



Windrush Bike Project Social impact report May 2022- September 2023

Windrush Bike Project CIC is a not-for-profit social enterprise run by a team of 7 professional staff supported by 24 amazing volunteers (donating over 2,860 hours each year). We empower people to improve their mental and physical health through cycling and learning bike mechanics. We run a community bike workshop in the heart of Witney, West Oxfordshire, where we teach vulnerable children and adults to fix donated bikes through our mechanics courses. Outside the workshop we deliver Bikeability cycle training in 48 schools, run a weekly inclusive cycling activity - Wheels for All, and organise fortnightly social rides. We are funded by grants, service agreements and the money we make through servicing, repairs, and sales of bikes from our workshop.

Community Workshop

Bike mechanics for well-being

This year 27 adults have completed our 12-hour bike mechanics for well-being course. 19 asylum seekers who are housed locally refurbished a bike as part of their course and took it home at the end. 2 clients became regular volunteers.

J, aged 30, is autistic and has mild learning difficulties. Consequently, he spent a lot of time alone at home (where he lived with his mother) and was lonely and isolated – particularly over the pandemic years. He participated in our cycle mechanics for well-being course in the autumn of 2022. He made excellent progress, remembering content and retaining skills from one week to the next. Attending the bike project was his only regular activity at that time. Following the course, he signed up to be a regular volunteer – our buddy system means that he is always accompanied by an experienced volunteer when he needs it. J does a mixture of tasks, dismantling old bikes for parts, refurbishing bikes, unpacking stock or organising the workshop tea break! J thrives on company, loves a good joke and enjoys the sociable atmosphere. Since he started with us, he has taken up another volunteering role in the community and is talking about getting a part time job. His time with us helped him gain confidence to develop relationships with new people. This has led to him taking on other roles in the community and looking for a paid job to apply for.



Build-a-bike graduates Summer 23



Alternative provision for secondary school pupils

5 secondary school pupils attended weekly sessions throughout the year. 21 young people attended our team building days, and 13 young people attended after school drop-in sessions – learning to fix their own bikes in a relaxed environment.

“R has had a chat with us this week and said that she feels she is ready to stop coming to the bike project and be in school. She has found being with you really helpful and it has been a great success for R. She will be with you for the first lesson but then come back to school for 10.00. Thank you so much for all that you have done to support R”. School Leader.



Team building days with secondary school students

Bike library

We have loaned out 92 cycles to children from low-income families through our Bike Library, breaking down the financial barriers to cycling. We also loaned out 19 trikes and other adapted cycles to children with additional needs. This enabled them to ride in their own community or take part in Bikeability cycle training alongside their peers.



Bike library recipients

“Our daughter has a diagnosis of autism and therefore qualified for a bike through the bike library. Taking part in Bikeability courses has enabled our daughter to learn to ride a bike. She was struggling to balance and was really frightened of hurting herself. The Bikeability course was fantastic in building her confidence and helping her to learn to ride a bike in a step by step process. The instructors were encouraging, patient and compassionate throughout. After the project, we were told about the Bike Library. We are now on our second bike from the library. Having a bike from the library meant we kept the momentum going after the bike course and our daughter now rides to and from school four times a week”.

Rusty Riders

Rusty Riders is a fortnightly health ride for adults – our package includes teaching adults to ride and supporting them to find local routes. This year we have had 12 people through the programme, including 1 person who rode a trike. As a result, 3 people bought themselves bikes and began to ride independently.

