



HOUSE OF COMMONS

Transport Committee

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

Wednesday 17 May 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 127–182

Witnesses

I: Rt Hon Jesse Norman MP, Minister of State, Department for Transport; and Anthony Ferguson, Deputy Director for Traffic and Technology, Department for Transport.



Examination of witnesses

Witnesses: Rt Hon Jesse Norman and Anthony Ferguson.

Q127 **Chair:** Welcome to today's session of the Transport Select Committee, where we have a double bill with the Minister: first, we have half an hour looking at e-scooters and then we turn our attention to self-driving vehicles. For the purposes of our records, could you state your name and position, please?

Jesse Norman: Yes, of course. I am Jesse Norman, the Minister of State for Decarbonisation and Technology at the Department for Transport.

Anthony Ferguson: I am Anthony Ferguson, a deputy director in the Department for Transport. I am the head of the traffic and technology team, which includes micromobility.

Q128 **Chair:** And for the second session.

Claire Wren: I am Claire Wren. I am part of the Shennan-Wren job share, and we are collectively the directors for Future Transport Systems and Environment and the Centre for Connected and Autonomous Vehicles.

Q129 **Chair:** Thank you for your time this morning. Very generally, in 2020 this Committee published a report on e-scooters, and the Department largely agreed with our conclusions and recommendations. How would you characterise progress since then?

Jesse Norman: First of all, Mr Chairman, thank you very much for inviting us today and thanks to all the members. As you will appreciate, as a former Chairman of a Select Committee and a Member for many years, I am extremely respectful of the power and interest of the work you are doing. This was a great example of that.

I would say we have made good progress since that report. You have obviously had a chance to talk to my predecessor in this role since then. In particular, the trials have continued to develop and have been extended until next year. They have yielded a great deal of information and insight as to how people are using e-scooters, and into micromobility more generally. That has fed into continued work we are doing. In due course, as you know, we are looking to lay regulations. That will be the next stage for development of the market overall and meeting the very evident need. The current situation, in which we have illegal scooters being used on the roads, is not a tolerable one.

Q130 **Chair:** You point to the need for more regulation. Presumably, it is still the case that it will require primary legislation.

Jesse Norman: We will be looking to lay regulations under the existing rules, but we will need to consult on them and will probably want to do some consultation before that because of the issues that you raised in part in your report. The trials have shown that we need to think about



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helmet use, insurance and safety-related matters. Those will need to be more widely consulted on.

There has been a slight shift in the public mood over the last few years. I do not know whether that is something the Committee has picked up on. Early on in the development of the market, there was a great deal of excitement about the potential for e-scooters to take people out of cars and to improve on decarbonisation and air quality. We have looked at much of the work that has been done in the trials and published a report on that. It looks like e-scooters cannibalise active travel rather more than they take people out of cars. That is one thing.

Secondly, people were very excited about the economic potential, which is considerable, and the ability of e-scooters to liberate parts of the community that might not have access to transport at a suitably low cost. That has been tempered by a worry about safety. We have seen a lot of that, as you know, in newspapers. That creates a need to strike a balance. That is where we will be coming from as we think about the different aspects of formulating a durable and effective regime.

Q131 Chair: Thank you. Some witnesses have told us that we are very close to the point when there is not much more information to be gleaned from the trials happening in different places. Is that something you would agree with?

Jesse Norman: I am not as close, obviously, as they are or as Anthony would be. It might be that Anthony wants to say something about this. I suspect we still have a considerable distance to go in thinking about this. Whether they will want to do so themselves is obviously a matter for local authorities and trial companies. My goal is to continue to push ahead with this and to pull out the lessons we are getting on the issues I have raised, and then try to put them in front of the public and have a proper conversation about it, taking the debate forward another stage.

Q132 Chair: Absolutely. Mr Ferguson, from your perspective, what is the gap in knowledge in terms of the trials that we are still waiting to hear about?

