

Police Scotland

Operational Support Division - Road Policing

Submission to Criminal Justice Committee 18th November 2026
on criminal and antisocial use of e-bikes and e-scooters

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Executive Summary

Police Scotland is alert to the harm caused by the criminal and antisocial use of illegal e-bikes and e-scooters. We are strengthening an established local response through national coordination, prevention and targeted enforcement.

- **Harm prevention is the priority.** Dangerous riding can cause serious injury to riders, other road users and pedestrians, with persistent antisocial use undermining confidence in public spaces.

- **The recorded picture is incomplete.** Recorded incidents and offences have increased, however, community experience is not fully captured because behaviour is not always reported to or otherwise identified by police. Increased enforcement also contributes to recorded demand.

- **There is an active, coordinated police response.** Local engagement and intelligence-led activity are supported by Road Policing coordination, updated guidance and a monthly National Practitioners Group. Operational records identify 1,204 seizures between January and October 2026, subject to the limitations in Annex A.

- **Existing powers enable action, but seizure is not the whole solution.** Our assessment is that current powers under the Road Traffic Act 1988 are sufficient to seize illegal e-bikes and e-scooters. As our coordinated response becomes embedded, sustained effects on offending, injury and community confidence will require assessment over time through both quantitative data and qualitative feedback.

- **Education and continued prevention.** We will sustain targeted policing, strengthen evaluation and progress joint work on prevention, product compliance and public understanding. We will seek to use existing structures, including Community Planning Partnerships and the Transport Scotland led Operational Partnership Group, agreeing responsibilities and milestones with the organisations concerned.

The scale and nature of criminal and antisocial behaviour involving e-bikes and e-scooters

The operational picture encompasses unlawful vehicle use and road traffic offending; antisocial behaviour affecting community safety and confidence; and wider criminality, including theft. Vehicle involvement does not necessarily mean offending by a rider: recorded crimes include cases in which an e-bike is the property stolen.

Police Scotland recognises that recorded data does not capture the full extent of antisocial behaviour involving illegal e-bikes, e-scooters and similar vehicles experienced in communities. Such behaviour is not always reported to the police and, unless otherwise identified by officers, will not appear in police records. The figures therefore represent only the recorded picture, not a complete measure of the frequency, geographical reach or cumulative impact of this behaviour. Community engagement and information from local partners remain important in understanding concerns and informing prevention and enforcement.

The impact is not confined to collisions or individual offences. Repeated dangerous riding and nuisance can make people less confident using paths, parks and other shared spaces. Reported concerns in Aberdeen prompted targeted activity in parks, playing fields, golf courses and the city centre [1].

Recorded incidents, crimes and offences

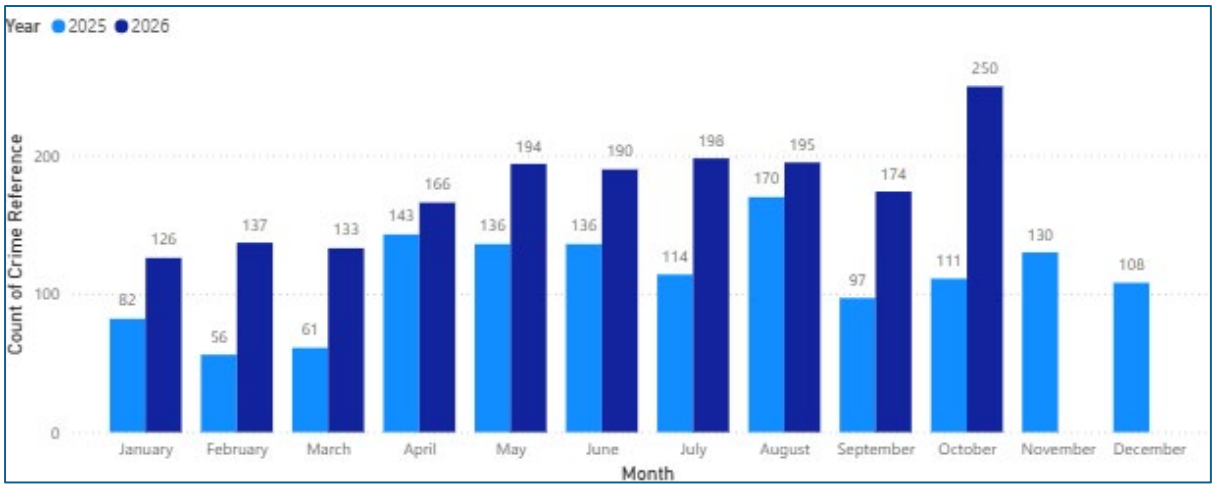
Evidence note: Police figures are indicative operational data, not official statistics, and must not be treated or reported as such. Unless stated otherwise, comparisons cover 1 January to 31 October in each year. Incident, offence and seizure count measure different things and must not be added together as a prevalence total. Reporting, recording and proactive enforcement affect the figures. Annex A sets out the methodological limitations.

