

West Yorkshire MAG's Plan for Reducing Motorcycle-Related Crime

Executive Summary

Introduction

The three West Yorkshire branches of the Motorcycle Action Group represent the interests of thousands of motorcyclists across the county. Motorcycle theft is our members' highest concern. West Yorkshire has one of the highest rates of motorcycle theft in England outside Greater London. Many are stolen by members of organised gangs who are involved with other types of serious crime. Thieves do not care about the difference between a motorcycle, e-bike or even a desirable pedal cycle as long as it is worth stealing. Theft and related offences have serious implications for community cohesion and Leeds' vision of making the city somewhere where you don't need a car.

In 2023 we held a meeting with the Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime to discuss motorcycle-related crime. She encouraged us to develop three "Big Asks". These are:

1. **Data:** Develop better data recording and reporting at local level whilst joining MAG in calling for the Home Office to introduce Theft of Motorcycle as a new offence code. At local level the ideal would be for them to publish the motorcycle specific theft, arrest and prosecution stats without us needing to go through FOIA process.
2. **Prioritisation:** Make motorcycle theft figures a key performance indicator for the force that is consistently measured and publicly reported
3. **Prevention:** Work with MAG to call for improved secure parking facilities and support/funding to expand Bumpy or similar charities. Address the root causes of motorcycle-theft and related crime through a multi-agency approach

We therefore welcome this opportunity to place a greater emphasis on reducing motorcycle-related crime as part of the 2024-28 Policing and Crime Plan.

Our concern is motorcycle theft and other crimes that fall outside the scope of road safety initiatives such as Vision Zero. The act of taking a motorcycle may involve burglary or assault. A stolen motorcycle may be used to commit further offences. It may be stripped for parts. Innocent bystanders may be killed or seriously injured. Between 2017 – 2023 7,091 motorcycles were stolen in Leeds and Bradford. Just 15, or 0.21% of cases resulted in some kind of resolution. Official statistics combine motorcycle theft with other vehicles as "Theft of Motor Vehicles" which makes it harder to compare with other crimes.

Priority One – Keeping People Safe

A full spectrum approach is needed to prevent people becoming victims of motorcycle-related crime and to reduce the fear of crime. A large number of secure motorcycle parking spaces have been removed in recent years. Power tools used for motorcycle theft such as battery-powered angle grinders are readily available from supermarkets. Changes to the West Yorkshire road network to encourage cycling need to "design out" two-wheeled vehicle theft. This should include making sure segregated cycle lanes do not become escape routes and ensuring ensure traffic reduction schemes such as Active Travel Neighbourhoods do not divert motorcycles through higher crime areas.

Priority Two- Safer Places and Thriving Communities

A multi-agency approach is needed to address the root causes of motorcycle-related crime. Use of the Clear, Hold, Build framework would help to disrupt organised gangs. Advocating simplifying the motorcycle licensing regime and supporting initiatives such as the Bumpy project in Birstall provide a

positive alternative to criminal activities. Working with other agencies such as housing and social services to develop sanctions other than custodial sentences would be worth investigating as a way to discourage people from getting involved with motorcycle theft.

There is also a need to improve communications about how the police are addressing this issue. A permanent, county wide operation with clear contact details and high profile social media presence would assure people that things are being done and discourage potential miscreants for getting involved. We would also like to see more engagement with stakeholders such as motorcycle groups. We find that by the time we build up a relationship with police officers, they move on to new roles and we have to start again.

Priority Three- Supporting Victims and Witnesses

We would like to see improvements for supporting victims of motorcycle theft. These cases are often closed very quickly and the hapless victim left to deal with their insurance company on their own. We would like to see cases held open for longer and reopened them if fresh evidence such as sightings of their stolen motorcycle comes to light. There is also room to improve processes for capturing information from witnesses. The 101 system is shared with 999 operators. A simple web form or email address could capture non-time critical information that can be shared across the county.

In addition the experience of theft victims could be passed to the government's investigation into the motor vehicle insurance industry.

Conclusion

This consultation provides a valuable opportunity to reset the approach taken in dealing with motorcycle-related crime. Following the 2024 general election a number of senior government ministers have West Yorkshire seats including the Home Secretary and the Chancellor of the Exchequer. We look forward to being involved with developing a scheme to reduce the rate and root causes of motorcycle-related crime in support of the national priority of reducing antisocial vehicle use.

An electronic version of this document, the full report and our statistics are available from the Yorkshire MAG website at <https://yorkshire.mag-uk.org/west-yorkshire-mags-theft-plan/> or <https://bit.ly/WYMAGTheft>.

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