



# Dumfries Town Board Community Engagement Report

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JUNE - AUGUST 2024

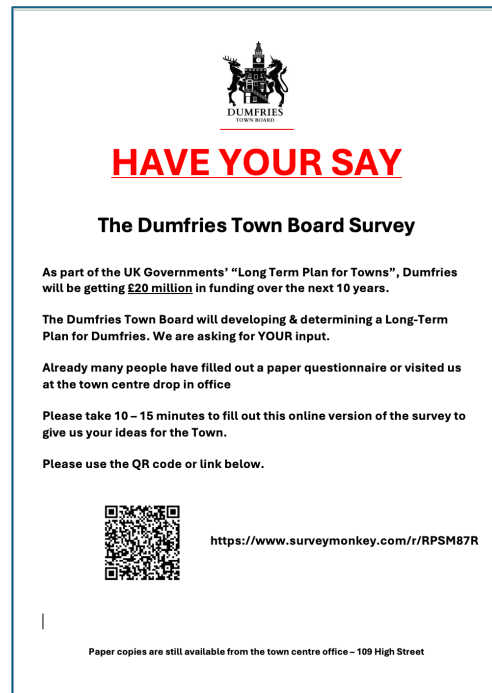
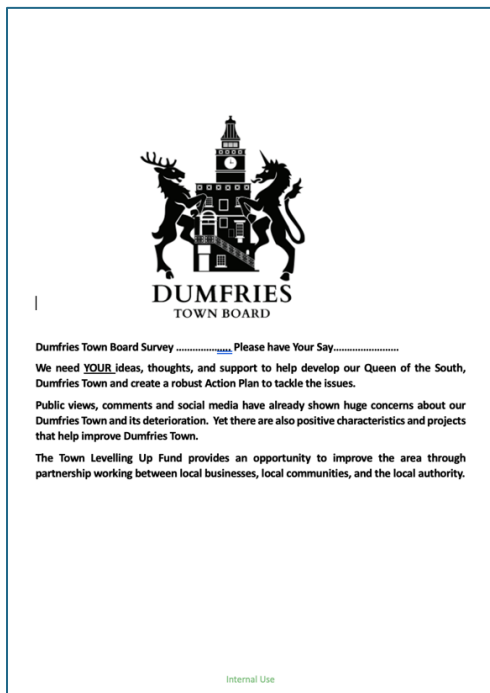
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## Introduction



In September 2023 the UK Government launched its 'Long-Term Plan for Towns', supporting 55 UK towns, including seven in Scotland, as part of the Levelling-Up programme. Dumfries has been selected and will receive £20 million in endowment-style funding over 10 years from 2024/25. As part of creating the 3 year and 10-year spending plan a community engagement was required to better understand the needs and wants of the public. This community engagement aimed to get as wide a representation as possible and used a variety of approaches. These included:

- The Main Engagement Survey that was available in both online and paper form
- Town Board office drop-ins - The public can come into the Town Board office and have one to one discussions with volunteers. They are able to fill out a survey and or leave a comment/suggestion on Post-it notes.
- The Short Survey – A shorter “one-page” survey was distributed to better engage older and younger respondents.

Although the community engagement was originally set up to get the views and suggestions of the public to incorporate into the 3 year and 10-year spending plans. The plan is for the community engagement to continue to better understand public opinion and to facilitate the public giving their suggestions.

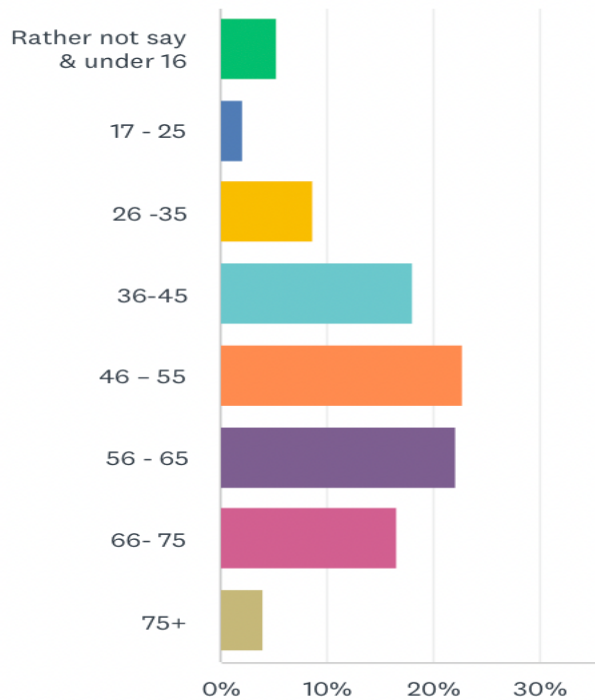
## Main Engagement Survey

The Main Survey was made up of 3 Sections, which were Regeneration, History and Heritage; Safety & Security, and Transport & Digital Connectivity. The survey consisted of 23 multiple choice questions and 9 open ended questions finishing with a brief demographic and data protection section.

### **How was data collected**

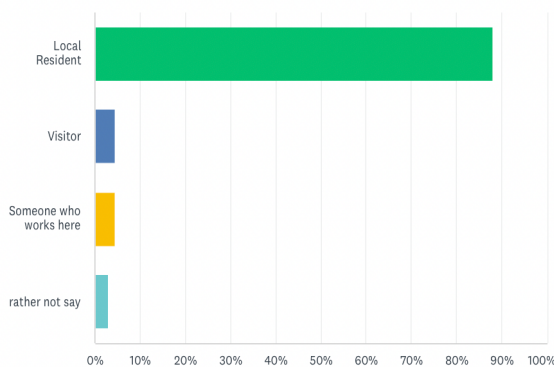
The survey was available in paper form through June & July 2024 and online throughout July 2024. Paper surveys were available at various key locations across Dumfries, including the drop in office at 109 High Street, Public Libraries and Community Centres. Posters with a QR code and a link to the survey were placed at multiple locations in the Town Centre and were also placed at DG1 leisure complex, the Ice Bowl, Local Supermarkets, Cafes, and many other locations around the Town. The survey link was also extensively shared online on several social media platforms and volunteers visited many of the Community Centres around the Town to have conversations, hand out paper surveys, and provide the online link using leaflets.

In addition to the Main Survey there was a shorter one-page survey, and volunteers were also available for one-to-one conversations with the public at the Town Board office at 109 High Street throughout June and July 2024. Members of the public were invited to leave their suggestions on Post-It notes, in addition to taking part in the survey, which were displayed in the office window.



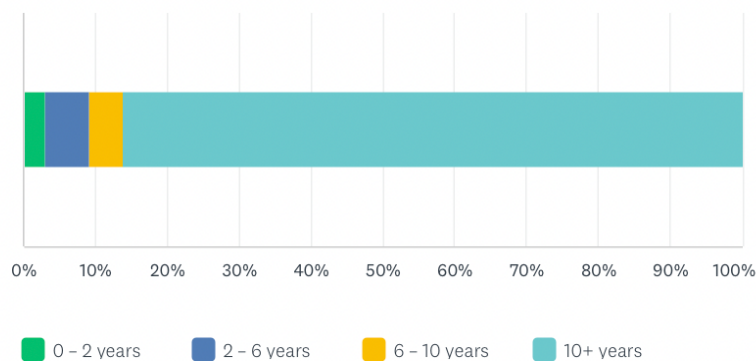
The Main Survey managed to get a good response from all age groups. The older age brackets were more represented than the young with 63% of respondents falling between 36 - 65. Given the demographics of Dumfries this is representative of the population. The Short Survey was able to gather a better sample of the younger age brackets especially U16s.

At the time of reporting, a total of 752 individual responses were recorded across the two surveys. A significant number of these represented family groups rather than individuals and altogether, the engagement represented the views of 1874 people including children.



88% of respondents considered themselves Residents of Dumfries, 4.5% were Visitors and 4% were people who worked in the Town (as shown left).

Most respondents who said they lived in Dumfries (86%) have lived in Dumfries for more than 10 years (as shown below).



## 1. Section 1 – Regeneration

People were asked to rate specific aspects of life in Dumfries' Town Centre from the options of Very Poor, Poor, Adequate and Good. Respondents were asked about Cleanliness; Attractiveness; Pavements; Town information; Daytime and Evening Activities & Accessibility. Respondents were also asked 3 open ended questions in this section.

### Key Findings

Respondents highlighted several aspects of the Town Centre that need improvement including Cleanliness; Attractiveness; Range & Quality of Activities, and Accessibility.

Both the cleanliness and attractiveness were rated low with 62% of respondents rating cleanliness and 77% rating attractiveness as Poor or Very Poor. In particular 94% of respondents between 26-35 rated the attractiveness of the Town Centre as Poor or Very Poor.

The only aspect of the Town Centre that respondents were questioned on that was considered to be majority Good or Adequate was the quality of pavements, but this was only 56% of respondents. Town Information was rated as 54% Poor or Very Poor.

The Quality and Range of Activities in the Town Centre were all rated as majority Poor or Very Poor by respondents. The worst of these was the range of activities in the evening scoring 78% Poor or Very Poor and only 1.75% rating these as Good. The rating was lower the younger the respondent.

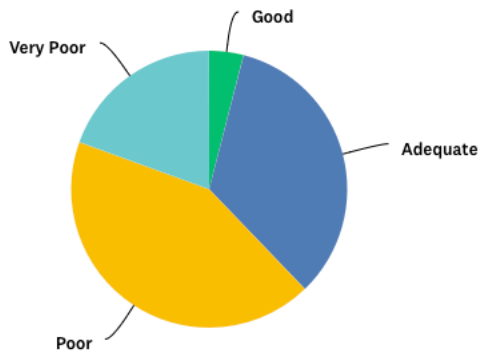
Respondents were asked 3 open-ended questions asking what existing projects they would like to see developed; what the respondent top 3 priorities were, and what history and heritage of the town did they want to see developed.

In the first open-ended question respondents highlighted the large number of existing events that take place in and around the town. Many comments, however, drew attention to how poorly these were publicised and attended. This emphasised the cultural potential that could be built on.

For the top 3 priorities question the main suggestions were shops, empty buildings, and cleanliness, which was not unexpected.

Finally in the last question respondents highlighted the vast and rich history & heritage of Dumfries and the surrounding area. Again, many respondents voiced their frustrations at how poorly these were advertised or coordinated. This highlighted the great potential that already exists, but that it requires more joined up thinking.

