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Payback time for Scottish fraudsters

A former company director and his ex-wife, who were jailed in March 2017 for a total of six years and nine months for tax fraud, have been ordered to pay back £154,900.

Donna Howard stole £283,713 of Income Tax and National Insurance Contributions from the unsuspecting employees of her ex-husband, Michael Howard, the director of Motherwell-based MDH Fire and Security Services Limited. HMRC investigators discovered that PAYE deductions for 29 employees had not been paid and that Donna Howard gave the fraud a veneer of legitimacy by creating false paperwork.

The investigation also revealed the Howards had charged customers more than £530,000 in VAT using fictitious and de-registered VAT numbers, but kept the money. The fraud was used to fund their lifestyle and before they were caught, the couple shared a £400,000 house in Motherwell and enjoyed luxurious trips abroad.

The Howards have now been ordered to pay two confiscation orders worth £154,900 at Hamilton Sheriff Court. During a hearing yesterday (14 December 2017) Donna, 44, was ordered to pay £127,000 within six months while Michael, 45, was previously ordered to pay back £27,900 within six months at a hearing on 15 November 2017. HMRC can apply for further confiscation and pursue the outstanding benefit of the fraud in the future.

Cheryl Burr, Assistant Director, Fraud Investigation Service, HMRC, said:

“Even following a conviction our work doesn’t stop. We will always seek to recover the profits criminals have made from their crimes, securing these funds for the public purse.

“We encourage anyone with information about tax fraud to contact our Fraud Hotline on 0800 788 887.”

Notes for editors

1. Donna Howard (DOB 16/06/1973) from Loth, Helmsdale, Sutherland, was found guilty at a trial in Hamilton Sheriff Court in February to being knowingly concerned in the fraudulent evasion of Value Added Tax contrary to section 72(1) of the 1994 Value Added Tax act. She was also found guilty of the fraudulent evasion of Income tax and National Insurance deductions. On Thursday 16 March 2017 at the same court she received a three year prison sentence for VAT fraud and a nine month concurrent sentence for the other offence. On 14 December 2017, at Hamilton Sheriff Court she was ordered to pay a confiscation order of £127,000 within six months.

2. Michael Howard (DOB 04/09/1972) from Snead View, Motherwell, was found guilty at a trial in Hamilton Sheriff Court in February to being knowingly concerned in the fraudulent evasion of Value Added Tax contrary to section 72(1) of the 1994 Value Added Tax act. He was sentenced to three years in prison on Thursday 16 March 2017 at the same court. On 15

November 2017, at Hamilton Sheriff Court he was ordered to pay a confiscation order of £27,900.

3. If the assets held by the convicted criminal at the time of the order are less than the benefit derived from the fraud, then any future assets can be confiscated up to the value of the benefit of the fraud

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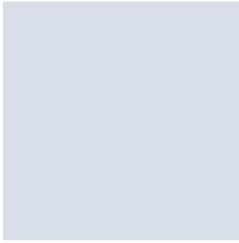
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