

Wiggle New Forest 100 Mass Cycle Event 16 & 17 September 2017

A report by Sway Planning and Transport Committee – Final (4th Oct).

This report prepared by Cllr Hugh Marchant with additional input from other councillors, was approved by Sway Parish Council Planning and Transport Committee at the meeting of the full Sway Parish Council on 28th September 2017.

On Saturday 16th September, Cllr Marchant drove 26 miles back along the route from Sway to the Wiggle start at the Somerley Estate which is outside the New Forest to the west near Ellingham. Once there, he waited until all participants had left. That same day Cllr Tarling walked the complete section of the route through Sway Civil Parish whilst all but the last riders few went through.

On Sunday, Cllr Marchant parked close to the junction of Mead End Road and Brighton Road, left his dashcam running and walked to Tiptoe and back experiencing the event at close quarters (sometimes rather too close!). The riders encountered were all friendly and well intentioned, but appeared generally unaware of their impact on other road users.

Other Councillors will have seen parts of the ride on one or both days, mostly within Sway Civil Parish.

Overall recommendations for any review of New Forest Charter

Changes in the law would be needed to regulate mass cycle events held on the public highways. In the meantime we can only rely on the goodwill of organisers following the New Forest Cycle Events Organisers' Charter. This Charter needs to be revised in the light of experience since its inception and should include the following:

1. Maximum size of event 500 cyclists per day with minimal marshalling.
2. For over 500 riders, marshals must be at all significant/major junctions and pinch points.
3. Events of over 1,000 riders are not recommended, but if held then appropriate traffic controls must be implemented at major junctions to limit traffic speeds to below 30mph.
4. Regardless of the size of the event, cyclists should not travel in groups of more than 5 riders.
5. All participants must clearly display their number at both front and rear.

Numbers of riders each day for this event

The three Wiggle routes shared the same course from Somerley Estate to the end of Avon Causeway. At that point, the short route turned North while the Standard and Epic routes turned South to eventually come through Sway. On Saturday Cllr Marchant arrived at this route split point before the short route riders were scheduled to start hence should have seen the entire field by the time finally leaving Somerley. He is unable to state precisely how many riders came through Sway as, between the Avon Causeway and Somerley he would have encountered riders who were following all 3 routes. On Sunday he did not drive as far as Avon Causeway and hence saw none of the short route riders. While this enabled him to take an accurate count of the number who came through Sway on the Standard and Epic routes, he can only estimate the overall total using UKCE's initial event plan sent in July which stated:

Estimated Riding Numbers • Epic Route: 700 • Standard: 600 • Short: 500

The count of those on the Epic and Standard routes through Sway on Sunday is very close to their 1,300 figure hence it is not unreasonable to assume there would have been around 500 short route riders, giving a total count of 1,800 for the whole event on Sunday. The estimate for those coming through Sway on Saturday is similarly based on their figures on a pro rata basis:

Numbers of riders:	Through Sway	Overall
Saturday 16 th Sept	1500 (approx.)	2139
Sunday 17 th Sept	1324	1800 (approx.)
Total for both days	<u>2824</u> (approx.)	<u>3939</u> (approx.)

(The Bashley Village Hall website estimated that numbers would be 1800 and 1500 respectively and hence also the numbers through Sway).

Summary of this Wiggle event:

Positive points:

- Wooden stakes again used for signage out on the forest and all signage removed afterwards (at least between Wootton and Sway).
- Approximately 80% of riders displayed rear numbers on Saturday (confirmed at two points on the route).
- Most riders friendly and generally well intentioned

Negative points:

- Very disappointed that the numbers of cyclists were again way beyond the limits specified in the New Forest Cycle Events Organisers' Charter. It is also deeply worrying that yet again the total number of riders UKCE permitted to participate on Saturday far exceeded numbers documented in their event plan.
- Still an appalling lack of marshals. Extra marshals are essential for the safety of riders and other road users. Please let's not wait until someone is killed or seriously injured before getting this issue properly addressed.
- Several large groups of up to 15 or more riders. Even in Sway which was 26 miles from the start groups of 12-14 were noted.
- Some cyclists appeared to deliberately block cars from being able to overtake, and in some cases forced oncoming vehicles to take avoiding action through failing to stay to their side of the road.
- On Saturday, 20% of riders were not clearly displaying rear numbers. These were either hidden (under rucksacks, clothing or simply folded over), poorly written and too faint to decipher, or often completely missing. This includes at least 3 riders in the final group to leave Somerley who could well have been members of the UKCE organisation itself. (numbers 4460, 4461 and 4462). On Sunday, none of the riders displayed rear numbers.
- Too many cyclists did not take sufficient care around vulnerable road users. Some serious issues have come to light through emails and comments on Social Media.
- A number of cyclists were seen urinating by the side of the road in full view. This is totally unacceptable and possibly illegal.

Questions for UK cycling events:

1. A large group of 15 riders kindly stopped to give way at a pinch point on Pound Lane Burley on Saturday at 09:18, but as Cllr Marchant passed, he noticed one rider lying on the ground just behind them. What was the story here?
2. Why do UKCE not provide all marshals with rubbish sacks for cyclists to deposit rubbish such as their empty energy gel packs?
3. when invited to our Parish Council meeting, UK Cycling stated, after being asked whether local charities had benefitted, that they had made a payment of £60,000 to charity. Can UKCE confirm that this was made out of UK Cycling's profits and not via other means, e.g. collections/riders contributions.
4. What are the results of UKCE's "trial" of rear numbers on cyclists?

Marshalling

On Saturday, just 10 marshals were counted along 26 miles of the route. These included those at the Bashley Village Hall Feed Stop and at the exit from Somerley Estate:

1. Sway Mead End Rd / Brighton Rd junction
2. Bashley Roundabout
3. Bashley Village Hall Feed Station
4. Rising Sun Wootton
5. Burley Cross
6. End of Avon Causeway
7. Hurn Junction
8. A31 Interchange
9. End of Rd from Somerley Estate
10. Entrance to/exit from Somerley Estate

At previous UKCE run events, marshals were noted at most of these same locations. One extra marshal was provided by UKCE at our request at the junction of Mead End Road and Brighton Road. Having reviewed nearly 3 hours of dashcam footage showing about 1,150 cyclists emerging from this junction; without this marshal there might have been several incidents or at best a number of very near misses. Even with the marshal there, a large number of cyclists were clearly not looking both ways before coming out of this blind turning onto Brighton Road, and many were taking such a wide arc it would have put them into the path of any traffic coming down Brighton Road. If the marshal had not been there, they would have been coming out much faster and hence wider.

Other places needing a marshal in the Tiptoe/Sway area were:

Junction of Wootton Road and the B3055. A very dangerous and busy junction with a lot of traffic coming out of Wootton Road to go down Vaggs Lane, or turning right to New Milton or left towards Sway. This mass cycling event was turning left into Wootton Road off the B3055. Imagine what might happen if another cyclist happened to be caught up amongst the event participants but then did not actually turn left. How is any driver coming out of Wootton Road to know that one amongst the group is going to go straight on? This is really more a case of needing proper traffic control rather than a marshal. However if there were at least a marshal slowing down participants prior to the junction, then maybe the dangers could be minimised.

Junction of Middle Road Tiptoe and Wootton Road. Here 3 cyclists (3001, 4495,

3938) were observed missing the turning into Middle Road. Judging from the time it took for two of them to return, one would guess some may have only realised their mistake on arriving at the Rising Sun at Wootton – a place they would have recognised from just half an hour earlier!

