

Guidance for Community Bike Share Schemes



SECTION 02

Planning for success



02: Planning for success

This section will consider some important aspects for developing a bike share scheme, putting you in good stead for setting up and running a successful one



Key ingredients

The success of a scheme will be determined largely by the extent to which its objectives have been met. The advice we provide in this document can help create a successful scheme, but underpinning many of the factors mentioned, CoMoUK believes three things are important to consider:

- **Access to bikes**

Ensuring bikes are conveniently located, in plenty supply and have a simple process that enables as many people as possible to use the bikes. This could also involve having options for booking out bikes for those without bank accounts.

- **Confidence boosting activities**

A package of support on offer to help participants confidently use the scheme and continue to cycle in their everyday lives.

- **Cycle lane infrastructure**

Considering how the bike share scheme can sit with existing safe cycling infrastructure and that the project works alongside other organisations improving active travel routes and facilities in the local area.

These factors are covered in more detail in this guide.

CoMoUK has produced a [separate guide](#) on the further factors needed for successful bike share schemes in cities, some of which can also apply to community groups.

Monitoring and evaluating

Monitoring and evaluating your scheme is vital as it can help improve your service, build ridership, and provide useful information to show funders of the need for, and impact of, your work.

The initial question to ask is what do you want to measure?

Consider why you are setting up the scheme and how these reasons can translate into benchmarks for measuring success. Typical things communities can monitor include:

- Satisfaction levels with the scheme
- Journey types e.g. leisure / commuting
- Number of journeys
- Has joining the scheme led to any behaviour changes – e.g. no longer using a car?
- Carbon savings through modal shift
- Social and health impacts such as improved health amongst scheme users
- Weekly / monthly mileage
- Seasonal differences in bike usage
- Your initial objectives (for example maybe you wanted tourists to use bikes instead of cars)
- E-bikes purchased as result of a trial
- Are there reasons the bikes aren't being used e.g. costs are too high / users are not comfortable making certain routes by bike?

How to monitor and evaluate

Once you know what you want to measure, you need to decide how best to measure it. Some suggestions:

- Pre and post-use questionnaires for riders to complete
- If you've received funding from organisations, make sure you are collecting what you have said you will in applications
- The reality is collecting the data can be time consuming and often onerous for participants - think of simple and creative ways you could get the data and make it easy for participants to respond
- Some of the more high-tech options for managing your scheme can collect data for you, but this will be more expensive - see **Section 6: Bikes and how to share them** for more information
- See [Sustrans guidance](#) for collecting mileage data for e-bikes
- Be flexible - in a [HITRANS](#) led project people started cycling for leisure, then they discovered it was useful for other journeys, so while you may want to aim for a project that facilitates modal shift, leisure journeys could lead to this

Further support for monitoring and evaluating

- CoMoUK runs an accreditation scheme which provides quality standards to help guide your scheme's development - email scotland@como.org.uk for more information
- [Bikes for All](#) partnered with [Glasgow Centre for Population Health](#) who provided the monitoring and evaluation support for their scheme (producing reports / questionnaires and collecting participant feedback) - depending on your budget or scale of scheme, you could source extra support to help with this aspect of the project
- You could participate in CoMoUK's Annual Bike Share Users Survey - email scotland@como.org.uk for more details
- [Example](#) of a follow up survey to capture changes (Arran Eco Savvy)
- [Example template](#) detailing outcomes and indicators



Edinburgh and Lothians Regional Equality Council bike share project

Timeframes

Timeframes for setting up and launching a scheme will depend on your existing set up, resources, capacity and fleet size amongst other factors.

The list below is designed to help you think through tasks that could impact on your scheduling and timeframes. Please note, we provide a longer task list as a tool to help with overall project planning further on in this section.

Time considerations for key scheme tasks

Task area	Set up considerations	Examples of ongoing aspects
Admin	Funding timelines Setting up processes such as booking platforms (if you do not already have this) Creating all the necessary bike hire forms Getting insurance in place	Funding reports Servicing records of bikes Checking payments
Hardware	Lead in times for purchasing storage / equipment (bikes, locks etc.) Getting permission for storage Testing equipment for any issues	Regular bike checks and annual maintenance checks Replacement of bikes Collecting bikes if they require transporting back to where they are stored Rescuing bike users with a puncture or other mechanical issue
People	If you are working with partners, putting all necessary agreements in place Training staff Recruiting, signing up and inducting riders / members	Recruitment of staff / riders / volunteers Ongoing training for members and staff
Engagement	Creating engagement materials Organising events Setting up social media platforms	Regular drop-ins Monthly events See below for community engagement strategy One to one contact - re-engage lapsed users - without being pushy
Monitoring and evaluating	Setting up data capture systems	Reviewing processes Collecting customer feedback

Timing of the project launch

It is recommended to launch a scheme spring time onwards due to a higher chance of better weather to attract riders.

This is not always possible, and some schemes have successes without that timeframe, especially if there is a tailored support package in place.

Supporting documents

Cycling Scotland's [project planner](#) can also help you think through timeframes.

We have produced a [task list template](#) for general points to consider when setting up a scheme.

