



## Japan Local Government Centre, London

### Monthly Report for April 2010 (England) – Pubs strategy

#### **Background**

In February 2010, the former Local Government Minister and current Housing Minister John Healey MP was given additional responsibility as 'Pubs Minister' at the Department for Communities and Local Government. Though not a Cabinet member, Mr Healey attends Cabinet in his capacity as Housing Minister. His additional responsibilities, given by the Prime Minister in response to the crisis currently affecting many of Britain's pubs during the recession, are similar to that of Local Government Minister Rosie Winterton MP, who was given additional duties as the first 'Markets Minister' in order to promote England's markets. It is estimated that 40 pubs have closed across Britain each week over the last year as a result of the recession, cheaper alcohol pricing by supermarket chains and the smoking ban. In response to his appointment, Mr Healey said "Pubs are often at the heart of village life, and are important meeting places for many people,"

#### **12 point action plan for pubs**

The 12 point action plan is based around three elements: *Business support; Industry standards and consumer choice; and Community and local authority action:*

##### Business support

- ✓ 'Pub is the Hub', a national advisory body of full-time advisers available to provide landlords and tenants with expert business advice
- ✓ a three-year pilot programme of funding for 50 community-owned pubs
- ✓ an independent study of the pubs sector and a skills plan for the pubs sector
- ✓ working with RDAs to ensure that local communities are aware of the benefits of community pubs and can access funding available under the Rural Development Programme for England

##### Industry standards and consumer choice

- ✓ a consultation on relaxation of licensing requirements for live music in small venues
- ✓ acceptance of the BIS Select Committee recommendations for effective operation of British Beer and Pub Association Code of Practice
- ✓ a government push for further freedoms for tenants to offer more consumer choice in their pubs as part of the Code of Practice

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- ✓ a government push for pub industry to regularise flow measurement devices (which ensure tenant is not buying beer from other sources)
- ✓ a review of the Amusement Machine Licence Duty for skill with prize machines

#### Community and local authority action

- ✓ Chief Planner to write to all local authorities to explain the flexibilities and protections available to pubs under the planning system
- ✓ more powers for local people to oppose demolition of empty pubs
- ✓ a consultation on the removal of restrictive planning covenants imposed by pub owners which prevent future land owners from operating a pub on the site

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