

Brian Welch  
Chairman, Ramblers Northampton Group

To:

Stephen Russell  
Ramblers Policy and Advocacy Officer

Cc Joy Tripp

Dear Stephen

### **Consultation on Shared Use of Footpaths with Cyclists**

Thank you for providing the opportunity to comment on the above advice note. I am responding on behalf of Ramblers Northampton Group which has over 350 members and provides a programme of regular walks throughout the year both locally and further afield.

The issue of sharing paths with cyclists is of concern to many of our members and, although the guidance note points out that benefits can accrue to both walkers and cyclists through the adoption of shared routes, particularly where this is accompanied by investment in the route, comments tend to focus on the negative aspects of sharing.

We agree with the general policy of the Ramblers Association that that the upgrading of a footpath to bridleway or cycle track status must be considered on a case-by-case, not by way of universal conversion. We would also wish to emphasise that any proposal should be based on a strategic approach to the route of a particular route or network rather than through an opportunistic approach. It is important therefore that Ramblers Groups are familiar with their Authority's Local Transport Plan and the policies and strategies on shared use contained therein, and comment on any proposed changes to policy, in advance of any specific proposals for shared use coming forward. Of particular concern in this regard would, for example, be the inclusion of a performance measure relating to the mileage of cycle routes (shared or otherwise) in a local authority's area.

In responding to proposals for shared use, we also believe it is important that local groups obtain evidence on the impact that shared routes already in existence on walkers. In our own area, there are a number of purpose built shared routes particularly to, from and around industrial estates and business parks built in the last 20-30 years. These provide an important amenity for both walkers and cyclists but concerns have been expressed by the former that their safety can be put at risk by the excessive speed of cyclists and the inability of

cyclists to pass pedestrians walking two abreast. Some members of our group have recently walked London's Capital Ring along routes where shared use is commonplace and have commented that the speed and aggression of some cyclists has had a negative impact on their enjoyment of parts of the walk.

This gives rise to the question as to whether a recommended width of 3 metres is adequate and (not mentioned in the document) whether some form of safe cycle calming measure should be included where a shared route would otherwise enable high cycling speeds.

In view of what has happened in Wales, it is important that Ramblers Groups are alert to this matter now and familiarise themselves with the policy of their local highways authority.

We look forward to seeing the final version of this advice note.

Yours sincerely

Brian Welch