

STATES OF JERSEY



PEDESTRIAN PRIORITY IN BROAD STREET, ST. HELIER (P.28/2021): SECOND AMENDMENT

Lodged au Greffe on 4th May 2021
by the Minister for Infrastructure
Earliest date for debate: 11th May 2021

STATES GREFFE

PEDESTRIAN PRIORITY IN BROAD STREET, ST. HELIER (P.28/2021):
SECOND AMENDMENT

1 PAGE 2, PARAGRAPH (a) –

For the words “to maintain the current pedestrian-priority restrictions” substitute the words “to maintain traffic restrictions to support the principles of pedestrian priority and through access by bicycle”

2 PAGE 2, PARAGRAPH (b) –

For the words “pedestrian-priority” substitute the words “pedestrian area and support the commercial centre of town centre through the creation of a sustainable transport corridor”

3 PAGE 3, PARAGRAPH (c) –

For the words “pedestrian-priority” substitute the words “sustainable transport corridor”; delete sub-paragraphs (ii) and (iii) and renumber the remaining sub paragraph accordingly.

MINISTER FOR INFRASTRUCTURE

Note: After this amendment, the proposition would read as follows –

THE STATES are asked to decide whether they are of opinion –

- a. to maintain traffic restrictions to support the principles of pedestrian-priority and through access by bicycle in Broad Street, St. Helier, for the remainder of 2021;
- b. to work with the Parish of St. Helier, and other interested parties, to facilitate and enable initiatives that enhance the appeal and the vibrancy of the pedestrian area and support the commercial centre of town through the creation of a sustainable transport corridor, subject to any public health restrictions, for shoppers, workers, visitors to St. Helier and residents;
- c. to review and, where necessary, take the necessary steps to improve – (i) the availability of on-street parking for disabled drivers in the central town area; and (ii) servicing and delivery access to business premises on the sustainable transport corridor;

- d. to monitor the operation of the scheme and to work with the Parish of St. Helier to carry out public consultation on its operation; and
- e. to report back to the States on the success or otherwise of the scheme by the end of 2021.

REPORT

The Government and the Parish of St Helier agreed to close Broad Street on the 23rd May 2020, so it is coming up to the first anniversary of the current restrictions to motor vehicle traffic.

Broad Street was closed to support physical distancing, by creating additional street space in one of the busiest parts of St Helier and to reduce crowding pressure on the formal crossing points and provide an alternative walking route. It is accepted that while not everyone will avail themselves of this opportunity, it is an important measure to give confidence to people's use of town. Town centre lunch-time (12pm - 2pm) footfall counts for July 2020 show the respective division in pedestrian traffic between King Street and Broad Street to be approximately 60% / 40%.

The Connétable of St Helier has lodged proposals (P.28/2021) to keep the existing restrictions in place until at least the end of the calendar year, however this presents some technical and logistical challenges which this amendment seeks to address.

I would like to amend the original proposition so controlled access can be provided to people travelling on Liberty Bus services and people cycling. This will deliver the following benefits:

- Enable people with impaired mobility better access to the town centre via the bus service
- The ~4000 people a month (pre-pandemic) who used to catch bus services from Broad Street will once again be able to do so.
- Give bus services a genuine advantage over regular traffic by creating a bus-only corridor through town
- Support active travel by connecting a quiet-route across town
- Assist retailers by increasing footfall to town centre shops
- Ensure access for emergency service vehicles is preserved

At present, these restrictions allow for the street to be used between the hours of 7am – 11am for commercial deliveries. Outside of these hours the street is only allowed to be used by pedestrians and cyclists, in addition to emergency service vehicles on blue-light responses. This means that the scheduled bus services have to divert via La Route de la Liberation, which increases their journey times.

When the street was closed, I made it clear that this was for emergency reasons pertaining to the pandemic only, and that I would always instigate a full and fair consultation process that seeks to balance views and needs of all stakeholders to determine the long term use of the street space. The original proposition seeks to bypass this process by keeping the restrictions in place for longer than is likely to be necessary, so I have brought forward this amendment.

The Jersey mobility hierarchy puts disabled and vulnerable road users at the top of any decision making with respect to transport and allowing the bus to use Broad Street is central to this commitment the States Assembly has made. All of Liberty Bus' scheduled service vehicles are fully accessible vehicles with spaces for wheelchairs and are low-floor compliant. We also have the travel pass for persons with a prescribed disability which allows them to travel on the bus network free of charge. Allowing bus services to return to Broad Street would be a step in the right direction. This amendment will

mean that people who have mobility impairments and struggle to move around town are no worse off than they were pre-pandemic.

