



TAG Bikes Employment Skills Worker Robert Berton (right) and members of the workshop take delivery of abandoned station bikes from GTR distribution manager Sarah Collett (far right)

Feb 01, 2018 14:56 GMT

## **GTR's abandoned station bikes transform lives for adults with learning difficulties**

Govia Thameslink Railway (GTR) is using bikes abandoned at its railway stations to help people with learning difficulties acquire new skills and build their independence.

The company gave TAG Bikes workshop, based in Huntingdon Community Centre, just under 50 bikes left at stations on the Thameslink and Great Northern routes after its distribution manager heard they'd put out an appeal in the local media.

TAG's enthusiastic team of 15 adults with learning difficulties, under the supervision of an employment skills worker qualified as a bike mechanic, are now servicing and repairing the machines to re-sell and raise money. The cash will be ploughed back into the charity, run by Cambridgeshire County Council as part of its Supporting into Work.

GTR Passenger Services Director Stuart Cheshire said: "More and more people are cycling to our Thameslink and Great Northern stations because we've been putting in better facilities with new racks and CCTV.

"Surprisingly, some people do abandon their bikes so when we heard the plea to help this great Supporting into Work project, we got straight in touch. There's no better cause I can think of to benefit, and we're glad to help."

TAG Bikes Employment Skills Worker for Cambridgeshire County Council, Robert Bierton, said they had been given 150 bikes in total as a result of their appeal. He said: "We are always extremely moved by the generosity and kind hearts that exist out there, especially in our region. The recent response we have received from media coverage has been astonishing and positively overwhelming, there has been a magical feeling in our workshop since.

"The bike donations we receive are vital to the success and development of TAG Bikes. Supporting into Work TAG Bikes has never been about financial gain but more directed towards our learners' development and getting our finished bikes back into new homes, without these donations we would not be able to do either."

He added: "Myself and everyone involved with TAG Bikes are very proud of what we have built here in Huntingdon and would like to say a massive thank you to all that have supported us in recent weeks and over the past three years. We have the feeling another wonderful year is ahead for TAG."

The bikes are sold at affordable prices to people in the local community. The money raised has already paid for computer equipment and a television for the workshop as well as parts to fix more bikes.

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**Notes to editors**

For further information, contact the GTR press office on 0203 750 2031. To speak to Cambridgeshire County Council Communications Team, contact 01223 699281.

### TAG Bikes

This not-for-profit project has been running for three years and worked with 25 learners since opening, out of which it has so far successfully supported seven learners into a mixture of both paid and voluntary placements.

<https://www.facebook.com/TagBikesHuntingdonCommunity>

### Govia Thameslink Railway

Govia Thameslink Railway stores bikes that passengers have abandoned at its stations on the Thameslink and Great Northern routes at its distribution centre in Letchworth. All the bikes donated have been kept for a minimum of three months in the hope that they can be reunited with their owner.

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***For more information, contact the press office on 0203 750 2031.***

### **Govia Thameslink Railway**

Govia Thameslink Railway (GTR) operates Thameslink, Great Northern, Southern and Gatwick Express services as follows:

- Thameslink – cross-London services between Bedford/Peterborough/Cambridge and Brighton/Horsham/Littlehampton/East Grinstead, and between Luton/St Albans and Sutton/Wimbledon/Rainham; plus services between London and Sevenoaks
- Great Northern – services between London and Welwyn, Hertford, Peterborough, Cambridge and King's Lynn
- Southern – services between London and the Sussex coast (Brighton, Worthing, Eastbourne, Bognor Regis, Hastings) and parts of Surrey, Kent and Hampshire (Ashford International, Southampton, Portsmouth)

- Gatwick Express – fast, non-stop direct services between Gatwick Airport and London Victoria (currently suspended during the pandemic)

[www.southernrailway.com](http://www.southernrailway.com), [www.thameslinkrailway.com](http://www.thameslinkrailway.com), [www.gatwickexpress.com](http://www.gatwickexpress.com), [www.greatnorthernrail.com](http://www.greatnorthernrail.com)