

# Guidance for Community Bike Share Schemes



## SECTION 03

### What type of scheme?



## 03: What type of scheme?

In this section we help you to think through what elements to consider when trying to decide what kind of scheme may be best suited to you.



### Community bike share approaches

Common approaches to running a community bike share scheme can see them categorised as bike libraries or bike loan schemes. The two types can overlap but in general the distinction is:

#### Bike loans:

- These offer longer term loans of bikes such as 1-6 weeks
- Alongside this model there may be trial sessions or the opportunity to borrow a bike to try it out before signing up to a longer loan
- Examples: [Applecross Community Centre](#) and [Dunblane Development Trust](#)

#### Bike libraries:

- These have bikes available for people to access on a shorter term basis, such as hourly or daily, for a fee (or free) and from one or more locations
- Some can be run from fixed locations such as a shipping container
- Others may be stored in vehicles that move from one place to another
- Example: [Edinburgh and Lothian's Regional Equality Council](#)

Both may also be described as bike pools; ultimately it is up to you what you want to call them.

#### Other:

Our [Models of Bike Share](#) sheet details other types of approaches which can be implemented by communities. However, many of these require a larger number of users to ensure viability and a greater source of funding – both for set up and operational costs. There is the potential for blended approaches as well. Please email [scotland@comouk.org.uk](mailto:scotland@comouk.org.uk) if you have more questions regarding these.

While most community approaches in Scotland tend to be bike libraries / loans, there is one larger scaled scheme run by a community organisation which involves on-street docking stations:

Forth Environment Link run [Forth Bikes](#) in partnership with the operator [Bewegen](#). The former are a community development organisation who received a large amount of funding to set up a scheme covering a broad geographical area.

You can get in touch with them for their guidance document which includes learning from setting up a scheme like this and the associated costs.

Their objectives include providing a sustainable, low cost, regular transport option for the Forth Valley and its large population, which is why on-street docked bikes were suitable

# Understanding what might be right for you

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You may already know what you want your scheme to achieve and how you are going to go about it. If you are not sure though, or you have an idea and still want to do a bit more thinking, we recommend the following points to consider. They are not all necessarily relevant to you, and as many communities are different, with bike share ideas at different stages, there is no one way of doing things. The below can be seen as a pathway to fleshing out your planning process and understanding the needs of the area.

## 1: Understanding how objectives of your scheme can impact the approach

Even if you have a clear idea of what you want your scheme to achieve, it is important to remember that many adapt and change to fit the local needs and context of the location. Therefore, being flexible and receptive to new ideas and demand for the scheme is useful.

For example, you may have started up with 4 e-bikes based in a community centre for local residents to use. However, when word gets out about their availability, various people come to the project and ask if you have child seats so they could use the bikes while doing their nursery drop off and pick up. Therefore a strand of your work could change and look to expand who your users may be.

## 2: Understanding the context of your local area

Where you live may hold some clues as to whether a bike share scheme could work and if it can fulfil a particular purpose.

For example, in Huntly, Aberdeenshire, 25% of the population is over 65, which you could say would favour e-bike users. It is also low in the index of multiple deprivation, with ever reducing public transport links. This highlights a need for improved transport options which Huntly Development Trust factored in when considering how to improve the area and led to the development of a bike loan programme.

## 3: Survey potential users to gauge demand

While this may not be a determining factor of the long-term success of your scheme (as many users emerge through word of mouth etc.), gauging initial demand can be helpful for funding applications, as well as providing ideas for how your scheme could operate. In our community engagement strategy piece in **Section 2: Planning for success**, we talk about surveying as part of a wider effort to secure buy-in to your project. See our [template](#) for suggested survey questions.

