



Joint Vehicle Recovery Service Policy (Surrey and Sussex) (141/2026)

Abstract

This document describes the approach by Surrey Police and Sussex Police to the recovery of vehicles by the police in varying circumstances.

Policy

1. Introduction

1.1 This policy is required to ensure the correct reporting and recovery process is followed when vehicles (including E-scooters, Illegal E-Bikes, Illegal E-Motorcycles and Unregistered Off-Road Motorcycles. From this point to be referred to as Vehicles) need to be removed under the Vehicle Recovery Scheme (VRS) (redacted text). It provides an efficient and cost-effective recovery service for vehicles which fall within the remit of the Joint Vehicle Recovery Service (JVRS).

1.2 Where appropriate, it complies with current legislation under the [Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984](#), [Removal and Disposal of Vehicles Regulations 1986](#) and guidance from the Home Office and National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC).

2. Scope

2.1 Vehicle Recovery Scheme - This incorporates the recovery of statutory or non-statutory vehicles and the liability for charges that will be applied in the different circumstances when a vehicle is removed from the highway by our contracted business partner, AA Developments Limited (AADL). The scheme is for use by Surrey and Sussex officers and staff. For more details refer to Vehicle Recovery Scheme.

2.2 Devolved Powers from the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA) - Operation Excise – The Forces have adopted the devolved powers of the DVLA, this grants powers to the police to seize vehicles in circumstances where a vehicle is used on a road without a current Vehicle Excise Licence in force. For more details see Devolved Powers of the DVLA - Operation Excise. The signed agreement with the DVLA now includes Police and Community Support Officer (PCSO).

3. Policy Statement

3.1 Surrey Police and Sussex Police (hereafter referred to as the Forces) have engaged with local businesses and partner agencies to provide the best and most cost-effective vehicle recovery service for the residents of both Force area's and both respective Forces.

Procedure

1. Joint Surrey and Sussex Vehicle Recovery Scheme (JVRS)

1.1 This scheme provides for the removal and storage of vehicles which need to be removed from the highway under both statutory and non-statutory circumstances. This has been contracted out to AA Developments Limited (AADL) who are responsible for facilitating and managing this on behalf of the Forces.

1.2 A statutory recovery can be determined as:

- A vehicle causing a danger and/or obstruction.
- Internal document: Vehicles Driven Without Appropriate Insurance and or Driving Licence – Section 165A - [Section 165A of the Road Traffic Act 1988](#)
- Internal document: Vehicles Seized under Section 59 Police Reform Act 2002 - [Section 59 of the Police Reform Act 2002](#)
- Vehicles left in contravention of a restriction enforceable by the police.
- Vehicles that are stolen or suspected to be.

1.3 A non-statutory recovery can be determined as:

- A Police and Criminal Evidence (PACE) 'evidential' vehicle recovery.
- Police fleet vehicles (see Internal document: Recovery of Police Vehicles also includes information on when the incorrect fuel is used).
- Owner's request for recovery the vehicle you need to recover falls within these categories.
- Vehicles belonging to a member of the public, accidentally stung during a live Tactical Pursuit and Containment Operation.

If the vehicle you need to recover falls within these categories, please refer to Internal document: Vehicle Recovery Scheme unless indicated otherwise.

2. Devolved Powers of the DVLA- Operation Excise

2.1 The Forces have adopted the devolved powers of the DVLA, this grants powers to the police to seize vehicles in circumstances where a vehicle is used on a road without a current Vehicle Excise Licence in force. These powers can only be used in controlled circumstances. If the vehicle you need to recover falls within these categories, please refer to Internal document: Devolved Powers of the DVLA - Operation Excise.

3. E- scooters, Illegal E-Bikes, Illegal E-Motorcycles and Unregistered Off-Road Motorcycles (Vehicles).

3.1 This procedure must be followed to enforce legislation surrounding the use of E-scooters, Illegal E-bikes, Illegal E-Motorcycles and Unregistered Off-Road Motorcycles outside of government approved trial areas.

