

From mountain to sea

Trading Standards Scams Bulletin No. 132

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

Nothing to report.

Scams etc.

Letter Scam

One resident from the Buchan area recently reported to us that she had received a letter from the Chartered Trading Standards Institute (CTSI) advising that an ongoing High Court case against a former Director of a named company had recently been settled. According to the letter, the Director had been accused of financial impropriety and his company had been wound up, with the company's remaining assets being placed into a bank account held by a major bank. These funds were awaiting creditors to the company making a compensation claim for losses they had incurred due to improper and possibly fraudulent actions of the former Director.

The letter also implied that there had been a number of previous letters sent to the resident; that she was a creditor to the wound up company and that the CTSI could act on her behalf to obtain compensation, which could be as much as £27000. The letter also mentioned that the fee to try to claim this sum would be £1200.

The letter further stated that the deadline for creditors making a claim was fast approaching and that any claims submitted after that deadline would be invalid. Contact details for the person the resident should approach in the 'CTSI' were also contained in the letter.

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It was also notable that the letter was very well written and appeared fairly professional and authoritative, so the resident contacted Aberdeenshire Trading Standards for advice.

Unfortunately, the letter is a scam and there will be no £27000 for her.

Some points to note:

- The CTSI is the trade body for the various local Trading Standards services throughout the UK. It provides training and professional qualifications for Trading Standards Officers. It does not give financial advice to consumers other than how to avoid falling victim to scams and does not act on behalf of consumers seeking compensation,
- The CTSI had no part in this scam other than its name being misused by scammers to try to deceive and cheat people,
- The resident is certain that she had not received any previous letters from this sender, despite the letter stating that they had sent them,
- To the best of the resident's knowledge, she had never had any dealings at all with the named company let alone been a creditor to it,
- The nub of the matter is the £1200 fee to claim compensation. This would be the sum which the resident would pay to the 'CTSI' and which, once paid, would result in the 'CTSI' ending all contact with her, leaving her out of pocket to that amount,
- Should anyone receive a letter similar to this one, please do not respond to it. They are sent out in large amounts to people at the same time and anyone replying to them will then be pestered by the scammers to sign up for this scam or another. Replying simply paints a target on your back,
- Instead, please report the matter to your local Trading Standards office for advice and for them to investigate and, if you can, send a scan of the letter too.

Misc.

Tai Chi Walking scam

Anyone who has been on social media recently cannot help but notice the number of ads there have been for Tai Chi walking and how it can both help practitioners lose weight more effectively and/or bulk up with muscle more efficiently – for a fee. Customers who sign up for the ads receive a workout plan by e-mail to do in their own home and without tuition.

Real Tai Chi is an ancient, respected Chinese system of exercises originally based on a martial art similar to the better known Kung Fu. It is done in a slow, flowing fashion and its aims include improved balance, flexibility and strength. It

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can also be very helpful for practitioners wishing to reduce their stress levels. It is normally practiced under the watchful gaze of a qualified tutor, either in person or online. Clearly real Tai Chi is very different from what the online ads offer.

To most people, these online ads, which are now burgeoning into military exercise routines, are immediately recognizable as scams designed to part the unwary from their cash. But that is only one part of the story. These ads, with their obvious mistakes and AI generated presenters, are deliberately created that way; at an early stage to put off the people who will never sign up for the ad, while retaining those people who the ad makers think might part with their money.

A very interesting video by a site called Smoke & Speculation is available on YouTube. It gives an insight on how these ads work and how they weed out people who won't fall for the scam but keep those who might, all to reduce the costs of paying social media for hosting the ads whilst also improving their potential income levels. It also shows how some scammers deliberately target a particular demographic.

Please note that the presenter in the video uses mild swear words during the course of his narrative. It can be found on YouTube by clicking [here](#).

Stop Press

Some residents in the Perth area have recently reported to our colleagues in that area that they have been getting called by a male using a mobile phone claiming to be from HMRC and that the call recipient had underpaid their taxes. The caller then went on to ask about the amounts kept in the call recipient's bank accounts and instructed them to call a land line number starting with the prefix of 020 to get the matter dealt with.

The caller's mobile number starts with the prefix 07922 and it has no reports on [Who Called Me](#), but the 020 number, which is obviously a landline based in London, has over 8000 look-ups and over 100 reports linking it to tax scams. It was last reported on 25 March 2026. Clearly these calls to Perth residents are a scam but given the nature of the scam, residents in this area may also be called. Thankfully, the Perth residents quickly realised that it was a scam and did not divulge any banking information.

And, of course, this is not how HMRC operates. Tax matters are normally dealt with by letter or e-mail, not via calls from mobile phone numbers. Letters and e-mails will also normally contain HMRC contact information. Phone calls like this



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only provide the mobile number and the caller's claim that they are a genuine HMRC officer. Needless to say, anyone can make calls and claims like this.

Should any readers receive a call from this scammer, or from anyone else pitching a similar narrative, please: don't divulge any personal or banking information, simply hang up and report the matter to your local Trading Standards office. Block the caller's number, if you can. You could also add a comment on Who Called Me about the caller's number(s) to warn other people.

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 tradingstandards@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.



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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](#).