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Mr Mat Bonomi
Head of Transport and Access
The Royal Parks
The Old Police House, Hyde Park
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Dear Mat

The Royal Parks Movement Strategy Consultation on the Strategy for Richmond Park

I am writing on behalf of the Mortlake with East Sheen Society in response to your invitation to comment on the traffic management scheme currently being trialled in Richmond Park, namely your proposals for the:

- 1) Removal of all cut-through traffic on the eastern side of the Park;
- 2) Closure of the vehicle link between Sheen Gate and Sheen Cross; and
- 3) Removal of all unauthorised vehicle traffic between Richmond and Roehampton Gates at weekends.

In addition, I would like to take this opportunity to comment on certain other traffic issues relating to the Park. But first, a brief intro:

The Mortlake with East Sheen Society

Our Society was founded in 1969 to represent the views of the community on planning and traffic matters within the Parish of Mortlake with East Sheen, whose boundary is shown here as the dashed line extending from the Mortlake riverside to the Royal Ballet School at the White Lodge in Richmond Park. It therefore includes both Sheen Gate and Sheen Cross. The Society has over 400 members and is currently engaged in several other major issues including: the closure of Hammersmith Bridge to vehicles causing displaced traffic to penetrate our area; the Council's plan for a Low Traffic Neighbourhood for Parkside (the area between the Upper Richmond Road West and the Park) including possibly a Controlled Parking Zone; and the redevelopment plans for the Mortlake Brewery where again the main issue is traffic.



1) Removal of all cut-through traffic on the eastern side of the Park

We assume you refer to not only the eastern section of the periphery road from Roehampton Gate to Robin Hood Gate but also the southern section from Robin Hood Gate to Kingston Gate. There may be a logic in restricting cut-through traffic in this area and making the Pen Ponds carpark accessible only from the east and the Isabella accessible only from the west, but the result is that the

rest of the peripheral road in the northern and western sections accommodates the displaced traffic and becomes more congested.

2) Closure of the vehicle link between Sheen Gate and Sheen Cross

There is no doubt that the closure of this link has brought huge benefit to the residents of Parkside who in recent years have experienced rat-running traffic exiting from Richmond Park through Sheen Gate and who in 2019 experienced a significant increase in such traffic following the closure of Hammersmith Bridge to vehicles, and much of it guided by satnav. However, certain members of our Society have been put at a disadvantage, in particular our elderly members whose journeys to Pembroke Lodge, the Isabella Plantation and the Kingston and Roehampton Hospitals have been considerably lengthened by using the alternative route via Upper Richmond Road West which is heavily trafficked.

Kingston Hospital is of particular importance. It is our local hospital and the journey there from East Sheen via Richmond Park at 20 mph can be guaranteed to take 15 minutes whereas the time it now takes via Upper Richmond Road has significantly increased and is highly unpredictable. Certain elderly members of our Society have pointed out that they have traditionally hired a taxi to take them through the Park to reach the hospital and that taxi drivers are now no longer responding to requests to use the alternative route because of the time it takes.

Members are also asking why residents of Roehampton, Richmond, Ham and Kingston are allowed to enter Richmond Park while residents of Mortlake and East Sheen are forbidden such entry.

Consequently, we have been thinking about possible alternatives. First, we know that certain vehicle users are already allowed access to the link from Sheen Gate to Sheen Cross, namely the Royal Parks staff and the Royal Ballet School, and we are wondering if the Royal Parks is prepared to consider further exemptions, e.g. blue badge holders. However, we realise that this group does not include all those of less mobility, not least children, who would all have to use the longer route or else the train from Mortlake to Kingston with long walks at each end of the journey. Other options, therefore, are as follows:

- A. The link to Sheen Cross to be open only from 10.00am till 4.00pm;
- B. The link to be one way southbound only (i.e. no entry from Sheen Cross northbound) – this would enable visitors to Kingston Hospital to get to their appointments on time whereas return trips can be the long way round;
- C. The link to have barriers at each end which would be activated by card;
- D. A charging system for all travelling through the park with cameras to detect number plates, as for the Congestion Charging Zone in Central London.

Our Society's preference is for Option B.

We have previously asked if such options will require another 6-month trial period but have not received any response from you on this.

3) Removal of all unauthorised vehicle traffic between Richmond and Roehampton Gates at weekends

We certainly agree with the closure on Sundays but some of us feel that any permanent closure on Saturdays needs a very thorough study of the volume of traffic using Upper Richmond Road West on such days.

Other Traffic Issues in the Park

In addition we would like to draw your attention to the following:

- The behaviour of some cyclists
- e-scooters and others
- Pedestrian crossings
- Commercial vehicles
- The Park's popularity

While we are in favour of cyclists using the Park we are concerned about the behaviour of some who are determined that the road belongs to them (not to motorists alongside nor to pedestrians crossing) and who exceed the 20mph speed limits. We are also concerned about the behaviour of some cyclists using the peripheral Tamsin Trail and feel this should be reserved for children with parental accompaniment. We would like to know what steps the Park intends to take to ensure cyclists respect other Park users. We would not want the Park's reputation to be damaged as a result of a serious accident caused by a cyclist, with the Park not being able to show that it has taken all sensible steps to ensure the safety of all Park visitors.

There has been a notable increase in e-scooters using the Park and also roller skaters, some with ski-sticks. They seem to mix comfortably with cyclists at weekends but not so comfortably with vehicles on weekdays. Is the Royal Parks producing any guidance on the do's and don'ts for such users?

Pedestrians, particularly the elderly, are having difficulty in crossing the peripheral road due to the increase in cyclists. We urge the Royal Parks to consider widening the road in certain key places in order to provide a central refuge. Particular locations include Sheen Cross and at the Pembroke Lodge carpark.

It is noticeable that there are a fair number of commercial vehicles using the roads in the Park. They are not allowed to (unless they are exempt, i.e. they are serving the Park offices or the Royal Ballet School) and we are aware that the Parks Police have been reprimanding drivers. However, the problem continues and we are wondering what further action the Royal Parks has in mind?

Finally, we have noticed that in the last few months the Park has gained a new popularity with vast numbers of visitors, for whom the parking provision within the Park is simply not adequate. The Park is suffering because of this, and pathways and indeed large areas of grass are being severely eroded. Residents of streets near Sheen Gate are also suffering because they have difficulty in parking in their own streets due to the mass invasion of visitor parking.

Conclusion

This letter has been drafted by our Committee and circulated to all members through our monthly newsletter. We feel it gives a fair representation of our Society's thinking and we look forward to receiving your response.

Yours sincerely



Tim Catchpole

Chair

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