

Transport Committee

Oral evidence: [E-scooters: follow-up](#), HC 1077

Wednesday 8 February 2023

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Members present: Iain Stewart (Chair); Mike Amesbury; Mr Ben Bradshaw; Jack Brereton; Ruth Cadbury; Paul Howell; Karl McCartney; Grahame Morris; Gavin Newlands; Greg Smith.

Questions 1–58

Witnesses

I: Commander Kyle Gordon, NPCC Lead for Roads Policing Operations, National Police Chiefs' Council; Clive Wood, Lead for Regional Policy and Campaigns Manager, Guide Dogs; Justin Stevenson, Head of Design, Halfords; and David G Davies, Executive Director, Parliamentary Advisory Council for Transport Safety.



Examination of witnesses

Witnesses: Commander Kyle Gordon, Clive Wood, Justin Stevenson and David G Davies.

Q1 **Chair:** Good morning. Welcome to this session of the Transport Select Committee. I am Iain Stewart, the Chair of the Committee. Before we get into questions, for the purposes of our record, I invite our panellists to introduce themselves and their organisations.

Clive Wood: Good morning, Chair. Thank you very much indeed. My name is Clive Wood. I am the lead for policy and the campaigns manager at Guide Dogs. Guide Dogs provides a range of services for blind and partially sighted people, from rehabilitation and mobility to our guide dog service. We are also the biggest provider of services to children and young people with sight loss and their families in the UK. For context, there are about 360,000 people registered blind and partially sighted in the UK. There are an estimated 2 million people living with sight loss as well.

Justin Stevenson: Good morning, Chair. Thank you for inviting me along. My name is Justin Stevenson. I am the head of design for the retailer Halfords.

Commander Gordon: Good morning, Chair and Committee. My name is Commander Kyle Gordon. I am the national lead for the NPCC for road policing operations. Within that portfolio we have alternative mobility, into which e-scooters fall.

David G Davies: Good morning. I am David Davies, the executive director of PACTS, the Parliamentary Advisory Council for Transport Safety. I would like to point out that it is an entirely independent body. Although we are proud to have Parliament in our name, we are not an official parliamentary body.

Q2 **Chair:** Thank you all. Welcome to this session, where we will revisit the subject of e-scooters. As you are probably aware, the Committee first looked at this issue back in 2020. Given that the initially planned timetable for the trials and subsequent legislation has been extended, we thought it would be prudent for us to revisit the subject, to check how things are progressing and that the evaluation of the trials is as comprehensive as possible so that that can influence effectively any upcoming legislation.

My colleagues will want to dig into some of the specific issues in a moment. Initially, can I ask each of you for your overall appraisal of how the trials are going and how they can be effectively appraised?

Clive Wood: Guide Dogs has been engaging with trials in England, where there were initially 31 trials. I emphasise that it is only in England that there are trials. I think the number has been reduced to around 26 trials now. We have engaged with those, and in general they have been quite



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positive. It has given us the opportunity to give feedback and views and to hear how the trials are going, which has been helpful.

There are some elements of inconsistency in the types of information that are being provided by operators and local authorities around the statistics on the use of e-scooters and the incidence of enforcement and accidents. There are some inconsistencies, but in general we feel that it is quite positive. We are talking about the trials, not the privately owned e-scooters.

Justin Stevenson: We do not have any direct involvement with rental or hire scooters at the moment. Our path is to understand the information and learning from those trials towards legislation on private e-scooters.

Commander Gordon: We are linked across the policing landscape in the United Kingdom with the trial companies and with local councils at local level in the forces. Those conversations feed back to us nationally.

There have definitely been some challenges as regards the purely policing aspect of the wider road safety issue. That has led to a lot of interest in this particular subject and, dare I say it, some potential confusion among the wider public in and around the trial e-scooters and the illegal e-scooters on the road, and we may get into that later on.

However, we are well linked in. There is good partnership working going on right across the policing landscape with industry, retailers and others. A bit like my colleagues to my right, whatever direction is taken in relation to e-scooters, we are interested in seeing how we can help, with wider society, to make them as safe as possible.

David G Davies: We think that the principle of conducting and evaluating the trials is a good one. Our impression is that some have gone better than others. We have had contact from some operators who clearly want to engage, particularly on the safety issues, and we are very pleased to have had that. Others have not chosen to engage and, frankly, have not given so much importance to safety issues. Similarly, some local authorities have placed more emphasis on revenue benefits, while others have given much stricter preference to safety and management.

Q3 **Chair:** Again generally, do you think that the fact that the trial period has been extended will allow for a fuller appraisal of the various pros and cons of e-scooter rentals?

David G Davies: I certainly hope so. Half of the period that was evaluated was at a very early stage. There were only 47 scooters at the beginning of the evaluation period. Even at the conclusion of it, it was nothing like the full amount, so I hope that we will continue to draw data from it and that we will evaluate better some of the information that is available from the initial period.

Chair: Do any of the other panellists want to add to that?



Clive Wood: We were quite disappointed that the evaluation period had been extended. With the first part of the evaluation, we were disappointed that we did not get the mid-term report until quite late. The problem is that the evaluation is flawed. Basically, we are evaluating the trials. We are not evaluating the broader issue of e-scooter use. Also the e-scooter trials are only in England. There is no opportunity to evaluate the impacts in Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales.

Chair: Commander Gordon or Mr Stevenson, do you have anything to add?

Commander Gordon: I understand Mr Wood's frustrations that some aspects of what e-scooter use will inevitably be in the wider context are not being picked up. Of course, any extension of the trial period will allow us to have more information about behaviours. We have already seen that in the reports that have been done, which show how the use of e-scooters has changed—who uses them, when they use them and what they use them for. By and large, the extension has been useful from a policing perspective.

Q4 **Karl McCartney:** I am Karl McCartney, the Member of Parliament for Lincoln and a member of the Transport Select Committee. I am going to ask a question that is quite specific. I will come to Commander Gordon first, if that is okay. I will then come to Mr Clive Wood and, following that, to Mr Davies. Mr Stevenson, although you are a commercial concern, shall we say, you might have an opinion and you are on the panel, so I will ask you what your view is at the end, if that is all right.

