

ROAD SAFETY UPDATE: ILLEGAL E-MOBILITY VEHICLES

For the purpose of this report, 'illegal e-mobility vehicles' refers to e-mobility vehicles that are either being used unlawfully or do not meet the relevant legal requirements for use on public roads and public places, including vehicles that have been modified or are otherwise non-compliant.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Illegal e-mobility vehicles, including non-compliant or modified e-bikes, privately owned e-scooters and illegal e-scooters, are an increasing concern nationally and within Dorset. The scale of the issue varies significantly across the country, with the most significant problems currently evident in major urban areas such as London, Birmingham and Manchester. The scale of the issue in Dorset is considerably lower, but there is evidence of increasing use, rising police seizures, associated anti-social behaviour and growing community concern.

A key challenge is the difficulty in accurately measuring prevalence. There is currently no reliable data showing the number of illegal e-bikes or privately owned e-scooters being used illegally. Police seizures, reported incidents and collisions provide useful indicators, but largely measure detection and reporting rather than the true number of vehicles in circulation. This makes it difficult to determine the full scale of the problem or predict how rapidly it may develop.

The availability of illegal and non-compliant vehicles is a significant contributing factor. E-bikes can be modified using relatively simple aftermarket or bolt-on components to increase power or remove speed restrictions. Illegal and compliant vehicles can also be sold alongside each other through mainstream retailers and online marketplaces, creating challenges for consumers in understanding what can legally be used on public roads and in public places.

Within Dorset, illegal e-mobility is most closely associated with anti-social behaviour, dangerous or intimidating riding and road safety concerns. There is evidence that e-mobility use broadly reflects established ASB hotspots and, in some areas, accounts for up to 20% of reported nuisance ASB. There is also emerging evidence of higher-powered and modified e-bikes being used in connection with wider criminality. In BCP, a small number of incidents have involved knives and individuals associated with criminal gangs. However, these incidents remain rare and there is currently insufficient evidence to suggest that wider serious criminality, as seen in other areas around the country, is representative of illegal e-mobility use across Dorset.

Illegal e-mobility is generating additional demand for policing through incident response, hotspot patrols, enforcement, vehicle seizure and disposal, offender identification, investigation and community reassurance. The quiet operation and high speeds of some modified vehicles, together with riders attempting to evade officers or conceal their identities, create particular operational and officer-safety challenges.

Dorset Police has a range of enforcement and preventative measures in place. Operation Think provides a coordinated operational response, combining enforcement, vehicle seizures, high-visibility patrols, community engagement and education. Neighbourhood Policing Teams also work with Local Authorities, Housing Associations and other partners to address persistent ASB and

identified hotspots. Forensic tagging spray using SMART water is being trialled in BCP as an additional tactic to assist in identifying riders and linking individuals to illegally used e-bikes, although its operational application is limited.

The strengthening of police powers through the Crime and Policing Act 2026, which came into force on 29 June 2026, has provided officers with a more immediate response by removing the previous requirement to issue a warning before certain vehicles can be seized. This is expected to increase enforcement activity and seizures. The Government has also confirmed its intention to reduce the period vehicles seized for anti-social use must be retained before disposal, although the proposed changes to a seven-calendar-day disposal timeframe require secondary legislation before they come into force.

A multi-agency approach remains essential. Dorset Police, Local Authorities, Community Safety and ASB teams, Youth Services and other partners are already working together through enforcement, intelligence sharing, hotspot activity, education and preventative measures. However, enforcement alone cannot address the availability of illegal vehicles or the underlying causes of their use.

Overall, the evidence indicates that illegal e-mobility represents a growing but currently proportionate policing and community safety issue in Dorset. The current priority is to maintain targeted and intelligence-led enforcement, improve the quality of local data, continue preventative and educational activity, and work with partners to address the availability of illegal and non-compliant vehicles. The position is kept under review as strengthened police powers, changes to vehicle disposal arrangements and potential future legislative reform take effect.

1 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

This paper provides an overview of illegal e-mobility vehicles in Dorset and what action is being taken to reduce the impact on our communities. This paper also seeks to address the following six Key Lines of Enquiry, as provided by the Dorset Police and Crime Panel:

- I. How significant is the issue of illegal e-mobility across Dorset and BCP?
- II. What hotspots and patterns have been identified?
- III. What evidence exists of links between the use of illegal two-wheeled vehicles and wider criminality?
- IV. How effective are current enforcement powers and operational tactics in tackling illegal use of these vehicles?
- V. What initiatives are in place to prevent offending, reduce harm and improve public confidence?
- VI. How does the OPCC work with partner agencies to respond to the issues, in terms of both intelligence and delivery?

