

# BIKE REUSE IN SCOTLAND

Reducing Waste and Changing Lives



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# WELCOME

**Circular Communities Scotland's Affordable Access to Bike Project, in collaboration with Cycling Scotland, is pleased to share this report which showcases and celebrates the positive impact of bike reuse in Scotland.**

Bike reuse organisations are on a mission to deliver affordable access to bikes for all. Through skill, passion and purpose, they create value and opportunity for their communities.

The contribution to active travel objectives and a range of social, economic and environmental policy outcomes is of growing significance.

The journey of each individual bike, from being discarded to being brought into use again, is an inspiring metaphor for their transformative power. Reuse of bikes promotes meaningful change across society, in our personal, social and political landscapes.

We really cannot overstate the power of bike reuse. At the Affordable Access to Bikes Project, I've seen firsthand the difference a refurbished bike can make. Organisations work to make bikes available to those who need them most. The fact that they are refurbished and saved from landfill is beneficial for the environment, but the social outcomes are equally as strong. We're proud to put forward this report, to show the true potential of bike reuse for our communities, our economy and our planet.



*Chris Sanderson*

**Chris Sanderson**  
National Bike Reuse Coordinator

February 2025



Funded by Transport Scotland, this project demonstrates the impact of bike reuse by social enterprises across Scotland. The project implements recommendations made in the [Affordable Access to Bikes Report \(2021\)](#) and helps remove barriers to bike reuse in Scotland.

Increasing fairer and affordable access to bikes is crucial to enable more people to travel by bike in Scotland, and the knowledge sharing and peer support across bike reuse organisations has contributed to over 8000 bikes being re-used, saving 200 tonnes from landfill.

By working together, project stakeholders have helped many more people benefit from a low-cost, sustainable way of getting around, and helped protect the environment by reducing waste in the process. The role of social enterprises, the supply chain and Original Equipment Manufacturers (OEM) is vital, providing health, economic and environmental benefits from bike reuse.

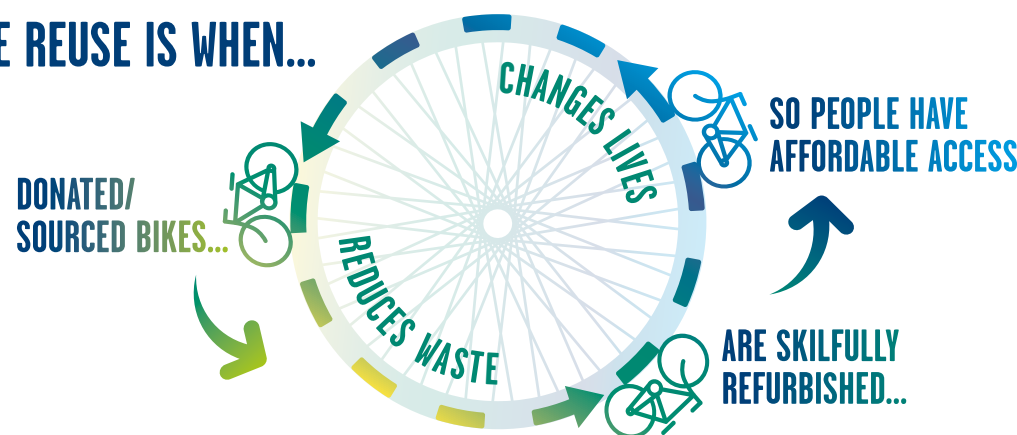
**Kath Brough, Head of Grant Funding and Partnerships,  
Cycling Scotland**

## Data Collection Information

This report has been compiled by data drawn from 18 bike reuse organisations over a one-year period. Questionnaires were sent to 35 organisations engaging with Circular Communities Scotland's Affordable Access to Bikes Project and in-depth discussions were held at quarterly bike reuse network meetings.

Data gathered November 2023 – October 2024.

## BIKE REUSE IS WHEN...



# A YEAR IN REVIEW

Our data, from the 12 months spanning November 2023 to October 2024, shows the vast potential of bike reuse in Scotland.