Anthony Ferguson: It may be less about gaps and more about having a deeper understanding of the things we are talking about. Micromobility and e-scooters are still a relatively novel form of transport. The trials were introduced during the height of covid, in an unusual set of circumstances. The longer they can run in a more normal environment, the more we will learn. The data we have collected is substantial—and in international terms, very substantial—but it is still relatively small when compared with what we know about bikes, cars and other forms of transport. The longer we go on, the more data we have and the more trips are made, the more we will understand. There is some variability in the data we have collected to date, which is simply down to the fact that the sample size is still, relatively speaking, quite modest.



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Jesse Norman: It is worth adding that the position in Europe continues to develop. We have seen the referendum in Paris. We have seen night-time bans, reductions in e-scooter numbers in other cities and restrictions on speed limits. There is an evolving, wider picture across Europe that we will need to think about when we try to lay something that will be effective and successful.

Q133 **Karl McCartney:** Minister, what experience do you have on e-scooters?

Jesse Norman: Extremely modest, is the truth of the matter. I am a bicyclist. As you know, I bike everywhere. I do not use a ministerial car.

Q134 **Karl McCartney:** That's fine. You have skirted round that answer, but have you—

Jesse Norman: No, no.

Q135 **Karl McCartney:** Have you been on an e-scooter in a controlled environment?

Jesse Norman: I have absolutely done so, not just in this country but in other countries. I do not have a lot of experience, but enough to know—

Q136 **Karl McCartney:** Have you travelled on the roads in this country?

Jesse Norman: Yes.

Q137 **Karl McCartney:** On an e-scooter?

Jesse Norman: Yes.

Q138 **Karl McCartney:** How far?

Jesse Norman: A short distance, half a mile—something like that.

Q139 **Karl McCartney:** Mr Ferguson, have you done the same?

Anthony Ferguson: I have domestically and internationally.

Q140 **Karl McCartney:** Some distance on the road?

Anthony Ferguson: The furthest I would say I have been on an e-scooter was probably in Cambridge. That was about two miles.

Q141 **Karl McCartney:** You both felt safe and thought it was a good mode of transport?

Anthony Ferguson: I am getting on a bit. Two miles felt as long as I wanted to be on a scooter, to be honest.

Jesse Norman: Absurd, Anthony, with your physical health.

Anthony Ferguson: It felt like I was getting to the limit of what is a naturally comfortable time to be standing on a scooter. I have done short trips and long trips in lots of different types of road conditions.



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Regarding further evolution, I was at an event last week and it was very obvious that the micromobility e-scooter industry continues to evolve. Vehicles are evolving. Comparing the very first generation of scooters with those produced now, they are very different. Wheel sizes are changing.

Q142 **Karl McCartney:** Interacting with some very big vehicles on roads.

Anthony Ferguson: Yes. Part of what we are trying to achieve is instilling a sense of safety as well as being safe—people feeling they are stable, and can stop, start and get on and off. Those are the basics of any vehicle.

Jesse Norman: Something I found when I used one is that I am so big that you need quite a big scooter for it to work. Otherwise, it is slow to pick up and you do not necessarily feel as safe. We are seeing larger models. Part of the benefit of that is more stability. That is something else to be taken account of as we think about the way forward.

Q143 **Karl McCartney:** One of my colleagues might want to cover with you, Minister, whether people should be wearing helmets on them or not. I have another safety aspect. Would either of you be happy to go to sleep in a house where an e-scooter was being charged on the ground floor?

Jesse Norman: The answer is yes, but it is absolutely an issue that we need to take seriously. We have had very few fires on the trials, but we have had some. There are obviously wider reports, and there is a scare going on at the moment about e-bikes. We think of these things in very much a joined-up way. We work with the OPSS, which is the official body. We work across the Department and across Government, with the Home Office, to try to deal with the issue and, of course, with the fire services. It is an issue of serious concern to us now and we are working hard on it.

