

NFNPA 540/18

NEW FOREST NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

AUTHORITY MEETING – 18 JANUARY 2018

UPDATE ON THE NEW FOREST CYCLE EVENT ORGANISERS' CHARTER

Report by: Nigel Matthews, Head of Recreation Management and Learning

Summary

This report provides a third annual update on the extent to which the Cycle Event Organisers' Charter and associated Safety Advisory Group systems have helped manage the impacts of cycle events in the New Forest. Although concerns are still expressed amongst some local communities, there have been some tangible improvements in communication and some promising developments in the management of events run by some event organisers.

Equality and Diversity Implications

There are no equality or diversity implications arising directly from this report. Work to manage the impacts of cycle events will not affect one type of group more than another and should make the events safer and more enjoyable for all.

Recommendations

- 1 The Authority confirms its support for the ongoing work to seek compliance with the Charter by cycle event organisers, safer and more considerate cycling by participants and greater tolerance and positivity by those not involved in the events.
- 2 The effectiveness of the Charter be monitored and reported on as part of reporting under the Recreation Management Strategy.

Papers

NFNPA 540/18: Cover Paper

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1 Introduction

- 1.1 At its meeting in January 2017, Members asked that a third review of the [Cycle Event Organisers' Charter](#) should be brought to the Authority in January 2018 – hence this report.
- 1.2 The history of the development of a [New Forest cycling code](#) (in February 2014) and the Charter (in January 2015) was covered in [the 2015 report](#). The [2016 report](#) covered events monitored in that year.
- 1.3 The Charter is a jointly endorsed set of best practice instructions for cycle event organisers: an excellent starting point for anyone seeking to organise an event in the New Forest. It includes a cap of 1,000 cyclists/day and requires that riders wear rear identification numbers.
- 1.4 This report focuses on the eight larger cycle sportive events held during 2017. There were two one-day events with 200-399 participants, four one-day events with 650-1020 participants and two two-day events with between 1,600 and 2,265 riders each day. This is a similar number of events compared with 2016 – some recurring events had fewer participants whereas others had more.
- 1.5 As usual, evidence and feedback has been gathered through a range of ways: direct monitoring of events; emails received before and after events; the Safety Advisory Group (SAG) feedback system; parish councils; internet forums; NFDC, HCC and Police officers; event organisers and participants; British Cycling and Department for Transport staff.

2 Feedback received via the Register of Events

- 2.1 Feedback about cycle events received via the Register of Events on the SAG webpage is a relatively small sample of public opinion, but it does enable some comparison between events and between years.
- 2.2 In 2015 (the first year for which the feedback system was in place for a full year) there were 15 feedback entries from a total of 10 people. Of these entries, 13 related to just two events – both run by UK Cycling Events (UKCE).
- 2.3 In 2016 there were 29 feedback entries from a total of 22 people. 26 of the entries related to events run by UKCE; among these were six that included positive comments. The remaining 3 entries related to the Garmin Ride Out run by Action Medical Research (one negative; two positive).
- 2.4 In 2017 there were 21 feedback entries from a total of 18 people. All but three of the entries related to UKCE events, and their two 2-day events prompted the biggest responses (seven and nine entries). The

remaining three entries were about the Garmin Ride Out (two negative comments) and the New Forest Bike Ride (one largely positive entry).

- 2.5 The pattern of feedback through the Register of Events seems relatively predictable, with a peak of interest in UKCE events, especially the larger events that span a weekend.
- 2.6 As in previous years complaints mostly focussed on either the behaviour of individual riders or on the wider impacts of the events on other road users.

3. UK Cycling Events (UKCE)

- 3.1 UKCE (now owned by Time Inc. (UK) Ltd.) ran about 80 sportive events across the UK during 2017. As in 2016, four of these were in the New Forest:

- Wiggle Spring, 8 & 9 April, total of 4,264 participants, based at Somerley Estate.
- Wiggle Bournemouth, 26 June, 1,027 participants (only used the west of the Forest).
- Brewin Dolphin, 1 July, 1,017 participants, based at Gang Warily.
- Wiggle New Forest 100, 16 & 17 September, total of 3,744 participants, based at Somerley Estate.

