

## The local business view: cycling's role in urban life

Interviewer: [Gareth Byatt](#) – Principal Consultant, [Risk Insight Consulting](#)  
Interviewee: Chloe Bourne, [Micks Cycles, Bury St Edmunds \(UK\)](#)

Photo of Micks Cycles, Bury St Edmunds (image by: G Byatt)



**June 2025**

Chloe,

Thank you for making the time to provide your thoughts and ideas on how to make cycling an integral part of urban life, anywhere in the world, as someone who is intimately involved in supporting people who cycle in the town where you have your cycling shop.

Could we start this interview with a brief outline of your background? I know that your shop, Micks Cycles, [recently celebrated its 55<sup>th</sup> year of business](#) – congratulations on your longevity!

**Chloe:** *Thank you for the opportunity to contribute. Micks Cycles was started by my Grandad, Mick, in 1970, when he decided to set it up with his wife Jessie (my Grandma). They began by selling mopeds, servicing and repairs and road licensing (called MoT's in the UK) from a yard in Victoria Street in Bury St Edmunds. In the 1980s they moved to a corner shop in Albert Street where Derek became more involved and at that time the business started to shift from mopeds to bicycles, as times changed. With Mick passing away in 1991, and Derek and Jessie working together, they moved to St Johns Street in the centre of town in 1993 offering bicycles, accessories and repairs. Later on, my mum Jo started to help as well.*

*I became involved in the business as I got older, starting with part-time work on Saturdays whilst at school and then when at college, working on free days. After leaving college I started at the shop full time. So, I have been involved all my adult life and learnt on the job and from Derek. We have training days from major suppliers such as Shimano and Cytech, which are great, and much of our learning is mainly craft handed down, tinkering and experimenting.*

**Gareth:** Thanks for this overview, Chloe. I appreciate the depth of the family roots that support this local business. Noting your point about the move from mopeds to bicycles back in the 1980s, how have things changed for the shop in recent years? I know you stock a lot of good quality eBikes nowadays, for example, and that bicycle servicing is a key part of your business. From your vantage point, are more people in [the town of Bury St Edmunds](#) and its surrounding area cycling than before?

**Chloe:** *Our business model has changed dramatically in comparison to what it was 30 to 40 years ago. The shop needs to look more enticing to people, and as a bicycle seller and maintainer you have to be more knowledgeable on a wider range of products, and to provide a range of good quality products. You need to think about what may be desirable to customers at any time and keep an eye on new trends. Simply having a shop filled with products isn't sufficient nowadays, in my opinion.*

*As an Independent Bicycle Dealer (IBD), we don't compete with online cycling platforms and stores. The large online businesses achieve buy-ins with larger volume and scale and better margins, which is something we do not try to compete on. We focus on doing what we do well, offering good bikes, servicing and after sales, and a personable approach through being part of the local community.*

*Repairs are a major part of our business – which is something that cannot be purchased online – customer come into our store if they cannot or do not wish to do servicing or repairs themselves. I believe that the UK average turnover percentage of a bicycle store for repairs is roughly around 5-8%. Ours is around 30-35%.*

*Cycling has changed in our local area. Many years ago, a bicycle was seen as a cheap and basic form of transport with no frills. Now there is so much on offer for people to buy, and it has become a hobby and love for many people.*

*Whilst we still have plenty of people who use bikes for commuting, the use of a bicycle is much broader than it used to be. Electric bikes (e-bikes) have allowed people who may not be able to cycle, or are daunted by it, to quite comfortably cycle 20 miles / 30km at acceptable speeds and enjoy it.*

*An example of local groups who enjoy cycling is a group of customers of ours who are in their late 50's and 60's, who use electric mountain bikes to ride up to and around a local forest (Thetford Forest). We have also seen a trend this year of teenagers and adults wanting mountain bikes / jump bikes to take to bike parks.*

*However, despite the increasing popularity and variety of cycling in and around the town and also the countryside, the cycle paths are not of particularly good quality in and around Bury St Edmunds.*

