

BRIEF REPORT FROM COCKERMOUTH MARKET PLACE PUBLIC MEETING ON 11TH SEPTEMBER 2007.

Over 70 people attended the meeting at the Kirkgate Centre to hear a presentation on the latest design proposals for the public realm works in the Market Place.

Mike O'Connell the lead consultant for BCA Landscape presented plans that had been developed to take account of many of the concerns expressed over earlier plans. He said that he believed the current proposal represented a workable compromise. He acknowledged that there are some businesses which want to retain all the on-street parking and other residents who were very disappointed that the vision for full pedestrianisation had been dropped. The designs presented represent the best fit between the views of many people, plus the legal and health and safety issues affecting any work on a public highway.

Following the presentation there was a long session of questions from the public, particularly on the issue of parking. Whilst there is still some dissent on this issue, most questions were seeking information and clarification. One person who had opposed previous plans expressed thanks to the BCA team for listening and being receptive to public concern and this comment drew considerable applause.

The overall feel of the meeting was positive.

The plans, which now form part of the tender brief for contractors include the following:

- Two-way traffic maintained on Market Place.
- Widening of pavements and resurfacing of pavements and road surface
- One loading-bay outside the Allerdale Court Hotel
- One short-stay free parking bay near Little Basil to accommodate one disabled parking space and two ordinary disk-parking spaces
- Replacement of the remaining 13 parking spaces which are currently available on Market Place with 13 short-stay, free disk spaces in Bitterbeck car park.
- Long-term parking displaced from Bitterbeck to be relocated elsewhere
- Current trees to be retained except for two, which are in a relatively poor state of health. These will be replaced with fully mature specimens.
- Widening of pavement on one side of Castlegate to improve road safety for pedestrians, particularly children walking home from school.

The scope of the Traffic Regulation Order to allow the temporary closure of the road for markets and other events has been reduced to apply only to Market Place. Occasional events which are big enough to require the closure of a wider will need to apply for specific police permission as they do now.

Work is now under way to get contractors in place and a public meeting with the contractors is scheduled for the evening of 16th October. A meeting with local artists to involve them in very detailed designs will take place at the Kirkgate Centre on the evening of 27th September.