

The United Kingdom

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- 1.1 The period since this Chapter was written has been one of unusually intense activity in regard to alcohol issues in the UK, with numerous new developments taking place and significant administrative re-organisation at both national and local level.
- 1.2 The position is complicated by the fact that some new developments have occurred and are occurring at the UK level, others at national level in relation to the constituent countries of the UK.
- 1.3 The two major developments have been:
 - i. The development of national alcohol harm reduction strategies for England¹, Wales², Scotland³ and Northern Ireland⁴.
 - ii. Reform of the alcohol licensing law for England and Wales. At the time of writing, licensing reform is also being undertaken in Scotland and just beginning in Northern Ireland.
- 1.4 These two interrelated initiatives, combined with the other changes to the legislative and regulatory framework occurring in association with them, will determine the basic alcohol policy framework for the foreseeable future. They have been prompted to a considerable extent by public and political concerns regarding underage drinking and in respect of alcohol as a cause of crime, disorder and nuisance, particularly in the context of the night-time economy. Some commentators have expressed concern that the focus on alcohol and crime and on youth may divert attention from issues to do with health and the adverse impact of alcohol on the health of older age groups. Some have also considered it somewhat paradoxical that one of the main outcomes of these developments is that the alcohol industry appears to be being given a, if not the leading role in tackling the problems, with Government-alcohol industry partnerships as the basis of the whole strategic approach to alcohol problems.

¹Alcohol Harm Reduction Strategy for England, Prime Minister's Strategy Unit, 2004

² Tackling Substance Misuse in Wales, National Assembly for Wales, 2000

³ A Plan for Action on alcohol problems, Scottish Executive, January 2002

⁴ Strategy for reducing alcohol related harm, Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, Northern Ireland, 2000

2 National Alcohol Harm Reduction Strategies

2.1 Scotland

Plan For Action on Alcohol Problems, January 2002

Introduction (Chapter 1)

0.1 The Executive has produced this Plan for Action on alcohol problems after consulting widely. Evidence has also been gathered about trends and costs of alcohol problems to Scottish society and what works in addressing these problems. The Plan is inclusive, with responsibility for action falling to the Executive, NHS boards, local authorities, the police, industry and businesses, voluntary organizations and individuals.

0.2 There are many positive aspects to the use of alcohol within Scottish culture. The industry and associated trades benefit the economy in a number of ways. Drinking small amounts is compatible with a healthy lifestyle.

0.3 When alcohol is misused, however, there can be serious problems for individuals, those around them and for society as a whole. Concerns include: the range of effects on physical and mental health; accidents and injuries; harmful effects on others, for example, because of violence and crime; drink driving; harmful patterns of drinking, especially binge drinking; particular problems experienced by groups such as children and young people, people in rural areas, equality groups and homeless people.

0.4 The Plan estimates that alcohol problems cost Scotland at least £1 billion each year. Much of this is accounted for by reduced productivity and human costs. The rest results from costs to NHSScotland and social work and criminal justice services.

Aims, priorities and resources (Chapter 2)

0.5 The overall purpose of the Plan is to reduce alcohol-related harm in Scotland.

0.6 Within this purpose, aims in the short term include changing some attitudes to alcohol, developing support and treatment services and building capacity to deliver the Plan locally. Longer term aims include reducing consumption of alcohol by some groups within the population, reducing harmful patterns of drinking and reducing public nuisance and crime related to alcohol.

0.7 The Plan identifies key priorities to reduce binge drinking and reduce harmful drinking by children and young people.

0.8 The Executive is providing new resources centrally to implement early priority action in the Plan on communications and capacity building. Resources to address alcohol problems are also available in a range of other Executive programmes. The Plan says that a lead-in period is required, to assess properly local needs to improve or redesign services. The Executive will provide additional funding over time for services

in the light of other Executive priorities and the resources available.

Culture change (Chapter 3)

0.9 There are positive points about use of alcohol in Scotland, for example as part of social occasions and of celebrations. There are also some negative points though. For example, problems may not be taken seriously, and people may not know when or how to seek help.

0.10 There is no single culture surrounding drinking in Scotland. There are differences between age groups, genders, ethnic and religious groups, urban and rural areas. This chapter of the Plan identifies action to influence culture directly. Other action will have an indirect effect.

0.11 The Executive will put in place a long-term communications strategy to highlight the consequences of binge drinking for individuals and society as a whole. The strategy will include a sustained mix of national and local activities and will incorporate activities of other organisations such as HEBS.

0.12 Local communications strategies will also be required. These will involve a range of activities, using more targeted messages and local means of dissemination.

0.13 The Plan recommends that the term “alcohol problems” should be used generally to describe a range of harmful patterns and levels of drinking and their consequences. References to more technical terms for types of problems should be reserved for specific purposes, for example in discussions between doctors and patients. One of the consequences of using descriptions that avoid value judgements should be that people will be willing to seek help for alcohol problems at an earlier stage than often happens now.

0.14 More organisations and professional bodies should adopt alcohol policies that define sensible and appropriate use of alcohol by their members, relevant to their work, or other pursuits.

Prevention and education (Chapter 4)

0.15 Alcohol Misuse Co-ordinating Committees (AMCCs) will make prevention, education and communications an integral part of their local strategy.

0.16 Prevention will make a major contribution to the priority in the Plan to reduce harmful drinking by children and young people. AMCCs will link up with Drug Action Teams (DATs) to produce combined strategies addressing all aspects of alcohol and drugs work with children: prevention, treatment and education.

0.17 96% of all Scottish schools provide education about alcohol matters. This is an integral part of health education in the curriculum and part of the context of the health promoting school. A Health Promoting Schools Unit is being set up to support

developments.

0.18 Outwith school settings, a range of detached youthwork and community education opportunities need to be used to provide information and alternative activities for young people. Sporting activities and other active leisure pursuits can play a major role here.

0.19 A new parents' guide on alcohol and young people will be produced, to support parents in talking with their children about alcohol.

0.20 The Plan promotes support for employers to develop workplace alcohol policies, through Scotland's Health at Work and guidance to small and medium sized enterprises.

0.21 The Scottish Road Safety Campaign published research on attitudes to drinking and driving and launched phase 1 of a 5 year strategy for drink drive publicity in December 2001.

Provision of services (Chapter 5)

0.22 There is a range of effective services, providing support and treatment in Scotland. Gaps have been identified, however, in services for people with alcohol problems and also to support those close to them.

0.23 The Executive will develop a framework for alcohol problems support and treatment services. The framework will assist those who plan and commission services to assess local needs, identify service gaps and develop plans to fill these. The framework will include core principles, quality standards and guidance on providing services for specific groups and on effectiveness. It will cover services delivered by the statutory, voluntary and independent sectors.

0.24 The Executive will consider whether a Scottish alcohol problems helpline is needed.

0.25 Children affected by alcohol problems will be one of the priority groups for the Changing Children's Services Fund from April 2003. The framework for services will cover the needs of children affected by their own and other people's alcohol problems.

0.26 Local strategies for addressing alcohol problems in rural communities will take into account the particular difficulties that service users may experience, for example with access and confidentiality.

0.27 Alcohol problems often underlie or exacerbate homelessness. Local authority homelessness strategies, to be prepared by March 2003, will indicate how homeless people with alcohol problems will be supported.

Protection and controls (Chapter 6)

0.28 The Executive announced a review of licensing law last year which will complement the overall approach in the Plan to addressing alcohol problems. The

Committee has been asked to look at the implications of the law for health and public order. Licensing law may contribute to culture change and action to reduce binge drinking, harmful drinking by children and young people and alcohol-related violence and public disorder.

0.29 Various measures to prevent underage sales of alcohol are included in the Plan, such as extending current pilot youth card schemes, promoting good practice by retailers and piloting the use of children in test purchasing exercises.

0.30 The police and the Crown Office are responsible for enforcing the existing law. New funding arrangements for local community safety partnerships will require responses to alcohol-related crime to feature in local crime prevention strategies.

0.31 A range of community based criminal justice interventions are already available for people with alcohol problems, to reduce the likelihood of their reoffending. The Executive will explore use of deferred sentences and arrest referral schemes and new opportunities for offenders to be linked to support, treatment and rehabilitation services.

0.32 The UK Government is considering the current drink drive limit, changes to penalties for drink driving and legislation to introduce targeted breath testing and roadside testing to provide admissible evidence in court.

0.33 The alcohol industry and related trades operate voluntarily a number of social responsibility codes and practices. Guidance on point of sale promotions has already been issued to all licensed premises in Scotland.

0.34 The Executive will work with the industry and licensed trade to improve and promote training in responsible serving of drinks, for those working in licensed premises.

0.35 The Executive is participating in discussions on labelling alcohol containers to provide information about alcohol content and health warnings.

0.36 Voluntary codes regulate alcohol advertising. The effectiveness of these codes was raised in the Executive's consultation exercises. The Executive will raise concerns expressed in Scotland with the UK Government.

Delivery (Chapter 7)

0.37 The Executive will play a major role in delivery of the Plan, developing accountability for local action and reviewing progress by the end of 2003.

0.38 The local AMCCs which bring together local statutory and voluntary agencies, will be the vehicle for delivering the Plan locally. Each AMCC will publish by April 2003 a local strategy covering a period of at least three years.

0.39 AMCCs will be given additional support. Where AMCCs are combined with Drug Action Teams, alcohol issues will be given higher priority than at present. AMCCs will also form effective working links to other co-ordinating structures, under the broader

community planning umbrella.

0.40 The voluntary sector will continue to play a valuable role in providing services and in other action within the Plan.

