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Electric bike laws: Are eBike conversion kits legal in the UK?

If you are looking at an eBike or a conversion kit, you're going to want to know where you stand in terms of the electric bike law. Let us bring you up to speed with eBike laws and where you stand with an electric bike conversion kit.

As the trend, and popularity, of eBikes, shows no sign of abating, there is one major barrier to eBike ownership: price. One way of getting around this, and still enjoying all that eBikes have to offer, is by using a conversion kit.

The likes of the Swytch Kit see your standard bicycle transformed in just a matter of moments. The good news is that to keep things simple, the standard electric bike laws also apply to conversion kits. Here's a look at what that means for you.

Are eBike conversion kits worth it?

Before looking at eBike conversion kits law, it is worth considering what a conversion kit actually is. An eBike conversion kit takes your standard bicycle and allows you to convert it into an eBike.

These conversion kits take various forms such as:

- Powered wheel conversion kits
- Concealed kits
- Rear-mounted friction drive
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While these types all have their advantages and disadvantages, they all perform the same basic function. Namely, transforming your loyal steed into something that is even better: an eBike. So, now we know what a conversion kit is, are they legal in the UK? Let's see what the UK eBike laws have to say.

UK electric bike laws

Fortunately, the government in the UK has made it easy to find out just what the electric bike laws are. The laws are also relevant to eBike conversion kits and are relatively simple to understand.

The UK eBike laws state that you need to be at least 14 years old to be able to ride one. Once you have reached this age, there is no need to take a test or to obtain a licence, as long as certain conditions are met.

These are:

- It must have pedals that are used as a means of propelling
- An eBike must show the power output or the manufacturer of the motor
- It must display either the voltage of the battery or the maximum speed
- The power output can't exceed 250 watts
- You shouldn't be able to propel the bike when travelling more than 25kph (15.5mph)
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Are eBike conversion kits legal and what if my eBike conversion kit does not comply?

Yes, eBike conversion kits, such as Swytch, are legal as they comply with the electric bike laws. However, aftermarket Kits may not be. Any eBike or conversion that doesn't comply with the law could then fall under the Road Traffic Act. The potential implications of your eBike being governed by the Road Traffic Act include:

- Your eBike being confiscated
- You would possibly be fined for having no insurance, MOT, or tax

- You could end up with points on your driving license
- If you're already disqualified from driving, riding a non-complying eBike could see you being arrested
- Drink-drive laws are likely to apply
- An accident leading to a fatality could see you being jailed for up to 14 years
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To ensure you don't inadvertently fall foul of eBike conversion kit laws, buying your conversion kit from a reputable company is best practice.

An eBike vs a pedelec in the eyes of the law

As far as UK eBike laws are concerned, eBikes and pedelecs are the same things and their names can be used interchangeably. The same restrictions are imposed on pedelecs as they are on eBikes. There are, however, some exceptions.

Although not overly common in the UK, countries such as Germany and Holland have seen a rise in the number of s-pedelecs being used. These are much faster than a standard pedelec and can reach speeds of up to 45kph (28mph). This means that they need to be insured, and helmets are needed to ride them.

Are there any other eBike conversion kit restrictions?

Although not directly related to electric bike laws, there is something else to be wary of when using a conversion kit: your warranty. If your bicycle has been purchased brand new, it is likely to be covered by a manufacturer's warranty.

While an eBike conversion kit is okay in the eyes of the law, your warranty conditions may see this otherwise. If your bicycle still has a valid warranty it is certainly worth checking the terms and conditions before you make any changes, including the addition of an eBike conversion kit. The good news is, as the Swytch Kit doesn't permanently modify the bike, you can reverse your bike into a regular bike.

How do international electric bike laws compare?

If you like to travel with your eBike, it is worth making sure that you're familiar with the electric bike laws that apply to where you're visiting. With the UK formerly being part of the EU, before Brexit, you will find that many European countries have eBike laws that closely mirror what you will find at home.

The main issue that you'll face, if you want to take your own eBike overseas, is that planes won't allow you to board with your battery. A battery that is powerful enough to power an eBike is usually banned from all flights. One solution can be found in our AIR Power Pack, which contains smaller batteries which are fit for air travel. Alternatively, it's worth investigating eBike rentals when you reach your destination.

Go to dev.swytchbike.com to explore our range of eBike conversion solutions