



CONNECTING, EMPOWERING AND HEALING PEOPLE AND COMMUNITIES THROUGH CYCLING

Offering innovative cycling-  
based solutions to many of  
today's challenges

October 2022



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# Our work

Here is an infographic providing an overview of our work and where we can and are making a difference.

## At an individual level



## At a community and institutional level



# Background

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Many of today's major problems such as climate warming, widening economic inequalities, the worsening mental and physical health crisis, and the hollowing out of high streets due to competition from online retailers are clearly global challenges. but increasingly, local communities are the ones taking it upon themselves to tackle them from the bottom up. Indeed, it could be argued that is the only way they will be truly overcome. Cycling Minds CIC was established to play a role in this.



## Our core social purpose

Poor mental health and long-term unemployment: a reality for many of our young people today

The UK's young people are facing a mental and physical health epidemic with the number of A&E attendances by young people with a recorded diagnosis of a psychiatric condition more than tripling between 2010 and 2018-19, and the problem is only growing, with 80% of young people with mental health needs agreeing that the coronavirus pandemic had made their mental health worse. At the same time, while the record number of job vacancies in the UK suggests there is a world of opportunities for young people, figures show one in eight of those aged 18 to 24 are not in education, employment or training. Moreover, young people have been hit the hardest by rising unemployment during the pandemic, with those under the age of 35 accounting for almost 80% of jobs lost in the past year. Official figures show youth long-term unemployment has hit a five-year high, with the number of young people unemployed for more than a year in July to September 2021 increasing by 19% year on year.

Cycling Minds: aspiring to inspire

Cycling Minds CIC was incorporated in Hexham (Northumberland) in November 2021 by three locals with a love of cycling to address both these major issues by providing young people (initially 16-24) struggling to engage with society and the job market, find their way in life and

achieve their full potential – especially those experiencing poor mental health and/or from disadvantaged backgrounds – free access to an e-bike to take part in our Step On(e) guided ride programme, principally to help enhance their mental and physical health but also to encourage them to join Cycling Minds which will act as an anchor organisation, offering them opportunities to interact with the local cycling community and receive training through our Persevere to Succeed programme as bike mechanics and ride leaders and in customer service to be able to volunteer (and eventually gain paid work) with Cycling Minds in a fun, sociable and nurturing environment.

## A link in a bigger chain

In order to fulfil its core social purpose to help young people improve their mental and physical well-being, employability and engagement with society, Cycling Minds opened a community cycling hub in Hexham (The Link) in April 2022 from which it provides bike maintenance services, refurbishes and sells donated bikes and hires out its fleet of e-bikes.

The Link is currently in a temporary home but Cycling Minds intends to use its experiences there to develop a larger and permanent space for The Link over the next two to three years which will house a bike shop run by Cycling Minds' partner Twelfth City Cyclery as headline tenant; a refreshments bar; cycling events such as a sportive, cycling festival, film nights, book-signings, and evenings with VIPs and experts; as well as rentable workspaces for cycling-related businesses and meeting and event spaces.

We are in talks with Northumberland County Council who are open to leasing Cycling Minds a vacant plot of land they own in a prime location in Hexham, and we are being supported by the local consultancy firm D3 Associates, which specialises in community building projects. They will manage all phases of The Link build, starting with the planning and fundraising stage which is now underway.



As its name suggests, despite being in a meanwhile space, The Link is already providing a base where local community groups such as cycle clubs, charities, sustainable travel campaign groups and cycling-related businesses can meet, share ideas, network and ultimately forge partnerships and synergies that are mutually beneficial. The Link is therefore playing an active role in boosting cycle use, developing a cottage cycling industry and

promoting sustainable transport and local economic and community revitalisation through a raft of cycling-related services in Hexham and the rest of West Northumberland.

**Ultimately, Cycling Minds aims to establish a virtuous circle where we leverage cycling as a sport to engage young people initially and then foster a long-lasting relationship with them so that they can develop the skills and knowledge needed to work with us as active participants in developing The Link and ambassadors for cycling in their local communities.**

## Our values

**To nurture togetherness:** We are one community, one team, working toward a common goal: to enhance everyone's well-being.

