

Safety and Green Travel Working Group: Interim Report



JANUARY 2019.

1	CONTENTS	
2	Background:.....	4
3	Summary.....	5
4	Introduction.....	6
4.1	Southampton Common: Safety and Green Travel.	6
4.2	Main paths	7
4.3	Lack of data and evidence.....	7
5	Priority One: Improve facilities for green travel and reduce conflicts between pedestrians, cycling and dog walkers.....	8
5.1	Reality	8
5.2	Options to reduce the conflicts caused by fast cyclists	10
5.2.1	Option 1: Provide a ‘commuter’ cycle path on or beside the Avenue.....	10
5.2.2	Option 2: Develop segregated, split or separated shared paths.	11
5.2.3	Option 3: Construct physical barriers on main paths.	11
5.2.4	Option 4. Widen selected main paths.	11
5.2.5	Option 5. Improve minor infrastructure and signage in and around the Common.	12
5.2.6	Option 6. Improve minor infrastructure and signage on ‘no cycling paths’	13
5.2.7	Option 7: Develop and promote a code of conduct	13
5.3	Other information: City Council policies on cycling on the Common	16
5.4	Priority One Summary.....	16
6	Priority Two: Improve the safety of users of the Common especially after dark through increasing both the natural light and lighting along the main paths.....	17
6.1	Reality	17
6.2	Safety in the daylight on main paths: Options.....	18
6.2.1	Option 1: Continue/increase vegetation clearance schedule near main paths	18
6.2.2	Option 2: Improve signage and information particularly at entrances.	18
6.2.3	Option 3: Promote increased usage as this improves feelings of safety as people feel safer when they see others	19
6.3	Safety in the darkness on main paths: Reality.	19
6.4	Safety in the darkness on main paths: Options	20
6.4.1	Option 1: Improve north-south green travel in the dark by identifying the most appropriate route or routes.....	20
6.4.2	Option 2: Decrease the number of lit main paths either in space, in time or intensity of light. 22	
6.5	Other safety concerns.....	22
6.5.1	Provide resource to reduce crime and antisocial behaviours	22
6.6	Priority Two Summary	23
7	Further research	23

8	Conclusion	25
8.1	Short – medium term.....	25
8.2	Medium – long term	25
8.3	Long term.....	25
9	Annex: Further examples of Codes of Conduct	26
	Examples of shared path signage from the UK and internationally.....	27
10	Evidence used	29



Figure 1: Inconspicuous “no cycling” sign on Carriageway Drive by Bellemoor Entrance.

2 BACKGROUND:

Southampton Common Forum (SCF) works constructively in partnership with Southampton City Council (SCC), stakeholders and users of Southampton Common to improve it for the benefit of all its users and the citizens of Southampton.

In 2017 SCF undertook a large survey of Southampton residents and users of the Common to understand their views about the Common and its future. This, along with a wide range of meetings and other engagements, was used to inform the development of a strategic plan for the Common by SCF in partnership with SCC. It was approved by SCC in December 2018.

The survey highlighted a number of important issues. SCF established three working groups to address the following hot topics:

- Safety & Green Travel
- Landscape & Toilets
- The Rejuvenation of the Hawthorns Urban Wildlife Centre.

The working groups are intended to provide creative, imaginative blue sky thinking that draws on research and best practice elsewhere (nationally and internationally) to develop a deeper understanding of the issues involved. They are also intended to broaden engagement by bringing together a diverse range of people, views and expertise.

Their reports will help to inform the management plans that will be developed by SCC in 2019 to underpin the strategic plan.

SCF is very grateful to all those who have participated in this working group:

- Jenny Marshall, Chair, member of SCF Management Committee
- Adam Tewkesbury, Transport Manager, University of Southampton
- Emily Dawes
- Isabella Camilleri, Vice-President Welfare, Southampton University Students Union
- Graham Linecar, Chair, Southampton Commons and Parks Protections Society.
- Hugh Davis
- Simon Buston, Southampton City Council

SCF would also like to thank representatives of the following organisation's who gave their time to inform this work.

- MyJourney (Senior Communications Officer- Sustainable Travel)
- Southampton Cycling Campaign (Events Coordinator)
- Southampton City Council Transport, Highway and Parking (Senior Transport Planner – Major Projects).
- Southampton City Council Parks Department Officers.

3 SUMMARY

Safety and green travel on the Common were two of the most frequently mentioned concerns raised in response to the 2017 user survey and 2018 consultation which informed the development of the Common Plan. The pros and cons of carefully selected options to take these topics forward in the implementation plan were examined. Following consultation with users and stakeholders the working group propose that a code of conduct is developed to improve mutual respect between users and tame fast cyclists, signage is improved and, if necessary, in carefully selected localised sections of main paths consider the feasibility of other initiatives. To improve safety on the Common on main paths the working group proposes that main paths continue to be cleared of intrusive vegetation, signage is improved, and the need for an effective, lit north-south route for cyclists and pedestrians is explored.



Figure 2: Code of Conduct, Marin County, California, USA.

4 INTRODUCTION

This is an interim report from one of three phase one ‘contentious hot topic’ working groups exploring options for taking the Southampton Common Plan priorities forward. The aim of this working group was to support the development of implementation plans for safety and green travel priorities by exploring options rather than making detailed recommendations. This interim report was shared with the Management Group of the Southampton Common Forum in December 2018 as well as with Southampton City Council Officers.

The two Common plan priorities are:

- Improve facilities for green travel and reduce conflicts between pedestrians, cyclists and dog walkers
- Improve the safety of users of the Common especially after dark through increasing both the natural light and lighting along the main paths.

The Common plan with 30 priorities was based a survey of 2200 people and several consultations including a Southampton City Council online engagement initiative on the draft plan with over 700 responses. Both priorities sit in the fifth section of the plan, Improve Paths, Access and Safety, and there are similarities and overlaps between them.

Working group participants have provided relevant expertise, knowledge and evidence at and between meetings, sharing good practice from elsewhere. The group has met four times and notes have been circulated to members for comment after each meeting. As requested, the GROW methodology has been a starting point (Goal, Reality, Options, Will) identifying key issues, and best practice. Informal fact-finding meetings have been held with contacts from the Southampton Cycling Campaign, MyJourney and Southampton City Council Highways and Parks teams. A meeting with local police is being planned; Community Safety Groups have yet to be contacted. The Sustrans and Southampton Common Forum websites, the extensive 2017 Common User Survey and the 2016 ‘Walking and Cycling Technical Design Guidance’ from the Royal Parks have been useful sources. Detailed meeting notes and a paper produced for the working group on ‘Fostering a culture of tolerance and co-existence between users of the Common’ are available. We have endeavoured to understand the needs of all users and stakeholders to produce a balanced report. Inevitably it’s been easier to access specific information about some groups, such as cyclists than others such as vulnerable users and pedestrians. The working group itself represents a range of users.

We have made realistic choices about the focus for the options covered in each priority as we cannot cover everything at this stage. Our underpinning belief is that solutions are not to be found in increased control or regulation but in including users and stakeholders as equal partners in furthering their enjoyment and appreciation of the Common.