Typically, the respondents are organisations with 77% of their bike activities relating to bike reuse. Found in both rural and urban locations, the projects are of varying sizes; the majority having two or three staff members refurbishing bikes and almost all involve volunteers in this activity. The four biggest bike reuse organisations together have the equivalent of 39 Full Time Equivalent (FTE) staff involved in bike reuse. This snapshot survey records respondents engaging a total of 60 FTE staff and 63 FTE unpaid team members. Since this data shows only FTE, the actual number of people involved is significantly higher across part-time and full-time roles.

Bike reuse reduces waste, provides opportunities in our communities and changes lives.

**20,646** BIKES RECEIVED

12,138 Public donations

8,051 Household waste recycling sites

457 Other sources

**123** PEOPLE REFINISHING BIKES  
(Full-time equivalent)

60 Paid

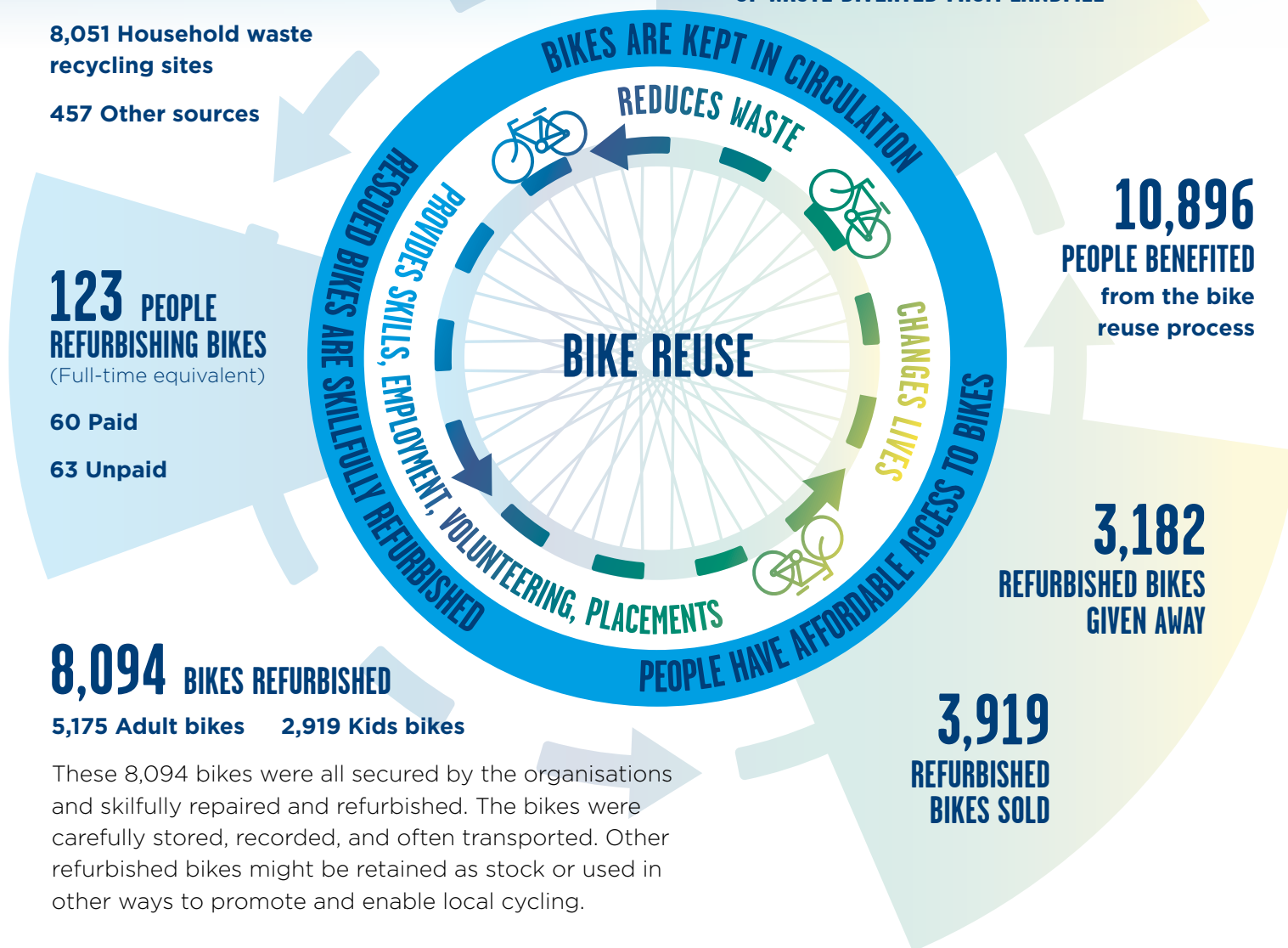
63 Unpaid

**8,094** BIKES REFINISHED

5,175 Adult bikes    2,919 Kids bikes

These 8,094 bikes were all secured by the organisations and skilfully repaired and refurbished. The bikes were carefully stored, recorded, and often transported. Other refurbished bikes might be retained as stock or used in other ways to promote and enable local cycling.

It is estimated that there have been over **200 TONNES** OF WASTE DIVERTED FROM LANDFILL



# WASTE REDUCTION

## **Bike reuse contributes meaningfully to waste reduction in Scotland by reducing waste sent to landfill.**

Individuals have bikes lying unused and bike projects provide a way for the general public to dispose of their bikes responsibly. Many do this through depositing them at their local Household Waste Recycling Centre (HWRC). The survey results show that 39% of bikes sourced for refurbishment came through the HWRC route. Some bike reuse organisations have negotiated access to a supply of bikes through these HWRC sites and this helps local authorities divert valuable resources from landfill.

Circular Communities Scotland produced the **Bike Reuse Toolkit: A Guide for Local Authorities** to support and enable the collection of bikes from HWRC sites. The toolkit was developed in response to the needs of surveyed councils and was distributed to all 32 local authorities with the support of the Waste Management Officers' Network.

Bikes from HWRCs can also be accessed through community projects such as West Lothian Bike Library (WLBL) and their [partnership](#) with West Lothian Council's criminal justice team. WLBL in turn offers to assess and train programme participants, demonstrating the wider benefit to the community.

