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VAT fraud gang jailed

The final member of a four-strong gang who attempted to steal £161,000 in a VAT fraud has been jailed after an investigation by HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC).

Patrick Dugbo, 49, from Derbyshire, was arrested by HMRC in November 2012 with his brother Solomon, 43, Joseph Benson, 54, and Elizabeth Harwood, 51, after HMRC investigations revealed that the gang had created false invoices to support a number of VAT repayment claims for the purchase of electrical goods.

The four members of the gang have been jailed for a combined five years and

four-and-a-half months.

Stuart Taylor, Assistant Director, Criminal Investigation, HMRC said:

“As HMRC closed in on their scam, they did everything they could to hide their crime, but to no avail. All four knew that they were breaking the law, yet they chose to overlook this to try to make what they wrongly assumed would be easy money, at the expense of the UK taxpayer.

“Tax fraud is a serious offence and we would urge anyone with information about people or businesses involved in such fraud to contact HMRC’s Tax Evasion hotline on 0800 788 887.”

Between February 2008 and November 2012, Patrick Dugbo claimed £128,000 in VAT repayments he was not entitled to for his business, Westlake Recycling Services, while his brother Solomon Dugbo tried to claim £33,000 for his business, Leeds Reuse Centre. Despite his involvement and attempts, Joseph Benson failed to obtain any repayments for his company BJ Electronics (UK) Ltd.

Elizabeth Harwood was found guilty of conspiring with them through her role as bookkeeper, helping to produce a large number of false invoices to cover the total fraud.

Confiscation proceedings through the Proceeds of Crime Act are now in place to recoup the stolen money from Patrick and Solomon Dugbo.

Notes for Editors

1. Patrick Dugbo, of Barrie Drive, Sinfin, Derbyshire, DOB 10/10/1965, was the sole proprietor of Westlake Recycling Services. He pleaded guilty to conspiring to cheat the public revenue and VAT fraud, at Leeds Crown Court on 5 February 2015 and was sentenced to 32 months in prison at the same court today.

2. Solomon Terry Dugbo, High Ash Avenue, Leeds, DOB 02/06/1971, was the sole proprietor of Leeds Reuse Centre. He was found guilty after trial to conspiring to cheat the public revenue and VAT fraud, at Leeds Crown Court in October 2014. He was sentenced to 12 months in prison on November 21,

2014.

3. Elizabeth Harwood, Soothill Lane, Batley, West Yorkshire, DOB 05/05/1963, self-employed bookkeeper, LH Accounting Services. She was found guilty after trial to conspiring to cheat the public revenue and VAT fraud, at Leeds Crown Court in October 2014. She was sentenced to ten months in prison on 21 November 2014.

4. Joseph Benson, Broadstrod, Loughton, Essex, DOB 15/04/1960, director of BJ Electronics (UK) Ltd, pleaded guilty to conspiring to cheat the public revenue and VAT fraud, at Leeds Crown Court in October 2014. He was sentenced to ten-and-a-half months in prison on 21 November 2014.

5. Reporting restrictions have been in place until today's sentencing of Patrick Dugbo, who missed the original trial due to illness.

6. Photographs are available at HMRC's Flickr channel:

www.flickr.com/hmrcgovuk

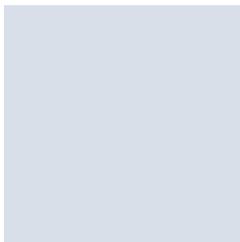
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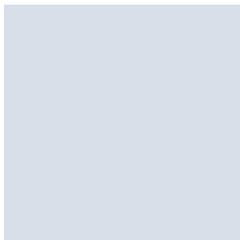


HMRC Regional Press Officer - East of England and Essex

Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire, Norfolk, Suffolk, Essex & Hertfordshire

03000 518 552

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03000 529 729

07979 245 517