4.1 SOUTHAMPTON COMMON: SAFETY AND GREEN TRAVEL.

The Common is a large open 365 acre space which is bisected by the A33 trunk road into Southampton. The Common is integral to north-south and east-west communications for residents in Southampton and its hinterland. It is adjacent to large populations hence the emphasis on safety. In the context of green travel it is important that the Common is considered both in its own right and as part of a coherent integrated green travel network within the local travel plan and Southampton Cycling Strategy. Common entrances and exits in the context of route continuity and transitions are

significant as are the public transport system and roads, pavements, paths, cycle paths and bus stops with which they are connected.

The location of the Common next to the University of Southampton on its eastern boundary is significant. The University has just published a new estate framework; discussions will be taking place with SCC, the University and Forum in the future.

4.2 MAIN PATHS

We have identified the main paths as those which are wider and surfaced:

- Highfield Road-Belle Moor,
- Belle Moor-Northlands Road,
- Coronation Avenue (not lit),
- Carriage Drive from Cemetery Road-Belle Moor-Burgess Road/The Avenue traffic lights (not lit).

Also included in our definition of main paths are other surfaced paths: -

- Lovers Walk (2 sections, north part lit)
- Links from the Carriage Drive to the Concrete Path & Pointout Path entrances on Hill Lane.

There are also five 'no cycling' paths.

4.3 LACK OF DATA AND EVIDENCE

We are aware of the lack of data and evidence to underpin some sections of this report. This may be because it doesn't exist or that we have yet to locate it. The Royal Commission on Environmental Pollution (2009), for example, highlights the surprising paucity of research into the impact of artificial light on plants and animals. Much of the literature focuses on paths, roads within the urban environment rather than parks. There is a lack of information about the number of safety incidents and collisions on the Common. Near misses are also relevant but unlikely to be reported. In reviewing the literature we are keenly aware of issues of transferability from other environments, low sample sizes, and would like a better appreciation of methodologies. We have yet to fully understand crime data related to the Common. The findings of a 2018 Common pedestrian and cycle count (Southampton City Council) and student survey on travel between The Avenue and Main Campuses (University of Southampton) were not available at the time of writing this report but were imminent. An indication of whether users are travelling through, or just there to enjoy the open space, would also be helpful. The Forum has the volunteer resource and, with advice from park and sustainable transport experts, would be able to contribute to research. Another option might be working with the University of Southampton.

5 PRIORITY ONE: IMPROVE FACILITIES FOR GREEN TRAVEL AND REDUCE CONFLICTS BETWEEN PEDESTRIANS, CYCLING AND DOG WALKERS

In a nutshell: In consultation with users and stakeholders, develop a code of conduct to tame fast cyclists, improve signage (including no through routes) and, if necessary, in carefully selected, localised sections of main paths, consider feasibility of other options

5.1 REALITY

The Common is a public open space; a place for recreation and enjoyment. It has been a much-valued resource for the city over the years adapting to changing city needs. Much is semi-natural landscape with important wildlife habitats. It is a large area close to the heart of the City so main paths give pedestrians and cyclists a sometimes shorter, more pleasant, less noisy, less polluted, traffic-free and safer alternative to using the surrounding busy roads. The City Council's policy is to reduce car use and air pollution by encouraging residents to consider alternative means of travel. This means that more pedestrians and cyclists are likely to use paths across the Common as through-routes in the future. The increase in 'green-travel' use of paths on the Common raises issues about conflicts with other users and compatibility with recreation and amenity. The Southampton Cycling Strategy is an existing adopted policy which makes reference to the Common; the key vision is to transform Southampton into a true Cycling City, creating a livable, integrated thriving and mobile city where safe cycling is a daily norm.

Generally people share the space on the Common well for most of the time. Conflicts arise not from deliberate anti-social behaviour but from people failing to understand the impact of and take account of their activity and behaviour on others.

There is a wide range of potential conflicts between faster and less confident cyclists, children playing, recreational ball games, dogs (free roaming and on extended leads), groups of users spread across the path, walkers and runners wearing headphones, vulnerable adults and events. Examples of conflicts include a dog walker with a dog on extended lead who is startled by a cyclist coming up from behind; a jogger with headphones or a walker on a mobile phone fails to hear a cyclists' bell; a cyclist with lights struggles to see a pedestrian in dark clothes on an unlit path at night; and a family with young children is frightened by an off lead dog.

We recognise that one person may participate in several of these activities; for example, a fast commuting cyclist may also be a dog walker, a pram pusher with young children and an appreciative nature lover.

Based on survey evidence the group felt the two key conflicts involved fast cyclists and dogs. We note the recent 'Dogs are brilliant' campaign across the City parks focusing on courtesy and control and wish it success. Consequently this report focuses on users travelling quickly on bikes on main paths.

The Common survey showed that the second most popular activity after walking is commuting by foot or bike. Cycling is a fast and efficient mode of transport in city environments. Conflicts between cyclists, pedestrians and joggers on main paths are more likely to arise from overtaking than meeting face-to-face (Essex 2015). Such interactions are often underpinned by anticipation and trust between

one user and another (Delaney 2016); they are linked to an unanticipated change of pace or direction. Essex (2015) highlights the significance of near misses and avoidance tactics in the user experience. At the heart of these interactions are the speed differentials between different user groups. A number of studies have been conducted to assess average walking speeds; 1.2 metres per second being most frequently cited. However people in parks frequently walk more slowly (Royal Parks 2016). Cycling speeds are much more variable based on trip purpose, bicycle type, path width and design. The speed limit on the Common is 10mph. The Royal Parks advocate design speed for shared use paths as 8-12 mph.

Periodic surveys of Southampton citizens about their use and experience of the Common and an estimate of users involved in green travel are listed as evaluation criteria in this section of the Common Plan.

Data about fast cyclists is helpful to shape an initiative. As we don't yet have the data about fast cyclists we have tentatively developed a possible scenario based on some assumptions. Sustrans categorise cyclists into five groups: sports (16-25+ mph), experienced commuter (13-17 mph), general utility (10-13 mph), children (5-13 mph), and leisure. The DoT includes a further category in their classification which is users of specialised equipment (cycle trailers, tricycles). Our focus is likely to be the experienced commuter. In Southampton 4.6% of work journeys are made by bike. This is above the national average of 2.8%. Common survey data indicates that self-declared commuting cyclists comprise 8% under -18s, 18% are 18-21, 14% are 22-29, 15% are 30-39, 16% are 40-49, 21% are 50-59, 12% are 60-69 and 5% are 70 or older so they are perhaps older than one might anticipate. Local hospitals and universities are key employers; neither have conventional working patterns and have a particular social demographic which may be more likely to endorse green travel. University students and staff travel up and down the north-eastern side of the Common between campuses and halls of residence. There are other employers such as a sixth form college, schools and shopping centres based near the Common. Young people travelling to schools and a College close to the Common are also Common users.

The DoT suggests that cycle use peaks between 7 am and 9 am and between 3 pm and 7 pm and recognises that as with pedestrian flows there may be other peaks. 'Comfort will be influenced by a range of factors such as the ratio of pedestrians to cyclists, the type of journeys being made and the extent to which people walk in groups. For any particular path these factors will differ substantially by time of day and day of the week' (DoT 2012).

