

## **Wheels for Wellbeing briefing statement: E-cycles, Disabled people's mobility and fire safety**

### **Our position:**

At Wheels for Wellbeing we're very concerned that organisations including Transport for London, a range of NHS trusts and other public bodies are considering banning e-cycles from being parked or used on their premises, and that insurers and landlords are removing permission for e-cycles to be stored in homes.

We consider the banning e-cycles from public spaces and services and the de facto banning of e-cycles from private homes via insurance and tenancy clauses to be inappropriate, disproportionate and discriminatory responses to the low fire risk that the government and fire services agree is posed by legal e-cycles.

Banning e-cycles from homes, from public transport and from important destinations in response to a low risk of fire in legal, appropriately-used devices fails to account for the huge importance of e-cycles used as mobility aids and for essential transport by many Disabled people, who often have no other viable mobility options.

#### **E-cycles are essential mobility aids for many Disabled people.**

Removing or restricting Disabled people's option to use safe, legal e-cycles for journeys will have a serious negative impact on Disabled people's mobility, health and access to employment, education and healthcare.

Disabled people need to have the option to use safe, legal e-cycles for all our journeys, including multi-modal, cycle-public transport-cycle, journeys and journeys to key destinations such as healthcare, education and both to and within employment, in the same way that some Disabled people use electric wheelchairs and mobility scooters.



## What we want to happen:

1. **We call on organisations** to read and consider the [Department for Transport's fire safety guidance on e-cycles](#) as well as the [current evidence available on causes of fires](#), to better understand the relative fire risk from e-cycles and e-scooters.
2. **We call on organisations** including employers and landlords to ensure their policies on e-cycle use and storage address the genuine safety issues arising from illegal and modified e-cycles without harming Disabled people's mobility:

[Current guidance](#) is clear that undamaged, legal e-cycles present a very low fire risk, with risk extremely low while cycles are not being charged.

3. **We call on insurers** to distinguish between safe, reputable and legal CE marked e-cycle electrical sets and dangerous, untested and illegal e-cycles. Insurers must ensure that their criteria do not restrict the use of legal, reputable e-cycles as safe, accessible, affordable and low-carbon mobility options especially for Disabled people simply because illegal devices exist and their use is insufficiently enforced. If the same approach were taken for cars, with law-abiding drivers prevented from using legal cars because there are [illegal](#) and [unsafe vehicles](#) being used and [because cars carry significant fire risk too](#), there would be nobody left driving.
4. **We call on government** to urgently bring forward regulations which will stem the tide of dangerous, illegal e-motorcycle kits, modification kits and low-quality, unsafe spare parts being imported into the UK, to reduce the fire risk from these dangerous devices.
5. **We call on government** to address the exploitation of gig economy delivery riders, identified in government guidance as a high-risk user group for e-cycle fires. We call on government to alter regulations such that that the large organisations using the labour of gig economy riders are held responsible for the safety and legality of the cycles and motorcycles used by riders working on their behalf.



## E-cycles and fire risk:

The UK government and [fire services](#) agree fire risk in e-cycles and e-scooters largely arises from dangerously modified, damaged and often illegal devices, with safe, legal e-cycles and e-scooters providing important low-carbon, low-risk mobility to millions of people:

“With their ability to enable more people of all ages and abilities to cycle, or to cycle further, e-cycles are an important element of the government’s ambition for active travel to make a significant contribution to the decarbonisation of the transport sector.”

“While most e-cycles are very safe, as with all products using lithium batteries, there is a risk of fire, particularly for counterfeit, damaged or poorly modified e-cycles and batteries, or when the incorrect charger is used.” – [DfT Battery Safety for e-cycle users guidance, 2024](#)

“...while safety remains the priority, it is also important that responses to fire risks are appropriately targeted, effective and proportionate, so that the potential of these forms of transport is not unnecessarily limited.” – [DfT e-cycle and e-scooter batteries: Managing fire risk for premises guidance, 2024](#)

### From government guidance and published ONS data:

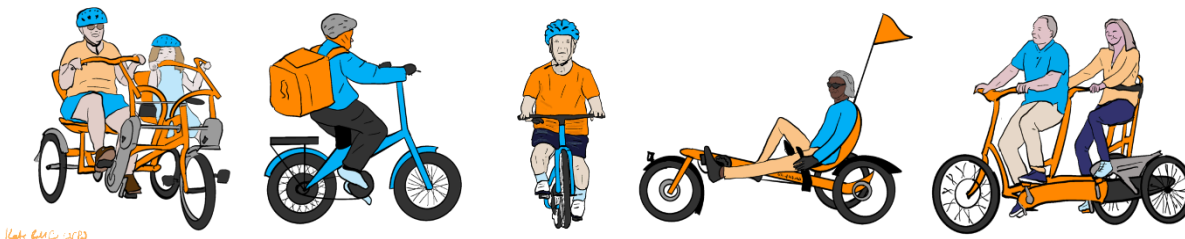
1. Owner-modified e-devices and those with visibly damaged, bulging, smelly or leaky batteries are a fire risk, particularly while batteries are charging. Most of these fires are residential. “Gig economy” riders using owner-modified e-cycles (very often illegal e-motorcycles) have been identified by London Fire Brigade as a high-risk user group.
2. [Total attended e-mobility fires were around 338 in 2023](#), compared to [178,737 total attended fires April 2022 to March 2023](#).

**E-cycle and e-scooter fires make up under 0.2% of all attended fires.**

3. Smokers’ materials, cooking appliances, electrical distribution, candles and space heating appliances were the leading causes of fatal building fires, with “other electrical appliances” (potentially including e-devices) the sixth listed cause of fatal building fires ([Home Office detailed analysis of fires 2022-23 figure 5.1](#)).
4. There were 18,665 attended road vehicle fires in 2023-24 ([ONS fire statistics data table fire0302](#)).

**Road vehicles cause 5500% more attended fires than e-cycles and e-scooters.**

5. [Only one e-scooter fire has ever been reported in a public transport vehicle](#). No e-cycle fires have been reported in public transport vehicles.





## Disabled people and e-cycles:

1. [Our surveys](#) have found that Disabled people who cycle are far more likely to use e-cycles than non-Disabled people. Anecdotally, reasons given are impairments that make cycling without e-assist impossible, excessively painful and/or excessively tiring. Disabled people who identify cycling as their primary mode of transport and who are able to use unpowered cycles often use e-cycles because they do not find it feasible to make all the journeys they want or need to make without e-assistance.
2. E-assist enables Disabled people to make longer journeys, navigate hilly terrain and carry out essential errands such as shopping, as well as maintain a safe speed among traffic, particularly, for example, crossing large and time limited junctions.
3. Disabled people are [disproportionately unlikely to be able to drive](#), [disproportionately unlikely to be able to access public transport](#) and [disproportionately unlikely to be able to access private hire vehicles](#): The exclusion of many Disabled people from many journey-making options increases the importance of e-cycles to Disabled people as a group.
4. Disabled people are [disproportionately likely to live in poverty](#) and be socially isolated, with [poor education, health and employment outcomes unrelated to their impairments](#). A lack of mobility options is a significant factor in this, with Disabled people making [38% fewer journeys than non-Disabled people](#).
5. For many Disabled people, e-cycles provide a relatively cheap, relatively easy to store mobility option which can improve physical and mental health as well as improving access to education, employment, healthcare and community.

