

Southwark youngsters will bring new life to bikes abandoned at Southern stations

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Fifteen young people in south London will learn cycle maintenance skills and earn a renovated bike of their own, thanks to a partnership between Cycling UK and Southern Railway. Southern have donated the fifteen bikes, abandoned and left unclaimed at its stations, to the country's leading cycling charity.

Cycling UK promote cycling for everyone. They work across the country with local not-for-profit groups to inspire people of all ages, backgrounds and abilities to cycle more often. They have passed Southern's bikes to Walworth-based Community Cycleworks, who run 'Build A Bike' courses with Southwark schools and youth clubs. Participants can keep the bike they fix, or give it to a family member as a present.

The youngsters learn repair and maintenance skills, along with a thorough understanding of how a bike works. This helps them to solve problems when they are cycling. Research shows that this knowledge boosts self-confidence as a cyclist, so encourages children to use their bikes more often.

Toby Edwards, Cycling UK's Training & Cycling Development Officer for London, said: "Cycling UK is hugely grateful to Southern Railway for donating these abandoned bikes. They'll make a real difference to the lives of children in South London.

“The ‘Build A Bike’ project run by Community Cycleworks offers young people a chance to learn how to maintain and fix donated bicycles. They get to keep the bike they work on, which gives them or their family member a real sense of ownership and pride. Whether it’s cycling to school or riding for fun with friends, we hope hundreds of miles will be clocked up once these bikes have been brought back to life.”

Southern now has partnerships with four bike-restoration charities on its network and delivers batches of 25-30 abandoned bikes to each in turn as stocks build up. These new partnerships follow the train company’s successful schemes with West Sussex County Council and Horsham District Council, whose recycling programmes restored abandoned bikes for key workers at local NHS Trusts.

Angie Doll, Managing Director for Southern and Gatwick Express, said: “It’s fantastic to be working with all our partners to promote healthy, green transport by extending the life of previously unwanted bikes. Cycling UK can find these bikes a variety of deserving new owners. And by encouraging young people to cycle and look after their bikes we’re creating lasting benefits for their future.

“At this challenging time, we’re proud to help keep Britain moving safely and sustainably. We’re building strong local partnerships right across our network to help communities recover and prosper.”

Southern’s donation is a timely boost for cycle education, coming shortly after the Government announced an £18m funding package to provide Bikeability training – the modern-day successor to Cycling Proficiency – across the country. Announcing the funding, Transport Secretary Grant Shapps said the Government wanted to ensure that every child could access the life skill of cycling by 2025.

Photo credit: GTR