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We are the industry leaders in Cigar and OTP retailing in the UK:

Davidoff of London - St James's
James J Fox London
Cgars
Sautters Cigars of Knightsbridge
Havana Cigar Exchange
N0 6 Cavendish
Birley Cigars
Kensington Cigar shop
Havana House

To the members of parliament:

We represent over 50 of the 175 retail units or specialist Tobacconists in the UK, which rely on the sale of Other Tobacco products (OTP's) for the vast majority of their turnover. Cigarettes form only a small and financially insignificant part of our product portfolio.

We are physically present in nearly all the major cities and tourist centres in this country. Our clients are typically over 30 years old and smoke only cigars or a pipe. We employ hundreds of staff both in shops and warehouses and indirectly in secondary industries.

We contribute millions to the exchequer in VAT, Tobacco tax, Corporation tax, income tax and NI. We attract tourists in large numbers as the UK is accepted as the world centre for Premium cigar excellence.

There has been no assessment of the impact of the proposed legislation on this small but important part of our economy.

Cigars are certainly a cultural product with a very traditional heritage. It is an unashamedly premium product for a select clientele. The lineage of some retailers stretches back over 230 years supplying fine cigars to Royalty and dignitaries from around the world. It is, without doubt, a lifestyle product and there is no evidence of early usage by underage smokers, no evidence that it is a gateway to the far more addictive cigarette smoking and no evidence to date that OTP's generally pose any significant health threat to consumers.

Yet this legislation will slowly strangle this industry. It is not the target of this legislation. "Stopping the start" is not applicable to the cigar industry as it is not in this arena that youth smoking begins. Cigar smokers are usually occasional users - not habitual ones. Enjoying a fine cigar in an allocated space is totally different from a hasty "fag" on the office steps.

There is already ample precedent to create regulation that differentiates between "Big Tobacco" (cigarettes and hand rolling tobacco) and OTP's (Other tobacco products) as evidenced by the differing rules on packaging, smoking in sampling rooms and even track and trace.

Other Tobacco products must be excluded from this legislation to prevent the collateral damage by wiping out this unique industry. We must not "accidentally" destroy a market which employs so many, contributes so much, is a centre of excellence and is the envy of the world.

The alternative will kill our shops and businesses, lay off our staff, reduce our economic input, reduce our standing in the world, and destroy a heritage and tradition that spans centuries.

And for what? So that we no longer tempt underage children to light up a Montecristo and become habitual cigar smokers for life.

Your faithfully,



Eddie Sahakian
Managing Director

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