



# CycleReading

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Autumn 2024 No 163

## RCC Reports on Delivery Riders



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Many of the people using two wheels nowadays are delivery riders.

Whether they are counted as cyclists or not will depend on what counts as being a bicycle, but lots of us use their services and probably even more of us have an opinion on them.

In this issue we have tried to get a better insight into the world of the delivery rider and

how the delivery platforms work.

We spoke to three current or former delivery riders and you can read about their thoughts and experiences from page 6 onwards.

And, if you do want to know what counts as a being a bicycle, our Membership Secretary has reported on this as well - see page 10.

# Campaign News



## Reading Borough Council (RBC)

### Autumn 2024 Report

Very little seems to have happened in Reading since my last report, or even throughout the previous year!

### Shinfield Road Active Travel Scheme Tranche 2

Site works have stopped, awaiting additional government funding. The signals with ASLs (advance stop lines) and an early start for cyclists are supposed to be implemented at the end of the works.

RCC still has a number of concerns with the scheme, including the university entrance area, sideroads and the bus stop areas.

There is no action apparent on making improvements. The segregated shared-path signs and all of the surface markings are still not completed!

### Cycle Hub

RBC are still looking for alternatives.

### Bath Road and Castle Hill Active Travel Scheme Tranche 3

No news, latest plans awaited.

### Station Subway - Shared Path Route

The subway is planned to open before the Reading Festival.

### Redlands Road Area Traffic Calming

There has still been no action to improve the poor traffic calming humps and chicanes, despite RBC's agreement to make some improvements there.

### Town Centre Signing and Routes

There are still a few signs to be provided, in particular the important ones in Town Hall Square. It is unclear what the delays are.

### Cleaner Air and Safer Transport (CAST)

The last meeting on 2 July had various reports. Unfortunately, RBC response on the issue of crossings policy was not ready, but should be for the next meeting on 3 September.

### London - It Can Be Done

A recent visit to London showed some good segregated cycle tracks and also

20mph on most roads including the main Euston Road and underpass.

When will Reading put a 20mph limit in central Caversham or the Oxford Road, let alone the IDR!?

John Lee

RBC Campaigner for RCC



## West Berkshire Council (WBC)

### Autumn 2024 Report

The West Berkshire Cycle Forum met on Tuesday 16 July. The next meeting is on Tuesday 15 October. If there are any matters you would like raised at the Forum, contact Rob Hill via [wbc@readingcyclecampaign.org.uk](mailto:wbc@readingcyclecampaign.org.uk)

### A329 Pangbourne to Purley Cycle Path

This project continues to make steady progress with WBC. Its Project Board has given approval to develop an outline design in-house and pursue investigations, following on from the feasibility study and focusing on the proposed off-carriageway section

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# Campaign News continued...

between the eastern end of Pangbourne and western end of Purley.



Officers have met with representatives of Sulham Estate and their consultants on site. In addition, WBC's new

automatic counters will shortly be deployed, and again in the autumn term, to collect data on existing use by cyclists and pedestrians.

No funding is presently earmarked for further work beyond outline level in-house, or for construction. WBC is exploring with Sulham Estate on whether they might make a strip of land available for a bike path.

## Theale-Calcot Connector Motorway Footbridge

A feasibility study has been completed, using Active Travel England (ATE) funding. The study focuses on the potential future replacement of the 50+ year-old, narrow pedestrian bridge west of M4 Junction 12, with a replacement structure that would be suitable for cycling as well as walking. This is on LCWIP corridor S5 (Theale-Calcot-Reading).



The feasibility study, funded by ATE, has been discussed with National Highways. The core issue is the substantial funding and resources required for further scheme development and ultimately for construction. The initial estimate is £5.39M for physical replacement of the bridge structure, with costs for land acquisition, legals and construction of approaches on top of this.

National Highways do not have funding available and have no visibility on their own future funding; their position is that the existing bridge is in fair structural condition though not meeting current standards for non-motorised users.

**Rob Hill**  
WBC Campaigner for RCC



## Wokingham Borough Council (WoBC)

### Autumn 2024 Report

#### Tanhouse Bridge

For all those unfamiliar with this story, this is the new bridge that is being built as a pedestrian footbridge across the railway lines in Wokingham town centre.

It will provide one of the few ways to cross the railway that bisects Wokingham from north to south, that does not involve being on an A road.

