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Thousands of Endangered Royal Mail Bicycles Saved From Extinction by An Elephant!!

Tens of thousands of Royal Mail Bikes, destined for landfill, have been saved by an innovative idea from a Staffordshire-based charity. The Royal Mail was forced to phase out the much-loved, hand-made, British bicycles and a mountain of the iconic red bikes were due to be scrapped, until the UK charity, Krizevac Project came to the rescue.

Managing Director, Vince Owen, explained “We’ve been creating social-enterprises in Malawi since 2007, including one business refurbishing and selling old bikes to make money to run a children’s centre. We’ve shipped about 7,000 bikes to Africa so far, but could no longer afford shipping costs and we didn’t know what to do with the rest because the Royal Mail didn’t want us to sell them in the UK.”

A solution to came unexpectedly from Africa, Owen explained, “Game wardens in a Malawi national park had bought half a dozen bikes to patrol the elephant fence; but when the elephants caught sight of the bright red Royal Mail colour, they charged after them! The wardens asked us to re-spray the bikes green and this seemed to do the trick. But it gave us an idea... We asked the Royal Mail if we could re-spray their bikes green, rename them “Elephant Bikes” and for every one sold in the UK, we’d use the money to send one to Malawi. Royal Mail loved it and, with the help of young offenders from Swinfen Hall prison, we’re giving new life to a limited edition of 5,000 of the bikes. We’ve just launched a website so people are rushing to grab a piece of British history as the iconic Royal Mail bikes have disappeared from our roads.”

Owen is enthusiastic about this “buy one give one” model, which supports vulnerable children in Malawi without asking for a penny in donations. “Our customers are getting handmade, quality, collectible bikes and the bike we give to Malawi is life-transforming, providing work and funding the children’s centre, helping to break the cycle of poverty for good!”



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For all press enquiries and to request high-resolution photos please contact:
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Background and Further Information

The Brand- Elephant Bike

The charity bike workshops in Malawi donated some of their red Royal Mail bikes to the Rhino Sanctuary in Malawi's biggest national park. The sanctuary offers a space for the endangered Black Rhino to flourish inside a 30 mile perimeter fence. The fence needs daily patrols to repair damage caused by elephants. The bikes were welcomed by the Fence Wardens, except for their colour. When trying out their new cycling patrols, one of the Wardens was chased for 20 minutes by an irate elephant who objected to the Royal Mail red. The bikes were returned to the bike workshop and re-sprayed a "bush friendly" green colour. The result? Happy elephants, safe Fence Wardens and better protected Black Rhino!

As the charity is contractually obliged to re-colour all the Royal Mail bikes prior to sale in the UK, the charity has echoed the national park story and chosen a range of elephant friendly green colours. All bikes will be branded as Elephant Bikes to promote the Africa connection.



The Bike

So why would anyone want to buy a used Royal Mail bike? The first reason has to be that it'll be hard to find a bike made to a higher specification. With an easy step-through steel frame in two sizes, enclosed all weather hub-brakes and easy trigger gears, these bikes are almost maintenance free and will last for years. The Italian leather saddles provide ultimate comfort and the quick release height adjuster makes it so easy to swap users. Ok they'll never provide top-speeds or win the Tour-de-France, but that's not their intended use. With the ability to carry 40kg of additional load, these are perfect shopping, touring or student bikes. With the option of purchasing the additional steel front carrier and a further optional wicker basket insert, the bikes have a classic retro look; perfect for those who seek to combine style with low-maintenance reliability and ease of ride. The Elephant Bikes have been professionally and fully refurbished to a tip-top quality. Each one is stripped down to component parts at HMP Swinfen. It then goes off to be shot-blasted and powder coated so it looks like new. The bikes go back to the prison to be re-built, using new parts where necessary. After a professional clean and final check by our trained team, the bikes are boxed up and ready for free to delivery to any UK address. The sale price starts at £250 which is a fraction of what these bikes cost new, but with no compromise on the quality of the product. Plus there's the bonus of know this pays for another bike to be shipped to Africa.

