



“PEDALL OFFERS COMPANIONSHIP.” – A PARENT’S STORY

The parents of regular PEDALL rider, Poppy, know as well as anybody the far-reaching benefits the New Forest’s inclusive cycling project can offer families, parents, and carers.

“Cycling with PEDALL is something Poppy and I can bond over, doing something together,” mum, Debbie, said. “Most of the time, I’m her mum and her carer, but with PEDALL, we can be buddies.

“We can be on the side-by-side bike and there are no concerns about safety or risk. I don’t feel like I have to manage her at all, because she’s co-operative and willing. She wants to do it.”

Poppy is a young person with Down syndrome who loves to cycle and joins PEDALL rides on an almost

weekly basis – whenever possible.

The 16-year-old enjoys days out on the bike because she gets to pedal for herself and see animals in the National Park, while simply being out in the fresh air and among trees is among her other highlights.

“It’s stress-free, I think that’s the best way to describe it,” Debbie said. “We can sing songs, try to spot ponies, look out for deer, and spot other wildlife. It’s just very relaxing and very interactive.”



“IT’S GOOD FOR US AS PARENTS TO MEET LIKE-MINDED PEOPLE.”

“For me, it gives me something peaceful to do as well where I can enjoy the countryside as much as she can. I’m not looking after her the whole time.”

Poppy used to join her mum and dad on bike rides when she was little and would sit in a trailer, but moved on as she got older and became more independent.

“We wanted Poppy to experience the joy of cycling and being surrounded by nature,” Poppy’s dad, Julian, said. “It’s good for us as parents to meet like-minded people,” he continued, referring to the potential impacts of carer isolation.

Debbie agreed: “It’s nice to enjoy the company of other riders as well. For me, that gives me companionship. I’m not just going solo all the time trying to entertain Poppy.”

As parents, Debbie and Julian said they’re always looking for things to do with Poppy to keep her interests varied – from sailability to trampolining.

However, activities and hobbies often pass in phases. That is, until a friend suggested cycling.

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Debbie said she hadn't heard of a side-by-side tandem before joining PEDALL for a trial session, but that it was "fantastic" and now "hits the spot every time."

She described a highlight on one ride and said, "We had a situation when a whole herd of deer ran straight in front of us. That takes you to another world – it's like being in a different place altogether.

"We love the trees and the fact that you can look up and sometimes only just see the sky through the leaves."

Debbie thanked PEDALL's volunteers for the environment they help create and spoke of the benefits for people's wellbeing, concluding that for her as a parent, PEDALL "takes you away from any troubles" and "gives you the opportunity to completely chill out and detach from the day-to-day."

She said: "I think cycling with PEDALL has highlighted the importance of doing these sorts of things.



"It's highlighted a need to be at one with nature and to enjoy the rivers and the woodlands, and the difference they make to your wellbeing – and how important that must be for Poppy as well."

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"[Poppy's] obviously relaxed in those environments and enjoys them. It's just great to get away from computer games and the TV. It's simple, it's practical, and it's good for her motor skills, wellbeing, and mental health. It ticks all the boxes."

Debbie, Poppy's Mum