



Northumberland

County Council

RECORD OF DECISION TAKEN BY SERVICE DIRECTOR - LOCAL SERVICES

Paul Jones

Blyth Market Place - Proposed alterations to the barrier system operation and existing parking restrictions

Cabinet Member: Councillor John Riddle

17 March 2022

Purpose of Report

This report sets out the background to proposed alterations to the barrier system and parking restrictions on Blyth Market Place. This follows concerns that have been raised regarding inappropriate use of the area by vehicles. The proposed alterations are needed to ensure this area is a safe public space for use by all.

Recommendations

It is recommended that the proposed alterations to the barrier system and parking restrictions on Blyth Market Place are introduced on an experimental basis.

Link to Corporate Plan

Living - "We want you to feel safe, healthy and cared for"

Enjoying - "We want you to love where you live"

Learning - "We want you to achieve and realise your potential"

Key Issues

1. Blyth Market Place is intended predominantly for use by pedestrians, with some limited permitted vehicular usage for traders to gain access and trade on market days and for events.
2. The existing 'No Entry' restrictions are largely ignored and the barrier systems intended to prevent intrusion are often left open.

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3. As a result, there is an increase in motorists using the Market Place for public parking and therefore an increase in conflict with pedestrians.
4. Several near miss incidents have now been observed that raise road safety concerns which need to be addressed.
5. The elected member for the area, Councillor Nisbett is aware of the problems and supports any measures that improve safety for all users.
6. The scheme will be funded through the Local Transport Plan (LTP)

Blyth Market Place – current situation

Blyth Market Place is a public space situated within Blyth Town centre intended predominantly for use by pedestrians, with some limited permitted vehicular usage for traders to gain access and trade on market days and for events.

Concerns have recently been raised by local partners about the current inappropriate use of the Market Place by vehicles. The County Council is aware that the existing 'No Entry' restrictions operating at Blyth Market Place are largely ignored by patrons and that the barrier systems in place around the Market Place intended to prevent intrusion are often left open. This results in regular interactions and conflict between passing motorists using the Market Place for parking and pedestrians wanting to access the nearby businesses.

Following the concerns raised, several near miss incidents between pedestrians and motorists have now been observed during recent site visits. This raises road safety concerns which need to be addressed.

Proposed alterations to barrier system operation and parking arrangements

The proposed alterations are being introduced to improve road safety and ensure that the Market Place can continue to be used as a public space predominantly for use by pedestrians which encourages better and safer access for all. The alterations will ensure that;

- The existing barrier systems operate as intended and support enforcement of the parking restrictions.
- Parking restrictions are robust in nature to enable effective enforcement and future proofed against any proposed improvements to the area.

To improve road safety for all parties and promote business use by patrons, the County Council are proposing the following measures;

Barrier System Operation

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- The barriers will remain in place but the barrier gates will be locked to prevent access between 10am and 7am the following morning every day.
- Access will be permitted for loading of premises between 7am and 10am daily.
- Combination locks will be fitted to the gates to enable emergency service access (a practice already in place elsewhere in Blyth)
- Exemptions for market days and events will remain but during the specified times the barriers will be locked.
- Traders can continue to use their vehicles during the market day to trade from or park adjacent to their stall.
- Access will be granted to emergency services should the need arise.

Pedestrian Only Zone

- A 'Pedestrian Only Zone' will be introduced which will replace the existing 'No Entry' signs to prevent parking between 10am and 7am the following morning every day to supplement the barrier system.
- The existing restrictions are deemed a 'moving traffic offence' which is only enforceable by the police as resources permit.
- The proposed restrictions come under the authority of the Local Authority's Civil Enforcement Officers where regular patrols of the area can ensure compliance.

Exemptions to the above barrier operation and parking regulations may be granted to provide access for specific reasons such as time limited loading for building works.

Implementation

The 'Pedestrian Only Zone' will be implemented on an 'Experimental' basis for a period of up to 18 months.

- The barriers will be locked as set out above from April 2022 onwards
- The Pedestrian Only Zone is anticipated to be in place by May 2022

The effectiveness of the scheme will be monitored by Civil Enforcement Officers and the Highways Improvements Team. During this time any comments on the experimental scheme will be welcomed and used to inform any future decisions for the Market Place.

Longer term arrangements for the Market Place following the above experimental period of up to 18 months will be integrated with planned improvements to the area as part of the Energising Blyth Regeneration Programme. The County Council are planning to improve the Market Place

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including the introduction of a new Culture Centre in the area and will provide further information about these improvements later this year.

Consultation

Council officers attended a recent Blyth Town Council meeting to provide a background to the issues being experienced and discuss the proposed improvements as set out above. Blyth Town Council showed their support for the proposals and requested that local businesses be made aware of the proposals in letter form.

An information letter will be sent to all affected businesses providing detail on the scheme with notification that the scheme will be implemented on an Experimental basis in the first instance to monitor its effectiveness.

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Implications Arising out of the Report

Policy	Consistent with existing policies
Finance and value for money	Scheme will be funded from the LTP 2021 / 2022.
Legal	Traffic Regulation Orders (TRO 11 101)
Procurement	N/A
Human Resources	None
Property	None
Equalities (Impact Assessment attached) Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> N/A <input type="checkbox"/>	N/A
Risk Assessment	This proposal has been specifically designed to reduce risks to users
Crime & Disorder	Regulations in place to carry out enforcement.
Customer Consideration	A reduction in conflict between motor vehicles and passing pedestrians will lead to a safer environment for all road users.
Carbon reduction	Speed reduction and motor vehicle reduction assists with carbon reduction
Wards	Blyth Croft Ward

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Background papers:

<https://northumberland365.sharepoint.com/sites/TS-InfrastructureProgrammeandProduction/Shared%20Documents/Forms/AllItems.aspx?RootFolder=%2Fsites%2FTS%2DInfrastructureProgrammeandProduction%2FShared%20Documents%2FHighways%20Programme%20%2D%20General%2FConsultations%2FBlyth%20Market%20Place&FolderCTID=0x012000AF9912D508A6794791F3F0FB40D31AE9>

Appendix A – Scheme Plan – Proposed Signing and Location Plan

Author and Contact Details

Report Author **Paul McKenna, Programme Engineer**

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DECISION TAKEN

Title of Officer: Service Director, Local Services

Subject: Blyth Market Place - Proposed alterations to the barrier system operation and existing parking restrictions

Consultation: Engagement with the businesses, the elected members, the Town Council is ongoing with Information Letters to be sent out. Ward County Councillor and Blyth Town Council support the proposals.

Decision Taken: To approve the proposed alterations to the barrier system operation and existing parking restrictions

Signature of Director



Date

6th April 2022

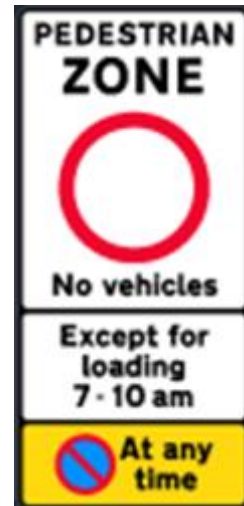
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Appendix A – Proposed Signing and Location Plan

What signs will be implemented and where? Image provided below. Two signs each will be installed on Regent Street, Waterloo Road and Wanley Street, Blyth.

What the Sign Means

- The top section of the sign means that a Pedestrian Only zone is in place.
- The middle section means that 'loading' will be permitted between 7am and 10am.
- The bottom aspect of the sign means that parking is prohibited at any time.



Pedestrian Only Zone boundary - See the Dashed Red Markings below which show the Zone boundary



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