

Police join forces to tackle metal theft and road crime



Almost 260 drivers have been stopped in Edinburgh during a police-led operation to tackle criminal use of the road, specifically related to metal theft.

The action was taken by Police Scotland under British Transport Police's Operation Scandium, a UK-wide initiative set up to ensure scrap metal dealers and those who trade in scrap metal are aware of their responsibilities under the proposed legislation contained within the Air Weapons and Licensing (Scotland) Act 2015.

Police Scotland and BTP officers were joined by the Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency, Scottish Environment Protection Agency, Scottish Fire and Rescue, Scottish Power, BT, HM Revenue and Customs, the Scottish Business Resilience Centre and the City of Edinburgh Council in carrying out checks on vehicles at sites in Seafield and Newbridge on Monday 12 and Monday 19 October.

Over the two days of activity, 258 vehicles were stopped and there were 147 offences dealt with. Five drivers were dealt with by British Transport Police for not having a licence to carry scrap metal, and there were a further 20 benefit fraud offences dealt with by the council.

Five vehicles were seized, for no insurance and no driving licence. Of 29 serious mechanical vehicle defects, nine were so bad that the vehicles were prohibited from continuing their journeys. Other offences dealt with included vehicles being overweight, using red diesel, having no MOT, and driving without wearing a seatbelt.

Temporary Superintendent Fraser Candlish of Police Scotland's Road Policing Unit said: "We are carrying out a series of road checks across the East of Scotland alongside British Transport Police and other partners under Operation Scandium. Whilst we want to educate those who use scrap metal dealers of the changes coming into force, particularly around cashless transactions, we are also using our partnership activity to disrupt those using the road network to commit crime.

"Metal theft strikes right at the heart of communities, whether it is phone cabling stolen, lead removed from church roofs or catalytic converters taken from vehicles. Once metal is stolen, it has to be transported and disposed of somewhere. By denying criminals the use of our roads, we can keep our routes and our neighbourhoods safe."

Temporary Chief Inspector Stuart Wilson, of British Transport Police said: "While we have seen a welcome decrease in the number of incidents from a high of several years ago, cable and metal thefts, such as those experienced recently from the main Edinburgh to Glasgow rail route, continue to disrupt and inconvenience industry and the public as well as being costly to rectify.

"Operation Scandium, which is supported by the Scottish Government, is a multi-agency phase of pro-activity and is designed to educate and inform scrap metal dealers and those who trade in scrap metal about their responsibilities under the legislation which will be introduced in the New Year."

Cabinet Secretary for Justice, Michael Matheson, said: "Metal theft can be dangerous and disruptive, as we saw with the theft of cabling which affected rail transport in the Central Belt earlier this month.

"We are proud to have delivered on our promise to bring in tougher rules to tackle metal theft with the Air Weapons and Licensing (Scotland) Act.

“Measures like a ban on cash payments, alongside enforcement action from partners, will make it harder for thieves to commit this thoughtless crime.”

Walter Brown, DVSA Area Manager said: “DVSA worked with Police Scotland to target non-compliant vehicles and drivers. Road safety is our top priority and this operation sends a clear message that robust action will be taken against those who flout the rules and risk the lives other road users.”

Willie Wilson, National Operations Waste & Enforcement Manager at the Scottish Environment Protection Agency, said: “SEPA takes seriously the need to combat metal theft. It is a crime which harms our environment through the burning of stolen cables; and which impacts upon our communities through the theft of metal from private properties. Metals are a valuable economic resource which, if lost to criminals, impacts upon legitimate business and sustainable resource management.

“We absolutely supports the aims of Operation Scandium and we will continue to contribute our expertise and knowledge of the waste sector to help our police partners tackle this crime. Tackling metal theft also helps SEPA tackle waste crime and by taking the criminals out of waste, we will protect our communities from crime but we will also protect our environment and support sustainable resource management in Scotland.”

Councillor Cammy Day, Community Safety Leader for the City of Edinburgh Council, said: “Metal theft can have serious consequences for the public and cause damage to property. We are pleased to be involved in Operation Scandium, and our Trading Standards’ officers will be working closely with partners on the doorstep crime aspect to this campaign. The Licensing Enforcement team will target scrap metal dealing to ensure compliance with conditions of licence.”