

Claims police advice on scooters is confusing

It is claimed that Police Scotland advice over electric scooters requiring insurance is fuelling widespread confusion over use of the speedy modes of transport – which remain illegal in Scotland.

It is illegal to ride an e-scooter on public roads, pavements, or other public spaces in Scotland, with the machines considered “unauthorised vehicles” under the Road Traffic Act 1988.

Insurance firms currently refuse to cover e-scooters because of their status, despite them being widely sold in shops and online.

While Police Scotland acknowledges it is against the law to ride an e-scooter in any public place, they also say e-scooters are classified as Personal Light Electric Vehicles (PLEVs), “so they are treated as motor vehicles and are subject to the same legal requirements as any other motor vehicle, requiring insurance, and a valid driving licence”.

John Dillion, Head of Dispute Resolution at Scottish solicitors Watermans, said the advice given by Police Scotland in relation to e-scooters and the need for them to have insurance is “both confusing and contradicting”.

He said: “In truth, the use of e-scooters is an area of law that could do with much better clarity. Especially as

confusion such as this can arise and clearly has here.

“At present it is illegal to use them on public land and roads. As a result, it is not possible to purchase policies of insurance covering their use.

“Clarity of advice is therefore certainly required. It needs to be provided so that those who are considering purchasing or have already purchased an e-scooter, know the exact parameters governing their use.”

E-scooters have become a common sight in towns and cities across Scotland, with riders of all ages openly flouting the law and sparking safety concerns.

Mr Dillion said that as it is not possible to get insurance for privately owned e-scooters it also means collisions involving the vehicles will result in claims against uninsured drivers.

He said: “Whilst ultimately these claims can be made against the Motor Insurers Bureau (MIB) for payment, these payments are from a purse funded by premium-paying motorists. It is therefore something that innocent motorists all end up contributing to for putting right.

“Given the high risk of accidents occurring with e-scooters in public places and on roads, it inevitably increases the chances of serious or life-changing injuries being suffered by pedestrians, children, and other road users.”

The RAC motoring organisation says stopping the illegal use of private e-scooters on roads should be a priority, and urges riders to ensure they can operate them safely.

Rod Dennis, the organisation’s road safety spokesperson, said: “As the number of e-scooters on the road increases, it’s perhaps a sad inevitability that collisions involving them will rise, so we need to ensure every e-scooter rider has the

skill and experience to operate them properly and safely.

“Stopping the illegal use of private e-scooters on the roads, some of which have been modified to allow them to be ridden at higher speeds, should also be a priority.”

Police Scotland is under increasing pressure to crackdown on electric scooter louts by seizing the machines on sight when they are used on public roads.

UK forces such as Derbyshire, Hampshire & Isle of Wight and South Yorkshire are confiscating e-scooters “immediately” to reduce numbers of the potentially lethal machines blighting communities.

The “seize first” approach means e-scooters are being confiscated without warnings for first offences to combat anti-social behaviour and crime, and hundreds have been sent to the crusher.

Police Scotland is now being urged to adopt a similar robust approach.

The force has been repeatedly criticised for its bystander approach to the growing e-scooter menace amid accusations they are failing to enforce the law.

Officers hit the streets of Glasgow earlier this month not to stop and seize but to “educate the public on the legal guidelines of e-scooters and e-bikes”.

Scottish Conservative shadow minister for community safety Sharon Dowey MSP said the public will “rightly be angry that more is not being done to crack down on the use of illegal e-scooters”.

She added: “They have been responsible for a spate of serious incidents, yet it appears the law is not being used to its full extent.

“That sums up how SNP ministers have failed to give our overwhelmed officers the resources they need to do their job.”

As well as blighting communities through anti-social behaviour there has also been a rise in the vehicles being used to commit crimes.

According to Department for Transport data, there were 17 casualties from e-scooter collisions recorded by Police Scotland in 2023.

A Police Scotland spokesperson said: “E-scooters can only be legally used on private land with permission from the landowner.

“Their illegal use can impact local communities and anyone with concerns should contact us so an appropriate policing response can be provided.

“We also urge anyone purchasing an e-scooter to be aware of the law and the implications of using one in a public place.”



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