

# **Cross-Party Group on Beer and Pubs**

Monday 4<sup>th</sup> December 2023 @ 12.30 p.m.

Minute

Present

MSPs

Craig Hoy MSP (Convener), Finlay Carson MSP, Douglas Lumsden MSP

Invited guests

Abi Owens, Nothing PR

Non-MSP Group Members

Stephen Montgomery, Tsvetin Stefanov, Paul Tognieri, Anne Toms, Colin Wilkinson

Apologies

Paul Sweeney MSP (Deputy Convenor), Pam Duncan-Glancy MSP, David Saer, Leon Thompson

Agenda item 1

The Minutes of the AGM held on 16<sup>th</sup> January 2023 were proposed for approval by the Convenor and seconded by Paul Tognieri and Anne Toms

Agenda item 2

PubAid – Presentation by Abi Owers, Nothing PR

Abi Owers presented the new PubAid strategy and direction, which was being overseen by Nothing PR, who had been appointed in August. The PubAid Promise had been developed which consisted of four key campaigns on Sport, Community, Charity and Sustainability.

- The new campaign on Sport would include new research on the contribution of pubs to local community and grass roots sporting clubs and activities, and what the impact would be if that support was not available;

- The Community Pub Hero Awards had recently been launched and this year would include a regional winner from Scotland and Wales, with a view to considering specific Scottish and Welsh Awards for 2025. A new on-line entry process had been introduced for this year to make it easier for MPs/MSPs/MSs to nominate pubs in their constituencies. 100 nominations had already been received and the closing date was not until January.

The Convenor and requested that the nomination information be represented with the Scottish CPG logo and he would share it with Scottish Parliament colleagues. He was keen to demonstrate the community value of pubs.

Anne Toms offered to set up a briefing for Abi and her colleagues on the Scottish context for the awards.

The Convenor thanked Abi for a very interesting and useful overview. The slides would be circulated with the minutes of the meeting.

## Agenda item 3

DRS

Barry Watts reported that the four UK nations were working together to develop a joint approach. There were three key issues going forward:

- (a) Timing: the deadline of October 2025 was still optimistic. Industry would need at least 18-24 months if not longer to prepare from when the Regulations were in place;
- (b) Scope of the scheme: this should be consistent in terms of glass.
- (c) Deposit Management Organisation: there were lessons to be learned from what happened in Scotland.

Anne Toms highlighted a meeting she had attended with Heineken, BBPA, BSDA and British Water, with DEFRA Minister Rebecca Pow MP where it has been made clear that no cumulative impact assessment had been carried out for DRS.

It was agreed that the timescales for DRS remained challenging. An SI was expected to be laid towards the end of the year which would then be under consideration by Europe and the WTO for three months. Movement on the October 2025 deadline would be of greatest benefit to industry at this stage. Development and publication of impact assessments was also crucial to avoid potential judicial review. The CPG would continue to highlight these issues and refer back to the findings of its report on DRS which was published last year.

## Agenda item 4

Consultation on Restricting Alcohol Advertising and Promotion

Over 3,000 responses to the consultation had been received earlier this year and a Government response was expected shortly. The vast majority of responses were content with the status quo and considered that the current system was already effective. There was likely to be targeted stakeholder engagement on in the new year and it would become a live issue again over the next few months. A revised consultation would be published in due course. Rita King offered to share the previous PubAid report on community sport which may be helpful.

## Agenda item 5

### Any other business

Douglas Lumsden MSP highlighted that he sits on the Net Zero, Energy and Transport Committee which was looking at a framework Bill on waste reporting which proposed to charge a deposit for or ban single use containers eg coffee cups. While it had not been discussed by the Committee, he was concerned that this requirement could potentially apply to the plastic glasses used outside pubs. Paul Tognieri confirmed that he had spoken to officials about this issue. Pubs often have plastic glasses as a condition of their alcohol licence and there was no option for refillables. The SBPA would feed back into the Committee.

The Convenor reported that lobbying continued for some form of business rates relief for Scottish businesses. It was noted that the latest increase in the National Minimum Wage would also be difficult for businesses to absorb in the current economic climate.