Our report highlighted the many concerns that people have about e-scooters, such as street clutter and the potential for collisions. Have concerns been allayed or exacerbated since then, in your opinion?

Commander Gordon: From the point when the trial commenced? Is that the question? It is difficult to answer. I am certainly not trying to fudge, but, of course, alongside the trials there has been an exponential growth in private e-scooter ownership. In answering that question, I would be in danger of trying to distil something that may not be there. What we have seen, certainly from a national picture feeding in and from my own force in London, is an increase in e-scooter use in general. Quite a lot of the concerns that are being raised with us at different community groups and in different areas are more to do with the private and illegal use of e-scooters.

Q5 **Karl McCartney:** From your point of view, representing the police, what is the biggest concern about the use of e-scooters, both in terms of private ownership and in relation to the rental schemes that have been in place?

Commander Gordon: My biggest concern, from a policing perspective, is the ambiguity around e-scooters—the legislation, who can use them and when they can be used. While the roll-out of the trials definitely has benefits, it has led to some confusion among the general public. I have



been out with my teams on operations when we have stopped members of the public on a technically illegal e-scooter who have taken all reasonable measures to be a good citizen. They are riding at an appropriate speed and are fully protected by the kit they are wearing. One gentleman showed us that he had managed to get third-party insurance cover through his house insurance. That was completely illegal, yet he saw people on trial e-scooters down a footpath at the same moment that we had him stop, as happenchance would have it, who were breaking the law in relation to where they were being ridden but were within the confines of the trial. If you were to ask me what my biggest concern is, it would be around lack of clarity for the general public on how society would police itself before we would have to step in.

Q6 Karl McCartney: You have probably answered the final part of my question, but I will come back to that later. I would like to go to the other panel members on the same question that I have just asked you. Mr Davies, do you want to go next?

David G Davies: By all means. As you well know, this Committee recommended legalising e-scooters, with a whole series of criteria, recommendations and caveats. It is really important to go back to those, because they were spot on. They included things like avoiding abstracting trips from active travel, looking to other countries to see what lessons have been learned there, and impact on pedestrians. For all those things, there is evidence in the evaluation report about how well or not that has been achieved.

Your main point was about pedestrians' concerns. We have certainly had that reported to us. We have seen the death of one elderly lady pedestrian in a collision. Another gentleman tried to move an e-scooter and died as a consequence. The day-to-day impact on pedestrians is noticeable. Some schemes are managed better than others. With rental schemes, you have geofencing, which can limit the impact, although it cannot distinguish between a road and a pavement. Of course, geofencing would not apply to private e-scooters, which are the bigger issue. We have a detailed report on an evaluation of the trials, but we do not have very much on the elephant in the room.

Q7 Karl McCartney: Thank you for that. Mr Wood, have your concerns been allayed or exacerbated since the report?

Clive Wood: Exacerbated, I would say. As an organisation, through surveys, we have been asking blind and partially sighted people, and the general public, actually, about their understanding and impression of e-scooters since the trials began. As the commander said, we have seen a number of privately owned e-scooters on the street. David from PACTS can give more detailed information about the numbers, but we are talking about a million privately owned e-scooters. To put that into context, there are about 20,000 e-scooters in the trials.



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The feedback that we are getting is that over 80% of the blind and partially sighted people we have asked have come into contact with e-scooters. Over 70% of them said that it was in a negative way. For someone with sight loss, "in a negative way" is if an e-scooter comes very close to them or brushes up against them. They may be a cane user or a guide dog owner. I have a fantastic guide dog, who makes my life so much better. If I am on the street, I am absolutely terrified for my dog. When I was coming over Westminster bridge to this place today, an e-scooter came right up next to me. I was more worried about my dog than about anybody else. That is what we are hearing from blind and partially sighted people.

The problem is that 50% of blind and partially sighted people tell us that they are now changing their routine. They avoid going to certain places. They use public transport more because they do not want to walk. That is really concerning to us. Twelve per cent. of them have had e-scooters hit their mobility tool, either hitting their cane or brushing up against their dog. That is a real concern to us. It is why, from our perspective, we need stronger enforcement. We need to see regulation introduced more quickly. That is what blind and partially sighted people are telling us.

Q8 Karl McCartney: Thank you for that very useful information. Mr Stevenson, do you have any comments that you would like to make at this point?

Justin Stevenson: I agree with the other members of the panel in a lot of ways. Obviously, we do not have much to do with the rental scooters, but I definitely agree as regards legislation on private e-scooters. I have huge empathy with people who are partially sighted, for example. Legislation to make sure that privately used e-scooters are not used inappropriately and that the specification of those e-scooters is right and safe is really important.

Q9 Karl McCartney: This is my final question. Mr Davies, I want to go to you, if that is all right, because you mentioned this. What support and guidance have the Government provided to address the concerns that you have? I will put the same question to the rest of the panel members. Have the Government been proactive, reactive or non-committal? Silence. Is there a reason that you are not answering this one?

David G Davies: I will answer, if you would like me to. I am sorry; I thought that I was exempt from that one.

We have been calling on the Government to take stronger action—to get a grip, to use that phrase. With due respect to my colleague here, we feel that some retailers could be much more responsible in their marketing of e-scooters. The other day I passed an expensive shop in Holborn that was advertising and selling e-scooters as perfect for the daily commute, with a big map of London behind them. It does not say, "By the way, they are illegal for your daily commute." There is that aspect.



The Government's response to that has often been, "It is a police enforcement matter." We have huge sympathy with the police because they have better things to do than to try to tell people that the scooter they have just bought cannot be used.

Q10 Karl McCartney: I will come straight to you then, Commander Gordon. Is it a case of passing the buck?

Commander Gordon: I don't think so. The space into which e-scooters, the trials and any potential regulatory framework have been introduced is a difficult space. Society is moving at pace. We recognise that. During the last number of years, with covid and other things, we have seen a change in how people move around. Of course, I completely understand why there may be a desire to introduce something at pace in this space.

