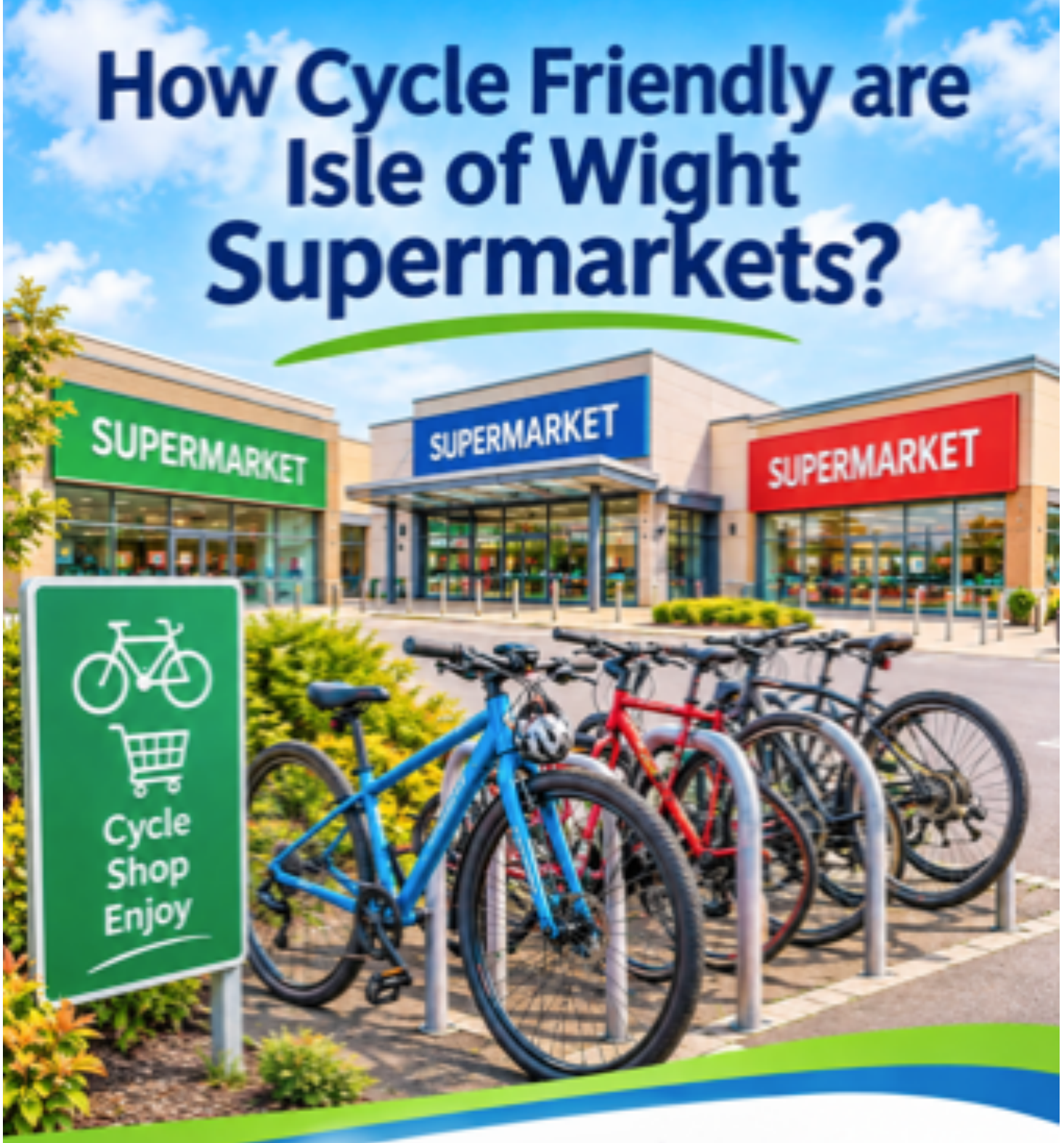
How Cycle Friendly are Isle of Wight Supermarkets?



CYCLEWight

Report

INTRODUCTION

HOW CYCLE FRIENDLY ARE ISLE OF WIGHT SUPERMARKETS?

Encouraging people to cycle short distances rather than using a car is a key theme in the Isle of Wight's 2025–2040 transport strategy. The rationale reflects a combination of environmental, social, and economic benefits. Local visits to the high street and supermarket for small shopping trips, to the medical centre, cafe or getting kids to school are all typical examples of when people could actively choose to take the healthier option.

The Island Transport Plan promotes a shift toward walking and cycling as part of a wider "avoid, shift, improve" approach— reducing unnecessary car travel and encouraging more sustainable modes for everyday journeys.

