

Smoking in London's parks should be banned, health advisers tell Boris Johnson

Commission set up by mayor urges him to bring in bylaws¹ and press other authorities in the capital to follow suit².

Smoking in London's parks would become illegal under proposals submitted to the mayor, Boris Johnson, to make it one of the world's healthiest cities. Under the plans Johnson would use his powers to make bylaws banning smoking in Trafalgar Square and Parliament Square, and his influence over the Royal Parks to follow suit in its 10 green spaces, which include Hyde Park and Green Park.

The measures would create the first places in the UK where smoking outdoors is banned. In 2007 it became illegal to smoke in enclosed public spaces across the UK such as pubs, clubs and restaurants.

Johnson has been urged to take the bold step by experts belonging to the London Health Commission, an independent inquiry he set up in 2013 under the ex-Labour health minister and eminent surgeon³ Lord Darzi, to help persuade some of the city's 1.2 million smokers to give up. The advisers hope that London's 32 local councils would follow the mayor's lead and ban smoking in their parks and open spaces as well, which between them cover about 8,000ha (20,000 acres).

Professor Dame Sally Davies, the government's chief medical officer for England, said it would help deter⁴ young people from smoking by reducing the likelihood of them seeing adults lighting up. "We all know smoking is bad for health," said Davies, "so I welcome any measures to reduce both active smoking and its role-modelling in front of children."

Michael Bloomberg, the former mayor of New York, said outlawing smoking in all of the city's parks and on its beaches had helped increase life expectancy by three years during his 12 years in charge.

However Johnson hinted that he thought the plan was too interventionist. "One of the glories of London is that we are generally pretty laissez-faire about how people live their lives – provided they do not break the law⁵ and provided they do no harm⁶ to others," he said.

He said he might act on the commission's advice but only if he was convinced that doing so would save lives. "If we were to consider a ban on smoking in parks, we would need pretty clear evidence that this would have direct health benefits – in other words that it would actually save lives. It is time for London to have that debate."

Adapted from <http://www.theguardian.com>
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¹ bylaw : réglementation locale

² follow suit : faire de même

³ surgeon : chirurgien

⁴ deter : dissuader

⁵ break the law : ne pas respecter la loi

⁶ harm : mal

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