

**READING BOROUGH COUNCIL  
REPORT BY EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF ECONOMIC GROWTH & NEIGHBOURHOOD  
SERVICES**

<b>TO:</b>	<b>TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT SUB-COMMITTEE</b>		
<b>DATE:</b>	<b>15 SEPTEMBER 2021</b>	<b>AGENDA ITEM:</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>TITLE:</b>	<b>RED ROUTE - ROUTE 17 (CENTRAL SECTION)</b>		
<b>LEAD COUNCILLOR:</b>	<b>TONY PAGE</b>	<b>PORTFOLIO:</b>	<b>STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENT, PLANNING AND TRANSPORT</b>
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**1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

- 1.1 This report recommends that the central section (town centre) of the Red Route, which is currently in place with an 'experimental' Traffic Regulation Order, is made a permanent Order. The experimental Order ends in January 2022.
- 1.2 This recommendation follows the implementation of amendments to the originally-implemented restrictions this year, which were a direct result of feedback and discussion with town centre business representatives. No further objections have been received since these changes were introduced, at the time of writing, and there is no further opportunity to make amendments to this experimental Order.
- 1.3 Appendix 1 - Plans to show the amendments made to the Red Route during the 'experimental' period.  
Appendix 2 - Objections and other feedback to the Red Route experimental Traffic Regulation Order.

**2. RECOMMENDED ACTION**

- 2.1 That the Sub-Committee notes the report.
- 2.2 That the Assistant Director of Legal and Democratic Services be authorised to undertake the necessary legislative and regulatory processes to make the experimental Red Route Traffic Regulation Order into a permanent Order.
- 2.3 That no public inquiry be held into the proposals.

### 3. POLICY CONTEXT

- 3.1 The provision of waiting/parking restrictions and associated criteria is specified within existing Traffic Management Policies and Standards.
- 3.2 The Red Route also compliments the Council's Local Transport Plan, Climate Emergency Strategy and Health and Wellbeing Strategy by supporting public transport and removing barriers to the greater use of sustainable, healthy transport options.

### 4. THE PROPOSAL

#### Current Position

- 4.1 National regulation changes that were enacted in 2016 enabled local authorities to implement Red Route restrictions using the same processes and legal mechanisms that would be used to implement other types of Highway waiting restrictions, removing the requirement for special Government approval. At their meeting in July 2015, Policy Committee agreed to the principle of turning the Reading Buses Route 17 into the Council's first Red Route.

Red Route restrictions had featured in the Highway Code for some time prior to the 2016 changes and enable improved and efficient enforcement by CCTV (including mobile CCTV) as well as by Civil Enforcement officers on-street.

- 4.2 In the main the Red Route was intended to replace existing yellow line restrictions already in place to manage parking and permitted stopping activities. Many of the double yellow line restrictions along the whole corridor included loading bans, either at all times, or during the busiest periods of the day. As yellow-line restrictions cannot be enforced in the same way as Red Route restrictions, the primary objectives of the scheme were to improve the efficiency of the Route 17 corridor, promote local business through better access to short-term parking for their customers and to stop indiscriminate parking on the footways/edge of carriageway, thus improving safety concerns expressed by pedestrians and cyclists. It was expected that delivery of the scheme would also generate an additional revenue saving through enforcement of the restrictions.
- 4.3 The route was split into three sections (west, central and east) with concept proposals developed for each. The Council conducted a 6-week informal consultation exercise in June and July 2017, where information was provided to all those fronting proposed restrictions and to stakeholders. Local public drop-in sessions were also held to help inform and to additionally provide feedback used to shape the resultant proposals.

Where compatibility allowed, the Red Route restrictions initially maintained the existing restrictions, so loading, limited-waiting, taxi ranking, pay & display, bus stop clearway and the like were retained along the route. The no-stopping restrictions also enabled licenced taxis to stop to allow waiting passengers to board the vehicle, or passengers on board to leave the vehicle.

The Council created a dedicated page on its website to provide information about the restrictions, and to seek feedback, during their 'experimental period' (see Section 4.4) and this page also hosts a dispensation application. This can be applied for specific one-off, short-duration activities where stopping on the Red Route is considered unavoidable, such as the delivery of scaffolding or a house removal. Officers have an opportunity to review the application, discuss any potential alternatives, and/or place conditions on the approval (such as specific locations, dates and time periods) so that impact to traffic movement is minimised. This has been a charge-free service.

