

From: Foi Enquiries
Sent: 08 February 2019 11:59
To: [REDACTED]
Subject: FOI-19-0079 - Bus Lanes
Attachments: V2 - Further Information - Right to Review & Appeal.pdf

Dear [REDACTED]

Thank you for your information request of 14 January 2019. Aberdeen City Council (ACC) has completed the necessary search for the information requested. Our response is now detailed below.

What are the bus lane restriction times for Bedford Road Aberdeen?

The section of Bedford Road that is a 'Route for use by buses and pedal cycles only' is in operation at all times.

Where are the bus lane times displayed for Bedford Road Aberdeen?

The restriction is signed in accordance with the Statutory Instrument titled "The Traffic Signs Regulation and General Directions"; this is available to view by way of the following internet link: -

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukSI/2016/362/schedule/3/made> (See Item 33 / Diagram 953) in the Sign Table – Schedule 3, Part 2

As the restriction is in operation at all times, there is no requirement for an additional plate indicating days and times; that is to say the default position is one where, unless there is an additional sign-plate indicating particular days and times, a driver will interpret the regulatory sign to be in operation at all times.

How many vehicle owners have received fines generated from driving in the bus lanes in Bedford Road Aberdeen between 02:00 hours and 04:00 from January 2018 to January 2019? How much revenue has been generated by levelling fines for vehicles identified as driving in bus lanes during the hours of 2:00 am and 4:00am?

ACC is unable to provide you with information on **how many vehicle owners have received fines generated from driving in the bus lanes in Bedford Road Aberdeen between 02:00 hours and 04:00 from January 2018 to January 2019 and how much revenue has been generated by levelling fines for vehicles identified as driving in bus lanes during the hours of 2:00 am and 4:00am** as the cost of providing it has been calculated as being in excess of the statutory maximum (£600). To explain this, it would involve an ACC Officer checking every bus lane penalty charge notice (PCN) issued during that 12 month period to determine what time it was issued (between 02:00 and 04:00) and extracting the relevant information to answer your request. There are 28,892 PCN's issued within that 12 months. Checking the PCN and extracting the information has been calculated at 30 seconds per PCN, which equates to 241 hours, at the cost of £2,662.88 in total.

In order to comply with its obligations under the terms of Section 16 of the FOISA, ACC hereby give notice that we are refusing your request under the terms of Section 12 - Excessive Cost of Compliance - of the FOISA.

ACC would be happy to discuss ways in which you may refine your request, so we can provide some information of interest to you within the maximum cost limits. Please do contact the Information Compliance team, who will be happy to advise you, if this is something you would like to pursue.

Why are there restrictions in place for bus lanes in Bedford Road during the hours of 02:00am and 4:00 am?

With the opening of the 'Diamond Bridge' Third Don Crossing it was anticipated it would carry in the region of 10,000 motor vehicles on any working day (this figure since being verified by way of survey following the opening). As a consequence, without the bus gate in place, it would have been expected a significant proportion of the aforementioned volume would travel

on Bedford Road. This would have had a negative impact on the operation / capacity of the Powis Terrace / Bedford Road Junction with the result being traffic congestion that would hinder movement on both Bedford Road and Powis Terrace. Indeed, for residents in this area and likewise for visitors, be they accessing the retail park, residential properties, school etc., this outcome would have been very much to their detriment.

When considering the Bedford/Sunnybank area prior to the opening of the new bridge, there were existing traffic management measures in place that were installed some years ago to mitigate the issue of drivers seeking to use residential roads in the area to bypass main routes. Examples of these were the length of one way on Bedford Place with the 'left turn only' restriction as drivers exit this road onto Bedford Road, the closure of the Bedford Road / Hermitage Avenue junction except for use by emergency vehicles, the closure of Sunnybank Place as a through route, and a widespread 20mph speed limit zone with the addition of physical traffic calming measures in the form of road humps on Sunnybank Road adjacent to the school. With the introduction of the bus gate, the aforementioned restrictions on vehicular movement (with the exception of the closure on Sunnybank Place / 20mph speed limit / road humps) have been revoked as they were no longer considered necessary.

If the bus gate had not been installed there would have been concerns over the surge in traffic volume on Bedford Road and the potential for drivers to attempt to gain access to the new bridge by way of surrounding residential roads. In this respect, there was the potential to exacerbate a longstanding issue with 'rat running' in the Sunnybank/Bedford area, but the bus gate effectively prevents such an outcome.

