**PRESS RELEASE**

**WEDNESDAY 09 APRIL 2014**

**MCCAUSLAND WELCOMES RULING AGAINST RED ARMY VODKA**

Duncan McCausland, Chairman of the Independent Complaints Panel (ICP) that oversees the Northern Ireland’s Responsible Promotion and Retail of Alcohol Code has welcomed the news that its complaint against Red Army Vodka has been upheld.

The ICP made a formal complaint to the Portman Group, the body that oversees the UK code for the Naming, Packaging and Promotion of Alcoholic Drinks by suppliers, claiming that a Red Army Vodka product made by Bartex was closely linked with violent, aggressive, dangerous or anti-social behaviour because of its name and packaging, which was modelled on a Kalashnikov rifle.

The Portman Group Panel upheld the complaint and found that the name Red Army, both in the context of the packaging, and with the packaging itself, was inappropriate for an alcoholic drink, as both suggested an association with violent and dangerous behaviour. The Panel found the product to be in breach of paragraph 3.2(b) of their code.

**Duncan McCausland, chair of the Independent Complaints Panel that oversees the Northern Ireland Responsible Promotion and Retail of Alcohol Code said:**

“Following a thorough process, the Portman Group Panel has upheld our complaint against Red Army Vodka.

“We believe that both the product’s name and packaging combined, made an unacceptable association between alcohol and violent, aggressive and anti-social behaviour. Such marketing techniques contravene the UK’s rules around the marketing of alcohol.

“We are pleased that the Panel has upheld our complaint and we are encouraged to see that both the Northern Ireland Code and the Portman Group’s code can work simultaneously to tackle irresponsible alcohol promotions.

“We would urge alcohol retailers in Northern Ireland not to stock the product in its current form of packaging after the Portman Group’s stated date of 19 June 2014, allowing the producer time to change its packaging.

“There is no place for this sort of irresponsible marketing of alcohol and we are glad to see that a zero-tolerance approach has been adopted in this case.”

**ENDS**

For further information, please contact Arlene O’Connor at MCE Public Relations on 028 90 267099/ 07736049754 or arlene@mcepublicrelations.com

**Notes to Editors:**

1. The Joint Industry Code for the Responsible Promotion and Retail of Alcohol in Northern Ireland (2012), which aims to address the current attitude and culture in Northern Ireland in terms of alcohol misuse and abuse, applies to all suppliers and retailers of alcohol in Northern Ireland.
2. It has been developed with the support of the Minister for Social Development, Nelson McCausland as well as the representative bodies of the drinks industries in Northern Ireland. It is hoped that compliance with the code will eventually become a condition of the granting or renewal of both liquor and entertainment licenses across Northern Ireland.
3. Full details of the Responsible Retailing Code NI and how to make a complaint can be found at [www.responsibleretailingcodeni.org](http://www.responsibleretailingcodeni.org)
4. The complaint against Red Army Vodka was made by the Independent Complaints Panel for Northern Ireland’s Code to the Portman Group’s Independent Complaints Panel. The Portman Group’s role is to promote responsible drinking and they have run the Code of Practice on the Naming, Packaging and Promotion of Alcoholic Drinks since 1996.
5. The Portman Group’s Code of Practice on the Naming, Packaging and Promotion of Alcoholic Drinks applies to pre-packaged alcoholic drinks and the promotional activities of all drinks producers.  A copy of the Portman Group’s Code can be downloaded from the Portman Group [website](http://www.portmangroup.org.uk/codes/alcohol-marketing/code-of-practice/code-of-practice).