



BUCKINGHAM TOWN COUNCIL

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Town Clerk: Mr. P. Hodson

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
WORKING GROUP

05 February 2021

Committee Members,

You are invited to a meeting of the **Economic Development Working Group** of Buckingham Town Council to be held on Thursday 11th February 2021 at 7pm online via Zoom, Meeting ID 871 2899 7691.

Residents are very welcome to ask questions or speak to Councillors about any matter relevant to the meeting at the start of the meeting in the usual way. Please email committeeclerk@buckingham-tc.gov.uk or call 01280 816426 for the password to take part.

The meeting can be watched live on the Town Council's YouTube channel here:
<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC89BUTwVpjAOEIdSlfcZC9Q/>

Mr. P. Hodson
Town Clerk

AGENDA

1. Apologies for Absence

Members are asked to receive apologies from Members.

2. Declarations of Interest

To receive declarations of any personal or prejudicial interest under consideration on this agenda in accordance with the Localism Act 2011 Sections 26-34 & Schedule 4.

3. Minutes of last meeting

To approve the minutes of the [Economic Development Working Group meeting held on Wednesday 11th November 2020](#), received by Full Council on the 23rd November 2020.

4. Action List

[Appendix A](#)



Twinned with Mouvaux, France  Neukirchen Vluyn, Germany 

Members are reminded when making decisions that the Public Sector Equality Duty 2010 requires Members to have due regard to the need to: Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct that is prohibited by the Act, advance equality of opportunity between people who share a characteristic and those who don't, and to foster good relations between people who share a characteristic and those who don't.

All Committee documents can be found on the Buckingham Town Council's website. Alternatively, the Clerk can send you a copy of any minutes, reports or other information. To do this, send a request using the contact details set out above.

5. Covid 19

To receive and discuss a verbal update from the Town Clerk

6. #AllWrappedUp Update

To receive and discuss a verbal Update from the Town Centre Manager

7. Town Centre Management

To receive and discuss a verbal report from the Town Centre Manager

8. Supporting Businesses to bounce back

To receive and discuss a written report (to follow on Tuesday 9th February 2021)

9. Buxplore: end of year report

To receive and discuss a written report from the Communications Clerk

[EDWG/112/20](#)

10. Town Centre Design Working Group

To receive and discuss a written report from the Town Clerk

[EDWG/113/20](#)

11. Buckingham & Villages Community Board Covid Support & Economic Recovery Group update

To receive and discuss a verbal update from Group members

12. Chairman's Announcements

13. Date of next meeting

22nd July 2021

To:

Cllr. Harvey	Vice Chair
Cllr. Hirons	
Cllr. Newell	
Cllr. A. Mahi	
Cllr. Mordue	
Cllr. Smith	Chair
Cllr. Stuchbury	
Cllr. Whyte	Buckinghamshire Council
N. Morrison	Buckingham Society
D. Jones	University of Buckingham
M. Simons	Traders Association
J. Watson	Dandy Lions Boutique

Committee	Minute No.	Action	Action Required	Action Owner	Update	Deadline
EDWG	148.1/19, 336.2/19, 500/19; 192/20	Membership	M. Simons and the Town Clerk AGREED to contact additional local business owners to join the Working Group.	Town Clerk, M. Simons		Ongoing
EDWG	151/19	BART bus to Town Centre	Cllr Whyte and M. Simmons discuss whether an arrangement for BART to provide a shuttle to the town centre shops for a discount on a cup of tea	Cllr Whyte, M. Simons		Ongoing
EDWG	151/19	BART bus to Old Gaol	Cllr Whyte and Cllr Smith discuss whether an arrangement could be made for a BART service which includes a discount on entry into the Old Gaol museum.	Cllr Whyte, Cllr Smith	Discussed with Trustees and agreement to offer £1.00 off normal entry fee, providing there's evidence that they have travelled by BART e.g. ticket	Ongoing
EDWG	338.1/19	BNDP: Design and Style guide	Design and Style guide could be looked at as part of the BNDP.	All members, Town Plan Officer	Revised version drafted and subgroup to meet over the next few weeks.	Ongoing

**BUCKINGHAM TOWN COUNCIL
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT WORKING GROUP**

**Buxplore: End of Project report for Buckingham Town Council Economic
Development Working Group**

Contact Officer: Mrs. L. Stubbs, Communications Clerk

1. Recommendations

1.1 It is recommended that the Group note the report

2. Background: Why make a Buckingham heritage app?

2.1 The Economic Development Working Group (EDWG) started working on a Buckingham Heritage Trail concept in early 2019. EDWG felt that a heritage trail would create more opportunities for residents to engage with the town as a leisure space and improve understanding of the historical importance of the town. These positive interactions are beneficial for the town overall, as they encourage residents to explore on foot, improving the footfall in the town centre and across the town. Improved footfall is an established benefit to local businesses, particularly retail and hospitality.

