

**EXTENSION TO RELAXATION OF PLANNING ENFORCEMENT IN TOWN
CENTRES IN RESPONSE TO COVID-19**

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report seeks approval for the extension of existing planning relaxations relating to recovery of town centre business activity previously approved in July 2020.
- 1.2 It is recommended that
- i) The guidance provided by the Scottish Government's Chief Planner on relaxation of planning enforcement in response to Covid-19 be noted.
 - ii) Extension to existing measures for relaxation of planning enforcement in relation to recovery of town centre business activity be extended until 31st March 2021, subject to periodic review in the event of updated guidance being provided by the Scottish Government.

- 4.1 The Scottish Government has issued advice that planning authorities should take a “common sense approach to enforcement, with actions proportionate to the severity of suspected breaches of planning control”. The Scottish Government’s Chief Planner has issued further instruction setting out guidance for relaxation of planning enforcement on identified activities that may give rise to a breach of planning control as businesses responded initially to ‘lockdown’ restrictions arising from Covid, and then subsequently as they adapted to a new operating environment as restrictions were initially eased.

Summary of Scottish Government Enforcement Relaxations:		
Date Issued	Scope/Activity Covered	Expires:
11 th March 2020 (updated 16 th June 2020)	<u>Relaxation of enforcement of conditions relating to retail distribution</u>	To be reviewed September 2020
18 th March 2020 (updated 16 th June 2020)	<u>Relaxation of enforcement where public houses and restaurants offer a takeaway service during the current outbreak</u>	To be reviewed September 2020
29 th May 2020	<u>Relaxation of enforcement in relation</u>	

*ary period up until **30th September 2020** Argyll and Bute Council as planning authority will not invite applications for planning permission or pursue planning enforcement action for development providing for the temporary change of use of outdoor areas and/or erection of temporary structures within the designated Town Centre areas of the Main Towns and Key Settlements (as defined in the adopted LDP) which are intended to provide on-street seating for existing cafes, bars, beer gardens and similar to accommodate physical distancing in relation to the resumption of operations in town centre businesses subject to the appropriate authorisations being obtained from Environmental Health, Licencing and Roads Authorities.*

etc. It is therefore considered that it would be prudent to make appropriate provision to extend the Planning Position statement for the duration of the 'emergency period' until 31st March 2021 (as it is currently defined by the Coronavirus (Scotland) Act 2020) to reduce regulatory requirements for temporary changes to operating arrangements by town centre businesses during this challenging period.

5.0 CONCLUSION

- 5.1 The recommendations set out proposals that will provide sufficient certainty to ensure that the Development Management Service can remain fully engaged in support for other regulatory activity of the Council which supports town centre recovery.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 Policy - None
6.2 Financial - None
6.3 Legal - None
6.4 HR - None