

Cycle Seahaven



A27 East of Lewes improvement scheme

Cycle Seahaven consultation response

8th December 2016

Dear sirs,

Firstly, many thanks for hosting your excellent consultation days at various points along the A27 that were staffed by enthusiastic and informative people. We learned a lot from our face-to-face discussions, particularly the requirements of other types of users (equestrian, pedestrian, motorised). We found the online consultation pages a little difficult to navigate - the maps were split awkwardly – but the brochure downloads were a lot easier to follow, and the large format displays at the consultations were very good indeed.

Cycle Seahaven are a club for beginner and intermediate riders, accepting all ages and abilities for road and off-road cycling since 2009. We have 246 members so far this year, mainly from South of the A27. We have a high turnover of membership, as many of our riders quickly go on from nervous beginners to independent cyclists, though many of them stay as 'ride leaders' to assist the latest influx of new members. We are highly successful in promoting cycling - our favoured form of active travel - we are on target to run 500 (Five Hundred) club and family rides in 2016, with between 6 and 25 riders on each - a figure I'm sure you will agree is phenomenally large. You can view our calendar online at <http://cycleseahaven.org.uk/calendar/>

We are very glad of the opportunity to comment on these exciting plans to improve our local section of the A27, and we appreciate the care that has been taken at the early stages in the draft proposals:-

Cycle Seahaven very much approve of the cycle lanes included at many places on and around the A27. But, we feel the cycle provision appears to favour only cyclists going along the A27, rather than assist when crossing. The proposed crossing points are mostly fine for experienced riders during low traffic volumes, but if you want to make use of the pedestrian/cycle paths while crossing this busy main road with kids, with the less able, with cycle trailers, or part of a larger organised ride, the proposals do little to help.

For example:

- * All the crossings state 'Pedestrian Crossing', rather than pedestrian/cycle crossing
- * Turning right by bicycle onto the A27 is expected to be done by road, rather than on the shared path. This is evident by the lack of crossings along the minor roads to get onto the walking/cycle paths on the other side of the minor road.
- * Cycle routes are cut short where one exists on the other side of the road at junctions. On minor roads short sections of cycle path are required as waiting zones (refuges) when crossing over onto the shared paths, or to facilitate quicker and safer crossings.

Here is a photo of one of the layouts, annotated with an example:

http://cycleseahaven.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/CommonLaneBoopeepLane_1.jpg

Many of our club rides make use of the extensive network of bridleways we have around this part of the A27, and we often need to cross this main road to continue to the villages, roads and bridleways on the other side. There are some particular crossings where we would like to see such cycling provision: Firle; Middle farm; Selmeston; Drusillas; Wilmington. At Middle Farm, Selmeston and particularly Wilmington, there is no facility for crossing, so access is severely restricted for novice or less able pedestrians, cyclists and mobility scooters. The crossings at Firle and Drusillas are more acceptable having a central reservation and, in the case of Drusillas, a lights controlled crossing. But, the higher speeds and increased traffic volume will make these crossing more hazardous, thus reducing their use, even where there are centre refuges. We would like to see better provision for active travel at all these junctions, thereby vastly improving the cost benefit ratio for the cycle provision along the A27.

Ideally we would like to see controlled crossings at more junctions, not just at Drusillas. If Highways England are worried about slowing down traffic then surely it highlights the fact that there's too much traffic to cross safely, and it's a real problem to be resolved for those wanting to cross the physical barrier that is the A27. One of HE's aims is to reduce the isolation (recognised by HE in their consultation documents) caused by the A27 barrier, but this isolation happens at all hours. If people need to cross then they be able to do so when they need to, and not wait until traffic volume dies down.

Cycle Seahaven would also like to see better provision for cyclists to get to these new cycle lanes on the A27. For example, along the road between Alfriston and Berwick - part of National Cycle Route 2 & Avenue Verte, with links the zoo park, Berwick rail station, Alfriston and many other smaller villages on both sides. Another ideal cycle link would be alongside the A26, from our international seaport of Newhaven (a regeneration town) and onto the A27 cycle ways, our county town of Lewes, and the rest of the cycle network. These are likely outside the scope of the A27 proposals, but if they were included (or considered now so that future development can happen) then access to the A27 would be greatly enhanced. We therefore need to ensure that the current proposals for infrastructure also caters for subsequent improvements, so non-motorised traffic can reach this main 'spinal' route from our local villages and towns and the wider context.

Latent demand is further bolstered by the latest cycle technology. The huge (and growing) take up of eBikes means that longer distance cycling for both leisure and commuting is now a reality for everyone, including those with disabilities, recovering from surgery, or looking to cycle further or commute. We have many members who ride eBikes, including a ride leader in his 80's, and there is strong demand for rides out to places the other side of the barrier that is the A27. Our website has testimonials from a few of our members who wrote about the benefits of electrically assisted bikes <http://cycloseahaven.org.uk/ebike1/>, and they are a revelation for all ages and abilities. eBikes are not a 'free ride'. They still require the user to pedal, raise their heart rate, and over time improve their fitness. We have one retired member who uses his ebike to ride all day while keeping his heart rate below 70% of maximum, as recommended by his doctor, while still getting many hours of a high quality cardio workout. The following report from the cycle industry shows that lack of infrastructure is holding back this revolutionary form of accessible transport, as well as explaining what 'pedelecs' are really about:

<http://www.emexlondon.com/uk-electric-bike-sales-double-in-2015-but-has-2016-seen-the-same-growth/>

We are dismayed to see a benefit to cost ratio of only 0.9. Cycle provision on and around the A27 is disjointed and incomplete. Perhaps your low CBR figures a reflection of the overall lack of coherent cycle provision on the A27, which in turn deters active travel? Cycle Seahaven provide support, guidance and expertise to cyclists; informal surveys of our members reveal that lack of safe routes is

the remaining barrier to cycling. If we had end-to-end cycle tracks on the A27 then take up cycling would be far greater. Nor may the low Cost/Benefit ratio count for the government targets for more active travel and the related benefits: improved mental and physical health and wellbeing (thus a huge reduction in NHS costs for type2 diabetes, coronary heart disease, mental health problems, obesity); improved air quality through lower emissions; reduced congestion; connecting communities by removing barriers and providing safe access. Cycle Seahaven would lead more rides to neighbouring villages if the infrastructure were in place to support it. Our estimates are that, in the first year, we would double our uptake on such rides if segregated cycle lanes were in place. The latest government advice is to strongly support active travel. This government report highlights the costs of motor transport and the huge cost benefits for active travel, as well as reflecting on the same barriers to cycling found by ourselves:

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/523460/Working_Together_to_Promote_Active_Travel_A_briefing_for_local_authorities.pdf

We feel that HE's CBR ratio does not take into account the above factors and the huge latent demand we see from people put off by safety concerns and poor total-journey provision, which would be rectified by our proposals above.

We know that the correct A27 cycle infrastructure will provide the backbone of a coherent cycle network for the South East, connecting not only the towns and villages it passes through, but also providing a spine to which the rest of a future network can grow to and from nearby communities - especially those that can be reached quickly and safely by bicycle.

Cycle Seahaven hopes you find these comments helpful. As a club with excellent links to local authorities and a proven track record of helping to deliver cycle infrastructure, we would be happy to be contacted to further discuss this and other proposals.

Cycle Seahaven
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