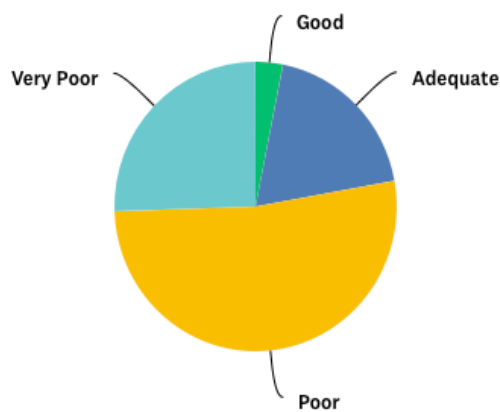
## 1.1. Cleanliness of the Town Centre



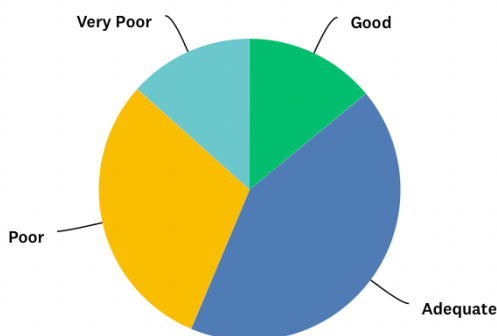
A majority of respondents said they thought that the Cleanliness of the Town Centre was Poor (43%) or Very Poor (19%) and very few said they thought Cleanliness was Good (4%). This was a subject that came up further in subsequent open questions. This was fairly consistent across the age groups.

## 1.2. Attractiveness of the Town Centre

Even fewer respondents considered the Town Centre to be attractive. Most respondents considered the Attractiveness of the Town Centre to be Poor (52%) or Very Poor (25%) with only 3% rating it as Good. The age bracket that gave the lowest rating was the 26–35 rating 37% Very Poor, 57% Poor and 0% rated the Attractiveness of the Town Centre as Good.



## 1.3. Quality of the Pavements

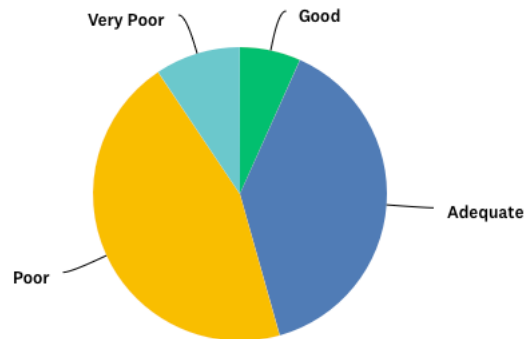


Most respondents rated Pavements in the Town Centre as Adequate (42%) or Good (14%). This was, however, not constant through the age brackets. The older age brackets rated Pavements 60% Poor or Very Poor whereas the younger age brackets were around 50%.



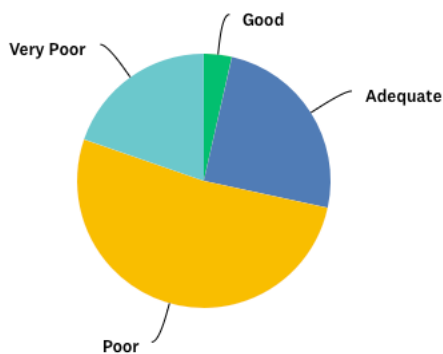
## 1.4. Town Information (accessible/events information)

A narrow majority (54%) of respondents rated Town Information as Poor or Very Poor. Only 8% of respondents rating Town Information as Good. The older the respondent the poorer the rating.

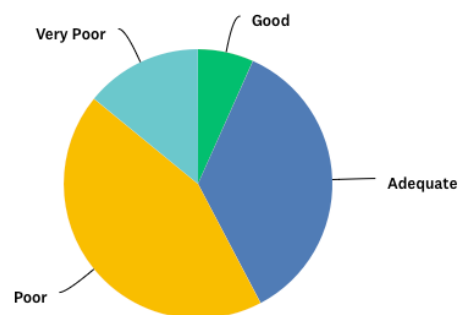


## 1.5. Daytime Activities

### Range

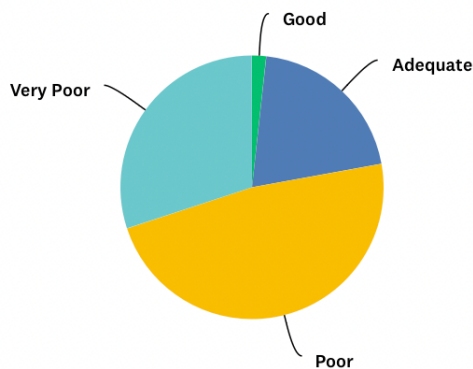


### Quality

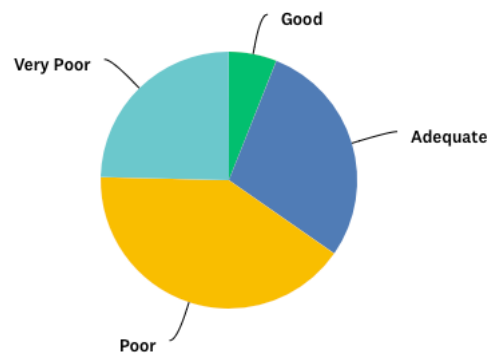


A majority of respondents said the Range and Quality of Daytime Activities in the Town Centre were Poor (52%/40%) or Very Poor (20%/25%). The age bracket with the greatest dissatisfaction with the Range of Activities was the 26-35 age bracket with only 19% of that bracket rating the Range as Adequate and 0% rating it as Good. Again, when rating the Quality of the Daytime Activities the 26-35 age brackets rated it slightly worse than the others with 67% rating the quality as Poor or Very Poor.

## 1.6. Evening Activities Range

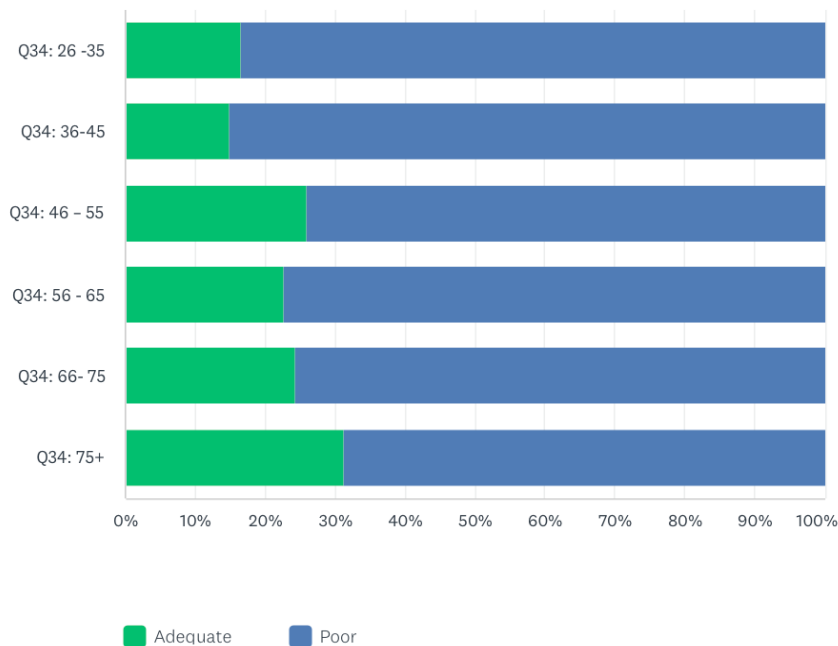


## Quality

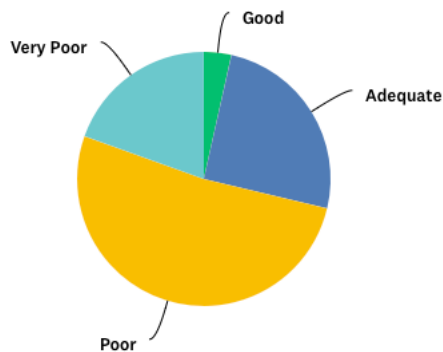


Evening activities in the Town Centre were an equally mediocre picture with 48% & 30% of respondents rating the Range of Evening Activities as Poor and Very Poor respectively and only 1.75% rating the Range of Activities as Good. 25% of respondents rated the Quality as Very Poor and 40% rated it as Poor. When examining for age (as shown below) it was the younger two age brackets that rated the Range of Activities poorest. When Good & Adequate were combined and Poor & Very Poor combined only 15% of 36 – 45-year-olds rated the Range of Evening Activities as Adequate & Good and only 16.67% of 25 – 35-year-olds.

### RANGE Adequate VS Poor AGE BREAKDOWN



## 1.7. Town Accessibility (for the less mobile)



Unsurprisingly age played a large factor in the accessibility question. 56-65, 66-75 & 75+ age brackets rated Accessibility majority Poor or Very Poor. With the 75+ bracket rating it 50% Poor & 12.5% Very Poor. Comparing this to 26-35-year-olds who rated Accessibility 19.5% Poor and 8% Very Poor.

## 1.8. What existing Town Projects & Events should be further developed

There was a wide range of suggestions a sample of which can be seen below:

- Big Burns Supper – Better supported with a wider range of surrounding events
- Farmers Market – Better promoted with more stalls.
- Youth Beatz – More things like this that pull in youth from all over D&G
- Entertainment on the High Street (especially during school holidays)
- International Street Food festival
- Cinema/Bowling Alley
- Evening activities and LIFE!

Beyond actual suggestions many respondents commented on the lack of information of what is already taking place. There is definitely a desire for more to be available in the evenings that doesn't involve alcohol and can be family friendly.

Further there were many comments about lack of coordination and being unaware that regular events would be taking place. The knowing that "something" would be taking place in the Town Centre every week or fortnight would be sufficient rather than specific knowledge what the event was. This rhythm, it was felt, would help to form the habit of visiting the Town Centre more regularly.

