



‘The Industry Standard of Excellence’

An open letter to UK train operators

It is with considerable concern that we see an increasing number of train operators banning the use of electronic cigarettes both on trains and at stations, disadvantaging as many as 2.6 million of your customers who use vaping products.

In the context of the potential for massively reducing the number of deaths from smoking, discouraging the use of electronic cigarettes is bad policy.

We understand that many of the issues relating to the use of e-cigarettes in public places relate to courtesy, since there is near universal acknowledgement that the current evidence does not support a ban on the basis of harm to others. We believe that there are better ways of addressing the courtesy issue than a ban, however. We are not alone in this view, with Deborah Arnott, Chief Executive of anti-smoking charity, Action on Smoking and Health, quoted as saying:

“There is no evidence that the vapour produced by electronic cigarettes is harmful in the same way as tobacco smoke. For that reason ASH does not support a blanket ban on the use of these devices in all enclosed public places. However, it’s up to individual organisations, including train operators, to choose whether or not to permit their use. We’d suggest that before doing so they think about the potential health benefits of these products which are mainly used by smokers trying to quit.”

A good review of the available science on e-cigarettes can be found in a report from Public Health England, which also does not suggest that e-cigarettes should be banned in public spacesⁱⁱ.

It is one of the fundamental basics of courtesy to minimise the extent to which your actions impact others, and in the case of electronic cigarettes this can be easily achieved. While most users of electronic cigarettes (vapers) find that the visible vapour on exhaling adds to the satisfaction of the product, it is not difficult to reduce this (and there are even liquids designed to minimise the visible vapour).

The argument that it is difficult to differentiate between the use of e-cigarettes and tobacco ones has little merit, as this table indicates:

Tobacco cigarettes	Electronic cigarettes
Appearance:	
Recognisable packets, with distinctive branding; cellophane wrapper, foil inner, and cardboard containers. Paper/plastic wrapping and metallic bands for cigars. (These lead to distinctive items of waste, which may be collected as evidence.)	Usually carried as individual items, or with accessories and spare carts/bottles of fluid for refilling. These may be kept in a small bag or container. Since electronic cigarettes are reusable, they do not produce ‘rubbish’ in the same way as tobacco products.

<p>Include a filter in (usually) either light brown or white. The ‘butts’ are discarded when the cigarette/cigar is finished, and may also be collected as evidence.</p>	<p>The cartridge or mouthpiece may be similar in colour to tobacco cigarettes, i.e. light brown or white, or may be black, silver or any other colour. These are not usually discarded, but are rigid, being made of tough plastic, rather than being ‘spongy’ like cigarette filters.</p>
<p>Cigarettes come in fairly standard sizes: kingsize (regular) or superkings (slightly longer), with the length reducing as the smoker uses the cigarette, with ash being produced. (This may be collected as evidence.) Cigarettes are usually white (apart from the filter in some cases), and covered with paper, so they will not appear ‘shiny’.</p>	<p>May be: Cigalike - Usually longer than tobacco cigarettes (although not always), but distinctive metallic/shiny finish (in various colours) and sometimes with LED light (in various colours). The length does not reduce as the product is used, and there is no ash or residue. Other - Increasingly, e-cigarettes have nothing in common with the appearance of tobacco ones, and have more in common with the appearance of mobile phones.</p>
<p>Cigarettes, and even some cigars, are fairly light in weight, so can be easily held between the lips for almost continuous smoking. This often appears quite distinctively as a smoker with the cigarette ‘hanging out of their mouth’.</p>	<p>Electronic cigarettes tend to be a little heavier – and in many cases, much heavier – than tobacco cigarettes, so users tend to hold them in the hand, then putting them in a pocket or on a table in between ‘puffs’. This is distinctively different behaviour from that of the smoker of tobacco cigarettes.</p>
<p><u>Ignition:</u></p>	
<p>Tobacco cigarettes and cigars must be lit by a flame, either a lit match or a lighter. This process may also produce ‘waste’ which may be collected as evidence, and will certainly be quite obvious if witnessed.</p>	<p>There is no combustion with electronic cigarettes, so no flame or ignition is necessary. The electronic cigarette is operated by a battery which either works automatically as the user ‘puffs’ on the device, or have a manual switch on the battery to deliver the vapour.</p>
<p>A lit tobacco cigarette or cigar will continuously emit an acrid, lingering odour until it is extinguished. Also, the smoker will exhale tobacco-smelling smoke after each ‘puff’. As the smoker ‘puffs’, the lit end of the cigarette will glow brighter, then dim as ash is produced.</p>	<p>The electronic cigarette produces no smoke at all, and no vapour until the user ‘puffs’ on it, after which they may exhale a cloud of white vapour which usually has no smell, and dissipates quickly. The LED (if applicable) on the end of the electronic cigarette will glow when the battery is operated – either automatically on inhalation, or via the switch – at a more or less constant level. No ash will</p>

	be produced and the light (if present) will automatically go out when the user stops activating the battery.
Requires some kind of receptacle to collect the ash which forms as the cigarette/cigar is smoked.	The electronic cigarette is not burning anything, so no ash is produced and no ashtrays are needed.
After the cigarette/cigar is finished, there will be a 'stub' or 'butt', which may have been partially crushed during the process of extinguishing the flame.	The electronic cigarette's length and shape do not change as it is used, and there is nothing to discard after use (apart from spent cartridges which are no longer required for refilling, as indicated above).
Partially smoked cigarettes and cigars which have been extinguished may be relit and smoked to completion, until only a 'stub' or 'butt' is left (as above).	The electronic cigarette is immediately ready for reuse, or may be recharged by replacing the cartridge or battery, or by refilling the cartridge with 'eliquid'.

A rather more nuanced policy could therefore be introduced. There is a need to balance the benefits to vaping customers and the wider public health benefits with the risk of users being discourteous to other travellers.

This could be simply described as a 'discrete vaping only' policy. This would avoid presenting e-cigarettes in the same light as smoking, and adding to the irrational fear some people have of the exhaled vapour, while still encouraging the use of harm reduction products. It would also have the benefit of aligning policy with what we expect is actual practise – since there is no legislated prohibition on vaping, many vapers will be continuing to vape, but surreptitiously. The people most likely to be deterred from vaping are, in fact, current smokers who might otherwise find the use of e-cigs appealing **because** they can be used in places where smoking is prohibited.

To draw an analogy: there are many passengers who would find it deeply offensive if one person began eating a particularly aromatic fish sandwich in a crowded train carriage. Most people who are *au fait* with notions of courtesy and respect would not engage in such behaviour, and it seems likely that passengers who found such an activity offensive and unpleasant would readily complain – either to the person directly, and/or to the train operator.

In order to ensure that customers are fully informed, we recommend the installation of signage, such as this:



so that those who wish to use electronic cigarettes are reminded to do so discreetly, and to treat their fellow passengers with courtesy and respect, while also informing those customers who do not wish to use such products that they can expect the products to be used in a minimally invasive or offensive way – and can report any misbehaviour in this regard. We believe that this is the appropriate balance to strike for this type of public environment. If such a policy were adopted by UK train operators, then they could be – at least in some small way – *contributing* to improvements in UK public health, rather than risking being a potential cause of harm.

We would welcome any feedback, and are more than happy to respond to any questions you may have.

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ⁱ <http://metro.co.uk/2015/06/10/e-cigarettes-have-now-been-banned-from-british-trains-and-stations-5238943/>

ⁱⁱ https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/457102/E-cigarettes_an_evidence_update_A_report_commissioned_by_Public_Health_England_FINAL.pdf