

Project Evaluation Report

Cycle Together – Heritage Cycling Project



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Heritage
Fund



Cycle Together

End-of-project evaluation

Project Funder/Sponsor

The National Lottery Heritage Fund

Project Partners

Yuvanis Foundation

Project Timescale

January 2024 – August 2024

Project Purpose

The "Cycle Together" project aims to promote community connection and improve both physical and mental wellbeing through a series of culturally tailored group bike rides for Ethnic communities from lower socio-economic backgrounds in Greater Manchester. These rides, led by qualified cycling leaders, will explore local canals, locks, bridges, and cotton mills, allowing participants to engage with the rich heritage of the area. By organising separate sessions for men, women, and young people, the project ensures cultural sensitivity and appropriateness. Through these interactive rides, participants will not only enhance their physical health by cycling but also develop a deeper connection to their community's history, promoting a sense of belonging and pride in their local heritage.

The project also seeks to remove barriers to participation by providing bikes and helmets free of charge, ensuring that financial constraints do not hinder anyone's involvement. By fostering a deeper connection with the local environment and encouraging physical activity, "Cycle Together" contributes to both the physical and mental wellbeing of the community, while instilling an appreciation for Oldham's historical significance.

Expected Benefits and Outcomes

- Heritage appreciation: Participants will gain a deeper understanding and appreciation of Oldham's local history, canals, and landmarks, fostering a sense of cultural connection and heritage preservation.

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- Improved physical and mental wellbeing: Regular participation in group cycling activities will promote physical health, reduce stress, and enhance mental resilience.
 - Enhanced community bonds: The project will strengthen community ties by creating opportunities for participants to socialise, build relationships, and promote inclusivity within diverse sections of the community.
 - Environmental sustainability awareness: Participants will adopt sustainable practices, including cycling as an eco-friendly transportation option, helping to reduce carbon emissions and promoting responsible resource use.
 - Commitment to environmental responsibility: The project will instill a long-lasting ethos of environmental responsibility, encouraging participants to actively protect natural habitats and contribute to a greener, more sustainable future.

Summary of Findings

The "Cycle Together" project successfully achieved its primary objectives, significantly impacting participants, the community, and the environment. Through a series of group bike rides tailored to ethnic communities from lower socio-economic backgrounds, the project fostered a sense of cultural connection, encouraged physical and mental wellbeing, and promoted environmental sustainability.

Heritage Appreciation

Participants expressed a deepened appreciation for Oldham's rich history, particularly its canals, mills, locks, and bridges. By cycling along these historic waterways, they engaged with the local heritage and learned about the vital role these sites played in shaping the community. Our collaboration with the Canal and River Trust further enhanced participants' understanding of heritage preservation and their potential role in protecting it.

Improved Physical and Mental Wellbeing

Regular participation in the cycling activities positively impacted participants' health, as they reported improvements in physical fitness and mental resilience. The opportunity to engage in physical activity while being immersed in nature reduced stress and contributed to overall wellbeing. Separate sessions for men, women, and young people ensured cultural appropriateness, resulting in inclusive and supportive environments for all.

Stronger Community Connections

The project strengthened community bonds by providing a platform for social interaction and relationship building. The group nature of the bike rides fostered camaraderie, allowing participants

from diverse backgrounds to connect over shared experiences. This led to a more closely-knit community, with participants developing lasting friendships and a greater sense of belonging.

Environmental Awareness and Sustainability

The project promoted sustainable living by encouraging participants to adopt cycling as an eco-friendly mode of transportation. This not only helped reduce carbon emissions but also instilled an ethos of environmental responsibility among participants. Through education on sustainable practices and the importance of respecting natural habitats, the project contributed to the promotion of environmental stewardship in the community.







Project Logistics and Execution

The availability of free bikes and helmets eliminated financial barriers, ensuring inclusive participation. Additionally, the project funded volunteer training on Ride Leadership and heritage, ensuring that sessions were well-organised, engaging, and informative. The use of a bike trailer enabled easy transportation of bikes, ensuring smooth logistics.

The "Cycle Together" project successfully enriched participants' connection to local heritage, enhanced their physical and mental wellbeing, strengthened community bonds, and promoted environmental sustainability. Feedback from participants and community stakeholders was overwhelmingly positive, highlighting the project's inclusive approach, educational value, and positive long-term impact.

