

## **Evaluation of Cycling Photography Project**

### **Original Aims of the Project**

The Cycling Photography project took place from the beginning of September to the end of October 2008. The aims of the were:

- Hold at least two workshops in which younger and older people could work together to capture images of cyclists within Darlington town centre.
- To encourage older people to take part in the project by working with organisations such as GOLD and Age Concern.
- To enable younger participants to take part in the project by working through the Young Caretakers Project and with Darlington Youth Service.
- To provide a series of digital images of cycling within Darlington Town Centre that could be used for a variety of promotional purposes.

### **Project Information**

In total there were five older participants who took part in the project which included members of Age Concern and GOLD. A further seven younger people were involved and were either members of the Young Caretakers Project run by Groundwork, or the rE-view team within Darlington Youth Service. A total of four sessions were arranged in which to take photographs within the town Centre. However, due to low attendance, the first session was cancelled.

Within each session all participants were encouraged to take photographs and members of the rE-view team were present to assist those who were unsure how to use the cameras correctly. This ensured that all those who attended could participate fully and enjoy the session.

The project employed two approaches to taking photographs. Firstly participants themselves were invited to bring their own bicycles and appear in front of the camera. This allowed photographers to set up an image they wished to capture and produced some high quality photographs. It also ensured that the project was able to obtain a consent form from those appearing in these photographs.

Secondly, participants were asked to capture images of members of the public cycling within the town centre. This presented a number of issues that made this element a bit more difficult. Members of the group had commented that certain individuals may not wish to be photographed. As a result the group were informed that they were able to ask people if they would be happy to be photographed and consent forms were available to be signed by members of the public. This allayed the group's hesitation however, it proved difficult to stop cyclists as they were often far away and moving at pace. The group were able to take photographs of cyclists at a short distance so that their faces were not clear.

As a result the quality of photographs is not necessarily as high as when participants themselves appeared in the image although a number of very good images were taken.

### **Participants Comments on Cycling within Darlington Town Centre**

It would appear that the majority of participants who agreed to take part in the project chose to do so because they had a personal interest in cycling as opposed to photography. This was despite emphasis being placed on taking photographs, and may have been in some part due to the way individual organisations communicated information about the project to their members. However, this had the benefit of allowing participants to discuss their views on cycling within Darlington town centre. Some of their general views/comments were recorded and are given below:

- Participants wanted to see longer cycle paths as the current ones started and ended suddenly. It was said that there was no continuity with the current cycle lanes.
- Participants would like safer places to park cycles close to the centre of town and preferably with a cover so they were not left in the rain.
- All participants who regularly cycled in the town centre said that they understood that it was necessary to be considerate of pedestrians and that they would often slow down or dismount in busy areas. They were of the belief that any issues that had been raised were caused by a minority of inconsiderate people.
- Leading on from the previous comment: Participants were generally not of the opinion that any one group were particularly inconsiderate of pedestrians. However, they were aware that young people were often blamed.
- Two participants had expressed concerns that as pedestrians they had been scared by cyclists moving past them closely at high speeds.
- The major reasons why participants cycled through the town centre included keeping physically fit and because it was easier than parking.
- Both an older and younger participant agreed that they were surprised by a high number of people cycling within the town. They had only become aware of this because of taking part in a photography session.