

Get yourself to Blackburn in 2016 and be part of the CYCLING REVOLUTION!



Activities for all: Some of the friendly faces you will see down at Witton Park

A new specialist cycle track is the latest exciting edition to what a Lancashire town is offering cyclists.

From traffic-free family rides to challenging mountain trials, Witton Country Park, based in Blackburn, is offering some great riding opportunities for all abilities and ages.

The town's iconic Country Park has miles of paths and routes to suit everybody, from flat, traffic free trials ideal for families and beginners to challenging mountain bike rides in Billinge Woods for the more experienced cyclist.

Thousands of visitors use Witton Park's cycle facilities every year and last year friendly staff based there assisted over 5000 visitors helping over 250 children and adults learn to ride a bike for the first time as part of its offer to the community.

And because of its far-reaching appeal, it has gained notoriety amongst cycling enthusiasts and novices alike becoming a one-stop-shop

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for everything pedal-powered.

The park has a dedicated cycle centre where visitors taking part in organised cycling sessions can hire mountain bikes and helmets – making cycling accessible to all – especially for families who can't fit a stack of bikes into their car boots!

It also offers those with low mobility the use of electronic off-road trampers so everybody is able to get out and experience the scenic countryside surrounding the park.

The facilities have been established thanks to Refresh leisure funding and also the Council's Connect project, a scheme set-up to promote sustainable transport in the Borough.

Ann Astley, 70, has been attending classes at Witton Park for two years after a suffering a number of falls. She says: "I love coming to the Cycle Centre. It has provided me with the confidence to battle against the difficulties I have faced in my own life, it's also a great place to come and meet new people!"

Witton is also home to Blackburn Community Cycle Club which earlier this year was awarded the prestigious affiliation to British Cycling, the national governing body for cycling. It benefits from British Cycling Coach, Dylan Clayton, former World and European BMX Champion, assisting staff at the centre to deliver skills sessions and rides throughout the year.

The park is also used by many social cycle groups which get together to ride in and around the borough. Groups including the Friendly Cyclists, the Official Bus Stop Bikers, Young Weavers and Dirty Knees Velo are all regulars and are always happy to welcome new riders. If you are interested in joining any of the groups give them a Google.

The impressive park has also been identified as the start and finish point for a new strategic cycle network that is currently being developed. Funding was secured in 2015 from the

Lancashire Local Enterprise Partnership to deliver 'The Weavers Wheel' a 26km route encircling Blackburn with additional spokes serving the town centre and spurs out to neighbouring towns. The inspiration of local residents Kev and Vicky Riddehough (who also run the Young Weavers Cycle group) The network is based on the successful Preston Guild Wheel, which now attracts nearly 100,000 cyclists a year.

In addition to the park's unique offer, Blackburn with Darwen Council in partnership with Landscape Engineering Ltd teamed-up to provide a specialist Pump track at the park.

The track can be ridden on mountain bikes and BMX bikes and is suitable for all ages and experience levels.

Cllr Phil Riley, Executive Member for Regeneration, said: "With cycling of all kinds experiencing a large growth and the success of the Cycle Centre at Witton Country Park, it seemed ideal to build a pump track that can be used by people of all ages."

James Syson Transport Strategy Team Leader added: "This new development is testament to our continued commitment to improving our local cycle network. The pump track and improvement to the mountain bike trails at Billinge Woods is part of our wide ranging support for more active travel and lifestyles complementing the skatepark in Darwen and the planned Weavers Wheel cycle network which was approved funding earlier this year."

Witton Park's pump track will be free to use, following the guidance and riding safety rules highlighted on site. It occupies a site around 50m long x 15m wide.

Riders can learn the techniques and improve their balance, encouraging riders to progress to the next levels.

Tember Walsh, who works at Witton Park's successful Cycle Centre, commented: "It is a great success; we have lots of bikes for hire and a good number of regular users. Progression and excitement is

what keeps riders interested. This facility, right on our doorstep, will be great for riders to learn and enjoy the tricks of riding."

Cycle retailers locally are pleased to see the new facility in the town. "Getting more people riding it good for our business, but also for battling obesity", says Ian Kay from Ewood Bikes.

"BMX is a great adrenaline sport and any new facilities in our town is good for all the local 'shredders!'", states Paul Bury of Cellblock."

Nick Riley, of Landscape Engineering Ltd, said: "We are keen riders and are keen to see young riders coming through. Getting kids outdoors using facilities is what we are about, that's why we enjoy building the pump tracks."

There really is something for everyone all year round down at Witton, so why don't you come along and see for yourself what is on offer? For more information about cycling opportunities in the borough visit: www.bwdconnect.org.uk



Put your cycle skills to the test and ride Witton Park's newest edition