



24 December 2012

Jeremy Browne, MP
Minister of State for Crime Prevention
House of Commons,
London SW1A 0AA

Dear Jeremy

**THE GOVERNMENT'S ALCOHOL STRATEGY CONSULTATION – IMPACT
ON THE SOMERSET CIDER INDUSTRY**

I am writing to you concerning the possible implications of consultation proposals for the Government's Alcohol Strategy on parts of the Somerset cider industry.

As you know, the cider making industry is important to the cultural heritage of Somerset and businesses in this sector and is a significant part of the county's economy. Equally, we understand the health and community safety concerns that come from alcohol misuse and which have resulted in the proposal in the Alcohol Strategy for a Minimum Unit Price for Alcohol (MUA) to specifically target the sale of cheap alcohol products.

Somerset County Council has considered this issue following consultation with the Somerset Chamber of Commerce and Industry, leading local cider makers and independent local experts on the Somerset cider industry to seek their views about the local implications of the Government's plans.

The majority of Somerset producers are engaged in making premium products, not cheap alcohol. We also acknowledge that, according to Home Office survey data, many premium cider brands will not be affected by MUA as they are already priced above that threshold. Nevertheless there is some disquiet among local independent cider producers about MUA. Specifically there may be implications for traditional farmhouse cider producers relying mainly on sales at the "farm gate", where MUA may mean a substantial rise in prices. While recognising the broader rationale of the Government's proposals, we believe that there is a case for the Government to undertake further examination of the impact that a MUA will have on small scale, independent/"farmhouse" producers and the scope for any mitigating actions to sustain this important part of our local economy.

I look forward to your thoughts about this matter.

Yours sincerely