We note that in the University's Geodata Institute's 2011 survey of 1300 local cyclists, 50% journeys are made between 0800-0900. A scenario is that fast commuter cyclists may cross the Common in and outside the traditional peak commuter times hence coming into conflict with pedestrian commuters and other Common users. Again we don't know about this group of commuter cyclists but twice as many men make cycle trips as women in the UK. Anecdotal evidence suggests that a small Strava-using minority traverse the Common as if it is part of the Tour de France. This group are a small inconsiderate minority amongst the wider more responsible cycling community

To put this in context, the survey data indicates that cyclists were mentioned by less than 200 respondents (out of 2,200) as a dislike behind litter/waste, safety, events and dogs however respondents found fast cyclists frightening and that they had no consideration for children or dogs on and off main paths. Better cyclist /walker separation was listed as the 6th priority for improvement after toilets, litter, play area, lighting and footpaths. These issues are not unique to the Common; in London's Royal Parks, for example, the Metropolitan police report that poor cyclist behaviour and the high number of cyclists can cause dissatisfaction to other visitors. Cyclists and dog walking are most frequently complained about in their stakeholder forums.

The impact of fast cyclists is most likely to be felt at:

- Peak commuter times: on north-south and east-west paths on weekdays particularly in good weather in the weeks leading up to the summer holidays. Peaks lead to conflicts between cyclists and pedestrians; pedestrians are discomforted and cyclists are frustrated by having to slow down. It is likely that in the future peaks will get bigger and last longer so we need to plan for them (Delany 2016). The growth of am and pm commuter peaks for walkers and cyclists is also reported by SCC (City Centre Action Plan 2013). We anticipate the further growth of electric bikes and note the implications of this on average speed.
- On localised pinch points: such as narrowing paths, crossroads, blind corners and steeper gradients i.e. Lovers Walk, just below the Cowherds, the underpass, north-south and east-west downhill routes (gradients heighten the speed differential between pedestrians and cyclists) and possibly the crossroads in the centre of the Common.
- When people are enjoying being on the Common (e.g. walking, children playing) and are caught unawares by fast cyclists. This is felt less at busiest times when pedestrians and dogs outnumber cyclists, and more at times when ratios are reversed and there are fewer pedestrians so the impact of an unexpected cyclist whizzing past is enhanced.
- Vulnerable users with limited hearing or mobility are more likely to have their enjoyment interrupted by fast cyclists. There are a number of care homes close to the Common and inclusive Health walks take place from the Hawthorns. The survey indicated that of those who identified conflicts with cyclists as an issue, 25% were in the over 60 age group and only 14% were under 40.

In summary, the conflicts between users on main paths are influenced by a range of factors. In attempting to resolve these conflicts we should remember that some solutions may be generic across the Common, other solutions are path-specific. Each main path is unique in terms of the types of user, user flow, number of peaks, gradient, path widths, distance from the perimeter, number of junctions with other paths, visibility and openness, and surrounding vegetation.

5.2 OPTIONS TO REDUCE THE CONFLICTS CAUSED BY FAST CYCLISTS

5.2.1 OPTION 1: PROVIDE A 'COMMUTER' CYCLE PATH ON OR BESIDE THE AVENUE

Introduction: The Avenue provides a key north-south communication route with pavements either side. We understand that Highways are looking at providing dedicated provision for fast commuter cycling on/alongside the Avenue (Cabinet Report 20/11 Responses to Court Leet presentations). SCC travel count data notes that in 2016 the busiest routes for numbers of people cycling into the city centre were Hill Lane (10%), Shirley Road (9.3%), Itchen Bridge (7.4%) and The Avenue (7.4%).

Pro: This could provide a wholly segregated route. Key benefits include diverting fast cyclists off the Common, reducing pedestrian-cyclist conflicts, increasing green travel and giving more choice to cyclists.

Con: Resource. Issue of northern exit route on the Avenue through the congested Burgess Road/Avenue crossroads.

Result. The group supports developing a commuter route on or alongside the Avenue as it reduces the impact of fast cyclists.

5.2.2 OPTION 2: DEVELOP SEGREGATED, SPLIT OR SEPARATED SHARED PATHS.

Intro: Shared use paths may be segregated or unsegregated, the former is where a path is separated by a feature such as a white line, kerb or some other feature. Core design principles in making a decision to segregate are convenience, accessibility, safety, comfort and attractiveness (DoT 2012). Segregated paths can be controversial particularly in urban areas (DoT 2012). A general rule is that as the effectiveness of segregation increases so too do the width requirements. The working group explored this using their experiences of such paths across the city and elsewhere in the UK and Europe.

Pro: Separates users by mode of transport.

Con: These paths (e.g. beside the Itchen in Bitterne and near the base of the Itchen Bridge and Central Hall) can lead to enhanced sense of entitlement potentially creating more conflicts. Vulnerable users and dogs don't recognise white lines. Highway policy is for 'shared-use paths and to use differentiated surface colours/white line markings to attempt to separate pedestrians and cyclists on the same paths only in exceptional circumstances' (e.g. through the Avenue underpass). Such surface colour differentiation has actually been removed south of the Northlands Road junction with the Avenue. Junctions with segregated path use are more complex. The London Royal Parks (2016) reported that 'it has been shown in several recent studies that a shared use area with no separation of modes is most conducive to considerate cycling, promoting lower cycling speeds'.

Result: The group are is not generally in favour of segregated, split or separated shared paths because a sense of entitlement can lead to more conflict.

5.2.3 OPTION 3: CONSTRUCT PHYSICAL BARRIERS ON MAIN PATHS.

Intro: This includes speed bumps (e.g. Bellemoor – Northlands Road route), staggered gates (e.g. above University steps), bollards (e.g. Northlands Road entrance) and paths at different levels (e.g. Riverside Park) to slow cyclists down.

Pro: Physical presence.

Con: Additional resource. On most parts of the Common cyclists would find a way around them. Challenging for wheelchair users, less confident riders, cargo bikes and bikes with trailers and tandems. In the future, bikes will get longer. Staggered gates can cause bottlenecks. Bumps and differing levels are challenging for runners especially at busy events where it's not possible to see the ground easily.

Result: The group is not in favour generally; we noted however, that there is a possibility of physical barriers in one or two carefully chosen locations after having thoroughly considered local factors.

5.2.4 OPTION 4. WIDEN SELECTED MAIN PATHS.

Introduction: There is a range of main paths on the Common. All are tarmacked; some traverse the grassed open areas of the Common with good visibility and space alongside and others are more tightly enclosed by vegetation and trees. A number of factors influence path widening decisions. The Royal Parks (2016), for example, list eight design principles to ensure path designs are appropriate (landscape character, visitor safety, pedestrian priority, inclusive design, tarmac neutral, historic alignment, fit for purpose and sustainable construction). Main paths on the Common could be widened by adding a 'green' flank or zone of permeable surface such as hogging, grid/mesh to strengthen the ground by widening the path itself or providing occasional passing places. There are

government highway design guidelines about the optimum width of paths which provide cyclists with sufficient but not too much space so they are less able to go too fast within the physical constraints of the path. Key design parameters including minimum widths for cyclists, pedestrians and wheelchair users are provided. Sustrans suggest paths should be wider on slopes to allow for cyclist wobble particularly with vulnerable and young cyclists in mind.

