

# ELITE ROAD TASK FORCE

Recommendations to energise the  
elite road racing scene

January 2024



# A NOTE FROM THE CHAIR

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As Chair of the Elite Road Racing Task Force, I'd like to pay thanks to the group's members and the British Cycling staff who have dedicated their time and knowledge to the project over the past four months, along with the hundreds of others who contributed to it through conversation and consultation.

Those who know me know that I hold domestic road racing very close to my heart, and I owe so much to the teams, organisers and volunteers who keep the wheels turning, year in, year out. It was a privilege to be asked to chair the task force, and I hope that its recommendations can help to stimulate the recovery and future growth we all want to see.

It's important to emphasise that there is clearly no quick fix for achieving recovery and growth, and that the recommendations on the pages that follow will require careful consideration over the coming years.

As a task force, we are not blind to the fiercely challenging economic landscape, and the impact that has on the local



authorities and commercial sponsors that are so vital to our success. But that doesn't mean there isn't still plenty that we can do.

Our work has spanned five distinct stages (Diagnosis, Discovery, Debrief, Decisions and Direction), which has helped us to craft a vision for British road and circuit racing and 16 recommendations for British Cycling to implement to help us to get there.

The success and positivity I've seen through the project to date is a result of the commitment to openness, listening and collaboration from all who have contributed. In that spirit, the task force would be more than happy to provide further support as British Cycling moves into its implementation phase.

**Ed Clancy OBE**

# WHAT IS THE ELITE ROAD TASK FORCE?

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The task force was created in August 2023 to support British Cycling in its venture to energise the elite domestic road racing scene. Its primary objective has been to work independently of British Cycling to shape a set of recommendations for consideration by the organisation.

It complements the work of British Cycling's existing Road Commission, which serves to grow the number of participants and events in the discipline across all levels.

## Challenge

"The post-pandemic domestic elite road scene is facing a period of challenged existence and relevance. How can we reinvigorate the elite domestic road scene to create an appealing, cohesive and sustainable calendar?"

## Objectives

1. To gain a deeper understanding of the issues through a combination of expert views, active listening and insightful research.
2. To propose commercially compelling and sustainable solutions.
3. To present recommendations within three months of inception.

# MEMBERS

Members of the task force were appointed to bring a broad range of experience from within the sport, covering current and former riders, event organisers, team management and media and marketing. We thank each of the following for their vital contribution, commitment and insights.



**ED CLANCY (CHAIR)**

Three-time Olympic  
gold medallist



**STEVE FRY**

Co-owner of sports  
marketing agency  
M2 Sports



**MONICA GREENWOOD**

Rider for  
DAS – Handsling



**JOHN HERETY**

Former manager of JLT-Condor  
& Great Britain Cycling Team DS



**PHIL JONES MBE**

MD of Brother UK and  
long-time sponsor of  
domestic teams



**CHRIS LAWRENCE**

Organiser of races including  
Newark Town Centre Races &  
Dudley GP



**JESS MORGAN**

UK Marketing Manager at  
Rapha



**JO TINDLEY**

Rider for Pro-Noctis Heidi  
Kjeldsen – 200 Degrees  
Coffee



# APPROACH

Through weekly virtual meetings and a full-day workshop at the National Cycling Centre, we worked our way through a strategic problem-solving process which included the five key steps:

1. **Diagnosis:** We gained a clear understanding of the problem, requesting data and insights from British Cycling on everything from rider entries and event numbers through to geographical spread and trends over time to help us shape our [initial analysis](#), which we published in October 2023.
2. **Discovery:** We listened. We wanted to give the whole community the opportunity to share their thoughts on the opportunities and challenges – and we were hugely encouraged by the response. In total, 240 of you responded to our targeted surveys and further in-depth conversations were held with several others, including team managers, influencers, local authorities and media outlets.
3. **Debrief:** We came together for a full-day workshop in November 2023 to share and discuss what you had told us, and then worked through these insights to determine priorities.
4. **Decisions:** We then had some important decisions to make. In December 2023, we came to a consensus on priority actions and recommendations.
5. **Direction:** Finally, in January 2024, we shared our final recommendations with British Cycling for review and action.

# DISCOVERY

An example of some of the responses we received from a breadth of stakeholders throughout the racing community:

“New organisers need coaching and support as they develop their events. Currently, support is minimal at best. The role is high pressure, and I give up 20 days a year of paid work to do this.”

## Event Organiser

“There are a lot of barriers to entry for a lot of people now with the cost of racing, equipment, travel. But then that is because there are few teams now compared to a few years ago.”

## Rider

“We have a single group of Commissaires who work at almost every major event. Same old faces every race. We are not developing new Commissaires at regional level.”

## Commissaire

“National Road Series needs to be more visible to make teams a more attractive proposition for sponsors.”

## Team Manager

“My son races road, mountain bike and cyclo-cross. This year he has concentrated on off-road due to the lack of road races and safety aspect.”

## Parent

# COMMENTARY

Needless to say, this was not an easy task. The situation is complex and interdependent and there is no simple answer which will immediately turn things around.

