

# **Ruthin Public Realm Improvements**

## **Levelling Up Fund**

### **Consultation Report – Summary**

## Contents

1.	Consultation .....	3
2.	Survey Results .....	3
3.	St. Peter's Square / Market Street.....	3
4.	Feedback from door knocking.....	5
5.	Feedback from drop-in sessions .....	6
5.1	St. Peter's Square.....	6
5.2	Market Street .....	6
6.	Cae Ddol.....	7
6.1	Further comments about Cae Ddol.....	8
7.	Feedback from drop-in sessions .....	11
8.	Young people comments .....	12
9.	Additional Comments .....	12
10.	Conclusion .....	13
11.	Recommendations.....	15
11.1	Market Street & St Peters Square .....	15
11.2	Cae Ddol.....	16

## **1. Consultation**

750 people were directly engaged via survey, drop-in sessions, door knocking and workshops. Approximately 120 people attended across the two drop-in sessions. Two school workshops were arranged and 70 - 80 young people between 10-14 years old engaged at Ruthin Youth Club.

## **2. Survey Results**

We received 400 responses to the survey.

### **2.1 Which best describes your relationship to Ruthin?**

There was a total of 377 responses to the question “Which best describes your relationship to Ruthin?”, of which 329 were Ruthin residents. 8% of the total responses received were from businesses in Ruthin. People visit Ruthin for functional reasons – essential goods and services, closely followed by eating out or socialising.

More than half of respondents travel to Ruthin by car, with more than a third using on-street parking as opposed to car parks. 44% walk, showing the importance of the consultation to local people which is reflected in the comments on parking and walking.

## **3. St. Peter’s Square / Market Street**

Most respondents strongly or somewhat agreed that the proposals for St Peter’s Square would make it:

- Safer for pedestrians – 67.7%
- Easier to access via active travel (cycling or walking) - 62.3%
- More attractive for shoppers and visitors 69.2%
- Removing the roundabout to create more space for events is acceptable - 64.72%

A significant percentage of respondents reported that the proposed changes would make them more likely to:

- Eat out or socialise - 42.2%
- Spend time outdoors - 41.7%
- Spend time with friends and family - 38.8%
- Purchase non-essential goods and services - 28.6%
- Purchase essential goods and services - 24.1%

### **3.1 Market Street options**

**Option 1:** an informal street layout featuring a widened pedestrian area on both sides of the carriageway - 69% of respondents preferred this option.

**Option 2:** retains many elements of the existing road layout with the addition of a contraflow cycle lane - 31% of respondents preferred this option.

### **3.2 Perceived impact of St Peter's Square and Market Street proposals**

Overall, respondents indicated the proposed changes would impact the way they travel to the town centre although approximately a third expected there to be no change in how often they would walk (29%) or drive and whether they parked on-street (30%) or in a car park (29%).

The plans may encourage active travel, with 43% of respondents expected to walk more often, while 24% expected to cycle more, if the proposals were implemented.

Additionally, 31% expected to drive into the town centre less often and 23% expected to drive into town and use nearby car parks less often.

### **3.3 Further comments about St. Peter's Square and Market Street**

**Parking** – an emotive topic where comments ranged from concern about parking being lost (and high charges) to those who thought the proposed schemes didn't go far enough in reducing traffic in the town centre. There were many comments about the parking situation outside Costa Coffee.

**Access** (for non-car vehicles and people) – several respondents, while acknowledging that the roads being more level and reducing kerb height was positive for wheelchair users, they also thought that the removal of on-street parking would make it more difficult for them to visit the town centre. There were concerns about access for larger vehicles.

**Businesses** – there is a vocal minority who are concerned that shoppers will visit Mold instead of Ruthin and that the pet shop in particular might be impacted by the loss of on-street parking.

**Cycling** – comments focused on the safety of both pedestrians and cyclists given the proposed cycle lane does not link to other cycling infrastructure.

