


# IMPACT REPORT

2021

THE  PROJECT

**GETTING REFUGEES CYCLING**

# CONTENTS

## **3 FOREWORD FROM OUR CHAIR**

## **4 ABOUT US**

- 4** *Getting refugees cycling*
- 5** *Why we do it*
- 6** *What we have achieved so far (2013-2021)*
- 7** *Experts through experience*

## **9 2021 AND THE CONTEXT OF OUR WORK**

- 9** *Summary*
- 10** *2021 highlights*
- 11** *2021 in numbers*
- 12** *A cost of living crisis is nothing new for refugees*
- 12** *An increasingly hostile environment*
- 13** *Inequalities, digital exclusion and social isolation*
- 13** *Rising tides of economic uncertainty*

## **14 OUR IMPACT**

- 15** *The power of a bike*
- 16** *Increased independence and mobility*
- 16** *Better physical and mental health*
- 18** *Financial benefit*
- 18** *Reducing isolation and loneliness*
- 19** *Gender equality*
- 20** *Empowerment and confidence*
- 21** *Nurturing talent*
- 21** *Changing public perceptions*

## **22 REFUGEE VOICES**

- 23** *Who we have supported in 2021*
- 24** *Nada: Pedal Power graduate*
- 25** *Sadaf: Volunteer*
- 26** *Ahmet and family: Bike recipients*
- 27** *Edris: Bike Buddy*
- 28** *Farzad: Social Action Hero*

## **29 FUNDRAISING PARTNERSHIPS AND EVENTS**

## **30 MARKETING AND MEDIA ACTIVITY**

## **32 FUTURE PLANS**

## **33 OUR SUPPORTERS**





# FOREWORD

## FROM OUR CHAIR

2021 saw The Bike Project continuing its growth in activity and impact despite the ongoing challenges posed by the disruptive pressures of Covid-19 and industry-wide supply chain and recruitment challenges.

Refugees across the country faced increasing pressure and stress in the UK. Continued lockdown protocols and the risk of contracting Covid-19 variants increased loneliness and isolation and made it harder for organisations to provide support. This made access to bicycles and our support programmes more important in this period than ever before. Cycling can be a socially distant co-operative activity and having access to a bike has helped refugees and asylum seekers maintain their physical and mental health.

Given the importance of our role in this community, I am proud of our successes in navigating these challenges and increasing bike donations, our income and our support programmes. It is particularly gratifying that we are now looking at ways to expand our support to more areas of the country where we would previously have not been able to help.

So much of our success this year has been attributable to the determination of our hardworking staff and volunteers of The Bike Project, who have overcome logistical challenges and shifting economic and political horizons to bring about growth in all areas of the organisation.

Notwithstanding our success in 2021, we will continue our ambitious growth plans in 2022. With a successful pilot of expanding our core activities into new cities and plans for the launch of a central, well-located retail space, we hope to see continued success for the future.

We are incredibly grateful to our supporters as they continue to put their faith in us and our team to pursue our mission to get refugees cycling.

**DOUG KRIKLER**  
Chair of Trustees

# ABOUT US

## GETTING REFUGEES CYCLING

*“The Bike Project provides the first step into normal living for those who have faced persecution and atrocity.”*

**HELEN BAMBER, OBE**

Founded in 2013, The Bike Project provides an innovative solution to one of the most pressing problems facing asylum seekers and refugees on arrival to the UK: **access to transport** when living in poverty or on a limited income, which for asylum seekers is as little as **£5.66 per day** (Home Office, 2021).

**Our mission is simple:** Each year we match refugees and asylum seekers without the means or money to get around with the many thousands of bikes that go abandoned or unloved around the country. We then go on to support these new bike owners to realise the emotional, practical and physical benefits of cycling.

To date, The Bike Project has collected, refurbished and donated **8,842 bikes** to newly arrived refugees and asylum seekers and created a thriving social enterprise selling secondhand bikes nationwide, the proceeds of which fund our charitable activities.



## WHY WE DO IT

There are 225,000 asylum seekers and refugees living in the UK (UNHCR, 2021), whilst every year **27,500 bikes are abandoned** in London alone (TfL, 2007).

On arrival to the UK, most refugees are **prohibited from taking paid work** whilst seeking asylum and live on just £39.63 support per week as their claim is processed by the Home Office. Claiming asylum in the UK can be a hostile process that often takes years to resolve, leaving people destitute and isolated. Even once awarded leave to remain, there are additional barriers that people face to establishing a life here.

By collecting and refurbishing abandoned bikes, The Bike Project has created a **sustainable model of reuse** that achieves physical, emotional and practical benefits for refugees and asylum seekers, one of the UK's most diverse, disadvantaged and marginalised groups.

