



Big Bike Revival: A local perspective 2023 - 2024



Active Travel England



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Introduction

The Big Bike Revival is a nationwide initiative that aims to help people across England get back on their bikes and enjoy the numerous benefits of cycling. Specifically, the programme focuses on reaching those who face significant barriers to cycling, such as individuals from low-income backgrounds, ethnic minority groups, LGBTQ+ communities, women, and those not meeting physical activity guidelines.

In 2023-24, this effort was made possible through the dedicated work of 362 delivery partners, who hosted various events, including free mechanical checks, maintenance workshops, group rides, and cycle training.

This report highlights the impact of local community-led groups and not-for-profit organisations who worked collaboratively with Cycling UK staff to ensure cycling is accessible to all whilst addressing challenges associated with increasing cycling participation in their communities. Through a case study approach, we explore how three delivery partners across England have successfully transformed their local areas by promoting cycling as an inclusive and sustainable mode of transport.

Who we worked with nationally

- **110,781** people reached¹
- **17,909** unique participants²
- **58%** of participants were women
- **23%** from an ethnic group other than white
- **24%** of participants were women from an ethnic group other than white
- **36%** from the top three most deprived areas in England
- **26%** unemployed
- **9%** disabled people
- **6%** LGBTQ+

¹ Reach refers to those people who were exposed to or influenced by the programme's activities or messaging, even if they didn't directly participate. This includes anyone who heard about the programme, saw promotional materials, or attended events without fully engaging. The number of people reached is submitted to Cycling UK by the delivery partners.

² Unique participants refer to those who actively engaged with the programme by taking part in its activities. Delivery partners submit to Cycling UK the names and emails for unique participants.

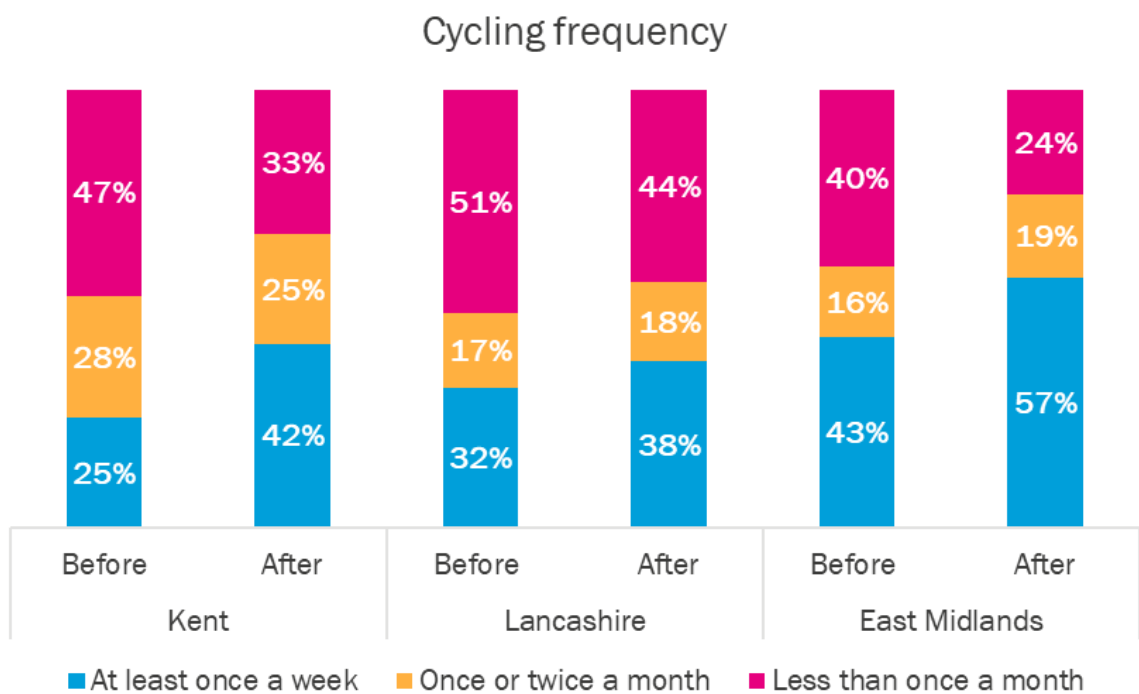
Big Bike Revival national outcomes

Between May 2023 and March 2024, **43,529** people increased their cycling activity, resulting in a **60%** reduction in car trips and an additional **84,027** cycling trips.

