

# WHY E-BIKE?

A recent Spokes competition asked...

***"What has transformed your cycling life?"***

Five entries came from people of middle age or over who had bought an e-bike.

Some had not cycled for years or decades, but all now cycle remarkable distances, for work and/or leisure. Four of the five had lost weight: three had lost 1-2 stones, one had lost "a ton of weight" and the fifth was slim already! For all five, their e-bike had transformed their lives.

This factsheet tells some of their stories and shows how you can do the same!

## What is an E-bike?

- ◆ Basically, it's a bicycle with electrical assistance which can only operate when you are pedalling
- ◆ With some, the harder you pedal the more the motor helps, others have a switch to adjust power
- ◆ Legally the motor must cut out at 15.5mph (25kph), so an e-bike can't make you a 'speed merchant'
- ◆ E-bikes usually weigh 25-30kg, heavier than non-e, so think about how/where you will store it
- ◆ A modern e-bike battery takes you a long way and is unlikely to need recharging except at night. The charger plugs into a normal 13amp socket.
- ◆ Cost varies widely, according to quality & options, roughly £500-£3000, typically £1500-£2000; and the battery may need replacing every few years
- ◆ You are allowed to use all normal bike facilities, cycleroutes, advanced stop lines, etc.
- ◆ Rules for e-bikes vary from country to country, and the points above may differ outside the UK.
- ◆ E-bikes are also called *pedelecs*. Many European countries also allow *s-pedelecs*, with a maximum speed of 45kph. These are not legal in the UK.

## The E-Bike Smile!!

Although she didn't enter our competition, Edinburgh City Council's Transport Convener, **Councillor Lesley Macinnes**, could have been in line for a prize too!!

In May 2018, not having cycled for 35 years, she bought a lovely red e-bike - and took to it like a duck to water (yes, even on some rainy days!) - so much so that she now enters the office with an *e-bike smile* !



*photo and quotes courtesy of The Edinburgh Reporter*

Lesley lives in her ward of Liberton/Gilmerton, not the flattest part of the city, but the e-bike doesn't mind ..

*"It is absolutely terrific – I am able to get up hills with enormous confidence and it's easier getting away from traffic lights, particularly when on a hill."*

Travelling by bike also helps you feel you are doing something for the City and for the planet ..

*"I am perhaps setting a good example by commuting in this easy but sustainable way."*

## E-bike research

- ◆ E-bikers used about 20% less energy per mile than on a non-e bike. They pedalled most of the time.
  - ◆ E-bikers tended to make longer journeys. As a result, total energy used was more than for typical non-e bike trips. [Certainly our competition results suggested people e-biking much longer distances].
  - ◆ E-bikers felt safer because of moving away from junctions quickly and not wobbling up hills.
- [All info from *Local Transport Today*, 3.8.18]

# WHY E-BIKE?

## Rosanna Rabaeijs

I always thought I would get an e-bike 'sometime', but hadn't really reckoned on it being so soon. My mum moved into a Retirement Home in Dalkeith in January and the journey to visit her across town from Blackhall by car was extremely tedious - and guilt-inducing in terms of burning fossil-fuels for just me in the car.

I had done the trip a few times by regular bike, taking the longish but flattish way round out along the Innocent Railway line following NCR1. It was do-able but I wasn't good for much the next day!

At the Firestarter Festival, I tried a 'Nihola', one of *Laid Back Bike's* trial models, then hired it



## Paul Allen

At the ripe old age of 48, I am cycling again after a break of 20 years. Why? Well I picked up a number of back injuries, operations and so on over the last two decades, which made cycling intolerable. I was fine on the flat but any incline hurt seriously and I had to push.



So I gave up cycling. Put a load of weight on and went back to car commuting. Not proud of this, and every time I sat in the bypass queue, looked up and saw cyclists over the viaduct, I had a real sense of defeat. I was also missing out as both kids were riding now.

So I bought an electric bike. What a revelation! I could pedal along the flat and then, hey presto! the motor kicks in when the horrible hills arrive. I am now the proud owner of a German tank (yes, they do weigh a little more). But now I'm back on a bike and I pedal all the way to work and back along the towpath.

