



Name of the Officer completing the evaluation

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Please give a brief description of the aims of the proposal

Removal of temporary traffic lights in Bridge Street, Usk that were introduced as a covid-19 re-opening towns measure.

The temporary traffic lights were introduced in response to the covid-19 pandemic as part of a suite of measures to support the re-opening of Usk town centre and to allow residents and visitors to safely support local businesses. The trial measures were developed through collaboration with County Councillors, Usk Town Council and business representatives on the Business Resillience Forum. The primary aim of the temporary traffic lights was to reduce vehicular traffic to single lane allowing a widened pavement to enable social distancing, because the pavements on Bridge Street are narrow.

All of the re-opening towns measures have been altered and adjusted in response to feedback from stakeholders. In the case of Usk, amendments include repositioning the traffic light heads, providing unloading/drop off bays, replacing the traffic lights with 'smart lights' that can extend the green light phase based on radar monitoring of queue lengths, provision of cctv cameras to detect red light jumpers, replacing the barriers with attractive planted barrels, and providing 'keep clear' markings at key junctions to aide traffic flow.

In the last fortnight, feedback has reported a significant increase in traffic volumes, now that schools and most businesses are re-opened. There have been at least three instances when the traffic lights have failed, going all red and causing significant tailbacks and frustration to drivers. Other issues continue to be caused by 'red light jumpers' as

	<p>this puts the lights into a safety mode (all red). Amberon has confirmed that the lights in place are the same smart lights and that, save for those instances above, are working correctly. However, it is apparent that the system in place is not working with the increased volume of traffic, resulting in increasingly negative community feedback and calls for the lights to be removed. Increased queue length and duration has the potential to impact on air quality, and the data shows that although nitrogen dioxide levels remain well below the trigger thresholds, they have returned to near pre-covid levels having dropped significantly during the lockdown period (noting that air quality is affected by multiple factors including wind, rainfall, seasons, traffic volumes and traffic flow).</p> <p>It is therefore proposed to remove the temporary traffic lights and reinstate two way traffic. We will work with the Town Council to engage with the local resident and business community to consider a vision for Usk's future including options for permanent measures to manage traffic flow through Usk town centre (noting that this administration has committed to <i>not</i> introducing a one way system during its term).</p>
Name of Service area Placemaking, Regeneration, Highways and Flooding	Date 5 th May 2021

1. Are your proposals going to affect any people or groups of people with protected characteristics? Please explain the impact, the evidence you have used and any action you are taking below.

Protected Characteristics	Describe any positive impacts your proposal has on the protected characteristic	Describe any negative impacts your proposal has on the protected characteristic	What has been/will be done to mitigate any negative impacts or better contribute to positive impacts?
Age	<p>Feedback is showing that increased traffic queue length and duration is causing school children to arrive late to school. There is a concern that increased traffic queues could adversely impact on air quality, with stationary queuing traffic in close proximity to homes and businesses on Bridge Street. Concerns about health impacts on traffic fumes have been expressed by residents of Castle Court, which provides older person accommodation, and one business. Removing the traffic lights would address these issues by removing the cause of the queues.</p>	<p>Older people are recognised as being more vulnerable to serious health consequences if they catch covid-19. Removing the ability for social distancing via widened pavements therefore poses a greater risk to these older age groups. Parents and carers with pushchairs will have limited opportunity to socially distance or pass by queues outside shops and businesses where entry is limited to a few customers at a time. Those who are without internet access/capability to shop, or who are lonely and would benefit from safely seeing other people, would be detrimentally impacted if the removal of social distancing provisions means they no longer feel safe visiting Bridge Street.</p>	<p>Wales is now in Covid response level 3. Case numbers are low in Usk and a very high proportion of older people in Wales have now received both covid vaccinations, offering them the maximum protection currently available.</p> <p>Visitors and shoppers will be advised to socially distance where possible and to wear a face mask where social distancing is not possible.</p>
Disability	<p>The widened pavement enabled by the temporary traffic lights included a change in level between the footpath and closed off carriageway. This was a potential hazard to partially sighted people, although it was mitigated by red markings along the kerbline, and there were no known reported incidents in Usk relating to the level difference.</p>	<p>Removing the temporary traffic lights will mean that the pedestrian space returns to being just the narrow pavements. This reduces opportunities for people to socially distance and is a particular problem for wheelchair and mobility aide users, who may have difficulty passing by queues outside shops and businesses where entry is limited to a few customers at a time.</p>	<p>Wales is now in Covid response level 3. Case numbers are low in Usk and a very high proportion of people in Wales with underlying health conditions or disabilities have now received both covid vaccinations, offering them the maximum protection currently available.</p> <p>Visitors and shoppers will be advised to socially distance where possible and to wear a face mask where social distancing is not possible.</p>

