

Report on Questionnaire results by PHSSG Administrator as presented 19.2.21

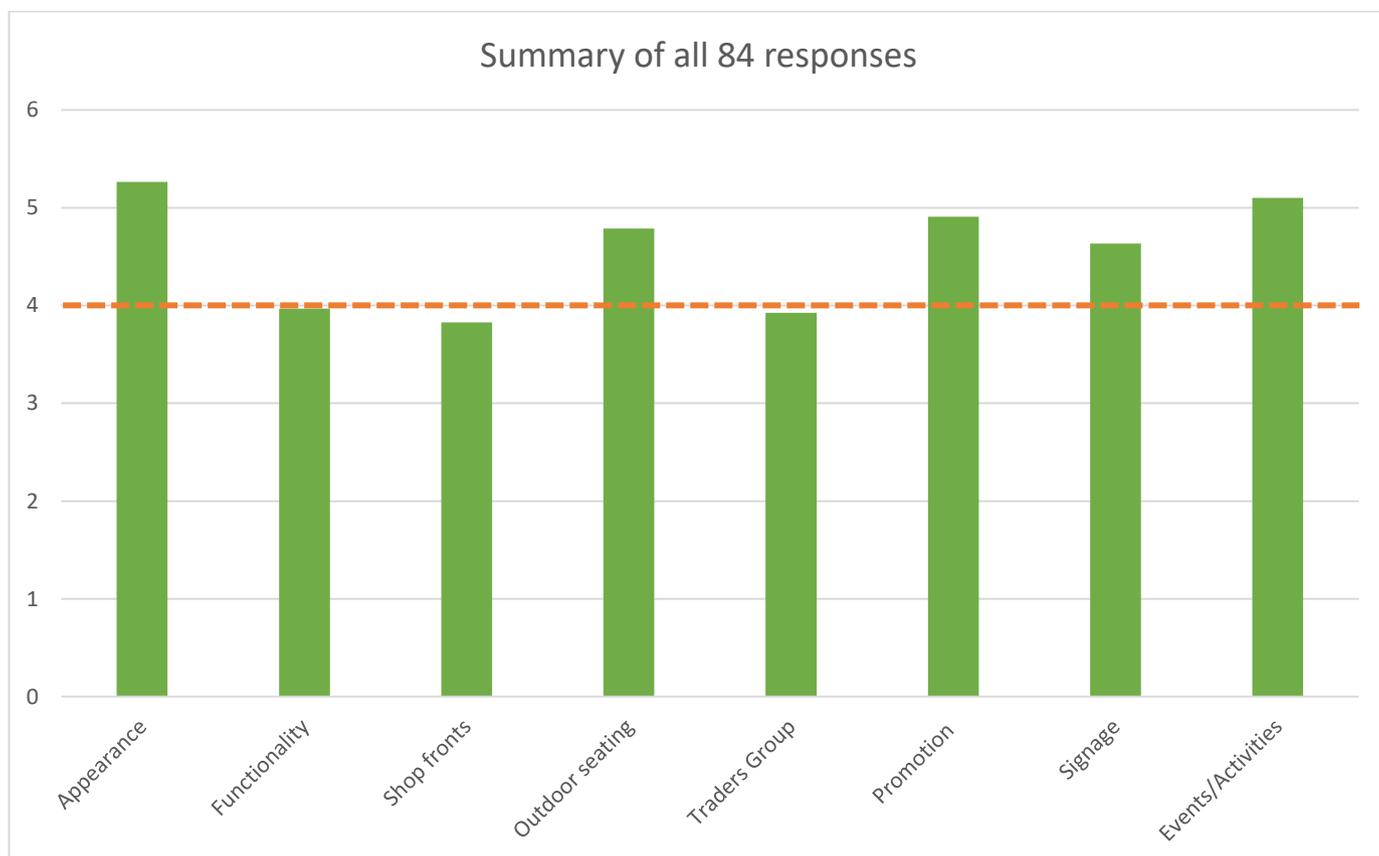
	Trader	1	2	3	4	5	6	Business	1	2	3	4	5	6	Resident	1	2	3	4	5	6	Other	1	2	3	4	5	6
INITIATIVES																												
Appearance	22	1		2	7	12	6					5	1	52				6	21	25	4				1	1	2	
Functionality	22	1		1	7	10	3	6	2			2	1	1	52	3	6	16	13	7	6	4				3	1	
Shop fronts	22	2	5	1	7	6	1	6		1	3	1	1	52	1		3	15	15	16	4			1	3			
Outdoor seating	22		2	2	2	9	7	6				4	2	52	1	2	11	13	11	13	4					1	3	
Traders Group	22	1	3	6	2	3	7	6		2		2	2	52	7	9	10	8	10	7	4				2	2		
Promotion	22		1	1	5	3	12	6				1	4	1	52	1	3	7	12	14	15	4				1	2	1
Signage	22			2	2	4	14	6	1		1	1	2	1	52	2	1	7	7	20	15	4				2	2	
Events/Activities	22			1	4	5	12	6				1	1	4	52	3	1	4	3	21	20	4				2	1	1

