Minimum Pricing – The Scottish experience
Figure 2.1 Alcohol-related deaths per 100,000 population in the UK, 1992-2011 (ONS)
UK Mortality Trends

Figure 6: Movements in mortality 1971–2007 (Deaths per million of population)
Liver Cirrhosis Death Rates 1950-2010

[Leon and McCambridge Lancet 2006 updated]

Men aged 45-64 years
Women aged 45-64 years
Per capita (litres per head per year)
consumption of pure alcohol in the UK population, 1900–2010

Sources: BBPA Statistical Handbook; Cancer Research UK
Price & Consumption Trends

Source: Tighe, 2003
Minimum Unit Pricing (MUP) Scotland

• Minimum retail price for a unit of alcohol, linked to alcohol content, price set in regulation by Scottish Parliament.

• Policy aims to reduce consumption and specifically targets alcohol which is cheap relative to strength.

• MUP affects the whole population but the effect is greater for those who drink the most.

• Heaviest drinkers buy more of the cheapest alcohol. Harmful drinkers account for 64% of low cost alcohol (below 40p/unit) sold in UK.
Anticipated Benefits of MUP

• MUP of 50p will reduce alcohol-related deaths by 60 in the first year and by over 300 by year ten.

• MUP of 50p will reduce hospital admissions by 1660 in year one increasing to 6630 by year ten.

• Estimated cumulative value of harm reduction of £942 million. [University of Sheffield Modelling 2012]
Taxation V’s MUP

• Taxation and MUP are complementary measures and together will deliver greater benefits than taxation alone.

• 36% increase in alcohol taxes in the UK since 2008 has not eliminated cheap alcohol.

• To bring the cheapest products up to the same level as a 50p MUP using taxation alone would require duty increases of more than 600% - not politically viable.
Scotland – Other Legislative and Policy Measures

• Licensing Scotland Act (2005) prohibits ‘happy hours’ in on-sales and introduces a licensing objective ‘to protect and improve public health’.
• Alcohol etc. (Scotland) Act 2010 prohibits bulk discount buys in off-sales purchases and limits promotions to the alcohol display areas.
• Public health levy introduced for larger premises selling both alcohol and tobacco.
• Proposal to reduce drink driving limit 0.08 BAC to 0.05.
• ABI program.
MUP – Current Status

• May 2012: Legislation is approved by the Scottish Parliament and the global alcohol producers immediately announce their intention to mount a legal challenge.

• May 2013: Lord Doherty issues Court of Session judgement which concludes - “In my opinion, none of the challenges to the minimum pricing measures is well founded. There is no proper basis for the petitioners being granted any of the remedies which they seek. The petition is refused”.

• Industry appealing Lord Doherty’s judgement. The case will be heard by three Appeal Judges February 2014.
Court of Session Judgement (1)

• “The views of the Commission and of the Member States who submitted comments or opinions are, of course, of interest; but no more than that. The Commission’s detailed opinion is but one of the steps in the procedure for dialogue provided for by the Technical Standards Directive. The contents do not bind either the Commission or the UK. This Court is not bound by any view expressed by the Commission in its opinion.” [Lord Doherty May 2013]
Court of Session Judgement (2)

• “It is well established that the national court is in a better position than the Court of Justice to examine and determine all the circumstances bearing upon proportionality....I do not consider it necessary or appropriate to refer any question to the Court of Justice for a preliminary ruling.”

• “I am in no doubt that the reduction of alcohol consumption generally, and reduction of consumption by hazardous and harmful drinkers in particular, are both legitimate aims of Article 36.” [Lord Doherty, May 2013]
Tactics of Big Alcohol

• Action by the global alcohol corporations mirrors the tactics of the tobacco industry which seek to prevent or delay the implementation of legitimate public health measures by democratically elected governments.

• MUP is essential for reducing alcohol-related harm in Scotland. It is for national and local governments to determine the level which they wish to afford to public health and the way in which that level is to be achieved.

• Industry has succeeded in taking MUP off the table in England and has been very influential in building opposition to the Scottish Government’s plans in Europe.
Misrepresenting Scientific Evidence

- “Industry actors ignored, misrepresented and otherwise sought to undermine the content of the international evidence-base on effective policies in order to influence policy... These tactics make evidence-based policy making more difficult to achieve where industry actors are involved

- “In Westminster, alcohol industry actors have cultivated long term relationships with the main political parties and an apparent consensus amongst these parties that they should have a wide-ranging role in alcohol policies” [McCambridge et al 2013].
Moving Forward

• Learn from the tobacco control movement about building effective advocacy coalitions.
• Establish alcohol control advocacy coalitions at local, national and global level.
• Come to Edinburgh in 2015 for the Global Alcohol Policy Conference.