

Cannabis Users Expected to Flock to the Polling Stations on Thursday.

Press Release – No Embargo:

There are over 6 million cannabis users (over 10% of the population), many who self-medicate for a myriad of conditions and these otherwise law-abiding citizens are sick and tired of living in fear of being criminalised for not being able to afford private prescriptions as the NHS continue to lag behind the rest of the world. The upcoming local and PCC elections on Thursday will provide the best chance for change since the 50 year ‘war on cannabis users’ began with the implementation of the Misuse of Drugs Act in 1971, recently described as ‘a failure’ in the current Drugs Reform Bill tabled by Tommy Sheppard MP.

The Liberal Democrats and the Green Party have developed progressive manifestos for drug reform including the decriminalisation of cannabis, a focus on health and treatment and a regulated market, as seen in the US and Canada. Many Police and Crime Commissioners are supportive of policy change which could see a De Facto decriminalisation across parts of England and Wales, where police forces would use their discretion and common sense to protect the public’s civil and human rights.

The United Nations confirmed that offences involving the possession, purchase or cultivation of illicit drugs for personal use should not be criminalised as this would be a contradiction of their human rights and that the personal use of drugs should be decriminalised or depenalised with the addition that limiting access to what may be considered essential medicine is a breach of the human right to health.

The London Mayoral candidate, Sadiq Khan, recently called for decriminalisation of cannabis use in London and has pledged an independent commission into drug reform if he wins. The National campaign group ‘Seed our Future’ have discovered that he is not alone following correspondence with PCC candidates.

“Although there are many candidates, especially Conservatives, who ignore the institutional racism, the antiquated and disproven ideology and the global science; there are far more PCC candidates, especially the Lib Dems and Greens with a handful of Labour, who are surprisingly supportive and considering there were only 9.2 Million voters in 2016, we have a good chance of turning the tide, but this will of course depend on those who will cast their vote for change” states Guy Coxall, the Founder of Seed our Future.

Mr Coxall continues:

“We sent 6 questions to every PCC candidate to gauge opinions on cannabis control and the answers showed that there is a real shift in opinion.” A great example were the responses from Peter Maughan, the Lib Dem PCC candidate for Northumbria and the Tyneside area:

If you are chosen to serve the People as PCC following the election this May, will you:

1. Create a policy to allow officers use their personal discretion and be tolerant when dealing with cannabis related offences (especially personal use, possession and cultivation) where there is no harm to others, as this would redirect funding and

resources to harmful crimes which clearly demonstrate *Mens Rea, Actus Reus and Corpus Delicti*?

Answer: Yes, I support the "Durham model."

2. Within the PCC role, you will be the voice of the People and hold the Police to account. As there are approx. 10% of the population who use cannabis medicinally or for stress relief, will you ensure that these people's human rights are upheld, and that institutional discrimination and racism will be appropriately dealt with within your force?

Answer: Yes.

3. In aiming to cut crime and deliver effective and efficient policing within your force area, will you ensure that officers are provided with the resources needed to ensure that officers effectively carry out their due diligence in respect of cannabis offences, as per PACE code G?

Answer: Yes, if possible and proportionate.

4. In order to disempower organised crime gangs, would you support the implementation of 'private members clubs' where people can medicate and relax in a safe environment, whilst having access to locally grown, tested and shared cannabis?

Answer: Yes, if providing appropriate safeguards.

5. 1000's of responsible drivers are being prosecuted under Section 5(A) of the RTA, without any evidence of impairment (NB: blood tests do not establish impairment or recent use) therefore, will you recommend that officers carry out impairment tests if a swab shows positive for THC and if no sign of impairment exists, end procedures?
6. Would you recommend that cannabis be removed from Section 5 of the RTA and revert to impairment focused enforcement as per Section 4 of the Act, in order to provide the Public with a just, fair and impartial trial which correlates to road safety concerns?

Answer: There is an issue here in respect of the difference between a positive test for cannabinoids which can remain in the system for days or weeks, and impairment. There is an important separation between policy decisions and operational matters for PCCs and I would not seek to interfere with operational policing matters. However I feel the law could benefit from clarification.

