

Partnership intelligence sharing to identify suspects of e-scooter and e-bike battery theft

Data provided by a European e-vehicle hire company identified users accessing their app who were not purchasing services. Partnership collaboration and analysis made it possible to link customer activity to local battery thefts.

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Key details

Purpose	Investigation cases
Topic	Acquisitive crime Digital, data and analytics Serious organised crime
Organisation	Merseyside Police
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Start date	July 2023

Description

Voi is a Swedish company specialising in providing electric bikes (e-bikes) and electric scooters (e-scooters) across Europe. Customers can hire e-bikes and e-scooters using the Voi app on a mobile device by signing up with an email address. The app uses GPS data to allow customers to locate scooters and bikes that are available for use nearby.

In 2023, Voi noticed an increase in thefts of scooter batteries in the Liverpool area. Between July and November, there were 1,160 battery thefts, equating to a loss of €580,738.

Line of enquiry

Voi customer accounts were analysed to identify users who were accessing the app within a particular geographic location, mirroring data with the location of the batteries that were stolen. Three suspects were identified, one of whom was found to have accessed the Voi app over 300 times without ever purchasing a ride. Voi reported these thefts to the police with their intelligence.

Using overt and covert tactics, the investigation team began to build an evidential case for the suspects. Through CCTV, automatic number plate recognition (ANPR) and telecommunications data, further suspects were identified. Following the execution of warrants at their addresses, five suspects were arrested, one of whom was a juvenile. Evidence was secured of two suspects unloading a significant quantity of stolen Voi batteries from a vehicle into the rear of an associated business premises.

Outcome

The suspects were charged with offences of theft and conspiracy to commit theft from motor vehicle. After pleading guilty, the four adults were sentenced to a total of 10 years and four months in prison.