

Newport City Council
Planning Department
Civic Centre
Newport
NP20 4UR

30 September 2025

The Town and Country Planning Act 1990
The Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) (Amendment)
(Wales) Regulations 2017

Re: The Installation of Three Advertised Communication Hub Units with Defibrillators.

Application Sites:

- 1. Pavement o/s 33 High Street, Newport NP20 1GH**
- 2. Pavement o/s 10-12 Austin Friars, Newport NP20 1DQ**
- 3. Pavement o/s 157 Commercial Street, Newport NP20 1JQ**

This letter is submitted with applications for advertisement consent (AC) and planning permission (PP) for the installation of three Communication Hubs within the city of Newport. The set of applications relate to three sites, as identified on the map of the city of Newport at **Appendix A**. The Hub Unit, in addition to free calls to landlines, offers a range of additional connective functions that include free Wi-Fi, a 32-inch touch screen to enable wayfinding, direct access to local webpages, a publicly accessible defibrillator and both USB and wireless device charging capabilities. The communication apparatus includes a telephony element together with an advertised face, which is why applications are submitted for both PP and AC.

Background

By way of background on this proposal, JCDecaux purchased a telephone Company called In Focus Public Networks (IPN) in 2018 and with it a network of old-style enclosed call boxes. Over the last few years we have been systematically working in partnership with IPN to rationalise and replace the call box estate with modern multifunctional Hub units, of which there are now over 250 in the UK. What is unique about our Hub unit is the inclusion of a publicly accessible defibrillator as a standard feature in the unit design.

This letter therefore sets out the details of the proposals, which seeks approval for a limited number of units to create a central network of connected Hub units that offer a range of interactive functions that are available free of charge to the public.

The details of the Communication Hub unit are enclosed at **Appendices B and C** and the proposed locations shown on the map in **Appendix A**.



Greater Manchester Police Crime Awareness Campaign on Piccadilly, Manchester

Hub Unit Features

Common to all communication providers is an advertised element, from which is derived the revenue to pay for the provision and maintenance of the equipment and support any services provided. Our Hub unit is the only unit that incorporates a single side of advertising rather than having it featuring on both sides of the structure. This enables us to dedicate the front of the unit solely to public use, as a purposefully designed benefit, rather than an afterthought.

The traditional role of the phone box is ill equipped for the modern digital environment. The multifunctional Hub unit has been designed to bring this public service up to date and present the next generation of communication provision that gives more to the public and can contribute to the vitality and vibrancy of city centres.

The available benefits include free calls to landlines¹ and charities, free wi-fi and device charging, wayfinding via the 32" touchscreen and instant access to the emergency services when needed.

However, one of the most important features is the inbuilt defibrillator, which is accessible 24 hours a day. Since 2019 JCDecaux has worked in partnership with

¹ Calls to Mobile Numbers prohibited under the adopted Management Plan

Community Heartbeat Trust, a registered charity that promotes greater public access to defibrillators in public spaces. Each Hub unit is equipped with a defibrillator as standard and local training is provided by the Community Heartbeat Trust, funded by JCDecaux, to ensure that the equipment can be quickly deployed in an emergency.



Communication Hub Renders

The detail in **Appendices B** and **C** covers some of the potential functions that can be provided by the Hub unit and which are currently being trialed in other Cities and Boroughs. These include air quality sensors through our collaboration with Airly²; pedestrian flow monitoring to enable Councils to better understand people movements and flows within their area; in built CCTV cameras to supplement local provision. Technological advances are driving the development of a range of functions that can be incorporated into street furniture to enable local authorities to better understand and plan for changes in the urban environment. All these capabilities are funded by the advertising revenue from the single display on the Hub unit, 50p in every £1 of which is reinvested in furniture to support public services.

The unit has undergone rigorous testing in extreme conditions and can boast 13.5mm thick anti-vandal toughened safety laminated glass on all glazed surfaces. The other external elements have been treated with a nanotech surface treatment to enable easy removal of stickers and/or sprayed paint to the external surfaces. The unit has a protection rating against impact of >IK10. All electrical circuitry is

² <https://airly.org/en/>

inaccessible to the public and the unit features hidden fixings that require specialist tools to enable access.

The advertisement screen will show illuminated static images that automatic change by means of a remote server. The light sensor will control lighting levels automatically during the day and be able to adjust levels to reflect a change in sunrise and sunset times from summer to winter and environmental conditions. Should the unit malfunction the screen will switch off and automatically alert JCDecaux's dedicated digital team of the fault and schedule a repair. The display screen on the reverse of the Hub unit will switch off between the hours of 11:59 p.m. and 6:00 a.m., thus reducing energy use by 43%. The touchpad screen will default to a map of the city of Newport for easy wayfinding and the screen can include shortcuts to the most often used apps and links direct to local Council services. A touchpad is positioned at 1m from the ground to provide easy access for wheelchair users and the screen is designed with high contrast colours to assist the partially sighted.

