



Transport Committee

Oral evidence: e-scooters, HC 255

Wednesday 1 July 2020

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[Watch the meeting](#)

Members present: Huw Merriman (Chair); Ruth Cadbury; Simon Jupp; Chris Loder; Karl McCartney; Grahame Morris; Greg Smith; Sam Tarry.

Questions 1 - 59

Witnesses

I: Professor Jillian Anable, Chair in Transport & Energy, University of Leeds; and Dr Graeme Sherriff, Research Fellow, University of Salford.

II: Rachel Lee, Policy and Research Manager, Living Streets; Lorna Lee, Campaigns Manager, Automobile Association; Eleanor Southwood, Director, Royal National Institute of Blind People; and Phillip Darnton OBE, Director, Bicycle Association.

Written evidence from witnesses:

- [Automobile Association](#)
- [Bicycle Association](#)
- [Living Streets](#)
- [Royal National Institute of Blind People](#)



Examination of witnesses

Witnesses: Professor Jillian Anable and Dr Graeme Sherriff.

Q1 **Chair:** This is the Transport Committee's oral evidence session on e-scooters. For the record, I ask our first two witnesses to identify themselves, please.

Professor Anable: I am from the Institute for Transport Studies at the University of Leeds. My expertise is on passenger mobility and understanding how behaviour changes both at the individual level and longer-term mobility trends.

Dr Sherriff: I am from the University of Salford, School of Health and Society. I lead a team called Healthy Active Cities, and we are interested in all aspects of sustainable transport and, particularly recently, in micro-mobilities, including bike share and e-scooters.

Q2 **Chair:** Thank you so much for being with us today. It is rather timely given the Government announcement yesterday.

Professor Anable, what role do you see e-scooters playing in the transport mix? Are you concerned by their development?

Professor Anable: I imagine that I take more of a positive view on e-scooters than perhaps some people do, who have perhaps already presented evidence or will be presenting evidence. The reason is that I look at the transport system as a whole. I think that they can play a very important role, not so much in the short term to encourage modal shift away from the car but in the longer term as part of a less car-dependent transport system. They will play a very important role for certain groups of people, mainly younger generations, to delay the onset of car ownership or perhaps prevent car ownership altogether.

Q3 **Chair:** Thank you. I hasten to add that that was not supposed to be a loaded question. I should have asked whether you are concerned or whether you see the positives of this development. Perhaps Dr Sherriff can take that with a bit more balance.

Dr Sherriff: Having looked into sustainable transport futures for quite a few years, I can see e-scooters as part of a sustainable transport future. I can see the benefits in environment, health and social inclusion. It depends on the rest of the system in a way, but they could very much encourage people away from cars, or at least away from car journeys, particularly when they are combined with other modes of transport. For example, you could replace a car journey with one by public transport and then e-scooter at the end.

I think there is a social inclusion potential as well. They are a very affordable and accessible mode of transport. Clearly there are some accessibility issues, though, and they are not necessarily for everyone, but I think we should welcome them and give them a role in our transport system.



Q4 **Chair:** Dr Sherriff, you have published work on the interaction between e-scooters and tourism. How do you see the comparison with other countries when it comes to e-scooters and the tourism mix?

Dr Sherriff: We have been much more cautious in the UK. I think there are merits to that approach. I have seen other countries have a wave of e-scooters, a bit like we had a wave of dockless bikeshare schemes a few years ago. I have seen initially more of a laissez-faire approach, followed by a bit more reining in and limiting numbers, trying to constrain where the scooters can go. I think there are things to learn from those approaches. There have been a lot of positives that we can see, but there are things that we can learn from those countries that have had them before us.

Chair: We will explore that in more detail. I am going to hand over to my colleague, Grahame Morris, who is going to ask you about the UK Government proposals for e-scooters.

Q5 **Grahame Morris:** Following on from the Chair's question, and indeed the Government's announcement yesterday, Rachel Maclean was quoted as saying she believes it will be a clean and cost-effective green alternative to what is currently on offer.

I would be very interested in your views, given the Government's announcement about the conditions: it will be rental only, so it excludes privately owned e-scooters; a 15 mph speed limit; and the requirement for a driving licence.

Will the witnesses also comment on the area that has been chosen to conduct the trials?

Professor Anable: I think the announcement is very welcome. Now is such a great opportunity: if we cannot do some bold things now with the transport sector and micromobility active travel, when can we do them?

I am a little concerned at the precedent it is setting for an incredibly cautious approach at this stage. I fail to understand the rationale for the driving licence requirement. It seems to me that if we were to be introducing bicycles for the first time now—if this was about bicycles—we would also be introducing the requirement to have driving licences for them. It is incredibly important, from the point of view of public acceptance and understanding of the rules and regulations, that there is a level playing field across modes and a clear rationale for the things that policy introduces.

I am concerned on two fronts: it limits the accessibility as a mode when, as a mode, I think its greatest merit is for those who do not have a driving licence and perhaps do not aspire to have one; and that there is not a good rationale behind it, which will damage public support for it. On that front I am quite concerned.



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I welcome the fact that we are hopefully now going to be less constrained by trials. I have absolutely nothing against demonstration trials. In fact, quite the opposite: they are absolutely crucial.

I have some real concerns about the way in which trials are held up to be the place to gather the evidence that everything is then determined by. Trials can be, by definition, false experiments. The people that join in trials may not be representative of the mainstream consumer down the line. There is also not enough time to gather the evidence to really understand how behaviour changes. Behaviour changes slowly and after a number of cumulative types of change that happen in any one location.

I hope that this will mean there is a broader idea that the scooters can be integrated into life beyond the trial setting and that we can start to understand who naturally takes them up.

Thirdly, I do understand about the idea of private versus shared access to scooters. I understand the regulatory and insurance challenges, and so on. I can see that. I do not have the detail of the announcement, but I am hopeful that there is a commitment in it to review that quite soon. Again, to be setting this down now and it not changing very quickly could be very damaging to the long-term prospects of this as a mode into the wider system.

Dr Sherriff: I am very pleased to see that we are now looking to have these vehicles in the UK. I share Professor Anable's concern about the driving licence requirement. That was the thing that surprised me most about the proposals. It seems very limiting for the social inclusion potential. At the moment we are asking people to avoid public transport unless absolutely necessary because of the pandemic, so it means that these could be very valuable for people who are finding it difficult to get around at the moment. From what I understand, a provisional driving licence is allowed, but that is another financial and bureaucratic layer to access rather than making something easy to trial and try out for people. That was the bit that disappointed me.

Q6 **Grahame Morris:** My understanding is that the pilot area that has been chosen is Middlesbrough. Is that correct? Do you have any thoughts on why that area should have been chosen, particularly in relation to your interests, Dr Sherriff, about encouraging tourists to use this facility as a green alternative?

Dr Sherriff: I do not have any particular comments about the choice of area. I welcome the fact that we are trialling it. I think there are some really good opportunities to look at the social inclusion potential in an area like Middlesbrough. In terms of tourism, I am not so sure. I do not have any immediate thoughts on that.

Professor Anable: I have a broader point to make. We have undertaken some research looking at active travel, but also e-bikes. We have come



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up with some very clear conclusions that much of the emphasis is applied in policy terms, and a lot of research, with an urban bubble mindset.

The research we have done has shown that the biggest scope for behaviour change and modal switch—this is one of the things we really want to try and understand where possible—is in the less dense suburbs and in the market town type setting, where you do not have lots of other sustainable alternatives, including conventional cycling and walking, and you have some need to access public transport hubs that are a bit further away. You have less conflict in many ways with other types of road users in those areas.

I would really like to see some greater emphasis, both in the way we talk about the scope for these modes but certainly in the trial locations going forward. I do not mean deep rural but small market towns and less dense settings.

Chair: We are going to move on now to look at how e-scooters will affect other transport usage.

Q7 Ruth Cadbury: These are questions about whether e-scooters, if rolled out, will change people's decisions about how they travel. Do you think they will primarily displace private car use, public transport, or both, or will they shift people away from walking or non-assisted cycling? If so, what will be the implications?

Professor Anable: I refer back to what I have just said about the evidence so far. There will be evidence that will have been brought to your attention that suggests that, so far, these modes have abstracted mainly from walking, cycling and bus use. I can see how that is absolutely the case, given what we have just said about the likely types of people who may be encouraged to use these modes. They are less likely to have access to a car in the first place.

My concern is that that evidence base leads to this very simplistic conclusion: "Oh dear, these are not sustainable because they simply rearrange the proportion of sustainable modes and do not get us any further from reducing dependence on the car or car use at the moment." But that is not taking into account the fact that, if you improve the environment for electric scooters in some of the infrastructure that we hope will come along to allow them to integrate with other modes, you are, by definition, probably going to take some road space from cars, for instance, improving the public realm for all users. That in itself will have a wider implication for car use.

As I implied before, we must also think about the longer-term implications. What is it that we want to see in the future? We want to see less car ownership. It is a bit of a taboo subject talking about ownership. If we can create options for people so they do not have to own a car—so maybe access a car but not own a car—and get into much more of a



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mindset of accessing different modes of transport rather than owning them, then they are much less likely to use cars as much in the future.

