

CLEATOR MOOR TASK GROUP

EXECUTIVE MEMBER: Cllr C Giel
LEAD OFFICER: Julie Betteridge – Head of Development Strategy
REPORT AUTHOR: Diane Ward – Development Projects Officer

Summary and Recommendation:

Executive is advised of progress made by the Cleator Moor Task Group to implementation stage

Executive is asked to;

a) approve the Implementation Strategy, and in particular Option 2, to enable it to move forward.

b) approve progress to the first stage which is to undertake a feasibility study to inform, and establish a case for phased development of the square.

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Cleator Moor Task Group was set up by Corporate Team to provide recommendations for the future of the Council Centre on Cleator Moor Square, following difficulties in maintaining the opening hours at the Centre as a result of the closure of the cash office in 2008. An integrated regeneration approach including wider issues have now been considered to achieve a corporate solution
- 1.2 In November 2008 the Executive approved in principle:
- a new approach to offering services from the Cleator Moor Council Centre through partnership working with the County Council and Cleator Moor Town Council and other public service organisations.
 - the possibility of a joint ownership arrangement being put in place to manage the three publicly owned listed buildings on the square.
 - further development of a scheme to deliver a key regeneration project within Cleator Moor
- 1.3 An Implementation Strategy has been developed based on this earlier report. This is now complete and is outlined in this current report, together with recommendations for implementation.
- 1.4 (A copy of the Implementation Strategy is available in the Members Room)

2. ARGUMENT

- 2.1 The Task Group believe that for the Public Realm services, including the use of the Council Centre, to be viable in the future, consideration must be given to:
- a) developing and co-ordinating the range of public services and facilities offered
 - b) to the ambience on The Square itself, internal and external to the buildings and within the context of the needs of the town as a whole.
- 2.2 The key elements within the Implementation Strategy are:
- The review and consolidation of the public services provided from The Square, including identification and provision for accommodation of additional organisations and facilities to be offered
 - Construction of a physical link between the current library building and the Council Centre to enable all three buildings to operate as a single complex with a shared reception point. The link to introduce a significant design element to The Square.
 - Internal re-arrangement of the buildings to ensure maximum utilisation offering the most needed services for the people of Cleator Moor
 - Establishment of a partnership management structure to enable operation as a single complex which will streamline the operation and make all three buildings operate to maximum efficiency.
 - Works to the areas of The Square open to the public to improve its image, making it safer and more user-friendly for pedestrians. Works will also ensure The Square can be identified as the town centre, and operate as such making the centre more attractive to incoming businesses, visitors and the community.
 - Building on the arts and culture of the town by celebrating local heritage and creating a backdrop for community events in The Square.
 - The town car parking and traffic flow be reviewed in light of pedestrian access issues to The Square and surrounding workspace.
- 2.3 The Task Group believes that changes to the Public Buildings within The Square alone are unlikely to make the centre viable or secure the services for the future unless such changes are accompanied by changes to the publicly accessible parts of The Square as well. The changes recommended could secure both the Council Centre, Library and Town Council offices and broader investment within the town which would see increased employment and training opportunities for the local residents.
- 2.4 The Implementation Strategy therefore recommends action to secure the future of the Public Realm Services provided from the buildings within The Square within the context of restating Cleator Moor as the key service centre for North East Copeland.

- 2.5 The first phase of the strategy involves undertaking a comprehensive feasibility study to give greater detail to the recommended scheme and permit further public consultation.

3. OPTIONS APPRAISAL

3.1 Option 1

Decline to approve the Implementation Strategy. No progress is made, The Square remains as a car park, and continues to be under utilised as a public space and fails to signify the centre of town. The buildings will continue to be under-utilised with the potential that the Council Centre owned by CBC will not be used to provide public services, with a further consequence that tenants lose the Council and reception support facilities previously enjoyed and seek alternative services accommodation.

3.2 Option 2

Approve the Implementation Strategy to enable the next phase to go ahead. This would allow the feasibility phase to get underway. Progressing this scheme is, at present, the best option for securing the future of the Public Buildings within The Square, the publicly accessible external areas and the town itself.

3.3 Option 3

Approve the Implementation Strategy as a document, but not the recommended option. This would result in either no progress or a short term superficial scheme going ahead, neither of which would secure the future of The Square, the Cleator Moor Council Centre nor the town as a key service centre.

4. RECOMMENDATION

- 4.1 Executive is asked to approve the Implementation Strategy and Option 2 to enable it to move forward.
- 4.2 Executive is further asked to approve progress to the first stage which is to undertake a feasibility study to inform and establish a case for further phases.

5. FINANCIAL AND HUMAN RESOURCES IMPLICATIONS (INCLUDING SOURCES OF FINANCE)

- 5.1 The cost estimate for undertaking a feasibility study is £25,000.
- 5.2 £10,000 has been approved for this stage from the Regeneration Priorities allocation within the Working Neighbourhoods Fund (CBC). A further £15,000 has been requested from West Cumbria Vision by the Task Group. If WCV refuse the application, funding will be secured from another source. Further progress of the first stage would be subject to receiving this funding.

- 5.3 Fundraising for the major works cannot be secured until the first stage is complete which will identify the scheme which goes forward. However the strategy has identified potential sources of funding.
- 5.4 The CMTG would continue to operate as a management group to administer the feasibility study.

6. IMPACT ON CORPORATE PLAN

- 6.1 **Review the use of local facilities and services to ensure they meet the needs of the community in a sustainable way (2.1.3)** Implementing the strategy will ensure a comprehensive and coordinated approach to service provision from Cleator Moor.
- 6.2 **Support delivery of regeneration in North East Copeland (2.2.3).** Restating Cleator Moor as the key service centre for NE Copeland and supporting and giving focus to the other developments within the town are key aims of the strategy.
- 6.3 **Enhance the architectural and historic environment of our towns (2.2.10).** Three architecturally important listed town square buildings occupy the square and one currently has its main front entrance permanently closed. The strategy looks to restore the impressive statement of these buildings whilst making them more welcoming to all.
- 6.4 **Respond to community / parish plans (2.4.4)** The need for enhancement work to the town square was highlighted in 1997 in the Cleator Moor Regeneration Strategy, in 1999 in the SRB delivery plan, in the Mini-Masterplan (2004), in Cleator Moor Town Council's Parish Plan of 2005 and RNEC's Neighbourhood Action Plan (2007).
- 6.5 **Increase employment in town centre retail and service activity (3.1.7).** Implementing the strategy should result in increased employment opportunities within the town through a stronger retail and business sector.
- 6.6 **Maintenance and improvement of street scene. Investment in public realm and accessibility (3.3.6).** The Implementation Strategy recommends changes which will significantly improve Cleator Moor's public realm.

List of Appendices

Appendix A – Implementation Strategy

List of Consultees:

Julie Betteridge – Head of Development Strategy

Pat Graham – Head of Development Operations

Cllr E Woodburn – Council Leader

Hilary Mitchell – Head of Policy & Performance

Chris Lloyd – Contracts & projects Manager

Jane Salt – Head of Customer Service

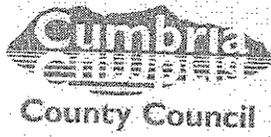
Cllr C Giel – Regeneration Portfolio Holder

CHECKLIST FOR DEALING WITH KEY ISSUES

Please confirm against the issue if the key issues below have been addressed. This can be by either a short narrative or quoting the paragraph number in the report in which it has been covered.

