


Edinburgh councillor blogs – Jim Orr on Brake the Cycle



I visited Brake the Cycle this week in my role as cycling champion. It's a "Community Payback" initiative based in Granton whereby unwanted bikes are donated and restored by offenders and then given free of charge to schools, community organisations and individuals who cannot afford to purchase bikes themselves. As far as I can gather, the project is unique in Scotland. I was told by the manager, Billy, that Community Payback has replaced probation and community service and is an improvement on them as it has a training (i.e. employability) element and is more flexible. Under Community Payback, offenders also work on other schemes such as graveyard repairs and repairing fencing.

In the first 12 months of the project, 700 renovated bicycles were donated. 15 offenders work each week distributing flyers, collecting donations of bicycles or repairing and renovating the unwanted bicycles and the Council are looking to expand into a second workshop elsewhere in the city to cope with the demand. The people I spoke to were enthusiastic about the project and enjoyed the work. Offenders carrying out work they are interested in are more likely to commit to the work, so there is improved attendance, motivation and self esteem. Some were working towards cycle mechanic qualifications and looking for full time work in a conventional bike shop.

 Bikes that are beyond repair are stripped of any working parts that can be reused and the metal frames are sold as scrap to raise money for new spare parts such as brake cables, brake blocks and tubes and to supplement the main funding

stream from the government. So far, Edinburgh's schools have received 360 bikes, including tricycles for children with special needs. This helps support the "bikeability" scheme to provide on-street cycle training for all primary 6 pupils by 2017 and that helps us meet our sustainability goals.

If you have a bike that you want to donate then contact james.hewitt@edinburgh.gov.uk or [visit the website.](#)