



Transport Committee

Oral evidence: e-scooters, HC 255

Wednesday 15 July 2020

Ordered by the House of Commons to be published on 15 July 2020.

[Watch the meeting](#)

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

Questions 60 - 147

Witnesses

I: Alan Clarke, Director of Policy, UK, Ireland & Nordics, Lime; Emma Silver, Head of Public Policy for Northern Europe & Asia Pacific, Bird; and Richard Corbett, Regional General Manager, UK, Ireland & Benelux, Voi.

II: Rachel Maclean MP, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State; and Anthony Ferguson, Deputy Director, Traffic and Technology, Department for Transport.

Written evidence from witnesses:

- [Lime](#)
- [Bird](#)
- [Department for Transport](#)



Examination of witnesses

Witnesses: Alan Clarke, Emma Silver and Richard Corbett.

Q60 **Chair:** This is the Transport Committee's final evidence session of our e-scooter inquiry. I ask our witnesses to introduce themselves.

Emma Silver: I am the head of public policy for Northern Europe at Bird, an electric scooter sharing company.

Alan Clarke: I am director of policy for Lime in the UK, Ireland and Nordics. We are one of the world's largest e-scooter operators. We have operated a shared e-bike service in the UK since 2018.

Richard Corbett: Thank you for the invitation. I am the regional general manager for Voi electric scooters in the UK, Ireland and the Benelux. We are one of Europe's leading e-scooter providers, and I am really proud to be here.

Q61 **Chair:** Good morning, and thank you to all three of you for being with us. We are particularly keen to get your experience and views. The UK is one of the last European countries to roll out e-scooters so the comparisons will be really helpful for our inquiry.

I will put this to Emma first and then take each of you in turn. What are your views on the Government's framework for the rental e-scooter trial schemes? Are you planning to participate in the trials? If so, when and where?

Emma Silver: Absolutely. We are planning on participating in the trials. We are really pleased that the Government have decided to bring forward these trials and to open them up to many more cities than was originally planned.

In terms of the Government framework, you will know that there was a very short consultation around the trials, which Bird and other operators submitted their responses to.

Two key factors have come out of the framework of the trials that will be problematic in the long term for legislation, but broadly speaking we are supportive of the approach.

The two problems that will be problematic in the long term are on the requirement for a driver's licence or a provisional driver's licence to be held by the user or rider of the electric scooter. The second is the requirement for motor insurance.

Both those things put electric scooters out of step with electric bikes. Due to the similarities between electric bikes and electric scooters, we would like these two requirements to be dropped from the electric scooter legislation. However, we do understand that bringing forward trials quickly has meant the trade-off of keeping those requirements for now.



HOUSE OF COMMONS

As an operator we are able to meet those requirements for now. We hope that, to encourage the uptake of electric scooters in the long term, those two requirements will not make it into the primary legislation.

Q62 **Chair:** Thank you, Emma. Alan, do you concur with much of that, or do you have differing views?

Alan Clarke: I echo much of Emma's comments about that. We operate in 125 cities around the world, from Seoul in South Korea to Milton Keynes to Copenhagen to Paris.

The UK is now in a really strong position because we have taken a little longer to reach the point of legalising scooters. That allows us to learn from the best practice in lots of different cities around the world. The UK's framework for trials reflects much of the best thinking and the best practice out there.

We agree with the specific points Emma raised about the driving licence. We already operate a shared e-bike service in the UK, in London and Milton Keynes. For us, the driving licence requirement is part of an issue. We would like someone to be able to download our app to use either an e-bike or an e-scooter, and have the choice to use the other mode as well.

A driving licence requirement for e-scooters makes that a different experience for the user and might discourage people from using both services. That might drive down usage of e-scooters, but if people cannot sign up to using an e-scooter it might harm the number of people wanting to use an e-bike.

We think that the framework is good and is the right step. We are delighted that the Government have done this. We can certainly work within that for the trial period, but longer term those are some of the areas where we might like to see some changes. At the moment we are in discussions with local authorities in the UK about participating in trials. We certainly look forward to people being able to use our service soon.

Q63 **Chair:** Thank you, Alan. I put the same point to Richard.

Richard Corbett: It is hard to better some of those responses. We agree with both Lime and Bird on this. This is a process that I started two and a half years ago, when I was the head of Bird in the UK and Ireland. To be where we are today is a fantastic milestone in British transport. It is certainly something that personally I have been working towards for some time now.

The regulatory framework is as good as we can get it, given the limited time the Government had to make this happen. What the UK Government have done is nothing short of a miracle—to go from a standing start in May effectively to the launch happening this week. I commend the Government for all the work they have done and all the resources they have thrown at this.



HOUSE OF COMMONS

Voi is 100% interested and keen to be the leading operator of e-scooter services in the UK. We are working with a number of cities across the UK on launching that bid.

To echo the points raised by the other guys, this is all about sustainability, improving air quality and taking cars off the road. If we are introducing the need to have a vehicle driving licence to use it, it seems counterintuitive, but it makes sense that this is the approach that has been taken given the limited time we have available.

Q64 Chair: All three of you have touched on discussions with local authorities. It is for local authorities to come forward. In reality, is it your organisations that prod them into action, or do they come to you?

Richard Corbett: We are invited by the cities to participate in the release of information. There are requests for information. That is usually the first step by the city, where they ask operators to come forward to say whether they are interested, and to share a bit of information. That information is then used essentially to inform the local authority what the appropriate framework is for a tender process. In the following couple of days or weeks a tender process and an invitation to tender is released.

So far, just a little over 10 cities in the UK have started their tender processes. We are practically involved in every single one of them.

Chair: Emma touched on the issue of licences and insurance. I am going to move on to Karl McCartney, who is going to probe further on those points.

Q65 Karl McCartney: I will come to Emma first, because I think you did more than touch on those two issues. You managed to answer questions two and three in our brief, which was quite entertaining. I am going to scrap those two questions and delve a little bit deeper into that issue of both the driving licence requirement and insurance on the road.

It is great that all three of you are positive about the opportunities. Do you agree that anybody who uses an e-scooter on the road needs to have road sense? In your opinion, who would be liable if a scooter user caused an accident, whether that is between a Ferrari and a Lamborghini or a Ford Focus and an Audi A3? Regardless of who might get injured, who is going to pay for the damage that an e-scooter user might cause?

Emma Silver: First, to take the point on licences, the concern is around the driving licence limiting the uptake of these types of vehicles. For example, statistics show that black and Asian people are much less likely to hold a licence. Younger riders and potentially those under the age of 13 are again less likely to hold a licence. Women are less likely to hold a licence. We do not want to introduce those barriers—

Q66 Karl McCartney: If I may interrupt you there, would you want people who do not have any road sense or experience of being on a road on an e-scooter without a driving licence to have the control and use of a



scooter that can go at quite a considerable speed on the road with vehicles?

Emma Silver: There are a number of issues to unpack there. First, of course, having a driving licence or a provisional licence does give you a form of road awareness and road training. However, it is not the only form of education that you can get as a rider of one of these vehicles.

Going back to what I think is a really important principle, we would like to see electric scooters have parity with electric bikes due to the similarities between those vehicles. One of the things that we do, as an operator of shared scooters, is provide a lot of education and training for riders of scooters. That is delivered both in person at community events, in cities where we operate around the world, and in app. When you first download the app, before you take your first ride, you will go through an onboarding as a rider. I am sure that Voi and Lime have similar processes. That training will tell you how to ride responsibly.

It is, of course, important that people do get that training. You made reference to the speed of these vehicles. The legislation that the Government is bringing forward will mean that the maximum speed will be 15.5 mph—the same maximum speed as for electric bikes. You can jump on an electric bike tomorrow without having had the formal training that you would get if you were going to be on a much more high-powered or high-speed vehicle.

I do think that is right. There has to be a balance between whether we are doing things with policy making that could harm the uptake of these vehicles—let us remember that they are much cleaner and greener than alternative forms of transport—and making sure that they are used safely. Of course, that has to be a top priority.

To answer your question, I do believe that there are ways to deliver that education and training for responsible riding and road awareness, as you say, that do not necessarily involve the user or the rider having to have a provisional or a full driver's licence.

Q67 **Karl McCartney:** I get that you are very positive about the environmental benefits of e-scooters, but what about safety and insurance, which you have not answered? Do you think that riders who cause accidents should themselves be liable, or do you think that the industry should be picking up the costs of any repairs to other vehicles that are in an accident with them? Do you think that the insurance industry as a whole should be picking that up? Are you absolving yourselves of that responsibility?

Emma Silver: No. We take full responsibility as an industry for making sure that we have the right protections in place, both public liability insurance and, where appropriate, the correct insurances. The UK Government have said that they want motor insurance as part of these trials. We will deliver that as part of this trial period. Perhaps there



HOUSE OF COMMONS

should be a broader review of whether insurance should be required for electric bikes as well. At the moment it is not, and I believe that is the right position for electric scooters as well.

Q68 Karl McCartney: I am sure you do. Alan, would you like to answer those same questions?

Alan Clarke: I would echo a lot of what Emma has said about the balance between requiring things like insurance for e-bikes and e-scooters and making sure that this is a sustainable transport mode that people can use, and use easily so that it is a genuine alternative to some of the other transport modes—for example, driving a car into a city centre, which, as a society, we are trying to discourage.

At the moment it is very important that we have these other alternative sustainable transport modes while public transport capacity is reduced. Like Bird and like Emma stated, when the trials launch in the UK the first person who steps on to a Lime scooter will be covered by a third-party motor insurance policy. We already have that and are ready to go whenever we participate in the first trial.

In addition, we have recently announced a global partnership with Allianz, a very large insurance company, to try to make sure that we are addressing some of the issues that you are talking about.

One of the other things it is important to remember is that at the moment we are talking about a trial period of 12 months, in which only rental scooters will be legal. Longer term and in most other countries around Europe and the world where we operate, rental scooters and scooters that are owned privately are legal. That raises an interesting question with regard to insurance. If someone owns one privately—and people are already riding these around the streets in the UK illegally with no insurance and no enforcement—and they were legalised in the future, we would need to find a way to make sure, if insurance is the right route that you are suggesting, that people who own private scooters have insurance as well.

That would require a more fundamental look, as Emma was suggesting, at some of the ways we look at risk associated with e-bikes and e-scooters. Longer term, it may require some study, but we have a 12-month period from now until next year to look at this using trial scooters. They will be fully insured. After that, the Government can take a view on the appropriate next steps.

Q69 Karl McCartney: I want to ask a very quick question and have a quick answer. I presume that you have been on an e-scooter. Have you been on the pavements and/or the roads in the UK, and would you feel safe travelling at 15 mph on an e-scooter on some of our roads?

Alan Clarke: I have never ridden an e-scooter in the UK on the roads, the pavement or a cycle lane. I have demonstrated one before on private land, but obviously with the law currently I have not used one on public



HOUSE OF COMMONS

roads. I am, however, a cyclist. I cycle regularly both on my own bike and on the shared e-bikes that we have in London and Milton Keynes. I feel safe where there is good infrastructure to support cycling.

When we are talking about safety, the biggest impact that we can have when we are considering the safety of bikes, e-bikes, walking, e-scooting or anything that is not in a car is the design of our cities. I am sure we will come on to it later, but that is one of the reasons why, for example, we share lots of data with cities where we operate that can help enhance decision making about where to put a segregated cycle lane, for example. Anyone who has cycled in London knows that that is the way people feel safest and are safest. We want to try to push that forward, but it will happen only if more people are using e-scooters, bikes and e-bikes, and fewer people are driving.

Q70 Karl McCartney: Richard, coming to you last again, I do not know whether you have anything to add on my earlier questions. Maybe you want to tell us a little about your personal experience if you have been on an e-scooter and where and when. I am not asking whether you have broken the law in this country. I am fine with wherever you have been on one.