Furthermore, **80%** of participants now feel safer while cycling and **60%** reported improved wellbeing. For a more detailed description of the programme’s outcomes, please refer to the Big Bike Revival annual report 2023/24.

Big Bike Revival regional outcomes

The graph below shows the cycling frequency of participants at baseline and three months after attending a Big Bike Revival event.



*The above statistics should be interpreted with caution due to differences in sample sizes at baseline, follow-up and across regions

Supporting women in Lancashire

Women, especially those from minority ethnic groups, are less likely to cycle due to a combination of safety concerns, cultural barriers, and limited access to resources. Concerns about road safety, harassment, and the lack of cycling infrastructure may serve as deterrents to cycling. Cultural norms and expectations may also discourage cycling,

particularly within certain ethnic communities. Additionally, financial and logistical barriers, such as not owning a bike or having access to training, further limit participation.

The Big Bike Revival project plays a significant role in addressing these challenges by creating a supportive and inclusive environment that encourages more women to cycle. By providing safe spaces, access to bikes and training, the programme helps break down barriers, empowering women from diverse backgrounds to embrace cycling, improve their wellbeing and reduce car dependency.

One of the key delivery partners supporting women in Lancashire to overcome barriers to cycling is S.A.S Rights not-for-profit organisation in Blackburn. The table below shows a summary from the national and Lancashire delivery of the Big Bike Revival programme, covering the period from May 2023 to March 2024, followed by a case study from S.A.S Rights showcasing its local impact.

	Lancashire	National Big Bike Revival programme
Number of events	269	3,168
Number of unique ³ beneficiaries	1,195	17,909
Number of Delivery Partners	20	362
Non-Cyclists	62%	47%
Women	59%	58%
Identified of belonging to an ethnic group other than white	18%	23%
Unemployed	25%	26%
Deprivation – lowest decile	19%	13%
Deprivation - lowest 3 deciles	44%	36%
Disabled people	8%	9%

³ Unique participants refer to those who actively engaged with the programme by taking part in its activities. Delivery partners submit to Cycling UK the names and emails for unique participants.

LGBTQ+	6%	6%
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S.A.S Rights – Women’s Cycling Club, Blackburn, Lancashire



S.A.S. Rights is a grassroots-based women-led organisation established in 1995.

Registered as a not-for-profit organisation in 2016, the organisation aims to create a more inclusive and equitable society and empower marginalised communities. They engage with women and diverse minority ethnic groups including south Asian and orthodox faith backgrounds, proactively

identifying barriers, engaging with community needs and providing support around a range of issues and offering opportunities and support for therapy, wellbeing, exercise and sports participation.

Working with Cycling UK to break down barriers to cycling

S.A.S Rights initially started with a small waiting list of 18 Muslim women who wanted to learn to cycle, and partnered with the local authority wellbeing team Blackburn with Darwen re:refresh Health and Wellbeing. They supported the project with access to bicycles to begin to offer sessions. Through the re:refresh team, they attended one of the Big Bike Revival events, where they met Cycling UK’s Cycling development officer for Lancashire, Laura Howarth.

Subsequent funding provided through Cycling UK’s Big Bike Revival programme has supported S.A.S Rights to grow the cycling provision considerably to enable them to offer ongoing weekly sessions, through access to cycles, facilities, parks, safety wear, helmets, insurance, and enabling the provision of a buffet lunch for participants. Alongside this, the ongoing practical support and guidance from Laura and the Big Bike Revival team has been invaluable in helping S.A.S Rights to produce a meaningful approach to breaking down the gendered and cultural barriers to cycling for the women that they work with.

