

**Written Addition to the Presentment to the Verderers Court, 17 November 2021**

**Minstead Village Hall, 17 November 2021**

**Electrically Assisted Pedal Cycles (EAPC) on the Waymarked Cycle Routes**

**Dear Verderers**

I submit this statement as an extension to my Presentment to the Verderers' Court.

Thank you for allowing me to make the Written Addition to the Presentment this morning. I will repeat my opening statement.

My name is Philip Thomas. I have lived in Dibden for than 39 years. I regularly visit the New Forest mainly by bicycle but also on foot. I also drive through it when visiting my brother in Lymington and for other reasons. I have been a member of Cycling UK (originally known as the Cyclists' Touring Club, the CTC) for over 25 years. May I state that I am making this Presentment today in a personal capacity?

As I mentioned in my Presentment I have been diagnosed with atrial fibrillation, which is an irregular heartbeat, and am taking beta-blockers and wafarin. This heart condition has severely affected my cycling insofar that I cannot cycle the distances which I was able to cycle when younger. I would say that I have cycled around 80,000 miles – commuting to Eastleigh College (where I lectured for 27 years, touring, shopping and day trips within the Forest and beyond to destinations such as Broadchalk, Cranborne and other villages the other side of the River Avon. I now cannot cycle up steep hills, as I have already mentioned, and need to protect myself from becoming breathless and having to stop to regain my breath. I find that I cannot pedal a non-EAPC at more than 10 mph without becoming breathless. This never used to happen.

My EAPC cannot be cycled at a speed higher than 15 mph as the motor would cut out if I attempted to do this. I enjoy cycling in the woods and do so at a speed slow enough to observe the flora and fauna in the woods and always keep to the way marked tracks. I regularly stop to photograph fungi and deer when I see them and very interested in the history of the area. I meet many cyclists using electrically assisted cycles and we discuss the environment and ecology of the area and the quiet. None of these cyclists are cycling quickly and many are of an elderly disposition or have medical reasons for using this type of cycle. Many such cyclists

are only occasional cyclists and need to use such cycles but the main thing is that these cyclists are not using the car to move around the National Park.

I am a member of the New Forest Cycle Working Group (NFCWG) representing the Waterside Cycling Action Group (WCAG) and represent the NFCWG on the Recreation Management Strategy Advisory Group within the National Park. The WCAG is in consultation with Hampshire County Council to improve the connectivity between the Waterside and the National Park to allow safe access for cyclists across the A326 to reduce the need to use motor vehicles to access the Forest. A member of the NFCWG is also a member of Christchurch Bicycle Club, a social cycling club. A number of their riders are elderly and/or have health issues, and need EAPCs in order to cycle any distance. One of these members is wheelchair-bound, and uses an electrically-assisted hand-powered tricycle to get about. All these people would be effectively excluded from the New Forest if electrically assisted bikes were to be banned from being used on Forest tracks.

I feel that as cyclists using EAPCs we make little impact on the areas in which we cycle. The gravel tracks have been laid to support the weight of HGVs carrying felled tree trucks, tractors, Land Rovers and other motor vehicles so the weight of any cycle, whether electrically or self powered and its rider will make little damage to the track surface. Cyclists on the way marked tracks do not disturb the animals as the cyclist can be heard when approaching due to the crunch of the gravel under the tyres. The woods are for enjoying the quiet of nature and the natural environment, for taking photographs of deer, pigs (during the pannage season) and of trees and various plants. The cyclist can enter the woods after reaching them by cycling and, thus, reducing the use of the car in the National Park.

I totally agree that cyclists should not be cycling in protected areas and have spoken to cyclists who I have seen cycling on the open heaths explaining the situation to them. I carry maps printed by the National Park Authority and hand them out when necessary to anyone I see who is looking lost.

It must be remembered that cycles with electric motors larger than 250 W and can be cycled at more than 15 mph (not freewheeling down hill but cycled – throttles were not allowed on electric cycles after around 2015 and these throttles could allow cycles to be ridden without peddling but not beyond 15 mph) are classed as electric motorbikes and need a licence, motorcycle helmet, insurance, etc. These should not be allowed on way marked or any other tracks in the National Park.

Unfortunately, there are some cyclists who wish to act illegally, as do many motor vehicles drivers when observing the speeding in the National Park, and the antics of these few should not be allowed to affect and spoil the pleasure enjoyed by the majority of legal cyclists within the National Park.

Thank you

Philip C Thomas