

June 3rd, 2013

Mr Vince Cable

Uxbridge
TW1 4JQ

"Re: Government Consultation pub companies and tenants April 2013"

Dear Mr Cable,

I am writing to you with regards to my leases with Punch taverns. I have been the leaseholder with Punch.

In the 11 years of trading with Punch Taverns I have experienced the pros and cons of dealing with this company.

Then:

In the past my experiences with punch were very formal and impersonal. It felt that even though it was my hard work, reputation and finance, it did not feel that I had the trust, support and advice required on occasion. Quite the quandary I felt restricted as to what I could do with my business. For example punch taverns had a system to monitor every last drop of the draught sold in my establishment by installing flow meters on each product line.

I was tied to all draught products, bottled beers and was being charged over the top prices. This obviously resulted in minimum profit. I felt that I was policed by what I sold and having continuous unannounced inspections of my cellar to satisfy their paranoia of product sales.

I was then hit by a no smoking ban and Tony Blair's bright idea of 24 hour drinking. These legislations financially cost me thousands to implement, with no support from Punch or the government. In one of my establishments, trade declined due to the above.

However there was no understanding/reduction of rent and in fact I found this company then to be aggressive and intimidating.

When I asked for help/support regarding rent and beer all I received was solicitors letters threatening legal proceedings. On top of all this I got invoiced for punch taverns solicitor's fees which resulted in thousands of pounds.

Due to this my health deteriorated and the business suffered, eventually resulting in me selling the premises for what I could get.

At this point I had lost all faith and trust with punch taverns as a company and I felt the feeling was mutual with other lease holders at that time.

Now:

In recent years there has been a dramatic improvement within punch taverns. It seemed the backlash towards punch made them sit up and take notice. I now find them more approachable and supportive to communicate with resulting with me signing another lease and I would like to outline a few of these positives.

- Re-negotiation of a 10year lease as appose to 4 year
- A more realistic and affordable rent agreement
- An adequate discount on all products supplied by punch taverns
- A better choice of cask ales and the opportunity to be free of tie on some products
- A better one to one relationship with RBM's and online support

All in all these factors have dramatically improved the profitability of my business in return I can employ more staff. It is still not a perfect situation however I feel it's certainly moving in the right direction.

I would however like to take this opportunity to ask, what the government has done to support publicans and lease holders alike. I feel like you personally are attacking and criticising companies like punch taverns for their misgivings and un-willingness to understand us even though I can't see what the government are doing for us.

For example, why on earth you have allowed big supermarket chains to continue to discount beer, spirits and wines at knock down prices which has a huge impact on people like me in the industry. Don't the supermarket chains make enough profit? Without tapping into, and sometimes destroying businesses like mine.

V.A.T at 20% hurts us all; here is a proposal for you Vince:

Reduce the V.A.T on all draught products in pubs, clubs and restaurants etc. This one positive change would make a huge impact as we can then offer competitive pricing structures and have a slight advantage towards all the supermarket chains.

In one clean swoop this would show people like me in the industry that the government is listening and seem to want to support us in these times of austerity.

To conclude Mr Cable, I do hope that you have realistic and positive proposals in hand to introduce in the very near future, as I fear without immediate help or support some businesses like mine will be obsolete. As far as my experience goes, punch taverns as a whole have implemented some very positive and dramatic changes which were badly needed.

Now it's your turn to make a difference, and in the words of Obama "Yes you can".

Yours sincerely