

Advice for purchasing cycle fleets and bike libraries

About

These notes have been prepared for grant applicants seeking funding from Cycling Scotland to develop or expand a bike fleet or provide access to bikes. The guidance relates to procurement of two-wheel, adult pedal cycles. If you are seeking funding for other types of bikes, such as cargo bikes, ebikes or adaptive cycles please contact info@cycling.scot

Guidance

When choosing bikes to support your community to cycle, six key factors to consider are:

- Price
- Size
- Type of riding
- Weight and simplicity
- Ease of maintenance
- Storage

Price

Even with a good servicing regime, cycle fleet bikes will have a tough life so it helps to buy a quality, robust bike to start with. Some mechanical parts, like chains and gears will wear out regardless of price, but a quality frame, wheels, and controls are important.

We recommend any fleet bike should have a manufacturer's recommended retail price (RRP) of at least £300 (*as of March 2021*). At the same time, given the range of quality and robust bikes now available on the market, Cycling Scotland will not contribute more than £700 per adult cycle or £400 per child cycle, unless for a specific purpose such as a cargo bike, adaptive cycle or ebike. This should not be viewed as a target price as quality, robust bikes are available for less.

All purchasing should follow responsible and sustainable procurement guidelines. It's worth also considering quality, refurbished bikes where available locally.

Size

Riding a well-fitted bike inspires confidence and control. Most bikes have adjustable saddle and handlebar heights, plus brake lever reach. However, you should consider the needs of everyone who may wish to use the bike, for example if the cranks are too long for riders with short legs. For children's bikes please see our [Bikeability Scotland specification sheet](#).

Many bikes come with 700c / 29" wheels as standard. Shorter riders may benefit from smaller wheels. Manufacturers will have specific guidance relating to their sizing and your local bike shop will be able to provide advice.

You will probably need to buy more than one size of bike. Where possible, buy from the same range to allow for easy swap of parts and equipment.

Type of riding

Consider where your bikes will be used. Cycling Scotland promotes everyday and leisure cycling and we don't fund bikes for sport or technical purposes like all-mountain bikes, road racing bikes or track bikes.

Hybrid bikes generally offer the best balance of comfort and efficiency.

If your bikes will predominantly be used on roads, consider bikes that can accommodate tyres up to 35mm wide (with a mudguard). This will provide sufficient comfort for bumps in the road, whilst also reducing rolling resistance

If your bikes will be used on a mix of road and traffic-free tracks and trails, you might want something with wider tyres (35-60mm) and more grip.

For most new riders, a flat handlebar is the easiest and most comfortable.

Weight and simplicity

The lighter the bike, the easier to ride and more efficient it is on undulating terrain. However, weight needs to be balanced with comfort and robustness. For instance, mudguards add weight, but for all-year riding they make the journey more comfortable.

With standard diamond-shaped frames, it is possible to get a robust, comfortable and affordable bike weighing little more than 10kg with a quality aluminium or steel frame.

Accessories like panniers for carrying equipment or shopping can be added to this.

Avoid unnecessary features like suspension. Unless you are riding on technical off-road trails, or spending a lot of money for these features, suspension simply adds extra weight. A wider tyre with less pressure will provide the same level of comfort.

With gears, simplicity is easier for people new to cycling. Look for 7-11 gears with a wide range of easy gears for riding on flat or hilly terrain. Ideally, the bikes will come with just one gear lever. This is generally lighter, easier to maintain and simpler for users.

Ease of maintenance

Bike fleets require regular inspections, servicing, and maintenance. For this reason, it's useful to keep things simple.

Many bikes now come with hydraulic disk brakes – these require less frequent adjustment but are trickier to fix when something goes wrong. Cantilever v-brakes require more frequent adjustment but are easier to fix. Avoid mechanical disc brakes for your cycle fleet.

If you have a fleet of bikes, you'll want to be able to remove wheels regularly to fix punctures or for cleaning. Look for bikes with quick release on the wheel skewers or bolt-thru hubs. For this reason, it is best to avoid hub gears or coaster brakes as they make wheel removal much trickier.

Storage

Before we fund a cycle fleet, we ask where bikes will be stored. If bikes are out for loan, it's the responsibility of the user to safely store them. However, when bikes come in for servicing or maintenance they will need to be stored in a dry and secure area.

For this reason, folding bikes might be attractive as they take up less space. Folding bikes can also be versatile as they adjust to fit a range of riders. However, they also have disadvantages including increased weight, cost and difficulty of maintenance.

See our cycle storage information sheet at [cycling.scot](https://www.cycling.scot)

