

Report to the Cabinet

Meeting to be held on Thursday, 14 September 2017

Report of the Head of Service, Highways

Part I

Electoral Divisions affected:
Preston Central South; and
Preston City

Preston City Centre Traffic Management

(Appendices 'A' - 'E' refer)

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Executive Summary

An experimental traffic regulation order which created a bus lane westbound on Fishergate between Mount Street and Corporation Street and another bus lane eastbound between Butler Street and Corporation Street was introduced in October 2016 to manage the traffic congestion that occurred in the lead up to, and during the, festive period of 2016/17. The experimental order was subject to a 6 month consultation period and this report sets out the impacts of the bus lanes, the outcome of the consultation and proposals for managing traffic in Preston city centre.

This is deemed to be a Key Decision and the provisions of Standing Order No. 25 have been complied with.

Recommendation

The Cabinet is recommended to:

- (i) Approve that the experimental traffic regulation order for the bus lanes is made permanent without amendment.
- (ii) Approve the re-commencement of camera enforcement from 6th November 2017 as set out in the report.
- (iii) Approve the proposed Experimental Traffic Regulation scheme to Lune Street; and
- (iv) Approve the revocation of the length of bus lane on Church Street between Derby Street and Ringway.

Background and Advice

A report on this matter was presented to the July 2017 meeting of Cabinet. A decision was taken to defer consideration to allow officers to prepare proposals for Lune Street, and for those proposals to be considered alongside other proposals in relation to extant experimental traffic regulation orders in Preston city centre.

The Fishergate public realm scheme was designed to give more priority to pedestrians, improve the city centre environment and provide a better experience in Fishergate for visitors and shoppers. Widened footways have significantly reduced pedestrian congestion along Fishergate and by giving more space for pedestrians the scheme has allowed new pavement cafes to be established and modern street furniture to be introduced, including much more seating. Pedestrian crossing times at the main junctions have reduced significantly, by as much as 75%, dramatically improving the ease of movement and amenity afforded to pedestrians through the city centre.

The improvements have also been a catalyst for economic and retail development. In the 5 years prior to Fishergate phase 1 works being implemented, there were 39 road traffic collisions in Fishergate between Pitt Street and Lune Street, of which 5 were serious. Whilst the data collected in the two years since implementation indicates that the number of incidents has reduced by approximately 50% a statistically sound comparison cannot yet be made.

Whilst the environmental, safety and visitor benefits are evident, periodic congestion occurs, particularly in the period between October and December. This has resulted in delays for motorists in exiting the railway station, Fishergate Shopping Centre and St George's Shopping Centre car parks.

In order to address this congestion, two bus lanes have been introduced on Fishergate on an experimental basis using an experimental Traffic Regulation Order (ETRO). The introduction of an ETRO enables effects to be assessed and monitored, allows changes to be made during the first six months if necessary and this period also provides for public consultation. This ETRO also provided for the enforcement of these bus lanes by camera.

The 6 month consultation period for this ETRO ended on 30 April 2016. There was extensive coverage of the ETRO and its impacts in local and regional news and in social media. A number of responses supported the changes and commented on the improvement in the environment and also the improved visitor experience. Other responses raised issues around the displacement of congestion and the impact on journey times on other routes.

The bus lanes came into operation on 31 October 2016 and camera enforcement commenced on 14 November 2016. Camera enforcement was suspended on the bus lanes on 10 March 2017 and 4 April 2017, following adjudication decisions made by the Traffic Penalty Tribunal on 9 March 2017 and 31 March 2017 in which appeals were allowed.

The adjudicators considered that although the ETRO had been properly made, in their judgement the signing which informs the motorist of its existence was not sufficient.

Whilst enforcement has been suspended, the cameras have remained in use to collect traffic volume information. It is evident from this that contraventions of the bus lane order has continued with 65,183 vehicles observed using the bus lane westbound on Fishergate between Mount Street and Corporation Street and 24,997 on the bus lane eastbound between Butler Street and Corporation Street, between 20 March 2017 and 13 August 2017. Since they were suspended, daily traffic volumes have significantly increased from daily averages of 230 to 600 vehicles for Fishergate between Mount Street and Corporation Street and from 130 to 190 vehicles from Butler Street to Corporation Street now being recorded.