Q144 **Mr Bradshaw:** I was interested in your comment that the latest evidence suggests that e-scooters are cannibalising other forms of active travel. That is certainly not the evidence we heard from some of our witnesses who came to update us. Even if you are right, isn't it a matter of freedom of choice?

Jesse Norman: That is precisely the question. Anthony can speak to the numbers. There is some evidence from early in the trials that it was taking away from genuine forms of active transport and travel. That effect appears to have waned over time. Where it settles, we will see and we will be able to discuss it. Of course, there is a proper question about what the balance should be between the two principles of freedom and connectivity, and then safety and health on the other side.

Q145 **Mr Bradshaw:** I choose to use an e-scooter if I am returning home late from Parliament and do not want to walk 15 minutes through a particular area. I feel safer on the road on an e-scooter or on an e-bike than I would walking on the pavement. In a way, I am not walking, but that is my choice.



Jesse Norman: That is true. Using e-scooters can also liberate people to take journeys on public transport, which they would not do otherwise and is a terribly helpful thing.

Q146 **Mr Bradshaw:** Exactly. It was interesting that you said that we don't need primary legislation. My understanding is that we have been told previously by your predecessors that we did need primary legislation for this. If we don't, what is holding you up? I believe we are the last country in Europe to regulate e-scooters. On this, as on so many other areas of policy, we seem to be getting left behind—left in a back channel. That is bad for the public and freedom of choice. It is also bad for manufacturers and people who want to promote alternative forms of transport. Why can't we just get on with it? We are not doing anything. We are on one-line Whips every day. MPs are hardly ever here. There is no legislation in the Commons. What is the problem with just getting on with it?

Jesse Norman: I don't want to mislead. We will need primary legislation in due course. We have regulations that we are debating at the moment. We are reflecting on them and trying to think about how we consult in preparation for them. We are not in a position to do that wider piece at the moment.

Q147 **Mr Bradshaw:** I appreciate that you are not in charge of the legislative programme. We were promised a transport Bill in the Queen's Speech. We were then told it was not going to happen. MPs are basically doing nothing—we are doing nothing. There is literally a one-line Whip every day and there has been for weeks. MPs are hardly ever here. Why not give us a bit of work to do and bring a transport Bill before the House now?

Jesse Norman: Mr Bradshaw, you will be aware, and you have already had a chance to cross-examine—to do a little doner-kebabbing of—the Secretary of State, that these are issues that are being discussed at Cabinet level and the top of Government. It is not for us to do anything other than make the case as strongly and effectively as we can. There is a wider issue, which is that, even if it were available, there are still intermediate steps, several intermediate steps—potentially another round of consultation, an extension of some trial work and more focused trial work—before we get to that stage.

Q148 **Mr Bradshaw:** Do you accept that the current situation is not ideal? There are large numbers of the public, who do not know that e-scooters are illegal outside the trial areas, who are using them. There are people in my constituency taking their kids to school on an e-scooter. In theory, they are breaking the law. The police told us they are not bothering to enforce the law, because they have more important things to do. It is the unregulated private scooters that tend to be the main problem when it comes to safety and accidents.

There is general consensus about what we want to do. The Government want to regulate, and they agree with us on this. I don't think you will get



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a lot of opposition. Please just get on with it.

Jesse Norman: Thank you for that. Believe me, we are making the case as articulately and effectively as we can. As I say, it would not be an immediate action even if the parliamentary time existed for it now, because of those intermediate steps, but we are fully seized of the importance of it. There are some unresolved public questions that we need to discuss and which you have touched on in this Committee. Those are changing over time, so it makes sense to do that intermediate work as well.

Q149 **Mr Bradshaw:** As a cyclist and someone who knows a lot about cycling, you are aware of the debate on helmets. You are aware of the overwhelming evidence that mandating helmet use, whether on bikes or scooters, leads to a fall in use, which is not, I would imagine, your policy objective.