Various local groups lobbied Network Rail (NR) hard to amend the original design which used steps instead of a wheeled vehicle friendly slope.

Unfortunately, this was in vain and the only concession from NR was that the bridge would be modular and designed to have ramps easily retrofitted at a later date and that the stairways would have a 'wheel gutter' to aid cyclists pushing their bikes.

The original bridges were demolished around Christmas 2023 with the plan being that the new bridge would be in place by March 2024. This was going to plan until the company building the new bridge went into administration, so since March we have a half-finished bridge in place.

NR have apparently committed to completing the bridge by the end of September 2024, although there has been no update on this since May.

I will be keeping an eye on this and attending relevant council meetings as WoBC have in the past recognised this as an important pedestrian access route and were fully in support of making it accessible for all - which it clearly isn't if steps are installed.

#### Woodley Cycle Scheme

I was unable to get any further information on what is happening here. I will keep an eye out for any developments and hopefully will get an update for the next newsletter.

## Reading Road Cycle Scheme Consultation

This consultation has now been completed for all three phases of the road from Winnersh into Wokingham town centre. No results have been made public but given that the last phase of the consultation finished in Spring, hopefully there will be some information made public shortly.

The Reading Road is the most used road into and out of Wokingham and a positive response to the consultation plans would support the position that this road needs comprehensive, continuous cycle infrastructure.

## Local Transport Plan

This is due to be published later this year and in draft form gave a high priority to sustainable transport (walking, wheeling, cycling, bus and train travel).

Hopefully the final plan will match the promise of the draft. I see no reason why it shouldn't.

## Kidical Mass

Unfortunately, the August Kidical Mass which was due to be held on Saturday 10 August had to be cancelled because several of our key marshals were on holiday, and we did not feel it was safe for the ride to go ahead.

We rely on a very limited pool of marshals and are always looking for more people who would like to be involved. The time commitment is very minimal - one hour every few months or whatever time you can spare. We're a nice and welcoming team of marshals, so please come along if you are available.

## Cycle Funding

Wokingham now has three 'oven ready' (to use a past Prime Minister's favourite phrase) cycle schemes which would become possible if the new government reverses the cuts to active travel funding instituted under the last government.

- The Woodley > Twyford cycle way
- The Reading Road cycle scheme
- The Tanhouse ramps

Please contact your local MP to show support for funding of sustainable travel and in particular local schemes.

**Alex Cran**  
WoBC Campaigner for RCC

# Chairman's Letter

Dear RCC members

A couple of years ago I bought an e-bike conversion kit which I installed on my town bike, but I never really got used to it and certainly never fell in love with it. The cadence sensor would feed in the power far too quickly and the handlebar mounted battery and front wheel motor meant that the whole bike became front heavy and nowhere near as nimble as before.

One day at Horizon Micromobility at Hare Hatch I found this lime green beauty with a step through Dutch style frame, and it was love at first sight. The torque sensor fed in the power smoothly and I could pedal as gently or as hard as I wanted and gone was the pattern of pedal, brake and freewheel I had got to used to with the conversion. The clincher was the price, and they still have a red one listed on their site as I write. You could fall in love as well.

As you will read elsewhere in this issue, we have been focusing on delivery riders and the fact that the vast majority of them use an e-bike of some kind. So e-bikes have been at the forefront of my attention recently. Indeed, there is a letter in

this month's Cycle magazine from Cycling UK, querying the legality of these bikes and asking if the police were doing anything about it. The answer, of course, is that they are almost all illegal - the rules are pretty clear - and the police are doing what little they can and will confiscate a few bikes every so often. But it seems to me that this is just one of the areas where legislators have been caught napping. Artificial Intelligence is another area, but currently this is outside the remit of the RCC.

The shops and websites that are selling these bikes and conversion kits are able to disclaim all responsibility by having a little notice pointing out that they can only be used on private ground and not on public roads and, of course, not on pavements in the case of e-scooters. Halfords and Decathlon sell lots of e-scooters and you can buy a fully equipped 25mph road illegal bike for £1400 on Amazon or a 1000W rear wheel conversion kit for £210.99. Matt Touw tells me that they can be 'adjusted' to do 40mph or more.

