

## DISPOSABLE VAPES TO BE BANNED FROM 1ST APRIL 2025

Ministers across the four nations have backed recommendations for a UK-wide ban on the sale of disposable vapes. Draft regulations were published by Scottish Ministers late last month, and the ban is now expected to come into force on 1st April next year.

The new Scottish legislation will form part of a UK wide ban on the product, that will likely have a similar timetable across the country. This means it will be an offence for a person or business to supply or stock single use vapes, and those found in breach could fall foul of a conviction of up to two years and/or a fine.

It is expected that measures will also be introduced to prevent vapes being marketed at children and to target under-age sales. Refillable, reusable vapes will remain available alongside other tools for smoking cessation, including nicotine patches and medication.

Furthermore, as part of the plans, it will soon become illegal to sell tobacco to anyone born on or after January 1, 2009, with the Scottish Government setting a goal of Scotland being tobacco-free by 2034.

SGF believes vaping products are an important cessation device for people who wish to quit smoking, and a ban could potentially have a negative impact on both public health and illicit trade (retail crime). While also putting struggling retailers under even more pressure.

Dr Pete Cheema OBE, SGF Chief Executive, said: "SGF wants to see tighter regulation of these products. They should not be targeted at younger people and should only be sold by legitimate traders who take their responsibilities seriously.

"However, there is already a significant illicit market for disposable vapes in the UK. Including potentially unsafe products. That will only get worse after a ban.

"The draft regulations do not make it clear how they intend to solve the problem of increasing illicit trade, and that needs to be a priority. Likewise, it is critical that they do not over-regulate flavouring, which is proven to be the key driver for smokers switching, if they wish to."

The Scottish Government press release is available to read here: [www.gov.scot/news/action-on-single-use-vapes/](http://www.gov.scot/news/action-on-single-use-vapes/)



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### SGF CRIME AND WELLBEING SEMINAR 2024

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# EMERGENCY ACTION NEEDED TO TACKLE TORRENT OF RETAIL CRIME

The marked increase in retail crime and anti-social behaviour over the past year has not only damaged business viability but is also having a harmful impact on the wellbeing of retailers, shop staff, their families, and their communities. Many of our members report that crime is now the most important issue affecting their business and employees.

Recent findings gathered for the annual SGF Crime Survey & Report 2023/24, which will be published at our SGF Crime & Wellbeing Seminar in Hampden Park, Glasgow, on 14th March, shows that there has been a significant increase in both shop theft and in-store abuse/assault over the past year. It is estimated that the cost per store has now reached more than £12,000 per annum. The report can be accessed here (after publication): [www.sgfscoot.co.uk/communication/publications](http://www.sgfscoot.co.uk/communication/publications)

Last autumn, SGF launched a campaign urging the Scottish Government to put an emergency plan into action to tackle the threatening surge in retail crime in Scotland. SGF want the Scottish Government, Police Scotland and the Crown Office to take action:

- More resources for the Scottish Justice System, focused on supporting enforcement organisations to tackle the rise in retail crime.
- Improved police response times, swifter action taken against perpetrators of retail crime and reducing the backlog of cases awaiting trial.
- Improved feedback for retailers when they report a crime and exploring more efficient methods of reporting and providing information to the police.

SGF encourages our members to report every crime. Nonetheless, our findings shows that most retailers share the view that deficiencies in the Scottish justice system means that reporting in-store crime now has limited value or result.

SGF Chief Executive Dr Pete Cheema OBE said: "If there isn't action now, the situation will only get worse."

"It is not only shop windows that are being shattered but people's lives, their livelihoods, their health and their mental wellbeing. The level of retail crime that is now being experienced by the convenience sector is utterly shocking,

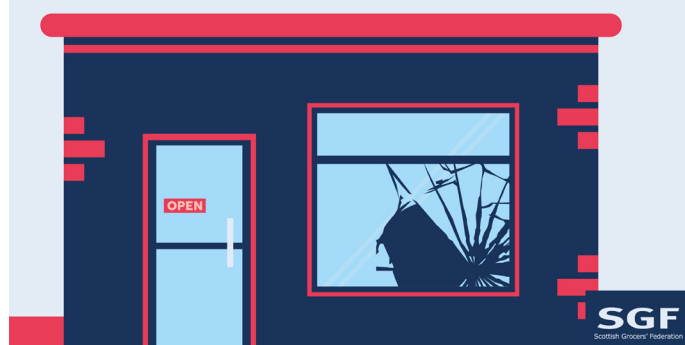
and there is virtually no support from our justice system."

