

Finalist's case study

The University of Worcester Facilities and Services

Bike Loan - mass bike hire on a shoestring

Section 1 About the project

Summary

Affordable and easy to administer bike loan scheme designed to promote cycling through minimising barriers to staff and students. Working in partnership with a social enterprise where young people with learning disabilities develop practical skills and self-esteem by maintaining loan bikes and managing the campus bike shop.

Project partners

The bike loan scheme is delivered in partnership with Spokes, a charity that works with young individuals with learning disabilities to develop mechanics skills and self-confidence, so to help find and remain in employment. Using abandoned bicycles, their students rebuild and repair bikes to sell at the campus bike shop at affordable prices from £45. Loan bikes are checked and maintained by students from Spokes who gain self-esteem and good social development through interaction with loan bike members and customers. A Nesta Workplace Cycling Challenge grant was awarded in 2013. The small grant enabled the purchase of loan bikes and the development of an online booking system and customer interface.

Section 2 The results

The problem

Transport related carbon emissions are a major contributor to the university's footprint, with staff and student commuting producing 6,142 tonnes GHG accounting for 30% of the overall footprint. The bike loan scheme aims to enhance cycling and reduce car use by removing barriers preventing students and staff trying cycling and forming new habits.

The approach

The easy to join 50 bike loan scheme allows unlimited bike hirings of up to 48 hours at no additional cost to members. The annual £20 membership fee gets you a new helmet and the ability to hire bikes whenever you like from any 24/7 university reception. The scheme offers members the ability to hire a good quality bike to suit their needs while eliminating the burden of purchasing, storing and maintaining a bike. The online booking system has made it possible to hire out large quantities of bikes from multiple university receptions. The system tracks the availability of bikes and generates emails to members when a bike is due to be returned. The online interface has been developed in house and is freely available for use in development of similar bike loan schemes.



Profile

- A Higher Education Institution
- 10,000 students
- 1,000 staff
- Urban campus

Category supported by



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Our goals

To change staff and student transport behaviour. The bike loan scheme's aim to encourage active transport and improve the visibility of cycling as an alternative is a key activity to this objective.

Obstacles and solutions

Management support	The single most challenging barrier to implementing this scheme was getting it agreed in the first place. This took nearly 2 years. It was only through the perseverance of Motov8 the initial contract holder of the University on campus bike shop and their willingness to pilot this at cost neutral to their social enterprise (training and workshops for young people at risk) that this scheme got off the ground.
Online system Booking system	The initial excel booking system caused a range of issues during the pilot as reception staff had difficulty recording bike bookings and it became impractical to keep track of hire bike's status and their location. Learning from the pilot indicated a user friendly online booking system would allow up-scaling and keeping track of loan bike locations.
Bike maintenance and fines	Keeping a record of bike maintenance requirements, repairs and members fines for late returns. These issues were resolved in the design features of the online booking system, which included features to register repairs and a membership page to record and pay fines.
Facilities for the bike shop staff	A network point and associate staff status was given to Spokes mechanic so the bike shop staff could manage the administration side of fines and bike maintenance requirements. As we were expecting bike shop staff to do administrative work in the 'bike shop', a re-purposed bin store, we also had to install some form of heating.
Terms of hire	An initial barrier to the scheme was designing and gaining organisation acceptance for bike hire terms and conditions. Conditions and documentation were drawn up using Worcestershire County Council agreements who at the time had operated a long term bike loan scheme and obtained legal advice for appropriate terms and conditions.

Performance and results

- **1,500 bikes hired** – during academic year 2013/14
- **9,069 miles cycled** Surveyed members cycle on average 7.27 miles per hire.
- **1,858 kg GHG emissions diverted** Commuting by students and staff accounted for 6,142 tonnes GHG emissions.
- **Changing cycling behaviour** 36% of surveyed members feel more confident to cycle as a form of transport following taking part in the bike loan scheme.
- **Low cost bike loan blue print**

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Section 3 The future

Lessons learned

The bike loan scheme was initially scoped in 2010 and it has taken several years for it to become embedded into the fabric of campus life. It was made simpler by the presence of a bike shop on campus, and now a catalyst for further contracts. Spokes also now provide a maintenance service for all our wheelchairs which they maintain on the same day as running the bike shop, and servicing the bike loan scheme.

Sharing our project

Approximately 60 sustainability professionals attended an EAUC conference session, and the loan scheme has featured in a number of press articles and it received considerable press when winning the NESTA grant. All enquiries from other institutions considering introducing and bike loans schemes are always followed up.

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

This award provides independent recognition of our collaborative approach bringing together local social enterprises, providing employment for disabled people giving hands-on experience, as well as providing a great service to students and staff. It is particularly pleasing to have done so well in the Green Gown 10th anniversary year and at a point when the awards have gained greater international recognition. These awards are very significant in raising the profile of an approach that integrates promoting social enterprises, community engagement and helping to reduce the organisations carbon emissions, and supporting peoples health and wellbeing.

Further information

Matt Smith

Sustainability Coordinator

01905 542415

Matt.smith@worc.ac.uk

<http://www.worc.ac.uk/discover/sustainability.html>