Cleo Lake, the Green PCC Candidate for Avon and Somerset stated in her manifesto that "*Cannabis use has no place in the criminal justice system*". She continues:

"In recent months, the relationship between local communities and the police in Bristol has become fractured and I aim to repair that relationship and build bridges. We know that

African Heritage (Black), other ethnicities and young adults, are disproportionately affected by the current drug laws, whether more likely to receive jail time for drug related offences than their white counterparts or else through stop and search policing where young black males are 10 times more likely to be stopped than their white counterparts."

"If elected, I will deprioritize the policing of cannabis and this will include raids on residents' homes who maybe growing a small number of plants and not in themselves creating a public nuisance. The only exception to this would be if the intelligence is 100% certain that a cannabis farm involving human trafficking is in operation."

Stuart Jackson, Green Party PCC candidate for Devon and Cornwall stated:

"Green Party policy has long been to de-criminalise the use of cannabis, but not its dealing. In other words, to support the right of people to grow and use their own cannabis as they see fit, but not to sell surplus on. It's dealing that leads to turf wars and violence."

"So, as PCC, I would urge the Chief Constable to halt the Stopping and Searching of people who are simply smoking cannabis in a public place, as long as their behaviour is not psychotic or anti-social in any way. The police time that is wasted giving cautions to cannabis users should be re-allocated to crime prevention, networking with people and gaining the public's trust, rather than alienating people who pay for our police. The more people who trust the police, the more we feel we can approach the police when we notice something that isn't right, and so the more effective crime prevention comes, when we all share the responsibility to keep our communities safe."

Cllr Jon Hunt, Liberal Democrat PCC candidate for the West Midlands stated:

"In my conversations with the police, I know they are keen to move away from using possession as a pretext for stop and search. I would be pressing for reduction in use of stop and search as excessive use aggravates community tensions."

Patrick Canavan, Labour & Co-operative Party Candidate for Dorset Police & Crime Commissioner stated:

"My personal view is that Cannabis should be able to be prescribed by a GP for any medical condition where they judge that this would benefit the patient. I feel that there should be a Royal Commission or similar level review of our approach to drugs and whether Cannabis should be a civil offence would need to be considered within this. I think it is important that we should seek to establish some kind of national consensus on this issue."

Ben Twomey, the Labour PCC Candidate for Warwickshire stated:

“No-one defends the war on drugs anymore, yet in their silence, it continues to destroy communities and wreck lives. It is time for a public health approach that will protect children, save lives and reduce crime.”

Stan Heptinstall, the Liberal Democrat candidate for Derbyshire stated:

“I am the Liberal Democrat candidate for Police and Crime Commissioner in Derbyshire and I concur with my party’s view that cannabis should be decriminalised.”

Mark Robson, the Liberal Democrat PCC candidate for Dorset stated:

“We are in favour of regulating it's use for those who need it on health and wellbeing grounds to help disempower Organised Crime Gangs.”

Keith Tordoff MBE, Independent Candidate Police Fire and Crime Commissioner for North Yorkshire stated:

“We are never going to arrest our way out of the use of illegal drugs. We need safe places for users and Police Officers trained to sensitively deal with users.”

Mr Tordoff continued:

“We need a grown-up debate for changes to the law on the Misuse of Drugs Act but in the meantime, the law of the land must be upheld - with Police Officers given discretion and using common sense.”

Professor Mike Barnes, political advisor and the first to prescribe medical cannabis in the UK said:

“Cannabis clubs are a great way to reduce harm and build communities to minimise problem Cannabis use. Clubs run by local communities provide tested Cannabis for medical use when many people cannot afford expensive Medical Cannabis. Clubs reduce harm and Police and Crime Commissioners should seriously realise the potential to build back better communities from the bottom up.”

More time and expense are used by the Police Force on cannabis than any other area of law enforcement, even though it is scientifically known that cannabis is far safer than alcohol. If voters are aware of this and the vast opportunities for health, the environment and our economy, they can access more information and find pro-cannabis PCC’s in their constituency by visiting: www.seedourfuture.co.uk

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