



(image: www.dyfibiosphere.wales)

Results and Findings of the 2021

Aberdyfi Community Survey:

October 2021

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CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	2
<i>Methodology</i>	2
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	3
EXPLORING THE DATA	4
<i>The Respondents: Who Had their Say?</i>	4
<i>Perceptions</i>	4
<i>Priorities</i>	5
<i>The Need: Local Facilities</i>	6
<i>The Need: Local Services & Activities</i>	9
<i>What Excludes People: Barriers to Participation</i>	11
<i>The Covid Effect</i>	11
<i>The Economy and Jobs</i>	12
<i>Young People</i>	12
<i>The Environment</i>	13
<i>Housing</i>	15
NORTH-WEST WALES RURAL HOUSING ENABLERS PARTNERSHIP: THE HOUSING NEEDS SURVEY REPORT	15
POTENTIAL NEXT STEPS: HOW YOU CAN ACT ON THESE FINDINGS	18
CONCLUSIONS	18

Note: *The finding of the survey reflects the thoughts and opinions of the respondents, which might not always be factually correct. However, such instances can give valuable insight. e.g., if a number of residents identify the need for a defibrillator in the village despite there being several installed, it highlights a lack of local knowledge about the availability of these current and potentially lifesaving assets.*

INTRODUCTION

In early 2021 a group of local people came together to form the ‘The Aberdyfi Community Needs Group,’ with the aim of identifying the changing needs of the community in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic.

The group commissioned ‘Resources for Change’ (R4C) to help develop an initial community wide survey to enable local people to have their say. To build a representative overview of the community and identify ways to improve things for local residents. We collaborated with the ‘North-West Wales Rural Housing Enablers’ to enable us to engage the community while adhering to Covid-19 regulations, and they produced a separate ‘*Local Housing Needs Survey*’ which should be read alongside this report. Their summaries and conclusions are also included in this report to provide a full overview of the situation.

This report summarises the findings of the community survey and will provide the initial evidence for further discussions and developments. These could include the development of individual projects and associated funding applications, or they could be developed into a more comprehensive Community Place Plan. The results will also be presented to the Local Authorities to provide evidence of local need for the latest Local Development Plan (LDP).

METHODOLOGY

A bilingual survey was set up on ‘Microsoft Forms,’ and the link was distributed through to each household by post by the ‘North-West Wales Rural Housing Enablers’ team. It was also shared and promoted through the networks of partners and identified stakeholders, and shared widely on social media. It was open for an initial three-week period in July-August 2021, during which time 234 individuals responded.

Senior officers within the Planning department of ‘Parc Cenedlaethol Eryri’ and the housing department of Cyngor Gwynedd were consulted to ensure the information captured was relevant to the development of the new LDP.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

There is a general perception that Aberdyfi is a good place for young people, families, and retirees to live [although the actual view of young people under 25 was not captured]. However other than for those able to work remotely from home, it was not considered a good place to either find work or commute to work elsewhere. The lack of diverse employment opportunities and reliance on low paid-seasonal work in the visitor economy is one of the major issues facing the community, and better training opportunities, workspaces, and a more diverse economy are perceived as steps to rectify this.

When asked to prioritise from a set of pre-set options, respondents' collective feedback had improving local facilities at the top of their list, followed by improving community services/activities, encouraging new employment opportunities, providing sustainable housing, providing local housing, and conserving our natural environment.

It's noticeable that the high priority practical actions to improve facilities and services are responding to the pressing day-to-day issues that are identified in the survey. Whilst more long term strategic and policy-based actions come lower down. The environment comes last, despite it later transpiring to be the issue that united the overwhelming majority of respondents more than any other in their appreciation of the benefit it offers them, and their desire to protect through education, action, and legislation.

Unsurprisingly communal facilities are perceived to be key to delivering local services and activities. They are also central to facilitating social interactions and bringing people together. The desire to protect, maintain, and enhance both facilities and community services/activities is strong across the board. And there are many specific suggestions and proposals of how this could be achieved, and how to fill gaps in current provision for the benefit of the community.

There are also common themes emerging of the barriers to participation in community activities. Lack of time and work commitments are most common

barriers. *[Not being interested in the activity on offer is the most common barrier identified, however this includes many who were uninterested in some activities but were actively engaged with others, which blurs the picture].* A lack of information and advertising of activities and events was also a prominent theme.

Poor health and mobility highlighted inclusive access issues such as wheelchair access and services for the hard of hearing, but also raised the potential of a community transport scheme. Lack of parking was also noted as keeping people away, especially during the busy tourist season. Finally issues around membership and perceived exclusivity are raised for certain clubs, which are perceived to be excluding many local residents.

The Covid-19 pandemic is perceived to have highlighted the need for local community-based services, especially relating to health and wellbeing. It's potentially changed the way people socialise as groups, and intensified issues around loneliness and isolation. It could also change habits and behaviour that could impact both the economy and the needs of the community. It's also seen to have brought out the best in people and fostered new relationships and stronger community spirit which can be built on going forward.

Finally, housing is seen as a major issue, and the data from 'The Housing Needs Survey' reinforces this by identifying that:

- 62.3% of local households are priced out of the local market
- No privately rented accommodation is currently available in Aberdyfi.
- 54% of all properties in the village are 2nd homes, holiday lets, or empty.

In general housing is perceived to be unaffordable for local people, and there are polarised views on the effect of 2nd homes on the community. This is reflected by other sections where tourism and visitors are considered to be both vital to the local economy while simultaneously putting substantial pressures on local services and the environment.

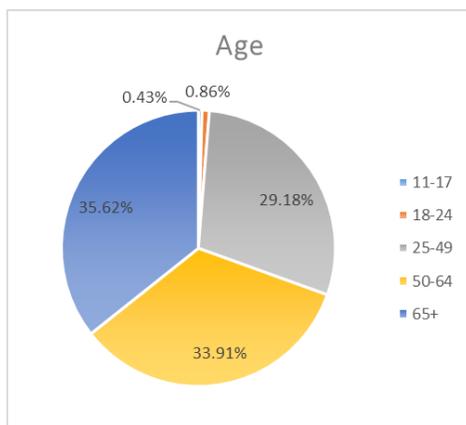
However, there is overwhelming support for measures that would promote local housing, affordable housing, and limiting secondary residences.

EXPLORING THE DATA

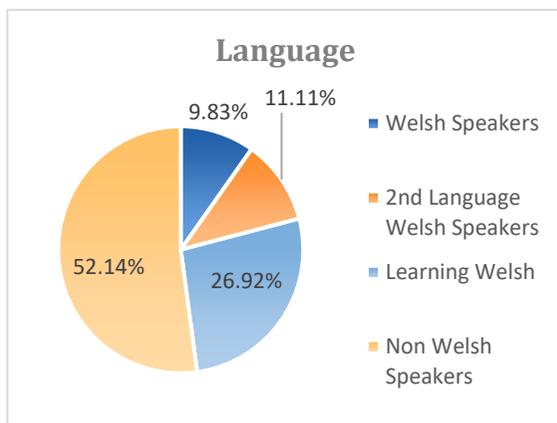
THE RESPONDENTS: WHO HAD THEIR SAY?