Bike refurbishment saves carbon by requiring fewer raw materials, fewer transportation miles and less energy expenditure than that resulting from the production and purchase of a new bike. Keeping bikes, frames and other parts in circulation for as long as possible reduces the manufacturing need, and as securing a second-hand bike is usually done locally, this saves carbon emissions.



The toolkit is very useful for local authorities and the templates are flexible enough for bike reuse partnership work. These were important for us.

**Robert Robb, Assistant Manager, Waste Resources, North Ayrshire Council**

Learning from the **Fife Affordable Access to Bikes** pilot project funded by Cycling Scotland informed the Bike Reuse Toolkit and also the current pilot in Orkney. The project was delivered in [partnership](#) with Fife Council and five local bike reuse organisations.

In just three months, 5.2 tonnes of waste were saved from landfill. 277 bikes were repaired and refurbished, ready for use by new owners instead of being left to rust.



# SKILLS, JOBS AND VOLUNTEERING

**The social enterprise aspect of all bike reuse projects is an important factor in the fulfilment of their mission. As local employers, they provide job opportunities and skills development within their communities, bringing a sense of place and purpose to customers, volunteers and staff.**

As noted on page 4, our research shows that responding organisations together employ 60 FTE staff who focus on bike reuse, with all projects employing at least one person. Bike reuse organisations also often involve volunteers, with many in addition providing opportunities for work placements and training. The ratio of paid to unpaid staff can vary widely, with some organisations relying heavily on unpaid labour whereas in others the reverse is true.

Fostering a strong learning and support culture is important to all bike reuse organisations, which they demonstrate with a commitment to skills development opportunities for staff, volunteers and participants. Some organisations have the capacity to provide formal qualifications on site while others source this learning externally. They commonly provide public bike maintenance sessions and many have developed learning relationships with local schools.

## Formal training on offer within the Bike Reuse Network includes:

- Cytech
- Velotech
- City and Guilds
- SQA programmes

## Non-formal learning provision includes:

- Internal training pathways
- Workshops
- Community sessions



Bike reuse provides 12 jobs at Recyke-a-bike, out of our total staff number of 26. We have 30 volunteers in per week, assisting with the workshop operations, helping us strip the good parts off bikes, organise our used spare parts, and build bikes. This initiative not only diverts waste from landfill but also creates opportunities for community members to learn new skills, gain experience, and contribute to a more sustainable local economy.