2 INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 For the purpose of this report, illegal e-mobility vehicles refer to small, electrically powered vehicles used for personal mobility or transport and includes vehicles such as illegal e-bikes, electrically assisted pedal cycles, e-scooters or e-scramblers.
- 2.2 The use of illegal e-mobility has surged nationally in recent years. These illegal vehicles exceed legal power and speed limits, do not comply with the law or safety standards governing electrically assisted vehicles and are becoming an increasing issue within our communities.
- 2.3 Across the country, the use of these types of illegal e-mobility vehicles has led to pedestrian collisions; have been used to cause anti-social behaviour (ASB); and used in street crimes

such as phone snatching and, in some cases, to facilitate organised crime.

- 2.4 E-bikes can easily be modified using bolt-on or aftermarket components to increase motor power or remove or alter speed restrictions, enabling vehicles to exceed the legal limits for electrically assisted cycles and travel at significantly higher speeds. The availability of relatively simple, removable, modifications mean that a vehicle may appear compliant when purchased but subsequently be altered for illegal use. The increased speed and quiet operation of these vehicles can present additional risks to pedestrians and other road users, while making detection and enforcement more challenging.
- 2.5 Some riders of illegal e-mobility may also conceal their identities using masks or balaclavas and ride at speed on footpaths and through pedestrian areas, causing alarm and increasing the risk to pedestrians and other road users and contribute towards intimidating or threatening behaviour.
- 2.6 Evidence from across the country indicates an increasing use of illegal e-mobility vehicles, although the scale and severity of the issue vary considerably between areas. London currently provides the strongest evidence of a significant problem involving illegal and high-powered e-bikes and e-scooters, with the Metropolitan Police having seized more than 2,500 such vehicles from January to July 2026 so far. Birmingham and Manchester are also experiencing significant and high-level issues. In comparison, the scale of the issue in Dorset is currently significantly lower and is not comparable with that being experienced in London, Birmingham and Manchester.

3 BACKGROUND

- 3.1 E-scooters became increasingly visible and widely used in the UK from 2020, following the Government's introduction of regulated rental trials in July that year. While rental e-scooters were permitted within designated trial areas, privately owned e-scooters remained illegal to use in public places. The rapid growth in availability and use since 2020 has created new challenges for policing, particularly around illegal use, road safety and anti-social behaviour.
- 3.2 Electric bicycles have been available in the UK for several decades, with the legal framework for electrically assisted pedal cycles (EAPCs) dating back to 1983. This established a category of electrically assisted cycles that could be treated as pedal cycles rather than motor vehicles, provided they met the relevant legal requirements. Commercial availability developed further in 1997, when Raleigh launched an electric bike in the UK. Since then, e-bikes have become increasingly common, with significant growth in availability, technology and public use.
- 3.3 The current legal framework was substantially revised in 2015, when the UK introduced requirements broadly aligned with European standards. The rider must generally be required to pedal for the motor to provide assistance. From 2016, additional type-approval requirements were introduced for certain 'Twist and Go' electrically assisted cycles capable of providing motor assistance without pedalling.
- 3.4 The distinction between compliant EAPCs and higher-powered or modified e-bikes is therefore important. An e-bike that exceeds the prescribed power or assistance limits or has been modified to provide motor assistance outside the permitted conditions, may no longer legally be treated as a pedal cycle and can instead fall within the regulatory framework applying to motor vehicles.
- 3.5 In more recent years, the more concerning issue is the manner in which the higher-powered or modified e-bikes and e-scooters are being ridden and the increased risk these vehicles pose to public safety.

- 3.6 Despite continued educational messaging and communications, evidence shows that public understanding of the law is still poor. In the Department for Transport's Autumn 2025 Technology Tracker, only 32% of respondents correctly identified that privately owned e-scooters cannot legally be ridden on roads and cycle lanes, while 32% incorrectly thought they could. This potentially contributes to illegal use.
- 3.7 The issue of illegal e-mobility is relevant to the wider Dorset Community Safety Partnership (CSP) agenda, particularly through its focus on anti-social behaviour and community confidence. While illegal e-mobility is not currently identified as a standalone CSP priority, the Partnership's assessment shows increasing public concern about both ASB and illegal e-scooter use. This issue is already being considered within the wider multi-agency response to ASB and community safety, reflecting the growing impact of illegal e-mobility on local communities.