Protected Characteristics	Describe any positive impacts your proposal has on the protected characteristic	Describe any negative impacts your proposal has on the protected characteristic	What has been/will be done to mitigate any negative impacts or better contribute to positive impacts?
Gender reassignment	None	None	None
Marriage or civil partnership	None	None	None
Pregnancy or maternity	There is a concern that increased traffic queues could adversely impact on air quality, with stationary queuing traffic in close proximity to homes and businesses on Bridge Street. Concerns about health impacts of traffic fumes have been expressed by one business with regards to a pregnant employee. Removing the cause of the queues would alleviate this potential problem.	Parents and carers with pushchairs will have limited opportunity to socially distance or pass by queues outside shops and businesses where entry is limited to a few customers at a time. Pregnant women may feel more conscious of being unable to socially distance and are unlikely to have had the covid vaccination while pregnant.	Visitors and shoppers will be advised to socially distance where possible and to wear a face mask where social distancing is not possible.
Race	None	None	None
Religion or Belief	None	None	None
Sex	None	None	None

Protected Characteristics	Describe any positive impacts your proposal has on the protected characteristic	Describe any negative impacts your proposal has on the protected characteristic	What has been/will be done to mitigate any negative impacts or better contribute to positive impacts?
Sexual Orientation	None	None	None

2. The Socio-economic Duty and Social Justice

The Socio-economic Duty requires public bodies to have due regard to the need to reduce inequalities of outcome which result from socio-economic disadvantage when taking key decisions. This duty aligns with our commitment as an authority to Social Justice.

	Describe any positive impacts your proposal has in respect of people suffering socio economic disadvantage	Describe any negative impacts your proposal has in respect of people suffering socio economic disadvantage.	What has been/will be done to mitigate any negative impacts or better contribute to positive impacts?
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<p>Socio-economic Duty and Social Justice</p>	<p>Removing the cause of increasingly long traffic queues will reduce journey time for car travel and public transport and will marginally reduce fuel consumption and therefore travel costs, however this benefit is likely to be negligible. Some residents have stated that they avoid Usk for shopping due to the traffic queues caused by the temporary lights. Retail, service and hospitality businesses have been badly impacted by the pandemic and resultant lockdown: these businesses often provide a significant number of jobs albeit typically relatively low paid. Removing the lights would therefore remove any potential harmful impact on local businesses and the employment and local economic benefit they offer.</p>	<p>As described above, the loss of the temporarily widened pavements will impact on the ease with which wheelchair and mobility aide users can travel around the town centre to access services or employment in terms of passing queues outside shops or pedestrians coming towards them.</p> <p>There is a risk that pedestrians will step into the carriageway into the path of oncoming traffic, however this is the original situation and the temporary traffic lights were a temporary response to the covid pandemic.</p> <p>People experiencing poverty may not have access to internet shopping or non-cash payment, so ensuring high streets are safe to return to will assist their opportunities to access goods and services, as lockdown easing allows businesses to trade. Data suggests that there is a link between poverty and vulnerability to coronavirus, so a safe environment that enables social distancing is particularly important.</p>	<p>The Council will work with the Town Council to engage with the local community to further develop a vision of Usk including options for managing traffic through the town centre, to see if there are ways to enhance the pedestrian environment. It might be that a permanent traffic light system can be designed that does not suffer from the difficulties now experienced with the temporary traffic lights, however this will need modelling and community consultation.</p> <p>Wales is now in Covid response level 3. Case numbers are low in Usk and a very high proportion of over 40s and people in Wales with underlying health conditions or disabilities have now received at least one covid vaccination, reducing the risk to their health. The vaccination programme is being rolled out at pace and the UK Government has suggested that social distancing requirements may end in England in June 2021. There is no announcement yet for Wales.</p>
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Policy making and the Welsh language.

How does your proposal impact on the following aspects of the Council's Welsh Language Standards:	Describe the positive impacts of this proposal	Describe the negative impacts of this proposal	What has been/will be done to mitigate any negative impacts or better contribute to positive impacts
<p>Policy Making</p> <p>Effects on the use of the Welsh language,</p> <p>Promoting Welsh language</p> <p>Treating the Welsh language no less favourably</p>	No impact	No impact	n/a
<p>Operational</p> <p>Recruitment & Training of workforce</p>	No impact. The removal of the traffic lights and associated traffic management measures must be undertaken by Amberon, the contractor appointed to provide the measures. The barrel planters will be removed by the Council's Operations team for relocation within Usk where possible.	No impact.	n/a
<p>Service delivery</p> <p>Use of Welsh language in service delivery</p> <p>Promoting use of the language</p>	No impact	No impact	n/a


4. Does your proposal deliver any of the well-being goals below? Please explain the impact (positive and negative) you expect, together with suggestions of how to mitigate negative impacts or better contribute to the goal. There's no need to put something in every box if it is not relevant!