**Ella Brakefield, Operations Manager, Recyke-a-bike, Stirling**



At SPYF we aim to alleviate the worst effects of poverty through eating, education, and exercise. Through our On Bikes project, we provide free bikes to our local community and wider Glasgow. We take referrals from local groups, social work, schools, housing associations, refugee organisations and other local charities.

We also work with our local prison bike workshop to provide fully refurbished bikes for free, as well as providing training and qualifications for the prisoners. We work together with the prison to provide work placements for the prisoners on their release to allow them to gain skills and qualifications with us. SPYF has given out 1500 free bikes in the last year.

**Ricky Baxter, Cycle Hub Coordinator, On Bikes, St Pauls Youth Forum (SPYF), Provanmill, Glasgow**



# CHANGING LIVES

**Bike reuse organisations are a community asset. Free or low-cost, safety-checked bikes are available within community settings, providing bikes to people who would struggle to access them otherwise due to barriers like cost, confidence, and proximity to a local bike shop. Bike reuse gives the opportunity for community members to become involved, to gain and share skills and to develop their cycling and personal confidence.**

Access to affordable bikes addresses transport poverty and people report that they are more able to undertake local, everyday journeys to work, meet friends and family, travel to school and college, and attend appointments.



Moreover, they report how transformational it is to be able to move so freely, to feel more in control over their physical and mental health, and to experience the improved wellbeing that generally results.

For example, [Bikes for Refugees](#) provides bikes to people who come to Scotland with refugee experience. Through this, New Scots are less isolated, able to explore their new area, attend important appointments and easily visit the community groups and charities that support them.

Access to free, reused bikes is only part of the social benefit. Beneficiaries often grow in confidence after accessing support services from the bike projects; from bike safety to bike maintenance. Supporters often become volunteers or even staff, establishing a long-term and meaningful connection with their local bike project.

### During the 12-month period covered by our survey:

- **3,182 people received a free refurbished bike**
- **3,919 people bought a refurbished bike**
- **10,896 people were beneficiaries of bike reuse processes.**

Build Your Own Bike projects are an example of the strengths-focused engagement that some respondents offer. Participants are supported to build and maintain a bike over several sessions and it is theirs to keep at the end. It is recognised that simply becoming a bike owner is never the only outcome from this positive process.



The way bikes are put together, recycled bikes from waste materials is a metaphor for the way people come through the project, people who are kind of wasted by society are brought back on line, reintegrated back into doing something meaningful and useful. Just like materials are discarded, people are discarded. And people go from that state into a state of feeling meaningful and purposeful in life again. It's a really powerful idea I think.

**Participant, Build Your Own Bike project, Common Wheel, Glasgow**

# KEEPING IT CIRCULAR

**Bike reuse and refurbishment contribute meaningfully to the circular economy.**

The circular economic model promotes reuse to keep items and materials in circulation for as long as possible. With this in mind, the best result for a bike's lifespan is to be repaired and refurbished for multiple owners. In this circumstance, the bike retains its original use, conserving energy and materials and holding a greater proportion of its value.

If a bike is too damaged to be kept intact, it is stripped for usable parts and recyclable elements. Every process is driven by maximum waste reduction because bike reuse organisations are committed to circular practices, despite the resourcing it requires. The Bike Station is an established urban project, working in Edinburgh and Perth, and their impact report ([The Bike Station Impact Report 2024](#)) demonstrates this determination to keep materials in use and circulation for as long as possible.



During the time covered by our survey:

**20,646 BIKES WERE RECEIVED**

**8,094 WERE REFURBISHED**

**12,343 WERE RECYCLED**

**Two rural examples of circularity are in Lochaber and Crieff.**

Lochaber Environmental Group's Bike Shed illustrate how they nurture this life-cycle approach to bike reuse in their short film [here](#); and Cycle Crieff work in partnership with a bigger local reuse organisation, Remake Scotland. Their collaboration meets a need in a rural area enabling affordable access to bikes. View their film [here](#).



Each one of our volunteers has helped to divert a bike from potentially going to landfill...and they keep their own bikes going for longer with the new skills and knowledge they've gained. Worn parts and cracked or damaged frames get taken to metal recycling in our e-cargo bike.

