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Cycling UK

The Reason to Velocheer!
Cycling UK Volunteering Strategy 2018-2023



Dan Howard
Chair of Cycling UK

Introduction

It's people who are key to bringing about positive, lasting change. For us, people who are passionate about cycling are a vital ingredient in building happier, healthier communities. And those who are willing to generously volunteer their passion, knowledge, skills and time to support others to get on a bike are an essential element of Cycling UK.

We have a vibrant, varied and highly skilled volunteer community and we feel lucky to be supported by them. They do valuable hands-on roles, both as individuals and in groups, to create better cycling conditions and inspire others to get involved.

Our Volunteering Strategy 2018-2023: The Reason to Velocheer aims to reflect how valuable these volunteers are to us, how we can better connect, support and empower them and how we might grow the number of volunteers in cycling to achieve our mission

Contents

1	5-8
Introduction & Foreword	About our Volunteers
2	9-10
The Value of Volunteering	What do we need to do?
3	11-13
Our Volunteering Vision	How will we get there?
4	14
The Volunteering Landscape	What next?

Foreword

“Volunteering has been at the heart of Cycling UK for 140 years and I’m delighted to be launching our new volunteering strategy. Our new vision is clear and ambitious - to enable millions more people to cycle. If we are to succeed, we must continue to engage the thousands of people who volunteer with us and inspire many more to do so in the future. This strategy sets out a clear plan to enable even more people to make a real difference to our work – we want to make sure volunteers feel welcomed, inspired, supported and valued. We will do this by improving the experience, growing the network and evaluating the impact.

I started volunteering for Cycling UK around 25 years ago by leading rides in my local area. At a local and national level, what inspires me is seeing people new to cycling having the confidence to ride, seeing existing cyclists doing more of what they enjoy, and creating the right environment to support future generations. I do this while reflecting on the difference that cycling has made to my life and those around me. Everyone has their own ‘cycling story’ which should be celebrated.

I’m enormously proud of what volunteers have achieved for Cycling UK over the past 140 years across all areas of our work and in all parts of the UK. As we move forward and look to the future, we have a renewed commitment to think more strategically about volunteering across the organisation, as well as embedding, celebrating and building on what has been achieved to date.”



“I am **passionate** about inspiring as many people as possible to get on their bikes”

The Value of Volunteering

The Heart

Volunteers are at the heart of what we do. Without them, many activities would not be possible, costs would be prohibitive, our skill base, reach and relationships would all be reduced. Our volunteers tell us that they get enormous value from volunteering in cycling and that they want to inspire and provide support to others. Volunteering is therefore vital for us as an organisation and the communities that we support. Our mission of enabling millions more people to cycle would simply not be possible without them.

Our Strategy

Because of this, volunteering is a central element of Cycling UK’s new five year strategy - Enabling Millions More People to Cycle. We want to connect and equip the cycling movement and provide more opportunities to get involved in a thriving cycling culture. In order to do this, we need volunteers to:

- **inspire and enable more people from all backgrounds to fit cycling into their everyday lives**
- **influence those with the power to make it easier for people to cycle.**

The Reason to Velocheer does not provide all the answers or detail every volunteer programme. What it does do is make a strategic commitment to volunteering, mapping the actions we will take and the solutions we will find over the next five years. It talks about our volunteering “network” or “community”. This includes volunteers directly supporting us as an organisation, and the many volunteers who give their time to cycling groups that are connected to us.

To our volunteers

- The opportunity to take on a challenge
- Meet likeminded people and help them to cycle
- Do something you feel passionate about
- Feel part of a community; part of something bigger
- Give something back
- Develop your confidence, skills, experience, sense of purpose
- Give others enjoyment and have fun at the same time
- Enjoy personal benefits from being more active physically and mentally
- Work in a team

To our communities

- Enables a wider range of accessible and affordable activities and opportunities to cycle
- Allows people to do something they are passionate about
- Enables them to be part of something bigger
- Delivers social and health benefits of spending time being active with groups and like-minded individuals
- Increases confidence in everyday cycling
- Provides encouragement, advice and support
- Organises activities so people go cycling and have fun

To Cycling UK

- Part of our heritage
- Gives us a stronger and more proactive voice
- Delivers a service we wouldn’t be able to provide otherwise
- Helps us sustain local cycling activity
- Provides us with a better understanding of local regions
- Has a positive influence on our profile and reputation
- Brings extra knowledge, relationships, expertise and skills
- Increases our brand awareness, visibility and reach

Our Volunteering Vision

Our Mission

An active and inspirational volunteer network which is empowered and united to support more people to cycle.

