



PEDAL POWER: ENVIRONMENTALLY-FRIENDLY RICKSHAWS UNVEILED

Green way to get around

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Forget carrying bags of shopping through the city centre - just sit back, relax and let the rickshaw take the strain.

The eco-friendly vehicles were unveiled yesterday and are set to start ferrying people around Leicester next week.

Curious passers-by and councillors were given a demonstration of the rickshaws in Town Hall Square yesterday.

The vehicles are powered by a cyclist, with the help of an electric back-up motor.

SIGHTSEERS

Luke Martin, 22, who lives in the city centre, is one of the rickshaw riders.

He said: "If you want to pedal, it's very easy to do so, but you need to be a cyclist to be able to do this. You've got to keep fit. It helps to keep you fit too."

"It's going to help the environment. It has no problems getting around the city centre and it handles corners really well."

Two vehicles will be in the city from Monday and it is hoped there will be 10 when High Street is pedestrianised next year. They will help shoppers and sightseers get around.

So far, the plan appears popular.

Pete Goulsbra, 51, from Safron Lane, said: "You pay enough for a taxi to get around and this is useful to use as well."



POPULAR PODS: Rickshaw driver Luke Martin ferries around Lynsey Carter and her son Elliott, three, in Leicester city centre

PICTURE: SARAH SALOTTI / 176225-8

"It is good for the environment."

Francesca Meyer, 23, from Leicester, said: "It could be very useful, but I don't think I would use one with the kids in the back."

The vehicles will be sponsored by companies who will advertise on the side.

City council leader Roger Blackmore said: "This is an idea which is likely to be attract-

ive to a number of people using the city centre.

"Rickshaw-style vehicles have been used in a number of English cities and do have the huge advantage of being relatively pollution-free."

"I certainly think it's essential that a city such as Leicester, which prides itself on its green credentials, needs to seriously investigate this kind of transport option."

Sonny Banwait, director of E-Go, said: "It's aimed at shoppers and visitors to the city and will help people get from A to B."

"It will also help older people and perhaps the disabled to get to their shopping destinations."

Last year, environmental organisation Groundwork Leicester bid for £76,000 from the European Regional Development Fund to set up a similar scheme, but was unsuccessful.

Tim Hudson, sustainable transport team manager for Groundwork, said: "We support what E-Go is doing."

"It will be interesting to see how they are received and how well it goes."

"We wish them all the best with it."

He said Groundwork was still trying to get companies to sponsor rickshaws and could run an evening service in the future.

Team will see rapists get justice

A TEAM of specialist police officers has been created to bring more rapists to justice.

Only one in 10 of the 259 alleged rape cases which went court in Leicestershire in the past year resulted in a conviction.

However, experts believe the scale of serious sex attacks is far higher, claiming that only one in five victims tells the police of an attack.

The new team - called the Solace unit - has been trained to gather the best possible evidence against suspects and aims to encourage victims to break their silence.

The team leading the unit from the force's headquarters in Narborough will be on duty around the clock, and will stay in day-to-day contact with victims to help them overcome their fear of appearing in court.

ATTACKED

Today, a rape victim who saw her attacker jailed late last year welcomed the move.

After the 21-year-old Leicester student had gone to bed after a party at her home in March last year, Dwaine Sismore, a party guest, let himself into her room and attacked her as she slept.

Sismore, (33), from Stamford in Lincolnshire, is serving eight years in jail after a trial at Leicester Crown Court in December.

The woman said: "I know the statistics and I really did not expect him to go to prison. There are so many people who don't get justice, it's awful."

"The police were excellent in my case and this new unit can only help other victims to come forward."

■ The Leicester Rape Crisis helpline, which also covers Leicestershire and Rutland, can be contacted on 0116 255 8852.

Jury out in case of man accused of killing wife and lover

THE jury is out in the trial of a man accused of stabbing his wife and her lover to death.

Alex Marshall is charged with killing estranged wife Fiona Marshall, 41, and her boyfriend Richard Flippance, 44, at her home in Brampton Ash, near Market Harborough, in April

last year. Marshall (37) is also accused of dousing their bodies in petrol and setting the bungalow ablaze.

Marshall, of Irchester Road, Rushden, Northamptonshire, denies murder and arson.

Mrs Justice Rafferty yesterday summed up the case to the jury

before they retired to consider their verdict.

Marshall claims he returned home at 11.30pm after finishing his shift as a security guard at a Tesco Express, in Wellingborough, Northamptonshire.

However, the prosecution alleges Marshall drove to the bun-

galow and stabbed Mrs Marshall eight times in the chest with a kitchen knife, before stabbing Mr Flippance three times.

David Fisher QC said Marshall's nose was burned in a explosive "flashback" as he put a flame to the petrol.

Marshall claims he received the injury cooking breakfast at his gas hob earlier the same day.

The judge told jurors: "You are here to do your job, which is, on the evidence, to answer a single question - has the Crown made me sure Alex Marshall is a murderer and an arsonist?"

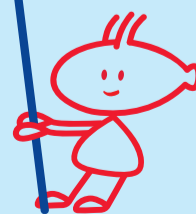
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