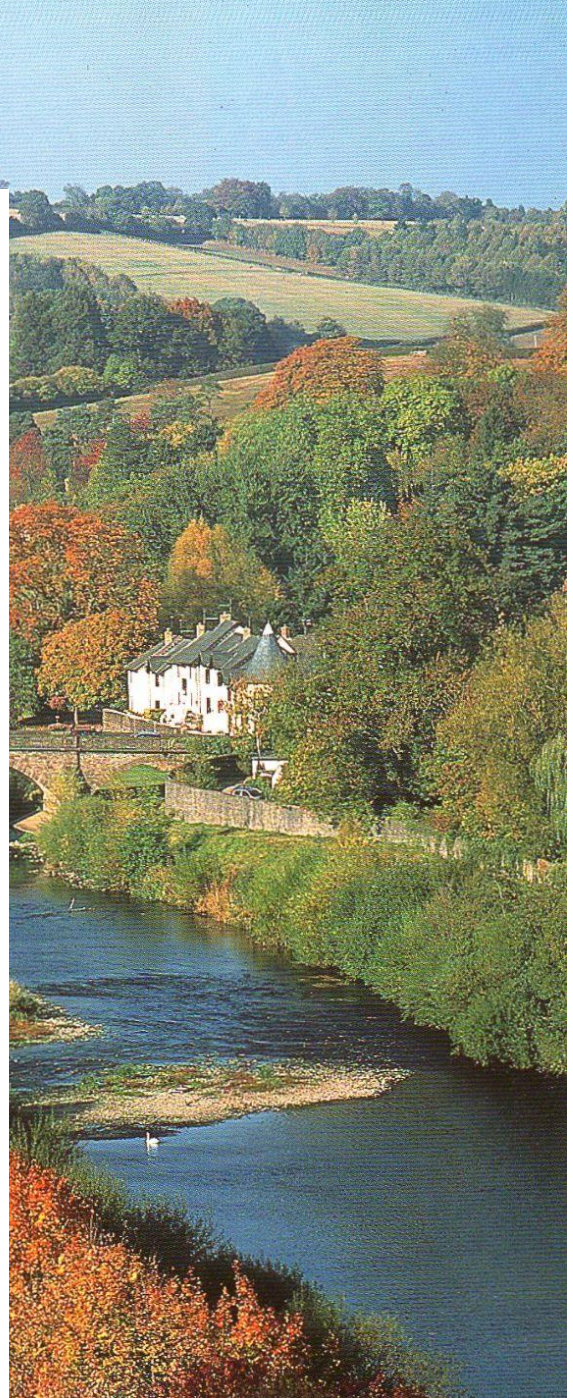


Report to MCC Public Services 2020



SEPTEMBER 18TH 2020

Usk Town Council
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Report to MCC Public Services

September 2020

1. Background to this report

In March 2020 MCC announced the proposed closure of the recycling facility in Usk. After protests and the admission, on MCC's part, that there had been little or no consultation with the Town Council or residents, it was agreed that any decision be postponed for six months to allow that consultation to take place.

Later that month we were plunged into the Covid 19 pandemic with the resulting drastic and necessary changes to our normal routines. Originally all four recycling centres in the County closed but the two largest have now re opened with Mitchel Troy and Usk remaining closed. We are told that this is a temporary measure during the pandemic and is constantly being reviewed.

Usk Town Council and its residents are convinced that this is the first step in justifying the closure of our site. The only consultation, to our knowledge, has been an on line survey which was County wide and not specific to Usk, not the consultation that we were promised and expect.

2. Comparisons of the five Monmouthshire towns

Usk is the smallest of the five towns in Monmouthshire yet our rates are comparable to our much larger neighbours. The benefits however do not compare!

All five towns benefit from the basic services from MCC including Planning/emergency planning, Building control, Highways, Education services, kerbside Recycling, Community Hubs & Libraries etc.

Unfortunately, there the similarities and provisions end.