*“Current events need to be advertised more. Posters, flyers as well as social media. Saturday Market is very poorly advertised and their social media is non-existent”*

*“Cinema or bowling alley. We don’t even have a bingo hall anymore. It’s a shambles”*

*“Not sure what projects or events are happening?”*

*“Multi-generational, inclusive experiences which draw people into town for reasons other than shopping. Dumfries MUST diversify the offering in its Town Centre and stop focusing purely on retail for its survival”*

## 1.9. Top 3 Priorities

The results from the ratings were further supported by open questions. Respondents were asked which 3 things were most essential for Dumfries to tackle. The 1523 responses were divided into 9 categories shown below (in descending order):

Priority	% of people mentioning	Sample comments
1. Shops	68%	<i>Too many empty shops</i> <i>More independent retailers</i> <i>Better choice</i> <i>Too many out-of-town retail units</i> <i>Need to attract shops back into Town Centre</i> <i>People go to Carlisle or further for clothes</i>
2. Cleanliness	47%	<i>Everywhere looks tired and unwelcoming...</i> <i>Clean Burns Statue annually</i> <i>More trees and greenery in the Town Centre</i> <i>Make the Whitesands more attractive</i> <i>Rubbish bins are not being emptied</i>
3. Empty/Derelict Buildings	37%	<i>Too many derelict looking buildings</i> <i>Fill it – mandatory sale of empty shops</i> <i>Systematic restoration of Victorian architecture</i>
4. Entertainment/Things for the Youth	30%	<i>Teenage boredom</i> <i>Lack of leisure activities for all</i> <i>Support entertainment i.e. theatres and what little cinema availability there is</i>
5. Transport	23%	<i>Poor public transport, especially in evening</i> <i>Opening up the High Street to cars</i> <i>Better management of car parking</i> <i>Better cycling access</i> <i>More taxis licences</i>
6. Seagulls	19%	<i>Give them a contraceptive</i> <i>Better bins and less litter</i>
7. Safety/Crime	17%	<i>Crime and groups hanging around intimidating people</i> <i>Stop vandalism &amp; anti-social behaviour</i>
8. Community Spirit/Big Events/Economy	14%	<i>Lack of vibrancy</i> <i>Less negativity – there is a lot of it about.</i> <i>More community involvement</i>
9. Other	23%	<i>Potholes</i> <i>Pavements</i> <i>Tourism etc</i>

## 1.10. Dumfries has lots of important History and Heritage, what would you like to see developed further?

Similar to question 1.9 there was a large call from respondents to better harness the rich cultural heritage and history that Dumfries has. This was seen to be valuable not just to attract more tourists to the town but as a valued resource for residents of Dumfries.

There was, for many, a feeling that people were unaware of what was on their doorstep and just better highlighting and co-ordinating attractions would go a long way to improve participation. A well-publicised “What’s on Guide” was one suggestion.

Many suggested well signposted and resourced cycling/walking tours with guides using the Town Centre as a starting point. It was acknowledged that such routes exist, but more formalisation was called for when compared to the current “piecemeal” approach. More than anything there was a consensus that a better “story” of Dumfries needs to be told.

There were many mentions of Burns, Bruce and Barrie but there were many other suggestions such as:

- The Old Gates Factory
- Heathhall Aerodrome
- Historical architecture
- Rosefield Mills
- History of Midsteeple/Greyfriars

A sample of comments can be seen below:

*Hub for tourism that signposts all the amazing activities that are available. There is still a need for customer facing roles for tourism.*

*Robert the Bruce weekend has been great and brought lots of people in the Town. The river could be tidied up and seats etc painted. It is so peaceful in an ever-increasing busy world to take time out.*

*Let’s “sell” and make what we have more attractive to visitors. We have beautiful region lets sell it more and show people why they should come here.*

*The Friars Vennel has the potential to be superb attraction such as Glasgow’s Ashton Lane. Investment in repairs, improvements in overall appearance, promotions and historical events should all be developed to further assist the improvements made by some of the existing businesses so far.*

*To engage with our heritage more innovatively, we must move beyond poorly strategised and unimaginative campaigns centred on figures like Burns, Barrie and Bruce. Instead, we should involve creatives, producers & community experts...*

*“Town Centre for range of social and activity-based opportunities – it could be a wonderful hub in the evenings.”*

*“Get life back into the town instead of so many empty shops.”*

*“The lack of draw to the town centre, there needs to be places to meet and socialise other than coffee shops or pubs.”*

*“There’s a lack of knowledge & info even among locals about the fascinating heritage & history of the town... Much needed signage for visitors.”*

## 2. Section 2 - Safety & Security

The section started with 5 multiple choice questions asking respondents to agree or disagree with statements about Safety and Security in the Town Centre during the day and the evening. They were also asked 5 open-ended questions asking them to identify particular areas that they felt unsafe at those times and what actions they would like to see. Lack of police presence and functioning CCTV; lack of public transport & taxis, and an increase in traffic in the Town Centre were all cited.

### Key Findings

Although a majority of respondents agreed or strongly agreed (71%) that they felt safe in the Town Centre, during the day, there were many concerns about safety in the evening, especially among younger respondents. A majority of all respondents (56%) disagreed or strongly disagreed that they felt safe in the Town Centre in the evening and that they felt nighttime businesses were not doing enough (63%).

When asked about fear of crime and anti-social behaviour affecting their day-to-day activities a majority of respondents said that they disagreed or strongly disagreed (67%) that fear of crime affected them, however a majority of respondents (53%) said that they agreed or strongly agreed that a fear of anti-social activity did have an impact.

When asked about locations that respondents felt unsafe in the Town Centre the Burns Statue was the most frequent response. Other common locations were closes and side streets; Dock Park (in the evening), and the area at the bottom of the Friars Vennel and the Whitesands public toilets.

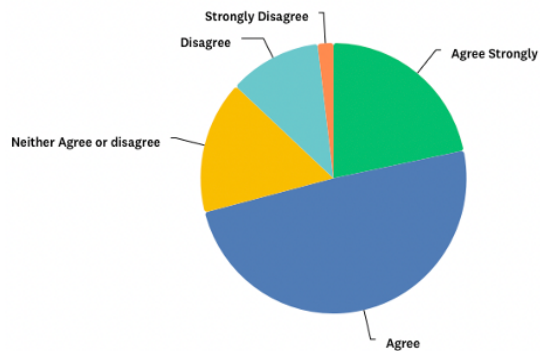
When asked what respondents felt was required to improve safety the top 3 answers were the same for day and evening. 69% of respondents mentioned increased police presence during the day, this increased to 74% for the evening. 19% (day) & 13% (evening) suggested additional or functioning CCTV and 13% both day and evening suggested town wardens/security.

In the final open question respondents were asked for additional comments. Some raised concerns about lack of cleanliness having an impact on anti-social behaviour; a lack of activities for the town's youth, and how quiet the Town Centre was in the evening making people feel more unsafe.

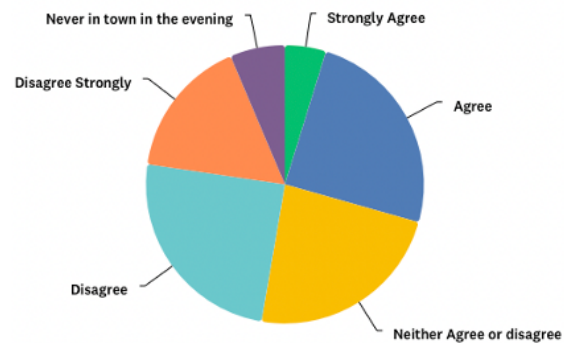


## 2.1. I feel safe when visiting the Town Centre

### Daytime



### Evening

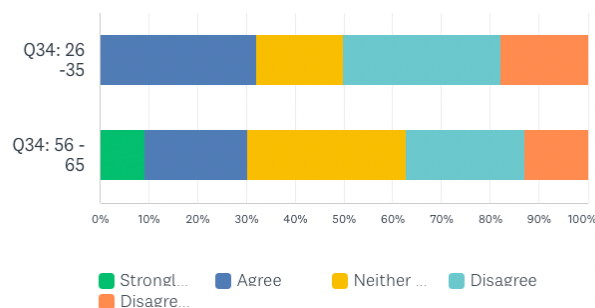


As can be seen above most respondents (71%) agreed or strongly agreed that they felt safe in the Town Centre during the day and only 11.6% said that they disagreed or strongly disagreed.

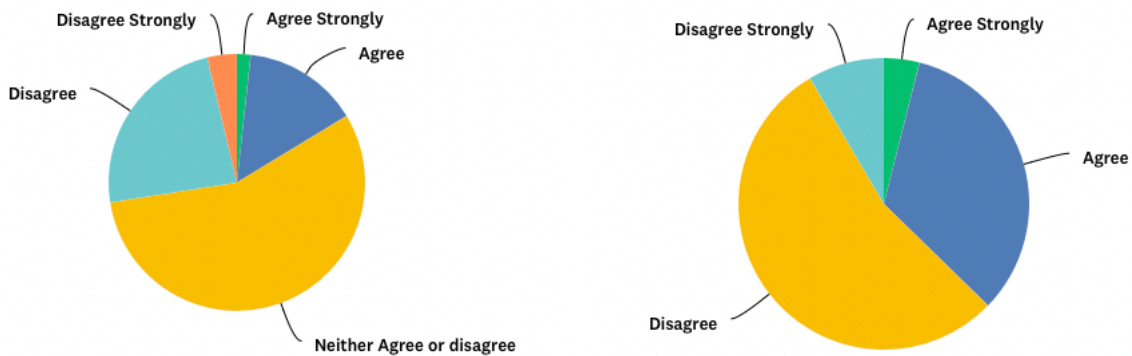
In the evening however it is a different picture. A majority of respondents said that they disagreed or strongly disagreed that they felt safe (41%) compared to those that said they agreed or strongly agreed (33%) when we removed those that said they don't visit the Town Centre.

As can be seen below this became more pronounced when we looked at age. The age bracket that felt most unsafe was 26 – 35. 51% disagreed or strongly disagreed that they felt safe compared to 37% of the 56-65 age bracket. Both age brackets had a similar proportion saying that they agreed or strongly agreed that they felt safe (32% 26 – 35 compared to 30% 56-65)

### I feel safe visiting the Town Centre in the evening 26-35 Vs 56-65



2.2. Do you feel that the nighttime businesses do enough to ensure the Safety and Security of the community?

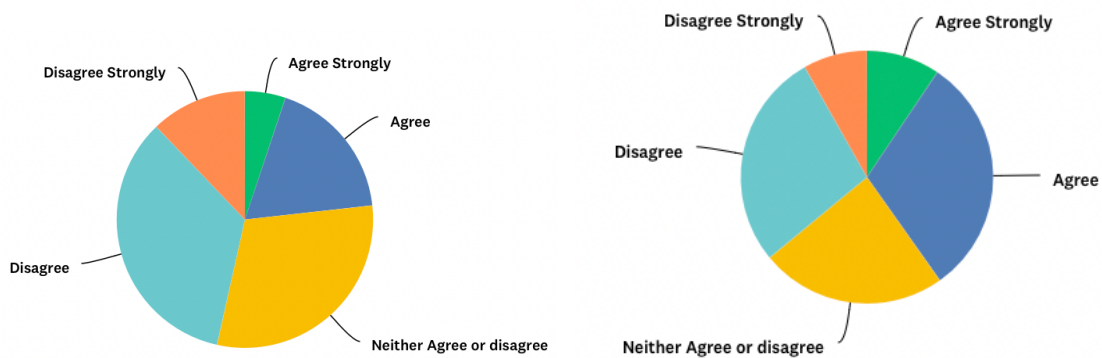


Most respondents answered this question as Neither Agree nor Disagree (54%) shown above on the left. When we removed that option, shown on the right, the majority of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed (63%) compared to agreed or strongly Agreed (37%).

