

eBay told to get tough on sale of stolen goods

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Leading retailers have demanded that eBay, the online auction site, cracks down on the sale of stolen goods on its UK site.

Asda, House of Fraser and River Island were among a delegation of retailers to meet with eBay last week in an attempt to persuade the internet group to share intelligence on suspect sellers on the site and ban the sale of credit notes and vouchers issued by high street retailers.

The retailers are particularly concerned about the sale of credit vouchers and gift tokens at a substantial discount to face value. Shoplifters often return stolen goods to stores and exchange the goods for vouchers.

Following the meeting with eBay's head of public affairs, Alasdair McGowan, eBay has promised to consider the group's proposals.

Laurence King, managing director of loss prevention consultants the Oris Group -who organised the meeting -said he believed that tens of thousands of pounds worth of stolen goods were sold on eBay every day. "It is long-winded and difficult to get eBay to close a suspect seller down," said Mr King.

Michael Gallagher, head of crime policy at the British Retail Consortium, has claimed that criminals are selling stolen goods from the comfort of their own home, rather than at the car boot sale or in the pub. "It's a virtual fence," he claimed.

A spokesman for eBay rejected the claims. "Stolen items are strictly prohibited from sale on eBay and we're committed to keeping the site free from such items. We do not accept that there are significant number of stolen items on the site," he said.

"The reality is that we have strong relationships with a wide variety of retailers and law enforcement, and in the small number of cases when potentially stolen items are reported to us, we actively assist the police with their investigations."