

**DERBYSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL**

**CABINET**

**4 June 2020**

Report of the Executive Director – Economy, Transport and Environment

**SUPPORTING ECONOMIC RECOVERY – RE-OPENING DERBYSHIRE'S TOWN CENTRES (HIGHWAYS, TRANSPORT AND INFRASTRUCTURE)**

(1) **Purpose of Report** To inform Cabinet of the work being undertaken to support post-COVID-19 economic recovery and specifically, the joint work with district/borough authorities on re-opening Derbyshire's main town centres, in line with Government guidance, and to set out the approach being adopted to create an immediate package of measures that will enable the re-opening of key town centres in as safe and effective way as possible within the timescales available.

(2) **Information and Analysis**

**Background**

The Government has already introduced a comprehensive package of support for business and workers during the economic emergency including (not exhaustively):

- The Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme where small and large employers are eligible to apply for a Government grant of 80% of workers' salaries up to £2,500 a month, backdated to 1 March 2020. It has been confirmed the scheme will continue until end of October 2020.
- £330 billion worth of Government-backed, guaranteed loans to support businesses, including a new Bounce Back Loans scheme which will provide loans of up to £50,000 available to the smallest businesses affected by the coronavirus pandemic.
- Businesses rates holiday for the retail, hospitality and leisure sectors in England for the 2020 to 2021 tax year.
- A deferral until June 2020 of VAT payments for firms - representing a £30 billion injection into the economy.
- A £12.3 billion package for local authorities to deliver grants of up to £25,000 to eligible businesses in the retail, hospitality and leisure sectors; and
- New temporary measures to safeguard the UK high street against aggressive debt recovery actions during the coronavirus pandemic.

As lockdown restrictions now start to be lifted following the Prime Minister's address on Sunday 10 May 2020, further funding and guidance has been announced to aid early recovery in key parts of the local economy; notably the re-opening of high streets and town centres.

In addition to the £3.2billion package of support announced throughout March and early April 2020 to help local authorities deal with the immediate pressures of COVID-19, Government has since committed a further £50m aimed at supporting a range of safety measures (e.g. practical safety measures including new signs, street markings and temporary barriers) to help shops and other retailers get back on track and ensure that people can enjoy their time visiting their local high street safely. Councils will also be able to use this money to develop local marketing campaigns to explain the changes to the public and reassure them that their high streets and other commercial areas are safe.

This '*Reopening High Streets Safely Fund*', which comes from the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), is allocated to local authorities on a per capita basis and will be ready to spend from 1 June 2020. The Fund complements the other, recently announced, £250m '*Emergency Active Travel Fund*' which is aimed at facilitating immediate travel initiatives to get people back to work, leisure and learning safely, including pop up cycle lanes and bus-only corridors. The travel fund forms part of a wider package of funding targeted at generating more, long-term walking and cycling solutions which for Derbyshire would include strategic cycles routes, such as the recently approved Key Cycle Network.

These initiatives are supported by various Government policy notes such as '*Safer Public Spaces – urban centres and green spaces*', '*Plans to Rebuild*', '*Reopening High Streets Safely Guidance* and '*Working Safely During Coronavirus – Shops and Branches* which have been issued over the last few weeks. The policy notes provide various advice and guidance on the approaches and precautions to be taken on key matters, such as maintaining social distancing whilst facilitating safe use of the highway (roads, footpaths, pedestrianised areas etc).

As with all things related to Coronavirus COVID-19, national guidance continues to be refined and amended and on 25 May 2020, Government set out a revised timetable for re-opening shops and town centres which extended the initial 1 June 2020 date to 15 June 2020 for certain types of premise. In summary:

- Outdoor markets and car showrooms will be able to reopen from 1 June 2020, as soon as they are able to meet the COVID-19 secure guidelines to protect shoppers and workers.

- All other non-essential retail including shops selling clothes, shoes, toys, furniture, books and electronics, plus tailors, auction houses, photography studios, and indoor markets, will be expected to be able to reopen from 15 June 2020 if the Government's five tests are met and they follow the COVID-19 secure guidelines.

*NB: Whilst this information was correct at the time of writing, it is possible that further Government guidance will have been issued on or before the date of the Cabinet meeting; this will be reflected in a verbal update to the meeting as appropriate.*

It is recognised that shops, such as supermarkets and pharmacies, have been trading responsibly throughout the pandemic and that Government sees the reopening of non-essential retail as the next step in restoring livelihoods, restarting the UK's economy and ensuring vital public services continue to be funded. However, businesses will only be able to open from these dates once they have completed a risk assessment, in consultation with trade union representatives or workers, and are confident they are managing the risks, in line with the current Health and Safety legislation.

