



# Sainsbury's and Asda among supermarkets funding lobbying against vape ban

EXCLUSIVE

Major retailers and tobacco companies are funding a group that is urging MPs to raise concerns about the Government's plans



Many feel vapes are designed to appeal to children with bright colours and a variety of flavours. (Photo: Peter Dazeley/Getty)

By Alexa Phillips

April 16, 2024 6:26 pm (Updated April 17, 2024 8:13 am)

Sainsbury's, Asda and other supermarkets are funding a group that is lobbying MPs to block a ban on disposable vapes and water down regulations, i can reveal.

The retailers are members of the Association of Convenience Stores (ACS), a trade body, which wrote to MPs urging them to raise its concerns about the Tobacco and Vapes Bill in its first debate on Tuesday.

The ACS told i it has received £120,000 in annual subscription fees from four tobacco and vaping companies: British American Tobacco, Japan Tobacco International, Philip Morris International and Imperial Brands.

NEWSLETTER



## The Essential

A curated daily round-up of news, culture, sport and more. (Mon-Sun)

Sign up

This site is protected by reCAPTCHA and the Google Privacy Policy and Terms of Service apply. Your information will be used in line with our Privacy Policy

Four more vaping firms have given the group £74,000 in subscriptions.



**News** [UK](#) [World](#) [Scotland](#) [Health](#) [Education](#) [Technology](#) [Science](#) [Environment](#) [Business](#)

representatives on the groups board.

### Read Next



**NEWS**

**BIG READ** [From James Dean to F1: Tobacco industry's long fight against smoking laws](#)

[Read More](#)

Asda and Waitrose acknowledged they are members of the ACS but said they are in favour of a ban on disposable vapes.

Major retailers have each paid up to £17,410 a year for their memberships.

Deborah Arnott, chief executive of Action on Smoking and Health, a charity, told **i**: “We are concerned about ACS being too close to the **tobacco industry** – and listening to the industry rather than their members.”

In an email widely sent to MPs on Friday and seen by **i**, the ACS said it wanted them to seek reassurances from the Government that planned restrictions on the display of vaping products would not be as strict as those for tobacco products.

It also claimed that the introduction of the **smoking ban** could result in increased violence and abuse towards shopkeepers.

The ACS has also urged businesses to write to their MPs to oppose the ban on disposable vapes, which is expected to come into force in April 2025.

The trade body offers a contact form on its website that simplifies the process by allowing visitors to enter their postcode, which fills in the email address for their MP and a pre-written draft that is ready to be sent.

The email draft argues that the ban on disposable vapes will push users to take up **smoking**, affect business sales and fuel an illicit market.

In its call to action the ACS says: “We do not believe that a ban on disposable vapes represents an effective policy intervention.”

### Vaping companies' annual funding for the Association of Convenience Stores



**News** [UK](#) [World](#) [Scotland](#) [Health](#) [Education](#) [Technology](#) [Science](#) [Environment](#) [Business](#)

**£30,000** – from Deep Vaping (Green Fun Alliance), a vaping manufacturer

**£14,000** – from JUUL and Aquios, vaping manufacturers

The Tobacco and Vapes Bill, which is **making its way through Parliament**, will ban disposable vapes and give the Government powers to restrict vape flavours, introduce plain packaging and change how vapes are displayed in shops so they don't appeal to children. The legislation also includes a ban on smoking for future generations.

Ms Arnott said polling it commissioned in January of nearly 1,000 independent shops, including more than 500 convenience stores, found most were supportive of the bill.

She told **i**: “ACS lobbying is straight from the playbook of **Big Tobacco**, and doesn't reflect their members' views.

“A representative poll of retailers finds that the legislation is supported by the majority of convenience stores – more than twice as many as oppose them, and the overwhelming majority support requiring proof of age.”

Ms Arnott said the ACS has a “track record of following the tobacco industry line”, having opposed previous rules banning the display of tobacco products and requiring plain packaging.

She said Action on Smoking and Health is worried that MPs will be “misled by what the ACS is saying”.

