

Smoking in Public Places Consultation Team
3 E(S), St Andrew's House
Regent Road
Edinburgh
EH1 3DG

Dear Sir,

Smoking in Public Places – A Consultation

Thank you for providing the opportunity to comment on the Consultation Paper.

Rank Group Gaming Division is a wholly owned subsidiary of Rank Group Plc and is a major operator of casinos and bingo clubs currently owning and operating 14 bingo clubs in Scotland.

I comment on the Consultation Paper below:

Existing Policy

The detail of the Scottish Executive's existing policy is recognised by Rank and indeed, forms an integral part of its policy in being a responsible employer and in the ongoing development of its estate.

In recent years Rank has relocated or opened as new nine of its Scottish estate with all providing first class comfort and facilities including much improved ventilation systems to deal specifically with 'second hand smoke' and including dedicated non smoking areas both in the body of the club and in its food service areas.

Additionally, all non public areas, expressly for the benefit of employees, are designated non smoking except for one room set aside for employees who wish to smoke.

During 2005 another Scottish club is to be relocated and a new club is scheduled to be opened in Paisley both with the same standard of facility.

The remaining clubs which are all former cinemas have designated public non smoking areas and operate the company's non public area policy as the new estate clubs.

The Future

- i. Total ban

In considering the options, and in Rank's view the ramifications should a total ban be implemented would have serious implications for the leisure industry.

The majority of the industry is made up of small business and if the 15% loss of trade experienced in Ireland when a smoking ban was recently introduced were to be repeated there would be a significant cost to the economy of Scotland and notwithstanding the potential loss of jobs.

A total ban could also defeat the purpose of reducing exposure to second hand smoke by driving individuals to purchase cigarettes and indeed alcohol from off licences with a subsequent increase in smoking and drinking in the home, often in the presence of children.

Additionally, Rank has a number of concerns regarding the enforcement of a total ban, not least being the disorder implications of large groups of people being forced to smoke outside licensed premises during bingo interval times.

ii. Local bans

The devolving of powers to a local level while initially appearing to enable flexibility and the supporting of choice by local communities can result in an inconsistent approach and cause more problems than solutions.

Local bans would cause difficulties for businesses, customers and employees alike with demarcation lines running potentially at edge of towns and between different Local Authorities with the subsequent movement of business with the general public seeking their appropriate choice.

iii. Targeted bans – where food is served

National or local bans could again create inconsistencies as to the definition of food (ie packet of crisps) and as most leisure premises serve food in the same areas as the general other activities take place the targeted ban would effectively become a total ban.

Summary

Rank's preferred approach would in the first instance be to continue with the existing policy of working in partnership with Scottish Executive and Local Authorities, but with a commitment to agree an ongoing strategy for leisure premises which would deliver a series of further actions to restrict smoking over a period of time, but permitting individual members of the public to make an informed choice.

It would, of course be necessary in adopting this approach for further consultation between the Scottish Executive and representative of the leisure industry to produce and publish a Code of Practice to ensure that the agreement was implemented.

However, should the Executive's decision be to implement a total ban it is Rank's view that the ban must be nationally led and enforced thus obviating local operational difficulties and concerns and that the ban should be applicable to all enclosed public places, including cafes, railway stations etc.

Yours faithfully

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John Campion
Head of Administration

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