The results need to be interpreted in the context of those that contributed, and we need to be mindful of the effect of missing certain groups or demographics.

A total of 234 individuals responded to the survey. There was a fairly equal distribution of responses from those from the 25-49, 50-65, and 65+ age groups, but a disappointing lack of engagement from young people under 25 years old.



Over 70% of respondents were permanent residents, 56% in Aberdyfi and another 14% living within 5 miles. Just under 20% were 2nd homeowners living in the area part of the year. The remaining 10% were a mix of visitors, people travelling in for work or activities, and those with historical and family ties.



Just over half (52.1%) of the respondents were non-Welsh speakers. First language Welsh speakers accounted for just 9.8% of respondents, with another 11.1% identifying it as their second language. Over a quarter (26.9%) stated that they were currently learning the language, and 89 individuals stated that

they would be interested in Welsh Lessons.

PERCEPTIONS

We asked respondents for their opinion on the following statements regarding Aberdyfi:

“I think that Aberdyfi is a good place for...”

...children/young people to live.

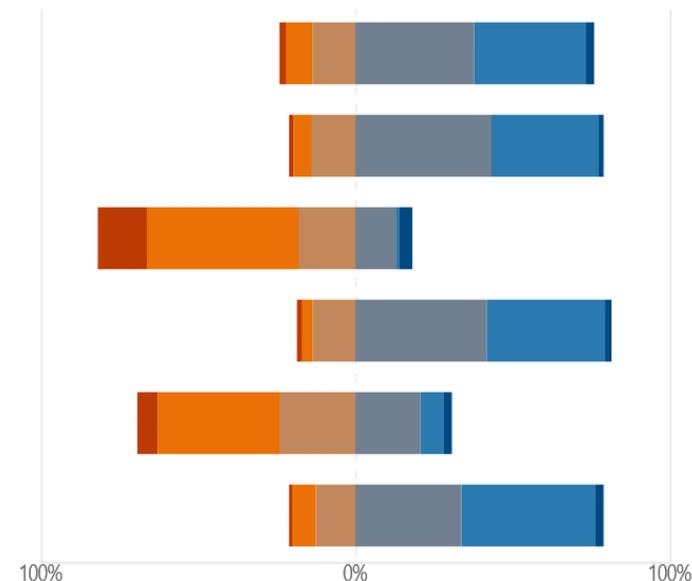
...for people to raise a family

...people to find work

...people to work from home

...people to commute to work elsewhere

...to live as a retiree



Respondents were asked to choose a response ranging from ‘strongly disagree’ (dark red) to ‘strongly agree’ (dark blue), and the results are illustrated in the chart above. We can see a pretty clear pattern, where the majority believe that Aberdyfi is a good place for children and young people to live, to raise families, working from home, and to retire to. However, there’s an overwhelmingly negative view of Aberdyfi as a place to either find work or commute to work in other places.

We must also remember that as mentioned previously these results don’t accurately reflect the perceptions of you people under 25.

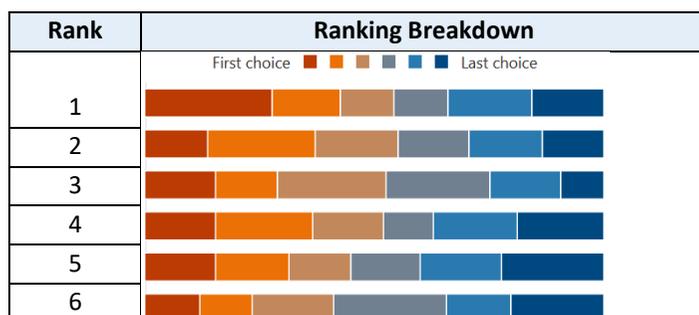
PRIORITIES

We asked the respondents to rank from 1 (most important) to 6 (least important), which of six proposed interventions they believe would improve the community and was most important to them. The results were as follows

Rank	Interventions
1	Improving the community owned buildings & facilities in Aberdyfi
2	Providing new and/or improved activities and community services for residents e.g. social activities for local people, training, arts and crafts, sports, youth club etc
3	Encourage new local work & employment opportunities
4	Providing more affordable housing
5	Providing more housing for local people
6	Conserve and enhance our natural environment

If we take a closer look at the breakdown of how individuals ranked each option (below), we see that almost twice as many people selected *'improving community facilities...'* (1) as a first option compared to any of the others, while *'improving activities & services'* (2) ranked highly based on people's second and third choices.

'Encouraging new work & employment opportunities' (3) was ranked third, even though less people thought it a priority than the two housing interventions. This is because nearly half of respondents ranked it 3rd of 4th priority, and less than 10% as the lowest.



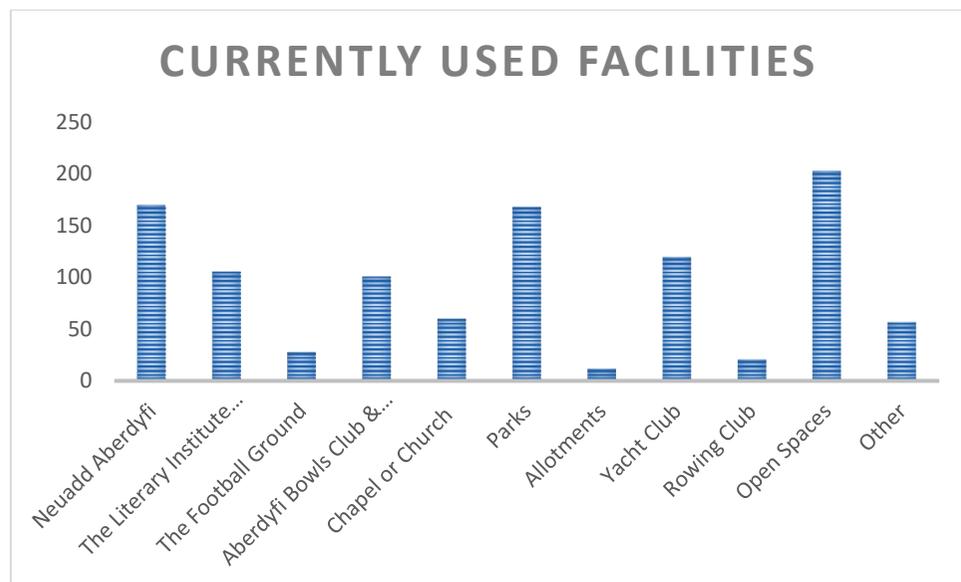
It's interesting to note that *'providing more affordable housing'* (4) was the option that split opinion most, with strong views at both ends of the spectrum. Somewhat surprisingly considering that 70% of respondents were local residents and the nationwide explosion in the housing market, *'providing more housing for local people'* (5) only ranked 5th.

