LOTHIANS CARGO
BIKE NETWORK

2026
-2027

# CARRYING CHANGE

## UNLOCKING THE POTENTIAL OF CARGO BIKES IN EDINBURGH AND THE LOTHIANS

Photo by Jenny Elliott

THE BIKE STATION

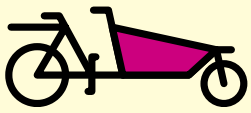
PORTY COMMUNITY ENERGY

Linlithgow Community Development Trust

SPOKES

ACTIVE TRAVEL MIDLOTHIAN

BANZAI BIKES BB

# Introduction 

A transition towards more sustainable modes of transport is essential not only to reducing the effects of climate change, but also to creating healthier, more accessible, and liveable communities.

In Scotland, transport is the country's largest source of greenhouse gas emissions.[1] The Scottish Government has committed to reducing car use as part of its transition to net zero, with the previous target of a 20% reduction in car kilometres by 2030[1] now being revised to establish a longer-term target aligned with Scotland's statutory 2045 net-zero target.[2] Progress towards reducing car use is currently off track, making practical alternatives to private car use more relevant than ever.

At a local level, the national policy direction is reflected through the City of Edinburgh Council's City Mobility Plan.[3] This plan sets a target to reduce car kilometres on Edinburgh's roads by 30% (from a 2019 baseline) by 2030. The measures intended to support this target, detailed within The Delivery Actions for Active Travel, include actions to increase walking, wheeling and cycling, improve active travel infrastructure and support behaviour change.

Cargo bikes combine the relatively low environmental impact of cycling with greater carrying capacity and practicality. By enabling the transportation of loads that would be difficult to carry by conventional bicycle, including children, shopping, and equipment, they can play an important role in reducing car use. It also makes them relevant not only for households but also for businesses and organisations looking for alternatives to vans and other motorised transport.

# Scope of the Report

This report explores the role that cargo bikes can play in supporting the critical transition towards net zero and reduction in car use, and draws on evidence from cities across Europe where cargo bikes are already more established within the transport landscape.

It looks at how cargo bike use has developed in these cities and the conditions that have supported their growth including the role played by infrastructure, policy, funding and access to vehicles.

It then turns to Edinburgh and the Lothians, examining the emerging cargo bike landscape across the region, including community lending schemes and business use. The report outlines how the region compares with European developments including the current policy and funding environment, and the impacts that cargo bikes are already having for both domestic and business users.

The report finds that the foundations for a stronger cargo bike ecosystem are in place, but that development remains at an early stage in this transition. It identifies opportunities to build on this emerging landscape and considers what further investment and support is needed to realise the potential of cargo bikes across the region.

# Lending Models

**Cargo bike lending schemes operate in a variety of ways, reflecting the different needs of their target audiences, funding requirements, and capacities. Schemes may combine elements of several models, but they can broadly be grouped into the following categories.**

**Short-term loans for individuals** allow people to borrow a cargo bike for a period ranging from hours to weeks. These focus on people wanting to trial the use of a cargo bike without the purchase commitment, and people with short-term requirements such as a family day out or moving house. These schemes can be particularly effective at reducing the financial and practical barriers to first-time use.

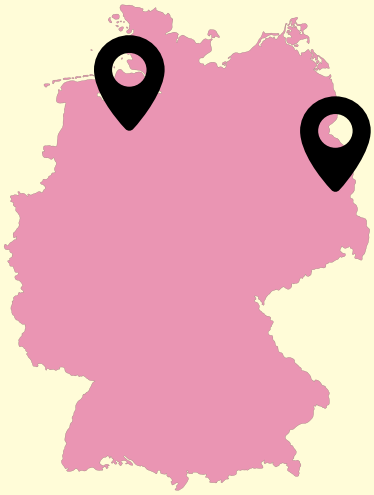
**Longer-term lending** provides users with access to a cargo bike for an extended period, potentially for several months. This model allows people to integrate cargo bikes more fully into their routines and provides greater opportunity for sustained changes in travel behaviour. Longer-term lending can also be particularly valuable where the aim is to support households that may not otherwise be able to afford a cargo bike.

**Hub-based schemes** use a centralised location for storing, repairing, and distributing the bikes. This improves the efficiency of the operation and allows a smaller number of bikes to serve a large number of people. This approach can reduce the need for individual ownership while making cargo bikes available for occasional journeys.

**Business and community organisation lending schemes** provide cargo bikes to small businesses, community groups, and charities. The bikes can support deliveries, staff travel, equipment transport or other work-related journeys, providing an opportunity to replace car or van trips and demonstrate the potential of cargo bikes in professional settings.

# Lessons From Around Europe

**Cargo bikes are becoming increasingly established within transport systems across the UK and Europe, although cities are at different stages of adoption. Experience from cities such as *Bremen, Berlin, London, Paris, Amsterdam, and Copenhagen* suggests that the transition is not driven by a single intervention. Instead, cargo bike use tends to grow where access to bikes, financial support, appropriate infrastructure and wider transport policy reinforce one another.**



**Bremen** provides one of the clearest examples of the role that lending schemes can play in this transition. Its Fietje cargo bike-sharing scheme provides free access to bikes for periods of up to several days, allowing people to test cargo bikes for everyday journeys without the cost of ownership.

Research based on 321 Fietje users found that **38-55% of trips would otherwise have been made by car**, with transporting children and bulky objects among the most important uses.[4]

This suggests that **lending schemes can act as an important first step in the transition** from awareness and trial towards repeated use and modal shift.

**Berlin** employs a similar approach with its fLotte model, using community organisations and local businesses to provide free access to cargo bikes.[5]

These models are particularly relevant to Scotland because they show how cargo bike access can be provided through local partnerships rather than relying solely on commercial rental schemes. They also give people the opportunity to try cargo bikes in everyday settings, helping to increase familiarity with a relatively unfamiliar form of transport.

**London** provides a good example of cargo bikes becoming part of mainstream transport policy. Transport for London's (TfL) 2023 Cargo Bike Action Plan identifies growth, infrastructure, safety and behaviour change as key areas for intervention.[6] Measures include:

- **developing appropriate parking and microhubs** (local facilities used to process goods before they are delivered via active transport)
- ensuring future **cycling infrastructure has sufficient capacity for cargo bikes**
- using **procurement and vehicle-emissions policies** to encourage uptake



TfL estimated that **cargo bikes could replace 1-4% of van kilometres across London by 2030**, with the potential rising to 6-17% in central London depending on supporting measures.[6] A follow-up report showed that cargo bike use is already increasing, recording a **42% increase in cargo-bike counts in central London between 2022 and 2023.[7]**

London boroughs including Hackney, Islington and Tower Hamlets have also developed cargo bike-sharing schemes, with TfL sharing learning between boroughs. More recently, TfL has distinguished between commercial and domestic cargo bike use.

