

**Decision Session – Executive Member for  
Transport**

**20 July 2021**

Report of the Director Transport, Environment and Planning

**Cycling in High Petergate**

**Summary**

1. This report seeks a decision on making permanent the Experimental Traffic Regulation Order (ETRO) that currently allows cycling in High Petergate during Footstreet hours (i.e. 10:30 – 17:00) on a trial basis.

**Recommendations**

2. The Executive Member is asked to:

Approve the introduction of a permanent Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) to permit cycling in High Petergate in a southerly direction (i.e. from Bootham Bar to Duncombe Place) during the Footstreet hours (10:30 – 17:00).

Reason: To improve road safety and convenience for cyclists.

**Background**

3. High Petergate is a narrow city-centre street with one-way traffic flow in a southerly direction (i.e. from Bootham Bar to Duncombe Place). It attracts high volumes of pedestrians, and was made part of the city centre Footstreets scheme back in 2000. Under this scheme all vehicle access (including by cyclists) is legally prohibited between the hours of 10.30 and 17.00 daily (subject to a few special exemptions, e.g. emergency vehicles).
4. Under this restriction, the alternatives for cyclists wishing to travel from Bootham into the city centre or to join the cycle route in front of the Minster are to either dismount and walk along High Petergate or to cycle along St Leonard's Place / Duncombe Place.

5. Many cyclists find these alternative routes unattractive, and there has been a significant level of illegal cycling along High Petergate during the Footstreet hours. A survey in 2019 recorded around 30 cyclists per hour riding their bikes along High Petergate during the Footstreet hours. Of these, 23 per hour travelled southbound and 7 travelled northwards (i.e. against the one-way traffic order as well as the Footstreet restriction).
6. Although these cycle movements during Footstreet hours were illegal, they did not appear to be creating a problem of pedestrian safety. Indeed the Police accident database has no record of casualties linked to cycling during the Footstreet hours since the introduction in 2000. During the surveys carried out in 2019 no significant conflicts between cyclist and pedestrians were observed.
7. In 2010 the “Way of the Roses” coast-to-coast route was launched. This route passes through the centre of York using both Bootham and Minster Yard. Allowing cycle tourists to use High Petergate at any time of day would enhance this route and help raise the profile of York as a cycle tourism hub.
8. Since the improved Scarborough Bridge pedestrian/cycle river crossing was opened in 2019 many more cyclists use Scarborough Bridge and then Bootham to access many parts of the city centre, rather than use Lendal Gyratory and Lendal Bridge. The pending improvements at Bootham / St Marys may further encourage use of this route. It was considered that relaxing the current restriction on cycling along High Petergate would help to further promote this safer alternative route for many journeys.
9. In view of these potential advantages for cyclists and following consideration of the current operation, it was therefore proposed to introduce an ETRO to allow cycling in High Petergate in a southerly direction (i.e. from Bootham Bar to Duncombe Place) during the Footsteet Hours (10:30 to 17:00). In effect, this would allow this cycling movement at all times of the day.
10. The proposal was considered by the Executive Member for Transport in October 2019, and approval was granted for the trial to take place. The ETRO was formally introduced on 3 March 2020.
11. An ETRO can be in place for up to a maximum of 18 months. Normally the ETRO would be reviewed after 6 months operation leaving plenty of time

for possible amendments or extension of the trial and further evaluation, before seeking a decision on making it permanent within the 18 month period.

12. Unfortunately, very soon after the High Petergate trial began, the first national Covid lockdown restrictions came into effect on 23 March. This significantly reduced the levels of activity within the city centre and meant that a meaningful review of the High Petergate ETRO could not take place. It was hoped it might be possible to undertake the review later in 2020 or early 2021, but the ongoing Covid pandemic and associated restrictions resulted in continued lower levels of city centre activity over a much longer period than originally expected. Indeed, it was not until after the significant easing of Covid restrictions on 17 May 2021, was it considered reasonable to carry out an evaluation of the ETRO. This was the date when indoor hospitality and entertainment was allowed to re-open, although non-essential retail had re-opened a few weeks earlier.

## **ETRO Review and Evaluation**

13. The review involved carrying out repeat surveys, a road safety review, and consultation with interested parties. The results and feedback are presented below, followed by an overall officer evaluation of the trial and a recommendation for the future.

