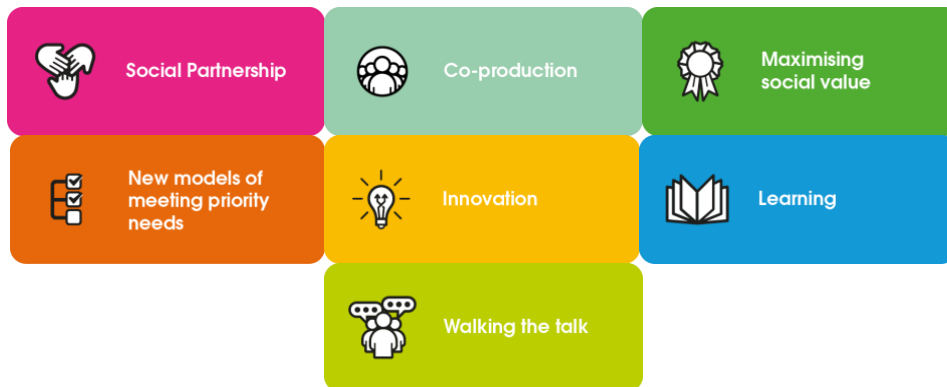




# Co-operative Councils

## Innovation Network

### COMMUNITY



The Active Wellbeing Society, working in partnership with Councils and the NHS

## Free Bikes in Birmingham, Essex & Southall

Join the Free Bikes Movement to increase inclusive and accessible cycling and ensure that affordability is not a barrier to active travel. Work with local communities to make new connections and boost health and well-being. Giving free bikes for people to keep is not only a carefully targeted intervention, but a powerful enabler of wider system change, which can lead to better support for individuals while boosting community resilience.

### Who We Are

The Active Wellbeing Society (TAWS) is a community benefit society and cooperative working to tackle inequality and promote community wellbeing. TAWS works with communities and councils across the country, in areas of high deprivation, to provoke positive system change and address barriers.

### How We Can Support Local Authorities

TAWS is collaborating with local authorities to provide support, advice and services and has developed a national free bikes programme. We can support you to develop the capability required to get schemes up and running as quickly as possible. Our aim is to build a broad alliance so that we can share knowledge and expertise.

# Free Bikes Project

Cycling is a healthy, environmentally friendly way to travel and to keep active, with its benefits including: improving health, addressing congestion, economic, and environmental issues.

We are also looking at cycling infrastructure, to increase access to cycling across the country, while providing free bikes to people who need them most, helping to close the inequality gap. We offer cycling training, maintenance courses, qualifications and employment opportunities.

## 11,977

Total number of attendances at cycling sessions and events between 2022-2023

## 9,500+

Free bikes distributed in the community nationally, since the project launched

**154 Tonnes**  
of carbon emissions reduced\*

**1,196**  
adults in Birmingham upskilled in bike maintenance.

**10,490**  
hours in volunteering hours, which is estimated to be worth more than £114,341.

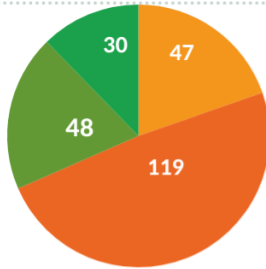
**844,926**  
miles cycled on free bikes.

**£1,788,000**  
health benefit from reduction on mortality.\*

**39,494**  
children trained to ride a bike in Birmingham.

**12,225**  
adults trained to ride a bike in Birmingham.

\* Based on The World Health Organisation's (WHO) Health Economic Assessment Tool (HEAT) estimating the reduction in all-cause mortality



### Big Bike Project Training and employment

- Big Bike Project Ride leaders trained
- Bikeability Qualified Cycling instructors trained
- People helped into employment through bike scheme
- Community cycling groups formed (58% from BAME communities)

### Essex Pedal Power Training

**341**

Participants attended sessions

**282**

Essex Pedal Power training sessions

### Reduced car usage

43% replaced 1 mile+ car journeys with cycling.  
(\*249 BBB survey respondents)

### Reduced inactivity

76% responded that cycling had improved their health conditions, 64% have lost weight and 33% are seeing the GP/nurse less often.

### Increased community trust

75%\* felt increased cycling confidence and 64% felt more connected to the community.  
(\*404 BBB survey respondents)

### Increased life satisfaction

61% feel less lonely now than before cycling and 48% have made new friends through the project.

### Increased volunteering

Total hours given were the equivalent of more than 14 months of work.

### Increased access

82% of our cyclists have discovered new places, and our free bike participants have made 294,000 trips together.  
(\*expected by free bikes in 2023)

## Big Birmingham Bikes, Essex Pedal Power & Let's Ride Southall

TAWS was instrumental in setting up Big Birmingham Bikes, which provides free bikes for people to keep, in communities in most need to break down barriers, improve access to opportunities and encourage physical activity. Big Birmingham Bikes, Essex Pedal Power, and Let's Ride Southall are supported by Sport England and work in partnership with the Department for Transport and the NHS to unlock co-benefits across the system.

### Impacts on Individuals and Communities

- The impact to date of providing free bikes has been significant. Many say **the bike has changed their life** and improved their health and wellbeing - **they can now travel independently for free.**
- The bikes are used for getting to work, school, the shops, and seeing friends.
- Across the three areas **schemes are reporting significant increases in community cohesion** as the bike recipient's bond. The schemes provide wraparound support for cyclists through weekly learn to ride, cycle confidence and bike maintenance sessions, led bike rides and e-newsletters.
- **Volunteering has taken off** in each area as have community cycling clubs.

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### For further information contact:

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