



anyone who has experienced this.

You can start off indoors with a stationary bike if balance or fitness are issues. It's also easy to gradually build up stamina and distance. Group cycling provides support and accountability. You can also adapt your own riding style to your new reality, while standard bikes are themselves eminently adaptable. On top of that, there's a plethora of different cycles for all kinds of injuries, from e-bikes for a bit of extra oomph to handcycles for those with limited use of their legs.

I cycled to Paris with a woman who had suffered a serious brain injury. She could no longer use a standard cycle but was determined that her injury wouldn't stop her cycling, so she invested in a trike. The whole group cheered when three of the mechanics managed to lift her and her tricycle up for that famous photo in front of the Eiffel Tower.

Dr Kay Inckle of inclusive cycling charity **Wheels for Wellbeing** (wheelsforwellbeing.org.uk) says: "Cycling can be a fantastic way to exercise and to keep mobile, independent and feel good after a life-changing injury or health experience. However, it's not always obvious what cycle is going to work for each individual and it's really important that people feel safe, comfortable and have just the right level of physical challenge/ input while cycling.

"We recommend that someone goes along to an inclusive cycling centre (they are all over the country) where they can

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Left to right: Handcycling demo in Saughton Park, Edinburgh. Back to normality for Janet (seated at the rear) on a Bicycle Belles group ride. Andrew has ridden the Trans Pennine Trail on his handcycle. Janet on her e-bike, riding outdoors again for the first time

try out a whole range of different cycles in a safe, off-road environment with specially trained instructors. Electric assistance is important for many disabled cyclists, and it's worth trying different types of e-cycles."

ELECTRIC AVENUES

Janet describes her e-bike as a "godsend". She had only bought it the previous Christmas. Her other bike is a tourer, which she wasn't sure she would have been able to ride after the stroke. The e-bike, however, with its smaller wheels, lower standover, more upright position and flat handlebar, meant the only adaptation she had to make was to drop the saddle slightly: "I dropped the saddle a tiny bit, just about half a centimetre, so I was able to push off, put the battery on high, and get going without wobbling so much."

These days Andrew rides a Freedom Ryder electric handcycle but he started out rather differently. After doing some research he found it was possible to get a clip-on handcycle for wheelchairs. However, these only work on rigid-framed wheelchairs, which aren't available on the NHS. Buying one would cost about £4,000.

As an engineer, he knew there must be a solution, so he got some gas pipes and built a frame for his wheelchair that the handcycle could clip into. He was, he says, "elated" because he could cycle again. "It was hard because it uses a different technique and different muscles, but I could do it."

But disaster struck: when Andrew took

Above left: Andy Catlin. Others by Janet Atherton & Andrew Mout