

Annual Report 2008–2009 For Annual General Meeting, 31 October 2009

Foreword By Our Chairman

The past year has seen the smoking ban continue to cause carnage across the hospitality trade. And of course with that, further restrict the social lives of smokers and their non-smoking friends.

Furthermore the ban has provided a green light to demonise smokers to levels not thought possible less than a few years ago. We have heard so-called health professionals preach hatred in public, without censure. We see advertisements imply that it's acceptable to beat up a smoker.

We are in deep recession, yet money is no object when it comes to government spending on their anti-smoking agenda. Television peak viewing hours are filled with NHS anti-smoking advertisements. Popular web sites are abundant with taxpayer-funded sponsorship, all targeting changing our smoking habits and choice of nicotine delivery.

Yet, despite the fact that the ban is being spun by the government as being a success, the facts and figures tell another story. Blanket bans and blanket demonisation have the reverse effect. Smoker prevalence has risen for the first time since the war amongst the main target group of this government's agenda. Youth smoking is increasing despite it now being illegal for 16-18 year olds to buy tobacco. Higher taxation has resulted in increased smuggling and counterfeit tobacco.

Pub closures are up to over 50 a week, Working men's club closures have now into three figures, and bingo halls are struggling like never before. The question is, how long will the state and their media lackeys remain in denial?

Freedom2Choose has been working the past year to expose the failings of the smoking ban and the continuing program of restrictions and coercion. We have been involved in many projects and led the way with initiatives, all shining a light on the truth and towards restoring freedoms.

This report and discussions at our second AGM since becoming a constituted organisation, will serve as a view of how Freedom2Choose will continue to fight to achieve our goals. The report is divided into sections according to areas of executive responsibility or particular project.

MEMBERSHIPS – Pete Jackson

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1) Overview.

Despite continuing initiatives like the prize draw for a mobile phone, take-up has remained slow through out the year netting only 27 new members since December 2008.

However of greater concern were the number of members who failed to renew their memberships none of whom replied to the numerous attempts to contact them, further many of the addresses no longer seem to be valid.

It is some comfort that the number of people who have not renewed is they same as our gains in this year, leaving our membership total the same as last year.

The new scheme for this year was the clubs initiative the hope we had for this proved unfounded, as we only had three clubs join bringing with them 21 new members since September of 2008.

This year has also seen the introduction of a more sophisticated membership form which can be filled in on a computer and e-mailed directly to me, making the process of signing up simpler.

Finally, as this year's AGM brings with it the first executive election, extra functionality has been added into the database to enable the printing and mail merging of the AGM invitations and postal voting form's, and also incorporated vote registration facilities.

2) Membership schemes.

The Freedom2Choose membership schemes are unchanged and are as follows;

- £10 Full membership with newsletter and voting rights + membership card.
- £5 Full discretionary hardship membership with the same advantages as above.
- £5 Junior membership with newsletter and membership card and no voting rights.
- £2 Associate membership with no rights or privileges (for Clubs only).

3) Membership statistics.

The current levels of membership are laid out below.

3.1) Current membership status.

Freedom2Choose has at the time of writing this report 127 members;

3.1.1) We currently have 126 fully paid up members of which 21 are full members from the clubs initiative.

3.1.2) We have no currently discounted member.

3.1.3) We have 1 junior member.

3.1.4) We have 4 associate members.

3.2) Regular donations.

Since last year, I believe we have only had one extra regular donor. I have this year stopped tracking the regular donations due to the difficulties involved. As all regular donations are by standing order there is little or no maintenance required.

Press Office Annual Report – Helen Daniels

Overview of activities undertaken:

F2C has increased the number of press releases issued and has distributed 34 full releases in the last year. Although activity has increased, it appears that our releases are, in the main, only being picked up by the 'blogosphere' and we have yet to have a full break-through with the mainstream media.

One major exception to this was our coverage of the G20 Conference Smoking Rooms 'Smoking Ban Amended' in March 2009, which saw a flood of enquiries from the main stream media and contributed greatly towards getting our name recognised and known.