This is about the system that we want in the future, not about looking at the evidence that exists today. If you just look at that evidence, it gives you a very narrow and very pessimistic view of the potential for this mode.

Dr Sherriff: Much of the data from other countries is showing a fairly low shift in the proportion of journeys away from car use, but it is really a case of looking to the potential of this. Over the last 10 years we have had a large focus on promoting cycling. Cycles are there already and they are a brilliant mode of transport, but people are not using them as much as we would like them to. There has been a lot of proactive work on that. We cannot just assume that because bikes are there people will use them. There have been a lot of promotional campaigns and work on improving infrastructure, particularly recently in Greater Manchester and in London. All those aspects help us to make cycling a more attractive prospect.

It is the same for e-scooters. We cannot suddenly expect a lot of people to use them for journeys they would have made by car. It needs a proactive approach. That has to include not just information but improvement of the environment for active travel for cycling, e-scooters and walking. It needs that kind of practical approach. It is almost creating a virtuous circle. As you start to reduce car use, you are making areas more attractive for active travel modes.

Q8 Ruth Cadbury: I will move on in terms of the physical space and ask both of you this question. From what you know of other countries that are ahead of us on levels of cycling and walking but also on the use of e-scooters, should the urban transport infrastructure be adapted? If so, how? Do you think that e-scooters will eventually be an integral part of the urban environment? Do you want to say any more about rural, suburban and market town opportunities?

Professor Anable: There is absolutely no doubt that infrastructure improvements have to come along. That is the case for existing walking and cycling modes, let alone then dropping a new mode into this. Facilities for sustainable transport, active transport and micromobility are not good enough.

The announcement yesterday is effectively treating these scooters as somewhere between a bicycle and a motorbike or motorised two wheeler. That means they are going to be expected to be on the road. We have a poor record on safety for cycling in this country. That suggests the prediction has to be that we will carry on with a poor record of safety for these modes vis-à-vis other places in the world that have a better safety record across the board for all these modes. That all points to better infrastructure and reallocation away from road space towards these modes. That is really quite simple to me.



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With respect to the thinking about alternative areas, the same applies, except that one of the things we are not doing well at all is thinking about longer-distance cycling routes. They could perhaps also eventually be used, if we build the infrastructure well, off-road and segregated to some extent. We could do some forward planning for longer-distance routes to accommodate these modes, including e-bikes.

I want to make a point here that is very important, and it also relates to modal shift. We hear a lot with respect to the decarbonisation agenda: 65% of trips that are undertaken are less than 5 miles. That is true, but they equate to only about 15% or 18% of the distance travelled, and even less of the carbon emissions because a lot of those shorter journeys are already undertaken by more sustainable modes.

We need to think about what infrastructure we need to capture those slightly longer journeys, which are very applicable to these e-scooters. The journeys above 5 miles are the ones that we really need to tackle in order to reduce our carbon emissions, not the journeys less than 5 miles. We need to transition some of the journeys between 5 and 15 miles that are currently very car dependent to alternative modes.

We also need to reduce travel distances—to reduce a lot of those 5 to 15-mile journeys to become less than 5-mile journeys. If we are talking purely about modal switch here, we need to think about longer-distance routes between small towns and from suburbs to outer town, and not get into the urban bubble mindset.

Dr Sherriff: It is really important not to get into the mindset that e-scooters are going to fix our transport system. We must recognise that these are one part of a system that we are developing. In terms of travel between cities, towns and areas, it is the integration with public transport that will be really valuable: walk and ride or walk and Slide—those kinds of arrangements.

There is a need for good-quality, attractive infrastructure for walking and cycling, for e-scooters—what people are starting to call mobility lanes. They are not just known as cycling lanes and they are not just for people cycling, but they are for these different modes that are more active. That is so important, and we have seen the case for that over and over again. We see how valuable it is in countries such as the Netherlands. That is often held up as an example.

One thing that is really valuable is the inclusion aspect. We find that the balance between gender and age groups is flatter and more diverse in countries where there is really good cycle infrastructure. It brings it away from an emphasis on, sad to say, very confident men who are more likely to cycle when the provision is not there for more attractive cycle routes. I think that is really important.

I also think there is going to be a period when there will be a sharing of the roads as new users. There has recently been movement on



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confidence training for people cycling. There is a role for e-scooter providers to provide some quite basic introduction on how to use an e-scooter. That could be a short video on a smartphone that they use to unlock the scooter or something else.

There has been a growth in the provision of cycle awareness training for drivers, including professional drivers. There are structures in place for professional drivers to have ongoing training. That could be built into that, so there is increased awareness that they are going to be seeing these e-scooters and how to behave around them on the road.

I think that is really important. It is important for e-scooter users to be very aware of safety and to use the scooters responsibly, but it is also important to make other road users aware that these scooters are going to be there and how to behave around them.

Chair: We will stay on the same theme of shared usage, but we will make sure we tell you specifically who we are looking to answer because that will help you.

Q9 **Karl McCartney:** I am going to mix it up a bit and come first to Dr Sherriff. Unfortunately, this is going to be a long question. I have listened to what you have both said and it has been very interesting, especially about the safety aspects and certainly about the urban and perhaps rural mix of usage.

One of the things that has struck me is the fact that there has been a proliferation of electric scooters already, but they are going to be banned still on roads, so they are going to be on pavements. Those taking part in the trials are specifically banned from being on pavements and are going to be on roads.

Not to be too technical, but obviously with small roads the road surfaces are going to need to be really smooth for them to be used safely. Safety is what I am going to pick up on for both of you.

With an interface between electrified scooters and pedestrians or cars, there are going to be accidents. Is there insurance in place in other countries, or do we just leave it to the civil courts to deal with? I am conscious that cyclists on the roads are not insured, and unfortunately neither are power cyclists nor assisted power cyclists. Do you think there is a case for the Government to look at it, or is the Minister wilfully overlooking it?

Dr Sherriff: I am not aware of countries where insurance is mandatory for individual users, but the rental schemes do tend to have insurance, and that will be the case in the UK. It is similar to cycling. Cycles are not insured and cyclists do not have to be insured because most of the danger is posed by other vehicles, and they carry insurance, so it is proportionality.

The point about road surface is really important. There is a strong case anyway for maintaining road surfaces really well. Other road users and



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cyclists are vulnerable from potholes. These vehicles do have smaller wheels. They are being improved. The stature, weight and robustness of these vehicles are being improved, but there is a need to make sure that road surfaces are very well maintained. They do highlight that issue.

I am not sure if I have really answered your question about insurance.

Q10 Karl McCartney: The reason I am asking is that there have been well documented cases of cyclists who have caused accidents with pedestrians, both as they are crossing the road and on pavements. I wondered whether you foresee those incidents happening more frequently with e-scooters, whether driven on a road or, perhaps more likely—as we have seen with the proliferation of those that are illegal but with many people using them already in our urban areas and others—on pavements.

Dr Sherriff: I was looking at some evidence from North America, where collisions were with road vehicles and not pedestrians. I am not saying that cannot happen, but it seems to be in a minority of cases.

It is a kind of transition. Where I live, there are cars parked all along pavements. There are very narrow gaps and people cannot get between those cars. There are opportunities for making pavements much safer if we can reduce car use and the need that sometimes people feel to have a second car in a household. That really does put pressure on parking in urban areas.

Q11 Karl McCartney: I see the benefits. I am just trying to examine what the downsides might be and how we might mitigate that or push the Government to mitigate that. Thank you for your answer. I will go to Professor Anable.

Professor Anable: I cannot answer the question about insurance in other countries, I am afraid. On the insurance point, I will just say that I am concerned that, if we go down the route of applying the need for insurance for this mode, then, by the back door, we are going to be applying it to other micromobility and active modes. That concerns me a lot. I think we should have a vision of a transport system where you can move around freely without needing to have an insurance policy to do so, other than if you are driving big—

Q12 Karl McCartney: I am sorry to cut across you. I understand what you are saying, but suppose somebody on an e-scooter moves out into a road and causes a Ferrari to hit a Daimler. There is going to be a lot of damage caused. Who ends up paying for that? The taxpayer?

Professor Anable: Yes, because cyclists do not currently have insurance. If we put them on e-scooters, we need to do it for cyclists. We would also need to have insurance policies for pedestrians because an increasing number of accidents are being caused by pedestrians walking out into the road due to less attention being paid because they are



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looking at their mobile phone, or whatever it is. It goes back to my point about level playing fields and what system we actually want.

The other issue around safety is that, on one level, if you are going to introduce a mode of transport into a system that is more vulnerable than other things on the road there will be safety implications for that user, but because they are trying to navigate their way through a very congested system they will cause some accidents. Of course there will be accidents. The point is that we need to reduce the number of cars on the road to create space for all these other modes. That is the solution to all the safety issues in the whole of the transport system.

Q13 **Karl McCartney:** We are going to disagree on who should be paying insurance, but I think you would agree that with the usage of anything, including roads, comes responsibility, surely.

Professor Anable: Absolutely, and I have not disputed that. What I am saying is that the use of the roads by cyclists comes with responsibility, and they do not have insurance. The use of pavements by pedestrians comes with responsibility, and they do not have insurance. I am not disputing the fact that there are responsibilities, but why is it that you would decide that this particular mode is different from some of the others?