“ *When you have to go from charity to charity to feed yourself, a bike becomes very important to your life.* ”

**BIKE RECIPIENT**

# WHAT WE HAVE ACHIEVED SO FAR

2013-2021

## BIKE DONATIONS

8,842

refugees and asylum seekers have received a free bike and accessories



## PEDAL POWER

565

refugee women accessed women-only cycling lessons

## CYBER CYCLISTS

430

people attended 241 live online learning and social sessions

## EMPLOYMENT

35

jobs created across London and Birmingham

## COST OF LIVING

£8.29m

estimated cost savings potential from all bikes donated



## SOCIAL ENTERPRISE

4,352

secondhand (and some new) bikes sold through our shop

## BIKE BUDDIES

229

refugees matched with a local buddy to go cycling together

## VOLUNTEERING

846

volunteers contributed 13,033 hours of their time and developed skills

## SOCIAL ACTION

10

young refugees supported to participate in social activism (new 2021)





# EXPERTS THROUGH EXPERIENCE

We have been doing what we do for nearly a decade, but every year there is more to learn. The Bike Project would not be the success that it is without **input from the refugee community** which ensures that we are able to offer the most relevant support.

We have strategically prioritised the **development of refugee talent** from within and sought to recruit this lived experience in to the organisation as we have grown. Currently, five staff bring lived experience and this year we were able to extend this expertise to the Trustee Board with the nomination of Comfort and Hala as Trustees. They have **enriched our strategic leadership** with their skills and experience, and have hit the ground running with their roles with big plans for how they want to contribute.

## COMFORT

**Comfort says that the impact of being a Trustee will allow her to be part of those who look after the wellbeing of refugees:**

“When I first got my bike, my life very quickly revolved around the project and around Pedal Power. So when the call was put out, welcoming applicants for the Trustees with lived experience, I wanted to apply immediately.

I've gone through every part of The Bike Project. From participant to volunteer, and instructor – I know as much as possible what it is like for the average person going through the process. I believe I will be able to share that experience with those on the Board. Where have I been and where I want to go, as a refugee and thinking about what's good for them, especially as we continue to expand.”



## HALA

**Hala truly believes in the mission and becoming a Trustee shed light on just how beneficial The Bike Project can be.**

“Reducing the gap of who can access exercise and physical activity is so important, especially for refugees. Beyond just providing a bike, The Bike Project helps refugees integrate in every way. For me personally, the impact is so clear. I feel more like part of a community due to my new bike. And I’m sure other refugees feel the same.

Of course, a bike is the main reason people first get in touch. But there is so much more the organisation does. Integration, empowering women, and helping access local community, to helping with mental health. With my background as a pharmacist and public health researcher this means I know how important these things are. I’m excited to help the organisation highlight this aspect of our work even more.”







# 2021 AND THE CONTEXT OF OUR WORK

## Summary

This year has been challenging for The Bike Project and sector as a whole as we adjusted from the onset of the **Covid-19 pandemic** and operated under the varying restrictions throughout the year, which has become our new normal. The work was made even more difficult with a backdrop of the government policy of creating **a hostile environment for refugees**, the Taliban takeover of Afghanistan, the introduction in July 2021 of the Nationality and Borders Bill, also dubbed the “Anti Refugee Bill” and a lack of safe and legal routes for asylum seekers to enter the UK.

In spite of this, The Bike Project continues to address the vital issue of **transport poverty and refugee mobility** (or lack of) through social innovation which promotes solidarity, builds community and celebrates diversity in a way that is actively inclusive and enables refugee voices to be heard.

# 2021 HIGHLIGHTS



The nomination of two new **trustees with lived experience** to the Board

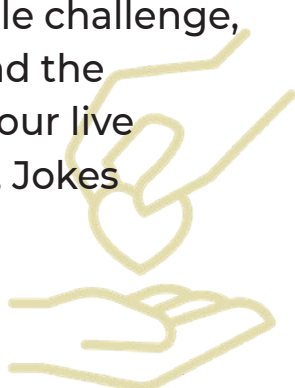


Expansion of bike donations to **new areas of the UK** including Middlesbrough, Coventry, Wolverhampton, Essex, Bristol, Oxford, Cambridge, Doncaster, Leeds, Swansea and Buxton

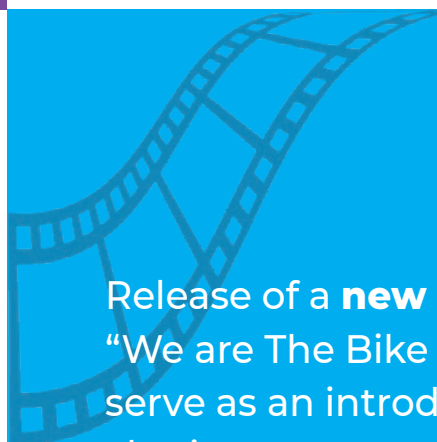
A successful pilot for refugee youth who are inspired to become **social activists** through cycling, culminating in a community day of action “Together We Change”



**Diversity in fundraising** by opening a standalone retail space, the growth of our bespoke virtual cycle challenge, Refugee Routes, and the welcome return of our live comedy fundraiser, Jokes and Spokes



Release of a **new brand film** “We are The Bike Project” to serve as an introduction to our charity



