

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.



Since these objectives were established, improvements have been 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 are making, the council reviewed its cycle-to-work provision. The council's incumbent cycle-to-work provider is restricted by the traditional £1,000 limit and charges an end-of-scheme exit fee. This means that employees cannot always get the bike they really want and therefore uptake has been lower than expected.

Solution

During 2016, the council's Transport Strategy Team was introduced to Green Commute Initiative; a cycle-to-work scheme with no £1,000 limit and no exit fees, on which participants can choose any bike, including commuter-quality E-bikes. This resulted in the council committing to using GCI alongside its incumbent provider.

Leicester City Council elected to use the Framework agreement which was established with Somerset County Council. This enabled them to follow best practice and avoid the overhead of the tender process. This decision introduced the council to My Staff Shop, a staff benefits provider, who were responsible for the Framework agreement. My Staff Shop provided the platform through which the council's employees access the cycle to work scheme.

Green Commute Initiative set-up the council on its Corporate portal which allows appointed scheme managers at the council to approve and progress-check applications. Through the portal, the scheme managers set parameters such as a £5,000 limit on bike packages and a salary sacrifice period of 3 to 48 months.

The scheme was launched to council employees on 1st April 2019 and to-date more than £20,000 worth of bikes has been acquired. The average order value is more than £1,400 and bikes ordered include Wisper E-bikes, Pashley and Trek cycles. Leicester City Council in conjunction with Sustrans has put on guided rides to give council employees the chance to try an E-bike for free and build confidence. In addition, new starters are encouraged to think about cycling to/from and during work .

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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 E-bikes. 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 E-bikes for a period of 12 months. E-bikes 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 E-bikes 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 E-bikes were sourced by Green Bike Pool from local bike shop; E-bike Centre on Granby Street, which is responsible for the safety checks carried out every eight weeks. The council also purchased additional accessories such as panniers and helmets.



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

The council's bike pool went live in June 2018 and the Transport Team hosted Bike Confidence sessions for employees who were a little nervous about using an E-bike 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 is 5 miles with the average booking duration being 1hr 30mins. An impressive 1,153 miles have been clocked up. This represents a significant drop in short car journeys made and equates 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 uses the E-bike Pool for behaviour change initiatives which includes business and community led cycle rides.

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