

**Attendees:** Nikola Floodgate (KCC Officer– Chair); Jamie Watson (KCC Officer), Ruth Goudie (Canterbury CC Officer);

**6 Community representatives of:**

David Cain (local businessman)

Sallyann Baxter lead petitioner 'reconsider the Plaza' petition

Sheila Appleton; president of the Boccia (disability sports) group in Herne Bay

Andrew Patterson-Watson (young family rep)

Local resident with events & tourism expertise (chosen to remain anonymous)

**Elected members:** Dan Watkins KCC Conservative Member; Cllr Tom Mellish and Cllr Chris Cornell (Labour CCC councillors)

**Apologies:** Martin Head (cycling rep)

**1. Introductions**

- The meeting started with thanks to all for their attendance. A re-cap of the situation to date and a review of the main actions from the previous meeting around looking at options for amendments to the scheme, to be agreed by the working group before putting forward to the Cabinet Member Neil Baker.
- The meeting were collectively thanked for their time and collective representation and the point that for future schemes this kind of focus group, prior to scheme implementation was much needed.

**2. Apologies**

Apologies explained with a note from martin head setting out his preference to the options report that was circulated to all members prior to the meeting taking place.

**3. Review of Options report**

The three options for Central Parade were summarised:

**Option 1** – Revert Central Parade to two-way and return all parking and loading to pre closure conditions within the closure location. Please note this option maintains all existing one-ways at Pier Avenue, St Georges Terrace, Station Road and Dolphin Street.

**Benefits:**

1. All vehicles will be able to use the entire length of Central Parade.
2. This allows large vehicles and coaches to navigate the whole length of Central Parade without the need to use Pier Avenue.
3. Any Special Events that wish to utilise a temporary closure of Central Parade in the same location as the existing closure can do so and take advantage of the side roads remaining one way.
4. Retaining the one-way means that disabled pedestrians have easier journeys to and from the sea front and high street as they cross these streets

**Disbenefits:**

1. The aims and objectives of the original funding bid (more walking, wheeling and cycling) to Active Travel England will have been lost along Central Parade.
2. If options below for return of parking are not included then waiting restrictions would need to be applied for via a Traffic Regulation Order.
3. The Traffic Regulation Orders (TRO) will need revoking and this process can take 6-8 weeks and will need a decision by KCC's Cabinet Member for Highways

& Transportation and may need to go through a Joint Transportation Board (meets every 3 months).

Construction/legal works required will involve the following: · Removal of planter to the footway (maybe a change of planter box type to a metal frame to allow easy movement for future use during closures. · Removal / masking of existing signs indicating one-way with cycle lane on Central Parade · Minor drainage works to resolve existing signs of ponding on the raised table · Removal of road markings via hydroblasting existing markings · Stick-on or temporary markings can be used during the reinstatement of the closure to accompany signs. · Traffic Regulation Order to allow a legal change is required. This would include revoking the closure and waiting/loading restrictions (see Traffic Regulation Order heading below for details).

Optional addition – Return only disabled parking as per pre-scheme instead of all parking on north side. A TRO is required.

Optional addition – Return coach drop-off parking only. A TRO is required.

**Option 2** – As per option 1 with the addition of reinstating the previous traffic flows on all streets except Richmond Street. This option returns all Roads/Streets to the pre changes situation.

**Benefits:**

1. All vehicles will be able to use the entire length of Central Parade and drive two-way on additional streets.
2. This allows large vehicles and coaches to navigate the whole length of Central Parade without the need to use Pier Avenue.

**Disbenefits:**

1. The aims and objectives of the original funding bid to Active Travel England will have been lost along Central Parade and side roads where cycles have exemptions to the one-way traffic flows.
2. Any Special Events that wish to utilise a temporary closure of Central Parade in the same location as the existing closure would have to include side road traffic flow changes as well.
3. The Traffic Regulation Orders will need revoking and this process can take 6-8 weeks and will need a decision by KCC's Cabinet Member for Highways & Transportation and may need to go through a Joint Transportation Board (meets every 3 months).
4. One-way flows improve the ability for the less abled pedestrian or mobility scooter user to cross the roads.

Construction/legal works required will involve the following: · Burn-off Road markings to add two-way markings at all junctions. · Remove of 2 no. Cul-de-sac signs · Remove 2 no. No Entry signs @ Pier Avenue, Dolphin Street and Station Road. · St Georges Terrace removal of one-way arrow markings and 4 signs. · Road closure traffic management required to complete any works on one-way street. · Full TRO consultation is required to revoke all recently consulted on changes prior to completing works.

**Option 3** – Remove the closure in Central Parade and make Central Parade one-way eastbound from it's junction with Lane End to it's junction with Dolphin Street with cycle contra-flow. In effect this is removing the closure in Central Parade and making it instead one-way east bound. The remaining scheme would operate as is.

**Benefits:**

1. All vehicles will be able to use the entire length of Central Parade.

2. This allows large vehicles and coaches to navigate the whole length of Central Parade without the need to use Pier Avenue.
3. Any Special Events that wish to utilise a temporary closure of Central Parade in the same location as the existing closure can do so and take advantage of the side roads being one way.
4. The contraflow cycleway can still be utilised along the one-way element.
5. The aims and objectives of the original funding bid to Active Travel England will not have been lost along Central Parade or the side roads.
6. An Experimental Traffic Regulation Order (ETRO) can be used which reduces the time needed to follow a permanent TRO as it can be implemented following a 7 day notice.
7. Further alterations within the initial trial 6 month period could be applied should the experiment not be supported or work as initially thought.
8. Significant areas of the existing closure can still be utilised by pedestrians/café culture.
9. Pedestrians/Mobility scooter users only have one-way traffic flow to look out for when crossing Central Parade between Lane End and Dolphin Street.

