

Thanks for letting me address the County at its cabinet meeting today.

Having injured myself by falling off my bike on black ice I found it unacceptable that the County prides itself of being the number one cycle city in the UK when it blatantly failed to grit cycle routes no matter how heavily they are used. Petition signatory Matthew Hill comments: "I have contacted the council about this before and received no reply."

Like him and many others I tried but failed to convince the county that this was a real problem. So the next step was to launch this petition.

The first responses by the county printed in the local press suggested that budget constraints were the reason behind its inaction. Let me just read out a few comments that challenges that view point. Signatory Laurence Calver comments: "Came off my Bike and fractured my elbow, county saved money not gritting, but it cost the NHS and my employer money."

Signatory Michelle Suckling comments: "I wouldn't let my children cycle to school yesterday. The cycle paths were just too dangerous - I took them in the car instead."

These people and many others highlight two problems. One is that the county's transport policy is at best incoherent and at worst irresponsible. How can the county claim to be promoting cycling and ask drivers to give up their car and cycle to work when it does not ensure that cycle routes are safe? The other problem is that the county only considers its own isolated budget but not the cost for society as a whole.

Everyone agrees that society benefits economically when more people cycle, in terms of less congestion, tear and wear of roads by cars as well as healthier citizens freeing up the NHS. It is therefore baffling that the decision not to grit cycle routes has remained.

The March edition of "Your Cambridgeshire" that was posted to households praises how the county is "Showing true grit" this winter. Signatory Andrew Carr comments: "I fell off my bike on the ice at the junction of Beche road and Abbey Road in Dec 2008 which had not been gritted. I dislocated and fractured of my shoulder which has required surgery and lengthy rehabilitation - still ongoing."

From that perspective the "Showing true grit" article is an insult to the thousands of people cycling in Cambridge this winter like Andrew Carr. If the county prints articles loaded with spin rather than facts then it both mocks and disengages the electorates from politics so they will not bother to vote.

In the future, on receiving a report from a citizen about an icy cycle route, the county should simply respond by acknowledging the problem and that it will grit the route within the next 24 hours. That would be good public service so this petition would never be necessary again.

Thank you for listening,

Robert