



for Freight
and Logistics

Securing Our Supply Chains

How the Government can crack
down on freight crime and secure
our supply chains

Nov 2024



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Foreword:



Rachel Taylor MP, Chair and Andrew Pakes MP, Vice Chair

Since our election as Chair and Officer of the All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on Freight and Logistics in September, the rising level of freight crime has stood out to us.

Our constituencies of North Warwickshire and Bedworth and Peterborough are both key freight crime hotspots – the lack of intervention on this issue has resulted in businesses in our constituencies being targeted by organised freight crime.

An unacceptable rise in the level of thefts has marred the haulage industry and had ripple effects for the rest of the economy. Tackling freight crime head-on would improve the welfare of drivers, encourage new entrants into the workforce and prevent significant financial losses to businesses and improve confidence in the wider sector.

The APPG exists to provide stakeholders and Parliamentarians with a forum to help engage and collectively solve the problems experienced by the freight and logistics sector, aiding mutual understanding of both the policy challenges and the on-the-ground reality.

During our Inaugural Meeting we were encouraged by the Minister for the Future of Roads, Lilian Greenwood MP, pledging to improve driver facilities and the security standards and number of lorry parking spaces nationally. More widely, other decision-makers in Westminster and the devolved Parliaments have recognised the threats faced by the haulage industry, acknowledging freight crime

is not just a source of lost income but a physical threat to drivers and a deterrent to entry into the workforce too.

While reassuring words are a positive sign, we must campaign until we see material change on the ground for drivers. This is a problem which will require a cross-departmental approach, at every level of government, and we will continue to push for solutions, both in preventing freight crime from happening in the first place, and properly punishing those who commit it.

Securing Our Supply Chains provides a road map for Government of the necessary steps to stop freight crime. It also outlines some of the measures which we will continue to promote alongside industry stakeholders as the APPG carries this work forward. Included in the report's recommendations are calls for secure parking standards, and a public awareness campaign to improve public understanding of the impact of freight crime.

This report also highlights how the issue of freight crime is interrelated with many other policy areas in the logistics sector.

In line with this, all other work carried out by the APPG will keep freight crime central to its thinking, considering the potential positive side effects of moves in other policy areas, whether we are campaigning on diversity, better facilities, net zero, international trade, or fiscal events.

Executive Summary

Since the APPG's first enquiry into Freight Crime began in the previous Parliament, the wider impact on our society and economy has only become more apparent.

Freight crime refers to any crime targeted at road vehicles designed to carry goods, ranging from threats and attacks on drivers to the theft of valuable loads and fuel.

Freight crime offences in 2023 were responsible for the loss of £68.3 million in stolen goods. This figure only represents the wholesale value of these goods, with National Vehicle Crime Intelligence Service (NaVCIS) – a national police unit hosted by Hampshire Constabulary – estimating the true value of these goods to be between £680-£700 million, when accounting for loss of value in revenues, VAT and insurance. Since 2020, the direct cost of freight crime has been £306.8 million, with the true value of losses likely being over £1 billion.

The true cost of freight crime is not only the value of goods stolen; it places the logistics industry under immense pressure, affecting companies' viability, staff retention, and losing contracts and investment in the UK as investors shy away due to the lack of supply chain security.

The APPG recognises the challenges in tackling this crime, especially given the increasingly professional nature of it.

Freight crime has for too long been seen as a victimless, opportunistic crime – however this perception neglects the significant impact on drivers, businesses and the wider economy. Freight crime is an organised crime activity, carried out by those with a high level of industry knowledge; they know what is being moved, when it is moving and where it is most at risk.

Through this report the APPG makes several recommendations to the Government on how to tackle this growing issue.

We have developed a series of policy recommendations which we believe will be effective in delivering the change the sector needs to see, which are outlined in further detail in this report.

APPG's recommendations to the UK Government

- Endorse and support secure parking standards: Drivers today cannot be assured of their own safety or that of their vehicle, even when in designated parking. Coordinated standards must be used to create an environment where drivers can pull into any truck stop with the confidence they deserve.
- Ensure planned reform to the National Planning Policy Framework considers the needs of hauliers: Reforms to the planning system must reflect the critical nature of supply chain security.
- Launch a national parking programme: There is a national shortage of lorry parking which forces many drivers to park overnight at unlit, unpopulated and vulnerable roadside facilities. Central government needs to work closely with local authorities to increase the provision of much-needed parking facilities.
- Increase support and resources for law enforcement: Our police forces do not currently have the tools and support to stem the rise of freight crime. Whilst other measures will help, there is no short cut that can replace better enforcement.
- Launch a national freight crime awareness campaign: To act as a visual deterrence to criminals who see freight as an easy target.



