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Dear Mr Coaker

Cycling on Footways and Funding Horizon

Your letter of 20 October to the Council's Chief Executive was reported to our Partnership at its meeting of 4 November, and Members of the Partnership were pleased to hear of your promotion, especially in view of your visit to Stockton in your former role.

In your penultimate paragraph you look forward to hearing from us about how government can work with us. One issue which has come to the fore locally in recent weeks is that of cycling on footways and pedestrianised areas, including Stockton Town Centre. Two petitions on this issue have been organised, the first of which was presented at the Chief Constable's recent 'Tier One' meeting in Stockton, and was supported by over 1,000 signatories.

The Partnership has discussed the issue and agreed that it is not straightforward: there have been a small number of well-publicised cases of reckless cycling on the footways, resulting in pedestrians sustaining injuries, but a 'zero tolerance' approach would be inappropriate, given that some cyclists using the footway are careful and considerate of pedestrians, and do so in order to avoid the risk of motorised vehicles. In at least one case a cyclist was asked to dismount by a police officer and it transpired that the gentleman concerned was able to walk only with difficulty.

The Partnership therefore recognises that the continuing use of discretion by police officers is of paramount importance in relation to this issue. The Partnership also identified a way in which our response could be improved by extending the 'nuisance vehicle' provision under Section 59 of the Police Reform Act 2002 to cover pedal cycles,

This option would effectively extend the 'toolbox' and would be of value to all local authorities in grappling with this issue.

I should be grateful if you would let me know whether you see any prospect of progress on this point, so that I may report back to the Partnership.

A second issue relates to future funding. At present we are unable to get any confirmation on whether or not the BCU Fund will still be available in 2009/10. We are aware of the proposal in the Policing Green Paper, to which we have responded, to put the BCU Fund at the disposal of CPRs, but they will not be in place for 2009/10. You will probably recall that the National Audit Office recommended recently that Home Office move to three-year funding profiles in order to offset the well known problems associated with short term funding. Any clarification you can provide on this issue would also be appreciated.

Yours sincerely

Mike Batty
Head of Community Protection / Secretary to the Partnership

PS Since drafting this letter, the Council's Housing and Community Safety Select Committee has also been asked to be advised of developments in relation to the cycling issue.

V. Coaker MP
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