A 2026 Mayoral response **identifies infrastructure, parking, theft prevention, rental provision and affordability as relevant to domestic use.[8]**



**Paris** illustrates the role of direct financial intervention.

The city currently provides **means-tested support covering 33% of the purchase price of a cargo bike, up to €600, for eligible residents**, while businesses and organisations can receive support covering 50% up to €1,200.[9]

Such measures reduce the significant upfront cost of cargo bike ownership and demonstrate how local governments can use financial incentives to move cargo bikes beyond a niche market.

While the upfront cost can be a barrier to adoption, cargo bikes can offer significant savings when compared with car ownership. Recent UK modelling found that **combining an e-cargo bike with public transport could cost a family around £4,000 less per year than using a second-hand family car and public transport.**[10] However, the same analysis still identified high upfront costs and lack of secure storage as significant barriers to adoption.

**Copenhagen and Amsterdam** provide a different insight, demonstrating the role infrastructure has in success.

Here, cargo bikes have developed within cities where cycling is already a normal part of everyday travel.[11,12] Their experience highlights the importance of the wider cycling environment, including **safe and sufficiently spacious routes, secure parking, and facilities that accommodate larger bikes**. This suggests that cargo bike policy cannot be separated entirely from wider investment in active travel.





A cargo bike may be available and affordable, but its potential as a car alternative will be limited if the surrounding infrastructure makes carrying children or bulky loads difficult or unsafe. The 2026 systematic review similarly identifies infrastructure, parking and perceived safety as recurring factors affecting cargo bike uptake, alongside cost and other personal and social factors.[13]









## Taken together, these examples suggest a **broad transition pathway:**




This pathway should not, however, be understood as a single progression that every user follows. The evidence suggests that shared cargo bikes can fulfil a distinct need for occasional access, while ownership is more closely associated with everyday use.

For Scotland, this provides a useful context for understanding the role of cargo bike lending schemes.

**Lending schemes can address an early barrier by allowing people to try a cargo bike without committing to a substantial purchase**, while also providing ongoing access for those who only need one occasionally or cannot afford, store or justify ownership. They can also generate evidence about demand and car-trip substitution, and help users move from unfamiliarity and experimentation towards regular use or, for some, ownership.

International experience suggests that lending schemes are most effective alongside other critical activities including:

- **wider transition strategy**
- **purchase incentives**
- **appropriate infrastructure and parking**
- **business support**
- **policies that make cycling and cargo bikes practical alternatives to car and van travel**

These experiences also suggest potential areas for regional and national policy advocacy, particularly around affordability, infrastructure, parking, and the integration of cargo bikes into mainstream transport planning.





# Lothians Cargo Bike Network

The Lothians Cargo Bike Network (LCBN) is an informal collective of cargo bike lending organisations across Edinburgh and the Lothians, established to strengthen collaboration and better understand and increase the impact of cargo bikes in the region. The network emerged from recommendations identified in a 2025 mapping report funded by Spokes and undertaken by The Bike Station which identified **17 active bike lending schemes across the region**, including numerous community-led initiatives and several larger schemes.

The report highlighted both the strengths and the challenges of a locally led approach to cargo bike schemes. It recognised that community organisations are often well placed to understand and respond to the needs of their communities, adapting their schemes to local circumstances, available resources and the people they serve.

It noted however, that this results in a fragmented landscape, with many small-scale lenders operating independently and collecting data in different ways, or not collecting it at all. This makes it difficult to build a consistent picture of how cargo bike lending is being used across the region, what impact it is having, and where further investment could make the greatest difference.

The Lothian Cargo Bike Network addresses this issue by bringing these organisations together to **share approaches, experiences and practical resources**. This aims to **reduce duplication and build a stronger collective evidence base** while retaining the local knowledge and flexibility that are important to community-led schemes.

Furthermore, the network is developing a longer-term approach to monitoring the impact of cargo bike lending. This will help build the evidence needed to support continued investment and wider policy change.

Ultimately, the LCBN demonstrates the value of combining local and regional approaches. Individual community schemes can respond to the needs of their users, while collaboration enables them to share learning, strengthen the evidence base and work collectively to raise the profile of cargo bike lending across the region.
There are currently 11 engaged organisations across the region (see Appendix A), with five actively participating in the network's data collection work.








Photos by Jenny Elliott

# Edinburgh & the Lothians

## *Domestic*

Our findings from Edinburgh and the Lothians draw on data from five participating LCBN schemes, including feedback from people who borrowed bikes (N=53), and case studies with individuals and organisational users. Together, these sources provide evidence of how cargo bikes are being used and the impact that they are having in the region, alongside the opportunities and barriers associated with wider adoption.

**Borrowing can change perceptions of what is possible by bike**. Feedback from scheme users was overwhelmingly positive:

- 88% said that they enjoyed using a cargo bike “a lot”.
- 85% said that they were “very likely” to borrow one again.

When asked what had surprised them about using a cargo bike, respondents frequently commented on how easy they were to ride, their carrying capacity, electric assistance and ability to handle hills.

The case studies illustrate how borrowing a cargo bike can change perceptions of everyday travel.

Jessie found that her experience challenged her assumption that carrying bulky or heavy materials meant cycling was not an option [see appendix B: Jessie’s story].

Chris described discovering that a journey which could take an hour by bus could be completed in under 20 minutes by cargo bike [see appendix B: Chris’ story].

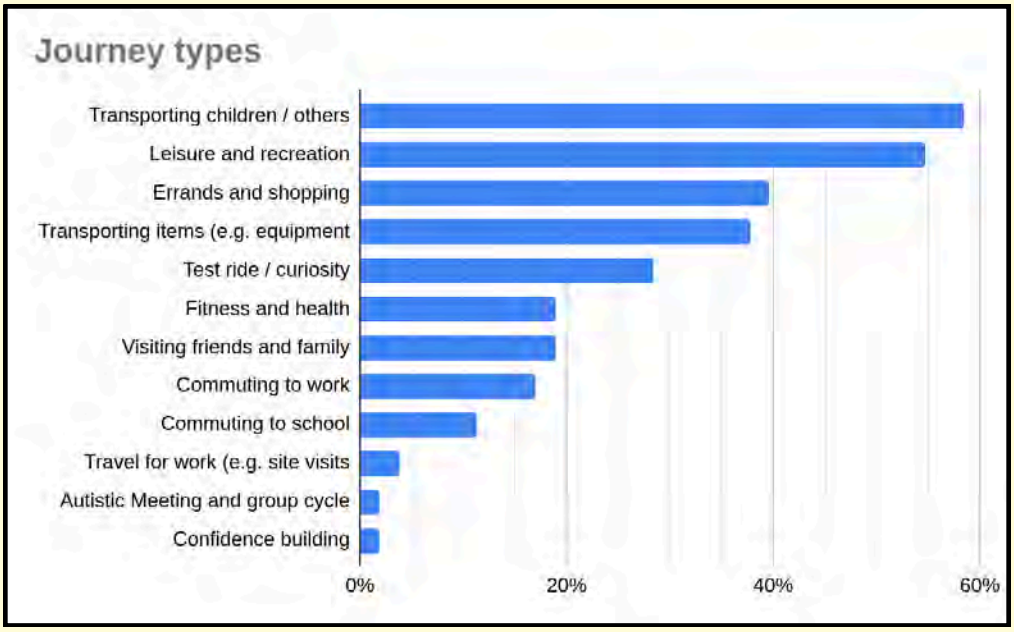
Danny found that his family's commute to nursery took around a third of the time [see appendix B: Danny’s story].