Pro: Widening paths could provide a solution for selected pinch points at peak times with carefully crafted signage and a code of conduct. Sections of paths could be closely examined by experts and users to determine whether widening would make a difference. The area next to main paths which would be impacted in terms of biodiversity is very small and the vegetation in these areas is already damaged. This makes paths more accessible for children on bikes and less confident riders particularly on uphill gradients. In his research on eight paths Essex (2015) found there were more severe interactions on narrower paths but the relationship between path width and severity of interactions is not constant.

Con: Additional resource. Wider paths could lead to cyclists going faster. Users will always expand to fit the space. Unpopular from an ecology perspective. Needs to be offset by other Common land. Wider paths impact on the visual amenity and have an urbanising effect in that paths can look more like roads especially in semi-natural parts of the Common. Need more evidence about the impact of wider paths. A concern that a raised edge can develop where the surfaced path and flanking strengthening meet and that can challenge cyclists. A green flank is not ideal for cycling and would require long-term maintenance.

Result. Perhaps path widening with green flanks or zones as passing places would work at carefully selected key pinch points or a limited widening along carefully selected sections to provide more comfort to users but not enough space to encourage fast cycling. Contentious. The jury is out.

5.2.5 OPTION 5. IMPROVE MINOR INFRASTRUCTURE AND SIGNAGE IN AND AROUND THE COMMON.

Introduction: Minor improvements in infrastructure and signage particularly at entrances could lead to more significant gains. Sustrans recommends that signage referring to shared use areas has clear instructions and includes a code of conduct.

Examples include

- A sign to cyclists and walkers towards Westbourne Avenue instead of Lovers Walk South (and vice versa south-north)
- Sign content and position of sign near Khartoum Road on Highfield Lane.

Pro: Relatively straightforward. The Southampton Cycling Campaign is successfully working with SCC across the city. Less drastic than other alternatives. Guidance available about consolidating information using existing street furniture.

Con: Some resource. Needs a detailed eye. Easy to get wrong. Signage too close to a path can be hazardous. Differing views on what constitutes an improvement. Sign clutter.

Result: The group is in favour of making carefully considered improvements to minor infrastructure and signage in and around the Common.

5.2.6 OPTION 6: IMPROVE MINOR INFRASTRUCTURE AND SIGNAGE ON 'NO CYCLING PATHS'.

Introduction: City bylaws ban cycling on the Common except where specifically signed. There are five 'no cycling' paths. There is an issue with the lack of consistency with signage on the tarmac and at entrances and in places where they have faded. The suggestion is that a reason is provided for the 'no through route' such as 'narrow path' and 'danger to wildlife'. These paths are:-

- Left hand fork from the underpass to Highfield Road
- The X of narrow paths in quiet area of the Common, east and north of the Ornamental Lake.
- Carriage Drive Cemetery Road to Bellemoor entrance in the southwest corner of the Common. The 'no cycling' sign on the tarmac is very small and this path has been controversial.

Pro: Cycling on 'no cycling' paths was raised as an issue in the survey.

Con: Resource.

Result: The group support improving the consistency of signage on 'no cycling' paths and recommend including reasons as we think cyclists are more likely to respond to this.

5.2.7 OPTION 7: DEVELOP AND PROMOTE A CODE OF CONDUCT

Introduction: We have identified a number of examples of codes of conduct on signs, websites or in leaflets which provide very useful insights into current practice.

- Priority 26 of the Common Plan is 'Improve signage and information, including a Code of Conduct for users to improve amenity of the Common for everyone'.
- The Southampton City Council Parks Code provides guidance for cyclist behaviours leading with the fact that on the Common shared paths pedestrians have priority and cyclists should always give way. It emphasizes the importance of green spaces as places for children to learn to ride and family group riding.
- Signs at some Common entrances include three points for cyclists:
 - Only cycle on shared use pathways
 - Please keep below 10 mph.
 - Cycle safely, give priority to pedestrians and be careful when passing dogs.
- The Southampton Cycling Campaign has produced a code of practice aimed at road users which could be adapted. There are 10 key headings: Be confident and assertive, Be clear and predictable, Be aware of hazards, Be courteous and patient, Be considerate, Be alert, Be seen, Be kind to your bike, Be stable and Be prepared (website and A4 leaflet).
- 'Dogs are brilliant' poster campaign displayed at the Common entrance. Strapline of 'Courtesy and Control' with seven key points: Be friendly and polite, Being aware of dog at all times, No stealing food, Wear a collar and ID, Under close control, Keep on lead if aggressive and Don't damage wildlife (sign).
- Ring-a-bell. Several dog walking survey respondents made the point that if cyclists used a bell they would be able to look out for their dog (silent cyclists). A protocol and rationale linked to this would need to be well communicated as many cyclists are reluctant to ring their bells as it feels like an aggressive gesture and many people don't like them. Ring-a-bell means 'a polite cyclist approaching' and is similar to saying something politely.
- Example: Cambridge City Council (selected). Techniques, skills and common sense. As a cyclist you cannot always expect to use shared paths for high speed travel. Different skills

and techniques are needed from road cycling. Always give priority to pedestrians. Never speed past pedestrians especially from behind. Always be ready to slow down and make sure you can stop if someone unexpectedly moves sideways- children and dogs are particularly unpredictable. Use your bell or a friendly voice to let pedestrians know you are there but remember that they may not step the right way and some may not be able to hear you. Slow down near blind points, entrances and trees. When passing oncoming cyclists it is normal to pass on the left. Be polite if a pedestrian moves for you especially on a narrow path. As a pedestrian it's usually safest to assume that cyclists will make their way around you if there is space so avoid making sudden movements (website).

Further examples can be found in the Annex.

Pro: Other schemes have taken a code of conduct route in preference to other options. Developing codes of conduct is in the Common plan. There are already examples for other Common users. A code would provide an opportunity to promote etiquette to respect for all users.

Con: We couldn't find evidence that codes of conduct work although we appreciate cause and effect would be hard to isolate (*request to SCC*). Too many codes of conduct on the Common would be confusing. Would a fast cyclist slow down to read a notice? Would a banner be needed? Is this an issue if large? Could a code of conduct be effectively enforced? Enforcement or change of byelaws? Would a visible staff presence make any difference?

Result: The group fully support involving users and stakeholders in the development of and promotion of a code of conduct with a constructive approach and inclusive ethos tailored to the Common to cover all aspects of the Common. An approach has been tentatively made to MyJourney to support the development and marketing of the code of conduct explaining that this is subject to Management Group approval. They have confirmed their support.

Code of Conduct Promotion

The group strongly feels that a code of conduct for shared paths requires the development of a marketing and communications strategy, possibly with a brand in turn, to encourage respect between Common users incorporating careful choice of terminology. Snappy slogans are essential e.g. 'Share with Care', 'Please be Courteous', and 'Thank you for slowing down'. The group suggested the use of pictures produced by children would be helpful to raise awareness. A MyJourney representative suggested this could be similar to campaigns to reduce car traffic and slow cars down near schools which used banners. The ethos behind a code of conduct for the Common is more fully articulated in a paper which is available (Davis, H 2018). We also discussed the pros and cons of singling out cyclists in a code of practice for the Common and felt the inclusive approach to be better however there would be carefully targeted messages within this for cyclists. Promotion could usefully include the existing Parks A-Z code of conduct. There is a need to understand ways in which behaviours can be changed.



