

## Employability scheme in Newhaven changes lives with abandoned bikes

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Southern Railway stations are helping the unemployed, homeless and vulnerable in East Sussex by donating abandoned bikes to a recycling programme.

The operator has already provided 27 bikes to the initiative, which is run by Sussex Community Development Association (SCDA).

The bikes had been left unclaimed and in storage for months, at Southern's depot in Horsham. The latest van-load delivered to SCDA's Newhaven workshop means the rail company has now donated over 180 bikes to the charity since forming their partnership in 2020.

The workshop is part of SCDA's 'Get Socially Active/Recycle' programme. Local unemployed people learn how to renovate the bikes and return them to roadworthiness, gaining practical skills, work experience and support on routes to employment.

SCDA sell the renovated bikes to raise funds for the programme, also supported by the European Social

Fund and The National Lottery Community Fund. The scheme welcomes donations of unwanted bikes, and volunteers with repair and maintenance skills.

Lee Wakefield, SCDA Employability Service Manager said: “We are very grateful to Southern for their kind donation. Our participants in the Recycle programme gain valuable skills in bicycle maintenance and repair before the refurbished bikes are sold on to local people. We are looking ahead to a busy 2022 – the demand for refurbished bikes is growing, and so is the need to continue supporting people in our local community to gain the skills they need to get back to work.”

Chris Fowler, Southern’s Customer Services Director, said: “It’s fantastic to be working with SCDA not only to promote healthy, green transport by extending the life of previously unwanted bikes, but to help provide truly life-changing support for the most vulnerable people in our communities.”

Southern also donates bikes to other charity recycling schemes in West Sussex, Surrey and South London.

“We’re building strong local partnerships right across our network to help communities recover and prosper, and to keep Britain moving safely and sustainably,” added Chris.