Guidance on the Management of Shopping Trolleys
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“It is in the interests of the environment and the communities that we live in, that local authorities, trolley owners, those responsible for water courses and transport facilities and others with an interest in the quality of the local environment, enter into voluntary agreement over the management of shopping trolleys and the treatment of abandoned trolleys wherever possible.

I hope that this guidance note, which I am pleased to commend, will be of assistance in formulating such arrangements”.

Ben Bradshaw MP
Minister for Local Environmental Quality
Introduction

Trolleys remain an integral part of customers’ shopping experience in the 21st Century. Retailers who provide shopping trolleys for their customers invest heavily in their maintenance, repair and replacement. It is in their interests to manage and control their trolley fleets.

It has been estimated that 10,000 new trolleys are stolen every year and many of these end up abandoned.1 The cost of replacement for retailers is, on average, around £80 per trolley. Dealing with the removal, storage and disposal of abandoned trolleys also imposes a considerable burden on local authorities.

Trolley management systems can never provide a total solution - trolley abandonment will continue to occur to varying degrees. Customers will, of necessity, remove trolleys from stores as part of normal usage. Trolleys will also continue to be removed illegally and abandoned.

These risks can and should be managed. Abandoned trolleys are unsightly and, if abandoned in rivers or other watercourses, have the potential to increase flood risk and to cause harm to wildlife and the environment. Inappropriate use of trolleys may also result in anti-social behaviour, causing damage to property and possible injury to persons.

This guidance document is intended to cover all trolley loss situations from any retail outlets, also to cover the loss of trolleys into watercourses which presents particular problems in terms of recovery. Whilst the focus is on shopping trolleys, a further section offering advice on the management of luggage trolleys is also provided at the end of this guide.

This is a practical guide to shopping trolley management for use by retailers, local authorities, the Environment Agency, British Waterways and other stakeholders. Given the economic, social and environmental costs associated with abandonment, there are significant benefits to be gained for all parties through partnership work to reduce trolley losses. The aim of this document is to:

- **Encourage** and share best practice amongst retailers on the prevention of trolley loss and safe retrieval of abandoned trolleys.
- **Foster** a common approach by officers of the Environment Agency, local authorities, retailers and British Waterways when dealing with abandoned trolleys in watercourses.
- **Promote** closer co-operation between trolley owners and local authorities when dealing with abandoned shopping trolleys.

This guidance applies in England and Wales only. Separate legislation and guidance is available in Scotland, please see: [www.littercode.org](http://www.littercode.org)

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1 Full Regulatory Impact Assessment of the Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Bill (Defra, 2005)
Expectations on retailers

Introduction

Shopping trolleys are valuable to retailers, so it is in their interests to ensure they are retained on their sites or collected from surrounding areas, in the most cost-effective method possible.

Preventing trolleys from leaving a site is always the preferred approach, though this is not always possible, for example where customers choose to take shopping off site, to their homes or cars.

The difficulties presented in managing shopping trolleys effectively and the risks that abandoned trolleys present will vary from store to store, so there is no ‘one-size fits all’ solution. This guidance presents a range of options and a process for evaluating and addressing trolley abandonment that can form the basis for discussions with trolley owners and enforcement authorities.

Retailers should consider incorporating trolley management in their environmental policy and ensure that staff are aware of the agreed policy and operations. This can help in responding to any concerns raised by customers, or incidents of trolley misuse or abandonment reported to the store.

Enforcement authorities can expect retailers to have reviewed the way they manage their shopping trolleys against the following expectations:

Assessing the risk

In the first instance retailers should have a system for regularly monitoring trolley numbers to determine if any are being lost from their stores. Where significant losses are identified, retailers should review their trolley management procedures to identify how these can be reduced.

The risk and urgency of remedial action will be increased by a number of factors, for example, proximity to vulnerable watercourses or high levels of concerns/complaints from the local community.
Guidance on management of shopping trolleys

Tackling the problem

Where a significant trolley abandonment problem is identified retailers will need to take remedial steps. Preventing trolleys from leaving sites is always the preferred approach, though as indicated above, this is not always possible.

Where trolleys are not in use for long periods (e.g. when the store is closed) it is good practice to secure them. Where trolleys are being lost during trading hours, several devices are available to make it harder for trolleys to be removed from retailers’ sites.

