



Reply to Chief Inspector Adrian Leisk, Head of Roads Policing, Devon & Cornwall Police  
From Exeter Cycling Campaign 14 December 2018

Dear Adrian

Thank you for your reply of 8 Nov 2018 to the Exeter Cycling Campaign's open letter from September. It was good to speak with you at the Exeter Close Pass Operation recently.

There are a number of observations and concerns that the Exeter Cycling Campaign continue to have. Allow us to lay them out here and invite you to consider and respond:

**Affecting a cultural change across the Force:**

As discussed at the Close Pass operation, the Force's officers will undoubtedly harbour the **car-centric attitudes** of the society from which they emerge. These attitudes are likely to be deeply ingrained and require training and constant reinforcement to overcome. A clear message **that intimidation of people who cycle is not to be tolerated will need dissemination throughout the Force** and not just to specialist officers.

We note you've been informed of an example from Plymouth of officers not taking intimidation of people cycling seriously. We suggest it's likely that had a car driver hit a Police officer cycling in this situation, the driver would have been charged. Although on this occasion, the cyclists seem to have escaped injury, we know of many other cases nationally where serious injuries have resulted from such behaviour. Even in the absence of serious injury, such cases contribute to the intimidating environment that causes many to give up cycling for everyday journeys.

**We invite you consider seriously how culture change can be achieved throughout Devon & Cornwall Police.** We would hope to see this messaging regularly included in team briefings and included in Officer induction training as the bare minimum for affecting this change within the Force.

**20 mph:**

We note the Force's stance that 20 mph limits should be self-enforcing by the road design and engineering used. Our call to the Constabulary though was that you would be more vocal in supporting other agencies' efforts to implement **20mph as an appropriate maximum speed** in urban areas.

It is not to be disputed that fewer people would be killed or seriously injured if drivers are travelling at or under 20mph rather than 30mph. Moreover that drivers would have more time to react to the movements of people walking, cycling and trying to cross the road. In urban areas this should become the default speed limit. **Offering your support for the lower limit would be one small but important step** to better, safer communities.

I'm sure you will be aware that Bristol has seen positive results after its adoption of 20mph (estimated total number of injuries avoided each year is 4.53 fatal, 11.3 serious, and 159.3 slight injuries, saving an estimated £15,256,309). In no other area of British



life do we think it reasonable to let those causing death and injury define the parameters that might constrain their behaviour.

#### **Words matter:**

**It is good to see the work that the No Excuses team are doing.** We would welcome the No Excuse team also using **social media more proactively** to engage with those who think it acceptable to advocate intimidation of people cycling. By this we do not mean D&CP merely putting out their own posts but also engaging with those who comment and reply on the posts of others. This offers a chance to engage with a hard core of road users who might not otherwise hear from the police. West Midlands police and Surrey police have set a good example in this area and we'd encourage you to review how they are using social media to challenge inappropriate attitudes and educate people.

#### **Road Safety Strategy:**

The Exeter Cycling Campaign **welcomes the commitments made in the [Road Safety Strategy](#) to identify cyclists as vulnerable road users**, to redesign your processes and policies around collision recording and to ensure the new strategy is reflected in your approach.

It was good to read that you wish to listen to Reference Groups and invite them to "influence police activity to ensure that the needs of vulnerable road users are better protected". Thank you. In that spirit, allow us to offer you some observations about this strategy:

We welcome that (p14) police contribution to the five pillars of safe systems includes "specialist contribution to the design of road and road features" and look forward to the **police being proactive in commenting on road designs** that do not reflect the expected speed limit. We hope that proactive engagement will emphasize the need to design roads in urban areas to not only provide safety and convenience of those driving but also those walking and cycling. We reflect that roads most recently completed in Exeter such as the TytheBarn Way do not 'feel' like 20-30mph zones and our most recent fatal collision involving a car and person cycling occurred on our newest road. **How are the police intending to ensure that their contributions are heard early in the road design process?**

We note that Strategic Objective 3.1.1 only intends to prevent killed and serious injury (KSI) collisions on our roads. In ignoring "minor injuries", the strategy downplays the impact that so-called minor injuries have on people cycling, affecting their confidence, instilling fear and deterring them from engaging in active transport. In defining the fatal five (at 6.10) it misses the fatal sixth ie death from inactivity related illnesses and pollution. The casualty figures here outstrip those immediately recognised within the KSI figures. A major contribution to these will be from fear on the roads and **we reiterate the need to also address the persistent low level intimidation experienced on our roads by people cycling.**

We note that paragraph 7.12 states that D&CP will include initiatives which promote respect between different road user groups. We are interested to hear what form these initiatives **will take, what evidence will underpin them and how they will avoid victim-blaming messaging**, ensuring those who pose the greatest danger are held to the highest standards of driving.



