

Advice and Information

Getting Started

Setting up a community eBike scheme

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Introduction

CTA has worked closely with its members to develop a toolkit to help you learn more about, set up and successfully sustain a community eBike scheme. Before developing a new community eBike scheme, we recommend that you first consider if there are any existing community-led active travel schemes in your local area which may be able to provide an immediate solution to the transport needs you’re hoping to meet.

Where a suitable scheme cannot be identified, this toolkit will guide you through the initial steps to establishing a new community eBike scheme.

What is a community eBike scheme and why should we consider setting one up?

A community eBike scheme is a transport model where a fleet of electric bikes are owned, maintained and loaned to members of the local community by a community group.

Across the UK, there are many barriers to cycling – including cost, lack of confidence and health issues. Making cycling more accessible for your community by hosting your own fleet of eBikes could be a

great way of encouraging modal shift towards active travel, providing more affordable transport options and improving the health and wellbeing of your community.

Why are community groups so well suited to hosting these fleets?

Community Transport operators know, understand and are key players in their local communities. They understand what gaps exist in local transport provision and can easily build relationships with members of their local community to learn about the people who live there.

CTs are also well placed to collaborate with partners and local businesses to ensure that gaps between public transport networks are addressed with considerate solutions. Involving members of the local community in local development plans is a well-recognised way to change travel behaviours and address problems long-term.

Getting Started

How is an eBike scheme set up?

Like setting up any form of Community Transport scheme, before getting started it's important that you understand the transport needs of your community. You should engage with your community to find out whether there is an interest in having access to eBikes, and if there are any practical challenges you might face in making this a possibility (for example, if you have a suitable location to store and hire the bikes out from). This will also feed into research you'll need to carry out to find out what costs might be incurred and how the project might be funded.

For more information on carrying out community engagement, establishing working groups and setting up a new Community Transport scheme more generally, please see Section 2 of [CTA's toolkit for setting up a Community Transport service](#).

Where do we start?

Once you've carried out community engagement and decided that you'd like to go down the route of establishing a new community eBike scheme, you'll need to start thinking about the more practical considerations, including the day-to-day management of your scheme; health, safety and policy of use; purchasing or leasing eBikes and cycle maintenance.

How should we manage our eBike scheme?

One of the benefits of a community-owned and operated eBike scheme, is the opportunity to meet and work with local people and groups. While there are options to manage eBike hire digitally, for a new scheme it might be easier to meet the customer and handing over the eBike in person initially.

This might not be necessary for your scheme and the need for this will vary depending on the geography of your area, your time capacity, and whether your eBikes are being loaned on the short- or long-term. If you do hand the eBike over in person, you have the benefit of being able to carry out final checks before it is used, and you can also provide the customer with a demonstration and induction of the eBike to make sure they feel comfortable operating it.

In terms of where you might want to hire the eBikes out from, this will vary largely depending on the space you have available and how large an area you want to serve. Do you have relationships with local community hubs that could host the eBikes? Community centres or local shops? Working collaboratively in this way could widen access to the eBike across the area and make sure they are best used.

Health, Safety and Policy of Use

Ensuring you do everything you can to prioritise health and safety is a must. eBikes are still uncommon across most communities, so you need to make sure you are satisfied that the people hiring your eBikes understand how to use them without causing injury.

Some areas you should consider including in your health and safety routine:

- Providing an induction on how to cycle the eBike safely and how to charge it

- Provision of appropriate health and safety kit. This might include helmets, bike pumps, puncture repair kits and lights
- Ensuring the individual knows what to do in case of an emergency and/or problems with the bike

It would also be advisable to write a policy of use for your eBike fleet. Ensuring individuals understand their responsibilities while they have the eBike will be really important, so you should ask them to sign Ts and Cs confirming they agree to your terms of use for eBike and understand these responsibilities.

How do we ensure our eBikes are maintained to the best standard?

When eBikes are hired out, they should be fully operational, in a good condition and you should be confident that they are not faulty. Many bike shops will be able to advise you on the specific checks you need to have carried out on eBikes, and might even be able to complete these out for you.