Together, their professional knowledge, research, and personal experiences led to a holistic approach that improved both attendance and satisfaction at the cycling sessions. Specifically, S.A.S Rights designed a project delivery approach which uses traditional social media poster/leaflet promotions but also offers a one-to-one and direct out-reach engagement model in which volunteers were trained to support women to create a personal action plan which includes therapy, other wellbeing activities, and trying outdoor activities, walking and cycling.

Some women were initially apprehensive about cycling, mostly due to feeling it was unaffordable, feeling unsure about committing to a training regime, and reporting barriers around caring commitments and expectations. Great consideration was given to timing of sessions which were organised around school times for those with children, and arrangements were also made for providing support with caring for older family members to enable women to take some time out for themselves. Offering a programme that was run by women, for women, helped to normalise cycling.

The project has removed some of the stigma associated with women and cycling; they have reduced the perceptions of immodesty associated with cycling, i.e. that tight clothes and leggings/shorts are obligatory and that the hijab (head covering) is not appropriate clothing for cycling. The project shows women that clothing is not a barrier as long as it is worn safely and tucked away and not in the way of the pedals.

Outcomes of the programme

The programme currently has 85 names on the register of interested persons, over 50 new persons who have attended a session, and an over 70% repeat attendance rate.

Increasing skills and confidence: Many women from a range of backgrounds described how they did not have the ability or confidence to ride a bike, or they had ‘forgotten’ and were scared. The drop-in informal approach with food, refreshments and a chat helped women to have conversations and breakdown confidence-related barriers. Women encourage each other to have a go on a trike, or pedal free bikes, or for those who can, they also provide the opportunity to participate in a group-ride led by trained instructors.

Initially, participants would remain in the confines of the park, but as the numbers of women grew, and the women began to grow in confidence, they began to cycle further.

“We now have women who are cycling outside of the perimeter of the park; therefore, they are in public view, and as such inadvertently have become a cycling advert in motion. Via this development I am receiving more and more enquiries from women who live in the area, asking if they can join.”

Reducing isolation and loneliness: Women have formed friendships with others they would have otherwise never met and have begun to meet up outside of the cycling sessions. Some women are also now actively volunteering with S.A.S Rights including becoming bike leaders.

Improving mental wellbeing: Women describe that they feel happy and valued as a result of the programme, and have gained in the confidence to access other mental health services with support from the organisation.

Changing perceptions of cycling: As well as changing perceptions and breaking down barriers to cycling for women, many of the women with small children are also requesting additional opportunities for whole families including children to attend cycling sessions.

“Therefore, whilst we may have not changed the world, we appear to have created a tipping point and a cultural shift of gender-parity in accessing cycling opportunities at least at a family level where women do have influence.”

Next steps

The S.A.S Rights Women’s Cycling Club has a range of ideas for how to continue to grow cycling and provide more opportunities for women to participate, including training some of the women as bike leaders to provide them with further opportunities to develop their skills, confidence, wellbeing, and feel empowered in their communities.

“We wish to ensure they see cycling as affordable, accessible whenever one desires, even as a family; be it for fun, cohesive and friendship opportunities, or for financial, health and environmental benefits.”



Supporting refugees in Kent

Refugees and asylum seekers face various barriers to cycling, including limited access to affordable bikes, lack of knowledge of local cycling routes and rules, language barriers, isolation and unfamiliarity with cycling as a transport option. These factors contribute to lower cycling rates among this group. The Big Bike Revival programme promotes independence and helps refugees overcome transportation barriers and integrate more easily into their new communities by offering bike access, safety training, and community support.

Despite Kent's predominantly white population, there has been a significant influx of refugees and asylum seekers, particularly in the Folkestone area. The Primal Runners and Riders is a local organisation empowering refugees by providing them with the skills, resources, and confidence to cycle.

