



**CAMPAIGN  
FOR  
REAL ALE**

# **CAMRA's Beer Drinkers and Pub Goers Charter**





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## Introduction

As a consumer pressure group, wholly independent of commercial vested interests, CAMRA is uniquely placed to be able to set out a comprehensive set of policy options to tackle the current crisis facing community pubs and the brewing industry.

Every single day, seven pubs close and small brewers struggle to sell their products due to the market dominance of four global brewers who brew over 80% of the beer sold in the UK.



CAMRA campaigns to ensure consumers have access to a choice of ales in their local community pubs, at a fair price and in a quality environment.

In summary, CAMRA is asking politicians to:

- 1 **Promote the interests of Britain's 15 million regular pub goers**
- 2 **Champion the community importance of well-run pubs**
- 3 **Support the rebalancing of alcohol taxation to protect well-run community pubs, small brewers and traditional cider producers**
- 4 **Press for reform of "beer tie" arrangements to ensure a fair deal for consumers, allow local brewers to sell their beers to local pubs and to deliver a sustainable future for Britain's pubs**
- 5 **Seek to address issues of alcohol-related harm through a more targeted, nuanced policy approach that supports pubs which play a positive role in community life and provide a safe and responsible place to enjoy a drink**

Politicians who support the above commitments can promote this by using the logo below.

**Proud to be . . .**



# "A real manifesto for real pubs, real ale and consumer rights"



## Planning - Change of Use and Demolition

Existing planning law gives little protection to communities who want to keep their local pubs open. Planning permission is not currently required to change a pub into a restaurant, shop, café or financial services office (England and Wales), or to demolish a freestanding pub unless it is listed. These planning loopholes are being systematically exploited by developers, to the detriment of communities and consumers throughout the UK.

Valued community pubs are being lost forever and local people and local councils are powerless to act.

**Control over the change of use and demolition of pubs must be brought into the hands of local people by giving Local Authorities greater power over planning.**



## Sustainable Communities

In 2007 the Sustainable Communities Act (England) was passed with cross-party support, after extensive lobbying by CAMRA. The Act provides a channel for local people to drive Central Government assistance and action to improve the economic, environmental and social wellbeing of their area.

The Act stresses the importance of pubs as local services.

**The Act needs to be extended to provide for a rolling programme allowing local people to continue to submit proposals to the Government to protect their local small brewers, traditional cider producers and community pubs.**



## Preventing Irresponsible Supermarket Price Promotions

Irresponsible price promotions by supermarkets mean that mass-produced alcohol is frequently sold at a loss. These incredibly low prices are harming the nation's health and driving a shift in alcohol consumption away from pubs and towards drinking at home or on the streets.

**We therefore call for action to ensure that supermarkets abide by the same high standards as the on-trade, and do not sell alcohol as a loss-leader.**

# "Proud to be speaking up for consumers, community pubs and local brewers!"

## Supporting well-run Community Pubs

Well-run pubs provide a safe environment for people to relax with a drink, and mix with people of other age groups and backgrounds. They play an important role at the heart of local communities.

Community pubs contrast sharply with huge open-plan 'super pubs' with loud music and minimal seating, which are more likely to give rise to binge drinking and alcohol-related disorder.

Unfortunately the current law is indiscriminate in forcing all licensed premises to carry the same burden of new regulations and increased taxation.

**The promotion of well-run community pubs should therefore be a cornerstone of any strategy to promote responsible drinking, and the role of such pubs should not be forgotten in preventing anti-social behaviour as a result of drinking.**

Pubs which act as hubs of their local community should be given 50% mandatory business rate relief as recognition of their value to society.

## Tax Issues

Since the 2008 Budget excise duty on beer has increased by 20% and over 3,600 pubs have closed down. The Chancellor takes a third of the price of a pint through excise duty and VAT.



