



Local Sustainable Transport response to Covid-19: Stakeholder and community engagement summary report for Denbigh

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Purpose of this report

The purpose of this report is to summarise the engagement activities carried out, underway, and planned in respect to the Council's [Local Sustainable Transport response to Covid-19 for Denbigh](#). The report itself will not make any recommendations with regards to the overall proposals but it is expected that views of stakeholders and the wider community of Denbigh which have been summarised in the findings of this report will be used by the Member Area Group (MAG) for Denbigh to assist in making their recommendations on the proposed scheme to Lead Member for Waste, Transport and the Environment, in addition to any further available evidence such as road sensor data, traffic modelling or other data which has been used to design the proposals to their current stage.

The options available which the MAG may wish to recommend to the Lead Member are likely to include (but may not be limited to):

- Proceed with the proposed scheme, with no amendments
- Request amendments to the scheme and re-submission to Welsh Government (there is no guarantee that Welsh Government would agree to an amended version of the scheme)
- To reject the proposed scheme, and decline to request any amendments or alternative propositions

For clarification, no final decision has been made on the proposed scheme at the time this report has been written.

Background to the proposed scheme

On 7th May 2020, the Welsh Government published [a statement requesting submissions of interest](#) for what it called local sustainable transport measures in response to Covid-19, stating "We are asking for initial expressions of interest by 21 May to allow us to gauge the overall funding requirement. We will then seek additional information as required before considering the proposals further. We envisage measures to be introduced from early summer"

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In response to this call for expressions of interest, Denbighshire County Council submitted expressions of interest for schemes in four towns, including Denbigh with the overall objectives of:

- Promote and sustain the uptake in active travel (such as walking or cycling) that has been seen as a result of the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic
- To facilitate social distancing at the currently-recommended distance of 2 metres where it is not possible to do so without additional measures in place
- To encourage and support town centre businesses (where possible) to expand their offer to outside their premises, particularly food and beverage businesses such as cafes, restaurants and pubs
- To support local residents and visitors to feel that their town centres are safe and welcoming environments after weeks (or months) for some businesses

The Welsh Government agreed in principle to allocate funding to Denbighshire County Council for four towns, including Denbigh. This decision was made on 19th June. In keeping with their request for 'additional information' prior to a final award being made, the Council launched a range of community engagement and consultation beginning 21st June. This included a preliminary 'snapshot' survey to gauge overall concerns around town centres and their recovery from lockdown, and followed with a more detailed consultation around the proposed active travel response schemes which ran from 9th to 24th July.

List of stakeholders

The list of stakeholders that the Council has engaged with or will expect to engage with at various stages of the proposed scheme includes:

- County Councillors for Denbigh
- The Town Council for Denbigh
- Partner organisations including North Wales Police
- The wider business community of Denbigh
- The residential community of Denbigh

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Timeline for proposed scheme development

7th May 2020

- Welsh Government releases call for expressions of interest with regards to promoting and sustaining active travel and social distancing in response to the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic, with a deadline of 21st May
- Denbighshire County Council submits initial proposals in time for the deadline, with a view to engaging and consulting at a later date before any final decisions are made

19th June 2020

- Welsh Government announces 'decision in principle' which details funding it is prepared to give for four towns, including Denbigh
- Denbighshire County Council launches short multiple-choice survey to capture 'snapshot' of people's views about [returning to town centres](#) and to flag up any other concerns. This survey will be live until late spring/early summer 2021.

