

Report subject	Whitecliff Rd/ Keyhole Bridge Further Review
Meeting date	14 December 2022
Status	Public Report
Executive summary	<p>A trial road closure (modal filter) was introduced via an Experimental Traffic Regulation Order (ETRO) on Whitecliff Road at Keyhole Bridge near Poole Park on 19th August 2020. Following a period of consultation a decision was made to remove the modal filter in March 2021 and the modal filter was removed at that time. This decision was formally challenged, and the subsequent High Court judgement directed the Council to re-open the consultation to inform a Cabinet review of the decision. This report provides information to inform the review. It sets out the potential options and provides the consultation material relating to the original and further consultation periods.</p>
Recommendations	<p>It is RECOMMENDED that:</p> <p>(a) Cabinet considers all responses, evidence and information and decides which, if any, of the following options to adopt:</p> <p>(i) Option A – Keep Whitecliff Road open as it is at present.</p> <p>(ii) Option B – Implement a further ETRO closing Whitecliff Road at Keyhole Bridge to enable a further experimental period of closure.</p> <p>(iii) Option C – Start the statutory process to implement a permanent Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) closing the Whitecliff Road at Keyhole Bridge.</p> <p>(If closed, the bridge would remain open to pedestrians and cyclists)</p>
Reason for recommendations	<p>To enable Cabinet to consider all of the existing information obtained historically and in the recent additional consultation period and undertake the necessary review to consider all options following the decision of the High Court dated 18 November 2021. (accessible via a link in the Background Papers)</p>

Portfolio Holder(s):	Councillor Mike Greene, Cabinet Member for Sustainability and Transport
Corporate Director	Jess Gibbons, Chief Operations Officer
Report Author	Richard Pearson, Transport Network Manager
Wards	Parkstone; Poole Town;
Classification	For Decision

Scheme Background

1. In August 2020, the Council introduced a trial road closure (modal filter) (ETRO/2) on Whitecliff Road at Keyhole Bridge. It was one of several active travel schemes trialled using grants from tranche 1 of the DfT's Active Travel Fund and was delivered as an urgent intervention as part of the UK Government's response to the Covid-19 pandemic. The scheme prioritised walking and cycling by prohibiting access by motorised vehicles 24 hours a day, seven days per week. Its purpose was to:
 - a. Support the Council's response to the COVID-19 pandemic.
 - b. Create a safer environment to travel to and through the area on foot or by bicycle.
2. An initial consultation commenced on 7 August 2020 and ended on 15 January 2021 and a total of 796 responses were received.
3. On 15 January 2021, the Portfolio Holder published their draft decision to revoke the ETRO and remove the road closure. A five-day engagement period followed, when 438 further responses were received from the public and interested parties.
4. On 28 January 2021, the Portfolio Holder published their final decision, confirming the draft decision. This was then subject to a five-day 'call-in' period by Councillors.
5. The decision was 'called in' and considered on 1 March 2021 at a meeting of the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Board (Item 157, 00:01:50 until 02:21:50 in the recording). The outcome was that the decision be implemented as proposed, meaning the ETRO was formally revoked and removed and the access via Keyhole Bridge opened.
6. In July 2021, Keyhole Bridge User Safety Group (KBG) submitted a claim to the High Court for a judicial review. On 14 July 2021, the High Court granted permission for it to proceed.
7. On 6 October 2021, a hearing was held in the High Court. The judgement published on 18 November 2021 found that in ending the consultation period earlier than had initially been indicated (6 months), the Council had not fulfilled the legitimate expectation of the public that the full 6 months period would be adhered to, and may have denied the opportunity for those who had not yet contributed to the consultation to do so. The High Court ordered that the Council:

