

Cycling UK strategy

SHIFTING UP A GEAR

CYCLING UK'S NEW FIVE-YEAR STRATEGY FOCUSES ON GETTING MORE PEOPLE CYCLING. **ADRIAN WILLS** ASKED **PAUL TUOHY** TO EXPLAIN WHAT IT MEANS FOR THE CHARITY AND FOR YOU

FOR 140 YEARS, Cycling UK has been fighting for cyclists' rights and inspiring people get out and ride their bikes. At first, as the Bicycle Touring Club, we provided companionship for new cyclists. Then we campaigned for cyclists' rights, particularly through the big road building period of the 1970s. In the last few years, we've broadened our focus from being a touring club to a charity, and changed our name, but our ethos remains exactly the same: we want more people cycling.

In most parts of the UK, cycling remains stubbornly low: only 2% of all trips are made by bike. To address this problem, Cycling UK has launched a new five-year strategy. I sat down with Chief Executive Paul Tuohy and asked him what it all means.

AW: WHAT'S THE THINKING BEHIND THE NEW STRATEGY?

PT: At the heart of everything we do at Cycling UK is a belief that cycling enriches people's lives and is an essential ingredient in healthier, happier communities for all. It reduces air pollution and traffic congestion while combating obesity and poor mental health.

The arguments for getting more people cycling are well rehearsed but currently only 5% of people cycle at least once a week. To put that in context, there are more vegans in this country than there are regular cyclists.

The number of people cycling in the UK has flat-lined. We needed an urgent rethink on what we're doing and how we're doing it. So for the last few months we've been working on

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We want to see many more children cycling to school

a revised strategy that we believe can deliver real results and make a significant change.

AW: HOW ARE YOU GOING TO ACHIEVE THIS AIM OF GETTING MORE PEOPLE CYCLING?

PT: We have a bold ambition to enable millions more people to cycle, but unfortunately there isn't a single, simple solution. And we accept that the task is too enormous for one organisation acting on its own. Many actors need to play their part if we are to succeed. In other words, people are the key.

We need to engage and mobilise the cycling movement, the people, like our members, who are passionate about cycling and who are willing to do something about it. We need them to inspire and support others, help us to change attitudes, influence people with power and funding, and create and share knowledge.

AW: YOU TALK ABOUT A 'CYCLING MOVEMENT'. WHO ARE THEY?

PT: I'm talking about the thousands of people across England, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland who already create and support a thriving cycling culture. That's the cycling movement. They get things done through formal or informal community groups, through charities and social enterprises, in their schools and workplaces, in universities and think-tanks, through networks and social media. Some work inside public bodies, others seek to influence them. These are the people who can make real change happen, and it's our job to connect them, equip them with the right tools, and guide them in the right direction.

AW: DOES THAT MEAN A BIGGER ROLE FOR MEMBERS TO PLAY?

PT: Absolutely! Our members remain our lifeblood and we need them to play a vital



Get the picture

Watch a video outlining the new strategy, and download a written copy of it, at cyclinguk.org/strategy

Another goal is to get more women cycling

“We’ll be improving the way we engage with our member and affiliate groups”

role in helping us achieve our vision. The strategy cannot be delivered without their passion, camaraderie, knowledge, skills, time and money.

Around 20% of members are already involved in our work as volunteer ride leaders, group organisers, local campaigners, and online influencers. We want to double the number of volunteers over the next five years, by providing more opportunities and support, and making volunteering a much more attractive proposition. In addition, we’re aiming to attract more members, particularly women, young people, and people from diverse backgrounds.

AW: WHAT ABOUT CYCLING UK GROUPS? WHAT IMPACT WILL IT HAVE ON THEM?

PT: Part of the strategy will involve improving the way we engage with our member and affiliate groups. We will be providing training and online tools to make running a group much easier. Plus, we’ll be working hard to help them recruit and retain volunteers, and

we will set up a small grants scheme to encourage activities that support our strategic aims of getting more people cycling.

AW: WHY IS CYCLING’S VOICE NOT BEING HEARD?

PT: We recognise the need to work more collaboratively, finding partners who share our aims and who have strengths that complement our own. Walking and cycling organisations have already reaffirmed our mutual commitment to speak to government with one voice, where we can. But we must go further and partner with other organisations specialising in health, young people, business enterprise, sports and recreation. That’s where wider government departments are focused, not on cycling for cycling’s sake. We need evidence to show how can cycling can be a real solution to their wider objectives.

AW: AS WELL AS WESTMINSTER, WHERE ELSE DO YOU SEE OPPORTUNITIES TO INFLUENCE?

