

## **GMCA Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

Date: Wednesday 25 October 2023

Subject: Bee Network Cycle Hire Recovery Plan

Report of: Andy Burnham, Mayor of Greater Manchester – Portfolio Lead for Transport

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### **Purpose of Report**

The first phase of the Greater Manchester Bee Network Cycle Hire scheme was launched in November 2021. Since Spring 2023 the scheme has experienced higher than expected levels of bicycle theft and vandalism resulting in a significant reduction in availability. This report provides an update on the scheme and the recovery plan to respond to the recent issues.

### **Recommendations:**

The GMCA Scrutiny Committee is requested to:

1. Note and comment on the recovery plan for the Bee Network Cycle Hire scheme.

### **Contact Officers**

Name: Richard Nickson, Active Travel Programme Director

E-mail: [richard.nickson@tfgm.com](mailto:richard.nickson@tfgm.com)

## **Equalities Impact, Carbon and Sustainability Assessment:**

N/A

### **Risk Management**

Risk management is carried out at a programme and project level within the Active Travel Programme in accordance with Transport for Greater Manchester's Risk Management policy.

The recovery plan set out in this report is intended to mitigate the impact that vandalism and theft is having on the operation of the scheme and the consequent availability of bicycles to customers.

### **Legal Considerations**

There are no specific legal implications with regards to this report. The changes to the operation of the Cycle Hire scheme are within the provisions of the existing contract and where a variation has been made this has been dealt with via appropriate change control procedures.

### **Financial Consequences – Revenue**

The cost of the Cycle Hire scheme recovery plan can be accommodated within the agreed budget for the scheme. The financial implications of the recovery plan are outlined in a Part B report for reasons of commercial sensitivity.

### **Financial Consequences – Capital**

The recovery plan does not include any capital financial consequences.

### **Number of attachments to the report:**

1. Appendix

### **Background Papers**

GMCA report, 25 June 2021 - The Mayor's Cycling and Walking Challenge Fund

## **Tracking/ Process**

Does this report relate to a major strategic decision, as set out in the GMCA Constitution?

No

## **Exemption from call in**

Are there any aspects in this report which means it should be considered to be exempt from call in by the relevant Scrutiny Committee on the grounds of urgency?

No

## **Bee Network Committee**

N/A

# 1. Introduction

- 1.1 The first phase of the Greater Manchester Bee Network Cycle Hire scheme was launched in November 2021.
- 1.2 Since Spring 2023 the scheme has experienced higher than expected levels of bicycle theft and vandalism, resulting in a significant reduction in bicycle availability.
- 1.3 Whilst ridership has been maintained, the recent criminal and anti-social behaviour reduced the availability of bicycles, impacting on customer satisfaction. Consequently, the operator and TfGM developed a recovery plan with support from the Travelsafe Partnership including Greater Manchester Police.
- 1.4 This report provides an update on the Greater Manchester Bee Network Cycle Hire scheme recovery plan.

# 2. Background

- 2.1 In 2021, following a competitive tender process, the design and operation of the Greater Manchester Cycle Hire (Phase 1) scheme was awarded to Beryl.
- 2.2 Beryl is a UK based micro mobility provider, which runs cycle hire (and scooter) services in various UK towns and cities.
- 2.3 Beryl is also a technology partner in the West Midlands and Transport for London scheme. Most recently it has been awarded the service contract in Leeds to provide 800 fully electric public hire bikes.
- 2.4 Phase 1 of the GM scheme was rolled out in three discrete sub-phases from November 2021 to Easter 2023, culminating in over 1,000 bikes on street, more than 200 'stations' and over 2,500 stands in an area spanning parts of Manchester, Salford and Trafford, as shown in Appendix, Figure 1. This area provides a catchment of circa 200,000 people. The cycle hire stations are spaced approximately within a 5-minute walk of each other (300-400m). To date, more than 60,000 users have registered to use the service, and over 460,000 rides have been taken, representing more than 1.1million km ridden.
- 2.5 The scheme provides self-service, 24/7, low-cost access to electric assist cycles (e-bikes) and traditional mechanical bikes, encouraging short, one-way trips by bike across Greater Manchester's regional centre. The scheme provides 2,500 stands giving capacity for 1,500 bikes. The fleet is a blend of e-bike (20%) and traditional bike (80%). Users access the scheme through a smartphone app which provides