SGF has regular engagement with Ministers, MSPs, Scottish Government officials and Police Scotland, highlighting the challenge of retail crime for convenience retailers. We are also calling for our joint campaign 'Don't Put Up With It', which encourages retailers to take a zero-tolerance approach by reporting all offences against them, to be refreshed. While the Scottish Government have informed SGF that it has no funding available to renew the website and materials, we are exploring alternative options that will allow us to continue the campaign.

**SGF continues to work closely with colleagues in the Business Crime Prevention Unit and Police Scotland's Your Safety Matters group – and is a signatory of the National Assault Pledge (raising awareness and protecting workers from physical and verbal abuse).**

## RETAIL CRIME

Effective political engagement from SGF ensured that the Protection of Workers (Retail and Age-restricted Goods and Services) (Scotland) Act 2021 was passed by Parliament. In August 2023, exactly two years from introduction, 7,955 cases of abuse, threats and violence toward shop workers had been recorded under the Act.



# MAXIMISING LAST-MINUTE EASTER SALES WITH MARS WRIGLEY



**M**ars Wrigley, a family-owned business with a century-long legacy, stands as a global leader in confectionery manufacturing, specialising in chocolate, chewing gum, and fruity confections. They put smiles on people's faces and create better moments for millions in more than 180 countries.

Through over five generations, the company has introduced beloved products such as the MARS® bar, SKITTLES®, and M&M'S®, attaining worldwide acclaim. The 2008 acquisition of the Wrigley Company solidified its status as the largest gum producer globally, and in 2016, Mars Wrigley emerged as the UK's premier confectionery business, uniting 19 renowned brands.

Guided by principles and a vision to positively impact people and the planet, the company pursues sustainability through its Sustainable in a Generation plan, focusing on a Healthy Planet, Thriving People, and Nourishing Wellbeing. From chocolate to chewing gum, Mars Wrigley has more than 34,000 Associates working hard to improve the way they source, make and market their products, so their consumers can enjoy them even more.

Additionally, the Mars Wrigley Cocoa for Generations Strategy, launched in 2018, aims to protect children, preserve forests, and enhance

## MARS WRIGLEY

farmers' incomes, establishing a sustainable cocoa supply chain.

Easter is a key opportunity for retailers to capitalise on the gifting occasion. As March unfolds, shopper behaviour shifts to focus on gifting and planned purchases for a seasonal occasion. A substantial 74% of Easter gifting confectionery is typically sold in the final three-week period leading up to Easter. Furthermore, giant eggs are the fastest-growing Easter egg partition (+59% YOY), offering consumers an opportunity to trade up and indulge in an unforgettable gifting experience.

With this in mind, Mars Wrigley has introduced two SKUs to its Giant Egg offering: the GALAXY® Caramel Giant Easter Egg and MALTESERS® Assorted Truffles Luxury Egg, providing retailers with a perfect last-minute opportunity to drive additional revenue this Easter.

<https://pol.mars.com/en/made-by-mars/mars-wrigley>





## SGF WARN THAT INCREASING MUP WILL IMPACT STRUGGLING BUSINESSES AND COMMUNITIES

The Deputy First Minister made a statement in Scottish Parliament on 8th February in which she outlined plans to increase the minimum unit price of alcohol in Scotland.

The statement outlined that MUP will increase from 50 pence to 65 pence, from 30th September 2024. This represents a 30% increase. The current price of 50p will remain in place until 30th September. No future date has been set for the price to be reviewed again in the coming years.

As part of a 'sunset clause' included in the original legislation on Minimum Unit Pricing (MUP), the policy was due to come to an end on 30th April 2024. It is required that the Scottish Parliament vote again on whether the measure should remain in force after 1st May 2024.

Two days Prior to the announcement on MUP our, CEO Dr Pete Cheema OBE, represented the SGF in the health, Social Care and Sport Committee.