2.3. Fear of Crime & Anti-Social Behaviour impact negatively on my day-to-day activities in the Town Centre?

**Fear of Crime**

**Fear of Anti-Social Behaviour**

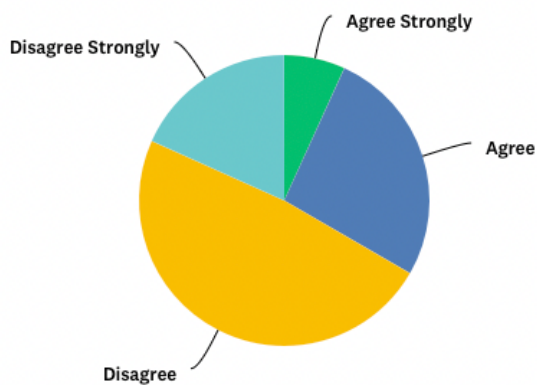


When asked about Fear of Crime affecting their day-to-day activities most respondents (48%) said they disagreed or strongly disagreed (see above). Again a large number of responses were Neither Agree or Disagree when these were removed a large majority of respondents said that they disagreed or strongly disagreed (67%) that Fear of Crime affected them (see below).

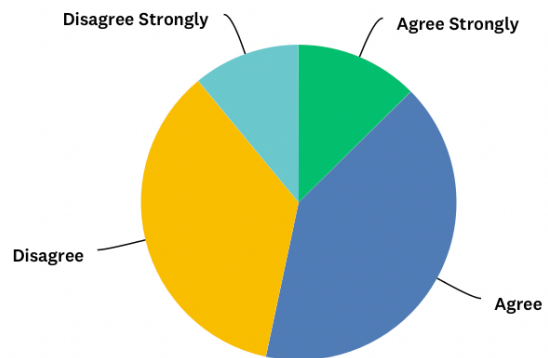
There was, however, a majority of respondents (53%) said that they agreed or strongly agreed that a Fear of Anti-Social Activity did have an impact when Neither Agree nor Disagree responses were removed.

The age bracket that had the highest number responding Agree or Strongly Agree was 26 – 35 (43%) with all other brackets less than 30%, with the exception of 66-75 (33%). For Fear of Anti-Social Behaviour, however, the 26-35 age bracket had one of the highest proportions (57%) saying that they agreed or strongly agreed that Fear of Anti-Social Behaviour had an impact on their day-to-day activities, but it was the oldest two brackets 66-75 & 75+ that had the highest proportion of respondents (59% & 60% respectively) saying that they agreed or agreed strongly.

### Fear of Crime



### Fear of Anti-Social Behaviour



2.4. Please tell us about areas within the Town Centre you would avoid during the day or night.

Most common locations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Burns Statue</li><li>• Dock Park</li><li>• Greensands</li><li>• Bottom of Friars Vennel</li><li>• Toilets at Whitesands</li><li>• Closes and side streets (especially if alone)</li></ul>

The locations where people felt most unsafe were similar for both day and night/evening. The Burns Statue topped the list both at day and night. Many respondents qualified their answers with stating being alone or poor lighting were also factors. Groups of large numbers of youths was mentioned multiple times.

Following is a sample of comments:

*Burns Statue can intimidate people.*

*Around the Queensberry Square and Burns Statue can be very intimidating with drunk people and large groups of youths spitting and shouting.*

*Not personally but wouldn't want my elderly parents down Dock Park alone....*

*Daytime is fine, but I feel nervous at night about anti-social behaviour and violence.*

*Businesses themselves at night do what they can, however, there's no presence on the streets of police etc and that's not up to the businesses.*

*Too many incidents happening. Wouldn't allow my children to travel anywhere alone in town day or night.*

*I have recently moved back from Glasgow to Dumfries and feel extremely safe here.*

## 2.5. What is required to improve the Safety and Security of the Town Centre?

Asked what initiatives respondents would like to see to improve safety in the Town Centre in the daytime and evening. a total of 1137 individual suggestions were recorded. Divided into 9 categories and shown in order of most mentioned to least, they were:

Suggestion	% of people mentioning Night/Day	Sample comments
1. Police presence	69%/74%	<p>Better police presence or wardens, someone who's job it is to speak to the groups of people acting inappropriately.</p> <p>More night patrols</p> <p>More police presence – I feel like we never see patrolling</p> <p>Loreburn Street Police Station needs to be open 24 hours again... I saw first-hand what a safe refuge it could be.</p>
2. CCTV.	19%/13%	<p>Make sure cameras are working - police resourced</p> <p>CCTV – quick reaction to the problems</p> <p>CCTV that actually works and is seen to be working</p> <p>CCTV working properly. More police presence.</p> <p>Town Centre Manager</p> <p>I often wonder if the town centre cameras are working. Don't seem to be a deterrent.</p>
3. Wardens	13%/13%	<p>Visibility of Security Officers</p> <p>Police or community safety team presence and mental health youth presence</p> <p>More lighting, CCTV and Community Wardens patrolling at night</p> <p>Night Wardens/Support Workers to keep people safe and keep order</p>
4. Busier Town Centre e.g. later opening hours, more people & housing	9%/6%	<p>More businesses open so just more human presence</p> <p>Activities and people, as the Town Centre is virtually abandoned at night fall.</p> <p>Repopulation of the Town Centre would help to reduce the feelings of emptiness &amp; isolation.</p> <p>Civic and social responsibility</p>

5. More/Better street lighting	8%/1%	Better lighting, police presence Improved lighting in some places If the town was cleaned up signage and road lines replaced. Better lighting in the winter in the closes
6. More for youth to do/More youth engagement	4%/5%	Gangs of youths need to be dispersed. The reasons for this will be wide ranging and require multi agency support to tackle Facilities for younger folk like cinema, bowling alley etc. Good taxi services - possibly more female taxi drivers for female passengers
7. More transport e.g. taxis & taxi ranks; later buses	4%/3%	Open up a taxi rank again or increase the buses to have more at night. Perhaps later public transport as taxis are difficult to get.
8. Cleanliness/Building appearance/Civic pride	2%/2%	More litter pick ups Police presence would be good, but a tidier more vibrant High St would be a more welcoming and therefore safer and more secure place. When places look rundown, dirty & unkept they feel unsafe... more sociable seating & green spaces will definitely help.
9. Other: Seagulls Traffic/Parking	4%/6%	Removal of seagulls Get rid of the seagulls! Less vehicles on pedestrian area. Bring back parking fines

## 2.6. Other comments about Safety and Security

Following is a sample of comments:

*More police out and just a good working CCTV in the Town Centre.*

*When a town is run down it inevitably causes crime to rise and if nothing is done crime and anti-social behaviour rise.*

*Town Centre is empty in the evenings which make you feel vulnerable when walking through it.*

*Dumfries has primarily an alcohol-based industry post 2100 hrs. Increase in events would bring a different mix of people into the Town Centre with potential for increase in footfall for food outlets.*

*Dumfries is a very safe town; however antisocial behaviour is a growing issue and is threatening to some people. The perceived threat is often greater than the actual threat.*

*“I often wonder if the Town Centre cameras are working. Don’t seem to be much of a deterrent.”*

*“I don’t believe Dumfries is a particularly unsafe place to live, but I can appreciate that there are vulnerable individuals who worry about antisocial behaviour, crime and vandalism.”*

*“During the day getting more people into the Town Centre would make people feel safer, safety in numbers.”*

*“There really is nothing to do for youths and teenagers. A good complex with activities and a cinema would certainly help keep them off the streets”*

### 3. Section 3 – Transport and Connectivity

Respondents were asked 9 multiple choice questions asking how much they agreed or disagreed with statements about aspects of transport such as: Ease of Access; Congestion; Satisfaction with Public Transport; Car Parking, and Signage. Respondents were also asked about digital connectivity and how that affects their experience of the Town Centre. They were finally asked an open-ended question asking respondents what suggestions they may have to improve transport links to the Town Centre.

#### Key Findings

While a majority of respondents said they found it easy to access the Town Centre from their residential area (61%) a larger majority (77%) agreed or strongly agreed that improving public transport links was important for the Dumfries' development with only 5% of respondents answering Disagree or Disagree Strongly. Only 26% of all respondents said they Agree or Agree Strongly that they were satisfied with the public transport options available in the Town Centre.

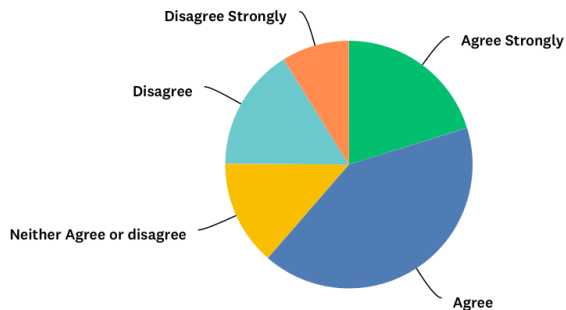
A majority of respondents (54%), increasing to 69% when Neither Agree or Disagree was removed, said that the Town Centre lacks sufficient signage or wayfinding.

Most respondents (62%) said that they disagreed or disagreed strongly that connectivity issues prevent them from utilising Town Centre services. This was a question that was greatly affected by age. With 49% of all 26- 35-year-olds, climbing to 59% when Neither Agree or Disagree was removed, agreeing or strongly agreeing that it prevented them from utilising services. 54% of all respondents said that they agreed or strongly agreed that improving digital connectivity would improve commerce. When neither agree nor disagree was removed this increased to 80%.

The most common suggestions from the open-ended question were more public transport in the evenings including more taxis and improvement of cycling & walking routes into the Town Centre.



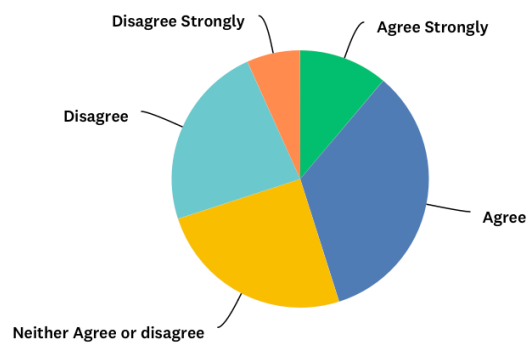
### 3.1. I Find it easy to access the Town Centre from my residential area.