Karl McCartney: I am not saying it is. I am saying it is exactly the same as some of the others, but I understand your point. Thank you very much indeed.

Chair: Before we move on to the environmental impacts, I want to bring in Simon Jupp.

Q14 **Simon Jupp:** Good morning. Thank you very much for joining us this morning and for your really interesting answers so far.

I have several concerns, not least the fact that by using an e-scooter you are not doing as much exercise as you would be if you were on a bicycle. The whole point of active travel is exactly that; you are active. This perhaps is not.

The other point is that, having lived in Bristol previously, with Bristol being one of the country's premier cycling cities, the impact of having another mode of transport in already busy cycle lanes—and Bristol has quite an exemplary selection of cycle lanes—will actually put off people from using cycling and walking, and walking and cycling to work. What does the panel think about the impact of this on active travel modes?

Professor Anable: On the exercise point, that is a very interesting question. I do not know specifically with respect to e-scooters. I do know that with respect to e-bikes, where the same caution has been levied about it not being active travel, the evidence that I have seen suggests that obviously there is some human-powered assistance with most e-bikes, and I appreciate that, but there is a lot of activity involved in e-biking.



The same idea comes through in evidence on use of public transport. People have to walk to and from public transport stops. The idea of scooters is that they are very portable and you can use them on different modes of transport. You can use them for parts of your journey, and therefore I really do not think we should be so concerned at them having a health disbenefit, particularly, as I said before, if it means people become less car dependent than they otherwise would have been, which we know does have real implications on health and sedentary lifestyles.

I am sorry but I have forgotten the second part of your question.

Q15 **Simon Jupp:** Do not worry; it was just about the mixture of usage of, for example, cycle lanes. If you add an extra mode of transport to these cycle lanes, which are already quite busy in our bigger cities, then we are going to put people off getting on the bike. They will not feel safe. We already know that, because of the fragmented nature of some cycle lanes in our cities, there are junctions where it is quite complicated to navigate around. This will only be more convoluted with the added element of an e-scooter. That was my question.

Professor Anable: This is a really big concern. The 15 mph limit that has been applied is very sensible for this reason. It is part of the solution, but again the solution comes from having better infrastructure and more space in order for the modes to mix more effectively. I do think there is a danger that that interaction could end up putting off some cyclists.

Simon Jupp: There could be some very interesting interaction.

Dr Sherriff: There are two elements with the potential to detract from walking. One of them is simply providing something that is quite attractive to using an e-scooter instead of walking a short journey. The other, as other cities and countries have found, is the litter and annoyance element of sharing pavements with clusters of scooters that have been abandoned at the end of the day after a rented journey or with people using them irresponsibly. Those are things that have been dealt with in the proposals by saying that they cannot be on pavements and by encouraging local authorities to work closely with the providers of the e-scooter rental schemes to make sure that parking is controlled. There are various ways of encouraging people to park them in sensible places and clusters, and not just leaving them lying on their side. That helps to deal with the issue of making walking areas less attractive.

There is always a benefit of building activity into people's lives. It does not have to be a vigorous cycle to work. It can be more about building activity gently into people's lives. I think that is what e-scooters do. We cannot pretend that they are the same kind of workout as cycling, or even walking a longer distance. They do allow people to build activities into their lives, maybe by using an e-scooter to get to a bus, a tram or a train and then going on. It is a more active journey, but it would be useful to look into ways to make sure that e-scooters do not simply replace more active journeys and that those active journeys remain.



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With cycle lanes, I would agree it is a question of sharing that space. It is partly about having really good-quality space. That is about the size of the space as well as the quality of the surface and separation from traffic. It is also about finding ways for different users to share that space effectively.

Chair: In every Select Committee inquiry that we undertake, we are very interested in how a policy or issue will impact on the target to get to net zero by 2050. I am going to ask Sam Tarry to cover the environmental impact.

Q16 **Sam Tarry:** Good morning to you both. DfT recently said that legalising e-scooters will have the benefit of reducing emissions and improving air quality, whilst having a positive impact on public health. I want to unpack that a little bit.

One of the things that we would like you to consider—perhaps if both of you could answer in turn—is that some people have expressed some concerns about the green credentials of e-scooters across their entire lifetime. First of all, what is your view on that?

Dr Sherriff: This is clearly a concern. Sometimes technologies are presented as green, but in fact have their limitations in reducing environmental impact. Walking and cycling do not involve batteries or replacing vehicles frequently. That is a claim that has been levied against e-scooters.

What I would say is that the companies have been improving their environmental performance quite a lot in terms of the sturdiness of the e-scooters, which helps them last longer, and in terms of their practices for what they call juicing, which is going round and charging them up. For example, they are developing swappable batteries. That means they do not have to drive round with a van-load of e-scooters. They just go round with batteries, and that is easier to do on bikes.

What I would encourage is that local authorities, when setting up rental schemes, really think about how to minimise the environmental impact. One way would be a system by which those juicing/charging activities are done on bikes and not with vans, and making sure that the companies have the best modular construction of e-scooters. What I mean by that is that they can simply swap the parts and do not have to dispose of the e-scooter at the end of its life; and that they find the companies that have e-scooters with longer lifespans. That is improving year on year, as I say.

The end game, the long-term game, is to reduce car ownership. Where e-scooters are bringing about conditions where people can sell their car or use it much less, that is a massive environmental advantage. It is not just about carbon. It is also air quality and noise.

There are environmental gains here, but it is important that local authorities work with providers to get the best possible system in terms of environmental performance.



Q17 **Sam Tarry:** Professor Anable, would you like to comment on that, and perhaps also give some evidence on the contribution to emissions and congestion that e-scooters can make. Obviously, we are talking here about the long-term impact and the build of those e-scooters. One of the key arguments has been that the flip side of that is that they are very good in reducing carbon emissions by getting modal shift under way.

Professor Anable: With respect to thinking about their whole lifecycle sustainability, like any other technology—including electric cars, for instance—we do have to consider the embedded emissions involved in the materials and so on. It was good to hear what Graeme said about the improvements that are being made on that side. It is not something that I know about.

I would say that probably any lifecycle studies that have been carried out that try to present some comparative assessment of the sustainability of these modes probably have not considered the extent to which, over the longer term, they may reduce car dependency. When that is factored in, I think the potential is reasonably high.

I am going to put a caveat on that in thinking about the contribution to our net zero target, which I assume is at least partly underlying the question about the environment. This goes back to something I mentioned earlier about the distribution of trip lengths and the fact that, yes, the huge bulk of journeys undertaken are less than 5 miles, but they add up to only a small proportion of the overall distance travelled and, therefore, the emissions. It is only 3% of journeys that are undertaken that are longer than 50 miles but that are responsible for about 30% or a third of the distance that we travel, and therefore use that as a proxy for emissions of passenger transport. That does not include air.

My point is that any of these active travel and micromobility modes do have a cap on the extent to which we can think about them in terms of our contribution to our net zero targets. It is a bit of surface window dressing thinking about those modes. Cycling, walking and these modes, at the expense of thinking about what we do for longer-distance journeys that are the bulk, and where we would get a bigger bang for our buck if we changed them, is where we really need to be putting our emphasis. That is not to take away from the fact that we also need to create better places for people to live so that, hopefully, they will reduce some of the longer-distance journeys that they do because their local environment is more attractive to them anyway.

Q18 **Sam Tarry:** We are aware that in May you published a study on e-bikes. I just wondered, based on that work and looking at that environmental impact, how you think that compares to e-scooters, and whether you think that should have the potential to offer similar reductions in carbon dioxide.

Professor Anable: With the e-bike study, I think there is more evidence internationally on the distances that people have been travelling on



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e-bikes. Journeys of 8, 10 and up to 15 miles are quite standard now in places where this mode is embedded, say in the Netherlands, Denmark, Italy and Germany. They are much further ahead on e-bikes than we are.

We were able to look at the potential distances that people could travel, and at the distribution and types of trips, the demographics, topography and so on, as well as the infrastructure around the country. We could identify where the biggest scope for putting e-bikes might be to get a modal shift for some of these circa 10-mile-type journeys.

That is where we came up with a very large figure, I have to say, for the maximum potential. If you could really switch these types of journeys from cars over to this mode for the demographic that we believe would use these modes, it could substantially reduce car use. If you took it at its maximum, because these trips are worth so much in distance and carbon terms, 30% to 50% of car miles could be switched, although we realise that that is unrealistic.

With scooters I have to be honest and say I am really not so sure. I have looked at the evidence on the distances that people travel on scooters—Graeme may know more—and there does not seem to be a lot of information about that. A lot of evidence is collected much more on the number of trips, but it is the distance of those trips that we really need to be able to make this kind of assessment. Given, as far as I understand it, that they do have ranges of around 10 to 15 miles—although I cannot imagine it is very comfortable to travel on them for that length of time—if we can assume that people do travel on them for 5 miles, then we can look at this distribution of trips and be quite optimistic that they could make a good dent in carbon for those shorter journeys.

