

Sustainable Communities Executive Advisory Panel 7 February 2024

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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, almost 1.5m trips have been undertaken in North Northamptonshire replacing an estimated over 572k car trips, and saving 281 tonnes of CO2. There are over 41,000 riders.
- 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 May 2024.

2.5 This summer, Ministers approved a further extension of the current e-scooter trials to 31 May 2026. 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 Extending the trial would ensure that it remains aligned with others approved By DfT , enable further improvements to be introduced (including through the deployment of artificial intelligence and other technologies), and maintain continuity for users in the area 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.

3. **Report Background**

3.1. The Northamptonshire E-Scooter trial is part of a set of initiatives that were initially 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 100 cities across Europe. Voi is also operating trials in other parts of England including London, Oxford, Portsmouth, Cambridge and Liverpool.

- 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).
- 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 almost 1.5m trips have been undertaken in the area. It is estimated that this has helped to save 281 tonnes of CO2 through reduced car trips.



- 3.6. Over 41,000 people have registered as users, and taken a ride, since the start of the trial. This represents about 11% of the total population aged 18 and over in North Northamptonshire.
- 3.7. Voi undertakes bi-annual user surveys, the most recent winter survey undertaken in December 2023 had 542 respondents in North Northamptonshire. Insights show:
- 83.6% respondents were in employment and 3.9% respondents were students
 - 36% respondents used the trial e-scooters to commute to or from work
 - 54.7% respondents used the trial e-scooters a few times per week

¹ All figures quoted relate to use to end of December 2023

- 66.3% 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, and other trends. This gives an indication of which routes may also be popular for cycling and where targeted 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 (both in England and internationally) 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 99.4% in December 2023 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. This led to it being short-listed in the National Transport Awards for the use of new technology. The real time monitoring of reported issues enabled through the platform results in swift action reducing the need for formal complaints. 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 (RNIB).
- 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.

4. Next Steps

- 4.1 Ministers approved an extension of the current e-scooter trials to 31 May 2026. 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.
- 4.2 DfT have indicated that the move towards a fresh regime, and new statutory footing, 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.
- 4.3 NNC and other local authorities need to decide whether to take up the opportunity to extend the trials to 31 May 2026. Decisions need to be made by 5 April 2024. As with the previous extension to November 2022, DfT hopes that all areas will want to continue, but there is no compulsion.
- 4.4 It is apparent that the trial has made a significant and positive impact on North Northamptonshire by offering a clean, flexible and affordable 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 2026 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.

4.5 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 e.g., work is already underway with the Hanwood Park developer in Kettering
- 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

5. Implications (including financial implications)

5.1. Resources and Financial

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

5.2. Legal and Governance

5.2.1. Voi is required to meet stringent legal and technical requirements as set out by DfT.

5.2.2. The use of Voi e-scooters through the trial is legalised through Vehicle Service Operator Agreements (VSO's) issued by DfT.

5.2.3. 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.

5.2.4. Monthly Steering Group meetings are held with Voi involving NNC, WNC and Northamptonshire Police. A quarterly meeting with Voi also now takes place with the Executive Member for Highways, Travel & Assets.

5.3. **Relevant Policies and Plans**

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

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

5.4. **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 |

5.5. **Consultation**

5.5.1. 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.

5.6. **Consideration by Executive Advisory Panel**

5.6.1. This was considered by Executive Advisory Panel in August 2022.

5.7. **Consideration by Scrutiny**

5.7.1. 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.

5.8. **Equality Implications**

5.8.1. 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.

5.9. Climate Impact

5.9.1. 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.

5.9.2 It is estimated that the trial has helped to save 572k car trips and 281 tonnes of CO2 emissions in North Northamptonshire.

5.10. Community Impact

5.10.1 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.

5.10.2 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 average | 19% | 42% | 30% | 7% | 2% |

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

5.10.3 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.

5.10.4 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.

