

CASE STUDY

LEICESTER CITY COUNCIL



Challenge

Leicester City Council's vision is to "transform Leicester into Britain's sustainable city that will be a great and prosperous place to live but also somewhere that does not place a burden on the planet in future years." To achieve this vision, the council sought expert guidance from international 'Healthy Streets' expert Brian Deegan, one of the main authors of Transport for London's cycling design standards, and these objectives were set:

- reduce congestion;
- improve journey times;
- improve air quality and reduce noise;
- reduce carbon emissions;
- improve quality of life.



Once the objectives were established, improvements were made to the local infrastructure with a view to creating safer and more attractive routes for both cyclists and pedestrians. To reduce the number of short car journeys it's 8,000 employees were making, the council reviewed its Cycle to Work Scheme provision. The review highlighted that it's incumbent scheme provider had a £1,000 cap and charged a 7% 'ownership' fee which were significant barriers to scheme participation - employees could not always get the bike they really wanted and were shocked by unexpected charges.

Solution

During 2016, the council's Transport Strategy Team was introduced to Green Commute Initiative (GCI); an innovative provider of the Cycle to Work Scheme with no £1,000 limit and no fees. This meant employees could chose any type of bike including ebikes. The council committed to using GCI alongside its incumbent provider.

Leicester City Council elected to use a framework agreement established between Somerset County Council and My Staff Shop, a staff benefits provider. This enabled them to follow best practice and avoid a lengthy tender process. My Staff Shop provided the platform through which the council employees accessed Green Commute Initiative's scheme (and other benefits).

GCI worked with the council to establish scheme parameters such the £5,000 spend limit and the salary sacrifice period (12-48 months) and registered the council's chosen Scheme Managers on the GCI portal. Through the portal, the Scheme Managers can approve/reject, progress-check applications and access documents.

The scheme was launched to council employees on 1st April 2019 and within weeks more than £20,000 worth of bikes were acquired. The average order value was more than £1,400. The council in conjunction with the Walk Wheel Cycle Trust (formerly Sustrans), ran guided rides to give council employees the chance to try an ebike for free and build confidence. Since then, all new starters are encouraged to think about commuting by bike.



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Green Bike Pool Initiative

Whilst the new Cycle to Work Scheme was being set-up, discussions took place about the introduction of a pool of ebikes. The council wished to encourage employees to use bikes instead of their own cars when travelling to off-site meetings for council business or when moving between different office locations.

GCI recommended the Green Bike Pool Initiative; a scheme which enables clients to hire a pool of ebikes for a period of 12 months. Ebikes are perfect for commuters and those who are not used to cycling. Hills and distance are no longer obstacles and riders can wear their normal business clothes without getting hot and sweaty.

The council selected six Wisper ebikes for the bike pool; two step-through models, two folding models and two cross bar models. The range of frame meant they could meet almost all requirements from those using the bikes. The ebikes were sourced by Green Bike Pool from local bike shop; Ebike Centre on Granby Street, which was responsible for the regular safety checks. The council also purchased additional accessories such as panniers and helmets.



As part of the 12-month hire package, Green Bike Pool Initiative provided gold standard locks to satisfy the insurance requirements. In addition, the insurance policy provides for a breakdown recovery service should a problem with the bike arise.

The council's ebike pool went live in June 2018 and the Transport Team hosted Bike Confidence sessions for employees who were a little nervous about using an ebike or hesitant about cycling in city traffic. The booking in/out process is managed by the Transport Team with the bikes located at City Hall and Town Hall.

Max Longley, Scheme Manager and Transport Development Officer, said:

"As a cycle friendly workplace, we are always looking for ways which will encourage staff to cycle to work. We opted to go with the Green Commute Initiative as it is the only cycle to work scheme which will allow our staff to purchase bikes above the value of £1000. This is important as it will give staff the opportunity to purchase a wide range of electric bikes. Additionally, we felt that GCI gave staff a fairer deal by not charging high end of scheme fees."

During the first ten months, 102 staff signed up to use the bike pool. The average journey was 5 miles with an average booking duration of 1hr 30mins. During this period, an impressive 1,153 miles were clocked up. This represented a significant drop in the number of short car journeys made and equated to a reduction of approximately 0.34 tonnes of carbon dioxide. All helping to achieve the council's objectives of reducing emissions and improving air quality.

In addition, the council used the ebike pool for behaviour change initiatives which includes business and community led cycle rides.