



Report: The SPIN Project (Sep 2023 - Mar 2024)

Huw Oliver, Project Officer

What is SPIN?

The SPIN Project (Strathspey Pedal Initiative) is a community-centred, non-profit project that aims to lower financial and psychological barriers to participation in cycling, both for recreation and travel, while promoting lifelong learning and a circular economy. Our work is based in Strathspey, which stretches from Laggan to Grantown-on-Spey, and ranges from engaging with large school groups to working one-to-one with volunteers. From September 2023 to March 2024, the SPIN project was funded by the Cairngorms Trust through their Community Led Vision fund — that funding allowed the project to transform from a series of ideas into a functioning project that is already making a difference to the community's access to cycling and the well-being benefits that it provides. With the project's initial phase having shown that there is a demand for the services that it delivers, SPIN is now registered as a CIC in its own right, and we want to establish it as a long-term presence in Strathspey.

SPIN CIC aims to do the following:

- Lower cost/confidence barriers to cycle travel in Strathspey
- Promote the re-use and re-adventuring of cycling and other outdoor gear
- Share knowledge, in order to improve resilience and confidence among new and future cyclists



The SPIN Project so far

The initial phase of the project has focused on three strands of activity which line up with our core aims. Below is a summary of the objectives, activities and progress of each strand.

e-Cargo Trike Community Share Scheme

Our initial grant funding enabled us to purchase an electric-assist cargo trike from XYZ UK, and they kindly provided us with a second trike on loan for the six-month duration of the project. We chose XYZ because their modular design means that they can be easily altered and repaired, and because the materials for construction are relatively non-specialist, allowing XYZ's UK distributor to source them as locally as possible.

In October 2023, MJ from XYZ UK visited us with a set of wheels and a bucket of parts before building the trike with us over the course of two days. It was fantastic to see the construction through from start to finish, and also allowed us to put the 'community' into the community share scheme by inviting volunteers along to help with the build and see what all the fuss was about. The first test for 'Frank and Shelley' the trikes was to transport all of our mobile repair gear along the Speyside Way to Boat of Garten for a free bike repair session in the Community Hall (see the 'Dr. Bike' section).

"The SPIN trikes have been fantastic! They have helped me with everything from my weekly shop, to taking out kit for camp outs, to offering delivery for local business to help connect rural communities. Inspiring team and project. Big fan." — Benjamin Brimacombe





The aim of the cargo trike project is to make practical, environmentally friendly travel affordable and fun. Since October, the trikes have been used to transport firewood, shopping, children and dogs! We provide the vehicle, and the users provide imagination. One exciting idea which we are hoping to support in the near future is the use of the trike to provide a delivery service for a local wholefoods grocery retailer.

The trikes are available to hire for a minimal fee of £5/day, with a £10 fee to sign up to the scheme. To maximise flexibility and convenience, we added an option to pay a £20 signup fee which allows users to take the trike out for an hour at a time for no cost. Since the project has run over the winter months so far, encouraging takeup was understandably challenging. However, as the initial project wraps up there have been 13 users and nearly 500km of cargo trike mileage logged, with several signups coming recently as March begins to promise warmer weather. We look forward to promoting the trikes through the Summer, and hope to secure funding to replace the loaned trike with an XYZ cargo bicycle. Where possible, we have incorporated use of the trikes into delivering Dr. Bike sessions at schools, as it's a perfect example of being able to leave the car at home!

Dr. Bike sessions



*“The children had a wonderful day, learning about different parts of their bikes and how to ensure they were safe to ride. Previously, many of the children were unaware that they were riding unsafe bikes or were not able to ride their bikes because of the lack of knowledge around how to fix them. The Dr Bike Day helped children grow in confidence around their bikes and gave them a fresh desire to get riding. This has had a huge impact on us as a school, where we are seeing more children biking to school and fewer cars in the car park.” — **Jess Creber, Acting Depute Head, Aviemore Primary School***

‘Dr. Bike’ is a well-established format for providing effective, large-scale bike safety checks to groups. To be a confident cyclist, you must first be confident in the state of your bike! The idea behind Dr. Bike is to provide a free bike safety check and to supply minor parts or adjustments needed, as well as giving some idea of the scope and estimated cost of any more in-depth repairs. Uncertainty over whether a bike is safe, or over the cost of repairs, is a perceived barrier that is often mentioned by customers in our workshop, so Dr. Bike is one way to lower those barriers, as well as a chance to share knowledge with a large group of cyclists quickly. As well as checking and adjusting, the chance to explain what we are doing and to the cyclist involved on a one-to-one level is a powerful way to increase confidence and show them that basic maintenance knowledge and skills are very attainable.



Initially, the Dr. Bike programme involved a series of three visits to local villages. In January 2024, we received additional funding to provide visits to primary schools throughout Strathspey, and have been delivering these throughout March. These seven visits have seen us check and repair around 200 bikes, and have been a fantastic way to engage with school children. Classes have been

getting involved in learning how to give their own bike a safety check with us and helping to make minor repairs. They have also been a chance to forge stronger links with local schools, with several requesting that we get more involved with their cycling programmes and work specifically with pupils who would benefit from alternative education provision. We also envisage using the bike donation and refurbishment scheme to help provide PEF (Pupil Equity Funding) pupils with free bikes to enable them to take part in Bikeability programmes, or simply cycle outside of school.

We hope to secure more funding to expand the Dr. Bike programme, providing annual visits to local primary and secondary schools, as well as offering a paid service to employers and other groups who wish to encourage cycle travel.

