

Vaughan Gething AC/AM  
Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros Iechyd a Gwasanaethau  
Cymdeithasol  
Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Services



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

Ein cyf/Our ref VG/00893/18

Oliver Hogan  
Chief Economist  
Centre for Economics and Business Research  
Unit 1  
4 Bath Street  
London  
EC1V 9DX

[ohogan@cebr.com](mailto:ohogan@cebr.com)

27 March 2018

Dear Mr Hogan

Thank you for your letter of 12 March 2018 regarding the Public Health (Minimum Price for Alcohol) (Wales) Bill.

I understand from your letter that you were unable to provide evidence to the National Assembly's Health, Social Care and Sport Committee ahead of the conclusion of Stage 1 of the legislative process.

I did not consider it necessary to postpone the debate on the general principles of the Bill, which went ahead as planned on 13 March, as I consider that the policy rationale for introducing minimum unit pricing for alcohol in Wales is well developed. Minimum unit pricing has already been the subject of two consultations prior to the introduction of the Bill to the National Assembly in 2017. Firstly as part of the Public Health White Paper in 2014 and subsequently – and more specifically – there was an extended period of consultation on the draft Public Health (Minimum Price for Alcohol) (Wales) Bill in 2015.

In 2015, alongside the draft Bill, the Welsh Government published an Explanatory Memorandum and Regulatory Impact Assessment, which summarised the evidence base in relation to minimum unit pricing at that point and specific assessments focusing on likely impacts on equalities, children and young people and the Welsh Language.

Following the introduction of the Bill to the National Assembly on 23 October 2017, the Health, Social Care and Sport Committee issued its own call for evidence on the Bill, which ran from 26 October until 15 December. The committee report notes there was broad, though not unanimous, support for the Bill's policy objectives.

Bae Caerdydd • Cardiff Bay  
Caerdydd • Cardiff  
CF99 1NA

Canolfan Cyswllt Cyntaf / First Point of Contact Centre:  
0300 0604400

[Gohebiaeth.Vaughan.Gething@llyw.cymru](mailto:Gohebiaeth.Vaughan.Gething@llyw.cymru)  
[Correspondence.Vaughan.Gething@gov.wales](mailto:Correspondence.Vaughan.Gething@gov.wales)

Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

There are significant issues associated with excess alcohol consumption in Wales. According to National Survey data, one in five adults are drinking above the current weekly guideline amounts and almost a third report drinking above the previous daily guidelines on at least one day the previous week. In 2016, there were 504 alcohol-related deaths in Wales – 41 more deaths than in 2015.

All alcohol-related deaths are avoidable; demonstrating the urgency for further action and further progress. We believe the introduction of a minimum price for alcohol can make an important contribution to addressing the devastation caused by alcohol-related illnesses and deaths.

We recognise the concerns raised by some that there are vulnerable groups, such as dependent drinkers, who may continue to purchase the same amounts of alcohol despite the proposed increase in price. We also acknowledge the concerns raised by some stakeholders that this may have consequential impacts in terms of household spend on areas such as food and heating. We will be working closely with the area planning boards in Wales to ensure local services can respond to people's needs.

I would emphasise – as I have in evidence to the Health, Social Care and Sport Committee and during the general principles debate in the National Assembly – that minimum pricing is not intended to work in isolation. It is not a panacea but it will form part of the Welsh Government's wider and ongoing Substance Misuse Strategy, which is underpinned by £50m of funding every year.

It is also important to recognise this legislation is targeted at reducing levels of hazardous and harmful drinking and that not all hazardous and harmful drinkers are dependent drinkers. Overall, we expect to see reduced levels of consumption among hazardous and harmful drinkers and associated reductions in alcohol-related harms.

The evidence on the extent to which MUP will have an impact on reducing hazardous and harmful drinking is as comprehensive and persuasive as it can be in relation to the UK and Wales – with anticipated impacts estimated through modelling undertaken by the University of Sheffield. Our evidence base for the introduction of an MUP in Wales does not solely rely on the analysis by the University of Sheffield. The Explanatory Memorandum which accompanies the Bill draws on a much wider evidence base, including evidence on the impacts of price on consumption and alcohol-related harms; on patterns of alcohol consumption and harms in Wales and on the impacts of other types of policy interventions.

Other safeguards have been built into the proposed minimum pricing regime – the Bill commits Welsh Ministers to publishing a report on the operation and effect of the regime after five years and provides for the legislation to be repealed after six years, unless Welsh Ministers, with the approval of the National Assembly, decide to continue it.

I am confident this is a policy worth introducing. You will be aware that on 13 March, the National Assembly voted in favour of the general principles of the Bill. Although stage one proceedings have now concluded, the window of opportunity to consider evidence in relation to MUP does not end now. Indeed, we will continue to look at new and emerging analysis as we enter stage two proceedings and beyond.

I look forward to considering the findings of your report once finalised. I have copied this letter to Dr Dai Lloyd AM, chair of the Health, Social Care and Sport Committee for its information.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Vaughan Gething". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'V' and a long, sweeping tail on the 'g'.

**Vaughan Gething AC/AM**

Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros Iechyd a Gwasanaethau Cymdeithasol  
Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Services