

Zero-emission beauty refills and south London gin on foot ... **Anna Fielding** talks to the growing number of businesses

On your bike for cleaner

The Sustainables

THE point of starting our own company was to do things the right way, even if it felt that ran counter to what the rest of the industry was doing," says Sophie Slater, co-founder of cult ethical fashion label Birdsong. "We knew that having environmentally friendly transport had to be part of that."

The majority of Birdsong's clothes are manufactured by women in Tower Hamlets who have otherwise faced barriers to finding employment. With its design studio in Dalston and its warehouse in Camden, the clothing company is rooted in London, something Slater says has been central to its ability to keep transport emissions low.

"If we need to take patterns or samples between the studio and the factory, or check in on the warehouse, one of our team will do that either on their bike or on public transport," she says. "Likewise, when deliveries are ready to head out we ensure they go in a Royal Mail van at the same time as goods from

We need to do what we can to reduce emissions ... using a bike should be one of the easiest

other brands we share warehouse space with to cut down on the number of journeys."

Birdsong also offers local Camden pick-up to customers who want to collect their purchases themselves, plus they host studio open days which allow people to purchase products and take them home there and then.

"Having a sustainable transport approach is more thought and more expensive for us but we get it back in consumer trust," says Slater. "People know we're not greenwashing."

Birdsong is part of a growing movement of London businesses developing greener transport strategies. Never has the need been more pressing. Road transport was responsible for more than a third of UK greenhouse gas emissions in 2019, the highest single source of carbon emissions. And despite attempts to instigate systemic reductions in polluting vehicles on London's roads, motor vehicle miles in the capital have only reduced by three per cent since the early 1990s.

Faced with rising fuel prices and the recent expansion of the Ultra Low Emission Zone, there are more incentives than ever for London-based businesses to explore transport options beyond petrol and diesel-powered cars and vans.

For Rich Mason, founder of bicycle-based takeaway delivery service Wings, the choice was straightforward. "Delivering takeaways like this should



Designs on a greener life: Birdsong outfits and their founders Sophie Slater and Susanna Ven, below. Right, the Wings delivery team



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Doorstep deliveries: top, Claudia Gwinnutt and Circla. Above and left, Deborah Efemini and her Catford Gin.



"As a business, it is harder to do it this way," says Mason. "But it's also more rewarding and it's really how things should be going."

Like Wings, Fulham-based business Circla also provides a doorstep delivery service, although in this instance of high-end beauty products across south-west London.

"I've always been a beauty junkie but I just couldn't justify the waste any more," says founder Claudia Gwinnutt. Instead, Circla buys products from a range of ethical premium brands which arrive in "big, unglamorous tubs". The company decants the products into

Five of the best cycle, skate and scooter shops in London

Slam City Skates

The Old Truman Brewery, 10 Dray Walk, E1 6QL
The surge of interest in skateboarding is hardly surprising given its Olympic debut this summer, not to mention lockdowns in which people's lives were put on hold, allowing them to try something new. Enter Slam City Skates, which is there to advise on the best boards. Slam's Covent Garden store is closed (for now) but the London favourites still have their outpost off Brick Lane and an outlet shop up in Enfield.
slamcity.com



Flying Dutchman Bikes

188-192 Eversholt Street, NW1 1BJ
Flying Dutchman Bikes has been providing Londoners with a little slice of Amsterdam (and Sweden, Germany and Taiwan) since 2015 in the form of city, cargo and electric bikes. We're a bit in love with everything they stock, not least the Urban Arrow Family cargo-bike, which has been hit tested around Hampstead and Highgate and is perfect for carrying whatever you need - intrepid toddlers included.
flyingdutchman.bike



Velorution

75-77 Great Portland Street, W1W 7LR
For those looking for a good urban commuting bike, the Velorution Marylebone team recommends folding bikes such as those made by London-based manufacturer Brompton. To help pay for whatever bike you select, Velorution accepts cycle-to-work vouchers through third-party schemes such as Bike 2 Work but also offers its own salary sacrifice scheme, Velo To Own, enabling employees to pay for a new bike over a 12-month period.
velorution.com



Slick Willies

12 Gloucester Road, SW7 4RB
Slick Willies have been selling skateboards since 1970 but they're equally at home with the roller skate and scooter crowd. Our hot tip for adults is the Micro Classic Scooter which, designed with commuting and school runs in mind, folds up easily and has larger than average wheels, making for a smoother ride. Given Slick Willies' Kensington location, anything you do purchase can be taken for a test run in nearby Hyde Park.
slickwillies.co.uk



VanMoof

6 Circus Road West, SW11 8EZ
If you've been debating whether to get an electric bike and VanMoof can't convince you then we reckon nothing will. Their bikes are considered to be the best e-bikes around, with a sleek design, four speeds and built-in anti-theft devices. Following a price drop in 2020 they are no longer wildly more expensive than others. The VanMoof S3 is the choice for riders over 5ft 8in. The X3 has a more compact frame for shorter types.
vanmoof.com



tackling the capital's transport pollution

deliveries



Circla packaging and sends them out, collecting any empties in the process before sterilising and re-using them.

