

CAMRA chair urges support from Parliament



Patrick Harvie MSP introduces Sarah Crawford at the Cross Party reception. Picture Nigel Duncan Media

The Scottish Parliament can do a lot to support the Scottish brewing industry.

That's the view of Sarah Crawford, Scotland and Northern Ireland director for the Campaign for Real Ale (CAMRA).

She told the annual reception of the Cross Party Group on beer and pubs at Holyrood that the Scottish brewing industry had experienced phenomenal growth in recent years.

Now Scotland has 104 breweries and she added that the brewing industry was integral to the great success of Scottish pubs.

Pubs, she said, played a unique role in our lives and she added: "They are a place where friends are made and communities come together.

"Research from Oxford University shows that there is a clear association between going to the pub and personal happiness.

“People who have a local have more close friends, are more trusting of others and are more engaged with their local communities.

“CAMRA will continue to campaign hard to ensure pubs continue to make a valuable contribution to our society, culture and economy.”

The organisation are now placing an increased focus on educating members and non-members about different types of beer.

She added: “It also sees campaigning for real cider and perry added to the objects for the first time as well as recognising pub and club protection as a key object for the organisation.”

She pledged to work with vigour to forge a bright future for beer and pubs and confirmed that CAMRA have welcomed the introduction of a 12.5 per cent cap on business rates increases for hospitality businesses which includes pubs.

Mrs Crawford said: “The Government made a good first step by extending this hospitality cap for another year but this cap must be made permanent to ensure the long-term viability of pubs.

“In the long-term, more must be done to address issues with the business rates system which adversely affects high turnover, low profit and property-based businesses such as pubs.

“Furthermore, while planning permission is needed to change the use of a pub, it is possible for developers to demolish some free-standing pubs without planning permission.

“This planning loophole needs to be closed so that planning permission is always required before a pub can be demolished.

“There is a lot that you can do in Parliament to support the brewing and pubs industry.

“Please consider putting questions to Government about these key issues, hosting debates or even sourcing locally-brewed real ale to serve at your events to help raise the profile of the industry.”