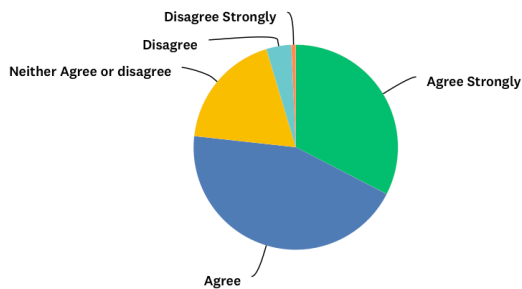
Most respondents said they agreed or strongly agreed (61%) that they found it easy to access the Town Centre from their area. This was consistent throughout the age brackets.

### 3.2. I often face Traffic Congestion or Delays when travelling to or within the Town Centre.

The majority of respondents said they agreed or strongly agreed (45%) that experienced delays, but a large number said that they neither agreed nor disagreed. When these were removed 60% of respondents said they experienced delays.

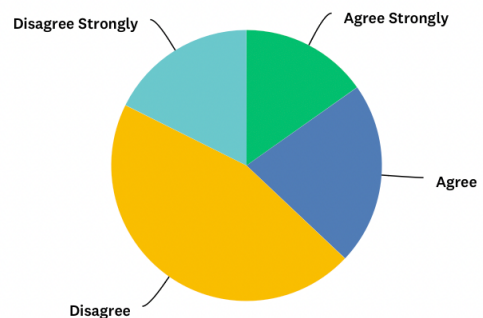
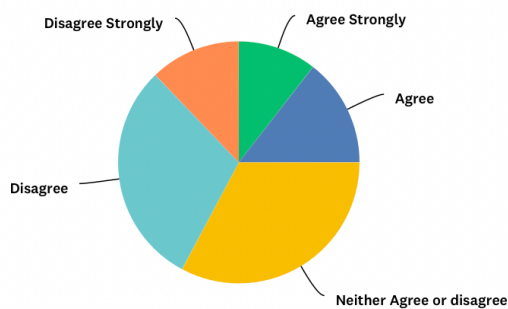


### 3.3. Improving Transportation Links between different parts of the Town Centre is important for its development

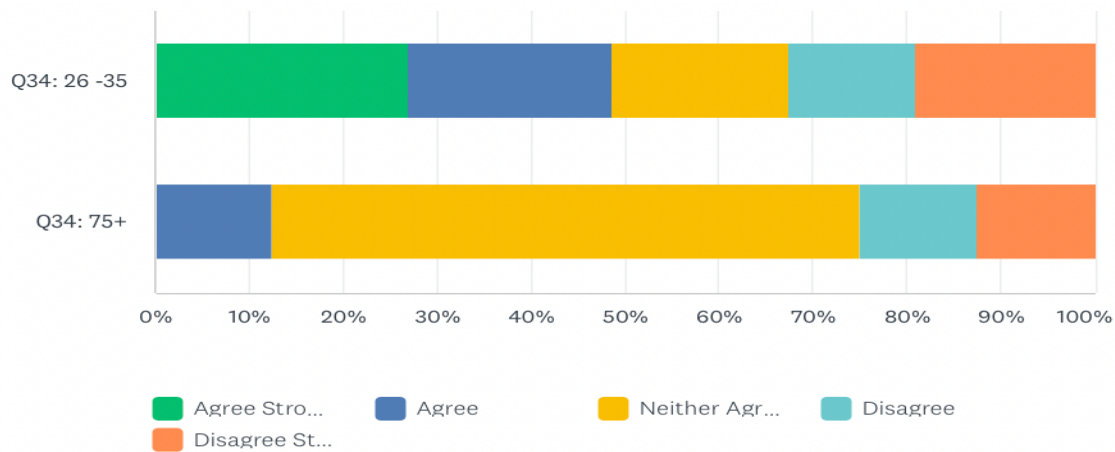


The vast majority of respondents (77%) said they thought that improving transportation links was important while only 4% disagreed and 0.7% disagreed strongly. Again, this was consistent throughout the age brackets.

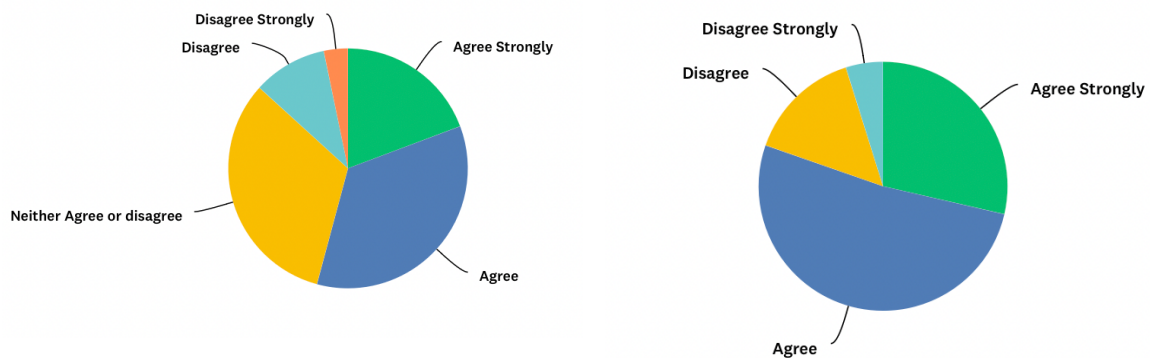
### 3.4. Connectivity issues (3G/4G) prevent me from utilising the Town Centre services such as shops/public services /social activities



While it can be seen on the left that a larger proportion of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed (42%) the picture becomes clearer, as seen on the right, when Neither Agree nor Disagree responses are removed. Then 62% of respondents said they Disagree or Strongly Disagree. Age played a large factor in this question as can be seen below. 49% of the 26-35 age brackets agreed or strongly agreed that poor connectivity prevented them from accessing certain services in the Town Centre. While only 12.5% of the over 75s agreed and 0% strongly agreed. The higher up the age brackets the number of neither agreed nor disagreed responses greatly increased.

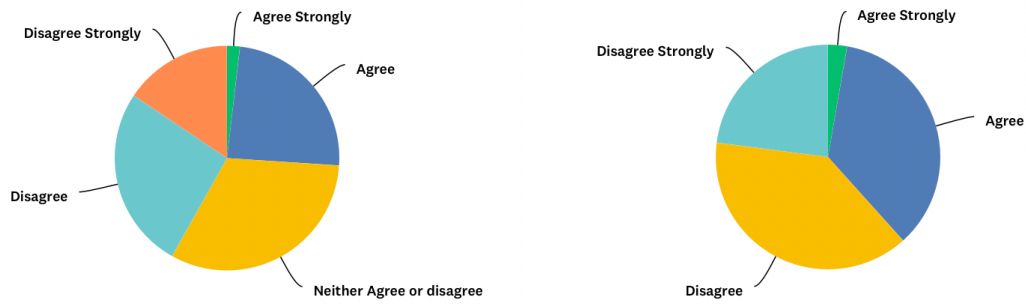


### 3.5. I believe that improving Connectivity would have a benefit to commerce in the Dumfries Town Centre



Despite a large proportion of respondents saying that they did not feel that Connectivity Issues had prevented them from accessing services, the majority (55%) of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that improved connectivity would be a benefit to the Town Centre (as seen on the left). Again, if Neither Agree or Disagree responses were removed this becomes even clearer with 80% of respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing that there would be a benefit (see right). The relationship with age was not as extreme, but unsurprisingly the younger age brackets agreed or strongly agreed to a greater extent and the number of respondents neither agreeing nor disagreeing increased the higher in the age bracket you went. Every age bracket, however, except for the 75+ bracket, had 50% or higher of respondents agreeing or agreeing strongly that they thought there would be a benefit.

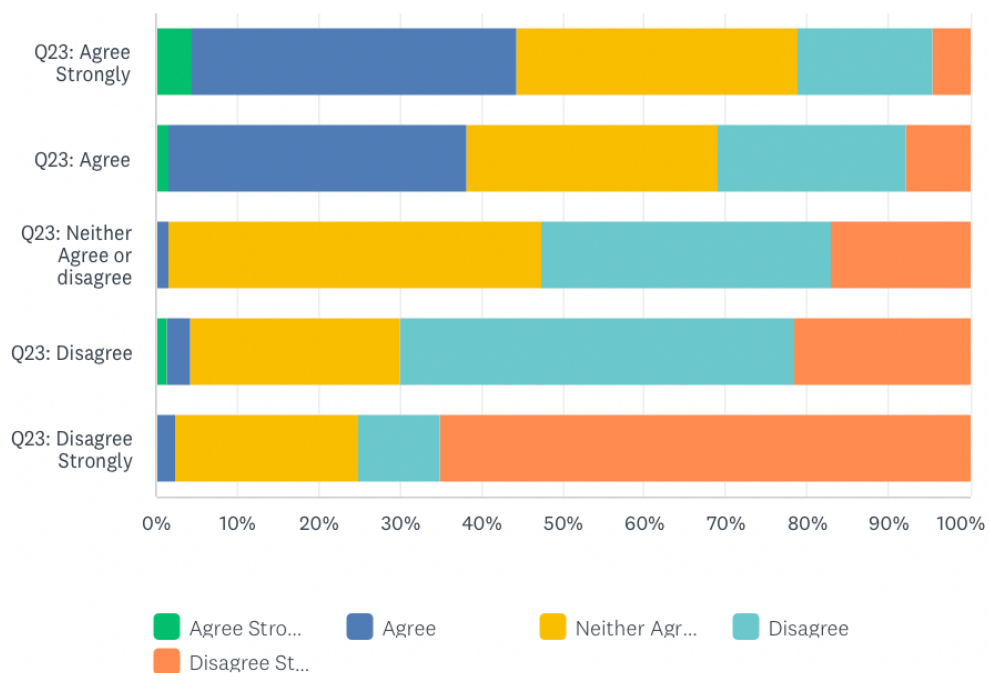
### 3.6. I am satisfied with the current Public Transportation options available for travelling within the Town Centre



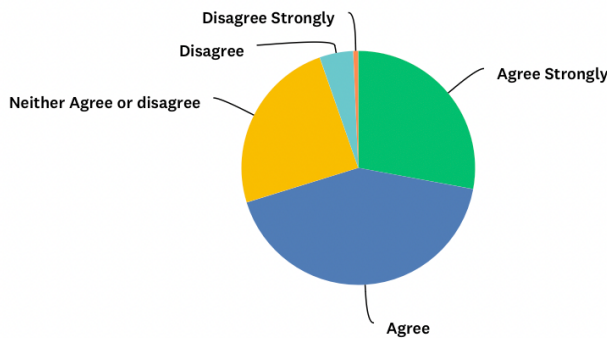
42% of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed that they were satisfied with the current public transport available (see left), compared to 26% answering Agree or Strongly Agree with only 2% answering Strongly Agree. Over a third of respondents answered Neither Agree or Disagree, when this is removed the majority of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed (62%) that they were satisfied with public transport.

