

EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

KILMARNOCK NORTH LOCAL COMMITTEE – 8 NOVEMBER 2005

ACCESS FOR DISABLED DRIVERS TO THE PEDESTRIANISED AREA OF KILMARNOCK TOWN CENTRE

Report by the Executive Director of Development & Property Services

1 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to advise the Local Committee—
- a) of the terms of the traffic regulation Order which restricts access to the pedestrianised streets in Kilmarnock town centre; and,
 - b) of the outcome of a review of access arrangements to the pedestrianised area by disabled badge holders.

2 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 At its meeting on 22 March 2005 the Local Committee agreed to request clarification from the Head of Roads and Transportation about the terms of the traffic regulation Order which restricts access to the pedestrianised streets in Kilmarnock town centre and to request a review of access to the pedestrianised area by disabled badge holders.
- 2.2 The new town centre on-street parking system in Kilmarnock town centre, which became fully operational on 25 April 2005, contains provisions to assist disabled persons when parking in the town centre by making disabled badge holders exempt from both the on-street parking charges and time limits. The Order also provides some 11 designated disabled parking spaces for use only by disabled badge holders.
- 2.2 Disabled badge holders are exempt from the charges and time limits in the Council's town centre car parks which also contain a provision of some 46 designated disabled parking spaces.

3 ACCESS TO THE PEDESTRIANISED AREA

- 3.1 The access restrictions and prohibited hours in the pedestrianised area of King Street and Portland Street are in force by virtue of the "Burgh of Kilmarnock (Pedestrian Priority) (Town Centre) Order 1975", as amended by the "Strathclyde Regional Council (Pedestrian Priority, Kilmarnock Town Centre) (Amendment) Order 1981".

- 3.2 The Order defines the Prohibited Hours as being between 1030hours and 1630hours, Mondays to Sundays and during this period access is restricted to police, fire and ambulance vehicles, public utility vehicles, vehicles involved in building works and invalid carriages. The Order defines an 'invalid carriage' as a mechanically propelled vehicle, unladen weight 8 cwt or less, which has been specifically designed and constructed, not merely adapted, for the sole use of a disabled person.
- 3.2 Outwith the prohibited hours (i.e. Before 10.30am and after 4.30pm) disabled badge holders may drive or park their vehicles within the pedestrianised area, so long as the vehicle is removed before the start of the prohibited hours.

4 REVIEW OF ACCESS ARRANGEMENTS

- 4.1 Currently disabled badge holders can park in several areas in close proximity to the pedestrianised area. As disabled badge holders are exempt from 'no waiting at any time' restrictions (so long as they do not cause an obstruction) they can legally park in Foregate Square, directly adjacent to The Cross.

Disabled badge holders can park free of charge and without time limit in the East George Street car park, directly adjacent to Portland Street and in several other public car parks adjacent to the town centre. Spaces have been designated for the sole use of disabled badge holders in all of these car parks.

Three designated disabled parking spaces, for use by disabled drivers only, have recently been provided in Queens Street, directly adjacent to King Street.

- 4.2 The new on-street parking system in Kilmarnock town centre, together with the facilities in the Council's town centre car parks provide significant parking provisions for disabled drivers in Kilmarnock town centre.
- 4.3 Given the physical nature of the pedestrian environment in this area and the established walking patterns of pedestrians, there is a potential conflict between pedestrians and vehicles if the current access restrictions in the pedestrianised area are relaxed.
- 4.4 There have been only two road accidents involving pedestrians in Portland Street and King Street since 2000, neither of which occurred during the prohibited hours. Any increase in vehicular traffic in the pedestrianised area could have a detrimental effect on pedestrian safety, particularly for people with a visual impairment.

- 4.5 The Social Work Department have indicated that there are in excess of 7,200 disabled badge holders currently resident within East Ayrshire. Opening Portland Street and King Street to disabled badge holders during the prohibited hours therefore has the potential to introduce a significant number of vehicles into the pedestrianised area during the busiest times of the day.
- 4.6 Unlike in Ayr High Street where there is a proper kerbed and asphalted running carriageway for vehicles, the pedestrianised area of Kilmarnock town centre has been constructed as a true shared surface between pedestrian and vehicular traffic. South Ayrshire Council has advised that there are currently between 150 and 200 vehicles an hour using Ayr High Street. Opening the pedestrianised area in Kilmarnock to additional traffic would require the creation of a properly delineated carriageway, designated disabled parking spaces and designated loading bays for use by vehicles servicing the local shops. The creation of such a carriageway and bays would be both costly and would fundamentally change the pedestrian environment and the physical characteristics of the pedestrianised area.

5 CONSULTATION WITH STRATHCLYDE POLICE

- 5.1 The views of Strathclyde Police have been sought in relation to the possibility of permitting access to Portland Street and King Street by disabled badge holders during the prohibited hours and they have raised the following points in writing—
- A significant increase in traffic flow in an existing pedestrianised area could create conflict between vehicles and pedestrians, resulting in injury to pedestrians.
 - The use of taxis by disabled people would permit a further number of vehicles to enter the pedestrianised area.
 - In addition to private vehicles and taxis there may also be strong requests for access to be given to 'Dial-a-Bus' coaches, local bus services and delivery vehicles further increasing traffic volumes in the pedestrianised area.
 - The maximum distance from the town centre car parks to either King Street or Portland Street is no more than approximately 150 metres.
- 5.2 The Police have concluded that any relaxation of the current prohibitions would create considerable problems in terms of pedestrian safety, traffic congestion and amenity value of the existing pedestrianised area.

6 SHOPMOBILITY

- 6.1 An officers' working group, chaired by Depute Chief Executive Elizabeth Morton, has been set up to consider options for a shopmobility scheme in Kilmarnock. A shopmobility scheme would provide mobility scooters which would be used to provide easy access to premises in the pedestrianised area without changing the character of the town centre or placing pedestrians or other disabled people at risk.

7 CONCLUSIONS

- 7.1 After consideration of the issues set out above and taking account of the concerns of Strathclyde Police, it is recommended that the access restrictions for the pedestrianised area in Kilmarnock town centre should remain unchanged at this time.

8 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 8.1 It is recommended that the Committee—
- a) notes the terms of the Traffic Regulation Order;
 - b) notes the improved provision of parking for disabled badge holders immediately adjacent to shopping precinct and the possibility of a shopmobility scheme for Kilmarnock; and,
 - c) notes, that for the reasons set out in the report, that the access restrictions for the pedestrianised area will remain unchanged at this time.

James Lavery
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21 October 2005

BACKGROUND PAPERS - None

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