2.2 The concept of an app was pursued due to its numerous advantages over physical trails. Including:

- ease of securing funding,
- ability to create multiple trails and therefore to cover multiple themes
- can involve more local groups, businesses and residents in the creation of the app,
- no planning permission issues in and around listed buildings and the conservation area,
- initial research speaking to residents showed that many residents didn't feel they knew much about local history, and would be interested in an app they could use to learn more,
- ability to update and continue to develop the product over time.

3. Background: National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF) £10,000 Grant

3.1 Buxplore was funded by a £10,000 grant from the National Lottery Heritage Fund. The funding was awarded in Autumn 2019 to create a Buckingham community heritage app, with the support of local schools and community groups. The funding purposes as specified by NLHF were as follows:

3.1.1. Develop an app to showcase Buckingham's community heritage, including young people in the app's production and local residents in development of its content.

3.1.2. Deliver community events to promote the app.

3.1.3. Ensure funding from National Lottery players is acknowledged in marketing and all project materials.

3.2 Production of the app started immediately with a small group comprising local community groups including Buckingham Town Councillors, local historians, Buckingham Society and Buckingham Library volunteers. This group met to

decide and draft the initial significant historical locations that would be used to create the content. Officers and the web app developer worked with the Buckingham School, using young people's ideas to influence the design and functionality as well as content of the app.

3.3 The first lockdown due to Coronavirus began on March 23rd 2020, just as the design and functionality of the app was being finalised with the graphic designer and web app developer. Over the next two months officers created the content, based on submitted historical data and images. These were developed into trails of differing lengths and themes. Buxplore launched in May 2020 with 6 different trails to try. All trails had audio versions, activities or questions for each location and a digital download prize for completing the trail.

3.4 In January 2021 NLHF agreed that due to the ongoing pandemic funding allocated to support purpose 2.1.2 events could be reallocated towards further development of the app.