We as a profession have been well linked in with Government and, indeed, other partners around this, so we probably feel that we have had the information that we would need. If there is a slight frustration in this space, as Mr Davies said, it is that in the absence of getting to that end point policing has been asked to undertake additional activity in the space.

I often quote this stat, so please forgive me: on average in the United Kingdom, 4.5 people are killed every day. Every 23 minutes, somebody is killed or seriously injured on the United Kingdom's roads. That means that by the time we finish our evidence this morning two people will have been killed or seriously injured on roads in the United Kingdom. There does not seem to be the same clamour for activity from policing in that space. In fact, in the three years I have held this portfolio, I have had more conversations around e-scooters and micro-mobility than I have had about any of the other fatal four areas.

While I understand that it is a difficult area, my frustration is that occasionally I feel we may be being asked slightly to bend our operational response out of kilter with where the threat, harm and risk is to keeping the vast majority of people safe. A regulatory framework introduced at an early stage would allow society to police itself, by and large. We would only step into the areas where we needed to, in a proportionate way.

Karl McCartney: Thank you for that. Mr Wood?

Clive Wood: As regards the Department for Transport, our frustration in what we are asking for—because it has not happened—is that there has not been a sufficient public awareness campaign around e-scooters. We think that that would have made a massive difference from the word go. If there had been a public awareness campaign that made clear what the law was and where you can and cannot use privately owned e-scooters, and that talked about the trial, it would have been more helpful.

There should have been more support for commercial organisations, for retailers, in how they communicate with their customers about e-scooters, and where and when those can be used. That is really



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important. I will give you another stat, if you don't mind. We spoke to members of the public in a survey just before Christmas. We gave them four choices in relation to the laws around e-scooters. Over 60% of those people got the wrong answer. More worryingly, in the trial areas, only 50% of those people knew the answer. It is quite worrying. It is about having a public awareness campaign. That is really important.

Karl McCartney: Thank you very much for that, Mr Wood. I would just say sorry to all the panel members, because it has now gone 20 minutes. I am sure that the Chairman will remind you to give shorter answers than I may have allowed you to give so far.

Chair: Thank you, Karl. Greg, I turn to you next.

Q11 **Greg Smith:** I am Greg Smith, the Member of Parliament for Buckingham. Thank you for coming.

Mr Wood, you have already commented on some of the points I want to get to around the rental trials. I appreciate that there will be crossover to the use of private e-scooters, but my question is specifically about the rental trials that we have seen and the rental trials that have been extended. What more do you feel is still to be learned from them? I appreciate the points that you made in answer to the Chairman earlier and that you articulated eloquently with regard to the public information campaign just now, but what more do you feel we still need to learn from them, or do we now know enough?

Clive Wood: What we have always asked for, as we did in our evidence to the Transport Committee in 2020, and what we would have liked to see introduced in all trial areas, is mandatory parking—either on-street parking or dock parking. For blind and partially sighted people, and other pedestrians, street clutter is the real issue. We are already facing pavement parking at the moment. That has not been resolved. We are already facing street furniture, which is still an issue. Now we also see inappropriately parked e-scooters, which are causing issues.

Before Christmas, I was speaking to a visually impaired person who was heavily pregnant. She walked into an e-scooter and fell over. Thankfully, she was okay, but it was really worrying for her. We hear this quite often. It is a barrier. We would have liked to see more effort put in by local authorities and the operators when the trial areas were being introduced, working with DFT, to make sure that pavement parking was not going to be an issue.

Q12 **Greg Smith:** That is really interesting. Can you elaborate on what you would see as appropriate parking for e-scooters? Are you saying that they must be only in public car parks or on private land? Must they be on the street?

Clive Wood: Think about motor bikes, for example. There are on-street parking bays for motorbikes. Since the beginning of our engagement with e-scooter trial areas, we have encouraged local authorities and the



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operators—it is predominantly down to the local authorities to do this—to allocate parking bays for e-scooters. The response we have had several times is that the challenge and issue they have is loss of revenue for them. We do not feel that that is a good enough reason not to do it.

If you are going to have trial areas and we are evaluating, we think that on-street parking would be beneficial. If that is not an option, parking bays like those that we have for dockless bikes—sorry, not dockless bikes; they are another thing; I mean docked bikes—would be an option as well. We want anything that will keep pavements clear. Pavements are an absolute struggle at the moment, with all the obstacles that I mentioned before. This is just another one that has been put in place.

Q13 **Greg Smith:** Is there anything else that you think should be in ongoing trials, on top of keeping pavements clear and mandatory parking areas?

Clive Wood: We would also like consistency around police enforcement. I totally appreciate the commander's views on the work they have been doing. We recognise that this is just another piece of work, but we would like to have seen more consistency in knowing how enforcement is happening in the trial areas, because the information we are being provided with is inconsistent. As I said at the beginning, we would like to hear more about where penalties have been given to users and where there have been injuries or somebody has had to have medical treatment. We would like that to be more consistent across all the trials.

Q14 **Greg Smith:** That is very helpful. Because we are talking about rental specifically, I might come to Mr Stevenson last. Commander Gordon?

Commander Gordon: Specifically in relation to rental, I do not think there is anything else policing is waiting for to come out of this. The trial period has run for a sufficiently long duration. We as a profession are content to wait and see what falls out of that. There is nothing specific that we want to see that has not been covered.

Q15 **Greg Smith:** Do you feel that there might be a point around parking of e-scooters? I appreciate that it is not particularly a policing matter, but might that be a gap in the trials?

Commander Gordon: It is not something that comes up to policing on a regular basis. If there is an issue with it, it is not being flagged to us.

Greg Smith: That is helpful. Mr Davies?

David G Davies: We would very much like more prescriptive guidance for local authorities in the new contracts that they issue, because we are picking up stories about a race to the bottom, rather than an improvement in safety and management standards. For example, some scooters have an inherently safer design. They have bigger front wheels, better suspension and so forth. Riders are less likely to come off if they hit a pothole. Some are providing helmets. Some schemes have lowered the maximum speed. In Essex, for example, it started at 15.5 mph and



has gone down to 12.5 mph, even 10 mph in places. Many schemes are operating at 12.5 mph, which we recommend as a safer speed, both for the rider and for other people. There is a whole series of measures that could be built into new contracts that would make them safer and better operated and would help the long-term viability of rental schemes.

