

Shared Use Routes

INTRODUCTION

The National Cycle Network, being developed by Local Authorities and other organisations all over the UK in partnership with Sustrans, will benefit not only cyclists but a whole range of other users by offering new facilities to walkers of all abilities, wheelchair users and, in some places, horse riders.

This document addresses issues about the shared use of paths by cyclists with other users on the National Cycle Network. It has been developed in consultation with different user groups. While it does not attempt to represent all the views of different interest groups, we hope that, with an ongoing dialogue, it will be possible to reach a consensus that benefits all users (1). Separate documents address issues relating to use by disabled people (2) and to public rights of way, with particular reference to horses (13).

It should be stressed at the outset that the overwhelming priorities for both cyclists and pedestrians are to reduce traffic volumes and speeds and reallocate road space away from private motorised traffic. Debate about pedestrians and cyclists sharing space must not be allowed to undermine their common efforts to achieve these ends.

SHARED USE

The National Cycle Network will be a UK-wide 10,000 mile (see note 1) network of safe, high quality routes for cyclists, which will also greatly expand facilities for other users. It is being designed to the highest standards in line with published Guidelines (3).



*New purpose-built shared use paths are popular with pedestrians and cyclists.
Bristol & Bath Railway Path.*

Over half of the network will be on quiet minor rural roads and traffic-calmed roads through towns. The remainder will be on routes generally free from motor traffic, either existing or newly built, for shared use by non-motorised users.

Shared use routes are those that are used by pedestrians and cyclists together. They may be segregated, where the different users are clearly separated from each other; or unsegregated, where the full space is used by both pedestrians and cyclists. Segregation can range from a physical kerb or verge to a tactile or painted line, but in all cases there is clear demarcation showing which area should be used by pedestrians and which by cyclists.

We know that there are genuine concerns about shared use voiced by different users, notably pedestrians and in particular elderly and visually impaired people (4), and this document aims to address these. However, it is important also to recognise the positive benefits that the National Cycle Network will bring to pedestrians as well as cyclists in terms of traffic-calming and extensive new facilities.

TRAFFIC-CALMING

Pedestrians and horse riders know only too well that traffic is becoming heavier and roads more congested, even on the smallest minor roads. Sustrans is pressing Local Authorities to introduce measures to reduce vehicle speeds and flows on the National Cycle Network to create a safer environment for cyclists and other non-motorised users.

In addition, where a route crosses a busy road, safer road crossing points will be installed, which will benefit pedestrians, horse riders, and wheelchair users, as well as cyclists.



Safer road crossing points will benefit a number of different users.

NEW FACILITIES

Much of the National Cycle Network, already completed and in use in different parts of the country, uses existing shared use paths, purpose-built by Sustrans or local authorities (along railway paths, canal and riverside paths, urban cycle tracks). Plans for the National Cycle Network include a substantial additional mileage of new purpose-built shared use paths.

Sustrans has been building paths like this for over fifteen years and they have proved hugely popular, with pedestrians outnumbering cyclists in places, and are used for a whole range of journeys by pedestrians and cyclists of all abilities. Shared use enables scarce resources to be pooled for the benefit of all users.

People are attracted to such purpose built shared use paths because:

- many conveniently start right in or on the edge of urban areas, providing for all types of journey including commuting, travel to school and college, shopping, visiting friends and reaching the countryside;
- they are generally 2-3m wide, with gentle gradients, few (but safe) road crossings, regular seats and meeting places;
- they are free of the stress, danger, noise and fumes of motor traffic, providing a space where people can relax and be together;

- there are no steps; access points are ramped to enable ease of entry for prams and wheelchairs; surfaces are normally firm, dry and smooth; there are flush dropped kerbs at crossing points;
- they are typically 5-15 miles long;
- sculpture, landscaping and wildlife management help create linear parks that bring peace and tranquillity - and wildlife - right into urban areas; and
- parents on foot can accompany children learning to ride.

CONVERSION OF EXISTING ROUTES

In addition to newly constructed paths, some sections of the National Cycle Network will involve shared use of routes previously available to pedestrians only. These will be on existing footpaths, as well as canal and riverside paths and other public spaces. It is these schemes which cause most concern, particularly in urban areas.

Pedestrian paths and their uses are so varied that each situation must be considered on its merits, taking full account of the local circumstances, and in all cases consultation with all users is essential. This is discussed further on page 4.

Use of pavements and footpaths

It is illegal to cycle on the pavement (see note 2) and Sustrans agrees with the Department of Environment, Transport, and the Regions (DETR) that "there are no circumstances in which a general or widespread opening up of footways and footpaths to use by cyclists would be acceptable" (5).

