

Opinion Letters

THIS MONTH ASSAULT ON BATTERIES, RECYCLED RUBBER,
£130 FOLDING BIKE, OFF-ROAD ROUTES, AND BIKE COACHES

Get in touch

LETTERS are edited for space, clarity and, if necessary, legality. Please note that if you have specific complaint or query about Cycling UK policy, you should address it to the relevant national office staff member. Feedback for the next issue must arrive by 28 February.

WRITE TO: Cycle, PO Box 313, Scarborough, YO12 6WZ or email
@cycle@jamespembrokemedia.co.uk



Cycling UK's Cherry Allen on a £1,000 Gtech City e-bike. See: bit.ly/cycle-ebikeepiphany

Left: Sam Jones Below right: Schwalbe

Letter of the month

Power to the people

I was deeply disappointed to read the letter from Matthias Bunte in the Dec/Jan issue criticising e-bikes for having a non-zero carbon footprint and suggesting that they should be a 'last resort' reserved for the 'few' of us who can't ride a normal bike. Of course an e-bike has an environmental impact, with the battery presenting the biggest concern. But when the European Cycling Federation assessed the carbon footprint of e-bikes, it found they produce about 22g of carbon per kilometre. Compare that with 21g/km for a regular bike.

However, what concerns me about Mr Bunte's letter is the undertone of ableism. It is hypocritical to judge people for using one mobility aid, an e-bike, while the most prevalent mobility aid of all, the car, goes unchallenged. The biggest rival to the e-bike is not the regular bike but the motor car (and maybe vice-versa). Nearly two-thirds of e-bikes in the UK are sold to people over 55. If we stigmatise people for riding their e-bikes, for – heaven forbid! – dressing warmly for riding instead of working up a sweat, will they switch to regular bikes and save that extra 1g of emissions per kilometre? Or simply make more journeys by car?

The reality is that you have no idea from looking at an e-bike user whether or not they 'really' need it. We should be welcoming e-bike riders into the cyclist community as an obvious way to make cycling more inclusive for all.

Kate Griffin

Win a set of Lezyne lights worth £110

The letter of the month wins a set of Lezyne Macro Drive 1100XL / Strip Drive Pro lights, courtesy of Upgrade Bikes. The versatile front light delivers 1100 lumens on its highest setting yet lasts 78 hours on its lowest, while the rear – at up to 300 lumens – is ultra-bright even in daylight. For more information about these lights, or to find your local stockist, visit upgradebikes.co.uk



Feel the buzz

Why are some cyclists so snooty about electric bikes? And haven't we been here before? Matthias Bunte's mean letter disparaging electric bikes and their riders took me back to the late 1980s, when people wrote frosty letters to the magazine objecting to mountain bikes and to articles about them.

In the 1980s, I like many others added an off-roader to my stable. Now in my 70th year, I've bought an electric road bike – a Bianchi Impulso E-road. It's not quite a last resort but it has extended my cycling capability. I can happily cycle 70 or 75 miles on it.

Alan Gwyer



Recycling innertubes

I see from the back of their innertube packs that Schwalbe have launched a scheme in Germany whereby cyclists can return used inners to retailers, who will return them free of charge to Schwalbe for recycling. According to their website, the recycling process takes place directly at Schwalbe's

plant in Indonesia and, even taking transport costs and environmental impact into account, the energy balance is exceptionally positive. In comparison with new butyl, just one quarter of the energy is used.

Does you know whether such a scheme exists in the UK?

Marcus Ennis

The service is currently available only in Germany, although Schwalbe UK say: "We would like to offer it in the UK at some stage." Meanwhile, Cycle of Good (cycleofgood.com) will accept your old innertubes. They send them to Malawi where they're recycled into wallets, purses, and the like. Cycle of Good also refurbish old Post Office bikes and sell them as Elephant Bikes – see cyclinguk.org/cycle/bike-test-elephant-bike for a review.



£130 full-size folder

You reviewed some reassuringly expensive suitcase bikes in Cycle. In 2017, I flew to Uganda with a low-cost folding mountain bike. It served me well for a month of trails, forests, and roads. The price has gone up a little but the Challenge Beacon 26 Inch Front Suspension Male Folding Bike is still available from Argos for £130. I managed to fit it into an airline-approved suitcase, having added a foldable pannier rack, and with the wheels removed and wrapped separately. (BA allowed me two checked-in bags.) The main challenge was the weight limit for my checked baggage; this bike is sturdy but not light, and I had other things to carry. See bit.ly/cycle-argosfolder.
Gavin Spittlehouse

Obituaries

Are published online at cyclinguk.org/obituaries. Contact publicity@cyclinguk.org



Way to go

Good to see the article on cycling the North Downs Way, with pointers for other routes. The coast-to-coast John Muir Way from Helensburgh to Dunbar is another. It runs for 134 miles across Central Scotland, through coastline, hills, forest, farmland, and urban green networks, taking in the best nature, history and landscape. It's an easy-to-moderate ride over three or four days or you could blast it in two. It uses cycleways, tracks, canal towpaths, and minor roads, with limited rough stuff. There's plenty of accommodation, plus train stations at either end. See johnmuirway.org.

Ron McCraw



Bikes on coaches

In the article Folders go Forth, I was interested to note that the main reason for taking folding bikes was due to the cost of the train and the lack of bike carriers on coaches in the UK. I've recently come back from a four-month cycle tour in Europe where there is a company called Flixbus, which runs coach services on which you can take bikes.

We used this service twice and it's brilliant. The tickets are cheap, far cheaper than a train,

and it's easy and safe to transport two full-sized touring bikes. They go on Thule racks.

Tim Knapp



Photo of the month

Overtaking expectations

Congratulations to Cycling UK for the Too close for Comfort campaign. Whilst cycle touring in Spanish Cantabria we came across these signs on many roads. To our pleasant surprise, the signs were nearly always adhered to; we were close passed perhaps only twice in a trip of over 800km. It would be great to see similar road signs here. *Sue Revill*

CYCLING UK FORUM

Get immediate feedback from other Cycling UK members on the Cycling UK forum: forum.cyclinguk.org. Here's an abridged extract from a popular thread: bit.ly/cycle-porridge



PORRIDGE: LOVE OR HATE?

brynpoeht: I like it just with water and salt, in winter with yoghurt or rice pudding. Why do you love [or hate] porridge?

Paulatic: Always made purely with water, soaked overnight. Pan on the hob and use a spurtle. I did try microwave for a while but it's a different result. I usually add raspberries or a fruit, nut and seeds mix.

softlips: Have it everyday made with milk, no salt or sugar. Proper porridge oats. Used to have Oat-so-simple but prefer the real stuff.

PDQ Mobile: I love Porridge because of Mr Mackay. "Fletcher!"

Cunobelin: Drop your spoon from a height of 6" If it doesn't bounce off, add more oats!

Mick F: Horrible stuff, and I have no idea why anyone eats it, let alone likes to eat it. I suppose if I was starving, I'd eat it.

hamster: Cooked with raisins and muscovado, it's my breakfast of choice before a long day cycling.

Cuddly Ocelot: Lovely stuff, especially if you add a teaspoon of whisky whilst it is being made.

Psamathe: I make my porridge with jumbo oats these days. Far nicer.

Pastycomper: I once lived with a Rayburn and discovered the joys of porridge made overnight in its warming oven.