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News from the Motorcycle Action Group (MAG)

MAG slams total absence of leadership in the war on motorcycle theft

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The Motorcycle Action Group has publicly condemned what it sees as a complete lack of leadership, understanding and vision by senior figures responsible for dealing with the epidemic of motorcycle and scooter theft. MAG has vowed to hold the government, senior police chiefs, and the judiciary to account for the deplorably weak response to this national issue. Director of Campaigns & Political Engagement, Colin Brown, has asked “Why is it that criminal gangs can demonstrate a better level of vision, organisation and adaptability than those whose job it is to protect us as law-abiding citizens?”

The national disgrace that is the ever-escalating lawless nature of this country has affected many areas of society. The motorcycling community is one that has been hit hard and yet it would seem is one that does not deserve the protection of the state. Few can have escaped seeing the news reports if not being directly affected by the lawless behaviour of gangs of criminals on stolen motorcycles and scooters. In London the very highly publicised attacks on members of the public and celebrities alike, with violence regularly featured, fill the newspapers. Less well reported nationally are the criminal gangs of anti-social riders that terrorise communities, placing people at risk of serious injury as they mount pavements and practice stunt riding on the public highways on a daily basis.

Colin said “Behind all this criminality is the epidemic of motorcycle theft that fuels and enables the behaviour. As I heard one wise police officer comment; ‘these people are not the type who go out to their local dealership to buy, register, tax and insure a motorcycle.’ We are not likely to be rubbing shoulders with them at a local charity run unless they are there to steal our bikes.

“Despite all the spin and Home Office Roundtable initiatives that claim to be dealing with the issue and even to having it all under control, the main point raised by the motorcycling community has still not been heard. The decision-makers have never ridden a bike and focus purely on the outrageous behaviour towards what they see as ‘normal’ people.”

MAG has a very simple solution to all the criminality: deal with the theft of motorcycles. Moped gangs would be reduced to being just gangs if they cannot source machines; anti-social riders can only be antisocial kids on foot if they are not riding bikes. Take away the new tool of their trade and they suddenly become less capable of breaking the law and far easier to apprehend.

Colin Brown went on to say: “The police are constantly asking for partnership-working due to the pressures on their resources, yet despite repeated offers they generally don’t want to work with us. We engaged with the Home Office Roundtable process but, again, despite repeated offers we were not actively engaged in any of the task and finish groups. The only people at the table with first-hand knowledge of the real face of motorcycle theft and the realities of what victims are suffering were excluded from the process. This has resulted in our view in a massive tick-box exercise that has not come close to tackling the problem.”

At the end of 2017 MAG attempted to collate details on the national picture, to understand the true face of the crime across the country. Freedom of Information (FOI) requests were sent to every police force in the UK. A simple question was asked: how many motorcycles have been stolen each year over the last 3 years? Shockingly 34% of police forces failed to give any response to the request, despite the fact that they have a legal obligation to do so. Three of the responding forces said that they did not record motorcycle thefts separately from other vehicle types, and could not therefore say how many had been stolen.

Colin Brown says “We are repeating this exercise with all UK police forces, asking how many motorcycles were stolen in 2017, how many were recovered, and how many criminals were charged with theft of a motorcycle. If we do not receive responses we will be referring those forces to the Ombudsman. We are also asking all local authorities how many secure motorcycle parking bays they provide, what their spending has been on secure parking infrastructure and what their budget is for 2018. From this data we will identify areas where there needs to be closer scrutiny, and we will then examine the response to the issue and planned action in that location. We will demand that independent advisory groups are set up to hold the senior officers and local authorities accountable. We will make our findings public and, where necessary, lobby local PCC’s and MP’s until action is taken.

“The time for platitudes, spin and box-ticking is at an end. We demand meaningful action and we demand it now.”

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ENDS

