

Meeting of:	CABINET
Date of Meeting:	23 SEPTEMBER 2025
Report Title:	BRIDGEND TOWN CENTRE ACCESS
Report Owner / Corporate Director:	CORPORATE DIRECTOR COMMUNITIES
Responsible Officer:	DELYTH WEBB GROUP MANAGER STRATEGIC REGENERATION
Policy Framework and Procedure Rules:	There is no effect upon the Policy Framework and Procedure Rules.
Executive Summary:	The report provides a detailed update on the Bridgend Town Centre Access proposal and seeks Cabinet approval to progress with a package of measures to provide greater flexibility to town centre loading and unloading restrictions, more flexibility on Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) exemptions during times that the bollards are raised, improved access for cycling, and increased blue badge parking on Derwen Road. These measures would be on an 18-month trial basis, subject to continual monitoring.

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1. The purpose of this report is to provide Cabinet with an update on the Bridgend Town Centre Access project and seek approval to introduce an 18-month Experimental Traffic Regulation Order (ETRO) comprising the following measures:
- increased flexibility for loading and unloading;
 - additional exemptions to existing Traffic Regulation Orders (TROs) when protective bollards are raised;
 - improved access and secure parking for cycling; and
 - expanded Blue-badge parking provision on Derwen Road.
- 1.2 It should be noted that improved access to the town centre will not serve as a panacea for the wider challenges it faces. Meaningful regeneration will require a combination of this and other town centre initiatives. It is proposed that an update on the Bridgend Town Centre Masterplan (2021) projects be presented to a future Cabinet meeting.

- 1.3 This report also seeks delegated authority for the Corporate Director – Communities to finalise the detail design, progress the ETRO and bring it into force, establish monitoring and evaluation arrangements, and submit or accept any external funding required to deliver the scheme.

2. Background

- 2.1 Bridgend town-centre pedestrianisation was completed in November 2004. Traders have subsequently indicated that the associated access restrictions are adversely affecting footfall and economic performance.
- 2.2 The Bridgend Town Centre Masterplan assessed the findings from previous Town Centre Access studies and concluded that options for improved town centre access should be explored further to account for changes in National Policy and guidance. Atkins Réalis were appointed in 2023, to look at options for improved accessibility in the Town Centre, including three access options for Queen Street, Dunraven Place and Market Street: These included the following:-
- **Option 1** – shorten the pedestrianised period while retaining delivery access outside those hours.
 - **Option 2** – allow all traffic outside a core pedestrian window while retaining the northbound one-way system.
 - **Option 3** – permit all traffic at all times while retaining the one-way layout.
- 2.3 The study concluded that Options 2 and 3 would re-introduce significant traffic volumes, alter the street typology from Pedestrian Priority to Informal and necessitate kerb upstands of at least 60 mm. Both options conflicted with national and local policy, and external funding for their implementation is unlikely to be available.
- 2.4 Option 1, supported by a complementary multi-modal package (revised pedestrian hours, cycling provision, way-finding, peripheral bus-stop enhancements and an updated parking strategy for more than 700 edge-of-centre spaces), was therefore recommended. Cabinet endorsed this approach in November 2023. Officers and consultants subsequently prepared a draft scheme focusing on extended loading and unloading, cycling access and additional disabled parking, in readiness for public engagement.

3. Current situation / proposal

- 3.1 Following on from the Atkins Realis study and recommendation (2024) a town centre access scheme was refined through internal officer discussions, an independent Stage 1 Road Safety Audit (RSA) on-street traffic surveys and ongoing safety risk assessments. The RSA highlighted a potential increase in cyclist–pedestrian interactions and advised that any amendments should consider an Experimental Traffic Regulation Order (ETRO) to allow post-implementation monitoring and, if required, adjustment.
- 3.2 Public consultation was held from 4 April to 2 May 2025. It sought views on extending loading and unloading hours, permitting cycling with improved cycle parking, and introducing additional blue-badge bays on Derwen Road. The consultation was publicised via social media, the Council e-newsletter, bilingual leaflets delivered to more than 400 town-centre businesses, three stakeholder webinars, two staffed drop-in sessions at The Bridge, and paper surveys on request.
- 3.3 On 15 January 2025 Full Council endorsed a Motion, requesting Cabinet to consider a partial re introduction of traffic. Following a meeting with Cabinet and Bridgend Town Centre Councillors, the consultation questionnaire was amended accordingly to establish whether

there continued to be public demand for access to all traffic through Queen Street, Dunraven Place and Market Street. The intention was not to propose the re-introduction of general traffic as part of the current proposal, but to gauge public opinion on pursuing restoring all general traffic to the three streets in the future. The questionnaire results focus in the main on what is proposed in the Atkins Report which was previously endorsed by Cabinet. The current proposal is the first positive stage in improving Bridgend Town Centre Access. As the town centre continues to develop the proposal to re-introduced general traffic will be explored further, but currently the re-introduction of general traffic through the town centre is contrary to current planning policy. There would also be a requirement to implement significant highway engineering works to meet current design standards and ensure the safety of vulnerable users. This would be subject to detailed design and funding, noting that the lack of policy alignment would make a successful external funding bid difficult to achieve.

3.4 It should also be noted that the Atkins Realis report (2024) identified from a benchmarking review that there is no clear evidence that re-introducing vehicular traffic into a town centre would result in an increase in economic activity. Even so, the gathering of public views on the matter is of value to inform future decision-making, in the event of the Council deeming the potential benefits to outweigh the risks.

