



Press Release

Friday 5th September 2008

Plain packaging threatens brand building in UK

Today the British Brands Group responded to the Department of Health's *Consultation on the future of tobacco control* which sought views on the potential for plain packaging of tobacco products. The Group calls on Government to take full account of the many functions of brand imagery on packaging and to base policy on robust evidence.

Brand imagery plays many important roles, informing and reassuring consumers, helping them recognise differences between products and providing important safeguards. By differentiating one product from another, such imagery provides the very basis for competition which in turn brings greater value and better products to consumers.

The British Brands Group, while not commenting on how tobacco products should or should not be regulated in the UK, sees proposals for plain packaging as a potential significant restriction on building brands. Policies that affect tobacco products one day may affect other products later.

John Noble, Director of the British Brands Group, stated, "This is potentially the thin end of the wedge. If this is introduced for tobacco products, what next? Yes, brand imagery plays an important promotional role but this primarily promotes one product over another and it is only one of many functions. Making all products look the same will reduce consumer choice and weaken competition in the market."

A proposal for plain packaging would push the affected market in the opposite direction to mainstream Government policies – helping consumers make informed decisions, providing high levels of consumer protection, empowering consumers, promoting innovation and promoting competitive markets.

The Department of Health acknowledges that evidence is speculative on whether the measure will reduce the uptake of smoking by young people. Unless policy is based on robust evidence, this solution is likely to have a number of unpleasant side effects while not delivering the change in behaviour sought.

ENDS.

NOTES TO EDITORS

British Brands Group

The British Brands Group was founded in 1994 as a non-profit-making membership organisation. Its primary role is to speak out authoritatively on behalf of brand manufacturers and represents them collectively when commercial and regulatory issues threaten both their value and their ability to be a positive force in society.

While the Group's work focuses primarily on UK policy makers, it also works hard at deepening public understanding of how brands benefit consumers, society and the economy through the provision of choice, value for money and innovation. The Group also provides the prime forum for its members on brand-related issues.

The British Brands Group is part of a global network of similar brand associations, and is the UK representative of AIM, the European Brands Association, based in Brussels.

The full submission to the Department of Health can be found at <http://britishbrandsgroup.org.uk/publications/other-papers-on-brands>.

For more information and further background briefings please visit the British Brands Group website: www.britishbrandsgroup.org.uk.

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