Impact on Crime and Disorder	Yes – changes to the square are designed to reduce the incidence of anti-social behaviour currently experienced
Impact on Sustainability	Yes – changes proposed aim to secure services and viability of public buildings on the square
Impact on Rural Proofing	Yes – Proposals would enhance key service centre for rural parishes
Health and Safety Implications	Any proposed changes to open space / buildings would meet necessary H&S regulations
Impact on Equality and Diversity Issues	Better service provision would ensure greater access to services for all.
Children and Young Persons Implications	Feedback suggested current square caters poorly for children and young people, this is addressed in the plan
Human Rights Act Implications	None
Section 151 Officer Comments	Funding of feasibility stage in process requested by the Task Group. Assuming this is successful and the feasibility study is completed, further approvals for funding for the substantive scheme will be sought. It is envisaged CBC will be asked to be Accountable Body for this scheme.
Monitoring Officer Comments	If approval is given to undertake a feasibility study written quotations or prices will be required from no less than three suppliers.

Key Decision – No



**Cleator Moor
Town Council**



Item 8
App A

**Regen
North
East
Copeland**

Regenerating & Supported by the Parishes of
Arlecdon & Fitzington, Cleator Moor,
Ennerdale & Kinniside, Lamplugh and Weddlicar

Cleator Moor Town Square Renaissance

Implementation Strategy

July 2009



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Cleator Moor Task Group was set up to provide recommendations for the future of the Council Centre on the Town Square. This implementation strategy sets out these recommendations within the context of the wider regeneration need in the town with the purpose of restating Cleator Moor as the key service centre for the surrounding rural community.

To function as such, Cleator Moor needs an identifiable town centre. Unfortunately, the current central square fails to act as the centre-piece of the town due to its poor layout, its primary use as a car park and the under-utilisation of its buildings.

The recommendation in this strategy is directed at establishing The Square as a vibrant core to the town, concentrating public services in a co-ordinated manner and encouraging business activity.

Improvements to the Town Square now, will complement other planned developments in and around Cleator Moor. Although each project may be planned independently, the combined effect will be to realise the successful redevelopment of the area and provide the critical regenerative mass for change to occur within the town.

In order to restate the centre of the town, build on the success of local businesses and attract increased private inward investment into Cleator Moor the Task Group recommend:

- The service provision from The Square be reviewed and consolidated, including physical changes to enhance this aim through the construction of a link between the current library and Council Centre, the creation of a shared reception/ information point and the opening of underused offices as meeting and office space within the public buildings for other service providers ensuring full and sustainable utilisation of the buildings which operate as a single complex.
- The public realm of The Square be reviewed to improve its image, make it more user friendly for pedestrians, and for community facilities, and improve perceptions of security and safety.
- Consideration be given to ensuring The Square acts as the centre-piece of the town making Cleator Moor more attractive to incoming businesses, visitors and the community
- Building on the arts and culture of the town by celebrating local heritage and creating a backdrop for community events in The Square
- The town car parking and traffic flow be reviewed in light of pedestrian access issues to The Square and surrounding workspace.

By aligning public services and making better use of the central buildings which function jointly, services will be better provided to meet the needs of the community they serve. It will also be possible for those involved in providing advice, information and guidance to signpost the public to connected services within and around The Square which may open up new opportunities in the community, such as volunteering, training or employment.

The Square's redevelopment will be supportive of and integrated into the future development of Phoenix Enterprise Centre whose prominence around the Town Square will help to secure the Centre's vitality and also benefit from investment in the public realm to help attract new tenants into office and workshop accommodation.

Implementing this strategy will create an exciting Town Centre that balances the public, private and voluntary sectors to stimulate growth in Cleator Moor and provide the level of service that better meets the needs of residents and the community as a whole. It will give Cleator Moor and NE Copeland residents and businesses the services they deserve and enable the town to play a role in West Cumbria that contributes to the wider economy.

INTRODUCTION

Cleator Moor Task Group was set up to provide recommendations for the future of the Council Centre on the Town Square. This implementation strategy sets out these recommendations within the context of the wider regeneration need in the town with the purpose of restating Cleator Moor as the key service centre for the surrounding rural community.

The vision, underpinned by national and local government policy, is to develop a Town Square that provides a hub of public services, allowing the local community to access their local government (County, Borough and Town Council) and voluntary sectors across all levels experiencing continuity and excellent service, this responsive delivery of public services being a major strand in the locality working agenda. The Local Authorities would be centrally located and joined with core services, such as Credit Union, Citizen's Advice, the Police, the Regeneration Partnership, and in close proximity with Job Centre Plus, employment advice and local health and family services. The Civic Hall has an important role to play, providing conference and meeting space within the town, building on its strengths as a central and accessible venue for West Cumbria.

The Town Square is flanked on two sides by business accommodation with retail premises on a third. The improved visual appearance and functioning of The Square as outlined in this strategy will serve not only to consolidate existing developments but is expected to act as a catalyst to encourage further economic demand, growth and activity including office and workshop accommodation within the town. Around The Square there is the potential to expand apprentice training; develop new workspace, introduce specialist markets and support the retail development within the town and a significant factor to unlock this potential is the redevelopment of The Square.

Cleator Moor is surrounded by stunning countryside, which should be echoed in the central Square by further planting and opening up the hard landscape to make the area a pleasant environment for locals and visitors to enjoy. The Square looks on to buildings captured by Lowry in his art and is home to dramatic sculptures by Conrad Atkinson, as well as historic listed buildings. This will be highlighted and celebrated with the opportunity to develop the arts heritage and stage community events. The Square should attract tourists travelling through the town and West Cumbria, both by road and the C2C cycleway, providing them with easily accessible information and guidance about what to do in the area and the best places to relax.

As well as drawing in new visitors, the central space should be about providing easily accessible public services to the local community. The library on The Square is already well used and building on this, signposting people to local government services, training and job opportunities or local community groups will be integral to the project.

The Town Square Renaissance is all about breathing new life into the heart of Cleator Moor and the community it serves. If local people of all ages are going to reverse the decline of the area, then they need to have pride in their town and access to a new way of delivering services that better meets their and their visitors' needs will help to achieve this.

BUSINESS CASE

To function as the key service centre for North East Copeland, Cleator Moor needs an identifiable town centre. Unfortunately, the current central square fails to act as the centre-piece of the town due to its poor layout, disparate provision of services, its primary use as a car park and the under-utilisation of its buildings.

Unless action is taken to revitalise the town centre, it is unlikely the town will be able to halt its current decline. The local community needs to be convinced that Cleator Moor town can meet their needs, with a better retail offer and greater inward investment. Reconfiguring the town square could contribute to this by acting as a catalyst for future improvements and complementing current public sector developments, such as the new health centre to the north of The Square, which without a significant centre could see further loss of identity of the town.

It is proving difficult to attract new businesses to the area, although Phoenix Enterprise Centre (PEC) does have some success, but their work is made all the more difficult by the appearance of the town, and The Square in particular. Alongside the lack of identity and vibrancy sits the issue of the impact of the disaffected young people in Cleator Moor who tend to congregate on The Square, limiting the attraction of the location to potential investors.

