

Place and Resources Scrutiny Committee

24 April 2025

Dockless Bike Rental in Southeast Dorset

For Recommendation to the Portfolio Holder

Cabinet Member and Portfolio:

Cllr J Andrews, Place Services

Local Councillor(s):

- **Colehill and Wimborne Minster East:** Cllr Jindy Atwal, Cllr Andy Todd
- **Wimborne Minster:** Cllr Shane Bartlett, Cllr David Morgan
- **Ferndown North:** Cllr Mike Parkes, Cllr Cathy Lugg
- **Ferndown South:** Cllr Julie Robinson, Cllr Hannah Hobbs-Chell
- **West Moors and Three Legged Cross:** Cllr David Shortell, Cllr Andy Skeats
- **West Parley:** Cllr Andrew Parry

Executive Director:

J Britton, Executive Director for Place Services

Report Author: Christopher Whitehouse

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Report Status: Public (the exemption paragraph is N/A)

Brief Summary: In January 2022, Dorset Council contracted Beryl Bikes to deliver a dockless bike share scheme in several wards in Southeast Dorset. The initial contract was for three years, with the possibility of annual extensions. However, Beryl Bikes decided to discontinue the scheme after the initial term due to commercial unviability.

Key Lines of Enquiry:

1. Formation of the Beryl contract and infrastructure costs
2. Decision process behind ending the contract

3. Impact on infrastructure and bikes post-termination

Recommendation:

1. **Reallocated Resources:** Ensure that the remaining assets from the terminated scheme (pedal cycles and parklet bays) are effectively utilised in other areas to maximise their value and benefit.
2. **Existing and Future Contracts:** Review existing contracts and work with the supplier to reduce risk of the recurrence of a similar unexpected withdrawal of services.

Reason for Recommendation:

To promote active travel and sustainable transport options in Dorset. Active travel forms an integral part of our drive towards the decarbonisation of transport, which contributes around 30% of emissions throughout Dorset. The Nature Recovery, Climate and Ecology strategy has clear targets in the reduction of emissions throughout Dorset. Active travel also improves health outcomes and can also have a positive impact on air quality. Our Active Travel Infrastructure plan is a long-term plan for improving our network for walking, cycling and mobility aids, and we are continuing to develop a strategic approach to this.

1. **Report**

- 1.1 Dorset Council offered a concession contract in January 2022 to Beryl Bikes to deliver a dockless bike share scheme for the Wimborne, West Moors, Colehill, Ferndown and West Parley wards in the Southeast of the Dorset Council area. The contract was for an initial 3-year term. At the end of the 3-year term Beryl Bikes reviewed ridership in the area and deemed it commercially unviable to continue, so notified Dorset Council of their intention to discontinue the scheme. Beryl required an operating revenue subsidy of £14k per month to continue operating the scheme.

2. **Formation of the Beryl Contract**

- 2.1 **Stage 1:** Business case/expression of interest (dated 10 Nov 2020) considered by the Community Infrastructure Levy Committee chaired by Cllr. Ray Bryan, for the introduction of a dockless bike share scheme. £400k capital funding was requested, £240k capital funding was made available.
- 2.2 **Stage 2:** An exemption to contract procedures was made to enable the Authority to make a direct award. Approval was granted on the basis that:
 - i) Provides customers with a cross-boundary, continuous service solution

- ii) Represents best value as the supplier already operates in the area and therefore already has the supporting infrastructure set up (local workshop, bike recovery and repair facilities)
- iii) Beryl Bikes have already gone through a rigorous procurement process to win the BCP contract – further evidencing of best value.
- iv) Beryl Bikes have an established bike share brand in the locality
- v) It supports our BCP Council partners and joint local transport plans
- vi) Beryl Bikes have a proven service that addresses several potential concerns such as bike dumping/littering, bike safety, vandalism etc.
- vii) Other providers are unlikely to be attracted to a bike share proposition bordering a larger, well established, and successful scheme
- viii) BCP report high levels of satisfaction with the service provided by Beryl
- ix) Speed of delivery – if appointed Beryl Bikes could have bikes in place before the autumn

2.3 Bike share schemes tend to operate in urban areas with large populations. It is unlikely that any bike share scheme provider would see the Southeast area of Dorset as commercially viable as a stand-alone operation without the application of a revenue subsidy. Beryl have use of the operational infrastructure already in place for the BCP scheme. This included a workshop and storage, access to support vehicles, and personnel resource (mechanics, field operatives, management).

These alternative options listed in the exemption request report were explored and discounted:

- i) Joined up contract with BCP Council – Perceived additional risks around the set up if controlled by BCP.
- ii) Full tender process – other suppliers were considered unlikely to be interested in a scheme adjacent to an existing one or be able to deliver at the required quality. When the BCP scheme was extended into Christchurch, BCP went to tender but only received one additional expression of interest which was dismissed on quality and cost grounds. See also Section 2 - Reasons for Recommendation

iii) In-house – Dorset Council have no experience with running bike share schemes.

