

A JOURNEY OF INSPIRATION AND OPPORTUNITY

Our vision for women's cycling
2013 - 2020



Supported by



At British Cycling, in partnership with Sky, we have never been scared of a challenge, nor of setting ambitious targets. Whether it is winning eight gold medals at a home Olympics four years after the triumphs of Beijing, producing the first British winner of the Tour de France or getting a million people cycling, we are proud of our record of achievement.

The next four years present a number of challenges, not least sustaining the elite success which has driven substantial rises in participation.

A fair share of that elite success is due to the exceptional progress made by our women riders. Until Beijing we had won one Olympic medal in a woman's event – Yvonne MacGregor's bronze in Sydney. Since then we have won 10 medals across two Games and, in Sarah Storey, seen a rider win four golds at a single Paralympics. Becky James was the sensation of the Track Cycling World Championships in February, winning two rainbow jerseys, and cementing Britain's place at the top of the medal table. We are proud that we have produced so many female role models.

This has not happened by accident but as the result of sustained investment in the potential of some extraordinary women. Now the challenge is to use that inspiration to effect significant change in the number of women cycling. Across sport, women's participation levels are well behind men in just about every area so this will not be easy.

At British Cycling, when we set ourselves goals, we set about them with seriousness and purpose. We are not saying we are going to be perfect, far less that we are perfect now. The direction of travel is important: our overarching target is to inspire one million more women to get on bikes and this is a summary of how we are going to do it.

Brian Cookson,
President | British Cycling



Image courtesy of Rick at cyclesportphotos.com



Image courtesy of Flickr at cyclesportphotos.com

Introduction

Inspiring more women to cycle more often, be it for fun, health, sustainable transport or winning bike races, is a major opportunity for British Cycling to shift the culture and accessibility of a sport that has become so successful and high profile in the UK today.

Our vision for women’s cycling is a statement of clear intent to change the cycling landscape and get one million more women and girls on their bikes by 2020.

This plan provides a summary of where we are today with women’s cycling, the barriers and motivations to cycle and a range of solutions to make cycling and the sport more accessible. We want to see cycling become a normal activity for more women, enabling them to aspire to progress in the sport with the right support from British Cycling and other providers along the way.

Over the past four years latent demand in cycling among women has increased from 800,000 to 1.1 million. So many women are considering cycling and the challenge is to make it as inviting and easy as possible for them to get involved and support their interests along the whole of the participation and performance pathway as far as they want it to take them.

The disparity between men’s and women’s participation across all sport is considerable and, in cycling, with a 50-year history of a sport dominated by male road racing, it is not surprising to see those differences. The current levels of engagement reflect society, the culture related to women’s sport as well as the perceptions of the sport and its accessibility for women. Since 2008, we have started to challenge ourselves about this disparity and there are some positive developments that demonstrate momentum and success in making cycling more accessible for women. Our elite programme has a 50:50 male/female ratio and, although an equal gender split of events was only delivered at the most recent Olympics, our women have been ahead of the curve in medals won.

After the successes of the 2008 Beijing Olympic and Paralympic Games, British Cycling took a brave step to target grassroots participation and inspire one million new people to start riding their bikes. In collaboration with Sky, Sport England and local government, we delivered a campaign to attract more families into cycling, from Go-Ride for young people to mass participation events



Image courtesy of Flickr at cyclesportphotos.com



and led rides across Britain. In October 2012 we achieved this and inspired 345,000 women to cycle regularly along the way.

During 2012 the number of women cycling once a week increased by over 60,000 to 525,000. The prospect of more girls progressing into the sport is also encouraging as over 35% of the young people in Go-Ride Clubs are girls. Since 2008, 40% more women are commuting by bike – it is apparent that as women ride more frequently, recreationally, for fun and fitness the more likely they are to cycle to work.

In 2010, with the support of the Active Women’s Fund (Sport England) we resourced a new programme ‘Breeze’ to help remove the barriers that women face when considering cycling. This volunteer-organised led-ride programme in over 200 local authorities across England has seen over 16,000 women get involved, including a growing volunteer network. In terms of competition, we have introduced entry-level racing for women and this needs further support to make it more attractive for a greater number of women to consider competing.