They already have the same pattern of events in their calendar for 2018.

- 3.2 UKCE was the only event organiser that attracted over 1,000 participants/day to cycle events in the New Forest.
- 3.3 The company does not believe the cap of 1,000 participants is appropriate. However, UKCE staff routinely liaise with the SAG in advance of each event and provide detailed event plans. They provide up to three different routes (spreading participants more thinly across the Forest), provide a named contact person/phone number for the day of each event, *front* numbering of cycles and clear instructions to cyclists (in advance and on the day). Rider times for New Forest events are now only available to people individually so that it is not easy to compare times with other participants.
- 3.4 This year, for the first time, UKCE provided *rear* identification numbers for cyclists at two of their New Forest events: the 1-day Brewin Dolphin event and day one of the Wiggle New Forest 100. On neither occasion was the outcome 'perfect' (even when securely fixed the numbers were easily obscured by outer waterproof clothing or rucksacks). However, this was a welcome development and UKCE have confirmed that they will provide rear numbers at all their New Forest events in 2018.

3.5 Another positive development was that for the September event, UKCE managed to consistently limit the flow of cyclists leaving the start venue to a maximum of 10 cyclists/minute (by releasing them in batches of 20 at 2-minute intervals). This compares with peak flows of 14-16/minute observed in April. The lower rate of flow reduces the tendency for large bunches of cyclists to form and increases the opportunities for motorists to overtake safely.

3.6 Other developments of note are:

- The instruction not to use metal stakes for signage was forgotten in April, but was rectified for subsequent events.
- The 'limit' of (just over) 1000 participants in the Brewin Dolphin event was self-imposed.
- UKCE staff attended a meeting of Sway Parish Council in advance of the Wiggle New Forest 100 event, and made some changes to their event plan in response.
- Local people in the Godshill area found a new feed station for the Wiggle New Forest 100 event, meaning that Hyde Memorial Hall was not needed – and therefore that Blissford Road and Blissford Hill could be avoided altogether.
- At Wootton, Burley Manor Riding Stables now cancels its rides on days when cycle events use roads adjacent to the stables; this is despite offers by UKCE to help resolve safety concerns.

4 Other cycle events

4.1 The other large cycle events were as follows:

- New Forest Bike Ride (Bike Events Ltd.); 18 June; 393 participants; rear numbers provided
- The Rattler (Cyclofanatic); 20 August, 220 participants. Despite being prompted to do so, the event organiser did not liaise with the SAG; however, the event has since changed hands and the new organiser (Challenging Events) seems much better organised.
- Garmin Ride Out (Action Medical Research); 1 September, 684 participants; not timed; rear numbers provided.
- Gridiron 100 (CTC Wessex Cycling, a local volunteer-led group of Cycling UK); 8 October; 693 participants, not timed. This year, for the first time in its 25 year history, the event organiser provided a suitable event plan to the SAG. The 2018 event will be run by a different volunteer who has already started to liaise with the SAG.

5 Other points of interest

- 5.1 Communication between event organisers and town and parish councils (mostly via the SAG and NFALC's nominated representative, Cllr Neal Martin) was again generally timely and effective.
- 5.2 This year, Sway Parish Council has been the most proactive in monitoring events and in engaging with event organisers. Godshill Parish Council was much happier with the route of the September event and there were some very welcome complimentary comments about the behaviour of cyclists that took part.
- 5.3 Most other Parish Councils were relatively silent and we assume are therefore happier than about two or three years ago.
- 5.4 Communication between event organisers and the Verderers to avoid clashes with drifts was mostly good, although the Rattler passed close to the Ipley drift, near Beaulieu.
- 5.5 Management of feed stations is usually good, with enough toilets, better marshalling and a focus on litter.
- 5.6 Many participants have been observed riding to high standards of safety and consideration.

