

SUBJECT: Re-Opening of Town Centres

MEETING: Economy and Development Select Committee

DATE: 26th July 2021

DIVISIONS/WARDS AFFECTED: All

1. PURPOSE

- 1.1 To reflect on the works undertaken over the last year to re-open town centres in response to the Covid-19 pandemic, considering what worked and what didn't work, and what may have the potential to become a permanent change to regenerate and revitalise our high streets in the challenging years ahead.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 That Members evaluate the effectiveness of the arrangements in place during the last year and consider which changes, if any, might have the potential to be made permanent (with or without tweaks) to regenerate and revitalise our high streets (subject to business and community consultation).

3. KEY ISSUES

Introduction

- 3.1 Over the last 15 months, a number of grant funded temporary trial changes have been made in our towns and main villages seeking to enable social distancing, support local businesses, and encourage active travel (walking and cycling) in response to the Covid-19 pandemic. Now that lockdown rules are being further relaxed, it is appropriate to reflect on what has worked and what has not worked well over the last 15 months, and to consider the future of our high streets moving from pandemic response to future regeneration of our towns. This aligns with the initial purpose of the Welsh Government funding, which was to support our town centres, promote active travel making town centres more people-friendly spaces, and trial measures that have the potential to become permanent changes.

Engagement to shape the initial proposals

- 3.2 The Council undertook public engagement in May/June 2020 to seek views of residents and businesses and received 1483 responses. This engagement was used to help shape proposals, which included the closure of roads in town centres in order to widen pavements and allow for social distancing and queuing outside shops. Guidance for businesses was developed alongside posters and a campaign encouraging people to shop locally.
- 3.3 On 27th May 2020, Cabinet received a report on 'Unlocking our Town Centres.' This included reference to a bid to Welsh Government for funding for low cost, high impact, experimental measures to be introduced into town centres. Measures suggested by Welsh Government included: footway widening by using carriageway

width; road closures with modal filters for cyclists; temporary parking removal or restrictions; decluttering of footways e.g. by consolidating signs. The measures were focused on nine settlements: Abergavenny, Caldicot, Chepstow, Gilwern, Magor, Monmouth, Raglan, Tintern and Usk.

3.4 To inform the measures required to ensure our communities felt safe returning to our town centres to support local businesses, a series of meetings was held with relevant representatives of the local community and businesses at which officers presented ideas for discussion:

- 28th May 2020 all Member workshop on Active Travel and Town Centres;
- 5th June 2020 meeting with the Mayors from each of the Town Councils with the Cabinet Member for Enterprise;
- 9th June 2020 meeting with County Councillors for Monmouth and Town Council representatives and business representatives (invitation to all Monmouthshire members)
- 10th June 2020 – as above for Caldicot
- 11th June 2020 – as above for Usk
- 11th June 2020 – as above for Abergavenny
- 11th June 2020 – as above for Chepstow
- 12th June 2020 – as above for Raglan
- 12th June 2020 – as above for Gilwern
- 12th June 2020 – as above for Tintern
- 15th June 2020 – as above for Magor
- Feedback from the Disability Advice Project via Adults Select Committee 16th June 2020

These measures were supported by a multidisciplinary team of officers from various service areas that came together to deliver on this significant additional workload.

3.5 On 19th June 2020, the First Minister confirmed that non-essential retail would be able to re-open on Monday 22nd June 2020. This announcement unexpectedly increased the urgency with which measures needed to be implemented. Subsequent decisions lifted the five mile travel restriction from 6th July 2020, allowed self-catering accommodation to open on 11th July 2020, and allowed food and drink to be served outdoors only and hairdressers to open from 13th July 2020. To respond to this, a programme of interventions was implemented with speed largely using emergency powers under highway legislation to implement traffic orders quickly. All of the measures are temporary trial measures and, unusually (but because of the emergency circumstances), were implemented without further prior consultation or engagement, but were then subsequently adjusted in response to feedback and monitoring of their effectiveness or to respond to any unforeseen issues.

Funding

3.6 An initial Welsh Government grant of £438,500 was secured, comprising:

- £145,000 for signing, lining and traffic orders;
- £30,000 for the Lion Street cycle lane contraflow in Abergavenny;
- £197,000 for cycle facility improvements;
- £25,000 for improvements to tourism destinations;

- £50,000 for bus station improvements;
- £30,500 for comms and marketing, and
- £30,000 to respond to additional public requests.

This was supplemented by £209,000 additional funding awarded in December 2020, which was to cover the raised platform at Beaufort Square, Chepstow; amendments to and monitoring of Monnow Street; on-going costs in Usk with traffic lights and planters; making part of the trial pavement enlargement in Tintern permanent; additional costs for the Lion Street contraflow; additional cycling infrastructure; and monitoring and evaluation.

- 3.7 Some measures were further supported by Town and Community Councils, for example Abergavenny Town Council helped fund bunting to decorate the town centre and Chepstow Town Council helped fund a consultant's study into proposals for the High Street. Support has also been provided in some locations via Town Teams putting bollards or signage in place each day, watering and maintaining planters, undertaking community and business surveys and helping raise awareness of the purpose of the measures.

Reviews and ongoing engagement

- 3.8 On 21st July 2020, the Economy & Development and Strong Communities Select Committees met jointly to receive a presentation from officers on progress that made within the four weeks since lockdown relaxations were announced on 19th June 2020 and the response to the trial changes. The joint Committee also considered the learning that needed to be considered to enable on-going improvements to be made to ensure that our local businesses are supported and that our town and village centres are safe places for businesses, residents and visitors.
- 3.9 Since that time, further review meetings have been held, adjustments made, social media posts and leaflets prepared, including
- 14th July 2020 – review meeting with County Councillors for Chepstow and Town Council representatives and business representatives;
 - 15th July 2020 – as above for Abergavenny
 - 16th July 2020 – as above for Monmouth
 - 27th July 2020 – as above for Magor
 - 28th July 2020 – as above for Caldicot
 - 28th July 2020 – as above for Gilwern
 - 30th July 2020 – as above for Tintern
- The initial feedback from Raglan representatives was that the small scale nature of the village centre and its physical layout meant that minimal interventions were needed. Consequently, further review meetings were not required.
- 3.10 The Business Resilience Forum, initially established to support local businesses through the recent flooding events, was re-purposed to engage with and provide support and advice to local businesses including on lockdown rules and business support funding and has met on a monthly basis throughout the pandemic.

- 3.11 A multidisciplinary officer working group has met on a (at least) monthly basis since the start of the pandemic to monitor progress and resolve issues as they arise.
- 3.12 Further interim meetings were held as needed, for example with Monmouth Members to discuss the traffic flow issues arising, with Usk Town Council to discuss issues arising with (and eventual removal of) the traffic lights, and attendance at a Chepstow Town Council meeting to discuss concerns arising with there.
- 3.13 More recently, a series of review meetings was held with County Councillors for each town, and Town/Community Council and business representatives:
- 14th June 2021 – Abergavenny
 - 15th June 2021 – Chepstow
 - 16th June 2021 – Monmouth
 - 17th June 2021 – Usk
 - 21st June 2021 – Tintern
 - 23rd June 2021 – Magor

Due to the limited interventions made in Gilwern and Raglan, further review meetings were not considered necessary. The interventions in Caldicot have become part of wider regeneration works which have been discussed via a series of other recent meetings involving the County Councillors, Town Council representatives and Town Team.

The purpose of this latest series of meetings was to review the trial measures, consider which, if any, might have potential to become permanent changes subject to community and business consultation, receive ideas for any other suggested changes, and reflect on what has worked and what hasn't worked over the last 15 months.

Measures implemented, lessons learnt and future potential

- 3.14 General feedback
- 3.14.1 To avoid repetition, a number of almost, if not wholly, universal themes have arisen from both the review meetings detailed in paragraph 3.13 above and from the officer group's own reflections, and these are summarised below, before considering town by town measures.
- 3.14.2 Shop Local campaign: The shop local campaign by the Council's Communications and Marketing Team was universally welcomed as providing a welcomed, coordinated and supportive boost to local businesses during an incredibly difficult period. It is intended that this campaign continues, with seasonal themes.
- 3.14.3 Engagement: although the meetings and arrangements detailed above were welcomed, and the emergency nature of the initial works fully understood, the universal feedback was that more initial communication with businesses and communities about what was happening, why and when would have been helpful. This feedback is completely accepted and is something the officer working group has itself reflected upon. The concept of undertaking works and then receiving feedback and making adjustments was a new one for everybody. In many ways it enabled us

to be brave and make changes and learn from them as live experiments, which was helpful both as a method of trying different solutions with the ability to amend or remove as needed and as a quick way of responding to an exceptional and evolving set of circumstances. Barriers to better engagement included the speed with which changes were being implemented, uncertainty about implementation times due to material supplies (see below), officer resource, and other practical matters such as health concerns about distributing leaflets and non-essential retailers being closed then suddenly (with little advance warning for anyone) being able to re-open. In one instance, leaflets were produced and printed to explain the changes to Monmouth businesses, but a sudden lockdown change meant they could not be distributed and by the time that lockdown phase ended, the content was out of date. Feedback also raised queries about the extent to which all businesses felt/were engaged, as not all businesses are part of a Chamber of Commerce.

