



Northumbria University PhD researcher Shaun Cutler hands over the Cathedrals Cycle Route relay baton to The Revd Canon Clare MacLaren outside Newcastle Cathedral.

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Research project results in new national cycle route

A Northumbria University academic has designed a 2,000-mile cycle route linking all 42 of England's cathedrals as part of a PhD project researching how historic places of worship can establish sustainable futures.

Shaun Cutler is currently carrying out a collaborative doctoral award, co-sponsored by Northumbria University's [Department of Arts](#), Newcastle Cathedral and the National Lottery Heritage Fund, which explores how

cathedrals balance their role as heritage destinations and places of worship.

As a keen cyclist himself, Shaun came up with the idea for the Cathedrals Cycle Route to promote the role of cathedrals in the community, as well as encouraging greener travel and highlighting the importance of mental and physical wellbeing.

The route, which travels the length and breadth of England, is suitable for beginners, families and keen cyclists alike, and can be ridden in individual stages or as part of a relay.

It will officially launch from Newcastle Cathedral this Sunday (30 May) to coincide with the start of Bike Week, the annual celebration of cycling delivered by Cycling UK. Shaun will be joined by the Cathedral's The Revd Canon Clare MacLaren, as well as friends and supporters, to start the first nationwide relay ride of the new route.

They will cover the first stage, from Newcastle to Durham Cathedral, where they will pass on a specially commissioned baton, designed by Shaun's 13-year-old daughter, to the next group of riders.

Speaking about the project Shaun said: "Times are challenging for cathedrals right now, both economically but also from a social point of view.

"Cathedrals are unique as they have a 'double identity' – on the one hand they are seen as a place of worship and on the other, as a tourist or heritage destination, and this can make it difficult to balance perspectives and resources.

"Through my research I have developed a simple model that encourages cathedral staff to consider a wide variety of perspectives when planning an event or community activity, for example, how well it fits with the cathedral's vision and values, the financial implications, whether there is the resource to manage it, how it impacts on the local community and of course, sustainability.

"The Cathedrals Cycle Route is a great example of an activity that scores highly across all these different areas as it links heritage and religion, whilst providing an opportunity for revenue, community connectivity and

sustainability.”

The Cathedrals Cycle Route has been supported by a unique partnership between the Association of English Cathedrals, the British Pilgrimage Trust, Cycling UK and the cycling charity Sustrans.

Several of Shaun’s Northumbria University colleagues have also been involved, with Graphic Design lecturers Andy Reay and Mike Pinkney designing the Cathedrals Cycle Route logo.

Mike will also be among the group of cyclists taking part in the first stage of the relay from Newcastle – the most northerly Anglican cathedral. It is expected that the relay will be completed 42 days later, weather permitting, with a group of cyclists carrying out the final leg of the relay from Carlisle Cathedral back to Newcastle Cathedral.

The start of the relay will coincide with The World’s Biggest Bike Ride, marking the opening day of [Bike Week](#), which takes place from 30 May – 5 June 2021.

The Very Revd Geoff Miller, Dean of Newcastle, said: “We are delighted Newcastle Cathedral is to be a part of this. We have an opportunity to be at the heart of initiatives to support our communities in recovery and the Cathedrals Cycle Route is one way of doing that.

“It allows our visitors to appreciate not just the beauty and sanctity of our building, but to enjoy the journey between them as well, which after a year of restrictions, is even more important for our mental and physical well-being than ever before.”

Shaun added: “The Cathedrals Cycle Route is about connecting our historic cathedrals and enjoying the spaces between them.

“Now more than ever, after a year of living with the coronavirus pandemic, this is a way to support people’s mental and physical health and promote the mission of England’s cathedrals through pilgrimage, wellbeing and heritage.”

Shaun’s PhD research project is entitled *Strategic Heritage Management of a Medieval Building: A Practice-led PhD. A case-study Newcastle Cathedral.*

[You can read more about the project through this interview with Shaun](#), featured on Newcastle Cathedral's blog.

You can find out more about the Cathedrals Cycle Route challenge in [this article for Cycling UK](#), which has information about each of the 42 stages of the routes between cathedrals.

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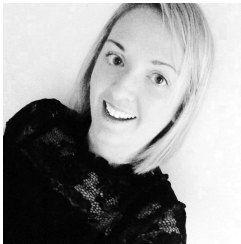
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