

Spokes Competition 2011 – My Cycling Solution - Entry Comp2011-11

The problem:

Many unsurfaced paths needing repair by volunteers are inaccessible by vehicle and can realistically only be accessed by bike (or on foot). The problem then is, how to transport, say, a barrow=load of stone or whin-dust for path repairs, on a bike?

There are numerous trailers available for purchase (or even hire), but none are suitable for carrying stone or whin. What's needed is basically a wheelbarrow. Wheelbarrows are robust, and don't mind getting dirty, bashed, scratched etc. No trailers on the market perform this function.

The solution:

I approached a company called 'Intermediate Technology' to build me a wheelbarrow trailer. They agreed they could do this; they built it, and sent it to me. The cost was about two-thirds of a typical trailer available to buy.

I was very happy to support this company, as they supply low-tech solutions for third-world countries and encourage a low-carbon and sustainable economy. Their principles are derived from Schumacher of 'small is beautiful' fame. This accords absolutely with my own philosophy and beliefs, and my trailer is an example of how heavy loads can be transported in a totally sustainable way.

The pay-load of the trailer is around 40kg, which is substantially more than anything a normal trailer could carry.

The barrow part of the trailer is detachable and can thus be replaced when worn. Replacements are available from hardware stores and cost about £25. I have had the trailer since 1997 and in that time have worn out two barrows - ie very economical!

If the bike has a rear rack, this has to be removed before the coupling can be fitted. Removal takes about 15 mins.

The photos show how the trailer works:

1. the trailer itself, with a foot stand which is needed when loading;
2. the bike with the coupling, under the saddle, to which the trailer attaches, and is held in place by a sprung pin; the trailer is loaded with stepladders;
3. the happy owner, ready with shovel to fill potholes etc

