

FEATURE
Cargo
cycling



Outspoken Delivery in Cambridge use cargo cycles to deliver everything from test tube samples to legal documents, sushi lunches and flowers

LOADS MORE CYCLING

Cyclists could easily move a quarter of cargo in cities.

Sara Basterfield summarises her Cycle Logistics study, which she carried out when working for CTC

Pedal power can be used to deliver all sorts of goods and services. Local shops once made deliveries by butcher's bike because it was efficient and cost effective, and some businesses are rediscovering these benefits. Cycle couriers continue to operate even in the face of fax and email. And despite Royal Mail's move to use trolleys and vans, post still goes by cycle in some areas. Transportation by cycle does work. The potential for more goods, services and people to be moved around by pedal power is vast – particularly in the UK.

The possibilities are well illustrated by the Netherlands and Denmark, where load carrying by cycle is thriving. 'Copenhagen now has 40,000 cargo bikes,' says Mary Embry of Copenhagenize. '17% of families own a cargo bike and 25% of them say that it's a direct replacement for a car.'

WHAT CYCLES CAN CARRY

CTC is studying cargo cycling in mainland Europe and the UK to discover what works and what the challenges are. Along with Outspoken Delivery in Cambridge, CTC is a UK partner in a pan-European, EU-funded Cycle Logistics project. Part of the Intelligent Energy – Europe programme, the project is

running from 2011-2014. 'Cycle logistics' means 'using cycle power to carry cargo or non-peddalling passengers, whether for business or personal use'.

The project has already concluded that 'almost 100% of goods transport within cities is done by motorised vehicles, ranging from personal cars to commercial lorries', and suggests that 25% of these trips could be shifted towards cycling-related solutions. The benefits of doing so include reduced energy consumption and CO₂ emissions; less congestion and noise; more space for people (rather than cars, vans and lorries); and a better quality of urban life. You can find out more about the study at cyclelogistics.eu.

There is a range of options for carrying loads by cycle: baskets, panniers, or a trailer fitted to a regular bike; an elongated cargo bicycle, with a load platform at the front or the back; or a cargo tricycle, which likewise can be designed to carry a load at the front or the back. Electrically-assisted cycles are also an option, although UK legislation is more restrictive than in most other European countries. CTC's website clarifies the current position – see ctc.org.uk and put 'EAPC' into the search box.

It is not just cycle enthusiasts who





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- 1 Cycle4U deliver documents, media and more by trailer
- 2 Cycles Maximus trikes remain in use but are no longer in production
- 3 Pashley still build the classic Delibike
- 4 Laden Yuba Mundo

#1 Cycle4U, #2 Outspoken Delivery, #3 iStock, #4 Yubaride.com

“CYCLE DELIVERY CAN BE FOUR TIMES QUICKER THAN A VAN AND SAVE UP TO £3,000 A YEAR”

are recognising the benefits of cycle logistics. Peter Murnaghan, South West Regional Officer for the Chartered Institute of Logistics and Transport UK (CILT), says: ‘Cycle deliveries are an exciting development for inner city distribution. They offer a more sustainable solution for collection and deliveries to customers where access is difficult for vans and lorries, because of narrow streets or parking difficulties.

‘Clearly, cycle delivery will never replace bulk movement or long distance transits, but it has a growing place in the supply chain in dense urban areas, particularly where customers are clustered in close proximity and consignments are a manageable size. The cycle delivery promoter needs to work closely with partners in the transport and logistics industry to agree how best to work to and from a hub, where bulk is broken down. But, as a component for the “last mile”, the cycle can make a promising contribution as part of a 21st century logistics solution for our urban areas.’

The UK has more examples of businesses switching to cycle logistics than you might expect. In London, everyday cycling has increased dramatically over the last decade. Cargo bikes and trikes have made a comeback too, delivering anything from Prêt à Manger sandwiches to AV2 Hire’s digital projectors.

According to AV2 Hire, cycle delivery can be up to four times faster than a van and save up to £3,000 in a year on parking and congestion charges. One of AV2 Hire’s unique selling points is getting right up to the customer’s front door, which is often impossible in a van. Meanwhile, Gnewt Cargo in London specialises in urban deliveries of office supplies and has an all-electric fleet of cargo cycles and minivans.

