

## **WEIGHT LIMITS**

The Highway Authority, North Lincolnshire Council is responsible for implementing traffic regulation orders, including weight restrictions. We do not have a specific policy on weight limits but they are subject to the statutory procedure for the implementation of traffic orders.

### **STRUCTURAL WEIGHT LIMITS**

A weight restriction of less than 7.5 tonnes can only be imposed on a route that have weak structures – such as bridges – that cannot bear vehicles over a certain weight (i.e. three tonnes). Restrictions of this type will typically cover only short sections, where the structure is located. Unlike environmental weight restrictions, a structural restriction will not normally include an exemption for access as the structure may fail should it be overloaded.

### **ENVIRONMENTAL WEIGHT LIMITS**

Weight limits can be introduced for environmental reasons, e.g. where roads are narrow and unsuitable for large vehicles, or to protect residents from the nuisance caused by lorries in residential streets. They are useful in preventing heavy goods vehicles using minor roads as inappropriate short-cuts between main routes.

An environmental weight restriction will usually only apply to vehicles with a maximum gross weight of 7.5 tonnes or above. This is the maximum permitted weight of the vehicle when fully laden. However with an environmental weight limit there are nearly always exemptions for:

- vehicles making deliveries or collections at premises within the restriction
- vehicles working on or near the roads in question
- emergency service and military vehicles
- buses, coaches and other public service vehicles.
- Vehicle operating centre

This means that vehicles requiring legitimate access within the area covered by the weight limit – i.e. to deliver to a shop or access an industrial unit – are permitted. As such, it is not appropriate to impose weight restrictions on routes/areas where the majority of heavy goods vehicles using those roads are doing so to access premises; to introduce a restriction in such circumstances will have little or no effect.

Environmental restrictions can be applied to individual routes or a defined zone of roads that have been determined as unsuitable for use by vehicles over a certain width or weight. In North Lincolnshire we have a mix of both weight zones and weight limits. Weight limits apply to specific lengths of road i.e. Westgate Road. Weight zones are used to cover several roads within an area, i.e. Scunthorpe. Within a zone there are permitted through routes, these are the roads which are deemed to be of better quality and allow goods vehicles to travel across town. Appendix A shows a map of the existing restrictions in our area. Appendix B is a list of roads covered by weight limits and zones.

### **APPLICATION FOR WEIGHT RESTRICTIONS**

We receive requests from Town and Parish Councils, Ward Members and residents for weight restrictions. These are fairly uncommon as a lot of areas are already covered under existing restrictions.

When a request is received, the first step is to see whether we have existing data showing HGV flows on the roads in question. If not we will arrange a period of monitoring to allow us to see how many vehicles are using the road. We then look at the area to see whether there are businesses that will generate HGV movements, as these businesses will always have a right of access the effect of a weight limit will be reduced.

When proposing a weight restriction for any route/area, we must give careful consideration to those vehicles that will be re-routed. In certain instances, a route may seem inappropriate for HGV use but there may be no other realistic alternatives. In the absence of alternative routes, introducing a weight restriction will only displace problems on to similarly inappropriate roads. Where alternative routes are available we must ensure wherever possible to positively sign these routes, and give early warning of a weight restricted area, to help the restriction to be self-enforcing.

We will not normally consider imposing a weight restriction on A and B classified roads. These roads form priority routes, linking communities together, and have an important strategic function.

If we consider that there is a suitable alternative route and that the restrictions will have the desired effect then an order will be drafted and consultation carried out. Legally we need to consult with Humberside Police, the Freight Haulage Association and the Road Haulage Association. We also include the other emergency services, local bus and taxi companies, the Hull and Humber Chamber of Commerce as well any effected Town and Parish Councils.

#### **ENFORCEMENT OF WEIGHT RESTRICTIONS.**

The enforcement of weight restrictions is the responsibility of the Police. The comments below are from PC Storr, Traffic Management Officer, Humberside Police.

Whilst Weight Limit contraventions are an offence, all reports are taken on a priority basis. Unless this happens in front of a Roads Policing Officer whilst on patrol I don't believe it would be resourced if a member of the public reported it in.

Only the Force Incident Managers will determine the priority of a 'job' when it comes in to the control room. But generally these matters would not be seen as a priority.

#### **REVIEW OF WEIGHT LIMIT EFFECTIVENESS**

Following the introduction of a weight restriction we will usually carry out a further period of monitoring within the next 12 months to see whether there has been a reduction in the number of HGVs using the road. This information is shared with the Police. Recently we have introduced lorry watch schemes in some areas. Under the scheme residents are encouraged to note down vehicles who continue to contravene the restrictions. This information can then be passed on to the Police.

Below are the monitoring results for before and after the last three weight limits we have introduced:

	Average vehicles per day before weight restriction	Average vehicles per day after weight restriction
Burringham	44	31
Thealby	41	18
Westgate Road, Belton	60	56

### **OTHER ACTIONS WE MIGHT TAKE**

We will consult with local Haulage companies to see if alternative routes or deliveries and departures out of their local depots can be agreed upon to help relieve pressures raised by residents. This approach, sometimes combined with resident monitoring of HGV vehicles that breach any agreed routes, can improve the situation on the network as compared with introducing an environmental weight restriction that would not make any difference.