- a. Undertake a further period of non-statutory consultation for 40-days.
 - b. Conduct another review thereafter, with the Cabinet to consider whether the ETRO should be made permanent, retained with alterations or removed.
 - c. Pay the Claimant's costs.
8. The Court set out in an appendix to the Order a set of principles agreed between the parties in respect of the process that would be followed in respect of the further period of consultation and the review ordered by the Court. These included the principles that those who have already responded ought not to send a further response, unless there is a genuinely new point to be made; and that the purpose of the consultation will be to inform, along with the existing information from the previous consultation exercise, a decision as to whether to:
 - a. Keep Whitecliff Road open as it is at present.
 - b. Implement a further ETRO closing Whitecliff Road to enable a further experimental period of closure.
 - c. Start the statutory process to implement a permanent TRO closing the Whitecliff Road at Keyhole Bridge.
9. In accordance with the judgement and Order, the Council carried out a further period of consultation from 28 February 2022 until 8 April 2022. The outcome of this further consultation is documented and forms part of the information to be taken into account when undertaking the required review.
10. Further background information can be found on the consultation webpages haveyoursay.bcpccouncil.gov.uk/whitecliffroad (initial consultation) and haveyoursay.bcpccouncil.gov.uk/keyholebridgereview (further period of consultation).

National Policy

11. England's current national transport policy is framed by a document called Gear Change (initially published in 2020 and updated in 2021). It aims to make cycling and walking the natural choice for shorter journeys and an integral part of longer journeys in combination with other transport modes.
12. This aim is based on the premise that cycling and walking can help address air quality, climate change, congestion, inequality and public health. It is also derived from the opportunity to embed some of the behavioural change apparent during the COVID-19 pandemic. It emphasises that active travel needs to be embedded into wider decision making and local authorities are expected to reallocate road space for cycling and walking.
13. Additional statutory guidance issued earlier this year under section 18 of the Traffic Management Act 2004, reaffirmed how Gear Change could be delivered. Modal filters (closing roads to motor vehicles) were one of several measures for reallocating road space. Fundamentally, it is recognised that not all schemes are suitable and Councils are free to make an informed decision using a robust evidence base. Equally it is stated that 'consultations are not referendums' and a 'genuine picture of local opinion [should be sought]'.

Local Policy

14. Local Transport Plan 3 - 2011-2026. This initially came into effect in April 2011 and set out a 15-year strategy for the transport network, with three-year implementation plans setting out investment. The latest implementation plan includes delivery of 1) Economic Growth, 2) A Reduction in Carbon Emissions, 3) Equality of Opportunity, 4) Improved Safety, Security and Health, 5) Improved Quality of Life for residents.
15. Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans (LCWIPs) are an initiative from Central Government that set out the long-term strategic approach for the walking and cycling infrastructure which is required across an area. LCWIPs need to be in place to attract central government transport funding. The Council adopted its LCWIP in May 2022 and the LCWIP identifies Whitecliff Road at Keyhole Bridge as part of the primary cycle network.
16. In the Council's Big Plan, the Infrastructure projects seek to provide alternatives to car use by creating a new network of sustainable travel routes.
17. Strategic priorities set out in the Corporate Strategy include objectives to 'ensure sustainability underpins all of our policies', 'develop an eco-friendly and active transport network', 'tackle the climate change emergency', 'develop sustainable infrastructure', 'promote happy, active and healthy lifestyles' and 'empowering our communities so everyone feels safe, engaged and included.

Sluice channel

18. The sluice channel at Baiter Harbourside Park, which allows water to flow between Poole Park Lagoon and Parkstone Bay, has come to the end of its serviceable life. According to the Cabinet Report dated 25 May 2022;
 - a. 'surface water drainage at Keyhole Bridge is connected to...the sluice channel [but]...localised flooding is a separate issue'
 - b. 'Keyhole bridge...floods during rainfall events and high tides [making it] inaccessible to non-vehicular traffic'
 - c. construction works to renew the sluice channel would likely involve a footpath diversion via Keyhole Bridge
19. At a meeting of Cabinet, it was noted that flooding at Keyhole bridge was;
 - a. 'rainwater related and a matter for Wessex Water'
 - b. 'a meeting had been held with Wessex Water on this issue, but that by [dealing with it separately]...much-needed improvements to the sluice channel can be progressed'.