Well Being Goal	Does the proposal contribute to this goal? Describe the positive and negative impacts.	What actions have been/will be taken to mitigate any negative impacts or better contribute to positive impacts?
A prosperous Wales Efficient use of resources, skilled, educated people, generates wealth, provides jobs	There is growing community feedback that the measures are deterring shoppers and visitors and harming local businesses. Although it is not possible to evidence this assertion, as lockdown has affected business revenue, it is a concern, and runs contrary to the objective of putting the measures in place originally.	
A resilient Wales Maintain and enhance biodiversity and ecosystems that support resilience and can adapt to change (e.g. climate change)	The traffic lights were intended to provide an improved pedestrian environment and to encourage active travel. However, increased queuing has the potential to harm air quality, and we need to be mindful of the status of Bridge Street as a A road.	We will engage with the local community to consider options for permanent traffic management measures to see if a solution can be found, allowing the pedestrian environment on Bridge Street to be improved and active travel encouraged.
A healthier Wales People's physical and mental wellbeing is maximized and health impacts are understood	The measures allow for widened pedestrian areas and seek to prioritise pedestrians and support active travel. Removing the lights arguably reinforces the priority of the car which is not ideal and goes against national policy on the transport hierarchy and active travel. However, the impacts caused by the traffic lights no longer operating effectively with increased traffic volumes means the benefits of the temporary traffic lights are no longer outweighing the negatives.	We will engage with the local community to consider options for permanent traffic management measures to see if a solution can be found, allowing the pedestrian environment on Bridge Street to be improved.
A Wales of cohesive communities Communities are attractive, viable, safe and well connected	The purpose of introducing the traffic lights was to support the economic health of our High Streets by enabling people to safely return to the town centres. The amended physical measures such as the planter barrels have been welcomed as an attractive	The planted barrels will be retained in the town where possible, although it will not be possible to locate them on Bridge Street due to the narrow pavements.



Well Being Goal	Does the proposal contribute to this goal? Describe the positive and negative impacts.	What actions have been/will be taken to mitigate any negative impacts or better contribute to positive impacts?
	addition to the town but current feedback is that the traffic queues are making the town an unattractive proposition to visitors and residents.	
<p>A globally responsible Wales Taking account of impact on global well-being when considering local social, economic and environmental wellbeing</p>	<p>Monmouthshire is a county of historic market towns blessed with high quality independent traders and tourism attractions. As such, it is important that our towns and villages are safe and attractive to visitors and tourism, being places where people are safe and confident visiting and spend some time. However, the current temporary traffic lights on Bridge Street are not functioning effectively now and the resultant queues are detracting from the town's appeal.</p>	
<p>A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language Culture, heritage and Welsh language are promoted and protected. People are encouraged to do sport, art and recreation</p>	<p>Monmouthshire has a greater proliferation of small businesses than any other county in Wales. The measures were introduced to seek to create an environment to support those seeking to invest or expand in retail thereby adding to the prosperity of Usk. However, the current temporary traffic lights are not functioning effectively now and the resultant queues are detracting from the town.</p>	<p>The planted barrels will be retained in the town where possible, although it will not be possible to locate them on Bridge Street due to the narrow pavements. This will reinforce Usk's appeal as the 'town of flowers'.</p>
<p>A more equal Wales People can fulfil their potential no matter what their background or circumstances</p>	<p>The equalities assessment above indicates that removal of the traffic lights is likely to benefit school children and those with respiratory difficulties living or working on Bridge Street, but would be potentially detrimental to older people and the disabled. It was hoped that businesses could make use of the enlarged pedestrian area for example for outdoor café space but there was very limited business take</p>	


Well Being Goal	Does the proposal contribute to this goal? Describe the positive and negative impacts.	What actions have been/will be taken to mitigate any negative impacts or better contribute to positive impacts?
	<p>up of that opportunity, with the most interest shown by businesses that unfortunately were unable to benefit being just outside the signal controlled area. There is limited evidence that the pavement widening supported local businesses on Bridge Street with increased footfall and increasing feedback that the traffic lights are now having a detrimental impact due to traffic queues. On balance it is recommended that the temporary trial traffic lights be removed and community engagement carried out in partnership with Usk Town Council to understand if other options could improve traffic flow and the pedestrian environment. This would include considering if permanent traffic lights could avoid the problems experienced with the temporary lights in recent weeks.</p>	