Richard Corbett: I have never broken the law in my life. It is a good question. My approach is very different from the American players you have just listened to. At Voi we take full responsibility for the rider. As such we are really proud to give more than just the basic third-party cover. We at Voi are pledging full comprehensive cover for every single rider that uses our scooter. They are covered for personal injury in addition to the third party.

To answer your question, yes, if a scooter got into an accident and it was the fault of the rider, we would cover that. We are taking responsibility. This is a new product for the UK and we at Voi, as the biggest European player, are here to help the Government and the public get through this, to make sure this is a seamless transition into what is going to be one of the best things to happen to UK transport in 100 years.

On the driving side, we of course have an obligation to educate riders. I do not agree with our US players that we should align with e-bikes. No; I think we should raise the bar a little bit. This is our opportunity to raise the bar on road safety. We at Voi also pledge over £1 million to educate riders in the UK over the course of the trial. We have an accredited e-scooter driving school. We launched the first global e-scooter driving school, and as of last week we had already passed 400,000 riders. We will continue to do that. We have already invested £1.5 million into getting riders on to the driving school. Of course, that is through incentives so that people get discounts in return for doing the driving test. It is also the manpower and female power to get that service out to the masses.



HOUSE OF COMMONS

We have a very different approach to the American players. We will invest into the driving school. We will educate the riders. We will insure them above and beyond the basic Government requirements.

What I would also say is that I think this is a two-way process. We need to learn from the experience. We have to share the data with the cities and the Government. This is a huge change in the way people travel. We cannot go through this process with a hands-off approach and say, "Well, let us just align with bikes." I do not think that is acceptable. We are certainly not going to do that. We are here to support the Government and cities to make this a safe transition.

Q71 **Karl McCartney:** Richard, that was extremely helpful and very illuminating. Thank you very much for that.

Chairman, before I hand back to you I would like quickly to go back to Emma. Do you have experience of riding an e-scooter either on private lane, or pavements or roads, in other countries or anywhere else? Would you tell us quickly what your answer is?

Emma Silver: Before I answer that, I would like to correct a point Richard has made. We do offer that rider insurance in other territories at the moment. We are waiting to see what will be required in the UK and we are working closely with cities, as I said in my previous answer, to make sure that we meet the requirements that they want as part of these trials, as well as the national Government requirements.

Bird has operated in the UK for the last 18 months on a small parcel of private lane in the Queen Elizabeth Olympic park. Mr McCartney, you are welcome to come down, as is the rest of the Committee.

Q72 **Karl McCartney:** I was waiting for that invitation from any or all three of you. Thank you very much indeed; it is a date.

Emma Silver: Yes. We do not recommend riding on the pavement. We do not think that that is safe. Of course, we expect the trials being brought forward, and the full legislation, will say that riding on the road and in cycle lanes is the right place for where these vehicles should be.

Karl McCartney: Super. Thank you all very much for that. I will hand back to you, Chair. Obviously, I am sure you will want to be the first to have a go on an e-scooter.

Chair: I would prefer to watch you have a go, actually. One of the witness organisations did indeed invite us to trial e-scooters on the parliamentary estate, which of course is private, but the pandemic put paid to that. Thank you for the offer.

Karl McCartney: But the offer is there.

Chair: Indeed. We will now move on to scooter design and safety.

Q73 **Gavin Newlands:** There has certainly been some controversy around both the Government's proposed speed, with a limit of 15.5 mph, and the



power limit of 500 W. How do these speeds and power limits compare with those in other countries in which you operate? What speed and power do the e-scooters operate at that you are providing in the UK?

Richard Corbett: Across Europe and North America we are seeing a range of 12.5 mph to 15.5 mph. Where we find it works best is where we are able to alternate between the different speeds. In some circumstances 15.5 mph is the best speed to go at because, as Emma quite rightly pointed out, it is the average speed of a bike, and you do need momentum and movement to stay safe on the road. You cannot be slow on the road; otherwise you become a hazard if you are too slow. So, having a decent amount of power for the rider to be able to get out of situations of trouble and to be able to keep movement is very important.

Having that as an upper limit does not mean that that is by any means the average speed. That is not what we are saying. Of course, the rider can, using the throttle, ride slower. If you imagine the upper speed as the average speed of a bike, we are not the fastest objects in the micro-mobility lanes, or the cycle lanes. Certainly, we will see bikes going a lot faster than us.

Unlike an e-bike, our upper limit speed is the fastest you can go. Obviously on an e-bike, that is an assisted speed so you can go considerably faster, but you have to assist with your own pedalling. This is an upper limit that we are talking about.

Having that as a benchmark where we can go anything up to that is really helpful, because in cities we can go below that in areas where there are, for example, high footfall or busier areas, or throttle it all the way down if we are going into areas that we just do not want to access, such as no-ride zones and pedestrian areas.

Q74 **Gavin Newlands:** What speed and power do your units operate at?

Richard Corbett: We have a max power of 500 W, a continuous rate of power of 350 W and a maximum speed of 15.5 mph. All of this can be controlled through the software. We can actually throttle through software the upper limits of the power output.

Alan Clarke: I would echo much of what Richard has said. Across the territories where we operate there is a variety of different rules. For us, we very much see this as being a top speed and an upper limit. In most cities around the UK we would seek to work very closely with the local authority, city council and even things like local disability organisations and local groups to identify parts of the city where it was appropriate to have a higher top speed. If you are on a segregated cycle lane that is very straight and there is a lot of room, maybe it is appropriate to have the higher top speed, but then in lots of parts of the cities we completely understand and think that a lower top speed is probably more appropriate.



What we do is get a map of the city, and we will draw on areas that the GPS sensor on our scooter will sense when you go to those areas, and your speed will automatically lower. For us it is a key safety feature. We will work very closely with local authorities to identify where these zones should go and make sure that that is how we can ensure that the speed is always appropriate for the road conditions and the space.

Q75 Gavin Newlands: What is your maximum power?

Alan Clarke: It is a similar thing to Richard. It can all be altered by software. In the UK it would be at 350 W and 15.5 mph, but in the Nordic countries, which have a slightly lower limit, we can alter the software to make sure that we are always adhering to the legislation.

Emma Silver: The power output is similar to what Richard and Alan outlined. An important thing to note about the importance of the power output is that a rider trying to go uphill needs additional power. Power is not just about speed; it is about terrain that the user is riding on.

There is a variety of maximum speeds across Europe, but in the national legislation across Europe 15.5 mph is roughly what most Governments have gone for. It is at the city level that cities have chosen to put local limits in at perhaps a lower level.

I do think that is the right approach, to give that flexibility. You do not necessarily want a one-size-fits-all approach. It would be odd to introduce a big disparity between different types of vehicle, as I mentioned before— between scooters and bikes. I do think 15.5 mph is the right limit for the Government to set. As with cars, you can set local limits at city level.

Q76 Gavin Newlands: Emma, I will stay with you for this question. In evidence, you told us that e-scooters should not weigh more than 35 kg. Were you surprised that the Government announced a weight of 45 kg?

Emma Silver: No. I do not think that is enormously problematic. Our recommendations are based on the weight of the vehicles that we use globally; an additional 10 kg is not a problem. Actually, it gives the ability for more innovation in the future, with potentially new vehicle designs. The Government has a duty to make sure that any legislation is future-proofed. I do not think that is a very important difference. I am happy to accept that increased weight limit.

Q77 Gavin Newlands: In terms of health and safety, do you all provide helmets as part of the e-scooter rental schemes? Do you plan to do so for the year-long trial? What kind of training, if any, do you provide to users of your rental e-scooters?

Alan Clarke: That is a really important question. Of course, as we said before, this is a new product. This is going to be a new experience for lots of people in the UK. We take the idea of training and of safety incredibly seriously.



HOUSE OF COMMONS

One of the things we are committed to doing in every UK city where we operate—and if we are selected to carry out a trial—is to run in-person training days at the launch of the trial. This gives people the opportunity to try out a scooter in a more controlled environment than going straight out on to the road. If they feel more comfortable doing that, it can be a great way for them to gain their confidence.

We also know, from experience of operating right across the world for a number of years, that if people have issues riding a scooter it happens in the first few journeys when they are unfamiliar with it. These in-person training events will run at the start of trials and are a really important part of giving people the option. If they want to come for training, there is the option.

We do have mandatory training on our app when people sign up. They get information about, for example, the specific laws in the UK. We will be reminding people very clearly that it is illegal to ride on the pavement.

In addition, we have a full safety portal within our app and online where we offer people discounted helmets. People can buy a helmet from us at substantially below the market rate that we have sourced in partnership with helmet manufacturers. We will also give away helmets at training events early on in the trial.

We encourage people to wear helmets. We think that is the right thing to do if you are riding on an e-scooter, but we are looking to balance the safety element with allowing people to make sure they can use an e-scooter rather than another form of harmful transport like a car.

We are going to do everything we can to encourage people to wear helmets. We will give them reduced-cost helmets but also educate them on the safest possible way to use an e-scooter. That is how we think you are going to get high levels of safety.

Q78 **Gavin Newlands:** Would you view it as an issue if helmet wear and use were to be made compulsory?

Alan Clarke: Yes. This has been looked at in Holland, but the UK Government have looked at this very recently with regard to bikes and e-bikes. The issue is always that by making helmets compulsory you vastly reduce the usage of whatever transport mode you are requiring a helmet for.

The key issue that is facing our cities at the moment is that we are going to have a serious air quality crisis in the next couple of years. We already have one in many cities around the UK. We have a problem that is only getting worse with regard to emissions causing climate change. We need to reduce the number of people driving. To do that, we have to give people easy access to things like e-scooters and e-bikes. A study carried out in Paris last year showed that, when people were asked if they were



HOUSE OF COMMONS

required or forced to wear a helmet to ride an e-scooter, about 70% said they would ride one much less.

That type of impact would be a negative outcome for cities. It is one of the reasons we think we should encourage, absolutely, and make it affordable and easy for people to wear helmets—remind people all the time—but compulsory is probably a step too far.

Emma Silver: I would echo pretty much everything that Alan has said. We have given away, as Bird, over 70,000 helmets at global safety and rider education events. We will continue to do that. We are also looking at new innovations such as foldable helmets that can be attached to the vehicle, although of course there is a problem with shared scooters about the helmet then becoming separated from the vehicle. We are looking at ways to do more to encourage our riders to use helmets wherever possible.

I absolutely agree with Alan that they should not be mandatory. The global cycling lobby has been saying over a number of years that helmets should be strongly encouraged but mandatory use of helmets could actually decrease cycling rates. I believe the same would apply to e-scooters.

Q79 **Gavin Newlands:** Do you provide any training?

Emma Silver: Yes. We provide in-app and in-person training at community events around the world. Typically, we would do that at the point that we launch in a new city. We would do that on an ongoing basis.

Q80 **Gavin Newlands:** But not at the point of rental?

Emma Silver: Yes. At the point of rental you are renting the scooter with your smartphone, so you get the in-app training at the point of rental. You also have the option to go to an in-person event in that city.

Richard Corbett: The same as Lime and Bird, we give free helmets away. One of the things we do to make it very easy to access helmets is that in the cities in which we operate we work with local partners. For example, in Paris we work with La Poste—the equivalent to Royal Mail—and there are six La Poste locations across Paris. A rider on the Voi app can go to any of these locations to pick up a helmet at any time for free.

In addition, we have a subscription model at Voi, where you can have a monthly pass. For £40 a month you can have unlimited travel on a Voi scooter. You can also get a free helmet on the subscription model.

I agree with the other people speaking on the call today. I do not think it should be mandated. Again, to echo the point previously made, there is a climate crisis. Over 50% of all NO_x comes from road transport. We need to give people a compelling alternative to travelling by car. If we look at some of the stats, 60% of journeys are less than 5 km. These are perfect scootable distances. If we want to get people out of cars and into



HOUSE OF COMMONS

something different, if we are introducing more friction into the process, we are not going to see that noticeable impact on climate change. We are not going to see that modal shift. Having said that, we should give people the option if they want it. If they want to ride safely, we are here to give them the helmets.

