

Trading Standards News

A summary of work and Facebook posts by the Trading Standards Service



Leicestershire
County Council

Welcome to our Winter 2024/5 Newsletter

The latest news of our work and advice on scams and consumer issues.

Remember to stay up to date with our latest news by [following us on Facebook](#).
Contact Citizen's Advice Consumer helpline on 0808 223 1133 or [Citizen's Advice online](#) for advice on all Trading Standards matters.

Scam Alert – fake Spotify emails

Beware - a Spotify scam email is doing the rounds!

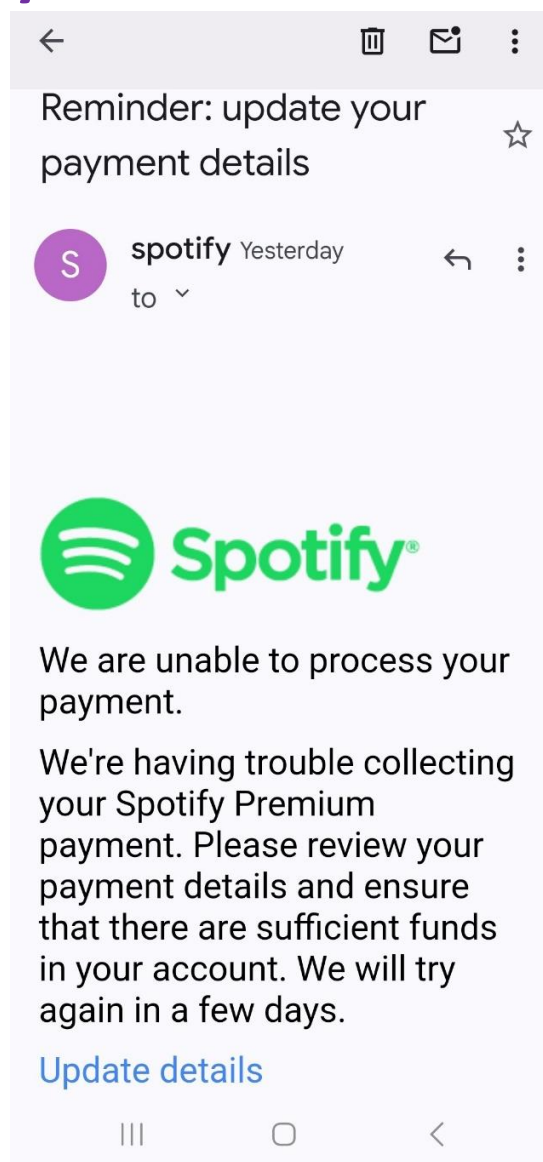
The email appears to be legitimate with Spotify's official logo, but it's a clever ploy to "phish" your personal and financial information.

"Phishing" is a scam where criminals typically send emails that pretend to come from banks, credit card companies, online shops and other trusted organisations. The embedded link in the email goes to a website that looks exactly like the real thing but is a fake designed to trick victims into entering personal information.

Spotify will never ask for personal information by email, and their official email addresses end in "@spotify.com". Find out how to spot a fake Spotify email here: [Spotify.com](https://www.spotify.com).

Check out advice from [Action Fraud](#) on how to spot scam emails.

Don't forget you can forward suspicious emails to report@phishing.gov.uk.



Should you trust trader assured websites?

Are you thinking of having work carried out on your home this year?

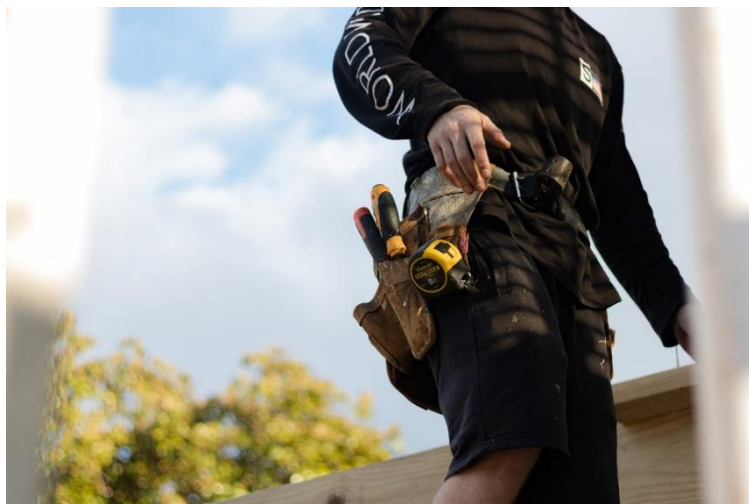
Don't rely solely on claims of 'trustworthiness' from a trader recommendation site. Many use terms like 'trusted', 'reliable', or 'expert' to describe their listed traders.