Figure 1 Pre launch social media

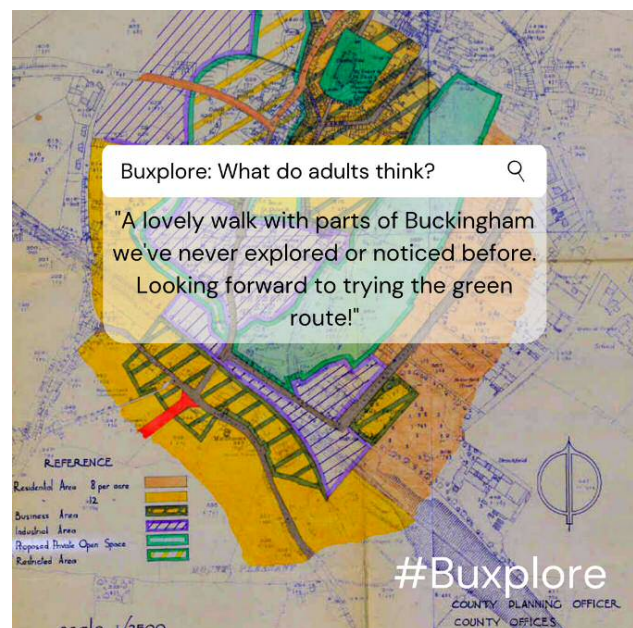


Figure 2 Launch social media

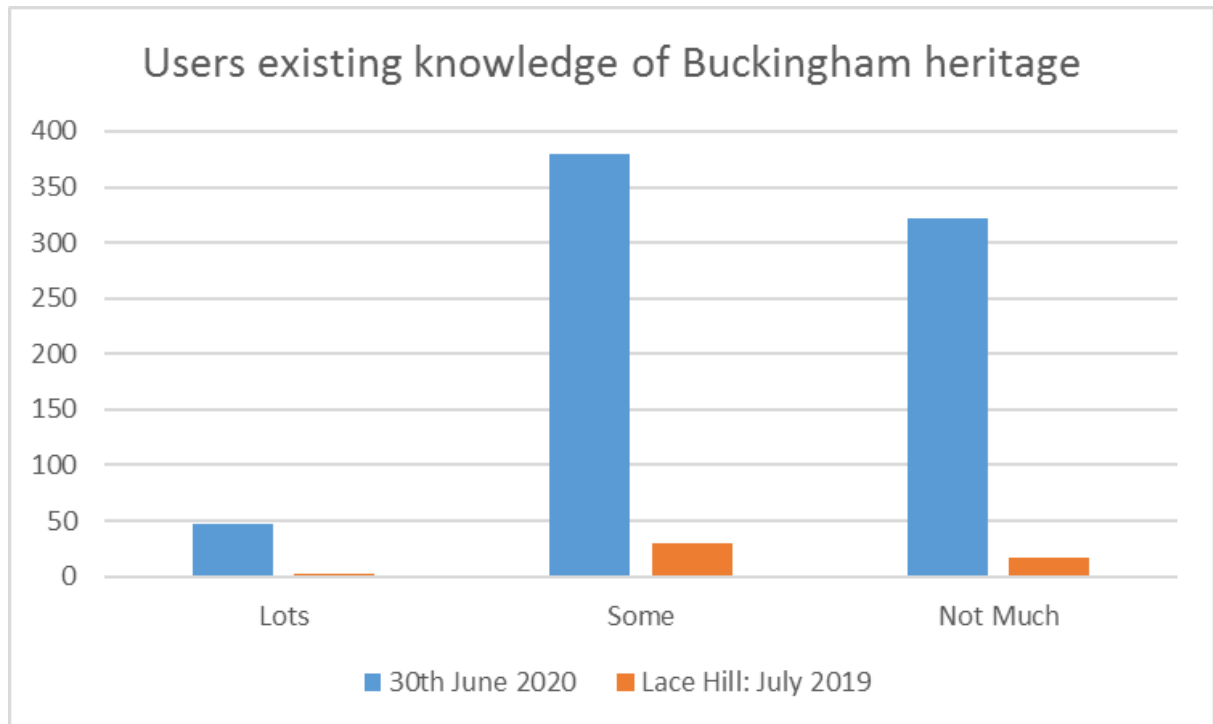
4. Background: Initial Impact

4.1 The digital launch of Buxplore took place on social media. The launch was extremely successful, more than 500 people followed links from social media and tried the app on the first day of its launch.

4.2 We used a short survey to gather baseline data about users in the first month of Buxplore being live. The responses to these questions confirmed that the problems the Economic Development Working Group had initially identified were valid, with many residents saying that they