It is not just about helmets. As everyone mentioned, it is education. We launched the first e-scooter training school. We have spent £1.5 million so far on that. We have trained 400,000 riders. We have pledged to spend another £1 million in the UK to educate riders in the UK.

On insurance, again it is around health and safety. We provide fully comprehensive cover. We ensure that we screen riders prior to access. We actually screen the driving licences, which was not mandated by the Department for Transport. We also invest in awareness and advertising campaigns to encourage people to ride smartly and safely.

Q81 **Gavin Newlands:** I am conscious of time. I will ask two more quick questions. Can I get yes or no answers?

There is some concern about e-scooters being quiet and posing a risk to the blind and partially sighted. Yes or no: are the units that you provide fitted with a bell or a way to make an audible noise or audible warning sound?

Emma Silver: Yes.

Alan Clarke: Yes, and, if I could add one thing very quickly to that, we also have a technology that allows us to know if someone is riding on the pavement. If someone repeatedly rides on the pavement, which is where a lot of this concern would come from—other pavement users—we have technology that senses that in the scooter and relays it to us. We then remind them of the law. If they break that law repeatedly, we can remove their access to the app. Sorry for the additional answer.

Q82 **Gavin Newlands:** That is okay. You will make a fine politician if that is a yes or no answer. Richard?

Richard Corbett: Yes, and we do the same as Lime.

Q83 **Gavin Newlands:** My last question is: we have been given evidence that three-wheel scooters are more stable in design than the two-wheel inline model that has been approved. Have the Government made a mistake in not allowing the three-wheel model to be part of this pilot? Again, please be very brief with your answers.

Emma Silver: I do not have a view on whether the three-wheeler option should have been included. We only provide vehicles with two wheels.

Alan Clarke: The same for us. The stability of the new range of scooters coming out now with large wheels and mountain bike suspension is very good. I do not have a view on three-wheelers.



Richard Corbett: We are trialling a three-wheeler model. Just like the other points made, it is the same stability, in effect. Bikes with three wheels would be more stable, but we are not moving to that. With hydraulic suspension, bigger wheels, et cetera, we are getting to a point where it is unnoticeable.

Gavin Newlands: Thank you very much.

Q84 **Ruth Cadbury:** I have a quick question about power levels, which links to Karl's and other people's concerns about safety. Does a higher power vehicle mean it accelerates faster, because that is a concern, as well as the top speed?

Emma Silver: A higher power level, as I mentioned before, is useful for difficult terrains such as moving up hills. It can also increase the acceleration of the vehicle. However, we have protections in place to adapt that if necessary. We have something called "warm-up" mode, which new users of scooters can switch on. That will limit the acceleration of the vehicle so that it is much gentler for those who are less-experienced riders.

Alan Clarke: The only consideration with power is the topography of cities. With somewhere like Bath, Bristol or Sheffield, for example, a higher power may be required because of the hills. With somewhere like London, which is flatter, the requirement is clearly much less.

Richard Corbett: To echo the point, power does not necessarily mean faster acceleration at all. It provides more torque, so it is more responsive. Topography has been mentioned. If you are going up a hill, you are not going to lose that performance. The weight of the individual has a huge impact on the performance of the scooter. Someone as heavy as me will not be as quick as someone as light as you, Ruth. To ensure there is that consistency in user experience, that power will be able to have a consistent performance across the board. The most important thing is ensuring that the capped speed is at 15 mph. That is the most important data point rather than the power.

Q85 **Lilian Greenwood:** Are there any key differences—wheel size or positioning—in the designs of your three scooters? I seem to remember another scooter provider said that their design meant that you stood with your feet side by side rather than one behind the other, and that was more stable. Are they all exactly the same?

Richard Corbett: A good question. They are fundamentally different. When someone refers to two feet going next to each other, it is usually because there is a wider footplate. In essence, having worked at Bird for two years and having worked at Voi for a couple of months, I know that our scooters, in terms of foot size, can be next to each other or inline.

It depends on where the brake position is as well. It also depends if you want to have your feet not next to each other but front and back. For example, if you have a rear mudguard brake, you will want one of your



HOUSE OF COMMONS

feet to be accessing that as well. Having them side by side is not where you want to be on that model of scooter.

There are a number of differences with our scooter. As an example, our scooter is the only one out of everyone's that has gone through a life-cycle analysis. We have been audited by Ernst & Young. They have reviewed our scooter to ensure that it has a two year-plus lifespan and that it is over 90% recyclable.

We also use swappable batteries. We are fundamentally different from some of the other operators. Some of the operators on the call do have them, but not all operators have them. We were the first to do swappable batteries, which means you do not have to take the scooter off the road. You can just have an e-cargobike swapping out those batteries. That is a fundamental difference. It impacts the carbon footprint of the scooter, so we are an emission-free and carbon-neutral operator, thanks to things like swappable.

We have double hydraulic suspension, a bit like Lime does. That means that potholes are no longer an issue. Those with fixed suspension have significant issues. It is something that needs to be addressed.

We have dual kick stands, which is very important. Again, most scooters have a single kick stand. Where that becomes more important is when you see things blowing over. A double kick stand is very important to enforce.

We have three brakes. We have the front and rear brakes, which are mechanical using drum brakes. In addition, we have electrical brakes. Again, they are very safe.

We have a beacon on the scooter, which has a light on the top that glows at night. This is to show that the scooter is available but also provides a light source that the visually impaired can see as well. That helps with building awareness. So there are fundamental differences between the scooters.

Q86 Lilian Greenwood: I am sure that Alan and Emma are going to want to pitch for why their scooters are better. Is there anything briefly to add, Alan, about Lime scooters?

Alan Clarke: The only thing I would say on this is that the scooters are slightly different, although on the Committee today you have three of the most experienced companies out there giving evidence. Lots of us have all gone through different versions of our scooter over time to reach where we are now.

Some of the other companies out there in the world are much further back in the process, so there is a difference between scooter companies and the scooters that we all use. The really important thing for the cities in the UK looking at trials is to prioritise working with the most experienced operators who have gone through the process of fully



HOUSE OF COMMONS

designing a scooter purely for use in shared schemes, rather than, for example, taking a scooter that is intended for private use and just putting it out on the street with a sticker on it.

One of the biggest impacts of the process we have been through has been improving the lifespan of the scooter—how long it lasts. It is also making sure, for example, that, if one component of the scooter gets broken or degrades over time, we can just replace that one piece of the scooter. That means when a scooter is nearing the end of its natural lifecycle we can use the workable parts, store them and put them back on to new scooters.

That makes the whole industry and the whole business that we operate far more sustainable. It is really important that these are the questions that local authorities around the UK that want to participate in trials should be asking operators for evidence of.

Emma Silver: I will save the full pitch for when you come down to try one out. Ruggedised scooters that are bespoke designed by companies like Bird, Voi and Lime for the shared market are very different from the consumer grade vehicles you will see out there. They are much more resilient. We have done a lot to improve the battery life of the vehicle so that the battery lasts much longer between charges and can travel much longer distances between charges. We have also done a lot more to make the vehicles tamper proof so that that can prevent vandalism. That can be a problem for some of the shared vehicles, as we saw with dockless bikes. The security of the vehicle is a really important factor, as well as the safety of the rider. These vehicles are very different from the consumer grade vehicles that you tend to see.

Q87 Lilian Greenwood: Very briefly, each of you, where are your scooters manufactured?

Emma Silver: Our scooters are manufactured mostly in China, with some assembly in Europe.

Alan Clarke: That is similar for us: mostly in China, but we have assembly plants and then individual centres in each country where we put the scooters together, and also do the repairs and recycling.

Richard Corbett: Designed in Sweden and made in China.

Chair: Tempting as it is to turn this session into “pimp my e-scooter”, we are going to move on to enforcement with Grahame Morris.

Q88 Grahame Morris: Alan, you did touch on this issue in one of your earlier answers. The Committee is particularly concerned about looking after the interests of people with disabilities. You may have read our report about pavement parking. You mentioned the use of the app technology to monitor retrospectively users transgressing the rules and riding on the pavement.



HOUSE OF COMMONS

Is it possible to use that technology to prevent people who hire them from riding them on the pavement rather than retrospectively? In your answer will you say something about the development of the software? I do not really understand what geofencing is, but if you explained that it would be helpful.

Alan Clarke: This an absolutely key question for any trial in the UK. All trials and all operators need to make certain that the trials are workable, usable and really well liked by people who want to use e-scooters. Crucially, we have to work closely with local authorities, with the police and with disability groups and organisations to make certain that we are mitigating any potential negative impacts.

We look at that in two main ways, and there are two things to be aware of and two big mitigations that we make. The first is around when scooters are being parked. For example, when we are deploying scooters in the morning for people to hire, or when someone is ending their journey and leaving a scooter on the pavement or in a public area, we need to make certain that that scooter is not going to impede a disabled person, or, in the example you gave, of a potentially blind person.

We use a GPS sensor in the scooter that works exactly the same as a GPS sensor in a phone if you use Google Maps or something similar. It locates where the scooter is and then we can make sure that it can only be locked in a designated area that we have drawn on to a map to quite a high degree of accuracy on the street.

That means that scooters can be parked in areas where there is plenty of space for people to walk, but also we engage very closely with disability organisations. We have already done so here in the UK to discuss best practice for where you put these parking zones. For example, how much space should there be between a parking zone and the start of tactile paving indicating a road crossing?

There is that element to it, which is about where scooters are left and parked. It is really important that we get that right so that parked scooters are not impacting people negatively.

There is also the issue about where scooters are ridden. It is illegal to ride them on the pavement. Like I said, we have the technology that can retrospectively identify when someone has done that. That uses data from the scooter, picked up from the road surface, compared to data from the scooter that is being ridden on the pavement to identify differences. That can then tell us when someone has been riding on the pavement.

At the moment that is retrospective. It is something that we can use as a rider education tool, but in making certain that people are not riding on the pavement it is very important that operators continuously remind people that it is illegal to do so. It is also important that we work really closely with the police and the local authorities to ensure that



HOUSE OF COMMONS

enforcement is happening there and then to stop it. That is something we have done before with great success in cities like Paris, Copenhagen and other places around Europe.

Q89 Grahame Morris: Thank you. I would like to ask Emma if she has anything to add to that. I am particularly interested, if you can use examples from other countries, where it has been effective. Remember that the thrust of my questions is about enforcement.

Alan mentioned local authorities and the police. Emma, do you have a view on who should be enforcing infringements in respect of use on pavements?

Emma Silver: In an ideal world, enforcement would be absolutely minimal because there would be really strong prevention in the first place. That is where we start with all of this, as Alan mentioned. There is geofencing, creating parking zones and clearly indicating and educating riders on where they should end their ride to ensure that the public right of way is kept clear. We absolutely think that that is a top priority. It is about public safety, not just for those with reduced vision or mobility but for everyone in the public space. It is for mums with buggies as well. We do think that is of the utmost importance.

In those rare instances where enforcement will be needed, it is for each local authority to decide how best that is done. What we would like to think, as operators, is that we can move those vehicles before enforcement is required.

I can give you the example of Paris, where they have an app called DansMaRue—in my street—which people already use for a variety of different reports and complaints: everything from potholes to poor parking of electric scooters. We get those notifications directly. The city does not have to step in and say, “Hey, Bird, you have a badly parked vehicle.” We will get that notification and we can send out one of our field team to go and correct that.

In addition, our newest model scooters have onboard sensors. One problem can often be that scooters can be tipped over when they are parked. They can be properly parked and someone knocks them and then they are improperly parked. Again, we will get that automatic notification so that we can go out and make that correction. That is an effort to reduce the requirement for enforcement.

