

Bike leasing scheme on the cards

❑ *Bike leasing scheme on the cards but not bike hire like London?*

A project to help city residents get in the saddle could receive the green light next week as part of a bid to increase cycling in the capital. A new bike leasing scheme would offer the public the chance to try travelling on two wheels without the commitment of having to buy their own bike first.

Under the proposal, up to 200 new and refurbished cycles would be available, as well as safety gear, training and repairs. Based on examples elsewhere, leasing costs could range from around £15 per month to £65 per year, giving users a choice on how long they want to try the scheme.

Transport convenor and chair of the city's cycle forum, Councillor Gordon Mackenzie, said: "People who might quite like to cycle to work, or for fun, are sometimes put off by the upfront costs. This is about providing hassle-free access to bikes so they can see if it's the right option for them. There's still some work to do on the detail, but this proposal could really help encourage cycling in the city and would support our many other actions to make life on two wheels more attractive for everyone."

❑ Councillor Mackenzie added: "Our investment in cycle-friendly initiatives has now doubled, with 5% of the relevant budgets being dedicated to this form of transport, which helps reduce congestion, improves air quality and is often a great way to get around the city. Cycling in Edinburgh has increased by 25% over the last two years and we want to see that go up further."

If the scheme gets the go-ahead, commercial sponsorship will

be sought to help fund it, and it could be managed in partnership with existing local organisations such as the Bike Station. More details would be provided to a meeting of the transport committee in the summer.

Bike Station board member Ian Maxwell, said: "The Bike Station is already putting large numbers of donated bicycles back into use in Edinburgh, and we would welcome the chance to help with all projects that encourage cycling in the city."

The Council has taken various steps to improve the city's environment for cyclists:

Surfaced and lit off-road paths

Built signal-controlled cycle crossings

Introduced 20mph limits on more than 50% of the city's residential streets

Developed two major cycle schemes that are due to open in spring 2012: a 'Quality Bike Corridor' scheme between King's Buildings and the city centre; and, a new 'Family Network' cycle route between Leith Links and Portobello Promenade

Bought safety mirrors which are to be given free to HGV drivers

Monitoring all serious accidents to help identify priorities for road safety works.

The Council has made a commitment to spend a minimum of 5% of its transport budget on cycling for 2012/13, an increase of around 70% on 2011/12. This will help to develop a 'Family Network' of safe, signed, cycle routes across the city along with other improvements for cyclists.

Other initiatives including a pilot project to introduce more on-street storage is being developed and a safety awareness campaign for cyclists and drivers that will be carried out

over the coming months.



Boris Bikes have proved a success - so why not Edinburgh Bikes?

The proposed scheme would operate in a very different way from the Transport for London bike hire scheme, which is designed for more short term use, but which The Edinburgh Reporter uses all the time when in London, and also in Dublin where the Dublin Bikes scheme has proved very successful. So we ask why not in Edinburgh?

The motion (number 10.2) proposing the scheme will go before the Council for approval at its next meeting on Thursday 15 March.