# 2021 IN NUMBERS

- + Refurbished and donated bikes to **1,553 refugees** and asylum seekers
- + Sold and shipped **1,365 bikes** to customers nationwide
- + Delivered **120 sessions** of Cyber Cyclists
- + Managed **61 volunteers** to support our activities
- + Supported **112 women** to learn to cycle through the Pedal Power programme
- + Matched refugees with **58 local Bike Buddies**
- + Hosted **43 pop-up bike collections** across Greater London and the West Midlands
- + Secured over **£2.2 million income** \*
- + Our bike donations helped refugees and asylum seekers **save £1.46 million** on transport costs

\* subject to annual accounts publication in summer 2022

Demand for our services has never been higher. Despite asylum applications falling in 2020, they **rose steadily in 2021**, as travel routes reopened and the number of people displaced globally continues to rise. At the end of December 2021, **100,564 people were waiting** for an outcome on their initial claim for asylum and of these, 61,864 (61%) have been waiting for **more than 6 months**, up from 46,796 this time last year (Refugee Council, 2022). This backlog has a knock on effect of increasing destitution amongst refugees and at the end of 2021, there were 24,175 people were unable to meet basic living needs (in receipt of Section 98 support) which is **nearly 10 times higher** than pre-pandemic levels (ONS, 2021).



## **A cost of living crisis is nothing new for refugees**

On arrival, refugees are **not permitted to work** but can receive £39.63 per week asylum support, a continuation of the £1.88 uplift awarded in response to the Covid-19 pandemic. Even before times of rising inflation, this **falls far short of essential living expenses** and does not match the uplifts awarded to other state support such as Universal Credit. Simultaneously, those in receipt of Section 95 or Section 4 support (in “full-board” accommodation) had payments limited to just **£8 per week**, experienced delays in payments and had unfair restrictions imposed on their movements.

## **An increasingly hostile environment**

After a mass outbreak of Covid-19 at **Napier Barracks**, used to house asylum seekers since 2020, the military barracks were briefly emptied. However, by April the Home Office began to refill them with people from a variety of conflict zones including victims of torture and trauma. The living conditions were later described as “squalid” by the High Court which has since **judged them to be unlawful**.

In August, the UK government evacuated Afghans fleeing the Taliban takeover of Afghanistan under **Operation Pitting**. We know that over 16,000 have arrived to date and the majority remain housed in temporary bridging hotels and are experiencing delays with BRP and settlement applications.

Finally, the **Nationality and Borders Bill** seeks to make sweeping changes to the UK's protection policy and in the opinion of experts, many of the proposals are regressive and will put the UK **in conflict with its international human rights law obligations**. This vision for the country has been mirrored in the government's delay to the reopening of safe and legal passage for refugees which led to a rise in dangerous attempts to cross the channel by boat, culminating with the unnecessary and tragic death of 27 people in November.

Living on the end of such policy decisions has had a **devastating impact on independence and mobility**, but also on physical and mental health by forcing people into destitution and homelessness.

## Inequalities, digital exclusion and social isolation

Whilst the initial increase in digitalisation of services and support in response to the pandemic has been a lifeline and increased accessibility for some, **digital literacy**, access to **technology and internet access** remains a major barrier for many, especially for women and older refugees.

**Poverty** has been a primary factor in health outcomes and minority ethnic populations account for a disproportionate number of Covid-related deaths. This has resulted in increased **anxiety, stress and social isolation** for refugees and asylum seekers, exacerbated by a lack of access to healthcare for all migrants.

## Rising tides of economic uncertainty

Finally, like all charities, The Bike Project is operating within a landscape of great **economic uncertainty**. The economic impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the philanthropy sector is yet to be fully felt and is being amplified by the **departure from the EU** and **cost of living crisis**. These issues combined create complex and unforeseen challenges relating to increased competition for funding, supply issues and increased operating costs.



# OUR IMPACT

Year on year, the power of giving the gift of a bike gets amplified with every bike donation having a significant impact on refugees and asylum seekers, who are hardest hit by the hostile environment, austerity, rising inflation and the Covid-19 pandemic.

## THE POWER OF A BIKE

Upon follow up, **93%** of bike recipients are cycling every week for essential journeys. Refugees and asylum seekers also tell us about the practical, physical and emotional benefits of cycling:

### PRACTICAL BENEFITS

- 97%** know their local area better
- 94%** say having a bike makes life easier
- 91%** are using their bike to visit new places or do new things
- 90%** are better able to access support and services
- 86%** are doing more social and leisure activities
- 81%** are saving money by cycling

### PHYSICAL AND EMOTIONAL BENEFITS

- 92%** felt their mental and physical health has improved
- 85%** feel more confident and independent and less lonely and isolated
- 84%** feel more part of the community



It is well cited that **cycling improves health, helps reduce levels of depression and stress, empowers refugees** (Garrard, 2003) but specific research conducted with bike recipients (Witty-Merrin et al., 2018) found that The Bike Project:

- + Provides opportunities to **bring people together** from different backgrounds
- + **Reduces prejudice** and negative stereotyping and increases trust
- + Reduces social isolation, loneliness and increases **social confidence**

Further research conducted by St George's University, London in 2019 and 2020 found that by combining cycling with group activities, The Bike Project provides a vital **stepping stone into resettlement** for refugees, leads to improvements in **health and wellbeing** and opens access to **community and social support**.

