

Recovery Theme Plan

As with the emergency phase, the recovery phase will follow a thematic approach with a lead senior officer responsible for delivery and reporting on progress. Each lead officer will also be responsible for drawing up a plan, with objectives and milestones, for that thematic area in conjunction with the appropriate lead member.

Recovery Theme Title: Business Support
Recovery Project Title: Infrastructure to support Town Centre Recovery
Lead Officer: Emlyn Jones
Lead Member: Cllr Hugh Evans, Cllr Mark Young and Cllr Brian Jones
Project Manager: Mike Jones
<p>Reason for bringing item to Cabinet:</p> <p>For Cabinet to consider to the contents of this document, for Cabinet to provide their views, and if appropriate, for Cabinet to give their support for the work being undertaken.</p> <p>It is also requested that Cabinet consider and discuss the related issue of when car park charges should be reintroduced. Please see the section at the end of this paper for further information.</p>
<p>Summary of Recovery Theme and Project:</p> <p>Coronavirus is a public health crisis but the impact on the economy and businesses is also crucially important. 'Our future health and happiness will be linked to our prosperity'.</p> <p>Town centres have shut down, consumers have been told to stay at home and Denbighshire has seen the immediate impact as businesses closed down but also could see its businesses and town centre struggle to recover in the medium and long term. It is possible some businesses may never recover.</p> <p>It is vital that as restrictions are relaxed and town centre businesses start to reopen, we take appropriate steps to enable the public to return to our town centres in a safe manner. If the public feel they can visit our town centres safely, then this will help restore confidence and boost the recovery process for retailers and other businesses.</p> <p>This project is firstly about scoping the locations and types of issues that are likely to occur. For example, social distancing will be difficult to maintain in locations where there is usually heavy pedestrian footfall such as in High Streets, or in locations where space is constrained such as at bus stations/stops, or where footways are narrow or obstructed by certain obstacles.</p>

The project working group has met and agreed on immediate and short term actions. It was agreed that DCC officers would be in each town from the date of easing lockdown and reopening of non-essential retail i.e Monday 22nd of June. This would be to provide advice, guidance and support to businesses and members of the public as well as gather intelligence about any hot spots and pinch points in the towns which may need further controls.

Key Objectives:

Support our town centres to 'get back up and running'

Identify and implement physical infrastructure measures that help social distancing, whilst enabling shoppers and visitors to safely use our town centres, such as removing sections of on-street parking to allow temporary widening of pavements, or removing non-essential physical obstructions such as planters.

Introduce appropriate signage to remind pedestrians to maintain social distance and to maintain good hand hygiene and respiratory hygiene behaviour.

Identify and introduce appropriate signage and markings to help guide pedestrians and work with busier retailers to plan for expected queues outside shops, such as through introducing temporary markings on the pavement

Identify and implement additional measures that support good hygiene, such as increased cleaning regimes, increased provision of bins etc.

Identify potential funding for measures.

(It is suggested that possible interventions are categorised as either "Type A" or "Type B". Type A will be interventions that are "quick wins" i.e. effective measures that can be implemented cheaply, quickly and with minimal engagement required. Examples could include pavement queue markings or increased cleaning frequencies. Type B interventions will be those that will take longer to implement either because of the need to identify funding, or the need for engagement with businesses, for example. Categorising in this way will enable the Type A interventions to be implemented quickly and allow the working group to subsequently focus their time on developing those measures that will take longer to implement.

Project working group – suggested to meet weekly initially

Denbighshire County Council

Emlyn Jones - Head of Planning, Public Protection and Countryside Services

Jamie Groves – Denbighshire Leisure - Managing Director

Mike Jones (Chair) - Traffic Parking & Road Safety Manager

Ben Wilcox-Jones – Senior Engineer Road Safety and Active Travel

Peter Daniels – Passenger Transport Section Manager

Andy Clark – Highways Works Unit and Streetscene Manager

James Evans - Economic and Business Development Lead Officer Inward Investment

Gareth Roberts – Section Manager, Public Protection

Ian Millington – Business Manager – DCC Public Protection

Sion Goldsmith - Lead Officer Assets & Communities - Denbighshire Leisure

Gwyn Hughes – Lead Officer Commercial Leisure – Denbighshire Leisure
Nigel Highfield – Principal Manager - Contracts and Facilities
Peter McDermott – Team Leader – Tourism, Marketing and Events
Sian Owen – Lead Officer – Destination, Marketing and Events Team
Jo Sutton – Public Engagement Officer

Other organisations

Sgt Kevin Smith - North Wales Police
Delyth Jones - Public Health Wales
Nadeem Ahmad – Chair of Rhyl BID
Representative from Prestatyn Business Forum - tbc
Paul Keddie - Llangollen Chamber of Trade
Maurice Woodward – Denbighshire and Conwy Vision Support

