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Look out for Inishowen's 'drug drivers' 'Believe me, they are out there'-says Blake

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By Staff reporter

According to anti-drug activist, P.J. Blake Inishowen is awash with drugs. But he claims the peninsula is not unique - the whole county is. Speaking with the 'Journal' this week Mr. Blake claimed there were probably as many people driving while on drugs as there were with alcohol but the Gardai either weren't interested or were not equipped to deal with 'drug drivers.'

Mr. Blake said: "I have a lot of contact with people from Inishowen over the years. I know that Carndonagh and Buncrana were awash with drugs - probably still are, but small towns like Moville haven't escaped either. I know there were claims for year

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s of fellas letting on they were going to the building sites in Dublin on a Monday but never going near them but coming back on a Friday with plenty of drugs on them for sale purposes. Whether this is true or not the reality is that Inishowen has a major drugs problem."

Mr. Blake said what was amazing was that when Section 49.1. of the Drunk Driving Act was introduced in 1961 it was supposed to cover the use of drugs as well. Since 1961 the sections relating to alcohol have regularly been upgraded and enforced but despite the huge growth in drug usage nothing had been done to address the drug driving issue.

He commented: "I have been trying for a long time to get figures for drug driving convictions. I rang the Garda Press Office trying to get nation wide figures but after been kept on the phone for quite a while and being passed around a girl in the office told me she didn't have any. If the gardai don't have the figures, who has? So I would reckon my chances of finding out how many local drug driving convictions there have been wouldn't be too hot either."

One figure Mr. Blake did obtain was that there were 20 drivers tested for drug driving last year - that, he pointed out, is less than one per county in the Republic.

He went on: "In my capacity as a Peace Commissioner, I have had to sign search warrants for Gardai from 12 midnight to 8 a.m. In fact one night I was wakened three times to sign warrants. But the last time I signed one for drugs was in November 07. Is anyone seriously suggesting that we haven't had drugs coming into the county since then?"

The Letterkenny man said he had no doubt whatsoever there were people driving around the roads of Inishowen high on drugs.

The reality of that "was frightening."

He commented: "The statistics indicate that cocaine consumption in Ireland is up almost 50 per cent but the problem is that the gardai have no training in drug driving detection. And when they do get their act together to

do a drugs test it frequently is a waste of their time. For a start, it takes four months to get back a result and if the garda involved doesn't bother following it up the results of the test are not sent out to him. That's blatantly absurd. I know, you know, the entire country knows that there are people - unfortunately most of them young kids - out driving around who are out of their heads on powerful substances that can leave their judgement seriously impaired. Meeting a driver high on drugs would be most motorists' nightmare"

Mr. Blake said it should be acknowledged that there moves to open a drugs unit in Buncrana and it was, he suggested, "at least a step in the right direction."

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