I have not run the numbers and this is off the top of my head, but you might be talking, if you really went for it, about a 5% reduction in carbon if you took out some of those shortish but not medium-length journeys on those modes.

Chair: I am conscious of the fact that we have run over time, as I can see the witnesses for the next panel. I want to get three more colleagues in. May I please ask for brief questions and answers?

Q19 **Grahame Morris:** I particularly want to ask about street clutter. In the light of the Government's announcement yesterday, what are your thoughts about the most appropriate measures that could be taken by rental providers and local authorities to minimise street clutter? I think particularly about the example of the bicycle hire schemes. The Government announcement is for the hiring of e-scooters, when in larger towns and cities we have quite a considerable problem of bicycles being left on the pavement and in inappropriate places. What are your thoughts on how to address that issue, as and when it arises?

Dr Sherriff: It is an issue. As I say, it can impact on people's willingness to walk around places where they live. I have seen quite successful



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approaches through virtual docks, and I would encourage local authorities to work closely with providers to do this.

One of the issues in Greater Manchester certainly, when we had the Mobike scheme—and I know it happened elsewhere—was that it was almost parachuted in with not much discussion with the local authority. There needs to be that discussion.

There are various carrot-and-stick approaches you can take. Sometimes you simply cannot leave your e-scooter outside a certain zone. It might be a place with certain periods on the pavement or the road. You can fine people or give them points for their next ride and so on. There are tried and tested carrot-and-stick approaches that make these virtual docks quite possible.

Professor Anable: I am going to say that Graeme is much more knowledgeable on the specifics of street clutter than I am.

Chair: We have touched on safety, but there are some specifics that Greg Smith was keen to ask about.

Q20 **Greg Smith:** Good morning. I appreciate, as Huw has said, that we have looked at safety a lot in this discussion. I am interested in seeing where in the globe is the best system of regulation or restrictions put on e-scooters. In particular, I am generally quite anti nanny state and would like to see as little regulation as is humanly possible. Is there evidence of helmets-not helmets anywhere impacting on safety? Are there examples of where speed limits have not really impacted on the safety record of people using e-scooters, given that by their very technology they are never going to get up to a particularly fast speed in the first place? Where in the world is the best practice?

Dr Sherriff: It would be worth looking at developments in Denmark and Germany. They initially had a more laissez-faire approach to e-scooters and have since not clamped down but have tried to limit numbers in cities and restrict their use. Helmets have not been mandated anywhere apart from Australia, where they are mandated for cycles. I think it has been problematic just in terms of the operation. It would be even more problematic at the moment in terms of hygiene, I would imagine.

Professor Anable: That is also my understanding. Certainly, the issue with helmets has been very controversial with cycling. The evidence is very mixed in its real benefits overall. I cannot imagine that that would be very different for e-scooters.

Q21 **Greg Smith:** On the speed point, a fit person—not me—pedalling a cycle can get up to considerable speeds. Certainly, driving on rural roads in a car I have sometimes struggled to match cyclists. Given that e-scooters themselves, by the nature of the electric motor in them and so on, could not go as fast as a pedal cycle, is it even necessary to put a speed limit on them?



Professor Anable: My understanding is that people are more vulnerable on a scooter in the sense that they are less stable and there is more of a tendency to go over the front of them. I would think that notwithstanding the fact that they do not get up to these speeds anyway, but just in making sure that they do not, they should have speed limiters on them and regulations to that effect. When you come down to actually understanding the optimum speed to ensure the least number of accidents or casualties, I would think there is an optimum speed. That may differ in different types of traffic environment.

That is a general point I would make. I know it adds to the complexity and it is probably not what anybody wants to hear, but I do think that there is a need to think about all the issues that we have spoken about today as potentially needing to be different in different locations, depending on the type of environment we are talking about.

Q22 **Greg Smith:** Graeme, do you have a different view on that, or the same?

Dr Sherriff: It is a really important point about the different environments. The technology behind e-scooters offers the potential, more than any other mode really, to limit speed differentially. For example, on a pavement, on a cycle lane or on a busy road you can limit the speed differently. I do not think we understand enough yet about the safety differences between riding an e-scooter and riding a bike. There are indications from studies that there are higher risks. For example, the steering is much narrower and the rider is vertical. We need to better understand the safety implications of allowing higher speeds. Generally speaking, I would say for the purpose of the trials it makes perfect sense to have this 15 mph limit.

Chair: The very last question, which perhaps will be put just to one of our witnesses, is from Ruth.

Q23 **Ruth Cadbury:** I have a question for Dr Sherriff, picking up what you said earlier. A lot of bike hire schemes and scooter schemes around the world use bikes and scooters that have a very short shelf life because the money is in the data and not in the kit.

If you have seen the regulations that the Government want to use for trialling, is there any way of improving the regulations to address what I think is a very real issue?

Dr Sherriff: I would specify the weight of the vehicles and the reparability, so that they can literally be repaired rather than just thrown away. I am not sure if it is in the regulations, or can be in the regulations, but I would encourage local authorities to make sure that the practices are around cycling so that replacing the batteries and maintaining the scooters are done by cycle or by low-emission vehicles. Quite a large part of the environmental impact is diesel vans driving around to move vehicles around.



Having parking policies helps that as well because it reduces the need to physically move them to redistribute them, if you specified and incentivised where people can and cannot park them in the first place.

Chair: Dr Sherriff and Professor Anable, thank you so much indeed for all of your extensive evidence this morning. It has been a huge help. We will look forward to keeping in touch with you. Thank you again.

Examination of witnesses

Witnesses: Rachel Lee, Lorna Lee, Eleanor Southwood and Phillip Darnton.

Q24 **Chair:** We now move to our second panel. I apologise for our timekeeping, but we will have plenty of time. We have four witnesses. I ask you to introduce yourself, starting with Lorna.

Lorna Lee: I am campaigns manager at the AA motoring organisation. We represent around 12 million members and customers.

Rachel Lee: I am policy and research manager at Living Streets.

Phillip Darnton: I am the chair of the Bicycle Association, a trade body representing the UK cycle industry, which includes e-scooters. It is a non-profit organisation. It is not a campaign group. It provides information, support and technical help to its members, and advice and guidance to the Department for Transport principally on technical issues.

Eleanor Southwood: I am chair of the Royal National Institute of Blind People.

Q25 **Chair:** Welcome to you all; thank you so much. With four witnesses we may ask specific questions but we will direct you on who we are going to ask at the very start, to make it easier for you. I will kick off, and may we have the very briefest of responses because we are going to go into detail?

What future role do you see e-scooters playing in the UK transport mix? Do you see it as a positive, or are you concerned?

Eleanor Southwood: It was really helpful listening to your previous evidence session. I think the contribution of e-scooters to that modal shift and active travel ways of getting around is not very clear. From our perspective, it is really clear that, even with all the safeguards and some of the things that we saw put into place by yesterday's announcement, we do consider e-scooters to be a real and genuine threat to the ability of blind and partially sighted people to move around independently and safely.

Phillip Darnton: I think at the moment it is entirely unclear. The Bicycle Association does not have a view about e-scooters because we have members who think they are really very controversial and others who are selling them.



The key thing, and I am sure we will come back to this, is the question about gathering some data. We simply do not know. The UK market is quite unlike any other market in the world because it only has personally owned scooters, all of which are illegal. It has no hire scooters at all. Its road and transport systems are quite different from those that people often quote in other countries. The issue is now one that requires a lot of data, and that, as I understand it, is precisely why the DfT are keen to introduce trials.

Rachel Lee: We, like Ellie and Phillip, do not really know at this point in time. I think we have serious concerns about the safety of e-scooters for pedestrians. They could be useful in a future transport system, but, as earlier panel members mentioned, our current infrastructure is not up to that job. I would want to see the infrastructure improved to the level of the Netherlands, France and other places where they have good cycle safety, segregated routes and so on. Then you can clearly see where these e-scooters would go. At the moment, I fear that people who are using these for the first time are getting scared on our busy roads and then jumping up on the pavement, and before you know it someone who is vulnerable, elderly, maybe who cannot see, or even children, will be knocked over by someone going at quite a speed. At the moment, scooters on the pavement are limited to 4 mph, and here we have vehicles capable of 15 mph. It is a big unknown. We need information, but it is quite a risk as well.

Lorna Lee: Potentially, we think that they could play a positive role in a future transport mix. There could be benefits for easing congestion and improving the environment, but it will all depend on how they are regulated and how they are managed. For us at the moment, the trial is really going to be key. With the trial, it is going to be of paramount importance that it is properly evaluated and monitored independently so that we can fully understand what benefits we can gain from it and where we need to concentrate our efforts on improving safety.

Chair: Thank you. I applaud you for the length of answers. If we keep it along those lines we will cover all the evidence, which is great.

The timing of this session is perfect because of the Government's announcement yesterday. I will hand over to Grahame Morris to talk us through that section.

Q26 **Grahame Morris:** Thank you. I understand that you heard the session with the previous panel. As the Chair has pointed out, we had an announcement yesterday about the conditions under which the Government have taken forward the e-scooter scheme, and in particular that it is to be rental only. Privately owned e-scooters will not be covered by the legislation. There is a speed limit, and I am particularly interested in your views on the proposal for the 15 mph speed limit and the requirement to have a driving licence or a provisional driving licence.

