



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

Our ref
Your ref
Date 8 January 2003

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RESPONSE TO CONSULTATION ON NATIONAL ALCOHOL HARM REDUCTION STRATEGY

The Countryside Agency is pleased to have the opportunity to respond to the National Alcohol Harm Reduction Strategy.

The Agency is pleased to note the questions which specifically referred to alcohol in rural areas. However, we are at this stage unable to respond in detail to the consultation, as the nature of the questions fall outside of our areas of expertise.

We would however like to make a few general points. The consultation quite rightly seeks to strike a balance between individual rights and responsibilities and provision and access to alcohol, capturing the needs of the alcohol industry. In the rural economy, the role of pubs as social meeting places and viable businesses cannot be understated. As with other rural businesses, the Agency is working with individuals and industry groups to enable pubs to adapt to both social and economic needs to ensure economic viability. In December 2001, we launched the Pub is the Hub scheme, to enable publicans to offer a greater range of services including basic post-office counter services to enable communities who have lost other service outlets to be able to access basic facilities.

At the same time, we recognise the importance of drinking in moderation, and support the Government in its ongoing education campaign. Rural market towns can be equal victims in antisocial behaviour at pub closing times - and we know that these issues are being addressed in various Government Departments (the Licensing Bill, and forthcoming Antisocial Behaviour



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Bill). We are also aware that the Department of Health is looking at alcohol misuse in its health inequalities work.

We would request that in considering a National Alcohol Harm Reduction Strategy, that both the social and economic side of the alcohol business is considered fully. Finally, we would recommend that before finalising the national strategy, it is rural proofed in order to deliver an effective rural service. A copy of The Countryside Agency's checklist is enclosed.

Details of our strategy can be found at the Annex attached to this letter.

Should you need clarification on any of the points raised in the response, please do not hesitate to contact me on 020 7340 2931.

JADE BADCOCK
Rural Proofing Studies



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Annex

The Countryside Agency is the statutory body working to:

- Make life better for people in the countryside and;
- Improve the quality of the countryside for everyone.

The Countryside Agency will help to achieve the following outcomes:

- Empowered, active and inclusive communities;
- High standards of rural services;
- Vibrant local economies;
- All countryside managed sustainably;
- Recreation infrastructure that's easy to enjoy;
- A vibrant and diverse urban fringe providing better quality of life.

We summarise our role as:

- Statutory champion and watchdog;
- Influencing and inspiring solutions through our know how and show how;
- Delivering where we are best placed to add value.

To find out more about our work, and for information about the countryside, visit our website www.countryside.gov.uk.