Q16 **Greg Smith:** You say that Essex has already dropped the maximum speed in its trial. As we look at extended trials and, potentially, new trials, do we already know enough from that data, or do we need further trials done with scooters at differing speed limits?

David G Davies: Quite a lot of the trials ran at 12.5 mph. We can provide the analysis, if you like. Some were at 15 mph. Some were at 10 mph. Some had higher battery power, motor power, and some lower. It is a shame that in the evaluation there was not a comparison of those sites to see whether safety or other lessons could be learned.

Q17 **Greg Smith:** It was a failure to collect the data, rather than a failure to do.

David G Davies: I think that it was a failure to analyse the data. I believe that the operator provided quite a lot of data, which has not been fully analysed.

Q18 **Greg Smith:** Got it. Mr Stevenson, is there anything you want to add from a Halfords perspective?

Justin Stevenson: Nothing in particular. For us, it is about gathering the information and moving to legislation on private e-scooters.

Q19 **Paul Howell:** I am Paul Howell. I am the Member of Parliament for Sedgefield in the north-east of England.

For a change, Justin, I will talk to you this time. I want to talk primarily about private e-scooters and the world you have to operate in at the moment. If I understand it right, effectively you are selling a product that is legal to sell but in a lot of cases is illegal to use, in terms of where it goes. There are different dimensions to that. I would like to ask you to reiterate to us how you manage the communication of information and the appropriateness of the sales that you are making. Can you give me a framework for that, please?

Justin Stevenson: Of course. Fundamentally, in the absence of legislation, we are self-legislating; we are trying to control very carefully what we do.

You asked how we reinforce the message to our customers. We shout, loud and proud, the message about where scooters are and are not allowed to be used. We shout about it in store. There is a banner across all the products. We have a headline on the bottom of every single price ticket. We have a training module that all our colleagues have to go through and that they then have to talk the customer through. We have a banner on our website. Finally, we have a pop-up on the till, as we sell



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the product, as a reminder for the colleague to go through a final reminder to the customer that they cannot use these in public and that they can use them only on private land, with the owner's permission. We have a whole selection of self-legislation.

On top of that, we actually control the product that we sell. We make sure that we have set our own guidelines on the maximum speed, maximum power, wheel size and general technical specifications of an e-scooter and that all the scooters that we sell, whether they are bought or designed by ourselves, comply with the same set of standards.

Q20 **Paul Howell:** I am making an assumption that those standards are the ones that have been employed in the trials.

Justin Stevenson: No, they are very slightly different. The trials have different standards. They are what we hope we would see in private e-scooter legislation, but because there isn't any yet it is, not an arbitrary number, but a very carefully selected number. Most of them agree with what PACTS would say. There are some differences.

Q21 **Paul Howell:** You obviously have lots of stores throughout the country. How do you affirm to yourselves as an organisation that your staff are following the guidelines that you have put there, to make sure that it is not just window washing and that your staff are actually doing the right thing?

Justin Stevenson: We are genuinely following it through. There are training modules and reinforcement. We have an operations team that manage that. I do not control it myself, but it is followed through to the end in every case. Colleagues who did not follow that path would be disciplined.

Q22 **Paul Howell:** Like everywhere else in the world at the moment, I am sure a decent proportion of these sales will be online. Do you have a different approach for verifying customer engagement and customer awareness when it is an online sale?

Justin Stevenson: Online, we have very clear banners at every single touchpoint. If you are browsing the product or if you are then buying the product, you get reinforced messages at every stage of the process. A lot of our customers who choose to buy an e-scooter online collect it in store. So we also get that touchpoint if they pick it up in store, which is our preferred method.

Q23 **Paul Howell:** Is it an age-restricted sale online?

Justin Stevenson: We have aligned our age restriction with e-bikes. We recommend 14 as the youngest.

Q24 **Paul Howell:** Recommend or enforce?



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Justin Stevenson: In store it will be enforced. Our colleagues will not sell to below-14s, but it is obviously harder to control online if it is delivered to the home.

Q25 **Paul Howell:** I understand. Can you give me the context as to where Halfords fits in the private market at the moment? What is your market share? Roughly, how many are you selling?

Justin Stevenson: It is hard for me to say, because it is obviously commercially sensitive. We think we are somewhere between 20% and 40% of the private market in the UK.

Q26 **Paul Howell:** Significant.

Justin Stevenson: Reasonably significant.

Q27 **Paul Howell:** I meant it in a positive way. Obviously you are here putting yourself forward as a responsible seller of these products. I am sure you watch the market as a whole for what your competitors are doing, both small and big organisations. Do you have anything we should learn about the way that others may not be respecting the rules?

Justin Stevenson: It is clear from a quick browse online that any of us would be able to understand that not everybody is as responsible as us. Legislation on e-scooters will definitely help to enforce those messages. There are e-scooters around that are high-speed and high-powered that you can buy online. We wish that everyone would follow our example, honestly speaking.

Q28 **Paul Howell:** It seems like an obvious statement to me. While the trials are very helpful, getting some framework of legislation in place to work around it would put substantial clarity into what you can sell and how it can be monitored and used elsewhere. Is that a fair statement, or am I missing something somewhere?

Justin Stevenson: No, absolutely.

Q29 **Paul Howell:** Are there any circumstances in which you would not sell to anybody?

Justin Stevenson: Obviously, someone young. It is very clear on someone below 14. Offhand, I cannot think of any other reason necessarily.

Q30 **Paul Howell:** My questions were directed at you in particular, but would any other members of the panel like to add something about the way that private e-scooters are sold in the market? Commander Gordon, you are looking at me as if you would.

Commander Gordon: Yes, absolutely, and I support those views. We would very much like some regulation around the selling of e-scooters. It seems almost counterintuitive that when people purchase a can of alcohol, a certain category of movie or other goods, we are very clear



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what age they need to be and the circumstances in which they need to use those things, yet with e-scooters we are not.

