



APPG on Smoking & Health Political Bulletin

ASH: 40 years fighting the harm caused by tobacco

On 15th June I hope you will join me at a reception I am hosting on behalf of the APPG to celebrate the 40th anniversary of Action on Smoking and Health. Further celebrations are in order, as ASH has been given a World No Tobacco Day award by the World Health Organization for its national and international work.

Set up by the Royal College of Physicians in 1971, ASH has provided the secretariat for this APPG since its inception in 1976. We have made astonishing advances since those early days when it was still legal to advertise smoking on billboards, at the cinema and in magazines; when tobacco sponsorship of sports was pervasive; and when deals were still done in smoke-filled rooms. In 1970 half the adult population were smokers, now it is only one in five.

These changes have been possible because of the development of strong cross-party support for tackling tobacco, in which the APPG has played a key role. The comprehensive tobacco strategy put in place by successive governments have made us a world leader in tackling tobacco. I was particularly pleased to see the strong commitment in the Coalition Government Tobacco Plan published this March to protect public health policy from the commercial and vested interests of the tobacco industry.

However, as the exposure of British American Tobacco's funding of the campaign against the display legislation shows (see article on back page), we must be ever vigilant to covert lobbying by the tobacco industry. You, like me, may have been contacted by lobbyists Hume Brophy on behalf of the NFRN, with no mention of the links with BAT. I have written to ask Hume Brophy to inform MPs about BAT's involvement and asking them to apologise for not having done so at the outset. Others of you may wish to do the same.

Stephen Williams MP, Chair, APPG on Smoking & Health



Kevin Barron MP meets protestors at BAT AGM – see back page

Tobacco Plan welcomed

The Tobacco Control Plan for England, published on 9 March, is exactly the ambitious and comprehensive plan to drive down smoking prevalence that we called for in the Spring edition of the APPG Political Bulletin. The Plan is underpinned by national ambitions for 2015, to:

- **reduce adult smoking rates to 18.5%**
- **reduce smoking rates for 15 year olds to 12%**
- **reduce smoking in pregnancy to 11%**

Other key features of the Plan include:

- Implementing legislation to end tobacco displays in shops
- Consulting on plain packaging of tobacco products
- Continuing to use tax to maintain the high price of tobacco
- Promoting effective local enforcement of tobacco legislation
- Encouraging more smokers to quit using local stop smoking services
- Publishing a three year marketing strategy
- Protecting public health policy from the vested interests of the tobacco industry
- Supporting local implementation of effective measures to tackle tobacco use.

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Tobacconomics

Tobacco industry uses specious analysis to obstruct health policy

“40 pubs a week will close because of the smoking ban”. “Ban tobacco advertising and kill the French Press”. “Canadian teen smoking increased 2% as a result of their display ban”. “Irish tobacco duty revenues fell by £0.5 billion after the display ban”.

All of these are claims made by the tobacco industry and the front groups they fund. But which are true? The claim that smokefree legislation has closed hundreds of English pubs is oft repeated but the only objective measure - the number of licenses for ‘on sales and off sales’ - shows an increase of 5% when England went smokefree and an increase every year since. When the BBC investigated the claim they found the drop reported is largely down to how the surveys re-reclassify pubs that sell more food. They concluded *“Pubs aren’t closing. They’re evolving.”*

Similarly, news of the death of the French press appears to have been exaggerated. In the UK and France, the print media and the advertising industry have continued to thrive in the absence of tobacco advertising. At its AGM this year, Imperial Tobacco claimed that Irish tobacco duty revenue fell by £0.5bn – almost half – when Ireland introduced their tobacco display ban. But what does Revenue Ireland report? No fall, but an increase of almost €50 million. And in not one year since display bans were introduced has youth smoking prevalence in Canada increased.

Even the best economic forecasters get it wrong sometimes, but according to a new report this is a systematic attempt to obstruct health policy. The ASH report *Tobacconomics* tells the story of how the tobacco industry generates and recycles specious economic arguments to obstruct public health policy. ASH is not the first organisation to make this claim. Indeed an internal tobacco industry memo as early as 1994 shows tobacco manufacturers themselves had come to the same conclusion.

“The economic arguments often used by the industry to scare off smoking ban activity were no longer working, if indeed they ever did. These arguments simply had no credibility with the public, which isn’t surprising when you consider that our dire predictions in the past rarely came through”.

Tina Walls, Philip Morris

Parliamentarians from all parties should be most concerned by the process by which industry funded claims are reduced, reused and recycled by front groups, included in briefings and ultimately used by Members.

