

HEAD SHOPS CLOSURE

'We won the fight' – Snype

■ Pauline Scott

A hapless head shop customer, who didn't realise that legislation had been introduced on Monday night, turned up at the 'High Times' shop at Castle Street, Roscommon, at 6.10 pm on Tuesday afternoon, and passed what he thought was a picket outside the shop and tried to enter, only to find that the doors were locked, the head shop closed what he thought was a picket was in fact a celebration to mark the success of the Roscommon Anti-Head Shop group!

The black-clad young man left the area amid cheers from approximately 20 people gathered outside. Members of Roscommon Anti-Head Shop group gathered outside the High Times shop at Castle Street on Tuesday evening, scene of a picket since the store opened in January, and celebrated the fact that legislation was introduced on Monday night which banned the sale of mephedrone, making it an offence punishable by life imprisonment. The 'High Times' shop in Roscommon was one of a large number of head shops across the country that closed its doors on Tuesday.

Jacqui Snype, a prominent member of the Roscommon Anti-Head Shop Group heard rumours early on Tuesday that legislation was to be introduced, but believed that it would merely give Gardaí limited powers in relation to head shops.

"I was in the hairdressers and Joe Duffy's programme rang and said how did I feel about the new legislation and I said, 'What legislation?' and they filled me in and I thought 'this is fantastic'.

"They asked me was the Roscommon Head Shop still open. Then I heard that they had the door locked. I came here and saw the door was open and the lights were off and I spoke to a man who worked here and asked if it was closed and he said it was."

Ms. Snype said that she spoke to a second worker at the store who said that they would be back in the next week or two with zephedrone or another new form. That young man also asked Ms. Snype if the group would go on to protest outside public houses in the area. "I hope if they do come back that the guards will be able to go in. I can't see them coming back. I have a good feeling about it."

"We were four days short of four months stand-



Maura Regan and Jacqui Snype from the Roscommon Anti Head Shop Group pictured outside High Times on Tuesday evening. Picture: Andrew Fox.

ing here, but it was well worth it. I would also like to thank every involved along the road. We couldn't have done it on our own.

"We received fantastic support. It's a victory for people power. This group kept going through hail, rain and shine. We made great friends and it's been brilliant and we are constantly in touch with each other. Martin Finan and Jackie Gilleran came up here while I was on to Joe Duffy and they were delighted. I was also on Shannonside and Mid West."

Asked about a low point of the four-month campaign, Ms. Snype said, "People were getting fed up after a few weeks, and a lot of people were getting

frustrated with it, but we couldn't walk away, nothing happens overnight, but we didn't expect it to go on for four months!"

Ms. Snype also thanked Sean Doyle for giving the group the use of premises, Francie of Finishing Touches, and the management of XLNT Signs, Roscommon Signs, Gleeson's Townhouse and everyone who supported the group in anyway over the last four months.

She also asked that anyone who may be renting premises in the near future, to be extra vigilant as to what it will be used for. "We won the fight," concluded Ms. Snype.

"I think it's brilliant. I saw it on Aertel earlier in the day. I think it's great for the people who were on the picket in recent weeks."

– Caitriona Gleeson

"It's absolutely fantastic to see it closed. It was time to put an end to these legal highs being sold as plant food and bath salts and people advising you on how to take it, that has to be welcomed."

– Cllr. Domnick Connolly

"It's a good day for everyone in the country, because it was like a sweet shop, they could come in and out and the guards couldn't do anything. 80 percent of the young people going into this shop wouldn't go out looking for drugs, but they would get it from a shop. At least we have that much and we will take it from here."

"I'm thrilled that it's closed, all the great work was worth it" – Pauline Hanley

"It was worth it to stand here in the cold and freezing conditions. People got colds and got sick, but it's worth it to see it closed."

– Marie Benedetti

"It's been a long six months and hard going and we never doubted that this could happen."

– Maura Regan

"A win is a win and it was certainly worth fighting for. It's wonderful for our next generation, as a grandfather. People of Roscommon can stand up and be proud of the protest. They achieved so much. We were the first to protest."

– Barry Molloy

"I think we have achieved what we wanted to do and hopefully it will be permanently closed."

– Michael Jordan

"I hope this will inspire others because there is an acceptance of it. You don't have to always accept what's there."

– K. Dunne

Earley expresses delight

■ Pauline Scott

"I'm delighted at this decision to close them down," said Michael Earley, Chairman of the Roscommon Anti Headshop Group, reacting to the introduction of legislation on Monday night to ban the sale of mephedrone, which resulted in head shops across the country closing on Tuesday.

"It's what we campaigned for

and it shows the power ordinary people have if the will is there and they are willing to stay at a campaign. It takes courage from people to get out there and make your presence felt and it will affect change. If I hadn't a vision that this was going to be closed, I wouldn't have started.

"It was always our aim to close these shops and we have achieved our aim."

Michael first heard news of the new legislation at 1 pm on Tuesday. Asked about the low point of the four-month long campaign, Mr. Earley said, "In any campaign there are highs and lows. There were days when it seemed like you were beating your head on a stone wall, but the enthusiasm of the group was always a great source of strength to keep the momentum going."

