

Metal Theft – update

Purpose of Report

To note.

Summary

The last Board paper contained a summary of the issue of metal theft, its costs and impacts. This update provides an overview on developments.

The LGA has been engaging with the Home Office and DEFRA on the issue. Cllr Parsons and Cllr Khan Chair of the Safer and Stronger Communities Board (the lead Board on metal theft) sent a **joint letter to Lord Henley**, Minister of State at the Home Office.

The letter explained the LGA view that the Scrap Metal Dealers Act 1964 no longer provides an adequate regulatory regime for the metal recycling industry. It requested that the current registration process be replaced by a proper licensing system, based on the alcohol licensing regime and administered by councils. It also sought compulsory cashless payments, the installation of CCTV with automatic number plate recognition technology, and requirements on dealers to keep detailed logs of the identity of people they buy metal from. The letter provided a response to the Private Members Bill tabled by Graham Jones MP which would give licensing responsibility to Magistrates rather than councils.

In his response Lord Taylor acknowledged the limitations of the Scrap Metal Dealers Act and explained that the government is considering the legislative options which include cashless payment. We understand this could include a government bill in the next session of parliament (from May onwards). A follow up meeting between Cllr Parsons and Cllr Khan will be arranged for the coming weeks.

The **Private Members Bill by Graham Jones MP** is currently awaiting its second reading which is scheduled for the 20 January. However, because it is not sponsored by the government it is quite far down the list of bills to be considered. It is therefore likely to be rescheduled for an alternative date if one can be found before the close of business at the end of March.

The government announced a **national metal theft taskforce** in the Treasury's Autumn Statement. It will be led by the British Transport Police and will have funding of £5m. The purpose of the taskforce is to work across departments and law enforcement to co-ordinate action to tackle metal theft. Officers on the Safer and Stronger Communities Board are exploring with the Home Office what role the LGA will have with the taskforce.

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Item 3d

The LGA is carrying out a **survey of councils on metal theft** to inform its lobbying position. It will cover the cost of the issue to councils of its impact and enforcement and also explore what a new regime should look like and what it would cost. The survey will be launched later in January with results expected by the end of February.

The LGA are holding a **Metal Theft Conference on 6 February** at Local Government House chaired by Cllr Khan.

Contact officer: Dan McCartney
Position: Adviser
Phone no: 020 7664 3238
E-mail: Dan.mccartney@local.gov.uk