The Challenge

The road transport industry is central to the UK supply chain and to economic growth. Road freight moves 89% of all goods and 98% of agricultural and food products. In total the road haulage industry contributes £13.5 billion to the economy, 5.6% of the UK's total GDP. Freight is also an economic multiplier, with every £1 generated by the logistics industry generating £3 elsewhere in the UK economy.

However, drivers and freight operators across the country find their livelihoods and businesses blighted by freight crime.

This is a significant problem which costs the UK economy hundreds of millions annually. In 2023 alone, there were 5,370 reports of HGV and cargo crime in the UK (with actual figures likely to be much higher), a 5% increase on the previous year.

Crimes of this nature have an immediate financial and reputational impact on logistics businesses, and disproportionately damage small to medium sized business (SME) which make over 90% of the sector. This comes alongside operators facing an array of macroeconomic pressures, including rising fuel prices, onerous regulation, growing labour costs, and inflationary pressures on parts and maintenance, all whilst relying on average profit margins of 2%. These pressures create a precarity that is rarely acknowledged and given the central role road freight plays in our economy, freight crime has the potential to severely disrupt our supply chains.

The issue of freight crime has escalated to the point where it has been professionalised, increasingly seen as a low-risk, high-reward enterprise. Organised Crime Groups are the primary perpetrators, often targeting high volume routes near the country's biggest ports.

The APPG for Freight and Logistics – the voice for logistics in Parliament – urges the Government to implement preventative measures and improvements to direct enforcement that will tackle freight crime head-on.

5,370

reports of HGV and cargo crime in the UK, in 2023

£68.3 million

worth of goods stolen, in 2023, due to freight crime

£1 billion

true value of losses, since 2020, due to freight crime

Figure 1: Motorway Service Area Hotspots (2022)



Note: Darker shades indicate increased freight-crime activity. Does not include all MSAs across the UK strategic road network (SRN) as not all police forces report freight crime.

