



Thursday 3rd September 2009

Scottish Legislative Programme - SWA Response

In response to publication of the Scottish Government's legislative programme today, which includes plans to introduce minimum pricing of alcohol, The Scotch Whisky Association said:

"We support a firm line on alcohol misuse but Government claims that minimum prices will not damage Scotch are wrong and worryingly blind to the long-term harmful consequences for Scotch Whisky sales globally.

"Minimum prices will hurt Scottish distillers at home and overseas. Government figures show little evidence that this measure will tackle alcohol misuse, begging the question how high the price of alcohol will have to be increased by Government, and penalising the majority in order to discourage the minority that drink excessively.

"To introduce a minimum price trade barrier requires Scotland to opt-out of international trade rules. Such an exemption can only be justified in very limited circumstances and no Government has advanced such a claim, even in relation to tobacco. The negative message the Scottish Government is sending out about Scotch is deeply concerning.

"If successfully introduced, the Scottish Government will give the green light to countries, already keen to protect local markets, to bring in spurious health-based trade barriers against Scotch, damaging exports and the wider economy.

"Our frustration is heightened because we welcome the vast majority of the alcohol strategy and believe it could have sent out a more positive message internationally if taken forward in partnership."

- ENDS -

Note to Editors:

1. For further information please contact Campbell Evans (0131 222 9231 or 07768 002 262) or David Williamson (0131 222 9230 or 07730 496 151).