

Essex Pedal Power

**REFLECTIONS AND
LEARNINGS FROM
CLACTON & JAYWICK**

2022-2023

Produced by Active Essex Insight & Evaluation Team



Executive Summary

Essex Pedal Power (EPP) is a programme which aims to make cycling more accessible by providing free bikes to members of Essex's most disadvantaged communities.

EPP launched in Clacton and Jaywick in June 2021. So far, 765 bikes have been given away to residents in this area. This report highlights the programme learnings so far.

Key learnings

- People are key to the success of EPP. We built trust with the community by hiring enthusiastic local leaders and building a team of passionate volunteers.
- A major project like EPP has many time-consuming elements, including governance and monitoring and evaluation. Ensure time and resources are allocated to these activities from the start.
- Sometimes it is necessary to spend more to deliver better value for local communities.

EPP has already had many positive impacts in Clacton and Jaywick. Bike recipients report that their average amount of weekly car journeys has decreased and their physical activity has increased. They have also reported increased levels of community trust and life satisfaction. Bike recipients have also increased access to local amenities, employment opportunities, and volunteer work.

Essex Pedal Power's Six Intended Outcomes

1. Increase cycling participation to level up inequalities
2. Increase sustainable travel through cycling
3. Increase the employability of local people and improve the local economy
4. Increase the fitness and physical health of inactive people
5. Increase the wellbeing of inactive people
6. Increase the resilience, connectedness and social capital in local communities





Reduced Car Journeys

At follow-up, average car journeys per week was 6.21 for bike recipients and 8.96 for non-recipients.

Reduced Inactivity

Inactivity dropped from 30% at baseline to 11% at follow-up for bike recipients but increased for non-recipients.

Increased Community Trust

At follow-up, there were higher levels of community trust reported by bike recipients compared to non-recipients.

Increased Life Satisfaction

Life satisfaction increased for bike recipients compared to baseline but did not increase for non-recipients.

Increased Access

At follow-up, bike recipients perceived accessing supermarkets, education and training opportunities, and volunteering and employment opportunities to be easier than non-recipients.

Increased Volunteering

At follow-up, 31% of bike recipients had recently applied for a volunteering opportunity compared to 17% of non-recipients.

Governance

Essex Pedal Power and its governance are overseen by representatives from three teams: Active Essex, ECC Localities Team and ECC Sustainable Transport team.

What went well

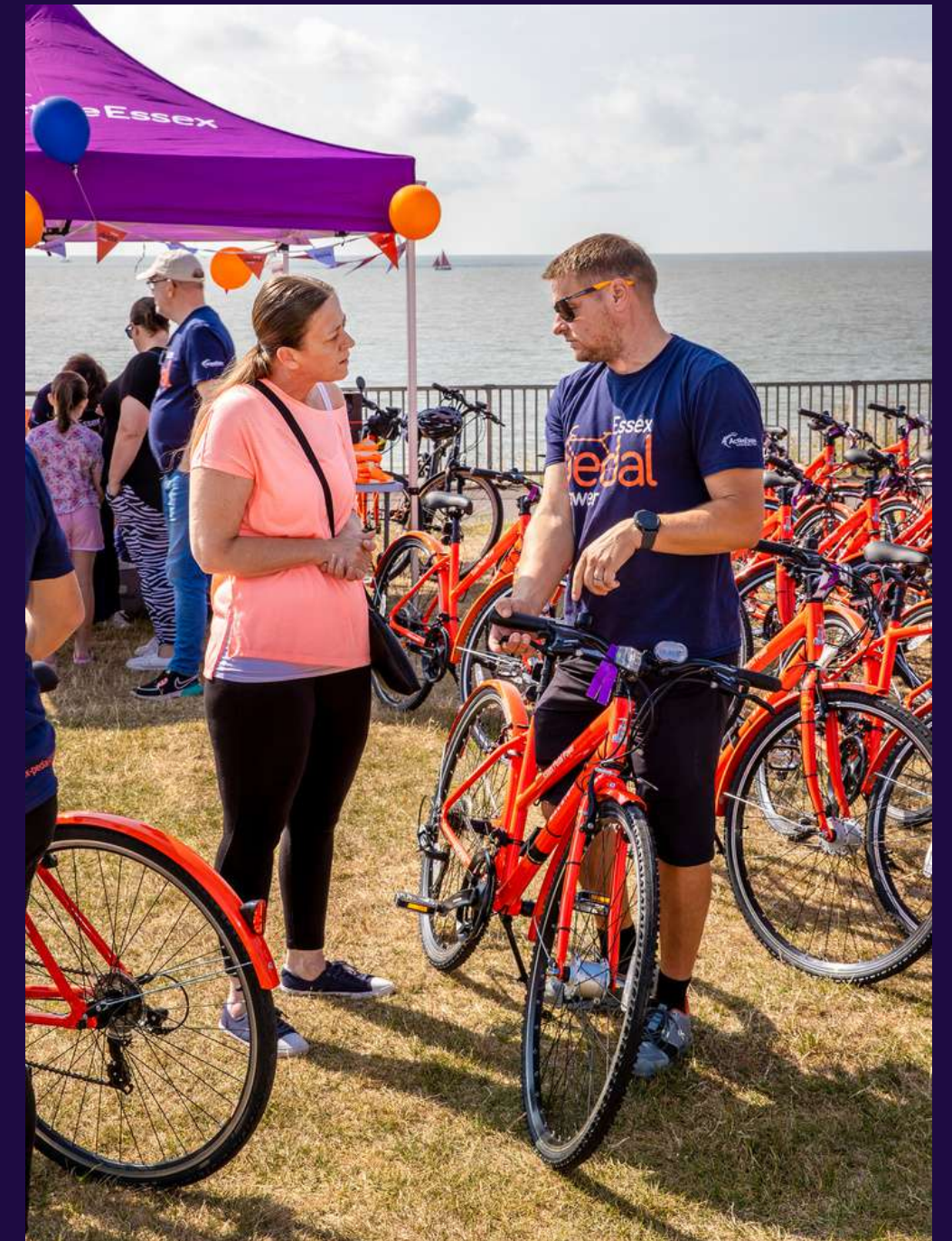
- Working with multiple stakeholders brings a wide range of expertise which benefits the programme.
- Creating a hands-on Programme Management Team has enabled us to make decisions and deliver outcomes quickly.
- Delegating staffing and purchasing to The Active Wellbeing Society (TAWs) has ensured fast-paced delivery.

