

ACCESS TO BIKE SCHEMES IN SCOTLAND - A REPORT FOR CYCLING SCOTLAND

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

16 July 2020

The research project

Access to bike schemes have an important role to play in making cycling available to all, particularly where they target people who would find it hard to access a bike by other means (e.g. due to socio-economic circumstance or physical disability). They thus meet one of the five high level outcomes of Scotland's Active Travel Framework, the Scottish Government's key policy document for walking and cycling in Scotland.

This research project was undertaken in spring 2020. The aims were to gain a comprehensive understanding of the number, location and scope of access to bike schemes in Scotland, and to identify any gaps in the provision of schemes where funding or support might be targeted in future.

Discussions were held with members of the Cycling Action Plan for Scotland (CAPS) Delivery Forum, together with other organisations in Scotland with knowledge of schemes. This was followed by an online survey of organisations responsible for running schemes.

A total of 17 stakeholder organisations were consulted. The online survey was distributed to approximately 200 organisations and achieved a response rate of around 46%.

Scope of schemes in Scotland

The results showed that a great diversity of schemes operate across Scotland, with countless different operating models. They can include pool bike fleets for specific groups of people, bike loans for particular events, public bike hire, cycle to work schemes, and bike recycling and re-use. Almost 200 named organisations were identified that run at least one type of scheme, and this number is likely to be

an underestimate. The majority of schemes appear to be small, local projects run by community groups, often with just a handful of bikes. Medium-sized schemes typically include those run by established cycling charities, together with on-street bike hire in Glasgow, Edinburgh and Stirling, and schemes run by large organisations such as local authorities and universities which are targeted at staff, students and/or specific communities. Finally, several organisations run large, national schemes covering all of Scotland. These include cycle to work salary sacrifice schemes provided by the private sector and grant or loan schemes funded through the Scottish Government.

This diversity of access to bike schemes shows that a broad range of organisations are getting involved in promoting cycling (thus meeting another outcome of the Active Travel Framework), and that schemes are likely to be adapted to meet local circumstances. However, because each scheme is managed differently it can be harder to keep track of the impact they are having and how they all connect with the Active Travel Framework. In particular, it is important for organisations to monitor the impact of their scheme(s) on people's everyday travel choices.

There also appears to be no national data on the overall volume of bike recycling and re-use in Scotland.

Audience

In general, organisations running access to bike schemes appear to be attempting to reach a broad audience. For example, around a quarter of survey respondents provided children's bikes and 1 in 5 provided adapted bikes to suit people with learning or physical disabilities. More than 70% of people using cycle to work schemes are basic rate

taxpayers, indicating that it is an affordable option for people on different incomes. Broadly speaking, employed people, children, students and people living in the Central Belt appear to be in the best position to use access to bike schemes, whilst the self-employed, non-working adults and people outside the Central Belt have less access.

Funding

The depth and breadth of schemes indicates that there is a clear demand for bikes in wide variety of locations, and many of the survey respondents were keen to expand to reach more people. However funding was a major challenge. Three quarters of survey respondents were reliant on grants and fundraising to finance their scheme(s), and just over half only had funding for their scheme(s) for a year or less.

The difference that funding can make is suggested by the fact that the majority of organisations surveyed had launched their scheme(s) in the past three years, corresponding with a substantial increase in active travel funding from the Scottish Government. In particular, recent Government funding for e-bikes appears to be reaching a lot of communities, with three quarters of survey respondents providing this type of bike.

Recommendations

The overall aim of this study was to gain a comprehensive understanding of access to bike schemes in Scotland, rather than to evaluate their impact or make recommendations for their future. Nonetheless, the research findings do suggest that the following recommendations might be helpful to maximise the benefits of access to bike schemes:

- Provide multi-year funding to give organisations more financial security when running an access to bike scheme and to ensure that access to bike schemes can continue into the future and, where necessary, expand.
- Set clear objectives for access to bike schemes, in line with the objectives and indicators of the Active Travel Framework. In particular, emphasise the importance of monitoring trip purpose and evaluating the impact on modal shift away from private car travel.
- Consider whether it is necessary to increase access to bikes for adults who are self-employed or not working, and people living outside the Central Belt.
- Consider whether it is necessary to collect national data on bike recycling and re-use in Scotland.