

02 MAY 2006

**MOYLE
DISTRICT
COUNCIL**

Our Ref: EH2006/0158

28 April 2006

Investing for Health Team (Tobacco Control)
Department of Health Social Services and Public Safety
Room C4.22
Castle Buildings
BELFAST
BT4 3SQ

Dear Sir/Madam,

Re: Consultation Draft Smoking (NI) Order

Please find enclosed the consultation questionnaire which was agreed by elected members at a meeting of the Council on the 27th March 2006.

Moyle District Council believe that this is a very important public health measure which will deliver real improvements in the health of the population of Northern Ireland. Moyle District Council are committed to playing their role in ensuring that this legislation is a success and believe that it is appropriate that district councils are the enforcing authority. This is consistent with the objectives of the Review of Public Administration in ensuring strong local government that will be able to have a real impact on improving the health of communities.

The Council look forward to participating in the consultation on regulations this summer.

Yours faithfully



R G Lewis
Clerk and Chief Executive

Enc



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CONSULTATIVE DOCUMENT

THE DRAFT SMOKING (NORTHERN IRELAND) ORDER 2006

QUESTIONNAIRE

March 2006

INTRODUCTION

Purpose

This Questionnaire seeks views on the **Draft Smoking (Northern Ireland) Order 2006** (the draft Order) which will introduce comprehensive controls to protect employees and the public from exposure to second-hand smoke. Comments would be particularly welcomed on a number of key areas:

- the definition of smoking;
- the definition of smoke-free premises;
- the extent of any proposed exemptions;
- offences and level of penalties;
- requirement for fixed penalties; and
- the power to raise the age limit for sale of tobacco to young people.

The Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (the Department) carried out an Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) screening exercise on the proposed legislation. The results, which include equality considerations and a partial Regulatory Impact Assessment, are set out in the IIA Overview.

Background

On 17 October 2005, Shaun Woodward, Minister for Health, Social Services & Public Safety, announced his intention to introduce legislation by April 2007 to protect employees and the public from exposure to second-hand smoke. He also indicated that he would seek views on specific issues such as exemptions and penalties. This followed a public consultation exercise carried out by the Department between December 2004 and March 2005, on options to strengthen existing controls on tobacco use. The consultation elicited over 70,000 responses with 91% of respondents expressing support for comprehensive controls. In framing the draft Order, account was taken of similar legislation and proposals in Scotland and England.

Responses to this Questionnaire must be received by not later than 5.00pm on Friday 5 May 2006.

In order to facilitate analysis it is important that respondents use the Questionnaire.

Responses to this consultation may be made online at:

http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/index/consultations/current_consultations.htm

QUESTIONNAIRE

Q1. *Article 2 (a) and (b)* of the draft Order defines “smoking” as covering all lit tobacco or any other lit substance in a form, which could be smoked, for example, herbal cigarettes. This is to avoid enforcement difficulties in cases where smokers claim their cigarettes do not contain tobacco.

Do you agree with the definition of smoking as set out in the draft Order?

Yes



If you wish to comment, please do so here.

The broad definition of smoking should remain in order to prevent enforcement difficulties.

Q2. *Article 3* of the draft Order defines “smoke-free premises”.

Do you agree with the definition of smoke-free premises as set out in the draft Order?

Yes



If you wish to comment, please do so here.

The definition of smoke-free premises hinges upon the understanding of what constitutes “the public”. We agree with the definition provided that members of a club, whether licensed or not, are members of the public or a section of the public. If this is not the case the definition needs to be more explicit.

Q3. Article 4 of the draft Order provides for the Department to make regulations to specify premises or parts of premises not to be smoke-free. In accordance with the Minister's announcement, the intention is that these exemptions will be limited and Article 4(3) specifically precludes exemptions in respect of licensed premises. **The regulations will be the subject of a separate consultation later in the year.** However, the Department is taking this opportunity to seek views. There are premises which act as a person's home, either on a permanent or temporary basis, but which are also another person's workplace, for example, residential accommodation, hotel bedrooms, prisons and psychiatric facilities. Different approaches to this issue have been adopted by other jurisdictions. In the Republic of Ireland psychiatric hospitals are exempt. In Scotland designated rooms in psychiatric hospitals are exempt while in New York it is necessary to apply for a waiver.

Set out below are examples of premises that serve as a person's home, either on a temporary or permanent basis.

Do you think that hotel bedrooms, designated rooms, or areas within the following premises should be exempt?

Hotel Bedrooms	No	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Care Homes	No	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Psychiatric Units	No	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Prisons	No	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Do you wish to suggest any other exemptions? If yes, please specify below.

We believe the smoke-free legislation should be as comprehensive as possible and that all workers should be afforded the same level of protection. We do acknowledge that this will create some practical difficulties and expect that others will have views on these matters.

