

APPENDIX 1 RESULTS OF CONSULTATION WITH STAKEHOLDERS

Letter from Darlington Association on Disability

	Darlington Association on Disability Established since 1986
	20-22 Horsemarket Darlington DL1 5PT
Registered Charity No. 518265	

Sue Dobson
Principal Transport Officer
Units 8-11, The Beehive
Lingfield Point
Darlington
DL1 1YN

6 December 2007



Dear Sue,

In response to your letter, dated 28 November 2007, this letter switches between talking about cycling in the Town Centre and the Pedestrian Heart. It is our understanding a trial period was to be monitored for cycling within the Pedestrian Heart not the Town Centre. However, cycling in the town centre has now become a major problem as the number of cyclists on the pavements is rapidly increasing. This issue needs to be addressed separately but can't be divorced from this review of cycling within the Pedestrian Heart.

Regarding the trial period of cycling in the Pedestrian Heart, Darlington Association on Disability believes the options within your letter do not carry equal weight as Darlington Borough Council has a vested, financial interest as a result of the funding from Cycling England with this existing agreement that radial routes will meet in the Pedestrian Heart, as stated on the Cycling England website (copy enclosed).

Regarding the monitoring of the trial period of cycling in the Pedestrian Heart, Darlington Association on Disability was assured that we would be involved in how the monitoring would be planned and when it would start and we have not been involved in either and we do not recognise our consultation through this letter as being involved.

The action plan sent to me clearly shows that a leaflet would be produced in August 2007 giving information on where cycling would be permitted within the Pedestrian Heart and information on how to make contact with the council if an incident occurred. We are not aware of any such leaflet being produced

and therefore do not see how effective monitoring can be carried out. If any leaflet was produced then it would have been offered in alternative formats and surely our members would have been known about it. Also wrote in the Action Plan there said there would be results of the views of the Citizens Panel by October 2007. A Darlington Association on Disability member on the Citizens Panel knows of no such survey.

Our Visually Impaired members tell us that as well as actual danger there is a natural perception of danger which is preventing or limiting their access to the Pedestrian Heart. With this in mind and the views of our other members with numerous impairments, Darlington Association on Disability is totally against allowing cyclists within the Pedestrian Heart. We recognise and agree with the view of the cycling campaign group that the roads should be made safer for cyclists but do not agree the danger should be transferred to vulnerable pedestrians.

I would also like to draw Darlington Borough Council's attention to its duties under the Disability Discrimination Act and before any decision is made regarding cycling then a disability impact assessment would need to be carried out regardless of the monitoring process.

To ensure that there is transparency in the decision making process which comes from the monitoring, Darlington Association on Disability would expect the public to see all the evidence coming from the monitoring and any sources of funding that could be deemed to influence the decision. Also, apart from the monitoring process we would like to see what evidence you have used to support cycling within the Pedestrian Heart as the majority of towns who have a pedestrianisation do not allow cycling and police it accordingly.

Yours sincerely



Gordon Pybus
Chair, Darlington Association on Disability

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Letter from Darlington Cycling Campaign

Pedestrian Heart - Darlington Cycling Campaign Submission

Cycling is now widely recognised by experts, political leaders and health, environment and transport professionals as a key component of any solution to the twin modern challenges of climate change and population ill-health. Britain - and especially towns like Darlington - has some serious catching up to do with those communities that are now forging ahead with plans to increase cycling's modal share of everyday urban travel to 40%, 50% or 60%. Whilst 20% of the town's residents are cyclists, before pedestrianisation of the town centre, only 1% of the population used a bike as their principle means of transport. It is therefore axiomatic that the local authority embrace policies that encourage more cycling.