Of course, this is not all about women riding with other women. It is about riding with friends, partners, children and families. We need to ensure there are opportunities for all kinds of cycling.

Our greatest success has come from the extraordinary performances of our elite female athletes with Olympic and Paralympic success repeated over two cycles. If there is one thing which defines British Cycling it is that elite success is not an end in itself – it must be used to grow the sport. And, with the prospects of continued success into Rio, we have numerous household names to inspire more women to take up cycling.

The challenge

- Fifty-year history of female under-representation in the sport
- One in four once-a-week cyclists are women
- One in five of cycle sport participants are women
- One in seven British Cycling members are women
- Specific barriers for women and girls engaging in sport, including cycling – we know that the biggest barrier to participation for women is concern about safety.

The ambition

To inspire one million more women to ride, race and be part of British Cycling by 2020.

Our ambition is to improve cycling for women at every level, whether as a sport, a recreational activity or as a sustainable means of transport, making all of them as accessible for women as they are for men.

The change

While clear evidence is emerging that there are more women new to cycling and taking part at the elite end, we know there is a big job to do to attract more women and girls into cycling.

- More opportunities at all levels for women and girls
- Better conversion of women who are considering cycling into participating
- Better representation of women in our structures and decision making at regional, national and board level
- British Cycling to play a stronger leadership role in the growth of female cycling and stimulate investment and support to sustain the growth
- Create new assets to support women’s cycling and give it more profile in our marketing and communication activity
- Continue to campaign for safer roads as we know safety fears are a major barrier for women
- Influencing and making the sport more accessible through club, volunteer, coaching infrastructure and other providers.

“...to inspire one million more women to get on bikes...”



Where we are today

Awareness and interest in cycling among women is growing:

Of the total number of people...	What proportion are women? (%)	How many women is this? (number)	Change over past 4 years (%)	Change over past 4 years (number)
...in the UK that are aware of British Cycling	46%	10,500,000	+79%	+4,600,000
...in England that have a desire to cycle	40%	1,100,000	+37.5%	+300,000
...in England that cycle once a month	33%	1,186,200	-2.7%	-32,900*
...in England that cycle once a week	27%	525,000	+4%	+19,100
...that are members of British Cycling	15%	9,534	+1.8%	+6,220

*this follows general trend in once a month cycling and has resulted in more women increasing their cycling frequency

British Cycling's female participation pathway:



Image: SportCam at Cyclettea, Human Race



Barriers

Over 30% of female respondents to a recent British Cycling survey identified safety concerns as the main barrier to participating in cycling.

The other most common responses were:

- ‘lack of knowledge of local routes’
- ‘nobody to go with’.

In addition, through our research and intelligence gained from the delivery of our programmes to date, we understand there are a number of additional barriers which challenge women specifically from participating in cycling:

- Lack of time
- Lack of confidence on a bike and cycling on the highway
- Lack of female role models, eg ride leaders
- Lack of knowledge of bike maintenance and associated vulnerabilities
- Negative body image associated with kit, equipment and resultant ‘muscular’ physique
- Costs associated with purchase of bike
- Impracticalities of bike transportation.

In terms of the barriers preventing women progressing to challenge rides and racing, we know the visibility and understanding of these opportunities need to improve. That is why we are campaigning to create a safe and enjoyable cycling environment for everyone.



Motivations

The main motivating factors for women to participate in our programmes are to:

- Get fit and healthy
- Meet other cyclists
- Find new routes.

More specifically the female participants provided us with the reasons why they chose a particular ride, the most common reasons were:

- Location close to home
- Design of route, eg. traffic-free
- The opportunity to cycle in a group
- The opportunity to cycle with other women of the same ability
- Low cost.

In terms of women participating in more challenging riding, events and competition the barriers relating to this include:

- Lack of quality information, understanding and visibility of what events and racing opportunities are available
- Entry-level racing requires considerable fitness and bike handling skills and both women and men need further coaching and race practice support to bridge the gap
- The pathway and transition from beginner, to challenge rider, through to racing, is not clear enough and the appropriate support required to help women progress needs to be identified.

