

DEFENDING CYCLISTS

Cycling UK's Cyclists' Defence Fund helps fight significant legal cases involving cyclists and cycling, especially those which could set important precedents for the future and could affect the safety of all cyclists. It is supported by clubs, members and individuals who have all made contributions to help ensure that Cycling UK is ready to work on behalf of the wider cycling community when it's really needed. You can donate now at: cyclinguk.org/cdf



Natural England and the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) regarding the proposed CtC national trail. In August, DEFRA announced that the CtC route was to become a national trail, but despite being legally obliged to consider our activities when devising new national trails, they forgot about us. Nobody bothered to consult with cycling or horse riding organisations to see if there was a way to make it a multi-user route.

They had tunnel vision, ignoring the suggestions in a separate report prepared by Yorkshire Dales National Park on realising the wider benefits from designating this route as a national trail. That report identified how the trail could be a multi-user route. It set out proposed detours for cyclists and horse riders from the walked path – effectively, a 'braided' route.

“ IT COULD BE A MULTI-USER ROUTE WITH DETOURS FOR CYCLISTS AND HORSE RIDERS ”



Our North Downs Way Riders' Route shows how it can be done

The report also suggested the cost would be around half a million pounds – less than 10% of the £5.6million budget for a walking-only trail. We know that where national trails are promoted for cycling as well, around 25% of the users are on bikes, which can bring millions into the local economy each year. It's madness for a government that claims to be focused on growth not to spend half a million to realise those benefits.

COURT ACTION

Fortunately, because of the support of our members, Cycling UK can seek to challenge decision makers, including governments, when the actions they take are detrimental to cycling. Sometimes we do that by quiet lobbying. Sometimes we have to run our campaigning parallel with the threat or actuality of legal action, as we did last year when successfully taking West Sussex County Council to court after they unlawfully removed a cycle lane in Shoreham.

The time limit for any legal challenge through the judicial review process is incredibly tight, however, so in relation to DEFRA's decision on the CtC national trail, we've had to join forces with BHS and immediately spring into action. Ahead of any

legal action, we've sent a formal letter to DEFRA and Natural England, calling on the government to reconsider proposals that would effectively prevent people cycling or horse riding along the length of England's next national trail.

As I write this, we're still waiting to hear back from the government. Will they reconsider, engage with BHS and Cycling UK, explore opportunities to make the CtC route multi-user, and commit to consulting with us on national trail proposals in the future? Or will we have to go to court?

By the time this goes to press, we should have an update. However, there are not many charities which are prepared to take on the government in court, and fewer still that can afford to. Litigation is an expensive and uncertain business, and we're only able to contemplate this because Cycling UK has the Cyclists' Defence Fund (CDF), which is there to fight significant legal cases involving cyclists and cycling, especially those which could set

important precedents for the future. The CDF is funded entirely through donations from members and supporters. If you want to help us continue fighting for cycling and cyclists, please consider donating today at cyclinguk.org/cdf.