Perhaps if retailers were targeted rather than individual users, the police would get better results, although PR and lobbying machines of the big companies would quickly roll into action once their profits were

threatened. There is a great deal of concern about the way these bikes are ridden and the fact that many of them are little different to mopeds. Yet there is no requirement for any registration, insurance, basic riding or safety training and we see this every day on the roads.

For me there is a bigger issue and that is it further weakens everyone's attitude to the rule of law. When you see one group of people flagrantly breaking the law, a little something at the back of the mind says "well it won't matter if I ...". and that "if I ..." can be anything from sneaking through the red light in the car, or not picking up your own litter, to much more serious transgressions.

I am not for a moment saying things were perfect in the past and getting a clip round the ear from the village bobby created a perfect law-abiding population. What I think I am saying is by allowing simple things like the sale of illegal bikes, this makes it progressively harder to tackle some of the really big issues facing the country, such as climate change and growing widespread poverty and hunger.

**Joe Edwards**  
RCC Chairman

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# Kidical Mass Autumn Report



## Reading Uni-Cycling Around

In May Kidical Mass ran a ride at the University of Reading's community festival. Over 50 people joined us for a ride through the university site.

The campus is a great place to go riding with young children - there is very little traffic on the road, what traffic there is moves relatively slowly and many of the cycle routes are off road.

It's a very safe place to learn to ride and indeed our youngest regular attendee, Blake (aged 3) has learned to ride there this Summer. It was a very easy route to marshal and made for a relaxed and enjoyable ride.

Kidical Mass Reading have other reasons to be grateful to the university too - earlier this year they

awarded us a grant which has enabled us to continue running the rides with related activities alongside (including offering bike maintenance to ride attendees).

We were also very pleased to welcome university researchers from the CALM (Cleaner Air Living Matters) to our July ride. They rode with us and sought views from the grown-ups after the ride.

I particularly enjoyed appropriating some of the pavement chalk the children were using post ride to sketch out the new layout of Lower Henley Road and explain why it has made such a difference to our school run!

As part of their work, Dr Marta O'Brien and her team offer free assemblies and other

resources to schools in Reading to help inform and empower students on these matters.

If you have children and you think they would benefit from this, please encourage their school to reach out - many schools in the Reading area have already taken advantage of the offer.

The next ride for Kidical Mass will be at 12pm from Reading Cycle Festival on Sunday 8 September - we hope to see many of you there!

Hilary Smart



# Delivery Rider Interview 1

## Matt Touw's Experience and Ideas

Matt Touw runs a bike repair business called MT-Cycle Repairs out of a workshop just off the Wokingham Road in East Reading. He is well known among delivery riders as he is one of a very few people who will work on their bikes, as he has a very real concern for their safety and welfare. This has arisen from his own experience of doing the work and being one of them.

After he gave a fascinating talk to the RCC open meeting in April, we decided to use this newsletter to look in more depth at the issues he raised, and to that end I went and had a long talk to him about his own experiences and his ideas for how things could be improved.

Matt has been involved with cycling in one way or another for most of his life, having worked for most of the major bike shops before making a career in retailing. It was while he was working in Reading for a major town centre retailer, he started doing cycle

delivery work in his spare time to supplement his income.

For instance, he would go to Oxford on his free weekends, where he could earn better rates than here in Reading. As a result of this he has a pretty comprehensive knowledge of the various delivery companies and the way their online apps work.

COVID-19 changed everything for him as the retail sector was hit, so he opened his bike repair shop on Norris Road, which now has a wide clientele among the locals as well as the delivery rider community. He is also a regular at cycling events where he uses his skills and experience to do free instant fixes.

He first explained to me how people get into the system and how the various apps work. There are just a few major players in the field, Deliveroo, Uber, Just Eat and Amazon, and they all have their own apps which work in the same general way but have their own subtle differences.

Riders will sign up via the company's website and register an interest in working in a particular geographic

area. Their personal details will be checked to make sure they have a right to work in the UK and that they have no relevant criminal convictions. The system also checks to see if there is a need for more riders in that area and they will not take on riders in areas that are already very popular e.g. Central Reading.

If these checks are passed, the rider is able to log onto the app and start accepting jobs. And here the apps vary a bit. The Just Eat app will only allow you to work in the area you have specified initially, whereas Deliveroo and Uber allow you to change your preferred area afterwards.

This leads to the first oddity in the system. If you are refused one area, you can apply for another less popular one and then switch, which can lead to too many riders chasing too few orders.