In the previous panel a couple of the academics expressed not incredulity



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but were not certain why that applied when it did not apply to e-bicycles. I am interested in your views about the need to have a provisional driving licence and, indeed, the areas that are being chosen to pilot this scheme.

Given the issue with bicycles and indeed with speed, might I ask Phillip first and then Ellie?

Phillip Darnton: I think the academics were short of some factual information. The issue on driving licences is, as I understand it, entirely about the fact that to stop the current regulation of e-scooters being illegal would require primary legislation. This takes a very long time to get through Parliament. The only way the Secretary of State can avoid that is by conducting a vehicle trial, and that therefore limits the trial to people who hold actual or provisional driving licences.

As I understand it, there is no suggestion from the DfT that, following the trials, legislation might well come forward that did not require you to have a driving licence. This is an entirely technical issue and is not in any sense set in stone. It is the inevitability of not being able to prevent the current legislation on illegality. That is the first point.

On the choice of area, again the facts are that Middlesbrough came forward as the first of local authorities who said they were keen to start next week, but indeed over 50 local authorities have come forward saying that they are interested in the possibility of conducting trials.

It has to be said that, as I understand it, there is no funding from central Government to carry out those trials. Therefore, it will be entirely up to local authorities how they organise those, what they do about parking spaces, how they organise their discussions with the hire companies and so on. I do not think there is any question that this is a topic that will be of interest to a very large number of local authorities, who have to have put in their recommendation for what they want to do before the end of August. There will be a very large number of local authorities, although I imagine that most of them will be in urban areas. That is almost inevitable because that is where the commercial interests of e-scooter companies lie and that is where people will most use e-scooters.

The only data we have of any substance on average journey length is from Brussels. Nearly 1,500 people were sampled last year, where the average journey length was five to 10 minutes.

As far as the trials are concerned, those are the reasons the regulations are as they are. The speed limit is rather surprising. At the end of May the DfT made a public webinar of what it considered the regulations for the trial would be, which included a 12.5 mph speed limit—20 kph—which the Bicycle Association, looking at what evidence there was, suggested was quite adequate. It is somewhat surprising that it has now gone up, but so has weight and power, which we may come to later.

Q27 Grahame Morris: Ellie and Rachel, I am particularly interested in your views about the speed limit and the views of your organisations on that.



Eleanor Southwood: Like Phillip, we were really surprised to see the 15 mph speed limit yesterday, which is a lot faster than we had anticipated. The speed is a really serious concern for us. We are obviously pleased to see that they will not be allowed to be ridden on pavements. However, even on the road, obviously if you cannot see, you cannot detect a silent vehicle, so it is a similar kind of challenge to the one around electric cars that do not have any audible clue that they are coming, and also bicycles. That still remains a huge concern.

We also know that, despite pedal bikes not being allowed on pavements, 80% of people who responded to a recent survey of ours said that they had had significant issues with cyclists on pavements. Our concern is that without really robust enforcement—again, as Phillip indicated, we are not very clear what that enforcement would look like and what the capacities of local authorities would be to provide that sort of enforcement, or indeed the police or any other authority to actually enforce—they would be ridden on the pavement. Obviously, somebody riding an e-scooter might not necessarily know that a pedestrian they were approaching was blind or partially sighted—they might not be holding a cane or have a guide dog, so it might be invisible. We would really want to try to limit these speeds.

We were hoping that speeds would be limited ideally to as close to walking as possible but, if not, to an absolute maximum of 12.5 mph. We are really shocked by the speed limit, and very concerned about the vehicles being on pavements and the lack of robust enforcement on that. We would like to see investigation of things like geo-fencing so that they could not be ridden on pavements. We will need to do a lot of publicity, so we would call on the DfT to fund a proper publicity campaign about not riding these things on pavements.

Q28 **Grahame Morris:** I am grateful for that. It is useful insight from the RNIB. I would ask Rachel and then Lorna, and in addition to commenting on the Government's specific proposals in the pilot areas I would be interested in your views on the ongoing consultation and evaluation, and what arrangements the DfT has put in place from your perspective to evaluate how successful the pilot schemes are or any problems that are identified.

Rachel Lee: Going back very quickly to speed first, we supported a lower speed—12 mph or 15 mph is very fast, relatively speaking, to someone walking. The risks to pedestrians if there is a collision are pretty much the same.

We are concerned about speed. The other thing that has come up elsewhere is people using e-scooters while under the influence of alcohol. We cannot count on people necessarily being sensible when they are using them because there have been quite a few self-inflicted injuries and risks to other people from people riding them drunk. Enforcement and knowing how we are going to do that will be important.



Data collection is hugely important. I have not had a chance to look at the detail. What concerns me is the speed at which this is being rolled out. It takes time to develop an effective evaluation framework. This was supposed to be happening in a year's time to develop the right framework and links to academia, to get the assessment that you want. Are we going to get that? I do not know. This is a concern. I know that they are going to have access to data, and hopefully we will get some useful information out of this, but it is going to be lots of different schemes. It is not even necessarily going to be that easy to compare what has happened in different places because each place is different, never mind each scheme being different. That is a concern for me.

Q29 **Grahame Morris:** Lorna, could you give the Committee your views on the speed limit of the Government's scheme and the ongoing consultation? I will go back to Phillip about consultation at the end.

Lorna Lee: I would just add to Rachel's point on the evaluation. We have not seen the criteria for it. That needs to happen. We need to know how it is going to be monitored, who is going to be monitoring it and what criteria they are using.

How strictly are the trials going to be enforced? How strictly is riders not using pavements going to be enforced? We understand that the pavement needs to remain a safe haven for all pedestrians, and, as Ellie was saying, for people that are blind and partially sighted there are additional challenges.

Pavements do need to remain a safe haven. I guess that is coming across loud and clear from all of us. We need to see what that looks like so that we can make sure that the trial is used to its best effect, so that the benefits can be enhanced and that people who need protecting and what needs to be kept safe can be kept safe.

In terms of the speed limit, we have said in our submission we would want the absolute maximum to be 15 mph.

Q30 **Grahame Morris:** Phillip, do you have a comment, particularly about the ongoing consultation?

Phillip Darnton: Yes. I will come to the ongoing consultation. I would like to comment on the point about speed. It appears that most accidents so far have not involved any other vehicle or person than the rider of the e-scooter. More often than not, that is because either they have slipped because the wheels are very small, or because they have hit a pothole or drain cover.

Clearly the faster you allow a vehicle to go, the more damage you are likely to do—probably to yourself and possibly to other people—so the speed limit is not just about trying to make a judgment about how fast people will want to get around. It has implications for the safety of the rider. The faster that you hit a pothole, the further you are going to go and damage yourself.



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As other witnesses have said, there is going to be a huge variety of types of e-scooter trialled, according to a local authority's wishes and judgment. There are going to be an enormous number of questions that could usefully be asked, because, as I say, we entirely lack reliable data in the UK. Even accident data is very skimpy and not entirely reliable across the rest of the world for various reasons.

There was the opportunity to use this, as the DfT originally intended before Covid as an orderly process whereby there were a load of off-road trials to try to sort out things like braking power, speed, wheel size and weight. They were going to be off-road first and then there were going to be some very carefully constructed trials in four, what were then, clean-air zones. This has now been overturned by the perceived importance of social distancing and not using public transport, but I do hope that that rush to introduce e-scooters does not mean that there will not be some rigorous monitoring and evaluation.

Grahame Morris: Thank you very much. I am sure that the Committee has noted your input and comments on the ongoing consultation.

Chair: Given that we have touched on risks, I am going to ask Greg Smith to explore that concept a little deeper.

Q31 **Greg Smith:** I absolutely appreciate the point about speed. I am enormously sympathetic to the point about pavements. I am absolutely in agreement with the point about the vehicles being silent and the risk that poses, just the same as every other vehicle that is silent, pedal cycles included, to pedestrians and those who are perhaps blind or partially sighted.

Looking at the technical detail of speed of an e-scooter on the road, it strikes me that there is a careful balance to be struck here. If you have a scooter with a speed limiter on it, it is very straightforward to block that scooter accelerating past a certain point. However, if that scooter—and bear in mind there are very small motors in them so the element of the engine braking is very small—picks up speed downhill, I would have thought a limiter that then applies braking would be more dangerous than letting a human being with their own balance ride it out and ensure that they get to the bottom of that hill safely. Do you have thoughts on where that balance should be?

Phillip Darnton: The question of speed is related to the question of power and weight. The Government announced yesterday that the speed would be 15.5 mph, at which point the motor cuts out, so the ability to go at any speed downhill is not affected. It is just as it is on an e-bike. The motor cuts out but it does not mean that the vehicle itself stops.

The power again was a very surprising 500 W. Most scooters in the world, and all the most popular brands, are rated at 250 W; 500 W will give you formidable acceleration. It is much faster than any cyclist or e-bike, which is also rated at 250 W, could possibly do. The acceleration of the



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vehicle accompanied by its speed potentially increase the risk to the rider, let alone anybody else.

