THE KNOW HOW

THE KIT DEALER

Pete Horton, product co-ordinator for Sportsbikeshop.co.uk

How to buy heated kit

Stay warm and riding right through to next spring...

INTERVIEW: BEN LINDLEY. PICTURES: SPORTSBIKESHOP & MATT HOWELL

BATTERY POWER

Lithium ion battery packs free you from being attached to the bike via a cable. Battery life depends entirely on the number of garments being powered, the power setting used and the battery condition. Use these quick calculations to work out how long yours will last: take the battery capacity in mAh and divide by 1000. For example a 2200mAh battery is expressed as being 2.2 Ah. Then take the consumption of the garment and divide this into the battery capacity. If the garment draws 1A then the 2.2Ah battery should last around 2.2 hours. Most battery packs have adjustable power settings so you can cut consumption and extend battery life. Extra battery packs can be purchased.

WHERE TO HEAT?

I would say hands are the most important part of your body to keep warm while toes can also get very cold on a winter ride. We sell two heated inner soles to stop this. The £100 Exo2 pads come with batteries that hold up to a 7-hour charge, and the £60 Keis inners wire directly into the bike. Look at heating the body's torso next, be it a heated jacket or body warmer. If the body gets cold, heat is pulled from the extremities. This can cool your hands and feet down even more.

TIGHT FIT

The misconception with a lot of heated clothing is that you will feel a real boost of heat, but many are designed to take the chill off by increasing ambient temperature. The effect is greater with a tight fit, especially with base layers like the Exo2 StormRider.

BIKE CONNECTION

If heat is a must-have for long hours in the saddle, grab a jacket that connects to the bike's wiring. Drawing power from the bike's battery is much handier than lugging battery packs about, especially as there's no need to charge anything at the end of the day. Some customers may be put off by the cables, but they are easy enough to install. Most heated garments come complete with a fused supply lead designed to be connected to your bike's battery. I believe they all use the same eyelets to connect to the battery but should have different connectors at the garment end. Cigarette lighter and Optimate lead adaptors are available for vehicles that have them.

HEATING FILAMENTS

Most of Keis' and Gerbing's heated clothing use tiny stainless steel or alloy wires. These simply heat up when an electrical current is passed through them. All Exo2 clothing uses FabRoc heated panel technology, and it works on the same simple principle: provide electric current and the fabric will heat up. FabRoc feels like rubber, flexes easily and claims to give a more even heat. Most manufacturers suggest you use their products in collaboration with a temperature controller. This is definitely a good idea.

HEATED KIT The hottest sellers

»Keis heated inner gloves £59.99

These will keep your mitts cosy, while your over-gloves provide the protection. The gloves come ready to be plugged into your bike, but a rechargeable battery pack is an optional extra. They can also be powered through the Keis X6 vest to minimise cables on the bike.

»Oxford hot vest £149.99

This is a tight-fitting top available as a wired version for long tours, or battery powered if you don't want the faff of wires. Both cost the same. Oxford use a woven mesh of stainless steel wires to dissipate their hot stuff. They claim this is more flexible than traditional copper wiring.

»Exo2 StormRider heated vest £167.99

The StormRider uses FabRoc pads incorporated into a moisture-wicking vest. It heats your upper back, kidneys, chest, and the front of the shoulders. You can power the StormRider with a battery pack, but then only the heating elements in the kidney area operate.

»Weise Montana element glove £199.99

Our customers say they rate the heating elements that spread heat out from a central point on the hand, and that the gloves themselves are chunky. This is probably due to the integrated battery pack in each glove. And yes, the charger accepts both batteries at the same time.