
Dunoon Town Centre Spaces for People Temporary Proposals

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1. This report updates Members on the outcomes of three consultation on the proposals for temporary changes in Dunoon Town Centre to increase space available to pedestrians to safely maintain social distancing as per government guidance.
- 1.2. A total of three consultations have been undertaken in relation to these proposals since the start of the covid-19 pandemic. These consultations were a community wide consultation (Jul 2020, 353 responses), targeted business consultation (Feb 2021, 35 responses) and a targeted taxi/private hire operator consultation (Feb 2021, 3 response).
- 1.3. The overall response from the community was broadly positive towards the proposed temporary changes with an average of two-thirds (66.7%) in favour. However, only around one-third (37%) of local businesses were in favour and none of the taxi/private hire operators were in favour of the proposed temporary changes.
- 1.4. Separately, Officers are progressing work to support Dunoon and south Cowal. The measures include providing improved passenger ferry waiting facilities in Dunoon, develop designs for improvements to the public realm in Argyll Gardens, improve the pedestrian signage in Dunoon, creating a smartphone app to encourage residents and visitors to explore Dunoon and supporting the establishment of a Cycle Bothy to encourage residents to consider walking/cycling for some journeys including leisure.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1. It is recommended that the Bute and Cowal members:
 - 2.1.1. Note the responses to the Community Consultation, Jul 2020 (Appendix 1), Business Consultation, Feb 2021 (Appendix 2) and Taxi/Private Hire Consultation, Feb 2021 (Appendix 3).
 - 2.1.2. Instruct Officers, given the results of the public consultation, not to take forward the proposals for temporary changes to Dunoon Town Centre to increase space for pedestrians in response to the covid-19 pandemic.

2.1.3. Welcome the other measures being implemented to support residents and visitors to Dunoon and Cowal during the covid-19 pandemic and beyond.

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3.0 INTRODUCTION

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4.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

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5.0 DETAIL

Consultations

- 5.1. A community consultation was undertaken between 16–26 July 2020, and received a total of 353 responses. The consultation was promoted via press releases, the Council's social media accounts and partner organisations.
- 5.2. Due to the low response rate to the community consultation from businesses and taxis/private hire operators, further consultations were undertaken between 08-21 Feb 2021 specifically targeting these groups. In support of these consultations, identified business addresses in the affected streets (185) and to the taxi/private hire operators in the Bute and Cowal area (30) were sent letters to inform them of the consultations. The consultations were also promoted via the Council's social media accounts, Dunoon BIDS and Dunoon Area Alliance.

Proposals for Temporary Changes

- 5.2.1. **Argyll Street:** temporarily make more space for pedestrians to safely social distance by temporarily closing Argyll St to some or all traffic.
- 5.2.2. **Hillfoot Street:** temporarily widen the narrow footway on the west side of Hillfoot Street to help pedestrians safely social distance when walking to/from Dunoon town centre and Dunoon Primary School. This would require making Hillfoot Street one-way for traffic and move the on-street parking from the west side to the east side of the street with a parking restriction in front of Dunoon Primary School.
- 5.2.3. **Kirk Brae:** temporarily widen the footway to help pedestrians to safely social distance by removing the waiting and parking on north-west side of Ferry Brae from the junction with Kirk Street through to Argyll Street.

Consultation Responses

- 5.3. Argyll Street 60% of respondents to the community consultation preferred temporary removal of traffic while 26% preferred no change, 32% of respondents to the business consultation preferred temporary removal of traffic while 68% preferred no change, none of respondents to the taxi/private hire consultation preferred temporary removal of traffic with all 3 preferring no change.
- 5.4. Hillfoot St, 73% of community respondents selected an option which supported temporary one-way traffic in Hillfoot Street while 27% preferred no change, 43% of respondents to the business consultation preferred temporary one-way traffic while 57% preferred no change, 2 of respondents to the taxi/private hire consultation preferred temporary one-way traffic while 1 preferred no change.

- 5.5. Kirk Brae, 67% of community respondents indicated that additional footway space in Kirk Brae would make it easier to social distance while 33% didn't support an increase in footway space. 37% of respondents to the business consultation preferred the temporary footway widening in Kirk Brae while 63% preferred no change, none of respondents to the taxi/private hire consultation preferred the temporary footway widening in Kirk Brae all 3 preferring no change.
- 5.6. Further to the online consultations a number of emails were received from local businesses and residents in relation to the proposed temporary changes, with the majority of submissions opposing or raising concerns regarding the proposals. While it has not been possible to include these responses within the results of the engagement surveys these submissions have been taken into account when forming the recommendations to members.

