

Is this the end of the road for white van man?

Weeks before its opening ceremony, moaning about the traffic problems caused by the London 2012 Games

has become an Olympic sport in the capital. In the haze of horrible fumes blanketing gridlocked streets, one thing is clear — trucks and vans are not a clever way to do nippy urban deliveries.

More and more businesses with a need for speed are turning to cargo bikes. Pizzas, pastries, plants, wine, office supplies — all are being ferried by pedal power, and not just in Britain's busiest cities.

Global logistics giants are taking the trend just as seriously as small, local start-ups. TNT has a fleet of cargo jets and massive trucks, but it relies on

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Outspoken! Delivery, a cargo bike company, for "time-critical" deliveries in the narrow streets of Cambridge.

Rob King says that when he founded Outspoken! in 2005 potential customers were dubious. "The first reaction here to bikes moving freight is "They couldn't do that," he said. "You don't get attitudes like that in the Netherlands. They think bike first, then they think car or van. We are the other way around. But that's changing."

To shift that change up a gear he recently invited more than 50 delegates from across Europe to Cambridge for

the inaugural conference of the European Cycle Logistics Federation.

On a trial run I lug 100kg of beef and beer for Kernel, a brilliant microbrewery in Bermondsey, and the butcher next door, Nathan Mills, who used to work for Jamie Oliver. I average 6.4mph. Not quite Chris Hoy, but respectable when traffic in Central London averages only 8.9mph.

And at the destination, the bike nips in, delivers and is gone while a van is still looking for a place to park.

Two (or three) wheels good.

Walter Hemmens