“ ***It makes me feel that someone cares about me and is actually thinking about my wellbeing... the sense of independence and ownership feels great.*** ”  
**BIKE RECIPIENT**

In the same research, Pedal Power was cited as highly influential in **breaking the barriers for refugee women** to access the wider community through increased confidence and reduced financial barriers to explore their local areas. The Bike Project has also enabled refugee women to access further opportunities to develop themselves as **cycle trainers or mechanics** and lend support to others.

Finally, volunteers of The Bike Project were found to have **better self-esteem and outlook on life** because of relationships they have formed and opportunities like Bike Buddies have expanded understanding and **insight into immigration struggles** in the wider population. The studies concluded that continuation and expansion of The Bike Project's activities would result in an improvement in quality of life for refugees living across the UK.

## INCREASED INDEPENDENCE AND MOBILITY

Cycling can unlock independence and mobility to allow **fuller participation in communities**, something which has been long cited as integral to the promotion of refugee well-being and integration (Goodkind et al., 2002). On follow up with bike recipients **93%** are using their bike for essential journeys every week and as a result, **97%** know their local area better and **91%** have used it to visit new places and do new things.

“ *Now I feel comfortable to go out, especially in Covid times. I wasn't leaving the house before but now I can go where I want when I want and quickly.* ”

**BIKE RECIPIENT**

This sense of independence and self-sufficiency is a recurrent theme amongst survey respondents who develop **greater autonomy as result of bike ownership**. This becomes even more pronounced with support of a Bike Buddy or Pedal Power cycle trainer.

## BETTER PHYSICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH

Upon follow up, **92%** of bike recipients that their physical and mental health has improved since getting their bike and many tell us that cycling has provided the opportunity to **reconnect with their bodies** and get rid of the stresses of daily life. This is supported by wider evidence that increased physical activity reduces the risk of health conditions and improves mental health for refugees in particular, who have experienced and are recovering from **severe trauma**. This is because exercise relieves stress, gives day-to-day structure and supports mental well-being (Warburton et al., 2019).

“ *It's very nice because my all muscles is working and the blood circulation much better. In my blood pressure, I felt last week, when I check on much better than before. Yes, no more pain killers!* ”

## BIKE RECIPIENT



When physical activity takes place in a **social setting**, such as Pedal Power and Bike Buddies, it can go further to reduce stress post migration, improve mental wellbeing, enhance self-efficacy and **reduce the risk of mortality and depression** (Hartley et al., 2017).

“ *It helped me to find new friends, and now we are talking about for our problems and we have same experience, and we discuss each other about our experiences. It makes me feel more stronger and confident in myself.* ”

## PEDAL POWER PARTICIPANT



## FINANCIAL BENEFIT

**Transport is the biggest household spend** in the UK: the average bus pass in the UK costs £18.03 per week, and from this, we estimate a potential annual saving of £937.56 for every bike that we donate. This estimate could be much higher as refugees living on limited means often pay per journey instead of realising the savings a weekly pass provides - unless lucky enough to be living in parts of Wales, where public transport is provided free of charge. Consequently, **relief from transport poverty** is a primary motivator for needing a bike in the first place and so it is not surprising that **81%** of bike recipients tell us they are saving money because they are now cycling to get from A to B.

## REDUCING ISOLATION AND LONELINESS

On follow up, **85%** of bike recipients feel less lonely and isolated and **84%** feel that they have become part a new community of cyclists. Refugees feel better connected with their local area and are making twice as many trips for social or leisure reasons and put simply, **cyclists speak to each other** - as one bike recipient said about Bike Buddies:

“ *They’re not just giving me a free bike, they’re giving me somebody who I can go riding with and I can be friendly with, who I can talk to and especially somebody like me... who comes from a different country and is new in the area... to know somebody and to know places, it’s a really good thing.* ”

**BIKE BUDDY PARTICIPANT**

## GENDER EQUALITY

Women (including children) make up just **22% of asylum claims** in the UK (Home Office, 2021) and despite gains made to close the gender divide in cycling during the cycling boom of 2020, just a third of all cycle trips are made by women, and even less by women of colour. This could put **refugee women at a double disadvantage** but our work to achieve representation of women in cycling means that, in 2021, 34% of all bike recipients were female (compared to just 4% when we started out in 2013).

Concentrating on **reducing our own gender gap** is why we created Pedal Power, cycle training for refugee women, led by refugee women, which makes cycling more accessible by supporting women to overcome the particular barriers that refugee women face.

Provision of cycle training, social group support and activities also encourages these refugee women to reach guidelines of moderate-intensity physical activity a week. This is vitally important as compared to the general population, **refugee women are more likely to suffer** from PTSD (Schubert et al., 2011), anxiety and depression (Llacer et al., 2009), social isolation, lack of opportunity (Hassan et al., 2016), obesity (Van der Kloof, 2015), as well as lower cardio-respiratory fitness (Guerin et al., 2007).



