



Tobacco Smuggling in Wales

What Is Tobacco Smuggling?

There are different types of illicit trade in tobacco products. These include large scale smuggling, bootlegging and counterfeit smuggling. Not all smuggling involves counterfeit products. Smuggled products may also be UK manufactured tobacco products that have been diverted to the black market.

Definitions

- ✓ Smuggling is the illegal transport and distribution of tobacco products, usually without payment of correct government taxes. Smuggling can be large scale or small bootlegging operations.
- ✓ Counterfeiting is the illegal production of “fake” brand cigarettes without the consent of the brand owner.

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Tobacco smuggling constitutes a serious public health risk by undermining initiatives aimed at reducing tobacco consumption. Smuggled tobacco is most likely to be sold in deprived areas where rates of tobacco consumption are already creating significant ill health.

Anecdotally there is evidence that people are able to buy illicit tobacco easily in Wales however to date, there has been no large scale survey of smokers investigating this. In a small survey of young smokers aged up to 18 across South Wales in 2008, 1 in 8 young people indicated they were purchasing cigarettes at a price of £3.50 or less (the Recommended Retail Price for a typical packet of 20 cigarettes was £5.44 at the time) – strongly suggesting that smuggled tobacco products are widely available to young people. Furthermore, 7% of young smokers said they were able to purchase single cigarettes as cheaply as 30p per cigarette.¹

Recent headlines in the media from Wales demonstrate just how tobacco products are entering Wales:

- ✓ *Statues Used To Smuggle Cigarettes*²
- ✓ *Pair jailed for attempting to smuggle cigarettes hidden in doors*³
- ✓ *Couple accused of smuggling 857,000 cigarettes*⁴
- ✓ *Four million fake ciggies discovered in toy crate*⁵

¹ Ffaith Youth Survey of young smokers aged 11-17 years in Caerphilly, Cardiff, Merthyr Tydfil, Rhondda Cynon Taff and Blaenau Gwent between 1 June and 30 June 2008

² <http://www.walesonline.co.uk/news/cardiff-news/2009/11/03/statues-used-to-smuggle-cigarettes-91466-25076179/>

³ <http://www.walesonline.co.uk/news/wales-news/2009/08/29/pair-jailed-for-attempting-to-smuggle-cigarettes-hidden-in-doors-91466-24559258/>

⁴ <http://www.walesonline.co.uk/news/wales-news/2009/10/28/couple-accused-of-smuggling-857-000-cigarettes-91466-25037304/>

⁵ <http://www.walesonline.co.uk/news/wales-news/2009/10/23/four-million-fake-ciggies-discovered-in-toy-crate-91466-24995837/>

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In the space of one week in November 2008, Welsh Trading Standards officers in twelve South East Wales authorities conducted authenticity checks on over 54 000 packs of cigarettes and hand rolling tobacco. As a result of this work, over 45 000 cigarettes and 144kg of hand rolling tobacco were seized⁶.

⁶ Trading standards at your council. LACORS 2009. accessed at:
<http://www.north-ayrshire.gov.uk/Documents/CorporateServices/LegalProtective/TradingStandards/LACORS.pdf>