

CYCLOPEDIA

Knowhow



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Making sense of commonly
misunderstood subjects

Groups

How can we build community through cycling?

Many people would assume cycling in a group is an elite sport for (primarily) male participants wearing Lycra and shoes that make a strange clicky-clackety noise when they dismount their carbon fibre machines to drink double espressos in a trendy café – if they stop at all during their 100-mile blast.

Happily, however, there are now groups working towards encouraging greater participation by people from communities that haven't, until now, felt as if they 'belonged' in cycling at all. Nicola Carass is co-founder of the Cycling UK-affiliated New Forest Off-Road Club, which "centres on the experience of women, trans and non-binary people", with some riders also at the intersection of perceived barriers such as disability, age or body size.

The group has a mission "to increase representation in the outdoors by providing guided, matriarchal experiences" and to supply the tools for others to do the same. 'How to build community' workshops explain how the group is "dismantling the patriarchy, one ride at a time" and "guide others through how to start their own mission-led vibe".

Nicola advocates cultivating a culture of community, compassion and tolerance when it comes to attracting people from underrepresented backgrounds to cycling. Her top tips for creating a space where everyone feels confident and connected include the following.

- **Remove barriers** such as expensive branded jerseys and other cycling kit. Let people to wear whatever they feel comfortable in.



Photo: New Forest Off Road Club

- **Don't comment on or criticise** their choice of bike unless it's unsafe. "Recognise the inequality in bike ownership and make concessions and adjustments where needed."
- **Lead with empathy** and vulnerability, focusing on community and opportunities for social contact above the amount of mileage covered.
- **Assume everyone is doing their best.** All mistakes provide a learning opportunity.
- **Create a mission, vision and principles** based on a shared mindset that reflects your group's ethos.
- **Equip people with the skills they need** to become confident ride leaders, guides and mechanics by reinvesting any surplus funds into the group.
- **Recognise that cliques can arise** and take steps to ensure that everyone feels included.
- **Focus on the pleasure of cycling** and "recognise the glory of the matriarchy!"
- **Form allyships** with like-minded organisations and individuals.
- **Celebrate difference and diversity** so that people come for the riding but become 'accidental activists'.
- **Establish a network of facilitators** from early adopters of the above principles. ●

Resources for groups

Cycling UK has a wide range of articles and resources for groups looking to attract a more diverse audience or people who wish to set up their own cycling clubs. From an Introduction to EDI (Equity, Diversity and Inclusion) webinar to an EDI officer toolkit to tips on how to set up a new group and welcome people to it, we've got it covered. Affiliation to Cycling UK also brings with it the benefit of peace of mind when it comes to having insurance for your activities, as long as they are run in accordance with our guidelines.

cyclinguk.org/local-groups

cyclinguk.org/new-forest-off-road-club

Build your own community through cycling

Have a culture of 'smiles not miles'



Create rides around a theme or food, such as a 'pie ride'



Promote rides with interesting destinations



Take time to learn people's preferred pronouns



Avoid creating cliques by not only riding alongside people like you