I can now look down onto the bypass from the viaduct and have a smile on my face. And I can tackle any weather. I even rode it in the snow last December.

I have lost a ton of weight and feel so much better. I even take the kids to their clubs during the week on our bikes. Cycling is for everyone, whatever you ride.

for a day - and bought it. David Gardiner of *Laidback* offered me a good price in return for promising to tell people about it, and I've been doing so ever since [Ed: now you're telling it again!!]

I gradually found the best routes to my mum's, and it quite impresses the staff, fellow residents and visitors. I don't plan to give up my regular bike for shorter trips about town but I also now also use the ebike to get out to West Lothian to my monthly Reading Group, and that's great too. The computer says it has been on for 104 hours, has done a total distance of 1400 miles, and my average speed is 12.9m/h overall.

Recently I did what for me was a marathon journey - first down to Musselburgh to help hand out Spokes' 'Bike Aware' leaflets at a young driver event, then to Dalkeith to spend an hour with mum, then to West Calder to deliver a birthday present, and home via Bellsquarry for the Reading Group meeting. And not even on the last bar of the battery.

I don't know how far the marathon trip was exactly, but I do know that I was perfectly fine doing it despite some strong winds, and not suffering the next day!

## Bill Waugh (North Berwick)

Age takes its toll on energy levels, and I was doing less and less cycling. So, I bought a Volt Pulse e-bike.

This is definitely my cycling transformation! The power assistance irons out the hills beautifully, and the battery gives me all the range I need - anyway I can always do the last wee bit under pedal power if necessary.



I have renewed my acquaintance with East Lothian's hills, hollows, lightly used roads and country cafes. I have gone further by train to revisit the Innocent and Pencaitland railway paths and many other minor roads and tracks.

I've had a great time, will have covered nearly 1000 miles in my first year, have visited lots of good places and cafes, and lost 1½ stones. It can't be bad!



*A quick coffee in Edinburgh!*



# WHY E-BIKE?

## Councillor Mark Brown

*Remarkably, it's not just one but two councillors whose lives have been transformed recently, with added health and enjoyment, thanks to an e-bike!*

Picture the scene. Twenty-odd years ago, I was cycling down Canonmills ... halfway down the hill, my fairly budget-price bike starts to disintegrate! Quick thinking saved me, but I hadn't cycled since.

Having been elected last year (Drum Brae / Gyle ward) I go to many local meetings and an impromptu chat with Graeme Hart of *Hart's Cyclery* led to me borrowing a Gazelle E-Bike over the festive period.

With a cycle path near home and a fair non-offensive route to work, I started to test the water to see if I'd be confident enough to get back in the saddle.

As a semi-retired rugby prop entering the realms of middle-age, exercise is welcome. After a few days saving at least an hour 'dead time' sitting on a bus, I really started to enjoy this wee loan spell of cycling. It took a few months to, erm, get myself in gear – but I stuck by my word and purchased a Gazelle Vento C7.

Since then, I've racked up over 1,000 miles, I cycle to and from work, city chambers, constituency and even do leisurely runs, North Berwick being a recent trip.



Unsurprisingly I've lost a stone and gained followers on Twitter [[@Mr\\_Mark\\_Brown](#)] who are keen to follow affectionately named 'Horatio' on his travels! So, overall, my transformation has been simple but effective. A big thanks to Graeme too for his assistance and post-purchase support.



## Kate Sugden e-cargo bike

*E-assistance is even more helpful for cargo bikes, where weight, including the (often very precious!) cargo is a major consideration. In last year's competition Kate won a free day's trial of the EdFoC Urban Arrow electric cargo bike. Here is what happened - we love it!!*

Having never ridden a cargo or e-bike before, I ended our day with my eyes opened to a new vision of the future!

The machine was pure pleasure to ride. The simple joy of cycling my daughter to her friend in Leith and back, without having to consider my energy levels, convinced me that with the right infrastructure the e-and cargo bike combination would negate the need for many to use a car within the city - a wonderful vision indeed!

