

HOW TO BE:

# A CYCLING FLAT-DWELLER

SPOKES FACTSHEET  
JANUARY 2011

## BIKE STORAGE FOR TENEMENTS AND FLATS



### Want to use a bike for every-day travel, but live in a flat with nowhere to store one?

Edinburgh is increasingly a cycling city, and both Spokes and the City of Edinburgh Council want to help more people to cycle more often. For many residents, improving bike storage at home is a necessary first step.

**This factsheet suggests some ideas and contacts that might help you keep a bike for your everyday travel. Some things to think about include...**

- The number and type of bikes to be stored
- The security of your existing bike storage
- Other spaces that might be used
- Neighbours' views, and permissions needed

We cover some of the practical options and issues below as follows:

1. Storage for an individual: bike choice, security, in-flat options
2. Storage at stairwell-level, including back-greens etc
3. Community level storage, e.g. on-street facilities

## 1 TACKLING STORAGE AS AN INDIVIDUAL

### 1.1

#### Choose a Bike with Storage in Mind

Think carefully about storage when choosing a bike:

- Is it worth spending more on a bike light enough to carry upstairs?
- Would a folding bike meet your needs?
- Will you need to spend more on locks etc, especially for an expensive bike stored out of your sight?

### 1.2

#### Make Your Bike as Secure as Possible

Obviously, a bike stored outside your flat is at greater risk from theft so minimise the temptation:

Use one or more decent locks, and secure both wheels and frame. Look for the 'Sold Secure' logo.

Lock to something immovable. Remove or secure items such as saddle, lights and panniers.

Use stairwell door locks; talk to neighbours about keeping doors shut. Bike thieves find banisters and rails easy to force or cut (and they're expensive to repair).

Ensure your bike won't slip down, to minimise vandalism to wheels.

Get a waterproof bike cover to keep off rain and screen it from thieves.

Register your bike with the Police and security-mark it, e.g. [www.bikeregister.com](http://www.bikeregister.com)

### 1.3

#### Keeping a Bike in Your Flat

Carrying your bike upstairs isn't ideal but storing a bike in your flat offers good security at least. With a bit of organisation, you might fit in more bikes than you'd think.

Consider wall hooks, brackets, ceiling pulleys/hoists, etc to hang bikes, but always follow manufacturers' advice about maximum weights and wall-quality. Some brackets can fold up against the wall when not in use.

Consider the clearance space needed around the bike (especially handlebars).

Protect wall/floors from bike dirt.

Seek landlord permission, if required, before fixing equipment to walls or ceilings, or use free-standing options.

Many different storage fittings are available – the database on the Spokes website gives some options, and check your local DIY/hardware store.

## 2 TACKLING STORAGE AT STAIRWELL-LEVEL

Even small storage improvements can improve stairwell tidiness and security, and reduce conflicts with neighbours – as well as encouraging more cycling. Obviously cost/security trade-offs, and building regulations, must all be considered too.

### 2.1

#### Get Organised

In-flat bike storage is often impossible, and stairwells may seem to be the best option.

Discuss with neighbours whether space might be used better, for bikes and anything else, always keeping fire safety in mind. Better organisation may also improve access to exits and back-greens, and make cleaning easier.

Remove 'dead' or unused bikes that might be taking up space, but use a clear process to avoid unintended 'theft'..

The Bike Station has a factsheet - [www.thebikestation.org.uk/donating](http://www.thebikestation.org.uk/donating)

### 2.2

#### Fixtures and Fittings

Some relatively simple equipment might improve bike security and stairwell accessibility:

Rings/anchors for locking bikes, secured to wall or floor, or free-standing heavy ones.

Wall-mounted brackets or racks (see 'in-flat' solutions above).

Bike stands, e.g. a 'Sheffield rack', or several joined as a 'toast-rack', fixed or free-standing. Avoid the butterfly-shaped 'wheel-benders'.

Lockable fire-proof containers for single or multiple bikes.

Be aware of the constraints posed by Building Control (see 'Regulations and Permissions').



#### Images (from left to right):

— Small hallway with five bikes! Two on the floor, one wall mounted and two hanging from ceiling.

(credit: Malcolm Fraser)

— Wall hook behind door (credit: Melanie Mann)

— Neatly folded Brompton in a flat hallway (credit: John Welford)





Images (clockwise from top left):

- Stairwell toast-rack (credit: Sam Anwar)
- Wall-mounted rack at the bottom of a stairwell (credit: Steve Leslie)
- Stairwell vertical bike racks (credit: TPI)

## 2.3

### Storing Bikes Outside (within the tenement boundary)

Consider possible storage spaces in back-greens, coal cellars, etc. – discuss with neighbours. Various hardware options might help, e.g.

Hoops / bars attached to walls or to suitable vertical supports, if space is inadequate for racks.

Sheffield stands or 'toast-racks,' possibly with covers.

Bike lockers for single or multiple bikes, or lockable sheds.

## 2.4

### Tackling Bike Storage Collectively

Improving bike storage is likely to be much easier if you build and maintain good relations with neighbours. A useful formal approach is through Stair Committees or Owners' Associations, which aim to facilitate agreements on repairs, maintenance and new facilities (such as bike storage). The Council website at [www.edinburgh.gov.uk/homeworks](http://www.edinburgh.gov.uk/homeworks) has links to information on organising an Owners' Association, plus advice for home-owners (Homeworks) and for private tenants and landlords (Letwise).

