

British Cycling's Breeze

Aim: To inspire more women across the UK to cycle more often as part of British Cycling's vision of 1 million more women riding by 2020.

Project summary

British Cycling's Breeze is the biggest programme ever to get more women of all ages (and their children) riding bikes for fun and fitness in a nurturing and friendly environment. The programme is inspired and supported by a team of over 2,000 volunteer Breeze Champions who organise local guided rides. It aims to tackle barriers facing women and to provide fun and free opportunities to help them get back on their bikes or on them for the first time.



Breeze works in partnership with Halfords to encourage more women to cycle and feel more confident riding their bike. The project has also partnered with Welsh Cycling to extend the programme across Wales.

Impact

Over 118,000 women have joined one of the 23,000 Breeze bike rides since 2011. Some of the participants who started off with an easy three-mile ride wanted to cycle longer distances and now take on lengthier routes or rougher terrain. This has improved physical fitness and associated health benefits. It is a low impact activity so has less impact on bones and joints.

Cycling can improve mental health, offering opportunities to relax and enjoy the fresh air and countryside. Designed to suit all ages and abilities, Breeze rides are the perfect excuse to get out into the great outdoors and explore the local area. Many Breeze rides are open to women and their children making them the perfect opportunity to spend some quality time together.

80% of participants say that Breeze has influenced them to start cycling more frequently. The top motivations for women to attend Breeze rides include:

- A chance to meet other female cyclists
- To have fun
- To get fit/healthy

Cycling can be integrated into everyday life; a ride to the shops or to work. Breeze has influenced approximately 4,470 new commuters which has resulted in a CO2 saving of 1,207 tonnes.

On average, cycle-commuting communities take one less sick day per year than non-cyclists and save the UK economy almost £83m. Cycling can improve productivity within the workplace and contribute to a healthy and satisfied workforce. Furthermore, this results in savings to the NHS as a result of higher levels of physical activity, with Breeze having an estimated £8.2m health impact. It is also estimated that the UK economy has had a £6.2m boost thanks to Breeze.

Further information

breeze@britishcycling.org.uk
0161 274 2117

www.breezebikerides.com

Video for Maryam's story:
<http://po.st/Maryamsstory>

Key learnings

- Behaviour change is a journey and can take time for people to move from contemplating an activity to getting started. Providing support to build confidence through sharing experiences and stories from other inspirational women has empowered many women to join a Breeze ride.
- Word of mouth and personal recommendations have been the most effective recruitment method.
- Developing a programme from the beginning can take time and providing support, reward and recognition of volunteers is essential.
- All levels of support and engagement from local volunteers, regional staff to national partnerships are recommended to deliver a national programme.

Future plans

- There will be a new 2017–2021 strategy which underpins British Cycling's ambition to get 1 million more women into cycling by 2020 by encouraging more women to cycle more often.
- Accessing new audiences through new partnerships.
- Broadening the Breeze programme to ensure that the pathway is clear for women to progress their cycling journey.



Maryam Amatullah's story

Maryam helped to set up a Breeze inspired cycling club – Leicester Women's Velo - in 2013 with a group of Breeze Champions who wanted to help increase the opportunities for women to ride and learn to ride. As a local club, they are part of the community and provide women of all abilities and opportunities to cycle or cycle more.

Breeze has had a profound impact on Maryam. As a naturally shy person, her confidence and self-esteem grew with the more rides she led. Maryam describes the encouragement and support from Breeze as 'tremendous'. Through Breeze Maryam has met a network of Breeze champions who all remain her good friends.

Maryam enjoys taking women on their first ever bike ride, showing how easy it is to get from one place to another. The sheer joy and surprise on their faces when they've ridden only 3 or 4 miles just makes her day! Maryam believes there should be no barriers to a woman wanting to ride and she is proud to be a champion to support that growth. Maryam feels empowered, free and in control whenever she rides her bike and rejoices every time she sees a woman on a bike!

Maryam wants women to know that no matter what background you're from, cycling is a normal and appropriate activity. Her passion is to challenge the belief still held in some communities that cycling is not an appropriate hobby or mode of transport for a woman. The effort she puts into supporting every single woman she has contact with is extraordinary.

Maryam inspires women through her own personal example by voicing the need for provision for women in the Muslim community, and of course, by leading her fantastic Breeze rides.

In addition to all of this, Maryam regularly delivers adult cycling training on Saturday mornings and provides support at the temporary bike parks that British Cycling manages to promote its programmes. All of this experience has helped Maryam to get a job at Sustrans as a Schools and Neighbourhood Officer. Her role with Sustrans has further developed her knowledge and skills in engaging with schools and the community to increase cycling through activities and events including Dr Bike.



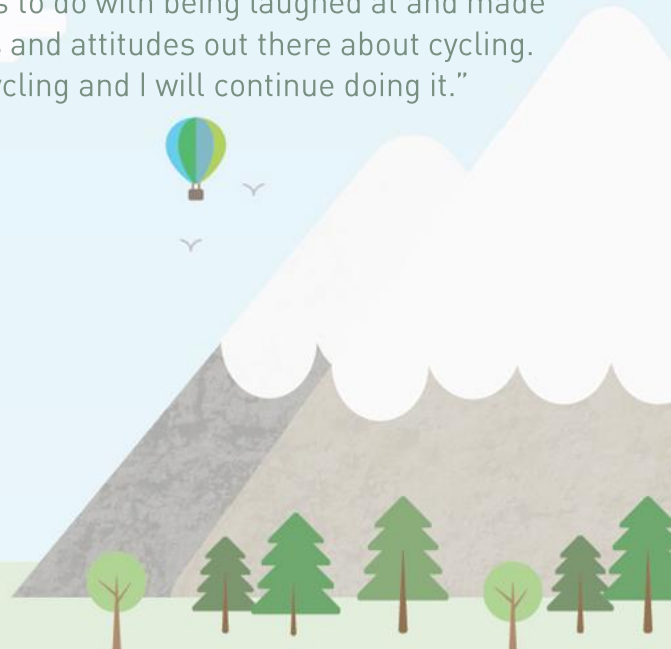
Maryam's passion for cycling and specifically her passion for getting other people in her community on bikes is inspirational. Despite facing challenges in her own community, she remains undeterred.

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Maryam recently rode the coast to coast challenge earlier this year from Whitehaven to Tynemouth which was her first long-distance cycling adventure carrying everything in her panniers and has also tried BMX. Maryam would like to continue to grow and develop and is inspired to become a cycle coach.

Maryam says: "I want to see more women riding bikes especially women from BAME communities. Some of them are afraid of what people are going to say, a lot of it is to do with how they are going to be seen and a lot of it's to do with being laughed at and made fun of. I've been able to tackle a lot of negativities and attitudes out there about cycling. As a Breeze Champion, I stand up for women's cycling and I will continue doing it."



Key facts

Target audience	Women and girls
Setting	Across the UK
Length of the project	2011 - present
Funding	2011 - 2014 National Lottery 2014 - present Sport England
Number of participants	31,000 female participants in 2015/16