Jesse Norman: When I was cycling and walking Minister, when I was last at DFT, one of the things we did was to consult very closely on cycle safety. We came to the view that mandating helmets would lead to such a reduction in cycle use that it would offset the policy objective, which was to get more people healthier and more engaged.

Q150 **Mr Bradshaw:** In Paris, it does not look as if there will be a ban. There was a tiny turnout. It is not at all clear whether they will act on that result.

Jesse Norman: But it is an evolving picture.

Mr Bradshaw: Yes, absolutely.

Q151 **Paul Howell:** There is a very clear and obvious use of these e-scooters out in the real world. You keep talking about more evaluations and more assessments. Something needs to happen. We need to make some things obvious, so that we have things happening at least at the manufacturing level regarding what it will be legal to use, and/or giving clear direction as to where things will be mandated or not mandated, even if it is a signal of intent. As has been said, people are buying these things and using these things with the belief that it is fine to do that. We need to get better messaging out there. If we are not getting legal action yet, we need to get better messaging as to where it is likely to go.

Jesse Norman: I don't disagree at all. We need to continue to push ahead because the situation continues to evolve. To give an example, one could, in theory, put in place legislation and regulation that limited e-scooters to a certain size. If one had done that a year or two ago, we would not have realised that there is an argument to be made for slightly larger scooters that have better potential safety benefits and greater stability. There are many parts of the situation that continue to evolve, just in the way people behave and use them. Of course, the insurance question is live and important.



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I fully agree that we need to continue to press on, and we need to shape the public debate. That is why I want to think about having a wider discussion—a wider consultation—on some of the big issues of principle that we have already discussed today.

Paul Howell: I take all of your points, but all I would say is, don't let perfection be the enemy of the good.

Jesse Norman: I agree with that. Thank you.

Q152 **Chair:** Picking up on the insurance point and focusing on privately owned e-scooters, which are not legal currently, other than on private land, I have heard some concerns from the Motor Insurers' Bureau that, because they are classified as a vehicle, they are not covered by home insurance, but you cannot get vehicle insurance, because they are not legal, other than on private land. There is a black hole in insurance cover that leads to the Motor Insurers' Bureau effectively having to pick up any claims. That is leading to an additional tax on motorists of about 3% or 4% on their insurance premium. Is that something that you are actively looking to resolve?

Jesse Norman: It is an interesting question. These are not legal vehicles when ridden on public land, the highway or indeed on the pavement. If supporting an insurance product for that is a way, in some sense, of ratifying the illegality of it, there is an issue of principle we need to reflect on. It is certainly a wider issue on which we have been approached by the industry and we are thinking about it. Would you like to comment further, Anthony?

Anthony Ferguson: We completely recognise what you have just described, Chair. We have regular interaction with the insurance industry generally. Insurance is one of the key issues we are looking at in regulatory proposals for e-scooters and wider micromobility, because it is not just about e-scooters. It is something we recognise, because the current situation is novel; it is unusual. These are vehicles that do not sit easily within the existing legislative framework.

Q153 **Chair:** Another option would be to emulate the German system, where they are not classified as vehicles. They come under the same category as pedal bikes and have a compulsory insurance model that comes under general house-type insurance. Is that a solution you would look at?

Jesse Norman: We will, to the extent that we are not already, be looking at international models that provide alternatives. Of course, the industry tends to be very vocal about promoting solutions. Often, it is very constructive about promoting solutions that will be effective for their clients and not burden the wider fee payers or insurance payers.

We are focusing on e-scooters, but it is worth mentioning that, when we think about legislation, what we are really talking about is a light electric vehicle piece of legislation. That has a very wide range of potentially exciting applications. It is extremely good, potentially, for inclusive



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transport and for decarbonisation. That is another aspect of the wider picture we are having to take into account, precisely so that, when we get an insurance regime, it can be one that does not just cover, necessarily, one approach. It can be one that spreads across a variety of vehicles that may not actually exist at the moment.

