

Executive Advisory Panel
Climate Change, Environment & Growth
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Report Title	Progress report on the E-Scooter Trial in North Northamptonshire
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List of Appendices

Appendix A – map of operating zones within North Northamptonshire

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1. The purpose of this report is to provide an update on the current e-scooter trial, and its impact, in North Northamptonshire.

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1. The Northamptonshire E-Scooter trial was one of the first to be launched in England. It operates across both North Northamptonshire and West Northamptonshire. The initial operating area focused on Northampton and expanded into North Northamptonshire in Kettering in December 2020, Corby in February 2021, Wellingborough, Rushden / Higham Ferrers in March 2021 and Burton Latimer in April 2021.
- 2.2. Since the launch of the trial, over 700,000 trips have been undertaken in North Northamptonshire replacing an estimated over 370,000 car trips, and saving 9.2 tonnes of CO₂.
- 2.3. The Northamptonshire trial has led the way for others piloting various innovations in the area, some of which have now been mandated or advised as 'good practice' for all trial areas. These include:
- the design and installation (with input from Northamptonshire Police) of identification plates on all e-scooters making it easier to track and enforce rule breaking;

- an on-line driving school and events to reinforce important safety messages;
- a 'three-strikes' policy for rule breakers; and
- a mandatory 'end of ride photo' which requires users to demonstrate that they have parked safely. Failure to do so results in a warning and then fines.

2.4 A decision was taken last year to extend the trial to 30 November 2022.

2.5 This summer, Ministers approved an 18-month extension of the current e-scooter trials to 31 May 2024. This is to allow Government to gather further evidence where gaps are identified, building on the findings of the current evaluation which has been commissioned by the Department for Transport (DfT).

2.6 NNC supports an extension so that it remains aligned with other DfT trials, further improvements can be introduced, and users in the area continue to benefit from this new form of transport. The continuation will also help to ensure that the results, experience and learning from the trial in North Northamptonshire can help inform new legislation which is expected this parliament.

3. **Report Background**

3.1. The Northamptonshire E-Scooter trial is part of a set of initiatives that were accelerated due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Northamptonshire was one of the first areas in the country to successfully bid to DfT to host a trial. A unique element of the Northamptonshire trial, differentiating it from others, was the intention for it to operate across different sized urban areas. It also involved looking at the role that e-scooters could play in tackling specific use cases (see below):

- Further/Higher education - Travel to/from the edge of centre campus particularly for students and staff.
- Major employer e.g., General Hospitals and industrial estates - Travel to/from work at busy compact sites, including shift patterns which make public transport challenging in areas with limited parking.
- Town Centre - Short trips in and around busy town centres.
- Park-and scoot hub site - Enable easy multi-modal choices delivering benefits to users.
- Out of town retail - Travel for employees and increasing leisure trips.

3.2. There was significant interest from suppliers keen to operate the trial in Northamptonshire. A competitive process saw Voi Technology (Voi) selected as the preferred supplier. Voi have successfully delivered similar schemes across Europe and are now live in more than 50 cities. Voi is also operating trials in other areas including Cambridge, Liverpool, and the West Midlands.

- 3.3. When launched in September 2020 the trial initially focused on Northampton. It then expanded into North Northamptonshire to Kettering in December 2020, Corby in February 2021, Wellingborough, and Rushden / Higham Ferrers in March 2021, and then Burton Latimer in April 2021 (see Appendix A). Voi also launched e-bikes in Kettering in February 2021 and these can be used across the town and in Burton Latimer with over 14,400 rides to date. North Northamptonshire was the first place, alongside Cambridge and Peterborough, to operate e-bikes alongside e-scooters.



- 3.4. The trial is helping NNC understand the role shared e-scooters, and e-bikes, can play now and in the future as part of an integrated transport system, alongside other modes, across North Northamptonshire. The trial was especially important during Covid-19 providing an alternative to car sharing and public transport for those who had to travel to work including emergency service employees, with over 32,600 trips across North Northamptonshire undertaken using the “Voi4Heroes” concession. It was also crucial addressing public health concerns regarding the risk of outbreaks at major manufacturing sites as many employees relied on public transport and car sharing to get to work.

