

# End of term report, April 2023

## The Award-Winning Bury Bike Train



### Executive summary

The school Bike Train project in Bury St Edmunds aims to facilitate modal shift from driving to cycling on the school run. Timetabled and marshalled group cycle rides serving the North, South and West of the town bring families into and from town centre schools three days a week. Over 500 passengers have used the Bike Train since it started in September 2022, with an average of 4.8 people per Train for the Spring term - an increase of 30% over the previous term.

The project has expanded during this term to incorporate a Bike Library that makes loan bikes available long term at very low cost, and a Community Bike Train for adults whose lack of confidence deters them from cycling in the town.

In March Bury Bike Train was named best Green Community in Suffolk's Creating the Greenest County awards, and featured in the National Cargo Bike Summit as innovative practice. It remains the only Bike Train in the country organised by a social enterprise (EcoCarriers BSE) rather than parents, and running three Trains per week, to and from school (the norm is one a month; to school only).

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Plans to develop the project during the Summer term include:

- Data gathering to map demand
- Working with local authorities to improve access to Cannon St
- Exploring the possibility of unaccompanied children joining the Bike Train
- Working with University of Suffolk to evaluate impact
- Offering a mobile Dr Bike service
- Introducing a new route for Moreton Hall



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## Introduction

The school Bike Train is a timetabled group cycle ride, along a set route, with trained outriders to support the group and marshal road junctions. Children and their parents or carers ride their own bicycles and join their nearest Bike Train at a convenient point (see schematic diagram showing the routes). Each of the routes runs on a different weekday, and all go to Guildhall Feoffment and St Edmund's primary schools in the medieval Grid, returning in the afternoons.

EcoCarriers BSE, a not-for-profit Community Benefit Society, runs the Bike Train cycle to school project thanks to grant funding from Suffolk Climate Action Community Match Fund, Bury St Edmunds Town Council and Cycling UK. Additional funding from town and district councillors' locality budgets received this term supports two new activities: the Bike Library, and the Community Bike Train, which are described in this report.

Spring term 2023 (January to March inc) was the first full term of operation since the project began in September 2022.

**ALL ABOARD THE BIKE TRAIN!**

**GREAT NORTHERN**

- Sandlands Drive/Redwood Drive
- New Bury Community Centre
- Tayfen Meadow/Spring Lane
- Arc-Cattle Market car park
- Guildhall Feoffment School
- St Edmund's School

**GREAT WESTERN**

- The Parade, Ridley Road
- River Linnet/Fleming Road
- Cemetery/Hospital Road
- Westgate School
- St Edmund's School
- Guildhall Feoffment School

**GREAT EASTERN**

- Moreton Hall Community Centre
- Symonds Road/Shaker's Lane
- Shaker's Lane/Kevelaer Way
- Magistrates' Court/Great Churchyard
- Norman Tower
- Guildhall Feoffment School
- St Edmund's School

**THE SOUTHERN**

- Mayfield Road/Caie Walk
- Hardwick Shopping Centre
- Laundry Lane/Lydgate Court
- St Edmund's School
- Guildhall Feoffment School

**CYCLE TO SCHOOL IN BURY ST EDMUNDS**

[ecocarriersbse.co.uk/bury-bike-train/](http://ecocarriersbse.co.uk/bury-bike-train/)

SUPPORTED BY  
BURY ST EDMUNDS TOWN COUNCIL



## Take-up of the Bike Train Jan - March 2023

Passenger numbers were steady during the Spring term (January, February and March), which saw one new family regularly join the Southern route from the beginning of term, taking advantage of a new branch line across Holywell Meadow to Westgate school. Another family joined the Great Northern route at the end of term.

