

Written evidence submitted by The Motorcycle Action Group

About MAG

The Motorcycle Action Group (MAG) is the UK's leading riders' rights organisation.

Formed in 1973, we are a membership organisation with over 58,000 full and affiliated members. We represent the views and opinions of over 1 ¼ million regular motorcyclists in the UK.

We are responding to this inquiry to set out the role of powered two wheelers (PTWs) in meeting these aims, and to address some of the barriers that riders may face in getting back on the road.

Executive summary:

- For those who cannot reasonably cycle or walk, PTWs present the best alternative for socially distanced travel.
- PTWs do not contribute to congestion. In fact, it is estimated that if 10% of people switch from cars to PTWs, congestion would decrease by 40%.
- Increased use of PTWs would significantly improve air quality.
- The average PTW on the road emits around 30% less CO₂ than the average car on the road¹. Electric motorcycles and mopeds produce no tailpipe emissions.
- We are statistically one of the most vulnerable road user groups, but our needs are often ignored in transport planning and road design.
- Allowing PTWs into bus lanes, or bus and cycle corridors, has been proved to have no measurable negative effect on other road users, but a positive effect on motorcycle and scooter riders.
- Despite the advantages that PTWs bring, they are being ignored in transport planning as we emerge from the pandemic and, in some cases, appear to be being deliberately pushed out of towns and cities. We are particularly concerned to see many roads being closed off to PTWs across the UK. In addition, no mention has been made of PTWs in the Department for Transport guidance *Reallocating road space in response to COVID-19: statutory guidance for local authorities*²

What can be done to support PTWs?

- Recognition in all Government messaging of the role that PTWs should play as a transport mode as we recover from the Coronavirus pandemic and beyond.
- Inclusion of this role in the Department for Transport guidance *Reallocating road space in response to COVID-19: statutory guidance for local authorities*³, and promotional and other materials.
- Inclusion of PTWs in all bus lanes nationwide, including the new bus and cycle only areas that have been created as part of the transport response to Covid-19. Evidence to support this is set out in the section on *The role of PTWs during and after the Coronavirus pandemic* below.

¹ [MAG: Motorcycle Carbon Emissions](#)

² [DfT: Reallocating road space in response to COVID-19: statutory guidance for local authorities](#)

³ [DfT: Reallocating road space in response to COVID-19: statutory guidance for local authorities](#)

- Provision of fit-for-purpose secure parking facilities for PTWs. This can be provided in the guise of dual-use cycle and motorcycle facilities with no additional cost implications.
- Recognition of the vulnerability of PTWs and our needs in road layout and design, and in efforts to prevent road traffic deaths.

About powered two wheelers

The term 'powered two wheelers' covers a variety of vehicles, including motorcycles, scooters and mopeds.

PTW engines vary in size. Across the UK in 2019, 35% of all PTWs registered for the first time were under 125cc, and 27% of all licenced PTWs were under 125cc⁴.

In addition, the use of electric-powered two wheelers is increasing as the technology becomes more viable. There has been a five-fold increase in new registrations of electric PTWs from 2015 to 2019⁵.

The key advantages of PTWs are:

- **Congestion busting:** PTWs don't contribute to congestion, due to their size and the fact that they can filter when other traffic is slow moving or stationary, meaning journey times are quicker and more consistent. For car drivers it means one less car on the road in front of them.
- **Lower emissions:** The use of PTWs has the potential to significantly reduce pollution, due the relative efficiency of the vehicle compared with cars, and the fact that they do not contribute to congestion. Electric motorcycles and scooters (a growing part of the market) produce no tailpipe emissions.
- **Longer distance travel:** The fact that PTWs have an engine means they can be used for journeys that are too far to walk or cycle.
- **Lower cost:** A PTW can be considerably cheaper to run than an average car, and parking is often free, making it a more accessible transport option for those on low incomes.
- **Flexibility:** PTWs can be an essential alternative at times when public transport isn't available.
- **Safety:** Women riders (a fast-growing demographic) are at a lower risk of sexual harassment while travelling by motorcycle or scooter than by walking or using public transport.

Roughly 1.3 million PTWs are registered in the UK⁶. Many more people could switch from public transport or cars to a PTW with appropriate incentives in place.

The role of PTWs during and after the Coronavirus pandemic

PTWs are the ideal transport mode to meet the Government's dual aims of socially-distanced travel and reduced congestion and pollution as we emerge from the Coronavirus pandemic. The nature of the vehicles and mandatory helmet wearing means that riders are naturally socially distanced.

⁴ [DfT: Vehicle Licensing Statistics](#)

⁵ Ibid

⁶ [DfT: Data on all licensed and registered vehicles](#)

In addition, they do not contribute to congestion. In fact, it is estimated that if 10% of people switch from cars to PTWs congestion would decrease by 40%⁷. This figure could be improved even more if people ride pillion with members of their own household.

The relative efficiencies of PTWs, alongside the fact that they do not contribute to congestion, means that PTWs are significantly less polluting than cars. The average PTW on the road emits around 30% less CO₂ than the average car⁸. Electric motorcycles and scooters produce no tailpipe emissions. There is the potential for such vehicles to contribute significantly to reducing levels of air pollution in the future.

