

## Guernsey Velo Club Review, September 2024.

### Introduction.

The Guernsey Sports Commission (GSC)<sup>1</sup> was asked by the Board of the Guernsey Velo Club (GVC) in June 2024 to undertake an independent review that would focus its outcomes on the following statement.

*"To understand what needs to potentially change in the corporate and operational structure of GVC that will allow it to sustainably remain as a multi-disciplinary club that helps people enjoy the sport of cycling, and which aims to develop junior cyclists to become the best they can and continue on as adult members within the Club".*

Interviews were carried out with thirty-two individuals between the ages of 18 – 65.

- current and former GVC members.
- current and former GVC Board or Committee members.
- current or former coaches.
- current or former elite cyclists and cycle specific medical professionals.
- recreational cyclists.
- cycle tourists.
- cyclists that have never aligned themselves to a Club or cycle group.
- two Physical Education leads from the State and Private sector.
- Two focus groups of year 12 and 13 Elizabeth College pupils were engaged separately.

This paper is based on the data gathered in those interviews and focus groups.

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<sup>1</sup> Steve Sharman, Relationship Director, Guernsey Sports Commission.

## Executive Summary.

One of the key outcomes taken from this Review is that since 1968 the GVC has been and continues to be at the heart of competitive cycling in Guernsey and the sport-specific knowledge and expertise that exists within its current and former membership is unparalleled.

The following four statements attempt to place cycling in the context of Guernsey life.

- Cycling in Guernsey exists within an environment that can attract thousands of local people onto the street to cheer on Island Games competitors then one week later contribute to a tension between two and four wheels that influences the daily commute, a recreational ride, or an organised race. Cyclists are in slang terms, *marmite*, loved and loathed in equal measure.
- Cycling is a stakeholder in the right of the Guernsey community to enjoy our limited off-road space, which is shared with dog-walkers, ramblers and other sporting groups<sup>2</sup>.
- Cycling significantly contributes to the local economy with four high quality bike shops on Island.
- Cycling is a multi-generational activity, sport, and life skill; one that it is so important that it forms part of the primary school curriculum.

The lack of consistent responses to questions was evident in the interviews. The answers given were clear, sensible and in many cases innovative but reflected individual bias as to a way forward. It was evident that the *purpose* of the GVC was not universally known.

The GVC *Articles of Incorporation*<sup>3</sup> defines its *purpose* as follows,

*'The purpose of the Company shall be to promote cycle racing (including road racing, time trials, cyclocross, grass track racing, cross country mountain bike racing, downhill mountain bike racing and BMX racing) and generally to encourage a good and enjoyable club life in relation to its Members' cycling activities.'*

The first recommendation in this paper will be for the current or future GVC President to lead on asking the question as to whether the *purpose* as stated above is relevant and achievable for the next ten years. This is a vital piece of work that should then influence a *corporate and operational structure* that best meets the needs of its members.

There were no strong opinions voiced as to a radical change of the corporate structure of GVC, rather a desire to keep that as simple as possible with a connection to the membership that allowed a forum where challenge, solutions, and ideas are welcomed. A Board that reflects the membership in terms of age could be explored and certainly a commitment to listening to the younger members as to how they would like to consume the sport of cycle racing.

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<sup>2</sup> Triathlon, Athletics, Motor Sport (Trials).

<sup>3</sup> Guernsey Velo Club Handbook 2024.

Included in the recommendations in this paper will be a suggested diary structure that best uses the time allocated for Board, Committee and Sub-Committee meetings.

The major disparity in interview responses was in response to the question '*why does the GVC exist*' with the inevitable outcome of, '*can it be all things to all people*'?

The question of being a '*multi-disciplinary*' or more '*specific*' Club, was intrinsically linked to the '*enjoyment*' that current or potential members would experience. The premise that less is more rang true for many respondents who also felt that in this way the racing pedigree that is at the heart of the GVC would remain but be balanced by a greater Club feel.

The individuality of the *cyclist* came through very strongly in the interviews. It is by nature a solo sport with the opportunity to compete as a team rare and when this does happen maybe restricted by team orders / tactics. The investment by an individual cyclist is considerable in terms of financial cost, time, and physical exertion, consequently the willingness to compromise, volunteer or embrace change that would impact on this personal investment is not always forthcoming.

This paper suggests there is a tipping point approaching for the GVC where there needs to be a cultural shift in attitude of all members where a majority not minority contribute to delivering a '*strategy for racing*' defined by a new *purpose*. In this way *enjoyment* levels should increase as everyone is contributing to ensuring their and other members' needs are being considered and achieved. The interviews delivered a clear statement that enjoyment was not the first feeling elicited by current members, was also a reason given as to why others had left the GVC and why some respondents were reticent about joining (it must be noted here that a caveat to this statement is the perception that not knowing how to race or being seen as less experienced at racing would mean less enjoyment from new members).