Outputs

The below are outputs achieved over the course of 10 sessions:

| | | |
|--|---|---|
|  Females |  Males |  Heritage Sites visited |
| 33 | 49 | 22 |
|  No. of Sessions |  Ages Range |  % of Main Target |
| 10 | 8–62 years | 100% |

Impact

The "Cycle Together" project made a significant positive impact on the physical and mental wellbeing of participants. By engaging in regular group cycling, individuals reported improvements in their overall health, feeling more energetic, and experiencing less stress. The calming environment of the scenic canals and historic mills provided participants with a sense of tranquility, reducing anxiety and improving their mental resilience. By offering culturally sensitive sessions for men, women, and young people, the project ensured that participants from diverse backgrounds could comfortably engage in physical activity, further contributing to their overall sense of wellbeing.

A major achievement of the project was fostering a deep connection between participants and Oldham's rich heritage. Many participants visited the local canals, locks, bridges, and cotton mills for the first time, gaining a new appreciation for the historical significance of these sites. Our collaboration with the Canal and River Trust was instrumental in providing educational insights about the heritage and importance of these landmarks. Participants expressed pride in learning about their community's industrial past, and many voiced a commitment to supporting the preservation of these sites in the future.

The project also had a powerful impact on community cohesion. Through the shared experience of group bike rides, participants from various ethnic and socio-economic backgrounds came together, forging new friendships and bonds. The social aspect of the rides, combined with the group discussions and reflections afterward, allowed participants to connect on a personal level. This strengthened sense of belonging has laid the groundwork for future collaborations and a more inclusive community spirit. Many participants expressed a desire to stay involved in Yuvanis Foundation's initiatives, highlighting the success of the project in fostering unity.

Environmental sustainability was another key outcome of the project. By promoting cycling as a sustainable mode of transportation, "Cycle Together" contributed to reducing the local community's carbon footprint. Participants not only embraced cycling as an eco-friendly alternative but also learned about the importance of protecting natural habitats and using resources responsibly. The project instilled in participants a greater sense of environmental responsibility, with many expressing their commitment to adopting greener practices in their daily lives.

Finally, the project's long-term impact is evident in its efforts to remove financial barriers for participants. By providing free access to bicycles and helmets, the project ensured that individuals from lower socio-economic backgrounds could take part. The training provided to volunteers in Ride Leadership and heritage education also guarantees that these group rides and heritage tours can continue in the future, ensuring that the benefits of the project will last well beyond its initial run. Overall, "Cycle Together" was a resounding success, creating lasting impacts on the health, heritage awareness, community bonds, and environmental responsibility of its participants.

Outcomes

- Increased physical activities
- Increased use of cycling as a mode of transport
- Most young people attended on a weekly basis
- Stronger heritage connection
- Increased self-confidence
- Skills development

Success Factors

- Co-designing with participants during the planning and delivery of project
- Participants always treated as individuals and not numbers
- All levels of competency in cycling were welcome
- Sessions were led by competent and qualified volunteers
- Cycling routes were surrounded by nature and heritage, easily accessible, and provided a variety of experiences

Recommendations

- Organise cycling training for younger children (under 7)
- Introduce new local and national routes
- Increase distance and difficulty gradually to build up endurance and skills

Case Study

Participant 1: Abraham Khan, aged 16, initially joined our cycling sessions during the Winter of 2022, already being able to cycle fairly confidently. We found from our initial baseline survey that though he was confident, he wasn't aware of road codes and lacked basic hazard awareness when around traffic. His own bike was out of use due to poor maintenance and repair. Through this project we repaired his bike so he is able to use his own bike to join our cycling sessions.

Since joining our Cycle Together group cycling sessions, he learnt to confidently and safely cycle along busy roads. He was also introduced to several local heritage routes which enabled him to cycle in areas other than his own and neighboring streets. As a result, Abraham now cycles at least 3 times a week, often cycling to school. He has also made connections with other local teenagers who he joins to cycle independently in his free times.

Participant 2: Mrs A, aged 39, joined our PedalMind project to learn how to cycle. Previously, she had never learnt to cycle, nor had she found any suitable opportunities. Having joined our 4-weeks cycle training program, she learnt how to confidently cycle off-road with no assistance. She was overjoyed at this and below are some of the quotes from Mrs A:

"I've always wanted to cycle as a child but nobody ever taught me how to. As an adult, I've sought opportunities but never found any. These sessions have been so uplifting for several reasons; the lessons took place right next to my house at the local park; the park isn't very busy and the instructors were extremely supportive and non-judgmental that I no longer felt ashamed or intimidated to get on a bike; learning in a group with other women took away the fear of stigma that exists in our community."

"I've generally lacked confidence in myself. Having learnt how to cycle – something I aspired to achieve for a long time – it has boosted my self-confidence."

Mrs A then went on to join our Cycle Together group led bike rides where she gained confidence in cycling on the road and around various heritage cycling routes.

"I've generally lacked confidence in myself. Having learnt how to cycle – something I aspired to achieve for a long time – it has boosted my self-confidence."

- Mrs A