New media contacts have been sought and are continually being collected. Our distribution list contains approximately 900 contacts from a range of outlets including television, newspapers, radio, bloggers, magazines, other pro-choice groups, MPs and PPCs.

F2C has also received exposure on Manchester Radio Online and SunTalk, along with placing adverts in The New Statesman and on the Guido Fawkes blog.

Monthly 'Smoking Snippets', written by Phil Johnson, have also been placed in the CIU Journal, and to date 11 of these have been released. A contract was provided for a year, so this exercise is now almost complete, but has managed to promote our organisation throughout the CIU clubs and their members. An alternative source is now being arranged for the next 12 months.

F2C has also appeared in the local press, including:

- Liverpool - Cyril Carter's smoke ban fine
- Swindon – smoking in hospital grounds
- Yorkshire – promotion of NE meeting
- Lincoln – report of Lincolnshire smoking festival
- Scarborough - ban Your MP promotion
- Skelmersdale – results of CIU Club survey

The press office also co-ordinated the distribution of the Christmas card to all MPs and assisted in the promotion of the TICAP event earlier in the year.

Although mainstream exposure remains slow, we have received recent enquiries from the BBC North East and The Sun (NI).

Accounts – Belinda Cunnison

FREEDOM 2 CHOOSE INCOME AND EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 2009

	Notes	Year ended 30 June 2009	21 September 2007 to 30 June 2008
INCOME			£ £
	Note		
General Donations	1	2,275	2,352
Donations to Overlordlist		75	0
Donations re F2C Scotland		92	0
Donations- Publicans funds		0	3,998
Donations - Judicial Review		0	4,723
	Note		
Membership Fees Received	2	1,442	1,160
Advertising Income - Z M T C		138	39
- Easyfundraising		269	0
Bank Interest Received - Gross		2	2
		<u>4,293</u>	<u>12,274</u>
EXPENDITURE			
Marketing Costs		2,114	895
Printing, Postage and Stationery		345	377
Cost of Website		60	0
TICAP Membership		200	0
TICAP Expenses Donation		360	0
Working Club Liaison Expenses		278	0
Legal Costs - Judicial Review		0	4,675
Donations to F2C Scotland		92	0
Donation to Publicans		0	3,998
Donations - Royal British Legion		0	48
Donations - Overlordlist		75	0
Donations from General Fund		75	81
	Note		
Professional Costs - Independent Review	1	100	140
Paypal Account Charges		57	139
	Note		
Corporation Tax	3	86	8
		<u>3,842</u>	<u>10,361</u>
SURPLUS OF INCOME OVER EXPENDITURE		451	1,913
Transferred to Reserves		<u>451</u>	<u>1,913</u>

FREEDOM 2 CHOOSE

**BALANCE SHEET
AS AT 30 JUNE 2009**

	Notes	30 June 2009	30 June 2008
			£ £
CURRENT ASSETS			
Bank Current Account		2,243	1,742
Paypal Account		102	159
Petty Cash		105	0
Debtors and Prepayments - F2C Scotland		0	20
		2,450	1,921
LESS CURRENT LIABILITIES			
Taxation	Note 3	86	8
		2,364	1,913
CURRENT ASSETS LESS CURRENT LIABILITIES		2,364	1,913
CAPITAL AND RESERVES			
Reserves B/fwd at 1 July 2008		1,913	0
Surplus of Income over Expenditure during the year		451	1,913
		2,364	1,913
Reserves C/fwd at 30 June 2009		2,364	1,913

FREEDOM 2 CHOOSE

**NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS
AS AT 30 JUNE 2009**

NOTES

1 General Donations

A significant proportion of Donation income has resulted from recurring donations from members. This seems to indicate an ongoing commitment to Freedom 2 Choose.

Donations also include an amount from Caroline Blows in order to negate the cost of the Independent Accounts Review.