2.4 **Stage 3:** Specification, invitation to tender, and contract. Documentation used for the BCP tender was used as the basis for the Dorset scheme, this included the contract. The contract was dated 25th January 2022.

COMMENCEMENT AND TERM

The Authority is looking to provide a dockless bike share scheme in Dorset. The Council will fund the provision of bikes for the set- up of the scheme up to the sum of two hundred and sixty three thousand two hundred and twenty five pounds (£263,225.00) (‘the Contract Sum’). The fleet of bikes will remain the property of the Council and will be leased back to the bidder for a nominal sum of £1 per annum for the fleet.

The bidder will provide a Bike Share service for residents and visitors in the Dorset area at its own risk and pay the Authority a Concession Fee.

This Contract shall commence on the date that it has been signed by the parties and shall continue, unless terminated earlier in accordance with its terms, until the third anniversary of the Services Start Date and shall continue thereafter unless and until terminated by either party giving to the other not less than three months’ written notice to terminate this Agreement.

2.5 It was considered unlikely by Beryl that the scheme would have been feasible as a stand-alone service if Beryl no longer operated in the BCP Council area.

3. Cost of Infrastructure

3.1 The table below sets out the project funding for the Southeast Dorset Scheme.

Funding Source	Amount	Infrastructure
Community Infrastructure Levy (Capital)	£240,000*	122 x pedal cycles (inc. spares) 44 x marked, geo-fenced bays
Transforming Cities Funding (Capital)	£23,225	3 Parklet Bays (with seating and signage) 3 x hard standing bays

Set Up Revenue Funding (wholly funded by Beryl Bikes)	£224,600	Maintenance Staff = £158,000 Account Management = £10,600 Operational software/back-office system = £56,000
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*Includes Project Mobilisation (Bay planning, scoping, staff hiring, bike commissioning, etc) = £38,250

4. **The decision process behind the ending of the contract in the East of the County**

4.1 The decision to terminate the contract at the three-year breakpoint was taken by Beryl Bikes.

4.2 Beryl’s key success metric is number of rides per bike per day. Beryl report that of the 15 schemes they operate nationally the Southeast Dorset scheme is the lowest performing against this metric with fewer than half a ride per day for each asset. This contrasts with the Weymouth, Dorchester and Portland scheme which is at almost 2 rides per day per asset despite the scheme only having operated in the autumn and winter months.

Area	Pedal Bike Use	E-Bike Use
South Dorset - Dorchester Weymouth Portland	n/a	1.9
BCP	0.8	1.5
East Dorset (Upton and Corfe Mullen)	0.2	0.6
East Dorset (Ferndown, Wimborne, West Moors, West Parley and Colehill)	0.1	0.4

4.3 **The Termination Process followed by Beryl:** Without prior warning, Beryl Bikes informed Dorset Council of their intention to terminate the Southeast Dorset Scheme in accordance with the contract terms on 28th November 2024. To continue to provide the service, Beryl Bikes offered a revenue figure of £14,000 per month with Dorset Council taking all the revenue turnover from the scheme (estimated at less than £50k per year).

Given the low usage of the scheme, the Cabinet Member for Place took the decision to not accept this offer.

5. The Infrastructure Post Termination

- 5.1 Pedal Cycles: those pedal cycles not lost, stolen or damaged beyond repair (approximately 80-90 cycles) have been redistributed into the Corfe Mullen, Upton, and BCP scheme where they continue to be available for users.
- 5.2 Geofenced Painted Bays: removed
- 5.3 3 Parklet Bays: 1 Parklet placed at Upton Library. 2 Parklets relocated to the Dorchester, Weymouth and Portland scheme.

6. Financial Implications

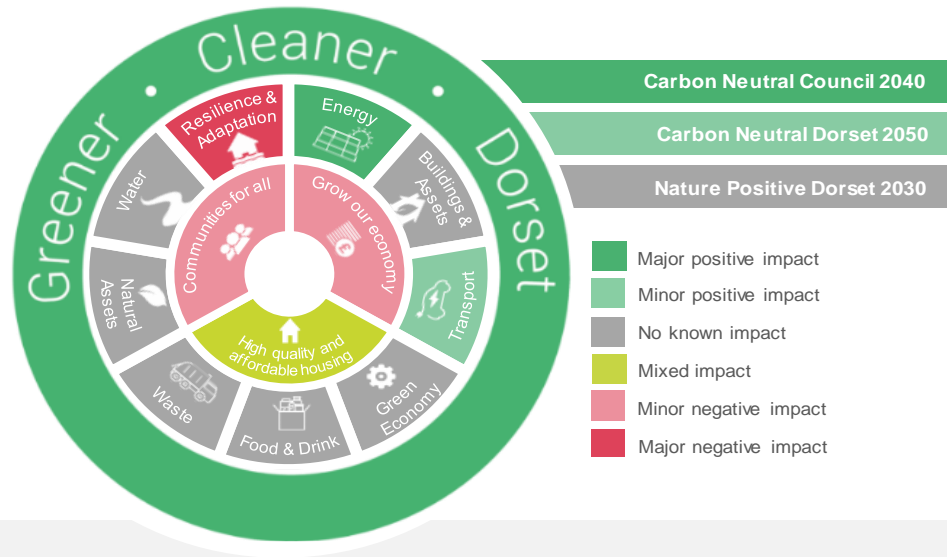
Once set up the scheme has had no further financial liability for Dorset Council with all revenue costs met by Beryl Bikes. Beryl Bikes have also met all costs associated with terminating the scheme.