Although the companies are not meant to take on more riders when an area is saturated, they do so during busy periods and will often take new applicants rather than ones on the waiting list. So it becomes a bit of a



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# Delivery Rider Interview 1 continued...

lottery and potentially means less orders per rider.

There is also a confusion over substitution of riders. Some apps allow this but there is a black market where riders, who are legally allowed to work, sell access to their accounts to others such as immigrants and asylum seekers. At present there is very little checking done to ensure that the rider is who he says he is.

All these considerations lead to considerable problems for the riders, in addition to which they have to cope with traffic and bike problems, especially tyre and brake pad wear due to the weight of the bikes and the loads to be carried and, of course, the state of the roads.

In addition, they are expected to pay for the company's merchandise, such as the insulated back packs and company clothing. There is, however, nothing to stop a Deliveroo rider taking orders from Just Eat or Uber. Some riders are able to combine orders to get several fees from one delivery ride.

It will come as no surprise to find that virtually all delivery riders are using e-bikes and most of them have been modified beyond what the current rules allow. These specify that a bike can only have a motor that has a continuous input of no more than 250W, and have the motor only as an assistant to assist you up to 25kph. These rules are common to all EU countries (and Ex-EU), and in the UK to be exempt from licensing and other motorcycle-related regulations, it needs to be no more than 30 kg. Also, riders must be at least 14 years of age to be eligible to ride an e-bike.

But all this comes at a cost in terms of safety for the riders and other road users and the public image of the delivery rider is not very favourable. Here is an extract from an article on the welovecycling website about e-bikes in general.

*Firstly, due to the lack of license and registration needed, anyone can take off and fly down a public road at motorcycle speed. It's not a rare view to see someone speeding down a sidewalk, slaloming between pedestrians as if they were cones. This presents a significant risk.*

*There are also quite enough people who ride an e-bike while texting. As*



*absurd as that is, the capability of these bikes to run as fast as 25kph should be terrifying enough.*

*Moreover, some don't know or entirely disregard road rules set to keep everyone safe. As a result e-bikers run red lights with astonishing speeds. And while the same might be true for regular cyclists, at least those who don't respect the law usually can't reach such high speeds.*

*Another serious issue are the injuries inflicted by crashing with an e-bike. Research done by the [National Institutes of Health \(NIH\)](#) suggests that accidents with an e-bike have more severe consequences than with a regular bike.*

*Head trauma is significantly higher, although a helmet is much more frequently used. The main culprit behind these results, according to the experts, is the much higher speed.*

As you can see there are big problems to be addressed, and Matt has thought about this in some detail. In terms of safety, he would like to see all cycle shops with repair facilities to be able to service the bikes.

This may require the user signing a liability waiver, but he is concerned that too many of the bikes are in a dangerous condition and getting them fixed is a high priority. The extra weight penalty of the battery imposes extra stress on brakes and tyres beyond what would be expected.

He would also like to see the regulations changed to allow higher powered bikes and a higher speed limit than the current 15mph. His logic is that being able to keep up with the traffic flow at, say 25mph, would be beneficial to all users.

Although this may prove controversial, there were reports that the last government were considering changing the rules. I have not been able yet to find out what Labour's position is on this.

Matt's view on policing is that there should be a lot more active policing of the bikes and the standards of riding, but he accepts that under the current conditions they do not have the capacity to do much more than confiscate the odd bike.

He would like to see more reporting of anti-social and dangerous riding by the general public, and thinks that the

delivery companies should be forced to take some responsibility for the behaviour of the riders they are contracting, if not employing, to carry out their deliveries.

They should be made to put in place systems that ensure the rider is actually the one registered and not an illegal substitution. This might require the rider posting a selfie for each shift or maybe even each delivery.

These last measures may also require a change in the laws governing self-employment and sub-contracting and early indications are that this new government might be persuaded in this direction.

Matt thinks that if refugees and asylum seekers were allowed to work while their claims were being processed, there would be less of an incentive to use the black market, and being able to earn a living legally, could reduce the burden they place on the welfare bill.

In summary, a system has evolved where due to the fact that delivery companies hold all the cards in terms of who gets what work at what price, the riders have had to find all sorts of dubious and often illegal routes to make even a modest living.

