

SFP – 01

Sub Committees on The Smoke-free Premises etc. (Wales) (Amendment) Regulations 2012

Response from Alex Cooper

I am extremely concerned about your proposals to permit the smoking of real cigarettes in films and on TV. Whilst I understand that you believe this might possibly bring business into the Welsh film and TV industry there are far more important things at stake: firstly, the health of people employed in those industries.

Passive smoking is not only unpleasant, it is also highly damaging to health, particularly in terms of cardiovascular and stroke risks but also with significant risks for lung cancer. The medical evidence is now beyond question, so your proposals are putting commercial interests ahead of people's health. This is not what you were elected to do.

There is no doubt that were cigarettes to be invented today, in the full knowledge of their addictiveness and the health risks they pose, they would not be considered acceptable for sale; indeed, laboratories that test cigarettes cannot discharge the smoke into the atmosphere because it breaches laws on environmental pollution. Are you seriously suggesting that Welsh workers should be obliged to breathe this stuff in the name of 'artistic freedom'?

If the portrayal of smoking is deemed to be artistically essential there are alternatives to real cigarettes available, avoiding the degradation of health by passive smoking.

However, there is a second factor which needs to be considered: the portrayal of images of smoking to the viewing public, which includes children. Such portrayals have real influence in getting children to start smoking; there is sufficient weight of evidence now to put beyond question that films and TV in which smoking is portrayed are powerful adverts for the tobacco industry.

There is a war going on between the tobacco industry and those concerned with protecting our health. Tobacco is a lethal product that is also highly addictive, and the tobacco industry has become very rich as a result. Their aim is to carry on making money and to do this they need to recruit more than 5600 new smokers every year in Wales to replace those dying from smoking-related diseases. They spend huge amounts of money lobbying legislators, and it seems to me that you are in danger of being duped by them.

You are currently campaigning to stop smoking in cars to protect children from second-hand smoke.

How can you possibly justify encouraging on-screen advertising of smoking? I urge you to reject totally this weakening of smoke-free legislation, both for the sake of those employed in the film and TV industries and for the health of our children.

Yours very sincerely,

Alex Cooper