

26<sup>th</sup> November 2009



Dear Colleague

## **A response by the Chair of CTC Council to the CTC South West London Circular to Member Groups**

I am writing to you in response to a circular email from Simon Legg of CTC South West London (SWL) about forthcoming proposals to convert CTC to a Charity.

Council believes these are important proposals for members to consider in the run up to the 2010 AGM. The quality of the debate will be important in stimulating members to vote in person or by their proxy at the AGM.

The first thing members should be aware of is that there is a debate. When motions go to the AGM you should not assume that there is a majority for any proposal or that the Council's position always holds sway. In the case of charitable status it is particularly important to achieve a high voting turnout so that a result is clear.

I am pleased SWL have expressed their concerns about the matter as it gives us an opportunity to start the debate and deal with some misconceptions that seem to have arisen even at this early stage in the process.

I would like to comment and hopefully clarify points raised by SWL. If you are considering circulating Simon's email to your members or printing it in your newsletter I would be grateful if you could treat this note in the same manner.

CTC Council is proposing that the Cyclists' Touring Club be changed into a charity. We are able to propose this now, because of changes to charity law made in the Charities Act 2006 mean that many of our founding and historic activities can now be deemed as charitable. This legislation also means that we will **not** be proposing any "takeover" of Cyclists' Touring Club by the CTC Charitable Trust.

Whether we do any work for or with third parties are entirely independent from the decision to recommend that CTC becomes a charity. We are and always will be a membership organisation that campaigns vigorously for all cyclists, organises rides for cyclists and arranges holidays and tours. Apart from 'holidays and tours' which I will refer to later, all our activities are of a charitable nature.

CTC Council would not want to deprive you as CTC members, of the chance to gain the benefits of greater public recognition, and of Gift Aid on your subscriptions when other organisations do so. A good example of an organisation like CTC is the Ramblers Association; a campaigning and membership organisation that benefits from being a charity. We also hope that in the future local groups may well benefit from being part of a charity. For example, we know that many venues you use give significantly better rates and support for charities than for membership organisations.

The only aspect of our work we cannot run as a charity is our holiday company (CTC Holidays and Tours) because it has to work within specific package holiday legislation. The holiday company will continue to operate as now, as a subsidiary company to CTC the proposed charity.

SWL has raised the issue of how our present charitable work affects members' funds.



We founded CTC Charitable Trust in 2004 because even at that time most of the activities undertaken by CTC were clearly charitable. With the Trust we have substantially expanded the ways CTC helps new and potential cyclists. We are delighted with the positive response by members to programmes such as for example our work for cyclists with disabilities and deprived communities

What we don't recognise is the suggestion in the SWL circular that these new activities are to the detriment of members or their funds. Council and the Trustees have set very clear guidelines for taking on new activities.

All new activities must enhance the core purposes of CTC. By this we mean it must be focussed on the needs of individual cyclists and the people who support them like groups, volunteers and cycle training instructors. We are not trying to win medals and apart from advising on the development a few local MTB tracks we don't build cycle routes. All new activities must make a contribution to the central costs of CTC. They do not use Member subscriptions.

We think "the contribution made by the Club to the activities of the CTC trust" as expressed by SWL is probably confusing the amount that CTC pays to the Trust to do the things that CTC has always done, but are now be regarded as charitable. We pay the Trust an annual grant because the Trust now employs our campaigners, our volunteer support staff, our member help lines, technical officer Chris Juden, and the communications team that supports Newsnet and the CTC magazine.

Since we created the CTC Charitable Trust in 2004 we have been able to increase campaigning staff, launch some fantastic new campaigns, increase volunteer support staff, put more money in to the magazine, increased Newsnet to 24,000 circulation and grow CTC membership to record levels. Our national media publicity has, I believe, been impressive. Over this period the club's reserves have grown substantially.

On a personal level I am truly energised by the range of activities in which CTC is now involved. We now have a national staff and can no longer be fairly accused of being southern based. We operate in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland as well as the English regions. I regularly see the work being done by our cycling development officers and look forward to the success of Bike Club for young people. I feel proud to be a part of this. We are reaching out to a wider section of society and introducing thousands more to the joys of cycling. We can't do that by going back to basics. Club membership is now higher than it has ever been. Making the Club a unified charity will increase our accountability to Members and make us an even bigger voice for cyclists.

You will also be aware that the forthcoming edition of Cycle will update members on the progress made on the future structure of CTC, since the AGM held in Chester in April. There is now a period of consultation with all members where I am sure many more points will come out, including those made to Councilors at recent member group AGMs. I look forward to a really engaging discussion.

David Robinson.

**Chair of CTC**

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To find out more go to the CTC web site or talk you your local Council Member <http://www.ctc.org.uk/DesktopDefault.aspx?TabID=5325> for the information pages about the charity conversion.

<http://www.ctc.org.uk/DesktopDefault.aspx?TabID=3852> for Councillor information.