

Lifting of e-scooter ban sees green jobs creation across the UK

Electric scooters are now legal in the UK providing certain conditions are met. Companies like Voi and Zwings are growing their teams rapidly, in an otherwise bleak jobs climate, as part of a greener recovery for UK mobility.

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Reaching net-zero emissions will require a total overhaul of the UK's transport system; with the sale of new petrol and diesel cars set to be banned post-2030, personal mobility, public transport and greener electrification will be key.

The average e-scooter ride is less than 5% of the carbon footprint of a car ride. Although electric scooters are - perhaps despite appearances - not as green as public transport, technology is rapidly developing. This will be facilitated by government subsidies, and the regulation of carbon-intensive alternatives, in the coming years.

In a recent *Sifted* piece entitled 'E-scooters aren't as green as public transport — but they're on their way', Fredrik Hjelm - founder of Swedish e-scooter brand Voi - said: "The mark that we're setting for ourselves is that the carbon footprint per passenger, per kilometre should be lower than public transit in all markets we're operating in."

Up until last year, riding an electric scooter on a public road in the UK constituted an offence. However, the rules changed over the course of the pandemic, and now TfL has announced plans for the UK's largest e-scooter trial this spring. This follows several trials across the UK.



According to Joe Lewin, CEO of Zwings - the leading British provider of e-scooter and e-bike rental schemes - "Ultimately, cities needed to start introducing some form of clean transportation that was affordable and accessible." The result, hurried along by social-distancing demands, has been the rise to prominence of e-scooters.

Lewin continues,

"We are thoroughly enjoying forming deep partnerships with councils and local stakeholders, including disability groups, to tailor our micromobility services to meet the unique needs of their respective communities."

There have been teething problems involving ironing out motorist-'scooterer' relationships and ensuring road safety. No doubt these will continue - but, with this new relaxation of rules, top e-scooter brands are recruiting left, right and centre. E-scooter jobs creation - a step towards a greener future for mobility - is a much-needed antidote to COVID's jobs demolition.

Last year Zwings was selected to deploy pilot programmes in eight locations; it also has live rental operations in Newcastle-Under-Lyme, Yeovil, Gloucester and Cheltenham. "We have created 25 jobs so far and will be creating a further approximately 20 more in 2021", continues Joe, who suggests an extensive e-bike rollout is on the horizon.

"This will allow the company to enhance its lead in the rapidly growing British micromobility market as a multi-modal disruptor", he adds.

As for Hjelm's Stockholm-based company - it now employs over 400 people and operates across 11 countries. Founded in 2018, Voi has been carbon-neutral since last January, and currently has a roster of coral scooters available to hire in nine UK towns and cities: Bath, Birmingham, Bristol, Cambridge, Coventry (University of Warwick campus), Kettering, Liverpool, Northampton, and West Bromwich.

Voi's UK team has grown from one last June to around 200 - and there are plans to double this over the course of 2021, with sustainable roles going across technical and non-technical positions, including engineering, public policy, mechanics and ambassadors. The company has also suggested a commitment to hiring those traditionally facing barriers to employment - through working with organisations such as Ambitious for Autism and Black Young Professionals Network.

Richard Corbett, Voi's Regional General Manager for the UK, Ireland and Benelux, commented,

“It’s a positive sign for both the future of e-scooters and the wider economy that we’ve been able to hire so many brilliant people across the UK in a relatively short space of time, particularly during the pandemic, which has led to mass layoffs and job loss across industries.”

The big prize for e-scooter providers – including Zwings and Voi, as well as household name Lime and others like Bird, Tier, Beryl and Ginger – will be a contract with Transport for London, starting as soon as this spring. Until then, new employees will be concentrating on making sure transport’s green recovery from COVID – and the e-scooter’s much-anticipated arrival – go as seamlessly as possible.

As Lewins from Zwings concludes, “Micromobility will be vital to the global COVID recovery, and more cities will take note, benefiting from the resurgence of economic activity, reduced emissions and congestion, and safer streets with fewer cars.”

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