



CYCLE PARKING IS BOOMING BUT IT IS GENERATING CONFLICTS WITH OTHER ROAD USERS. JOHN OSBORNE CONSIDERS HOW YET ANOTHER PRESSURE ON PARKING SPACE CAN BE ALLEVIATED TO EVERYONE'S SATISFACTION

A wheely good idea

Barclays Bank has backed Boris Johnson's controversial cycle hire scheme in London. This wealthy sponsor is indicative of the money being poured into such projects, and some BPA members must be wondering whether to diversify into this sector.

When Barclays Cycle Hire was launched in July 2010, 315 docking stations were provided. According to Transport for London (TfL), 353 docking stations are now available. Although this is essentially a hire scheme, these are effectively cycle parking places.

The Mayor's scheme has proved very popular but it has become controversial because parking facilities for other types of vehicles have allegedly been taken away to encourage cycling. It has even been the subject of a debate in the House of Lords.

Cyclists are used to free parking, but by encouraging them to join such schemes they are now being asked to pay to leave bicycles in secure areas. The interesting issue is whether income from the scheme will help to alleviate transport problems in the capital. It may prove popular with voters in future elections, but the Mayor of London's efforts may be exacerbating the tensions, emerging in the crowded capital.

Providing more parking facilities for cyclists in London will be applauded by many people, but there is a finite amount of space available and already

another new politically-inspired scheme – the much lauded Barclays Cycle Superhighways project, has generated tension. Cyclists have complained of parked cars on the blue routes, something TfL are investigating.

Cycle wars

Soon there are likely to be disputes about the legality of parking on the routes and arguments about the interpretation of signs placed near them. So far, many riders of powered two wheelers (PTWs) – motorcycles and motorbikes – have complained about docking stations replacing parking spaces for their vehicles.

According to a report by Steve Farrell, in August of this year, and available on motorcyclenews.com, 'scores of motorcycle parking spots have been replaced by docking stations for push bikes in Johnson's flagship cycle hire scheme.'

He continued: 'Eight motorcycle bays, each thought to have accommodated up to 20 motorcycles or scooters, have been replaced by cycle docking stations in Boris Johnson's scheme, which received £25 million sponsorship from Barclays.'

Farrell added that in Westminster, 'where extra motorcycle parking was promised in return for a new £1 daily charge, dozens of motorcycle spaces have been replaced. A bay for at least 20 motorcycles has been scrapped to make way for just one docking station on Little Argyll Street, near

Oxford Circus. Another 20 motorcycle spaces have gone near Charing Cross police station.’

A TfL spokesman said: ‘Cycle hire docking stations have replaced motorcycle parking at a very small number of sites, but in each case these parking spaces have been relocated nearby in the relevant borough. In some cases, additional motorcycle parking spaces are being provided at the new sites.’

Meeting cyclists’ needs

The government is providing funds to improve cycle parking, but the political will may be at odds with the need to ensure that money invested in parking facilities – and generated from charges – actually reduces congestion and improves traffic flow.

It is also debatable whether the growing trend to provide more secure valet cycle parking in Britain’s cities, particularly London, is actually meeting the needs of cyclists.

Mark Dawson founded Pollards Hill Cyclists five years ago in south London. He is a tireless campaigner for cycling and believes that paid cycle parking in London ‘is a good idea but only if they’re open 24-hours and offer something worthwhile for the fee. And definitely not at the expense of free on-street parking.’



Dawson added: ‘On-street cycle parking equipment should now switch from Sheffield stands to Camden stands for new installations, with indelible instructions on how to utilise two locks for better security.’ He said this information could be etched onto the stand.

In some parts of the USA, according to Dawson ‘events for more than 5,000 people are required to provide valet cycle parking. This should be introduced here so that all stadiums have valet cycle parking, and all outdoor events should have it included as a condition of licence.’

The motorcycle bay there has been halved to accommodate the cycle hire scheme

Some progress has been made to provide more secure cycle parking in the UK.

