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### **Five arrested during raids in *Xclusive* online ticket fraud probe**

**In an investigation into complaints about failure by companies to supply at least 4,000 tickets for events such as the Beijing Olympics and music festivals in the UK, four addresses in the London area were searched yesterday by Serious Fraud Office investigators and officers of the Metropolitan Police Service.**

The searches took place throughout the day and into the evening. The addresses comprised three residential properties and one business property. Four men (ages 41, 50, 51 and 54) and a woman (49) were arrested, interviewed and released on unconditional bail.

#### **The online ticket companies**

The investigation, which was prompted by complaints from the buying public, is looking into a suspected online ticket fraud. The case opened in September 2008 following a referral to the SFO from the Department for Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform ("BERR").

In particular, the investigation is looking into the activities of Xclusive Tickets Limited, Xclusive Leisure & Hospitality Limited and related companies. Both of the Xclusive companies are in liquidation. The Xclusive companies sold tickets online for a wide variety of events including the Beijing Olympics and various summer music festivals in the UK.

The families of UK Olympic contestants were amongst those who paid for tickets but did not receive them. Customers from more than 60 countries bought tickets for the Beijing games and other events including well known music festivals in the UK, such as the V



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Festival, Reading Festival and Leeds Festival but did not receive tickets or refunds. The companies entered liquidation in September 2008.

Commenting on the case, the Director of the Serious Fraud Office, Richard Alderman said: *“People thinking of buying tickets on-line should be vigilant and always check the supplier’s credentials. In this particular case we know that many thousand consumers lost money and suffered disappointment that they could not attend events that many of them had spent years dreaming about and I urge those people who bought tickets through Xclusive to come forward with information ”.*

(Note: Richard Alderman pod cast today can be heard on the News section of the SFO website. Click on this link: [http://www.sfo.gov.uk/news/media/podcast\\_261108.asp](http://www.sfo.gov.uk/news/media/podcast_261108.asp)

### **SFO seeks further information on Xclusive**

Customers of the Xclusive companies who did not receive their tickets and are willing to assist the SFO with its enquiries are invited to fill in the questionnaire at the following link on the SFO's website. <http://www.sfo.gov.uk/investigations/>

If members of the public suspect they have been a victim of a ticket fraud but it does not relate to the Xclusive companies, this should be reported separately at Consumer Direct; a telephone and online consumer advice service operated by the Office of Fair Trading in conjunction with Local Authority Trading Standards Services. The reports can be made by filling in the online form at <https://secure.consumerdirect.gov.uk/reportascam.aspx> or by calling +44 8454 04 05 06

### **Exercise caution**

Although the vast majority of online ticket sales websites are bona fide, the SFO recommends that the public should exercise vigilance when buying online and in particular advises that:-



(1) Sellers in England and Wales of match tickets for FA Premiership, Football League, League Cup and FA Cup games, Conference League and for UEFA and FIFA matches must in law be authorised to do so by the clubs, the leagues or the venues. So, before buying online people should check with any of these to ensure that the ticket agency is authorised. Buying from unauthorised agencies could result in no ticket, a forged ticket or risk through lack of supporter segregation.

(2) For non-football tickets, secondary sale is not illegal but often the terms of their issue prohibit their transfer for profit. Tickets sold in such a manner by an unauthorised agency could be cancelled by the venue or the promoter or may be forgeries. People should check with the venue or promoter before buying.

(3) When checking the credentials of a ticket agency, many internet bulletin boards comment on the service it provides. Though the accuracy of the comments cannot be verified they can highlight agencies that attract a number of complaints about non-supply or non-refund.

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