

Report to the Cabinet

Meeting to be held on Thursday, 13 September 2018

Report of the Head of Service - Highways

Part I

Electoral Divisions affected:
Preston Central West; Preston
City;

Road Traffic Regulation Act (Lancashire County Council) (Preston City Centre) (Revocation and Bus Lanes) Order 201* (Appendices 'A' - 'F' refer)

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Executive Summary

This report sets out proposals to introduce cycling provision on the Fishergate Hill bus lane and to revoke the bus lane on the Church Street approach to its junction with Ring Way. Promoting these proposals provides the opportunity to bring together all of the bus lane restrictions in the city centre, along the Fishergate Hill, Fishergate and Church Street corridor into a single order. Such an order will simplify the administration of bus lane enforcement within the city centre. Whilst the proposed new order was being consulted upon, a number of objections were received.

This is deemed to be a Key Decision and the provisions of Standing Order C19 have been complied with.

Recommendation

Cabinet is asked to approve the proposals as set out at Appendix 'F'.

Background and Advice

Over time a number of different orders have been introduced governing traffic movements on Fishergate and Fishergate Hill to limit traffic to buses, cycles, taxis and authorised vehicles in various ways. Location plans illustrating this are set out at Appendices 'A' to 'D'. This proposed order will bring the various restrictions together into one order which will provide clarity, consistency and improve efficiency in managing compliance of the restrictions. The notice of proposal relating to the new

proposals and the revocation and introduction of the established bus lane orders on Fishergate is included at Appendix 'F'.

There is demand from cyclists for direct access to the city centre from the west along Fishergate Hill. Cyclists have been observed using the Fishergate Hill bus lane without a detrimental impact on bus use and this order seeks to legitimise use of the lane for this purpose, thereby improving cycling links to the city centre from the west of the city.

On Church Street the order seeks to implement a decision taken by Cabinet in September 2017 to approve the revocation of the length of bus lane between Derby Street and Ringway as part of a number of traffic management provisions agreed at that time. This is illustrated at Appendix 'E'. It is intended that this change will provide extra capacity for vehicles leaving the city centre via Church Street.

The other extant orders now proposed to be incorporated into this new one are in relation to bus lane restrictions on Fishergate at its junction with Butler Street, between Mount Street and Corporation Street and between Cheapside and Cannon Street.

Consultations

The order was advertised between 15 June 2018 and 13 July 2018 in the local press and on site local representatives were contacted along with other interested parties including the bus operators affected by the changes at the commencement of the consultation period. Over the period two e-mails have been received that supported the proposals to provide cycling access to the bus lanes. 15 emails were received from members of the public and one e-mail from the divisional county councillor all of whom objected to the established bus lanes. One objection was received from a bus company objecting to the revocation of the bus lane on Church Street and one objection from a local businessman who complained about the bus lanes being enforced by the use of number plate recognition cameras along with concerns regarding the congestion that was generated.

1. Objections to bus lanes

a) From the general public

Objections from members of the public were that the established bus lanes caused them difficulties in three main areas:

1. The bus lanes made it difficult to access and egress their homes adding extra miles and time to journeys.
2. The bus lanes have caused vehicles to access the city centre using residential streets increasing traffic flows near their homes.
3. The bus lanes have contributed to congestion in the city centre and this has in turn increased the levels of pollution due to traffic fumes.

These objections are to the existing Fishergate bus lanes which have previously been subject to a formal consultation process, the effect of which is not proposed to

be changed through this order. Since their introduction the county council has taken steps to mitigate their impact. The introduction of two way traffic on Lune Street has removed the circuitous route that vehicles had to take when leaving the St Georges Centre car park which has reduced the impact of traffic in Avenham. The bus lanes have had a positive impact on air quality in Fishergate which accommodates a high number of pedestrians.

b) From the divisional county councillor

An objection has been received from the divisional county councillor who would like the bus lane regulations removed altogether as he is concerned that the measures are having a detrimental effect on the city centre for both businesses and residents. In his objection he states that he has a large number of supporters not only from the city centre but also residents from the surrounding communities.

The introduction of the bus lanes has resulted in a redistribution of traffic around the city centre and measures have subsequently been taken to mitigate this as described above. It is considered that the revocation of the Church Street bus lane will provide further mitigation. To remove the bus lanes, in particular the restriction between Mount Street and Corporation Street, will lead to an increase in traffic in the heart of the city centre and to high levels of congestion on Fishergate itself, particularly at the busiest city centre trading times. Traffic management in and around the city centre is kept under review, and should further measures to improve the efficiency of movement be identified they will be brought forward for consideration.

2. Objections to revocation of Church Street Bus Lane

A local bus operator has made an objection to the proposal to revoke the northbound bus lane on Church Street. The operator claims that the removal of this facility will add about 10 minutes to route times for the five services that use Church Street. The objector claims that rather than removing the bus lane that is largely ignored and unenforced the bus lane should be remarked and enforced. If this was done it is argued by the operator that this would reduce bus journey times making the use of these routes more attractive and in turn reduce congestion.

The bus lane is not well observed by vehicles and it is considered that its removal will have little impact on present bus journey times. Although there are five services using this, the frequency of them is such that it is not considered sufficient to warrant the road space being dedicated to such a use. The removal of the bus lane will help ease congestion for traffic leaving the town centre including vehicles using city centre car parks and residents of the Avenham area.

3. Objection to the use of enforcement cameras

An objection was received from a local businessman with premises on Queen Street who was concerned that once the council started to use cameras to enforce the orders his business had suffered as customers were unwilling to visit the showrooms due to the congestion in the area. His complaint also included that the council did not consult his organisation, though his property is within the Business Improvement District area, before the use of camera enforcement.

Traffic flow in the city centre is regularly monitored. The traffic regulation order which camera enforcement supports was introduced to reduce congestion and it is acknowledged that this has directed more traffic through the Avenham area than was previously the case. As described above, measures have been taken to ameliorate this including making Lune Street two way to provide direct access to Ringway from the St. Georges shopping centre car park and the prospective removal of the bus lane on Church Street is expected to assist in this regard. Camera enforcement has proven to be an effective deterrent to what was previously widespread contravention of the order. The Business Improvement District group was advised that the county council would be using camera technology as a means of enforcing the bus lanes at the time that the original plans for the bus lanes were under consideration, however it was considered that it was not necessary to inform individual businesses.

Implications:

This item has the following implications, as indicated:

Financial

The cost of the new signs for Fishergate Hill are estimated to cost £1,000 and will be funded from the approved road safety capital programme. The revocation of the Church Street bus lane will involve the removal of redundant signs and some minor road remarking at an estimated cost of £500 which will be funded from the highways revenue budget. The works will be completed this financial year (2018/19).

Risk management

The revocation of the bus lane on Church Street will provide extra capacity for traffic joining Ring Way. The decision to revoke this bus lane was taken by Cabinet on 14 September 2017. If this measure was not included in the order the capacity benefits may not be realised.

Failure to implement the order will reduce the ability to enforce the system of bus lanes that are implemented to ensure that visits to the main shopping area of Preston are both a safe and pleasant experience. Without correct enforcement the bus lanes will be abused and the reduction in congestion achieved will be at risk.

List of Background Papers

Paper	Date	Contact/Tel
None		
Reason for inclusion in Part II, if appropriate		
N/A		