

Criteria for Delivery of the Welsh Government Transforming Towns Thematic Covid – 19 Response 2020/21.

Overview

The Minister and Deputy Minister for Housing and Local Government have approved the proposal to re-purpose elements of the Transforming Towns 2020/21 budget allocation to allow Local Authority partners across Wales a much greater degree of flexibility in adapting to the comprehensive social distancing changes required in town centres as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

It is recognised that comprehensive social distancing measures will need to be introduced in our town, city and district centres to support the reopening of non-essential retail and wider town centre businesses. This is necessary in order to both encourage people to return to the high street once lockdown is eased and to ensure there is a general sense of wellbeing, safety and confidence in these areas.

It is therefore agreed that elements of the Transforming Towns 2020/21 budget be allocated to COVID -19 recovery so as to allow a greater degree of flexibility in adapting to the short term changes required in town centres as a result of the pandemic.

This is a capital fund only, so revenue expenditure will be considered ineligible. This criteria for support will be reviewed on a regular basis in order to ensure that they reflect any new Welsh Government guidance or agreed amendments.

Target Towns

This support is available to all town centres across Wales.

This support is available in the town centres initially prioritised within the Targeted Regeneration Investment programme. It should be delivered within town centre locations and should be aligned with the agreed red line boundaries set out in the approved Regional Plans for Regeneration.

In addition, this support is also available in other priority locations where there is a clear need and opportunity. Any newly chosen locations should be either town, city or district centres. Where possible these new locations will build on other Welsh Government or public sector support so as to enforce natural clustering and investment multiplier effects.

Any new proposals brought forward as a result of this funding should, where possible, be aligned with local reopening plans for town, city and district centres.

Please discuss new settlement proposals with your local Welsh Government Regeneration Manager.

It is important that local authority partners engage in a comprehensive manner locally across all town centres so as to gauge interest from all stakeholders in accessing this funding. It is important that all innovative and creative ideas are captured in delivering this new opportunity.

Who can apply for this funding?

The funding can be accessed by Local Authorities, the private sector or Third sector partners. It will be the responsibility of Local Authority partners to promote this new offer and advertise its availability and the process for application.

It should be noted that this support is also available to town councils, community councils and Business Improvement Districts (BIDS) where they exist. This will ensure that key stakeholders and groups have equal and adequate opportunity to deliver on their local Covid – 19 plans and re-opening strategies.

Local Authority partners are encouraged to use this funding directly, particularly where there are larger scale interventions required or where there are natural clusters of businesses who would collectively benefit. This approach would also ensure Local Authority partners have more control on design, safety and uniformity of approach, particularly in regards to visual amenity and public realm. There is also the potential for Local Authorities to benefit from economies of scale if a wider area or whole town based approach were to be adopted. This though is a decision for local delivery.

This funding is being made available up to a maximum intervention rate of 80%. It is for the local authority to determine the appropriate level of intervention for individual projects; however, it is the responsibility of partners to ensure that 'best value' is achieved in delivery. In this regard, where projects may be delivered through loan funding, or at a lower intervention rate, this should be examined so as to ensure the maximum level of projects are delivered and the greatest level of impact is achieved. If the local authority is the recipient of the grant then the intervention rate should be agreed with the Welsh Government.

Regional Delivery

Each region will have a designated lead body which will have responsibility for administering this funding. This role will include the responsibility for legal arrangements, managing the distribution of the funding to individual Local Authorities, receipt of claims and evidence from regional partners and submission of claims to the Welsh Government. It is the responsibility of the lead regional Local Authority to

provide quarterly update reports, inclusive of photographic evidence, to the Regional Town Centre Action Groups and Welsh Government Regeneration Managers. Individual Local Authorities will be responsible for assessing applications, awarding funding, overseeing delivery and assessing and processing project claims before submission to the lead body.

Decisions on the quantum of funding allocated to each regional Local Authority partner should be made at a local level whether this be on a needs basis or proportional distribution.

What can be supported through this Thematic Covid - 19 fund?

This proposal is an urgent and immediate response from Welsh Government, working in partnership with Local Authorities across Wales, to address the issues faced in town centres as a result of the Covid – 19 pandemic. It is designed to ensure that our town centres are working economically and, more importantly, are safe environments.

This funding allocation is aligned with the Welsh Government £15.4 million Transport Funding. This funding is complementary and strategic alignment should be demonstrated where possible.

This funding is to be used for external interventions in order to facilitate social distancing and a lower density of occupation in external areas where customers and members of the public are to congregate, be served food or drink or rest.

Applicants, working in conjunction with Local Authority partners, will need to consider the risk of each intervention and how any potential areas of concern may be addressed. Key considerations on risk and their mitigation will need to be documented prior to implementation. As such Risk Registers should be revisited and revised as often as necessary so as to ensure they are aligned with any revised guidance issued.

Any physical measures support through this funding mechanism will need to be COVID secure; they will need to be accompanied by appropriate behavioural measures such as signage, guidance and training of staff where necessary.

The specific interventions proposed consider the following, but further interventions may be suggested by Local Authorities:

- Outdoor awnings, canopies, igloo bubbles, outdoor heating, marquee coverings. These external enhancements need to be delivered in such a way so as to ensure that they are aligned with current medical advice. They should facilitate outdoor trading space. The effects of sunlight, wind direction and intensity, social distance and effective handwashing should all be considered

alongside any intervention. Specifically in regards to the use of physical coverings, awnings, gazebos or marquees should be open on 3 or 4 sides so as to be considered and treated as an external environment. Coverings, awnings, marquees or gazebos need to be either transparent or of light cover so as to ensure transmission of sunlight. It is imperative that if marquees are to be adopted for use they need to be effectively used and policed so as not to allow for an excessive confined congregation which would not accommodate effective social distancing.