Bike Re-use Scheme

The final strand of the SPIN Project's initial phase is the bike refurbishment scheme, which has been a fantastic success. This scheme came about due to the influx of Ukrainian refugees to Aviemore in 2022. A local charity was sourcing and donating bikes to ensure that new arrivals had access to cycle transport, and we offered to donate labour and some parts to make sure they were safe and ready to use. After supplying over 40 bikes, we realised that there would likely be demand for re-used, affordable bikes for other people too.

In a nutshell, we have encouraged members of the public to donate unused and unwanted bicycles and parts, which we then refurbish with the help of a team of volunteers and sell. The aim is to reduce the number of bicycles going to landfill while simultaneously providing a source of affordable bikes that come with a guarantee of quality and safety. This scheme is aimed squarely at those who, despite living in one of the outdoor capitals of the UK, might see the expensive, shiny equipment being unloaded from cars and think that cycling is financially unattainable. It also allows us to support specific groups of people, such as the PEF pupils mentioned in the Dr. Bike section.

"I bought a mountain bike from the SPIN project in February 2024. I'd been wanting to buy my partner a bike to encourage him to get into biking and join me on more rides over the summer and the SPIN project allowed me an affordable way to do this. As he may not ride super regularly and isn't sure what he likes and doesn't like in a bike, a second hand bike was the way to go. The SPIN project provides quality bikes at affordable prices and I trust the mechanics to have serviced the bike to a good level. Having borrowed this bike myself to ride round the woods and nip to the shops I can confirm it's an excellent wee bike with the added bonus of supporting an excellent project."

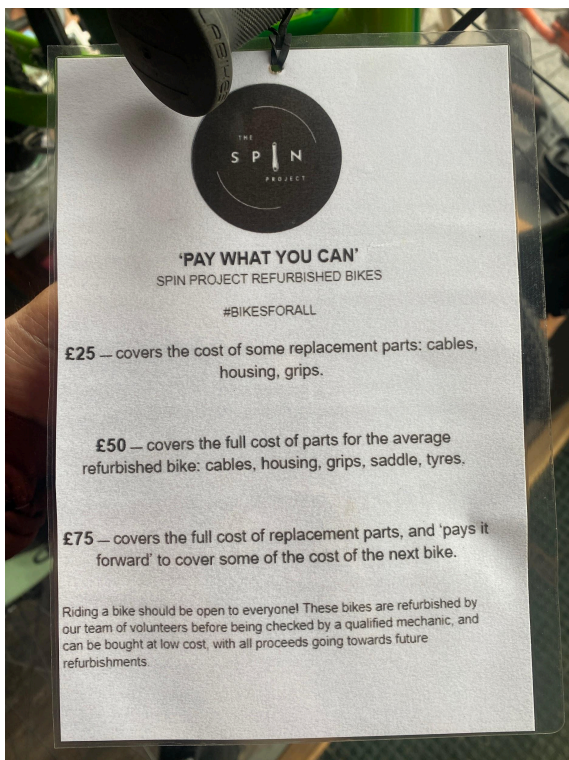
— Beckie Davies

The response to requests for donated bikes has been surprising, both in terms of quantity and quality. In fact, supply has outstripped our capacity to refurbish them, and storage has become an issue!

Since starting the scheme in September, we have:

- Refurbished and sold over 20 bikes
- Accepted over 50 donations, as well as donations of frames, forks and other parts
- Worked with 11 volunteers, who have helped with refurbishment while receiving training and tuition from a qualified mechanic.
- Sales of refurbished bikes now total over £1800. Allowing for the cost of replacement parts, this has raised roughly £900 in funds that will allow us to donate free bikes to school pupils from low-income backgrounds, as well as setting the scheme up to be financially self-sustaining in future.

Some of the donated bikes that have been passed on to new owners and adventures.



After discussion with the scheme's volunteers, we decided to sell the bikes on a 'pay what you can' basis, with guidelines for suggested donations, ranging from £25 to £75. Occasionally, a bike of higher quality is donated, and those have been sold for a high price. The suggested donations were something of a guess, but with over 20 bikes now sold it seems that the average bike does cost around £50 in parts, so it turned out to be an accurate guess. As it stands, this scheme is going from strength to strength as the community becomes more aware of it, and has proven to be financially sustainable. We hope for there to be

more time available in the roles of future project officers to continue working closely with the volunteers and scale up the scheme to cope with the level of supply.

So, what next?

The SPIN Project might only be six months old in the flesh, but its ideas have been growing for several years. The interactions and conversations that we've had during this initial project phase have convinced us that, although Aviemore is a popular destination for cycling enthusiasts from elsewhere, there are ongoing opportunities to help people in the community to take steps towards becoming lifelong cyclists, both for pleasure and for travel. Aside from positive figures, in terms of numbers of bikes donated, repaired and sold, or bikes checked during Dr Bike sessions, we have also seen enthusiasm and encouragement from members of the public who have confirmed our suspicions that the provision of an inclusive, affordable and welcoming cycling culture in Strathspey can make a difference to people's lives.

While the current funding phase is coming to an end, this is just the beginning for the SPIN Project, starting with the exciting development of setting up SPIN CIC. Our ambition is to develop the current project strands to make them long-term and financially sustainable, while developing stronger links with existing projects in schools and in the wider community. As of the end of March 2024, we have also secured funding from the National park to offer support to local schools, working with pupils who struggle with mainstream classes to find ways to help them engage and learn new skills in the setting of bike maintenance. We hope this is just the start of a wider programme reaching across primary and secondary schools for the future. Watch this space!