PTWs take up significantly less parking space than other vehicles, with up to six fitting in one car parking space.

PTWs are vulnerable to theft however, as are pedal cycles. The most effective solution for reducing theft is the ability to chain the vehicle to an immovable object. Cycle parking consisting of solid rails can fulfil this role if careful consideration is given to placement and access by PTWs. **We are therefore calling for dual use cycle and motorcycle parking provision; a policy requiring no additional funding, but providing a better return on investment of emergency funding made available to Local Authorities.**

The idea that cycling and walking alone can replace all the transport needs of those who will be unable to commute by public transport is not realistic. The average cycle trip in 2018 was 3.3 miles. Nationally, average local bus trips are 5.3 miles. The average trip on the London Underground was 8.9 miles and, on average, surface rail trips are 30.9 miles. During lockdown, we have not all moved closer to our places of work. At an average trip distance of 13.4 miles, PTWs can clearly replace far more public transport trips than cycling, whilst also offering congestion reduction benefits over cars.

The majority of riders use their bike for commuting or for work. In 2019, 65% of all PTW trips were for commuting/business purposes in comparison with 18% of all modes⁹. Many riders wish to return to this, but it is being made difficult by changes in road layout and the approach to transport planning taken by the Government and local authorities.

During the Coronavirus pandemic, many motorcycle and scooter riders have been using their vehicles to volunteer. One example of this is the Bike Shed Community Response.¹⁰ At time of writing some 1,100 riders were signed up to this service, running around 100 jobs a day across the UK, delivering food, PPE, Oximeters, medicine and many other items, through over 40 partners. This service is delivering around 10-15 Oximeter probes a day in London alone, relieving pressure from emergency services during the pandemic.

In addition, the well-established 'blood bikers' - who provide a voluntary rapid response for hospitals transporting anything from platelets, plasma, serum and surgical instruments to patient's notes and X-rays - have been very active UK-wide during the pandemic.

The advantages of PTWs (they are manoeuvrable, able to bypass congestion and carry fragile and heavy items) make them ideal for transporting a variety of emergency medical items.

⁷ [MAG: New paper shows the cost of anti-motorcycle transport policy](#)

⁸ [Ibid](#)

⁹ [National Transport Survey: Purpose of travel](#)

¹⁰ [The Bike Shed Community Response](#)

Despite this we are consistently seeing PTWs ignored as a mode of transport during the pandemic, and a number of road closures put in place, or planned, which permit busses and cycles but not PTWs. By excluding PTWs, local authorities risk pushing riders back onto public transport or into cars, thereby removing a key advantage of PTWs.

In addition, reducing the number of streets PTWs can use will force them into smaller areas, thereby interacting with more traffic which risks increasing collisions. This is not in line with aspirations to reduce road traffic accidents and deaths.

We note that two trials of PTWs in 2009-10 and 2010-11 in London bus lanes produced no measurable negative impact on other road users (including cyclists and pedestrians), but significant improvements in safety for PTWs.

The findings of two independent studies of these trials conducted by Transport Research Laboratory included:

- Allowing PTWs in bus lanes had no significant impact on pedestrian collision rates.
- Allowing PTWs in bus lanes had no significant impact on cyclist collision rates.
- Evidence that PTWs using roads allowing access to bus lanes transferred activity from other roads.
- An increase in collisions for PTWs at trial sites in the initial study, mainly involving cars turning into or out of side roads. However, the second study showed that the increase in collisions in these bus lanes was half the increase seen on the remainder of the road network between the two study periods, suggesting that whilst dangers on London's roads were increasing for riders, lives were saved by allowing PTWs access to bus lanes.
- Bus speeds were unaffected by allowing PTWs to ride in bus lanes¹¹.

PTWs have been allowed in some bus lanes in London for ten years and these findings have been borne out in that time. Similarly, PTWs access many city bus lanes in Bristol, Birmingham, Cardiff and Edinburgh, with no adverse effect on the safety or efficacy of other modes.

In addition, we would draw your attention to a report by the London Assembly Transport Committee in 2018¹² which drew the following conclusions:

“The Mayor and TfL need to get serious about ensuring motorcyclists can ride in all bus lanes. We are unconvinced that TfL is persuading boroughs to make this change with sufficient vigour. The rate of progress is far too slow and this is causing unnecessary risk for riders. TfL should provide whatever practical support boroughs need. Ultimately it might be necessary for the Mayor to use his financial leverage to make this change.”

“We support the ongoing changes to roads to create Healthy Streets across London and make cycling and walking safer – good design for safe motorcycling must be implemented in the delivery of these schemes.”

Road Safety GB, which represents road safety professionals including officers working at all London boroughs, has also called for:

“A consistent policy across London to allow motorcyclists into all bus lanes. Currently motorcyclists are allowed into some bus lanes and not others, creating confusion amongst

¹¹ [London Assembly Transport Committee: Easy rider Improving motorcycle safety on London's roads](#)

¹² [London Assembly Transport Committee: Motorcycle safety in London: update report](#)

riders. By allowing motorcycles into all of London's bus lanes, this will enable the motorcyclist to make safer and easier progress by blending within the traffic."