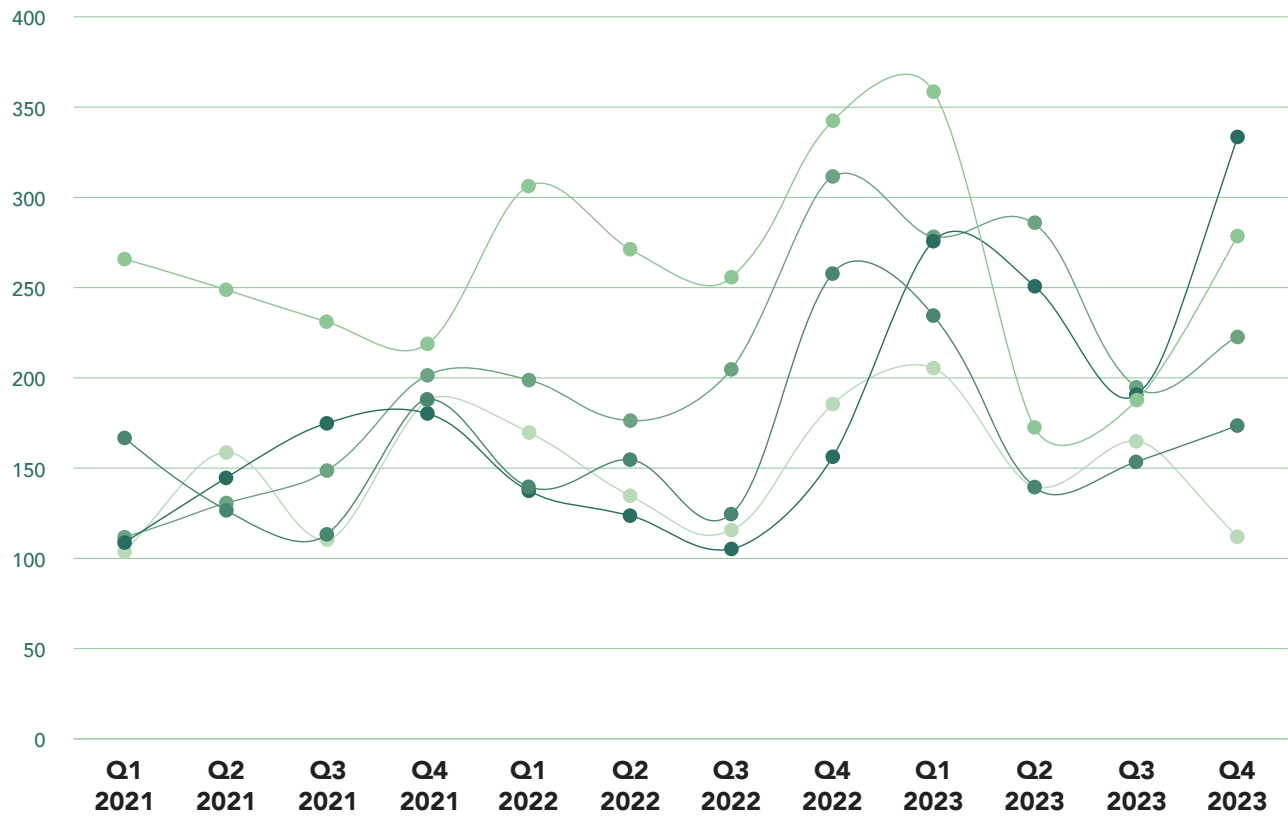
Overview of freight crime statistics

In 2023, NaVCIS identified a selection of key crime hotspots, generally unchanged from the year prior aside from some flares in the midlands. Hot spots include Stafford (138 offences), Thurrock (103), Warwick Services (87), Cambridge (83), Corley (76), Trowell (66), Clackett Lane (63), Birchanger Green (61), Hopwood Park (53) and Hilton Park (50).

Table 1: Top Five Force Regions and Historic Offence Totals.

Region	Police Force Areas	Report Offences total 2020-2023
East / East of England	Essex, Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire, Hertfordshire, Norfolk, Suffolk	4,308
Yorkshire and Humber	South Yorkshire, West Yorkshire, North Yorkshire, Humberside	3,175
South East	Thames Valley, Hampshire, Kent, Surrey, Sussex	2,973
East Midlands	Nottinghamshire, Derbyshire, Northamptonshire, Leicestershire, Lincolnshire	2,294
West Midlands	Staffordshire, West Midlands, Warwickshire, West Mercia	2,797
		15,547

Figure 2: Top Five Force Regions Offences Recorded (2021-2023)



Similar to Table 1, figure 2 suggests that the East Region, Yorkshire and Humber and West Midlands represent the majority of criminality in NaVCIS' 'Top Five Force Regions'. Importantly, from recent NaVCIS data there has been a notable increase in the prevalence of criminal offences across the country by the West Midlands and Yorkshire and Humber regions, the most drastic appearing in the former, seeing a doubling in 2023 and the latter a 65% increase since 2021.