Darlington Cycling Campaign strongly urges the council to continue to allow cycling in the Pedestrian Heart for the following reasons:

- The campaign has carried out a risk assessment of cyclist/pedestrian behaviour in the Pedestrian Heart, using CCTV footage. Of 302 observations, we **did not find a single incident** that could be described as “dangerous”. Five incidents (0.16%) where pedestrians changed their behaviour in response to a cyclist (slowed down, changed direction) are matched by 3 similar observations (3.12%) involving motorised wheelchairs. Our full report is attached to this submission.
- Department of Transport guidelines state that any new pedestrianisation after 2004 should presume that cycling be allowed, unless there are compelling reasons to do otherwise, and **safe** and **direct** alternative routes are available to cyclists. The Pedestrian Heart provides a safe, direct and, with a few minor details that can easily be resolved, convenient route across town for all cyclists. From the cyclist's perspective, the alternative that would be on offer as a result of pedestrianisation, the inner ring road, would be lethally dangerous. Road accident figures bear this out.
- Any partial restriction still needs to take account of how cyclists can cross the town at all times. The original design of the Pedestrian Heart in fact failed to take account of this - there are currently a number of oversights that clearly show up the lack of thinking as to exactly how cyclists are expected to cross the town centre. Good urban design "builds in" good cyclist behaviour, and there is still plenty that can be done in the Pedestrian Heart to improve the way cyclists and pedestrians inter-mingle.
- Prior to pedestrianisation, cyclists could travel through the town centre like any other vehicle. Banning cyclists now, even for part of the day, would make the situation **worse** for cyclists now than it was before pedestrianisation.
- Darlington Borough Council received £1.5m from Cycling England to improve the town's cycling infrastructure, with the Town Centre a crucial hub for actual and planned cross-town routes. The aim is to triple cycling in the town in five years. Cycling has increased by 70% in the first year of the Demonstration Town funding. We believe one important reason is that cyclists can travel across the Pedestrian Heart. If cyclists were forced out of the Pedestrian Heart, we predict an actual drop in cycling in the town. Talk of Darlington's success in relation to cycling, now a major national topic of conversation, would soon be transformed into Darlington's disaster.

- The few badly behaved cyclists that do exist will not be stopped mis-behaving by a cycle ban. The Campaign has argued that such bad behaviour is a social, not a traffic, problem. Anti-social behaviour is just as likely to occur – and be more life threatening – behind the steering wheel of a car, or indeed (as in Barnard Castle recently) on a motorised wheelchair, as on a bike saddle. If an incident occurs with any of these modes of transport, we are surely not expected to ban all other users of that mode? These problems should be tackled appropriately through social and policing measures.
- We are in favour of more qualitative, objective monitoring of the behaviour of users of the town centre to more properly assess the real situation. Much is said about cyclist behaviour by vocal opponents of cycling, in a manner that stigmatises all cyclists as one breed of human being. But our own objective research suggests that, in fact, the vast majority of cyclists in the Pedestrian Heart are careful, considerate and alert to the people around them.
- The "perception of danger", most vocally expressed by our colleagues from Darlington Association on Disability is, as DAD themselves admit, perception rather than reality. We suggest that this is due in large part to the fact that most of the population of Darlington - unlike Copenhagen, Freiburg, Amsterdam and hundreds of other cycle-friendly towns and cities - have had little experience of living with, and understanding cyclists. As other users of the Heart experience safe, responsible cycling more regularly, including police constables on bikes, we believe this perception is already starting to change and, given time (and more people cycling), will be replaced by a much more rational understanding.

Darlington has been put at the forefront of Sustainable Travel politics by its council's decision to act to encourage greener forms of travel in the town. Any decision about the rights and wrongs of cycling in the Pedestrian Heart needs to be based on reason, not populism. We urge the local authority to resist turning the clock back on its own environmental and transport policies, opposing Department of Transport guidelines and pandering to prejudice about cyclists. Like 180 years ago, Darlington has once again made a national name for itself because of its transport foresight. Let the town's future be shaped by hope, not fear.

Darlington Cycling Campaign
14th December 2007

Email from Darlington Cycling Campaign

From: Sue Robinson [suzanne.robinson@durham.pnn.police.uk]
Sent: 21 December 2007 09:43
To: Sue Dobson
Subject: Cycling in the Town Centre - Trial Period

Sue,

Further to your letter of 28th November 2007 regarding the above I have now had the opportunity to liaise with my colleagues from several departments in order that I can provide the most comprehensive report possible.

