Taking action on UK wine fraud

7 May 2010 by Julia Harding MW

Amid the growing concern about fraud in wine trading, demonstrated by recent threads on our forum, and concerns that the heated market for Bordeaux 2009 will attract some rogue dealers - see Jancis's warning not to part with a penny - the establishment of a national fraud reporting and advice service in the UK is more than welcome.

Action Fraud was launched on 1 February 2010, so far for England and Wales only. The service is provided by the National Fraud Authority, the Attorney General's Office, the City of London Police, the Association of Chief Police Officers and the Home Office.

Jim Budd, Loire expert, fraud hunter and the man behind www.investdrinks.org, explained that Action Fraud is not specifically for wine but it is a huge step forward compared with the previous uncoordinated approach of individual police forces.

Budd points out that until now, 'the reporting of fraud has been very piecemeal, which has meant that the UK police forces have been unable to build up a clear picture of the extent of the problem. Both the Metropolitan and City of London police are currently investigating wine investment fraud. However, these investigations have been hampered through not knowing how widespread the misselling of wine as an investment is because the reporting of fraud has previously been uncoordinated. It should enable the UK police forces to build up a clear picture of the extent of the problem.'

Furthermore, people living outside the UK can also complain to Action Fraud about UK companies and translation services will be provided.

Action Fraud's homepage sums up their mission: 'Action Fraud is the UK's national fraud reporting centre. If you've been scammed, ripped off or conned, there is something you can do about it. Speak to us.' And they emphasise preventive action: 'Early recognition of fraud can be vital, so no matter whether you think you've been a victim of fraud or you just want to know how to protect yourself, this is the place to start.'

The site offers clear and simple advice on types of fraud, protecting yourself against fraud, links to reports about current or recent frauds and a way of reporting suspected fraud. You can do this by phone (03000 123 2040) or by completing an online form at www.actionfraud.org.uk.

All complaints are referred to the National Fraud Intelligence Bureau and although this does not mean they will investigate every one, they will use the information 'to build up a national picture of fraud. This will help make the UK a more hostile place for fraudsters to operate in and keep other potential victims safe.'

See Action Fraud for full details.