

**Première partie de l'épreuve****SAVE UP TO A THIRD ON ELECTRIC BIKES UNDER PLANS FOR CYCLING REVOLUTION**

The price of electric bikes could be cut by up to a third under government plans to offer commuters a “sweat-free” alternative to conventional bicycles.

Ministers will launch a taxpayer-backed scheme to boost the number of people using battery-assisted bikes, appealing directly to commuters riding in business outfits and  
5 those who are older or less fit.

Trials of the programme will begin in the next five months before details of a full-scale support package are unveiled in spring next year.

Although the details are yet to be finalised, *The Times* has learnt that the government favours a system of direct subsidies similar to grants for plug-in cars, motorbikes, vans,  
10 taxis and trucks. They are worth a maximum of 20 to 35 per cent off the purchase cost depending on the type of vehicle.

One Whitehall<sup>1</sup> source said it was “wrong that the only electric vehicles we don’t provide any taxpayer support for, is a bike”.

E-bikes currently cost between £600 and £3000, suggesting that any grant is likely to run  
15 into hundreds of pounds. It could be on top of the government’s existing cycle-to-work scheme, which gives salaried, higher-rate taxpayers up to 42 per cent off the cost of bikes.

The move comes after the publication of a government cycling strategy in July which outlined a £2 billion funding package to more people on to two wheels.

E-bikes have a small battery-powered motor that can provide assistance at speeds of up  
20 to 15.5 mph, making journeys and hill-climbs easier.

The report said that e-bikes could be “particularly useful for people who, for example need to ride in business clothes without breaking into a sweat, or to ride up hills, or to travel long distances, who are older or less fit, or who are otherwise put off by the physical effort of an ordinary bike”.

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<sup>1</sup> Whitehall = (here) government

25 Responding to a parliamentary question, Chris Heaton-Harris, the Transport Minister, said the government was “developing a national programme of support to boost e-bike uptake to the levels seen in many other countries”.

Cycling UK said that the support scheme “should be a straightforward purchase subsidy” adding that it was a “long-standing bone of contention<sup>2</sup> that grants are available for electric cars, electric vans, electric lorries, electric taxis, even electric motorbikes, but not electric pedal cycles”.

It suggested that the scheme should not be “overly generous, as the concern is that it could simply end up being a subsidy for wealthy people to buy expensive bikes”, adding that more generous support could be offered to those with health conditions or disabilities.

35 Sarah Mitchell, Cycling UK chief executive, said: “E-bikes flatten hills, cancel headwinds, turn short sweaty routes into a carefree ride, and above all they are fun. Nearly 70 per cent of our journeys under five miles are driven. With the right incentives and right infrastructure in place, a mass uptake in e-bikes could provide a real alternative to households that previously relied on two or more cars.

40 “There’s no reason to be sniffy<sup>3</sup> about e-bikes – they’re not cheating and have an important part to play in making cycling more accessible for more people”.

Adapted from Graeme Paton, Transport Correspondent, *The Times*, 17 November 2020

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<sup>2</sup> A bone of contention: a source of disagreement

<sup>3</sup> Be sniffy: be disrespectful