

Tamper Proof Number Plates

The DVLA view

The use of number plates that cannot be re-used once detached from a vehicle would be a major step forward in preventing the theft of number plates for cloning vehicles or to avoid congestion charges etc.

Number plate manufacturers have indicated that this should be technically feasible, and there are potentially a number of varying technical solutions. It would be necessary to draft regulations so as to avoid giving a monopoly of production to any single manufacturer.

The question arises as to whether to make the requirement mandatory or to simply permit the use of such plates as a customer option. The danger of making the use of tamper-proof plates optional is that they might not be taken up on a wide enough scale to have an impact on crime. Also manufacturers and retailers might choose not to market them if they felt that a market did not exist. It would therefore seem preferable to require that any new plates fitted after a certain date must be tamper proof. Manufacturers would undoubtedly have investment costs and this would have to be explored further before making a regulatory impact assessment.

Current Situation (February 2006)

There has been a change in the wording from the initial concept from 'Tamper proof' to 'Tamper evident'.

A number of members of the BNMA are currently involved in the design and implementation of 'Tamper Evident Plates'. The results of these investigations will be made available during the latter part of 2006.

Electronic Tagging of Number Plates

The DVLA View

The consultation paper referred to the use of a microchip containing the vehicle identification number in number plates. It has been suggested that the vehicle registration number should also be included as a minimum.

The paper did not address the issue of electronic vehicle identification (EVI) in general, but nevertheless, many of those consulted asked about the wider implications of using microchip technology. In 2002 the independent Jill Dando Institute published a report on the UK's vehicle registration system. One of its 11 recommendations was that the Government should introduce EVI to improve vehicle identification systems. The Department for Transport has agreed to look into this recommendation and is undertaking feasibility work to consider all the related technical, legal and privacy and cost issues. No decisions have been taken to introduce EVI at this stage and there would have to be consultation before any decision was taken.

Several companies have indicated their willingness to become involved in further discussions about the development of systems that could be used for the

electronic tagging of plates and it is evident that technological solutions exist and could be put into operation in the not too distant future.

Electronic tagging of number plates offers the possibility of making a limited improvement in advance of a full system of EVI. However, decisions on electronic plates will need to be taken in the broader context of the Department for Transport's work on EVI.

Current Situation (February 2006)

Tenders were invited by the DVLA to trial the feasibility of EVI using tags fitted to the Number Plates. A number of interested parties have submitted tenders, including members of the BNMA. The trials are due to take place in 2006 and results discussed and reviewed before possible introduction during 2007.