

You Can Bike Too

*In just two years, this inclusive cycling centre transformed access to cycling in Cambridge. Dan Joyce spoke to two of the team: **Ruth Brannan** and **Angela Sanford***

Cambridge is a cycling city. Around 30% of its population regularly cycles, more than anywhere else in the UK. But there were people who weren't catered for. One of them was Aaron. 'You Can Bike Too got started because of Aaron,' Angela says.

'Aaron's mum and brother are amazing cyclists,' Ruth adds, 'so he wanted to cycle too. But there was nowhere locally to cycle safely away from the roads, and no bikes that he would be able to use. So Aaron and I went to London to visit a project called Pedal Power, based in Finsbury Park. We saw the most amazing bikes, and Aaron was able to cycle for the first time. On the train home, he got very excited about the thought of something similar in Cambridge.'

After consultation with the city council, Aaron, Angela, and four other friends with learning difficulties formed a project team. 'They planned what they wanted and we did some scoping,' Ruth says. 'We went to London to visit another project. Then we did some presentations to professionals.'

'We met at Milton Country Park,' Angela says. This is a 95-acre park on the outskirts of Cambridge, with two miles of tracks that are cycle and wheelchair accessible. It's where the majority of You Can Bike Too's activities take place, and where its 20 or so special bikes reside. Every Sunday and every other Tuesday, visitors can pay £5 to try all of the bikes in an hour's taster session, or to hire just one for an hour; Angela takes the money. You Can Bike Too runs events too.

'On the Big Day Out on 6th July, we had 432 people on our bikes,' Ruth says. 'That was in Cambridge city centre the day before stage three of the Tour de France.'

You Can Bike Too is a community project with a host of volunteers but it still needs funding to put on events, as well as to buy and maintain the bikes and make them

available for use. The project's success is down to being proactive about getting that funding. You Can Bike Too recently received £10,000 from Children in Need to develop cycling sessions for youngsters, while 106 volunteers raised another £10,000 at the Cambridge Beer Festival.

Ruth tells me that they've been in the local paper nine times since April. 'We went to Cambridge Radio,' Angela adds. 'And we've won an award. It's a bit hush-hush.'

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This latest trophy turns out to be a Points of Light Award for Angela, given by the Prime Minister to 'outstanding individuals who are making a change in their community and inspiring others'. Angela received it on 25 August, after our interview.

'People are amazed at how much fun they have cycling,' Ruth says. 'Responses vary from "I never knew this was something that I could do" to a man with MS who hadn't been able to cycle for 10 years, who said "I feel like I'm alive again." We even had a 92-year-old who had never cycled.'

To anyone who thinks they couldn't cycle, Angela has a simple rebuttal. 'I'd say "You could do it. You could get some help and try a bike at Milton Country Park."'●

You Can Bike Too (youcanbiketoo.org) is one of over 40 CTC-affiliated Inclusive Cycle Centres that are part of the CTC Inclusive Cycle Network, set up in partnership with Cycling Projects, and funded through the BIG Lottery Fund. See ctc.org.uk/inclusive



● Angela on her own bike. Her favourite on site is a handbike



● Ruth (with megaphone) at the official opening of You Can Bike Too

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