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 ***News Release***

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|  | For the attention of **News Desks**  | No. of pages: **2** |  |
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**Suspected illicit tobacco factories uncovered in Glasgow**

An estimated five tonnes of suspected illicit tobacco has been seized by HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) in Glasgow.

HMRC officers searched five domestic premises, one commercial property, two self-storage containers and three vehicles across the city on Thursday 21 February. The tobacco found is believed to be worth an estimated £1.5 million in lost duty and taxes.

Officers also seized £4,000 of cash in the operation, with the assistance of a cash dog. Two of the premises searched were suspected sites of illicit tobacco factories.

Four people were arrested and charged with Excise Duty fraud in the operation. They are:

* A 25-year-old man from Glasgow.
* A 37-year-old woman from Glasgow.
* A 38-year-old woman from Glasgow.
* A 42-year-old woman from Glasgow.

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

“The trade in illicit tobacco is unregulated and makes cheaper tobacco more readily available to the young and vulnerable.

“The sale of illegal tobacco will not be tolerated by us or our partner agencies. Disrupting criminal trade is at the heart of our strategy to clampdown on the illicit tobacco market, which costs the UK around £2.5 billion a year. This is theft from the taxpayer and undermines legitimate traders.

“We encourage anyone with information about the illegal sale of tobacco to report it to HMRC online or call our Fraud Hotline on 0800 788 887.”

**Notes for editors**

1. Since 2000, we have reduced the illicit market in cigarettes by around a third. In the last two financial years alone, over 2.8 billion illicit cigarettes and over 660 tonnes of hand-rolling tobacco have been seized resulting in approximately 700 prosecutions.
2. HMRC can also levy civil penalties on anyone handling, using or supplying non-duty paid tobacco products.
3. Anyone with information about people or businesses involved in tax fraud can contact our HMRC helpline on 0800 788 887 or <https://www.gov.uk/report-an-unregistered-trader-or-business>
4. Follow HMRC’s press office on Twitter @HMRCpressoffice

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