



27 November 2008

## **NEWS RELEASE – FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

### **BEER INDUSTRY AND CONSUMERS UNITE TO SAVE THE PUB Supporters urged to sign up to “axe the beer tax”**

A major campaign to mobilise public and political support to Save the Great British Pub is launched today in Westminster by representatives of the beer industry and consumers.

The campaign, “Axe the Beer Tax – Save the Pub”, follows the decision by the Government to impose further duty rises on beer and pubs in its Pre-Budget Report this week.

A third of a price of a British pint now goes in tax. Beer sales in pubs are already at their lowest levels in nearly 40 years and pub closures have accelerated to a rate of five a day. Yet this week’s Pre-Budget Report, on top of the big duty rise in March and the planned increases due to be imposed in each of the next four years, means that by 2012:

- beer tax is set to rise by a further 40%
- at least 7,500 more pubs are set to close
- more than 40,000 jobs are likely to be lost

A campaign manifesto, “Last Orders – a five-point plan to save the British pub”, is also published today setting out the industry’s case.

Today’s launch, at the Westminster Arms pub just yards from Parliament, represents a significant moment in that it is sponsored both by the beer industry and the consumer rights champion CAMRA, the Campaign for Real Ale. The event was attended by actress Jennifer Ellison and is supported by other celebrities, politicians and groups concerned about the future of pubs in communities up and down Britain.

Speaking at the launch of the campaign, **Rob Hayward, chief executive of the British Beer and Pub Association**, said:

“Pubs play a vital role in communities up and down the country and are an essential part of promoting a more responsible drinking culture. Yet recent changes can only force more and more people out of pubs - and more and more pubs out of business.

“Pubgoers already pay a third of the price of every pint to the taxman. And now beer tax is set to rise by 40% over the next three years. The latest research predicts 43,000 lost jobs will be lost from the beer and pub trade – and that was before this new raid on our customers.

“The Chancellor has rightly decided the whole British economy needs relief from recession – except for one part of it. It is hard to avoid the conclusion that a great British tradition is being abandoned.

“This campaign will provide a voice to those who want to save the great British pub – and we urge everyone to sign up on the campaign’s website [www.axethebeertax.com](http://www.axethebeertax.com) to register their support.”

**Mike Benner, chief executive of CAMRA**, said:

“People who like a quiet pint at the local pub are being singled out for some of the biggest tax increases ever imposed.

“Community pubs are at the heart of countless communities across Britain. They are where people meet and socialise, and they promote responsible and sensible drinking.

“Yet with beer sales already falling, the scale of tax rises puts at risk parts of the brewing industry that can never be replaced once lost. At the current rate there will be 7,500 pubs lost by 2012. This latest tax increase must make that an underestimate.”

Today’s launch of ‘Axe the Beer Tax, Save the Pub’ also featured a photocall in Manchester with **Kym Marsh**, who stars as barmaid Michelle Connor in Coronation Street. Kym said:

“Pubs are a great British tradition and we must do everything we can to save them. I love going to my local pub and meeting friends for a relaxing pint, so I’m 100% behind this campaign”

All those concerned about the future of pubs are being urged to sign up to the campaign on its website [www.axethebeertax.com](http://www.axethebeertax.com) where they can lobby their MP, sign an on-line petition and organise local campaigning events.

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## **NOTES TO EDITORS**

### **British Beer & Pub Association**

The BBPA is the leading organisation representing the UK beer and pub sector. Our members account for 98% of beer brewed in the UK and own more than half of Britain's 58,000 pubs.

### **Campaign for Real Ale**

CAMRA is a consumer organisation that campaigns for real ale, real pubs and consumer rights. CAMRA has over 95,000 members and has been described as the most successful consumer group in Europe.

### **For information:**

- For more information about the launch and the wider campaign call Katherine Garrett 0207 4679286, Stephen Day 07810007317, Pete Bowyer 07740913886
- For more information re. Kym Marsh and Jennifer Ellison call Richard Price 02074679251