The third element is the weight. Again the weight that the Bicycle Association had recommended, after an enormous number of consultations and studies of vehicles across the world, was that 20 k would be sufficient. You are carrying one person on the scooter in an upright position on wheels that are only 4 inches off the ground. If you fall off it, the weight of the scooter is potentially quite significant to people around you.

However, the Government have published a weight of 55 k, which suggests that they recognise that you can now put in very much larger batteries of very considerable weight in order to reduce the number of times that the vehicle has to be recharged and, therefore, reduce the costs to the commercial hirer for so doing.

I think the combination of speed, power and weight has to be looked at together. It does seem to me that the decision to take the upper limit of those—15.5 mph, 55 k and 500 W—is absolutely at the top end of what any vehicle could possibly be expected to do when you are standing just under 4 inches above the ground.

Q32 **Greg Smith:** I appreciate that point and certainly the point around the power output. However, it seems to me that the weight, as you say, is more about how many batteries you can get in and how long the thing can last in between charges. At the end of the day, the weight of the actual device is inconsequential compared to the human who then stands on top of it. From a very slender person up to someone like me would make a massive difference in the balance and safety of that vehicle over the weight of the scooter itself, surely.

Phillip Darnton: I assume that no members of the Committee have been able to ride an e-scooter because they are illegal in the UK. Unless you have tried them abroad, you will not know what it feels like.

I think there is a very interesting balance—I have ridden one in Warsaw—between the excitement and fun of an e-scooter, which is what most of our surveys in major retailers when people purchase them say they want them for, and fear. There is a real sense in which the more powerful and the heavier you make something, if it falls on you or on somebody else you are going to see higher and more serious levels of accident. I do think that the balance between fear and fun, between safety and attraction, is one that has to be considered very carefully. I assume that is exactly why we are going to carry out trials and get that data properly sorted out, as to what the balance between those elements should be.

Q33 **Greg Smith:** Thank you. Just expanding on those safety aspects, and bringing in the responsibility element to ensure that people do ride them in a responsible manner, in the previous session we had a discussion about whether insurance should be required. Perhaps Rachel, Lorna or



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Eleanor have a view on whether there should be insurance for e-scooter riders.

Rachel Lee: We do not have a position on whether insurance should be required. I would rather see safe infrastructure in the first place. We do not have a position on that at the moment.

Lorna Lee: Insurance is not something that we would call for to be mandatory in the same way as was talked about in the previous session. It is not mandatory for cyclists at the moment, so we would not call for it to be mandatory for riders of e-scooters. I think that with some rental schemes you do get some level of public liability cover. I suppose people would have the option to purchase their own on a voluntary basis if they wanted to.

Picking up the point about responsibility, we would support training for riders of e-scooters. It is possibly something that we could look at at a younger age. With things like cycling you have Bikeability training for children. Potentially, if this becomes part of our transport mix, you could look at whether we start to do training and whether this kind of thing would fit in with Bikeability training as well.

What Phillip was saying about people looking at it as fun was interesting. Obviously, there is an element of fun for something like this, but that has to be tempered with using them responsibly. Training can really help to ensure that that is embedded in people's minds.

Eleanor Southwood: On the insurance point, I would make the same point that I would make if you asked me about licensing. Should there be an accident or should something go wrong, we would welcome anything that makes it easier to identify the e-scooter rider and seek any kind of redress, although clearly for us the issues around safety are more prominent.

Q34 **Greg Smith:** I guess the point I was trying to get people's view on was how you increase safety through those responsibility mechanisms, such as thinking through what the impact is if you push the limit a little bit too far, or if you get tempted to jump up improperly on to a pavement, or whatever it might be. I am just trying to explore what the mechanisms might be to encourage that responsibility in any riders. I appreciate that this is not limited to e-scooters; it applies to virtually any mode of transport, including using your own two feet.

Phillip Darnton: As I understand it, the guidance that the DfT is offering would suggest that they expect e-hire companies to insure the rider for the period during which their vehicle is being used. That of course now just aggravates the anomaly between hired e-scooters and owned e-scooters. Owned e-scooters will continue to be absolutely illegal on the pavement and on the road. Hired e-scooters will be legal on the road and absolutely not on the pavement. I have no idea how this could possibly be enforced in practice. It seems inconceivable that in Bristol, for



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example, the police will stop you on an e-scooter and say, "Excuse me, is this hired or owned?" and depending on your answer you will get fined and your scooter confiscated, which they are entitled to do under the regulations, or whether they say, "On your way and good luck."

It does seem to me that this is a really very unsatisfactory legal position that is now in play. It is inevitable that people who own e-scooters will read the headlines and assume that it is now perfectly legal to use them. The question of insurance for them is, as it is for anybody else, prudent. Many cyclists do take out insurance exactly for that reason, but I do not think it is going to alter behaviour very much indeed.

My much greater concern is that people will use e-scooters, frighten themselves on them and actually ride them on the pavement. It will be very difficult to stop them.

One further point: it is not clear at all what offences are now going to be applicable to riders and users of these scooters. I do not think that the DfT has issued any publication on the nature of offences for e-scooter riders.

Chair: We have explored the risks in detail. We now want to move towards the impact on other users, particularly pedestrians and cyclists. I will ask Karl to start us off on that front.

Q35 **Karl McCartney:** I have a couple of questions for Lorna, picking up on some of the answers you have given already. Would the AA treat electric scooters as vehicles? If you had a member phone up and say that theirs had broken down, would you attend to fix it?

Lorna Lee: We have not looked at that at the moment.

Q36 **Karl McCartney:** It seems to me that the 15, 15.5 or even 12 mph that Eleanor mentioned seems quite an arbitrary figure, and quite high from what you have all said. Why has the AA picked on that figure? I am of an age where I remember electric milk floats, and they certainly did not travel at that speed; not even Ernie, the fastest milkman in the west, travelled at that speed. Why are e-scooters going to be going at 15 mph, when probably certainly less than 10 would in reality seem safer?

Lorna Lee: At the moment for us, the reality is that until the trials have gone ahead and been properly assessed we do not fully know what the safe limit would be to set it at. It is a line in the sand. Once the trials have gone ahead, they have been monitored and that evaluation has come through, we will support the recommendations that come from the trial. It is something to look at.

Q37 **Karl McCartney:** Are you aware of the technical specifications? I know that you might not know the answer to this. Are they going to have an electric buzzer? Again, I am of an age where I did, prior to Bikeability, cycling proficiency at the age of nine or 10. To pass your cycling proficiency every bike had to have a bell on it. I know anybody can shout,



but are these electric scooters going to have a buzzer of some sort?

Lorna Lee: We are not technical experts on the specifications of e-scooters, but we would support some kind of audible device being on them. There are other measures to make them more visible. I think some brands of e-scooters already use reflective paint. That needs looking at, but I might defer to the others because it is not an area I am especially an expert in.

Q38 **Karl McCartney:** I want to come quickly to both Rachel and Eleanor, as you both have issues with safety of people walking. What happens currently if a bicycle, electric scooter or electrically assisted bicycle hits one of your members or people that you represent or know? What happens if they are hurt?

Rachel Lee: If they are hurt badly, they will go to hospital. Will that information be recorded? It depends whether a policeman is in attendance. It might be recorded in the hospital stats. It might be the case that the person tries to contact the council and say, "Look, this has happened." Often nothing much happens. That is the trouble, isn't it, apart from the person—

Q39 **Karl McCartney:** Do Living Streets record those incidents?

Rachel Lee: No; we do not.

Q40 **Karl McCartney:** Eleanor, are you aware of what happens if somebody who is blind and is a member of your organisation is hit? Do you record that?

Eleanor Southwood: If somebody calls us up and says, "This has happened," then obviously we would know about it, but there is no process or automatic way by which that would be recorded, similar to the previous panellist. Obviously if the police are involved, then they would know but it would rely on somebody proactively calling us up.

It is why, when we run surveys, it is always quite interesting. You find lots of people who would not think to call us up and say, "This awful thing has happened to me," but when you go out and ask people you often uncover a whole heap of, fortunately, quite low-level incidents but quite frequent ones. That is a major concern. Some 75% of blind and partially sighted people we ask say that walking is the way that they mainly get around, and their main form of exercise; 86% say that walking independently is incredibly important to them.

It is often the low-level impact that this has on the choices people make every day. It is a massive priority for people to be able to exercise and get around independently and safely. No, we would not automatically know. Sometimes people will call us, but, when we ask, we definitely uncover a lot of stuff that we did not know before.

Q41 **Simon Jupp:** I am intrigued by the level of concerns being raised by every member of the panel about the questions that remain unanswered



about the decision that was made and announced yesterday. If there was one quick question that you would ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he was in front of you right now, in relation to safety in particular, what would it be?

Rachel Lee: You have put me on the spot. I would say, “How can you safeguard pedestrians?”

Simon Jupp: A good, short, sharp and succinct answer. Thank you.

Lorna Lee: Obviously keeping the pavement as a safe haven for pedestrians is of paramount importance. We would not advocate that e-scooters were allowed to be used on pavements.

Phillip Darnton: I think the question has to be about the future rather than the past. Clearly a series of decisions have been taken. How will the Secretary of State be gathering data that is robust on the results in terms of safety and accidents?

