



UNITED KINGDOM REVENUE PROTECTION ASSOCIATION

UKRPA Newsletter # 8

January 2015

Quick Issues:

Revenue Protection reforms for the water industry?

Two new UKRPA Members join up

Energy theft back in the media

UKRPA Seminar well received by attendees

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Happy New Year from the UKRPA Chairman...

First and foremost, I would like to wish all our members (both old and new) a very happy New Year and a prosperous 2015. Indeed, with regard to new members we kick off the New Year by swelling our ranks to 17 organisations, reflecting the power of coming together to share knowledge and best practice in the detection and prevention of theft.

We closed out 2014 with a metaphorical 'bang', delivering notable success against our 2014/15 Strategy and plan. Amongst the many successes, I would like to mention in particular the second successful UKRPA Seminar targeted at those organisations wishing to understand more about how energy theft is undertaken and real life experience from a revenue protection department. It is also worth mentioning recent media activity, following our members' involvement in two Programmes: Black Market Britain and Fake Britain. It seems

our collective voice covering safety and consumer protection is certainly making its mark and getting attention. In fact, this is manifesting itself in increasing theft reports coming to the UKRPA website – doubling the volume compared with 2013.

The UKRPA Forum and Committee have recommended the 2015/16 Budget which will inform on the Strategy and roadmap to build on our current success and in particular to 'press' ahead with our external profile. The Forum in particular was keen for the Association to directly engage with the Crown Prosecution Service and Sentencing Council, to ratchet up targeting social landlords, to follow up with water companies following their interest to join the association, as well as having a more direct conversation with Ofgem to help guide their work.

In 2014, we were asked what information we had with respect

to the level of energy theft taking place. I am therefore particularly pleased to report that we will be concluding our market analysis work on the level of theft reports and associated illegal abstraction of energy across the UK and are expecting to publish our findings during Qtr. 1 2015.

2015 is shaping up to be another busy year. Come and join us, because together we can drive change and make a difference.



Tony Thornton
UKRPA Chairman

UKRPA Fraud Helpline Setting Records

The UKRPA is now receiving around 300 reports of suspected fraud every month via its anonymous tip off service.

In 2014, the Association processed just shy of 2,500 potential leads - it is anticipated that the number of reports will continue to grow in 2015.

During the past year, the

UKRPA has improved its website fraud report form and can now rely on more accurate address data.

The UKRPA helpdesk also handles an increasing number of anonymous phone calls, from concerned members of the public and those with queries about Revenue Protection issues.

All the reports received are

passed on to the relevant supplier for investigation by Revenue Protection Units throughout the United Kingdom.

In Q4 2014, 19 suppliers and networks received leads via the UKRPA helpdesk.

The online fraud reporting tool can be found on the UKRPA Website.

News In Brief

Heat lamps seized by police in drugs raids on cannabis farms are being used to cultivate the grass at Rochdale's football ground, Spotland. Head groundsman Oli Makin said the lights, which would have cost the club between £20,000 and £30,000, were donated by Sgt. Andy Fern of Greater Manchester Police.

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In a rare case in Northern Ireland, a man has been successfully prosecuted for tampering with his water meter. The customer was fined £500 for two offences; NI Water are also seeking recompense for six years' worth of water charges.

U.S. Police are investigating an explosion at a property which injured two firefighters and caused an estimated \$5,000 of structural damage. Evidence suggests that a bullet may have been shot into the meter at the house in Lancaster, Pennsylvania.

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Work to deliver a central service for reporting and analysis of gas and electricity theft in the UK continues. The contract for the Theft Risk Assessment Service (TRAS) provider will be awarded by ElectraLink in May 2015.

Revenue Protection Abroad Spanish smart meters vulnerable?

Millions of electricity smart meters installed all over Spain could be easily attacked by hackers as they lack sufficient cyber protection, suggests a report.

According to cyber-security researchers Javier Vazquez Vidal and Alberto Garcia Illera, the smart meters, rolled out by one of the three Spanish utility companies are equipped with reprogrammable memory chips and running a flawed code, allowing hackers to remotely shut down power supplies to households and tamper with

meter readings.

The attackers could also insert malicious worms into the meters, possibly causing widespread blackouts, taking advantage of the Internet connectivity.

Speaking ahead of the Black Hat Europe hacking conference, Vazquez Vidal said he believes the utility may be able to patch the problem remotely, without having to send repair staff to upgrade each box manually.

UKRPA Seminar Well Received

The UKRPA hosted a packed out seminar in November, with delegates welcomed from across the industry—members and non-members alike.

Among a variety of interesting topics, attendees heard the latest regulatory updates on TRAS and other initiatives from Ofgem's Chiara Redaelli, learned how to spot a tampered meter, and heard why prosecutions can prove so difficult for energy theft in Great Britain.