Having checked our incident reporting system there would appear to be 20 incidents recorded covering rowdy / nuisance behaviour of persons on cycles however no reports of actual accidents. It could be questioned that if the people committing the rowdy nuisance in the centre were not allowed to cycle in the area that they would choose to go elsewhere. I am aware that a number of commercial premises feel a very strong link between allowing cycling in the town and the rowdy / nuisance behaviour they suffer from local youths. I unfortunately do not believe that the above figure provides a true reflection of incidents that have occurred due to peoples tolerance and not knowing exactly who they should report the incident to. This can be best evidenced by family members of police officers who have fallen prey to knocks and bumps from cyclists as well as the force's own Traffic Management officer who was victim to a bruised leg when a cyclist rode directly into his path and then made off.

I have spoken with the forces Central Ticketing Office who have confirmed that 7 tickets have been issued during the trial period, 2 for no lights and 5 for cycling on the footway. An issue that this does raise is whether the identification of the footways from other areas is easily identifiable. Again, this figure does not provide an extensive overview of offences being committed as the town centre team were keen to advise that the issuing of tickets is secondary to the importance of education which they do on a daily basis. Unfortunately this has not been recorded by the individual officers so I am unable to confirm statistics as to when the number occasions when suitable guidance has been given.

Discussion within the team regarding the town centre area becoming "no or limited cycling" does cause the police concern with regard to its enforcement. The centre has many routes in and I would suggest that public perception of such a regulation would be that it would be heavily enforced and no one would ever be seen in the town centre riding a cycle. Unfortunately we do not have sufficient resources to deploy to this specific task on a daily basis. My other concern is that if the police did try to stop those that defied the ban, that they would not stop and that potentially we could have officers pursuing a cyclist through the town with the cyclist having no regard to other users' safety.

Having considered all of the above points, I would take the stand that the issues raised do not evidence the need for the town centre to become a "no cycling" area however greater education, signage and publicity would greatly improve peoples understanding of the legislation. The option of limiting cycling by location or time could potentially cause great confusion.

Having listened carefully to my colleagues including Michael Straugheir (Traffic Management), I do not believe that the Police can evidence the need to limit cycling in the town centre. I would however take this opportunity to offer the services of the town beat team to assist in any campaigns / initiatives that can be developed to increase cyclists' awareness of both the relevant legislation and pedestrian safety through considerate cycling.

Should you wish to discuss any of the above in further detail please do not hesitate to contact me.

Insp Sue Robinson
Neighbourhood Policing Team
Darlington
T.01325-742198

Email from Cycling England

Dear Sue,

I understand that you will be at a briefing of the Cabinet and the Corporate Management Team on Tuesday prior to a more formal process in January regarding cycling in Darlington town centre.

On behalf of the Board of Cycling England I would formally like to register our total support for the continuation of this scheme. The Cabinet will be aware that Cycling England has been funding Darlington as a Cycling Demonstration Town for £500,000 p.a. matched by your own funding. This has allowed you to implement a significant programme of infrastructure building to allow for cycle usage across the town and into the centre. You have also taken significant initiatives – and put substantial investment – into crossings of the main roads in order to ensure that the road safety is permeable to cyclists wishing to go to the centre of the town. The quality of the work which you have also been undertaking in the town centre itself does mean that the heart of Darlington is now both much more attractive and readily accessible by cycle and on foot.

Colleagues on the Board of Cycling England, including John Grimshaw, the Chief Executive of Sustrans, do point out that the work which you have put in would be greatly devalued and the potential cycle usage of the whole town undermined if the present period of experiment of cycling through the town centre were to be terminated. This was a significant part of your vision in presenting the original three year plan to Cycling England and we therefore urge as strongly as we may that the right to cycle across the town centre should be upheld and maintained. We have also experience of another Cycling Demonstration Town – Exeter – introducing mixed use for pedestrians and cyclists in the town centre which has proved entirely satisfactory, albeit after an initial understandable period of anxiety and some complaints. With the relative brief passage of time however the general public has come to accept this as a reasonable arrangement and with the support of local cycling groups have done their utmost to minimise any problems which might arise.