4 E-MOBILITY CLASSIFICATIONS

ELECTRICALLY POWERED PEDAL CYCLE (EAPC)

- 4.1 Electrically assisted pedal cycle (EAPC) is the legal term for an e-bike or e-cycle that can be treated the same as a conventional pedal cycle, provided the user is age 14 or over. There are many products known as 'e-bikes' or 'e-cycles' available on the market.
- 4.2 To be classified as an EAPC under the EAPC regulations, the cycle must:
- be fitted with pedals that can propel it;
 - have an electric motor with a maximum continuous rated power not exceeding 250 watts; and
 - cut off electrical assistance when it reaches 15.5 miles per hour (mph)
- 4.3 EAPCs that comply with the regulations do not need to be registered, insured or taxed (Vehicle Excise Duty). Any e-bike that falls outside of this is not an EAPC.
- 4.4 If an EAPC does not comply with the regulations, it is treated as a motor vehicle under the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 and the Road Traffic Act 1988. Such vehicles need to be registered, insured and taxed as a motor vehicle. The rider will need an appropriate driving licence and will have to wear an approved motorcycle safety helmet.
- 4.5 Pedal cycles providing electrical assistance without the rider needing to use the pedals are usually called 'Twist and Go'. 'Twist and Go' cycles are classified as EAPCs provided they meet the EAPC regulations as listed in 4.2. 'Twist and Go' EAPCs placed on the market or entering into service after 1 January 2016 have to meet a range of technical requirements before they can be used on roads. If a 'Twist and Go' EAPC has not been 'type approved' it falls into the 250W LPM (Low Powered Moped) category of vehicle.
- 4.6 Some electric cycles offer a temporary increase in top speed that is often advertised as 'off road' mode. When 'off road' mode is activated, the vehicle can be propelled by the motor at a speed greater than 15.5 mph. Vehicles that have this feature do not comply with the EAPC regulations and are considered motor vehicles.
- 4.7 E-bikes can be, and in some cases are, modified to increase their speed or power beyond the limits permitted for legally compliant EAPCs. Such modifications can include increasing motor power or altering speed limiters, resulting in vehicles that no longer meet the legal requirements for use as an EAPC.

ELECTRICALLY POWERED E-SCOOTERS

- 4.8 Electrical scooters (known as e-scooters) come under the category of 'powered transporters' and fall within the legal definition of a motor vehicle under the Road Traffic Act 1998. This means the rules that apply to motor vehicles also apply to e-scooters, including the need to have a driving licence and insurance.
- 4.9 There are two legal ways of using an e-scooter:
- i. **by renting one through an authorised rental scheme i.e. Beryl.** In areas where a rental trial scheme is running, rental e-scooters can be used on public roads, some cycle lanes, and other public spaces. But the rider must follow the relevant road traffic laws, or the rider will face prosecution. To use a rental e-scooter in an approved area the rider must hold the correct driving licence, have insurance (which the rental company provides when the e-scooter is hired from them) and the rider must meet the minimum age limit.
 - ii. **by privately owning one** – Privately owned e-scooters can only be used on private land with permission from the landowner. It is not currently possible to get insurance for privately owned e-scooters which means it is illegal to use them on the road or in public spaces, such as parks, street pavements, and shopping centres.

ELECTRIC MOTORCYCLES

- 4.10 An e-motorbike is a two-wheeled motor vehicle powered by an electric motor and designed to operate as a motorcycle or moped. Unlike a legally compliant EAPC, an e-motorbike is subject to the legal requirements applicable to motor vehicles, including type approval, registration, insurance, appropriate driving licence requirements and, where applicable, vehicle excise duty and MOT testing. Some smaller electric two-wheelers may fall within the moped category rather than being classified as motorcycles.
- 4.11 The term “e-scambler” is not itself a legal classification. Some e-scamblers can potentially be road legal if they have been manufactured, type-approved, registered, insured and operated in accordance with the requirements applying to their vehicle category.
- 4.12 An illegal e-scambler is generally an electrically powered two-wheeled vehicle styled like a small off-road motorcycle or “scrambler” that does not meet the legal requirements for an electrically assisted pedal cycle (EAPC) and is being used on public roads or other places where motor vehicles are required to be road legal.

5 PREVALENCE / AVAILABILITY

- 5.1 The Department for Transport (DfT) estimated in 2025 that between 760,000 and 1.2 million people aged 16 and over in England owned a private e-scooter. As privately owned e-scooters cannot currently be legally used in public places, this represents a substantial pool of vehicles potentially available for illegal use. However, there is no national data showing how many are actually being used illegally. The scale of illegal e-bike use is even more difficult to quantify, with no national estimate of the number of illegally modified or non-compliant e-bikes in circulation.
- 5.2 The national scale of the problem is currently measured largely through outputs such as seizures, collisions and enforcement activity, rather than reliable measures of prevalence. Seizures are currently one of the best available indicators, but reflect police detection and enforcement rather than the actual number of illegal e-mobility vehicles in circulation. For example, the Metropolitan Police seized more than 2,500 illegal e-bikes and e-scooters in the first seven months of 2026, but this cannot be used to estimate the total number in circulation across London.

