

HFMA - The Voice of the Natural Health Industry. For information on HFMA membership, or enquiries, call 0208 481 7100 or email office@hfma.co.uk

hfma Bulletin Board

— News, information and comment

The Voice of the
Natural Health
Industry



Keeping health on the High Street

Reading this month that Chiselhurst in Kent won the Mary Portas' High Street Champion of the Year Award reminded me of the extensive criticism she attracted with her 'town pilots'.

Some said it was like giving a sticking plaster to someone with a severed limb, but it wasn't her fault the Government made only £2.7 million available to help. Split across 27 towns, this was a sum so paltry that either the Government didn't really care about 'the High Street' or, more likely, failed to understand the true nature and scale of the problems local retailers are facing every day.

It was not surprising then that a polite 'unworkable' greeted Eric Pickles' suggestion that allowing people to park on double-yellow lines on busy high streets would help sort things out. Not exactly the type of queue retailers are looking for.

As we move into 2014, however, there are some real opportunities to influence and shape policy that might start to make a real difference. In a rapid recovery, Eric Pickles' department (DEFRA) has issued a consultation document which looks at how



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councils can adopt more shopper-friendly parking policies alongside changes to high street planning, and the Chancellor announced in his Autumn Statement a range of caps and discounts on business rates that are designed to assist struggling high street retailers. The opposition, for its part, has just appointed Bill Grimsey, the former chief executive of Wickes

and Iceland, to advise the Labour Party's high street policy.

At NBTY Europe we have been actively supporting the British Retail Consortium and other trade associations in lobbying for change. We now appear to have some substantial draft policies to think through and debate, and it is vital that the voice of the local independent operator is heard here. Locally as well as nationally.

Politicians and the media need to understand that if some high streets in London and the South East are enjoying a few small green shoots of growth, the majority of high streets across the country are not. The trade associations and companies, including Holland & Barrett, can present the corporate perspective, but it is the local independent operator that can most powerfully bring to life what the high street crisis means to local economies.

So if it's not too late for another New Year's resolution, please do what you can to engage in the debate, speak to your local newspaper, respond to the consultations, write to your local MP and councillors and make a difference.

GETTING THE BEST FROM THE HFMA...

Good Manufacturing Practice

In an industry which is being increasingly monitored by the national media, and constantly regulated, the importance of Good Manufacturing Practice (GMP) should not be undervalued.

To protect the reputation of both members and the industry, HFMA policy requires its members to ensure that all products are manufactured according to GMP.

All companies within the HFMA membership are required to sign a declaration of adherence to the principles of the GMP at various stages during the manufacturing and distribution process.

In the case of food supplementation, the HFMA takes lead from the standards included in the *Quality Guide for Food Supplements* published by the European Federation of Health Product Manufacturers (EHPM), to ensure members conform to the highest standards of manufacturing.

Visit the HFMA team on Stand 4040E on the HFMA Pavilion at Natural & Organic Products Europe.



RESEARCH UPDATE ...

Prevalence of rickets

New figures from the NHS show there were 833 hospital admissions last year for children suffering from rickets, caused by a lack of vitamin D. The figures represent more than a 300% rise from ten years ago, when there were 190.

In another argument for the importance of vitamin D supplementation, Professor Nicholas Clarke, consultant orthopaedic surgeon at Southampton General Hospital and professor of paediatric orthopaedic surgery at the University of Southampton, warned: "It should be remembered that vitamin D deficiency is utterly preventable and easily treated by minor supplements. It is also important to note that the Chief Medical Officer has now advised that all children from the age of six months to five years should take vitamin D supplements in order to prevent deficiency and its effect on later health issues."

DEFENDING AN INDUSTRY

In a national media environment which has been highly unpredictable and inconsistent in its portrayal of natural health over the last 12 months, it has never been more important to stay one step ahead of negative reports.

The HFMA has put concerted efforts into liaising with national news journalists on new research reports, and clarifying incorrect or inflammatory challenges to the industry.

Once such example occurred recently, when a US report from *The Annals of Internal Medicine* suggested that "Most supplements do not prevent chronic disease

or death, their use is not justified and they should be avoided" was widely reported.

This research, which was conducted by academics from Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine and the University of Warwick, asserted that "supplementing the diet of well-nourished adults has no clear benefit and might even be harmful".

An early alert to the issue meant that the HFMA was able to produce a statement reassuring consumers of the safety and efficacy of the VMS industry, and reiterating that daily supplementation provided nutritional insurance for millions of users, and

this was used extensively within national news media.

Later focus on the issue saw the HFMA's Graham Keen engage in a live national radio debate with media medics, Dr Sarah Jarvis and Dr Chris Van Tulleken, in which he reiterated that there are numerous nutritional deficiencies within the British public and that, in the case of vitamin D in particular, the Chief Medical Officer has advised that at-risk groups, including pregnant women, children and the elderly, should be provided with vitamin D supplementation.

The HFMA remains alert and ready to act when needed.