

#SupportLocalPowys with safe and resilient towns



Embracing the opportunity to reimagine and recreate our open spaces – for resilient and thriving town centres, which in turn will lead to happy and strong communities.



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Why?

The coronavirus (COVID-19) crisis has had a significant impact on the lives and health of many Powys citizens, but it has also had severe economic consequences. The lockdown had an immediate impact on the way in which our town centres operate, with many businesses being required to close for a significant period of time.

Covering such a vast geographical and rural area, the consequences of the travel restrictions have been keenly felt across the county. However, the silver lining has been the refocusing of people's attention on the importance of their local retailer and businesses. Many of whom have adapted the way in which they have worked to ensure that their local communities were provided with the services and goods they needed throughout lockdown.

With other, non-essential businesses now set to re-open, the attention now turns to making our public realm areas safe, gaining the public's confidence to return to the high streets and ensuring our local businesses and high streets remain viable.

Other notable benefits to lockdown include how we have all reduced our reliance on travel, reducing our carbon footprint and resulting in positive improvements to our environment. In turn, we have discovered more time to exercise and have enjoyed the opportunity to walk and cycle within our local areas.

As we begin to plan for a safe, resilient future, this is the opportunity to look at things differently and rebalance our public spaces. Now is our chance to work in partnership to develop 'new look' town centres - creating dynamic healthier spaces and happy, strong communities.



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Safer environments

The public and business owners must be, and feel, safe within their environment. This is the number one priority. There will be no quick fix to recover from the Covid-19 crisis, social distancing and the need for personal protection measures will be with us for some time.

With this in mind, we must plan to #SupportLocalPowys businesses and create safe and resilient towns.

With the support and financial backing from Welsh Government, Powys County Council will work with town and community councils, local businesses, chambers of trade and residents to design and install bespoke measures to create safe public areas for citizens to access freely and for businesses utilise to reopen and remain viable.



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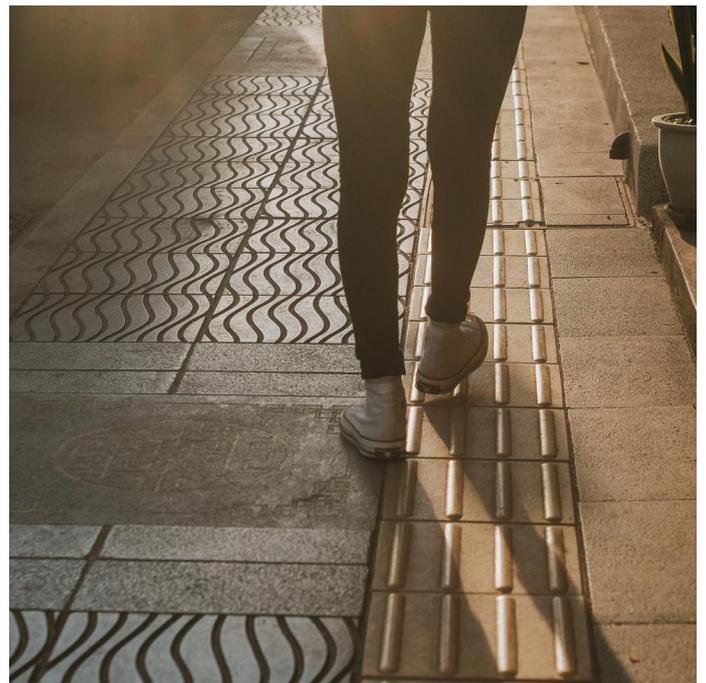
Active travel

As well as opening up space within our towns to facilitate safer trading, our aim is to also cultivate a culture of active travel within our communities. Encouraging people to make shorter journeys and visit their local towns on foot or by bicycle.

The coronavirus pandemic has shown that reduced traffic levels generally encourages and/or facilitates opportunities for people to feel happier to cycle and walk within their local areas.

By introducing cycle lanes, pedestrianised areas and allowing people to safely walk and cycle around our towns gives them the confidence to engage in healthier lifestyles choices and benefit from improved physical and mental wellbeing.

Increased active travel across the county also has the added benefit of reducing our carbon footprint on the environment.



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Supporting our local high street

There will always be a balance between traffic flow, parking, public safety, and the ability for businesses to remain viable in every town centre. The physical layout of our more urban environments pose both challenges and exciting opportunities... if towns and communities are willing to embrace them.

It is true that many essential businesses have managed to remain open throughout the pandemic, and while introducing safety mitigation measures, have been able to serve their local communities well. However, with more shops and businesses (and hopefully all soon) reopening for customers, the challenge of maintaining those safety mitigation measures becomes harder.

We are committed to ensuring that all businesses, who are willing and able to open, are given the help needed to ensure their staff and customers are safe and that they have the opportunity to begin trading.

By working with businesses and local town and community councils, the aim will be to open up space for people to enjoy and improve the retail and social experience for shoppers and encouraging visitors to stay longer in our quirky and unique historic towns.

We are aiming to help shape 'greener', welcoming, resilient, and thriving town centres, which in turn will lead to happy and strong communities.



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How could our town centres look in the future?

Every town will be different, and each plan of action will be bespoke to maximise the strengths of the area and needs of the businesses. The aim is to enhancing the town centre experience, whilst giving both the shoppers and the businesses a stronger voice on the high street.

In areas where roads can be pedestrianised, there will be opportunities to install unique street furniture, creating open air dining and socialising space for cafes, restaurants, pubs and bars. Reclaimed public space can be granted licences and other areas can simply be available for people to safely meet and enjoy community life.

Where the additional repurposed space is required to facility queues and safe passing space for shoppers, it can be adorned with street furniture, seating, and planters to improve its appearance.

Imagine metropolitan street cafes, cosmopolitan and artisan spaces, open air markets, thriving independent retailers, and popular places to eat and drink... all enhanced by stylish, customised modules to facilitate safe socialising. Concepts and ideas from towns and their residents are welcome and encouraged – these are your spaces after all.

Reimagining and recreating our towns in this way will make they visually more appealing and increase the footfall of shoppers, residents, visitors and tourists. Making them, in turn, a vibrant, thriving place to do business and socialise.

This is your opportunity to embrace the opportunities and make real changes to the way our town centres are used – ensuring the viability of many businesses and healthy communities.



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What's possible?

Anything is possible. With the support of the town and community councils, businesses and residents, the council is happy to consider all options. Making our town centres safe and helping businesses to reopen and remain viable, is our main priority.

By embracing the opportunities that these extraordinary circumstances have created we have the chance to create exciting, community themed public spaces for the benefit of everyone.

This is what has already been created elsewhere:

