

**Smoking in Public Places Consultation:
Response from Fife Council Liberal Democrats**

Fife Council Liberal Democrats welcome the opportunity to contribute to this important consultation exercise. Our response follows the format of the consultation questionnaire.

1. Having considered the health risks associated with passive smoking, do you think that further action needs to be taken to reduce people's exposure to second-hand smoke? YES

Please provide any other comments here:

Fife Council works with its community planning partners to take forward health improvement work in Fife and as such has shown a commitment to reducing health inequalities.

The high incidence of smoking within economically disadvantaged areas and socially excluded groups indicates that those people may already have more chance of either smoking or being exposed to environmental tobacco smoke.

The further action of a ban in public places would go some way to reducing this exposure.

Local authorities have a key role in contributing to this agenda through an overall approach which includes preventing the uptake of smoking and increasing the number of people stopping smoking in Fife, as a key contribution to reducing health inequalities.

For example, Fife Council has an enforcement role in relation to tobacco advertising and the Children and Young Persons (Protection from Tobacco) Act 1991 and responds to complaints about under age purchase of cigarettes.

Education and Community Services are working to inform young people about the health risks of smoking and environmental tobacco smoke.

Environmental Services play a key role in all aspects of public health and would be instrumental to the enforcement of any ban.

2. Would you support a law that would make enclosed public places smoke free? (Public places include workplaces and public transport) YES

Please provide your reasons or any other comments here:

Fife Council already has a Smoking Policy banning smoking on Council premises and transport, with some exemptions. It therefore follows that we should support a ban in public places that are not owned by the Council.

The banning of smoking in public places would contribute to creating a culture where passive smoking is not acceptable. This would protect thousands of workers who have no choice about passive smoking and may spend eight or more hours a day exposed to environmental tobacco smoke. It would also provide environments where smokers who are trying to give up are supported in this effort.

Fife Council Liberal Democrats would support a '*Scotland-wide ban on smoking in enclosed public places*', rather than '*giving powers to Local Authorities to regulate smoking in public places in their areas*'.

An arrangement giving power of regulation to individual Local Authorities could lead to inconsistencies and confusion, making any local regulations harder to implement and enforce.

Consideration would be need to given to the resources required to enforce a Scotland -wide ban on smoking in public places, as additional Environmental Services staff would be required.

3. If a law was introduced, do you think there should be any exemptions to it?

YES

Please provide any suggestions, reasons or other comments here:

Fife Council provides services to a range of service users in a variety of settings.

As the aim of a ban would be to protect people from passive smoking, rather than to penalize smokers, there should be opportunity to manage some situations in ways appropriate to that individual setting or circumstance.

Fife Council Smoking Policy currently acknowledges that some service users may smoke and in certain situations this may need to be managed differently from the overall ban. *'For example where in the professional judgement of the interviewer, permitting the client to smoke or offering a cigarette will have a significant calming affect and smooth the progress of the interview.'*

The consultation includes the 'workplace'. Fife Council manages resources which support individuals living in settings that include areas which could be defined as public places, and are also workplace settings. Included in this category are residential homes, sheltered housing, hostels and some staffed group homes.

Fife Council Liberal Democrats would wish to continue to support the management of smoking in these premises in relation to the needs of both workers and residents. Whenever possible this will include focused smoking cessation work for those people living and working there, particularly where residents belong to communities of interest who face high incidences of smoking eg people with mental health problems.

4. If we decide not to introduce a law, what could be done to encourage individual businesses to take voluntary action to become smoke-free or to provide more smoke-free provision?

The current level of compliance with the Scottish Voluntary Charter on Smoking in Public Places suggests that this is not working effectively. Influencing and supporting more individual businesses to take this on would be resource intensive.

Current Liquor Licensing arrangements could impose restrictions on smoking in certain circumstances, for example where children have access. However, experience in other local authority areas has shown this has not been successful.

Evidence points to there being no practicable technical solution to the problem of environmental tobacco smoke in enclosed public spaces. Research evidence shows that although ventilation can increase comfort it does not protect public health. Therefore compliance with certain levels of the voluntary code would not have any impact on the health risks of passive smoking.

- Currently Fife Council, along with community planning partners, are encouraging local businesses to provide smoke-free provision within the criteria for the Scottish Healthy Choices Awards. Uptake of this award in Fife has been extensive, so it would appear that this is a useful tool in relation premises where food is served.

All the above may contribute in part to the reduction of passive smoking. However, even if more resources were involved in supporting these initiatives, it is hard to see how they could match the outcomes of an overall ban, in relation to the reduction of passive smoking and the resultant reduction in health risks.

5. What else could be done to reduce people's exposure to second-hand smoke?

Fife Council Liberal Democrats believe that banning smoking in public places is only one part of an overall strategy for reducing the health risks of smoking. They believe that reducing the number of people who start smoking and supporting people to stop smoking is essential in reducing exposure to second-hand smoke.

Therefore, Fife Council Liberal Democrats will continue to support education initiatives within schools and community services; continue to support workers to quit through service based initiatives linked to SHAW; continue to improve and enforce Fife Council's Smoking Policy; and target smoking cessation initiatives within disadvantaged groups in Fife, through Fife Council's Joint Health Improvement Plan and the Tobacco Issues Group's (Fife's community planning partnership group with a focus on tobacco issues) action plan.

The implementation of a Scotland-wide ban on Smoking in Public Places would increase the impact of this other work.

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