

**In this episode of the podcast, we are joined by Kiera Byland, a member of the Centennial 100 Champion Lions. Kiera is a double triple gold medallist, she has been awarded a British Empire Medal and joins Samantha Boffin to talk about how she got involved in cycling and what a positive difference it has made in her own life and to those she is coaching. We also feature Llew Monger of Winslow Lions, who joins us to tell us about the North Bucks Bike Ride, the partnership approach with Winslow Wheelers Cycle Club and Furze Down School and the organisation and preparation leading up to the big day.**

Be uplifted, be inspired. This is Step Forward and Volunteer.

Welcome to the latest episode of the popular Step Forward and Volunteer podcast brought to you by Lions Clubs British Isles.

My name is Samantha Boffin and I'd like to thank you for tuning in.

If you haven't listened before, our aim is simple. We want to celebrate the positive difference volunteering makes to communities across the British Isles and beyond. To do that, we'll be speaking to those who give up their time to help others, inspiring more people to step forward and volunteer.

In this episode of the podcast, we are joined by Kiera Byland, a member of the Centennial 100 Champion Lions. Kiera is a double triple gold medallist, she has been awarded a British Empire Medal and joins us to talk to us on how she got involved in cycling and what a positive difference it has made in her own life and to those she is coaching. We also feature

Llew Monger of Winslow Lions, who joins us to tell us about the North Bucks Bike Ride, the partnership approach with Winslow Wheelers Cycle Club and Furze Down School and the organisation and preparation leading up to the big day.

But first, I have a favour to ask. We'd like your help in getting the word out about Step Forward and Volunteer. Tell your family, tell your friends - and if you're a Lions member, why not let other members of your club know about the podcast - and how easy it is to listen. All you need to do is either go on the website [www.lionsclubs.co](http://www.lionsclubs.co) where you will see a link to the podcast, or you can search for Step Forward and Volunteer on apps like Spotify, Podbean, Apple podcasts and Google podcasts.

You can listen on-demand or subscribe so that you never miss an episode. We publish a new programme on the second Wednesday of each month, and we're really keen to spread the positivity and get as many people listening as we can.

So we caught up with Kiera Byland from Centennial 100 Champion Lions who joins us to tell us where her own journey into cycling began and the positive difference in her own life and that of others.

Hello, Kiera, very warm welcome to you. Hi. Nice to see you, how are you? All right thank you.

So, so can you tell us how you got involved with cycling, and where your journey started?

At the age of 12, I couldn't actually ride a bike. I struggled with the gears, the brakes, the balance, everything that you need to do to be able to ride a bike. Then a few years later, and then went to the Manchester Velodrome where they don't have brakes. They have a fixed wheel. You can't stop pedalling. Otherwise, it kind of hurts. So I learned how to balance that way. And then in 2013, I was given a pedal bike with gears and brakes. And then I entered my first Special Olympics competition, which is people with learning disabilities. And then in 2015, I was invited to go to Special Olympic World Games in Los Angeles. Wow. So going from someone who couldn't ride a bike at the age of 12 to being invited two years later to go to a world games in a different country, that was amazing to me.

Wow. So, so it took you two years from being able to start riding a bike before you began competing in cycling? Yeah. That's incredible. That's amazing. So now, how much training do you have to do Kiera?

When I was competing I would train five days of the week, and I've got myself a cycling coach that created a training plan. And then because of my intellectual disability, I found numbers and timing was quite hard and to remember what I need to do. So I used to colour code it, so if it was a green week, it was nice and easy. Orange a little bit harder. A red week, oh a red week, can be quite difficult. And then work our way through that process, it's called tapering. So you start off easy, then it gets harder. Nearer a competition date really you then start to bring it back down again. And sometimes I'd have to train twice a day on the

weekends because I also swim and cycle. So that's where the inner strength had to kick in a little bit.

Yeah. Did the swimming help you with the cycling and the other way around as well? Did they both help you with each sport as it were?

