

The Bristol Bike Project

Recycling unwanted & unused bikes to benefit marginalised groups in Bristol



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Organisation:	Community shop
Location:	Bristol, South West
Award date:	April 2017
Award amount:	£10,000
Ownership:	Community Interest Company

Grant purpose

To develop a staff and volunteer development programme, increase publicity and marketing activity and access community business training in marketing, social impact, community building and staff management.

Trading for the benefit of the local community

By repairing and selling disused and unwanted bikes and running bike maintenance courses, generating income to run community programmes supporting various marginalised groups who experience barriers to freedom of movement in some way

Broad community impact

Bristol Bike Project promote inclusivity through free transport, working with marginalised groups. The project saves large amounts of waste by reconditioning unwanted bikes and promoting practical, carbon neutral transport.

Reducing isolation

Bristol Bike Project run sessions for individuals experiencing social isolation. People can come and work on restoring or repairing a bike or lead a group of volunteers to connect them with members of their community.

Bristol Bike Project started in December 2008 as a weekly community workshop where people



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could work on repairing disused bikes. Teaching mechanical skills and the basics of bike maintenance, the project aims to benefit marginalised and disadvantaged groups who would benefit from owning their own bike.

This is particularly the case for people who can't afford a car or public transport. With levels of inequality in Bristol high, free bikes for disadvantaged people can make a significant difference – allowing people to move around the city quickly to get to essential appointments, the shops and social activities, and access a broader range of work opportunities and in a more environmentally friendly way.

The project partners with over 50 organisations in and around Bristol to support a wide range of people who can benefit from owning their own bike or from the activity of repairing one. Refugees, the homeless or those living in sheltered housing, people with substance abuse problems, people with mental health difficulties and those facing social isolation are some examples. A young person's programme also supports kids with challenging behaviour, providing them with a focus, an outlet for creativity and an opportunity to learn new skills.

Bristol Bike Project generates an income selling bike parts and refurbished bikes at affordable rates, plus servicing and repairing bikes. This income is then used to subsidise activities with an especially high social impact. These include the 'Earn a Bike' project where refugees learn to renovate and maintain a bike which they then get to take home. It also includes a women's night bike kitchen, which provides a safe space for women to learn new bike mechanic skills without assumptions of ability based on gender. 'Fix a Bike Wednesday' provides a non judgemental space for people suffering isolation to meet, mend bikes, chat and drink tea together as well as going on monthly bike rides.



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As a Community Interest Company with a co-operative structure, the Bike Project is a member-led organisation. Anyone who volunteers regularly can become a member to get more involved in the running and direction of the project. They can also attend the General Meetings to participate in decision-making on the future direction of the project.

The project was able to benefit from Power to Change's [Trade Up programme](#) – a funding model where grant money of up to £10,000 is allocated in equal proportion to the income which is generated from an organisation's trading activity. Business leaders from the organisation can also access 12 days of training from the School for Social Entrepreneurs.

Reflecting on the training they received as part of the training, Krysia Williams from the project said: "Coming away from the learning blocks, I feel more confident in the ideas I have. Part of that is down to being able to talk through those ideas, but also just being given that time and space to actually indulge in them. It's easy in community businesses to try and do everything, but you don't have time to breathe."

Being given the opportunity to nurture your project with support not only from SSE but also other brilliant community business leaders is invaluable. I don't know where else you'd find space for that community to come together

Krysia Williams

