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 ***News Release***

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|  | For the attention of **News Desks**  | No. of pages: **3** |  |
|  | Date: | **23 November 2020** | Ref: | **SCO 01 20** |  |

**Four million illicit cigarettes uncovered in Glasgow warehouse**

Three men have been charged and 4.2 million suspected illicit cigarettes seized by HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC).

Officers made the discovery when they attended a Glasgow warehouse. The goods found are believed to be worth an estimated £1.6 million in lost duty and taxes.

Further enquiries led to the uncovering of a tobacco factory in Hamilton, South Lanarkshire, which was dismantled with the seizure of two industrial mixing machines, a tobacco shredding machine, packaging and 45kg of tobacco.

In an operation supported by Police Scotland, three men from Airdrie, North Lanarkshire, aged between 25 and 34 were arrested and charged with Excise Duty fraud and money laundering offences. Some £20,000 cash was also seized from one of the properties.

Joe Hendry, Assistant Director, Fraud Investigation Service, HMRC, said:

“This is another example of the combined powers our partners at the Scottish Crime Campus and Serious Organised Crime Taskforce have to disrupt, detect and deter the illicit trade of tobacco and other forms of criminality.

“Tackling criminal trade is at the heart of our strategy to clampdown on the illicit tobacco market, which costs the UK around £1.9 billion a year. This is theft from the taxpayer and undermines legitimate traders.

“We encourage anyone with information about the illegal sale of cigarettes to report it to HMRC [online at gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk/report-an-unregistered-trader-or-business) or call our Fraud Hotline on 0800 788 887.”

As part of the operation 50 HMRC officers executed several warrants across Glasgow and Lanarkshire on Thursday (19 November 2020) along with eight colleagues from Police Scotland.

Three people were arrested, interviewed and charged with suspected Excise Duty fraud and money laundering. A report will be submitted to the Procurator Fiscal in due course. The three men have been released pending further investigation.

**Notes for editors**

1. Details of searches and arrests carried out on Thursday (19 November 2020):

**Glasgow**

* One commercial property searched
* 4.2 million cigarettes worth an estimated £1.6m in lost revenue, seized

**Airdrie, North Lanarkshire**

* Three residential properties searched
* Three men aged 25, 30 and 34 arrested and charged with Excise Duty fraud and money laundering offences
* £20,000 cash seized

**Hamilton, South Lanarkshire**

* One commercial property searched
* Tobacco factory dismantled
* 45kg of tobacco, two industrial mixing machines, one tobacco shredding machine and packaging seized
1. Since 2000, HMRC has reduced the illicit market in cigarettes by more than a half. Between April 2018 and March 2019, more than 1.3 billion illicit cigarettes and more than 146 tonnes of hand-rolling tobacco were seized, resulting in 278 successful prosecutions.
2. HMRC can also levy civil penalties on anyone handling, using or supplying non-duty paid tobacco products.
3. HMRC supports the work of [Scotland’s Serious Organised Crime Taskforce](https://twitter.com/soctaskforce), which brings together a range of organisations to disrupt, detect and deter criminal groups, and divert people away from involvement in serious organised crime.
4. Anyone with information about people or businesses involved in tax fraud can contact our HMRC helpline on 0800 788 887 or online at <https://www.gov.uk/report-an-unregistered-trader-or-business>
5. Follow HMRC’s press office on Twitter [@HMRCpressoffice](https://twitter.com/HMRCpressoffice)

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

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