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Lawson Mountstevens: Heineken addresses Punch concerns



Lawson Mountstevens says pubs such as the Fork & Field in Livingston have benefited from Heineken's investment. Picture: Contributed

By
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Paul Waterson of the Scottish Licensed Trade Association (STLA) has voiced concerns about Heineken's intention to purchase 1,900 pubs from Punch Taverns. I would like to address those directly with readers of The Scotsman.

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comments



Heineken is a passionate supporter of pubs, and we believe that they play a vital role at the heart of communities. Of the 4,900 pubs in Scotland, we currently own just over 100 – that's 2 per cent.

If our offer is successful, this would increase to just 6 per cent, far from making us the monster that the SLTA says we would become.

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“We hope to bring our passion, expertise and successful operating model to more Scottish pubs”



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Heineken has a long track record of working with entrepreneurial licensees who know that success comes from providing a consistently excellent experience for customers. In 2016, we committed a further £2 million of investment for our Scottish pubs, adding to the £5m we have spent over the last three years. The scale and scope of our refurbishments have helped to ensure that licensees can significantly improve their food offer, with new kitchens and flexible areas within pubs to cater for a wider range of events. With our pubs better equipped to meet changing consumer needs, they are also generating multiple income streams for our licensees.

The results are nothing short of transformational. Both our licensees and customers of the [Fork & Field in Livingston](#), The Jolly Botanist and the recently opened Barrelhouse Bar & Grill in Edinburgh will attest to that.

We would be happy to show the SLTA around these great pubs or invite them to our Edinburgh HQ to meet some of the 550 people we employ in Scotland. Or to come and see our historic Caledonian Brewery where we brew award-winning beers. The SLTA highlights the important £1.6 billion contribution that brewing and pubs make to the economy. We agree, and Heineken is proud that we contribute approximately £370m of that value to Scotland.

Rather than “de-stabilise our fragile industry”, we hope to bring our passion, expertise and successful operating model to more Scottish pubs. When it comes to consumer choice, Heineken’s market share in Scotland’s pubs is less than half that of the largest producer (C&C Group). We have consistently said that we start with what is right for each pub, and we will work with licensees to ensure they have the right drinks offer to suit the specific needs of each pub. Our purchase is subject to approval by Punch shareholders and the UK regulators; so we will, of course, fully co-operate with the competition authorities.

Looking ahead, we will stay focused on investing in our pubs and campaigning on behalf of licensees; to cut the excessive burden of business rates, secure apprenticeship levy funding, and promote the important role that pubs play in our communities.



• Lawson Mountstevens is managing director of [Heineken Star Pubs & Bars](#)

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