

Above: The police were in the town centre for over an hour sitting in their car. Numerous bikes road past, but they did nothing but keep warm.

On the 16th of April 2016, I received a response from Barry Chandler, Neighbourhood Policing Team Sergeant, to an email I had sent detailing some of the problems I have had with cyclists and the issues I think need to be dealt with.

I have read your email to the police and I am sorry to hear that you have been involved in several incidents involving cyclists. You mention that a number of signs in the town have been obscured or removed by the council and you are indeed correct in stating that this makes the job of enforcement even harder. It is the duty of the council to notify pedestrians and cyclists regarding the areas of the town which should not be cycled through.

A few thoughts.

The duty of enforcement is made harder by not having any police patrolling to enforce the law. Enforcement is made harder again by those occasional patrols not enforcing the law. I had heard a long-term Community Support Officer giving wrong advice to an elderly couple who'd had to avoid a cyclist and drawn his attention to said cyclist. He said he was entitled to cycle on the darkened town centre paving that signal the access route for vehicles.

Wrong. I have never seen a police officer stop a cyclist in Hastings Town Centre. As in the featured photo at the top of the page. They just sat in the car for an over an hour and didn't stop a single cyclist who went past. With 'action' like this, it's no wonder that people are

getting the wrong idea.

If it is the duty of the council to notify pedestrians and cyclists alike as to where they can and cannot cycle, then the council don't know this. He may be talking about East Sussex County Council as they are in charge of signage. I have contacted them multiple times but they will not even move the signs that have been turned to face the shops so that no-one can see them. They have said they will not be adding anymore signs as they would not want people to confuse people. Apparently if people see lots of signs in the town centre, they might take this to mean, that the lack of signs outside of the town centre, i.e on pavements, means it's okay to cycle there. Ridiculous and all the same, there are cyclist already doing that!

Unfortunately, as suggested by the council, the resources that police can put into this problem are growing more limited. I would like to think that any officer or PCSO who witnesses an incident such as yours would take appropriate action, however you suggest there is an issue that some officers may not know whether the pedestrian area is allowed to be cycled through. I will ensure my staff are aware of the areas that are pedestrian only and that they seek to advise people of this when on patrol. I think it is fair to say that this issue is largely about communication and education and I feel it would be unlikely we would prosecute a person for cycling through the pedestrian area unless there were some other factors involved such as the incidents you have described. I believe we would be far more successful in resolving the issue with some targeted signage and communication via social media and I would encourage you

to speak again to the council about pursuing these.

The police say they have increasingly limited resources, however I am sure that there are very low cost ways to organise communication and education of cyclists, but it will have to take the form of a direct engagement with those who are breaking the law. Sandwich boards and leaflet campaigns will not do. Maybe the Police cadets would like to make up the numbers with some Police Officers and do some town centre reminders. It could be combined with the security marking days they have, although it would require more than that. I am sure there are individuals who would be happy to help out with their time. Hastings and St.Leonard's Senior's Forum springs to mind as they have been out with questionnaire forms and interested in tackling this issue for quite some years (over 10 years, and apparently the bulk of complaints raised by their members was cyclists). I did contact them but they didn't respond, which was disappointing and surprising. Still coming from the Police or the Council, I'm sure they would be more willing to help.

I don't think it's fair to say that this is an issue ONLY of communication and education.

Some days sitting outside Nero, I've noticed a sudden drop in cyclists on bikes and when I've moved to see if I can find a policeman, there has inevitable been one. Recently the police have started appearing in the town centre around school's out time and it was at first quite amusing to see cyclists jumping off their bikes as they noticed the police.

Unfortunately this has just led to more and more cyclist staying on their bikes as the weeks have gone by and they have realised that they won't be stopped by the police. I am so disappointed in the Police Force for repeatedly not doing anything on those rare occasions they are actually in the town to do something. They are supposed to be about law and order but I only see them first thing in the morning, liaising with different shops and then gone for the rest of the day. If they come down later, they are inevitably in Priory Meadow on

business or just keeping warm in the winter.

