

A REVOLUTION IS TAKING PLACE

With e-Scooters looking ever-more likely to gain Government approval in the UK, Hayley Everett picks the brains of Reid Bikes' CEO **Rob Akam** and Pure Scooters' International Managing Director **Peter Kimberley** on how e-Scooters could soon become a large player in the UK e-mobility market...

ROB AKAM > REID BIKES

Having seen e-Scooters as a solution to urban transport for some time, Reid Bikes' CEO Rob Akam holds a keen interest in the e-Mobility space. After developing and selling e-Bikes for a couple of years, Reid saw consumer demand for other additional greener options which people could use to get around.

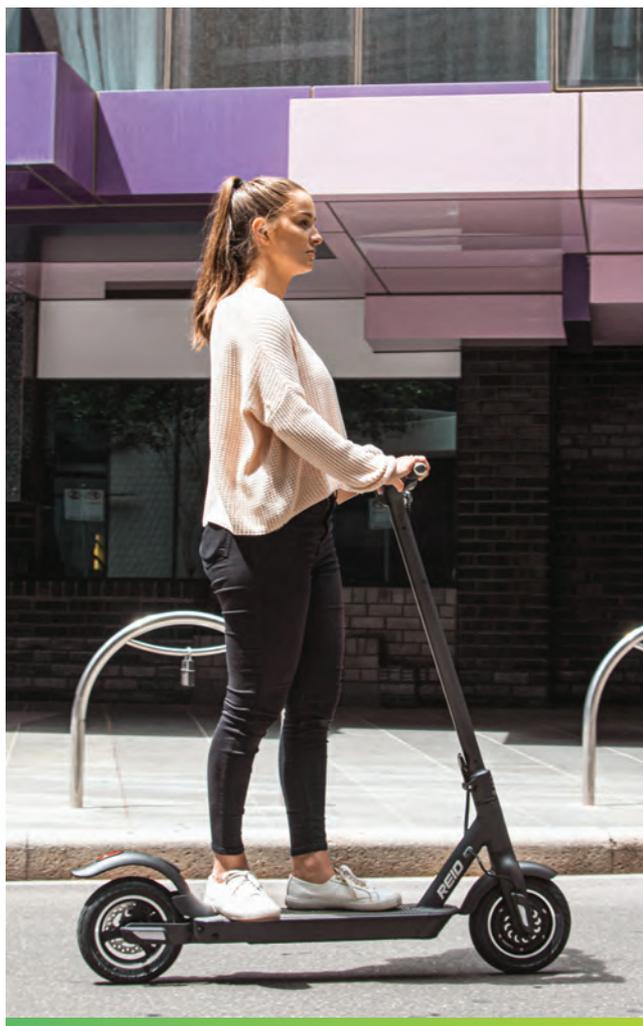
"By attending most trade shows for bikes, leisure and sports in general in Asia, we had good exposure to the development of e-Scooters early on," explains Akam. "This really interested me, as it's the ideal solution for people that have a commute or regular journeys of a few miles who maybe can't afford an e-Bike, but still want a quick, green and easy way to get around."

Reid has partnered with Moore Large to distribute two of its e-Scooter models to the UK market, the E4 and E4 Plus. According to the distributor, it hasn't seen demand as high since the Tern GSD hit the market.

"This shows there is simply huge demand for this product category in the UK market," Akam enthuses. "This is despite their current legal status which means they can only be ridden on private land. E-Scooters are a brilliant solution for urban mobility. Living in Bournemouth, which is always in the top five towns and cities in the UK for congestion, I can tell you that we need real and rapid changes made to urban infrastructure.

"Consumers are already making their behavioural changes proven by their purchasing decisions for e-Bikes and e-Scooters. Once the Government catches up, and hopefully legalises e-Scooters, I can only see this demand growing, and at a rapid rate."

A public consultation into legalising the public use of e-Scooters, with the Government reportedly keen to align legislation with that of e-Bikes, is currently underway. It is expected the consultation will be followed by trials in cities, with nationwide approval if deemed a success. According to Akam, this is long overdue.



"I really hope they work through this consultation process quickly and look at all the benefits e-Scooters can offer," he says. "With urban populations continuing to grow, we need better transport solutions. To add balance, I don't feel that a blanket legislation is the right approach either. Scooters going 50kph, when even e-Bike regulation

cuts power assistance over 25kph, would not be safe or wise for urban environments.

“An e-Scooter using roads and cycle lanes, limited to the same top speed as e-Bikes, and used in the same way, following the highway code; I honestly don't see it as posing any more danger than a bicycle or e-Bike.”

Akam feels scooter brands, manufacturers and major retailers should be actively engaged in the consultation process in order to put forward what they feel can make the products safe, and therefore help to legalise them.

Reid has worked to create what it believes is a safe and sensible product, limiting the speed to 25kph, having front, rear and side lights, a brake light, and all electrical components meeting EU and CE regulations.