Approximately 40% of the original capital spend is irrecoverable (painted bays and project set up costs). The remaining 60% of the original scheme investment (pedal bikes and parklet bays) has been redistributed into the remaining scheme.

Natural Environment, Climate & Ecology Implications

Removal of the scheme impacts negatively on active travel options for residents and visitors in the area. However, the low usage of the scheme means these negative impacts will be negligible.

Closure of Southeast Dorset Beryl Bike Scheme



Quantitative Impact on CEE targets (if known)

	Unit	Number of units (+/-)
2030 - Natural asset extent & condition	Ha	0
2040 - Operational Emissions	CO ₂ (tonnes)	

7. Well-being and Health Implications

For users who regularly used the service there may be an impact on personal health and wellbeing if cycling using a Beryl bike is not replaced by some other form of exercise.

Bike share schemes can impact positively on car use and its associated negative health impacts. However, the low ridership means this impact is probably negligible in the case of this scheme.

8. Other Implications

n/a

9. Risk Assessment

9.1 **HAVING CONSIDERED:** the risks associated with this decision; the level of risk has been identified as:

Current Risk: Low
Residual Risk: Low

10. **Equalities Impact Assessment**

n/a

11. **Appendices**

Appendix 1 - Accessible table showing natural environment, climate & ecology impacts

Appendix 2 - Appendix 2 – Supporting Information

Southeast Beryl Bike Share Scheme

A Contextual Summary

12. **Background Papers**

Beryl Bikes Annual Rider Report 2024 - [Annual Rider Report 2024.PDF](#)

<https://beryl.cc/sites/default/files/2025-01/Annual%20Rider%20Report%202024.PDF>

13. **Report Sign Off**

11.1 This report has been through the internal report clearance process and has been signed off by the Director for Legal and Democratic (Monitoring Officer), the Executive Director for Corporate Development (Section 151 Officer) and the appropriate Portfolio Holder(s)

Appendix 1

ACCESSIBLE TABLE SHOWING IMPACTS

Natural Environment, Climate & Ecology Strategy Commitments	Impact
Energy	major positive impact
Buildings & Assets	No known impact
Transport	minor positive impact
Green Economy	No known impact
Food & Drink	No known impact
Waste	No known impact
Natural Assets & Ecology	No known impact
Water	No known impact
Resilience and Adaptation	major negative impact

Corporate Plan Aims	Impact
Grow our economy	minor negative impact
High-quality and affordable housing	neutral
Communities for all	minor negative impact

Appendix 2 – Supporting Information

Southeast Beryl Bike Share Scheme

A Contextual Summary

Prepared by Christopher Whitehouse

Transport Planning Team

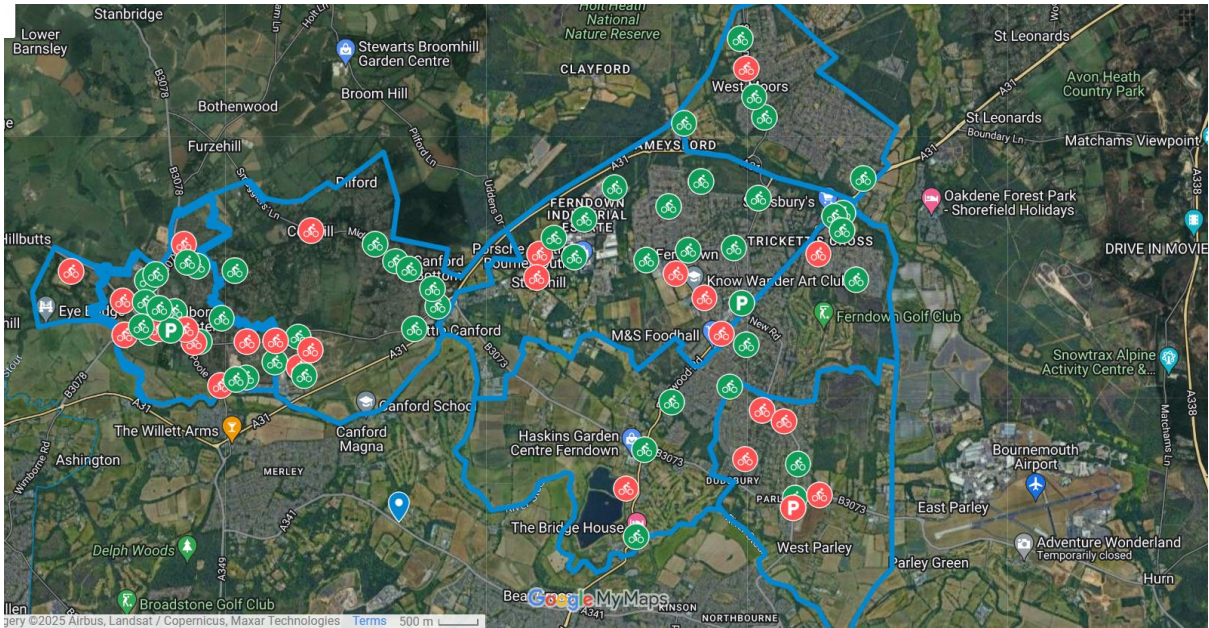
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Introduction