### **Developing Derbyshire's Proposals**

Derbyshire has a large number of town and local centres which fulfil an economic function in supporting local communities with essential services – along with jobs and opportunities to access learning, e.g. Chesterfield. In response to the Government's policy announcements, a number of these centres have been identified by district/borough authorities as key places for targeting support in this immediate phase of recovery (1 June 2020 to 15 June 2020).

Appendix 1 sets out the list of town centres that have been suggested as areas for concerted effort. However, the short timescales available from the policy being announced to 15 June 2020 which shops will re-open will require close and intensive work with the district/borough councils. This work will necessarily involve identifying the key/essential measures that will need to be put in place to allow safe pedestrian and vehicle movement. It is likely, therefore, that a phased approach and/or prioritisation to the introduction of measures will need to take place.

As part of the Local Resilience Forum's Strategic Recovery Group (SRG), good progress has been made on setting up strong working arrangements to drive forward the economic recovery programme for Derbyshire. The County Council will chair the Economic and Business Recovery Cell constituted of key partners, such as the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP), Job Centre Plus, further and higher education, business representatives and all the district/borough authorities – among others.

Within these arrangements, the County Council's Economy and Regeneration and Highways services have been working with Heads of Economic

Development in the district/borough authorities since 15 May 2020 to develop safe and pragmatic plans on how to bring town centres – and visitor hot spots – back into active use in the immediate term.

Plans are taking account of the following issues:

- Phasing in the opening of retail premises in line with/guidance (see above).
- Safe queueing on the highway without impeding access to premises.
- Safe movement of people around the town centres.
- Maintaining accessibility for wheelchairs and pushchairs.
- Enabling deliveries to shops.
- Providing/ensuring suitable parking facilities.
- Providing increased opportunities for cycling, including storage facilities.
- Supporting safe use of public transport where possible.

To facilitate development of the plans, each district/borough authority is responsible for confirming:

- Appropriate town centre locations.
- Footfall levels.
- Particular locations where it may be challenging to support queueing, social distancing and safe pedestrian movement.
- Key routes for pedestrians and cyclists.
- Any other challenges/barriers that may be known locally, etc.
- Lead officers to enable efficient delivery from all stakeholders.

This information is being collated and assessed by the County Council's Highways Service to understand the implications (statutory and otherwise) for the highway network. Potential measures being considered include interventions such as one-way pedestrian systems, temporary dedication of the network for cycling and walking, procedures and associated risks and the necessity for control within the highway, including civil parking enforcement.

Detailed discussions are taking place between the County and district/borough councils over the period up to 1 June 2020 (and beyond to 15 June 2020) to develop and agree plans suited the individual circumstances of each town centre; this is necessary as the local conditions. As noted, however, the work required to bring these town centres back into full and safe use is intensive and some pragmatic phasing of the measures being proposed within the town centres will be required.

Supported by the Derbyshire Chief Executives (which is chaired by Derbyshire County Council), it is proposed to confirm a core, 'Town Team' of key officers for each town centre which will include a highways lead contact,

district/borough lead contact (e.g. Head of Economic Development, town centre manager if one is in place) and any other appropriate officer. For those town centres which are also likely to encounter external visitor footfall, it is anticipated that other agencies may need to be involved in the Town Team, e.g. Peak District National Park, National Forest or Marketing Peak District and Derbyshire etc. There is potential for additional support from volunteer 'ambassadors' to help provide a visible presence in the centres and offer advice and guidance to visitors.

An effective Town Team is considered essential to the successful implementation of the proposals: ensuring an appropriate split of roles in line with statutory responsibilities; understanding the resource (staffing and cost) implications and how to ensure best use of all available resources; keeping stakeholders (including elected members) informed in a timely manner; identifying and resolving implementation issues; and ensuring that good practice is disseminated quickly to support a better visitor experience in the town centres. On behalf of the County Council, and to ensure compliance with highway safety requirements, the Council's Head of the Traffic and Safety Service will be instrumental in supporting the work of the Town Teams.

The Economy and Business Recovery Cell of the SRG will provide the management and delivery oversight to the work of the Town Team, ensuring liaison with other key partners such as Police and business representatives. Core to this will be ensuring clear, strong and timely communication with the public, with businesses and with visitors to help manage expectations and behaviours on the safe re-opening of premises. This is likely to include messages around social distancing, queueing, public transport, encouraging walking and cycling and visiting the centres during quieter and off peak times.