There is a caveat here, in that improving community facilities and services have the potential to improve the community for everyone, whilst providing affordable/local homes won't benefit those who are already homeowners. This could have influenced people's choices. However, this does not explain why *'Conserving and Managing our natural environment'* (6) was the lowest priority across the board.

Finally, it's important to remember that these options, based on potential interventions identified by a group of local people, were ranked in relation to each other. This is not to say that the lowest ranked ones are irrelevant. This was a prioritisation exercise looking at six potential interventions, and a low-ranking mere indicates that it is considered less important or less pressing than the others.

THE NEED: LOCAL FACILITIES

To get an idea of which facilities were being used by the community, we asked respondents which of them they or their families had visited during the 12 months before the Covid-19 Lockdown.



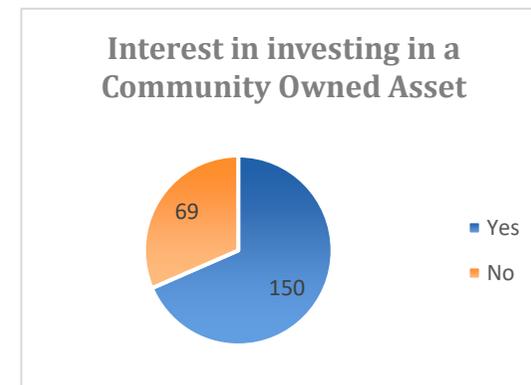
**Note: We missed the Golf Club off the list – and the comments about the omission prove it has regular use!*

These facilities serve different groups and audiences, some are for a specific activity (e.g. football ground), others such as Neuadd Aberdyfi host a wide range of activities and services, while parks and open ground are accessible to all. It does however give us an indication of the facilities that provide services or benefits to a large proportion of the community.

The Yacht Club, Golf Club, and Recreation Ground (Bowls/Tennis/Croque/Putting), and other 'activity/sports clubs' play a key role as social hubs as well as activity providers, with many stating that they benefit from the facilities despite not participating in the core activities. The same is true of Neuadd Dyfi and the Institute.

A NEW COMMUNITY OWNED ASSET?

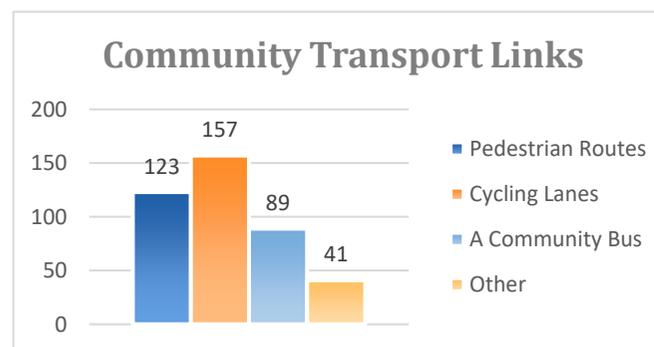
We asked a simple Yes/No question to gauge the local appetite for investing in shares in a community owned asset if the opportunity arose. Two thirds of respondents to this question replied positively indicating that such a venture would find support.



SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY TRANSPORT

We also asked if respondents believed that better sustainable transport links were required in the village, and if so, what interventions would benefit the community.

New cycling lanes was the most popular choice, reflecting previous findings. There was also widespread support for new/improved pedestrian routes (or walkways), and many thought a community bus was also a potential solution.



WHAT COULD BE DONE TO IMPROVE EXISTING FACILITIES?

There was a rich variety of suggestions and comments about what could / needs to be done to improve the current facilities in Aberdyfi, and to make the most of what we have.

Information: The most common suggestion was for a central information hub / one-stop-shop for [mainly] local people to let them know what's going on at different clubs and facilities, and how they can get involved. An online group or page on social media, or a physical noticeboard/hub in the village centre were recurring suggestions.

Improving Current Facilities: There were repeated specific calls for improving current facilities:

- Neuadd Aberdyfi: Installing retractable seats to increase and make the most of the available space in the main hall, and open up new opportunities.
- The Literary Institute: There is a perception that the asset is underused and could benefit from modernisation to improve quality and diversity of the offer there and make it more relevant to current needs.
- Aberdyfi Bowls & Recreation Ground: Improvements to both playing surfaces of the bowling green, tennis courts and croque lawn, as well as associated facilities. There was also a strong view that the Recreational Ground was a hugely underutilised asset, and that visitors and locals alike were unaware of its value.
- Yacht Club: There were comments about the condition of the slipway and boat launching facilities.

Local Participation: There was a recurring theme (including from members) that many of the local clubs should be more welcoming, and make a greater effort to engage local people. The majority of comments referenced the Yacht Club given its prime location, facilities on the waterfront, and tendency to be seen as a place for 'visitors.' But the message was similar for other organisations as well.

Better Use of Open Spaces: Respondents identified an opportunity to develop some of Aberdyfi's open spaces, specifically the green and the waterfront. Proposals included provision for open air dining and recreational activities.

Upgrade Children's Play Area: There were numerous comments on the need to improve and upgrade the children's play area to provide a better experience for young people.

Accessibility: Improving accessibility for all across all facilities and around the village in general.

Parking: There were repeated calls for increasing the parking provision in the village especially during busy periods and making an effort to stop visitors parking in inappropriate places and on green spaces. There were also calls for dedicated residential parking outside people's homes.

Public Toilets: Keep them clean, well maintained, modern, and fit for purpose in this popular destination for locals and visitors alike.

Ongoing Maintenance: It was noted that good work is already being done to maintain many of these facilities, but that should be a focus on maintaining and improving these facilities moving forward to prevent them deteriorating. There were a few comments about the village starting to look tired and rundown during the pandemic.

Bins and Dog Fouling: Calls for more waste bins and dog poo bins, and for them to be emptied more often.

Other	
A Bandstand (on the green?)	Better local and community Transport
Outdoor Gym	Improvements for visitors and players at the Football Ground
Fix railway bridge between Outward Bound & Picnic Island	Fibre Broadband Provision

MISSING FACILITIES

There were also a wide range of suggestions for additional facilities that currently don't exist in the village. The recurring proposals are highlighted, whilst most of the others are noted under 'other.' This is not necessarily an indication of the need or demand, merely a reflection of the survey feedback. They should be treated as an indication of community priorities, and a starting point for a more detailed conversation and identification of need.

Cycle Path: A Cycle path linking Aberdyfi and Tywyn was the most popular proposal here, whilst safer cycle routes within the village itself was also put forward.

Improved Medical Facilities: Various respondents mentioned a doctors surgery, dentist, day care shelter and sheltered accommodation to enable people to be cared for in the community and avoid traveling to Tywyn for services. Separately, there was a call for a **Defibrillator** to be situated in the village.

