

Report to the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport
Report submitted by: Interim Executive Director of Environment
Date: 10 October 2014

Part I

Electoral Division affected:
Lancaster East

Lancaster Pedestrian Zone Experimental Traffic Regulation Order – Proposed changes to access restriction as part of Lancaster Square Routes Project.
(Appendices 'A' - 'F2' refer)

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Executive Summary

Approval is sought for the advertisement and implementation of an Experimental Traffic Regulation Order (ETRO) to introduce new access restrictions in Lancaster Pedestrian Zone (Appendix 'A'). The details of proposed restrictions and their implications are set out in the report.

Recommendation

The Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport is asked to approve the advertisement and implementation of an ETRO in the Lancaster Pedestrian Zone as set out in this report and Appendices.

Background and Advice

The on-going Lancaster Square Routes Project aims to improve streets and spaces within the historic city centre for the public to enjoy and to support trading. Part of the focus of the project is the management and use of streets and spaces and how their future use can be improved for the greater benefit of all users.

As part of the Square Routes Project, Lancaster City Council has carried out public consultations and traffic surveys that support the view that traffic in the pedestrian zone is now at levels that significantly impair the experience of pedestrians, to the detriment of public amenity and road safety. In turn this is unhelpful to trading and has a detrimental impact on the quality of public spaces. The levels of vehicle access constrain what might be done to make more and better use of streets and spaces, particularly the use of Market Square for public events and exhibitions. The pedestrian zone contains shops, a charter market, cafes and restaurants, banks, dental surgeries and public buildings including the public library and the City Museum which is situated within the old town hall in Market Square. Access to the

rear of shops and delivery areas is limited due to the historic nature of the city. When combined with the current access arrangements for Blue Badge and Permit A holders there can be significant and often excessive numbers of motor vehicles within the zone.

Following on-street informal consultations and stakeholder meetings Lancaster City Council has formulated proposed changes to access arrangements within the pedestrian zone. These are set out at Appendix 'C'. The City Council has requested that the County Council considers the introduction of the restrictions and to deliver these changes under an Experimental Traffic Regulation Order (ETRO) to enable the proposals to be reviewed within the first 6 months of operation and allow for further amendments to be made to the ETRO if required. This will allow for the ETRO to run for a period of up to 18 months before a decision is taken as to the final traffic management arrangements at the end of the experimental period. The proposed ETRO would amend the existing restrictions by:

- Extending the existing core hours of restriction for all vehicles from between 10.30am to 16.30pm daily to 10.00am to 17.00pm daily;
- Withdrawing the existing Permit A which allows access for Blue Badge holders, however retaining permits for essential maintenance, the dismantling of market stalls within set times and temporary access for events;
- Removing the 7 parking spaces dedicated for use by Blue Badge holders in Market Square and to the rear of the Old Town Hall (Museum);
- It is also proposed to make a further amendment that would support the use of the pedestrian zone by cyclists outside the proposed revised core hours of operation; in the morning before 10.00am and in the evening from 17.00 onwards following the outcome of further consultations with stakeholders at the additional meetings held in March and June 2014.

Consideration has also been given to limiting the size of vehicles entering the pedestrian zone outside the core hours to 7.5 tonnes to further improve amenity and reduce the potential for damage to surfaces and street furniture. However at the present time there are several businesses that use vehicles over this weight. It is proposed to keep this option under review with the possibility of introduction at a later date.

Extension of Core Hours

The proposed extension of the core hours is targeted at extending the period in which shoppers and users of the pedestrian zone can expect there to be minimal traffic incursion into the area. This is expected to contribute toward an improvement in the quality of the environment for pedestrians and vulnerable road users by reducing the length of time in which delivery vehicles are permitted to enter the zone.

Removal of Blue Badge Holder Access

There are currently 7 designated disabled parking spaces within the pedestrian zone and the current parking scheme allows for use of these spaces by non-Permit A Blue

Badge holders outside the existing core hours of restriction, with Permit A Blue Badge holders being able to park anywhere within the zone, at all times of the day, providing they do not cause obstruction. The Permit A is issued to those Blue Badge holders who receive the higher rate of the disability mobility component or, to those Blue Badge holders over the age of 65. The scheme has not been reviewed since its introduction in the 1990's and the complex operation arrangements are open to misinterpretation. This is compounded by inconsistencies in the existing Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) and the supporting access signs. The City Council manage the permit scheme and its records are incomplete, although it is understood that the current number of issued permits allowing this type of access to the zone is potentially in excess of 700.

