

READING BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT BY EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR FOR ECONOMIC GROWTH & NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES

TO:	TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT SUB-COMMITTEE		
DATE:	5 MARCH 2020	AGENDA ITEM:	8
TITLE:	KINGS ROAD EXPERIMENTAL BUS LANE ORDER		
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1. PURPOSE OF REPORT & EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 In January 2018 the Sub-Committee agreed to the implementation of an experimental Traffic Regulation Order, altering the Kings Road inbound bus lane restriction, to better manage the vehicles that were permitted to use this public transport infrastructure.
- 1.2 This experimental restriction was implemented on 11 July 2019. Officers ask that Members consider the objections that have been received and recommend agreement to make this Order permanent.
- 1.3 Appendix 1 provides a plan to show the location of the inbound bus lane.
- 1.4 Appendix 2 provides the objections to this Order/restriction, which have been received by officers to date.

2. RECOMMENDED ACTION

- 2.1 That the Sub-Committee notes the report.
- 2.2 That the Sub-Committee considers the objections in Appendix 2.
- 2.3 The Assistant Director of Legal and Democratic Services be authorised to make the experimental Traffic Regulation Order into a permanent Traffic Regulation Order under the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984, advertised in accordance with the Local

3. POLICY CONTEXT

- 3.1 The proposals are in line with Reading Borough Council's Local Transport Plan and current traffic management policies and standards.
- 3.2 Under the Traffic Management Act 2004 the authority has a duty to maintain and manage the road network and secure the safe and expeditious movement of traffic.

4. BACKGROUND AND PROPOSALS

- 4.1 The inbound/westbound bus lane runs between Cemetery Junction and the junction with Orts Road and allowed access by buses, cyclists, motorcycles, taxis (Hackney Carriages) and private hire vehicles. Appendix 1 shows a plan of the bus lane location.
- 4.2 This bus lane is an important facility, which expedites the journey times of key public transport routes, such as the Number 17 Reading Buses route, particularly during peak traffic periods. However, the facility was being compromised by the volumes of vehicles that were accessing it, whether legitimately or otherwise (this facility was not camera-enforced).

Concerns were raised regarding the access that vehicles registered as Hackney Carriages by other Local Authorities have to certain areas, when they are not necessarily the wheelchair-accessible 'black-cab' style vehicles that Reading Borough Council licences as Hackney Carriages and are not necessarily providing a public transport service in Reading.

- 4.3 Local authorities have greater flexibility over the vehicle-type restrictions that can be implemented on bus lanes. At the January 2018 Sub-Committee meeting, approval was granted for implementation of an experimental TRO to replace the existing bus lane restriction.

This experimental restriction, which was implemented on 11 July 2019, permits buses, bicycles, motorcycles and 'authorised vehicles' to pass along the lane. The TRO defined 'authorised vehicles' to be Hackney Carriages and Private Hire Vehicles, both licenced by Reading Borough Council, only.

- 4.4 The restriction was intended to reduce the overall volume of traffic using this facility, with the outcome of providing more consistent

journey times for Reading's public transport providers, in addition to making the lane more appealing for use by cyclists.

Following the implementation of the restriction, camera enforcement has been installed to ensure compliance of the restriction by all users.

4.5 The experimental TRO can run for a maximum period of 18 months and local authorities are required to invite objections for a minimum period of 6 months before the Order could be made permanent.

4.6 The experimental TRO has now been in place for more than 6 months and Appendix 2 provides the objections that officers have received in this period.

The Sub-Committee is asked to consider these objections before making a decision on whether to make the experimental order permanent.

4.7 Officers recommend that the Sub-Committee agrees to making the experimental TRO permanent.

5. CONTRIBUTION TO STRATEGIC AIMS

5.1 This proposal supports the aims and objectives of the Local Transport Plan and contributes to the Council's priorities, as set out below:

- Keeping Reading's environment clean, green and safe
- Ensuring the Council is fit for the future

6. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

6.1 The Council declared a Climate Emergency at its meeting on 26 February 2019 (Minute 48 refers).

6.2 The decisions and recommendations of this report are not expected to have any environmental implications.

6.3 It is accepted that, upon implementation of the restriction, there will have been some displacement of journey's from Kings Road onto London Road and other routes. These routes, however, have a greater traffic capacity than the single inbound bus lane and any measures that can enhance the public view of public transport service routes and more cycle-friendly routes in Reading will help to encourage transport mode shift.

7. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND INFORMATION

- 7.1 The proposals for defining 'authorised vehicles' were produced in liaison with Reading Borough Council's Licencing department. The definitions were shared with their counterparts in the surrounding Local Authorities, to enable opportunities for them to share the information with their respective taxi trades.
- 7.2 The process of implementing an experimental TRO enables a live 'testing' period for a proposal and allows a long period (at least 6 months) for objections to be received and for appropriate adjustments to be made, if necessary.

8. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 The Order will be made under the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 and advertised in accordance with the Local Authorities Traffic Orders (Procedure) (England and Wales) Regulations 1996

9. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 9.1 In addition to the Human Rights Act 1998 the Council is required to comply with the Equalities Act 2010. Section 149 of the Equalities Act 2010 requires the Council to have due regard to the need to:-

- eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;
- advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
- foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

- 9.2 It is not considered that the proposals have a direct impact on any groups with protected characteristics. The experimental TRO process has enabled a long period (exceeding 6 months) for objections to be received, concerns raised and for appropriate adjustments to be made, if necessary.

10. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 The permanent making of the Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) will be funded from within existing transport budgets and the cost is not expected to exceed £2000.

Funding will be sought from Transport Capital funding, which will include developer contributions (e.g. Section 106 contributions) wherever possible.

11. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 11.1 Bus Lanes - Proposals for Statutory Consultation (Traffic Management Sub-Committee, January 2018).