The E4 and E4 Plus e-Scooters were created as a genuine alternative to a car, bus, bicycle or e-Bike for urban mobility, used not only for 'last mile' journeys but also for journeys up to five or ten miles. Ergonomics and comfort are priorities in the design, with a larger deck than most in this price bracket, and wide handlebars similar to those on a bike with a better fit for a western adult's frame. Both models have puncture proof wheels, with the E4 having eight-inch wheels and the E4 Plus having larger 10-inch wheels for improved comfort on UK roads.

The E4 Plus also has integrated rear suspension to add further comfort, noticeable on longer journeys. As well as a rear disc brake, the model features electronic regen-



A POLL ON CI.N'S INSTAGRAM FOUND ONE IN THREE BIKE SHOPS HAVE AN INTEREST IN STOCKING E-SCOOTERS

erative braking on the front wheel; by having both brakes acting in tandem via the handlebar-mounted lever, braking occurs over a shorter distance and improves safety.

Both models connect with the Reid app, available from the App Store and Google Play, which enables riders to customise their light colours, see their e-Scooter's battery percentage and change its power settings. Users can also track their live speed, journey distance and odometer, among other things.

When asked what kind of response the e-Scooters had received so far in the UK, Akam replies: “It's been unbelievable. Everyone has been very positive about our scooters, and this is despite their current legality status. Additionally, a lot of the retailers who have taken on the e-Scooters through Moore Large are already sharing their positive feedback on social and have started taking pre-orders.

“There have been some slight reservations around e-Scooters in general from companies that have been hurt by poor warranty and support from companies that have flooded certain markets with cheap, poorly assembled scooters,” he continues. “We have taken a more sustainable approach, spending more time on development and quality control to produce a product we are proud to stand behind and support.”



PETER KIMBERLEY > PURE SCOOTERS



Previously the Managing Director of Tredz Bikes and retail chain Cycle Republic, Peter Kimberley recently announced he had decided to swap bicycles for another two-wheeled variety, joining Pure Scooters as the brand's International Managing Director at the beginning of the year.

What initially drew you to the e-Scooter space?

This is such an exciting time; a revolution is taking place within the micromobility space. I share the same passion and vision as Adam Norris, the Founder of Pure Scooters, who believes that by using game-changing technology we can improve lives and how people move around cities.

I have recently purchased an electric scooter and can instantly appreciate the rider benefits; it reminds me of when I first rode an e-Bike several years ago and how the power of electric enhances the rider experience.

Do you see large demand for e-Scooters in the UK?

The rate of growth and demand for e-Scooters within the UK over the last 12 months has been incredible, and this is reflected in our first year of trading. Reviewing our trend data, the expected growth for 2020 is undoubtedly going to continue to build momentum and increase year-on-year.

I experienced a similar scenario about five years ago when e-Bikes were introduced to the UK market. There was a lot of scepticism and doubt that e-Bikes would be accepted by cyclists, however we have seen the shift and change in attitudes and I believe this will be the case across the entire e-mobility sector.

What response has Pure Scooters received from the market so far?

As a specialist retailer, Pure Scooters has received a fantastic response from our customers and the suppliers we work with across the industry. The business launched just over 14 months ago and we now have an e-Commerce platform in both the UK and Belgium, while we launched our first shop in Belgravia, Central London. Across all our channels we have received excellent feedback for both our product range and customer service, something that is reflected in our 4.7 stars 'Excellent' rated Trust Pilot score.

A consultation into legalising the public use of e-Scooters is underway – is this a step in the right direction?

Without a doubt, the review of the policy regarding legalising public use of e-Scooters is hugely overdue. The UK is the last major European economy to still ban such use. Germany is paving the way for the mobility of the future, having passed legalising the public use of scooters last May. We have seen from consumer demand that people have the appetite to enhance their lifestyle and contribute to reducing air pollution and vehicle congestion within our cities.

While I support the legalisation of e-Scooters, I do believe that this needs to be carefully reviewed with necessary support from stakeholders across the industry. This was an approach adopted for e-Bikes and something I was personally involved with, working alongside Transport for London.

Do you think legalising e-Scooters could help pave the way for better infrastructure for all forms of mobility?

The Government, authorities and local councils have made some fantastic progress in developing, investing and driving changes within the infrastructure to enhance safer and more efficient walking and cycling routes across our cities. However, as our cities evolve, our mobility needs must be considered within this changing environment. It is critical that the infrastructure continues to advance, and I am sure that legalising e-Scooters will help pave the way for an improved infrastructure.

Where do you see the long-term future of e-Scooters? As popular, if not more so, than e-Bikes?

I anticipate the rate of progress in this sector to grow at a phenomenal rate. We are at an 'early adopter' stage and this is an emerging market, but people are starting to recognise the benefits that e-Scooters can provide to improving their lives. We increasingly find ourselves 'time poor' and seeking to create convenience in order to spend less time on congested roads and more quality family time.

I expect we will see tremendous growth in e-mobility, and as technology advances this presents greater scope for product development, underpinned by an improvement in our infrastructure. I anticipate the popularity of e-Scooters will increase for those undertaking shorter journeys, and whilst e-Bikes are a viable alternative, they do not offer the convenience and storage benefits of a scooter; something that is particularly appealing when traveling to and from your place of work. ●