Enough is enough, which is why CAMRA is calling for:

- An end to above inflation increases in beer duty
- A new zero duty rate for beers 2.8% abv and below
- Support for beer as a low alcohol product - vital to the survival of community pubs
- Retention of small breweries' relief

## A Full Pint – Take it to the Top

Consumers lose more than £1.3 million a day due to short beer measures. Short beer measures are endemic because the current law means that it is not illegal to serve consumers less than a full pint in the pub.

Legislation is urgently needed to protect beer drinkers from being short changed.

## Licensing Law

The 2003 Licensing Act (England and Wales) has had significant benefits for consumers and community pubs, allowing more flexible opening hours, simplifying the rules on provision of licenses for well-run community pubs and giving councils greater powers to target individual problem pubs.

**The changes to licensing law in the 2003 Licensing Act should be protected, as they allow greater flexibility in pub opening hours and therefore greater choice for the consumer.**

## A European Dimension

The EU Excise Duty Directive means that it is currently illegal for the UK Government to introduce a preferential duty rate for beer sold in pubs. A lower duty rate for beer sold in pubs would support well-run community pubs and help ensure that a night out in the pub remains affordable for consumers.

**CAMRA is seeking the support of the UK Government in our campaign to revise the relevant EU Directive to empower the UK Government to apply a lower rate of excise duty on draught beer sold in pubs.**

# “Backing pubs, choice and the consumer voice ”

## The “Beer Tie”

The unfair operation of the “beer tie” by large pub companies is artificially inflating the consumer price of beer, reducing consumer amenity in pubs and increasing the rate of pub closures. Tied licensees can only buy a limited range of beer, at prices which are inflated by around 40%. This restricts consumer choice and prevents small and regional brewers from accessing the market.

There must be radical reform in the operation of the “beer tie”, to rebalance the relationship between the large pub companies and their licensees to deliver benefit to consumers. This should include the provision of a guest beer right.

## Restrictive Covenants

Restrictive covenants are used by the seller of a pub to prevent the purchaser from operating the premises as a pub in order to restrict competition.

Restrictive covenants are anti-competitive and have a detrimental impact on communities. Their use must be immediately banned.

## A Right to Buy Policy

We believe that every effort should be made to keep community pubs open, and that where pub owning companies are seeking to sell community pubs the community and current lessee should have the opportunity to purchase the business as a going concern at a fair market price.

Government should amend compulsory purchase powers so that where a community pub is being sold the community and current lessee are given an opportunity to buy.

## Consumer Protection

Consumer interests are often overlooked by policy makers and official bodies. For instance, the Office of Fair Trading gave consumers scant consideration in their response to CAMRA's recent super-complaint regarding the “beer tie”.

Consumer protection should be strengthened and the remit of competition authorities extended.

Consumers should be represented by a dedicated Consumer Minister who attends Cabinet; who will have a role in ensuring consumers are not overlooked and balancing business interests which are already strongly represented.





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## What is CAMRA?

CAMRA was set up in 1971 and has a growing membership of more than 110,000 individuals.

CAMRA is a not-for-profit, volunteer-led consumer organisation funded by members' subscriptions, sales of publications and proceeds from beer festivals.

### **CAMRA aims to:**

- Maintain consumer rights
- Promote quality, choice and value for money
- Support the public house as a focus for community life
- Increase appreciation of traditional beers and ciders

### **Contact us**

Why not join us in our campaign to protect and promote choice, quality and value for beer and community pubs?

Get in touch at:

The Campaign for Real Ale  
230 Hatfield Road  
St Albans  
AL1 4LW

Tel: 01727 867 201

Email: [camra@camra.org.uk](mailto:camra@camra.org.uk)

Or contact CAMRA's public affairs team: Jonathan Mail on 01727 798 448 or Emily Ryans on 01727 798 447 or via email: [campaigns@camra.org.uk](mailto:campaigns@camra.org.uk)

**Proud to be . . .**

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Community PUBS  
Local BREWERS  
and CONSUMERS!**