In January 2022 Dorset Council contracted Beryl Bikes to provide 122 pedal bikes and 47 bays including 2 parklet bays for the Ferndown, Colehill, West Moors, Wimborne and West Parley. The scheme went live in August of that year. The number of bays and bikes was based on Beryl's experience of delivering similar schemes around the country and calculated using demographic population data. In November 2024 Beryl Bikes gave notice to the authority that they wished to take advantage of the three-year break clause in the contract unless the scheme could be subsidised on the basis that it was not commercially viable due to persistent low ridership.

Background

The purpose of this report is to provide some background information on the Southeast Dorset Beryl Bike scheme. By contextualising the Southeast Dorset scheme against other schemes, it is possible to get an idea of Beryl's rationale for withdrawing the Wimborne, Ferndown, Cole Hill, West Moors, and West Parley element of the service.



The above map shows the scheme as delivered in August 2022. Green symbols indicate bays that went live. Red symbols are proposed bays that were never installed. Total number of bays = 47 + two parklets.

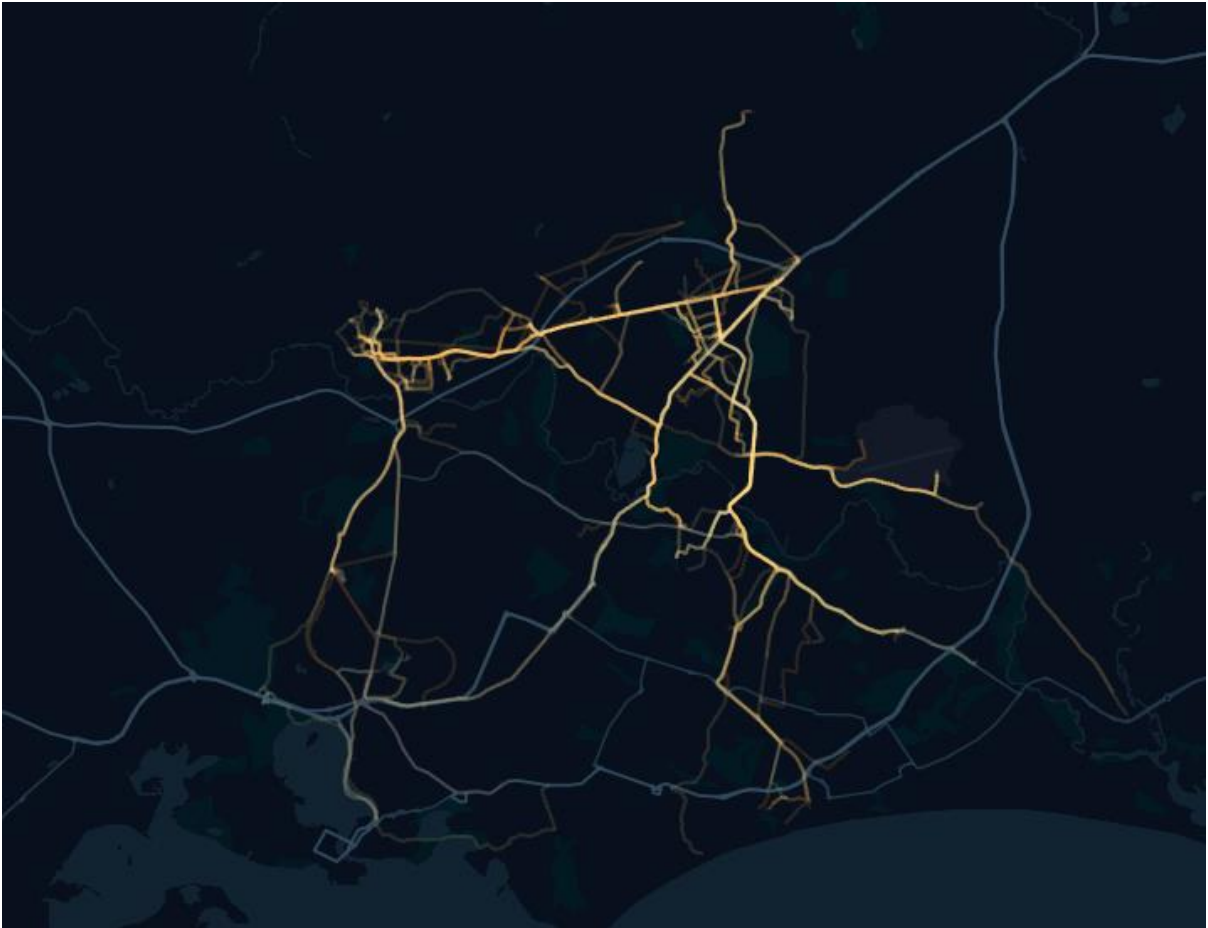
Measuring Success