However, it's important to check exactly what the site does to verify these claims.

There should be clear information on their website, but if you have any further questions contact the trader recommendation site to ask about their vetting process.

The Competition and Markets Authority have published a guide on [what to consider when using a trade association website](#).

Get more advice from Citizens Advice on 0808 223 1133 and read their advice: [before you get building work done](#).



Sweet like honey...

We all know that Winnie the Pooh loves honey, but did you know that the sale of honey is governed by specific regulations to ensure it is authentic and traceable?

Honey producers must label their jars with their name and address and the country of origin, as well as the best before date and weight. There are also reserved descriptions (names) for honey which can only be used if it meets the correct compositional requirements.

More information can be found in this [labelling of honey](#) guide.



If you are concerned about the way a food product is described or labelled you can use our online [“Report It”](#) form to let us know.

Slime toys safety warning!

Slime can be great fun but some slime toy products for sale online contain an unpleasant surprise – high doses of harmful chemicals.

The slimes pictured below have been recalled from purchasers because they contain excess amounts of boron. Exposure to this can cause irritation, diarrhoea, vomiting and cramps and may damage a child’s reproductive system.



The best advice is to buy from reputable brand names and retailers and avoid shopping with unknown sellers online.

The Office for Product Safety and Standards lists consumer products which have recently been [recalled](#). You can sign up for email alerts and check their list of recalled slime products [here](#).

Get more advice on avoiding the purchase of dangerous toys from the [Child Accident Prevention Trust](#).

Fake always breaks!

Fake or sub-standard vehicle parts can pose serious dangers to drivers, passengers and other road users. Counterfeit car parts are often cheap-looking imitations made from inferior materials that have not been safety tested.

It can be hard to tell the difference between a fake and genuine product. How can you be vigilant when replacing automotive components?

- Research the seller, regardless of shopping online or from the high street. Be wary if a product is cheaper than elsewhere.
- When buying parts online, check the website: genuine websites let you report fake products.
- Fake parts are likely to be 'one size fits all' which can be dangerous and damage your vehicle. Check the part specification is correct.
- Leave it to the experts: don't bring your own parts to the garage. Fake parts are unlikely to be covered by the garage under warranty, you may also lose the cost of the replacement part or fitting labour costs if it subsequently fails.



Check out advice from www.gov.uk on how to spot and avoid purchasing fake vehicle parts.

To report concerns about the sale of fake car parts or get advice on repairing your vehicle visit Citizen's Advice, or ring them on 0808 223 1133.

Beware of “HMRC” scam calls!

Have you received an automated phone call telling you HMRC is filing a lawsuit against you? The message instructs you to press 1 to speak to a caseworker to make a payment. This is a scam, and you should end the call immediately!

Like our fake email warning, these calls are an attempt to “phish” for your personal details. Phishing calls use a variety of phone numbers including UK mobiles. Criminals will use well known organisations to try and obtain your personal and financial details for their own gain.



If you've been a victim of a scam and suffered financial loss, report it to Action Fraud on 0300 123 2040.

Find out more about HMRC scams at www.gov.uk.

Rogue builder is sent to prison for just under six years



Our officers conducted a complex investigation resulting in the director of a limited company, H&L Building and Landscaping Ltd, receiving a prison sentence of 71 months – just under six years - after admitting to defrauding eight customers of a total of £37,000. He was also disqualified from acting as a director of any company for 10 years.

The director and his company began to operate and quote for work between April 2020 and August 2020, advertising on Facebook, promotional boards outside properties or adverts in 'The Big Red' magazine.