In April, issues were raised about inadequate marshalling and UK Cycling Events referred to “*employing an approved marshal company*”. However on talking with two marshals this time, it appears that they are either unpaid volunteers who get a free ride in exchange, or paid employees of UKCE. So UKCE must be fully responsible for all marshalling decisions. There is therefore no good reason for their failing to provide sufficient marshals for their events. So, with this in mind, further recommended future marshalling points include:

1. All junctions where cyclists turn into a more minor road. During a mass cycle event, motorists coming out of the minor road will naturally assume the entire group of cyclists will take the turn. This makes it extremely dangerous for any other cyclists who get caught up in the event.
2. All junctions where cyclists come out into or cross over a major road.
3. All pinch points, particularly those along downhill sections.
4. All downhill sections where the road is narrow and there is a steep bend in the road.

Impact of Mass Cycling Events on Vulnerable Road Users

The problems experienced by motorists have been fairly well documented. Getting stuck behind endless groups of slowly moving cyclists can become highly frustrating and often results in drivers making poor decisions and potentially dangerous manoeuvres. This in turn makes it perilous for those cyclists and for other road users in the vicinity especially those who are traveling in the opposite direction. Cllr Marchant had to make an emergency stop on Saturday on encountering such a motorist overtaking a group of just 3 cyclists far too close to a bend in the road. What is perhaps less appreciated is the impact that these events have on those more vulnerable road users such as walkers and horse riders. For instance the photo below from Cllr Tarling shows an awkward situation on Saturday on Mead End Road: as you can see there are two horse riders going away from the camera, and one coming towards the camera. As this photo was taken a group of some twenty riders came up behind the two horseriders (and as you can see some did not have clearly visible rear numbers) at the same time as a short queue of traffic built up coming behind the single horse rider. Cllr Tarling was on foot at the side of this narrow road.



The following observations are based on experiences while Cllr Marchant was walking on Sunday, along with comments received from others.

Cyclists en masse do not slow sufficiently when passing horses or walkers in the road. Our narrow lanes have no footpaths. Car drivers in our area are generally well versed in the safest way to pass, but although many cyclists may take a wider berth, few actually slow down sufficiently. Horses in particular are unpredictable and may be spooked. Walkers may trip or stumble. On Sunday, 2 horse riders plus another leading a pony were put in danger through cyclists totally ignoring appeals to slow down or stop so that they could get their animals under control. It seems that too many participants of this sort of event treat it as a race and are very reluctant to stop or even slow down. **Cyclists must always assume that something untoward might happen and slow down and take a wide berth, or even stop if requested or appropriate.**

Cyclists often approach with bright flashing lights. This is likely to spook some horses. We fully understand the safety benefits of these lights, but those cyclists should attempt to shade their lights in the presence of horses or other animals. If this is not possible, **they must take even greater care when approaching unpredictable animals.**

When in groups of more than about 5, the lead cyclists may observe a hazard ahead and take appropriate action, but those towards the rear of their group may not be in a position to see the hazard and consequently are less able to take appropriate action. This may well explain the incident observed on Saturday at a pinch point in Burley (see questions for UKCE on page 3). For this and many other reasons, **cyclists should not travel in groups of more than about 5.**

When approaching someone walking in the road, the cyclists seemed more prone to go slower and take a wider berth if that person is facing them. A psychologist may be able to explain this phenomenon. It could be that making eye contact encourages better behaviour, or it may be that the cyclists are more aware when they could be identified by their number – Cllr Marchant was walking on Sunday when none of the cyclists wore numbers on their backs.

By contrast, those motorists encountered showed far more consideration as Cllr Marchant walked along the route. In addition, he was much more likely to be able to find safe refuge from those relatively few motor vehicles than he could from the much higher numbers of cyclists participating in this event.