Youth Facilities: There was a demand for youth facilities, especially for older teenagers. However apart from suggestions such as a skatepark, there was a lack of concrete proposals, potentially reflecting the lack of youth engagement with the survey and/or the lack of young residents.

Recycling Centre: A community recycling centre with facilities for general and garden / green waste as the nearest facility is currently in Machynlleth (*according to feedback).

Parking: Repeated from the previous section, but there is a call for additional parking facilities both for visitors and local residents.

Electric Vehicle Charging Points: Charging points close to facilities and amenities to enable local people and visitors alike to charge their vehicles, which will be an essential facility as diesel/petrol cars are phased out of production over the next decade.

Traffic Calming Measures: New speed limits and traffic calming measures in the village and its approaches.

A Diversified Highstreet: A common comment is that the village lacks a diversity of restaurants and cafes. Similarly, there are numerous respondents calling for independent stores such as bakers, fish store, bookstore, cake store etc. These are in the spirit of providing for local residents, but would undoubtedly also appeal to visitors as well.

Other: Numerous local services were mentioned by a couple of respondents including a **nursery, bank, library, food bank, sport centre/gym, indoor swimming pool**, and reopening the **primary school**. Developing **Indoor sport** and **wet weather activities** such as badminton or a skittle alley in existing facilities was proposed, and a suggestion for a local heritage **museum** was echoed by calls for better interpretation and signage of local landmarks and heritage.

Dedicated **Motorhome Facilities** was proposed as a way of avoiding issues with informal overnight stays, **Lifeguards and a dedicated swimming area** on the beach, along with **improved signage regarding safety and responsible behaviour**.

A **Local Minibus/Dial a Ride** service was proposed as a potential way to improve local transport and accessibility,

**Local Homes: Providing affordable homes for local people was put forward a number of times. This is explored later in this document and in the associated report by North-West Wales Housing Enablers.*

THE NEED: LOCAL SERVICES & ACTIVITIES

To explore the activities and services in the community and their use, we asked respondents which ones they had participated in and/or benefited from during the past 12 months before the Covid-19 lockdown.

It was a free-text question as there were too many to individually list on the survey form, and we would have been guaranteed to miss some of the lesser known. People's own definition of activities and services also varied, so the following section aims to summarise the wide range of activities identified and identify key elements.

Community activities & services are invariably connected to the available facilities, and the data highlights this with many of the popular activities hosted at the popular facilities. We would have been surprised if this wasn't the case, however it's still good to see that the data holds up as expected!!

Sport and physical activities of all kinds seem to be at the heart of community life in Aberdyfi. Sailing, golf, rowing, tennis, bowls, croquet and football feature repeatedly. As do fitness and dance classes. And as previously mentioned, it can be hard to decipher those who participate in the actual activities, and those who benefit from the associated events and facilities.

One of the most popular activities was the shows, exhibitions, and particularly the pantomime which are held at Neuadd Aberdyfi. The Community lunch club also features prominently, also held at the Neuadd. Numerous respondents noted local events such as the Food Festival, Dovey Fest, craft fairs, the garden club show, and Summer Salt.

A smaller number specifically noted events, talks, and social events that bring people together. Often noted as being at Neuadd Dyfi and the Literary Institute, however it could reasonably be expected that these happen at the other facilities as well but not specifically noted and so and hidden in the data. The reading rooms were also mentioned a couple of times.

Similar numbers noted the church, chapel, and worshipping as regular activities. And the Art Society/Club was also mentioned numerous times, as was activities related to the RNLI.

The Train and Bus services also had a few mentions!

Other activities and services were noted by one or two people, and we've listed them here:

- Post Office Shop
- Pharmacy
- Dyfi 1st Responders
- Blood Donation
- Community Council
- Educational Courses e.g. Computer Course
- Volunteer Activities
- Toddler Group
- Group Swimming
- Paddleboarding
- Beach Cleaning
- Dovey Ladies
- Inner Wheel
- Glee Club
- Book Club
- Children's Summer Football
- Gardening Club

Its often the case that smaller groups can get overlooked in surveys such as this. For examples ones with smaller numbers as they focus on one specific activity, a certain demographic, and those lacking associated activities (e.g. Club House, regular fundraising activities etc). However, it must be recognised that although they may lack the numbers, they still provide the same benefits, vital services, and socialising opportunities to their members as the larger activities and clubs. And often benefit those not interested in the offer of larger organisations.

It is also clear that the majority of the respondents focused in on the 'activities' (sport, theatre, social etc) rather than 'services' e.g. healthcare, transport, childcare, etc. This could indicate a lack of demand, a missed demographic, or something else. Unfortunately, the data doesn't tell us and we don't want to speculate. Further research could be required here.

ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES

It's worth noting here that in addition to traditional activities and services provided by an organisation or individual, a significant number of respondents cited activities or services provided by the environment. Walking, cycling, running, access to the beach and open green spaces etc. These are all 'services' that are commonly considered as beneficial to health and wellbeing and are also a focus for Welsh Government Environmental Policy.

WHAT COULD BE DONE TO IMPROVE CURRENT ACTIVITIES & SERVICES?

The standout theme here was that there needs to be a **central calendar** of local events, activities, and services. And that they should be **advertised extensively** to the local residents. There is an activities calendar at www.aberdovey.org.uk however many are obviously unaware of it. Another indication of the lack of awareness is that many respondents were suggesting potential 'new' activities or services that already exist!

There are quite a few references to the fact that the **timing of activities**, with daytime activities not accessible to working adults [or school age youths]. A call for longer opening hours was aimed mainly at businesses and places to eat, although it could be relevant to communal facilities offering services as well. More **evening social events, talks, and/or training courses** was proposed by some, both for educational and social value.

Increasing the number of community events was seen as a way of both providing entertainment and enhancing community cohesion. Numerous respondents specifically mentioned that they miss a Carnival / Parade type of event.

The need for more fitness-based classes was also raised, so some though might be given to what is missing from current provision or if there is adequate capacity given that a range of such activities are already available.

MISSING SERVICES

Reflecting what's been noted before, the most popular suggestion here was a **Youth Club or Activities Club for young people**, particularly older teenagers. One individual did mention that this had been tried before but failed because of insufficient numbers, so this could be worth revisiting. We would however advise you to consult the young people themselves on this issue, as a lack of responses by under 25's means that this is the older generations (although quite possibly parents) telling us what the youngsters need!

The lack of local **healthcare services** (GP Surgery, dentist etc) is also highlighted again and the second most popular theme in this section. A **Community Minibus was put forward** to help those not able to access current services, or to reach the ones located outside the village.

Some form of **Social Centre/Community Café** was proposed by many as a way of enabling people to socialise, battle loneliness and isolation, especially amongst elder residents.

Quite a few respondents noted that they'd like to see a local walking group set up, with others interested in themed walks (nature, heritage, history etc) for locals and visitors alike.

