

BTS NRC 2007

### Smoking ban 'good for business'

**Businesses are already "reaping the rewards" of a smoke-free culture, the Welsh health minister has claimed.**

He made his remarks exactly six months before a smoking ban in enclosed public spaces comes into force on 2 April. Dr Brian Gibbons said smokers and non-smokers alike preferred smoke-free places and were spending more in cafes, which were already smoke-free.

But a body representing pub landlords in Wales said the ban as it stood would impinge on the freedom of choice. The ban will come into force in Wales a month before the assembly elections and at the same time as in Northern Ireland. It will mean no lighting up at work, in pubs or clubs, although there will be some exemptions, such as hotel rooms.

"More and more businesses are contacting us via our website as many now discover the financial benefits of going smoke free," Dr Gibbons said. He cites examples which include Starvin Jacks, a chain of three cafes in Swansea. Dr Gibbons said since taking over a former smoking establishment, it has recorded an 80% surge in sales while Cafe Mao in Cardiff's Gabalfa area has posted a 15% increase in takings since introducing their voluntary ban in May.

However Aneurin Jones, president of Licensed Victuallers Association (LVA) in Wales said the ban was "taking the freedom of choice from individuals - it's totally wrong". Mr Jones, who runs the Dolbadarn Hotel in Llanberis, said there needed to be designated areas for people to smoke if they wanted to. "We have a ban where people eat - in the dining room - it's very strict and it was before any official ban. "People can smoke in the public bar but we don't encourage it in the lounge bar."

The assembly government will send out mailshots to businesses in November, to help them prepare for the ban coming into force. This will include samples of the bilingual no smoking signs that will need to be displayed.

Ireland banned smoking in public places in March 2004 and Scotland introduced a ban in March 2006. A number of other European countries operate similar bans, including Italy, Malta, Norway, Spain and Sweden.

Story from BBC NEWS:

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