

The Royal Parks Cycling Policy July 2008

The Royal Parks are managed for the enjoyment of public, balancing the needs of all our visitors with other duties such as those relating to wildlife, heritage and conservation. In the parkland and greenspaces pedestrians are given priority as they comprise the vast majority of park users. At the same time, we try and accommodate as wide a range of appropriate activities in the parks as we can. Cycling is one of the activities we support.

There are good reasons for allowing cycling in the parks. It provides a pleasant way to gain access to the parks' amenities, such as the gardens, sports areas, cafes and other places of interest. It is also a healthy form of exercise with a low environmental impact and allows cyclists to avoid busy urban roads.

While most cyclists are considerate and abide by the Park Regulations, some can be inconsiderate and aggressive to other park users, particularly pedestrians. Cycling can also affect the enjoyment of park users in unintended ways: for instance some visitors, particularly the elderly and those with children or dogs can feel intimidated by cyclists travelling at relatively high speeds. This leads some people to stop using footpaths that are heavily used by cyclists altogether. Although these dangers may sometimes be more perceived than actual, they can affect people's enjoyment of the park. We should take no less account of pedestrians' concerns than we do of cyclists aspirations.

Cycling policy:

The Royal Parks provide cycle routes where we can do so without interfering with safety and enjoyment of other park users. In doing so, we take into account a range of issues including the landscape and usage of the park in question.

Wherever possible, cycle routes in the park link with designated cycle routes outside the park where these exist. We generally keep cycle routes in the park (other than those on park roads) to the perimeters of the London Royal Parks. This is because the parks get very crowded particularly in the summer and this leaves the centre free for pedestrians to wander freely without having to keep an eye open for cyclists (and visa versa). Keeping routes to the edge of the park also helps preserve the landscape character and quality (most of the Parks are listed Grade 1 on the English Heritage register for Parks and Gardens). Taking cycle routes through the centre of the green space creates the potential for more conflict between park users. It has been shown in studies and by experience that most conflict occurs at junctions, therefore taking paths through the centre using an existing footpath increases the likelihood of conflict. This has a detrimental effect for park users and their safety.

Our cycle routes do not always take the most direct route or meet the individual journey needs of every cyclist. This may not suit everyone and can add time to a journey. Most cyclists understand the need for these restrictions but nevertheless enjoy the opportunity to cycle in a pleasant and traffic free environment. In the larger, less formal landscapes of Richmond Park and Bushy Park we encourage cyclists to keep to the roads and cycle paths to avoid sensitive wildlife areas.

Managing the Royal Parks is all about balancing the needs of different users. While we do what we can to meet the needs of cyclists we can not allow cyclists to go wherever they want to in the parks. We are, however, always open to considering proposals for improving cycling provision, both for commuters and cyclists who do not currently use the park.

The Pathway Code of Conduct

In September 2007 the Royal Parks Pathway Code of Conduct was launched as part of the Considerate Cycling Campaign at Freewheel 2007. We aim to encourage cyclists and pedestrians to share paths responsibly. The Code of Conduct is available on the Royal Parks Website and has been included on signage in the Parks.

Additional cycle routes

The Royal Parks is regularly approached by individuals, stakeholders and lobby groups to introduce additional cycle routes within the greenspace of the parks. There is increasing pressure on the parks to provide commuter routes which are safer than using the road network. When considering additional cycle route, often utilising existing footpaths, the Royal Parks has adopted the policy that these should be of a level of service A or B (based on the New York Platoon Methodology – based on Intelligent Space reports). This level has been chosen as it ensures that the expected experience of the park visitor is not adversely affected. This is based on the research carried out by the City of London on Hampstead Heath and a study undertaken in Kensington Gardens. The Hampstead Heath consultation process highlighted that all participants signed up to the process as it was an objective way to assess the suitability of routes and existing paths for shared-use pedestrian cycle routes.

Analysis has also being undertaken where possible to assess existing routes – where these routes fall below the standard (less that level of service A or B) the priority is to improve the existing route prior to introducing additional cycle routes.

Cycle routes within the Royal Parks are generally classified as 'segregated' or 'shared-use'.