Our Vision

Our volunteers are recognised as being at the heart of everything we do and feel valued and supported to use their time and expertise to make a significant contribution, both to their communities and to our mission.

How will we do this?

Key themes

Aim

What success looks like

Improving the Experience



We want to continually improve the quality of the experience for our volunteer network

SYSTEMS
Systems, policies and processes which make life simpler and clearer for the volunteer

COMMUNICATION
Volunteers who feel valued, informed, celebrated and communicated with at every stage of their volunteer journey

SUPPORT
Groups that are provided with tools and guidance to support them in identifying, recruiting, training and retaining their own volunteers

CULTURE
A workforce that understands, values and celebrates volunteering as integral to the success of the organisation and is committed to improving the volunteer experience

Growing the Network



We want to support the sustainability of our Cycling UK activities and those of our groups by recruiting more volunteers from different backgrounds

OFFER
A series of volunteering opportunities that offer rewarding and unique roles which are relevant to modern lifestyles

DIVERSITY
Active encouragement, support and empowerment of volunteers from all backgrounds and interests to get involved in cycling

CONTRIBUTION
Volunteers that input their views and ideas and contribute to the direction of travel of the volunteer programme and organisation

Evaluating the Impact



We want to better understand the volunteers that support us and the impact that they have so we can share learning and be clear that we are achieving what we set out to do

IMPACT
A clear understanding of who all our volunteers are, what they do, what they think and what value they add, and use this to continually improve

CONNECT
Volunteers and groups that are empowered to share learning and offer peer support to each other, with the ability to share learning with partner organisations



Outcome:

More people on the ground with the tools and support they need to champion cycling by: helping; inspiring; and influencing.



“ I naturally want to **help & advise** people ”

The Volunteering Landscape

The landscape for volunteering is changing. Our Volunteering Strategy aims to respond to many of the challenges and opportunities facing organisations who rely on volunteers. By putting volunteers at the heart of what we do, and professionalising our approach, we can achieve our new volunteering vision.

National surveys show that across all UK nations, volunteering has remained relatively stable for the last five years. Sport is still one of the most commonly supported sectors for volunteering, particularly with men; with organising and helping run community activities or events also being very popular.

Diversity and Volunteering:

But volunteering does lack diversity, with socio-economic status, education and ethnicity all being key contributing factors to participation. On top

of this, barriers and benefits are personal to each volunteer and widely variable depending on the individual. Encouragingly however, volunteering with a club or a group for 16-25 year-olds has been increasing - this age group in England is now the most likely to undertake formal volunteering. This provides an opportunity to diversify our volunteer base and empower new volunteers to get involved. In Cycling UK, the majority of volunteers are white, over 50 and male. Like many charities, we need proactive strategies to recruit a wider variety of volunteers to inspire more people to cycle.

Modern-Day Volunteering:

How people want to volunteer is changing. Modern-day lifestyles can be challenging for people to find time to get more involved. People tend to move in and out of volunteering rather than volunteering consistently for an extended period. Shorter, easy to complete, specific tasks are key to attracting new volunteers.

Virtual volunteering tasks have the potential to provide more flexible opportunities, but whilst online tools have helped to mobilise more people into informal volunteering, they

have not led to greater diversity or an increase in those engaging with organised groups.

Group Volunteering:

Doing activities together and the benefits of the social side of volunteering in a group are known to be hugely important, and something we should champion. But it is increasingly difficult to recruit into traditional sport committee-based volunteering roles, which can be seen as too time-consuming. Working with groups to encourage more “task-based volunteering” with smaller, more varied roles around planned activities will be key going forward.

Volunteering Influence:

Social action in the local community is also key. Generally, people feel they can have more influence at a local level and care about the impact they have where they live. Volunteers want to understand and know how they have made a difference, however small, so communicating this is important. Some want to get more involved, helping co-create or using their professional skills to advise or shape charitable work, but are unaware of how their individual skills or knowledge could be of use.