Figure 4: Cycling code signage, City of Gold Coast, Australia.



Figure 3: Elizabeth Quay, Perth, Australia.

5.3 OTHER INFORMATION: CITY COUNCIL POLICIES ON CYCLING ON THE COMMON

We looked at the Byelaws for parks, the Parks section of the Council website and Planning and Highways policy documents.

As already noted, the Byelaws prohibit cycling in parks except on paths signed as cycle routes. Cyclists are limited to surfaced paths and prohibited from cycling across grass and in wooded parts of the Common where it can interfere with the enjoyment of other users, cause damage and disturb wildlife. There is a dedicated byelaw for cycling on the Common which is different to other parks.

The Park Code/A-Z of Parks gives a permissive right to cycle on surfaced paths except when there are signs prohibiting cycling. It stresses that it is 'shared-use' and cyclists should travel at a speed and in ways that respect others enjoying use of the Common. Pedestrians have priority and cyclists should give way to them.

The Council's strategic-level policy on transport sets the goal of reducing car usage and encouraging use of 'green' options such as buses, cycling and walking. We found difficulty in reconciling seemingly conflicting statements in the policy for cycling (the Cycle Strategy and its implementation through the Cycle Delivery Plan).

The Strategy acknowledges that paths in parks are not suitable for high-speed commuter cycling, must be shared with other users and require 'courteous behaviour' from cyclists. It identifies the path from the Bellemoor entrance through The Avenue underpass to Highfield Road as an important link. The other important identified route is north-south on The Avenue. The Delivery Plan did not include any proposal to secure improvements to encourage cycle use on this route but a report to Cabinet 20 November 2018 stated that ways to provide a dedicated facility for fast commuter cycling on or alongside The Avenue are being investigated. The path is potentially wide enough in many places if the scrub is kept back and leaves and clippings are removed; there is up to two foot of buried tarmac. The much-used cycle link from the Bellemoor entrance across The Flats to Northlands Road is not part of the cycle network identified in the Cycle Strategy.

5.4 PRIORITY ONE SUMMARY

	Option	Comment
1.	Provide 'commuter' cycle path on or beside the Avenue	Support
2.	Develop segregated, split or separated shared paths.	Not supported.
3.	Construct physical barriers on main paths.	Support only if other initiatives don't work.
4.	Widening selected main paths.	Support only if other initiatives don't work.
5.	Improve minor infrastructure and signage in and around the Common.	Support
6.	Improve minor infrastructure and signage on <u>no cycling paths</u> .	Support
7.	Develop and promote a code of conduct	Strongly support

6 PRIORITY TWO: IMPROVE THE SAFETY OF USERS OF THE COMMON ESPECIALLY AFTER DARK THROUGH_INCREASING BOTH THE NATURAL LIGHT AND LIGHTING ALONG THE MAIN PATHS.

In a nutshell: Ensure main paths continue to be clear of intrusive vegetation, improve signage, and give consideration to lighting paths to give pedestrians and cyclists an alternative lit route to the Avenue.

6.1 REALITY

There are two key areas in this priority: perceptions of safety along main paths during the day, and perceptions of safety along main paths in the dark. The priority highlights the desire to increase natural light and levels of lighting in darkness. It is interesting to note that feeling unsafe in twilight was frequently referred to in the Common Survey. Whether safety concerns are real or perceived our aim is to improve people's experience of the Common and encourage everyone to benefit from it. Some users enjoy the sense of being in a 'wilderness' natural setting in the dark perhaps on the many minor earth paths; others feel unsafe using main paths when they are overgrown. Although safety in the light and dark are very closely linked we decided to explore this priority in two sections.

Whilst the priority specifically refers to the main paths there is a sense that people's perceptions of safety in any area of the Common, main paths included, is linked to poor visibility associated with overgrown verges, unchecked undergrowth such as brambles, increasing amounts of overhead holly, fallen trees on path margins, shrubs etc. Visibility is important in enhancing feelings of comfort and security ensuring that people can see ahead and around them (see Landscape and Toilet Working Group). The entire tarmac and surfaced path network comprises <2.5% of the Common. Many of the main paths are in open grassland areas, however a small proportion of main paths which are



important transit routes are in more tightly constrained, claustrophobic areas which consequently feel less safe in light (particularly in poor weather) or darkness. A particular risk for cyclists on unlit main paths is hitting the edge of the tarmac.

We recognise the significance of perceptions and expectations in feeling safe in known and unknown areas; and whether people are first time users, on their own or in groups, and on foot, in a wheelchair or on a bike. There is evidence suggesting women are more likely to feel unsafe in the dark. Recent events are regrettably likely to have had an impact on the Commons safety reputation. A cyclist, for example, might weigh up the pros and cons of a convenient, traffic free route across the Common but with a possible fear of crime against taking his or her chance with traffic on a road (Brown, R 2017). Features such as CCTV on main paths could make people feel safer as has been used in Phillimore Park, Sheffield.

6.2 SAFETY IN THE DAYLIGHT ON MAIN PATHS: OPTIONS

6.2.1 OPTION 1: CONTINUE/INCREASE VEGETATION CLEARANCE SCHEDULE NEAR MAIN PATHS

Introduction: The Council have a mowing map and schedule for the Common vegetation management using a range of machinery. The intention is to clear 1.8 m to 2 m of vegetation on both sides of the main paths. In some places the grass is mown, in others vegetation, such as spreading undergrowth or bushes, is cut back. Trees on Common paths with significant pedestrian use are inspected every two years (trees elsewhere-every five years). Overhead holly is cut back from time to time as there isn't resource for more frequent activity; it was cut back two years ago on Lovers Walk and now it is growing back. As a long-term option selected felling, stump pulling and grinding would permanently remove the holly and other unwanted saplings.

Pro: Meets the requirements of increased light and lighting to promote safety. Popular support. Improves visual permeability. The value of verges can be increased significantly by an appropriate mowing regime focusing on 'path edge management' and the 'reminder of the verge'. (Sustrans). It links to priority 13 in the Common Plan.

Con: Resource. Side of main path clearance may impact on endangered species but proportionally in the context of the Common this is a very small area. Need an evidence base to support this concern.

Result. There is strong support for this option. Note the possibility of volunteer support.

6.2.2 OPTION 2: IMPROVE SIGNAGE AND INFORMATION PARTICULARLY AT ENTRANCES.

Introduction: Safety begins at the perimeter. There are signs at all main entrances. The literature and experience in Sheffield Parks indicates people feel safer if they have a clear view ahead to a feature whether it be the next corner, next lamppost, their exit point or alternatively they can see it on a map. There are no national regulations governing the installation of signage in parks and commons.

Pro: This builds on Common Plan priorities 24 and 27.

Con: Resource particularly if signage is placed at all major and minor entrances. Needs to be high quality. There is a balance between sufficient signage and visual clutter (Sustrans).

Result: There is strong support for improving signage and information particularly at entrances.

