

Nottinghamshire County Council

Examples of bus gates and road closures with cycle access

Final Report

April 2008



Burton Joyce bus gate (east end)

Introduction

This report has been written in response to a request to the Cycling England Local Authority Support Team from Nottinghamshire County Council for a briefing note in support of a bus-plug (or gate) with a cycle by-pass on the A612 at Burton Joyce. The issue is described, by a Nottinghamshire County Council representative, as follows:

"Essentially it is a bus priority project but the design has afforded us an opportunity to incorporate significant gains for cyclists by allowing them to continue to use the route that is now almost traffic free. However, since the opening of the scheme it has prompted a significant amount of local debate that has resulted in us agreeing to carry out an 'early review' of the scheme. This review is due to take place during March 2008 and a briefing to Cabinet Members will ensue in early April. Much of the 'anti' bus-plug camp focuses upon the extra distance some motorists now face to access parts of the highway network. This argument, whilst being understandable from an individuals point of view, fails to acknowledge benefits brought to other user groups such as cyclists and pedestrians".

Following a site visit to Burton Joyce, the Cycling England representative can offer the following comments and observations:

- The A612 Gedling Transport Improvement Scheme has resulted in a significant upgrade of facilities for general motor traffic to the east of Nottingham, between Carlton and Burton Joyce. The vast majority of motorists affected by the scheme will be enjoying a positive benefit.
- The GTIS has also been used to introduce benefits for others, including bus users, pedestrians, cyclists and local residents. The most obvious and, for some, controversial of these benefits for 'others' are the bus gates on Stoke Road and Burton Road (the 'old' A612) in the vicinity of Carlton-le-Willows Secondary School.
- The bus gates include provision for cycle access, which Cycling England strongly supports.



- The scheme has dramatically reduced the volume of motor traffic on the stretched of Stoke Road and Burton Road affected. This has created a very pleasant environment conducive to walking and cycling, as well as reducing traffic-related noise and visual intrusion for local residents. While it is acknowledged that some local car owners will be inconvenienced by the access restrictions, a far greater number can appreciate the benefits of reduced motor vehicle movement in the area.



- The scheme is likely to have a very positive effect in encouraging the use of non-motorised modes for local journeys, particularly to Carlton-le-Willows Schools (circa 1300 pupils). Cycling England endorses and encourages the use of traffic management measures that create positive advantage for cyclists. Providing for other modes, like buses and walking, also help to encourage cycling by reducing the volume of private motor vehicles with which cyclists have to contend.
- The Burton Joyce bus gate scheme is well connected at either end with facilities for cyclists and pedestrians, enabling access to / from a wider area. The shared-use path to the west (towards Nottingham) was recently implemented as part of the GTIS and is high quality. The path to the east is a conversion from an existing footway, and is rather sub-standard with a poor surface condition and numerous side-road interruptions. However, Cycling England supports Nottinghamshire County Council's efforts to put the bus gate scheme 'in context', and connect it to a wider cycle route network.



This report now draws together some other examples of schemes where cyclists have access through traffic controls designed to allow only buses, emergency vehicles and other specific users. These examples should strengthen the arguments in favour of retaining the Burton Joyce bus gate by demonstrating that this traffic control technique has been successfully 'tried and tested' elsewhere.

Examples of bus gates and road closures with cycle access

Below are examples, from around England, of locations where access is restricted for general traffic, but buses and/or emergency vehicles are allowed, and also cyclists.

Hollwell Road, Hull.

This is primarily an emergency vehicle access control system. It wasn't installed as a specific cycle facility, but offered an opportunity to create advantage for this road user group as well.

Andy Mayo



Hull Road, York

A bus gate with a permanent green signal for cycles.

Tim Pheby



Cambridge

This arrangement allows access for buses, taxis and residents who would otherwise be disadvantaged by the closure.

Alex Sully



Taunton

At the time this photo was taken the rising bollards were broken, which itself illustrates the degree to which they are necessary to control those who would rather ignore the signs (£30 non-endorsable fine). The cycle slip is largely unnecessary, except when a bus is actually using the gate. At other times it's more convenient to use the closed carriageway. The alternative route utilises a dual carriageway and some busy junctions.