*I feel change must also come in the UK from car drivers' acceptance and view of cycling as being on an equal footing with car drivers, and everyone respecting each other's right to share street networks.*

*The biggest thing that I think has happened in Bury St Edmunds is a two-storey cycle rack at the town train station – groundbreaking! Hopefully small changes will make a larger difference over time.*

**Gareth:** When you mentioned the Independent Bicycle Dealer term, I had a look on [the UK Cycle Scheme website](#), which allows a person who works for a company to save up to 42% on a bike and accessories. I could also see [the big network of bicycle shops](#) (including yours) that are on the network.

It's great to see continued popularity of cycling, however, I would like to draw on the thread you have just mentioned about the cycle paths not being very good in the town.

I know it's a challenge to make changes to streets once they are laid out – for example, changing a street into a partial cycleway is hard – even if it is for just one day a month, let alone changing a street permanently into a cycle lane.

It can be done though. Here are a couple of examples:

1. Starting in 1974, [Ciclovía in Bogotá, Colombia](#) initially covered a few kilometres. It has since expanded to cover over 120km of roads. Every Sunday, over one and a half million people in Bogotá go for a walk, a bike ride, road skating or a run.<sup>1</sup>
2. [The Dutch city of Groningen invented a cycling template for cities all over the world in the 1970s](#) – which initially met with opposition and is now broadly accepted and appreciated by the city's citizens.

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<sup>1</sup> Read about it, including a browser translation option into English, [on the Bogota city website](#). A summary of “50 years of Ciclovía” is available in [a November 2024 article on the World Economic Forum website](#). Read a discussion with [Gil Peñalosa](#), Founder of [8 80 Cities](#) & [Cities4Everyone](#) in [an interview in April 2025](#).

I wonder if more focused and positive engagement by local authorities in the UK to involve the public and local businesses that trade on our streets could result in better cycle networks and more initiatives like these?

**Chloe:** *Anything to improve and encourage cycling, walking, health and wellbeing, in my opinion is a positive. I suppose there are many perspectives to consider. On the large urban scale of a city, I wonder if it is easier for city teams to push through changes like this? Perhaps it depends on how the city is governed. For new urban development anywhere, it should be easier to implement better cycling infrastructure, as long as it is thought about. When it comes down to making things work in an old town and changing how individual streets work, this can be tricky to achieve. What if some people with a direct interest on the street object – should it stop an idea being trialled or going ahead?*

*I can give you a direct example – our street of St John's Street, which is a very old, cobbled road that isn't wide enough to fit a cycle lane and a roadway for vehicles (including delivery lorries, not just cars). Would closing town streets on certain days of the month or week bring cycling more into the forefront of people's minds and make cycling more accessible to more people? We won't know unless we try and review the data. But different people have different views and it's hard to get agreement on how to proceed. For example, our local council will not shut St John's Street for one Saturday each month if businesses object for some reason (if they think it would affect their trade).*

*My hope is that over time, people who are sceptical about this type of change even as a trial could grow to see how it could in fact be positive for their trade, not negative. By walking or cycling, people have time to look into and browse what's on offer in a street – which should help the wide range of independent shops in our street, just as an example. I wonder if linking it with making a larger part of the centres of town pedestrianised could help, since that will reduce cars (though I appreciate councils must look at all pros and cons).*

*I believe good engagement with people would make a difference: engagement and trials go hand in hand. If more people are using bikes, there may be a larger push to make places safer for cycling with more infrastructure and accessibility. However, there may be reluctance to cycle if the infrastructure isn't there. What is hopefully making a change is a soft push from for example the Bury St Edmunds BID ([Business Improvement District](#)) – BIDS are a UK government initiative to support businesses – who are running a feature in Spring 2026 to promote cycling in and around the town. This may be a small step, but a step closer.*

