



Three Operators Selected for the Rental E-scooter Trial in London

TfL and London Councils have now announced the three operators selected to take part in the UK's largest rental e-scooter trial which will launch on Monday 7 June in a core group of boroughs and Canary Wharf with more areas expected to join the 12-month trial as it progresses. This member briefing provides an update on the announcement and related work we have done so far.

Overview

E-scooters are currently illegal for use in any public place, however they are legal to sell and use on private land, and demand for these vehicles is growing, with strong sales from UK retailers. Many cities across the world have significant rental markets and the UK government has legislated to allow trials of rental e-scooters to be undertaken legally in areas that wish to run them.

London needs to be focused on how to maximise the benefits of active travel, with safety remaining the number one priority in the Capital. However, we also recognise that the coronavirus pandemic has changed the case for e-scooters in the UK, in particular the need to provide safe, green and sustainable alternatives to public transport and to avoid a damaging car-based recovery.

We are supportive of trialling innovative solutions that might help get London moving again, if they are safe and sustainable. By offering an alternative to car trips, rental e-scooters could improve London's transport system and reduce carbon emissions.

TfL, London Councils and the boroughs have worked collaboratively over the past year on developing a suitable trial for the capital and have recently announced the three selected operators. The London rental e-scooter trial will give us an opportunity to collect evidence on how Londoners would wish to use e-scooters and therefore collectively shape future policies on how they could safely be used on our roads.

Operators Dott, Lime and Tier have been appointed to take part in the trial following an open and competitive procurement process that attracted global interest, in which their ability to meet strict safety requirements and high operating standards was carefully considered. These safety standards will go further than those set out by the DfT at a national level, by requiring a lower maximum speed of 12.5mph and insisting on additional safety features such as lights and

audible warning systems that can be used without adjusting the rider's grip of the handlebar. All operators will also be obliged to ensure that their rental prices take into account the needs of people on lower incomes and to offer discounts to certain groups where appropriate, including key workers playing a vital role in helping London get through the pandemic. The operators will also have various safety mechanisms in place including 'first ride policies' where riders will need to take an e-learning safety course before they hire for the first time.

Safety will be at the core of the trial throughout and data shared by the operators will play a vital role in helping to shape London and the UK's future policy on e-scooters, including whether they could form part of London's sustainable recovery from the coronavirus pandemic.

Background

Prior to July 2020 e-scooters were illegal for use on all public highways in the UK and could only be ridden legally on private land with the landowner's consent. The Secretary of State for Transport announced in May 2020 that to provide additional transport options during the coronavirus pandemic, trials of rental e-scooters would be fast tracked. The government passed regulations in July 2020 to allow these trials to be undertaken in areas that wish to run them.

Usage (except on private land) outside of rental schemes remains illegal.

For trials in major cities, DfT published guidance¹ stating that where trial areas were to involve several tiers of local government, their preferred approach was for a lead authority to be agreed. In most cases it was expected that the lead authority would have strategic oversight across all local trial areas. This approach has been adopted in London by TfL and London Councils, and working closely with the London boroughs, we have sought to ensure a joined-up and safety-first approach to e-scooter rental in London that avoids policies and approaches varying borough by borough.

Operator announcement

TfL and London Councils have now announced the three operators selected to take part in the UK's largest rental e-scooter trial which will begin across the capital on Monday 7 June. They are: Dott, Lime and Tier.

Safety is our top priority and ultimately this trial will help us understand if and how these vehicles can be safely accommodated in London. The three operators selected for the trial have been assessed on their ability to meet strict safety requirements and high operating standards, putting safety first and ensuring that the trial is responsibly managed for the benefit of everybody in London.

The selected companies will also be required to provide critical data for TfL and the boroughs to understand the impacts of these vehicles on London's goals, including Vision Zero, a shift to walking, cycling and public transport, local borough goals, zero emission targets and the Healthy Streets approach.

E-scooters will be banned from riding on pavements but will be able to use the same space as bicycles.

This trial will be the only legal way of riding e-scooters in public places within London. Private use of e-scooters in any public place remains illegal, and the Metropolitan Police Service are undertaking enforcement activity to deal with illegal e-scooters.

Trial area

The exact trial area is subject to decisions to participate by individual councils. A core group of London's boroughs and Canary Wharf have expressed their intention to join the trial initially, with more considering joining at a later stage. The position each borough takes is flexible and can be changed.

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¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/e-scooter-trials-guidance-for-local-areas-and-rental-operators/e-scooter-trials-guidance-for-local-areas-and-rental-operators>

Ealing, the City of London, Hammersmith & Fulham, Kensington & Chelsea and Richmond have confirmed their participation in the trial from 7 June as full-service boroughs, while Tower Hamlets will be joining as a ride-through borough. Lambeth and Southwark are also seeking to join the trial.

