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Thank you for your letter of 20 January to the Rt Hon Mike Penning MP on behalf of the British-Irish Parliamentary Committee D (Environmental and Social). I am replying as the Minister for Preventing Abuse, Exploitation and Crime.

I am very sorry for the unacceptable delay that has occurred. This was due to initial confusion over whether a cross-government response was required to your letter, compounded by a further delay in handling due to an administrative error. The team that handles this type of correspondence at the Home Office has been reminded of their responsibilities and steps are being taken to implement more efficient ways of dealing with such correspondence.

You requested that I respond to the committee's recommendations and queries regarding scrap metal dealerships. Our view is that the provisions within the Scrap Metal Dealers Act 2013 are effective and that it has established a robust licensing regime which supports legitimate operators whilst providing local authorities and the police with the powers needed to tackle rogue dealers who wilfully break the law and trade in stolen metal.

The provisions within the 2013 Act provide universal coverage without any exemptions for specific groups, individuals or businesses who must comply with the requirements of the legislation.

The 2013 Act makes it clear that those wishing to trade across different local authorities must have a licence issued by the relevant local authority in which the individual is likely to buy or sell scrap metal, and this includes Traveller, Gypsies and Roma communities.

Currently, there are no provisions within the Act to allow those who trade in scrap metal to acquire multi-authority licenses and we have no plans to amend the legislation in this area. There is however, a commitment in the 2013 Act to review it, to make sure that it is meeting its intended objectives and publish a report of its findings to Parliament. In doing so, the Government will consider any evidence as part of that review that demonstrates if the Act (or any part of it) disproportionately discriminates or causes obstacles for those traders who go about their legitimate business when dealing in scrap metal. The purpose of the review will enable us to consider if any of the provisions within the legislation need to be repealed, replaced or amended based on that evidence. The report must be published within five years of the Act's commencement; that is, by 30 September 2018.

I hope this clarifies our position.



Karen Bradley MP