**To empower the individual:** We create opportunities for personal development through networking, learning and employment.

**To be a driver of change:** We serve as a launchpad from which cycling-based projects and community action can take off and flourish.

**To find solutions to local problems:** We are convinced the health of the local economy and people can be improved through cycling and finding ways to achieve this lies at the heart of what we do.

## Our people

### Toby Price (Director and General Manager)



Cycling Minds was envisaged by Toby who is a freelance Spanish translator and has been a youth football coach with a local girls' team in Hexham for four years. He is a keen cyclist and has experienced first-hand how cycling can play a role in overcoming mental illness. A Velotech Gold accredited bike mechanic, Toby has repaired bikes for members of his local cycling club, Allen Valley Velo, friends and family for several years and ran a popular free bike repair service for key workers during the first Covid-19 lockdown. It was that experience that gave him the inspiration to build Cycling Minds around a bike reconditioning, hire and repair service, having seen that there was a need for these services in Hexham and the surrounding area.

## Dominic Cook (Director)



An engineer with a long track record working in project development in the energy industry, Dominic is currently a director with one of the world's leading engineering professional services consultancies, WSP. He is responsible for senior level business unit operational decision making and delivery of Innovation support to energy innovation companies and consultancy and advisory technical and commercial due diligence services to investors. Dominic has served as treasurer for Hexham Round Table for two years, helping to organise numerous community events and raise funds for local good causes. He competes in triathlons and has also been treasurer for the One Life triathlon club for three years.

## Michael Williams (Director)



Michael is Managing Director of PDL Solutions (Europe) Ltd, a Hexham based subsidiary of the 3,000 strong and Paris based Vulcain Group. PDL comprises 40 well qualified analytical engineers and Michael has responsibility for the day to day running of the business, ensuring regulatory requirements are met and that there is sufficient work to keep the team busy and engaged. By trade, Michael is a Chartered Mechanical Engineer and is a Fellow of the Institute of Mechanical Engineers (IMechE) and the Society for Underwater Technology (SUT) and he is heavily involved in the development of clean energies in the UK. Outside of the work environment, Michael volunteers as a Scout Section Assistant supporting a very active Scout group in Barrasford, and has recently gained further responsibility within the Explorers section – in both cases working to support an enthusiastic bunch of young people. Michael has a passion for cycling, whether that be on the local trails on his mountain bike or on the many and varied Northumbrian country lanes with a bunch of like-minded road cyclists.

## Advisory Board

We couldn't have got Cycling Minds up and riding without the invaluable support of our Advisory Board of volunteer experts in different fields including: Ted Liddle, cycling development and tourism specialist; Thomas Hardy, Twelfth City Cyclery bike shop owner; Justin Rowntree from SweetSpot, advisor and fundraiser for a successful social enterprise working with young people with mental health challenges (Blend Kitchen ); Stef Anderson, Fundraising and Communications Lead at Ouseburn Farm Charity in Newcastle; Linz Philips, former EVP at Sage and board member of Dynamo North East and Digital Leaders; and Tania Thomas, Team Leader of the NHS Living Well Coordination Service.

## Our ambassadors

### Dr Ollie Hart



Ollie has joined Cycling Minds as an ambassador and advisor, attracted by our sports health and training programme which will make a valuable contribution to fulfilling the NHS's targets for person-centred care and social prescribing under its Comprehensive Model for Personalised Care. Known as Doc on a Bike after he pledged to swap a car for an e-bike for his work as a GP Partner and Clinical Director of Heeley Plus Primary Care Network, Ollie is a personalised care lead with the Royal College of GPs, and one of two global Health and Wellbeing ambassadors for parkrun. He is also a director of Peak Health Coaching and has a strong interest in integrating conventional medical provision with addressing social determinants of health, sitting on the steering group of the national think tank, Rethinking Medicine. He has been at the forefront of championing person-centred care since 2014, engaging 70 GP practices to develop person-centred care skills.

