

# Cambs Times

The Cambs Times

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I WRITE in response to your website article headlined 'Five arrests as 100-strong task force swoop on 30 addresses as part of suspected £6m cigarette smuggling fraud' (July 18).

It highlighted the continued problem of illicit tobacco in your area.

Last week's decision by the government to delay implementation of plain packaging for tobacco products, until the emerging impact of the decision in Australia is better understood, should be welcomed by all who are concerned about counterfeit cigarettes.

Since September 2011, I have been researching the trade in illicit and counterfeit tobacco products in the UK, including the links to organised crime.

This work involves liaising closely with the various law enforcement agencies that have interests in this area as well as investigations in particular known hot-spot locations across the country.

The trade in illicit tobacco has become the primary source of revenue for some criminal gangs and terrorist groups and it has already reached epidemic proportions.

As part of my engagement with Trading Standards, they have described the situation in parts of the UK as reaching "chronic proportions".

It is perfectly clear to anyone who has dealt with counterfeiting and the black market that the idea of putting cigarettes in plain packets would be a boon for organised crime, which so often targets children.

So I applaud the Government's decision to wait and their ability to understand the impact of plain packaging on illicit tobacco.

**WILL O'REILLY**

Former Scotland Yard Detective Chief Inspector

Via e-mail

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