*Something that may make a difference is how cycling really does benefit us and that it is enjoyable, rather than the physical infrastructure. If more people are cycling, more have a view from a cyclist's perspective and the attitude of drivers changes, with cyclists having more of a priority and thus feeling safer. Perhaps then the physical infrastructure improvements and changes may come after.*



**Gareth:** Thanks for these thoughts, Chloe. When I think of a range of places around the world that have overcome scepticism by some parts of the community about implementing more cycling infrastructure in city and town centres at the expense of allowing people to drive, I do hope that it can happen in more places. It has to be well designed and thought through, as you say. Also linked with good public transport (transit) systems. Maybe a trial including capturing data such as the impact on local shop trade can then inform a future decision on whether to install more cycle paths and shut streets to cars. Maybe small towns can replicate on a small scale the type of cycle hire schemes and also e-scooter schemes that exist in many cities – to provide active mobility options for visitors (in a controlled way – e.g. with speed limiters on them), for example. Maybe the private sector can help with this. It's all part of thinking it through properly.

Is social media helpful for you to engage with the local community about the benefits of cycling, by the way?

**Chloe:** *Social media is fundamental for us as an independent shop. In today's world, it allows us to reach more customers, and it is also a platform to promote and educate about cycling in all aspects. Larger social media teams for larger chain businesses will likely be much better at leveraging social media than smaller stores, but for us, it allows us to collaborate with other businesses and also charities such as [Bury Rickshaw](#), who offer free, chatty rickshaw 'joy' rides to local people who need a bit of help getting out and about, and businesses including [Rising High Balloons](#) (which specialises in balloons), and the bicycle brands we stock, which have production teams. For me personally, I particularly like how social media can help us to collaborate and share information with brands and bicycle companies, which we can share with our customers to educate or inspire.*

**Gareth:** I know you are part of the Bury St Edmunds BID ([Business Improvement District](#)), which you mentioned just now. How does the BID team support you, and are there any ways that local councils can do more to support local businesses like yours? Are there any current local council or government cycling schemes that support your cycle shop business, by the way?

**Chloe:** *As a member of the Bury St Edmunds BID, we pay an annual levy and in return the BID provides social media support, initiative schemes such as Dog Friendly Bury St Edmunds, VE Trail, Spring Fayre and others, which bring people to the town. They also offer support if we need any advice on how to promote our business further and offer First Aid Training among other free qualifications and classes. Even down to small things like putting the colourful bunting up on St John's Street is led by the BID, so in my opinion they are a great asset to the town.*

*Our local council this year gave St Johns Street £2,500 funding for [VE Day celebrations](#) in May 2025, which were used successfully for musicians, face painters and entertainers so they are in my good books at the moment!*

*However, when it comes to cycling specifically, it is a slightly different context.*

*The local council does not currently come to us asking what we think would be beneficial for our customers or town and they have not (to date) put any cycling ideas to us to discuss and review. We asked about 8+ years ago if we could pay for and fit some cycle racks on the path opposite our store (where there is ample space for them, in our view), but nothing ever came of it. I have tried to be involved with the implementation of some cycle racks at the town bus station (which is a 1-minute walk from our shop) and also across the town when I was on the board for BID, but after two years nothing evolved.*

*I feel it would make sense for us and / or another local cycle shop to be involved with the council in pushing for greater cycling adoption across the town. As a cycle store, we talk to our customers all the time to gain their views, and we pay into a nationwide funding pot for improving cycling but at our grass roots level we are seeing very little use or benefit from the levy that is charged for this, to be honest.*

*As one anecdotal example. a cycle path was created in Risbygate Street in the town a few years ago, but after complaints were made, it was removed just a few months later as some shops in the street said it made logistics unloading difficult, cyclists said there were cars parked in the cycle path which impeded their use of it, and the council road sweeping team couldn't get in to clear the debris that formed as plastic posts were fitted to offer protection to cyclists. This strikes me as a lack of joined-up thinking – I wonder if the people who work on these projects are cyclists?*

**Gareth:** This example you have just given about the half-hearted cycle path in Risbygate Street strikes me as a prime example of (1) a lack of what I call “systems thinking” – think through everything, and (2) a lack of engagement with everyone to see how such an idea can work, using systems thinking to look at all practical points and to design the right solution. Hopefully there are some lessons learned about this for the council and others to take on board.

