



Gravesham Business Awards

2023 Winner

Best Community Focused  
Business

# The Cyclopark Charitable Trust

## Overview

2023  
WINNER

BUSINESS  
AWARDS UK

Kent Awards

► Sports Facility of the Year

Cyclopark

# Summary

- Cyclopark is a charity on a mission...to get our communities active.
- Located in Gravesend, Kent, our purpose is to provide a welcoming and safe environment across our 40+ acres venue for the local residents of Gravesend, its surrounding areas and the wider disability and cycling communities to discover the community, participation and sport-based activities on offer and benefit from the positive social, health and well-being outcomes.
- We do this through a range of social, recreational and taught Ride (cycling), Fitness and Play activities from beginner to expert level for all ages from babies to older adults.
- Originally a cycling venue built as a legacy of London 2012, increasing operating costs, reduced funding and a desire to position ourselves more within the heart of our community has seen the portfolio of activities grow, including the introduction of the fitness offering in 2017/18 as a key source of funding and engagement with the local residents of Gravesend and the surrounding areas.
- Cyclopark now has 250,000 visits a year with a mix of casual visitors, regular attendees and members who value it as more than just a facility, seeing it as a significant community asset. The last member survey in November 2023 saw 60% of respondents being members for two years or more and 80% who would strongly recommend Cyclopark to a colleague, friend or family member.
- 2023 has seen a series of changes in the senior management team with a review currently underway ahead of a re-launch at the end of quarter one 2024.



# ParkRide

*With excellent facilities and progressive coaching opportunities, we enable people the chance to develop their cycling skills or just be comfortable at their chosen level within a safe, traffic free environment*

- 2.9km road circuit, national standard BMX track, 6km mountain bike trails
- A progressive CycloPathway starting with beginner bike handling into road, BMX, mountain bike and cyclo-cross offerings to the highest standard
- Around 1,000 coached sessions a month along the CycloPathway from Learn2Ride to expert level
- Schools engagement including: balance bike loan scheme with local primary schools; Pupil Referral Unit coached sessions; GCSE assessments; after school clubs
- Social inclusion: developing initiative with Northfleet Youth Centre, Gravesham Community Safety Unit and Kent Police to positively address anti-social behaviour prevalent in the area
- Open track sessions available everyday for anyone to simply cycle safely in a traffic free environment
- A range of events led by the 'Spring in the Park' youth road cycling series and BMX novice events for new riders to experience racing and attract new customers to CycloPark
- A series of regional and national major events in road, BMX and cyclo-cross disciplines providing profile and economic impact to Gravesham and Kent from the thousands of attendees travelling from around the southeast, UK and Europe

**Positive impact** – Alfie, Oscar and Luke. All three started as six year olds when CycloPark first opened and now represent Great Britain at cyclo-cross. Full story to follow.

# Cyclo4All

## *The inclusive cycling programme for children and adults with disabilities and special needs*

- Fleet of over 25 adaptive bikes.
- Collaboration with the Kent Community Health NHS Foundation Trust to get people moving and create positive outcomes, see below.
- Weekly Wednesday sessions with an average of over 50 participants each time.
- Once inducted, participants can use the fleet of adaptive bikes at anytime.
- Creation of a new Limitless Club meeting regularly to provide a progression opportunity.
- Commonwealth Games Gold medallist and Paralympian Johnboy Smith bases his training at Cyclopark.

**Positive impact** - read Lilley, Kenneth and Hilary's stories in the Appendix

# ParkFitness

***Not just a gym, ParkFitness provides a social and community hub for the local residents of Gravesham and the surrounding areas***

- Five dedicated indoor spaces including weights and cardio room, spin studio, two studios for classes and Garage HIIT area.
- Outdoor training areas and access to 2.9km of track and 6km of trails for safe, traffic free running and cycling.
- Over 70 classes a week from low intensity yoga and pilates to high intensity Garage HIIT.
- Over 750 members, more than half for over two years and more than three-quarters would strongly recommend membership to a colleague, friend or family member, see below.
- Inclusive opportunities including Parent and Baby classes for new mums to Chair Fit and Chat for the older and less mobile.
- GP referral scheme for 20 people every three months working with The Grand Healthy Living Centre, Gravesend, see below.
- Regular five week Menopausal Weight Training Clinics providing significant positive impact, see below.
- Initiatives integrating with ParkRide including CycloFemme, BMXercise and the Black Dog Cycling Group, see below.
- ParkFitness is not just about exercise, it is the catalyst for friendships and camaraderie outside scheduled classes, see below.

