



London Living Streets response to Phase 2 of the Royal Parks Movement Strategy Engagement

London Living Streets is the London campaigning arm of Living Streets which is the national charity for everyday walking. The London group aims to be a voice for people seeking to improve conditions for walking in the capital and is made up of the members of Living Streets borough groups across London and other individuals who are interested in these issues.

We are commenting on how Royal Parks might improve the way the seven strategic outcomes of the draft Movement Strategy are achieved. We comment with particular reference to the experience and safety of people who walk in the parks and whose journeys, to or from the park, include walking.

We strongly support all seven strategic outcomes in the phase 2 Royal Parks Movement Strategy engagement and welcome the initiatives taken that create a programme that will promote the safety and amenity of people walking. We very much welcome the general approach of the document which recognises that only with a complete change in attitude to Active Travel are we going to be able to deal with improving the walking experience in the Royal Parks, as well as tackling the air pollution and climate change crises amongst a whole host of other issues. **Fundamental to these wholesale improvements is the urgent need for the removal of through (motor) traffic using the Parks as a short cut** and the elimination of all but the most essential service vehicles whose entry and exit should be strictly controlled. Such a fundamental change must include vehicle access and parking being only available to those directly using the parks and to be limited to a highly selective list such as people and groups with impaired mobility and other disabilities.

It is quite clear from the results of the initial consultation that the vast majority of the respondents support a rapid reduction in the number of motor vehicles in the Royal Parks so we are most concerned about the apparent change in the language and tone of the document since initial consultation. There does not appear to be the wholesale commitment to the elimination of through traffic that is needed and was envisaged. Words and phrases have now appeared like: overcoming challenges; exploring opportunities; decreasing motor traffic; discouraging through movement.

These seem to suggest that we are going to get a few minor changes when what is needed is a **radical change in policy on the use of motor vehicles in the Royal Parks. The evidence is clear that the public will support firm action that returns the parks to people and allows them to be the lungs that our city so needs.** There is no good reason to be cautious and the air pollution and climate emergencies give added weight to a bold approach.

We comment in more detail as follows:

- **We support the immediate adoption of 20mph as the default speed limit.** We note that there was a speed limit of 20mph in most Royal Parks which was increased in 1960 to 30mph explicitly for the benefit of motorists (see HC Deb 18 July 1960 vol 627 cc173-204e). We also note that 'The maximum speed in most parks open to the public, eg those owned by the National Trust, is lower than 20mph; eg the limit in the grounds at Cliveden is 5 mph, as it is in many other places. **The adoption of a 20mph default has previously been agreed and there can be no further reason for delay in implementation.** There are still examples of Royal Parks where the surrounding roads have 20mph limits and the speed limit rises to 30mph on entry into the park. This needs to be addressed urgently. The package of measures for strategic outcome 4 should include lower maximum speeds than 20mph. In Greenwich Park for example a maximum speed of 15mph would be more appropriate - at this speed even through traffic could be discouraged while making the wide central parking boulevard significantly safer for all park users.
- Whilst we accept that the whole plan will take a number of years to complete, the quoted time period of five years is far too long. A number of the proposals are relatively simple to introduce and should be done so rapidly. It is also not appropriate to push difficult decisions into the long grass. **The mandate from the original consultation is clear. The parks should be for its users and not through traffic and this should be one of the first policies to be implemented rather than the last. This is particularly pertinent in Regents Park, Greenwich Park and Richmond Park and should be one of the first issues to be tackled.**
- Current enforcement of traffic regulations is simply not robust enough and priority should be given to much **more effective enforcement for the future. This will of course be hugely aided by removing the need for through journeys.** As well as removing through traffic and reducing accessing traffic, **there is an urgent need to enforce the current regulations on commercial motor traffic,** which are widely flouted; an individual action plan for each park is required.
- We particularly welcome any extension of complete traffic free days similar to those operating in St. James Park at the weekends. They can be introduced at little cost and offer huge benefits to the public. BUT people should not be like Oliver timidly asking for more! Car-free should be the default and not a bonus. The Royal Parks should now see themselves as armed with a clear mandate to begin to meet the needs of these people users. **Weekend closures of The Mall should be a starting point only and, in the summer, should be the norm for all of those times when huge numbers of people would delight in simply being able to inhabit the whole of the space between Hyde Park Corner and Trafalgar Square.**

- Particular attention should be focused on pedestrian crossings with more of them and shorter waiting times to cross and longer crossing times. **In the future, signalised crossings inside the parks should be able to default to red for traffic and the dominant phase should be one that allows pedestrians to cross.**
- The RP Movement Strategy in its Vision section states (page 8) that: "We will encourage the use of more sustainable ways to access and travel through our parks; We will encourage visitors to use active and sustainable modes of transport as their first choice for park visits whenever they can." This is supported by people's views shown in the infographic on page 7. The MS notes the low levels of access to Bushy and Richmond Parks in particular via public transport, a direct result of lower quality public transport links (which has been noted). We ask for stronger action from the Royal Parks to seek to work with TfL to improve public transport access for these two parks and thus reduce the need for access by motor vehicle.
- Whilst we fully understand that both vehicle recognition cameras and filtering traffic both have a role to play in enforcement, we favour permanent filtering and 24/7 road closures where ever possible.
- We think the walking experience could be further advanced (strategic outcome 3) by Royal Parks **working closely with the appropriate highway authorities to improve pedestrian crossings that provide access to the parks from adjacent streets.** We are thinking of examples such as crossings for St James's Park and Green Park from nearby points of origin such as the Palace of Westminster, the National Gallery, Charing Cross station and Victoria station. For Greenwich Park from the direction of Blackheath and Greenwich town centre. For Regent's Park access to park entrances across all streets around the park and linking to the Central London Walking Network.
- In many of the parks this removal of motor traffic would give **the opportunity to create beautiful walking boulevards with increased greening** - such as The Mall, Constitution Hill, Inner Circle, York Bridge, Blackheath Avenue and Chestnut Avenue. In turn, each of these could connect to wider walking networks through partnership work with The Ramblers and London Living Streets.