Whitecliff and Baiter Park Cycleway

20. Widening of the waterside path to create a separate cycleway and footpath commenced earlier this year, along with upgraded access to Whitecliff Road.

Poole Park Life

21. Enhancements to Poole Park included measures which reduced traffic dominance. Following completion in 2021, an end of project evaluation report was produced. It acknowledged that there were 'differing views as to what should

have been done...but consensus around the idea that [access] was not yet addressed'.

22. Whitecliff Rd, including the section under Keyhole Bridge is part of the public highway and is currently open to motor traffic at all times. The road through most of the park itself is not part of the public highway and the park road is currently closed to motor traffic between the hours of 6am to 10am Monday to Saturday inclusive. This means that the overall main through route through the park is currently not open to motor traffic when the park road is closed.

Initial consultation (20 August 2020 – 15 January 2021)

23. Stakeholders and the public could submit written representation and/or fill out a questionnaire. Reports assessing the feedback are attached at Appendix 1 and 2.
24. For the written representation 346 items were submitted. These consisted of: 49% messages of support; 24% objections; 21% follow up messages; 3% query; and 3% neutral comments.
25. With the questionnaire, 450 respondents took part. Of these, 60% agreed or strongly agreed that Whitecliff Road at Keyhole Bridge should be prioritised for cycling and walking and 37% disagreed or strongly disagreed.

Further period of consultation (28 February 2022 – 8 April 2022)

26. Similarly, reports setting out and assessing the feedback are attached at Appendix 3 and 4.
27. For the written representation 81 items were submitted by 60 respondents. Of the 60 respondents who took part: 41 (68%) had not previously provided written representation; Of the 60 respondents, 29% supported Option A (keep Keyhole Bridge open); 0% supported Option B (Conduct a further trial closure) and 71% supported Option C (close Keyhole Bridge permanently). A total of 135 new points or themes were identified and these can be found in Appendix 3 from page 8 on. New themes arose around: compliance/enforcement with the existing width restriction; size of modern vehicles; the best way to implement a sustainable transport network and vested interests. KBG submitted five files; two they authored (Flood Risk Report and Traffic Surveys) and one they commissioned (Transport Technical Report).
28. With the questionnaire, 791 respondents took part. Of these: 86% had not previously commented; Of the 791 respondents, 41% agreed with Option A (keep Keyhole Bridge open), with 58% disagreeing; 26% agreed with Option B (Conduct a further trial closure) with 59% disagreeing; and 65% agreed with Option C (close Keyhole Bridge permanently) with 35% disagreeing. Where the percentages do not add up to 100% this is because some expressed no view or a neutral view.

Overall public feedback

29. Across both consultations principal concerns were: accessibility; amenity; cyclist behaviour; displaced traffic; flooding; need for the scheme; procedural matters; rat-running; and road safety.