For Jon, the experience contributed to the decision to sell his car altogether [see appendix B: Jon’s story].

**Cargo bikes were used for a wide range of everyday, family and community journeys.** Respondents reported using cargo bikes to transport children (58%), carry shopping (40%), travel to school (11%), commute to work (17%), carry equipment (38%), visit friends and family (19%), for leisure and recreation (55%).

When asked how they would previously have made the journeys undertaken by cargo bike, many respondents said that they would have driven (46%), while others would have used public transport, a conventional bicycle or walked. Some said that they would not have made the journeys at all.

> **“I sold the car. I haven’t looked back.”**
> *- Jon, borrowed a cargo bike from Banzai*




The case studies demonstrate that this potential extends beyond household travel.

- David used a cargo bike to transport shopping and catering equipment to events in central Edinburgh [see appendix B: David's story].
- Jessie used one to move materials and equipment for arts and community projects.
- Lucy used a cargo bike to collect surplus food and transport equipment as part of her community work [see appendix B: Lucy's story].
- Mayfield and Easthouses Development Trust (MAEDT) has begun considering whether cargo bikes can replace some van journeys when collecting food, bikes and garden supplies [see appendix B: MAEDT's story].

These examples show that cargo bikes can support a range of activities where carrying capacity, parking restrictions, or vehicle costs are important.

**The ability to carry people and loads is a key part of their appeal.** Survey respondents repeatedly reported that carrying capacity was something that surprised them.

Families described carrying children alongside shopping and other belongings, while individual and organisational users transported equipment, food, materials and other bulky loads.

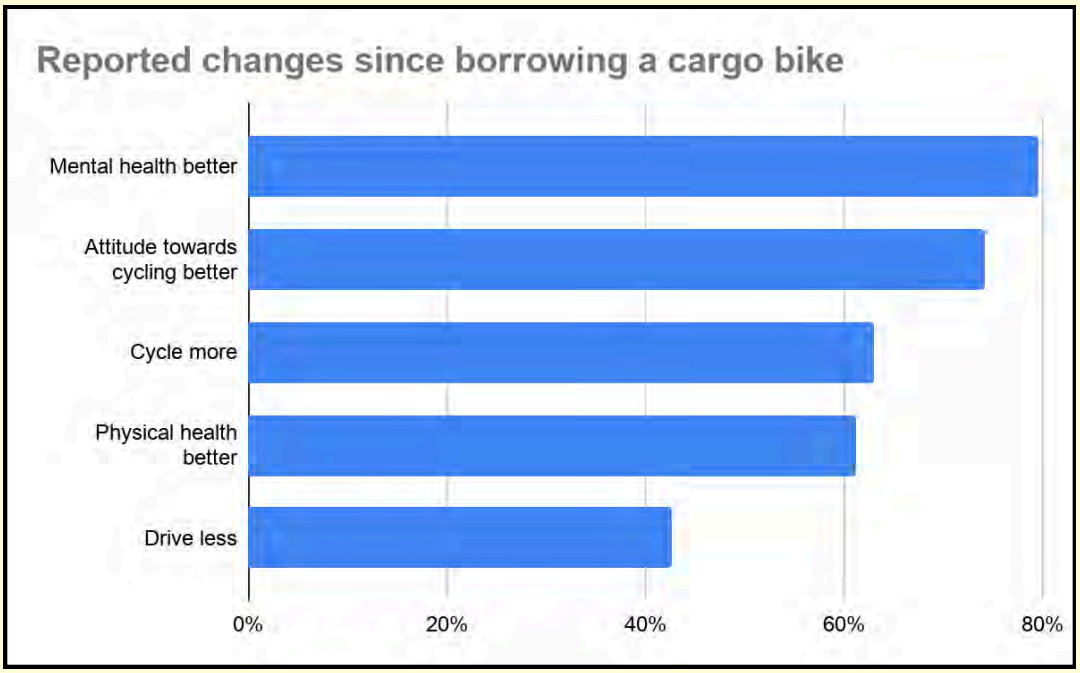
**"The speed you could travel at was great and it meant that I could get around quickly, even when carrying two children"**
*– Susan, borrowed a cargo bike from the Wee Bike Library*

**"I can very happily fill the entire front of an Urban Arrow when I do a big shop"**
*– Chris, borrowed a cargo bike from Banzai*

**"There's also something liberating about having the capacity to carry things. It makes cycling feel much more compatible with everyday life and work"**
*– Jessie, borrowed a cargo bike from Banzai*

This capacity can make cycling more compatible with activities that might otherwise require a car, van or multiple journeys.

There is also evidence of wider benefits associated with this change in travel. Many respondents reported **cycling more and driving less after borrowing a cargo bike, alongside improvements in physical or mental wellbeing and attitudes towards cycling.**




Case studies describe additional benefits including exercise, reduced stress, greater independence, spending more time outdoors and making family journeys more enjoyable.

**"My wife says that it gave her a real mental health boost while she was looking after our 5 year old. She was far less isolated"**
*- Danny, borrowed a cargo bike from the Wee Bike Library*

**"The cargo bike helps me further my reach, meet more people & professionals"**
*- Lucy, borrowed a cargo bike from Porty Community Energy Bike Library*

**"I feel that my body has adapted and my fitness has increased."**
*- Hannah, borrowed a cargo bike from the Wee Bike Library*

**"You can also arrive somewhere and feel less harassed, less sweaty and not needing to change clothes all the time."**
*- Danny, borrowed a cargo bike from the Wee Bike Library*

For some users, the experience also increased confidence in cycling or encouraged other members of their household to cycle.

