

QUESTION NO. 1

Michael Weller to ask the Chair:

Cycling on Footpaths

Over the last three years there has been a very much increased use of bikes using the footpaths in Reading to the effect that it's getting very dangerous to walk on many of the narrow footpaths for many young mothers with young children. Also older residents of Reading are being forced off to the side of the footpaths with cyclists riding so fast or coming up behind them and pushing their way past. I can see a very big accident happening very soon if you let it continue as it is.

I have been into the police station to see what they are doing about this problem but they say it's nothing to do with them ?

Can you tell me which footpaths in Reading you can ride a bike on or is cycling allowed on all footpaths even the Broadway. If cycling is allowed then let us have a demarcation line so cyclists and public can walk and ride in safety? Because I do not want to hear of an accident where a young child has been killed or badly hurt...

REPLY by the Chair:

I thank Mr Weller for his question.

Off-carriageway facilities are considered where there is a high proportion of inexperienced cyclists and children to cater for, and the alternative is a busy traffic distributor route, or where an off-carriageway facility will improve route continuity to key destinations.

Off-carriageway facilities should ideally be 3 metres wide or a minimum of 2 metres as set out in our Cycling Strategy and be signed as shared-use with standard DfT approved signs.

A supplementary plate, which will be displayed under standard shared-use signs, is being taken forward as part of the new cycle scheme along Bath Road. These signs will highlight the presence of other footway users and request that they 'share with care'. The cycling map illustrates the majority of shared-use facilities in Reading and new facilities will be included within the next update.

Cycling on a footway is an offence under section 72 of the Highways Act 1835 as amended by Section 85 (1) of the Local Government Act 1888. The enforcement of cycling offences is an operational matter for the local police force who can use the Fixed Penalty Notice (FPN) as a direct means of dealing with most minor offences.

The Road Traffic Act 1991 also allows the Police to issue fines for dangerous cycling and careless cycling. These restrictions do not apply to children under 16 or where the Police believe that a responsible cyclist has mounted a footway to avoid an area of very busy traffic and who cycles with regard to other users.

QUESTION NO. 2

Simon Smart to ask the Chair:

Cycle Bridge over the Thames

The new pedestrian and cycle bridge over the Thames is a fantastic resource for the community and an excellent example of good infrastructure development. It gets heavy daily usage and has a very positive impact on quality of life for those travelling between Caversham and Reading station. I would firstly like to thank the Sub Committee for their involvement in making it a reality.

Near the end of January this year, Reading experienced snow and several days of extremely cold temperatures. Unlike the road network, the paths in and around Christchurch Meadow are not gritted during cold weather. Combined with the sloping ramps, the ice that formed on the bridge was extremely dangerous. During my commute I personally witnessed two cyclists fall (one into the railings at the south end of the bridge, and one on the adjacent ramp), and one pedestrian. I am confident that many others fell during the day as the ice persisted for two days.

It is only a matter of time before a serious injury occurs, especially as the path at the base of the southern ramp is unfenced adjacent to the river.

Could the committee expand on the plans being made to ensure that this situation does not recur, either by treating the surface or at the very least making grit bins available to the public in the meadow and for the bridge.

REPLY by the Chair:

I thank Mr Smart for his question.

By way of background, the Council does not precautionary salt any of its footway network. However if snow is predicted to lay for more than 24 hours then the town centre area, as detailed in Appendix F of the Council's Winter Service Plan, will be treated with Urea to prevent snow and ice forming. These footways are treated with Urea as they have a high pedestrian footfall.

With the exception of shared carriageway routes on a primary or secondary precautionary salting route, shared footway/cycleways and remote cycleways are not salted when frost, ice or prolonged hazardous conditions are forecast. Being part of the carriageway, shared carriageway/cycleway routes on the primary and secondary precautionary salting route networks will be salted by default in accordance with the Winter Service Plan.

Unfortunately the Council is not in a position to treat its footway/cycleway network within the Borough. It is for these reasons that it is important to have a Winter Service Plan/Policy to ensure that the winter service is delivered efficiently, effectively and consistently across the Borough's highways network, within the budget and resource constraints.

The Council's Winter Service Plan 2016 - 2017 is available on the Reading Borough Council website at: <http://www.reading.gov.uk/winter-road-maintenance> which

explains in more detail the Council's winter maintenance service. There is reference to footways and cycleways in Section 7 on Page 10 and Appendix F is on Page 32.

The Council has two hand operated snow ploughs which will be deployed on primary footways in the Town Centre, over Reading and Caversham Bridges and over the new Christchurch Bridge, in the event of heavy accumulations of snow.

An annual review exercise is carried out by Officers at the end of each winter period. At the end of this winter season, the review will include all requests for additional grit bins as well as an options report on the feasibility and associated cost of providing an extended shared footway/cycleways and remote cycleways winter service, including bridges.

Committee members will be making an informed decision, taking into consideration financial constraints, resources, as well as the practicality of delivering this additional service. The review will include all of the shared footway/cycleways, remote cycleways, including bridges in the Borough.