

## Rural Market Town Group - Case Study Template

Please let us know about one initiative which your council has been involved in, which has improved support for your local community and which would be of interest to our member councils and rural policy makers. This could be through direct action or by supporting another local project. This doesn't need to be lengthy. Concise and to the point is best! Any data and/or direct quotes from beneficiaries which illustrate the outcomes would be useful, as would photographs.

Project Title	Council Name	Contact name and email
Footfall Counters	Wisbech Town Council	Terry Jordan, Town Clerk  clerk@wisbechtowncouncil.org.uk
<b>Introduction</b>	Context for this case study (eg location, demographics, current service provision)	
<p>The proposal was to install two footfall counters (affixed to existing CCTV camera columns (owned by the District Council) within the Wisbech Market Place area; the "heart" of the town. The majority of the town's retail activity surrounds the Market Place.</p> <p>The owners of a shopping centre in the town, located adjacent to the Market Place, already operated footfall counters. Those installed by the Town Council have increased coverage in the town centre.</p> <p>Wisbech Town Council operates an outdoor market on the Market Place every day.</p> <p>The population of the town is circa 34,000 and has a total catchment of around 50,000. Approximately 30% of the population is of Eastern European descent.</p> <p>The town has Low wage economy (historically, agriculture and related services).</p>		
<b>Project aim</b>	Why did your Council decide to set up/support this project? What local challenges did it aim to address?	
<p>The reason for installing footfall counters was to be able to monitor changes in footfall; for example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How many people attend the events and festivals which are held in the town centre?</li> <li>• Are the levels of footfall affected positively by new stores opening?</li> <li>• Are levels of footfall affected negatively by existing stores closing?</li> <li>• Are the Town Council's aspirations in terms of attracting more traders and shoppers to the Market Place proving successful?</li> </ul> <p>Previously it had not been possible to produce accurate data/evidence as to the amount of people who access the town centre for shopping or other activities. Knowing how many people had attended, say, a community event or have made purchases from market traders would</p>		

assist the Town Council in evaluating the return on its investments (budget spend) in the town centre.

Introducing footfall counters enables the Town Council and others - such as the Chamber of Commerce, Fenland District Council, the Constabulary and Cambridgeshire County Council – to have an accurate “picture” of activity within the town centre. Previously the “evidence” had only anecdotal or based upon perception.

The Town Council had implemented, last year, a scheme of enhancement which has made the Market Place a space which is more attractive and comfortable in which to spend time. It has increased the footfall and dwell time in the town centre; this will, hopefully, lead to an increase in spending, not only in the Market Place but the town centre more widely.

Introducing footfall counters is a natural “fit” with the Wisbech Market Place enhancement scheme. Not only does the town centre need to be more attractive and comfortable if we wish to see more people there, we need to be able to enhance the vibrancy and vitality of the town centre. There had been no way of measuring levels of patronage or benchmarking against towns of a similar size or demographic; footfall counters provide such data.

Furthermore, Wisbech has a significant Tourism offer. Being aware of the numbers of people who visit Wisbech (and the routes that they take within the town), enables those who operate within that sector to “shape” their offer accordingly.

More people; more spend; resulting in an improved local economy and more jobs; the holders of those additional jobs spending their wages/salaries in the local economy.

The data collected in Wisbech, plus the opportunity to benchmark that data, provides useful evidence when writing funding bids.

<b>Project actions</b>	What steps have been taken to address these challenges and why did you decide on these actions? Have you worked in partnership with other organisations and/or the local community? Has the Council played a leading or supporting role?
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The Town Council led on the implementation of this initiative but liaised with the owners of a shopping centre in the town which already operated such cameras, to achieve a “joined-up” coverage. We share data with each other.

There is a close working relationship between Wisbech Town Council and the management of the Horsefair Shopping Centre in terms of the economic and social well-being of people who visit the town centre. The footfall counters installed by Wisbech Town Council within the Market Place area “supplement” those which exist in the Horsefair Shopping Centre.

There is a shared ambition between Wisbech Town Council and the Wisbech and District Chamber of Commerce to take whatever realistic actions are necessary to support the economy of the town and to both retain and create employment.

<b>Costs and timescale</b>	What were the project dates and timescale? What was the cost and how was it funded?
<p>Project was implemented in December 2021, following 6 to 9 months of planning and securing funding. The total cost was £19,500 and was funded in full through the submission of a successful bid the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority.</p>	
<b>Outcomes</b>	How has your local community benefitted from this initiative? What went well/not so well? Any data showing impact would be useful, as would direct quotes from beneficiaries.
<p>This scheme has enabled evidence to be produced which can be used to help increase footfall and shopper/visitor dwell time, which will help retain the shops in the town. This is important for the local economy, as it supports local employment.</p> <p>If the council wishes to “persuade” businesses to invest in Wisbech, it needs to be able to state with accuracy the number of shoppers/visitors that the town attracts. On average, there are 58,000 people movements within the Market Place each week.</p> <p>The Town Council organises directly and supports (with grant funding and volunteers) a number of community events and festivals each year; these are aimed at helping to support the local economy and strengthening community cohesion/integration. The installation of footfall counters has enabled the council to evaluate the success of those occasions in terms of public attendance.</p> <p>The Town Council is firmly of the belief that this scheme can assist in making Wisbech more attractive to potential new retailers.</p> <p>The value of collecting footfall data is that it helps to improve efficiencies in many areas; such as resource planning/scheduling, event planning, space management, promotional activities. The Footfall counters system that is being proposed not only counts the movement of people but also vehicles. The latter feature would be very useful in helping to guide any future plans for the enhancement of the town centre, particularly when seeking to: reduce the potential for pedestrian/vehicular conflict; improve air quality; reduce congestion.</p> <p>The company which provides the footfall counters service for Wisbech Town Council provides, as part of the arrangement, a benchmarking service. Footfall data is collected by that company at more than 4,500 individual counting points across the United Kingdom. The footfall data collected in Wisbech could be compared with the situation nationally, regionally and sub-regionally. Such benchmarking could enable the Town Council to see what it is doing right or where the council needs to re-focus its attention/objectives.</p>	
<b>Key learning</b>	What have you learned from this project that other rural councils and policy makers could benefit from? What were the key reasons for success? Would you do anything differently?
<p>Identify the benefit that a project could deliver and being able to “sell” that “case” to funders. Look for models of good practice; do not “re-invent the wheel” unless absolutely necessary. In</p>	

this particular case, the council would do nothing differently (possibly be mindful of the fact that the delivery of projects generally takes longer than planned).

<b>Next steps</b>	Are there any plans to develop this project further?
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There are no plans to install additional footfall counters but the Town Council continues to look for opportunities to enhance the vitality and viability of Wisbech town centre. One of those proposals is to introduce, in partnership with the local Chamber of Commerce, a new Shop Watch Radio Scheme. The Town Council has been able to access the necessary funding (circa £33,000) from the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority. In addition, the Town Council undertook a major enhancement scheme (at a cost of almost £500,000) – new paving, seating, planters, waste bins, lighting – of its Market Place last year.