



Public Bike Share Accreditation  
Criteria

Full, Provisional and Basic Standard Accreditation

**Final 27.03.24**

## **Public Bike Share Accreditation Criteria**

### **Introduction**

CoMoUK, the UK representative body for shared transport has created an accreditation scheme to promote good practice in the sector. This tool is designed to help local authorities manage how schemes are designed and operated in their area regardless of whether the operator has been granted public funding or just access to public space.

Accreditation was developed in consultation with a wide range of stakeholders. It will ensure a collectively agreed set of standards are upheld across the industry to maintain the reputation that bike share has gained as a valuable component of sustainable city transportation. The criteria have been carefully chosen to provide a robust framework whilst not stifling innovation.

### **Why be accredited?**

Bike share operators and suppliers benefit from obtaining Accreditation by having a shortcut badge to demonstrate their credentials to local authorities and other partners. By supporting the scheme, operators are ensuring industry standards are maintained whilst also providing key data to support the development of bike share.

### **Developing Accreditation for a changing market**

CoMoUK reserves the right to update the Accreditation criteria and application forms to reflect changes in the public bike share market and new models of bike sharing that are emerging. Any changes will be done in consultation with all stakeholders and will be done at the point of renewal each year unless there is a consensus for an urgent change between these dates. Details of the consultation process are outlined in appendix 1. Any updated versions will be published on the CoMoUK website ([www.como.org.uk](http://www.como.org.uk)) and circulated to all accredited operators.

There are two standards of Accreditation available; full and provisional.

### **Full Accreditation**

Full Accreditation applies to operators who are already established and have at least one scheme in operation in the UK. Full Accreditation requires operators to meet all the requirements set out in the full Accreditation application form (see below).

Some bike share operators who are new to the market may wish to work towards full Accreditation as their operations move past the launch phase. In these circumstances, provisional Accreditation may be appropriate.

### **Provisional Accreditation**

Local authorities entering contractual agreements with operators need to have assurances that they can deliver what they claim, but at the same time, new entrants

to the industry may wish to apply for opportunities prior to having all operational elements in place.

It is difficult for CoMoUK to give the necessary assurances without the applicant being operational and proving what they can deliver. Provisional Accreditation will only be awarded on the basis that the operator provides CoMoUK with written details of a set of milestones leading up to a launch date and evidence at each stage will be required. CoMoUK will update relevant local authorities on the conversion process and expects all outstanding documentation to be provided to convert to full accreditation within 60 days of receipt of a MOU / contract or launch whichever is sooner. If repeated delays to launch or receipt of documentation occur, provisional status will be revoked until rectified.

A typical scheme specification document would also ask a series of questions to assess the suitability of the proposed bike share scheme, allowing both provisional and full accredited operators to be judged on their respective merits, such as bike share model and operational experience. To provide full transparency and assurances to those local authorities assessing operators, CoMoUK will provide an annex to the accreditation certificate outlining areas which require further evidence post launch.

We request that provisional accreditation is not used to limit new entrants to the UK bike share market as this can inhibit innovation and limit competition.

### **Accreditation Scheme**

The criteria for the provisional and full Accreditation are split into five sections; each section contains the requirements needed and a brief explanation of what is included. The five sections are:

- **1. Business requirements**
- **2. Service provision requirements**
- **3. Maintenance and safety requirements**
- **4. Data collection requirements**
- **5. Maintaining standards**

To be awarded Accreditation, each operator will need to complete the appropriate application form and provide the appropriate supporting documentation outlined in the application form.

To be awarded full Accreditation it will be necessary for an operator to achieve all of the requirements in full. The Accreditation process will require operators to renew their Accreditation on an annual basis.

A charge will be levied each year by CoMoUK to cover the cost of administering the scheme. A penalty charge of £100 may be made if substantial information is missing on an application and a second appraisal is required. Price rises may be applied each year. Each renewal year runs April to April regardless of when a scheme is approved and operators will be notified at least one month in advance of any price rises. The core fee will be charged at 50% for those applying in the second half of the year.

All materials supporting the application will be provided in English.

***Payment structure from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2024 (prices exclude VAT)***

- £3250 accreditation fee plus £800 membership fee, provisional accreditation fee is 50% i.e. £1625 with the remaining £1625 to be paid on conversion to full status.
- plus a bike levy of:
  - £0.50 per bike for first 1000 bikes
  - £0.65 per bike for 1000+ bikes

based on the number of bikes at 31<sup>st</sup> March each year.