These devices can help to reduce losses to a lower level, though they are not always appropriate for every store location and will not prevent trolleys being removed by determined persons. There are several devices available including:

- Wheel locking devices fitted to wheels that activate when the trolley crosses cables/magnetic paving in the ground at either exits or the entire perimeter of the premises (two-wheel locks are most effective):
  - ✓ customer friendly.
  - ✗ ability to use this solution is dependent on the layout of the premises, its location and the need to ensure that all customers, including those that may be unable to carry their shopping, can use the store.

- Installation of bollards or specialist paving presenting a physical barrier to the removal of trolleys from premises:
  - ✓ relatively cheap device.
  - ✗ may impair access for users, especially those with mobility aids.

- Vertical poles on trolleys that are tall enough to prevent them being taken out of the store:
  - ✓ relatively cheap device.
  - ✓ suitability will depend on design of the store.

- Trolley locks that require a coin to release the trolley:
  - ✓ relatively cheap device.
  - ✗ may cause inconvenience to customers, for example, if the coin slots are vandalised.
  - ✗ anecdotal evidence has shown customers may feel intimidated by persons offering to return trolleys if they can keep the deposits.

Retailers may be disadvantaged if other stores in the area do not adopt a similar approach in the installation of such devices. It is therefore recommended that local authorities and retailers work together to look at joint solutions involving all parties.
Expectations on retailers

Case Study – Partnership Working at Crawley

Crawley Borough Council provides a freephone number which the public can use to report any abandoned shopping trolleys to its contact centre.

The freephone number is used for all Amenity services issues and is regularly advertised in the local press and Council’s ‘Crawley Live’ magazine, as well as on the Council’s web-site, posters and hand-out cards.

Each morning the Council’s Community Wardens compile a list of all reported trolleys which is emailed to the local Marks & Spencer’s store. A trolley recovery company member of staff collects this list from the store each day at lunchtime.

The trolley recovery company visit the reported locations, as well as visiting any known ‘trolley hotspots’, and remove the trolleys. They then return those that belong to member companies directly to their owners the same afternoon or the following morning. Any that are beyond repair or belong to companies that aren’t members of the scheme are returned to the council’s depot to await collection or disposal. Member companies pay the trolley recovery company directly for the scheme.

Further information from:

Graham Rowe
Streetscene & Maintenance Manager
01293 438460

Case Study – Collection of Abandoned Trolleys in York

The City of York Council has agreed arrangements for the collection of trolleys by local supermarkets. They notify retailers of the occurrence of any abandoned trolleys and this has helped to identify hotspot areas such as bus stops near the supermarkets.

Trolley abandonment has been a greater issue for supermarkets in the town centre rather than the out-of-town stores, therefore, the policy of most stores affected has been to install coin-operated facilities.

A small number of trolleys are also picked up by the council’s street scene operatives in the course of carrying out their other duties. These are taken to the council’s depot, and the relevant supermarkets contacted to arrange collection.

Further information from:

Liz Levett
Street Environment Manager
01904 551825
Off site retrieval

Where trolleys are known to be regularly abandoned from a store, retailers should have in place a system to provide trolley collection within a reasonable time frame to be agreed with the enforcement authorities.

Through experience and feedback from customers and local residents, a retailer should be aware of areas where trolleys may be abandoned.

Retailers will normally direct staff to collect trolleys on and off site, within approximately a one-mile radius along designated collection routes to cover as efficiently as possible the locations where trolleys are most likely to be abandoned.

To assist, retailers should advertise the ways in which customers can report abandoned trolleys, e.g. through a local trolley hotline number or direct to the store.

This will help identify where trolleys are being abandoned and enable them to be collected quickly. Both the Environment Agency and British Waterways have 24 hour contact numbers that can be used to report trolleys abandoned in watercourses, especially where there is an associated risk of flooding. Please see ‘contact’ section at the end of this document for details.

Retailers should clearly mark their trolleys so that the owner can easily be identified and alerted, or the trolley returned to store. Where trolley hotline numbers are available, retailers should provide these on the trolley, again, to allow ease of return.

Where agreement is reached on an off-site trolley recovery scheme between a local authority and retailer(s), its chances of success will be greatly increased by publicity, including coverage by local media. Publicity can raise awareness of the measures being taken and the action that members of the public can take to help.

Retrieving trolleys from watercourses

Where trolleys are abandoned in watercourses a removal process will be needed, as required, until the cause of the problem can be better controlled.

Retrieving trolleys from watercourses can present significant health and safety risks to those involved. In most circumstances, but in particular where there are steep banks or deep water, trolleys should only be removed by properly trained contractors with the correct safety equipment.

