

## **PLACE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

5 February 2015

**PRESENT** – Councillor Long (in the Chair); Councillors Baldwin, Cossins, Culley, Harman, Lawton, EA Richmond and Wright. (8)

**APOLOGIES** – Councillors Carson, Donohue and L Hughes. (3)

**ALSO IN ATTENDANCE** – Councillors Coultas, Kelley, Lyonette, Macnab, C Taylor and Thistlethwaite. (6)

### **Representing Outside Organisations -**

Mrs Coates, Member of the Public, Duncan Buckingham, Bike Stop, Gordon Pybus, Darlington Association on Disability, Inspector M Button and Sergeant L Guest, Durham Constabulary. (5)

**OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE** – Steve Petch, Place Strategy Manager, Andrew Casey, Head of Highway Network Management, Louise Neale, Sustainable Transport Officer and Karen Graves, Democratic Officer.

**P39. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST** – Councillor Lawton declared a non-pecuniary interest as a member of Darlo Velo and Councillor Coultas declared a non-pecuniary interest as Chair of Bikestop Darlington.

**P40. CYCLING IN DARLINGTON PEDESTRIAN HEART** – Submitted – A report (previously circulated) of the Director of Economic Growth providing background information and monitoring of cycling in Darlington town centre, in particular cycling in the pedestrianised area of the town centre. A PowerPoint presentation accompanied the report.

Members also took into consideration a letter (circulated at the meeting) received from Michael Drake of Darlington Cycle Club.

It was reported at the meeting that the number of pedestrian accidents had reduced from 34 to 31 and not halved as detailed in the submitted report.

The submitted report detailed the evidence collected during the trial periods of allowing cycling in the pedestrian heart from 2004 to final approval by Cabinet in February 2009. Monitoring reports were then presented to the former Economy and Environment Scrutiny Committee which did not show any reported incidents causing injury despite the numbers of cyclists increasing in the town centre.

It was stated that, in order to allow for deliveries, vehicular access was allowed before 10.00am and after 5.00pm in certain areas of the pedestrian heart although cycling was allowed on all roads within the town centre including Post House Wynd but cyclists have always been discouraged from cycling there.

Particular reference was made to the reasons for allowing cycling in the town centre which included conforming to national guidance, connecting radial routes to provide a continuous safe cycle route network and providing access to employment, retail and leisure facilities in the town centre.

Details were supplied of the Durham Police STATS 19 Accident Data of all road traffic collisions within the Borough reported to the Police. The data indicated that pedestrian casualties arising from road traffic accidents had reduced slightly since the introduction of the Pedestrian Heart scheme. Members of the public are able to report incidents to the Council and since 2009 eight reports have been received. The one incident on the STATS 19 database involving a collision between a cyclist and a pedestrian was as a result of a pedestrian stepping out into the carriageway into the path of a cyclist.

Members were informed that a quarterly cycle and pedestrian cordon count has been taken since 2007 covering 12 manual count sites at key entrance points to the town centre. The data showed an increase on previous years in both the number of cyclists and pedestrians in the town centre.

To gather the views of the general public to cycling in the town centre surveys were undertaken in 2007 and 2008 from a wide cross section of cyclists and pedestrians. The 2008 survey showed the majority of people were aware cyclists were allowed in the town centre with 77 per cent of respondents seeing a cyclist and 30 per cent indicating they had experienced problems due to cyclists in the town centre. However 62.1 per cent of people were in favour of cycling in the town centre as opposed to only 53.9 per cent in 2007.

A Member questioned whether it was appropriate to allow cycling in the Pedestrian Heart, whether a cycling ban in the Pedestrian Heart would be enforceable, lack of 'No Cycling Allowed' signage in Post House Wynd and the need for a risk assessment to be undertaken in relation to risks to pedestrians caused by cyclists.

Members were informed that a Road Safety Audit was undertaken when the scheme began and a further Audit could be done to determine the implications on cyclists and pedestrians. An Audit was done based on facts and there were currently very little facts and even less in relation to 'near misses' as these were rarely reported therefore the Accident Statistics indicated that there was not a problem. It was confirmed that signage and bollards were reduced when the Pedestrian Heart was introduced and that Post House Wynd does have a 'No Entry' sign.

