



Local Sustainable Transport response to Covid-19: Proposals for RUTHIN

Covid-19 response proposals for Ruthin town centre

Introduction:

The aim of this document is to explain some of the temporary changes we are proposing to make in order to help Ruthin town centre recover from the impact of the Covid-19 (coronavirus) pandemic. This also includes details of how you can share your views regarding these proposed changes.

Background to the scheme



In March 2020, Welsh Government imposed a number of restrictions across Wales in response to the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic, including wide-scale closures of retail premises which effectively closed entire town centres. From 22nd June 2020 the Welsh Government allowed many businesses to begin to resume trading, however the threat of Covid-19 hasn't gone away and we understand that this ongoing threat continues to have a negative impact on our communities, especially our town centres.

Many businesses are required to work or operate in a different way in response to Covid-19. One of the biggest changes is the requirement for social distancing, as set out in the Health Protection (Coronavirus Restrictions) (Wales) Regulations 2020 (as amended). Additionally, there is a requirement from Welsh Government to encourage and promote active travel (such as walking or cycling) as part of the ongoing response to the pandemic.



Understanding local concerns

To understand how businesses and residents/visitors in Denbighshire feel as communities begin to look for a 'new normal' the council launched a survey on 21st June to ask people for their thoughts. To date, over 130 responses have been received from businesses and local residents. Although people generally feel safe in town centres (with 78% of local business respondents and 80% of local residents saying they were either satisfied or very satisfied with how safe their town centre feels), nearly half of respondents who left a comment expressed concerns

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about the width of pavements and over 60% expressed concerns about social distancing. 80% of residents said they were visiting town centres to carry out essential tasks only, and 65% of businesses said they felt quieter than usual. The survey is ongoing and will track people's opinions over the next few months however these early responses indicate that there is a need to do more to support communities back into their local town centres.

Responding to local concerns

In response to these types of concerns, and also in recognition that more of us have been walking and cycling more through lockdown; the Welsh Government has made a grant available to fund measures that address some of the concerns raised by communities in Denbighshire (and likely elsewhere in Wales) such as the temporary widening of pavements. Denbighshire County Council has been successful in securing funding for introducing such measures in some of our towns including Ruthin

The proposals for Ruthin

We are proposing to introduce one-way roads for vehicular traffic on Market Street and Well Street. Market Street will be one way northeast (downhill) from St. Peter's square and Well Street will be one way northwest (uphill) to St. Peter's square. Market Street will be one way from the car park entrance to the roundabout. Well Street will be one way from Record Street to the roundabout.

- The introduction of this temporary one-way system will allow us to:
- Widen pavements in areas where they are narrow
- Support some pubs, cafes and restaurants in the town centre area to create outside seating areas for their customers
- Encourage and support commuters and residents to choose active travel (walking or cycling) as their main means of getting around town
- Encourage and support commuters, residents and tourists to choose active travel (walking or cycling) as their main means of getting around town

The principle of what are we doing in Ruthin.

Ruthin is an historic market town, and many of the pavements are narrow. At the moment, it is not possible to maintain social distancing on these narrow pavements without stepping into oncoming traffic – which presents an unacceptable hazard for both road users and

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pedestrians, and something a number of residents have already expressed concerns about. The options to rectify this are limited as existing roads are already narrow and do not allow the pavements to be widened whilst maintaining a two way flow of traffic.



The 'new normal' for pubs, restaurants and cafes in Ruthin?

In line with the feedback received to date from businesses and residents around the county, we want to ensure that Ruthin town centre feels safe and welcoming, and to ensure we support Ruthin's cafes, restaurants and pubs to create safe outdoor spaces for their customers to spend time with friends or family. We understand that people are unsure about coming back to public places, and that is why we consider it is really important to put these measures in place to help keep people safe and make it enjoyable to visit, shop and spend time in Ruthin Town Centre.

How are we doing it?

We will be using Temporary Traffic Regulation Orders (TROs) to put the temporary one-way system in place. We will use temporary kerbs and bollards to make the new widened active travel areas. This equipment will be bolted down and can be installed quickly, and easily removed in the future.

The kerbs are 2.0m long and will be separated by 2.5m gaps. The gaps between the temporary kerbs will be fitted around pedestrian crossings with dropped kerbs. Away from the crossings or in locations where gaps are not necessary, planters will be used in between the kerbs to mark out the lanes and create safe outdoor spaces for cafes, restaurants and pubs. It is hoped that using planters in key locations will introduce a splash of natural colour from flowers and greenery to the town centre and give it a more welcoming feel.

Monitoring

If the scheme (or a modified version of it) goes ahead, we will be monitoring the impact of the temporary measures in close detail over the next 18 months. This will include using some technology to monitor things like traffic flows, speeds, pedestrian flows and air pollution. We will also be collecting feedback from the community of Ruthin and reviewing

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this on a regular basis to monitor how residents, businesses and visitors feel about the ongoing impact of the temporary measures.

How to get in touch

To view and comment on the proposals for Ruthin and some of the county's other towns, please visit:

<https://countyconversation.denbighshire.gov.uk>

What happens next?

Once we have considered the feedback we receive, we will discuss this with the Ruthin County Councillors and make a final decision on whether to proceed with the scheme.