The DansMaRue app works really well in Paris. I know that there is a similar app in the UK. I think it is called FixMyStreet. I wonder whether there is the possibility to use that technology to try to reduce the burden of enforcement on local authorities.

Q90 Grahame Morris: Richard, do you have a contrary view, or do you also believe that technology is part of the enforcement solution? Do you also have a view on whether it should be local government or the police who enforce a breach of the law?



HOUSE OF COMMONS

Richard Corbett: I do agree with the other two statements. We need a proactive approach to be able to prevent people from doing that, whether that is through technology and proximity camera sensors on the scooter, or even GPS. A lot of the GPS, including ours, is 1 metre by 1 metre accuracy. Over time you will start to be able to map cities and streets to know where you are in that space. Then we will be able very quickly to know whether someone is on the path versus on the road.

Technology is getting better and better, and we will over time be able to identify proactively those riders in those areas. We can do anything from warn the rider, cut off their service or just throttle the speed down to zero. There is a number of things that technology can do.

Where people try to break the law, there are ways in which we can stop them. If we know that someone is reported with GPS, we will know who that person was and when they did it. We can enforce that later. If law enforcement gets involved, of course that would be helpful as well. It would add a bit more teeth to what we are trying to do. I think the user needs to be responsible, and they need to be willing to lose their right to use the service.

One of the biggest concerns I have as an operator is private usage—the non-branded scooters that are now starting to be used across the UK. I think the retailers who are selling those know that they are acting against the law, and they need to have an obligation not to sell scooters to private users. We have no influence over those users. We have no data, so those are the ones who will potentially start to muddy the water when operators like Bird, Lime and Voi try to do the best thing to enforce that.

Q91 **Grahame Morris:** Richard, what happens in Sweden? In working with the enforcement authorities, do you share data that you have collected on customers' usage? In the trials, we are talking about rented scooters. Do you share data that might include potential enforcement action with either local government or the police? What happens in Sweden, for example?

Richard Corbett: Across Scandinavia we work hand in glove with the local authorities. We do report abusive riders to the police. We do believe in them taking responsibility. If, for example, there is a fine—one of our riders has been charged for parking in the wrong location—we enforce that and ask the riders to take responsibility. We do not believe in covering it up or covering the cost because that does not solve the problem. We certainly do work with law enforcement.

Echoing what Alan was saying, we also work with a lot of the vulnerable groups across the Nordics. They also help us to understand where we need to be operating. This is not just about riding but about parking. In Oslo, for example, we have a new racking system that has been endorsed by the Norwegian visually impaired association.



HOUSE OF COMMONS

Those are the innovations, technology, investments and infrastructure that we as operators have to be investing in. It is to help guide the user, but it is also important for the cities to help us identify those locations to best allocate electric scooters. It is not just riding; it is also parking. That is something we need to work on together.

Grahame Morris: Thank you very much indeed for your comments.

Chair: We have gone over time and we still have three more sections to go. The Minister is waiting outside, so perhaps I can encourage short answers and not all witnesses to answer them. I will move to Simon Jupp with the street clutter side.

Q92 **Simon Jupp:** Thank you very much for joining us this morning. I am conscious of the time, but I do have concerns about street clutter and e-scooters. For example, when I was wandering home yesterday, I noticed four abandoned bikes—not e-scooters—near where I live. Obviously, that is quite dangerous. We talked about the issue of pavement parking earlier. That can be a really tricky thing for people, particularly for those in wheelchairs and things like that. Street clutter is an issue.

You have all said you plan to operate dockless e-scooters in the UK trials. What is the risk of this creating unnecessary street clutter, as seen in places like Paris, Barcelona, San Antonio and Montreal?

Emma Silver: I do think that dockless micro-mobility—bikes and scooters—has come a long way since the bad old days. There were instances where the industry did get it wrong in the beginning. Both the technology and the operational efficiency of dockless micro-mobility have improved dramatically, particularly in the last 18 months.

I, and some of the other operators here, have made reference to some of the technologies that we use, such as geofencing and dedicated parking. That is on top of the rider education that we do about correct good parking. At Bird, we put a high priority on protecting the public right of way.

There are two important policy issues to separate out here when you are talking about e-scooters. One of them is, do the Government want to legalise e-scooters as a whole? The second is, if we legalise electric scooters and dockless shared schemes come to UK cities, do those local authorities have the right powers to regulate parking and where those vehicles live?

The second one is a question for the Government—whether they have given local authorities good powers to enforce. We, as operators, are certainly doing all that we can on the prevention side so that enforcement is absolutely minimised and the public right of way is kept clear for the public.

Q93 **Simon Jupp:** Staying with you, Emma, because you neatly segued into



HOUSE OF COMMONS

my next question, I want to ask you about your “Save Our Sidewalks” pledge. How successful has that been so far?

Emma Silver: “Save Our Sidewalks” was something from 2018. That pledge has morphed and grown from a one-size-fits-all approach, which we initially used, and now is tailored for each city in which we operate. We have a variety of different ways that we operate that pledge, depending on local needs. Every city is different. Some cities and local authorities have more of a requirement for extra distribution of the vehicles. Some of the cities in which we operate have mandatory use of dedicated parking spaces, so you cannot leave the vehicles anywhere other than in a marked bay.

As I said at the beginning of my first answer, the industry has grown and the way in which dockless has operated has grown. We used to have docking stations for vehicles. That used to be very common in micro-mobility. Dockless is the future, but that does not mean you can just leave the vehicle anywhere. You can create virtual docks and a variety of other mechanisms through the technology to ensure that these vehicles have a home and a place that they live in.

Q94 **Simon Jupp:** Going back to my first question in relation to concerns over street clutter, I will go to Alan first.

Alan Clarke: It is a really important question. We operate in 19 European countries, and in most of those countries people have raised similar questions. We have come up with good answers to them and good policies to reduce these problems.

In the main, our response has been to operate a hybrid system for our service. That essentially means that in the city centres where there is limited space and street clutter is a real problem with people wanting to use narrow pavements, or in areas where there are lots of people walking like train stations around Waterloo in London or wherever it might be, parking zones there make enormous sense. It makes things orderly, it organises the areas where scooters can be left and guarantees no obstruction of the highway.

Outside of that, in suburbs and areas where there is more space, we tend to operate a more free-floating system, simply because education tends to be enough to get people to leave scooters and park them safely and responsibly in a way that does not cause the issues you are talking about. That blend is really important for getting the balance right between making scooters usable and easily findable for people, easily parked and ensuring that there is not clutter in the streets. That is a model we have developed over the last couple of years, and it has been very successful, particularly in European cities.

Richard Corbett: We operate in centralised parking zones, mandatory parking racking and virtual docking. Again, like the other operators, there are many ways that you can encourage riders to park in the right



HOUSE OF COMMONS

location, either through a softer approach where you give discounts for parking in the right location versus, "You cannot end a ride unless you are in an approved zone."

I agree with Alan that, if you put too many restrictions on the rider, they are not going to use the service. If the aim is to get people out of cars and reduce pollution, we need to make it as smooth a transition as possible while providing guidelines that get riders to act in the right way. Certainly, I think it is a two-way process; it is not just from the operators' side.

The cities also have to work with the operators to identify locations in the city that they can allocate to micro-mobility parking, whether that is converting a car-parking space that holds one car into a micro-mobility space that holds 15 scooters. These are the things that operators cannot do alone. It is by collaborating and working in partnership with the city that we can start to get scooters off the pavement and into areas that are not obstructing pedestrians.

Chair: Lilian and Ruth, with huge apologies may I ask you to put your question to one of the witnesses only? I will leave you to select. We will move on to how e-scooters will affect other transport usage.

Q95 Lilian Greenwood: Are people who are using e-scooters getting out of their car, in which case that is great news for improving congestion and air quality, or are they just people who would have walked or perhaps even cycled who are now using a mode of transport that does not require much activity? I will ask Richard, because you operate primarily in Europe, which is a less car-dependent culture than the US. What is your evidence that it takes people out of their cars?

Richard Corbett: We operate in over 40 cities across Europe and are one of the leading players in Europe. What we have seen is that people generally walk no more than 0.5 to 0.6 miles. Beyond that they start to look at alternative forms of transport. When we look at our riders, our average rider is riding between 2 and 3 miles, depending on the city. We do not see a huge move from walking to e-scooters because of the types of distances that we are looking at, and also because of our pricing model. People do not want to pay a £1 unlocking fee to move only 0.5 miles.

We are seeing people pushing themselves to 2 or 3 miles, which again are not the norms for walking distances because of course everyone's day is just squashed so much these days that they are trying to get as much done as possible. No one has the luxury of walking half an hour to an hour. What we do see is between 20% and 30% of our riders coming from cars, which is great. Where we see the delta and we can start to move that up is on critical mass. If you have too few scooters in a city you are not going to be able to give the people enough availability. If they cannot guarantee they can get to work and back from work, then they are not going to leave their car at home or sell their car and move to



scooter services like Voi because they cannot guarantee that the scooter is going to be there for them.

What is really important for us is, wherever we launch and if we want to really drive that modal shift from cars, to increase availability and use the right machine learning to understand where the point of need is and where we need to distribute the scooters most effectively to get people to change how they travel. It is super-important.

Q96 Lilian Greenwood: Obviously there is a potential for them to be particularly useful in less dense suburbs and in market towns, where perhaps the alternatives, particularly public transport, are less readily available. Do you have plans to roll out trial schemes in those areas rather than in city centres, where potentially you would be taking people off public transport?

Richard Corbett: Completely. We are engaged with North Devon, where the biggest city is Barnstable, with 30,000 people. There are many towns with around 10,000 people. There are a number of different ways dockless can really help those cities and not just the big cities. Because it is dockless and there is not a huge cost in infrastructure, you can allocate a proportional number of scooters to address that particular local market's needs. With swappable batteries, you do not need large warehouses to manage this service. It really can work for small market towns in addition to larger cities. Because it is dockless, you can dial up or dial down as demand requires.

Lilian Greenwood: Thank you very much. I am sorry not to be able to ask more.

Q97 Ruth Cadbury: I have two quick questions. What is the average lifespan of your bikes? We hear it is only three months. Do you use vans or eco-vehicles to move the bikes between the docking areas?

Alan Clarke: The average lifespan of our models that are going out now is over two years. In the Nordic countries, where we operate in eight cities, there are scooters out today in places like Stockholm that have been there since November 2018 in constant use, albeit with repairs and maintenance. We are really confident that that is a great lifespan. It shows how far the industry has come over the two and a half years since the figure of a couple of weeks that you were referring to. That study was done a while ago, and we have come a long way since then.

On how we look after the scooters, we already have e-bikes in London. We use e-cargobikes primarily to swap the batteries. We are anticipating the UK using a mix of cyclists, e-bikes, e-cargobikes and then, where possible, zero-emission vans or at least ULEZ compliant Euro6 vans, if necessary, to move scooters in large amounts.

Richard Corbett: We invested in an independent lifecycle analysis by Ernst & Young on Voi scooters. They confirmed independently that our scooters last at least two years, if not longer. We are a zero carbon



emission service. We have no emissions. We use e-cargobikes, e-vans and green energy in everything we do. Ninety per cent. of our scooters are recyclable; 80% of the batteries are recyclable. Sustainability is at No. 1 for us.

Q98 **Ruth Cadbury:** I will let Emma quickly answer if there is anything else.

Emma Silver: We are in line with what Alan and Richard have said. I am conscious of the time.

Chair: Thank you. I am sorry to you, Ruth, and Lilian. We have hopelessly gone over our time.

Emma, Alan and Richard, thank you so much for the evidence you have given to us. It has been really illuminating. We wish you and your teams all the very best. We will see how this future space pans out.

Examination of witnesses

Witnesses: Rachel Maclean and Anthony Ferguson.

