

New Edinburgh bike hire scheme to run from August

A new bike hire scheme will be launched in the capital by August to replace a version that collapsed almost four years ago.

Edinburgh Council is set to decide between two operators, Dott and Lime – and the scheme would cost the city nothing.

Councillor Stephen Jenkinson, convener of the Transport and Environment Committee, said: “Neither of the companies were looking for any form of subsidy or any kind of finance to deliver the service.

“Both companies were comfortable that they had the processes in place to manage any risk to the delivery of the service.

“We’ve got to prove that this is successful [through the trial], and that the demand is there. If the demand is there, the scheme will expand through time. It’s quite fluid.

“If the people of Edinburgh deem that this is a success, I can certainly see the scheme expanded in coverage, moving across much of the city.”

The no-cost model for the council differs from the previous Just Eat bikeshare scheme, which saw the city spend £1,500,000 per year for its upkeep.

An officer said a ‘diluted rollout’ would take place by August, with 100 to 200 bikes in the city centre.

Within a few months, they expect to have 600 to 800 in and

near the city centre, with the possibility of further expansion.

The implementation will run as a two year trial, with data collected from the trial informing what the city does next for a permanent cycle hire scheme.

Officers are expected to select a winner between Dott and Lime if a report before the Transport and Environment Committee is supported by councillors.

Edinburgh's previous bike share scheme used metal docks, where riders would begin and end their journeys.

But, whichever firm wins the competition will use a dockless system, with bikes instead being picked up and left off at designated points in the city.

The city's last bike hire scheme, operated by Serco, ended in September 2021 after the contractor backed out.

Cllr Jenkinson said the scheme would open new travel options, even if its scope was limited to the city centre.

He raised how it could help his own commute, saying: "To get home quite often, I'll get two buses. I'll jump on a bus, then I'll get off at Tollcross, and I'll get another bus.

"If I had the opportunity to use a bike to get from the city chambers to Tollcross, then get a bus up the road, would I do that? Quite possibly.

"So that in itself, rather than waiting 10 minutes on a bus, I could actually get home quicker and use multiple modes of transport. And I think that's a good use case for having these schemes."

According to Cllr Jenkinson, the only infrastructure needed will be new paint on pavements at the drop off and pick up points.

The trial bike share scheme will differ from the failed Just Eat bikes scheme in several other ways as well.

Bikes will be fitted with GPS trackers and gyroscopes, allowing the cycle scheme operator to know when bikes are out of place or on their side – which officers hope will help reduce theft and vandalism.

In addition, the GPS trackers on the bikes will be used to track their location, with software ensuring that they are only dropped off and picked up from approved locations.

The previous scheme faced issues with bikes being left away from docking stations, damaged, stolen, or thrown in various bodies of water, most notably the Union Canal.

Cllr Jenkinson suggested that the GPS tracking could be used in future to limit the speed of the bikes in various locations, such as on pedestrianised streets.

By Joseph Sullivan Local Democracy Reporter