

NEWS RELEASE

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Domain Name Scammers Sentenced

Two men were sentenced on 2nd April at Leeds Crown Court following a successful prosecution by North Yorkshire County Council Trading Standards and Regulatory Services.

David Robert Tunney, 33, and Christian Denver Shaw, 32, both from Ammanford, Wales, were each sentenced to nine months imprisonment suspended for two years and to a 12 month supervision order requiring they each undertake 250 hours of community service. Each had pleaded guilty to 15 offences under the Trade Descriptions Act 1968. The pair operated a domain name scam through their company Sky Protection Ltd in Ystradgynlais, Wales.

The business made cold-calls to the owners of guest houses and bed and breakfasts around the country including Aberdeen, falsely claiming that a third party was trying to set up internet websites using the business's trading name as domain names. They alleged this would prevent them setting up a website with an appropriate domain name in future.

Tunney and Shaw also operated under the trading name Internet Verification Office, deliberately giving people the false impression that they had some official capacity in relation to domain name regulation. To reinforce this impression, the scam used an accommodation agency address in London, rather than their Welsh location.

They then went on to explain that, if the owner of the guest house / bed and breakfast made a quick decision, they could have first refusal of the domain names. Further false statements were made in relation to the charges for the domain names and the length of time the registrations would last for.

In one example, the owner of a guesthouse in Aberdeen was told a competitor in the next street had attempted to buy domain names relating to her business. Fearing it would affect her business in future she agreed to buy three domain names, for £25 each. After giving her bank details over the phone, Sky Protection then debited £750 from her account.

In another the owner of an Aberdeen guesthouse was told a new Guesthouse was to open nearby and had attempted to buy domain names similar to the name of her business. She also was concerned and agreed to buy five names for £25 each lasting 10 years. These were domain names ending “.org”, “.net”, “.co.uk”, “.info” and “.org.uk” She was told the opposition would get all

her trade. All she had to do was give him her bank or credit card details.. After giving her bank details over the phone, Sky Protection then debited £1250 from her account.

Proceeds of Crime Act asset recovery cases are to follow in relation to all two men.

Carole Jackson the Trading Standards and Commercial manager said "These prosecutions represent examples of our continuing determination to protect the residents of Aberdeen from callous rogue traders. Our co-operation and assistance with North Yorkshire County Council demonstrate that we will do all we can to ensure crime does not pay in Aberdeen. We also repeat our previous advice that consumers should not deal with cold-callers, whether they contact you by telephone or call at your door. "

Consumers wishing to report rogue traders or seek advice should contact the Trading Standards via **Consumer Direct on 08454 04050**