0.41 The Executive, through Scottish Training on Alcohol and Drug Abuse, the national training agency, will provide training for staff and managers in alcohol and generic services. Professional bodies involved in medical, nursing and social work education and in teaching will improve training on addressing alcohol issues.

0.42 The Executive will provide resources from January 2002 to underpin development of a national alcohol information resource, to support implementation of the Plan.

0.43 The Public Health Institute for Scotland will lead a review starting early in 2002 of gaps in research knowledge and evaluation practice.

2.2 *England*

The aim of this strategy is stated to be to prevent any further increase in alcohol-related harms in England. It will become a key feature of the public health policy which the Government is at present consulting on and will publish later in the year.⁵ The Strategy begins with the statement that, *'The vast majority of people enjoy alcohol without causing harm to themselves or to others - indeed they can also gain some health and social benefits from moderate use.'* But for others, alcohol misuse is a very real problem. The Strategy Unit's interim analysis estimated that alcohol misuse is now costing around £20bn a year. This is made up of alcohol-related health disorders and disease, crime and anti-social behaviour, loss of productivity in the workplace, and problems for those who misuse alcohol and their families, including domestic violence.

The direction set out in this strategy is based on a detailed analysis of the key issues and the current situation. It is intended to provide a strong base for where Government should intervene and lead, whilst recognising that responsibility for alcohol misuse cannot rest with Government alone. Importantly, the strategy sets out a new cross-government approach that relies on creating a partnership at both national and local levels between government, the drinks industry, health and police services, and individuals and communities to tackle alcohol misuse.

Better education and communication

The strategy includes a series of measures aimed at achieving a long term change in attitudes to irresponsible drinking and behaviour, including:

- making the "sensible drinking" message easier to understand and apply;
- targeting messages at those most at risk, including binge- and chronic drinkers;

⁵ Choosing Health: Making healthy choices easier, Department of Health, November 2004

- providing better information for consumers, both on products and at the point of sale;
- providing alcohol education in schools that can change attitudes and behaviour;
- providing more support and advice for employers; and
- reviewing the code of practice for TV advertising to ensure that it does not target young drinkers or glamorise irresponsible behaviour.

Improving health and treatment services

The strategy proposes a number of measures to improve early identification and treatment of alcohol problems. These measures include:

- improved training of staff to increase awareness of likely signs of alcohol misuse;
- piloting schemes to find out whether earlier identification and treatment of those with alcohol problems can improve health and lead to longer-term savings;
- carrying out a national audit of the demand for and provision of alcohol treatment services, to identify any gaps between demand and provision;
- and better help for the most vulnerable – such as homeless people, drug addicts, the mentally ill, and young people. They often have multiple problems and need clear pathways for treatment from a variety of sources.

Combating alcohol-related crime and disorder

The strategy proposes a series of measures to address the problems of those town and city centres that are blighted by alcohol misuse at weekends. These include:

- greater use of exclusion orders to ban those causing trouble from pubs and clubs or entire town centres;
- greater use of the new fixed-penalty fines for anti-social behaviour;
- working with licensees to ensure better enforcement of existing rules on under-age drinking and serving people who are already drunk. We will also work in partnership with the industry to reduce anti-social behaviours – issues to be addressed may include layout of pubs and availability of seating, managing crime and disorder in city centres and improved information on safe drinking in pubs;
- and in addition to local initiatives, the Security Industry Authority (SIA) will begin the licensing of door supervisors with effect from March 2004.

Working with the alcohol industry

The strategy will build on the good practice of some existing initiatives (such as the Manchester Citysafe Scheme) and involve the alcohol industry in new initiatives at both national level (drinks producers) and at local level (retailers, pubs and clubs).

At national level, a social responsibility charter for drinks producers, will strongly encourage drinks companies to:

- pledge not to manufacture products irresponsibly – for example, no products that appeal to under-age drinkers or that encourage people to drink well over recommended limits;
- ensure that advertising does not promote or condone irresponsible or excessive drinking;
- put the sensible drinking message clearly on bottles alongside information about unit content;
- move to packaging products in safer materials – for example, alternatives to glass bottles; and
- make a financial contribution to a fund that pays for new schemes to address alcohol misuse at national and local levels, such as providing information and alternative facilities for young people.

At local level, there will be new “code of good conduct” schemes for retailers, pubs and clubs, run locally by a partnership of the industry, police, and licensing panels, and led by the local authority. These will ensure that industry works alongside local communities on issues which really matter such as under-age drinking and making town centres safer and more welcoming at night. Participation in these schemes will be voluntary. The success of the voluntary approach will be reviewed early in the next parliament. If industry actions are not beginning to make an impact in reducing harms, Government will assess the case for additional steps, including possibly legislation.

Making it all happen

Making it happen will be a shared responsibility across Government. Ministers at the Home Office and the Department of Health will take the lead. The Government will measure progress regularly against clearly defined indicators and will take stock in 2007.

3 Public Health White Paper⁵ (England)

This was published in November 2004. On alcohol, the White Paper promises that from April 2006 additional funding will be provided to improve the health service response to tackle alcohol problems at an early stage. The focus of the first year i.e 2005, will be on:

- Guidance and training to ensure all health professionals are able to identify alcohol problems early
- Piloting approaches to targeted screening and brief interventions in both primary care and hospital settings, including Accident and Emergency departments
- Similar initiatives in criminal justice settings, and
- Developing a programme to improve alcohol treatment services.

The other main elements of policy involve working in partnership with the alcohol industry. The White Paper confirms the Government’s intention of working with the alcohol industry’s Portman Group ‘to cut down on binge drinking’. This will include a new information campaign. It appears that the Government is planning to fund the Portman Group to run some kind of education/publicity campaign, perhaps including

TV advertising.⁶

It also confirms the policy announced in the National Alcohol Harm Reduction Strategy of developing a voluntary social responsibility scheme for alcohol producers and retailers. This will aim to protect young people by placing information on alcohol containers and in alcohol retail outlets, including reminders about responsible drinking on alcohol advertisements, checking identification and refusing to sell alcohol to people aged under 18.

4 Licensing Reform

4.1 England & Wales

The Licensing Act 2003⁷ represents the most radical reform of the licensing law for at least 60 years. It provides a unified system of regulation of the activities of the sale and supply of alcohol, the provision of regulated entertainment and the provision of late night refreshment. The purpose of the licensing system is to promote four fundamental objectives:

- i. the prevention of crime and disorder
- ii. public safety
- iii. the prevention of public nuisance
- iv. the protection of children from harm.

Specifically in relation to alcohol, the Act:

- introduces a dual system of licensing, personal licences authorising individuals to sell or supply alcohol, and premises licences authorising the holder of the licence to use the premises to which the licence relates for the sale of alcohol (or provision of other licensable activities)
- transfers responsibility for alcohol licensing from local magistrates' courts to elected local authorities
- requires each licensing authority to determine and publish a statement of its licensing policy every three years
- abolishes the system of 'permitted hours' for the sale of alcohol, creating the possibility of 24 hour trading
- makes it an offence to permit children under the age of 16 who are not accompanied by an adult to be present on premises being used exclusively or primarily for the sale of alcohol for consumption on those premises, or between midnight and 5am at other premises supplying alcohol for on-premise consumption. The Act also re-enacts provisions in the Licensing Act 1964 in regard to sales of alcohol to minors etc
- provides for a senior police officer with the power to close specific premises for up to 24 hours in specified circumstances

⁶ The Publican, 24 November 2004

⁷ The Licensing Act 2003, DCMS, July 2003

Prior to the introduction of the 2003 Act, responsibility for alcohol licensing was transferred from the Home Office to the Department of Culture, Media and Sport.

4.2 *Other measures*

The Licensing Act itself comprises one element of the regulatory framework concerned with preventing alcohol-related crime, disorder and nuisance. Other measures include the Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003 and the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 2001 which provide inter alia powers to confiscate alcohol from people causing disturbance in public places and to designate specified areas as alcohol-free zones.

4.3 *Scotland*⁸

In June 2001, the Nicholson Committee was established by the Scottish Executive to undertake an independent review of Scotland's liquor licensing law. The Committee reported in August 2003, since when the Scottish Executive has undertaken extensive consultation with a view to preparing legislation in due course.

The Nicholson recommendations, most of which were accepted by the Scottish Executive, would provide a similar legislative framework to that introduced in England and Wales by the Licensing Act 2003. One difference, however, is that in Scotland it is proposed to have a fifth licensing objective, the promotion of public health, in addition to the four that apply in England and Wales.

Another difference is that whilst the Scottish Executive has accepted the Nicholson recommendation to abolish the system of permitted hours, it, unlike the Government for England and Wales, has stated that the presumption will be against 24 hour opening.

5 *Alcohol Advertising*

As heralded in the National Alcohol Harm Reduction Strategy, the regulations governing broadcast alcohol advertising have been tightened somewhat. Organisational responsibilities for regulating advertising, including alcohol advertising, have also been changed.⁹ The UK operates a co-regulatory system in relation to alcohol advertising. Under the Communications Act 2003 the statutory authority is now Ofcom, the independent regulator and competition authority for the UK communications industries, with responsibilities across television, radio, telecommunications and wireless communications services. However, responsibility for ensuring compliance with the advertising code and handling complaints is contracted out to the Advertising Standards Authority, which now functions as a one-stop shop for regulating alcohol advertising in all media.