Economic and traffic modelling

30. To determine the impact of the trial at Keyhole Bridge, BCP Council commissioned Dorset Council to produce an independent and balanced economic assessment based on an earlier trial closure of the Park route undertaken in 2016. The report is attached at Appendix 5. Findings suggest:
 - a. More than 50% of traffic entering or exiting Poole Park via Whitecliff Road in 2013 was avoiding neighbouring main roads
 - b. Over 20 years, a closure would impose £3,382,000 of costs from delayed traffic and produce £923,000 benefits from more cycling/walking, a net disbenefit of around £2.45m.
31. KBG appointed KMC Planning Limited to conduct their own study. Their report is attached at Appendix 6. It states that closing Keyhole Bridge would over 20 years result in £1,934,469 of costs from delayed traffic and £10,400,417 of benefits from more cycling/walking, a net benefit of £8.47m.
32. WSP independently reviewed both studies to investigate the disparity. Its report is attached at Appendix 7. It concluded that differing assumptions around the projected increase in cyclist / pedestrian numbers, the extent of traffic evaporation (where a scheme results in change in transport choices towards sustainable modes and causes an overall reduction in motor traffic) and assumptions about vehicle occupancy were the cause.
33. Compared to the Dorset Council report the KBG report made assumptions that resulted in less increased costs (due to lower vehicle occupancy) and much higher economic benefits due to more pronounced take up of sustainable modes and also traffic evaporation.
34. The same approaches were used for both economic assessments of the impact of the closure of Keyhole Bridge, however the application of significantly different input assumptions resulted in markedly different valuations of the overall impact.
35. The different occupancy data rate used in the two reports is material as a higher occupancy results in a greater loss of time and therefore increases the costs of closing the road at the bridge. The DfT guidance has been applied in both cases, being 1.43 and 1.14 for Dorset Council and KMC respectively. The DfT occupancy figure for average trip is 1.43 whereas the DfT figure for a commuter trip (route) is 1.14. By using the occupancy rate for a commuter route the KMC report concludes a lower economic impact than the Dorset Council report. A short survey of actual occupancy was undertaken at 12 noon on 22/8/22 and the occupancy was measured at 1.74. This was only conducted over a short period and may not be typical of the level over a longer assessment time or the occupancy during commuter times.
36. The evaporation of traffic assumed in the KBG/KMC report has a significant impact on the economic disbenefits of closing the route. Traffic evaporation happens where a change to the highway results in a large take up of sustainable modes and therefore causes an overall reduction in motor traffic. Based on a published transport paper that looked at a significant number of schemes around the UK and Europe, a 10.6% traffic evaporation was assumed by KMC. Whilst this not especially high, it is difficult to predict this impact accurately as in essence it is predicting an unknown change in future behaviour. In this particular case, just over half the traffic using the park route is known to be passing straight

through the park, and it may be the case that this traffic will use the main diversion route instead. It is possible that some of those travelling through the park by car may not choose to travel at all, or they could switch to more sustainable modes or they could decide to use a wider diversion route.

One theory that KMC mention, is that if traffic is displaced then that would lead to congestion and if the diversion route becomes more congested then less traffic may choose to use that route over time. This is possible, however if that traffic uses a wider diversion route then that is likely to create congestion on those routes and the economic impact on other routes has not been evaluated as part of either the KMC or Dorset Council assessment. In addition, one alternative option would be for people to switch to public transport as a more sustainable travel choice. Parkstone Rd is a busy bus route and if it becomes more congested then bus journey times would increase, and this would both increase the operating costs for the buses and also make the use of public transport less attractive and viable.

Dorset Council did not make any allowance for traffic evaporation as it came to the conclusion that closing the park route would be more likely to increase traffic on the diversion route as the modelling predicts and the 2016 trial demonstrated in practice. The 2016 trial also showed traffic displacement and journey time increases on wider diversion routes. Cabinet will need to consider whether closing the park route will cause overall traffic on the main diversion route to reduce by 10.6% in the medium term or whether it is more likely that traffic will simply increase on the main diversion route and wider diversion routes as the 2016 trial demonstrated.

37. The most material influence on the combined benefit/disbenefit of the highway and active mode impacts is the assumption for the number of 'new' cyclists and pedestrians. In Dorset Council's analysis this leads to the active travel benefits not outweighing the highway disbenefits, while for the KMC Transport Planning March 2022 analysis of the scale of the active mode benefits does. This conclusion is considered under a range of sensitivity tests on the uplift levels for cyclists and pedestrians.

The KMC Transport Planning report uses a comparison between wintertime cycling and walking counts with the bridge closed, taken in Feb 2021, with summertime counts taken in Sept 2021 with the bridge open, to be representative of the actual projected beneficial impact of closing the bridge. The counts were taken by members of the Keyhole Bridge Group and it has not been possible for the Council to verify them. Using these counts, KMC assumes a 125% increase in cycling and a 250% increase in pedestrians arises as a result of closing the bridge. It cannot be said with certainty whether this exaggerates the likely benefit however weather is a known factor in the numbers of people choosing sustainable travel modes and it is notable that in February 2021 the schools were closed due to covid whereas by September they had re-opened.

