|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| HMRC_327_AW |  |  |
|  |  |  |

 ***News Release***

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | For the attention of **News Desks**  |  No. of pages: 3 |  |
|  | Date: |  18 December 2018 | Ref: | E 04 18 |  |

**Racing driver jailed for tax fraud**

A Hemel Hempstead company director, who funded his hobby racing high-powered sports cars in races across Europe through a £450,000 tax scam, has been jailed.

Simon Atkinson was already under investigation by HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) for anti-money laundering offences when officers unearthed the six-figure tax fraud, which he used to finance his passion for racing Lamborghinis in competitive motor tournaments.

The 54-year-old raced at tracks including UK’s Brands Hatch and Belgium’s world-famous Spa circuit in the Supercar Challenge, and entered the 24-hour Series Barcelona race twice and the Maxi Endurance 32 hour in Portugal’s Algarve.

Kath Doyle, Assistant Director, Fraud Investigation Service, HMRC, said:

“Atkinson was thinking only of himself as he stole from the taxpayer to fuel a life in the fast lane across Europe, funding his ambitions as a racing driver with money that should have been going into our vital public services.

“Now his scam has well and truly hit the skids and not only has he been put behind bars, he also has to pay back all the stolen money. It proves tax crime doesn’t pay.

“We would urge anyone with information about individuals or businesses involved in tax fraud to report it to us online or contact our Fraud Hotline on 0800 788 887.”

The tax fraud came to light after Atkinson’s halal poultry processing company, IHP Ltd, was investigated for failing to comply with anti-money laundering regulations. When analysing the company’s records, investigators discovered that Atkinson had falsified invoices, asking companies to invoice his personal motor racing expenses as business costs.

Investigators found multiple invoices, dated between 2011 and 2015, listed as ‘transportation’ and ‘engineering services’. In reality these invoices were for high-end motor car servicing. In 2011 he even paid for a racing Lamborghini, claiming the cost of the racing car as a legitimate business expense under machinery costs.

He funded his motor racing by fraudulently claiming the costs as business expenses, receiving £112,186 in VAT repayments, and evading £338,630 in Income Tax.

On 20 July 2018, at Luton Crown Court, Atkinson pleaded guilty to two counts of failing to comply with money laundering regulations, and two counts of cheating the public revenue. He has since paid back most of the stolen money and on Monday (17 December), at Luton Crown Court, he was jailed for three years and four months and ordered to pay back the remaining £30,125 within 42 days.

**Notes for editors**

1. Simon Atkinson (DOB: 29/10/1964) of Shantock Hall Lane, Bovingdon, Hemel Hempstead pleaded guilty to two counts of failing to comply with money laundering regulations and two counts of cheating the public revenue at Luton Crown Court on 20 July 2018. On Monday (17 December 2018) he was jailed for three years and four months, handed a £30,125 compensation order, to be paid within 42 days, and ordered to pay £1,901 in costs.
2. IHP Ltd. were fined £20,000 and ordered to pay £1,000 in costs.
3. Simon Atkinson was a company director of IHP Ltd until May 2018. IHP Ltd. IHP Ltd was subject to investigation and pleaded guilty to two counts of failing to comply with money laundering regulations.
4. Anyone with information about people or businesses involved in tax fraud can contact our HMRC Fraud Hotline on 0800 788 887 or visit <https://www.gov.uk/report-an-unregistered-trader-or-business>
5. Follow HMRC on Twitter @HMRCgovuk

**Issued by HM Revenue & Customs Press Office**

Press enquiries only please contact:

Jemma Smith, Press Officer for East of England & Essex

Tel: 03000 520 184 / 07741 615 662

E-mail: jemma.smith@hmrc.gsi.gov.uk

Or

Ashleigh Prince

Tel: 03000 598 834

Email: ashleigh.prince@hmrc.gsi.gov.uk

Out of hours

Tel: 07860 359 544

**Website** www.hmrc.gov.uk