E-bikes and Powered Transporters (including e-scooters)

Position statement V1.2 January 2024

1. Introduction

1.1 There are some significant benefits of using an e-bike as a means of commuting into work and moving between our campuses. An e-bike is cheaper, kinder to the environment, and in some cases faster than using a car, or other forms of transport. Cycling, even with the assistance of an electric motor, has big benefits for your physical and mental health.

1.2 It is important to stress the benefits of e-bikes from the outset as this position statement is not intended to discourage the use of e-bikes. Its intent is to address the legitimate safety concerns and material fire risks that e-bikes present and set out sensible controls.

2. Scope

2.1 This position statement will apply to all staff, students, visitors, and contractors and across all university buildings and grounds owned or controlled by Sheffield Hallam University (SHU).

2.2 This position statement does not apply to mobility scooters, powered wheelchairs and rollators designed to support people with additional mobility needs.

3. Definitions

3.1 **E-bikes:** bicycles which are propelled by a motor, as well as/instead of being manually propelled.

3.2 **Powered transporters:** the Government uses this term to cover a variety of novel personal transport devices which are propelled by a motor, as well as/instead of being manually propelled. It includes escooters, Segways, hoverboards, go-peds (combustion engine-powered kick-scooters), powered unicycles, and u-wheels.

3.3 The examples cited above are not exhaustive and the University may add further forms of powered transporters to this list if it believes that they present a material risk to our people and buildings.

4. Legal position and the position of the University

E-bikes -

4.1 E-bikes or 'electrically assisted pedal cycles' (EAPCs) are legal modes of transport as long as they meet the UK governments criteria. Riders do not need a licence and the e-bike does not need to be registered, taxed, or insured.

4.2 If a bike meets the EAPC requirements, it's classed as a normal pedal bike. This means you can ride it on cycle paths and anywhere else pedal bikes are allowed.

4.3 To meet the governments criteria an e-bikes electric motor must have a maximum power output of 250 watts and should not be able to propel the bike when it's travelling more than 15.5mph. Users should therefore not modify their bikes in such a way that either the power output or the speed limit is exceeded.

4.4 The University therefore permits the use of e-bikes on its campuses, providing the general principles of safe use are followed:

- Our campuses are shared by pedestrians, cyclists, and vehicles. To keep everyone safe, all users should be considerate towards other road and path users. This would include cycling at a speed that is appropriate to the conditions and the environment.
- Pedestrians have priority over cycles and manual scooters on all footpaths in and around the university. Be patient, be respectful, and be alert.
- Use your bell - it's a good way to let pedestrians and other cyclists know that you are approaching, especially in congested areas.
- Never cycle whilst under the influence of alcohol or drugs.
- Cycles may use the footpaths, except where there is an immediate alternative road route.
- Cycles must use lights between dusk and dawn so that you can see and be clearly seen.
- Consider how you are dressed. In the autumn and winter months dress in vivid hues to ensure that you are clearly seen.

Powered transporters (including e-scooters) -

4.5 Powered transporters can only be used on private land to which the public does not have access without legal restrictions. The permission of the owner or occupier of the land must be obtained.

4.6 The University's campuses are private land, and the University does not grant permission for the use, storage, or charging of powered transporters including e-scooters on its campuses. This position will be is enforced by SHU and Constant Security Services.

4.7 It is an offence to use powered transporters on the pavement. Powered transporters are forbidden from using footpaths, cycle tracks, and cycle lanes.

(Please note that term powered transporters does not include mobility scooters, powered wheelchairs and rollators designed to support people with additional mobility needs).

Charging for e-bikes and powered transporters (including e-scooters) -

4.8 The most common type of battery used in e-bikes are lithium-ion based. With lithium-ion batteries there is a serious risk of fire in the event that either the batteries are damaged or when charging sub-standard or modified units.

4.9 Once a lithium-ion battery fire does start the fire can grow extremely rapidly and is very difficult to extinguish.

4.10 Due to the additional fire safety risks associated with these types of batteries, the charging of e-bikes and powered transporters or their battery packs within university buildings is prohibited.

4.11 This position is consistent with guidance from the university's insurers. A failure to implement and comply with the arrangements and restrictions set out in this document could result our insurers rejecting a claim.

Storage arrangements for bicycles including e-bikes -

4.12 Cycle users should make use of the designated bicycle parking facilities which are available at strategic locations throughout the campus. Small "folding" bikes, when folded, may be carried into buildings and stored provided they are stored so that they do not cause obstructions to other building users. The folding bike must be collapsed before entering the building and placed in a bag or holdall thereby preventing water, dirt, or oil from spilling onto the floor.

4.13 Bicycles including e-bikes are not permitted within offices, classrooms, lecture theatres, and technical spaces. Nor are they permitted to be left in corridors and other common areas as they can present serious obstructions to people evacuating buildings in emergencies and could result in the University being culpable under health and safety or fire safety legislation.

Removable battery packs -

4.14 Removable battery packs can be brought into university buildings. However, they must not be charged within the building, and they must be stored in such a way that does not present trip hazard or an obstruction.

5. Enforcement

5.1 Given the fire and health and safety risks if bicycles, e-bikes, or powered transporters are found being stored or charged within common areas in buildings or fire escape routes, they will be removed by SHU Security immediately and without notice.

