



THE SOLUTION TO THE CYCLING REVOLUTION

Nick Knight

Nick Knight, MD of Eco Cycle Ltd, first put his mind to the need for a more considered approach to bike parking more than a decade ago. His work as a chartered surveyor meant he understood the financial implications of valuable space being devoted to space-hungry bike storage, and the frustrations of such facilities being underutilised due to a real or perceived lack of security. His familiarity with commercial and residential developments, planning requirements, and increasingly stringent environmental and sustainability legislation and ratings, also gave him an understanding of the need for developments to build in secure cycle parking that would actually be used, and that could potentially add to the attractiveness of the public realm, and be accessible by occupants and visitors alike.

Unfortunately, his work at that time left him too little time to develop his fledgling ideas of automated cycle storage, but the subject continued to intrigue him, and by 2013 the rapidly growing numbers of cyclists across the capital, and the introduction of 'Boris Bikes' and improvements to London's cycling infrastructure in line with the Mayor's Vision for Cycling in London, led him to research cycle storage around the world. That's when he first encountered the Eco Cycle concept:

'Eco Cycle's sophisticated automation and engineering just blew me away. Japan is globally renowned for its technically advanced engineering and ingenious use of space, which are perfectly embodied in the Eco Cycle concept. It was clear to me that this would be an elegant solution to the cycling revolution that London (and the UK as a whole) is experiencing; providing the secure cycle storage that's currently the missing link in the Mayoral Cycling Vision. I was therefore delighted to acquire the exclusive rights to Eco Cycle in the UK in 2015.' nick.knight@ecocycle.co.uk

Nick presents an enthusiastic, practical and realistic case for public sector organisations to incorporate effective cycle parking.

A cycling vision

Cycling has unmistakably taken off, fuelled by many catalysts. In London it was cemented by Boris Johnson's Cycling Vision 2020, which established the aim to double the number of journeys made by bike in London each day, bringing huge health and lifestyle benefits, not just to the cyclists themselves, but – thanks to reduced emissions, less traffic, and cleaner and greener public spaces – to every London resident and visitor.

In his ebullient introduction to the Vision, Boris had pledged to make

cycling 'normal', not just for the, 'admirable Lycra-wearers, and enviable east Londoners on their fixed-gear bikes,' but for everyone.

However, while we applaud that initial Vision, as well as more recent intervention on a nationwide scale from the Department for Transport (DfT) and the establishment of the 8 Cycling Cities, setting out the need for investment in cycling infrastructure (albeit the enthusiastic talk of following the Dutch is unfortunately not matched by Dutch levels of funding commitment), there is one area that has yet to be addressed properly: the lack of secure cycle parking:

'If we want Dutch levels of cycling, we need to provide Dutch levels of cycle parking.' Peter Siemensma of Royal HaskoningDHV: TransportXtra, Mar 2015.

The cycle space deficit

The public generally suffers from a notable lack of secure cycle spaces and, despite rapidly increasing demand, the situation is only getting worse:

- Planners are trying to de-clutter the streets, and increasingly shy away from putting Sheffield-type stands in newly designed public areas
- Santander Cycles in London, while encouraging cycle journeys and attracting as many as 73,000 hires per day (Transport for London data for July 2015), inevitably steal large chunks out of pavements, or eat into resident or meter parking, so is meeting with increasing resistance from local residents and businesses



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- Although electric bikes are a rapidly growing and evolving market, with an obvious appeal for non-MAMIL (middle-aged men in lycra) commuters, the fact that prices range from around £1,000 upwards means they're unlikely to be entrusted to just a hefty lock and a Sheffield stand
- Provision of cycle spaces may be a legal planning requirement, but according to Greater London Authority research, these semi-public areas (especially within basements) frequently suffer from theft – or even just the perception of theft – and as a result, bikes are often stored on balconies and in apartments and cyclists often use a second less valuable bike to commute on
- While the Mayoral Cycling Vision for London talked about an extra 80,000 cycling spaces being provided by the end of 2016, nearly all of these are through the planning regime, providing bike storage for residents and workers in the new developments, but little or none for the public.

Perceptions count

Health and safety on the streets is often cited as the key reason preventing people from cycling, and it's true that there's much to be done to improve junctions and routes for cyclists, and to change the perception of cycling as being dangerous. However, this isn't the only reason that keeps people away from 2 wheels. The other most quoted concerns are where to park and theft; and both of these can go hand-in-hand.