Beryl's key success metric is number of rides per bike per day. Beryl report that of the 15 schemes they operate nationally the East Dorset scheme is the lowest performing against this metric with fewer than half a ride per day for each asset. This is in stark contrast with the South Dorset scheme which is at almost 2 rides per day per asset despite the scheme only having operated in the autumn and winter months.

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Use of the Network

Dorset Council have invested heavily in cycling infrastructure. The heatmap below generated by tracking Beryl Bikes clearly shows use of the network by Beryl users.



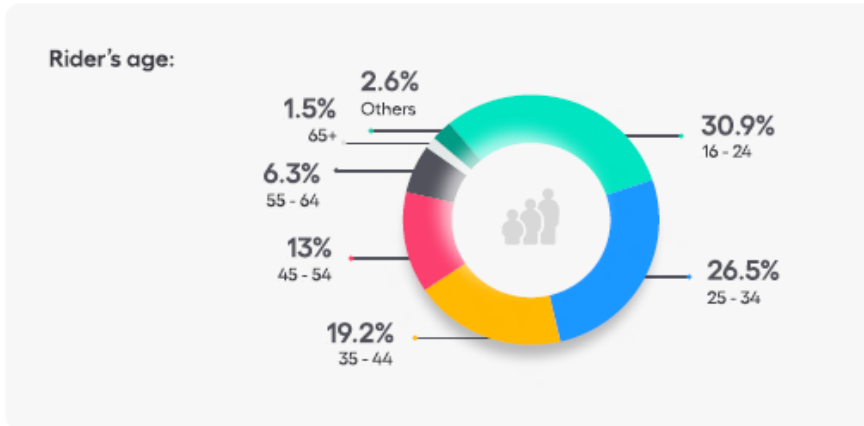
Source: *Beryl Bikes*

Demographics

Personal data about age of riders in Southeast Dorset is not available but according to Beryl's annual rider report most riders are between 16-54 with riders over that age only making up around 7.5% of users.

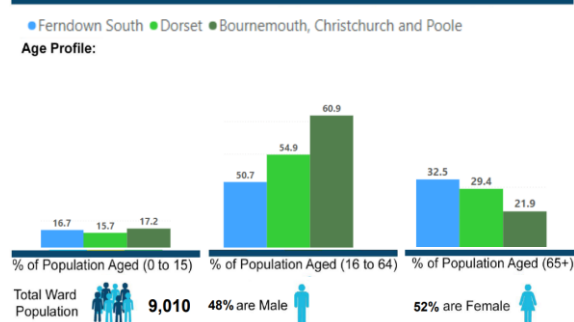
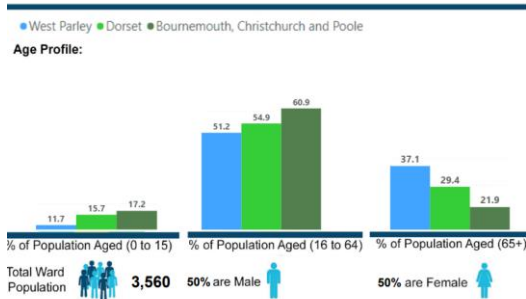
Age

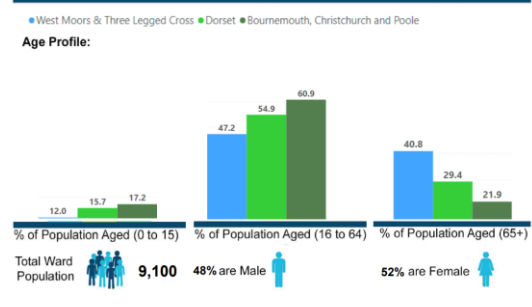
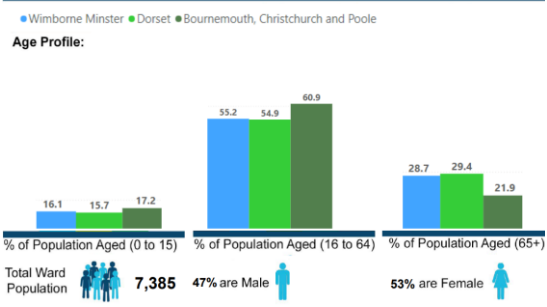
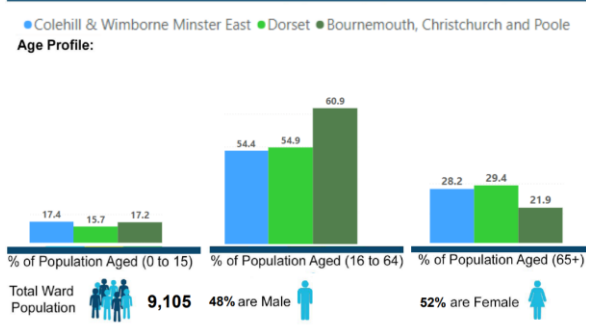
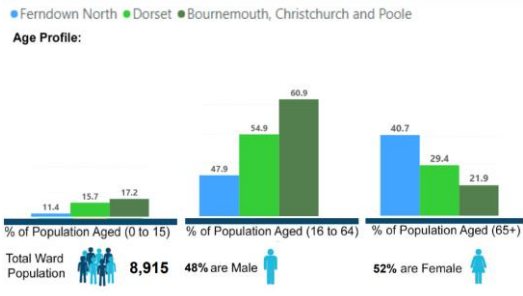
Beryl's user base is predominantly young, with 57% of riders being under 35 indicating a strong appeal to younger demographics.