Some volunteers want to help co-create or use their professional skills to shape charitable work

Shorter, easy to complete, specific tasks are key to attracting new volunteers

The benefits of the social side of volunteering in a group are hugely important

About our volunteers

We have over 7000 registered and an estimated 1800 unregistered volunteers doing incredible work for our organisation and the wider cycling network, and we want to improve our relationship with them. Many of our volunteers do not consider themselves as volunteers, simply taking part in activities they enjoy. Many also do not engage or communicate with us. Our current systems and tools to monitor activity and communicate with existing volunteers need improvement. Finding out more about our volunteers, providing better support, shouting about what they do and harnessing their

enthusiasm is a priority for the organisation.

Although equality and diversity data on our volunteers is scarce, a recent survey indicates that those who responded from our volunteer base are not diverse. The majority of our volunteers are male (74%), over 50 (84%) and white (94%). We are committed to actively encouraging, supporting and empowering volunteers from traditionally underrepresented groups in cycling volunteering. This commitment is an integral part of both our Cycling UK organisational and volunteering strategies.



Their roles

Volunteers support many key roles, either as an individual or as part of one of our local groups:

Some volunteers work at a national or regional level, but in the main they are hands-on volunteers in their local area making a difference to the community where they live.

We know we need to innovate to connect our communities so there can be more quality roles and opportunities for volunteering. These roles will help and inspire others to cycle or influence those that can make it easier to cycle. They might campaign, lead rides, fix bikes, run events, but whatever their role, they have in common their passion for cycling and an understanding that it can bring huge benefits to individuals and communities.



We know how unique this support is and how lucky we are to have it.

Helen Knell Campaign Volunteer

Helen helped bring about much-needed improvements to conditions for cyclists on the Isle of Sheppey. She started the Lower Road Campaign to lobby for a cycle/pedestrian track on a busy road which was narrow and very dangerous. After nearly being knocked off her bike, she decided it was time for action and formed a working group to share the load. After Helen and her fellow campaigners had attended a lot of meetings with local politicians and planners, funding for the new track was finally found.

Helen says: "I am pleased that we did our bit towards getting the cycle track and very glad that I did



“It is good to feel that I can still make a difference to my world and do something to help other people”

not simply go home and moan.” She added: “I find volunteering very fulfilling. It is good to feel that I can still make a difference to my world and do something to help other people. Through the

campaign I have learnt quite a bit about local politics and have great respect for most of our local politicians. I have also made friends with the people I have worked with.”

Our Groups

Most of our volunteering supports group-based activity, with over 1000 groups making up the Cycling UK network. Local groups and the volunteers that support them are essential in delivering social cycling activities or campaigning and advocacy work in local communities. They include Cycling UK Member Groups with volunteers, running rides and activities especially for Cycling UK members. The service and commitment of these volunteers is remarkable and supports approximately 20,000 members to take part in leisure riding.

We also have cycling groups across the country who affiliate with us to receive benefits such as insurance, networking and guidance. Many volunteers with these local groups do not identify themselves as part of the Cycling UK network, even though their

group is a member. Whilst there is no need to overly formalise our relationship with every single volunteer, we value all group volunteers and see them as essential to getting millions more people on their bikes.

Some groups and individual volunteers have evolved from their original roles and are influencing and advocating for cycling at a high level by:

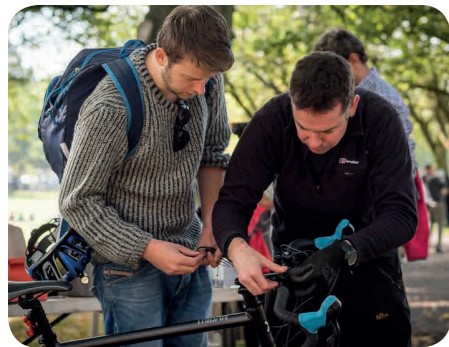
- representing Cycling UK at stakeholder groups
- raising awareness of Cycling UK to public, politicians and partners
- responding to high level consultations.

These volunteers tell us they would like more support and communication, with an agreed strategic direction for the work that they have contributed to.

4064
member
volunteers

5082
affiliate
volunteers

More essentially, they also want to feel empowered to use their considerable knowledge and skills to make a difference. We recognise this is not an easy area to get right and commit to finding a joint solution with these groups and volunteers.



The Potential

The Cycling UK community is large, comprising of existing volunteers as well as members, supporters and social media followers who currently do not volunteer. Recent surveys indicate that 40% of members would be interested in volunteering for the organisation but are not currently doing so. Many of the reasons given are things we can do something about such as: "I haven't been asked" or "I don't know what roles are available". 35% of respondents who want to volunteer don't have time at the moment.

