

A guide to setting up a cycle parking hub

What is a cycle parking hub?

A hub is a covered structure or building with access to secure cycle parking facilities.

Most existing hubs are located at transport interchanges or places with high known demand for cycle parking, such as employment or education centres. Hubs operate in other places too, including high streets and shopping centres. Some cycle hubs may offer storage lockers, repair stations, e-cycle charging points, cycle hire charging points and cycle hire. They may also act as spaces to display local cycle information, host workshops and as meeting points for cycle rides. Fees may be charged for parking and other services provided within hubs.

Why are hubs needed?

Research shows the benefits of increasing the number of journeys made by cycle. Government policies in areas including climate, health and transport aim to grow and 'normalise' cycling. A lack of well-located and secure cycle parking is a barrier to this. Cycle theft rates are high in many places. The fear (actual or perceived) of having a cycle stolen can discourage cycling. Well-designed cycle hubs are an important part of providing varied cycle parking facilities alongside more traditional on-street racks. Hubs provide peace of mind for a range of users, from families to commuters, to park their cycles securely, flexibly and conveniently. Cycle hubs support other place-making activities, for instance, empty shops can be repurposed as hubs.

What is the purpose of this guide?

Cycle hubs are popping up around the country and more are planned. The information presented in this guide draws on lessons from those involved in planning and operating hubs. It will help ensure stakeholders such as local authority officers, councillors and community members are aware of factors that can influence the success of cycle hubs.

This guide is a collaboration between the Reading Cycle Hub Partnership and Henley Business School. The next pages outline Reading Cycle Hub Partnership's story so far and offer practical suggestions about vision-setting, building connections, measuring progress and what to consider when setting up a hub. We hope the guide will be useful to others.



55%

of surveyed residents indicated access to secure storage would help them cycle more¹

¹ Source: Walking and Cycling Index (Sustrans, 2021)

Reading Cycle Hub Partnership has a long-term goal to develop Reading as an inclusive Cycle Haven, a place where people cycling feel safe, secure, supported and welcome. This can only be achieved by investing in safe cycle infrastructure, secure cycle parking and making sure cycling is an accessible and pleasurable experience. In turn, this will help Reading realise health, safety, local environment and economic benefits. It will also support town centre regeneration.

Setting up a secure Cycle Parking Hub is a first step towards becoming a Cycle Haven. There are also a series of complementary activity areas that support this ambition. To create a shared focus, the Partnership developed a vision that connects shorter-term actions with longer-term objectives, see Figure 1. The quotes outside the 'wheel' highlight the purpose of each activity area. High-level targets are shown within the one-year and 5-year circles. The Partnership also identified indicators and milestones to support each target. Monitoring and measuring these indicators and milestones will demonstrate the value of the hub and support future funding applications.



Measuring success

The first year is about demonstrating the principles and benefits of a secure cycle parking hub to residents and visitors. We will also test locational, operational and financial feasibility. It is important to identify how to monitor and measure progress against targets at the start of the project, as well as gather data for future operational models and services. There are four key data sources, see Table 1. Firstly, data can be captured electronically, for example via an online access system. Secondly, data can be recorded manually whenever there is a member of staff or volunteer on site. Thirdly, we can ask people for feedback. Finally, we can refer to indirect data sources to provide contextual information.

Electronic data	Feedback
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • User numbers • Capacity levels/use of space • Booking frequency • User preferences e.g. popularity of certain spaces 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Surveys, interviews and/or focus groups • Hub users and non-hub users • Perceptions e.g. safety, security, value • Reasons/rationale for decisions taken
Manual data	Indirect
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On-site theft or other incidents • Observational data e.g. user preferences and behaviours 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Road traffic accidents • Reported cycle theft figures • Cycle theft reporting websites • Local targets e.g. air quality, cycle rates

Figure 2: Data sources

Figure 2 is not an exhaustive list, but indicates the kind of data that could shed light on how cycle parking hubs are used. People involved in planning and running hubs can use this data to inform operational decisions. Decisions could include where to locate secondary hubs, whether to offer additional services (e.g. cycle hire), or whether the type and amount of cycle storage meets user needs. Monitoring hub performance also keeps the longer-term vision (Figure 1) and connections to wider strategies and objectives (Figure 2) in sight.

“We believe Reading can be a more healthy, efficient and pleasant town if we make it cycle-friendly.”

Reading Cycle Campaign

“If people know their bike will be safe they are more likely to cycle, making Reading a better place to live.”

