



Windrush Valley Traffic Action Group (WiVTAG)
Final Report to Oxfordshire County Council (OCC)
Burford Bridge 7.5t Experimental Traffic Regulation Order (ETRO)

24 November 2021

1. Introduction and Aim

WiVTAG wishes to conclude our submissions to OCC in relation to the 18-month experimental TRO for a weight restriction through Burford by:

- summarising our appeal to date,
- recording some further developments and evidence since the mid-term review at the Cabinet Member Decision Meeting on the 29 July 2021 and,
- setting out some ideas for a way forward when the final decision is reached in January 2022.

We have endeavoured to remain constructive, objective and factual in our submissions, to avoid hearsay and conjecture and to provide evidence and supporting data that substantiate our comments and recommendations. The extensive discussions, exchanges and reports of the past six months have proved that there is no simple, short-medium term solution that will match the expectations of Burford Town Council with those of the surrounding rural communities, farms and businesses. Some compromise approach must be found.

This final report is intended to collate our three submission documents^{1,2,3} and five meetings involving OCC Officers in order to suggest plausible solutions.

2. WiVTAG submissions to date

From the outset, WiVTAG has taken the view that Burford TC's application for a weight restriction failed to adequately assess the adverse impact that such a restriction would have on the region. Their expectation seemed to be that HGVs would be able to find alternative routes on the existing road network but the evidence to support this case was unconvincing, and attempts at traffic modelling failed. In contrast, WiVTAG has sought to consult with regional hauliers and farmers and has built up a body of evidence that is shown in the appendices to our main Appeal Document² (submitted in July 2021). Without exception the 12 larger farms and 136 companies that WiVTAG has contacted have advised of severe difficulties in working to comply with the Burford 7.5t restriction. Diverted HGVs have chosen either to use unsuitable narrow lanes and bridges, or to adopt longer routes on main roads with consequent negative impacts on their commercial viability and on the environment.

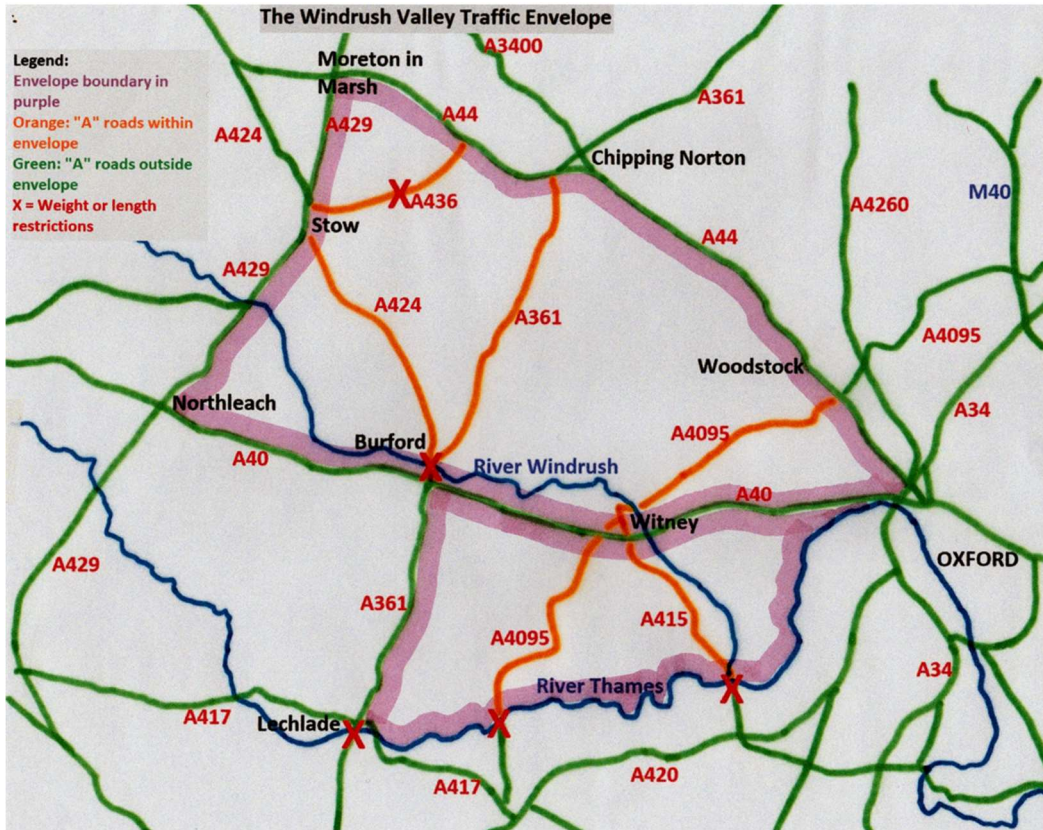
Added to this, the communities through which these diverted HGVs now travel are experiencing damage to road infrastructure, increase in air pollution, a genuine threat to public safety, and a reduction in the quality of living conditions for residents. As parish councils, we remain in receipt of numerous complaints and concerns from the community about the safety of pedestrians on narrow pavements.