Yeah, so the cross train in between the cycling and the swimming actually helps because I have lordosis in my back and in the winter, it gets really sore, the muscles kind of tighten up and this was great because when I did backstroke, it would actually straighten them back. Then when it came to the cycling, it wouldn't hurt so much. So that's why it's so good because it's working different muscles and asking your body to perform in a different way. So then it gives a little bit of a break, because training gets very intense, when you're training for games and competitions.

So now last year, I know that you received Coach of the Year for your work locally with a cycle racing team based in Tameside. So, how did that come about? How did you get that Coach of the Year?

Well, I was nominated by a fellow coach that saw something in me I guess, being able to have the coach to experience for so long, but also we are an inclusive club. So we have riders with intellectual disabilities, and also people that do not have a disability, and it's a really friendly environment. So once a week, each coach kind of rotates, and then you get to

coach in the evening. And then I found out that I got nominated for this award. Oh my goodness, how amazing and special to have the recognition that this team has seen me as a coach, rather than people seeing the disability first, and then me as a person second. I thought, okay, what happens, happens if I get it great. If not, it's okay, it's not gonna change anything. If I don't get the award, I'll keep doing the coaching. I'll keep enjoying each other's company, trying to inspire each other, cyclists who do have an intellectual disability, and some who don't. But I did get it, which is amazing to me, because it's almost like, wow, yeah, I'm able to achieve things, even though people might not think that you'd be able to achieve quite highly. Sometimes when you say disability, people might think they kind of aim the goals either too low, or too high. Yeah, before they actually get to meet the person and meet their individual needs. Because that's my job really, as a coach, meeting people's individual needs, and meeting my own individual needs as well. So it sounds hard, but it's quite fun. I enjoy my coaching. I'm very passionate about it. I like learning from other coaches as well, because they might deliver something different to me, and I go, awh, I didn't think about that. When I'm delivering and they're riding in the group. They might go, awh, I didn't think about that. That's quite a good idea. And then you put it into the training, but adapt it a little bit to suit everybody.

So having that it's a unified, inclusive approach. This is Mossley Cycle Racing team. Is that right? It is yeah, Mossley CRT for short.

So having that sort of approach, actually, with any team is a really good one, because you all learn from each other and learn how to cope in different situations.

It is and it's just trying to say to other clubs, that if you do have riders, or people that come along that have a disability, that's okay. It actually helps you become a stronger coach in a way because it's asking you to think outside the box approach. But it's also saying that if you have a club that isn't inclusive, that's okay, as well, but it's just being able to say try and be open to the idea of it. It doesn't mean that we're asking you to change absolutely everything. It's just trying to have an open mind towards people that have disabilities and saying that they are welcome, you can join and not being afraid to ask questions, saying how do you learn best? Do you learn best by watching, hearing, having a go first. Then the coach giving a little bit of advice and then from that information, you can then work on that but then some people might be nonverbal, which is absolutely fine as well. But we just try and change our coaching styles but it's not a big change, it's just a little bit. So if you're a coach that likes to show, demonstrate or if you do a lot of talking that's okay. So it's only trying to start little things first rather than going okay I've got to change massive things about it. It's not, it's just taking it step by step and just looking at your session plan, or the actual session and going, okay, I can change a little bit here, a little bit there. And it's just trying to not get so overwhelmed. I think sometimes people might think, I don't know what to do. But asking questions, trying to learn from each other is quite important, I think, to myself, because it's helped me grow from the beginnings of my coaching journey to now.

Actually, that's amazing advice for anyone who's teaching anything, you know, across the board. So, so not only are you a passionate coach and a leader, you are a dedicated athlete, and you compete in Special Olympics. So do you feel that cycling as a sport, or even all the sports that you do, has really given you confidence in other areas of your life?

