

Edinburgh MEP disappointed by voting on tobacco directive

DISAPPOINTMENT OVER EU PARLIAMENT TOBACCO VOTE

Alyn Smith has today expressed his disappointment at the European Parliament's vote on the Tobacco Products Directive.

MEPs voted in favour of proposals to expand health warnings on packaging and to ban the sale of imitation tobacco products, but rejected key proposals to restrict the sale of slim and flavoured cigarettes and to introduce medical regulation for e-cigarettes, which would have seen their quality and content being properly regulated.

Reacting to the vote, Alyn said:-“Parliament has made the wrong call today.

“With 700,000 EU citizens dying every year from tobacco-related diseases, the proposal to ban slim and flavoured cigarettes would have made significant progress in reducing that figure. In rejecting these regulations the Parliament has passed up the opportunity to save lives.

“The rejection of proper medical regulation on e-cigarettes is particularly disappointing. The classification of e-cigarettes as pharmaceutical products would have allowed us to monitor their content whilst maintaining their widespread availability in shops and supermarkets for those who wish to use them as an anti-smoking aid. Claims that e-cigarettes were to be banned or made available only under prescription were irresponsible and completely untrue. Under consumer regulation, the public will now remain in the dark as to the long-term health impacts of these new products, and the tobacco industry will be free to pursue their agenda of making e-cigarettes a gateway to tobacco smoking.

“Although the amendment votes did not go our way, I lent my support to the overall package put forward by the Environment Committee which had much to admire on issues such as the regulation of additives and characterising flavours, and which passed by a large majority. Despite the disappointing result on these specific regulations, I am nonetheless proud to have stood up to the intensive lobbying we received from the tobacco industry and to have voted in the interests of public health.

“We are doing tremendous work here in Scotland to curb the use of poisonous substances such as tobacco – not least through the Scottish Government’s commitment to press ahead with standardised packaging that is leading the way in Europe – and our position today only reaffirms our commitment to achieving a tobacco-free Scotland by the year 2034.”