The summary statement in our appeal document is unchanged:

WiVTAG challenges and seeks to constructively support both OCC and Gloucestershire County Council (GCC) to recognise the serious regional, environmental and commercial impact of this experimental weight limit. We urge OCC to revoke the Burford 7.5t restriction and strengthen the application of relevant policies and strategies in their Local Transport Plan (LTP)

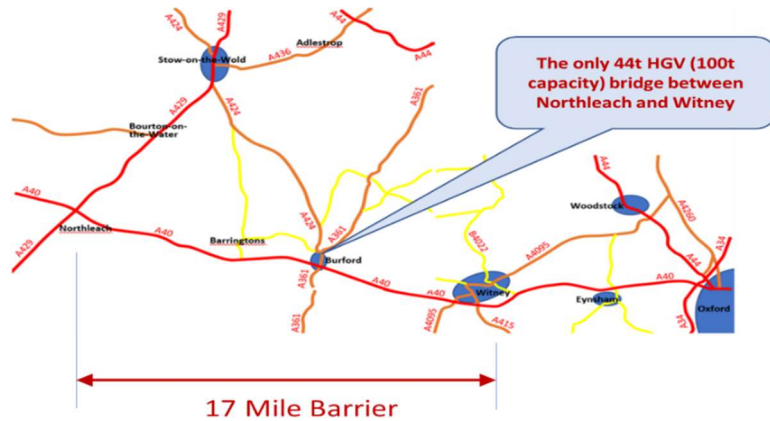
3. Developments and evidence since the mid-term review

Perhaps the most significant issue since the scheme review on 29 July 2021 is the realisation that a large part of the pre-restriction HGV usage through Burford was generated by business needs within the **Windrush Valley Traffic Envelope** as shown, outlined in purple, on the plan below.



The envelope area is determined by the road layout rather than as a circle centred on Burford. We believe this more accurately represents the area within which the Burford ETRO has affected local businesses. The 7.5t restriction on the A361 through the centre of Burford closes one of the few north/south routes across the Windrush river, and forces one block of HGVs onto routes through either Northleach roundabout or Witney.

In effect this introduces a 17-mile wide barrier to most haulage contracted to meet legitimate local supply and demand, unless they elect to use minor roads through rural villages. HGV routes between local towns have been hugely altered by this change and there has been a significant displacement of HGV traffic onto the A44 particularly affecting Woodstock, Enstone, Chipping Norton, and Bourton-on-the-Hill.