Q154 **Karl McCartney:** I am pleased to know you recognise that the insurance industry has some issues, but what are you actually doing about it? If somebody hits a car with an e-scooter or causes an accident, who is liable? Who pays for that? Car insurers? That is my first question. My second question is, if there is damage to other vehicles on the road, regardless of whether it is a rental or somebody else using an illegal e-scooter, what will stop e-scooters being used for the eternal cash-for-crash or crash-for-cash aspects?

Jesse Norman: I don't know what you mean by cash for crash.

Q155 **Karl McCartney:** People making false claims. Who will back up whatever happens with an e-scooter if somebody says, "Well, XYZ crashed into me and I am, therefore, making a claim"? It happens with cars. What's to stop it happening with e-scooters?

Jesse Norman: That is an interesting question; I have not reflected on that. On the wider point, in a trial it is a requirement of the trialling system that there is third-party insurance, and the trial companies have put in place insurance arrangements to go more widely than that. If you are on an illegal scooter, of course, you are not insured. If a car or anyone else who has insurance is insured, they can claim or they will be able to claim on their own insurance. Or they may have to resort to—

Q156 **Karl McCartney:** What will happen to their no claims bonus, Minister? Is that fair?

Jesse Norman: No, no.

Q157 **Karl McCartney:** Do you think that is fair on the person in the car? Because I don't.

Jesse Norman: There is no aspect of this that is unproblematic. These are not, when used as we discussed, legal vehicles. I am not suggesting for a second that this is a satisfactory arrangement.

Q158 **Karl McCartney:** Ultimately, if they are illegal vehicles and they cause an accident, somebody has to pay. At the moment, it is the insurance industry or the person whose car or vehicle was involved.

Jesse Norman: This is the point the Chair made. That is why we are talking to the MIB.

Q159 **Karl McCartney:** You have been talking to them, but what we are trying to get out of you is what your thinking is. Which way will you jump? Are you going to make sure that all electric scooter users are insured?



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Jesse Norman: The answer to that is that we have not yet arrived at the point of formulating a position to put in front of people; we are looking at the alternatives. We are more than delighted to take input. When we have some proposals, we will put them in front of people in a consultation.

Q160 **Karl McCartney:** With respect, your colleagues in the Department who are civil servants have had a good few years to decide which way they might want to go.

Jesse Norman: We rushed in ahead, faster than anyone had imagined, to put these trials in place. The growth of private e-scooters has been faster than anyone had imagined. These issues of insurance have naturally arisen with the additional scale that has arisen. There are other models, as well as developing impacts, that need to be taken into account. It is not as fast as I would like, but it is something we will continue to push forward on.

Q161 **Karl McCartney:** Compulsory insurance is surely the way forward, with, perhaps, powers for the police. If they stop somebody who is not insured, they take the scooter off them.

Jesse Norman: Questions of enforcement are obviously at the forefront of the current situation. We can discuss that separately. Compulsory insurance is certainly one model we would want to look at closely.

Q162 **Karl McCartney:** Favoured by you, perhaps?

Jesse Norman: We do not have compulsory insurance for riding a bicycle. There are other models available. We will just have to look at where we want to come out. The goal is to get people using these things effectively and successfully in as carbon-light and active-travel-promoting a way as possible. Let's do things that support those goals.

Q163 **Karl McCartney:** Anything to add, Mr Ferguson?

Anthony Ferguson: Exactly what the Minister just said. We don't have insurance for e-bikes, so there is a spectrum of possibilities. That is what the consultation will be, in due course. It is not possible to say there is a right and a wrong answer. There is a range of different possibilities. We will have to test them out and see what people say, including the insurance industry, but not just them—the manufacturers and everybody else who is a player in the micromobility sector.

