

# Born to Tri



And they're off...

**O**n September 11, Brighton and Hove City Council's Hove Lawns played host to the very first Brighton and Hove Triathlon.

Organised by Vivid Event Group, the triathlon, and sister event, The Sport and Fitness Show, were created following months of research that highlighted the need to deliver a high-profile sporting event that allowed visitors to get active and experience a huge variety of sports in one single location.

"No one was putting on the type of event that we wanted to," commented Lisa Clayton, event director of the Brighton and

Hove Triathlon and The Sport and Fitness Show. "Charlie Hepburn [MD of Vivid Event Group] and I came up with the concept for The Sport and Fitness Show nearly three years ago. We had both attended loads of sports events with our children and wanted to create an exciting, engaging and inspiring sports event that would capture the imagination of all ages."

Sport, health and wellbeing is a fast growing industry and as Government focuses on prevention rather than cure, Clayton and Hepburn felt that their event should educate and look at exercise and ways to achieve a better lifestyle. "We wanted to attach a sporting event to our

outdoor expo and I approached John Lunt (Olympic 2012 triathlon competition delivery manager). John had always wanted to stage a triathlon in Brighton and loved the expo, so we teamed up. We then created our dream team, with Julia St John as financial director and spent about 18 months getting our event through council approval to get closed roads for the triathlon and use of the public space on Hove Lawns."

Clayton described Brighton and Hove City Council as "very supportive" of the event, with the local authority acknowledging the benefits that sporting events bring to the area. But Clayton and Hepburn had to bring something to Brighton that the city had not seen before. "Year one was always going to be a challenge," Clayton added. "We had to prove our concept with The Sport and Fitness Show and also our capability as event organisers."

In all, 1,000 entrants took part in the inaugural Brighton and Hove Triathlon whilst 22,000 people visited The Sport and Fitness Show across the event weekend (September 10 and 11). The triathlon featured 12 waves of participants, each representing a specific age group or gender.

"I wanted to bring a triathlon that reflected the personality of Brighton," Clayton explained further. "It had to be



Setting the wheels in motion

# BRIGHTON AND HOVE TRIATHLON

inclusive and friendly and we very much achieved that.

"We worked closely with the Sport England campaign, This Girl Can – they chose us as one of their three major UK triathlons – and we had a significantly higher than average female entry.

"We also moved away from the traditionally elitist, very stylised image that triathlon has. We wanted people to realise how accessible triathlon is to any ability. There are not many challenge sports that you can share the experience as a team. The relay wave meant that you could put together a bunch of people based on individual strengths and compete together. We had loads of beginners in both the super sprint (beginner distance) and the relay waves. We also had a Mates Wave, which meant anyone could race together."

## Going local

The first ever Brighton and Hove Triathlon and The Sport and Fitness Show took over Hove Lawns on Brighton's seafront and a 2.5 kilometre stretch of the A259, which resulted in one eight-hour road closure on September 11. Clayton, Hepburn and Hunt, race director, worked alongside St John, operations director, Josie Pether, event manager, Kat Valk, triathlon course manager, Andrew Taylor, swim manager, and Becky Stevens of Brighton-based, Hybred Events, who was responsible for production and health and safety.

"As organisers we were very keen to employ local business for the delivery of our event," Clayton added. "We are very lucky as the quality locally was high and therefore it wasn't a hard choice. I really enjoyed building a team that we can work with over coming years that understand our product and the ethos behind it."



Having a go at the show

Dates for next year's event have already been set and Brighton and Hove Triathlon will take place on September 17, 2017. But what of lessons learned in year one? Clayton continued: "The most challenging part was trying to engage local business in the event and I am not sure that we achieved that in our first year.

"Hopefully, now businesses understand what a spectacle the triathlon and show provide, they will want to fulfil more of their corporate responsibilities towards their employee health and well-being. Of our exhibitors, 72 per cent were national brands and I would like to think that in 2017 we could increase our local presence too," she added.

"The other challenge has been to really get National Governing Bodies (NGB) in sport involved. We worked really closely with Triathlon England, but I am hoping that now Sport England has seen what we are trying to achieve, that it will be somewhat easier to engage with them.



Crowds enjoy the event

All the NGB's that we have worked with so far have been really pleased with the opportunity to reach out to active individuals in such a hands on environment."

Clayton concluded: "I have also learnt that what we set out to do was achievable and now we can move forward with a successful weekend of activity. We have two more locations that are amazing that we are in discussion with. It's really very exciting. I am fierce about protecting the integrity of what we have created and so we will expand as an event, working with like-minded people and business."



Final preparations

## SUPPLIERS LIST:

Power – Hewden  
Marquees – ABC Marquees  
Medical – Pro Event Medical  
Traffic management – Wilbar Associates  
Fencing – Brighton and Hove City Council