Total no. responses = 84

1=Not at all important 2=Not very important 3=Slightly important 4=Fairly important 5=Very important 6=Extremely important

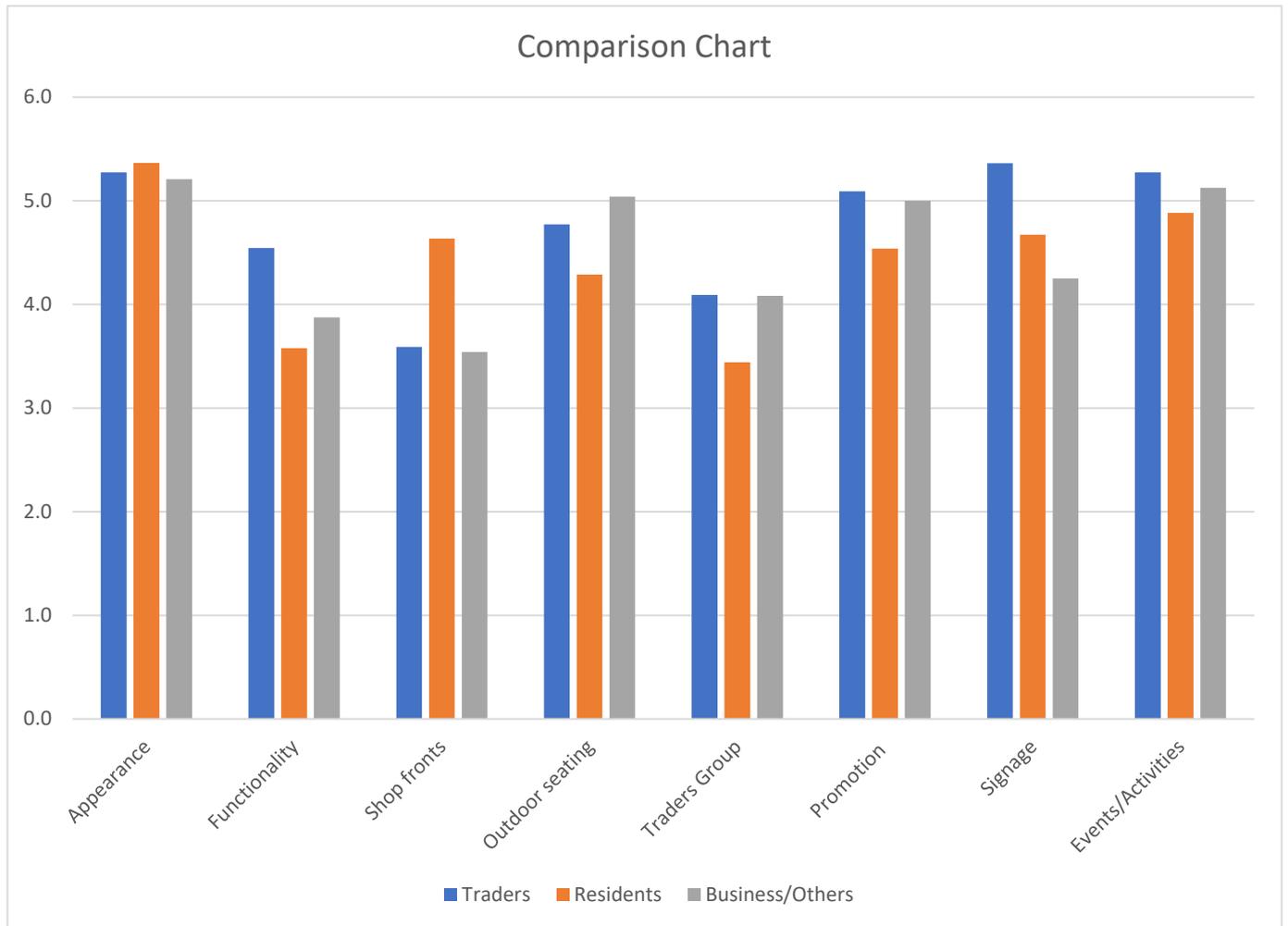
Please note, some responses did not tick all Initiatives so totals may differ from ratings recorded