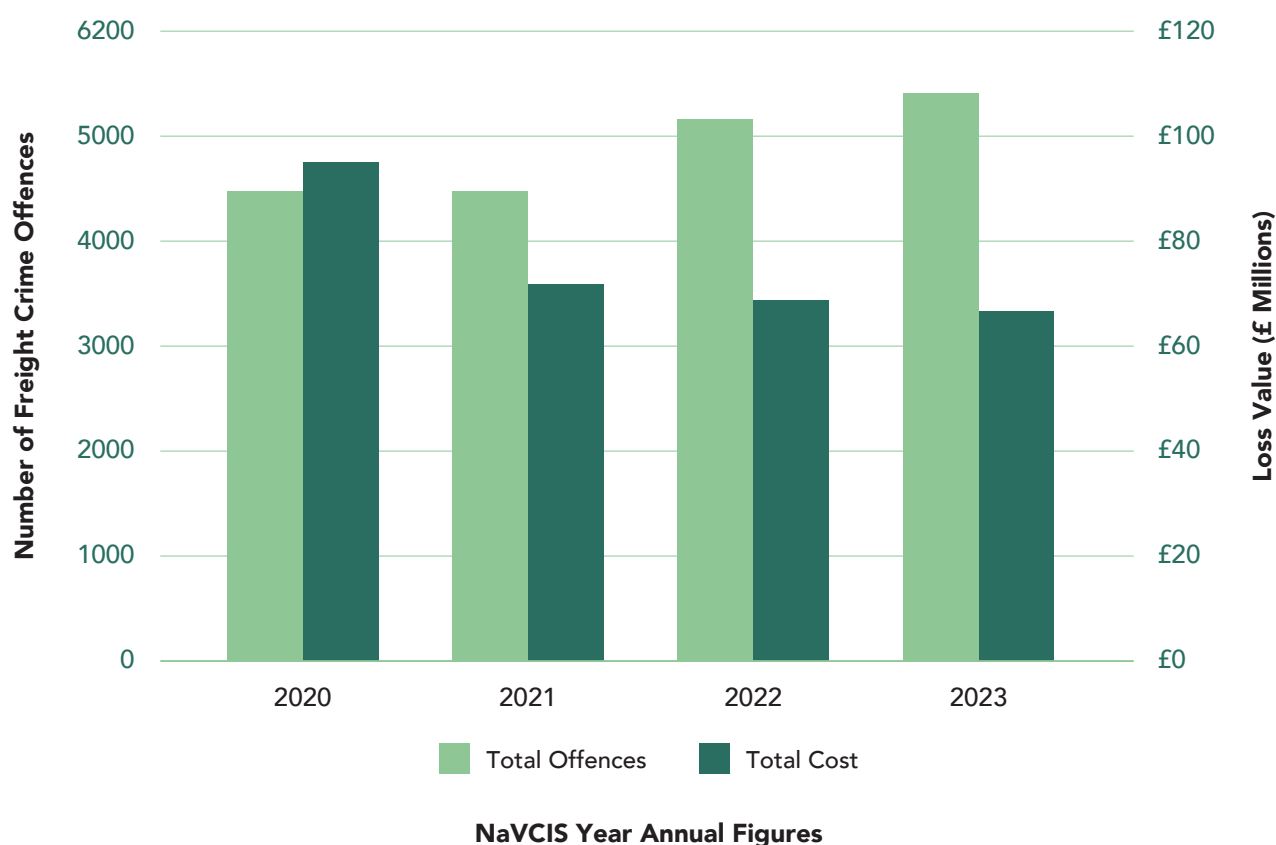
Table 2: Top Five Force Regions Offence totals by Subregion

Force Areas	2021 Total	2022 Total	2023 Total
East Midlands Region			
Leicestershire	95	92	135
Northamptonshire	123	173	205
Nottinghamshire	145	128	121
Lincolnshire	56	30	33
Derbyshire	138	183	126
East Region			
Essex	499	472	374
Cambridgeshire	150	239	270
Bedfordshire	159	236	141
Hertfordshire	85	128	130
Suffolk	41	87	56
Norfolk	28	15	25
Southeast Region			
Thames Valley	220	233	298
Kent	98	381	236
Hampshire	87	33	58
Surrey	136	60	80
East Sussex	51	31	27
West Midlands Region			
Staffordshire	121	213	302
Warwickshire	144	99	314
West Mercia	62	80	178
West Midlands	280	129	254
Yorkshire and Humber Region			
Humberside	104	109	219
South Yorkshire	233	380	328
West Yorkshire	214	367	345
North Yorkshire	39	52	31

Table 2 takes a closer look at the top force regions by subregions, re-emphasising areas of particularly high freight crime. The East Midlands has seen the smallest changes in recent years – where notably increases have been seen in Leicestershire and Nottinghamshire, offsetting slumps in Derbyshire and Lincolnshire. The largest contributor to freight crime, the ‘East Region’ is located in Essex, however recently as offences wain, Hertfordshire and Cambridgeshire have seen significant growth.

