

## Representations in support of the Experiment from Organisations

### York Civic Trust Letter

13<sup>th</sup> February 2019

**For the attention of: the Traffic Management, Economy and Place Directorate**

York Civic Trust strongly welcomes the impacts of the Micklegate Bar Experimental Traffic Regulation Order (ETRO).

The stated aim of the ETRO is to "improve the environment in Micklegate by removing a proportion of the through traffic whilst maintaining access for those who need it". We consider that the scheme fully meets this aim, and offers the opportunity for more extensive environmental improvements in the street, which offers one of the finest urban streetscapes in the country.

The immediate environmental and safety benefits of the ETRO in Micklegate, which have been evident since its inception, are:

- a significant reduction in traffic flow on the street as a whole
- the complete removal of the queues of traffic approaching the Bar, which often extended at peak times to 20 or more vehicles
- the resulting avoidance of conflicts between traffic on Bar Lane attempting to force gaps in the queue on Micklegate and pedestrians and inbound traffic
- the removal of vehicular movement through the Bar, thus reducing the risk of vibration damage
- the lack of any significant visual clutter by the simple expedient of using a single bollard in the middle of the Bar to effect the closure.

There are also benefits in the wider area, since removal of traffic entering the congested Queen St/ Blossom St/ Nunnery Lane junction, and provision of a shorter stage for cyclists only when demanded, have freed up time in the junction for other movements. We anticipate that this will have reduced the transfer of traffic to less suitable routes such as Scarcroft Rd.

We are also satisfied that the ETRO has been successful in maintaining access for those who need it. We accept that vehicles on Micklegate, Priory St and Toft Green destined for Blossom St will have had to take a longer diversionary route, but the additional travel time involved will typically have been small, since the signals previously only permitted three or four vehicles to enter the junction, and delays in doing so prior to the ETRO frequently exceeded 10 minutes. Meanwhile cyclists, for whom the diversion would have taken much longer, have been provided for, and now have a much safer and protected path into the junction.

There are still occasional occurrences of vehicles turning back having not realised that the Bar was closed, but this could be remedied by reinstating the sign in advance of the junction with George Hudson St.

York Civic Trust is greatly encouraged by this farsighted scheme, and intends, when it is made permanent, to investigate ways of further enhancing public realm in the street and making it a more appealing destination for visitors and residents.

We strongly urge the Council to make the scheme permanent.

## Micklegate Business Initiative E-mail

I'm a committee member for the MBI and acting deputy chair.

For the last couple of years we bring it up in most meetings and it is almost universally popular with the members.

We discussed the plans back in 2016, where we voted unanimously as a group that we preferred the option of one way into town, there was little support for full closure and agreed that something had to be done. This meeting had around 25 businesses in attendance as well as Cllr Hayes.

Since the project was implemented, we talk regularly and even those who were hesitant at first have concluded that it is better now, the main concern was from Minster hire (who were not at the meeting, but in general conversations expressed concern) they have found it far easier for their customers to access their yard without the traffic jams.

The only negative that I have heard from anyone, and I have spoken about this to many people, was on the signage.

We did discuss it at our last meeting in January and although this was a pretty small turnout of about 15 people, everyone was in favour.

We have not previously sent in a formal response, but if suitable, you can consider this an official endorsement of the trial from the MBI.

Kind Regards



### **Micklegate Bar Experimental Southbound Traffic Restriction**

York Environment Forum Transport Group considered this at two recent meetings and agreed to strongly support the Experimental Traffic Regulation Order (ETRO), and to making it permanent. This was subsequently endorsed by the full Environment Forum.

We consider that the scheme fully meets its aim to "improve the environment in Micklegate by removing a proportion of the through traffic whilst maintaining access for those who need it". Micklegate is noticeably less trafficked, particularly southbound in the evening rush hour, and consequently much pleasanter. The removal of vehicular movement through the Bar is an improvement for this historic feature in its own right, and reduces the risk of vibration and accidental impact damage to it.

The restriction has also significantly improved the experience for Southbound cyclists – eliminating the problem of trying to get through the Bar in competition with often stationary vehicles, which led to a significant problem with cyclists using the east side pedestrian arch and footway instead. It also means that southbound cyclists now effectively have a cycle only phase through the Blossom Street junction, removing conflict with left turning vehicles into Nunnery Lane and usually allowing those heading down Blossom Street a conflict free journey down Blossom Street to past the Odeon / Real Cinema crossing to where the current southbound cycle lane starts. This removes a lot of danger of close overtaking that characterises that section of Blossom Street for cyclists from Micklegate, and is hopefully encouraging greater take up of cycling, as this location was previously a major disincentive for less confident cyclists using their bikes. The positive personal health benefits and contribution to making York more sustainable in transport terms increasing cycling involves are therefore a key benefit of this scheme. We also note that some other early problems with cyclist detection at the junction seem to have been satisfactorily resolved – it's important this is maintained.

Finally, the restriction has also reduced the degree of conflict between traffic on Bar Lane attempting to force gaps in the queue on Micklegate and pedestrians and inbound traffic, although a member has noted some tendency for vehicles to turn out of Micklegate into Bar Lane at speed, at risk to Bar bound cyclists coming down Bar Lane, especially in the evening. This problem is also worsened by parking near the junction on the Bar wall side. We consider this could be addressed by

extending the double yellow lines on the Bar Wall side a couple of vehicle lengths from the junction and improving the lighting at the end of Bar Lane.

