



Finalist's case study



Middlesex University Services & Facilities MDXFreewheelers Bike Scheme



Profile

- Higher Education
- 18,000 students based at Hendon Campus
- 1,900 staff
- Urban environment, Greater London

About the project

Summary

A free bike loan scheme for staff and students, encouraging a sustainable travel option for movement to, from and across the estate. Bikes can be borrowed for the day or for longer periods, up to one week.

Project partners

Working in partnership with Middlesex University Students Union, MDXSU to roll out the scheme, promote and encourage student membership and take over the day to day management of the hire process. Elephant Bikes sourced 6 of the bikes, an international charity that refurbishes old Post Office bikes and for every bike sold in the UK they send one to a charitable partner in Africa. Bikes, a local charity offering training and employment opportunities to young people with complex learning difficulties supplied the rest of the bikes and undertake the weekly inspections and monthly services.

The results

The problem

Movement across the estate and to halls of residence can be timely. Often people jump in their car without considering an alternative way to travel.

The approach

Deliver a solution that is efficient, effective, free of charge, sustainable and encourages activity that will improve wellbeing for everyone. At the same time helping to reduce our carbon footprint.

Our goals

Continue to develop the scheme, increase the fleet of bikes and encourage cycling in the locality while raising awareness of the health benefits of cycling and ditching the car.



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Obstacles and solutions

"I can't afford a bike"	We secured enough funding to allow the scheme to be free of charge to students and staff
"I can't ride a bike"	Working with London borough of Barnet we offer free adult bike riding lessons and a buddy scheme
"Is it safe around here for cyclists?"	As well as offering free road awareness training, every rider gets front and rear lights and a hi-vis vest when they borrow a bike. Cyclists are told to provide their own safety helmet.
"There's nowhere to change and store my gear"	We provide a list of the location of changing facilities, all cyclists can use the gym showering facilities and they can also hire a storage locker.
"Bikes get stolen"	Bikes are located in high visibility location, and we use silver graded d-ring locks.
"I didn't know you did this!"	We promote on student and staff corporate web sites as well as MDXSU (student union) web site. The scheme is promoted at Green Week and at Welcome Week, with bikes on show and available for trial.

Performance and results

In less than 6 months of the scheme being rolled out, we have recruited 57 users and hired out 671 hours of "bike time". We have organised 2 successful staff events to promote cycling as an alternative to the car and have had positive feedback from everyone who took part.

The future

Lessons learned

The main lesson learned is that there is a demand for better cycling facilities on site and for better cycling access in the locality. Also, if a service is free it will always get a positive reaction. Some users were less than security conscious when using the bikes and did not secure them correctly, we replaced the cable locks with higher graded d-locks, and this appears to have helped with security.

Top 3 learnings from implementing your project

- The small scale of this scheme enables a simplistic approach
- Restrict hire periods to one week maximum
- Buy high grade locks to make the bikes safe and deter opportunist thieves

Sharing your project

This loan scheme is available to all staff and students. We have promoted the scheme at every opportunity including Green Week, Fresher's Fair, Staff Induction and Sustainable Campus Tours. Middlesex University Students Union have worked with London Borough of Barnet and Sustrans as part of a larger project and have used the bikes to enable led rides in the local area.

What has it meant to your institution to be a Green Gown Award finalist?

Andrea Dlaska – Deputy Vice Chancellor

Our MDX Freewheelers scheme demonstrates our commitment to low carbon travel, promoting a healthy lifestyle and providing employment experience. This reward recognises the hard work contributed by both staff and the Student Union and is an excellent example of the partnership work between the University and the MDX Students Union.