

Harmful drinkers will see biggest impact from minimum unit price for alcohol – new research shows

In October, the Welsh Government unveiled a new Bill that will, if passed by the National Assembly for Wales, introduce a minimum price for the sale of alcohol. The Bill is designed to tackle the health impacts of excessive alcohol consumption.

The Sheffield Alcohol Research Group at the University of Sheffield were commissioned by the Welsh Government in June 2017 to update the 2014 model-based appraisal of the likely impact of a range of minimum unit pricing policies in Wales.

The research published today is an interim report which updates the modelling undertaken by the University of Sheffield in 2014, and provides an analysis of the health impacts of a 50 pence minimum unit price, as an illustrative example, for comparison with that used in the 2014 report.

The research shows that harmful drinkers purchase almost half (46%) of their alcohol for less than 50p per unit. They account for 4% of the drinker population, they drink 27% of, and are responsible for 20% of all spending on, all alcohol consumed in Wales.

In contrast, moderate drinkers purchase less than a quarter (22%) of their alcohol for less than 50p per unit which means it is estimated moderate drinkers would only spend £8.30 extra per year under a 50p MUP.

The research also shows:

- A 50p MUP is estimated to avoid 66 deaths and 1,281 hospital admissions per year
- Harmful drinkers in the most deprived areas make up 0.6% of the drinker population, the modelling estimates that they will experience 45% of the averted alcohol-attributable deaths and 24% of the averted alcohol-attributable hospital admissions
- Almost three quarters of drinkers drink within the UK Chief Medical Officer's guidelines of 14 units/week, however 24% of drinkers are drinking at potentially hazardous levels (14-50 units/week for men and 14-35 for women), and over 4% are harmful drinkers (over 50 units/week for men and 35 for women)
- Very little alcohol is sold in the on-trade (pubs and restaurants) at below the example 50p MUP threshold (less than 1% of all sales), but a significant proportion of off-trade (off-licences) alcohol is (46%), and overall 37% of all units drunk are bought for less than 50p.

Health Secretary, Vaughan Gething said:

“This research is further evidence that there is a very clear and direct link between levels of excessive drinking and the availability of cheap alcohol.

“The introduction of a minimum unit price will have a clear impact on those who drink harmful and hazardous levels of cheap, strong alcohol. It is also expected to make an important contribution to addressing health inequalities by improving the health outcomes of hazardous and harmful drinkers living in the most deprived areas of Wales.

“All alcohol-attributable deaths are avoidable deaths – so by introducing this measure, we will save lives.”

[Investment for Venue Cymru as Wales attracts business events at global exhibition](#)

Work on refreshing Venue Cymru’s offer as a business events venue will begin in May 2018 with a view to work being complete by the end of the year.

Almost £1 million of EU funding has been secured for the development. The project is part of the Welsh Government’s EU funded Tourism Attractor Destination programme, led by Visit Wales.

Venue Cymru hosts in excess of 800 separate conference and events every year.

Conwy County Borough Council, owners of Venue Cymru recognised that the remodeling of key spaces within the complex was critical to ensure that Venue Cymru could evolve with the needs of this important market, and attract further business events to Wales.

A programme of reconfiguration of the current building will allow for better use of the existing space to accommodate the varied programme of shows and events; with the improved quality of the offer attracting more visitors to North Wales and Venue Cymru, helping to extend the visitor season.

Tourism Minister, Dafydd Elis-Thomas, said:

“This investment in Venue Cymru is a welcome recognition of the importance of the centre to the business events sector in north Wales – and investment is critical in order for us to have the variety and quality of facilities and attractions that the market demands.

“Wales currently attracts under 2% of the value of business conferences and meetings for the UK as a whole but there is significant potential to draw events from UK and international associations, public & third sector meetings, corporate meetings and team building events to Wales’s award-winning venues and business destinations. Business Events are a priority for the Welsh Government, with one of the extended benefits of this market being the high percentage of delegates subsequently returning to the area for future holidays.

“Wales has built an enviable track record of successfully hosting many of the world’s biggest events. We’re now looking at building on our experience to attract more leading business events to Wales – our attendance at global events such as ibtm world is key in setting out our ambition as real players in this market and to raise Wales’ profile as a business events destination.”

Conwy’s Cabinet Member for Economic Development, Cllr Louise Emery added:

“We are delighted the Welsh Government has recognised the importance of this exciting project. Venue Cymru already contributes more than £33m per annum to the North Wales economy supporting hundreds of jobs. This development will help us build on this, further growing Conwy’s valuable business tourism and events offer.”

Visit Wales is exhibiting at ibtm world with industry partners from Wales: Cardiff, ICC Wales and the Vale Resort. ibtm world is the global event for the business events/conferences/meetings sector and the Welsh Government has recently announced a new business events approach with the ambition of attracting major business conferences and events to Wales.

Wales calls on UK Government to do more to support onshore wind and solar development

The Welsh Government together with a large number of Welsh energy and environmental organisations are today making a public statement of continuing support for renewable energy.

The statement builds on the Cabinet Secretary’s recently announced targets for renewable energy and urges the UK Government to enable onshore wind and

solar technologies to compete in renewable energy generation auction rounds.

Currently renewable energy generation auction rounds, termed Contract for Difference, secure subsidies for technologies including offshore, marine renewables and biomass. The auctions specifically exclude onshore wind and solar, which potentially provide the biggest opportunity for the Welsh renewable energy sector.

The Cabinet Secretary said:

“The UK has invested over £9 billion in developing the renewables sector and costs have successfully been driven down.

