**Monmouthshire Vision for Cycling**

accessible, affordable and sustainable vision for cycling ‘**a county of cyclists’**

**INTRODUCTION**

The purpose of the vision is to lay down the priorities within which Monmouthshire can set the direction for achieving its vision to make Monmouthshire a county of cyclists.

Our priorities will be communicated through our strategic cycling group, sustainable transport forums & integral to our community based services agenda total places. The recent success of cycling in Monmouthshire, recreational participation, competitive club provision and through events gives us the opportunity for improvement and challenge.

We aim to:

1. Take every opportunity to exceed our statutory responsibility and commitment to the recent Welsh Government Active Travel (Wales) bill.
2. Ensure that our vision, actions and any investment has the greatest impact whilst addressing the needs of Monmouthshire’s Single Integrated Plan.
3. Provide clear evidence of commitment by ensuring any future development in infrastructure and funding opportunities are cycling considerate.
4. Where investment and opportunity is considered, a list of perspective and proposed cycling infrastructure schemes are widely promoted to key stake holders, policy makers and the wider community for opportunities for funding and volunteer support.
5. There is opportunity for innovative thinking and projects to be supported where clear evidence is linked to the vision and compliments our total place agenda.
6. Prepare & promote our offer of cycling to British & Welsh Cycling to work towards their outcomes and make a bid for an annual calendar of prestigious and inspirational events, staged locally.

Through our commitments we envisage cycling in Monmouthshire to be accessible, affordable and sustainable and become an active county of cyclists.

**Background**

Monmouthshire is predominantly a rural area with not too much in common with its immediate neighbours. The county has a rich and diverse landscape with large areas of open countryside, forestry, mountains and valleys which create ideal opportunities for outdoor activities.

There is a commitment in Monmouthshire to increase the accessibility and quality of physical activity opportunities for all residents, with the aim of supporting healthy lifestyles for its residents and allowing them to achieve their sporting potential. The ‘Creating an Active & Healthy Monmouthshire Plan’ identifies ambitious but achievable opportunities to make more people more active, the ‘Monmouthshire Local Area Plan for Sport’ targeting increased participation in sporting opportunities and British Cycling’s Whole Sport Plan aims to increase the number of people cycling competitively so that they can grow the pyramid at grass roots level in order to have a greater supply of talent from which to choose for Olympic and Paralympic and World cycling success. The Cycling Sports Development pathway aims to support these strategies.

Monmouthshire has an enviable track record of delivering cycling opportunities, both with a sporting and recreational context and has a reputation as a lead authority for this sport.

**Partners and key stakeholders**

The Monmouthshire Strategic Cycling Group represented by all clubs, British & Welsh Cycling, Leisure, Sports Development, Countryside, Outdoor Education, Highways, Transport, Tourism, Adult Education, Adventa reflects the profile of cycling as a priority sport for Monmouthshire. The growth from the legacy of the Olympic & Paralympic Games 2012 has enabled the authority to focus resources through the local area plan for sport and development of a cycling pathway.

There is a strong voluntary sector in the county and the Council acts as landlord to many of the larger sports clubs and sports associations. Council officers have over the years developed close working relationships with local sports clubs and have provided assistance in attracting capital finance from sources such as the National Lottery distributors, Section 106 funding, the Big Lottery, Sport Wales and the Community and Economic Development Scheme (CEDS) to improve facilities at a local level. In addition to this, officers work closely with local sports clubs to identify projects that can be brought forward for small scale revenue funding through the Community Chest Panel for activities such as junior development & coach education.

**Cycling Pathway and Community Cycling Clubs**

At present Monmouthshire boasts three community cycling clubs and two racing teams. Two of the clubs are registered for the British Cycling ‘Go Ride’ scheme, the program of youth development linking schools and community activity, and are ultimately working towards the ‘Clubmark’ status for excellence in community clubs.

The third club (CC Abergavenny) promotes the annual ‘Abergavenny Festival of Cycling’ (currently in its seventh year), which has included many of the major competition promotions in the authority, and proven to be an essential means of marketing the sport to new participants who have utilised the other clubs as an ideal ‘exit route’.

The Go Ride clubs are based at Local Authority Leisure Centres, one to the North & one in the South of the authority.   
  
Whilst offering an ideal spread, one club (Abergavenny RC) currently suffers from capacity in its coaching provision due to facility limitations. The club accounts for approx 80 British Cycling members, but is reluctantly discouraging new members at present due to the need for compliant and productive coaching activities. The other club (Qdos CC) is ‘nomadic’ in its approach to operating wherever there is a need for youth development in the authority. However, the volunteers also recognise the problems with inappropriate facility provision.

Both clubs have benefitted from investment via the Community Chest funding scheme to commence indoor ‘roller’ training sessions – expanding activity through the winter months.