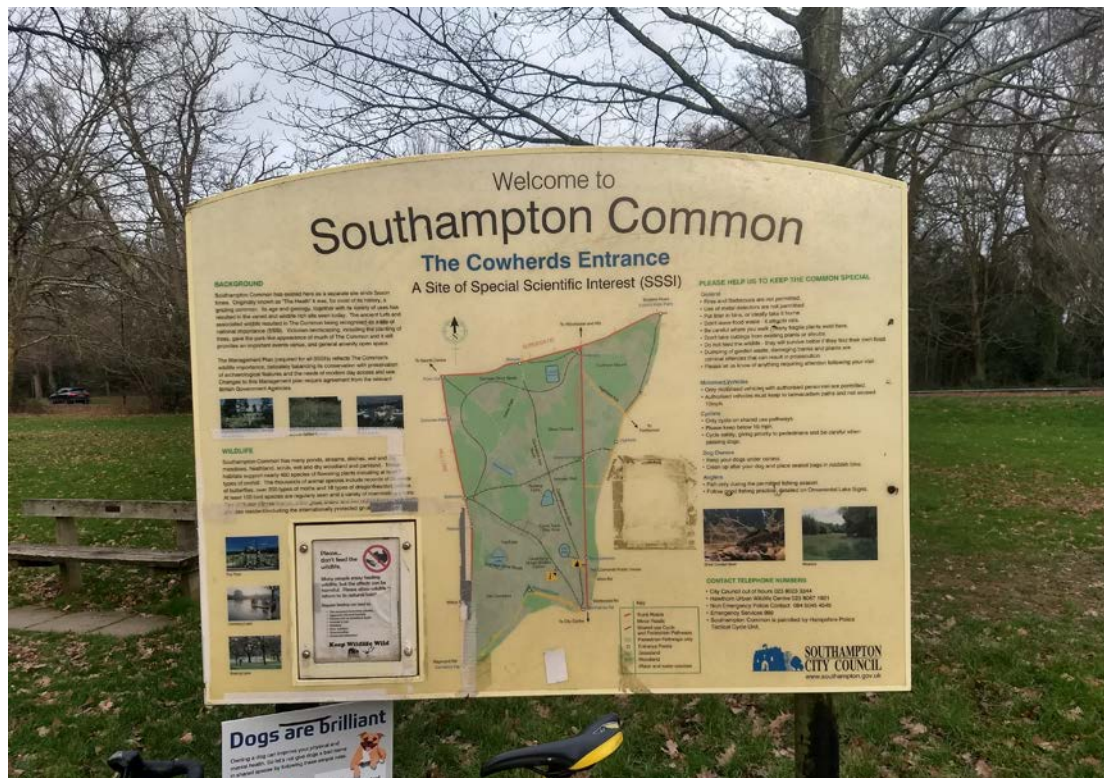


Figure 5: Tired and ineffective entrance signage.

6.2.3 OPTION 3: PROMOTE INCREASED USAGE AS THIS IMPROVES FEELINGS OF SAFETY AS PEOPLE FEEL SAFER WHEN THEY SEE OTHERS

Introduction: Increasing usage and enjoyment and making the Common accessible to all groups of people is a central feature of the Common Plan. A communications campaign to explain expectations of use in darkness, building on the A-Z Parks code of conduct could be developed.

Pro: Links to priority one in the Common Plan and part of the Common's raison d'être.

Con: Resource to support further Common promotion.

Result: There is strong support for increasing usage by all users including those most vulnerable and those most likely to feel unsafe.

6.3 SAFETY IN THE DARKNESS ON MAIN PATHS: REALITY.

The City Council position as expressed in the Parks Code/A-Z of parks is: 'As a general principle we do not light our green spaces. Green spaces are often open, dark spaces and as such we expect you to take a sensible approach to using them. People walking at night should do so in pairs or more and avoid quiet areas. Remember to take responsibility for your own safety'.

The main lit paths are: -

- Highfield Road-Belle Moor,
- Belle Moor-Northlands Road,

- Lovers Walk North.

The neighbouring lit highways include: The Avenue, Highfield Avenue, Highfield Road, Cemetery Road (and continuation path to Hill Lane), Hill Lane, Burgess Road, Northlands Road and Westbourne Crescent.

Street lighting and personal safety was listed as the 4th priority for improvement behind children's play facilities, public toilets and litter and waste management in the 2017 Common Survey.

Street lighting in Southampton was replaced with low energy/low lighting under a supply and maintain contract with SSE three years ago. Lighting and light columns on the Common were replaced at that time. This was designed to minimise light spill. Illumination levels on the Common are lower than on vehicle highways; the brightest levels are on main traffic routes, including The Avenue. 'We recognise that lighting of public space has benefits and is perceived by many in society to have advantages which outweigh the negative impacts. But it is equally clear that improved technology can deliver those benefits while minimising unwanted side-effects' (The Royal Commission on Environmental Pollution 2009). Lighting technology has moved on significantly in recent years allowing greater flexibility, changing emission colours, motion sensors, timers etc. Ground lighting and low level bollard lights have been utilised in other parks and commons.

The areas the lights illuminate on the Common have been designed so that there are zones for bats and other creatures to navigate in the dark. Southampton Common Forum has met with bat experts at Southampton University to identify key wildlife issues and solutions on the Common. Further work is planned to identify the types of bat species which live on the Common and their behaviours particularly the impact of lighting on foraging. The Bat Conservation Trust and Institute of Lighting professionals have issued recommendations for best practice.

6.4 SAFETY IN THE DARKNESS ON MAIN PATHS: OPTIONS

6.4.1 OPTION 1: IMPROVE NORTH-SOUTH GREEN TRAVEL IN THE DARK BY IDENTIFYING THE MOST APPROPRIATE ROUTE OR ROUTES

Introduction: It is likely that people who venture onto the Common in darkness mainly to do so because they need to get somewhere. Pedestrians and cyclists have a choice of three lit west-east Common crossing routes (as seen on the map in Figure 6.) but there are restricted north-south choices. A key factor is understanding demand for the provision of valued safe and attractive options on or beside the Common for pedestrians and cyclists to navigate the city. Understanding demand is critical. Student Union representatives in the working group reported that students were likely to take the shortest route back from work in the city centre or social events at night which could involve the Common. A focus in this priority is on green travel on foot or bike and thus the importance of the improving north-south travel across or beside the Common. This could be by:-

- Developing a fast cycling route beside the Avenue.
- Lighting Coronation Avenue on the Common.
- Utilizing the north-east section of the Carriageway on the Common.
- Improving Lovers Walk.
- Improving roads and pavements around the Common. The pathways are often much wider than thought because much is buried under years of accumulated debris.
- A combination of these.

Pros: Roads around the Common, particularly The Avenue, are not great for cycling on safely therefore alternative routes become more important. Cycles are involved in 16% of reported accidents on Southampton roads despite only being 1.4% of the daily traffic.

Common paths could be lit, adapted and managed to be used in a sustainable and environmentally friendly way. Link to priority 26 in Common Plan.

This is a common in an urban environment as opposed to a common in a rural environment as such it serves different functions.

