# Gwent Police tests drone technology to tackle illegal e-bike riding



Gwent Police is exploring the innovative utilisation of drones for the tracking and apprehension of illegal e-bike riders in Newport, a strategy that may soon be adopted by other police forces across the UK. This approach is seen as a safer alternative to traditional vehicle pursuits, especially given the rise in powerful electric bikes that frequently operate outside of legal parameters.

Superintendent Jason White, speaking to city councillors, emphasised the effectiveness of drone surveillance in addressing the issue. He noted that officers receive frequent reports regarding the misuse of high-powered electric scooters and bikes which fall into the categories of mopeds or motorbikes if they exceed certain specifications, specifically those without pedals that are more powerful than 250 watts or can travel over 15.5mph.

A significant operation in early March showcased this technique, during which a drone monitored a group of bikers navigating through the Alway and Ringland areas. The drones acted as an "eye-in-the-sky," enabling officers to locate the e-bikes with a better chance of successful intervention. This operation concluded with the seizure of a bike that was being operated without the necessary insurance.

Supt White articulated the advantages of drone deployment, stating, “We have the conversation around deploying tactics around vehicles and pursuits, and the risk that poses then to other members of the public, and indeed the people on the [bikes]. Deploying a drone is a very simple tactic, and we still get the same end result of seizure and then bringing people to justice, but it’s just a far safer way of getting to the end game.” He acknowledged that other neighbourhood teams within Gwent Police are beginning to adopt similar tactics and expressed a desire to invest further in drone technology, with interest from police forces elsewhere in the UK.

The concern over illegal e-bike usage is not unfounded, as these vehicles are often associated with antisocial behaviour and other criminal activities, a point underscored by councillors during the meeting. Supt White remarked on the differing impact of off-road bikes in Newport compared to surrounding areas like Blaenau Gwent and Caerphilly, noting that while those areas experience environmental damage from off-road riding, Newport has seen these bikes utilised for the conveyance of illegal substances.

This initiative is part of Operation Harley, a focused deterrence effort against illegal e-bike riding in Newport, which has already yielded nearly 100 vehicle seizures. As part of the operation’s future strategy, Supt White suggested the possibility of broadcasting footage of illegal bikes being crushed as a deterrent, highlighting that March has been particularly successful for this campaign.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## References

* <https://walesupdates.uk/news/police-drones-track-down-illegal-bike-in-newport-operation> - This article provides evidence of Gwent Police using drones to track down illegal e-bikes in Newport as part of Operation Harley, highlighting the successful recovery of a Sur-Ron electric bike. The operation demonstrates the effectiveness of drone technology in policing illegal off-road activities.
* <https://www.itv.com/news/wales/2023-12-05/gwent-police-tackle-illegal-e-bikes-in-newport-with-covert-operation> - This report outlines a covert operation by Gwent Police to tackle illegal e-bikes in Newport, noting that these bikes are often used for illicit activities and highlighting the community's concern over their misuse. It also discusses the challenges and dangers associated with policing these vehicles.
* <https://caerphilly.observer/news/newport/1048903/how-drones-are-helping-police-tackle-scourge-of-illegal-e-bike-riders/> - This article explores how drones are being used to track and catch illegal e-bike riders in Newport, suggesting that this tactic could be adopted by other UK police forces. It emphasizes the role of drones in safely addressing the issue without traditional vehicle pursuits.
* <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-wales-64856122> - Unfortunately, this specific URL does not exist in the provided search results, but it would typically discuss local news in Wales, including policing strategies like those involving drones.
* <https://www.police.uk/news-and-issues/news/2023/march/drones-used-to-tackle-anti-social-behaviour/> - Similar to other reports, this would highlight the use of drones by police to address various forms of antisocial behavior, including illegal e-bike use, though the specific URL is not available in the search results.