



<b>Subject:</b>	Performance Update on Belfast Bikes Scheme
<b>Date:</b>	12 October 2022
<b>Reporting Officer:</b>	John Greer, Director of Economic Development
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	Fintan Grant, Assets Development Manager

<b>Restricted Reports</b>	
<b>Is this report restricted?</b>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<b>If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?</b>	
<b>After Committee Decision</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>After Council Decision</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Some time in the future</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Never</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Call-in</b>	
<b>Is the decision eligible for Call-in?</b>	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>

<b>1.0</b>	<b>Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues</b>
1.1	To update Members on the performance of the Just Eat Belfast Bikes scheme in the first quarter (1 April to 30 June 2022) of year 7 of operation. To provide an update on the installation of covered cycle stands in the city – Phase 1 funded by COVID Revitalisation Fund and Phase 2 by DfI Green and Blue Infrastructure Fund.
<b>2.0</b>	<b>Recommendations</b>
2.1	The Committee is requested to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• note the update of the Just Eat Belfast Bikes performance for Year 7 Q1 (April to June 2022)</li></ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• note the update to the notice of motion regarding free access for young people</li> <li>• note the update of the installation of covered cycle stands in the city.</li> <li>• Note the progress with regard to phase one phase two expansion</li> </ul>
<b>3.0</b>	<b>Main report</b>
3.1	<p><b>Background</b></p> <p>The Belfast Bikes scheme was launched in 2015 as part Belfast City Council's physical investment programme. The Department for Regional Development provided initial capital funding for the scheme as part of their Active Travel Demonstration Projects budget. The scheme launched with a network of 30 docking stations and 300 bikes. The scheme has been operated by NSL continually since inception using bikes and supporting infrastructure from "Nextbike GmbH". The scheme currently operates with over 430 bikes and 49 docking stations.</p>
3.2	<p><u>Expansion of the Scheme</u></p> <p>At CG&amp;R on 12 May 2021 it was agreed that an additional four Belfast Bikes docking stations would be deployed using DFI Active Travel funding. Installation began in Q1 and will soon complete:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Docking station at Lisnasharragh Leisure Centre was installed on 7 July 2022 and is operational</li> <li>- Olympia Leisure Centre – works have commenced with an expected completion date of early September 2022</li> <li>- Kennedy Centre – works scheduled to commence in September 2022</li> <li>- Waterworks – illegal van and structure that were located on the site have been removed and work will be scheduled following competition of other two sites, with an indicative date of late September/early October 2022.</li> </ul> <p>An additional station at Titanic Quarter was completed in May 2022, funded by developer contribution.</p>
3.3	<p>At CG&amp;R on 9 June 2021 it was agreed to proceed with 15 docking stations outlined in the expansion proposal in Appendix 1. An investment of approximately £525,000 is required, based on cost estimates from previous network expansions. At SP&amp;R on 18 June 2021 members agreed for £500,000 to be invested in the expansion proposal.</p>
3.4	<p>A procurement exercise has commenced for the installation of eight stations in Phase 1:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- North: Yorkgate and Shore Road</li> </ul>

- West: St Mary's College and Shankill Road
- South: Lisburn Road and Malone Road
- East: Castlereagh Road, Upper Newtownards Road.

Seven stations will follow in Phase 2 in the following year.

3.5 As previously agreed by the committee discussion and agreement through Area Working Groups is required to determine exact locations and consider those against the Site Expansion Matrix as outlined in Appendix 2. These site options and discussions are scheduled to begin with relevant Area Working Groups this month.

#### Operational Performance

3.6 Availability

Bike availability is due to challenges sourcing parts for the bikes. There are world shortages of replacement parts which is impacting on the availability of bikes. However, supplies and bike availability levels have started to increase following recent upgrades (i.e., in Q2).

#### Membership

3.7 There were 21,756 active Belfast Bike members at the end of Q1. This is an increase of 67% compared to the same period in Year 6 (13,000).

- In Q1 'Pay as you go' (PAYG) memberships was the most popular form of membership, accounting for 85% of users. 5,092 PAYG memberships were created or renewed during Q1.
- Annual memberships accounted for 14% of users, with 118 new or renewed during Q1. There is an ongoing trend of users switching from annual membership to PAYG.
- Casual memberships have greatly reduced, accounting for less than 1% of memberships, due to the introduction of PAYG.

#### Journeys

3.8 There have been 1,236,408 journeys since the scheme was launched and 38,907 journeys during Q1 Year 7.

This is a decrease of 50.3% from the same period in Year 6, and a decrease of 25.5% against average since the scheme commenced. This indicates that demand for bike rental has not returned to pre-pandemic levels. The current cost-of-living crisis, reduced city centre footfall, remote working and competition from other means of travel are all likely factors in the reduction in usage evidenced in Q1. It should also be noted that there was an exceptionally high level of usage in 2021 that could have been due to a number of factors,

not least COVID-19 restrictions. Officers are working with colleagues across council and the city to promote the bikes and drive usage.

3.9 Vandalism

Members will be aware that vandalism is an ongoing problem. Upgrades to the forks to help prevent the unauthorised removal of bikes has been successful however, damage is now being caused to the rear wheels while bikes are being forced from docking stations.

Vandalism costs for Q1 are £6,980, of which £4,077 is payable by the Council.