As promised in the National Alcohol Harm Reduction Strategy, Ofcom undertook a review of TV alcohol advertising, and after consultation, announced a new code. This

⁸ The Nicholson Report: A Review of Liquor Licensing Law in Scotland, Scottish Executive, 2003

⁹ Final revised alcohol advertising rules, Ofcom, 2004

takes effect from 1 January 2005 but with a grace period until 30 September 2005 for advertisers who may already have committed to campaigns that do not conform to the new code. The provisions of the new code are as follows:

11.8 ALCOHOLIC DRINKS

Notes to 11.8:

1. The Notes included with 11.8.1 and 11.8.2 are, in general, simply those which clarify the scope of the rules. Additional interpretative guidance will be produced by the Broadcast Committee of Advertising practice, subject to public consultation and to Ofcom's approval

2. The spirit as well as the letter of the rules in this section apply whether or not a product is shown, referred to or seen being consumed. (See also rule 1.2)

3. Where soft drinks are promoted as mixers, rules 11.8.1 & 2 apply in full

11.8.1 – Rules for all advertising

a) 1) Advertisements must not suggest that alcohol can contribute to an individual's popularity or confidence, or that refusal is a sign of weakness. Nor may they suggest that alcohol can enhance personal qualities

2) Advertisements must not suggest that the success of a social occasion depends on the presence or consumption of alcohol.

b) Advertisements must not link alcohol with daring, toughness, aggression or anti-social behaviour

c) Advertisements must not link alcohol with sexual activity or success or imply that alcohol can enhance attractiveness

d) Advertisements must not suggest that regular solitary drinking is acceptable or that drinking can overcome problems

e) Advertisements must not suggest that alcohol has therapeutic qualities nor offer it as a stimulant, sedative, mood-changer or to boost confidence. There must be no suggestion that physical or other performance may be improved by alcohol or that it might be indispensable

f) Advertisements must not suggest that a drink is to be preferred because of its alcohol content nor place undue emphasis on alcoholic strength. (This does not apply to low alcohol drinks. See 11.8.3)

g) 1) Advertisements must not show, imply or encourage immoderate drinking. This applies both to the amount of drink and to the way drinking is portrayed

2) References to, or suggestions of, buying repeat rounds of drinks are not acceptable

Note: This does not prevent, for example, someone buying a drink for each of a group of friends. It does, however, prevent any suggestion that other members of the group will buy any further rounds

3) Alcoholic drinks must be handled and served responsibly

Note: 11.8.1(g)(1) and (2) do not apply to advertising for low alcohol drinks)

h) Advertisements must not link drinking with the use of potentially dangerous machinery, with behaviour which would be dangerous after consuming alcohol (such as swimming) or with driving

11.8.2 – Additional rules for alcohol advertisements

a) (1) Advertisements for alcoholic drinks must not be likely to appeal strongly

to people under 18, in particular by reflecting or being associated with youth culture

(2) Children must not be seen or heard, and no-one who is, or appears to be, under 25 years old may play a significant role in advertisements for alcoholic drinks. No-one may behave in an adolescent or juvenile way

Notes: (1) See the exception in 11.8.2(a)(3)

(2) In advertising for low alcohol drinks, anyone associated with drinking must be, and appear to be, at least 18 years old

(3) There is an exception to 11.8.2(a)(2) for advertisements in which families are socialising responsibly. In these circumstances, children may be included but they, and anyone who is, or appears to be, under 25 must only have an incidental role. Nevertheless, it must be explicitly clear that anyone who appears to be under the age of 18 is not drinking alcohol

b) Advertisements for alcoholic drinks must not show, imply or refer to daring, toughness, aggression or unruly, irresponsible or anti-social behaviour

c) Advertisements for alcoholic drinks must not appear to encourage irresponsible consumption

d) Advertisements for alcoholic drinks must not normally show alcohol being drunk in a working environment

e) Alcoholic drinks must not be advertised in a context of sexual activity or seduction but may include romance and flirtation subject to rule 11.8.2(a)

(Youth appeal)

11.8.3 – Low alcohol drinks

Exceptions to 11.8.1 and 11.8.2 apply to advertisements for drinks containing 1.2% alcohol by volume or less so long as the low alcohol content is made clear. (The exceptions are not granted if the advertising might promote a product of higher alcoholic strength or might conflict with the spirit of the rules)

The exceptions are:

(a) 11.8.2(a)(2): Anyone associated with drinking must be, and appear to be, at least 18 years old

(b) The advertisements need not comply with:

- 11.8.1(f)
- 11.8.1(g)(1) or (2)

6 The Politics of Alcohol

All of these policy initiatives have attracted widespread criticism. The Licensing Act 2003 was particularly controversial and was opposed in its original form by a wide range of bodies including residents and amenity associations, some police, local authorities and alcohol control advocates.

The Government has also been roundly attacked by alcohol control advocates and others for the National Alcohol Harm Reduction Strategy which, they argue, rejects the policy measures the scientific evidence suggests are effective in reducing alcohol-related harm, in favour of largely cosmetic measures that are acceptable to the alcohol industry. Alcohol control advocates have objected in particular to the 'extraordinary' proposal to give responsibility for tackling youthful 'binge drinking' to an alcohol industry lobby group.

The country

The United Kingdom (UK), officially the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, is situated on the western part of Europe and is made up of England, Scotland and Wales, which are situated on the island of Great Britain, and Northern Ireland, the north-east corner of Ireland, the second largest island in the British Isles, as well as the Channel Islands and the Isle of Man. The UK covers a landmass of 244,110 km². The British channel and the North Sea separate Great Britain from France, Belgium and the Netherlands. Since 1994 the European continent and Great Britain have been connected by the channel tunnel. The Irish Sea separates the islands of Great Britain and Ireland. In addition, several dependencies and dependent territories around the world are associated with the United Kingdom. The capital of the United Kingdom is London.

Total population of the UK is 59 million, and the population density is 242 inhabitants per km². The majority of the population, 83 per cent, live in England, 9 per cent live in Scotland, 5 per cent in Wales and 3 per cent in Northern Ireland. The UK has a diverse ethnic mix, including English (82 per cent), Scottish (10 per cent), Irish (2 per cent), Welsh (2 per cent) and Ulster (2 per cent). West Indian, Indian, Pakistani and others account for the remaining 2 per cent of the population. English is the official language of the United Kingdom and the first language of the vast majority of its citizens. Other languages are Welsh, and Scottish form of Gaelic. The predominant religion is Anglican, followed by Roman Catholic, Muslim, Presbyterian, Methodist, Sikh, Hindu and Jewish. Approximately 50 per cent of the population belong to the Anglican church. Churchgoing is, however, relatively low.

In the 19th century, Britain had the world's leading economy: With the growth of the economies of other nations in the 20th century, the British economy remained relatively strong. It faced, however, a number of persistent problems of which the balance of trade was one. Since the mid-1970s, Britain has benefited from a world-wide economic upswing as well as internal improvements. Britain is still an important manufacturing country, although it imports large quantities of manufactured goods from overseas. In the mid-1990s, about 27 per cent of the population worked in the industrial sector, approximately 2 per cent in the agriculture and about 71 per cent in the service sector. Some 90 per cent of the population live in urban areas.

The UK is a constitutional monarchy with Queen Elizabeth II presently as the chief of the State. The head of the government is the prime minister who is also the leader of the majority party in the House of Commons. The parliament consists of the House of Lords with 682 seats of which 92 are occupied by hereditary peers, and the House of Commons with 659 members elected by popular vote to serve five-year terms. Each part of the UK is affected by the central government, but there are also regional government offices and slightly different regional laws. For example, some parts of the UK have separate alcohol licensing laws. Certain powers have also been developed through the creation of a Scottish Parliament, a Welsh Assembly, and a regional government for greater London.

Alcohol production and trade

The UK has a long history of beer production and domestic beer dominates the beer market. In 1995 total beer production was 56.8 million hectolitres of which 3.0 million hectolitres was exported. In the mid-1970s beer exports were under one million hectolitres. In 1995 the beer imports rose to 5.2 million hectolitres. Consequently, imported beer accounted for 9 per cent and domestic beer for 91 per cent of the total beer consumption. This preference is, however, somewhat distorted by the fact that several foreign brands are produced in the UK either by direct ownership of a brewery or through a licensing agreement (Hurst, Gregory & Gussman, 1997).

There are many varieties of beer produced in the UK including bitters, stouts, lagers, ales and milds. Sales of stout, ales and milds have fallen from a market share of 70 per cent at the beginning of 1980 to less than half of the market in the mid-1990s. Lagers have increased their share from 30 per cent in the beginning of the 1980s to 55 per cent in the mid-1990s. In the 1970s draught beer was still increasing in popularity. Since the beginning of the 1980s the market share of draught beer has decreased from 80 per cent to 65 per cent and the share of packaged beer has increased from 20 per cent to 35 per cent. Beer is traditionally consumed by the glass in pubs, and despite the changes in the shares of draught and packaged beer, in the mid-1990s over 70 per cent of all beer was still estimated to have been consumed in pubs or restaurants (Hurst, Gregory & Gussman, 1997).

In 1995 there were some 65 brewing companies running 93 plants in the UK. In addition, there were about 180 micro breweries and some 100 pub breweries in operation. The majority of brewing companies are serving regional markets. In the UK the system of vertical integration has been quite common, i.e. breweries have owned or otherwise controlled the on-premise retailers of beer. Pubs which breweries own and which they solely supply are called tied houses. The brewing industry has undergone a major restructuring as a result of the government decision in 1989 which required the larger breweries to reduce the number of tied houses in their control. In the late 1980s there were six major national brewing groups in the UK. Since then they have been consolidated to four accounting for 83 per cent of the beer market in 1995 (Hurst, Gregory & Gussman, 1997).

