Last year, nearly half all violent crime in Devon was alcohol-related. That represents 4,568 instances of completely avoidable violence. I welcome the introduction of a ban on below-cost sales of alcohol as a first step, but does the Minister share my fear that, because it involves only VAT plus duty, it will not go far enough in tackling this serious problem? What other measures will be introduced to tackle alcohol-related crime?

James Brokenshire (Parliamentary Under Secretary of State, Home Office)

My hon. Friend is right to highlight the link between alcohol and levels of crime. In fact, 50% of violent incidents are associated with alcohol. Our proposal to ban below-cost sales on the basis of duty plus VAT constitutes an initial package. We will introduce further measures to deal with licensing and other issues involving problem pubs and other alcohol outlets, and also with problem practices. That is precisely what the duty plus VAT element is about.

We will continue to monitor this complex area of policy. In particular, we will consider the rate of duty in the context of super-strength lagers, which have been associated with problematic behaviour.

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