Benefits of the bus lanes ETRO include a large reduction in traffic on Fishergate in overall terms with an average of 2,700 vehicles removed daily from the section between Mount Street and Corporation Street during the hours of operation of the bus lane. This reduced the congestion and delay at the Butler Street and Corporation Street junctions resulting in a reduced delay in exiting the car parks serving the Fishergate shopping centre and the railway station.

A further consequential benefit has been to bus travel with bus journeys being more reliable and journey times reduced. Both Stagecoach and Preston Bus, the main service providers in Preston, are supportive of the bus lanes on Fishergate and wish to see them retained.

The reduction in traffic has also improved air quality with significant reduction in the level of particulates and Nitrogen Oxide. Recent air quality surveys and modelling indicate that the reduction in traffic volumes has reduced the level of pollutants by over 50%.

Whilst the number of collisions has reduced since the opening of the scheme, the reduction in traffic volume itself reduces the collision risk further and the number of recorded injury collisions along Fishergate is expected to continue to reduce.

The reduction in traffic volumes, the improvement in air quality, the improvement in public transport journey times and the reduction in accident risk have all contributed to an improved visitor experience for those coming into Preston city centre.

Notwithstanding the benefits described above, there have been some consequences of the changes that have generated negative comments. The alternative route for vehicles leaving St George's Shopping Centre car park has resulted in a displacement of traffic onto the Avenham Lane and Queen Street route with an increase in congestion and delays along this route and on Ringway. This has increased journey times for residents and workers in the Avenham and Winckley Square area. There has also been a reduction in the numbers of motorists using the St George's Shopping Centre car park.

Suggestions offered were to remove the bus lanes, to reinstate traffic signals, shorten the times of operation of the bus lane on Fishergate and also to make Lune Street two way. These have been considered and it is advised as follows:

The removal of the bus lanes, whilst beneficial to those travelling from the south of Fishergate towards the west of the city, would reintroduce delays and congestion along Fishergate and the junctions. This is not supported by the retailers at the western end of Fishergate and is not supported by the local bus operators. It is also considered that this would increase road safety risks, pollution levels would rise and the visitor experience would be degraded.

The re-introduction of traffic signals without reinstating a wider carriageway to accommodate two lanes of traffic in Fishergate would lead to long queue lengths in Fishergate, the blocking of junctions and more widespread delay in the heart of the city centre. Such a proposal would also destroy the integrity of the existing scheme.

Shortening the times of operation of the bus lane would have a similar albeit lesser impact as removing the bus lanes. Drivers are aware of the current restrictions and times of operation and any changes would likely lead to a period of confusion.

As stated earlier in this report, the volume of traffic contravening the bus lane restriction has doubled since enforcement was suspended. It is considered that camera enforcement is an effective way of ensuring compliance with the restrictions and should therefore recommence, subject to additional and amended signing being installed to address the sufficiency concerns that the adjudicators raised about the current signing provision. The adjudicators will not direct what signing may be necessary to meet the test of sufficiency but may review its adequacy if enforcement was to recommence and an appeal was submitted to the Traffic Penalty Tribunal. Plans are set out at Appendices 'A' - 'D' illustrating the additional works that it is considered will satisfy sufficiency concerns. Signing work could be completed by the end of August to allow enforcement to recommence thereafter. It is proposed that enforcement would recommence from Monday 6 November with an initial 4 week period during which warning notices only would be issued. The issue of penalty charge notices (PCNs) would commence from Monday 4 December 2017.

Prior to enforcement recommencing on 6 November a programme of publicity would be undertaken. This will be done through the county council's communications team. This period of publicity would be followed by a month where warning notices are issued giving a two month period where drivers would be informed or receive notice that unauthorised use of the bus lanes would be subject to enforcement.

Taking all the relevant information into account it is proposed that the bus lanes ETRO be made permanent. It is also proposed to re-introduce camera enforcement as set out in the recommendations.

In order to address the concerns about the St George Shopping Centre car park and reduce the volume of traffic traveling through the Avenham area, it is feasible to make Lune Street two way. This would involve the construction of a new link onto Ringway. The route would follow the line of the existing highway which is subject to a

prohibition of driving order. Such changes to Lune Street would have an impact on adjacent streets and require changes to current traffic movements.

Initial traffic assessment work has been undertaken to help inform the proposed two way scheme on Lune Street. The results suggest that this could offer an operational alternate route for many cars departing from the St Georges car park, thereby reducing impacts on Fishergate and the Avenham area. However at very busy times it is much more difficult to predict the outcome of this change given that there are no existing figures for the number of vehicles that would chose this route.