Q99 **Chair:** We now move to the second session. Minister, I apologise profusely for keeping you waiting so long. It is fortunate that the trains do not run to the time that this Committee does. I am very sorry.

For our record, would you introduce yourself?

Rachel Maclean: Thank you very much, Chair and the Committee, for inviting me along and looking at this important area. I am the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Transport, and particularly for the future of transport, which is what we are talking about today.

Q100 **Chair:** Welcome, Minister. It is your first time before us as well, and it is great to see you here this morning. You also have an official with you. We should let him speak, just to test our technology. Mr Ferguson, would you like to introduce yourself?

Anthony Ferguson: I am a deputy director in the Department for Transport. I am head of a team called Traffic and Technology. It is my team that is overseeing the trials.

Q101 **Chair:** Thank you. Minister, I will open up the session today and ask you about the Government's proposals on e-scooters. What role do you see e-scooters playing in the UK's future transport needs?

Rachel Maclean: As the country recovers from the crisis, we are exploring how the transport sector more broadly can support the UK's economic recovery and deliver the critical long-term goals in areas like decarbonisation and levelling up.

We very much hope to see a continuation of the environmental improvements during lockdown. The restrictions as a result of Covid have had a huge impact on our communities. Many people across the country have noted the lower emissions and the cleaner air as a result.



HOUSE OF COMMONS

We know that, as people return to work and start to travel, the number of trips will increase and so will emissions. That makes our efforts all the more crucial. That is why we are working more broadly to ensure that emissions continue to fall over time right across the country in both urban and rural areas, through a green economic recovery with transport at its heart.

What we are doing in the environment more broadly is bringing on an extra £10 million to incentivise local authorities to install up to 7,200 additional on-street electric vehicle charge points—a doubling of the funding. As well as that, we have committed to supporting 4,000 zero emission buses to make greener travel a convenient option.

That brings us to the role of the e-scooter trials. We think that they can help to provide another green alternative travel option and to help ease the burden on the transport network. We believe that they can offer an opportunity for people to travel in a sustainable way at a time of social distancing. We have heard from people who think that e-scooters could provide an effective mobility aid for those who find it difficult to travel.

There are risks to introducing a new mode of transport, and the existing evidence base is weak. That is why we are running the trials. It will provide an opportunity for us to assess the safety and the wider impacts of this type of vehicle and the service.

I want to stress to the Committee that it is not a done deal. We need to consider carefully whether legalising e-scooters is right for this country. If we do decide to legalise them, the trials will help us to make sure we have the right laws in place to guarantee the highest consumer safety.

Chair: We are going to go into detail about the UK trials and how they will work, but, first, I am going to ask Lilian Greenwood to touch on how this may impact other forms of transport.

Q102 **Lilian Greenwood:** Despite the evidence that we just heard from Richard Corbett at Voi, we have heard evidence to suggest that the shift from car use to e-scooters has been relatively low in other European countries. Actually, often people are using an e-scooter as an alternative to walking or cycling. In France 30% of survey respondents left public transport to use an e-scooter.

What is the Department doing to ensure that e-scooters contribute to replacing car journeys rather than walking or cycling, or indeed, in the longer-term, public transport, where we would not want to discourage people from using public transport?

Rachel Maclean: Yes, this is the broad policy objective behind the introduction of these trials. We clearly want to see mode shift, not just on to e-scooter but on to other forms of active travel such as cycling and walking. Our transport decarbonisation plan puts that mode shift at the heart of what we are doing in the department. You will have seen a range of initiatives that we are bringing in to encourage that.



We are running the e-scooter trials because we do not have robust evidence. There are studies, but we do not believe that they provide a very robust evidence base for us to base the policy on in this country. They are looking at different environments under very different circumstances with different sets of riders. We believe the right thing to do is for us to gather the evidence here in this country.

On the mode shift, we do expect to see a mode shift away from cars. I cannot really quote you a figure because our departmental analysts have been over and over this and they have not been able to give me a figure that we are happy to stand behind. We have spent quite a lot of time looking at this. There are broad estimates that we have looked at from other countries. We expect to see some mode shift, but I would also make the point that we may see more mode shift now in the time of Covid. There is a renewed focus on active travel. There are also restrictions still in place on using public transport. The public attitude to public transport is taking a little while to come out of the Covid pandemic.

We believe that these micro-mobility aids can provide a more active form of transport at this time. I come back to the point that that is why we want to run the trials: to gather that evidence and have a good spread of evidence.

Q103 Lillian Greenwood: I completely understand the wish to collect evidence and to understand what mode people shift from in order to use the e-scooters in these trials. Are you going to take action, do things or be active in ensuring that it is a mode shift from cars to using e-scooters and to discourage people from moving from other forms of active travel such as walking and cycling on to e-scooters, or are you just going to see what happens and measure it?

Rachel Maclean: We know that users and people making journeys will choose a variety of different modes of transport on any given day and in any situation, whether it is going to work or leisure activities. They may use a multitude of different modes of transport even in one day.

It is fair to say that we cannot force people not to use cars, but we can put in place a range of incentives to encourage their uptake, first by introducing the trials. We know there is a huge appetite for these e-scooters. We are being actively lobbied by many people who want us to legalise them across the board. We know there is interest in them. We know that people are keen to use them.

On top of that, I would also point to the work that we are doing around the emergency active travel funding. That is enabling local authorities to build more local cycling and walking infrastructure and to make the roads safer for road users, which we also believe will encourage people to try out this new mode of transport.

Q104 Lillian Greenwood: That is very welcome, but I go back to the question, Minister. In your messaging or in other ways, are you actively going to be



HOUSE OF COMMONS

encouraging modal shift from the car rather than from walking and cycling on to e-scooters? It is a yes or a no. Are you going to take active measures or are you going to provide it and see what happens?

Rachel Maclean: We are taking those active measures across the whole Department in our transport decarbonisation plan. The answer is yes. That is a broad set of measures very clearly set out by the Secretary of State for Transport to put active travel and public transport at the heart of our plans for the future of our transport system.

Q105 **Lilian Greenwood:** Do you think there are going to be health benefits from the Government's e-scooter rental trials?

Rachel Maclean: We do expect there to be health benefits, yes. I would say there will be health benefits, if we do see the mode shift from cars that we expect to see. We can expect to see cleaner air. We know that obviously dirty air is a very major contributor to public health hazards. We would expect to see that health benefit.

More broadly, we would expect to see more interest in active forms of travel. Micro-mobility is one active form of travel. You are not sitting in a car. You are more active. You are out and about.

When you look at some of the statistics about short journeys, the potential for mode shift to more active forms of travel out of cars is quite significant. At the moment 58% of car trips are less than 5 miles; 24% of car trips are less than 2 miles. In an urban environment where over 40% of urban journeys are less than 2 miles, we believe that there would really be a significant benefit in providing this alternative method for people to make these short journeys which is not just jumping in a car to go to the shops.

Q106 **Lilian Greenwood:** Will you set targets for a reduction in car journeys, particularly short car journeys, and for modal shift? Would you consider that? It was a recommendation in the last Committee's "Active travel" report.

Rachel Maclean: I would be very happy to study that recommendation closely. I would be delighted to do that. The approach that we are taking is very much based on the knowledge that we have at the moment, which we do not believe is robust enough for us to have that evidence base. If we were to set a target, we would need to know where we are starting from and where we need to go to. We are not in a position to do that. We believe that the only way we will get that evidence is by running the trials in a real transport environment. Anything else is not going to be comparing like with like.

We know that many of the trials that have taken place have not been done in the same fashion as we are doing, with carefully controlled parameters. We do not feel it is realistic for us to take that approach. We are happy to study the report carefully.



Q107 **Lilian Greenwood:** You obviously know the percentage of short journeys that are undertaken by car. I appreciate that you might not know what alternative people would choose if you provided safer streets and alternatives, but I would have thought that you had a target for reducing the percentage of particularly short journeys undertaken by car.

Rachel Maclean: All these things are part of our thinking. Just as I said in an earlier answer, although it would be lovely for me to be able to come up with a figure of modal shift that we would like to see—I have gone round this with officials, the experts and the economists in the Department—we did not feel confident enough with those figures to be able to come before a Select Committee. If we do not even know what the baseline is, it would be very difficult for us to achieve a target that would have any realistic measurement or that would be realistic. As I have said, we are very happy to look at the suggestions.

The point about the trials and the way we have designed them will enable us to gather data on a realtime basis. We will know in real time how many people are actually taking up these scooters. We will have that evidence base about the modal shift because we will have that granular detail across a range of different environments to be able to make those targets for the future.

Clearly, if we were to bring in primary legislation, we would definitely want to take an approach such as you have suggested. I think that would be very helpful.

Lilian Greenwood: I am sure that colleagues will want to understand more about how you are going to measure the success of the trial, but I will hand back to the Chair.

Chair: We want to take further evidence, Minister, on the trial that is currently being undertaken. I will ask Simon to start us off.

Q108 **Simon Jupp:** A couple of weeks ago the Committee heard evidence from the Bicycle Association and the Royal National Institute for the Blind. They all mentioned the criticism that this trial has been rushed. The key word was that this had been too quick—rushed—with not enough evidence and things like that. I know it has been welcomed by an awful lot of people across the UK, who really wanted to explore this new way of travelling, but do you accept that criticism? Why was it so important to bring forward the trials?

Rachel Maclean: The timeline for the trial was set in the context of the work that we were already doing. Before the pandemic hit, we were already looking at this area in the future of transport more generally. We have an approach in the Department where we are introducing future of transport zones. We were undertaking a call for evidence on the future of transport regulatory review. We already had quite a significant body of evidence in that call for evidence.



The advice that we received—the standard advice and good practice—was that we needed to run a consultation, but under the unprecedented circumstances of the pandemic it was deemed acceptable to have a consultation for two weeks. As part of that, we did reach out to a number of the groups that you have mentioned, including the RNIB. I personally have taken these issues very seriously around vulnerable groups, people with restricted mobility and people who have hearing issues. The accessibility Minister, Chris Heaton-Harris, and I have met the inclusive transport stakeholders group. That includes members of Age UK, Scope, Alzheimer's, National Autistic Society, Disability Rights UK, DPTAC, Guide Dogs and Leonard Cheshire. I had a further round table with many of these groups as well. We heard first-hand from them about some of the issues. We also discussed some of the mitigations that we committed to bringing in as a result of that work. I think we have done a considerable amount of engagement work with the groups that are affected.

Q109 Simon Jupp: That is really welcome, and I am delighted to hear it because we did hear concerns a couple of weeks ago. Obviously, those round tables and hearing those concerns will really help.

I am interested by the points that you have taken from those meetings and what you have therefore changed.

Rachel Maclean: Yes, absolutely. We are making it a requirement for local authorities in their design phase to engage very closely with representatives of these groups at a local level, so that they can hear the concerns locally as well as nationally with the Department. At the end of the day, it will be the local authorities who are responsible for addressing all these issues that may happen in their local environment. We thought that was very important, and we have committed to doing that.

Q110 Simon Jupp: Do the local authorities get any further funding to do that?

Rachel Maclean: Yes. We have made a small amount of funding available. This is not an expensive process for local authorities. They should already have these communication channels. A lot of them are combined authorities or larger areas that will already have links with these groups and these road users, but we have provided some small amounts of funding to enable local authorities to run the trials and bring in certain modifications. We have supported them throughout.

Q111 Simon Jupp: How have you taken the views of disabled people on board? In the last panel I mentioned, for example, street clutter. I know we will get on to that later, but it has been a major issue and it is a concern for those people who are disabled that this will be quite a hindrance to them as they head out and about, especially if they have been shielding.

Rachel Maclean: Yes, absolutely, and I heard those concerns myself as well. We have put that at the centre of the guidance and the requirements on the local authorities to consider those. Some of the funding that we have introduced will enable the local authorities to, for



HOUSE OF COMMONS

example, set up parking bays and docking stations in their local area. We have required them to engage very closely with operators to make sure that they are taking into account those issues.

