



Subject:	Performance Update on Belfast Bikes Scheme
Date:	08 th February 2023
Reporting Officer:	John Greer, Director of Economic Development
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Restricted Reports	
Is this report restricted?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?	
After Committee Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
After Council Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
Some time in the future	<input type="checkbox"/>
Never	<input type="checkbox"/>

Call-in	
Is the decision eligible for Call-in?	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>

1.0	Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues
1.1	To update Members on the performance of the Belfast Bikes scheme in the third quarter (1 st October 2022 – 31 st December 2022) of year 7 of operation.
2.0	Recommendations
2.1	The Committee is requested to: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• note the update of the Belfast Bikes performance for Year 7 Q3 (Oct-Dec 2022);• note the update to the notice of motion regarding free access for young people;• note the progress with regard to phase one and phase two expansion.
3.0	Main report

3.1	<p>Background</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 by TIER’. The scheme currently operates with 428 bikes (including those in reserve for new stands) and 51 docking stations.</p>
3.2	<p><u>Expansion of the Scheme</u></p> <p>At CG&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 current status is as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lisnasharragh Leisure Centre was installed on 7 July 2022 and is operational; • Olympia Leisure Centre was installed on 25 October 2022 and is operational; • Kennedy Centre installation is currently ongoing and is expected to be operational by the end of January 2023 and is operational • Waterworks installation has been delayed due to supply chain issues and is expected to be operational by February 2023. <p>Council officers are currently liaising with the operator and supplier to improve the supply chain issues for future installations.</p>
3.3	<p>At CG&R on 9 June 2021 it was agreed to proceed with an additional 15 docking stations. At SP&R on 18 June 2021 members agreed for £500,000 to be invested in the expansion proposal.</p>
3.4	<p>Works is ongoing for the design and installation of eight stations in Phase 1 (to be installed 2022/23):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • North: Yorkgate and Shore Road • West: St Mary’s College and Shankill Road • South: Lisburn Road and Malone Road • East: Castlereagh Road, Upper Newtownards Road. <p>Seven stations will follow in Phase 2 in the following year (2023/24).</p>
3.5	<p>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</p>

Expansion Matrix. These site options and discussions with Area Working Groups commenced in November 2022. The AWGs have agreed the exact locations in South and North; the discussions in East and West are still ongoing.

3.6 Operational Performance

Availability

Following the ongoing challenges sourcing replacement bike parts, the number of bikes on the street have decreased during Q3. The average daily bikes on the street during Q3 was 294.

3.7 An additional 180 bikes have been purchased to facilitate the ongoing docking station expansion, so availability levels are expected to further increase in coming months.

Membership

3.8 There were 76,565 registered Belfast Bike users at the end of Q3.

- In Q3 'Pay as you go' (PAYG) memberships remained the most popular form of membership, accounting for 88% of users.
- Annual memberships accounted for 12% of users. There is an ongoing trend of users switching from annual membership to PAYG.
- Casual memberships have greatly reduced, accounting for 1% of memberships, due to the introduction of PAYG.

Journeys

3.9 There have been 1,326, 035 journeys since the scheme was launched including 33,452 journeys during Q3 Year 7.

Although this is a decrease of 24% from the same period in Year 6 (which was an exceptionally busy year for the scheme), journeys during this period increased by 3% against Q3 average since the scheme commenced.

Vandalism

3.10 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.

There were 123 instances of vandalism in Q3. Whilst this is lower than previous periods, it is higher than the quarterly average by 36%. Vandalism costs payable by the Council for this

3.11	<p>period is £11,734. Whilst this figure is lower than the previous quarter, it is significantly higher than the quarterly average (£3,841)</p>
3.12	<p>Members should note that generally the number of vandalism incidents has decreased in recent times, however vandalism costs have increased due to the higher cost of parts associated with a higher quality of bike. Bikes were upgraded to 'SMART' bikes in 2021. For comparison, in the same period in 2017, there were 226 instances of vandalism at a cost of £7,242 i.e. higher incidents but at a lower cost. See Appendix 1 tables 2 and 3 for annual comparison.</p>
3.13	<p>Members should also note that following the upgrade to 'SMART' bikes, the amount of theft has decreased due to GPS tracking in the bike allowing for recovery. The operator is very proactive at retrieving missing bikes.</p>
3.14	<p>The bikes operator continues to deliver operational improvements and community engagement initiatives with PSNI to help decrease vandalism incidents.</p>
3.15	<p><u>Subscriptions and Usage Revenue</u></p> <p>Income from fees and charges in Q3 was £30,902. This is 22% higher than average for this period. Year to date income from fees and charges is £154,601.</p>
3.16	<p><u>MARCOMMS</u></p> <p>Marketing activity during Q3 included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social Media messaging and video promotion on "Lock it Dock it" • Article in Winter City Matters magazine (circulation of 160k homes); on new stations at Lisnasharragh Leisure Centre, Olympia Leisure Centre, The Kennedy Centre and the Waterwork. <p>Belfast Bikes currently has 5.1k followers on Twitter; 1.7k on Facebook; and 1.1k on Instagram.</p>
3.17	<p><u>Operator contract</u></p> <p>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.</p>

Sponsorship

3.18 Sponsorship ended in September 2022 and council officers are currently assessing procurement options for a new sponsor of the scheme. The preferred option is to tender for a “sponsorship expert” with the required market experience in similar bike schemes, to identify an appropriate sponsor and market value for the Belfast scheme.

Response to Notice of Motion

3.19 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*”.

3.20 Belfast Bikes operator, NSL, added date of birth (D.O.B.) as an essential criteria for users from 13 October 2022. It would be prudent to wait approximately six months to allow the majority of users to upgrade their information before accurate age demographics can be determined.

3.21 However, initial reports indicate 53% of users fall within the ‘25 and under’ age group. Providing free usage to under 25’s is likely to have a significant detrimental impact on revenue generated from the bike scheme, which directly contributes to operating costs.

Update on Covered Cycle Stands city-wide

3.22 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.

3.23 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 and the status is as follows:

Gasworks	Installed July 2022
St. George’s Market	Stand delivered but still awaiting DfI approval

Grosvenor Community Centre	Installed September 2022
Shankill Leisure Centre	Installed July 2022
Belmont Park	Installed August 2022
Inverary Community Centre	Installed August 2022
Belfast Zoo	Installed August 2022
Waterworks	Installed August 2022
Belvoir Activity Centre	Installed August 2022
Mary Peter's Track	Installed September 2022

Phase 2

3.24

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.

Following a procurement process, a supplier has been appointed for the next 10 covered cycle stands being delivered in-year.

Financial & Resource Implications

3.25

Finance

There are no specific financial or resource implications contained within this report.

Equality or Good Relations/ Implications

3.26

None

4.0

Appendices – Documents Attached

Appendix 1: Belfast Bikes - Performance Data Q3 (Sept 2022- Dec 23)