About three quarters of the distilled spirits market in the UK consist of domestic beverages with whisky being the most popular type. Gin has traditionally been the second most popular distilled beverage. During the last two decades the market shares of whisky and gin have decreased. At the beginning of the 1980s whisky accounted for 50 per cent of the domestic market of distilled spirits. In the mid-1990s its share was 39 per cent. The UK is the largest producer of distilled spirits in the European Union with a production of 12.2 million hectolitres in 1995. The major destinations of its exports are France, the United States, Spain and Japan (The Drink Pocket Book, 2001).

In contrast with distilled beverages and beer, the majority of wine consumed in the UK is imported. Wine produced in the UK is mainly made wine. In 1995 the share of imported wine was 88 per cent, and even this figure is an underestimation as wine coolers are not included in it. In the 1980s the share of imported wine was about 97 per

cent. Wine is mostly imported from France, Germany and Italy (Hurst, Gregory & Gussman, 1997).

Alcohol consumption

The consumption of alcohol has long been an important part of traditional culture in the UK. In the nineteenth century, the flourishing trade in alcohol was utilised by the government as a means to raise revenue through duties and taxes. It is therefore possible to make fairly reliable estimates of alcohol consumption for over 200 years through the financial records kept by Customs and Excise (Spring & Buss, 1977). At the beginning of the twentieth century, total annual consumption of alcoholic beverages fell from approximately 10 litres to 8 litres of pure alcohol per capita. This may have been due to the influence of the temperance movement and the wakening social conscience of legislators (Faculty of Public Health Medicine, 1991). Alcohol consumption continued to fall during the First World War, and during the recession in the 1930s it was at an all-time low of around 4 litres of pure alcohol per capita.

Between 1950 and 2000 total alcohol consumption per capita increased twofold from 3.9 litres to 8.4 litres. Alcohol consumption was stable in the 1950s but it increased quite strongly in the 1960s and 1970s. At the beginning of the 1960s the total annual alcohol consumption was about 4.5 litres and in the late 1970s it was about 7.5 litres. In the 1980s and 1990s the total alcohol consumption increased slightly reaching the figure of 8.4 litres per capita in the late 1990s .

Table 18.1. Consumption of alcoholic beverages by beverage categories in the United Kingdom in litres of pure alcohol per capita and as percentages of total recorded alcohol consumption in the years 1955, 1965, 1975, 1985 and 1995, five years' averages

	1955	1965	1975	1985	1995
Total alcohol consumption	3.93	4.78	6.91	7.28	7.68
Consumption of distilled spirits	0.62	0.82	1.48	1.66	1.44
Consumption of wines	0.25	0.47	0.94	1.31	1.74
Consumption of beer	2.99	3.42	4.35	4.09	4.16
Consumption of cider and perry	0.07	0.07	0.14	0.22	0.34
Percentage of distilled spirits	16	17	21	23	19
Percentage of wines	6	10	14	18	23
Percentage of beer	76	72	63	56	54
Percentage of cider and perry	2	1	2	3	4

Sources: Hurst, Gregory & Gussman, 1997; World Drink Trends, 2002.

The consumption of distilled spirits almost tripled during the 1950-1999 period. There was an increase in spirits consumption in the 1950s, stagnation in the 1960s and again quite a strong increase in the 1970s when the consumption of spirits reached the level of 1.9 litres of pure alcohol per capita in 1979. In the 1980s spirits consumption was again

stable but decreased in the 1990s. In 2000 it was 1.6 litres of pure alcohol per capita (World Drink Trends, 2002).

Wine consumption was almost constantly on the increase in the 1950-2000 period starting from a very low level of one litre of the beverage per capita in 1950 and reaching the level of about 17 beverage litres per capita in 2000. The growth in wine consumption was especially fast in the first half of the 1970s when it nearly doubled from 2.9 to 5.3 litres in four years. A similar nearly doubling of wine consumption is to be found between 1977 and 1986, from 5.4 to 10.4 beverage litres per capita (World Drink Trends, 2002).

Beer consumption was already in 1950 on a relatively high level, 85 litres per capita. In the 1950s the beer consumption was almost stable. It increased to 100 litres per capita in the late 1960s and to over 120 litres in the late 1970s. Since then the consumption of beer has been on a slight decrease. In 2000 beer consumption was about 95 litres per capita.

The consumption of cider and perry was very modest in the beginning of the 1950s and it is quite modest even today. The consumption of cider and perry has, however, grown almost constantly since the mid-1960s and it is nowadays five times higher than in the mid-1960s.

In the 1950s beer dominated alcohol consumption. At that time beer consumption accounted for 76 per cent of the total alcohol consumption. The corresponding figure for distilled spirits was 16 per cent. During the 1950-1999 period beer has lost its relative weight, and in the late 1990s beer consumption accounted for 53 per cent of total alcohol consumption. The proportion of distilled spirits of the total alcohol consumption was at its highest in the late 1970s when it reached the figure of 25 per cent. In the late 1990s the corresponding figure was 18 per cent, almost the same as in the mid-1950s. Wine gained in importance in the 1950-2000 period. In the mid-1950s wine accounted for 6 per cent of the total alcohol consumption. In 2000 the corresponding figure was 23 per cent.

Drinking alcohol is a widely accepted feature of social life in the United Kingdom. This is amongst others reflected in the low proportion of abstainers in the UK. In the mid-1990s only 4 per cent of males and 7 per cent of females were lifetime abstainers (Health Survey for England, 1996).

According to World Drink Trends (2002) about 117 litres of alcoholic beverages were consumed per capita in the UK in 2000, consisting of 5 litres of distilled spirits, 17 litres of wine and 95 litres of beer. The corresponding total per capita figure was 131 litres in 1980. In 2000 the consumption of commercial non-alcoholic beverages was 540 litres per capita, consisting of 205 litres of tea, 104 litres of milk, 90 litres of soft drinks, 75 litres of juices, 43 litres of coffee and 17 litres of waters. In the mid-1980s the consumption of commercial non-alcoholic beverages was 490 litres. Since the mid-1980s the per capita consumption of tea, milk and coffee has decreased by 46 litres, 16 litres and 7 litres respectively, whereas the consumption of soft drinks, juices and waters have gained in importance. The consumption of juices has increased by 59 litres,

that of soft drinks by 40 litres and that of waters by 21 litres (World Drink Trends, 2002).

Administrative structure of preventive alcohol policies

There are in the UK several governmental departments that have a responsibility for alcohol production, consumption and related problems. The Department of Health has responsibility for the provision and development of health and personal social services for problem drinkers, and for preventing alcohol misuse by fostering sensible drinking habits through health education measures. The latter used to be undertaken predominantly by the Health Education Authority, a special health authority founded in 1987 and largely funded by the Department of Health. The Health Education Authority is nowadays called the Health Development Agency. The Department of Health is also concerned with prevention of alcohol-related violence against National Health Service staff.

The Home Office is responsible for the licensing laws, broadcasting and criminal policy, drunkenness offences, enforcement of drunk driving laws, crime prevention and the treatment of offenders. The principal interest of the Department of Environment, Transport and the Regions in the alcohol field is the road safety issue of drunk driving. The principal concern of the Department of Education and Employment is to ensure that schoolchildren and young people receive appropriate education and guidance on alcohol and misuse. This department also has an interest in alcohol misuse arising from their responsibility for industrial legislation and health and safety at work.

The Department of Trade and Industry has an interest in alcohol advertising, and also an interest in alcohol-related accidents stemming from its general responsibility for safety in the home. The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food has sponsorship responsibilities within government for the UK alcoholic drinks industry. This role entails balancing the legitimate interests of all parts of the industry itself, other affected industries, and the interests of the consumers. The Treasury has a general policy interest with regard to alcoholic drink taxation, whilst Customs and Excise has a specific responsibility for indirect taxation on alcoholic drinks including both detailed policy considerations and administration of the appropriate duties. Finally, the Department of Culture, Media and Sport has an interest in alcohol through its responsibilities in broadcasting, sports and recreation, tourism, and film, music and the press. The Scottish, Northern Ireland and Welsh Offices each have an administrative role in alcohol matters in addition to the part played by the central government departments.

There have been only minor changes to this structure since the 1950s. With each successive government, and also periodically within a government leadership, there have of course been departmental shuffles and reorganisations, but the basic structure has remained similar. The devolution of legislative power to Scotland and Northern Ireland has been the biggest change.

Several ministerial groups have evolved in response to periodic concerns. In 1987 the conservative government established a ministerial group of representatives from twelve government departments to review, develop and coordinate government strategy with

regard to alcohol misuse. In 1990 this group established 14 regional alcohol misuse coordinator positions throughout the country to act as catalysts in coordinating local activities. In 1995 the All Party Group on Alcohol Misuse wrote a report on crime associated with alcohol consumption (The All Party Group on Alcohol Misuse, 1995). In 1997, the new Labour government announced the formation of the Ministerial Group on Alcopops in reaction to a perceived threat from the new designer drinks and their appeal to children.

Licensing policy

The liquor licensing laws, specifically the Licensing Act of 1964 and subsequent legislation, deal with the sale and supply of alcoholic beverages for consumption on the premises and off the premises in England and Wales. Retail sale of alcoholic beverages in Scotland has been regulated by local geographical boards since October 1977 under the Scottish Licensing Act of 1976. Separate licensing laws exist for Northern Ireland. The description below predominantly concerns the situation in England and Wales.

