

STATES OF JERSEY



PEDESTRIAN PRIORITY IN BROAD STREET, ST. HELIER

Lodged au Greffe on 29th March 2021
by the Connétable of St. Helier

STATES GREFFE

PROPOSITION

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

to request the Minister for Infrastructure -

- (a) to maintain the current pedestrian-priority restrictions 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-priority area, 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;
 - (ii) cycling access to Broad Street, and within the pedestrian-priority area;
 - (iii) bus services to, and from, the pedestrian-priority area; and
 - (iv) servicing and delivery access to business premises in the pedestrian-priority area;
- (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.

CONNÉTABLE OF ST. HELIER

REPORT

In his answer to a question from Deputy Ahier of St. Helier in the States Assembly on Tuesday 24th March 2021, the Minister for Infrastructure stated that it was his intention to re-open Broad Street to through traffic as soon as the public health restrictions had been lifted that led to the closure of the street after 11.00 a.m. daily, unless he was requested to do otherwise by a States Member lodging a proposition for debate by the Assembly. Accordingly, I am asking the States to agree to request the Minister to maintain the new current traffic arrangements for the rest of the year in order to help St. Helier recover from the pandemic.

Throughout the world local authorities have responded to the requirement for physical distancing in towns and cities by removing non-essential through traffic and some on street parking in central areas. This has been in recognition that such measures would not only provide more space in town centres during the pandemic, but that once measures encouraging people to stay at home were relaxed, they would increase the availability of outside seating areas for cafés and restaurants, improve the health and well-being of people who walk and cycle, and lead to increased trade.

It is regrettable that in over a year since the new access arrangements have been in place in Broad Street such steps have not been taken by the Government, and that it is intended to allow the street to revert to its former role as St. Helier's 'Inner Ring Road' (as it has been described by the Infrastructure Department). It is also to be regretted that my requests that the Minister take the simple steps necessary to re-route the Number 19 bus to allow convenient central access for bus passengers at the top of Broad Street by the Philip Le Sueur Obelisk, even on a trial basis, have been refused, although the recent announcement of a trial town 'hopper' bus service is welcome news.

It is difficult to understand the Government's reluctance to seize the opportunity to 'build back better' in Broad Street, given that this proposal is consistent with States' strategic policies, including successive Island Plans, transport policies, environmental, health and sports strategies, for more than two decades. The work that was carried out around the Le Sueur monument at the turn of the Millennium, restoring the fountains and lights and creating a new square at the top end of the street, has more recently been complemented by the paving of Sand Street and improvements to Charing Cross; in recent times these have led to a burgeoning in retail and hospitality activity in that area and, with plans now passed to introduce a water feature into La Croix de la Reine, there is no doubt that we are on the cusp of realising a major improvement to St. Helier's public realm. No one who visits the excellent new Santander 'work café' in the former Thomas Cook building, and looks past the seating and the crapaud on its plinth, can fail to be struck by the opportunities offered by a second pedestrian-priority route in the heart of town, opportunities that will be lost if Charing Cross is once again bisected by nose-to-tail traffic belching fumes as drivers seek an alternative to the congested Ring Road.

The need to make our town centre welcoming and attractive, a destination in its own right, has become even more pressing with the increased reliance on online shopping and working from home, both of which factors are likely to reduce footfall and threaten the viability of the retail and hospitality sectors, in particular.

If the proposition is approved, and subject to the relaxation of public health restrictions, it is planned to introduce a host of activities and events, providing an extra incentive for

Islanders and visitors to spend time in St Helier. The Parish receives a steady stream of requests for locations in town for 'pop up' stalls, art displays, music and performances, sponsored activities in support of local charities, et cetera, and Broad Street can provide a home for these.

To achieve the kind of reimagining of Broad Street that the Parish of St. Helier can deliver through its Town Centre Management function, in collaboration with other parties, requires the present access arrangements in Broad Street to continue for the rest of the year. However, it is essential that the access needs of disabled drivers and bus passengers are reviewed and improved where necessary. Cycling in the street also needs to be controlled by the Minister and the servicing and unloading needs of local businesses responded to. The proposition further requests that the success or otherwise of the extended pedestrian-priority arrangements are monitored by the Department and that a report is presented to the States at the end of the trial period, in order that a decision may be made as to whether Broad Street has a sufficient 'buzz' for the arrangements to be made permanent.

Financial and manpower implications

The Minister has announced that funding is in place for the proposed town 'hopper' bus trial; other costs associated with delivering a new vision for Broad Street can be met from existing States and Parish budgets and staff.