real-time availability information and is used to collect payment. The bikes are fitted with a 'smart unit' with on-board GPS tracking and telemetry monitors. The bikes are secured through a front lock (frame to stand) and a rear lock (frame thro' wheel).

- 2.6 The contract awarded to Beryl was to design, build, operate and maintain the scheme. Delivery of the majority of the stations and stands is now complete, with over 1,500 bikes commissioned. The stations, stands and bikes for phase 1 of the scheme have been delivered within the budgeted funding for those assets.
- 2.7 Beryl receives a management fee to manage and maintain the scheme, including repair and replacement of bikes. The cost of this was to be funded by revenues generated through bike rental charges and a sponsorship deal, with any operational cost deficit to be funded from the Mayors Challenge Fund (Walking and Cycling) programme.
- 2.8 Although there is currently no confirmed funding for expanding the scheme into other areas of Greater Manchester, beyond modifications to the current scheme, work is ongoing to consider options, including funding, for where a future expansion of the scheme might be appropriate.

### **3. Recovery Plan**

- 3.1 Since Spring 2023, as Phase 1 of the scheme approached completion, higher than anticipated levels of damage arising from theft and vandalism occurred reducing bike availability. In summary the issues were:
  - Repairs peaked and then initially subsided as the service area expanded between September to November 2022.
  - Missing bikes increased in November 2022 then saw a steady increase until April 2023.
  - Between April and July 2023, the rate of both missing bikes and bikes requiring repair increased significantly as the scheme expanded further, with a plateau of both missing bikes and repairs in May 2023.
  - At the end of July 2023, there were over 550 missing bikes, over 700 in need of repair, and availability of bikes dropped below 200.

Further detail is included in Appendix, Figure 2.

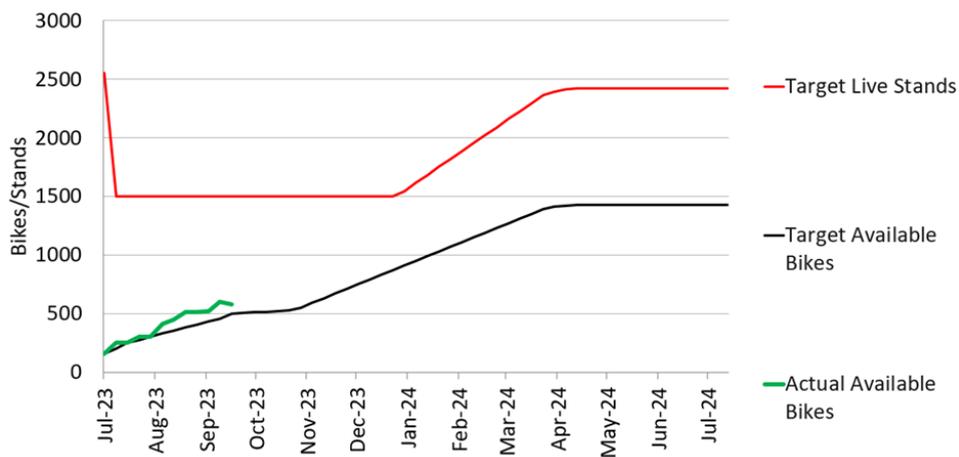
- 3.2 Through June and into early July, Beryl and Transport for Greater Manchester with support from Greater Manchester Police, developed a 'recovery plan' designed to

bring levels of bike availability back in line with the contracted service level agreement of 95% of commissioned bikes.

