



Subject:	Performance Update on Belfast Bikes Scheme
Date:	14 th June 2023
Reporting Officer:	John Greer, Director of Economic Development
Contact Officer:	Fintan Grant, Operational Development Manager Cathryn Mc Oscar, Assets Development Officer

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"/>
Sometime 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 for 2022-2023 financial year (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 2022-2023 financial year (year 7 of operation)

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • note the update to the notice of motion regarding free access for young people; • note the progress regarding phase one and phase two expansion. • note the update that tender will be prepared for a procurement of a new Public Bike Hire Scheme
3.0	Main report
3.1	<p>Background</p> <p>The Belfast Bikes scheme was launched in 2015 as part of 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 455 bikes (including those in reserve for new stands) and 52 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. All stations below are now operational</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lisnasharragh Leisure Centre • Olympia Leisure Centre • Kennedy Centre • Waterworks <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 are ongoing for the design and installation of eight stations in Phase 1 (to be installed in 2023):</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.

There are plans for seven stations in Phase 2

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. These site options and discussions with Area Working Groups commenced in November 2022. The AWGs have agreed the exact locations in their respective areas.

3.6 Operational Performance

Availability

Following the ongoing challenges sourcing replacement bike parts, this issue has been resolved and the number of bikes on the street during Q4 has increased. The average daily bikes on the street during Q4 was 295.

3.7 An additional 180 bikes have been purchased to facilitate the ongoing docking station expansion, and this stock will be filtered onto the street, so availability levels are expected to further increase in coming months.

3.8 Membership

There were 16,282 registered Belfast Bike users at the end of Q4. Nextbike by Tier the current provider changed their payment operator during Q4 and as such the details of non-active members are no longer recorded as registered users. Going forward all active users will need to update their information with the new supplier.

- In Q4 'Pay as you go' (PAYG) memberships remained the most popular form of membership, accounting for 83% of users.
- Annual memberships accounted for 15% of users. There is an ongoing trend of users switching from annual membership to PAYG.
- Casual memberships have greatly reduced, accounting for just over 1% of memberships, due to the introduction of PAYG.

Journeys

3.9 There have been 1,350,153 journeys since the scheme was launched including 24,118 journeys during Q4 Year 7.

Although this is a decrease of 20% from the same period in Year 6 (which was an exceptionally busy year for the scheme), journeys during this period also decreased by 24% against Q4 average since the scheme commenced, which poor weather contributed to.

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 and to the docking points while bikes are being forced from docking stations.

3.11 There were 52 instances of vandalism in Q4. This is much lower than previous periods and lower than the quarterly average by 31%. Vandalism costs payable by the Council for this period is £5,782. Whilst this figure is significantly lower than the previous quarter, it is higher than the quarterly average (£2,734)

3.12 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 154 instances of vandalism at a cost of £5,237 i.e. lower incidents but at a higher cost. See Appendix 1 tables 2 and 3 for annual comparison.

3.13 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.

3.14 The bikes operator continues to deliver operational improvements and community engagement initiatives with PSNI to help decrease vandalism incidents.

Subscriptions and Usage Revenue

3.15 Income from fees and charges in Q4 was £19,930. This is 48% lower than average for this period. This could be due to a number of contributing factors including poor weather and change of payment provider. Income from fees and charges for the 2022-2023 financial year was £176,171

3.16	<p><u>MARCOMMS</u></p> <p>Marketing activity during Q4 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 currently 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>
3.18	<p><u>Sponsorship</u></p> <p>Sponsorship ended in September 2022 and council officers are currently assessing procurement options for a new sponsor of the scheme.</p>
3.19	<p><u>Response to Notice of Motion</u></p> <p>Following a Notice of Motion from Councillor O’Hara the Committee agreed on 4th March 2020 to investigate “ <i>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</i>”.</p>
3.20	<p>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.</p>
3.21	<p>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.</p>

3.22 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.

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

3.24 Phase 2

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 currently.

3.25 Financial & Resource Implications

Finance

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

3.26 Equality or Good Relations Implications

	None
4.0	Appendices – Documents Attached
	Appendix 1: Belfast Bikes - Performance Data Q4 (Jan 2023- March 23)