The laws concerning licensing are administered by licensing justices. They have discretion to grant a licence to sell alcoholic beverages to any person they think fit and proper. These licences can be for consumption either on or off the premises and it is an offence to retail alcoholic beverages, beverages exceeding 0.5 per cent alcohol by volume, without a licence. An opportunity is provided for anyone, including the police and local residents, to object to the renewal and issuing of a licence on a wide variety of grounds, including the suitability of the person and premises. A liquor licence is granted jointly to a person and the premises and can only be transferred to another person by permission of the licensing authorities.

Although there are two broad divisions of licence, those for on-licence premises and those for off-licence retailing operations, there are currently, in effect, more than 40 different types of licence for liquor, and different procedures to follow, depending on the type of licence application. Examples of the different licences include restaurant licence, residential licence for hotels, special hours certificate, supper hours certificate and extended hours order.

The off-premise and on-premise licences are renewed every three years and cost approximately 30 English pounds. There are about 500,000 licensing transactions in any year (Better Regulation Task Force Review, 1998). The biggest change in the last fifty years to off-premise sales has been the 1964 Act that allowed alcohol to be sold in supermarkets. One of the major recent changes to on-premise licensing has been the introduction of children's certificates. Since January 1995 Licensing Justices in England and Wales have been allowed to grant Children's Certificates to permit accompanied children under 14 years to enter a bar of a licensed premise. Licensing Justices must be satisfied that the bar area for which the application is being made is a suitable environment for the children under 14 to be present. Children's Certificates are normally operational until 9 p.m., but the Justices can specify earlier or later times. Similar rules have been in force in Scotland since 1990.

In 2000 there were 70,615 pubs and bars, tied to breweries or independent, in Great Britain. The number of clubs was 31,961 and that of licensed restaurants 31,511. An outlet licensed for sale of alcoholic beverages for consumption on the premises is also allowed to sell alcoholic beverages off the premises. In 2000 there were in Great Britain 42,664 off-licence outlets, including specialist off-licence shops and grocery shops (The Drink Pocket Book, 2001). Based on the number of licences in England and Wales the number of on-premise licences was in the late 1990s some 36 per cent higher than in the mid-1970s. In the late 1990s there were some 44 per cent more off-premise licences than in the mid-1970s. The increase in the number of off-premise licences took place in the 1970s and 1980s (The Drink Pocket Book, 2001).

Producers of alcohol need to register with Customs and Excise. Registration does not cost anything and does not need to be renewed, but a separate registration is needed for each of the production premises. Alcohol importers and wholesalers no longer need to apply for a licence or to register.

Special restrictions on alcohol availability

In the UK there are laws governing the purchase and consumption of alcoholic beverages by young people. According to Children and Young Persons Act of 1933, children under five years may not be given alcohol except on medical grounds whilst children aged five and over may consume alcohol at home but not on licensed premises. According to Licensing Act 1964, children under 14 years old may not be present in the bar of licensed premises unless accompanied by a person over 18 years old, and only before 9 p.m., and the bar must possess a children's certificate. Based on the Licensing Act 1964 and Deregulation and Contracting Out Act 1994, children aged 14 and over may be in a licensed bar during permitted hours at the licensee's discretion. Those under 16 years may be present in a restaurant where alcohol is served with a meal and at the licensee's discretion they may consume alcohol bought by an accompanying adult, parent or guardian. However, they may not purchase alcoholic beverages by themselves.

The Licensing Act 1964 allows young adults aged 16 years and over to purchase beer, porter, cider or perry with a meal in an eating area of licensed premises. In Scotland they can also buy wine. However, those under 18 years may not purchase or be supplied with or consume alcohol in a bar. Moreover, the Confiscation of Alcohol Act 1997 gives the police the powers to confiscate alcohol from persons younger than 18 years drinking in public and to contact their parents. In Northern Ireland those less than 18 years are not allowed to enter licensed premises or to be employed in a bar of licensed premises. In the UK, only adults aged eighteen years and over are allowed to purchase alcohol in off-licences.

There have been no major changes in the age restrictions. The laws were tightened in 1988 making it easier to prosecute offenders. In 1990 the Portman Group introduced a national proof of age scheme to protect licensees from unknowingly selling alcohol to minors. Over 400,000 young people have been issued with cards, and the scheme is now co-funded by retailers and card applicants.

In the UK there are strict opening hours for the sale of alcoholic beverages, both off-premise and on-premise. In England and Wales the opening hours for most public houses are 11 a.m. to 11 p.m. with 20 minutes' drinking-up time daily except on Sundays when they are open from 12 noon to 10.30 p.m. Off-licences can be open from 8 a.m. till 11 p.m. daily and from 10 a.m. to 10.30 p.m. on Sundays. The other exception is Christmas Day, when pubs can be open from 12 noon till 3 p.m. and then again from 7 p.m. until 10.30 p.m. Different hours apply to registered clubs and to premises with exceptional allowances, such as Special Hours Certificates, Supper Hours Certificates, Restaurant Licences, and Special Extension orders.

In England and Wales the permitted hours and days of sale for licensed premises and registered clubs were extended by the 1988 Licensing Act, which came into force on August 22, 1988. Further liberalisation of permitted hours occurred when the Sunday business hours were extended under the Licensing Sunday Hours Act which came into effect on August 6, 1995. There were exceptions made on Millennium New Year's Eve when the government allowed public houses to open for a continuous thirty-six-hour period.

In Scotland the permitted hours for off-licences are from 8 a.m. until 11 p.m. and for on-premise sales from 11 a.m. until 11 p.m. Extensions are made at the discretion of the local board and it is not unusual for extensions up till 4 a.m. Legislation introduced in 1990 extended weekday permitted hours to a maximum of 12 hours, and legislation in 1994 allowed off-sales premises to open on Sunday.

The restrictions on age and permitted hours are the main controls on physical availability of alcohol. However, in England and Wales, the sale of alcohol from petrol station forecourts was outlawed in 1988 with a few exceptions.

Alcohol taxation

In the UK special taxes in the form of excise duties are levied on alcoholic beverages. The exact method of how excise duties have been levied has changed quite much in the 1950-2000 period. Nowadays the excise duty on beer containing over 1.2 per cent alcohol by volume is charged on the basis of the quantity and alcoholic strength, i.e. per hectolitre per degree of alcohol in the finished product (Table 18.2). For distilled spirits above 1.2 per cent alcohol by volume, the excise duty is charged in accordance with the alcoholic strength, i.e. per hectolitre of pure alcohol in the finished product. For wine and intermediate products, the excise duties are set according to special strength categories, and for wine one factor is also whether the product is still or sparkling. The rates given in table 18.2 only apply to the mainland UK. Each of the Channel Islands, together with the Isle of Man, apply locally decided rates of excise duties. Value added tax is currently 17.5 per cent.

Table 18.2. Excise duty rates for alcoholic beverages in the United Kingdom in April 1, 2000 in English pounds and in euro

Alcoholic beverage category*	UKL	EUR
Beer, per hectolitre per degree of alcohol in the finished product		
From 0.5 to 1.2% alcohol by volume	0.00	0.00
Over 1.2% alcohol by volume	11.89	18.30
Wine, and fermented beverages other than wine and beer, per hectolitre of the product		
Over 1.2 but at most 4.0% alcohol by volume, still	47.58	73.21
Over 4.0 but at most 5.5% alcohol by volume, still	65.42	100.66
Over 5.5 per cent alcohol by volume, still	154.37	237.53
Over 5.5 but less than 8.5% alcohol by volume, sparkling	166.70	256.50
Over 8.5% alcohol by volume, sparkling	220.54	339.34
Intermediate products, per hectolitre of the product		
Not exceeding 15% alcohol by volume	154.37	237.53
Over 15% alcohol by volume	205.82	316.69
Distilled beverages, per hectolitre of pure alcohol in the finished product	1956.00	3009.69

* For details of the lower limits of alcoholic beverages and other EU rules concerning alcohol taxation, see Chapter 2.

Sources: European Commission, DG XXI, Excise duty tables, November 2000; The Drink Pocket Book, 2001.

As already mentioned, there have been several changes in excise duties on alcoholic beverages in the last decades both with regard to the method of levying the excise duties and to the level of excise duty rates. With the introduction of a value added tax in 1973, for instance, the government reduced excise levies on alcoholic beverages by the estimated yield from the new value added tax of 10 per cent to render the change fiscally neutral. In 1974 the value added tax was decreased to 8 per cent but raised again to 15 per cent in 1979, and to the current 17.5 per cent in 1991.

Before 1993 the calculation of excise duty on beer was based on original gravity (Table 18.3; cf. also Chapter 2). From 1993 the base for excise duty on beer has been its alcohol content counted in volume per cent. In 1993 the excise duty rate for beer was about 400 per cent higher than at the beginning of the 1970s in nominal terms. The change in the taxing method in 1993 is considered to be tax neutral (Hurst, Gregory & Gussman, 1997). This is the case if all sugar in the wort is fermented into alcohol. However, if this is not the case then the new method involved a decrease in beer excise duty rate. In the 1993-2000 period the excise duty rate for beer increased about 14 per cent in nominal terms.