## EMPOWERMENT AND CONFIDENCE

Empowerment encompasses a process that helps people **gain control over their lives**, within which lies the sub-theme of confidence to overcome barriers. We see this demonstrated on follow up with bike recipients, **85%** of who feel more confident and independent after receiving a bike.

“ *I feel very confident... I've started to think there's a lot of things I just said in my head and I think I can't do this, can't do this. Now I know if I, if I really want to do something I should give it a go first. And, if it doesn't work then I know I tried. Rather than just sit back and think oh it's difficult.* ”

### BIKE RECIPIENT

In particular, we find that women who have gone through Pedal Power training frequently describe a **new sense of self-belief** of being able to do whatever they wanted and having the confidence to try new things.

“ *I can do anything. No one, anyone says you are a woman, stay at home and like this. I can go with myself, what time I want and come back when I want. I can do anything I want. No one says 'don't do that'. Freedom. Yes. Freedom. I can do anything I want... go out in the morning and go to the park... just the freedom of having a bike makes me feel confident.* ”

### PEDAL POWER VOLUNTEER INSTRUCTOR



## NURTURING TALENT

Despite bringing a wealth of experience and skills (**over 40% of refugees hold formal qualifications** before coming to the UK) unemployment still stands at around 36% and those who are employed are often working well below their capabilities. The increased confidence from learning about the local area through cycling enables individuals to pursue local opportunities and opens up the possibility of gaining employment. As a consequence, we find that **bike recipients are twice as likely to be in work, training or education.**



People are also encouraged to return to learn new skills at our workshop, office or by volunteering at Pedal Power and interviews with our volunteers found that volunteering has been particularly helpful for those prohibited from working so that they can feel **part of a supportive community**, develop skills and confidence to increase preparedness for the UK workplace.

## CHANGING PUBLIC PERCEPTIONS

Research with our volunteers has shown that by talking about and sharing experiences, they have **increased understanding** around the refugee crisis and **examined their privilege** as a lifelong UK citizen.

The Bike Project proactively engages with the media to provide a platform for positive representation of refugees and asylum seekers in the UK and increase representation of **women in sport**. In 2021, we featured across 19 media outlets such as The Financial Times, Time Out, and The Independent. In addition, a trustee and previous graduate of Pedal Power, Comfort, was nominated as one of [Cycling UK's 100 women in cycling](#).

For the very first time, we ran a programme of **social action**, where 10 young refugees learned skills to organise a community engagement event to educate promoting discussion about how a better asylum process, acceptance and community support can result in positive outcomes, encouraging the public to see that there is much more to people than their immigration status.

# REFUGEE VOICES

The UK is home to **just 1%** of the 26.4 million refugees, a diverse population, who have been forcibly displaced from their home countries across the world. The UK ranks **17th in Europe** for number of asylum applications per capita. Here we are able to share the voices of some of those who have risked everything to find safety.





# WHO WE HAVE SUPPORTED

## IN 2021



**1,553 refugees** (38.5%) **and asylum seekers** (61.5%) living across the UK, the majority in Greater London (45%) and Birmingham (16%) but also Coventry, Wolverhampton, Essex, Bristol, Oxford, Cambridge, Doncaster, Leeds, Middlesbrough, Swansea and Buxton.

66% male and **34% female**, the highest proportion of women cyclists to date

From **74 countries**, the most common being Syria (15%), Eritrea (13%), Iran (12%) Sudan (10%) and Afghanistan (6.5%)

Upon registering with The Bike Project, people tell us about their situation:

**17.5%** had the right to work but were unemployed

**14.5%** had been assessed as a vulnerable person for another reason

**13.5%** were destitute

**10.5%** were unaccompanied minors

**10.2%** had ongoing asylum cases, were unable to work and were not in receipt of any financial asylum support

**2.5%** were recent care leavers

**0.5%** had a diagnosed mental illness

**0.2%** had a physical disability



**Nada and her family arrived in the UK during the COVID pandemic, and knew no one, but she got a bike, took Pedal Power lessons, made friends and accepted one of our placements to train to become a Ride Leader. The importance of having a bike is clear to her, as she explains:**

“When I arrived in the UK it was a lockdown and Covid everywhere. I didn’t have friends or family. My kids didn’t have anyone and school wasn’t running. Me and my kids used to spend time riding the bike. that was the only thing keeping us busy, and it helped us to exercise and stay healthy.

I knew how to cycle before, but I forgot. The Pedal Power cycling instructor helped me to get back my confidence and to know the rules of the road. In Pedal Power we enjoy learning and experiencing new things with people who share the same situation as us. We are also meeting weekly online, it’s like we are actually meeting in person. We enjoy our time like a family.

This (Ride Leader Qualification) helped me a lot to help others and my family as well. I learned the rules about cycling in the street, I drive in confidence in difficult roads. It gave me experience to take care of my kids on the road.

The Bike Project helps people in the beginning of their time in the UK to find a way to share their feelings and to do something useful with their time. And at the same time to make friends.”