Provision of cycle routes alone doesn't provide the full solution, as non-cyclists tend to need some form of encouragement. For instance, Milton Keynes' best kept secret is that it has more than 200 miles of segregated cycle routes, yet we understand that they're not used to their full potential, which is counter-intuitive as apparently the majority of people work within 5km of their home. At times it's just too easy to take the car, with seemingly too many obstacles to riding a bike; including what to do with your helmet,



and where to put your lights, pump, and other peripherals, let alone where to park and concerns of theft. And for commuters, there's also the question of where to shower and how to keep clothes looking presentable. It's literally not quite as easy as riding a bike!

The Dutch tend to ride their bikes more sedately, without such a need for showers. However, they understand that every journey ends in having to park the bike, and the only way to encourage mass cycling is therefore to provide mass parking. They have a philosophy that all stations should be "mixed-modal"; whereby there's a seamless interchange between rail and bike. Each station will have plenty of parking, which is sadly in contrast to London's Crossrail project that was conceived before the cycling

revolution. Their literature states that only 1,335 new bike spaces are being provided across its 40 stations: that's just 34 spaces per station.

Shorter journey times from outlying Crossrail stations will make surrounding areas more attractive to commuters, although the lack of cycling infrastructure – and particularly lack of storage provision at their final destination – will discourage them from using their bikes. The additional car and bus journeys this results in will put the local infrastructure under further strain.

The DfT and train operating companies have been investing in cycle parking at stations, although generally in a piecemeal and incremental manner. The provision of parking appears to be made using calculations and formulae





that assess perceived demand based upon current take-up of non-secure facilities. Steel and glass enclosed hubs are a great start, although their semi-public nature does little to counter the perceptions of theft, nor take away any of the hassle of the journey.

Eco Cycle: the solution to the cycling revolution...

There is a solution: Eco Cycle – an ingenious high tech mass bike storage system that’s been operating successfully in Japan since 2002 - has now arrived in London and has the potential to be the missing link.

Eco Cycle holds enormous potential for developers, corporations, educational institutions, transport hubs, hospitals, planners and others interested in:

- Reducing on-street clutter and enhancing the public domain
- Minimising the footprint of bike storage within high value space
- Meeting statutory obligations for provision of cycle spaces more efficiently
- Improving take-up of cycling spaces provided, thanks to greater security and convenience
- Encouraging and facilitating a green mode of transport, improving health and wellbeing among cyclists and the population at large
- Future-proofing developments and adding a unique and distinctive unique selling proposition to a development or area

- Improving corporate reputation, and supporting corporate social responsibility commitments.

Eco Cycle: facts and figures

Eco Cycle Ltd has collaborated with Apex Lifts, London’s largest independent lift manufacturing and elevator servicing company, who will manufacture, install and service the units, and also supply round-the-clock engineer call-out services and off-site monitoring.

Eco Cycle’s access pod and entrance occupies the equivalent space of two thirds of a car space, with each unit providing up to 204 secure, dry cycle spaces below ground, while taking up just 6% of the space required to house the same number of bikes within 2-tier racking.

Eco Cycle simultaneously reduces on-street clutter and minimise occupation of valuable street (and lower ground floor) level space. And, because it can be integrated into new developments, with cycle access at street level rather than within sensitive and private areas of the building, Eco Cycle offers both public and private provision with no security or access issues.

Eco Cycle also enables developers to make financial sense of future-proofing developments in line with rising levels of cycle use (10% a year in London), as, rather than leaving additional spaces empty, they are able to charge the public to use these until demand from the development’s occupiers catches up.

Planning policy tends to stipulate the formula for calculating the number of

long and short-stay cycle parking in accordance with the size and use of the building. However, planning does little to ensure that sufficient spaces for the public are also provided. With Eco Cycle, this is now feasible, and locations of high value and accessibility benefit from secure and discreet cycle parking for the public, without impacting on the public realm or purse. To incentivise developers to provide public access to parking within new buildings, planning authorities can look actively to contribute some of the s106 payments, so long as public access is safeguarded.

Advantages of Eco Cycle for cyclists:

- Safe, dry and secure bike and accessory storage (no need to lug your panniers, lights, bike computer and helmet around with you) available 24/7, 365 days a year
- App can let you check for the Eco Cycle nearest to your destination and verify the number of spaces available, so you can cycle straight to secure storage, and choose to leave your heavy locks and chains at home if you want to
- Retrieves your bike within 13 seconds: less time than it takes to fiddle with cumbersome locks and chains on a Sheffield stand or railing (or call the police to report the theft of your bike!)
- It can house public, private and even hire bikes within the same facility.

Want to find out more?

A working model of an above ground Eco Cycle unit, with storage for 58 bikes, has been imported from Japan and erected by Apex in premises close to Southwark Underground Station. Interested parties are invited to visit us and have a demonstration.

To be part of the solution to the cycling revolution, simply contact us at info@ecocycle.co.uk. For more detailed information on Eco Cycle visit www.ecocycle.co.uk