One aspect that gained almost universal agreement was the principle of engaging with young people so that the future of the Club was secured. If resources (time, volunteering, coaching, facilities) were prioritised it was felt that the u18 age group would be number one on that list. Historical examples of how this had been achieved were forthcoming and were highlighted as the most important piece of work a paid GVC employee could focus on. Whilst *elite* and *participation* are two words that are often over-used and misrepresented there was clarity from some of those interviewed, borne out of lived experience, that they were mutually compatible and important to the future strategy of the GVC.

## Context.

In writing this report I have used Simon Sinek's Golden Circle Theory<sup>4</sup> and the basic principles it presents to provide a structure to the questions asked. In my work as the Relationship Director for the GSC the first question I often ask individuals or committees / boards involved with running sports clubs or associations is '**Why do you do what you do**'. The responses usually focus on the *what* and *how* things are and have been done but as Sinek stresses it is fundamental to understand the *why* first.

# The Golden Circle

## WHAT

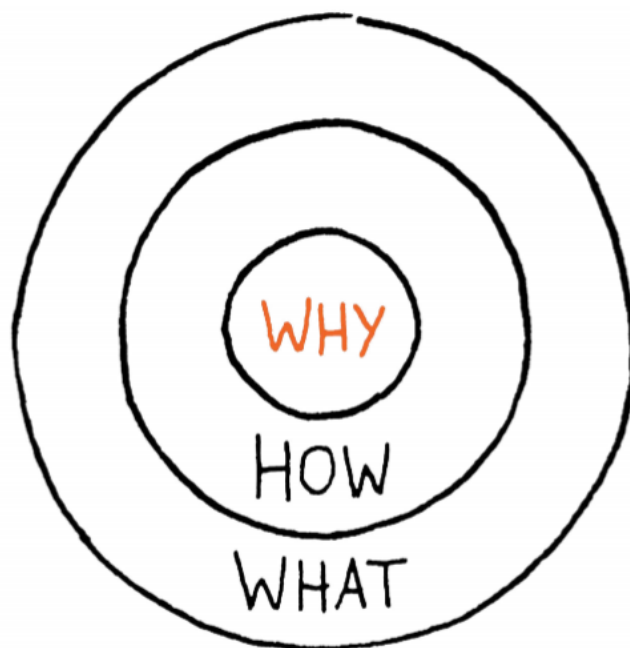
Every organization on the planet knows WHAT they do. These are products they sell or the services they offer.

## HOW

Some organizations know HOW they do it. These are the things that make them special or set them apart from their competition.

## WHY

Very few organizations know WHY they do what they do. WHY is not about making money. That's a result. WHY is a purpose, cause or belief. It's the very reason your organization exists.



Sport in Guernsey cannot operate effectively or with purpose if it does not understand the political, economic, social, and educational environment that surrounds it. The list below details some facts and questions that any sporting organisation should be cognisant of if it wants to be successful and relevant.

- Guernsey has an ageing demographic. There are approximately 1250 fewer 0–19-year-olds living on Island now than in 2004.
- We have had a declining birth rate, culminating in 200 fewer children starting Reception classes in State School than in 2012.
- The long-standing debate regarding State Secondary education means that more families are choosing to send their children to the private Colleges. This combined with the cost-of-living increase has created a squeezed middle-income demographic that are having to choose how

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<sup>4</sup> [www.simonsinek.com](http://www.simonsinek.com)

to spend their disposable income. Research shows that stopping paying membership of sporting clubs is one measure of economising<sup>5</sup>. The GSC *Sports Voucher Scheme* has seen a significant increase in applications in the last three years. This Scheme financially supports families in paying for their children's subscriptions, playing kit and equipment. To date we have never had a request from a family wanting their child to join the GVC. Does this mean it is seen as out of the reach of the lower socio-economic demographic groups in Guernsey?

- The physical education experiences for pupils within regulated activity (schools) is matching their demand for new activities and ways to consume traditional ones. Many Sports have upped their game in terms of their offer, approach and pathway into Club or team participation and competition. How does the GVC respond?
- Inclusivity and anti-discrimination must be at the forefront of any long-term strategy for a Sport on Guernsey. At what point does cycling become unaffordable for a significant proportion of the Island?

Whilst some of the above bullet points paint a less than rosy picture, we also must understand that cycling has the capacity to offer young people key lessons for life in terms of respect, observing rules, understanding laws, sportsmanship, and social interaction in a multi-generational environment. In a World where technology has been shown to contribute to poor mental and physical health, cycling can provide a much healthier alternative.

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<sup>5</sup> [Cost of living: Families choosing between food and children's sport - BBC News](#)

## Interview response data.

The question themes in each interview were based on the scope of the Review. I have collated all the different responses to the questions whether the answers were repeated by a few respondents or just one. The most popular answers start at the top and then proceed clockwise.

