

Coronavirus

Les magasins de vélos du Royaume-Uni à la vitesse supérieure pour gérer la ruée vers les coronavirus

La peur des transports en commun surpeuplés encourage les travailleurs clés à réparer de vieux vélos ou à en acheter de nouveaux



Le verrouillage a rendu le vélo sur des routes normalement très fréquentées beaucoup plus agréable et plus rapide que la normale © Henry Nicholls / Reuters

Robert Wright à Londres 14 HOURS AGO

La crise des coronavirus a donné un coup de fouet indispensable à l'un des rares secteurs de vente au détail non alimentaires encore en activité au Royaume-Uni: le magasin de vélos de quartier.

La peur des systèmes de transports publics surpeuplés, le manque de places de stationnement dans les centres-villes et l'inquiétude de l'éloignement social dans les rues ont poussé les travailleurs clés à se rendre dans les magasins de vélos pour se fournir de nouveaux deux-roues ou réparer des modèles plus anciens qui étaient restés inutilisés pour années.

The closure of many workplaces and rules forcing people to remain indoors have made cycling on normally busy roads far more pleasant and quicker than normal. Bike shops have also benefited from laws [restricting](#) outdoor exercise to cycling, walking and running.

The emergency has also provided a new sense of moral purpose for bike suppliers. Brompton, the London-based [manufacturer of folding bikes](#), is organising a programme of free rentals of its machines for National Health Service staff, while

Peloton Liverpool, a social enterprise that repairs unwanted bikes among other services, is donating some of its refurbished bikes to key workers in the Liverpool area.

The growth in demand for bikes reflects in part a reluctance among healthcare staff to commute on public transport services that have become overcrowded and unreliable during the coronavirus lockdown, according to Jonathan Kelly, divisional manager at the Barts Heart Centre at St Bartholomew's Hospital in London.

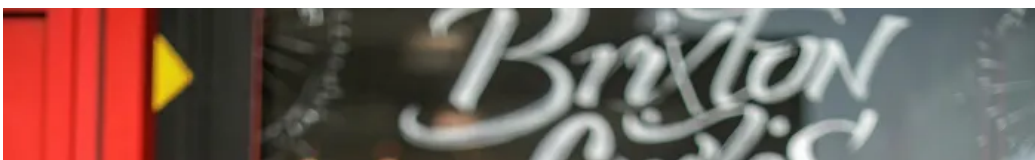


Brompton is organising a programme of free rentals of its machines for NHS staff © Charlie Bibby/FT

“The bike has become the mode of transport that people have just naturally gone to,” said Mr Kelly.

The desire among bike shops to remain open has been tempered by concern for the safety of customers and staff, who risk handling machines that have been in contact with potentially infected people.

Brixton Cycles, a co-operative business in south London, has been offering discounts to NHS workers and prioritising repairs on their bicycles. However, its window is plastered with requests for people suffering Covid-19 symptoms not to enter.





Georgina Taylor of Brixton Cycles says many bikes taken for repairs were being 'liberated from backyards and garages' © Charlie Bibby/FT

Georgina Taylor, a member of staff, said she and colleagues were worried about getting ill themselves and also wanted to ensure customers were prevented from passing the virus to each other.

“Since we’re helping people in the NHS, we have to remain vigilant on our safety and risks, just so that we can stay open,” she said.

What we thought of as bicycle retailers have become service and repair centres, helping keep our key workers on the move

Chris Boardman

Despite the restrictions, Brixton Cycles has already sold more than twice the value of Trek-brand bicycles in the current model year — which runs until the summer — as it did in the whole of the previous 12-month period.

The repair shop at Brixton Cycles has also benefited from customers asking them to fix many bikes that were clearly being

“liberated from backyards and garages”, according to Ms Taylor.

“[We’re seeing] a lot of spiders — and moss and lichen on the tyres,” she said. “It’s terrible the circumstances that this is all happening in, but it is good to see people coming back and getting going now to ride bicycles on the road.”

Roger Graver, manager of the Islington branch of Velorution, another London-based bike retailer, said he first noticed sales picking up four weeks ago.

“It’s definitely different people who have come in,” he said. “There have been lots of new customers. We’ve been doing a lot of support for the NHS.”



Roger Graver at London's Velorution has seen lots of new customers coming into the shop © Charlie Bibby/FT

Phillip Darnton, chairman of the Bicycle Association, which represents cycle retailers nationwide, said those shops that had remained open were “quite busy”, although he had no sales statistics yet to support this.

Chris Boardman, cycling and walking commissioner for Greater Manchester, said it had come as no surprise to him that doctors, nurses, carers and hospital cleaners had started dusting off previously unused bikes. Two-thirds of commutes for key workers in Manchester were less than 5km, he pointed out.

“What we thought of as bicycle retailers just a few weeks ago have now become service and repair centres, helping keep our key workers on the move,” Mr Boardman said.

The bike sector had been [struggling](#) with excess capacity and online competition before coronavirus struck. But many bike-related businesses stressed that their moral contribution during the lockdown was as important to them as the value of the sales.

Julian Scriven, managing director of Brompton Bike Hire, the rental arm of the folding bike manufacturer, said it had received 500 requests for bikes from NHS staff in England after launching a [crowdfunding initiative](#) to create a dedicated fleet for health workers.

“They can keep hold of the bike throughout the crisis and store it safely at home and at work,” said Mr Scriven. “[Afterwards] we will convert these bikes into a dedicated NHS legacy fleet that will enable NHS staff access to a cheap and

sustainable form of transport.”

Danny Robinson, founder of Peloton Liverpool, said he was proud his business was helping to revive cycling. The company has been donating a bike refurbished by its staff every week since the start of the crisis. He said there were noticeable numbers of novice cyclists on the streets of the normally cycling-unfriendly city.

“For me, it’s always been about gaining independence and flexibility,” Mr Robinson said of his efforts to encourage cycling. “People are getting the sense of freedom.”

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