Do you get the chance in your busy working week to talk with the owners of other cycle shops in the UK and maybe elsewhere about ideas and approaches to improve cycling for everyone? If not, if a “connection service” was provided from time to time would it be useful?

**Chloe:** *Being completely honest, we don't get the chance very often to speak to other shops. In the past, when bicycle brands used to hold launch events at their headquarters, we used to meet lots of shop owners as we were all physically at the launch of the new model year. Since the COVID-19 pandemic, most brands don't offer physical launches now – they are either online launches or they just change each model when they finish a line and don't hold a launch.*

*We do speak to bicycle and accessory brand rep's when they come round and we go to training days so we do get to speak about people in the trade to find out what's trending and being looked into, but it doesn't seem to be angled towards getting people cycling – it's more what they can do to get people to buy new product.*

*I would definitely be up for working as a collective to promote cycling in general, and / or even a platform where information can be shared to us – for example, how a first cycle path in a town or a new initiative succeeded, which we could share on social media (to our point earlier) to spread awareness that cycling can work out when we want it to.*

**Gareth:** I appreciate these insights, Chloe.

I'd also appreciate your views on connecting government strategy to reality on the ground.

The UK government published a Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy (CWIS) in 2017 which stated an ambition for England, "to make cycling and walking the natural choices for shorter journeys, or as part of a longer journey." A target was set to double cycling activity by 2025, and each year reduce the rate of cyclists killed or seriously injured on English roads.<sup>2</sup> In this strategy they also talk about [the Bikeability scheme](#), [the Cycle City Ambition scheme](#) (which operated up to 2018) and others.

The second cycling and walking investment strategy (CWIS2) was then published by [the Department for Transport](#) (DfT) in March 2023. It states an aim for "50% of all journeys in towns and cities should be walked or cycled by 2030."<sup>3</sup>

On 28 March 2025 the DfT announced an intention to publish a third cycling and walking investment strategy (CWIS3) following the conclusion of [the Spending Review](#) (in June 2025).

Then there's Suffolk County Council, with its [Suffolk Cycling Strategy](#) which talks about improvements for "walking, cycling and wheeling".<sup>4</sup> They talk about installing cycling facilities and introducing pedestrian and cycle zones, for example.

Does this all add up to reality on the ground in your view, and are you seeing positive change happen to make cycling a more attractive mode of travel for people? I wonder how they are involving people involved in cycling, and citizens, in this strategy.

It's one thing to write strategies and papers, it's another to see real action. What could local and national government in the UK be doing to encourage more people to cycle and walk, and use cars less?

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<sup>2</sup> UK government Department for Transport – Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy (2017): <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5f622fade90e072bb68d5c74/cycling-walking-investment-strategy.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> UK government Department for Transport – The second cycling and walking investment strategy (CWIS2) (2023): <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-second-cycling-and-walking-investment-strategy/the-second-cycling-and-walking-investment-strategy-cwis2>

<sup>4</sup> Suffolk County Council - Improvements for walking, cycling and wheeling: <https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/roads-and-transport/transport-planning/improvements-for-walking-cycling-and-wheeling>

The Suffolk Cycling Landscape ([The Suffolk Cycling Strategy p. 6](#))



When I see how cycling is so embedded into the way of life in countries across the North Sea, for example in the Netherlands and in Denmark, whilst ensuring people have good public transport to use and they can use cars when they need to, I wonder whether the UK could ever be on a par with them...

