Social Responsibility and the Drinks Industry

Pat Barry

Guinness Group Sales

<u>**Response Summary**</u>

Dr. Holder's conclusions has synergies with one of the principles of my own company - Think Global - act local. His approach is one to which the Drinks Industry in Ireland can subscribe and, further, one which the industry would be prepared to support. Why? Because contrary to what some people might suggest - the industry in Ireland does care and does have social responsibility high on its agenda. And as an industry that plays a role at the very core of the issue, surely it makes sense for it to be engaged more actively with those focussed on the issues of abuse of alcohol.

Dr. Holder's paper establishes a number of learnings for us in Ireland: Clear objectives and a clear understanding of the issue are critical - tackling abuse of a specific nature (e.g. abuse of licensing laws and drink-driving have a higher likelihood of success than more generic interventions around alcohol use levels).

Locally based initiatives engender higher levels of commitment, and help stimulate a debate around cause, effect and symptom. When compared with more conventional social marketing approaches to alcohol abuse, the community-based initiatives can be very cost effective. Finally, the visible evidence of success can have a very motivating impact on the local community, leading to more empowered groups of citizens with an appetite and an energy for tackling societal issues. Against this, local policies can find it difficult to gain real traction and risk being getto-ised. The evidence presented suggests that neither the community nor the policy-makers always set the correct time frame for change.

Dr. Butler's response will indicated that we haven't really experimented with bottom-up approaches in Ireland (for alcohol). Surely, some of the initiatives in which the Drinks Industry is or can be involved provide us with a basis for implementing real and effective action to tackle the grave problem of alcohol abuse within our society."