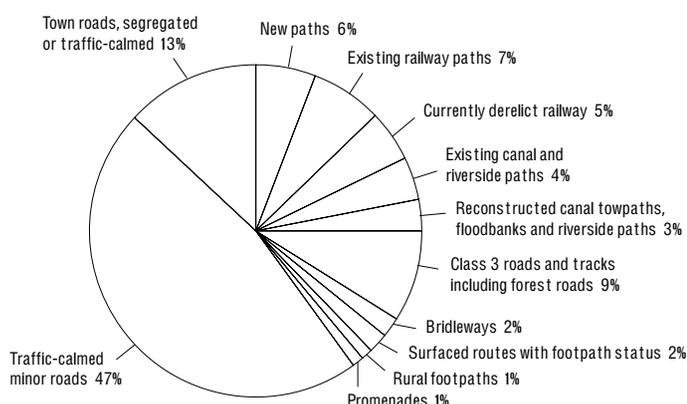
Sustrans advocates that cycle facilities in urban areas should preferably use road-based solutions or new shared use paths away from the highway. Where cycle facilities are required, these should normally be provided by reallocating road space from motor vehicles to cyclists, rather than at the expense of pedestrians (3,6). However, there are a limited number of sections of the National Cycle Network where the only continuous and safe provision for cyclists will be by making use of a pavement or footpath. Often this will be for short lengths to link, for example, two quiet roads.

Where a network of cycle routes is provided in an urban area we would normally expect the proportion of pavements and footpaths converted to shared use to be very small.

Any shared use provision should be clearly marked and signed in line with DETR guidelines (7,10).

If segregation appears advisable it should be provided. If this is not practicable then all alternative options, including on-road routes, should be reconsidered.

National Cycle Network by Route Type



A previously pedestrian-only facility has been converted to shared use, with a raised tactile delimitation strip demarcating the pedestrians' and cyclists' sides. Barnstaple, Tarka Trail.

Julia Bayne

Where the National Cycle Network proposes to use a pavement or footpath, wherever possible, opportunities should be taken to improve conditions for pedestrians, for example by installing additional crossing points, improving the surface or widening the existing path.

There is concern in some quarters that poorly designed shared use facilities could lead to an increase in illegal pavement cycling. The fear is that if there is little distinction between a poorly designed shared use route and an ordinary pavement, cyclists may gain the impression that it is acceptable to ride on pavements.

All user groups agree that good design is crucial (see section 8) and Sustrans deplores the increasing tendency of illegal cycling on the pavement. We would, however, like to see the introduction of legislation allowing children under 12 to cycle on pavements, linked to cycle training for all 10-11 year olds to prepare them for cycling on the road (see section 9).

Riversides and canal towpaths

Many canal towpaths were originally built to a high standard of 2.5m or more in width, but overgrown vegetation and uneven surfaces currently makes them impassable. The reinstatement of a broad, smooth surface can bring benefits to walkers of all abilities and wheelchair users as well as cyclists. Similarly on riverside routes, a shared use surface can improve access for a wide range of users.



Kai Paulden

Good surfacing along canal and riverside paths can open up facilities to cyclists and walkers of all abilities. Kennet & Avon Canal.

Sensitivity is required so that the 'rural' nature of some of these routes is not destroyed, and that the requirements of others, such as anglers and boat owners, are taken into account. The design of such routes should always have regard for the safety of all users.



Where it is proposed to use public spaces, shared use routes should be well defined. Hyde Park.

Public spaces

Wherever possible on-road alternatives should be sought, but achieving a safe cycle route into a town centre may depend on being able to use some part of an existing path through a park, along a promenade or other open public space. Here the greatest care is needed to minimise the inconvenience to existing users, and to ensure safety for everyone.

Any shared use route will need to be carefully chosen and well defined, with pedestrians having the remainder of the area for their continued exclusive use. Measures should be included to benefit existing users, for example improved surfaces, physical segregation, additional paths, tactile information and continuity at road crossings. Many of the concerns of pedestrians can be satisfied by the provision of a physically segregated route for cyclists.

Pedestrianised areas

Many town centres have pedestrian areas where vehicles are excluded for all or part of the day. Prohibiting cyclists from such areas can force them on to longer, busier, unpleasant and dangerous routes. If satisfactory alternative routes cannot be provided, exemptions for cyclists should be considered, at least outside the busiest periods.

There has been considerable debate about the ability of pedestrians and cyclists to mix safely in pedestrian areas. The Transport Research Laboratory has monitored this issue, concluding that there are no real factors to justify excluding cyclists from pedestrianised areas (8). It also concluded that a wide variety of regulatory and design solutions exist to enable space to be used effectively and safely in these areas, which could be tailored to local circumstances. As with public spaces, many concerns can be satisfied by the provision of a physically segregated route for cyclists.



In a busy pedestrian area cyclists use a designated space. Peterborough.