### **Surveys**

14. The “before” surveys were undertaken back in late May/early June 2019. The “after” surveys were carried out at the end of May 2021. These covered 7am to 7pm on both weekdays and the weekend. The key results are summarised below.
  - The figures suggest that current weekday pedestrian activity is still about 25% lower than pre-pandemic, and cycle number are also down about 17% outside the footstreet hours. However, during the footstreet hours, the cycling levels are about 20% higher than before (36 per hour compared to 30 before). This indicates that the ETRO has resulted in significantly more people choosing to cycle along High Petergate during the footstreet hours.
  - When city-centre activity returns fully to pre-pandemic levels, it can be expected that cycling movements during the footstreet hours would also increase further. Assuming a 25% increase in cycling (in-line with the

expected increase in pedestrian activity) would result in an average hourly flow of 42 cycle movements during the footstreet period.

- The surveys show that about 68% of pedestrians choose to walk in the carriageway during the footstreet hours. If numbers get back to pre-pandemic levels, this would be around 850 pedestrians per hour.
- The survey results suggest that allowing cycling during the footstreet hours has already brought about a significant increase in cycling numbers and this could rise further when city centre activity returns to pre-pandemic levels. However, the numbers of cyclists are very low relative to pedestrian flows. To put this in context, there could be 850 pedestrian movements mixing with about 42 cycle movements per hour, compared to 30 cycle movements happening illegally before the ETRO.

## **Road Safety Audit**

15. A Road Safety Audit assessment was carried out on the proposed trial. No audits were considered necessary in advance of the trial, but an independent road safety assessment was recommended during the trial to feed into the evaluation report.
16. The Road Safety Assessment was carried out on Friday 18 June 2021. The key findings and recommendations are summarised below:
  - During the site visit a number of cyclists were observed using the route without incident.
  - The high number of pedestrians present tends to have a slowing effect on cyclists using the route.
  - The “before” survey recorded 30 cyclists an hour using the route illegally, but there had been no recorded casualty accidents over many years. This suggests any conflict between users is not resulting in collisions. The lack of any recorded conflicts in the analysis of the video survey during the trial also supports this (North Yorkshire Police have rechecked their records and report no incidents involving cyclists on High Petergate).
  - The signing and lining introduced for the ETRO, as well as being required for enforcement, also helps make pedestrians more aware of the presence of cyclists (see Annexes A and B).
  - Permanently relaxing the prohibition of cyclists on High Petergate is unlikely to result in an increase in casualties.
  - Some minor changes could assist cyclists joining other routes at the

Duncombe Place / Minster Yard junction and reduce the possibility of collisions between motorised vehicles and cyclists.

## Consultation

17. Consultation has taken place with local businesses and residents, road user groups / organisations, and local Ward Members. The feedback is summarised below:-

### Businesses/Residents

18. Over 50 consultation letters were delivered to local business and residential properties. Only two responses were received. Neither objects to allowing cycling at all times on High Petergate. However, comments are made about difficulties caused by restricted vehicle access to the street, especially since the footstreet hours were extended from 17.00 till 20.00 on a temporary basis as part of the city centre Covid recovery measures. Concerns were also raised about road safety on Duncombe Place, particularly at the High Petergate / Minster Yard junction.

### Organisations

19. Consultation emails were sent out to relevant organisations representing key road-user groups and interested parties including groups representing older residents and those with sensory impairment. Only two responses were received, both from cyclist representatives and both in support of making the ETRO permanent.

### Ward Councillors

20. Cllr Looker – in support. Considers it a hugely useful link for cyclists, and avoids the congestion with buses around St. Leonard's Place.
21. Cllr Craghill - supportive of making the experimental order permanent, but would welcome hearing the views of residents in the street and other consultees.  
Also concerned that if we are successful in encouraging larger numbers of pedestrians and more cyclists to the route, we may see conflict between the two increase. We would then need to look at the options for further measures for the street in order to create a well defined cycle route (possibly two way) whilst also providing for pedestrians, wheelchair users, and deliveries. This may also be something to consider in relation to the

Minster Neighbourhood Plan and any future plans for the re-design of Duncombe Place.

22. Cllr Fitzpatrick – generally supportive of cycling in the city centre, but concerned about conflict with pedestrians and therefore essential for cycle speeds to be low.

