

# INFORMATION ITEM

REPORT OF	MEETING	DATE	ITEM NO
TECHNICAL SERVICES	FINANCE AND DEMOCRACY COMMITTEE	30 JANUARY 2023	17
<b>SQUIRES GATE STATION ACCESS UPDATE</b>			

## PUBLIC ITEM

This item is for consideration in the public part of the meeting.

### SUMMARY OF INFORMATION

In June 2019 the committee agreed that the Council should seek to purchase a small parcel of land adjacent to Squires Gate Station platform. The purpose of this acquisition was to facilitate the creation of a level accessible route onto the platform which can currently only be reached from steep steps from Squires Gate Lane. This station is the only railway station in the Fylde Borough without an accessible route to the platform.

To obtain the parcel of land the Council has proceeded with a Compulsory Purchase Order process which is nearing completion. Following this, the access onto the platform will be constructed with various agreements put into place with relevant stakeholders.

### SOURCE OF INFORMATION

Head of Governance and Technical Support Manager

### WHY IS THIS INFORMATION BEING GIVEN TO THE COMMITTEE?

To update the committee on progress towards obtaining ownership of the land required to form a level, accessible route onto Squires Gate Station platform.

### FURTHER INFORMATION

Contact Andrew Loynd, [andrew.loynd@fylde.gov.uk](mailto:andrew.loynd@fylde.gov.uk)

## Background

1. Access to Squires Gate Station platform is currently from Squires Gate via a steep set of steps and as such is inaccessible to those with mobility issues. It has long been a desire of Ward Councillors and the South Fylde Community Rail Partnership, on which Fylde Council is represented by the Council's Technical Support Manager, that some form of accessible access be created.
2. During 2018, with the progression of the Coastal Dunes development on the former Pontins site by Persimmon Homes, it became apparent that an accessible route onto the station platform may be possible from New Road. Officers established that although most of the land required to create the access is owned by Persimmon Homes, who included a path as part of their planning application, a small patch of land required to complete the access is unregistered. The ownership of this patch of land was claimed by an individual with

whom officers negotiated a purchase price on the understanding that they would produce a statutory declaration to claim ownership of the land.

3. On 24<sup>th</sup> June 2019 the committee reviewed a report and agreed to fund the purchase the land required to complete the access route and legal costs up to £5,400.
4. Despite apparent progress during 2019 and into 2020, officers were advised in August 2020 by the solicitor of the person who claimed ownership of the land that they had received no further instructions to proceed. Despite further efforts by Fylde Officers to pursue the purchase of the land, in February 2021 Fylde Council advised that if the situation wasn't progressed imminently then authority would be sought to start the process to obtain a Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO).
5. On 28<sup>th</sup> June 2021 the committee reviewed a report and agreed to recommend to Full Council that the CPO should be made along with agreeing to fund an additional £1,000 of legal costs. On 5<sup>th</sup> July Full Council agreed to the making of the CPO.

### **Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO)**

6. On 7<sup>th</sup> February 2022 a further report was reviewed by Full Council stating that the preparatory steps required to make the CPO had been concluded and a detailed Statement of Reasons along with the draft CPO was provided. Council approved the making of the CPO.
7. The CPO was subsequently sealed with notices to allow for objection being displayed. With no objections received the CPO was submitted to the Secretary of State for confirmation. This confirmation was received at the end of November 2022.
8. The next step in the CPO process is for six weeks' public notice to be given of the confirmation of the order. That notice period is underway. The final part of the process will be to make and serve a General Vesting Declaration. The declaration will come into effect 3 months after it was served, after which the land will become the property of the council and will be able to be registered in the Council's name.

### **Next steps**

9. While the CPO process has been ongoing, Lancashire County Council's Rail Development Manager has been negotiating with relevant parties, including Persimmon Homes, to ensure the access can be formed as soon as possible once the land is obtained by Fylde Council. They have advised that:

Officers from Lancashire County Council have been in discussion with the Rail Industry around the creation of the new level access arrangements which will include amendments to the station's fence-line, a new gate, tie-in surfacing between New Road, the existing footpath and the station platform, plus additional lighting and signage. Outline designs have been produced within a "GRIP 3" stage Option Selection Report which has evaluated technical compliance, constructability and has provided outline costings for the new level access path. Options to deliver the works with Network Rail, Northern Trains and Persimmon Homes are currently being evaluated with agreement to be sought between the parties at the earliest opportunity.
10. Although a timescale for the carrying out of works cannot be provided at this time, all parties are committed to completing this access as soon as possible.