**Businesses: support your wine & spirit industry – email your MP!**

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Who are we?

We are the Wine & Spirit Trade Association (WSTA) and we represent the views of over 300 UK wine and spirit businesses to Government, campaigning for a vibrant and sustainable wine and spirit industry, and helping to build a future in which alcohol is produced, sold and enjoyed responsibly.

Why are we asking you to write to your MP?

The Government’s proposed new system to charge alcohol excise duty (tax) unfairly places a significant financial burden on to the wine and spirit sector. We have therefore prepared a template letter (below) to be sent from your business to your local MP urging the Government to act regarding the ongoing Alcohol Excise Duty Review (ADR).

**We believe it is vital that the industry works together as a collective voice if we are to achieve change, and we are grateful in advance for your collaboration on this matter.**

Please do personalise the template where applicable, and cc Sophie (sophie@wsta.co.uk) in your email.

We also have personalised letters available for different business types. If you are one of the following types of business and would like a more bespoke letter, please get in touch:

* Distiller
* Vineyard
* Importer
* Fine wine merchant
* Independent wine merchant
* Retailer

We recommend sending your letter via email as MP offices tend to react more quickly to emails rather than a standard letter.

Find your MP

You can find your MP’s details by inputting your postcode, here: <https://members.parliament.uk/members/commons>

Draft email

**Subject:** Support our wine & spirit industry!

**Cc:** Sophie@wsta.co.uk

Dear [Name of MP],

I am contacting you on behalf of my business [business name, type of business, POST CODE] based in your constituency regarding our concerns surrounding the Government’s Alcohol Excise Duty Review (ADR) the consultation for which ends on the 30 January 2022.

As a business, we welcomed the Government’s announcement in 2020 to review the alcohol duty rules. The current excise regime, inherited from the EU, is not fit for purpose. It distorts the competitive playing field - for example, for the same amount of pure alcohol, sparkling wine and spirit drinks can pay some 5 times the duty compared to that levied on other types of alcoholic drink. It is also complex and complicated to administer. We were therefore pleased that when launching the review, the Government set out a few stated objectives that the reform should address, including simplifying the current system and making the basis of alcohol taxation more economically rational with fewer distortions.

Like many in the sector, we were looking forward to seeing the proposals from Government following last year’s call for evidence. Regrettably, the model proposed by the Chancellor at the Budget has come as a disappointment to [add business name] and to wine and spirit businesses across the UK.

[Insert type of business, the impact the duty reform will have on your business specifically].

The Government is proposing moving to a system where duty is levied on all alcoholic drinks based on alcohol content. We would have hoped that under the new system, we would see much closer alignment between rates for different categories. However, the Government is *not* proposing applying the same rate or even close to the same rate for all categories of alcohol.

Under the Chancellor’s plans, it is estimated that the wine sector will face an overall increase in duty - some £250 million with wines at the higher permitted ABV facing an increase in duty of 30%. Spirits, too, will be paying the highest rate of duty. This reinforces existing market distortions as opposed to rebalancing them which the review was supposed to achieve. It is not economically rational to differentiate duty rates on the strength of product as sold. For instance, in the case of spirit drinks which are often consumed with a non-alcoholic mixer, a consumer choosing to mix a gin and tonic at home will be paying more duty on that gin compared to the gin in premixed can under Government proposals. **In no way could this be described as a fairer system, nor one that is economically rational.**

We are also concerned that the new duty system:

* Fails to support small English and Welsh wine producers and distilleries (but does support small breweries and cider makers);
* Would result in a major new administrative burden due to its calculation complexity and dependency on accurate ABVs; and
* Will ultimately increase the tax burden on consumers.

We believe that these are unintended consequences, but it is vital they are redressed as a matter of urgency.

I would therefore appreciate it if you could represent my concerns to Chancellor Rishi Sunak and Treasury Minister Helen Whately. Additionally, I would value a virtual or in-person meeting with you to discuss the anticipated effects of the proposed Alcohol Duty System on my business and others within the industry in more detail. Please do contact me on [insert email] to arrange a convenient time to meet.

Yours sincerely,

[Name]

[Signature]