Making the experimental restriction permanent would provide the opportunity for more extensive environmental improvements in Micklegate, which is one of the finest urban streetscapes in the country. The relative lack of any significant visual clutter at the Bar by the simple expedient of using a single bollard in the middle of the Bar and the less satisfactory no entry signs on the inbound arch to effect the closure seems to be working fine after some initial abuse of the latter by southbound vehicles. This issue could be further improved by better advance signing and redesign / refurbishment of the currently rather ugly junction island south of George Hudson St. to make clear that there's no through route through the Bar.

There are also benefits in the wider area, since removal of traffic entering the congested Queen St/ Blossom St/ Nunnery Lane junction, and provision of a shorter stage for cyclists only when demanded, have freed up time in the junction for other movements, offsetting the longer route for servicing / access traffic. We also wonder whether the Micklegate Bar closure would present a significant further opportunity for a radical and strategic improvement to cycling provision in Blossom Street, through a combination of amalgamating the current three Blossom Street approach lanes to Micklegate Bar junction to two and using the released road width to create a proper outbound cycle lane and improving the width of the inbound cycle lane. Combined with removal of the Odeon / Rank pedestrian crossing island and conversion of that crossing into a single phase full road width crossing would allow a full length outbound cycle lane in Blossom Street, which would meet the Council's transport hierarchy and ambition to increase cycling levels by encouraging less confident cyclists.

For all these reasons we strongly urge the Council to make the scheme permanent, and to pursue the consequent opportunities it presents.

## York Cycle Campaign

The Campaign has just been made aware of a deadline today for comments on making the current trial traffic restrictions of Micklegate Bar permanent. On behalf of our members we wish to speak in favour of maintaining the current arrangement of cycle access only when travelling westbound out of the city centre.

In conversation with members since the start of the trial in December, we have heard many positive comments about the restrictions, which are of a huge benefit to cyclists using Micklegate as a route to/from the city centre. A common theme is the perceived decrease on traffic numbers using Micklegate, particularly westbound. Our members have informed us that this makes using Micklegate as a route out of the city centre much more attractive, as there is less worry about dangerous interactions with motor vehicles. This is particularly welcomed along the cobbled uphill section, which often requires cyclists to adopt a position away from the kerb and adopt an irregular line to avoid the most severe cobbles.

The trial has also meant that the green light onto Blossom Street has effectively become a cycle only phase, with riders able to make good distance along Blossom Street before traffic coming from other directions passes. This comes up most often with cyclists travelling with younger children in their own cycles, as it removes the previous danger of what could be a chaotic junction.

Since the change, we have had concerns raised about the restriction being disobeyed and outbound motorists being observed bypassing through the inbound arch. We understand that the police have previously taken action against this, however the frequency with which this has been observed would suggest further efforts such as the use of cameras should be taken to combat these actions and protect oncoming road users.

Going forward we believe that the scheme should, as a minimum, be retained and we would also welcome any extension. When the proposed improvements to York Station and Queen Street have been discussed at our meetings the link between that masterplan and Micklegate is often raised, despite our understanding that it does not include Micklegate within its boundaries. It is, however, obvious to our members that there is a natural benefit to linking the two schemes. regardless.

Another desire often raised is for a similar restriction inbound, which would protect cyclists coming into the city centre from Blossom Street. Just this week in our social media group, a member reported a near miss, which could have been a severe incident, after being overtaken through the lights by a taxi which had to then brake sharply to make it through the arch. Unfortunately this is not an irregular report. It's also been considered by some members that such a closure would free up room on Blossom Street for a segregated cycle lane and widened footpaths as the straight ahead lane would no longer be required for traffic.

Finally, we'd like to raise the question as to whether the deadline of today for comments still stands? We have not heard of or seen any publicity concerning this date, and were only made aware of this closing date recently through a third party. Could you confirm that any comments received after today's date during the remainder of the 18 month trial will still be considered?

Below are a sample of the kind of comments we've received (names have been removed for GDPR purposes).

December 17, 2018

"Well I've just cycled up Micklegate. What a joy! I hadn't realised how much I usually avoid it!

Cycling up the wet cobbles holds no fear when you are not being pushed towards the gutter by cars. It was quiet and civilised. And then straight through the Bar and into the now unnecessary bike box."

April 16, 2019

Today I exited Micklegate Bar for the first time since closure to outbound motor vehicles. An amazingly pleasant experience and time to safely establish lane use before the next outbound traffic wave. Still to contend with Blossom St. outbound bus departures, when I generally give way to their drivers. Vastly improved and much safer than previously.

January 14, 2019

Car-restricted Micklegate appear to be thriving, not struggling. Purely anecdotally, I spent several hours in the Micklegate Social recently and only noticed one customer being dropped off by car - everyone else arrived by bike or on foot. Obviously some of these pedestrians could have been walking from parked cars, but it seems unlikely given that there is no shortage of competitors/alternatives to the Micklegate Social.

May 27, 2018 (pre-trial)

Micklegate Bar is a terrible spot for cyclists in any part of the intersection

On behalf of York Cycle Campaign