



Rt Hon David Cameron MP  
Prime Minister  
10 Downing Street  
London SW1A 2AA

13 January 2015

Dear Prime Minister and Secretary of State for Health

**Regulations on standardised tobacco packaging must be voted on before the Election**

We are writing to you on behalf of the Smokefree Action Coalition, an alliance of over 250 organisations committed to reducing the harm caused by tobacco that strongly supports standardised packaging of all tobacco products. Members of the SFAC include health charities, local authorities, Royal Colleges, public health organisations and local NHS organisations.

There is strong public support for standardised packaging as well as overwhelming support from the health community. An open letter to you published in the BMJ before Christmas attracted nearly 4,000 signatures and the list of signatories continues to grow. As you know, the primary legislation enabling standardised packaging to be introduced was passed with overwhelming support in both Houses of Parliament.

However, a vote on the necessary Regulations to bring in standardised packaging will only be possible before the General Election if your Government tables them imminently, and we are deeply concerned that as yet there is no sign of this happening. The reason we have been given is that the vote cannot happen until the end of the period of notification to Europe on March 2<sup>nd</sup> 2015. This is irrelevant. After notification is complete it will be possible to vote on the Regulations without the need for further revision, but before March 2<sup>nd</sup> the UK Government will have to take the necessary steps to make a vote possible.

By mid-January the Government must lay the Regulations, so that Parliamentary scrutiny processes can be completed in time. This is not a matter of European bureaucracy preventing the UK from going ahead; it is a matter of political will. Delay is the key goal of the tobacco industry and its surrogates and allies.

Over half a million children have taken up smoking since the Government first announced in March 2011 that it would consult on standardised packaging of cigarettes. Every day hundreds more join them. Half of all lifetime smokers will die from smoking related disease. We understand that much of your attention is taken by current problems in the NHS, which are quite rightly a high priority. However, for the NHS to be sustainable longer-term depends on a radical upgrade in prevention and public health. This was a clear conclusion of the recently published NHS Forward View. To achieve this requires tackling smoking to be a top priority, since it causes more preventable deaths than the next six causes put together.

Your Coalition partners and the Official Opposition have committed to help find the necessary parliamentary time to debate and vote on the Regulations before Parliament is dissolved in

March. But the final decision is in your hands. If you go ahead it will be a vital next step towards the smoke-free Britain we all aspire to and you will be strongly supported by health professionals and the public health community. Blocking this key measure will amount to a failure to protect public health and young people. We are strongly urging you, therefore, to stand up to tobacco industry pressure and to commit to a Parliamentary vote on the Regulations before the next Election.

Yours sincerely



Professor Jane Dacre  
President, Royal College of Physicians



Dr Mark Porter  
Chair, British Medical Association



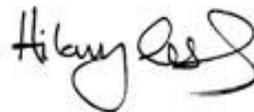
Simon Gillespie  
Chief Executive, British Heart Foundation



Harpal Kumar  
Chief Executive, Cancer Research UK



Dr Maureen Baker CBE  
Chair, Royal College of General Practitioners



Dr Hilary Cass  
President, Royal College of  
Paediatrics and Child Health



Professor Sir Simon Wessely  
President, Royal College of Psychiatrists



Dr Peter Carter  
Chief Executive & General Secretary,  
Royal College of Nursing



Graham Jukes OBE  
Chief Executive, Chartered Institute  
of Environmental Health



Leon Livermore  
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Dr Janet Atherton  
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Public Health



Professor John R Ashton CBE  
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Professor Cathy Warwick CBE  
General Secretary, Royal College of Midwives



Kay Boycott  
Chief Executive, Asthma UK



Francine Bates  
Chief Executive, The Lullaby Trust



Dr Penny Woods  
Chief Executive, British Lung  
Foundation



Deborah Arnott, MBA FRCP (Hon)  
Chief Executive, ASH

cc: Rt Hon Nick Clegg MP, Deputy Prime Minister  
The Rt Hon Earl Howe, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Quality  
Jane Ellison MP, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Public Health  
The Rt Hon Norman Lamb MP, Minister of State for Care and Support

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