

# HEAD SHOPS CLOSURE

## Finneran welcomes immediate ban

"The immediate ban imposed by Government sends out a clear message to people about the dangers involved in psychoactive substances sold in headshops and on the internet," according to Minister Michael Finneran TD.

"The Government has confirmed that it has made an Order declaring a number of substances to be controlled under the Misuse of Drugs Act 1977, with immediate effect. The list of products is available on the Department of Health and Children's website www.dohc.



Minister Michael Finneran.

ie and include Spice, bzp, mephedrone, methylene, butylone, flephedrone, and MDPV.

"Possession and supply of these products are now illegal and subject to criminal sanction of up to seven years imprisonment and/or a fine for unlawful possession and, on indictment,

up to a maximum period of life imprisonment for unlawful supply.

"Legislative proposals were also brought before the Government by the Minister for Justice and Law Reform Dermot Ahern TD to make it a criminal offence to sell or supply substances that are

not prohibited under the Misuse of Drugs Act, but that have psychoactive effects on humans. As soon as these proposals have been accepted by Government, the drafting of this legislation will begin."

"The action taken today stems from an inter-Governmental approach.

Because the issue crosses so many different Departments it was important for a combined approach to the issue. Under the new Minister with Responsibility for the National Drugs Strategy Pat Carey TD, the Minister for Health and Children and the Minister for Justice and Law Reform have moved to address this issue.

"The ban follows consultation with the EU authorities. Unusually a three-month period must pass before a ban can be imposed but in serious cases relating to the protection of public health or safety, emergency legislation can be brought forward. This certainly has been one of those cases, and I am happy that the Government and the EU authorities worked together on the issue to bring about this result."

"This sends out a very clear message to young people and to everyone who were purchasing these types of products, that they have very serious health consequences," concluded Minister Michael Finneran TD.



## Naughten and Feighan welcome move and call for more action

Local Fine Gael TDs Denis Naughten and Frank Feighan have welcomed news that the Minister for Health is to announce an immediate ban on a number of substances available in head shops but they have stated that further action must be taken to address this issue.

"An order banning the substances under the Misuse of Drugs Act was signed on Tuesday and while this is very welcome it simply does not go far enough," stated Denis Naughten.

"The reality is that almost as soon as one substance is banned another substance is manufactured to replace it. The Government needs to investigate the possibility of introducing a ban on all psychotropic drugs in a bid to tackle this problem.

"In the past similar laws were introduced to ban the use of angel dust and other growth promoters that were administered to cattle. If the law was good enough for animals, surely it could be used to ban substances with such a damaging effect on young people."

Denis Naughten said the move was a result of "people power" and praised those involved in the campaign locally to force the closure of the shop. He also called on the Minister for the Environment to change the law to require



Deputies Frank Feighan and Denis Naughten.

planning permission for head shops.

"The reality is that this Government has been slow to act against head shops, which currently operate as legitimate businesses, and until proper legislation is implemented they will be still able to sell 'legal highs' containing a variety of unknown toxic ingredients, many of which pose very serious health risks," concluded Denis Naughten.

His party colleague Deputy Frank Feighan also welcomed the ban. He congratulated the commitment and dedication of the people who

tirelessly worked to ensure this outcome – parents and the public who attended meetings, used the airwaves to warn families of the dangers – the brave people, many whom he met during their protest outside the Head Shop. Deputy Feighan warned that measures to tackle new products that may now be developed would also be needed.

"The Minister's statement is the most comprehensive response to date in combating the dangerous substances which are on sale in head shops. It is regrettable that we lag somewhat behind other countries in this regard and that new analogues of existing products may already be in development.

"The head shop business has shown itself to be like the Hydra; you cut off one head only for two to grow in its place. With this in mind, and in conjunction with criminal justice measures the Government is considering to allow Garda raids of head shops, it is imperative that we also seek to pre-empt the arrival of new products onto head shop shelves. We must legislate so that no substance for human consumption should be sold across any counter unless it has been approved by the Food Safety Authority of Ireland or the Irish Medicine Board."

## Connolly welcomes head shop closure

Clr. Domnick Connolly has welcomed the closure of the head shop in Roscommon Town and praised those involved in the fight to ensure the closure of the premises.

"Credit must go to those people who made their voices heard on this issue and who protested outside the shop come rain or shine," said Clr. Connolly, who previously featured in a debate on head shops on RTE's 'The Frontline'.

"In Roscommon Town we have witnessed an extremely well organised campaign of protests, lobbying and informing the public on the dangers of the substances that were on offer in such shops. The closure of these premises along with the introduction of new regulations banning the sale of several dangerous products is a victory for the local communities that have campaigned vigorously on this issue in recent months."

Clr. Connolly had previously written to National Drug Strategy Minister John Curran asking him to ban mephedrone, a drug which was being sold legally in the country's head shops and which was among the substances banned this week by the Minister for Health.

## 'Triumph for people power' – Fallon

Clr. Laurence Fallon has praised the group behind the campaign against head shops following news that the head shop in Roscommon Town has closed down.

"This is a triumph for people power and credit must go to those involved in the campaign who mounted protests, lobbied politicians and who kept the public informed of the risks associated with the products sold in such shops," stated Clr. Fallon.

"The ban on head shop products announced by the Minister for Health is also welcome but the Government must now ensure that measures are taken to tackle new products that may now be developed. We must pre-empt the arrival of new products onto head shop shelves."

## Closure 'a credit to organisers' – Leyden

Senator Terry Leyden has described the closure of the High Times head shop in Roscommon as a "wonderful victory for parents and community leaders". The closure comes following the midnight ban imposed by the Government Order, creating criminal penalties for the sale and supply of certain 'legal highs'. The Order is made pursuant to the Misuse of Drugs Act, 1977.

"A sustained campaign spearheaded particularly by local women and concerned parents kept this issue to the forefront, and they never let up," said Senator Leyden.

"High Times which was operating on Castle Street, Roscommon has now placed a closed sign on its premises. Throughout the country a series of closures of similar shops has been reported. Now, arising from this Order, which has been approved by the European Commission, the Gardaí are empowered to seize the products, and the Courts have the power to impose a sentence of up to seven years' imprisonment and/or a fine for unlawful possession. On indictment, up to a maximum period of life imprisonment for unlawful supply may be imposed."

## 'High time head shops closed' - Higgins

Jim Higgins Fine Gael MEP for Ireland North West welcomed Tuesday's ban on certain head shop products but criticised the unnecessary delay and the failure to address drug addiction and the associated social problems.

"The Government have failed to put a contingency plan in place in order to protect and help addicts of the banned substances who may resort to street drugs. I have no doubt that the burning of numerous head shops was the result of disgruntled drug dealers eliminating their competition, we need an all-encompassing drug policy that will prevent drug dealers from profiting from head shops reduced stocks."

"We need an early warning system that will allow us to highlight and remove from public consumption potentially dangerous substances whose side effects await scientific confirmation. We cannot expect the unscrupulous manufacturers or head shop owners to cease in their efforts to circumvent the current ban."