However, **positive experiences do not necessarily translate into individual ownership.** While the average likelihood of using a cargo bike instead of a car for everyday journeys was 4.66 out of 5, and the likelihood of borrowing again was 4.76, the average likelihood of purchasing a cargo bike within the following year was considerably lower, at 2.66. This suggests a distinction between recognising the value of cargo bikes and being able or willing to own one.

**Cost was by far the most frequently reported barrier in the feedback responses.** Secure storage was also repeatedly identified, alongside a lack of safe cycling infrastructure and concerns about driver behaviour.

The case studies reflect these findings: Hannah, Susan and Danny all identified cost as a barrier to ownership, while Jon, Lucy and Ariane described difficulties finding suitable storage. For some families, the cost of the bike and associated equipment remains prohibitive even after a positive trial.

**"The main thing is the price, they are very expensive with all the add ons"**
*– Susan, borrowed a cargo bike from the Wee Bike Library*

**"The EST grant wasn't available and they cost nearly as much as a car which wasn't possible for us"**
*– Danny, borrowed a cargo bike from the Wee Bike Library*

**"I had thought about using the bike to work scheme, but they would only loan half the cost of the bike. Insurance also might be expensive."**
*– Ariane, borrowed a cargo bike from Porty Community Energy Bike Library*

**"The financial barrier is the biggest thing. Even a second hand cargo bike is not cheap."**
*– Hannah, borrowed a cargo bike from the Wee Bike Library*

The evidence therefore suggests that **access to cargo bikes can play an important role in allowing people to experience their potential without the financial commitment of ownership.** For some users, borrowing has subsequently led to purchasing a bike of their own; for others, the experience has demonstrated the benefits of cargo bikes without overcoming the practical or financial barriers to ownership. The loan schemes themselves therefore provide an important means of testing different types of cargo bikes, building confidence and exploring how they could fit into everyday life. They may also provide a form of ongoing access for people who need a cargo bike occasionally or regularly but, like car-club users, do not want or are not able to invest in their own vehicle.

# Cargo bikes in businesses and organisations

City of Edinburgh Council estimates that 20-50% of motorised trips associated with the transport of goods in Edinburgh could potentially be shifted to e-cargo bikes.[14] Cargo bikes are already being used by a range of businesses and organisations across the city, demonstrating their potential in a variety of contexts. Their applications extend beyond parcel delivery to include transporting equipment, moving goods and supporting community activities.

Local examples include **ACE Cycle Couriers** and **CADi Couriers**, both worker-owned cooperatives providing commercial delivery and logistics services using cargo bikes. Their work illustrates the potential for cargo bikes to form part of Edinburgh's urban logistics infrastructure, particularly for short journeys where congestion, access and parking can make conventional vehicles less practical.

Cargo bikes are also being integrated into businesses where transporting equipment is part of delivering a service. **The Cycling Gardeners** use electric cargo bikes to carry tools and gardening equipment between jobs, while **SHRUB Cooperative** uses cargo bikes to collect and transport surplus food as part of its Food Sharing project. **Porty Community Energy**'s cargo bikes are used for weekly surplus food collections for the popular Porty Community Fridge. These examples show how cargo bikes can support a much wider range of activities than conventional courier services.

However, competing with established, lower-cost, van-based delivery models remains a significant challenge for the commercial viability of cycle logistics. The Council has identified external funding to support e-cargo bike uptake by businesses and individuals as a specific action,[14] recognising the role that financial support can play in enabling this transition.

**ACE Cycle Couriers** demonstrates how cargo bikes can support commercial activity beyond personal transport, enabling businesses to move goods locally without relying on vans. The Edinburgh-based cooperative began when two couriers started using cargo bikes to deliver bread for a local restaurant. Following the closure of Zedify in 2025, demand from other local businesses led to the development of a wider courier network.

**ACE now has 13 members** and provides regular and ad hoc delivery services for around 10 local businesses. Their work demonstrates the potential for cargo bikes to support business-to-business (B2B) logistics, moving goods between suppliers, businesses and other locations, as well as supporting businesses whose services ultimately reach individual customers (B2C).

For businesses, cargo bike deliveries can provide a practical, low emission alternative to van-based transport for local journeys, while reducing traffic and making access and parking easier in busy areas.

The couriers operate as a co-operative of independent contractors, providing a shared point of contact for businesses while riders retain the income from their deliveries. **Access to grants and financial support has been essential** in enabling riders to purchase cargo bikes and build the fleet and capacity needed to provide these services.

# Recommendations

The evidence presented in this report suggests that Edinburgh and the Lothians have the foundations needed for cargo bikes to form part of a mature active travel ecosystem. Lending schemes are already providing access and enabling people to experience cargo bikes in everyday situations; businesses and community organisations are beginning to integrate them into their work; and the Lothians Cargo Bike Network provides a basis for collaboration and shared learning.

However, the findings also indicate that access alone is unlikely to be sufficient to support a wider transition. The gap between people's positive experiences of borrowing and their willingness or ability to purchase a cargo bike highlights the need for a broader approach combining access, affordability, infrastructure and practical support.

## 1. Sustain and expand cargo bike lending schemes

Cargo bike lending should continue to be supported as an important part of the transition towards wider use. The regional evidence shows that borrowing can change perceptions of what is possible by bike, provide access to people who cannot afford or store a cargo bike, and enable people to test different models before considering ownership.

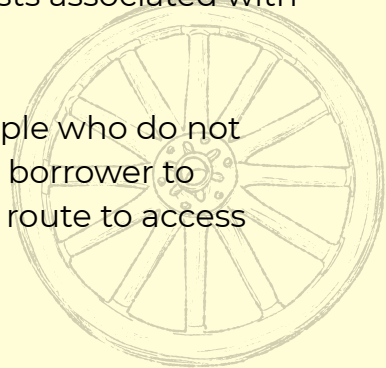
Future investment should therefore support both the continuation of existing community schemes and the development of provision where gaps in access remain.

## 2. Improve access to ownership

Positive experiences of borrowing do not necessarily lead to ownership. Cost was the most frequently identified barrier in the regional feedback, and the relatively low likelihood of purchasing a cargo bike compared with borrowing again suggests that demand alone will not overcome the financial barrier.

Regional and national stakeholders should therefore consider how financial support could make cargo bike ownership more accessible, particularly for households and organisations that could use a cargo bike to replace car or van journeys but cannot meet the upfront cost. Support could also recognise the wider costs associated with ownership, including accessories and secure storage.

Lending schemes should remain an important alternative for people who do not need or cannot justify ownership. The aim should not be for every borrower to become an owner, but to ensure that people have an appropriate route to access depending on their circumstances.



