



● (Top) CTC Forest of Dean Accessible Cycling Day
(Below) SRCC Open Day at Gallows Close in Scarborough

WHEELS OF CHANGE

*Being able to cycle can transform people's lives. CTC's **Kay Lakin** introduces four people who have benefited from CTC community cycling projects*

CTC WORKS with local communities to change lives through cycling. Your support as a member enables us to promote the joys and benefits of cycling to everyone, whatever their circumstances. Over 30,000 people benefited this year alone. To get a sense of what that means on an individual level, here are the stories of four of them. You can read more, and see what else CTC is doing, at ctc.org.uk/community-outreach.

Olivia's story: CYCLING WITHOUT LIMBS

Olivia first visited the Watchtree Wheelers with her mum in September 2012. They were looking to buy a trike so that Olivia could go out cycling with her friends. On

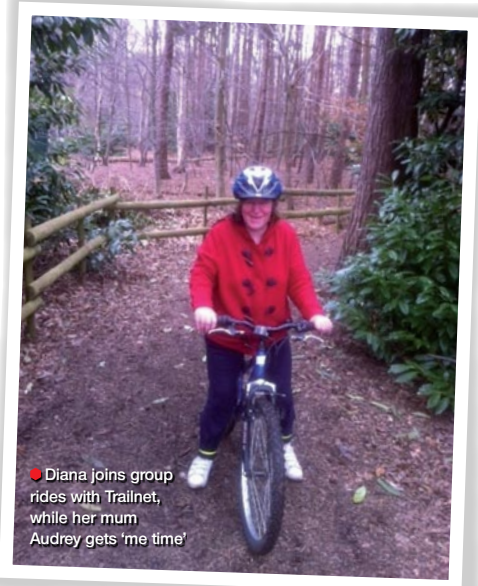
the first day, she tried a number of different adapted cycles, including trikes and four-wheelers. Olivia was able to control a trike with just one hand and was soon zooming around the car park grinning. Pedalling with her prosthetic legs wasn't a problem but could she manage a two-wheeled bike?

At the next session, after a quick warm-up on one of the trikes, Olivia worked towards cycling a two-wheeler. At first, she tried a balance bike to see if she could scoot along but she had a hard time steering it with one hand. It became obvious that the bike would need to be adapted so that she could reach the handlebar with her amputated arm without having to bend over.

Ryan Dobson of Watchtree Wheelers came up with a solution: he used a piece of foam strapped onto the handlebar so that Olivia could press her forearm into the foam to control the steering and still sit upright. With the adaptations made and the brakes switched over so that she could operate the rear brake, she was soon gliding along without touching the ground for ten metres or more! Balancing wasn't going to be a problem but the next obstacle was pedalling.

After a great deal of dedication and practice, Olivia continued to improve and, at a later session, she managed to put her second foot onto the pedal, and with a little wobble, she was off! Her mum urged her to keep pedalling, and Ryan jogged alongside her, ready to catch if needed. Olivia shouted with joy: 'I'm doing it, I'm doing it!' and 'Don't cry, mummy!'

Olivia is now riding her adapted bike with her friends. As she grows, she'll continue to need alterations to the bike but that won't stop her. She is now a much more confident rider. Olivia's mum Kim said: 'Previously, Olivia has felt left out when



● Diana joins group rides with Trailnet, while her mum Audrey gets 'me time'

her friends go off on their bikes and she hasn't been able to keep up on foot or on her scooter. On her bike she can go further, and faster, without effort. It's given her independence and confidence to go out and interact with other local kids.'

Cycling makes Olivia happy. She told Ryan: 'I feel normal, the same as everybody else. I feel included with my friends more and that makes me happy.'

Ryan Dobson is a project officer at Watchtree Wheelers in Carlisle, which is part of the Inclusive Cycling Network.

Diana's story: BOOSTING SOCIAL SKILLS

Diana came to Trailnet inclusive cycling centre with her mum, Audrey, and an occupational therapist who had referred her. Diana has some brain damage and



● A foam pad for her amputated arm lets Olivia steer her bike

Bottom left: Pete Spence, Scarborough Review. Others: CTC & affiliated groups



» learning difficulties, and although she had ridden a standard bike as a child, she needs additional support to cycle.

Things didn't get off to a great start at that first session. Diana was very reluctant for her mum to leave her but the instructors managed to encourage her onto an adapted trike and she joined the group for a very short evaluation ride. She demonstrated good bike control and no shortage of energy or determination.

