

Falkirk Junior Bike Club Chair Annual Report 2019

It is fair to say that Falkirk Junior Bike Club is almost unrecognisable from the beginning to the end of 2019. In so many ways the club has come on in leaps and bounds. So many times the club has hit the headlines. So many moments from 2019 stick in the memory of a year in which the club **flourished** from its informal roots and has begun to show the force that it can be in Scottish cycling in the years to come.

At the start of 2019 the club had just short of **100 members**. Many of the early riders at the club were residents near to Larbert High school, the clubs first home. But by now the net was starting to widen – people from further afield were starting to hear about the great work taking place under the Falkirk Junior Bike Club banner. From the weekly sessions and regular masterclasses to the parent-led rides and sociable meet-ups being arranged, a sense of **community** has been building around the club. A community that welcomes anyone with any interest in simply getting on your bike or helping others to do so.

Falkirk Junior Bike Club riders were becoming more and more regular at other club events, and it was time for us to put on our own show – the Dirt Crit at Canada Woods. And what a show it was. Around 300 riders entering across 5 age groups, from many different clubs, including significant numbers from our own club. A huge undertaking of volunteer time – and one to be so **proud** of.

By the start of the summer it was clear the club was going to continue to grow, and that a number of changes were going to be required. With membership growing, financial income and outgoings were increasing, and the responsibilities on key individuals were becoming all the more evident. The club needed to **stabilise**.

In July a strategy consultation survey was launched to ensure the way forward was guided by the views of those taking part in the clubs activities. A wealth of feedback allowed for the drafting of a strategy document to outline the clubs plans, which was presented at a meeting with parents and coaches in September. By that time the Saturday sessions had moved away from **Larbert High school to Kinneil Estate** – a potentially contentious decision at the time but one that has provided a visible boost to the rider's development opportunities.

Also at that September meeting the clubs first committee was appointed. My thanks to our committee members who volunteered (or were volunteered!) – Fraser Johnston, Jade Gray, Catriona Paul, Lesley Archibald, Tom Whalley, Andrew Lauder, Marc Wright, Paul Burns, Graham McQueen, Gemma McAusland and Nicola Ozturk. And I would like to single out one individual to say a huge and special **thankyou** to a man who has, and continues to, show **such dedication** to the sport and to the interests of the club. We hopefully now have a wider group around to support him in the clubs development, please can we take a moment to show our appreciation to **Fraser Johnston**.

The committee have been meeting on a monthly basis since their appointment and I can tell you have the very best interests of the club at heart. The appointment of dedicated

individuals to certain areas has allowed a significantly greater focus. The website development has progressed rapidly, and you now see a wide array of kit being modelled in all the places you'd expect to spot it - Kinneil, the Helix Park, Falkirk High Street, the Isle of Mull, Glentress and Aviemore! A focus on the fundraising for the club has also resulted in significant returns, and we have been able to put on a variety of events through funding from the Paths for All, Greenspace Scotland and Big Bike Revival funds, as well as the Scottish Cycling Active Girls fund that will help us develop in line with the Scottish cycling strategy on gender balance.

There are plenty more visible successes as a result of committee discussions, but I'd like to pick out 3 core areas that the club has made important advances in over the latter part of 2019.

Firstly, **Policies**. To many not the most exciting of developments but a huge amount of work has gone on behind the scenes to create, develop and update the policies that you as members have all signed up to. These documents are **critical** to ensuring the club operates within appropriate standards, that you as members or representatives of members understand what the club expects from you, and what you can expect from the club.

Secondly, the **Basis for Membership**. As you are aware the club decided to move to a monthly membership subscription fee. We have seen the number of club members grow over 2019 and we feared a number of them may turn away as we made such a bold change. But I am pleased to say member numbers now sit around 120, with a waiting list of over 60 about to receive an induction to join the club. My thanks to you all for your commitment to the club during this change. We believe that this set-up facilitates both a low-effort commitment from the riders and their families to the club, and provides a more stable and predictable income for the club which in turn allows us to plan better for the future.

Which brings me to the third area, **Strategy**. That planning for the future is steered by the club strategy, which covers our aims and objectives for the period 2020 to 2024. I would encourage everyone to browse the strategy document from time to time, to remind yourselves where we are going and why we do what we do. You'll be relieved to know that a shorter, "pocket sized" version is now available. For those who have already read the strategy you will know that it is formed on 6 core areas. To keep PEOPLE at the heart of the club, to be ORGANISED, to raise the PROFILE of the sport, to be a SUSTAINABLE part of the community, to support and help develop PLACES in which the sport can grow, and to remain CONNECTED to provide pathways within the club for our riders.

Within the strategy there are defined outcomes that we can use to measure the success of the club, but I'd like to touch on a topic that crops up every now and again, and that I would like to re-affirm my views on.

Understandably events help put the club on the map, draw in the crowds, and help the club to grow. The sheer size of the Mini-World Championships that we put on in September – a

massive success and the biggest event of its kind in the UK – can be a big boost for the club and its membership level.

The success of the club however will be judged by many as the number of FJBC riders appearing on podiums. I want members of Falkirk Junior Bike Club to remember that so many more achievements and successes are made in the woods of Kinneil, on the bends of Canada Wood and in the darkness of the Helix Park. Clearing that jump for the first time, really nailing that new skill that the coaches have been teaching, hitting a new top speed and feeling the wind in the hair, beating that hill for the first time. Let's celebrate those achievements, let's positively encourage the youngsters towards their next challenge, and let's share each other's progress across our community.

In the coming year we will be working more with the schools in the area, helping to create a pathway for cycling in our region. Yes we may find and develop budding young cyclists who go on to stand on podiums, but we will also retain a focus on the grass-roots, the facilitating and encouraging of getting kids on to bikes.

I noted my thanks to the committee members a moment ago. Most of them are parents / guardians of youngsters in the club as well, but a big thankyou has to be said to the taxi drivers, the drag-em out of bedda's, the "I am sure it won't be raining when you get there" promisers – you the parents and carers of the young people that the club seeks to inspire – my thanks to every one of you.

But I have 2 further groups of people to thank in this report. Firstly – to the coaching and leadership volunteers who give up so much of their time to coach the youngsters in the club. You really are the clubs most valuable asset and you will never know how much we appreciate the work you put in. With a particular thank-you to the young coaches who are an inspiration to the kids and adults alike. You show us all how it should be done and we are immensely proud that you are helping us develop our young riders. I hope all the coaches are as excited as I am about the journey the club is going on.

And of course a thank-you to the main "raison d'être", the kids themselves. It is them that make the club what it is, make us smile, make us laugh, make it all worthwhile.

I firmly believe this has been a milestone year for the club with the creation of solid foundations from which the club can grow. As long as my report in the following years doesn't grow as fast we will all be ok.

I submit this 2019 annual report to the members and thank you all for listening.

Mark Drackford

FJBC Chair 2019