Retail is not predominantly our world—I understand that—but we would be keen for regulation at the construction stage; in other words, that approved e-scooters are built to a specification that means they are inherently safer than some other models. At the retail level, we would very much encourage a responsible retailing approach through some sort of regulation.

Paul Howell: Mr Wood, would you like to add anything?

Clive Wood: I agree. It is really important. From our perspective, we think weight, speed and power is the key issue in terms of e-scooters. I appreciate the comments from our colleague from Halfords, but we know that you can go online and get e-scooters that go over 60 mph. You can modify an e-scooter if you have the ability to do it. We need to regulate. We need to have standards, including having an AVAS sound system on e-scooters. At the moment, some of the operators are doing studies. We were at PEARL yesterday, which is at University College London, looking at the work they are doing around AVAS systems for some of the operators.

We need to see this being led by the Department for Transport. We need a standard that is uniform. We cannot have different sounds. I want to be able to go to any part of the country and, if I hear a specific sound, I know it is an e-scooter. That is what we need. At the moment, three or four different types of research are being done around sound. We need that to be done as well.

Paul Howell: Finally, would you like to add anything, Mr Davies?

David G Davies: The Government announced to this Committee that they wanted to legalise e-scooters, so that is the direction of travel. We would like to see regulation brought in as soon as possible so that those that are sold legally and used legally are as safe as possible. There are our recommendations, but there is plenty of precedent in other countries in Europe we could point you to.

Paul Howell: I endorse the comments made. It took me about a minute and a half to find other users on the sites last night. I looked at your site as well, Mr Stevenson, in terms of the banners. I endorse exactly where you are at there.

To summarise, Chair, it seems that we are looking at the need for both regulation as soon as practicable on the use of them, and for quality of the equipment and things like sound, and so on, on the equipment as well.

Q31 **Grahame Morris:** Good morning, gentlemen. My name is Grahame Morris. I am the Labour Member of Parliament for Easington in County Durham in the north-east. My questions are really quite simple. You have



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already touched on some of these areas.

How dangerous are e-scooters when they are being used on the highway or on pavements? I want to start with Mr Davies. I would like you to address this for the users and for other people and compare it to other, similar modes of transport like e-bicycles and so on. Mr Wood, I will come to you last, if you don't mind.

David G Davies: We have done quite a lot of work in this area in relation to private e-scooters. We very much said that we would not comment on the rental ones because the Government are evaluating that. However, of course, now the evaluation report is out we have more information. I have to admit that I was slightly surprised to find that, in the rental trials, the official figures show that the rate per mile travelled for e-scooters—it is predominantly the riders who are injured—is three and a half times that for pedal cycles, which is alarming in itself.

When you consider that 40% of people have switched not from pedal cycles but from public transport, and 20% from walking, those are very valid comparisons. Of course, public transport is much safer again. On safety grounds there are concerns. Over 30 people have died in the last three years as a result of using e-scooters. Sadly, I think nearly all of those deaths would not have occurred if those people had continued to travel as they did previously, by walking or on public transport, and so on. From the users' perspective, the situation is not good.

It can be made better with helmets, vehicle design and so forth. From the point of view—

Q32 **Grahame Morris:** You mentioned speed limitations earlier.

David G Davies: Absolutely. Half a dozen countries in Europe have introduced a 20 km speed limit requirement, and a similar number have introduced mandatory helmet wearing. Those are two things that could substantially improve safety for the users and for pedestrians.

On safety for pedestrians, it is a much harder number to arrive at. Certainly, the evaluation trials' consultation with residents raised alarms: 75% of scooter users admitted to using the pavement for convenience purposes. They knew it was illegal, but they did. There is clearly an interaction going on there, but I think my colleague from the blind community could comment better.

Q33 **Grahame Morris:** Commander Gordon, can you share your views on that?

Commander Gordon: I absolutely can. There is a difference between absolute harm and per-mile harm. That distinction needs to be drawn because, of course, there are fewer e-scooters on the road than there are vehicles. In the United Kingdom, there are an estimated 38 million cars. Of course, in terms of absolute harm e-scooters are down our list of key priorities. By that, I simply mean that in the same period—the year



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ending June 2022—if we take the official data, there were 11 fatalities on e-scooters, unfortunately, but 789 in cars. In terms of absolute harm, of course, that is where we put our policing effort, because those are the homes of the families that our officers visit afterwards.

In terms of the actual dangers associated with e-scooters, I support just about everybody here. There is more we can do on protection and regulation of the riders themselves, especially helmets and other protective gear. Lights and warning systems would certainly go a long way to making whatever use there is of them much safer now and as it expands.

Q34 Grahame Morris: On danger to other road users or other pavement users—I am particularly thinking of vulnerable people, people with pushchairs and people who are blind or partially sighted—is there a greater role for the police in enforcement with respect to illegal use on the pavement?

Commander Gordon: Is there a greater role? Certainly, where we have the capacity. With finite resources and myriad competing demands, we would like to be in those spaces more. In fact, we occasionally run dedicated operations in that area, but you will appreciate that nobody would thank us if we took our eye off the ball and focused on whatever the particular cause célèbre is around an issue, and let a greater number of people be harmed on the roads. I think there is a role for us. Whether it is a greater role is dictated by our yearly annual strategic threat assessment.

Q35 Grahame Morris: Do you have a view on this, Mr Stevenson, in relation to bicycles, e-bikes and so on by comparison?

Justin Stevenson: I do not have the data necessarily that my colleagues on the panel do, but fundamentally we think that e-scooters, while there are concerns, can certainly be made safer with the right legislation in terms of clear messages about where they can and cannot be used. Making sure that they are not used on pavements is one of the key points. Other things we have discussed, about safety on the actual e-scooter itself, limiting maximum speed and power, and including safety features like lights, are really important.

Grahame Morris: Mr Wood?

Clive Wood: I agree with all the comments that have been made in terms of introducing regulation and from a safety perspective. As I said earlier, I gave figures around blind and partially sighted people and their perception. It is also about their concerns around e-scooters and making changes to their daily lives.

