

Thanks to a donation from a kind philanthropist in 2021, Spokes was able to offer 3 grants of £1000 to Spokes members to assist purchase of a family cargobike. One was Rosanna; her report is below.

This is the second time we've had a similar kind donation, so if you may want a cargobike in future, make sure you're a spokes member in case another philanthropist comes along!

These grants are quite separate from the grants which we offer to community organisations, which are continuing. [www.spokes.org.uk/documents/advice/cargo-bikes](http://www.spokes.org.uk/documents/advice/cargo-bikes)

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## Feedback Report for Spokes - On getting an e-cargo bike

This year I was the grateful recipient of a Spokes grant to get an e-cargo bike: as described in previous competition entries (Shopping by bike 9/16, Cycling during the pandemic 5/21).

I have always had a tendency to treat my bikes as cargo bikes, and especially the last one proved quite inadequate to the task (it was new in 2017, and the support for the basket I had on the front had already worn a deep and potentially dangerous groove into the frame). The last straw was an accident which buckled the front wheel rim so I was considering replacing the bike when I saw the information about the grant, and was lucky enough to be accepted for it.

I was looking for a bike as close to a regular one as possible, and would have liked to get either a Tern, but the waiting time is very long, or a Radwagon, or an Omnium Mini but these are not available in the UK. Anyway, I bought a Bergamont E-Cargoville, one of its advantages being that it was available immediately, and even with a discount, as it was showroom model at the end of season sale at Electric Cycle Company.

I found all the staff there super helpful and friendly. The bike itself rides very nicely, even without electric assist. I would have liked a step-through too, and can occasionally do this but this is not the design. I find the bike's capacity really helps with what I do in life, namely ad hoc voluntary collections and deliveries of food, clothing and other things within the voluntary sector: it is very sturdy, and much better up to the task than the bikes I have previously abused doing this. However the frame's rigidity gives a rather bumpy ride for soft fruit etc: it's rather good at producing mashed bananas, so I have had to adapt the ways I carry these, but one disadvantage is definitely the state of the road surfaces in Edinburgh, the many potholes and rough areas and indeed the setts/cassies. This all makes for cautious cycling and of course slows one down quite a bit.

On the other hand the frame's strength allowed me to make a good box for the back, made from thick plywood and two wire freezer crates fixed together and onto the bike. Another freezer basket fitted nicely into the carrying frame at the front. I have always improvised (and upcycled) baskets for my bikes.

Another downside is that I am not tall and don't have huge upper body strength so I do find the bike quite tricky to hold when laden, and this issue is compounded by its high centre of gravity – although of course it has the advantage of big wheels.

I had rather hoped getting this bike would effectively replace my regular bike, but I do find it a bit too heavy for this, so I still use a regular bike for day-to-day.

Anyway, I decided to cycle with it through to Glasgow with Critical Mass/Pedal on COP for the big demo on 6<sup>th</sup> November, and the Electric Cycle Company kindly lent me a second battery for the weekend, although actually I would not have needed it, as the one battery would have coped fine, but having a backup gave peace of mind anyway. Some of my fellow riders commented 'you've got a lot of stuff': well, indeed: in view of the weather forecast I had two complete changes of clothing with me, and I was actually very grateful for them! I was also planning to stay overnight at my daughter's, so thought "after all, it's a cargo bike, why would I not take everything I might need on it?" That was quite a contrast to the many who took that trip travelling light, but I was extremely grateful to have taken what I did, and indeed also to have taken part in this fantastic ride! It has inspired me to do even more campaigning, and I have kept the laminated slogans I made for the occasion on the bike ('keep spaces for people', 'enable active travel!', and my favourite quote from Greta Thunberg 'to change everything we need everyone').

Of course I am gaining more experience, and understanding of how to ride this bike: it's a bit like cycling in icy conditions – sudden turning and sudden braking are both likely to make it difficult to handle.

In summary, my feedback is that I am very grateful to have this bike now, and what I have learned – to adapt a wise African proverb - is that if you want to go fast, then get fit (or young!) and get a light bike but if you want to carry loads and even go far with them, then this bike is certainly up to the task.

Rosanna

December 2021