Q164 **Paul Howell:** In the middle of mentioning insurance, you touched on the situation with pavement use. You would not believe the representations we have had from people who are concerned about the use of e-scooters on pavements, and particularly those with limited visibility or mobility. That is clearly something that is getting ahead of where we are at the moment. What are you doing to address the concerns of pedestrians about their space being intruded on by not only moving vehicles but stationary vehicles that have been left and abandoned? How do we do



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something about that not just in the legislative term, but in the short term?

Jesse Norman: Let's break that up into two chunks. As you know, in some of the trials there is geofencing that prevents or inhibits the use of scooters on pavements. As regards stationary placing of scooters, there are local authority rules that allow, under some circumstances, scooter parks on pavements. That is a matter for the local authority. In the trials, scooters are required to have bells or some mechanism for letting people know where they are.

We have looked very closely at the accessibility needs of the wider disability community. I had a long session with them recently in one of the great labs at UCL, talking about those specific needs and looking at some of the work that UCL is doing with partners on what sounds can be put into e-scooters most effectively, and potentially required as part of a mandated solution and a process of legalisation and regulation, in order to let people who may be hard of hearing, or who may be spooked by them, know about them. Having them on pavements dynamically is a question of enforcement that, ultimately, goes to the police.

Q165 **Paul Howell:** In terms of assessing things, we don't have to walk very far from this building to see the street clutter that exists. Something needs to be done to get enforcement into place as quickly as possible.

Jesse Norman: Yes. That is a separate question one could discuss.

Q166 **Grahame Morris:** Good morning, Minister and officials. Going back to a reply you gave earlier, you told the Committee that the trials will be extended into April next year. Is that correct?

Jesse Norman: The trials have already been extended to next May.

Q167 **Grahame Morris:** We heard from PACTS that the Government's position on e-scooters in relation to active travel is ambivalent; they do not have a view. Is it your view, Minister, that we should be encouraging e-scooters and that the legislative framework should permit that?

Jesse Norman: The point of introducing the legislation is to create a class of low-emission vehicles, of which e-scooters are a prominent early case. It is absolutely aimed at legalising and regulating what you have. The question is how exactly you do it and how you manage the balance. If you can manage it in a way that allows private e-scooter use as a substitute for car use, and enables the use of public transport, which it might easily do for people coming in from further distances, that is something we would massively want to support. If it is something that turns out, as we go through, actively to take people away from bicycles or walking and there was a way that framed legislation might mitigate it in some sense, we might want to do that too. There is quite an important series of different principles to bring into play through the legislative process.



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Q168 **Grahame Morris:** There are a lot of issues that need to be addressed. Frankly, Minister, they are in your lap, and not the least of them is the issue of the insurance liability.

Jesse Norman: Yes.

Q169 **Grahame Morris:** Have you or your officials quantified the potential insurance liability from third-party accidents? The Motor Insurers' Bureau was originally established after the war by the Treasury to provide compensation for third parties who were involved in accidents with uninsured drivers. Costs are being placed on the MIB, which has no alternative but to pass them on to the motorists who are actually paying insurance premiums. That is a key issue that I hope you and your officials are addressing as a matter of some urgency.

Jesse Norman: Mr Morris, this is our third go in this Committee session on this. I congratulate the MIB on the effective work they have done talking to members of the Committee.

Q170 **Grahame Morris:** It is an important issue.

Jesse Norman: Yes, it is a very important issue and that is why I have engaged—

Grahame Morris: It is an important issue if premiums are going to increase. They will contact their MPs.

Jesse Norman: Of course that is true, and no one wants to pay more on their insurance than necessary. The MIB, in general, is an extraordinarily important backstop to the way our insurance industry is set up. I entirely agree, but it is hard to go further than I have already said. We are regularly engaging with the industry. We are more than happy to have specific conversations with the MIB. We would expect to do that in the context of a piece of consultation. It is obviously a key aspect of the next stage of consultation. As you say, there is a round of different principles that we need to trade off in order to make sure that we get the right model, which does not impose too much cost and protects people.

