Dear Councillor,

I am writing to give you advance notice of the arrangements that are being put in place to support the towns of Huntingdonshire to re-open. These arrangements will be communicated from Thursday 11th June.

The District Council can draw on £157,000 of allocated funding from the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), with the primary goal of supporting **small to medium sized businesses** in town high streets to re-open and encourage our community to shop locally again, safely. This is limited to business focussed measures:

* Support to develop an action plan.
* Communications and public information for re-opening of economies.
* Business facing awareness raising activities to manage re-opening safely, including visiting information officers.
* Temporary public realm changes.

**This funding cannot be used for toilet provision, lost income or existing staff costs, ambassadors/wardens, PPE provision for businesses or business adaptations for COVID-19.**

We are asking for your support in launching and communicating the measures as well as helping us to learn about any issues that arise as the number of shoppers in our towns starts to grow.

We are working with a marketing agency to ensure we have the capacity to actively promote our towns, our businesses and shopping safely.

**Shop Local**

This is key campaign to support the small and medium sized independent retailers that make our towns special. This will include a Re-Opening Huntingdonshire Survey to ensure we are focused on the concerns and issues our community have in returning to our high streets.

* Information has been gathered in conjunction with BID Huntingdon, St Neots Town Council and St Ives Town Council to publicise information on the businesses open, their opening hours and whether they offer click and collect, card payment or an appointment system.
* Several businesses will be involved in showcasing that our towns are safely open.
* Our local businesses support local jobs which is essential for successful towns.

**Supporting Businesses**

We have spoken to the Federation of Small Businesses and the Chamber of Commerce, as well as Huntingdonshire Against Business Crime, the Town Clerks and the BID in Huntingdon, which highlighted:

* Need for help with COVID-19 safe trading and risk assessments required, especially for businesses employing more than5 staff.
* Need for help outside their premises, queuing arrangements and space to queue. With the need to manage social distancing inside the premises most retailers will have limited ability to look after their forecourt areas.

We have established town specific action plans to support businesses and shoppers to visit safely. The detailed plans are attached and will be made available on the Council’s website. We are planning to:

* Maintain free parking whilst lockdown eases.
* Move the markets to create space in our town centres as they become busy.
* Use signage to highlight the social distancing message.
* Deploy queue and queue end markers sprayed in environmentally friendly paint.
* Use our Parking Officers as Ambassadors supplemented by temporary staffing including Town Council and BID Huntingdon Rangers.
* Update the [**www.wearehuntingdonshire.org**](http://www.wearehuntingdonshire.org)hub with specific advice for risk assessments, links to free mentoring, and specific advice on temporary relaxation of planning and licensing rules.

**Helping Visitors**

We will promote a campaign to highlight the preparations made by our businesses and in our high streets to encourage shoppers to return and shop safely. We will be emphasising the need to plan and look after yourself whilst being kind and patient with others. Additional measures to those already described include:

* Additional cleansing.
* Monitoring of hotspots of possible congestion/queuing.
* Ensuring continued access for anyone with disabilities.

**Action Plans**

The plans have been drawn up in consultation with the Police and endorsed by the County Council Highways team. They have been developed in partnership with the Town Councils, Huntingdonshire Business Against crime, BID Huntingdon as well as District Council officers from Planning, Licensing, Parking, Economic Development, Environmental Health and Street Cleansing.

If you have any questions please do not hesitate to contact Neil Sloper, Head of Operations, who is co-ordinating the team re-opening our towns and supporting our businesses to do so.

Yours sincerely,

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Councillor Ryan Fuller

**Executive Leader**

**Huntingdonshire District Council**

**TOWN CHANGES**

**St Neots**

Encourage one-way usage along the high street with markers for shoppers to wait on outside businesses. This will be achieved through:

* Stencils marking ‘stand here’ at 2m intervals outside businesses close to the walls.
* Stencils marking the ‘end of queue’ for a business so that waiting customers do not encroach on the next business.
* Signage reminding pedestrians to observe social distancing (placed at key points as per the stars on the map near crossings with additional along the high streets) and consider walking in one direction on the high street, returning back do the other side of the street.
* Stencils marking ‘directional arrows’ to support the ‘one-way’ use of the town (facilitated by the high number of pedestrian crossings already in place (marked as twin parallel lines).

**St Ives**

The closure of ‘free of charge’ parking bays at the side of the high street to increase the pavement width which does not impact the movement of vehicles in the town centre.

In addition, a section of the town will encourage one-way usage along the high street. The town will have markers for shoppers to wait on outside businesses. This will be achieved through:

* Setting up of red/white water-filled barriers in places where car park bays are to be closed to widen the walking area. We have measured up 480m required which CCC will supply. HDC will arrange setup and monitoring.
* Stencils marking ‘stand here’ at 2m intervals outside businesses close to the walls.
* Stencils marking the ‘end of queue’ for a business so that waiting customers do not encroach on the next business.
* Signage reminding pedestrians to observe social distancing and consider walking in one direction on the high street, returning back down the other side of the street. These will be placed at key points, marked with stars and additional placed on lighting columns throughout the high streets.
* Stencils marking ‘directional arrows’ to support the ‘one-way’ use. (see map for route)
* HDC will relocate the two St Ives markets to an HDC car park to reduce impact on available pedestrian space within the town centre and support SITC by permitting them to do the same with the fortnightly famers market.

*NB: a full closure of the town centre was discussed with CCC, HBAC and with SITC - it was agreed that the option shouldn’t be off the table in the future if required, however we should proceed with the bay closure options first and monitor.*

**Huntingdon**

Place markers for shoppers to wait on outside businesses taking advantage of the existing pedestrianised area. This will be achieved through:

* Stencils marking ‘stand here’ at 2m intervals outside businesses close to the walls.
* Stencils marking the ‘end of queue’ for a business so that waiting customers do not encroach on the next business.
* Signage reminding pedestrians to observe social distancing at key points marked with stars and additional placed on lighting columns throughout the high streets.
* HDC will amend the layout of its market utilising the market square to ensure we reduce impact on available pedestrian space on the main high street.
* **Pedestrian Zone -** the area boxed in on Huntingdon high street is a pedestrian zone. Extending the pedestrian zone times to 2am to provide additional space for food businesses to extend out into the high street.

**Ramsey**

As a quieter high street, the main measure of support with be to place markers for shoppers to wait on outside businesses. This will be achieved through:

* Stencils marking ‘stand here’ at 2m intervals outside business.
* Stencils marking the ‘end of queue’ for a business so that waiting customers do not encroach on the next business.
* Signage reminding pedestrians to observe social distancing.

**Ambassadors**

The use of Parking Officers as primary staff with additional temporary resource to assist in monitoring the high street and queues in support of businesses and to promote safe shopping:

* Some additional temporary staff for a minimum of two months to support Parking Officers in St Ives and St Neots.
* St Ives Town Council has offered some support and may be able to supplement the team with grounds and Norris Museum team.
* Use of HBAC radio for ambassadors to link to shops.