

**Report to Chairperson and Members  
of the Transportation Strategic Policy Committee**

**Recommended changes to the procedure for the removal of Abandoned Bicycles  
within the Dublin City Council jurisdiction**

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## Introduction

In February 2016 an Abandoned Bicycle Procedure was adopted by the Transportation Strategic Policy Committee aimed at freeing up valuable on-street cycle parking by removing bicycles that had clearly been abandoned. There continues to be strong demand for on-street cycle parking within the city centre and this is predicted to rise significantly in the coming months with the introduction of stationless bike sharing. This report reviews the current procedure and recommends a number of changes to improve its effectiveness.

### Existing Procedure for the Removal of Abandoned Bicycles:

The existing procedures for the removal of abandoned bicycles are coordinated on an area wide basis by the Public Domain Enforcement Officers with the assistance of Traffic Officers from the Environment and Transportation Department.

Essentially bicycles that are identified as potentially abandoned are initially monitored for two weeks, then tagged as abandoned and if they are still in the same location after a further two weeks the bicycles are removed. The bicycles are kept for a further four weeks in secure storage during which time the owner can reclaim their bicycle.

### Review of Current Procedure:

The current procedure has provided the Public Domain Officers with an agreed method for removing abandoned bicycles. In 2016, a total of 216 bicycles (including partial frames) were removed from the south-east and central area with a further 92 bicycles removed from these areas in 2017. Efforts to remove abandoned bicycles have been concentrated in these areas as this is where the demand for cycle parking is greatest.

The procedure has operated smoothly with only a handful of cases reported where owners have sought to recover bicycles or frames that were removed as abandoned. In all cases the bicycles have been returned to their owners.

It is however felt that the current procedure is a little overcautious and could be improved by making the following changes.

### Proposed Changes

- 1) In cases where bicycles are in extremely poor condition and pose an immediate hazard to the general public it is proposed that the general abandoned bicycle procedure should **not apply**. In these exceptional cases it is recommended that the bicycles are removed immediately with no requirements to either tag or place the bicycles in storage.
- 2) It is proposed that the definition of an abandoned bicycle should be revised to state that:

An abandoned bicycle is defined as a bicycle located on a public street or in a public car park *that would appear, due to its general poor condition, to have been abandoned by its owner.*

Explanation:

The earlier definition of an abandoned bicycle as a bicycle *that would appear to have been in the same location unmoved for a period of more than 3 months* is considered over-cautious and too specific.

- 3) It is proposed to remove the requirement to initially monitor a bicycle for two weeks before tagging it as abandoned.

Explanation:

The current procedure requires that once an official suspects a bike is abandoned they must monitor it for two weeks before tagging it as abandoned. It was intended that this requirement would help avoid situations where bicycles that hadn't been abandoned were tagged in error. However, during the two years since this procedure has been in operation, DCC Officials have become accustomed to recognising abandoned bicycles and it is considered that this requirement is no longer needed. As long as DCC Officials continue to exercise caution when tagging bicycles it is considered unnecessary to monitor the bikes for two weeks beforehand.

- 4) It is proposed to alter the text on the official abandoned bicycle tag as shown below:

Existing Tag:

New Tag:



Explanation:

The original text on the tag ensured that no bicycles were removed unless the tag was in place and therefore the owner was given two weeks clear notification of DCC's intention to remove the bicycle. It sought to avoid a scenario where the tag became separated from the bicycle before the owner had a chance to read it.

However this method has proved cumbersome as in some cases the tags were removed from bicycles that were clearly abandoned. In these cases the DCC Officials had to restart the tagging procedure.

In the vast majority of cases where bicycles have been tagged as abandoned and removed there has been no attempt by the owners to recover them. This is due in part to the judgement shown by the DCC officials in only tagging bicycles showing obvious signs that they have been abandoned and also the fact that once a bicycle deteriorates past a certain stage it would appear that most owners have little interest in them.

Taking these facts into consideration it is now thought that the original text was unnecessarily cautious.

The proposed new tag offers greater clarity and will allow for a more efficient use of Dublin City Council resources with abandoned bicycles being removed in a shorter timeframe. Any owner who fails to notice that their bicycle has been tagged as abandoned will still have four weeks to contact the council and recover their bicycle should they wish.

- 5) When a lock is cut to remove an abandoned bicycle it is proposed to keep the cut lock with the bicycle when it is moved to the secure storage.

Explanation:

All bicycles in reasonable condition that are removed as abandoned are kept in secure storage for a *holding period* of 4 weeks. During that time the owner can reclaim their bicycle by contacting the relevant official from the area where the bicycle was parked. The owner is required to establish ownership. One simple method of doing this is to produce the key that opens the lock.

