

Reasons for the Call In Request

Reasons for the Call In request provided in a letter from Councillor Nicholas Field-Johnson on 10th January 2022.

10th January, 2022

Dear Scrutiny Committee,

We were extremely disappointed by the decision made today on the Burford Weight Limit ("BWL"). We believe it was based on knowingly erroneous information and wish to have the decision called in to the full Cabinet for a final decision. This suggestion is based on:

1. Serious Omission of the ANPR data.

Cllr Enright decision, he stated, was based on a table in the Officers' report. Because Officers had not fully analysed their own data this table is hugely erroneous. Burford Town Council did fully and professionally analyse the October 2021 OCC data and submitted a written report on these errors to Cllr Enright in December 2021.

In October 2021 two traffic measuring techniques were compared at 5 sites for the first time by OCC, with the introduction of ANPR recording (Automatic Number Plate Recognition). Analysis showed that the cable-across-the-road technique, ATC, can overestimate the number of HGVs by up to a factor of 10.. The table Cllr Enright used to base his decision is ATC based and therefore contains useless, unreliable information.

But the ANPR surveys were crucial in other ways. Firstly, they allowed the proportion of HGVs that were above and below 7.5t to be known for the first time. This meant that the real number of affected HGVs could be identified, which proved to be much lower than implied by the ATC survey. This showed that the selection of 50% in the criteria defining the thresholds of desired (or harmful) impact when applied to all HGVs was meaningless with hindsight. The criterion should only have been applied to HGVs above 7.5t, i.e. the target of ETRO.

Secondly, the ANPR data allowed through traffic between Leaffield and Witney to be identified, providing irrefutable evidence that there is minimal use of Leaffield for north/south through movements.

All of these findings were omitted from the Officers' Report.

This is a glaring use of erroneous HGV traffic information for decision making and is beyond comprehension for a professionally-run Council. The crucial non-analysis in the Report to Cllr Enright has not been explained by Officers.

2. Misrepresentations and claims.

A significant number of complaints come from Leaffield. This was orchestrated by a Councillor through social media mis-representing the situation. The gold standard ANPR data linked to DVLA is the only reliable HGV measuring technique which showed that there were only 1 an hour >7.5 tonne HGVs passing through Leaffield and Crawley, negligible even in a village. The excessive claims from critics including GCC are misguided. Cllr Enright maintained otherwise, again groundlessly.

Separate survey of HGVs in Leafield have been carried out by me and Burford Town Council supporting the 1 an hour survey results.

Analysis of the ANPR data by BTC also indicates that a number of HGVs use Leafield in order to by-pass Charlbury, which has its own weight limit, and this has nothing to do with Burford.

3. Decision at the meeting had been pre-determined.

No recognition of the points of the nine speakers was considered or data or the report from BTC detailing the errors in the Officers' Report. The decision was clearly long pre-determined and the decision was compromised by the wrong data being used to validate the decision.

One has to question whether the role of the Cabinet Member was compromised by his close association with Witney Town Council and Witney hauliers in their opposition to the BWL.

4. Called-in grounds

One must question why Cllr Enright ignored facts and read a decision obviously prepared before the Decision meeting. The ETRO has had many benefits to towns and villages on the A361, environmental, pollution, building damage, accidents etc. but as always there are some losers, who are hauliers which are within Enright's ward. There is clear evidence of possible bias which should be removed.

Others, unbiased, should review the decision and request the officers to analyse all the data they collected and then put back the issue to Cabinet. Such a major decision affecting people and businesses in West Oxfordshire - 25% of total - should not be a delegated decision.

Best wishes

Nicholas

County Councillor Burford & North Carterton