



Property Marking A guide to protecting your bicycle

Produced in partnership with the Metropolitan Police Service

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Bicycle theft: the facts

Bicycle theft is a huge problem in the United Kingdom. According to **The Crime Survey for England and Wales**, there were **296,000** reported thefts in 2019.

Many of these thefts will have gone unreported, as many cyclists think that once their bike is stolen, it is gone forever. Worryingly, BikeRegister, the national cycle database, confirms that bicycle theft incidents reported to them, increased by over 50% from June to September 2020, compared to 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 delaying or even preventative measures (if the lock is good enough), members of the **Asset and Property Marking** section of the **British Security Industry Association (BSIA)** can offer additional advice and solutions.

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, microscopic dots, electronic transponders and security labels.



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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.

RETAINAGROUP

Retainagroup Limited has also been using its 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 of whether 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 has 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 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.



DeterTech worked with police in Bishop Auckland in 2013 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 County Durham and Darlington over the course of the previous 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 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 ultraviolet light. Each application also has a unique code, linking the bike to a person or address.



How can BSIA members help you?



Datatag ID Limited have been providing cycle security marking systems for over 20 years.

In that time, Datatag have been supporting police forces across the UK with cycle security marking sessions, including events in the City of London, Haslemere, Hastings, Reading, Nottingham, Wolverhampton, Lincoln and across North Wales.

The Datatag system uses a 'layered' approach to cycle security marking. A combination of tamper evident visible identification labels, ultra-violet etches and **Datadots®** combine to enable a cycle to be robustly marked.

One of these technologies has proven particularly useful in tackling parts theft. Most components don't carry any manufacturer identification marks. Datatag's cycle systems include **Datadots®** technology which can be used to add a unique identifier to these valuable components.



Recently Datatag helped the owner of a Cannondale bike identify and recover the bike's expensive seat post, saddle, bars and levers, which were all stripped from the bike while it was parked outside his work.

After seeing the parts advertised on eBay, the customer contacted Datatag to explain that he was confident that he could identify them. A member of the Datatag team helped coordinate a visit by the police to the seller, who were then able to identify the parts as stolen and recover them.

Vince Wise from Datatag explained, "Without the ability to accurately identify a part it is very difficult for the police to take action and recover it, no matter how strongly they believe that it is theirs. That is why we include **Datadots®** in our systems to give that confidence that the whole bike, and not just the frame, is protected."

How can BSIA members help you?



Selectamark has helped to drive down bicycle thefts. Its national bicycle identification and registration initiative, **BikeRegister** is the preferred bike marking system of virtually all UK police forces such as the **Metropolitan Police Service** and **British Transport Police**.

Avon & Somerset Police has recently released data that shows nearly 3,000 bikes were reported stolen across the force area from August 2019 to July 2020. Many of these were from Bristol city centre.

Since the introduction of a highly successful partnership with BikeRegister, bike crime has significantly reduced in Avon & Somerset. Figures for the last 12 months show an 18.3% reduction, which equates to 819 less bikes stolen and an impressive saving to the force of circa £700k.

Over the course of the project, officers held hundreds of BikeRegister cycle marking initiatives to help protect cyclist's bikes from theft.



Some of the bike owners who have had their bikes returned thanks to the BikeRegister database

Acting Police Sergeant Pete Rooke said: "This is an initiative that meets the values, mission and vision of Avon & Somerset Police. It has given us the ability to target areas of high crime with a recognised national initiative that has proven, positive results."

BikeRegister is the only free-to-use cycle registration scheme in the UK, and holds records of over 1 million bicycles (as of May 2023). The Police have 24/7 access to the database via both web and mobile applications, making identification of bicycles on the street quick and easy to carry out.

BikeRegister also works with retailers to register bikes at point of sale via a dedicated portal on the BikeRegister Mobile App.



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

Lock it Mark it - 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 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 good quality locks are used. Locking devices should cover the wheels and the frame. Ensure that all are secured to a irremovable object.

Follow the three Rs

Record – keep a record of the frame number, make and any other marks that can identify your bike if it is stolen

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 many thousands of bikes using BikeRegister

Report – if your bike is stolen you must report it to the police and BikeRegister, providing as many details as you can, such as frame number, make, distinguishable marks, which will enable the Police 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.

There are hundreds of recent examples of bikes being recovered by police using the BikeRegister database, so as well as working as a deterrent to theft, it also is an invaluable tool in helping return bikes to their rightful owners.

Find 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/apm-members

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





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About the BSIA

The **British Security Industry Association (BSIA)** is the trade association for the professional security industry in the UK.

Our members are responsible for more than 70% of privately provided UK security products and services (by turnover) including the manufacture, distribution and installation of electronic and physical security equipment and the provision of security guarding and consultancy services. Our members are industry professionals ranging in size from global companies to small and medium enterprises, offering quality products and services to a vast spectrum of end-users.

For more information on Asset Property Marking visit www.bsia.co.uk/asset-property-marking

