

Pool bike schemes

Choosing the right bikes

In order for a pool bike scheme to be successful the bikes must meet the needs of those who will use them.

Conduct a travel behaviour survey

Conducting a travel behaviour survey amongst staff to find out what sort of activities people would like to use the pool bikes for, such as commuting, travelling to meetings or lunchtime rides and how far they will be travelling will help work out which types of bike should be purchased.

It is likely that a variety of types of bikes will be required rather than all the same kind.



Different types of bikes

Hybrid bikes

Hybrid bikes have the speed of road bikes and the strength and gearing of mountain bikes making them suitable for riding on roads, traffic free paths and some off-road paths. Hybrid bikes are lightweight but sturdy. They have:

- slim tyres and between 21 and 27 gears
- an upright riding position making them fairly comfortable
- pannier racks which are useful for carrying notebooks and other equipment
- mudguards.

They are ideal for commuting, travel to and from meetings/site visits, shopping during lunch hour and leisure rides.

Folding bikes

Folding bikes can be folded up compactly then carried and stored easily after use. They have smaller



wheels and fewer gears than hybrids and are:

- very practical to use as part of a 'mixed mode' journey, for example cycling before and after a train or bus journey
- easy to take home overnight in the boot of a car.

They are ideal for commuting and travelling to and from meetings/site visits.

Mountain bikes

Mountain bikes are designed for off-road, non-tarmac paths and are ideal for use in leisure time for adventurous biking. If fitted with slick tyres they are suitable for road cycling. They have:

- thick, knobbly tyres and either front or both front and back suspension (both of which can make them harder to pedal on the flat)
- a fairly horizontal riding position.

Specialist bikes

Specialist bikes can range from tandems to tricycles to hand-cycles and can be useful for disabled and visually impaired riders, those who are getting back into cycling after a long break and those who are recovering after an illness.

Investing in some specialist bikes can encourage certain people to overcome such potential barriers to cycling.

Road, racing and touring bikes

- **road bikes** are lightweight with skinny tyres,



drop handlebars and a horizontal riding position. They are designed to be aerodynamic and speedy

- **racing bikes** are also lightweight and fast, but designed primarily for road racing and are generally not suitable for commuting
- **touring bikes** are sturdier versions of racing bikes, designed for long distances.

Bike features

Frame size

Although the height of seats and handle bars can be adjusted, the bike frame size required by different people will vary. Although more people are likely to fit a medium frame size it is important to purchase small and large frames to accommodate all users. A clear labelling and numbering system will help match the right bike to individual requirements.

Quick release

Both the wheels and the seat can be fitted with a 'quick release' meaning a spanner is not required to remove or adjust them. Whilst this can present more of a theft risk, it does allow users to adjust the seat height quickly and easily. It is advisable to lock the bike via the frame rather than the quick release wheel as a wheel is easier to replace than the whole bike.

Seat type

Many bikes will come with a fairly narrow seat which may be discouraging to those who are new or returning to cycling. More comfortable gel filled seats can be purchased.

Branding

Branding will act as a theft deterrent and can help market a pool bike scheme.

Accessories

Helmets, front and rear lights, bike bells, panniers, bike pumps and puncture repair kits, high visibility vests/clothing or reflectors and good quality locks are also useful equipment for pool bike schemes. The best type of bike lock is a 'D' lock with optional cable for attaching through quick release wheels and saddles.

Purchasing bikes

Number of bikes

The number of bikes required for a pool bike scheme will vary according to the location of the workplace, the type of usage the bikes are likely to get and how well the scheme is marketed. Results from existing pool bike schemes show that purchasing a small fleet of bikes and building up the numbers as popularity of the scheme grows works well.

Use local bike shops

Local bike shops can often offer competitive packages for pool bike schemes, including follow-up support such as introductory sessions for staff and ongoing maintenance.

A good supplier should ask lots of questions about the schemes needs rather than trying to sell their top brands.

Typical bike costs

- **Hybrids** between £250 and £300 should buy a good quality hybrid bike that is built to last, with £20-40 extra for a pannier rack and mud guards.
- **Folding bikes** between £350 and £400 should buy a reliable folding bike.
- **Mountain bikes** a minimum of £300 should be spent on a mountain bike. A bike with full suspension usually costs more than one with only front suspension but it's best to avoid cheaper full suspension bikes (under £600) and go for a better quality model with a regular frame.
- **Specialist bikes** specialist bikes are fairly expensive due to their unique nature. They can cost anywhere from £400 up to £2,000+.
- **Road bikes** £350 to £400 should buy a good quality road bike.

To find out more visit www.activetravel.org.uk/toolkit

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