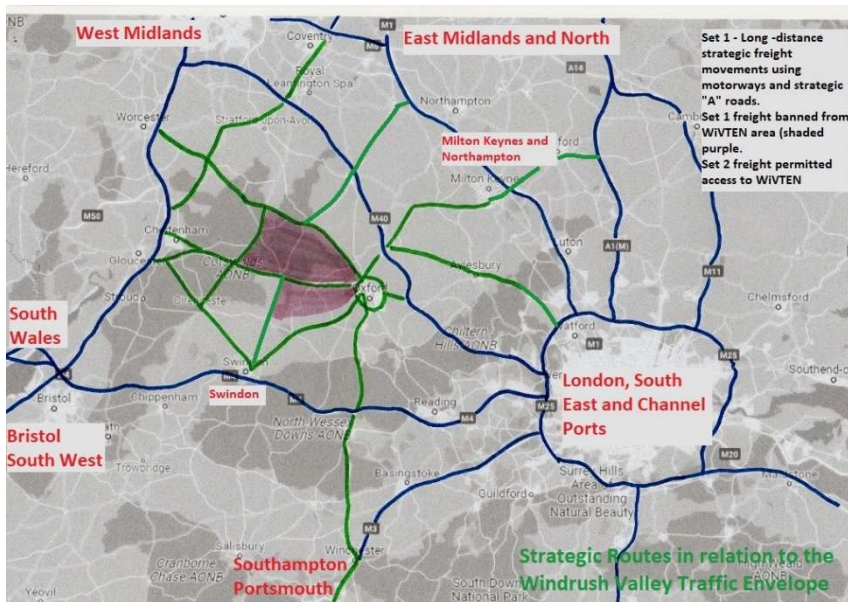


Our market research with haulage businesses has demonstrated that there is a second block of freight requirements (particularly for farmers) that have collection or delivery points within the Windrush Valley traffic envelope. These journeys begin or end at more distant depots or centres of operation.

The 4.8-mile radius permit scheme that was proposed by BTC to cater for local traffic makes no allowance for either of these legitimate blocks of freight movements.

Use of the adjectives Strategic, National, Regional and Local in describing freight movements has led to some overlap and confusion. For clarity we will consider freight movements in three sets:

- **Set 1 Strategic through routes** – long distance journeys whose origin **AND** destination are outside the Windrush Valley Traffic Envelope (indicated on the map below)
- **Set 2 Windrush Valley traffic** – journeys whose origins **OR** destinations are within the Windrush Valley Traffic Envelope
- **Set 3 Local Burford traffic** – journeys whose origins and destinations are within 4.8 miles of Burford centre



Burford ETRO appears to have been based on the assumption that the movement of HGVs through the town was made up of local Burford traffic (**Set 3**) plus vehicles on strategic through routes (**Set 1**). The permit scheme catered only for **Set 3** and expected to force the remaining HGV traffic onto motorways and trunk roads. It made no allowance for the majority of freight movements within the Windrush Valley Traffic Envelope (**Set 2**).

Burford TC have provided a response to the WiVTAG Appeal Document in which they acknowledge the shortcoming of the ETRO in relation to the needs of farmers. However their response fails to address the needs of local hauliers and businesses who generate most of the **Set 2** movements.

It is WiVTAG’s clear understanding that no intercity or international haulier, contracted to transport goods on a north/south transit of the UK, would consider routes other than on motorways and trunk roads. No such journeys would involve the A361 through Lechlade, Burford, Chipping Norton or Banbury. Even a simple desk exercise using Google Map will show that long distance journeys via motorways and trunk roads present better options for route plans than journeys using the A361 through Burford. We believe that the majority of HGV movements that were seen as **Set 1** were in fact **Set 2**, and were using the A361 as the most appropriate route for their journeys to and from businesses **within the Windrush Valley Traffic Envelope**. This opinion is reinforced by the market research carried out by WiVTAG and shared with OCC Officers in the face-to-face meetings facilitated by WiVTAG since the 29 July 2021 mid-term review:

- WiVTAG meeting with Farmers and OCC Officers (4 Oct 21)
- WiVTAG meeting with Hauliers and OCC Officers (14 Oct 21)

These meetings have demonstrated that:

- The farming and major haulage industries are inter-dependent; farms do not own or manage HGVs
- Local/regional farms, dependent on heavy (44t) haulage, are penalised financially, or in some cases so isolated by the ETRO that crops cannot be shipped, livestock moved or essential products supplied as contracted.
- Local hauliers, who regularly used the Burford bridge as the most efficient route, have been refused permits, despite proof of local contracts (construction, delivery/collection). The current permit scheme fails to cater for their needs.