- 5.3 It is important to distinguish between the legality of an e-mobility vehicle and how it is ridden. These are separate issues: a vehicle may be illegal because it does not meet the relevant legal requirements, while the rider's behaviour may create additional risks through excessive speed, dangerous or careless riding, use of pavements or pedestrian areas, or behaviour linked to other criminality. These factors should therefore be considered separately when assessing prevalence, harm, and the appropriate policing and preventative response.

6 ILLEGAL E-MOBILITY USE IN DORSET

- 6.1 Like other areas of the country, Dorset has experienced a steady visible increase in the use of illegal e-mobility vehicles in recent years. The key concerns are:

- Availability and consumer awareness;
- Anti-social behaviour;
- Dangerous and intimidating riding;
- Links to wider criminality;
- Increasing enforcement demand; and
- Community confidence and fear.

- 6.2 **Availability and consumer awareness** – A key concern is their widespread availability through mainstream retailers and online marketplaces, where products can be presented alongside legal vehicles and may reference UK legal requirements, but are often available to purchase without meaningful checks at the point of sale.

Online marketplaces create particular challenges because illegal or non-compliant vehicles can be sold alongside legitimate products, making it difficult for consumers to understand what is legal to use on public roads. Consumers may therefore purchase vehicles or modification equipment without fully understanding the legal restrictions on their use in public places.

This presents a significant challenge and highlights the need for legislative and regulatory changes to prevent illegal or non-compliant vehicles and modification equipment from reaching consumers in the first place. In the meantime, education and consumer awareness remain important in helping the public understand the legal requirements and risks associated with these products.

- 6.3 **Anti-social behaviour** – The use of illegal e-mobility vehicles, combined with the behaviour of riders, has a strong associated link with anti-social behaviour (ASB). In Dorset, the prevalence of illegal e-mobility use broadly mirrors established ASB hotspots, with these vehicles frequently being used in connection with ASB offending. This is a growing concern within the community and, in some areas, accounts for up to 20% of reported nuisance ASB. The response is through multi-agency partnership working.
- 6.4 **Dangerous and intimidating riding** – An increasing concern is the way in which higher-powered or modified e-bikes and e-scooters are being ridden, and the resulting risks to public and road safety. The use of face coverings or balaclavas to conceal identity can further increase feelings of intimidation and concern within the community. It is important to recognise that not all riders who cover their faces are involved in wider criminality; however, face coverings may be used deliberately to intimidate or cause alarm and distress, or to avoid identification where the rider is involved in other criminal activity. Their use can therefore heighten public concern and create additional challenges for police in identifying riders and investigating offences.
- 6.5 **Links to wider criminality** – A more recent emerging issue is the use of illegal e-mobility that have been adapted to significantly exceed the legal speed limit, with some reportedly capable of reaching speeds of up to 70 mph. These vehicles are being used by criminal

gangs, with individuals often wearing balaclavas to conceal their identities. In BCP, there have been a small number of incidents involving the use of knives, including incidents targeting other gang members. However, such incidents in Dorset remain rare.

- 6.6 **Increasing enforcement demand** – The increasing use of illegal e-mobility vehicles is generating additional policing demand through incident response, hotspot patrols, enforcement activity, vehicle seizures, criminal investigations and community reassurance. Where illegal e-mobility use is associated with ASB or wider criminality, this can create further demand across neighbourhood policing, roads policing and investigative teams.
- 6.7 **Community confidence and fear** – Illegal e-mobility can have a disproportionate impact on community confidence and perceptions of safety. 29% of Dorset residents identified illegal e-scooter use as a crime affecting their local area in 2025, up 3.3 percentage points from 2024. Dangerous or anti-social riding, particularly at speed or in pedestrian areas, can cause alarm, intimidation and fear among residents. Repeated and highly visible incidents can undermine confidence in the safety of local public spaces and increase demand for police reassurance and enforcement.

7. POLICE ENFORCEMENT / RESPONSE

- 7.1 Legislation within the Road Traffic Act 1988 enables police to deal with offences associated to the riding of illegal e-mobility vehicles on public roads.

