



Subject:	Update on Just Eat Belfast Bikes Strategic Review –Screening
Date:	8 <sup>th</sup> December, 2021
Reporting Officer:	John Greer, Director of Economic Development
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<b>Restricted Reports</b>	
Is this report restricted?	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>	
Is the decision eligible for Call-in?	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 equality screening of the delivery of Belfast Bikes and make recommendations for a way forward.
<b>2.0</b>	<b>Recommendations</b>
2.1	The Committee is asked to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- To proceed with the four stations to be funded by the Department for Infrastructure outlined at 3.5, and the 15 stations as outlined in appendix 1.</li><li>- Agree to the phased Equality Screening and that additional criteria are included the scoring matrix.</li></ul>

<p><b>3.0</b></p> <p>3.1</p> <p>3.2</p> <p>3.3</p>	<p><b>Main report</b></p> <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 400 bikes and 48 docking stations.</p> <p><u>Strategic Review</u></p> <p>It was agreed to undertake a comprehensive strategic review of the Just Eat Belfast Bikes scheme and make recommendations for the future management, operation and potential expansion of the scheme at CG&amp;R committee in January 2019. Intelligent Transport Services were commissioned in May 2019 to carry out the strategic review of the scheme. Stakeholder engagement and a public survey was carried out in August/September 2019 and an elected member's workshop was held on the 27<sup>th</sup> August 2019.</p> <p>The scope of the review considered the following steps:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Assessment of the current network;</li> <li>- Review of scheme objectives;</li> <li>- Review of operations;</li> <li>- Future expansion; and</li> <li>- Financial sustainability.</li> </ul> <p><b>Future expansion</b></p> <p>Included in the Strategic Review were recommendations in relation to the future expansion of the scheme. These findings were the result of extensive stakeholder engagement, public survey and engagement with elected members. A summary of findings is included below.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- There are gaps in the network along arterial routes and local centres in the North, West, South and East of the city. Investment in new stations should be carried out to increase network coverage and ensure social inclusion.</li> <li>- Additional capacity is needed in the northern section of the city centre to service the new Belfast UU campus and the Tribeca development and in the east to service the Sirocco development. This should be funded through developer contributions.</li> </ul>
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<p>3.4</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- An assessment of the current network identified a number of existing stations which are under used and should be either relocated or reduced in size and used for expansion of new stations.</li> <li>- Requests have been made from neighbouring councils and expansion into adjoining areas should be considered through partnership funding.</li> </ul> <p>A summary of future expansion as presented to June Committee including potential relocations and complementary measures are outlined by area and included at Appendix 1. Areas for expansion had been selected by identifying gaps in the network along with feedback from the public survey and elected member/stakeholder consultation. It was acknowledged that further work would be needed to determine exact locations and consider those against the Site Expansion Matrix and it was proposed that this should be discussed and agreed through the Area Working Groups meetings. These proposals were phased over a two-year period to take account of the significant lead time and resource requirement required for an expansion. The costs were based on analogous estimates from our previous expansions of the network. In some instances, site specific conditions can result in savings or additional expense.</p>
<p>3.5</p>	<p>Members agreed at the CG&amp;R Special Meeting in November 2020 to allocate £330k of £749k of DfI Blue and Green Infrastructure funding allocation to replenishing the Belfast Bikes fleet. Members also agreed to carry out feasibility work to inform the allocation of £310k of this element of the fund for additional citywide infrastructure to support the cycling network with proposed measures to include covered cycle stands (to be provided within existing programmes of work or within existing Council assets); an electric bike trial; expansion of the Belfast Bike Infrastructure and Active /Sustainable Travel Hubs. At CG&amp;R on 12<sup>th</sup> May 2021 it was agreed that an additional four Belfast bikes docking stations would be deployed using DFI Active Travel funding. This expansion highlighted the following four sites</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Antrim Road, Waterworks</li> <li>- Lisnasharragh Leisure Centre</li> <li>- Olympia Leisure Centre</li> <li>- Kennedy Shopping Centre</li> </ul>
<p>3.6</p>	<p>A recommendation was also made within the report relating to a matrix for the selection of new docking stations. The criteria contained within the Site Expansion Matrix are detailed below.</p>

- Employment Destinations
- Residential
- Public Transport
- Public Amenities
- Resident Requests
- Existing Usage at nearby stations
- Gaps in Network
- Survey Feedback
- Cycle Infrastructure
- Land that is either owned or managed by Belfast City Council or where express permission to situate a biking dock in already in place.

3.7 During discussion at CG&R in June a number of proposals were made and debated by elected members. These are listed below

- Agree to add both levels of air pollution and access to car/van as per census data 2011/21 when updated to the Expansion Criteria.
- Agree to add additional criteria including Health Inequalities as part of the scoring matrix on expansion.

