

CAMCYCLE



Cargo bikes for businesses Policy

The use of cargo bikes by businesses delivers action on climate change and benefits for local communities and businesses. Cargo bikes offer an efficient, low-carbon transport solution for people and goods and are often faster and cheaper than motor vehicles in urban areas.

The term cargo bike refers to a broad category of cycles adapted to carry heavy or bulky loads or passengers. The size of cargo bikes varies but they are often longer and wider than standard cycles. Cargo bikes can come with or without electric assistance. The term 'cargo bike' encompasses both types; where support or facility requirements vary for electric-assisted cargo bikes, this policy refers to e-cargo bikes.

Urban air pollution and the contribution of the transport sector to climate change remain major problems. Traditional urban mobility involving cars, vans and lorries also takes up a huge amount of road and parking space. The UK has made a legally binding commitment to reach net-zero carbon emissions by 2050. This will require a transformation of the transport sector, and cargo bikes offer huge opportunities both for personal and business mobility.

Cargo bikes can be used by businesses to serve their urban mobility needs, particularly first and last-mile deliveries. Furthermore, the significant shift in purchasing behaviour towards online shopping and home deliveries, a trend accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic, means that a shift to cargo bikes is increasingly vital to reduce the number of delivery vans in our urban spaces. Business can either use their own cargo bikes or engage the services of a cargo bike-based logistics company.

There is a strong business case for using cargo bikes. Cargo bikes are often quicker in urban areas than other delivery vehicles. This is because cycles are nimbler, can use cycle lanes, move past stationary traffic (where space has been allocated for cycles) and take short cuts, and can stop right at their destination. E-cargo bikes are popular with businesses because they reduce the effort required to transport heavy goods and increase average speed. E-cargo bikes are extremely energy efficient. A study by the Swedish Energy Agency and Velove found that e-cargo bikes consumed 94% less energy than e-vans (they tested a Nissan-NV200). Two key explanatory factors are the difference in weight and that cargo bikes can often take shorter routes. This same study also found that the embodied energy for the manufacture of e-cargo bikes was far lower than for e-van¹. Cargo bikes also produce considerably lower levels of particulate matter pollution from brake, tyre and road wear relative to e-vans due to their lower speeds and weight. Finally, cargo bikes take up significantly less space than vans and cars which is important as this is at such a premium in urban areas².

¹ Erlandsson, J., 2017. The Armadillo electric cargo bike use 6 % of the electricity of a small electric van. Velove. [Online] Available from: <https://www.velove.se/news/armadillo-cargo-bike-use-6-electricity-small-electric-van>

² Parr, T., 2020. The Business Case for Cargo Bikes. Urban Mobility Daily. [Online] Available from: <https://urbanmobilitycompany.com/content/daily/the-business-case-for-cargo-bikes>

However, the re-invention of urban business mobility around cargo bikes requires considerable planning and investment. Camcycle believes that central and local government as well as businesses have a role to play in this transformation.

Policy asks:

- **Cycle infrastructure and facilities must be designed to accommodate cargo bikes**
- **Infrastructure that supports cargo-bike-based deliveries must be implemented in urban areas**
- **More road space must be reallocated for cycle use in order to support cargo bike use by businesses**
- **Training and support must be available to help businesses use cargo bikes safely**

1. Cycling infrastructure and facilities must be designed to accommodate cargo bikes

A lot of current cycling infrastructure excludes or inconveniences cargo bikes as it is not designed to accommodate larger and less manoeuvrable cycles. This is a serious barrier for businesses adopting cargo bikes for deliveries as one of the key business arguments is that these deliveries can be done faster by cycle than by van. Furthermore, independent businesses investing in cargo bikes for deliveries may also wish to use the cycle for personal journeys, so reducing barriers is doubly important.