- 3.14.4 Teamwork: the multi-disciplinary officer working group has been invaluable and the collective response throughout the Council and beyond has made this happen. The works have created considerable officer pressure being additional work on top of existing duties and falling in close succession with significant flood events. The implementation and adjustment of measures has been most successful where officers, business representatives, the Town Council and the County Councillors have worked effectively together, with Abergavenny perhaps best illustrating this.
- 3.14.5 Timescales: On many occasions delivering aspects of the trial measures, such as planters, bollards, attractive barriers and parklets has taken much longer than anyone would have liked. This has been a result of increased demand for products, with many towns across the UK implementing similar covid response measures all requiring similar items.

3.15 Abergavenny

- 3.15.1 Detailed information is provided in Appendix 1. The main measures introduced were: the part-time closure of part of Cross Street, the provision of parklets and planters, the Lion Street cyclepath contraflow, provision of additional disabled person parking bays in Tiverton Place car park and provision of active travel measures.
- 3.15.2 Overall the measures are considered to be successful with potential scope to become a permanent arrangement subject to community and business engagement, and with some tweaks. Key additional suggestions were consideration of how St John's Square works as a public space and a suggestion for covered areas behind the Market Hall for events.

3.16 Caldicot

- 3.16.1 Measures implemented in Caldicot in direct response to the pandemic response were smaller scale because the town centre is already pedestrianised. The primary activity in Caldicot has been the provision of a number of parklets which are attractive and well-used. Consideration needs to be given to how these might be used in colder and wetter months.

3.16.2 Much of the focus of activity in Caldicot have been on the wider regeneration, which has included significant Targeted Regeneration Investment funding and Active Travel funding, with works to Caldicot Cross, Church Road and external property refurbishments underway. Officers are continuing to seek funding for Church Road phase 2 (stalled by protracted discussions with Transport for Wales, who now administer active travel funding), and the Council has recently submitted a significant funding bid for Levelling Up Funding. There are significant opportunities ahead to keep pursuing in partnership with the Town Council, Town Team and local businesses.

3.17 Chepstow

3.17.1 Detailed information is provided at Appendix 1. The main interventions have been the closure of High Street to traffic other than blue badge holders accessing parking on Bank Street, and deliveries except between 10am-4pm; a raised platform at Beaufort Square instead of the pedestrian crossing, to create a civilised space; provision of planters and parklets, and the provisional of additional disabled person parking bays in Welsh Street car park.

3.17.2 Feedback on the measures has been mixed from Councillors, Town Councillors, businesses and the wider community, which has made it difficult to achieve consensus and agree amendments to measures. This was not helped when the parklets and planters delivered looked very different to those shown in a jointly commissioned consultant's document: on reflection our lack of communication on these changes meant that Councillors and Town Councillors were understandable feeling let down by what was delivered in that it wasn't what had been presented previously.

3.17.3 Chepstow's topography has presented an additional challenge with particular regard to ensuring accessibility for people with disabilities: a very early change that had to be made in response to feedback was to allow blue badge holders access to the Bank Street disabled person parking bays because the distance and incline to the Welsh Street car park presented an insurmountable barrier to some members of the community. This has meant that High Street is neither fully open nor fully closed, hindering the desired achievement of a fully people-friendly environment. Moreover, blue badge holders have reported being verbally abused by other members of the public, not realising that access is permitted or not realising that the car contains a blue badge holder. This events have made visits to the town very unpleasant for people with disabilities, with some reporting that they now shop in Monmouth instead.

3.17.4 Further concerns have been raised regarding the impacts on traffic flow on the A48, believing that the High Street created a useful release valve for free-flowing traffic.

3.17.5 Community feedback on the raised platform crossing has been mixed, with a significant number of people expressing concerns about their safety as it is unclear who has priority. A petition requesting provision of a zebra crossing has been started. Although the changes fully meet design standard requirements set by Welsh Government, and the civilised space is an approach advocated to make spaces more people-friendly and less car-dominated, officers have accepted that community buy-

in to the changes is essential, and have therefore agreed that a zebra crossing will be provided.

3.17.5 Going forwards, more work is required to understand if alternative changes could be made to enable the High Street to be fully closed between 10am-4pm (or similar times) and how traffic flows can be supported. This could include amending the road closure to allow traffic up Bank Street and through the town arch, to allow the disabled parking bays to be accessed without the problems summarised above. A review of loading/parking on Moor Street and/or a trial one way system by the bus station could also help with traffic flow. Additional disabled person parking bays are being considered on Upper Nelson Street. A key area for further work in Chepstow is the agreement of a vision for the town, that draws together the Town Council's emerging Place Plan and the Council's aspirations with the ideas from the community and businesses. Officers are preparing a bid for Transforming Towns revenue grant funding to support this work.

3.18 Magor

3.18.1 Detailed information is provided at Appendix 1. The main interventions were the partial closure of Magor Square to enable social distancing and outdoor trading, and the provision of planters and banners.

3.18.2 Initial measures closed off more of the Square and this was amended promptly in response to concerns raised by Councillor Taylor who was liaising closely with the local businesses and residents, which was really helpful. An effective working relationship has assisted find solutions here. Feedback from a community survey (which was drafted with Councillor Taylor) largely supported the amended measures and welcomed the provision of outdoor space for businesses, commenting that it created a welcome 'buzz' to the village centre and helped with mental wellbeing during the lockdown. One local business reported that it helped them stay afloat, as their small businesses premises made distancing inside impossible so the outdoor space was essential. Magor was widely celebrated in local press for new businesses in the Square opening.

3.18.3 The amended scheme, together with the planters and removal of the initial unsightly barriers, looks good and works well and merits consideration as a more permanent change. One additional challenge currently facing Magor is that WG grant funding is explicitly for towns: this will change if Magor becomes a town under the Boundary Commission review, but until then has been an unhelpful obstacle for local businesses. This is not within the Council's control.

3.19 Monmouth

3.19.1 Detailed information is provided at Appendix 1. Monmouth has arguably experienced the greatest number of adaptations as schemes have evolved and been adjusted. Initially, Monnow Street was closed to through traffic while Agincourt Square public realm works were completed. It was then re-opened to one way traffic, but despite various adjustments to the timing of traffic signals, traffic flow presented a significant problem whenever there were problems on the A40 trunk road, which was frequent. Unlike our other towns, the wide nature of Monnow Street allowed an alternative

design to be progressed that provided for two way traffic, widened pavements and retention of much of the on-street short-stay parking, all but one of the disabled parking bays, and a loading bay. Various active travel improvements have been provided.

3.19.2 The provision of parklets and planters, cycle stands and the widened pavements has been generally well received, although some businesses continue to raise concerns about deliveries and the loss of some on-street parking. Initial difficulties were experienced with the local community moving the barriers, screw-in bollards and heavy water-filled barriers, meaning the layout was messy, unclear and had limited chance to 'bed in'. More recently, temporary rubber kerbs with tarmac infill has been installed: this creates the feeling of a truly widened pavement (rather than feeling like you were walking on the carriageway with a level drop) and has helped with the appearance of the town, albeit neither the kerbs nor tarmac finish would be a permanent solution.

3.19.3 Going forwards, subject to community and business engagement there appears to be scope to make permanent changes to Monnow Street, perhaps with some review of loading provision and disabled parking provision. Active Travel funding has been secured for this financial year to design and consult on a permanent layout. A significant bid has been submitted under the Levelling Up Fund for a range of regeneration and tourism proposals.

3.20 Raglan

3.20.1 The only interventions implemented in Raglan were a temporary pavement extension to support social distancing at a bus stop, which has removed as it was not serving a demonstrable purpose, and the implementation of a village-wide 20mph zone, which seems to have been widely welcomed.

3.21 Going forwards, a discussion is needed with the Raglan Community Council to identify if they want the 20mph zone to remain as a permanent change

3.22 Tintern

3.22.1 Detailed information is provided at Appendix 1. The main changes made were the temporary widening of pavement areas where possible, improved signage for the Wireworks Car Park and a trial pedestrian one way system between the village and the Abbey, and a village wide 20mph zone.