- 4.4 As Red Route restrictions were new to Reading, and largely unseen outside of London, the Council recognised that the proposals could represent a perceived significant change for Reading and, therefore, be of concern to residents, businesses and other stakeholders. For this reason, all sections of the Red Route were initially implemented as separate experimental Traffic Regulation Orders (TROs). Experimental TROs enable the local authority to implement the restrictions and then open them to public consultation for a minimum period of 6 months. These TROs can last for a maximum duration of 18 months, but minor modifications can be made within the first 6 months, requiring a further 6-month minimum period for further consultation thereafter.

The East section of the Red Route was implemented first, followed by the West. The central section was considerably more challenging to design, as the town centre contained a wide range of complex restrictions to 'translate' to their Red Route equivalents. The Council had prepared for delivery in April 2020, but halted delivery until July 2020, due to the initial COVID-19 lockdown restrictions.

- 4.5 The central section Red Route restrictions were implemented from July 2020 under the experimental TRO and the large-scale plans are available to view on the Council's website: [www.reading.gov.uk/redroute](http://www.reading.gov.uk/redroute). Within the first 6 months, the Council received feedback primarily from town centre businesses with concerns about loading difficulties. Appendix 2 provides the comments and objections that were received during this period.
- 4.6 Officers met with representatives from the town centre businesses and Reading UK CIC to discuss and understand the concerns that they had and then considered options to overcome some of the challenges that they were facing.

The Council's Delegations Register provides officer authority to make minor modifications to experimental schemes. The proposed modifications were provided in a briefing note to the Lead Councillor for Strategic Environment, Planning and Transport and were implemented from 4<sup>th</sup> January 2021.

The modifications to the Red Route are shown in Appendix 1 and primarily consist of additional loading facilities being made available (one full-time and 5 part-time) in addition to other elements to 'tidy' the restrictions on-street and contained within the experimental TRO.

- 4.7 Since implementing the minor modifications to the experimental TRO, the Council has received no further objections at the time of writing. The further 6-month

minimum period of further consultation ended in July 2021 and the experimental TRO expires in January 2022.

### Options Proposed

- 4.8 It is recommended that the Sub-Committee agrees to making the experimental TRO for the central section Red Route, as amended in January 2021, into a permanent TRO. This will retain the range of restrictions that are currently in place, which have overcome initial objections and concerns, and the benefits that the enhanced enforcement opportunities bring in terms of the local area (see Sections 5 and 6) and to current revenue income (see Section 10).

There is no further opportunity for alteration to this experimental TRO and a deferral of this decision risks insufficient time being available to undertake the necessary processes to make the TRO permanent, prior to its expiry in January 2022.

- 4.9 Once the experimental order is made permanent, future alterations to this section of the Red Route restrictions may be considered in the Waiting Restriction Review programme, following a 6-week embargo on any statutory consultations, following the making of the TRO - this enables any legal challenges to be received.

### Other Options Considered

- 4.10 The options available at this stage are to either remove the central section Red Route or to allow the experimental TRO to expire. Both options would have the same result in that all affected restrictions would need to be returned to their pre-Red Route state.

These options are not recommended for the following reasons:

- The benefits of the Red Route, as outlined in this report, would be lost.
- The additional facilities (e.g. additional loading facilities) provided within this experimental TRO would be removed.
- Significant funding would be required to remove all Red Route signing and road markings and for these to be replaced by signing and markings that relate to the pre-Red Route restrictions.
- Officer resources required for this work would impact on the intended development and delivery of other schemes.
- There would be significant disruption to town centre operations while the restrictions are being reverted, which would be taking place over the busy winter period.
- Red Route Enforcement income would reduce, impacting on the Council's Medium-Term Financial Strategy (see Section 10).
- The operations to remove lining and replace signing would have an environmental impact in terms of material use, material wastage and emissions arising from machinery and processes used on-street.

