Dear Duncan

ALCOHOL (MINIMUM PRICING) (SCOTLAND) BILL: STAGE 1

When I gave evidence to the Health and Sport Committee meeting on 31 January, I undertook to feedback following my visit to Brussels on 6/7 February to discuss our minimum pricing proposals with the European Commission.

As I indicated, my visit was part of the ongoing process of engagement we are having with the European Commission over our minimum pricing proposals. To this end, I had very constructive and positive discussions with John Dalli, European Commissioner for Health and Consumer Policy and, in a separate meeting, with senior officials from DG Enterprise and Industry.

These different discussions confirmed that tackling alcohol misuse is a priority for the European Commission. Most importantly, the discussions with DG Enterprise officials confirmed our view that there is nothing in EU law which makes minimum pricing, per se, illegal. As we already knew, we will need to be able to balance the scale of market intervention with the health benefits which will flow, but we have always known we needed to be able to demonstrate this kind of proportionality, and are confident we will be able to do so.

I hope this is helpful.

NICOLA STURGEON