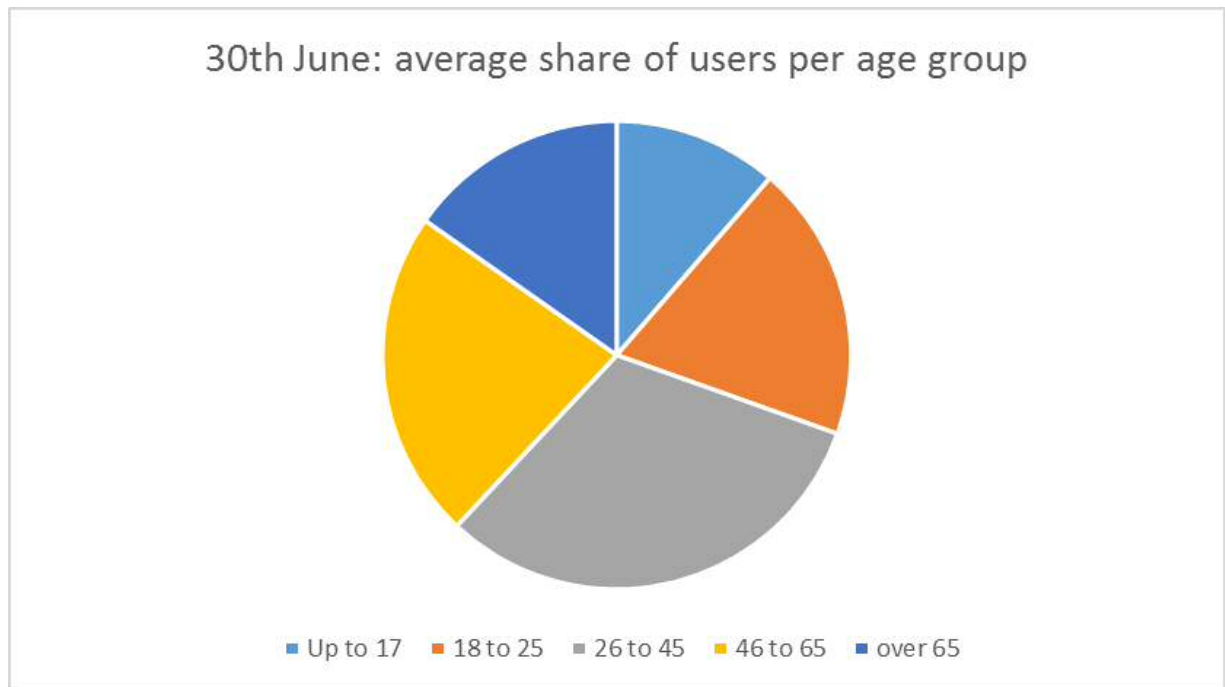


knew very little about local history. The high launch day uptake showed that an app offering heritage education in an active way across Buckingham was an appealing product to residents who felt they only knew a little or not much about Buckingham's heritage.



4.3 User age was also measured in order to gauge the overall appeal of the product and how well it was addressing gaps in local knowledge across different ages. Results from users surveyed in May and June 2020 showed a good spread of ages accessing the app, including many young people under the age of 25. The highest level of engagement was from users aged 26 to 45, an age category that includes those users most likely to be parents.

4.4 Feedback suggested the most popular trails for families were Green and Heritage for Kids. As lockdown eased visitors to the Tourist Information Centre, typically older people, were more likely to try the History trail, spending an hour visiting locations close to the town centre. This information helped officers to adapt their plans for future trails, focusing on high levels of interactivity and shorter trails.



5. Adapting to Coronavirus

5.1 Coronavirus has had a significant impact on the ability for the app to succeed, in both positive and negative ways.

5.2 In the spring of 2020, there were many residents viewing their home town in a new light, interest in learning about their local area and in a new exercise option to break up lockdown boredom were both high. Consequently, officers worked as quickly as possible to create a workable version of Buxplore.

5.3 This had some negatives; waiting longer would have created a more developed product at launch. However, the offset of creating a product with real benefit in a time of need was more important. Encouraging residents to be outdoors, exploring areas of the town they may not have already known about (beneficial for social distancing) and exercising was important for their mental well-being at a time of great stress.

5.4 Some early issues with the clarity of how to download the app were cleared up quickly.

5.5 Social media presence is a strong driver in number of users accessing Buxplore daily, due to Coronavirus the Officers working on the app have had wildly varying workloads. This has made it difficult to always be a consistent online presence as producing good quality social media content takes time. Changes in communications strategy, including the purchase of new products for Officers were implemented towards the end of 2020 to improve this issue long term.

5.6 Officers time was also a factor in not being able to produce as many trails in 2020 as originally intended.

5.7 The launch event has sadly been an impossible task. There has been no point since the app launched that the community gathering planned would be possible due to Coronavirus restrictions.

5.8 As per 3.4, the money that would have been spent on the launch event is instead being invested in additional features for the app, making best use of the funding before the March 31st 2021 deadline. These will include a points scoring system, adding Buxplore to Google Play and QR codes that direct users to particular trails, as well as additional wildlife themed content for the most popular trail, the Green Trail.