The Dorset Council report assumes a 20% and 12% increase respectively and that these figures were thought to be realistic in the context of the outcome of actual cycle improvement schemes measured in the Dorset Council area. Dorset Council also evaluated the impact of a 55% increase in cycling and if this arose, the active travel benefit would increase by approximately £1m, reducing the net disbenefit to -£1.395m if other their inputs are also used.

It is noted that the economic impact on general traffic in Sandbanks Rd between Whitecliff Rd and the gyratory is not considered in either report and this would increase the economic disbenefits. However the Dorset Council report includes journey time information that suggests this section of the diversion route does not see major differences in journey time whether keyhole bridge is closed or not, so any economic impact is likely to be less significant. Displacement of traffic onto wider diversion routes is also not considered by either report, although the 2016 trial did show some displacement and journey time increases on wider routes this was also more modest in scale than the impact on Parkstone Rd.

38. All traffic flow and economic analysis is to a degree subjective as any assumptions can radically influence the findings as is evident in these two reports. The report in Appendix 7 and this summary highlights the main assumptions that have led to the different conclusions in these two reports and Cabinet will need to weigh these considerations in deciding which report may be most accurate or realistic and also consider the weight to be given to the economic assessment in the broader assessment including other factors.
39. The Council also analysed traffic data from an Automatic Traffic Counter. Full results are contained within Appendix 3. The exercise found that:
 - a. Traffic volumes in 2022 are broadly similar to those in 2018 and are not thought to have changed significantly since 2016.
 - b. It cannot be determined with any level of certainty whether the actual experimental closure of Keyhole Bridge to motor traffic resulted in an increase or decrease in motorised vehicles using the diversion route via Sandbanks Road, because conditions were unrepresentative during the experimental closure due to the Covid pandemic. This is why the assessment of the 2016 trial closure is useful in assessing the likely impact of closing Keyhole Bridge to motor traffic - particularly as traffic levels do not appear to have changed significantly since 2016.
40. Keyhole Bridge is subject to moving and static TROs. These include a width restriction of 6 foot-0 inches (6' 0"); a 30mph speed limit; and at any time waiting and loading restrictions. There is also a 7'6" height restriction. The current width restriction of 6'0" (1829mm) was prescribed in a Traffic Regulation Order dated 1969. Enforcement powers are governed by Part 6 of the Traffic Management Act 2004. Since 31 May 2022, English local authorities outside of London have been able to apply to the Secretary of State for new powers to enforce moving traffic offences and BCP Council is working towards applying for those powers. Previously, highway authorities outside London could only issue penalty charge notices for static traffic infringements. At this time only Dorset Police have the power to enforce this width restriction.
41. The current 6'0" width restriction can be seen in the historical context of the original British Motor Corporation Mini and Morris Minor cars that were approximately 4' 8" and 5' 0" wide respectively. Many modern vehicles exceed this width. For example a Ford Ka is 1894mm wide and most Honda Jazz models are 2029mm wide.
42. The total width between the inside brick piers is 2720mm. The narrow section under the bridge is 2260mm wide between the harbour side brickwork pier that has no kerb upstand and the kerb upstand on the other side that creates a buffer strip on that side which is 460mm wide. Therefore most motor vehicles currently

using the bridge are in contravention of the width restriction, even though they are physically able to pass through, with care. It would be advisable to consider increasing the width restriction to better reflect the size of modern vehicles that can reasonably fit through the bridge if the decision on review is to keep the route open to all traffic.

43. In a general sense, width restrictions are often used as traffic calming features, to significantly reduce traffic speed and they can also serve to limit the use of HGVs on a route and this function is potentially helpful in reducing vehicle types and speeds of vehicles at this location and using the park route if a decision is made to keep the route open following this review.
44. In 2021 the Council erected shared space signs on the approach to the bridge as these signs convey the legal meaning that no users have priority, and all users must take care and give way to others.