Approximately £37,000 was paid to the company by eight victims, but work was only carried out for two of them. After deposits were taken for materials, work either did not start or was completed incompetently. Most of the victims were given a series of reasons and excuses that were found to be untrue.

Find out more on our website: www.leicestershire.gov.uk.

Do you know who you are buying from when buying online?

Before you buy anything, make sure the company's website is legitimate, you can do so by looking at their terms and conditions, including checking for a UK address and email. Also read their reviews on independent review sites.

If you buy from a business outside the UK, the options for enforcing your rights should the goods not arrive, be defective, illegal, or unsafe are limited.

Consider how you pay for the goods or services. If the value is over £100 and you pay by credit card, you may be able to claim from your card provider if things go wrong.

Make friends with Consumerfriend.org.uk to get more advice on buying safely online.



Celebrate but remember wildlife safety



Many people like to release helium balloons to celebrate special occasions, but have you ever considered what happens when they come back down to earth?

The ribbons from the balloons can easily get wrapped around wildlife and livestock legs and necks, causing harm and injury. In some cases, the animals may even eat the balloon, which can cause an internal blockage.

For more information check out this factsheet from [RSPCA \(England & Wales\)](#).

Closure order for Leicestershire store

A Hinckley shop which sold illegal cigarettes to our undercover officers on eight occasions and had more than 1,800 packets of illegal tobacco seized during four enforcement visits has been closed down for three months.

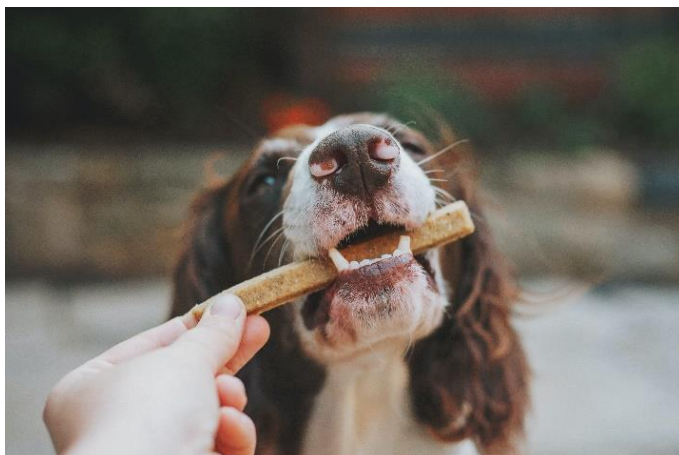
The tobacco was hidden in various locations, including a stairwell at the back of the shop, in the roof space of a stock room and in a car belonging to an employee.



The closure order, granted at Leicester Magistrates Court, followed a joint operation by this Service and Leicestershire Police. The closure order prevents anyone from entering the address, and anyone who breaches it is liable to be prosecuted. Read more on this Closure Order here: [Leicestershire County Council](#).

The sale of illegal tobacco can have a huge detriment on businesses who are trading legitimately, as well as bringing criminality to our high streets. To report a trader selling illegal tobacco and vapes, please call 0808 223 1133 or report it to us [online](#).

Starting a pet food business at home?



Thinking of setting up a business specializing in manufacturing or retailing dog treats?

In some cases, this activity requires registration by this Service; find more details on our website

www.leicestershire.gov.uk.

If you are looking to use horns, hooves, hides or bones you may need to register with Animal and Plant Health Agency.

You can find more information here: www.gov.uk.

Get toolled up to fight scams!

[Get Safe Online](#) have put 11 free tools together to help you protect yourself, your family, finances, devices and workplace from fraud and other online harms.

NEW! Get Safe Online Self Help Tool Centre

Free, easy-to-use tools to help you get safe online, all in one place.

Help yourself!



The tools include how to check if a website or a photograph is genuine, as well as a fun but informative quiz on how to spot Artificial Intelligence. See what you score!

Tool up at: [Get Safe Online Self Help Centre](#).

Leicestershire Trading Standards Service

Tel: 0116 305 8000

Email: tradingstandards@leics.gov.uk

 [/LeicsTradingStandards](#)