

Cycle hire scheme unlikely to be reintroduced due to cost

Bringing a cycle hire scheme back to Edinburgh would cost around £20 million, estimates have revealed, as the council said one returning to the capital any time soon is “unlikely” amid mounting funding pressures.

Officials who investigated setting up another bike rental service said a city-wide scheme would be the preferred option, with a proposed 1,540 bicycles and 140 docking stations.

Councillors will meet to discuss the costs and feasibility of the project next week.

City Transport Convener Scott Arthur said he would like to see the scheme up and running again but pointed out the council faces £80m in cuts this year.

The previous Just Eat-sponsored cycle hire scheme in Edinburgh was marred by thefts and vandalism. Intended to be self-financed from rental and sponsorship fees, it also ran into funding difficulties, causing contractor Serco to walk away from its deal with the council in September 2021.

Following-up on its pledge to look at “alternative options,” proposals have been included in a report going before the transport committee on Thursday.

Under the 'preferred option' arrived at by transport officers, 140 docking stations would be set up across the city with 1,120 bikes and 420 e-bikes, costing the council £20 million to set it up. This would work out at £4m a year for five years and then an annual £2m subsidy thereafter.

Cllr Arthur said: "That works out at £12,820 per bike.

"Allocating £4 million a year to this, are there other ways we can better spend that money?

"With the amount of money involved, it seems to be unlikely."

But he added the council could explore "smaller schemes that are cheaper to run".

A report said: "It is important to note that the findings of the options appraisal do not take account of financial deliverability and, in particular, the Council's forecast pressure on capital and revenue budgets.

"Should the council seek to progress any option, provision would have to be made in both the capital and revenue budget setting process for financial year 2023/24 and beyond.

"As the project would commit the Council to significant costs for at least five years, any investment would be dependent on a balanced medium-term budget revenue budget."

by Donald Turvill

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