

Better battery improves bike

By PHIL BARNES

Nelson enthusiasts of electric-powered bicycles have got together to form a club.

The Nelson Electric Motor-Cycle Club was co-founded by Jace Hobbs, who said the club would be organising regular events such as group rides out of Nelson.

"We will do things such as cycle to Mapua, where we will stop and have breakfast before coming back."

Jace said most members were environmentally aware cyclists who were "strong advocates in assisting in the transition of the Nelson region into a zero-carbon economy".

"We have a brilliant cycleway system in Nelson and it's getting better all the time. But we also have traffic congestion problems which are getting worse all the time."

However, he said "pivotal technology" was now available, enabling people to resolve issues such as traffic congestion and escalating petrol costs.

This was because improvements to lithium batteries – which are used to power electric bicycles – now meant the bicycles could be used as a viable transport option.

Jace said he had been involved with electric bicycles in various capacities for eight years. However, he was put off from getting too interested in the early days because of problems the bicycles were having with battery technology.

"But in the past two years the issues of using lithium batteries have been solved.

"The batteries are reliable, very energy dense [meaning they can hold large amounts of power within a small space] and the cost has become affordable."

Jace said the average battery would provide the energy to power a bike for about 30 kilometres without pedal assistance. However, if cyclists were pedalling as well as using the battery they could go much further.

Jace said an averagely fit retired



Silent and efficient: Graham Snadden, 71, riding an eZee Quando fold-up electric bike up Russell St.

Photo: PHIL BARNES

person could get up the steepest hill in town by using an electric bicycle, whereas most people would not even consider taking a pushbike up a similar slope.

"And you don't have to sweat if you cycle to work and end up needing to take a shower."

He said the bikes were being bought in increasing numbers as a result of the improvements in battery technology and because of ever-increasing petrol prices.

"They are silent and efficient and they have no moving parts such as belts and cogs."

He said options for electric bikes included smaller bikes which could fold up.

People seeking more information about the Nelson Electric Motor-Cycle Club should contact Jace on 03 545 1122.

For further details about electric bikes go online to electricbikehub.co.nz.