For many of these riders it is the only work that they are able to find due to all manner of problems, be they educational, social or legal status. However, at the end of the day, the system only works if ordinary people are prepared to order their food or groceries on-line and pay for the privilege of having it delivered.

**Joe Edwards**  
RCC Chairman

# Delivery Rider Interview 2

## A Man Called Claud

While I was talking to Matt Touw, a man came in to have some work done on his bike. He was obviously well-known to Matt and although he declined to be photographed or even give me his name, on the strength of his continental accent I will call him Claud.

Claud told me that he worked as a delivery rider to supplement his income from his regular job and that he liked doing the work as he could fit in the hours to suit himself. Like most of the riders he was signed up to all the different apps, although he preferred Just Eat and an app called Stuart which he said paid best.

I asked him about his bike, which again he said he would prefer not to be photographed, and he told me that he was concerned to keep it in good condition and that he was one of Matt's regular customers.

His bike was a fairly big name mountain bike which had been modified with a motor unit attached to the bottom bracket with sensors mounted on the rear forks and wheel. There was a very big battery pack housed in a triangular case mounted inside the frame and various displays and controllers fixed to the handlebars.

He was very concerned about the security of the bike and carried three separate locks. It all looked well organised although hardly lightweight.

I asked him how he kept himself safe while out on the road and he told me that keeping his bike in good order was the first priority. He needed to have good tyres and brakes that would take the extra stress which the weight of the bike and the loads he carried imposed on them.

I asked him how much could he carry and he said that sometimes a full bag would be up to 40kg.

This he said imposed a real strain on his body and his ability to ride safely, but the apps don't know much about the weight of the orders, so multiple orders can mount up.

He showed me the personal safety equipment he wore. He had a good helmet and pull down visor and he wore padded gloves to protect from road vibration.

He looked very well equipped and, like his bike, this was not cheap stuff. He also had quite a fancy mobile phone and a proper mounting bracket on his handlebars, unlike the many riders we see riding with a phone in one hand.

I also asked him about his attitude to road safety and the highway code. He said that he didn't generally ride on the pavements, but preferred to stay on the road. I got the impression that his bike had enough power to keep up with the traffic.

He did venture that on quiet early mornings he would ride through red lights where it was safe to do so. He is probably not alone in doing this, as many riders feel it safer to get away from the traffic, and the most dangerous time is when you are just getting moving and the traffic is already pushing past you.

I asked him about his experience with the different apps and how much money he could make from being a delivery rider. This is where I got a real shock to learn just how badly it is paid. His target was to earn £50 from four hours work.

Surely, I asked him, you could earn more filling supermarket shelves as £12.50 was only a fraction above the minimum wage of £11.44 an hour. His reply was that it suited him as he could choose his hours to work.

Claud told me that he declared his earnings for tax purposes, but that he knew many other riders operated totally outside the tax system.

However, when you factor in the initial cost of your bike, the ongoing maintenance and presumably someone has to pay for the electricity to charge them, there cannot be a great margin to be made.

There are several other drawbacks and gotchas in the way the system operates. Like Matt, Claud was of the view that the companies behind the apps hold all the cards and pay the absolute minimum they can get away with.

For instance, when a job is offered, the app shows the pickup point, the destination address and the fee offered. The rider can then accept or refuse the job, but if you refuse an order, your standing with the app may be downgraded and you may be

offered less work or less attractive work. Experience shows that some apps can reduce fees or order frequency although this is not documented.

The fee offered is derived from a formula which may involve a small multiplier for some situations. Most companies pay on a weekly basis to the user's account, although Deliveroo will for a 50p fee pay instantly and Uber will also allow a limited number of instant payments.

The base fees are very similar with Deliveroo paying £2.90/mile, Uber £3 and Just Eat £3.10. All the platforms give additional pay over one mile, but this is regularly undercut, leaving the rider to fill in a form to challenge it.

If it takes between fifteen and thirty minutes per order it is unlikely the rider will make even the minimum wage most of the time.

There is a time allowed for the delivery, but although the app knows exactly where you are, it does not allow you any time to get to the pickup point.

Uber has increased the allowed delivery time for safety reasons, but this is leading to dissatisfied customers. If you are late on a delivery there is a danger you may lose your account on that app.

This may explain the speed at which we see the riders travelling and the shortcuts they choose to take.

Claud was of the view that some apps have actually reduced the amount they pay after the first mile and so riders are now earning less than they once did.

