



ADVANCE INFORMATION

SMOKER'S CHAMPION TAKES 'SMOKERS' MANIFESTO' ON THE ROAD 'Voice and friend of the smoker' on tour in Ireland, 12-26 October 2011

Please find enclosed a media pack for Forest Eireann's campaign to protect smokers' rights in Ireland.

Spokesman John Mallon will shortly undertake a tour of the country, taking his message to the people of Ireland. He will be visiting pubs and bars, speaking to publicans and consumers, many of who feel disenfranchised from the political process.

John will begin his tour on Wednesday 12th October in Cork, finishing in Dublin on Tuesday 25th and Wednesday 26th October.

Full schedule:

Wednesday 12th October	Cork
Thursday 13th October	Waterford
Friday 14th October	Kilkenny
Monday 17th October	Tralee
Tuesday 18th October	Limerick
Wednesday 19th October	Galway
Thursday 20th Oct October	Westport
Friday 21st Oct October	Donegal
Tuesday 25th October	Dublin
Wednesday 26th October	Dublin

John is available for interview throughout the tour. To arrange an interview please contact Jacqui Delbaere on +44 (0) 7770 828791 or contact John direct on 085 219 3245.

Forest Eireann believes that the government should relax the smoking ban and have greater respect for Ireland's one million adult smokers.

Tobacco control policies should be amended so they are fair for everyone, smokers and non-smokers alike. The government should:

- respect the rights of adults who have made an informed choice to smoke tobacco in full knowledge of the health risks associated with this legal product;
- acknowledge that the overwhelming majority of smokers are ordinary, decent, law-abiding adults whose habit does not affect their ability to make a positive contribution to Irish society
- relax the smoking ban so that pubs and bars can provide smoking rooms that allow adults to smoke in greater comfort without bothering non-smokers;
- cut tobacco duty to tackle smuggling and reduce the temptation to buy tobacco abroad
- recognise the major financial contribution made by consumers who buy tobacco from legitimate retailers in Ireland
- review the use of public money to fund groups and quangos dedicated to persecuting adult smokers
- engage with the consumer so that one million smokers no longer feel ignored and disenfranchised from the political process

According to John Mallon, "Ireland's tobacco control policies have been a disaster. Since the smoking ban was introduced in 2004 more than 1,000 pubs have closed. Many more have reduced their opening hours. Publicans have lost customers and bar workers have lost their jobs.

"Smokers are forced to stand outside or remain at home. Those hardest hit include the elderly, many of whom used to enjoy a drink and a smoke in their local bar. Now reports suggest that loneliness is a major cause of ill health, worse than lifelong smoking.

"Record levels of duty have forced the price of tobacco sky high. No wonder that nearly a third of smokers avoid buying tobacco, and paying Irish duty, in Irish shops.

"Government policy has created an enormous black market. Tobacco control? You're kidding. Criminal gangs sell cigarettes to anyone, including children."

Despite this record of failure, tobacco control campaigners now want a ban on smoking in private vehicles, bans on smoking in outdoor areas, and the denormalisation of smoking and adults who choose to smoke.

During his two-week tour of Ireland John Mallon will distribute copies of Forest Eireann's 'Smokers' Manifesto'. He will also promote 'Civil Liberties: Up In Smoke?', a new report published by civil rights watchdog Privacy International in association with Forest.

Calling for greater tolerance and common sense on the issue of smoking, Mallon says:

"The anti-smoking movement has gone too far. Unwittingly, perhaps, some well-meaning campaigners are making many smokers' lives a misery.

“We support restrictions on public smoking but to ban smoking in every bar without exemption was unnecessary and draconian. The tobacco display ban and proposals to introduce picture warnings on packets and ban smoking in private vehicles suggest a movement that doesn’t know when to stop.

“But our concerns are not just about smoking. It’s about excessive government intervention in people’s daily lives, and that affects everybody, smokers and non-smokers alike.

“What next? Will it be alcohol, sweets, crisps, fizzy drinks? If consumers don’t fight for their rights a host of other restrictions will surely follow.”

– ends –

Notes for editors:

Forest Eireann is supported by the British smokers’ group Forest. Forest was founded in 1979 to represent adults who choose to smoke tobacco and non-smoking adults who are tolerant of other people smoking. The group receives donations from tobacco companies in Britain and Ireland. Supporters include artist David Hockney, musician Joe Jackson and TV chef and publican Antony Worrall Thompson.

Forest Eireann was founded in August 2010. Spokesman John Mallon has appeared on Highland Radio, Spin FM, TippFM, Midwest Radio, Spin South West, Today FM, Newstalk, WLR FM, 98FM, Clare FM, Radio Kerry and RTE Radio 1. John has also been quoted by the Irish Times, Irish Independent, Irish Examiner and Cork Independent among others.

Forest’s mission is to protect the interests of adults who choose to consume tobacco in its many forms. We acknowledge the health risks associated with smoking. We accept that government and other agencies have a role to play, educating people about the risks of smoking tobacco, just as they should educate people about the risks of drinking too much alcohol, eating too many fatty foods and dairy products, not taking enough exercise and so on.

Forest accepts the need for restrictions on smoking in some public places and we accept the need for smokers to act responsibly when it comes to matters such as litter and smoking around young children in a confined space.

What we do NOT accept are the intolerant, bully-boy tactics used by many people within the tobacco control movement who routinely employ tendentious arguments and personal vilification to justify draconian smoking bans, record levels of tobacco taxation, and the introduction of some of the most extreme anti-smoking laws anywhere in the world.

For more information see our website: www.foresteireann.org