Table 18.3. Excise duty rates for beer in the United Kingdom from 1972 to 2000 in English pounds per hectolitre of the product

From (year / month)	Rate at original gravity of 1030°	Plus for each additional degree of original gravity	Rate for each degree over original gravity of 1000°	Rate for each degree of alcohol
1972 *	6.34	0.27		
1973 / 4	4.22	0.18		
1974 / 3	5.72	0.19		
1975 / 4	8.36	0.28		
1976 / 4	9.68	0.32		
1977 / 1	10.65	0.35		
1980 / 3	13.05	0.44		
1981 / 3	18.00	0.60		
1982 / 3	20.40	0.68		
1983 / 3	21.60	0.72		
1984 / 3	24.00	0.80		
1985 / 3	25.80	0.86		
1988 / 3	27.00	0.90		
1988 / 10			0.90	
1990 / 3			0.97	
1991 / 3			1.06	
1992 / 3			1.108	
1993 / 3			1.163	
1993 / 6				10.45
1995 / 1				10.82
1998 / 1				11.14
1999 / 1				11.50
1999 / 4				11.89

* Prior to entry into the European Economic Community

Sources: Hurst, Gregory & Gussman, 1997; Drink pocket book, 2001.

Also the rules for setting excise duties on wine and intermediate products have changed since the beginning of the 1970s. With regard to wine one can find both sharp increases and decreases in excise duty rates in nominal terms. For instance, in 1974 the excise duty rate for light wine was almost half of the 1972 rate. Yet, two years later the excise duty rate was threefold compared to the 1974 rate (Table 18.4). In 2000 the excise duty rate for normal table wine was 170 per cent higher than in 1976 in nominal terms. One can also find a slight decrease in the excise duty rate for table wine in the mid-1980s after the ruling of the European Court of Justice against the UK in one of the four alcohol cases (cf. Chapter 2). However, since the mid-1980s the excise duty rate for wine has increased by 70 per cent in nominal terms whereas the excise duty rate for strong beer has only increased by some 20 per cent. Since 1993 the excise duty rate for table wine has increased by 23 per cent in nominal terms. The excise duty rate for intermediate products has slightly decreased during the same time period (Table 18.4).

Table 18.4. Excise duty rates for wine and intermediate products in the United Kingdom from 1972 to 2000 in English pounds per hectolitre of the product

1976 / 1	57.57	64.57	73.70	
1976 / 4	65.01	75.02	88.33	
1977 / 1	71.50	82.50	97.13	
1980 / 3	81.42	93.93	110.59	
1981 / 3	95.20	122.90	144.70	
1982 / 3	106.80	137.90	162.30	
1983 / 3	113.00	145.90	171.70	
1984 / 3	90.50	157.50	183.30	
1985 / 3	98.00	169.00	194.90	
1988 / 3	102.40	176.60	203.70	
1990 / 3	110.28	190.20	219.40	
1991 / 3	120.54	207.89	239.80	
1992 / 3	125.96	217.25	250.59	
1993 / 1	125.96			209.93
1993 / 1	132.26			220.43
1994 / 1	134.77			207.33
1995 / 1	140.44			200.64
1996 / 1	140.44			187.24
1998 / 1	144.65			192.86
1999 / 1	149.28			199.03
2000 / 4	154.37			205.82

* Prior to entry into the European Economic Community

** Nowadays this is called intermediate products over 15 per cent alcohol by volume

Sources: Hurst, Gregory & Gussman, 1997; Drink pocket book, 2001.

Made wines had special excise duty rates until 1984. These rates were a little lower than the rates for wines of fresh grapes (Drink pocket book, 2001). The rates for low strength alcoholic beverages shown in table 18.2 were introduced in 1997 (Drink pocket book, 2001) Sparkling wines as well as cider have had their own excise duty rates and still partly have (cf. Table 18.2; Drink pocket book, 2001, 179-180).

During the time the UK has been a member in the EU the way to set an excise duty on distilled spirits has not changed, i.e. distilled spirits have all the time been taxed on the basis of hectolitre pure alcohol in the finished product. In 2000 the excise duty rate for distilled spirits was about 170 per cent higher than at the beginning of the 1970s in nominal terms (Table 18.5). Since 1993 the excise duty rate for distilled spirits has been nearly constant.

Table 18.5. Excise duty rates for distilled spirits in the United Kingdom from 1972 to 2000 in English pounds per hectolitre of pure alcohol in the finished product

From / (Year / month)	Excise duty rate for distilled spirits
1972 *	726
1973 / 4	595
1974 / 1	655
1975 / 4	851
1976 / 4	949
1977 / 1	1,043
1980 / 3	1,187
1981 / 3	1,360
1982 / 3	1,447
1983 / 3	1,519
1984 / 3	1,548
1985 / 3	1,577
1990 / 3	1,735
1991 / 3	1,896
1992 / 3	1,981
1995 / 1	2,060
1995 / 11	1,978
1997 / 1	1,899
1998 / 1	1,956

* Prior to entry into the European Economic Community

Sources: Hurst, Gregory & Gussman, 1997; Drink pocket book, 2001.

The fluctuations in alcohol excise duties must be put into context with other economic changes and relative to the prices of other goods. During the 1950-2000 period the value of the English pound decreased because of inflation. The increasing price level in the UK in the 1960-2000 period as described by the consumer price index (CPI) are given in table 18.6. Taking into account the changes in CPI it can be concluded that since the mid-1970s the real burden of excise duties both on beer and distilled spirits has decreased a good 50 per cent and the excise duties on table wine by nearly 50 per cent.

Table 18.6. Consumer price index in the United Kingdom, 1960-2000, 1995 is 100

1960	1965	1970	1975	1980	1985	1990	1995	2000
8.4	9.9	12.4	22.9	44.8	63.4	84.6	100.0	114.2

Source: OECD, Main Economic Indicators, March 2000 CD-ROM.

The pricing strategy of alcoholic drinks in the UK has largely been determined by the government's overall economic strategy, its counter-inflation and fiscal policy, and its need for revenue (Baggott, 1990, 112). The concern for cross-border trading has kept prices lower than they might otherwise have been if the government had decided to

strategically raise duties in an attempt to reduce alcohol consumption. The price of alcohol in real terms in the UK has generally been falling since the 1960s. For example, between 1969 and 1981 the price of beer fell by 2.5 per cent in real terms and the prices of wines and distilled spirits fell by 37 per cent (Baggott, 1990, 96) Both according to Sulkunen (1978) and Leppänen (1999) the real price of alcoholic beverages was on the increase in the first half of the 1960s. After the decrease in the real prices of alcoholic beverages especially in the 1970s but also in the 1980s, the real prices of alcoholic beverages have increased by some 10 per cent in the 1990-1996 period (Leppänen, 1999).

Counted per litre of pure alcohol the excise duty burden on beer and wine was about the same in the mid-1990s, and the tax burden of distilled spirits nearly twice that on beer and wine. In 1977 beer was taxed only half of that of wine and distilled spirits nearly twice that of wine. In the mid-1990s taxes constituted some 40 per cent of beer prices. The corresponding figure for wine was 45 per cent and for distilled spirits 61 per cent (Hurst, Gregory & Gussman, 1997).

Alcohol advertising and sponsorship

In the UK alcoholic beverages are among the most heavily advertised products. In the late 1990s annual expenditure on alcohol advertising was estimated to be in the region of 350 million English pounds (The Drink Pocket Book, 2001). Advertising is a legitimate commercial activity for the drinks industry as a means to attract new consumers and win brand loyalty. However, there are concerns that exposure to advertisements and sponsorship will recruit vulnerable new drinkers, especially the young, or encourage those who already consume heavily to drink more. The possibility that alcohol advertising can have socially adverse effects is recognised in the special rules drawn up in relation to how, where and when alcoholic beverages can be advertised.

In the UK, a mixture of statutory and voluntary restrictions, depending on the media used, restrict alcohol advertising. Advertising on televised media is controlled by statutory bodies; the Independent Television Commission in the case of the television and the Radio Authority in the case of radio networks. The British Broadcasting Corporation does not carry any advertising. Advertising in other media like in newspapers, magazines, posters, brochures, leaflets and also the cinema is regulated by a voluntary code, the British Code of Advertising Practice. The British Code of Advertising Practice (1995) is referred below insofar it concerns alcohol (Paragraphs 46.1 - 46.13)

- Paragraph 46.1: For purposes of the Codes, alcoholic drinks are those that exceed 1.2 per cent alcohol by volume.
- Paragraph 46.2: The drinks industry and the advertising business accept a responsibility for ensuring that advertisements contain nothing that is likely to lead people to adopt styles of drinking that are unwise. The consumption of alcohol may be portrayed as sociable and thirst quenching. Advertisements may be humorous, but must still conform with the intention of the rules.
- Paragraph 46.3: Advertisements should be socially responsible and should not encourage excessive drinking. Advertisements should not suggest that regular solitary

drinking is advisable. Care should be taken not to exploit the young, the immature, or those who are mentally or socially vulnerable.

- Paragraph 46.4: Advertisements should not be directed at people under 18 years of age through the selection of media, style of presentation, content or context in which they appear. No medium should be used to advertise alcoholic beverages if more than 25 per cent of its audience is under 18 years of age.

- Paragraph 46.5: People shown drinking should not be, nor should they look, under 25 years old. Younger models may be shown in advertisements, for example in the context of family celebrations, but it should be obvious that they are not drinking.

- Paragraph 46.6: Advertisements should not feature real or fictitious characters who are likely to appeal to people under eighteen in a way that would encourage them to drink.

- Paragraph 46.7: Advertisements should not suggest that any alcoholic drink can enhance mental, physical or sexual capabilities, popularity, masculinity, femininity or sporting achievements.

- Paragraph 46.8: Advertisements may give factual information about the alcoholic strength of a beverage or its relatively high alcohol content but this should not be the dominant theme of any advertisement. Alcoholic beverages should not be presented as preferable because of their high alcohol content or intoxicating effect.

