

# WE ARE THE CHAMPIONS

This year CTC recruited 13 Cycle Champions, who are working to improve access to cycling at a local level across England. So how are they getting on?



This year CTC Charitable Trust began a £6.3 million programme to bring cycling to those people in society who could most benefit from it: people who cycle less or never and who have lower activity levels as a whole – such as older people, the disabled, women and ethnic minorities.

CTC's 13 new Cycle Champions are spearheading the programme. They're being funded for four years to work with community groups and organisations across England, with the BIG Lottery Fund providing £4.5 million and the rest coming from partner organisations. The Champions programme is part of a Sustrans-led portfolio of projects aimed at making two million people become more physically active. Encouraging cycling as transport will help reduce CO2 emissions, as well as tackling health and obesity.

We asked our Cycle Champions to reflect on their experiences so far.

## CLIVE ANDREWS / EAST HAMPSHIRE



▶ My work with disabled cyclists at Alice Holt Forest is now spreading around the district, with sessions coming soon at Queen Elizabeth Country Park. We're also organising rides for people looking to return to cycling after a few years off, or following an illness (see p12).

Working in a rural area makes it harder to bring people to our activities. But I still get to see a cross-section of society. The other day I was riding with youngsters with behavioural problems in the morning, before helping an 83-year-old get back on a bike and assisting some mums fitting helmets for their toddlers.

The future of our work is all about volunteers. We've had some great help and this looks set to carry on.

Left: Clive Andrews

The job of the Cycle Champions is to help get people cycling

**VIV CARNEA / BRADFORD**



▶ My main project has been Manningham Women on Wheels for the South Asian community. The women wanted to be able to learn to cycle outside their neighbourhood. Many had never ridden a bike but they were determined and, by the end, four could ride a short way. Sessions with another group saw the numbers who could ride rise to nine. They were ecstatic! The women are looking at how to keep the group and their cycling going.

In future, I'll be working with secondary schools to help get teenagers and their families into cycling.

**RICHARD MONK / COLCHESTER**

▶ In the summer I ran 'enjoy cycling' taster events at fêtes and festivals, including a hugely rewarding Special Schools Skills Day.

A successful Workplace Cycle Challenge followed in the autumn. It involved 34 organisations employing over 6,000 staff and resulted in more than 400 staff cycling over 18,000 miles. Of the people who took part, more than 100 had not been on a bicycle for at least a year beforehand. One, who had not cycled for many years, enjoyed it so much that he plans to sell his second car.

Work is also in hand to get more people cycling again through GP referrals, working with the university and with Colchester MIND.



**ELIZABETH BARNER / LEICESTER**



▶ Since April, the Peepul Centre Bicycle Project has offered family rides and classes for adults who wanted to learn to ride. More than 60 people signed up and 20 attended the first three learn-to-ride sessions. An hour into the first session, most of the adults could pedal on their own.

I have also helped set up the Wheel Ability Cycle Club. Organised with the Disabled Children's Inclusion Service, this six-week project grew from taster sessions. Parents and staff said they 'had never seen the young people so engaged.' In August, I helped 44 young women take part in cycle and maintenance training in preparation for a sponsored ride organised by the BAPS Shri Swaminarayan Mandir (see news, last issue).

**MARK GUMBS / MANCHESTER**

▶ My main work has been with the Boggart Hole Clough project at the Manchester park of that name. Set up by Shirley McCardell, it now includes a cycling session. The Boggart Bikers club was formed from a fund-raising night that brought in over £12,000 (with the help of Charles Hill of GB Solutions). From three people attending one wet Saturday in June, the club now has 30-40 people every week, all with a range of disabilities and special needs. If we could replicate this in other areas of Manchester it would be amazing.

The big challenge for me is persuading people that the four biggest green flag parks in Manchester are a good place for community cycling.