Key Facts and Findings¹

- 3.5. Since the launch of the trial in North Northamptonshire over 700,000 trips have been undertaken in the area. It is estimated that this has helped to save 9.2 tonnes of CO2 through reduced car trips.



¹ All figures quoted relate to use to end of July 2022

- 3.6. Almost 29,000 people have registered as users since the start of the trial. This represents about 10% of the total population aged between 18 and 65+ in North Northamptonshire.
- 3.7. Voi undertake bi-annual user surveys, the most recent winter survey undertaken in February 2022 had 185 respondents in North Northamptonshire. Insights show:
- 80% respondents were in employment and 4% respondents were students
 - 50% respondents used the trial e-scooters to commute to or from work
 - 29% respondents used the trial e-scooters a few times per week
 - 67% respondents scored 5 or more (Agree or Strongly Agree) when asked about e-scooter safety
- 3.8. Analysis of data provided by Voi since the start of the trial shows an increase in average hourly rides during peak commuting hours of 5am – 8am and 4pm – 6pm with these now the dominant times for usage. The early (5am) start time for the morning commute peak is understood to be unique to North Northamptonshire compared with other areas where Voi operates.
- 3.9. The data provided by Voi has also been useful for the work on Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans (LCWIPs) and indicating the most popular start and end points for trips. This gives an indication of which routes may also be popular for cycling and where infrastructure improvements could be most beneficial.

Improvements and Innovations

- 3.10. The Northamptonshire trial has led the way nationally by testing and deploying numerous innovations some of which were introduced in response to negative impacts experienced at the start of trial. Many of these innovations have subsequently adopted by other areas and now part of Government 'best practice', for all trial areas. These include clearly visible ID plates on all e-scooters, safety events and an on-line safety school, pavement riding detection trial, compulsory 'end of ride' photos to demonstrate compliant parking, a 'three-strike' policy on rule-breaking and a dedicated form to report incidents at <https://www.voiscooters.com/report/uk/>
- 3.11. Other innovations include creation of incentivised parking zones which reward users for parking in defined areas, deployment of parking racks and pavement markings in areas with high footfall such as prominent town centre locations, in-app messaging reminding users of rules which has been shown to improve parking. Parking compliance has increased from 91% in September 2021 to 98% in August 2022 following implementation of these innovations.
- 3.12. Following the introduction of these improvements, which are constantly refined with input from partners, including Northamptonshire Police and

members of the public, NNC has seen a significant decrease in the numbers of reported anti-social behaviour incidents.

- 3.13. A further innovation is the use of the Vianova platform 'Cityscope', a web based open API data platform which enables fleet management, analytics and planning and audit and regulation functions and covers many major cities across Europe. NNC are unique in the UK for utilising Cityscope for the e-scooter trial. The real time monitoring of reported issues enabled through the platform results in swift action reducing the need for formal complaints/ reputational impacts. The platform also helps to monitor supply and demand of e-scooters in real-time.
- 3.14. Despite the improvements enabled through these and other innovations, there is no complacency and both Voi and NNC are committed to continuing to improve the service and experience for both users and non-users. This includes continuing to reinforce rules on use, promoting safety including through free helmet giveaways and special events, and making it easier for the public to report anti-social behaviour involving the use of trial e-scooters.

Engagement and Collaboration

- 3.15. The success of the trial has been enabled by strong political leadership, latterly by NNC and WNC, and the positive engagement of many other organisations. These include in particular Northamptonshire Police (appointed national forces lead on e-scooters), especially the messaging on rules and safety for users, the General Hospital in Kettering, major business bodies, destinations and employers e.g. Sovereign Centros owners of Corby town centre and the Crown Estates owners of Rushden Lakes, and key special interest groups such as the Royal National Institute for the Blind.
- 3.16. Throughout the trial to date Voi has embraced the benefits of a collaborative approach working with these and other stakeholders. This culture underpinned their submission to operate the trial and was a major factor in their successful appointment. This collaborative approach has also been indicated in other arenas and activities. These include:
- Voi promoting clean growth and the e-scooter trial at local climate change events including the summit organised by NNC in November 2021
 - Voi demonstrating at the Business Expo organised by the Northamptonshire Chamber of Commerce at Kettering Conference Centre in March 2022, at the NNC staff learning at work events at the Corby Cube in May 2022, and at the Merged Futures technology showcase event in June 2022 organised by Digital Northamptonshire
 - The production of Voi [City Guides](#) which highlight local areas of interest in all the local towns, including independent attractions and shops, able to be accessed via the trial e-scooters
- 3.16 Voi and NNC also presented jointly to the LGA Conference held in Harrogate in the summer via the Innovation Zone.

