



From mountain to sea

Trading Standards Scams Bulletin No. 119

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

One resident of the Garioch area recently contacted Trading Standards to express concern about a caller who had attended his door, apparently collecting funds for a veterans charity in a collecting tin. The resident was unsure if the caller was genuine or a scammer, so declined to make a donation.

In truth, while this issue is not often reported to Trading Standards, we believe it's still worth covering. It does occur from time to time and there are some indicators to look out for, to try to sort the genuine collectors from the scammers.

Should someone come door-to-door with a collecting tin, bucket or similar for a charity or good cause, there are certain conditions which must be adhered to for the matter to remain lawful. These include:

- The organiser of the collection should seek permission from the relevant Local Authority (in this case it would have been Aberdeenshire Council) to hold the charitable collection. It may be an offence for the organiser to hold such a collection without that permission,
- Each collector should have a certificate of authority with them, listing the details of the organiser, the collector's details, the charity/good cause being collected for, the area being covered, the authorised period of the collection and the collector's and the organiser's signatures. It should be shown on request to anyone wishing to see it,
- Each collector should also wear a badge with the details of the charity/good cause on it,
- If the collection is by way of collecting tins or buckets, each tin or bucket should have a unique number on it,



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- If the collection is on the street, the collector must be at least 14 years of age,
- If the collection is door-to-door, the collector must be at least 16 years of age,
- No collector should badger a householder for a donation or remain at the door if requested to leave,
- Failing to adhere to these conditions may be an offence under the Public Charitable Collections (Scotland) Regulations, 1984.

Some points to consider if a collector comes to your door:

- Remember, you are not obliged to answer the door to any caller, especially if you don't feel safe,
- The more of the above conditions which are unmet, the more likely that the collector is a scammer,
- Bogus door-to-door collectors are usually after cash. If you are uncertain that the collector at your door is genuine or not, tell them you have no spare change, note the details of the charity/good cause and tell the collector you'll donate online,
- Likewise, if the collector asks you to sign a direct debit mandate at the door, tell them you're a bit rushed for time, note the details of the charity/good cause and tell the collector you'll complete one later online,
- If you have concerns that a charity collector going door-to-door is bogus, try to note their description and direction of travel, any vehicles being used, then report the matter to Police Scotland,
- Please also report the matter to your local Trading Standards office, so that they are also aware of the matter, as it may be another form of doorstep crime.

Scams etc.

E-mail scam

One resident of the Deeside area recently received a notable e-mail which landed in his Inbox.

This e-mail purported to come from the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Authority in Swansea (DVLA, a department of the UK Government) and alleged that the resident's vehicle was untaxed via the excise licence system.

The e-mail is part-reproduced below (though the sender's and the resident's e-mail addresses have been removed). The e-mail went on to say that failure to tax the vehicle could be punishable by a fixed penalty notice for £80, the vehicle being clamped and/or a Court prosecution resulting from the matter.



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The e-mail also included a hyperlink entitled 'Tax Now' for payment of any outstanding excise duty.

In truth, the e-mail was a scam and a fairly obvious one at that, though it may also catch out the unwary who simply panic and click the hyperlink, to put things right.

Some points to consider:

- The e-mail did not come from an official 'gov.uk' e-mail address but a Fastnet one. Needless to say, Fastnet took no part in this scam; it's services were simply misused by the scammers,
- The e-mail was not addressed to a named person but to a rather more uncertain 'Dear Sir/Madam'. A genuine e-mail would probably have reference in the message to a named person unless it came from an automated 'donotreply@dvla.gov.uk' type e-mail address,
- Similarly, there was no mention of the vehicle's registration number so that owners would know which vehicle, if they owned more than one, was being referred to,
- The e-mail refers to a Fixed Penalty Notice (FPN) costing £80. The current real DVLA FPN is £100,
- The reference in the Subject line and the use of red text for a 'Final Notice', the claim that DVLA had tried to contact the vehicle owner before are solely designed to alarm people and get them to act rashly and try to tax their vehicle using the e-mail,
- If you are in any doubt, take a moment to check your own vehicle documents or saved e-mails to clarify when your vehicle's excise duty runs out,
- Alternatively, you can check on your own vehicle, or almost any other, at the gov.uk website by clicking the link <https://www.gov.uk/report-untaxed-vehicle>
- As with any texts from unknown or suspect senders, if you receive an e-mail similar to this, please do not click on the hyperlink in the e-mail as this may lead you a website where you'll be asked to give over your personal or bank details, no doubt to your own detriment,
- Please also, do not reply to these e-mails as this may let the scammer know that your e-mail address is live, so they may target you with even more scams,
- Instead forward the e-mail to the National Cyber Security Centre via their dedicated e-mail address at report@phishing.gov.uk,
- Then report the matter to your local Trading Standards office (contact details are at the end of this bulletin),

