

Transport police launch shared database and crime mapping system to tackle metal crime

British Transport Police (BTP) has led the launch of a new shared database and crime mapping system to tackle metal crime across the UK.

The National Infrastructure Crime Reduction Partnership, led by BTP, has been working with the SmartWater Group and Opal, a national intelligence unit focused on serious organised acquisitive crime, to develop a range of tools that will improve how organisations will jointly tackle crime.



British Transport Police

These include a national database for the metal industry, a national infrastructure crime and intel mapping system, along with a partnership approach to sharing data and intelligence

to reduce crime.

Transport, power and telecommunications, are some of the sectors severely affected by metal crime. Heritage sites, including places of worship, are also increasingly being targeted with metal stolen from roofs and altars, causing irreparable structural damage and historic loss.

National infrastructure partners will now have the ability to see where crime is happening across the UK, not just for their organisation. The tools allow organisations to analyse the details and put measures in place to prevent crime happening in their industry. An alert system is also available to warn organisations of developing crime patterns ahead of any attack on the national infrastructure.

Mark Cleland, British Transport Police Superintendent and National Lead for Metal Crime, said: "Thanks to the support of SmartWater, we have taken the next step in creating the ability to map out criminality across the UK, enabling partners and law enforcement agencies to target those who present the greatest risk.

"These tools provide a greater pool of intelligence and a bigger picture of offender behaviour, allowing us to join the dots and deliver impact evidence to courts for sentencing.

"By taking a multi-agency approach, we are maximising our ability to identify those who are attacking our national infrastructure and historical buildings, making it harder for them to sell stolen metal and gain from their activities."

Phil Cleary, CEO of the SmartWater Group said: "We are really excited to demonstrate a number of innovative tools that will support national infrastructure and policing in tackling crime across the UK.

"SmartWater and our partners are working together to form a national infrastructure crime reduction partnership that will

drive activity to disrupt crime and reduce disruption of the UK's important infrastructure. We are proud to be part of this work in supporting the country during these difficult times."

The introduction of the Scrap Metal Dealers Act 2013, which brought in strict licensing requirements on dealers and identity checks for people selling scrap metal, contributed to a significant decrease in metal theft. Despite this, crime has continued with some offenders taking advantage of a quieter network during the Covid-19 pandemic to target isolated locations.

BTP recently led a national week of action, involving more than 45 other organisations, in which the force provided training for officers from local forces, council staff and industry workers.

Officers made more than 500 visits to scrap metal dealers, vehicle dismantlers and illegal waste sites. More than 1,000 vehicles were stopped and there were 29 arrests across eight force areas, as well as 129 matters settled without prosecution, with 150 other alleged offences under investigation. 16 loads of stolen property were also recovered.