**APPG on Metal, Stone and Heritage Crime**

Meeting Minutes

12 December 2018

**Attendees:**

Graham Jones MP (GJ)

David Knight, Church of England (DK)

Kevin Thomas, EIG (KT)

Susie Burrage, Recycled Products Ltd (SB)

Jake Kelly (JK)

Antonia Grey, BMRA (AG)

Apologies: Lord Faulkner, Dame Cheryl Gillan MP, Mark Harrison (Historic England), Lord Birt, Dame Caroline Spelman MP

**1. Welcome and apologies**

**2. Crime updates**All those present agreed that incidents are going up across the board: Estate, roofs, batteries, etc. Thought to be led by organised crime, with two eastern European groups in London and Birmingham. The issue is that there is no centralised data collection and ONS property crime statistics, which contain some metal theft data, have been reassigned and will not be reported until early 2019.

It was agreed that the group needs to try to get information about thefts and policing activity while recognising that the lack of custody suites means that it is not always viable for police services to take action.

Actions:

* Table a PQ to ask for data. If the Home Office has data, the quality of that data needs to be assessed by parties concerned. If it doesn’t have the data, we need to make a further inquiry. Write to two sources – local police and authorities – to ask for metal, stone and heritage crime data.
* Write to police authorities ask what the level of policing is being carried out, the number of arrests, cautions and convictions since 2016 and the codes used. Ask about links to modern day slavery.
* The chair will send a letter to the CEO of ONS to ask why the reporting has been changed and delayed. (Drafted by AG).
* FOI Local Authorities: How many Metal Dealer licences (Site and Mobile) have been issued and how many are registered on the EA register. (Current year).

**3. Amending legislation**The group discussed tightening the Act in other ways such as adding an amendment to another legislation. This amendment could change the omissions that make it easier for organised crime to operate and crack down on vehicle dismantling ‘chop shops’.

Investigate whether there should be a personal licence for all workers on the yard, ie: operator and personal licenced employees. Although any changes should not make it harder for those who might have a criminal record to get employment.

**4. VAT fraud**The group agreed that cash payments may also be part of a wider VAT fraud. The sector already has an issue with missing trader intracommunity or carousel fraud. AG explained that the UK is an easy target for this crime as, alongside Malta, it is the only country that does no have reverse charge VAT on scrap metal. The BMRA has asked HMRC to deploy reverse charge VAT but it is not willing to do so.

Action: The Chair will send a letter for HMRC (drafted by AG)

**5. Online portals enabling crime**It was noted that online portals are being used by illegal operators to tout for business such as offering cash for scrap. This could be seen as aiding and abetting a crime by enabling illegal operators to conduct business. These sites are also possible ways for disposing of stolen metal, heritage items and stone.

It should be noted that Gumtree is working with BMRA on this issue and eBay are working with the Vehicle Recyclers Association.

Actions:

* Write to Home Office and DCMS to ask what is being done to monitor these sites in terms of selling stolen goods and illegal operations.
* Table a PQ on how many convictions there have been against online sites such as Facebook and Gumtree for allowing listings that advertise cash for scrap or contain a stolen item. Follow with a letter.

Date of next meeting: TBC once actions have yielded results.