The traffic flow around The Square is also an issue as it can impede pedestrian access to both The Square and the surrounding offices as cars using the central parking area need to navigate the perimeter roads to access the car park. Whilst a vibrant town centre needs sufficient car parking, this should not dominate community space. Consideration should therefore be given to relocating the majority of the parking spaces from The Square to alternative sites within close proximity to the town centre.

In order to restate the centre of the town, build on the success of Phoenix Enterprise Centre and attract increased private inward investment into Cleator Moor there is a requirement to:

- Review and consolidate the service provision from The Square, including physical changes to enhance this aim through the construction of a link between the current library and Council Centre, the creation of a shared reception/ information point and the opening of underused offices as meeting and office space within the public buildings for other service providers ensuring full and sustainable utilisation of the buildings which operate as a single complex.
- Review the public realm of The Square to improve its image, make it more user friendly for pedestrians, and for community facilities, and improve perceptions of security and safety.
- Give consideration to The Square to ensure it acts as the centre-piece of the town making Cleator Moor attractive to incoming businesses, visitors and the community
- Build on the arts and culture of the town by celebrating local heritage and creating a backdrop for community events in The Square
- Review the town car parking and traffic flow in light of pedestrian access issues to The Square and surrounding workspace.

APPROACH

A partnership approach was taken through the formation of a task group set up with officers from the Borough, Town and County Councils and Regen North East Copeland (RNEC), the regeneration partnership for the area. Each council owns one of the listed buildings on The Square, and all four organisations have a broad remit with regards the town.

Wider consultation was undertaken through:

- A stakeholder meeting held for all those with a direct business interest on The Square.
- A general public consultation undertaken by questionnaire to ascertain local opinion on the current format of The Square
- A detailed structured interview with existing and potential occupants of the public buildings on The Square to gauge the opportunities for long-term development.

The detailed feedback is available on request and has been used to inform this strategy.

Reference was also made to key documents such as the Cleator Moor Mini Masterplan (2004), Cleator Moor Parish Plan (2005), Cleator Moor and Area Neighbourhood Action Plan (Updated 2008), Gateway studies (2006 & 2008) and the Urban Design Compendium (2007)

TERMS OF REFERENCE (TORs)

Taking into account the current socio-economic environment and in consultation with local partners and the local community in Cleator Moor. The Task Group were asked to:

1. Assess the current level of services delivered to the public (CBC/CCC/Voluntary etc).
2. Review Council and associated assets (extent, use and management arrangements). List other known underused or vacant land and property.
3. Link the opportunities for improving the public realm in association with relevant partners, to the provision of future services
4. Link the opportunities for regeneration and wider development activities to the provision of future services.
5. Provide an implementation strategy based on the above to ensure change takes place

TOR 1: Assess the current level of services delivered to the public (Statutory/Voluntary etc).

Current Services provided from the Town Square

The main buildings currently house the following key organisations as permanent tenants:

- Cleator Moor Town Council – access to Town Council, allotments, local grants, etc
- Copeland Borough Council – all Borough Council queries including travel vouchers, etc
- Cumbria County Council – Area Support, Library services and Local Link.
- Credit Union – financial support and advice
- Copeland Occupational and Social Centre (COSC) – support for individuals with disabilities
- Cleator Moor Civic Hall – meeting space and Masonic Lodge

Drop in sessions are also run by:

- Cumbria Constabulary through the Community Police Support Officer
- Blue Skies Group – a mental health support group
- Citizen's Advice Bureau (CAB) – personal and financial advice
- Town Council – Saturday Surgeries

Key services offered from the buildings around The Square include:

- Phoenix Enterprise Centre – Office and workshop space, employment advice and guidance
- Regen NE Copeland – Regeneration Partnership office for the area
- Copeland MP's constituency office
- Gen II – apprentice training
- Office and retail premises house a variety of commercial businesses
- The Methodist Church, Colomba Club and Pensioners Hut offer community meeting space

General Issues

As an 'interim measure' Copeland Borough Council are considering moving their Customer Services office in Cleator Moor into the Library with the existing County Council staff to establish a 'Local Link'. This could be the first stage in moving towards more sustainable, co-ordinated services, but will only go some way towards making the improvements required. Only two of the current eight tenants are linked by this move, therefore the Local Link will only provide partial access to local services. The move will also risk the current Council Centre becoming unsustainable through both reduction in tenants and visitors to the building. In order to fully realise the potential of a Local Link the whole area of service provision needs to be fully considered, coordinated and developed.

Poor landscaping, both hard and soft, also detracts from the listed architecture; the planting is limited and patchy, and damage to trees and foliage has not been reinstated. Poor lighting on The Square does little to enhance the architectural features and can encourage anti-social behaviour, giving a perception of The Square being unsafe, especially at night. The absence of good urban design has led to a lack of community events and a much diminished market on The Square. Feedback from the community consultation reinforced this as when asked 'How well does the space cater for different people's needs?' the majority view was that The Square 'catered well for no-one'.

Traffic flow needs to be reviewed as the roads around The Square are restrictive both for pedestrian access to The Square and access to the surrounding workspaces. New car parking needs to be identified to allow the public space on The Square to be utilised differently and creatively. However, the current car parking capacity needs to be retained within the town centre and therefore new spaces need to be identified to allow reallocation of the existing parking.

TOR 2: Review Council and associated assets (extent, use and management arrangements). List other known underused or vacant land and property.

Premises Assessment

Overall size of The Square is approximately 7030m², and comprises public open space areas and a small number of buildings:

- Open sandstone flagged public areas with trees, a monument feature and some art features, with metal railings and arches, bollards and lighting.
- Public car park for approx 37 cars, having tarmac surfacing and white marking paint to delineate bays. There are also separate parking areas in concrete block paviors for approx. 19 vehicles
- Library contained in a single storey building of sandstone wall construction with slated roof.
- The Council Centre - a two storey building having ground floor and basement, with a small grassed external area behind. This building is physically linked to
- Town Council Building – a two storey building having ground floor and basement.
- Cleator Moor former Civic Hall, a single storey building having a small attached public toilet facility and parking for 5 cars.

Ownership, Use and Assessment of Buildings

The Library: is owned by Cumbria County Council and operated as a public library. Copeland Customer Services may jointly occupy and provide services from the library during 2009. The layout comprises one large room, two smaller rooms and a kitchen toilet area. Access is through the main front doors, and an access ramp is provided for disabled persons. Internal redecoration works have just been completed to facilitate the establishment of a Local Link. Area on plan is approx. 225m². The building appears to be in good condition.

The Council Centre: is owned by Copeland Borough Council and let as follows:

- The basement is leased to COSC
- The County Council and Cleator Moor Credit Union both lease space on the ground floor.

There are some vacant rooms and an under-used reception area, a communal toilet and kitchen facilities. The area of both floors is approx. 660m²

The building is in good condition according to the borough council's Condition Survey; however the ground floor offers a poor internal layout with wasted under-used reception space, and some under occupation of office space. The front main entrance is not used, and instead a separate side entrance has been created which provides pedestrian and disabled access, this is considered be acceptable but is of poor design quality.

