

DfT Trial of e-Scooters in Dorset

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Executive Summary

Dorset Council is considering the introduction of DfT-approved rental e-scooter trials in two areas—Corfe Mullen & Upton and Weymouth, Dorchester, Portland & Chickerell—to build on existing shared-mobility schemes and improve sustainable transport options. The trial requires evidence of engagement with Dorset Police and disability groups, along with mitigation plans for issues raised.

National and local rental e-scooter trials have demonstrated high demand, strong modal shift from cars, and positive environmental outcomes, including major CO₂ savings and high trip volumes in neighbouring BCP's scheme. However, trials also show increased collision risks and behavioural issues that must be carefully managed.

For Dorset Police, the introduction of rental e-scooters presents several operational challenges, including antisocial behaviour, crime opportunities, road safety risks, and increased enforcement demands, especially around misuse, under-age riding, and the illegal use of private e-scooters. The trial will also require robust data-sharing, clear enforcement protocols, and close partnership working with Dorset Council and the chosen operator to ensure community safety and effective response mechanisms.

Overall, the scheme offers transport and environmental benefits but will require coordinated planning and policing to minimise risk and ensure safe adoption across Dorset

1. Background

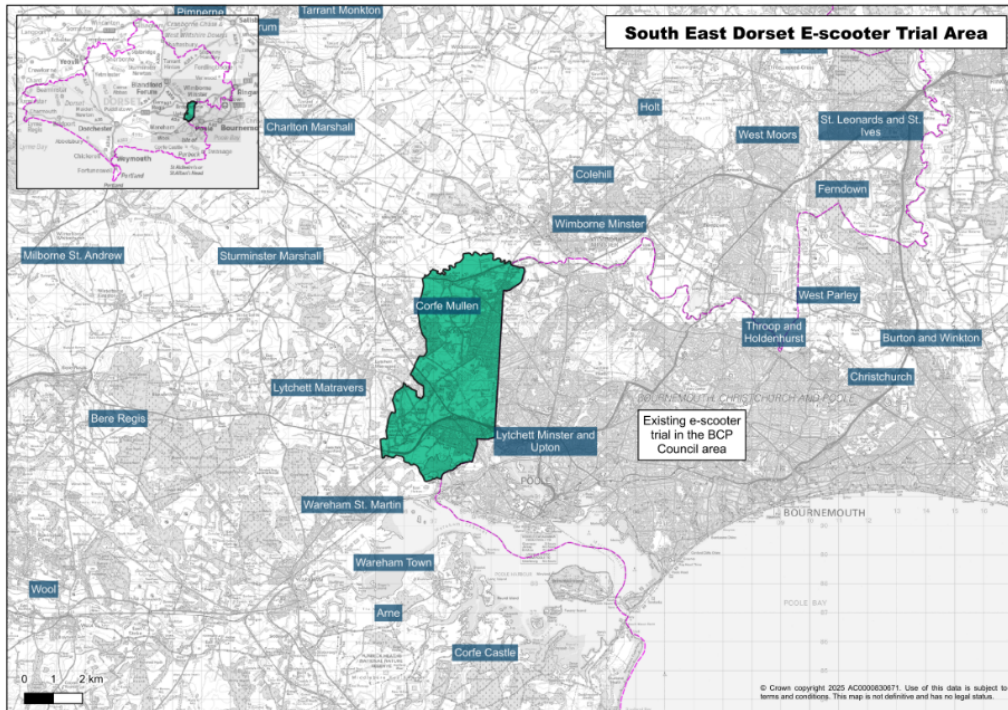
1.1 Dorset Council has been authorised by the Department for Transport (DfT) to introduce a rental e-scooter trial in two defined areas of the Dorset Council region. Permission is contingent on the Council demonstrating active engagement with Dorset Police and disability groups, providing a summary of concerns raised, outlining mitigation measures, and obtaining a confirmation of no objection or conditional support from the police. This report has been prepared to support Dorset Police in forming an informed response for submission to Dorset Council and subsequently the DfT. The proposed trial areas include:

- **Evidence of engagement with the police and disability groups, in the form of e-mail exchanges, meeting minutes, or equivalent.**
- **A summary of any concerns or issues raised by the police and disability groups, and how you have addressed each one.**
- **An email or letter from the police confirming either that they are satisfied with the agreed measures or that they have no objections to the proposed roll-out.**

1.2 This paper seeks to provide an outline of the proposal so that Dorset Police can provide an informed response to Dorset Council's Transport Planning Team that can be shared with the DfT and with Dorset Council members. Any response from the Police will form part of the evidence presented to Dorset Council Cabinet to enable them to make an informed decision about whether or not to allow the e-scooter trial to go-ahead.

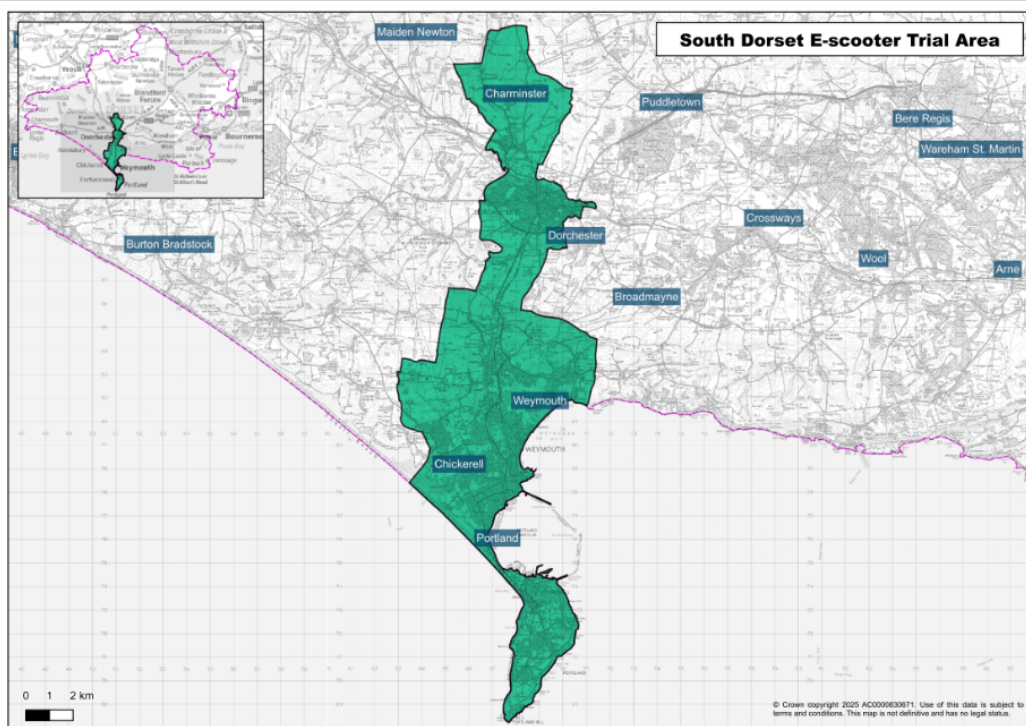
1.3 The two geographic areas for consideration are:

Corfe Mullen and Upton – an e-bike rental service run by Beryl bikes has been operating in the area since June 2023. The scheme is part of a wider Beryl run service operating in the BCP Council area. The BCP scheme has been licensed by the DfT for e-scooters since 2023 and they have been successfully operating since then. This scheme if approved will be operated by Beryl.



Above: Upton and Corfe Mullen Scheme area which is coterminous with the existing BCP scheme operated by Beryl.

Weymouth, Dorchester, Portland and Chickerell – a bike rental service run by Beryl under a concession contract has been operating in the area since July 2024.



Above: Portland, Weymouth, Dorchester and Chickerell – proposed scheme area. Beryl already operate a bikeshare scheme in the area.

If the Corfe Mullen/Upton scheme goes ahead Beryl will be the appointed operator. Dorset Council will go out to tender to find an operator for the Weymouth, Dorchester, Portland and Chickerell scheme. Even though Beryl currently operates an ebike scheme in the locality and have expressed an interest in adding e-scooters to their portfolio, it is not a given that they will be the future operator.

