

Spokes Competition 2011 : My Cycling Solution : text-only entries

Spokes Competition 2011 – My Cycling Solution - Entry Comp2011-1

Problem: When cycling my 'D'-lock flaps about on its bracket.

Solution: I bought 50cm of velcro and stuck the two strips back-to-back. Then use the velcro to hold the loose end of the D lock against the frame. [Wind it round, then the velcro will hold itself and the lock in place].

Spokes Competition 2011 – My Cycling Solution - Entry Comp2011-2

Problem: Your bike is a great liberator – it can take you virtually anywhere you want to go. But one obstacle is the fear of punctures. Who wants to wrestle with tyre levers and grapple with an oily chain, stuck in the middle of nowhere at the mercy of the weather?

Solution(s): Why can't someone invent an impregnable tyre which doesn't deflate? Not the solid rubber of childhood tricycles, but one filled with space-age cotton wool, impervious to glass and thorns, but fully pneumatic and responsive. Until that invention comes along – the next best thing has to be using an armadillo tyre – a little pricier and heavier than ordinary tyres – but well worth it for the freedom of a carefree and carfree ride!

Spokes Competition 2011 – My Cycling Solution - Entry Comp2011-7

Problem: Carrying around a D Lock without a bag and with a clamp that doesn't work

Solution: Just hook it into the rack on the back

Spokes Competition 2011 – My Cycling Solution - Entry Comp2011-8

Problem:

- * Worried about my expensive bike getting stolen
- * Having to go through the ordeal of chaining up my expensive bike with a D lock etc. takes so much time that it puts me off cycling over short distances

Solution: Buy another bike for £70 that is fully serviced, has rack and mudguards on it, new brakes etc. from the Bike Station (or Soul Cycles on Brougham Street). Great value for money if you consider how much a service costs. This can be used for short distances (e.g. commuting and trip to local shops). It will do the job fine and will be less likely to be stolen. And even if it does get stolen it's not going to break the bank.

Keep the good bike for touring and/or long day rides on weekends, where it is important to have a comfortable and efficient bike.

Spokes Competition 2011 – My Cycling Solution - Entry Comp2011-9

A problem I have encountered with cycling...

I am currently working as a home health care worker, which involves travelling around many different areas of Edinburgh throughout the day. I get to enjoy cycling around 130 miles per week as a result, on my beloved Genesis bike.

In case anyone missed it, there have been a few slightly damp days this ‘summer’, so waterproofing has been a problem on occasion. Jacket and overtrousers are no problem, but footwear is trickier. I need to go into peoples’ homes, so large galoshes or hill-boots aren’t practical. Gaiters give a partial solution, but are time-consuming to get on and off – a major issue during a busy shift.

The Leith-Roseburn cycle path (a commonly-used route for me) does develop some magnificent puddles. Negotiating these on one particularly wet day, I arrived at my first appointment with squelchy feet. Carrying a spare pair of socks and small towel ensured my feet were soon dry. But what to do about the soggy shoes? And how to prevent my socks just getting soaked again when I put wet shoes on and ventured back out into the elements.....?

How I solved it...

My client wasn’t too surprised when I asked if I could take a couple of his pedal-bin liners. He was slightly more nonplussed when I started putting them over my socks, tucking them into the top to create a nice plastic lining round my feet. Slipping into the wet shoes instantly became a non-issue, and back out I went, to the laughter of a highly-amused client.

It continued raining, and my shoes became more sodden throughout the morning, but I cared not a jot. With dry, warm feet, I could even focus on enjoying the extreme elements. Now, I always have some spare bin-liners (they need to be decent quality or they just shred), or some supermarket shopping bags (ensure they are the kind with no air-holes) in my backpack, alongside the wee towel and the spare socks. And soggy foot misery is a thing of the past. Several of my fellow-cycling workmates have gratefully taken up the idea.

My next plan is to find a lightweight pair of plimsolls. That way, if I find my shoes were to become just too wet to venture into someone’s house, I can slip my dry, warm, socked feet out of the shoes and plastic bags, into an easily-carried pair of dry shoes.

There’s no such thing as bad weather, there’s just weather. It’s all a matter of being prepared for it.

Spokes Competition 2011 – My Cycling Solution - Entry Comp2011-10

Problem: emergency mechanical breakdowns

Solution: Plastic is everywhere. Often a nuisance, bags and bottles strewn by the roadside but these small plastic straps – zip or cable ties - are invaluable.

I always have some in my emergency toolkit coming in a range of sizes from very fine to chunky strong. My main use has been for mending mudguards especially where the rivets have broken but also when the blade has been severed. They extend the life of the mudguard many times over. The zip tie is quick, requires no tools and can be easily trimmed later.

They can be used to temporarily attach luggage, a spare tube, secure a rack or water bottle cage etc. Even better you can get reusable ties with a quick release tab allowing for reuse e.g. putting up signs for a cycling event or ride. A local pedicab business was delighted to find you can source reusable ties as they frequently change the advertising on their vehicles resulting in reduced cost and waste.

The next time your packaging includes cable ties carefully remove and they can be useful addition to your toolkit. You can either release the tab or cut just behind the clasp (the tie is only fractionally shorter).

Spokes Competition 2011 – My Cycling Solution - Entry Comp2011-12

A problem I have encountered with cycling:

Cycling (more than 2 miles) to business meetings, where a suit or equivalent is expected.

The job that I did until recently required me to visit clients in major banks and insurance companies throughout Edinburgh. At most of these, formal suit and tie (or equivalent) was the expected dress code. The problem: how to cycle sometimes five miles in hot or wet weather and yet arrive smart and fragrant for the business meeting?

How I solved it:

I found a waterproof pannier (not a specialist suit carrier, although I've seen these) into which I could put my gently rolled-up or folded suit, shoes and other clothes. (The meeting papers and laptop went in a waterproof briefcase designed for bike mounting). I phoned ahead either to the client's secretary or to the facilities manager of the building I was visiting and requested use of their changing and (if they had them) shower facilities. Most of our clients subscribed to the same "green" principles as we did and could therefore understand the "environmental good practice" of what I was doing. I then cycled to and from the meeting in my normal cycling wear, changing to suit and back at the client's office.

Apart from the environmental attraction of this solution, it also encourages companies to be aware of the need for facilities for visiting and employee cyclists, and says something positive about the company you work for.

Spokes Competition 2011 – My Cycling Solution - Entry Comp2011-14

The problem: Last year, I got a new job which meant visiting homes over in South Fife. I've always worked in Edinburgh before, and had gradually found that cycling was the best way to get around. All my colleagues drove hundreds of miles a month without thinking, but I wasn't looking forward to driving again, especially in queue traffic over the Forth Bridge.

The solution:

My office was near Haymarket, so I thought I'd try going by train to the bigger towns. I soon discovered, the train service to Fife is amazing, frequent and reliable. And plenty space for bikes!

At first, I just took my bike for trips to the bigger towns (Kirkcaldy is quite long, and Dunfermline quite hilly!). But after a while I became more adventurous, and started combining train and bike to get to other places like Leven, Saline and Kinglassie, which don't have their own stations but are still easy enough to get to. If it was a nice afternoon, I'd sometimes cycle back all the way, not bothering with the return train.

I found myself using the time travelling productively, preparing for visits more thoroughly and reflecting on them on the way back. On the odd occasion when I had no choice but to drive, I'd get back stressed and irritated, whereas cycling had me relaxed and happy. I tried not to bore or be smug with my work colleagues, and a few started taking bikes to work on days when they didn't need to travel during the day.

The lesson for me has been in not dismissing the idea of cycling just because you think no one else does it, or its too far to go by bike alone.

Spokes Competition 2011 – My Cycling Solution - Entry Comp2011-15

*A problem I have encountered with cycling...*My biggest problem with cycling used to be If I had not been on my bike for a week or so, next time I got back on the bike, for a few days the saddle soreness would return.

*How I solved it...*Ate more pies, which gave me more backside protection against the dreaded saddle soreness, however the fiancé wasn't happy with the new big butted look so got myself a gel seat and got back to the old look.

Spokes Competition 2011 – My Cycling Solution - Entry Comp2011-16

A problem I have encountered with cycling is being distracted from my planned route by an attractively-reared cyclist to the fore. This results in me ending up a large distance from original planned destination.

I have solved it by thinking of my grandparents in lycra or, if that fails, Simon Cowell.

Spokes Competition 2011 – My Cycling Solution - Entry Comp2011-19

Problem: You've got an angora Rapha top with a pink arm detail and a pair of Lutz wool tights with world champion rainbow ankle elastic, but come mid June when your lardy blue Scottish legs come out of hibernation for a Saturday morning bunch ride, you know who they're calling Salmonella. You might be in full aero tuck but you make like a frozen chicken.