# 3. Make infrastructure suitable for cargo bikes

Cargo bikes need to be considered within the wider development of cycling and active-travel infrastructure. The regional findings, supported by experience from established European cycling cities, identified concerns about safe cycling routes and secure storage in particular.

Transport planning and infrastructure investment should therefore consider cargo bikes explicitly, including sufficient space on cycle routes, and secure, conveniently located parking capable of storing larger bikes. Residential and workplace developments should also consider these requirements.

# 4. Support the development of cargo bike use by businesses and organisations

The emerging use of cargo bikes by businesses and community organisations in Edinburgh demonstrates potential beyond household transport. Local examples show applications ranging from commercial deliveries to transporting tools, equipment, food and materials.

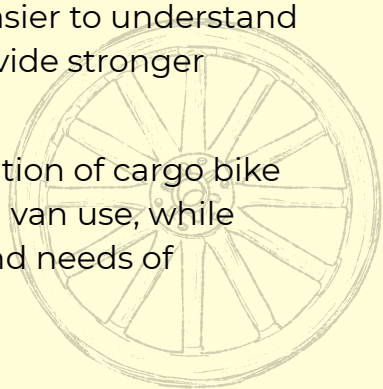
There is an opportunity to build on this through targeted support for organisations considering cargo bikes as an alternative to car and van journeys. This could include access to funding for vehicle purchase, training and equipment, alongside practical support to help organisations identify journeys that could be undertaken by cargo bike.

# 5. Strengthen collaboration and the regional evidence base

The Lothians Cargo Bike Network provides an important mechanism for coordinating the region's lending organisations. Continued collaboration should be used to share practical learning, develop consistent approaches to monitoring, and demonstrate the collective impact of cargo bike lending.

The network should continue to develop a shared evidence base covering measures such as usage, repeat borrowing, journey purposes, previous modes of transport and indicators of longer-term behaviour change. This would make it easier to understand which approaches are most effective in different contexts and provide stronger evidence for future investment and policy development.

Over time, this evidence could also help demonstrate the contribution of cargo bike schemes to wider transport objectives, including reducing car and van use, while ensuring that future investment is informed by the experiences and needs of local users.



# Looking ahead

Taken together, these recommendations point towards a shift from establishing access to cargo bikes, to building an environment in which cargo bikes are a practical option for a wider range of households, businesses, and organisations.

Edinburgh and the Lothians already possess important elements of this environment - community-led lending schemes, emerging commercial use, an active regional network, and growing evidence of positive user experiences. The next stage is to connect these developments with the wider conditions that allow cargo bikes to become a practical part of everyday transport, in particular affordability, infrastructure, storage, and business support.

The priority should therefore be to build on the foundations that already exist, while continuing to generate evidence about what works and where further investment can have the greatest impact.

# Methodology & Limitations

## *Methodology*

The project began by identifying organisations with similar activities and interests in cargo bike lending and sharing across Edinburgh and the surrounding regions. A network of participating organisations was then established to support collaboration and agree a shared approach to data collection. The network agreed the key questions and information to be collected, after which data collection materials were developed and distributed to participating organisations.

The resulting data were analysed using a combination of exploratory and descriptive approaches. Key values were summarised to identify broad patterns, while cross-tabulation was used to explore relationships between factors of interest. Qualitative responses were analysed thematically to identify recurring themes and insights across participants.

Case study interviews were conducted with individual borrowers and organisations using cargo bikes to provide additional qualitative insight into how cargo bikes are being used in practice and the impacts they can have on everyday travel and work. Case studies were selected to represent a range of users and uses, including household, community and business applications.

## *Limitations*

The findings should be considered in light of several limitations. The data collection period was relatively short, limiting the amount of data that could be gathered and the extent to which longer-term patterns could be identified. Staff capacity within participating organisations also affected the time available for data collection and engagement with the project. Finally, the number of organisations that participated was relatively small, meaning that the findings should not be assumed to be representative of all cargo bike lending and sharing schemes.

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# Appendix A

## *Lothians Cargo Bike Network members*

| Scheme provider | Area | Organisation type | No. cargo bikes | Main use | Website |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Wee Bike Library (The Bike Station) | Edinburgh | Community based organisation | 15 | Community lending | https://www.thebikestation.org.uk/weebikelibrary |
| BANZAI Cargo Bike Library | Edinburgh | Community based organisation | 4 | Community lending | https://banzaiedinburgh.org.uk/banzai-cargo-bike-library |
| Porty Community Energy Bike Library | Edinburgh | Community based organisation | 5 | Community lending | https://portycommunitybike.myturn.com |
| Edinburgh Festival of Cycling | Edinburgh | Community interest company | 1 | Short-term lending | https://edfoc.org.uk/cargo-bike-hire |
| Midlothian Council | Midlothian | Local authority | 1 | Community lending | https://www.midlothian.gov.uk/info/200279/roads_and_travel/406/walking_and_cycling |
| Cycling UK (Midlothian) | Midlothian | National charity | 6 | Community lending | https://www.facebook.com/CyclingUKinMidlothian/ |
| Cycling UK (East Lothian) | East Lothian | National charity | 4 | Community lending | https://www.cyclinguk.org/connecting-communities |
| Sustaining Dunbar | East Lothian | Community based organisation | 2 | Community lending | https://sustainingdunbar.org/projects/bike-library |
| Sustaining North Berwick | East Lothian | Community based organisation | 2 | Community lending | https://sustainingnb.org.uk |
| Linlithgow Community Development Trust | West Lothian | Community based organisation | 1 | Community lending | https://trust-linlithgow.org.uk/projects/activetravellinlithgow |
| Forth Environment Link | West Lothian / Stirlingshire | Community based organisation | 5 | Community lending | https://felscotland.org/bike-library |

# Appendix B
## *Case Studies*

### Jon's Story - *Banzai*



"Have you ever seen the film *Motherload*?" asks Jon Andrews, a student at Edinburgh College of Art. It's a crowdsourced documentary about cargo bikes and parenthood in the age of climate crisis. After attending a local screening, Jon made a big decision.

"I sold the car. I haven't looked back."

Jon had the opportunity to ride a cargo bike in Glasgow and loved the experience. He discovered that the same opportunity existed in Edinburgh when another student signposted him to Banzai Bikes.

His first expedition with a loan bike from Banzai was transporting construction materials for an art project at ECA. "The experience of carrying the materials across the city centre was brilliant," he says. He's now planning further pieces inspired by this experience: his next project will use waste construction materials from building sites.