- Outdoor tables, chairs and seating provision. To be delivered in accordance with current guidance on social distancing requirements.
- Outdoor screening, bollards, planters. To be delivered in accordance with current social distancing requirements. Any proposals delivered should not impede pedestrian traffic on pavements, pathways or public realm areas.
- Outdoor serving facilities.
- The establishment of parklets (using parking spaces and the provision of decking on which to construct timber structures so providing small covered areas offering some weather protection).
- Small Green Infrastructure schemes especially where there is seating provision.
- The establishment and adoption and temporary use of vacant trading spaces to facilitate overspill, meanwhile uses, pop ups and entrepreneurship action
- Electricity supply and lighting to outdoor trading space.
- The establishments of outdoor market provision to include electricity provision.
- Social distancing measures
- Other interventions can also be considered that facilitate social distancing and a lower density of occupation in the external environment such as shop front modifications, courtyard / rear garden improvements, and adaptations to the public realm (subject to planning and local approval). If you wish to discuss any ideas please raise these with your Welsh Government Regeneration Managers.

Whilst this is considered a short term and immediate solution, all of the proposals to be supported should be able to demonstrate that they have lasting impact on our town centres and be aligned where possible with wider proposals relating to public realm adaptations and projects being delivered through the Transforming Towns Green Infrastructure support.

Any interventions supported in the public realm must be of sufficient quality to ensure they provide a sustained and lasting impact, are delivered, as appropriate additions to

the public realm and provide an aesthetic uplift to areas. Works must be delivered to appropriate construction and safety standards and provide safe and appropriate access for all.

Alignment

The funding of adaptations in our town centres will facilitate trading, public safety and enhance the look and feel of town centres to help restore confidence. This proposal is aligned with the initial discussions of the Ministerial Town Centre Action Group and also the Regional Town Centre Action Groups. The delivery of this re-purposed funding will be monitored by Welsh Government officials with oversight being provided by the Ministerial Town Centre Action Group.

Further References

- Re-opening Wales published 14 May 2020
<https://www.fsb.org.uk/resources-page/reopening-wales.html>
- Ailagor Cymru (14 Mai 2020)
<https://www.fsb.org.uk/resources-page/ailagor-cymru.html>
- Open for Business: Repurposing Public Spaces for Economic Recovery published 8 June 2020
<https://www.fsb.org.uk/resources-page/open-for-business.html>
- Ar Agor Am Fusnes: Ailbwrrpasu Mannau Chyoeddus Ar Gyfer Adferiad Economaidd (8 Mehefin 2020)
<https://www.fsb.org.uk/resources-page/ar-agor-am-fusnes.html>
- Welsh Government: Safer Public Spaces Guidance issued on 17 June 2020 -
<https://gov.wales/creating-safer-public-places-coronavirus>
- Llywodraeth Cymru: Creu manau cyhoeddus mwy diogel: coronafeirws (17 Mehefin 2020)
<https://llyw.cymru/creu-mannau-cyhoeddus-mwy-diogel-coronafeirws>
- Updated UK Hospitality Guidance in relation to Wales:
<https://www.ukhospitality.org.uk/page/WalesGuidance>
- Coronavirus: guidance for tourism and hospitality businesses for a phased and safe re-opening (updated) – 10 July 2020
<https://gov.wales/tourism-and-hospitality-businesses-guidance-phased-reopening-html>
- Coronafeirws: Canllawiau i fusnesau twristiaeth a lletygarwch ar gyfer ailagor yn raddol ac yn ddiogel
https://llyw.cymru/busnesau-twristiaeth-lletygarwch-canllawiau-i-ailagor-yn-raddol-html?_ga=2.164224511.155747889.1594653161-1723596760.1558079454

Base Principles for Covid -19 Response Funding



The creation of parklets and seating provision in town centres

Parklets (Copyright: Paul Carstairs / Arup)



The use of inexpensive plastic seating should be discouraged for use via this funding. The funding should be used for products and interventions that add to amenity of areas.

<https://www.goodfreephotos.com>



The use of large scale planters in order to enhance wellbeing and segregate areas should be encouraged.

Source: Carmarthenshire County Council



Outdoor seating provision using awnings and planting provision.



Outdoor seating provision to enable social distancing.



Delivery of street markets and associated costs such as the establishment of permanent power and utilities supply.

www.uplandsmarket.com

This note is to inform partners the factors that should be considered in regards design principles for the flexible funding revision to the Transforming Towns Thematic programme.

The Health Protection (Coronavirus Restrictions) (Wales) Regulations 2020 (as amended) impose temporary statutory restrictions and are regularly reviewed in accordance with Regulation 3.

<https://gov.wales/health-protection-coronavirus-restrictions-wales-regulations-2020-amended>

This guidance contains information and examples of temporary interventions that may be undertaken by the owners and operators of public spaces to keep people safe as and when the restrictions are relaxed and urban spaces become busier.

This guidance applies in Wales only and does not impose any legal obligations other than those in place as part of the grant stipulations or statutory permissions.