## 5. CONTRIBUTION TO STRATEGIC AIMS

- 5.1 This proposal contributes to the Council's Corporate Plan Themes, as set out below:

### **Healthy environment**

Reading's first Red Route was implemented in three sections primarily to improve the consistency of journey times for the Number 17 Reading Buses service by enabling improved enforcement against the ad-hoc stopping activities that were being conducted along its route, in contravention of the prior restrictions. This central section, in particular, will benefit a significantly greater number of services and help to further enhance the appeal of using of public transport services in Reading.

The benefits of the Red Route to bus services were also expected to benefit cyclists along the route, who would have a clearer route and would see greater containment of on-street parking (stopping) to permitted bays only. Furthermore, the Red Route provides greater enforceability against footway encroachment by parked/stopped vehicles, through the enhanced enforcement opportunities that the restriction brings.

The recommendation of this report to make the central section Red Route into a permanent restriction will retain the benefits that it has brought to remove potential barriers that some may have to using public transport, cycling and walking. In complement to other Council initiatives, it will contribute to encouraging people to make healthy transport choices and toward the Council's goal of making the town carbon neutral by 2030, through reducing emissions by private vehicle use.

- 5.2 This proposal contributes to the TEAM Reading Values, as set out below:

**Together** - The amendments made to the original installation of the Red Route, while in the experimental period, were developed through the receipt of feedback and working with town centre businesses.

**Efficiency** - The recommendation of the report retains the existing infrastructure (signing and lining) that would otherwise require costly replacement. The Red Route also supports the efficient use of limited kerbside space within the town centre and the expeditious movement of public transport providers.

**Ambitious** - As per Section 5.1, the Red Route supports the Council's goal of making Reading a carbon neutral town by 2030.

**Make a Difference** - As per Section 5.1, the Red Route makes a positive difference across transport modes.

## 6. ENVIRONMENTAL AND CLIMATE IMPLICATIONS

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

- 6.2 The recommendation of this report is to make the current experimental Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) into a permanent TRO. The experimental TRO process allows no further amendments, so agreement to the report recommendations will result in the retention of the restrictions (including the signing and lining) as they

are currently installed - no further infrastructure will be installed or adjusted as a result of the Sub-Committee agreeing to this recommendation.

As a result, an Environmental Impact Assessment has been conducted, which shows a net 'NIL' impact as a result of the Sub-Committee agreeing to the recommendation of this report.

The making of this permanent TRO will require (by regulation) advertisement of the legal Notice in the local printed newspaper, which will have a negligible, one-off impact in terms of likely additional printing and paper usage.

## **7. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND INFORMATION**

- 7.1 As per Section 4 - 'Background' the project to create Reading's first Red Route scheme commenced with a 6-week informal public consultation, during which time all properties fronting the route received letters and information, alongside press releases, and local drop-in sessions were held to seek feedback on the initial concept proposals and to inform the detail of the scheme. Each section of the route was implemented under separate experimental Traffic Regulation Orders (TROs), which has allowed an extended period of consultation (minimum of 6 months) to take place with the restrictions being 'live'. This is significantly longer than the typical 21-day statutory consultation period for the proposed creation of a new 'permanent' TRO and has enabled the Council with the opportunities to make relatively quick alterations to the scheme in order to overcome any unnecessary and unforeseen difficulties that may have come as a result.
- 7.2 For the central section, much of the feedback was from town centre businesses, requesting a desire for more loading/unloading facilities. The Council met with business representatives and implemented alterations to the experimental TRO, providing a further 6-month minimum consultation period.
- 7.3 Appendix 2 provides the objections that the Council has received to the central section Red Route experimental TRO. It should be noted that no further objections have been received, following the implementation of the Red Route amendments in January 2021, at the time of writing.
- 7.4 The Council created a page on its website dedicated to Red Route information, which has contained the detailed plans and legal Notices associated with each section of the Red Route, while it was experimental. Press releases preceded the implementation of each section and guidance information was provided to Reading's taxi association and other organisations ahead of implementing the first section. It should be noted, however, that Red Route restrictions have been a relatively long-standing feature within the Highway Code.

The Council continues to operate an application process where dispensation requests can be considered for one-off events where there is no alternative nearby stopping facility. There have been relatively few such applications across the entire Red Route and are typically necessary for house-moves, setting up scaffolding for property maintenance and other similar short-term activities. This process has allowed officers to work with residents/property owners to accommodate specific

activities at no cost to them, while also enabling timing and location conditions to be added in order to minimise the impact of the activity on traffic flow.