**We thank you for the recent Close Pass Initiative.** We would have welcomed greater publicity around this and on-going messaging to reinforce that any cyclist passed might be an undercover police officer.

On behalf of the Exeter Cycling Campaign can we invite you to consider these observations and concerns?

We thank you for your engagement with the Exeter Cycling Campaign. As a Campaign we continue to hear about many of the incidents involving people who cycle but which are never reported to the police. We know that groups representing people who cycle in Truro, Plymouth and Torbay are watching this dialogue closely.

We are committed to supporting you as you endeavour to turn the positive statements of intent from your strategy, a reality.

Exeter Cycling Campaign

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Reply received from Adrian Leisk on 8th November 2018 to original email:

I am writing in response to your open letter dated 11<sup>th</sup> September. Please accept my apologies for the delay in responding.

I fully recognise the challenges articulated in the letter, and can provide the following answers in response to the issues raised;

1. *To acknowledge that being prevented from cycling due to fear is a police matter.* Whilst the police have a primary responsibility for enforcement of road traffic offences, we work in partnership around Road Safety, predominantly with the Highway Authorities who have a statutory duty to promote road safety. As you will be more than aware, the safety of the cycling infrastructure, its design and fitness for purpose are all influencing factors in ensuring an uptake of cycling. In summary, I agree we have a significant role to play, but one that is a collective responsibility with other key stakeholders.
2. *Formally recognise that people walking & cycling are vulnerable in the context of both regular road use and if involved in motor vehicle collisions.* The new Devon and Cornwall Roads Policing Strategy formally identifies cyclists as vulnerable road users. We are in the process of redesigning our processes and policies around collision recording and will ensure the new strategy is reflected in our approach.
3. *Take a zero tolerance approach to aggression and intimidation directed at people cycling.* Our approach must always be based around the evidence provided. Where there is sufficient to prosecute offenders we will act proportionately. We are working to simplify the internal process routes into a team of trained and dedicated gatekeepers who will provide a consistent approach, using their experience as Police Led Prosecutors to review and determine outcomes. This will remove the current variance in approach and knowledge experienced at present.
4. *Lead on the culture change required within Devon & Cornwall Police to achieve these.* The Chief Constable and Police and Crime Commissioner have both sponsored the development of the new strategy, underpinned with investment in additional resource to deliver. Alison Hernandez is the national PCC lead for Road Safety and the ambition is to reposition Devon & Cornwall as a leader in terms of having the safest roads in England and Wales.



5. *Fully adopt and regularly deliver West Midlands Police's approach in proactively tackling poor driving around people cycling.* Alliance Roads Policing officers have met the team in Birmingham, witnessed a Close Pass operation in action and have delivered a number of operations in Exeter, Plymouth, Truro, Weymouth and Bournemouth. We will be conducting more in November, and using the uplift in staffing enabling more to occur on a regular basis to raise the profile of cyclist safety. We are in the process of recruiting a number of Road Casualty Reduction Officers and creating a Road Harm Reduction Team, mirroring the approach initiated in West Midlands. It is important to recognise that activity which works in a densely urban setting, does not always readily translate into a urban, rural and coastal environment with 13700 miles of road network.
6. *Offer full police support for 20mph as an appropriate maximum speed in urban areas.* The setting of speed limits is a matter for the relevant Highway Authorities. Where engineering accompanies a decision to lower a speed limit, and the evidence suggests that non-compliance is an issue, we will support it. What concerns me is the blanket lowering of speed limits with an unrealistic expectation created that these can be regularly enforced. There is a significant degree of design innovation by authorities all over Europe and we remain keen and engaged to work with our Highway Authorities to develop solutions which change road user behaviour. Given the length of our road network and our level of resource, we simply could not be on every street corner to ensure compliance.
7. *Ensure that all Officers and Police Staff who receive or attend reports of intimidation or collisions are trained in the National Standard for Cycling and understand the vulnerability and needs of a cyclist when they have been victimised, assaulted or been in collision with a motor vehicle.* As described earlier, our intention is to streamline reports into the organisation, ensuring the evidence is of sufficient quality into a smaller, better trained cohort who would benefit from additional investment around cyclist specific training. It would simply be impractical to train all frontline officers and staff, including call handlers to a sufficient standard.

We are committed to ensuring that Reference Groups are listened to and feel that they can influence police activity to ensure that the needs of vulnerable road users are better protected. We also need to develop new relationships with Health colleagues around road safety to improve confidence in cyclists and deliver the benefits of healthy lifestyle and activities. There is much to be done in this area, but I am sure that you will agree that the new Roads Policing Strategy is a clear statement of intent. Please can I thank you and the members of the Exeter Cycling Campaign for raising your concerns, coupled with a clear willingness to engage.

