

# Conference highlights the scale of Scotland's fake goods problem



Shock cases of paint stripper found in makeup products that can cause blindness, fashion boots made from skinned dogs, perfume containing urine and phoney condoms were unveiled at a major conference yesterday to highlight the scale of Scotland's fake goods problem.

The Scottish Anti Illicit Trade Summit is the first event of its kind that brings together police, trading standards, industry and other agencies to fight the counterfeit and illicit trade gangs operating across the country – and to urge the public to play its part by refusing to buy dodgy products.

The Summit features the largest collection assembled of diverse high quality and cutting edge fake and illicit products – such as foods, fashion, gaming, alcohol, DVDs, music, beauty products and medicines – that have been seized by police and trading standards in Scotland.

Organised by the Scottish Business Resilience Centre (SBRC), and delivered by its newly-formed Scottish Anti Illicit Trade Group, the two-day Summit at Edinburgh's Murrayfield Stadium is outlining the close links to serious and organised crime and the escalating actions being taken to combat the problem.

SBRC Director Mandy Haeburn-Little said the Summit provides a platform to mount a step-change in the fight against illicit and counterfeit trade.

She said: "For the first time, every expert from every field and sector will share their concerns and discuss how best we

move forward to reduce the scale, impact and cost of illicit trade in Scotland.

“But to tackle this problem we need people in Scotland to change their perceptions and refuse to buy any illicit or counterfeit product from this day forward.

“Everyone loves a bargain. But people need to stop to think about the true cost of fake goods. Can you be confident that those cheap cigarettes, perfumes and alcohol are actually safe?

“However, it goes much deeper as those products are likely to have supported child labour or human trafficking or used to fund serious organised crime.

“Illicit trade also hurts businesses in Scotland very hard. People choosing bargains at markets, car boot sales or on the internet impacts hugely on retailers and manufacturers – less genuine goods being sold closes businesses and put people out of work.

“But by us all working together we can make a change to ensure Scotland becomes a hostile environment for serious organised criminals.”

Justice Secretary Kenny MacAskill, who gave the keynote speech, said: “Buying counterfeit goods might be seen as a victimless way to get presents for family and friends on the cheap, but many of these items will have a long back story of criminality often involving violence.

“However, the problem doesn’t just lie with fake bags, perfume or alcohol. There is a serious global problem in counterfeit medicines, machinery and engine parts which can be seriously damaging to people’s health and potentially deadly.

“The work that the Anti-illicit Trade Group is doing to tackle the influx of fake goods is a fantastic example of authorities

cutting off the cash that funds these gangs and hitting them where it hurts – their pockets.

“I am delighted to open this first-of-a-kind conference to show the importance that the Scottish Government, along with the police, Crown Office, the Scottish Business Resilience Centre and a number of other agencies, places on this crime.

“Scotland will simply not tolerate the shadow economy that drives illicit trade.”

The summit featured a presentation by actress Blythe Duff, best known for her detective role in TV’s Taggart, while speakers from US Homeland Security, Interpol and Europol will meet together for the first time in Scotland to discuss the challenge against the criminal gangs.

Further discussion panels heard how prevention, intelligence and enforcement can be enhanced through collaborative work by multi-agencies.

Other sessions will showed sophisticated DNA testing of whisky, a catwalk show to highlight the threats to Scotland’s fashion industry talent and a unique debate organised by the Scottish Youth Parliament and Young Scot to discuss the right to download music/movies free.

The Anti-Illicit Trade Summit, supported by independent product safety testing and certification specialists UL, took place at Murrayfield Stadium, Edinburgh, on March 6 and 7.