The following table summarises the operational data available. Incident totals include reports from the public and incidents recorded because of police activity. Where a seizure is not linked to an existing incident, officers create an incident record.

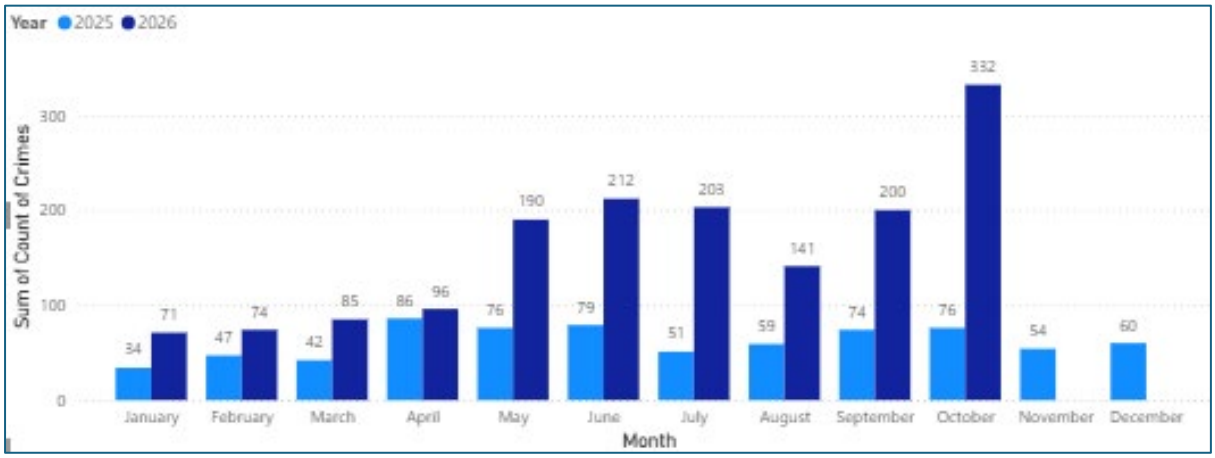
Recorded measure	E-bikes: 2025	E-bikes: 2026	E-scooters: 2025	E-scooters: 2026
Incidents	1,143	2,033	546	1,175
Incidents with a final description of “Public Nuisance”	313	612	195	491
Crimes and offences	1,106	1,763	624	1,604

Table 1 – summary of operational data. Incident figures include police generated activity around the seizure of illegal e-bikes and e-scooters.

This highlights increased demand, with public nuisance the most frequently recorded final incident description for both vehicle categories. There has been an increasing trend since January 2024 concerning the number of offences recorded each month. This increase is driven by a combination of increased number of users of illegal e-bikes and e-scooters, and a more robust police response to offences involving their use as shown in graphs 1 and 2 below.



Graph 1- recorded E-Bike offences



Graph 2 - recorded E-Scooter offences

Recent campaign activity and proactive policing within communities will have directly contributed to these increases. The impact of Police Scotland's Operation Overlap in October can clearly be seen in the offences recorded for that month.

"Theft of an e-bike" was the most frequently recorded e-bike offence, with 393 offences in 2026 compared with 281 in the equivalent period in 2025. "Failure to insure against 3rd party risks" was the most frequently recorded e-scooter offence, with 446 offences in 2026 compared with 180 in the equivalent period in 2025.

Collisions and injury

Clinicians within the Scottish Trauma Network (STN), part of National Services Directorate in Public Services Delivery Scotland, have reported increasing numbers of injuries associated with E-bike/E-Scooters presenting to Emergency Departments (EDs) and Minor Injury Units (MIUs).

Police collision information requires further review and validation before a reliable national total can be presented. However, it is important to illustrate the potential severity of harm sustained while using an illegal e-bike or e-scooter. The below table shows some anonymised cases*.