3.5 The consultation generated 760 responses (758 online, one paper and one email) and 17 attendees at the drop-in sessions. An overview of the feedback indicated the following, with a full copy of the consultation responses attached as **Appendix 1**.

- 60 per cent support for extending loading and unloading (28 per cent opposed, 2 per cent favoured shorter hours, 10 per cent unsure);
- 56 per cent support for permitting cycling within the pedestrian area, comprising 37 per cent unqualified support and 19 per cent conditional support (37 per cent opposed, 7 per cent unsure);
- 64 per cent support for introducing additional Blue-badge parking on Derwen Road (22 per cent opposed, 14 per cent unsure).

3.6 Taking account of the evidence and consultation feedback, and subject to completion of the external safety risk assessments, it is proposed to introduce an 18-month Experimental Traffic Regulation Order (ETRO) that would:

- (i) extend loading and unloading until 11:00 and recommence it after 16:00, with additional flexibility for facilitating emergency situations and events;
- (ii) allow cycling within the pedestrian zones, with localised restrictions if required by the design and risk assessments; and
- (iii) convert under-utilised taxi bays on Derwen Road to Blue-badge parking, with precise operational times to be established.

3.7 The ETRO can be implemented relatively quickly, and at low cost due to the absence of any significant engineering works, delivering early benefits while retaining flexibility. A monitoring, reporting and evaluation regime will be established to evaluate the success of the scheme and this will be reported back to Cabinet at the end of the 18-month period, with recommendations to determine the permanent way forward for the town centre.

4. Equality implications (including Socio-economic Duty and Welsh Language)

4.1 The protected characteristics identified within the Equality Act, Socio-economic Duty and the impact on the use of the Welsh Language have been considered in the preparation of this report. As a public body in Wales the Council must consider the impact of strategic decisions,

such as the development or the review of policies, strategies, services and functions. It is considered that there will be no significant or unacceptable impacts as a result of this report.

- 4.2 A full EIA has been carried out as part of the development of this strategy, policy or proposal. The full EIA considers the impact of the strategy, policy or proposal on the nine protected characteristics, the Socio-economic Duty and the use of the Welsh Language. Survey materials were available in Welsh and English, and online sessions were offered to stakeholder groups representing protected characteristics. Additional Blue-badge bays on Derwen Road will improve access to the town centre for disabled visitors. The prioritisation of active travel through the retention of a pedestrian and cycle priority zone provides an inclusive alternative to private car use.

5. Well-being of Future Generations implications and connection to Corporate Well-being Objectives

- 5.1 The proposed town-centre interventions will assist in delivering the Council's Corporate Plan well-being objectives 2025-26. In particular, contributing towards well-being objective One: A prosperous place with thriving communities.
- Promote the conditions for economic growth and prosperity, by Improve sustainable and active travel choices.
 - Regenerate our town centres and Valleys.

6. Climate Change and Nature Implications

- 6.1 Any future projects progressed from the Placemaking Plans will be developed to ensure there is no negative impact on the environment and is in line with the commitment to achieve the Council's Net Zero targets. Prioritising walking, cycling and public transport accords with the sustainable-transport hierarchy set out in Llwybr Newydd – The Wales Transport Strategy 2021 and will help reduce emissions from short car trips. This also supports the Corporate Wellbeing Objective number 5.

7. Safeguarding and Corporate Parent Implications

- 7.1 Due regard has been paid to the BCBC Safeguarding Policy which seeks to safeguard and promote the wellbeing of children, young people and adults at risk of abuse or neglect and to ensure that effective practices are in place throughout the Council and its commissioned services. Given the subject matter of this report no negative safeguarding implications have been identified.

8. Financial Implications

- 8.1 Total implementation costs of the Town Centre Access improvements are £102,206. This sum covers legal drafting of the Experimental Traffic Regulation Order, new signage, carriageway markings for Blue-badge bays, secure cycle parking, and monitoring and evaluation.
- 8.2 External Grant of £89,761 (88%) has been secured from Welsh Government Transforming Towns and Shared Prosperity Funding. The match funding of £12,445 is ring fenced within a feasibility earmarked reserve budget specific to this scheme

9. Recommendations

It is recommended that Cabinet:

9.1 Delegate authority to the Corporate Director Communities to:-

- (i) pursue an 18-month ETRO for the extension of loading and unloading hours to 11:00 and recommence it after 16:00, with additional flexibility allowed for emergency situations and events;
- (ii) pursue an 18-month ETRO to permit cycling within the pedestrianised area, subject to the satisfactory completion of the safety risk assessments;
- (iii) pursue an 18-month ETRO for the conversion of under-utilised taxi bays on Derwen Road to Blue-badge parking bays.

9.2 Delegate authority to the Corporate Director Communities to establish monitoring and evaluation arrangements for the Experimental Traffic Regulation Order (ETRO) and to modify, suspend or revoke the Order if required, during the experimental period.

9.3 Delegate authority to the Corporate Director Communities, in consultation with the Chief Officer – Finance, Housing & Change and Chief Officer - Legal & Regulatory Services, HR & Electoral, to submit and accept external funding, award and enter into contracts, agreements and other legal documentation on behalf of the Council which is necessary to deliver the measures.

9.4 Note that a further report will be presented to Cabinet proposing a permanent position in respect of the Experimental Traffic Regulation Orders (ETRO);

9.5 Note that a further report will be presented to Cabinet on Bridgend Town Centre Masterplan projects.

Background Documents:

None