

# PRESS RELEASE

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Thursday 2<sup>nd</sup> July 2009

## **MP Watches as Irish Shopkeepers put Cigarettes Out of Sight**

As politicians across the UK consider controversial proposals to end tobacco displays in shops, Julie Morgan, MP for Cardiff North, has visited Ireland to see how effective a similar law is operating there.

As of 1<sup>st</sup> July 2009 tobacco retailers in Ireland have had to keep cigarette packs out of sight. The proposals are based on research that suggests tobacco displays contribute to increased youth smoking and trigger relapse among smokers trying to quit.

Many retailers in the UK are opposed to bringing in a similar law, not least because they believe they will face a bill of up to £10,000. Julie Morgan is keen to reduce the harm caused by tobacco. However, she also feels it is essential to understand the possible effect of the new law on local businesses. This was the purpose of the day in Dublin.

Julie said,

*“I’ve had letters from Doctors, scientists and health charities telling me how important this new law is and how strong the evidence is but many shopkeepers aren’t convinced. They’ve been told by the tobacco lobbyists that this law could close down their business. I met with the Office of Tobacco Control but I wanted to hear from retailers who had experienced these changes in person and I was hugely encouraged. In every shop we visited they had been getting ready for the law and the tobacco companies were paying for the work.”*

Manufacturers and retailers have had five years to get ready. Initially, the tobacco companies fought the new law in the courts claiming it was not proportionate. However, they ended up having to withdraw, agreeing to pay costs. Since then they have been replacing old shelving and displays with new automated cigarette dispensers and illuminated signs. The new cabinets were quick and easy for the companies to adapt when the law came in and, in the meantime, provided high powered advertising. In fact, the Welsh MP found that companies sometimes went even further, fitting cabinet doors onto existing shelving to keep cigars and pipe tobacco out of sight.

Julie added,

*“Some shop keepers worry that smokers will walk on by without knowing where to buy their cigarettes but the regulations in Ireland solve that by requiring shops have a standard sign explaining that cigarettes are for sale to over 18s only. This seems to me to be a solution that benefits the retailers and the health community. Even better, our bill may also allow us to put an end to vending machines where companies can still sell cigarettes to children with little chance of prosecution and where young smokers can still buy cigarettes without being challenged. A ban on vending machines could transfer close to £1bn of legitimate sales to local retailers who have a much better record asking for proof of age.”*

ENDS

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION:**

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