Solution: What's the answer? Stand and Tan spray-on Lanzaroti Legs, £ 2.99 per leg, £ 5.00 the pair. See the heads turn when they clock those golden calves all buffed up and shiny scooting past the loitering youth of Tranent. It might be grey, bleak and pedestrian on the back roads of East Lothian but your glowing pair of deep fried pins are transport to the sun drenched switchbacks of Mont Ventoux.

Spokes Competition 2011 – My Cycling Solution - Entry Comp2011-20

Problem: Stop your housemaid griping about having to clean down the rubber bike marks in the hallway.

Solution: Call up the local painter and decorator and commission a gloss black, six inch stripe, handlebar height, right round the vestibule. Bob's your Uncle, this dandy dado creates the perfect detail for the sporting enthusiast – it hides those pesky marks and keeps the servants nice.

Spokes Competition 2011 – My Cycling Solution - Entry Comp2011-21

Problem: Road surface bumps at junctions. Three times in past 5 years I have fallen off my bicycle, sustaining injuries. [the entry form specifies the injuries]. In one case my loaded bicycle fell on my leg at a junction, waiting to turn right-uphill on a busy road, with a *large speed bump* at the junction. Once I fell off my loaded bike at a bumpy kerb, trying to access the off-road route from the trafficked road.

Solution(s): I have reduced my cycle use – I now take a rucksack to the supermarket and walk home with the load, rather than letting the cycle take the strain. If only this town had an integrated system of cycleroutes, segregated from traffic (as in Denmark – or even, I'm told, in London!)

Spokes Competition 2011 – My Cycling Solution - Entry Comp2011-22

Problem: How to live conveniently outside the city without owning a car

Solution: Find somewhere to live within easy cycling distance of a rail station, shops, school, etc. If you don't like rain, try to find somewhere within a mile or so of shops and station - even with that restriction, you can live anywhere in or near many small towns. Get a folding bike, which you can take easily on all trains and is also allowed on Lothian Buses, First Bus and most other bus companies. Consider also getting a simple trailer like a Bike Hod (but this is not essential). When you need to get something bulky, like a fridge or sack of compost, either use a bike trailer, or mail order, or ask your nearest local shop to deliver (delivery is far cheaper than owning a car!) When you need to get rid of something bulky use Freecycle or the council bulk-waste collection. If you think this answer is short for such a big problem, that's because it really is easy!!

Spokes Competition 2011 – My Cycling Solution - Entry Comp2011-27

A problem I have encountered with cycling...

I ran out of energy on a long cycle and felt I could not go on. Luckily I was with a friend who had brought along a couple of mars bars. He suggested that we pull off the road and let me have a mars bar to eat. Twenty minutes later I was refilled and ready to carry on cycling.

How I solved it...

To avoid an energy gap on cycles now I cut a mars bar into slices before I go out on my bike. I put the slices of mars bar into a poly bag in my jacket pocket and make a point of having a slice every 30 miles or so.

Spokes Competition 2011 – My Cycling Solution - Entry Comp2011-28

A problem I have encountered with cycling...

Whilst cycling in renfrewshire my bike went into a rain filled pot hole. I came off my bike and fell on to the road. I quickly got to my feet and pulled my bike on to the verge.

How I solved it...

I now diligently register every pothole I see, whether I am walking, cycling or driving my car with the pothole register at www.potholes.co.uk so that the council are made aware of the problem and can fix the hole. This has helped reduce the likelihood of me or other cyclists coming across a pothole in the future.

Spokes Competition 2011 – My Cycling Solution - Entry Comp2011-29

A problem I have encountered with cycling...

I found it scary to ride my bike on the road because of numerous potholes and traffic which makes it difficult to feel safe and relaxed while cycling.

How I solved it...

I followed a cycle route sign and found the local cycle tracks. This meant I could go down the coast off road, on great flat cycle paths.

Spokes Competition 2011 – My Cycling Solution - Entry Comp2011-30

A problem I have encountered with cycling...

As a woman, I felt unsafe cycling any distance alone. I was worried that I'd injure myself or that something would go wrong with my bike that I wouldn't be able to repair, particularly as my bike was 28 years old and starting to rust.

How I solved it...

I spoke to a friend and she felt the same way, she didn't like cycling alone. We now meet up regularly and explore new routes. We know even if something goes wrong with one bike the other will be able to cycle to get help.