### John Holmes



John Holmes is a retired Chartered Surveyor with a career in Development, Housing, Regeneration, Economic Development, Heritage Management and Tourism in both the public, private and charitable sectors. He now chairs the Bernicia Housing Group, is a Governor of Northumberland College, is a Trustee of Tyne & Wear Archives & Museums Development Trust and is a volunteer driver for a local charity. He has always been passionate about cycling and has taken part in many coast-to-coast rides and several fundraising rides including for a Rumanian children's charity. His latest project is the Cuthbert Cycling Challenge which retraced the route that the monks took when they left Lindisfarne and eventually led to the building of the Cuthbert's shrine in Durham Cathedral. John did the entire ride of over 540 miles and works closely with Cycling Minds on seeking partnership support for legacy projects through his wide network of local business contacts.

## Our patron



We are proud to have as our patron Northumberland County Councillor and Hexham Town Councillor, Suzanne Fairless-Aitken. Suzanne has experienced first-hand how cycling helps manage mental health and decided to support the project as patron because, in her words: "Cycling Minds very much ticks most of our list of priorities for Hexham – a sustainable social enterprise that will bring huge benefits to the health of residents and generate valuable tourism opportunities attracting visitors to the town. A happy and healthy Hexham – a win-win! It is opportunity for our youngsters to volunteer, be trained and learn essential life-skills which is until now unprecedented in the area - and this doesn't even touch on the obvious, positive mental-health benefits of cycling, especially for those with post-lockdown issues that have been sadly all too noticeable among young people."

## Our funders

Cycling Minds would not have been possible without the financial backing of our funders.



We believe the wide range of funders we have is indicative of how Cycling Minds has positive impacts in many areas of life. For example, we have received a grant from the Northumbria Police & Crime Commissioner as we can play a part in reducing anti-social behaviour, from Northumberland National Park for our involvement in cycle tourism and offering access to nature for people who may not otherwise be able to go there, and Mental Health Concern for our focus on mental health and well-being.

## Work streams

### Providing transport for a group that could not access cycling without support

We facilitate e-bikes to people who would not otherwise be able to access the Northumberland landscape to enjoy cycling around its wonderful roads, byways and forest trails and discovering its rich natural and cultural heritage. As Cycling Minds scales up, we will extend our fleet of bikes to include adapted cycles such as tandem tricycles, side-by-side bikes and platform tricycles to give disabled people the same access to everything our county has to offer.

In this regard, we are considering incorporating an All-Ability bike distribution centre into our plans for The Link new-build. These bikes will be available to organisations around Northumberland to hire or borrow. We are working with the Strategic Transport team at Northumberland County Council who are wanting to establish such a centre.

### Case study

*Since our launch in April 2022, we have taken over 30 people on guided e-bike rides around the Tyne Valley and have helped a number learn how to ride or increase their confidence on a bike. Darwin (5) for example has learned to ride during the summer through our Big Bike Revival cycling classes run by our amazing British Cycling L2 qualified coach, Jo. She has also helped Liz (63) regain her confidence on the roads after some time off the bike.*

### Offering training and engagement opportunities through a volunteering project



We provide our volunteers and beneficiaries with specific training (bike mechanic, customer service, etc.), which will increase their employability and enable them to find a foothold in the wider labour market, potentially in the local tourism industry. A number of local bike mechanics

are helping with this training and, when they are ready, beneficiaries will be able to obtain official qualifications such as Velotech.

We are also planning to develop our own Bike Business course and get it accredited as we have identified a need in the cycle industry for a more comprehensive course than just bike maintenance, encompassing workshop management, IT systems, procurement, CRM, accounting etc.

