

BLACKWOOD TOWN CENTRE MANAGEMENT GROUP - 21ST OCTOBER 2010

SUBJECT: BLACKWOOD – EXPERIMENTAL PROHIBITION OF DRIVING, TRAFFIC ORDER UPDATE AND COMMENTS ON STREET CLUTTER

REPORT BY: CHIEF EXECUTIVE

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To inform the town centre management group of the progress on the above mentioned traffic regulation orders for High Street and a consideration to remove street clutter.

2. SUMMARY

- 2.1 The implementation and operation of the experimental road closure and the recent on-street parking changes had been successful in improving the town centre environment. It is therefore recommended that the experimental closure order be made permanent. Further improvements could also be made by removing the extensive guardrailling and replacing the three 'traffic flow' orientated pelican crossings with 'pedestrian orientated' zebra crossings.

3. LINKS TO STRATEGY

- 3.1 Engineering Division Objective: To work towards a safer environment through positive measures to reduce road accidents, and particularly for protecting and providing for vulnerable road users.

4. THE TRAFFIC ORDERS PROGRESS

- 4.1 High Street was experimentally closed to through vehicles in September last year overnight on Thursdays. After much consultation this proposal was agreed as necessary to try to control the nuisance of 'car cruisers' that had plagued the town for 25 years.
- 4.2 The Council erected substantial gates at either end of the High Street with their associated 'flip down' signage and this signage was repeated on its two side roads of Woodbine Road and Pentwyn Road. The local Police shut the gates and unhinged the signs at a suitable time after 7 pm since the order came in to force on 13th May on all but two Thursday nights (because of severely inclement weather). The Police reported a significant drop in car cruisers in the first 6 months. A very small number of local townsfolk were reported for driving past the gates and the signs. The Police asked if the side road signage could be improved and this was carried out last month when 4 variable message signs were erected here. They are remote control operated which makes it more easily controlled by the local Police Officers. Generally the experiment has been very successful. The only two adverse comments were made to the press. These were from one local restaurant/take away owner on Pentwyn Road and a pub landlord from Argoed whose pub is located over two kilometres north of Blackwood town centre. The local Police Officers intend to give their own verbal report on both traffic regulation orders to the meeting.

- 4.3 The Engineering Division seeks the views of the Town Centre Management Group on this experimental order and the recommendation to make it permanent in January next year.
- 4.4 Earlier this year the Council implemented a review of the on-street car parking on the High Street. Parking was prohibited on the town's eastern side and the parking bays on the western side were more clearly defined. The two southbound loading bays and the taxi bay outside the Coed-Duon pub were removed.
- 4.5 Generally the traders, the local community and the local Police Officers have welcomed the High Street changes. The only adverse comment was from the Caerphilly County Borough Taxi Drivers' Association as their drivers have lost some of their on-street taxi rank provision. The Association had asked for this matter to be considered again.
- 4.6 The whole of the Blackwood and Cefn Fforest area traffic orders are due for an overall review starting this financial year and taxi provision on and near the High Street will be reconsidered as part of this new review.

5. STREET CLUTTER

- 5.1 Earlier this year Engineering & Planning Division officers met to consider if the Town's High Street environment could be further improved by reducing its street clutter. The three Pelican Crossing sites were identified as areas where it had an obvious urban look to it rather than a valleys' town feeling. Each pelican crossing has extensive guardrailing surrounding them giving pedestrians an enclosed, barriered off impression. The town's fourth crossing point and its most recent addition in 2006 is the Zebra Crossing by the market access called Gravel Lane. This crossing is not enclosed or barriered off at all and is the most used road crossing point in the town. The three pelican crossings have existed here since 1977. They were implemented and maintained here due to the High Street being part of the A4048 Crosskeys to Pontllanfraith to Tredegar principal road. High Street became the B4251 on December 23rd 2005 when the Sirhowy Enterprise Way was opened as the new A4048.
- 5.2 The pelicans were essential up to that time to allow principal road traffic flow to be maintained. Their associated traffic signals equipment and electronic controllers are expensive to maintain and they are nearing the end of their operational and useful life. The Engineering Division recommend that this old equipment be removed from the highway and be replaced by new Zebra Crossings with their belisha beacons. Zebras give demand to pedestrians over vehicles and are this more appropriate for the High Street.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 Funding for the removal of the extensive guardrailing could be available via Urban Renewal for this year but funding to change the three pelicans has yet to be identified.

7. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 None.

8. CONSULTATIONS

- 8.1 The two traffic orders have been fully consulted upon. The consultees' written responses are held in the Traffic Management Office - please contact the author if you wish to see them.

9. RECOMMENDATIONS

9.1 The Town Centre Management Group are asked for their views on and support for the following recommendations:-

9.1.1 to make the experimental overnight closure order permanent

9.1.2 to remove the extensive guardrailing on High Street *around the pedestrian crossings*

9.1.3 to remove the aged pelican crossings equipment and replace them with zebra crossings to give greater priority to pedestrians.

10. STATUTORY POWER

10.1 The Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984.

11. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

11.1 The reasons for the recommendations are outlined in paragraphs 4.1 to 5.4.

Author: Bob Campbell, Senior Assistant Engineer - Traffic Management
Tel: x5265, Email: campbri@caerphilly.gov.uk

Appendices:
Appendix 1 - Traffic Order Consultation List

Traffic Order Consultation List

Heddlu Gwent Constabulary
Police Headquarters
Croesyceiliog
Cwmbran
NP44 2JX
F.A.O. Mike Nightingale

Wales Ambulance Services NHS Trust
Clinical contact Centre
Vantage Point House
Ty Coch Way
Cwmbran
NP44 7HF

South Wales Fire-Rescue Services
HQ
Forest View Business Park
Llantrisant
CF72 8LX
F.A.O. Graham Tearle
Regional Secretary
Freight Transport Association
Regis House
Falcon Drive
Cardiff bay
Cardiff
CF10 4RU
Road Haulage Association
Midlands & Western Region
Roadway House
Bristol
BS10 7TU

The Town Council

3 Ward Members: Cllrs K Etheridge (as Member in 2009 and early in 2010), K Smallman and Mrs K Presley
Cabinet Member: Cllr Gough

Trade representatives - Mr Lambert and Mrs Edwards