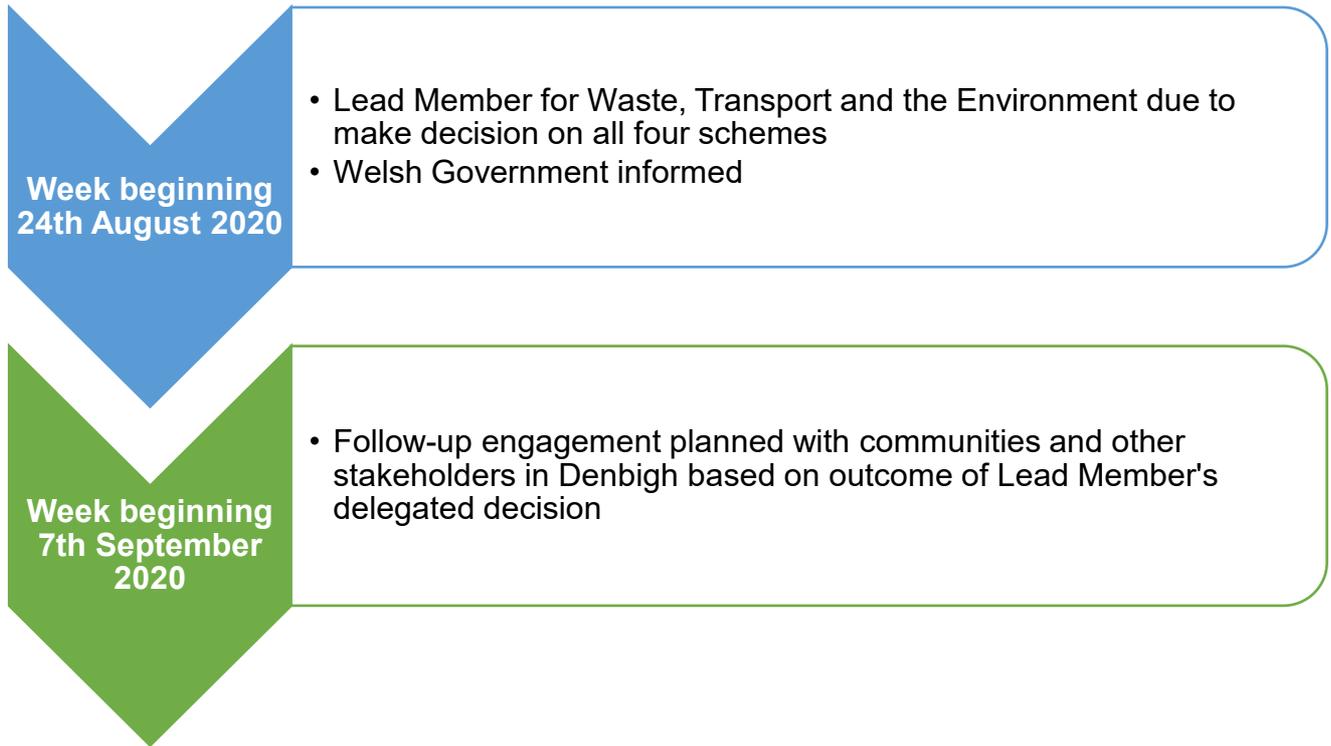
9th July 2020

- Consultation is launched with a response deadline of 10 working days (24th July)
- Representations are accepted via online survey, email, written letter, telephone call, and the Council will make a summary note of any discussion captured via external channels such as e-petitions, social media discourse etc

Week beginning
10th August 2020

- Local Member Area Groups (MAG) responsible for Denbigh to discuss the findings of the preliminary engagement and consultation, before presenting recommendations to Lead Member for Waste, Transport and the Environment

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Summary of engagement and consultation activities carried out to date

To date, the following engagement and consultation work has been carried out:

Date	Activity Summary	Stakeholders involved
19 th June 2020	First 'Town Centre Recovery' working group meeting	Mainly internal (Council) officer working group
21 st June 2020	Online public surveys launched for residents and businesses with specific regards to concerns around re-opening town centres	Businesses in Rhyl, Prestatyn, Rhuddlan, St Asaph, Denbigh, Ruthin, Llangollen and Corwen Visitors to town centres (local and from elsewhere) to the above-named towns
9 th July 2020	Public consultations launched for temporary Local Sustainable Transport proposals	County Councillors for Denbigh, the Town Council, and the wider business and residential community of Denbigh

Feedback from 'Town Centre Recovery' project surveys

To understand how businesses and residents/visitors in Denbighshire felt as communities begin to look for a 'new normal' the council launched a survey on 21st June to ask people for their thoughts, as part of an ongoing Town Centre Recovery project. The survey is likely to run until spring 2021 as the Council hopes to understand the pressures that town centre businesses face at different times of year and as the impact of Covid-19 continues to develop.

Prior to the Local Sustainable Transport Response to Covid-19 consultation for Denbigh being launched on 9th July, over 130 respondents had taken part in the Town Centre Recovery Surveys, of which 46 were from Denbigh. 9 of these respondents left comments, which referenced concerns about antisocial behaviour in the town centre, concerns about pubs re-opening and concerns about queuing around cash points.

A further 61 comments were received on this survey between 9th July and 26th July (the consultation period). Of these, 44 comments were clearly intended to be included as part of the consultation.

Feedback from consultation stage

The Council launched an online consultation between 9th and 26th July 2020 to seek local opinions on the proposed Local Sustainable Transport Response to Covid-19 scheme for Denbigh.

Summary of responses received

The consultation received a total of 867 representations directly, and as stated above, a further 44 representations made via the separate project around town centre recovery. Direct representations include:

Dr James Davies, MP who submitted a letter to Denbighshire County Council to state that overall, he was **against** the scheme. Dr James Davies' concerns included the topography of Denbigh not lending itself to an appetite for active travel, concerns raised by residents about the suitability of 'diversion' routes including Barker's Well Lane, Grove Road and Park Street to cope with the volume and type of downhill traffic that is currently absorbed

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by the High Street, and concerns about loss of on-street parking and the impact of this on disabled access.

Ann Jones MS submitted a letter stating she was generally **against** the proposed scheme for Denbigh. Concerns raised by Ann Jones included the suitability of the proposed route to facilitate pavement widening, the proposal to create a shared pedestrian/cyclist space rather than an exclusive cycle lane, and concerns about the impact of the proposals on emergency services access.

Denbigh Town Council held a meeting to discuss the proposals and forwarded to the Council a notification of their decision, which was to **support** the proposals. More information on the Town Council's meeting may be available by [contacting Denbigh Town Council](#).

Three emails and three letters were received by the Council from residents objecting to the proposed schemes.

