

Public Spaces Protection Order (Touting) 2026

To:

Cllr Mike Todd-Jones, Cabinet Member for Communities

Cabinet 23rd September 2026

Report by: Yvonne O'Donnell Strategic Environmental Health & Public Safety Lead

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Wards affected:

Market and Newnham

Director Approval: Director Sam Scharf confirms that the report author has sought the advice of all appropriate colleagues and given due regard to that advice; that the equalities impacts and other implications of the recommended decisions have been assessed and accurately presented in the report; and that they are content for the report to be put to the Cabinet/Cabinet Member for decision.

1.	Recommendations
1.1	It is recommended that Cabinet: 1. Agree the Public Space Protection Order (Touting) 2026 as attached Appendix A 2. Approve the amendment to the Public Spaces Protection Order (Touting) 2023 to define the activities of the PSPO as: The Activities prohibited by this Order are: Soliciting for and/or promoting and/or arranging for and/or concluding the booking or sale of river-related goods or services to members of the public in a public place (including any punt tour or the hire or use of punts, boats or similar craft on the River Cam and any walking tour which includes or incorporates such services) whether: • orally, and/or • by distributing sales or publicity materials, and/or • by carrying or wearing a tout board, sandwich board or similar advertising device, and/or • by using, offering or displaying any electronic device for booking or sale purposes, and/or • by any other of verbal advertisement or of touting.

	3. Agree the restricted area for the PSPO as attached Appendix B plan 4. Implement as from 27th September 2026 for a 3 year period until 27th September 2029.
2.	Purpose and reason for the report
2.1	The Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014 (“2014 Act”) gives local authorities the power to make Public Space Protection Orders (PSPOs). PSPOs were created to deal with problems in public spaces which have a negative impact on the local community’s quality of life. A PSPO does this by stopping certain activities in the area it covers. If someone refuses to stop doing the activity covered by the PSPO it is a criminal offence and they will be issued with a fixed penalty notice of up to £100 or prosecuted with a maximum fine £1000. The current PSPO The Public Spaces Protection Order (Touting) 2023 prohibits: Verbally touting, advertising, soliciting for custom or otherwise touting for a punt tour, the hire or use of punt boats (or similar craft) on the River Cam. █ This included touting for walking tours which include or involve a punt tour, the hire or use of punt boats (or similar craft) on the River Cam. █ The PSPO prohibits touting in certain parts of the city centre, they are shown in red on this map and are referred to as the Restricted Areas: █ This PSPO has been renewed twice since 2016 and is due to end on 27 September 2026. Before this date, a decision will need to be made to decide whether to renew the order, vary it or allow it to end. As per legislation this decision should be informed by consultation with: ▪ The Police and Crime Commissioner, ▪ Cambridgeshire Constabulary (the local police body), ▪ Relevant community representatives, ▪ Ward Councillors, and

	▪ The owner/occupier of land the PSPO covers. In addition to these groups, the Council sought views of local people via the Go Vocal consultation platform. 470 responses were received. The consultation questions and responses can be found in Appendix C. The evidence and consultation results have been used to inform consideration about whether to a) renew the PSPO; b) vary it; or c) discharge it.
3.	Alternative options considered
3.1	The principal alternative would be not to implement a PSPO for punt touting, when the existing arrangements expire. This option is not recommended as the consultation responses demonstrate significant public support for a continuation of enforcing against illegal and aggressive punt touting. Another option is to continue with the existing PSPO and only consider verbal touting. The consultation responses demonstrate significant public support to strengthen the scope of the PSPO.
4.	Background and key issues
4.1	Between 2006 and 2016 268 complaints about aggressive punt touting were received, negatively impacting people's experience when in the city centre. As a result, the City Council created a Public Spaces Protection Order (PSPO) which restricts where punt tours can be sold from. The PSPO prohibits touting in certain parts of the city centre, they are shown in red on this map and are referred to as the Restricted Areas as shown in Appendix B.

Punt operators are still allowed to sell punt tours from the 6 authorised locations which are:

- La Mimosa, on the corner of Jesus Green
- Quayside
- Trinity College, inside the college grounds
- The Mill Pond, on Silver Street
- Mill Lane
- The Granta mill pond, near Sheeps Green

In 2016 the PSPO was introduced to address nuisance punt touting. At the time it was introduced there was an increased number of operators and individuals selling punt tours by way of touting in the city centre. Much of the touting took place in Market Square, King's Parade and the surrounding streets.

On 25 May 2018, an Injunction was granted against named and unnamed parties from engaging in unlicensed commercial punt operations, including touting, on certain pieces of Council-owned land. This resulted in operators being unable to punt from Garret Hostel Lane and had a significant impact on illegal touting in Kings Parade and the city in general

The table below shows the impact of both the PSPO and the Injunction on touting complaints since available records (2006).

Year	No. of complaints	PSPO / Injunction
2006 – 2016	268	PSPO introduced – 15 September 2016
2016 – 2018	164	Injunction introduced – 25 May 2018
2019 – 2023	21	PSPO Extended to 2026
2023 – 2026	23	

The Order is enforced by Cambridge City Council officers who have the power to issue fixed penalty notices to those who breach the PSPO. The number fixed penalty notices issued per year are:

Year	Fixed Penalty Notices Issued
2016/17	27
2017/18	41
2018/19	24
2019/20	3
2020/21	2
2021/22	7
2022/23	2
2023/24	0
2024/25	0
2025/26	0
Total	106

The current PSPO will lapse 27th September 2026. To renew the PSPO we need to show that there is significant evidence that verbal punt touting within the Restricted Areas will get worse without the PSPO.