“I am a semi-retired woman. In 2011 I suffered a brain infection which has left me with balance and coordination issues, among other things. I found the Windrush Bike Project by chance – but what a lucky chance! To begin with - thanks to their Saturday Wheels for All initiative - they let me tricycle around their own safe premises, using one of a range of adult adapted bikes and tricycles. I practiced once a week and gained so much confidence that I found myself smiling with gratitude and relief. I haven't felt this way in years! I bought my own second-hand tricycle, so the next step was to think about cycling on the road. I was very nervous, but I needn't have worried. The Windrush Bike Project has qualified instructors to help me with this step, in the first instance with some one-to-one practice on residential roads. This further increased my confidence, to the extent that I was encouraged to try cycling on a few major roads and cycle routes in a small group. Their on-road, fortnightly group initiative - Rusty Riders – offered me the first opportunity in over ten years to feel like I was moving forward – physically and mentally - in the world alongside others with similar struggles. We are learning and laughing together. What I had for so long regarded as an obstacle to my future, became the first step in a cycling journey. The Windrush Bike Project offered me just the sort of gentle start I needed. I am now even beginning to trike to the shops on my own! And finally, for the first time in my life, I will experience the joy of exploring the local villages, countryside and the natural world”.



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Wheels for All

Our weekly Wheels for All sessions mean children and adults with additional needs can ride specially adapted cycles and 2 wheel cycles in safe and supportive environment. This year we have had over 400 visits from at least 82 children and adults along with their siblings, parents and carers who have enjoyed the physical and mental benefits of cycling.

“The wonderful piggyback bike you lent us has been wonderful and I enjoy taking H out on it. A rides his own bike behind us and we have had a chance to ride together as a family which hasn't been possible as I am a single parent. We enjoy coming to Wheels for all as you have been very kind and caring to my young family. A and H enjoy riding all the different bikes you have. Thank you for helping us”.

"Our daughter has autism and ADHD as well as mobility difficulties. She had been having a tough time at school and had severe anxiety about leaving the house. Wheels for All inclusive sessions have been a lifeline this past year offering her the chance to learn to ride a bike in a way she feels comfortable. It's been really easy to book and affordable. All the staff and volunteers are friendly and seem to have such a good understanding of autism. It's also been a valuable opportunity for us to connect with other parents. It's been lovely to see her happy and enjoying herself."

“For O Wheels for All means, with his disability and him not being able to ride a standard bike (yet!!) he can ride bikes that include using just his arms, or just his legs. We as a family, could not purchase an adapted bike ourselves, so having the option of attending Wheels for all on a weekly bases, means he gets physio every week which is crucial for his needs. The support behind Wheel 4 all is invaluable and if it was not for their passion, patience and love for their role, O would not have his physical needs met. Thank you so much to everyone involved”.



Bikeability

Our Bikeability instructors work in over 42 schools per year, giving over 1000 children and young people the skills and confidence to cycle on today's roads. The community workshop and Wheels for All link with our Bikeability programme to ensure that financial or learning needs do not prevent children from taking part.

"It's worked so well this year and got some very tricky children through and feeling successful all due to the fantastic trainers. Please pass on our thanks".

"These sessions exceeded all expectations. The instructors were amazing with our young people, who had a wide variety of needs and a real range of ability. The increased confidence and perseverance I witnessed was remarkable. These sessions were beneficial in so many ways and I cannot thank you enough for giving my students this opportunity".

Future plans

In 2023-4 we will continue with the core programmes outlined above – working to ensure the quality of our work for the most vulnerable in our community. We have funding secured for our Bikeability programme and Wheels for All. We have just submitted a funding proposal to continue to fund our well-being bike maintenance courses and are actively seeking funding for our Bike Library and Rusty Riders programmes.

As an organisation we are growing and need to upgrade our IT and communications systems so that we remain efficient and can communicate effectively with our clients and supporters. We also need to put 7 of our staff and regular volunteers through the Cytech Level 1 cycle mechanic qualification. The qualification will mean they can check and sign off bikes leaving the workshop. This will speed up the process of turning around our library bikes to get them back out to a child that needs one.

Thank You to our funders:

Abingdon and Witney College, Active Oxfordshire, Big Bike Revival – Cycling UK, Blenheim Community Bursary, Councillor Priority Fund, Jim Cousins Charitable Trust, Muirden Energy LLP, Oxfordshire County Council (Bikeability), Open Schools Facilities Grant, Sport England Together Fund, Witney Town Council, Witney Town Mayor Fundraising appeal.