

EDINBURGH CYCLE HIRE SCHEME

An update from Transport for Edinburgh

In August 2015 The Transport and Environment Committee of the City of Edinburgh Council directed Transport for Edinburgh (TfE) to investigate the cycle hire market and procure a cycle hire scheme for the City. This work began in earnest in 2016, just as the UK cycle hire market was changing, as a consequence of “Bike and Drop” schemes and the more traditional companies consequently reviewing their business models.

Following extensive market research, a refresh of feasibility studies and wide consultation, Transport for Edinburgh conducted an Industry Engagement Day in September 2017. Some twenty companies attended; a mix of traditional multi-nationals, new start-ups and smaller local operators.



Part of the challenge for TfE is that although 10% of the City’s transport budget was, and continues to be, allocated to cycling, the vast majority of this is invested in improving cycling infrastructure. There was, and is, no capital or revenue budget to procure a cycle hire scheme. The approach would require an innovative approach with a chosen partner.

The Industry Engagement Day was an opportunity for TfE to explain their aspirations for a scheme for the City and to hear from potential providers if this was a realistic proposition. An Invitation to Tender was issued on 14 December 2017, eliciting 32 notes of interest and a shortlist of 4 qualifying bids for evaluation. This procurement process and the evaluation of shortlisted bids was conducted in January and February of 2018. It included an evaluation of the bikes, supported by Spokes Member, Ewan Jeffrey. The TfE Board approved the recommended preferred bidder, Serco, in March 2018.

The Evaluation Panel and TfE board were impressed by all the bids, but had considerable confidence that Serco were absolutely committed to delivering an enduring, socially inclusive and accessible scheme for the City and that Serco would work in close partnership with TfE to do this. The scheme will be delivered through the award of a concession. The detail of this has now been agreed between TfE and Serco. A Serco Project Team is now in place and working closely with TfE to develop the detail for the delivery of the scheme.

Concurrent with the procurement process TfE developed a Memorandum of Understanding with The University of Edinburgh, in order that the University would be an active partner for the scheme and would help coordinate the engagement of all other Edinburgh Universities and Colleges.

So What's Coming?

The initial 3-year project will deliver 500 cycles and 100 electric cycles. Around 30% of the hire stations will be physical docks, especially in conservation areas. The remaining 70% will be an innovative solution that will be clearly marked and geo fenced, but not requiring a physical dock.

The first 200 manual cycles will be operational this Summer and in time for the start of the academic year in mid-September. This will build to the full 600 being available by April 2019. Serco and TfE believe that the City can sustain some 2000 cycles and the intention is for the scheme to grow incrementally, driven by customer demand and an ongoing review of usage. It is anticipated that after an initially successful 3 years, the scheme will be extended for a further 4 years.

The cycles themselves are the same new Pashley bikes currently being brought into the Santander Cycle Scheme in London, although with a redesigned gear set to better suit Edinburgh. Initial roll out of the scheme will start in the the City Centre, including at Waverley Station and University of Edinburgh sites. Individuals will be able to hire cycles either through an annual membership, on a daily basis, or for shorter periods. This latter aspect requires further market research to determine if a single ride or perhaps an hour long hire is preferable.

A number of Serco red demonstrator cycles are already in the City, including an electric prototype. These are being used to help develop various aspects of the scheme and you may well see them out and about. It is, however, likely that the final versions will be blue rather than red. It is currently planned that the demonstrator cycles will be available to try during Clean Air Day on 21 June.