Gwinnutt considers sustainable transport an integral part of her business, the majority of which is delivered by a cycle courier company, although some deliveries are also made using an electric car.

"It would be absolutely hypocritical for us to place so much emphasis on packaging and then not follow through in other areas like transport," she says. Doing the right environmental thing often has strong community benefits, says Deborah Efemini, the creator of two south London drinks brands including Catford Gin, which is infused with the herb catnip.

Its hyper-localism isn't confined to its name. The gin is made in Catford and customers pre-order for when a batch is ready, reducing the number of deliveries by grouping them together. Homesick Catfordites living elsewhere in the UK and abroad will receive a standard postal delivery. But given the vast majority of Efemini's business is in SE6, some packages are taken by Hugo Harrison, who runs a local cargo bike delivery service, and most are hand-delivered by Efemini on foot.

As a regeneration specialist who works with the local council, community is important to her. "It's emotionally sustainable too," she says. "There's a real benefit to being able to chat to people and know regular customers."

Of course, hand delivery isn't possible for everything. For a real taste of the future, look to Wembley-based Magway. The company is developing a system whereby driverless electro-magnetic carts run through a network of utility pipes above or below ground, allowing for near-constant small-batch delivery.

"We're three to five years away from launching the first multi-user routes," says co-founder Phill Davies. "We're aiming to reduce the amount of vehicles on the streets. It's about reducing emissions, but also the amount of particulate matter that comes from tyres grinding on streets."

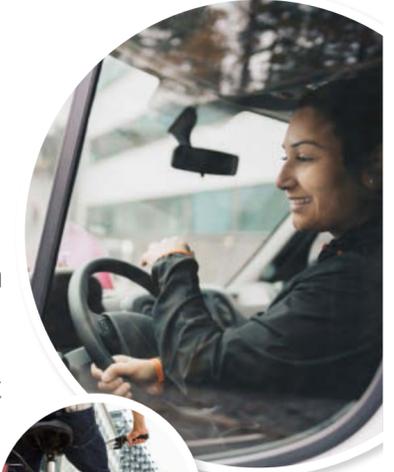
"There is an urgent need for sustainable deliveries to create supply chain resilience. If we are ambitious, together we can crack climate change."

ADVERTISEMENT FEATURE



Take the road to more sustainable transportation

Businesses have a vital role to play in improving air quality in the capital and beyond - here's how they can reduce their environmental footprint



The pandemic has shown that changes in behaviour by individuals and businesses can go part of the way needed to cut carbon emissions. At the height of lockdown, with the streets of the capital largely free from vehicles, carbon dioxide emissions dropped by nearly 60 per cent in central London.

Transport is one of the worst offenders when it comes to air pollution, partly coming from high levels of nitrogen dioxide emitted mainly by diesel vehicles.

This is having a real impact on health. According to a recently published analysis from London's City Hall, 98 per cent of schools in London are in areas exceeding WHO pollution limits, compared to 24 per cent outside of the capital.

Businesses have an important role to play in improving air quality, since commercial activity - including

transportation and logistics - is a big part of the problem.

To address this, companies such as UPS and BMW have created fleets of electric vehicles - but smaller businesses can also make a real difference.

Here are three things to consider when it comes to your business's transportation...

1. TAKE STOCK OF YOUR EMISSIONS

Carry out a review of your business to get an overall picture of your transport needs and where you can look to cut the carbon you produce, whether in the types of vehicles used or the journeys made.

Also, look at your entire supply chain and think about how you can use more local suppliers to reduce transportation emissions.



2. INCREASE YOUR USE OF ECO-FRIENDLY TRANSPORTATION

Take inspiration from sustainability-minded companies and use low-impact delivery methods, wherever possible. Ecofleet, for example, offer a zero emission last-mile delivery service on cargo bikes across the capital. While TopUp Truck - who supply household essentials and groceries by weight - run their mobile zero-waste shop from an old electric milk float.

3. THINK CREATIVELY ABOUT YOUR EMPLOYEES' COMMUTE

You could promote cycling to work via a salary sacrifice arrangement to help your employees reduce their carbon emissions, and encourage car sharing to lower the number of vehicles your business puts on the road. Also, remote and hybrid working will help reduce emissions from daily commutes.



With small and medium-sized companies accounting for the bulk of the British economy, they are centre-stage when it comes to tackling climate change, and will play a critical role in the Government's target to reach net zero by 2050. However, few SMEs will have had the time, resources or expertise to take a lead on this, especially during the Covid pandemic. To help these businesses to get started on sustainability, Google and Planet Mark have launched a new, free training programme in partnership with the Government's Together for Our Planet campaign.

The training focuses on the business case for reducing emissions and practical ways to decarbonise using digital technology. It also covers how companies can use their sustainable credentials to attract customers and staff.



BRING SUSTAINABILITY TO YOUR BUSINESS - SIGN UP TO GOOGLE'S FREE TRAINING PROGRAMME

Google To find out more information and sign up for the course, visit g.co/sustainability/uk



UK Government

TOGETHER FOR OUR PLANET



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