Yeah, I have cycling as a starting point, that's how I made friends through my sport, and Special Olympics as well. They give opportunities for athletes to train and compete, and then even potentially go into a world games that happens every four years, the athletes might have the opportunity to represent their country, if they are selected to be a part of the team. And it's life skills that you learn. So friendships, how to I guess survive, work within your community, as well. And it almost gives you a voice as you will. So mine started in sport, through the cycling of the Special Olympics. But it also gave me the opportunity to become an athlete leader, where I've learned different skills, how to be professional, how to balance being professional and my emotions, and different environments will try and stretch yourself almost, improve yourself. And there are times when you go, okay. I'm not sure what I'm going to do, or how I feel. It's almost like take a breath, take a minute, recollect yourself, and then you can kind of start forward. But that's a learned skill for me, that doesn't come natural. But it's nice that the different roles that I've gained either nationally, through Special Olympics Great Britain, or Special Olympics Europe, Eurasia, our internationally, Special Olympics International, the different roles have gained through Special Olympics, has helped me help other people. Because when I started my journey, I said to people, I want to be that person that I didn't have when I was going through my journey. It's not saying that my family didn't help, or my friends didn't help. It was just in mainstream, I didn't have somebody that I could go to that was a similar age to me. Yeah, that I could get advice from. My family have been so supportive, and through Special Olympics, I have gained friends, experience. For now I have people that they can come to me, and I can go to them to gain advice and enjoy what I'm doing. If that is training competing as an athlete, being a coach, or swim teaching, or bikeability instructor. I like that I get to have different things from day to day. But I also like to support other people to say

that even though you might have a disability, either physically, visually, or intellectually, you can still achieve.

So you've had an absolutely incredible journey Kiera. Do you have an inspirational message that you'd like to share with us?

I would say that if you have a dream, you can achieve it. No matter what other people may think, or say, or feel about that goal, or dream. And it's okay. If it's different than somebody else's. It means that it's your goal that you can achieve. Even if you have a disability or not, it doesn't matter. Because it's yours. You should be proud of who you are, and what you can do.

Wow, that is an incredible message to end on. Thank you so much for sharing your story, Kiera. That was amazing. It was absolutely lovely speaking to you.

Thank you for having me. And I hope that people can see that. I'll listen. You can do anything you put your mind to.

It's time now for a short break, we'll be back after this ...



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So today we are talking to Llew Monger from Winslow Lions, in Winslow, Buckingham who joins us to tell us all about the North Bucks Bike Ride. An event for the Sportive riders and leisure cyclists and the importance of planning and preparation.

Hello Llew, Hello, lovely to meet you, and you.

Llew, the Winslow lions are involved in the North Bucks Bike Ride, which took place in July. Is that right?

Yes, it did indeed. The second year that we would run it. We originally intended to start this in 2020. But a national problem got in the way. And in fact, our first one was last year. So this year, we were a little bit more organised, and it went off remarkably well. so brilliant. When we first were putting it together, we had contact with another Lions Club. Interestingly, Knowle and Dorridge in the Midlands who were already running a bike event, and certainly we got some help and guidance from them. So a good example of cooperation between Lions Clubs coming to the benefit of all.

Yes, being run in partnership as well. Yeah, and is there a school involved as well and a cycling club?

Yeah, we have a local cycling club. We're only a small market town 5000 population, but the cycling club has nearly 100 members. And they go out every Saturday morning, my wife as it happens is included and in the Summer, on Wednesday evenings as well. We worked with them, they picked up particularly on contact with other cycling clubs, and promoted the event through them. Our connection with the school it's a special school, a fabulous site, fabulous building. And it's ideal as a start/finish point because it's on the edge of the town. So it has all the facilities we need to start and finish the event. And our riders are quickly out within 100 meters, they're out into the countryside. So there's no need for them to ride through busy town streets or anything like that. Yeah yes. So certainly our principal partners in the venture are the Winslow Wheelers Cycling Club, to whom we're very grateful. And the Furze Special School without whom we couldn't run the event.

So how many people are involved in the bike ride? How many were involved this year?

