

Flak for Imperial Tobacco at AGM

DEMONSTRATORS dressed as giant cigarettes greeted shareholders to the annual general meeting of Southville company Imperial Tobacco.

The South West branch of Action on Smoking and Health (ASH) had organised the protest.

The 20 people involved wanted to draw attention to the role of tobacco in causing lung cancer, and the case of widow Margaret McTear, who is currently taking action in the Scottish courts against Imperial Tobacco following her husband's death from lung cancer at the age of 48.

Giving a spoof show of support for Imperial yesterday, demonstrators held banners with messages to Imperial chief executive Gareth Davis, including "Big Cig loves Big G" and "Smokers love you to death."

Cecilia Farren, who chairs the branch, said: "Every year more than 35,000 people in the UK die

from lung cancer and almost nine out of 10 of these are caused by smoking.

"Imperial Tobacco prides itself that its brands have about 50 per cent of the UK market.

"It's about time that Gareth Davis, who was paid more than £1.6 million last year, was called to account for the impact of selling a highly-addictive product that will kill half who use it in the long term."

Having bought a share in the company to enable her to gain access to the AGM, she later attended the meeting and asked chief executive Mr Davis why he would not admit that lung cancer caused smoking.

He said: "I don't know that smoking causes lung cancer. It may. It may not. Certainly I conceded the point that smokers are more likely to develop some diseases than non-smokers."

● **Imperial results: Business, Page 68**



Hear our plea: Members of ASH protesting outside the Marriott Hotel on Castle Green during Imperial Tobacco's AGM