We cannot have this; we cannot have a situation where people do not feel confident that they can travel independently on a footpath. A pavement is there for me and other blind and partially sighted people so



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that we can feel safe. At the moment that is not happening with the number of e-scooters being used irresponsibly on pavements.

You can go to extreme speed very quickly on an e-scooter in comparison with e-bikes or normal bikes. They are heavy. At the moment a lot of e-scooters do not have a sound. I think it is about trying to look at how we can prevent e-scooter use through regulation and legislation in terms of pavement use, and in other areas, such as shared space areas. There is a legitimate and actual concern to blind and partially sighted people, as well as to other disabled people and pedestrians.

Q36 **Grahame Morris:** I presume it is not just on pavements but in pedestrian precincts and shopping centres. I did an exercise with Guide Dogs, where I wore a blindfold. There were enough obstructions with A-frames and furniture outside premises to bruise my shins without worrying about an e-scooter knocking me over as well.

Clive Wood: Absolutely. We know that e-scooters are being used in shared use and pedestrianised areas. Train operating companies and Network Rail have banned e-scooters from being used on concourses at train stations. and some operators like TfL have banned e-scooters on their trains because of safety concerns.

It is of real concern to blind and partially sighted people and others but, as I said earlier, we cannot be in the situation where I, or another blind or partially sighted person, am concerned. I want to go from A to B. I want to do the same as everybody else does. I want to be able to travel independently. At the moment, for a lot of people with sight loss, that is a real challenge.

Grahame Morris: Thank you for sharing your thoughts, Mr Wood. I appreciate it.

Q37 **Gavin Newlands:** I am Gavin Newlands, the MP for Paisley and Renfrewshire North. I am the SNP transport spokesperson down here.

Mr Morris touched on a couple of the issues that I was going to ask about. Can I come back to you directly, Mr Wood, following the last answer? The evaluation of the trial that was published at the end of last year showed that less than a third of residents agreed that e-scooter riders were generally respectful of pedestrians. Given how important that is for people who are blind or partially sighted, what do you think can be done about it?

Clive Wood: We absolutely have to bring in legislation to prevent use of e-scooters on pavements. At the moment that is not the case, and it is chaotic. As I said earlier, there must be public awareness around that as well, and making the general public aware of the dangers of e-scooters if used inappropriately on pavements. That is really important.

From speaking to our dog trainers, for example, in the last year they have certainly seen a difference in the reaction of the dogs that we have



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in training to e-scooters on pavements. Obviously, we are reviewing that to see if we can improve how we do training, but should we have to? I don't know, but it is a concern. Our rehabilitation trainers, who train blind and partially sighted people to use a white cane or other mobility aid, not just the guide dog, to go along a footpath or walk on a street, are telling us that they have real concerns. It is not just the other obstacles on pavements but inappropriate parking and e-scooters being used on pavements. I think we have all agreed today that that is a key issue.

Q38 Gavin Newlands: In terms of the confusion on the law about e-scooter use in relation to public and private land, who do you think should be responsible for educating users or the public? Is it the police, the Government, the manufacturers, the sellers or all of the above? Should somebody take responsibility? Perhaps I could start with you, Mr Wood, and then move along the panel.

Clive Wood: I would certainly say that the Department for Transport should take responsibility. The Government need to take responsibility. It needs to be shared responsibility across all those you mentioned.

Q39 Gavin Newlands: What is the police's role in educating the public, or would you follow the Government's lead on this?

Commander Gordon: There is a dual approach. Of course, we will follow the Government's lead. It is our job to deliver what legislators give us to deliver, and we will continue to do that. We have been out on the streets and have used the same sort of approach as we used with covid around educating the public in the first instance, to make sure that what we deliver is a proportionate policing response. Operationally, on the ground we have delivered a lot of activity around educating. We have also done media. We have been out. I have personally been out with the Walking and Cycling Commissioner. We have written to retailers about it, so we are not idle in this space but, of course, we will follow where the Government lead in relation to education of the wider public.

Q40 Gavin Newlands: What about the PACTS view?

David G Davies: The context is really important. Certainly, education could be rolled out much more. The Government's position on e-scooters is ambivalent. Is it active travel or is it not active travel? Is it something that is important to the decarbonisation policy or strategy, or is it not? Essentially, is it something that the Government are promoting or something that the Government just want to regulate, acknowledge and try to keep safe? That is one issue.

The other thing is that some authorities have said, "We can't do education because private e-scooters are illegal, and we are in that bind." We would absolutely welcome more about the pavement message.

Q41 Gavin Newlands: Where do, not so much the manufacturers, but the sellers of e-scooters come into this?



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Justin Stevenson: I agree with everyone else that there is a joint responsibility. At the moment, our message has to be, “You cannot use this in any public area.” Should they be legalised, we can change that message to be very specific and educate our customers more about where they can and cannot start dividing use between—for example, yes on cycle paths, and definitely no on pavements.

Q42 **Gavin Newlands:** Would it be fair to say that it would be a disincentive for Halfords and anybody else selling e-scooters to be shouting the message that they are essentially illegal on public roads?

Justin Stevenson: We do that. The peak of the sales seemed to happen in about 2020-21, and it has declined since then because of that message. As the message that they are illegal has got out to more consumers, I think we have definitely seen a drop in the sales of e-scooters.

Q43 **Gavin Newlands:** This is the last question from me, Chair. I think we are all in agreement that there needs to be more awareness and a public information campaign following the Government’s decision, but I am curious. In previous public information campaigns on cycling safely and on drivers respecting cyclists, how much of an impact have we seen? I am looking at you, Commander Gordon. I am not looking for statistics but, anecdotally from your own experience, were they of any use?

Commander Gordon: I am awfully glad that you are not looking for statistics, because I don’t have them to hand. I think it varies. It comes back to the point I made earlier. The policing purpose is not to police everything in society. We would much prefer that society sets its own norms and abides by those.