Key Stakeholders – not on group but will be kept updated and engaged regularly

Leader and Lead members
Local members
Town Councils
Planning, Public Protection and Countryside Services Leadership Team
Pete Lea & James Parson – Traffic Management and Car Parks team
Other town centre business groups - i.e. Corwen, Ruthin, Denbigh and Rhyl Business Groups
Tourism Forum
Arriva and other bus operators
Sustrans

Key Milestones (include decision points e.g. Cabinet):

Approval of outline project brief by Emlyn Jones and Leader/Lead Members (w/c 8/6/20) - Complete

First meeting of project working group (w/c 15/6/20)

Identify initial list of Type A interventions “quick wins” that can be quickly developed and implemented (w/c 15/6/20)

Inform key stakeholders of proposed Type A interventions (w/c 22/6/20)

Start procurement and implementation of Type A interventions (w/c 22/6/20)

Continue to develop ideas and locations for interventions especially Type B interventions which will take longer to develop and implement (w/c 22/6/20)

Engage with key stakeholders on Type B interventions as appropriate (w/c 29/6/20)

Commence procurement and implementation of Type B interventions (w/c 6/7/20)

Monitor and manage interventions (ongoing post implementation)

Review and phase out interventions as and when necessary

Risks & Opportunities:

Risks

Traffic Section staff resource stretched as already dealing with other Covid-related projects and other “business as usual”.

If working group is too large it could slow down the decision-making process.

Insufficient budget to implement the interventions that are identified.

Ensure that new measures don't disadvantage those with mobility impairments.

Opportunities

Opportunity to build on existing schemes that have been put forward as expressions of interest for WG Covid-19 Sustainable Transport grant funding

Opportunity to make a real difference for Denbighshire retailers struggling to recover from Covid

Opportunity to change longer term behaviours through increased usage of active modes of travel

Opportunity to implement new technology to reduce need for individuals needing to touch surfaces such as when crossing the road, or purchasing a car park pay and display ticket

Initial ideas for types of measure that could be introduced:

- Reallocation of road width to enable temporary widening of pavements through the use of temporary barriers and other measures, this extra width could be gained by suspending on-street parking or reducing traffic lane width.
- Work with retailers to manage queuing from busier shops onto pavements, through use of temporary markings on the pavement so that queues don't interfere with passing pedestrian flow and keep adequate distance.
- Remove unnecessary obstacles that cause physical constraints in busy areas, such as planters or guardrails for example.
- Provide temporary markings on benches of where to sit to keep sufficient distance
- Increase cleaning regimes
- Increase availability of hand washing facilities
- Effective comms campaign to give message that town centres are back open, informing public of measures put in place, and reminding of them of guidelines for social distancing, good hygiene etc.
- Ensure adequate space for pedestrians waiting to cross at informal and formal crossing points

- Configure traffic signals to automatically change to pedestrian phases – avoiding the need for pedestrians to touch push buttons
- Consider signing “entry” and “exit” points for pedestrians or short one way sections for pedestrians
- Consider reconfiguration or reduction of capacity of some car parks
- If car park charges are re-introduced, fast-track cashless payment technology to reduce need to touch P&D machines buttons

What does Success Look Like?

Reopened, connected and sustainable businesses

Thriving town centres in terms of value i.e. spend as well as in footfall

Long term increases in walking and cycling numbers

Addendum to report – Car parking charges

Parking charges were suspended in Denbighshire County Council car parks at the beginning of April to assist key workers and volunteers.

A decision now needs to be taken in regard to when car park charging should be reintroduced. The subject has recently been discussed at SLT and the view of SLT is that car park charging should be reintroduced as soon as possible because of the significant loss of income that has already occurred as a result of the Covid-19 crisis and the suspension of parking charges.

By the end of Q1 of 2020-21, car park income is expected to be down by £320k compared with Q1 in 2019-20.

July and August are traditionally the two months when car park income is at its highest in Denbighshire. The combined income for both months was £338k in 2019-20 (£149k for July and £189k for August).

Even if charges were reintroduced on the 1st July, it is reasonable to assume that income for July and August may only be at 50% of 2019-20 levels at best. This is because of the continued closure of tourist attractions (although this may of course change); because people will be nervous about returning to shops and town centres; and because of the continuing impact on the food and hospitality sectors.

There is the viewpoint that as income is going to be reduced anyway, it won't present much more of a loss of income if free parking was continued or at least if some form of free parking was offered to help businesses recovery at this incredibly challenging time. The “flip side” of this argument, however, is that there is already a £338k budget pressure which is going to increase, but that we should mitigate against this increase by reintroducing charging.