6. End of Project Evaluation

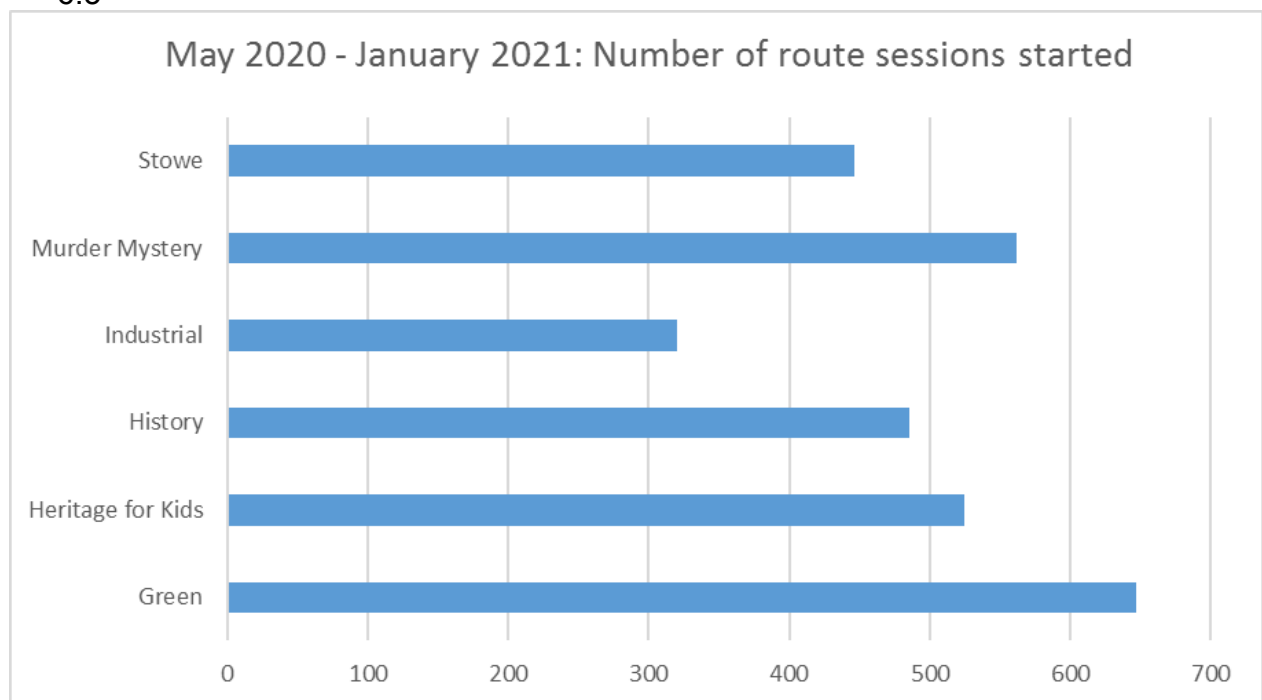
6.1 As of January 22nd 2021, 8 months after the launch of Buxplore, more than 2,500 unique users have accessed Buxplore.

6.2 During lockdown, and particularly during periods of school closures much higher numbers of people accessed the app daily. Dozens of people used the app every weekend during the initial March 2020 lockdown and this is being maintained during the current 2021 lockdown, despite much poorer weather.

6.3 The most popular trails overall have been Green, Murder Mystery and Heritage for Kids.

6.4 Although 320 users to date have tried the trail, the least popular trail is the Industrial Trail. Half the number that have tried the most popular trail. This suggests the concept itself was less appealing to users choosing a leisure activity, and that there is scope to present the information included in another way.

