CIRCULAR COMMUNITIES SCOTLAND

Recording Key Metrics in Bike Reuse: A Guide to Standardising Data

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Overview

Bike reuse has grown in size and visibility in recent years with the Scottish Government committing to spending £320 million (or 10%) of the transport budget on active travel by 2024-25. Project funding to support bike reuse across Scotland has been available through Cycling Scotland and Cycling UK, with the former also funding the Affordable Access to Bikes Project[1] and the National Bike Reuse Coordinator role, based within Circular Communities Scotland. The announcement in September 2024 that the Scottish Government will now cut £23.7 million from this financial year, and that public finances will remain under pressure for some time, increases the levels of future risk and uncertainty for bike reuse organisations.

Policy Landscape

The Circular Economy (Scotland) Act 2024 is a positive development and references the requirement for the circular economy strategy to take the waste hierarchy into account prioritising, in order, waste prevention, preparation for reuse, then recycling, over recovery and disposal. The Scottish Government's Waste Route Map will be the operational plan to achieve more circularity and has 'Reduce and Reuse' as one of its four strategic aims. The latest version will be published by the end of 2024.

Evidencing Impact

More than ever before there is a need to make a strongly evidenced case for the value of bike reuse in Scotland. Bike reuse is largely grant-dependent since the true cost[2] of refurbishing donated bikes doesn't generate an operating profit. In most cases the driver for such activity is the broader economic, environmental and public health gains of reducing waste and enabling people to have a healthier lifestyle and affordable access to travel through cycling.

Reducing bike waste through removing and refurbishing bikes from Household Waste Recycling Centres assists local authorities. Provision of volunteering opportunities and employment through the reuse activity are among the benefits to local communities. Standardising data from bike reuse organisations will show the wide-reaching impact of this commitment to circular practices.

Report Purpose

This guide outlines key metrics identified from focused group discussions with bike reuse organisations across Scotland. It draws on associated research3, a pilot project4, our bike reuse toolkit5 and the innovative, development work of exemplar bike reuse data gathering. It illustrates the

[1] The AATB Project actively works with around 35 bike organisations across Scotland
[2] True costs would include all overheads, staff and volunteer costs, parts, skills development etc.
[3] Affordable Access to Bikes Research (2021) Affordable Access to Bikes Project Survey (2023)
[4] Fife Affordable Access to Bikes Pilot (2023)
[5] Bike Reuse Toolkit: A Guide for Local Authorities

features and benefits to the organisations using these measures and recommends that organisations adopt these to enable effective impact analysis.

Situation

Without standardised data across the bike reuse sector across Scotland, it is not possible to paint an accurate national picture of the collective activities and outcomes of this important work. Opportunities are being missed to demonstrate the valuable contribution of bike reuse to achieving national[6] and active travel[7] priorities, and to build support and understanding among high level stakeholders. Without these key metrics, bike reuse organisations themselves may be less able to:

- make informed decisions,
- develop strategic approaches,
- understand their successes and
- find solutions to problems.

Features and Benefits

All bike reuse organisations collect data already. The opportunity here is to strive for consistency to enable collective reporting and there is much to gain from placing standardised metrics at the heart of individual data recording systems. While some organisations have the capacity to implement a more sophisticated system and have the need for evidence at a more granular level, it is anticipated that organisations would feel the benefit in adopting the key metrics as a minimum.

Useful data collection and analysis enables intelligent, informed decision making about service planning and resourcing. It supports more effective strategic planning. It clearly demonstrates impacts and successes, which helps morale as well as provide evidence for wider audiences. It also allows organisations to recognise trends which may impact their effectiveness. All of these benefits can be felt internally to the organisation and also externally as the bike reuse sector seeks to demonstrate its collective value and impact to high level stakeholders.

In seeking to encourage standardisation, the ambition is to build on what already exists and, further, to encourage increasingly effective data collection that supports bike reuse. A couple of organisations[8] have developed customised apps to support their specific data needs and they are both happy to discuss this innovative work with peers. There is also a range of good examples where bike reuse statistics are used together with bike stories[9] to provide a complete picture of beneficiary impact and waste reduction. The Bike Station, for one, takes this a step further with data

[6] Programme for Government - gov.scot (www.gov.scot)
[7]) Key policy approaches to improving the uptake of walking and cycling in Scotland for travel | Transport Scotland
[8] Cycle Hub and The Bike Station
[9] Evaluation Support Scotland provide excellent free resources to support blended evaluation reporting.

showing a bike's 'life cycle' and their role in keeping that bike in useful circulation for as long as possible.

