
Property Marking

– A guide to protecting your bicycle



Produced in partnership with Transport for London
and the Metropolitan Police Service

Worcester

Kirkham House
John Comyn Drive
Worcester
Worcestershire
WR3 7NS

London

Market House
85 Cowcross Street
Farringdon, Islington
London
EC1M 6PF

tel +44 (0)845 389 3889
fax + 44 (0)845 389 0761

info@bsia.co.uk
www.bsia.co.uk

 @thebsia

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Bicycle theft: the facts

Bicycle theft is a huge problem in the United Kingdom. According to research carried out by Halfords in 2010, there were 115,147 reported thefts¹.

While this number is already significant, the National Crime Survey for 2010/11 suggests that there were actually over 500,000 bicycle thefts, the vast majority of which went unreported². Worryingly, the Crime Survey for England and Wales, year ending in September 2012, confirms that bicycle theft incidents are still on the rise, with a 2% increase from the previous year.

The repercussions of bicycle theft are varied. For many, a bicycle could be their main transportation to their workplace or school, and its theft would cause difficulties to their everyday lives, not to mention the unwanted cost of replacing the equipment.

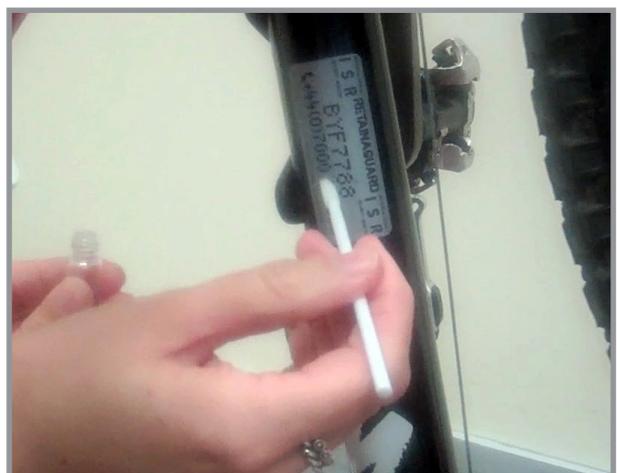
While bicycle locks and chains can be good preventative measures, members of the Asset and Property Marking section of the British Security Industry Association (BSIA) can offer additional advice.

The solution – Making your mark

Property marking is used to deter theft and other crimes by rendering stolen goods useless through covert or overt security marking. Property can be uniquely marked, with a corresponding number or code being registered on a master database. This way, if police come into contact with a bicycle that has been marked and then stolen, they would be able to search for it on the database and return it to its rightful owner. If a bike has been obviously marked with a unique code, thieves will be less likely to steal it, knowing that they could possibly be linked back to the crime and subsequently convicted.

Security marking is a simple, cost-effective and efficient theft deterrent and can come in various forms. Approved forms of security marking

include: stencil etching, forensic coding in the form of markers, sprays or greases, microscopic dots, electronic transponders and security labels.



¹ www.guardian.co.uk/environment/bike-blog/2011/jun/08/uk-bike-theft-hotspots

² www.homeoffice.gov.uk/publications/science-research-statistics/research-statistics/crime-research/hosb1011/hosb1011?view=Binary

How can BSIA members help you?

Members of the BSIA's Asset and Property Marking section have been doing their best to drive down this crime and help cyclists recover stolen property.



Case study

One member company, **SmartWater Technology Ltd**, has been working with police in Bishop Auckland this year to provide free security marking to anyone buying a new bicycle. The initiative was launched with the help of two local firms with funding being obtained via the Proceeds of Crime Act (POCA). Local motor dealers SG Petch and South Durham Partnerships also donated additional funding.

1611 bicycles were reported as stolen across Country Durham and Darlington over the course of the last financial year, including bikes taken during burglaries alongside other property, as well as incidents where the bike was the only target. The majority of these stolen bikes had not been security marked, meaning there was no way to reunite them with their rightful owners, even if they were later recovered by police.

From January 15th 2013, anyone purchasing a bike at Halfords in Bishop Auckland was handed a leaflet advising them to contact the local police for free security marking. Once contacted, officers met with the new bike owners to apply a Smart Water solution to the frame of their bike. While invisible to the naked eye, the marking can be seen under ultra-violet light. Each application also has a unique code, linking the bike to a person or address.

“Using Smart Water provides an instant method of being able to trace the owner, and if we find a marked bike or other item in the possession of anyone else, it is almost certain to be stolen property” said PC Dickie Day, who came up with the idea.



Case study

Another BSIA member, **Retainagroup Limited**, has also been using their security marking products to help reunite bikes with their original owners. They provide ultra-destruct labels that are permanent and visibly marked with a unique code. The labels also state the 24/7 contact details of the International Security Register (ISR), serving to increase the chances that the bike will be returned to its rightful owner.

Regardless if a thief is successful in removing the label, the fluid that is applied over the label ensures that the code and telephone number are etched into the frame of the bike, visible under UV light. Retainagroup Limited has supplied around 55,000 cycle marking and registration packs to UK Police and Councils and have had success in doing so.

For example, in October 2012 the ISR received a call from the Garda Police in Ireland asking for help in identifying a bicycle protected by the Retainagroup's system. The bicycle had been stolen in August and the operator at the ISR was able to direct police to return the bike to its owner.





