



NEWS RELEASE – 6th SEPTEMBER 2010

SMOKING BAN TO BLAME FOR PUB DECLINE, SAYS NEW RESEARCH

New research suggests that the smoking ban is the main cause of pub closures in the UK.

Using data from a respected industry database, researchers found that the number of pub losses demonstrate a very close statistical relationship between the introduction of smoking bans and the acceleration of the decline of the British pub.

This relationship, says the report, is considerably stronger than those that could be attributed to other factors such as the recession, alcohol duty or supermarket competition.

Researchers found a striking similarity in the rate of closures in Scotland, England and Wales following the introduction of smoking bans in each country.

Analysis of statistics from CGA Strategy showing the net figure of pubs closing revealed losses accelerating after the first year of the ban in each country — from between 0.5% and 1.2% in the first year to between 3.8% and 4.4% in the second year.

Almost three years after the introduction of smoking bans in the three countries, Scotland had lost 7.1% of its pub estate (467 pubs), Wales 7.3% (274), and England 7.6% (4,148). Scotland, which introduced a smoking ban a year earlier lost a further 4% of its pub estate in the fourth year after the ban, mirroring a similar decline in Ireland (11%) which banned smoking in pubs in 2004.

Total pub losses in England, Scotland and Wales since the introduction of smoking bans in all three countries are in excess of 5,500.

According to CR Consulting's report, which was commissioned by the Save Our Pubs & Clubs campaign, "While there is significant variation in the trajectories of pub closures before the ban, there is an almost total correlation between the three countries after the ban.

"This indicates that they are affected by a strong common factor - the smoking ban. The correlation is in fact so close that the trend line for the three countries is identical."

Oliver Griffiths, director of CR Consulting, said, "The decline of the British pub had started before the smoking ban but at a low level. The ban had a sudden and marked impact, accelerating the rate of decline.

"While it is not the only factor in the closure of pubs, the smoking ban is demonstrably the most significant cause of pub closures."

Griffiths warned that further pub losses in England and Wales are inevitable. "In Scotland the smoking ban was introduced fifteen months before England and they have lost a further 4% of their pubs.

"If England continues to follow that trend another 2000 English pubs could shut down before the fourth anniversary of the ban in July 2011, and there is no indication that the closures will stop there."

Griffiths blamed the continuing decline on the loss of sociability in pubs where smoking has been banned.

"With smoking customers spending much of their time outside, some pubs may be becoming less sociable places, leading customers to question whether they want to drink there or at home."

John Madden, executive officer of the Guild of Master Victuallers, said: "Traditional drink-led pubs have been caught in the crossfire in the war on smoking. As this report shows, the smoking ban has helped to put literally thousands out of business already and sadly we expect many more to follow, all through no fault of their own.

"Smoking rooms are allowed in most European countries, why can't we have them? They don't inconvenience non-smokers and may help us to keep our businesses going. Our pubs are part of the national character and a great place for people to meet and chat. At the time when we are supposed to be building a Big Society it just doesn't make sense to be forcing licensees out of business."

Simon Clark, director of the Save Our Pubs & Clubs campaign, "Politicians can bury their heads in the sand and pretend otherwise but there is no doubt that the smoking ban has had a devastating effect.

"We were told that the ban would encourage a new wave of non-smoking customers but that hasn't happened. Instead, many smokers have chosen to stay at home and thousands of pubs have closed as a result.

"For the sake of our local communities, the Government must review the smoking ban. Options should include separate smoking rooms, which would protect the interests of non-smokers.

"The Government should also relax the regulations on outdoor smoking shelters so people can smoke outside in a warm and comfortable environment all year round."

Further information

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