

## Written Evidence from Charles Amos,

### Leader of the Grassroots Campaign Against the Tobacco Ban

Dear Committee Members,

I am Charles Amos, leader of the grassroots campaign against the tobacco ban. I am submitting my case below because I believe in individual freedom; as do the 350 plus people who have signed my petition against the ban from London to Oxford to East Grinstead and Haywards Heath. I have not received any money from tobacco companies for my endeavours. My case may be summarised in the following bullet points:

- Accepting the paternalism behind the tobacco ban would require rationing junk food and alcohol and requiring exercise; this is wrong; hence, the paternalist principle is wrong and thus the main justification for the tobacco ban is defeated. Individual freedom should stand.
- Smokers do not cost the state anything on a net analysis. This is due to the fact they save the state [£10bn](#) by dying early, contribute [£9bn](#) in tobacco taxes and only cost the NHS and local councils about [£5bn](#), meaning, they are a [£14bn](#) net contributor to the Treasury
- According to the ONS, [69%](#) of people who have ever smoked have given up, showing, without doubt, people have free will when it comes to quitting. Tobacco cannot be banned on the basis it destroys free will.

#### *Against the Tobacco Ban*

(1) The tobacco ban is a grave wrong against the young and unborn of Britain. Individuals should be free to enjoy cigarettes, or, make the mistake of taking up the habit. Not permitting the freedom to make bad choices is simply a runaway train to greater and greater state control over our lives, ensuring adults are treated as if they are children. What is next, rationing junk food, requiring exercise and the state telling people what job is best for them? No liberal society can tolerate such outright paternalism, and, hence, the gradual ban on cigarettes must be opposed. Let the following reasoning persuade you to this conclusion.

- (2) Although it may be admitted many experiences in life are objectively valuable, surely, it must be conceded, many are subjectively valuable alone. Whether an individual chooses to eat lots of cake, climb the sides of mountains, or, ride a motorcycle into work, is entirely a matter of personal taste. Arguing the risk of any of these activities outweigh the benefits simply does not make sense, because, there are no scales, except those in the mind of the individual, on which to make such a verdict. Thus, if an informed individual arrives at the decision an experience is good for him, in these sorts of areas, his judgement is final. Hence, banning any of these activities makes him worse off. This is good reason to oppose such intervention.
- (3) In banning smoking for young people, the government will make many of them worse off, hence, there is good reason to oppose such intervention. The ban denies lifestyle pluralism. I suspect some readers will oppose this logic for three reasons, i.e., smokers are not well informed, smokers do not really want to smoke, and, smoking, unlike the former activities, is objectively bad. Let us take each of these in their turn, and, in so doing, show how none of them ultimately support the banning of cigarettes for adults. Smokers are informed of the dangers of their choice, indeed, with plain packaging and the constant warnings of lung cancer it would be hard for them not to be. Regardless, restricting the freedom of the informed to smoke because the uninformed are too lazy to spend ten minutes on Google is wrong, just as it would be wrong to ban drain cleaner because some drink it due to being too lazy to read the label despite the vast majority acting responsibly.
- (4) No doubt many soon to be smokers will really wish to quit: Their lower self instead of their higher self will govern their behaviour. Nonetheless, today [16.3%](#) of smokers still wish to carry on the habit and [38.3%](#) do not know whether they intend to quit or not (and much of the desire to quit is motivated by the high cost of smoking due to tobacco taxes). And no doubt these two groups would still emerge among potential smokers too. Why should their freedom be restricted to serve the higher selves of the rest. Are the latter group more important than the former group? I don't think so. Just as it would be wrong for state officials to ban the dessert buffet in a hotel because the majority of patrons do not want to eat dessert to lose weight, but could not control themselves, depriving those who really do want dessert of it; by the same reasoning, it is wrong for state officials to ban cigarettes

because the majority of the young do not want to smoke them, but cannot control themselves, depriving those who really do want cigarettes of them.