A flat membership fee of £300 is applicable to community bike share schemes with less than 50 bikes, the bike levy is only applicable to bike schemes with more than 100 bikes in total across UK.

Accredited operators will be entitled to two passes to the CoMoUK annual conference.

**1. Business Requirements**

**1.1 The operator must have a formal constitution and/or be a limited or public liability company**

Bike share operators will be required to show that they have a formal organisational structure in place. Limited companies must produce foundation documents and demonstrate that they have a formal management structure in place, such as a board of directors.

Other operators such as community groups will have, as a minimum, a formally adopted, written constitution. These groups will also have an elected body that form an operational committee; these will include a Chair, Secretary, and Treasurer as a minimum.

**1.2 Operating experience. Applicants must submit details of relevant operating experience in UK or overseas and a reference from at least one current public sector partner.**

1.3 The operator must submit an annual report and accounts on application, unless they are not yet operational in which case, they must submit a similar publicly available statement of how the scheme will be operated

In all cases the report must include details of the current number of bikes, stations, members, pricing structures, location(s) of operation and operational methods. It will also include a statement on company procedures should the operator cease to operate in a particular area, close operations or be taken over. Published audited accounts or management accounts for the previous year must also be submitted. If these are not available CoMoUK requests evidence of financial sustainability.

On renewal, it is the duty of the operator to make CoMoUK aware of any new documentation or changes to operating conditions that have a material impact on their Accreditation status (for example new operational locations that are to be included in the Accreditation). CoMoUK reserves the right to request updated documents on renewal of Accreditation (such as published accounts for the most recent year) or if it believes that substantial organisational changes have occurred (e.g. merger or acquisition).

1.4 The operator must meet the following ethical, social and environmental standards

To ensure high environmental standards are maintained the operator will have either:

- ISO14001 Accreditation, or
- B Corp Certification, or
- An Environmental Policy and Environmental Impact statement to be approved by CoMoUK.

To ensure operators demonstrate fair work practices, operators will demonstrate that they:

- Support the Government Living Wage by guaranteeing a minimum standard of income for all employees and sub contactors.
- Have an Equality and Diversity Policy.

1.5 All operators to publish an assessment of their full lifecycle carbon emissions in their annual report, and to ensure this is reflected in any reported carbon savings.

1.6 All operators must make reference to their accreditation status on their website.

## 2 Service Provision Requirements

### 2.1 The operator must offer a self-service bike share service

To be accredited the bike share operator must provide a service that conforms to ALL of the criteria listed below.

The bike share must have:

- Bikes which are accessible at the time of the hire commencing without assistance from a member of staff using one or more recognised access systems (e.g. credit card, smart card, App or code provided by telephone) accessible to all customers,
- The scheme will be accessible to single use “walk-up” customers, and not require membership,
- Prices allow customers to use the bikes and pay for short trips rather than or as well as whole day hires, which may include a range of tariffs suitable for the differing user requirements; commuting, leisure and utility,
- Customers pay according to a clear price structure,
- Pricing must be available to customers at the time of booking and include any excess fees for over running,
- Bikes will be available to customers 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year. This rule allows for block bookings of a proportion of bikes by corporate members. Variations in service are permitted with agreement from local partners -e.g. for extreme weather or large events,
- Bikes will be available in convenient locations where there is customer demand e.g. residential or commercial areas,
- The scheme will allow for one way trips,
- Have defined docking stations, parking bays, and /or geo-fenced stations with wireless return detection or marked / agreed public stands,
- Or where dock-less systems are employed to allow parking away from stations, the operator must demonstrate that tools including geo-fenced restrictions, penalties, incentives and rebalancing are deployed to:
  - ensure bikes can be returned to preferred identifiable locations as defined by the local authority partner,
  - ensure bikes aren’t allowed to cause an obstruction,
  - ensure bike are not allowed to become excessively untidy,
  - ensure parking is not allowed in locations local authorities have identified as no-go parking areas.

Operators would be expected to proactively push information about the rules for parking in their terms and conditions to their users through all communication channels.