- 7.1 Where Dorset Police stop individuals using illegal e-mobility, the officer assesses the situation based on:

- Whether the illegal vehicle is being ridden with insufficient knowledge that they are illegal;
- Whether the illegal vehicle is being ridden with knowledge that they are illegal;
- Rider behaviour and whether it is being used to commit other criminal offences.

- 7.2 **Illegal vehicles being ridden with insufficient knowledge that they are illegal** – For several years, Dorset Police and the OPCC have provided the public with clear and consistent educational messaging aimed at e-mobility vehicles and their use on public roads. This messaging is targeted at all age groups, including parents and carers who may consider purchasing an e-mobility vehicle as a birthday or Christmas present for a child.

Despite sustained communication campaign efforts, there are still instances where individuals appear to have limited knowledge or understanding of the legal restrictions surrounding the use of e-mobility vehicles on public roads. To support the re-education of the public, Dorset Police previously developed a leaflet, 'Why am I being given this flyer?', which provided information on the legal requirements and risks associated with illegal e-mobility vehicles. However, as public awareness has increased and police have increased powers, the use of these leaflets has reduced considerably, and they are now issued infrequently.

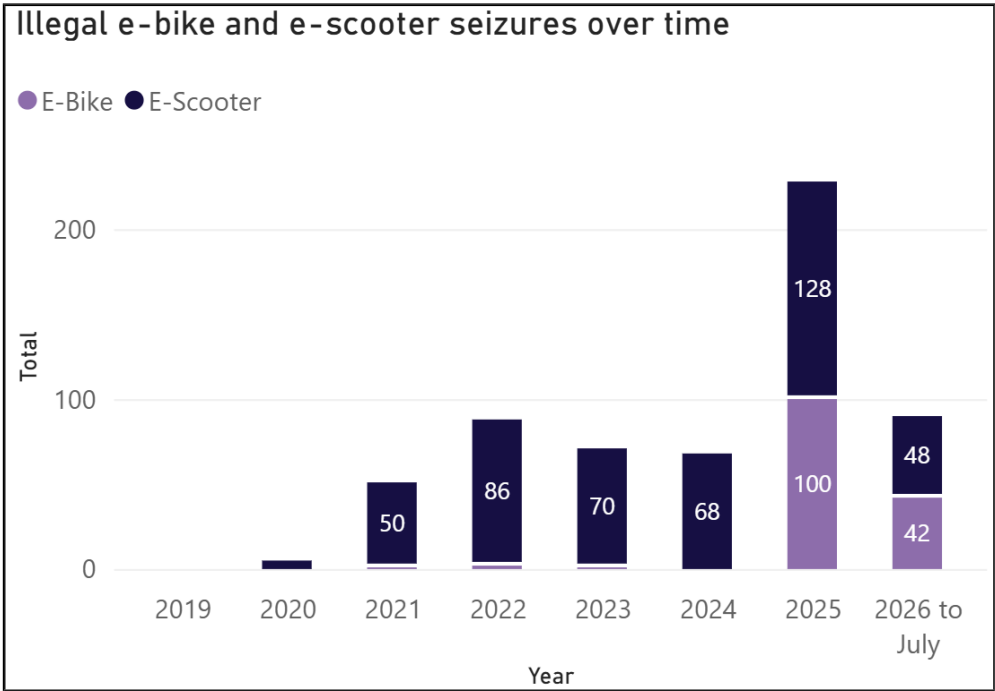
- 7.3 **Illegal vehicle being ridden with the knowledge that they are illegal** – The changes to the Crime and Policing Act, which came into force on 29 June 2026, have strengthened police enforcement powers in relation to illegally modified e-bikes and other vehicles being used anti-socially. The changes removed the requirement for police to issue a warning before seizing such vehicles, enabling officers to seize illegal e-mobility vehicles immediately when encountered on the public highway and, where appropriate, pursue prosecution for relevant road traffic offences.

For younger riders, cases can be referred to the Youth Justice Out of Court Resolution Team for consideration of the appropriate disposal. Seizure prevents the vehicle from

continuing to be used illegally and, where applicable, it is subsequently destroyed in accordance with police property disposal procedures.