Dr Cheema warned that the increased Minimum Unit Pricing (MUP) could deepen the cost-of-living crisis, impacting local businesses and hitting struggling households the hardest.

Furthermore, he argued that the much of the data on its effectiveness was collected during the Covid 19 pandemic. This unprecedented time likely skewed much of the data. Therefore, MUP should have remained at 50p until there had been enough time to assess its impact.

SGF has stated that it will continue to engage with the Scottish Government over the coming months. Despite calling for a twelve-month implementation period, SGF welcome the nine-month lead time before prices change.

In 2018, SGF worked with the Scottish Government to publish a Retailers Guide on MUP and host an easy to access online MUP Calculator



for retailers to use. In the coming months, SGF hopes to repeat this process for the new price of 65p.

You can view our full press release on this:

[www.sgfcot.co.uk/latest-news/sgf-warn-that-increasing-mup-will-impact-struggling-businesses-and-communities](http://www.sgfcot.co.uk/latest-news/sgf-warn-that-increasing-mup-will-impact-struggling-businesses-and-communities)


### WHAT EFFECT WILL THE NEW UNIT PRICE HAVE?

TYPE OF ALCOHOL	50P (OLD MIN. PRICE)	65P (NEW MIN. PRICE)
 <b>£14</b> 70CL BOTTLE AT 40% ABV	<b>£14</b>	<b>£18.20</b>
 <b>£13.13</b> 70CL BOTTLE AT 37.5% ABV	<b>£13.13</b>	<b>£17.06</b>
 <b>£1</b> 500ML CAN AT 4% ABV	<b>£1</b>	<b>£1.30</b>
 <b>CIDER</b> 1 LITRE BOTTLE AT 5% ABV	<b>£2.50</b>	<b>£3.25</b>
 <b>RED WINE</b> 75CL BOTTLE AT 12.5% ABV	<b>£4.69</b>	<b>£6.09</b>

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# NATIONAL LIVING WAGE AND NATIONAL MINIMUM WAGE INCREASE



The National Living Wage for people aged over 21 will increase from 1st April 2024 to the hourly rate of £11.44 – this represents an increase of 9.8% from last year. This increase will present the retail sector and in particular convenience stores with significant financial challenges.

The NLW and NMW rates from 1st April are set out in the table below:

	NMW RATE	INCREASE IN PENCE	PERCENTAGE INCREASE
National Living Wage	£11.44	£1.02	9.8%
18-20 Year Old Rate	£8.60	£1.11	14.8%
16-17 Year Old Rate	£6.40	£1.12	21.2%
Apprentice Rate	£6.40	£1.12	21.2%
Accommodation Offset	£9.99	£0.89	9.8%

The LPC's Report on the National Minimum Wage (NMW) and National Living Wage (NLW) can be accessed at: [www.gov.uk/government/publications/minimum-wage-rates-for-2024](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/minimum-wage-rates-for-2024)

SGF recognise that these increases to the NLW and NMW will have real implications for convenience retailers who are trying to run viable, sustainable businesses during these challenging times and will continue to raise these concerns with government, politicians and the Low Pay Commission.

## SGF MINI SUMMIT 2024

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Scottish Grocers' Federation

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[HTTPS://WWW.SGFSOT.CO.UK/NETWORKING-EVENTS/MINI-SUMMIT](https://www.sgfscot.co.uk/networking-events/mini-summit)

 INTERESTED IN BEING A PANELLIST OR SPONSORING?  
[angela@sgfscot.co.uk](mailto:angela@sgfscot.co.uk)

### MEET OUR WOMEN IN RETAIL PANELLISTS



**CHAIR**  
**HELEN LYONS**  
55 NORTH



**KATE ROBERTSON**  
PREMIER FOODS



**VICTORIA LOCKIE**  
NISA

## NOTES FROM THE PRESIDENT

# CRIME IN OUR STORES IS DAMAGING FABRIC OF SOCIETY

THERE'S never a dull moment in the world of convenience retailing and, as we all know, most of the big issues of the day – and the some of the smaller ones – in the wider business and political world have an impact on our sector.