**Laura Jackson,**  
Active Travel Project Officer,  
Fort William Bike Shed,  
Lochaber Environmental Group

We do close to a hundred checks on a bike when it arrives. We're talking affordable, low-cost bikes that have had a life already and we'll hopefully give them a new life.

**Lawrence Howell,**  
Project Coordinator,  
Cycle Crieff



# CONCLUSION

**Evidence gathered for this report shows that bike reuse organisations across Scotland are making a real difference—reducing waste while transforming lives.**

The impact of bike reuse is significant and therefore it is a substantial task to represent its range and reach. While this report offers just a snapshot of its achievements, progress made in [standardising data collection](#) is paving the way for even better evidence of its value.

What we can see from evidence already collected is that refurbishing bikes is an investment in both people and communities. A reused bike can find multiple owners over its lifetime, bringing lasting benefits to individuals, families, and communities. What's more, the refurbishment process itself not only saves bikes from landfill but also empowers people; engaging communities, building skills, boosting confidence, and bringing additionality to any funded work.

Thanks to the efforts of bike reuse projects across the country, thousands of people have access to affordable bikes, enabling them to achieve positive personal, social and environmental outcomes. Without this work, many wouldn't have the chance to enjoy the benefits of cycling.

With sustained investment and meaningful political will, bike reuse offers the opportunity to significantly contribute to both the wellbeing and circular economies in Scotland.



# FUTURE OPPORTUNITIES

## The opportunities to support and develop the bike reuse sector in the future include working with organisations to:

- Progress relationships with local authorities to improve access to bikes at HWRCs and advance other processes which encourage the supply of bikes and parts for refurbishment
- Further develop systems and approaches for data collection, analysis and dissemination that demonstrate sector impact
- Explore opportunities to enable greater peer support, knowledge sharing, and source further learning in developing sustainability
- Support and progress initiatives to develop skills, jobs and volunteering opportunities in the sector
- Facilitate local, regional and national approaches to collaboration.

At a different level, opportunities exist to address the:

- Waste and disposal burden due to limited life and high volume of low-cost imported bikes and componentry
- Opportunity to design bikes and parts with repair in mind.

For the above opportunities to be made a reality, secure and consistent resourcing is needed. This investment would further Scottish Government's commitment to the [Active Travel Framework](#) and climate change targets.

Bike reuse organisations work within very restrictive margins. Refurbishing abandoned bikes is value-generating, but it is not income-generating. Organisations need to work at diversifying their income and accessing support to develop [sustainable business models](#) and need support for their impactful bike reuse services to take their work forward.

There is an opportunity for each sector of our society, national and local government, corporate partners and locally based social enterprises to work together. Bike reuse is a cross-cutting activity, strongly positioned to enable key government objectives, directly linked to addressing climate change, creating opportunities for all, increasing wellbeing, reducing inequality, and tackling poverty.



Thanks to the following organisations for their contribution to the bike reuse network and directly or indirectly to this report:

- Argyll Countryside Trust: ReCycle
- Bike for Good
- Bikes for Refugees (Scotland) SCIO
- Biosphere Bikes
- Camphill School Aberdeen
- Common Wheel
- Community Gift Exchange: CGX Cycle Works
- Cycle Crieff
- Cycle Hub
- Cycle Station
- Cycling Scotland
- Cycling UK
- Drumchapel Cycle Hub
- Ebike Freedom
- FEL (Forth Environment Link)
- Fife Bikeworks
- First Step Development
- Free Wheel North
- Glasgow Eco Trust: De'ils on Wheels
- Gordon Rural Action: The Bikery
- Greener Kirkcaldy: Langtoun Cycles
- Healthy n Happy: Bike Town
- Healthy Valleys: Gear Up
- Include Me Too Club: Bike Hub
- Just Cycle
- Killie Can Cycle
- Kintyre Recycling
- Lochaber Environmental Group: Bike Shed
- Outfit Moray: Bike Revolution
- Penicuik Community Development Trust
- Positive Pedals
- Recyke-a-bike
- Remake Scotland
- Sea the Change
- Shetland Community Bike Project
- SHRUB Coop: The Wee Spoke Hub
- St Paul's Youth Forum (SPYF): On Bikes
- Stella's Voice
- The Bike Station
- Transition Stirling
- Tyred n Cranky CIC
- Velocity
- West Lothian Bike Library