ABSTRACT
This report advises the Committee of the results of further consultation carried out on the implications of closing Abbey Path to all traffic in a downhill (westerly) direction.

1 RECOMMENDATIONS

1.1 It is recommended that the committee agree:-

(i) that Abbey Path remains open to buses and cycles in a downhill (westerly) direction;

(ii) to note that signing improvements have been carried out to discourage cyclists from cycling the wrong way down upper High Street and to encourage them to use the correct route through Abbey Arch;

(iii) to note that the bus companies have agreed to enforce a stop/go arrangement for buses travelling down Abbey Path;

(iv) to note that road safety training in Arbroath schools will include specific mention of the dangers to cyclists who ignore the rules of the road, with particular emphasis to the situation at Abbey Path.

2 DETAILS

2.1 Report No 77/04 Abbey Path/High Street Junction, Arbroath approved by the Infrastructure Services Committee on 22 January 2004 instructed the Director of Roads and the Director of Planning and Transport to carry out a consultation exercise on the implications of closing Abbey Path to all vehicular traffic travelling in a downhill (westerly) direction.

2.2 A meeting has been held involving Roads Department and Planning and Transport Department staff, Tayside Police and officials from Strathay Scottish Omnibus Ltd (the main bus company using Abbey Path). At this meeting edited video clips of the traffic movements at the junction were shown, principally to illustrate the extent of the problem of illegal cycling at the junction but also to give an indication of the speed of buses crossing the High Street.
2.3 Subsequently a further meeting was held with the Arbroath members and the Convener and the Vice Convener of the Infrastructure Services Committee. Again the video clips were shown and officers from both the Roads and Planning and Transport Departments along with representatives from the Police and Strathtay Scottish addressed the meeting.

2.4 Consultation has also taken place with Travel Dundee (who operate Wishart Coaches) who are the only other bus operator using Abbey Path and with the local representative of the Cyclist’s Touring Club.

2.5 During these consultations a number of proposals and issues were considered and these are discussed in detail in Appendix A. As can be seen at paragraph 8 in Appendix A the option of closing Abbey path to buses in a downhill (westerly) direction has considerable implications for the viability of public transport in Arbroath town centre and indeed for the service to Ninewells Hospital in Dundee. Although the alternative route is achievable there is no doubt that this longer route will introduce other road safety risks. There are a number of junctions on the alternative route that, like the Abbey Path/High Street junction, are not ideal. Extra bus traffic will certainly increase the risk of an accident occurring at these locations.

3 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

3.1 The signing improvements already carried out were contained within the Roads Department’s revenue budget for road safety in 2003/04. The signing improvements recently ordered will be contained within the same budget for 2004/05.

4 HUMAN RIGHTS IMPLICATIONS

4.1 There are no human rights implications in terms of the Human Rights Act 1998 arising from the proposals in this report.

5 CONSULTATION

5.1 The Chief Executive, the Director of Law and Administration, the Director of Finance, the Director of Planning and Transport and the Chief Constable have been consulted in the preparation of this Report.

6 CONCLUSIONS

6.1 Abbey Path should remain open to buses and cycles in a downhill (westerly direction).

6.2 The dangers caused by illegal cycling at this junction can be mitigated by the voluntary stop/go manoeuvre proposed by the bus companies.

6.3 In addition the improved road signing will hopefully reduce the incidence of cyclists cycling the wrong way down the upper High Street.
6.4 The more targeted cycle training in schools will alert children to the dangers they face by ignoring the rules of the road.

Ronnie McNeil
DIRECTOR OF ROADS

NOTE

The following background papers, as defined by Section 50D of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 (and not containing confidential or exempt information) were relied on to a material extent in preparing the above Report:-


NJ/JSG
6 May 2004
REPORTS/abbey path.june04
APPENDIX A

ABBEY PATH – HIGH STREET JUNCTION
MATTERS CONSIDERED DURING FURTHER CONSULTATION

1 Cycle training. The police Road Safety Unit will ensure that specific mention is made of the problems caused by cyclists at the Abbey Path/High Street junction when road safety training is carried out in Arbroath schools. A CD showing video clips from the survey of the junction has been supplied to the police for this purpose.

2 Road Signing. Improved signing of the preferred cycle route through Abbey Arch has been erected. Amended signing has been ordered for the top of Abbey path to emphasise that the only exemption to the restrictions is for local buses and cycles. This will deter mini-bus drivers from using this route in contravention of the traffic regulation order. Extra “cycling prohibited” signing has been erected to supplement the no entry signing at the top end of the upper High Street and to reinforce the existing signing in the pedestrian precinct.

3 High Street/Hamilton Green junction. Alterations were considered to create a narrowing of the exit from the High Street to deter cyclists from entering the High Street against the one-way system. However this proposal could not physically prevent cyclists from entering the upper High Street against the one-way system and it is considered likely that cyclists who meet a vehicle at the narrowing will simply jump their cycles onto the footway. This proposal has therefore been dropped.

4 Further narrowing of Abbey Path. The possibility of further narrowing of Abbey Path and the removal of the footway on the south side to take buses slightly further away from the “pet shop” corner has been investigated. However given the minimal improvement possible and the possibility of pedestrians simply walking in the carriageway this has not been progressed further.

5 Footway width at the “pet shop” corner. The current layout at this corner was determined by both the swept path of large vehicles turning left from Lordburn into upper High Street and by the presence of ironwork close to the kerb line. The possibility of moving this ironwork to allow a slight widening of the footway has been investigated. Again as in (4) above only a minimal improvement is possible and this has not been progressed further. During the consultation the possibility of pedestrian barriers at the “pet shop” corner was again raised. However as reported to the committee in Report No 77/04 on 22 January 2004 “the additional restriction to an already narrow footway width and the likelihood of pedestrians simply walking round the limited possible length of barrier meant that this was not a practical proposition”.

6 Balance of footway width/carriageway width/on-street parking provision and service parking provision in upper High Street. Widening the footway and narrowing the carriageway would certainly discourage cyclists from cycling the
wrong way in this one-way street. However it was felt that cyclists would simply transfer to the widened footway so there would be no net benefit. In addition there is a need to cater for large delivery vehicles here as well as the normal shoppers parking. On balance therefore it is considered that the current layout should remain.

7 **Speed of buses travelling downhill on Abbey Path.** Strath Tay Scottish Omnibuses Ltd have instructed their drivers to carry out a stop/go manoeuvre as they approach the junction and cross the High Street. They stated that this was something that could be assured as all newer buses had monitoring equipment in the cabs. Failure to comply would be a disciplinary matter, which the company would take very seriously. Travel Dundee (Wishart) have also confirmed their willingness and ability to impose these requirements on their drivers.

8 **Alternative bus route.** The alternative bus route to avoid Abbey Path in a downhill direction has been discussed at some length during further consultation with the interested parties. Although possible (with some minor road improvements) this alternative route does create major problems for the bus company. Because of the extra distance and time involved (approx ½ mile and 6 minutes) an extra bus would be required to maintain the existing service. Even with this extra bus however there would be loss of some through routes with passengers for Ninewells in Dundee having to change at the Arbroath bus station. The cost of this additional bus is estimated to be £60000 per annum and this would require to be met by the Council.