Q112 Simon Jupp: Going back to councils, I realise you are talking about some larger authorities or combined authorities. I used to work for one myself. They are all facing financial difficulties that are not of their own doing because of the Covid-19 pandemic. If they needed further funding to help them out, would you look at that? You have to make sure that the trials are safe for everyone in every corner of the country.

Rachel Maclean: Yes. I think you will know that I cannot comment on local council finance, but, like all matters of council finance, all of it is kept under review at all times. That will be the case with these trials.

Chair: Minister, we want to touch on the licence and insurance requirements. I will ask Karl McCartney to take us through this section.

Q113 Karl McCartney: Congratulations, Minister, on your new role and thank you for coming to the panel today. If you and your colleagues in the Department have been paying attention, you will know I am going to ask two or three easy questions.

The first two are, what are your thoughts on requiring people to have driving licences to use the e-scooters in the current trials; and any thoughts on insurance?

Rachel Maclean: Thank you, Karl. Under existing legislation e-scooters are classed as motor vehicles, as you know, and they do require a driving licence. If we were to remove that requirement, we would need to change primary legislation, which we could not do quickly. We wanted to do this quickly. The decision was made to proceed quickly in response to the Covid pandemic, as I said earlier.

We have widened the group of driving licence holders to include provisional licence holders. We think that will enable more people to take part. It only costs £34 to get a provisional licence, and it does mean that users must be a minimum age of 16. It does widen the group of people that can use e-scooters.

All the trial e-scooters will have insurance provided by the rental companies. It is a bit like renting a car when you go on holiday. You will not be able to, and nor will the operators be permitted to, rent a scooter without insurance. That will need to be in place, and that will be third-party and liability insurance as well.

Q114 Karl McCartney: Thank you very much. My final question will be a lot quicker than in the first session.

Have you or any of your ministerial colleagues in the Department, or any of your departmental colleagues, been on an e-scooter in a sanitised environment, and when are you going to experience an e-scooter on the mean streets of the inner city of London at 15 mph?



Rachel Maclean: Personally, I cannot wait to have a go on an e-scooter. I am hoping that with social distancing the rules will allow me to visit Tees Valley and have a go on one. I have had a go. I was very kindly lent an e-scooter for that very purpose, but because they are not permitted to be ridden on the roads I rode it just round the drive of my house. It was a lot of fun, and I can report that the handling was very good. I felt very safe and very stable. I went on the grass, off the grass and it performed very well without any problems at all.

What that highlighted for me was that cycling—and I am a big fan of cycling—is fantastic, great and something that the Department backs, but it is not right for everybody, particularly women. We know that. Travelling in a skirt or a dress and not being able to shower when you get to work means that cycling does not always work for people. Clearly, it works for many people, but we just want to offer as many options as possible to give people the freedom to choose how they make their daily journeys. That is a very important principle at the heart of what we are doing.

Q115 **Karl McCartney:** Thank you for those practical points. Before handing back to you, Chair, I would like to ask Mr Ferguson, who has not had a chance to say anything yet, if he himself has been on an e-scooter yet.

Anthony Ferguson: That is very kind of you to ask. I have, in fact, yes. I spent a day in Paris as part of our fact finding, before we developed the trials. Some time ago we went to Paris and spoke to the city authorities and to the national Government about their experiences. You heard this from the operators before. There is a lot of learning that has gone on, and we wanted to make sure that we had last mover advantage.

I have also ridden around Singapore on a scooter, where they have made some very interesting regulatory changes over time to address some of the concerns that people have had. I have both experienced the scooter, but also talked to the people who provided and regulated them.

Karl McCartney: That is good to hear. Thank you very much.

Q116 **Chair:** Before we move off insurance, Minister, a recent court case has decreed that the Motor Insurance Bureau will end up being on the hook in the event that there is a claim and there is not insurance on a vehicle of the scooter type. The Association of British Insurers is concerned that that would mean that drivers of cars would end up being on the hook for it by higher premiums.

Does that mean that insurance is going to be here to stay for e-scooters?

Rachel Maclean: I have heard the concerns of the Association of British Insurers. It is fair to say that there is still a lot of legal analysis that is taking place with regard to that.

We need to await the results of the trials so that we can make an informed decision on whether insurance will be required for e-scooters in



HOUSE OF COMMONS

the future. We need to balance the risk, the safety and the inclusivity of all of that, which is why we need to do the trials and evaluate them properly.

Q117 **Chair:** On the issue of driving licences, we understand that you are bound by the existing law. Is the working assumption that once primary legislation can be changed licensing will not be a requirement, or again are you open to how that will work?

Rachel Maclean: It is fair to say that we are approaching that issue, and a number of others I referred to, with a genuinely open mind. We are running these trials, and we want them to be as representative as possible so that we can fully understand not only the mode shift but some of the other issues that the Committee members have referred to, such as public health and the safety record. Insurance is just the same. We need to consider all those balances when we come to make that legislation decision, if we do that.

Q118 **Chair:** The issue is that, once driving, you can see how people operate when they have licences. You do not have the ability to see how people without licences operate. It is almost an assumption that we just stay with that new normal. Is that a danger with not allowing non-licensed users to have a go?

Rachel Maclean: Yes. I understand that there are calls for these to be allowed without licensing. We have considered that, but we do not think that is the right approach at the moment. You make a very good point. We know that there are certain inclusion issues around driving licence holders. For example, we know that an average of 74% of people aged 17 and over have a driving licence. In and of itself that is not entirely representative of the whole population. If we introduce a new mode of transport, we want everyone to benefit from it. The point you make is very valid, and we will have to consider how we measure that very carefully when we come to do it.

Chair: Thank you very much. Let us move on to the scooter design and safety elements. I will ask Gavin Newlands to take us through this section.

Q119 **Gavin Newlands:** We have heard concerns about the Government's proposed speed limit for e-scooters, although not from the first panel, admittedly. Why did the Department decide to increase the trial speed limit from your initial proposal of 12.5 mph to 15.5 mph? Can you, in answering that, explain the rationale for choosing the maximum power rate of 500 W and the scooter weight of 55 kg, which are both at the upper end of the scale?

Rachel Maclean: Yes, absolutely. We had a number of responses on these issues about the speed, the power and the weight in the consultation. We considered it all carefully.



HOUSE OF COMMONS

We are effectively treating e-scooters now very much like e-bikes. We believe that 15.5 mph would be suitable.

With a view to the last question posed to me by the Chair, if we think about the future of these vehicles, if we did want to legislate for them, we would need to have the evidence of them operating at these speeds in order to get a good sense of how we would legislate in the future and take into consideration those issues.

Local authorities are able to set the speed limit if they wish to. For example, Tees Valley has set a speed limit of 12.5 mph. Some authorities may wish to have variable speed limits in different areas of their authority, depending on the nature of the road environment. That can be achieved by some of the technology that is built into these vehicles—geofencing. It is about getting the speed right for the design of the environment in which they are operating.

You asked me about the power. We thought it was necessary to have a limit. We did not want to have very powerful e-scooters used on roads and cycle lanes, but we thought it was important to get the balance right so that the vehicles are usable where there are hills, which I am sure there are in Scotland. There certainly are in Redditch. I am sure they are steeper in Scotland. We did need them to be able to carry heavier users and the loads that those users might carry. Effectively, it is the combination of the speed and the power together, and also the safety standards, that contribute to the safety of an e-scooter in the round.

Q120 Gavin Newlands: You have chosen not to make helmets mandatory in the trial. What actions would you want the e-scooter companies to take to encourage helmet use? What training should they be providing to those who rent?

Rachel Maclean: The Department's position on helmets is the same as it is with pedal cycles. We strongly recommend that cycling and e-scooter users wear a helmet, but we have not made it mandatory in the same way that it is not mandatory for cycles. The reason for that is that we conducted a recent review in the Department, and we found that the evidence was inconclusive on whether mandating cycle helmets in and of itself improved safety.

We are strongly encouraging users of e-scooters to wear helmets. In addition, that will be built into the design of the trial. It will be built into the requirements of the e-scooter operator to make sure that they have the helmet capacity in place. We know, for example, that some of them are offering the helmet as an integrated package. They are providing sanitiser wipes as well so that users can disinfect between uses.

To be clear, the Department's overall position is strongly to recommend wearing a helmet when you are on an e-scooter. If I am on an e-scooter I will be wearing a helmet, that is for sure.



Q121 Gavin Newlands: We will hold you to that.

What training should they be providing, if any, to the customers—the renters of the scooters?

Rachel Maclean: There is no compulsory training for the renters because these vehicles are designed with minimum safety standards in mind. They are incredibly easy to use. They are easier to use than even a cycle, so we did not think it was necessary to mandate training. We are taking an educated approach.

Q122 Gavin Newlands: All three panellists this morning confirmed that their company did, but there is some concern about how quiet these scooters can be. Why did the Government not make it a mandatory requirement for rental scooters to be fitted with a bell or some audible warning or sound?

Rachel Maclean: As a result of the consultation that issue was raised with us by, especially, the people representing the blind groups. We have made it mandatory for e-scooters to have either a horn or a bell. We have listened to that and we have introduced that into the trials.

Q123 Gavin Newlands: My last question before I allow the Chair to move on is that we have seen evidence that three-wheel scooters are inherently more stable than two-wheel scooters. This was challenged certainly by a couple of the panellists this morning, to be fair. Why has the pilot ruled out three-wheel scooters?

Rachel Maclean: We did consider the use of three-wheel scooters. We did not consider it was appropriate to include them at the moment. What we have done though is included seated e-scooters—the two-wheeled ones—and that again was in response to the calls from some of the disability groups, who believe that it may enable more active forms of travel for people with certain restrictions on their movement.

Q124 Gavin Newlands: Is there a specific rationale for not including three-wheelers, even if it was just in a pilot for a year just to contrast and compare? I do not know if you have any information that you can provide.

Rachel Maclean: I might ask Anthony on that specific point.

Anthony Ferguson: If anything, it was a pragmatic decision. There were a number of different designs of scooters that we could have considered. Time was of the essence. In order to do the regulatory changes we did, there were some things where we would have had to make more regulatory changes. We simply did not have time. It is not that we have ruled them out as not being desirable, full stop. All we have said is that, for the purposes of the trials that we wanted to run, we have done what we were able to do in the time we had.

Obviously, as the Minister has said, our minds are open about a number of things about the way the trial is going to be operated. This is not



HOUSE OF COMMONS

necessarily to say that they could never be part of any trial. That is not what we are saying. We are just saying that they were not part of the trial that we have set up where the desire was to start the trial to support Covid response. It was a pragmatic decision.

Chair: Minister, we are now going to turn to enforcement.

Q125 **Grahame Morris:** I am sure you heard the evidence from the earlier panel of operators. One of the issues that the Committee has been very active on is in relation to ensuring the safety of pedestrians, people with disabilities, older people and those with visual impairment.

Within the context of the illegal use of e-scooters on pavements, we have some specific concerns about how it can be adequately enforced. How does the Government propose to enforce the regulations or the law in relation to e-scooters, particularly when they are being misused, used inappropriately or at all on pavements?

Rachel Maclean: Enforcement is a very important part of our thinking. It might be helpful if I set out the position for the Committee.

There are offences and penalties for using an e-scooter illegally. Users can be fined up to £300. They can have six points put on their driving licence, and the e-scooter can be impounded. There are also offences under the Road Traffic Act related to drunk driving and careless driving. They would also apply to e-scooter users.

As you know, driving on the pavement is an offence under the Highways Act. We have a very well-established regime in this country where the only motorised vehicles allowed on pavements are mobility scooters, for very good reasons. We are not violating that principle at all.

