

## LANCASTER CITY CENTRE TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT STAKEHOLDER GROUP

4<sup>TH</sup> JUNE 2014

### NOTES

**Present:** Cllr D Brookes, Lancaster City Council  
Cllr R Newman-Thompson, Lancashire County Council  
Daniel Herbert, Lancashire County Council  
Harvey Danson, Lancashire County Council  
Eddie Mills, Lancashire County Council  
Sarah Dunn, Lancashire County Council  
Kate Smith, Regeneration, Lancaster City Council  
Julian Inman, Regeneration, Lancaster City Council  
Jeanette Binns, Lancashire County Council  
Joanne Williams, One Voice Disability Services  
Jerry North, St Nicholas Arcade  
Vicky Lofthouse, Lancaster District Chamber of Commerce  
David Hopwood, Parking Services, Lancaster City Council  
Maggie Trewhitt, Markets, Lancaster City Council  
Tracey Bruce, Markets, Lancaster City Council

**Apologies:** Patricia Clarke, Dynamo  
Suzi Bunting, Lancaster BID

### NOTES

Daniel provided an introduction to the meeting by outlining its purpose as a follow-on from the previous meeting at which people were encouraged to provide comments and highlight issues/concerns on the proposed terms of the ETRO.

The main issues raised were around:

- Disabled parking - principally the proposal to remove access to the pedestrianized area for all blue badge holders and the potential distance to walk into the centre from the identified spaces outside the zone.
- Cycling – very different views have been expressed around possible access for cyclists ranging from full access, through part access to no access. The County Council are currently hosting 2 e-petitions – one for greater access and one against.
- Enforcement – a number of issues were raised about enforcement of current access restrictions particularly around the permit system and signage which were both considered confusing.

Eddie circulated three potential options in response to the issues raised around blue badge holder access and parking options.

Option 1 would be a permit system that would allow permit holders to access the area during core hours and would allow all blue badge holders access outside of core hours. This is essentially the current system if it were operating as it should. Experience suggests that this option would not work as there are significant levels of misunderstanding and confusion as to how the scheme operates which leads to its misuse. Option 2 is effectively what was suggested in the original ETRO which is no blue badge holder access at any time within the pedestrian zone with no permit system in operation. Finally, Option 3 proposed a hybrid of the other two options allowing access for permit holders during core hours and all blue badge holders outside of the core times but only in a limited area (access from Market Street and Church Street only). It was also proposed not to provide any identified parking bays but instead to allow parking anywhere on the street as long as it would not cause an obstruction.

Eddie also presented the proposed signage in respect of each of the options and comments were invited. The main comments related to the signs in respect of Options 1 and 3 which included arrangements for permit holders and blue badge holders. The opinion of the group was that by including the blue badge, holders could misunderstand the signs and think that they have the access rights of permit holders. Cars would therefore enter the zone when they shouldn't be there and could risk a ticket if they park. Whilst the feeling was that the proposed signing was complicated and confusing Eddie stated the point that the signs had been designed to comply with the necessary legislation.

Option 1 was immediately discounted by the Group because of how the current system is failing and therefore unlikely to be able to achieve the scheme objectives. .

In respect of Option 2 concern was expressed that the proposals could excluded access to core services to too many people. Julian stated that Option 2 was broadly consistent with the City Council's proposals and as such Option 2 would be the Council's preferred option. He also made the meeting aware of the significant improvements that had been made in the provision of on and off street disabled parking over the last few years and reiterated the Council's commitment to continuing to improve provision, with a possible focus on the west side of the City Centre where provision was currently more limited. Julian also made the meeting aware of the continued provision of unlimited free parking in City Council controlled car parks and in the St Nicholas Arcade for blue badge holders regardless of whether parked in a dedicated parking bay.

There was agreement from across the group that Option 3 could have merit, but only IF it could be made to work. Some concerns were expressed about the potential of Option 3 to lead to areas becoming highly trafficked with particular concern around Church Street which already suffers from high levels of parking. There could also be implications for the planned development of the market. Parts of the market have been temporarily relocated into New Street to accommodate the on-going public realm improvements. This has worked well and it was therefore hoped that the market could be extended into new Street and Market Street on a more permanent basis. If Option 3 was taken forward unmodified this may make such an extension difficult as some concerns had already been expressed because of conflict between the market and traffic on New Street.

Jerry's view was that the business community would not want to see high levels of traffic utilising the area where the public realm has been improved. Jerry also suggested that businesses generally felt that the relocation of part of the market to New Street had worked well and that they would be keen to see this continue on a more permanent basis.

Cllr Brookes enquired as to whether there was any proven demand for access in to the pedestrian zone in the evenings. If there wasn't any proven demand, or if there was very little demand, it could be possible to simplify the scheme to make access for permit holders only. Others questioned whether we would want to continue with a permit scheme given the confusion that they seem to cause and because of the potential difficulties that they present to visitors.

Because of the potential distances to the central area from the alternative parking provision Option 3 was favoured by both Joanne and Jeanette. Joanne reiterated the concerns raised around the need for much greater clarity around the differences between blue badge holder and permit holder access.

Maggie and Tracey asked if it might be possible to look at altering the core hours on market days. There was some concern however that this could add to the confusion.

Concerns were also expressed around the proposals to not provide marked parking bays as it felt that this would require people to make a subjective judgement about whether or not they would be causing an obstruction. Countering this there were concerns expressed that marked bays would detract from the quality of the environment and that they take up space and restrict the use of that space.

Regardless of which option is finally agreed it was acknowledged that there was a significant communication requirement to ensure that people understand how the scheme operates. Julian felt that there were advantages in Option 2 in respect of it being a clearer and simpler proposition. This would also bring benefits to the council in terms of administration.

Unfortunately no one from Dynamo was available to attend the meeting but Daniel brought to the meeting's attention a petition that was currently being hosted on the County Council's website requesting access through the City Centre during rush hour. Daniel also referenced a further petition that had been submitted that was against cycle access to the City Centre at any time. Cllr Newman Thompson was generally supportive of cycling outside of the core hours albeit with concerns around potential conflict including conflict arising from mixing with artic lorries. Concerns around consistency were expressed; e.g. if option 2 was adopted, was it right that cyclists would have access and blue badge holders wouldn't? Daniel suggested that the outcome of both petitions was awaited before a preferred option for cyclist access was agreed.

Julian raised again the request made by the City Council at the last meeting to introduce width and/or weight restrictions. It was recognised that this would probably not be welcomed by the larger nationals who don't like using smaller vehicles. At the same time it was acknowledged that they would and could find solutions if they had no choice. Further concerns were expressed that such restrictions would add a further level of confusion, adding to 'clutter' on the signing and that it could work against some event hosting which need to bring in large vehicles. Assessing the pros and cons was difficult without understanding the potential impact of any such restrictions e.g. how big a reduction would it deliver, what would the impact be?

**Next Steps** – The intention is for the proposals (with recommendations) to be shared with the group ahead of a report being drafted to the relevant County Council Cabinet Members. The intention is for the report to go to Cabinet members in July so that it can then go through legal and be advertised in September. Current thinking is that it will be progressed as an experimental order and this provides more flexibility and should ensure it can progress with minimum delay. It is not the intention to hold any further meetings of the group.