This very issue with cyclists using the town centre started to pick up when the Community Police office in the town centre closed and also when Officers and PCSO's started being bundled down to the old town in the summer months because that's become the icon and symbol of this town. Then there was the addition of the Seafront cycle route, Sussex Coast College, the Source Skate Park and the mangled signs of East Sussex County Council.

I agree with targeted signage but I think the idea of using social media is a joke. I must have glossed over it when I read it the first time.

As we move forward this year our current priorities are regularly reviewed and it may be that despite the council putting up signs that cycling is still a problem. If this becomes the case then we will have a look at the issue again and see if there is anything further we can do, but I would encourage you to keep me informed of any information you become aware of as it will assist when planning it.

In the past, the law was enforced by citizens as well as the Police. Nowadays, attitudes have changed and people are unwilling to tell someone to get off their bike, like they would have in the past. It appears only to be me and a few of the older generations who will still try and say something, though this is on the decrease as people have realised that cyclists won't listen (often feigning deafness) and so an apathy has set in. I remember this fear of speaking out appeared at the turn of the millennium and there were an increasing number of incidents reported in newspapers about the ugly rise of violent physical or verbal abuse

on people daring to speak out. It certainly made people more afraid to speak out.

This problem is not new. There are Observer reports from ten years ago that I have posted on this site before. How can they not see this IS an issue? How have they not tackled it at any point along the way?

Reporting a dangerous pavement cyclist to the Police



Above: The spot where I saw the speeding cyclist.

I recently tried to reporting a cyclist who was speeding dangerously through the town centre. The reason I reported it was because of the ridiculous speed he was going, zigzagging through the busy street from Marks and Spencer's down past W H Smiths in Queens Road, Hastings.

If someone is seen riding on the pavement by a police officer, appropriate action will be taken at the time. We will not be looking at the CCTV to try and identify the cyclist in this case as it is not a proportionate use of police resources.

Regards,

Due to the speed he was going, I thought they might want to take a look

If you call us at the time that an incident is happening and an officer attends and catches them, appropriate action will be taken. If a CCTV camera captures footage of someone riding on the pavement, the cyclist would still have to be identified. This is not a suitable use for limited police resources unless the cyclist is riding especially dangerously.

But that was why I contacted them! He was riding especially dangerously. And so...

I thought I made it clear that I was reporting this particular cyclist precisely because he was riding dangerously as opposed to the other cyclists I don't report.

As someone who has been hit twice by cyclists because of the

lack of enforcement by police and local authorities, I am dismayed at your attitude and your refusal to answer my questions.

Would the previous advice I received from the police be wrong? Can you send me or point me towards the police's and in particular, Hasting police's approach or guidelines for dealing with anti-social cyclists.

As the police rarely patrol the town centre and as support officers have been cut back, relying on officers to see offenders, is hardly an effective strategy.

As I frequently see police cars driving past offending cyclists, I hold out little faith in this as an effective strategy.

No response.

Six days later I was contacted by a PCSO who had himself been knocked over by a cyclist.

I will make my colleagues aware and conducting more patrols in that area to address the problem I was once even knocked over by a cyclist so I know the feeling

We did speak on the phone eventually but he sounded limited in what he could do, or at least, what he thought he could do. If the police would co-operate with other relevant authorities and volunteers, we could easily sort something out. When the authorities look at what they can do individually, and only within their ranks, their thinking to become

impotent.

I asked the PCSO to visit my website and join the Facebook group but he never did.

I did notice some police officers in the town centre within days. Unlike the doughnut munchers featured at the top of the post, they were out of the car and cyclists, upon spotting the police, were jumping off of their bikes.



Above: Doughnut munchers? They seemed unwilling to step out of the car and stop all the cyclists in the pedestrian zone.

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