The bus stop in Broad Street serves the number 5 and number 19 buses as part of their outbound routes from Liberation Station. The closure of Broad Street has led to a diversion that has been employed many times over the years for various reasons e.g. Fête de St Hélier. Essentially it pushes buses out to the ring road (1x service 5 and 1x service 19 per hour) requiring up to 4000 passengers per month to board at the bus station rather than in Broad Street outside the Government offices.

Over time we have lost bus services from within the town centre and there are few meaningful services left to aid the movement of the town's residents by bus.

We announced in January that a scheduled town bus service (**Appendix A**) is to be trialled which will loop around St Helier, linking key destinations such as Liberation Station, the General Hospital, Town Hall, Town Market and the northern residential, and it is highly likely that Broad Street would be integral to this offer.

The new bus service will be frequent and easy to use to reduce the need for car use in central St Helier and increase accessibility for Town residents who rely on bus services. Although work is ongoing to finalise the details of this service, it is likely that Broad Street will be a key corridor for the service in the future, so this amendment is about safeguarding the potential to explore this facility in the future.

With the new transfer tickets that were launched at the start of this year, it will soon be possible for people to catch the bus to town and transfer onto the town bus service at Liberation Station without having to buy an additional ticket.

This is not a new approach. There are a number of examples in urban centres around Europe where cities have designated key shopping streets as accessible by public transport. Oxford Street in London allows the famous red buses to use the road to help deliver shoppers and visitors to its numerous shops. High Street in Exeter and Fleet Street in Torquay are examples of where public realm can be tastefully designed to accommodate bus passengers being brought right into the heart of the city centre.

We can achieve the same in St Helier whilst simultaneously calming the street to make it a more pleasant environment for those who live, work and visit there.

Through carefully controlling access to Broad Street for buses, we will in effect create a priority route, which will give people a genuine advantage to those opting to travel by car. This will build on our existing commitments to create dedicated bus lanes in the westbound and eastbound directions from Liberation Station. This will have the effect of making the service a more attractive offer and creating a virtuous circle of increasing demand. More passengers mean we can afford to put on more frequent buses.

The creation of a quiet, safer, lightly trafficked (bus only) route, will mean a more attractive offer for cycling, as these road users will no longer have to compete with cars for space on the tarmac. My vision is for Broad Street to remain as a route for considerate cycling across town.

The States approved the Sustainable Transport Policy in March 2020, recognising that a range of transport modes are required to meet the island's mobility needs and cycling

is part of this mix. We should not let anecdotes told by a small, but vocal, minority of anti-cycling lobbyists set back the Government's ambition to become a cycling island. It is likely that some of the issues frequently voiced against cycling are disproportionately amplified and there is a similar amount of anti-social behaviour exhibited by people driving motor vehicles, but generally it is not reported.

Enabling cyclists to continue to use Broad Street will build on our already announced cycling schemes in town, such as on Hill Street, and piece by piece we will join the dots to create a network which will encourage islanders to cycle for more journeys.

A number of retailers have expressed concerns to me about how the closure of the road has led to a decline in footfall visiting their business. This does not just affect Broad Street, but a number of additional roads connected to it. There are fewer vehicles now travelling down Conway Street and subsequently into York Street as a result of the closure. I would like to support the businesses in town by preserving the means for people to reach them whilst simultaneously improving some of the negative impacts that private motor vehicles have on the street. It is hoped that the bus service can breathe some new life back into the street and get the economy going again.

This amendment will not preclude the road being occasionally used for special uses, so we can still support the social and cultural scene in St Helier. We have an established and capable team which can manage closing Broad Street for events such as Fête de St Hélier, the Jersey Marathon, etc., and will work with the Parish to ensure this can continue.

Keeping the traffic using Broad Street carefully managed in this way will mean that the road can remain open for Emergency Service vehicles, so if there is an incident blue-light services will be able to use Broad Street to get across town quickly in an emergency. When we discussed closing Broad Street initially, when it was closed for the pandemic, they expressed concerns that putting street markets and alfresco seating in the street on a permanent basis might be unsuitable.

I would urge members to get behind this amendment, which seeks to balance the competing needs to the street in a way which will breathe new life back into the centre of town, whilst aligning with the strategic principles of our Sustainable Transport Policy.

Financial and manpower implications

Delivering these modest changes to the arrangements for access to Broad Street can be met within existing Governmental resources and budgets.

Appendix A – Draft proposed Town Bus Service route

