

Report to the Cabinet

Meeting to be held on Thursday, 20 January 2022

Report of the Head of Service - Highways

Part I

Electoral Divisions affected:
Skelmersdale East; West
Lancashire East;

Corporate Priorities:
Delivering better services;

Lancashire County Council (Alder Lane, Parbold Hill and Sparrow Hill, Parbold, Crow Orchard Road and Hall Lane, Wrightington, West Lancashire Borough) (Revocation, Red route Clearway and Prohibition of Waiting) Order 202*
(Appendices 'A' – 'D' refer)

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Brief Summary

Following observations undertaken by highway officers in conjunction with information provided as a result of Lancashire Constabulary enforcement activity for the area, officers propose to introduce a 'Red Route' Clearway along a section of the A5209 Parbold to Wrightington to combat the steep increase in highway parking that has occurred resulting in serious road safety concerns for both vehicles and their occupants, as well as other road users of this busy section of the A5209.

Recommendation

Cabinet is asked to approve the proposals for the Red Route Clearway along the section of the A5209 as set out in this report and the attached appendices.

Detail

National movement restrictions in place during 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in the increased popularity of local beauty spot locations throughout the county and has resulted in continued popularity since. One such location, Fairy Glen, is situated on the A5209 at Wrightington which forms part of the main A road network for traffic connecting from the M6 to the surrounding local communities of Burscough, Rufford, Ormskirk and Skelmersdale.

Due to the absence of dedicated parking facilities within the Fairy Glen, visitors have resorted to parking within the highway on the approaches to the facilities entrance. Since 2020, the location began attracting a vast amount of visitors from further afield, this has expanded to a level which has prompted concerns from local residents, West Lancashire Borough Council and the Lancashire Constabulary. The parking of the vehicles on the highway with fast moving traffic along this national speed limit section of road and the entry/exit from the vehicles by the occupants, represented a general danger to other road users.

Observations undertaken by officers at the location during the latter part of 2020, in conjunction with information provided from Lancashire Constabulary relating to enforcement activity for the area, confirmed that there had been a huge increase in highway parking. The manner in which vehicles were parked and the entry/exit from vehicles by occupants represented a potential road safety concern both for the vehicles and occupants involved as well as other road users of this busy section of the A5209.

As a result, officers proposed a reduction in speed to 40mph to align this remaining national speed limit section with comparable sections along the route which have previously benefited from a speed limit reduction and a carriageway clearway to prohibit the occurrence of parking activity within the highway. Following consideration of the area layout, and the observation of parking within both the verge and footway areas, it was determined that, in view of their now expanded national availability, the installation of a Red Route clearway would represent a more suitable solution as, unlike standard clearways, this incorporates a prohibition of parking for the entirety of the highway area not just the main carriageway but also includes footways and verges, by default.

Consultations

Formal consultation was carried out between 28 July 2021 and 25 August 2021 and advertised in the local press. Notices were displayed prominently along the route. Divisional county councillors were consulted along with the council's usual consultees and the consultation documents posted on the council's website.

During the consultation period, 3 objections were received to the proposals from local residents and the Parish Council which highlighted:

- Three surrounding areas being potentially affected by the displaced parking.
- The effect on daily operations for local establishments, for example the churches; and;
- Concerns related to enforceability of the order for vehicle owners who may consider parking fully off the carriageway acceptable.

The specific areas of concern along with officer responses are set out below in more detail.

1. Concern:

A concern was raised that the proposed order as it stands will push cars to park on Glenside, Sprodley Lane and Stoneygate Lane which also feature entrance points to Fairy Glen.

Officer response:

The current proposal aims to remove parking along the section of the main A5209 route through the area where this represents a potential increased hazard to road users because of higher traffic flows. As part of this process officers will undertake an assessment of how any relocation of parking will impact the surrounding area and where this is found to contravene highway code directions the provision of additional restrictive measures will be considered. Unfortunately, clearway restrictions such as the proposed Red Route are not considered appropriate for lower traffic areas, such as within housing estates and, therefore, additional restrictive measures will predominantly take the form of traditional yellow line restrictions where it is identified that parking results in either a hazard or unnecessary obstruction to other road users.

