

Bike hire scheme skids to a halt

The Just Eat Bike Hire scheme which allowed anyone with a credit card to pick up a bike and drop it somewhere else in the city will close at midnight on Friday after just three years of operation.

The operation was introduced by The City of Edinburgh Council with much fanfare, and after many years of councillors trying to set such an operation up, but it appears that the level of vandalism has been just too much for the operators, Serco, to cope with. A council spokesperson said that there have been efforts made to extend the current contract but it was not possible to reach an agreement satisfactory to both parties.

The docking stations are all but a memory now – most are broken by vandals and some were removed during the lifetime of the bike hire scheme. The move to promote active travel has been very successful in other cities such as London, Paris and Dublin. It aligns with the council's ambitions to achieve net zero carbon by 2030. The scheme operators believe the the cycle hire scheme has saved over 162.5 tonnes of CO₂ during the last three years.



Depute Leader of the City of Edinburgh Council, Cllr Cammy Day, CEO of Transport for Edinburgh George Lowder, Transport Convener Cllr Lesley Macinnes and CFO of Serco Angus Cockburn at the launch in 2018. The colour scheme was changed after this launch. PHOTO The Edinburgh Reporter

Transport Convener Cllr Lesley Macinnes said: “It’s a pity that this very popular and successful bike hire scheme has had to close and we very much wish this wasn’t the case. However, we’re working hard on exploring future options for the Capital – the appetite is clearly there to keep access to bikes for everyone in Edinburgh given around quarter of a million trips were made by hire bike last year alone, and we’ll do what we can to make that happen.”

George Lowder, Chief Executive of Transport for Edinburgh, said: “It’s incredibly sad that the scheme is closing. The Edinburgh Cycle Hire Scheme was a catalyst to help people get back on a bike and start cycling again or cycle when they did not have access to a bike of their own.

“It is hugely disappointing for all our team, who have worked tirelessly to build a successful service. We will be supporting the Council to develop options for a new scheme and to continue to promote cycling in Edinburgh. We’d like to thank all our customers for their loyalty, support and for choosing a sustainable way to travel. And we’re asking anyone who finds a cycle hire bike abandoned after the scheme’s closed to contact us on 0131 200 2000 or TfEBikes@edinburgh.gov.uk and we’ll arrange collection.”

Sam Jones, Micromobility Director for Serco UK & Europe, who operated the cycle hire scheme, said: “We would like to thank all of our dedicated people, Transport for Edinburgh and its partners, and the general public for supporting Edinburgh Cycle Hire over the last three years. We are incredibly proud of what the scheme has achieved, supporting residents and visitors to travel around the City in a sustainable way. The feedback from our customers since announcing the closure has reinforced the positive impact that the scheme has had and how important active travel is in the city.

“Serco operates successful cycle hire schemes in other areas of the UK and we truly hope we can return to Edinburgh in the

future to continue the journey.”

The scheme in Edinburgh was the fastest growing at one point with city residents taking the majority of the 234,500 trips in 2020 when there were travel restrictions and the country was in lockdown.

Transport for Edinburgh is said to be exploring options for a new bike hire scheme.



Just Eat e-bikes were introduced in March 2020. Photo: Martin P. McAdam www.martinmcadam.com



Bike hire scheme docking station at The Meadows 16 September 2021 PHOTO © The Edinburgh Reporter