Eleanor Southwood: I would lead off with, “Why the rush when there are legitimate ways to gather the data that we would need to be more confident?” How will we know? The guidance to local authorities is not very clear on how disabled people will be involved in evaluation and how they will measure the impact on disabled people. I am not clear how we will know what the impact is, given that we are rushing to this so quickly.

Simon Jupp: Thank you; that is much appreciated.

Q42 **Chair:** I want to pick up on a couple of aspects. This question is for those of you who have the best evidence, rather than views. Do you think that e-scooters will primarily displace private car use, public transport or both? I leave this open, but I am particularly keen to hear whether any of your organisations have done research on this. I will ask the AA, as you are the motoring organisation and I have mentioned the private car. Lorna, has your organisation done any research on this?

Lorna Lee: Yes, we have. We did ask some questions on this in our populist panels. Around half of our members said they believed that using e-scooters could reduce congestion in towns and cities, which is positive. A fifth said they would consider buying one but as an alternative to walking and cycling. Obviously, we do not want it to replace walking and cycling, so there would be a need for education or encouragement on how best to use them and fit them into your transport mix. Interestingly, the highest support was among younger people between 18 and 24—around a third at 32%—who would consider one as an alternative to walking and cycling.

Q43 **Chair:** Lorna has touched on the impact on walking and cycling. I would be keen to throw that into the mix.

Rachel Lee: Living Streets has not done the research, but PACTS has pulled together a lot of information—for example, from the International Transport Workers Federation. Studies around Europe show that primarily



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use of e-scooter schemes replaces walking, cycling and public transport. For example, in Brussels 75% of e-scooter journeys were replacing walking and public transport.

Q44 Chair: What would you say would be the implications and concerns on that front?

Rachel Lee: The implications are that people who could, and perhaps should, be walking in the current situation are not. Given that we need to maintain social distancing of some kind and that public transport is being discouraged, there are going to be some people who still need to use it and who are not going to be able to jump on a scooter. They are not going to be using a bike, an e-bike or walking.

We need to have a mix of transport options. Those who can really should be walking, and those who can cycle should be cycling to make the best use of our transport system. We need to think about how it all fits together and how we make the most efficient use of what we have.

We still need to maintain our public transport systems for the future when we get past the Covid situation.

You do not want to have a population who are less active, particularly among the younger age group who may be using e-scooters.

Phillip Darnton: All the data that we have from Norway, Germany and, as has been mentioned, Belgium does suggest very high levels of migration from walking in particular. However, the issue is that all of this data relates to a pre-Covid period. It is unclear what people might do now, having been asked not to use public transport. I think it is a very difficult question to answer.

I must say that if you are over the age of about 34—which seems to be the top limit of purchase of e-scooters in the UK so far—the likelihood of you wanting to get out of your very safe personal motor car and on to an e-scooter is prima facie pretty unlikely.

The Secretary of State, in his “Future of Mobility” introduction, said that “walking and cycling must remain the best option for short urban journeys.” I assume that he thinks that, at the very best, e-scooters will be peripheral in all of this.

Q45 Chair: Ellie, on the one hand, the recommendation is that e-scooters must be off the pavement. That would be a benefit to those with sight issues. On the other hand, we will see a proliferation of e-scooters as these schemes come in, and inevitably people will use them on the pavement, notwithstanding that they should not. What would your overall concern be in that balance, and are you concerned that it will make your members and those you look after less confident in going out and about on the pavements?



Eleanor Southwood: That is 100% our concern; exactly. We live in an uncertain and, for many people, quite scary world at the moment. For lots of blind and partially sighted people emerging from lockdown comes with all sorts of anxieties about how you physically distance if you cannot see where other people are; whether people will still offer you assistance; and how that will work.

What I am saying is that there is anxiety out there already about venturing out. We are concerned that this will compound that. When we asked people what they felt about e-scooters, when we were undergoing the perfectly valid and standard consultation that was in play before this rush, someone did say it would increase that concern by 100%.

It is about the things we have talked about on speed and silence, but it is also what happens to the e-scooter when somebody is not riding it. We have not touched on the parking challenges. Again, the guidance to local authorities is loose—that would be the word—and flexible. Councils have enough challenges around parking as it is, but we would want to see designated parking bays on roads being used. Unfortunately, you will get what sadly we have seen through some of the e-bike schemes, where the bicycles are left just on the pavement. That in itself of course is a real hazard.

There is a street clutter-related concern, which is when they are static as well as the challenge, as you rightly say, inevitably when people ride them on the pavements.

Chair: We are going to explore and look at the urban mix on this front.

Q46 **Grahame Morris:** Lorna, you mentioned some of the survey evidence that the AA has, it having asked the views of the membership. There seems to be broad agreement among all the witnesses about e-scooters not being permitted on pavements in the urban environment. Given that the three choices are pavements, cycle lanes or roads, the carriageway, 75% of your member surveys quoted in the evidence are concerned about the safety of other road users—motor car drivers and cyclists—if e-scooters are on the roads.

Lorna, do you have any views on what could be done to mitigate those concerns?

Lorna Lee: Yes; you are right. Three quarters were concerned about other road users if they were legalised. We were specifically looking at drivers and cyclists. Ninety per cent. said that they were concerned about the safety of pedestrians if they were allowed on pavements. We would not want them on pavements.

I apologise for coming back to it, but, looking at the trial results, hopefully the trial will help show where improvements can be made, what is safe, what is not safe, where the flashpoints are and go from there. For the time being we would say that they are fine to be used in cycle lanes or on roads that cycles go on. We would not want them to be used on



mixed pedestrian and cycle pathways. If it is both bikes and pedestrians, then e-scooters should not be allowed on there at the moment.

Q47 **Grahame Morris:** Do any of the other witnesses have any strong views in respect of what could be done to mitigate that? You are all agreed that e-scooters should not be on pavements, but given that they have to be on the carriageway, on the roads, what do you say?

Rachel Lee: I completely agree with Lorna about e-scooters not being in any cycle and pedestrian shared use areas. One of the key things that can be done at the moment is reallocating road space away from cars. Conflict between pedestrians and cyclists comes about because there is not enough space for pedestrians, or, for that matter, for cyclists, because roads are quite dangerous when you have fast-moving vehicles on them.

At the moment we have an opportunity to rejig our transportation system in favour of more active travel, allowing more space for safe active travel through reallocating that road space. Then you could have e-scooters on the carriageway with plenty of space for them and cyclists. If you have the space, you are going to have better visibility. You are going to be able to react in a more timely fashion and it will be safer for everybody. We have the funding set aside anyway for road space reallocation as part of the Covid response, so it would make sense to tie those things in together.

Q48 **Sam Tarry:** There are a number of different aspects that I want to cover. I know that the AA has done some research into some of these areas. Lorna, some people have expressed concerns that the green credentials of e-scooters across their lifetime are perhaps not as good as could be hoped for. Do you, and some of the other panellists, have a view on that? An interesting report from Oregon suggested that the opposite was true and that there is some evidence that if they are built properly over the whole period of use, which could be 10 to 15 years, they could be more environmentally friendly pound per pound than car production.

Lorna Lee: I might need to defer to some of the others. We are not particular experts in the technical spec of e-scooters.

Q49 **Sam Tarry:** Do Rachel or Phillip want to take that point up?

Phillip Darnton: The point that was made in the first session—that the scooters are becoming more robust and that the hire companies are learning from the past—will clearly affect the answer to your question. However, it does seem that you are producing things that, on a hire basis, have had an expected life of under three months. At the end of that three months it is not at all clear where they go, who takes them or what they do with them. I simply do not know about that.

They are not generally easy to repair. The point was made that if a scooter was made in a modular fashion you could replace elements of it, and that in the future may be the case, but at the moment it seems to



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me that you have a problem. It is impossible really to repair 4-inch wheels if they get a puncture. So, a hire scooter at the moment probably has a lifespan of about 12 weeks.

There are then the issues about how it is serviced, which were discussed earlier, and whether the hire company manages to recharge the batteries by using a cyclist rather than a car. There are the issues of the disposal of the battery, which is integral to the e-scooter, so it is not readily detachable.

I think there is a lot of work to be done to find out just how environmentally acceptable they are by comparison with cycling or walking, which, as we keep going back to, are the Secretary of State's preferred choice of active travel. Of course, e-scooters are not active travel. There is no health benefit from them whatsoever.

Q50 Sam Tarry: I will turn to Rachel of Living Streets and ask what contribution to emissions and congestion reduction you think that e-scooters could make. Do you think there is enough evidence in that area to demonstrate that?

Rachel Lee: In terms of contribution to climate change, if we see more space allocated to the use of micromobility you might get a reduction. Obviously, the more attractive it becomes to use a mode like that, the more efficient the gains will be. Walking and cycling are obviously zero emission and much more sensible in terms of tackling climate change. We have covered things like the maintenance. There is a carbon cost to the batteries at the moment in manufacture.

It depends on the quality of the e-scooters that we use. At the moment I cannot see them contributing that much. It could even be a cost to the environment. In terms of active travel, even electrically assisted bicycles will have a better contribution. At least people will invest in and keep them over a longer period. They will still cycle on them and use the power when they need to rather than all the time. Yes; it is mixed, I think.