## **4. Feedback from door knocking**

### **Positive comments**

- The plans for St Peter's Square would help the pub
- Most people felt that they would not be impacted by the proposed changes

### **Negative comments**

- Wheelchair access
- Parking and traffic flow
- Potential disruption (to businesses) caused by work to implement the plans
- Buses idling opposite the council offices
- Reduced footfall with the proposed pedestrianisation

- The implementation of changes during COVID having a negative impact on local businesses

### **Suggestions**

- Greening the area

## **5. Feedback from drop-in sessions**

### **5.1 St. Peter's Square**

#### **Comments / Suggestions**

- Blue badge parking on square
- A way to prevent motorcyclists from parking on "event space"
- No need to remove the roundabout for traffic reasons; it functions well enough at present. Any occasional minor problems are caused by inconsiderate parking - an enforcement issue. If visual and entertainment issues are considered more important, the ugly parking area in the central area from the clocktower to the Post Office should be removed and the area landscaped
- The roundabout should be removed to give greater pedestrian/social space ease
- Discouraging all traffic from the square other than for residents, owners, staff and users of businesses and deliveries, an audit of directional signs across the town should be undertaken

### **5.2 Market Street**

#### **Comments / Suggestions**

- Market Street - disabled people frequently park in front of Costa at the moment, what will happen to them?
- Will there be a roundabout by the car park at the end of the one-way system?

## 6. Cae Ddol

Respondents were supportive of the proposals however, there is much concern around maintenance in the future and an increase in antisocial behaviour.

There were strong views on seeing nature prioritised and mitigating flood risk, enabling the park to be used year-round. A desire for free toilets and parking generated many comments.

The park is currently used by the respondents in a frequency from weekly to less than once a month noting that:

75% never cycle through the park, 70% never walk a dog there, 50% never use the play area and 80% never use the skate park\*

(\*this reflects age group of survey respondents not being skate park user age)

In considering the proposals, respondents would welcome:

- More seating and shelters - 87% strongly or somewhat agree
- Adventure play area - 87% strongly or somewhat agree
- Wetland planting - 88% strongly or somewhat agree
- Open space - 96% strongly or somewhat agree
- Pump track - 65% strongly or somewhat agree
- Better access to the river - 80% strongly or somewhat agree
- Increasing active travel – 78% strongly or somewhat agree

In terms of future use, there appears to be limited appeal for using the skate park - 45% would not use the park more than they do now and 45% have no opinion (however, consideration should be given to the survey respondents not being users of the skate park) or commuting to work or home through the park – 48% have no opinion on this point. Positively, 48% think they would spend more time outdoors and 45% would spend more time in the park with friends and family.

## **6.1 Further comments about Cae Ddol**

### **Balancing Multiple Users:**

#### **Positive Comments**

- Welcome improvements to paths to increase accessibility for all
- Replacement of playground and addition of pump track will encourage more families and children to be active and use the park

#### **Negative Comments**

- Sounds like a large playground. Large older population in the town that wants to enjoy nature and quiet away from swarms of people and noise
- Active walk route is rather strange! People choosing their own route through the park is much calmer and gives full use of the park not just in concentrated areas
- Live next to Cae Ddol, concerned that the additional shelters, seating areas etc would encourage young people to gather there in the evening and late into the night

#### **Suggestions**

- Maybe zones - keep the noisy kids' stuff in one area, the peace and tranquillity away a little... the other side of the river perhaps
- An open space for dogs to run about and enjoy the river at the far end away from everything
- Any introduction of a pump track needs to be done in harmony and happy coexistence with walking paths / tracks
- Relocate football goals if a pump track is introduced



## **Facilities:**

### **Positive comments**

- A café
- Improving the toilets is an excellent proposal but they should be free and checked for cleanliness daily

### **Negative comments**

- Car park charges in place until 11pm discourages evening visits

### **Suggestions**

- A café / kiosk would encourage people to visit
- A shop or kiosk could be leased to a private operator, which, once again, would generate money for the Council
- Need toilets available for families to use at all times

## **Infrastructure:**

### **Positive comments**

- More shelters would be welcome

### **Negative comments**

- Shelters may attract undesirables in the evenings
- Currently not safe for people with disabilities to visit due to the conditions