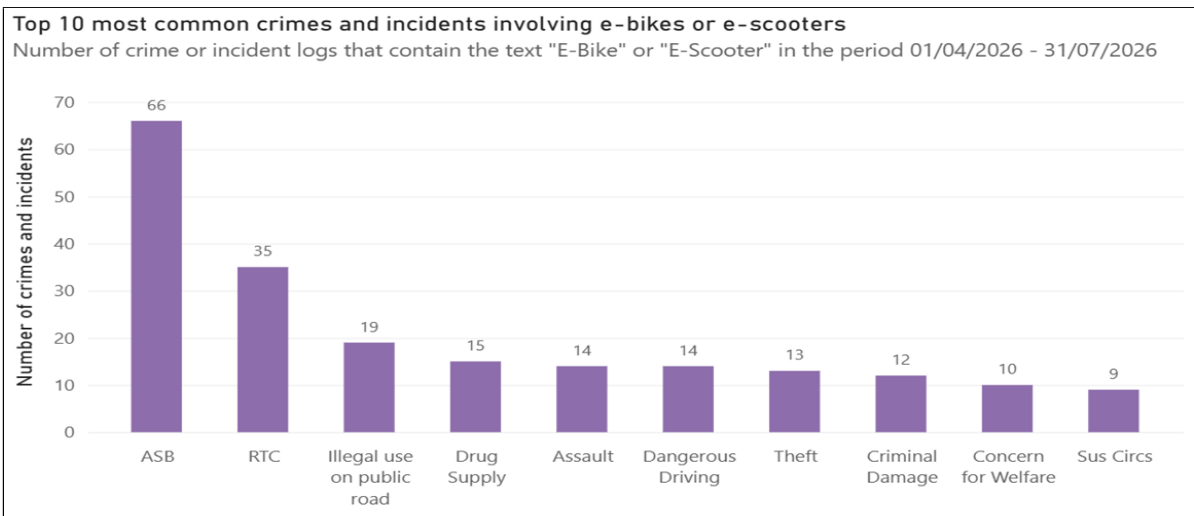
Dorset Police welcomed the strengthened powers, which provide officers with a more immediate and robust response to the illegal and anti-social use of e-mobility vehicles.

7.4 The chart below shows the number of e-bike and e-scooter Dorset Police seizures by year.



There has been a notable increase in police seizures of illegal e-mobility vehicles during 2025 and 2026. The rise in e-bike seizures is likely to reflect both the growing prevalence of illegal use and increased police focus on tackling the issue. Seizure numbers are also expected to increase following the strengthening of police powers in June 2026, which removed the requirement for officers to issue a warning before seizing certain illegally used or modified vehicles.

7.5 **Rider behaviour and whether it is being used to commit other criminal offences** – The chart below shows the 10 most common crimes and incident types involving e-scooters and e-bikes.



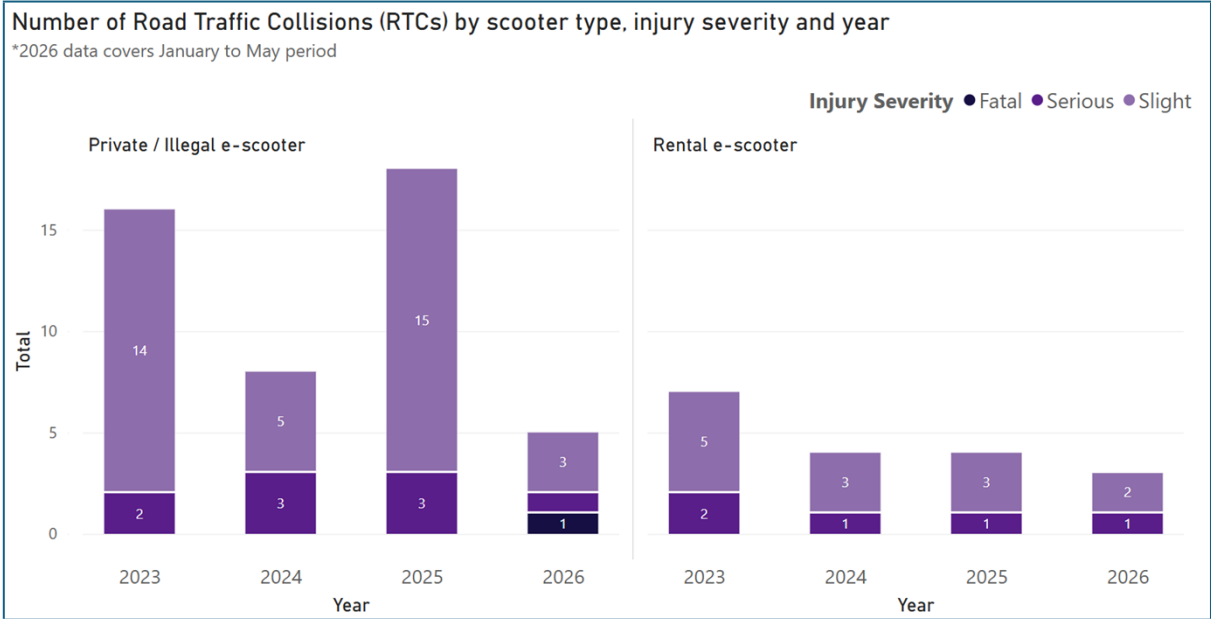
**** Please note that, whilst the data identifies incidents 'involving' e-mobility vehicles, it does not provide information on the legal status of the vehicle itself. For example, in relation**