When conducting our diagnosis phase, we discussed multiple reasons contributing to the environment the sport finds itself in. These include:

- The economic environment making it very difficult to attract commercial sponsorship at all levels of the sport in both the private and public sector.
- A limited pool of race organisers, many of whom are ageing, and a lack of succession plan for them or the races they organise.
- Rising costs for all elements of race organisation – including risk management – leading to races becoming economically unviable.

We also recognise the huge contribution made by Commissaires, race organisers and volunteers in continuing to support the scene in its current format. A lot of time, energy and expense is invested by a small group of extremely committed and loyal people.



# VISION

We believe that domestic road and circuit racing has the power to bring communities together, provide a vital platform for riders and act as a compelling shop window highlighting all that's great about our sport.

Our vision is for a National Circuit Series which is primed for new and diverse audiences in iconic locations, unlocking economic and wider societal benefits in the towns and cities it touches.

Our vision for the National Road Series is one which is reinvigorated, varied and thrillingly competitive, while at the same time becoming more commercially sustainable for organisers and teams.

It could take several years to realise the vision that we've outlined, but we have hope that through small steps and with our community's backing, we'll get there.

A recurring theme throughout our conversations was that we are more than the sum of our parts – we can achieve more together if we work together and urge British Cycling to take action in this spirit.





# GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS

We acknowledge that the financial environment within British Cycling has changed, and the current commercial context has led to a downsizing in available resources for action and delivery – both financially and in people.

Whilst there is desire to move quickly by all who are passionate about the sport, it's important to note that not every action is immediately deliverable, and a three-year direction of travel is the best course to pursue where there are more strategic or structural recommendations made.

We look forward to seeing British Cycling's plan of action in response to the below.

1. **Explore the creation of a central procurement function** with the aim of reducing costs of events overall and maximising value, particularly to the national events. **Keep a centralised system of records** on event delivery costs, best price suppliers and event resources such as barriers.
2. **Produce a branding, communications and marketing framework plus toolkit** to complement the needs of series sponsors, local authority partners and race organisers to build consistency in how national events are projected and marketed. Additionally assess how local authority partnerships could be maximised to encourage participation, promotion and PR.
3. **Undertake a full review of the end-to-end digital strategy** for the National Road Series and National Circuit Series, with a particular focus on sharing key race information, race reporting, news and storytelling, and social media. Consideration should also be given to the Under-23 and Junior National Road Series to ensure a connected linear link and to create and build new audiences.

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# GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS

4. **Develop event organiser succession plans** for all existing national series races and **deliver best-practice workshops** for race organisers and volunteers to ensure sustained development of the sport, together with support on securing sponsorship, marketing and PR. To attract new organisers, **review and simplify all current organiser documentation.**
  5. **Develop a 'Winning Pattern' playbook based on existing successful road and circuit race models** for replication in other towns and cities. This should include commercial as well as technical requirements, plus PR/marketing best practice, VIP areas, unique experiences, and other successes.
  6. **Consider a targeted sponsorship agreement for the National Road Series and National Circuit Series**, enabling new title sponsors to be introduced outside of British Cycling's headline sponsors. A clear and compelling commercial offer should be developed for title sponsors, which should then be harnessed to attract further investment from local authorities and businesses.
  7. **Review rider entry processes to encourage and stimulate early entry**, providing organisers with more commercial confidence in event planning and delivery.
  8. **Develop best practice guidance for all domestic road and circuit teams** which outlines the minimum standards that all teams should achieve including rider welfare and conditions.
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# CIRCUIT SERIES RECOMMENDATIONS

9. **Undertake a complete review of the National Circuit Series to strengthen rider, community and audience engagement and standardise the commercial model to leverage investors.** Create more attractive formats such as sprint laps, differing jerseys, team awards, a variety of course designs, pre-race community activities, local active travel and wellbeing initiatives, live entertainment, corporate events, along with live results, racing highlights and paid media partnerships.
  10. **Prioritise locations for circuit series races that attract large audience sizes and a more diverse demographic of viewers** (live and digital) and **change regulations to allow weekend criterium racing** to access larger in-person audiences. Create more flexibility in the calendar, enabling **crit races close to road races** wherever possible to drive efficiencies for organisers and teams.
  11. **Review and clarify the entry criteria for WorldTour and Women's WorldTour riders to participate in the National Circuit Series** as guest riders, which provides the potential to give events a significant boost in exposure.
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# ROAD SERIES RECOMMENDATIONS

12. **Review the race calendar to ensure optimum efficiency and participation by domestic teams** between the domestic and international racing blocks and **ensure that the National A Series race calendar has more races outside of the north of England.** Assess the feasibility of reintroducing successful locations that are no longer on the calendar.
  13. **All efforts should be made to ensure the Tour of Britain and a UCI Women's World Tour stage race are delivered in 2024.**
  14. **Explore the opportunity to increase the number of UCI 1.2 and 2.2 category races held in the UK** as a longer term-goal, aligned to the existing UCI races established within the domestic calendar.
  15. **Undertake a full review of race distances and rider qualification criteria** to optimise field sizes across the sport, including the potential to equalise distances between women's and men's races. Additionally **review race formats to provide more variety in course types**, as well as at least one domestic stage race in the UK calendar (minimum three days).
  16. **Consider introducing a new range of jerseys** for the National Road Series (KoM, QoM, Sprint) to further engage and incentivise riders and teams and **consider a capped maximum entry cost.**
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