This indicates a willingness to get involved. It suggests that we have an eager and sizeable community of potential volunteers who would consider moving from being a member or receiving our communications, to generously giving their time, skills and knowledge to help our cause. Our challenge is ensuring there are high quality volunteer roles that are fit for

busy lives then linking those willing to the right activities for them. It also shows the importance of keeping in touch with existing and potential volunteers who might dip in and out of volunteering as and when they have the opportunity.

We know that volunteers want to hear from us more and we are committed to improving the quality of the experience for them. We also know that our volunteers want to speak and share with each other. Our networking events that give groups and individual volunteers a platform to share ideas leave attendees energised and wanting more. Volunteers doing similar things in totally different areas of the UK want to be connected to learn from each other. If we can equip volunteers with tools such as events, buddying and online systems, they can support each other to grow in confidence, skills and knowledge.

Ensure there are high quality roles that are fit for busy lives

If we can equip volunteers with tools such as events, buddying and online systems, they can support each other

What they say

40%
Of our members are interested in volunteering*

14% I haven't been asked

35% I haven't got time at the moment

11% I don't know how to go about it

23% I don't know what roles are available

7% I haven't got around to it

10% Other

We have an eager and sizeable community of potential volunteers who would consider helping our cause

Joy Anibaba Joyful Bellas and Fellas Community Cycling Club

“Go for it! Best thing I ever did. I'm amazed at how much I and others love it. I really **love cycling**”



Joy Anibaba, a local government officer, (pictured in black helmet centre of photo) founded and helps run Birmingham-based Joyful Bellas and Fellas Community Cycling Club.

The group enables other women just starting out to get practice, gain confidence and ride at their own pace. It meets every Saturday morning and the riders do laps around Edgbaston reservoir for about two hours. Joy says about volunteering: "It's improved my confidence, my riding ability, and my mental and physical health too."

In response to what she would say to someone considering volunteering with Cycling UK groups, she adds: "Go for it! Best thing I ever did. I'm amazed at how much I and others love it. I really love cycling."

What do we need to do?

Providing every volunteer, regardless of their role, with quality support, training and tools is essential to achieve our vision of millions more people cycling.

We need to identify a **wide range of quality opportunities** to attract a more diverse range of people

We need to **help our groups recruit volunteers** and offer them guidance on how to support and manage them

We need to be **clear about the impact** and importance of every role

We need to **respond quickly and efficiently** to volunteer enquiries with expert professional advice

We need to ensure we provide a **quality experience** that best utilises and builds on the volunteers' skills

We need **easy to complete volunteering** opportunities that people can dip in and out of when they have the opportunity

We need to keep **bureaucracy to a minimum** where we can and make it as easy as possible to volunteer

We need to **thank and recognise volunteers** throughout the year

We need to **ask people to get involved** and raise awareness of how they can

We need to put in place systems and tools that can help us **monitor volunteer activity** and measure its impact

We need to **support volunteers throughout their journey**, from smooth induction to leaving on a high note

We need to have a **clear plan for how strategic and professional volunteers can contribute** to our organisation

We need to **develop tools** to collect and share learning with and between volunteers, **understand their views** and needs and use this information to improve our support

We need to **facilitate fluid movement** between different volunteer roles and tasks so that volunteers can continue to contribute at some level even if their personal circumstances change



'Pat Standen (second from left), Secretary of Cycle Ayrshire Member Group says of volunteering: "Do it! We've discovered everyone has useful skills whether simply being friendly or sharing bike know-how, making cups of tea or route planning. The list is endless and being part of a group is great fun."

"I wanted to give my **professional skills**"

"Volunteering introduced me to so many people who **love cycling**"

"I volunteer for the **knowledge, skills and a sense of pride**"

There are five important volunteer types that need developing:

- 1 Strategic Volunteering:** there are some volunteers that already undertake strategic tasks for us. We would like to create more opportunity for these sorts of roles in the relevant areas. For example, developing and supporting advisory boards in each of the devolved nations to offer country-specific guidance or providing advice on a specific programme of work.
- 2 Professional Volunteering:** we know that our members and supporters have considerable professional skills in a wide range of areas. We also know there are potential corporate partners who can contribute their knowledge and time. We need to ask for support from volunteers with specific professional skills to help contribute to set pieces of work.
- 3 Micro-volunteering:** we need to develop opportunities for short, defined tasks relevant to modern-day lifestyles to enable new volunteers to contribute without a significant investment of time.
- 4 Group Volunteering:** we need to make it easier to volunteer for all our groups. Reducing rules where possible; offering more guidance and tools for volunteer recruitment; improving communications, responsiveness and collaboration; and offering accessible, remote training are all areas for us to work on.
- 5 Campaign Volunteering:** Creating more opportunities, using volunteers' individual skills; clarifying our group offering; and improving communications will all help us to support and grow our volunteer campaign network. But we also need to create accessible tools and resources to enable volunteers and groups to campaign effectively locally and support the delivery of our national campaigns. The review of our campaign network will inform how we do this.

Graham Brodie Devon Member Group

Graham, a retired engineer, is long-term Secretary of CTC Devon and helps organise many of its flagship events such as the Devon Dirt (pictured right) and the Devon Delight Challenge Ride.

Graham, who is also a qualified cycle instructor, has such an enthusiasm and passion for cycling that he wants to inspire others to take it up. He has been volunteering

within Cycling UK since the 1970s. He feels most proud when an event goes well and has positive feedback. He describes his volunteering as “hard but worthwhile”, adding to anybody considering it: “Go for it, it’s very rewarding!”



“Go for it! It’s very rewarding”

How will we get there?

Improving the Experience

We want to continually improve the quality of the experience for our volunteer network. We recognise that our volunteers are doing amazing things and that we need to support them better. There are key tasks we can work on, from improving our communication and responsiveness to volunteers, to recognising their incredible work and providing better guidance and tools.

We make the following commitments:

- We will ensure that Cycling UK is operating policies and procedures that are compliant with best practice
- We will develop a volunteering induction that is inspiring, informative and accessible online
- We will identify and deliver a volunteer management tool that allows us to monitor and communicate with all our volunteers and hold data safely and securely
- We will develop a “volunteer journey” that provides opportunity for two-way communication on a regular basis at every stage of their involvement with us
- We will celebrate, thank and champion volunteers and their stories by launching a brand-new Reward and Recognition programme
- We will work to increase the visibility of staff and Trustees to volunteers and groups to help them feel more valued and connected
- We will develop with volunteers a clear code of conduct and responsibilities for groups along with advice and tools for effective volunteer management that groups can use
- We will develop a new group membership that helps sustain local volunteer-led activities
- We will run recruitment campaigns for our groups to help them fill vacant volunteer roles
- We will identify a programme for volunteers of cycling specific training courses and more general volunteer skill development

H3 Supported Cycling Scheme Community Cycling Club



“I know how important having a decent mentor is”

This Stockport-based Community Cycling Club helps people experiencing homelessness to participate in cycling activities, especially at weekends when there is little support for them. Volunteers lead its rides, enabling service users to enjoy the outdoors, visit new places, build confidence and enjoy a group activity. All ability levels are catered for, from beginner to the more experienced, and cycling provides improved mental and physical health and wellbeing.

Ride routes and locations can be planned with service users that want to engage in this way. Rides can also be used to go and visit attractions as a group.

The club has recently benefited from a Cycling UK-led initiative to enrol more volunteer ride leaders. New recruit Margaret Mulowska says: “I’m particularly interested in supporting the hostel’s women – there seems to be many more barriers to cycling for women than for men.”

Fellow recruit Steve Rathbone says: “I’m a vicar, and know how important having a decent mentor is, someone who is supportive and listens – and you can do that while out cycling.”

Growing the Network

We want to support the sustainability of Cycling UK activities and those of our groups by recruiting more volunteers from all backgrounds. We recognise the huge potential and passion of the Cycling UK Network and the wider cycling community and want to harness this by providing more opportunities to get involved.

We make the following commitments:

- We will identify and publicise a series of micro-volunteering opportunities
- We will build a new corporate volunteering package that engages this sector in supporting our work
- We will review and launch a new programme for volunteer campaigners
- We will run recruitment campaigns to fill identified roles
- We will develop a small grant fund where local groups can bid to run new projects that tackle volunteer and cycling diversity
- We will investigate the potential for new partnerships and build more volunteer support into existing community programmes to help diversify our volunteering
- We will investigate through training and education how we can develop youth volunteers in cycling
- We will identify and publicise the professional and strategic roles that volunteers could play for our organisation
- We will develop and support effective systems for voluntary advisory groups in all devolved nations

David Aris ABC Edinburgh

Cycling UK's All-ability Bike Centre in Edinburgh has around 15 regular volunteers who assist people on and off the bikes and trikes, buddy up with them on rides or help them to learn to ride for the first time; they also assist in maintaining the fleet of adapted cycles and many other tasks. One of the standout volunteers is David Aris (pictured on the left with regular rider William Porter on the right).