I suspect Claud is not your typical delivery rider, as he is quite a bit older than most I see around town. As a European living in the UK, he presumably has settled status and a right to work. He looked fit and healthy and was not disguised in all black clothing as so many are.

However, I was left with the impression that it was only marginally profitable for him to be doing the work and that it might not be a long-term occupation.

**Joe Edwards**  
*RCC Chairman*



# Delivery Rider Interview 3

## Michael's View

For this issue of *Cycle Reading* where we are looking at the burgeoning food courier business, we asked an experienced delivery rider for their thoughts.

Michael has been a delivery rider for about 10 years, dating back to the time when Deliveroo first launched in Reading. We asked him about working for a delivery platform, what he thought work wells, and what doesn't.

One of Michael's first observations was how hourly earnings have reduced compared to when he first started. Whilst the minimum wage has risen over time, this does not apply to the gig economy where people are self-employed.

There may be several reasons why this has happened; one reason could potentially be the supply of labour in an environment where there is little regulation.

Being a delivery courier is a relatively accessible form of employment for recent immigrants, and Michael suspected the delivery platforms may be able to exploit this fact, alongside the lack of workers' rights in the gig economy, to drive down their costs.

Of course being self-employed, ie the gig economy, means you can work when it's convenient to you and you only need to accept the deliveries that you want to do.

Michael felt the delivery apps in themselves function quite well. The apps have their own algorithms for offering deliveries to couriers, and the allocating and acceptance of deliveries is itself a market place, which depends on the delivery price offered and who is willing to accept it.

However, this market dynamic gets more complex when you consider that couriers may be running multiple delivery apps simultaneously (with the potential to overcommit on deliveries).

For more detail on how the apps offer and price their deliveries see the separate article on Claud's experiences on page 8.

Delivery couriers are required to sign an agreement with the delivery platform company. As an example, the Just Eat agreement states:



*"Any vehicle you use to undertake Deliveries must be roadworthy and compliant with UK law," and goes on to state: "You agree to perform the Delivery with a reasonable level of care, skill and diligence and in compliance with all traffic, health and safety laws, rules and regulations and with the Just Eat Courier Community Guide."*

Whilst the legal requirements are nominally there, in a gig economy environment there is little or no monitoring or enforcement to ensure compliance. What's more, the courier who signed the agreement can get substitutes to actually do the deliveries for them.

When Michael first started out as a delivery rider they were pretty much all cyclists and the illegal motorised bikes, which have only become prevalent this decade, were not present on our roads.

At that time he was provided with all the delivery gear such as uniform, lights, battery power banks, etc. Nowadays the delivery platforms keep themselves at arm's length from the delivery transport mode; Just Eat's agreement with their delivery couriers

states: *"You are free to undertake a Delivery in any way you deem suitable..."*

Having said that, the platforms generally provide guidance on how to responsibly use delivery transport, including safe and legal cycling and what constitutes a legal e-bike. But provision of any training seems to be beyond the remit of the delivery platforms.

Michael felt the platforms could make more effort to manage their couriers and invest more in training the delivery riders/drivers, with some form of online testing to at least attempt to ensure competence. Michael noted that there was a high rate of turnover of couriers in a gig economy and that this would not encourage the platforms to invest in the couriers.

Another factor may be that the more the platforms 'manage' their delivery couriers the more likely they would be considered as being employed by the delivery platform, with all the rights that go with employment.

**Keith Elliott**  
RCC Secretary

# Electric Bikes and the Law

This article explains the current state of the law regarding electric bikes (also known as e-bikes) in the UK. Note that this represents the personal view of the author, not the stated position of the Reading Cycle Campaign, and none of this should be taken or construed as legal advice.

While I have made every effort to be accurate regarding the relevant laws, I am not a legal professional and I recommend that you take legal advice if in any doubt. I have included links to UK government and other websites for reference.

## What is an e-bike?

Contrary to much popular opinion, e-bikes are, subject to certain regulations described below, perfectly legal in the UK.

There is no single definition of an e-bike in the UK, So what are the types of e-bikes, according to UK law?

- Electrically assisted pedal cycle (EAPC)
- Speed pedelec
- Electric motorcycle
- E-scooter (not strictly bicycles, of course)

Different laws apply to these types, these will be described below.