The City Council's request to remove Permit A and disabled parking spaces within the pedestrian zone was considered at stakeholder group meetings in spring 2012, which included the City Council's Access Officer. The stakeholder group established that the levels of traffic within the pedestrianised streets were incompatible with a long term ambition to improve the amenity and user experience of the pedestrian zone.

The above mentioned parking spaces occupy key areas within the city centre which can be better used and more suited to the development of the Square Routes proposal further contributing towards the quality and also the safety of the environment therefore these spaces should be removed along with Blue Badge holder access to the entire pedestrian zone. These spaces also contribute to the high levels of vehicular traffic within the zone as they encourage Blue Badge holders to linger in and recirculate through the pedestrian zone until parking spaces become available.

The plans attached at Appendices 'F1' and 'F2' provide an indication of the current distances from parking areas to areas within the pedestrian zone (Market Square) and also indicate the effect that the proposed removal of Blue Badge holder spaces would have on distances from parking spaces to areas within the zone.

The loss of these spaces can be offset by provision of on-street disabled parking on the periphery of the zone which is supplemented by additional disabled parking within St Nicholas Arcade and Marketgate shopping centres. Additionally there is an increased number of dedicated disabled parking bays in City Council car parks outside of the peripheral streets with existing on-street disabled parking allocation. It is proposed to continue to monitor the availability of disabled parking provision on the periphery of the city centre and to continue to work with the City Council and private car park managers to further increase the provision of dedicated disabled parking spaces where feasible.

The current dedicated disabled on-street parking provision within the A6 gyratory with direct access to the pedestrian zone is expressed as a percentage of the total parking allocation and is set out below:

Church Street (Upper) - 3 spaces (50% of total parking allocation)
New Road – 0 spaces (N.B. New Road incorporates a steep gradient)
North Road – 1 space (100% of total parking allocation)
Church Street (Lower) – 0 spaces

Gage Street – 5 spaces (100% of total parking allocation)
Mary Street – 1 space (100% of total parking allocation)
Common Garden Street – 4 spaces (100% of total parking allocation)
Brock Street – 0 spaces (No parking allocated)
Penny Street – 2 spaces (100% of total parking allocation)

It should also be noted that whilst the above affects the number of designated spaces, there is provision within the city centre pay and display car parks and the on-street pay and display parking for Blue Badge holders to park for free.

Officers have considered the impact of the proposals to remove Blue Badge holder access on those representative groups most likely to be affected by carrying out an equality impact analysis which is attached at Appendix 'E'. Having made this assessment and considered the impact it is considered that the disadvantages to Blue Badge holders can be mitigated through alternative provision and that the wider benefits to all groups outweigh the disadvantages.

Cycling

The request to allow cyclists to use the pedestrian zone from 17.00pm until 10.00am the following day has been considered and whilst it is acknowledged that permitting cycling may be perceived as detrimental to pedestrian safety it is proposed that this request be included in the revised ETRO access arrangements following representations and petitions from cycling groups. This is aimed at contributing towards the reduction of collisions involving cyclists on the A6 gyratory and will offer an alternative route during peak travel times.

Proposal

It is now proposed to advertise an ETRO and introduce the appropriate signs to enable enforcement of the proposed changes. The City Council, on behalf of the County Council, will be responsible for the management of the revised permit arrangements. The effectiveness of the ETRO will be monitored by a stakeholders group to be established by the County Council. The feedback from this group will be used to inform the recommendations to finalise the TRO at the end of the experimental period.

The proposed changes and improved legibility of the access signs will support improved enforcement within the pedestrian zone by the County Councils Civil Enforcement Officers and the Police and will potentially also assist in providing an element of self-enforcement which has been absent over recent years due to misunderstanding of access restrictions for zone users.

