

LEOMINSTER TOWN COUNCIL



11 Corn Square
Leominster
Herefordshire
HR6 8YP

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14th August 2023

Sir Bill Wiggin,
8 Corn Square,
Leominster,
Herefordshire.
HR6 8LR.

Dear Sir Bill,

Leominster Town Council are seeking your support and assistance to ensure that the public realm works, planned in Leominster as part of the High Street Heritage Action Zone (HSHAZ) programme, are **guaranteed** to complete. The works encompass High Street, Victoria Street, Corn Square and Corn Street and the project is due to complete by March 2024. As this end date is now only 6 months away, the Town Council has grave concerns that the works will not be completed and the money will be lost. Leominster is in dire need of this investment in its town centre.

One of the major hurdles the project has encountered is losing one year of the 4-year project due to the covid pandemic. Sadly, the end date has not been extended to compensate for this, and the monies currently cannot be ring-fenced.

Also, the design to resurface the area on one level to reduce the problems of narrow roads and pavements and very high kerbs in some areas which had been agreed has been halted because of the Shared Space Scheme letter from Secretary of State at the time, Kit Malthouse. The letter is dated September 2018 but has only recently been cited by Herefordshire Council as a reason to change the design. [instructionshttps://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/749116/ministerial-letter-about-shared_space.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/749116/ministerial-letter-about-shared_space.pdf)

This has created a delay which makes it difficult to imagine that the works can be completed before the end of the financial year. This has caused much concern as a high proportion of the population is elderly, there are many people using mobility aids (some of which are quite large in size), families need to be able to use prams/buggies.

There appears to be a lack of urgency given the tight timeline;

- The final TRO consultation with townspeople and businesses about possible part/all/no pedestrianisation of the space has not yet commenced. This is a key emotive issue in the town so any consultation must be well publicised and accessible. The outcome will shape the future of the town centre. It will impact

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the amount of traffic using the High Street, if Corn Square is pedestrianised as there will not be the constant stream of traffic using the parking spaces in Corn Square.

- The design has had to be changed recently and the tender has still not gone out even though we are now in August. As this is a relatively very small project it is difficult to imagine that there will be companies wanting to take this work on as the completion date is so close and involves the all-important Christmas trading period which, under the 'Considerate Contractors Scheme', would need a period of cessation of the works for Christmas trading and material lead times are estimated to be up to 12 weeks. Given the short time span one cannot help but wonder if a competent contractor can be found who can literally start the job immediately, in order to complete the works programme before March 2024. Delays in the construction plan are possible if utility companies need to repair or make good the sub-road infrastructure once it is exposed, as happened recently when West Street was resurfaced.
- The town council is concerned that the new design, which will reinstate the dangerous and unsatisfactory existing design, will not make the improvements we had hoped for and therefore will not provide good value for money for the scheme and not help to rejuvenate the town centre in the way the HSHAZ scheme envisaged. The county council will have the continued expense of repairing pavements that are damaged on a daily basis by HGV's and vans that cannot navigate the narrow streets without mounting the pavements.

The residents of Leominster deserve safe streets and pavements in the town centre. Given the narrowness of the streets (and consequently pavements) in this historic market town centre, the Town Council had requested a kerbless streetscape through the whole of the development area.

Historic England have been very supportive with the programme and the additional projects taken on within the scheme but given this situation with the public realm works, we ask you to intercede on our behalf, to secure the ring-fencing of this funding for 3 months at the beginning of financial year 24/25 and to monitor Herefordshire Council's compliance with the timeline.

Yours sincerely,

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On behalf of Leominster Town Council