Between 60 and 150 e-scooters will be available to rent in each fully participating borough, with riders able to move freely across these boroughs and 'ride-through' areas. Operators who demonstrate strong performance and compliance may be able to increase the number of e-scooters in their fleet over the course of the trial, while those who do not may be required to reduce their numbers.

The boroughs not wishing to be involved in the trial will not see rental e-scooters in their local areas. By the use of geofencing technology the rental e-scooters will only be able to be used in agreed operating areas, unless the council decides otherwise.

Local authorities participating in the trial fully or on a ride-through basis will be able to set "No-Go" and "Go-Slow" areas to either prohibit the vehicles completely or limit their speed to 8mph. The selected operators will be required to ensure their vehicles comply with these restrictions automatically.

Full-service boroughs will determine and control parking locations for e-scooters to protect against street clutter, and TfL are also considering parking to complement borough provision at some TfL stations. All parking of rental e-scooters will be limited to bays which will be created for the trial and clearly marked on the ground in paint. There will be mandatory response times for the operators in cases where vehicles have been improperly parked, are damaged or are causing an obstruction.

An Operational Board has been established to ensure a collaborative and consistent approach to the trial. It includes representatives from TfL, London Councils and the participating London boroughs. The Board will consider a range of issues, including fleet size reviews, operator compliance, the city charges and other issues or contraventions. London Councils is responsible for nominating borough representatives for the Board.

Regular meetings of the Borough Working Group will continue to ensure an open and inclusive approach to the trial. It will include representatives from TfL, London Councils and all London boroughs (including participating and non-participating boroughs).

TfL, London Councils and the boroughs will also continue to work closely with stakeholders, including TfL's Independent Disability Advisory Group, to ensure that the trial meets the needs of everybody living in, working in and visiting the trial area.

Safety features

Safety is our number one priority, and the purpose of taking a collaborative approach is to drive up a consistent safety standard for London. The final safety criteria for the London trial has been agreed by TfL, London Councils, and the participating boroughs and approved by the Department for Transport (DfT).

The selected operator's vehicles must comply as a minimum with the vehicle specifications set out by the DfT². In addition to these minimum standards, the e-scooters being used in the London trial will also:

- Be capable of efficient braking at all times, including where the battery is drained and on all road surfaces in typical weather conditions
- Position the bell or acoustic warning device required by the DfT so that it can be easily used without the need to remove the rider's grip of the handlebar
- Have lighting at both the front and rear that is always on throughout any rental

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2. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/e-scooter-trials-guidance-for-local-areas-and-rental-operators/e-scooter-trials-guidance-for-local-areas-and-rental-operators>

- Have distinguishing features which allow an operator’s rental e-scooters to be easily identifiable as a rental vehicle. Vehicles should also be easily distinguishable from those of other operators participating in the trial
- Have on-vehicle information outlining contact details for reporting any issues
- Have tamper proof on-vehicle technology that automatically ensures compliance with location-based requirements (including no-go and go-slow areas), prevents the vehicle being digitally locked and parked outside of designated parking areas and remotely removes the availability of any rental e-scooter when it is reported as being unsafe

All selected operators have large front wheels measuring at least 30cm and they all have tip-over notifications to alert the operators if any of their vehicles fall over or are not left in an upright position. The three operators will also require users to undertake mandatory training before their first ride and provide ongoing training and refreshers. This user education provision includes disability awareness training amongst other topics. The operators have beginner modes which restrict first rides to a lower initial speed, and various strategies in place to minimise “high-risk behaviours” such as pavement riding or use of mobile phones while riding. All three operators will have robust licence and identity verification processes in place and require users to undergo sobriety testing before riding during high risk times.

The operators also have their own features in addition to these. To find out more information please contact Dott, Lime and Tier directly via their websites.

The safety standards have not only been developed in consultation between TfL, London Councils and the London boroughs, but have been informed by extensive engagement with key stakeholder groups as well as lessons learnt internationally and from other cities in the UK that have launched rental e-scooter trials. We will continue to look at lessons learned from around the world and listen closely to key stakeholders’ concerns and ideas as to how to make any trial a success.

Next Steps

Clearly a collaborative approach is needed to continue to get the best outcome for the capital. By working together, TfL, London Councils and the boroughs will be able to co-ordinate the trial, promote safe and consistent standards across a defined, geographically limited trial area on London’s streets.

Our key priority now is to ensure boroughs intending to join the trial from the beginning are ready to do so.

We will continue to work closely with TfL, the participating boroughs and the selected operators to prepare for the start of the trial, ensuring that London’s streets are ready and engaging with local communities. The organisations involved in the trial will be carrying out education and awareness outreach to ensure that Londoners are prepared for the new trial.

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Links:

[Joint TfL/London Councils press release](#)

This member briefing has been circulated to:

All members

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