Whilst it is clear that much work is progressing to support the immediate re-opening of town centres across the County, for the next phase (July onwards), a more considered and strategic approach will be taken to developing Derbyshire's shared plans for town centres, considering not only the above proposals but wider principles around:

- Embedding work to tackle climate change and reduce carbon emissions.
- Promoting and embedding changed behaviours in the town centre 'offer'.
- Developing longer term digital and other infrastructure proposals – including electric vehicle charging etc – to take advantage of changed behaviours.
- Promoting and enhancing facilities for sustainable travel (e.g. cycling and walking) – including the role of public transport in supporting access to jobs, shops and learning.
- The long term role and future of town centres - and high streets – in economic revival, including relationship with the Future High Street Fund and Town Deals work which is already progressing.

Attached at Appendix 2 is a draft copy of an emerging policy note which will guide the medium to longer term development of sustainable transport and connectivity solutions in and around the County. It is proposed this longer term work will be overseen by the Economy and Business Recovery Cell, in close liaison with the Derby, Derbyshire, Nottingham and Nottinghamshire (D2N2) LEP to ensure alignment to the Local Industrial Strategy and related funding programmes. Proposals will be reported to future Cabinet meetings as appropriate.

(3) **Financial Considerations** To support all the above work, Government has now confirmed the level of grant available to district/borough authorities through the *Reopening High Streets Safely Fund*:

Local Authority	Grant Award
Amber Valley	£113, 424
Bolsover	£71, 400
Chesterfield	£92, 638
Derbyshire Dales	£63, 808
Erewash	£102, 534
High Peak	£81, 981
North East Derbyshire	£90, 043
South Derbyshire	£95, 419

In addition, an emergency active travel fund of £250 million has been created by Government to support the creation of schemes and intervention, such as pop up cycle lanes and bus-only corridors in the early stages of economic recovery. It is anticipated that this emergency fund will be devolved to transport authorities by a formula process, although the amount likely to be passported to Derbyshire County Council has not yet been confirmed. In the interim, it is possible to utilise Local Transport Plan (LTP) funding to pump prime introduction of some of the early transport interventions in advance of receipt of the Active Travel Fund.

A wider, £5 billion investment plan for sustainable transport was announced earlier in the year of which, a £2 billion early investment phase will be open to funding bids by individual authorities (date yet to be announced). These funding streams will be used to support the longer term economic revival of town centres and other places in Derbyshire, embedding sustainable travel and supporting more comprehensive place making post COVID-19.

(4) **Social Value Considerations** Opportunities to work with local suppliers and local businesses in the re-opening of Derbyshire's town centres will be maximised as part of the short and long term economic recovery programme. This in turn will ensure spend is targeted at supporting the local economy with obvious benefits to sustaining jobs and household income.

## **Other Considerations**

In preparing the report, the relevance of the following factors has been considered: legal, prevention of crime and disorder, equality and diversity, human resources, environmental, health, property and transport considerations.

(5) **Key Decision** No.

(6) **Call-in** Is it required that call-in be waived in respect of the decisions proposed in the report? No.

(7) **Background Papers** Held on file within the Economy, Transport and Environment Department.

(8) **OFFICER'S RECOMMENDATIONS** That Cabinet notes:

- 8.1 The work being undertaken to support post-COVID-19 economic recovery and specifically, the joint work with district/borough authorities to develop plans to support the safe and effective re-opening of Derbyshire's main town centres, in line with Government guidance, and specifically the creation of 'Town Teams' (nominated officers) responsible for leading the implementation of those plans.
- 8.2 The emerging thinking in supporting longer term revival of town centres and the joint work with district/borough authorities and the Derby, Derbyshire, Nottingham and Nottinghamshire Local Enterprise Partnership (D2N2 LEP) in developing related proposals.

**Mike Ashworth**  
**Executive Director – Economy Transport and Environment**

**APPENDIX 1**

**List of Proposed Town Centres**

<b>Local Authority</b>	<b>Town Centre</b>
Chesterfield	Chesterfield, Staveley, Brimington
High Peak	Buxton, Glossop, Whaley Bridge
Amber Valley	Heanor, Belper, Alfreton, Ripley
Derbyshire Dales	Matlock, Bakewell, Ashbourne, Wirksworth, Matlock Bath
	Other rural communities with high visitor footfall (eg Baslow, Eyam, Hathersage)
North East Derbyshire	Clay Cross, Dronfield, Killamarsh, Eckington
Bolsover	Bolsover, Shirebrook, South Normanton, Creswell
Erewash	Long Eaton, Ilkeston
South Derbyshire	Swadlincote



## Appendix 2

# Derbyshire's Response to the Department for Transport's Active Travel Fund

### Our Purpose

To deliver a package of measures to ensure the Government's proposals are delivered efficiently whilst maintaining a longer term behavioural change to our network. These measures will form part of essential economic revival. The overall benefits will encourage more people to choose sustainable methods of travel, create healthier habits and lifestyles, help to regenerate our economy and in the longer term reduce the carbon footprint. This will fit with Government plans to boost greener, active travel following unprecedented levels' of walking and cycling across the UK and captures the huge potential for modal shift.