We believe these principles can be applied UK-wide. **We are therefore calling for PTWs to be welcomed into all bus lanes nationwide, including the new bus and cycle only areas which have put in place by local authorities as a way to manage traffic as we emerge from the pandemic.** This would help to encourage socially distanced, congestion busting travel in a safe way.

We are concerned that many of these road closures are being implemented in a way that is not safe: for example, with temporary planters or bollards that are not appropriately marked or lit. Local authorities should ensure that all road closures are done in a way that is safe for all road users.

We are concerned that there is talk of these road closures being made permanent. Given the lack of consultation or inclusion of PTWs in many of these schemes, this risks pushing PTW riders out of cities altogether, or onto more congested and dangerous routes. We note that even temporary measures can remain in place for up to 18 months.

We are particularly concerned that no mention of PTWs has been made in the Department for Transport guidance *Reallocating road space in response to COVID-19: statutory guidance for local authorities* or in any of the promotional material used by Government. This is especially prominent given the focus on so called e-scooters in Government literature which, unlike PTWs, are unregulated and require no training to operate.

The voices of motorcycle, scooter, and moped riders are not being heard. Our needs are not taken into account, despite statistically being one of the most vulnerable road user groups, and a clear part of the solution to travel during and after the Coronavirus crisis.

We are therefore calling on Government to recognise the role that PTWs should play as a transport mode as we recover from the Covid-19 pandemic and beyond. One way this can be done is by including consideration of PTW needs in the Department for Transport guidance *Reallocating road space in response to COVID-19: statutory guidance for local authorities*¹³, and promotional and other materials.

PTWs and road safety

Statistically, PTWs are one of the most vulnerable road user groups. In 2018, PTWs made up 20% of all fatalities despite the fact that we account for less than 1% of all journeys¹⁴.

A study of 100,162 PTW crashes found that the most commonly occurring crash type involved vehicles turning right from a junction into the path of an oncoming motorcyclist from the rider's right.¹⁵

Small changes can significantly improve riding conditions for PTWs. For example, 'Think Bike' signs, awareness campaigns and better road surfacing. In addition, allowing us to use bus lanes has had an undeniably positive effect on our safety, as discussed above.

Despite the safety challenges, little or no money is allocated specifically for PTW safety in transport budgets. Additionally, we are being actively excluded from schemes which have been shown to have a positive effect on our safety, such as access to bus lanes.

¹³ [DfT: Reallocating road space in response to COVID-19: statutory guidance for local authorities](#)

¹⁴ [DfT: Reported road casualties in Great Britain: 2018 annual report](#)

¹⁵ [RoSPA Road Safety Research: Common Motorcycle Crash Causes](#)

¹⁶ [TfL: Urban Motorcycle Design Handbook](#)

Despite the existence of publications such as the TFL Urban Motorcycle Design Handbook¹⁶ we rarely see evidence that this guidance is consistently followed.

We are therefore calling for greater investment in PTW safety and recognition of our needs and vulnerabilities in road layout and design.

June 2020

Testimonials from motorcycle and scooter riders about the value their vehicle brings to them and their environment.***Rachel, 33, London***

"I was attracted to riding a scooter seeing them filter past me while stuck in traffic in my car. When I developed asthma and started to find it impossible to take the tube due to its poor air quality, I decided to switch.

My commute – using a 125cc scooter - is quick, easy and enjoyable. I have replaced many car journeys with a much more efficient form of transport. Most of the journeys I take are too far to cycle or walk.

I am scared that the changes to London roads will force me back onto the tube, which will ultimately force me out of the city I love. I don't want to leave it or my family behind."

Mark, Oxfordshire

For me, motorcycling has always been the most efficient way to travel. My bike gets me all over the UK to visit business clients, to see friends and family and to get where and when I need to be quickly, cheaply and reliably.

I live in a rural area with almost no public transport. If I ride, it costs less than a third of the train fare, I can leave at a reasonable time and get a guaranteed seat (unlike the train). I can carry everything I need with me and I arrive smiling.

The plans to close roads to bikes are worrying. For those of us in rural areas who work in towns, closed roads and difficult access means less time with our families and friends.

Alex, London

"For the last year, I used several transport modes to commute from my home in West London to the City, including the Underground, bicycle and motorcycle.

Post-lockdown, motorcycling will be my preferred way of getting to work as it is easy to social distance. However, I am concerned that my route will be directly affected by the proposed road closures in London, and that this will negatively affect my ability to commute safely."

Moussa Kaloga, London

"I became a delivery rider in 2018. I live near Croydon and ride a 125cc scooter.

Being a delivery rider allows me to work in flexibly to support myself and my family. I work long hours travelling all over London. I couldn't do this job without my scooter.

The roads in London are dangerous enough for riders like me. Closing off roads is just going to make it more dangerous and harder for us to do our jobs. It may put some riders out of work."