## Summary of the regulations

As we said above, different regulations apply to each type. So, let's look at them in turn. Note that these regulations have changed over time, so we only discuss the current state.

### Electrically assisted pedal cycle

Electrically assisted pedal cycles are the most common type in the UK. As the name implies, the intent of these bikes is that the motor *assists* and is not the primary motive power. Such bikes are classed as pedal cycles under the law and are subject to (mostly) the same regulations. The most important legal requirements are:

- The maximum power output should not exceed 250 watts.
- The motor should not provide power at higher speeds than 15.5mph (25km/h)

- The motor should assist and not be the sole power source. In other words, the rider should be pedalling for the motor to assist.
- Riders must be 14 years or older.
- The bike must carry some indication of its maximum speed and power output.

So, when someone on an e-bike overtakes you going uphill at 30mph without pedalling, the bike is certainly illegal.

#### Notes:

- There is ongoing discussion about whether the maximum power should be increased to 500W. This seems unnecessary to me, as this is roughly a fit club cyclist's maximum continuous power output.
- There is no law against such a bike travelling at more than 15.5mph (if you are wondering why this odd-seeming speed was chosen, it equates to 25kph), providing the rider is the sole source of power.
- As these are legally pedal cycles, there is no requirement for tax, insurance, registration, protective gear, or type approval for the e-bike.
- Some e-bikes have a switch to allow for higher power and/or speed than would be allowed on the road, for example, for off-road use. It is unclear whether these are legal in the UK.

### Speed pedelecs

A speed pedelec is like a legal e-bike, except it can go faster than 15.5mph under motor power, but not more than 28mph.

Under UK law, these are regarded as mopeds and are subject to the same laws as mopeds for tax, insurance, registration, type approval, and protective clothing.

### Electric motorcycle

An electrically powered cycle that does not conform to the above regulations is regarded as a motorcycle and is subject to the same laws as a motorcycle for tax, insurance, registration, type approval, and protective clothing.

## Electric scooters

Ah, the e-scooter. If you see one of these being ridden in Reading on public land, including highways and pedestrian paths, it is illegal. So when can they be used?

- On private land, subject to the owner's consent and providing the rider is at least 14 years old.
- In certain pilot scheme areas, *rental* e-scooters, but not privately owned ones, can be used on public roads and cycle lanes, but not pavements.
  - Riders must be at least 16 years old
  - Riders must hold a driving licence with a Category Q (a moped, and included in full and provisional licences for cars and motorcycles)
  - You must be insured (this is generally arranged by the rental company)
  - Only one person at a time is allowed
  - You cannot tow
  - You must not use a mobile phone while riding - although you can use a screen for navigation and it is not clear if using a phone for this is allowed.

The trial areas for e-scooters are:

- Bournemouth and Poole
- Buckinghamshire (Aylesbury, High Wycombe, and Princes Risborough)
- Cambridge
- Essex (Basildon, Braintree, Chelmsford, and Colchester)
- Gloucestershire (Cheltenham and Gloucester)
- Liverpool
- London (participating boroughs)
- Milton Keynes
- Newcastle
- North and West Northamptonshire (Northampton, Kettering, Corby, Wellingborough, Rushden, and Higham Ferrers)
- North Devon
- Norwich
- Oxfordshire (Oxford)
- Salford
- Slough

# Electric Bikes and the Law continued...

- Solent (Isle of Wight, Portsmouth, and Southampton)
- Somerset (Taunton, Minehead and Yeovil)
- West Midlands (Birmingham)
- West of England Combined Authority (Bristol and Bath)

So definitely not Reading nor most of the surrounding areas.

## What are the penalties?

One of our committee members is aware of a rider who had their illegal machine confiscated and (I believe) destroyed. In addition, there are fines, and you can get penalty points on your driving licence (even if you do not have one, they can be recorded).

## Who is responsible?

The rider is responsible. There is an argument that companies who use riders for deliveries or as couriers have a duty to make their riders aware of the laws around e-bikes, but that is my opinion.



