

Walking And Cycling Need A Woman's Touch

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Sustrans, the sustainable transport charity, is looking for more women to support walking and cycling across the UK.

There are around 600 women volunteering for Sustrans, donating a total of 32,500 hours of time every year.

But, for every female volunteer there are three male volunteers, and Sustrans is keen to help women redress the balance.

Katie Aartse-Tuyn, Sustrans's Volunteer Coordinator, said: "We are fortunate to have the help of a great team of volunteers, and are always ready to welcome new people to the team – men and women alike.

"But, we're particularly keen to encourage more involvement from women. They are vital role models to help us get the message out there that active, environmentally-friendly methods of travel are for everyone."

Volunteer roles for everyone

Sustrans has a mix of volunteer roles to suit everyone. One of the most popular is the ranger role, helping to maintain local sections of the National Cycle Network, which now covers 12,000 miles across the UK.

Michele Taborn has been a Volunteer Ranger for Sustrans in north Devon for the last six years.

She said: "I'm always surprised when I go to ranger meetings and there are far more men than women. Being a Volunteer Ranger is the ultimate in multi-tasking – it allows people to combine getting fit, socialising and making a real difference to the local environment. Plus it's one of the few leisure activities you can do that doesn't cost much!"

Other volunteer roles at Sustrans include fundraising - whether by holding a sponsored event, hosting coffee mornings or placing collection boxes in local shops and cafes – representing Sustrans at local events, helping out in one of the Sustrans offices or promoting cycling in schools.

Make friends and make a difference

Katie Aartse-Tuyn continued: "There really is something to suit everyone, no matter how much or little time people can offer us. Our advice for women is to take the plunge and give it a go - you'll have the chance to make new friends, get more active and know that you're making a positive difference."

Women are currently under-represented in cycling.

A BMRB survey commissioned by Sustrans this spring revealed that 79 per cent of women in Britain never get on a bike despite 49 per cent having access to a bike.

Sustrans is hoping to change that in 2009, with a year of activities to get more women cycling, including a brand new website www.bikebelles.org.uk

To find out more about the volunteer opportunities in your area call 0117 9150110, email volunteers-uk@sustrans.org.uk or visit www.sustrans.org.uk and click on 'Support Sustrans'.

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