

# Cycles for Good

## Build-a-bike courses for asylum seekers in Witney 2023

### Background:

In the autumn 2022 we received many requests for cycles from asylum seekers who had just arrived at a hotel in Witney. They are allocated £9 a week by the government to cover all costs (in addition to food and accommodation) and are not allowed to work. In this situation even a bus fare is unaffordable. They needed cycles for transport and to get their children to school. We put together a full package, generously funded by many different organisations with logistical support from Care for Calais. This meant that people received bikes and learnt skills to maintain them, along with support to ride safely on the roads and tracks around Witney.

### The Project:

Cycles were donated to the Windrush Bike Project by local residents and were assessed for faults and made ready for our courses by our regular workshop volunteers supervised by our workshop mechanic. *Funded by Witney Town Council.*

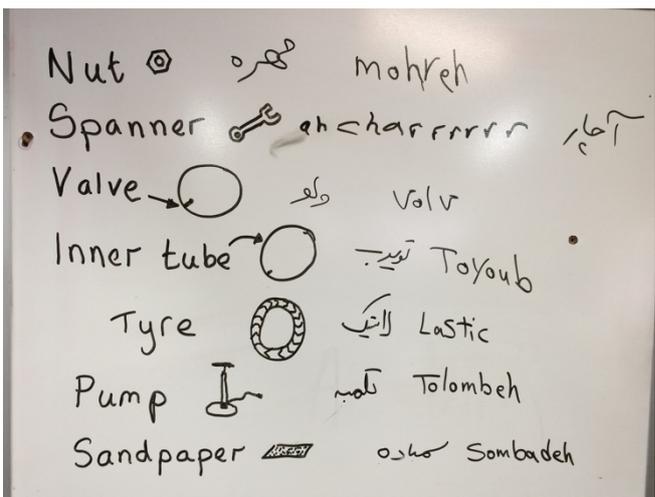
17 asylum seekers attended basic bike mechanics courses. They learnt on our training bikes and then practiced by fixing up the bikes they would take home. The bikes were then doubled checked by qualified mechanics. Training took place in English and each pair of learners was doubled up with one of our workshop volunteers, in one group 7 out of 8 were Farsi speakers so we worked out bike terms in English and Farsi. The teaching element was *funded by Abingdon and Witney College.*

Each person who completed the course went home with a cycle along with a lock, lights and a helmet *funded by the local churches.*

At the end of the course we provided a guided ride, and some extra cycling lessons for those who wanted them. *Funded through the Bikeability programme at OCC.*

Reflections from a WBP volunteer who helped during the course:

I really enjoyed the whole experience. I think I was most taken by their enthusiasm and willingness to help each other. Language wasn't as much of a problem as it could have been because we ALL worked through it. I really liked learning a bit of Farsi from them and I hope they enjoyed it as much as I did.



Our follow up survey found that:

- Over 70% used their bike more than 3 times a week, 30% every day.
- Bikes are mostly used for shopping and rides, with 30% being used for the school run (we also gave away 19 bikes to children of school age through our bike library).
- The most cited benefits of the project were the ability to get to new places, better mental health and fitness.
- All respondents who had needed to fix their bike had either done so themselves or known they could bring it back to the bike project. 5 participants have used the workshop to come back and fix their or others' bikes. They are always welcome to stay and chat.



In their own words:

I and my family ride bikes on the weekends and it's really fun

We are very happy that we got a bike through this bike course. Thanks for helping with the bike  
My bike has saved a lot of effort and time

I must say that I needed a bicycle and I think that having a bicycle helped me a lot in this situation

I am very happy that you helped me so that I can easily take my little child to school and I can easily reach the store and other places.

It was amazing experience when you arrive at foreign country and people who don't even know you well do something good for you for free 🙏



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