

Davey Defends Cannabis Legalization and Smoking Ban Stance

Liberal Democrat leader Sir Ed Davey has defended his support for the legalization of cannabis, insisting it is not “inconsistent” with backing a phased smoking ban. This comes after the government’s Tobacco and Vapes Bill, which proposed making it illegal to sell tobacco to anyone born after January 1, 2009, failed to pass before the general election due to a lack of time.

Support Across Party Lines

The policy had the backing of Labour and Liberal Democrat MPs, who were given a free vote and thus were not compelled to support the bill. Speaking to the BBC, Sir Ed reiterated his desire for a regulated cannabis market, emphasizing the health dangers posed by both potent cannabis strains and smoking.

Clarifying the Position

Addressing public questions during a BBC Radio 5 Live phone-in, Sir Ed was asked whether his support for a smoking ban conflicted with his stance on cannabis legalization. He acknowledged that some see the positions as inconsistent but argued they were aligned.

Regulated Cannabis Market

He highlighted the party’s policy to introduce a regulated market for cannabis to prevent the availability of more harmful strains such as skunk. “I’m banning skunk because that’s very, very harmful to people’s health. And cigarette smoking, everyone sees, it’s really clear it’s very, very harmful,” he explained.

Personal Motivation

Sir Ed shared that his stance was influenced by the loss of both his parents to cancer. He admitted it was challenging as a liberal to support bans but felt the health arguments were compelling. “If you’re serious about the NHS and you’re serious about what happens to families when they lose their parents, you just need to act,” he stated.

Past Experience and Future Policies

When asked if he had ever smoked cannabis, Sir Ed admitted to having done so “on a few occasions” at university but said it was “very seldom.” Regarding the legalization of other drugs, such as magic mushrooms, he emphasized the party’s commitment to “evidence-based health policies.”

Liberal Democrat Manifesto Commitments

The Liberal Democrat manifesto outlines plans to remove 'skunk' from the streets by creating a legal, regulated market for cannabis, with sales limited to over-18s from licensed retailers and strict potency limits. The manifesto also promises to free up police time, reduce court backlogs, and address prison overcrowding by directing individuals arrested for drug possession to treatment where appropriate.

Tobacco Sale Age Increment

Under the Conservative Party's proposals, the legal age for purchasing cigarettes would increase by one year annually, preventing those born in or after 2009 from ever legally buying cigarettes. This policy, which was not enacted before the election, remains a key commitment in the Conservative manifesto. Labour has also pledged to implement the ban if elected.

In conclusion, Sir Ed Davey's steadfast support for cannabis legalization alongside a phased smoking ban highlights a nuanced approach to public health and drug policy. By advocating for a regulated cannabis market, Davey aims to mitigate the risks associated with potent strains like skunk while also addressing the well-documented harms of cigarette smoking. His personal experiences with loss due to cancer shape his commitment to these health policies, emphasizing the need for decisive action to protect future generations. As the Liberal Democrats continue to push for evidence-based reforms, their policies on cannabis and tobacco remain central to their broader health and social justice agenda.

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