Consultations

Prior to Lancaster City Council's formal request for the County Council to consider the introduction of an ETRO to amend access restrictions in support of the Square Routes Project, the City Council carried out several levels of consultation including:

- Officer meetings to discuss the operation of the pedestrian zone in 2003/04 (Appendix 'B1');

- On-street public consultation as part of the initial Square Routes Project development during 2009/10;
- Publishing of the Square Routes details and proposals in Your District Matters magazine circulated throughout the Lancaster district;
- Lancaster Pedestrian Zone Stakeholder meetings in spring 2012 including attendance by elected members and city/ county officers to consider the format of the ETRO (Appendix 'B2').

The County Council advertised a notice for the introduction of an ETRO proposing changes to the access restrictions for Blue Badge holders in February 2014 however due to an administrative error the ETRO was deemed to be invalid. The County Council decided to place a hold on the introduction of the ETRO at this time and completed further engagement and consultation with appropriate stakeholders at meetings held in March and June 2014 (Appendices 'D1' and 'D2').

20 letters of objection were received by the County Council from Blue Badge holders following the advertisement of the notice in February 2014.

Between March and June 2014 extensive consultation has taken place including stakeholder meetings in which the following were represented:

Lancashire County Council Highways Service
 Lancashire County Council Equality and Cohesion Manager
 Lancaster City Council Regeneration and Planning Service
 Lancashire Constabulary
 Lancaster City Council Property Services
 One Voice, Lancaster (Disability Access Group)
 Lancaster District Chamber of Trade Inc Marketgate Shopping Centre/ St Nicholas Arcade Shopping Centre
 Divisional County Councillors
 Lancaster City Ward Councillors and Cabinet Members
 Lancaster City Council officers – Market, Parking and Administration Manager
 Dynamo (Lancaster Cycling Group)

The stakeholder meetings considered the objections that had been received and the following issues:

- The original proposal to remove disabled driver access and parking within the zone;
- HGV access to premises within the zone;
- Cycling access within the zone;
- Charter Market operations within the zone;
- Enforcement arrangements (current and future);
- Whether to use an ETRO or TRO to introduce the revised access arrangements.

The notes of the Stakeholder meeting are attached at Appendices 'D1' and 'D2'.

The consultation process included input from County Councillors and City Councillors. There was support for improving the current arrangements with a recognition that the existing arrangements are confusing and do not work well. There

was some concern raised about the removal of access for Blue Badge holders but a recognition that this has to be balanced with the needs of all those who use the city centre.

Following consideration of all the representations it is proposed that the County Council proceeds with the proposed changes to access restrictions to the pedestrian zone with the advertisement of an ETRO notice as set out in this report and supporting Equality Analysis Toolkit document (Appendix 'E').

Appendices

Appendix 'A' – Lancaster City Pedestrian Zone plan

Appendix 'B1' – TRO review document 2003/4

Appendix 'B2' – Lancaster City Stakeholder feedback 2012

Appendix 'C' – Lancaster City Cabinet Member Decision 2012

Appendix 'D1' – Lancashire County ETRO Stakeholder Meeting minutes 12 March 2014

Appendix 'D2' – Lancashire County ETRO Stakeholder Meeting minutes 4 June 2014

Appendix 'E' – Lancashire County ETRO Equality Analysis Toolkit document

Appendices 'F1' and 'F2' – Parking Spaces Distances plans

Implications:

This item has the following implications, as indicated:

Risk management

The advertisement of an ETRO could be subject to a request for a Public Inquiry into the making of the Order and introduction of the changes to the access arrangements on the basis that the objector considers that the correct procedure or due care has not been taken. In addition to the consultations and consideration of factors that took place prior to the initial advert for the ETRO in February 2014, the County Council has entered into further consultations since it was established that there was an administrative error with the above Order and has produced an Equality Analysis Assessment to ensure that appropriate consideration has been given to the needs of all users of the pedestrian zone and the potential impact of the proposed changes to access arrangements.

Financial

The advertisement of the ETRO and the cost of implementing the new signs for the change to access arrangements are estimated at £15,000 and will be funded from the Local Sustainable Transport Fund allocation for Lancaster.

List of Background Papers

Paper	Date	Contact/Directorate/Tel
Lancaster Pedestrian Zone (ETRO 2014) Equality Analysis Toolkit Document	February 2013	Eddie Mills/ Environment Directorate 01524 772068
Minutes – Lancaster Pedestrian zone stakeholders meeting		
Reason for inclusion in Part II, if appropriate		
N/A.		