

# Counterfeit crackdown recognised for efforts against trade in fake goods

Royal Mail and Vue Cinema Group have become the first businesses to be nominated and recognised by members of the Scottish Anti-Illicit Trade Group (SAITG) for their outstanding efforts in the battle against the trade of fake goods.

The private ceremony on Thursday 4 October at Fountain Park Cineworld in Edinburgh saw members of SAITG, HMRC, Police Scotland and representatives from Vue and Cineworld come together to celebrate Royal Mail and Vue Cinema Group receiving their awards from Scotland's Justice Secretary, Humza Yousaf MSP.

Royal Mail has been instrumental in assisting HMRC identify the trade of millions of illicit cigarettes in Scotland, allowing effective interventions by HMRC.

Vue Cinema trained staff in identifying suspicious circumstances and customers, and assisted with the high-profile conviction of a man caught filming T2 Trainspotting at Glasgow Fort Vue Cinema earlier this year.

Speaking at the event, Cabinet Secretary for Justice, Humza Yousaf MSP, said: "The trade in illicit and counterfeit goods is not a victimless crime. It has a detrimental impact on legitimate businesses and can pose a serious risk to the health and safety of everyone who thinks they are getting a bargain.

"I very much welcome the contribution that the Scottish Anti-Illicit Trade Group makes to the implementation of Scotland's

serious organised crime strategy and congratulate both recipients on today's awards.

"Working collaboratively with partner agencies, the private sector and with the public assisting, the Serious Organised Crime Taskforce is determined to disrupt this illegal trade and reduce the harm it causes."

Chaired by one of Mr Yousaf's predecessors as Justice Secretary, Kenny MacAskill, the SAITG brings together experts from both public and private sectors with the aim of reducing the scale, impact and cost of illegal trade across Scotland.

Mr MacAskill believes that for authorities to succeed in reducing the harmful counterfeit trade, there must be even greater cooperation with businesses and the general public.

He said: "Illicit trade and counterfeit goods harm our economy and our society.

Tackling them is about protecting the quality associated with Scotland and the tax paying jobs that go with it.

"It's all about our business, not just law enforcement, which is why these actions matter.

"Those being rightly praised for outstanding work today have gone above and beyond the call of duty. Their actions were innovative and resourceful and are understandably commended for that.

"They've protected valuable jobs and businesses that pay their taxes and insurance. Our communities are better and safer places as a result."

As counterfeit goods tend to be substandard they can pose a risk to the public. This is particularly true in respect of counterfeit electrical equipment, toys, cigarettes/tobacco, and alcohol products.

The Intellectual Property Office (IPO) working with OECD found that up to 4% of UK imports in 2013 were counterfeit, which implies that up to £500million worth of counterfeit goods were imported into the Scottish economy in 2013.

Operation SALANG was a multiagency operation coordinated by Police Scotland to disrupt and deter those involved in illicit trade and saw over £31million counterfeit products seized in Scotland between 2013 and 2016.

Roddy Fullarton, Investigation Manager from Royal Mail said: "We are delighted to be receiving this award along with our partners, who we work closely with. Royal Mail takes the security of the mail and the postal service very seriously indeed and we will do everything in our power to protect it."

Simon York, Director, HMRC Fraud Investigation Service, said: "The trade in illicit cigarettes damages funding for essential public services and undermines legitimate traders.

"In Scotland, Royal Mail has been instrumental in helping HMRC tackle the importation of illegal tobacco.

"This liaison has led to a greater awareness amongst postal depot managers and staff on how we can work together to tackle this menace."

Lord Puttnam of Queensgate CBE, President of Film Distributors' Association, said: "The cinema offers a uniquely immersive, digital entertainment experience.

"The creative industries as a whole are worth 5% of the UK's economy, while the film industry plays an essential role in shaping how we are seen around the world.

"All piracy does is line the pockets of criminals, often serious, organised criminals, who invest nothing at all in the

production and distribution of the films concerned – they just diminish their value by ripping them off.

“So vigilance in screenings is extremely important, and on behalf of Film Distributors’ Association I’m delighted to congratulate and thank today’s award recipients.”

The SAITG was formed by SBRC, which works towards building a safe, strong and resilient country in which to live, work, visit and do business.

For more information on the SBRC and its range of services, visit [www.sbrcentre.co.uk](http://www.sbrcentre.co.uk).

*The SBRC is a non-profit organisation which exists to support and help protect Scottish businesses. With a unique connection to Police Scotland, Scottish Fire and Rescue Service and a strong relationship with Scottish Government, SBRC provide the very best advice to keep businesses of all sizes free from risk.*