When we do public campaigns—for example, the recent drink and drug drive campaign—what is difficult for us is that, having done all of the publicity, we actually detect more. That may be to do with how we are doing it and how we are targeting, but there have been other campaigns where we have had education messages and we have seen some benefits. It is very much down to how the message is received by society setting its own norms, more than the effectiveness of any given message. That will be key around e-scooters and the demographics who are using them.

Gavin Newlands: Thank you very much. It would be good to see if the DFT has any data on previous public information campaigns and their impacts. Thank you, Chair.

Q44 **Ruth Cadbury:** I am Ruth Cadbury, Labour Member of Parliament for Brentford and a member of this Committee.

I have a couple of questions about good practice on the street clutter issue. Mr Wood, do you have examples of where this is being addressed better, and where the experience is better than elsewhere, and if so, why?



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Clive Wood: For example, there are some boroughs in London. To make the Committee aware, not all boroughs in London are part of the e-scooter trial. With the ones that are involved, some are using on-street parking bays or allocating on-street parking bays, which is absolutely welcome.

We were very pleased that the West of England Combined Authority is re-tendering for the e-scooter trial in that area. We and other organisations have been lobbying the local authority to introduce on-street parking or at least docked parking facilities. They are going to do that as part of the new tender, which we really welcome.

It is happening in some areas. It is not happening in others. What we are saying is that it needs to be consistent. That is really important. If you have sight loss, you need to know that everywhere you are going, e-scooters will be either docked or in an on-street parking bay. At the moment, that is not the case. I would say that, in London, we are seeing some really positive things, as there are in other parts of the country as well, but it is not consistent.

Q45 **Ruth Cadbury:** Presumably, you have the same concerns about the dockless cycle rental schemes as well, where there seems to be an issue that they are dumped on the pavement. Would you agree?

Clive Wood: Absolutely. Excuse my very loud sigh, but it is a real issue. More dockless bikes are being parked inappropriately. Let's go for a walk around Westminster afterwards, if you like, and we will see how many bikes are parked all over the place. Again, it is just another issue and another barrier for people with sight loss. We would like to see those bikes being docked.

Q46 **Ruth Cadbury:** Commander Gordon, before e-scooters were a thing I was in Singapore, where I think people almost got arrested if they did not put the rental cycle into the marked bay. Are there better ways that enforcement of dockless e-scooters and e-bikes could be done?

Commander Gordon: There are certainly better ways. I will go back to this again. None of us wishes to live in a police state. I am very proud of our British policing tradition, which does not lock people up for not parking an e-scooter. It needs to be proportionate.

Of course, the first better way—as colleagues have mentioned—is about respect in relation to the e-scooter in general. Society as a whole has to set its own norms that certain things are unacceptable. That is the first place to go.

The second would be to do with the rental users, in conjunction with councils having their own parking enforcement. I know that you are coming to me because policing is seen very much as enforcing at times, but I would dread to see the day when our officers and colleagues were busy with where e-bikes and e-scooters were parked. We have many more pressing public safety issues—



Q47 **Ruth Cadbury:** You made that point very well earlier. Do any of the panel have experiences of other jurisdictions where street clutter is dealt with better and that we could learn lessons from? If not, I will pass back to the Chair.

David G Davies: Could I offer an opposite opinion? It is often said that the UK needs to catch up with other countries. If you look at some other countries in mainland Europe, the street clutter is terrible. I had to fight my way into the Eurostar terminal in Brussels through a sea of e-scooters last week. In that sense, the docked schemes here are inherently better and preferable.

The other thing with docked schemes is this. I was in Norwich at the weekend, and there the scheme offers e-scooters, e-bikes and pedal bikes, all in the same docking area. Our view is that that is the way to go.

Ruth Cadbury: Of course, if private e-scooters were legalised, those scooters would not need to be dumped on the pavements because they would be in the possession of the owner.

Q48 **Mike Amesbury:** Good morning, gentlemen. I am Mike Amesbury, Member of Parliament for Weaver Vale. I will focus on enforcement and crime. Some of this has already been touched on. I have a specific question for Commander Gordon. What steps are police forces taking to deal with the use of privately owned e-scooters? What are the challenges? Expand on some of those.

Commander Gordon: We have a partnership approach in relation to how we are enforcing. That ranges from operations on the ground through to publicity. I have already talked about some of the operations we have done in London with the Walking and Cycling Commissioner. We write to retailers. We are on many steering groups and working groups to ensure that our voice is heard on what the regulation and legislation should be in this space.

As I say, the enforcement element is always a line of last resort but, when we need to, we are out on the ground. I have been very clear as the national lead on this, working with colleagues, to ensure that we have a proportionate response. What we do not want to do—this touches on the second part of your question around challenges—is to criminalise the otherwise so-compliant. Excuse that phrase; it is my phrase in this space. What I mean by it is this. The challenges of stopping an e-scooter are such that, inherently, the people we end up enforcing are people who stop and comply with the policing request. By and large, we tend to find that the vast majority of them are operating in a state of ignorance through not understanding the legislation. We stop them. It would be easy to seize, enforce and give penalty notices and, if they have licences, points, and so on. The challenge with that is that it might be the first interaction they have ever had with policing. Hitherto, they have been completely compliant.



Where we want to concentrate our efforts is on those who would involve the e-scooter in criminality or antisocial behaviour. By their very nature, you will understand that they do not always stop for us when we ask them to. I have had a sergeant in London with a broken shoulder and a constable with a broken leg while attempting to stop these things. We are working around tactics and training on how we may achieve that more successfully.

The inherent instability of e-scooters being used in that manner means that even a decision by policing to use force in that space would put the rider in danger. Any use of police force, as the Committee well knows, has to be absolutely proportionate to the ends we are trying to achieve. If the only offence they have committed—by “only” I do not mean to sound pejorative—that we are aware of at that time is illegally riding an e-scooter on a pavement, potentially putting somebody at risk of serious harm by stopping them in an enforced manner may not be proportionate in those circumstances.