North Yorkshire Police

23. North Yorkshire Police are supportive of the proposal.

### **Options**

24. The Executive Member is asked to consider the following options:
  - a) Authorise the making of a permanent Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) to replace the ETRO
  - b) Revert to the former traffic order restrictions, which prohibited cycling along High Petergate during footstreet hours.

### **Analysis**

25. The ETRO trial has been significantly affected by the Covid pandemic and associated restrictions. However, city centre activity has recently returned to high levels, making it possible to undertake a meaningful review and assessment, albeit much later than originally anticipated. The survey results confirm that making it legal to cycle along High Petergate during footstreet hours has attracted more to do so, and this is expected to increase further still. However, as noted in the Road Safety Assessment, high levels of pedestrian activity tend to encourage low cycling speed and help create a low risk environment.
26. The layout of this street, with raised footways providing a segregate route for pedestrians, means that there can be clear separation between cyclists and pedestrians for the full length of the road. Groups representing people who have mobility or sensory impairment contacted through the consultation for this location did not raise any objections on the operation of the ETRO. An Equalities Impact Assessment has been undertaken for the proposed TRO change. It is not considered that the change would set a precedent for other areas of the city centre as each area would need to be assessed on its merits considering the road layout, use of the highway (e.g. payment cafes), pedestrian flows and potential

risk of conflict between users. Consideration of the wider potential for cycling in the city centre is the subject of a current consultation to be reported later in the year.

27. Reverting to the former TRO restriction is not recommended because it would not achieve the aim of improving cross-city centre cycle route facilities where appropriate to the road layout and level of pedestrian usage.

## Council Plan

28. This proposal relates well to many of the Council's key core outcomes, as set out in the Council's Plan 2019-23 and other key change programmes.

*An open and effective council: listening to residents to ensure it delivers the services they want and works in partnership with local communities.*

*A greener and cleaner city: providing improved links to promote sustainable travel.*

*Getting around sustainably: as above*

*Good health and wellbeing: promotion of cycling to improve health and wellbeing of residents.*

The proposal responds to cyclists' clear desire to travel along High Petergate at all times of the day and is in line with the council's transport hierarchy.

## Implications

- 29.
- **Financial** - The introduction of a permanent TRO and associated signing would cost approximately £5K to implement. An adequate budget allocation is provided within the Transport Capital Programme for 2021/22.
  - **Equalities** – An Equalities Impact Assessment has been undertaken for the proposed change to the TRO - See Annex C. No specific equalities implications were raised during the ETRO consultation process. The scheme will be kept under review in operation.

- **Human Resources (HR)** - There are no HR implications.
- **Legal** – the ETRO can be replaced by a permanent TRO without any further advertising or consultation. If the decision arrived at from this report is to make a permanent TRO, this can be brought into effect to take over seamlessly from the ETRO on, or before, 3 September 2021.
- **Crime and Disorder** - There are considered to be no crime and disorder implications of the change.
- **Information Technology (IT)** - There are no IT implications.
- **Property** - There are no property implications.

## Risk Management

30. **Physical** - there is always a potential for new safety issues to arise whenever an existing traffic arrangement is altered, and particularly where vulnerable road users are involved. However, a significant level of cycling was already taking place in High Petergate during Footstreet hours without problems. The results of the ETRO evaluation, including the road safety assessment, indicate that the safety risks in making the arrangement permanent are very low.
31. **Organisation/Reputation** - there is a risk of criticism from the public in implementing a scheme to which some people may have objections, but equally there could also be criticism from potential supporters of the scheme if it is not implemented. Introducing the change on an experimental basis, and carrying out a comprehensive evaluation of the trial, should ensure that a decision about the future of scheme is well informed thereby reducing the risk of public criticism.
- 32.

Risk Category	Impact	Likelihood	Score
Physical	Medium	Unlikely	6
Organisation/Reputation	Medium	Unlikely	6

Measured in terms of impact and likelihood, the risk scores have all been assessed at lower than 16. This means that at this point, the risks need only to be monitored, as they do not provide a threat to the achievement of the objectives of this report.



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**Report  
Approved**



**Date** 9 July 2021

**Wards Affected: Guildhall**

**For further information please contact the author of the report**

## **Background Papers:**

Cycling in High Petergate – report to Executive Member for Transport Decision Session meeting on 24 October 2019.

## **Annexes:**

**Annex A** – Entry Sign.

**Annex B** - Road Markings

**Annex C** – Equalities Impact Assessment