

# Wylam Parish Council

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26<sup>th</sup> September 2019

Councillor P Jackson  
Leader, Northumberland County Council  
County Hall  
Morpeth  
Northumberland  
NE61 2EF

Dear Councillor Jackson,

## Cycling on Wylam Bridge Footpath

Wylam Parish Council have asked me to write to you to express our concern about the actions of Northumberland County Council (NCC) in relation to signage used to discourage cyclists from using the single pavement on the road bridge crossing the Tyne in Wylam. Anything you can do to address our concerns would be appreciated.

A summary of the issue:

- Wylam is one of a limited number of bridging points along the Tyne Valley. The Tyne Riverside Country Park is right on our doorstep and national cycle route 72 passes through the middle of the village on the north side of the river. On the south side, the path/track heading west along the river from the Gateshead conurbation terminates at Wylam with the river bridge the only way cyclists can link onto other routes in the area.
- As a consequence, Wylam hosts a large volume of cyclists. Most behave well, but some do not. This is contentious issue in the village. A number of residents, especially - but not exclusively - the elderly are too scared to use certain routes in the village and the surrounding countryside. There have been a number of incidents of cyclists not respecting other users, up to and including physical assault. Recently, a 73 year old man was punched in the face by a cyclist who asserted that the "Waggonway" was exclusively for the use of cyclists.
- The road bridge across the river is one of the pinch points. As you may know, the railway station in Wylam is on the south side of the river, away from the main village centre. The road bridge is the only way for the vast majority of residents to access the station. The bridge has a single, relatively narrow pavement. Cyclists frequently use this causing a significant hazard to pedestrians. At some time in the past, a "Cyclists Dismount" sign was installed at each end of the pavement. This did not eliminate the problem, but did at least



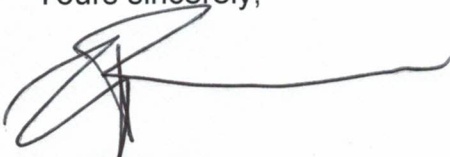
provide a prompt to cyclists not to cycle on the pavement and was a useful reference point when cyclists asserted their right to do so (our experience is that cyclists can be entirely ignorant of the law in this respect).

- NCC decided to renew the road marking on and around the bridge. At the same time, they decided to remove the "Cyclists Dismount" signs, despite our pleas otherwise. They indicated that they did not think such signs were appropriate (as they did not think cyclists should use the pavement at all), but gave us a clear assurance that alternative signs or road markings would be included in the works that would clearly direct cyclists not to use the pavement.
- This promise was not fulfilled. If anything, the new road markings made matters worse by appearing to indicate cyclists should use the pavement. We complained. Time passed. The number of complaints from residents about cyclists' behaviour on the bridge increased, including from distressed elderly residents and people with mobility impairments. We continued to press NCC to deliver on their promised solution.
- Eventually, NCC decided, unilaterally, to conduct a video survey to see if road markings or signage were appropriate. Our reaction was one of disbelief. NCC had themselves removed the original signs, had promised suitable replacements and were aware of the increasing concerns of residents following the signs removal. Why were NCC wasting time and money on a video survey when solving the problem would be cheaper and quicker?
- We received the results of the survey. We understand that NCC analysed one five-hour period and one two-hour period, but we were only provided with full details of one of these. In the five-hour period, 186 cyclists crossed the river bridge – a shocking (but, to us, unsurprising) 34% of these using the pavement rather than the road. In other words, a cyclist crossed the bridge using the pavement every 4.7 minutes.
- NCC curtly concluded that, as a result of the survey, "no further action was planned". No proper explanation was provided, nor were we given any opportunity to discuss this conclusion or present an alternative perspective.

We feel shocked by this decision, let down that NCC have reneged on earlier promises and insulted by the high-handed approach taken by officers towards us and our residents. Our assurances to residents that we are pursuing the matter are beginning to wear thin.

We would be grateful for your comments and for any assistance you can provide in helping us reach a satisfactory solution.

Yours sincerely,



Jos Joures  
Chairman, Wylam Parish Council

