

# Cross-Party Group on Independent Convenience Stores [draft]

The Scottish Parliament, Committee Room 3  
6pm, Tuesday 26<sup>th</sup> September 2023  
Minute

## Present

### MSPs

John Mason MSP (substitute Convener)

Gordon MacDonald MSP (Convener) (Joined at 19:00)

### Invited Guests

Cheryl McNulty (speaker), Diet and Healthy Weight Unit (via MS Teams)

Dean Duke (speaker), Mars Wrigley

Kathryn Neil (speaker), SGF Healthy Living Programme

Umar Majid (speaker), Baba's Kitchen

Amanda Gordon, Office of Gordon Macdonald MSP

Charlie Docherty, BP

Claire Hislop, Public Health Scotland

Fazella Ratnani, Nestle

Gillian Edgar, SGF Healthy Living Programme

Graham Watson, SGF

James Harper, One-O-One Retail

Joana Ferreira

Leslie Clark, Halogen Communications

Michael Adamson, Weber Shandwick

Norman Loughery, Golden Casket

Seonag Mackinnon, Federation of Independent Retailers

Stephen Burnett, Retail Data Partnership

Stuart Rae, Golden Casket

### Non-MSP Group Members

Luke McGarty (CPG Secretary), Scottish Grocers' Federation

Aidan Smith, Scottish Grocers Federation

Abdul Majid, Baba's Kitchen

Colin Smith, Scottish Wholesale Association

Dennis Williams, Broadway Convenience Store

Jamie Buchanan, Scottish Grocers Federation (Go Local Programme)

Jamie Mackie, Scottish Grocers' Federation

Joe Hind, Scotland Food & Drink  
Linda Williams, Broadway Convenience Store  
Martin Devlin, PGMA  
Dr Pete Cheema OBE, Scottish Grocers Federation

## Apologies

The Convener noted that apologies had been received from Daniel Johnson MSP (Deputy Convener), Stephanie Callaghan MSP and Jackie Baillie MSP.

## Welcome and Introductions

John Mason MSP (substitute Convener) welcomed attendees to the meeting.

## Approval of Minutes and Action Points

John Mason MAP (substitute Convener) asked for the approval of the previous minutes from the 28<sup>th</sup> February 2023 meeting. These were approved.

## Topic: Restricting the promotion of Food and Drink High in Fat, Sugar or Salt (HFSS).

Cheryl McNulty, Restricting Promotions Team Leader, Diet and Healthy Weight Unit, Scottish Government (via MS Teams) highlighted the ongoing issue with diet and healthy weight in Scotland, impacting on public health and wellbeing. Stating that the proposed measures are intended to have a positive impact on these issues and noting the difficulty of changing public behaviour. Details will be forthcoming in a Scottish Government consultation expected this autumn and regulations are likely to come into force in 2025.

Kathryn Neil, SGF Healthy Living Programme (HLP) Director outlined the work and benefits of the HLP. The programme focuses on education and awareness, providing support and a full package for retailers to provide healthier choices for customers. Noting that over 2,300 contributors are now involved with the programme.

Dean Duke, Public Affairs Senior Manager, Mars Wrigley welcomed the opportunity to find areas of agreement and opportunity through HFSS policy. Noting that expectations for high consumer choice provides opportunities to explore new innovations and promote healthier options. Asserting that restrictions are one of the tools available, but not the full picture of changing public relationship with HFSS products. Therefore, it is important to see measurable benefits, confidence, assurance, and clarity in order for government and industry to deliver a workable scheme.

Umar Majid, Independent Retailer, Baba's Kitchen highlighted that local stores are essential for their communities, providing important local services, good value and meeting customer demands. Price promotions allows retailers to manage their stock and provide value for customers. Noting that the Scottish Government should take into account the economic challenges difficulties facing smaller stores, and the cost impact of implementation of regulation.

## Question and Answer

Following the four presentations there was general discussion and questions from a range of those present.

Some of the points made were:

- The Scottish Government is eager to engage with industry and to explore new alternatives and initiatives on issues relating to HFSS.
- Regarding price promotions, officials are taking advice and use the experience in Wales as a case study.
- It was noted that some retailers are moving to in store food service, which supports local producers and suppliers and encourages investment. More product regulation could stifle this area of growth.
- The Scottish Government is exploring the possibility of exemptions, and the consultation will outline the measures being introduced.
- At present, there are no plans to change Nutrient Profiling of HFSS products. The example provided by regulation in England has not progressed far enough to provide meaningful data.
- The sector would broadly welcome alignment with UK, which is a key issue for suppliers and producers.
- Education may be a more effective way of promoting behavioural change, as it is difficult to regulate consumer choice through in store restrictions and placement.
- Retail should not be the front line or testing ground for all new regulation. The focus should be on well-funded public education and working with parents.
- Officials acknowledge that one policy will not deliver full behavioural change, however there are a range of initiatives working across multiple areas of government.
- It was noted that social media may be a powerful tool to reach younger people. Highlighting the success of social media in the implementation of the Healthy Living Programme.
- The Scottish Government has taken the decision has been to move forward with regulation, given the delays to rollout in the UK. However, data is being collected where possible to support policy development.
- Public Health Scotland believe that retail does have a role to play. However, work is going on across a range of areas, particularly among younger people and schools.

- The out of home sector may be a key driver of HFSS related health issues and it is possible that restrictions on HFSS in retail may result in limited success.
- The Scottish Government is targeting the out of home sector, in addition. A variety of policies are intended to build into a significant messaging programme across Scotland.

The Convener thanked all the speakers for their presentations and attendees for their participation.

## Action Points

There were no action points from the meeting.

## Any Other Business

The Convener confirmed that there was no other business.

## Date of Next Meeting

The Convener confirmed that the next Cross Party Group meeting would take place at 6pm on Tuesday 14<sup>th</sup> November. The meeting will be held in-person.