

## UN Reports Island's Cocaine Consumption

Written by Jason Postlethwaite  
Monday, 13 August 2012 12:35

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Peter Karran has recently been appointed political head of the Drug and Alcohol Strategy. Shortly before his appointment The United Nations Office of Drugs and Crime published their 2012 World Drugs Report.

In this article Jason Postlethwaite examines how information about the the Isle of Man was handled by the local media. Perhaps Mr Karren should read the report more closely?

The United Nations Office of Drugs and Crime published their 2012 World Drugs Report, and listed the top ten countries with the highest use of cocaine. Topping the chart per head of population was the Isle of Man with 3.5% of 15-64 year olds reportedly using the class A drug.

The Isle of Man came above countries that included Scotland, named second highest at 2.7%, with Spain, England, Italy, Wales, USA, Australia, and Monaco all named with Saint Kitts and Nevis listed as number 10.

The report also cited the Island wide consumption of other drugs, with Cannabis use at 9.4%, ecstasy at 1.5% and amphetamines at 0.9%.

What was reported in the IOM media?

Politicians and government spokesman alike were quick to denounce the reports findings.

'*They do not reflect the true position in the island, which has low levels of drug use and good support treatment for drug users,*' claimed the head of the Isle of Man Drug and Alcohol Strategy, David Quirk MHK on iomtoday.

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The Manx Radio website also reported David Quirk as being '*concerned the island is unfairly portrayed in the report.*'

Also doing the rounds was Home Affairs Minister Juan Watterson MHK who was reported on Energy FM as believing the latest UN report had used the ESPAD survey of 2007 '*inaccurately*'.

Providing background on the ESPAD report was the BBC website. With its full title as the European School Survey Project on Alcohol and other Drugs Report, the BBC revealed how the survey is conducted every three years in 35 countries, with the 2007 survey in question having been completed in the Isle of Man by 740 school students between the age of 15-16.

Meanwhile, an unnamed spokesman for the Department of Home Affairs was quoted extensively on iomtoday. Scathing at the UN's findings, he referred to the report as having '*deeply flawed methodology and should be disregarded*'

The unnamed spokesman continued to denounce the report claiming '*the Data does not accord with the information held by the department, indeed it appears the findings are based on a small sample of teenagers which have then been applied across the entire Isle of Man population*'

Before finishing, the unnamed spokesman concluded that '*if the Isle of Man had the highest level of cocaine use in the world per head of population, as suggested by the World Drug Report, drug-related crime would be extremely high to enable addicts to feed their habits*'

Quoting from their named source however was [isleofman.com](http://isleofman.com) who reported on Julian Lalor Smith, director of administration at Home Affairs, as insisting '*there's no evidence of a cocaine problem in the Manx population*'

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On the other hand, while Shelly Stanley of the Drug Advice Service and Help Line (DASH) was careful not to substantiate the reports findings, quoted on [isleofman.com](http://isleofman.com) as claiming '*it is unclear how accurate these figures are*', she did not downplay the issue of cocaine consumption among the island community stating, '*cocaine use is an issue in the island, how big that is, we don't have reliable island-wide evidence for*'

Furthermore, isleofman.com added that a letter of complaint was being drawn up and that this would be passed to the UN office that had published the report.

### Final Comment

And there we have it. No problem exists, a letter of complaint drafted, so everything can continue as it has been. One thing is for sure, which ever side of the debate you fall upon, whether it is zero tolerance towards drugs or a wish to legalise them, your views and concerns are not being represented. As long as there is a refusal to engage with the reports findings in any meaningful sense, then no meaningful debate can take place. In fact the political establishment have ensured that all debate around questions of policing drugs or legalising them has been closed down, serving only to allow the whole merry go round to continue.