The Cabinet will be aware that Cycling England is presently asking for proposals from the six demonstration towns for their plans for a further three years of cycling investment and we will wait with interest to learn of your decision on this particular matter.

Phillip Darnton
17 December 2007.

Email from Richard Baker, Town Centre Assistant, Darlington Borough Council

Summary of comments on cycling in the town centre from town centre businesses – 2 January 2007

Andrea Borlant, Seymours – East Row

“There is no reason why responsible cyclists should not use the town centre. However, anyone who uses the pavements or interferes with the smooth running of the traffic (road and pedestrian) should be told to stay away. Skate-boarders should not be allowed to use public areas and are a nuisance - likewise rollerskaters.”

Andy Atkins, Cooks & Kitchens – Grange Road

“Overall, I've no problem with cyclists being permitted (and encouraged) to use the Town Centre. On Grange Road specifically, we get a few 'cycling shoppers', but the majority are 'lads' in small groups and, whilst they don't cause a general problem, they do have a penchant for cycling the wrong way up the street!

On the whole, I'm in favour of access with the usual caveat that cyclists respect other users of the Town Centre.”

John Coxon, Leggs – Skinnergate

“Cycling in the Town Centre should be further encouraged. We have several cycle mounted customers as well as a staff member.

There is unfortunately a rogue element, usually BMX mounted, who need to be discouraged, however this is a policing matter rather than a policy one.

Access to the town on bicycle is a definite benefit to the whole ambience of the centre.”

Volunteer sector – Visually Impaired Reps and Age Concern Reps.

These sectors are totally against have bikes in the Town as they are a hazard. They feel that cyclists show no respect for pedestrians on foot and that there are many circumstances that their members cannot get out of the way in time. They feel that if they are led to believe that it is a pedestrianised area then it should be and not have exceptions for bikes.

Nicola Skelton, Mothercare – Northgate

No problems or comments to report. Ok either way.

Michelle Bell, Peacocks – Northgate

There have been a few incidents of children ‘flying’ past the shop front causing near collisions with customers and pedestrians.

On another occasion, somebody left on a bicycle after shoplifting.

Finally, they have a couple of members of staff that cycle to work and Michelle says that there should be a secure bike store in the town centre for people to safely leave their bikes for the day.

Alastair Dunn, Gifts & Toys – Priestgate

“I as a resident and a businessman in the town, I am totally against any cycling at all within the town, especially when it is supposed to be a PEDESTRIAN heart. I have on several occasions nearly been knocked over by cyclists and also they come through very fast at times.

Also at the underpass from Gladstone St to the town they come through here far too fast. You said that cyclists are valuable shoppers, not one has ever bought anything from me, and also they are sometimes the ones who do the stealing and then cycle off through the PEDESTRIAN heart, and also it's time the council thought about the elderly, the hearing and visually impaired for a change, they cannot get out of the way quick enough from bikes. So Richard I am totally against any cycling in the town centre at all SO NO, NO, NO, NO”

Susan Young, Cornmill Centre Manager

No real issues to report, and generally ok with allowing cycling.

If children mess around on their bikes then that is different, but Susan hasn't seen any specific incidents.

Denise Jeffery, Queen Street Centre Manager

“Speaking personally I agree that cyclists are valuable shoppers and we should continue to aid them where possible. I have received no negative feedback from any tenant about cyclists and my only concern would be their safety from them many cars and vans that still travel up and down Bondgate at speed”.

Ian Hughes, The Art Shop

“I don't see it as a problem for most of the time but as usual it is going to be the minority who are going to be responsible for the making up of the rules, i.e. Kids on their bikes playing 'catch me' etc. Maybe all cyclists should dismount in the very core of the pedestrianised area (High Row, Northgate) and the other areas signs put up explaining what is expected of cycling etiquette in the town. The cycling forum/Local Motion don't seem to have the impact Darlington was expecting from them regarding alternative forms of transport and real changes happening to make cycling safer and acceptable in the town centre.”