Q171 **Mr Bradshaw:** Minister, I think you have heard the frustration from all sides of this Committee at the slow pace of progress and the fact we are getting left behind. The trials have been extended until next May, even though the trial areas say they do not think they have much more to learn than they already have learned. There is not really any prospect of anything happening before the next election, given that you have one more King's Speech before the election. With all the other competition for legislative space, your Government are not going to prioritise doing something about—

Jesse Norman: I cannot comment on any plans. I am not privy to them. These decisions are made at the top of Government.

Q172 **Mr Bradshaw:** That feeds the perception that the Government are not doing anything. They are not getting stuff done.



Jesse Norman: I think they are getting a lot of stuff done, Ben. But this is not one of those situations in which we could go as fast as you think. As we have discussed extensively this morning, there is quite a series of important issues that we need to have a proper, settled public view on before we can legislate in any case.

Q173 **Jack Brereton:** I want to touch a bit more on the points you were making around enforcement. In my area in Stoke-on-Trent—we are not part of a trial area—we are seeing increasingly widespread use of e-scooters illegally. There does not seem to be any enforcement. The police are focused on dealing with bigger issues, and there seems to be increasingly widespread abuse of the system. Are you concerned about the lack of enforcement? We have heard what my colleague Paul Howell just mentioned about the impact on people with disabilities. Is there any enforcement that can take place, or is the reality that we will just have to tolerate this widespread abuse?

Jesse Norman: It is wrong in principle for Ministers to comment on the actions of the police. There is a case, and many people in the different police forces are making that case, for more enforcement in this area. It is an issue that is of concern to senior police chiefs and to the Home Office—rightly so. We might find over time that there are more tools in the toolbox than people might think.

These are digital vehicles and, therefore, it is possible to track, over time—it is an issue to discuss—whether all e-bikes should be fitted with GPS or radio frequency identification. It will be possible to track wherever an e-scooter has been. If someone has been on the pavement 50 times and gets pulled over for an offence, the police will be able to reconstruct a pattern of behaviour that could lead to some potentially quite serious enforcement. There are aspects of this that could bear more detailed discussion on the police side. We stand absolutely ready, with the Home Office, to have that conversation with them.

Q174 **Jack Brereton:** There are concerns that these vehicles are being used for wider criminality—to run drugs and facilitate other criminal activity. Is this something you are concerned about?

Jesse Norman: Yes. It is a Home Office issue more than a DFT issue. All forms of transport could be used, and that could be regular bikes, e-bikes, cars or e-scooters. It will be true for different vehicles that might be introduced under new legislation. There are also civil liberties concerns about whether or not forms of transport should have identification put into them, although that may start to erode as we move towards a world of connected autonomous vehicles.

Q175 **Jack Brereton:** There is no way of identifying these vehicles at the moment. There is no registration plate on them.

Jesse Norman: There is no reason at all, in many cases, why they should not be pulled over if they are on the public highway. If they are not carrying the prominently displayed name of a trial, they are illegal.



Q176 **Gavin Newlands:** Much of the contact we get by email or through social media from people in the trial areas is about their interaction with e-scooters, or unsafe interaction, particularly on pavements. Given the cut the Government announced to their active travel spend, which was already significantly lower than it is across the border, are there concerns that it might impact public confidence in e-scooter roll-out if there is no separated active travel infrastructure that the e-scooters can travel on, where possible?

Jesse Norman: There is plenty of infrastructure going in as part of a £3 billion plan over a number of years. There is more funding available now through CRSTS and through levelling-up fund moneys than there has been in the past. Those concerns, which you are absolutely right to flag and which I see, as a Minister, from colleagues, pre-existed any funding plans or changes that have been made.

The concern is plainly there; there should not just be enforcement against use of e-scooters, for example, on pavements. There should be, as we have discussed, proper signalling and awareness-raising sounds on e-scooters. You also want alternatives that can readily be used so that people do not feel any incentive to try illegal routes. I agree that there clearly is a link, and that is something that will play out over time. At the moment, there is plenty of trial e-scooter use on public infrastructure in cities, and particularly in trial areas, that is completely compliant and useful to monitor.