	High Street Traders	Other Businesses	Residents	Other
Appearance	5.3	5.2	5.4	5.3
Functionality	4.5	3.5	3.6	4.3
Shop fronts	3.6	3.3	4.6	3.8
Outdoor seating	4.8	4.3	4.3	5.8
Traders Group	4.1	3.7	3.4	4.5
Promotion	5.1	5.0	4.5	5.0
Signage	5.4	4.0	4.7	4.5
Events/Activities	5.3	5.5	4.9	4.8



Updated to total of all 84 responses received as of 19/2/21.

Appearance, Outdoor seating, Promotion, Signage and Evens/Activities all above 4, so rated Very or Extremely Important



I would like to suggest that the results of the Comparison Chart above show the following:

Appearance of the High Street is very important to all groups including Traders and Residents.

Functionality of the High Street is quite important to Traders but is less so for Residents and others.

Shop-front restoration is more important to Residents than it to High Street Traders or others.

Outdoor seating is very important to High Street Traders and others, and fairly important to Residents.

A Traders Group is more important to Traders and others than for Residents.

Promotion is very important to High Street Traders and others, and fairly important to Residents.

Signage is the most important issue for Traders but slightly less so for Residents and others.

Events & Activities are important to all groups including Traders and Residents.

Report on Questionnaire responses as read out at the PHSSG meeting Friday 19th February

We were very grateful that people added further comments to expand on their ratings of the 8 main themes and also added other ideas. It has been quite a task to summarise so many responses, from now 84 returned questionnaires, but I have tried to pick up all the comments to include in this report.

Road safety, traffic calming and the narrowness of the pavements were raised by a lot of people. Unfortunately, it is probably beyond the scope of this Fund and the time scale in which it has to be delivered as many of the ideas require Highways to implement. But, we will pass on these concerns to the necessary authorities and liaise with Porlock Parish Council, Somerset West & Taunton Council and Somerset County Council to see what can be achieved.

However, some have suggested that signs, floral displays, etc. could enhance the feeling of entering a more pedestrian/Village area discouraging cars from passing through too fast, in the way residential areas look and feel, thus providing much needed traffic calming.

Car parking was also discussed by many. Ideas from the need to signpost the car parks, especially when/if Somerset West & Taunton Council waive charges for particular days or weeks, to having the first hour or more free in all car parks. As suggested, the latter may be better than 24hr free parking as car parks last year tended to become clogged up with permanent parking, thus not helping the shoppers and day visitors. However, the Doverhay and Central Carparks belong to Somerset West & Taunton Council so we have no direct control over parking costs, but can definitely lobby for these ideas. If nothing else, we can provide signs so people driving through the High Street know there is free parking on particular days, if Somerset West & Taunton Council provide this again this year.

Toilets are seen as essential. How can we expect visitors to stay around the High Street if there are no toilets for them to use? The toilets belong to Somerset West & Taunton Council and are currently leased by Porlock Parish Council and the cost of running them has to come out of the taxes we all pay to Porlock Parish Council. Are we willing for more money to be spent on them to make them free and keep them open when they keep getting vandalised, etc? As an aside, just for information, I would like to mention that, quite unbelievably, there is no statutory requirement for a local authority to provide toilets, so Somerset West & Taunton Council have decided not to fund them.

An electric vehicle charging point has been suggested and this is something that is in hand, funded by other 'Green' grants, I understand.

Better use of the Recreation Ground and provision of an outdoor performance stage were mentioned and hopefully we can liaise with the Recreation Ground Committee regarding this. The land and the funds they have, however, are in their control, but perhaps if this project could provide signage to link the High Street to the Rec, we could both benefit.

The issue most raised that seems to be most important to most people was the appearance of the High Street and how this can be enhanced by floral displays through the year, Christmas displays in the winter and flags and bunting to support other events or occasions, sprucing up Porlock and generally making it look like a picturesque, vibrant, well-cared for Village. This is important not only to attract more visitors and encourage them onto the High Street but for the Residents as well, and to the general well-being of all. Providing a year-round 'Wow' factor to encourage visitors and shoppers in the duller/quieter months of the year is important to businesses and suggested by many residents. Porlock has many community garden spaces along or close to the High Street and these could be better 'connected' to the High Street with signage, promotion and the provision of seating. Benches can be expensive, especially vandal-proof ones, but a few may become more by encouraging 'dedications' and perhaps a 'story app' of the people mentioned in the dedications (an idea seen on TV this week). Creating focal points and other attractions with plants, statues, sculptures and a water feature were also mentioned.

