1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

To provide comments on the Scottish Governments Bill and comment on the key issues.

2. KEY ISSUES

Minimum Price of Alcohol

East Renfrewshire Licensing Board is of the opinion that introducing a minimum price of alcohol would not be an effective way to combat Scotland’s relationship with alcohol.

We have examined the paper and find that the introduction of this measure would not have the desired effect of improving Scotland's relationship with alcohol.

The Level of Minimum Pricing

From the figures being quoted of roughly 0.40 pence per unit of alcohol East Renfrewshire Licensing Board are of the opinion that this would not be economically viable. Having used the formula provided we find that prices will remain roughly in line with current pricing and not have an effect on alcohol associated with antisocial behaviour and health related issues.

An increase on this figure would have an impact on certain types of alcohol and would only lead to an increase in the price of all alcohol and would result in consumers and responsible drinkers facing a detrimental impact from this.

The Rationale of Minimum Pricing

East Renfrewshire Licensing Board is of the opinion that minimum pricing is not an effective tool to address all types of problem drinking.

The Board is of the opinion that although minimum pricing may have a positive impact on public health; it will not tackle the problem of antisocial behaviour associated with alcohol.

Alternatives to Minimum Pricing

East Renfrewshire Licensing Board has not researched the issue of alternative methods of tackling Scotland’s relationship with alcohol but has listened to the opinions of local licensees on this.
East Renfrewshire licensees are of the opinion that tackling “loss leading” and “negative mark ups” are the only way to improve Scotland’s relationship with alcohol.

Alternative measures such as not allowing alcohol to be sold for less than the duty paid on the alcohol. This issue is currently being debated by the Board and the local licensing forum.

East Renfrewshire Licensing Board are of the opinion that transferring the mandatory conditions for irresponsible drinks promotions relating to on sale premises to off sale premises would be an effective alternative to minimum pricing. We do however recognise that further revision of these measures may have to be considered.

**The Implications of the Social Responsibility Levy**

East Renfrewshire Licensing Board agrees in principal to the introduction of a social responsibility levy.

The Board feel that it would be advantageous to have the option of introducing this levy to help further the licensing objectives and recoup costs in dealing with the adverse effects of alcohol.

The Board feel that it would be necessary to have a sliding scale of charges and to be able to provide an exemption if it felt this was required.

**Raising the Age to 21**

East Renfrewshire Licensing Board are not in favour of empowering Boards to raise the age to 21 for their area or specific parts of the area.

We are concerned that this will create disparity within East Renfrewshire or with neighbouring authorities due to different age requirements and creates the risk of youths going on a “booze cruise” to areas with the lower age requirement.

**Promotional Offers**

East Renfrewshire Licensing Board is supportive of the measures contained in the Bill to tackle excessive advertising of alcohol.

Elaine Green
Chair
East Renfrewshire Licensing Board
22 January 2010