BICYCLE BUSINESSES

Outside the centre, in Hackney, East London, Alix Stredwick from Carry Me Bikes, a new social enterprise, reports that their demonstration Bakfiets cargo bikes are popular with the locals. ‘They’ve been used by a parents and toddlers group, Forest Kids Hackney, for trips to Hackney Marshes and Victoria Park; by local market traders to transport their goods and stalls cheaply to Hackney’s markets; and by people wanting an easier pollution-free way of doing a big supermarket trip.’

Fumio Tanga, who sells Japanese savoury pancakes at Hackney’s Chatsworth Road Market, has switched to a Carry Me Bikes cargo bike. ‘I was using a taxi to carry the heavy, bulky electric griddle and the fresh ingredients for work, despite living three minutes walk away. This cargo bike service really fits the bill. And it looks good too!’

Outspoken Delivery, a well-established cycle delivery business in Cambridge, delivers a whole range of items, including test tubes of antibodies (packed in a polystyrene box with a cooling pack), sushi lunches, post (they collect business post from the local Royal Mail sorting office for delivery to businesses in Cambridge), legal documents, and flowers. They also offer a delivery service to London using a folding bike and train combination – it’s faster than a motorbike.

It’s no great surprise to see cycle logistics in Cambridge: it’s flat, the inner city is closed off to motorised traffic from 10am to 4pm, and there’s a strong cycling culture there. It’s different in Edinburgh, where there are big hills and cobbled streets. Yet here Edinburgh’s Pronto Pedal Power is enthusiastically introducing cycle logistics to Scotland, mainly using Danish-built Bullitt bikes.

In Birmingham, Cycle4U deliver documents, timesheets, DVDs, USB sticks, laptops and promotional materials. They’ve been using two cycle trailers, which are less expensive and easier to store than cargo



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#6 & #9, CTC, #7 Carry Me Bikes, #8 iStock



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6 We reviewed a singlespeed Yuba Mundo in A/M 09
 7 Bakfiets in London
 8 ...and at home in the Netherlands
 9 Unlike neighbouring countries, UK postal deliveries by bike have been slashed

› bikes. Now they're planning to invest in some freight bikes.

In Wales, Big Blue Bike delivers within Cardiff, including 'last mile' deliveries. Bristol, meanwhile, has no fewer than four cycle delivery businesses, including Pedal Wallah – a cycle rickshaw business that is popular with hen parties and rail passengers alike. North of Bristol, in Yate, Really Useful Bikes offers a wide range of practical bikes and luggage-carrying accessories. Outside the larger conurbations, Hereford Pedicabs provides zero-emission recycling vehicles, as well as pedal-powered taxis and cargo vehicles.

FREIGHTED WITH POSSIBILITIES

Potentially, many more deliveries could be done using cycle power. Plenty of ideas emerged from CTC's focus groups in Bristol and London. The big opportunities seem to be for small-scale companies to establish themselves and for bigger logistics companies to incorporate cycle power into their delivery systems, perhaps as the last link. For example, delivery vans that fail to deliver a parcel because the customer is out could drop it off with a local cycle delivery service instead of taking it back to their depot; it could then be delivered that evening by the cycle service.

European partners in the project have provided numerous examples of small businesses using cycles instead of vans to

carry equipment needed to deliver their services, from window cleaners to builders, from gardeners to musicians. Mikael Colville-Andersen from Copenhagenize sees more and more cargo bikes selling ice creams, coffee, cocktails, waffles and so on in Copenhagen's streets and parks. He says: 'You can eat and drink your way through Copenhagen on a summer's day exclusively from cargo bikes.'

In the Netherlands and Denmark, IKEA and other stores successfully operate loan systems for cargo bikes or trailers. This

worked less well when it was trialled at one of the Bristol branches of Waitrose. Customers arriving by bike could borrow a trailer for free. The trailers were well used, but the trailers got damaged or were returned with parts missing, so it wasn't viable.

CYCLE HAULAGE HURDLES

Given their advantages, you might wonder why cargo cycles aren't used more. Firstly, there's the initial cost, around £1,000 for even the cheaper options. That's a significant outlay for an individual or a small business. ›

MEMBERS' MEMORABLE HAULS

On the CTC Forum, we asked you to name big or odd loads you've carried. Here's a sample of your replies.