*Chloe: I really appreciate the time that goes into these investment strategies, and I'm sure a lot has already been implemented and is making a change.*



*When I think about the town of Bury St Edmunds, I would not say that there has been a fundamental change yet (although as we discussed at the start of this interview, we are seeing more people interested in cycling).*

*I would however say that many years ago in the UK, most people walked, cycled or used public transport, so it depends on what historical date we are comparing a target date to. With the ease and relative low cost in the UK of cars today, and the distances that people need / want to travel, it's sometimes the only way to travel. Myself for example, with all my family commitments, the first bus from my village at 9.30am, and the last return at 5pm, the use of buses or cycling for me just isn't an option today for me to fulfil my cycling business commitments.*

*However, if the change has been progressive and in smaller steps, it may be less obvious than a large change at once. As I mentioned earlier, I think more change may come more from a greater number of people cycling who demand the change – people power – rather than a government change being made to get people cycling.*

*That said, Cycle to Work schemes have worked well. The tax-free cycle schemes offered by companies to their employees as a work benefit are positive (you mentioned one earlier). People who work for qualifying / registered businesses can purchase a bicycle, save their tax and national insurance percentage, and pay it back monthly (essentially paying their employer back). This has allowed people to purchase better bicycles than they would purchase outright, and it has encouraged people to cycle to work rather than drive. In my opinion, this has probably been the largest change I have seen as an incentive to cycle in the UK in the past ten years.*

*What has also potentially helped is the fact we have been very successful in Olympic Cycling, the Tour de France and other televised cycling events in recent years. We always see a boost in sales and repairs after the Olympics, so the exposure on TV and Socials must inspire people to get on a bike.*

*I get the sense that strong strategies may be put in place as government policies, but they seem to get watered down as they work through the system and by the time they get to the real people implementing cycling in their area, things break down as one size does not always fit all.*

*I wonder if the UK will ever be on par with continental Europe for cycling. Many countries on the continent tend to have more land space per person, and cycling seems to be so deeply integrated into their way of life. They seem to have a different outlook, perhaps they are not in as much of a rush yet also have the proactive outlook on how to make cycling more accessible for everyone whether they are in a city or in the countryside.*

*There is a Youtuber who rode to a relatives in southern France from London who documented how stressful and ill-equipped the UK is for cyclists and how dangerous it can be, but as soon as you get off the Eurostar in France, there are cycle paths to take you wherever you want (an enormous cycle path for a very long way!).*

*Most things seem to be better in continental Europe when it comes to travel. Even down to having toilets and showers in Aires on the Motorways in France that are free to use, as just one example. The photos we have discussed speak for themselves – the UK seems so far away from achieving this across the country in everyday lives.*

*I was in Cambridge recently which is obviously a “bicycle city” which is great, but even they are still using regular normal roads and car infrastructure. Is that right? Perhaps. There doesn’t seem to be anything out of the ordinary or groundbreaking in Cambridge, but it seems to work in harmony as everyone accepts that bicycles, vehicles and pedestrians are part of everyday life in the city.*

*I have seen an amazing cycle garage in Bruges, similar to that amazing one at Utrecht Train Station. Does the UK have anything even similar? Cambridge has some bike parks, but nothing in this league that I can think of.*

*The lack of joined up thinking may be what is detrimental to using anything other than a car for some. If things aren’t easily accessible or they are a bit inconvenient, people will seek other easier ways to move around in their busy lives.*

The integration of public transit, the cycling network and car transport in Utrecht, the Netherlands, November 2023 (photo: G Byatt)