This was consistent through the age brackets. The only age bracket to have over 30% answering agree or strongly agree was the 36 -45 age bracket.

Shown below is a comparison with those that answered question 3.1. As can be seen those respondents that answer disagree and strongly disagree that they found it easy to access the Town Centre also answered Disagree and Strongly disagree that they were satisfied with public transport with 75% of respondents who answered strongly disagree to 3.1 also answered this way to 3.6.

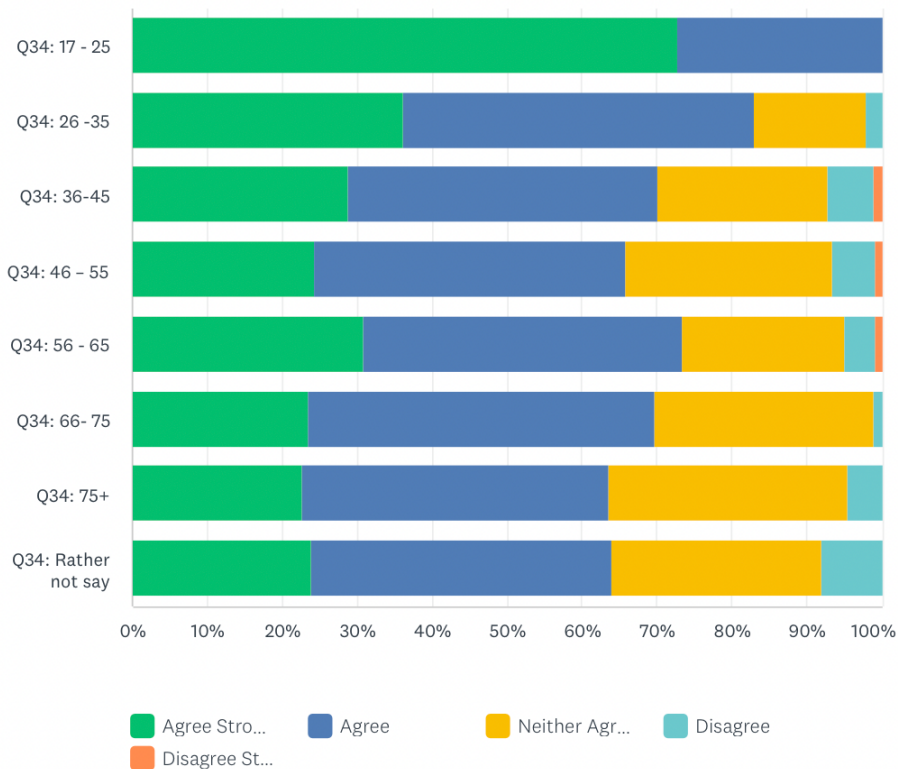


### 3.7. I believe that better integration between different modes of Transportation is necessary for improving Connectivity in the Town Centre

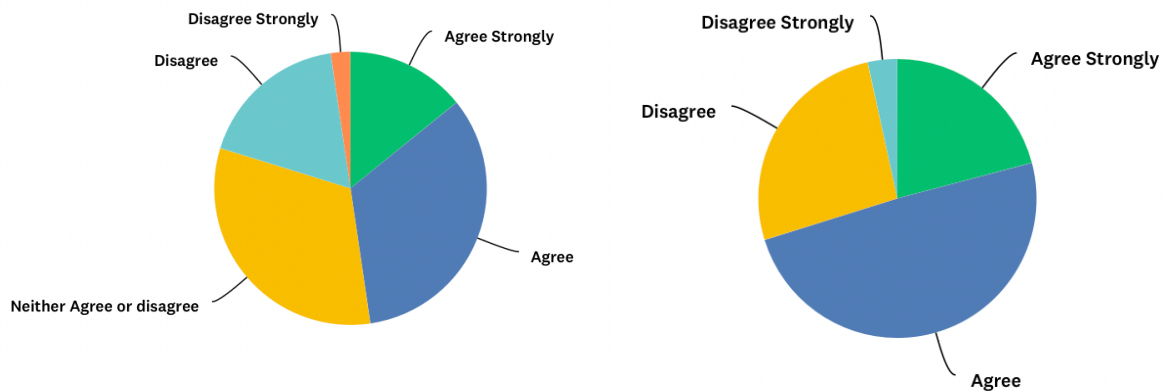


The overwhelming majority (70%) of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they believed that better integration of transportation is necessary. Only 5% disagreed or strongly disagreed with only 0.7% strongly disagreeing. 26% answered Neither Agree or Disagree after removing these responses 93% answered Agree or Strongly agree.

Shown below it can be seen that all age brackets over 65% agreed or strongly agreed with the question and no age bracket had more than 7.5% disagreeing or strongly disagreeing. In the age brackets 26- 35; 65 – 75 and 75+ 0% of respondents disagreed strongly.



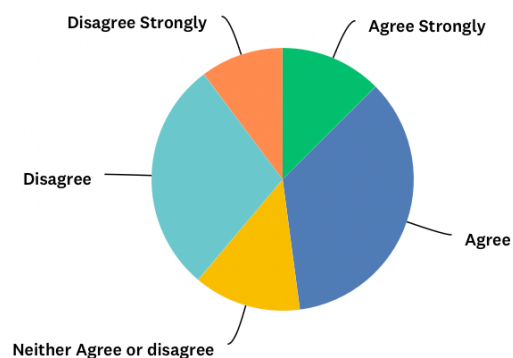
### 3.8. I feel that the Town Centre lacks sufficient Signage or Wayfinding Systems to help navigate its various areas



A greater number of respondents (48%) said they agreed or strongly agreed that the Town Centre lacks sufficient signage compared to those that disagreed or strongly disagreed (20%) and only 2% said they strongly disagreed. There were many respondents that answered Neither Agree or Disagree when these responses were removed the great majority of respondents (69%) agreed or strongly agreed that signage was insufficient. This was consistent throughout the age brackets with older respondents answering Agree or Agree Strongly slightly more.

### 3.9. I feel the Town Centre has sufficient Car Parking in terms of locations, accessibility, availability and security.

Respondents were evenly split in their response to this question. 37% agreed or strongly agreed that there was sufficient parking while 39% disagreed or strongly disagreed. Even when neither agree or disagree was removed only a marginal majority of respondents (55%) agreed or strongly agreed that the Town Centre has sufficient parking.



### 3.10. The Town Board believe improving Transport Links is essential for the Town Centre's growth and prosperity. What suggestions do you have that would improve it?

A sample of responses can be seen below:

- Better signage / promotion of area. A digital board in the Town Centre highlighting what there is to do. Providing a map would, I feel make a big difference. On top of that the ability to hire bicycles to get round the town and free access to Wi-Fi would also help
- Secure cycle storage and lock-up facilities within Town Centre. Most places in Dumfries are within a short/reasonable walking/cycling distance of the Town Centre. There should be a real drive to make Dumfries an 'active town' with walking and cycling being the number one mode of transport (highly ambitious but you've got to aim high!). There is a need to investigate public transport provision for out-of-town residents. Can public transport costs be further subsidised to make them attractive?
- To get people to use the Town [Centre] in the evening an extended bus service would help.
- Improved cycle paths to villages and suburbs 2-5 miles away; more and better public bus transport.
- Businesses in town are suffering because of lack of transport after 10pm to get us home. Restaurants, pubs etc would benefit from us being able to come out and get home safely after 10pm... I feel like I'm on a curfew because of the lack of public transport.
- Living outside Dumfries means that transport into the town is sadly lacking.
- People being able to get buses/taxis home after a meal/ drink in the town. This is not acceptable at the moment and is affecting businesses. Many of these businesses are closing early/opening later due to a fall in demand. People being unable to get home is not helping businesses or the Town Centre in the long run. For example, the last bus home to the Locharbriggs area pre covid was around midnight. It is now 8.15pm.
- More parking, and some complain of needing two buses to get to the likes of the hospital. Have one bus that does longer routes.
- More transport options to go to rural areas, more taxis needed on weekends.
- Better links from other places outside Dumfries and night buses.

*“Later buses from the Town Centre would allow more people to have a reliable and cost effective way home. Volume of taxis late at night is an issue”*

*“Extension of existing paths and cycle routes through periphery of area and linking into countryside beyond.”*

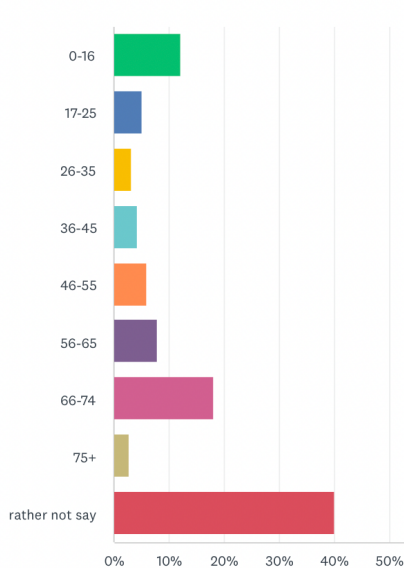
*“Perhaps mini-buses which could use the pedestrianised areas – especially for the elderly and for tourists...”*

*“Lots more buses! Put them back on in the evenings and people will come into town to use pubs and things...”*

*“I regularly walk into the town. I feel that we need to encourage this, rather than focusing on car parking and subsidised public transport.”*



## 4. The Short Survey.



In addition to the main survey a shorter survey was offered to those that did not have time to fill out the main survey or were a younger/much older respondent. This provided the Town Board with a useable sample for the U16 age bracket. Gathering more information from this cohort will be a priority going forward. 253 responses to the short survey were received.

This survey asked respondent to rate several aspects of the Town Centre finishing with one final open-ended question.

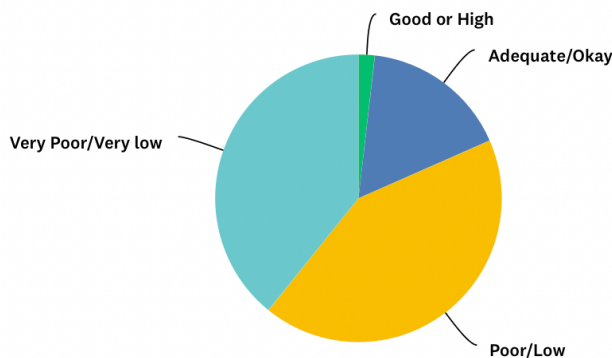
## Quantitative Questions

The short survey consisted of 12 quantitative questions asking respondents to rate aspects of the Town Centre.

