

'FAKES FUND CRIME' (Intellectual Property Crime)



SHOPPERS WARNED,

DON'T MAKE THIS CHRISTMAS A GIFT FOR ORGANISED CRIME

The Scottish Government, Scottish Crime and Drug Enforcement Agency (SCDEA) and Strathclyde Police have joined forces to warn Christmas bargain hunters about the link between buying fake goods and supporting serious organised crime.

Officers from the SCDEA and Strathclyde Police will be joined by the Justice Secretary Kenny MacAskill at the Glasgow Barras Market on Saturday 12 December to drive home the message - '**Don't make this Christmas a gift for organised crime. Fakes fund crime**'.

Organised crime groups use the trade in fake goods, such as handbags and CDs, as an opportunity to generate profit and to fund other forms of serious organised crime, including human trafficking, firearms and illegal drugs.

In the UK, the counterfeit goods market is estimated to be worth £1.3 billion, with £900 million of this flowing to organised crime (Rogers Review, 2006).

In October this year, Strathclyde Police recovered £2.5 million worth of counterfeit goods during a raid at the Barras, compounding fears that the market is a target for serious organised crime groups and the rogue traders they are linked to.

Justice Secretary Kenny MacAskill said:

"With Christmas fast approaching and the effects of the economic recession hitting lots of families, it is understandable that people's heads are turned by what appear to be festive bargains. But buying fake goods to save a few pounds costs us all in other ways.

"The fact is that every pound spent on counterfeit goods represents one less pound for an honest retailer, meaning our economy is suffering from this lost revenue.

"My message to shoppers is clear - if a bargain seems to be too good to be true, it probably is. It's probably fake and it's probably helping fund a criminal lifestyle.

"Christmas should be a time of giving - but please don't give your hard-earned cash to gangsters."

Detective Chief Superintendent Allan Moffat, head of crime support and interventions, SCDEA said:

“Those who are involved in producing and selling counterfeit goods are very often also responsible for pushing drugs in our communities, forcing people into the sex trade and cultivating cannabis in our neighbourhoods, not to mention the fear, intimidation and violence associated with this criminality. It is not a victimless crime.

“Buying fake goods appears to be socially acceptable in some communities in Scotland. We need to change that. The bottom line is - if you are buying fake goods you are helping to fund crime in your own community.”

There will be an enhanced high profile police presence at the Barras over the festive season and police are warning shoppers not to come to the market intent on buying counterfeit goods.

Assistant Chief Constable Ruairadh Nicolson, Strathclyde Police said:

“Tackling serious and organised crime is and always will be priority for the Force, indeed, we have just come to the end of a high profile crackdown which saw nearly £8 million pounds worth of drugs taken off the streets, as well as cash and firearms.

“With regard to counterfeit goods, be it tobacco, alcohol, clothes or DVDs, it may seem that as one person is fined or locked up for selling them, another will take their place. However, the public can be assured that our pursuit of these criminals will be relentless. We will make sure that these shady businesses are disrupted at every opportunity, making it hard for them to survive, and we will come after their homes, cash, cars and other personal possessions.

“This is a battle we will not concede.”

Counterfeit crime is one of the priority areas within Scotland's first serious organised crime strategy, 'Letting our Communities Flourish: A strategy for tackling serious organised crime in Scotland'. Launched in June this year by the Serious Organised Crime Taskforce, it aims to reduce the demand for counterfeit goods by making consumers more aware of the links to organised crime.

The impact counterfeit goods have on legitimate trade is significant with the clothing and footwear industry losing around £3.5 billion per year, and an estimated £36 million generated in sales of illegal CDs.