Community engagement strategy

Communities may have their own strategies and ideas for engaging stakeholders and promoting their projects. In this section we have provided some thoughts for spreading the word about your scheme and getting good buy-in within your area.

Pre-launch activities

Early community engagement with all key stakeholder groups is a key component to the success of schemes. Making sure community groups and the local media are well informed and consulted with, will help to galvanise support. This will allow for the development of a common positive narrative, and the opportunity to continue to build awareness and excitement through regular updates. It is recommended that you nurture a strong communications network, who can share good news stories as well as keeping potential users informed of progress. A study carried out by consultant Beate Kubitz, highlighted the benefit of early engagement for the development of the [Cardiff bike share scheme](#).

You could also involve stakeholders and communities in the design and development of your scheme, ensuring a sense of ownership from the beginning.

- Surveying potential interest and demand among users
- Mapping possible cycling routes
- Focus groups

Launch

The launch of the scheme is an opportunity to maximise interest through a range of promotional activity.

This gives an opportunity to explain to people how the scheme works and provide them with a test ride. Offering a quick trial is a fun thing to do but it also provides a key opportunity to share safety tips.

You could team up with an active travel organisation such as [Sustrans](#) to help run activities and hand out freebies etc.

Ongoing activities

Once the scheme has launched, there is an opportunity to widen the audience of users from residents, commuters and businesses. One key market could be visitors to the area. These can be reached through links with accommodation providers and visitor attractions. Current users could also be offered promotional codes to give to visiting friends.

There are examples of projects which have increased take up by lower income and marginalised groups. Often these are the people who can most benefit from low cost, low emission transport but face barriers to using the systems. Projects such as [Bikes for All](#) in Glasgow and [Better Bike Share](#) in North America have deployed a range of practical and engagement measures to overcome these barriers. These include:

- Investing time to build relationships with key community groups who have strong links to target groups such as charities, faith groups and housing associations
- Hosting engaging activities to raise awareness where the focus may not be on cycling alone e.g. drop-in sessions, talks, mystery tours or a pedal and picnic

- Using images that reflect the people you are trying to attract in marketing materials
- Offering women-only trips and training
- Offering free or low cost use alongside cash payment systems for those without bank accounts or smart phones
- Adding a budget for insurance to take away fears about fines if a bike is damaged (NB: experience has shown that misuse is rare in these contexts, particularly as the users are well known through the project partners)
- Getting creative online as Social media is a common approach to promoting bike share projects e.g. run a competition to get people to name your bikes

Cycling Scotland have an [excellent guide](#) with many more ideas for engaging audiences.

Click [here](#) to see Moray Car Share's example of how they promote their e-bike project on their website.

Operational sustainability

The advice we provide in this document will help pave the way to achieving project longevity. However, how you view the sustainability of your project depends on your vision and objectives. For example, are you setting out to have a two year provision or is this a scheme you want to keep going for many years as a viable transport operation?

Perhaps you are running a volunteer led scheme where people can borrow bikes on an ad hoc basis or as a way to try a bike before purchasing one. This distinction will impact how you view sustainability.

On the next page we have provided an overview of outcomes we think that, when addressed, lead to greater longevity and overall sustainability of a project.

Suggested Outcomes to Help Achieve Sustainability

Desired Outcomes	Required Outputs	How
Happy people	Understanding the needs of your users Getting feedback on customer experience Confidence boosting activities	Surveying at the beginning of the project Regular checking in - formal and informal feedback methods Buddy rides (read Section 4: People and places)
Demand & satisfaction	Monitoring and evaluating	Understanding bike usage (when is demand high / ridership numbers etc.)
Financially sustainable	2 - 5 year business plan	Diverse revenue streams (see revenue income ideas in Section 5: Money, money, money)
Adequate resourcing e.g. people to manage it	Ambitions of scheme should match available resources Be realistic - if volunteer led, make sure tasks are not too onerous	Start small and grow your project based on demand, learning year to year Speak to existing projects about what it took to run theirs Have a steering group to oversee the project A maintenance partner is very useful
Wider connectivity	Integrate your bike share scheme into existing transport schemes such as a car club or bus service	Speak to transport providers in the local area or Regional Transport Partnerships to understand how bikes could complement existing provisions e.g. could bikes be located at a local bus terminal Example: Hooky Car Club in Oxfordshire

Contact: scotland@como.org.uk

Next Steps:

You should now have some ideas for ensuring the sustainability, success and buy-in to your project. With these covered, it is time to consider what sort of scheme might work in your area and what type of journeys your bike could be used for in the next section: **What type of scheme?**



Further help and support from CoMoUK

CoMoUK is the national charity for the public benefit of shared mobility. Founded in 1999, CoMoUK enters its third decade with a depth of expertise and research into shared transport and the built environment.

CoMoUK can provide bespoke information and support on how to set up and develop your community bike share scheme. This includes:

- Helping you to think about business cases and project plans
- Providing examples of best practice and case studies
- Sign posting you to other parties and relevant organisations
- Providing advice on potential sharing solutions for your scheme (such as booking and billing)

To find out more about how we can help you, please contact scotland@como.org.uk for details.

Please also see our website como.org.uk for further information and to sign up to our newsletter and forums.

Find out more about CoMoUK and collaborative mobility online at como.org.uk

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