

Briefing for the Citizen Participation and Public Petitions Committee on petition [PE1971](#): Take robust action to stop motorcycle theft, lodged by Kenneth Clayton

Background

The [petition](#) was lodged by Kenneth Clayton on behalf of the [Motorcycle Action Group](#).

It seeks the following action to help tackle motorcycle theft:

- empower the police to pursue and tactically engage thieves
- review sentencing policy to allow the courts to impose tougher sentences for motorcycle theft, including the use of mandatory custodial sentences for those carrying weapons or groups who threaten individuals with violence.

Previous parliamentary consideration of relevant issues includes scrutiny of petition [PE1618](#) on combatting motorcycle theft, lodged in 2016 on behalf of the Riders Club Edinburgh. The petition was closed in 2017 on the basis that:

“stakeholders consider that Police Scotland has adequate powers in relation to motorcycle theft and measures are in place to address the wider social issues”.

Policing of motorcycle theft

Police Scotland has advised that it has: (i) a comprehensive standard operating procedure for vehicle pursuits (including motorcycles); and (ii) a standalone pursuit tactics directory, but that neither are publicly available.¹

It added that police officers have the training and capability to manage pursuits involving motorcycles, whilst noting that such pursuits present greater risks (e.g. due to the vulnerability of the rider) and require a proportionate response.

Police Scotland has also highlighted its efforts to tackle motorcycle theft (and associated antisocial behaviour) in Edinburgh through ‘Operation Soteria’ (e.g.

¹ SPICe advised by Police Scotland October 2022.

see '[Police recover £600,000 worth of stolen motorbikes as part of Operation Soteria](#)', Edinburgh Evening News September 2022).

The [2018-2021 local policing plan for Edinburgh](#), described Operation Soteria as a “multi-agency response” (p 5) to tackling this type of crime.

Statistics on motorcycle theft

The Scottish Government’s statistical bulletin [Recorded Crime in Scotland, 2021-2022](#) includes figures for the theft of motor vehicles (see table A6). However, a break-down of the figures to identify the level of motorcycle theft is not available.²

In response to the earlier petition on combatting motorcycle theft, [Police Scotland provided some figures in 2017](#).

A recent freedom of information request sought information from Police Scotland, including:

“The total number of motorbike thefts over the last two years split per police force area that you cover. If possible, please can the total number of thefts, for each year, be split per month, so we can determine the most popular time per year for theft, e.g., spring/winter, etc.”

[Police Scotland’s response](#) (July 2022) stated that providing the information would exceed the cost threshold for requests. It went on to explain that this is due to the way in which crimes are classified for statistical purposes. Police Scotland has advised that this limitation on the availability of relevant statistics still stands.³

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11/10/2022

The purpose of this briefing is to provide a brief overview of issues raised by the petition. SPICe research specialists are not able to discuss the content of petition briefings with petitioners or other members of the public. However, if you have any comments on any petition briefing you can email us at spice@parliament.scot

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² SPICe advised by Scottish Government officials September 2022.

³ SPICe advised by Police Scotland October 2022.

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