Retailers may need to seek assistance from local authorities, the Environment Agency, British Waterways and other agencies to identify suitable contractors who are able to remove trolleys from watercourses in a safe manner.
The need to involve specialist equipment means that the speed at which retailers can respond to requests to remove trolleys from watercourses may be slower than for dry land collection. Retailers will therefore need to make an assessment of the level of risk and prioritise the urgency of individual cases. Factors affecting the frequency of removal will include the potential for increased flood risk, damage to the local environment and the hazardous nature of the removal process.

The approach outlined above for watercourses may equally apply to other potentially hazardous locations e.g. railway sidings, roadways etc. Further advice on removal from railways is provided below.

**Case Study – Reporting Systems in Tendring**

Tendring District Council regularly received reports of illegally discarded shopping trolleys in residential areas and watercourses. Problems occurred in urban areas and around out of town superstores. Trolleys were not only being removed by vandals but also by shoppers taking their groceries home.

Generally trolleys were identifiable to a particular retail outlet. Through contact with the identified supermarkets, either by council officers or the street cleansing contractor, Veolia, the majority were recovering their own trolleys. Supermarkets were encouraged to display a contact phone number in-store for reporting abandoned trolleys.

Action has been linked through an EAT NEAT campaign encouraging food retailers to take some responsibility for keeping the district clean. A litter conference was held which included discussion on dealing with abandoned trolleys with representatives of retailers, district, parish and town councils, DEFRA, ENCAMS, police and schools.

The district council has telephone and on-line reporting arrangements for abandoned trolleys.

As well as encouraging a partnership approach to minimising the problems of illegally dumped trolleys the council is also preparing to use powers under the EPA 1990 to seize, store and dispose of trolleys.

Further information from:

Stephen Sparrow
Assistant Head of Environmental Services
ssparrow@tendringdc.gov.uk
Expectations on enforcement authorities

Agreeing a Voluntary Approach

In the majority of cases, enforcement action should be a last resort. The preferred way should be to develop a partnership approach with retailers, the Environment Agency, British Waterways and other interested parties.

There are many examples of partnership solutions already operating, and a number are provided in this guidance.

Before implementing schemes for trolley seizure, enforcement authorities should consult with local retailers with a view to reaching agreement on acceptable trolley management procedures. This would normally include agreeing a policy on time limits for retailer collection of abandoned trolleys.

Under paragraph 4(2) of Schedule 4 of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 local authorities can agree a retailer’s scheme for trolley collection. Where such an agreement is made the local authority may not charge costs under the Schedule for any trolleys within the scheme that are covered by it.

Local authorities may choose to outsource a recovery/storage service and charge for doing so. Whilst this may prove cheaper and easier to set up, it does not necessarily help to tackle and reduce the source of the problems which may include theft and anti-social behaviour. It is therefore intended that this guidance may be used by local authorities as the basis for a partnership agreement under paragraph 4(2) of Schedule 4, working directly with the retailers in their area to help protect property and tackle the behaviour of those who are responsible for the trolley abandonment.

For example, local authorities should undertake to enforce the law, in particular, against individuals who dump trolleys in high-risk situations e.g. watercourses, motorway and railway embankments or bridges. In such cases the matter should also be referred to the local Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership (CDRP) to ensure that all relevant enforcement agencies are involved.
Use of Enforcement Powers

Should voluntary measures prove unsuccessful, local authorities have powers under section 99 and Schedule 4 of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 (as amended by the Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act 2005) to seize abandoned trolleys and charge for their return. Detailed guidance on these measures can be found at: www.defra.gov.uk/environment/localenv/legislation/cnea/index.htm#guide. This legislative guidance provides information on the level of costs that can be recovered by local authorities from retailers. This may include costs for the recovery of trolleys from watercourses where this is undertaken by the local authority, however, this will be a standard charge set by the authority within the terms of the legislation, based on the average cost of dealing with abandoned shopping and luggage trolleys in its area. Local authorities are expected to give adequate local publicity to the charge, and where they have seized abandoned trolleys and charged for their return, they should, on request, provide trolley owners with a full breakdown of the costs incurred.

Both the Environment Agency and British Waterways have enforcement powers in relation to the pollution of watercourses.

British Waterways has powers under section 9 of the British Waterways Act 1983 to remove shopping trolleys from inland waterways and recover any costs incurred in connection with their removal.