The basement was previously adapted for use as a civil defence command centre and some of the installation remains. Whilst structurally sound the finishings and services would benefit from modernisation, the removal of pipes and ductwork and the re-opening of the bricked-up windows.

The Town Council building consists of a basement and ground floor. The basement is used by COSC as a joiner's workshop and the ground floor is used by the Town Council as an office, customer reception and meeting space. The area of both floors is approx. 200m²

The ground floor appears to be in reasonable condition, but the entrance is not DDA compliant, however access can be gained from the Council Centre side entrance.

The basement area (some uncertainty over ownership boundary) comprises toilets and workshop. Both the toilets and the workshop would benefit from upgrading, and there is evidence of some water/damp ingress which requires investigation and remediation.

External Public Space:

The small area to the rear of the Council Centre is segregated as access to the basement with a grassed portion which is currently maintained by COSC and forms their 'outdoor area', hardstanding and a path.

The main car park to the rear of The Square is in relatively good condition, although a few holes exist. Car parking on The Square is currently subsidised by RNEC, PEC and the Town Council to offer free parking to visitors. On Fridays the smaller car park is designated as a market area. Drivers have begun to park their cars on the space in front of the library building even though this is not a designated parking area - a symptom of The Square being regarded as a car park as opposed to the significant landmark it should be marking the centre of the town. The small parking area in front of the former Civic Hall is operated by the Freemasons.

Small public toilets are attached to the Civic Hall and leased, maintained and operated by Copeland Borough Council, area approx. 12m². The toilets are adequate but relatively poor against current public aspirations, and would benefit from renewal.

The remainder of the site is owned by Copeland Borough Council and is maintained as public open space. The sandstone flagged pedestrian areas and pavior parking areas are in reasonable condition, some of the railings have been damaged/repared, some tree roots are causing disturbance, the monument has been relocated to the front of the buildings at some point in the past and some art features have been erected to the rear of the buildings. The layout of railings/features etc is not considered to be particularly encouraging for public use.

Appendix 3 gives the North of England Civic Trusts' conservation observations on The Square and gives a heritage perspective to this assessment.

Other CBC owned property

Phoenix Court and Phoenix House

Phases 1 and 2 of Phoenix Court and Phoenix House are leased to Phoenix Enterprise Centre. Phase 3 is managed by Phoenix Enterprise Centre.

Phase 2 is currently vacant with re-furbishment works expected to be completed by November 2009, and does not front The Square. Key buildings are Phases 1 and 3 of Phoenix Court which sit to the South of The Square, and Phoenix House which is the significant building on the West of The Square. All three buildings are in good order and frame The Square well despite the entrance to Phase 3 opening onto Earl Street rather than Cragg Road which makes the building appear to face away from The Square.

Jacktrees Road – Car park, play area and adjacent land

The car park is in need of an upgrade, but does provide useful parking. The privately owned land to the rear of the car park is under-utilised and in poor condition.

The small children's play area adjacent to the car park is often littered and can be unpopular due to the nearby bench being frequented regularly by those wishing to consume alcohol throughout the day, and on whom the litter problem is largely blamed. This area also provides the link from the C2C Cycleway into the Town. The card shop on the corner of Jacktrees Road provides the stamp to verify cyclists have been on the route and therefore the view from this corner of The Square is critical to the decision of cyclists to either explore the town or head back onto the cycle

route. Failing to capitalise on this visitor potential only contributes to the towns underperformance.

King George's Playing Field & Bowling Centre

The Bowling Centre is leased by North Country Leisure and proves very popular during the indoor bowling season with the local community. However the land surrounding the bowling centre is under-utilized due to poor signposting and uninspired appearance. The car park has had recent work and appears in sound order. The all-weather pitches on King Georges Field are in need of an upgrade as are the changing facilities which are at best minimal, but non-existent for female users.

Privately owned key sites on / surrounding The Square

Cleator Moor Civic and Masonic Hall

This building, now in private ownership, sits on the South West corner of The Square. Architecturally the building is poorly designed and fails to compliment any of the surrounding buildings and largely detracts from the appearance of The Square. However, it is still used relatively regularly by a variety of community groups and offers the only significant large meeting space within the town.

Colomba Club

This building is of strategic and historic interest, as it was captured in a painting by LS Lowry when he visited the area. Unfortunately, a history of broken windows to the ground level has resulted in this prominent building on the perimeter south-west corner of The Square having the glass removed from the ground floor windows which further adds to the sense of insecurity in the town centre.

Vacant Plot on Market Street

The plot has planning permission for town houses although the current owner has no plans to develop the site, yet has indicated a potential willingness to sell the land. The plot sits to the south-east perimeter corner of The Square and without a building fails to frame the corner which unbalances The Square's appearance.

Crowgarth House, 1 Market Street (Old Groundwork Building)

A large prominent building which marks the eastern entrance to The Square. Unfortunately this building currently stands empty, and is in need of renovation. It is advertised for sale / to let, but as with many buildings in the town, is failing to attract a buyer.

TOR 3: Link the opportunities for improving the public realm in association with relevant partners, to the provision of future services

It is inevitable that the level of services offered from The Square will change, however without significant intervention it is most likely the services will decline. Opportunities do exist to ensure this decline is halted, if not reversed and these areas of opportunity are:

- Fulfil the potential of the "Local Link" to provide an access point to all Local Authority and related public services. This could be achieved by creating a physical link joining the Library to the Council Centre. This would enable a flow of people through the three buildings which would function as a single complex, using one centrally located reception. In addition, the physical link between the Library and Council Centre could offer a new design element to The Square.
- Review and redesign the internal layout of the three buildings to best locate the front desk reception, library and public and voluntary/ community sector organisations. This could provide easy access for the public and back room space for local organisations, plus meeting space and shared domestic facilities. Changes will also be required to the areas leased by COSC.
- Support the three tiers of local government to provide joined up services and on-line access to new services in Cleator Moor, with signposting and easy access to services provided by the Credit Union and CAB. New organisations are interested in taking up space within the buildings, such as the Regeneration Partnership, the Community Law service and in the long term possibly Cumbria Constabulary and others. This would help to make current services more sustainable and see the buildings and Square used to the level that they were originally designed to meet.
- The potential to offer new services is constricted by the current buildings layout. Demand has shown that access to other services, such as Tourist Information, a café and drop-in meeting and arts space would add a new dimension to The Square that cannot currently be accommodated. Tourist Information could be introduced to the town, with display material that would draw visitors in and provide information on the accommodation offer and things to do in the surrounding area. Long term aspirations could include the provision of an early booking service on-line, along the lines of the i-site model used successfully in countries like New Zealand. The Town's links with LS Lowry and Conrad Atkinson are under-exploited at present and there is the potential to create a hub at the heart of the community that would attract visitors to explore local history, the arts and access local events. Potential visitors could also be signposted from the C2C Cycleway link as a further opportunity to support and develop the retail sector and attract repeat visits.
- To enable this joined up proposal to operate effectively in the longer term, a new management structure will be needed to oversee the delivery of the public/ community services based within The Square. Potential options include establishing a joint management agreement with existing partners or establishing a Development Trust.
- As the number of people accessing the services offered from The Square increases, it is important that access to the buildings is not hampered by an excessive number of cars or railings. Without any improvements to the public realm this would be the case. In order for the services offered from The Square to be welcoming and successful, people must feel safe and comfortable accessing those services. It is therefore critical for the success

of any organisation operating from The Square that the public realm is conducive to pedestrian access. Consideration must be given to the landscaping and function of the space, which with appropriate works would enable the town to attract market stalls back to the front of The Square, for occasional specialist markets and a more regular farmers market.

