Workplace infrastructure for active travel: choosing a bike shelter / locker

Key questions

Where are your funds coming from for this?

If you're applying for external funding, check www.waytoworkscot.org for up-to-date information about funding opportunities. It is *crucial* from the outset to check what potential funders require in terms of information, specifications, quotes etc.

One main source of funding in Scotland is Cycling Scotland's Cycle Friendly Employer Fund. This also involves applying for the Cycle Friendly Employer Award. There's loads of support available, with local assessors making site visits to advise.

How big should it be?

Generally speaking a good shelter means that more staff cycle, so install as large a capacity as you have space and budget for. In 2018, 1.4% of journeys in Scotland were made by bicycle as the main mode (source: Transport Scotland). The Scottish Government's target is 10% by 2020: a seven-fold increase. The NHS as an employer should be at least this ambitious.

It's a good idea to design in space for larger bikes / adapted bikes / trailers / ecargo bikes, perhaps at one end.

Who will use it?

Do you need open or locked parking, or some of each (see below)? Locked is good for staff who are based in the building, open is good for visitors. Some sites get hundreds of visitors a day, some get none at all.

Will it actually shelter the bikes?

It definitely needs to be covered – open hoops are not attractive to users. And the shelter needs to actually shelter the bikes! Many designs have a high roof / open sides / a short and shallow roof, and so bikes get wet. Don't spend all that time and effort on something which doesn't work.

Choice of position

Locate it as near to the main entrance as possible. People who choose to cycle are doing everyone else a favour and should get prime position. On a large site with multiple entrances you might want to provide a shelter at each entrance, for convenience - staff prefer to have their bike handy than to park it and then walk miles round to their work base.

Orientation / access

Shelters can have access on the long side or from the gable end (less common). This might help you choose a shelter to fit the desired location.

Open or lockable?

This partly depends on the security of the site itself, and partly on the usage pattern as mentioned above.

Do you want to be able to store stuff in there e.g. cleaning kit, a pump, tools? Do you want users to be able to store stuff e.g. hang up a wet jacket, leave their panniers on the bike without worrying? These really add value to the shelter.

A lockable shelter is encouraging for staff especially if they have an ebike or other more expensive bike. It also allows staff who travel by car to leave a spare bike there for work trips during the day.

If it's locked and opaque, will it get broken in to because thieves believe there's valuable stuff in there?

If it's lockable, will you have a key or a PIN code? Where will you keep the key (and the spares)? / Who will know the code – other members of staff, regular visitors?

See through or opaque / solid?

Connected to the above question. Security issues – do you want to be able to see inside? Do you want passers-by to be able to see the bikes? Might the shelter be used for smoking if it's opaque but open? Does it need to be vandal proof?

Lighting, CCTV

Consider installing these. Lighting makes it easier to lock / unlock your bike, fasten up your pannier etc. in in the winter as well as adding to personal security and deterring theft. Especially important for women.

What about lockers?

Depending on the capacity you need, a locker / lockable storage shed might be a good solution. Choose a double locker, lockers for 3 or 4 bikes, or a bank of single lockers. You might want to install a locker beside the shelter for workplace bikes / ebikes.

Don't get the upright design of locker where you have to store the bike vertically, slotting its front wheel into a bracket. They're awkward to use and put people off, especially if they have a heavier ebike or they're not very tall / strong.

Asgard lockers are really robust and are built to last.

As with shelters, check what can be delivered to your area, especially in Scotland – this might be a deciding factor in your choice.

Groundworks – beware

Groundworks can add significant costs. If you can, site a shelter on existing hard standing / slabs. Remember to allow for space in front of the shelter to get a bike in and out – around 2m extra.

Delivery & build

Your choice might well be constrained by who will deliver what to your site at a reasonable cost. Remember to include the cost of build on-site – this can be significant e.g. four figures.

The parking rack itself

These usually have to be ordered separately from the shelter so remember to budget for what you need.

Sheffield hoops are good but you don't have to get individual ones separately concreted in – you can get a "toast-rack" style where the hoops are on a frame, which is simply bolted to the shelter base.

Spacing of the hoops is typically 75 / 80cm but that is a bit of a hangover from everyone having road bikes with dropped handlebars. Nowadays many people have hybrid bikes and handlebars can be 75, 80 cm wide which means that getting them in next to each other is a bit of a nuisance and can lead to bikes getting tangled or damaged. Wider spacing of say 100cm between hoops reduces capacity, but does make the parking easier to use.

Don't get a front tyre holder ("Toblerone") design, although they're cheaper. It makes it really awkward to lock your bike, you can usually only reach to lock round the front wheel which isn't very secure, and there's a risk that the bike leans and bends the front wheel.

Absolutely don't get the bike-upright type, they are really awkward to use and people will just avoid them.

What about power for charging ebikes?

Power in a bike shelter for charging ebikes usually isn't necessary. People just unlock the battery from the ebike and take it inside to charge. If an ebike has a built-in battery then yes it would be good to provide power but it massively adds to cost and complexity.

For workplace pool ebikes, it's usually part of the User Agreement that you check the battery level on return and put it on to charge if necessary. If people are doing a particularly long trip then they can take the charger with them and charge up en route but for everyday journeys it's really not necessary - modern batteries will take an ebike 60+ miles between charges depending.

Ebike chargers go into a 3-pin plug and are getting smaller all the time; ebikes cost pennies to charge and batteries go from flat to full in 3 - 4 hours usually.

A typical charger and battery look like this:

So unless there's a compelling reason for providing power in the shelter, don't bother.

Extras

While you're doing the funding sums, consider adding: a track pump (and maybe a bit of chain and connectors to install it if the shelter isn't lockable), tools in a toolbox or a workstand with tools, poster display cases for information / events, hooks / shelves.

Some manufacturers of bike shelters, not in any kind of order

Falco, Turvec, Marshalls, UrbanFab, Cyclehoop, Lock-it Safe, Cyclepod, Bikedock Solutions, Cycleworks, Broxap.

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