According to a story published in *The Times* in May 2010, Evans Cycles, a major cycling retailer in the UK, has been contracted to run the Leeds CyclePoint scheme at Leeds railways station in West Yorkshire. The newspaper said that the project has been ‘funded with a £500,000 grant from the Department for Transport (DfT), through Network

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Rail. The grant is being spent on the new two storey cycle park.'

The Times said that 350 bicycles would be available for rent at £8 per day and that the charge for storage was likely to be £1 a day, with discounts for season ticket holders. Leeds CyclePoint opened at the end of October last year.

In London there are many places where bicycles can be parked. The most well-known facilities are to be found at Finsbury Park, Russell Square, and London Bridge.

Sekura-Byk installed a TfL cycle park at Finsbury Park in 2006 and has been operating and managing it on TfL's behalf for four years. It provides 125 locks and Shireen Naghshineh, a director of Sekura-Byk, said that it has more than 1,200 registered users. 'There have been no thefts or damage to cycles since the park opened in March 2006,' claimed Naghshineh.

The firm's cycle and motorcycle locks use smart card-operated security systems – known as PLS – instead of old-fashioned locks and chains, giving a well-lit and safe environment for commuters to leave their bikes in.

The firm also installed a 42-lock cycle park near Russell Square. This facility was created on behalf of associated property development group, Targetfollow.

Targetfollow owns the multi-tenanted office building, opposite Russell Square underground station, and RCP Parking, another arm of the family-run group, runs the car park.

The London Bridge Cycle Park opened in June 2009 and is operated by On Your Bike. It is a staffed indoor bicycle parking facility with space for up to 400 bicycles. Access to the cycle park is controlled by an access card system during opening hours. The cycle park is CCTV monitored. Changing facilities are available on site, and customers can have repairs to their bicycles carried out in On Your Bike's cycle repair workshop.

PAID CYCLE PARKING IS A GOOD IDEA BUT ONLY IF THEY'RE OPEN 24-HOURS AND OFFER SOMETHING WORTHWHILE FOR THE FEE



Secure cycle parks may be the most effective way of providing parking for commuting cyclists in major cities but there is also concern about the way many cyclists who live in flats in London currently have to store or park their machines.

Cycle super highway

Southwark Council is involved in a project that could transform the way bicycles are parked in residential areas.

'We have received funding from TfL,' explained Gareth Tuffery, principal road safety officer at Southwark Council, 'to determine whether there is a need for cycle parking in a 1.5 km-wide zone around the part of Barclays Cycle Superhighway Route 7 (also known as CS7) that goes through the London Borough of Southwark.' The council has received a £70,000 grant to improve residents' cycle parking.

According to Lambeth Council, CS7 starts in Merton, passes through Lambeth along Clapham Common South Side, Clapham High Street, Clapham Road and Kennington Park Road, before going through Southwark to the City.

Tuffery said that many estates in Southwark were built after World War II to replace the slums. Those estates may provide better housing, but he and his colleagues think that the flats currently provide poor facilities for storing bicycles. He said that he has seen cycles hanging from balconies and in communal stairwells.

Southwark Council intends to install about five different products. These will include a mixture of secure horizontal and vertical lockers. This is on the back of a survey of residents by the council asking whether there is a need for cycle parking in Southwark.

The results of the survey, which went to 12,000-15,000 residents, will drive future plans for cycle parking.

Providing better parking facilities for cyclists could help to reduce congestion in Britain's cities but conflicts and accidents are only likely to become less frequent if cyclists, motorcyclists, motorbikers, and politicians work together more.

If Boris Johnson has his way, soon most travel in the capital will be via bicycle, but as both the bicycle and the powered two wheeler community are discovering, dedicated, safe parking, no matter what shape the vehicle, comes at a price – something most cyclists would agree is worth the cost.

This burgeoning area of parking, adding to the already congested city streets, needs more professional advice and a clear strategy for the future. It could prove a challenge for even the most dedicated and patient of parking managers. ■

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