

Opinion Letters

THIS MONTH FROZEN CABLES, POST-OP CYCLING, CHAIN TERMINOLOGY, BIKES ON NIGHT TRAINS – AND MORE

Get in touch

LETTERS are edited for space, clarity and, if necessary, legality. The editor reads and automatically acknowledges all letters but publishes only a selection. Feedback for the next issue must arrive by 30 April. Please include your membership number.

WRITE TO: Letters, Cycle, Cycling UK, Parklands, Railton Rd, Guildford, GU2 9JX or email editor@cyclinguk.org



The battery (left) and a formerly white ceiling

Letter of the month

FIRE ALARM

E-bike battery fires have been widely reported, but the suggestion seems to be that these are caused primarily by cheap imported batteries from China, and normally plugged in. My e-bike battery was neither of these things. It was a Kalkhoff with an expensive 625Wh branded battery, which was not plugged in.

We had a house flood on the 1 January 2025, with water maybe 2cm deep getting into the garage. The bike battery and all my cycling kit was stored in a strong supermarket carrier bag. Water did not cover the battery. On the 6 January, this battery spontaneously combusted and my garage was very smoke damaged. I've enclosed pictures of the remains of the battery bag and the garage.

An expert fire assessor was sent from the insurance company already dealing with the flood. He agreed that it was likely to be condensation and not water covering. The battery was being stored correctly.

The e-bike and all my bike equipment has been written off, as has most of the contents of my garage. I will replace my e-bike, although finding a small-sized model anywhere near where I live in Manchester is like hen's teeth! However, I will be buying a fireproof battery bag for it.

Karen Sandler

The overwhelming majority of e-bike fires are caused by cheap batteries and chargers with inadequate safety features. But we have reported on an incident where a member's e-bike caught fire after being stored in a car while still wet with seawater. (It hadn't been immersed.) This incident and yours demonstrate that it's safer to store an e-bike – or at least its battery – in a non-damp environment. Read more about battery safety and safe charging practices at ebikepositive.co.uk.

Win three Hiplok JAW+ bike racks worth £113.97



The letter of the month wins three Jaw+ bike racks, worth £37.99 each, courtesy of Hiplok. These wall-mounted racks are adjustable to fit tyres from 20-75mm wide, and can be used in or outdoors. Each is supplied with fittings plus a lightweight Z Lok Combo, which can double as your café lock. For more about Hiplok storage and security, visit hiplok.com.



STOP SEIZED CABLES

The Feb/Mar 2025 edition of Cycle had an article on preventing frozen brake cables. Introducing oil down the cable where it enters the housing and then capping the cable with a dab of grease where it enters the housing is at best partially effective. It slows water entry, but water gets past the grease after a while. Then it gravitates down the cable outer and freezes in a U-shaped section, seizing the cable.

The solution is to ensure the water drains out. A convenient way to do this is to fit a cable oiler at the lowest point on the cable (as pictured). Any water that gets in drains out at the cut outer junction. Lube on the cable, being more viscous, tends to stay put. Cable oilers can be found at SJS Cycles and other outlets.

Dr Cliff Barthram

WHAT'S WATT?

In the Feb/March issue of Cycle, Nadia Kerr covers some of the legal issues about e-bikes. But what still remains unclear to me is the legal amount of Watts for an e-bike. The article clearly states anything above 250 Watts is illegal. My neighbours have bikes with 600 Watts, friends have mountain bikes with similar if not more power and my wife bought a Vado 4 with 325 Watts. Am I missing something obvious?

Philip Dean

You're confusing Watt-hours (Wh), a measure of battery capacity, with the motor's power rating in Watts (W). See cyclinguk.org/e-bikes for more.