

**DEPUTY LEADER AND CABINET MEMBER FOR HIGHWAYS, STREETSCENE AND BROADBAND – CLLR JOHN THOMSON**

**HIGHWAYS AND TRANSPORT SERVICE**

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**REFERENCE:** HSB-05-14

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**LACOCK HIGH STREET**  
**EXPERIMENTAL PROHIBITION OF DRIVING**

**Purpose of Report**

1. To consider the comments received following the Experimental Traffic Regulation Order prohibiting motor vehicles from driving through the High Street / Abbey Road, Lacock.

**Relevance to the Council's Business Plan**

2. Outcome 2 of the Business Plan – People in Wiltshire work together to solve problems locally and participate in decisions that affect them.

**Background**

3. The issue of through traffic problems in the village is a longstanding concern for the Parish Council. Prior to the construction of Hither Way all traffic accessing locations to the east of Lacock (Bowden Hill and Calne) used the High Street / Abbey Road. Following an increase in traffic volume and lobbying from the Parish Council, the former Wiltshire County Council agreed to construct the Hither Way bypass with the intention to re-route the High Street traffic around the village. This was duly opened in 1986.
4. The introduction of traffic signals at the junction of the A350 / C150 during 2000/01 resulted in encouraging southbound motorists intending on accessing the areas to the east of the village to access the village at this location rather than at the alternative location which links into Hither Way. Additionally, motorists approaching from the east with an intention of heading northbound also continued to use Abbey Road / High Street to access the traffic signals.
5. Concerns were raised by the Parish Council that Hither Way was not functioning as was originally intended, with traffic continuing to use the High Street in both directions. This prompted, after discussion with stakeholders, the introduction of the one-way system in Abbey Road which sought to remove 50% of the traffic from the High Street.
6. Prior to development of the Community Area Transport Groups, representatives from Lacock Parish Council, The National Trust, Wiltshire County Council (and latterly Wiltshire Council), the former District Council and the Police met quarterly to discuss issues within the parish. As a result of these regular meetings, a number of schemes have been developed and implemented, namely an improvement to the street scene through a decluttering exercise, and a comprehensive review of waiting restrictions within the village.
7. It was through this forum that the desire was initially raised to consider measures which seek to further reduce through traffic in the High Street and Abbey Road area, and

encourage traffic with a destination to the east to utilise West Street and Hither Way, as originally intended prior to the construction of the bypass (Hither Way).

8. Various options to discourage use were discussed with representatives from the Highway Authority and Police. These options included the introduction of traditional traffic calming facilities, a full closure of the route, and the prohibition of driving restriction. The introduction of traditional traffic calming was discounted for a number of reasons, including the impact on neighbouring properties / structures, the ability of features to discourage use and the environmental consequences (visual and noise). A full closure to through traffic was discounted due to the necessary access requirements for adjoining properties, and the impact on The National Trust, in particular coaches. It was subsequently agreed that a restriction which prevented vehicles, but provided an exemption for coaches and access to off-street premises, would provide an acceptable solution.
9. It was recognised by all parties that the introduction of this restriction would represent a considerable change to traffic movements within the parish and, consequently, it was considered that the restriction should be introduced as an experimental scheme to assess the impact, and for the Parish Council to undertake a public consultation exercise within the village to determine whether or not there was a desire for the scheme.
10. To assist with the consultation, Wiltshire Council provided the Parish Council with a proposal drawing, and the Parish Council held a public exhibition in the village over the weekend of 19 and 20 January 2013 and allowed residents to comment on the proposal. During this event, 91 residents commented on the proposal, with a positive response from 71% of these. A copy of the proposal plan is included in **Appendix 1**.
11. The Parish Council discussed these results at its meeting in February and resolved to formally request that the restriction be introduced on an experimental basis. The benefit of an Experimental Traffic Regulation Order allows for the restriction to be introduced for a maximum period of eighteen months, and during the initial six month period comments can be submitted for consideration.
12. The scheme was formally introduced on 27 May 2013. As with all schemes which alter driver behaviour, there was a limited degree of misunderstanding during the initial period of operation as motorists familiarised themselves with the restriction, and the necessary alternative route. The Police took the opportunity to provide assistance by regularly enforcing the restriction during the early periods to discourage use and educate those contravening the restriction. During this period, representatives of both the Parish Council and The National Trust took the opportunity to monitor and observe the restriction, prior to meeting with representatives of the Highway Authority to assess its effectiveness and discuss any concern raised locally. At this meeting, it was recognised that a number of minor alterations to the traffic signs in advance of the restriction were required to reinforce and provide additional advice on the presence of the restriction, as well as reaffirming the junction priorities at West Street and High Street. These amendments were completed in July and October respectively.
13. During the trial period, traffic monitoring has been undertaken to assess the impact the restriction has on the closure and also the alternative routes. Table 1 details the results of the monitoring.

