



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

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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 Ruthin](#). 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 Ruthin which have been summarised in the findings of this report will be used by the Member Area Group (MAG) for Ruthin 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 Ruthin 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

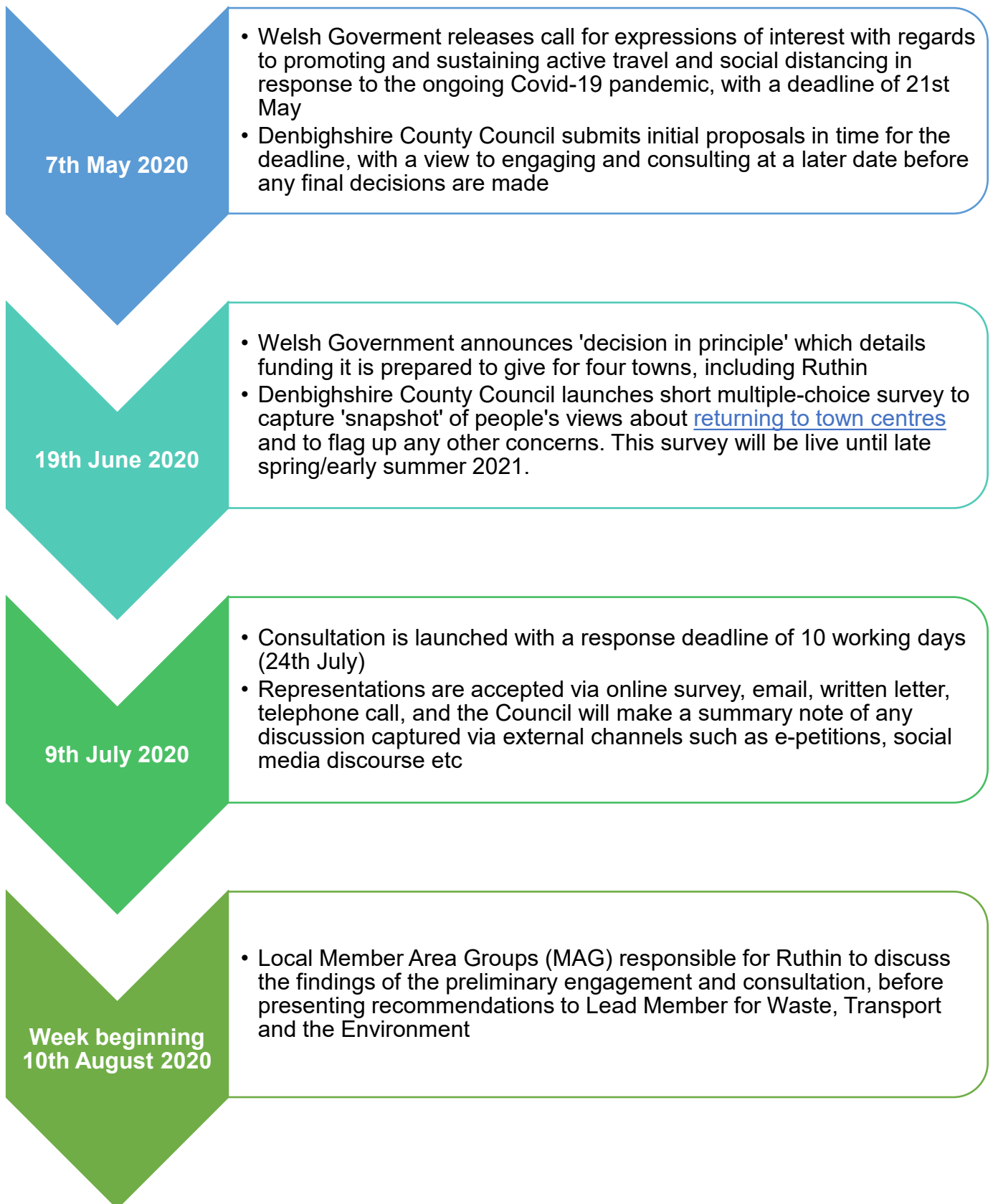
The Welsh Government agreed in principle to allocate funding to Denbighshire County Council for four towns, including Ruthin. This decision was made on 19th June. In keeping with their request for 'additional information' prior to a final award being made, the Council launched a range of community engagement 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