	Received £
General individual Donations	910
Repeat Donations	1,265
Donation allocated to negate the cost of independent accounts review	100
	<hr/> <u>2,275</u>

2 Membership Fees

A significant proportion of Membership fees indicate an increasing interest in membership, as follows:

Renewals of Existing Membership fees	507
New Membership fees received	935
	<hr/> <u>1,442</u>

3 Corporation Tax

The Corporation tax due is made up as follows:

Tax due on Advertising income	21%	07/08	66
Tax due on Advertising income	21%	08/09	20
			<hr/> <u>86</u>

FREEDOM 2 CHOOSE Review Statement

I have examined the Income and Expenditure Account and Balance Sheet as at 30th June 2008 herewith, and confirm that it reflects a true and fair view of the books and records and other information provided to me.

CAROLINE BLOWS
CPA Accountancy.

Club & Pub Liaison Report 2009 - Phil Johnson

Twelve months on and we are still finding the Pubs & Clubs highly reticent about committing to joining the fight for our rights- and, ultimately, their own salvation. The pub licensees seem scared to death of any repercussions from their bosses, the Pubco's, and the only positivity we have had is from individual licensees; i.e. free of tie etc. The clubs are equally apathetic, sadly, save for one or two who 'demand' that we make a difference and save their failing businesses.

There have however been some sparkling moments, such as the "Smokers Music Festival" at the Jolly Brewer in Lincoln. If only there were more Emma Chapmans in this world our job would have been 100 times easier, but that does not seem to be f2c's lot!

A survey earlier in the year told us what we already knew.

1.	Has the smoke ban had a detrimental effect on your club?	Yes/No	Yes 98%
2.	Was the smoke ban implemented fairly?	Yes/No	No 98%
3.	Do you believe there should have been freedom of choice?	Yes/No	Yes 98%
4.	Has your club the facility for a smoking room?	Yes/No	Yes 98%
5.	In the light of events, do you trust this government anymore?	Yes/No	No 81%

However, despite the Club Journal providing us with a platform this year to get the message out to the clubs, the returns in terms of new memberships has been dire. Therefore when another 'pubs & clubs' newspaper approached me I felt this might be a smaller but far more productive situation whereby fortnightly articles and a weekly advert were offered for slightly less than the Club Journal deal. This paper goes directly to the pubs & clubs.

Back to the CIU survey, the latter question led us to the next stage of our fight against prohibition. Surely, it would not be too difficult to gain support for our cause from the next Conservative government.

To this end I enlisted the support of our honorary member, Roger Helmer, who could clearly see the advantages of an amendment to the smoking ban, no less, the support to be gained from the Labour heartlands. That situation, I am happy to report, is now coming to fruition as we now have a firm commitment to November 10th in London.

We are also starting to make headway in powerful circles in and around government. Our political executive, Dave Atherton is more capable than I of a progress report in that sphere.

We have finally opened the f2c shop, though of course, with limited funds, stock is limited. However, there are plans to build on this situation. A vote of thanks goes to Paul Kearns for his tremendous help in this department.

What I can report as progress however, is the alignment of f2c with JFL (Justice for Licensees) set up by the tireless Inez Ward. Since my visit to Paignton, Inez has come to realise that had it not been for the smoke ban none of these other problems would have come to the surface in such a violent manner, hence, other protest groups. Without customers, the excessive charges by Pubcos on their tenants have become all too apparent.

Inez has also realised that UNITY is the way forward and has taken the first step by working with f2c. This I am sure will lead to more groups following suit, which will, eventually, give us the people power I have always demanded.

JFL has a 'facebook' following of more than 373,000 people. Inez assures me that at least 2,000 of these are licensees therefore we can safely assume that this newly formed alliance between f2c/JFL will certainly bear fruit in the coming months.

Inez has contacts that we probably cannot reach but I feel 'that' will be a reciprocal situation. More importantly, Inez has secured the support of John Gaunt and the Sun newspaper – something I could not do on behalf of f2c – so this alliance is even more important in that aspect. I feel that this 'union' will pave the way to more organisations banding together, which of course is exactly what we need to provide people power.

