

## Request for Scrutiny – Leeds Motorcycle Action Group

3<sup>rd</sup> April 2019

In 2017 the West Yorkshire Combined Authority published their 20 year transport plan which recommended that motorcycles should be allowed in bus lanes wherever possible. The other 4 councils in the West Yorkshire Combined Authority area are moving forward with implementing this measure

However, following an extensive search of public documents and a number of Freedom of Information Act requests, we were surprised to discover that this does not appear to have been discussed or signed off by the Infrastructure, Investment & Inclusive Growth Scrutiny Board at Leeds City Council. We are therefore requesting that it is discussed at the next board meeting in line with the procedure listed at <https://www.leeds.gov.uk/your-council/councillors-and-democracy/scrutiny>.

The documents that we did manage to obtain consist of a short review of 4 schemes where motorcycles were allowed in bus lanes and a partial list of authorities which excludes York and all the authorities in West Yorkshire. These are available from [https://www.whatdotheyknow.com/request/bus\\_lane\\_research#incoming-1336633](https://www.whatdotheyknow.com/request/bus_lane_research#incoming-1336633). Some of the authorities on the list have since changed their stance and do allow motorcycles to use bus lanes. These documents support a letter sent by Gwyn Owen to the Combined Authority in February 2016 suggesting that further trials are necessary before making a decision. When we asked for details of when this was signed off, we were given minutes from a meeting of the scrutiny board from 2012 which was more about allowing hackney carriages into bus lanes and only mentioned motorcycles in passing. These minutes are also available from the above link.

Allowing motorcycles in bus lanes would have positive benefits for all traffic. It would reduce congestion and air pollution, reduce reliance on private cars, and improve safety for motorcycle riders, who are one of the categories of Vulnerable Road User as defined by the government and highlighted as a specific concern in the WYCA strategy. Because the other 4 district councils in West Yorkshire, plus York and Sheffield, have agreed to do this, it will also ensure a consistent approach across the county.

*Extract of Request for clarity sent by Principal Scrutiny Adviser*

12 April 19

*It would seem that you are seeking support for allowing motorcycles to utilise bus lanes in Leeds, which would come under the remit of the highways authority and is a Leeds City Council function. The highways authority are the decision makers regarding the use of bus lanes. I would be grateful if you could confirm that you are making a formal request for Scrutiny to consider this? (rather than the governance arrangements around the WYCA transport plan). Any additional information you may wish to provide is also welcome, including details of any engagement you may have already had with the Highways Service.*

## Response from Leeds Motorcycle Action Group

16 April 19

We've been trying to get this issue signed off for some time. We've had discussions with the West Yorkshire Combined Authority and officers at Leeds City Council over the last few years. However Leeds City Council does not seem to want to implement it. The timeline of events is as follows:

- Autumn 2013 - Leeds Motorcycle Action Group approach LCC requesting that motorcycles be allowed access to bus lanes.
- Winter 2013 - had a meeting with representatives of LCC including Andrew Hall and Gwyn Owen. We were asked to delay our request until after the Grand Depart in summer 2014 which we agreed to.
- Summer 2014 - re engaged with LCC and we're told by Andrew Hall, that decisions like PTW access to bus lanes would now be under the umbrella of the new West Yorkshire Combined Authority (which Leeds was a part of)
- Winter 2014 - engage with WYCA to improve safety of motorcyclists throughout the county. Culminating with a five point plan being put forward to improve PTW use for all.
- These were adopted by the WYCA after several meetings and in August 2017, Motorcycle access to with flow bus lanes was incorporated into the WYCA 20 year transport strategy for the country.
- Throughout 2018 we approached the individual councils, four of which are all moving towards implementing this part of the WYCA strategy.
- LCC have refused to engage with us to discuss the implementation until we met with Councillor Richard Lewis (Executive Member for Regeneration, Transport and Planning) three times in late 2018. This culminated in him stating that Leeds City Council wouldn't be told what to do by the WYCA and Leeds would have to do their own consultation on the matter (despite the WYCA already spending tens of thousands on an independent study which was wholly positive and agreeing to implement it throughout the county)
- We have put a formal complaint in against Richard Lewis and have also received answers to several FOI requests from LCC.

Our experience of discussing this with officers at Leeds City Council has not been positive. Meetings have been postponed or cancelled at short notice and making a decision on it keeps being put off. We would therefore request that it is discussed at the next meeting of Leeds highways authority or the scrutiny board as appropriate. We would be able to attend any meeting to answer any questions they may have.