- Paragraph 46.9: Advertisements should not portray drinking alcohol as the main reason for the success of any personal relationship or social event. A brand preference may be promoted as a mark of the drinkers' good taste and discernment.

- Paragraph 46.10: Drinking alcohol should not be portrayed as a challenge, nor should it be suggested that people who drink are brave, tough or daring for doing so.

- Paragraph 46.11: Particular care should be taken to ensure that advertisements for sales promotions requiring multiple purchases do not actively encourage excessive consumption.

- Paragraph 46.12: Advertisements should not depict activities or locations where drinking alcohol would be unsafe or unwise. In particular, advertisements should not associate the consumption of alcohol with operating machinery, driving, any activity relating to water or heights, or any other occupation that requires concentration to be done safely.

- Paragraph 46.13: Low alcohol drinks are those that contain 1.2 per cent alcohol by volume or less. Advertisers should ensure that low alcohol drinks are not promoted in a way that encourages their inappropriate consumption, and should not depict activities that require complete sobriety.

The Independent Television Commission Code of Advertising Standards is very similar. These rules apply principally to advertisements for alcoholic beverages but the incidental portrayal of alcohol consumption in other advertisements must always be carefully considered to ensure that it does not contradict the spirit of these rules. The major change in these regulations has been the lifting of a ban prohibiting the advertising for spirits on television and radio in June 1995. For thirty years distilled spirits were not advertised due to a voluntary agreement between the manufacturers and the TV companies.

In April 1996, the Portman Group issued a Code of Practice on the naming, packaging and merchandising of alcoholic beverages. The Code, which was endorsed by the seven largest alcoholic drinks manufacturers in the UK, is intended to ensure that alcohol is marketed to adults only and that alcoholic products cannot easily be confused with soft

drinks. The Code bans the use of characters or imagery that have a predominant appeal to youth and bans containers shaped in a way that might allude to antisocial behaviour. It also requires retailers to ensure that alcoholic beverages are clearly differentiated in-store from non-alcoholic drinks, and to train staff on adhering to the law on the sale of alcohol to those under 18 years of age.

Education and information

Information on the social and health hazards of alcohol consumption is provided by official government sources and independent non-governmental bodies and also by the drinks industry. The information is disseminated through a variety of media and organisations, depending on its target. For example in the 1980s, the government made it compulsory for alcohol studies to be part of the National Curriculum in the British school system for children between the ages of seven and sixteen.

The Department of Environment, Transport and the Regions is responsible for the Christmas, and recently also summertime, drunk-driving campaigns, using sometimes graphic visual reminders of the potential consequences. Funded largely by the government, the Health Development Agency and its local outposts encourage responsible alcohol consumption in sporadic campaigns.

The charities Alcohol Concern and the Institute of Alcohol Studies both provide detailed fact sheets on a range of alcohol-related matters; from physical damage to laws concerning consumption. Also other non-governmental organisations (NGOs) are useful sources of information and educational material.

The drinks industry has also engaged in educational activities. The Brewers' and Licensed Retailers' Association finances a number of educational and information programmes on the responsible use of alcohol aimed at young people, drinking in the workplace, pregnant women, and drunk driving. The Portman Group provides alcohol education materials for schools; information materials for adult drinkers; and training materials for licensees. They have also run a number of advertising campaigns against drunk driving.

The UK government has recently taken a controversial approach in its message to the general public on alcohol consumption. Ministers have promoted a sensible drinking message for several decades, but in recent years this has included a recognition that some alcohol consumption has beneficial health consequences.

The Health Department first raised the notion of sensible drinking in 1981. In the booklet *Drinking sensibly* alcohol misuse was defined as drinking to excess or drinking in situations which are not appropriate, when the effect in either case is to put the drinker or others at risk of harm (Department of Health and Social Security, 1981). In 1984, the Health Education Council, the predecessor of the Health Education Authority, published the first edition of its pamphlet *That's the Limit* (Health Education Council, 1984). This defined sensible drinking as keeping with safe limits - 18 standard drinks a week for men and 9 for women. Too much was defined as 56 drinks a week for men and 35 for women. The term units of alcohol was introduced in the 1987 edition of the

leaflet. A unit of alcohol was defined as 8 grams of pure alcohol, and the upper safe limits were increased to 21 units a week for men and 14 for women. Too much was kept at 56 units a week for men and 35 for women.

Three of the medical Royal Colleges issued reports on alcohol during 1986 and 1987 (The Royal College of Psychiatrists, 1986; The Royal College of General Practitioners, 1987; The Royal College of Physicians, 1987). Importantly, all three reports endorsed the Health Education Council line on sensible drinking.

In 1992 the sensible drinking message was used to set the deadline for targets to reduce alcohol misuse in the document Health of the Nation (Department of Health, 1992). Moreover, this document stated that drinking less than 21 units per week by men and 14 units per week by women is unlikely to damage health but also that sustained drinking in excess of these levels progressively increased the risk.

In 1994 the government announced that an inter-departmental group of officials would be set up to carry out a review of the sensible drinking standards in light of the latest scientific findings, including those on the protective effect of alcohol on coronary heart disease. The terms of reference for the group were:

- to review current medical and scientific evidence and its interpretation on the long-term effects of drinking alcohol, and
- to consider whether the sensible drinking message should be reviewed in light of this, and also taking into account current government policies on the short-term effects of drinking alcohol and other factors considered relevant by the group.

The group received 89 submissions from the alcohol industry, scientific and academic sources, medical sources, the health promotion field, service providers and other organisations. One submission from a working group representing the three Royal Colleges of Physicians, Psychiatrists and General Practitioners, released in June 1995, strongly opposed any changes in the health education advice on sensible limits (The Royal Colleges Report, 1995).

The inter-departmental group's report, called Sensible drinking, was released in December 1995, just before Christmas. It concluded among other things that

- drinking alcohol confers a significant health benefit in terms of reduced mortality and morbidity on men aged over 40 and postmenopausal women,
- men who drink more than 3 to 4 units a day, and women who drink more than 2 to 3 units a day, run an increasingly significant risk of illness and death from a number of conditions, including haemorrhagic stroke, some cancers, accidents and hypertension,
- regular consumption of between 3 and 4 units a day by men of all ages will not accrue a significant health risk, and
- regular consumption of between 2 and 3 units a day by women of all ages will not accrue any significant health risk (Department of Health, 1995, 31-32).

The report was interpreted by the media to mean that the previous limits had been relaxed from 21 to 28 units per week for men and from 14 to 21 units per week for women. However, the government did stress that the guidelines were for daily consumption and advised people not to consume all their weekly units on one occasion.

There followed lively and heated discussions about the new guidelines both in the health journals and wider in the media.

The inter-departmental group's review represents the first acknowledgement by the government of the benefits of moderate drinking. It also makes a clear statement against the use of the whole population approach as a means of reducing alcohol misuse. The UK approach has been described as a bimodal model due to the prevailing view that there are two distinct populations, one composed of sensible users of alcohol and the other of abusers.

In May 1997, the Labour party was elected to government. They abandoned the conservatives' Health of the Nation document and in July 1999 released their own health strategy called Our Healthier Nation. With regard to alcohol it stated that "moderate alcohol consumption is a part of everyday life for many, bringing enjoyment and relaxation. For older people, drinking small amounts of alcohol can give some protection against coronary heart disease. But heavy drinking is harmful not only to individuals, but also to their families and to society at large" (Department of Health 1999, para 9.12).

The document goes on to outline the government's aims with regard to minimising harm and also describes the development of a national alcohol strategy. "An effective strategy to tackle alcohol misuse needs the co-operation of all those concerned with alcohol: health and social services, school, and the alcohol industry, law enforcement agencies, government and the general public. We shall carefully consider the views of all the above to ensure that our strategy provides a coherent and balanced framework for action to tackle alcohol misuse and its consequences. We intend to take this work forward, in partnership with health and industry interest. We expect to publish our strategy after consultation early in the year 2000" (Department of Health 1999, para 9.14).

Several pressure groups and charities have responded and produced their own documents on a national alcohol strategy. Alcohol Concern invited a representative from the Department of Health to observe its consultation exercise on an alcohol strategy and launched its proposals in May 1999 (Alcohol Concern, 1999). The Society for the Study of Addiction convened a group to write their document, Tackling Alcohol Together, and the Portman Group and the Institute of Alcohol Studies have submitted their own proposals to the Department of Health (The Portman Group, 1999; Institute of Alcohol Studies, 1999).

The administrative structure of treatment

The current structure for treatment of alcoholism and alcohol misuse is fragmented in the UK. Health care workers, including general practitioners, psychiatrists, hospital physicians and nurses, accident and emergency specialists routinely encounter problem drinkers. Outside the medical profession, the first point of contact may be social workers, police, teachers, employers, probation officers, or prison officers. Across all sectors there is a general lack of training and recognition of skills needed to identify alcohol problems (Society for the Study of Addiction, 1999).

Once a problem has been recognised, there is still a lack of agreement on minimum purchasing and commissioning guidelines for specialist alcohol services, which has contributed to a highly variable patchwork of treatment provision across the UK. Instead of being driven by needs assessments, the provision of local services is often determined by the availability of funds and other resources, and heavily reliant upon voluntary contributions.

As a result of the National Health Service and Community Care Act of 1990, every Local Authority was instructed to be responsible for

- assessing the needs of the local population for alcohol and drug services;
- including the services for alcohol and drug misusers in their community care plans;
- assessing the social care needs of individual alcohol and drug misusers;
- arranging appropriate packages of care, which may include a range of options (Department of Health, 1993).

