

Swaythling Primary School

Putting a RIDES e-cargo bike to good use in the community

John Draper is Head Teacher at Swaythling Primary School, where they have been delivering weekly food supplies to local families with a RIDES e-cargo bike.

Swaythling Primary School was closed during the lockdown earlier in 2021, as part of the measures to prevent the spread of COVID 19. This meant that children who would normally be eligible for free school meals were not getting them. During this period the school's Parent Support Officer, Debbie Greenham, made weekly grocery deliveries, by car, to local families. These were very well received and proved to be a lifeline for some of the families.

When the school reopened in March, the grocery deliveries would have stopped. However, the school decided to work with the charity Fair Share*, which has enabled them to continue supporting 20 families each week with a crate of food, at a cost of £5 per family.



In the early days of the weekly grocery deliveries, Debbie would fill up her car to its capacity of just 2 crates at a time and make up to 10 out and back journeys. She also had to wait until the school playground was empty to bring the car onto the playground to load up. So, when John read about the RIDES e-cargo bike free trial, he realised it would be a much more efficient solution for them.



The advantages of an e-cargo bike over a car for local deliveries

John uses an Urban Arrow e-cargo bike, which can carry up to 100kg. Each crate of food weighs 12-20kg and the bike can carry 4 crates, so he is carrying 50-80kg per trip (as opposed to 24-40kg by car). He is therefore making fewer out and back journeys, just 4 instead of 10, which works out as 6.5 miles in total each week. John says he was "really surprised at the capacity of the e-cargo bike. It can hold more than most car boots and, now we've got a route sorted out, it only takes around 90 minutes to deliver the 20 crates."

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The reduced number of journeys is not the only benefit that John has found of using the e-cargo bike instead of a car to make the food deliveries. Whereas Debbie would otherwise have to travel in her car before, she now uses her own bicycle and can spend more time chatting with the families, while John goes back for the next load. He says “Debbie can have a catch-up conversation with our vulnerable families while I take the e-bike back to school, get another load and meet her at the next point, meaning that she gets more time to support them.”

Now that he is not restricted to the roads that he would otherwise use by car, John is finding new, shorter routes, such as Lilac Road (linking Burgess Road with Honeysuckle Road) which is blocked to cars but allows bikes through. This reduces the time needed for each trip.

John admits he is rather ‘bike crazy’ anyway and enjoys getting on two wheels far more than driving a car. He says “It’s the best part of my week! It is nice for the parents to see the Head Teacher getting out and doing the deliveries and I’ve got to know them and the school catchment area a lot better. It has been good for me to have more informal conversations with some of the parents I didn’t know so well and the e-cargo bike is a good conversation starter.”

Despite the greater load capacity of the Urban Arrow compared to an average car, John says that parking is far easier with the bike. He has also only had to charge the bike once in 4 weeks. He has taken the bike out in all weathers and says it handles well in the wet, although he would recommend avoiding very high winds.



The RIDES e-cargo bike trial for Swaythling Junior School will run until the end of the school summer term. John says that if there was another project that required multiple short journeys, he would consider getting an e-cargo bike for the school and encourages other people to consider it.

You’ll find more information on the RIDES e-cargo bike trial [on our website](#). And if you are interested in a RIDES e-cargo bike trial for your organisation, please email the RIDES project manager, Stuart Williams, at stuart.williams@southampton.gov.uk

*Fair Share is a charity that redistributes nutritious food that from supermarkets would otherwise go to waste.