

Case Study – ACT reCYCLE Community Bicycle Scheme

The reCycle Community Bicycle Scheme, managed by the Argyll and the Isles Coast and Countryside Trust, serves as a vital intervention in the Argyll and Bute rural transport landscape. By partnering with LiveArgyll, the scheme specifically targets the financial and logistical barriers that prevent schoolaged children (and their families) from owning, using, or maintaining a bicycle.



An electric van allows us to collect and distribute across A&B

Background: The Challenge

In Argyll and Bute, cycle ownership for pupils is often hindered by a “triple barrier”:

- **Financial Constraint:** The high cost of new bicycles is a significant hurdle for low-income families, particularly during the cost-of-living crisis.
- **Rural Isolation:** A lack of local bike shops and technical services makes maintaining a bicycle difficult; once a bike breaks, it often stays broken.
- **Safety & Confidence:** Many parents are reluctant to let children cycle without



The Partnership: reCycle Argyll & LiveArgyll

The collaboration between reCycle and LiveArgyll (the region’s culture and leisure trust) is the engine of the scheme. This works by:

- **Referral & Identification:** LiveArgyll manages the Active Schools coordinators and the Bikeability Scotland network. These coordinators identify students who want to participate in cycle training but lack a safe, functioning bicycle.
- **Supply Chain:** reCycle Argyll collects donated bikes from the public and organisations (such as Benmore Outdoor Centre). A Velotech qualified technician refurbishes these bikes to a safe and functioning standard at their Mid-Argyll workshop.
- **Targeted Delivery:** Refurbished bikes are then funnelled through the LiveArgyll network directly to the schools (often in collaboration with teaching staff). This ensures that the bikes reach the children with the greatest need, specifically those who would otherwise be excluded from school cycling activities.

Key Features of the Scheme

To ensure “ownership” is sustainable and has real long-term impact, the scheme includes:

- Maintenance Support: reCycle delivers STEMthemed sessions where students learn the mechanics of their own bikes using curriculum topics. Bicycles are brilliant for applying practical application of maths, technical literacy, chemistry, and health and wellbeing, for example.
- Bikeability Integration: By providing the hardware, the scheme allows LiveArgyll to achieve 100% participation in Bikeability training, regardless of the student’s socioeconomic background.
- In instances where pupils are without a helmet and/or other necessary items, ACT will ensure this accompanies the bicycle.

Example of the logistical challenges and opportunities.

Argyll and Bute is the second largest local authority in Scotland with this region also containing many island and remote and rural schools. Our ambition is to support from a small resourced Hub all schools in Argyll and Bute.

Recently we were requested to supply 4 bicycles to Rothesay Academy. This represents a challenge in that it required two ferry journeys and significant mileage. We worked with the School and the Active Schools team to negotiate a way that we could leave the bicycles at the second ferry terminal so sharing the financial and time commitments involved. The reCycle budget and capacity will not allow us to reach every school on every occasion but by working with partners we can always find a way to support pupil access to bicycles.

Schools that are closer to our workshop are more easily served and the full process of ensuring bicycles are always easy to access is made more straightforward with our new electric van which also supports the tools and equipment required for in school technical work shops.

Testimonials

SC, Mid Argyll based Teacher and local resident:

‘It’s a valuable resource. The scheme is easy to use, I have been able to access bikes for school and the delivery of 4 years of bikeability training - allowing equity across the pupil group. The young cyclists, gaining confidence through training then become part of the ‘cycling classroom’ - taking their learning out for a ride. I’m always keen to let folk know about this scheme, it has opened the door to parents being able to get their children cycling and for workers accessing bikes to commute locally.’

NT, Bikeability Coordinator for LiveArgyll

‘Equitable access to Bikes is key for our Bikeability project. Working in partnership with the reCycle project at Act and Schools has been a great way of sourcing bikes for children who do not have access to their own bikes. We have a fleet of bicycles now which we can loan to schools for pupils to complete the Bikeability programme, but the Recycle scheme allows children to retain their bike, take it home and make use of it beyond the term of the Bikeability sessions in schools. These bikes are a real benefit to the children, and their families to help cycling become part of daily life.

We have also accessed bicycles for adults through this scheme, as we often have requests from adults who do not have access to a bike, or have difficulty in transporting bikes from their home to the school where they will be delivering Bikeability training to the pupils. This service has also been very valuable to ensuring our Bikeability programmes are run and continue to run in schools.’



Feedback is always welcome! It’s very rewarding to know the bicycles have life changing impact.