We have also secured regular monthly spots on radiomanchesteronline.com, which can be heard worldwide, so we are still getting the message out there.

We have secured an 'intro' into the 'Bingo Hall world', albeit small, but talks are still ongoing with top representatives of Gala Bingo, who have been forced to close a fair number of their outlets.

We also have the full support of "C.Gars Ltd" of London who list 16,000 members and to this end I think we need a list of 'supporting organisations' on our front page which will show newcomers we are a rapidly growing organisation.

In conclusion, although a disappointing year as far as recruitments are concerned; we have made tremendous progress in other areas. We are now a recognised force, which confirms to me that we will be successful.

Freedom2Choose OFFICE

It is reasonable to expect any organisation's office to be the hub of communications and the office of Freedom To Choose is no different.

Since we first became an organisation, rather than just forum activists, many initiatives have been put into action over the past year that required the following:

- a) A secure postal address
- b) A secure email address
- c) A unique telephone/fax number
- d) A distribution point for the products needed to meet initiatives started.
- e) Membership forms and fees to be processed and stored in a secure location.
- f) Membership fees to be sent to the Treasurer on a regular basis, (weekly.)
- g) Copies of all paper records kept securely after the relevant committee member or initiative line manager has been informed of their content
- h) Passing on telephone messages received to relevant Freedom2Choose member/committee member or group member.

Your office will always be vigilant with all monies received whilst carrying out its duties on behalf of the Freedom2Choose membership, sourcing supplies and supplier's that offer the best value for your money.

Chairman's Statement - Andy Davis

Freedom2Choose's second AGM as an association will take place on 31 October 2009.

This will provide a chance to review the past year and discuss the next.

I'd like to take this opportunity to thank the Executive Committee for their hard work and commitment to the cause during the past year.

I would also like to extend my thanks to all members for your contributions and support.

As you know, some big projects have been taken on during the past year. It has become apparent over the past year that some campaign groups struggle to achieve a large membership base, and even more so an active membership. We have learned that we have to spread ourselves thinly, and encourage involvement in individual projects where they suit certain skills and interest.

Despite having a relatively small core of activists we have made the national news this year. We exposed the hypocrisy of this government in allegedly allowing smoking at the G20 summit. Second hand smoke is apparently a unique phenomenon – deadly to the public, but harmless to the political elite!

We have made further inroads into halting the carte-blanc imposition of bans in areas not covered by the law. Our exposure of the inhumane treatment of smokers at a large hospital in Swindon resulted in the reversal of their outdoor ban.

We have co-hosted a large smokers' festival, and participated in various forums across the hospitality trade, providing expert representation on the impact of, and alternatives to, the blanket smoking ban.

We participated in the inaugural International Coalition Against Prohibition conference as a founder member organisation, and will be represented at the next event over the coming year.

We are now starting to build a support group amongst politicians, and hope to meet with them soon along with heads of hospitality groups. This is all important as we should soon see a change of government. It is vital that we have a core group of MPs in the new parliament, ready to vote for change.

We have already formulated a policy for an amendment. The leading scientist on Building Services in the UK has approved our document providing a solution based on air management in workplaces.

These successes and further initiatives will provide Freedom2Choose with plenty of challenges for the coming year.

It would make our cause much easier if we could attract more activism, and more funding, and I urge members to be involved in whatever ways they can. However, we have had some notable achievements this year with limited resources, and the important thing is being able to get the message across. Even if we had a million members (like the anti-Iraq war demonstration), it wouldn't guarantee success. This current government chooses to ignore anybody opposing their policies – even to the extent that they only hold consultations with those who support them.

However, it seems certain that their days are numbered. We need to campaign hard to ensure that their replacements do listen – and that they recognise that there are better alternatives to the abject failure of their current policies on tobacco.

This year's AGM will provide an opportunity to discuss the best way to achieve this.