So in summary, to be vulnerable user friendly, cyclists must slow down and take a wider berth, travel in groups of 5 or fewer and always be prepared to stop. They must also be mindful of the effects of bright flashing headlights on unpredictable animals. **All road users must be constantly aware of the need to share the roads safely and to treat all other road users as they themselves wish to be treated.**

A very useful guide from a cycling website on how to ride on rural lanes can be seen at <https://www.britishcycling.org.uk/knowledge/skills/article/izn20150106-Horses-on-the-road-0>

Organisers must ensure that all the cyclists display their numbers so that they can be easily identified from both front and rear. Other road users cannot be expected to memorise every number of every cyclist coming towards them just in case one of

those cyclists may be about to do something stupid. We can only hope to be able to take note of a number after we have identified there has been a problem. This is a very important issue. **Numbers MUST be clearly displayed at both front and rear.**

Feedback from others.

The following are extracts of emails received plus one social media post regarding this event. All have given permission to reproduce text and photos. In the interests of balance we should point out that there have also been other comments posted on social media indicating people had no issues with the event and/or that they thought everyone should simply stay away from roads affected during such events.

Hello i was passed this link for reporting some problems i had at the weekend with some of the cyclists on saturdays event. I keep my horse in bransgore on braggers lane and while driving up this hill i passed 3 males (separately) urinating on the verge right at the side of the road. This whole (single track) lane is surrounded by a wide grass verge, hedgerows and fields both sides all along it yet rather than pop behind the hedge each one chose to stand on the edge of the road and just stand there to urinate, with all on display. I had my 2 young daughters in the car so did not stop/slow to get their numbers as I didn't think at the time, even if i had thought to, I would rather not have slowed more for them to see more than they already had! I only wish i had a dashcam as i would have reported them to the police for indecent exposure.

My husband is a keen cyclist and normally i am of the opinion that we can all share the forest and enjoy it, but it seems each time there is one of these races i get more annoyed by it. Often while riding my horse, large groups whizz past at such speed and so close, if only they understood that if my horse spooks and jumps sideways in front of them they would come off a lot worse! Though we are insured for any 3rd party accidents as we use the road, I expect most cyclists are not. Also i see so many throwing litter, particularly the little energy shot wrappers.

The other gripe i have is that I always thank drivers for slowing/passing wise or nod and smile while i ride, and i wish cyclists could occasionally show the same courtesy, often they cause long tailbacks which is fine, but when a car does wait for them (often as they are in a huge group (often several abreast) a thank you would probably help others be more considerate of them and go a long way.

I also think if that were me and 20 other horse riders cantering down a road several abreast at 20mph through the forest roads there would be uproar yet as it's bikes it's somehow different.

As with anything a few inconsiderate ones give the majority a bad name, i think wearing large numbers is a good idea so reports can be made if needed and then a general courtesy talk given before races and in info pack perhaps with the threat of a ban from future events if bad behaviour

We had problems with cyclists riding on the wrong side of the road. I only have 1 picture of cyclists we followed but couldn't overtake, but we had oncoming cyclists overtaking right in front of us, coming head on with our car meaning we had to swerve out of their way. A lot of them had no respect for other road users. Picture attached was taken on Wooton road on Saturday



disgusting behaviour by the event cyclists riding 3 4 or even 5 abreast not allowing cars to pass being rude and unpleasent poorly organised should be banned. if you had a bunch of people on mopeds doing the same on the public road they would be prosecuted and let me remind you mopeds are restricted to 30mpg there morons on

there push bikes do in excess of that they have no road sence but if they collide with my car it's still my fault? not happy in the slightest I have lived here for 20 years and it has always been a issue

and now I hear of yet another bike race were the organiser refuses to give notice as per road cycling regulations fantastic how they are not only incapable of following road rules but also unable to comply with regulations aimed directly at them that have been in force since 1960

Has anybody else had problems with the Wiggle cycle ride cyclist?

This am myself and Daughter went out for a hack.

Knowing the cycle ride was on we tried to stay clear of the roads as much as possible and keep in the forest, The route we took was the best route which had the least amount of road to go on, as we were heading homeward bound we came out of a track from Canada common onto Blackhill road (which we had about 50 meters of road to get back over into the forest) some cyclist rode passed us and were very considerate as both my horse and daughters pony were on their toes from the whizzing noise of the bikes.

