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Proposal to trial 2 x electric bicycle pedicabs (velocabs)

The proposed idea is to introduce an electric bicycle passenger service in Brighton and Hove. Utilising modern electric cargo bike technology, our three wheel 'Velocabs' would carry 2 passengers and operate within a 3km radius of Brighton train station . We would aim to provide a safe and reliable zero emission addition to the city's existing taxi services. If provision cannot be granted as Hackney carriages we would also consider a private hire licence allowing us to transport prebooked passengers, using a dedicated phone number or app and allow us to conduct tours of Brighton.

We are at a major turning point in the future of transport within the urban environment .With the pressures of climate change ,zero carbon targets and the desire for a post pandemic green recovery our Velocabs can help to make a difference. Velocabs will contribute to achieving the councils zero carbon 2030 objectives, help to reduce congestion and add a fun and exciting transport option for locals and tourists alike.

As we are seeing, buses within the city are already going electric and as new low or zero emission zones are imposed and car free city centres implemented, taxis too will have to go electric especially if London's model is to be followed.

Velocabs are not intended as competition to the existing taxi companies but rather a complimentary service. A velocab ride is different to a taxi journey, it carries less passengers over shorter distances and may be more impulsive ,especially for example with tourists. We would welcome the opportunity to collaborate with the existing taxi companies so they could Pre-empt further restriction on car traffic by perhaps themselves investing now as an additional service to their fleet.

As our velocabs will be able to access the growing network of bike lanes they will offer a unique perspective of the city to passengers. They are proposed as both an A to B option , as well as being able to offer longer tours for tourists or new students and residents wishing to get acquainted with the city. Our themed tours would be curated by professional performers and/or tour guides , offering a unique view on our city.

Bicycle passenger schemes are currently operating in London, Edinburgh, Hereford, Oxford and many other towns and cities throughout the UK, Europe and worldwide. We believe a similar scheme would be a perfect fit for Brighton and Hove, helping to achieve promised carbon emission targets, as a great asset to tourism and reflecting the city's vibrant modern image .

We are seeking permission to to trial a couple of electric bicycle taxis in Brighton city centre and work with the council, tourist partners and local groups to help grow the project. We welcome the idea of carrying tourists and locals alike and working with community groups .

From my initial responses from Brighton and Hove licensing department, its clear there are currently barriers to the licensing of pedicabs here as they would be considered Hackney carriages or Private hire vehicles and fall under the councils controlled growth cap of 5 new licences permitted each year.

We would like to draw on successful examples from Hereford, York and South Cumbria councils of how they have successfully licenced pedicabs as Hackney carriages or private hire vehicles. In York's case for example they removed their hackney carriage licence cap to allow pedicab licences and added specific clauses to accommodate them. We would like to explore ideas with the council that could help facilitate licensing for example 1 in 5 new licences going to a pedicab or allowing a separate quota for zero emission vehicles etc. We have identified an insurance company that insures existing schemes and also provides an excellent template for compliance of pedicabs regarding safety and suitability. Riders would carry full driving licences, DBS checks and all be fully insured and trained.

We look forward to working with the council , tourism and licensing team to take this idea forward.

Supporting the project

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