### 1. 'Why does the GVC exist'?



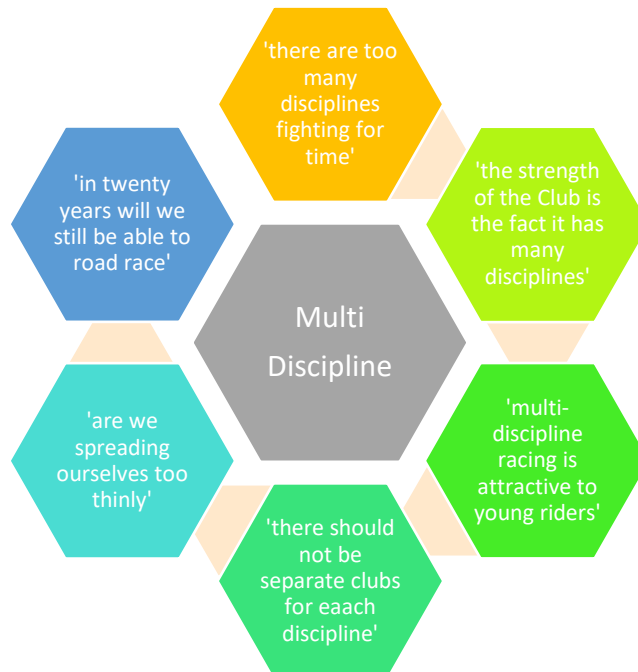
### 2. Governance structure.



