

READING BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT BY DIRECTOR OF ENVIRONMENT & NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES

TO:	STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENT, PLANNING AND TRANSPORT COMMITTEE		
DATE:	15 JULY 2015	AGENDA ITEM:	14
TITLE:	READYBIKE CYCLE HIRE SCHEME - FIRST YEAR UPDATE		
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1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To update the Committee on the first full year of operation of the ReadyBike cycle hire scheme, future proposals to relocate a small number of underused docking stations and progress with identifying a sponsor for the scheme.
- 1.2 Appendix A - Location of ReadyBike Docking Stations.

2. RECOMMENDED ACTION

- 2.1 To note the success of the scheme to date and progress with identifying a sponsor.
- 2.2 To note the proposals for relocating a small number of underused docking stations and to delegate approval of any relocations to the Lead Member for Strategic Environment, Planning & Transport in conjunction with the Head of Transportation & Streetcare.

3. POLICY CONTEXT

- 3.1 The ReadyBike cycle scheme was launched in June 2014 as a core component of the Local Sustainable Transport Fund (LSTF) programme funded by the Department for Transport. The core objectives of the LSTF programme were to encourage economic growth and to reduce carbon emissions.

- 3.2 The scheme contributes to the objectives of the Local Transport Plan for better 'Connecting Reading' with a transport system enabling people to move around easily, safely, sustainably and in comfort. It allows people to make better transport choices, by offering cycling to those who cannot afford or store a bike or who find maintenance a barrier to cycling. It helps tackle congestion, accessibility, road safety and air quality by encouraging people to switch from motorised transport to cycling.
- 3.3 The ReadyBike scheme is aligned with wider corporate policies including the Sustainable Community Strategy, the Climate Change Strategy and contributes towards health and wellbeing objectives by enabling people to cycle who otherwise may not have access to a bike.

4. READYBIKE SCHEME UPDATE

First Year Usage

- 4.1 The ReadyBike cycle hire scheme was launched in June 2014, comprising of 200 bikes at 27 docking stations. The scheme is operated by the Council's appointed contractor, HourBike. Additional docking stations were opened at Reading Station South in January 2015 following completion of the station interchange works, and at Earley Station in March 2015, increasing the total number of docking stations to 29 within the scheme.
- 4.2 The scheme provides a network of readily accessible bicycles at key local destinations, including education, retail and employment hubs, transport interchanges and areas of high density housing. A plan of the docking station locations is provided at **Appendix A**.
- 4.3 Usage of the scheme and performance of the contractor is monitored on a monthly basis through a set of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs). Officers hold regular review meetings with the contractor to ensure the standard of service is maintained and promotional activities are undertaken to raise the profile of the scheme.
- 4.4 Usage statistics for the first full year of operation show that users of the scheme have cycled an estimated 135,000 miles. There have been over 26,000 individual bike rentals, meaning on average there have been approximately 500 rentals every week of the scheme being in operation. A loyal usage base is being established with over 220 annual subscribers who regularly use the 200 ReadyBikes across the town, and over 7,000 casual subscriptions. The average rental time for a ReadyBike is currently 38 minutes.
- 4.5 As anticipated at the start of the scheme, the higher usage rates coincide with warmer and drier weather. Usage dipped in December, January and

February. However, in April 2015 the number of rentals was up by 62% compared with the previous month. Whilst the number of annual members has remained consistent throughout the winter, casual use has been increasing significantly through the spring and summer months.

4.6 The top ten most used docking stations in the first full year of operation of the scheme were as follows:

- Christchurch Green
- University of Reading (Whiteknights Campus)
- Broad Street
- Town Hall Square
- Bridge Street
- The Oracle (Riverside)
- Thames Valley Park
- Reading Station North
- Caversham Centre
- University of Reading (Earley Gate)

4.7 A number of key flows of ReadyBike trips has emerged throughout the first year, including from Reading Station to major areas of employment (including Thames Valley Park), from the University to the town centre, internal trips within Whiteknights Campus, between Caversham centre and the town centre, and leisure trips within and around Palmer Park.

Scheme Expansion

4.8 Whilst in the majority of cases the scheme has been a success, there are a small number of docking stations have been underused. The least used docking stations in the first full year of operation were Academy Sport (Northumberland Avenue), Longwater Avenue (Green Park), the Madejski Stadium and Lime Square (Green Park). These locations combined account for approximately only 5% of the total usage of the scheme.

