



Clockwise from bottom left:
The New Routes group explores Birmingham's canal towpaths. Gus Cairns (leading) of the Dunoon Bothy project. CeCe Balfour (left) and mum Vicky from the New Forest Off-Road Club. Lowri Evans (second right) of Chester & North Wales CTC



with this is to be firm so that the group stays together."

The project also provides participants with refurbished bikes and has been very successful at getting people from the surrounding area out in the open air, enjoying the chance for some companionship and learning a new skill. One recent ride attracted 13 people.

The goal is to encourage the riders to go further along the 250-mile canal network and eventually take in some sections of road, with a view to using the bikes they have been donated as day-to-day transport.

TEAMWORK MAKES THE DREAM WORK

Lowri Evans is a long-standing ride leader and secretary of Chester & North Wales CTC member group (also known as CTC Caer a Gogledd Cymru). Her way of keeping the group together is to focus on teamwork.

She says: "Everyone on the ride should be coming along ready to have fun – even though this might be type two fun – and with the expectation that they have a part to play in ensuring that all have a safe and enjoyable ride, with great company, an interesting route, friendly cafés and good weather as a bonus."

Many people might not feel confident enough in their navigation skills to offer their services as a ride leader. Lowri uses various methods to plan her rides. She says: "If it is an unfamiliar route, I tend to look at an Ordnance Survey map and may try to plan it on Ride With GPS. For a very

local route, it is usually local knowledge, with variations according to weather, time and mechanicals."

Sometimes rides are planned around a particular theme, such as to take in routes with lots of daffodils on St David's Day. Her most recent ride was only five miles, almost all on cycle paths: "We ended up doing some 'forest bathing', which was a new term to me."

Lowri doesn't claim that things never go awry and, despite 25 years of ride leading, says she is always learning. "There is always scope to learn and improve. I have done both the one-day Cycling UK Club Leader training course and the much newer online course for members. It's helpful to try to keep up to date and get new ideas."

She'll also always listen to others if their local knowledge is better at, for example, predicting when it's going to rain, and she recommends appointing "a really good back marker to assist, or even leading from the back yourself, so you can keep an eye on riders who may need some extra support."

TIPS AND TACTICS

Lowri's other top tips for making sure nobody gets lost or discouraged include "encouraging riders to look back to see if everyone is there. There are times on rides when it can help to let faster riders go ahead, with an arranged point for regrouping. Stronger riders can also shelter others if riding into a strong headwind. On most rides there isn't a GPX route sent out ▶

Ride leader resources

Cycling UK supports groups and ride leaders with a wide range of resources such as our Ride Leader's Toolkit. This includes the Ride Leader Standards Handbook, which has advice to increase your confidence and proficiency in leading rides and groups.

We also provide training, such as our free online course for Cycling UK members and member groups, as well as tailored in-person, paid-for training for small groups from cycling clubs or other organisations such as police, prisons and recovery houses. In the current financial year, we're delivering 90-plus courses across the UK in on and off-road ride leading, bike maintenance and first aid.

Our website has more on:

- Local groups and cycling clubs: cyclinguk.org/local-groups
- What to do if there's an incident on a group ride: cyclinguk.org/group-ride-incident
- Free online training course for member group ride leaders: cyclinguk.org/ride-leader-training
- Other courses and training: cyclinguk.org/courses-and-training/courses-available