Finally, sustainability is an important element of the Company's approach to development from initial design, product and material sourcing to energy use. In 2019 the Company joined RE100, a global leadership initiative for companies committed to 100% renewable electricity. The Company's objective is to source 100% of its electricity consumption from renewable electricity this year. Although not an exhaustive set of criteria, I list below some of the important considerations in our proposals.

- **Need** – The *Future Wales: The National Plan 2040* confirms that the need for this type of communication apparatus is not a material consideration. However, evidence from installed Hub units in the UK clearly demonstrates not only the demand for phone functions, but the active use of the additional functions provided. The Hub unit is not limited to voice calls but includes access to a range of other facilities that are free for public use. The defibrillators on the Hub network have been used over 400 times in two years. The share of time of the display screens together with the dedicated local area specific content on the touchscreen provides a platform for people to engage with public bodies and promote public awareness.

The need for accessible defibrillators in public spaces is well known³. Cardiac arrest is a real issue in all communities with over 100,000 hospital admissions each year. A heart attack can happen to anyone and anywhere and the survival rate is just 1:10, however the early use of a defibrillator can triple the chances of someone surviving such an attack. Each Hub unit is equipped with an easy to use defibrillator provided and maintained by JCDecaux and added to the register of available devices in the Borough. How to activate and use the device can be displayed on screen and local training can be organized through CHT funded by JCDecaux, to ensure that when needed, this equipment can be quickly deployed to save a life.

- **Design** – The Hub unit is based on the Forum design by Fosters and partners and is a familiar scale of furniture that is found in urban areas as it is comparable to the size of advertising on bus shelters, for example. The design is purposefully understated in a dark grey or black colour to match other functional furniture within Newport and is of robust construction and fully accessible. The units are run on 100 renewable energy and cleaned by rainwater.
- **Unit Number and Clutter** – The proposal is limited in scope to three new locations, which is a suitable scale of network for the size of the district of the borough of Newport. We have identified sites to fit the distribution and where possible sited them on footpaths that are relatively clear of other similar forms of furniture.
- **Safety** – The experience of other Operators across the UK has raised real concerns over the misuse of a free to use public service. The design and operation of the Hub unit has been formulated with the support of the Met Police Design Out Crime Unit resulting in the adoption of a Management Plan that ensures the use of the units is closely monitored and managed to prevent abuse.

³ <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/number-of-defibrillators-to-be-increased-with-new-funding>

Heritage Statement

Section 72 of the Act establishes a duty in the exercise of any function under the Act to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of a conservation area. This statement has been prepared to assess the impact of the proposed digital advertised Communication Hubs on the character and appearance of Newport Town Centre Conservation Area. The purpose is to evaluate the likely effect of the development on the historic and architectural aspects of the surroundings. This assessment aims to ensure that the introduction of contemporary amenities does not detract from the city's historic identity but rather complements and enhances the urban landscape in a responsible and balanced manner.

The Newport Town Centre Conservation Area covers the heart of Newport's commercial district. This area represents a mosaic of history and modernity, with landmarks like the Newport Market Hall, the Westgate Hotel, and St. Woolos Cathedral embodying its rich historical narrative. The town centre's urban fabric is characterised by a blend of Georgian, Victorian, and contemporary architectural styles. Its narrow streets and open public spaces reflect both historical evolution and a vibrant, bustling character essential for commercial activities.

The street scenes of High Street and Commercial Street within Newport Town Centre feature active pedestrian engagement and traditional shopfronts, periodically invigorated by modern designs that contribute to a lively environment. Heritage buildings coexist with modern structures, offering a unique juxtaposition that showcases both historical integrity and responsive modernisation. As part of modernising Newport's retail centre, the proposed digital Communication Hubs seek to integrate essential modern amenities into the urban landscape without compromising the area's heritage values. This initiative not only enhances public safety but also contributes to the area's commercial viability and urban character, ensuring that Newport Town Centre remains a vital and accessible location.

As detailed below, Communication Hubs have been sited in locations within the Conservation Area where their introduction is seen to be suitable due to the surrounding street scenes and their operation. It is the view of the applicant that the proposed Communication Hub will result in either a negligible or a positive effect and would consequently not harm the heritage or amenity interests within the area.