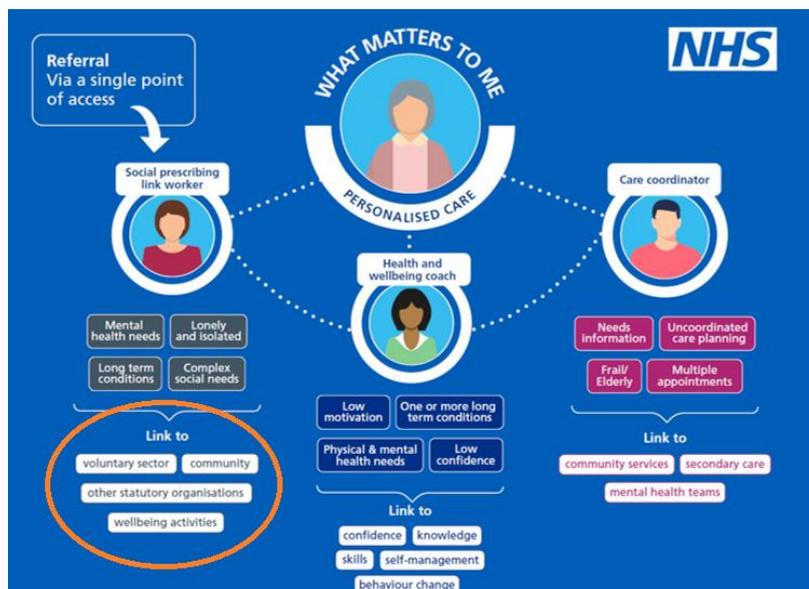
Beneficiaries are also able to engage with the wider cycling community to find meaning to their lives and contribute to cycling development and the growth of cycle tourism across the county. Ultimately, the project helps our young people to reintegrate into society, boost their self-esteem and skills to become happier and more productive members of the local community and contribute to making Northumberland an even better place to live.

Cycling Minds already has a great team of 20+ volunteers and serves as a focal point for other volunteer groups to come together and work towards common cycling-related objectives. An example of this is that Active Travel Tynedale and Cycling Minds have already agreed to work together to organise guided rides and other community cycling events.

### Case study

*Rich, who has learning challenges, found himself without anything to fill his days after a placement at a nearby SEND centre came to an end. His mum contacted us to see if we could help and since then, Rich comes to The Link once a week to socialise and learn how to fix bikes and deal with customers. Both he and his mum have reported that his self-confidence has increased and levels of anxiety have fallen and he's already making a valuable contribution to the team and is clearly someone who learns quickly. A great start.*

Healing people's mental and physical health through exercise and community work (social prescribing and person-centred care)



From the beginning, Cycling Minds' core social purpose and how it fulfils this has been inspired by and informed through extensive talks with numerous local social and health care providers, principally: The Living Well Coordination Service (managing social prescribing for the 14 GP surgeries in West Northumberland); Northumberland County Council's Public Health, Well-being and Adult Social Care Services; the charities Adapt North East (working to improve the quality of life of people with mental health problems and who are disadvantaged in being able to access services because they live in a rural location); and Acorns Project (providing therapeutic and support services to young people affected by domestic violence); as well as other local charities and community initiatives such as Hexham Youth Initiative, Stop Gap Supported Housing, the Hextol Foundation and Number 28 Community Project.

They have been hugely enthusiastic about Cycling Minds because, as they have pointed out, it targets an age group that is currently underprovided for in Northumberland. Referrers report a lack of options for them to signpost the young people they care for to organisations offering sports-related activities for that cohort, particularly sports that are non-competitive and outdoors. Cycling Minds is helping to fill this gap while also going a step further and giving our young beneficiaries a chance to gain a foothold in the labour market.

Our work is inspired by the NHS 5 Steps to Mental Wellbeing and our young beneficiaries will be able to develop their cycling skills and confidence following a programme aligned with the National Standard for Cycle Training syllabus while increasing their fitness through moderately strenuous activity in line with NHS recommendations on healthy levels of exercise.

## Case study

*We are already supporting other organisations in their own work in the area of social prescribing and person-centred care, for example the Northumberland Recovery College for whom we have been running bike rides and maintenance classes for their students. More than 20 people have attended these sessions and feedback has been very positive. We look forward to a long-lasting relationship with the college.*

**Northumberland Recovery College** **MENTAL HEALTH CONCERN**

### Bike Maintenance

Join Cycling Minds CIC for an evening session of bike maintenance led by Velotech Gold accredited bike mechanic, Toby Price.