**Positive impact** - read Michelle, Imogen, Sarah and Lorraine's stories in the Appendix

# ParkPlay

*The gateway to engage the local families and younger children of Gravesham and the surrounding areas to help form positive habits through fun physical activity from an early age*

- Play area: 3,000 square foot area with multiple activities.
- Cycloland: the ground breaking initiative with a mini-road network for children to understand road safety whilst learning to scoot and use a balance bike. The success of this has seen the concept replicated around the UK by British Cycling.
- Skatepark: 1,400 square metre area designed with a variety of features for skateboarders, BMXers, scooters and rollarbladers.
- Baby Cloud: the baby programme designed to encompass bonding, immersive multi-sensory experiences, massage and yoga for mum's and babies up to a year old.
- Toddler Cloud: the interactive programme for one to four year olds to exercise imagination, build vocabulary and develop memory and listening skills whilst having fun.
- Seasonal themed animal meet and greets for young children and families as a fun and interactive way to engage new visitors.
- Working with organisers to stage third party events that introduce new audiences eg ellenor Twilight Walk, North Downs Run, Gravesham Borough Council's Park Life event.

**Positive impact** – Isabella and Alex. Isabella started riding a balance bike at Cyclopark, took up BMX and is now racing in national events. Her father, Alex took up coaching during this time and now coaches at Club Cyclopark. Full story to follow.

# 2024+ Opportunities

An internal review is underway supported by member, public and stakeholder engagement to identify efficiencies in operations and effectiveness of offerings alongside a key focus of securing new grant funding.

Phase Two of this review is taking place from January to March with a 're-launch' at the end of quarter one. Some initial considerations include:

- Leverage the Trust's charitable status to unlock funding and support continuation of accessible activities for our communities.
- ParkRide/Play: greater integration between both areas through a new ParkPlay 'Club' including Learn2Ride and scooter/balance bike races introducing more children to ParkRide in a fun and engaging way.
- ParkRide: more grassroots and club events across all disciplines to engage the casual cyclist, inspire new riders and support growth in numbers of the cycling community.
- ParkRide: develop more coaches to support learning opportunities for all levels of rider and provide skills development, and employment opportunities, with a focus on residents in Gravesham and surrounding areas.
- ParkFitness: explore ways to create more capacity through initiatives such as a new off-peak membership, covered outdoor exercise area and outdoor fitness events.
- ParkPlay: work closer with Gravesham Borough Council to stage events.
- All areas: creation of a corporate offer.
- All areas: Maximise activation around Paris 2024.

# Appendix – Lilley's Story

## *Cyclo4All*

- 1. Before attending Cyclopark...** My mobility was deteriorating even with my mobility aids, my wheelchair and walker. It was affecting my mental health, and everything was a struggle. I had been a confident, outgoing, social young person but my wellbeing had plummeted.
- 2. What I do at the Cyclopark...** Being offered a session with David on the adapted bikes really changed my life. Once a week I attend a session taking part in adaptive cycling.
- 3. How this has helped me...** It has enabled me to exercise at a pace and level that is suitable for me but has also made me challenge myself to cycle faster and longer with has helped immensely with my physical and mental health. Due to my limited mobility, cycling has helped to build my strength and muscle tone and ensure my levels of fitness are not only maintained but also improve. Riding the bike gives me a sense of freedom that using my wheelchair cannot.

## *A mother's perspective*

Cycling has been so positive for my daughter on many levels. Obviously from a physical and wellbeing aspect but, also from a social perspective it has been brilliant for her speech and she loves to chat to David as she cycles. She looks forward to her sessions and loves interacting with all the staff at Cyclopark. From an emotional perspective cycling at Cyclopark on the adapted bikes makes her happy, being out in the fresh air is good for her, she has grown in confidence and loves the independence that cycling brings her.