Q177 **Gavin Newlands:** Do you agree that, as best practice, it would be preferable if e-scooters and other forms of micromobility were used on active travel infrastructure if it was available?

Jesse Norman: I think it is best practice that they should be able to be used in a safe way whatever infrastructure is available.

Gavin Newlands: I thought you might say something like that. Thank you.

Q178 **Mike Amesbury:** What additional information and evidence do you need, Minister, to regulate and legislate? What is missing?

Jesse Norman: That is a useful point for digesting the conversation. There are two or three different things we can point to. The first thing I think it would be useful to have, for the reasons that Anthony Ferguson described, is non-pandemic, large-scale usage data. We are seeing patterns of use change. That, in turn, is feeding very helpfully into an academic literature on injuries. We know that the majority of injuries tend to occur with people who use them for the first time or the first few times. We know that they tend to occur on Friday and Saturday evenings to young men who have sometimes had one or two too many to drink. They can lead to serious facial injuries to the user. You see an evolving picture of use. I would like to see more work done on geofencing. That is a matter for discussion with officials, if we take that forward. The first thing is more information.



The second thing is about what principles to apply. That involves consultation. We will need to talk to people: "Here are insurance alternatives. What do you think?", "Here is the evidence on helmets. What do you think?", "Here is the evidence on safety. What do you think?", "Here is the evidence on weight. What do you think?" You can go through all those.

Q179 **Mike Amesbury:** You don't think you have that evidence at the moment?

Jesse Norman: We certainly don't have a consolidated basis of consulted evidence. It would not be normal practice for DfT to proceed without a pretty full consultation on this kind of issue, certainly not with primary legislation.

Q180 **Chair:** You have touched on the potential mitigations for riding e-scooters on pavements. We have a lot of concerns expressed to us by individuals and charities for disabled people and people with visual impairments that the clutter of e-scooters that are not being ridden, on pavements and in cycle lanes, is very damaging for them. What measures are you proposing to address that?

Jesse Norman: There are local authority areas in which it is permissible to park e-scooters on pavements under different circumstances. That is a matter for local authority regulation and approval. I would be reluctant to substitute a national law for one that was more closely attuned to local needs, but I absolutely take the point you make. There clearly are concerns about that. It is a particular problem if you are in a mobility scooter, a wheelchair or some other form of transport that needs unfettered access to pavements.

Q181 **Chair:** I appreciate that there needs to be some flexibility to adapt to streetscapes in a particular area. Is there not a role too for some national guidelines?

Jesse Norman: I am not sure that I know what the situation is.

Anthony Ferguson: There is already, in the sense that all the trial areas are subject to DfT guidance about what we expect in the way that trials are run. What we leave the local authority to do is work out how to implement that, because the local streetscape will be understood better by them than by us. What we seek to ensure is that the standards and the outcomes we are looking for are clear. As for whether there is too much clutter outside St Thomas's Hospital—I have seen the photographs—that is a matter between the local authority and the operators. The operators all operate under contract. None of the operators taking part in the trials does so on their own. They do it because they have bid for a contract and, therefore, the local authority has mechanisms, or levers, to impose higher standards and ensure that they are met.



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Jesse Norman: You mean contractual levers as well as regulatory levers.

Anthony Ferguson: Correct.

Q182 **Chair:** Are you actively monitoring that as part of the trial appraisal?

Anthony Ferguson: It is part of the qualitative learning that we are getting from the trials. We talk regularly to the operators and the local authority areas taking part to understand the challenges they are facing between, for example, having parking bays versus the free-floating model that you see, particularly in London, with lots of bikes and scooters, where scooters are parked in bays, typically; the free-floating model is very prevalent. There is a lot of learning of different types across the shared mobility sector.

Chair: Thank you both for your evidence on this subject.