4. How has your proposal embedded and prioritised the sustainable governance principles in its development?

Sustainable Development Principle	Does your proposal demonstrate you have met this principle? If yes, describe how. If not explain why.	Are there any additional actions to be taken to mitigate any negative impacts or better contribute to positive impacts?
 <p>Balancing short term need with long term and planning for the future</p>	<p>The re-opening towns measures are trial measures to enable visitors and shoppers to safely socially distance. Live feedback was sought throughout to enable measures to be tweaked, added to, changed or scrapped as applicable. It was always intended that if measures were successful, they could be made permanent, subject to further consultation. Conversely, if unsuccessful they would be removed. In this instance, the benefits realised while the temporary lights were operating successfully are now outweighed by the problems now experienced. A pragmatic response is required that balances those pedestrian environment and health benefits during the height of the pandemic with the potential air quality concerns and negative impact on the perceptions of Usk for businesses and visitors.</p>	<p>We will engage with the local community to consider options for permanent traffic management measures to see if a solution can be found, allowing the pedestrian environment on Bridge Street to be improved and active travel encouraged.</p>

Sustainable Development Principle	Does your proposal demonstrate you have met this principle? If yes, describe how. If not explain why.	Are there any additional actions to be taken to mitigate any negative impacts or better contribute to positive impacts?
 <p>Working together with other partners to deliver objectives</p>	<p>The re-opening towns measures were drafted in collaboration with County Councillors, Town and Community Councils and business representatives sitting on the Business Resillience Forum. A community survey received nearly 1500 responses which have helped shape the measures proposed across the county. A further survey helped inform active travel proposals to support town centres. A series of review meeting has been held to discuss how the measures are working and provide an update on feedback received and changes made in the interim, with several site meetings between officers and Usk Town Councillors. MCC officers and the Cabinet Members for Infrastructure and for Regeneration met with the Town Council again on 4th May 2021 to discuss the problems being experienced and reported and to discuss the proposal to remove the temporary traffic lights.</p>	<p>We will engage with the local community, in partnership with the Town Council, to consider options for permanent traffic management measures to see if a solution can be found, allowing the pedestrian environment on Bridge Street to be improved and active travel encouraged.</p>

Sustainable Development Principle	Does your proposal demonstrate you have met this principle? If yes, describe how. If not explain why.	Are there any additional actions to be taken to mitigate any negative impacts or better contribute to positive impacts?
 <p>Involving those with an interest and seeking their views</p> <p>Involvement</p>	<p>The re-opening towns measures were drafted in collaboration with County Councillors, Town and Community Councils and business representatives sitting on the Business Resillience Forum. A community survey received nearly 1500 responses which helped shape the initial measures across the county. A further survey helped inform active travel proposals to support town centres. A series of review meetings has been held to discuss how the measures are working and provide an update on feedback received and changes made in the interim, with several site meetings between officers and Usk Town Councillors. MCC officers and the Cabinet Members for Infrastructure and for Regereration met with the Town Council again on 4th May 2021 to discuss the problems being experienced and reported and to discuss the proposal to remove the temporary traffic lights.</p>	<p>Further feedback on successes and problems can be submitted via live feedback on the measures.</p>
 <p>Putting resources into preventing problems occurring or getting worse</p> <p>Prevention</p>	<p>Feedback is increasingly expressing the view that the temporary traffic ights are no longer working effectively, with longer queue lengths and queue times. Amberon has advised that the lights are operating correctly. Some of the issues may be being caused by red light jumpers, but this does not account for all of the failings. Air quality data indicates that nitrogen dioxide levels are nearing pre-Covid levels at the two sensors near the traffic light heads in particular. Although air quality is affected by many factor including wind, rainfall, seasons, traffic flows and traffic volumes, it is considered appropriate to take precautionary preventative steps now to prevent his problem getting worse and removing the temporary lights.</p>	<p>A Traffic Regulation Order has been published for consultation to introduce single yellow lines prohibiting parking and waiting at key times near the chip shop and fire station, which will assist traffic flows.</p>

Sustainable Development Principle	Does your proposal demonstrate you have met this principle? If yes, describe how. If not explain why.	Are there any additional actions to be taken to mitigate any negative impacts or better contribute to positive impacts?
 <p>Considering impact on all wellbeing goals together and on other bodies</p>	<p>The proposal seeks to balance the competing needs of shoppers, businesses, pedestrians, cyclists and drivers (given the rurality, topography and demographic of the county it is appreciated that car use will remain essential for some people).</p>	

5. Council has agreed the need to consider the impact its decisions has on the following important responsibilities: Corporate Parenting and Safeguarding. Are your proposals going to affect any of these responsibilities?