After they passed we started to trot as we could see a big group of bikes heading up behind us, when they came closer I shouted twice for them to stop to allow us to get to the opening for us to re enter through the woods and away from the cycles so no harm could come to anyone.

They didn't stop, the front rider came so close to my daughters pony causing her to rear up while my horse bolted down the centre of the road with my daughter and pony following, there was a oncoming car heading towards us which thankfully stopped in time.

I finally managed to get my horse under control, which help my daughter to with her pony.

Only one person from the large group of cyclists apologised to us after me shouting at them saying 'I asked you to stop!!' all the rest carried on and didn't care! She also commented on how well my daughter sat out the rear and how well she controlled her pony.

Then another set of cycles came closely behind when my daughter and I tried to collect ourselves and carry on, when asking them to stop for a second so we could get into the woods their response was 'WE CAN'T !!!!'

Why the hell can't they??? 😡😞

I'm just shocked at the couldn't give a S@@t attitude for other users of the Forest.

I couldn't get the number of any of them as it was on the front of the bikes and so small.

I'm just grateful that we all managed to get back to the yard unharmed.

Driving back to bashley from Brockenhurst on Saturday after parkrun so around 10am. This is a normal sight when there's a Wiggle event on, and worse. We got stuck behind 4 abreast on Sunday between ringwood and bransgore, even crossing fully to the opposite side there's no way to pass wide enough should I get to a straight bit. Other events happen, other cyclists use the forest and share the roads - why doesn't this company do the same?!

We saw cyclists relieving themselves on the side of the road, Derritt Lane. No attempt to hide or disguise what they were doing. Not a pretty sight on a sunday morning.

I met you whilst you were out walking the Wiggle route on Sunday and you witnessed the lack of consideration given to me by the riders taking part in the race whilst I was leading a small pony. You asked me at the time whether or not this was normal practice by the racers and I had to confirm that it was, only two or three weeks prior to this race there was another race organised which again came along Middle Road, Tiptoe. I was not previously aware of this race and had left that morning to ride my other horse, I met the race as I was approaching my home on my way back. The riders took no notice of me or my horse and did not slow down or move over (in accordance with the rules of the road). At one point a group of approximately 15-20 riders came along in one large mass, they do not seem to understand that this is a very scary thing for horses – the cyclists are usually dressed in bright clothing, many of them have flashing lights and the sound made by a large group of fast approaching bikes is quite a loud but low rumble. Fortunately on this occasion my horse just froze, however he could well have chosen to spin and run with potentially dangerous consequences to both myself and the cyclists. Horses need time to assess strange things approaching them on roads which is why the general rule when approaching/passing horses has always been to pass slow and wide.

Shortly after I met you on Sunday I turned to go back home which meant that the cyclists were now coming from behind me. My pony initially found this more difficult to deal with and spooked at the sudden appearance of the bikes as they shot past us. I therefore started to wave my arm in a manner indicating that I needed the cyclists to pass slowly. I will acknowledge that some of them did comply with my request, for which I thanked them. However several did not and one group of approximately 15 cyclists approached me and started to slow down as I had requested but as they got closer one of the female competitors towards the back of the group started shouting "Go, go, go" to the other people in the group. She clearly wanted the group to speed up past me. Two years ago, when the Wiggle was on, I had gone out for a ride and headed towards Longslade via Setthorns (I had unfortunately misunderstood the route the race was taking). When I came out of the Setthorns gate opposite Longslade car park I needed to cross the road however the racers were already on the road and nobody would even slow down to let me cross into the car park despite the fact that my horse was obviously having trouble

dealing with the number of bikes flashing past us. Under normal circumstances (i.e. not a race) someone would have let me cross but it appears to me that they are only interested in achieving their best time.