Ethical Reading

Building strategic connections

The Partnership's Hub-to-Haven vision aligns with some of Reading's key objectives, including the Reading Climate Emergency Strategy and target to achieve 'net zero carbon' by 2030. Figure 3 highlights how cycle hubs connect with – and contribute to – local and national policy agendas.

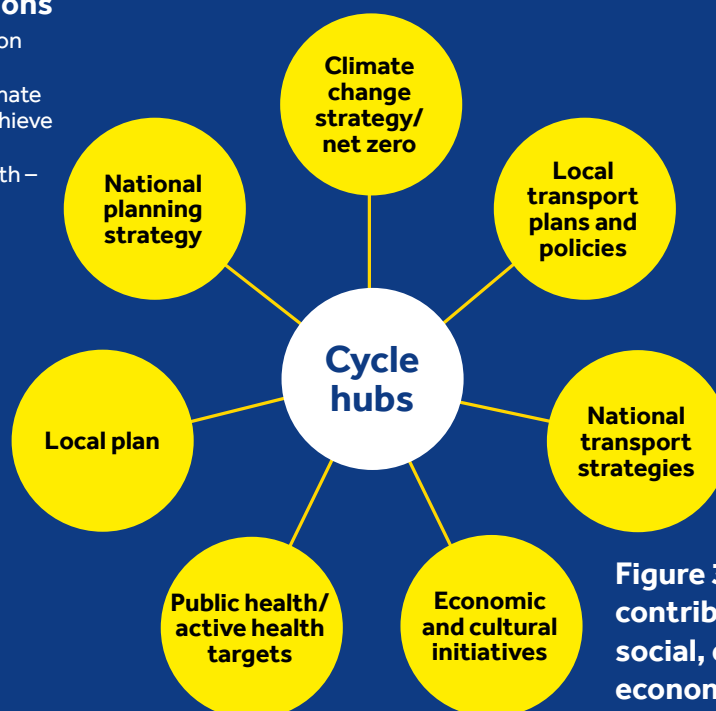


Figure 3: Cycle hubs contribute to wider social, environmental, economic, health and community objectives

Thinking of setting up a cycle parking hub?

Here are some factors to consider. There are many more detailed resources, including Standards for Public Cycle Parking (The Bicycle Association, 2021), London's Cycle Parking Implementation Plan (Transport for London, 2019) and London Cycling Design Standards (Transport for London, 2016).

Factors	Considerations	Questions
Hub vision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create expectation • Recognise and communicate benefits 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How does the vision inform and support the funding strategy? • Who are the target users? • Does the hub integrate with wider strategic objectives?
Hub location and venue	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cost and length of lease • Ease of use and access • Impact on other users • Proximity to desired destinations • Connectivity with other services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is the hub easy to access/close to users' destinations? • Is the venue well-located to meet user demands? • Is the hub supported by the surrounding infrastructure? • Will the hub be supported by retailers and businesses in the area? • Is the hub easy-to-find, well signed and publicised?
Hub design	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Type of unit • Storage options • Desired 'look and feel' • Accessibility • Design in safety and security features 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is the hub clean, welcoming and safe? • Level of refurbishment needed? • Is it accessible to all potential users and bikes? • Is secure parking separate from community access? • Availability of bike locks, lighting, CCTV? • Potential public security risks? • Do users feel safe? • Are there 'natural' surveillance opportunities?
Operating system	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ease of access • Pricing structure • Logistics • Locking options 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is the hub consistently available? • Will the hub be staffed? • How will the site be accessed? • Will users need to pre-register? • Can users pre-book? • What data can be captured? • Credit card tap-in? • What behaviours do you want to encourage? • Flexible duration options?

Figure 4: Factors to consider when setting up a secure cycle parking hub

Secure cycle parking hubs can support increased – and more diverse – cycling. Done right, hubs can help tackle practical barriers to riding such as (fear of) cycle theft. Providing visible, well-located and appropriately designed cycle parking facilities normalises cycling by helping more people feel able to go about their daily activities by bicycle. This guide has set out some things to consider in planning and delivering a cycle hub.

Reading Cycle Hub Partnership includes representatives from:

Reading Borough Council, Ethical Reading, Reading Bicycle Kitchen, Reading Cycle Campaign, Avanti Cycling, Sustrans and the University of Reading.



If you are involved in setting up or operating a cycle hub, we'd love to hear from you. Contact: e.j.street@henley.reading.ac.uk

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