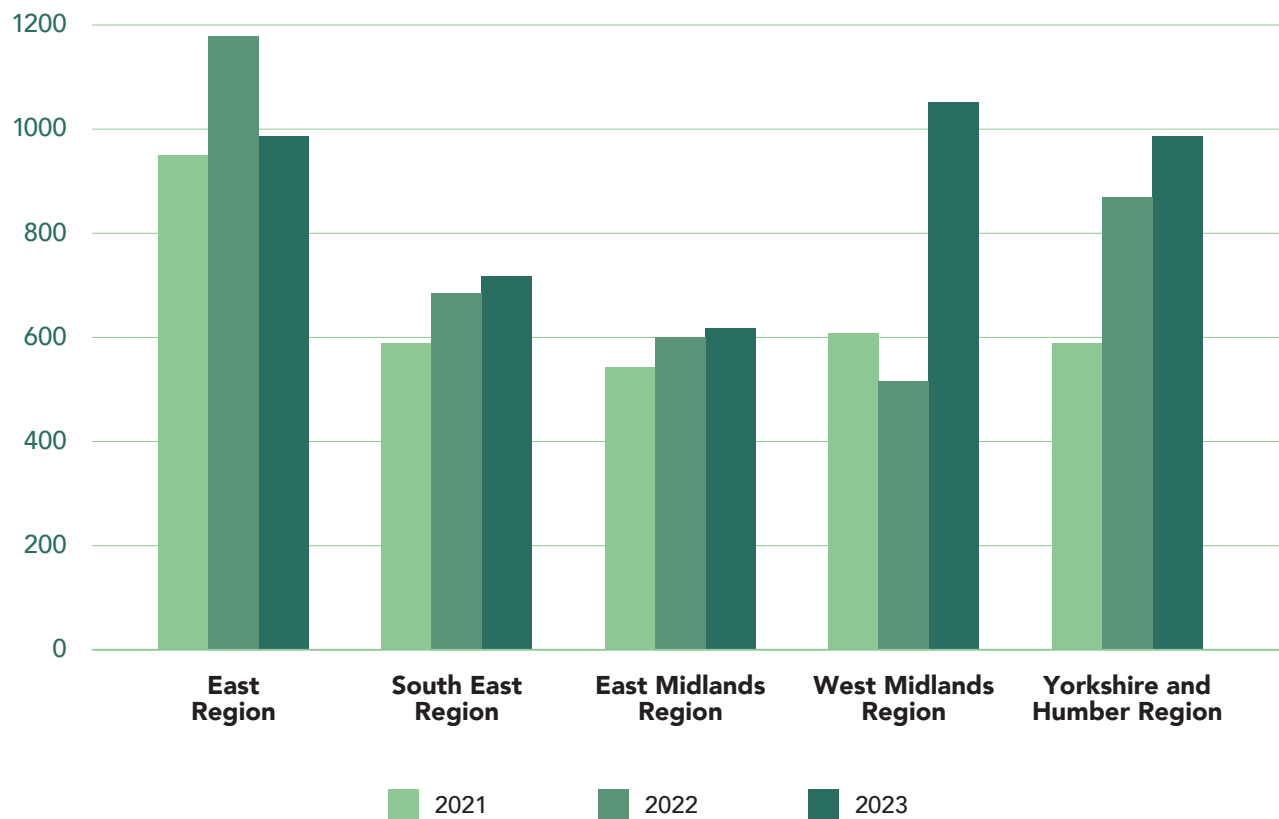
Amongst the Southeast Kent has seen a dramatic increase since the lifting of Covid-19 restrictions, understandably given proximity to major UK port of Dover. However, the Thames Valley continues to contribute growing offences where Surrey, Hampshire and East Sussex have seen freight crime decrease. As aforementioned, freight crime in the West Midlands and Yorkshire and Humber have grown substantially, with offences recorded across the regions. Most drastically, South and West Yorkshire, Stafford and Mercia have become significant contributors.

Figure 3: NaVCIS - Number of Offences by Force Area Q1 2021- Q4 2023



A regional analysis of freight crime offences across police force areas does highlight the seasonality of illegal activities. Figure 3 shows that in post Covid-19 years (2022-2023), Q4 witnessed a significant increase in criminal activities of 56% and 26%, expectedly in relation to the Christmas retail period. Despite a clear pattern failing to emerge, this seasonality can see offences increase by 61% in the East Midlands or by 107% in the Southeast in 2022. Notably, the data suggests that the spike in winter crime was seen to a lesser degree in 2023 across most force regions, even highlighting a fall in the East Midlands by 32%, as over 232 fewer offences were recorded. However broadly speaking, since 2021, criminality across the five major regions has risen by 68%, and Q4 of 2022 stands as a particularly aggressive period for freight crime across the country, painting a persistent pattern of crime that authorities must be cautious of.

Figure 4: Freight Crime Offences and Loss Value (£million) over time (NaVCIS Annual Figures 2020-2023)



This graph shows freight crime offences from 2020-23, as recorded by NaVCIS and financial losses reported. Figure 4 outlined the totality of freight crime across offences and loss value over this period. Noticeably, in 2020 the total cost of offences was at its height and has since seen a consistent, yet small decline of around £20 million yearly since 2020. Total costs generally remain consistent at around £70 million whilst offences have seen growth over this period.

