

## WILTSHIRE COUNCIL

### BRADFORD ON AVON AREA BOARD 21 September 2011

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#### Proposal for a Lorry Watch Initiative in Bradford On Avon

##### **1 Purpose of the Report**

To outline the purposes and operation of the Lorry Watch initiative and to seek support for a 'Lorry Watch – Bradford on Avon' campaign.

##### **2 Proposal from Trading Standards**

2.1 A scoping meeting was held on 30 August 2011 to introduce the initiative, attended by Sgt Chris Hams and PC Martin Annetts (Wiltshire Police), Councillor Vicky Landell-Mills (Bradford on Avon Town Council); Tom Hutchinson (Wiltshire Trading Standards) and Peter Dunford (Bradford on Avon Community Area Manager)

2.2 Lorry Watch has been implemented successfully in other counties, such as Gloucestershire, and has been piloted in Wiltshire at Purton (near Swindon) as well as being investigated at Laverstock and Ford (near Salisbury) and at Newtown (in Trowbridge).

2.3 Lorry Watch is a scheme operated by using local observers to detect the misuse of weight restricted routes by heavy goods vehicles in local towns and parishes.

2.4 Local observers note details of vehicles that may be misusing the route; details are then handed to a Co-ordinator for administration and checking; the Co-ordinator sends details to Trading Standards who will obtain details of the owners of the vehicles from the DVLA; once the vehicle weight has been confirmed a letter will be sent to the owner to determine whether the driver was in contravention of the Order when observed; Trading Standards will then make a decision as to what action is necessary.

2.5 Help will be provided by Wiltshire Council for initial set-up but the initiative will run with local volunteer effort. A Co-ordinator and team of observers will need to be recruited and briefed. A leaflet 'What is Lorry Watch' together with a set of 'Frequently Asked Questions' has been prepared to assist the recruitment process (attached).

2.6 Bradford on Avon is considered a prime candidate as an early-adopter of the scheme, particularly given the proposed HGV weight limit on the A46/A36 route via Cleveland Bridge/ Bathwick Street in Bath which could result in increased

levels of heavy traffic trying to reach the A36 southbound by way of the A363 through the congested centre of the town.

### **3 The issue in Bradford on Avon**

- 3.1 There is much local concern regarding the intrusion of overweight HGVs in the historic environment of Bradford town centre. Previous efforts to control the HGV nuisance by the Police and the Town Council, over many years, have suffered from a lack of resources and enforcement powers and the sheer volume of bureaucracy involved. There remain a number of activists in the town who are campaigning for improvements to the situation.
- 3.2 The Police report frustration that, despite years of effort and lobbying, until now no co-ordinated action had been taken by the local authorities to address the problem. Weight limit warning signs on the roads around the town are felt to be inadequate and should be clearer and sited further out e.g on the A46 approaching Bath from the motorway.
- 3.3 Other problems include foreign drivers not understanding the road signs and the expense and lack of universal availability of HGV-specific SatNav software which sometimes results in lorries driving through the town in error.
- 3.4 The current weight limit on the Town Bridge is 17.5 tonnes. There is widespread support to reduce this to 7.5 tonnes and 2 axle vehicles, however this would need to be considered as part of a sub-regional freight strategy.

### **4 Staverton River Bridge and other Villages**

- 4.1 HGV traffic is signed to follow the B3105 route from the top of town through Woolley Green to Staverton so as to avoid the town centre of Bradford on Avon. Heavy traffic has no option but to use the bridge at Staverton and this restricts the possibility of any such weight limit being placed upon it. Unrestricted HGV traffic on this route is likely to increase following the weight restrictions imposed in Bath and the enforcement through Lorry Watch of the weight limit on Town Bridge.
- 4.2 Increased traffic in and around Bradford on Avon will also impact on villages such as Woolley Green, Holt, Limpley Stoke, Westwood and Wingfield, some of which have very constrained historic environments.

### **4 The Need for Joined-Up Strategy and Action**

- 4.1 There are a number of initiatives which, if joined-up effectively, could deliver a multi-agency response to the HGV nuisance in the town:

- i) The Historic Core Zone – plans for surface improvements at Church Street/ Market Street will re-inforce the pedestrian priority in the town centre and new ‘gateways’ will feature new signage to deter HGV traffic from entering the historic core zone of the town.
- ii) The Air Quality Management Area – levels of nitrogen dioxide in the town centre are already in excess of EU air quality standards and a new air quality monitoring device is to be sited towards the top of Masons Lane, at the junction with Ivy Terrace, to monitor emissions.
- iii) The proposed Experimental Environmental Traffic Regulation Order at Cleveland Bridge/ Bathwick Street in Bath – likely to be approved by Bath & Northeast Somerset Cabinet on 14 September - will require extensive new signage to direct HGV traffic in excess of 18 tonnes away from Bath and the centre of Bradford on Avon. Cabinet papers here: <http://democracy.bathnes.gov.uk/mgIssueHistoryHome.aspx?IId=5517>
- iv) Freight Strategy – as part of the recent Local Transport Plan, a separate freight strategy was published in March 2011 which highlights the importance that Wiltshire Council places in the efficient movement of freight within the county. It is proposed to designate the A363 through Bradford on Avon town centre as an ‘Access Freight Route’ for local access traffic only and not for through HGV traffic.
- v) Community Speed Watch – this joint initiative of Wiltshire Police and Wiltshire Council is already active across the county, featuring trained teams of volunteers, so there will now be learning to benefit the operation of Lorry Watch.

## **5 Launching Lorry Watch – Bradford on Avon**

5.1 Further to discussion at the Bradford on Avon Area Board on 21 September, the initiative will be formally debated by Bradford on Avon Town Council at its meeting on 27 September. Assuming that the project will receive endorsement, it is hoped to recruit volunteers and a Co-ordinator and to formally launch the scheme during October 2011.

5.2 Members of the Town Council and of the Neighbourhood Policing Team have already put their names forward to help.

## **6 Implications**

### **6.1 Environmental Impact of the Proposals**

Lorry Watch will hope to impact upon over-weight HGV traffic which unlawfully seeks to pass through the historic core zone of the town, thereby reducing the number of unnecessary traffic movements and improving the pedestrian

environment. A reduction in nitrogen dioxide emissions should improve environmental conditions within the designated air quality management area.

## 6.2 Financial Implications

Lorry Watch will run as a predominantly volunteer scheme and the post of Lorry Watch Co-ordinator is a voluntary position. Wiltshire Trading Standards will provide the 'back office' administration for the scheme, including contact with the Driver Vehicle Licensing Agency and the Magistrates Courts.

## 6.3 Legal Implications

Volunteers will be trained to monitor the traffic and collect vehicle registration data in safe and controlled conditions. The subsequent dealings with drivers and the prosecution process will be handled by suitably trained employees of Wiltshire Council and Wiltshire Police.

## 6.4 HR Implications

There are no specific HR implications related to this report.

## 6.5 Equality and Diversity Implications

Involvement in Lorry Watch is open to all and the outcomes from it will benefit the whole community.

## 7 Recommendation

- i) The Bradford on Avon Area Board supports the initiative of Wiltshire Trading Standards to establish 'Lorry Watch' in Bradford on Avon.
- ii) The Community Area Manager be delegated responsibility to organise the launch and management arrangements including overseeing the recruitment of a Co-ordinator and Volunteers
- iii) That joined-up strategy and action is ensured between officers responsible for highways and traffic improvements in Bradford on Avon, including the Historic Core Zone, the Freight Strategy, and the effects of the proposed HGV weight restriction order at Cleveland Bridge in Bath.

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