However, there is one big issue that never goes away. It affects each and every one of our businesses on a daily basis – and that's retail crime. Indeed, there's been an unprecedented rise in retail crime over the past year, so our upcoming Crime Seminar – on March 14 at Hampden Stadium in Glasgow – will be a timely opportunity to discuss the issue in detail.

We'll be launching this year's SGF Crime Report at the event where we will reveal the results of our Annual Crime Survey. Among the survey's findings are that all respondents agree that shoplifting has increased in the past year, with most also agree that abuse and violence towards staff has also increased.

It's frustrating for all of us that the police appear to regard crime in our stores as petty. However, for those of us at the sharp end, it is clear that petty crime doesn't just affect our businesses and staff – it damages the very fabric of society.

Please attend our Crime Seminar if you can. Retail crime is a huge and growing issue for the convenience sector in terms of the money it costs our businesses and, arguably more important, the impact it has on our staff.

In recent weeks, we've also had confirmation that minimum unit pricing (MUP) will increase from 50p to 65p from September 30. Pete Cheema has spoken eloquently about how this increase could impact negatively on

businesses and hit struggling households during the current cost-of-living crisis.

While MUP gives our sector our more level playing field with the multiples and we don't disagree in principle with raising MUP, perhaps more consultation and reviewing the increase at a later date may have been more appropriate at a time when everyone has a lot to contend with.

It is also disappointing that the views of convenience retailers were omitted from the UK and Scottish governments' response to the consultation on 'Creating a smokefree generation and tackling youth vaping'. We do, of course, welcome the review but SGF's balanced response on behalf of our members was ignored because of our connection with the tobacco industry.

Again, another classic case of government – both at Westminster and Holyrood – failing to engage with businesses with no consideration for the prospect of an increase in illicit and unregulated trade should there be an outright ban on vapes.

So, we've certainly hit the ground running in the early part of 2024 and it is guaranteed that there will be many more issues to contend with as the year progresses.

As always, please don't hesitate to drop me an email or pick up the phone if you wish to discuss any issues regarding the SGF or your business. And if you have done something within your business that you think would be beneficial to other retailers, please do share that with us – it's always refreshing to promote a success story in our sector.



Craig Brown giving an insightful tour of the Filshill distribution centre to the SGF staff



# NORTHERN IRELAND SERVES UP PURE NATURAL QUALITY



Scotland and Northern Ireland enjoy geographic and cultural affinity. That means we share a lot of cold and rainy weather and also a love of cakes and sausage rolls. Perhaps that's why there is a happy flow of food and drink from Northern Ireland into the Scottish marketplace – and we're not averse to the odd slice of Lorne sausage or chunk of tablet either.

Invest Northern Ireland is the government business development agency for Northern Ireland. Established in 2002 as the single agency for economic development with responsibility for growing the local economy, we are part of the Department for the Economy and provide support for business, helping new and existing businesses to compete internationally, and attracting new investment to Northern Ireland.

Northern Ireland has expertise across a range of sectors, including digital technologies such as fintech, cyber security and AI; in advanced manufacturing sectors like aerospace and

materials handling and across a wide range of professional services. Food and drink is our largest manufacturing sector, with a value of over £6bn. Northern Ireland has a strong agricultural base, providing high-quality raw ingredients, coupled with state-of-the-art processing facilities, resulting in short supply chains and outstanding provenance. We sell food and drink to over 70 countries worldwide, but our closest neighbours remain our biggest customers, with 51% of external sales going to GB and 13% to the Republic of Ireland.

Our dedicated food and drink business development team focuses on boosting sales and developing new opportunities for NI suppliers in Scotland and ROI. Our relationship with SGF helps us keep up to speed with Scottish market developments and most importantly supports our interactions with leading Scottish retailers. It's always a pleasure to showcase our food and drink at SGF events and to welcome retailers to Northern Ireland. Suppliers engaged with

SGF include familiar brands like Thompson's Tea and Lakeland Dairies, as well as newer entrants including Clandeboye Yoghurt, Milgro Crispy Onions and Clarke Millar Foods (Millar Moo drinks). For retailers looking for inspiration, we're open to a chat and happy to make introductions to our wide network of over 300 suppliers.

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Northern  
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