The message is being reinforced by the UK Government via Active Travel England (ATE) in it's recently published Active Travel policy paper entitled 'Active England: the third cycling and walking investment strategy (CWIS3). This, together with ATE's 'Worth Every Step' document sets out the government's vision and objectives for active travel.

In short, it is ambitious and sets a course to improve the wellbeing, fitness and health of people over the next decade, getting more children riding bikes to school, reducing fear as a cause for not wanting to ride and encouraging local authorities to become more proactive, innovative and quicker to deliver infrastructure that improves road safety for vulnerable users, all this supported with the promise of a multi billion pound funding program, the money becoming available from various sources.

An important factor worth consideration too is the rapid growth of e-bike sales, bikes that can make the shorter journeys easier, bikes that can range in value from a few hundred pounds up to £17,000+ for a new top of the range hi specification model, so it

follows that good security, when leaving a bike unattended, has to be a major consideration.
There's evidence that there are plenty of environmentally concious customers prepared to shell out serious money to keep themselves fit!
So, the question has to be asked, how prepared are we for this wave of change?
Is it acceptable to expect these cashed up riders to chain their new, lacquered carbon fibre pride and joy to the nearest tree or lamppost to keep it secure, more to the point, is it acceptable for any rider of any bicycle to expect anything less than they would if ordinarily driving a car?
With this in mind CycleWight decided to carry out a survey of islandwide supermarkets to find out just how cycle friendly and inviting supermarkets are for those who decide to leave the car at home and cycle out for small shopping excursions.

The 24 supermarkets selected for this survey all belong to national chains and only those with car parks with adequate space to accommodate cycle parking were assessed. They had to satisfy 6 different requirements to achieve a possible maximum score of 30 points, 5 points per section.
Other factors taken into consideration when scoring were the quality, condition, location and security of any facilities on offer.
Ideally, cyclists should be able to enjoy the same level of parking amenities as all other road users so at the entrance to a supermarket clear signage to indicate where secure parking is available for bikes would be advantageous.
Some directional signs through to the designated bike park would be useful too. Ideally a segregated well marked cycle way from the main road to the bike park would be the ultimate solution.

Just how much have supermarkets done to accommodate island shoppers wanting to take advantage of these lifestyle benefits?



The top scorer: Waitrose East Cowes bicycle parking facility.

Well located, dedicated all weather undercover shelter, strong and secure ‘ Sheffield’ stands, good condition, highly visible, clean, spacious with clear signage.

Co-op Cowes - Two identical security rings, one for bikes, another for dogs.





Supermarket bicycle parking survey summary

The result of the supermarket survey highlighted vast differences between each individual store's approach to welcoming cyclists.
The findings varied from a handful of stores offering varying degrees of good or acceptable facilities for cyclists to a number that simply offered nothing.

Surprisingly, amongst the poorer performers on the list was Lidl, surprising because of all the stores surveyed they are the most active retailers of cycling clothing and paraphernalia through their Crivit brand, Lidl are also major sponsors of the Lidl Trek pro cycling racing team, although that team is based in Germany and not associated with the UK operation.

Two of the four Co-op stores failed to recognise that more shoppers might likely opt to use a bike for small shopping excursions if they knew that good secure facilities were made available to them at their local store, they too offered zero in the way of acceptable parking for cyclists. The Cowes store had one small metal ring attached to the wall with a small bike sign, on the same wall another same size ring was accompanied by a sign of a dog on a lead.

Waitrose, the supermarket in East Cowes came out on top.
Waitrose had clearly thought through how to welcome cyclists to their store in the planning stage.
The location of their cycle parking was highly visible and close to the entrance of the store, this type of location provides a sense of security for cyclists in as much that any attempt to steal a bike is likely to be more risky and noticable by passing shoppers. The location was also conveniently close to a public seating area. The dedicated cycle parking area was covered, providing all weather shelter, it was clearly signed with strong and spacious racks for securing all types of cycles. Waitrose also offers free coffee to their customers, a benefit not lost on the cycling fraternity!

The new Aldi store at Newport Retail Park looks to be reliant on the excellent, spacious undercover, on site cycle parking facility although this is located at the opposite end of the building, some 100 metres

away, both Costa and McDonalds have installed their own customer ‘Sheffield’ racks outside of their respective restaurants on the same site.

Only one store, M&S Cowes, received the maximum score of 5 for the location of their bicycle parking, whilst other cycle parking stands were close to, they were not in the immediate vacinity of the entrance/exit as is the case with many continental supermarkets.

