Dear [MP NAME],

**Cut Duty, Keep the Easement & Support Amps Wine Merchants**

As one of your constituents, I'm contacting you to share my concerns about the impact of the recent changes in the alcohol excise duty regime and the damage these measures have had on consumers and on local wine and spirit businesses, such as Amps Wine Merchants.

Amps Wine Merchants in Oundle is my local independent wine merchant, a fourth generation family run and owned business who have been trading since 1901.

I am writing to ask you to show your support by asking the Government to introduce two key changes at the Budget on 6 March:

1. Cut excise duty; and
2. Make the temporary easement mechanism for levying wine duty a permanent feature.

Last August’s double digit increase in excise duty has undermined consumer demand, stifled sales, fuelled inflation and reduced revenue to the Exchequer. Cutting excise duty at the Budget would help restore business confidence, give us hard pressed consumers a break, drive down inflation and lead to increased income to the Treasury.

Duty increases on 1 August 2023 were the largest in around 50 years, adding 20% to excise duty on over 80% of all still wines on the UK market and more than 10% to duty paid on most spirits. Following the increases, sales volumes have declined, alcohol inflation is running at over double the headline rate – while revenue from duty receipts has declined.

It need not be as damaging to business, as impactful on Treasury income or as tough on hard-pressed consumers. Even a cursory examination of alcohol excise duty income over the last 10 years or so demonstrates that income to the Exchequer tends to increase following a duty freeze – spirits excise receipts increased by 4% in 2015-16 on the back of a 2% cut to spirits duty in 2015.

**Given the pressure on the public purse and on household incomes it is surely in everyone’s interests – those of Government, businesses and consumers to maximise revenue earned and minimise costs by cutting excise duty at the Budget.**

For thousands of wine businesses across the UK, the Government’s new excise duty regime, introduced last year, has failed to meet one of its key objectives: to make the new duty system easier to administer. Unless the temporary wine easement is made permanent, from 1 February 2025 wine businesses will be swamped with significant start-up costs and ongoing increased red tape to introduce fully the new system.

The introduction of the Temporary Easement – under which duty is calculated on all wines between 11.5-14.5% ABV as if they were 12.5% (£2.67 per bottle) - rightly recognised that wine is a unique product. However, unless the Government acts, this temporary mechanism is due to end on 1 February 2025. This will mean duty has to be calculated for every SKU, in a range that contains around 85% of all wine on the UK market. **Making the easement permanent would avoid increasing cost pressures and administrative burden for all wine businesses, and especially for thousands of SMEs. It would also help stabilise prices and restore consumer confidence and, as a result, Exchequer receipts would increase.**

Despite the freezing of duty at the Autumn Statement, the Treasury has not listened to industry feedback and the new system remains unnecessarily complex and burdensome to administer.

I ask that you support your constituents and our local businesses by supporting a cut in duty and making the wine easement permanent - and urge you to write to the Treasury as a matter of urgency.

Kind Regards,

[CUSTOMER NAME]

[CUSTOMER POST CODE]