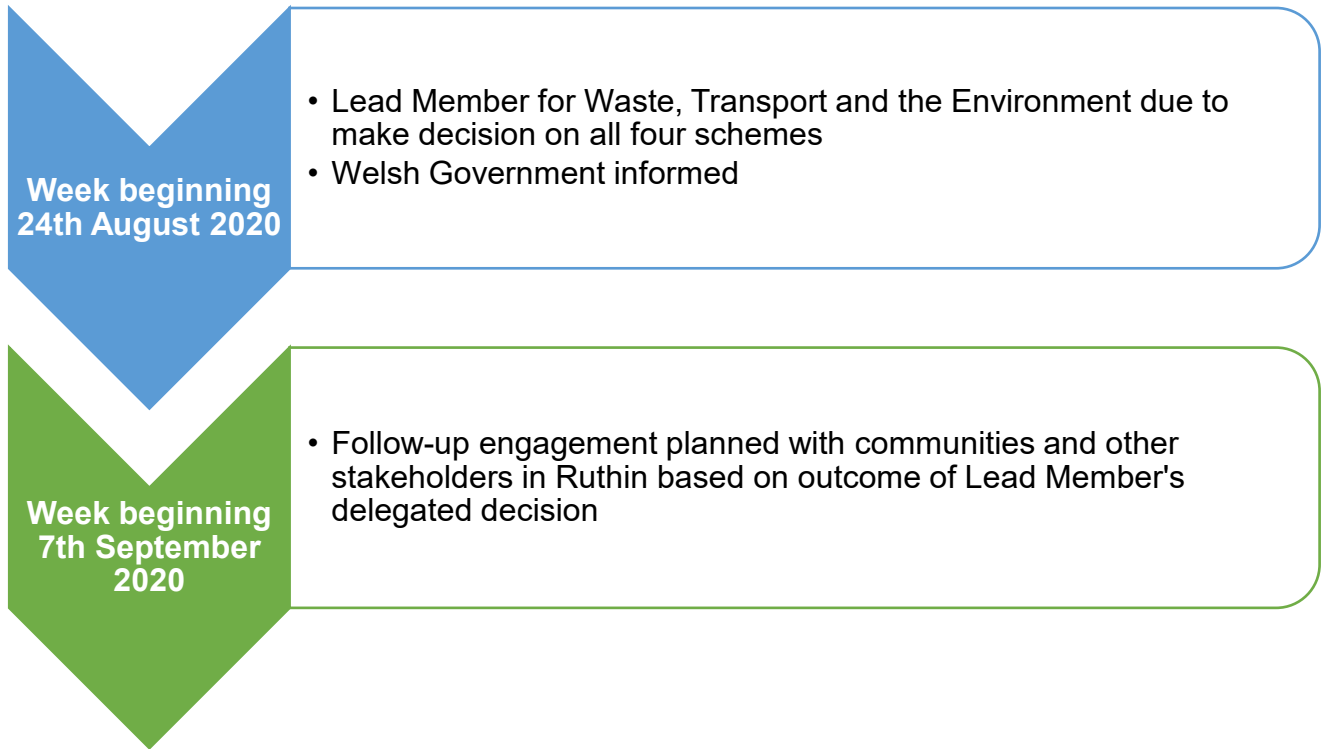
The list of stakeholders that the Council has engaged with or will expect to engage with at various stages of the proposed scheme includes:

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

Timeline for proposed scheme development



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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 Ruthin, the Town Council, and the wider business and residential community of Ruthin

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 Ruthin being launched on 9th July, over 130 respondents had taken part in the Town Centre Recovery Surveys, of which 19 were from Ruthin. Whilst this number is too small to be considered a representative sample of town centre users, early comments from these few respondents indicated that town centre users not adhering to social distancing, and vehicles mounting pavements or parking on double-yellow lines on routes up to St Peter's Square were of concern.

A further responses 65 were received on the Town Centre Recovery survey between 9th July and 26th July (the consultation period) and comments continued to indicate that lack (or perceived lack) of social distancing, pavement width was of concern, as well as to express support for an element of 'café culture' to be introduced to the St Peter's Square area. 10 comments received into the *Town Centre Recovery* project survey at this stage were intended for the *Local Sustainable Transport Response to Covid-19* consultation for Ruthin and have been included with that for analysis.

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 Ruthin.

The consultation received a total of 606 representations directly. These include:

Ruthin Town Council who submitted a letter generally **in support** of the scheme. The Town Council also provided 'artist impression' style drawings which they asked the County

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Council to include with the consultation documents for residents' and businesses' consideration.

Ruthin and District Civic Association stated that they supported in principle the objectives of the proposals for Ruthin however raised a number of concerns, these were primarily including around not increasing provision of on-street car parking in sensitive or heritage areas, concerns that rerouting could increase speed of traffic, and concerns sustainability of proposals in the longer term.

Three emails were received by local residents, two in favour of the proposed scheme and one against.

601 responses were received via the County Conversation Portal website of which 591 were directly onto the online consultation for the proposals and 10 were received via a separate *Town Centre Recovery* engagement project which was running simultaneously.

Overall, respondents who made their representations via the County Conversation Portal were generally in favour of proposal to create temporary one-way routes in parts of Market Street and Well Street to support social distancing measures and to create new shared pedestrian/cyclist spaces, with 81.33% of respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing that the proposals were acceptable. Concerns related primarily to pedestrians and cyclists having to share a space, and the potential impact of the changes on disabled, elderly or otherwise car-dependent town centre visitors who prefer on-street parking to using a nearby car park.

Based on respondent data, use of the town centre for shopping remains the most important by a small margin, but with a clear emphasis on the town centre for leisure/social use also. Reasons given by respondents for visiting the town centre were as follows:

Reason to visit Ruthin Town Centre	Percentage of respondents who felt it was very important
Essential shopping	62.41%
Socialising / eating out	57.33%
Spending time outdoors	54.79%
Spending time with friends/family	51.8%
Non-essential shopping	39.62%
Working or volunteering in the town centre	27.8%

More information about the responses is available in the detailed data report.

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 Ruthin town centre. These experiences will be useful legacy data and will assist the council in continuing to plan and support Ruthin 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 Ruthin 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 Ruthin 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 Ruthin 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 Ruthin MAG and/or Lead Member believes there is a general appetite amongst the stakeholders and community of Ruthin to pursue a Local Sustainable Transport response

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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 Ruthin will be considered as part of this process.

The Council will then need to re-consult with the community and stakeholders of Ruthin 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 Ruthin 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 Ruthin MAG and Lead Member considers the proposed scheme in response to the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic in Ruthin to be disproportionate or inappropriate to the needs of Ruthin, 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 Ruthin with regards to their ongoing thoughts around active travel in Ruthin 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 Ruthin 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 Ruthin