

THE SUNDAY TIMES



# RICH LIST

Who's up, who's down  
— and how they make their money

Magazine



## Kinahan's dirty cash laundry

News

Disposable vapes face ban by end of year

'Health emergency' forces government into rapid action

**Julianne Corr**

Disposable vapes are set to be banned in Ireland by the end of this year on both environmental and health grounds with a government minister calling the situation a "health emergency", The Sunday Times can reveal.

Ossian Smyth, the junior environment minister, said he would proceed with plans to outlaw disposable vapes in Ireland after receiving assurances from the EU that such legislation would not be at odds with single-market rules.

The move comes as Belgium announced a ban on disposable vapes to come into effect on January 1 next year, while the single-use e-cigarettes will be banned in the UK from April 1.

"I set out to see if I could find a way to deal with this problem and I ran a public consultation. I got thousands of responses and generally an overwhelming number of people were in favour of banning them," Smyth said. "One of the challenges from this is the tobacco products directive which defines what kind of cigarettes can be sold in Europe and then [was] misinterpreted as meaning that they have to be allowed to be sold all over Europe and couldn't be banned.

"I've had my lawyers look at this carefully and I've had advice from the attorney-general. The people who are profiting in the hundreds of millions have also had their lawyers looking at it.

**'VAPES MADE ME COUGH BLOOD'**

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"Belgium has managed to get a decision from the EU that this is not against the single market. This is a critical decision; I was delighted when I read that and that is the turning point. That means I can go ahead and proceed on the joint basis of the effects [of vaping] on health and the environment."

Smyth said he would get permission to proceed with the legislation by "the end of this year".

"I met Mr [Stephen] Donnelly [the health minister] about this and my department is working with his to prepare the documents to go ahead and ban the disposable vapes. I expect we will be putting in our submission to the EU this summer and I will be getting permission to proceed before the end of the year," he said.

"I'll be moving as fast as I can as it's a health emergency. The idea that the highly addictive substance is becoming much more popular, it's sort of becoming endemic among teenage children and at the same time causing an environmental disaster."

He added: "I'll be pushing for the fastest route that we can possibly reach ... I will be dealing with this at the same speed that we dealt with

pandemic legislation, of which there was vast quantities. If we can do that then, we can do this now."

Smyth said he would be seeking advice from Australia, where disposable vapes were officially banned on January 1 this year. Vape products are available in Australia only on a prescription basis.

"We definitely do need to look really closely at the experience in Australia and talk to the Australian health ministry and ask them what has worked and what hasn't worked, so that we don't get unintended consequences such as the danger of smuggled products coming in," he said.

"I know they've taken a very strong line on vapes and on smoking. We're not proposing to outlaw the refillable, rechargeable vapes altogether or to make them prescription. The main thing is the health aspects of this are inextricably linked with the environmental aspect, and that's why my two departments have to work together."

This newspaper contacted all 160 TDs and asked them whether they were in favour or against a ban on disposable vapes. Of 50 respondents, 49 were in favour, including Simon Harris, the taoiseach, and Micheál Martin, the tanaiste.

Michael Healy-Rae, an independent TD for Kerry, was against the ban. "The problem I have with it is that it's no more than smoking or alcohol," he said. "Of course I'd

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YES, HE CANNES



Lorcan Finnegan poses for the cameras at Cannes Film Festival alongside the Hollywood actor Nicolas Cage, who takes the starring role in the Irish director's fourth feature film, The Surfer

O'Reilly, 'a giant in Irish life', dies at 88

**Hugh O'Connell** Political Editor

Simon Harris, the taoiseach, last night led tributes to Tony O'Reilly, the businessman, media magnate, philanthropist and rugby star, who died yesterday at the age of 88 following a short illness.

O'Reilly passed away in the morning at St Vincent's hospital in Dublin surrounded by his family.

The founder of the Kerrygold butter brand, he was also the chief executive and chairman of Heinz, a noted philanthropist who owned Independent News & Media for decades, and an Ireland international who set the still-unbroken record for the most Test tries scored for the British & Irish Lions.

His family said: "In the coming days there will be many worthy tributes made to Tony O'Reilly's unique and extraordinary achievements in the fields of business and sport, as well as his extraordinary philanthropic vision which was best evidenced by the establishment of the Ireland Funds at a dark time in this island's history.

"But, for us, he was a dearly loved dad and a grandad. He lived one of the great lives and we were fortunate to spend time with him in recent weeks as that great life drew to a close."

Harris called O'Reilly "a giant of sport, business and media" who left "legacies in all three". He said: "Modern-day Ireland likes to see itself as an island in the centre of the world. Tony O'Reilly was one of the first Irish businesspeople to truly believe that." The IRFU said: "A legend of the game has passed."

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