## REGULATIONS AND PERMISSIONS

Many residents are unaware or confused about what building controls, planning constraints or other regulations might apply in relation to bike storage.

**a)** Building Controls can pose a significant constraint. To comply with fire regulations, no item should be stored in the stairwell or access route to the main entrance.

- If you do use stairwell space, crucially, bikes must not obstruct exits. Ensure that there is clear access of at least 800mm (standard door width), and that bikes are secure and unlikely to fall.

- A mainly 'enclosed' facility (e.g., a cycle locker) should not be situated within 3m of a tenement external wall. Covered racks outside flats might require a Building Warrant.

- For advice, contact Building Standards on 0131 529 7826 (central) / 529 4644 (North) / 4655 (South) or email [buildingwarrant.applications@edinburgh.gov.uk](mailto:buildingwarrant.applications@edinburgh.gov.uk)

**b)** Planning Permission may be required for any external facility within the curtilage of a flatted property. Properties in conservation areas need additional consents.

- For advice, contact the Planning & Building Standards Department – 0131 529 3571 / email [planning@edinburgh.gov.uk](mailto:planning@edinburgh.gov.uk), or visit [www.edinburgh.gov.uk/planning](http://www.edinburgh.gov.uk/planning)

**c)** Listed Building constraints may also apply, if bike storage would affect the 'character or appearance' (internal or external) of the building.

- Consent may be needed regardless of category (A, B or C), and even if equipment won't actually be attached.

- For advice, contact the Listed Buildings Team – 0131 529 3550 / email [listed.buildings@edinburgh.gov.uk](mailto:listed.buildings@edinburgh.gov.uk)



## 3 COMMUNITY-LEVEL SOLUTIONS: ON-STREET STORAGE

Even if in-flat, stairwell or back-green storage seem impossible for your situation, there is still hope! Talk to your councillors (3 or 4 for each ward - see [www.edinburgh.gov.uk/councillors](http://www.edinburgh.gov.uk/councillors) - 0131 529 3186) about on-street bike storage for your area. Encouragingly, Edinburgh Council's 2010 Active Travel Action Plan refers specifically to piloting on-street residential bike storage.

- At its simplest, on-street bike storage could be in the form of Sheffield racks. To suggest a specific location where these could help, email [cycling@edinburgh.gov.uk](mailto:cycling@edinburgh.gov.uk)

- Lobby for more weather-proof and secure solutions such as shelters or lockers. Of course, the more robust (and expensive) the facility, the more you'll have to argue your case.

- Ask for solutions appropriate for your situation, giving as much detail as possible in support (numbers of residents, cyclists, current usage of space for car parking, footway space etc.)

- Ask the Police Crime Prevention Officers for security advice - tel 0131 311 3131



**Images (clockwise from top):**

— Dutch-style 'Bread-bin'  
(credit: Jan Kuipers Nunspeet)

— Cycle store  
(credit: Katherine Ivory)

— On-street Sheffield Racks  
(credit: Cycling England)

## AND FINALLY...

The Spokes campaign to improve residential bike storage continues to develop. Feedback, suggestions and ideas that would help others are very welcome – email:

[spokesbikestorage@spokes.org.uk](mailto:spokesbikestorage@spokes.org.uk)

We'd especially welcome information about any actions taken by you or neighbours to improve bike storage.

More information and future updates will be available from the Spokes Tenements Storage Project webpage...

[www.spokes.org.uk](http://www.spokes.org.uk) (Go to Downloads → Technical → Tenements Storage)

Other Cycle Campaigns are also working on cycle parking and storage, e.g. the London Cycling Campaign:

[www.lcc.org.uk](http://www.lcc.org.uk)

and the Cambridge Cycle Campaign:  
[www.camcycle.org.uk/  
resources/cycleparking/guide](http://www.camcycle.org.uk/resources/cycleparking/guide)

## Want to cycle more, and looking for information?

[www.spokes.org.uk](http://www.spokes.org.uk)

Spokes campaigns for better conditions for using a bike for your everyday work and leisure journeys. Spokes also produces highly-regarded cycle maps for Edinburgh and the Lothians, as well as running Sunday rides and an informative website.

[www.thebikestation.org.uk](http://www.thebikestation.org.uk)

Edinburgh's bicycle recycling charity. Quality re-conditioned bikes at good prices.

[www.edinburgh.gov.uk/cycling](http://www.edinburgh.gov.uk/cycling)

Council cycling information, local cycling maps, other useful weblinks / organisations.

[www.citycyclingedinburgh.org](http://www.citycyclingedinburgh.org)

Cycling discussion forums, info

## Support us by joining Spokes!

[www.spokes.org.uk](http://www.spokes.org.uk)

The Spokes Bike Storage project was funded by the Scottish Government's Climate Challenge Fund. This factsheet was written by Katherine Ivory, with background research by TPI Consultants, and design by Hillside Agency. Copyright Spokes, January 2011.

Our thanks to the many Spokes members and other Edinburgh residents who contributed in various ways. Spokes is also very grateful for input from City of Edinburgh Council officers in Building Control, Planning and Cycling policy.

While every effort has been made to make this information as accurate as possible, Spokes can accept no responsibility for the consequences of any errors or omissions. Mention of particular suppliers does not imply endorsement.

Whilst the information here is understood to be correct at the time of going to press, regulations etc change from time to time.