

Electrically Assisted Pedal Cycles (EAPCs) Regulations

An electric bike is more than just a standard bicycle with an electric motor. Specific definitions and regulations apply to this type of vehicle. If you are planning to ride an electric bike in the UK, it is important to familiarize yourself with the relevant laws and regulations. The following details summarise our interpretation of the legal requirements.



General requirements

'The Electrically Assisted Pedal Cycles Regulations 1983' [1], 'The Electrically Assisted Pedal Cycles (Amendment) Regulations 2015' [2] and the guidance 'EAPC standards and legal requirements' [3] define the criteria for an EAPC to be exempt from classification as a motor vehicle under UK law. An EAPC must comply with the following requirements:

- It must be fitted with pedals that are capable of propelling it;
- It is fitted with an electric motor that has a maximum continuous rated power which does not exceed 250 watts;
- Its electric motor cannot propel the vehicle when it is travelling at more than 15.5 miles per hour;
- The cycle must be marked with the manufacturer's name, the motor's maximum continuous rated power, and either the battery voltage or the maximum speed at which the motor can propel the cycle.

Power assistance

Under the 'REGULATION (EU) No 168/2013 OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL of 15 January 2013' [4], from 1 January 2016, the output of the motor of all sold EAPCs must be cut off when the cyclist stops pedalling, and it must be progressively reduced and finally cut off before the vehicle speed reaches 15.5 mph.

Cycles equipped with a throttle ("twist and go") can still qualify as EAPCs, provided they meet the EAPC requirements. However, for models first placed on the market from 1 January 2016, the appropriate approval requirements must normally have been completed before the cycle can be legally used on public roads [3].

If an electric bike can be propelled without pedalling and does not fall within an exemption under the EAPC regulations, or if it does not otherwise meet the EAPC requirements [5], it must be type approved. 'This should have been done by the manufacturer or importer before you bought it. If it's been type approved, it will have a plate showing its type approval number.' [5]



Exemptions and off-road modes

An exemption exists for EAPCs where the motor provides power up to approximately 3.7 mph without pedalling, typically to assist with start-up. These cycles are not subject to type approval requirements [6].

Some electric cycles include an 'off-road' mode that allows the motor to propel the cycle at speeds greater than 15.5 mph. In the Department for Transport's opinion, vehicles with this feature do not comply with the EAPC regulations and are considered motor vehicles [3].

References

- [1] Electrically Assisted Pedal Cycles Regulations 1983 SI 1983/1168
- [2] Electrically Assisted Pedal Cycles (Amendment) Regulations 2015 SI 2015 No. 24
- [3] Electrically Assisted Pedal Cycles (EAPCs) in Great Britain – Information Sheet (Department for Transport, updated December 2024)
- [4] Regulation (EU) no 168/2013
- [5] Riding an electric bike: the rules (The Highway Code, road safety and vehicle rules)
- [6] Guidance on European type approval for certain electrically assisted pedal cycles (EAPC)
- [7] Proposed Changes to Legislation for Electrically Assisted Pedal Cycles – Consultation Outcome (Department for Transport, January 2025)

Licensing, tax and insurance


The legislation ensures that a licence is not required to ride an EAPC, and it does not need to be registered, taxed, or insured [5]. A bike that meets EAPC requirements is considered a standard pedal bike. This allows you to use it on cycle paths and anywhere pedal bikes are permitted. You must be 14 or older to ride an electric bike [5].


Note: In January 2025, the UK Government concluded a consultation on proposed changes to EAPC regulations, including increasing the maximum motor power from 250 watts to 500 watts and relaxing certain throttle requirements. These proposals were not adopted, and the existing EAPC requirements remain unchanged [7].

Dr Kenny Santos

Kenny based in our Kenilworth office, completed his PhD in mechanical engineering in 2024, developing expertise in road traffic accident investigation specialising in road traffic collision reconstruction, road traffic collision dynamics, computational mechanics, and data science and machine learning. Kenny has given evidence in the criminal court in Portugal, and he has prepared numerous reports for court purposes.

Since joining Burgoynes, Kenny has been involved in the investigation of road traffic incidents with aspects of accident reconstruction, injury analysis, vehicle inspections and component failures.

 01926 485 960

 Kenny.santos@burgoynes.com