- In improving the public realm, improving the public space would encourage more people onto The Square to relax and enjoy the town centre. With a well designed space surrounded by key town buildings, the centre of town will be clear and give significance to the location for visitors. It would also allow more local events to be held in The Square supporting a growing sense of community.
- Existing arts structures could be complemented by new installations. There is the opportunity to create a flexible covered "outdoor" space that will enable people to enjoy The Square in all weathers creating a hub for local gatherings.
- The regeneration of The Square is expected to reinforce PEC's current success as the opportunity exists to develop additional town centre workspace in Kelvin Hall (former Conservative Club) and redevelop offices in Phase 3 and possibly expand into premises on Earl Street. This would ensure the continuing growth of a private sector presence in the heart of the town, boosting the daily demand on the retail sector, provide new jobs and new business premises.
- Given that the Civic Hall occupies 25% of The Square, the opportunity should be taken to discuss with the owners the best way of realising the scope of the building for conference and meeting facilities, and as a central location for West Cumbrian events.

TOR 4: Link the opportunities for regeneration and wider development activities to the provision of future services.

Cleator Moor has seen a slow decline over a number of years with an accompanying loss of services and businesses to the town centre. The recent (2008) closure of Ehenside School now means even fewer people visit the town on a daily basis.

Efforts have been made to reverse this decline including the recent (2006) renovation of the former Co-op building which has enabled Phoenix Enterprise Centre to expand and secure additional business activity in the centre, which in turn has supported the retail sector. Regen NE Copeland has also supported the upgrade of nine premises in the centre of Cleator Moor over the last two years through their *Building Improvement Scheme*, a project which has now come to a close. Whilst these efforts have been well received, the level of decline in Cleator Moor is such that more work needs to be done. Whilst each individual project has had its own positive effect, the lack of a key co-ordinating project has meant that the overall impact has been minimal. Work to The Square however offers the opportunity not only to co-ordinate service provision but could give coherence to the town as a whole. The opportunities identified could be acted upon individually, but a comprehensive project at this point could not only transform the town centre, but would consolidate previous regeneration efforts and support future developments. The scheme proposed has the potential to have an impact far greater than the sum of its parts.

Improvements to the Town Square now will complement and enhance other planned developments in and around Cleator Moor. Together these projects could restore balanced development within this key service centre. The planned developments will enhance local services, address underlying problems with health and unemployment and create a new economic impetus within the town. These developments would support and enhance works to The Square as they provide the critical regenerative mass for change to occur:

- Birks Road:

Cumbria Primary Care Trust has earmarked land on Birks Road for a bespoke Health Centre, including potential facilities for local doctors surgeries, dentist, pharmacy and additional care services, with plans currently submitted to Copeland Borough Council. Opposite this site a residential nursing home is being built, with the possibility of further interim care and dementia facilities being built adjacent to the Health Centre.

The Birks Road site also houses a Howgill Children's Centre, Cleator Moor Youth & Community Centre (currently applying for refurbishment funds) and Celtic Football Club. The new Health Centre will provide easy access to health services in close proximity to the centre. This site will focus "cradle to grave" health care on the one "Health Campus", concentrating services and social support within one setting.

- Ehenside School:

The School closed in 2008 and redevelopment of the site will be a major project for the town over the coming years. Development of the site is likely to be focused around leisure, healthy lifestyle and tourism, exploring the potential for Extreme Sports and links into the National Park. The vision is to create a site that will attract users from within West Cumbria and day trippers from the National Park.

- Cleator Mills/ Ehen Valley:

This site is earmarked for redevelopment by the current private owners and has the potential to open up access to walks and cycling in the forest around Dent, working towards the Whinlatter/ Grizedale models for outdoor activity. The scope is to grow from

the Cleator Mills site up to Ennerdale and towards Egremont with the aim of attracting tourists to stay and play in the area, working alongside the Ehenside Extreme Sports project to offer all weather activities for visitors and the community.

- Leconfield:
The industrial estate is currently under-utilised, dilapidated and suffers from a very poor image, which site owners Ashtenne are working to address. Redevelopment plans currently aim to continue the estate as a commercially based site focused on the nuclear industry supply chain, although retail and mixed housing options are being explored.
- Cleator Moor Bowls Centre:
The Bowling Centre is becoming a hub for sports activity with the aim of adding new change rooms, pitches and open space to encourage a range of sports activity including women's hockey and netball squads.

TOR 5: Provide an implementation strategy based on the above to ensure change takes place

The Task Group considered three options:

Option 1: Do Nothing

If no changes are made to the current operation or layout of the buildings, whilst the library will continue to function, and may see enhanced usage if the relocation of Borough Council customer service personnel goes ahead. However, the Council Centre usage will decrease and any further loss of occupants is liable to close the building entirely. Attracting new occupants to the Council Centre would be problematic given the lack of reception and the current internal layout of the building. This will also leave the lone worker in the Town Council building further isolated with potential health and safety issues.

If the use of the buildings continues to decline, so too will the use of The Square. With unsustainable use of the Council Centre, unless Copeland Borough Council can fund the increased running costs to keep it open, this building could potentially become vacant. Vacant and unused buildings often attract anti-social behaviour, which is already a significant issue within the town and on The Square. This would have a negative impact on the town centre.

Beyond ongoing maintenance, no additional works would be undertaken to improve the open space of The Square leaving the railings surrounding The Square intact which continue to act as a barrier for both people and footballs. No additional lighting would be introduced to The Square leaving it an unwelcoming and unsafe place at night.

Cost: ongoing maintenance, but with potential loss of income through loss of rent.

Doing nothing to The Square would likely result in, at best, very limited future investment. Doing nothing also runs the risk, if the other planned developments go ahead, that the town centre would entirely lose its identity.

Option 2: Redevelop The Square; both public space & buildings

To prevent the public service provision offer on The Square becoming even further disjointed, a link could be built to join the current library and the Council Centre, linking all three publicly owned buildings to enable them to operate as a single complex offering a range of public, private and third sector services.

A joint management agreement could be put in place allowing a shared reception to simplify service access for the local community and visitors alike. From the main reception area people could be signposted to any of the services offered, all of which would be accessible from the main reception point in the complex.

As the council buildings on The Square are listed, any visual alterations or extensions need to be sensitive to the existing architecture, but not mimic it. Options need to be explored for the proposed 'link' between the current library and Council Centre, but a well designed contemporary structure could be a possibility as this would neither detract from, nor clash with the existing features, but could offer a significant design element to The Square. In addition, external works relating to the entrances may be required (re-opening of the main entrance on the Council Centre for example).

Given that the Local Link offer in Cleator Moor is best co-located with the library, this option may require the re-location of the library to enable the creation of a shared main reception. Works to re-organise the interior of the buildings would be undertaken to provide efficient, flexible accommodation to meet the needs of as many services as possible to ensure maximum occupancy and full utilisation of the buildings. With increased usage of the buildings, an increased number of people would be attracted onto The Square. In addition, the joint use of all three buildings would provide the opportunity for the lone town council worker to re-locate within the buildings to reduce isolation.