Evidence to support approach

- 5.7. Evidence from academic studies and similar measures implemented elsewhere in Scotland during the covid-19 pandemic indicate that increasing the space available to pedestrians within town centres, even when it involves the removal of some or all motor vehicles, makes town centres a more attractive destination resulting in increased footfall and increased spend in local businesses. While not examined in the referenced work below, it would be reasonable to expect that an increase in people travelling to Dunoon Town Centre would result in an increase in business for taxi/private hire.
- 5.8. The Pedestrian Pound (Living Streets, 2018) found improving opportunities to walk and/or cycle, including where motor vehicles are removed to create additional space, increased footfall by between around 30%, with retail sales increasing by 20% - 46%. www.livingstreets.org.uk/policy-and-resources/our-policy/high-streets
- 5.9. Active Travel and Economic Performance (Sustran, Living Streets, TAS; 2017) found pedestrianisation of town centres increase footfall by an average of 30%. The research also identified that while shoppers visiting town centres by car had a higher spend per single visit, shoppers arriving by sustainable travel modes (pedestrian, cyclist, public transport) visited more frequently and had a higher spend over a month. www.sustrans.org.uk/media/4472/4472.pdf and www.sustrans.org.uk/our-blog/opinion/2020/may/what-are-the-economic-impacts-of-making-more-space-for-walking-and-cycling
- 5.10. Economic Benefits of the Reallocation of Street Space (Ryder Architecture, 2020) found that walking and cycling projects can increase retail sales by 30 percent or more, and that if more space is given for walking and cycling and less to cars, the absence of customers arriving by car is more than compensated by people arriving on foot or by bike. This review of evidence also identified that Shoppers accessing the town centre on foot or by bicycle do so more frequently than those accessing the centre by car; that Cycle parking can generate up to five times the retail spend for the same area of car parking; and, that 38% of local residents visit their nearest town centre several

times a week for small 'top up' or leisure trips. www.ryderarchitecture.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Economic-benefits-of-the-reallocation-of-space-3.pdf

- 5.10.1. A recent practical example of the benefits of increasing pedestrian space is Union Street, Dundee, which has had significant reallocation of roadspace from motor vehicles to pedestrians during the covid-19 pandemic. Union Street was closed to motor vehicle in July 2020. Following initial concerns, by September 84% of businesses on the street felt the changes had been positive and 62% said it had been good for their business. Access was retained for delivery vehicles outside trading hours and local bus services were re-routed to neighbouring streets. www.dundee.gov.uk/news/article?article_ref=3746
www.dundeeandanguschamber.co.uk/news/Union-Street-Pedestrian-Zone-0_8522.html
www.eveningtelegraph.co.uk/fp/football-boom-leads-to-calls-for-pedestrianisation-of-union-street-to-become-permanent/

Finances

- 5.11. In April 2020, the Scottish Government announced a single-year fund to assist councils to install temporary measures which would support safe social distancing for pedestrians and/or cyclists undertaking essential journeys during the covid-19 pandemic. The definition of essential journeys includes shopping, education and travel to work. The fund, Spaces for People, is being administered by Sustrans on behalf of the Scottish Government and was open in early summer 2020 for competitive applications from all Council and similar public bodies. Due to a significant over subscription, the value of the available funding was increased from £10M to £30M. Argyll and Bute Council successfully applied for a total of £915,000, with £465,000 allocated to measures related to town centres and £450,000 for measures related to access to schools. To date a total of £740,000 has been expended across Argyll and Bute with Officers working to expend the remaining £175,000 by 30 April 2021.
- 5.12. The Scottish Government has confirmed that there are no plans for similar funding to be made available in 2021-22. Some flexibility has been made for the carry over of up to 10% of the funding into 2021-22 to pay for the ongoing maintenance and removal of temporary measures installed before April 2021. The final date on which any costs for the installation of new measures can be claimed is 14 May 2021. Allowing for the necessary time to compile, validate and submit the grant claim, all works to be funded via the Spaces for People fund must be implemented by 30 April 2021.
- 5.13. The deadline of 30 April 2021 for implementation of all works eligible for the external Scottish Government Spaces for People funding would be a challenging timescale to implement these temporary proposals and would require considerable focus by the Roads and Infrastructure Service given the requirement to develop and implement the necessary Temporary Traffic Regulation Order (TTRO) and supporting physical measures. Any works after 30 April 2021 would require to be funded from internal budgets.

Longer-term options

- 5.14. The consultations demonstrated support from the community in relation to the proposed temporary measures. This may indicate that there is community support for longer-term improvements to the pedestrian space and facilities in Dunoon Town Centre. Should there be community support for longer-term changes; members could consider the potential for development of longer-term options to increase the pedestrian space in Dunoon Town Centre.
- 5.15. Longer-term options could be developed on a permanent basis or on a reoccurring but temporary basis, for example, Edinburgh City Council has an Open Streets programme that closes identified key retail streets to all traffic other than pedestrians and cyclists on the first Sunday of every month between 10am and 5pm.
- 5.16. Any development of potential longer-term options should be led by the Roads and Infrastructure Service as the service responsible for the roads and footways within Dunoon Town Centre and include further community and business engagement to identify the level of support for changes beyond the covid-19 pandemic.