2. The Law and Use of Private E-Scooters

- 2.1 Public use of private e-scooters is illegal. Riding a privately owned e-scooter on roads, cycle lanes, pavements, parks, or public spaces is against the law. Penalties include a fine, penalty points, and possible seizure of the scooter. They may be used only on private land with the landowner's permission.
- 2.2 E-scooters are illegal because under the Road Traffic Act 1988, e-scooters are categorized as "motor vehicles," which legally require MOT, licensing, insurance, registration, and tax—requirements that private e-scooters cannot currently meet. Privately owned e-scooters used publicly may be seized under Section 165 of the Road Traffic Act 1988. Users risk fines, penalty points, and prosecution for driving without insurance or a licence.

3. Rental E-Scooter Trials

- 3.1 E-scooters are legal within trial zones: Since July 2020, rental e-scooters are allowed in designated trial areas across England and Wales, and these trials have been extended until May 2028. E-scooters in the trial areas are permitted on public roads and cycle lanes in trial zones—but not on motorways or pavements. An e-scooter rental scheme has been in operation in the BCP Council area since 2022.
- 3.2 E-scooters must meet DfT-approved standards which limits the maximum speed to 15.5 mph, motor power no greater than 500 W, mass to be no greater than 55 kg, and two wheels aligned front-to-back. Telematics restrict e-scooter use to the designated usage area which can include areas within the usage zone such as Weymouth sea front.
- 3.3 Riders must have at least a provisional UK driving licence (categories Q, AM, A, B), may be aged 16+ or 18+ depending on provider, and must have third-party insurance arranged by the operator.

4. Future Outlook for e-scooters

- 4.1 The government is assessing trial data (second evaluation due 2026) to inform possible permanent legislation. Upcoming legal reforms may define categories, speed limits, equipment rules, insurance, and the pathway to legalising private e-scooters—potentially in force by 2027–2028

5. Why Consider the Introduction of an E-scooter Rental Service for Dorset?

- 5.1 With e-scooter trials all across the UK and globally, Dorset has the benefit of learning from the experience of those trials. In the UK:
- **14.5 million rental trips** were completed by December 2021 across 32 trial areas, demonstrating strong user adoption. [\[gov.uk\]](#), [\[assets.pub...ice.gov.uk\]](#)
 - **Mode shift from cars:** As trials matured, there has been a progressive shift from private vehicles to e-scooters, particularly for commuting and purposeful trips. [\[gov.uk\]](#), [\[assets.pub...ice.gov.uk\]](#)
 - **Increased access and equity:** Regular e-scooter usage was higher among ethnic minorities and low-income individuals, enhancing transport inclusion. [\[gov.uk\]](#), [\[assets.pub...ice.gov.uk\]](#)
 - **Positive public sentiment:** Most residents in trial locations viewed the introduction of e-scooters favourably. [\[gov.uk\]](#), [\[assets.pub...ice.gov.uk\]](#)
 - **More collisions vs bikes:** Collision frequency was higher than for pedal cycles, especially among inexperienced riders; however, injury types were similar to those seen in cyclists. [\[gov.uk\]](#), [\[assets.pub...ice.gov.uk\]](#)
 - **Technical and behavioural issues:** Concerns were raised about e-scooter visibility, audibility, acceleration, pavement riding by riders, and pedestrian conflict. [\[roadsafety...tre.org.uk\]](#), [\[pacts.org.uk\]](#)
- 5.2 Collaborative Mobility UK (CoMoUK) is the national charity dedicated to the social, economic and environmental benefits of shared transport. A CoMoUK April 2023 Report identified the following:
- **Trip demographics and purpose:** E-scooters were frequently used for commuting and essential travel. [\[assets-glo...-files.com\]](#)
 - **Enhanced equity:** Programmes successfully engaged women and lower-income groups by adapting service design and communications. [\[assets-glo...-files.com\]](#)

- **Anti-social concerns and parking:** Highlighted the need for clear parking guidance and enforcement to prevent pavement clutter.

