



Pub bosses slam potential outdoor smoking ban as bonkers and nuts Free  
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### Description



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and ‘nuts’**

The indoor smoking ban could be extended to cover other locations including small parks, outdoor restaurants and hospitals, according to reports.

Pub industry bosses and brewers have criticised reported plans to ban smoking in beer gardens, as part of a drive to improve public health.

Chris Jowsey, chief executive of Admiral Taverns, told the PA news agency: "I'm no fan of smoking, but I just can't see how this will improve health outcomes if you move people from smoking in a pub garden to smoking at home.

"It doesn't really make any sense to me. It feels really ill-thought through."

Mr Jowsey, whose company runs more than 1,600 pubs across the UK, added: "It would also reduce footfall and revenue into pubs.

"A pub is the last community asset left standing in many communities. Anything that undermines their ability to survive and grow their business is a bad thing, not just for the pub, but for the community.

"What are we going to do? Will we have to employ people now to just patrol the gardens to make sure nobody's smoking? It seems a bit nuts."

According to leaked proposals seen by The Sun newspaper, the indoor smoking ban could be extended to cover other locations including small parks, outdoor restaurants and hospitals.

Prime Minister Sir Keir Starmer said on Wednesday that the Government would "take decisions" on a potential outdoor smoking ban in an effort to curb preventable deaths and alleviate pressures on the NHS.

Clive Watson, chairman of Inda pub group, who also founded City Pub Group, called the policy "a bonkers idea".

He added: "Surely, after all the pub industry has been through, we should be allowed a period of stability."

Pubs and restaurants were at the sharp end of the Covid-19 pandemic, closing for months at a time during lockdowns.

Then, through 2022 and 2023, skyrocketing inflation caused their operating costs to rise, while the cost-of-living crisis also depressed sales.

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The number of pub closures increased to 80 per month over the first three months of 2024, up by 51% compared with the same period last year, according to official Government data for England and Wales.

Tom Bott, founder of London-based beer brewer Signature Brew, told PA: "Independent breweries and pubs, which rely heavily on creating welcoming outdoor spaces for all customers, are facing

unprecedented challenges.

“Legislation like this, without adequate consideration of its economic impact, risks further destabilising an industry already under immense pressure.

“We need support, not more obstacles, to ensure our long-term prosperity.”

In 2007, under the last Labour government, smoking in enclosed public places and workplaces was made illegal across the UK.

Former prime minister Rishi Sunak announced plans to crack down on smoking through his flagship Tobacco and Vapes Bill last year.

The Bill was progressing through Parliament when the General Election was called, and was shelved as a result.

Tim Martin, founder of JD Wetherspoon, was less critical of the policy from a business point of view, instead calling it a “libertarian issue”.

He said Wetherspoon was the first pub group to open non-smoking pubs before the 2007 smoking ban, adding: “The rationale then was that non-smokers should be free to avoid passive smoking. That argument is diluted outside.”

Mr Martin told PA: “The question is whether the Government should interfere in individual liberties where danger is involved.

“Mountaineering is dangerous, for example. Horse riding, statistically, causes many serious injuries.

“I don’t think it will have a big effect on our business, one way or the other, and is really a libertarian issue.”

Rob Pitcher, chief executive of Revolution Bars, added: “As a non-smoker who spends a reasonable amount of my time in pub beer gardens, secondary smoke can occasionally be annoying, but I’m not convinced it’s prevalent enough to be putting any strain at all on the NHS.

“The potential ban on those grounds feels like an overreach by the state.”

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