

this is cycling UK



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Together in spirit

Social distancing may have kept us apart but it hasn't stopped us working hard to support all UK cyclists, writes new CEO **Sarah Mitchell**



When Cycling UK started out as the Bicycle Touring Club in 1878 it brought together a community of people who loved cycling. We are still doing this today, 142 years later – albeit sometimes virtually! – and I am really proud to join a community of cyclists that has grown enormously. Cycling UK is unique in welcoming cyclists of all kinds and abilities and from all four nations of the UK.



me to discover that 77% of the public support local authorities' efforts to encourage cycling and walking through measures such as cycle lanes. It's unfortunate that a small but vocal minority of critics are now trying to scare local authorities into ending these initiatives. Cycling UK and our volunteer campaigners are working hard to bolster this work.

This has been a strange time to join the Cycling UK family, but in my first weeks I have been impressed by the dedication and experience of our staff, our members and supporters, and by the sheer range of our groups and projects. It's good to see that our tradition of campaigning is still going strong, with our popular action on the Highway Code and a timely campaign against the bike lane backlash. As your new CEO, I am keen to ensure that we continue to fulfil our role as the cyclist's champion, to share our love of cycling with all cyclists and to welcome them to Cycling UK.

Cycling UK has achieved an incredible amount over 2020, against all the odds. The team has been working hard to keep running as many of our projects and as much of our support work as possible. Despite restrictions, which varied across all our regions and nations, we have continued to cycle and to campaign. We launched the brand new King Alfred's Way route; we ran our Pumped Up campaign to get more people cycling; our total membership grew to a new high of 70,500; and our campaigns reached more people than ever, with 16,000 supporting our work to amend the Highway Code.

The huge enthusiasm for cycling that lockdown unleashed across the UK was really inspiring, and it was no surprise to

We need your help to speak up for the silent majority who support local infrastructure improvements. Visit cyclinguk.org/article/six-reasons-build-cycle-lanes.

As of early November, the restrictions on group rides look set to continue in one form or another. However, even in the strictest lockdown areas we can still get out on our bikes to enjoy the autumn colours and the bracing(!) winter air. Personally, I'm looking forward to trying out Martin Nelson's London Cycle Orbital routes (london-cycle-orbital.org.uk) over the coming winter weekends.

As we look ahead to 2021 it's still uncertain when we'll be able to return to life as usual, let alone cycling as usual. But over its long history and over recent months, Cycling UK has shown that we are nothing if not resilient. We will continue to support our members through tough times with our advice and guidance, and we'll build the cycling community through our project work. When restrictions allow I look forward to meeting many of you and seeing for myself much of the great work we do together, including our Big Bike Revival projects, the Scotland Cycle Repair Scheme, our member groups, the community cycle clubs, and all our encouragement and support for new cyclists.

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Main photo: Ioolize Dymond