

Smoking: Protecting public health policy from the influence of the tobacco industry

The tobacco industry has a long history of working to subvert or delay health policy and local authorities must be vigilant to local tobacco industry influence

- The tobacco industry engages local authorities to advance their commercial interest
- The World Health Organizations' (WHO) international treaty: The Framework Convention on Tobacco Control commits signatories to protecting public health policy from industry interests. This covers local and national government.
- Local authorities should have clear, transparent policies on industry engagement.

The tobacco industry attempts to engage with local government to influence policies in favour of its commercial interests. They use a range of techniques to get a foot in the door and work to influence health policy by:

- Attempting to influence the national agenda through influencing local decision makers
- Offering funding to support councils delivering public health services
- Offering support to councils on tackling illicit trade to appear as valued partners
- Encouraging public health resources to be spent on a narrow range of activities
- Undermining health policy through work to renormalise smoking in council environments.



Imperial Tobacco sponsored shelters on council property - part of their 'smoking allowed' campaign.

"In my research I have encountered some outrageous examples of the industry's bogus economics but in short, what ever tobacco reform a government proposes you can be sure the industry will claim:

- 50 small businesses will close every week***
- Thousands of jobs will be lost***
- Our streets will be flooded with smuggled tobacco***

and if they think they can get away with it they will claim all three..."

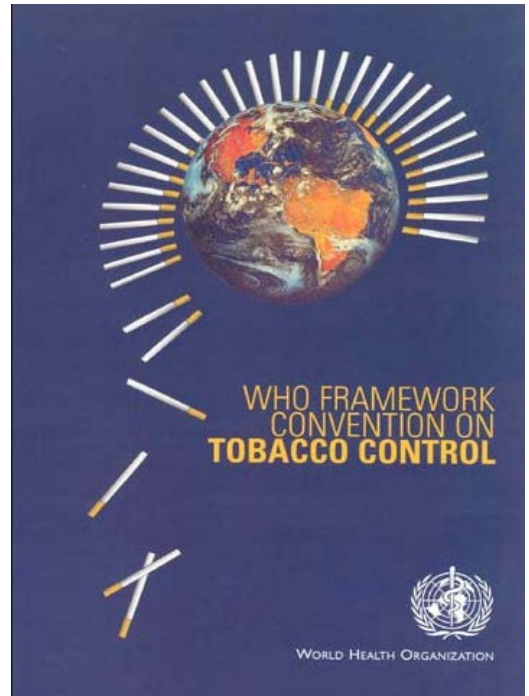
Luk Joossens, European Cancer Leagues

Article 5.3

The Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC) is the first international health treaty developed by the WHO. It is a broad treaty which includes a range of commitments to comprehensive tobacco control.

[Article 5.3](#) of the FCTC is a response to decades of industry attempts to subvert public health policy. It states that: "In setting and implementing their public health policies with respect to tobacco control, Parties shall act to protect these policies from commercial and other vested interests of the tobacco industry in accordance with national law."

The [Tobacco Control Plan for England](#) makes clear these commitments also apply to Local Government: *"Local authorities are also responsible for meeting the treaty obligations set out in the WHO FCTC to protect their public health policies from the commercial and vested interests of the tobacco industry."*



A clear policy

There is clear evidence that the tobacco industry has worked to prevent implementation of effective tobacco control policies:

"In short, we are very clear about our objective - **an unyielding and aggressive defence of our rights to make and sell our products** and our consumers' rights to have a free marketplace so that they can choose and use those products." [Phillip Morris International, 1995](#).

To protect health policy and ensure your local authority is compliant with the FCTC all councils should review current practice and develop a local policy. It should include commitments to:

- Refuse any partnerships with the tobacco industry, for example around tackling illicit tobacco or under age sale of cigarettes;
- Refuse any funding, either monetary or in kind, from the tobacco industry (or their subsidiaries) for any public health or other council work;
- Refuse offers to participate in any tobacco industry "corporate social responsibility" activity;
- Publish details of any necessary meetings or interactions with the industry;
- Meet with the tobacco industry only in so far as is necessary under responsibilities to regulate it;
- Publish any information provided by the tobacco industry to the council, which should be submitted in writing;
- Organisations and individuals engaged with the Council shall declare any tobacco industry funding or support they receive.

Further resources:

1. ASH/iPiP: Toolkit: [Article 5.3 of the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control](#)
2. Tackling Illicit Tobacco for Better Health: [Guidance for Trading Standards on engaging with the tobacco industry](#)

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