

West Lothian Bike Library and West Lothian Council; Working together to reduce waste and increase local access to bikes.

Overview

West Lothian Bike Library is a not for profit, community interest company, based in Livingston. It supports people to get active and connected through cycling and aims to tackle inequalities in health by making cycling an activity for all, regardless of background, income or ability. Donated bikes are refurbished then either donated to those who need them or sold at low cost. All proceeds from sales and servicing go to maintaining the fleet of loan bikes and enabling the donation of more bikes to those who would otherwise be unable to take up cycling.

Following lockdown, the library streamlined the process of accessing bikes dumped at West Lothian Council's Household Waste Recycling Centres (HWRC) by developing a mutually beneficial partnership with the local authority's Criminal Justice department and its Unpaid Work Team.

This "win win" relationship reduces waste and increases affordable access to bikes in the Livingston area.

Significance

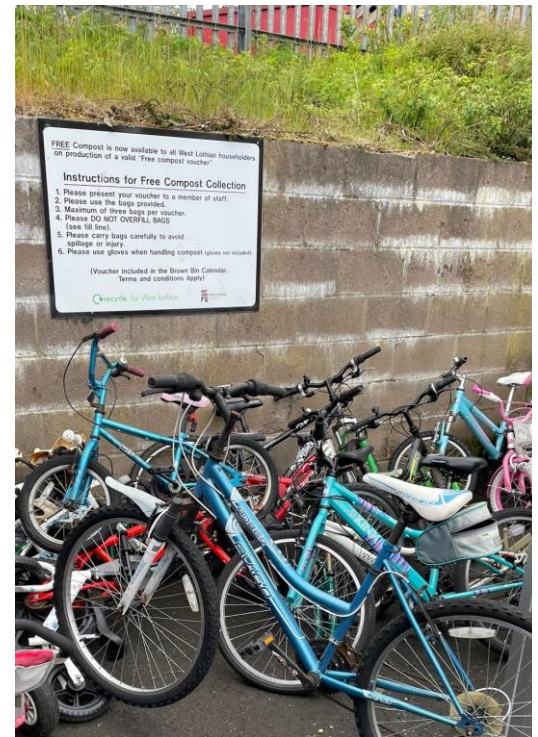
This collaboration is significant because it:

- showcases the benefits of using a council team to access HWRCs (instead of negotiating and dealing with direct access arrangements),
- demonstrates how the partnership delivers benefits to both parties, and
- does not require additional funding.

West Lothian Bike Library

Keen to share his positive experience, Manager David Liddell explained the process:

"The Unpaid Work Team have the time, labour and resources to help us out. They go round their recycling centres every week picking up the bikes that they think we can use. They're able to restore some of the bikes themselves. They give us all the bikes and they take away our scrap. They can segregate and recycle the scrap more effectively and responsibly than we



are able to do but we still feel the benefit. They recently bought us ten balance bikes with some of the money they got for the scrap.

“We have a backlog of requests from different agencies for bikes to go out to people. We receive referrals from social work and support agencies. We’ve also given bikes to displaced families from Ukraine. Demand is really high so we appreciate the support we get from the Unpaid Work Team. It increases the number of bikes we can pass on so we’re keen to work with them long term.

“In return, we mentor their staff who are doing Velotech training. We can help to get their staff qualified and gain experience. They’ll take some time to reach the skill level of our mechanics so we can sign off their work meanwhile.”



Bikes that have been dumped at one of the West Lothian Council HWRCs.



West Lothian Council

Sarah Smillie and Sean Cumming are Project Officers in the Unpaid Work Team at West Lothian Council. Together with the work supervisors, they’ve supported the partnership. Sarah said, “The Bike Library is a fantastic local project that helps so many people be active and get around. David is aware that if he needs help with something he can contact us and we will do our best to help out.

“We put any bikes that are in reasonable condition to one side and these are taken by work squads to the Bike Library, usually weekly or fortnightly. The rest our clients strip down for scrap and we donate any income from that to local charities and projects. We now have an agreement with the Bike Library to collect their scrap and strip this down as this is a time-consuming job for them. We also can collect and drop off bikes for them from out with their collection areas as we have large vans.

“Medium to longer term, we will be getting work supervisors trained to Gold level on the Velotech Course to create our own bike project to work alongside the Bike Library and another local bike project.”



Three Ukrainian young people who received bikes from West Lothian Bike Library, along with Mum*. The library has donated around 70 bikes to their Ukrainian community.

The Unpaid Work Team partnership has helped to maximise the library's social benefit outcomes.

Looking to pilot bike reuse activity in your local authority area?

- Interested in working with your local HWRCs?
- Curious about specific funding support?

Please contact:

Chris Sanderson chris@circularcommunities.scot 07743 557603
National Bike Reuse Coordinator (case study author),
Affordable Access to Bikes Project, supported by Cycling Scotland.



West Lothian Bike Library is a full member of Circular Communities Scotland.

[Circular Communities Scotland](#) supports and represents 250+ repair, reuse and recycling charities and social enterprises across Scotland.



Case study published October 2023. For more information, please contact:

David Liddell
Sarah Smillie
Sean Cumming

info@wlbikelibrary.co.uk
sarah.smillie@westlothian.gov.uk
sean.cumming@westlothian.gov.uk

*Photo permissions in place and assured by David Liddell.