- *Cycleways must be kept clear of obstructions which can be dangerous, slow down journeys and even exclude cargo bikes from using cycle infrastructure (See Camcycle's policy on Obstructions in Cycleways and Access Controls).*
- *Access controls on cycleways must not impede cargo bikes. Often the width or length of cargo bikes can make it hard, slow or even impossible to pass through poorly designed access controls. This is important on both public highways and private developments as cargo bikes also need easy access to housing developments.*
- *Cycleway width must accommodate cargo bikes.*
- *There must be a simple way to report obstructions or access controls which are making cycle infrastructure inaccessible for cargo bikes. The local authority should be responsive to these reports and try to quickly resolve any accessibility issues.*

At present, a lot of cycle parking is not designed to accommodate cargo bikes. The lack of accessible and secure cycle parking for cargo bikes is a significant barrier to their large-scale adoption.

- *There must be secure and accessible cycle parking available for cargo bikes to use in public spaces, private developments and at business premises.*
- *Cargo bikes should be allowed to access the goods and public entrances of businesses to enable efficient deliveries.*

In some urban areas, there are some large multi-lane roads which explicitly exclude cycles or are unsafe to use.

- *Cycles should be accommodated safely on all urban roads. Where this is not possible an alternative safe and efficient cycle route must be identified or implemented.*

2. Infrastructure that supports cargo-bike-based deliveries must be implemented in urban areas

- *Micro hubs must be built in strategic locations to facilitate the consolidation of loads and first- and last-mile transport by cargo bike.*
- *Micro hubs should include secure cycle parking for cargo bikes and charging for e-cargo bikes.*

One potential barrier to cargo bike adoption is that not all businesses have somewhere secure to store a cargo bike.

- *Shared, secure and convenient cargo bike storage with charging points should be available for businesses to use.*

3. More road space must be reallocated for cycle use in order to support cargo bike use by businesses.

The business model for using cargo bikes relies on them being efficient in urban areas and out-competing motor vehicle alternatives.

- *More road space must be transformed into cycleways to increase the efficiency and accessibility of cycling. A network of cycleways that allows cyclists to move safely past traffic and take the quickest routes must be created (see Camcycle's 'A connected cycle network' policy).*
- *New developments must be built in a way that prioritises cycle movements over those of motor vehicles.*

4. Training and support should be available to help businesses use cargo bikes safely

Cargo bikes, especially when heavily laden, often require slightly different skills from the rider than a standard cycle. A lack of confidence can also be a major barrier to the adoption of cargo bikes for business.

- *Specific cycle training for cargo bike use must be available locally.*
- *Free cycle training for everyone has been proposed under the Department for Transport's 2020 'Gear Change' Vision for Cycling. This scheme should be adapted for those who wish to be trained to use cargo bikes for business purposes.*

Switching from using motor vehicles to cargo bikes for deliveries involves investment and behaviour change. People will need support to encourage a shift.

- *'Try before you buy' schemes that allow businesses to try out cargo bikes should be implemented by local authorities and business groups.*
- *Cargo bike-sharing schemes should be rolled out. These may require time-limited investment with the stated view of becoming self-financing leasing schemes.*
- *Financial support for building secure and convenient cargo bike storage should be made available to businesses to encourage adoption.*

One barrier to e-cargo bike use is the inconvenience and expense of maintaining e-cargo bikes. Often cycle shops do not have the parts or expertise to do repairs, and where they do the cost remains very high.

- *Support should be available to help businesses maintain e-cargo bikes. This includes, but is not limited to, supporting bike shops to train employees and offering financial support, where appropriate, to businesses needing to get a cargo bike repaired.*

The use of motor vehicles for business is normalised and people may view a substantial modal shift to cargo bikes as unrealistic. Equally some members of the public may not be aware of the higher amount of pollution caused by electric vehicles relative to cargo bikes.

- *The benefits of cargo bike use for businesses must be communicated to the public through positive targeted campaigns which encourage and accelerate the switch from motor vehicle use.*

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To provide feedback on this draft policy please contact Camcycle at contact@camcycle.org.uk

Further reading

Pedal Me: <https://pedalme.co.uk/why-cargo-bikes/>

Sustrans:

<https://www.sustrans.org.uk/policy/life-after-lockdown/2020/briefing-paper/reinventing-transport-planning-for-e-cargo-bikes>