

# **Transport charity says Edinburgh will be left behind without a cycle hire scheme**

**Edinburgh risks being left behind other global cities if it continues without a shared bike scheme, national shared transport charity Collaborative Mobility UK (CoMoUK) has warned.**

CoMoUK said the Scottish capital cannot afford to jeopardise its international reputation as rivals promote communal cycling as a sustainable way for residents and visitors to get around.

It has urged Edinburgh councillors not to abandon efforts to replace the popular Edinburgh Cycle Hire Scheme (ECHS) after city council officials recommended dropping an investigation into options for revival.

Edinburgh is now the only Scottish city, apart from recently inaugurated Dunfermline, without a bike share scheme.

CoMoUK highlighted there are more than 40 operating or planned programmes across the UK with 2.8 million members as of March this year.

These are attracting people back to cycling, delivering mental and physical health benefits, and helping the environment.

There are more than 3,000 bike share systems in cities around the globe, connecting residents and tourists to businesses and attractions.

Edinburgh's scheme ran from 2018 to 2021 and proved successful before coming to an end.

The Edinburgh Reporter understands that the costs of obtaining sponsorship now (as opposed to when the scheme ended) for such a scheme which was run by Serco (and was one of the most successful in the UK) would be about tenfold.

It depends very much on the budget agreed in February 2023 whether or not any progress can be made with finding a new partner. Meantime one of the last discussions was on 11 November 2021. Further details can be read [here](#).

Research by CoMoUK found cycling in Edinburgh increased sharply following its introduction with a 70 per cent rise in the number of trips through the scheme in 2019.

The council previously acknowledged the ECHS as the fastest growing scheme in Britain with 234,500 trips made in 2020.

CoMoUK recently issued guidance to councils urging them to treat bike share as a key part of their sustainable transport offer and ensure there is sufficient funding for it to be developed to support all communities.

The charity said potential funding gaps can be plugged through a flexible allocation of capital funding.

It also recommended councils explore using revenue raised from policies such as developer contributions, government funding pots and any clean air zones.

Sponsorship, corporate membership, and advertising can also help raise revenue.

Separate research by CoMoUK found the growing popularity of bike share schemes across the UK has reduced car mileage for each user by an estimated 3.7 miles every week.

Electric bikes (e-bikes) are also soaring in popularity because they reduce journey times and help riders to tackle hills – with the bikes now appealing to all generations.

Rachael Murphy, Scotland director of CoMoUK, said: “The ECHS was an extremely welcome addition to Edinburgh, with clear

social and environmental benefits for all.

“Bike share supports health and wellbeing, triggers sustainable travel behaviours, cuts car miles and works alongside bike ownership.

“It also plays an important role in the movement of tourists, allowing them to explore attractions in a leisurely and inexpensive way.

“We understand the financial challenges facing local government, particularly during the cost-of-living crisis.

“But simply abandoning bike share cannot be an option if we are to achieve net zero targets and address the issue of private car ownership, which massively contributes to Scotland’s emissions.

“Edinburgh has a well-deserved international reputation for its festivals, arts and culture, and should not be left behind on the world stage when it comes to sustainable transport.

“Shared transport such as bike share schemes, along with car clubs, demand responsive transport and e-scooters, are the key to achieving our goals.”



Just Eat e-bikes. Photo: Martin P. McAdam [www.martinmcadam.com](http://www.martinmcadam.com)