The position of Bedford Road in the road network hierarchy is also relevant. Powis Place/Great Northern Road, King Street and St Machar Drive are all A Class Roads (A96, A956 and A948 respectively) and principle routes for vehicle movements. These roads would be expected to be busy with all types of traffic. Bedford Road on the other hand is a distributor road for the local community; albeit with access to the adjacent retail park at its Powis end and Aberdeen University Library at its St Machar end. Its appropriate 'through traffic' stays on the principle roads, and bearing this in mind, the new bridge facilitates improving the flow of traffic on these A Class roads and journey times will be reduced for all motor vehicles, particularly so for those from outside the area. A resident from the Bedford/Sunnybank and likewise a visitor to the area may be disappointed there is not direct access to the new bridge via Bedford Road/St Machar Drive, but they have to balance this against swifter journeys on the surrounding principal distributor roads and the improvement for all road users. The detour is also very modest, so in real terms any additional local journey time should generally be cancelled out by the reduction in time taken for the overall journey.

The bus gate should also not be considered in isolation as part of the Third Don Crossing project, as there is a possibility it may be an integral part of future infrastructure development. As part of wider improvements, and in support of sustainable transport, there is an aspiration to introduce bus priority measures on Powis Terrace that will reduce journey times and increase reliability. The bus gate on Bedford Road could complement these future facilities, with a provisional traffic and economic assessment indicating an enhanced benefit with Bedford Road closed to general through traffic. These current and possible future measures to provide priority for buses will serve the public well, with the likelihood of an improved service for the Bedford/Tillydrone area. It is also possible this new route may eventually be used for bus services to the Danestone/Bridge of Don area of the City, but this would be subject to assessment by commercial bus operators and with consideration to existing bus routes that already serve these areas.

In terms of the active travel, the reduction in motor vehicle traffic on Bedford Road could lead to an increased volume of pedestrians and cyclists using this route. Cyclists are now well served by new dedicated off-road cycle facilities adjacent to the new road from the Parkway to the bridge, and on the lengths of Gordon's Mill Road/Tillydrone Road to its junction with St Machar Drive. Thereafter on Bedford Road there are existing lengths of on-road advisory cycle lanes where road width/parking restrictions allow.

The route provided by 'Diamond Bridge' will therefore be attractive to cyclists making their way from the north of the city to the centre; likewise, it would be expected the University already generates a considerable number of trips by cycle on Bedford

Road. Accordingly, with no dedicated off-road cycle facilities on Bedford Road, the reduction in motorised through traffic brought about by the bus gate will enhance conditions for cyclists. Given there is a growing number of the population that recognise cycling as sustainable, healthy and convenient way of travel, any conditions that encourage its uptake are particularly relevant.

Looking to the future, Aberdeen City will also need to reduce motor traffic volumes by as much as 20% in order to make the city an attractive place to live and work. The Scottish Government's Transport Strategy has also set a target that 10% of all trips should be by cycle by 2020. The bus priority measures provided by the new route and the enhancement of conditions for cyclists are therefore part of the on-going strategy to reach these targets.

Regarding the Bedford Road/Powis Terrace and Belmont Road/Powis Terrace junctions, it is expected the future Berryden Road upgrade will alleviate current traffic congestion/queues experienced at these junctions. This project will also bring significant benefit to the wider road network. This corridor, in its current form, has long been considered a pinch point and the associated congestion has been observed to have a wider impact on the surrounding road network, including rat running. The analysis of studies on this corridor led to the conclusion the most effective option to bring improvement would be to dual Berryden Road for its length from Maberly Street to St Machar Roundabout, with local realignment along the route. The same studies also showed the most effective configuration of Bedford Road would be for the inclusion of a bus gate.

Overall the Berryden Project provides economic benefit and value for money for the city; this is based on Scottish Transport Appraisal Guidance that showed the corridor improvements, in combination with the Bedford Road bus gate, brought the most improvement and by a significant margin. It prioritises sustainable modes, through public transport priority along Powis Terrace and Bedford Road, cycle facilities along the length of the corridor and brings the footway and crossings up to current design standards for pedestrians. It also provides an efficient and effective route for all vehicles, while minimising environmental impacts and supports the Council Local Transport Strategy and future economic development, including the city centre Masterplan.

In conclusion, the installation of the bus gate on Bedford Road must be considered against the overall objectives to improve the road network for all road users and in terms of the consequences for local traffic/residents in the Bedford Road area had it not been put in place. Its operation at all times provides for a consistent measure; the alternative where it was limited to certain days/hours would likely cause confusion and require additional complex signage, which has already been identified by members of the public as a source of concern. In this regard, it is of note this option was considered by the Council's Communities Housing and Infrastructure Committee in November 2017 as part of an overall review of the bus gate; the outcome of this report was the bus gate would remain operational at all times and the only significant change to its operation, subject to statutory consultation, being an exemption for taxis to travel through the bus gate. For information, the exemption for taxis has been successfully promoted and will be brought into effect in the Spring of 2019.

We hope this helps with your request.

Yours sincerely,

Grant Webster
Access to Information Officer

INFORMATION ABOUT THE HANDLING OF YOUR REQUEST

ACC handled your request for information in accordance with the provisions of the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002. Please refer to the attached PDF for more information about your rights under FOISA.

Grant Webster | Access to Information Officer

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