To change (or vary) the PSPO we need to show that there is evidence to change the spaces that are covered by the PSPO or that there is evidence to stop people from doing other behaviours that have a negative impact on the local community.

Although the complaints received has reduced over the years indicating that the situation has improved, the results of the consultation indicates that visitors and businesses to the city centre are still being approached and feeling uncomfortable when approached.

There has also been a reduction in the number of FPNs that have been served, however this may be due to the fact that as the touting has to be verbal, it is difficult for enforcement officers to gather evidence that verbal touting is taking place. Officers are well recognised by the punt touts who cease to verbally tout when the Officers are in the vicinity.

The consultation showed that 52.8% of the respondents have seen verbal touting for punt tours in the restricted area of which only 4% reported it to the police or the council. The most common locations were Kings Parade, Bridge Street and Magdalene Bridge. However, it was considered that touting was spread across the main tourist routes.

A small number of respondents reported aggressive touting at the train station (which is outside the restricted area) and wanted the restricted area extended to include the train station. However, as this is private land section 72 of the Crime and Policing Act 2014 requires that there needs to be a specific consultation with the owner or occupier of any private land. The consultation for this PSPO did not take place for this purpose.

Some respondents were concerned about the misleading promotion such as tourist information stands.

76% of respondents agreed that the PSPO should remain with 17.7% stating it should be changed or varied. 6.4% believe it should end. There is over whelming support to either renew or vary the current PSPO.

There is a clear message that most respondents wanted the PSPO to be strengthened and increased enforcement. There was a strong view that the touting was aggressive, persistent and general unsafe practices.

67.9% of respondents agree that the PSPO should be extended to all forms of touting. Many respondents wanted the PSPO to include all commercial tour promotion, whether verbal, non verbal, written or digital and to include walking tours.

Although the PSPO has had a positive impact on the number of complaints and

	enforcement action that has taken place over the past 10 years, there is public perception that aggressive and unwanted touting continues to take place. Response to the consultation indicates that only 4% have reported it to the police or the Council and therefore the data held may not reflect the current situation.
6.	Consultation, engagement and communication
6.1	A public consultation via the City Council website, Go Vocal was undertaken between 3rd June 2026 and 12th July 2026 on the proposed PSPO (touting) 2026. A total of 470 responses were received. The consultation included quantitative questions on the PSPO together with opportunities for respondents to provide written comments. The responses demonstrate particularly strong support for renewing the PSPO with some variation to strengthen the wording of the PSPO to cover more than verbal touting, but to also cover include all commercial tour promotion, whether verbal, non-verbal, written or digital and to include walking tours. Across the consultation, enforcement was one of the most frequently raised issues. Respondents repeatedly called for visible enforcement, appropriate penalties. If the wording was strengthened to include non-verbal touting this would be easier to obtain evidence of breaches of the PSPO and therefore further enforcement could be taken. Subject to approval, communications will be required before the new PSPO takes effect. This should include updated information on the Council's website, appropriate notices and signage at affected locations. Consultation responses and summary can be found as Appendix C
7.	Anticipated outcomes, benefits or impact
7.1	The proposed PSPO is intended to provide a clear and proportionate framework to tackle illegal and aggressive punt touting The anticipated outcomes include:

	• Cambridge City being a safe place to visit; • Prevent aggressive touting both verbally and non-verbally • An enforcement regime which will prevent touting in particular restricted areas. • Removing illegal punt operators The effectiveness of the PSPO can be monitored through complaints and service requests relating to punt touting, enforcement activity, fixed penalty notices where applicable.
8.	Implications
8.1	Relevant risks
	Local Government Reorganisation (LGR)
8.2	No specific Local Government Reorganisation implications have been identified at this stage. Any implications for future responsibility for enforcement or management of the PSPO arising from LGR should be kept under review as arrangements develop.
	Financial Implications
8.3	No significant financial implications have been identified.
	Legal Implications
8.4	A PSPO is a statutory mechanism available to local authorities under the Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014. In determining whether to make or renew the Order, the Council must be satisfied that the relevant statutory requirements are met and must have regard to the consultation undertaken, proportionality and any applicable rights and equalities considerations. External legal advice has been sought to ensure that the PSPO is robust..

	Equalities and socio-economic Implications
8.5	An EQiA has been completed and attached as Appendix D
	Net Zero Carbon, Climate Change and Environmental implications
8.6	There will be no net impact on the councils ne zero carbon target
	Procurement Implications
8.7	No significant procurement implications have been identified.
	Community Safety Implications
8.8	The variation and renewal of the PSPO will continue to have a positive effect on community safety in the concerned areas.
9.	Background documents Used to prepare this report, in accordance with the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985
9.1	(a) Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014: http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2014/12/contents/enacted/data.htm (b) Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014: Anti-social behaviour powers, Statutory guidance for frontline professionals: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/352562/ASB_Guidance_v8_July2014_final_2_.pdf (c) Decision details: Public Spaces Protection Orders - https://democracy.cambridge.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=476&MId=3971&Ver=4 (d) PSPO – Touting 2016 – Sealed: https://www.cambridge.gov.uk/media/7690/touting-pspo-sealed.pdf
10.	Appendices

10.1	Appendix A PSPO (touting) Order 2026 Appendix B Plan of restricted area Appendix C Responses to consultation Appendix D EQiA
	To inspect the background papers or if you have a query on the report please contact, Yvonne O'Donnell Strategic Environmental Health & Public Safety Lead. Email : Yvonne.odonnell@cambridge.gov.uk