

## **Co-convenors' report - Women's Cycle Forum Scotland - 2016-17**

The Women's Cycle Forum grew out of a collaboration between Sally Hinchcliffe and Suzanne Forup to run a number of women-led events for women in cycling, however defined. We ran a number of well-received events and set up a Women's Cycle Forum Facebook Group which has a membership much wider than Scotland and continues to be a lively space for discussion and a good sounding board on topics ranging from saddle fit to sexism in bike marketing.

In 2016 we decided we needed to form a properly constituted body, to spread the load and to enable us to apply for grant funding.

The purposes of the WCF Scotland - as agreed in discussion both on- and off-line were:

- a) To encourage women to cycle, including providing opportunities and information that help women to support others to cycle
- b) To promote equality and diversity by providing a platform for women's voices to be heard in the cycling in Scotland
- c) To develop the skills of women in cycling in Scotland as organisers, leaders, speakers or inspiring others
- d) To celebrate the role of women in cycling, in Scotland and elsewhere

We formed a committee, consisting of: Suzanne Forup and Sally Hinchcliffe (Co-convenors), Alice Lyall (Treasurer), Lee Muir (Secretary), Susanne Mueller (Website), Caroline Barr, Claire Connachan, Caroline Brown and Vivienne Gray and we were formally launched in June 2016 as part of the Edinburgh Festival of Cycling, featuring inspiring talks by Jools Walker and the Adventure Syndicate's Lee Craigie.

Part of our time since then has been learning to be an organisation - particularly setting up the infrastructure (logo, bank account, twitter account, sorting out the website) which we have done through regular online meetings. As a volunteer-run organisation, we have tried not to be too ambitious in what we attempted to achieve, aiming for the long haul.

That said, through a mixture of planning and occasional opportunism, looking back we have managed an impressive amount!

Most prominent has been our collaboration with the Edinburgh Literary Festival, who asked us to curate some events celebrating women and cycling, which ended up bringing Elly Blue, Juliana Buhring, Jenny Tough and - most excitingly - Dervla Murphy, cycling legend and a long-time heroine for many of us.

We have continued our collaboration with the Adventure Syndicate, co-running two events in Glasgow, and hosted three talks by Ishbel Taromsari (World Bike Girl) who brings a very different perspective to round-the-world cycling. We have also spoken at the Cycling Scotland Conference, highlighting the importance of diversity in planning, and to students and the public at Aberdeen University. We have also encouraged women to tell their own stories: our Women in Cycling interviews have showcased 25 women so far and are intended to create a resource for conference and event organisers, while our "Pecha Cakea" evening offered a chance for women to stand up and present their own stories, be they adventures on the bike, in campaigning or breaking into song. Starting with a workshop to develop public-speaking skills, it proved some participants' first experience of speaking to an audience and was an evening filled with laughter and lots of cake.

Sally and Suzanne have a strong campaigning background and that has been reflected in two further events: the Women's Cycle Forum hustings for the local elections, which ended up being as much about social justice as about cycling infrastructure, and the 'Cake Summit' - a chance for committee members and a few other female campaigners to step back and consider how we went about winning hearts and minds for cycling, active travel, and livable towns and cities more generally.

Finally, we have not neglected the social side of things. We have held casual get-togethers in Aberdeen, Dundee and Perth and we have continued to host our Facebook group, providing an open, friendly and welcoming space to discuss everything bike.

Looking to the future, we now have a bank account which means we can apply for grants and generally build up our finances to help us run more events and run them more professionally. We are also looking at developing a line of merchandise to help spread the word about us and also raise some funds. We are in the throes of planning our next events. We would also like to increase our diversity as an organisation and among our members and make sure we can represent all women who cycle or who might wish to.

We would like to thank all of our committee, and particularly Alice Lyall for taking on the thankless task of opening a bank account, Susanne Mueller for taking the website in hand, Caroline Brown for taking on the Book Festival after an all-male cycling line up last year, and Lee Muir for keeping track of our members and running the newsletter. Claire Connachan and Vivienne Gray have helped run events, particularly the Pecha Cakea, and also been generous with their expertise (and good humour) on line. We also would like thank Caroline Barr, our outgoing committee member, for her service and help with events right from the start of the WCF.

**Sally Hinchcliffe & Suzanne Forup**

**18th August 2017**