

Gordon Seabright

CTC's Chief Executive left us at the end of May. Dan Joyce spoke to him about his two years in the job

By the time you read this, CTC's Gordon Seabright will have left CTC to take up his new job as Director of the Eden Project, the environmental visitor attraction in Cornwall. He's not leaving his association with cycling behind, however.

'I wrote it into my contract there that I'd have a company bike,' he says. 'Brompton are building a bike for me in Eden colours, with the Eden logo on it, so I can turn up at meetings in a suitable fashion. I've asked for a 6-speed because south Cornwall is extremely lumpy.'

Discovering the usefulness of a bike for business use and other utility trips is something that Gordon says he has CTC to thank for. 'When I joined CTC, the vast majority of my cycling was for pleasure – along the country roads of Wiltshire, where I live, or off-road on the Malborough Downs or Salisbury Plain. I still do a bit of that, but now a much larger proportion of my cycling is whizzing around London and other cities.'

Cycling, as we know, is quick, enjoyable, and good for you. If you're en route to a meeting with, say, Transport for London or a government department, there's another benefit: 'Collecting mental evidence about what they need to do to improve facilities and make cycling feel a damn sight safer!'

The dialogues that CTC now has with politicians, and the united front that CTC presents alongside other cycling organisations when talking to politicians, is something that Gordon says he's happy to have developed during his time as Chief Executive. 'Governments across the UK know that if they want to talk to cycling, they can't pick us apart: they need to talk to CTC, our friends at Sustrans, British Cycling, LCC, and a number of other organisations. There might be nuanced differences in what we're demanding, but essentially our positions are aligned.'

These demands aren't falling on deaf ears. Politicians are listening, particularly in the devolved governments of Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland, though Gordon acknowledges that some are quicker to talk the talk than walk the walk. 'Politicians of all stripes are quick to make declarations in favour of cycling and rather slower to come up with concrete measures and funding to deliver on them. They operate on short time frames, and cycling delivers on things like obesity, congestion, pollution, and climate

“Governments across the UK know that if they want to talk to cyclists, then they can't pick us apart: they need to talk to CTC”

change over the long term.'

In the media, meanwhile, CTC is increasingly quoted and represented. Why? 'We've become more obviously a campaigning organisation,' says Gordon. 'Things like Road Justice, Space for Cycling, and increasingly now off-road cycling access. An interesting thing for me is that the only funding announced personally by Robert Goodwill MP in his entire time as the minister covering cycling has been the money given to CTC to develop Fill That Hole.'

At a time of economic austerity, public money is tight. CTC's charity status does make additional funding streams an option. And it's not all doom and gloom. The scope to grow cycling, Gordon points out, is huge. 'The real opportunity for cycling – and I think CTC has been a big part of this and still has a big part to play – is making sure that cyclists look like the country that we live in. We need to make sure everyone can enjoy cycling, whatever their gender, race, background, or disability.'

Moving to the Eden Project will no doubt present its own challenges and rewards. But what will Gordon miss most about CTC? 'I'll miss the passion of the teams I worked with – people who have chosen to spend their working life, or their spare time, trying to make the world a better place for cyclists. It was a joy for me working with the likes of the late Tom McClelland.' ●



● A company Brompton is something Gordon will enjoy in his new job too

SHARE YOUR STORY: If you know – or are – someone with a CTC-related story to tell, email editor@ctc.org.uk