



Report to Cabinet Member for Transportation

Decision to be taken on or after 31 October 2005

Decision can normally be implemented at least 3 working days after decision has been signed.

Cabinet Member Report No. **T06.05**

Title: Watery Lane, Hambleden.
Prohibition of Motor Vehicles.
Traffic Regulation Order.

Date: 21 October 2005.

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Electoral Divisions : Chiltern Valley

Relevant Overview and Scrutiny Committee: Community and Environment

Summary

Watery Lane is a narrow single track road which lies within the Parish of Hambleden, but it also borders the parishes of Turville and Ibstone. The lane is subjected to regular flooding which caused surface damage resulting in the road being closed sometimes for long periods. When the road was open there was also a potential conflict between motor vehicles and vulnerable road users along this narrow country lane. Consequently, in February 2000, a Traffic Regulation Order was introduced which prohibited motor vehicles from using Watery Lane and gave priority to pedestrians, equestrians, and cyclists.

This scheme generated significant interest both before and after its implementation, and in view of the level of comments received at that time, the County Council agreed to consider the following course of action following a meeting held with local parties:

- To explore the possibility of providing a bridleway adjacent to Watery Lane, which would provide a safe facility for vulnerable road users, and would allow the lane to be re-opened to motor vehicles;
- To undertake a questionnaire survey of all residents in the Parish Council areas of Ibstone, Turville, and Hambleden, in order to gauge local opinion on the effects of the scheme;
- To consider the environmental impact of this scheme by reducing sign clutter at the closure points at each end of Watery Lane by reviewing the size and type of the signs that are in place, and also to consider the possible transfer of some signs onto the gates.

The bridleway option was considered but no further action was taken on this proposal because it was strongly resisted by local landowners, and it would have required the use of compulsory purchase powers to progress.

A questionnaire was circulated to all households within the three Parish Council areas. The purpose of this survey was to gauge the local view on whether the Prohibition of Motor Vehicles Order should be retained. A total of 220 responses were received from the questionnaires survey, and the comments received from the local residents are analysed in Appendix 2, attached to this report. The comments received clearly indicate that the majority of the local residents support the removal of motor vehicles from Watery Lane and are keen to see the Traffic Regulation order retained.

There was also strong support for the environmental aspect of the physical measures used at the closure points to be reviewed.

A diary of events is contained in Appendix 1, attached to this report.

Recommendation

- 1. AGREE, that in view of the comments received from the questionnaire survey, that the existing Traffic Regulation Order which prohibits the use of Watery Lane by motor vehicles should remain in place ;**
- 2. AGREE that the method of closure at each end of Watery Lane be reviewed in accordance with the 'Environmental Guidelines for the Management of Roads in The Chilterns' in order to retain the rural aspect of this area ;**
- 3. AGREE that any amendments to the closure points be determined through local consultation and that any approved works be undertaken when funds become available ;**
- 4. AGREE that all formal consultees are advised accordingly.**

A. Narrative setting out the reasons for the decision

1. Watery Lane is a narrow single-track rural lane without passing places. It is approximately 500 metres in length and provides a link between Skirmett and Turville.
2. For a number of years this lane has been the cause of major maintenance problems due to springs rising in the vicinity, which result in flooding and surface damage. These problems have caused this road to be closed on a number of occasions, and at times for lengthy periods. When the lane has been closed, traffic has been diverted onto a more suitable route via Fingest Lane and Holloway Lane.
3. The lane is used regularly by pedestrians, cyclists and horse riders, and in view of the narrowness of the carriageway, there has been strong support from these groups to remove vehicular traffic from the lane in order to address the conflict issues between vehicles and vulnerable users of the lane.
4. In 1996 a petition was received from residents of Skirmett who were in favour of closing Watery Lane to motor vehicles, but at that time residents of Turville objected to this proposal. However, following further strong representations from local residents it was agreed that the usage of this lane together with the consideration of

possible vehicular restrictions should be reviewed. This course of action was supported due to the concerns relating to public safety implications, and the fact that a more suitable alternative route exists.

5. In January 1998 the Traffic and Road Safety Panel recommended that the scheme should be taken to formal consultation. Following receipt of these comments it was agreed to take the proposal to public consultation and this was undertaken in February 1999.
6. Due to the controversial nature of the proposal, together with the high level of representations received from the public, it was agreed that a decision should be deferred until Members had the opportunity to visit the site. Also, public opinion was divided on the merits of the scheme with 112 letters of support received, with 96 objections to the proposal.
7. It was recommended that the Traffic Regulation Order should be introduced, and it came into effect on 4 February 2000.
8. Following its introduction, further objections to the closure were received, and a number of local groups have demanded that the Traffic Regulation Order should be revoked and that the lane should be available for use by motor vehicles.
9. In order to assess the full effect of the Traffic Regulation Order, a meeting was held in January 2001 with interested parties. Following this meeting it was agreed that the only real test of local opinion on this significant issue would be to undertake a full Questionnaire survey and invite comments from all residents within the Parishes of Hambleden, Turville, and Ibstone.
10. A total of 220 responses were received from the Questionnaire survey. Of these, 109 comments were in support of the closure of Watery Lane, 74 were objecting to the closure and a total of 37 were neutral comments from residents who have been unaffected by the closure.
11. The majority view from the supporters of the closure, was the safety improvements for walkers and horse riders who are now using this route.
12. Of those who wished to see the lane re-opened to traffic, the main complaint was the additional distance they had to travel on the diversion route.

B. Other options available, and their pros and cons

The existing Traffic Regulation Order could be revoked, but this would require further consultation exercises, which would be costly and time consuming, and would be against the majority view expressed by local residents through the questionnaire survey.

The possibility of providing a separate bridleway adjacent to Water Lane has been investigated previously. There was strong opposition to this suggestion from local landowners, and also it would require the use of costly and time consuming compulsory purchase powers to progress.

Therefore, it is suggested that the existing Traffic Regulation Order should remain in place in order to manage the usage of the lane by vulnerable road users only.

C. Resource implications

There would be no capital costs involved in retaining the current Traffic Regulation Order.

There will be ongoing maintenance costs to ensure a clear safe passage for those who are entitled to use the lane.

The cost of implementing revised methods of closure to retain the rural aspect of this area would cost approximately £3,000. This work would have to progress when funding is available.

D. Legal implications

None.

E. Property implications

None

F. Other implications/issues

None.

G. Feedback from consultation and Local Member views

Comments received from the Questionnaire survey are detailed in Appendix 2.

H. Communication issues

All formal consultees will be informed of an approved decision by letter.

I. Progress Monitoring

The feedback from local residents on the effectiveness of the current Traffic Regulation Order will continue to be reviewed.

J. Review

Further local consultation will be undertaken on the proposals to amend the closure features at each end of Watery Lane to ensure that the rural character of this area is retained.

Background Papers

- Drawing No. WL / POMV / 1
 - Photographs showing closure features
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Your questions and views

If you have any questions about the matters contained in this paper please get in touch with the Contact Officer whose telephone number is given at the head of the paper.

If you have any views on this paper that you would like the Cabinet Member to consider, or if you wish to object to the proposed decision, please inform the Democratic Services Team by 5.00pm on Friday 28 October 2005. This can be done by telephone (to 01296 383610), Fax (to 01296 382538), or e-mail to cabinet@buckscc.gov.uk

CABINET MEMBER REPORT NO. T06.05

DECISION TAKEN:

I have taken into account any representations received concerning the contents of this report.

Signed: _____

Date: _____

DECISION NOT TAKEN:

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Reason: _____

For Reference

Professional advice supporting the decision was provided by the following Officers

Name	Signed	Date
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