We are in favour of setting a minimum price per unit of alcohol on the following grounds:

- It would deter certain groups of people associated with heavy alcohol consumption, especially the young, and the consequential deleterious effects, from buying large quantities of alcohol at a time, and from consuming it either at home or out of doors.
- It would prevent large outlets such as supermarkets from selling below cost price alcohol.
- There is evidence from various other countries of the efficacy of minimum pricing in reduction alcohol related crime and disorder.
- There would eventually be advantages to the nation in terms of health benefits and subsequent financial savings to the NHS and other care providers.
- The only disadvantages that we can see would be: a small increase in financial outlay to moderate drinkers; a possible increased risk of ‘under the counter’ or other illegal sales of cheap alcohol, which would require greater input from law enforcement and monitoring.

We think that the level of minimum price per unit of alcohol should be set at 40p, although our members were divided on this, and some felt that a higher price per unit would act as an even greater deterrent to alcohol abuse.

Rationale behind the use of minimum pricing

- Evidence that reducing alcohol consumption, especially among the young, contributes to overall benefits in health and crime reduction
- Tax gained by price increases could be used by the various government and other agencies for health promotion and subsidies for healthy foods in areas where alcohol consumption is seen as a problem.

Possible alternatives

- We do not think there is any alternative, but we suggest that the government should also look at other countries, where, for example, the sale of alcohol is strictly controlled in premises solely concerned with alcohol sales. Such systems are in operation in parts of Canada.
- We also think that the age for purchase and consumption of alcohol in licensed premises should be raised to 21.
- We feel that Licensing Boards should revise their policies on permitting the sale of alcohol by reducing the number of licensed outlets, especially in areas where there are alcohol related problems.
Social responsibility levy on pubs and clubs

Such a levy should apply to all outlets selling alcohol, regardless of type, location, or reputation.

Justification for raising the permitted age of alcohol purchase to 21

We believe that the justification is evidenced by research in other countries of the benefits. We are conscious that in many areas of Scotland the main problems related to alcohol, whether health or crime, are associated with young people.

Promotional offers

We are opposed to all promotional offers on alcohol.

Age verification policy

Although we are in principle opposed to identity cards for everyone, we believe that they would be a useful tool to prevent under-age purchase and consumption of alcohol.

Other information

In November 2009 our community council assisted Dumbarton East and Central Community Council with a public survey into the question of minimum alcohol unit pricing, which we believe they have submitted to you as part of their evidence. We fully endorse the findings of this survey.

Wilma Skinner, Chair
Rosemary Cairns, Vice-chair
Bill Barlow, Treasurer
Rose Harvie, Secretary
Silverton and Overtoun Community Council
17 January 2010