	Kent	National Big Bike Revival programme
Number of events	144	3,168
Number of unique ⁴ beneficiaries	926	17,909
Number of Delivery Partners	20	362
Non-Cyclists	66%	47%
Women	61%	58%
Identified of belonging to an ethnic group other than white	8%	23%
Unemployed	27%	26%
Deprivation – lowest decile	12%	13%
Deprivation - lowest 3 deciles	31%	36%
Disabled people	13%	9%
LGBTQ+	3%	6%

⁴ Unique participants refer to those who actively engaged with the programme by taking part in its activities. Delivery partners submit to Cycling UK the names and emails for unique participants.

Primal Runners and Riders, Folkestone, Kent



Primal Runners is a social enterprise which works with refugees and young people from disadvantaged backgrounds. They offer opportunities for running, including free coaching and training, and also free access to other outdoor activities and adventure pursuits including trail biking, kayaking and woodland glamping experiences. Their aim is to connect with people from different backgrounds, offering a



foster a

sense of community, and enhance their physical and mental wellbeing.

Offering cycling opportunities in Kent

The cycling project, supported by funding through Big Bike Revival, was designed to provide up to eight people at a time with the opportunity to participate in cycling sessions along the Kent Coast and the countryside surrounding Folkestone. The participants were predominantly from the refugee community, comprising men aged between 18 and 50 living at the former Napier Barracks in Folkestone. The former barracks was repurposed to accommodate up to 300 asylum seekers. This group, characterised by a diverse range of cultural and social backgrounds, shared common experiences of displacement and uncertainty. Many had previously expressed fears of leaving the relative safety of the barracks, which had become their sanctuary in a foreign land. Many of these individuals were new to cycling and had limited experience of the natural environment around their new place of residence.

Over the course of sessions, participants embarked on guided cycling tours, each carefully planned to ensure safety, inclusivity, and enjoyment. The routes covered both the picturesque Kent Coast and the scenic countryside, offering varied landscapes and experiences. Each session included safety briefings including basic cycling skills and road safety, provision of safety equipment, a guided ride, and opportunity for social interaction and engagement.

Outcomes of the programme

Skills and confidence: The sessions provided valuable cycling skills, enhancing participants' mobility and independence. Beginners who had never ridden a bicycle before gained confidence and competence, while more experienced riders improved their techniques and endurance.

Sense of achievement: Completing the rides gave participants a strong sense of accomplishment. This was particularly important for those who had faced numerous challenges and uncertainties in their lives. The project demonstrated their ability to set and achieve goals, boosting their self-esteem.

Enhanced social connections: The project facilitated new friendships and strengthened existing bonds among the participants. The shared experience of cycling helped to build camaraderie and trust within the group. Interactions with local community members also helped to reduce feelings of isolation and foster a sense of belonging.

Improving physical and mental wellbeing: Many participants reported an increase in physical fitness and a boost in mental wellbeing. The physical activity, coupled with the serene environment, provided a therapeutic escape from the stresses of their daily lives.

Discovery and appreciation of local environment: For many, the rides were their first exposure to the natural beauty of the Kent Coast and countryside.

“Participants expressed amazement at the landscapes and a newfound appreciation for their surroundings. This experience was particularly significant for those who had been reluctant to leave the barracks, as it broadened their perspective and encouraged further exploration.”

Next steps

The cycling project achieved its primary goals of promoting physical activity, social connection, and exploration among refugee participants. Primal Runners identified some lessons to be learnt for the future around language support, pre-ride orientation and developing further collaborations with local cycling clubs and organisations, and they are keen to continue to offer cycling to help provide a range of positive outcomes for the refugee population in the local community.

“Overall, the Cycling Project demonstrated the transformative power of community-based physical activities in fostering resilience, confidence, and a sense of belonging among refugee populations.”



Supporting people with disabilities in East Midlands

One of the key priority groups of Big Bike Revival is people with disabilities, who often face significant barriers to cycling. Common challenges include lack of access to adaptive bikes that suit their needs, poorly designed cycling infrastructure and safety concerns.

Additionally, societal misconceptions about the ability of disabled individuals to cycle can discourage participation. Without adequate support, training, and resources, people with disabilities are often excluded from cycling, missing out on the physical, mental, and social benefits it provides.