The ultimate aim for Lune Street is to improve the quality of the street so that it marries with the adjacent Fishergate scheme. The proposal however is to implement a new scheme on Lune Street in two phases. The first phase will be new ETRO which would see a low cost change to help inform the design of the second phase which would use the more expensive materials used nearby in Fishergate. The new traffic arrangement would allow two way movement on Lune Street from the car park access to Fleet Street, then one way north bound onto Ringway at a new junction by the Bar 1842 pub, formally known as the Corn Exchange. Fleet Street would remain as present, apart from the provision of new parking or loading bays. The Lune Street statues would remain in place but the brick wall and planting area would need to be removed in order to create the junction onto Ringway. The proposals are shown on drawing number Lune Street 1 (Appendix 'E' refers). During the first phase traffic surveys would be taken in order to assess the impacts on Lune Street and the surrounding streets of the ETRO.

The proposal is to undertake the phase 1 changes at Lune Street in the autumn of this year utilising an experimental traffic regulation order to introduce revised parking and loading arrangements to accommodate two way traffic on Lune Street. In addition the current one way traffic regulation order will need to be suspended.

The phase 1 evaluation would inform the ultimate and significantly more expensive second phase scheme for Lune Street and the public space area in front of Bar 1842. This use of an ETRO mitigates the financial and technical risks associated with introducing a high quality scheme at the outset and will also bring additional capacity into the city centre in the earliest possible time. A further report on the evaluation and the ultimate proposals for Lune Street along with the anticipated long term benefits of the scheme would be presented to Cabinet during spring next year.

It is therefore proposed that the ETRO scheme be commenced on Lune Street.

As part of the consideration of city centre traffic movements, there is an existing eastbound bus lane on Church Street that runs from Derby Street to the just before the junction with Ringway. This was installed as part of bus priority measures in 1997 to assist the timings on the park and ride bus scheme. The route for these busses has now changed and as such the bus lane is no longer required. Additionally, the removal of the bus lane will improve the f the junction efficiency therefore assisting traffic movements from the Avenham area of Preston amongst others. It is therefore proposed to revoke Article 3 – THE FIRST SCHEDULE of the PRESTON BOROUGH COUNCIL, BOROUGH OF PRESTON (CHURCH STREET) (BUS PRIORITY LANE) ORDER 1998 and remove the length of bus lane.

Consultations

A public consultation period of 6 months has taken place subsequent to the introduction of the ETRO. Meetings have taken place with a city centre stakeholder Group comprising Preston BID, Preston City Council, Virgin Rail, Lancashire Constabulary, the Shopping Centre Managers and retailers.

The divisional county councillor has been consulted on the proposals.

Implications:

This item has the following implications, as indicated:

Risk management

- Traffic Management

Not implementing the recommendations will lead to an increase in congestion and delays along Fishergate. Whilst congestion due to displaced traffic using alternative routes will occur, the delays are less severe during peak periods. The introduction of two way traffic on Lune Street and the removal of the bus lane on Church Street will mitigate levels of congestion.

- Legal

The experimental traffic regulation order can remain in place for up to 18 months. If the new ETRO on Lune Street is not made permanent before 30 April 2018, it will expire and the previous restrictions will revert to being in force.

- Financial

Expenditure on the management of the bus lanes would be a call upon any income generated from enforcement of the bus lanes. It is not anticipated that expenditure will exceed income and any surplus income, would be invested in highway and transport initiatives.

It is estimated that the cost of implementing the Lune Street phase 1 scheme including monitoring and evaluation would be c£0.100m - £0.150m. It is proposed that the costs of the scheme be funded from the authority's section 55 account which is the account that receives the surplus from the enforcement activity. This account ring-fences the monies for use in highway and transport related expenditure and this project fits within that definition. The account has sufficient balance to cover the cost of the Lune Street phase 1 scheme.

List of Background Papers

Paper	Date	Contact/Tel
Report to the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport	6 October 2016	Dave Gorman, (01772) 534261

Decisions of the Traffic Penalty Tribunal Adjudicators	9 March 2017 and 31 March 2017	Daniel Herbert, (01772) 538654
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Reason for inclusion in Part II, if appropriate

N/A