

# Press release: British public urged to be aware of poppy merchandise scams

- the Intellectual Property Office and The Royal British Legion urge consumers to beware of fake poppy merchandise ahead of Remembrance 2018
- no-one benefits – both charity and public lose out with fake poppy merchandise
- advice to buyers to 'buy responsibly' through official channels, and how to report fake poppy merchandise

The Intellectual Property Office (IPO) and The Royal British Legion (RBL) are urging members of the British public to be extra vigilant when buying poppy merchandise for Remembrance this year. Their donations are intended to support Armed Forces community men, women, veterans and their families. Instead they could end up benefitting fraudsters if their poppy merchandise turns out to be fake.

The RBL has registered its rights for the poppy goods to prevent such counterfeiting.

The IPO and The RBL have teamed up with the Police Intellectual Property Crime Unit (PIPCU) to crack down on the rogue traders making money from the fake Remembrance goods. The warning applies to poppy merchandise – scarves, jewellery, poppy pins and larger poppy brooches. This does NOT apply to the traditional paper poppies.

The PIPCU team has been targeting suspected sellers by visiting addresses and speaking with people in connection with this crime. In Autumn 2017, Border Force officers at Tilbury intercepted a shipment of poppy merchandise intended for the UK worth in the region of £150,000.

Intellectual Property Minister Sam Gyimah said:

It is truly shocking that anyone would target and exploit one of the UK's most cherished charities and take advantage of public support for our Armed Forces community

Together we can ensure donations go to the people they are intended for, by only supporting approved merchandise. Be vigilant when you are buying your poppies this year, and look out for the Royal British Legion logo to ensure the merchandise is approved and genuine.

Claire Rowcliffe, Director of Fundraising, from The Royal British Legion said:

It is a sad fact that there are people who actively defraud the

public in order to take funds intended for the support of our Armed Forces community. We would urge everyone wishing to purchase a Remembrance poppy brooch, to do so through official channels. For example, you can buy from one of our trusted volunteers, from The Royal British Legion's online Poppy Shop, or from one of our corporate partners.

Join with us, the IPO and PIPCU to help make sure your donation doesn't line the pockets of criminals. We want to make sure that it goes to supporting those who have made such a unique contribution to our society.

## **Fake poppy merchandise – what to look for**

The public are being asked to look out for counterfeit goods in the shape, or bearing the image of, the RBL's familiar two-petal red poppy, or Poppy Scotland's four-petal poppy in Scotland. The RBL have registered their rights for the poppy goods to prevent such counterfeiting.

To help consumers beat the fraudsters, here are the top tips to avoid buying fake poppy merchandise online:

- be a 'responsible buyer' – buy from official channels and The Royal British Legion's corporate partners
- avoid cheaper priced products. If the price is too good to be true, it usually is
- the Royal British Legion works with a number of corporate partners. Only [corporate partners](#) are authorised by the Royal British Legion to sell poppy merchandise
- if in doubt, buy through [The Royal British Legion](#) or [The Royal British Legion official eBay](#) or Amazon pages – you will be sure of the authenticity

## **What to do if you think you've spotted fake poppy merchandise**

Call Crimestoppers on 0800 555111 or [report it online](#) if you spot anyone selling what you believe to be fake poppy products.

## **Notes to editor:**

- the IPO is part of the Department for Business, Energy, and Industrial strategy and is responsible for the national framework of intellectual property rights, comprising patents, designs, trade marks and copyright
- the IPO's intelligence hub is recognised within the Home Office Serious & Organised Crime Strategy as the UK lead on counterfeiting and piracy
- the RBL is one of the most trusted charity brands, with the Poppy Appeal standing out as the best known national charity campaign. Their work supports not only the families of the fallen but also a new generation of veterans and service personnel
- PIPCU is a specialist national police unit dedicated to protecting the UK industries that produce legitimate, high quality, physical goods and

online and digital content from intellectual property crime

## **Media enquiries**

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