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Mr Robert Harper  
26 Ashfield Road  
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Dear Mr Harper

Thank you for contacting me about beer taxation and its impact on pubs. I enclose for your information a recent letter I have received from the Exchequer Secretary to the Treasury on this issue.

Local pubs in Nottingham East are very close to my heart and I recognise the valuable contribution the pub industry makes to employment, the life of local communities and to the economy. I'm also aware of the pressures that pubs face with increasing costs and the impact of legislation, though other factors, including shifting tastes and consumer preferences are also affecting the demand for beer and the pub market is continuously changing.

Recent tax changes should be seen alongside action on the economy that will benefit all businesses, including pubs. Pubs will be able to benefit from a range of measures to support small businesses and many small local breweries already benefit from a lower rate of alcohol duty because of the small brewery relief introduced in 2002. The tax changes also mean that households have on average an extra £20 a month to spend – over £12 billion for the wider economy - supporting spending and consumption further. This will help to protect hundreds of thousands of jobs and businesses, including those in the pub industry. Please be assured that I will continue to support these and other measures that help the businesses and the people who make the British pub such an important part of our national life.

With regard to Early Day Motion 10, I have a great deal of sympathy with the five demands in this EDM, but after careful thought, I have decided not to sign it. My reasons are as follows :

I do believe that tax should be increased less for pubs and more for supermarkets, but I do not believe there should be no increase. I am happy, of course, with the idea of better enforcement of existing laws, but would not like to rule out new laws if they seem necessary. I am very happy to support stopping the irresponsible promotion of alcohol, as described in the EDM. I am happy that people should be allowed the freedom to choose but I do think that this must be within a framework that stops the irresponsible behaviour previously mentioned. I certainly do support pubs but I would like to add that I think the decline is due to a number of factors, with prices being a fairly small consideration.

I hope this explains my thoughts on this. Thanks again for taking the time to get in touch.

Yours sincerely

John Heppell MP

[www.johnheppell.labour.co.uk](http://www.johnheppell.labour.co.uk)