

# BTN BikeShare

How we partnered Brighton and Hove City Council to develop, launch and operate the most successful bike share scheme in the UK outside London.

## The vision

Brighton and Hove City Council (BHCC) was looking for a bike share partner, following a very promising feasibility study forecasting uptake of <XXXX> rides over <length of time> and an overall cost benefit ratio of 7.5:1.

A central goal for the council was to encourage uptake of cycling to improve traffic congestion and the local environment, as well as cutting emissions to help meet their commitment to reduce net zero emissions by 2030. Improving health outcomes for residents and reducing local healthcare costs were also a key driver of the scheme.

### BTN BikeShare at a glance



#### Infrastructure and investment:

- 450 GPS-tracked smart pedal bikes
- 50 hubs: hybrid docked and dockless system
- 1.16 million in government start-up funding
- £290,000 local council investment



#### Results after first four years:

- 1 million rides and 2 million miles ridden
- Cost benefit ratio 7.5:1
- £500,000 in healthcare benefits
- Scheme extended to 600 bikes and 80 hubs

## What we offered: a winning combination

Following a competitive tender, Hourbike was delighted to be chosen to help deliver the city's first bike share scheme in <year>.

At the heart of our bid was the **latest generation of smart bikes** and a **hybrid docking model**. At the time, a number of other local councils had run into problems with Chinese run schemes offering cheap, poorly made bikes that didn't last, and dockless systems that resulted in high levels of abandonment and vandalism. Hourbike offered BHCC the opposite.

## The best and latest bikes and technology

Our high-quality bike spec included lightweight durable alloy frames and a range of clever internal design features to help keep performance high and maintenance low. But for BHCC, the really exciting part was the electronic controller, locking mechanism and back end software system.

Within each bike's built-in controller is a GSM modem and SIM card that continuously tracks the bike's location and usage, providing a wealth of useful data. The back end software system enables highly effective real time management of the fleet as well as turning bike data into reports covering everything from usage stats and heatmaps to maintenance reports. This would prove invaluable for BHCC to help monitor the effectiveness of the scheme and for planning where and how it could be extended.

## A reliable and flexible hybrid docking system

Docked hub systems can be frustrating and time-consuming for users when the dock they want to finish at is full. On the other hand, dockless systems mean bikes can be left here, there and everywhere which can be messy for communities and challenging to manage.

The Hourbike hybrid approach for BHCC combined the stability of a docked system, using flexible modular hubs that don't require power and are easy to install. At the same time, users could leave their bike nearby if a hub is full – or choose to finish their ride anywhere local for a small extra fee.

## Local ownership and branding

Another plus for BHCC is that Hourbike would be an invisible partner. The council owns the assets such as bikes and hubs and the branding reflects the city's name and colours. Any additional on-bike advertising is the council's choice.

We operate the scheme as an 'open book' concession contract. The council has significant control over many aspects, including budgets, operations, planning and marketing, supported by Hourbike's industry knowledge and expertise. Meanwhile, Hourbike covers all the operational aspects, such as background analytics; servicing, repairing and redistributing bikes and hubs; providing customer support and collecting revenues. Any profit is shared.

## The launch: an instant success

After partnering the local council through every step of the planning and development stages, BTN BikeShare was launched in September 2017. A local marketing and PR firm staged an impactful launch event, including a network of bike share 'Ambassadors' to help people use the bikes. Take-up of the bikes was high and immediate with the majority of users having no problem installing the app, signing up and setting off on their first ride.



## The challenges: how we overcame them together

Every community is unique which is why every Hourbike scheme is bespoke. Fine-tuning once a scheme is up and running is part of the process, which is when Hourbike's software and data comes into its own.

### Responding to usage

In Brighton, our data reports quickly showed that usage patterns varied widely depending on the day of the week, time of day, time of year and weather. There was also a pronounced flow of bikes toward the seafront. In response, we researched and trialled a number of solutions to collect and redistribute the bikes to keep the supply balanced. Our solution was to customise an easy-to-load 'beaver tail' truck with a bespoke cage that could carry up to 30 bikes at a time. We also created a dedicated 'Redis Team' providing a bike collection and redistribution service, 7 days a week, from 6am to 9pm.

### Keeping locals happy

While most Brightonians welcomed the bike share scheme with open arms, inevitably there were some who had concerns. We worked closely with the council to resolve these. In one instance, a hub was situated near the home of a person who is disabled and felt distressed by it. We listened to their concerns alongside the council, then researched a nearby alternative and relocated the hub.

### Minimising loss and damage

As with any bike share scheme, BHCC's bikes are kept outside and accessible 24/7, leaving them open to potential theft and vandalism. But in Brighton, we've achieved very low levels of damage and loss.

We believe our approach has a lot to do with it. Using local branding on the bikes and promoting usage across a wide demographic fosters a culture of local pride and ownership, encouraging people to look after them. Our smart bike technology and GPS swiftly identifies bikes that may have been stolen so they can be retrieved quickly. And locals play their part too, reporting bikes that may have been abandoned or stolen helping our ops team to get them back promptly.

## Outcomes

*"The council is committed to becoming a carbon neutral city by 2030 and BTN BikeShare is playing a significant role in promoting healthy and accessible travel to our residents and visitors."*

Councillor Anne Pissaridou, Chairwoman of the Environment, Transport and Sustainability Committee

Bike share has been a huge success for Brighton.

- BTN BikeShare is one of the best-used bike share schemes in the UK outside London.
- Over 120,000 residents, visitors and commuters have cycled more than 2 million miles in less than three years.
- It regularly exceeds 4 RPBD (Rides Per Bike Per Day).
- The scheme won a Highly Commended for Excellence in Walking and Cycling Award at the 2019 National Transport Awards.
- So far, the scheme has generated over £500,000 in health benefits, with a reported long-term projection of £1.98 million.
- To date, it's achieved a 7.5:1 cost benefit ratio.
- The scheme has run at a surplus in every year of operation, split 50:50 with Hourbike, generating a significant sum for the council.
- During the COVID-19 pandemic, the council offered annual membership of BTN BikeShare free to NHS staff and council care workers – a much-needed boost to morale.

## Discover what bike share can achieve for your community

We'd welcome the opportunity to demonstrate the potential of bike share for your unique community.



**Call: +44(0) 203 633 9259**

**Email: [info@hourbike.com](mailto:info@hourbike.com)**

Hourbike Ltd, 33 Heath Drive,  
Raynes Park, London, SW20 9BE