Road Safety

45. Comparing casualties on the main diversion route to the park route. These have been considered over a 5 year period spanning the closure (1st March 2017 to 28th Feb 2022). These stand at 22 and 2 respectively although the 22 casualty collisions on the diversion route include 5 serious and 1 fatal whereas the park route has 2 injury collisions both categorised as 'slight'. Of the park route collisions, only one is near to the bridge itself and this involved two cars colliding immediately to the east of the bridge.
46. If traffic is diverted onto a route that has a casualty record about 10 times higher than the original route, then it is likely to lead to an increase in casualties. This is because casualties generally happen at conflict points and the diversion route is significantly longer, traffic speeds are typically higher and there are far more potential conflict points that are known to result in casualties. If the diverted traffic causes congestion then that could reduce traffic speed and help reduce casualties or at least offset any increase and also reduce the severity of casualties, although sometimes congestion can also increase casualties.
47. There were 2 road collisions causing casualties on the main diversion route during the trial bridge closure in 2020/21. Both were serious and resulted in 3 casualties altogether. The timing of those (18/10/20 at 11:07am and 22/1/21 at 5pm) is such that they may have resulted from the trial closure of the bridge or the park road work closures that were happening at the time, but it is not possible to be certain and it would not be appropriate to assume a direct link. For clarity, in the period preceding the planned and trial closures, the park road would have been open at the times the incidents occurred so a link cannot be completely ruled out either. Due to the short period of the trial and lower than usual traffic flows at that time due to the pandemic, it is not possible to draw any firm statistically meaningful conclusions from the actual casualty evidence during the trial, even though on the face of it the casualty record during that time was not that good on the diversion route.

Options Appraisal

48. Option A maintains the current and historic status-quo by keeping the Bridge open to motor traffic. However, if chosen, consideration should be given to reviewing the width restriction that currently prohibits most modern motor vehicles that use the route, including many that may fall into the commonly described categories of mini or super mini.
49. Option B constitutes a re-run of the trial. It would offer the opportunity to gather more representative data (when travel patterns are not skewed by Covid/lockdowns or construction activity in Poole Park) and more fully assess the extent of behavioural change (by conducting a trial over a lengthier period). Feedback suggests Option B is least popular. Monitoring and evaluation would also require consideration and further costs would arise.
50. Option C closes the bridge to motor traffic and represents a change, with the potential to bolster active travel and / or increase traffic volume using alternative routes locally. It is the most popular and aligns with national and local transport policy and guidance. It may increase road casualties on the diversion route may also lead to increased emissions on routes that are lined with many residential dwellings where dispersal of pollutants may disperse less well. Conversely, it may reduce casualties on the park route and create a route that people perceive to be safer and easier to navigate. It may have an adverse or positive impact on economic activity subject to Cabinet's views on which of the economic assessment reports is most likely to reflect the actual impact of closing the bridge.

Summary of financial implications

51. Option A is not expected to incur any further direct cost.
52. Option B would require a new ETRO, since the previous one has expired. Monitoring and evaluation would also incur costs, but these would be contingent on the scope of works. A further trial would be likely to incur costs of around £25k.
53. Option C would involve making a permanent traffic regulation order and reinstating a closure incurring costs of approximately £5k.
54. If option A is chosen and Keyhole Bridge remains open to motor traffic, the revision of the current 6'0" traffic regulation order, to better reflect the width of vehicles that can physically use the route, would cost approximately £2k.
55. The above costs can be funded from the transport capital programme.
56. The costs of reducing or resolving the flooding problem are not yet known and are dependent on the design solution and will be considered separately as part of the transport capital programme if appropriate.

Summary of legal implications

57. Highway Authorities can instigate improvements under the Highway Act 1980 and make or revoke TROs under the Road Traffic Act 1984. To comply with the High Court ruling, the Council needs to complete the review and decide on a course of action. It can be confirmed that the Claimant's costs have been settled.

