

OFO want to share their bikes with you

Transport for Edinburgh, the city's transport body has a goal of getting people on their bikes. They say they would like 15% of all commutes and 10% of all journeys to be by bike in three years' time.

The City of Edinburgh Council already spends 11% of its transport budget on cycling infrastructure and has its own active travel policy to encourage the use of bikes in the capital. TfE envisage dockless bikes which will make cycling more accessible and integrate it with the city's public transport. A primary concern is road safety and in the code which they have drawn up they state that 'Dockless bike share schemes must work for everyone without impacting, or causing a danger to, other road users.'

The idea is to have a number of bikes available for the public to use within a certain area which will be 'geo-fenced'.



This week we met representatives from [ofo](#) a company bidding for the right to run the bike hire scheme in the capital.

Their bikes are extremely easy to use with an app which you download to your phone as the means of unlocking. The bike can be readied for use in under a minute, and locking the bike again is very simple too.

Matthew Sparkes from the company told us Edinburgh has a tender process for a bike hire scheme and **ofo** hope to bring their distinctive yellow bikes to Edinburgh.

He explained how it works : "Every bike has a smart lock on the back. It locks the bike by pushing a rod through the back

wheel, meaning you don't have to lock the bike to anything. When the rod is in place you cannot ride the bike. We have a smartphone app which helps you to find a spare bike and we will have hundreds all over the city. You walk up to one, scan the bike and the lock opens. As soon as you're finished you just push the lock down and walk away.

"It costs 50p for every ride for half an hour. There is no deposit to pay, it is backed with a credit or debit card."

Even though the bikes are light it will be difficult to steal them. To protect against theft every bike has a GPS chip inside the lock and it communicates its position back to **ofo** all the time.

There are several companies doing this but **ofo** say that they are the experts who began first. The company already has over 3,000 bikes on the street in the UK, in London, Cambridge, Oxford, Norwich and Sheffield, although the company began in Peking where founder David Dai set up the first bike sharing platform.

If OFO win the right to set up in Edinburgh then Paul Spence will run the Edinburgh operation. At present he is Operations Performance Manager for the UK.

He said : "I'm Edinburgh born and bred and a keen cyclist and I think this scheme would go down very well here. We are long overdue a dockless cycling platform and I would be very excited to launch and manage that here.

"It is important to protect a UNESCO site such as this, so there would be 30 marshals using E-bikes and trailers and using electric vehicles. They would be working throughout the day and evening to redistribute our bikes across the city."

The system is also self-regulated by awarding extra points if

customers return bikes to hubs. Paul thinks the hubs for collecting and returning bikes might be tram stops, bus and train stations, university buildings and other key city centre areas. You have to return the bike to a place where bike parking is allowed.

And if you are wondering where the name of the company comes from, they say that the logo looks like a person riding a bike!



Paul Spence shows off one of the bikes