After a few weeks, Diana switched to a two-wheeled bike and was immediately at home, showing that she hadn't forgotten her childhood bike rides.

It has now been over two years since that first session and Diana is one of Trailnet's most enthusiastic riders, turning up regardless of the weather. Diana continues to make progress in terms of distance ridden, hills managed, and technical terrain difficulty.

Trailnet Ride Leader Alison said: 'We operate a star system, where riders are awarded stars depending on how they've managed a number of cycle-related objectives for that session. Diana responds very well to this, and her confidence and bike control have improved significantly. She is very animated when she reaches her goals!

'Diana doesn't hesitate to let us know what she likes and what she doesn't, and sometimes needs a bit of convincing to get on the bike, and to ride on some of the steeper or muddier sections. She is always happy to see us, and her smile and laughter really lift everyone's spirits.'

Diana is now only too happy to leave Audrey – her full-time carer – in the café for a well-earned break while she goes for

a cycle ride. Audrey said: 'I really appreciate the chance for some "me time" where I can have a chat and a cup of tea with others while Diana is riding.'

Coming to the Trailnet sessions has not only helped to develop Diana's cycling skills, it has also boosted her social skills. While Diana still struggles with socialising independently, she now also takes part in many more supported social activities than when she first joined Trailnet.

Trailnet in Essex is also part of the Inclusive Cycling Network. Diana's story was written by Geoff Fletcher of Trailnet.

Brenda's story: LEARNING TO RIDE

Brenda was keen to take part in one of the newly-launched ladies-only cycle rides in Sefton, Merseyside. The only problem was that she'd never ridden a bike before!

CTC Cycling Development Officer Ross Adams was eager to make sure that everyone had the same opportunity to attend the rides, and arranged a day to meet Brenda for some one-to-one cycle training at Litherland Sports Park.

First, Ross got Brenda onto a conventional two-wheeled bike but it quickly became obvious that cycling wasn't going to happen overnight. Brenda had a go on a tricycle instead and was immediately away! She was pedalling and steering like a natural.

The following week, Brenda and Ross started with a ride on a tandem. With Ross steering and Brenda as stoker, they rode two full laps of the cycle circuit. This gave Brenda the feeling of riding a two-wheeler, and what balancing a bike felt like. She then began practising on a smaller-framed two-wheeled bike.

Brenda's progress was modest initially. But she carried on trying and, after her fourth session, it all clicked. The hard work and dedication paid off. Brenda was cycling unaided, something she had never done before.

The sessions continued and Brenda's cycling skills have now gone from strength to strength. She can confidently cycle unaided, completing full laps of the cycle track.

Brenda has her own bike now, a gift from her daughter as a reward for her success! Not only can Brenda join in the ladies-only cycle rides, which was her initial goal, she can also go out cycling with her daughter. Just a few weeks earlier, neither of these things had seemed possible.

Ross Adams is a CTC Cycling Development Officer who works as part of the Active Travel Sefton project.



● Cycling has transformed Panna's outlook on life

Panna's story: REGAINING SELF-CONFIDENCE

After a distressing event in her life, Panna wanted to regain her confidence and spend more time with people. At work, she learned about the cycle training courses provided by CTC's Leicester Cycle Champions project. Panna had never been on a bike prior to the course. Her family circumstances had prevented her; she was a carer to her mother for 28 years.

'I always wanted to learn,' she said, 'especially since helping with the bid for the cycling project.'

After just a few sessions, she was pleased with her progress: 'I've just learned to ride and am getting to grips with it. I feel like I'm on top of the world when riding. I become alive!'

She enjoys the comradeship of the other people on the course – 'being with women that have got that spirit', as she put it. Panna is a dedicated trainee and tries not to miss any sessions. In fact, she missed her nephew's wedding rather than her cycling session!

'I feel like a butterfly,' she said of her changed outlook. The course has helped Panna in other ways too. She was experiencing pain in her knees prior to riding and that's gone; her consultant believes they've become stronger since she started to use them more.

In the future, she would love to cycle to work rather than use the car. Recently, Panna's son bought her a bike with a wicker basket. She can't wait to get on the bike and start riding to places. Before that, she's practising her bike handling and riding skills. She said that she pictures herself out and about next summer 'riding confidently on country lanes, wearing a summery hat.'

Panna's story was written by Maryam Amatullah, a freelance cycle trainer who works with Elizabeth Barner on the Cycle Champions Leicester project. ●



● Brenda had never ridden a bike before. Now she owns one