**Monday 19th & 26th September 6pm - 8pm**

The Link Community Cycle Hub Haugh Lane Industrial Estate Hexham NE46 3PR

Our sessions are free for any adult who lives or works in Northumberland. If you'd like to come along, email or call us:

[nrc@mentalhealthconcern.org](mailto:nrc@mentalhealthconcern.org) **07866053717**

Find out about our wellbeing support here:

[northumberlandrecoverycollege.co.uk](http://northumberlandrecoverycollege.co.uk)

**Northumberland Recovery College** **MENTAL HEALTH CONCERN**

### Bike For Better Health

Join Cycling Minds CIC for an evening bike ride led by a British Cycling qualified ride leader. Bring your own bike!

**Tuesday 20th & 27th September 6pm - 8pm**

The Link Community Cycle Hub Haugh Lane Industrial Estate Hexham NE46 3PR

Our sessions are free for any adult who lives or works in Northumberland. If you'd like to come along, email or call us:

[nrc@mentalhealthconcern.org](mailto:nrc@mentalhealthconcern.org) **07866053717**

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## Serving as a focal point for local community development



As its name suggests, The Link provides a space for local community groups such as cycle clubs, charities, sustainable travel campaign groups and cycling-related businesses to meet, share ideas, network and ultimately forge partnerships and synergies at The Link that are mutually beneficial.

### *Case study*



*An example of this is how one of our volunteers linked up with the Hexham Together for Ukraine action group and established a bike lending scheme to enable local residents to lend bikes to the Ukrainian refugees staying in the area. Cycling Minds acts as an intermediary in this, checking the bikes before they are passed on. One of the Ukrainian beneficiaries is now volunteering with us to improve his English and meet people and off the back of this collaborative effort, we have also started guided rides for those Ukrainians staying in the area who like cycling.*

## Boosting sustainable tourism

Our work designing and running guided bike rides and multi-day tours and holidays for people from outside Northumberland will help drive sustainable tourism and we will work with local hospitality and accommodation providers to design exciting, high quality cycling holiday packages once we launch our cycle tourism offering in spring 2023.

The Link community cycle hub itself is regularly visited by cycle tourists in need of repairs of spare parts.

The Link could also become the home of Hexham's tourist office, something which the town needs given that it is not reaching its full potential as a tourist destination and visitors often struggle to find where they can obtain information. Hexham Town Council have applauded Cycling Minds' ambitions to develop tourism in the area and will be supporting the project as much as they can.



We incorporate visits to key sites of special environmental, historic or cultural interest into our guided rides and provide local insight into other features we pass along the way. For example, we have attracted interest from the National Landscape Discovery Centre-The Sill who are looking to run joint e-bike rides with us to visit local Roman sites such as Vindolanda.

We also hosted a recent Visit Northumberland cycle tourism networking event to showcase our work promoting cycle tourism in Northumberland. The tourist board and the National Park Authority want to make Northumberland the “premier cycling holiday destination in England” and located at the start of two key cycle routes, we are perfectly placed to contribute to this.

## Revitalising the local economy

The medium to long-term impact of the project will help revitalise the economy of Hexham and Tynedale by: (i) enabling people to get their bikes repaired and buy bikes in Hexham rather than having to travel to the nearest bike shop, which is 25 miles down the A69; (ii) encouraging professionals offering cycling-related services from elsewhere to base their operations in Hexham; (iii) attracting cyclotourists and other visitors to the town; and (iv) increasing Hexham’s attractiveness by establishing a vibrant focal point for anything cycle related.

We have held meetings with Northumberland County Council who have expressed a willingness to lease land to us on which we can build a permanent home for The Link if we secure planning permission. We are working with community building experts, D3 Associates in Hexham, who have provided initial plans and a timeline for the build and are actively seeking funding for the project from funders such as the North of Tyne Combined Authority and the National Lottery.

We have also been approached by another team at the county council keen to find partners who can deliver projects as part of the Hadrian’s Wall Investment Programme (Borderlands Inclusive Growth Deal). They are attracted by the role Cycling Minds can play in meeting cycle tourists’ needs, especially at The Link, and are keen to explore the possibility of us creating an outpost in Haltwhistle in the future to help realise their vision. With the help of two of our volunteers John and Rob, we have submitted an Expression of Interest to this team setting out our vision and what we need to build a permanent home for The Link in Hexham. We are very excited about where this could lead.