4. Issues and Choices

- 4.1. Choice 1 – not participating in initial trial period. This choice would have resulted in lack of knowledge for NNC about new and emerging transport options involving e-scooters and other similar forms of shared transport, limited the ability to deliver on climate goals, and restricted travel options for residents during the COVID-19 pandemic by not providing an alternative to car sharing and public transport for emergency service employees and others required to travel to and from work.
- 4.2. Choice 2 - agreeing to participate and extend trial to November 2022. As post-Covid working and travel patterns emerged this opportunity allowed more data collation to aid learning. The direct benefits were car journeys replaced contributing to climate change aims, providing an additional green travel option for local residents, mutual learning, the ability for NNC to be a trail blazer at the forefront of a new type of transport, and the opportunity to influence operating practices and emerging legislation.
- 4.3. Choice 3 – continuing the trial beyond November 2022. Ministers have recently decided to extend the national programme of trials to 31 May 2024. This is to enable DfT to gather further information to help address gaps in their knowledge and for trials to continue to introduce innovations and evolve. The extension will also provide the opportunity for new legislation and guidance to be developed and implemented and avoid a potential hiatus and the risks that could present e.g. a growth in the use of illegal private e-scooters, and encourage operators such as Voi to continue to invest in the trials.

5. Next Steps

- 5.1 The Queen's Speech on Tuesday 10 May 2022 announced the Government's intention to introduce legislation on the future of transport in the new parliamentary session as part of a Transport Bill. Baroness Vere of Norbiton added more detail to this in the House of Lords debate on 11 May 2022, outlining that one aim of the Transport Bill will be to create a new regime for regulating micromobility.
- 5.2 The statements indicate that Government intends to create a new, low-speed, zero-emission vehicle (LZEV) category which is independent from the cycle and motor vehicle categories, covering both new vehicles that are familiar to us today, such as e-scooters, and vehicles that have yet to be invented. New powers, to be set out in the Transport Bill, would allow the Government to decide which vehicles fall into this category in future and establish how they should be regulated to make sure that they are safe for users, pedestrians, and other road users, while still facilitating growth and innovation. The primary benefit of this is that the new framework would be more adaptable, enabling regulations to keep up with this fast-moving sector and evolving user behaviours.

- 5.3 It is anticipated that the powers within the Bill will be used to subsequently create regulations that will legalise e-scooters, but under new rules. These rules would include robust technical requirements and, most likely, a set of requirements for users. The Bill will also propose new powers for local transport authorities to shape and manage rental operations, for pedal cycles, e-cycles, and e-scooters. The details of this scheme would be set out in subsequent regulations.
- 5.4 The Government will consult publicly before any secondary regulations for e-scooters and the rental schemes are made. This means that no final decisions about regulations have been made, nor will they be until such point that the Transport Bill becomes law.
- 5.5 In June 2022, Ministers approved an 18-month extension of the current e-scooter trials to 31 May 2024. The extension will be restricted to existing trial areas only, such as Northamptonshire, and will allow Government to gather further evidence where gaps are identified, building on the findings of the current evaluation commissioned by DfT.
- 5.6 DfT have indicated that the move towards a new regime means that the trials continue to have significant value, as well as providing a practical example of how better regulation can encourage responsible use. They will continue to gather trip data and monthly incident reports to inform policy development. They are also keen to use the extension to allow local authorities to share lessons learned, amongst themselves and with non-trial areas, in preparation for the introduction of rental permit schemes under the new legal framework. This will be facilitated by DfT and provides an opportunity for NNC to play an active role.
- 5.7 NNC and other local authorities need to decide whether to take up the opportunity to extend the trials to 31 May 2024. Decisions need to be made by October 2022. As with the previous extension to November 2022, DfT hopes that all areas will want to continue, but there is no compulsion.
- 5.8 It is clear that the trial has made a significant and positive impact on North Northamptonshire by offering a clean form of shared transport which is popular with users and at zero-cost to NNC. It is also clear that extending the trial to 31 May 2024 provides the opportunity to build on the successes achieved to date, and also continue to tackle some of the important issues which remain regarding anti-social use and poor parking and making it easier to report and enforce against bad behaviour by users which although in a small minority should be addressed. NNC therefore intends to extend the trial with the decision confirmed in consultation with the Executive Member for Highways, Travel and Assets. WNC will also need to confirm its position and it is hoped that it will agree a similar course. This will also help to safeguard the local jobs supported through the trial.
- 5.9 Some of the potential opportunities which have been identified for exploring through the extension of the trial and in the longer-term once legislation and guidance is in place include:

- Tackling actual and perceived concerns regarding the safety of e-scooters
- Offering the use of e-scooters to staff as part of a travel plan with hubs at council sites and exploring the benefits that this could provide including potential cost-savings if journeys undertaken instead of using a private car
- More work on how interchange between different modes can be made easier for users – this includes information, journey planning, payments, infrastructure etc.
- Creating mobility hubs with dedicated parking infrastructure at major transport hubs and other key trip generators
- Collaborating with progressive developers to explore the scope for actively promoting the use e-scooters to new residents and an alternative to private car use
- Expanding the current e-bike offer, which is only available in Kettering and Burton Latimer, to other towns where the e-scooter trial currently operates and potentially to the rural areas, as well as looking at other forms of shared transport
- Integrating micromobility, including e-scooters, into the new Local Transport Plan
- Exploring how new developments can be planned to support the use of new forms of micromobility such as e-scooters, but also wider including delivery robots and other forms of new transport e.g. through dedicated parking, routes and other measures

6. Implications (including financial implications)

6.1. Resources and Financial

- 6.1.1. The e-scooter trial operates at zero cost to NNC.

6.2. Legal and Governance

- 6.2.1. Voi is required to meet stringent legal and technical requirements as set out by DfT.
- 6.2.2. The use of Voi e-scooters through the trial is legalised through Vehicle Service Operator Agreements (VSO's) issued by DfT.
- 6.2.3. A Collaboration Agreement is in place between Voi, North Northamptonshire Council and West Northamptonshire (WNC) which outlines how the trial will operate. NNC manages the trial as lead authority on behalf of WNC through the Digital Infrastructure Inter-Authority Agreement.
- 6.2.4. Monthly meetings are held with Voi involving NNC, WNC and Northamptonshire Police.

6.3. Relevant Policies and Plans

- 6.3.1. [DfT E-scooters trials: guidance for local authorities and rental operators](#)

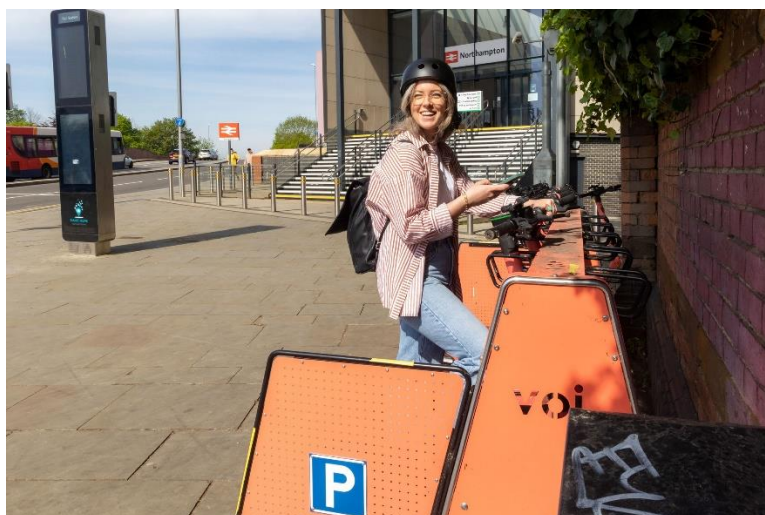
- 6.3.2. [North Northamptonshire Council corporate plan](#) – the green, sustainable environment priority.

