

Dartmoor Forest Parish Council



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See Distribution

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Dear Sirs

WASH-UP ON THE DARTMOOR CLASSIC SPORTIVE EVENT 2014

1. Following the meeting between the Dartmoor Classic Sportive organisers and Dartmoor Forest Parish Council on 9 June 2014, the Parish Council conducted a wash-up of the event from the Parishioners perspective at their monthly meeting on 8 July 2014. The following reports and points were made by Parishioners through their Councillors and directly by members of the public.
2. **Organisation.** The willingness of the organisers to meet the Parish Council, hear views and modify arrangements was appreciated. Increased and improved marshalling, increased signage and publicised predicted times for traffic disruption agreed at the meeting all helped on the day. The Parish Council would wish to be included in any post event wash-up and to be involved in the planning of any future event to help improve the event and minimise the negative impact on the Parish.
3. **Report from Hexworthy.** In Hexworthy an extra marshal was posted but spent most of the time at the Forest Inn rather than at the blind double bend by Jolly Lane Cottage as promised, but the suggested marshal at Huccaby Bridge was not seen. Some cyclists were better than others at letting traffic through. At one point a farmer had pulled over to let a backlog of cycles past but then no cyclist would slow down to let him carry on. One of the advance warning notices had not been removed after the event. Overall, it was slightly better than last year, but this may be due to the reduced numbers taking part and fewer 'tag along' cyclists owing to the hot weather.
4. **Report from Postbridge.** In Postbridge it was congested at both the bridge and the shop. Drivers could not turn in or out of the shop forecourt and the shop owner was sworn at when he tried to slow the bikes down to let cars pull out. Most cyclists were going very fast downhill towards the bridge despite the number of pedestrian visitors walking about and trying to cross the road from the visitors centre car park to the clapper bridge. Cars were queuing to get over the bridge with abusive language being used by cyclists when traffic tried to get by. Some residents were held up badly getting back to the village. Overall, it appeared to be less congested than last year, again possibly due to reduced numbers. In future there really needs to be much better marshalling at both the bridge and the shop.
5. **Report from Princetown.** In Princetown the only direct complaint to the Parish Council was about the volume of rubbish strewn along the roadside between Princetown and Yelverton. There were, however, many telephone complaints made to the High Moorland Visitors Centre about the disruption.
6. **Report from Rundlestone.** At Rundlestone it was fairly subdued with model behaviour from cyclists, all in single file and quiet by the time they reached the top of the hill.
7. **Report from Two Bridges.** The following letter was sent to the Plymouth Herald: "*Please can someone who organised the Dartmoor cycle ride on June 22 take note of this message. I was in a huge line of cars that were being held back at the junction near to the Two Bridges Hotel. Hundreds*

and hundreds of cyclists were coming from all directions and no filter systems were in place, cyclists were being allowed to go through while all the cars were not. Several motorists in front of me got out of their cars to see why we were not moving. I know the cyclists have to be kept safe but the road was open to all so it needs to be better organised or close the road to traffic. I saw one collision and several near misses. Please make this a safer event next time. Mrs B Morris."

8. **Report from Businesses in the Parish.** The Dartmoor Classic Sportive event impact on Parish businesses (in alphabetic order) was reported as follows:

- a. **Country Charm, Princetown - Neutral Impact.** They found the attitude of the race marshals somewhat officious. The shopkeeper received verbal abuse from cyclists while trying to reverse a vehicle into their parking space.
- b. **Fox Tor Café, Princetown - Positive Impact.** Takings were up from both members of the public and race officials.
- c. **High Moorland Visitor Centre, Princetown – Negative Impact.** Visitor numbers were down on the day, although takings held up suggesting spectators were buying more goods than normal. They fielded a "huge number of complaints" via telephone from people who had their travel arrangements disrupted.
- d. **Lords Café, Princetown – Neutral Impact.** Takings were similar to normal. They received a lot of requests from cyclists for drinking bottles to be filled.
- e. **Moor Beads, Princetown – Negative Impact.** Regular customers had told the owner they would not be in as they were avoiding the moor for the day. The shop ended up closed all day as the owner gave up on the journey between Bovey Tracey and Princetown due to delays caused by the cycle traffic.
- f. **Plume of Feathers, Princetown – Negative Impact.** A few more customers than normal bought drinks. However, the downside was that a lot of riders made use of their toilet facilities and others made requests for drinks bottles to be filled. Marshalls on roundabout prevented a member of staff from getting into work for quite some length of time by not letting her cross the road into the car park.
- g. **Postbridge Stores, Postbridge – Negative Impact.** Drivers could not turn in or out of the shop forecourt and the owner was sworn at when he tried to slow the bikes down to let cars pull out. The owner had similar problems last year and is not a fan of the Dartmoor Classic in its current format and level of marshalling.
- h. **Post Office and Shop, Princetown – Positive Impact.** Takings up by 20% compared to Sundays either side of the event. This may also have been helped by good weather on the day. The Postmaster had difficulty carrying out an unscheduled re-supply trip on the day due to cycle traffic.
- i. **Old Police Station Café, Princetown. Negative Impact.** Traffic disruption prevented several of their usual customers from visiting them that day. The general feeling of the owners was that *"it's more trouble than it's worth"*.
- j. **Prince of Wales, Princetown – Neutral Impact.** Possibly one or two more people than normal came in for drinks.

