

Potential implications of Covid-19 on the Cattle Market Makers project

The pandemic and the measures taken to minimise spread, have had a major effect on many aspects of life in the UK. As it is still unfolding it is hard to make precise predictions but there are some clear impacts.

- * Lockdown has been hard for many people, especially those already living in poverty or with poor physical or mental health or suffering abuse. Although restrictions are easing, these effects are likely to continue in many cases.
- * Unemployment has already risen and is very likely to rise further when the furlough scheme ends, particularly in sectors which cannot reopen or can only operate in a limited way, such as hospitality, non-essential retail, transport and performing arts.
- * Small and medium sized businesses have been hard hit by the crisis and it will cause some to fail.
- * While essential retail (eg food) has done well locally, non-essential retail continues to be badly affected and several shops in Liskeard have already closed or moved out of town. Cafés and restaurants locally have also been badly hit, partly because they don't have premises where they can serve people outside.
- * Businesses, including creative businesses, which have online retail have seen a significant increase in sales.
- * There have been increases in sales of craft supplies and in people taking part in craft activities during lockdown.
- * There has been a significant increase in both home working and videoconferencing and both are expected to stay higher than pre-Covid although not as high as at the peak of lockdown, therefore less people are shopping in the town centre during their lunch break/before/after work.
- * There was a strong community spirit during lockdown both nationally and locally, with many people helping each other and people would like to build on that.
- * The Cornwall Council residents survey in June 2020 asked 500 people what one thing people would like to see changed once the pandemic is over. Only one in ten wanted things to go back to how it was before the pandemic and a cleaner environment, closer communities and reduced traffic were the most mentioned topics.

We do not know when vaccines will be available or how effective they will be but it seems sensible to plan for a situation where social distancing measures stay in place for some time - at least to Spring 2021- and where there may be further lockdown measures before then.

Potential impacts on the project.

These are considered under two main headings, whether needs have changed and how Covid-19 measures may impact on the delivery of the project.

Have needs changed?

Existing craft businesses - will have lost outlets to sell their works due to lack of markets and lower non-essential retail sales. More need for help in online retail and marketing.

Potential entrepreneurs - higher unemployment is likely to lead to more people exploring setting up their own businesses and seeing if they can turn a hobby into a source of income. If more family members are spending more time at home, this may increase demand for workshop spaces. On

the other hand, it may be more daunting to consider setting up a business in a difficult economic climate.

People not in employment - difficulties caused by lockdown may present even more barriers to their participation. On the other hand, some will be part of the overall trend of increased crafting during lockdown.

It is intended that the project will also provide wider business support and networking opportunities and these are likely to be needed more than ever in the much more difficult economic climate.

How may delivery be impacted?

Recruitment of staff - there should be no barriers to this going ahead although interviews will probably have to be via videoconference. Careful thought will need to be given to induction so that it is safe and effective. A suitable location for the staff to be based before the units are delivered will need to be found, and consideration given to the size the office and suitability for two staff on delivery.

Commissioning and building the creative hub - the government has put a strong emphasis on construction projects going ahead so it is unlikely (but not impossible) that this will be delayed due to Covid.

Letting workshop spaces - there is no reason why this should not go ahead as planned.

Use of Fab Lab and Mucky spaces – potentially less people can use this at a time so the income projections will be reduced (although very low assumptions used).

Running business support programmes - this may need to be by videoconference initially. This is not ideal but plenty of similar programmes are already running remotely.

Programmes for people not in employment - this is probably the most difficult aspect to run if social distancing is still in place. This aspect of the work would be due to start in Spring 2021. Liskeard Together and other projects are exploring how to support participants in different ways and, if necessary we would learn from their experience. Options include more 1:1 or very small group work, outdoor activities. This could increase costs beyond those budgeted.

There may be additional costs for PPE, increased cleaning regimes, additional IT equipment and licenses, etc. which we have not budgeted for and the TC would have to cover.

Impact on grant funding and meeting output targets

The grant is paid once activities have been undertaken, so if programmes are not able to run the grant for that aspect would not be claimed.

The output targets have deliberately been kept low, with significantly more capacity e.g. for places on programmes than the minimum outputs. This means that if the programme has to start more slowly there will still be time to catch up.

Return to main report for feedback from CLLD programme management.

Recommendation: that the town council considers whether the Cattle Market Makers project application be changed or abandoned on the light of the changed circumstances caused by Covid-19.