3.22.2 One of the key limitations was the limited opportunities to improve pavement width to the north of Abbey Mill, due to the carriageway width and riverbank. Initial adjustments had to be made to the area fronting the GP surgery but the remainder of the widening worked well and has been made permanent. Concerns have been raised by the community about the new protruding kerb but corrected whitelining has resolved that to officer satisfaction given it is within a 20mph zone. The A466 leading past Tintern Abbey does not lend itself to a 20mph zone being a long, wide, straight downhill stretch and this has presented difficulties with the new speed limit being adhered to. The delay in implementing the roundals and speed indicator signs didn't assist but was due to supply issues outside of our control.

3.22.3 Going forwards, longer-term measures for Tintern will be looked at via the Wye Valleys Villages project. Like Magor, Tintern cannot currently access WG towns based regeneration funding.

3.23 Usk

3.23.1 Detailed information is provided at Appendix 1. The main measures implemented in Usk were the temporary traffic lights on Bridge Street to reduce traffic to a single lane, banners, planters, a temporary prohibition on parking near the chip shop, and outdoor trading space on Twyn Square.

3.23.2 After some bedding-in issues, smart lights were installed that monitored queue length and the scheme was working well. However, as lockdown eased and schools returned, the lights failed on multiple occasions resulting in significant objection and the lights being removed as the problem could not be overcome. This was disappointing. An ongoing challenge was drivers jumping the red lights, which caused the whole system to do a safety reset, turning to red until satisfied there were no cars between the signal heads, causing delays and inconvenience for everyone else. The Town Council's support in communicating with residents and businesses, and arranging a community survey, were gratefully received, and the Town Council's disappointment that the lights needed to be removed is acknowledged.

3.23.4 Some objection was received to the outdoor space at Twyn Square from residents who used the on-street parking spaces because they have no off-street parking. While the Council has no duty to provide private property owners with parking, their concerns were understood. Other objections have been received where outdoor trading near the Co-op entrance has narrowed pavement widths, but this has recently been reigned in and appears to now work.

3.23.3 Future aspirations for Usk are set out in the Usk Masterplan, commissioned by the Town Council. It is proposed that MCC 'adopts' the Masterplan to help shape our activities, however it is noted that there are no easy solutions to the problems of the narrow nature of Bridge Street. The lorry watch scheme continues, and although data shows fewer lorry movements and a low proportion of unauthorised lorries using Bridge Street, the scheme has considerable value and further volunteers are sought to support it. The improved signage on the A449 and the inconvenience of the traffic lights are likely to have deterred some lorries, but a tighter restriction (smaller area for authorised access) would have impacts on local businesses and farmers that would need careful consideration.

Next steps

3.24 Officers are now focusing on future regeneration potential to support town centres, shifting from the previous pandemic response focus. The trial measures have allowed a number of scenarios to be tried and adjusted and allow scope for consideration as permanent changes to create more people-friendly towns, supporting local businesses. Longer term proposals will be subject to community and business engagement in a way that we acknowledge did not take place for the emergency response works.

3.25 The newly formed regeneration team has increased capacity to support grant funding bids and project management, and the two Project Managers, Jane Lee and Daniel Fordham, have taken the role as the new town officer leads. The current arrangement is set out below, but this will change as workload and resources require:

Abergavenny	Daniel Fordham
Caldicot	Daniel Fordham
Chepstow	Jane Lee
Magor	Jane Lee
Monmouth	Daniel Fordham
Usk	Jane Lee
Wye Valley Villages	Jane Lee

3.26 **Governance Proposals**

The following Project Board structure has been agreed by the Enterprise Management Team:

Chaired by Head of Placemaking, Regeneration, Highways and Flooding

Attended by:

Project Sponsors	Regen/Highways Manager
Project Managers	Regen Officer/Highways Engineer
Others	Finance Officer

Comms

Highways works programmer

Business Support Manager

As needed MonLife

Estates

Procurement

Legal

Public transport/PTU

3.27 Given the scale of the projects in question, the Board will meet six weekly when required, reducing to quarterly when appropriate. The Board will oversee delivery of regeneration and significant highways projects, the LUF (if the bids are successful), and any other projects within Enterprise DMT where the Head of Service or Chief Officer consider the Board would provide a helpful framework. Invitees would be adjusted accordingly. For projects linked to the Enterprise Directorate but with their own governance arrangements elsewhere, for example active travel funded schemes that form part of the Monnow Street or Church Road regeneration, formal governance would be via the Active Travel Board, with programme updates reported to this Regeneration Board. This approach has been agreed with the Chief Operating Officer for MonLife.

3.28 The scope of the Project Board would be to oversee the following activity:

- Attendees bring initial project ideas to board at early stage for feedback/agreement;

- Project manager identified who then develops detailed proposal, which comes back to board for further feedback/approval;
- Project managers report regularly to Board during delivery. The Board uses RAG status reports to focus its attention and time on projects which need most support/are most at risk;
- Project managers reporting back to the Board at the end of the project on delivery to evaluate success, gather and share lessons learned, and to inform future project delivery and grant bids.

Multidisciplinary Officer Meeting

- 3.29 Now that the town centre work is moving from covid response to future-looking regeneration, the monthly re-opening town multidisciplinary officer meetings (to which the Cabinet Members for Economy and Infrastructure & Neighbourhood Services are invited) will be replaced by a quarterly multidisciplinary officer meeting. This officer meeting will be chaired by the Head of Placemaking, Regeneration, Highways and Flooding or the Head of Strategic Projects or the new Regeneration Manager when in post. It will be a forum to bring together colleagues from various services to ensure everyone is aware of current workstreams and to share ideas for the future pipeline of projects, and to share knowledge of local issues and of new funding opportunities.

Place-based Project Management

- 3.30 Beneath the Project Board, the Regeneration team and Highways team will arrange whatever meetings are needed to coordinate and project manage operational matters, either jointly or on a town/place basis, acknowledging constraints on colleagues' time.

Political reporting

- 3.31 The Cabinet Member for Economy and Cabinet Member for Infrastructure and Neighbourhood Services will be briefed via the existing cycle of regular monthly briefings. An Individual Cabinet Member Report is proposed for 18th August 2021 to clarify that regeneration decision-making is delegated to the Head of Service and Chief Officer Enterprise with respect to bidding for grants, consultation and engagement, securing match funding (via the normal reporting mechanisms and political agreement), procurement and appointment of contractors, contract management and decisions on which projects to prioritise. This activity will be subject to Cabinet Member briefing and Member engagement as appropriate. Ways of keeping Members aware of progress will be considered further.

Placemaking Grant

- 3.32 The Council has secured an equal one-tenth share of a Welsh Government transforming towns 'placemaking' grant awarded to the Cardiff Capital Region and administered by RCT Council. Monmouthshire's share is £554,000 which together with the required match funding from MCC of £237,429 provides a total fund of £791,429.

3.33 Appendix 2 sets out the grant categories and criteria. Appendix 3 sets out the indicative proposed allocation of grant funding for 2021/22. The proposed grant submission is informed by ideas arising from the reopening towns work and ideas put forward by colleagues via the multidisciplinary meetings and by Members, Town Councillors and business representatives from the reopening towns review meetings. Those ideas have been sifted by compatibility with the grant criteria, deliverability in financial year and impact/outcomes. It is noted that not all towns will benefit equally, however this is for the sifting reasons given above. It is expected that future grant funding will be available, and it is hoped that the Welsh Government will move from single year funding awards to multi-year awards to give greater certainty for larger projects. The indicative list will change as projects evolve, and if some cannot be progressed then other projects including those on the reserve list will be considered.

4. EQUALITY AND FUTURE GENERATIONS EVALUATION (INCLUDES SOCIAL JUSTICE, SAFEGUARDING AND CORPORATE PARENTING):

4.1 All decisions have been undertaken following the completion of a Future Generations Evaluation, which can be found on our website. A WFGA is not required for this review report but will be required for future physical changes to our town centres.

5. OPTIONS APPRAISAL AND REASONS:

5.1 The purpose of this report is to encourage Select Committee to scrutinise the covid response measures implemented to reopen our town centres, and the work undertaken, and to consider how that work can translate into future potential regeneration proposals for our town centres including any lessons learnt. Select Committee is asked to note the new governance arrangements, grant submission and clarification of delegated powers going forwards via an ICMD report. The preferred option is that the Committee scrutinises the activities to date to help shape improved activities going forwards.

6. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:

6.1 The work to date has been delivered by colleagues from Highways, Operations, Economic Development, MonLife, and Communications teams with support from the Digital Team. £438,500 Welsh Government grant for sustainable transport measures in response to COVID-19 was initially awarded, with a further £219,000 award in January 2021. Future work is dependent on new grant funding streams with MCC match funding and officer time input.