To those who'd like to give the cargo bike a go, Jon advises that they handle differently to a regular bike. "Go for a short spin, in a non-traffic zone, before getting on the road," he advises. "After that, I'd tell them - sell your car, and life will be good!"
He also notes that finding secure storage can be a challenge, so when he moves he'll be looking for a place with ample bike storage.

Above all, Jon has found that the ability to borrow a cargo bike has made it much more feasible to live a car-free lifestyle. "It just adds a string to the bow, really, in reducing reliance on cars."

Jon is now dreaming up a sculpture which can be transported by cargo bike and displayed in different locations. Borrowing a bike from Banzai has, in Jon's words, "kind of freed the imagination."

## Bryony's Story - *Banzai*

Following a realisation that her well-used buggy wasn't going to support her growing family's car-free lifestyle for much longer, Bryony started noticing cargo bikes around the city. However, since cargo bikes can be a big investment, the family wanted to give it a trial run before they made the leap. Banzai Bikes provided them the opportunity to borrow some cargo bikes and see whether this change might suit them.



"We took a lovely trip up and around Arthur's Seat on the High Road - my baby's first trip on a bike, when she turned 9 months. The electric bikes were amazing for getting us up and around so speedily, with a snack stop partway. On foot and bus, it would have easily taken up most of the day from our Marchmont flat."

At the time Bryony didn't think of herself as a confident cyclist, and she didn't have much experience of cycling on roads. "The Banzai bike team were fantastic... [Cargo bikes] are very big and heavy for people of small stature so having support and someone else to model handling it well has been so helpful, but this wouldn't have been possible without Banzai."

The family borrowed two bikes so that Bryony could practise riding on the roads and build her confidence while her husband carried the children on another.

The trial run was such a great success that Bryony and her husband went on to invest in their own cargo bike. "My husband now uses it for nursery runs and commuting - it was previously impossible for him to do drop off and make it to work on time when depending on the bus. He's already racked up over 300 miles on it!"

To other families who may be considering the cargo bike lifestyle, Bryony had this to say: "Give it a try - it's a fun, brilliant way to get your family around the city without a car!"

# Chris' Story - *Banzai*



Chris first borrowed a cargo bike from Banzai for a journey to collect a new bike for his son. "The best and most adventurous way for us to go and do it was to borrow a cargo bike so I could take him to go and collect it." They'd seen posters for Banzai around their neighbourhood, and encountered the cargo bikes for the first time at a community cargo bike event in 2023.

"Our subsequent use of the bikes had often actually been to facilitate pretty normal everyday journeys, like allowing me to take the kids to the nursery and then go to work. The first time I did that... I could complete that journey in under 20 minutes, whereas on a bus, it'd take me an hour. That was so eye-opening to the possibilities."

Nursery pick-ups in the afternoon were originally very tricky, dependent on catching a bus at the right time, with fewer options than the morning. When Chris started hiring a cargo bike, he discovered that "I can essentially get an extra hour of my day back."

Another benefit to Chris' family has been the ability to do a big shop at their local supermarket. "It's something that wasn't really possible at all. It was limited by what you could carry, basically, but I can very happily fill the entire front of an Urban Arrow when I do a big shop."

"I've even taken my partner somewhere where it'd take her a while to get there on a bus, but I can get her there in 10 minutes. We're reasonably well served with buses, but if you want to go anywhere that's not directly on the route, it just takes a lot longer. So being able to effectively cut the corners in everyday life is a big benefit."

When asked about Banzai's impacts on his family, Chris says that "the biggest one is that we're not going to be using Banzai anymore! Using the bikes was so influential that we've gone out and bought one. We tried it a few times and it became very evident that the impact is so big for us that, as much as we could keep using that bike, it wouldn't be fair to everyone."

Now that his family has a cargo bike of their own, Chris encourages everyone to try them out. At nursery pick-up he often speaks to other parents who are curious. "I tell them some of the benefits and some of the ways that we get use out of it... My go-to is to tell them about Banzai and what a great service it is, especially because you can try it for free and it's very accessible."

"I want more people on cargo bikes," says Chris. "For me, I think part of the power of Banzai is to truly let people experience it, know what it's like for their day-to-day, and possibly buy one themselves."

# Jessie's Story - *Banzai*

One of Jessie's first journeys on a cargo bike saw her transporting a case of beer, pitching it to bars and pubs around the city. The lager was a collaboration with Pilot as part of an innovative non-flyering campaign for a Fringe show.



“I was curious about whether a cargo bike could actually work as a practical alternative to using a car or other transport for carrying things around Edinburgh. “

“A lot of my work involves moving equipment, materials or bags between different places, particularly for arts and community projects, so the idea of being able to transport things by bike was really appealing."

Borrowing a cargo bike from Banzai allowed Jessie to see whether it might work without having to commit to buying one.

"There’s definitely a little bit of a learning curve, particularly when you're navigating busy streets or tight spaces," she says of her early experiences. "If you haven’t used one before, it’s easy to assume that they’re difficult or impractical. Actually trying one is probably the best way to overcome that."

Jessie found herself quickly converted. "There’s something quite satisfying about being able to just load everything up and cycle where you need to go," she says. "There’s also something liberating about having the capacity to carry things. It makes cycling feel much more compatible with everyday life and work, rather than something you have to plan your day around."

"Before borrowing one, I would sometimes assume that if I needed to carry something bulky or heavy, cycling wasn’t an option. Having access to a cargo bike has challenged that assumption. For example, when I’m working on projects and need to move materials or equipment around Edinburgh, I can think 'I could cycle that.'"

Jessie would advise anyone to give cargo bikes a try. "I’d definitely recommend borrowing one before making any assumptions about whether it’s for you. Start with a journey you already know, give yourself a bit more time than usual, and get used to how it feels when it’s loaded."

"The biggest thing I’ve taken from it is that a cargo bike can make cycling a genuinely practical form of transport, not just a way of getting from A to B. Once you realise how much you can carry, you start seeing all sorts of journeys differently."

# David's Story - *Banzai*



David describes himself as an occasional event caterer. "I've always enjoyed making very simple meals, so that people can break bread together when they're coming together to talk about climate issues, or ecological architecture."

Catering these movement meetings, however, presents a unique set of challenges. They're almost always in the centre of town, where parking is an issue for those who have access to a car, and the cost of a taxi is a barrier for those who don't. The solution: borrowing a cargo bike from Banzai. "It meant I could do it in my own time, with no extra cost."

On a typical catering day, David will cycle the ten minute journey on his own bike to the Banzai Hub on Bruntsfield Links. He'll store his bike safely and ride the Riese & Muller Packster to a low-cost supermarket, where he'll stock up on all the ingredients he needs. After that he'll cycle home to load his catering equipment into the cargo bike's tray alongside his shopping, then carry on to the venue. "The cargo bike is just an absolutely wonderful opportunity to be able to just slide in right by the front door and offload a whole load of stuff."