Local services in England and Wales are coordinated by the charity Alcohol Concern. The local primary health care acts as a gateway to the more specialist units. Specialist units can be in the private sector or part of the National Health Service and they may be hospital or community-based. The units may offer psychiatric or medical treatments and intensive social support, including residential accommodation where necessary.

The situation today shows a marked change in structure from the 1950s, when alcohol problems were treated, if at all, by private practitioners or mental hospitals. In 1962 the Ministry of Health issued a memorandum entitled *The Hospital Treatment of Alcoholism*, which called for the establishment of specialised hospital units for the treatment of alcoholism and alcoholic psychosis (Ministry of Health, 1962). This marked the end of an era characterised by the government's rejection of the need to review policies regarding alcohol consumption and alcoholism treatment and the entry of the Ministry of Health into the emerging alcohol arena (Thom & Berridge, 1995). In the 1970s, the government gave alcoholism a higher priority and shifted the emphasis from a hospital-centred treatment approach to a more comprehensive community care strategy (Department of Health and Social Security, 1973) and concentrated on strengthening links between the two. Prevention was placed high on the agenda in the 1980s, with the release of the Department of Health's sensible drinking guidelines (Department of Health and Social Security, 1981) and subsequently in the health strategy for England (Department of Health, 1992) and the recent revisions of sensible limits in the Inter-Departmental Working Group's report (Department of Health, 1995).

The current role of non-governmental organisations and pressure groups

NGOs, including self-help groups, are arguably the main providers of services to problem drinkers and their families (Eurocare, 1998). They provide treatment, advice, support, group therapy and counselling. Alcoholics Anonymous arrived in the UK in the late 1940s. There are now around 3,000 meetings per week in England and Wales and a membership of some 60,000 active members.

Other organisations and charities in the UK include Drinksense, a charity providing counselling, information and support for people with alcohol-related problems and their

carers and families. Teachers' Advisory Council on Alcohol and Drug Education was established in 1968 as a charitable NGO with the mission to make an effective contribution to improving the health of children and young people by enabling those with responsibility and influence to encourage positive changes in knowledge, attitudes, skills and behaviours. The Campaign Against Drunk Driving supports and assists the victims and families of victims who have suffered death or injury by drunken drivers on the roads in the UK. There are also regional bodies such as the Scottish Council on Alcohol, the Welsh Drug and Alcohol Unit and the Northern Ireland Council on Alcohol.

The charity Alcohol Concern, founded in 1984, is the national agency on alcohol misuse in England and Wales. It evolved from the existing National Council on Alcoholism. Alcohol Concern aims to reduce the costs of alcohol misuse and to develop the range and quality of helping services available to problem drinkers and their families. The Institute of Alcohol Studies is a London-based registered charity, sponsored by the United Kingdom Temperance Alliance. It is an educational body and supplies information to the general public, the helping professions, industry, commerce and trade unions.

The temperance movement originated and developed during the nineteenth century when it commanded political attention from the leaders of the day. Its popularity withered away in the twentieth century, partly due to the declining appeal of the churches from which it drew most its support. In the 1960s, the temperance movement participated in creating a number of new organisations to reshape its image; for example the National Council on Alcoholism in 1962, the Christian Social and Economic Research Foundation in 1966 and the Teachers' Advisory Committee on Alcohol and Drug Education in 1968. However, it is argued that the temperance movement exerted little direct influence on policy (Baggott, 1990, 10).

In 1989, the Portman Group was established by eight of the UK's major alcoholic beverage companies. The Portman Group's efforts are directed towards reducing consumption among those at risk and preventing others from developing drinking habits that may be harmful. Initiatives focus on a combination of educational programmes and research. To date the Group has provided alcohol education materials for schools, information materials for adult drinkers, and training materials for licensees. It has also run a number of advertising campaigns against drunk driving, funded research at Edinburgh University, operated a Code of Practice on responsible marketing that has led to certain alcohol products being withdrawn from sale, and convened a task force on underage alcohol misuse. The Brewers' and Licensed Retailers' Association also engages in educational and information projects.

Drunkenness and drunk driving

There are many laws in the UK governing drunken behaviour, some dating back to the nineteenth century. In the Metropolitan Police Act of 1839 it was deemed to be an offence to be drunk in a street or public place in the Metropolitan Police area and to be guilty of riotous or indecent behaviour. This was amended in 1872 to include drunkenness in a highway or other public place or on licensed premises. The 1902

Licensing Act decreed that it is an offence to be drunk in charge of a child under 7 years old or to be drunk and incapable on any highway or other public place.

A series of offences were introduced for licensees in the Licensing Act of 1964. For example, it became an offence for licensees to permit drunkenness on premises and to serve a drunken customer. Licensees were given powers to refuse to admit to, or expel from, licensed premises any drunken person. Based on the 1980 Licensed Premises Act licensees could ban from entering their premises any person convicted of any offence committed on licensed premises involving violence.

In 1985 the Sporting Events Act prohibited the possession of alcohol at specific sporting events, and on public transport to and from these events. There are also a number of specific occupational groups with their own laws with regard to alcohol consumption. For example, the Civil Aviation Authority prohibits the consumption of alcohol by a pilot for at least 8 hours before flying.

In the UK the offences on simply being drunk in a public place are rarely enforced. However, certain local by-laws have prohibited drinking in designated areas.

It is prohibited of being in charge of a motor vehicle while unfit to drive through the influence of alcohol, as shown by the proportion of alcohol in the blood. The 1967 Road Safety Act introduced the breath test with a legal limit of 0.08 per cent. This is equivalent to 35 mg of alcohol in 100 ml of breath, and 107 mg of alcohol in 100 ml of urine. According to section 7 of the Road Traffic Act 1972, amended by the Transport Act in 1981, a breath test can be requested by a uniformed constable, who has reasonable cause to suspect that a person driving a motor vehicle on a road has alcohol in his or her body or has committed a moving traffic offence or has been involved in an accident.

The penalties of drunk driving depend upon the consequences. Causing death by careless driving whilst under the influence of alcohol or drugs can lead to a 10-year imprisonment and a disqualification of at least 2 years. Driving or attempting to drive whilst above the legal limit or unfit through drink can lead to a six months' imprisonment plus a fine of 5,000 English pounds and a disqualification of at least 12 months or 3 years if convicted twice in 10 years. Being in charge of a vehicle whilst above the legal limit or unfit through drink can lead to 3 months' imprisonment plus a fine of 2,500 English pounds and a disqualification. Refusing to provide a specimen can lead to a 6 months' imprisonment plus a fine of 5,000 English pounds and a disqualification of at least 12 months. Additional considerations are made for high-risk offenders defined as those who refuse to provide a specimen as well as those who are convicted at two and a half times the legal limit, and those convicted twice in ten years. An approved doctor has to certify that the person does not have a drink problem before the licence can be returned.

In 1991 changes were introduced to the rehabilitation of drunk-driving offenders. Magistrates now have the authority to send offenders on alcohol education courses, paid for by the offenders, and in return those who complete the course receive a reduction of 25 per cent in the length of their period of disqualification. This scheme is currently under evaluation.

Summary

In the UK successive governments have imposed restrictions on alcohol availability in an attempt to control drinking as a perceived threat to social order and public health but also to raise revenue from alcohol excise duties. Methods of control have included licensing restrictions, especially hours of sale, which however have recently been relaxed, and there are proposals for even more liberal hours. Methods of control have also included taxes and duties, penalties for drunk driving and for supplying minors with alcohol.

The problem of alcohol misuse has been seen as a political problem because of the running battle between the interests of the drinks industry and the anti-alcohol pressure groups. Over the years the frame of reference for alcohol-related problems has expanded beyond the narrow confines of alcoholism or alcohol dependence to include all of society. In terms of strategic approaches to minimising heavy alcohol use, there has been an on-going debate as to whether it is more advantageous to target the heavy drinkers themselves, or attempt to lower the total alcohol consumption of the whole population. The UK government has tended to explore the former harm reduction approach, combined with an emphasis on separating alcohol from high-risk situations, such as driving, sports events and alcohol consumption among youth.

There have been very few public opinion polls of the alcohol initiatives and laws discussed in this chapter. Awareness among the general population of the government's sensible drinking limits was investigated in a survey carried out by the Office for National Statistics in 1997. Just over half of the 3,600 men and women interviewed claimed that they had heard of the daily guidelines, but only about a third of these respondents could accurately recall the limits (Goddard, 1997). Whether they were aware of the sensible limits or not, 21 per cent of men and 8 per cent of women are reported to consume more than the weekly limits of 28 units for men and 21 units for women (Health Survey for England, 1996).

The recent submissions to the Department of Health by interested bodies, such as Alcohol Concern, the Portman Group, the Institute of Alcohol Studies and the Society for the Study of Addiction highlight the dissatisfaction that is felt by some pressure groups with regard to alcohol control policies in the UK. There have also been discussions among alcohol groups, government ministers, local communities and the police on the issue of whether to lower the legal BAC level for driving to 0.05 per cent, to harmonise the UK with many other countries in Europe. The question regarding alcopops was also a heavily debated issue on the political arena in the latter part of the 1990s.

Fears remain over cross-border shopping sprees where vast amounts of alcoholic drinks are brought into the country from hypermarkets on the continent. The unwillingness to increase excise duty on alcohol in the UK, as shown by a freeze in the March 2001 Budget, reflects the government's desire to curb the legal and illegal alcohol importation from France and other neighbouring countries.

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