6 Ongoing work

- 6.1 Managing cycle events in the New Forest requires ongoing coordination of effort across a wide range of local organisations. The SAG organisations (especially New Forest District Council, the Highway Authority and Police) have a key role in advising event organisers but it is clear that the NPA, town and parish councils, local groups and businesses also have roles to play.
- 6.2 We need to continue to remember that the Charter is voluntary and that neither the SAG nor its constituent members have the legal powers to stop or control the events.
- 6.3 We will continue to encourage and expect individual cyclists to ride safely and considerately. We should also expect a similar standard and attitude amongst motorists.
- 6.4 The SAG is still committed to encouraging compliance with the Charter, and any event which does not comply with the cap of 1,000 riders and the lack of rear rider identification numbers will be sent an 'amber' letter stressing the importance of following the Charter and requesting that the event plan should be changed.

- 6.5 Parish councils and village hall committees are likely to continue to review when and where they will accept bookings for feed stations. On some routes, and for some events, these premises are ideal – and a useful income is generated. It may be that, as in 2017, more suitable feed stations can be identified which alleviate issues elsewhere.
- 6.6 The SAG organisations will continue to look at event plans and advise where they foresee particular issues.
- 6.7 We hope that UKCE will now routinely limit the rate of flow of riders to 10/minute – and that the decision to provide rear numbers will prove to be beneficial.
- 6.8 The remit and terms of reference for the SAG are being reviewed by NFDC but we anticipate that this will not significantly affect the way it deals with cycle events.
- 6.9 Resolutions of conflicts are much more likely to be achieved through positive dialogue than where there is confrontation, so officers will continue to work with all involved to facilitate this. UKCE staff have agreed to attend the January meeting of NFALC, so this is a positive step.
- 6.10 We understand that at a national level, the Police and British Cycling remain keen that cycle regulations are brought up to date, and there is some ongoing work around the role of Accredited Marshalls. However, we have no assurance that any changes would help address New Forest issues, and Department for Transport staff have confirmed that there are no immediate plans to amend the Cycle Racing Regulations, at least in part due to constraints on the amount of Parliamentary time available for non-Brexit related matters. There is to be a cycle safety review which Jesse Norman (Transport Minister) announced in September following a spate of road incidents involving bikes. DfT will be making a further announcement on the scope of the review, as well as issuing a call for evidence, so that might provide an opportunity to highlight concerns around cycle events in the New Forest.
- 6.11 Most other national parks still do not have particular concerns about on-road cycle sportives and outside of national parks, significant concerns seem still to be in pockets rather than widespread.
- 6.12 The New Forest Charter seems to have stood the test of time. Although some people (mostly cyclists and cycle event organisers) would prefer reference to the cap and rear identification to be removed, these clauses usefully highlight the ongoing need to take into account impacts on other road users and the accountability of participants.
- 6.13 It is interesting that the Recreation Management Strategy 2010-2030 does not refer to cycle events. In contrast, the public consultation to

begin the review of the 2010 strategy prompted many comments about cycle events and it seems appropriate that a jointly owned action about managing the events should be included in the update when this is drafted. This action may also provide the basis for ongoing monitoring.

7 Summary

- 7.1 We continue to welcome and support cycling as a form of transport and recreation. We also remain committed to working with cycle event organisers to minimise negative impacts and maximise benefits so that their events are welcomed by all involved and affected.
- 7.2 The cycling code is widely supported, including by cycle organisations, and we will continue to find ways in which it can be promoted. The Charter has helped raise the standard of cycle event organisation and encouraged a joint approach to managing potential impacts.
- 7.3 Progress is easiest in a positive environment where cyclists, motorists, local people, event organisers and statutory and non-statutory organisations look for solutions rather than problems. A significant amount of good will has been displayed that should help us achieve further improvements.
- 7.4 The SAG remains central to the process by which individual events are managed, together with effective communication amongst town and parish councils and the additional impetus provided by the NPA. We will continue to work together to improve systems and ensure best use of resources.
- 7.5 We will continue to keep an eye on developments elsewhere in the country, both to learn from others and to capitalise on any prospects for a coordinated national approach.
- 7.6 With the review of the Recreation Management Strategy during this year, it is suggested that monitoring the effectiveness of the Charter be included in reports under this Strategy.

8 Recommendations

- 8.1 The Authority confirms its support for the ongoing work proposed to seek compliance with the Charter by cycle event organisers, safer and more considerate cycling by participants and greater tolerance and positivity by those not involved in the events.
- 8.2 The effectiveness of the Charter be monitored and reported on as part of reporting under the Recreation Management Strategy.