

Your opinions

LETTERS

THIS MONTH E-BIKE LEGISLATION, BOTTOM BRACKET HIGHS AND LOWS, BIKES ON DRAINS, MULTIFUNCTIONAL BIKES, FLASHING LIGHTS, AND MORE



Letter
of the
month

Legislation

E-BIKES & N IRELAND

As a member of Cycling UK living in Northern Ireland, I was disappointed to find no mention in the last issue of Cycle of the problem facing electric bike owners in Northern Ireland. Over the summer, the government department (DVLA) has ruled that electric bikes must be treated as motorcycles and owners must register their bikes with the DVLA and tax and insure them. It appears to arise because the civil service did not properly update the legal regulations on electric bikes.

Although I am not an electric bike owner, I know riders and local businesses who have been badly affected by this. I expected at least some mention of this issue, if not a full article, advising members and outlining what Cycling UK was doing to change this ruling.

Gabriel Fulton

We mentioned this in the 'Electrify your bike' article in the Aug-Sep issue. I know Cycling UK's Policy Director Roger Geffen has been in touch with you with a full explanation, so I'll just print the key sentence from his reply: 'The current suspension of the Northern Ireland Assembly means that nobody can now rectify the problem, even though everyone agrees that this needs doing!' Once the Assembly has reconvened, action can then be taken.

Write to
Cycle

Cycle, PO Box 313, Scarborough, YO12 6WZ. **EMAIL:** cycle@jamespembrokemedia.co.uk
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ALTURA



Bagging a trip to Paris

Left: Huw Poraj-Wilczynski

PROBLEM IN BAG AREA

Was Sam Jones aware that two people had smuggled their way into his pannier while on his Eurostar journey?

Adrian Smyly

GET TO THE BOTTOM OF IT

The Oct/Nov issue of Cycle was the most interesting one for an age. There was humour, adventure, relevance, and currency. It was thought-provoking and a reminder that most people, including children, can cycle and enjoy doing so.

The piece about the smaller frame/shorter cranks shows there's a need for a feature on shorter people and the challenges they face. A piece looking at obstacles and options for smaller people would be useful.

Related to that: in the article about your search for a bike for all reasons, there's a lot of technical detail. There was talk here too of the need for a lower bottom bracket, but it was not explained

why. I am less than 5'2" and so the discussion was of relevance to me. Can you explain what a lower bottom bracket means in terms of usability, please?

Rebecca Lack

A lower bottom bracket makes it easier to put a foot down – at traffic lights, for example – because the saddle will also be lower to the ground by the same amount. However, it makes pedal strikes more likely off-road. So it's handy if your road or town bike has a lower bottom bracket than your mountain bike.

Getting a foot down from the saddle, or mounting/dismounting, is a bigger deal the shorter you are, hence the need for a bottom bracket that's lower still. There's an added complication: if you fit shorter cranks, the saddle height has to go up so that your legs still extend properly at the bottom of the pedal stroke. So if you need short cranks, it's much better if the frame has been specifically designed for them – with an even lower bottom bracket.

Proportional measures





Report hazards at fillthathole.org.uk

▶ FEELING DRAINED

The last issue of Cycle got me thinking about losing my wheel down a drain. In Q&A, one rider highlighted the problem but seemed to be dismissed by his local council. Riding home recently, I stopped to take photos of the countless different drain covers. The most dangerous was positioned in the centre of one lane and it easily swallowed my wheel, as illustrated. I'd love to hear any council arguing this is safe and needed for drainage!

Bob Willis

ONE BIKE ONLY

I enjoyed your article about single 'multifunctional' bikes in the Oct/Nov edition. I owned one for ten years, christened Rudy: a red Marin MTB with 26" wheels. Due to security concerns about keeping bikes in my back yard, and limited space indoors, this bike was my daily work commuter and round-town shopping bike. It



Transport, tourist, MTB

OBITUARIES

Are now being published online at cyclinguk.org/ obituaries. We recently said farewell to Brian Morris. Send obituaries, with a digital photo if you wish, to publicity@cyclinguk.org.

did 60-70 mile countryside runs every weekend, and even proper mountain biking! I took this bike touring to 13 countries. For 95% of the time, it had 35mm touring tyres on, but I would change to MTB tyres when going off-road.

After it had carried me for at least 40,000 miles, I donated it to the excellent Recycle y'Bike project in Newcastle. I hope it's still out there, giving enjoyment.

Stephen Psallidas



Reelights flash but don't dazzle

LIGHTING FLASHPOINT

I have commuted year-round by bike since 1992, but am considering giving it up – not because of increasingly aggressive motorists, but because of powerful flashing lights, particularly on the cycle-path section of my commute.

I anticipated this problem during the consultation on the 2005 Amendments to the Road Vehicle Lighting Regulations, when I objected to the legalisation of flashing front lights. It was obvious that front flashers would soon become a hazard to other road users, including cyclists.

Regrettably, Cycling UK (then CTC) supported the change. Do you have any thoughts on what can be done about this menace?

Danny Colyer

As I understand it, Cycling UK supported flashing lights, not powerful flashing lights. It was and remains an offence to dazzle other road users. Highway Code Rule 114 says: 'You MUST NOT... use any lights in a way which would dazzle or cause discomfort to other road users, including pedestrians, cyclists and horse riders.' See also bit.ly/cycle-dazzling.

The Cycling Cartoonist



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The Cycling Cartoonist, An Illustrated Guide to Life on Two Wheels by Dave Walker, is published by Bloomsbury (bloomsbury.com), priced £10.99.

Join the conversation

CYCLING UK FORUM

Get immediate feedback from other Cycling UK members on the Cycling UK forum: forum.cyclinguk.org. Here's an abridged extract from a recent thread: bit.ly/cycle-urbantouring

URBAN TOURING?

mercalia: Are there any more like me who mostly do urban touring? I like wandering around towns and cities.

iandriver: Don't know if you've ever done audax, but the London Sightseer is spectacular. A bike is often the best way to see a city. **Gattonero:** Very early weekend mornings, or very late schoolday evenings/nights are the best time. It works better in spring/summer, when days are longer and you can enjoy the sunrise on quiet streets

before cars spoil it. **nirakaro:** Last year, I spent a day crossing Paris from east to west. Loved it. To my mind, most city sights – Eiffel Tower etc. – are worth seeing, but not really worth stopping for.

PH: I've been on several guided city tours: Berlin, Amsterdam, Barcelona, Paris, Rome, Naples, Madrid, Manchester, Oxford. They've all been fun and a great way to get a feel for an unfamiliar city.

AdamS: Does anybody else enjoy following



the National Cycle Network through towns and cities? Lots of routes are rubbish. When they work well, I enjoy the bizarre feeling of having traversed a city without battling with traffic. **Slowroad:** I've happily explored Birmingham, mainly by canal. It feels like another dimension, and Spaghetti Junction from underneath has to be seen to be believed! The enjoyable side of urban touring is down to decent cycling provision. Busy, polluted road cycling isn't fun.

How to contact Cycle



LETTERS are edited for space (especially if above 150 words), clarity and, if necessary, legality. Please note that if you have specific complaint or query about Cycling UK policy, you should address it to the relevant national office staff member. Letters & emails for the Feb-Mar issue must arrive by 22 December. Write to: cycle@jamespembroke.co.uk or Cycle, PO Box 313, Scarborough, YO12 6WZ



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