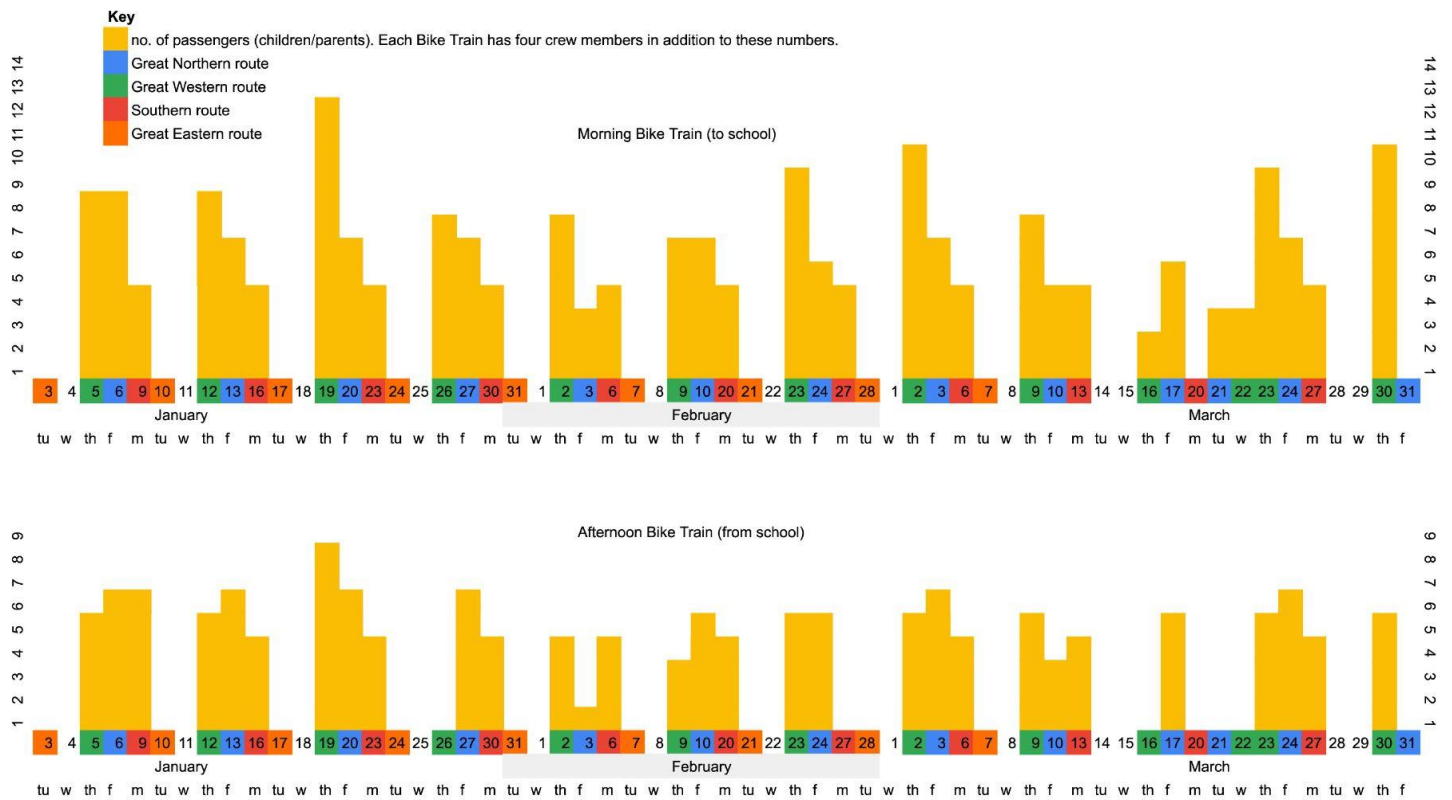
The Monday, Thursday and Friday Bike Trains (The Southern, Great Western and Great Northern routes respectively) ran every week, but there was no interest in the Great Eastern route into town from Moreton Hall on Tuesdays. This route was therefore suspended from the middle of March.

There were a total of 346 passengers for the term (vs 198 the previous term), and 72 Trains ran (53 last term), giving an average of 4.8 passengers per Train (3.7 last term). This represents a 30% increase in average Train passenger numbers. Each Train has a 'crew' of four EcoCarriers BSE riders (not counted in the passenger numbers).





## Bike Train usage Spring term 2023



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## Bike Library

Locality grants from Councillors Wakelam, Rayner, Beckwith and Waterman support the acquisition, refurbishment and garaging of bicycles that are available for any West Suffolk resident to 'borrow' permanently for a one-off fee of £30 or a donated bike. The Library bike can be swapped for another machine at a later date (for example, when a child has grown too big for it). 12 bikes were loaned out during the Spring term.

