



BRIDGNORTH TOWN COUNCIL

LJ/2022

✉ Shropshire Council Highways

3rd March 2022

ROAD CLOSURES AND EVENTS IN BRIDGNORTH

I write to you on behalf of Bridgnorth Town Council and the process that you have with regards to road closures that seek to close roads in Bridgnorth for events. In particular we would request that no such road closures are approved without the Town Council being informed/consulted and provided with the supporting documentation that might accompany any application.

We have recently been made aware of a number of events and/or road closures that are intended to take place in Bridgnorth over the coming months. We have become aware of these events in 2 ways: receipt of an approved road closure notice from Shropshire Council or event organisers telling us that they are holding an event that will close roads or impair their usual use. These have been delivered to the Town Council largely as a fait accompli.

The closure of roads for events to normal traffic causes disruption and there appears to be little overall control or knowledge of the events and this causes the Town Council some embarrassment and some wonder from the public 'how come the Town Council doesn't know what's going on in its own town!'

It appears that anyone can just close a road without much being known about them or any check whether they might clash with another event (that might not need a road closure).

As an example, the Town Hall in the middle of the High Street is a wedding venue. Weddings are often booked well in advance for obvious reasons. To have booked a wedding a year in advance only to find out that 2 or 3 months before the event that you can't get the wedding car to within 200m of the venue can significantly dampen the event.

Furthermore, where events are organised by outside groups it is not necessarily clear to residents, who is responsible or who they should speak to in order to maintain access to their properties or how delivery lorries to shops and businesses might access them. We are often approached and asked for details of events and what the implications are and we are often left unsure or completely in the dark. We are often advised that 'we will leaflet drop', 'we will inform residents' or 'we doing much the same as last year only to find out that none (or very little) occurs other than 'oh we put it on Facebook'.

We are trying to maintain a list of events that are held in the Town so that residents and businesses might have a one stop shop for a diary of events so that they might manage their diaries and lives accordingly. Imagine booking a taxi for an airport run to Birmingham and finding out a few days in advance that the taxi can't get to your front door and you have to wheel several suitcases down several streets to look for a taxi that can't park anywhere.

While we are not averse to a number of events being held, we do have concerns that some of the normal procedures that the Town Council undertakes when it submits a road closure are not documented or perhaps not even considered e.g. method statements, risk assessments, insurance arrangements, first aid provision, fire lanes, crowd control, marshalling arrangements, advanced warning signage, who/ where is the point of contact for the day, what arrangements have been made for increased litter, who and how will they make good the town afterwards. etc.

We are of the view that for any road closure for an event should be sent to us for comment before it is considered for approval by Shropshire Council. We are not suggesting that we should be the final determiner but, if we are for instance planning an open day in the Town Hall to show off its historic artefacts, we would probably ask that a road closure on the same day that reduces parking availability and makes access difficult not be approved or that it be modified accordingly. In addition, where we have a wedding planned then we would likely object and ask that you do not approve a road closure on the same day, unless there was a clear and documented method of suitable access for a Wedding car or a route through for guests. We currently make a best guess about probably unsuitable dates for a wedding however, this can have a negative impact on one of our vital income streams. Under the Town Hall we regularly hold Sunday craft markets, and these can be disrupted by short notice or poorly publicised road closures. Clearly there is an opportunity for many events to be modified to accommodate a market or a wedding and a road closure, however the lack of any information being provided to the Town Council before approval of a road closure often means that there is no pressure on the event organiser to engage us before hand to work out the issues (if there are any). We appreciate that there are a number of events such as the Italian Auto Festival and the Bridgnorth Tractor run that appear to have gained an entitlement to continue to do what they have done in previous years, but it does not seem too much to ask that each year they provide the fullest details.

As an example, we have had a road closure notification come through recently advising that the Bridgnorth Tractor Run will take place on 3rd April and that the road will be closed from 11am to 2pm – we have received no direct contact from the event organiser. While I can view the road closure on the Shropshire Council publicly available interactive map and it tells me that “*if you have an enquiry about these works please call Shropshire Council Customer Services Centre on 0345 678 9006*”. It does not provide me or the Town Council with any information about the proposed activity and who is organising it. Are the tractors parking the High Street for 3 hours? Is a steady trail of tractors driving through the High Street for the entire period? If they are parking up for some time what areas have been designated for that? Will someone be manning a barrier to let residents who have

properties within the boundaries of the road closure vehicular access? How are bus users being advised that the bus will not be stopping in the High Street? What if there is an incident who would manage that? I have looked on Facebook and there is some reference to the event by the organisers (I presume) and a link to their website, but I am not convinced that it provides sufficient information to everyone who might be interested in knowing how it might affect them (I appreciate that many might know because they will expect much the same as last year) but that does not help the new arrival in town. I would assume that the road closure application would have included some detail that would be most useful to share with the wider population.

The Town Council is not seeking to stop events that require road closures. It is looking to be engaged in the process so that we might; help manage expectations, contribute to a well-coordinated activity, ensure that events are well advertised and include all reasonable information that might mitigate any concerns, provide public reassurance that events are planned with thought and consider safety issues.

Do you think that going forward from now the application process can be modified to ensure that Bridgnorth Town Council is made aware of events before any road closure is approved?

I would be grateful for a response before the Town Council meeting scheduled for 23rd April so that I might inform the Town Council formally at that meeting.



Lee Jakeman
Town Clerk
for Bridgnorth Town Council