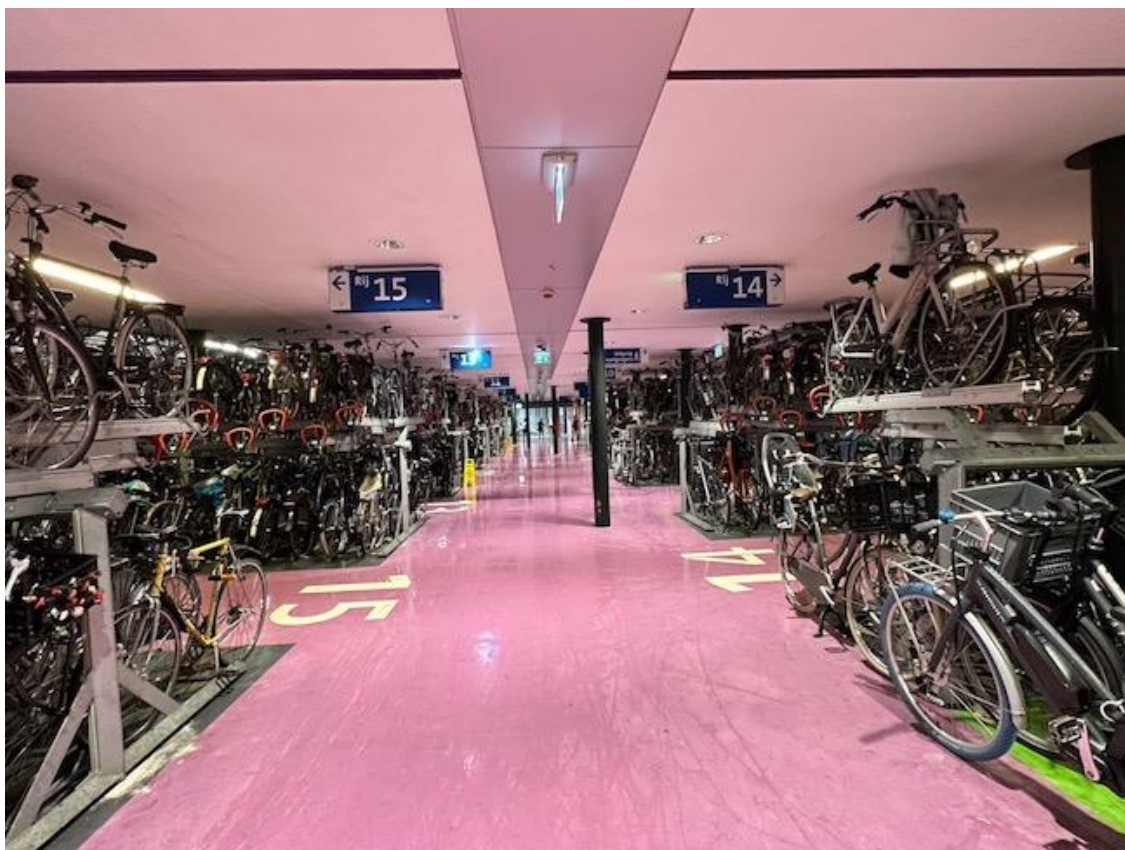




The integrated roads and cycling network in Utrecht, the Netherlands, November 2023 (photo: G Byatt)



The amazing cycle garage at Utrecht train station, the Netherlands, November 2023 (photo: G Byatt)



**Gareth:** Really good points, Chloe. I feel that transport planners should be engaging with lots of groups of people to fully understand why cycling is not higher up in people's travel priorities. As you see, speed and efficiency of getting from A to B are absolutely key – something I have talked with many people about. Providing infrastructure for cycling is not just cycle paths, it's good parking (protected and secure), and giving cyclists priority at junctions (as you see in The Netherlands, for example) and linking it up with public transport too (can you take a bike on a bus in the UK? Not that I'm aware of).

