

RIDING FOR A CAUSE

RIDING BY DAVID TAYLOR FOR FREEDOM



David Taylor talks to Gordon Miller about his ongoing campaign to end modern slavery – by riding his bike...



I can't wait to fulfil a longstanding ambition and ride a stage or two of the Tour de France"

DAVID TAYLOR: You seem to always be on a bike: how do you find the time?

GORDON MILLER: Ha ha! I have a limited social life and my house is a wreck because I'll always choose a ride over DIY. Seriously, when you make your passion (cycling) your purpose (harnessing cycling to advocate to end modern slavery and empowering survivors through our Freewheel programme), quite simply you've got to put your money where your mouth is and get out on your bike at every opportunity. Luckily, there are few places I'd rather be.

DT: Any tips?

GM: Cycle and fundraise for a charity/ cause and it legitimises the time out on your bike! Get in touch, folks, if you're up for fundraising for Ride For Freedom!

DT: What's the best thing about what you do?

GM: If you'd asked me six months ago, I'd have said that cycling to advocate to end modern slavery was 100 per cent where it was at. Don't get me wrong, there's not much I enjoy more than riding my bike and doing it for a purpose massively drives me forward. However, an extra dimension has been added now we've launched our Freewheel programme, in Barking and Dagenham, East London, that empowers survivors of modern slavery to cycle to support their physical and mental health and rehabilitation into society. We do this by giving them, to keep, a bike and accessories, including helmets, locks and lights, and cycling

proficiency and road awareness training through the national government-accredited cycle training programme, Bikeability. I'm getting such a buzz from seeing what a difference it's making to the survivor-service users' lives. The feedback has been hugely positive from them and our charity partners who support them. So, now there's a double motivation to my cycling-inspired mission: 1) to raise awareness, educate and forge partnerships to help end modern slavery; 2) provide remedy to survivors. Double bubble!

DT: We enjoyed riding with you in the Freewheel event from Barking and Dagenham. What rides do you have in store?

GM: Good to ride with you chaps too! After that ride was the Ride For Freedom North East England Football Clubs fundraising social cycle on 19 August 2022. We've just announced the participatory Ride For Freedom Basque Country *Tour de France* cycling tour 2023. That's going to be a doozy – I can't wait to fulfil a longstanding ambition and ride a stage or two of the

Olympian effort – Miller and friends showing a red card to human trafficking



Gordon Miller is a human rights advocate, communications strategist, social entrepreneur and CEO of Sustain Worldwide



Tour de France, and to deliver Ride For Freedom's mission. Before then, I'm heading across the pond this October for the Ride For Freedom USA East Coast Cycling Tour 2022.

DT: The US sounds particularly interesting – how is planning going?

GM: All on track! We're arranging to meet the sports franchises we'll visit en route to reinforce our #ShowARedCard campaign, which raises awareness of human/child trafficking in sport. Excitingly, we're collaborating with others to seed a Freewheel by Ride For Freedom Hub as a legacy of the tour. That's an incredible step forward in our ambition to roll out our Ride For Freedom blueprint globally.

DT: What steps can governments make to ease the modern slavery problem?

GM: How much space have we got? Policy is critical to how modern slavery is understood, addressed and mitigated. For example, in the UK, the systematic eradication of workers' rights over the past 40 years has



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Berliner Miller – on his German Bundesliga Cycling Tour

been central to conditions for labour exploitation (a form of modern slavery) to take place. So, the strengthening of workers' rights is fundamental to reversing the trend and reducing the conditions for modern slavery to be perpetrated. And don't get me started on the current immigration policy that often victimises those who have been trafficked. (Definition: the unlawful act of transporting or coercing people in order to benefit from their work or service, typically in the form of forced labour or sexual exploitation.)

DT: How can Velocity readers help?

GM: Thanks for asking! They can support Ride For Freedom on a personal level by donating (there's a donating page on our website). Or they can fundraise by joining a Ride For Freedom social cycle. Or they can undertake their own cycling challenge and fundraise for Ride For Freedom. The donations and funds raised support the development and delivery of our Freewheel programme. After the establishment of the first Freewheel Hub in Barking and Dagenham in March 2022, I'm delighted that we'll be rolling out the second hub in the West Midlands this autumn.



We also welcome corporate donations (why not!). Ride For Freedom partners' support enables us to deliver our SDG 8.7 aligned mission – to harness the universal appeal of cycling to raise awareness, educate and forge partnerships to end modern slavery, and to provide remedy to survivors through our Freewheel programme. Ride For Freedom partners include Aviva, Be First Regeneration, Berkeley Group, Biffa, Countryside, EcoWorld London, Halfords, L&Q, Marshalls, Wates, Weston Homes and Willmott Dixon. For more information about becoming a Ride For Freedom partner, get in touch at Info@RideForFreedom.org.uk

Our corporate partners get priority individual and team invitations to our Ride For Freedom social cycles and tours, such as the Ride For Freedom Basque Country *Tour de France* cycling tour in partnership with Be First, the regeneration arm of the London Borough of Barking and Dagenham. The ride runs from 24 to 30 June 2023 (*Tour de France* begins in Bilbao on 1 July 2023) and we will cycle the first three stages on supported rides, visit the Basque Country football clubs to #ShowARedCard to child/human trafficking (a form of modern slavery) in football/sport, fundraise for our Freewheel programme, and seed a Freewheel Hub in the Basque country as a legacy of the tour. We're currently accepting corporate teams of between four and six riders. So, if riding three stages of the *Tour de France* rotates your wheels, get a wiggle on and sign up (contact me) before 30 November 2022 as places (and hotels) are quickly booking up. ◦

rideforfreedom.org.uk

#EndModernSlavery
#RideForFreedom

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