Other	
Outdoor Activities targeted at locals	Small water craft rental
Toddler Clubs	Bridge Club
Local Market	Befriending services
Repair Shop	Swap Shop
Garden Club	Mobile Library
Self-help groups	Welsh Language Classes

WHAT EXCLUDES PEOPLE: BARRIERS TO PARTICIPATION

We asked if there were reasons people didn't use local facilities or accesses local activities and services, to explore if there were any major barriers to participation. If we exclude 'Covid restrictions,' and 'living outside the area,' The most common answer was a **lack of interest** in the activities or events on offer (non-religious, not interested in football etc).

Many noted that they were '**too busy and didn't have time.**' Some citing work pressures, whilst others noted that work hours simply made it impossible for them to attend daytime events.

A **lack of information / advertising of** what was the most common reason cited regarding activities and services, which could be something that could easily be rectified, perhaps through a central noticeboard (perhaps online) or newsletter.

Poor health, age and mobility issues was the next most common theme.

Including comments from wheelchair bound individuals and the hard of hearing. This lack of accessibility is echoed by a couple respondents which mentioned a **lack of transport**.

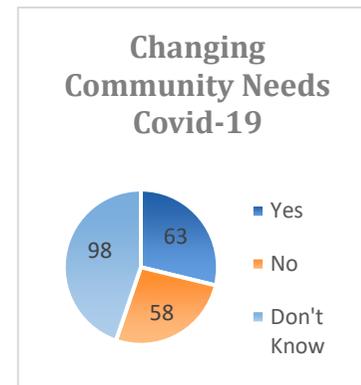
A **perceived lack of adequate parking** was another cited barrier that kept people away, especially during the high season when according to some "*it can be overrun by tourists.*" No available parking during busy periods was one complaint, whilst a lack of disabled parking was another theme.

Some comments were specific to individual facilities, e.g. citing the need to be (or unsure if you needed to be) a member of the Yacht Club to use the facilities, or a lack of space (or waiting list) for an allotment. So, **membership and fees** were a barrier to some, whilst **perceived exclusivity** of some clubs deterred many casual users.

Finally, there were comments referring to the '**tired nature of** some facilities' that could do with *an uplift and some modernisation*.

THE COVID EFFECT

Given the nature of the past 18-months, we asked whether the respondents believed that the Covid-19 pandemic had altered the needs of the community. As you can see, there was no clear consensus on this, but we did receive a number of views on potentially changing needs:

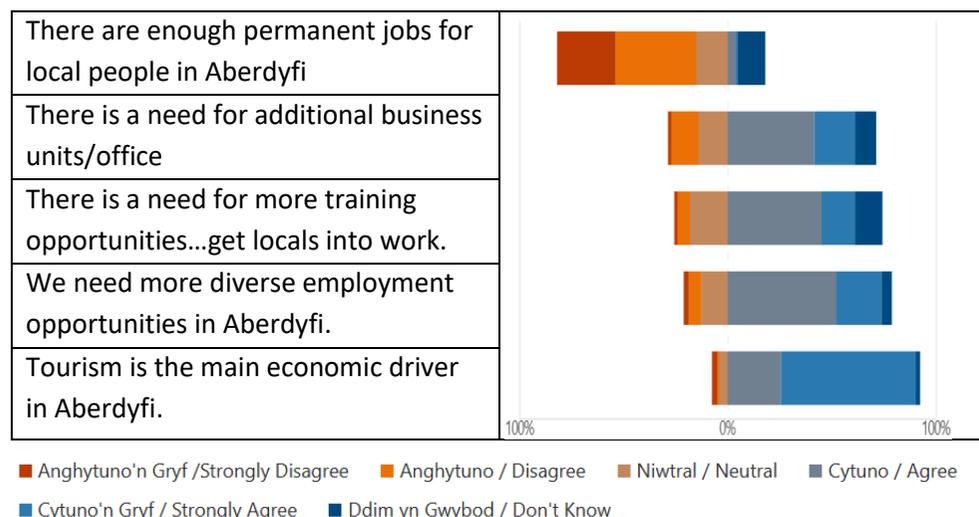


- It's highlighted the need for local health & social services in our community, and the current lack of it. It's also changed the nature of these services, with more vulnerable individuals requiring support and monitoring at home.
- Many individuals are now wary of group activity and will need persuading to re-join communal activities, and the activity providers will need to provide reassurance through stricter safety, social distancing, and hygiene arrangements. Potential need for greater number of smaller classes.
- Isolation and loneliness issues are two issues affecting mental health & wellbeing that have been highlighted and intensified over the past 18 months. "*People need a community.*"
- It's brought out the best in people, coming together to support neighbours and colleagues establishing new relationships, friendships, and communities.
- More staycations and a perceived influx of new (younger) residents will put added pressure on local services, it but could also bring new blood and enthusiasm into the community.
- Changing habits could be a blow for the local economy as more people socialise at home and shop online. Conversely anecdotal others believe that more people are shopping locally since lockdown.

Other	
Highlighted need for socialising spaces	Community are volunteers essential
Broadband: Essential to home working	Better awareness of individual needs
Increased reliance on home deliveries	Communication is essential

THE ECONOMY AND JOBS

We asked respondents for their opinion on the following statements regarding the state of the economy and employment in Aberdyfi:



There is an over whelming perception that there is a lack of permanent employment opportunities in Aberdyfi (67%). This tallies with the perceptions in the earlier section that Aberdyfi wasn't a good place to live for those looking for work or commuting to work.

It also concurs with the perception that Tourism is the main economic driver in the village, which is associated with low paying seasonal jobs.

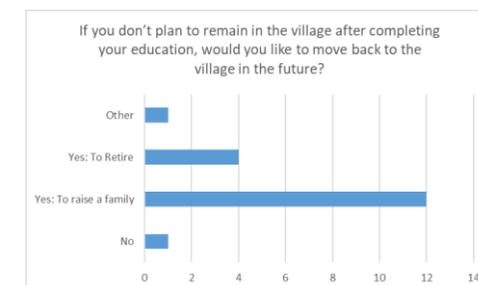
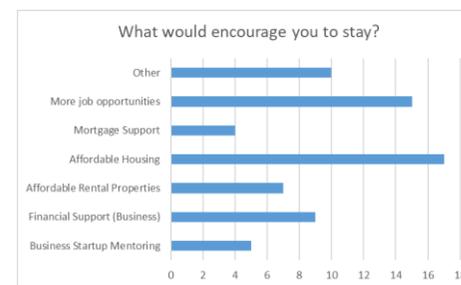
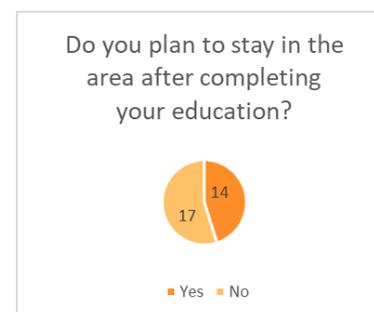
As you can see, there is a strong opinion that additional business units / office space (61%), training opportunities (62%), and a diversification of employment opportunities (74%) would be beneficial to the area.