A single vehicle collision where the 35-year-old rider of an e-scooter lost control and collided with a lamppost, resulting in serious injury and a slight injury to their 12-year-old male passenger.
An illegal E-bike travelling at speed on the wrong side of the road collided with a car, resulting in the serious injury of the 15-year-old male illegal e-bike rider.
An 89-year-old female suffered serious injury after a collision with an E-scooter.
A 14-year-old illegal E-bike rider suffered slight injuries after falling from the vehicle while performing a "wheelie", ultimately colliding with a parked car
58-year-old male E-scooter rider was seriously injured following collision with a car which had just collided with another vehicle.
A 39-year-old male pedestrian suffered slight injury when hit by a 30-year-old male riding an illegal E-bike.
An 8-year-old male pedestrian suffered serious injury, and a 10yo male pedestrian suffered slight injury following a collision with an illegal E-bike rider who had failed to stop at a red light.

Table 2 – anonymised sample of harm.
**These cases are illustrative, not representative of all illegal e-bike and e-scooter collisions. They do not establish the frequency of collision types or fault across incidents.*

The current legal and policy landscape

The focus is on criminal and antisocial use of illegal e-bikes and e-scooters; therefore, it is important that the committee and stakeholders have a common understanding and definition of terminology:

Compliant EAPCs. An EAPC must have pedals capable of propelling it, a maximum continuous rated motor power of 250 watts and electrical assistance that cuts off at 15.5 mph. Riders must be aged 14 or over. Compliant EAPCs are treated as pedal cycles and as such no motor vehicle registration, tax, insurance or driving licence is required.

Other powered transporters. Machines outside the EAPC requirements are treated as motor vehicles, including EAPCs modified to exceed the power or assisted-speed limits and electric motorcycles without usable pedals. Road use requires the same standards as a motorcycle to be met. Privately owned e-scooters cannot lawfully be ridden on public roads, pavements or other public places in Scotland. They may be used on private land with the landowner's permission.

Additionally, Police Scotland have taken steps to improve and embed national policy and governance. The monthly National Practitioners Group brings together divisional practitioners and specialist advice to identify recurring difficulties, share effective practice and support a consistent approach. Updated guidance, circulated nationally, addresses vehicle classification, powers, seizure, recovery and disposal. However, it is paramount that these issues are managed at a local level with that knowledge and community relationships pivotal.

The activity to address this issue requires multi-agency responsibility, but this has added complexities as this spans reserved and devolved matters. The Scottish Government has identified legislation governing e-bike and e-scooter use as a reserved matter [11]. Any changes to the vehicle regulatory framework will require engagement with the UK Government, while policing, justice and community prevention involve Scottish institutions and local partners.

Section 165A of the Road Traffic Act 1988 enables a constable in uniform to seize a motor vehicle where the statutory conditions concerning driving without the required licence or insurance are met [6].

Section 126 of the Antisocial Behaviour etc. (Scotland) Act 2004 addresses motor vehicle use contravening the careless or inconsiderate driving or prohibited off-road driving provisions and causing, or likely to cause, alarm, distress or annoyance. Its warning requirements and exceptions must be observed [7].

However, operational experience has shown that the use of Sec 165A of Road Traffic Act 1988 is effective when seizing illegal e-bikes and e-scooters. The easy availability and access to these products and the retail and regulatory framework, will need to be assessed by the committee on whether it adequately prevents harm.

Effectiveness and limitations of enforcement measures

Enforcement alone will not resolve this issue. Our enforcement response illegal e-bikes and e-scooters, pursues offences supported by evidence and targets the locations and repeat behaviour causing concern.

A local example of this is **Operation Armour.** Between 18 May and 5 June 2026, Aberdeen's Community Action Team identified 154 crimes and charged 50 people following public reports of illegal vehicle use. Intelligence-led activity included hotspot patrols and eight search warrants. Officers recovered 24 illegal e-bikes and 15 e-scooters, alongside petrol motorcycles and other vehicles. Offences included dangerous driving, driving without a licence or insurance and driving on footpaths; drugs and cash were also recovered [1].

This type of activity is taking place across communities in Scotland and a coordinated national week of action under **Operation Overlap** took place the week beginning 19 October 2026. This resulted in 142 vehicles seized across Scotland: 99 illegal e-bikes and 43 e-scooters. A strong focus of the campaign was education, and public communications explained the legal requirements and consequences of unlawful use [2].

Operational records identify **1,204 vehicle seizures** between January and October 2026, compared with 727 in the equivalent period in 2025 and 380 in 2024. Section 165A of the Road Traffic Act 1988 accounted for 1,196 of the 2026 seizures, compared with 645 in 2025 and 310 in 2024, making it central to the current response as highlighted in Annex B.