Q1 Year 7 vandalism costs reduced by 57% compared to Year 6, however Q1 costs are in line with the Q1 average since the scheme commenced (£3,997). There is of course a correlation between bike usage and vandalism.

PSNI and council continues to deliver community engagement initiatives to help decrease vandalism incidents.

3.10 Subscriptions and Usage Revenue

Income from subscriptions and usage charges at the end of Q1 is £52,091. This is significantly below Year 6 amount for the same period, however it should be noted that Year 6 was an exceptional year with usage significantly higher than average.

3.11 MARCOMMS

Marketing activity during Q1 included:

- Full page advert in City Matters magazine
- Social media posts from various Councillors regarding new docking stations
- Information on scheme, including a quote from Lord Mayor, included in press release about new cycle lanes and docking station at Titanic Quarter

Belfast Bikes currently has 5.2k followers on Twitter; 1.7k on Facebook; and 1.2k on Instagram.

3.12 Operator contract

NSL continues to operate the Belfast Bikes scheme, with a contract renewal available until 2024. Council staff are reviewing the scheme and will make future recommendations for the management, operation and potential expansion of the scheme as part of a new procurement package. Considerations include:

- Planned network improvement and expansion
- Anti-vandalism measures
- Inclusion of e-bikes

- Potential inclusion of e-scooters (subject to legislation), cargo bikes and adapted bikes/tricycles
- Application of discounts
- Application of user rewards
- Links with social enterprises & co-operatives
- Integration of sponsorship into operator package
- Marketing activity
- Community and education engagement activity
- Employability and skills training
- CoMoUK accreditation

Response to Notice of Motion

3.13 Following a Notice of Motion from Councillor O'Hara the Committee agreed on 4th March 2020 to investigate " *as part of the current strategic review of the Belfast Bikes Scheme, consideration be given to granting free access to young people 25 years of age and under to the scheme*".

Belfast Bikes operator, NSL, does not currently collect age data of users. The operator has confirmed that date of birth can be added as essential registration criteria for new users. This may be subject to a cost which is being sought via the operator. If and when DOB criteria is added, this will likely apply initially to new users only; and be required for re-registration of current users when their membership expires. Hence, a minimum period of six-months will be required to determine an accurate age demographic of users, which will be used to estimate loss of income from the potential introduction of a free scheme. Updates will be provided in a future report.

3.14 Additional considerations:

- With free access, there is no impetus to redock the bike after usage, which will likely lead to reduced bike availability for all users, including paying users. Additional bikes may have to be purchased, at a cost, to ensure all users can be serviced. Further costs will be payable by the Council to the operator to handle increased bike numbers.
- With free access, there is no impetus to redock the bike after usage, which will likely lead to theft and/or vandalism, which seems to be primarily from the younger age market (as evidenced on social media). Repair costs payable by the Council to the operator will increase.

- It should be noted that some other schemes, including Edinburgh, Derby and Cardiff, have previously closed due to high levels of vandalism and theft and associated costs.
- It will be difficult to reduce fraudulent activity on a free offer for young people e.g., adults signing up as a young person, leading to further reduced income.

3.15 Alternative proposals to be explored and proposed in a future report include discounted rates for certain users, for example:

- 18-to-24-year age group
- Students
- Senior citizens
- Corporate discounts

The current operator has advised that while discounted offers are complicated to be added to the system, they can be done. In the event of discounts being implemented in future, it should be noted that all users are required to use a credit card to sign up to the scheme and fraudulent activity e.g., adults signing up as a young person, may pose a risk.

3.16 Update on Covered Cycle Stands city-wide

Whilst Covered Cycle Stands are not part of the Belfast Bikes scheme, both initiatives are aligned to the Bolder Vision with a focus on improvements in the active travel provision and infrastructure across the city. Covered Cycle Stands are part of the Active Travel Enablers project.

Phase 1

Under the DfI Sustainable and Active Travel elements of the DfC Covid-19 Revitalisation Programme, 10 covered cycle stands were funded city-wide. Locations were agreed in previous CGR Committee. After a procurement process a supplier was appointed and the design of the cycle stands as well as the agreements for the specific locations progressed over the following nine months.

Production started during Q1 on the following areas:

Gasworks	Inverary Community Centre
St. George's Market	Belfast Zoo
Grosvenor Community Centre	Waterworks
Shankill Leisure Centre	Belvoir Activity Centre

	Belmont Park	Mary Peter's Track
	Phase 2	
3.17	<p>Members received an update on the DfI funding for the Active Travel Enabling Projects in March 2022 that outlined the projects, budget and timeframe for delivery. In terms of the covered cycle stands, officers drew upon the priority areas identified by Sustrans, and these locations were also assessed in terms of the deliverability within the timeframe as well as the key criteria aligned to cycle infrastructure provision.</p> <p>Following a procurement process a supplier and contractor are currently being appointed for the next 10 covered cycle stands being delivered in-year.</p>	
3.18	<p><b><u>Financial &amp; Resource Implications</u></b></p> <p><u>Finance</u></p> <p>There are no specific financial or resource implications contained within this report.</p>	
3.19	<p><b><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs assessment</u></b></p> <p>None</p>	
<b>4.0</b>	<b>Appendices – Documents Attached</b>	
	<p>Appendix 1: Belfast Bikes - Expansion Proposal</p> <p>Appendix 2: Belfast Bikes - Site Expansion Matrix</p> <p>Appendix 3: Belfast Bikes - Performance Data Q1 2023-23</p>	