

NEWS BRIEF

Presented by **Crendon Insurance Brokers Ltd**

Scotland May Lower Drink-drive Limit

Scotland's Justice Secretary Kenny MacAskill has submitted a proposal, which, if approved by the Scottish Parliament, would slash the country's drink-drive limit by almost half. The proposal would lower Scotland's drink-drive limit from 80mg to 50mg in every 100 ml of blood, potentially starting on 5 December. If the proposal passes, Scottish drivers could be breaking the law if they drink a small glass of wine or a single pint of beer and get behind the wheel.

Why Lower the Limit?

The proposal to lower the drink-drive limit stems from a late 2012 Scottish Government survey that asked people whether they would like to see a lower drink-drive limit; seventy-four per cent of respondents answered that the government should reduce the limit. Of the respondents in favour of reducing the drink-drive limit, 87 per cent agreed with the following proposals currently under deliberation by the Scottish Parliament:

- A reduction in the blood limit from 80mg to 50mg of alcohol in 100 ml of blood
- An equivalent reduction in the breath limit from 35 mcg to 22 mcg of alcohol in 100 ml of breath
- An equivalent reduction in the urine limit from 107mg to 67mg of alcohol in 100 ml of urine

Supporters of the lower limit believe that it could save lives and prevent injuries on Scotland's roads—about one in 10 deaths on Scotland's roads involve drivers who are over the legal limit, and in 2012 an estimated 230 people were killed in drink-drive accidents across the United Kingdom, according to the latest data. With a potential start

date of 5 December, supporters claim that a lower limit could substantially curb drink-driving during the festive season.

However, detractors of the proposal believe that the lower limit is not designed to dramatically improve road safety, but is instead meant to generate increased income from fines. They claim there is a lack of statistics proving that drivers marginally over the limit are a significant hazard. Instead of lowering the overall limit, critics would rather see legislation or initiatives specifically targeted at the extremely inebriated motorists who cause the majority of drink-driving accidents.

Drink-drive Limits Across the United Kingdom

The drink-drive limit in the United Kingdom is set at 80mg of alcohol in 100ml of blood. But Northern Ireland, like Scotland, is also considering a reduction to the drink-drive limit from 80mg in blood to 50mg as part of a group of proposals found in the Road Traffic (Amendment) Bill. The Northern Ireland Assembly is currently reviewing the bill, which could become law by early 2015.

If the proposals pass, both countries' legal alcohol limits would be in line with much of Europe, including Spain, France and Germany.

England and Wales will not follow suit—there are currently no plans to change the limit in these two countries. But in the future, drivers passing between different countries in the United Kingdom may be subject to different drink-drive limits, meaning drivers need to monitor their own alcohol intake and be aware of the applicable laws wherever they drive.