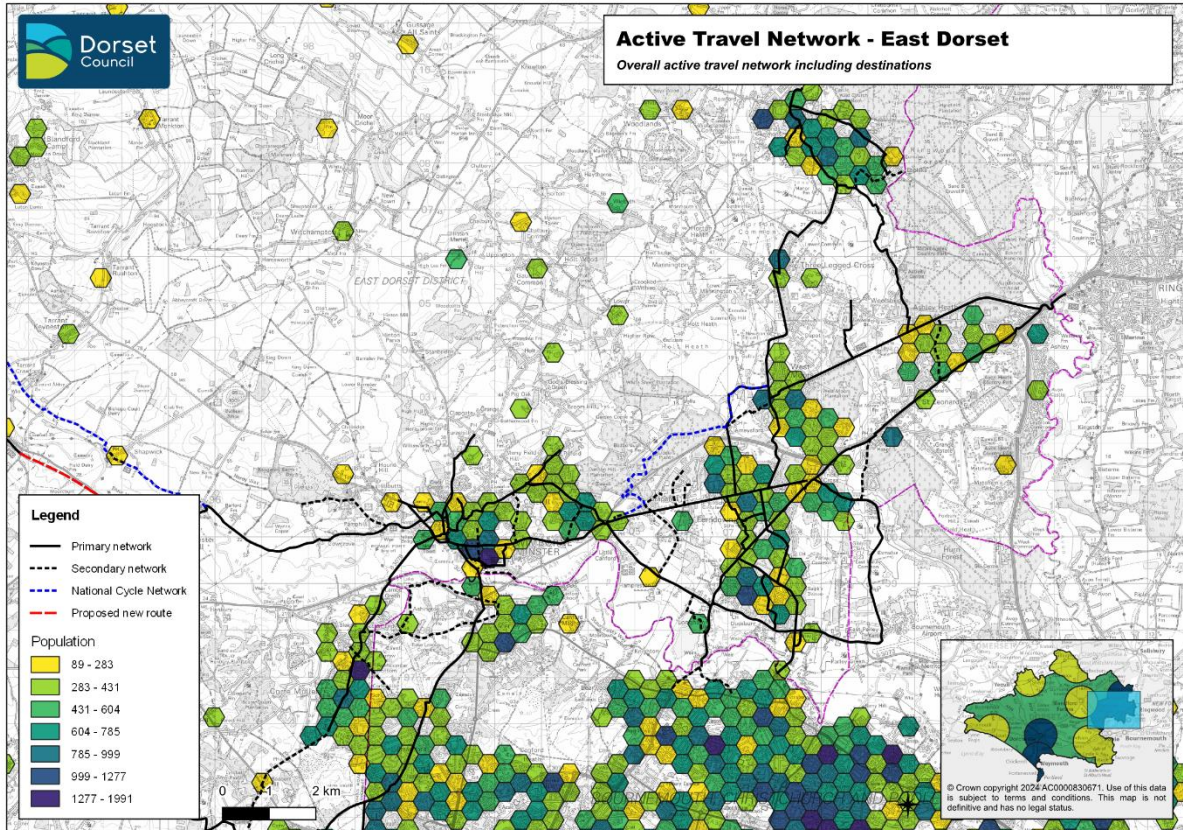


Source: *Beryl Bikes Rider Report 2024*

A look at the age profile for each of the wards in the area (see below) shows that compared to the wider BCP area and Dorset as whole there are generally fewer of the typical ridership types and more people of an age less likely to use the bikes. This may go some way to explain why bike use has been so much lower in the area particularly when compared with the neighbouring Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Council area.



