

Community Cycling Ardrishaig (CCA) Registered Charity SC 052342 company no. SC759890

CCA was formed on 23.2.2023 after long supporter meetings to take forward its plan to serve the community following the closure of the previously active Cycling UK Bothy. CCA is a registered charity and company limited by guarantee and is a membership based organisation with full membership open to anyone whose main residence is within the boundaries of the Mid Argyll area. RCT has a board of four directors all of whom live in this area.

Background and Context:

Ardrishaig is rural village of 1290 people with good local buses but limited access to public services such as doctors, dentist, hospital, library and post office. These services are mostly 3 miles north on flat ground and could be accessed readily by cycling. Dr Stephen Watkins, co-chair of the Transport and Health Study Group (an independent society of public health practitioners and researchers with millions of professional publications) says: "The risks of cycling are low. The health benefits of cycling rather than driving every day are many times greater than any risk of injury" Cycling is a well enjoyed sport and leisure activity which is becoming more popular as its health benefits are known for both participants and the environment. Many of our members have cars but prefer to cycle to Lochgilphead especially when the bus doesn't meet the appointment time. Ardrishaig has a vibrant community life with many different active community groups and clubs on offer. Until 2022 counted amongst these was The Bothy, a cycling and walking hub administered by Cycling UK and run by local volunteer cycling enthusiasts.

These enthusiasts are reluctant to see such a valuable service go.

We want to go beyond what was achieved previously and amongst our plans is co-operation with like-minded organisations and businesses and especially social prescribing authorities. Bearing in mind we are going through an asset transfer with Cycling UK right now and are negotiating with Scottish Canals for the lease of The Bothy these plans are currently aspirational but we fully expect to achieve them. However, we are able to do small one-day events like one we attended recently in conjunction with the MS Centre held at the MacPool when we surveyed the public and results were extremely encouraging.

Our vision is to provide:

- A weekly program of led bike rides and other activities such as bicycle maintenance and activities to suit all ages. As we are not sure which items the asset transfer will include we might need to buy further stock to meet all these activities requirements e.g. balance bikes for accompanied toddlers or side by side or cargo e bikes. We will evaluate in further surveys what the community most want and follow that lead. I am a qualified nursery nurse for example and can provide activities for accompanied children in conjunction with for instance the local police on road safety.
- A base which offers members of the community and holiday-makers information about our cycling program and bicycle loans. There will be information leaflets regarding bicycle maintenance and checks and trained volunteers to answer questions.
- Somewhere where people are invited for a chat about their own needs and aspirations, and how we can help them meet them. They may have special needs, or feel they have lost confidence in riding, or may not be able to ride and we can offer riding lessons. Or they might just be enquiring about a more active lifestyle and considering cycling. We will do our best to signpost enquirers to other exercise providers if cycling does not appeal.
- A place to receive information about local health inspired activities such as kayaking, walking, cycling, swimming, water sports and other outdoor pursuits. We already have connections with other local sporting and leisure companies such as **Dan the Merman**, a professional wild swim coach and guide in the beautiful Mid-Argyll region of Scotland. and Ann Shand at Argyll Kayaks situated opposite The Bothy in Ardrishaig.
- A venue where bicycle maintenance classes can be arranged. We have trained volunteers in first aid, bicycle mechanics, ride leading, risk assessment and further training is being undertaken now and is planned.
- Storage and maintenance facilities for the project cycles and different cycles to suit different riders. We have been monitoring the assets for Cycling UK and making sure The Bothy is securely locked.
- An administrative area where records may be completed and securely stored and the expected office equipment is kept.

And to promote cycling as a green and environmentally friendly activity for all ages and abilities which can improve health and fitness and uplift mood for all those in Mid Argyll especially the lonely or socially excluded.

Funding

As we are a charitable company, we are applying for funding from providers including Argyll and Bute Council. Our vision doesn't require the income of a large charity to put on a program that we envisage but we will depend on funding and will be actively seeking new money.

We will be happy to receive gifts or donations although our services will be free of charge due to the free help of our volunteers and supporters some of whom are retired.

We will actively seek further volunteers and supporters as we establish our services and will advertise wherever possible to achieve this, especially speaking to service users once they show an interest.

Experience

My own experience is that I moved to Ardrishaig two years ago and immediately started walking along the wonderful Crinan canal and saw led rides, which on enquiring I found were from the Bothy. I had always been a cyclist but a couple of years before had lost all confidence in a road rage incident and sold my bike. I explained that to the very helpful Bothy manager and he encouraged me to start by borrowing a bike and starting from scratch in the area around the Egg Shed to regain my skills and then along the canal on a one to one training until I felt safe to go alone. I was so glad to find this was free because I had moved 500 miles to be in Scotland and didn't need further expenses. This experience was successful because it was not forced and catered for my circumstances. I progressed to an e-bike and I am very happy to be cycling again, I would like this experience and similar ones to be available to the community. Thank you.
Janice Gale.

Janice Gale 6th April 2023

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