7. CONSULTATION:

7.1 This review paper has been informed by feedback from stakeholders and elected members throughout the last 15 months, but in particular the recent series of review meetings attended by County and Town Councillors and business representatives.

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MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL & ABERGAVENNY TOWN COUNCIL MEETING – MONDAY 14TH JUNE 2021

NOTE OF MEETING

Introduction

Cllr Sara Jones chaired the meeting, explaining that this is one of a series of meetings with local business representatives, the Town Council and MCC to capture feedback, discuss ideas about measures introduced via Covid response to keep shoppers safe and supporting traders in a safe environment. The meeting would also consider ways to improve going forward.

Carl Touhig, MCC Head of Service for Neighbourhood Services and Abergavenny town lead for reopening towns measures, gave an overview of the measures implemented, the main objective of which was to make Abergavenny a safe and welcoming place. Feedback was generally positive, and attendees felt that Abergavenny looks good and feels vibrant and busy. Specific issues and concerns are summarised in the table below. It was felt that credit was due to businesses for their support in implementing these measures and in reopening Abergavenny. Thanks were also noted to MCC officers for support given to businesses.

The table below summarises the discussion on Covid measures and other issues in the town centre.

Abergavenny			
Measure	Issues arising	Things to consider	Action
Part closure of Cross Street to daytime vehicular traffic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Management of opening and closing of barriers • Loss of disabled parking • Concerns about traffic after 4pm when road reopens – potential conflict with pedestrians • Excessive signage provided in beginning – since removed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bus access • Cycle access (change gates?) • Review re-provision of disabled parking • Signage/measures to slow traffic down • Monitor traffic after 4pm • Retractable bollards – although these can be difficult to manage 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve access for Cyclists into Cross St • Review access for deliveries if scheme is to be made permanent

Abergavenny			
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use of St John's Square – balance between furniture for café and wider public use 	
Provision of/for parklets, outdoor trading and planters in Cross Street, St John's Square and Frogmore Street	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parklets etc were slow to arrive due to delays in manufacture/delivery • Ongoing maintenance requirements for planters – clarity about responsibility for maintenance and associated costs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • St John's Square as public space or business space? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potential to replace barriers in St John's Square with planters • Plants need tidying/replacing in some planters • Discussion with town council re maintenance costs
Lion Street contraflow cycle lane	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delivery was delayed due to funding, but now in place and working well 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •
Permits for Café Culture/outdoor seating	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Permits for outdoor trading for hospitality generally well received. • Some concerns about growing concentrations of cafes • Cafés' outdoor trading measures (eg canopies, signage, parklets) sometimes hide adjacent shops • Outdoor trading furniture also sometimes encroaches on footways 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Longer term consideration to be given to managing the balance between retail and cafes/restaurants • However, cafes/restaurants currently playing important role in vibrant and welcoming feel of Abergavenny 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitor growth in cafés/restaurants
20 mph speed limit zone	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The town-wide 20mph area is now part of the pilot project to be rolled out this financial year 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •
Shop local campaign and lamppost banners and signage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • None 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintenance of banners 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Refresh signage to keep message strong and visible • More permanent signage

Abergavenny			
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need for wind loading assessments of streetlights when mounting banners 	
<p>Active travel measures:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 8 Theta Cycle Hoops (front/rear of Market Hall & near Morrison's) • 2 Public Bike Pumps (bus station & train station) • Car Bike Port (Cross Street in place of 1 car park space) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Car bike port is located in a former disabled bay – road marking has not been removed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Removal of obsolete road marking at new bike parking locations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review of disabled parking re-provision as part of longer term scheme

Transforming Towns – Placemaking Grant

Daniel Fordham, MCC Regeneration Project Manager, gave an overview of the Welsh Government's Transforming Towns programme, which provides funding to support regeneration and placemaking projects in town centres. Transforming Towns Placemaking Grant funding has been allocated to Monmouthshire, which with MCC matchfunding provides £790k to support projects in towns across the county in 2021/22.

A number of potential projects for Abergavenny were discussed, including:

- Cross Street – quick win projects to support longer term permanent public realm improvements and pedestrianisation
- Green infrastructure projects
- Grants to support outdoor trading
- Provision of town centre wifi units with automated footfall counting capability
- Improvements to A40 gateway into town
- New/improved signage around town
- Canopies/tensile structures in St John's Square and Brewery Yard to accommodate seating, events, market stalls etc.

Other suggestions/issues raised

Monmouthshire County Council & Abergavenny Town Council Meeting – Monday 14th June 2021

- Support for moving forward with permanent part time pedestrianisation of Cross Street subject to community and business engagement.
- Opportunities to develop and deliver projects in partnership between MCC, town council and local businesses.
- Need for improvements/maintenance to bus station – repairing roadway, signage etc
- Support for Lion Street cycle contraflow to be made permanent
- Local buses – loss of service in Frogmore St causing difficulties for some people.
- Oil spillage from vehicles causing damage to roadways, particularly in pedestrianised area.
- Suggestion to revisit proposals for St John’s Square and Brewery Yard – potential to hold events such as outdoor concerts if canopies were installed.
- Car parking – suggestion for MCC to consider change to payment on exit rather than purchase of ticket at time of arrival – gives shoppers/visitors more flexibility to extend stay.
- Introduction of bilingual signs.

Welcome to all/Introductions.

CLlr Jane Pratt chaired the meeting on behalf of CLlr Sara Jones, informing all that this is one of a series of meetings between Chamber of Commerce (or similar) as representative of some of the town’s businesses, Town Council and MCC to capture feedback, discuss ideas over measures introduced via Covid response to keep shoppers safe and supporting traders in a safe environment. The meeting would also consider ways to improve going forward.

County Councillors and officers and Town Council and officers were present. No representation from the business community.

Paul Keeble as Town Lead for the reopening towns outlined the measures taken back in June/July 2020 by MCC to make Chepstow COVID safe. Ideas/ key objectives were shared with Town Council and Chambers. However, concerns raised that the list discussed with the Town Council was not the list delivered. MCC explained that measures were introduced for safety in restricted timescales throughout Monmouthshire but recognised the scheme was not what was expected. Lesson learnt going forward.

Much discussion on the new shared space created and concerns captured in the table below:-

Measure	Issues Arising	Things to Consider	Action
<p>Changes to Beaufort Square Crossing / To give more priority to pedestrians</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A number of Town Councillors & 1 County Councillor against the civilised space • Petition from local community for a zebra crossing has 65 names • Near misses with vehicles as cars don’t know who has priority. • Pedestrian crossing requested, to give pedestrians the priority. • Concerns with visual/hearing impaired – previously crossing had peg indicator to indicate that safe to cross. • Disabled community affected by changes • Lack of communication re construction of civilised space • Signage in this area not right • Question asked over who has priority – car or pedestrian • Disabled people abused when legitimately using the High Street 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MCC Engineers suggested the new civilised space needed time to settle in and Stage 3 safety audit to be completed • Officers Design is compliant with Active Travel Act guidance and manual for Streets. • In line with Active Travel to encourage people to walk, cycle etc design is similar to Agincourt Square in Monmouth, Chepstow based on a similar approach • Need to consult with business community and others re civilised space and any changes proposed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MCC to engage with disabled community via a newly forming community group led by Yvonne Havard. • Civilised space idea is a new concept to understand but comments on zebra crossing will be considered. Subsequently, officers have agreed that a zebra crossing will be provided. • Consultation and communication to be improved

<p>Closure of High Street with exemption incl, blue badge holders and deliveries between 4pm and 10am Car Free Environment except Disabled parking</p>	<p>Concerns people with disabilities no longer visiting town due to pedestrians and planters – difficulty manoeuvring around these, and receiving abuse when legitimately driving up High Street to access the Bank Street parking bays.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • review access of Blue Badge holders, around movement of traffic • Transport study to be shared, engage with Active Travel, Bus & Train services) • Gates at end of High Street 	
<p>Additional Disabled Parking bays in Welsh Street Car Park</p>			
<p>Changes to Welsh Street/Moor Street Crossing by Arch More space for pedestrians</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Request to open arch to allow deliveries and disabled access • Moor St/Bulwark street junction need traffic lights. • Greggs area causing congestion at high street roundabout. Therefore shared space is causing A48 pressures. • cars parking on left side of Moor St – needs traffic management. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shared Space Signage required • ie traffic flows, opening up arch, bank str – need rethink and then engagement. 	
<p>Provision of Planters/Parklets to support Café Culture</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Markings not clear, • planters not spaced properly, • shared space been tarmacked looks good but other areas with no tarmac look 'scruffy'. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved road surface is needed. • Request for resurfacing noted 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planters to be re-aligned with improved layout with trees along one side (Herbert Lewis side) • Additional planters to go in • Signage clutter to be removed
<p>Business Grants</p>	<p>Town Council felt that this was not communicated well, Business were unaware</p>	<p>MCC confirmed that 12 out of the 50 business grants across Monmouthshire were from Chepstow.</p>	<p>Communication to be improved</p>
<p>Banners and signage Shop Local campaign</p>		<p>Shop Local campaign currently featuring local shops. Chepstow businesses encouraged to contact MCC Comms to take part</p>	<p>MCC Comms will continue to update the campaign and share with partners</p>

20mph to be introduced in Chepstow in 2022/23			following representations at the meeting MCC will consider if 20 mph in Chepstow town centre could be introduced sooner to encourage people back into Chepstow (safe town)
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Transforming Towns Place making Grant

Dan Fordham informed the meeting that WG through the Transforming Towns funding has allocated an amount of Placemaking Grant to Monmouthshire. With match funding from MCC this is £790,000 for the towns across the county. Projects are to be completed by end of March 2022.