COSC occupy the basement of both the Town and Borough Council buildings. The basement needs a major refurbishment with the removal of internal ducts and pipes and the creation of a new reception area and window to increase the amount of natural light into the space.

Works to make the open space safer (increased lighting and improved design) and more attractive (more trees and fewer railings) would encourage people to use The Square not just to visit the buildings, but to use the open space to relax and give the potential to re-introduce the market and hold community events. Work to the rear of The Square would ensure the town looks inviting to the many C2C cyclists who visit the shop on The Square to validate their route. The external art features would form an outdoor gallery and create a focal point for visitors. In addition, the opportunity should be taken to interpret the LS Lowry links in the Town through boards signposting key buildings and a local "Lowry trail".

Alternative car parking should be found away from The Square to reduce the dominance of cars at the centre, but with the parking capacity within the town retained.

The public toilets should be upgraded. This issue was raised in the public consultation, and if more people are to be attracted people onto The Square the public facilities should not detract from the experience.

Changes to The Square should make the space more welcoming for everyone, and should result in increased number of people visiting the town. The Square will be 'reclaimed' and free to be used by all, including the young people of Cleator Moor. It must however be recognised that groups of young people will still want to congregate socially and changes to The Square must not result in simply 'moving on the problem'. This will be alleviated in part by the plans to redevelop the Youth & Community Centre on Birks Road, which will house the Phoenix Youth Project and is within easy reach of The Square. Changes to The Square should also be accompanied by further alternative youth provision.

This option could also support efforts to address the underlying problems of Cleator Moor in terms of deprivation and worklessness. Increasingly service providers are looking to different and innovative ways to support hard to reach groups and this option could support this work by enabling people to access advice and information in a friendly, non threatening environment to encourage them into training, community support and employment.

Cost Estimate (at October 2008) excl. VAT:

Feasibility:	£ 25,000
Reconfiguration of buildings	£ 719,345
Construction of link	£ 214,830
Enhancement to public realm	£ 829,069
Reconfigured car parking	£ 310,000
Professional fees	£ 327,987
Inflation	£ 114,222
Total	£ 2,540,453

This option provides the best opportunity for securing future investment in the town, ensuring an identifiable town centre and securing the sustainable future of the council buildings whilst supporting wider efforts to tackle social issues within the town.

Option 3: Enhance the public space on The Square

This option assumes just external superficial works to The Square would be undertaken.

Works could be undertaken to make the open space safer (increased lighting and improved design) and more attractive (more trees and fewer railings) to encourage people to use The Square to relax in, with the potential to re-introduce the market and hold community events. Work to the rear of The Square would ensure the town looks inviting to the many C2C cyclists who visit the shop on The Square to validate their route. The external art features would form an outdoor gallery and create a focal point for visitors. In addition, the opportunity should be taken to interpret the LS Lowry links in the Town through boards signposting key buildings and a local "Lowry trail".

The main car park would remain on The Square, but additional planting would be undertaken to make the area more attractive.

However, without the works to improve service provision and use of the public buildings, the Council Centre is likely to become unsustainable and potentially vacant, although it is expected the library would continue to operate at least at its current level. The Town Council offices would continue to be used, as would the area designated for use by COSC in both the Council Centre and Town Council basements.

Cost Estimate (at October 2008) excl. VAT:

Feasibility:	£ 15,000
Enhancement to public realm	£ 629,069
Professional fees	£ 94,360
Inflation	£ 21,703
Total	£ 760,132

This option would provide a relatively superficial enhancement to The Square. In the short term the attractiveness of the public space is likely to increase, however long term as no changes to the function of The Square and its buildings would take place it is expected that The Square would eventually return to its current under-utilised state, lacking vibrancy and with no significant demarcation as a town centre. This scenario is not dissimilar to one of The Squares most recent transformations – the addition of the railings, which currently are a significant contributor to its lack of use by the many and abuse by the few, despite being a welcome addition at the time they were introduced.

RECOMMENDATION

The task group recommends **Option 2**. This is the only option that ensures sustainability of all three listed buildings, offers a comprehensive service to local residents whilst maximising the potential for future investment within the town.

THE IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY

This strategy is based on the implementation of Option 2. Key elements are:

- Review and consolidation of the public services provided from The Square, including identification and provision for accommodation of additional organisations and facilities to be offered
- Construction of a physical link between current library building and the Council Centre to enable all three buildings to operate as a single complex. The link will introduce a significant design element to The Square.
- The internal re-arrangement of the buildings to ensure maximum utilisation offering the most needed services for the people of Cleator Moor
- Establishment of a management structure to enable operation as a single complex which will streamline the operation and make all three buildings operate to maximum efficiency.
- Works to the public realm of The Square making it safer and more user-friendly. Works will also ensure The Square can be identified as the town centre, and operate as such.
- Building on the arts and culture of the town by celebrating local heritage and creating a backdrop for community events in The Square
- Review of the town car parking and traffic flow in light of pedestrian access issues to The Square and surrounding workspace.

Phase I will involve the launch of the new Local Link within the current library. In parallel with this process, feasibility funding should be sourced to carry out detailed design work on the building and Square alterations.

By September 2009, tenders to go out for the feasibility stage, with the detailed design phase being complete by January 2010. Integral to the process will be further public consultation to ensure the resulting scheme is accepted locally. Once the redesign of The Square and options for reconfiguring the buildings are agreed, alternative strategies for car parking should be put forward. Work with partners to agree a Governance structure and management solutions for the joint operation of the buildings also to be undertaken. Final options to be put forward to both stakeholders and the wider public for consultation; with the approval of the final option by March 2010.

