

From mountain to sea

Trading Standards Scams Bulletin No. 127

The articles in these bulletins are based on real life complaints made to Aberdeenshire Council's Trading Standards department, unless otherwise stated, to make them as relevant as possible to readers. Names, exact addresses etc. have been withheld to avoid identifying complainants and to comply with GDPR so please feel free to share the contents with friends, family, neighbours or any community groups you are a part of. For details of scams reported in other parts of Scotland please click on the [Trading Standards Scotland Bulletin page](#).

Bogus Callers and Rogue Traders

Protecting Our Community

Aberdeenshire Trading Standards have again received reports that employees apparently working for Kingdom Coatings have been knocking at doors at homes in the West Road area of Peterhead, even when those homes have been displaying 'No Cold Callers' stickers at the front door.

If you have had such a recent experience with Kingdom Coatings, or any other company, please call us on 01467 537222 or e-mail us at trading.standards@aberdeenshire.gov.uk

Scams etc.

Investment Scam

One resident of the Banff and Buchan area recently saw an investment advert on Facebook featuring Martin Lewis, the Money Savings Expert, who was promoting an investment opportunity where investors could make substantial gains in short periods, so she clicked on the advert. She was then taken to a completely new web page where she was asked to input her personal details so provided her name, address, phone numbers and e-mail address.

Almost immediately she was then called by a man who had a good command of English but who had a Continental accent. The man, who called himself Alex and sounded in his 30's, explained that he was an Investment Manager for a company called Pro X Market and could help her make sizable sums of money through investments in gold, Bitcoin and currency exchanges.

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The resident decided to go ahead with the investment so transferred £200 to the company using her debit card. She thereafter ended the call with Alex.

Next day, a colleague of Alex's, who called himself Zack, called the resident back and advised her that her investment had made £350 overnight and tried to persuade the resident to invest further. By this time, she had changed her mind and asked for her investment back. Zack's attitude changed immediately and went from being friendly and pleasant to derogatory and challenging. The resident tried repeatedly to get her money back, but without success, all the while the people she spoke to tried to fob her off with excuses that it could only be done through Bitcoin or by opening a bank account with Resolut and that all future correspondence should be conducted via WhatsApp.

The resident then tried to reclaim her money via WhatsApp, without success, and any replies she got appeared to come from a Dutch number prefixed +31 6. Getting nowhere with Pro X Market and fearing rightly that it was a scam, the resident reported the matter to her bank and to Trading Standards. Our enquiries are ongoing but there are some points to note:

- Neither Facebook, WhatsApp nor Resolut were involved in this scam. It was simply that their services were used by the scammer to try to disadvantage the resident,
- Likewise, Martin Lewis took no part in this scam. His image and good reputation were simply used to deceive people. He has said numerous times publicly that he does not promote or support any schemes like this one, in any fashion,
- Please be cautious when looking at adverts on Facebook or any other social medium which promise huge investment gains with little or no effort. This is simply wishful thinking and is likely to be just a get rich quick scheme (but you won't be the one getting rich),
- Other celebrities have had their photographs used without their consent for similar scams, such as Elon Musk, Keir Starmer and Robert Peston. Be particularly suspicious of these adverts as they will almost certainly be a scam,
- Many scammers use social media (not just Facebook) to target new victims. Please never click on links to 'investment opportunities' on social media as they will most likely just be a scam,
- This incident highlights the links between the use of social media by scammers and how it's misused by them to snare new victims into giving out their personal details which can be passed to other scammers who, in turn, will pester the victim incessantly for weeks, all with the intention of scamming them further,
- Remember - if it looks too good to be true, it probably is.

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- The overnight gains claimed by these callers of £350 (almost tripling the initial investment) and both completely unrealistic for even the best genuine investment. They were completely fictitious. They do not exist and never did,
- If you would like to make an investment into these types of areas, one good place to start, to look for a genuine advisor would be the Financial Conduct Authority's website where they have a register of approved advisors. This can be found by clicking [here](#),
- If you think that you've fallen victim to a similar scam, please report the matter immediately to your bank then contact your local Trading Standards office to report the matter and seek advice.

Misc.

Directory of businesses with verified compliance issues

Aberdeenshire Trading Standards now publish details of businesses when we have been unable to confirm compliance with Trading Standards laws.

This is part of the **Protecting our Community** initiative which is a commitment by our Trading Standards team to raise the standard of businesses operating in the region and empower and protect consumers from rogue traders.

The initiative began with a project focussing on the roofing sector. Complaints about this sector have risen significantly following storm Arwen, with 46 received in 2023 and 93 in 2024, an increase of 102%. Financial detriment associated with these complaints is approximated to be £330,000 in 2023 and £461,000 in 2024. The initiative aims to reverse this trend.

The team has been busy auditing roofing businesses verifying trading addresses, contact details, examining paperwork and assessing overall compliance with trading standards legislation.

Businesses that have not engaged with the team, where trading details cannot be verified and paperwork not provided for examination or fail to address non-compliance issues have been added to a [directory of businesses with verified compliance issues](#) (click on the blue link to see the directory). This directory is a tool that consumers can use alongside other checks, to evaluate a business and help make an informed decision.

Consumers can also search the [Aberdeenshire Trusted Trader website](#) for businesses that have been rigorously vetted and approved by Aberdeenshire Trading Standards.

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Conclusion

Please note that the advice given in these bulletins has been deliberately kept simple, so that if you are faced with such a scenario where fear, alarm and panic are tools often used deliberately by scammers, you will know what to do at that time.

If you have been the victim of a Bogus Caller or other form of scam, please report the matter to Consumer Advice Scotland so that Trading Standards can maintain a detailed picture about scammers operating in the Shire. This would be a great help to us to tackle this sort of crime.

If you have any information to share about the unlawful sale of tobacco or disposable vapes, please use the Contact Info below to pass that information to Trading Standards. If you would prefer, you can report the information anonymously to Crimestoppers on 0800 555 111.

Contact Info

For non-urgent Trading Standards enquiries in Aberdeenshire, please contact Consumer Advice Scotland at <https://consumeradvice.scot/contact/> or call them on 0808 164 6000.

For urgent Trading Standards matters or doorstep crime matters, contact Aberdeenshire Council's Trading Standards at 01467 537222 or via trading.standards@aberdeenshire.gov.uk

Aberdeen City Council's Trading Standards department can be contacted by calling 0300 0200 292 or e-mailing tradingstandards@aberdeencity.gov.uk

Contact Police Scotland on 999 if you need urgent Police assistance or 101 for non-urgent matters.

For more information about scams please visit the [Friends Against Scams website](#) or [Take Five](#) at their website.

Please direct any media queries to news@aberdeenshire.gov.uk or 01467 538222 during office hours.

All previous Trading Standards bulletins can be found on the Aberdeenshire Council website on the [Trading Standards Scams Bulletin page](#).