Alex Sully

Colney Lane, Norwich

A route to a hospital that can only be used by buses and cyclists (or those with a transponder, e.g. ambulances). There is not a dedicated cycle bypass since it's not necessary in this design. The road closure initially inconvenienced local people and 'rat-runners' but has been in for at least 6 years and is now accepted.



Rob Marshall

Example of successful road closure

Whilst not a bus gate, the scheme described below highlights how cyclists and pedestrians can benefit when a route is closed to general motor traffic.

From the Cycling England website:

[Cycling England - Scheme of the Month: March 2008](#)

Closure of Bishop Bridge, Norwich

This scheme demonstrates how a simple closure creates a high quality, cost-effective walking and cycling route using existing roads. Although the bridge enhancement works were relatively expensive and protracted (due to the bridge being a scheduled ancient monument) the actual closure costs were relatively inexpensive – the cost of the stopping-up order and the bollards. Signing use and sign size is to a minimum. The issue of 'substandard' railing heights (again because the bridge is a scheduled ancient monument) suggests that the current 1.4m height requirement could be reviewed.



Bishop Bridge, Norwich

There was considerable concern about the detour imposed on vehicular traffic and the effect on the adjoining road network. The changes to the road network and traffic patterns, however, quickly settled down. After 10 years it is as if the bridge was always closed to traffic.

Key features of the scheme include:

- Completed in 1998.
- Bishop Bridge provides a crossing of the River Wensum and a route into Norwich city centre from the Inner Ring Road.
- Previously, the route was open to motor vehicles, except HGVs.
- Bishop Bridge has 'scheduled ancient monument' status. It was decided to close it to motor traffic, mainly for structural reasons.
- This closure created an 'instant' walking and cycling route.
- Previously, 40% of accidents at this site involved pedestrians and cyclists.
- An existing pedestrian crossing of the Inner Ring Road was relocated and converted into a Toucan.
- Bishop Bridge Road (Inner Ring Road) was narrowed in the vicinity of the crossing to reduce traffic speeds and enhance crossing movements.
- Access to the crossing for pedestrians and cyclists is via a 'jug-handle' on the north side of Bishop Bridge Road, a cycle slip on the south side of Bishop Bridge Road, and a kerb build-out with flush kerb for cyclists from Gas Hill (Norwich's steepest hill!).
- Posts and post and rail were used on approaches to the crossing as an alternative to pedestrian guardrail for aesthetic reasons.
- The bridge parapets, being only 700mm high in places, do not comply with current guidance. The requirement for 1.4m high parapets was never seriously considered since the bridge is a scheduled ancient monument. There have been no accidents involving falls from the bridge in the 10 years since the scheme was completed.



Bishop Bridge, Norwich

- Approaches to the crossing on the north side are by shared, segregated paths.
- There is no formal segregation over the bridge. However, an informal central 'carriageway' with 'footways' each side is indicated by flush granite paving strips.
- There is minimal signing and no surface markings.
- Current daily average cycle flow (based on 12 hour counts) is 367
- Accidents involving pedestrians or cyclists have been halved since the scheme went in.

Conclusions

The schemes illustrated above show that traffic controls, which effectively close the road to general motor traffic, whilst allowing buses and emergency vehicles access and maintaining permeability for cyclists and pedestrians are not unusual in England and bring benefits to non-motorised road users.

Indeed they can encourage more people to make short, local journeys by bike or on foot, because of the reduction in traffic and the perceived ability to use a 'short cut'.

Inevitably this sort of change provokes protest from motorists, but they will usually soon settle on alternative routes (in the case of Burton Joyce, a new by-pass for through traffic) and accept the situation after a period of time.

Of course, for the press, 'disgruntled motorists' is a better headline than 'happy cyclists and pedestrians' and people generally attend public meetings to protest about, rather than to support, schemes. So opposition to such changes is often exaggerated, whilst support can be underestimated.