

most technology



Standard ANPR technology



# Ghost Plates

Chris Worton-Smith, National Sales Manager, Jepson & Co Ltd and BNMA  
Enforcement Liaison

22.01.2026

# Context



Vehicle Parc

~42M vehicles

~84M number plates



Three pieces of legislation which cover plates

1. Performance of the plate - BS AU 145e, largely dates back to 2001 with minor amendments in 2021.
2. Appearance of the plate - Vehicle Crimes Act 2001 with minor amendments in 2008 and 2021.
3. Distribution of plates - RNPS regulations 2003.



Significance?

- The Legislation is old and technology has moved on
- ANPR drives the legislation



# Quiz

- How much does it cost to register as a supplier in the UK?

£40 - one off fee - for the last 23 years in the case of some suppliers.

- How many current outlets?

c. 34,000 UK and NI - 4x more than petrol stations

- What checks are taken at the time of registering?

None - RTS found some convicted serious offenders taking identity checks.

- Are there annual audits by DVLA Enforcement?

No, 4 enforcement officers for the 34k outlets '8,500 audits per year'.

- Obligations to record details electronically of plates supplied?

No, can simply keep a paper record. Software fragmented.

- How many ANPR cameras in the UK and how many reads per day?

18,000 linked cameras - 90M reads per day

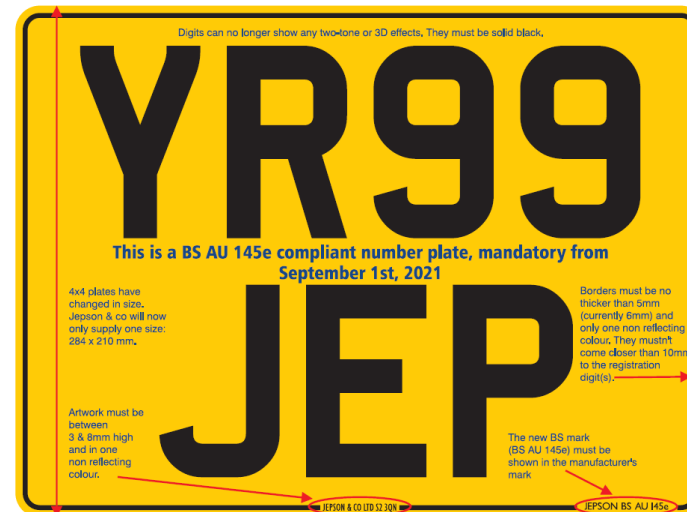
- How many security marks on a UK plate?

None

# Typical forms of plate abuse

Estimates suggest 1 in 15 plates are non-compliant (5.6M plates).

- No personalisation and/or BS mark
- Incorrect spacing
- Incorrect font and size
- Fastenings in the readable area
- Tinting and non-compliant 'stick-on' digits
- Cloning
- Stealth plates
- Ghost plates



# Ghost plates



- First appeared around 2019
- Uses an IR transmitting black acrylic - appears like a normal raised plastic digit but is invisible under IR light.
- Hard to detect without specialised equipment.
- Rochdale TS - Feb 2024  
BNMA Support - presented
- DVLA Enforcement
- Sarah Coombes MP (West Bromwich)
- APPG Report  
BNMA Supported



# APPG 'Ghost' and RSS



- RSS

- The strategy explicitly consults on addressing illegal number plates, including 'ghost' plates, signalling increased enforcement and potential new offences or penalties.
- Greater reliance on automated enforcement (ANPR) means higher demand for plates that meet reflectivity, font and mounting standards; non-compliant plates will increase risk of fines for customers and reputational risk for suppliers and dealers.

- APPG - Ghost

- Standardise plate design; ban 3D/4D plates; restrict and audit suppliers; require background checks; mandate plate checks at MOT; increase fines and add penalty points; enable seizure and stronger prosecution powers.
- Look at International Best Practice on security features including UID's, watermarks, QR codes and NFC tags.

# Risks to Remarketing

## Pre-sale compliance burden

Increased responsibility to verify that plates fitted to vehicles are legal and that checks have been performed.

- Liability for the plate being compliant?

## Reputational risk

Selling vehicles with non-compliant plates could damage buyer trust and lead to legal exposure.

- Reputational damage and complaints.

## Due diligence

Greater need to verify plate provenance and to document chain of custody for plates.

## Central vs decentralised supply

Potential impact on speed to replate and overall cost.

# What's next?



DVLA are fully committed to address the issue and will consult over the coming months and years



Expect 3D plates to be banned later this year (76 reg)



Significantly enhanced penalties to the driver for displaying



Moving forward - stricter rules on suppliers and manufacturers aimed at securitised product and distribution.

The humble number plate needs to be consistent with the technology Government now deploy and with the direction described in the RSS.



Timescale overall 3-4 years?

# Thank you

Questions?

