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Setting the minimum unit price of alcohol, December 2018

Tenovus Cancer Care is Wales' leading cancer charity. Our aims are simple. We want to help prevent, treat and find a cure for cancer.

We do this by offering support, advice and treatment to cancer patients and their loved ones. We also promote healthy lifestyles and fund cancer research to find new ways to prevent it, diagnose it, and treat it.

We welcome the opportunity to respond to this important consultation.

1. We invite comments on the draft regulations included in annex one which sets out the proposed minimum unit price of 50p.

Tenovus Cancer Care strongly believes in the importance of a targeted Minimum Unit Price for alcohol. Alcohol is well established as a known carcinogen¹, for which there is no safe level of consumption.² We welcome Welsh Government's commitment to driving down alcohol related cancers, and improving public health in Wales.

Alcohol is estimated to account for around 3% of all cancers in the UK³ and is 61% more affordable than it was in 1980.^{4,5} Based on the available evidence, we have previously stated support for a Minimum Pricing of 45p-50p per unit would contribute to lowering long term instances of alcohol related harm.⁶

A recent study by the University of Sheffield showed that minimum unit pricing provides the biggest health benefits for harmful drinkers in the poorest sections of society.⁷ In turn this would contribute substantially to a reduction of health inequalities.

As a result Tenovus Cancer Care strongly supports the proposed minimum unit price of 50p and believe this policy will deliver clear benefits, not just in the prevention of certain types of cancer, but also by relieving strains on other sections of the NHS in Wales.

References

¹ Alcohol has been well established as one of the leading causes of cancer. The International Agency for Research into Cancer classified alcohol into a Group 1 carcinogen in 1988 which is the highest risk category.

² Parkin DM, B. L. (2011). The fraction of cancer attributable to lifestyle and environmental factors in the UK in 2010. Summary and conclusions. *British Journal of Cancer*. p.81

³ Specifically 3.3%. Alcohol links closely with the development of mouth and throat cancers; however bowel cancer has the greatest number of cases. Brown, K., Rungay, H. & Dunlop, C., 2018. The fraction of cancer attributable to modifiable risk factors in England, Wales, Scotland, Northern Ireland, and the United Kingdom in 2015. *British Journal of Cancer*, Volume 118, pp. 1130-1141.

⁴ Institute of Alcohol Studies. <http://www.ias.org.uk/Alcohol-knowledge-centre/Price/Factsheets/How-has-the-cost-of-alcohol-changed-over-time.aspx>

⁵ Health and Social Care Information Centre. Statistics on alcohol: England, 2013. Available at <http://www.hscic.gov.uk/catalogue/PUB10932/alc-eng-2013-rep.pdf>

⁶ Holmes, J et al. (2014) found a minimum unit price of 45p led to an immediate reduction in 3.7% or among the heaviest drinkers rising to a reduction of 7.6% among the lowest income quintile.

⁷ Holmes, J. et al., 2014. Effects of minimum unit pricing for alcohol on different income and socioeconomic groups: a modelling study. *The Lancet*, Volume 383, pp. 1655-64.