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E-Scooter Regulations – When we can expect to see change?

The regulatory regime for privately-owned e-scooters urgently needs to be clarified and updated. Given the proliferation of privately owned e-scooters, with around 750,000 in England alone, and the practical difficulties already encountered around enforcement of their use in public places, no-one believes that the current situation is sustainable.

A consensus appears to be forming that both rental and privately-owned e-scooters should be legal to use in public places, providing there is a robust regulatory regime on the allowed technical specifications, safety equipment and usage. The Department for Transport has hinted that there may be a new Low-Speed Zero Emission Vehicle category in the forthcoming Transport Bill to enable new powers and establish a revised regulatory regime.

Most of the technical requirements around anti-tampering, wheel size, brakes and weight should be relatively straightforward. The retrofitting of currently owned private e-scooters that do not meet these specifications should be actively encouraged, and should be a necessity if they are to be used on public roads.

Whilst 'education over enforcement' must be the longer-term goal, given the widespread illegal use of e-scooters enforcement must be increased in order to combat the cultural acceptance of illegal behaviours. There should also be increased penalties for retailers selling e-scooters beyond the

established technical specifications.

The risk of head injury from e-scooters is high, and so mandatory helmet wearing would also be sensible. Although it is not currently a legal requirement for bikes, there appears to be some evidence that serious head injury from e-scooter accidents is more likely. Carrying a passenger, drink driving, dangerous or careless riding and the use of headphones, handheld mobile phones or other devices should also be prohibited.

A driver's licence is required for rental e-scooters, so it would make sense for privately owned e-scooters to require the same. There could also be limits on night-time usage, as in Norway and Finland.

However, the thorny issues are mostly around road tax, registration plates and mandatory insurance. Despite the difficult enforcement issues, there are strong arguments in favour of all of these factors. With the number of deaths and serious injuries rising, can we really place convenience and affordability above wellbeing and life? ●