

PBO Logbook

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The latest news from the boating world, edited by Robert Melotti

Outboard thefts at epidemic levels

Organised crime implicated in multi-million pound 'industry'

Outboard engine theft in the British Isles has reached epidemic proportions, according to figures obtained from the website www.stolenboats.org.

The number of outboard thefts recorded on the site, which is maintained by insurers and the police, increased by nearly 60% (from 262 to 450) between 2007 and 2009, with totals for 2010 set to increase by a further 10% over last year's figure.

Speaking at an emergency British Marine Federation conference on the issue, loss adjuster Peter Clark stunned delegates with the dire statistics, estimating that the actual number of thefts is likely to be at least 40% higher than the figures recorded on stolenboats.org.

'Stolenboats.org relies on police and insurers to record crimes on the site and very few thefts are reported outside Hampshire, Dorset, Devon & Cornwall and Wales,' Clark says. 'The police national computer often only records marine crime if it takes



Insurers and police are helpless in the face of an epidemic of outboard theft

place on the water, missing out thefts from boats on land.'

EU-wide epidemic

- The Irish republic's Gardai recorded 446 outboard thefts between Jan 2008 and May 2009
- Europol estimates the theft of outboards across the 25 EU nations in 2008 was worth £70m
- The proportion of thefts involving

engines over 100hp (worth upwards of £12,000) is at an all-time high of 25%. Exactly half the engines stolen in 2010 have been over 50hp

- The total value of stolen outboards recorded on stolenboats.org between Jan 09 and Mar 10 is estimated at £2.5m with damage to vessels estimated at a further £750,000

Big haul in Helford



Sharp-eyed Nick Bailey, boss of Helford River Boats in Cornwall, wrote down the number plate of a suspicious-looking car and joked: 'If anything goes missing tonight, we'll know who did it.'

Next morning he arrived at work to find his hire-boat premises had been broken into for the second time in three days, and he'd lost six outboard motors worth around £30,000 in total.

The vehicle he'd noted was already known to police and three arrests soon followed. So far no engines have been recovered. It's thought a large organised gang using as many as 20 different vehicles has been stealing to order throughout the South West.

'We've marked our new engines,' says Nick. 'But there's 400 boats on moorings down here and businessmen like me are sleeping in their offices so they don't lose more stock.'