Baroness Tanni Grey-Thompson DBE DL backs Launch of Elite Women’s/Para Cycling Team that underlines Benefits of Cycling in the Southwest

DEVON – new cycling team seeks new sponsors with soft launch. Celebrating the social, environmental, mental, health and infrastructure benefits of cycling in the South West.

Soft launch on Tuesday 30th August 11am at Sandy Park Conference Centre, Sandy Park Way, Exeter EX2 7NN.

Cycling in the UK has exploded. SkyRides, Breeze Rides, the popularity of cyclo-sportives, and Bikeability training have dramatically increased membership in British Cycling, Cycling Time Trials, Cycling UK and other Grassroots organisations.

At the same time, our elite cyclists have underlined GB superiority on the biggest stages, at the recent and previous Olympic and upcoming Paralympic Games. The dominance extends through to Team Sky, the only British World Tour team, at the Tour de France over the last 3 years.

The team have identified that there’s a huge gulf of expertise and development between the professional elites of World Tour cycling and regional grassroots club cyclists and beginners.

With the grassroots explosion there are too many young enthusiastic riders with potential to all be supported by national sports bodies on their journey to the top level. Similarly, older riders new to the sport or those who were not supported first time round may feel they have ‘missed their chance’. Ironically, considering the lack of funding, this ‘lost’ demographic is also the largest, and fastest-growing, market in cycling.

This gulf is never made more stark than in the worlds of Women’s and Para cycling- which remain comparatively underrepresented and underfunded. This team exists to provide the missing middle step between grassroots and elite for those riders. The team will remain proudly amateur, but offering professional equipment and development support to allow riders to fulfill their potential- whether that is through moving onto a professional cycling contract whilst balancing education or simply performing at the UK top level while juggling careers and families. In this manner the team hope to champion the benefits of cycling- for ALL riders.

This focus on improving participation for all has been noted by famous Paralympian icon, Baroness Tanni Grey-Thompson DBE DL, (multiple gold medal winner) who has very kindly agreed to being patron of this innovative women’s/para cycling project. Quote: "Cycling is for all - and this team exemplifies it". The Baroness had hoped to attend this soft launch but unfortunately prior commitments with the Rio Paralympic Games have kept her away. The team hopes to welcome her to our official launch in early 2017.

The team, predominantly comprising members from the South West, intends to compete on a national basis but will also act as ambassadors championing the unique benefits of cycling in the South West-
where the bicycle can be truly seen as THE vehicle for transport, leisure, health and competition. The team’s proposed vibrant green livery visually underlines connections to the rolling hills of Devon.

The South West’s worldwide reputation as a cycling destination is further confirmed by the imminent return of the Tour of Britain to Dartmoor and surrounding areas. The ‘Devon’ stage of each year’s event are always the highlight ‘Queen Stages’, with Haytor providing a spectacular backdrop and advertisement for the area seen by a global audience of millions.

The team’s commitment to the region’s cycling development extends beyond competition and into the realms of community, with envisaged involvement with a number of local charities and projects devoted to increasing cycling and health. They are keen to chaperone and join in with charity and fundraising cycling events in the South West, and work with local businesses to get their staff and partners switched on to cycling. The team’s riders are dedicated to being positive role models for all- young, old, able-bodied, disabled, cyclists and non-cyclists alike.

Husband and wife team Tom and Alice Staniford are providing the leadership and guidance for this project-backed by a unique perspective and passion for cycling in its various forms. Tom is an international para-cyclist and National Para-Cycling Champion who studied Law at the University of Exeter on both Sports and Academic scholarships. He has raced for Great Britain in France, Spain and across the UK. You may recognize him from his presenting work on ITV4’s The Cycle Show, and as the subject of several segments and full-length documentaries for BBC, Channel 4, Discovery Channel and RTL.

Alice is the current South West Cyclocross Champion, and has earned podium places in road, mtb and cx disciplines in the SW over the last few seasons.

When not training towards their own cycling goals the couple work as digital marketing agency providing marketing and consultancy services to a broad range of local, national and international businesses of various industries. Having experience and contacts in the region and sport have given the team management the perfect skillset and in-house resources to guarantee professional promotion of the team and sponsors.

Exposure for sponsors will come through dedicated Social Media accounts and a professionally-executed PR strategy. The girls will be racing rounds of the National Road Series, National Team Series and National Championships, as well as the televised Tour Series of city centre criterium races, further boosting their exposure at the top levels of competition in the UK. Tom will be racing rounds of the National Para Road Series, National Para TT Series, and National Championships. Alongside domestic racing the team also intends to compete in international stage races in Ireland and on the continent.

This project is only made possible with the help of a growing selection of generous sponsors who see the value in supporting this vision for cycling health, participation and pride in the South West. The team aspires to a sustainable model delivering long-term mutually-rewarding partnerships, inculcating in people a respect for their bodies, environment, region, and sport.

They hope you’ll come along for the ride.

Rights free images available to support this press release and photos from the launch. If you have any specific request please let us know. We will also be providing video content.
Pictured below are Tom Staniford and Alice Staniford in a recent photo shoot on Haytor, Dartmoor where the final Devon stage of the Tour of Britain will finish. On that day the Tour of Britain Route Director & The Women’s Tour, Andy Hawes arrived and kindly allowed the car to be used in the photos.