Yours sincerely

Adrian Leisk

**Chief Inspector Adrian Leisk - Head of Roads Policing**

Alliance Operations Department, Middlemoor, Exeter EX2 7HQ

Strategic Alliance

Devon & Cornwall Police and Dorset Police

Working together to serve the public

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Original email sent jointly to Chief Constable Shaun Sawyer and Police & Crime Commissioner Alison Hernandez from the Campaign 11 September 2018



The Exeter Cycling Campaign has been encouraged to hear that plans are to be put in place for Devon and Cornwall Police to collect and process video evidence, and additional traffic officers for the area. We've seen how similar actions have reduced dangerous close passes by up to 50% in other areas of the UK,

The Exeter Cycling Campaign is a group of over 600 Exeter citizens committed to enabling safe cycling for people of all ages and abilities, so children can cycle to school and adults cycle for their normal daily activities.

Whilst we support your actions to improve the way your Force processes third party video evidence we are greatly concerned about a number of other areas and wish to highlight these for your attention. The Campaign has heard from numerous people cycling that there is a growing level of intimidation and driving that is below the level that should be expected on our roads. Many collisions have occurred this summer to experienced riders, including several National Standard cycling instructors, despite taking all appropriate precautions to address their own safety on the roads.

Furthermore, we are concerned with the way Devon and Cornwall Police are currently inadequately and inconsistently addressing the near misses, intimidation and collisions suffered by people cycling.

These concerns include:

- A lack of understanding and support from Officers for vulnerable road users.
- Inadequate and inconsistent communications, recording, and follow up, resulting in victims feeling abandoned by the police.
- We understand reports that should have been filed by the investigating officer are not reaching the Collisions Unit. The Collisions Unit appears not to have a facility to identify that these have not been received.
- We learn that police officers are using phraseology that lays blame on the victims:
  - "But it is hard to spot cyclists"
  - "The driver said you were speeding" (12mph in a 30mph zone)
  - "Well, you can replace the bike"
- Officers appear to be unaware of National Cycling Standards, for example, in regards to best practice for safe road positioning.
- There appears to be a lack of will to follow through and prosecute incidents to ensure that drivers face appropriate sanctions for their actions on the road.



- Driver awareness courses are reported to pay scant regard to the need for extra attention needed around vulnerable road users and the appropriate amount of space to afford them on the road. Furthermore, these courses are reported as not insisting on positive engagement from participants and there is no possibility of failing the course if an incorrect attitude is demonstrated.
- Citizens are unable to carry out their lawful right to cycle on the roads because of the intimidating behaviour of drivers.
- Speed limits in the centre of Exeter are not policed effectively. We know that nationally 80% of drivers speed in 20mph zones and this is likely to be the case in Exeter.

These factors together suggest officers have not been trained to overcome the car-centric view of the roads held by wider society and to appreciate the vulnerability of people cycling on the road network. These institutionally car-ist attitudes need addressing with the same system-wide effort and leadership that police forces have given in the past to correct their approach to racism and sexual abuse.

In the light of these observations we call for Devon & Cornwall Police to urgently consider and address these areas that we have raised with both the Chief Constable and Police and Crime Commissioner on previous occasions. Namely that:

1. To acknowledge that being prevented from cycling due to fear is a police matter.
2. Formally recognise that people walking & cycling are vulnerable in the context of both regular road use and if involved in motor vehicle collisions.
3. Take a zero tolerance approach to aggression and intimidation directed at people cycling.
4. Lead on the culture change required within Devon & Cornwall Police to achieve these.
5. Fully adopt West Midlands Police's approach in proactively tackling poor driving around people cycling.
6. Offer full police support for 20mph as an appropriate maximum speed in urban areas.
7. Ensure that all Officers and Police Staff who receive or attend reports of intimidation or collisions are trained in the National Standard and understand the vulnerability and needs of a cyclist when they have been victimised, assaulted or been in collision with a motor vehicle.



8. Adapt Devon & Cornwall Police's road traffic collision processes, FAQ, information leaflets and fees to meet the needs of people cycling involved in an incident.
9. Provide local police officers with cycles for patrolling their area.

The Exeter Cycling Campaign is committed to engaging positively with the Councils and police and we would welcome the opportunity to discuss this with you further.

Yours sincerely,

Biddy Walton	Exeter Cycling Campaign steering group
Caspar Hughes	Exeter Cycling Campaign steering group
Graham Heysett	Exeter Cycling Campaign steering group, qualified Bikeability Instructor, Sustrans Ranger and recent victim of a road collision
Dave Godwin	Ride-On Qualified Bikeability Instructor and recent victim of a road collision
Mark Hodgson	Co-Cars & Co-Bikes Electric Director and recent victim of a road collision
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