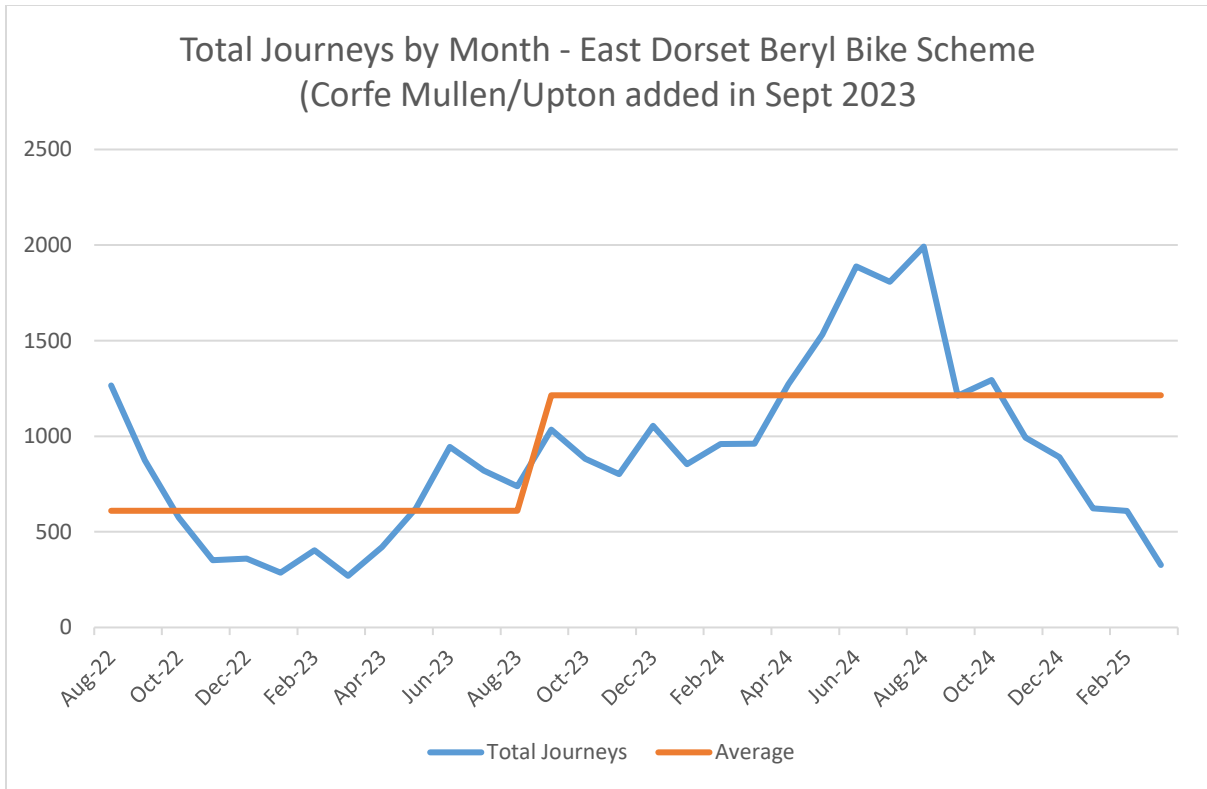




The above map shows population density in relation to the cycle network in the Southeast area of Dorset. From this we can see that the areas of high population density are relatively fragmented. Even so, the cycle network offers good connectivity from which it would have been easy to conclude that a bike share scheme in the area would have been more widely used.

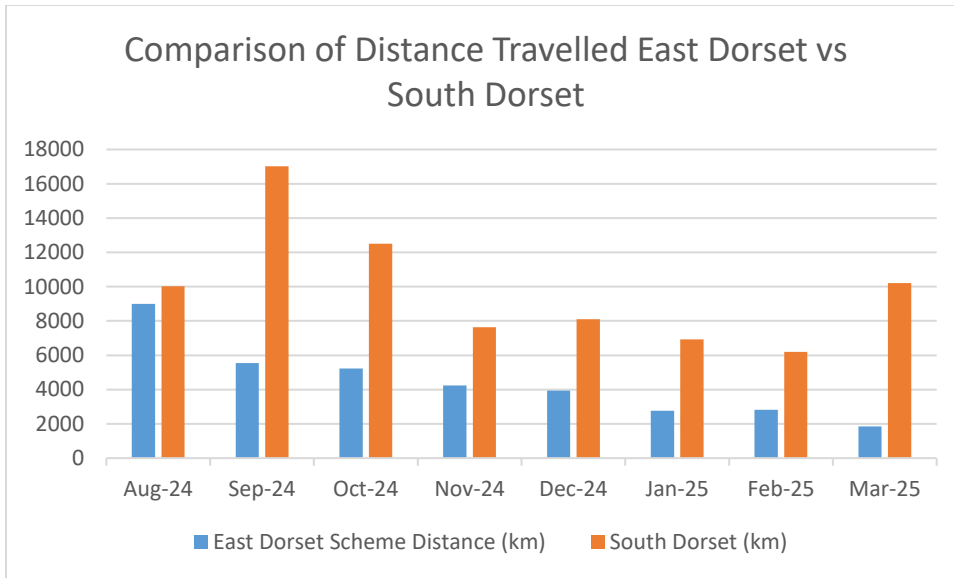
Comparison with the Upton/Corfe Mullen Scheme

A second scheme was added in the Corfe Mullen and Upton area in September 2023. For reporting purposes Beryl combine data from the two schemes. The graph below shows that when the Upton/Corfe Mullen scheme went live the number of journeys virtually doubled across the scheme even though only 12 new bays and 80 ebikes were added to the scheme. Similarly, once the scheme closed in the Southeast area usage fell but only by around 50%.



