



GUIDE TO REMOVING TRAVELLERS FROM PRIVATE LAND

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INTRODUCTION

Finding travellers on your land can be unsettling and costly. Unauthorised encampments often lead to disruption, damage, and financial loss – and the responsibility for dealing with them falls on the landowner. Acting quickly and within the law is essential to protect your property and avoid escalation.

Removing travellers yourself is rarely straightforward. Police and councils have only limited powers when the land in question is privately owned, and attempting to act without the correct legal process can expose you to serious risk. That is why professional, certificated enforcement agents are usually the most effective option.

This guide explains the legal rights of private landowners, and the routes available for removing travellers and preventing re-entry.

FIRST STEPS

Discovering travellers on your land can be stressful, but it's important to stay calm and act within the law from the very beginning. The first steps you take will shape how quickly and effectively the situation can be resolved.

Your first call of action should always be to report an unauthorised encampment to the police so a record is made of the incident. They often treat such cases as civil matters, but may attend if there are reports of crime or anti-social behaviour.

On private land, responsibility rests with the landowner. Police and councils will not usually arrange eviction for you. Because of this, it is highly recommended you enlist a specialist enforcement company. They have the expertise to manage traveller evictions lawfully and efficiently. Enforcement officers understand the correct use of common law and court orders, and their presence can prevent situations from escalating.



LEGAL ROUTES FOR EVICTION

Once travellers occupy your land, you have the legal right to remove them. Unauthorised encampments can cause disruption, damage, and financial loss, and the law recognises that landowners should not be left powerless in these situations.

However, any action must be carried out correctly and within the limits of the law. Using excessive force or acting without authority could expose you to claims of unlawful eviction. There are two recognised legal pathways to regaining possession:

1 · Common Law Eviction:

This is the quickest and most widely used option. Under common law, a landowner has the right to instruct certificated enforcement officers to require trespassers to leave. If they refuse, the officers can remove them using no more force than is reasonably necessary. Because no court order is needed, common law evictions can often be completed within 24 hours.



2 · Court Proceedings and Writs of Possession:

Where common law is not suitable — for example, with larger groups, when there has been violence or repeated incursions, or if resistance is anticipated — a possession order may be sought through the courts. Once granted, it can be transferred to the High Court for enforcement under a Writ of Possession. Although this route is slower and more costly, it carries the authority of a court order. If trespassers breach the order, they commit a criminal offence, meaning the police can intervene directly.

NEVER:

- **Attempt a DIY eviction:** Taking direct action yourself risks confrontation and could lead to claims of unlawful eviction.
- **Use unlicensed agents:** Only certificated enforcement officers are authorised to carry out evictions under common law.
- **Use excessive force:** The law only allows “reasonable force,” and misjudging this could expose you to legal claims. Qualified enforcement agents know where the line is.
- **Ignore the situation:** delays encourage more travellers to arrive and increase the risk of damage to your property.

HOW COMMON LAW EVICTIONS WORK

- **1 · Initial Attendance:** Enforcement officers attend the site on behalf of the landowner. They will speak to the travellers, inform them they are trespassing, and request that they leave.
- **2 · Allowing Time to Leave:** Travellers are given a period of time to move off the land. This is often between one and 24 hours, depending on the circumstances. If the trespass is aggravated – for example, where damage has been caused or threatening behaviour has occurred – no notice period is required.
- **3 · Removal if Necessary:** If the travellers do not leave within the time allowed, enforcement officers may remove them. Only the minimum force necessary can be used. Officers will also take steps to secure the land afterwards and record evidence of any damage.
- **4 · Police Involvement:** While the police will not usually carry out the eviction themselves, enforcement agents will often request their presence to prevent breaches of the peace. The police may intervene directly if serious offences occur, such as violence, criminal damage, or large-scale obstruction.

USING A WRIT OF POSSESSION

- **1 · Apply for Possession:** Enforcement officers attend the site on behalf of the landowner. They will speak to the travellers, inform them they are trespassing, and request that they leave.
- **2 · Serving the Order:** Travellers are given a period of time to move off the land. This is often between one and 24 hours, depending on the circumstances. If the trespass is aggravated – for example, where damage has been caused or threatening behaviour has occurred – no notice period is required.
- **3 · Transfer to the High Court:** If the travellers do not leave within the time allowed, enforcement officers may remove them. Only the minimum force necessary can be used. Officers will also take steps to secure the land afterwards and record evidence of any damage.