Suggestions for the Placemaking Grant were discussed and summarised as follows:

- Historic place Chepstow – could have art walks, etc – help Tourism
- Hanbury house improvements etc.
- Town Wi-fi which will also run footfall counters, business and MCC can have access to the data.
- Wooden kiosks for outside trading
- Pop up shops, grant could be used for fit out costs to get them up and running.

Question asked if this funding could be used in Bulwark, answer given that this funding is to be focused in town centres so Bulwark not eligible.

Future Vision/Suggestions put forward by the Town Council

- Free car parking would help people into town. Town Councillors expressed concerns that people were not shopping in Chepstow but preferring to go to towns with free parking eg Cribbs Causeway (based on anecdotal evidence). Review disabled parking access/provision.
- Guides/Ambassadors to signpost visitors
- Aim for Chepstow to be a safe and family friendly place. Consideration re licenses for evening trading.
- Chepstow to emphasis Arch and Castle in tourism promotion. Cadw due to undertake reinterpretation of the Castle so could this extend to other parts of Chepstow etc Arch, St Mary’s, Bulwark camp?
- Need to increase historic walks and activities to attract tourists. More could be made of the Chartist Routes
- Town Council can see Chepstow being an Art town capitalising on the annual arts festival.
- A community led project is the improvement of The Dell park to develop into destination park

Monmouthshire County Council & Chepstow Town Council Meeting - Tuesday 15th June 2021

- Town Council undertaking a Place Plan with a working group set up. Conversations about how to tie up the Place Plan, Energy Survey in response to climate Emergency and Vision Statement. Suggested potentially 3 chapters of the plan and tied together.
- Is there an opportunity for a Quarry trail to teach history to new residents, including salt marshes, shipyard building?
- Need to consider cycle hire
- Could there be a ferry terminal for boat trips
- Promote Chepstow as the base to explore Tintern
- More could be done to market Chepstow for weddings, town has lots of venues, florists for wedding. Marriages at Castle, tourism events promoted
- Town Council is currently recruiting a Community Projects Officer
- Support from MCC welcomed for Hotel (opp Coach & Horses)

Welcome to all/Introductions.

Cllr Sara Jones chaired the meeting and informed all that this is one of a series of meetings between Chamber of Commerce (or similar) as representative of some of the town’s businesses, Town Council and MCC to capture feedback, discuss ideas over measures introduced via Covid response to keep shoppers safe and supporting traders in a safe environment. The meeting would also consider ways to improve going forward.

Present at the meeting were County Councillors and officers, Community Councillors and representation from the business community.

Summary of meeting –

Graham Kinsella as Town Lead for Magor on the reopening towns outlined the measures taken back in June/July 2020 by MCC to make Magor COVID safe. Measures implemented supported local businesses to provide extra space to allow shoppers to safely adhere to the 2 metre social distance. Positive and negative feedback received on the measures with an agreement to consult on future plans for the Square.

Discussions have been captured in the table below:-

Measures put in place	Issues arising	Things to consider	Action
Temp Barriers added in The Square, removed car spaces Amended later in response to feedback and limited car spaces (balance)	Poor communication with local County Councillors and business community re plans. Lack of communication created a ‘Knock on effect’ which was very difficult and knowledge of the measures being issued would have made a difference. Many residents very unhappy to awake to barriers - learning to communicate with local members is important. Barriers unsightly	To make permanent or take away Difficult to reach out to all audiences as not all residents use social media. Magazine, The Villager is used by Cllr Taylor as that and goes to all households. Suggestion for future news perhaps. However Cllr Taylor, Dymock and Cook to engage here to support MCC and push messages through.	Discussion with business in the Square
Planters & Banner installed Bike Pump & Repair Kit installed in The Square	People moving them to allow them to park Square is less dominated by the car now and more pedestrian friendly.	Should planters to be larger to prevent ease of moving Feedback that Magor Churchman unable to hold events due to measures on the Square so dialogue is needed with this group	Signage in to the square would be welcomed

Monmouthshire County Council & Magor/Undy Council Meeting – Wednesday 23rd June 2021

Café Culture licenses granted for premises in the Square	<p>Outside seating created which has been popular</p> <p>Business Owner of Donnie’s informed the meeting that of businesses were not informed of barrier measure which they felt attracted the negative comments. Going forward Magor Square is more vibrant. ‘Donnie’s now has 14 seats outside Café Culture licenses granted for premises in the Square</p>	<p>Should this be permitted in the longer term</p> <p>Perception business is busy as customers outside. Stressed that misapprehension that they are not making loads of money. Simply users now sit outside because they cannot sit in. The numbers sat outside is not a reflection on how businesses are doing. Careful not to presume they are doing well, but outside seating welcomed</p>	
New Businesses opened in Pandemic – Positive	Shop local promotion can assist with promotion		Cllr Taylor working with businesses and MCC Comms on shop local campaign
Reduction in availability of parking on the Square	<p>People moving planters to open up parking areas</p> <p>Still some resistance in the village to walking more and reinstating little parking has helped.</p>		

Mark Hand shared the survey findings with those present. 250 responses received with a high percentage of residents wanting to keep the outdoor café theme. Also noted positive responses received on how village café theme impacted positively on Mental Health as people could get out and socialise. However, further analysis needed as not clear if wider pavements, planters and reduced parking is to stay or go back pre-covid, Business owners less supportive at the time of survey. Worked well overall although a mixed response to the balance of parking spaces in the Square. Negative responses on social media but more positive from survey findings.

Personal comments shared by Cllr Cook on how useful the survey was with some good positive responses. A need to promote more walking, and not driving was suggested. Agreed spaces for disabled and residents need to be prioritised but a need for more Active Travel objectives going forward.

Link for Active Travel Consultation of next stage proposals shared with the group – feedback would be welcomed.

Jane Lee, new Project Manager and Town Lead for Magor introduced and will visit in person. Also go to person for comms/ regen Q & A. Suggested a Stakeholder group meeting with community council to encourage engagement.

Future Suggestions/Ideas

- Ideas for permanent changes on the Square must involve consultation with business and local community.
- If Boundary commission decision goes ahead, there will be funding opportunities for Magor/Undy.
- 20 mph through the village planned for this financial year to affect all Magor/ Undy
- Cllr Taylor commented she would welcome conversations with MCC re: opportunities that may exist. Expressed no benefits to Magor becoming a Town as currently no infrastructure with a population of 7K and no support for local businesses, but would welcome the funding should Magor become a Town.
- Also encouraged MCC to talk to community councillors, looking at what it spends on village things.
- Desire for social media to promote Magor to push items such as:- Magor marsh - unique, encourage people to walk, link up businesses, people. Story of people business, family involved. Historical interest to with Procurators House – links up to Tintern could be explored. Reprint maps for walks, bring people back
- No village events scheduled due to Covid but suggestions from Cllr Dymock for 'book nights' run in a local café. Also proposed that a woman's walking group meet up could start from coffee shop and explore Magor Marsh.

MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL & MONMOUTH TOWN COUNCIL MEETING – WEDNESDAY 16TH JUNE 2021

NOTE OF MEETING

Introduction

Cllr Sara Jones chaired the meeting, explaining that this is one of a series of meetings with the Chamber of Commerce, the Town Council and MCC to capture feedback, discuss ideas about measures introduced via Covid response to keep shoppers safe and supporting traders in a safe environment. The meeting would also consider ways to improve going forward.

It was acknowledged that although repeated closures and reopenings have made the last year difficult for businesses and for the town centre, Monmouth is now busier, and the visual impact of reopening towns measures such as planters and parklets is mainly seen as positive. However, concerns were raised about the reduction in town centre parking capacity, lack of clarity about disabled parking space and loading arrangements. More broadly, there were concerns about the need to increase footfall – which may have been affected before Covid by road closures in Agincourt Square, and has not recovered – and to preserve the unique character and heritage of Monmouth.