## SADAF

### Volunteer

**Sadaf, a previous Pedal Power graduate became a volunteer this year. With the help of The Bike Project, she was able to find hope and purpose in the midst of uncertainty and suffering.**



"I view The Bike Project differently (to other organisations), they are doing something practical. Most of the organisations (they help your) mental wellbeing, they talk to you, they give you a solicitor and legal advice but we want to come out of that stance. We need something practical. The Bike Project has a totally different approach. I really love it.

The sense of freedom is very important, no matter if you are an asylum seeker or not- it is for everyone. That moment (we get a bike) is very important for us, that we have something of our own and we own something and we can manage it. Because everyone treats you like you're an asylum seeker- you're not allowed to work, you're not allowed to rent a house, you can't go here- there are so many restrictions. But it (cycling) gives you a feeling that you can achieve something. That is very good, I really like that.

I'm originally from Pakistan. I've been in the United Kingdom for the last 11 years. I came as a student. I completed my degree here. Because of some personal reasons I had to claim asylum in 2015 and from 2015 until now, I'm still struggling with my asylum claim. When I learnt that I can work as a volunteer, without giving it a second thought (I said) 'Okay, I will go and help' because The Bike Project has done so much for me, now it's my turn to pay them back. I said 'Okay, I'm ready, whatever I can do'.

Before (volunteering) I was thinking about myself, my problems. I was not aware of what other ladies or other asylum seekers are facing. By talking to them, I learnt their problems, what they have to face, what they have to go through, and how they manage it...and how I can be helpful for them. That's what I learnt from volunteering, how you help other people."

# AHMET AND FAMILY

## Bike Recipients

**Meet Ahmet, teacher and cyclist, originally from Turkey. When the second lockdown started he and his family were housed in temporary hotels, moved cities and eventually received their leave to remain and right to work. During this time, The Bike Project supported the family with bikes, accessories and cycle training.**

“After our arrival the second lockdown started and we spent that time in a hotel provided by the Home Office. It was a hectic time for many people, but for asylum seekers it was terrible. To get to some places far away we had to walk around 1.5 hours as using a bus or tube was too costly. We were moved to Birmingham and placed in a house and it was there that I first came into contact with The Bike Project.

Pedal Power was open and I applied for my wife to join. We were contacted and she could receive a bike and start a cycling course in July. We were very happy.

By August, we were granted refugee status and I got a job offer and we had to move. My wife had already finished her lessons and I got bikes for myself, my son and my daughter in London. (We were all using my wife's bike when we were in Birmingham!)

I cannot forget the day we got the call to say our bikes were ready. My kids were at school and I went there with my wife to collect them. We got them home on the overground to North London. When we arrived home the kids were there and were so happy.

I use my bike to travel to my job. It is healthier because I am cycling. It is free so I save money or I use the money for my kids or other needs instead of spending it on traveling costs. It is also time-saving. I like cycling because it gives me some freedom of traveling. My son goes to school with his bike and my wife takes him from school he uses his bike to come back home and they pay a visit to our local park every day so that my son can ride there. It is very important for me to spend a productive time with my kids.”



## EDRIS

### Bike Buddy

**Edris received a bike and was later matched with a Bike Buddy to go cycling together. Here he shares his experience:**

“From my experience, I see lots of refugees in this country get depression because they stay at home all the time, they don’t do any activity but I’m really happy. I think one of the most important reason is met Bike Project.

The bike changed my life a lot. I like cycling I like sport, one the other hand, this bike helps me to not get stuck in the traffic. I can go everywhere easier, I can discover London (and) I can discover countryside around my area.

Recently I met another cyclist (a Bike Buddy), related to Bike Project, and we go cycling out of London once a week. I love them because they are very helpful because I’m new to cycling, I’m a new cyclist. They really help me, they know me, they go with my speed not with their speed. Every single time that I have been cycling with them was amazing. One of the best was going to St Albans, a new area and the beautiful café played live music in the streets and (there is a) beautiful lake and famous church. We went in the morning by cycling and I went again in the afternoon by myself! Because I wanted to discover it.

The Bike Project is really important for the people like refugees, like me. We are new in this country, Bike Project is like a family for us in this country because they gave us a free bike, they helped us to change repair, fix the bike. The group that I go for cycling they help me to be to be more happy. It’s really important and they are very helpful.”



## FARZAD

### Social Action Hero

This year we piloted a new programme, of social action. This was set up in response to demand from young refugees who were inspired by the transformative power of cycling. We ran workshops online, and in person. Sessions included cycle safety, storytelling, marketing and social media with support from IMix. This culminated in a community engagement event where the young people would use the Collier's Wood shop space to run activities to convey what it means to be a refugee in the UK.

Farzad, one of the participants (or Social Action Heroes as we like to call them) told us how he found it:

"We found the skills useful and practical. I feel the skills will help me to build my business in the future. The qualification also will be asked by the next event we are going to join, so it's a game-changer for us. We're using our skills which we learnt more and more every day, but the most benefit will be in the future where we want to do something seriously. I am proud of myself to be part of the team. I'm looking forward to the next event. It's a pure pleasure to do something that's gonna help other people like ourselves."

