Drug gangs see Aber as easy target, book claims

by Antony Gedge
antony@cambrighe-news.co.uk

DRUG gangs are targeting Aberystwyth as they can charge higher prices and avoid city police forces with more manpower, a new book has claimed.

Steve Hackman, the author of Young Guns: Inside the Violent World of Britain's Street Gangs, said Aberystwyth was emerging as one of the key areas for gangs from the Midlands, with a former drug dealer he interviewed describing the town as the "in place."

Both Dyfed Powys Police and Crown Court Judges have said that Aberystwyth is seeing a greater number of drug gangs from the Midlands and Merseyside target West Wales and particularly Aberystwyth.

And Mr. Hackman (not his real name) said that was partly because Dyfed Powys Police doesn't have the manpower available to police forces in large cities. Gangs from the Midlands area had already started transporting Class A drugs to Scotland before moving onto Aberystwyth.

In the book, Mr. Hackman said: "In June 2008, two Wolverhampton-based drug dealers were caught stealing crack and heroin in the Welsh seaside town of Aberystwyth."

"The willingness of the city's drug gangs to travel hundreds of miles to sell their wares means that turf wars are often transferred to smaller towns where drugs are seen as less of a problem."

"The police in Wolverhampton may have the facilities to deal with gun-wielding gang members. The same cannot be said for Aberystwyth."

Mr Hackman, who spent time in prison after being convicted for supplying ecstasy while a student, spent a year talking to various gang members and drug dealers.

And one of his sources, a former drug dealer, said Aberystwyth was an attractive area as there are fewer established drug gangs, less of a gun culture and drugs are usually lower quality.

He said: "There are less people selling drugs in wholesale quantities in the town, which enables dealers from other cities to sell to pre-established suppliers without the fear of treading on anybody else's toes.

"There isn't much of a gun culture so there's less threat from rival dealers. The drugs are generally of a lower quality in North and Mid Wales so cocaine can be cut with creatine and powdered lactose and what would usually pass as a gramme of coke can be doubled up to two grammes."

"Also, there aren't as many 'taxmen' (criminals that make a living from robbing other dealers) as there are in major cities."

"And people want to travel to where their friends or associates are and Aberystwyth is quickly becoming the 'in' place for criminals to go to."