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Inheritance lie hid fake firm VAT fraud

A West Yorkshire man who lied about an inheritance to hide a £173,000 VAT fraud has been jailed for 10 months after an investigation by HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC).

Phillip Morris, from Pontefract, told HMRC officers that his business's cash-flow was from a family inheritance. But the business did not exist and was just a front to commit VAT fraud.

Investigators found suspicious-looking invoices and basic spelling mistakes on doctored bank statements. When they checked with his alleged customers, farming businesses in Herefordshire and Worcestershire, Morris admitted he had falsified invoices from suppliers to claim back VAT and that his business records were also false.

Jo Tyler, Assistant Director, Criminal Investigation, HMRC, said:

“Morris lied to HMRC about a fictitious business to claim money he was not entitled to. His customers were faked, and he created fake business records in an attempt to cover his tracks. Stealing public money is not acceptable when the vast majority of people pay what is due when it's due. HMRC will pursue every avenue to make sure that the UK's tax system is not abused in this way.

“If you suspect anyone of committing tax fraud please call us on 0800 59 5000”

Morris said that he had set up an agricultural business buying grass seed and arranging for farmers to grow hay and straw that he later sold. Between July 2012 and July 2013 Morris claimed £173,000 in false VAT repayments. He pleaded guilty to two counts of VAT fraud and was sentenced on 24

November 2014 by Leeds Crown Court.

Notes for Editors

1. Phillip Morris (DOB 15/09/1967) of Gothic Mount, Ackton, Pontefract, West Yorkshire
2. Morris was charged on 12 September 2014 and later pleaded guilty on 2 counts of VAT fraud under Value Added Tax Act 1994
3. HMRC's Flickr site: www.flickr.com/hmrcgovuk

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HM Revenue & Customs (HMRC) is the UK's tax authority.

HMRC is responsible for making sure that the money is available to fund the UK's public services and for helping families and individuals with targeted financial support.

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