3.3 The following actions were agreed to be implemented:

- Suspension of service at 102 stations (see Appendix, Figure 3);
- An increase in Beryl's resources to tackle the backlog of repairs and to increase the scale of their on-street teams.
- Mandating the use of both front and rear locks to end a ride where there is space at a station. The go-live for the Mandatory Front Lock usage is planned for the 23<sup>rd</sup> of October (subject to final sign off by TfGM).
- Increased enforcement by incorporation of the Cycle Hire Service into the targeted activities of the GM Transport Unit, GMP and Travelsafe teams.
- Improvement to bike security and tracking measures.
- Credit card fraud prevention measures.
- Penalties have been increased for improper use e.g., failure to lock or taking bikes out of the service area (see Appendix, Figure 4); and
- In the longer term, Beryl is considering further changes to lock design and operation, and reinforcement of smart devices.

3.4 The overall intent of the recovery plan is to bring bike supply back up to contracted levels as illustrated below. As of 13<sup>th</sup> October 2023, there were 580 available bikes.



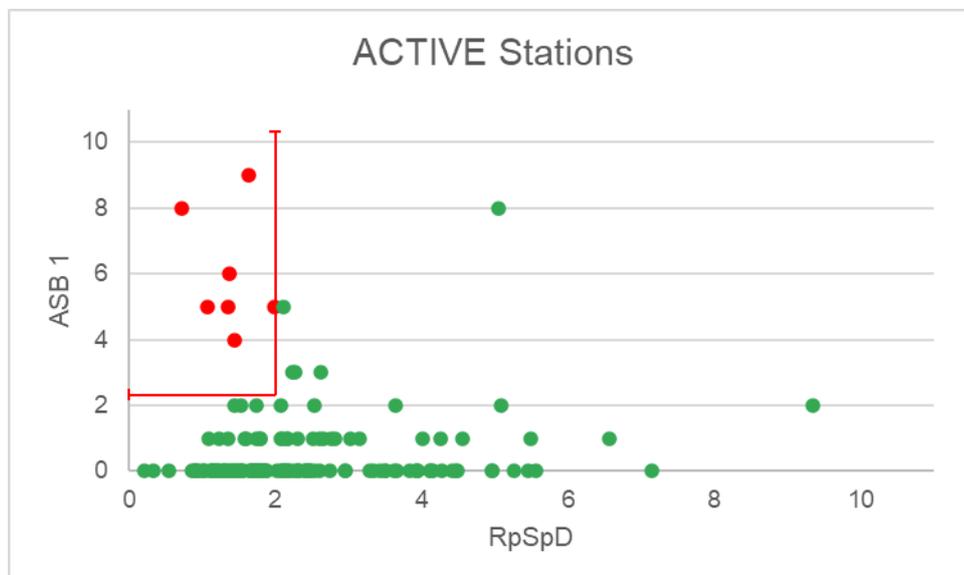
3.5 The plan will be delivered within the terms of the contract with Beryl and can be accommodated within the agreed budget for the Cycle Hire scheme. Further details of the financial implications of the recovery plan are included in the accompanying Part B report.

3.6 The recovery plan is predicated on a number of assumptions, including, for example, that the level of theft and vandalism will reduce following the suspension of stations.

The impact of the recovery plan, and whether the underlying assumptions crystallise, will be closely monitored and reviewed throughout the recovery period.

3.7 The first stage of the recovery plan included an analysis on anti-social behaviour (ASB) trends and resulted in the operator proposing to suspend all stations generating less than 1 ride per station per day, as these coincided with areas of higher anti-social behaviour but also inconvenienced the least amount of cycle hire users. Appendix: Figure 3 shows the distribution of open versus suspended stations.

3.8 A station suspension review was conducted in September 2023 highlighting 7 stations with higher-than-average levels of vandalism and low usage (Rides per Station per Day – RpSpD). These stations will continue to be reviewed and suspended if necessary. The graph below shows the 7 stations in red (top left quadrant) being monitored.



