

**Report to the Deputy Leader of the County Council and the Cabinet Member
for Highways and Transport**
Report submitted by: Interim Executive Director for Environment
Date: 14 January 2015

Part I

Electoral Division affected:
Preston City

Fishergate Central Phase 2(a) Public Realm Improvement

Contact for further information:
Marcus Hudson, 01772 530696, Environment Directorate,
marcus.hudson@lancashire.gov.uk

Executive Summary

This report outlines the proposals for the next phase of public realm improvements in Preston City Centre, to extend the shared space initiative along Fishergate to complete the pedestrian connectivity between the Bus Station and its western apron and the Railway Station. Phase 2(a) of this work will see the initiative continue eastwards along Fishergate to Preston Minster, whilst the final phase 2(b) will see it completed from Miller Arcade along Lancaster Road to the west apron.

These public realm improvements form part of a bid to Government for Local Growth Fund monies made by the Lancashire Enterprise Partnership in March 2014. In July 2014, the Government announced a £6 million funding commitment through the Lancashire Growth Deal, to deliver the Fishergate Central project, a transformational public realm gateway in Preston City Centre. This funding is subject to the commitment of local contributions and to the Lancashire Enterprise Partnership receiving a business case and granting funding approval. This approval stage is anticipated in June 2015.

There is an imperative to begin works sooner, in order to contain the works in the 2015 calendar year and so avoid adverse winter weather conditions and a halt to works for the Christmas shopping period, and the consequent risks to costs, public safety and reputation. Delays at this stage may also affect the ability to make a start on the improvements to the Bus Station.

Accordingly, this report proposes that the Phase 2(a) works form an advance commitment against the wider Fishergate Central project.

This is deemed to be a Key Decision and the provisions of Standing Order No. 25 have been complied with.

Recommendation

That:

- i. the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport is asked to approve the proposals set out in this report for the extension of the shared space initiative along Fishergate, known as Phase 2(a), and
- ii. that the Deputy Leader is asked to approve these works to be carried out as an advance commitment against the Fishergate Central Growth Deal project, and add the project to the Environment Directorate's 2014/15 Capital Programme to the value of £3.127 million.

Background and Advice

Preston City Centre has a key role to play in fully realising the economic growth of the Preston, South Ribble and Lancashire City Deal area. A key part of Preston's economic asset base is its strategic location on the road and rail network. Significantly for Preston, the rail and bus stations sit at opposite ends of the city centre; the railway station to the west, the bus station to the east. As town and city centres reinvent themselves to take account of changing demands these key transport locations will serve to anchor a revitalised Preston City Centre, creating a centre that sits at the heart of Lancashire driving broader economic growth.

Investment in the City Centre's public realm is well underway. The current works represent the first major phase of a wider programme of gateway development work to improve connectivity between the two transport hubs (railway station and bus station) and the key development and commercial "Opportunity Areas" that are located between them. This work centres on Fishergate. Fishergate is the city's principal street, connecting the city centre's assets, key zones and development areas. It is the primary pedestrian route between the railway station and bus station, is directly adjacent to each of the City's 'Opportunity Areas', and plays host to the majority of principal high street stores and banks in the city.

Completing the rejuvenation of Fishergate is an essential component of change in the city centre, complementing gateway improvements at Preston's railway station and bus station, and enhancing Preston's image as an attractive and viable business location, especially for higher-value service sectors and retail occupiers.

The Lancashire Strategic Economic Plan submitted to Government by the Lancashire Enterprise Partnership at the end of March 2014 included a bid for LGF funding towards these public realm interventions. In July 2014, the Government announced that through the Lancashire Growth Deal it would commit £6 million over two years, 2015/16 and 2016/17. This came with the proviso that the Lancashire Enterprise Partnership (LEP) and its partners commit monies to deliver a transformational public realm gateway in Preston City Centre, together with the redevelopment of the Preston Bus Station.

The Cabinet agreed at its meeting on 6 November 2014 to reallocate the County Council contribution of £8.3 million to the construction of a new bus station, contained within the approved capital programme, to the refurbishment of the Preston Bus Station and Multi Storey Car Park (MSCP). This provides the match funding that will secure the £6.0million Growth Deal contribution.

The wider Fishergate Central Gateway improvements include the extension of the shared space initiative along Fishergate to complete the pedestrian connectivity between the Bus Station and its western apron and Railway Station. Phase 2(a) of this work will see the initiative continue eastwards along Fishergate to Preston Minster, whilst the final phase 2(b) will see it completed from Miller Arcade along Lancaster Road to the west apron.

Before this funding becomes available, the project must be appraised through the LEP's two stage business case process. An Outline Business Case is anticipated for submission to the LEP Board in April 2015 followed by a Full Business Case in June 2015.

However, an updated technical assessment of the works programme has flagged an imperative to begin works much sooner, in order to contain the works in the 2015 calendar year and so avoid adverse winter weather conditions and a halt to works for the Christmas shopping period, and the consequent risks to costs, public safety and reputation. These risks can be better managed if works are started at the earliest opportunity in the new calendar year.

In order to achieve an accelerated delivery programme, it is recommended that the Phase 2(a) works be carried out, at risk, as an advance commitment against the wider Fishergate Central Growth Deal project. Given that the intent of the £6.0m Growth Deal contribution is to facilitate the wider Fishergate Central Gateway programme of works, this is seen as a low risk position.

Working to an accelerated delivery programme would see public realm works along Fishergate begin as early as next February and be delivered by November 2015.

Consultations

A public awareness event has been held in St George's Shopping Centre and, subject to approval, businesses will also be consulted prior to commencement of the proposed works.

Implications:

This item has the following implications, as indicated:

Risk management

As outlined in the report, there is a risk of delay to delivery of the Fishergate public realm improvements if works have to fall either side of the Christmas period, firstly, because of the agreed halt on works affecting Christmas shopping traffic and pedestrian movements, and secondly, because of the likelihood of more adverse winter weather conditions and failing light slowing the pace of works. This would

have implications for levels of disruption to the public and businesses, public safety and the County Council's reputation. Delays to the works programme may also incur additional costs or place the contract at risk. These risks can be better managed if works are started at the earliest opportunity in the calendar year.

In advance of the formal approval to draw down grant funding through the Lancashire Growth Deal, any costs incurred in this project will be done so at risk.

Financial

The report is seeking approval to make an advance start on Phase 2(a) of the Fishergate Central Growth Deal public realm improvements in advance of Growth Deal funding being secured. The cost estimate for completing this phase is £3.127 million. If funding for the Growth Deal is not confirmed, which is judged to be a small risk, then any capital expenditure incurred on this phase of the project will need to be met from the Environment Directorate's capital programme. If such a risk was to materialise this could be mitigated by a re-prioritisation of the capital programme over the next three years 2015/16 to 2017/18 to maintain total capital expenditure within available resources.

List of Background Papers

Paper	Date	Contact/Directorate/Tel
Lancashire Strategic Economic Plan: A Growth Deal for the Arc of Prosperity	March 2014	Kathryn Molloy/Office of the Chief Executive/01772 538790

Reason for inclusion in Part II, if appropriate

N/A.