On behalf of Health Protection Scotland, the organisation responsible for protecting the Scottish public from infectious and environmental hazards, I thank you for providing me with the opportunity to provide written evidence on the Alcohol, etc (Scotland) Bill. My comments are from the perspective of Health Protection and relate to potential advantages of the Bill’s proposed recommendations. There are two areas of Health Protection which deserve special attention when considering the potential benefits of recommendations to tackle problem drinking in Scotland.

It is well recognised that there is a strong association between unprotected sexual intercourse, and thus the acquisition of sexually transmitted infections, and excessive alcohol intake; accordingly, any measures to reduce the excess would be welcome.

On the Hepatitis C infection front, the Scottish Government has invested £43 million during 2008-2011 to improve prevention, testing, treatment and care services to reduce Hepatitis C transmission and Hepatitis C related disease. A critical co-factor in Hepatitis C related disease progression towards cirrhosis and liver failure is excessive alcohol consumption; thus, any measures which will reduce alcohol intake among individuals whose livers are already vulnerable as a consequence of Hepatitis C, would also be extremely welcome.

If any further detail regarding the above is required, please do not hesitate to get in touch.

Mary Morgan
Director
Health Protection Scotland
16 February 2010