

**WHERE** Sustrans C2C route across Northern England  
**START** Whitehaven, Cumbria **FINISH** Tynemouth, Tyne & Wear  
**DISTANCE** 140 miles **WORDS** Joolze Dymond  
**PICTURES** Joolze Dymond



# COASTING ACROSS ENGLAND

**Joolze Dymond** rode C2C on an electric bike, recharging her batteries while depleting the pedelec's

**T**he views are breathtaking when you cycle across northern England from the Irish Sea to the North Sea. Unfortunately, so are the climbs. I hadn't done any long-distance cycling for some time; in fact, cycling full stop had been on the back burner. So I decided to cheat. I would do the 140-mile, three-day route on an electric bike.

That way I could relax and enjoy the scenery. It would also let me find out how practical it was to ride a long-distance route with electric-assistance. How far would I really get on one charge? And would businesses be happy to top up the bike's battery when it ran out of juice?

I was joined on the ride by Steve Woods, who also borrowed an electric bike. Each bike weighed in excess of 20kg without luggage, so we decided to take the 'supported' option. Saddle Skedaddle took

#### IN THE PHOTOS

- 1) The climb out of Allenheads
- 2) Whitehaven. You can also start from Workington
- 3) Leaving Keswick. The route follows a mix of railway paths and minor roads
- 4) Greystoke Cycle Café
- 5) Taking a breather on Whinlatter climb. It's a long one on a flat battery!

our overnight bags to our chosen B&Bs ahead of us, transported us to the start, and were on the end of a phone in the event of emergency mechanicals. This, it turned out, was a wise decision.

#### ASSAULT ON BATTERIES

A blue cloudless sky and warm sea breeze greeted us as we pushed the bikes to the traditional starting point in the former coal-mining town of Whitehaven: the beach. We dipped our rear wheels into the Irish Sea (the front ones had electric motors in), and set off. Neither of us had ridden an electric bike before so we zoomed about, pressing buttons and experimenting with the power settings. We were confident that the promised battery range of 50 miles or so would at least get us to our first scheduled stopping point in Keswick.

The miles flew by. We effortlessly crested any climbs, pedalling through splendid scenery at a steady 12mph. Then, with 20 miles under our belts, we found ourselves at the bottom of our first big test the two-mile grind up Whinlatter Pass.

Overgeared road bike riders struggle up here. We would not: we popped the boost button to 'Sport' mode to get the most assistance. Within yards, the battery light went from green to red to STOP! The loss of power was sudden and the bike nearly toppled over. I was suddenly pedalling a super-heavy bike by muscle power alone – uphill. Disaster!

Steve is fitter than me so we swapped his bike's battery for mine. He would have the training ride of his life on a heavy, unpowered bike while I'd continue with power-assistance... except his battery also drained to