## 4: Plotting routes

Get a map of the local area and see what routes are cycle friendly and the distances between amenities. Sustrans and Cycling Scotland will have supplementary information on what makes cycle routes safe. By playing with a map, it can help you work out such thing as:

- Which local journeys are practical by bicycle
- Whether there are any potential hubs that bikes could be located in due their popularity or high density location
- Popular car journeys that could be undertaken by bike instead – such as from the ferry terminal to a local village
- Whether a main employer in the area could be accessed more by shared bikes rather than car

## 5: How many bikes?

Staff / volunteer capacity: depending on your project capacity we recommend starting off small and then growing as you develop skills and have tried and tested systems to run the project.

Population: it is useful to have an idea of how many people you want the bike share scheme to serve, if possible. If you are setting it up with a specific group in mind, such as job seekers in your local area, you may have a better idea of how many are required.

Use your survey results to guide the initial number of bikes purchased.

## 6: Feasibility

If you want in-depth support in working out the type of scheme and its viability in the local area, you could get a consultant to undertake a feasibility study for you. As there is likely a cost to this, it is probably only cost-effective if you are considering a larger scale bike share scheme (e.g. 10 or more bikes).

## Considerations for rural areas

In dispersed communities with less public transport, there is an opportunity to explore the role of e-bikes and community sharing schemes to support rural communities with their accessibility needs. But in general, unless you have high pockets of density in a rural area, it is probably best to have a loan or bike library model.

Disparate cycling trips and no clusters where a lot of people could benefit from a pool of bikes for short journeys, lends itself to using shared bikes to encourage ownership rather than placing them for ongoing communal use. This can be done using a loan / 'try before you buy' scheme.

If you imagine someone living in a village and the community hall has a fleet of bikes to share 3 miles away, it is unlikely a resident would walk three miles to borrow the bike for a day, return it to the community hall and then walk three miles back home. Borrowing the bike for a longer period of time is probably a better option.

## Considerations for loan models

Research by the Energy Saving Trust suggests that behaviour change comes when people try a new habit for up to 4 weeks. The CoMoUK [Shared Electric Programme](#) in 2016 found that people were more likely to go on to buy a bike if they had the longer 3 month loan than a 1 month option. This gave the user more time to embed the behaviour into their lifestyle.

### Long term loans or day loans?

If you are using a loan model, bear in mind that if you have, for example, 5 bikes, only 5 people will be able to have them at one time – and for as long as the loan period you have set. If someone does want to borrow a bike for a day or just one short trip, and you have the means and capacity to oversee this, it could be a good idea to keep a couple of the bikes for this type of use.

Bike loan schemes packaged with cycle training and accessories have previously been proven to be a good method for converting potential cyclists, and the addition of e-bikes into fleets appears to widen the pool and increase success.

Comments from a scheme:

“Day hires can be a strain on staff resources. It is important schemes have resources in place to ensure maintenance, cleaning, meeting people to hand over the bikes and admin. If a bike goes out for half a day through the forest in the rain, the work required for that hire is the same as if the bike is out for a week or a month (assuming no maintenance issues during the hire period).”



## Considerations for on-street:

On-street docks really do require higher density or routes, popular with enough people, to justify operational costs of the scheme. Given this is an unlikely scenario for a community run scheme, we have included information where relevant but mainly signpost readers to existing examples to follow up with. See [Forth Environment Link's](#) guidance for this.

However, there are ways to run on-street schemes in smaller areas which you can find in our [Models of Bike Share](#) document:

- [Brompton Bike Hire](#) have schemes in tiny places where bike lockers are situated in different places and anyone can borrow a bike through their app. A community could run this version by paying Brompton to operate it.
- Pocahantus, Iowa is a town of 1000 people where a not-for-profit on-street bike share scheme called Koloni was run successfully and whose lessons have been shared via their [case study](#).



## Next steps:

This section has hopefully provided you with some ideas for working out what type of sharing scheme you will run, and the types of journeys it could assist with. For more planning around your users, the project team and the location of your scheme, head to **People and places**.



## 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.

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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](mailto:scotland@como.org.uk) for details.

Please also see our website [como.org.uk](https://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](https://como.org.uk)

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