Q4. Articles 7, 8, 9 and 12 of the draft Order sets out the following four offences and penalties:

- (i) a person failing to display the prescribed no-smoking signs in smoke-free premises commits an offence and is liable on summary conviction to a fine not exceeding level 3 on the standard scale (£1,000);

- (ii) a person who knowingly smokes in smoke-free premises commits an offence and is liable on summary conviction to a fine not exceeding level 3 on the standard scale (£1,000);
- (iii) a person who controls or is concerned in the management of smoke-free premises and fails to prevent a person smoking in a smoke-free place commits an offence and is liable on summary conviction to a fine not exceeding level 4 on the standard scale (£2,500); and
- (iv) a person who intentionally obstructs an authorised officer of a district council acting in exercise of his duties under the Order commits an offence and is liable on summary conviction to a fine not exceeding level 3 on the standard scale (£1,000).

Do you agree with the offences and level of penalties set out in the draft Order?

No

✓

We are broadly content with the four offences as set out in the Draft Order. However we have some reservations concerning the meaning of Article 9(1) in relation to the owner of premises. How should the phrase "cause a person smoking there to stop smoking" be construed? Should it be construed literally or more broadly to include actions such as having a smoking policy in place, training staff and ensuring that the policy is implemented? Could the owner of a business be held responsible for the inaction of his staff if they fail to cause a person smoking there to stop smoking?

Penalties

In relation to the offence of failing to prevent smoking in smoke-free places (Article 9) we feel the level of the penalty should be level 5 so as to be consistent with other legislation, for example, health and safety.

Defences

Burden of proof. In respect of Articles 7(7), 8(4), 9(5) it is our view that these subsections of the articles are not necessary and it should be for the defendant to establish the defence and not for the prosecution to disprove it if an issue is raised.

In relation to the defence available for breach of Article 9(1) set out in 9(4)(b) we believe that this would create enforcement difficulties in relation to prosecution of owners who are not present while the person is smoking. The defence relates to a lack of knowledge of the specific person smoking and we feel that this defence is not necessary given the defence available in 9(4)(a).

Q5. Article 10 of the draft Order provides for an authorised officer of a district council to issue a fixed penalty notice where he believes an offence has been committed under Articles 7, 8 or 9. Schedule 1 makes further provision about fixed penalties. The levels of fixed penalties will be specified in regulations which will be the subject of consultation this year.

Do you agree with the fixed penalty notice procedures as set out in the draft Order?

No

✓

If you wish to comment, please do so here.

We believe that fixed penalty notices are only appropriate for article 7 offences. Fixed penalty notices have not been used in the Republic of Ireland where controls have been introduced successfully. There is evidence from British Columbia that fixed penalty notices for this type of offence are not effective. We believe that breach of this legislation is a serious matter and the use of fixed penalties does not create the correct image in terms of being a deterrent and ensuring compliance. The issuing of fixed penalty notices may also create practical enforcement difficulties. Experience from the Republic of Ireland indicates that sensible enforcement will not result in large numbers of cases going to court; as to date there have been only 36 prosecutions. The use of fixed penalty notices would also create different regimes in cross border areas.

Q6. Tobacco control measures are currently enforced by Environmental Health Officers of district councils.

Do you agree that smoke-free legislation should also be enforced by district councils?

Yes

✓

If not, please state your reasons below.

We believe that district councils should be the sole enforcing authority. District councils currently enforce legislation in large numbers of premises through functions in relation to health and safety at work, food hygiene, environmental protection, entertainment and petroleum licensing, consumer protection, public health and noise control. District councils currently enforce other tobacco control functions. The addition of this responsibility would help to strengthen the role of District Councils and provide a clearer focus for how they address smoking as a public health issue. District councils are currently working with other partners such as Investing for Health Partnerships, Health Promotion Commissioners, Smoking Cessation Co-ordinators, Health Promotion Officers, the Health Promotion Agency, and representatives of the business community and charities to ensure the objectives set in the Northern Ireland Tobacco Action Plan are met.

Q7. At present *Articles 3 and 4* of the Health & Personal Social Services (Northern Ireland) Order 1978 make it an offence to sell tobacco products to young people under 16. In the Republic of Ireland, the Health (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2001 increased the age limit from 16 to 18 and in Scotland the Smoking, Health & Social Care (Scotland) Act 2005 provides the power to raise the age limit there. The draft Order provides the power (*Article 14*) for the Department to raise the age limit from 16. Any proposal to raise the age limit would be the subject of further consultation.

Do you agree that the Department should take this power?

Yes ✓

If you wish to comment, please do so here.

We believe that it is prudent for the department to take this power and perhaps through regulations consult on increasing the age limit to 18.