



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

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## **WRITTEN STATEMENT BY THE WELSH GOVERNMENT**

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**TITLE**     **Public Health (Minimum Price for Alcohol) (Wales) Bill**

**DATE**     **23 October 2017**

**BY**       **Rebecca Evans AM, Minister for Social Services and Public Health**

I am today introducing the Public Health (Minimum Price for Alcohol) (Wales) Bill and its accompanying Explanatory Memorandum and Regulatory Impact Assessment to the National Assembly.

The introduction of a minimum price for alcohol will form part of the Welsh Government's wider strategic approach to promote a healthier relationship with alcohol. It signifies a firm commitment to further improving and protecting the health of the population of Wales and forms part of a continuing programme of work to tackle alcohol-related harm.

The ultimate aim of the Bill is to tackle alcohol-related harm, including alcohol-attributable hospital admissions and alcohol-related deaths in Wales, by reducing alcohol consumption among harmful and hazardous drinkers.

The Bill provides for a minimum price for the sale and supply of alcohol in Wales and makes it an offence for alcohol to be sold or supplied from qualifying premises below that price. The minimum price for the supply of alcohol in Wales will be calculated by multiplying the minimum unit price, the percentage strength of the alcohol and its volume. It will not increase the price of every alcoholic drink – only those currently sold below the applicable minimum price. The proposals will also put in place a series of offences and penalties relating to the new system. The Bill proposes to provide additional powers and duties for local authorities to enable them to enforce the proposed system.

Specifically, the Bill proposes:

- The formula for calculating the applicable minimum price for alcohol by multiplying the percentage strength of the alcohol, its volume and the minimum unit price.
- Powers for Welsh Ministers to make subordinate legislation to specify the minimum unit price.
- To establish a local authority-led enforcement regime with powers to bring prosecutions and to issue fixed penalty notices.
- Powers of entry and inspection for authorised officers of a local authority and an offence of obstructing an authorised officer.

The demand for goods and services is strongly influenced by price – this is a relationship which extends to alcohol.

The Bill proposes that the minimum unit price would be specified in regulations made by the Welsh Ministers and a decision has yet to be taken as to what the level will be. However, for the purpose of assessing impacts and the associated costs and benefits, the supporting documentation for the Bill – including the Explanatory Memorandum and Regulatory Impact Assessment – uses a 50p minimum unit price, as an example. The decision on the level of the minimum unit price to be specified in regulations will be informed by the latest available evidence.

Evidence suggests the introduction of a minimum unit price could have an important impact on levels of harmful and hazardous drinking in Wales – reducing alcohol consumption, alcohol-related harm (including alcohol-related deaths and hospitalisations) and the costs associated with those harms. Research undertaken by the University of Sheffield in 2014 estimated that a minimum unit price of 50p would be worth £882m to the Welsh economy in terms of reductions in illness, crime and workplace absence over a 20-year period.

The introduction of a minimum unit price will have only a small impact on people who drink moderate amounts of alcohol – its impact is greatest on those people who drink hazardous and harmful amounts of alcohol. This Bill is aimed at protecting the health of harmful and hazardous drinkers who tend to consume larger amounts of low-cost and high-alcohol products.

The targeted approach of minimum pricing policies has been at the centre of the alcohol debate in a number of countries around the world. By introducing legislation on minimum pricing in Wales, we have an opportunity to realise its potential for change at the earliest opportunity and deliver health and socio-economic benefits across our nation.

There have long been calls for Wales to redefine its relationship with alcohol. This legislation provides us with the opportunity to do so.

I will make an oral statement about the Bill to the National Assembly tomorrow.

Details of the Bill and its supporting documentation are available on the National Assembly for Wales' website:

<http://www.assembly.wales/en/bus-home/bus-legislation/bus-legislation-progress-bills/Pages/bus-legislation-progress-bills.aspx#welsh-government>.