

London Mayor questioned over theft epidemic in capital

Mayor of London Sadiq Khan was questioned about a theft epidemic in the capital by a City Hall Conservative member at the London Assembly today.

Conservative representative for Croydon and Sutton, Neil Garratt, asked the London Mayor on whether the Police and Crime Plan, due on 28 March, adequately addresses the current issues surrounding theft in London.

Mr Khan assured the assembly that theft and robbery are areas of priority, and personal robbery and bike thefts have fallen in the past twelve months to February 2025.

He also supported the Met Police's efforts to pursue and prosecute perpetrators, saying he will "use all the technology data at our disposal to tackle cycle and phone theft, to prevent stolen phones from being repurposed - ultimately deterring theft".

By engaging with the Home Office, the Mayor said he is "seeking the opportunities to prevent mobile phones from entering the second-hand market".

Mr Garratt was concerned with the limited detail on phone and bike theft in the 16,000-word document, where phone theft was briefly mentioned, but bike theft was not mentioned at all.

Following a commissioned poll, Mr Garratt said that 86% of Londoners believe phone theft is increasing and that only 21% don't believe the Mayor is taking it seriously.

He said: "Londoners were really pessimistic about the probability of anything happening if their phone is stolen or their bike is stolen," with only 1.7% of phone thefts resulting in any kind of action.

Phone theft is a transnational issue, as devices have been reported to be reconnected to various countries across the world.

Belfort market, in the suburb of Bab Ezzouar, in Algiers, northern Algeria, is a common destination for a large quantity of these phones.

In a report from The Times, 28% of phones stolen in the UK have been illegally exported out of the country to the northern African territory, which is a substantial quantity compared to those exported to China (20%), Hong Kong (8%), the US (7%) and Pakistan (6%).

Mr Garratt identified Central London as a prolific area where phone theft is most likely to happen, saying: "By following up on those thefts, it will lead them again and again to the same, quite large, organised crime gangs."

He added: "What we specifically recommend in the report is a squad tasked specifically with looking at this."