to ASB incidents, the data does not indicate how many reports involved privately owned e-mobility vehicles, as opposed to legally permitted vehicles. Caution therefore should be exercised when interpreting this data, as it is heavily reliant on information recorded within free-text fields.

The chart above shows that ASB is the highest crime and incident type and represents a significant portion of e-mobility use in Dorset. ASB associated with the irresponsible use of E-mobility is a growing area and represents up to 20% of all reported nuisance ASB in some areas of Dorset.

Road Traffic Collisions (RTCs) is the second highest crime and incident type recorded. Collisions and casualties are recorded in accordance with STATS19 requirements, the data standard used across Great Britain to record personal-injury road traffic collisions reported to the police. Current STATS19 data and police collision reporting systems do not distinguish between legal e-mobility vehicles and illegal or modified vehicles. As a result, it is difficult to accurately identify collision and casualty rates specifically involving **illegal** e-mobility vehicles.

It is possible to identify whether an e-scooter involved in an RTC was privately owned or was part of a rental scheme, which is the closest determinate for legal / illegal use, but still needs to be used with a degree of caution.



Based on the data available, between 1 January 2023 and 31 May 2026, there were 65 e-scooter collisions. 47 of the 65 injury collisions involved a private e-scooter and 18 involved a rental e-scooter. The numbers presented are very low compared to other vehicles involved in collisions. The data does tell us that 72% of the e-scooter collisions recorded within the given timeframe, involved privately owned e-scooters.

- 7.6 When looking at the available data for e-bikes and specifically illegal e-bikes, only three collisions in both 2025 and 2026 specifically mentioned an illegally modified bicycle. The data was insufficient to provide any meaningful analysis and has not been included as a chart for this report.
- 7.7 Operation Think is Dorset Police’s ongoing response to the illegal and anti-social use of e-mobility vehicles. The operation combines proactive enforcement and vehicle seizures with high-visibility patrols, community engagement and preventative activity. It aims to disrupt offending, reduce the impact of illegal e-mobility on communities and improve public

awareness of the associated risks and legal requirements.

- 7.8 Under Operation Think, forensic tagging spray using SMART water is an available method in which to target individuals seen riding e-bikes illegally. Each cannister costs in the region of £60 which includes the forensic recovery. Dorset Police purchased 10 sprays for a trial in BCP. As of August 2026, two cannisters have been used. The use of the tagging spray does rely heavily on knowing or suspecting the identity of the rider and being close enough to the rider to deploy the spray. When an individual is identified and the tagging spray is used, officers then attend the home address and seize the e-bike and clothing for forensic comparison. A core strand of this product is the linked media campaign which was launched late 2025 and seeks to educate the public and provide deterrence. The use of tagging spray has restrictions and operational challenges, which are considered in further detail in Section 8.4.
- 7.9 Dorset Police Neighbourhood Teams (NPTs) work in partnership with Local Authorities and Housing Associations and use tenancy agreements, where appropriate, as leverage if the identity of an individual is known or suspected and they are using e-mobility vehicles illegally. Where there are hotspots of reported ASB, NPTs provide high-visibility presence and seek to educate the public and seize illegal e-mobility vehicles.
- 7.10 Dorset Police Crime Prevention Advisors provide advice to communities and Local Authorities on measures to restrict the movement of e-mobility vehicles in open spaces and parks. This can include the use of physical barriers to create controlled or 'pinch point' access. However, these measures can be costly, particularly across large or open areas, and may also create additional safety, accessibility and maintenance considerations.