Providing Safe and Secure Parking Facilities

The road haulage industry needs the right infrastructure and facilities to maintain the safety of the road network and ultimately reduce the likelihood of freight crime occurring. Most notably, this needs to include the provision of adequate lorry parking spaces and driver facilities.

The Department for Transport's (DfT) National Survey of Lorry Parking in 2022 found that the lorry parking utilisation rate across the UK was 83%, near critical level, with utilisation in the South East, East Midlands and East of England higher than 90%. On the crucial East-West route A14 Cambridge-Felixstowe utilisation was at 100% capacity for overnight lorry parking. Given the area contains the nation's busiest port in Felixstowe, this statistic is a clear example of how the level of investment in supporting infrastructure has not kept up with the growth in that region.

This situation forces drivers to take rest periods in insecure locations such as laybys and industrial estates, threatening their health and safety and putting them at risk of crime. Nationally, the RHA considers there to be a shortage of around 11,000 lorry parking places. Adding to this, much of the allocated overnight lorry parking is not secure, being insufficiently lit, lacking effective CCTV and almost always being publicly accessible. This is illustrated by NaVCIS figures which show that 75% of freight crime offences happen in independent road parking or unsecured motorway service areas.

The issue is not just a problem of investment. Planning guidance does not sufficiently support the need for new and expanded lorry parks, leading to local planners not tending to not approve applications when they are brought forward, which hampers efforts to consider and implement improved lorry parking and facilities for HGV drivers on a national scale. In November 2022, grant funding of £32.5m was announced by DfT for truck stop operators to upgrade and improve their existing sites. This was in addition to £20m being made available by National Highways in April 2022. This funding has been a welcome contribution to improving standards, but it does not impact the number of spaces available or the number of truck stops.

Measures outlined in the previous Government's Future of Freight plan were a welcome recognition of the issue and reforms to the National Planning Policy Framework and other supporting regulations should improve the chances of applications for lorry parking facilities being approved.

However, identified problem areas will need more direct action to encourage the development of the new lorry parking sites the national network needs.



Table 3: Freight Crime Offences by Parking Facility Type over time

	2020	2020-2021	2021	2021-2022	2022	2022-2023	2023
Independent Road Parking	2231	-3%	2157	+20%	2,586	-11%	2,298
Secure Yard	545	+12%	619	+29%	796	+9%	868
Motorway Service Area	993	-2%	971	+11%	1,076	+59%	1715
Jump Up	368	+33%	549	-26%	406	-40%	244
Truck Stop	295	-106%	143	+63%	233	+3%	239
Romanian Rollover / Moving Cargo	30	-400%	6	-17%	5	+20%	6

Note: NaVCIS do provide financial losses by HGV parking location sporadically, when retrieved the RHA will update figures to include this breakdown, including by Top Force Region.

Table 3 compares the prevalence of criminal offences recorded from 2020-2023 year on year, providing an overview of key targets for criminal groups, where in 2023, independent Road parking and MSAs made up the majority of targets. Since 2020, independent road parking remained steady on the rate of criminal occurrences. In the same period however, MSA crimes have increased dramatically, increasing almost 60% in 2023. Modest increases in truck stop and private yard offences were noted over time as secondary targets for freight crime. Despite jump up crimes spiking in 2020, they have fallen significantly in 2021-2022, and since 2020 moving cargo crime has dropped dramatically to a plateau of 5-6 per year in 2022-2023 – possibly indicating a broader shift in preference for theft targets.

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To this end, we call on the Government to implement the following measures:

- **Endorse and support secure parking standards:** Drivers today cannot be assured of their own or their freight's safety, even when in designated parking. Coordinated standards must be used to create an environment where drivers can pull into any truck stop with the confidence they deserve. The government should work closely with relevant authorities to establish and enforce a recognised UK parking standard that ensures secure parking facilities for freight vehicles and drivers. This standard should include provisions for controlled access, CCTV surveillance, and adequate welfare facilities for drivers.
- **Ensure planned reform to the National Planning Policy Framework considers the needs of hauliers:** Any future reform to the planning system needs to reflect the importance of truck parking and reassert the need for a strong nationwide network to ensure the safety and security of drivers and their cargos. When considering applications for sites that will increase local HGV journeys e.g. warehousing and logistics sites, it must be mandated that truck parking should be provided either as part of a development or in close proximity to it.
- **Launch a national parking space programme:** Work closely with local authorities across the UK to develop proposals that increase the provision of safe and secure parking spaces in their areas, delivering growth locally and improving standards for hauliers. This can include specific language to be inserted into Local Plans and recommendations for site selection and a better understanding of how the road haulage industry works and how vital it is to local economies.