5.2 If bicycles, e-bikes, or powered transporters are found being stored or charged in other areas such as offices or classrooms, the owner will be instructed to move it to a designated storage area. If the owner refuses, SHU Security have the authority to remove it to a place of safety.

6. Changes to this position statement

6.1 This position statement will be reviewed every 12 months, or in response to changes to legislation or an incident that highlights the need for improvement, or that this statement may no longer be valid.

6.2 Trade unions and health and safety representatives will be consulted in good time about any proposed changes.

Appendix 1

Guidance for staff and students on how to keep your home safe when charging your e-bike

Before a lithium-ion battery catches fire, there may be warning signs that it is about to fail. If you see any of these signs you must act immediately and stop using your battery to stay safe and reduce the risk of fire.

You must stop using or charging your battery immediately if you notice any of the following:

- Overheating: If your device's battery feels extremely hot to the touch.
- Deformation: If your battery looks swollen. Similar signs include any type of lump or leaking from the device.
- Noise: If your battery is making hissing or cracking sounds.
- Smell: If you notice a strong or unusual smell coming from the battery.
- Performance: If your battery does not fully charge or is taking longer to charge than normal.
- Smoke: If your battery or device is smoking.

The majority of fires related to e-bikes happen in the home. These fires often happen when charging batteries. There are a number of ways you can reduce the risk of fire when charging your e-bike battery in the home.

- Don't charge your e-bike in the bedroom or where escape routes can be blocked – for example, hallways.
- Don't leave your battery charging unattended when you are out or while you are asleep.
- Don't cover chargers or battery packs when charging.
- Don't overload sockets when charging and avoid plugging chargers into multi-socket adapters.
- Don't charge or store batteries in direct sunlight or in hot locations (above 45^{o}C).
- Don't charge batteries close to combustible materials or hazardous substances.
- Always unplug your charger when you have finished charging.
- If your battery can be removed from your e-bike and charged separately, it should be charged on a hard flat surface where heat can disperse and in area with good ventilation.

Fire safety in the home

A fire can develop quickly, within a few seconds, and often without warning. Formation of smoke or a white vapour cloud indicate the start of battery failure and fire.

What you must do if your lithium-ion battery is a fire risk:

- If the device starts smoking or catches fire, raise the alarm, get out, stay out and call 999 immediately, never try to fight the fire yourself.
- If your battery shows any signs of failure, turn off the device and unplug it from the power source immediately.
- Ensure that your home has working smoke alarms and test them once a week, or once a month as a minimum to make sure they work.
- Make sure you and your family have an escape plan in place in the event of a fire. Always get out then call 999, never try to fight the fire yourself.
- If you are in student accommodation, ensure that you are familiar with the buildings escape routes and understands the building fire safety arrangements. If you are unsure speak the accommodations provider or your landlord.

Maintaining your e-bike or e-scooter

- Always follow the manufacturer's instructions for charging and using your product.
- Always use the manufacturer-approved battery pack and charger.
- If you need a replacement battery or charger for your e-bike, go directly back to the manufacturer or retailer you bought it from to ensure it's safe.
- Regularly inspect your product and check for damage or warning signs that your battery might be failing and becoming a fire risk.
- Don't attempt to modify or tamper with your battery.

Buying an e-bikes

- Only buy e-bikes, chargers and batteries from reputable retailers and manufacturers.
- Check the product is marked with a CE or UKCA mark to ensure they comply with UK product safety standards.
- Check product reviews before buying.
- Register your product with the manufacturer to validate any warranties and make it easier for manufacturers to contact you in the event of a safety issue e.g., product recall.
- Check if products have been recalled by visiting the government Product Recalls and Alerts website at:

  https://www.gov.uk/guidance/product-recalls-and-alerts

E-bike conversion kits

Conversion kits change standard bicycles into e-bikes.

It is recommended that a professional carries out an e-bike conversion. They will be responsible for ensuring that the e-bike is safe and fitted with the correct motor, battery, and charger.

Installing a conversion kit yourself could lead to safety issues with your e-bike and increase the risk of fire.

Furthermore, it could invalidate the manufacturer's warranty and make you responsible for any consequent damage or accident. If you modify an e-bike to increase its power or speed, then it may no longer be legal to use on public roads.

Disposing of a lithium-ion battery

Lithium-ion batteries should not be placed in the same bins as your regular rubbish or recycling. They can cause a fire if they overheat or when crushed in bin lorries or waste and recycling plants.

You can find out how to dispose of your lithium-ion battery safely by checking your local authority's website for information about the safe disposal of batteries in your area or you can find your nearest recycling centre at:

http://www.recycleyourelectricals.org.uk/

Appendix 2

Useful links:

Staff Cycling Rack and Store Locations

https://sheffieldhallam.sharepoint.com/sites/4178/SitePages/Car-Parking.aspx

Cycle parking and facilities in Sheffield

https://www.sheffield.gov.uk/travel-transport/cycle-parking-facilities

Cycle to work scheme

https://sheffieldhallam.sharepoint.com/sites/3005/penben/benefits/SitePages/cycletoworkscheme.aspx