

Guest Article by Dr Ian McKee MSP – the alcohol debate

by Dr Ian McKee MSP

✘ Scotland's relationship with alcohol is a topic that has dominated this session of parliament. For many, it's a controversial issue that sharply divides public opinion. In my view, the alcohol debate will allow people to judge politicians and separate those who take their public role seriously and responsibly, from those who use it as yet another opportunity for political point-scoring. Alcohol should not be a victim of party politics, but rather addressed by political parties coming together in the national interest as was done with the smoking ban (Tories excluded). It is with much regret that so far, the opposition has lacked courage and responsibility and has let Scotland down.

Contrary to what is often perceived, Edinburgh is not exempt from the contagious binge and excessive drink culture. In fact, there are parts of the city where excessive drinking is well above the national average. This culture not only leads to premature deaths and illnesses but costs our National Health Service, police and social work services billions each year. As a former GP for Wester Hailes, I have first hand experience of what all this means and I am using my term in office to bring my experience to parliament and highlight the social problems faced by many people in deprived communities.

If, like the smoking ban, politicians can put their colours aside and act in the best interest and future of Scotland, people might well restore their faith in politics and really believe that we can make a positive difference to their lives and their children's future.