### **Suggestions**

- Seating for picnics should be suitable for disabilities (not benches attached to tables)
- Seating close to car park for adults
- Benches near the skate park and proposed pump track
- Circuit walks around these areas, which are accessible to all users, are also crucial to enabling families and individuals to spend more time outdoors
- Changes cannot be static and left to age. Any improvements will need to be maintained and upgraded over time

- Fill in the potholes on paths and car parks more frequently
- The middle bridge needs replacing, the metal sheeting is rusting through, bowing in places which makes it feel very unsafe
- Suitable surfaces for walking safely, mobility aids and wheelchairs
- Maintenance of new and existing park features (trees, toilets, pond, pump track etc).
- Improve slide, swings (for older and younger children), outside gym
- Refurbishment of the skate park
- Clean up: river, graffiti

## **Environmental:**

### **Positive comments**

- Opportunity to improve connections to the castle grounds

### **Negative comments**

- Open barrier/fencing at the duck pond is dangerous for babies/toddler
- Flooding makes the park unusable for many
- The proposed path looks very short
- Any increase in the height of obstructions across the floodplain have negative implications for properties already in the flood plain
- The risk of flooding must go up
- Having one bridge only would be a bad idea and too congested

### **Suggestions**

- Wetland planting would seem essential.
- The new paths will involve raising the ground level across part of the floodplain, inhibiting the flow of water away from the area, increasing the risk of flooding to houses in the floodplain
- Dredge the river through the whole area to ensure a continued good flow of water throughout the year
- Appropriate material for the walkways so that they are still usable in wet weather

- Raised walkways to reduce the compaction of soil could improve the area a lot and offer wild birds a place to nest and thrive in the wetland plants with less disturbance
- The introduction of some form of habitat for wild animals, insects and pollinators would be good to see
- Improvements to the park should be entirely focused on improving biodiversity, watercourse quality and flood prevention, increasing the urbanisation of the park runs counter to these objectives

## **7. Feedback from drop-in sessions**

### **Negative comments**

- Prioritising the proposed works described as “short-term improvements” is in our view misplaced and runs counter to your Climate and Ecological Change Strategy
- Measures to deliver biodiversity net gain and enhance and create wildlife habitats should take precedence over increasing the urbanisation of the principle green space in the town

### **Suggestions**

- Velodrome - why didn't it happen?
- The island needs tidying up
- Lake - there is an underground spring in the centre. Could that be turned into a fountain?
- Why does the bridge in Cae Ddol need widening?

## 8. Young people comments

Some of the young people's comments are quite practical while others are more aspirational and these are themed below.

### Facilities young people would like in the park

- Fun activities: football field with 2 sets of nets, trampoline, climbing wall, bowling, zipline, tyre-swing, mini-golf, swimming pool, petting zoo, bowling, pool table, archery, shooting range, clay pigeon shooting, table tennis, ice skating, roller skating, ropes, bike track, adventure course, horse riding, trampoline, go-karts, bike and scooters to use, goal posts
- Leisure/space to gather (particularly for teenagers): benches/sofas/seating areas, outdoor cinema, add a café/refreshment facility
- Creative activities: outside art, art board

## 9. Additional Comments

The Ruthin & District Civic Association welcomes supports and is in favour of all the town and district's Levelling Up projects. They would like to see more proposals to slow traffic in and around St Peters Square; the *"plans for The Square should be more imaginative."* They would also like to see Castle Street be included in the proposals and *"the upper part of Well Street is likely to change"* and would like further details on this development. On Cae Ddol, they would like an events space within the park, more information on the active travel route and the designs for the playground equipment.

Some of the written comments submitted by Ruthin Town Council included "strong support to the imperative to include Castle Street within the project, as an 'informal street' to the standard proposed for Market Street." Their "strong preference" is for Option 1 but without the dedicated red cycle lane. On Cae Ddol, the Town Council would wish to be consulted further on the design of the proposed play equipment and noted that the park should have provision for an events space and for bee-friendly meadows.

