

## **Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)**

### **What are the micro-mobility trials?**

The Department for Transport (DfT) have brought forward and extended e-scooter trials, to aid response to COVID measures, and to inform future legislation on e-scooter use.

The trials would be for up to 12 months and would provide essential insights for the council on how e-scooters contribute to the transport mix in Portsmouth, as well as learning from other local authorities and data collected by the Department for Transport (DfT).

### **Why have the DfT fast tracked trials?**

The DfT have brought forward and expanded e-scooter trials to support a 'green' restart of local travel and to help mitigate the impact of reduced public transport capacity. The trials will help to inform future changes in legislation on e-scooter use.

The DfT see e-scooters as offering the potential for fast, clean and inexpensive travel, which will help to ease the burden on transport networks and allow for social distancing. They also offer an alternative transport mode in the long-term.

### **What are e-scooters?**

E-scooters are designed around a traditional kick scooter but have an electric motor allowing the user to coast between 5mph (walking speed) and 15.5mph. E-scooters provide an attractive alternative for short commutes and journeys or sightseeing (~3 mile distances or less). This allows users to travel standing on the e-scooter, using the handlebar to control acceleration and braking. The e-scooters would be available on short-term hire (pay per minute), with monthly bundles available.

### **Who would be delivering the service?**

A procurement exercise has been undertaken to identify Voi as the Council's Scheme Operator.

## **When would the trial begin?**

If the trial is approved, Voi would introduce e-scooters to the City from mid-March in line with DfT deadlines for the trial. A low number of e-scooters would be introduced to start, increasing numbers over a few weeks in line with demand and approval from Portsmouth City Council (PCC), once comfortable with street operations. The introduction of the parking locations will also be phased at the launch stage.

## **How would the service be managed?**

Voi will be responsible for providing, operating and maintaining the e-scooter fleet and parking racks. This includes ensuring there are systems in place to monitor e-scooters and be able to use rebalancing to ensure demand is met; operating a 24/7 service; and maintenance of e-scooters.

## **What are the benefits of Portsmouth participating in the trial?**

Introducing a shared e-scooter rental scheme as part of a trial offers the opportunity to bring e-scooters into Portsmouth's transport mix in a small-scale, controlled, closely monitored environment. The trial would provide us with the opportunity to understand the market, user behaviour and perception of micro-mobility transport within Portsmouth by non-users and users. The trial period would also provide the opportunity to understand how e-scooters complement other transport options in the city.

Regular contact with other local authorities, particularly those in the Solent Region also running trials, will enable us to learn from trials in other areas, and where we may look to make changes to our operations.

## **Are PCC able to adjust operations during the trial?**

Participating in the trials allows for e-scooters to be introduced to Portsmouth in a controlled manner.

PCC would have full control of the trial, and would work in partnership with Voi on how the e-scooter scheme would run. The council would have control over parking locations, the rate of deployment of e-scooters, the service area, and identification of slow speed zones. Regular contact and meetings with Voi and council officers would ensure any adjustments can be made through the duration of the trial. Voi are also able to provide data to help PCC make informed decisions on the trial.

## **How would the service be evaluated?**

The DfT are undertaking their own evaluation of the trials. This would be shared with participating local authorities. PCC will be able to gain access to this data. This evaluation will broadly cover;

- Safety of e-scooters;
- Who is using them;
- The impact on the transport system (modal shift, integration with other transport modes);
- Public perceptions of e-scooters;
- Outcomes seen in differing areas;
- Lessons learned from implementation.

PCC is also undertaking before and after surveys, focusing on public perceptions of e-scooters and their impact on the transport system.

## **What is the maximum speed of scooters and how would this be controlled?**

The maximum speed of an e-scooter is capped at 15.5mph. This is a requirement set by the DfT. Voi will be able to restrict speed on certain areas of the city for safety of users and non-users.

## **Who is able to ride an e-scooter?**

As part of DfT requirements, users must hold at least a provisional driving license to ride an e-scooter (with some international licenses also accepted).

## **Where would e-scooters be able to ride?**

The DfT have stated that e-scooters would be treated similarly to electrically-assisted pedal cycles (EPACS) as they have a similar road presence. E-scooters would therefore be allowed to ride on roads and cycle lanes but not pavements.

## **How do we ensure rider safety and safety of non-users?**

Voi has set out how they will educate users about riding safely and appropriately, including encouraging helmet use. They have also set out measures they have to ensure safe parking, including having designated parking racks.

Voi are also able to use geo-fencing to restrict e-scooter access and/or speed on certain streets within the city centre, such as pedestrianised streets. This will improve safety in areas of high pedestrian usage.

## **What insurance is in place?**

Voi has the DfT requirements for insurance, and are able to provide fully comprehensive motor vehicle insurance for riders.

## **How would hygiene be considered in response to COVID-19?**

Voi has outlined a robust process and measures it has in place in response, and to address, COVID-19. These measures ensure the safety of both users and their staff. They also ensure that e-scooters will be cleaned on a regular basis and users will be reminded of guidance on hand cleansing.

## **How would we address e-scooters contributing to street clutter?**

The approach to safe parking in PCC will be to adopt a system of designated parking racks within Mandatory Parking Zone (which instructs the user where to park) rather than a dockless system (this is where the e-scooters are left at the user's discretion). This approach will reduce street clutter. Users will incur penalties if not parked in the correct place. Generally the e-scooters have stands which ensure they are kept upright and technology can be used to identify fallen e-scooters.

## **How would the e-scooter scheme be advertised across the city?**

The e-scooter scheme would be advertised across the city through PCC and Voi's communication channels. A communications plan has been drawn up, and PCC will work with Voi, Solent Transport and the DfT on informing and educating the public on the trial.

## **What is the impact on the blind and partially sighted, elderly people and those with small children? How are concerns being addressed?**

Concerns have been raised by the RNIB and other national organisations around the impact of e-scooters on the blind and partially sighted. The RNIB have outlined recommendations for local authorities and e-scooter providers.

PCC and Voi recognise the need to mitigate the impact of e-scooters on this group and have addressed a number of the recommendations set out by the RNIB for introducing e-scooters. These include, but are not limited to:

- Designated parking racks within Mandatory Parking Zones for e-scooters;
- Restricting access to certain areas and slow speed zones;
- Systems in place to encourage safe and appropriate parking, with systems in place to respond to poor parking.

PCC and Voi have also engaged with local organisations in Portsmouth to discuss how their operations may affect those with sight loss.

**Have the police been consulted and what are their views?**

PCC, Voi and the Hampshire Constabulary will work collaboratively in the run-up and during the trial to respond to any issues or concerns.

**How will the police identify between legal (rental) e-scooters vs illegal (private) scooters?**

A requirement of the Council's e-scooter operator is to ensure their e-scooters are clearly identifiable and this is being developed for launch. This will make it clear to identify which e-scooter is part of the trial and which is a private e-scooter. The Voi e-scooters will also have unique vehicle ID plates.