

Cycling is a three-sided coin and we need to work together

WE ALL know that cycling is one of the activities that politicians, environmentalists and medical practitioners encourage us to get involved in for the sake of our health, to protect the environment and as a means of saving money.

However, as always, what appears to be a good idea on the surface tends to hide a multitude of problems both real and imaginary.

For example, we look askance at the concept of shared surfaces.

Very often, the pedestrian doesn't want to share his surface with the cyclist, the cyclist doesn't want to share his surface with the vehicle driver and, all too frequently,



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the driver doesn't want to share his surface with either the cyclist or the pedestrian.

Cycle lanes on the roads seem one way in which to resolve the cyclist/vehicle conflict but it is beset with problems.

For a start, so many of our roads are not wide enough to allow a cycle lane to be safely constructed.

Even where they can be incorporated, too often the cycle lanes are incomplete,

It's as if the planners ran out of steam.

Similarly, the cyclist/pedestrian issue has its difficulties.

Where pavements are wide enough, it is possible to divide the pavement in half, one half for the cyclist and the other half for the pedestrian.

Unfortunately, one then sees the problem, which we all experience on the roads, one of lane discipline, and it's not uncommon to find pedestrians in the cyclist lane and vice versa.

In many ways, allowing cycling on the wider pavements is a double-edged sword as it appears to encourage cycling on pavements, which are

only just wide enough for pedestrian foot traffic.

Such irresponsible behaviour then carries forward into what is frequently perceived as aggressive cycling in pedestrianised areas such as West Street and around the Shelley Fountain.

There are no simple answers and we can only expect everyone concerned to apply some common sense to what should not really be a problem.

Horsham District Council commissioned a very good report on cycling, which was published in January 2009.

To date, the key recommendations of this report have not been

implemented by West Sussex County Council.

We need the cycle routes within Horsham to be completed and perhaps we should ask the cycling groups to get together and come up with definitive proposals that could be put in front of the planners.

We need enforcement so as to ensure, for example, that the motorist does not park in such a way so as to block a cycle path on the road and, at the same time, ensure that the cyclists control their speed on surfaces they share with pedestrians and do not cycle in totally pedestrianised areas.

Like everything in life, we need to work together if we

are to achieve a situation which is in all our best interests.

No one group, pedestrian, cyclist or driver has a divine right to do whatever they wish without giving due thought to how it may affect everyone else.

The Horsham Society is concerned about the past, present and future of the town. It seeks to promote good planning and design for the built environment and open spaces.

Membership of the Horsham Society is open to anyone, who shares these concerns.

For more information, visit our website www.horshamsociety.org or telephone 01403 263870.