Other Works in Dunoon

- 5.17. Dunoon ferry passenger waiting area. Proposals to improve the covered passenger waiting area for the CALMAC operated Dunoon passenger ferry were strongly supported by the community during the consultation in July 2020. Officers in the Roads and Infrastructure service are working to deliver a new covered passenger waiting area to enable passengers to safely social distance while waiting for the ferry. These works are forecast to cost £40,000.
- 5.18. Argyll Gardens public realm. As a key public space, Argyll Gardens provides a focus within Dunoon town centre. The design work to be commissioned will seek to develop a cohesive design for Argyll Gardens to tie in with the wider regeneration activities in Dunoon building on the investment to the lighting and events infrastructure. These design works are forecast to cost £5,000.
- 5.19. Dunoon pedestrian signage. Refurbishment and replacement of the traditional fingerpost style pedestrian signs in Dunoon. Signs will be repainted white and black to match the other historical signs in Dunoon, 54 finger blades will be updated and replaced. A review of blue cycle road signs has identified a number of out of date signs that will be removed. These works are costing £17,800 funded from the Smarter Choices Smarter Places programme.
- 5.20. Discover Dunoon smartphone app. Development of a downloadable smartphone app providing a series of digital trails within Dunoon that will encourage residents and visitors to explore their town. The digital trails will complement existing information, displays and exhibitions and include a range of media including photographs, augmented reality, audio, video and text. The app will also provide a 'treasure trail' game aimed at younger residents. A similar app was developed for Campbeltown in 2020 and is available to download for android and apple phones (search "Discover Campbeltown").

The development of the smartphone app is costing £17,900 funded from the Smarter Choices Smarter Places programme.

- 5.21. Dunoon Cycle Bothy. Following the successful establishment of the Ardrishaig Cycle Bothy, Officers are supporting Cycling UK to establish a Cycle Bothy project in Dunoon based on the successful model of the Gourock Cycle Bothy which has been operating for a number of years. The Dunoon Cycle Bothy will provide support to residents to trial walking and/or cycling including led health walks, led cycle rides, family cycle rides, opportunity to trial electric bikes and advice on the benefits of walking/cycling. Argyll and Bute Council contributed £15,000 from the Smarter Choices Smarter Places programme towards the costs of establishing and operating the Cycle Bothy. It is proposed to complete the refurbishment of the Castle Lodge building to base the Bothy at this location 100% funded by Crown Estate Funding.

6.0 CONCLUSION

- 6.1. The proposals to temporarily reallocate roadscape in Argyll Street, Hillfoot Street and Kirk Brae to pedestrians are supported by research that identifies that similar measures in other locations have had a positive impact on footfall and the income of local businesses. The community consultation (July 2020) identified that two-thirds (66.7%) of respondents supported the proposals, although significantly lower levels were identified in local businesses (Feb 2021) where around one-third (37%) and none of the taxi/private hire operators (Feb 2021) who responded supported the proposals.

7.0 IMPLICATIONS

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| 7.1. Policy | Implementation of these temporary changes would support the Council's SOA outcomes 2: We have infrastructure that supports sustainable growth and 5: People live active, healthier and independent lives. The project also supports achievement of the Scottish Government's objectives set out in the Cycling Action Plan for Scotland (CAPS) and Let's Get Scotland Walking - The National Walking Strategy. |
| 7.2. Financial | External funding received from the Scottish Government's Spaces for People programme would fund any design and construction prior to end-April 2021. The council have not contributed any funding to design or capital costs. |
| 7.3. Legal | Input would be required from Legal Services to support the necessary Temporary Traffic Regulation Order (TTRO). |
| 7.4. HR | None. |
| 7.5. Fairer Scotland Duty: | |

6.5.1 Equalities	The proposed temporary changes would increase the opportunities for residents and visitors to Dunoon to travel more sustainably and actively by walking, wheeling and cycling.
6.5.2 Socio-economic Duty	The proposed temporary changes would increase the opportunities for those with mobility aids including wheelchairs and parents/guardians with a child's pram or buggy to access Dunoon town centre more easily.
6.5.3 Islands	There are no adverse impacts.
7.6. Risk	There is a reputational risk to the Council if the implementation of the temporary changes was not undertaken in a sensitive and timely manner, taking account of the feedback received from the engagement undertaken to date.
7.7. Customer Services	None.

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Appendix 1: Dunoon Spaces for People Community Consultation Report (July 2020)

Appendix 2: Dunoon Spaces for People Business Consultation Report (February 2021)

Appendix 3: Dunoon Spaces for People Taxi/Private Hire Operator Consultation Report (February 2021)