Although this is slower and more expensive than the common law route, once in place, travellers are committing a criminal offence if they remain on your property, so police have the power to intervene. It also deters against reoccupation, which is ideal for cases of repeat incursions and entrenched groups

PROTECTING LAND AGAINST FUTURE OCCUPATION

Sites that have already been occupied are more likely to be targeted again. Luckily, there are a number of effective ways to secure private land against unauthorised encampments:

1 • Physical Barriers, Fencing, & Boundaries:

- Install strong gates secured with heavy-duty locks.
- Use height barriers at entrances to stop caravans from gaining access.
- Place bollards, concrete blocks, or earth mounds to block entry points.
- Wooden fencing provides a basic deterrent and should suffice in preventing opportunistic occupation.
- Steel palisade fencing is sturdier and harder to climb, so is ideal for more vulnerable sites, but it is much more expensive.
- Ditches and natural barriers like trees, hedges, and rivers also make access more difficult.



2 • Security measures:

- CCTV cameras are a strong deterrent, and mean that if travellers do attempt occupation, there is evidence.
- Motion sensors and motion-activated lighting makes it very difficult for intruders to move unnoticed.
- Security patrols and guards could be appropriate for particularly high-risk or valuable sites, but this is costly.
- Remote monitoring services can alert you instantly if movement is detected on your land.

3 • Good practice after eviction:

- Inspect the site as soon as possible once the encampment has been cleared. Weak points such as broken fences, damaged locks, or unsecured gates are often exploited again. Also keep an eye out for any health and safety hazards or waste left behind by travellers.
- Remove any rubbish, abandoned vehicles, or debris promptly. These can act as cover for a return visit and create the impression of a neglected site.
- Consider notifying neighbours, local businesses, or site staff so they can be alert to suspicious activity.

No method provides guaranteed protection, but combining several measures makes your land much harder to access and reduces risk greatly. The majority of travellers won't attempt to occupy land with visible security measures.

LANDOWNER LIABILITY

EXCESSIVE FORCE

The law only permits the use of “reasonable force.” Courts take a strict view of what is considered excessive. If you, or someone acting on your behalf, go beyond what is necessary, you may face civil claims from the trespassers.

UNLAWFUL EVICTION

Evictions must follow common law or court process. Moving travellers outside of these methods can amount to unlawful eviction, leading to hefty damages awarded against the landowner that often far exceed the original cost of the problem.

UNLICENSED ENFORCEMENT

Only certificated enforcement officers are authorised to carry out common law evictions. If you use anyone else, the eviction could be deemed invalid, and you as the landowner could be held responsible.

NEGLECTING SITE SAFETAY

Once travellers have left, the landowner must ensure the site is safe. If damage is left unrepaired or hazardous waste is not cleared, and someone is injured as a result, liability can fall on the landowner.

CONCLUSION

Traveller encampments are a serious issue. They bring disruption, risk of damage, and financial cost – and the responsibility for resolving the problem lies with the landowner. Key takeaways are:

- **Always act quickly:** Delays make the problem harder to resolve.
- **Follow the proper legal process:** Either common law or a court order.
- **Never attempt DIY eviction:** Only certificated enforcement officers can lawfully carry out the removal.
- **Secure your land after eviction:** Preventing re-entry is as important as removing the encampment in the first place.

When handled correctly, traveller evictions can be resolved swiftly, lawfully, and with minimal disruption. The key is to take decisive action, use the right process for the situation, and ensure professionals carry it out on your behalf.





ABLE INVESTIGATIONS & ENFORCEMENT SERVICES

Able Investigations are an ISO-9001 accredited team of Certificated Enforcement Officers who can carry out a full range of duties.

From serving legal papers to traveller eviction and enforcing court judgements, we offer a timely service within the framework of the law. If you have any queries or require advice on any aspect of our service, our highly experienced support team are on hand to assist.

Although we are based in Bristol, we offer our services throughout the UK.

Get in touch today if you would like to discuss enlisting the services of a Certificated Enforcement Office by calling us on our 24h/7 telephone service at 0345 366 0000, or through the [contact form](#) on our website.