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Primary Club Funds Blind Pedal Power

Grant helps blind cycling club to compete on the international circuit

Newry and Mourne Watch Tandem Club, a Newry-based tandem cycling group for blind and partially sighted people, is using its Primary Club grant to enhance its competitive edge. The money is paying for up to three new racing tandems meaning that team members have the best equipment for competitive cycling.

Formed by members of The Blind Centre for Northern Ireland in 2004, initially the group enjoyed leisurely Sunday cycle rides on borrowed bicycles, but it wasn't long before some members of the group started racing. Last season the club travelled 700 miles to take part in the Bold Tandem Marathon in Lincolnshire for partially sighted people and also entered the Irish May Blind Sports Games in Dublin. The competitive members of the group follow a strict training regime typically cycling 40 miles on a Sunday and once mid-week. The club also enjoys local club tours and most recently took part in a duathlon on the outskirts of Belfast.

"When we first started we just used whatever bikes we could get our hands on and were content with gentle rides at the weekend," said Daniel McSherry, community vision co-ordinator at Newry and Mourne Tandem Watch Club. "One and a half years later and it's a different story – the club is transformed – now we want to enter races and win. Our borrowed bikes are no longer good enough - we need the proper equipment to train and compete to the best of our ability and take the club to the next level. This grant from The Primary Club will enable us to come closer to our dreams of making a name for ourselves on the blind cycling circuit as a force to be reckoned with."

"The Primary Club has always looked for ways to help blind and partially sighted people enjoy sport regardless of their disability," said Robert Fleming, chairman of The Primary Club. "Newry and Mourne's experiences to date are testament to the transforming quality of sport. Not only does sporting success reap personal rewards, but the training, endeavour and commitment needed to succeed can greatly improve the quality of blind people's lives by delivering a great sense of achievement and nurturing confidence. We're looking forward to watching the club's progress this season and hope the new bikes help to grow Newry & Mourne's collection of silverware."

(390 words)

About The Primary Club (www.primaryclub.org)

Founded in 1955, The Primary Club's mission is to raise money to fund sporting and recreational activities for blind and partially sighted children. Now in its fifty-first year the Club has almost 9,600 members having raised a total of £2 million. In 2006 the Club donated £200,000 to a number of UK-based charities including Linden Lodge School, The Royal London Society for the Blind and British Blind Sport.