

SFO set to secure £280,000 from convicted fraudster David Ames

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The SFO has secured its first recovery order against David Ames, who defrauded thousands through the Harlequin timeshare scheme.

The Serious Fraud Office (SFO) has secured a £283,321 confiscation order against David Ames, who was convicted of defrauding thousands of victims through a Caribbean island timeshare fraud.

This marks a step forward in the SFO's ongoing asset recovery action against the former property developer and convicted fraudster.

In 2022, following a successful SFO prosecution, Ames was sentenced to 12 years in prison for a £226 million fraud.

SFO investigators have since uncovered hidden assets belonging to Ames, including suspected land in Thailand and luxury properties in Dubai, cash held under Ames' name in a hidden bank account and "tainted gifts" – funds transferred to family members, detail of which was heard during a contested hearing at Southwark Crown Court in November 2025.

Ames ran Harlequin Group, a property development venture persuading pensioners and first-time investors to part with more than £226m through a range of tactics including celebrity endorsement. Investors were told funds would be used to build timeshare properties overseas.

Many lost precious lifesavings and pensions when the scheme collapsed in 2013, with only 200 of the promised 9,000 units built across two sites in Buccament Bay in St Vincent and the Grenadines.

Ames must pay the confiscation order or face up to three years being added to his existing twelve year sentence.

Paul Napper, Head of the Proceeds of Crime division at the SFO, said:

Ames took multiple steps to hide the profits of his audacious fraud – a crime funded by thousands of people's life savings and pensions.

Our specialist team uncovered his multiple assets, hidden across the globe, and today's result is a first step in ensuring Ames does not profit from his crimes.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/sfo-set-to-secure-280000-from-convicted-fraudster-david-ames>