A newly formed community cycling club Monmouthshire Wheelers focuses on all levels of participation has a widening membership base and has introduced many new people to the sport in the South of the County.

The racing teams support athletes in different cycling disciplines, with Gateway RT biased towards local adult support in Mountain Bike competition, and M&D Cycles promoting a Junior team in Road racing. Both teams are underpinned by local businesses in Abergavenny, demonstrating the varied spread of activities supported by the clubs.

There are a further 24 NGB affiliated cycling clubs registered within a thirty mile radius of Abergavenny, accounting for all six of the cycling disciplines. These clubs account for a significant proportion of participants in Monmouthshire competition.

**Coaching**

At present there are eight British Cycling qualified coaches actively coaching in the authority clubs, with a further five trained in recent years who are currently being engaged.

Welsh Cycling, the National Governing Body for cycle sport in Wales, uses Abergavenny Leisure Centre as a venue for its Level I & II coach education courses, acknowledging the excellent partnership Monmouthshire has forged between clubs and the NGB.

Coaches are currently delivering at a generic level, although the NGB coaching plan has identified a number to further train in discipline specific awards, providing expansion opportunities for participants to include the nearby Wales National Velodrome, Newport.

The Monmouthshire Local Plan for Sport currently includes a directive to train authority and community volunteers for implementation of a ‘cycle tots’ scheme – completing a community pathway in the region to cover youth participation from beginner through to community club participation.

**Inclusive programme**

A flat tarmarc surface allows for many activities especially Paralympic cycling events and training. The Paralympic success and local Paralympian Mark Coulbourne enables us to promote and delivery inspiring sessions, training camps and recreational opportunities. The sport development department has recently been accredited with the Disability Sport Wales Insport ribbon. Through their community & sport development officer they are engaging with school to deliver bespoke opportunities and support community clubs to deliver inclusive sessions.

**Volunteering**

Officially there are five trained Welfare Officers covering the clubs in Monmouthshire, six event organisers, seven trained British Cycling officials and numerous other volunteers who contribute to the club, coaching & competition programs albeit in an unofficial capacity. The sport development department has focused on developing further volunteers both for cycling and sports.

Welsh Cycling will shortly adopt the British Cycling Young Volunteers scheme, with anticipated demand from the two Go Ride clubs. The opportunities to become involved in other events and site activities will be a positive factor in the development of the new facility.

**Recreational**

Monmouthshire benefits from a network of identified recreational routes, accounting for significant local and tourism provision. Much of this participation is known to be significant, albeit exact figures are yet to be determined.

A recent mapping exercise by Monmouthshire Highways department has, for the first time, actively promoted safe cycle routes and paths for recreational users.

Areas where we are able to directly log participation have been via the Abergavenny Festival of Cycling and the official ‘Sportive’ events. These annual events cover a range of distances over 25, 50 & 100 miles, with participation figures across the events typically exceeding 600 participations. This accounts for a number of visitors to the area, but also a significant local interest in recreational participation.

The festival also hosts a family participation day, where schools are linked to festival activities designed to encourage club participation / engagement. In 2011 this exceeded 1500 school children engaged in support activities, and over 200 recorded as attending the festival.

**Other Activities**

The project to develop a Cycling Centre at the Gilwern Outdoor Education Centre will provide opportunities to schools, clubs and family activities and would also be utilised as a multi - sport venue capable of hosting major events throughout the year. The site would have a number of high profile events to encourage mass participation. The events will also be multi - disciplined or specialist to allow use of other facilities on offer at the site.

The Centre already hosts mountain bike events and with the development of a new road track would also be able to put on Duathlons events (Bike and Run) and major road running events such as the Welsh Athletics 5K road Race Championships.

It would provide a safe facility without the need to hold such events on the public highway and thus minimise the need for traffic management. We see the centre becoming a hub for many clubs and societies who will all use the closed circuit facilities to maximise usage.

**Our opportunity for greater impact and success can be achieved through imminent actions:**

* Monmouthshire actively promotes itself as the Capitol of Cycling for Wales and a cycling destination.
* Engaged with every key stakeholder to ensure the promotion, capacity and vision for cycling is communicated through tourism, sites of special interest and National Governing Bodies of sport.
* A National cycling facility is developed at Gilwern – Calls for Action project off-road Velo Park that provides opportunities now and in the future for all residents of Monmouthshire to enjoy the Venue for recreational and competitive cycling as both participant and spectator as well as complimenting the existing outdoor pursuits & eductaion offer undertaken at Gilwern Outdoor Education Centre.
* Monmouthshire cycling pathway and interventions can contribute to improvements in health and wellbeing for all residents, particularly those in most need. Clearly identifying the programmes and interventions where it enables children & young people to become confident and competent cyclist of the future.