After an energising day of cooking, sharing a meal and hearing from speakers, it's time to pack everything up again. "I was able to put it all back and cycle home, unload, take the cargo bike back to the bike shed and then bring my own bike back home. That's so much nicer than doing it with a car... it wasn't a big journey or anything, it was just running around and using the capacity of the bike."

David would advise other people who are keen to try cargo bikes to take it slowly to begin with. "It takes a little bit of getting used to. You need a proper induction... and then it's quite safe." Banzai's volunteer librarians provide training for new users, after which David recommends taking the bike on a short journey first. He also suggests starting with the Tern Quick-Haul Longs, which are most like an ordinary bicycle. Banzai will soon be having a series of open mornings where members of the public can give the different bikes a try.

One of David's favourite cargo bike memories is of taking his grandson out for the day. Arlan has a baby sister, six months old, and the bike they were riding happened to have two child seats. Arlan looked at the spare seat and said, "This one will be for Romy."

"He loves it," David says. "It's a good start in life to realise that active travel is super easy, and much nicer than being car-dependent."

# Ariane's Story - *Porty Community Energy Bike Library*



Ariane lives in Craigmillar and is a single mum bringing up her two young children. Having cycled regularly before becoming a parent, she was keen to keep cycling with her children. She first discovered cargo bikes through Jen, a colleague from the Greenhouse pantry food project where Ariane volunteered. Jen also worked at Portobello Bike Library and would ride an Urban Arrow to the pantry. "When my daughter – who was two at the time – saw the Urban Arrow she was so excited by it."

At the time, Ariane was using a trailer for local journeys, but her children were getting too big for it. Jen encouraged her to try the Urban Arrow, and over the Christmas holidays Ariane borrowed one to see whether her children would enjoy it. They loved it. "Although my kids are very active, and can't keep still in the car – they really like being in the cargo bike and they don't fidget."

The family have since joined several of the Bike Library's led rides. On one trip to the Botanics, Ariane's youngest daughter Aya cycled part of the way herself while Ariane carried her in the cargo bike for the rest. One of the ride leaders brought an extra cargo bike, meaning that when Aya became tired, both she and her bike could travel in the cargo bike. "She loved that she could do both things that she loved – sit in the cargo bike, and ride her bike, and wouldn't have made it on the bike all that way by herself."

Having access to cargo bikes has also reduced the family's reliance on the car. "Both me and my kids prefer the cargo bike to taking the car or the bus." For Ariane, the bike is particularly useful because it can carry all the extra things that come with family life. "As well as little people, cargo bikes also carry some extra toys when you go to the beach like kites, and our quite elaborate library of sand cake utility and shovels plus picnic baskets. All things a young family needs and especially when you are a single parent you are dragging it all. Cargo bikes make it easier."

Cycling also gives Ariane a chance to be active during the day. Working from home and experiencing back problems, she values being able to combine getting around with exercise. She had always cycled before having children, but found it much harder to continue once she became a parent. "Borrowing the cargo bike has been a great option and gets my children used to bikes in a fun way."

The biggest barriers are practical ones. The Bike Library isn't particularly close to Ariane's home, and she has nowhere suitable to store a cargo bike overnight. Her garden entrance is too narrow and there is no secure bike storage on her street. She had considered getting her own bike through the cycle to work scheme, but the cost, insurance and risk of theft remain concerns.

Despite this, Ariane's experience has been overwhelmingly positive. "It's just great fun." Although she found the balance slightly strange at first and one of the bikes was difficult to start on hills, she quickly got used to it. Her advice to anyone considering borrowing one is simple: "Just do it. You'll be surprised how much fun it is!"

# Lucy's Story - *Porty Community Energy Bike Library*



Lucy first discovered the Porty Bike Library through a community conversation in Bingham, where she works. She met Jane, who manages the Bike Library, and they began discussing ways they could collaborate on cycling activities. When the Bike Library acquired a newer Urban Arrow but needed somewhere to store it, Lucy offered space in the community woodshed. After being trained to ride it, she began using it as part of her community work.

One memorable journey came when Lucy volunteered with Porty Community Fridge to collect surplus food from Marks & Spencer. She and another volunteer cycled there together, each using a cargo bike. "At the back of Marks & Spencers I filled the entire Urban Arrow with the cover on, jam pack full of bouquets of flowers destined for the bin. It seemed enough to give everyone in Porty a bouquet!" The concentration of flowers was so strong that the volunteers kept putting their heads under the cover to take in the smell on the journey back.

The experience inspired Lucy's own plans for Bingham, where she works in an area she describes as a food desert. She is now preparing to use the cargo bike to collect surplus food from a local supermarket for a new community fridge. "This will be starting imminently and will be our main use of the cargo bike."

The cargo bike has also become useful for other parts of Lucy's work. She has used it to deliver slow cookers, put up posters around local businesses and carry equipment to events in the park, saving time and additional journeys. "The cargo bike helps me further my reach, meet more people and professionals and carry equipment or donations."

For Lucy, the bike is also a welcome way to break up the working day. With her office next to a cycle path, she can easily travel between neighbourhoods while avoiding busy roads. "I do not like looking at a laptop all day and prefer when my day is broken up getting out and about. I love going out on it."

Finding suitable storage has been the biggest challenge. The cargo bike currently lives in the community woodshed, but this space will soon be used for other activities. Lucy is hoping to secure funding for dedicated storage and potentially establish a small bike library in Bingham.

Before trying the Urban Arrow, Lucy was concerned about its size and having so much bike in front of her. "I was worried about the bulk of it being on the front and being unable to see around corners before pulling out." In practice, she found it much easier than expected. "You just take some more care and it's ok." The electric assistance also makes it easier to start with a heavy load.

For Lucy, cargo bikes are a practical tool for community work as well as a sustainable way to travel. "They are great fun, better for the environment and the most practical electric bike out there for carrying loads." She would encourage people to try different models through the Bike Library and see which works for them.

## MAEDT's Story - *Midlothian Council*



As a community-based charity, Mayfield and Easthouses Development Trust (MAEDT) is committed to supporting its local environment through projects including a weekly litter pick, community garden, Bike Hub and walking group. The organisation borrowed a Winther cargo bike to reduce its reliance on its van when collecting bulky items for its food pantry and community garden. While the volume of food needed means that the van will still be essential, MAEDT wanted to explore where journeys could instead be made by cargo bike.