Sustrans is pleased that Local Authorities are now increasingly excluding motor vehicles from central areas whilst continuing to allow cyclists. This is a policy which has been pursued successfully in continental Europe where it has encouraged more people to walk and cycle, and has improved the environment of urban centres.

SAFETY

Cyclists, walkers of all abilities, people with prams and buggies, wheelchair users, and horse riders all benefit from routes free from motor traffic. Although some authorities react at first against shared use, concerned that walkers will be at risk from cyclists, the risk to both groups is overwhelmingly from motor traffic. However, it is recognised that cyclists travel at significantly greater speeds than pedestrians and cannot stop or change direction as quickly, and this must be taken into account in the selection and design of shared use routes. Personal security issues must also be considered, and these are discussed in a separate information sheet (14).

Pedestrians

Pedestrians express concern about the speed, quietness and close proximity of some cyclists, especially if approaching from behind. Such concerns are, understandably, greater for elderly people, those who are visually or hearing impaired, or those with young children (4). Sustrans accepts that, however low the actual risk of being hurt in an accident, there is a perceived danger that affects users' behaviour. If people perceive conditions to be unsafe they will not use the route.

Cyclists

Cyclists express concern that pedestrians often use the side of a marked path allocated for cyclists. The movement of children can be unpredictable and sudden. Dogs can also be a serious worry to cyclists, and pedestrians are urged to keep them well under control.



Good design of an inviting environment enables users to feel at ease. Bristol & Bath Railway Path.

Horse riders

When horse riders use the same route there is yet another set of interactions that must be taken into account. Separate advice is available on this (13).

In our experience of developing shared use paths, potential problems can be minimised through early consultation, good design standards, and publicity and education.

CONSULTATION

In the planning and design of a shared use path early consultation with different user groups is essential to ensure that proper account is taken of their concerns. Sub-standard shared use paths can be unpleasant and dangerous for pedestrians and cyclists alike.

Consultation with residents, cycling, pedestrian, disabled access and horse riding groups will normally be undertaken through local authority channels, although Sustrans also welcomes direct contact with such groups. Consultation with disabled access groups should include those representing people with sensory impairments. Proper consultation is essential to ensure that attention is paid to the details necessary for a successful route.

GOOD DESIGN

Good design is essential. Although each location is unique, we have found that on well-designed routes shared use poses very few problems. Poor quality shared use paths can be unpleasant and dangerous for all users. Inevitably different user groups will have their particular requirements, and each situation must be considered with regard to the expected usage and local conditions.

Sustrans, the Institution of Highways and Transportation, and the DETR have all published separate guidelines which include advice on detailed design for shared use paths (3,6,7,9,14). Points from these are summarised here, but reference should be made to the full documents for details.

Segregation

In urban areas where the level of use is high complete segregation of pedestrians and cyclists by means of a dedicated cycle track or a level difference should be the aim of highway authorities, particularly in new developments. This will not only assist visually impaired people, but will also be helpful to other vulnerable pedestrians.

The most common method of tactile segregation is by using a raised profile white line delineator. This should

PUBLICITY AND EDUCATION

All user groups need to become more aware of the needs of other users of shared use paths, but cyclists in particular need to be aware of more vulnerable users.

When introducing shared use paths the need for appropriate publicity and educational material should be considered, to inform all those affected by the scheme and to promote the need for responsible cycling. Cyclists need to learn to cycle at closer to walking speed when mixing with pedestrians and to behave courteously at all times.

GOOD CYCLING GUIDE

Sustrans is promoting a Good Cycling Code (11) in conjunction with the National Cycle network. The code on shared use paths is reproduced here: a full version of the code is available from us.

When cycling on shared use paths please:

- give way to pedestrians, leaving them plenty of room
- keep to your side of any white dividing line
- slow down when passing pedestrians and be prepared to stop if necessary
- don't expect to cycle at high speeds
- be careful at junctions, bends and entrances
- remember that many people are hard of hearing or visually impaired. Don't assume they can see or hear you.
- fit a bell and use it. Don't surprise people!
- where there are wheelchair users or horse riders, please give way.



Julia Bayne

In busy urban areas physical segregation of a cycle path and the pavement can benefit all users. Bristol Centre.

include tactile surfaces at access points and at intervals along the route to indicate which are the pedestrian and cycle sides. Guidance on this is published by the DETR (10).

Width

On well used unsegregated shared use paths we recommend a minimum of 3m width. Where paths are lightly used and there is a clear verge on both sides a minimum width of 2m may be sufficient.

Where segregation is provided, an overall width of 5m is preferred. A minimum of 3m may be acceptable on a lightly used route clear on both sides where a raised profile white line delineator is provided.

Access Controls

There should be a presumption against the use of any access barriers on a shared use path because of the difficulties they can cause users.

