

# Two years after legal supermarkets STILL

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SUPERMARKETS in Scotland are selling alcohol at record low prices – in defiance of a Scottish Government crackdown on cut-price booze.

In the run-up to Christmas, stores are trying to lure shoppers with incredible bargains on beers, wines and spirits.

Stores across the country are offering 'bulk-buy' deals in which alcoholic drinks become cheaper when customers buy more.

For example, one supermarket is selling a four-pack of canned lager for £3.50 – and a 30-pack of exactly the same product for only £16.

The discounts are being offered to customers despite the Scottish Government outlawing 'multi-buy' promotions two years ago.

Although supermarkets insist the deals are legal, officials now believe they are not, claiming the legislation prohibits retailers from providing promotions which 'encourage the purchase of alcoholic products packaged together'.

Last night, a Scottish Government source said: 'Officials believe these offers may be illegal. We believe the supermarkets are breaking the law, as you cannot sell in bulk for less than the standard price of individual products.'

A snapshot survey carried out in supermarkets in Glasgow by The Scottish Mail on Sunday last week

## 'Officials believe these offers may be illegal'

found a remarkable range of bulk-buy bargains.

At Tesco in Silverburn, a four-pack of 440ml Carlsberg cost £3.50 (equivalent to 87.5p per can), yet a 30-pack of the same lager cost only £16.00 (which equates to a price of only 53.3p per can).

In ASDA on Helen Street, Govan, a six-pack of 300ml Budweiser cost £5 (equivalent to 83.3p per bottle) and a 24-pack of the same beer cost only £12 (equal to 50p per bottle).

Similar bulk-buy deals were available in Morrisons, Sainsbury's and Aldi.

In recent years, the price of alcoholic drinks has become a political issue. The Scottish Government is desperate to tackle the nation's appalling record on reckless drinking and alcohol abuse.

In 2011, laws were introduced outlawing 'multi-buy' discounts on alcohol. Shops were forced to drop two-for-the-price-of-one or three-for-the-price-of-two promotions.

As well as the ban on multi-buy promotions, the Government has also banned happy hours in pubs and clamped down on other promotions.

The supermarket bargains are likely to prove very popular with shoppers.

But MSPs and health campaigners are demanding that the bosses of Britain's biggest supermarkets should be summoned to appear before a Holyrood committee to explain why they are encouraging customers to buy alcohol in bulk.

Scottish Labour public health spokesman Richard Simpson, a former GP, said: 'I regard these

## ...and on the streets, alcohol-fuelled revellers



**CASUALTY:** A paramedic arrives at the scene to offer help to a woman who has collapsed on the pavement of Renfield Street in Glasgow city centre on Friday night

**POLICE** officers outnumbered doctors in Scotland's busiest A&E ward this weekend as drunken Christmas parties sparked a massive surge in casualties and victims of violence.

With the festive party season in full swing, office workers and revellers hit the pubs, bars and clubs – leading to a boom in alcohol-fuelled injuries and attacks.

The Scottish Government has consistently tried to improve Scotland's troubled relationship with alcohol through advertising campaigns and changes to the law. But when The Scottish Mail on Sunday took to the streets of Glasgow on Friday night, there was little sign that the message is getting through.

Police, medics and volunteers were forced to

By **Stephen Johns**

run a military-style operation to keep the party-going public safe, while bars and clubs offered cut-price booze promotions.

At Glasgow Royal Infirmary, Scotland's largest hospital, doctors saw a marked increase in patients, the vast majority intoxicated.

Dr Richard Stevenson, who worked until 8am on Saturday with a team of four doctors and nine nurses, said the sheer number of drunks put a huge burden on the emergency services.

He added: 'It was much worse than a regular Friday night; 50 people were brought in after midnight, compared to around 30 or 40 usually. Unfortunately, the vast majority were assaults

related to alcohol. They were all brought in from the city centre with blunt force injuries from punches and kicks. One person had been hit on the head with an unbroken bottle.

'We were treating victims and offenders. At one point, there were more police officers in A&E than doctors and nurses combined.

'People's behaviour caused problems and was very disruptive. There was shouting and a couple of people were carried out by the police because they were aggressive.

'People who might not often drink that much were drunk out of their heads and absolutely wasted. These were people who all had jobs, and ranged in age from early twenties up to 49 – all on work night outs. They were a burden on the



## A four-pack for £3.50 and a 30-pack for only £16? It's a deal!

### TESCO – Silverburn

Carlsberg 440ml cans: 4-pack £3.50 • 30-pack £16.00  
Tennent's 500ml cans: 4-pack £4 • 12-pack £8.50  
San Miguel 330ml bottles: 4-pack £4 • 12-pack £9

### ASDA – Helen Street, Govan

John Smith 440ml cans: 4-pack £3.50 • 10-pack £6.66  
Budweiser 300ml bottle: 6-pack £5 • 24-pack £12  
Carlsberg 440ml cans: 4-pack £3.76 • 20-pack £11

### SAINSBURY'S – Braehead

Carlsberg 440ml cans: 4-pack £4 • 15-pack £12  
Tennent's 440ml cans: 4-pack £4 • 15-pack £9

### MORRISONS – Paisley Road West

Carlsberg 440ml cans: 4-pack £3.75 • 12-pack £8  
Kronenberg 440ml cans: 4-pack £4.49 • 10-pack £10

### Aldi – High Street, Glasgow

Tennent's 440ml cans: 4-pack £2.99 • 12-pack £8



offers as totally against the spirit of the law. It is morally reprehensible for firms that are endeavouring to promote responsible drinking.

'I have requested the chairman of the health committee, Duncan McNeil, to call on supermarkets to

provide an explanation as to why they are doing something that is against the spirit of the law. It is clear from the debate and what was said in parliament that this sort of activity was to be stopped.'

Dr Simpson is currently preparing

a Bill that will include more measures to tackle loopholes which allow retailers to discount the price of multi-packs.

Supermarkets believe they are free to offer bulk-buy deals because a four-pack and a 20-pack, even of the

same beer or lager, are technically counted as separate products and can be sold at whatever prices managers choose.

Dr Evelyn Gillan, chief executive of Alcohol Focus Scotland, said: 'Yet again, the supermarkets are compet-