

Do you ever walk or drive by a building and wonder what goes on there? Or see an emergency service flash by and wonder where they are going? Well one of the benefits of being an MP is you get to find out what goes on behind the scenes and I find them a fascinating treat for my curiosity. But one particularly exhilarating moment I had was when I joined Kent Police on a dawn raid on an operation relating to metal theft.

Metal theft became a higher profile issue when schools, railways, utility companies and churches started to become victims, sometimes crippling a local community for days on end. Historically there has never been a specific offence relating to metal theft but in 2010 chief police officers estimated that the crime was costing the UK economy around £770m per year.

The theft of metal had an obvious link to market prices but it was sometimes considered as a victimless crime and regulation and enforcement were perhaps not as strict as they should have been. But it was quite clear to me when I joined the police on their raid that metal theft and other crimes were often organised and one funded the other.

Thankfully the Government listened to suggestions about how we could equip the police with better tools to deal with this crime. Changes were made and already we are seeing a significant fall in this type of crime. Network Rail have reported a 67 per cent drop in the total number of cable thefts over the past year, thus creating just over 3,000 fewer hours of delays to hard-working people this year compared to the previous year. It may not be headline news, but it is something to celebrate for those communities and businesses previous paralysed by this cynical and organised crime.