## 2.2 Minimum specification of bikes

The bike specification should meet the countries legal requirements. For UK bike share bikes this is:

- [the ISO 4210:2014](#) standards for bicycles and / or BS EN15194:2017 (excluding the requirement for the provision of a user manual) for electric pedal assist bicycles. Certificates are required for each new model of bike as they are added to the fleet,
- Front bike light should be compliant with either:  
If a constant light, then it should be compliant with BS6102-3.  
If it is a flashing light, then it should be compliant with Road Vehicle Lighting Regulations - Regulation 13(g), and ISO6742-1:2015 Clause 4.2.
- Each bike to be identifiable e.g.: numbered.

## 2.3 Local authority permission is required, and the number of bikes deployed should be appropriate to the demand in the area

Operators should never deploy bikes for hire in an area where the local authority has not given permission. Operators should deploy up to the number of bikes which has been agreed with the relevant local authorities.

Bikes that are causing an obstruction should be removed as soon as possible by operators once they are notified or become aware.

Operators should attempt to collaborate with neighbouring authorities to those with whom they have permission to operate.

Operators in London must meet the specific permission conditions defined by the TfL Code of Practice and any additional requirements of each borough, or any pan-London approach agreed by TfL, London Councils, boroughs and operators.

Operators should use all measures at their disposal to ensure that riders end their trips in areas the operator has permission to operate in and that riders park considerately. These measures may include clearly designating where and how to park in communications to riders and, in the case of non-compliance, cutting electric assistance in the case of e-bikes or fining riders.

Bikes that are ridden into boroughs with whom an operator does not have an agreement may be left for re-hire with the agreement of the borough concerned. Where permission for re-hire has not been granted by the borough concerned, a procedure must be in place to move the bikes within locally agreed timeframes.

#### 2.4 The operator will have a rebalancing system in place to ensure customer demand is met and bikes are not allowed to build up and cause obstructions

The operator must submit details of their operational plans to ensure stations or geo fenced stations are not left full or empty and customer demands for collection and drop off are met. In systems without parking bays, the bikes must be rebalanced to geo fenced areas and not allowed to build up in an untidy and unsafe manner in any areas. Systems must be in place to ensure that hot spot areas where parking is prohibited are kept clear at all times. Dynamic pricing and user incentives are acceptable tools as part of the operational plan. Specifics of service level agreements will be agreed with each local authority or contractor.

Where possible efforts should be made to reduce use of petrol or diesel vans for redistribution.

#### 2.5 Operators must be easily contactable

To deal with members' problems, operators must be easily contactable by telephone or other means such as text or in app chat. This should cover core business hours supplemented with a tried and tested system to deal with out of hours queries within an acceptable timeframe agreed by the operator and local authority.

To reduce the number of out-of-hours queries, systems will be put in place to deal with non-serious matters. Customers must be able to access information on the procedure in the case of:

- No space available for drop off (where relevant)
- Not being able to access the bike
- A bike being returned late (where relevant)
- Damage being discovered on the bike before riding
- A bike developing a fault or being involved in an accident.

#### 2.6 All operators must provide user information with terms and conditions on their website and or app

To ensure that members are aware of how to access and return the bikes and how to deal with emergencies and breakdowns, a set of "frequently asked questions" or handbook must be available on the operator's website or on application. This will include all telephone numbers that may be needed should any problem arise from using the bike including a simple procedure for reporting faulty bikes.

#### 2.7 Operators should adopt ethical pricing strategies



Operators are expected to adopt sustainable long-term pricing strategies which are based on sustainable rates not designed to undercut and eliminate competitors or support price dumping strategies with a view to later implementing significant increases. This doesn't preclude special offers and rates designed to help specific low-income user groups.

#### 2.8 Deposits, authorisations on payment cards and charges for damage taken by the operators must be set at a reasonable level

To protect the operators from cost of damage, theft or unpaid charges, it may be necessary to request a deposit or card authorisation from the customer. In all cases the deposit must not be more than the cost price of replacing or repairing the bike. Members will be made aware of what charge will be payable in the event of all scenarios.

All deposits must be returned to the customer within 10 days of termination of the service contract, any deductions must be itemised and supporting documentation and/or receipts provided. Credit card authorisations should not last longer than 48 hours after the end of the hire period. The operator's procedures with deposit should be clearly visible to users.

#### 2.9 All operators must have a complaints policy on their website and /or app

Operators will have a procedure with which members can raise complaints which will be made available to members on commencement of hire. The procedure should provide contact details of CoMoUK if members are dissatisfied with treatment by the operator.