# Appendix – Kenneth's Story

## *Cyclo4All*

- 1. Before I attended the Cyclopark...** I had been active in various sport before major surgery to my right leg as a result of an aneurysm. The result of the surgery left me with reduced walking capacity as the calf had been removed and circulation was severely limited. I was unable to walk any distance unaided and any exercise was extremely difficult.
- 2. What I did at the Cyclopark...** Some time later, I was interested in what was available at Cyclopark and on visiting was encouraged by the then Manager and on-site physiotherapist to try to improve upper body/cardiovascular function by exercising as a first stage measure using a recumbent manual trike. I did this under supervision and with support from David Hedley, the Physiotherapist and his support team for some time with a view to moving on to a different bike.
- 3. How this has helped me...** With guidance and support from David and his team, I now exercise twice a week and have graduated to a trike which enables me to be balanced and to exercise. I have built up the muscle power and cardiovascular circulation in both my legs. I have managed to go faster and to increase the number of laps I complete every week. My next target is to use a standard bike and thereby improve my balance further.

# Appendix – Hilary's Story

## *Cyclo4All (completed in the third person by family members)*

- 1. Before attending Cyclopark...** Hilary has a learning disability, has been partially sighted since birth and has restricted movement due to having a stroke 21 years ago. Hilary attended regular hydrotherapy sessions prior to Covid which unfortunately had to stop during the pandemic. Her mobility deteriorated during the first lock down and she had a couple of falls. This knocked her confidence and as a family we were struggling to stimulate and motivate her.
- 2. What I did at the Cyclopark...** Once a week she attends the Cyclo4All sessions taking part in adaptive cycling.
- 3. How this has helped me...** The arrangements made for Hilary have been a revelation. I had a quiet cry watching her going around the track on our first visit and seeing the joy and freedom this was giving her. I still get emotional even now just watching the pleasure on her face. Her self-esteem has improved no end and her mobility too.

# Appendix – Michelle's Story

## *ParkFitness – cancer recovery and Menopausal Weight Training*

- **Before I attended Cyclopark...** I had been battling breast cancer for a year, all my treatment finished in December 2021. I was then diagnosed with Osteopenia due to my treatment and was recommended to do strength building. This was very scary for me as I've never really done weights before and I had no confidence after my treatment due to putting on weight and being weak, but this was something I had to do to help me.
- **What I did at Cyclopark...** I joined Cyclopark as it was a small and friendly gym. I thought I would feel better there as I tried to build my strength. The thing is I didn't really know what I was doing so I booked in with one of the fitness instructors to write me a program and found this extremely helpful with Kellie making me really feel comfortable. I used the program at the gym about three times a week which was great. I also signed up for the menopause weight training course, this helped me even more to learn about weights and how to use them properly and build my confidence. The people on the course were amazing too. Once I felt more comfortable, I started doing other classes like HIIT. I have been doing this now for a year and half and lost one and half stone.
- **How this has helped me...** This has helped me by given me confidence to work with the weights on my own at the gym, I feel stronger and my last scan showed my bone density hadn't got worse which is amazing. I also love the fact that if you need any help, the instructors are there to guide you which is brilliant.

# Appendix – Imogen's Story

## *ParkFitness – Parent & Baby Classes*

- 1. Before I attended the Cyclopark...** I always loved fitness and prioritised it where I could before falling pregnant. Once I had my daughter I realised how hard it was to have time to yourself and prioritise your own health and well being. As a breastfeeding mum to a clingy baby, normal gyms just weren't for me. Walking was a lovely way to ease my way back into fitness but I wanted to get my strength back and feel fit and happy.
- 2. What I did at the Cyclopark...** I started attending the parent and baby classes then, spin, HIIT and shred classes. I loved the parent and baby classes and even arranged my working hours around them. As lock down hit I continued to attend classes virtually helping me feel connected to others during a very isolating time. When pregnant with my second child, I continued to exercise with the support of all instructors right up until the end of my pregnancy (when my bump couldn't physically fit on a spin bike). Once I was signed off as able to exercise, I attended parent and baby classes with my new born. Now my youngest daughter is 2 1/2 and I'm still attending parent and baby classes on my day off with her.
- 3. How this has helped me...** Cyclopark has done so much for me. It's not only a place to train or for my children to play but, it's become part of my life. I met some of my best parent friends there, friendships that were maintained through Covid and are ongoing and our children are still friends.

