

Chief Executive

# ON THE RIGHT TRACKS

**Paul Tuohy** reflects on winter off-road riding and the push by active travel organisations to get cycling in the political spotlight



**PAUL TUOHY**  
Chief Executive



Paul Tuohy chats  
to Chris Boardman

**W**INTER IS FINALLY HERE, and the nights are closing in as we approach Christmas. But I bet it's not stopping hardy Cycling UK members from getting out. My group ride is on Saturday afternoons, and at this time of year off-road is our preferred terrain: more shelter from the elements, and such fun.

My off-road season kicks off with the West Kent CTC Rough Stuff ride in October, which has been running since the 1950s. I went along this year with Trustee Ian Wescombe. The 25-mile circular route is fabulous. We had to find six checkpoints, staffed by cheerful volunteers who stamped our cards to show we had not taken a detour.

In the Wrotham village clubhouse after the ride, Ian got talking over coffee to Cycling UK member Jon Ennis. Now aged 81 and still

incredibly fit and active, Jon told Ian that this was his 66th consecutive Rough Stuff. He's not missed one since he began, aged 15!

When people talk about the member benefits of Cycling UK, being able to ride with our clubs is one of them. It's such a brilliant way to celebrate cycling with some of the UK's most knowledgeable cyclists.

## LET'S GET MOVING

In October, we held our Big Bike Celebration in Birmingham with the help of supporter Chris Boardman. I'd invited him back in the summer, when he was commentating at the Tour de France. As a cycling champion, Chris can wear either hat, sport or advocacy. He spent the day telling us about his new role as Greater Manchester's walking and cycling commissioner. He then took questions from members.

One of Chris's roles is policy advisor to British Cycling, which has just appointed a new CEO, Julie Harrington. I met with Julie in Manchester, not long after she had attended a consortium of active travel organisations at

the Department for Transport in London earlier in the autumn. Others in this group include the CEOs of Sustrans, Living Streets, and of course Cycling UK. We have been wanting British Cycling to show their support and work more closely with the group for some time, as we all work together to demonstrate to ministers that cycling and walking are worth much more investment. We wish Julie the very best in her new role.

The new minister responsible for cycling and walking, meanwhile, is Jesse Norman. I met him in the corridors of Westminster; I think he thought I was stalking him! I've invited him to take a look at how the Big Bike Revival is making a significant impact in towns and cities by attracting marginalised communities into riding their unused bikes. Given that his department funded the project, I hope he comes to see how effective it's been – as we'd like funding to do even more.

Jesse Norman is the third minister for cycling and walking in three years, so there's been a struggle to get any continuity. He's just announced a review of cycling offences and how to make cycling safer. Along with my colleagues in the consortium of active travel organisations, I will be using this opportunity to engender a bolder vision for active travel.

If Jesse Norman is still in post next year, I'll also be inviting him to ride with Jon Ennis at the 2018 West Kent CTC Rough Stuff event. Then he can see for himself just how healthy and active cycling keeps you!



Ian Wescombe (r)  
off-road in Kent

**“Kent CTC’s Rough Stuff event first took place in the 1950s”**