“However, the rapid changes in UK Government policy have decimated large parts of the renewable sector, with potentially valuable developments to Wales stopped in their tracks by UK Ministers. In 2015 alone, four new wind developments in mid-Wales with an installed capacity of over 300MW were refused by UK Government.

“The bulk of UK Government renewables investment is now going to offshore projects outside of Wales. This investment is paid for by Welsh bill payers, amongst others.

“We believe that lowest cost technologies, such as onshore wind and solar, present the best opportunities to manage the costs of generation to energy bills. They also offer Welsh businesses and our rural economy the opportunity to be more resilient and self sufficient in a future outside of the EU.

“The statement of support we, along with key Welsh organisations, have published today, calls for change. That is why we are urging the UK Government to do more to support onshore wind and solar development.

“A policy framework which enables the most affordable projects to continue to form the bulk of energy supply is fundamentally important to delivering our decarbonisation and prosperity goals.”

Be The Spark – More than £5m for new activity to support entrepreneurship in Wales

The Welsh Government, partly funded by the European Regional Development Fund will invest over £4m and work with academia, industry and local partners to

support the establishment of four new Business Hubs.

The new hubs based in North West Wales, Mid Wales, the South West Valleys and the South East Valleys will aim to kick start and sustain increased innovation driven entrepreneurial activity in their areas.

The establishment of the new hubs follows work already underway to develop the Wrexham Business Hub, which is expected to create 100 new enterprises and 260 new jobs over the next two years.

All five hubs will provide individuals and companies with the space to network, innovate, establish their enterprises and access a range of support services such as business "angels", advice on pitching, work shops and business surgeries.

Collectively the five hubs will aim to create at least 700 new enterprises and 1160 new jobs, with many of those jobs expected to pay above the average salary for Wales.

In addition to the funding for the hubs, the Economy Secretary has also announced £1m for community entrepreneurship projects which will specifically target people living in less advantaged communities around Wales.

These projects, delivered in the heart of the community, will enable individuals to explore how being self employed can benefit and affect their lives and will help them to generate and develop workable business ideas, overcome barriers and develop transferable skills.

Economy Secretary, Ken Skates said:

"We know that supporting and encouraging entrepreneurship across Wales is absolutely crucial if we are to succeed in growing Wales' economy.

"This additional entrepreneurship funding will enable us to develop four new business hubs in North West Wales, Mid Wales, the South West Valleys and the South East Valleys.

"The hubs will be in addition to the Wrexham business hub already being established and will ensure that budding entrepreneurs in all parts of Wales can access the space and help they need to get their ideas off the ground.

"Evidence tells us that this collaborative approach will bring a host of wider benefits to areas surrounding the hubs which can only be good news for the regional economies of Wales.

"I am also pleased to announce around £1m for community entrepreneurship projects.

"This funding will be used to assist and develop budding entrepreneurs who might need a bit more help in clarifying and developing their

self employment plans.

“I hope that this specialised support, delivered in the heart of some of our least advantaged communities will provide the advice and development needed to develop a whole new cohort of successful and driven entrepreneurs.”

Welsh Government expands overseas operations to boost trade post-Brexit

The Welsh Government will open offices in Canada, France, Germany and Qatar next year to help protect existing markets, pursue new trade and investment opportunities and promote Wales to the world.

Germany and France are Wales’ 2 biggest European markets in terms of trade and investment. A quarter of all Welsh exports go to Germany, worth £2.9bn last year alone, while 90 German companies are based in Wales employing over 12,000 people.

France is Wales’ second biggest export destination, with the value of Welsh exports to France standing at £1.9bn in 2016. In addition, there are an estimated 80 French-owned companies in Wales employing over 8,100 people.

For the year ending June 2017, Canada was the 9th largest market for Welsh exports with a value of £392m, an increase of almost 70% over the previous 12 months. Canada is also in Wales’ top 5 investing markets, with companies such as Montreal-headquartered CGI having offices in Wales.

The Middle East is a growing commercial market which has seen strong growth as an export destination for Welsh companies. Last year, Qatar was the 15th largest market for Welsh exports, worth £172m to the Welsh economy, which is an increase of over 15% on the previous year.

Wales has achieved record-breaking inward investment results for 3 years running, attracting major companies – including GE Aviation and General Dynamics – against the backdrop of Brexit and competition from the largest economies in the world.

Welsh Government overseas teams promote Wales as a potential investment destination and have helped secure some Wales’ largest foreign investments.

For Welsh exporters, Welsh Government’s overseas teams play a role in investment decisions, providing knowledge of markets and trends, business climate and culture as well as ways to win new business. Overseas teams also offer access to networks and businesses and facilitate connections with

influencers and decision makers.

During a major speech this evening at Cardiff Met University on Wales after Brexit, the First Minister will say:

“Increasing our presence in these key markets allows us to pursue new trade and investment opportunities, build networks and promote Wales to the world. This has never been more important as we face a future outside of the European Union.

“Leaving the EU will create challenges, as well as opportunities. That is why we are expanding our presence in Europe and across the globe, so we are able to meet with, and attract, new investors and sell Welsh goods to overseas customers.

“As well as identifying new and exciting opportunities, we are working hard to protect our existing markets. Two thirds of Welsh exports go to European countries, while a third of all Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) comes from the EU.

“If we turn our backs on the Single Market and shut ourselves off from vital European trading markets, it would be hugely damaging to our economy. Maintaining and increasing investment from companies already in Wales is vitally important to us and dedicated resource in these countries will maximise the investment opportunities that these markets bring.”