#### 2.10 In the event of a withdrawal of operations, operators must have an appropriate procedure in place

In the event of there being a temporary closure of a parking bay, operators will where possible provide prior notice at the station and via electronic communications.

In the event that an operator ceases operations or withdraws services from a specific area, operators will give their customer two months' notice if this is practicable. Where the decision is the operators to close the scheme, they will also offer customers information on other bike share schemes if available. We request that operators advise CoMoUK of their intention to withdraw services or close as early as possible. Operators may also seek advice from CoMoUK on an appropriate closing down procedure.

#### 2.11 All operators have to comply with data security legislation.

Operators must demonstrate compliance to the 2018 General Data Protection Regulations. Privacy policies need to include a clear statement of what intentions there are for any data gathered. Operators must notify CoMoUK with changes to privacy policies during the year with highlighted changes.

Accreditation also requires an outline of how user registration provides prominent, specific, data use consent opt-ins separated for different purposes.

### 2.12 All operators to consider equality impacts of schemes

In a first step towards addressing inclusion in bike share, the accreditation will now include a voluntary agreement to:

- Operators to provide us with whatever equality impact assessments they may have carried out on schemes.
- Operators to engage with inclusion forums with authorities where appropriate.

## **3 Maintenance and safety requirements**

### **3.1 All schemes must have adequate insurance.**

All schemes must be covered by the necessary insurance to meet the legal requirements of the country in order to protect the safety of other road users, property and bikes and to protect the operator. For those using the accreditation within the UK please provide evidence for the cover outlined below. Please note some cities in the UK may require £10 million public liability cover.

#### *Employer's Liability:*

The operator must take out and maintain throughout the annual period of Accreditation - Employer's Liability insurance to the value of a minimum TEN MILLION (£10,000,000) POUNDS STERLING in respect of any one claim and unlimited in the period.

#### *Public and Product Liability:*

The operator must take out and maintain throughout the annual period of Accreditation -Public Liability insurance to the value of a minimum of FIVE MILLION (£5,000,000) POUNDS STERLING in respect of any one claim and unlimited in the period.

Product Liability insurance to the value of a minimum of FIVE MILLION (£5,000,000) POUNDS STERLING in respect of any one claim and in the aggregate.

All insurance certificates and details of cover should be submitted with applications as well as being available to customers within three working days of the request being received. The above insurances must be with an insurance company registered with Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) in the UK, or equivalent body for other EU member states by the council and any operator must not sub-let or sub-contract any part of the commission unless the sub-contractor is similarly insured, unless CoMoUK agrees otherwise. It is the express responsibility of the lead operator to ensure this is the case.

### 3.2 All bikes available for hire must be roadworthy and regularly serviced and maintained

To protect the customer's health and safety all bikes offered for hire must comply with all national legislation regarding roadworthiness.

- Manufacturer's service requirements must be adhered to in full.
- Regular maintenance checks will be undertaken by the operator to ensure compliance with relevant legislation and the Highway Code.
- All maintenance checks will be recorded, and any repairs or adjustments recorded.
- All bikes will be fully serviced at least once a year as a minimum.
- Operators should supply their mechanic staff training policy. All servicing carried out will be supervised by a mechanic qualified to Cytech 2 or equivalent. Details of the certification should be provided on application.

### 3.3 Reactive maintenance

The operator must clearly set out a simple procedure to users for returning, exchanging and reporting faulty bikes.

- Mechanical, technical and vandalism repairs to bikes must be addressed to make safe or unavailable to the public within 24 hours.
- 90% of bikes on the street must be serviceable to avoid faulty bikes being left on the street.
- The operator must develop a system of locating and collecting bikes that have been abandoned or not been returned within 48 hours.
- Mechanical, technical and vandalism repairs to bike share stations must be addressed to make safe to the public within 12 hours.

### 3.4 Bikes and bike parking bays will be always kept clean

To protect the image of bike schemes as a professional service, as seen by potential and actual customers the operator will have a defined cleaning procedure to ensure all bikes and parking bays are kept clean and in good order. As part of the application for Accreditation, operators must outline their checking procedures which will include responding to complaints within 24 hours

### 3.5 Promoting cycle safety

Operators will provide information on how they will promote safe cycling initiatives in their application. Operators will include information in a range of channels such as websites, app, social media and emails about cycle training from local providers, safe cycling messages and how they invest in technology and initiatives to improve safety. It is recommended that operators work with their local authorities to support local initiatives.