Challenges

- Insufficient internal subject matter expertise in some areas.

Top Tips

- Identify gaps in expertise and reach out beyond the Programme Management Team in good time.
- Local authority governance can be extremely time consuming. Ensure sufficient resources are assigned from the start.
- Collaborate with legal and finance departments from the beginning.



People

Essex Pedal Power Clacton & Jaywick is led by EPP Coordinator Rosie, who is supported by a team of staff and volunteers.



What went well

- We recruited knowledgeable, enthusiastic, and well-connected local experts like Rosie into paid positions.
- We developed a strong network of passionate volunteers.
- TAWS provided support to EPP employees, informed by their expertise and experience in the sector.

Challenges

- Insufficient capacity at the start of the programme.
- No initial plan for volunteer recruitment or training.
- Ongoing capacity challenges surrounding the day-to-day administration of EPP. Time consuming but essential tasks such as processing giveaways, contacting applicants, running events, bike maintenance, communications, and bike training have had to be prioritised over following up with bike recipients.

Top Tips

- Programmes like EPP require a full-time Coordinator, Bike Mechanic, and Support Worker, and a part-time Volunteer Coordinator.
- These people should be locals who are trusted by and connected to their community, and knowledgeable about the local area.

Communications and Engagement

The communications and marketing of Essex Pedal Power is driven by the Active Essex team and supported by members of the wider EPP team.

What went well

- A small launch event was better than the big launch cancelled due to COVID-19 - it felt more personal.
- The Active Essex team have produced high quality branding, products, and videos that have got our message across clearly.
- Videos showing the impact EPP has on real people's lives have been particularly powerful and will help us to leverage further funding in future.
- The EPP Coordinator has worked as part of the comms team, providing local insights and advising on messaging that will work for the community.

Challenges

- COVID-19 restrictions meant that we could not work with the community to shape the programme as we had planned.
- Collecting stories has been difficult due to lack of capacity and lack of clarity about whose role this is.
- Responding to criticism is a challenge and must be done quickly, as 'fake news' can be damaging for a scheme like EPP.

Top Tips

- Time communications carefully to maximise interest in the project.
- Share responsibility for communications and engagement between the project team and the community where possible.
- Build in considerable capacity for this work from the start. In person capacity is essential for story collection.



Bikes and Trackers

The bikes given away as part of Essex Pedal Power are provided by Raleigh. They are fitted with GPS trackers from SeeSense.



What went well

- Our strong relationship with Raleigh has enabled us to be flexible - they have worked with us to find solutions to problems such as order changes and bike storage.
- Data dashboards have kept us informed about bike usage. We have been able to use data to encourage and maintain behaviour change.
- We have responded quickly to challenges. When we realised that manually charged trackers were not working, we decided to have dynamo trackers fitted at the factory in future.
- We have worked with SeeSense to remove a data delay and can now pick up data from trackers within 24 hours.

Challenges

- Charging the manually charged GPS trackers was challenging for many bike recipients, particularly those who are older, vulnerable, and/or living above ground floor.
- It would have been beneficial for us to have purchased additional data (such as braking, swerving, and road quality data) from SeeSense from the start.