The bike made a memorable appearance at the Mayfield and Easthouses Gala Day in June 2026, where MAEDT used it to promote cycling and showcase its work. The cargo bike carried a large display sheep, "Lady Baa Baa", as well as potted plants grown in the community garden, vegetables, signage and promotional materials. As the only non-petrol vehicle in the parade, it certainly attracted attention, receiving cheers and support from the crowds.

The cargo bike is now considered when MAEDT plans collections of food, children's bikes for repair, garden supplies and other bulky items. "We consider if they can be picked up by Cargo Bike rather than using the van." As well as reducing vehicle use, the organisation has found that the bike provides a practical way to get around, keeps staff active and helps promote its services.

Storage has been the main challenge. MAEDT has been able to keep the cargo bike secure and dry on a locked veranda at its premises, but suitable storage remains an important consideration for organisations looking to use one.

Their advice to others is to try before committing: "Try one out first as they have their own unique style, plus make sure that you have safe ground floor storage." Overall, MAEDT found the cargo bike to be "a wonderful, clean and energy saving addition to our transport options" and would like to continue using one for many years to come.

## Danny's Story - *Wee Bike Library*

After a friend recommended the cargo bike library, Danny began considering whether a cargo bike could work for his family. He had initially used the Wee Bike Library to borrow a bike for his child and noticed that cargo bikes were also available. Friends had already bought one and the family liked the idea, but the cost was a barrier. **"The EST grant wasn't available and they cost nearly as much as a car which wasn't possible for us."** After thinking about it for a long time, Danny finally decided to give one a try.

Living in Buckstone in the south of Edinburgh, the family are at the top of a steep hill and a 10-15 minute walk from their nearest bus stop. Danny had previously cycled his son to nursery on a normal bike, but as his son got heavier, the journey became increasingly difficult.

**"When we finally borrowed the cargo bike it completely changed our lives.** It now takes a third of the time to make the journey to nursery." The difference was particularly significant for Danny's wife, who doesn't drive. "Now we can cycle to the Commonwealth Pool and back!"

One journey particularly stands out when Danny's wife cycled with their son from their home to pick up a present in Bruntsfield before continuing to the garden centre at Mortonhall for something to eat. She even bumped into a friend who commented that she had a "new glow", which she put down to the fresh air, exercise and reduced stress of not having to drive.

The cargo bike also transformed their day-to-day family life. Danny's wife has a bad back and isn't able to carry their son, while her working hours meant that Danny sometimes had to drive them to and from work and nursery multiple times a day. The cargo bike replaced around 5-7 car journeys a week, including nursery runs, shopping, and trips out in the evening. "It definitely gave my wife a lot more confidence in cycling again."

The trial was such a success that **the family went on to buy a cargo bike from a friend.** "It is effectively now my wife's car." For Danny's wife, it also meant being less isolated while looking after their five-year-old, giving her more freedom to get out and do things together. "The kids love travelling on the cargo bike."

The family still find a lack of safe cycling infrastructure a barrier, particularly in the south of the city, where Danny's wife has experienced several close calls. But his advice to anyone considering trying a cargo bike is simple - "Just do it! Give it a shot!" With everything provided by the library, including a lock, chain and insurance, the family found it easy to give it a try. **"Even if you didn't think of yourself as a cyclist, an electric bike could change your opinion of that. It made the city feel so much smaller in a good way."**

## Hannah's Story - *Wee Bike Library*

Hannah first heard about cargo bikes from a friend who borrowed one from the Wee Bike Library. As her youngest child grew, she was looking for a way to manage the school and nursery runs. With parking difficult and the distance too far to walk, a cargo bike seemed like a good option.

When she first saw her friend's cargo bike, Hannah thought it "looked cool", but she was still surprised by how easy it was to ride when she tried it. She also discovered new bike paths and quieter roads around the city that she hadn't noticed before.

For her children, the cargo bike quickly became a highlight of the day. **"They think that they are royalty being on the bike. They sing all the way and wave at their friends as they pass."** The excitement has made the morning routine easier too, giving the children an incentive to get ready and out of the door rather than taking the car.

The cargo bike has also made some important family moments feel more special. After borrowing through the Bike Library, Hannah was able to find a second-hand cargo bike of her own. When her older daughter started primary school, she was able to cycle there together rather than worrying about parking or traffic. "It was an emotional milestone for both of us, seeing her grow up. **With the bike I could be there and not worry about the car and be able to feel present in that special moment."**

For Hannah, cycling has brought benefits beyond getting the children from A to B. She enjoys the exercise and the feeling of riding past traffic jams, and over time she has noticed her fitness improving. "I have gradually reduced the amount of assistance that I use on hills."

**The biggest barrier has been the cost.** Even second-hand cargo bikes can be expensive, and the family also worry about keeping theirs secure as they don't have an ideal place to store it. Having had the chance to try one through the Wee Bike Library, however, Hannah would encourage others to do the same.

## Susan's Story - *Wee Bike Library*

Susan first discovered the Wee Bike Library at Bridgend Farm. With two young children, the family were looking for ways to get around without relying on the car, both for environmental and health reasons. The cargo bike quickly attracted attention wherever they went, with people often stopping to ask about it. "It was great to see how it inspired other people, such as children at school and other parents, to get involved."

Before borrowing one, Susan was unsure about the size and weight of a cargo bike and how it would handle. **She was surprised by how easy it was to ride.** "The speed you could travel at was great and it meant that I could get around quickly, even when carrying two children."

**The school run became one of the family's favourite journeys.** Susan's eight-year-old would usually cycle his own bike while her five-year-old travelled on the cargo bike. "It was much better than our usual drive to school because we wouldn't be stuck in traffic, and we were out in nature listening to the birds and getting fresh air." The bike also made everyday trips easier. After cycling to the gym, Susan could stop at the shops on the way home without worrying about parking, with plenty of space for the shopping.

The experience has encouraged the whole family to cycle more. Susan's husband now uses the cargo bike for the school run, while their five-year-old has started cycling too. "We go on a lot more cycles as a family. I also cycle a lot more myself and it is great to not worry about parking or traffic."

For Susan, there is also a sense of satisfaction in changing how the family travels. "I like knowing that we aren't adding to traffic, and feeling that we are being good role models for our children and other people."

The main barrier to owning a cargo bike is the cost. With the additional equipment needed to carry children safely, larger bikes can become particularly expensive, while security is another concern. Having had the opportunity to try one through the Wee Bike Library, however, Susan found the experience straightforward. "Both the bike and the library are really easy to use." For her family, the benefits were clear - "My children really enjoyed it and (now) they aren't sitting in their car all the time."

# CARRYING CHANGE

## UNLOCKING THE POTENTIAL OF CARGO BIKES IN EDINBURGH AND THE LOTHIANS

LOTHIANS CARGO BIKE NETWORK

2026 - 2027



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