



Friends position on through traffic trial

In August The Royal Parks (TRP) implemented the reductions in through traffic in all its Parks promised in its February Movement Strategy document.

The partial road closures in Richmond Park are one of several six-month trials that will end in February and include road closures in Hyde Park, Green Park, Greenwich Park and Bushy Park. This is the most significant change in Richmond Park's roads since the introduction of a 20-mph speed limit and the closure of Robin Hood Gate in 2004. It's a big step but mirrors similar traffic restrictions throughout London.

The trial in Richmond Park closes the whole east side of the Park and the link between Sheen Cross and Sheen car park to through traffic at all times and between Roehampton and Richmond Gates at weekends. The west side between Kingston Gate and Richmond Gate remains open. All the car parks are open.

We welcome the trial. The Friends' charitable objectives are to conserve and protect the peace and tranquillity of the Park and to 'limit the adverse effects of activities that damage its attributes', so we have always been in favour of reducing through traffic. Visitor research shows that the top reason for visiting the Park is its peace and tranquillity and lock-down showed how tranquil the Park can be without traffic. Many locals and especially visitors would like it to continue like that. And in the long-term through traffic is surely incompatible with. National Nature Reserve; the Park should not be a relief valve for the roads outside it.

We have monitored the trial since the start to see whether it provides the promised benefits for the Park and its visitors, and have been surprised at how much more relaxed and tranquil the Park is now on the east side, and at weekends in the northern part. Cars accessing the car parks are going more slowly than before, and it appears deer are crossing the road more leisurely. Visitors we speak to are delighted.

The barriers are effective in that almost no cars are going through them (except those on Park business). However, with roads free of cars, there are more cyclists, with some going much faster, and better protection is needed for pedestrians when crossing the roads.

Although our main concern is the Park, we are obviously aware of the potential impact of the Park's road closures on traffic outside the Park. Closing Robin Hood Gate created problems and hardship in the short-term from the increase in traffic outside the Park, but in the longer-term traffic levels have adjusted.

TRP are now consulting on the trial. Please submit your views to it. We hope you agree with us, but whether you do or not, let TRP know what you think.

