

# Smoking ban would be a drag for some people

**Admits driving stolen Range Rover dangerously on Clayton By-pass**

A man who admits handling and driving a stolen Range Rover, stopped on false plates shortly after being stolen, has been committed to crown court for sentence.

Omar Elattar, (22), of 27, Dartmouth Road, Hendon, London, appeared before Cheshire Magistrates' Court, sitting in Crewe on 18th September, and admitted that between 1st and 5th October, in Congleton, he handled a stolen Range Rover worth £18,000 and with the registration G16 THM, belonging to Anthony Errington, knowing or believing it to be the stolen.

He was committed to crown court for sentence and released on unconditional bail until 23rd October 2023 in Chester Crown Court, which is for sentence.

He further admitted that between 4th and 5th October in Birchanger Road, London, he handled stolen number plates, bearing the registration LL14 KSE belonging to Lucy Ntare, and on 5th October, in Congleton, drove a Range Rover, displaying plates with the registration number LL14 KSE, dangerously on Clayton By-Pass.

He was given an interim driving disqualification until dealt with at crown court.

**By Kelly Mattison**

A smoker who has been lighting up since he was 12 said the prime minister's plan to phase out the sale of cigarettes in England "will not work", but a chain smoker said he would fully support the measure.

These were just two of the views given to the "Chronicle" when reporter Kelly Mattison asked people in Congleton town centre what they thought of Rishi Sunak's bid to stub out smoking once and for all.

Mr Sunak wants to raise the age at which people can buy

tobacco products — currently 18 — by a year each year. It would mean that those aged 14 now would never be able to legally buy cigarettes.

Bradley Dale, (18), a carpet fitter from Congleton said if smoking had been outlawed when he was under 14 it would not have stopped him smoking.

He told the Chronicle: "I would have just got someone over the legal age to get cigarettes for me, or got some fake ID," he said. "Smoking relieves my stress."

Mr Dale said the proposed plan was a way of the Government controlling people and their lives and added that if young people did not have the choice to smoke then they would turn to drugs or alcohol.

When he announced the plan during the Conservative Party conference in Manchester earlier this month, Mr Sunak had said a 14-year-old today "and their generation can grow up smoke free".

He said the aim was to stop teenagers taking up cigarettes in the first place.

"What has ultimately swayed me is that none of us, not even those who smoke, want our children to grow up to be smokers," he said.

Outlining the risks of smoking, Mr Sunak said it was "responsible for one in four



**"The prime minister shouldn't dictate to people," said Mr Machin. (23-41-040).**

cancer deaths, kills 64,000 people a year and leads to almost one hospital admission every minute".

But Amy Nellist, (27), who works in a pet store in Congleton, agreed with Mr Dale, saying that if the ban had been in place when she was younger it would not have stopped her from smoking either.

"At that age, you're rebellious and you go against your parents. When you get to 18, you're allowed to drink so I think taking away the choice from people forever is taking away their freedom."

Fifty-two-year-old Joanne McCallum, who lives in Congleton, believed that Mr

Sunak was "grasping at straws" and should focus on sorting out the "real issues," such as mental health.

"Mental health is at the crux of everything these days. He should concentrate on that rather than trying to force people not to do something which is their choice to do," she said.

Julian Machin, aged 58, who worked as a lorry driver on nights for 26 years, agreed and said the prime minister should not dictate to an adult what they could and couldn't do.

"It should be up to them once they reach 18," he said.

A woman, who would only give her first name as Helen, moved to Congleton from Manchester and has voted Conservative all her life. She said there were bigger issues affecting people, "which the Government could choose to focus on".

"Let's face it, when you're young, we all smoked but if you've got any sense you stop. I stopped in my early 30s. I think most people do get some common sense when they get older," she said.

However, Shama Paul, (33), who worked as a nurse in India, disagreed. She said she was "shocked" to see many children aged 12-15 "behaving like adults" in the town and smoking vapes.

Her concern was that children would start with vapes then



**Ms McCallum said Mr Sunak was "grasping at straws". (23-41-039).**

move onto cigarettes. "Smoking is an attack on our lungs and diminishes the power of our immune system."

Sixty-nine-year-old Rob Harper, who moved from Sale to Congleton and has lived in town for 20 years, agreed with Ms Paul, saying: "I started smoking 20 years ago, now I chain smoke, so I agree with it. I think a lot of the things the prime minister is doing are aimed at vote-catching — but so's Keir Starmer."

When asked by the Chronicle, Congleton Labour town councillor Richard Walton believed the proposed ban was "absolutely" a political tactic to win votes.

"I think it's just classic deflection from the difficulties he (Rishi Sunak) faces in public opinion," he said.



**Ms Paul: "Smoking is an attack on our lungs." (23-41-037).**

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