The overwhelming majority (90%) saw tourism as the main economic driver, although there were numerous comments that this was detrimental to other sectors and the wider community.

YOUNG PEOPLE

There was a section in the survey aimed at young people under 25. However unfortunately only three individuals under 25 responded to the survey, so it is not possible to draw any conclusions from these results.

A number of people did answer the questions aimed at under 25 (although this shouldn't have been possible, we believe there might have been an error in the branching on the online survey platform). We appreciate that these records could have been contributed by parents on behalf of their children, so we include a brief summary here in case it can inform the development of any future study.



THE ENVIRONMENT

We asked respondents for their opinions on the following statements (see opposite), to gather information about people’s perceptions of the natural environment and its influence on the local community:

The overwhelming majority perceive that the natural environment and landscape makes Aberdyfi a better place to live (93%), and that it contributes to improving our health and wellbeing as a community (94%).

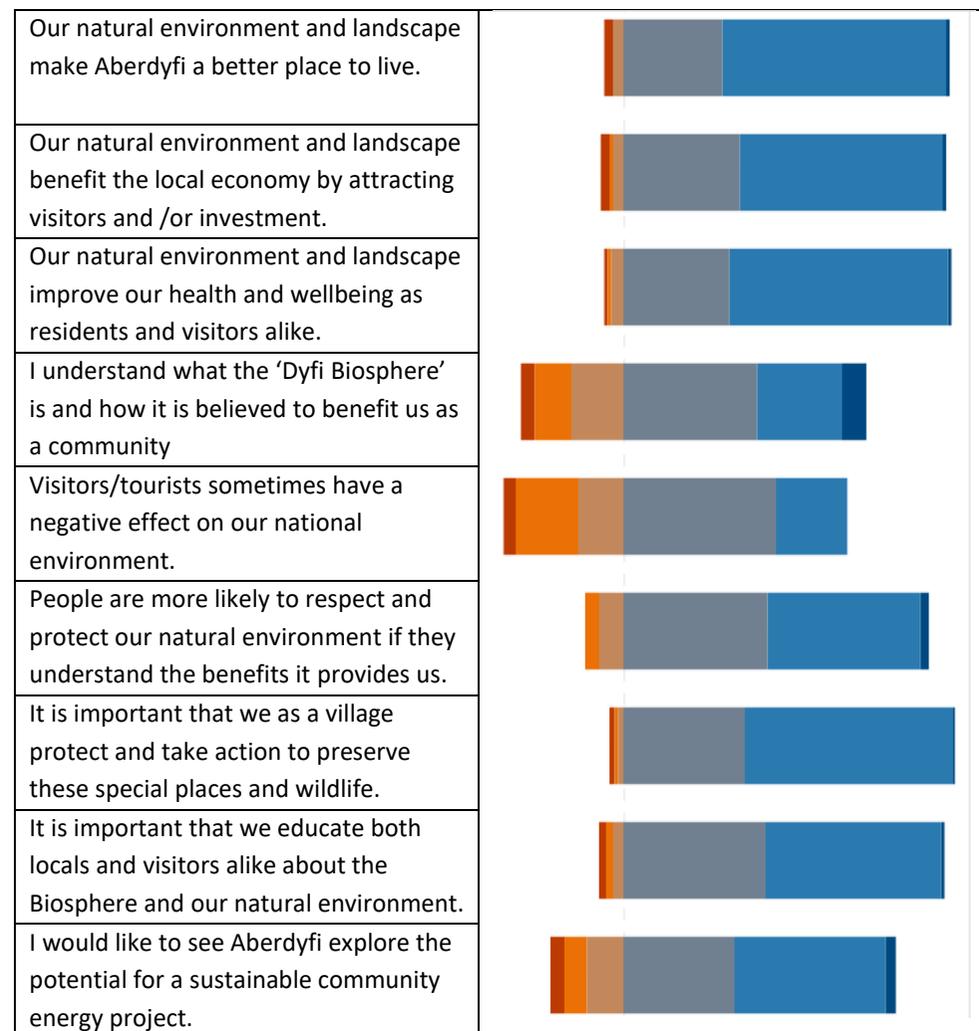
There is also a strong belief that it benefits our economy by attracting visitors and investment (93%). However, the flip side of this coin is that the majority also believe that this influx of visitors can sometimes have a negative effect on the environment that attracts them in the first place (65%), although a significant minority disagreed.

There is a consensus that it is important that we take action to protect this special landscape and the wildlife if harbours (95%), and that people are much more likely to respect and protect it if they fully understand the benefits it provides us (82%). There was also consensus around the proposal that it was important to educate visitors and locals alike about the Dyfi Biosphere and the wider environment (95%).

Overall the respondents weren’t quite as sure that they fully understood the Dyfi Biosphere and the benefits it provides the community (63%), and there were more ‘don’t know’ responses here than for any of the other statements. Finally, there was widespread support for exploring the potential for a sustainable community energy project in Aberdyfi (72%), with a small minority (11%) against the idea.

It should be noted that the overwhelming positive response to both the value and need to protect the natural environment in this section is at odds with the previous finding that ‘The Environment’ was the lowest of people’s priorities. It highlights the fact that although highly valued, it is often overlooked when

considered along more pressing ‘day to day’ issues such as services, facilities, housing, and employment.



■ Anghytuno'n Gryf / Strongly Disagree
 ■ Anghytuno / Disagree
 ■ Niwtral / Neutral
 ■ Cytuno / Agree
 ■ Cytuno'n Gryf / Strongly Agree
 ■ Ddim yn Gwybod / Don't Know

PERCEIVED ISSUES

The overwhelming issue that respondents identified was the issue of **rubbish and littering**, especially during the busy tourist season. This ranged from overflowing bins on the high street which was associated with a lack of bins and infrequent collections, to rubbish being left on the beach which harms the environment and attracts seagulls. A **lack of local recycling facilities** was seen as contributing to **fly tipping** and littering. **Dog fouling** is another issue identified

Jet skis and other motor craft was the second most common issue cited, associated with **noise pollution** (a separate issue in its own right) and also disturbances to wildlife.

Overcrowding caused by the influx of visitors was perceived as a source of many of the identified issues especially **increased traffic** through the village (and associated emissions), and **parking spilling onto natural green spaces**. A recurring theme in many communities, **Dog Fouling** was seen by many as a serious issue in Aberdyfi.

Marine pollution (including examples from named premises), is tied in with associated concerns of **'runoff' from farmland** having an adverse effect on rivers and the sea. **Plastic packaging/pollution** was also specifically noted by a number of respondents, with a specific mention for beach products (discarded buckets, spades etc). **Climate Change** in general was identified as a threat, including coastal and sand dune erosion (also visitor related), and sea level rise.

Unchecked development is seen as detrimental to biodiversity and green spaces.

