

To: Dr Vince Cable MP

Re: Pub Companies and Tenants

I write to you on the above subject and hope you will find time to consider my views on a number of topics that have affected our Industry, our tenants and our business.

On this year I celebrated years continuous service in the Industry, all of these have been spent in the Leased and Tenanted sector working for Whitbread, Laurel and Enterprise. I have experience in Property, Marketing, Commercial and Operations, and therefore approach this latest challenge with extensive knowledge and experience of the Industry, and have seen many changes in this time, some for the better and some not so.

However I don't want to dwell in the past but would like to offer my views on the current consultation for which you are seeking representations, I have read the consultation and find it lacking in accuracy of information and ill-informed in respect of the relationships with tenants and how they are treated.

I believe that tenants now are treated more fairly than ever before, the introduction of the BII accredited Codes of Practice has been a major success, and has clarified better than ever what is expected of tenants and landlords within the commercial relationship they are entering into, the introduction of PIRRS is a huge step forward for tenants to utilise to assist them to secure a fair rent for their business, and is much more affordable than the old arbitration approach. PICAS as a low cost arbitrator service should a tenant have a dispute that cannot be settled is also a welcome addition to the Industry, however it is a testament to the industry's self-regulation effort and proof it is working that very few cases have had to resort to either of these services.

The Industry has faced many challenges in my years, but none as great as Ill-fated blanket smoking ban introduced by the government in 2007; this has had a devastating effect on the Industry and has led to many closures of local pubs that became unviable due to the loss of trade, however many have also survived with help, assistance and investment from us to change the proposition to appeal to a different customer in order to be successful.

The past few years have seen more challenges which have taken customers away from pubs; most of these are well documented but are worth noting:

- The recession
- The greed and lack of available funding from banks
- Below cost selling of alcohol by supermarkets
- The unfair VAT system that operates in the UK
- Over bearing licensing regulation & bureaucracy in running a small business

As business secretary I wonder if you are aware of the deplorable practices of the utility companies, who will charge whatever rates they can get away with and disconnect services without consultation leaving tenants and their families without satisfactory living conditions, and then demand huge bonds to reconnect the same services, this is an area that requires your immediate attention as our tenants desperately need your help in making ends meet and protecting their homes and families.

Another area for you to consider is the rating service for pubs, whilst we have reduced rents across our estate by an average of 12% in recognition of the decline in our tenants business, trying to get the same response on business rates is almost impossible and when you eventually do get a positive response it is transitional and takes years to be effective. I would also implore you not to defer the five year revaluation to 2017 as has been suggested, as this would be extremely detrimental to our tenants.

I am proud a person who was set a fine example by my father who worked hard to support us as a family and was instrumental in my upbringing, I learnt many tough but valuable lessons of what is right and wrong, I have carried these values and lessons with me into my working life, I am proud of the progress I have made in this industry and I believe I have done so on the basis that I am straight, honest and fair in my dealings with people, and I demand the same from my team of who provide expert advice and support to our tenants on a daily basis.

You can imagine the hurt I feel when I read the accusations made by some parties in the press that we treat our tenants unfairly, however I never let these accusations change the way I approach my job and I will continue to challenge myself and my team to add value and support to our tenants efforts to run successful and profitable businesses for our mutual benefit.

I imagine that you will be inundated with letters both for and against in the consultation and therefore I thank you for taking the time to consider the points I have raised, and would hope that it will help you and the committee come to a balanced and fair view of our relationships with our tenants

Yours sincerely