The problem with holding such events on the roads seem to stem from a complete lack of understanding and consideration to other road users simply because the cyclists are racing, they are not out for a quiet ride on a Sunday morning, they are competitive and appear to be totally focussed on their timing. The problem is exacerbated by the numbers involved, often very large groups of cyclists tend to clump together. Clearly, this is a simplification, and I do acknowledge there are some cyclists who are aware and prepared to act appropriately towards other road users. But the fact remains that this is a race and the majority of the competitors are focussed on that – please do tell me when our roads became race tracks!

An interesting link to the British Cycling website sets out their expectation very clearly. <https://www.britishcycling.org.uk/knowledge/skills/article/izn20150106-Horses-on-the-road-0>

I did have an issue with cyclists going up the hill towards Setthorns campsite.

Hanging back from a group of 5 going up the hill, I had already decided not to even try to overtake before i got over the top of the hill. A faster cyclist (sorry couldn't see number) decided to try and overtake me as I reached the top of the hill. If I had not done a double check as I pulled out I would have hit him. Got sworn at, but I feel he was in the wrong. Further up at the Wilverley turning 3 men urinating at the side of the road, Toilets are just over the road, or bushes a few feet away. 2pm in the afternoon on Saturday.

There are also many more comments on these and other issues such as the throwing of litter by Wiggle cyclists, on various social media sites including Sway Newswire, Lymington Rumour Control, Sway Parish Council's facebook page and the New Forest pony people facebook page.

The following is extracted from the British Cycling website referred to earlier:

<https://www.britishcycling.org.uk/knowledge/skills/article/izn20150106-Horses-on-the-road-0>

If you're cycling on rural roads and lanes, you are likely to encounter horses. Follow this advice to ensure that both you and the horse riders can continue with a safe and enjoyable ride.

Communicate

The most important thing is to make the rider aware of your presence. If approaching from behind, horses have a very large blind spot and won't see you until you're practically level with their heads. It's vital therefore to let the riders know you're there with a clear "good morning" or similar. Don't shout overly loudly but don't be too tentative either. A horse is far less likely to be spooked by the sound of your voice than by being suddenly surprised by you appearing next to them. Wait until they've acknowledged your presence and follow any instructions they may give you for passing.

Slow down

Whether approaching horses from behind or head on, slow right down and be prepared to stop. This applies whether you're out for a training ride or taking part in an event. Allow plenty of time and distance for the horse and rider to become aware of your presence.

Avoid unexpected noises

Don't shift gears or brake hard when approaching horses as these sort of mechanical noises can easily spook them.

Pass wide

Most horses being ridden on the road are used to passing traffic so, as long as you give them plenty of room and pass to the right as you normally would, they'll be fine. Allow room in case they are surprised or startled, this is as much for your safety as it is for the horse and rider. If there isn't space to pass safely, wait until a suitable opportunity arises, just as you'd hope a car would do the same for you.

Be visible

The more warning a horse rider has of you approaching, the better. Make sure you're visible and have suitable lights fitted to your bike. Follow these tips for [being seen in poor light conditions](#).

Be observant

Keep an eye out for signs that there may be horses around. Fresh dung, bridleways that cross the road and nearby stables are all fairly clear indicators. Look out for horses being ridden two abreast as this can indicate a younger or nervous horse. Some riders will also wear tabards indicating a young or nervous horse or if they're an inexperienced rider.

Groups

Large groups of cyclists can be especially alarming for horses so, if you're out on a club run or taking part in an event with other riders, be especially aware of this. Follow all the advice above, [communicate through the group](#) that you're slowing down and split into groups of four or five riders to pass. The horse riders may be able to find a safe place, stop and let you pass as one group but you have to allow them the time to do this.

Be polite

It can be frustrating to have to slow down but always be polite and pleasant. We are all sharing the roads so we need to work with each other and respect other road users. Don't take offence if a horse rider doesn't appear to acknowledge your consideration, they are probably concentrating on controlling their horse.

For further information take a look at [the code of conduct for horse riders and cyclists](#) from the British Horse Society.

End of report