

# Scrap dealers targeted as railway metal thefts cost taxpayers £1.4m and disrupts passengers

February 14, 2020



Scrap yards in Greater Manchester are being visited by Network Rail and the British Transport Police to ensure dealers are not trading stolen metal.

Latest figures reveal more than 400 incidents of metal theft on the railway between London Euston and Carlisle in the 12 months to January 2020.

This caused significant delays to passengers and cost the taxpayer an estimated £1.4m in Network Rail's North West & Central Region.

Surprise scrap dealer site visits, in conjunction with the telecoms industry, have taken place in recent weeks to remind traders of their obligations under the Scrap Metal Dealers Act 2013.

By law dealers must ensure traded metal is legally sourced and that sellers' details are recorded and kept as part of any sale.

Organised criminal gangs are increasingly targeting metal used in infrastructure and exploiting high metal prices.

Thieves are being warned that police have sophisticated ways to catch them – with metal marked with a

variety of trackable tags.

Andrea Graham, project manager for route crime performance initiatives at Network Rail, said: “Metal theft not only makes it harder to maintain our railway, but causes significant problems for passengers too.

“To stop the trade of illegal scrap metal, dealers must be vigilant if offered materials which could have been illegally obtained.

“Trespassing on the railway is incredibly dangerous, as well as illegal. Thieves are not just risking a criminal record when they come onto the railway to commit crimes, but risking their lives too.”

Chief Inspector Gary Jones said: “BTP officers regularly work with industry partners, particularly Network Rail, to catch out and target metal thieves, which includes paying surprise visits to scrap metal yards, as well as patrols and covert and overt operations.

“Our aim is to disrupt this criminal activity by targeting strategic points across the country.

“Anyone involved in the theft and trade of metal from the railway will be brought to justice. Cable theft on the rail system involves not only huge financial losses, but causes hours of delays to millions of passengers. It is not a victimless crime.

“It is also extremely dangerous for those involved who put themselves at risk of serious injury and death by trespassing on lines.”

Anyone witnessing suspicious behaviour on or around the railway should report it to British Transport Police by calling 0800 40 50 40 or texting 61016.

*Photo credit: Network Rail*