8. POLICE ENFORCEMENT CHALLENGES

- 8.1 As mentioned previously in this report, the continuing number of illegal e-mobility vehicles available to consumers on the open market and the number being used in communities across Dorset continues to place significant demand on policing. For policing, this includes responding to reports of dangerous and anti-social riding, targeted patrols in hotspot areas, vehicle seizures and disposal, identification and investigation of offenders, and community reassurance. Where illegal e-mobility is associated with wider criminality, including drug dealing or serious violence, the demand extends beyond road safety enforcement into neighbourhood policing and criminal investigation. The increasing requirement for proactive enforcement and partnership activity also places additional demands on policing resources.
- 8.2 Where riders cannot immediately be identified, police may need to review CCTV, develop intelligence, identify repeat offenders and undertake follow-up enquiries. This is particularly relevant where vehicles are associated with ASB or wider criminality.
- 8.3 While officers have the power to stop riders of illegal e-mobility, Police rely on the rider complying with instructions to do so. Where the rider refuses to stop there is no current safe way to compel them without placing the rider and officer at risk of serious harm.
- 8.4 Tools such as the forensic SMART water tagging spray is currently being trialled but it will not be a complete solution to illegal e-mobility. There are several challenges which restrict its use:
- **Identifying the tagged person:** SmartTag provides a forensic link, but the spray itself does not identify the offender immediately. Officers still need to locate the suspect and subsequently use UV equipment to identify the marking which can be then used as evidence.

- **Getting close enough to deploy it safely:** Illegal e-bikes can be travelling at high speed, and riders will attempt to evade officers. Deploying a spray accurately from a moving police vehicle or at distance can therefore be difficult and may create additional safety risks.
- **Officer safety and proportionality:** Officers need to assess whether deploying the spray is proportionate and safe in the circumstances, particularly where a rider is aggressive, carrying a weapon, or travelling at speed. The College of Policing has identified concerns around the potential for forensic spray interventions to escalate violence in some circumstances.
- **Evidence and continuity:** If the marking is to support a prosecution, officers need to recover, preserve and submit the evidence appropriately and establish the link between the unique forensic code, the location and the individual. This creates additional investigative and evidential requirements.
- **Equipment and training:** Effective use requires officers to have access to the spray and UV detection equipment, together with appropriate training and understanding of when it can be deployed. The College of Policing has specifically highlighted the importance of ensuring officers have access to UV torches when using forensic marking. Each cannister costs £60 which includes the forensic recovery.
- **Limited opportunity in spontaneous incidents:** In many e-mobility incidents, officers may only have seconds to make a decision. A rider travelling at speed may disappear before officers can safely deploy the spray, meaning it is likely to be more effective as part of a planned, intelligence-led operation than as a response to every incident.

9. MULTI-AGENCY RESPONSE

9.1 Illegal e-mobility is being tackled through a multi-agency approach involving Dorset Police, Local Authorities, Community Safety and ASB teams, Youth Services and other partners. The response combines enforcement and vehicle seizure with intelligence sharing, hotspot patrols, community engagement, education and preventative measures. Where illegal e-mobility is linked to persistent ASB or wider criminality, partners can also use wider ASB and safeguarding powers to address the underlying behaviour and individuals involved. This approach recognises that enforcement alone will not address the full extent of the problem and that effective prevention requires coordinated activity across policing, local government and communities.

9.2 The widespread availability of illegal e-mobility vehicles remains a significant concern and contributes to their increasing use. In March 2026, the Dorset PCC responded to the Government's consultation on consumer product safety. The consultation, led by the Office for Product Safety and Standards (OPSS) and the Department for Business and Trade, proposed strengthening responsibilities across the product supply chain, including for products sold through online marketplaces.

In the PCC's response, he highlighted the urgent need to address the sale and availability of illegal e-mobility vehicles and supported the proposed changes to consumer product legislation.

9.3 The Government has committed to pursuing legislative reform to create safe, legal routes for the use of micromobility vehicles like e-scooters when parliamentary time allows. However, this continued delay in legislative control is not assisting or reducing the demand for police enforcement.

- 9.4 In May 2025, the Government consulted on proposals to reduce the time vehicles seized for anti-social use must be retained before disposal, initially proposing a reduction from 14 days to 48 hours. Following consultation, the Government published its response in June 2026 and confirmed that it will instead legislate to reduce and align the disposal timeframe to 7 calendar days. The changes require amendments to secondary legislation before they come into force.
- 9.5 The evidence indicates that illegal e-mobility is an emerging and increasing issue in Dorset, particularly where vehicles are associated with ASB, dangerous riding and, in a small number of cases, wider criminality. While the scale of the problem is considerably lower than that seen in larger urban areas such as London, Birmingham and Manchester, the increase in seizures, reported incidents and community concern demonstrates the need for continued monitoring and a coordinated response. Effective management requires a combination of proportionate enforcement, prevention, education, intelligence sharing and action with partners to address the availability of illegal vehicles. The position continues to be reviewed as the impact of strengthened police powers and forthcoming legislative changes becomes clearer.

10. RECOMMENDATION

- 10.1 Members are recommended to note the illegal e-mobility update.

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