## **8. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

8.1 Under the Equality Act 2010, Section 149, a public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, 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.

8.2 It is not considered that an Equality Impact Assessment is relevant as the proposals are not deemed to be discriminatory to persons with protected characteristics. The recommendation of this report is to take the current restrictions on street from an experimental to a permanent implementation, which would not alter the existing arrangements that have been in place (and under open consultation) since July 2020 (original) / January 2021 (with amendments).

## **9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

9.1 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.

This report seeks agreement for the Assistant Director of Legal and Democratic Services to undertake this process.

9.2 Following the making of this Order, the public must be afforded a period of six weeks to raise any legal challenge, prior to any alterations to the restrictions within being proposed through statutory consultation.

## **10. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

The following information is based on agreement to the recommended actions of this report, namely to retain the existing Red Route restrictions on a 'permanent' basis.

## 10.1 Revenue Implications

	2021/22 £000	2022/23 £000	2023/24 £000
Employee costs	NIL	NIL	NIL
Other running costs			
Capital financings costs			
<b>Expenditure</b>	NIL	NIL	NIL
Income from:			
Fees and charges	50	NIL	NIL
Grant funding			
Other income			
<b>Total Income</b>	50	NIL	NIL
<b>Net Cost(+)/saving (-)</b>	-50	NIL	NIL

The above table shows the Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) savings that was expected against the increased provision of Red Routes. The saving was an increase in income generation through enforcement that would be realised in a single financial year (2021-22) and maintained thereafter.

## 10.2 Capital Implications

Capital Programme reference from budget book: page line	2021/22 £000	2022/23 £000	2023/24 £000
Proposed Capital Expenditure	£13	NIL	NIL
Funded by Grant (specify) Section 106 (specify) Other services Capital Receipts/Borrowing	Capital integrated transport block (ITB) grant funding	N/A	N/A
<b>Total Funding</b>	£13	NIL	NIL

## 10.3 Value for Money (VFM)

The recommendation of this report is a continuation of the existing Red Route restrictions. To achieve this, there will be a one-off cost to advertise the making of the experimental Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) into a 'permanent' Order. It is anticipated that the cost of this advertising, based on previous adverts for the scheme, will be £13k.

The recommendation of this report will result in a continuation of the income that the Council achieves through enforcement of the central section Red Route.



As detailed in Section 4 - 'Other Options Considered', the only alternative decision that the Sub-Committee can make is for the experimental Red Route TRO not to become permanent. This will result in the Council needing to revert the affected central section restrictions back to a 'pre-Red Route' state, at significant cost, and losing the enforcement income that is being generated from the Red Route.

Agreement to the recommendation of this report therefore provides best value for money, in addition to the wider benefits that the restrictions provide.

#### 10.4 Risk Assessment

There are no foreseen financial risks associated with the recommendation of this report.

Should the Sub-Committee members decide against making the experimental TRO permanent, there would be significant financial and resource implications in reverting the affected restrictions to their pre-Red Route state, involving temporary parking restrictions to facilitate widespread re-lining and re-signing. Enforcement income associated with this central section of the Red Route would also cease and impact the income referred to in table 10.1 against the MTFs.

Should the Sub-Committee defer a decision at this meeting, there are significant risks around the deliverability of a permanent TRO thereafter, prior to the experimental TRO expiry.

### 11. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 11.1 Briefing Note to the Interim Head of Transport and subsequently to the Lead Councillor for Strategic Environment, Planning and Transport, seeking approval to implement 'minor modifications' to the experimental central section Red Route TRO under officer-delegated authority (November 2020)
- 11.2 Red Route - Route 17 (Traffic Management Sub-Committee, September 2019)
- 11.3 Red Route - Route 17 (Traffic Management Sub-Committee, March 2019)
- 11.4 Red Route - Route 17 (Traffic Management Sub-Committee, September 2017)
- 11.5 Red Route - Route 17 (Traffic Management Sub-Committee, March 2017)
- 11.6 Proposed Service Offers and Budget Proposals 2016-2019 to Narrow the Budget Gap (Policy Committee, July 2015)