David has balance and coordination difficulties and first came to the project as a participant but was keen to get more involved. He has been riding a trike since he was young and uses his own every day for getting around

to his other work and volunteering engagements, as well as shopping, meeting friends and so on. David is very enthusiastic about cycling and was keen to get involved in Edinburgh ABC as a volunteer, after taking Cycle Ride Leader training and a Velotech Silver mechanics course.

David says: "The best thing about helping with Edinburgh ABC is meeting people and helping them get cycling. I love it. Love meeting the group".



“I love it. Love meeting the group”

Evaluating the Impact

We want to better understand the volunteers that support us and the impact that they have so we can share learning and be clear that we are achieving what we set out to do

We make the following commitments:

- We will produce an evaluation plan setting out clear outputs and indicators and how we will measure the impact of our volunteer activity
- We will develop clear departmental and country specific volunteering plans to deliver this volunteering strategy
- We will use the new volunteer management tool to provide better information and analysis of volunteer numbers, behaviour and impact
- We will devise a consistent method of tracking volunteer output, outcomes and key indicators of success across all areas
- We will facilitate shared learning with and between volunteers and use this information to improve our support
- We will develop online tools and face to face events that connect volunteers for peer to peer support
- We will complete a value benchmarking exercise to clearly represent the contribution of volunteers to our charity and learn from other organisations



Together, we can build an active and inspirational volunteer network who are empowered and united to support more people to cycle.

What next?

We are proud of the work that our volunteers and those of our groups do. We are committed to ensuring volunteers feel valued and supported in using their time and expertise to make a significant contribution, both to their communities and to our mission.

Implementation

This strategy document will not just sit on a shelf – it will help guide and focus our work and the support we offer. It is accompanied by an action plan of tasks needed to meet the objectives. A new volunteer policy will lay out clear procedures and systems for how we manage and support our volunteers. At its core it's about effective support and relationships which deliver two-way communication on a regular basis at every stage of a volunteer's involvement with us.

Investment

We will invest in this strategy and have identified a five-year budget to ensure it can be delivered. We are prioritising investment in:

- our staff capacity and skills to ensure we can provide volunteers with expert advice and guidance, including developing an employee volunteering programme
- a small grant pot for groups to apply to for funds to run more diverse cycling activities
- IT tools to make volunteer management for ourselves and our groups easier and help connect volunteers to each other
- ensuring our processes and systems are best practice and compliant with current legislation
- an induction and training programme for volunteers to develop their skills and knowledge
- an updated reward and recognition programme that encourages and inspires current and future volunteers

Review and action

Given its duration, it is key that the accompanying action plan is flexible so the volunteer programme can respond to new ways of working or seize opportunities for innovation. There will be continual ways for volunteers to contribute to how we change and the way we do things – our learning is an ongoing process. An evaluation plan setting out clear outputs and indicators, including how we will measure the impact of volunteering

and whether we are on track to deliver the strategy will be produced.

Responsibility

There is a lot to do and staff and volunteers working together will be key to making it happen. We are already taking positive steps to turn this strategy into reality. The Volunteer Network Team has been created to write new policies, communications, training and guidance to deliver the strategy. Volunteers will be embedded into each area of Cycling UK, with clear roles and designated volunteer points of contacts identified and trained. We are moving from a system where volunteers are the responsibility of one team to volunteers being at the heart of all the work we do.

Most importantly, time and space to listen to, innovate and create with our volunteers will help us develop the best foundations and tools.

Working in partnership with other organisations is crucial. We want to share best practice, connect together and collaborate on new and innovative ways of working with other stakeholders in the sport, health and environment fields. It is not possible to achieve the change that is necessary on our own.



we are
cycling
The cyclists' champion **UK**

Contact

If you would like to comment on the strategy or find out more about volunteering, then contact the Volunteer Network Support Team on: 01483 238300

volunteering@cyclingsuk.org
www.cyclingsuk.org/volunteer

For our Cycling UK volunteer newsletter - Velocheer, visit www.cyclingsuk.org/velocheer