My husband and daughter felt similar – see picture. My subsequent enthusiasm for e-assist spurred my somewhat listlessly retired parents into getting

e-bikes! Both have now enjoyed long rides around Stirlingshire, the Isle of Wight and the Pyrenees, instead of endless Facebook and sudoku - a truly positive transformation!

## Spokes CargoBike support

This factsheet is about e-assist for individuals and families, but we'd also like to mention that, thanks to generous donations from our members, Spokes offers matching cash up to £500 to **community groups** buying a cargo bike (with or without e-assist). Details at... [spokes.org.uk](http://spokes.org.uk) : documents : spokes projects : cargo bikes.





# WHY E-BIKE? ... GETTING STARTED

There is now a growing range of opportunities for trying out, hiring and/or buying an e-bike or cargo bike. Most bike shops now sell e-bikes, but this page outlines additional options for trying, hiring and buying, as well as available grants and loans.

Note: Info on this page is thought to be correct as at Sept 2018 but may change, so please check with the supplier.

## Low Carbon Transport Loan Fund

This Scottish Government fund gives 4-year interest-free **loans** for households (up to £6000) or businesses (£30k) to buy e-bikes including e-cargo and e-adaptive (for people with disabilities). Also a **free trial**.

There is a separate scheme of **grants** for councils, colleges and some other public or community bodies to support the wider adoption of e- and cargo-bikes.

For this & other energy-saving schemes see advert or.. [www.energysavingtrust.org.uk/scotland/grants-loans](http://www.energysavingtrust.org.uk/scotland/grants-loans)

## Green Commute Initiative [GCI]

Employers can now sign up to GCI, which is fairly similar to the Cycle to Work scheme but unlike C2W has no £1000 upper limit. Under both schemes, you get a bike tax-free through 'salary sacrifice.'

Details at... [greencommuteinitiative.uk](http://greencommuteinitiative.uk)

### Local e-bike & cargo-bike services

NB – additionally, most bike shops now sell e-bikes

<a href="http://edinburghcyclehire.com">edinburghcyclehire.com</a>	BH [soon]
<a href="http://*edfoc.org.uk/cargo-bike-hire">*edfoc.org.uk/cargo-bike-hire</a>	CH
<a href="http://laid-back-bikes.scot">laid-back-bikes.scot</a>	BS,CS
<a href="http://www.harts-cyclery.co.uk">www.harts-cyclery.co.uk</a>	BH,BS,CS,CH
<a href="http://edinburghbicycle.com">edinburghbicycle.com</a>	BS
<a href="http://*sustrans.org.uk/thebikelibrary">*sustrans.org.uk/thebikelibrary</a>	CL
<a href="http://electriccyclecompany.com">electriccyclecompany.com</a>	BS,CS
<a href="http://electronwheels.co.uk">electronwheels.co.uk</a>	BS
<a href="http://www.thebikespark.eu">www.thebikespark.eu</a>	CD,BR
<a href="http://www.edinburghcouriernetwork.co.uk">www.edinburghcouriernetwork.co.uk</a>	CD
<a href="http://www.zedify.co.uk/edinburgh">www.zedify.co.uk/edinburgh</a>	CD
<b>West Lothian</b>	
<a href="http://*wlbiklibrary.co.uk">*wlbiklibrary.co.uk</a>	07724 667321 BH
<a href="http://*transitionlinlithgow.org.uk">*transitionlinlithgow.org.uk</a>	01506 844182 BH
<b>Midlothian</b>	
<a href="http://*Gorebridge.org.uk">*Gorebridge.org.uk</a>	01875 823202 BH
<b>East Lothian</b>	
<a href="http://thebikehub.scot">thebikehub.scot</a> [near North Berwick]	BH,BS

BS E-bike sales

BH E-bike hire

BR E-bike home repair; also bike->e-bike conversions

CS Cargo-bike sales

CH Cargo-bike hire

CD Deliveries by cargo-bike

CL Cargo-bike 'library' - tryouts for businesses

\* Non-profit organisation, charges may be negotiable



Gazelle Orange C8 HMB eBike

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