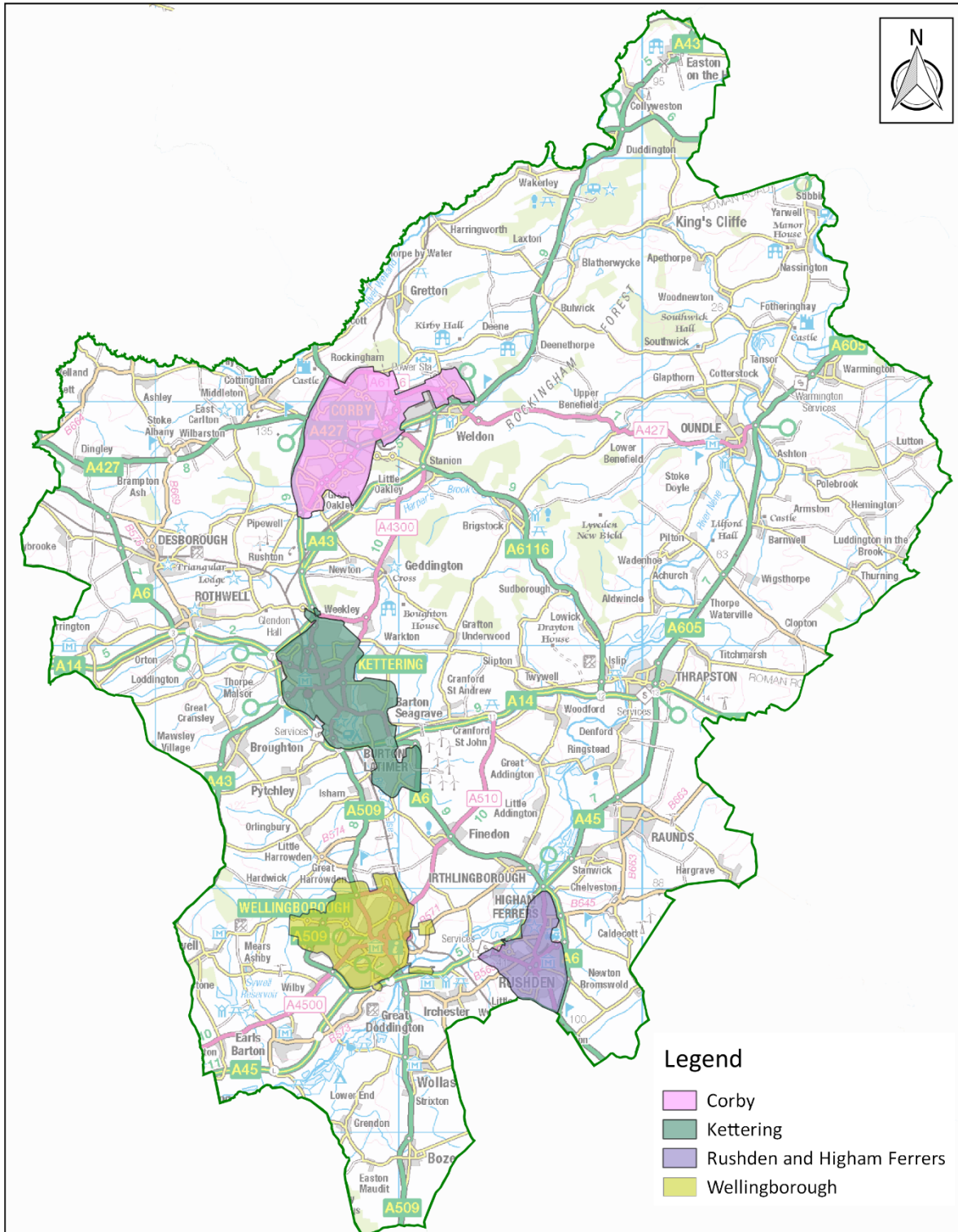
5.11. **Crime and Disorder Impact**

5.11.1. Voi and NNC have worked closely with Northamptonshire Police to discourage rule breaking and support enforcement actions, especially through education.

6. Background Papers

6.1. None.

Map of E-Scooter Operating Zones in North Northamptonshire



 North Northamptonshire Council

Title: **E-Scooter Operating Zones in North Northamptonshire**

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