9. In summary, the claim that the Dartmoor Classic Sportive brings increased revenue to Dartmoor Forest is not substantiated. Only two businesses reported increased business, countered by five businesses that reported a negative impact and a further three businesses that reported no change from the seasonal average. There is anecdotal evidence that many visitors stay away from the moor, fearing traffic delays and disruption. In addition to the financial aspect, significant numbers of cyclists abused the facilities of restaurants, cafes and pubs by using their toilets and asking for water refills without actually buying anything.

10. It was also noted that the financial income from the event goes to the Dartmoor National Park Authority and not to Dartmoor Forest Parish, which faces the disruption.

Conclusions.

11. While many aspects of the Dartmoor Classic Sportive went smoothly there were several areas of difficulty, despite improved communication between the organisers and the Parish Council. This resulted in the overall impact of the Dartmoor Classic Sportive on Dartmoor Forest as being **negative**. On the assumption this event is held again, there needs to be a key focus by the organisers to improve performance at several identified 'trouble spots':

- a. **Hexworthy Hill.** This is a small community served by one narrow lane. Improved marshalling and signage needs to be in place on the blind double bend by Jolly Lane Cottage, to slow cyclists and maintain safety against oncoming vehicles and gravel. Marshalling is also needed at Huccaby Bridge to control traffic flow to keep vehicular delays to a reasonable minimum. Consideration must be given to residents and farmers. This would need a marshalling team of 3-4 at the minimum.
- b. **Postbridge.** This is a fast hill down to a major tourist attraction (with a car park on the opposite side of the road) and a traffic bottle-neck at the bridge. Improved marshalling and signage is needed to slow cyclists down **before** they reach the Visitors Centre car park. Marshalling is needed to assist pedestrians to cross the road to and from the clapper bridge; to halt cyclists to allow traffic to turn into and out from the Postbridge Stores; and to control traffic flow on the bridge to keep vehicular delays to a reasonable minimum. Consideration must be given to residents, businesses and tourists (the majority of whom are not connected to the cycle event). This would require a marshalling team of 4-6 at the minimum.
- c. **Princetown.** The organisers must discourage cyclists from using pubs and cafés as public toilets and from requesting water refills from businesses where they provide no custom. Additional marshals may be needed in the village to direct or redirect cyclists to appropriate facilities.
- d. **Two Bridges.** This is the 'central crossroads of Dartmoor' and of the Dartmoor Classic Sportive. Traffic congestion should be no worse on these junctions than at Rundlestone, but it clearly was. Improved marshalling will be needed at Two Bridges for future events. A possible alternative would be routing all cyclists anti-clockwise around the Princetown-Two Bridges triangle to generate only left turns at Two Bridges (noting Rundlestone is the quieter road). Subsequent complex marshalling at Rundlestone could be avoided by either reversing the direction of the Lydford loop of the Grande route or alternatively by routing returning Grande cyclists from the B3357 above Merrivale along the Foggintor track and into Princetown along the cycle track, subject to appropriate permissions.
- e. **Disruption Timing.** The provision of estimated times for the event at each location was appreciated. However, members of the public would prefer a central collated list of timings. Dartmoor Forest Parish Council is happy to host this on their website.
- f. **Attitude of Cyclists.** Everyone understands that even the best plans go wrong sometimes. However, the level of arrogance and verbal abuse levelled by cyclists at parishioners and businessmen trying to help traffic flow or resolve other problems is a recurrent and distasteful theme reported back to the Parish Council from all areas. At the very least, the Ride Manual must be updated to include the requirement for basic courtesy to those trying to help, even if it appears to delay cyclists slightly. Until this issue is resolved, Dartmoor Classic Sportive participants are likely to be tolerated only, and not welcomed on the moor.

Recommendations.

12. The Dartmoor Classic Sportive organisers continue to meet with and consult the Dartmoor Forest Parish Council when organising future events. This would ideally be sufficiently early in the planning stage for the Parish Council to be able to propose, for example, route variations etc.
13. Marshalling is significantly improved in Hexworthy, Two Bridges and Postbridge with both increased numbers of marshals and more considerate control of vehicular traffic.
14. The timings of peak 'pulses' of cycle traffic with a map of the event are published to enable all members of the public to fully understand where and when they might (and might not) face traffic disruption.
15. The Dartmoor Classic Sportive organisers consider making a donation to Dartmoor Forest Parish Council to be used for community projects in Hexworthy and Postbridge, which currently experience a solely negative impact from this event.
16. The Dartmoor Classic Sportive organisers revise their Ride Manual to make it explicitly clear that cyclists must expect to face short delays at key pinch-points within Dartmoor Forest Parish; that they must not use Pubs and Cafes in Princetown as public toilets; that they should refrain from asking for water refills from commercial premises unless they are providing custom; and that they are expected to be polite and courteous to members of the public at all times.

Yours sincerely



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Parish Clerk

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