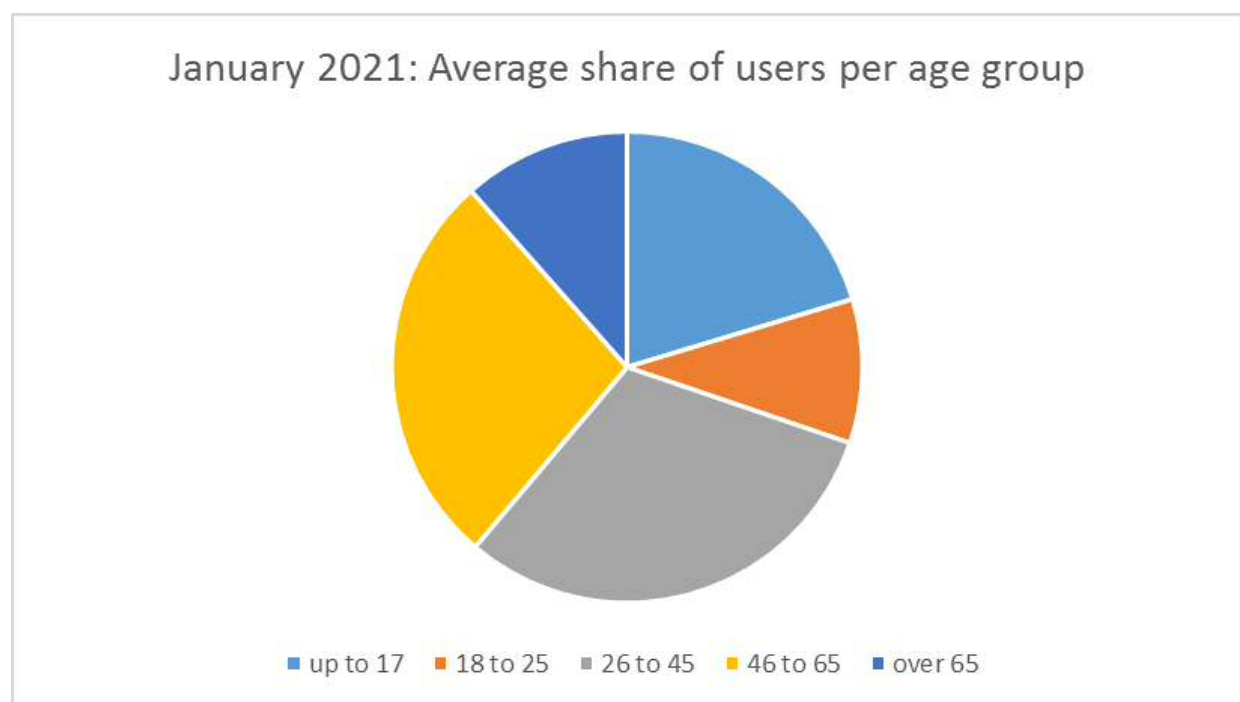
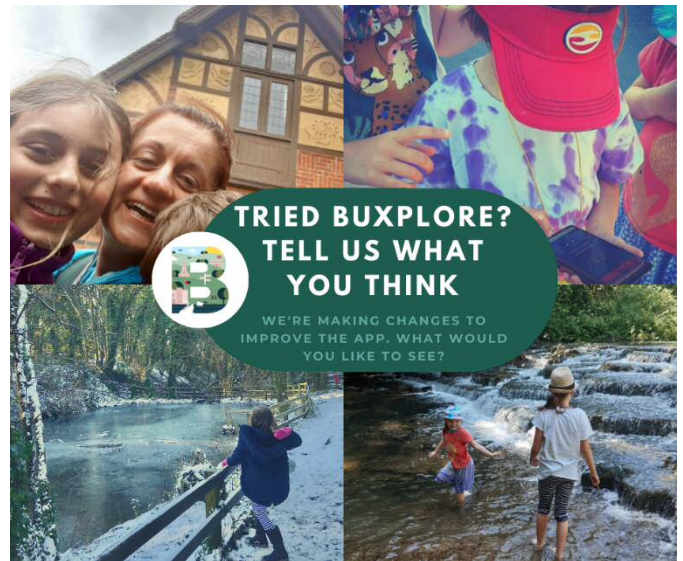
6.5



6.6 The end of project survey has only just begun. A month's sample will be taken, over a number of different platforms. This will include a standalone Survey Monkey survey that will be advertised online and emailed to Buxplore users.

6.7 Volunteers will also be sought for more in depth user interviews.

6.8 Currently a user snapshot survey within Buxplore itself is gathering demographic data on age of users and the key measure for a NLHF project's success: whether more people are engaged with local heritage before the project or after. Initial responses tell us that:



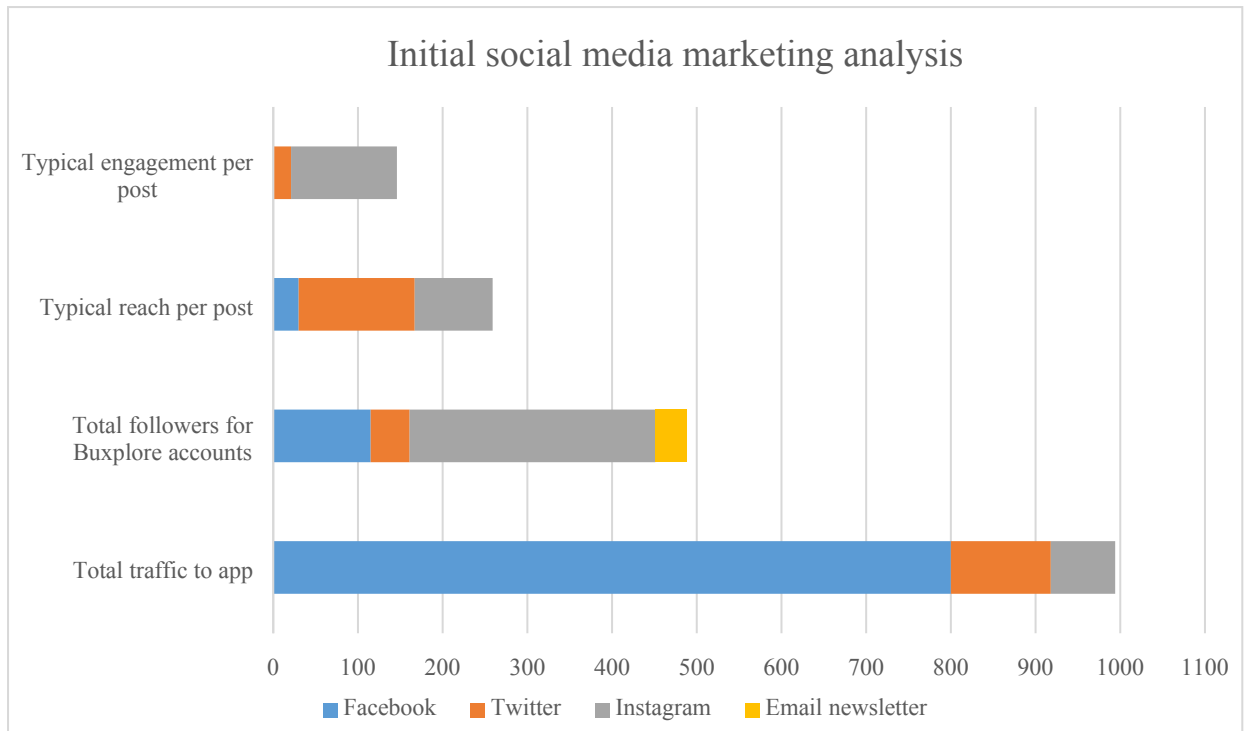
While the number of responses so far is too low to be statistically representative, interest in the app amongst different age groups is broadly similar to launch, with some proportionally increased interest amongst younger people. Overall, the app is most popular with people aged 26 to 45. This age group might also be using the app with other family members including children.

6.8 There are not enough snap shot survey responses to make a judgement about the response to whether or not Buxplore has helped users to learn more about Buckingham's history. However, to date, no one has disagreed with the statement.

- 6.9 Overall feedback on social media and from users in person has been positive, adult and child users have told us that the app allowed them to discover things they hadn't known about Buckingham, and that they had fun using the app.
- 6.11 There have been some user requests that it has taken a long time or have been difficult to be able to fulfil – for example adding the app to the Google Play store. The experience of loading the app to the phone is more onerous for Apple users, this is unfortunate but difficult to resolve with only a very small budget to build the app with. With a much larger budget, an entirely different approach to the app creation would likely have been taken. On balance the approach taken remains the best balance between budget and usability for users, with a clean easy to navigate design.
- 6.12 Some residents have been keen to see particular locations, for example St Rumbold's Well on the app or other themes, and these are ideas officers are working on.

7. Current and Future Plans: Marketing

- 7.1 Aside from the initial launch, engagement with the Buxplore Facebook page is very low. The largest proportion or referral traffic to Buxplore from Facebook have been where posts have been made to the main Town Council page, not the Buxplore page.
- 7.2 In order to make best use of officer resources growing the Facebook account is not likely to be a focus going forwards. Posts will continue to be made periodically to the main Town Council page.
- 7.3 Instagram and Twitter are growing more quickly and provide more evidence of interaction from followers with each post. These markets are worth growing.
- 7.4 An email newsletter sign-up option has been added relatively recently. Currently this has not been advertised, and no newsletters have yet been sent. Regardless, there have been 37 organic sign ups to the newsletter already. Long term this is likely to be an effective approach to advertising new trails and updated features or facilities.
- 7.5 While the app has been running for 10 months, due to Coronavirus opportunities to advertise and showcase the app face to face have been very limited. With a budget reserved for new trails on an annual basis, and social media content being shared it's likely that new users can continue to be attracted to the app over time.
- 7.6 Buckingham Town Council's office team will continue to provide around two hours a week of officer time to maintain Buxplore's media and social media presence and, when possible, to create one new trail a year.



