



Rt Hon Rishi Sunak MP
Prime Minister
10 Downing Street
London
SW1A 2AA

May 16, 2024

Dear Prime Minister,

Re: Recent personal remarks by Dame Andrea Leadsom to Tobacco and Vapes Bill Committee

On behalf of the UK Vaping Industry Association, the UK's largest industry association, I would like to draw your attention to the personal statement made by Public Health Minister Andrea Leadsom to the Tobacco & Vapes Bill Committee which has been considering evidence in relation to clauses that make up the Bill, as it makes it passage through Parliament.

We feel it was wholly inappropriate that she used this platform to express inappropriate, false and disrespectful opinions which we consider to be highly prejudicial.

In response to calls for a vape retail and distributor licensing scheme to be considered as part of the amendments to the Bill, Leadsom said her personal view was that: "It is a license for the vaping industry to get rid of the competition, make loads more money and focus even more on addicting children to vapes. It is the most cynical of all the cynical proposals I have seen. I am literally in no way in support of a licensing regime."

These remarks are ill-considered, totally without foundation and have caused much anger within the industry because they demonise the entire sector and have the potential to undermine the huge strides made in recent years to successfully transition millions of adult smokers to a much less harmful alternative to cigarettes.

Our industry acknowledges that we have a serious youth vaping problem and the vape licensing scheme, far from being 'the most cynical of all cynical proposals to addict children to vapes', sets out a clear framework to protect children from accessing vapes sold by unscrupulous businesses. The proposal is predicted to generate upwards of £50m in annual self-sustaining funding – at no additional cost to taxpayers – which would be used to empower Trading Standards and support a much-needed and proactive programme of enforcement. It would also see retailers and distributors face fines of up to £10,000 and £100,000 respectively if they are caught flouting the law or trading without a licence.

Far from being cynical, this is the vape industry meeting its obligations to society in general and we urge you to ask the Public Health Minister to reconsider her comments and apologise for the disrespect she has shown to the legitimate independent vaping industry where many individuals have invested their life savings in helping save the lives of smokers. The UKVIA is fully committed to working with the Government, regulators, enforcement agencies and other stakeholders to help end youth vaping and I am personally available to attend any meetings or panels to help do so. We want to be judged for the benefits we bring to the lives of adult smokers and for our continuing efforts to tackle youth vaping.

We urge all ministers to judge us by our actions and to put aside personal prejudices so that we can help adult smokers quit while ensuring the highest standards of protection to young people. We genuinely believe that a licensing scheme is the right thing to do and the legitimate independent vape industry will continue to work hard on the shared priority of putting an end to underage and illicit vape sales for good.

Yours sincerely,

John Dunne
Director General
UK Vaping Industry Association