Those are the challenges that we have. The next one is around public perception. I alluded to it earlier and I frequently get asked about this subject. Yet, the data and the stats that we have tend to suggest that, while there is some criminality associated with e-scooters—and there is anecdotal only around antisocial behaviour, because police systems do not capture antisocial behaviour with the sub-category of e-scooter—it is nowhere near the levels that would tend to suggest that I would be getting asked about this subject at the level that I do.

In fact, we have seen much more prevalence of electric motorcycles being used in criminality. Moped scooters are still being used much more. I have had a conversation with detectives who have spoken to some of the street gangs in London, who say that e-scooters are too unstable for them to carry out street robberies and snatches. Even the criminal fraternity are waiting on some sort of direction in this space so that they understand what it is that the e-scooter can be used for.

Those are our challenges. It is a proportionate response to filling a void until a legislative and regulatory framework will make clear to the public what is acceptable or not, so that society itself sets its norms. In the meantime, I am desperately trying to be proportionate and to enforce where we need to, but not to criminalise those who are otherwise lawful and compliant.

Q49 **Mike Amesbury:** If we dissect a little bit more of that, what are you more concerned about? Would it be criminality, antisocial behaviour or the safety of users of e-scooters?

Commander Gordon: That is an interesting question. It goes back to the absolute harm question that was asked before. Personally, from my perspective, I am concerned about the safety element. We wrote to all the forces in advance of this Committee, knowing we were coming here, and we asked the question, “Are you concerned around criminality and



antisocial behaviour?" From all the responses that we had, nobody was overly concerned with the criminality aspect of e-scooters. With the antisocial behaviour element it was more, but in the same way that they would be about kids on an estate riding bicycles, skateboarding down footpaths and just congregating. It was not directly or specifically related to e-scooters as a mode of travel. Of course, I am concerned about the safety element of e-scooters.

Q50 Mike Amesbury: Finally, you work with retailers. How are police forces working alongside retailers? Obviously, you have a retailer right beside you.

Commander Gordon: In all the working groups we have, I understand that retailers and their representatives are involved. We are not driving this. That is an important point to make. Policing, frankly, gets drawn into these areas. Because we are the visible, uniformed presence, there is an assumption that we drive this. We do not. We are simply an equal partner among others, but we have written to retailers. We visit stores and we have had operations where we have spoken to them.

Mike Amesbury: Thank you.

Q51 Jack Brereton: I want to ask a quick question of Commander Gordon. I am Jack Brereton, Stoke-on-Trent South. There are some concerns that e-scooters may be used by gangs to move drugs about. Are you concerned about that?

Commander Gordon: I am concerned about it, in the same way as I am concerned that the same gangs are using pedal cycles, public transport and vehicles. Apologies for being pedantic on this point, but I would not want to misrepresent the case. If your question to me is whether I am concerned that this is increasing the transportation of drugs, no, I am not. It is an alternative means of transport. Again, if you will forgive my glib comment from earlier, the criminal community see this the way the wider community see it: it is an alternative means of moving things around. But there is nothing that I have seen in the last couple of years that suggests to me a shift predominantly on to them.

Chair: Finally for this session, Ben.

Q52 Mr Bradshaw: To summarise, you all want legalisation, you all want regulation and you are all very frustrated that you have not got it. When you say to Government, "What on earth is going on?", what do Government tell you?

Commander Gordon: If I can clarify the nods from everybody else on the bench—again I will be exact—I understand why your question was whether we all want legalisation. There is no "want" from the police. We are fighting hard to—

Q53 Mr Bradshaw: It would make your life easier though, wouldn't it, if there was legalisation with regulation?



Commander Gordon: We are staying neutral in this space. If the Government decide to legalise, they legalise. Do we want regulation? Absolutely. What are Government doing in this space with us? We are linked with Government at every level, and have conversations from the highest level down to Committees around this.

Q54 **Mr Bradshaw:** But the absence of regulation with legalisation, and the kind of wild west that you have just described, makes your job more difficult—fact.

Commander Gordon: Without ceding to your comment about the wild west, yes, we would like regulation. The sooner it came in, the more helpful that would be for us.

Q55 **Mr Bradshaw:** What are Government telling you when you say, “What on earth is going on? We are the only country in Europe. Law-abiding people are just buying scooters anyway and using them because they do not see there is a problem, and they are much cheaper than the rental ones.” The rental ones are quite expensive. What do the Government tell you, Mr Davies?

David G Davies: We have not taken a position on legalisation either. That is a decision for the Government, weighing up the risks and benefits. Given where we are, with the Government saying they will legalise, we want them to get on with it. They say, as I am sure you know better than me, that there is no timetable now for the transport Bill, so it is to be legislated on some time in the future, whenever that occurs. That is a frustration.

Q56 **Mr Bradshaw:** Like almost everything else that comes before this Committee, we are getting left behind. On this, on e-vehicles and on everything, there is just nothing going on. What do Government tell you as a retailer, Mr Stevenson?

Justin Stevenson: I am no expert in this particular space. We want legislation. Our position is that we want legislation to enable us to be in a stronger position with the product we sell.

Q57 **Mr Bradshaw:** In the absence of that, more and more people are going to buy private ones and use them on the roads or wherever because it is a cheap and easy way of getting around. It is convenient.

Justin Stevenson: We hope that none of our customers are using them on the roads because of our clear message, but certainly others are.

Q58 **Mr Bradshaw:** But you can understand why they would, given that the rental ones are so expensive. It is two quid before you have gone anywhere, so why not get your own? I have huge sympathy, Mr Wood, for the partially sighted community, but you must be as frustrated as everyone else on the panel at the lack of clarity and regulation.

Clive Wood: Absolutely. It is not just on e-scooters, as you intimated, but it is in several other areas as well. The issue is that as Guide Dogs we



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do not have a particular view either way, but what we are saying is that you cannot put the genie back in the bottle. There are over a million privately owned e-scooters. It would be very difficult, but we need to get on with it. We need to legislate. We need to put regulation in place to make it safe for everybody. It is not just for blind and partially sighted people but for road users, e-scooter users and everybody. That is the important thing.

Chair: Thank you. I thank our first panel very much. It has been a very full and interesting session. Thank you again for your time.