There was a range of views given about the factors that may have influenced the decline in footfall and visitor numbers, and a variety of opinions about the impact of the Covid response measures and the potential for them to be adapted as permanent changes. More research and consultation may be required on these points. The table below summarises the discussion on Covid measures and other issues in the town centre.

Monmouth			
Measure	Issues arising	Things to consider	Action
<p>Traffic management measures:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Closure of Monnow Street to through traffic during Agincourt Square works • One way traffic • Cycle lane contraflow • Two-way traffic with widened footways to give additional space for pedestrians, achieved through narrowed carriageway 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Road markings and parking signage unclear • Reduction in parking capacity on Monnow Street • Informal crossing at corner of Monnow St and Blestium St felt by some to be dangerous • Inappropriate use of disabled parking spaces limiting availability for disabled users • Clarity required about shared use of old Monnow Bridge • Loading bays used for parking, leading to difficulties with deliveries for businesses 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Additional parking • Payment regime for parking – alternatives that would encourage longer dwell time? • Extension of 20 mph zone • Provision of parking in longer term proposals for Monnow Street • Crossing facilities as part of longer term proposals for Monnow Street 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relining and signage if required to give clarity on disabled parking and loading bays
<p>Footway widening delineation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Metal barriers in carriageway • Screw-in bollards in carriageway • White water-filled barriers in carriageway • Temporary widened pavement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First three measures were frequently removed/moved • Some issues with trip hazards and drainage on temporary widened footway 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Retention of widened footways in longer term 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider any urgent measures re trip hazards/drainage
<p>Planters, trees and parklets to support “café culture” – Covid-safe outdoor activity. Parklets and planters were sourced from local manufacturer.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some issues with specific planter locations – eg too close to parked cars, preventing door opening. • Not all planters level due to gradient of footways 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider implications for design of longer term scheme 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider options to move/adjust planter positions to deal with issues raised.

Additional disabled parking bays in Cornwall House car park	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase in disabled parking capacity, but spaces too far from Monnow Street for some users 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Additional and/or clearer disabled parking on Monnow Street 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • See above re relining and signage if required
Business grants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Business grants offered to support outdoor trading 		
Shop local campaign and lamppost banners and signage		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chamber of Commerce and county-wide schemes 	
Active travel measures: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cycle hoops • Pump • Cycle shelter 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To be completed July/August 2021 		

Transforming Towns – Placemaking Grant

Daniel Fordham, MCC Regeneration Project Manager, gave an overview of the Welsh Government’s Transforming Towns programme, which provides funding to support regeneration and placemaking projects in town centres. Transforming Towns Placemaking Grant funding has been allocated to Monmouthshire, which with MCC matchfunding provides £790k to support projects in towns across the county in 2021/22.

A number of potential projects for Monmouth were discussed, including:

- Green infrastructure projects
- Grants to support outdoor trading
- Provision of town centre wifi units with automated footfall counting capability
- Meanwhile use projects in empty shops

Other suggestions/issues raised

- County Council submitted bid to UK Government Levelling Up Fund. Three projects: Shire Hall refurbishment to accommodate museum; Market Hall refurbishment to accommodate indoor market/start-up space and coworking facility; public realm improvements in Monnow Street and Blestium Street. Outcome expected in autumn.
- Work on Monmouth Place Plan getting underway – initial meeting of Town Council working group on 5 July 2021.
- Monmouth has distinctive character, identity, charm – important to preserve this and avoid homogenisation.
- Town Council requested regular updates on measures that impact town centre so they can be relayed to residents.
- Community engagement/consultation required in understanding longer term vision for Monmouth.
- Some felt that trade/footfall in Monmouth fell during Agincourt Square works and have never fully recovered – exacerbated by Covid.
- Lack of parking perceived by some to be a factor in declining footfall.
- Aspiration to increase tourism/visitor numbers.
- Ambassador scheme along lines of Tintern scheme could help support tourism

Monmouthshire County Council & Tintern Community Council Meeting – Monday 21st June 2021

Welcome to all/Introductions - Cllr Sara Jones chaired the meeting and informed all that this is one of a series of meetings between Chambers of Commerce (or similar) as representative of some of the town’s businesses, Town Council and MCC to capture feedback, discuss ideas over measures introduced as a Covid response to keep shoppers safe, support traders and pedestrians in a safe environment. The meeting would also consider ways to improve going forward.

County Councillors and officers, Community Councillors and reps from the business community were present

Matthew Lewis as Town Lead for the reopening towns outlined the measures taken back in June/July 2020 by MCC to make Tintern COVID safe. Working in consultation with the Community Council, MCC introduced measures in Tintern to address COVID restrictions. Measures to support local businesses to provide extra space to help pedestrians within the village to have the 2 metre social distance. Measures had regard to Tintern’s role as a visitor destination.

Measure	Issues Arising	Things to Consider	Action
Temporary signs of 20 mph, signage etc Now made permanent, fixed signs, repeater, white lining Speed indicators installed (2)	Negative feedback from businesses as 20 mph had not been adhered too Speeding – joint exercise mcc, police and fire last week – stopped 19 speeders, 3 options for points, rest opted to watch a video. Need for stronger enforcement All parties acknowledge overabundance of signs, cones etc.	Looking to make 20 mph permanent as all businesses & Residents support this	Removal of one way system for pedestrians around Abbey to end, not working Keep sign at Abbey end, take away others.
Temporary footpath widening (doctors/Abbey Mill)	Cllr Evans – had complaints that a few people have hit the widened kerb.		Since been rectified by new white lining following the kerb, with new signs on order.
Temporary signage for visitors, car parks etc	More signage needed		Blue ‘Parking’ sign for Lower Wireworks car park include a distance to car park to discourage people from parking on verges Interpretation Mapping – wider approach to new ones

Monmouthshire County Council & Tintern Community Council Meeting – Monday 21st June 2021

Planters	Arrived without any prior notification		
Temporary signage for pedestrian route - Abbey - village Centre	More signage needed		Further signage and location to be considered and implemented
Signage at end of Greenway to mark that cyclists/pedestrians entering onto a Highway	Possible safety issue given increasing popularity of the greenway	Signage/interpretation panel	
Supporting Tintern Ambassadors	Successful team 2020, operating again 2021		
Shop Local campaign and Tintern social media campaign	Feedback good so far – evolving		
Planters delivered / general Tidy up (Abbey approach, village centre & Wye Valley Hotel)	Still items needed to be removed – more general tidy up Request for grass cutting on A466 to be cut (near closure) was done last minute – thanks expressed and road now open – thank you to MCC from Cllr Webb.		Fencing alongside of river to be done

Wye Valley Villages project

Introductions from Jane Lee, new Project Manager. Wye Valley Villages Study update. Stage 2 consultation (remote) due in July - Sept 21. Help to support vision for Tintern. Issues such as Road Safety, Sustainable Transport feature in this study so will link with current concerns.

Ideas/Suggestions put forward by Community Councillors and Business Community

- Shops that are not occupied – pictures in windows –attractive instead of empty shop
- Request for Shop Signs for empty shops
- Request from Businesses for more signage relating to mask and hand sanitisers particular in the Abbey – lots of exceptions and staff not sure. Incorporate in shop local or on social media.
- Comments from Businesses - Parking very difficult and needs addressing. Joined up transport strategy, park and ride at racecourse would help in medium term. (next year please if possible)
- Businesses Feedback - Request for decent width pavements from Abbey Mill – Friars wharf. (Dangerous to cross from a bus... road safety issues when on and off buses (opp falls, by Riverside Cottage)
- Requests for Cohesive pavement all though the village
- Request identical signs (maps) just off the bridge on the new green way (use to turn right to brewery and left the abbey. Also encourage pedestrians to dismount from bikes to look at and prevent them going into the road.
- Requested spaces be made clearer as people park all over in Wire Works Car park (surface not able to line but metal markers so car park better) ***more thoughts needed here to find the best answer – a more permanent surface would help but very difficult re drainage***
- Wye Valley Scheme is a sensible place for communications but emails, consultation of smaller items, updates or those that wouldn't fall in Wye Valley, would be beneficial. Better engagement.
- Strong concerns raised for emphasis on making safer for pedestrians. Due to limited width pavements, size of carriage way, and speeding vehicles, cyclists not in single file, it was felt there is not the Width /luxury to have a wider safer pavement **AND** a cycle path
- Arup to also receive a copy of notes as this as useful feedback
- Future work / if any updates for Wye Valley, MCC happy to provide updates or attendance to Community Council.

Welcome to all/Introductions.