The impact of lighting can be mitigated through the latest wildlife friendly installed lighting and smart technologies, e.g. motion sensors, remote control and the spectrum of light emitted (see Bat Conservation Trust).

London's Quietways on routes away from high volume traffic have had an impact on cycling rates (e.g. 56% increase on the Quietway from Waterloo to Greenwich).

Cons: Highfield Lane has to be navigated on the East of the Avenue.

If Coronation Avenue was lit there could be an impact on wildlife however an evidence base would be needed. It could be seen as contrary to the concept of what a Common is the context of urbanisation. Resource implications. There are some very strong objections to any further lighting on the Common and to anything that encroaches on the semi-natural environment of the Common. The development of a fast cycling route by the Avenue has resource implications.

There is evidence from Holland that 'cycle routes remote from natural surveillance, such as those across parks, may not be used after dark once user levels have fallen, even if lighting is provided', Sustrans (2012)

There is an argument that on unlit paths the increasingly powerful bike and jogger lights that flash intermittently into the surrounding dark areas are potentially harmful

Issue of northern exit routes and bunching in transition zones such as onto the Avenue through the congested Burgess Road/Avenue crossroads.

Result:

1. The preferred choice is a fast cycling route by the Avenue.
2. To give cyclists and pedestrians' greater choice and differentiate between cyclists who want to go faster beside a main road in the dark, and cyclists who want to go faster in a traffic-free environment, Coronation Avenue could be lit. There are mixed views on this option.
3. More could be made of the other north-south lit roads beside the Common, better signage, cycle paths etc. These could include Hill Lane, Highfield Road and Welbeck Avenue. The permeability of the western side of the Highfield Campus to the Common indicated in the recent University Estate Framework may provide new opportunities but its nature has yet to be clarified.

6.4.2 OPTION 2: DECREASE THE NUMBER OF LIT MAIN PATHS EITHER IN SPACE, IN TIME OR INTENSITY OF LIGHT.

Introduction: by taking all lights away from the Common it returns to a former state. Lights are dimmed from 70% to 30% from midnight to 6 am on the Common.

Pro: supports ecology and wildlife. Supports concept of the Common as an open space in a city. Improvement in lighting technology.

Cons: the Common becomes inaccessible to certain groups of people. Unpopular as taking a resource away. Several survey respondents reported their safety fears in the dark and at dusk.

Result: The group felt that this could be considered at a later date, there are other priorities.

Please note that the three options from daylight safety on main paths are also relevant here (continued/increased vegetation clearance by main paths, minor infrastructure and signage and increase usage).

6.5 OTHER SAFETY CONCERNS

Other safety concerns are linked to conflicts with other users, crime and antisocial behaviours such as drug and alcohol abuse. We have not focused on these concerns in this report because main paths are central to this priority. The function of this report is to explore options and we thought it would be useful to share a case study where resource has been provided to improve safety. Our understanding of a preliminary analysis of crime data between October 2017 and November 2018 suggests that there were three reported crimes on the Common, two ASBs and one theft which is significantly lower than the surrounding neighbourhoods.

6.5.1 PROVIDE RESOURCE TO REDUCE CRIME AND ANTISOCIAL BEHAVIOURS

Hampstead Heath Constabulary is a civil enforcement agency with responsibility for public safety on Hampstead Heath, Highgate Wood and Queen's Park. Twelve attested constables are employed, four of whom are dog handlers. They are trained in advanced first aid and fire control. Established in 1994 they enforce the Engagement, Education and Enforcement Strategy Plan 2015-2018. Included are three performance targets linked to managing dogs (two patrols a day, 90% conviction rate for dog related offences, and education and outreach events) and three performance targets linked to cycling (two patrols a day to non-designated cycling hot spots, 90% conviction rate for all cycling related prosecutions and education and outreach events). The Heath attracts 7 million visits a year.

Pro: Visible presence of the constabulary and knowledge that they exist might be a deterrent. This is important to the UoS Student Union.

Con: City Council staff would need to have civil enforcement capability to enforce civil regulation (Bylaws, codes). Significant expense. Could make the situation worse. Danger of vigilantes.

Result:

Many would see this as desirable but the expense would be prohibitive. Could this be a voluntary function on the lines of neighbourhood watch? Could this be a small part of someone's role? Could this be crowd funded? Sponsored by a local business?

We have yet to consult with local Police and Community Safety Groups about safety on the main paths.

6.6 PRIORITY TWO SUMMARY

	Option	Comment
1.	Improve north-south green travel in the dark by identifying the most appropriate route or routes.	Some support from the working group but also mixed views.
2.	Decrease the number of lit main paths either in space, in time or intensity of light.	Not supported at this stage
3.	Continue / increase vegetation clearance schedule near main paths.	Supported.
4.	Improve signage and information particularly at entrances.	Supported.
5.	Promote increased usage as this improves feelings of safety as people feel safer when they see others.	Supported.

Please note that the Landscape and Toilet Group will also be considering some of the wider safety aspects.

7 FURTHER RESEARCH

There are several areas previously been mentioned that would benefit from further research.

1. Survey and count of fast cyclists to understand their motivation for using the main paths and possible alternatives.
2. Research into the impact of codes of conduct on shared use paths and in particular if combining users in one code of conduct works or whether a separate code for cyclists is more effective.
3. Find out if dedicated research into paths in parks exists as more research is linked to paths by roads and in urban areas.
4. Find out if there is research into the widening of paths and impact on cyclist speed. Is there an optimum width?
5. Identify best practice for environmentally friendly lighting and test it on the Common and understand more about the impact of lighting on antisocial behaviour.