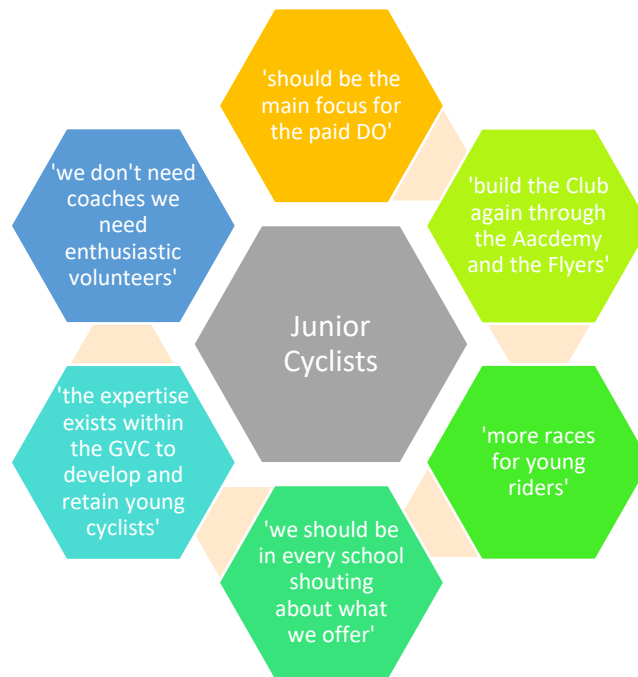
3. *Operations.*



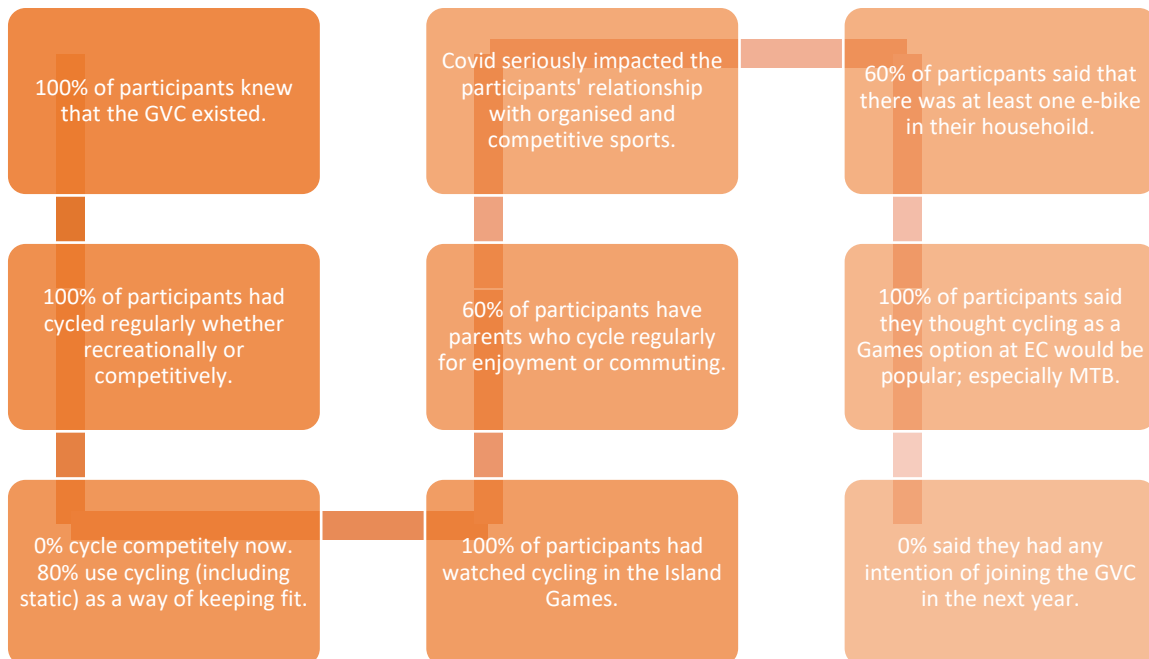
4. *Multi-discipline.*



5. *Junior cyclists.*



Two focus groups of Elizabeth College year 12 and 13 pupils (male and female) provided the following general comments regarding the sport of cycling generally and the GVC specifically.





## Recommendations.

The recommendations below should be considered by the GVC Board and are meant to be a guide to a further discussion that will inform the GVC Strategy going forward. The Guernsey Sports Commission remains committed to supporting the GVC in being the best organisation it can be on any given day and in doing so represent its members in a safe, fun and inclusive manner.

- I. The current or future GVC President to lead on asking the question as to whether the *purpose*<sup>6</sup> of the Company is relevant and achievable for the next ten years. This is a vital piece of work that could then influence a future *corporate and operational structure* that best meets the needs of its members.
- II. Ensure that the Board and all Committees reflect the inclusive membership of the GVC. The Board and all Committees to have a minimum of one u23 representative.
- III. There should be a clear Communications Strategy and a Committee member responsible for this area of work. The Guernsey Netball Association have such a position and use a third party (Buzz Media) to deliver the Strategy.
- IV. Once the Committee structure has been agreed a calendar of meeting dates would allow clear channels of information and the appropriate discussion and challenge to occur. An example for 2025 is detailed below.
  - a. **January** – joint **Board and GVC Committee Strategy Day**.
  - b. **February** – **Sub-Committee** meetings. Agenda set and minutes taken and distributed two weeks prior to the March GVC Committee meeting.
  - c. **March** – **GVC Committee**. Agenda to include minutes from February Sub-Committee meetings to note or discuss. Minutes taken and distributed two weeks prior to the April Board meeting.
  - d. **April** – **Board** meeting. Agenda to include minutes from the March GVC Committee meeting.
  - e. **May** – **Sub-Committee** meetings.
  - f. **June** – **GVC Committee** meeting.
  - g. **September** – **Sub-Committee** meetings. **GVC Committee** meeting. **Board** meeting. (meetings to be in this order this month).
  - h. **November** – **GVC AGM**.
- V. A **GVC Youth Council** that helps write / inform a GVC Youth Strategy could be created. All participants should be under 18 with a minimum age of 14. A Board and GVC Committee member should work jointly to support this Council. They should meet a minimum of twice a year.

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<sup>6</sup> 'The purpose of the Company shall be to promote cycle racing (including road racing, time trials, cyclocross, grass track racing, cross country mountain bike racing, downhill mountain bike racing and BMX racing) and generally to encourage a good and enjoyable club life in relation to Members' cycling activities' GVC Articles of Incorporation, Guernsey Velo Club Handbook (2024).

- VI. The primary focus of a paid DO could be on developing interest at the *Foundation*<sup>7</sup> and *Participation*<sup>8</sup> phases of sport development.

### **Conclusion.**

I would like to thank everyone who agreed to be interviewed and who gave me a cycling education as well as invaluable insight that informed this paper. There were often strong views expressed, highlighting how much the sport of cycling means to people in Guernsey and this should be seen as a positive.

What is clear though for the future of the GVC and cycle racing is that there needs to be a unified purpose that everyone buys into and most importantly contributes to delivering.

We are all increasingly time poor and the environment of volunteer-led sporting clubs has changed immeasurably over the past ten years. Greater corporate regulation and compliance allied with stringent health and safety, safeguarding and welfare requirements has resulted in the workload rising increasingly. Openness, transparency, and a whole Club approach that focuses on the needs of the membership has to be the outcome.

Cycle racing in Guernsey has a rich history and the GVC has and will continue to be a major contributor to this important aspect of Island life.

The recommendations I have put forward suggest evolution rather than revolution, with all stakeholders having to agree and own the next steps.

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<sup>7</sup> The Foundation stage is made up of people who are beginners in sport, meaning that it generally contains young children who do not have much experience and will be developing the basic skills and movements. Children will learn to have a positive attitude towards physical activity as part of this stage. Yorston, G (2015)

<sup>8</sup> The Participation stage is where young people begin to participate regularly in a specific activity for enjoyment and when certain sports become more important to them than others. Yorston, G (2015)

