

REPORT: Executive Board Sub Committee

DATE: 1st April 2011

REPORTING OFFICER: Strategic Director, Environment & Economy

SUBJECT: A533 Queensway (Silver Jubilee Bridge)
Objections to Proposed Clearway
Traffic Regulation Order

WARDS: Riverside & Mersey

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To report on objections that have been received following public consultation on a proposed Traffic Regulation Order to make the section of the A533 Queensway where it passes over the Silver Jubilee Bridge (SJB) a no-stopping clearway.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 It is recommended that the proposed Traffic Regulation Order for a no-stopping clearway on A533 Queensway where it passes over the Silver Jubilee Bridge should be made, and the objectors informed accordingly.**

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 3.1 Over recent months there have a number of complaints about delays crossing the Silver Jubilee Bridge (SJB) due to broken down vehicles not being removed quickly. On one recent occasion a vehicle was on the bridge for about three hours from 15:30, which resulted in queues back to M56 Junction 12, a distance of nearly 4 miles and during this time a police patrol car was behind the broken down car. Due to these incidents, discussions have been taking place between staff from Cheshire Police and Halton Borough Council, to find a way to reduce these delays and the need for police officers to remain on the bridge with broken down vehicles.
- 3.2 Cheshire Police had separate discussions with their legal team and it was requested that a 'No Stopping' or clearway order be placed on the SJB in order to assist with removing broken down vehicle. Such an Order would give the Police powers to remove any vehicle immediately in the event of a breakdown or accident using their own Vehicle Recovery Contract provided by local garages, rather than being obliged to stand by while a motorist attempts to arrange their own recovery. This would then allow vehicles to be removed quicker and hence reduce delays.
- 3.2 If the police use their powers to remove vehicles, local contracted garages are obliged to attend the scene within a certain time limit. For vehicles under 7.5 tonnes (cars etc) the response time is 30 minutes and with vehicles over this weight it is 40 minutes with the Police selecting the garage able to attend the scene in the shortest time. All the garages on the scheme have set fees that they can charge, as follows: -

Vehicle up to 7.5 tonnes (Cars etc)	Minimum Charge £150.
Vehicle over 7.5 tonnes	Minimum Charge £350.
Garage storage charge	Minimum charge £12 per day

Some recoveries can be complicated and take a long time, particularly after collisions, and will obviously incur more expense. Further information on operation of the Police vehicle recovery operation is set out in Appendix 'A'.

3.3 A proposed traffic regulation Order was subsequently advertised, to create a (no stopping) clearway on the A533 Queensway and approach roads from its junction with the A562 Speke Road through to its junction with the Daresbury Expressway to include connecting slip roads to and from Ditton Road, Desoto Road East, Desoto Road West, the Daresbury Expressway and the Weston Point Expressway, plus Desoto Road East and Desoto Road West.

3.4 An elected Member expressed concerns that the no-stopping zone extended over a popular drop-off/pick-up zone at the north end of the SJB for people car sharing, and in view of this, Cheshire Police clarified that they would be content for the Clearway Order to extend only over the actual Bridge span where there are four narrow lanes with no hardshoulder. The reduced extent now proposed reflect this change and address the concerns. Appendix 'B' defines the revised clearway proposals and is shown in Drawing. No. 8962.

3.5 Another elected Member lodged an objection as follows:

"It (TRO) does not achieve or improve anything; in fact it will probably exacerbate the situation. It is to all intents and purposes 'a cash cow' to clobber the motorist. I will be opposed to such and believe it should be removed from the wider scheme before wasting money on it and upsetting the motoring public any further in respect of the bridge issues."

3.6 There were no other objections and no enquiries from members of the public.

4.0 FINANCIAL & OTHER IMPLICATIONS

4.1 The cost of implementing the clearway is approximately £2,000 if executed at the same time as other bridge works needing lane closures and associated traffic management. This would be charged to traffic management revenue allocations.

4.2 There are no direct policy, social inclusion, sustainability, legal or crime and disorder implications resulting from this report.

5.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES.

5.1 Children & Young People in Halton

Action to reduce delays in crossing the Silver Jubilee Bridge would be beneficial to school attendance and to client transport.

5.2 Employment, Learning & Skills in Halton

There are no direct implications on the Council's 'Employment, Learning & Skills in Halton' priority, although it would help reduce problems with travel to work or training.

5.3 A Healthy Halton

There are no direct implications on the Council's 'A Healthy Halton' priority.

5.4 A Safer Halton

The speedy removal of obstructions on the Bridge should reduce the potential for further accidents.

5.5 Halton's Urban Renewal

An ability to manage incidents on the Bridge more effectively should improve reliability, a major factor in the attractiveness of the area as a location for business.