- Kensington Gardens has 3 shared-use cycle routes where the path is marked at entrances, footpath crossing points and junctions. The signage is kept to a minimum to reduce visual clutter and ensure that the route is in keeping with the historic landscape environment.
- Hyde Park has 8 segregated cycle paths and 3 on-road cycle routes. The paths are not physically segregated but are marked out with white lining and cycle symbols. The main concern with this configuration of cycle route is that cyclist tend to less aware or concerned about other park users – often observed to be cycling at speed. Though many park users, including vulnerable people, prefer this system – risk assessments indicate that though accidents are less likely the severity of the accident is likely to be greater due to cyclists travelling faster.
- Richmond Park has 17 km of shared-use cycle track that runs the perimeter of the Park.
- Greenwich Park has one segregated cycle route that runs through the centre of the Park along with two roads.
- Bushy Park has a long distance cycle route signed through the park (on shared-use paths and the roads).
- The Green Park has one segregated path that runs along Constitution Hill and a shared-use path behind Canada Gate.
- St James's Park has a shared-use path that runs through the Mall North Horseride car parks. A cycle lane is also provided under Admiralty Arch.



The cycle routes in Hyde Park have been in place for over 10 years and there is concern that they are not able to cope with the numbers of cyclists using them – particularly in the peak. Their segregated nature is an issue as there is the fear that young children and dogs, not aware of the segregation, are likely to be involved in cycle related accidents on these routes. There is an aspiration to move to more shared-use spaces where people can behave in a considerate manner to one another.

The Royal Parks is now subject to application for planning permission for developments within the Parks. Therefore, consultation with stakeholders, local authorities, residents, Friends groups and vulnerable users is very important when considering additional cycle routes. The Royal Parks uses the adapted Green CRISP methodology and the action points provided in the Transport for London (Cycling on Greenways) Equality Impact Assessment. We appreciated that some cycling improvements also improve accessibility for wheelchair users and other vulnerable users. We consider vulnerable users to be children under 5 years old (with accompanying adult), registered disabled and elderly people.

Additional cycle facilities

Whenever we undertake a refurbishment of a park amenity, or carry out developments in the parks (e.g. let a new licence to run one of the catering outlets) we will take the opportunity to provide cycle racks and/or cycle shelters.

We will consider applications for cycle hire concessions in other parks, like the one that has been running in Richmond Park for some years.

Cycling for the disabled

We are keen to consider the scope for increasing cycling schemes/provision for disabled people, to build on the Companion Cycling scheme that has been operating for some years in Bushy Park.

Funding

The Royal Parks' funding allocation is likely to be flat over the next four years. We shall therefore be looking at all possible sources of funding for cycling-related projects: including new licences refurbishing concessions; developments; GLA initiatives; local borough initiatives and Transport for London.



Appendix A

Regulations

Cycling in Royal Parks is only allowed on that are designed and marked for the purpose (Regulation 3 (4) (a)). Anyone cycling other than on a designated cycle route is committing an offence under the park regulations (there is no requirement to prove that they are endangering other park users, as is widely believed – that is dealt with separately under Regulation 3(10) (c)). Regulation 3(11) (b) deals with cycling without adequate lights and there is also a regulation against cycling off the roads/paths (i.e. on the grass).

Enforcement

A person offending against any of the Park Regulations may be reported for prosecution and, upon summary conviction in a magistrate's court, may be fined.

Pathway Code of Conduct

Code of conduct for cyclists, roller skaters, roller bladers, skate boarders and visitors using other foot-propelled devices in designated areas.

- **Be considerate** – Pedestrians have priority over all other users of pathways and shared pathways, even in areas designated and marked for other purposes. You are asked to use these pathways considerately. Other users may not be aware of you, please remember this when passing.
- **Be safe** – We recommend you wear British Standard approved protective equipment and ask that you adhere to all pathway and road markings. Our pathways are not suitable for fast travel, so please keep to a sensible speed. If you are in a hurry, you may wish to use another route.
- **Be seen & heard** – Some park visitors may have a visual or hearing impairment, using a bell and or wearing high visibility clothing will help others to be aware of your presence. Use British Standard approved lights in low visibility conditions.
- **Be polite** – Thank other park visitors who allow you to over take or pass them.