- Additional costs (fuel/time) have been added to contracts resulting in cancellation or commercial unviability.
- There is a real concern amongst local hauliers that the permit scheme is anti competitive. If freight support systems are damaged, local business will suffer.

We believe that this information had not previously been clearly reported to OCC Officers.

The other major development since the mid-term review is that OCC has completed the final set of traffic counts on which an assessment can be made on the success/failure of the Burford scheme in accordance with the approved criteria. Performance measures failed to achieve the success criteria at the 6-month review and have failed again at this final session. The key target was to reduce the number of HGVs coming through Burford High Street by at least 50%. Traffic counts at 6-months and 14-months showed 'no change' and '15% reduction' respectively. On this basis the experiment can only be seen as a failure.

4. Conclusions and recommendations

WiVTAG contends that the Burford ETRO could have been avoided if, by logical application of existing County LTP strategy, the HGV ban proposed by BTC had been identified as not meeting the full intentions of that strategy. The minor town and parish councils surrounding Burford have always accepted that essential farm and HGV traffic (delivering or collecting locally) is a necessity in the rural environment; we are confident that they will continue to do so. Whatever the scenario, it is apparent that HGV restrictions in local towns, villages or bridges simply divert the problem; they are not a solution. Some mediation may identify a compromise but no such way forward can be activated without the immediate revocation of the Burford A361 ETRO. WiVTAG's conclusion is that the Burford scheme has failed. It has not satisfied the approved performance criteria nor has it made allowance for the adverse impacts on surrounding communities and businesses. We urge OCC to revoke the Burford ETRO.

It is outside WiVTAG's remit to stipulate any alternative solution. We recognise that this responsibility lies entirely with OCC. However we can offer a series of concepts that OCC may consider in reaching a fair solution in this matter :

- One possible approach would be to introduce a combined East-Gloucestershire, West-Oxfordshire area scheme based on the Windrush Valley Traffic Envelope that would allow access inside the envelope area for all **Set 2** (and **Set 3**) HGV movements.
Set 1 traffic, on strategic through routes, would be restricted from entering the envelope area and would remain :
 - on motorways and trunk roads outside the envelope area, or
 - on the perimeter roads around the area, or
 - on the A40 that runs across the area.

Traffic within the envelope would be limited to vehicles up to 7.5t plus **Set 2** freight movements i.e. those with origins OR destinations within the area. To facilitate all the intended **Set 2** traffic movements, the Windrush Valley Traffic Envelope would have to be defined as a single zonal restriction with the A40 running through the envelope area in an unrestricted corridor. Treating the envelope area as two zones would re-introduce the "17-mile barrier" along the A40 that is damaging to local businesses.

Such a solution caters for local business and farming needs. The scheme would be similar to the existing East Oxfordshire weight restriction zone and could draw on the strategy of Neighbourhood Weight Watch as shown in LTP Volume 5⁴. The LTP strategy allows local communities to supplement the resources of the Police and Trading Standards and contribute to enforcement. **The scheme is therefore largely self-policing.**

No permit scheme is needed.

This approach provides a 7.5t restriction for every community within the envelope area, including Burford, subject to the provision that access is permitted to all **Set 2** vehicles.

- Such a scheme might allow GCC to remove the current weight restriction at Adlestrop.
- OCC and GCC should review and improve the signage for current weight restrictions to ensure clear visibility and consistent information that is readily understandable to drivers.
- The GCC and OCC Police should add a 101 call reporting option for HGVs.

Additional information can be provided by any of the WiVTAG committee members listed below or by email to WiVTAG@outlook.com

References

1. WiVTAG Interim Findings Report to OCC
2. WiVTAG Appeal to OCC, Burford A361 ETRO
3. WiVTAG letter to Cllr Enright dated 4 August 2021
4. LTP Volume 5 [Click here \(Paragraph 21\)](#)

Submitted on behalf of

WiVTAG

Windrush Valley Traffic Action Group

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Enstone Parish Council

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Hailey Parish Council

Crawley Parish Council

Leaffield Parish Council

Hanborough Parish Council

Barrington Parish Council

Bourton on the Hill Parish Council

Minster Lovell Parish Council

Bladon Parish Council