**Becoming a community of cyclists**

Free Ride is a social enterprise that started In response to a cycleway being built.

Founder Lily Chalmers was managing a local youth centre for Hutt City Council and saw that Council was planning The Beltway Cycleway, a community asset that would come right through the north east of Lower Hutt where many families are struggling. Lily thought “how will our community get on this cycleway if there are no bike shops or bike mechanics in this community”

This is the beginning of Free Ride’s story, Free Ride has grown to become a community owned bike mechanic workshop with over 500 members joining and over 250 bikes being given away since it’s launch in 2020. Together we are building a community of cyclists, and offer pedal ready training, bike mechanic classes, an e-bike library and regular bikes, helmets and other accessories.

The membership survey provides data that Free Ride can share with funders, but also provides good insights on what will and won’t work in the community. This lends an element of safety to the project that community views are taken into account, and that Free Ride builds what is needed, and not what is not needed.

Lily is keen to share her learnings with others, in the hope that more community owned cycle projects spring up, especially in communities where change is hard and resources are limited, bikes can transform health outcomes, community connectedness and our relationship with the cities and towns we live in.