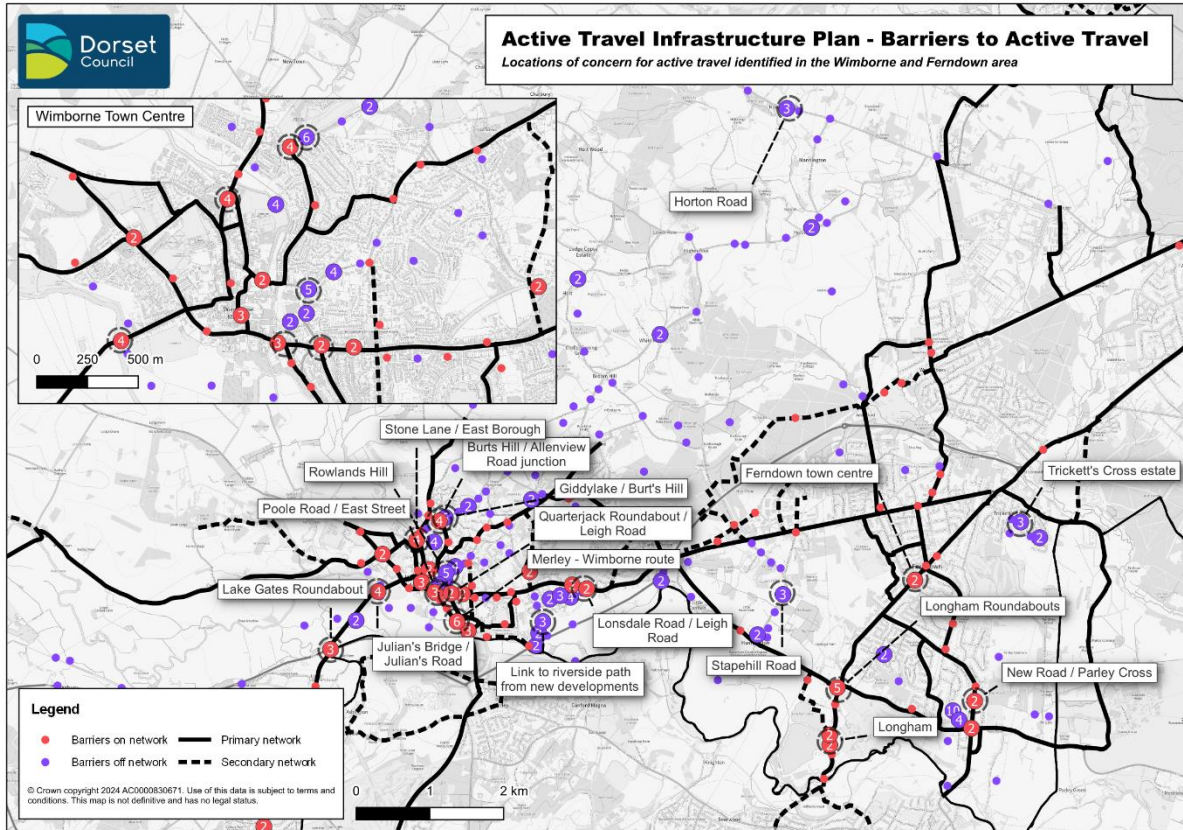
Comparison between East Dorset Scheme and South Dorset Scheme

The Weymouth, Dorchester, Portland South Dorset Beryl bike scheme was launched in August 2024. The scheme is an ebike only scheme. Using distance travelled as a proxy measure, one can see how the two areas differ in ridership. South Dorset opened with only 80 ebikes and was only launched a few days before the bank holiday weekend and yet it still clocked up more distance than the scheme in the whole of East Dorset during the entire month of August. Seeing the data this way helps contextualise and explain why Beryl are saying that the Southeast Dorset scheme is not commercially viable.



The Wider Picture of Cycling and Cycle Infrastructure in the Area

A public engagement exercise carried out by Dorset Council on the barriers to cycling identified these features set out in the map below. In the absence of other information, one should be wary of making a causal link between these perceived barriers and low Beryl bike use but these and other factors will no doubt be a contributory factor.



Conclusion

Bikeshare schemes operate on very narrow margins. Nationally many have failed or terminated due to lower than expected ridership. Beryl have reported that pedal bike schemes are especially hard to make commercially viable with many only working successfully either with significant subsidy either directly or through the additional income generated through e-bikes and e-scooters. From the outset the Southeast Dorset scheme use has been marginal and heavily dependent on its proximity to the larger and more viable scheme in the BCP area.