

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.

Cycling England has agreed funding for all six Cycling Demonstration Towns for a further three year period and continues to see the permeability of the town centre as a key part of Darlington's overall cycling strategy. We are aware of the extremely thorough and continuing research which has been carried out to evaluate the risks of cycling into the town centre and are supportive of the recommendation that this should become a permanent feature of the towns' infrastructure. – [Last paragraph added December 2008.](#)

Phillip Darnton
17 December 2007.