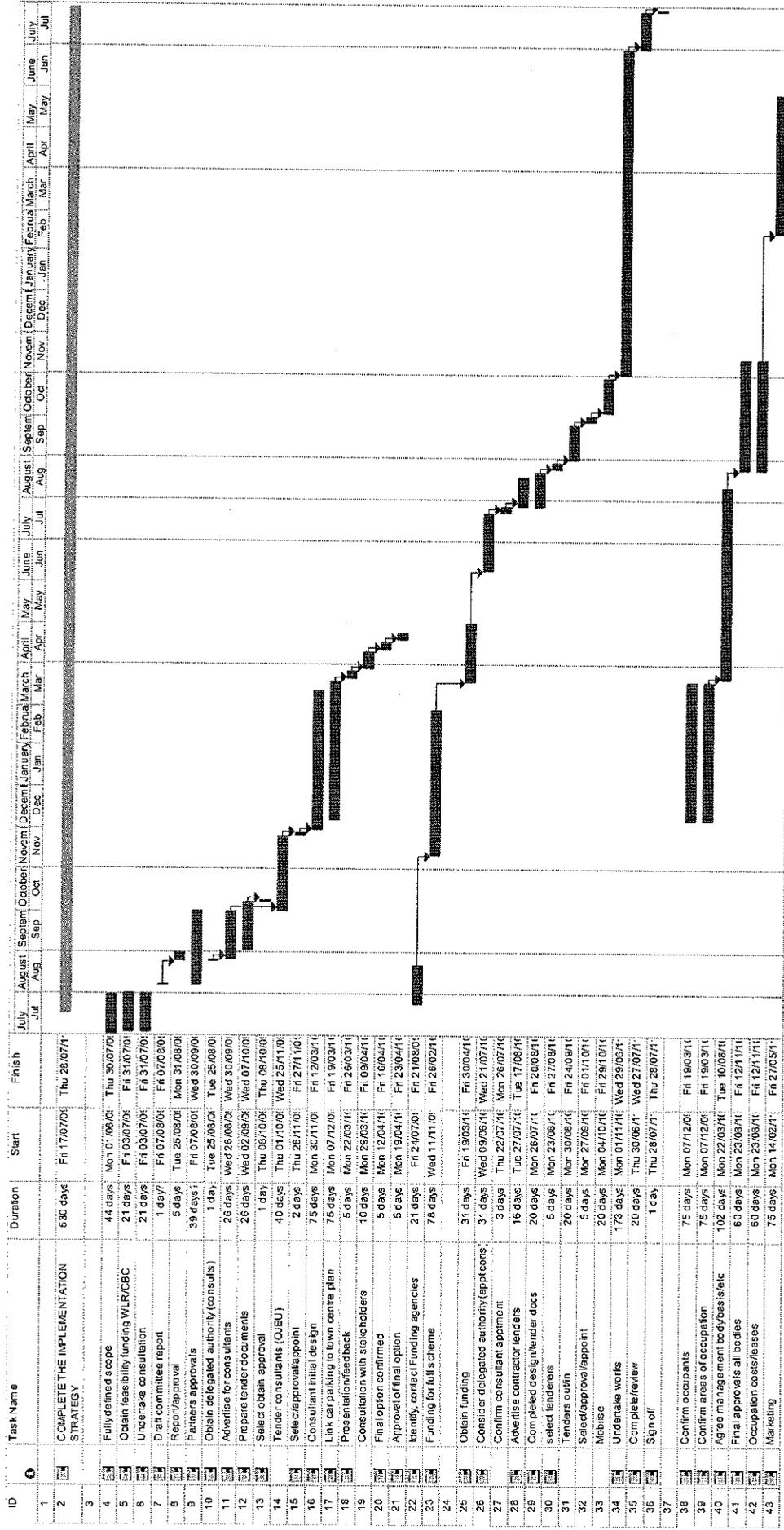
Talented Minds funds are in place, but additional funds need to be sought. Once all funding is in place, tenders should go out for the main works to start in Autumn 2010, finishing in the summer of the following year.

The project should be underpinned by regular communications and information through established traditional routes, such as the Local Link information board, Neighbourhood Forum, etc. In addition, use should be made of the Local Authorities' websites and www.necopeland.co.uk to discuss the project and invite comments.

Implementing this strategy will create an exciting Town Centre that balances the public, private and voluntary sectors to stimulate growth in Cleator Moor and provide the level of service that better meets the needs of residents and the community as a whole. It will give Cleator Moor and NE Copeland the services they deserve and enable the town to play a role in West Cumbria that contributes to the wider economy.

Greater detail in terms of outputs, outcomes and a risk analysis will be developed during the funding application process.

Suggested programme



Appendix 1 - Options Appraisal

	Option 1 Do Nothing	Option 2 Redevelop The Square: both public space and buildings	Option 3 Enhance the public space
Estimated Cost	Ongoing maintenance	£2,540,453	£ 760,132
Sustainability & co-ordination of services	<p>Potential increased use of library through Local Link but Council Centre usage likely to decrease and any further loss of occupants liable to close the building as financially unviable.</p> <p>Attracting new occupants problematic with no reception and current internal layout.</p> <p>Town Council clerk isolated.</p>	<p>All public owned buildings linked with single access point for all services.</p> <p>A joint management agreement would allow buildings to operate as one complex with a shared reception.</p> <p>Co-ordination of services and shared reception would increase potential of new occupants ensuring sustainability</p>	<p>Potential increased use of library through Local Link but Council Centre usage likely to decrease and any further loss of occupants liable to close the building as financially unviable.</p> <p>Attracting new occupants problematic with no reception and current internal layout.</p> <p>Town Council clerk isolated.</p>
Job creation and business growth	Status quo maintained and risk that job opportunities and business growth continue to diminish	<p>Greater opportunity for private sector to reap benefit of increased daytime visitors and increase turnover in retail sector.</p> <p>Improved image could help to attract new tenants into available workspace offered by PEC.</p> <p>Improved access to support services through public sector and employment advice with potential to increase local skills base.</p>	<p>Improved image could help to attract new tenants into available workspace offered by PEC, but the underlying issues still apparent, so superficial difference will not affect all prospective tenants.</p>
Interior of Buildings	No change. Buildings continue to be under-utilised and Council Centre would operate without a reception.	<p>Interior of all three buildings re-organised to create flexible space to ensure maximum occupancy and full utilisation.</p> <p>Considerable works to the basement including the removal of internal ducts and pipes and the creation of a new reception area to enhance facilities.</p>	No change. Buildings continue to be under-utilised and Council Centre would operate without a reception.

	Option 1 Do Nothing	Option 2 Redevelop The Square, both public space and buildings	Option 3 Enhance the public space
Exterior of Buildings	No change – buildings remain understated and 'main entrance' continues to be closed to the public.	Link between the existing library building and the Council Centre to be constructed offering a significant design element to The Square. Potential re-location of library could enable opening of main entrance or more central entry point through the link. Works to the basement to include creation of a new reception facility for COSC and increased natural light into the basement. Works to make the open space safer and more attractive to encourage people to use The Square to access services and relax.	No change – buildings remain understated and 'main entrance' continues to be closed to the public. Works to make the open space safer and more attractive to encourage people to use The Square to access services and relax. Potential to encourage C2C cyclists to visit the town. The external art features to form an outdoor gallery and interpretation of the LS Lowry links to create a local "Lowry trail".
Landscaping	No change. Square continues to feel 'unsafe' especially at night.	Potential to encourage C2C cyclists to visit the town. The external art features to form an outdoor gallery and interpretation of the LS Lowry links to create a local "Lowry trail".	Potential to encourage C2C cyclists to visit the town. The external art features to form an outdoor gallery and interpretation of the LS Lowry links to create a local "Lowry trail".
Safety concerns and public use of square	Potential for perceived anti-social behaviour to increase through decreased use and potential vacant building. No change to lighting – square continues to feel unsafe at night. No change to railings which would continue to dominate The Square and act as a barrier for pedestrians	Increased use of square and re-opening of main entrance would reduce number of young people loitering and perceived level of anti-social behaviour. Removal of perimeter railings would deter playing of football and make square more welcoming Alternative youth provision designed in conjunction with Phoenix Youth Project.	Increased use of square would reduce anti-social behaviour. Removal of perimeter railings would deter playing of football and make square more welcoming Possibility of alternative youth provision, designed in conjunction with Phoenix Youth Project.