In accordance with the Environment Agency’s Enforcement Policy the decision to take enforcement action in relation to shopping trolleys in watercourses will depend upon a number of factors including:

- The pollution caused/pollution potential
- Response by the company
- Management systems in place to prevent the loss of trolleys and ensure efficient retrieval.

In the case of national retailers, the Environment Agency would normally endeavour to contact the company Head Office at an early stage and prior to any formal action (e.g. prosecution) being taken.

Trolley abandonment in watercourses is particularly problematic and may require action by local authorities to help prevent trolleys from being dumped in this way, for example by maintaining fencing to waterways where these are in local authority ownership.
Case Study – Abandoned Trolley Campaign in Bristol

Through the existing partnership of the Bristol Living Rivers Project, Bristol City Council, the Environment Agency, Clean & Green and river groups started a campaign to find a whole city long-term solution to the problem of dumped shopping trolleys in watercourses and open spaces.

- Legislation, local trolley management practices and potential solutions were investigated.
- A citywide trolley survey revealed the worst watercourses and supermarkets which were the source of the abandoned trolleys.
- A series of free community river walks and media coverage raised awareness.
- Bristol City Council undertook a full public consultation on adopting schedule 4 of the EPA 1990. If approved a removal scheme will be set up.
- Reports of abandoned trolleys will be registered through Bristol City Council’s Customer Services telephone hotline and abandoned trolleys monitored through the Local Environmental Quality Survey of England administered by Encams.
- The Planning Authority includes a condition on relevant planning applications to ensure measures will be in place to prevent the removal of trolleys off-site.

The campaign used a multi-agency approach sharing both knowledge and work. With good political and media support the problems were tackled through both policy and practical measures.

Further information from:

Kathy Derrick
Bristol Living Rivers Project Officer
Tel: 0117 9223400
Acting together to find a solution

A partnership approach to trolley loss management involving all parties should be the preferred approach to achieving long-term sustained improvement.

Following the process outlined in the checklist below will be a useful starting point to this process.

Checklist

✓ Where local authorities/the Environment Agency/British Waterways believe there to be an on-going trolley abandonment problem this should be highlighted to the retailer and a meeting arranged to discuss the problem and how it may be addressed.

✓ Review preventative measures:
  – Can further measures be taken to prevent trolleys leaving site?
  – Can further measures be taken against individuals dumping trolleys e.g. in watercourses?

✓ Establish a service level agreement for retailer trolley collection, including the extent and frequency of recovery ‘sweeps’ and agreed time limits within which abandoned trolleys should be removed. For a trolley abandoned on land, 72 hours is recommended as the maximum response time. In most cases it should be possible to carry out retrieval well within this limit, the speed of response being dependent on such factors as the level of hazard caused and ease of accessing the land. For a trolley in a watercourse, a risk-based approach should be taken. In some situations, the increased flood risk or the danger to navigation could mean that the trolley should be removed immediately, whilst in other situations a longer timescale may be adequate.

✓ Review other preventative measures that may need to be taken by other parties – e.g. repairing/re-instating fences to prevent access to railway track sides.

✓ Agree joint publicity and local awareness-raising campaigns where required.

✓ Agree on regular local shopping trolley liaison meetings to monitor and review on-going shopping trolley management procedures.

✓ Involve the local CDRP in establishing the partnership agreement so that all participating agencies are aware and advised of the approach.
Case Study – Skelmersdale Trolley Watch, West Lancashire

The scheme set out to rid the streets and streams of abandoned trolleys through a partnership approach involving local supermarkets, the police, Environment Agency, country rangers, fire brigade, residents groups and the West Lancashire Streetscene Department. The supermarkets concerned were Aldi, Kwiksave, Wilkinsons, Iceland, Farm Foods and ASDA and staff from the Concourse Shopping Centre.

These parties all worked together over a number of months to deal with the existing problem by removing abandoned trolleys from the streets, out of wooded areas and streams. Trolleys in good condition were returned to the supermarkets, whilst damaged ones were disposed of. This resulted in streams being cleared of trolleys that had been there for many years. Leading on from this the scheme was expanded to dig out parts of the waterways that had stopped flowing, making the local environment a far more attractive place for residents.

Asda changed all their trolleys to have brakes fitted and installed sensors by their shop entrances to prevent trolleys being taken away from car park areas. Aldi, Iceland, Farm Foods and Kwiksave also put poles on their trolleys to stop them from leaving the stores.

The occurrence of trolley abandonment has now greatly reduced. Co-operation and commitment from all involved has been essential to the success of the scheme, as well as ensuring that staff have been able to attend and participate at meetings, especially at the outset.