44 responses to the proposed scheme were received via the 'Town Centre Recovery' project, hosted simultaneously on the County Conversation Portal website alongside the Local Sustainable Transport Response to Covid-19 consultation for Denbigh.

858 responses to the proposed scheme were received directly via the Local Sustainable Transport Response to Covid-19 online consultation.

The Council is also aware of (at least) one e-petition which has been circulated widely on social media which objects to the proposals and understands that this e-petition currently has at least 1,300 signatories. The Council is not able to consider petitions (whether paper or electronic) which have not been formally submitted for consideration. At the time of making this report, the Council understands that the e-petition is still active and therefore although aware of it, the Council is not able to confirm that the e-petition is intended for submission to the Council and therefore is unable to consider it as part of the consultation analysis.

Summary of the substance of community responses

Overall, respondents who made their representations via the County Conversation Portal were generally **against** the proposals to create a temporary one-way system in Denbigh to

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facilitate pavement widening for social distancing purposes, and to promote and sustain active travel as a means of accessing the town centre.

A summary of the 'top 5' specific reasons for the objections are as follows:

Concern about Denbigh proposals	Number of mentions
Concerns about suitability of 'diversion' routes, either to cope with volume of traffic or classes of vehicle which usually travel down the High Street	157
Concerns about impact on car parking	135
Concerns for resident safety on 'diversion' routes or possible 'rat run' routes	71
Wider concerns about road safety (e.g. speeding / potential for road traffic collisions)	52
Concerns about impact of proposals on access for emergency service response vehicles	48

More detailed information with regards to the responses received at this consultation stage of the scheme can be found in the detailed data report, attached in the appendices.

Summary of planned future engagement activity

In terms of community engagement and consultation, the ['Re-opening our Town Centres after Covid-19'](#) online surveys which were used to capture preliminary data ahead of the consultations are ongoing until late spring/early summer 2021. The council warmly encourages residents, visitors and businesses to continue to share their experiences of time spent in Denbigh town centre. These experiences will be useful legacy data and will assist the council in continuing to plan and support Denbigh in the future.

In terms of next steps for the proposed *Local Sustainable Transport* schemes, no further engagement will be planned until a decision about how to proceed with each scheme has been made by the Lead Member for Waste, Transport and the Environment, on 25th August 2020.

The Council is keen to ensure that, whatever the outcome of the Lead Member's decision, the community of Denbigh feels supported to get involved and have their say in the Council's wider-reaching objectives around active travel and sustainable transport. Although the Council is unable to make any guarantees at this stage as to what the Lead Member's decision will be, possible scenarios include:

Scenario 1 – the proposed scheme goes ahead with no modifications

If the proposed scheme for Denbigh goes ahead with no modifications, the Council intends to work with the community throughout the duration of the scheme to understand the impact it is having, and will use this community feedback to determine what direction any future active travel proposals for Denbigh and the surrounding area should take. Because the proposed scheme is temporary, the Council would be able to modify or remove the scheme at any point within the trial period. A successful trial is no guarantee that any scheme would be made permanent, and the Council would have a statutory (legal) obligation to consult widely with the community and other key stakeholders before making any permanent changes to town centre infrastructure.

Scenario 2 – modifications are suggested for the proposed scheme

If the Denbigh MAG and/or Lead Member believes there is a general appetite amongst the stakeholders and community of Denbigh to pursue a Local Sustainable Transport response to Covid-19, but feels the current proposals to be inappropriate, they may request that the proposals are modified or re-designed. This will be done by officers with town planning and road safety expertise, and the views already shared by the community and stakeholders of Denbigh will be considered as part of this process.

The Council will then need to re-consult with the community and stakeholders of Denbigh before any final proposals are submitted to Welsh Government.

There is no guarantee that Welsh Government would agree to support a modified proposal, although the Council hopes that if this is the outcome of the Lead Member's decision that Welsh Government would be agreeable to any modified proposals that are in keeping with the original request to support and sustain active travel in Denbigh as part of the Council's ongoing response to the Covid-19 pandemic (and are not at significantly different financial cost).

If the Welsh Government agree, the Council would then plan to carry out a range of continuous community monitoring and engagement, as outlined in scenario 1 (above).

Scenario 3 – the proposed scheme is rejected and no request is made to consider viable alternative proposals

If the Denbigh MAG and Lead Member considers the proposed scheme in response to the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic in Denbigh to be disproportionate or inappropriate to the needs of Denbigh, they may reject the proposal without requesting a modified or alternative proposal.

The Council is keen to ensure that, even if this is the outcome, that discussions are facilitated with the community of Denbigh with regards to their ongoing thoughts around active travel in Denbigh more generally. It is likely that the Council will publish a further programme of online engagement which will seek to understand the community's reaction to such a decision, and also to understand what they may hope to see in Denbigh in the future.

This feedback will be useful in planning future developments, and specifically will be useful in planning a more extensive range of community consultation and engagement around the Council's long-term statutory duty under the Active Travel (Wales) Act 2013 to [research, develop and promote active travel](#) across the county.

Appendices and further reading

Appendix 1 – detailed engagement data report for Denbigh