## 10. Conclusion

People were really engaged throughout the consultation period, with a long time spent with people on the door-knocking and at the drop-ins who seemed genuinely interested in the proposals. It was also evident from the engagement with the children and young people that they have an active interest in Cae Ddol.

There is real support for option 1 with regards to the St Peter's Square and Market Street proposals in relation to improved safety and more attractive for shoppers and visitors. Plus, the respondents indicated the proposed changes would impact the way they travel to the town centre.

Approximately, 750 people were directly engaged during the consultation period. The consultation events were well attended, however, despite a wide ranging engagement programme, we suspect the usual groups of people took part i.e. individuals over 55, businesses with a stake in the proposals.

Indirectly, it is likely there was wider in-person and social media discussion about the plans amongst those who chose not to attend a drop-in session or fill in a survey.

There was an impression that the children were not regular users of Cae Ddol. Some were apprehensive about the park being used by older teenagers. This raises the question of whether the pump track and the current skate park is more relevant to young people who are aged 13 and above.

Based on the survey results and the other forms of consultation, more information is required on the thinking and the benefits of the Market Street proposals and the improvements to St Peter's Square. With hindsight, the plans and diagrams could have provided more information on the plans (if indeed any) for Well Street.

While those driving perhaps have the loudest voice, reflected in the comments, it should be considered that 44% of those completing the survey walk into the town centre meaning there is a need to consider this group as being just as important.

No comments were received on the Clock Tower in the survey or during wider engagement activities.

Concerns around the proposed changes to the town centre focused on loss of trade to businesses, access for older residents or those with disabilities. The addition of a cycle lane is not popular with only 31% supporting these proposals and many comments about the safety aspects of this facility and its lack of connectivity with other cycling infrastructure.

From businesses and residents, Mold is seen as the local competition in taking people and spend away from Ruthin due to a better parking regime (and lower costs) but there is little evidence that this will happen. Businesses have concerns around access for delivery vehicles and loss of on street parking.

Two thirds of people spoken to were positive about the proposals for Cae Ddol and many felt they had a connection to the park.

There were many concerns around environmental and maintenance issues in the park from increased flood risk to ensuring the toilets are free to use and installing a kiosk (for drinks or refreshments).

Speaking to young people about the park, they have a long wish list of what they would like to find there; however, there are also concerns about how safe they feel within it. The young people seemed surprised to be asked for their views across the school and youth club workshops.

There is demand, across all groups, for more covered seating to enable the park to be used in all weathers but there is concern that these spaces might attract antisocial behaviour.

In summary, there are wide ranging views across all the proposals, and it is hoped that these will be taken into account when revisiting the existing plans and making changes.

## **11. Recommendations**

In considering what happens next, the recommendations outline the key steps. There are also recommendations for further engagement at the next stage of the proposals to continue to work with young people but also to reach harder to reach groups who may not have given their comments at this stage. Equally, communication needs to continue, updating those that engaged and building momentum for the next phase of proposals.

The recommendations, and conclusions, reflect feedback from the residents; the concerns of businesses and the information that the survey results have outlined. They cover immediate elements where consideration should be given to the existing proposals and adaptations that may be needed to progress them and the second aspect covers delivery in relation to how future schemes are consulted on.

### **11.1 Market Street & St Peters Square**

In future iterations of the plans, the Council needs to be more explicit on what a proposed one way system for Well Street would look like. There is more to be done in selling the benefits and opportunities that will potentially come out of the development to St Peter's Square.

There is real support for option 1 with regards to Market Street. Plus, the respondents indicated the proposed changes would impact the way they travel to the town centre.

There needs to be more work undertaken on the wider implications on the travel and parking arrangements. The addition of the cycle lane and access for those with disabilities needs to be revisited.

## **11.2 Cae Ddol**

In Cae Ddol, there are concerns that there are a lot of new aspects being considered while the park lacks maintenance and really floods meaning it isn't used as much as it could be. It was felt that these aspects need rectifying before considering changes.