



Dealing with Travellers on Commercial Premises

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The unauthorised and unexpected arrival of travellers can be a common problem for landowners and businesses, particularly those with open sites that are more vulnerable to occupation, for example car parks or land awaiting development.

Travellers can cause significant business interruption and delays, undermine customer or employee confidence and safety, and provoke unwelcome publicity. If an occupation is prolonged, considerable costs may also be incurred in cleaning up and restoring the land to its former state once the travellers have moved on.



Photo: Eric Jones.

Being prepared and able to swiftly regain possession of land can considerably reduce the negative impacts of traveller occupation. Burges Salmon has frequently acted for land owning clients in reacting to such incidents. We can bring practical experience and advice to assist in achieving a rapid and cost effective result.

Common Law

A landowner has a common law right to use reasonable force to remove travellers that are trespassing on commercial premises. This is usually by towing caravans/vehicles off site. Although this approach can carry some risks, when it is managed appropriately, using experienced private bailiffs and with the co-operation and often the presence of the local Police force, it can be very swift and effective as it avoids the delays of issuing proceedings and obtaining a Court Order for Possession. We have considerable experience of successfully employing this method, which often results in the travellers leaving the land within 48 hours of first instruction at a significantly lower cost than pursuing the Court Process.

Court Process

Alternatively, if the common law approach is considered inappropriate in specific circumstances, Travellers can be removed after obtaining a Possession Order at Court. There is an expedited process for obtaining a Possession Order against trespassers, which usually takes around 5-7 working days. Court bailiffs will then be instructed to carry out an eviction to remove the travellers – potentially a further 3-5 working days.

Despite these possible delays, an eviction of travellers pursuant to a Possession Order does not carry the risks associated with removal under the Common Law as the Court, rather than the landowner, is ultimately responsible for the eviction.

We have successfully obtained and enforced Possession Orders against trespassers on numerous occasions and liaise closely with the Court concerned to seek to ensure our client's case is prioritised.

Post occupation

Arrangements should be made to ensure the land will be cleaned and cleared immediately after the travellers have left, allowing a swift return to normal business operations. Consideration should also be given to properly re-securing the site (e.g. a height restrictor can be an effective deterrent to future attempted occupation of a car park or large boulders placed to prevent vehicular access to open land) as well as securing other vulnerable sites which the travellers may seek to move onto.

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