Cllr Jane Pratt chaired the meeting and informed all that this is one of a series of meetings between Chambers of Commerce (or similar) as representative of some of the town's businesses, Town Council and MCC to look at feedback, to capture feedback, discuss ideas over measures introduced via Covid response to keep shoppers safe and supporting traders in a safe environment. The meeting would also consider ways to improve going forward

County Councillors and officers and Town Council and officers were present. No representation from the business community.

Summary of meeting –

Graham Kinsella as Town Lead for the reopening towns outlined the measures taken back in June/July 2020 by MCC to make Usk COVID safe which included measures to support local businesses to provide extra space to help pedestrians within the town to have the 2 metre social distance. Road lay outs and traffic restrictions were introduced in the main high street in the town.

Usk Town is very busy and issues arose due to the large volume of traffic and heavy Lorries passing through. However, thanks received from the Town Council to Mark and his team for good communication, support and help throughout were noted. Good working relationships with Town Council were noted as helpful to have effective working relationships.

Feedback of how pavement widening helped was discussed as was the survey completed by Town Councillors which identified that pedestrians were in favour of the wider pavements but drivers were against. Issues were noted of queuing traffic by Castle Court when the traffic lights were in place resulting in residents expressing concerns of the pollution levels, noise levels from music from cars when queuing.

Slide shown with summary of survey for discussion – approx. 400 responses, majority in town. Survey details very useful and ***Cllr Howells agreed*** to follow with another for comparison. Noted that negative social media comments were not a true reflection of how residents felt. Next survey to ask businesses and residents along Bridge Street about their views to go forward. Also to include those that were suffering the air & noise pollution either end of Bridge Street. ***Agreed another survey would help to engage with businesses for future.***

Traffic lights now removed from Bridge Street, concerns expressed of how the narrowing sections of pavement are still a serious issue as impossible to comply with social distancing due to the width of the pavements, and pedestrians are stepping back into the road when trying to pass. Pedestrians benefited greatly from the traffic lights arrangement.

Traffic lights worked well and less heavy traffic was noticeable...suggestion to put calming measurements in place and have wide pavements. A solution such as Red Brick Gutters could be put in place to create the impression that the road is narrower which encourages slower traffic. Wider pavements welcomed. Further discussions of concerns, future visions and funding ideas.

Usk			
Measure	Issues arising	Things to consider	Action
<p>Set Temp signals in Bridge street, with barrier control to support social distances</p> <p>Later Introduction of Intelligence cameras to replace sensor signals (reactive to queue lengths) queue jumping – cameras to try to catch red runners</p>	<p>Lots of complaints but good communication throughout.</p> <p>Narrow pavements again causing social distancing to pedestrians.</p> <p>Air quality improved as less vehicles during lockdowns</p>	<p>There may be design solutions to visually (but not physically) narrow the carriageway to slow down traffic eg red brick gutters</p> <p>Suggestion that pavement could be removed to allow road widening eg by the Three Salmons Hotel as Town Councillor didn't think this pavement was used much.</p> <p>Permanent traffic signals on Bridge street (need to measure travel flows and modelling solutions – possibly 4/5 sets of traffic lights</p> <p>Air pollution during traffic lights time was 2/3 improved there. Worse spot by flat (near 3 salmons) complaints received. Question over Lorry Watch as only 1 volunteer at the moment monitoring lorries in the town to check if any overweight lorries are using the route</p>	<p>Analysis of business along bridge street to gauge views re possible changes</p> <p>Cllr Howells to follow with 2nd Survey</p> <p>Further work on Usk Master Plan</p> <p>Separate meeting re Lorry Watch to be convened</p>
<p>Additional signing on wider network to divert lorries through town Also Maryport street, signage.</p>		<p>To pick up as part of the Masterplan</p>	
<p>Planters/ Barrel Planters (Street scene)</p>		<p>No issues</p>	
<p>Castle Parade - Temp prohibition of parking facilitated with cones – hope to make permanent this summer</p>	<p>Permanency of cones caused problems for people accessing Chip Shop</p>	<p>Lining will be carried out in the summer. Request from Town Council for this to be asap</p>	<p>Lining will be carried out in the summer. Request from Town Council for this to be asap</p>
<p>20mph speed limit</p>		<p>funding doesn't extend to introducing 20mph throughout the town in this financial yr to pick up in next Financial year.</p> <p>Consider speed indicator display signs with flashing smiley or sad faces rather than just the speed</p>	<p>Possible support from Town Council to bring forward earlier.</p>

Dan Fordham informed the meeting that WG through the Transforming Towns funding has allocated an amount of Placemaking Grant to Monmouthshire. With matchfunding from MCC this is £790,000 for the towns across the county. Projects are to be completed by end of March 2022.

Transforming Towns - Ideas for funding

- Marketspace area behind main street
- Lorry watch monitors -? Camera ANPR can read number plates to DVLA network for monitoring (Cllr Howells does this manually - time consuming)
- Pedestrian/cycle access to county hall from Usk – Safe active travel route provided for citizens to get to County Hall and car park used for visitors to Usk on weekends – *grants not suitable for this as the focus is town centres.*

Usk Masterplan

Roger Hoggins, MCC explained to the group that this piece of work is at 1st stage and further work needed to move on to develop some of the ideas. A consultation was carried out and good ideas such as managing parking differently, using the Square differently, Active Travel link to Usk Island (Llanbadoc side) also how we could support businesses in town. Group now to reconvene to decide which aspects they want to look at again to develop further. Also looking of funds opportunities and how we can resource these.

Other Issues/Suggestions raised by Town Council

- Problem with illegal parking outside 'One stop' – cannot be enforced unless parked for 5 mins. Suggestions to put in place - markers on pavement please to introduce to stop parking *G Kinsella*. Loading restrictions – double yellow lights make it illegal for anyone to park across those restrictions at any time. Could enforce loading time restrictions to prevent parking.
- Café No.49 moved outdoors and have received lots of complaints that they have encroached out into the area by the Spar...Issue with license so can push them back a little ... *email to follow to update M Hand*
- Prison car park – due for commencement - badly needed.
- Old amenity site, town council raised good points – previously a former refuse site, *M. Hand* not aware of draft business case but passed on now. *A need to look at here further.*
- Usk Town clock in dis-repair. Cllr raised the point of broken wooden structure to the clock – MCC responsible however town council happy to get quotes for repairs. *Agreed with Roger Hoggins* for Town council to use contractor to complete the repair and forward invoice to Roger for payment.
- Air pollution – currently only one volunteer undertaking Lorry Watch – *is this worth continuing?*
- Suggestion from Mad Hatter to close high street on specific days but comprehensive traffic management scheme would be required for this to take place safely
- Town Council submitting a Smart town application – digital notice board in, Usk pushed as a Smart town. Application with charging points that include monitors aspects of digital smart.

Appendix 2 Placemaking Grant categories and criteria

Place Making Intervention	Scheme Detail	Eligible Applicant	Maximum Allocation of grant
<p>Residential Units in Town Centres</p>	<p>To convert vacant floor-space on upper floors into new residential accommodation. The minimum requirement from each scheme is 1 x 1 bedroom self-contained flat.</p> <p>Schemes are expected to be a mix of one and two bedroom units with ratio determined by layout of building and planning consent.</p> <p>Schemes should comply to the minimum floor space as recommended in the most up to date Welsh Housing Quality Standards, currently this is:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 46m² per one bedroom flat 2. 59m² per two bedroom flat <p>Student accommodation, bedsits and studios are not eligible for grant funding</p> <p>Where acceptable to Local Planning Authorities potential conversion of ground floor, as well as upper floors may be considered for areas not considered to be core retail, where no alternative commercial use can be found.</p>	<p>Occupiers or property owners of properties within town centres who either:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Own the freehold, or • Hold a lease with a seven year minimum period remaining at the planned final grant payment date and who have secured their landlord's written consent to the proposed works. 	<p>Up to £250,000 per property</p>
<p>Commercial Property Improvement Grants</p>	<p>The Property Improvement Grant is available to commercial building occupiers and owners within town centres. Its purpose is to enhance building frontages together with the upgrade of vacant commercial floor space to bring it back into beneficial business use.</p> <p>New/ upgraded floor space must be for business use, with each scheme determined on its individual</p>	<p>Occupiers or property owners of commercial properties within the designated area who either:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Own the freehold, or • Hold a lease with a seven year minimum period remaining at the planned final grant payment date and who have secured their landlord's written consent to the proposed works. 	<p>Up to £250,000 per property</p>