**Disbenefits:**

1. Although an Experimental Traffic Regulation Order is quicker to introduce and can be made permanent following a 6 month trial period, staff time and analysis of feedback generally takes longer.
2. All vehicles (except cycles) will not be able to travel in an east-west direction between Dolphin Street and Lane End.
3. The parking and coach bay would not be reintroduced within the existing closure location.
4. One way traffic flow can lead to increased speeds however with reducing the width of the one way through the existing closed area it is anticipated that this would not be significant.

Construction/legal works required will involve the following: · Removal of planters to create the widened footway (use of cylinder wands/bollards to demark narrowing of road). · Removal / masking of existing signs to indicate the new one-way eastbound movement with cycle lane on Central Parade · Minor drainage works to resolve existing signs of ponding on the raised table · An Experimental Traffic Regulation Order is required.

Individual members of the working group voiced their support for Option 1, this was seconded and supported by at least 3 other members of the working group. One other member of the group said their preference was for Option 3 as it was felt the one-way option may make it easier for them to negotiate crossing the road. Other members of the group were concerned that the whole seafront road is not one-way and this could cause confusion. A concern that a one-way operation could result in increased speeds was raised by more than one member of the group.

One member of the group was in support of Option 1 and asked if it was evident that the one-way roads on Pier Avenue, Station Road and Dolphin St for example are now 'bedding in'. Whilst no hard data could corroborate this there was a general feeling amongst members that most people were now aware of the restrictions and were on the whole settling in. There were members that raised the ongoing concern of larger vehicles not being able to turn and travel safely up

Pier Road due to the incline, although most felt this would not be a problem if Central Parade were opened up for two-way traffic again. Members of the working group were aware that retaining the one-way roads as mentioned above under Option 1 would make it simpler to put in temporary closures of Central Parade for events, in their use for diversion routes, albeit on a temporary basis.

One member of the group asked CCC to look into the provision of additional disabled parking provision and this was taken away as an action for CCC.

It was also asked if a review of the sensor data that was available for the scheme could be looked at to further understand the make up and use of the traffic (car and non-car) at the Richmond Street/High St junction. KCC took an action to look in to this and report back.

It was suggested that since there was some support for the scheme and the closure there was some value in keeping elements of the scheme in place to ensure it could be used even if only for special events, it was also recognised that to revert all aspects of the scheme back to pre-scheme layouts would put the Authority at more risk of losing the intended benefits of the scheme for active travel and may result in Active Travel England expecting the full scheme costs to be returned.

One member raised a separate issue about the ease of booking the plaza by the clock tower, as this is considered to be quite convoluted.

The group went on to discuss options with regard to considering amendments to Richmond Street. KH felt that Station Road is now busier. The group were not fully decided how this aspect of the scheme should be altered without a full picture of the use of the infrastructure and roads by all road users.

The group discussed the 20mph limit, the apparent lack of compliance particularly on Western Avenue and DW said he was talking with Kent Police Speedwatch coordinator about establishing a community led Speedwatch scheme at Western Avenue and Canterbury Road in the first instance.

The issue of the vandalism of the signage for the scheme in general, but particularly the graffiti of the 20mph signs was discussed as it is having a detrimental impact on compliance. All members of the group condemned these acts of vandalism.

JW explained that KCC can provide more in the way of support and resources for localised 20mph campaigns to further enhance the 20mph scheme. KCC will action this with the safer road user behaviour change team.

It was asked if more could be done regarding the route legibility, particularly with regard to the route between the park and the pier and to establish how people are using the facilities. This will help inform any potential amendments to Richmond St in the future. Better wayfinding and perhaps increased promotion was discussed.

If Option 1, which was the groups preferred option, is progressed DW asked how we can work to make it more cycle friendly, as to not undo the proposed benefits

for safer active travel. The need to highlight the National Cycle route and possible links to other locations was suggested, again with increased promotion and clarity. The interaction between cyclists and coaches was discussed and the group all felt a coach drop off facility on the central parade was appropriate but not coach (longer term) parking, which is available in the other local places.

The group also agreed that some small changes are needed to items such as better signage and dropped kerbs to help less able-bodied residents walk to the seafront and these will be handled by the KCC councillor and officers outside of the working group.

**Next Steps:**

- KCC officers agreed to summarise the meeting discussions, disseminate to the group and update the public website with the preferred option (1), to enable the Cabinet Member, Neil Baker to make an informed decision.
- Should the Cabinet Member be minded to proceed with Option 1, a Traffic Regulation Order and associated consultation needs to be carried out. It can take 2-3 weeks to arrange the TRO as it needs to be advertised in the local paper and it must be advertised for a minimum period of 21 days. At present if there are more than 5 objections to the proposals a recommendation from the local Joint Transportation Board to the Highways & Transportation Cabinet Member for Kent County Council for a decision is required.
- Due to the need for work to happen at pace to reduce any negative impact on business, access and tourism, the Cabinet Member may be able to take the decision in advance of the next meeting of the Joint Transportation Board which only meets every 3 months and requires reports to be published a week before the meeting date.

**Summary:** The working group would like to recommend to the Cabinet Member that Option 1 for Central Parade is progressed at pace ***“Revert Central Parade to two-way and return all parking and loading to pre closure conditions within the closure location. Please note this option maintains all existing one-ways at Pier Avenue, St Georges Terrace, Station Road and Dolphin Street”***.

A further review of the other elements of the scheme including Richmond Street to follow around September onwards.

The working group will meet again in around 8 weeks time and again possibly in September but this is to be confirmed.