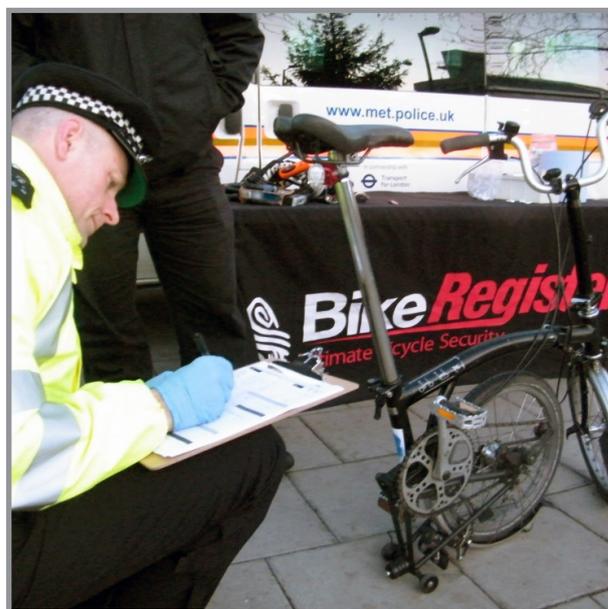
Case study

BSIA member **Selectamark** has also helped to drive down bicycle thefts. In the London Borough of Sutton, for example, cycle theft has fallen by nearly 40% from April 2012 to December 2012 in comparison to the same time period the previous year. Over the year, officers from Sutton Police held a number of cycle marking initiatives to encourage cyclists to protect their bicycles from thieves by using **BikeRegister.com**.

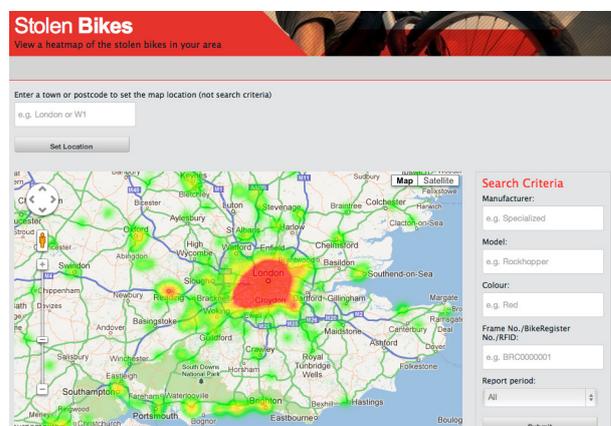
BikeRegister is the UK's leading online bicycle identification and registration initiative, and also the preferred bike marking system of the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS). Police believe the significant decrease of cycle theft in the borough to be down to more people having their bikes marked and registered, along with a better awareness of how to secure them. If a bike is marked and registered, there is a greater chance of them being returned to their homes if they have been stolen and recovered. Without a marking and registration, police will be unable to identify who the bike belongs to.

Similarly, in West Sussex, police launched 'Operation Velo', an initiative to help reduce the number of bike thefts across the county. Within the first month of the operation, more than 600 bikes were marked and registered.

Sergeant Chris Pipkin, who set up Operation Velo, said: "Each bicycle is marked using an anti-tamper label and the owner's details are registered on BikeRegister.com. Officers will be able to check if a bicycle is stolen or in the wrong hands within minutes of stopping the rider. The aim is that potential thieves will be put off from stealing in the first place, knowing that they are more likely to get stopped and the bicycle will be traceable back to the owner."



BikeRegister.com homepage



Stolen bike page – view a heatmap of the stolen bikes in your area

Project Cycle Ops - a partnership approach to tackling cycle theft

The Metropolitan Police Service, British Transport Police, City of London Police and Transport for London are working together in an initiative to shift cyclists' and potential cyclists' behaviour towards keeping their bikes secure, to reduce cycle theft in the capital and increase restoration of those bikes that have been stolen.

Officers and staff from these agencies are working together to tackle cycle theft through various initiatives, which include enforcement and education.

By taking some very simple steps, the opportunity for cycle crime is reduced significantly and if stolen, increases the chances of having it returned:

Park and lock your bike at designated parking areas. Make sure the locks catch the bike frame as well as both wheels and the post.

Follow the three R's:

- 1. Record** – keep a record of the frame number, make and any other marks that can identify your bike if it is stolen
- 2. Register** – register the details of your bike onto www.bikeregister.com, the MPS preferred online cycle registration database. London's police forces offer free security marking, registration and advice events and as a result, have marked over 60000 bikes on bikeregister.com
- 3. Report** – if your bike is stolen you must report it to the police and **provide as many details as you can, such as frame number, make, distinguishable marks**, which will enable them to check databases and contact the owner once the bike is recovered.

Registering your bike helps police and retailers identify and verify the legitimate owners that have been stolen or are being resold.

In a recent example of this, a plain clothed police officer from the MPS was approached in Brick Lane Market, Tower Hamlets by a man offering to sell a stolen 'Puch' racing bike. Checks on the bike were carried out at the scene, which included BikeRegister.com and officers were able trace the owner, who had reported the bike stolen from Hackney two days earlier. The man was arrested and the bike returned to its rightful owner.

Choosing a trusted supplier

No matter what solution you choose to mark your bike with, the most important thing is that you choose from a trusted supplier. BSIA members represent the best in the private security industry and are inspected to high quality standards. To find a supplier near you, visit www.bsia.co.uk/find-a-local-security-company

To find out more about Asset and Property Marking, visit www.bsia.co.uk/asset-and-property-marking/about-bsia-asset-and-property-marking