### **Summary:**

It is **recommended** that the current procedure for dealing with abandoned bicycle is revised as follows:

- 1) The current procedure will **not** apply to abandoned bicycles that are in extremely poor condition and pose an immediate hazard to the general public. There will be no requirement to tag or store these bicycles and instead they will be removed as soon as possible and disposed of.
- 2) The current definition of an abandoned bicycle is to be revised to state that:

*An abandoned bicycle is defined as a bicycle located on a public street or in a public car park that would appear, due to its general poor condition, to have been abandoned by its owner.*

- 3) There will no longer be a requirement to initially monitor a bicycle for 2 weeks before tagging it as abandoned.
- 4) If a bicycle is still in the same location two weeks after the bicycle has been tagged it will be removed (regardless of whether the original tag is present or not).
- 5) Any locks that are cut when removing an abandoned bicycle will be kept with the bicycle during the 4 week holding period.

It is proposed to monitor this revised procedure over the following 12 months and report back to the Transportation Strategic Policy Committee on its operation in early 2019.

It is intended to publish the procedure and relevant contact details on the [dublincity.ie](http://dublincity.ie) website.

Furthermore the Gardaí and the Dublin Cycling Campaign will be informed of the procedure.

The full revised procedure is attached to this report for information.

### **Revised Procedure for the Removal of Abandoned Bicycles:**

1. This procedure does **not** apply to abandoned bicycles that are in extremely poor condition and pose an immediate hazard to the general public. There will be no requirement to tag or store these bicycles and instead they will be removed as soon as possible and disposed of.
2. For the purpose of this procedure an abandoned bicycle is defined as *a bicycle located on a public street or in a public car park that would appear, due to its general poor condition, to have been abandoned by its owner.*
3. The removal of abandoned bicycles is to continue to be managed on an area basis by the Public Domain Enforcement Officers with the assistance of the Environment and Transportation Department. The exception is the management of the removal of abandoned bicycles from Drury Street Car Park which will be managed by the Traffic Planning Section.
4. Abandoned bicycles will usually be identified by their condition. Flat tyres on both front and back wheels, buckled or missing wheels, damaged frames or heavily rusted chains and sprockets will be taken as indications that the bicycle has been abandoned.
5. Dublin City Council officials will exercise caution when determining that a bicycle is abandoned.
6. Once a council official has determined that a bicycle is abandoned, an *Abandoned Bicycle Tag* will be placed on the bicycle. This tag (see photograph below) is a weatherproof, single-use luggage style tag which allows the council official to insert a date after which the bicycle will be removed.

The council official will make a note of the location of the potentially abandoned bicycle, take a photographic record and arrange a follow up inspection after the two weeks period has elapsed.



7. If the bicycle remains in the same location Dublin City Council will take the necessary steps to remove the bicycle. Before the bicycle is removed a photographic record of the condition of the bicycle will be taken. The lock(s) will then be cut and the bicycle removed. The cut lock will be kept with the abandoned bike as it can potentially be used to establish ownership should the bicycle be reclaimed at a later stage. The owner would be required to produce a key that opens the lock.
8. All bicycles that are in reasonable condition will be kept in secure storage for a *holding period* of 4 weeks. During that time the owner will be able to reclaim their bicycle by contacting the relevant official from the area where the bicycle was parked (see contact details below). The owner will be required to provide proof of ownership or produce the key that opens the lock that secured the bicycle. No compensation will be payable to the owner for any inconvenience associated with the actions of Dublin City Council in removing the bicycle.
9. Once the *holding period* has expired, the bicycles, depending on their condition, will be donated to charity, recycled or dumped.

**Contact Details:**

Central Area:	John McPartlan – Public Domain Enforcement Officer	222 5303
South East Area:	Kevin O’Sullivan- Public Domain Enforcement Officer	222 2499
South Central Area	TBC - Public Domain Enforcement Officer	222 5200
North West Area	Patrick Smith - Public Domain Enforcement Officer	222 5496
North Central Area	Richard Cleary- Public Domain Enforcement Officer	222 8866
Drury Street Car Park	Alec Dundon – Executive Engineer	222 2706

## **Operation and Monitoring of Procedure**

It is intended to only use this procedure to remove bicycles that have clearly been abandoned and therefore it is considered unlikely that many owners will seek to recover their bicycles.

However in order to assist owners who may seek to recover bicycles it is intended to publish the procedure and relevant contact details on the [dublincity.ie](http://dublincity.ie) website.

Furthermore the Gardaí and the Dublin Cycling Campaign will be informed of the procedure.