(5) Nevertheless, I suspect the real argument for gradually banning cigarettes is the belief smoking is objectively bad for all users. This is seriously implausible. If I value the pleasure of smoke filling my lungs, the social scene of smoking, and, the relaxing nature of puffing away over the increased chance of premature death, who is anyone to say I am wrong. And who are the politicians to make these decisions for the young people of today, who will be the adults of tomorrow. Certainly, no one believes longevity or reducing the risk of cancer are objective values which must never be exchanged for pleasure, as demonstrated by the fact we cross the road and eat bacon. For the remainder of this endeavour though let us grant the paternalists the ethical assumption smoking is objectively bad.

(6) The ban on cigarettes violates individual rights and for this reason should be opposed outright. As each of us has the right to imprudently act, e.g., by regularly overeating, failing to exercise, not revising for exams, or, declining to do tasks which really need to be done, analogously, each of us has the right to imprudently act by smoking cigarettes too. As Ludwig von Mises once wrote: 'Freedom really means the freedom to make mistakes.' And what is next if individuals are not granted the freedom to make mistakes? The end of paternalism is forcing us into jobs we would most enjoy, requiring us to exercise, rationing junk food, and, mandating so much socialising per week. All of these interventions may be for our own good, and, although the state may struggle to issue prudential directives due to a lack of information, this administrative barrier cannot really be what is protecting our freedom. We are free by right.

(7) At this point a number of readers will say smokers are not truly free because they are addicted. Indeed, the health minister, Victoria Atkins, has said: 'There is no liberty in addiction'. The evidence smoking can be given up is overwhelming though; [69%](#) of those who have ever smoked have now given up according to the Office for National Statistics. Smokers clearly have free will concerning quitting. Perhaps eliminating addiction is viewed

as intrinsically valuable; an aim which would admittedly support banning tobacco. All sorts of things are addictive though, such as sugar, alcohol, fast food and coffee too. The NHS webpage on [addiction](#) even states people can get addicted to the internet, shopping and work. Following through on banning addiction would implausibly require banning all these things, or, at least banning them for the addicted. Plus, it would require banning good addictions too, such as to exercise, the study of the universe or socialising.

(8) The commercial rights of the tobacco industry will be violated by this ban too: This is wrong. As bookmakers, distillers and pornographers are allowed to sell their products, even though their sales may be bad for many of their consumers, analogously, tobacconists should be allowed to sell their products too. None of us would accept the state forcing out a professional racer who always wins Formular One, even if it made races better for most viewers, so, neither should we accept the state forcing the [6,000](#) people working in the tobacco industry out of their chosen employment either even if it will benefit most soon to be smokers.

(9) The case against the wretched paternalism of banning cigarettes has now been made. Nonetheless, there remains the argument smokers cost the taxpayer money, and, hence, to stop the public from picking up the tab of smokers, the government should ban smoking. (If this is the argument though why not ban all smoking now) The issue with this argument is smokers do not cost the state money on a net analysis. As Christopher Snowden and Mark Tovey from the Institute of Economic Affairs have found smokers cost about [£5bn](#) for healthcare and litter costs, but save the state about [£10bn](#) by dying early, meaning, pensions and healthcare costs are not incurred, and, this is in addition to paying about [£9bn](#) in tobacco taxes into the Exchequer as well. Instead of demonising smokers, or, soon to be smokers, for costing the public money, they could actually be praised for their contribution.

(10) Against this evidence Sunak has claimed: ‘Smoking places huge pressures on the NHS and costs our country £17 billion a year.’ The issue with this £17bn figure is it includes lost productivity to the tune of [£12bn](#), which is actually borne by smokers themselves, either in lower wages, or, to a greater extent, in them simply being dead and not earning anything at all. This £12bn is not a cost to society as it was never entitled to the income of smokers to

begin with, hence, just as when people retire early, we do not claim they cost society, neither do smokers who die early cost society either.

(11) Banning tobacco is a grave wrong which must be opposed. A few young people will be deprived of the pleasure of smoking, who would never acquire the intention to give up, and, will only be made worse off by the ban as a result. And those who wish to smoke, even if they do so imprudently, should still have the freedom to do so. Accepting the paternalism which maintains we must have no freedom to make bad choices is the runaway train to requiring us to exercise, rationing our junk food and forcing us into the jobs which are best for us. No. Freedom must stand: The generational ban on tobacco must be opposed.

Yours faithfully,

Charles Amos