E-scooters Illegal E-Bikes and E-Motorcycles are readily available without restriction to any age group and are:

- Classified as a powered transporter in law.
- There is no specially designed legal regime for powered transporters. This means that they are covered by the same laws and regulations that apply to all motor vehicles.
- The definition of “motor vehicle” as set out in the [Road Traffic Act \(RTA\) 1988](#) is “any mechanically propelled vehicle intended or adapted for use on roads” There is case law confirming that powered transporters fall within this definition.
- The term “powered transporters” covers a variety of novel personal transport devices which are mechanically propelled (propelled by a motor) as well as, or instead of being manually propelled. It includes E-scooters, Segways, Hoverboards, Go-Peds (Combustion engine-powered kick scooters), powered unicycles, and U-Wheels.
- This does not include electrically assisted pedal cycles which have their own regulatory framework.
- Require a driving licence:
 - Category Q on a full or provisional licence for categories AM, A and B.
 - Provisional licence holders do not need to display ‘L’ plates whilst riding in a trial area.
 - The minimum age to hold a licence is 16 as per regulation 9 Motor Vehicles (Driving Licences (Regulations) 1999.
- require an insurance policy to be used on the road; and
- are subject to all Road Traffic laws e.g., driving standards, drink and drug driving and disqualified driving.

1.3 It is illegal to use an E-scooter Illegal E-Bike or E-Motorcycle, and Unregistered Off-Road Motorcycle (Now to be referred to from this point on as Illegal vehicle(s) on:

- Roads and Highways.
- Pavements.
- Public Places.
- Bridleways.

E-scooter riders are not required to wear helmets.

Individuals using non-UK licences in trial areas will be advised to carry their licence with them.

An Illegal Vehicle (apart from an Off-Road Motorcycle):

- must have pedals that can be used to propel it
- can have more than 2 wheels, for example a tricycle
- It can be propelled up to 15.5mph without pedalling but only if it has been approved.

Its electric motor:

- must have a 'continuous rated power' output of no more than 250 watts
- must not be able to propel the bike when it's travelling at more than 15.5 miles per hour (mph)

Markings on the bike must show both:

- the continuous rated power output
- the bike manufacturer

It must also show either:

- the battery's voltage
- the maximum speed the motor can propel the bike

If the bike is an EAPC then it can be ridden on cycle paths and anywhere else pedal bikes are allowed.

- The bike cannot be ridden on pavements.
- If the electric bike does not meet the EAPC rules, then it is classed as a motorcycle or moped.

If the bike is not an EAPC

If an electric bike is not an EAPC it must be [registered and taxed](#).

- [hold a valid driving licence to ride one](#)
- The user must wear a [motorcycle helmet that meets British Safety Standards](#)
- [The vehicle must be insured](#)

Process.

The use of these vehicles can be dealt with by offences under the following:

- [Section 59 Police Reform Act \(anti-social use of vehicles\)](#)
- [Section 165A RTA](#)

Age restrictions

Where the vehicle is being used in **an antisocial manner or in the commission of committing crime** there will be no discretion for age. The vehicle will be seized, will not be returned and will ultimately be disposed of. This will include destruction or dismantlement.

Persons under 16 years

Discretion must be used when dealing with young people under 16 who are clearly using the vehicle in a non anti-social manner as they may be unaware of current legislation. Consideration of informal education and the removal and return of the relevant vehicle to parents or a responsible person direct may be considered. Rationale for any decisions made must be added to the Occurrence Enquiry Log (OEL).

Any vehicle stopped where the rider is over **16 years and under 18 years** must be dealt with in the following manner:

- Consider using Section 59 Police Reform Act in the first instance, if not appropriate seize under Section 165A RTA.
- Issue a first warning, advise the vehicle can only be used on private land with the express permission of the landowner. If a warning has already been given the vehicles will be seized, will not be returned and will ultimately be disposed of. This will include destruction or dismantlement.
- Where possible and appropriate arrange for the disclaimer to be completed and signed in the presence of an adult.
- Update NICHE in the normal manner for Section 59 warnings where appropriate.
- If the officer considers the rider will continue with their journey and not accept the advice / warning revert to Section 165A RTA powers and seize the E-scooter. The vehicles will be seized will not be returned and will ultimately be disposed of. This will include destruction or dismantlement.
- If there are other offences present other than those identified under Section 59, for example drink or drug driving, disqualified driving as an example deal with those as the primary offence and seize the vehicle under Section 165A RTA.