In nearly all aspects a majority of respondents rated the aspects as Poor/Very Poor. The only 2 aspects that were rated majority Good or Adequate was the Range of Heritage and Pedestrian Paths/Cycle Paths.

There was a different picture for the U16 cohort who rated most aspects (8) as Good or Adequate. The only aspects a majority of respondents from this cohort rated as Poor or Very Poor were Safety,

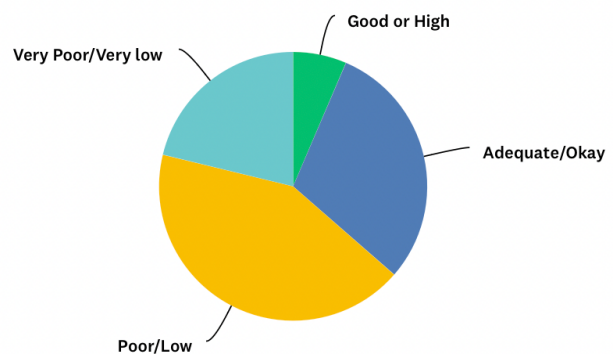
## 4.1. Cleanliness



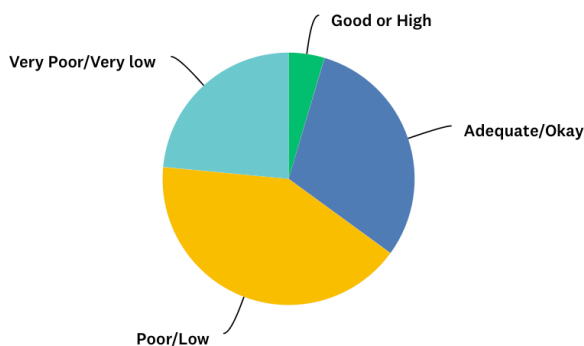
Respondents were very clear that they considered the Cleanliness of Town Centre as Poor. 81.6% rated the Cleanliness as Poor or Very Poor and only 1.8% rated it as Good and 16.6% rated it as Adequate. The U16 cohort of respondents had similar opinion with most respondents rating Cleanliness as Poor or Very Poor (73.1%) and 0% rated it as Good.

## 4.2. Accessible Town Information / Events

A majority of all respondents rated Town Information as Poor or Very Poor (63.6%) and 30% as Adequate. This was very different for the U16 cohort most of which (65.4%) rated the aspect as Good or Adequate.



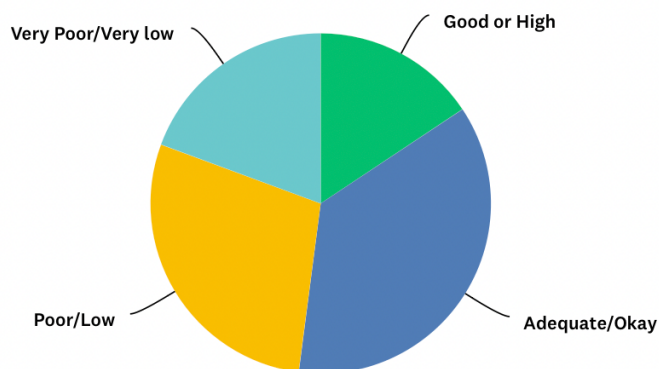
## 4.3. Range of Activities / Events



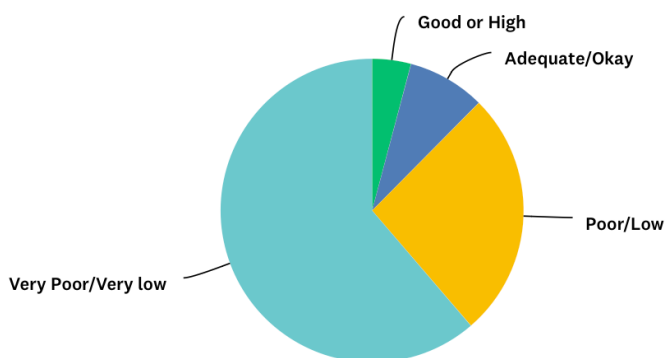
65% of respondents said they felt the Range of Activities in the Town Centre were Poor or Very Poor. Only 4.6% rated it as Good and 30.4% considered it to be Adequate. In contrast a slim majority of U16 respondents rated the Range of Activities as Good or Adequate (53.9%) and only 11.6% of respondents rated the aspect as Very Poor.

## 4.4. Range of Heritage / History Opportunities

Range of Heritage was one of the two questions where respondents rated it as majority Good or Adequate (52%). This was also the aspect with the highest rating of Good (15.7%) and the lowest rating of Very Poor (19.4%). A greater majority (69.3%) of the U16 cohort also rated the aspect as Good or Adequate.



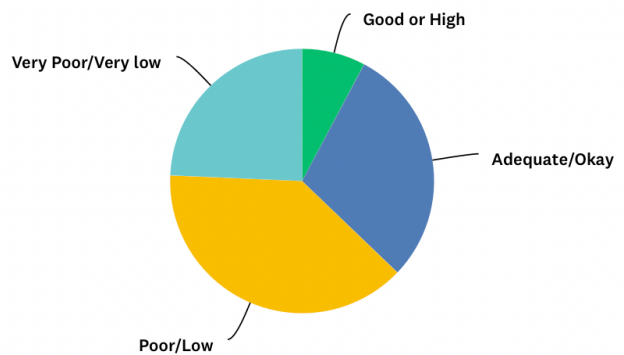
## 4.5. Selection of Shopping



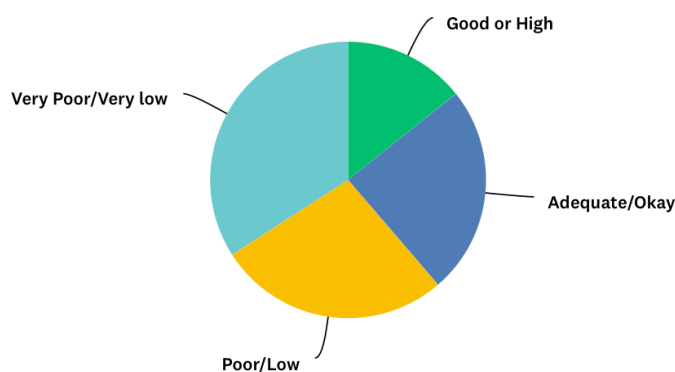
The Selection of Shopping was the poorest performing aspect. 87.6% of respondents rated the Selection of Shopping as Poor or Very Poor and only 4% rated the Selection as Good. Although the U16 cohort also majority rated the Selection as Poor or Very Poor (53.9%) it was by a much slimmer margin and 19.2% rated the Selection of Shopping as Good.

## 4.6. Feeling Safe

Similar to the main survey safety was a concern. Most respondents (61.1%) rated the aspect of Feeling Safe as Poor or Very poor with only 7.8% rating it as Good. This was very similar for the U16 Cohort with 66.3% rating the aspect as Poor or Very Poor but 19.2% did rate it as Good. Of all the aspects Feeling Safe had the greatest similarity between U16s and the average.



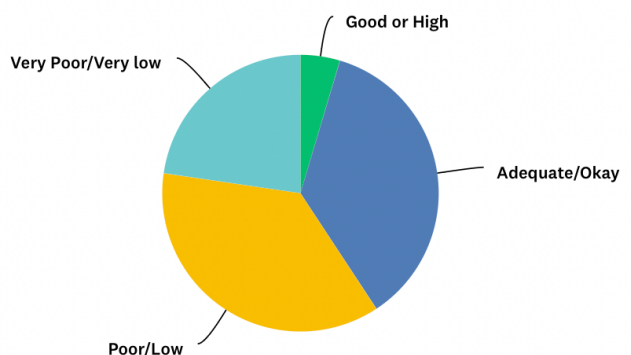
## 4.7. Levels of Anti-Social Behaviour



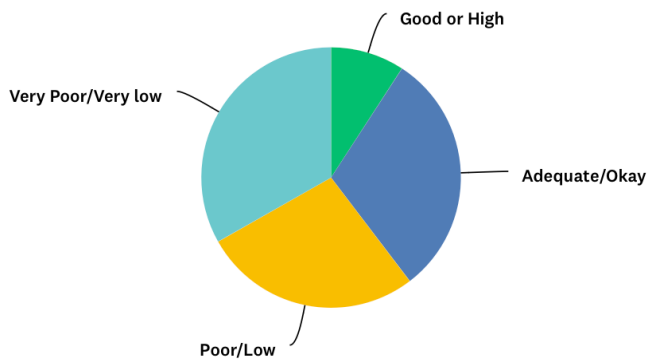
An almost identical proportion (61.2%) of respondents rated the levels of Anti-Social Behaviour as Poor or Very Poor compared to Feeling Safe. A greater number did rate it as Good (14.3%) compared to Feeling Safe. There was, however, a different picture for U16s where most of the respondents rated this aspect as Good or Adequate (66.3%).

## 4.8. Tourism Levels

For Tourism Levels most respondents (59.3%) rated it as Poor or Very Poor and again a low number rated it as Good (4.6%). This was a different picture for U16s most of whom considered Tourism Levels to be Good or Adequate (77%).



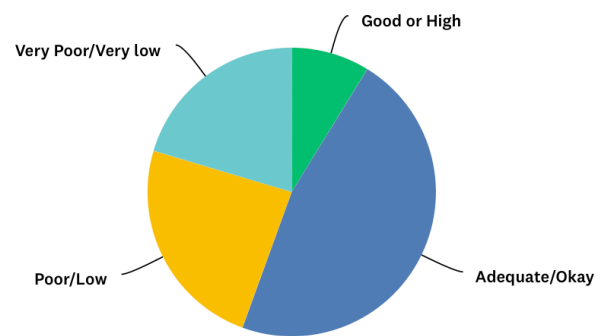
## 4.9. Bus Routes/Times from Town



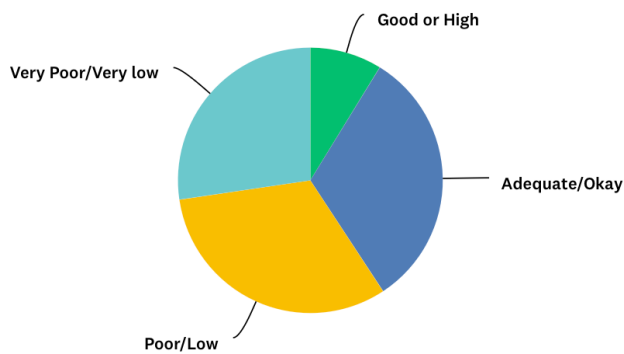
Bus Routes were rated similarly by all respondents to the previous 3 questions with 60.4% of respondents rating the aspect as Poor or Very Poor and 9.2% rating it as Good. Once again this was a different picture for U16s most of which rated Bus Routes and Times as Good or Adequate (69.2%) and only 11.5% rated it as Very Poor.

