

NATIONAL CONSUMER FEDERATION

THE GRASSROOTS CONSUMER WATCHDOG

Philip Flaherty
Official Controls and Enforcement Policy Branch
Food Standards Agency
Room 411C, Aviation House
125 Kingsway, London WC2B 6NH

6th August 2008

Dear Mr Flaherty

Scores on the Doors Consultation

NCF as the organisation for local consumer groups is interested in the hygiene checks on food premises made by local Environmental Health Officers. We have the impression that this can be very patchy throughout the country.

Members who have used the scheme have found it very helpful, and agreed they would use it again. They mostly looked at cafes, take-aways, restaurants, hotels and butchers shops in their area. All the schemes we looked at were on 5 star systems. In one area those with 3 or less as shown on the website appeared reluctant to display the fact.

We think the scheme should be a national one, across the UK and NI, consumers could find it helpful to have a consistent scheme to use when travelling or staying somewhere, for instance across national chains of outlets. Our members are inclined to think the 3 stars plus fail would be sufficient information, and perhaps more useful 'on the doors' as a simple check. It should definitely only be given following a full inspection; and to each business within one establishment where this occurs; and taking into consideration the likelihood of the level of compliance being maintained in the future. Scores should be notified to businesses before publication to allow query/challenge; an appeal system will be required; and businesses should be allowed to request re-inspection at a reasonable cost.

We like the idea of a notice sticker on the window or similar, preferably so that consumers can see it prior to entering the premises, but it may need the score rating chart as backup information somewhere so that consumers know what the stars mean and it is vital that it is clearly dated. Web based information can be fuller and past performance may usefully show a trend. The system needs to be better promoted if people are to use it effectively.

Yours sincerely
Sue Payne
NCF Food Policy Group

NATIONAL CONSUMER FEDERATION

FOOD POLICY GROUP AIMS:

- a) For Choice, Information, Representation, Access to goods and services, Quality, Fairness, Safety and to identify and promote the interests of consumers, with reference to the key guiding principles of Redress.
- b) To consult with and represent grassroots members, to circulate, publish and disseminate their views and where appropriate to respond to consultation on their behalf in food related issues.

HEAD OFFICE : Wey House, 15 Church Street, Weybridge, KT13 8NA
TEL: 020 01932 820230 secretary@ncf.info www.ncf.info
COMPANY NO. 04276357 LIMITED BY GUARANTEE CHARITY REG. 1101414