3.8 **Call-in**

As members will be aware, the decision was subject to call-in and was referred to Counsel for opinion. Subsequently the call-in was found to have merit on both procedural and community impact grounds.

An opinion was received with regard to the inclusion of existing cycle infrastructure within the Site Expansion Matrix which is detailed below.

*‘Given the clear evidence that the current cycle infrastructure is poor in North and West of the City, the inclusion does have the result that decisions taken on that basis will have an adverse impact on those inhabitants of those sections of the district.*

*The next question is whether any adverse effect is disproportionate. In assessing this matter, I note the evidence that the infrastructure in north and west Belfast is particularly poor. Whilst I appreciate that the matrix applies equally to all locations, the practical effect of the decision would be that the areas of north and west Belfast would score lower than*

*other areas because of the poor existing infrastructure. That would have a disproportionate effect as it would result in those inhabitants being less likely to be able to benefit from the expansion of the Scheme.'*

3.9 In summary this directs that the inclusion of the criteria of existing cycling infrastructure must be removed from the site expansion criteria.

3.10 Following the call-in it was agreed at CG&R in September 2021 that an equality screening would take place with initial findings reported back to Committee to allow a decision to be made on future investment in the scheme.

### **Equality Screening**

3.11 A staged equality screening is progressing and builds on the equality screening of the Belfast Bike Scheme carried out in 2013/14. This original equality screening identified the potential to improve equality of opportunity in relation to those with a disability, those with dependants and women. The following mitigations and actions were taken:

- As one of four Active Travel Demonstration Projects of the DfI (previously, DRD) Active Travel Initiative, an important element of the Active Travel Strategy is to encourage local authorities to promote more walking and cycling in the communities they serve and to recognise the need to include people of all abilities.
- The design and the colour of the bikes are subject to the potential sponsor of the scheme. However, the design and colour of the bikes must take into consideration the symbolism of political opinions and have a 'neutral' appearance. This has been actioned through the sponsorship and bike provider specifications. The decision about sponsorship is taken in line with Council's policies regarding specific products.
- Members of IMTAC and Disability Action were consulted in the stakeholder workshops. They attended site visits and influenced the locations for the docking stations.
- During the development and extension phase, consultation took place with representatives from communities and groups directly affected by the scheme i.e. in areas of potential locations of docking stations

- Considerations such as mobility issues and the potential of introducing special bikes such as trikes/e-bikes will continuously influence the development of the scheme.
- Within the action plans for the scheme 'try it' events have been hosted including some targeted at underrepresented groups such as people with a disability and women
- Tied in with Sustrans events such as Women in Cycling, cycle proficiency training and bike club programmes; also had a number of separate events in schools.
- Users have to sign up to the Terms & Conditions of using the Public Bike Share Scheme and Health & Safety Regulations are paramount using the scheme. It is noted that this may result in some limitations in usage, such as in terms of age.

3.12 As this is an existing programme we have taken an approach to screen at appropriate stages of delivery based on the information available. The current draft screening takes into account the strategic review of the Belfast Bikes in 2019 and new policy developments, for example, A Bolder Vision for Belfast, Sustrans Policy on Public Bike Hire Schemes (2019) and the Belfast Cycle Network (June 2021). While the objectives of the scheme remain unchanged; it is noted that the primary objective of the Belfast Bike Scheme in 2013 was described as: to achieve a sustainable low cost transport system to service key locations in Belfast City Centre, and the scheme has expanded to include additional areas surrounding and outside the city centre where funding and demand have supported such expansion.

3.13 Work to date on the draft equality screening indicates the potential differential impacts on women, those with disabilities, those with dependents and those who are older. Given the diversity of issues experienced, it also notes the need to further investigate the potential impact on those from different racial groups in Belfast, as well as those with disabilities in order to better understand the potential impacts. This information and health data will be considered to inform future development of the scheme subject to feasibility. Further analysis is also being undertaken into the incorporation of the additional location assessment criteria to ensure clarity of definition and application of assessment.

3.14 Financial & Resource Implications

	<p>As set out to Committee in June 2021, based on the historic revenue from bike hire and the expected revenue from sponsors it is estimated for the financial year 21/22 that the Belfast Bikes scheme will require a subvention of £244,280 to cover its cost of operation. This subvention was included in Place &amp; Economy departmental estimates for the financial year 21/22.</p>
3.15	<p>An investment of approximately £525,000 is required to fund the recommended expansion of the network in this phase with further investment required for subsequent phases. This funding has been secured via in year underspend.</p>
3.16	<p><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u></p> <p>We have taken an approach to screen at appropriate stages of delivery based on the information available.</p>
4.0	<p><b>Appendices – Documents attached</b></p>
	<p>Appendix 1 – Expansion Proposals</p>