## Case study



*Since The Link opened in April 2022 and operating just 18 hours a week, we have generated sales of over £12,000 (bike repairs, sales of refurbished bikes and second-hand and new parts and accessories). We have fixed the bikes of more than 200 customers at The Link, including a notable number of cycle tourists from the US to the Netherlands passing through Hexham on the National Cycle Route 72 and the Sandstone Way. We have created jobs for two people.*

## Contributing to environmental restoration and sustainable access to the natural world around us

Our campaign work with local partners will also contribute to improving the cycling network in Northumberland, restoring existing cycle paths, byways and bridleways and creating new ones. For instance, we will work with Active Travel Tynedale and local Cycling Tourism and Greenway Development specialist, Ted Liddle, not only on the projects they are involved in but also new ones that we initiate.

## Case study



*In September, we helped organise an e-bike ride with local MP Guy Opperman and the then Cycling Minister, Trudy Harrison, to showcase the need for a cycle superhighway along the Tyne Valley and highlight how the special nature of rural areas such as Northumberland requires a different approach to cycling investment plans as part of Active Travel England's cycling development strategy. This was very well received and is leading to our proposals being considered in more depth by Active Travel England.*

## Towards Net Zero and our role in promoting active travel and carbon-free transport

Part of our work involves collecting and upcycling bikes for resale; in doing so we contribute to keeping bikes out of landfill and reducing the carbon footprint of the cycle industry by cutting the number of new bikes being produced.

By bringing together groups involved in the development of sustainable transport solutions in Northumberland, we contribute to cutting transport emissions in the local area and help reduce its carbon footprint until it achieves Net Zero status.

We are also evaluating the possibility of working with local e-bike builder, Intelligen, to start an e-rickshaw taxi service in Hexham, offer locals and tourists alike an emission-free hop on, hop off shuttle service around the town.

Moreover, we are in close contact with Northumberland county councillor, Nick Morphet who is a keen supporter of our project. He is championing cycling development and sits on the Northumberland Cycling and Walking Board, the remit of which is to improve routes and infrastructure around the county, secure funding and increase marketing and education to promote active travel. One of our volunteers, Rob Aubrook, is also on the Northumberland Cycling and Walking Board.

## *Case study*



*Cycling Minds is really starting to get noticed around the county. Recently, for example, we were contacted by an NHS Trust who have asked us to help them deliver an Active Hospitals pilot scheme by procuring several e-bikes for them and running cycling with confidence and maintenance classes and guided rides for their staff and their families. The scheme will also include us servicing their e-bike fleet. Contracts such as these offer a perfect destination for beneficiaries as they can be fairly quickly trained to fix the same model of bike and so the prospect of further opportunities such as this is very encouraging for us.*

## What we can offer other organisations

Additional to and indeed underpinning our core social purpose of supporting young people improve their life chances, we are seeking opportunities to help other organisations in the areas of social prescribing, cycle tourism and active travel.

We would like to be part of their journeys and can help in the following areas:

- ✓ **Establishing e-bike fleet projects**
- ✓ **Social prescribing**
- ✓ **Cycle infrastructure development**
- ✓ **Boosting active travel**
- ✓ **Corporate volunteering**
- ✓ **Staff training and awareness about cycling**

Ultimately, the more business opportunities and collaborative projects that come our way, the more job opportunities we can offer the young people we are here to help. It is about creating destinations for them at the end of their journey through our programmes and giving them the chance to grow Cycling Minds and further its impact and outcomes in the local community.

## Founder's closing statement by Toby Price

I am a firm believer in the power of cycling to not just improve an individual's mental and physical health but also that of the local community. Like anywhere, Hexham has and is suffering from the fallout of the Covid-19 pandemic, which has only exacerbated the mental health epidemic faced by the UK and the gradual decline of the high street.

Rather than sitting back and moaning about all our woes, I felt it was time to act by leveraging my passion for cycling.

The enthusiasm with which this project has been received by local cyclists, social prescribers, Hexham Town Council and Northumberland County Council to name but a few rubberstamps my belief that something as simple as cycling can serve as a catalyst for real social, environmental and economic change.

A strong and healthy community is a resilient one and I hope Cycling Minds can play a small part in building a brighter future for West Northumberland and its people.



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