Rosemary Hiscock, a researcher at the University of Bath's Tobacco Control Research Group, said the tobacco industry is known for trying to influence government policies via other groups.

### Read Next



POLITICS

**MPs vote to ban smoking for anyone born after 2008**

[Read More](#)

She told **i**: “They aren't allowed to advertise generally but then they can advertise their new products in the retailer press, so therefore they can reach retailers.

“They often do operate with front groups so that it looks like the challenge is coming from the retailers, but actually they're being funded by the tobacco industry.

“They often use the same arguments the tobacco industry themselves use, so it looks independent but actually it's all funded by the tobacco industry.”

David Strain, board of science chair at the British Medical Association, said disposable vapes are harmful to the environment and “through predatory marketing tactics” primarily target young people, exposing them to the harms of nicotine addiction.

He told **i**: “There must be tighter regulation and restriction around disposable vapes and the fact that industry is lobbying so aggressively means we need to remain focused in our efforts to ensure regulation protects the health of the population.”

Libby Peake, head of resource policy at the Green Alliance think-tank, said MPs “shouldn't be swayed by these business interests who are making money from damaging both the health of the nation's children and the health of the environment”.



She told **i**: “It’s no surprise that businesses that are currently making a lot of money out of vapes – and seeing an exponentially expanding market – want to defend that and try to ensure that that market doesn’t disappear completely.

“The data on that is incredibly alarming, not just in terms of how quickly the market is growing, but in terms of the uptake amongst youth in particular – in other words, non-smokers. The environmental impacts from that rise are also quite shocking.”

The ACS said it only represents the interests of convenience retailers and “any supplier to the convenience sector cannot by definition be a member and has no input in our policy positions”.

It said suppliers to the convenience sector looking to network with retailers and have access to ACS data and insight can purchase one of three annual packages: Connect, Club and Premier Club packages. It said there are 100 companies signed up to these packages and the fees from four tobacco firms represent only 5 per cent of ACS’s annual turnover. The vaping firms mentioned are also not members, but suppliers, it said.

A spokesperson said: “ACS does not represent the views of suppliers to the convenience sector, who cannot by definition be members.” It said suppliers can take part in events but cannot provide feedback on policy submissions and have no influence on policy-making on any issue.

A spokesperson for Asda said the company supports the current Tobacco and Vapes Bill, including the full ban on disposable vapes, as well as restrictions on placement, flavours, and the marketing of all vapes.

A Waitrose spokesperson said: “As the first supermarket to announce our intention to never sell disposable vapes, we absolutely support the Government’s ban.”

Morrisons, Co-op and Southern Co-op declined to comment. Sainsbury’s and Spar did not respond to a request for comment. **i**

Topics

[Lobbying](#) / [Smoking](#) / [Smoking Ban](#) / [Tobacco](#) / [Tobacco Industry](#) / [Vaping](#)

### Most Read By Subscribers



POLITICS

**Nearly half of Britons want a general election within six months, poll shows**



NEWS

**Assad troops flee Aleppo as Russian jets bomb suburbs after surprise rebel assault**

POLITICS

**Great British Railways fiasco with only 15 staff and nationalisation months away**

MEDIA

**Piers Morgan battles Nigel Farage for first UK Donald Trump interview**

WORLD

**A doctor was raped and murdered at work. Now India’s women are fighting back**

OPINION

**Drunk MPs and my pretend G&Ts – Westminster’s booze problem has gone too far**

Essentials

News

Useful links

Contact Us



**News** [UK](#) [World](#) [Scotland](#) [Health](#) [Education](#) [Technology](#) [Science](#) [Environment](#) [Business](#)

[Opinion](#)

[iRewards](#)

[Puzzles](#)

[i app](#)

[i Student Digital Subscription](#)

[Sitemap](#)

[Newsletters](#)

[Saved Articles](#)

[Manage account](#)

**Follow us on**



All rights reserved. © 2024 Associated Newspapers Limited.

[Cookie Settings](#)

[Do not sell or share my personal information](#)

[Terms and Conditions](#)

[Privacy Policy](#)