

# Oxford Strategic Partnership

## Wednesday 15<sup>th</sup> July 2020

**#reopening Oxford**

Tom Bridgman

[www.oxford.gov.uk](http://www.oxford.gov.uk)



# Opening up our city and local centres...



## HIGH STREETS TASK FORCE



## COVID-19 checklist

- Common plan for public space
- Enhanced sanitisation
- (Consistent) signage
- Identify hotspots
- Inclusive social distancing
- Walking & cycling
- Access & egress
- Communication with businesses
- Stewarding
- Adapting markets





# Pavement signs and lamppost posters



# How has it gone so far?

- One-way guidance has been partially successful, with some shoppers following guidance and looking out for each other
- The queue management has also largely worked
- Social media comments - about one third are supportive, one third say the measures are overkill, and one third say they don't go far enough
- Survey data from our residents' panel found that 78% of Oxford residents backed some one-way footways to support social distancing
- We've used this feedback – alongside comments from members, and from our disability focus group – to make changes e.g. using yellow stencils and adjusting signage
- Work in progress – assumption is these interventions will be needed more as city get busier

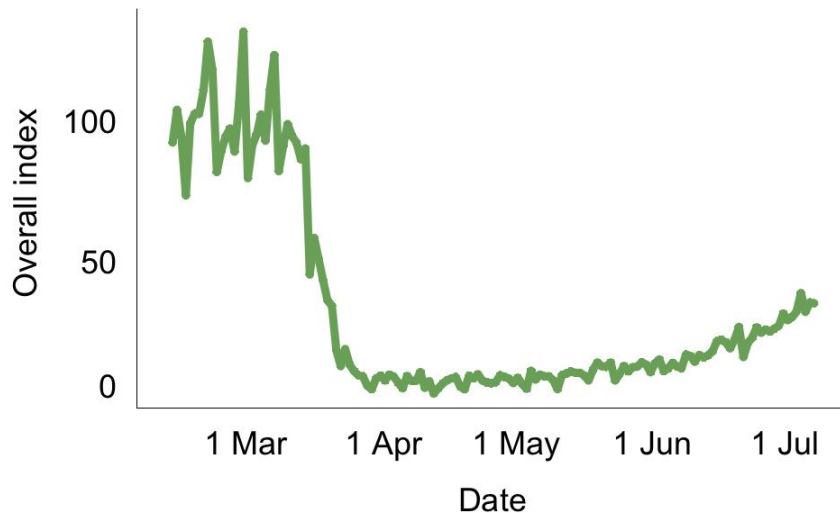
# Footfall – Oxford improving but still...

- Footfall up on June 15 (to 30k) and again on July 4 (to 48k)
- ...but significantly down (60-70%) on the same weeks last year
- Centre for Cities has Oxford in the cities bottom 10 compared to pre-lockdown

City



**City 1 overall recovery**



## Bottom 10

Norwich	48
Glasgow	42
Leeds	42
Birmingham	38
Liverpool	38
Manchester	34
Oxford	33
Cardiff	29
Edinburgh	27
London	23

\*Date Centre for Cities

# A key aim: mitigate negative footfall impacts on Oxford City Centre

## Oxford disproportionately impacted

- Reduced tourist, visitor, language schools, conference business
- University students not returning until October
- Oxford more reliant on bus travel – actively discouraged by central Government, but now shifting of position?

## More generic factors

- Continued working from home
- Some people reluctant to come to shop/visit
- Some who've experienced online shopping continuing to use that
- Some e.g. theatres, nightclub businesses remaining closed has spin-off impacts on others e.g. hospitality



# Carefully evolving our communications

- Need to instil confidence
- Actively promote Visit England's industry guidelines
- Attract local visitors
- "Now is a good time to visit" message
- Work with & align with partners inc. EO, bus companies etc.



VisitEngland 



## NEWS

Home | UK | World | Business | Politics | Tech | Science | Health | Family & Education

Politics | Parliaments | Brexit

### Coronavirus: Face masks and coverings to be compulsory in England's shops



# Promoting activity

- Push for more tables & chairs
  - Cornmarket
  - St Michael's Street
  - Broad Street?
- Re-launch meanwhile use project in city centre and local shopping areas
  - Vacancy rates increasing
  - Fresh call for occupiers (retailers, arts & cultural orgs, community groups etc)
  - Appropriate vacant City Council units to be included
  - Refresh list of privately owned premises through agents database
  - Seeking central Government funds to support with light touch fit outs for occupiers
  - Impact on changes to planning in Autumn will be interesting...



# #BuildBackBetter – getting the city moving

- Announcement of two temporary city centre bus gates aimed at achieving
  - Reducing congestion & bus journey times
  - Platform for re-prioritising road space to active travel, tables & chairs
- County delivering on first tranche of DfT Active Travel funds to promote walking & cycling - due for completion by August 20<sup>th</sup>
  - Additional bike parking
  - Widening pavements space
  - Improved cycle lanes & signage into city
- DfT clear that second tranche needs to focus on
  - Segregation & road closures
  - Changing the status quo
  - Is now the time for a serious look at Broad Street pedestrianisation?

# Long-term planning

- Working on redevelopment of Boswell's
- Commissioned masterplanners for the train station
- Submitted business case for West End Innovation Quarter
- City Centre Vision & Action Plan due for consultation in the Autumn
- Looking to restart cycle greenways project – strategic cycle routes into & through the city



The image is a screenshot of a BBC News article. At the top, the BBC logo is visible on the left, and the name 'Tom Bridgman' is on the right. A navigation bar includes links for News, Sport, Weather, iPlayer, and Sounds. Below this is a red banner with the word 'NEWS' in white. Underneath the banner is a secondary navigation bar with links for Home, UK, World, Business, Politics, Tech, Science, Health, and Family & Education. Below that is a third navigation bar with links for England, Local News, Regions, and Oxford, with 'Oxford' being the active link. The main headline of the article is 'Plan to turn Oxford's department store Boswells into hotel'. Below the headline is the date '2 July 2020' and a row of social media sharing icons for Facebook, WhatsApp, Twitter, Email, and a general 'Share' button. At the bottom of the screenshot is a wide, low-resolution image showing the facade of a large, multi-story building with many windows, likely the Boswells department store.

# County-wide Economic Recovery Plan

- OxLEP, with partners, commissioning Steer ED to support ERP to complete in December 2020
  - Working within Local Industrial Strategy
  - Establish new baseline
  - Modelling scenarios and impacts across sectors
  - Qualitative work with business and sector reps to get real time information and trends
  - Informed by parallel work updating of OxLEP skills strategy
  - Develop business cases for new projects/adapt existing ones
- Oxfordshire needs to build on its USPs – national levelling up agenda is strong
- Clear much needs to be done in interim – ERP group will lobby into central Govt. for the county e.g. visitor economy



# Thoughts & questions...

- Can we do more to increase footfall?
- The social distancing measures in place?
- Bus gates, active travel and #BuildBackBetter – proposals & where next?
- Scope of county-wide Economic Recovery Planning?
- Anything else?

# Oxford Economic Growth Board Update

- Overseen the development of the Oxford Economic Strategy
  - Final report to follow in the Autumn
- Advised on the immediate economic response to COVID19 and City Council Recovery Plan
- Advised on the Inclusive Economy Seminar Series and next steps
- Chair and other members supporting Oxford Station and West End Promoters Group

## Forward Plan

- Publish Economic Strategy and refine TOR to align with this
- Chair seeking additional sector reps to align with sector priorities (Science and digital business)
- Chair led focus on account management with major employers