Persons over 18 years.

Any vehicle stopped where the rider is over 18 years must be dealt with in the following manner:

- If offences are present, no insurance or failing to comply with the conditions of their driving licence use the powers under Section 165A RTA and seize the vehicle. The vehicle will be seized, will not be returned and will ultimately be disposed of. This will include destruction or dismantlement.
- Officers must complete a Traffic Offence Report (TOR) for every seizure of a vehicle to validate the seizure. Offences should be dealt with in the same style as any other motor vehicle utilising the TOR process which offers formal education or Conditional Offer of Fixed Penalty reserving the use of court action where no alternative exists or out of court disposal is inappropriate.

- In the absence of a Vehicle Registration Mark (VRM) officers must use the last 8 characters of the serial number of the vehicle on any relevant paperwork.
- Officers must not just seize the vehicle as a punishment process to the rider, it must be backed by an evidential process as with any other traffic offence.
- If there are other offences present other than those identified under Section 165A RTA, for example drink or drug driving, disqualified driving as an example deal with those as the primary offence and seize the vehicle under Section 165A RTA.
- If other offences are present and dealt with by charge or process always proceed with the Section 165A offences at the same time.

Seizure Process.

Seizures will be in accordance with the Joint Vehicle Recovery Service (JVRS) Policy.

The defined process for recovery must be used in line with all Section 165A and Section 59 seizures. The seizing officer must contact the (redacted text) in the normal manner to arrange a recovery. The nearest available Vehicle Recovery Operator (VRO) will be assigned to the recovery and should attend within 30 minutes as is their contract.

Under no circumstances must the seized vehicle be taken to a police premises or placed in a property store. Apart from an unregistered off-road motorcycle.

E- Vehicles are powered by lithium batteries that degrade and can become unstable when damaged or subject to a power drain. They emit white toxic smoke as the battery degrades and the lithium cells degrade, they reach a very high temperature and spontaneously combust, burning at a very high temperature. The vehicle recovery operators are trained to deal with electric vehicles and store them accordingly.

For pre-planned operations on these vehicles contact the vehicle recovery team in good time who can arrange to have an appropriate VRO vehicle on site with the policing team to negate the need to call for a recovery every time. This will speed up the process.

Officers must generate the seizure notice in the normal way; the vehicles will not have a VRM, make use of the serial number as an identifier. This can also be used in the TOR for the prosecution.

On arrival the VRO will complete the Vehicle Audit Document (VAD) to allow for the management of the vehicles on the JVRS management server, ELVIS. This will allow the JVRS team to manage the return process with the VRO.

The seizing officer must have a STORM record created detailing the rider and/or owners' details. The ELVIS reference number if known (EID), location and any other information the officer feels will assist the JVRS team. Have the record sent to the JVRS team email account at (redacted text) (This will also allow for any external enquiries from the public to be tied up with the seizure.)

The seizing officer must inform the rider they cannot reclaim the vehicle, and it will be disposed of. However, if proven stolen the owner may reclaim the vehicle. They must attend a nominated police station to sign a disclaimer. See the section below for vehicle returns for more detail.

The owner must be informed that the statutory recovery fee of £192 is applicable to reclaim their vehicle, after 24 hours a storage charge will be applied of £13 for every 24-hour period thereafter. This can be claimed from insurance.

Returning stolen E-scooters and Illegal E-bikes

The vehicle will not be returned, under the Retention and Disposal of Vehicle Regulations to the rider. If it is proven stolen it can be returned to the rightful owner. Once seized you must inform the owner, they must attend a nominated police station with their seizure notice to sign a disclaimer within seven days:

- Youths must attend with an adult to countersign the disclaimer. The counter signatory must also attend the VRO with the youth on collection of the vehicle.
- The owner must be advised that they will have a further 7 days to reclaim the vehicle from the VRO (14 days for complete process) or their vehicle will be dismantled and disposed of.

Stated Cases relating to E-scooters / Illegal E-Bikes, E-Motorbikes and Off-Road Motorcycles.

