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Paris move to ban outdoor heaters at cafés in fresh blow to smokers

The Gauloise-puffing intellectuals of Paris, still reeling from a smoking ban in the city's cafés, are facing a fresh blow with a move to ban outdoor gas heaters.

By Henry Samuel in Paris

Published: 4:31PM BST 23 Sep 2010

France



Cafés that have already purchased the gas heaters will have two years to phase them out Photo: ALAMY

(<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/france/>) long held out against the smoking bans being enacted worldwide in public places, but finally caved in three years ago. But while the inside of Left Bank cafés has been less foggy, the *café-clope* (coffee and cigarette) culture of the city has continued to thrive by simply spilling into the streets, thanks to the gas heater.

The devices have blossomed in the capital since 2008, bringing ever-greater numbers of Parisians outdoors. But now the Socialist and Green-run town hall has declared war on the heaters, calling them an ecological disaster.

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"Warming the little birds in winter is not very useful," said Lyne Cohen-Solal, the Socialist deputy mayor in charge of trade.

She is spearheading the push for new regulations, to come into force by January next year, which would also forbid the use of plastic partitions to keep in the heat on terraces. They are deemed unsightly and a fire hazard. Glass partitions would be allowed. Cafés that have already purchased the heaters will have two years to phase them out.

Christian Navet, of UMIH, the top café, restaurant and nightclub union, fumed at the news. "If we no longer have plastic sheeting or [gas] heating, a large part of our turnover will go up in smoke and we cannot allow that."

André, owner of A la Tour Eiffel, a café near the landmark, was less diplomatic. "What do our four little gas heaters pollute compared to a plane taking off? This equipment cost me a fortune – 11,000 euros. What do I do with all my smokers now?"

Jeanne Deschamps, a 40-year old translator and occasional smoker said: "The French always moan whenever there's change. It's true it's nice to sit out in winter with heaters whether or not you're a smoker, but if it's deemed eco-unfriendly fair enough. We can use duvets like they do in Scandinavian cafés."

Since the smoking ban ended, the police have received complaints from home owners that burgeoning outdoor terraces, which often stay open long into the night, are making their life hell. The new town hall rules will make it mandatory for cafés to leave at least 1.6 metres of pavement space free for people to stroll past cafés without having to squeeze past customers or venture into the street.

The association Vivre Paris, which defends peace-loving city dwellers, said the rules did not go far enough. "It's harder and harder to get around on pavements and locals can no longer sleep at night because of the noise," said Elisabet Bourguinat, a member.

The rules will dismay Nuit Vive, a group of musicians, DJs and nightclub owners who last year warned that a "law of silence" in Paris was turning the City of Light into "the European capital city of sleep". Some 15,000 people signed their petition to relax rules on nocturnal revelling.

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