We were also pleased to welcome a representative from Essex and Suffolk Water to the Seminar. Revenue Protection in the water sector has taken on an increased

profile over the last few months (see overleaf). We look forward to engaging with water companies with respect to sharing best practices on a pan-utility basis.

Excellent feedback was received from all Seminar delegates; the UKRPA is already looking towards organising the next event.

The UKRPA extends a thank you to all speakers and attendees at the seminar, and welcomes ideas for topics at future events.

Members can now download the slides from the event via the Members' Forum on the UKRPA website.

Water Theft to be Addressed in Labour Reforms?

27 November 2014—the Shadow Environment Secretary, Maria Eagle, delivered a speech outlining Labour policies to reform the water sector, announcing a “new deal with the water industry that puts the consumer first”.

Maria Eagle announced that Labour policies would “strike a fairer balance between finding new ways of supporting those who cannot pay their water bills and pursuing those

who can pay but choose not to”.

The Labour Party would work with water companies to design a National Affordability Scheme to ensure that the most vulnerable customers were provided with a cheaper tariff.

To help fund the scheme, Labour intend to work with the industry to help water companies recover bad debt—it is estimated that non-

payment adds around £15 onto the annual water bill of each customer.

Measures will include forcing landlords to pass on details of tenants to the water companies. The Landlord and Tenant Address Portal (Landlord TAP) has recently been launched, allowing the sharing of details for tenants liable for water charges in England and Wales.

UKRPA Welcomes New Members

Since the publication of the last newsletter, the UKRPA has welcomed two further members to the Association, bringing the total membership of the UKRPA to 17.

In November, energy supply company Spark Energy signed up. CEO Chris Gauld said, “It’s really important for us to offer all of our customers a great deal and great service. We don’t think it’s right that some people choose to avoid paying

for their energy and our UKRPA membership will go some way to ensuring that all customers are fairly treated and are able to access the cheapest possible prices on the market”.

SSE acceded to the Association in December; five of the largest energy suppliers are now full members of the UKRPA. Chris Walters, Operations Manager at SSE, said: “We are aware of the growing problem of

energy theft and the safety risks associated to this activity. The safety of both our internal and external customers are of paramount importance to us, and we will continue to work closely with relevant authorities as we strive to combat this issue.”

For all the latest membership information, please email UKRPA@gemserv.com.

Revenue Protection in the Media

Energy theft featured heavily in two primetime television programmes shortly before Christmas.

In the Channel 5 programme Black Market Britain, undercover reporters set up a sting operation to catch a thief in the act of tampering with an electricity meter and advising on how to tamper with a gas meter.

The programme also included further sting operations from conmen from all walks of life, including shoplifters, fake immigration papers and counterfeit money. The hour long episode is available to view on the [Channel 5 website](#).

UKRPA Chairman Tony Thornton was interviewed for BBC consumer show Fake Britain, which aired on BBC One in early December.

Tony’s interview highlighted the serious safety concerns of tampering with energy meters in order to produce ‘fake bills’, and the episode included images from the Sheffield gas explosion in 2013.

During the programme, UKRPA Members British Gas and Western Power Distribution are filmed carrying out investigations, and there are interviews with two speakers from 2014’s UKRPA Conference.

Mark Andrews, head of Revenue Protection at British Gas, demonstrates some typical types of meter tamper, and Chris Blacksell from the Chief Fire Officers’ Association (CFOA) speaks about the great risks to the public and industry workers caused by meter tampering.

For UKRPA media enquiries, please contact the UKRPA Secretary at UKRPA@gemserv.com.

Revenue Protection Industry Calendar

Friday 16th January 2015	UKRPA Forum, London
Friday 17th April 2015	UKRPA Forum, London
5th - 8th May 2015	EURPA Conference, Illinois

To advertise your event in the quarterly UKRPA Newsletter, please [contact the UKRPA](#).



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Our industry operates within a regulatory framework that seeks to strike a balance between consumer protection at one end of the spectrum (such as vulnerability), and a desire to drive increasingly proactive theft investigative practices. The approach to theft detection, investigation and resolution has historically been fragmented across the industry with varying industry practices and no real joined up approach between electricity, gas and water.

Against this backdrop, the UKRPA is uniquely positioned to provide a UK industry wide input to the evolving market arrangements, ensuring that the experiences and expertise of its members is brought to the forefront of the revenue protection industry's discussions.

UKRPA Membership

Full and Associate membership opportunities are open to companies working in the revenue protection arena, in and around the United Kingdom. For more information regarding benefits of membership, please visit our website www.ukrpa.co.uk

UKRPA Members



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Tony Thornton