

Paul Ogden, Project Leader at Stratford District Council, answers questions on World Class Stratford

What's it about?

"Working with partners to achieve a vibrant, World-Class town that meets the needs of residents, businesses and visitors; looking at ways improvements can be made to the quality of the environment, addressing transport issues and the long term sustainability of what we do. Ultimately, improvements in these key areas will drive increased financial performance of Stratford-upon-Avon bringing further benefits to local residents and businesses and - because of the far-reaching influence of the town - to the surrounding area, as a region and ultimately the United Kingdom."

How do we improve the economy?

"By having a clear vision of what we want the town to be and a clear plan as to how to achieve it. To get there, a strategic vision document has been prepared and - following recent public consultation and subsequent amendment - has been adopted by the District Council. Using this as a basis, an urban design framework (UDF) or masterplan for the town is being prepared. This will propose a comprehensive range of actions and concept designs for change. Public consultation starts in June 2006 when views on the issues and opportunities for Stratford will be considered with further consultation on proposals during the autumn."

Why do we need it?

"Currently Stratford-upon-Avon is performing 'OK - but could do much better'. The town used to be one of the top few places in the country to visit but for a number of reasons this is no longer the case. As others improve their act our position will only decline. As an international 'icon', it has been recognised that Stratford upon Avon must be able to compete with the best in the world."

Who is paying?

"Advantage West Midlands, (AWM) our regional development agency, has approved an initial £5m towards an initial programme of £7.5m of projects, which include:

Bancroft Gardens improvements

Recreation Ground improvements: phase 1

wayfinding and interpretation scheme

proposed foot and cycle bridge over the Avon

Waterside and Southern Lane pedestrian priority scheme.

A further bid for around £20m will be developed later in 2006 based on concepts that emerge during the UDF/Masterplan work. Once invested in the public realm infrastructure, this should encourage much larger sums to be invested by the private sector. These sums are additional to the £100m scheme for renewal of the RST."

Why partnership working?

"The significant improvements necessary cannot be achieved by any individual organisation; involvement of key partners - Stratford District and Warwickshire County Council, AWM, the RSC and the Stratford Town Management Partnership - will ensure that we achieve the changes in a coordinated and planned way. The success of the project will rely on everyone contributing ideas; comments and suggestions for improvements will be welcome - as well as good examples from around the world that could be appropriate to Stratford-upon-Avon."

When will it all happen?

The first things to be seen will be new fingerpost signs around the town later this year as part of the Wayfinding and interpretation scheme. This will be followed by improvements to the Bancroft Gardens as a first of a two- or three-phase scheme tying in with the RSC development plans.

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