



## **SMUGGLING** **Shops lose €500m to cigs gangs**

By **COLM KELPIE**

SHOP owners wrote off almost half a billion euro in sales last year because of cigarette smuggling, it was claimed yesterday.

They hit out at the Government claiming they hadn't done enough to target gangs selling tobacco at less than half price.

And the Retailers Against Smuggling group said 4,000 jobs could have been created in the sector last year had sales not been hit.

RAS spokesman William Hanley added: "Last year the loss of income through retailers due to smuggled cigarettes cost 4,000 jobs.

"We are asking the Government to bring in penalties that will deter criminals from getting involved in smuggling.

"The Government needs to wake up to the fact that they're losing so much revenue."

The group said tobacco sales can account for around 40 per cent of retailers' incomes.



← **DEMAND** RAS's Mr Hanley