

Uninsured drivers receive warnings from police

More than 30,000 uninsured drivers have been sent warning letters by Police Scotland after being caught by hi-tech cameras.

Police Scotland joined Operation Tutelage, a UK-wide initiative aimed at reducing the number of uninsured drivers on the roads, in April 2021.

Officers using Automatic Number Plate Recognition cameras (ANPR) were able to check whether or not drivers had valid insurance and caught out more than 31,000 motorists hitting the roads without it.

According to a Police Scotland performance report, from the launch until the end of August last year, the most recent month for which data was available, a total of 31,416 letters had been sent out to drivers in Scotland. The letters led to 83% complying within 14 days.

The report says: "The Criminal Justice-led initiative centres on identifying uninsured vehicles using ANPR and subsequently writing an insurance advisory letter to the registered keepers to inform them that driving without insurance is an offence.

"Working on the principle of behavioural compliance, the operation is designed to encourage the majority of compliant individuals to insure their vehicles."

Police Scotland say the key road safety benefits of the crackdown include reducing the number of uninsured vehicles on

Scotland's roads using "positive engagement and resolution".

Motorists driving without insurance can receive a fixed penalty of £300 and six penalty points on their licence if they are caught driving a vehicle that they are not insured to drive.

However, if the case ends up in court, there is the possibility of a fine up to £5000 and being banned from driving altogether.

Police also have the power to seize and sometimes destroy a vehicle being driven without insurance, while drivers can face higher insurance premiums for a number of years.

Research conducted by comparison website iCompario, showed that Scotland had a rate of uninsured drivers of one in 131, with Motherwell in Lanarkshire found to be the area with the highest rate of uninsured drivers at one in 110.

According to the Motor Insurers' Bureau, "uninsured and untraced drivers" are responsible for 130 road deaths and 26,500 car crash injuries every year in the UK and are calculated to cost more than £400 million.

Chief Superintendent Hilary Sloan, Police Scotland's Head of Road Policing, said: "Op Tutelage is an effective way of reducing the number of uninsured vehicles on our roads.

"There are a number of reasons why a vehicle may show on the Motor Insurance Database as holding no insurance and Op Tutelage provides an opportunity for registered keepers to take action as necessary.

"Police Scotland is committed to keeping the roads safe in collaboration with key partners and this operation allows our officers to take action against those who deliberately break the law and put other road users in danger."