Summary of human resources implications

58. There are no anticipated significant human resources impacts for options A and C. If option B were chosen then as part of a new project plan in addition to Transportation Officers, Neighbourhood Services, corporate colleagues in communications and the consultation team would need to be utilised to assist with the facilitation of the ETRO and associated engagement and assessment process.

Summary of sustainability impact

59. The decision could affect congestion and the numbers cycling / walking. To assist the Cabinet in making a decision two DIAs have been produced.
- a. DIA no 450 Appendix 9, Leave Keyhole Bridge open to motor traffic.
 - b. DIA no 451 Appendix 10, Close Keyhole Bridge to motor traffic.
60. Road closures can impact public health and wellbeing by influencing travel patterns. In this case, it can also affect accessibility to recreational areas.

Summary of equality implications

61. An Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) has been completed and is attached at Appendix 8. In common with other similar schemes both local and national, where a change in road layouts has been trialled, there have been positive impacts for some people who benefit and challenges for others who are negatively impacted as their usual arrangements and environment have been affected. Nationally, active travel schemes have generated considerable debate and some have been challenged on equality grounds. There is still not a settled position after two years of evidence and to find an overall consensus could marginalise both positive and negative implications both between and within protected groups.

When the trial was underway to close Whitecliff Road to through motor traffic at Keyhole Bridge, awareness increased of the difficulties that motor vehicles caused to many people that walked and cycled through the area compared to the previous open arrangement. Then when the trial ended, the positives apparent during the closure for people that walk and cycled, some disabled people and some family groups then ended. For others the trial highlighted that their usual travel means or route, particularly to get to Poole Park was made more difficult and to find alternatives means some disabled and elderly people stated proportionally higher impacts. When the trial ended their previous travel patterns could resume, giving clarity as to how they were affected and reinstating their travel options.

62. Aside from the direct way of travelling, other impacts arise including safety, air quality and congestion implications. There was a strong perspective of road safety improvements arising from the trial closure with some positive equality implications for more vulnerable groups. Both positive and negative road safety concerns were also highlighted from walking and cycling conflicts arising from the closure.
63. Overall accidents involving motor vehicles are likely to have more serious implications, however it is noted that the route and Keyhole Bridge specifically has a relatively low casualty record whilst the diversion routes have a relatively high casualty record (approximately 10 times higher than the park route) that may

be exacerbated by adding more motor traffic to a longer route with more potential conflict points. Conversely, more traffic on the diversion route may increase congestion and this could lead to lower traffic speeds on the diversion routes and that could help to reduce casualties.

64. During the experimental closure in 2020/21 there were 2 serious collisions on the diversion route that resulted in 3 casualties. Because the trial period was relatively short, it is not possible to draw any overall statistically meaningful inference or conclusion as to whether casualties increased or decreased as a result of the closure or whether these casualties were directly or indirectly related to the trial itself and it is noted that traffic flows on the diversion routes were relatively low at the time of the trial due to the covid pandemic. This means that any increase in traffic may not have caused the same level of congestion compared to that arising had the trial taken place during a period when traffic flows were more typical of usual conditions.
65. For air quality and congestion, the trial, by reducing some car trips crossing Poole Park without using the park itself, will likely improve air quality within the park, which is positive for an area of recreation. Some of these through trips will be transferred to other B roads that are more appropriate for motor traffic than a park, however this displaced traffic is likely to cause worse air quality and possibly increased road casualties on those routes and may also make those routes less attractive and less safe for cycling and walking. Poor air quality does proportionally impact more vulnerable people including children, the elderly and disabled people and the diversion routes pass by many domestic dwellings and other properties. If the trial did encourage more cycling and walking trips overall at the expense of car journeys (modal shift) then overall improvements in air quality may arise and there could be some positive equality implications.
66. The implications of the trial closure based on the consultation responses realised improvements to transport arrangements for people that are able to walk and cycle and enhanced safety through a narrow bridge which was highlighted by many, including some disabled people who travelled through there. Improving the local environment through reducing the impact of through motor traffic, benefits those that already cycle and walk but also encourages others, including from protected groups who are more likely to walk or cycle along the route if Keyhole Bridge is closed to motor traffic due to the overall reduction in motor traffic that would be likely to result on the route. Those that benefit will not necessarily cite equality issues in their support for the closure.
67. There are through the consultation responses from specific groups – many disabled and some elderly people who were adversely affected by the closure as one way they could reach Poole Park by car was curtailed. The equality profile of those negatively impacted by the period the road was closed was more evident from the research than the equality profile of those that benefited, whilst noting there was majority agreement for the closure to through traffic overall and that the scheme was considered as providing an overall positive impact.
68. The closure of Keyhole Bridge improves air quality on the route and accessibility and safety for pedestrians, cyclists and those with wheelchairs or pushchairs, creating an attractive sustainable travel route that also links to other sustainable travel routes. The creation of such a route is likely to promote a further take up of sustainable travel modes although it is apparent that the route remains a viable route for these modes whether it is closed or not.

