

How and why to...

IMPLEMENT CAR SHARING

Switching your travellers from their own vehicles into those of a car-sharing scheme is no easy task. Read on to find out how the City of York Council managed it and reaped both cost and environmental benefits in doing so

Getting employees out of their own car for business purposes is a tough call but one that City Of York Council was prepared to tackle. And not for them the switch to pool cars instead, but something more innovative – an hourly rental car sharing service.

“It’s a change management process and it takes some brave steps by the employer to force a change in employee behaviour at a time when the public sector is going through such a tough time,” comments Rob Ingram, director of business rental at Enterprise-Rent-A-Car and provider of the scheme, WeCar. “You’ve got to stand up and say, ‘I know you’re not used to doing this but the new scheme

will help benefit the company,” he adds.

WeCar was launched in the UK in 2009, more on an environmental platform rather than a cost saving one. Car sharing is patronised well in Holland and France, but it’s yet to have any real impact in the UK.

One of the first innovative businesses to take up the scheme in the UK was Woking Borough Council, who replaced ten pool cars with two WeCars. It has recently added one electric car and built a charging station. The City of York Council also decided to plough ahead with car sharing, ready to face the consequences. What were they? Read on to find out.



Geoff Derham
Head of Waste & Fleet Services,
City of York Council

Geoff has worked in local authorities for 33 years. He has worked in and managed a range of services including grounds maintenance, street cleansing, refuse and recycling, school and building cleaning and fleet management and maintenance. He has also managed large corporate projects and has been undertaking a review into transport and fleet operations across the Council since January 2011.



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STEP 1

What triggered the new thinking was a planned office move to a new headquarters in York in spring 2013. Some 1,000 staff would be amalgamated into one building, totalling 3,500 employees, and with only three car parking spaces on-site.

The Council had already attempted to rein in costs by reducing the price they reimbursed on business mileage, from 52p to 45p, but as the Council’s head of waste and fleet services, Geoff Derham explains, there were other issues that needed tackling.

“There were no checks on whether they were legitimate business journeys as there was no pre-authorisation and no accountability.

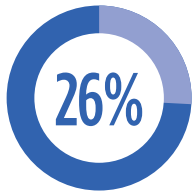
Employees looked on it as a perk,” says Derham. “Also, the average age of our grey fleet was six to seven years and so we were pumping out a lot of CO₂ into York and polluting the local environment.”

Enterprise-Rent-A-Car was already on the government procurement framework for transport – as a car hire provider – and suggested the WeCar car-sharing scheme. “That helped us avoid a lengthy and expensive procurement process,” adds Derham.

STEP 2

Derham decided to trial five WeCars in one department, its main 170-strong Eco Depot site at Hazel Court in York where there are 170

CITY OF YORK COUNCIL IN NUMBERS



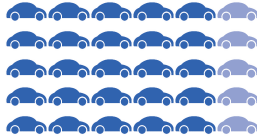
the reduction in mileage already achieved compared to grey fleet

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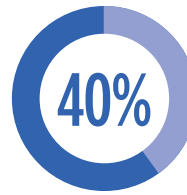


the number of cars in the pilot sharing scheme

25-30



the number of car-sharing cars that will ultimately fulfill demand



the swing away from grey fleet to car sharing



the reimbursement per mile goal once all staff have moved to the new HQ, down from 45p

employees. The trial began in June, targeted at frequent, short-term trips such as site visits, surveys and inspections. Reimbursement per mile for the Enterprise cars came down by 1p to 44p. The hope was that fewer cars would be used by more employees and at one fixed monthly fee, and that would mean business journeys would cost less per mile.

“Capacity’s always the thing,” says Derham. “If all the cars are out then it’s not giving us flexibility.” Enterprise’s Ingram believes five cars were more than they needed but understood the underlining issue, to give employees confidence: “It’s a dramatic shift to force staff into another form of transport so easy accessibility of the car is essential.”

Both the Council and Enterprises staged one-hour presentations on the scheme, which included a live demo with the car. The cars carry the City of York Council logo, and the words, ‘In partnership with Enterprise’.

STEP 3

How does the Enterprise car sharing system work for the City of York Council? The cars are booked online on a website showing live availability. Users have their own log-on and membership card to reserve a car for a certain amount of time.

Much like car clubs, the system utilises telematics technology, which allows users to swipe their membership card in front of the windscreen to unlock the doors. The car is not usable unless a member unlocks it.

The keys are inside, avoiding the messy and labour-intensive key collections service, and when returning the car, the keys are left inside so the next member can utilise it.

“It’s relatively straightforward and was one of the reasons we were sold on the scheme. Users just book the car at a certain time and location, click and book and that’s it. We were also keen to avoid setting up a cottage industry to handle all the keys,” says Derham. “It has the beauty and simplicity of a car club. It’s very clever technology.”

There is no extra head count needed and no maintenance required as Enterprise handles that with a fortnightly check on tyres and so on. What it does require is that users clear away any rubbish and leave fuel in the car, and all members have a fuel card to manage topping up.

It is an MI-rich system as there’s a sim card inside the car that tracks miles driven, time in, time out, no-shows, late pick-ups and returns, carbon emissions and so on, all of which is fed into reports.

“It will show if you are reducing the miles you used before and help determine how many cars you need as you ramp up the scheme,” says Ingram. “The MI will show gaps in availability so employees can try and shift a 2pm appointment to 3pm, for example. It also requires more advance planning of business trips,” he adds.

STEP 4

Resistance to the new-fangled scheme was anticipated and duly came, with many excuses voiced as to why staff couldn’t switch from the comfort, convenience and security of their own vehicle. “I’m taking a pay cut,” was a common excuse, and another, ‘I need a car at a moment’s notice’,” says Derham.

“We haven’t managed to wrestle all staff away from grey fleet but we’ve seen a 40 per cent movement away from private car usage. When there’s no incentive to drive more miles on grey fleet, the mileage goes down. The Council has benefitted from a 26 per cent drop in mileage compared to grey fleet.

“Most of our journeys are under 30 miles so they’re not in there a long time to worry about re-tuning the radio or changing the seat pitch,” says Derham.

This reduction in mileage occurred over the summer months with fewer staff working and Derham is keen to compare mileage over a longer period of time, “but I’m convinced that it will continue to reduce,” he says. He’s hoping that employees will start to combine journeys

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now that the financial incentive has been removed. Ultimately, once all Council staff have migrated to the new headquarters building, reimbursement will reduce to 32p or 33p per mile.

STEP 5

Looking back on the pilot scheme, Derham has this advice for anyone planning a similar journey: “Make sure you understand what you’re currently doing, by getting as much accurate data as you can on the status quo, by journey types, carbon emissions, vehicle roadworthiness systems that are in place, and so on. This way, you will get a good baseline for your current activity and therefore something to measure where the new initiative is taking you. Otherwise it’ll be a guesstimate.

“Working out carbon emissions when you only had a vehicle registration plate was challenging but the DVLA site gives vehicle type by carbon emissions but it meant a separate enquiry with every single vehicle.”

Back to the present and Derham is looking to the office move next year with some trepidation. “There will be a few more hurdles to cross when we migrate to 3,500 staff and the arguments will be louder,” he says.

To anticipate that his team are going around the top 20 travel teams to allay their fears and every new employee will have a half day’s training about the scheme as part of their induction. “So it’s not just a side show anymore,” he says with some satisfaction.