

Waltham Forest Council and Freebike: A Natural Fit

It is perhaps no surprise that Waltham Forest Council, who have invested many millions in making their London Borough one of the best urban places to cycle, would be an early adopter in providing Freebike's for their employees.

Despite their rich pedigree in cycling, Waltham Forest Council's previous pool bike scheme was the same old story seen up and down the country: Bikes laying dusty and dormant with a laborious and complex booking system putting off even the most ardent of user. These problems were eliminated with the introduction of a fleet of Freebikes. Staff could register themselves via the app and rent a bike by simply going up to it and swiping their staff ID badge. Gone was the convoluted booking out system, with users able to see, at a quick glance of a screen, the availability of bikes. Freebike's unique engine lock, which negates the need for external cable locks, means bikes can be left outside in prominent and useful areas for staff.

Freebike's introduction coincided with the reduction of parking spaces across the Council's offices, with Freebikes seen as a sensible way for staff to both get to and from the various Council sites, but also to carry out their essential work functions, such as site visits, that would have previously been made by car. The introduction of Freebike to Waltham Forest Council was an instant success and has gone from strength to strength. With nearly one fifth of Waltham Forest Council's workforce registering themselves for access, the fleet has grown to 14 across 3 Council sites. Over 3,000 individual trips and over 8,500km cycled in the first year, the scheme has been a success.

During office hours, all Council employees have access to an e-bike free of charge to complete site visits, travel between meetings or travel actively during lunch breaks. The scheme was initially composed of 10 e-bikes, but due to the ever-increasing popularity and usage of Freebike, Waltham Forest Council now have 14 e-bikes. Cycling using an e-bike is a sustainable mode of transport for Council staff. It reduces carbon emissions, is an efficient mode of travel around the borough, helps reduce the number of staff using private motor vehicles to travel to work and frees up staff car parking spaces for essential users.

Daniel Gosbee, Cycling Officer at Waltham Forest Council has stated that:

'The Council has been impressed with the quality of the bikes and the level of service received. Freebike respond to all maintenance and app enquiries promptly and ensure that the batteries are replaced in good time for continuous service.'

A survey was sent out to all Freebike users in July and over one-third of users who responded cycle a Freebike at least once a week and over three-quarters of users cycle at least once a month. There were also some positive responses:

"Great scheme, the changes to the town hall campus mean that cars cannot be brought to the office in the future"

"I am so happy our organisation provide us with free electric bikes, it keeps us fit, is good for the air quality and also reduces the time I am travelling from one site to the other."

"I think this is an excellent scheme and should continue. Great app"

