



Bath & North East Somerset Council

Improving People's Lives



A Joint Letter from the Directors of Public Health and Council Leaders of South West England

11 February 2026

To: Ashley Dalton MP, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Public Health and Prevention

Cc: Baroness Merron, Members of Parliament for South West England

Subject: Unreserved support and urgent call for the swift passage of the Tobacco and Vapes Bill

Dear Ashley,

We, the undersigned Directors of Public Health and Council Leaders from local authorities across the South West of England, write with a unified and urgent message: The Tobacco and Vapes Bill must be passed without delay or dilution.

The Bill is an essential public health and economic measure that demands immediate legislative priority. We are pleased to see a date has now been set for Report stage and we urge you to ensure the Bill's swift and undiluted passage through the final stages in the Lords and for Royal Assent.

The impact of tobacco in the South West

Tobacco smoking is the leading cause of preventable death in the South West, claiming over 6,500 lives each year - more than 17 deaths a day. Despite progress in reducing smoking rates, over 520,000 adults in the South West still smoke, with rates highest in our most deprived communities.

As the leaders responsible for the well-being and local services of the South West, we witness the heavy burden placed on the NHS and our local services from tobacco-related ill-health, as well as the heartbreak of families who lose loved ones to smoking.

The Tobacco and Vapes Bill offers a once-in-a-generation chance to tackle these harms once and for all. We cannot view the Bill solely as a long-term measure for 2027; its immediate passage is a vital signal that the era of commercial tobacco is ending. Any delay in enactment signals to the public and the NHS that preventable death is still being tolerated.

Our call on the government

Public support for the bill is strong;

- **7 in 10 adults** in the South West support the ‘Smokefree Generation’ policy;
- **Over 9 in 10 adults** in the South West support bans on smoking in children’s play areas and on school grounds;
- **But around 1 in 2 adults** in the South West feel the Government is not doing enough to limit smoking.

We therefore call upon you to honour this consensus by ensuring the Bill's safe passage.

We urge you to:

1. **Prioritise the bill:** Ensure it receives the necessary Parliamentary time to proceed swiftly through the Lords and proceed to Royal Assent.
2. **Resist compromise:** Oppose any amendments that would delay, weaken, or undermine the core measures of the Bill, particularly the generational ban and the vital new powers to introduce new smokefree places and a licensing scheme.

We cannot afford to waste this once-in-a-generation opportunity. We urge you to pass this vital legislation swiftly and decisively.

Yours sincerely,

The Council Leaders and Directors of Public Health for South West England;

Cllr Leigh Frost, Leader of Cornwall Council;

Cllr Kevin Guy, Leader of Bath and North East Somerset Council;

Cllr Millie Earl, Leader of Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Council;

Cllr Tony Dyer, Leader of Bristol City Council;

Cllr Julian Brazil, Leader of Devon County Council;

Cllr Nick Ireland, Leader of Dorset Council;

Cllr Lisa Spivey, Leader of Gloucestershire County Council;

Cllr Robert Francis, Chairman of the Council of the Isles of Scilly;

Cllr Mike Bell, Leader of North Somerset Council;

Cllr Tudor Evans OBE, Leader of Plymouth City Council;

Cllr Maggie Tyrrell, Leader of South Gloucestershire Council;

Cllr Ian Boulton, Co-Leader of South Gloucestershire Council;



Cllr Bill Revans, Leader of Somerset Council;
Cllr Jim Robbins, Leader of Swindon Borough Council;
Cllr David Thomas, Leader of Torbay Council;
Cllr Ian Thorn, Leader of Wiltshire Council;
Rebecca Reynolds, DPH for Bath and North East Somerset Council;
Rob Carroll, DPH for Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Council;
Professor Christina Gray, DPH for Bristol City Council;
Dr Eunan O'Neill, DPH for Cornwall Council;
Steve Brown, DPH for Devon County Council;
Sam Crowe, DPH for Dorset Council;
Siobhan Farmer, DPH for Gloucestershire County Council;
Katie Ash, DPH for the Council of the Isles of Scilly;
Matt Lenny, DPH for North Somerset Council;
Dr Emma Kain, DPH for Swindon Borough Council;
Alison Bell, DPH for Somerset Council;
Professor Sarah Weld, DPH for South Gloucestershire Council;
Professor Steve Maddern, DPH for Plymouth City Council;
Dr Lincoln Sargeant, DPH for Torbay Council;
Professor Kate Blackburn, DPH for Wiltshire Council