Other	
Loss of Biodiversity & tree felling	Cigarette Butts
Caravan/motorhome waste	Wild camping & fires
Lack of political will to change	Lack of trees
Vandalism	Over manicuring of green spaces

There was also comments that stopping channel dredging had made more harm than good, and that some environmental legislation were counterproductive.

PROPOSED SOLUTIONS

The single most popular solution to some of these issues addresses a number of them, and that is **Education**. Be it in the form of leaflets, posters, signage, or education events and activities, educating people on the state of the natural environment, the harm being done, why it needs protecting, and the benefits it provides residents and visitors alike.

More bins (including recycling bins), and more frequent collections is the next most popular proposal aimed at a specific issue. And this is elaborated on by others who see a **community recycling facility** as being key to reduce littering and fly tipping (as well as presumably reducing household waste going to landfill).

Limiting jet skis and motor craft, both in speed and location, is also proposed by a similar number of respondents as a solution to noise pollution and habitat disturbance (also addressing safety concerns).

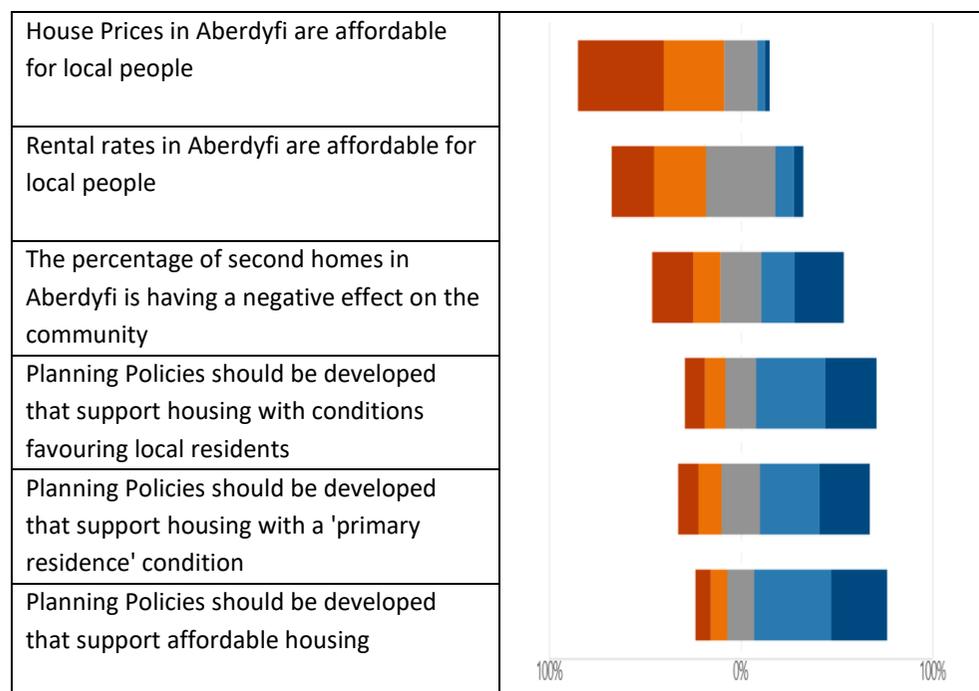
Enforcement through prosecution and/or wardens, is seen as the solution to littering and parking issues amongst others. And there is an appetite more **community initiatives** such as litter picks to address issues.

Some specific solutions to local issues appear numerous times. **Banning crabbing (or the local sale & use of nylon lines)** is perceived as a way to solve a local plastic pollution in the marine environment; **encouraging businesses to reduce plastic use, and use recyclable packaging/containers**, while **providing recycling facilities on their premises**. **Tree planting/habitat creation** also features repeatedly.

A **Park and Ride** facility is suggested as a way to reduce traffic and parking issues; **EV Charging Points, 20mph speed limit**, and **Green Energy** projects to facilitate a reduction in emissions. **Repair/swap shop, changing farming practices**, and **limiting visitor numbers** is proposed. Finally developing **Sustainable Housing**, is proposed. There is a call for more detailed **specialist research** into the issues (potentially **collaborating with CAT**) and **establishing a local group** to lead on protecting the environment.

HOUSING

We asked respondents for their opinions on the following to gather information about people's perceptions of the housing sector in Aberdyfi and its influence on the local community:



■ Anghytuno'n Gryf / Strongly Disagree
 ■ Anghytuno / Disagree
 ■ Niwtral / Neutral
 ■ Cytuno / Agree
 ■ Cytuno'n Gryf / Strongly Agree

As you can see, the overwhelming majority (75%) of respondents don't believe that house prices in Aberdyfi are affordable for local people.

Nearly half (49.5%) don't believe that rental prices are affordable for local people either. However, there is a significant section of the respondents (37%) who don't have an opinion either way. We suspect that this is because unless you live in/are searching for rental accommodation then you are unlikely to be aware of the current market rate, which are not as visible as the prices of sold properties which can be easily found online.

Whether second homes are having a negative effect on the community is an issue that splits the respondents. 43% believe it's having a negative effect, and 35% disagree. This is reflected by other sections where tourism and visitors are considered to be both vital to the local economy while simultaneously putting substantial pressures on local services and the environment.

Despite these differing opinions, there is clear and widespread support for the development and implementation of planning policies that provide conditions to favour local residents (63% for, 21% against), stipulate primary residence (57% for, 23% against), and to supply affordable housing (69% for, 17% against).

NORTH-WEST WALES RURAL HOUSING ENABLERS PARTNERSHIP: THE HOUSING NEEDS SURVEY REPORT

The second half of the online survey, along with other sources, informed the '*Housing Needs Survey Report*' produced by the 'North-West Wales Rural Housing Enablers.' We have included the 'Conclusions and Findings' section of this report here to inform the reader as our own conclusions and recommendations are influenced by their findings.

We strongly suggest that the '*Housing Needs Survey Report*' is read alongside our own to give the reader a comprehensive and detailed picture of the current situation in Aberdyfi.

SUMMARY & CONCLUSIONS

While using the information available from the social and affordable housing register, information regarding the housing market and housing affordability, information regarding empty properties and second homes, as well as our on-line survey we are able to conclude the following regarding the local housing need in Aberdyfi.

62.3% of households are priced out of the housing market all together. For those households with income that fall within the lower quartile the percentage is even higher. With the lower quartile median income in the area at £18,901 and the income required to afford a property at entry level price at £39,571, purchasing a home on the open market is not an option for many.

There are currently no properties available to privately rent in Aberdyfi.

There is a very high number of second homes and properties that are registered as self-catering units in the area. The number of empty homes is high also. In total 54% of the housing stock in the area are either second homes, holiday lets or empty properties.

There are 50 social units in the area, with a variety of options regarding size and type of unit. There are currently no units which are difficult to let, however social housing officers have noted that some units located on first floors or steep hills and designated for the elderly can be difficult to let.