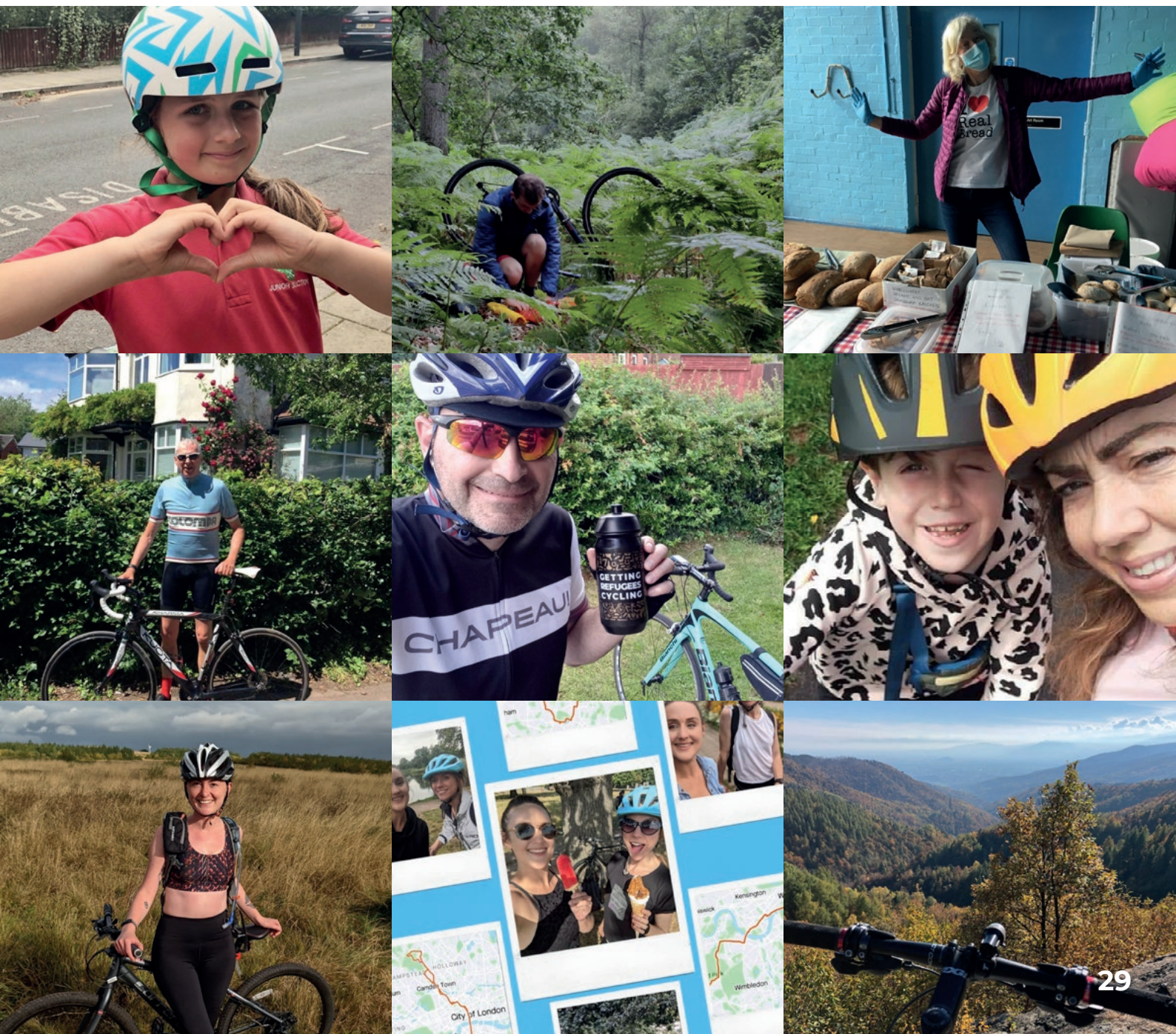




# FUNDRAISING

## PARTNERSHIPS AND EVENTS

Our fundraising activities also grew in 2021. We negotiated and built our first **corporate partnership with SunGod**, building a match funding campaign across four months. We continued our fundraising in a difficult year, focusing on **online comedy events** and our **virtual fundraiser**, Refugee Routes which had over 300 participants taking part. We also had a runner in the London Marathon. We hope to grow these funding streams in 2022 and look forward to the return of RideLondon.





# MARKETING

## AND MEDIA ACTIVITY

Although we did not have dedicated media and PR investment in 2021, we still appeared across **19 platforms**, including BBC Radio 1, The Financial Times, The Independent, Evening Standard and local platforms including Birmingham Live and Peckham Peculiar.