Further information from:
Robbie Levens
Street Cleansing Officer
01695 577177
Management of luggage trolleys

The provisions in section 99 and Schedule 4 of the EPA 1990 also apply to ‘luggage trolleys’, defined in the legislation as trolleys provided by a person carrying out a railway, light railway, tramway or road transport undertaking, or an airport operation, to travellers for carrying their luggage.

Airports tend to experience less trolley abandonment than other transport facilities such as coach and rail stations since they are relatively inaccessible to pedestrian traffic and most trolley usage takes place inside the terminal building. Additionally, many luggage trolleys have automatic brakes requiring the handle to be depressed to allow them to move, in order to prevent them from rolling off and creating a hazard. This can help to make them less attractive as a source of entertainment for children, and hence misuse.

Nevertheless, as in the case of shopping trolleys, where loss and abandonment does occur, it can result in considerable costs, both for local authorities to deal with, and for transport operators to replace. Operational land is specifically excluded from the legislative provisions, but trolleys abandoned here can present a serious threat to the safety and operational integrity of the transport network.

Many of the principles outlined in this document can help in developing arrangements for the storage, monitoring, reporting and collection of luggage trolleys. In particular, it is recommended that:

- Luggage trolleys should be marked-up with the owner’s name and a contact phone number for ease of return.
- Where problems exist, local authorities, transport providers and other relevant agencies should work together to develop solutions and agree arrangements for collection.
- It should be recognised that transport land may be used as a dumping ground for other types of trolley, and operators may be looking for these to be collected quickly to prevent their use in acts of vandalism.

The following section offers some further specific advice on issues relating to railway land.

Rail Land - Track and Trackside

The use of abandoned trolleys in railway vandalism has the potential to create a serious hazard to railway operations and passenger safety. Additional damage can arise where the track is electrified (both overhead and third rail). The removal of trolleys from the track and immediate trackside must take place either as part of a planned closure/possession of the network or on the basis of individual removal by personnel with the necessary railway safety accreditation, such as rail engineers.

Network Rail has set up a 24 hour helpline whose remit includes handling requests from local authorities and the public to clear the line-side area (see ‘contacts’ below).
Rail Land: Platforms and Stations

Train Operating Companies (TOCs) will be responsible for any luggage trolleys they make available for passenger use at stations, and should consider the following steps to help prevent trolley losses from occurring:

- Station operators should conduct a regular count of their trolleys to ensure any losses are identified. It is suggested that this is carried out on a weekly basis, but with greater frequency should any problems with trolley abandonment arise.

- Trolleys are mostly made available at larger stations, where it may prove cost effective to invest in wheel-locking equipment at the main exits. In many cases, coin release systems are already used to good effect and help provide an incentive for customers to return them. The use of bollards may be less practical at stations than elsewhere as they may obstruct the free movement of passengers and impair access for wheelchair users and others with restricted mobility.
Useful Contacts

British Retail Consortium
2nd Floor,
21 Dartmouth Street,
London
SW1H 9BP
Tel: 020 7854 8900
www.brc.org.uk

British Waterways
Willow Grange
Church Road
Watford
Hertfordshire
WD17 4QA
Tel: 01923 201120
www.britishwaterways.co.uk
24 hour emergency freephone: 0800 47 999 47

Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra)
Local Environmental Quality Unit
Nobel House
17 Smith Square
London
SW1P 3JR
Tel: 08459 335577
www.defra.gov.uk

Department for Transport
Great Minster House
76 Marsham Street
London
SW1P 4DR
Tel: 020 7944 8300
www.dft.gov.uk

ENCAMS
Elizabeth House
The Pier
Wigan
WN3 4EX
Tel: 01942 612621
www.encams.org

Environment Agency
Tel: 08708 506 506
www.environment-agency.gov.uk
24 hour pollution incident line: 0800 807060

Health and Safety Executive
Rose Court
2 Southwark Bridge
London
SE1 9HS
Tel: 0845 345 0055
www.hse.gov.uk

Welsh Assembly Government
Local Environmental Quality Team
Environment – Protection & Quality Division
Cathays Park
Cardiff
CF10 3NQ
0845 010 3300
www.wales.gov.uk

Network Rail
40 Melton St
London
NW1 2EE
Tel: 020 7557 8000
www.networkrail.co.uk
24 hour helpline: 08457 11 41 41

For details of your local council services, visit:
www.local.direct.gov.uk/mycouncil/