We need more insight into the motivations to move into challenge riding and racing.

Where we want to be by 2020

More women cycling more often

- More women and girls involved in recreational cycling through the Breeze participation programme and Sky Ride
- Breeze participants to increase how often they cycle
- More Breeze participants engaging in other opportunities offered by British Cycling
- Sponsorship of the Breeze campaign in order to amplify British Cycling efforts.

Creating opportunities to ride and race

- Establish and develop series of entry-level races at key facility hubs in the regions
- Continue to influence the structure of the calendar at national level to encourage further uptake among women
- Develop specific campaigns at key points during the year to signpost to other disciplines
- Create a place or hub for women’s cycling on the British Cycling website highlighting the opportunities and all the ‘how to’ information
- Put in place systems to capture and promote women-specific club activity, led rides and events.

A pathway that keeps women engaged

- Establish ‘get into cycle sport’ regional coaching sessions based at facilities leading to races or sportives
- Develop holiday coaching programmes for teenagers focusing on coaching and life skills.
- Facilitate female-specific Go-Ride club sessions and Go-Ride Racing events
- Develop inclusive clubs and entry-level races in colleges and universities.

More women running the sport

- Recruit a network of female volunteers across British Cycling’s sport and recreation programmes
- Grow the number of opportunities for women to become coaches, volunteers, leaders, officials and tutors and promote them more widely
- Establish a National Youth Forum with equal male and female representation, consulting with them about offers and opportunities through British Cycling.

More women involved in governing the sport

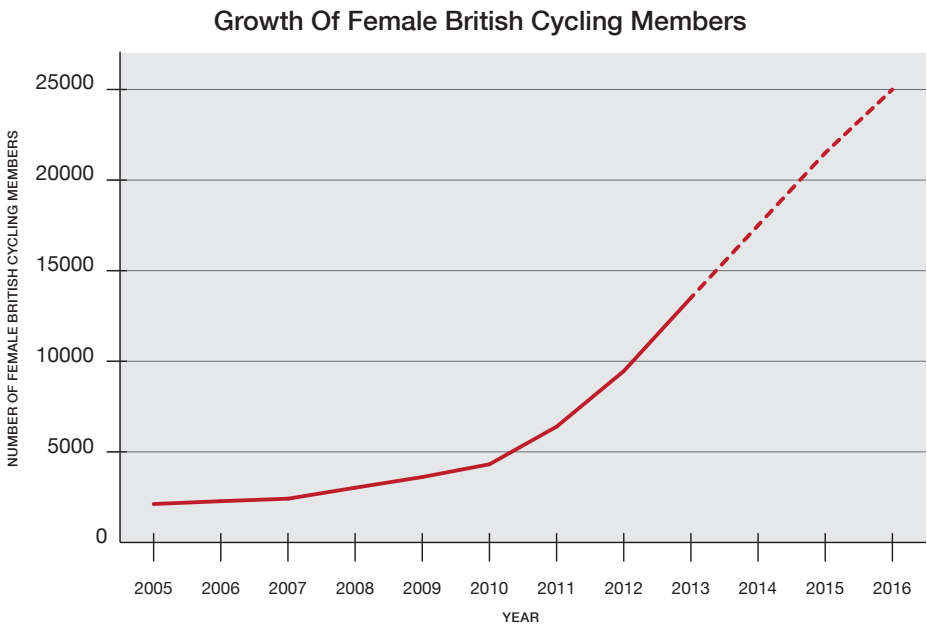
- We know there is a gender imbalance in our democratic structures and we are working to change this. Our intention is to create at least 25% female representation at Board level, so we are more representative, over the course of the next four-year cycle.

Increasing female members

- Achieve higher growth rate of female members
- Increase proportion of female members from 15 to 18% (9,500 to 25,000 members over four years)
- Increase proportion of female members in line with above growth rates – from 15 to 20% by 2020.

Campaigning and commuting

- Continue to campaign for safer roads for all cyclists
- Continue to increase number of women cycling frequently and building their confidence for cycling on the highway
- Maintain the positive trend for women riding to work
- Put women at the heart of our cycle safety campaigning, education programmes and communications.





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