## 4.10. Pedestrian Paths/Signs/Cycle Routes

Most of both cohorts rated Pedestrian Paths etc as Good or Adequate. The All-respondent sample rated it as 55.6% and the U16s rated it as 84% Good or Adequate. Looking at the 66-74 cohort many of these respondents rated Pedestrian Paths etc as Poor or Very Poor (53.8%) showing the expected differences in some of the aspects between the age groups.



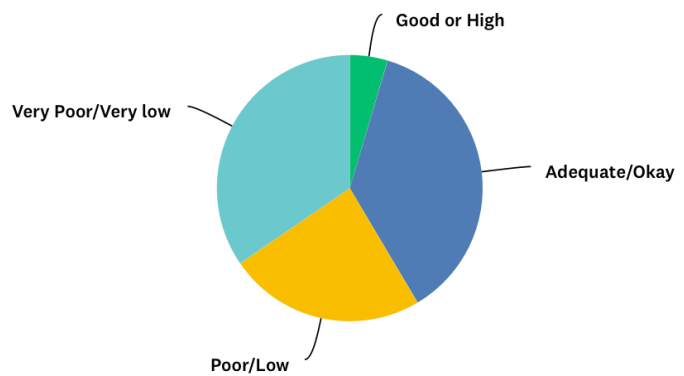
## 4.11. Parking Availability



Although the largest proportion of respondents rated Parking Availability as adequate (31.9%) most respondents rated the aspect as Poor or Very Poor (59.2%) with only 8.8% of respondents rating it as Good.

## 4.12. Internet/Wi-Fi Access

A narrow majority of all respondents rated Internet access as Poor or Very Poor and only 4.6% rated it as Good. Adequate (36.9%) was the most common answer of the 4 ratings. The U16 cohort had the reverse response with most respondents rating Internet as Good or Adequate (61.5%) with half, exactly, of all U16 respondents rating it as Adequate.



## 4.13. Open-Ended Question

As this question was completely open ended there was a wide variety of answers given. Nearly all followed similar themes that the more specific qualitative questions asked in the main survey.

There were many comments about the appearance of the Town Centre; the lack of shops; lack of activities in the evening, and multiple comments about the seagulls!

Below is sample of the comments made:

### What ideas do you have to improve the Town Centre?

- Improving the parking situation to encourage those with mobility issues to come to the town centre
- Get owners to smarten up their buildings. Encourage small businesses to open in the vacant shops. Sort seagull issues...
- Encourage all people living here to be proud of and take responsibility for the area, and that it is not someone else's job to do this work. It's not always the councils' fault, they have limited resources.
- Get the basics done. Lockable bins/street cleaning just after pubs and clubs shut. No foodstuffs for seagulls.
- Too much traffic. Force absentee landlords to maintain buildings or lose them.
- Regular litter cleaning, enforcing parking laws, police patrol the town centre.
- Nothing for teenagers. No cinema, no shops, buildings are a disgrace.
- Better transport links, better internet connections, make use of open spaces for regular events, music, heritage, sports etc...
- Town just a mess – trees and plants climbing out of buildings, streets a disgrace and seagulls a menace. Could make Dumfries more pleasant and nicer if you got landlords of derelict buildings to clean them up or sell.
- Less bookies/vaping shops/barbers in town, make it easier for good quality wider range of smaller specialist stores to come, lower rates, incentives. Voucher system to encourage shoppers

*“Get the owners to smarten up their buildings. Encourage small businesses to open up in the vacant shops. Sort the seagull issue.”*

*“Clean it & support local. Filthy town, unsafe place.”*

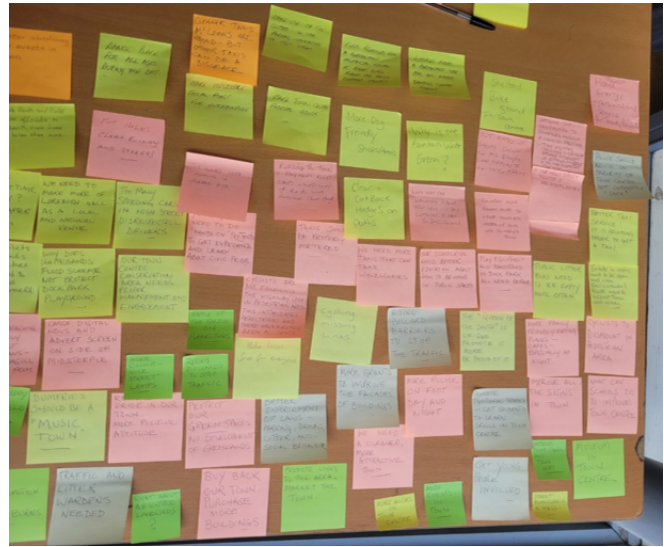
*“Make it cleaner – I’m always standing in bird or dog poo. Make places to sit that aren’t dirty. The seagulls are a problem ... More things to do for my age – I am 9*

*“The Town Centre is the worst I have seen it...To bring people into the town you need shops, entertainment – more coffee shops open after 5pm, better bus services...”*



## 5. A vision for Dumfries Town Centre – Drop-Ins at 109 High Street

Over the months of June/July volunteers were available in the 109 High Street office of the Town Board to have one to one conversations with the public; hand out paper surveys and direct them to the online survey. They also invited members of the public to write their ideas on Post-it notes to be displayed in the window of the Office. A sample of some of the suggestions is in the table below.



<b>High Street</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We need a cleaner more attractive town</li> <li>• Bins need to be emptied more often</li> <li>• Make Dumfries cleaner</li> <li>• Make Mid Steeple a focal point for entertainment</li> <li>• Dumfries should be a "Music Town"</li> <li>• Better events advertising</li> <li>• Town Centre manager (single point of contact)</li> <li>• Permanent historical centre</li> <li>• History: every street and building should have an accessible story</li> <li>• High St shop as a hub to signpost people to locally based trades</li> <li>• Refurbish street signs</li> <li>• Primark in town centre</li> <li>• Table area for cafes in town square near Fountain</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nighttime economy. There's nothing after 5.30pm</li> <li>• Why do the cafes all shut at 3pm on a Saturday?</li> <li>• Battle of the Bands on the Planestanes</li> <li>• Large digital news and advert screen on the side of Mid Steeple</li> <li>• More Town Centre benches under cover</li> <li>• Why is the Fountain water green?</li> <li>• Too many speeding cars in the High Street</li> <li>• The Queen of the South is unique - promote it, be more proud of it</li> <li>• Restore pride in our town, more positive attitude</li> <li>• Quarterly community voices meeting</li> <li>• No more meetings, surveys, plans - we want action</li> </ul>

## Transport and Connectivity

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fix potholes</li> <li>• Improve the signs in the Town</li> <li>• More consideration for disability in town</li> <li>• Map identifying key locations in the town</li> <li>• Bring back traffic wardens</li> <li>• Stop vehicles driving on the High St</li> <li>• Rising bollard barriers to stop the traffic</li> <li>• Make use of the Closes (i.e. for car parking) connected to the High St</li> <li>• More buses to Georgetown after 6pm</li> <li>• Better bus service from Georgetown and outlying areas with evening buses</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve transport links, particularly at night</li> <li>• Taxis should be properly metered</li> <li>• Better cycle routes</li> <li>• Safer cycle routes and linking them together (Missing links!)</li> <li>• Cyclists are not following the highway code in pedestrian areas. This intimidates pedestrians and there have been accidents.</li> <li>• Better information on buses and trains. What happened to digital signs?</li> <li>• Revitalise pavements and roads</li> <li>• Better disabled parking</li> <li>• Refurbishment of suspension bridge and Kirkpatrick McMillan bridge</li> </ul> |
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## Safety and Security

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Town pastors day and night</li> <li>• Get young people involved</li> <li>• Young people need to do hands on projects</li> <li>• Promote traditional trades. Get young people to learn skills in the Town Centre</li> <li>• Litter education</li> <li>• Impose premium rates on out-of-town takeaways as a litter tax</li> <li>• More police on foot day and night</li> <li>• Sheltered bike stand in Town Centre</li> <li>• No flood defence - we need the parking</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bring back the public gallows and the stocks</li> <li>• Police should advise on security of town centre (not currently safe)</li> <li>• Open the old The Hub building as a youth innovation centre</li> <li>• Litter in front of Greggs at Burns Statue is unacceptable. Where are our litter wardens?</li> <li>• Better pest control and environmental health (Whitesands and Burns Statue)</li> <li>• Build flood defences to protect Whitesands</li> <li>• Why does Whitesands flood scheme not protect Dock Park playground?</li> </ul> |
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## Conclusion

The Community Engagement drew attention to several areas that respondents wanted to see improved in the Dumfries Town. In particular its general appearance; lack of retail and events available, and a feeling, for some, of being unsafe. It did, however, highlight the wide range of cultural and historical resources at the towns' disposal, but it was felt they are currently poorly presented and organised.

There is an opportunity to tell a better story about Dumfries Town. To make it once again a thriving hub of commerce and activity. It is naturally the hub of the local area and even the region of Dumfries & Galloway. Local High streets all over the country have felt the impact of internet shopping, covid and the demographic issues of an increasingly aging population and a younger population that is seeking opportunities and employment in the bigger cities. It is the aim of the Town Board to use the information gathered from this engagement to better understand what can and should be done to make the Town Centre a place that people want to visit, shop and enjoy themselves in.

Glenkiln Research and the Dumfries Town Board wish to extend thanks to everyone who took part in the research and contributed ideas. For those that have not there is still time to complete the survey either by paper or online.

The Dumfries Town Board, which commissioned this engagement to produce a 3 year and 10-year plan for Dumfries Town will be making this available to the public in the coming months. There will be an effort to continue engaging the public throughout the process as a way of monitoring and evaluating its progress as well as stimulating and resourcing further ideas.

For more information about the engagement contact [glenkilnresearch@outlook.com](mailto:glenkilnresearch@outlook.com) or visit the Town Board Office at 109 High Street