3.9 Suspended stations will be re-opened at 750+ available bikes on street.

3.10 In the first 2 weeks of October 2023 bike availability increased to 580 as vandalism trends stabilised.

3.11 Throughout the recovery period usage and users has remained relatively high but usage and users joining the scheme dropped over the summer, following a similar trend to the previous year. This points to high numbers of students using the scheme and the Recovery Plan not significantly impacting usage. September 2023 saw an increase of 47% more rides and 71% more active users compared to August 2023. The total number of rides since launch has now passed ½ million with over 1.2 million km ridden.

# Appendix

Figure 1: Planned Operational footprint phase 1 Cycle Hire scheme.

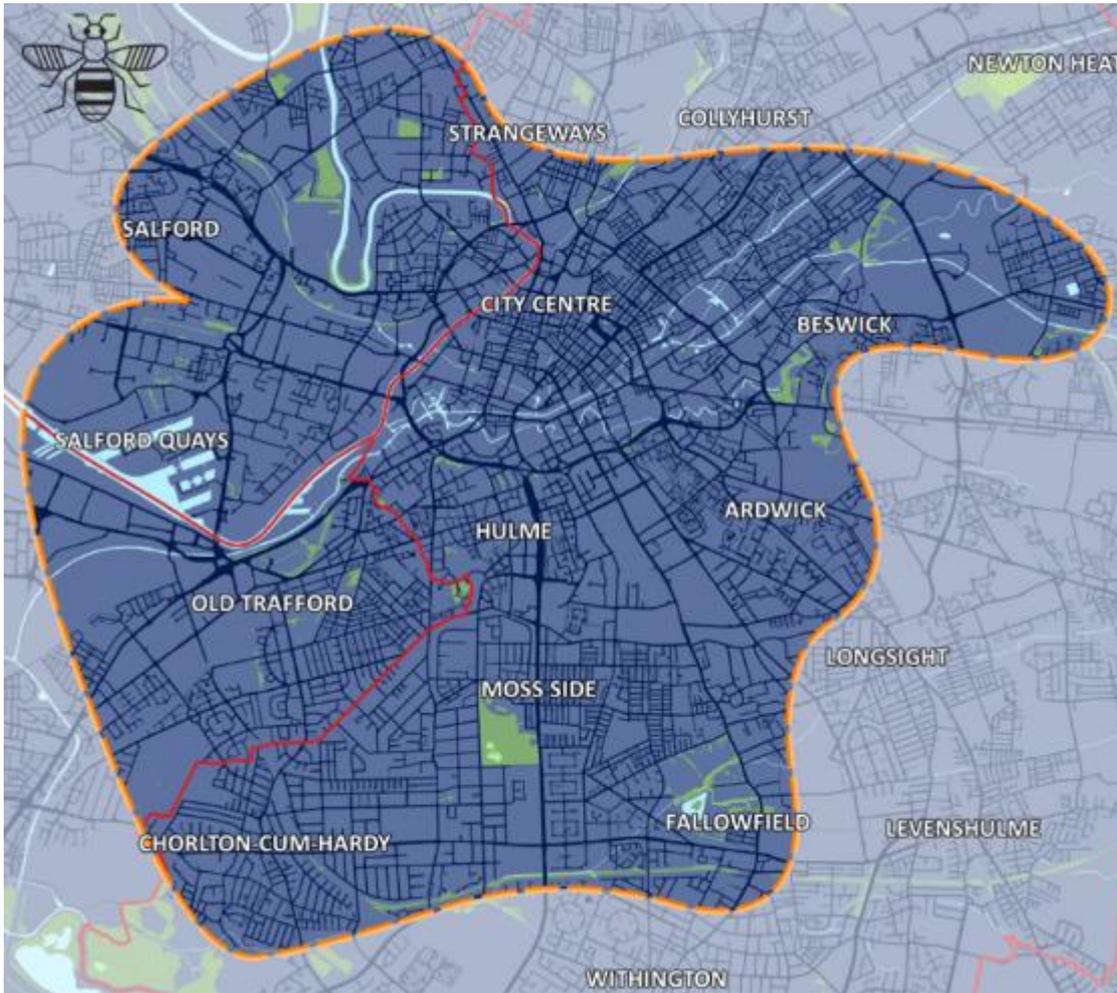
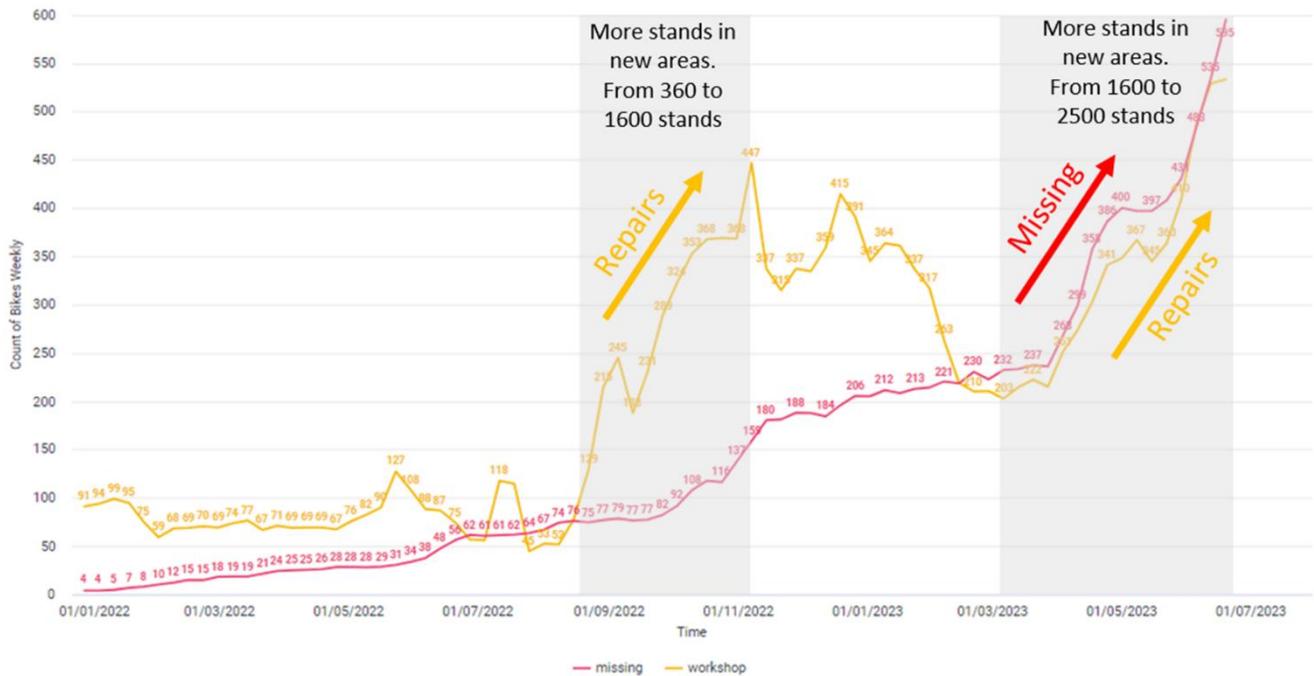
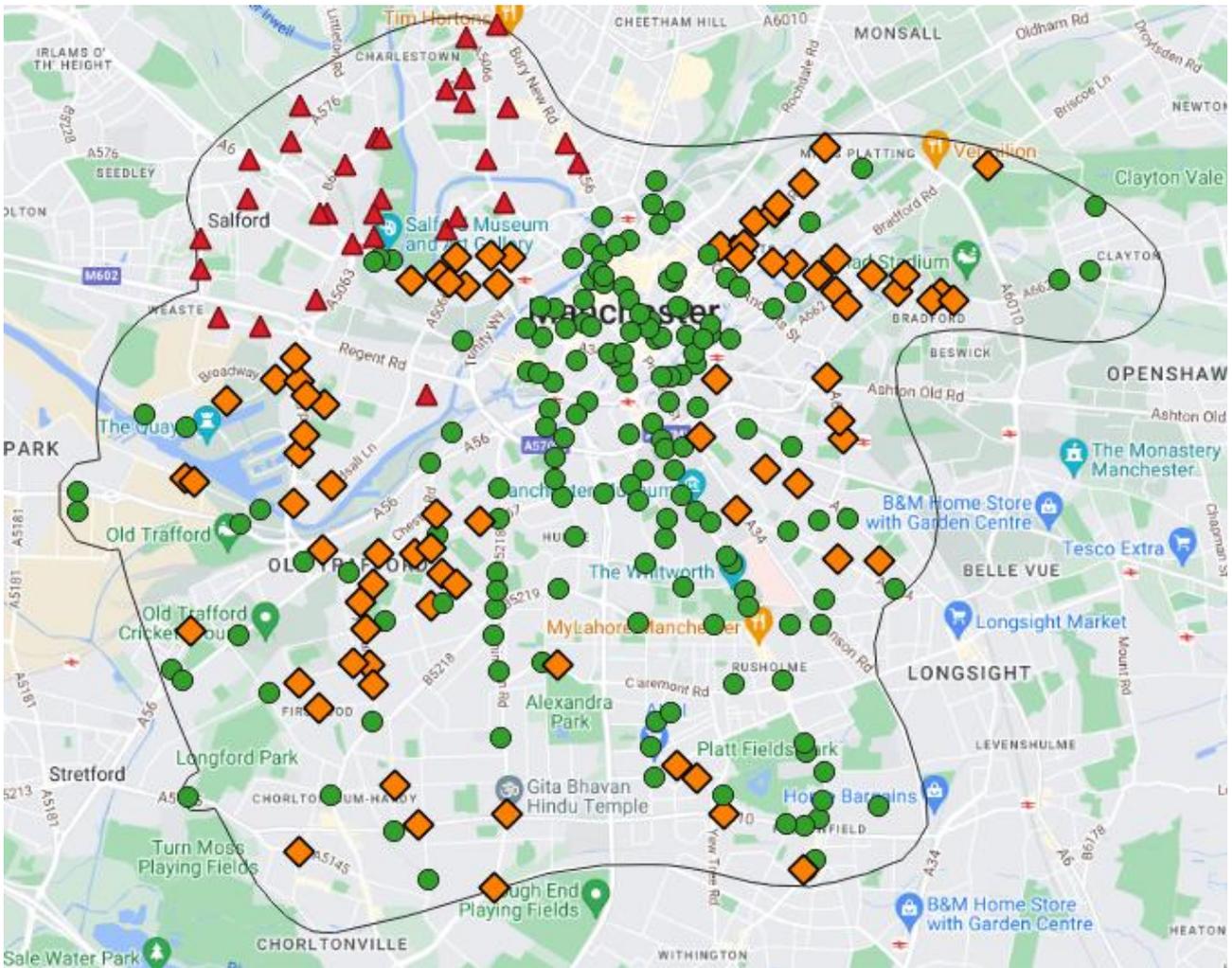


Figure 2: Repair and missing bike rate changes:



**Figure 3: Revised operational footprint (station suspension)**



**Key:**

- Green (circles) – remain operational but under review – to track shifts in ASB/Usage.
- Amber (diamonds) – suspended until review in autumn 2023.
- Red (triangles) – suspended until April 2024: areas of high ASB, and conflict with Lime e-Scooter trial (resulting in low cycle hire usage).

**Figure 4: Table of Penalty charge changes**

The following changes to penalties have been introduced.

	Previous	Recovery Plan
Out of Station fine	£5	£10
Failure to lock bike fine	£10	£30
Out of service area fine	£10	£25
Out of service area fine 24h	£80	£80