Strengthening Enforcement

Whilst preventative infrastructural measures are a key element in the successful prevention of freight crime, there is simply not going to be enough of a deterrent for criminals if there is not an improvement in enforcement.

Enforcement can be seen as a form of future crime prevention, as with each criminal who is caught, several future instances of freight crime are potentially prevented. With thieves apprehended, there is a far better chance of recouping at least some of the victim's lost freight or income. When it comes to threats and assaults, there is likely to be significant underreporting from drivers themselves, with little chance of any reports leading to significant enforcement action.

Improving the police's resources and knowledge of this area can be a highly cost-effective investment, with the offense being highly localised to certain spots and areas. Main arterial roads close to the biggest ports (Felixstowe, Southampton, Dover) as well as 38 hot spots identified by NaVCIS see the vast majority of freight crime. A well-executed, targeted approach in these locations can result in a massive reduction in crime for relatively little police resource.

The effects of low levels of enforcement are not limited to the road haulage industry, nor is there a lack of desire from the authorities to invest in stopping crime and catching criminals. Central Government needs to give the police and other enforcement services the basic levels of funding they need to raise their efforts to the job required.

We are therefore calling for the Government to:

- **Increase support and resources for law enforcement:** Our police force does not currently have the tools and support to stem the rise of freight crime. While other measures will help, there is no short cut that can replace better enforcement. Additional funding and resources will support efforts to investigate and combat freight crime effectively, including services like NaVCIS, which are critical in this area. This should include specialised training for officers and establishing dedicated policing units to address freight crime and a National Police Chiefs Council (NPCC) lead for freight crime. This will also help set minimum standards of police investigation and crime recording to be agreed upon by NPCC and police forces.

Bettering Public Awareness

The thousands of instances of freight crime each year endanger and stress the workforce of the road freight industry. Last year alone, hauliers fell victim to £68 million worth of theft. However, the freight crime epidemic is not known about in the public consciousness.

With greater public awareness, people are more likely to question and report suspicious activity where they see it and help create a hostile environment to opportunistic criminals. This increased public vigilance will improve the safety of unsecured parking spaces, reducing demand and costs in our asks elsewhere.

Therefore, we are calling on the Government to:

- **Launch a national freight crime awareness campaign:** In collaboration with industry representatives, support the launch of a national awareness campaign to educate the public, businesses, and drivers about freight crime and its impacts. This campaign should emphasise the importance of reporting incidents promptly and cooperating with law enforcement. With more public awareness of the problem of freight crime, we can create a more hostile environment for criminals, with suspicious behaviour more likely to be reported.

Conclusion

Freight crime is an unnecessary and unacceptable hinderance on the honest, hardworking professionals who keep the UK supply chain moving, and a strain on the whole UK economy. The prevalence of freight crime threatens the sector's growth and productivity, increasing prices and restricting recruitment. This has an immediate knock-on impact on consumers and threatens the viability of smaller operators unable to withstand disruptions. However, it is preventable with the right measures and buy-in from the Government and stakeholders.

Introducing measures that will better combat freight crime will not only improve safety for drivers, but also improve the performance and prosperity of the country's SME haulage businesses and economy as a whole.

Road haulage is an industry we all rely on – the least we can do is to help them carry out that vital job as safely as possible.



for Freight
and Logistics

About the APPG for Freight and Logistics

The APPG for Freight and Logistics was founded to promote and represent the interests of the UK logistics and freight sector and provide a forum to discuss opportunities and challenges facing the sector.

The APPG is Chaired by Rachel Taylor MP, Member of Parliament for North Warwickshire and Bedworth.

About the RHA

The RHA is a major trade association representing 8,500 road haulage, coach, and van operators across the UK, 85% of whom are SMEs. Our members operate around 250,000 HGVs (half of the UK fleet) out of 10,000 operating centres and range from a single-truck company to those with thousands of vehicles.