The ability to pursue and safely stop illegal e-bikes and e-scooters must be lawful and proportionate. Any immediate intervention must be assessed against the risk it could create for the public, officers and the rider.

Face Coverings

There is currently very limited legislation in Scotland which empowers police officers to remove or seize items being worn to conceal identity, but there are also clear Human Rights elements which must be considered to ensure that policing activity is proportionate, necessary and non-discriminatory. It is recognised that a general ban on the wearing of face coverings is unlikely to be Human Rights compliant.

It is, however, recognised that Scottish Government may also wish to explore alternative legal options which should incorporate requirements that certain conditions and authorisation thresholds are met, including being timebound and in an identified geographic area.

There are likely to be potentially significant operational impacts on Police Scotland through the introduction of any related legislation, so it will be important to ensure that these are taken into account and that policing priorities are considered in managing public expectations. Police Scotland would welcome informing such a debate, but recognises there are other voices to be heard.

Disposal Arrangements

Another limitation to enforcement has been the disposal arrangements under previous contracts. Police Scotland acknowledge that previous arrangements resulted in seized illegal e-bikes being auctioned. In September 2026, we stopped this and ensured a consistent approach of destroying seized vehicles so they could not re-enter circulation. However, this change in practice has generated a financial impact by policing having to absorb the fee for each illegal e-bike and e-scooter seized.

Managing competing demands place constraints on enforcement, with attendance prioritised according to risk and other pressing operational needs. An immediate response will not always be possible; therefore, locally informed community policing is central to tackling the issue, combining targeted enforcement with prevention and partnership work to address recurring offending and community concerns. The recovery of vehicles can also have an impact on officer time, the current recovery arrangement is 30 minutes, however, this can be longer during peak demand like a coordinated campaign such as Operation Overlap.

The availability of replacement vehicles and gaps in public understanding limit what enforcement alone can achieve. Lawful sale does not automatically allow lawful public use, and modification can change a vehicle's legal classification. Sustained, intelligence-led enforcement must therefore operate alongside prevention and partner action.

Preventative and enforcement action

We are combining consistent use of existing powers, local prevention and public advice. Our action programme sets out what Police Scotland will deliver and how it will be reviewed. Joint next steps identify where agreement with partners is required.

Prevention must reach parents, riders and prospective purchasers before vehicles enter unlawful use. We are preparing communications ahead of Christmas explaining lawful use, the risks of misuse and the consequences of offending.

Local prevention is already established across the communities of Scotland which includes Project Trail that included engagement with schools, community councils and young people in Renfrewshire and Inverclyde [3]. Work with partners in Moray explained e-scooter dangers and restrictions [4], while direct engagement with delivery riders in Glasgow addressed compliance

requirements [5]. These examples demonstrate established routes for engagement and reporting.

Police Scotland's action programme

1. Sustain targeted, safe enforcement.
Local policing divisions will identify priority locations and repeat behaviour using intelligence, recorded demand and community concerns. Road Policing will coordinate national support and consistency through the National Practitioners Group. We will review the use of powers, safe delivery, recovery and disposal, and escalate operational or resource issues through normal governance.

2. Strengthen prevention and public understanding.
Local policing divisions, supported by national communications, will continue to deliver advice to riders, parents, schools and communities, with an immediate focus on the pre-Christmas period. We will review campaign delivery and local feedback to inform subsequent activity. Messaging will distinguish compliant EAPCs from illegal e-bikes and e-scooters and **will not discourage responsible lawful cycling**.

3. Support partners to address unsafe products and misleading sales practices.
Police Scotland will willingly engage with the agencies responsible for product safety, imports and trading standards. We will share relevant intelligence and evidence from operational activity, referring concerns about unsafe vehicles, conversion products or potentially misleading advertising to the appropriate agency. This will help partners identify and address problems with the products being supplied and how they are marketed, while Police Scotland continues to tackle criminal and antisocial use.

4. Improve our understanding of demand and harm
Road Policing will work with analysts and those responsible for our recording systems to improve the information available on illegal e-bike and e-scooter incidents, offending and collisions. This will include addressing differences in how vehicles are described and recorded, checking the information extracted is clear. We will use this information to identify emerging concerns, inform operational priorities and assess changes over time, taking account of the limitations in the data. We will also seek input from health partners to develop a fuller understanding of injuries and their impact.

