



Durham Constabulary

Press Release

January 18, 2012

12 ARRESTS AS SCRAP YARDS ARE TARGETED

Police and their partners have today taken unprecedented action in a bid to combat metal thefts across County Durham and the North-East region as a whole.

A total of 12 men have been arrested and trading at three scrap yards in the county has been brought to a halt while searches at the premises, expected to last up to three days, get underway.

The yards at the centre of the operation in County Durham are at Shildon, Darlington and Wingate.

Those arrested are all from the County Durham area and range in age from 20 to 60. They were arrested on suspicion of money laundering and are being held at police stations in Durham city, Bishop Auckland, Peterlee and Sunderland.

Strikes took place simultaneously in the Cleveland and Northumbria police areas.

Today's intelligence-led operation has been several months in the planning and involved about 80 officers and colleagues from British Transport Police, as well as representatives from a number of partner agencies, including Durham County Council, Darlington Borough Council, the Environment Agency, the Fire and Rescue Service, and British Telecom.

Additionally, officers from Durham's roads policing unit are patrolling routes across the county's borders with other force areas to disrupt the movements of thieves travelling from one area to another.

Chief Supt Dave Orford, regional police lead for metal theft, said: ***“Like other areas of the North East and, indeed the country as whole, communities in County Durham and Darlington have been suffering the effects of metal theft for some time. Much has been done to curb this crime, both by target hardening and encouraging scrap dealers to act responsibly and self-regulate the industry.”***

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He explained that with support from British Transport Police (BTP), over many months, a significant amount of evidence has been gathered which suggests some areas of the industry appear not to be acting lawfully.

Chief Supt Orford added: ***“Today’s operation is to help the scrap metal industry achieve its aim of ensuring those who operate within it do so lawfully. One of our key aims to that end is to choke off the market for stolen metal.*”**

“While we have previously carried out unannounced spot checks on dealers, today is the first time we have effectively closed yards for business. This should send a clear message to metal thieves and people who profit from dealing in stolen metal that their activities won’t be tolerated.”

BTP Deputy Chief Constable Paul Crowther, who chairs the Association of Chief Police Officers’ Metal Theft Working Group, was in the North East for the operation.

He said: ***“This multi-force operation targeted those scrap metal dealers who are suspected of profiting from proceeds of metal theft and money laundering.***

“Scrap metal dealers have a responsibility to ensure the metal they buy is from legitimate sources and that they keep appropriate records. It is not acceptable to turn a blind eye to stolen metal. By helping criminals to turn stolen metal into cash, often quickly and easily, dealers are fuelling this crime which is blighting our infrastructure and disrupting the lives of ordinary people on a daily basis.

“Whilst longer term we are looking for a change to the legislation to make it harder for stolen metal to be sold, we will continue to work within the current legislation to target the business practices of those dealers who wilfully flout the law for their own gain. Today’s operation sends a clear signal that we will not allow dealers to ignore the law.”

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