PT: We will also be focusing our efforts on the devolved nations. In Scotland, for example, we have invested in our behaviour change work – and the government is listening. In England, we’ll be putting campaigning and policy staff resources in locations where there are the opportunities to make a difference, such as the cycling cities and towns, and

the cities with metro mayors. Manchester’s Cycling and Walking Commissioner, Chris Boardman, really gets it. In the West Midlands, there’s the will for change already but it needs more support.

AW: HOW IS CYCLING UK GOING TO GET NON-CYCLISTS RIDING?

PT: We’ll also be expanding our behaviour change programmes, such as the Big Bike Revival, which aims to help people overcome barriers to cycling, whether that’s through a lack of skills and knowledge, confidence, social deprivation, or cultural issues. We’ve got the evidence and track record to show how effective our behaviour programmes are.

To paraphrase the fishing rod analogy – give someone a hire-bike and they’ll cycle for a day. Show them safe routes to work or leisure, give them confidence through cycle training, give them access to a cheap recycled bike, introduce them to like-minded people to cycle with, show them the fun, ease and freedom of cycling... and they’ll cycle for life. For just £20 a head, we can get someone cycling. It’s cheaper than any transport or health solution.

AW: ARE THERE SPECIFIC GROUPS THAT YOU WISH TO HELP?

PT: The BBR and our community groups programmes already do an amazing job at using cycling to integrate communities and

Opposite: Julie Skelton. Above: Joolze Dymond



Far left & near left: Joolze Dymond. Below left: Julie Skelton

Clockwise from top left: BBR helps people overcome barriers to cycling. Community Cycle Clubs also make cycling more accessible – as do inclusive cycling programmes



Every little helps

Everyone can make a difference. Here's how you can help.

- In just one minute, you can take part in an online action.
- In five minutes, you could Gift Aid your membership fee – it could be worth up to £34 for Cycling UK's work.
- If you have old copies of Cycle magazine, pass them on or drop them into your doctor's surgery.
- Tell friends about Cycling UK, or buy them a gift membership.
- Know some great routes? Lead or assist on a group ride.
- Donate that old bike in your shed to a recycling project.
- Take part in our 2018 Grand Draw. Details overleaf.

For more about our volunteering strategy, visit: cyclinguk.org/volunteeringstrategy.

“Our ultimate aim is to see 25% of all trips made by bike”

▶ as a means to help areas of high economic deprivation. We want to do more and to ensure our behaviour change programmes reach a wide range of demographics, ethnicities, abilities and ages, so we're beginning look at ways to diversify our funding.

We also want to build on the great work of our Women's Festival of Cycling from the last two years. It showcases the wide spectrum of women in cycling, from round-the-world adventurers to mums in parks, and we see how women inspire each other at both ends of the spectrum. It's part of our unique cycling network that we want to promote and nurture.

AW: HOW ARE YOU GOING TO AFFORD THIS?

PT: Our members are very generous both

with their time and, through the membership fee, their financial support. Increasingly, members are recognising our work by leaving legacies and by getting behind our fundraising appeals such as #Toocloseforcomfort, which involved fundraising to equip every police force with a mat for road safety training, to educate close-passing drivers.

On top of that, we are building a fundraising team – like you'd expect every charity to have – to promote Cycling UK's work to corporates, the cycle trade (which benefits from more people cycling), trusts, foundations, and government departments beyond the Department for Transport.

Having healthier, happier communities through cycling lowers pollution, reduces absenteeism, increases footfall on high-streets, and reduces the drain on public health resources. Our job now is to make the government, corporates and others realise what we all already know: that cycling is a cheap solution, and that they should invest in cycling and in Cycling UK.

AW: HOW WILL YOU JUDGE IF YOU'VE BEEN SUCCESSFUL?

PT: We have set ourselves some pretty ambitious targets to help us measure our success. This includes: seeing the proportion of adults who cycle at least once a month rise to 25%; one million people having taken part in a Cycling UK behaviour-change programme: our membership, donors, volunteers, and supporters having risen to 100,000; and the public and media talking in much more positive terms about cycling.

Looking further into the future, our ultimate aim is to see: 25% of all trips made by bike; half of all children travelling to school by bike; and 80% of the population agreeing that cycling is safe.

Yes, it is a big challenge and we won't be able to do it without your support. But it's also a hugely exciting opportunity to make a real difference, so we can change the future of this country for the better. I hope you'll join us to make this vision a reality. Together, I truly believe we can get the nation cycling.