3. Additional benefits enjoyed by the residents of Abergavenny, Monmouth, Chepstow and Caldicot: -

Large Leisure centres providing; -

- Swimming pools,
- Saunas,
- Gymnasiums,
- Fitness suites,
- Full programmes of classes for all ages,
- All weather outdoor pitches and courts,
- Children's activities throughout the school holidays

And in addition

- Skate parks.
- Hubs/ Libraries
- Good transport links.

We acknowledge that a small town may not be able to sustain the leisure centres that the other larger towns enjoy, or benefit from Section 106 funding from House Builders or Supermarket Chains, but surely that should be taken into consideration when making decisions that impact significantly on this town.

4. What additional benefits does Usk have?

- A Hub/Library (its retention fought for by a group of dedicated locals)
- A Post Office (part funded by UTC)
- A Recycling Centre

No comparison to our neighbouring towns!!

5. What we do not have: -

- Any leisure facilities provided by the County Council even on a smaller scale.
- Any play parks/skate parks provided by the County Council.
- Any Children's activities available throughout the school holidays.
- Any decent or reliable transport links even to Abergavenny the site of our nearest hospital.

Usk residents are very resourceful and generous with their time so every leisure activity, every club and society has been funded, is run and maintained by volunteers.

6. The Real issues

MCC are considering closing one of the few benefits that we have. The demography of Usk is of an ageing population. You acknowledge in your RDLP that ‘poor access to community facilities and declining local service provision is a particular issue for rural communities’ (well-being goal 5)

Usk residents would have a 20-mile round trip to either Five Lanes or Llanfoist sites, Yes, residents from other areas may well have this distance to travel but we are talking here of the population of a whole town and surrounding villages, upwards of some 1987 households.

In the RDLP Monmouthshire County Council recognises that we are in a climate emergency and that the high volume of car journeys in the County raises carbon emission levels. MCC also commit to strive to limit the increase in global temperatures and support carbon reduction through a variety of measures. (goal 17) Forcing car owners to make avoidable journeys makes a mockery of your objectives.

Your decisions are apparently based on budget pressures which we appreciate, but some measures can only result in more expenditure rather than less. During the time that the local recycling centre has been closed we have sadly seen a rise in fly tipping, this will inevitably increase with a considerable cost to the County Council and to the detriment of our countryside.

7. What do we suggest as a way forward?

The main sources of contention appear to be the perceived misuse of the black bag (household waste) skip, health and safety issues around the stairways and cost effectiveness.

We would like to make the following proposals to mitigate these concerns: -

- Remove the black bag facility if necessary,
- Remove the current large skips and stairways/platforms,
- Replace the current large skips with 4x20 cubic feet builder's skips, (green waste, general non- recyclable waste – mattresses, broken furniture etc.)
- Retain the current glass, metal, wood, plastic, paper etc.
- Retain small/medium electrical,
- Add a re-use/upcycling section
- Possibly add cooking/engine oil container.
- Consider re introducing larger electrical disposal facility.
- Amend opening hours/days (less staff hours and more mobility between sites)

With these changes in place we can deliver on the following: -

- Eliminate the Health and Safety issues
- Eliminate the need for extra large lorries,
- Savings to be had on vehicle fuel and wear and tear for Viridor and MCC
- Reclaim parking spaces
- No food issues
- No black bag issues
- Reduce the likelihood of fly tipping
- Salary savings to Viridor
- Cost savings for MCC
- Manageable
- Reduce carbon emissions across the town and other areas
- Improve statistics on recycling

8. And finally; -

Usk is a beautiful little town attracting many thousands of visitors to the area every year. Its reputation as a town of flowers, the open gardens, the picturesque square and the historic buildings all make it a favourite destination in this wonderful County. We feel that we make a great contribution to the economy of Monmouthshire but receive very little in return.

Monmouthshire County Council have stated recently that their motivation is to help improve lives and build sustainable and resilient communities. Usk Town Council has always worked alongside MCC and been amenable to help, both

practically and financially wherever possible. We believe that to close the re cycling centre would be a mistake that would be counterproductive and deal a further blow to a town that already feels neglected.