Top Tips

- Getting bikes in, built, and out to participants is not easy. Develop a step-by-step process map detailing logistics.
- Capture as much data as you can - we are now considering how we can use the data we collect to open up other funding opportunities.

Premises

A number of premises are required for Essex Pedal Power including office space, bike storage, and areas for bike building and training.

What went well

- We identified an office hub in the right location at the heart of the community so that people can drop in.

Challenges

- We initially underestimated the amount of space needed for the programme.
- A pilot using shipping containers as a quick solution for bike storage was unsuccessful due to planning permission requirements.

Top Tips

- Visible premises are really important because visibility builds trust. This is vital for vulnerable communities like Jaywick, who may be more likely to meet promises of a free bike with distrust due to previous negative experiences of Council-backed initiatives.
- Visibility also helps build relationships with community members, which can encourage them to get involved with EPP.



Training and Events

Essex Pedal Power provides cycle training to bike recipients and the wider community. The EPP team has also held and attended a number of community events to promote and celebrate the scheme, including a popular one year celebration event.



What went well

- The Essex County Council team have provided the outstanding cycle training offered through EPP.
- EPP-branded items such as t-shirts and a gazebo increase the project's visibility at events and make people feel they are part of something big - the upfront cost of these items was money well spent.
- The one year celebration event gave the EPP community a moment to shine and meant a lot to them.

Challenges

- COVID-19 restrictions made holding events challenging and, at times, impossible.
- Finding suitable sites for training delivery has been difficult.
- Low uptake of cycle training has meant we have not always got value for money.
- We have had to bring in cycle tutors from other areas. In future, we would like to upskill local people so they can deliver cycle training and lead rides for their community but this will take time.

Top Tips

- Events require a lot of work and energy but they are essential for building trust with the community - and fun!
- They also help everyone involved in the project see its impact and celebrate this together.

Funding

To date, Essex Pedal Power has secured over £6 million in funding. Initial funding came from the South East Local Enterprise Partnership (SELEP) which acted as a catalyst for securing additional funding from LDP, Colchester Town Deal, Essex County Council Levelling Up and London Marathon Charity Trust.

What went well

- We have been able to secure over £6 million from a range of sources as Essex Pedal Power benefits multiple stakeholders and serves various agendas.
- We used initial funding from SELEP in a non-traditional way, utilising cycling to achieve economic growth.
- We supported the Levelling Up agenda
- We positioned ourselves to be agile which enabled us to apply for ad hoc funding opportunities as they arose.
- We were able to draw on the strengths of the LDP (awareness of funding opportunities and swift governance to take them).

Challenges

- We have been less successful in securing funding from national funders such as the Department for Transport and Active Travel England. National bodies have a narrow view of Essex Pedal Power and have not accepted associated evidence from Big Birmingham Bikes.
- Inflexible funding has forced us to work on short time-scales to fit external deadlines.
- Effectively communicating these timelines (and the reasoning behind them) to the public has proved difficult.

Top Tips

- Securing funding and persevering with governance is difficult but worthwhile.
- Some funds have time-consuming reporting requirements. Be sure to factor in sufficient time for monitoring, evaluation and reporting and embed this from the start.



Costs

The project has cost more than anticipated when we wrote the initial business case two years ago but still represents good value for money.



What went well

- Relationships with other areas and suppliers brought bulk purchasing advantages - by working with free bike programmes in Birmingham and Solihull we are able to pay just £550 for the bike, tracker, light, helmet and data dashboard.
- The Active Wellbeing Society (TAWs) - who employ Essex Pedal Power staff - offer a Living Wage. This has enabled them to recruit and retain talented people.

Challenges

- Insufficient initial understanding of costs, particularly around resourcing, premises fees, and bike transportation
- Cheaper is not always better. For example, manually charged GPS trackers were cheaper but were less effective at data collection than dynamo trackers.

Top Tips

- Understand and utilise appropriate tax incentives.
- Spend more when it will benefit the programme and its participants.

Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning

The evaluation of Essex Pedal Power is overseen by Active Essex. Progress is monitored against the six intended outcomes of EPP.

What went well

- Three data streams inform evaluation and learning: project data (number of bikes given away); participant data (surveys and stories); and GPS data (from trackers on the bikes).
- An initial evaluation report from TAWS provided useful insight and informed practice as the project progressed. This report analysed participant baseline data and initial findings from GPS data.

Challenges

- The evaluation of a project as big as EPP requires a high level of capacity. The initial TAWS report recommended hiring a dedicated evaluation researcher, but this took some time to achieve.
- The TAWS report was useful for understanding initial impact findings but did not consider learnings from the programme.

Top Tips

- Use a dedicated platform such as Monday.com to combine and analyse data from multiple sources.