- [DPP v Saddington - \[2000\] EWHC Admin 409](#). The High Court found that a Go-Ped, which is a scooter powered by an internal combustion engine, was a motor vehicle in the statutory framework. Mr Saddington was therefore required by law to have a driving licence and third-party insurance when using one on the road.
- [Winter v DPP - \[2002\] EWHC 1524 \(Admin\)](#). The High Court considered the use of a 'City Bug' electric scooter, and whether its user was bound by the compulsory insurance requirements. It found that it was, and that the appellant had been properly convicted of the offence of driving a vehicle without insurance.
- [Coates v Crown Prosecution Service - \[2011\] EWHC 2032 \(Admin\)](#). The High Court considered the situation of Segways in the statutory framework. It found that the appellant had been properly convicted under the Highway Act 1835 of "riding" on the footway, or of "driving or leading a carriage" on the footway. The Segway was a carriage either by analogy to other forms of carriage (like bicycles) or because it was a motor vehicle, which by operation of statute is a carriage.

As such the application of the RTA in respect of the use of E-scooters is clear. They are a motor vehicle as defined in Section 185 Road Traffic Act 1988 they are not an [electrically assisted pedal cycle](#) and so currently carry no exemptions in that respect. Therefore, all offences applicable to motor vehicles including careless driving, driving licences, insurance, drink, and drug driving must be adhered to.

E-scooters subject to an authorised trial will be able secure appropriate insurance.

4. Vehicle Recovery Contacts

4.1 There may be occasions when you are required to contact a Vehicle Recovery Operator (VRO).

4.2 Some VROs have separate email addresses and phone numbers for police and the public, please make sure you use the correct contact details if passing on to a member of the public.

Do not disclose the mobile numbers for the VRS / Automated Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) team members, they are for police use only. For the public, use the direct dial number and the VRS extension number or the vehicle recovery email address.

4.3 All police recoveries must be arranged through the (redacted text) in the first instance.

4.4 Do not disclose contact details for the (redacted text) manager and team, these are for police use only.

5. Complaints Process

5.1 The complaints received into the JVRS team can come from many quarters and vary in content and context. The complaints can be categorised into the following.

Complaints received by the Contact Team in both Forces these can relate to officer conduct. These will be referred to Professional Standards Department (PSD) for assessment and recording. PSD will sometimes receive these in the first instance and pass to the JVRS team for comment as the data trail is held on their recovery system (ELVIS)

Complaints regarding the seizure of vehicles and the payment of statutory fees will be passed to the JVRS team to investigate. They will assess and respond to the complainant or the officer in charge (OIC) within 14 days with a decision.

Complaints from officers and staff regarding the late attendance of recovery units outside of the agreed contacted times will come into the JVRS team. They will collate the relevant information and pass the complaint to the (redacted text) managing agents. The (redacted text) Contract Manager will investigate and pass the result back to the JVRS team who will update the OIC. The results will be logged and discussed at the monthly management meetings.

Complaints from the Recovery Operators will be received by the JVRS team, assessed and triaged. They will be logged and passed to the relevant department or dealt with by the JVRS Management Team.

The JVRS team will open a complaints folder for each occurrence.

6. Retention and Disposal of Vehicles

6.1 Both Forces follow the statutory powers when dealing with the disposal of vehicles. [The Police \(Retention and Disposal of Motor Vehicles\) Regulations 2002 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](https://www.legislation.gov.uk). Under the statutory powers the Forces have a legal right to dispose of vehicles seized or recovered under these powers.

There is a requirement to retain the vehicles for 14 days, this is to allow the authorities time to inform the registered keeper by letter to collect their vehicle and pay the statutory fee and any outstanding storage fee.

A failure to do this will result in the vehicle being disposed of. Any fees collected from the disposal are used to pay the recovery operators for their service, and any administration fees accrued by the salvage agent.

Any residual funds remaining are paid to the police, there is a legal requirement for the police to retain the funds from each disposal for one calendar year from the date of the seizure. This is to allow the police to compensate any keeper that comes forward who can prove that they had rights to ownership at the time of the seizure.

It is the responsibility of the respective Force seizing and retaining the vehicles to ensure this is implemented. It is managed by the JVRS team.

Team: Operations Command Roads Policing Unit