

# Duke of Edinburgh's Award Supports Cycling



## Summary

Local authority:  
South Ayrshire Council



In October 2018, the Active Travel Hub in Ayr launched an innovative training scheme for secondary school pupils working towards their Bronze Duke of Edinburgh's Award, a programme that offers 14 to 24-year-olds the opportunity to learn and apply new skills via a wide range of experiences, including an expedition component.

The purpose of the accredited, 12-week training programme was to equip participants with the core skills and knowledge to become confident and independent cyclists. The training covered bike maintenance including common roadside repairs, and on road cycle training. This will support the participants in the expedition element of the Award.

Potential participants in the training were identified by Duke of Edinburgh's Award Coordinators based in three secondary schools in South Ayrshire. A total of 16 pupils signed up for the training, which took the form of six, weekly cycle maintenance sessions, followed by six, weekly cycle skills training sessions. Completion of both training courses was incentivised by offering participants a new bike if they attended the full 12-week programme. Of the 16 who started, 14 pupils completed the programme.

The pilot scheme ran from October 2018 until February 2019. Its success means that – in 2019/20 – the training programme will be offered to a further group of young people seeking to achieve a Bronze Duke of Edinburgh's Award.

This project received funding through the *Smarter Choices, Smarter Places* programme, which is administered by Paths for All and funded by Transport Scotland.



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In August 2017, the Active Travel Hub in Ayr engaged with the Duke of Edinburgh's Award programme, to discuss the joint development of a programme to encourage young people to have a more positive attitude towards active travel.

The Duke of Edinburgh's Award is a well-known and respected youth achievement award for 14 to 24-year-olds that offers the opportunity to learn and apply new skills via a wide range of experiences. Hundreds of licensed organisations and institutions across the UK – including schools in South Ayrshire – help to run the programme.

The Active Travel Hub in Ayr is a South Ayrshire Council project operated in partnership with Sustrans that engages with education, community groups, workplaces and the general public to make it easier to walk and cycle for everyday journeys.

In March 2018, staff from the Active Travel Hub, working in partnership with Duke of Edinburgh's Award programme, started designing a bespoke, 12-week programme that enabled participants in the Duke of Edinburgh's Award to receive accredited cycle-skills training as part of the Bronze skills element of the award.

The training included a bike maintenance course, with a focus on roadside repair. The purpose of the training was to enable the participants to become confident and independent cyclists and help equip Award programme participants with important skills to enable them to successfully undertake a cycling expedition.

Before the maintenance course could run, Hub staff needed to identify a fleet of bikes that participants could practise on. Fortunately, participating schools were able to provide access to bikes that could be used by course participants. The only challenge was that the bikes were not fit for purpose for cycle skills.

Alongside the maintenance course, a cycling skills training course was also developed, with the aim of helping trainees gain practical cycling skills, as well as the confidence necessary to ride on the road. The final course design was based on the UK National Standards of cycle training<sup>1</sup>, with Hub staff already accredited in National Standards training.

Potential participants in the training were identified by Duke of Edinburgh Award Coordinators based in licensed secondary schools in South Ayrshire. However, before either of the training courses could run, Hub staff needed to carry out appropriate risk assessments and to secure necessary consents. Once this was complete, the training programme was piloted, running from October 2018 until February 2019.

Three schools were engaged in the pilot project, with 16 pupils signing up to attend six, weekly cycle maintenance sessions, followed by six, weekly cycle skills training sessions. Poor weather conditions meant that that delivery of the training needed some flexibility, but generally, it ran to schedule.

Completion of both training courses was incentivised by offering participants a new bike, via a local supplier, if they attended the full 12-week programme. A total of 14 out of the

16 pupils that started actually completed the 12-week programme, thereby making them eligible to receive a new bike.

A range of monitoring was in place to assess the outputs and outcomes delivered by the pilot scheme. For example, an attendance 'register' was maintained throughout the 12-week programme and beneficiary surveys were administered at the end of the training. In addition, a core outcome indicator was whether or not participants achieve their Bronze Duke of Edinburgh's Award.

The information generated by monitoring activities has helped the delivery partners understand the scheme's strengths and weaknesses, refine its design and ultimately, to decide to continue rolling the programme out during 2019/20. For instance, a review of the pilot project identified that additional contingency plans should be in place to enable the training programme to be delivered when impacted by poor weather. The contingency will be created by only two school streams operating at the same time.

In March 2019, the delivery partners approached a local bike shop to see if it would be interested in helping Hub staff deliver the bike maintenance training to participants. This should enable the programme to be offered to a further range of participants. This approach will also help to free up Hub Project Officer time, thereby enabling them to continue delivering the cycle skills training course to participants and focus on their wider responsibilities.

Plans are being developed to continue the programme in 2019/20. The programme will start earlier in the year in May and the first half will run until the school summer holidays. The second half will commence on the pupils return from the summer. It is hoped that some of the pupils involved in this first running of the programme may return to support the next as their volunteer part of a Duke of Edinburgh's Silver Award.

<sup>1</sup> Source: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-standard-for-cycle-training>

Participation in this initiative represented a substantial commitment by the young people and their Duke of Edinburgh coordinators. Whilst each young person's experience and what they gained from the programme was unique to them, there were common themes in their feedback.

These included:

- Increased confidence when cycling and for some, a more general increase in confidence, such as with peers or in relation to fitness and ability.
- An increased knowledge of their local area and where it is more and less appropriate (for them as individuals) to use their bikes.
- They had fun.

## In numbers



Delivery of the pilot project cost circa **£7,500**, which paid for Project Officer time, as well as the equipment and tools required for the maintenance classes

**36**

separate training sessions were delivered across the 3 schools, with each session last approximately 2 hours

**14**

S3 pupils completed the full training course out of the 16 who started

**92%**

of participants said they now know their local surroundings better

**67%**

of participants said the experience helped to connect them with new people in their area

**83%**

of participants said they will or are considering changing their travel behaviour as a result of their involvement in the training

“ It was plain to see that the children enjoyed the bike skills course; they were enthusiastic and made the effort to be there every week, even in the really cold nights. Some of the children challenged themselves and I think this has given them a bit more confidence in their physical ability. ”

Mandy Barr, Duke of Edinburgh Coordinator, Belmont Academy

“ With the support of the leaders and my team I was able to cycle long distances. This for me was a massive physical push which took a lot of self-belief and resilience. I believe that the course showed me that, if I don't give up when things get a little hard, I can achieve things that I wouldn't normally dream of doing. I see this as a life skill. I came out of every session feeling proud of what I managed to achieve. ”

Participant, Belmont Academy

“ I feel the project was very beneficial to the participants who completed the programme. I have noticed increased engagement on a personal basis and interest in the DoFE in general. Feedback from the sessions, especially the road skills activities, was very positive and they have obviously enjoyed the experience. ”

Jim McGarvie, Duke of Edinburgh Development Worker, Ayr Academy