Q51 Sam Tarry: That is very helpful. You are thinking that, perhaps, because you are not actively moving any of the vehicles yourself, it is going to be nowhere near as good in active travel and keeping people fit and healthy as a bike or even an electrically assisted bike.

Rachel Lee: Yes. I do not think it has any benefits in being active. In some ways it could be a disbenefit. We have already heard that the people most likely to use it are younger people who, if anything, are the ones we want to keep active for as long as possible. We spend all day sitting down as it is, so we need to have room to be active in our lifestyle for as long as possible.

Q52 Sam Tarry: Lorna from the AA, do you want to comment on any of your evidence about whether it contributes to any carbon reduction on any significant scale?



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Lorna Lee: We have not looked at it. At the moment it seems that there is more potential if they were to be able to be safely used and if legislation was robust and in place to mitigate some of the issues that everybody has raised. Then we believe that there is potential that they could have a positive impact on congestion and particularly emissions in the urban environment.

Chair: As we know, with every new initiative on our streets we tend to get more clutter added to it. I want to ask Grahame Morris to take that forward.

Q53 **Grahame Morris:** I particularly want to ask Ellie, to begin with, and then maybe Rachel, if she has some views.

You might be aware that the Transport Committee produced quite a hard-hitting report with some particular recommendations about pavement parking. Indeed, your organisations very much informed the views of the Committee. I wondered about your views in relation to the impact of e-scooters, particularly given that the Government are going to go for rental scooters rather than privately owned scooters, on the potential increase for street clutter.

First, Ellie, could you give me your views on how you think this may be prevented or mitigated?

Eleanor Southwood: This is a considerable concern we have. We saw with some of the dockless e-bike schemes that our community is significantly affected by the bikes when they are left, often strewn across the pavement in a not very helpful way. What we would like to see is designated parking bays on the road for e-scooters and that there is a physical kerb between the pavement and those parking bays.

Those calls will be familiar to those of you who have followed the shared space discussions over the years, which are now paused and well documented as being really difficult areas for blind and partially sighted people, as well as lots of other people. We would want to see the same sorts of things, such as physical kerbs and segregated areas. Obviously in the street environment it would mean them being on the road. That is what we would really want to see; otherwise they do contribute to clutter. There is enough clutter.

Interestingly, you bring up pavement parking, which remains an issue. That feels like a basic issue that is still a huge problem. Luckily, it is not in London, where it is illegal, but if we are looking at priorities and other things that are ready to go and implement, then that ban on pavement parking would be top of our list in terms of streetscape rather than the bringing in of e-scooters.

Q54 **Grahame Morris:** Have you given any consideration to whether the Government should place limits on the numbers of rental e-scooter operators or, indeed, the number of e-scooter vehicles per operator? In your opinion, would that have any impact on the amount of clutter rather



than having operators with huge numbers of units? Would smaller numbers be beneficial?

Eleanor Southwood: I think it could help. From the point of view of a pedestrian or somebody who is just walking along a street, you only need to fall over one. I can see that our community will probably be a bit sceptical about that, but from an overall perspective, yes, that would be of some help.

Q55 **Grahame Morris:** Rachel, do Living Streets have a particular view on those points?

Rachel Lee: Like the RNIB, we believe that the rental schemes should have parking schemes. They should not be dockless. We are completely against dockless schemes.

They should also be on the carriageway. As soon as you put them on the pavement, people are going to be scooting on to the pavement before they get off them. It is natural, so you are permitting them to scoot on the pavement.

It also needs to be borne in mind that as we reopen bars and cafes, and people are eating and drinking outside, there is already the potential for street clutter. The Government are advising businesses to use car parks and terraces, if they have them. If they do not, then we have recommended that local authorities allow the use of parking spaces for eating and drinking.

We are coming back to reallocating road space. We have a finite amount of space in which we are meant to be doing all these things, whether it is moving, eating, drinking or walking. How do we fit it all together? Pavement parking is absolutely an issue that we have not yet dealt with. Let us try to manage what we can without introducing new problems. Keeping the scooter in the carriageway seems absolutely essential to me.

Chair: I want to touch on one aspect before I hand over to Ruth Cadbury.

Ellie and Rachel, to come back to you, the Boris Bike scheme was placed in areas such as Whitehall Gardens, just off Northumberland Avenue. The entire bike strip is right across the entrance to that park, which is a pain for anyone, but if you have sight or mobility issues it is more than a pain. Do you expect to be involved in the street design for this system? Were you involved in the street design of where to put the Boris bikes?

Eleanor Southwood: I cannot comment on our involvement when the Santander bikes were developed. However, I do think this is a really important issue. It is going back to comments around the guidance for local authorities on how disabled people will be involved in the trials, and in the evaluation of the trials.



As you say, some of the docking stations are not in the most convenient places. Therefore, we would absolutely expect the guidance to help clarify how local authorities can involve disabled people, what will be expected of them in involving disabled people and how they will then measure and evaluate the impact of the trial on those groups, who are already experiencing high levels of street clutter.

Q56 **Chair:** Rachel, do you have anything to add on that point?

Rachel Lee: I would like to remind everyone that we also have local cycling and walking infrastructure plans being developed. We are bringing another level of complexity into a local transportation system. One of the problems with doing it so quickly is that it is hard to join it up to things like the LCWIPs, doing proper impact assessments, thinking about where bus routes are running and where movements are being shifted around for vehicular traffic in road space reallocation.

Obviously, we have street closures as well to allow for better pedestrian movement. It is essential that it is done in as joined-up a way as possible, but it is difficult to do that quickly. That would be my note of caution really. You are asking local authorities that are already understaffed and under pressure to try to think about all these things in advance, and they are not going to be able to, so there are going to be mistakes and problems. How we mitigate that is a good question.

Q57 **Ruth Cadbury:** The current consultation announced yesterday and the pilots to start on Saturday propose some regulatory changes that apply to e-scooters but not to parking and street clutter that Eleanor in particular was covering, nor on the longevity of scooters. I think 12 weeks has been mentioned.

Do you have comments on that, Eleanor and Rachel? Should there be regulation of street clutter? Phillip, should there be regulation on the robustness of the e-scooters themselves?

Eleanor Southwood: I think it would be very helpful to give clearer guidance certainly to local authorities. This is a really tricky one because every locality is different, and regulating and prescribing how this should be done, particularly around issues like parking, is incredibly challenging. I appreciate that there is a reluctance to do that, but I do think local authorities would appreciate clearer guidance. Removing parking bays in a local context is never an easy thing to do.

What we have agreed on as a panel is that that might be what is required in reallocating road space and so on. I think some assistance to local authorities in having those discussions locally and making clear what the overall desire is around active travel and safety for e-scooters would be really helpful.

I appreciate that regulation is difficult and local circumstances are different, but from what I have seen so far I do not think it gives local authorities anywhere near what they need. As one of the other panellists



said, it is a lot to ask in the context of local authorities, who are frankly really struggling at the moment and doing lots to put in physical distancing measures and so on. It is taking a huge amount of energy and capacity in the context of the wider funding challenges that they already have.

Q58 Ruth Cadbury: Rachel, do you have any comments about how you regulate the use of these rental schemes and cluttering the pavements or parking bays and so on?

Rachel Lee: I do not know that regulation is necessary. The Government have issued a set of guidelines and will approve schemes. If the guidelines state very clearly that you are not allowed to have e-scooters parked on the pavement, then that would be a requirement of any agreement between the council and the operator.

Similarly, if you say that no dockless schemes are allowed, that would be the parameter for any pilot that is run. I think that the Government can do a lot of this without actually needing regulation.

Q59 Ruth Cadbury: Phillip Darnton, very briefly, could the regulations be extended as one of our previous witnesses, Dr Sherriff, said? Do you have any view on manufacturers and retailers in terms of the quality of the build and longevity of these e-scooters?

Phillip Darnton: The problem is that at the moment scooters are selling at the rate of about 1,600 a week to people who should know that they are illegal. That means there are more than 200,000 scooters already in existence. Scooters are produced in China to specifications that satisfy the whole of their world market. I think it becomes very difficult to try to introduce a standard that is substantially different from that which is deemed to be acceptable across the whole of the world market.

That is partly because the limits that a manufacturer has in, for example, making the wheels bigger, the running board longer or shorter, or the brakes more powerful or more effective, are all really designed around commercial reality, as they would claim it, and these are made by toy manufacturers. Once you start making things to a different quality and a different standard, they would have to be made by bike manufacturers in China, which would in turn increase the cost, whether to buy or to the rental company buying in bulk. That would decrease the commercial attractiveness of e-scooters in the first place. Remember that dockless bikes disappeared simply because they did not make commercial sense, regardless of whether people wanted them. That risk exists with this. If, in fact, the commercial providers find that they are not making any money out of it, e-scooters will go away.

Chair: That concludes our evidence session. I thank Rachel, Ellie, Phillip and Lorna very much indeed for all of the evidence you have given. It is not easy having four witnesses, for each of you, but you have given us such forceful evidence. We are very grateful; it has covered our brief. We



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will conclude our inquiry in July, so we will look forward to getting our report out. Thank you very much indeed.