7.7 Some of the plans for in person marketing including publicity stalls at appropriate events and distribution of flyers have been difficult to make use of in 2020. In order to make best use of the remaining marketing budget, additional flyers and banners will be purchased for these uses in future years.

8. Current and Future Plans: Finance and Resources

8.1 Of the original £10,000 budget £3778 remains. It is intended that this funding will be spent on improvements to the app, one (or more¹) additional trails before 31st March 2021, and marketing materials, banners and flyers. After 31st March any remaining unspent funding must be returned to NLHF.

8.2 NLHF digital projects must continue to exist in a functional way for 5 years after their project end date (Buxplore's official project end date in March 31st 2021 - meaning the app must exist until around April 2026)

8.3 Original plans to finance the app through sponsorship through local businesses have been put on hold due to the precarious economic situation for many local businesses.

8.4 General maintenance and hosting costs for the website are low, and additional trails could be added for small amounts, making the total cost of supporting Buxplore between £400 and £1400 a year depending on whether new trails are to be added. A budget of £750 for Buxplore has already been agreed for 2021/2022.

<i>Type of maintenance/addition</i>	<i>Approximate cost</i>
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¹ Number of trails that can be completed depends on officer workflow due to Coronavirus restrictions, which remains difficult to predict. Three trails are currently in stages of production. Buxbot, Thornborough and Foodie.

<i>Server space</i>	£60
<i>Updates and fixes</i>	£320
<i>Variable cost: adding a new trail using existing functionality</i>	£200
<i>Variable cost: adding a new trail with additional functionality</i>	£1000

8.5 As the economy recovers, local businesses could be approached to consider sponsorship of Buxplore in later years.

9. Current and Future Plans: New Trails

9.1 With more than 2,500 users to date and lockdown restrictions continuing there is scope and a need for more trails with different themes.

9.2 Due to the officer time required to make each trail, it's unlikely that more than one trail a year could be produced. However, the following trails have been discussed, and initial planning and research started:

- For launch spring 2021 - Buxbot trail – an industrial trail with activities designed for children.
- World War 1 – a digital version of the RBL Buckingham Map.
- Thornborough bridge loop – a natural and history trail with links to the Old Gaol artefacts
- Foodie – linking current businesses with historic Buckingham foods.
- Stowe School statue trail – to be created by students

**BUCKINGHAM TOWN COUNCIL
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT WORKING GROUP
MONDAY 15th FEBRUARY 2021**

Contact Officer: Paul Hodson, Town Clerk

Town Centre Design Working Group

1. Recommendation

1.1. It is recommended that the Group notes the report.

2. Background

1.2. During the first Covid 19 lockdown, Buckinghamshire Council, in common with councils around the country, sought to put in place measures to support town centres to open safely whilst encouraging people to shop again. At the time there was much discussion about the merits of pedestrianising part of the town centre. The only measure that it was felt to be safe and practical at the time was to introduce a temporary crossing at the foot of Moreton Road. However, conversations in a range of meetings and on social media about the pros and cons of pedestrianisation have continued since then.

1.3. The subject was raised during the Covid 19 and Economic Recovery sub-group of the Buckingham & Villages Community Board, held on 26th January 2021. It was agreed at that meeting to seek to establish a small working group to review the options, and to develop a scope of work for a suitable designer to propose options to change the town centre's layout, including options for pedestrianisation. It is likely that the Community Board would be asked to fund the ensuing design work, and may also be asked to support the implantation of any agreed schemes in the longer term. Any designs created would then form the basis of public consultation to assess local support for their implementation.

1.4. It was agreed to invite representatives of Buckinghamshire Council, Buckingham Town Council and the Buckingham Society to take part in the group.

1.5. At this stage, the group has not met and so there are no proposals to discuss. However, it is likely that the group's areas of consideration may include options for pedestrianisation in the town, impact on parking and businesses, and space for events and café furniture. It may be that the group is able to propose some short term measures to help the town recover from

the current lockdown which would also be able to test ideas for long-term implementation.