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Distillers call for partnership to tackle misuse

Industry, government, and other stakeholders must work together to promote a responsible drinking culture in Scotland was the message from Scotch Whisky Association (SWA) Chief Executive, Gavin Hewitt, in a keynote address today to the Scotland's Futures Forum at Holyrood.

The event at the Scottish Parliament was examining the wide range of initiatives supported by whisky distillers, and other drinks producers, aimed at tackling alcohol misuse. It also considered international experience and what more might be done by industry and others to address the minority who continue to drink irresponsibly.

Gavin Hewitt said:

"I'm a firm believer in partnership - that is why the SWA was an enthusiastic founding participant in the Scottish Government/Alcohol Industry Partnership, an initiative that is already delivering tangible results such as last year's highly successful Alcohol Awareness Week. SWA members have also put in place a far reaching Code of Practice on marketing and promotion, best practice recognised at EU level, and are rolling out new voluntary labelling to raise alcohol unit awareness.

"Last month, ONS figures reported that fewer and fewer Scots are drinking to excess. It is good news that our message is getting through but it is also clear more must be done to reach the minority who continue to drink irresponsibly. Today gives us an excellent opportunity to learn more about working in partnership to tackle alcohol misuse."

The event also heard, among others, from the European Commission's top health official, Robert Madelin, and from Benet Slay, Managing Director of Diageo GB, on the benefits of a partnership approach to promoting responsible drinking.

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Note to Editors:

1. The event is part of a series of Scotland's Futures Forum seminars considering 'Fresh Perspectives on Alcohol & Drugs' – see <http://www.scotlandfutureforum.org/> for more details.
2. For further information please contact Campbell Evans (0131 222 9231 or 07768 002 262) or David Williamson (0131 222 9230 or 07730 496 151) at the SWA.