

[News story: Metal theft falls after introduction of Scrap Metal Dealers Act](#)

Metal theft has fallen by more than three quarters in 4 years following action by government to tackle a spike in these crimes.

A review into the Scrap Metal Dealers Act, which brought in tough measures to crack down on the trade in stolen metal, has revealed the number of thefts has dropped from nearly 62,000 per year in 2012/13 to around 16,000 in 2015/16, potentially saving the UK economy hundreds of millions of pounds.

[Recent figures](#) from the Office for National Statistics showed police-recorded metal thefts in England and Wales fell to fewer than 13,000 in 2016/17.

At its peak, metal theft was estimated to cost the economy more than £220 million per year, prompting the introduction of strict new licensing requirements for scrap metal dealers, identity checks for those selling scrap metal and the creation of a new offence for dealers to purchase scrap metal for cash.

Minister for Crime, Safeguarding and Vulnerability, Victoria Atkins, said:

Metal thefts can have a hugely negative impact on victims and the wider community, particularly when items which form part of our nation's heritage such as war memorials, the statues in our parks and town centres, or other sites of religious, community or cultural value are callously targeted.

I am pleased the Act continues to be a powerful weapon against this form of criminality and the robust measures put in place in 2013 are working to regulate the industry and deter people from stealing metal or dealing with stolen scrap metal.

We will continue to work with a range of partners to identify whether more can be done to prevent these crimes from occurring and ensure that those involved are brought to justice.

The Scrap Metal Dealers Act 2013 was a response to an increase in metal theft between 2009 and 2011. The sectors severely affected by this crime included, power, transport and telecommunications – and the security of our national infrastructure was under threat – but religious sites and churches were also frequently targeted with metal stolen from rooves and altars.

The purpose of the Act was to enforce stricter regulations of the metal recycling sector to make it more difficult to dispose of stolen metal and reverse the upward trend in thefts.

The Act:

- requires a scrap metal dealer to hold and display a licence, issued by the relevant local authority. This can be either a site licence or a mobile collector's licence
- permits local authorities to charge a licence fee, set locally, at cost recovery
- allows for the closure of unlicensed sites
- requires local authorities to provide appropriate information to enable the Environment Agency in England and the Natural Resources Body for Wales to maintain national registers of licences
- requires scrap metal dealers to verify the identity and address of persons from whom they receive metal makes it an offence for a scrap metal dealer to purchase scrap metal for cash
- sets out the record-keeping requirements in respect of any scrap metal received or disposed of by scrap metal dealers
- provides the police and local authorities with a right to enter and inspect scrap metal dealers' premises

[Read the report.](#)