	<p>merits at the discretion of local officers, and then approved by local and regional project boards. In particular offices, independent leisure, retail, food and drink uses will be considered. Mixed-use schemes will also be considered, but private student lets, will not be considered.</p> <p>Offices or commercial premises above retail units will also be considered for support.</p> <p>WORKS</p> <p>External External works to the building can include work deemed necessary for the structural integrity of the property. Items might include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shopfronts; • Signage; • Windows and doors; • External lighting; • Roofs and chimneys; • Rainwater goods (guttering and down pipes); • Rendering, stone cleaning and repairs, re-pointing; and • Structural works. <p>Internal Internal works to the building can include all work, visible or structural, necessary to complete the project to Building Regulations. This might include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Windows and doors; • Improved accessibility; • Walls, ceilings, lighting; 		
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Appendix 2 Placemaking Grant categories and criteria

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Energy Efficiency measures when included as part of the overall scheme; • Utilities and services, including heating; • Welfare facilities (e.g. essential washroom and cleansing facilities only); and • Structural work <p>New Build New build commercial floor-space could be eligible, where a local need for this has been identified.</p>		
<p>Green Infrastructure</p>	<p>The provision of Green Infrastructure and Biodiversity projects in town centres. Specifically but not exclusively:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Green Walls • Green Roofs • Rain Gardens • Greening. • Pocket Parks <p>Other Green Infrastructure or general greening measures are eligible subject to approval of Welsh Government. Any intervention needs to be strategic and underpinned by a Town Centre Green Infrastructure Audit.</p> <p>This support will not contribute to ongoing maintenance costs in future financial years.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local Authorities • Business Improvement Districts BIDs • Town and Community Councils • Occupiers or property owners of commercial properties within the designated area who either: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Own the freehold, or ○ Hold a lease with a seven year minimum period remaining at the planned final grant payment date and who have secured their landlord's written consent to the proposed works. 	<p>Up to £250,000 per project</p>
<p>Public Realm</p>	<p>The provision of small scale public realm enhancements where they are aligned with a natural</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local Authorities. • Business Improvement Districts BIDs 	<p>Up to £250,000 per scheme.</p>

Appendix 2 Placemaking Grant categories and criteria

	<p>clustering of regeneration activity in town centres. Where there is demonstrable social and economic impact. Specifically:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The removal or dropping of curbs for access and egress; • The widening of pavement areas so as to provide outdoor seating and amenity areas; • Permanent planters and screening provision; • Enhancing features to a key project within the town or city centre; <p>Other measures may be eligible for support subject to approval of Welsh Government.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Town and Community Councils 	
Strategic Acquisition	<p>Acquisitions within town and city centres. This support should not be used to acquire properties that are subject to, or could benefit from planning enforcement measures. Specifically, this support could be used to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acquire properties in order to complete land assembly for larger strategic proposals; • Acquire properties for demolition in order to deliver improved connectivity and permeability in centres; • The acquisition of properties in order to provide greenspace, play facilities or enhanced public realm. • Demolition costs are eligible. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local Authorities • Business Improvement Districts BIDs • Town and Community Councils • Social Businesses and B – Corps 	Up to £250,000 per acquisition.
Town Centre Markets	<p>The delivery of the ‘Every Town a Market Town’ philosophy. The development and enabling of local markets for the provision of produce, craft, food and value added products. This capital only funding will deliver:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local Authorities • Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) • Town and Community Councils • Social Businesses and B – Corps 	Up to £250,000 per location.

Appendix 2 Placemaking Grant categories and criteria

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The provision of permanent electricity supplies to enable market trading; The acquisition of trading stalls, stands and platforms. <p>Works must conform and be aligned with the Welsh Government best practice guide for the establishment of local markets. This work should be aligned with any post Covid – 19 Town Centre works and planning.</p>		
Town Centre Meanwhile Uses	The establishment of temporary meanwhile or pop – up uses in currently vacant premises in town centres. The support should be wholly aligned with the Welsh Government Meanwhile Uses Best Practice Guide.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local Authorities Business Improvement Districts BIDs Town and Community Councils Social Businesses and B – Corps 	Up to £250,000 per location.
Town Centre External Trading support.	The provision of outdoor seating, planters, coverings, servery areas and building canopies. This support is in line with the Covid – 19 response grant 2020/21.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local Authorities Business Improvement Districts Town Centre Businesses BIDs Town and Community Councils 	
Shop Frontage Enveloping Schemes	External shop frontage enhancements whereby no internal modification or redevelopment is undertaken. Adjacent or closely situated properties need to be targeted in a given town so as to achieve a critical mass and greater impact. It is suggested that a minimum of 6 properties should sign up to this support.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Occupiers or property owners of commercial properties within the designated area who either: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Own the freehold, or Hold a lease with a seven year minimum period remaining at the planned final grant payment date and who have secured their landlord's written consent to the proposed works. For projects that request less than £50k in grant a legal charge is not required so a lease with five years remaining at the final grant payment date is acceptable. 	Up to £250,000 per location.
Digital Towns	The furthering of the 'digital towns' agenda through the provision of capital items to support Wi-Fi analytics and Lora Wan networks.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local Authorities Business Improvement Districts BIDs Town and Community Councils. 	Up to £250,000 per town centre.

Appendix 2 Placemaking Grant categories and criteria

<p>Active Travel</p>	<p>Provisions supporting or facilitating active travel routes in town centres where this cannot be funded through other means. Specifically the provision of bicycle storage, lockers and retrofit of show and hygiene facilities in commercial premises</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local Authorities • Business Improvement Districts BIDs • Town and Community Councils • Social Businesses and B – Corps • Private sector partners 	<p>Up to £250,000 per application.</p>
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Appendix 3 Placemaking Grant indicative submission

Transforming Towns 2021/22
Placemaking grant submission

Transforming Towns Placemaking Grant allocation	70%	£554,000
MCC match funding (minimum requirement)	30%	£237,429
TOTAL	100%	£791,429

**PROPOSED
PROJECTS**

Project	Placemaking Grant project category	Location	Priority	Estimated cost	Deliverability	Notes
43 Frogmore St - upper floor conversion to shared workspace	Commercial Property Improvement Grants	Abergavenny	1	£63,000		Cost based on 70% of total project cost. Space to be occupied/managed by Gwagle, who operate existing coworking space on Nevill Street. Peter Wooley is building owner.
Cross Street interventions leading to pedestrianisation - quick win projects	Public Realm	Abergavenny	1	£25,000		Cycle-friendly gates, signage at junction with Monk Street. Costs TBC.
Church Road phase 2 - active travel/public realm/placemaking scheme	Public Realm	Caldicot	1	£250,000		Match funding. Dependent on timely award of Active Travel funding
Caldicot Goes Pop!	Town Centre Meanwhile Uses	Caldicot	1	£11,000		Upgrades to existing Town Team pop-up unit
Caldicot shop front improvements - continuation of 20/21 grants scheme	Shop Front Enveloping Schemes	Caldicot	1	£150,000		To include existing commitments and new projects. Funding allocation could be increased if other projects underspend.

Appendix 3 Placemaking Grant indicative submission

Caldicot Town Team market gazebos	Town Centre Markets	Caldicot	1	£7,000		To support expansion of Town Team-managed market
Chepstow meanwhile use	Town Centre Meanwhile Uses	Chepstow	1	£10,010		Total 21/22 project cost £24k. Proposal is around community hub activity in vacant shop. Chepstow TC will pay running costs.
Chepstow Green Wall	Green Infrastructure	Chepstow	1	£25,000		Issues around maintenance requirements which are apparently intensive/costly
Various projects generated through the GI Action Plan	Green Infrastructure	Abergavenny, Chepstow, Monmouth	1	£65,000		Cost is for delivery of GI Action Plan projects in town centres. Other deliverable projects available outside town centres. £80k if Magor Undy included
Town centre outdoor adaptation grants - continuation of 20/21 grants scheme	Town Centre External Trading Support	All towns	1	£130,000		To include existing commitments and new projects. Funding allocation could be increased if other projects underspend.
Town centre wifi and Smart Town Data	Digital Towns	All towns	1	£60,000		To be delivered by Rural/Digital Programmes Team
TOTAL				£796,010		

RESERVE LIST

Project	Placemaking Grant project category	Location	Priority	Estimated cost	Deliverability	Notes
Hanbury House - improvement to shopfront and lettable areas	Commercial Property Improvement Grants	Chepstow	2	£80,000		Costs TBC
Welsh Street car park - improve ped environment at entrance	Public Realm	Chepstow	2	£110,000		Potential to improve disabled access to High Street.
Chepstow markets	Town Centre Markets	Chepstow	2	£20,000		Markets operated by Chepstow Town Council
Monmouth meanwhile use - pop-up shops/art in windows/community uses	Town Centre Meanwhile Uses	Monmouth	2	£10,000		Proposal from Monmouth Chamber of Commerce. Lead organisation TBC.
20 Monnow Street	Commercial Property Improvement Grants	Monmouth	2	£50,000		Improvements/repairs pending redevelopment/refurbishment
RESERVE LIST TOTAL				£270,000		