The atmosphere is non judgmental and empowering. I can go there on a bad day and leave feeling strong and able to take on the day. The people are supportive and kind and it has a family community feel. I love that. The way Cyclopark classes, instructors, staff, people make me feel means I don't have to drag myself to do exercise. I do it because I love it. Not to get thinner or more toned but because it makes me happy and feel great. I can bring my children, who love Cyclopark, and they have learnt how important fitness is and that they can be with me while I do something for me. They are then able to play in the park or sit in the cafe. My eldest daughter learnt to ride her bike here too.

Physically I'm feeling stronger and fitter than I have in a long time and I'm able to keep pushing myself in a supportive, judgement free environment. The classes have helped with all post pregnancy and childbirth problems including strengthening my pelvic floor, strengthening my hips and shifting some of those hard to lose pounds. I feel so much more comfortable and happy in my body now. Cyclopark got me through the multiple lockdowns and kept me sane when going through some really tough times, including losing colleagues during Covid. It's a space where I can forget everything and intensify my focus. Then I can leave in a better place. It's my happy place and I would encourage anyone to join up and become part of the happy healthy community that has been created by the great people that work and train there.

# Appendix – Lorraine’s Story

## *ParkFitness – Self-Referral Scheme*

- 1. Before I attended Cyclopark...** I was struggling with my mental health. I had quit my job due to stress and anxiety and was on medication to manage this along with counselling. With two young children it was also very hard to find the time to exercise and over about two years both my fitness and my mental health had really taken a back seat. I was also recovering from major surgery to my foot and ankle and could no longer do a lot of the sports and exercises that I had enjoyed. I loved exercise and had always used it to improve my mood as well as for fitness but finding a way back into it was proving really hard.
- 2. What I did at Cyclopark...** I joined Cyclopark’s self-referral scheme which gave me access to the gym and lots of classes for free. The induction reminded me of all the exercises I could still do even with the need to adapt because of my surgery which really helped change my mindset and give me a boost. I regularly attended indoor cycling and high intensity interval training classes as well as some parent and child classes which was great for helping me fit exercise in while looking after my children.
- 3. How this has helped me...** I love the positive attitude and friendliness of everyone at Cyclopark. They are always so welcoming and happy to help or stop and chat, and it makes you want to keep returning. This inspired me to take qualifications in fitness to begin a new career: I have now completed my Level 3 Diploma in Gym Instructing and Personal Training as well as qualifications in indoor cycling instruction, chair-based fitness and exercise programmes for older adults. I am loving being active again and it has inspired me towards a new career helping people to get active and look after their own health and fitness.

# Appendix – Sarah's Story

## *ParkFitness Membership*

- 1. Before I attended the Cyclopark...** I always exercised but never knew what was right for me or how to get the most out of my exercise. The gym I was a member of before the Cyclopark wasn't a gym where the staff were very approachable or very warming. They had an extensive fitness program but the classes were very 'clicky' especially the evening classes. Which made you not want to attend or walk into. The membership was also very expensive and I don't work. I had also been overweight and this wasn't a good thing for my mental health.
- 2. What I did at the Cyclopark...** I attended the group classes & had a program for the gym. I also found a group of people that were the same as me. The fitness instructors took time to say hello, all the staff were friendly, the members were kind and the group classes you worked out together. You felt as if you mattered and you were not on your own. I joined as a full member and then lockdown happened, once restrictions were semi lifted, Cyclopark made classes happen with outside classes and even created an outside space. This was invaluable to all members.
- 3. How this has helped me...** since being at the Cyclopark not only have I lost 32lb in weight but have a good understanding of what works for me and what I should be doing. The fitness instructors have helped me every week to make this happen. I have built good friendships with other members and the ParkEat cafe is like our therapy sessions some mornings after our classes. I found Herbalife at the Cyclopark with another member who is a coach and this has been life changing for me. Being a menopausal woman sometimes you just lose yourself but having the right nutrition and exercise this has helped me for the last two years to maintain at my current weight.