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- Finally, consign the offending e-mail to your Spam or Junk folder so your e-mail provider can consider blocking the e-mail address. Please don't just delete it, as this tells your e-mail provider's servers that it was a genuine e-mail which you no longer want to keep, rather than what it really was, a scam email and phishing attempt.

Date: 15 August 2025 at 23:30:14 BST
To: [mailto:info@aberdeenshire.gov.uk](#)
Subject: This is serious — your car isn't taxed

STATUS: NOT TAXED

FINAL NOTICE: Vehicle Tax Outstanding

Dear Sir/Madam,

We have previously notified you that your vehicle is **UNTAXED** as of 11 August 2025.

This is your final reminder. Failure to tax your vehicle may result in:

- ☐ A fixed penalty notice (£80)
- ☐ Your vehicle being clamped
- ☐ Court prosecution

[Tax Now](#)

Yours faithfully,
DVLA Enforcement Team

Misc.

Bereavement Scam

We have mentioned numerous times in the past in these bulletins just how amoral and without scruple scammers can be. One very good example of this appeared in a recent edition of the Chartered Trading Standards Institute's (CTSI) Journal of Trading Standards. Please see the article in full, below.

'Ruthless' scam targets bereaved

Fraudsters are targeting grieving families with bogus video links and donation pages.

By JTS Staff, Journal of Trading Standards' in-house team

A 'despicable' scam which exploits grieving friends and families of the recently deceased has sparked a renewed outcry from CTSI, which is warning the public to be on their guard.



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Scammers have been trawling publicly available online funeral notices and then, posing as bereaved family members, sending links to mourners with requests for payment to view video streams of funerals.

Fraudsters are also setting up fake donation pages encouraging potential victims to hand over personal information that can be used to commit authorised push payment (APP) fraud. Trading Standards has received reports of fake donation pages appearing on platforms including Facebook and JustGiving.

Katherine Hart, CTSI Lead Officer for Doorstep Crime, said: “This is a truly despicable scam – targeting people during one of the most emotionally difficult moments of their lives. It’s hard to imagine a more callous form of fraud.

“What’s particularly upsetting is that victims often feel they can’t report what’s happened for fear of adding further stress to grieving families. That silence is exactly what these criminals are counting on. We need people to stay vigilant, share warnings, and report anything suspicious. No one should feel ashamed for being taken in by such a ruthless trick.”

John Herriman, Chief Executive of CTSI, added: “Scammers are always looking for new ways to manipulate and exploit people, and this is a particularly cruel example. Trading Standards teams across the UK are working tirelessly to raise awareness and protect local communities, but we also need the public’s help to speak out, report concerns and protect others from becoming a victim.”

CTSI is advising the public:

- You should never be charged to attend a funeral, whether in person or via livestream,
- Only donate through official, verified sources – check with the named funeral director or celebrant if unsure,
- Never share personal or banking information in response to unsolicited messages,
- Be cautious of friend requests or messages from unfamiliar profiles, even if they appear to be mutual friends,
- If you’ve shared bank details, contact your bank immediately.

If you or someone you know has been affected, please contact one of the following:

England & Wales: Action Fraud – www.actionfraud.police.uk

Scotland: Advice Direct Scotland – 0808 164 6000



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Northern Ireland: Consumerline – 0300 123 6262

Consumer advice: Citizens Advice Consumer Helpline – 0808 223 1133

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.



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