

Chief Executive

RECHARGING THE BATTERIES



PAUL TUOHY
Chief Executive

Paul Tuohy's Christmas break started badly but ended well thanks to a friend's new-found love of cycling, courtesy of a borrowed e-bike



Anne's cycling gets a boost

Photos: Martin Jones

SO HERE WE ARE, well into the New Year. What was your cycling resolution and how long will it last? Mine is to be more vigilant with my bikes, as one was stolen from under my nose on a train from London to Kent just before Christmas. I'd been chatting about cycling with a friendly fellow passenger, who had struck up conversation after noticing my Cycling UK jacket.

The chap asked what Cycling UK was all about, and we had a 15-minute discussion about Cycling UK advocacy, projects, CTC groups, and championing cycling for all. I thought I'd recruited a new member! As he left, we wished each other a Merry Christmas. I then turned around to see that my Brompton, which I'd stowed behind my seat, had gone! Was I being deliberately distracted? Or was someone else taking advantage of my distraction?

My son picked me up from the station

“E-bikes are a gateway into cycling for many people”

three stops later. ‘How on earth did you let that happen?’ he wanted to know, as did my wife. I felt dreadful – and angry. Back in the office next day, our new Head of Communications, Adrian Wills, said we should publicise the theft and see if we got lucky. I agreed, and his press release was picked up by some of the tabloids.

This led to Kent Online running the story, where it was seen by a good Samaritan called Jason, who phoned to say he'd found it discarded near a train station and had taken it home. To my utter delight, Jason arrived at my house shortly after with my Brompton. It really made my Christmas to have it returned. I won't let it out of my sight in future.

POWER FOR THE PEOPLE

The following week I was on holiday in France with my friends Debbie, Anne and their partners. They were intrigued by the two electric bikes in the garage. I'd bought them last summer as some previous guests had said the cycling down to Lake Annecy was fantastic but, being hilly, it was hard work getting back again.

Having used them in the UK before taking

them out to France, I'd got used to the huge amount of fun they were for going to the shops or to my local for a pint. They came with two big pannier bags and a rack, so could haul plenty of shopping. I was surprised at the number of strangers who commented on the e-bike as I locked it up (securely, of course!). Most people have heard of e-bikes but not that many get to see them close up.

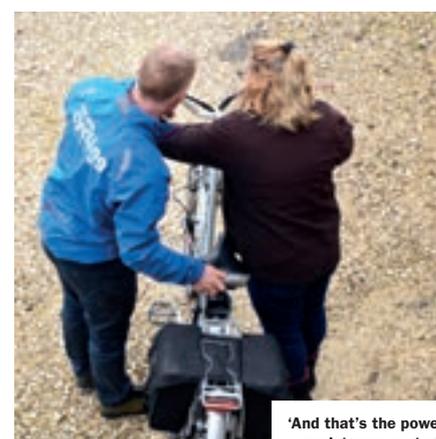
Over in France, Anne asked if she could try one of the e-bikes to pop down to the supermarket a mile away. It was 5°C and wet but Anne seemed keen, so off we went. The impact was immediate and profound.

Anne has cycled in Les Baux before, but like many casual cyclists finds hilly terrain challenging. The climb up to the local church back from the supermarket is steep. With baguettes, two litres of milk, and other groceries she pedalled up that hill with the smile of a young girl on Christmas Day.

‘I love it, I love it, I want one!’ she cried. There then ensued a conversation with her husband Paul about their next important investment...

E-bikes are here to stay. They are a gateway into cycling for many people, as well as an aid to existing cyclists. If they make doing the shopping more fun, take away the car for short trips, and help you stay active, what's not to like?

Paul videoed Anne's maiden e-bike voyage:
cyclinguk.org/article/power-electric-bikes



‘And that's the power assistance control’