

## Nationwide Scrap Metal Crackdown Hits Criminal Networks – Report

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– Categories: Crime



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Authorities in England ramped up efforts to combat environmental and infrastructure-related crime during the 2024/25 financial year, with 34 targeted operations supported by the Joint Unit for Waste Crime (JUWC), including high-profile raids on illegal scrap metal activities and waste hauliers.

The crackdown led to 13 arrests, eight vehicle seizures, and three illegal sites being shut down, as the JUWC collaborated with police forces, the Environment Agency (EA), and HMRC to take on what it described as serious organised criminal activity threatening public order and national infrastructure.

One of the major initiatives was the National Metal Crime Week of Action, held in March 2025, which involved inspections of over 100 scrap metal dealers and 45 mobile waste collectors. The JUWC said the operation uncovered rampant noncompliance, resulting in two arrests and multiple enforcement actions.

The JUWC, a multi-agency task force aimed at protecting communities from organised environmental crime, also coordinated 70 “days of action” and trained 3,000 officers, with support from British Transport Police, to identify and address waste-related offences more effectively.

In another successful sting last November, a joint roadstop operation between the EA, Kent Police’s Rural Crime Team, and local authorities led to 22 vehicle inspections, with eight carrying unregulated waste. Five vehicles were seized, and one individual was arrested.

The JUWC stressed the importance of cracking down on fraudulent waste activity that not only harms the environment but also enables criminal profiteering at the expense of law-abiding taxpayers and small businesses. The unit emphasised the growing sophistication of these networks, which often exploit legal loopholes and regulatory blind spots.

Over the fiscal year, the JUWC also hosted 40 training and awareness events and co-led a webinar attended by 400 industry stakeholders to promote better fraud prevention strategies in the sector.

“Waste crime continues to blight our communities and the environment. Criminal networks that operate to make financial gain from this continue to look for ways to diversify how they offend,” the JUWC said in a statement.

Citing research from Europol, the JUWC noted that waste-related crime is a growing threat across Europe, and emphasised the UK’s role in leading by example with a no-nonsense, enforcement-led approach.