	Option 1 Do Nothing	Option 2 Redevelop The Square; both public space and buildings	Option 3 Enhance the public space
Lack of community events & market	No change. The one vendor constituting 'the market' continues to operate, as do the occasional community activities. This level of activity is well below that required for a key service centre.	More welcoming square with designated market and events area likely to attract greater use.	More welcoming square with designated market and events area likely to attract greater use.
Traffic flow and reduction of car parking	No change – parking continues to be concentrated on The Square which detracts from its function as the centre-piece of the town. No guarantee that parking will continue to be subsidised by RNEC, PEC and the Town Council. Roads around The Square continue to be difficult to negotiate due to volume of traffic using perimeter roads and high level of roadside parking.	Reduced car parking on square making it more pedestrian friendly. If people are not cut off by cars (& railings), square likely to see greater pedestrian usage Alternative car parking identified and signposted Traffic flow within the town to be considered to ease traffic movement	Limited enhancement to existing car parking. Roads around The Square continue to be difficult to negotiate due to volume of traffic using perimeter roads and high level of roadside parking.
Result	Without positive intervention in The Square future investment within the town will be at best very limited as The Square will continue to fail to signify a vibrant town centre	Increased use of The Square and therefore the town, thus significantly increasing the potential for future investment. The Square will be a significant location which will attract potential investors.	Dealing only with the immediate aesthetic problems will not stop the decline in use of the buildings, which could leave the most important public space in town being dominated by empty buildings further deterring future investment.

Appendix 2 - FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

Whilst the current economic climate is difficult, opportunities do exist.

West Lakes Renaissance: provisionally awarded £200K for The Square under the Talented Minds programme for 2009/10 and 2010/11. WLR/ West Cumbria Vision (WCV) are also considering a request to support the feasibility stage.

West Cumbria Vision: Funding from the Nuclear Management Partners is being channelled through WCV and the criteria for funding will be linked to both the NDA Socio-economic Development Plan 2009-2010 and the Energy Coast Masterplan, both of which reference infrastructure and public realm improvements in towns across West Cumbria.

North West Development Agency: preliminary findings of the 'Rural Growth Study for Cumbria' outlined Cleator Moor as a vulnerable service centre in need of significant regeneration effort. A pro-forma has been submitted outlining the scope of works on The Square for consideration of support.

Rural Development Programme for England (RDPE): a potential source of funding if the Rural Growth funding is not available (the two cannot support the same project). RDPE funding aims to 'foster competitive and sustainable businesses and thriving rural communities'.

Arts Council: potential to secure funding for public art on The Square and for support with interpretation of the Lowry heritage.

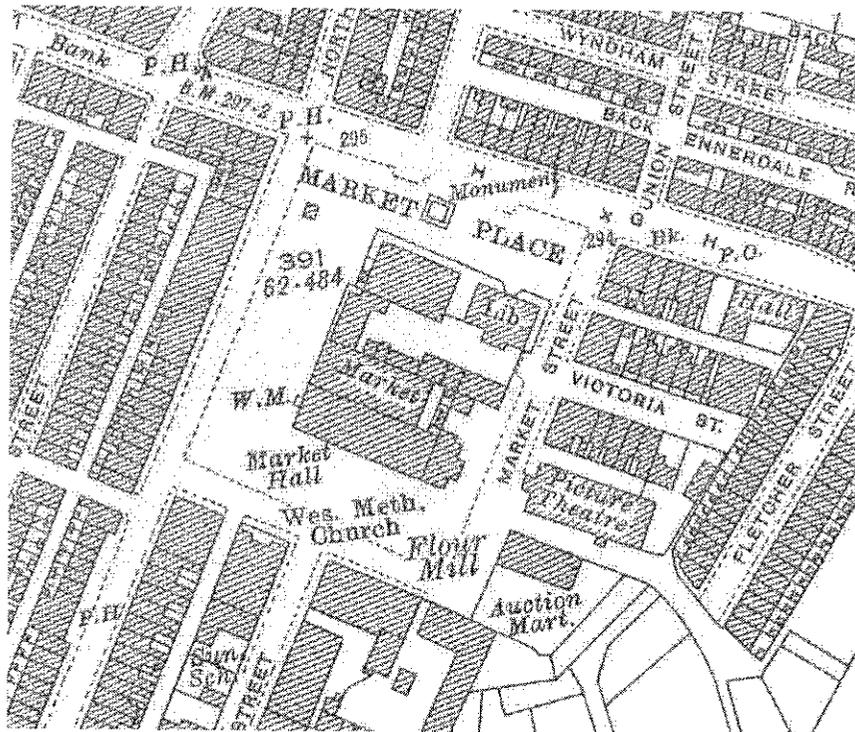
Appendix 3 - Conservation Observations

Author: Steve Palmer, North of England Civic Trust

1. Historic background and setting

The group of late C19 and early C20 buildings and structures provide a clear, attractive, visual focus to the Market Square. They are the remnants of a greater concentration of C19 buildings which included the market and market hall which combined to provide a compact built mass at the centre of The Square. The surviving buildings – the red sandstone former public library (1906), public offices (1879) and the Free Library added to the latter in 1894 – retain their essential classical elegance albeit slightly diminished by some changes, particularly the catslide lobby attached to the west elevation of the former public office and the rendered south and east elevations of the former Free Library. The fountain, added in 1903, has lost its pelican/heron finial and is no longer operational.

The third edition Ordnance Survey (c.1925) shows the historic arrangement of The Square. This, together with old photographs, shows that the buildings were substantially surrounded to the north, east and south by an extensive area of open space decorated by a limited number of trees and lampposts, the surrounding buildings on High Street, Market Street, Jacktrees Road and Phoenix Court providing adequate and attractive visual containment. The fountain provides the principal built focus in the open square.





Early photographs show that The Square opened out onto the surrounding streets to create a general space.

Changes have, over time, altered the character of the group of buildings and its open space setting. The market hall complex has been demolished and replaced, in part, by the post-war Civic Hall, a car park and an amenity/sitting area with an arrangement of external steps and a ramp to accommodate level changes. The once single flow of space around the historic buildings has been fragmented to provide areas of contained dedicated car parking associated with new, varied, building uses. As a consequence of late C20th improvements, the space has been compartmentalised through the introduction of relatively high decorative metal railings across and around The Square. This is exacerbated by the use of a variety of materials, reflecting different ownerships and phases of development/improvement works.



Different materials and styles create visual confusion

The design and implementation of environmental improvement works offers the opportunity to address some of the issues which have diminished the historic character of The Square. The following issues should be considered during the preparation of designs:

- To simplify the arrangement of the space through the removal of vertical visual and physical barriers. This will help to recreate the historic homogenous flow of space around the buildings. The existing arrangement of open space uses can still be accommodated but within a single open area.
- To give consideration to the removal of all or part of the fencing around the edge of The Square to re-unite the space with its surrounding streets/buildings. This would reflect the historic C19 grain of the town centre.
- To ensure that tree planting is structured to reflect the civic nature of the space.
- To reduce the palette of materials to a simple range of high quality, and wherever possible, natural products.
- To consider building upon the Conrad Atkinson public art programme with the commissioning of new works to enhance the visual quality and enjoyment of The Square. This might include street furniture.
- To consider the reinstatement of lost historic details such as the heron/pelican from the fountain.
- To work with property owners to reinstate missing architectural details from buildings in The Square and remove inappropriate additions and surface treatments.