

Khat arrests puts issue back on the agenda

Mark Lancaster's campaign to ban the drug khat was given new impetus today, following arrests relating to the illegal smuggling of the drug and funding of terrorist activity.

The seven dawn arrests took place in locations across the UK, including Cardiff and London.

Khat, a leafy plant grown in the Arab Peninsula, is chewed to achieve hallucinatory and euphoric effects, which can lead to psychosis and other health problems.

Mark said, 'I have been pushing for evidence which links the terrorist group al-Shabaab to the illegal export of khat from the UK. Today's news proves that our suspicions are well-founded, and more must be done to expose this worrying link between khat and terrorism.'

Holland, a traditionally liberal country when it comes to drugs policy, are enforcing their khat ban next month.

Mark has recently spoken with the Home Secretary Theresa May, warning that as the sole legal entry into Europe, illegal trafficking and 'khat tourism' are just two of the consequences to be expected.

Many of Milton Keynes' Somali citizens have cited khat as a key contributor to unemployment and family breakdown.

Adan Kahin, Head of Milton Keynes Somali Community Association, commented 'this news has caused great concern. If it is happening elsewhere in the UK, then it could easily be happening in Milton Keynes.'

Concerns are spreading amongst the community that extremists are introducing young Somali's to khat, who become easy targets for terrorist recruitment.

The khat report by the Advisory Council for the Misuse of Drugs is due to be published this summer.