Enforcement is very important and we have taken it seriously right from the start. That goes to the heart of our approach, which is enabling these trials to take place but balancing the need for speed. We need to respond to this pandemic quickly, and that is why we brought forward the trials. We also need to do it safely.

What we have seen in some other countries is where e-scooter operators have turned up and dumped hundreds, if not thousands, of dockless scooters on the roads overnight. Of course, that causes untold problems. You have mentioned some of them, Grahame. We do not want to be in that position, which is why we have taken a much more careful, more controlled and possibly more regulated approach.

Enforcement is clearly always a matter for the police. They will have powers, as I have just said, to enforce any illegal use of the vehicles. It is an important point that will be considered by every local authority when they apply to us to set up a trial. We would not authorise any trial to go ahead unless it had evidence that it had engaged with the law enforcement agencies in its local area and had constructed a robust and realistic enforcement plan.



HOUSE OF COMMONS

Q126 Grahame Morris: Thank you, Minister. There is quite a bit of interest and publicity in e-scooters, partially because of the Select Committee's inquiry. You mentioned that you are going to Middlesbrough shortly to see the trial. I was watching the Police Federation rep on the TV yesterday, and he was expressing concerns about another issue—the police enforcing the face mask regulations and whether that was practical, and so on.

What is going to happen in those areas, Minister, outside the trial areas like Middlesbrough, where there is a lot of interest now in e-scooters? Will the police be actively enforcing the law and the regulations in those areas outside the trial areas like the Tees Valley?

Rachel Maclean: I very much hope to get to the Tees Valley, but, to be clear, I will not be doing so unless it is perfectly safe and deemed acceptable for me to do so.

As I said before, enforcement is really important. We have had discussions with the police and taken their views on board about how enforcement will take place. It is currently already a matter for the police. They are able to enforce illegal riding on pavements where it takes place. I think that is very much at the heart of their job, which is to protect the public. This is the same as any other policing matter for them.

Q127 Grahame Morris: I know that time is short, but my colleague Lilian Greenwood asked a little earlier about the Government's plan to promote and educate people about the correct use of e-scooters. As part of that and of the encouragement of a modal shift that Lilian mentioned from motor cars on to more active travel and e-scooters, will you be emphasising the rules and regulations in respect of the safety of use and their not being used on pavements?

Rachel Maclean: Yes. That is very clearly set out in our guidance to operators. They have to take steps to make sure that when they are renting scooters users are educated in these matters.

I know that the Committee heard from the e-scooter operators before I came in. They have a very strong imperative to make this work. If they are renting scooters irresponsibly, not educating users enough and not fulfilling the requirements we have set on them, the Government are going to take a very dim view of that. Their potential business is going to be curtailed. It is very much in the interests of these operators to put a lot of effort into getting this right. It is a new market for them. We know that they are very interested in this market. It is potentially a huge market for them, but we are clear that they have to get it right. There is a responsibility on them. We will not be allowing irresponsible operators to rent out e-scooters to people on the streets of the UK.

Chair: Simon mentioned that he was going to touch on street clutter.

Q128 Simon Jupp: Minister, a couple of answers ago you touched on bikes being plonked on the streets. One of the genuine concerns held by a lot



HOUSE OF COMMONS

of people, particularly in places where we are used to quite serene imagery, is that street clutter will become a significant problem. I was walking home yesterday and came across four abandoned rental bikes. Street clutter has been an issue in Paris, Barcelona, San Antonio and Montreal.

What can you put in place, and what have you put in place, to ensure that street clutter is kept to an absolute minimum?

Rachel Maclean: It is an important point, as we have touched on before. You are right to touch on it. Where e-scooters were allowed on the road in other countries, it was without any form of regulation. There was no power, no regulation and no requirements to bring in any mitigation for this issue. We have probably all seen it if we have been on holiday to some of these places. That has perhaps been an issue. Certainly, that has been brought to our attention.

What we know about looking at the international picture is that, where the trials are introduced in a manner where the local authorities work very closely with operators and central Government, you can put in place these controls. In those cases they can be much more well managed.

We have some good examples. Lisbon has introduced trials. It has a much-improved environment from some of the negative stories that we have heard.

I also mentioned that some of the support we are putting in for local authorities will allow them to address some of these issues by providing infrastructure such as docking stations or parking places, and for them to explore technological solutions such as geofencing with operators.

That is at the head of our thinking. Again, we will require all authorities who wish to run a trial to demonstrate that they have thought about it and that they have plans in place.

Q129 **Simon Jupp:** And that they might look at, for example, designated areas for these bikes to go or use different cycle lanes. There will be a full review of this trial. How long do you think that will take, out of interest?

Rachel Maclean: That is a good question. The trials are coming in and they will last for 12 months. There is a little bit of flexibility over that. We have enabled the trials under regulations, so the Secretary of State could change that if that is appropriate. We want to get as good a picture as we possibly can. If we feel it is necessary to run the trials for longer, then possibly that is what we would do.

We have set out a clear framework centrally under which we require local authorities and operators to provide the evidence to enable us to do the final evaluation. Local authorities will also be able to provide their own evidence. As part of that, we will work closely with representatives of the inclusivity groups.



HOUSE OF COMMONS

Simon Jupp: Excellent. I look forward to seeing you on a scooter outside of your parked driveway.

Chair: I was going to say that we want to move to evaluation of trials, but we have already moved there. Greg can take us forward.

Q130 **Greg Smith:** When we are looking at the evaluation of the trials, it is inevitable that there obviously has to be a balance. A lot of factors have to be looked at. It would be enormously helpful to try to understand what the do-or-die is to carry on with e-scooters. Is it accident rates? How are we going to be sure that accident data are properly recorded? It would be very easy for it to be lost among, "Well, it could have been on an e-bike." I presume it would come under the same regulation, but I saw what looked like an electric skateboard over the weekend in the village where I live.

How are we going to be sure, if it is safety, that that accident data is robust? If it is not the safety measures that are most important, but perhaps its modal shift, where is the Government's position on what is the real do-or-die moment on whether to expand the use of e-scooters in the UK?

Rachel Maclean: It is a very fair question. It is fair to say that all of it is important. We are looking at all those issues. We know that it is not just safety itself in the raw data; it is also the perception of safety. This came out very strongly with my consultations with the RNIB and the other groups I have mentioned.

Some people have expressed concerns like, "Well, I just do not feel safe going out because I am frightened of this happening." It is also very important that we take that into account.

We can do that. We have not finished our work on the evaluation framework. We are working through that very closely. We will set that out when we come to do the evaluation. I am sure that we will be able to come before the Committee and discuss it again in more detail.

Q131 **Greg Smith:** That is very helpful. Multiple trials are running in quite different places. Do you foresee our ending up with a mixed bag where one area—Middlesbrough—could report something completely different from Milton Keynes or some of the other trials? How would the Government go about validating a final answer if the experience is so radically different across those places?

To make that slightly more complicated, most of the trials are in very urban environments but that does not mean constituencies like mine will not want to see them. There are many villages in my constituency that are only 1 or 2 miles apart, but you would have to go on a country lane with them. How can the Government expand the evaluation, to extrapolate what is happening in a town like Middlesbrough to a nationwide roll-out that could involve their use on country lanes or wider roads, where bicycles can go perfectly happily now?



HOUSE OF COMMONS

Rachel Maclean: That is a very good point. I am told that the Tees Valley—I have never been to the Tees Valley, so forgive me—includes urban areas and more remote rural areas. We will get a good sense, even from one area like the Tees Valley. I do not have the final number, but a relatively large number of authorities that represent a broad spread of our country are interested in taking part.

I strongly believe that this is very much in line with our levelling up ambition. We do not want everything just to come to London and the big cities. We want these new forms of transport, if they are beneficial and safe, to be available to everybody, whether they live in a city, a town or indeed a rural area. That is a personal priority for me.

We have definitely designed the trials with that in mind. That is very important because a great benefit of our approach is that we will have that broad sweep of evidence to draw on. A lot of the other countries, where it has just been in capital cities, are not able to do that because they are in one very particular type of environment with its particular challenges. That is very much at the heart of our thinking.

Q132 **Greg Smith:** That is great. I am coming back into Westminster on the train now, but in the early days when we came back I was driving in every day. I noticed that there are an enormous number of e-scooters on London's streets at the moment—illegally. I have to say that I did not see anyone doing anything dangerous on them. I did not see any issues whatsoever, although obviously there is that criticism that they were not there legally.

How can we try to include in the evaluation, although it is not part of the formal evaluation, where e-scooters are being improperly used to try to judge the impact that they have had in places like London, where they are visibly out there right now?

Rachel Maclean: I would say two things about London. We know that there is some interest from London boroughs in running the trials. That is still yet to be worked through. It would be good if we had London included in some way, but I understand that there are some issues to work out. At this point I am not able to say whether they will be included.

As you say, at the moment it is still illegal to ride an e-scooter on the pavement in London and an offence is being committed under the Road Traffic Act.

Your broader point about how we think about the experiences of people who currently own an e-scooter is quite a difficult one. We have taken the decision to only use rental scooters because we wanted to have that granular access to the data that is provided by that approach.

We are able to require the operators to share their data with us. We know that they have advanced software capacities and state-of-the-art platforms. We have required them to sign up to our data-sharing



HOUSE OF COMMONS

requirements. They will be sharing that data with us. We believe that will give us a very good picture of the usage.

The ultimate purpose is to fit this more broadly into our greener transport recovery and our transport decarbonisation plan. Of course, we do want to see mode shift across the board. We do think this is going to play an important part in it.

Q133 Greg Smith: I have a final question on how the evaluation will work. I have been doing quite a lot with some coach companies in my constituency for totally different reasons. However, in a conversation with some coach drivers the other day, they commented that they foresee a large increase in e-scooters on the road being a big problem for coaches, buses and HGVs. If they are going along at 15 mph, particularly in a town like Princes Risborough in the south of my constituency, and I am trying to think of one in your constituency—

Rachel Maclean: Redditch.

Greg Smith: But Redditch is full of big dual carriageways. Let us take somewhere like Evesham, just next door. It is very difficult for them to pull out and get past quickly. There could be a concertina effect on traffic flows through villages if big vehicles get stuck behind them.

As part of the trials will you be talking to the Road Haulage Association, coach operators and bus operators to get feedback from other road users and their views, perceptions and experience of e-scooters on traffic flow in towns like that?

Rachel Maclean: Yes. I talk to the Road Haulage Association regularly in my capacity as a Transport Minister. That point about how they interact with other road users in a real-life environment will form part of our evaluation. We will want to look at that.

It is important to say that e-scooters will not be legal on all roads in the UK, but only in the trial areas. We will be able to look at the impacts there and compare them with the impacts where they have not been introduced—to look at the impact that they have.

Chair: We want to move away from the detail of the trial to how e-scooters can be integrated with other road and pavement users.

Q134 Sam Tarry: Minister, I want to probe the integration aspect. One of the witnesses in our previous session talked about the change of term, calling cycling lanes mobility lanes. One of the things that concerns me is that that sounds like a de-prioritisation of active travel.

You can have cyclists who cycle quite fast. The maximum speed we have been talking about today is 15 mph. In London you often see cyclists cycling far faster than that, maybe up to 20 mph. Do you think that the infrastructure is adequate to have fast-paced cyclists, maybe doing longer distances into work of 5 miles-plus, and maybe the shorter and slightly slower e-scooters?



Rachel Maclean: As part of the recovery from the pandemic, and during the pandemic itself, we have seen an uptick in cycling and walking. That has been maintained at quite a good level, even as the economy gets going again. That is why we have taken all the measures that we have done to embed these habits, which are not only good for the health of the people riding and cycling but for air quality, air pollution and of course decarbonisation longer term.

That is why we have announced and brought forward £225 million to a broad spread of local authorities to redesign towns and cities so that they are safer for cyclists and pedestrians. That will help them to create pop-up cycle lanes, protected space for cycling, wider pavements, safer junctions and bike and bus-only corridors. We have already seen a number of them come into action and be used. They are welcomed by cyclists in those areas.