An emergency active travel fund of £250 million emergency has been created which is the first stage of a £2 billion investment plan. This forms part of the [£5 billion in new funding announced for cycling and buses in February](#).

### Our Scope

To identify short, medium and long term measures to create a more sustainable environment for the Derbyshire community. This will capture and facilitate the upsurge in cycling and walking, support our residents and businesses as we ease out of lockdown and seal in the benefits of sustainable travel. An overview of short, medium and longer term measures is identified as follows and is evaluated using a red, amber green methodology of prioritisation.

- Short term – Interventions that can utilise the Government's emergency funding and delivered in a matter of weeks. This identifies those measures that can be implemented to meet timescales of the 1<sup>st</sup> June and 4<sup>th</sup> July.
- Medium term – longer term which could be permanency of the green phase but also influenced by the larger funds available from the Government. It is anticipated there will be a bidding process for the £2 billion investment plan.
- Longer term – larger aspirations for more permanent changes to the road environment. Strongly links with larger scale cycle infrastructure.

Derbyshire County Council as the highway authority will discharge their duties under the Traffic Management Act 2004: network management in response to COVID-19 statutory guidance. This will ensure safe, efficient and appropriate governance of the highway network. The safety of our road users is paramount and working practices and measures will encompass the safety of all types of road user.

We recognise the necessity of social distancing as outlined in Government guidance and this will form part of our assessments.

## **Derbyshire's Response to the Department for Transport's Active Travel Fund**

### **Objectives/Strategic Background**

The key objectives of the Department for Transport advice summarise the expectation of what we can do to bring town centres back into business. There is an expectation of local authorities from Government to make significant changes to their road layouts, providing more space for cyclists and pedestrians. These changes will help to embed altered behaviours alongside additional behavioural work with which the county council has already began engagement in the form of a leading behavioural expert. This behavioural work will help to form an important part of funding bids' to the Department for Transport. It is recognised that to maximise the work of Derbyshire county council we need to work closely with districts and boroughs to develop and deliver our plans. Behavioural outputs and innovative enforcement forms part of the overall package to protect our travelling public and sustain safe and longer term changes in behaviour and the use of the network. Key objectives are:

- Improvement to air quality
- Encourage and increase cycling and walking.
- Alter behaviours and demonstrate the positive effects of active travel.
- Engage with businesses to encourage modal shift.
- Ensure alternative modes of transport are both attractive, affordable and safe.
- Create transport network support recovery from the COVID-19 emergency and provide a lasting legacy of greener, safer transport.

### **The importance of partnership working**

Weekly meetings have been facilitated with Economic Development involving discussions concerning preparatory and planning issues. Highways staff have engaged in early discussions to discuss district plans and associated concerns. A method of compiling information and sharing highway expertise has been adopted. This engagement has helped to determine

- appropriate town centre locations
- The indication of footfall
- Key routes for pedestrians and cyclists
- Lead officers to enable efficient delivery from all stakeholders

Measures discussed have included a wide range of interventions including one way systems, dedication of the network for cycling and walking, procedures and associated risks and the necessity for control with the highway including civil parking enforcement. Highway safety will be paramount when assessing the implementation of associated measures.

### **Roles and Responsibilities**

The importance of a single point of contact is recognised as a key role as part of the implementation process. It is essential that stakeholders are informed of progress in a timely manner and the creation of 'Town Teams' for each town centre will play an essential role in dissemination of information and the delivery of these schemes. The teams will be formulated using skills of operational staff and partners with a

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strategic overview of the outcomes required. Detail of roles and responsibilities is shown in the diagram below. Requests will be sense checked by the Head of the Traffic and Safety Service, utilising engineering expertise, the safety of the network and the available funding as indicative measures. First points' of contact for Traffic and Safety are as follows:

- Simon Tranter Head of the Traffic and Safety Service  
[simon.tranter@derbyshire.gov.uk](mailto:simon.tranter@derbyshire.gov.uk)
- Steve Alcock Project Engineer Project Engineer for High Peak/Derbyshire Dales.  
[steve.allcock@derbyshire.gov.uk](mailto:steve.allcock@derbyshire.gov.uk)
- Richard Handbury Project Engineer for South Derbyshire/Erewash and Amber Valley. [richard.handbury@derbyshire.gov.uk](mailto:richard.handbury@derbyshire.gov.uk)
- Bridget Gould Project Engineer for Chesterfield/North East Derbyshire  
[bridget.gould@derbyshire.gov.uk](mailto:bridget.gould@derbyshire.gov.uk)

### Roles & Responsibilities

