

BLACKWOOD TOWN CENTRE MANAGEMENT GROUP – 15TH DECEMBER 2004

**SUBJECT: HIGH STREET, BLACKWOOD - NO 'U' TURNS 7 PM TO 7 AM
EXPERIMENTAL TRAFFIC ORDER**

REPORT BY: DIRECTOR OF THE ENVIRONMENT

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To provide an update on the experimental traffic order to ban 'U' turns overnight on High Street, Blackwood, at the town's southern roundabout.

2. SUMMARY

- 2.1 The Chief Engineer had decided to advertise making the experimental order permanent and to provide the same prohibition at the town's northern roundabout.

3. THE EXPERIMENTAL ORDER BACKGROUND

- 3.1 For clarification it is appropriate to highlight the history of this Order. This unique Order was originally suggested and requested by Blackwood police in September 2003 and was supported by the Chief Constable's representative at Cwmbran Police HQ. At a Thursday evening site inspection in Blackwood town between the hours of 8 and 11, a local police inspector, the previous police liaison officer at Cwmbran Police HQ and an officer, witnessed first hand the continual 'snake' of cruisers driving up and down the High Street and carrying out a 'U-turn' at the mini-roundabout where it meets Gordon Road. 'Car cruisers' for several years had thus plagued the town, on most evenings of the week. These drivers were causing continuous anti-social and nuisance behaviour together with, quite often, dangerous driving activities to the other law-abiding users of the town centre's facilities. The Inspector's radical solution was intended to be part of a package of measures for law enforcement in the town to attempt to alleviate these very problems.
- 3.2 The Council agreed to ban 'U turns' at the Gordon Road roundabout between 7 pm and 7 am as an experimental traffic order, to gauge its usefulness in combatting the ongoing problems on High Street. The Welsh Assembly Government's authorisation was sought and gained for the non-prescribed traffic signs that were associative with the Order. Initially WAG approval was given for six months only and the Order was made and signed in November 2003. Apart from a few initial complaints/queries from residents from the Oakdale area and taxi drivers who wished to turn around at the roundabout the experiment has not raised any written objections.
- 3.3 In February 2004 Blackwood police asked for the experiment to be continued for a further period and WAG duly approved the signs for another six months. Whilst it has been operational it is believed that over a hundred drivers had been booked by the local police for contravening the Order. Enforcement has been associated with other police actions in the town.

- 3.4 Therefore, the experiment has been proven to be of some success in combatting the town's problems over the last ten months or so, but it has obviously been dependent upon evening enforcement. In August this year Blackwood police expressed the view that the experiment has been generally successful in deterring 'car cruisers' from causing anti-social and dangerous driving behaviour along High Street to the overall benefit of the local residents and town users in the evenings. Also it had assisted with the ongoing, law enforcement exercises in the town centre that had taken place from time to time. It was requested that consideration be given to making the Order permanent and that further consideration be given to duplicating the Order, as a mirror image, at the new, northern roundabout near the Asda store.
- 3.5 To pursue this item a meeting was held with the new Blackwood Inspector and the police liaison officer on the morning of 20 September 2004. It became clear that the new Inspector supported his predecessor's request. I am aware of some criticisms of the lack of policing of the signs from parts of the community such that, from time to time, the 'cruisers' have blatantly ignored the signs. But from the meeting and a lack of actual complaints to the Council office, it is clear that these have been countered by a general reduction in 'cruising'.
- 3.6 The Chief Constable's representative in his letter of 20 September 2004, formally requested that consideration be given for the above mentioned experimental traffic order to be made permanent.

4. RESPONSE

- 4.1 In view of the success of the experimental order in helping to control the problem and in response to the request for a complementary order at the northern end of the town, I have pursued making the Order permanent and proposed another 'No U turns' Order, for the northern roundabout, through the legal channels. The necessity of continued police enforcement of the Order is stressed so that it does not fall into any disrepute.
- 4.2 Legal Services advertised the proposals on 25 November and in the meanwhile WAG has re-authorised the temporary signs until Jan 2005.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 A permanent traffic order and its associated signs will cost about £5,000 from the Traffic Management budget.

6. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 Traffic Management, Legal Services and Communication officers time will be required to pursue a permanent traffic order.

7. CONSULTATIONS

- 7.1 Members of the Blackwood ward, the Town Council and the Chamber of Trade have already been consulted on the permanent order proposal. No adverse comments were received.

8. DECISION

- 8.1 The Chief Engineer had decided under delegated powers to formally advertise the permanent order for the High Street, Blackwood.

9. REASONS FOR THE DECISION

9.1 The reasons for the decision are outlined in paragraphs 4.1 to 5.1.

10. STATUTORY POWER

10.1 The Council can introduce a traffic regulation order on the highway in consultation with the Chief Constable under the terms of The Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984.

Author: Bob Campbell, Senior Assistant Engineer - Traffic Management
Tel: x5265, Email: campbrj@caerphilly.gov.uk
File ref. TM/W10

Consultees: Local Members – Cllr K Etheridge, N Dix, L Gardiner
Cabinet Member for Transportation and Planning, Cllr K Griffiths
The Chief Constable

Background Papers:
None