2. Concern:

A concern was raised that enforcing a 'clearway' along the stretch of the road past Fairy Glen will simply lead to visiting drivers parking completely across the footway and verge, rather than partially as they do now.

Officer response:

In this instance the implementation of a Red Route clearway has been chosen due to the unambiguous definition that coverage is for the full extent of the highway which includes footways and verges by default without the requirement to add this element as a supplement which is the case for normal clearway restrictions. This, in conjunction with the clearer, more perceptible, signage, is anticipated to reduce any misunderstanding for drivers and allows for the potential use of more effective methods of enforcement activity such as camera cars in the future.

3. Concern:

The layby on top of Parbold Hill is part of the highway and within the area concerned but the problems highlighted by the parish council over many years have not been addressed at all.

Officer Response:

The layby at the top of Parbold Hill forms a dedicated parking area for the local beauty spot and where used correctly, within the rules of the Highway Code, operates as an area where vehicles can exit the main highway and park in a safe manner. The Highway Code does contain clear directions for overnight vehicle parking, particularly involving larger vehicles, and where this is not adhered to enforcement is available via the Police who can be contacted directly via either the non-emergency 101 number or online at <https://doitonline.lancashire.police.uk/>, with, where possible, a record of the registration numbers of the vehicles. In conjunction with the introduction of the Red Route a proposal for a reduction in the current speed limit along this section to 40mph is also being progressed to correspond with other sections along the route which present a similar surrounding configuration.

4. Concern:

Can you please clarify if this order would prevent vehicles such as wedding cars and hearses parking on the road outside Christ Church, Douglas-in-Parbold?

Officer response:

Red routes are a new restriction recently opened up for use outside of main city areas, and whilst initially it was considered that in line with more traditional restrictive measures, the requested short-term waiting at the entrance to Christ Church Douglas-in-Parbold Church would be permitted. However, on receiving further direction from the county council's legal team based on Department for Transport guidance this is not the case and Red Route clearways are more precise in their prohibition and, in line with their objective of retaining a clear traffic route, do not incorporate the potential for an exemption for this purpose.

As a result, the current proposal for a red route clearway will not permit the requested short-term parking within the highway for vehicles attending the church. For general attendees this is not envisaged to result in decreased accessibility due to the expansive, off highway, car parking facilities immediately adjacent the premises; however, it was accepted that the change in level present between the car park and church entrance would represent a concern when undertaking the transfer of caskets into the premises for funerals.

Therefore, as the church is positioned within the lower 30mph speed limit section at the western extremity of the identified area of concern it has been considered that a reduction of the overall extent of the clearway to exclude the 30mph section would be acceptable. This is not predicted to result in any reduction to the effectiveness of the proposal in resolving the current Police identified parking related concerns in the vicinity of the Fairy Glen site.

In light of the above, a further public consultation was undertaken to establish levels of opposition or support for the amended extent which would limit the restriction to the more rural area subject to the higher 40mph speed limit. This was carried out between 28 October and 18 November 2021 and did not result in the receipt of any additional responses of either support or opposition.

In view of the above amended proposal, and absence of any additional responses, officers are recommending that the Traffic Regulation Order featuring the revised western extent (detailed in the plan at Appendix 'D') continues to completion.

Implications:

This item has the following implications, as indicated:

Financial

The costs of the Traffic Regulation Order will be funded from the 2021/22 highways budget for new signs and lines at an estimated cost of £6,000.00.

Risk management

This proposal aims to add additional controls to parking activity along the A5209 which has been identified to represent a potential hazard to both vehicles and occupants involved. This will assist in alleviating potential road safety implications for all highway users in this area.

List of Background Papers

Paper	Date	Contact/Tel
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None

Reason for inclusion in Part II, if appropriate

N/A