Well we have over 300 entrants. The vast majority of them being on the Sportive events. The event is actually five events in one. There are three courses for serious cyclists so they turn them Sportives, so there's a 60k, 100k and 100 miles. And in fact, 100 Miles is achieved by completing both the 100k and 60k routes. So that helps us with marshalling, we were actually marshalling, you know, with less area than we would be if the 100 mile route was an entirely separate route. Yes. So, so that works quite well. And then we have a leisure ride side to the event, where we have a 20k and a 30k ride. And that's where we can get children involved, family groups, quite a lot of family groups did it this year and obviously, there's an

entry fee. But we made it free for under 16s this year, which, which I think helped us with families in the current circumstances, we didn't want them to have to pay.

No, absolutely. How young are your youngest riders?

Oh, good question. I would think probably we had riders, certainly under 10, but only in family groups. Anyone under 16 isn't allowed to enter unless they're with an adult. Right? We have to be careful about safeguarding issues obviously and we have a huge responsibility, obviously in the event of any accidents en-route, although we cover that very well with first aid, at two key points. And we use the community bus to trawl around the route and pick up any stragglers.

So there are opportunities to stop aren't there along the route.

Yeah, for the leisure riders, the sportive riders wouldn't want to, their intention is to get the course finished. But for the leisure riders, we have a partnership with four local attractions, national trust property, Clayton House, where the estate is open for free, and our leisure route actually passes through the estate. So they come off the road, right around the house, across the lawns, and through the trees and back out onto another road.

So that's how, wow, wow gorgeous.

We have Hogshaw Farm and Wildlife Centre, which is a petting farm, quite a big activity. And the Buckinghamshire Railway Centre at Quainton. That's a massive railway centre, with steam engines still operating. And Quainton windmill, where they lay on people to give a conducted tour of the windmill and anyone who still has the energy to climb up to the top of the windmill.

So it's a really big day out actually, for the families for the leisure cyclists.

For sure. Yeah. Yeah, people have got a choice. If they, if they want to do the Quainton part with the Steam Railway and the windmill that requires the 30 mile route. But if they can only manage the 20 then that picks up the National Trust property and the farm.

Fantastic. But the Sportive people, it's all about personal bests. Is it?

For some it's just completing it? Yeah. But yes, of course, personal bests. I mean, some of these people have got really serious bikes, you know. I know, cyclists myself, but I marvel at some of the gear that these people have the camaraderie that exists among these groups you can see. I find it fantastic, half six on the Sunday morning, as we're starting to put things together, people arrive remarkably early for, you know, the main event goes off the 100 mile event starts at eight o'clock. And, but they're there from half six, quarter to seven, meeting up with old friends, perhaps people in other cycle clubs that they've met in the past. It's so colourful, because you've got all the different coloured jerseys out there. We're somewhere

that club jerseys, some with frankly sincere, really humorous things on shirts. We even had a North Bucks Bike shirt produced this year, and a number of people had spent serious money to buy one of them to just to wear in the event. So they're very keen. It's a very exciting time to be involved with them at that early start period.

And do they have chip timing?

Yes, chip timing for the Sportives not for the leisure riders. It's, it's a bit of a bone of contention as to whether we should continue with it. We do a survey, survey results suggest that 50% of the people think it's important, fifty percent really don't care. So many of the serious riders now use Strava. So they've got something on their bike on their wrist, whatever, to give them all of the data that they need anyway. And for us, you know, there's a cost of over £600 pounds just to hire the equipment and do it ourselves. If we brought in the specialists, it would cost us twice that.

Absolutely, absolutely.

Anyone else looking at doing it? I'd say, one perhaps needs to question the value of actually doing the chip timing these days.

Yes. And actually, that brings me on nicely to. You were able to get sponsorship to run this event were you?

Yes, we were. We have operating costs of about £3,500. It's surprising how it ramps up with promotional activity, banners, literature, and the timing, as we've just mentioned, and various other things. So we secured £2,000 in sponsorship from an engineering company. It's actually a consortium, the name of EKFB. And in other words, it's HS2, it's the four major construction companies that have come together for the construction and engineering works for HS2 which is passing through our area and our route passes their works in several places. And I approached them to see if they could help and they have a community fund for areas that are affected by their work. And, and they gave us £2,000. A local estate agent £500 Alexander's Estate agents joined us and our local town council Winslow Town Council gave us another £500. So we had £3,000 worth of sponsorship to offset our fixed costs.