5.3 Closer to Dorset, the BCP Council (Bournemouth, Christchurch & Poole) e-scooter scheme has reported:

- **High usage:** Over **936,000 journeys**, spanning more than **3.15 million km**, in just three years. [\[beryl.cc\]](#)
- **CO₂ savings:** Approx. **122 tonnes of carbon** were avoided via modal shift. [\[beryl.cc\]](#)
- **Car journey replacement:** Rider surveys show over **318,000 trips** substituting private vehicle journeys. [\[beryl.cc\]](#)
- **Strong trial performance:** BCP ranked second across all 32 UK trial areas, averaging four trips per scooter per day. [\[beryl.cc\]](#)

6. E-Scooter Trial: Considerations for Dorset Police

6.1 Inevitably a rental e-scooter trial will bring with it a range of challenges for Dorset Police. This section highlights the potential issues. If the scheme goes ahead Dorset Council will ensure that the Operator provides a community impact assessment or mitigation plan in conjunction with the relevant stakeholders to help reduce concerns and address the issues. With an e-scooter scheme already operating in parts of the Dorset Police area the constabulary is well placed to form a view on which issues need to be addressed and prioritised.

6.2 Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB)

- Irresponsible riding: Fast riding in pedestrian zones, parks, and coastal areas; weaving between pedestrians; riding in prohibited areas.
- Groups engaging in nuisance behaviour: Youths using scooters to intimidate, gather, or carry out ASB in town centres.
- Vandalism and tampering: Damage to scooters, removing trackers, dumping or throwing scooters into rivers/harbours.
- Noise or disturbance: Late-night use causing complaints from residents in hotspots such as Weymouth seafront or Dorchester town centre.

6.3 Crime & Criminal Opportunity

- Use of scooters for quick getaways: Good mobility and speed make scooters appealing for minor thefts, shoplifting, or low-level drug dealing.
- Theft of scooters: Despite being GPS-locked, rental scooters can be targeted for parts, batteries, or resale attempts.

- Use in acquisitive crime: Riders may snatch bags or target phones due to manoeuvrability and ease of escape.
- Identity issues: Riders may share accounts or use false details if verification controls are weak.

6.4 Road Safety

- Collisions involving riders: Young and inexperienced riders unfamiliar with road rules; accidents at junctions, roundabouts, and rural-urban interface roads.
- Impact on other road users: E-scooters mixing with vehicles at 30–40 mph roads poses risk; near misses with cyclists.
- Serious injury potential: Head injuries are common; helmet use remains voluntary in UK trials.
- Inappropriate infrastructure: Lack of segregated cycle lanes in many Dorset towns increases risk; narrow or uneven pavements and heritage areas present hazards.

6.5 General Policing & Resource Requirements

6.6 Enforcement demand:

- Stopping and educating riders, particularly early in the trial.
- Issuing warnings, fines, or seizing scooters when required (e.g., misuse, intoxication, road traffic offences).
- Operational pressures:
- More calls for service from residents complaining of misuse.
- Requirement for officers to understand enforcement powers specific to rental vs private e-scooters.
- Training: Officers may need updated guidance on legislation, trial rules, and evidence handling (e.g., collisions involving rental vehicles).

6.7 Costs (Direct and Indirect)

- Direct policing workload: Time spent on enforcement, investigations, accident responses, and community engagement.
- Indirect costs: Administration, additional signage recommended to reduce misuse, and officer training time.
- Opportunity cost: Time redirected from other policing priorities (rural crime, domestic abuse, neighbourhood concerns).

6.8 Illegal Use of Private E-Scooters

- Confusion among public: Legal rental scooters may increase private scooter use, despite private ones remaining illegal on public roads.
- Increased enforcement complexity: Officers must differentiate rental scooters (legal) from private ones (illegal).

- Potential surge in private scooter prevalence: Residents may incorrectly assume all e-scooter riding is now permitted.

