

FREE SPIRIT

Georgia Yexley, the founder of the sustainable transport innovation agency Loud Mobility, has a unique approach to encouraging people to travel more actively. It's all about the joy

WORDS / SAM UPTON

GEORGIA YEXLEY IS SITTING in a busy café in the middle of Stansted Airport. Surrounded by families rushing to catch their flights to various hotspots around Europe, the founder of Loud Mobility is an oasis of calm as she looks forward to a week-long walking holiday with friends in Albania.

Seven days of hiking along Albania's coastline is just what Yexley needs after a busy year. Having stepped down from her role as general manager of Tier Mobility for the UK and Ireland in 2023, she fully intended to take a career break, but was drawn to the idea of promoting the positive aspects of sustainable transport.

"The mission with Loud grew really organically," she explains. "It started with one project and developed from there, building connections and conversations and seeing opportunities. But the mission has always been really clear: to raise the volume of joyful sustainable journeys."

HUMAN EXPERIENCE

There's no shortage of evidence for the value of sustainable travel, but much of it concentrates on its benefits for society rather than the individual. Of course there are health and financial benefits, but what Yexley and her growing team at Loud Mobility focus on is the personal in-the-moment pleasure of walking, wheeling, cycling or scootering in the open air, connecting with your surroundings and simply living in the moment.

GEMMA DAY

"I believe that what truly cuts through with many people is experiencing that element of joy when walking or travelling on a bike or scooter," she says, "because that places a focus on the human experience. At Loud Mobility, we have the mission of increasing awareness of the enjoyment that sustainable journeys offer, but everything we do works up to the big aim of shaking up the transport sector by challenging how we measure success."

To achieve this, Yexley wants to go beyond the basics. While active travel infrastructure and health and financial arguments are obviously important, her philosophy revolves around opportunity and joy, making sure that people have the capability and access to sustainable transport in the first place.

"When we think about what cuts through and enables people to make the switch to active travel, a positive experience is number one," she says. "Areas such as safety, access and inclusion are the basic aspects of a transport system, improving people's capability and access to make active travel a viable option for all."

CAMPAIGN SUPERNOVA

Based in Camden, North London, Loud Mobility has established a hub for sustainable travel

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activity, a focal point for events and activity where Yexley's team works alongside regional transport bodies, local campaign groups and bike shops, all working together to promote sustainable transport to members of the public.

One of the organisation's latest campaigns is She's Electric, a national movement to inspire and enable more women to enjoy riding electric bikes. With the goal of reaching one million women in 2024, the campaign's vision is to make the electric bike a mainstream mode of transport and achieve gender parity. Campaign events so far have delivered over 600 test rides on a range of e-bikes, with over 60% of riders being women or non-binary people, a representation rarely seen at cycling events.

Loud Mobility also focus on collaborations with wider projects and initiatives. In 2023, the organisation was appointed by international charity World Bicycle Relief to develop and manage its partnership with the UCI Cycling World Championships. With the help of 20 local volunteers, Loud Mobility raised enough funds during the event to deliver 300 bikes to the poverty relief programme, making a positive impact on the lives of more than 1,500 people living in developing countries.

"Our work is about celebrating and bringing the benefits forward," says Yexley. "Once we have made a measurable impact, we make sure that we're loud about what works so it can influence decision-making on funding, regulation, legislation and policy making. That sharing of good practice in recognising the good work and talking more about it is really vital."

AN INDIVIDUAL APPROACH

A key group of people that many active travel organisations and initiatives try to encourage is women, with varying degrees of success. There are universal concerns such as safety and harassment that affect every woman on the road, but Yexley promotes an intersectional approach when it comes to inspiring women to cycle more.

"The first thing you need to do is listen, as active listening allows us to understand their perspectives, experiences and concerns," she says. "We often talk about women's concerns, but a Black woman in London may not have the same transport worries as an elderly white woman in Norfolk. There are a lot of factors at play alongside gender that need to be considered. Once you understand those factors

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then you can work with individuals and groups to find options and solutions to suit them.”

Those options may include having a cycle buddy or joining a group of riders. Others could be more information about the area and the best cycle routes.

“Having an openness to listening, learning and working collaboratively to find the right mode and not having a fixed mindset of ‘You need to do this thing and we are going to convince you’ can be extremely powerful.”

TOWPATH TREASURES

On a personal level, Yexley likes nothing better than getting on her bike and cycling along Regents Canal in London, from Kings Cross, through Regent’s Park to Little Venice.

“Every 200 metres there’s something magical to experience along the canal,” she says. “You can cycle past the monkeys at London Zoo or a beautiful graffiti mural. I love cycling all over London and hope the work that we do allows others to enjoy it too.”

TRAVEL FURTHER

For more information on Loud Mobility, go to loudmobility.co.uk

CAMPAIGNS AND COLLABORATIONS

Loud Mobility’s latest work

SHARE THE JOY

Loud Mobility were commissioned by shared mobility company Lime to work with the London Cycling Campaign on a project to spread cycling joy in London. The campaign saw the launch of a £100,000 community fund, a festival and the creation of a coffee table book based on cycling joy.

SHE’S ELECTRIC

Created to boost the number of women on electric bikes, She’s Electric was designed to change

perceptions of what an electric cycle is and demonstrate its value in accessibility, convenience and fun. Campaign highlights include a number of test ride events, with hundreds of people experiencing e-bikes for the first time.

PEDDLE MY WHEELS

A social enterprise that’s been creating and operating active travel projects for over a decade, Peddle My Wheels teamed up with Loud Mobility to support people living in areas of high deprivation to have

access to sustainable transport solutions such as an e-cargo bike service.

TRANSPORT FOR LONDON

TfL commissioned Loud Mobility to work with its e-scooter trial team to re-engage key stakeholders across the capital. Loud Mobility hosted over 60 councillors, as well as sustainable transport officers, campaigners and academics at their London HQ to educate them on the future of the mode in London.