So that's great. So that must have helped cover the majority of the cost for the event.

Yeah, absolutely. We have a lot of other smaller contributions that are more indirect, if you like, yeah. So Erding alcohol free beer was provided free of charge to everyone over 18. So they're building connection with sport. And they've been a group that's two years, both events last year as and this, they have supported us. We had two cycle companies one, a repair and maintenance company who set up a base at the halfway point. And another one who are mainly a bicycle sales company had a display at a marquee at the start finish point.

Actually, that's a good point. Are there areas around the route? Where if you got a puncture, or something happened to your bike, is there help available?

Yeah. So obviously, the technical help is static location at the start, and approximately the halfway point where we had the Quanton windmill site. So we also have, as I mentioned earlier, the Winslow community bus, one of our members is a regular driver for the community bus. So we have the bus out for the day. And the bus just travels around the route and can pick up, we also had a new thing this year, we had an emergency number, a single number for anyone. So everyone was given that number. And we had one lion dedicated to the day who had a telephone that was only used for that number. So anyone who had a serious problem only had to ring that single number. And we also encourage them to use what three words to pinpoint their location. So we could either send someone out from the start finish point, if they were closer to us, contact the community bus or contact the bike repair outfit at the halfway point. So no one got lost or had a serious problem.

That's great. That's fantastic support. Was there other support offered to the cyclists on the day.

Absolutely. Best of all, at the end, we had contact with Bucks New University, and we had about a dozen people who are doing a sports massage course there. And they came with all their kit and tables, and we put on one of our larger gazebos for them, sort of a mini marquee. And we also had a professional who lives in Winslow who does sports massage, and she came with her own kit. So anyone at the end could have a free sports massage.

That's fantastic.

We had three franchises out for refreshments. So we had a deluxe burger van, the ice cream van, very popular. And a barista doing a fantastic range of coffee and other drinks. So plenty going on. And we, we staged the finish in such a way that the cyclists came down a ramp into an area surrounded by the massage, representatives from three charities, the food outlets, so there was a sense of theatre. Yeah, as they came across the finish line and into that area, where to get their medals and various other freebies that were given them.

Wow, that's important, isn't it to have a nice big finish to celebrate.

Something we learned from the first year? Yeah, first year. We didn't do it like that. We realised we needed to change. It worked. It worked great. So another good tip to pass on.

So how long did it take to organize this bike ride the North Bucks Bike ride? How many volunteers worked on it?

Well, the core team of four of us have been doing things over a year and I mean we're already having discussions about next year's event. So I think I'd say in reality, probably more like nine months of actual work. We have to have a look at the course we're trying to keep the course the same each year. But we've got to liaise with the Bucks Highways team. So



we've got one member who's a serious regular cyclist and goes around the world cycling, he's Course Director, he designs the course and liaises on that, we have another member of the core team who liaises with the leisure right sites, and handles the marketing. Then a third, doing all of the IT so we've got a good website with a lot of information through that. And I handled the sponsorship relations with the County Council, the highways department, and various other bits and pieces. So we pull it together ably supported by our member who handles all of our social media. So that is terribly important to. On the day though 60 people involved in supporting as marshals, or at the start - finish point.

So, Lew, you've worked with a number of other cycle clubs. I think how useful was that for getting the word out about the North Bucks Bike Ride?

That was absolutely critical. What we had locally with the Winslow Wheelers Club, is people who, who many of us know members in the club anyway. They have really good social media of their own. So they promote the events through their social media and through their contacts with other cycling clubs. And then our own social media guru promoted on the lions website. So between the two, we got a lot of coverage. In fact, Andrew, our social media Lion said, we had the highest responses for anything we've ever done through lions in all the years, he's been involved doing social media. So that's an indicator that there is a huge interest in this, you know? So, yeah, social media is terribly important. Clearly, in getting the word out.