Concern was raised from some residents that providing seating/picnic areas with signs to them from the High Street would take trade away from cafes and restaurants. Traders, however, tend to feel that visitors are less likely to leave the High Street if they can find somewhere nearby to sit and have their takeaway coffee & cake, or to eat their packed lunch. People feel safer outside with Covid-19 so need these outdoor spaces, perhaps. Various open spaces close to the High Street have been suggested and creating and providing more seating and picnic benches may require collaboration with other organisations.

The general assessment and improvement of all the signage has been mentioned by many - to unclutter, reposition, redesign and simply provide better/new signage in many places, like from the Central Carpark to the High Street and other locations, like the toilets, Visitor Centre, library, local landmarks and visitor attractions, etc. And to the various open spaces and interesting back streets. Notice and information boards also need a complete overhaul and to be put to better use.

Porlock having a 'brand' or 'image' has also been suggested. Or becoming notable for, maybe, an art installation, celebrity endorsement, cultural or historical connection, etc. to put Porlock 'on the map' so to speak. Setting a tone of excellence for Porlock and incentives of vouchers or discounts were also suggested.

Cycle racks are a popular idea. There is already one at the Visitor Centre, but one at Doverhay Carpark has been suggested. Making them lockable to offer security would be welcomed.

Promotion and Publicity ideas range from YouTube videos, TV, radio, Facebook and other social media, websites, phone apps, Sat nav/Google maps, brochures and leaflets. Various methods may be more appropriate than others depending on whether it is aimed at tourists coming from further away, more local visitors and shoppers from Taunton, Minehead, Lynmouth and other villages, campsites, etc., or aimed at the people already staying, visiting or living in Porlock. Maps of Porlock and the shops, pubs, cafes, visitor attractions, etc. are felt important to offer Visitors a better experience.

The A39 takes all through traffic along the length of the High Street so maybe Porlock can advertise itself by the impression people get of the Village as they inevitably travel through. The image of a pretty, well-loved, vibrant Village may make traffic stop and look around or encourage them to pop back on a day out or at another time.

Making the most of the assets Porlock already has by promoting the landscape, nature and outdoor pursuits, local walks, the Marsh and bay, the hills and moorland, the Rec, Porlock's appeal as a dog-friendly village and its general scenic, rural setting, are all highlighted as important. As well as walking tours of Porlock itself, utilising the many interesting stories Porlock has to tell.

Connecting Porlock to Porlock Weir, a notable asset in itself, for the benefit of both, and highlighting St Dubricius Church as a spiritual asset as well as a historic building, a much-needed outdoor space and a focal point in the centre of the Village are all suggested.

Many are concerned that shops lying empty or 'For Sale' signs do not look good and that this is an important, possibly negative, aspect of the High Street appearance. I think we actually only have one shop that will definitely remain closed this year (for personal reasons), and one which may not re-open as it is waiting for a buyer. And I'm afraid I do not know the situation with The Royal Oak pub. Many shops are only leased, with the owners wishing to sell the properties and the leases on. However, there are ideas to use 'empty' shop windows as event advertising spaces, Art exhibitions like the one currently on show in Porlock, or try and use empty shop spaces as 'pop-up' shops or exhibitions. Another suggestion was for a Community Café or a repair shop. One person has even suggested, perhaps contentiously, that shops could be allowed to become residential rather than stand empty.

Recycling bins, more dog bins, rubbish collection and generally keeping Porlock tidy are important to many people and we will need to work with the Porlock Parish Council on this.

Events are seen as being very important. These are often organised by the Visitor Centre, the Rec, The Horticultural Society, the Village Hall, Porlock Community Group, to name but a few. We hope to add to these events but to also encourage more communication to ensure that the High Street fully engages. It may need evening or Sunday opening, that sort of thing. A suggested 'Events Calendar' perhaps on the Visitor Centre website would be an advantage to everyone, visitor, locals and Traders alike. Coach parties could perhaps be encouraged to visit Porlock, but again this would need co-ordinating. A street market has been suggested with possible locations along the High Street identified. Expanding the shopping experience with, say, a weekly fish van, street entertainers and recitals in the Church. Or shops diversifying to offer craft classes are others ideas put forward.

Finally, I heard only a couple of hours ago from a very late emailed questionnaire, that a Community Radio for Porlock is being proposed.

All the questionnaires that informed this report have been scanned and will be retained for reference.

Lesley Thornton

PHSSG Administrator