

Scotland sets minimum alcohol price

14 May 2012

The Scottish government set out a minimum price for alcohol Monday, saying too many Scots were "drinking themselves to death" and it was time to tackle the country's relationship with booze.

Alcohol should be sold at a [minimum price](#) of 50 pence (81 US cents, 63 euro cents) per unit, [Health Secretary](#) Nicola Sturgeon announced.

The proposal is expected to be passed in the Scottish parliament next week and could come into effect from next April.

"Cheap [alcohol](#) comes at a price and now is the time to tackle the toll that Scotland's unhealthy relationship with alcohol is taking on our society," Sturgeon said during a visit to patients with liver complaints at Glasgow Royal Infirmary.

"Too many Scots are drinking themselves to death. The problem affects people of all walks of life.

"As affordability has increased, alcohol-related [hospital admissions](#) have quadrupled, and it is shocking that half of our prisoners now say they were drunk when they committed the offence. It's time for this to stop.

"Introducing a minimum price per unit will enable us to tackle these problems, given the clear link between [affordability](#) and consumption."

In recent years, Scotland has made efforts to tackle its [health problems](#). It was the first part of the United Kingdom to outlaw smoking in public places, doing so in March 2006.

Scottish lawmakers have banned discount deals such as two for the price of one on bottles of wine, restricted "irresponsible" drinks promotions and advertising around premises, and set a requirement for [age verification](#).

Under the proposed law, a 70-centilitre bottle of 37.5 percent vodka would cost at least £13.13, while a 75cl bottle of 12.5 percent wine would be

sold for no less than £4.69.

One unit in Britain is 10 millilitres of pure alcohol. A double pub measure of spirits, a pint of low-strength beer and a medium glass of wine each contain around two units.

Doctor Brian Keighley, chairman of the British Medical Association in Scotland, said alcohol-related illness caused one death "every three hours" and the spiralling healthcare costs were unsustainable in the current financial climate of austerity.

However, some said the measures would hand supermarkets a profits windfall and punish the lower classes.

Four 440ml cans of super-strength nine percent lager would increase to a minimum of £7.92.

Sam Bowman, head of research at the Adam Smith Institute economic think-tank, branded the scheme "a miserable, Victorian-era measure that explicitly targets the poor and the frugal, leaving the more expensive drinks of the middle classes untouched".

A minimum price of 40 pence per unit has been mooted for England and Wales.

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