When establishing your eBike scheme, you should decide how often you need to have full checks carried out on your eBikes. This will apply both to eBikes that you have in storage and those that are already out on hire. For short-term hires, carrying out daily checks before and after the bike is hired should be quite straightforward, but for long-term hires where an individual keeps the bike for longer than a few weeks, you will need to consider what boundaries you set to ensure the eBike is being checked over regularly enough.

Purchasing or Leasing eBikes

Just like manual bicycles, eBikes come in a variety of shapes and sizes, with some models being designed for mountain-biking, and others being more suited for road cycling. When it comes to deciding what models of eBike you lease or purchase, you'll want to consider:

- The range of battery required, what do you expect the bikes to be used for?
- How can you make the bikes as accessible as possible for your community?
- Your local geography, what is the terrain like where you are?

Your local terrain and what you think the bikes will be used for should influence the model that you look for. For commuting, having a light, compact bike maybe even with a folding element might be most useful. Or if you're based in a mountainous area, you might want to consider investing in sturdier bikes with bigger motors to suit this terrain. There are many resources available that might be able to help you decide on the models for you, including [information provided by Cycling UK](#).

You should also think about reaching the widest audience of passengers possible. Expensive hire costs and bike models unsuitable to members of your community might put people off getting involved. Bike models are diverse and so are people, but you can get some very adaptable eBikes which can be adjusted to suit a wide variety of body types, as well as bike models that are designed to support specific requirements. Cycling UK also have a lot of extensive advice on [making cycling inclusive](#).

Case Studies

These case studies are just three of many brilliant examples of how understanding your community, working with other local groups and making use of the resources available to you are key components of a successful Community Transport scheme.

South Ayrshire Community Transport - North Carrick eBikes

Since being established in 2016, South Ayrshire Community Transport (SACT) has set out to address unmet transport needs in communities across South Ayrshire. Among the transport services they offer are minibus hire, day trips, car hire via their car club, and a newly established eBike hire scheme.



Managed in association with the North Carrick Community Benefit Company, Energy Saving Trust and the Carrick Centre, their eBike scheme has been operating since April 2022. The main motivation for establishing this scheme was to encourage modal shift by providing more accessible options to active

travel. So far, this has been a success as many individuals who hired an eBike have gone on to purchase their own!

SACT provide helmets, padlocks and pumps to the eBike users as part of the hire agreement, and are able to provide this affordably due to the funding they have received so far. For more information on SACT's eBike scheme and the other services they offer, visit their website [here](#).

Dolen Teifi Community Transport

Dolen Teifi Community Transport provides accessible and sustainable transport to the people living in Ceredigion and Carmarthenshire in Wales. They support groups and individuals to access essential services, such as health appointments, trips out and social activities which help to tackle loneliness and isolation across their area.



To continue to support their community and provide affordable active travel options in their area, Dolen Teifi CT have also established an eBike hire scheme. Locals can now consider eBike hire an affordable option, whether they are travelling for leisure or looking to keep fit while they commute. Dolen Teifi CT are well connected with local charity groups and businesses, and link with local volunteer repair workshops to help with maintenance of the eBikes.

For more information on the eBike scheme that Dolen Teifi CT run, as well as the other services they offer, visit their website [here](#).

Radio City Association

Based in Kilbirnie in the Garnock Valley of North Ayrshire, Radio City Association is a charity supporting their community through: promoting work, volunteering and learning opportunities for local people;

investing in local economic redevelopment; connecting local communities and providing opportunities for healthy living across the area.

To help to address gaps in transport provision across the local area, promote environmentally friendly transport and encourage active travel for local journeys, Radio City Association has introduced their own eBike hire scheme.

Their scheme allows flexible, cost-effective access to employment opportunities and essential services such as healthcare appointments and social activities, with the added benefit of allowing anyone hiring the eBikes to keep fit while they travel!

Visit the Radio City Association's website [here](#) to find out more on this scheme and the other work they do.



