

Written evidence submitted by King's Cross Brunswick Neighbourhood Association (KCBNA)

KCBNA is a community association which has been serving the deprived King's Cross community of south Camden for approximately 40 years.

We provide valuable community services to a range of priority groups, from young people, Bangladeshi, Somali and Chinese residents through to the large number of older people living in this vibrant part of London.

It is the latter group which gives rise to our concerns about the prevalence and growth in the use of e-scooters, although we are equally concerned about the increasing tendency for cyclists to ride along local pedestrian only footways and through public gardens and to travel the wrong way along local one-way streets.

Older people are particularly vulnerable to collisions with these vehicles, which are often driven at speed and silently, giving little warning of their approach to vulnerable pedestrians, who tend to have poorer hearing and vision and slower reflexes than others.

We would first like to see the current, long-standing law which forbids cycling on footways being properly enforced. This used to be enforced in the past by the police, who passed the buck to local authorities, who have never had sufficient resources to prioritise enforcement action, to the detriment of all pedestrians, but older people in particular.

The introduction of cycle hire schemes has exacerbated this problem, by introducing a large number of people who appear not to know or care about the Highway Code. This includes the large numbers of tourists who visit this part of central London.

Apart from loneliness caused by isolation, this is probably the biggest cause of concern to local older people, which appears to have increased exponentially during Covid-19 'lockdown', as more people 'escape' from of isolation and take to cycles and scooters at all times of the day.

E-scooters are in the same category as e-bikes, in that they are frequently ridden at frightening speeds on the footways, in parks and gardens and the wrong way up one way streets, which has been the biggest cause of accidents in the busy shopping street which runs through our area.

We haven't a particular view about whether E-scooters should be permitted in cycle lanes, apart from ensuring that their users obey the Highway Code, respect other road users, stop at red traffic lights, and don't mount the footway to cut off corners or jump the lights because they are in so much of a hurry. Licensing such vehicles and requiring them to be properly insured would seem to offer victims of accidents some recourse in the event of a collision with said vehicles. It might also make the riders behave more considerately if they are hit in their pockets with financial penalties (fines) and might face court action.

June 2020