**KAREN CARTER / ROCHDALE**



▶ I've been working with the Duke of Edinburgh Award centre in Rochdale to make a variety of cycling activities available

to youth and community groups in the borough. I've put together a 12-month plan of activities to support the DoE Award scheme. This plan includes Bikeability, bike maintenance, led rides, and will progress to overnight expeditions. It's great to be able to make cycling and related activities available to those community groups who otherwise may not get such opportunities.

**DAVE CHEETHAM / WOLVERHAMPTON**

▶ I'm aiming to increase cycle usage in Wolverhampton by offering training and support to: those seeking an improvement in their health; young people with learning and physical disabilities; and members of the ethnic communities. Rides and group activities for all will be supported through work with other partner organisations.

I plan to set up a central hub of resources, particularly for information and education. A lot of the work involves overcoming people's perceptions of danger and providing supportive networks for them.

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## HELEN BIGGERSTAFF / READING



▶ Everybody Active is a weekly session for adults with learning/physical disabilities that I'm involved with. We have some fantastic adapted bikes and regularly attract 30 people. The best moment was persuading a severely autistic person to have a ride on a trike, after he had sat watching for three sessions. He jumped on and rode around the stadium. He has returned every week since and absolutely loves it.

In future, I'll be building on the various cycling sessions that are already running at Palmer Park: Cycling for Health; Accessible family cycle club; U3A; and the Asian women's cycle club.

## AMANDA SALT / DERBY



▶ I've worked with Wetherby Day Centre for adults with learning disabilities to develop a regular cycle-group activity. Over 60 people from all over the city took part in a fun cycle try-out provided by Cyclemagic. Many had never been on a cycle before, and everybody who wanted to was able to participate. The project has now purchased some trikes – including a hand-crank trike and rickshaw – for the day centre. Volunteers have been trained to use the cycles and maintain them.

## JULIET JARDINE / SEFTON



▶ Working with girls in secondary schools has been my major project. They have enjoyed building up their skills, so that they have the confidence to ride in traffic. I hope to get a lot more girls cycling.

It's been tough recruiting volunteers to help with all the projects in Sefton. But the response has been great. After helping one 14-year-old girl to ride a bike, I heard her phone her mum afterwards, saying she wanted a bike for her birthday. I was glad to give her the opportunity to be like her friends.

## TAMINA OLIVER / SWINDON

▶ The major project so far in Swindon is SENsational Cycling, a project offering Bikeability cycling skills training and Road Safety Awareness training to young people with Special Educational Needs (SEN). In the first phase of the project a qualified instructor is delivering sessions.



But two teachers are undergoing training to become Bikeability instructors and they will adopt the training role themselves to ensure sustainability of the project. Incorporating cycling skills training into the school's curriculum within PE will facilitate this.

The Swindon Workplace Cycle Challenge I coordinated was a great success. It involved 41 businesses and 913 people cycling to work.

## MARTYN BOLT / NORTH YORKSHIRE



▶ My biggest event was a mountain biking day for children at the finish of the Yorkshire stage of the Tour of Britain in Dalby Forest. We had to build 108 bikes in three days. But the support of other officers and volunteers meant that children from across North Yorkshire were able to enjoy an event alongside some of the world's best cyclists.

Many of the children were from urban areas were eager for more access to the bikes and more visits to Dalby Forest. In future, I'll be working to offer greater access to the fleet of bikes we have there, and to establish satellite access facilities in other parts of the county.

## STEVE MARSDEN / SHEFFIELD



▶ I've been setting up a steering group on cycling, comprising the local authority, Primary Care Trust, education people, local businesses, disability interests, and cycle trainers. In July we started Cycle Back to Health, a pilot project that we hope to roll out over the area. In August, I set up Sheffield's first cycle festival. Memorable moments include meeting a lady with over 15 bikes who now has a disability called lupus. She wants to get back to cycling and I will do my best to help her!

**For more on CTC's Cycle Champions project, including details on how to get involved, see: [www.ctc.org.uk/cyclechampions](http://www.ctc.org.uk/cyclechampions). If you'd like to contact any of the Champions, their email addresses all follow the same formula: [firstname.surname@ctc.org.uk](mailto:firstname.surname@ctc.org.uk)**

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