	Describe any positive impacts your proposal has	Describe any negative impacts your proposal has	What will you do/ have you done to mitigate any negative impacts or better contribute to positive impacts?
Safeguarding	Not applicable	Not applicable	n/a
Corporate Parenting	Not applicable	Not applicable	n/a

6. What evidence and data has informed the development of your proposal?

The covid response trial measures were informed by Councillors, Usk Town Council, business representatives, community feedback and officer advice. The measures were adjusted and amended in response to feedback.

Air quality data for January 2020 to March 2021 has also been reviewed.

The decision to remove the temporary traffic lights has been informed by the above WFGAEQI Assessment, by considering feedback received from the local community from complaints logged and on social media, and discussion with elected community representatives on 4th May.

- *Equalities dashboard link.* [Equality data dashboard for EQIA's 2020.xlsx](#)

7. SUMMARY: As a result of completing this form, what are the main positive and negative impacts of your proposal, how have they informed/changed the development of the proposal so far and what will you be doing in future?

The easing of lockdown restrictions and the reopening of schools and businesses have resulted in increased traffic volumes in Usk and we have been aware of longer queue times and queue lengths along Bridge Street recently. We are concerned that with the increased traffic levels, the temporary lights are no longer operating effectively and have concluded that now is the right time to remove them. Although pollution levels remain well below trigger levels, we are also concerned that increased queue lengths could result in a potential impact on air quality, which we want to avoid.

The main negative impacts are the inability for shoppers and visitors to socially distance where pavements are narrow or where popular small businesses have queues outside. This will particularly affect disabled people and parents/carers with pushchairs.

The main positive impacts are on businesses who may be losing trade and on those with respiratory problems particularly those who live or work near the traffic lights where the queues are located.

8. ACTIONS: As a result of completing this form are there any further actions you will be undertaking? Please detail them below, if applicable.

What are you going to do	When are you going to do it?	Who is responsible
Community engagement with Usk residents and businesses, in partnership with Usk Town Council, to identify a town vision and look at options for managing traffic flow through the town.	Spring/Summer 2021	Mark Hand
The Council will continue to work with Usk Town Council and Lorry Watch volunteers to monitor the current regulations, which prohibit lorries exceeding 7.5 tonnes in weight unless they require access for deliveries and loading.	Ongoing	Graham Kinsella / Gareth
The Council will continue to work with Gwent Police and GoSafe to ensure the 20mph speed limit in Usk town is observed, considering additional awareness and advisory measures as necessary	Ongoing	Graham Kinsella
A Traffic Regulation Order has been published for consultation to introduce single yellow lines prohibiting parking and waiting at key times near the chip shop and fire station, which will assist traffic flows.	June/July 2021	Graham Kinsella

9. VERSION CONTROL: The Equality and Future Generations Evaluation should be used at the earliest stage, such as informally within your service, and then further developed throughout the decision making process. It is important to keep a record of this process to demonstrate how you have considered and built in equality and future generations considerations wherever possible.

Version No.	Decision making stage	Date considered	Brief description of any amendments made following consideration

1	Officer sign off of the original reopening town measures for all towns, with agreement from Cabinet Member for Highways and Infrastructure and Cabinet Member for Enterprise and Land Use Planning	18 th June 2020	Amendments to proposals made during previous ten days from meetings with businesses and Town/Community representatives.
2	Project update for all towns as measures are amended and street furniture installed	18 th March 2021	Review of parking provision and accessibility
3	Officer sign off of proposal to remove the temporary traffic lights in Bridge Street, with agreement from Cabinet Member for Highways and Infrastructure and Cabinet Member for Enterprise and Land Use Planning and following meeting with Usk Town Council 4th May 2021.	5 th May 2021	This proposal to remove the traffic lights is a reversal of the original decision above. The easing of lockdown restrictions and the reopening of schools and businesses have resulted in increased traffic volumes in Usk and we have been aware of longer queue times and queue lengths along Bridge Street recently. We are concerned that with the increased traffic levels, the temporary lights are no longer operating effectively and have concluded that now is the right time to remove them. Although pollution levels remain well below trigger levels, we are also concerned that increased queue lengths could result in a potential impact on air quality, which we want to avoid.