4.9 The conclusion of the first full year of the scheme provides an opportunity to review the provision of ReadyBike locations with a view to relocating a small number of docking stations to areas of potentially higher demand. In most cases it is anticipated that the ReadyBike presence would not be removed entirely, rather the number of cycle spaces would be reduced at the existing location.

4.10 In particular there is an opportunity to expand the scheme into West Reading which is not currently served by the scheme. It is recommended that a cluster of docking stations should be implemented at the same time to provide a local network, which would help to encourage a viable level of usage. The following locations have been identified by officers, working in

partnership with the scheme operator, as potential locations for ReadyBike docking stations in West Reading:

- Oxford Road (outside West Reading Library)
 - Tilehurst Triangle local centre
 - Prospect Park (car park off Liebenrood Road)
 - Meadway Precinct local centre
 - Reading West Station
 - Tilehurst Station
- 4.11 The highest priority locations from the list above have been identified as Oxford Road, Tilehurst Triangle, Prospect Park and Meadway, due to both the anticipated level of demand and the practicality of installing a docking station at these locations.
- 4.12 A further opportunity exists to fill gaps in the existing network of ReadyBike docking stations in response to existing areas of high demand, for which the following locations have been identified:
- Caversham centre (St Martin's Precinct)
 - Cemetery Junction local centre
 - Erleigh Road local centre
 - Whitley Street local centre
 - Kenavon Drive
- 4.13 This highest priority from the above list has been identified as Caversham centre due to the fact that the existing seven bike docking station, located outside the telephone exchange on Church Street, empties quickly and therefore there is a risk that no bikes will be available for a period of time if any delay to the redistribution of bicycles occurs. It is anticipated that the opening of the new pedestrian cycle bridge across the River Thames later this year will further increase demand for the scheme from north of the river.
- 4.14 In addition, a few approaches have been received from external organisations offering to fund the provision of new docking stations outside their premises. Such approaches need to be considered in the wider context of the scheme in its entirety to ensure it does not become unsustainable to operate, therefore officers are continuing to review these approaches in partnership with the operator of the scheme.
- 4.15 It is recommended that officers continue to develop proposals for relocating a small number of underused docking stations as outlined above, and to delegate approval of any relocations to the Lead Member for Strategic Environment, Planning & Transport in conjunction with the Head of Transportation & Streetcare.

Scheme Sponsorship

- 4.16 Officers are investigating the possibility of appointing a sponsor for the scheme, which has the potential to further raise the profile of ReadyBike and to provide an income stream to help ensure the scheme is sustainable in the longer-term.
- 4.17 It is anticipated that the main element of the sponsorship arrangement would be advertising on the backguards of the ReadyBikes, with the potential for the sponsor to be included on the scheme website and other promotional materials. In addition we have been seeking feedback from interested organisations regarding further ideas for further sponsorship opportunities relating to the scheme.
- 4.18 An initial advert to invite expression of interest for sponsorship of the scheme has been publicised to help ascertain the potential level of demand for this opportunity, and the proposed next step is to contact local businesses and organisations directly to help identify further interested organisations. It is anticipated that a period of negotiation with interested parties would follow to enable the Council to identify the most beneficial appointment for sponsorship of the ReadyBike scheme.

5. CONTRIBUTION TO STRATEGIC AIMS

- 5.1 The ReadyBike cycle hire scheme contributes towards the following strategic aim:
- To deliver the Corporate Plan Service Priority: keeping the town clean, safe, green and active.

6. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 A Certificate of Lawfulness will be obtained before installation of any additional ReadyBike docking station.
- 6.2 The appointment of a sponsor for the ReadyBike scheme will be undertaken in line with the Council's procurement procedures.

7. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 The cost to relocate each docking station is anticipated to be approximately £3-10k, depending on the nature of the individual locations and any reinstatement works required to existing locations. In the first instance it is anticipated that five docking stations will be relocated, subject to the required funding being identified within existing transport budgets.

7.2 Appointing a sponsor would provide a financial contribution towards the scheme which would help to ensure the scheme is sustainable in the longer term.

8. BACKGROUND PAPERS

8.1 Traffic Management Sub-Committee LSTF Update Reports from 13th June 2013.

APPENDIX A - LOCATION OF EXISTING READYBIKE DOCKING STATIONS