6.0 RISK ANALYSIS

- 6.1 Failure to implement the proposed Clearway Order will see extended delays in removing broken down vehicles from the SJB and in the future, as lane restrictions become more common as a result of maintenance works on the structure and alterations associated with the proposed Mersey Gateway crossing, these delays could become more common. Traffic queues on the SJB can result in secondary traffic collisions on the approaches.

7.0 EQUALITY & DIVERSITY ISSUES.

- 7.1 There are no direct equality and diversity issues associated with this report.

8.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 8.1 There are no background papers under section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972

Notes on operation of vehicle removal relating to the Silver Jubilee Bridge, provided by Cheshire Police:

You will be aware of the background to our request for a 'Clearway' Order on the Silver Jubilee Bridge, in that there were two recent incident where we received some criticism for staying with and allowing broken down vehicles to remain on the bridge for too long a period before they were removed. On both occasions the drivers had already arranged for their own breakdown service to attend, but by allowing them to remain it caused severe backlogs of traffic.

Under the Removal and Disposal of Vehicles Regulations 1986, Regulation 3 and 4 - a constable has the power to remove a vehicle on a road or arrange for its removal to a place not on a road, or to another position on that or another road, which:-

- a) has broken down on a road in such a position, condition or circumstances as to cause obstruction to persons using the road or as to be likely to cause danger to them, or
- b) has broken down and remained at rest on a road in contravention of a prohibition or restriction contained in any enactments mentioned in Schedule 1. (Includes Clearway Order).

In respect of a) above the terms used are subjective and open to interpretation, whereas b) is far more definitive. This is why the introduction of a Clearway Order will greatly assist the police with the suggested Vehicle Removal Policy indicated below.

Our Force has a Vehicle Recovery Contract with a company that at our request will remove vehicles from the scene of collisions, causing obstruction etc. There are a number of private garages contracted to this company and two of these cover the Silver Jubilee Bridge and its immediate area. All of the garages on the scheme are contracted to attend the scene of a removal within 30 minutes for a vehicle under 7.5 tonnes (car) and 40 minutes for any vehicle over this weight. The garages operating under the Vehicle Recovery Contract charge the owner of the vehicle to be removed a minimum of £150 for a vehicle under 7.5 tonnes (car) and a minimum of £350 for those over 7.5 tonnes to do so. There are then storage charges at the garage of a minimum of £12 per day.

In order to address the criticisms, improve traffic flows and lessen the potential danger to other motorists caused by broken down vehicles on the bridge, we are proposing to introduce the following policy:-

Where a constable attends the scene of a broken down vehicle on the bridge (within the span where there are just four narrow running lanes and no hard-shoulder) and either:-

- a) The driver is not present, and cannot be easily located the Vehicle Recovery Contract must be used immediately to have the vehicle removed from the bridge. Or
- b) The driver is present and has not made his/her own vehicle recovery arrangements, and is not a member of a vehicle recovery organisation, then the Vehicle Recovery Contract must be used immediately to have the vehicle removed from the bridge. Or
- c) When the driver is present and he/she has already made their own recovery arrangements or is a member of a vehicle recovery organisation which they have not already contacted to attend. It must be ascertained, if necessary via Force Resource Deployment Centre, how long it will take the recovery vehicle to attend the scene to start the recovery. If in the case of a vehicle under 7.5 tonnes unladen weight it is going to be longer than 40 minutes, then the Vehicle Recovery

Contract must be used immediately to have the vehicle removed from the bridge. If in the case of a vehicle over 7.5 tonnes unladen weight it is going to be longer than 50 minutes, then the Vehicle Recovery Contract must be used immediately to have the vehicle removed from the bridge. If applicable, the original attending garage must be immediately cancelled.

It will be noted that when you compare our Force Vehicle Recovery Contract Scheme times with those in the proposed 'Bridge Vehicle Removal Policy', we have extended the times by 10 minutes. As previously mentioned above the introduction of a 'Clearway Order' will greatly assist the police in their enforcement of the Removal and Disposal of Vehicles Regulations 1986, and the proposed policy.

Details of Proposed Order:

[a] Clearway (no stopping)

[b] Details:

A533 Queensway between a point immediately over Bank Street (below) in Widnes to a point 310 metres north of the Weston Point Expressway/Bridgewater Expressway (below) in Runcorn. (Links to existing clearway further south covering Silver Jubilee Bridge approach roads)

[c] Associated revocations:

None

[d] Exemptions: Standard

[e] Statement of Reasons: In order to permit faster removal of broken down/crashed vehicles by Cheshire Police contractors.

[f] Plans: Drg. no. 8962 for deposit only.

[g] Date to be advertised: ASAP

[h] Date to be effected: ASAP