There are 113 on the waiting list for social housing in Aberdyfi. The highest demand is for two-bedroom units, however there is a substantial demand for one bedroom and three-bedroom units. The demand is fairly equal for both one and two-bedroom units. The majority of those who require a two-bedroom unit are looking for a house of bungalow. For those who require a three-bedroom property, a house was the most popular choice.

There are those who have registered on the social housing register with a local connection of five years or more, and who are in need of a one, two or three bedroom unit. It is worth noting that it is a fairly low number of those on the register that have a local connection of five years or more to the area.

Four have responded to the online survey noting that they would consider renting a social house however are not registered on the social housing register for the area (It would be required to check if those who responded qualify to be included on the register).

It is worth noting that the waiting list for social housing could increase during the next few months / years due to Covid-19's economic impact on households in the area.

14 have currently registered with Tai Teg for an affordable home in Aberdyfi. Ten of those registered wish to purchase a home, three want to rent and one is looking to buy or rent. Two have chosen Aberdyfi as their first-choice location, nine have noted Aberdyfi as their second-choice location, and three have noted Aberdyfi as their third choice. Seven of those registered are in need of a two-bedroom house, and six are in need of a three-bedroom house. There is one application where the applicant has not noted how many bedrooms they require. One response to the online survey noted that they would consider part purchasing a property, and seven noted that they would consider purchasing a cheaper property with re-selling restrictions. Only two of these have registered with Tai Teg (It would need to be confirmed if the rest are eligible to be added to the register).

In our online survey conducted during July and August 2021 it was highlighted that 56 households were in housing need. Whilst analysing the income of those who responded (it should be noted that only 40 of those who responded answered the question regarding household income) and with a current average house price in the area of £365,010 we can consider that the most of these (if not

all) are in need of an affordable home. It should be noted that only two of these have registered for Tai Teg and three that have registered for social housing.

Approximately half of those who stated that they were in need of housing and answered the question regarding income, have a household income of £30,000 or less a year. It is important to consider this whilst exploring solutions for the local need.

As part of the responses to our survey the biggest interest was in three-bedroom houses, however with a large number also interested in two-bedroom houses and two-bedroom bungalows.

Seven responded stating that they required a ground floor property, one required sheltered housing with an additional care service, two require sheltered houses without any additional care services, one required home care, and one required an adapted house for special needs.

Most of the responses want to purchase on the open market, however some also would consider renting privately, renting socially, or buy a cheaper property with a re-selling restriction. 22 of the responses noted that they would consider self-building and 23 would consider renovating an empty property if there was an appropriate property available.

The local connection of those who responded that were in housing need are strong with 78.6% having a connection of five years or more to the area.

It was highlighted in the survey that there was support for a development of houses for local need with 63.7% in support and 20.9% stating that they would not support a development of this kind. A variety of reasons were given for supporting and opposing any development.

The following themes were highlighted when those who responded were asked to note their views regarding the housing situation in the area:

- The housing situation is disastrous and getting worse.

- There are too many second homes and holiday lets.
- House prices are too high for local people.
- The housing situation is having a negative effect on the community, economy and local services.
- Aberdyfi's landscape makes it hard to develop more housing.
- There are some affordable housing in neighbouring towns and areas.
- We need jobs as well as housing for local people in the area.

The themes above were the most highlighted however it should be noted that some responses felt that the housing situation in Aberdyfi is acceptable.

As well as supporting any potential development of affordable homes for local people, there is also a demand for:

- Measures to control the second homes and holiday lets situation – for example the Council Tax system or Planning system
- Assistance for local people to purchase or renovate a property.
- Facilitate communication between local seller and buyers before a house is sold on the open market.
- Facilitate ways on which empty properties can be used to assist the local housing need.
- Develop an agency that can buy, sell and rent houses for local people.
- Develop the local economy to increase jobs and salary's as well as encouraging technological developments that would allow people to work in jobs with higher salaries from home.
- Improve the public transport, and transport links in order to develop accessibility to job locations for people who want to live in Aberdyfi but work elsewhere.

48 of the responses noted that they have an interest in being a member of a group that would respond and assist with the local housing situation. We welcome any enquiries regarding the information, conclusion and recommendation made in this report.

POTENTIAL NEXT STEPS: HOW YOU CAN ACT ON THESE FINDINGS

The findings and conclusions of this report should be used as the evidence base for further development, and to stimulate further conversation and discussions around some of the key themes picked up in this work.

Here we've outlined a number of potential steps you could take, both in the short term and long term, to collaboratively develop these findings alongside local residents and key stakeholders. Identifying and putting in place measures that will improve the community for all:

Engage Young People: The lack of engagement with young people was one major weakness of this survey. This could be as it was targeted at homeowners / tenants, and that the social media and network approach didn't cut through to them. Identifying their actual perceptions and needs will be vital to developing interventions that improve the Community, as well as evidencing any future developments and associated funding applications.

Recruit Additional Support: A total of 48 respondents (over a fifth) stated that they would be interested in getting involved with a group set up to address some of these issues. That's significant additional capacity and a potential wealth of skills and experience at your disposal. Those who have consented to be contacted and provided contact details should be engaged early on to recruit support for your efforts.

Engage & Collaborate with Key Stakeholders: It's vital that you maintain the engagement with key strategic stakeholders such as Cyngor Gwynedd and Parc Cenedlaethol Eryri. They have both the capacity and influence to support your efforts, and these findings will support their own work in reviewing the Local Development Plan. It can only help your efforts to keep them engaged and informed, and to draw on their advice and expertise.

Engage the Community: Depending on practical considerations (and Covid-19 regulations), a public meeting or drop-in session to discuss these findings will help engage the community, refine the initial proposals, and develop a sense of ownership for the work. The process is often as important as the action as you need to gain support and legitimacy for any development, and ensure it has widespread benefits. Social media, discussion groups (e.g. WhatsApp), and local papers are some of the approaches you can take.

Develop Individual Projects: You might identify certain projects or actions and decide to follow them up individually. This could be through a central group, or different organisations could use the reports as evidence for their own projects.

Develop a Comprehensive Community Plan: The other option is to develop these initial ideas and proposals into a more comprehensive Community Place Plan. This would be an inclusive and collaborative effort between the community and key stakeholders. It would set out the strategic case for change and identifying a series of actions and projects, alongside local/regional policy development/changes, in a comprehensive and coordinated Action Plan for the next 5-10 years.

CONCLUSION

This exercise was meant as a first step in establishing the needs of the community in Aberdyfi, and it's revealed a diverse range of actions that the respondents of this survey believe would benefit those who live here and those who visit.

Despite the idyllic location, there are clearly some significant issues facing the community. Some of these are day-to-day concerns that could be addressed locally with additional resources and capacity. Others are deep rooted systematic issues and require a shift in policy and approach at a regional or even national level to bring about the desired change. From housing to the environment, working in partnership with relevant authorities and partners will be key. But having taken this first step, Aberdyfi has the potential to showcase the real positive change that can be achieved when local communities take action.