

## My bike

# AVRIL LOCKHART

Avril is a key-worker who received a long-term loan bike from a Cycling UK project in Scotland during the pandemic, as **Corra Boushel** reports

**W**hile Covid-19 has turned many lives upside down, five Cycling UK projects in Scotland have been trying to make life easier for essential workers, isolated community members, and disabled people and their families through long-term bike loans and activities.

Lockdown restrictions interrupted the group rides, cycle training and events that our place-based projects would usually run. Our staff got around this by working with local community networks to offer bikes and support to those whose access to transport or outdoor activities has been most severely limited.

One pandemic bike-loan recipient was Avril, a classroom assistant who lives near the Ardrishaig Bothy project in Mid-Argyll. Due to knee and hip issues, Avril had stopped cycling for many years. However, the need to find commuting alternatives as an essential worker during lockdown encouraged her to try out a folding e-bike. The loan gave her a totally new perspective on cycling.

"I found it difficult to ride a normal bike due to arthritis," she said. "I loved the folding e-bike as it gave me the confidence to ride a bike again and enabled me to cycle much greater distances than I used to."

As well as using the e-bike for commuting, Avril was inspired to try longer bike rides. She also discovered the mental health benefits that cycling brings. "I used the bike to get to work and in my free time," she said. "Cycling regularly improved my physical health and gave my mental health a huge boost. I'm now planning to buy my own e-bike to continue cycling. I can't thank the Ardrishaig Bothy enough for loaning me the bike – and all the resulting benefits it gave me."

Almost a hundred bike loans have taken place directly through Cycling UK's projects since the start of the pandemic, with a further 9,900 bike repairs, loans and kit improvements offered through partners under the 'Big Bike Revival for Key Workers' programme.

At the Inverclyde Bothy, west of Glasgow, staff have found safe ways to offer a mix of bike loans with walking and cycling activities. Over the first 12 months of the pandemic, the team



**Top:** Avril's e-bike took her further afield as well as to work  
**Below:** Dr Bike sessions provide maintenance for local residents

## The Bothy network

Cycling UK runs five Bothies across Scotland. They provide local communities with bike loans, led rides, cycle training, and support for walking. Our network of development officers across England and Scotland support local communities to share, campaign, ride and teach the benefits of cycling.

ran 365 events, including e-bike loans, one-to-one socially-distanced walks with older or vulnerable community members, and support for people building their cycling confidence.

For new and even experienced riders, sometimes a negative incident can severely damage their confidence and motivation. Jenny (not her real name) got in touch with the Inverclyde Bothy in the autumn. Getting back to cycling after many years, she had bought a bike and tried cycling on shared paths. However, on an early attempt someone shouted "You shouldn't be here!" at her. She lost confidence and stopped using the bike.

When she first started attending the Bothy for sessions, she walked her bike most of the 3km journey because she didn't feel confident on roads and didn't know her rights on shared paths. With personalised support, a cycle training course, and a 'buddy ride' from the Bothy trainer to explore routes around her neighbourhood, she felt able to start cycling again.

"The support from the Bothy gave me the confidence to cycle on the road, which is something I thought I would never do. My son lives on a busy road where it can be difficult to park the car so now I just jump on my bike and go and visit him. Before I contacted Inverclyde Bothy, my bike sat in the garage gathering dust. Now I try to get out as much as possible." ●



### More Info

For more information on this and other community-based behaviour change work that Cycling UK undertakes, please visit:

- [cyclinguk.org/Scotland](https://cyclinguk.org/Scotland)
- [cyclinguk.org/community-cycle-clubs](https://cyclinguk.org/community-cycle-clubs)
- [cyclinguk.org/bigbikerevival](https://cyclinguk.org/bigbikerevival)