6.4. **Risk**

Risk	Mitigation
Anti-social behaviour	Continued improvements to mechanisms for reporting incidents. 'Three strikes' policy deters rule breaking and bad behaviour
Accidents involving trial e-scooters	On-line driving school. Safety events. In-app messaging. Helmet giveaways
Poor parking	'End of ride photo' requirement. Options explored for additional parking infrastructure and incentivised parking zones
Increased use of private e-scooters	Continued education and communications, including via Northamptonshire Police, explaining rules

6.5. **Consultation**

- 6.5.1. Consultation is undertaken via the wider Steering Group with attendance by Voi, NNC and WNC officers, and Northamptonshire Police. Engagement with officers includes neighbourhood teams, planning, highways, trading standards and environmental leads. The Police are consulted on any amendments to the operating areas and other operational changes proposed by Voi. They are also consulted on safety improvements.
- 6.5.2. Consultation has taken place with the RNIB to design suitable parking racks (see below). RNIB are also involved in an acoustic trial led by Voi testing a unique sound for e-scooters. This trial is being undertaken in the West Midlands. Voi have also presented to local business networks.



6.6. **Consideration by Executive Advisory Panel**

6.6.1. This item has not previously been considered by Executive Advisory Panel.

6.7. **Consideration by Scrutiny**

6.7.1. There is no identified need for wider consideration by scrutiny although should members of the scrutiny commission request it to go into the work programme, they can do so.

6.8. **Equality Implications**

6.8.1. Equality implications are considered through engagement with key groups representing vulnerable users such as the RNIB. Voi are proactively engaging with RNIB and other organisations representing vulnerable users at a national level.

6.9. **Climate Impact**

6.9.1. Transport is a major source of emissions targeted as part of net zero plans. Voi has been a carbon neutral company since January 2020, and they work to continually reduce residual emissions. As part of the trial, electric vans, cargo bikes and battery swapping technology are used for fleet management and rebalancing.

6.9.2. It is estimated that the trial has helped to save 370,000 car trips and 9.2 tonnes of CO2 emissions in North Northamptonshire.

6.10. **Community Impact**

6.10.1 Oxford Consultants for Social Inclusion (OCSI) overlaid the Community Needs Index with the Index of Multiple Deprivation to find those communities that suffer from the highest levels of combined social, cultural, and economic deprivation. Those wards that rank in the top 10% most deprived on both indices, are arguably the most 'left behind' neighbourhoods in England.

6.10.2 The Left Behind Communities in North Northamptonshire are Kingswood in Corby, Windmill in Kettering and Brickhill and Queensway in Wellingborough.

Figure 1. Table showing car availability as at 2011 Census for Left Behind Communities and North Northamptonshire

Locality	% Households with no car or van	% Households with 1 car or van	% Households with 2 cars or vans	% Households with 3 cars or vans	% Households with 4+ cars or vans
Kingswood, Corby	27%	44%	24%	4%	1%
Windmill, Kettering	27%	45%	23%	4%	1%
Brickhill and Queensway, Wellingborough	32%	45%	18%	4%	1%
North Northamptonshire	19%	42%	30%	7%	2%

Source: ONS Census 2011 Crown Copyright Reserved [from Nomis on 15 March 2022]

6.10.3 Analysis of Census 2011 data for car ownership shows that the Left Behind Communities generally have higher percentages of households with no access to a car or van than the North Northamptonshire average. These areas generally have higher percentages of households with access to 1 car or van than the North Northamptonshire average which could represent occupations with works vehicles.

6.10.4 Data from Voi indicates that e-scooter usage is noticeably higher in these areas when compared to the rest of the Operating Zones. This indicates the attractiveness of shared transport and the trial e-scooters as an alternative and affordable method of transport.

6.11. Crime and Disorder Impact

6.11.1. Voi and NNC have worked closely with Northamptonshire Police to discourage rule breaking and support enforcement actions, especially through education. Reports of anti-social behaviour have decreased from 131 in December 2021 to 20 in July 2022.

7. Background Papers

7.1. None.

Map of E-Scooter Operating Zones in North Northamptonshire

