



NEWS RELEASE – Thursday 23 January 2014

**‘PLAIN PACKS PLAIN STUPID’ CAMPAIGN WILL FIGHT  
STANDARDISED PACKAGING OF TOBACCO**

**+ ‘Voice and friend of the smoker’ on tour in Ireland, January/February 2014**

John Mallon, spokesman for the smokers’ group Forest Éireann, has taken to the road this week to promote the group’s new campaign, ‘Plain Packs, Plain Stupid’.

Over the next three weeks Mallon will visit towns and cities throughout the country. He said:

“Plain packaging of tobacco is gesture politics. It won’t stop children smoking and there are other more important issues the Minister for Health should prioritise in 2014.”

The ‘Plain Packs, Plain Stupid’ tour coincides with a series of hearings that the Oireachtas Joint Committee on Health and Children is conducting to consider the Public Health (Standardised Packaging of Tobacco) Bill 2013.

According to Mallon:

“Most children start smoking because of peer pressure or the influence of family members. There is no credible evidence that plain packaging will have any long-term impact on youth smoking rates.

“Australia is the only country in the world that has introduced standardised packaging and so far there is nothing to suggest that it has had any effect on the consumption or sale of tobacco. There is however evidence that it has boosted illicit trade.

“The black market is already costing Ireland a fortune. The only people who will benefit from plain packaging are the counterfeiters and criminal gangs who are happy to sell cigarettes to anyone, including children.

“Far from being protected, children could be at even greater risk if the government goes ahead with this stupid plan.”

A recent poll by Red C for Forest Éireann found that nine out of ten people think plain packaging is NOT the best way to stop young people smoking. Of four policy options considered in the poll, mandatory health education in schools (51 per cent), tackling the illicit trade (23 per cent) and banning adults from buying cigarettes for children (14 per cent) were all considered more likely to work than plain packaging (9 per cent).

Given a list of four issues Health Minister James Reilly should prioritise in 2014, plain packaging ranked last on just 4 per cent. In contrast, 45 per cent wanted the Minister to prioritise the health budget overspend, 32 per cent childhood obesity, and 18 per cent under-age drinking.

John Mallon said: "James Reilly has made plain packaging of tobacco a personal crusade but only a very small minority think it is the best way to stop children smoking. Even fewer want it to be his number one priority in 2014."

The 'Plain Packs Plain Stupid' tour began on Tuesday 21<sup>st</sup> January in Cork. It is currently scheduled to finish in Dublin on 5-6<sup>th</sup> February.

**Schedule:**

Tuesday 21 <sup>st</sup> January	Cork
Wednesday 22 <sup>nd</sup> January	Waterford/Kilkenny
Thursday 23 <sup>rd</sup> January	Tipperary
Friday 24 <sup>th</sup> January	Tullamore
Monday 27 <sup>th</sup> January	Tralee
Wednesday 29 <sup>th</sup> January	Limerick
Thursday 30 <sup>th</sup> January	Galway/Ballyhaunis/Sligo
Friday 31 <sup>st</sup> January	Longford/Roscommon
Tuesday 4 <sup>th</sup> February	Drogheda
Wednesday 5 <sup>th</sup> February	Dublin
Thursday 6 <sup>th</sup> February	Dublin

John is available for interview throughout the tour. To arrange an interview please contact him on +353 (0) 85 117 0943 or call Jacqui Miles on +44 (0) 7815 594729.

**Notes for editors:**

1. Forest Éireann is supported by the British group Forest (Freedom Organisation for the Right to Enjoy Smoking Tobacco). Forest was founded in 1979 to represent adults who choose to smoke tobacco and non-smoking adults who are tolerant of other people smoking. The group receives donations from tobacco companies in Britain and Ireland.

2. A random sample of 1,002 18+ adults interviewed on the telephone by Red C between 18-20 November 2013 found that nine out of ten think plain packaging is NOT the best way to stop young people smoking.

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3. The Oireachtas Joint Committee on Health and Children is conducting four hearings to consider the Public Health (Standardised Packaging of Tobacco) Bill 2013.

Forest Éireann has written to the chair of the Committee, Jerry Buttimer, to request that spokesman John Mallon is invited to give evidence on behalf of the consumer.

**For more information see our website:**

[www.foresteireann.org](http://www.foresteireann.org)