5. Address operational issues and contribute to national policy
The National Practitioners Group will bring together issues encountered by divisions; agree what action is needed and identify who will take it forward. Progress will be reviewed at the monthly meetings, with specialist advice sought where required, including on the application of enforcement powers. Police Scotland is also working with the National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC) and forces in England and Wales to share experience and contribute to the development of UK-level guidance and policy. This engagement allows us to learn from practice elsewhere and ensure that Scotland's operational experience and legal framework inform that work.

Demonstrating delivery and assessing impact

We will review both the work being carried out and whether it is helping to reduce offending and harm. Road Policing and local divisions will use existing management arrangements to review progress and agree any further action.

Review stage	What we will look at	How we will review it
Delivery of agreed activity	Action on local priorities, use of the revised guidance, targeted enforcement, prevention work and engagement with partners.	Road Policing and local divisions will review what has been delivered and identify any difficulties. Progress will be considered through existing management arrangements.
Changes in offending and harm over time	Injuries, repeat incidents and offending, recurring community concerns and whether people feel safer in public spaces.	We will consider available incident and collision information alongside feedback from communities and partners. Where the data allows, we will compare periods before and after activity, taking account of seasonal patterns, changes in reporting and recording, and whether offending has moved elsewhere. We will also seek input from health partners to improve our understanding of injuries.

Next steps with government and partners

The next stage of this work will build on prevention and enforcement already taking place across Scotland. We will use existing local and national partnerships to agree where further joint action is needed, including Community Planning Partnerships and the Road Safety Framework Strategic Partnership Board where appropriate. Responsibilities, timescales and any resource requirements will be agreed with the organisations involved.

Discussions with Transport Scotland regarding a specific multi-agency targeted media campaign are progressing to enhance public awareness. In addition we will:

1. **Continue prevention and support compliance.** We will continue working with partners to help riders and purchasers understand the rules and use these vehicles lawfully. Local engagement and public communications will remain an important part of that work, particularly in reaching parents and young people. Where officers identify concerns about the safety, importation or marketing of vehicles and conversion products, we will share relevant evidence with the agencies responsible and support their enquiries. Through existing government and regulatory contacts, we will seek agreement on who is best placed to act and how policing can assist. National road safety issues can be raised through the Road Safety Framework Strategic Partnership Board, with specialist matters referred to the relevant authorities.

2. **Improve our understanding of injuries using police and health information.** Police records provide only part of the picture of injuries involving EPAC, illegal e-bikes and e-scooters. We will seek to work with Public Health Scotland and relevant trauma services to understand what health information can add and where there are gaps in

both sets of records. The first step will be to agree which vehicle categories and injury measures can be compared meaningfully, what periods they cover and how the information can be reviewed over time. This work will focus initially on summary information. Any sharing or linking of individual records would require separate agreement and appropriate safeguards.

3. **Embed local prevention and community engagement.** Local and community policing teams will continue the prevention and engagement work already established with schools, young people, parents and community groups. Through existing community safety and road safety partnerships, we will work with local authorities and other partners to respond to the concerns raised in each area. This will help us identify where advice, targeted engagement or enforcement is needed and who is best placed to provide it. Feedback from communities will inform local priorities and national communications and help us understand whether the action taken is addressing their concerns.

Police Scotland will continue to act on community concerns, enforce the law and work with partners to prevent harm. National coordination will support that local response and help address difficulties encountered by officers. We will judge progress by the evidence available on injuries and repeat offending, alongside what communities tell us about their safety and use of public spaces.

Annex A: Evidence and methodology

Status and reporting periods

Police figures are indicative extracts from operational systems, not official statistics, and must not be treated or reported as such. Unless stated otherwise, they cover 1 January to 31 October 2026, with comparisons for the same period in 2025. Published health information and the results of individual operations may cover different periods and populations, as indicated alongside the figures.

Identification, classification and assurance

There is no dedicated flag on crime reports or STORM incident records that consistently identifies illegal e-bike or e-scooter involvement. Analysts have therefore relied in part on keyword searches of descriptive text. This means relevant records may be missed where different terms have been used, while some search results may refer to vehicles or circumstances outside the intended scope. Descriptions used in operational records do not, on their own, establish a vehicle's legal classification.

Vehicle classification limitations in CRASH also affect our ability to distinguish vehicle types reliably. Work is ongoing with the Department for Transport and the CRASH system administration team to address these issues. Further checks are needed to confirm the coverage of the extracts and how unclear or duplicate records have been treated. Comparisons between years also depend on consistent recording, search methods and counting rules.