**Table 1**

Location	Annual Average Daily Traffic		
	Pre Installation (Jan/Feb 2013)	Post Installation (Jun/Jul 2013)	6 Month's After (Jan/Feb 2014)

	North Bound	South Bound	North Bound	South Bound	North Bound	South Bound
Hither Way	(East) 985	(West) 2283	(East) 2048	(West) 2077	(East) 1205	(West) 1108
Melksham Road	541	50	1048	1043	586	538
West Street	93	28	1858	1671	1083	1044
Abbey Road	7	1037	16	201	9	105
Bewley Common	(East) 1029	(West) 969	(East) 2117	(West) 1960	(East) 1070	(West) 1187

Note: Hither Way Pre Installation Survey was undertaken during May 2013

Note: The readings highlighted in red are considered imprecise

14. Following analysis of the most recent survey (January 2014), it is estimated that approximately 15% of those recorded travelling on Abbey Road in a southbound direction have a legitimate reason for travelling in the restricted section.
15. The six month consultation period finished on 27 November 2013. During this period a total of 47 comments in support have been received, along with 16 comments objecting and 8 making general comment. Both the Parish Council and Wiltshire Council Member, Mr Richard Tonge, have outlined their support for the proposal and their desire for its introduction on a permanent basis.

### **Main Considerations for the Council**

16. To consider the comments received during the consultation period. A summary of the issues raised is included in **Appendix 2**. Details of those who commented are provided in **Appendix 3**.
17. The most frequent comments in support of the scheme are:
  - Consider the restriction has reduced traffic in the High Street and has made a positive improvement for vulnerable road users, both resident and visitor (made 37 times).
  - Consider the scheme to have positively improved the character and ambience of the High Street, including a reduction in the general noise levels (made 22 times).
  - Consider the scheme to be a success (made 9 times).
18. The most frequent comments in objection to the scheme are:
  - Consider the restriction has increased danger in the High Street, due to the number of vehicles having to turn around (made 9 times).
  - Consider the scheme has increased danger for motorists and residents in West Street and Hither Way (made 6 times).
  - Consider there are alternative solutions which would achieve the same result (made 6 times).
  - Consider the restriction has inconvenienced residents who live to the east of Lacock, in particular Bowden Hill (made 6 times).
19. In addition to the comments listed above, it has also been noted that concern exists regarding the level of compliance of the restriction and concerns raised regarding the potential for contravention. It is acknowledged that the imposition of restriction without any physical feature, such as a gate or barrier to regulate the restriction, results in the potential for contravention, particularly by a small percentage of persistent offenders. The existing features are only temporary in nature and are insufficient to provide a long-term

solution to encourage compliance. It is therefore necessary to consider the introduction of permanent features which assist in achieving this.

### **Safeguarding Implications**

20. There are no safeguarding considerations relating to this proposal.

### **Public Health Implications**

21. The introduction of the restriction has reduced the traffic volume in the High Street and consequently it is likely to provide reductions in traffic emissions in an area subject to significant volumes of pedestrian movements.

### **Environmental Impact of the Proposal**

22. The installation of road signs where none previously existed, together with road markings, can be considered detrimental to the visual vista and street scene.
23. The increase in distance travelled by vehicles following the diversion may lead to additional vehicle emissions being produced. However, given the comments received, this may be offset through the potential reduction in congestion encountered in the High Street.

### **Equalities Impact of the Proposal**

24. There are none with this proposal.

### **Risk Assessment**

25. There are none with this proposal.

### **Financial Implications**

26. The costs associated with implementing the experimental scheme have been borne through contributions by the Parish Council and The National Trust. Should the decision be to remove the scheme and revert to the previous arrangement, there is no allocation in either the 2013-14 or 2014-15 Local Transport Plan (LTP) Integrated Transport budget for this works.
27. Should a decision be taken to proceed with adoption of the scheme, there is neither an allocation within the 2013-14 LTP Integrated Transport budget nor the allocation for 2014-15. Any subsequent costs associated with implementing the scheme on a permanent basis will have to be borne through a submission to the relevant Community Area Transport Group or via contributions from third Parties, i.e. the Parish Council or The National Trust.

### **Legal Implications**

28. The introduction of Experimental Traffic Regulation Orders has a maximum duration of eighteen months. Should no determination of objections be received during this timeframe, the restriction will have to be removed and the previous layout restored.

### **Options Considered**

29. To:
- (i) Implement the proposal as per the current Experimental Traffic Regulation Order.
  - (ii) Remove the Experimental Traffic Regulation Order and revert to the previous road layout.

### **Reason for Proposals**

30. The scheme has been developed following considerable work by the local community, including the Parish Council and The National Trust. The restriction retains the support of the Parish Council and local Wiltshire Council Member; in addition, the majority of responses received during the comment period indicate there is strong support within the local community.

### **Proposals**

31. That:
- (i) The Experimental Traffic Regulation Order be made permanent.
  - (ii) The objectors be informed accordingly.

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**The following unpublished documents have been relied on in the preparation of this Report:**

None