Library bikes are sourced through donations, purchases and the police Community Engagement team. Several of the machines have been refurbished by Gear Monkeys, at Monkey Workshops in Bradfield St George, which works with disadvantaged and hard to reach young people to teach them practical skills, including bicycle mechanics.



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## Community Bike Train

Parents bringing children to Learn to Ride sessions last term often said they would like to cycle in Bury but did not feel safe riding on the roads. Government cycling statistics<sup>1</sup> suggest two thirds of adults believe it is 'too dangerous' to cycle on the roads in the UK.

The Community Bike Train project aims to bring the school Bike Train model - of cycle training, bike checks, supported group rides and access to loan bikes - to adults who lack the confidence to ride on their own. The project commenced in March, with two free sessions of training and Dr Bike, and is supported by a locality grant from Councillor Whittingham.

### Feedback on cycle training sessions for adults

*"I would like to say a big thank you for Saturday for encouraging me and helping me get back on a bike. You would not believe how proud of myself it has made me feel. I have realised after this weekend that I can achieve anything. I am wondering what my next challenge will be - no stopping me now. Thank you so much." Sara*

*"I found the session really helpful and it has definitely given me more confidence. I am not there yet, & it may be a good idea to have another session at some point. The instructors were great!" Julia*



<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/walking-and-cycling-statistics-cw>

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## Recognition for the Bike Train

In March, Bury Bike Train won the Green Community award in Suffolk's *Creating the Greenest County Awards 2023*, being described by the judging panel as 'an exciting and active new initiative, involving families, reducing traffic, and encouraging alternative transports'.

The Bike Train featured in a plenary session on innovation at this year's National Cargo Bike Summit - a gathering of cargo bike operators, manufacturers and retailers, and transport policy-makers.



## NATIONAL CARGO BIKE SUMMIT

GUILDHALL, LONDON, EC2V 7HH  
31 MARCH 2023



TAKING CARGO BIKES MAINSTREAM

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## Plans for Summer Term 2023

1. To make the school Bike Train as accessible as possible, we need to:
  - a. ensure the routes are optimised for where pupils live - we will seek pupil hotspot data from schools/local authorities
  - b. understand what deters families from joining the Bike Train - we will work with schools to survey parents, and overcome obstacles where possible. One idea is to offer a mobile Dr Bike service that could fix minor issues (punctures, worn brake blocks etc) at the family home. Another idea is to explore the feasibility of opening up the Bike Train to unaccompanied pupils and removing the present stipulation that parents join in too.
2. An important route from the north of Bury St Edmunds is currently inaccessible to the Bike Train. The Malthouse bridge over the A14 links the Fornhams, Marham Park, and the Howard and Mildenhall estates to the town centre as far as the Northgate St/So To Bed roundabout, but the No Entry at the bottom of Cannon St arrests further progress (for a Bike Train). We will work with the local authorities to overcome this.
3. The headteacher of Sebert Wood primary school is keen to see a Bike Train for his school on Moreton Hall, where there is an excellent network of cycle paths. A *Learn to Ride* session is planned at the school in late April, with a view to running a Train once a week thereafter, probably from and to the Lark Grange development.
4. The University of Suffolk is providing academic support for us to research the Bike Train, evaluating the impact of community air quality action and identifying successes and barriers, to enable impact- and evidence-led dissemination.



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## Acknowledgements

Bury Bike Train is a community effort, and thanks go to the schools involved this term - St Edmunds mostly, but also Westgate, Guildhall Feoffment and Sebert Wood; the families who ride the Train; the volunteer marshalls and EcoCarriers BSE team; the Police Community Engagement Team; Monkey Workshops; the Arc Shopping Centre; SCC Bikeability instructors; and all the Bike Train funders and supporters.

Special thanks to:

Maria Kemble  
Sarah-Jane Stebbing  
Phil Seddon  
Shaun Sivertsen  
Ian the Lollipop

*Photo: Michael holding the Green Community  
Award for Bury Bike Train*



**Libby Ranzetta**  
**EcoCarriers BSE, April 2023**

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