



Living Streets Response to the Transport Select Committee call for evidence into E-scooters

Introduction

1. We are Living Streets, the UK charity for everyday walking. We want to create a walking nation, free from congested roads and pollution, reducing the risk of preventable illnesses and social isolation and making walking the natural choice. We believe that a walking nation means progress for everyone. Our ambition is to get people of all generations to enjoy the benefits that this simple act brings and to ensure all our streets are fit for walking.
2. Living Streets welcomes this opportunity to respond the Transport Committee's inquiry into e-scooters.

Is the legislation for e-scooters up to date and appropriate?

3. No, the legislation is not up to date. E-scooters are currently illegal to use on public highways in the UK, but sales increased 50% in 2019¹ and their use on roads in our towns and cities is becoming more visible and widespread. The law as it stands is not being enforced, therefore, new regulation is required to govern the situation.

To what extent do e-scooters have positive benefits, for instance relating to congestion and promoting more sustainable forms of transport?

4. E-scooters are cheaper, more energy efficient, take up less space and produce no exhaust emissions (as opposed to particulate matter or emissions from electricity generation) when compared to conventional road transport. It has been suggested that *"the aim of the*

¹ <https://www.standard.co.uk/tech/electric-scooters-uk-legal-sales-government-consultation-a4351791.html>

*scooters is to solve the issue of the last mile – the final part of a journey which isn't covered by public transport..."*². However, these so-called positive benefits must be put in perspective. 80% of trips under one mile are currently walked³ - and arguably should be walked by people who can.

5. In the face of public health crises (including COVID-19) and the climate change emergency, walking is healthier, cheaper (free), more energy efficient, more space saving and produces zero emissions compared to using a scooter. The availability of e-scooter rental schemes could (in theory) encourage more people to leave their cars at home and use public transport, but the benefits should not be overblown or outweigh the importance of promoting active travel.

Where in the urban environment should e-scooters be used (e.g. road, pavement, cycle lanes), and how this could impact on other road users and pedestrians, including people who have visual impairments or use mobility aids?

6. Proposals for the trial of e-scooter rental schemes suggest a maximum speed of 12.5mph. At present, mobility scooters allowed on the pavement may travel at a maximum 4mph – walking speed. Given the difference in speed and the fact that electric motors are very quiet it is imperative that e-scooters and pedestrians are segregated. E-scooters must not be allowed on footways or footpaths. It is possible they may be permitted on shared use routes alongside bikes and this is likely to cause conflict – just as interaction between pedestrians and cyclists can be a problem for people walking or cycling⁴.

7. Furthermore, because e-scooters “are small, quiet and quick” they are not well equipped to deal with poorly maintained surfaces. This has led the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents to suggest that they could pose a “significant public health problem”⁵. There have been two deaths so far in London⁶ and high levels of injury reported elsewhere – in 2019 ROSPA reported that an estimated 1500 people had sustained an e-scooter related injury in the US since 2017.

Should there be advice or compulsory requirements to use specific

² <https://www.standard.co.uk/tech/electric-scooters-uk-popular-legal-future-of-transport-a4190031.html>

³ National Travel Survey (2018)

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/823068/national-travel-survey-2018.pdf

⁴ Living Streets (2016). ‘Sharing the Space’ <https://www.livingstreets.org.uk/media/1864/sharing-the-space-report.pdf>

⁵ ROSPA (2019) <https://www.rospa.com/rospaweb/media/Documents/Road%20Safety/road-safety-factsheet-e-scooters.pdf>

⁶ See <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/electric-scooter-crash-london-beckenham-emily-hartridge-death-battersea-a9005416.html>

safety equipment when using an e-scooter?

No comment

Should there be safety and environmental regulation for the build of e-scooters, and what this might entail?

No comment

What is the experience of other countries where e-scooters are legal on the roads?

Alongside high levels of death and injury experienced by e-scooter users, dockless rental schemes have posed a hazard to people on pavements and public spaces. Dockless e-scooters (and bikes) can be unlocked with a phone app and left anywhere when a ride is finished. As rental scheme operators jockey into position to grab the largest market share there is a risk that e-scooters will inundate footways and cause an obstruction to pedestrians. For example, Paris authorities warned operators to keep e-scooters off the pavements or face a temporary ban. Theft and vandalism can add to the problem⁷.

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⁷ See <https://www.euractiv.com/section/transport/news/paris-takes-pesky-e-scooter-fleets-to-task/>