Counting units and overlap

Incidents, crimes, offences, collisions and seizures are different measures. They do not represent a count of individual people, and one event can generate several records or offences. The datasets and vehicle categories may overlap, so their totals must not be added together to produce an overall figure for the problem. Some offence records concern the theft of a vehicle rather than its use to commit an offence. Police and health records also cover different groups and circumstances. Their figures must not be combined into a single collision or injury total unless a reliable method has been agreed and checked.

Reporting and enforcement effects

Incident totals include reports from the public and incidents recorded because of police activity. Where a seizure is not linked to an existing incident, officers create an incident record. More targeted enforcement, greater public reporting or changes in how vehicles are identified can therefore increase recorded totals without necessarily indicating an equivalent increase in offending. Behaviour that is neither reported nor identified by officers will not appear in police records. The figures cannot capture the full extent of the problem or of community experience.

Interpretation

The figures provide an indication of recorded demand and emerging patterns. They should be read with the limitations above and alongside local knowledge and feedback from communities and partners. They do not establish the full scale of harm, the proportion of riders who offend or the causes of any apparent change. They should not be used to calculate precise rates of change where comparability has not been confirmed or relied upon alone to judge the effectiveness of policing activity. Further work to check recording and extraction methods will support future analysis. Assessing whether improvements are sustained will require evidence gathered over time, with clear explanations of what can and cannot be concluded.

Annex B: Recorded seizures by power and vehicle category

Reporting covers January–October. Vehicle and power labels reproduce the operational categories. Blank cells are retained as supplied and do not imply a confirmed zero.

YEAR REPORTED	POWER	E BIKE	E PEDALCYCLE	E SCOOTER	GRAND TOTAL
2024	ANTISOCIAL BEHAVIOUR (SCOTLAND) ACT	1	2	1	4
	CIVIC GOVERNMENT (SCOTLAND) ACT		1	3	4
	COMMON LAW (SCOTLAND)	18	3	18	39
	SECTION 165A (SCOTLAND)	226	9	75	310
	SECTION 99 (SCOTLAND)	16	1	6	23
2024 Total		**261**	**16**	**103**	**380**
2025	CIVIC GOVERNMENT (SCOTLAND) ACT	2		5	7
	COMMON LAW (SCOTLAND)	41	8	11	60
	SECTION 165A (SCOTLAND)	381	60	204	645
	SECTION 99 (SCOTLAND)	11	2	2	15
2025 Total		**435**	**70**	**222**	**727**
2026	ANTISOCIAL BEHAVIOUR (SCOTLAND) ACT			1	**1**
	COMMON LAW (SCOTLAND)	4			**4**
	SECTION 165A (SCOTLAND)	670	73	453	**1196**
	SECTION 99 (SCOTLAND)	2		1	**3**
2026 Total		**676**	**73**	**455**	**1204**
Grand Total		**2744**	**318**	**1560**	**4622**

Section 165A refers to the Road Traffic Act 1988 [6].
Section 99 of the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 enables regulations for removing vehicles illegally, obstructively or dangerously parked, abandoned or broken down [8].
The antisocial behaviour category relates to the Antisocial Behaviour etc. (Scotland) Act 2004; the extract does not identify the provision used in that individual records [7].

Sources and references

1. Police Scotland, *Fifty people charged following crackdown on illegal e-bikes in Aberdeen*, June 2026; Operation Armour, 18 May–5 June 2026.
2. Police Scotland, *More than 140 illegal e-bikes and scooters seized during week of action*, October 2026; Operation Overlap, week beginning 19 October 2026.
3. Police Scotland, *Project Trail launched in Renfrewshire and Inverclyde*, June 2026.
4. Police Scotland, *Officers in Moray working with partners in connection with e-scooters*, June 2025.
5. Police Scotland, *Officers provide advice on illegal e-bikes and e-scooters in Glasgow city centre*, March 2025.
6. *Road Traffic Act 1988*, section 165A.
7. *Antisocial Behaviour etc. (Scotland) Act 2004*, section 126.
8. *Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984*, section 99.
9. Department for Transport and Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency, *EAPC standards and legal requirements*, updated 10 December 2024.
10. GOV.UK, *Riding an electric scooter: the rules*.
11. Scottish Parliament, written question S6W-32671, answered 8 January 2025; Scottish Government position on e-bike and e-scooter legislation and use.