Tobacconomics is available from:
www.ash.org.uk/tobacconomics

tob·ac·o·nom·ics

(tə'bakō'nāmiks) Noun: 1. The use of specious or partisan analysis to “throw sand in the gears” of public health policy
2. Creating unjustified anxiety about the social or economic impact of regulations to reduce tobacco use

Settling the bill

A major tobacco company has confirmed that it will be meeting retailer’s costs for implementing the display ban

I am delighted that the government has resisted the tobacco industry’s misinformation campaign and will go ahead with the ban on point of sale display of tobacco products in stores like mine from 2015.

Before the government’s decision, cigarette retailers around the country were being told they would need new displays costing £1,000s, with dire predictions that many businesses would fold. In reality the ban will cost shopkeepers like me **absolutely nothing**. The cost of replacing the display will be met by the tobacco industry, as will be the case for a high proportion of retailers on a similar contract with their suppliers.

Imperial Tobacco has also had to reassure retailers who were misled into thinking they would have to literally retrieve cigarettes from under the counter. The following quote from trade magazine Retail Express, demonstrates clearly how many of my fellow retailers have been confused and misled by misinformation:

“Imperial Tobacco has warned there is a common misconception among shopkeepers that tobacco goods will have to be stored literally under the counter once the tobacco display ban takes effect. The manufacturer reminded retailers they could keep their tobacco in a traditional storage unit, but the main difference is that it will be ‘closed’.”

From April 2015 small retailers in England will no longer have ‘glitzy’ tobacco displays, allowing stores like mine to give greater prominence to more profitable and healthier products. One independent wholesaler, the Booker Group, has even argued that the independent sector could see a short-term boost in sales when the ban comes into effect in large stores in 2012.

Just a month after the Health Secretary made his decision, the claims of a ruinous future for the corner store are crumbling, as the tobacco industry redirects its myth-generating energy away from point of sale and turns it towards the forthcoming debate on plain packaging.

John McClurey, retailer, Gateshead

Tobacco-free Olympics

Every Olympics since 1988 has been smokefree, 2012 must leave the legacy of a tobacco-free games

Public health advocates have been urging LOCOG to make the London Olympics tobacco-free since 2009 to no avail. So to put in on the public record I tabled a PQ and was pleased to see DCMS and the DH confirm their aspiration for a tobacco-free Olympic games.

It was also confirmed that LOCOG will not be appointing a tobacco sponsor and that tobacco and cigarettes will not be sold at any of the Olympic or Paralympic venues. Furthermore smoking will also be prohibited in all ticketed sports competition, venues for the games (for example the Olympic Stadium and the Velodrome), as well as the athletes' village.

However, LOCOG has so far done nothing to publicise this commitment, and the opportunity to promote a tobacco-free Olympics is slipping away. So on World No Tobacco Day on 31 May I wrote to LOCOG to ask in detail how they propose to turn this commitment into an effective tobacco-free policy, by asking the following questions.

1. When will LOCOG itself publicly announce that the 2012 Games have been designated tobacco-free and put this up on relevant websites?
2. How will this policy be communicated to participants, spectators and the general public (i.e., what branding and marketing plans are being developed)?
3. Will LOCOG ensure that all signage, posters, programmes, tickets and other printed literature carry a tobacco-free designation – as this will be the best way to ensure compliance?
4. What training is being planned for staff and volunteers servicing the Olympic venues?

I also asked some questions of clarification about what tobacco-free will mean in practice. In particular:

1. Will the Olympic park be tobacco-free indoors and out?
2. When LOCOG says that the athletes' village will be smoke-free will this include the entire facility?
3. Will the use of Olympic events for corporate hospitality by tobacco companies be prohibited?
4. Can you confirm that the 'no sponsorship' policy extends to sponsorship of individual teams and broadcasting rights in third countries?

At the time of going to print I was still awaiting a response.

Diane Abbott MP.

Plain packs – plain facts

The Tobacco Plan for England includes a commitment to consult later this year on requiring plain packaging of tobacco products. This step would put the UK at the forefront of global tobacco policy, but MPs and peers should prepare themselves for a barrage of mis-information from the tobacco lobby.



An example of what plain packs might look like

Plain packaging means standardised packs without logos, or colour schemes, with just the brand name displayed. There is a wealth of peer-reviewed evidence showing that it is;

- **Less misleading** – Plain packaging reduces false beliefs that products in certain coloured packs are less harmful
- **Less attractive to young people** – branding continues to drive teen smoking and young people rate plain packs as less attractive
- **More impact for health warnings** - Reducing branding increases the effectiveness of health warnings.