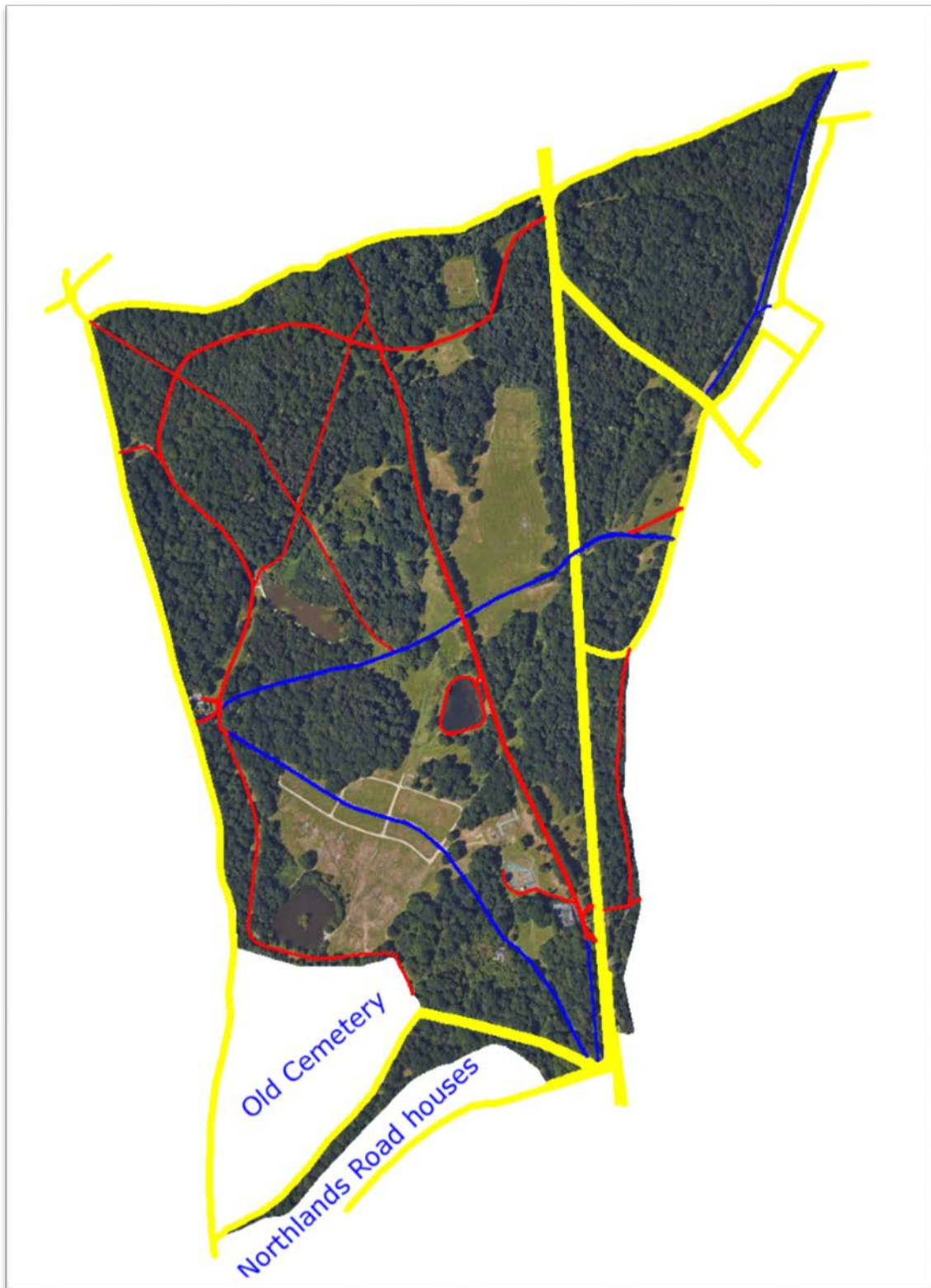


Figure 6: Schematic map of paths and roads on the Common; yellow are metaled roads, red are unlit paths and blue are lit paths.

8 CONCLUSION

Safety and green travel on the Common are two of the more contentious issues emerging from the user survey and Common Plan consultation process. Our task was to give potential options a good airing highlighting the pros and cons rather than provide detailed recommendations. As seen in the survey, Common users have strong views and solutions are unlikely to be easy nor straightforward. These are not to be found in increased control or regulation but in including all groups as equal shareholders in furthering their enjoyment and appreciation of the Common. We have sought to utilise users' detailed knowledge and advice by experts to progress our understanding of these complex areas.

We are aware of the limitations of the report in that further consultation, expert advice, research and data gathering may be required before 'key' decisions can be made.

That said, here are the key findings.

8.1 SHORT – MEDIUM TERM

- i. Work with MyJourney, and consulting with the Common's stakeholders and users, develop a code of conduct for pedestrians (including dog walkers) and cyclists to encourage all path users to behave and cooperate to share paths safely. The Code of Conduct should be part of a wider communications strategy for the Common.
- ii. Improve signage and minor infrastructure on the Common including effective no cycling path signage.
- iii. Ensure main paths continue to be free from intrusive vegetation.
- iv. Collect and collate data on cycle and pedestrian motivation and travel across the Common as well as related research.

8.2 MEDIUM – LONG TERM

- i. With users and stakeholders review north-south routes on or beside the Common for travel in darkness.
- ii. If the code of conduct initiative is not felt to be effective after a certain time period (a year?) and after further research, be prepared to explore options 3 (physical constraints at selected key pinch points) and 4 (limited path widening at selected key pinch points). We appreciate evidence would be required to make this decision and recommend that expert park and cyclist advice is sought to do this.

8.3 LONG TERM

- i. Develop a framework along the lines of the Royal Parks to assess potential future initiatives on the Common.

- Example: Southampton Parkrun. Please be considerate to the park and other park users all of the time. When running take care on uneven surfaces- whether on grass or tarmac. Watch out for cyclists, other runners, pedestrians, children, dogs, wildlife, park animals, vehicles, park maintenance work, falling branches, bollards, posts and other obstacles around the course. It is not permitted to run with a dog and pushchair at the same time (website).
- Example: Winchester CC. This is a shared use path. Please be courteous to other users. Cyclists: Use your bell and give way to pedestrians. Pedestrians: Do not take up the whole width of the path (sign),
- Example: Winchester CC: Image of a bike, an adult and a child. Shared path pedestrians have priority (sign) with SLOW written in large capital letters on the path.
- Example: Monterey Bay Coastal Trail Rules and Safety Guidelines. Cyclists reduce speed and call out when passing; Excessive speed and reckless trail use are prohibited, Be prepared to share the space, Be safe, Be courteous, Enjoy, Look (diagram of a bike and a person). Thank you for your cooperation (sign)
- Example: Cyclists Pieds a Terre. Priorite aux pietons. Tout accident incomber a la responsabilite du cycliste (sign)
- Example: Royal Parks London. 'Pedestrians have priority. Considerate cycling permitted. Be considerate. Be safe. Be seen and heard. Be polite.' There are an additional 4 points for cyclists on the sign.
- Example: Norwich. Images of a cyclist, a pedestrian and a large heart with the comment Share with Care (sign).
- Example: Canal and River Trust. Share the Space, Drop your Pace (campaign).
- Example: Ramblers. Scottish Outdoor Access Code. Respect the interests of other people. Care for the environment. Take responsibility for your own actions.
- Example: One Path' is a very recent initiative to promote positive behaviour on the Bristol and Bath Railway Path (August 2018) as alternative to physical change. This which focuses on people and behaviour with a key message of 'Share, Respect and Enjoy'. It is based on a 2016 pilot in Northern Ireland which engaged path users. With 4 million trips a year the Bristol-Bath Path is one of the busiest dedicated traffic free routes in the UK. A recent survey noted 5000 trips a day in the Whitehall section with 1000 people using it between 0800-0900. As congestion has risen there have been increasing levels of conflict, particularly between pedestrians and cyclists, and accidents. A consequence is that more vulnerable and less confident users are less likely use the path. A public meeting about this took place in December 2018 where the key focus was on engagement with users
- Example: Southampton City Council. Skateboards and skating in parks (selected) Respect other park users. Priority to pedestrians. Do not grind park benches, walls, monuments or other green space. You run the risk of prosecution for criminal damage (website).
- Following ten years of research and observation of cyclists and walkers, The Royal Parks (2016) have produced a 'Hierarchy of Needs' in planning to reinforce the order of priority as:- safe access for all users, vulnerable users, pedestrians/walkers, joggers/runners, horse riders, leisure cyclists, skaters and scooters, sports and commuter cyclists, cars and through traffic. They also have a framework to determine the development of shared paths in the parks.

EXAMPLES OF SHARED PATH SIGNAGE FROM THE UK AND INTERNATIONALLY.

See #sharethepath on Instagram and other social media.





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