

A Word from the UKRPA Chairman...

“This represents an exciting year ahead for the UKRPA. During 2012, we took a number of important steps forward to engage actively with Government, the Regulator, Local Authorities, housing trusts and associations. During 2013, we will build on these important foundations. We aim to foster improved practices, knowledge and intelligence in revenue protection measures. This is within a context of key market reforms being driven by Ofgem towards a centralised intelligence hub to better detect gas theft to be followed by similar proposals for electricity. However, the two markets represent different challenges. Unlike gas, cannabis factories within the electricity market is a ‘growing’ cause for concern. For these reasons, the UKRPA is developing closer bonds with police authorities and the Home Office to improve coordination and therefore detection.”



Tony Thornton, UKRPA Chairman



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ON THE NOSE – POLICE SNIFF OUT CANNABIS

Sunderland Police Officers on patrol in the Millfield area detected a strong smell of Cannabis which led them to a flat on St. Mark’s Road. 200 plants were discovered in the loft, along with specialist heating and lighting equipment. It was deemed necessary to make the property safe for detectives so electricity distributor NEDL were called to the scene.

It is well known by Police that criminals bypass the property’s electricity supply to avoid detection equipment. The Northumbria Police helicopter was asked to scan the area, as its hi-tech thermal imaging cameras can spot heat sources given off by sophisticated cannabis-growing.

The suspect has been charged and he is to appear in Sunderland Magistrates Court.

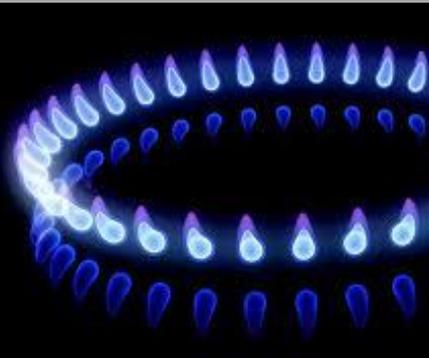
Northumbria Police have uncovered a total of 325 cannabis farms in the last five years.

Source: SunderlandEcho. Published on Friday 4 January 2013

IN THE SPOTLIGHT – THE HOME OFFICE

Following the last UKRPA Executive Meeting, the UKRPA was invited to attend a meeting convened by the Home Office, with the specific purpose of assessing what can be done to tackle the rise in prevalence of cannabis cultivation in the UK. The meeting was attended by representatives from power companies, police authorities, Ofgem and the Home Office.

The meeting provided an opportunity for various members to highlight a number of significant challenges that were currently being faced as well as identifying trends and patterns in delinquency. The meeting presented attendees with an opportunity to propose practices and ideas which would encourage deterrence and early detection. Shared experiences and successes stories are fostering increased collaboration and new initiatives.



The UKRPA in 2013...

As the United Kingdom's primary energy theft Trade Association, our focus for 2013 will be to:

- Increase the rate at which energy theft and meter tampering instances are detected and responded to through the adoption and promotion of better working practices amongst energy companies and those dealing with energy theft on a daily basis.
- Improve and further facilitate effective communication across the energy and related industries
- Present a unified front in the face of criminal activity

Whether your interests are directly related to revenue services, or whether you have a more academic interest in recent developments within the energy market, or simply to network with other revenue protection experts...

...2013 is a great time to become a member of The UKRPA.

GUEST AUTHOR

JONATHON DIXON, HEAD OF INDUSTRY CODES AT OFGEM, SPEAKS ABOUT ENERGY THEFT

At the start of January, new licence requirements on gas suppliers to detect, prevent and investigate theft came into effect.

Ofgem also directed gas suppliers to set up a new body to help improve theft detection by March 2014. With the aim of at least doubling the amount of theft detected in its first year of operation, this new body, known as the Theft Risk Assessment Service (TRAS), will analyse and identify when theft may be happening and pass this information onto suppliers so they can investigate it.

A working group has been established by the Supply Point Administration Agreement (SPAA) Executive Committee to deliver the TRAS ([here](#)).

Gas suppliers have developed additional measures to help tackle gas theft. We are currently deciding whether to approve a new, industry-developed code of practice on theft investigations ([here](#)). If approved, this would become a mandatory requirement under SPAA. One industry party is also developing a modification to introduce incentives to find theft.



We are now looking to suppliers to address the other recommendations of our March 2012 decision document ([here](#)) which include a stolen meters register to identify where meters have been illegally switched; a 24-hour hotline to report suspected theft; and a forum for sharing best practice on tackling theft between suppliers and promoting better co-ordination with other agencies.

In September 2012, we consulted ([here](#)) on applying similar reforms to the electricity sector. This included incentives and obligations on electricity suppliers, the setting up of a TRAS for the electricity market and additional requirements for DNOs.

We are pleased at the positive response to these proposals. We are now preparing a consultation on our detailed policy proposals for the electricity sector. We aim to publish in spring 2013 and would welcome the UKRPA's continued engagement in these matters.

REVENUE PROTECTION OVERSEAS

UKRPA Executive Committee Member – Mike Wilkinson – was asked to be a guest speaker at the 7th Annual Asian Metering conference in Bangkok, Thailand in May 2012. The event was attended by more than 700 representatives from Asia and further afield. This global platform allowed utilities, regulators, solution providers and other stakeholders across the metering industry to exchange lessons learnt from international metering projects and discover the latest technologies being used in taking their operations to the next level.

Mike Wilkinson spoke of the strategy of the UKRPA and the benefits it can give in partnership with other agencies, and also gave an insight into what is happening in revenue protection in the UK with some brief case studies.

MINI CASE STUDIES

Energy companies and law enforcement agencies continue to collaborate to improve prosecution rates. Nonetheless, the UKRPA believes that more work is needed to help foster a prosecution environment that acts as a real deterrent:

Case 1: *A recent cannabis production case where stronger sentencing should have applied involved the suspect being prosecuted only for production, not abstraction, even where a witness statement had been provided to the court.*

Case 2: *A take away business had set up multiple illegal reconnections and generators, and when inspected by the fire brigade, high levels of carbon monoxide were detected. No arrests were made in relation to this case.*

These two cases highlight potential weaknesses in securing effective deterrent measures. Reasons may include for example, insufficient or inadequate evidence being gathered, difficulties engaging with prosecution services, differences in prosecution approaches across the UK, and trade-offs between prosecuting for drugs offences versus illegal abstraction. The UKRPA is engaging with the Home Office to help improve practices that will lead to improved prosecution rates.



Success Story...

A tip off via the UKRPA reporting portal gave vital information that a factory in the North East of England was using unmetered electricity straight from the substation. A site investigation by the MeterPlus Revenue Protection service was able to calculate that over a 6 year period, 5.2 million units of electricity was not paid for which was in full knowledge of the factory management. In conclusion, the electricity supplier was able to invoice approximately £250k.

ACTIONS NEEDED

The UKRPA mini case studies (on the right) highlight where further improvements can be made, more specifically:

- **Engagement** with Crown Prosecution and Police Force personnel in order to raise the profile of energy theft
- **Educate** those dealing with consumers at their premises to enable swift identification and rectification
- **Communicate** a consistent message in tackling energy theft
- **Deter** potential thieves by ensuring that punitive measures reflect the wider safety implications of the crime.

UKRPA Membership

Full membership and affiliate membership is open to companies working in the revenue protection arena in and around the UK. For more information about benefits of membership please view our [website](#).

Administered by



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