## 4. Data Collection

The criteria outlined below are those agreed with all operators and local authority representatives for those with full Accreditation status.

One of the aims of this process is to avoid having different reporting requirements in different local authorities. This does not mean that local and combined authorities cannot make additional requirements. Some aspects may be particularly commercially sensitive and hence may need to be disclosed directly without being included in this process. It should be noted that the data criteria will have to be reviewed annually and there will be an opportunity for revisions and additions at this point.

Operators will commit to meeting the 6 monthly reporting deadlines agreed and data should be free of charge to CoMoUK and relevant authorities.

### **The data will be collated into the following reports:**

**4.1 The CoMoUK Annual Bike Share Report** - an annual report of users that collates information on bike share membership, usage and customer satisfaction. It provides a standardised format to report the impact of bike schemes on travel behaviour, health and the environment allowing local authority partners to make comparisons between their area's data and the national picture. Each operator and public authority will receive anonymised data for their cities as well as the national amalgamated analysis.

Operators are required to demonstrate how they will actively promote the survey through either email or in-app notifications AS WELL AS social media,

providing direct links to the survey to users on our behalf. The data analysis is verified by an independent academic or consultant.

The survey timing will be agreed with stakeholders each year.

**4.2 Six monthly report** template submitted with:

- city / town locations
- number of bikes, e-bikes & cargo bikes per location
- number of active users in last 12 months per location
- trips per bike per day by location

**To view a sample copy of the CoMoUK Annual Report, please see:**

<https://www.como.org.uk/shared-bikes/overview-and-benefits>

All information held by CoMoUK because of applying for Accreditation or participating in the CoMoUK Annual Survey and other data collection exercises is subject to GDPR and no company sensitive information will be disclosed to any other operator or third party. Where data is reported publicly as part of the CoMoUK Annual Survey or in monthly reports to our funding partners, the data will be presented anonymously.

Please note that CoMoUK reserves the right to withdraw an operator's Accreditation if they consistently refuse to cooperate with requests for the data outlined in this document.

## **5. Maintaining Standards**

Principally, the standard of operators will be checked through a renewal of the Accreditation status each year. CoMoUK reserves the right to randomly check the quality of service being provided by each operator and we encourage all stakeholders to provide feedback on operator compliance. If operators do not maintain standards throughout the year then a process has been put in place to review their continued eligibility for Accreditation as outlined below:

1. CoMoUK will write to the operator detailing the areas which are thought to need improvement, and also notify the relevant local and combined authorities and other key partners.
2. The operator has one month to challenge the claims and / or make necessary improvements.

3. If the standards are still not met after this time, CoMoUK in conjunction with the relevant local authority or other key partners will look to suspend or remove the Accreditation status.
  
4. If an operator has not paid the renewal fee due for the whole of the fleet by the 60th day after the renewal invoice is dated, the Accreditation will be revoked. The fee will still be payable and an additional fee will be charged if a subsequent application is made

## Appendix 1

### Consultation process for annual review of criteria

Each year there may be shift in the public bike share market or new models of bike sharing emerging which make desirable or necessary to make changes to the accreditation criteria. All operators apply for accreditation renewal at the same time on 1<sup>st</sup> April each year. Having a collective renewal date allows for any amendments to be made fairly across all operators at once. Changes are only made in consultation with all stakeholders and will generally only be made at this point in the year although there may be a need to review criteria between these dates.

Details of the consultation process are outlined below.

Action	Timing
CoMoUK invites comments on current criteria and proposals for amendments	January
CoMoUK assesses the submissions and shares the suggested changes with operators to gain feedback and test their practical application.	February
Any proposed changes not taken forward for discussion will also be published anonymously with reasons for rejection.	February
Agreement on changes is sought with operators through group or 1:1 discussion.	Early March
Where a consensus cannot be reached on proposed changes the first stage would be referral of the issue to the relevant stakeholders (mainly public sector authorities but also including members) for discussion through email, telephone conferencing or online survey.  If consensus still cannot be reached, then the matter would be referral of the issue to the CoMoUK board to review all opinions and decide upon a course of action.  Notes on the decision process including a summary of comments anonymised will be available on request and CoMoUK reserves the right to publish.	Early March
Final criteria are shared with local authorities.	Mid-March
Final criteria and renewal forms are sent to operators	Mid-March
Renewals are processed, invoices issued, and certificates sent out once all steps are completed.	April