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***News Release***

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|  | For the attention of **News Desks** | | No of pages: 3 | |  |
|  | Date: | 20 July 2018 | Ref: | LON 11/18 |  |

**Trouble in store as tax fraud shop owner jailed**

A man who owned several shops selling F1 merchandise has been jailed for four years after he fraudulently claimed more than £960,000 in tax repayments to keep his businesses afloat.

Peter Davis, 58, of Lee, south-east London and owner of Formula 1 Teamwear Ltd, set up shops in shopping centres in Liverpool, Glasgow, Cardiff and west London, along with two smaller shops in Brighton and a website. To help keep his businesses going and to fund his lifestyle, he submitted 17 fraudulent VAT returns to HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) between 2009 and 2013, and falsely claimed repayments of £961,307.

HMRC investigators found that Davis received subsidies from the shopping centres to fit-out the shops. But his outlets all failed, often leaving rent and rates unpaid and some customers of his website without the goods they had ordered, leaving them out of pocket or needing to submit claims to their credit card providers.

Davis also ran an Italian restaurant, Salerno’s, near Tower Bridge, London where he failed to declare about half of his sales, and falsely claimed £58,507 in four VAT claims.

Daren Cooley, Assistant Director, Fraud Investigation Service, HMRC, said:

“Davis lied over and over again to steal taxpayers’ money to help fund his businesses and lifestyle. He foolishly thought he could carry on cheating the public by setting up new businesses built on a house of cards.

“Tax fraud isn’t a victimless crime. Not only is it stealing from UK taxpayers, it takes away money needed for the vital public services we all rely on. Anyone with information about tax fraud should report it to HMRC online or contact our Fraud Hotline on 0800 788 887.”

Davis pleaded guilty to fraudulent evasion of VAT and on Friday 20 July 2018, he was jailed at Southwark Crown Court for four years. He was also disqualified from being a company director for seven years.

On sentencing, His Honour Judge Michael Hopmeier told Davis: “These were serious, sophisticated frauds carried out over a long period of time, by deliberate dishonesty and virtually from the start of trading.

“Offences of this nature - fraud on the revenue - are not victimless. Government and Public Services are funded by tax, there are no other sources of income – this means hospitals, schools, roads and benefits are all paid for by tax.

“Stealing money from public funds means less money for these services.”

Confiscation proceedings to recover assets from Davis will now begin.

**Notes for Editors**

1. Peter DAVIS,DOB 22/06/1960, a shop and restaurant owner, of Woodyates Road, London, SE12 admitted fraudulent evasion of VAT, Contrary to Section 72(1) of the Value Added Tax Act 1994.
2. He was disqualified from being a company director for seven years – under Section 2 of the Company Directors Disqualification Act 1986.
3. Davis opened shops called Wheels of Sport in: Liverpool ONE, Liverpool, L1; Westfield Shopping Centre, Ariel Way, London, W12; St David’s Centre, Cardiff, CF10; St Enoch Centre, Glasgow, G1. He also traded as Lambretta in Cardiff and Glasgow.
4. He also had shops in Bond Street, Brighton (Attitude and Paddock Club) and a shop in Queens Road, Brighton (Paddock Club).
5. Anyone with information about people suspected of tax fraud can report it online at <https://www.gov.uk/report-an-unregistered-trader-or-business> or call our Fraud Hotline 0800 788 887.
6. Follow HMRC Press Office on Twitter @HMRCpressoffice

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

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