In East Midlands, the percentage of people with disabilities supported by Big Bike Revival is similar to the project's national average of 9% (table below). The case study from Grow Wild showcases how delivery partners promote cycling among people with disabilities.

	East Midlands	National Big Bike Revival programme
Number of events	272	3,168
Number of unique ⁵ beneficiaries	1397	17,909
Number of Delivery Partners	22	362
Non-Cyclists	52%	47%
Women	62%	58%
Identified of belonging to an ethnic group other than white	41%	23%
Unemployed	24%	26%
Deprivation – lowest decile	9%	13%
Deprivation - lowest 3 deciles	29%	36%
Disabled people	9%	9%
LGBTQ+	7%	6%

⁵ Unique participants refer to those who actively engaged with the programme by taking part in its activities. Delivery partners submit to Cycling UK the names and emails for unique participants.

Grow Wild, Northamptonshire, East Midlands



Grow Wild are an adult day service provider for adults with additional needs including physical disabilities, learning disabilities, and mental health needs. The premise is like that of a forest school with a focus on outdoor activities to promote mental and physical wellbeing. They take part in community conservation projects, volunteering and keeping physically fit via activities such as cycling, hiking, and water sports. Grow Wild is based in Kettering where they have a yard, greenhouse and office space, but they offer services and opportunities across the entire county of Northamptonshire.

Inclusive cycling opportunities

Prior to taking part in the Big Bike Revival, Grow Wild were very limited on the cycling activities that they could offer. Due to the complex needs of some of the individuals they support, they required some adaptive cycles and there was only one local place where they were able to hire these cycles which severely limited access to cycling due to travelling time and restrictions. They had previously contacted all bike hire services and nothing was available in the whole county.

Taking part in Big Bike Revival meant that Grow Wild was able to purchase two adaptive trikes – a hand powered cycle and an adult sized trike. This has enabled them to offer cycling sessions and opportunities to individuals who would otherwise not have the opportunity to take part.

Outcomes of the programme

Improving confidence: The community supported by Grow Wild have grown in confidence particularly after some of them were initially quite nervous about the idea of cycling.

“I have personally seen a vast improvement on the confidence some individuals in particular have got in regards to cycling. One individual did not want to even go on a bike during a session at the beginning of our time running these sessions, we worked with him learning the parts of the cycle and how to maintain it, we walked a route pushing the bike and

then later on in the programme he was able to take part in a group ride along the river and lakes at Stanwick lakes riding his 2 wheel bike independently which was such amazing progression to see.”

Improving social connections: Grow Wild has run some ‘learn to fix’ sessions which have promoted conversations and activities between individuals who would otherwise not usually interact with each other.

“It’s been a great ice breaker and talking point and has made our presence known within the close community there, giving us the opportunity to work together and share common goals and aspirations with others.”

Next Steps

Grow Wild aspires to extend their support to reach as many people as possible and to extend their support to more regions.

“It’s great to see the excitement of what this could lead to and develop into in the future with all of the staff and service users and also their families and carers around them.”



Conclusion

Big Bike Revival funding allows local delivery partners to develop diverse cycling initiatives tailored to the specific needs of their communities, creating a more inclusive cycling environment that enables individuals to cycle more and experience the numerous benefits associated with cycling. The case studies highlighted in this report show how Big Bike

Revival supports the generation of significant positive health, wellbeing and social impacts in local areas.

S.A.S Rights has empowered women in Blackburn, particularly from minority ethnic and faith backgrounds, by breaking down cultural and gendered barriers to cycling. Their holistic approach has fostered confidence, reduced isolation, and changed perceptions of cycling among women. Primal Runners has supported refugees in Folkestone, offering a safe, inclusive environment for participants to build confidence, explore new surroundings, and foster a sense of achievement and belonging. Grow Wild in Northamptonshire, through the purchase of adaptive cycles, has made cycling accessible to individuals with disabilities, boosting their confidence, promoting social interaction and improving both physical and mental health. All three delivery partners recognised the importance of Big Bike Revival in enabling them to generate these positive outcomes for the people that they support.