The Limited Edition

Krizevac Project aims to get as many bikes to Africa as possible, so they are limiting the maximum number for sale in the UK to just 5000. The countdown to the extinction of the former Royal Mail bikes will start at number 5000 and end with a flourish for the final bike. Each bike will have its own brass number tag making each bicycle unique; but to make it even more special, customers have the option of having a name engraved on the same tag to make it even more personal. Customers can contact the charity if they need a "special" number, so if your mum's 60th birthday is approaching, bike number 60 can be requested along with mum's name to create a one off, never to be repeated special present.

About Krizevac Project

[Film of our work in Malawi](#)

Founded by Staffordshire businessman, Tony Smith, in 2006, Krizevac Project aims to alleviate poverty and transform lives in Africa by creating social enterprises. These businesses create training opportunities for thousands of adults which is crucial in countries like Malawi. Education is mostly poor quality and

unaffordable for anything beyond primary schooling for the vast majority of its population, who live on less than \$1 a day. The enterprises also create profits; 100% of surpluses are re-invested into community transformation projects such as children's centres, primary school support and community outreach work. Currently 380 Malawians are employed in meaningful skilled work in Chilomoni Township, hundreds of others have taken their training to set up their own businesses and now employ others, multiplying the positive effect of the initial training.

Case Study- Beebikes:

Beebikes is part of Beehive Centre for Social Enterprises, created by Krizevac Project in 2007. This hub of education and enterprise is situated in Chilomoni Township, home to 60,000 of the world's poorest people. The charity ships around 1500 bikes per year to Beebikes. The team of local mechanics are earning a living and supporting their families by mending and selling bikes to Malawians. Owning a bike in Malawi is akin to owning a car or a van here in the UK; bikes enable people to travel to work or school, they are used to start businesses or to take goods to market. They are affordable, although they do represent a considerable investment costing around £80 each; Malawians have to save hard to buy one these bikes, but because of that the bikes are valued: they are an aspirational purchase which fits with the charity of raising aspirations and promoting the development of future Malawian leaders.



The Royal Mail bikes are perfect for Malawi. The sturdy steel frame, made by Pashley in the UK, sealed drum brakes and Sturmey Archer gears cope better than anything with dusty, pothole African dirt-roads. Their load carrying ability (whilst no longer suitable for Royal Mail) is perfect for transporting goods and people. It costs the charity around £45 per bike to transport it to Malawi, but the long term impact of bike ownership means the value of this investment is multiplied hugely and is worth far more than a traditional cash donation to charity. Beebikes now generates around £8000 per month through bike sales. 100% of the trading surplus supports Mother Teresa Children's Centre which offers vital care and family support for thousands of vulnerable children and orphans throughout Chilomoni Township.

Meet the team:

While the charity work has grown and hundreds are employed in Malawi, here in the UK the charity has remained small and efficient. They're cheerful and hardworking team of five:

Vince Owen- Managing Director. With experience of fundraising for international charities, Vince now spends his days securing Krizevac income streams by working with our sponsors to develop and grow their businesses.

George Furnival- UK Coordinator. With a background in community development and children's services, George has helped establish and develop children's services in Malawi and also recruits long-term international volunteers to support the overseas work.

Zoe Kasiya- Resources Manager. Zoe is a logistics and shipping expert and organises the huge operation of gathering donated business resources (including the 12,000 bikes) and shipping them to Malawi.

Terry Richards and Dennis Harper- General Factotums. No organisation can manage without a Terry and Dennis!

But the team are supported by a willing and wonderful bunch of volunteers who do everything from packing books and preparing bikes for shipping to helping raise funds through internet sales here in the UK.

Being a small charity means they can make sure every penny counts and just as importantly know where every penny goes.