## Links

### Government sites

- [Electrically assisted pedal cycles \(EAPCs\) in Great Britain: information sheet](#)
- [Electric bikes: licensing, tax and insurance](#)
- [Guidance on European type approval for certain electrically assisted pedal cycles \(EAPC\)](#)
- [Smarter regulation: proposed changes to legislation for electrically assisted pedal cycles](#)



- [New guidance to enhance e-bike and e-scooter safety](#)
- [E-scooter trials: guidance for users](#)

### Other useful sites

- [Complete Guide to UK Law For Electric Bikes, Scooters, Mopeds & Motorbikes](#)
- [Are Electric Bikes Legal in the UK? 2024 E-Bike Law](#)
- [Electric Bike Laws UK: 13 Rules You Can't Afford to Ignore](#)
- [Electric Motorcycles: UK Law, Licences and Regulations](#)

Keith Collyer  
Membership Secretary

# Contacting Just Eat and Deliveroo

In July there was an article in *road.cc* about the problems delivery cyclists were having in [Canterbury](#).

Just Eat and Deliveroo were both quoted in the article.

I contacted both companies about their policies towards food delivery riders and how they ensure their riders always act respectfully and responsibly.

I heard nothing from Deliveroo, but Just Eat sent a reply:

*We have high standards for those that deliver on behalf of the business and our expectations are clearly communicated to couriers as part of onboarding and guidance processes, with a clear courier agreement and code of conduct which couriers sign up to in order to deliver on our network.*

*We do everything we can to ensure couriers are working safely and acting*



*responsibly, and we provide reminders about compliance and behaviour to local courier teams whenever we are notified of any problems.*

*We work cooperatively with local authorities and police authorities across the country to mitigate local issues and assist with enforcement approaches where appropriate.*

*We do believe it is our role to ensure that couriers have access to relevant*

*safety information, helping them to do their job most effectively.*

*We provide couriers with information around delivering safely, which includes guidance on the responsible use of e-bikes.*

*[Our communications materials around safety can be found here](#), and this information is always available through our courier site, and we also issue regular reminders through courier marketing.*

*We hold regular face-to-face courier events across the country, called [StreetMeets](#), and we use these events as an opportunity to talk to couriers about opportunities and challenges, share safety information, provide new merchandise to help them do their jobs, service bikes where applicable, and recycle old kit.*

Rob Hill  
WBC Campaigner for RCC

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## Contact Us

Tel: 0845 330 2543  
www.readingcyclecampaign.org.uk  
www.facebook.com/ReadingCycleCampaign  
twitter.com/ReadingCycle

Chairman	<b>Joe Edwards</b> chair@readingcyclecampaign.org.uk
Secretary	<b>Keith Elliott</b> secretary@readingcyclecampaign.org.uk
Treasurer	<b>Brian Morley</b> treasurer@readingcyclecampaign.org.uk
Membership Secretary	<b>Keith Collyer</b> membership@readingcyclecampaign.org.uk
Publicity Coordinator	<b>Susan Children</b> publicity@readingcyclecampaign.org.uk
Events Coordinator	<b>Karen Robertson</b> events@readingcyclecampaign.org.uk
Reading Campaigners	<b>John Lee &amp; Tony Carr</b> rbc@readingcyclecampaign.org.uk
Wokingham Campaigner	<b>Alex Cran</b> wokingham@readingcyclecampaign.org.uk
West Berks Campaigner	<b>Rob Hill</b> wbc@readingcyclecampaign.org.uk
Newsletter Editor and Designer	<b>Alice Elliott</b> newsletter@readingcyclecampaign.org.uk
Website Manager	<b>Stuart Ward</b> webmaster@readingcyclecampaign.org.uk
Newsletter Distribution	<b>Kat Heath and Nick Zealey</b>

Next newsletter copy deadline: 1 November 2024

The newsletter will now be delivered electronically to members. If you prefer to receive a paper copy, please email [membership@readingcyclecampaign.org.uk](mailto:membership@readingcyclecampaign.org.uk)

## Cycling Events

5 September @ 11:00 - 14:00

[Dr Bike pop up sessions](#)

8 September @ 11:00 - 17:00

[Reading Cycle Festival at Christchurch Meadows](#)

8 September @ 12:00 - 14:00

[Kidical Mass Family Bike Ride Reading](#)

View more events on our Events page:

<https://readingcyclecampaign.org.uk/events/>

# RCC's Monthly Meetings

7.30pm on the third Wednesday of each month

**Wed 16 Oct 2024 - AGM**

**Wed 20 Nov 2024 - cttee mtg**

**Wed 18 Dec 2024 - open mtg**

See RCC's Facebook Page or our website for more details.

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