

Community Event Report

April 27, 2025

Overview

Preston Pedals organised a community event to involve more people in discussions about the organisation becoming a co-operative. Over thirty people curious about cooperatives and supporters of Preston Pedals attended the event at the Cotton Court Business Centre in Preston. They listened to engaging presentations about what being a co-operative means, a real-world example of a cycle cooperative, and participated in group discussions.

Amongst the attendees were several community organisations, including Preston Cooperative Development Network (PCDN), Broadgate Community Connectors, and Climate Action Preston. A tasty lunch was provided and served by The Mill at St Catherine's Hospice.

What is a Co-op?



John Harrison from Preston Cooperative Education Centre

Birmingham Bike Foundry Worker Co-op



Chris Tomlinson, one of the worker members

John Harrison set the stage for deeper reflection on shared ownership and democratic participation. Drawing on the Co-operatives UK definition and the seven key principles, he explained how the co-op business model is rooted in democratic control, shared values, and community benefit.

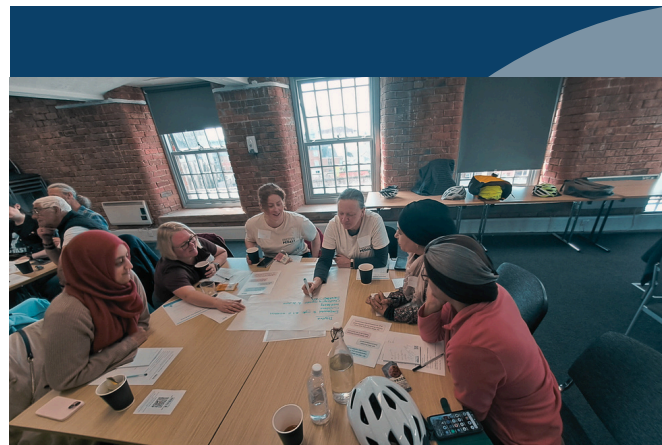
Chris Tomlinson emphasised how shared decision-making, collective ownership, and alignment with broader sustainability goals underpin everything they do. He spoke of the potential for co-ops to create decent jobs, empower members, and deliver high-quality, community-rooted businesses, offering inspiration for Preston Pedals' future as a co-op.

Key Points from Group Discussions

Positive Cycling Experiences in Preston

People enjoyed cycling the Guild Wheel, which made them feel 'connected' and 'free'. New infrastructure, including the Broadgate and Friargate junctions, were seen as helpful to cyclists, as were new cycle paths in Cottam and Fulwood. Some of the benefits of cycling were its health benefits and that it gets people out in nature. There are some great routes along the Preston to Lancaster canal and through Preston's parks. Cycling gave the opportunity to enjoy birdsong, fresh air and green spaces. Cycling was seen as a climate-friendly type of transport, reducing emissions, and was part of everyday wellbeing and active lifestyles.

Some people said that cycling helps foster a sense of community and independence. They spoke of the friendly interactions with other cyclists and walkers, and how cycle-friendly cafes enhanced their social experience and connections. It was a cheap and fast way to get around, helping skip traffic jams. Cycling made daily travel easy and affordable for everyone.



Preston Pedals Helps Everyday Cyclists

Preston Pedals is making a tangible difference. People credited Preston Pedals with helping them build confidence, learn new skills, meet others, and feel part of a wider cycling community. It has been especially empowering for women and less confident riders, offering a supportive, inclusive environment where people can learn at their own pace.

Preston Pedals has encouraged more people, especially women, to cycle and to get out cycling independently. Our cycling activities have supported wellbeing, physical fitness, and the positive mental health benefits of being outdoors. People said we'd helped make cycling more inclusive and accessible by breaking down social barriers and raising awareness of its' benefits, fostering a sense of safety. Increasing people's cycling confidence led to wider community participation.



Key Points from Group Discussions

Ideas on Future Directions

People wanted Preston Pedals to **continue to offer and to increase existing activities** such as social-led rides, and bike repair and maintenance sessions to keep bikes in good shape with access to tools, parts and expert mechanics. They also called for exciting themed adventures and cycle trips beyond Preston to stay motivated.

New ventures suggested included developing an e-bike and e-cargo bike hire scheme, and providing route planning support.

Amplifying the voice of everyday cyclists **advocating and lobbying** for better cycling infrastructure and better, safer cycle storage was called for. This included promoting shared space education to improve interactions between cyclists, car drivers and pedestrians.

Strengthening **communications and the visibility of Preston Pedals** through a website and increased social media presence would help grow further participation.

Broadening participation in Preston Pedals' activities to include working with families and children (future active travellers) through collaborations with youth organisations, mosques and museums. Offering bike loans, free and low-cost bikes and cycling lessons to underserved communities.

Preston Pedals Co-op Membership

PRACTICAL BENEFITS AND INCENTIVES

- Discounts at local shops or with partners
- Subscription packages that include perks like free repairs or ride credits
- Access to space for self-repairs, such as Bike Kitchens
- Options to earn rewards or 'add-ons' through continued involvement

COMMUNICATION AND ENGAGEMENT

- Regular newsletters or a mailing list to stay informed
- A website to access information, event updates, and membership details
- Participation opportunities in creative outreach projects, e.g. SPIN Buddies



AFFORDABILITY AND INCLUSION

- Cost should not be a barrier to participation
- Flexible or tiered pricing, or sponsorship options for low-income members
- Open to wide range of cycling interests.



MEMBERSHIP IDENTITY AND VISIBILITY

- Membership card, T-shirts, and other merchandise
- Up-cycled vintage bikes as symbolic or functional member gifts



SOCIAL AND COMMUNITY ASPECTS

- Fun social events, open to all
- Opportunities to connect with other co-ops



Next Steps

In addition to agreeing to produce this summary report and share it widely, the following next steps were proposed:

- 1 Preston Pedals team start shaping a draft co-operative and membership model, exploring tiers, benefits, roles and responsibilities.
- 2 Develop the website and other marketing strategies to improve communications and engagement.
- 3 Map the opportunities for members and volunteers to become more involved in Preston Pedals' activities.
- 4 Considering the ideas and proposals for new ventures and potential growth of Preston Pedals activities.



Thank you!

We wish to thank John Harrison and Chris Tomlinson our speakers, and everyone who attended the event for their brilliant contributions.

We acknowledge the support of **Preston City Council's Community Wealth Building Team** for their generous ASEP grant to support our cooperative journey. We're also grateful to **PCDN** for its financial contribution to this event.

Get in touch



PrestonPedals@outlook.com



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