

Appendix 1: Legal Powers and Frequently asked Questions.

Dockless cycles and e-scooters

Introduction

Dockless bike operators have been permitted to operate in the City of London since 2019. We currently have two operators for dockless bikes: Lime and Forest, both of whom use solely electric bikes in their fleet. Lime have also provided e-scooters, along with Voi, since the City Corporation joined the pan-London e-scooter trial in 2021.

Dockless bike hire is an increasingly popular, form of transport across London and in the Square Mile. Our recent traffic counts show that the number of dockless bikes increased four-fold since 2022, which now make up 17% of all cycles in the City, or 17,800 journeys per day.

As of April 2025, the City Corporation now has 108 dedicated parking bays, with capacity for 1,160 vehicles including e-scooters. By the end of 2025 we expect to have capacity for around 1,500 in total

Our forthcoming Memoranda of Understanding with operators will help the City Corporation address ongoing issues around parking compliance and fleet sizes, as well as data sharing agreements and financial contributions from operators towards new parking and maintaining existing capacity. Previously, funding was provided ad-hoc by operators, but this will now be replaced with a per-bay charge for each existing - and any potential future – operator either deploying or allowing users to park bikes in a bay.

Legal Powers

There are still concerns about dockless bikes when badly managed. There are a number of things we can and can't do legally as we are still limited in the legal options available to manage bikes. The FAQs below explain what we can and can't do at the moment. We do expect this to change as new legislation becomes available, over the next two years, so will keep you up to date with changes.

Frequently asked questions

How can I report inappropriately parked dockless bikes?

If you have a concern about the way that dockless bikes are being parked or used, please report it to the relevant operating company. This is the quickest and most efficient way of having them safely moved.

Each dockless bike has a clearly visible identifying number and is tracked by its operator. Including the identifying number and the exact time and location can help operators identify and respond to the issue.

- [Lime\(external link\)](#) 0800 808 5223

- [Forest](#) 0208 157 7491

Please note that the City of London Corporation has limited powers to address complaints regarding dockless bikes.

Please contact the contact the [Transport Strategy team](#) if your issue relates to a designated dockless bike hire parking bay.

You can also report dockless bikes or e-scooters on the City Corporation's dedicated webform in the page above. Your report will be sent directly to the operators, which can be actioned quickly.

How to use a dockless cycle hire in the City of London

Two dockless cycle hire operators serve the City of London: [Lime\(external link\)](#) and [Forest\(external link\)](#). Their bikes can be located, hired and unlocked using a smartphone app and may be ridden and parked in the City.

Cycles hired from any other dockless operator in London can be ridden through the City, but you cannot end a journey there.

Dockless cycles must be parked in designated parking areas which are marked in Lime and Forest's apps.

If you park or abandon a dockless bike outside of a designated parking area, you may be fined or banned. Operators issue additional charges and penalties for bikes that:

- Obstruct the pavement, especially on narrow pavements or in areas with high footfall
- Are parked on carriageway (unless in a designated bay)
- Are parked on or near a crossing or dropped kerb
- Are parked in front of doors or entryways
- Block fire exits or are parked in fire evacuation assembly points
- Are parked in a disabled parking space, car parking space or a loading bay
- On City of London highwalks and walkways

How are dockless cycle hire schemes regulated?

Dockless cycle hire schemes are not covered by legislation so the City of London Corporation does not have the legal power to prevent dockless cycle hire schemes from operating in the City. Nor does the City Corporation have the legal power to compel operators to operate their schemes in accordance with City Corporation policies or standards.

Dockless cycles differ from rental e-scooters, which are regulated as part of the ongoing e-scooter trial with the Department for Transport (DfT) and Transport for London (TfL).

If dockless cycle schemes are unregulated, why are there dedicated parking bays in the City of London?

The City Corporation has provided dedicated on-street parking bays for dockless cycles and has insisted that operators ensure their users end their journeys in those bays to minimise inappropriate parking in other areas.

These parking bays have been designated following a design and review process, which included road safety audits, site visits, local engagement and equalities impact assessments, to ensure they do not negatively impact other street users.

While the City Corporation provides these spaces, it has no legal power to require that operators use these spaces as part of their hire schemes, nor does it have legal power to enforce against users who do not use them.

What does the City Corporation do to minimise inappropriate dockless bike parking?

The City Corporation engages with dockless cycle hire operators to insist they improve their schemes. Officers have laid out a series of short, medium and long-term actions for improving dockless bike hire operations in the City. More information on these actions, and on dockless bike policy, can be found in the approved [Streets and Walkways Committee Report](#) (January 2024).

What powers does the City Corporation have in respect of obstructions on our streets?

The City Corporation has powers to enforce against obstructions on the streets and pavements.

Highways Act 1980:

- Section 137 offences related to obstruction created by people
- Section 148(c) offences related to obstructions created by anything deposited on the highway
- Section 149 offences related to dangers created by anything deposited on the highway

When an obstruction is reported, the City Corporation has the power to place a notice on that obstruction requiring that the obstruction be removed in a reasonable timeframe, usually within 72 hours. If it's not removed in that time, the City Corporation can make a request to the Magistrates to grant the City Corporation the power to remove it.

In practice, obtaining an obstruction order can take several days and by that time the bike will almost certainly have been re-hired by a new user or relocated by the operator.

Could trading laws be used to remove dockless bikes?

Consideration has been given as to whether the provision of dockless cycle hire is covered by local legislation making it unlawful for any person to engage in unauthorised street trading in the City.

Street trading is defined in the City of London (Various Powers) Act 1987 to mean the selling or exposing or offering for sale of any article or thing in a street. However, dockless cycle hire schemes involve cycles being available on the highway (or on private land with the consent of the owner) for temporary hire by the public, with payment being made via an App and no person in the street is engaged in their hire.

As the 1987 Act prohibits a person from selling items in the street, not the temporary hiring of bikes via an App, which is more in the nature of a service (and not dissimilar to the existing Santander cycle hire scheme except that there are no docking stations), the activity would not be considered unauthorised street trading.

Could law on the management of waste or litter be used to remove dockless bikes?

It is considered that the definitions of waste or litter are not intended to cover bikes left temporarily on the highway and which are in use for the benefit of the operators and their customers and officers do not know of any decisions on this point.

What does the City Corporation do to enforce against inappropriately parked dockless cycles on our streets?

Our approach to enforcing against inappropriately parked dockless cycles consists of reporting issues and incidents directly to operators and, if possible, immediately moving or relocating bikes to appropriate locations. We do not undertake significant legal enforcement action against dockless cycle hire operators.

City Corporation staff are unable to unlock dockless bikes but, if safe to do so and not presenting a manual handling risk, they will attempt to lift bikes (which can weigh up to 20kg and need two people to move safely) and move them to the nearest safe location. These bikes are reported immediately to the responsible operator.

City Corporation staff report thousands of inappropriately parked cycles each year.

Are there plans for new legislation to regulate dockless cycle hire in the City?

The Government announced the English Devolution Bill white paper in December 2024, which would give local transport authorities the power to regulate on-street micromobility schemes (dockless hire bikes, e-scooters and any other forms of shared micromobility that may emerge on the market) if passed into primary

legislation. This will allow enforcement of parking compliance and fleet size across the City of London and all London boroughs.

There is no official timetable for legislation and although work is in progress in central government, the earliest this is expected to come into effect is late 2026. Until such time as legislation gives the City Corporation powers to effectively manage dockless bike hire operators, we will continue to engage constructively with them to manage our streets safely.