- At different times, I've carried a fridge and 70kg of lumber. **EnquiringMind**
- I moved all my possessions to a house I was renting by bike and trailer – took three or four trips. I also used the same trailer to take a sound system to a party. **WaterLab Rat**
- I've recently moved a table, a cupboard and a bookcase on my new Carry Freedom trailer – not all at once. **alicej**
- A dead bicycle and about 35kg of cement and sand on the Carry Freedom Y-frame Large. I've also carried a greenhouse (dismantled!) including the glass 2x2 panes on the trailer. **jayjay**
- I regularly ride my Kettwiesel with a wheelie bin (on its side) strapped to my Y-Frame trailer. When I reach my plot it sits up normally and I fill it up with garden refuse, then carry it back home for the compost heap. **hercule**
- I invested in Kona Ute last year as the 'Trombone and cat food' bike. I'm ruminating on a way to get sousaphone to sit on the rack. **Snowflake**
- The ladder I returned to a mate half a mile away. It was at the time of fire brigade cuts. A neighbour said: 'I've heard the fire brigade are making cuts but that's a bit much'. **dkmwrt**
- I adapted a cello case so I could carry it to school on my bike. **Linda Cottrell**

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#10

- #10 Family transport, Christiania trike style
- #11 You can keep a closer eye on your passengers than you can with a trailer
- #12 German posties



#11



#12

#10 CTC, #11 Carry Me Bikes, #12 iStock

BUYING A LOAD CARRIER

No luck locally? Get online: Practical Cycles (practicalcycles.com) has a range of load bikes. BikeFix (bikefix.co.uk) has several too.



Yuba Mundo £949+

A budget 'longtail' cargo bike that, with suitable accessories, can carry passengers or up to 200kg of cargo. This is the 21-speed version; an electric assist version is also available. yubaride.com



8Freight £1495+

A long, lean cargo bicycle that goes through gaps easily, making it suitable for urban deliveries. Designed by Mike Burrows, the budget version is now factory built. Load capacity is 100kg. 8freight.com



Bakfiets Cargo Bike £1765+

A bicycle that has the child or cargo box in front of the rider, so you can keep on eye on the contents. Accessories include a rain cover and benches. It's available in two lengths. bakfiets.nl



Pashley Loadstar Trike £1220+

A sturdy and reliable traditional trike that's made in Britain, the load platform suits cargo more than people. Gearing options are limited to singlespeed or three-speed. Capacity is 200kg. pashley.co.uk



Carry Freedom Y-Frame £220+

A tough plywood load bed bolted onto an aluminium frame. Wheels and handle release for flat storage. Small size carries up to 45kg, large (£240, pictured) 90kg. carryfreedom.com

> Hills can be hard work too. You can add electric assistance to most cargo cycles to make hills easier, but that ramps up the cost. The UK's car dominated infrastructure doesn't help either. Britain's weather is often cited as an excuse, although it's seldom any worse than the weather in Northern Europe.

Storage is another challenge. Urban flat dwellers can struggle to store even an ordinary bike. A cargo cycle is harder yet, being too long for some cycle stores, too heavy for steps, and – if a tricycle – possibly too wide for gates or doors. While this presents a challenge to businesses too, cargo bikes take up less space than a van.

Security is if anything less of a problem than it is with conventional bikes. Cargo bikes are both more bulky and more unusual, making them more difficult to steal and harder to sell on afterwards. Cycle delivery businesses leaving their cargo bikes on the street while they deliver don't seem to have a problem with theft.

Riding a cargo cycle isn't difficult, but it can take some getting used to. A wider cycle can prevent certain cut-throughs and make it hard to overtake queues of traffic. This is one of the reasons for choosing length over width and where the 8Freight and the Bullitt come into their own. If you choose a trike, you'll need to re-learn tricycle riding – you don't steer by leaning like you do on a bike.

Cycle delivery businesses, with

the exception of some not-for-profit organisations or businesses with 'green credentials', consistently report that their biggest selling points for customers are saving time and money. Given the rising cost of fuel and the economic outlook, using cycle power can only become more attractive.

PEDDLING PEDAL POWER

As part of the European project, CTC is encouraging people to shop by bike – and will show them how. CTC's Elizabeth Barner plans to combine it with the Summer of Cycling initiative (summerofcycling.net), getting people to introduce a friend to cycling and to experience cycling not only as fun but as useful fun.

Meanwhile, Outspoken Delivery, supported by CILT, invites interested organisations and individuals to a free one-day inaugural conference of the European Cycle Logistics Federation. It's on Saturday 14 July 2012 in Cambridge. Register for your free place at tinyurl.com/cargofederation or email gary.armstrong@outspokendelivery.co.uk

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