Q135 **Sam Tarry:** Are there further plans for investment or improving the infrastructure around not just cycle lanes but generally to accommodate what could be, as we have seen in other cities around the world, quite a large uptake in e-scooter usage?

Rachel Maclean: The Government have already committed £2 billion to cycling and walking more generally across the board. That covers a range of measures. This money that I have just referred to—the active travel fund—is part of that. The Government have a broad cycling and walking strategy that is not within my remit, so I am not going to be able to give you chapter and verse on it.

Our broad push and broad ambition to encourage more cycling and walking is at the heart of our thinking around the decarbonisation plan that we are working through very quickly at the moment.

Yes, if we want to encourage that mode shift, that will need to come along with assistance and support from the Government to enable local areas to build that infrastructure into their plans. We have already seen the Government making that funding available. No doubt there will be more on the back of that if it is needed to drive the mode shift that we want.

Q136 **Sam Tarry:** One of the things that our evidence has shown so far is that potentially enabling people to have longer journeys on e-scooters would maximise the benefits in decarbonisation and so forth rather than just small journeys because of the two-year or so lifecycle of a scooter. Do you think there could be any specific plans allowing e-scooters to have longer and easier journeys from A to B?

Rachel Maclean: Do you mean in terms of the infrastructure?

Sam Tarry: Yes.

Rachel Maclean: I think that is a very valid point. We know that most of the journeys that are undertaken in urban environments are quite short,



HOUSE OF COMMONS

as I said earlier in one of my answers. Many car trips are quite short. We see those as a potential candidate to try to encourage modal shift, not just to e-scooters but to cycling and walking. That is the purpose behind our decarbonising plans more generally. That is very much part of what we are thinking of doing over the longer term.

Chair: Minister, in every inquiry we hold we will ask what this issue of innovation policy does for our commitment to get to net zero by 2050. The next section is on environmental impacts.

Q137 **Ruth Cadbury:** Minister, e-scooters would be said to be quite environmentally friendly, with low polluting emissions as well as low carbon emissions. Why did the Department not specify sustainability and environmental requirements as part of the rental trials? I am thinking particularly of the vehicles used to service the fleet, and the longevity of the batteries and of the kit itself. I am happy if Mr Ferguson wants to answer some of that as well.

Rachel Maclean: We obviously understand that the biggest environmental impact of e-scooters is from people getting out of their cars. That is what we want to encourage. There is a danger, especially in the pandemic, that if people are not using public transport they are going to be turning back to their cars. We are already seeing a little bit of that. We have had the message not to use public transport, which of course has driven people into cars. We do not want that to become a long-term shift. That is why we brought in e-scooters, which are battery vehicles, in the first place.

There are a number of models that the operators are using that will maximise the time on the roads, including having swappable batteries. The batteries can be replaced when the user brings them back. That will maximise the time that they are available and that they are out. Others are charged in docking stations.

A lot of our operators are working in places that already have their own environmental credentials. They have also made those commitments to reach net zero. They will want to look locally at the impact of the whole operation in its entirety.

Anthony Ferguson: That was a pretty complete answer, but I could make a couple of points. Some of our technical standards will ensure the robustness of the vehicles. That accusation was certainly thrown at operators when micro-mobility first appeared a few years ago.

The other aspect, which perhaps was slightly overlooked with the earlier panellists simply because of who they were, is that there is a lot of discretion for local authorities, as the trial client if you like. They are choosing which operators to work with. It is pretty clear that local authorities will be asking questions about sustainability and environmental credentials. No one is going to have an operator imposed on them. The local area is going to choose who they want to work with. It



is fair to say—and we heard some of it rehearsed earlier—that all the operators globally are innovating furiously fast to be able to make the best pitch possible to local areas, to persuade them that they are the right people to do trials with.

To some extent we need a bit of diversity in the trials. We need a bit of local difference. If we had one homogenised form of trial, we would learn about that form of trial and not about scooters. We need to have some difference, but it is fair to say that all local authorities take their environmental duties very seriously. They are not going to allow operators to operate in their areas who do not meet high standards.

Q138 **Ruth Cadbury:** I will ask one further question, if I may, about the variety of different trials. Will the Department for Transport adequately resource the feedback and research to get the best possible analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of the different schemes? Will you also connect what has happened with rental e-scooter schemes with which learning does and does not read across to private ownership?

Rachel Maclean: Yes. There is funding budgeted for in the funding for the trials for us to pay for and comprehensively evaluate. I said earlier that there is a framework that the Department is creating and working on. I might ask Anthony to comment in a bit more detail on this. We are clear that it has to be done to high standards. It has to be a professional and validated set of data that we are working on so that it does take account of the issues that you have mentioned.

I wonder whether Anthony could comment a bit further on that.

Anthony Ferguson: To flesh that out a tiny bit, because they are national trials that are going to inform and advise Ministers potentially about legalisation, or certainly future legislation, monitoring and evaluation are absolutely at the heart of what we are doing. That is why we are designing a central framework. We will let a contract to collect the data, process the data and produce good results from it. We want robust evidence to be able to produce robust advice.

Local authorities will also collect their own information and learning. There will be a lot of qualitative learning as well, obviously. Operators will also do this, because they are all learning as they go. Many of the issues that you are raising today are issues that have been seen around the world.

I have one final point, quickly, that struck me earlier when we were talking about infrastructure and the need for dedicated infrastructure. The Department, as the Minister has said, is spending a large amount of money on encouraging cycling. That is going into capital schemes, but it is a lot more than just that. Clearly, e-scooters and cycling are very much integrated because they are often using the same dedicated infrastructure. There is a lot of learning that is coming through from the cycling side of the Department, which is obviously going to be relevant to



HOUSE OF COMMONS

inform our thinking about micro-mobility as well. The trials are not the only source of evidence that we will be relying on at all.

Chair: Minister, I am conscious of the fact that we are running over your time, but I want to bring a couple of quickfire matters through.

Q139 **Lilian Greenwood:** You have set out maximum speeds and wattage, but will there be any minimum requirements for braking and wheel size? If not, why not?

Rachel Maclean: Yes, we are considering very closely the minimum standards. We have set the same power and weight limits as the limits in Germany—and people will know they have very thorough standards. We have set out standards around having two independent braking systems. They must have lights. They must have reflectors. They must pass some stability tests.

Q140 **Lilian Greenwood:** Is there anything on wheel size, or can that be left to operators?

Rachel Maclean: That will be included in the stability test, but I would probably need to ask Anthony to comment on the wheel size point specifically.

Anthony Ferguson: The crucial point is the stability test. The key thing to say about that is that we have largely followed the German model, which we think is one of the best. It is probably the gold standard in European regulation. That is what we are relying on. Otherwise, we could specify a minimum wheel size and the vehicle might not meet the stability test. It is stability that matters. When someone is riding a vehicle on uneven terrain, we need to know that they will be able to stop, and stop safely. That is the test that we are applying.

Q141 **Lilian Greenwood:** The other question I had was about how you will identify the safety impact of e-scooters. For example, will the police and hospitals be instructed to identify injuries involving e-scooters separately from injuries involving cyclists or users of e-bikes so that you can distinguish?

Rachel Maclean: Yes. We will have to work closely with colleagues in public health and gather that accident data. That will form part of our thinking.

Q142 **Lilian Greenwood:** But you will ensure that they can be separately identified from injuries involving other active travel modes.

Rachel Maclean: Yes. I think that is a very important point. We do want to understand how safe these are compared to cycling and car use.

Q143 **Chair:** We will be in contact with your officials to ask for some guidance as to the mandatory audible measures. We were a bit lost on finding that information in the guidance.

I want to ask a bit of a libertarian question. In this country, if we want to



HOUSE OF COMMONS

access a bicycle, a car or indeed a property, we can choose to rent or buy. Yet when it comes to e-scooters we can only rent. You have touched on the need to be able to look at data. Will there be a commitment to look again at whether there should be an amnesty for those who have purchased, and to open up a new market for people who want to buy and not rent?

Rachel Maclean: I am very sympathetic to your comments, but we are maintaining our position. We have considered the idea of including privately owned scooters. For all the reasons that I have set out, we do not think that is the right balance at the moment. That is why we are running real-life trials in a wide spread of environments to assess properly how safe these scooters are and if, indeed, they can give way to new ways of exciting new active travel for people up and down the country. If that is the case, then let us look at it and see how they can be brought on to the roads.

Q144 **Chair:** Why is that? Ultimately, if it is safe enough to be able to rent, surely it must be safe enough to be able to own. Indeed, there will be less clutter because it will be parked in someone's back garden.

Rachel Maclean: Some of the trials that we are running will use a long-term rental model. People will be able to take them home and charge them at home. That will definitely cut down on the clutter aspect that you have mentioned.

I cannot really add to what I said earlier. We do not feel it is the right approach for this country simply to allow them all on to the roads. We would not be able to have the data. We would not know if we are achieving our broader public policy objectives, such as reducing greenhouse gases and reaching net zero. We may find that all that is happening is that people are stopping cycling and walking. Of course, that is a risk. There is always a risk with something new. We simply do not know. That is why we are running the trials, but we feel it is important to have that control and that data.

Q145 **Chair:** Part two on the libertarian side is: when we look to evaluate and make decisions based on data and evaluation, one would perhaps tend to have the most liberal form of regime in terms of speed, age and the like. Here, we have made it quite restrictive. It is hard to think that the Government would then look at this and think, "Oh, actually it is so safe that I am going to reduce the age limit," for example, or some of the other requirements. In reality, is this framework here to stay?

Rachel Maclean: We have made it as unrestrictive as possible, given the legislative framework that is already in place and the speed at which we need to move to respond to the pandemic. I said earlier that we have enabled people as young as 16 through the use of a provisional driving licence to be able to take part in these rental trials.

I want to stress again that this is not a done deal. We have made no policy decisions at this point. We have built a very thorough process of



HOUSE OF COMMONS

evaluation that Anthony has set out. We will be looking at all the evidence in the round, including what you have heard from operators and from the other groups that you have had before you. It is very important that we do that so that we get it right.

This is a very big market for e-scooter operators. We do not want to rush into something that we regret doing later.

Chair: Thank you. There is one final question from Ruth Cadbury.

Q146 **Ruth Cadbury:** This does go into the territory of the difference between a rental trial and an overall e-scooter trial. The fact is that the genie is out of the bottle and e-scooters are already very prevalent, even though they are not legalised.

Thinking forward, would one way to allay fears about the risks of these scooters be to have some kind of chip that is linked to the owner, or something like that, if there are further problems? I share the concern of a lot of people, but I understand why you are requiring licences and insurance at the moment. I have real problems with that long term in terms of private ownership, but I also accept the need for some kind of catch-up, particularly for the bigger vehicles.

Would ownership identification be something that one could consider?

Rachel Maclean: Are you talking about for privately owned scooters?

Ruth Cadbury: Yes, definitely; private vehicles.

Rachel Maclean: What we are doing at the moment with the operators and the requirements around data sharing is that we will know who is using the e-scooters. That data will be collected. It will be a requirement for the operators to collect that as part of the trial. We will know who has rented the scooters.

In terms of the point you have touched on about the future, if we come to legalise them, that will be something that we would have to consider carefully as part of the overall consultation at that time. It does go back to striking the right balance, as with all public policy making, between the libertarian argument that the Chair has set out and the concerns of the more vulnerable road users. It is about getting that balance right.

Q147 **Chair:** Minister, thank you very much indeed. It is nice to be able to talk about an innovative form of transport. We thank you for the time you have given us. We will conclude the inquiry and look forward to bringing our report out when we get back in the autumn. Thank you again.

Rachel Maclean: Thank you very much. I look forward to seeing the report.