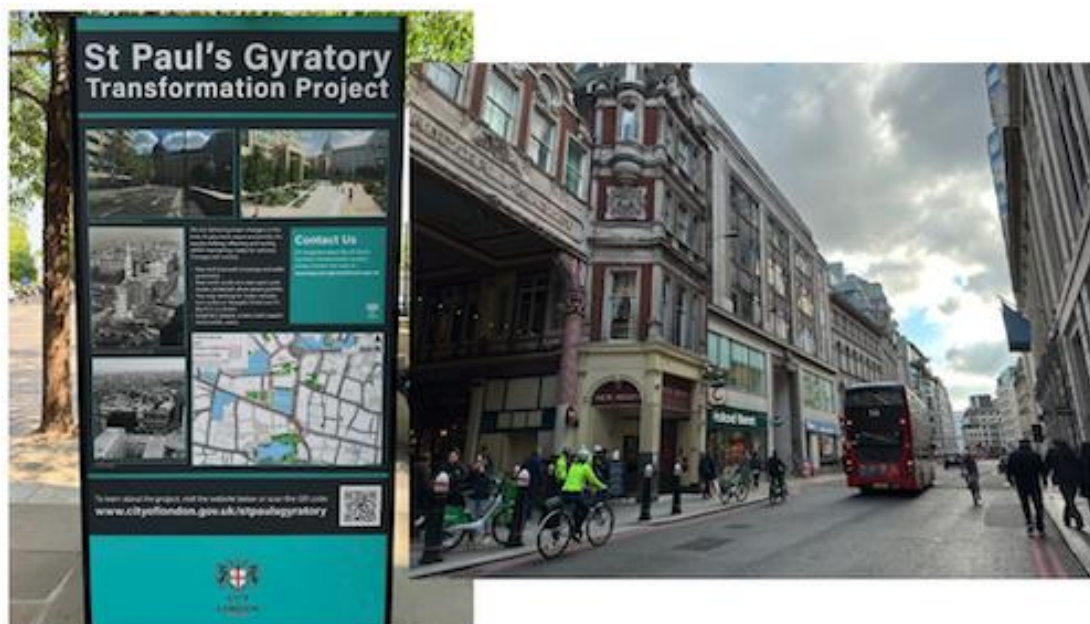
On a positive note, London (a city I regularly spend time in) is doing a good job over time of integrating cycling into travel options – I see ongoing change in the City of London and in London's boroughs. I know London has a different context to many other urban places in the UK, but it shows how change can happen over time.

Do you see things happening in other parts of the UK that Bury St Edmunds can learn from?

**Chloe:** *Cycling moves and changes in London is always likely to be where things can start, and as you say, London's example does show that change can happen when there is a will to make it so. When I did [the Palace to Palace Bike Ride](#) (an annual charity ride from Buckingham Palace to Windsor Castle) a few years ago, we started from Buckingham Palace and rode to Windsor on a Summer Sunday through Surrey. London on the day was very quiet, it was lovely and a joy to ride through, and you could see how the work on cycling infrastructure is working as the strategies are thankfully obvious, including the cycle lanes.*

*Hopefully, many little changes will show that over time big leaps can be made and perhaps London can show how changes can be implemented in other cities and towns – each with their own characteristics, of course. I'm still not convinced that physical changes can be made everywhere, for example to small country roads due to them being so narrow.*

The City of London moves forward with its integrated cycling network, April 2024 (photos: G Byatt)





**Gareth:** In a discussion I had with the Urban Economist Alain Bertaud in April 2025, one of the points we talked about was how to best use key indicators to improve cities and towns. I wonder if we should have some key cycling indicators.

I remember seeing monitoring panels on certain streets in central Perth, Australia, that track the number of cyclists going by against a stated target the authorities hope to achieve (I wonder if they engaged city citizens on setting this target). Perth has an excellent dedicated cycle lane network, I want to add.

**Chloe:** *It would be interesting to know if monitoring points like this cyclist counter you saw in Perth in Australia really make a difference – do they have data that shows a noticeable trend upwards in cycling since installing it, I wonder? I wonder what it cost to implement. Perhaps working in conjunction with other initiatives and strategies it may be making a collective difference to the overall health and wellbeing of citizens. If it didn't make a difference initially, maybe it will encourage passersby go to work on their bike next week? Hard to quantify, but anything to promote cycling, health and wellbeing is a positive in my opinion.*

Tracking cycling activity in Perth, Australia, December 2023 (photo: G Byatt)



**Gareth:** Thank you very much for your thoughts and perspectives, Chloe and Derek. Here's to your centenary anniversary in 2070...

Jessie, Jo, Chloe and Derek celebrate 55 years of Mick's Cycles, May 2025 (photo: G Byatt)

