

Queen Margaret University Lecturer on going green

One Queen Margaret University (QMU) lecturer has gone green and ditched his car as a new way to commute.

As QMU continues to pursue its commitment towards creating a greener, more sustainable place for learning in Edinburgh, some staff members have decided to use a new way of commuting using e-bikes.

Jim Scobbie is Professor of Speech Sciences at QMU and his ground-breaking work focuses on helping improve the speech articulation of children and adults who have long standing speech communication difficulties. Recently, he decided to get rid of his car and instead take up cycling as a way of getting to work. Initially wary of how hard the transition might be, he now finds himself cycling everywhere he needs to go, and not just to work.

Living in Portobello, the distance between home and campus is quite short, however Jim said that he remained unconvinced about cycling to work until he borrowed an e-bike for a week from the local bike library. He said that the experience of actually trying an e-bike completely converted him and he is now buying his own through the Cycle to Work scheme available at QMU.



Jim said: "We live in Portobello, which is close enough to the campus that it doesn't feel like driving is an absolute necessity. I've cycled a bit to campus but it's uphill, and I

have a very heavy mechanical bike. I borrowed an e-bike from the Portobello Bike Library to try it and it was a real game changer.

“I can ride to work and it’s literally ‘no sweat’. It was just like walking. It takes 20 minutes door to door, it’s a great exercise activity, you don’t have to worry about traffic. It’s really just no hassle. I can’t emphasise enough how easy it’s been – easy to use, easy to charge. Everything about it has been easy.

“There was definitely an environmental factor in this decision”, explained Jim. “We replaced a car with a bike. Not only will that reduce our carbon footprint from fuel, but we are also reducing the carbon cost of the hardware we are using. Our car was over ten years old and by trading it out for an e-bike, rather than a brand new car, we are reducing our consumption that way too.

“The final push to get an e-bike was just trying one out and it’s really been great. I can cycle into town, go to a restaurant and cycle back home without any worries. It’s quite a long way uphill from the seaside but you can switch on the motor to cruise through the tough parts and free-wheel all the way back.”

QMU says it is dedicated to helping as many people as possible reduce their commuting consumption, with multiple schemes and systems in place to get people to campus more sustainably. As well as the university’s Cycle to Work Scheme, which allows people to buy an e-bike for no up-front cost, there is also the Cycle Connections scheme, which offers plenty of ways to get people on a bike.

The scheme allows participants to hire mechanical bikes for just £40 a semester, which comes with a light, lock and helmet, or you can hire your own e-bike for £15 a month (which also comes with everything you need to get on the road). With

fantastic cycle routes to campus from the city and facilities on site to properly store and protect your bike, it has never been easier to start commuting in a more sustainable way.

Jim Scobbie explained more about how accessible cycling to QMU is for students and staff: "People should really borrow a good e-bike for a week and just try it. The technology works so well, I am astonished by the sophistication of the device. There's nothing clunky about riding an e-bike. It's like magic.

"I have a few other colleagues who already have e-bikes and they kept telling me I would love it. One of them bought their own, but another rents his through the University's Cycle Connections scheme and it's really got him interested in getting one for himself.

"The University, too, really does offer plenty of ways for people to get involved. Cycle Connections is a great way for people to try out e-bikes and they offer you a helmet, a lock and everything you need to get started. If you find it's for you, then you can start to think about upgrading or getting one for yourself. However, renting them is still quite affordable and is a great way for people to try it. Not only that, but the campus always has plenty of spaces to store your bikes. It's very secure."

"It's just as fast as driving, and I arrive as fresh as a daisy. It's been absolutely fantastic."