Inspector Button advised Members that the Police managed the Town Centre as best they could in relation to anti-social behaviour although cycling did not feature as much as in other areas.

Officers confirmed that the dedicated e-mail address to report incidents had received nothing since 2011 and that Darlington has 400+ road traffic casualties per year with possibly 8 or 9 damage only to vehicles and many 'near misses' below that.

Gordon Pybus of DAD stated that although cyclists needed access to the Pedestrian Heart they needed to be discouraged from cycling on dedicated pavement areas.

---

Members heard the views of Mrs Coates whose husband had been severely injured in an accident in the Pedestrian Heart. Mrs Coates presented a petition containing over 700 signatures and in doing so stated that she would like to see cycling banned from the pedestrian areas. Concerns were also expressed at the lack of 'No cycling' signs, the speed of cyclists in certain parts of the town and little warning given of a cyclists approach as they were so quiet, unlike a motorised vehicle. Mrs Coates suggested that cyclists should dismount and walk their cycles within a pedestrianised area.

Members were surprised to learn that the Police had more complaints and had issued Fixed Penalty Notices regarding skateboarders but not cyclists.

Matthew Snedker advised Scrutiny that as a father of three he often cycled with his children and had many 'near misses' none of which had been reported. It was stated that cars could do more damage to an individual than a cycle and that a data collection for 'near misses' was required. Mr Snedker was also concerned that drivers on mobile phones were not fully concentrating and needed to be reported to the Police.

A Member stated that the Pedestrian Heart was a wide pavement and that it was illegal to cycle on a pavement, many incidents were not reported and the data was worthless, a survey of cycling in the Pedestrian Heart should be undertaken and a proper Risk Assessment by an independent assessor should be carried out. It was also stated that cyclists had to be more aware than pedestrians who were often on mobile phones and not concentrating on their surroundings.

Reference was made to Stockton and Middlesbrough Pedestrian centres where cyclists were rarely seen and it was requested that they be asked how cycling was managed.

Duncan Buckingham of Bikestop stated that secure parking for cycles was needed in Darlington, he was aware of many near misses that had not been reported and that dedicated cycle paths were required as in European towns and cities.

Reference was made to the Code of Conduct for cyclists which recommended that cyclists do not cycle in Post House Wynd or 'the Yards' and that consideration should be given to pedestrians. It was acknowledged that youths usually caused problems and that schools should be encouraged to educate students to be aware of pedestrians.

**RESOLVED** – (a) That Place Scrutiny Committee accepts the use of the Pedestrian Heart by cyclists as a component of the cycle route network designed for the Borough and the contribution of this Policy to carbon reduction measures and road safety.

(b) That Place Scrutiny Committee is united in its objection and condemnation of anti-social behaviour in the Town Centre.

(c) That the following recommendations be forwarded to Cabinet for approval :

- i. That the Council and the Police be encouraged to work together to inform cyclists of the concerns of pedestrians, particularly the elderly, through events and road safety marketing and publicity;
  - ii. That Scrutiny Committee notes that the Cycle Training includes advice on how to ride responsibly in the Town Centre where a child's school journey involves this
-

route;

- iii. That the Police provide increased focus on anti-social behaviour particularly on bikes and skateboards;
  - iv. That the profile of the incident reporting mechanism and the Code of Conduct be highlighted using various media forms, including social media, to encourage cyclists to be considerate and aware of other users of the pedestrianised area;
  - v. That improved signage be provided to delineate where cyclists can and cannot cycle in the pedestrianised area and that these be reported to Place Scrutiny Committee in six months;
  - vi. That a further Attitude Survey be undertaken in February 2016, to be reported to Place Scrutiny Committee, as part of a comprehensive monitoring exercise;
  - vii. That a Road Safety Audit be undertaken;
  - viii. That Officers be requested to investigate the provision of a dedicated cycle route around the Pedestrian Heart in conjunction with cycling groups; and
  - ix. That best practice of other Local Authorities be investigated.
-