Bollards should be the first choice of access control, to discourage access by motor vehicles. If motorcycles subsequently become a significant problem then more restrictive barriers should be considered. Whatever form of access control is provided should be designed to be easily detectable by all users, particularly the visually impaired. Where horse riders use the same path a separate horse access barrier may be required.

Sight Lines

Adequate sight lines are important for safety and personal security. Blind corners, poor forward visibility on bends and over-hanging vegetation can create dangerous situations. Satisfactory visibility must also be provided at intersections. If adequate sight lines cannot be achieved then appropriate warning signs should be provided.

Signing

There should be clear signing indicating a shared facility. All cyclists should give way to pedestrians and, where necessary, there should be signs to indicate this.

Lighting

Lighting is important for personal security, and may be appropriate for certain sections of shared use paths - for example, in urban areas and in tunnels or underpasses.

Surfacing

The use of a contrasting coloured surface should be considered at locations where there is a need to highlight the presence of a cycle track to pedestrians, in addition to any tactile surfacing requirements.

Where path rangers are employed they are able to encourage considerate behaviour by all users, but unfortunately funding is not commonly available for rangers.

Sustrans aims to raise cyclists' awareness of pedestrians through information provision and through its own network of supporters. Sustrans recommends clear signing indicating a shared facility and signs encouraging cyclists to take care and to give way to pedestrians. Sustrans' supporters are requested to set a good example to fellow cyclists.

Bicycle Bells

Sustrans favours the compulsory fitting of bells on all cycles at the point of sale, and bells are the most popular item sold by Sustrans through our information catalogue. Cyclists wanting to reassure pedestrians that they are responsible riders can do this quickly and easily by fitting a bell straight away - and using it! Calling out a friendly greeting is also a positive way of reassuring other users.



The Safe Routes to Schools project encourages considerate behaviour by pupils on shared use paths.

Cycle Training

Sustrans recommends that all novice cyclists and children aged 10 and over should take part in cyclist training. Some local authorities provide training both for adults and through schools. As well as covering training for cycling more safely on the road, most established schemes include elements on cycling behaviour.

The Safe Routes to Schools Project, co-ordinated by Sustrans, encourages schools (through parents, pupils and governors) to set up training schemes with their local authority, and to establish their own good cycling codes and cycling permit schemes. Sustrans recommends that children receive high quality instruction before they are allowed to cycle to school. Pupils are encouraged to consider the needs of others when cycling, particularly on shared use paths, or where cycle paths cross routes used by pedestrians. An information sheet on "Cycling to School", including sections on permits, training and cycling behaviour, is available from Sustrans (12).

References

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3. Sustrans and Ove Arup & Partners, 1997, "The National Cycle Network: Guidelines and Practical Details", Issue 2.
4. Joint Committee on Mobility of Blind and Partially Sighted People, 1997, "Shared Facilities for Pedestrians and Cyclists", Policy Statement.
5. DOT & Welsh Office, 1989, "Making Way for Cyclists", Local Transport Note 1/89.
6. Scottish Development Department, 1980, "Making Way for Cyclists", Note 1/90.
7. Institution of Highways & Transportation, Cyclists Touring Club, DOT and Bicycle Association, 1996, "Cycle Friendly Infrastructure: guidelines for planning and design".
8. DOT & Welsh Office, 1986, "Shared Use by Cyclists and Pedestrians", Local Transport Note 2/86.
9. Scottish Office, 1989, "Providing for the Cyclist", Cycle Advice Note 1/89. Cyclists at road crossings and junctions. Shared use by cyclists and pedestrians.
10. Trevelyan & Morgan, 1993, "Cycling in Pedestrian Areas", PR15, Transport Research Laboratory.
11. Sustrans, 1994, "Making Ways for the Bicycle: a guide to traffic-free path construction".
12. DETR(Mobility Unit), 1997, "Guidance on the Use of Tactile Paving Surfaces" (Notified Draft).
13. Sustrans, 1997, "Good Cycling Guide".
14. Sustrans, 1997, "Cycling to School: advice for parents and schools", Sustrans Information Sheet FS11(English), FS07 (Urdu), FS08 (Bengali), FS09 (Punjabi), FS10 (Welsh).
15. Sustrans, 1999, "The National Cycle Network and Public Rights of Way", Sustrans Information Sheet FF27.
16. Sustrans, 1999, "Designing for Security on the National Cycle Network", Sustrans Information Sheet FF21.

Notes

1. The total distance of the National Cycle Network is 10,000 miles. This includes all routes in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, and all links and alternative routes.
2. Within this text we refer to "pavements" for a path legally designated as a "footway".

We are grateful to all those who have commented on this document so far and welcome further comments, which should be addressed to Keith Marsh at Sustrans.

Sustrans
ROUTES FOR PEOPLE

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