69. These benefits are offset to a degree because the closure of Keyhole Bridge displaces traffic onto alternative routes and has an opposite and adverse impact on those. In addition, the closure appears to have specific adverse impacts on those with protected characteristics including age, gender and disability. Closing the route may also have some associated surveillance disbenefits.
70. Overall, whilst different protected groups are impacted to a greater or less extent by either the opening or closure of Keyhole Bridge, no protected group is fundamentally impacted by either decision - as viable alternative routes exist.

Summary of risk assessment

71. The main risk highlighted is mitigating the impact on protected groups for whichever option is selected and implemented. The Council routinely monitors road casualties on all its roads and also has air quality monitoring stations around the conurbation as well as traffic counters that will assist in monitoring the impacts of any decision.

Background papers

Active Travel Fund, Department for Transport, 20 May 2022, retrieved from <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/emergency-active-travel-fund-local-transport-authority-allocations> (published works)

Active Travel Schemes, BCP Council, no date, <https://www.bcpCouncil.gov.uk/News/News-Features/Supporting-Active-Travel/Active-Travel-Schemes.aspx> (published works)

Agenda and minutes, Overview and Scrutiny Board - Monday, 1st March, 2021 2.00 pm, BCP Council, retrieved from: <https://democracy.bcpCouncil.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?Mid=4312> (published works)

Case No: CO/1937/2021, High Court Of Justice Queen's Bench Division Planning Court, 18 November 2021, retrieved from: <https://haveyoursay.bcpCouncil.gov.uk/14035/widgets/40200/documents/22685> (published works)

Gear change: a bold vision for walking and cycling, Department for Transport, 27 July 2020, retrieved from <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/cycling-and-walking-plan-for-england> (published works)

Gear Change: one-year-on review, Department for Transport, 30 July 2021, retrieved from <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/gear-change-one-year-on-review> (published works)

Harbourside Park - Strategic infrastructure improvements to the sluice channel linking Poole Park and Poole Harbour, BCP Council, May and July 2022, retrieved from: <https://democracy.bcpCouncil.gov.uk/ielssueDetails.aspx?Ild=15213&PlanId=0&Opt=3> (published works)

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Appendices

Appendix 1 – Initial consultation written representation report

Appendix 2 – Initial consultation questionnaire report

Appendix 3 – Further period of consultation written representation report

Appendix 4 – Further period of consultation questionnaire report

Appendix 5 – Economic Assessment of 2016 Trial by Dorset Council

Appendix 6 – Economic Assessment by KMC on Behalf of Keyhole Bridge Group

Appendix 7 – Whitecliff Road Economic Impacts Review by WSP

Appendix 8 – EIA Report and Action Plan

Appendix 9 – DIA assessing the leave Keyhole Bridge open option Report No 450

Appendix 10 – DIA assessing the close Keyhole Bridge option Report No 451