Active Travel Funding

Motability – Active Travel Grant Programme

This fund can be used to help organisations improve access to quality and affordable active travel equipment and journeys, to ensure disabled people have the same opportunities to make decisions about how they travel, their impact on the environment and to enjoy the physical and mental health benefits that active travel can provide.

Love Your Network Grant – Sustrans Scotland

Supported by the Scottish Government and delivered by Sustrans Scotland, this funding is available for community groups based near the National Cycle Network. The funding can be used to provide tools for cycle lane maintenance, wildlife management and workshops in wildlife identification.

Energy Saving Trust – eBike Grant

This funding can be used to introduce a variety of eBikes, eTrikes, eCargo bikes and various types of adapted cycles to your community. The funding can also be used to support projects that provide opportunities to trial eBikes.

Paths for All - Smarter Choices, Smarter Places Programme

The Smarter Choices, Smarter Places Programme from Paths for All supports behaviour change projects that encourage more walking, wheeling, cycling and using public transport. This fund is open to public, third and community sector organisations based in Scotland.

ArtRoots Funding for the National Cycle Network in Scotland

ArtRoots provide funding for murals, art installations, performances and a variety of creative projects to support local communities in encouraging more walking, wheeling and cycling.

Insurance

As with any Community Transport scheme, it will be important to consider what type of insurance cover you need to operate an eBike scheme. The protection of your organisation and eBike users is a big priority and something you'll want to establish early in your planning process.

Additional security measures such as CCTV in your storage hubs, or GPS trackers on your eBikes could help to protect your fleet and bring down the cost of your insurance cover – but these can be costly to install. Some GPS trackers allow you to calculate the carbon savings of the journeys your scheme is facilitating, however eBike users need to be aware of any tracking taking place to there would be additional GDPR paperwork to consider.

Endsleigh Insurance

CTA offers CTA Insurance, a bespoke and discounted insurance offering available to CTA members as one of our member benefits. CTA Insurance is run in partnership with [Endsleigh Insurance Brokers](#), a household name and one of the UK's leading and most trusted insurance brokers.

As our partner for CTA Insurance, Endsleigh bring their expertise and experience to our members, providing excellent service and coverage for community transport providers across the UK.

For more information on CTA Insurance, take a look at ctauk.org/cta-insurance/

About the Community Transport Association

CTA is a national charity that represents and supports providers of community transport: thousands of local charities and community groups across the UK that all provide transport services that fulfil a social purpose and community benefit. We are for, and about, accessible and inclusive transport.

We help our members remain relevant and responsive to key areas of public policy and to make a big difference for the people and families in the communities in which they work. Our vision is of a world where people can shape and create their own accessible and inclusive transport solutions and our mission is to achieve this through championing accessible and inclusive transport, connecting people and ideas and by strengthening our members and raising standards.

In 2023, CTA in Scotland were delighted to launch our [Climate Action Programme](#), because we know that the Community Transport sector is passionate making sure transport is accessible, inclusive and sustainable. Throughout this programme we have produced and shared resources, hosted climate action workshops and celebrated the climate action being taken by the Community Transport sector in Scotland.

Keep up to date with CTA via ctauk.org, [@CTAUK1](#) or by [singing up to our monthly news brief](#).

CTA's Advice Service

The CTA's Advice Service is available to CTA members, community and other voluntary groups, local authorities and other statutory bodies. It offers information and support on any aspect of non-profit transport operations. The CTA's Advice Service covers the whole of the UK and is supported by national governments. We will only ever explain the most accurate and commonly accepted interpretation of regulations and best practice. We do this by providing support and information on a wide range of community transport related topics such as permits and licensing regulations and by signposting to other agencies. The Advice Service does not exist to provide legal advice on any topics. If you are still unsure you will need to [seek legal advice](#).

For more information you can contact our advice team via advice@ctauk.org or 0345 130 6195.

This briefing has been primarily produced for members of the CTA. If your organisation has benefited from using it but isn't a member please consider joining us, for more details head to ctauk.org/why-become-a-cta-member.

The Community Transport Association has made every effort to ensure the accuracy of the information contained in this leaflet, but it should be noted that this is only a guide, and should be treated as such.