



Durham Police Authority

PRESS RELEASE

26 October 2011

Durham Police Authority back police initiatives to tackle metal theft

Members of Durham Police Authority have expressed their support of Durham Constabulary's commitment and forward-thinking initiatives in their response to tackling metal theft.

At a Special meeting of the Police Authority on Tuesday, Police Authority Members debated a report detailing how metal thefts issues are being addressed, not just locally, but also by working in partnership with Northumbria and Cleveland police forces as well as community and corporate partners. Speaking to the report, Chief Superintendent Dave Orford, the strategic lead for the prevention and detection of metal theft, said:

“Durham Constabulary has developed a clear strategy in response to metal thefts, which has developed under the name Operation Hansell. Specific policing teams have been set up within each of the locality areas force wide, as well as dedicated Road Policing staff targeting specific offenders and scrap metal recycling yards to reduce metal thefts across County Durham and Darlington”.

Police Authority Member Councillor Richard Bell highlighted the urgent need for a change in the law, urging the public to sign up to the government's e-petition initiative (<http://epetitions.direct.gov.uk/>) to influence government policy. The Scrap Metal Dealers Act 1964 was intended to regulate the scrap metal industry; however there are limitations in the Act which means a lack of identification being required. The British Transport Police have approached Durham Constabulary to lead on delivering an enhanced identification trial with scrap yards as a pre-cursor to potential legislation changes, and to assist

with identification of good practice in relation to problem solving metal theft. Other forces around the country have requested tactics, information and best practice from Durham Constabulary and the force is hosting a regional problem-solving conference for metal thefts on 2 November 2011.

On the recent increase in metal thefts affecting members of the public nationally, Councillor Eddie Bell, a member of the Police Authority, congratulated Operation Hansell's response to the complaints of local people, from both rural and built-up areas. Instances such as theft of drain covers, which can cause serious hazards to pedestrians and vehicles, is just one example of metal theft local police have had to deal with. Chief Superintendent Dave Orford said:

"From a policing perspective, we not only see the impact metal theft has on individual victims but also the impact this has on the infrastructure (e.g. metal stolen from railways or BT phone cabling) which affects the wider community. Metal theft continues to be a force priority with performance targets managed on a weekly basis".

Police Authority member Councillor Garry Huntington commented that there are genuine dealers in the region within the scrap metal industry and enquired how they can take steps to work co-operatively with the police in the future. Chief Superintendent Dave Orford responded: "The outcome for legitimate dealers is they can have a very positive impact on their local community and work with the police, as this is an industry that is based on trust. The dedicated metal theft teams set up through Operation Hansell are already starting to have an impact with 46 people arrested within the first two weeks, 10 of whom have been charged with additional crimes and nine currently on bail".

Police Authority member Mr Tony Thompson, who is also a serving magistrate and Chair of the North Durham Bench, commented on the work going on in the courts, with progress being made in regards to metal theft and expressed the view that both victim and community impact statements are valuable in the decision making process regarding metal theft incidents.

Mr Peter Thompson, Chair of Durham Police Authority said:

“Durham Constabulary have clearly identified that metal theft is a threat in terms of performance, reputation and risk of harm to the community. A number of measures are in place to target known offenders, as well as working in partnership with local police forces, community and corporate partners. Police Authority members are confident that there is clear governance and accountability around Durham Constabulary’s performance to ensure that activity is both in line with the strategy and achieving in its aims”.

The force is also recognised within the industry as leading on the issue nationally and has received recognition in Metal Recycling Weekly which is the industry trade paper.

ENDS

Notes to Editors

Durham Police Authority is an independent body responsible for ensuring Durham Constabulary delivers an efficient and effective police service. It is made up of 17 local people who include 9 councillors, 8 members of the public who are the independent members.

The Authority ensures that the Constabulary is accountable to the people of County Durham and Darlington and ensures that citizens have a say in how they are policed.

The Authority is responsible, amongst other matters, for setting the budget for the Constabulary and, following consultation with local communities, mapping out the strategic direction of policing. This includes agreeing policing priorities and setting the Constabulary challenging targets to drive performance higher.

The Authority’s Vision

“To ensure that policing in County Durham and Darlington is fair, effective and visible”

The Authority’s Mission

“To be the effective voice of our communities in securing the delivery of high quality policing by:

- Exercising strong & effective leadership
- Engaging positively with communities to build confidence in local policing
- Strengthening partnership working
- Promoting equality, tolerance & respect for human rights

- Scrutinising and challenging police performance to secure continuous improvement
- Scrutinising and challenging business systems and processes to ensure effective use of resources

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