

READING BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT BY EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR FOR ECONOMIC GROWTH & NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES

TO:	TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT SUB-COMMITTEE		
DATE:	14 SEPTEMBER 2022	AGENDA ITEM:	
TITLE:	RAILWAY STATION SUBWAY - PROPOSAL TO REVOKE PROHIBITION OF CYCLING		
LEAD COUNCILLOR:	TONY PAGE	PORTFOLIO:	CLIMATE STRATEGY AND TRANSPORT
SERVICE:	HIGHWAYS & TRAFFIC SERVICES	WARDS:	ABBEY
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1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 There is a desire to improve the cycle route linking between the north and south sides of Reading Railway Station, which currently presents a barrier with the prohibition of cycling in place along the subway. Due to improvements that are planned for increasing the height of the subway, this report proposes that a statutory consultation is undertaken on the proposal to revoke this cycling prohibition, creating a shared-use (pedestrian/cyclist) facility.
- 1.2 Appendix 1 - Extract from the 2013 Traffic Regulation Order, showing the location of the subway.

2. RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

- 2.1 That the Sub-Committee notes the content of this report.
- 2.2 That the Assistant Director of Legal and Democratic Services be authorised to undertake statutory consultation processes for the proposed revocation of the Traffic Regulation Order that implemented the subway cycling prohibition in accordance with the Local Authorities Traffic Orders (Procedure) (England and Wales) Regulations 1996.
- 2.3 That subject to no objections being received, the Assistant Director of Legal and Democratic Services be authorised to make the Traffic Regulation Order.
- 2.4 That should any objection(s) be received during the statutory consultation period, that these be reported to a future meeting of the Sub-Committee for consideration and decision regarding the outcome of the proposal.

2.5 That no public inquiry be held into the proposal.

3. POLICY CONTEXT

- 3.1 The proposals complement - and are complemented by - the Council's Local Transport Plan (LTP) and Local Cycling, Walking and Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP). The proposals will complement the Council's Climate Emergency Strategy and Health and Wellbeing Strategy by removing barriers to the greater use of sustainable, healthy transport options.

4. THE PROPOSAL

Current Position

- 4.1 In 2013, following the substantial redevelopment of Reading Railway Station and its interchanges, the subway linking the north and south interchanges was dedicated as a Highway under a deed of variation between Network Rail Infrastructure Ltd and Reading Borough Council. Responsibility for the overhead concrete / rail structure remains with Network Rail while the internal subway and ceiling are the responsibility of Reading Borough Council's Highways & Traffic Services Team.
- 4.2 The subway construction included a suspended ceiling lower than that of engineering constraints of the surrounding structure. It a potential safety risk to cyclists and as such, a Traffic Regulation Order was put in place implementing a prohibition of cycling along the subway.
- 4.3 The public have a right of access through the Reading Station Subway on foot and cycling is not currently permitted, as the width and height clearances are substandard.
- 4.4 It has been a long-standing desire of Reading Borough Council and cycling groups to find a solution that would enable safe cycling along the subway, as this prohibition and the surrounding rail infrastructure and strategic road network are significant cycling barriers between the north and south sides of the station and beyond.
- 4.5 The Council commissioned a feasibility report on allowing cycling as part of a scheme to remove the lowest ceiling panels using S106 funding specifically for this scheme. The solution will see the removal of the low sections of ceiling panels, a tidy up of the existing concrete ceiling and protection of Network Rail services.
- 4.6 There will be an improved head room clearance, which although below national guidelines, will enable the Council to accept the position and allow cycling through the subway following the necessary consultation process and revoking of the Cycling Prohibition Order.
- 4.7 There is also a separate proposal to replace the lighting with a LED equivalent lanterns to reduce energy consumption and enable remote monitoring and control the lighting units.

Options Proposed

- 4.7 In consideration of the above proposals to address the current ceiling height, it is now proposed that statutory consultation processes are undertaken for the proposed revocation (and removal) of the cycling prohibition along the subway and creation of a shared-use (pedestrian/cycling) facility.

