



## Annual General Meeting

21 July 2021 • 4pm • Zoom

### Minutes

#### 1. Welcome and introduction.

Andrew Selous, MP, Lord Faulkner of Worcester, Ruth Jones MP, Lord Birt, Lord Chartres, Katie Strang on behalf of John McNally MP, Antonia Grey, Secretariat (BMRA). *Apologies:* Baroness Browning, Lord Snape, Lord Taylor of Holbeach and Catherine West MP.

*Guests:* Superintendent Mark Cleland (BTP), Mark Harrison (Historic England), Robin Edwards (Onis Consulting), Rachel Oakley (Smartwater), Sally-Anne Stevens (Op. Opal), Richie Iwanoff (BT), David Knight (Church of England).

#### 2. Matters pertinent to the Annual General Meeting

- a) Election of officers:
  - a. Chair (s): Confirmed Andrew Selous, Lord Faulkner of Worcester
  - b. Vice-Chair(s) : Lord Birt, Baroness Browning
  - c. Other officers: Ruth Jones
  - d. Secretariat: Antonia Grey, BMRA
- b) Review of income and expenditure in respect of the past reporting year
- c) No expenses recorded

#### 3. Business of the Group:

- a. *Review of minutes and actions from the last meeting*  
Minutes approved and actions completed.
- b. *Update on Metal crime issues and next steps*
  - i. Verbal Report by Superintendent Mark Cleland, BTP on Metal Theft data

Superintendent Cleland told the Group how the National Infrastructure Crime Reduction Partnership (NICRP), which is focused on metal theft, came to be set up, its objectives and how it is working. Along with links into the Joint Unit for Waste Crime, NICRP has a single point of contact in each of the 43 police forces, and has been in contact with local authorities and other enforcement partners such as Trading Standards. Key to this group is the fact it is supported by an industry-led group chaired by Richie Iwanoff of BT. Understanding that data would be key, the group has partnered with Smartwater to gather and map data using a specially developed dashboard. All the partners can log in to this dashboard to monitor and track crime and even set up preventative measures.

The data led to a Week of Action being undertaken in September 2020 that saw over a thousand sites visited, 900 vehicles stopped and about 30 arrests made. This was followed by a second Week of Action in April 2021 focus on catalytic converter crime. That Week of Action during April led to catalytic converter crime across the whole of the UK by being reduced by 50% and some 70 disruptions to crime being achieved.

Superintendent Cleland reported that the biggest issue faced by the group is lack of funding. The Home Office gave funding for the first year, but with those funds exhausted, for the Group to continue this important work it needs to find opportunities for additional funding to support it until it can shift to a potential membership or self-funding model.

Sally-Anne Stevens from Op. Opal reported that there is an issue with the way metal crime is reported on police systems, so she has been seeking out data and drilling down to look at the reasons behind this while looking for trends and their potential cause.

Rachel Oakley told those present more about the dashboard, and how it links to the 'We don't buy crime' initiative, a database of scrap metal dealers that will enable forces to 'RAG' rate those dealers in terms of compliance with legislation, etc. with green being good, amber indicating a risk, and red being a poor site.

Susie Burrage asked if the data including thefts from scrap metal yards and Superintendent Cleland told her that as long as it is reported to the police as a metal crime, it will be included. If it goes down as burglary, then it won't be. These are some of the issues we are having around crime recording.

Lord Birt asked if we seeing a reduction or an increase overall over a three-to-five-year period and if the police are dealing primarily with organised criminal networks? He further asked if intelligence work helps to segment, identify and segment the offender community and if the distribution and monetisation of the metal stolen is being tracked.

Superintendent Cleland stated that, at the moment, it is difficult to say what metal crime is trending at because all the data is not yet in. All the data in from the police forces is needed to better understand what is going on nationally otherwise we are just going on anecdotal evidence and media driven reports.

Antonia Grey pointed out that figures that were pulled from the police national database show in excess of 36,000 thefts last year and asked how that relates to the ONS data which was around 15,000 the same year?

Sally-Anne Stevens reported that she was due to access the PND which would enable her to compare ONS statistics with PND data for the last couple of years which should hopefully that will give a better picture of what is going on with metal crime data.

Lord Faulkner commented that understanding the data is going to be crucial because if the APPG is to be effective as a group it needs to have accurate and explainable statistics. He agreed that the extraordinarily discrepancy between the ONS figure and the PND figure where one is more than twice the other is something that needs to be explained. He asked what Home Office funding there is available and pointed to Operation Tornado being extraordinarily successful at minimal expense.

Superintendent Cleland told the Group that Operation Tornado 2 is already running but that the Home Office does not currently feel metal crime is a problem that requires the funding for a Taskforce, hence the need for developing an evidence base to justify it which is why the team have taken the path they have.

Lord Birt asked for a fuller explanation around mapping, distribution and monetisation to which Superintendent Cleland confirmed they were looking at organised crime and do map this activity as well as looking at money laundering but that there are intelligence gaps around what happens to the stolen metal in the main.

Andrew Selous expressed his thanks for the work that Superintendent Cleland and his wider team are doing on this issue.

**Action:** Once the gaps have been filled that Superintendent Cleland should get in touch with Antonia Grey so a meeting date can be arranged.

*c. Update on Heritage crime issues and next steps*

*i. Report by Mark Harrison of Historic England: Appended*

Lord Faulkner asked what is being stolen most from heritage buildings. Mark Harrison told the Group that it was high-grade lead, which is a specific material for historic buildings.

Andrew Selous asked for an update on the theft of lead from church buildings and Mark Harrison was able to share the good news that two organised crime groups who were responsible for a large percentage of the most recent thefts are now in jail thanks to Operation Crucible.

Lord Birt asked about the current planning restrictions around replacing lead with an alternative and Mark Harrison was able to report that thinking has changed, and the decision is now a theft-risk-harm assessment. If there is such a risk, then coated stainless steel can be used. Lord Chartres welcomed this move.

Susie Burrage asked that when these thefts occur that the BMRA is notified as soon as possible so that it can send out a Metal Theft Alert to its members. Mark agreed and asked that Susie and the BMRA work closely with him on a visual guide he is working on.

Lord Chartres asked how easy it is to identify such lead and was informed it is surprisingly easy. Mark Harrison told the Group Historic England are currently working on a smart application to identify different types of lead.

Ruth Jones asked that Superintendent Cleland share the details of point of contact for her local force and suggested that Police and Crime Commissioners are pushed to ensure their chief constables have this issue on their radar, especially as the chief constable is supposed to have “due regard to the police and crime plan”.

**Action:** Write to the Association of Police and Crime Commissioners to draw attention to the need for this regard while telling them how we very much welcome their current support.

**Action:** Write letter as well to Tim Passmore, the new Chair of the Rural Crime Network, which has 33 commissioners on its panel and which has the objective to tackle crime in the historic environment.

**Action:** MPs and Members of the House of Lords to also contact their local PCC to ask for their support.

*d. Agree/set the Group’s objectives to tackle metal crime for the next session of Parliament.*

**Action:** Given time was running short it was decided that Mark Harrison, Superintendent Cleland, Antonia Grey, Lord Faulkner and Andrew Selous should try to work together to gather interest amongst supportive colleagues in the Lords and the Commons.

*Date of next meeting:* October TBC dependent on data