Yes, that must have been a real boost.

Wow, that's quite an input, isn't it?

Well, we're a club in a small community, but we actually have more than 40 members. And most of our people in fact, I think everyone who was actually in the country on the day, and physically able was actually doing something, quite a lot of partners and family get dragged into it to do various things.

Of course, so, obviously, this is a fundraiser, so it's going to benefit a variety charities. So which three charities does this particular bike ride benefit?

Well, we decided this year to support cancer charities. This year, one of our past presidents his wife had cancer during the year. And that directed us towards cancer charity. So we split it three ways with Macmillan Cancer Support. And then two hospices that cover our area, Willen hospice in Milton Keynes, and the Florence Nightingale hospice, which covers a wider part of Buckinghamshire. So there was a clear link between the three. And we know that Florence Nightingale and Willen actually work together anyway. So we have all three represented on the day, we encourage them to use their own marketing to get their supporters to come out and join the event and maybe even get direct sponsorship just, just for them. Because the money we make is from the registration fees. So all of that in the end went well, the majority of it went to the three cancer charities, we also give £1000 to the school. Because we think it's huge, what the work they do is amazing. And we want to keep supporting them.

Of course. Absolutely. So do you know how much was raised this year in sponsorship?

Yes, £7000. So it's not bad for a days work? The fact that we actually spent nine months it's by the by. Yeah, yeah, £7,000 net after all the costs. And you know, allowing, obviously for the sponsorship that we offset some of the costs. Wow.

That's brilliant. So would you have any tips or advice Llew for other clubs, if they wanted to set up a similar thing? You've given us a couple of tips already, haven't you?

I think you need to start early. It's no good thinking well, let's, you know, you decided in May that you're going to do it in the summer. That's not good, it's not going to work. So you you've got to be looking initially, I think a year ahead. I think it's important to work with people who actually understand cycling. So if you've got a local cycling club, to meet with them have discussions with them. Before getting involved, we'd be more than happy to talk to any Lions Club, who we're going to consider it an event, I'm sure we could do that over zoom or meet up somewhere if that was going to help. And of course, you also have to work with your local highways department to be sure that they're not planning to close the road, dig a road up. They might even be persuaded to fill some potholes in, which we did, I must say that the highways team at Bucks were, were really helpful. We had regular zoom meetings with them, so, so that I think they will be the three areas - involve people who actually know something about cycling. If you've got somebody who's good at marketing and social media, that's a key element to and to start early, for sure. Yes. And also starting

early allows you to get sponsorship in and to be able to. Yeah, yes, not as easy as you might think. Because, you know, times are hard for even the biggest businesses. And you've got to find a reason. You know, we had an outfit to have a number of pubs in our area. Well, they've got pubs all over the country. But they have three that almost defined three points on our route. But we still cut no ice because they spend their money on a local rugby club. So you know, it's not as straightforward as one might think.

Good tips. Well, Llew, thank you so much for coming on to the podcast and sharing all of that information. And just the sheer excitement of the North Bucks Bike Ride. It's just sounds wonderful. It's brilliant work that you're doing.

Well, thank you for having us on. And as we'd be more than happy to help anyone else who wants to take it forward.

Oh, fantastic. Thank you, Llew. It was great speaking to you. My pleasure. Bye now.

That is all we have time for on this month's podcast. Don't forget you can also listen to past editions of the Step Forward and Volunteer podcast any time via [www.lionsclubs.co](http://www.lionsclubs.co) or on Spotify, Podbean, Apple podcasts or Google podcasts.

Cycling days out are popular in all parts of the British Isles. They can focus on family fun or appeal to those looking to ride with organised events as highlighted in the LION Magazine Summer Special.

Thanks once again to our special guests Kiera Byland and Llew Monger and a big thank you to our listeners as well. Take care and goodbye.