Orkney Islands Council and Orkney Islands Area Licensing Board (OIALB) have welcomed the opportunity to comment on the provisions contained in the Alcohol etc (Scotland) Bill as presently laid.

As the Scottish Parliament will be aware, the Orkney Islands Council is the smallest local authority in Scotland comprising approximately 70 islands the Council and OIALB are proud of their heritage and the sense of community which still exists in these progressive islands. They are seeking to work collaboratively with the Scottish Government, Partner Agencies, the licensed trade and the businesses and people of Orkney.

Addressing the questions posed

**Question 1 – 4 Minimum Alcohol Sale Prices** - The Council and OIALB welcome the proposals as detailed in the draft bill with regard to minimum pricing. The use of minimum pricing as a tool to control excess has been demonstrated in the studies referred to and is supported with the analogy to tobacco sales for health reasons. It is particularly disturbing that the non-alcohol drinks sell for more than alcohol.

Minimum Pricing alone would not, it is believed, be effective without a detailed education programme supporting that proposal together with effective management of the advertising and sale of alcohol by restricting its accessibility, for example a 'drinks' counter, which would remove the alcohol availability from being perceived as part of routine groceries and would, it is hoped encourage people to think before they purchase. Whilst the proposals contained in the draft bill regarding the age of consumers are noted - it was disappointing to note the lack of reference to raising the age at which one can sell alcohol and the resultant dichotomy that could thereafter arise of such a policy if think 21/think 25 was introduced in an establishment but the member of staff permitted to sell the alcohol and seek to establish the credentials of the purchaser could not themselves meet the purchase criteria. It would be the preferred options that such contradictions were addressed at an early stage.

Regarding **Question 5** The Council and OIALB, whilst recognising the difficulties experienced on the mainland regarding alcohol related incidents, do not thankfully experience difficulties to that extent within their administrative areas and do not wish the Orkney Islands to experience such difficulties/disturbances and /or nuisance.

The Council and OIALB would appreciate if it was recognised that whilst the overall alcohol consumption may be a national problem there are local variations and would seek to have as much local decision making as possible provided for.
The Council and OIALB do not believe that one size would fit all as whilst they appreciate the ethos and reasoning behind the policy the culture and ethos of the Orkney Islands are significantly different to the culture and ethos of the Scottish mainland country areas let alone city centres. The Council and the OIALB whilst they support the levy in appropriate circumstances would seek for the imposition, setting, collection and appropriateness of the levy to rest with the Local Authority who are aware through Local Knowledge and the Licensing Board of the difficulties that are or as the case may be, are not, experienced in their local area and the appropriateness or otherwise of such a levy for their administrative area.

I trust you find these comments helpful and please do not hesitate to contact me should you require any further information.

Alistair Buchan
Chief Executive
Orkney Islands Council
1 March 2010