Key principles behind data standardisation

A shared set of defined metrics will better evidence how the bike reuse sector:

- works to reduce bike waste and the use of new materials by keeping bikes in useful circulation for as long as possible and by recycling what they cannot use;
- enables access to family and friends, local amenities, services, education, work and more through providing affordable access to bikes;
- supports the modal shift away from dependent car use, towards active travel and vibrant healthy communities;
- provides skills development, volunteering and employment opportunities; and
- offers additional services and support to those being given or buying refurbished bikes.

Key metrics in bike reuse

Sections:	Notes and definitions
Inputs	
1. **Number of bikes received through:**	This data shows, for example, how bike reuse organisations process waste *on behalf of* local authorities.
a) direct donations from the public	
b) HWRCs	
c) all other sources	
2. **Number of people refurbishing bikes:**	
a) staff (FTE)	To help estimate staffing costs and invoice funders for staffing costs.
b) unpaid members of the team (FTE)	To estimate value of in-kind contributions for funding applications. To recognise this input.
Bike Refurbishment Processes	
3. **Number of bikes refurbished:**	A simple split is proposed, where we take 'Adults' to mean 26" wheel and above and 'kids' to mean 24" wheel and below.
Adults (26" +)	
Kids (24" or less)	
4. **Number of bikes sent for recycling (not able to be refurbished):**	
a) Adults (26" +)	
b) Kids (24" or less)	

5. **Average price of refurbished:**	An average (median) price indicates the cost to the consumer, an estimated retail value and gives an indication of quality. This is not a metric about the cost of *refurbishment*[10] to the bike organisation.
i. adult's bike (26" +)	We could base this on any size agreed above or just supply data based on how you usually categorise your bikes.
ii. kid's bike (24" or less)	
Main Outputs	
6. **Number of refurbished bikes that were:**	This is *not split* into adults/ kids. It's a total of all refurbished bikes.
iii. given away	This includes all bikes given away, whether or not a donation has been enabled by specific funding.
iv. sold	
7. **Number of total beneficiaries of your bike reuse processes**	This should be the maximum number of people benefiting from involvement: volunteers, people who buy a refurbished bike, people who are given one etc. Number could be higher than 8 A) + B) because some refurbished bikes might be lent.
8. **Tonnage saved from landfill** Please supply a single figure	Adult bike average weight: 15kg. Kid's bike average weight: 10 kg If in doubt, 12.5kg can be used as a mixed weight (Reuse Network calculations) *Your figure will be regarded as outline tonnage based on an assumption of mixed weight average.*

[10] Calculating the average true cost of a refurbished bike is important but it's complicated, given the overheads that would need to be factored in, so is not included here. True refurbishments costs could form a separate illustration. It is possible to refurbish bikes under a guide cost provided by specific project funding to enable access to bikes and this data can be recorded as part of separate project monitoring for funders. One bike reuse organisation calculates refurbishment costs by noting the hours taken to collect, refurbish and distribute bike, multiplies this by staff member's hourly cost and considers adding a 5-15% management fee to account for other overheads.

We could include the 'value of scrap' as a metric but this should show up elsewhere in an organisation's financial tracking system eg selling metal for scrap results in an invoice or income category.

The key metrics above are regarded as recommended minimum data points for a bike reuse organisation, regardless of size or complexity of operation. Collecting more granular detail would enable better informed decision making, more effective planning and stronger business and funding cases. Makes and models of cycles wasn't included here in order to keep the metrics simple but one argument for logging this data, for example, might be to demonstrate the proliferation of 'Bike Shaped Objects' and their attendant challenges as well as to build a case for extended producer responsibility.

Next steps

- Agree recommendations to implement (October 2024).
- Request this data in order to evidence the national picture (by late November 2024).
- Circulate to Cycling Delivery Forum (cycling organisations, RTPs and Local Authorities) and across CCS/ ZWS for awareness and support to encourage implementation (this could include funding support in 25/26). The goal here would be simple, standardised monitoring and reporting for organisations.
- Assess impact of standardised data for LA partners through review of HWRC toolkit (early 2025).

Conclusion

In conclusion, this work to standardise bike reuse data is intended to evidence the depth, range and relevance of bike reuse activity across Scotland to the full range of stakeholders, including Scottish Government, local authorities and funders. Achieving this data set will empower the bike reuse sector to make a stronger national case for its important work. Developing consistency across the organisations may also support supplementary goals such as negotiating service level agreements with local authorities and making a case for the introduction of extended producer responsibility for cycle manufacturers.