

# Joint operation to tackle rogue traders in Midlothian



Midlothian Council and Police Scotland are warning local residents against buying fish from rogue traders, following the arrest of five men in Bonnyrigg yesterday, Tuesday 6th December.

The men, all from the north of England, were arrested as part of a dedicated operation to tackle food-related crime involving police, trading standards, Food Standards Scotland and local authorities across the country.

The men, aged 18, 31, 45, 46 and 54, have been charged with trading standards and licensing offences and are expected to appear at Edinburgh Sheriff Court on 27th January 2017.

The operation was set up after an increase in unscrupulous doorstep sellers using aggressive sales tactics to off-load fish which is of questionable quality as it is neither packaged or stored properly. Such rogue traders target the most vulnerable in the community, such as the elderly and effectively bully them into buying. Victims are often overcharged by hundreds of pounds, sold far more fish than they wanted or misled about the type of fish being sold.

The Council is advising local residents not to allow doorstep sellers into their home for any reason. Anyone thinking of buying should examine the product before paying to make sure they are happy with it. Ask for a receipt bearing the trader's details, including their name and address. If the trader is not prepared to provide these then the advice is do not go ahead with the purchase.

Cllr Jim Bryant who has responsibility for Trading Standards

and Environmental Health said: "The Council's general advice would be not to buy anything from doorstep sellers who are unknown to you. If anyone feels uncomfortable with a trader's presence, they should politely ask them to leave or close the front door and contact a relative, friend or neighbour for support. These traders are not only a nuisance to local residents but also to the legitimate businesses that they undercut with their inferior goods. If in doubt just say 'No' – do not be intimidated by cold callers."

Sergeant Michele Lindsay based at Penicuik Police Station said: "These incidents have caused considerable concern for the community, and following a social media appeal we issued on Monday we were contacted by a large number of people who had been approached by rogue doorstep sellers or had seen suspicious activity in their area. I want to thank everyone who came forward as this information was vital in helping us develop our operation this week and take the action that resulted in five arrests. If anyone does have any concerns about potential rogue traders, please contact police or the Council's Trading Standard's Team immediately."

The Council can provide local residents with 'No Doorstep Sellers' signs to tell traders that they are not wanted at the property. Anyone wanting a sign should contact the Council on 0131 271 3549. Anyone wishing to report suspicious rogue traders can also contact the Council on this number, or the Police on 101, or the Citizens Advice Consumer Service 03454 040506.