### [The Cause: The Bike Project is helping refugees get back on track](#)

*The Financial Times: How To Spend It*

### [London's best bike shops](#)

*Time Out London*

### [Tips for cyclists](#) - mentions bike donations and our online shop

*Money Saving Expert*

### [How a bicycle can change a refugee's life](#)

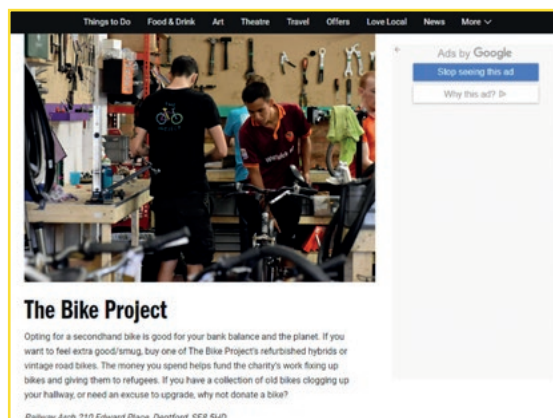
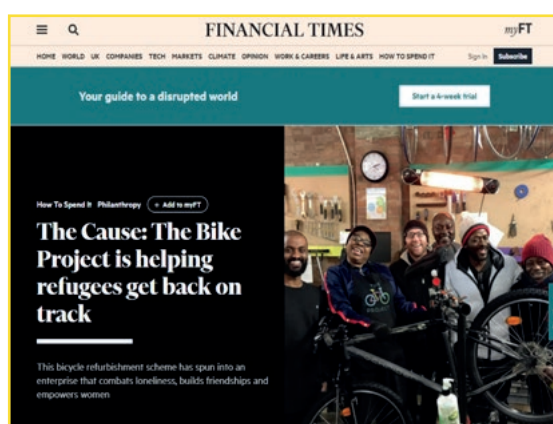
*The Independent*

We strengthened our relationship with influencers and celebrity supporters, creating two new films with **David Morrissey**, our patron, and **Francis Cade**, an influential cycling social media personality and created a strong brand film [We are The Bike Project](#) to serve as an introduction to our charity, which was fully funded by a donor.

We expanded our online reach over 2021 across our website, with **footfall increasing by 11%** year on year. This has resulted in **increased sales**, but also more visitors to our charity focused content pages. We have continued to amplify our **bike donation message**, as the second highest footfall landed on the 'bike donation' pages – with only retail pages scoring higher. With continued optimisations which include a smoother onboarding journey for supporters who donate bikes, we managed to **increase retail gift aid** on bike donations from 30% to **over 60%** by end of 2021.



Our social pages have **grown another 15%** year on year, now totalling just over 19,000 combined reach across Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. We have had the added authority of receiving a **'blue tick' on Twitter** which means our reach continues to increase. Finally our engagement continues to outperform industry standards, at 2% (with industry standard being 0.7%). We continue to grow our newsletter, which now has a total of **6,500 subscribers**.



# FUTURE PLANS

Looking forward, we are confident that we can move on from the pandemic, and **not just survive, but thrive**. We seek to achieve the vision that every asylum seeker and refugee in the UK has access to the practical, social and emotional benefits of cycling.

The Bike Project is operating within the context of a government who perpetuates a hostile environment for asylum seekers and refugees by restricting access to financial support, employment, housing and refusing to fix a broken asylum system that leaves people increasingly vulnerable after arrival to the UK.

Compounded by the Covid-19 pandemic, the cost of living crisis and rising hostility towards migrants since the departure from the EU, more and more refugees are finding themselves destitute, reliant upon charitable aid and are waiting longer for a claims to be resolved. As such, **demand for our services has never been higher**.

The increasing need, combined with other factors such as the national transfer of Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC) across the UK, uneven distribution of asylum accommodation and rising numbers of new and outstanding claims means that we must both **increase our output and become more agile** in the way we work.

We plan to expand our mobile donation programme to reach more refugees in **more areas of the UK**, and maintain our work in London and Birmingham, which will operate as national hubs. At the same time we will consolidate learning from our **support programmes** and ensure that all bike recipients have access to our community. We will also continue to build our new **social action movement** to counter the threat posed by rising anti-refugee political and social rhetoric, and unlock the transformative power of cycling to maximise the impact of every bike that we donate.

To support this growth in charity operations and impact we must have **financial security and sustainability**. We will continue to grow our funding streams, from grants and trusts, to major donors and community fundraising. Importantly, after the successful trial of a standalone retail space in London in 2021, we will secure **a permanent home for our social enterprise**, so that the charity can continue to benefit from the current cycling boom.



# OUR SUPPORTERS

The Bike Project only exists because of the **generosity of our supporters**. We would like to thank everybody that has donated a bike or their time throughout 2021. We also give thanks for the support of our **financial donors and the following trusts, funds and organisations**, without which, the achievements outlined in this report would not have been possible.

Awards for All

Austin & Hope Pilkington

BlackRock

Charities Advisory Trust

Churchill Fellows

Clifford Chance

Comic Relief

Dulverton Trust

Evan Cornish Foundation

Garfield Weston Foundation

GLA (Greater London Authority)

Herbert & Stefanie Straus  
Memorial Trust

Kusuma Trust UK

Matrix

Mazars LLP

Mercer's Company

National Lottery Community Fund

Newton Europe

Reta Lila Howard

SC & ME Morland's  
Charitable Trust David

Boyd household

SunGod

The Canary Wharf Group

The Harbour Foundation

The Rank Foundation

Unltd

Vitol Foundation

Founding sponsor: JHub and  
the team at The Pears Foundation



SCAN TO MAKE A DONATION