Plain packs would also be popular. A recent survey commissioned by ASH found that half of people are already in support, rising to 80% if people were shown evidence that they would be less attractive to children.

However, the move will face strong opposition from the tobacco industry, which has already said: "We're going to take whatever action we can".

In Australia, the tobacco industry has responded to similar legislation with scare stories including claims that plain packaging would breach intellectual property rights, even though experts in trademark law advise that this will not be the case. Claims that the legislation will increase the illicit trade are equally misleading, as anti-counterfeiting markings will be maintained.

It is important that MPs and Peers support any subsequent legislation based on the evidence. If you would like more information about plain packaging please contact: appq@ash.org.uk.

BAT admits to funding retailer lobbying

British American Tobacco has admitted that it funded the NFRN campaign against the point of sale display ban. Kevin Barron MP calls on the Government to ensure greater transparency with the forthcoming consultation on plain packaging.

At its AGM on 27th April BAT, in response to my questioning, was forced to admit that it had provided financial assistance to the National Federation of Retail Newsagents in support of its campaign against the display ban.

This funding was not made clear when MPs were contacted by Hume Brophy *"on behalf of Mike Weatherley MP and the NFRN"*, and asked to sign a petition to urge the coalition government *"to reconsider the tobacco display ban"*. Nor did the email to MPs mention the fact that this campaign was not only funded by BAT, but that BAT is a client of Hume Brophy and that BAT was involved in discussions about the campaign.

Subsequent to this campaign the date of implementation for the display ban was put back for small shops by 18 months. It is of great concern that this covert lobbying may have had an impact on the Government's decision on this matter.

Covert lobbying of this kind is completely inappropriate and indeed makes it very difficult, if not impossible, for the Government to live up to its obligations as a Party to the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC) that *"In setting and implementing their policies with respect to tobacco control, Parties shall act to protect these policies from commercial and other vested interests of the tobacco industry in accordance with national law."*

In the recently published Tobacco Plan, the Government set out its commitment to *"protect the*

development of public health policy from the vested interests of the tobacco industry". Further, that any organisations engaging with the Department of Health on tobacco control, for example by responding to consultation exercises, will be asked *"to disclose any links with, or funding received from, the tobacco industry"*. I have written to Andrew Lansley to inform him of the tobacco industry involvement in the campaign against the display ban.

"British American Tobacco admits funding campaign against display ban: Tobacco giant financed retail association's high-profile campaign against a government ban on cigarette displays"
Guardian 28th May 2011

Lobbying continues, and the consultation on plain packaging due to be launched this year is likely to be subject to even heavier lobbying by the tobacco industry. Certainly this has been the case in Australia, the first country in the world to announce that it will implement plain packaging of tobacco products.

I have therefore also asked the Secretary of State to confirm that any responses to the plain packaging consultation by organisations which have received tobacco industry funding, or any lobbying by any such organisations, will be evaluated in the light of the Government's clear obligations under the WHO FCTC and its commitments in the Tobacco Plan.

Rt Hon Kevin Barron MP

Forthcoming APPG on Smoking and Health events

ASH 40th Anniversary– Wednesday 15th June 2011 - 4.00 to 6.00 pm, Dining Room B, House of Commons

Joint event with the APPG on Heart Disease – Tuesday 5th July 2011 – 4.00 to 5.00 pm, Committee Room 6

Join the APPG on Smoking and Health

All parliamentarians from both Houses are welcome to join the Group. Please email: appg@ash.org.uk.

Officers of the group:

Chair: Stephen Williams MP (Liberal Democrat)

Secretary: Jeremy Lefroy MP (Conservative)

Vice Chairs: Kevin Barron MP (Labour)
Baroness O'Cathain OBE (Conservative)
Lord Patel (Cross Bench)
Lord Rennard MBE (Liberal Democrat)
John Robertson MP (Labour)

The All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on Smoking and Health is a cross-party group of Peers and MPs which was founded in 1976

"To monitor and discuss the health and social effects of smoking; to review potential changes in existing legislation to reduce levels of smoking; to assess the latest medical techniques to assist in smoking cessation; and to act as a resource for the group's members on all issues relating to smoking and public health."

ASH provides the secretariat for the APPG and funded the printing of this publication.
www.ash.org.uk/APPG E: appg@ash.org.uk T: 020 7739 5902