

# E-SCOOTERS

**10 reasons why you SHOULDN'T buy an E-scooter for Christmas**



Far be it from us to decry the advances of technology, but various reasons are put forward to avoid E-scooters. Let's look at some of the top issues and the reasons behind them in order that you can make an informed decision if you do intend to purchase one for yourself or your children, possibly for Christmas this year.

### **1.They're illegal(ish)**

This is, it must be said, a bit of a blow but you should have been informed of the legalities of use at point of purchase if you have already bought one. Actually, they are not illegal to own, and on private land (with permission of the landowner), you can whiz about to your heart's content – but public use is a very different matter. Her Majesty's Government has classified them as 'powered transporters', thus banning them from pavements and pedestrian areas (Highway Act 1835), footpaths (Road Traffic Act 1988) and cycle lanes (RTA 1988 again).

You could technically ride them on the road, but gov.uk warns that you would then require *“insurance; conformity with technical standards and standards of use; payment of vehicle tax, licensing, and registration; driver testing and licensing; and the use of relevant safety equipment,”* which Whitehall gently suggests you might find “very difficult”.

For the record, mobility scooters and electric wheelchairs are exempt from these bans, which shows that governments can bend; but as of now, your options are not so much limited as vanishingly rare.

But, what about hire E-scooters? I'll come to that later.....

### **2. They could hurt you**

Whilst the Government trial hire E-scooters are limited to 15.5mph (12mph in Chester City Centre), several models on the market can easily top 40mph or 50mph and one is said to be capable of 75mph! Clearly, this is extremely risky, and not just because crash helmets and body

protection are optional. A 2019 US study found that 45% of resultant injuries were to the head and 27% “upper extremity fractures” (i.e. broken arms). Coming off at any speed could easily make you an unwanted burden on the NHS. Not a great idea in the current situation.

### **3. The rider (i.e. YOU) could hurt someone else**

Although not the only quiet mode of transport (cyclists can reach a fair speed without much aural warning), E-scooters often surprise pedestrians, including road-crossers, many of whom have consequently found themselves mown down.

At worst, this has led to tragedy. Hire E-scooters have in-built public liability insurance; your private model doesn't.

Some E-scooters are also somewhat lacking in the boring but important areas of visibility such as headlights, indicators and horn – useful for alerting and avoiding others.

### **4. They're for kids, right?**

Motorised scooters have been around for over a century – the Smithsonian Museum cites the 1915 Autoped as “*the true ancestor of the modern motor scooter*” and have always been aimed at adults. However, it cannot be denied that their powerless push-along cousins have found a much wider user-base among the younger age groups, mainly those of primary school age.

E-scooters or PLEVs (Personal Light Electric Vehicles) on the other hand, riders have to be 18 years or over (for hire E-scooters). They must also hold a Provisional or Full Driving License for car/motorcycle/moped, something under 16's will not have.

### **5. They're not very secure**

The problem with E-scooters is that their basic shape does not offer an easy route to locking them up. Unlike bikes, there is no frame presenting a thief-proof way to attach the chassis to road furniture, and you cannot get a decently girthed chain through the wheel.

Sadly, what is not very lockable is therefore nickable, and your expensive chariot is thus all the more attractive. Furthermore, most E-scooters do not have a lockable ignition, the more typical starter-button mechanism allows the chancers to pootle off into the sunset. And even if they cannot start it, they might be tempted to senselessly chuck it in the river or canal.

### **6. They're not the best workhorse**

Like the horses that came before them, bicycles can help you carry large loads with the use of panniers on either side, which will distribute the weight.

E-scooters offer no such logistical assistance. You could fill a backpack or rucksack, but the resulting balancing act may be difficult to control. Just as E-scooters are not built for the long commute, they are also unsuited to heavy lifting.

### **7. They might not be all that green**

There is no doubt we have to clean up our act in regards to omissions, and moving over our motive power from fossil fuels to electricity is a big part of that. But is an E-scooter actually that green?

True, you won't be pouring petrol in and spewing fumes out, but the electricity that recharges its batteries doesn't fall out of the sky, it still has to be paid for. In addition, what is that battery made of? Usually, it's a lithium ion battery, which is expensive to replace, and what happens when the battery ends its lifecycle?

And talking about the lithium ion batteries, there is a possibility it could burst into flames. This has happened, hundreds of times, according to the US Consumer Product Safety Commission, with many of these incidents available to view on YouTube and TikTok!

### **8. It's you versus the lorries!**

Although as previously stated, private E-scooters are currently illegal, it is possible that the government may at some point relax the law on using them on completion of the current city hire trials. If it does, it is unlikely that the change in law will allow usage on pavements, pedestrian areas, footpaths and cycle lanes as previously mentioned. In short: you ain't going on the pavement or cycle lanes, but you will more than likely be on the road. Do you really fancy your chances against a lorry?

### **9. You may be liable to Police action**

Enforcement is mainly focused on private E-scooters. The most appropriate action for the individual circumstances will be undertaken but could include (but not limited to):

- Fixed Penalty Notice for no insurance: £300 fine and six penalty points and seizure of the vehicle.
- Fixed Penalty Notice for no driving licence: up to £100 fine and three to six penalty points.
- Youth Divert Scheme (16yrs and under only).

Police will also take action against rider behaviour, whether private or rental. Offences could include:

- Riding on the footway: Fixed Penalty Notice and possible £50 fine.
- Using a mobile phone whilst riding: £300 and six penalty points.
- Riding through a red light: Fixed Penalty Notice £100 fine and possible penalty points.
- Drink driving offences: As with driving cars; Court imposed fines, driving ban and possible imprisonment.
- Drug drive offences: As above.
- Riding without Due Care and Attention.

If your E-scooter is seized, you would unlikely be able to reclaim it as these vehicles are incapable of being made “road legal” and insured (see Point 1). The only avenue to seek the return of a seized E-scooter is via the Court route (Police Property Act 1897). The owner of the E-scooter would need to contact the Court to seek an application for return of the item in Police Property, a power only available to the Court to grant. If this is being considered, the owner would need to make Police aware within 14 days of the seizure if they intend to take Court action, otherwise the vehicle would be disposed of after the 14 days retention period.

### **10. They're expensive**

Not just for the reasons above, they are expensive to buy. You could pick one for as little as £100 but the average pricing is somewhere around £400-£1,000, some as much as £6,000!

So, before you spend your hard earned cash on an E-scooter for you or your child this Christmas, re-read the above and consider an alternative until there is a change in the law.