Should objections be received during the statutory consultation period, these will be reported to a future meeting of this Sub-Committee so that they may be considered prior to a decision being made regarding the outcome of the proposal. Namely, this decision would be whether the prohibition should be revoked, or not.

Other Options Considered

- 4.8 The Sub-Committee may decide not to proceed with the statutory consultation process, as proposed above. As such, the prohibition of cycling will remain in place.

5. CONTRIBUTION TO STRATEGIC AIMS

- 5.1 The retention of the cycle scheme contributes to the Council's Corporate Plan themes as set out below:

- **Healthy environment**

The implementation of cycle facilities can remove barriers to cycling and lead to an increase in uptake of this active and healthy transport mode. This can lead to a reduction in motor-vehicle journeys, particularly short local journeys, which can be some of the most polluting, improving air quality by reducing emissions.

- **Thriving Communities**

Cycling is a lower-cost transport mode that also provides exercise. Providing cycle-prioritisation facilities and, therefore, removing some barriers that may exist toward cycling offers an appealing and beneficial transport option for our communities.

- **Inclusive economy**

The proposal in this report provides useful linking between destinations and other parts of the cycle network across the borough. With the addition of future schemes, they make Reading an increasingly attractive place in which to cycle and visit sites of cultural significance, retail and entertainment venues and enjoy its geographical benefits (e.g. the River Thames and River Kennet).

- 5.2 Full details of the Council's [Corporate Plan](#) are available on the website and include information on the projects which will deliver these priorities.

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 A Climate Impact Assessment has been conducted, which considers a net 'low-positive' impact as a result of the Sub-Committee agreeing to the proposal to consult on (and subsequently agree to implement) the revocation of the cycling prohibition.

While there will be some minor negative impact due to the required printing of public notices for the statutory consultation. If the change is agreed for implementation, there will be some minor negative impact and material use for signing alterations and potential lining (e.g. shared-use markings). However, the proposals would remove some barriers to cycling, which would be expected to more than offset this minor negative impact.

7. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND INFORMATION

- 7.1 Statutory consultation (if agreed) will be conducted in accordance with appropriate legislation. Notices of intention will be advertised in the local printed newspaper and on-street within the affected area. The Police and other statutory consultees will be directly notified. The consultation will be hosted on the Council's website (the 'Consultation Hub'), where details and plans will be available. Feedback received during the consultation will be considered as part of the scheme implementation decision process at a future meeting of the Sub-Committee.
- 7.2 Traffic Management Sub-Committee is a public meeting. The agendas, reports, meeting minutes and recordings of the meetings are available to view from the Council's website.

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 (EIA) is relevant at this stage, as we will be seeking views on the proposal as part of the statutory consultation process. This will include consulting the Access & Disability Forum and other interest groups.

Feedback will be considered and analysed, and an EIA conducted as part of the further report to the Sub-Committee, where we will be seeking a decision on the implementation (or otherwise) of the proposal.

9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 New, or changes to existing, Traffic Regulation Orders require advertisement and consultation, under the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 and in accordance with the Local Authorities Traffic Orders (Procedure) (England and Wales) Regulations 1996. The resultant Traffic Regulation Order will be sealed/revoked in accordance with the same regulations.

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

10. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 The only immediate financial implications resulting from the recommendations of this report will be for the advertising of proposed Traffic Regulation Order revocation, which is a requirement as part of the statutory consultation process.

Capital Implications

The following figures are based on the Sub-Committee agreeing to the recommendations of the report and therefore relate to the estimated immediate costs of advertising the proposed Traffic Regulation Order revocation.

	2022/23 £000	2023/24 £000	2024/25 £000
Proposed Capital Expenditure: Local Traffic Management and Road Safety Schemes	1	0	0
Funded by Grant (Integrated Transport Block)	1 0	0 0	0 0
Total Funding	1	0	0

10.4 Value for Money (VFM)

It is considered that the recommendations of the report provide value for money as the benefits of the proposal can be realised with very modest costs.

10.5 Risk Assessment.

There are no foreseen financial risks related to the recommendations of the report.

11. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 11.1 None.