6.9 Data & Evidence Management

- Access to operator data: Dorset Police must ensure clear protocols for:
- Rider identification
- Journey logs
- GPS tracking
- Incident video (if fitted)
- Data-sharing agreements: With operators for real-time or near-real-time access during incidents

6.10 Emergency Services Interaction

- Obstruction of emergency response: Poorly parked scooters blocking pavements, fire exits, ambulance access points.
- Collision response: Increased workload for ambulance crews and police attendance at serious accidents, especially involving young riders.

6.11 Public Perception & Community Relations

- Mixed local reaction: Some view scooters positively (transport solution), others associate them with disorder.
- Community tension: If ASB rises, communities may feel policing is inadequate without visible enforcement

6.12 Environmental & Geographic Challenges in Dorset

- Seaside/resort misuse: Scooters used on promenades or beaches.
- Tourist hotspots: High seasonal visitor numbers increase collisions and ASB risk.
- Rural road risks: Poor lighting, higher vehicle speeds, and fewer cycle lanes increase danger for riders.

6.13 Partnership & Governance

- Coordination with Dorset Council & DfT: Participation in data monitoring, trial evaluation, and mid-trial adjustments.
- Operator responsibilities: Ensuring they implement parking controls, speed-limited zones, geofencing, and rapid recovery of abandoned scooters.

6.14 Safeguarding & Youth-Related Concerns

- Underage use: Children borrowing adult accounts or finding ways to unlock scooters.
- Riders under the influence: Alcohol-related misuse, especially around nightlife areas.

6.15 Legal & Liability Considerations

- Collision investigations: Clear processes for investigating serious incidents involving rental scooters.
- Insurance clarity: Ensuring operators' insurance fully covers third-party risks and injury claims

7. Timeline

Following is a draft timeline – subject to change and dependent on several decisions.

Milestone	Action	Who
10 April 2026	Evidence/support gathering complete	Input from Dorset Police, disability and other groups
19 May 2026	Decision on whether to allow e-Scooters	Dorset Council Cabinet
20 May 2026	Submission of evidence/decision outcome to DfT	Dorset Council Transport Planning Team
Subject to Dorset Cabinet Decision		
May/June 2026	Confirmation of go-ahead with any conditions	DfT
June 2026	Upton/Corfe Mullen scheme roll-out	Beryl
June-September 2026	Tender process for the Weymouth, Portland, Chickerell, Dorchester area scheme	Dorset Council Transport Planning Team
October 2026	Tender award and contract	Dorset Council Transport Planning Team
Oct-Dec 2026	Mobilisation	Appointed operator

8. Conclusion

- 8.1 The introduction of a rental e-scooter scheme within the Dorset Council area presents both opportunities and challenges for local policing. While the scheme offers clear potential benefits in terms of sustainable travel, congestion reduction and improved mobility, it will also require Dorset Police to prepare for increased demand relating to enforcement, public engagement,

road safety and the management of anti-social behaviour. By ensuring that appropriate controls, data-sharing mechanisms, mitigation measures and joint-working arrangements are in place from the outset, Dorset Police, Dorset Council and the appointed operator can work collaboratively to deliver a scheme that maximises public benefit while minimising risk and harm. This briefing aims to support that process and enable Dorset Police to provide an informed, evidence-based response to the proposed e-scooter introduction as part of the DfT trial programme.

Useful Links and Information

1. National Evaluation of E-Scooter Trials – Findings Report (DfT, 2022)

Link: [DfT Findings Report](#)

Summary: Provides evidence from UK-wide trials on safety, modal shift, and public perception. Highlights benefits such as reduced car use and improved transport equity, while identifying risks like collision rates and pavement riding—informing mitigation strategies for Dorset.

2. National Evaluation of E-Scooter Trials – Technical Report (DfT, 2022)

Link: [DfT Technical Report](#)

Summary: Offers detailed data analysis on usage patterns, environmental impact, and safety outcomes. Useful for benchmarking Dorset's scheme against national performance indicators.

3. Beryl E-Scooter Share – Bournemouth, Christchurch & Poole (BCP) Council

Link: [BCP E-Scooter Scheme](#)

Summary: Demonstrates strong operational performance, high usage, and significant CO₂ savings in a neighbouring area, supporting the case for Dorset's scheme viability.