Morrisons at Lake had well signed cycle parking close to the entrance to their store, again location is extremely important, offering that extra sense of added security.

None of the supermarkets had any signage at the entrance to their car parks to indicate that bicycle parking was available. Signage for car drivers, drivers with blue badges and drivers with small children was abundant and in some cases for motor cycles too.
There were no directional signs or dedicated cycle paths through the carparks at any of the stores surveyed, although clearly marked walkways for pedestrian customers were evident in some car parks.

Signage is not such a problem for local shoppers familiar with the store but with increasing numbers of cyclists visiting the island, for them, it would be a case of riding around a car park searching until you find, if indeed there’s anything to be found.

It’s abundantly clear that the planners of some stores have installed ‘Sheffield’ style cycle stands to simply tick a box to comply with basic planning recommendations.
These racks, if strongly secured, are perfectly acceptable, however, the location of these cycle stands were in spaces that appear to be of little use for other purposes, almost an afterthought. They’re positioned too far away from the store entrance, sometimes completely hidden from view and offering nothing in the way of security, in two cases they’re attractively positioned for potential bike thieves.
The Co-op Ryde and M&S Newport are examples.

M&S Cowes had two ‘Sheffield’ style cycle stands, despite plenty of room for more, these were well located scoring 5 points, they were

close to the store's front entrance and easily visible from the nearby bus stops and shelter.
Tesco in Wootton High Street had 'Sheffield' style stands positioned in the corner of the car park conveniently located next to a well marked pedestrian walkway to the entrance/exit of the store.

There's clearly a lot more that the supermarkets could do to encourage active travel. There does appear to exist, across some of the planning community, a mentality that considers cyclists as unimportant, effectively treating them as second class citizens, this is unfortunate given the trend to move away from car centricity to more sustainable and healthy transportation options.

Some stores have been swift to instal charging points for EV's but very slow to recognise the rapid growth of e-bike and e-cargo bike usage, bikes that are easily capable of carrying heavier shopping loads.

Currently the Isle of Wight Council is placed in the lower sector 1 in Active Travel England's Local Authority Active Travel Capability Ratings 2025. This low scoring has an impact on the amount of central government funding that can become available for active travel projects.
The IW Council is aiming to improve it's position as it recognises this low rating is unacceptable. When the council achieves a higher level, could this inspire supermarkets and other island businesses to improve their cycling facilities? Until then we wait to see if and when the supermarkets will make improvements.

eBikes offer increased load capacity and flexible, low cost mobilty options.





SUPERMARKET	LOCATION	CLEAR DIRECTIONAL SIGNAGE FOR CYCLISTS AT THE ENTRANCE TO CAR PARK	CLEARLY MARKED SEGREGATED CYCLE PATH & SIGN POSTED DIRECTIONS TO CYCLE PARKING AREA	STRONG SECURE CYCLE PARKING TO ACCOMMODATE WIDER BIKES & TYRE SIZES	CLEAR SIGNAGE AT THE CYCLE PARKING LOCATION	UNDERCOVER CYCLE PARKING	PROXIMITY OF CYCLE PARKING AREA TO STORE ENTRANCE/ EXIT (ADDED SECURITY)	TOTAL POINTS (MAX 30)
WAITROSE	EAST COWES	0	0	5	5	5	4	19
TESCO	FRESHWATER	0	0	5	5	5	3	18
ALDI	LAKE	0	0	5	4	5	3	17
ALDI	NORTHWOOD	0	0	5	4	5	3	17
MORRISONS	LAKE	0	0	5	5	0	4	14
MORRISONS	NEWPORT	0	0	5	0	5	4	14
TESCO	RYDE	0	0	5	0	5	4	14
SAINSBURYS	NEWPORT	0	0	5	0	5	2	12
ALDI	NEWPORT	0	0	5	0	5	1	11
M & S	COWES	0	0	5	0	0	5	10
HOME BARGAINS	NEWPORT	0	0	5	0	0	4	9
TESCO	WOOTTON	0	0	5	0	0	3	8
TESCO	LAKE	0	0	4	0	0	3	7
ASDA	NEWPORT	0	0	5	0	0	2	7
CO-OP	RYDE	0	0	5	0	0	2	7
THE FOOD WAREHOUSE	NEWPORT	0	0	5	0	0	2	7
CO-OP	COWES	0	0	1	1	0	4	6
M & S	NEWPORT	0	0	5	0	0	1	6
CO-OP	ROOKLEY	0	0	2	0	0	1	3
LIDL	SHANKLIN	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
LIDL	NEWPORT	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
CO-OP	SHANKLIN	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
ICELAND	RYDE	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
THE RANGE	COWES	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

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