

# Newtown and Llanllwchaiarn

## Household & Community Survey 2016

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# Newtown and Llanllwchaiarn Household Survey – results and reflections

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## Executive Summary

In September 2016 Aberystwyth University conducted an indepth survey of 162 residents of Newtown and Llanllwchaearn. This report provides a summary of the findings. Some of these may seem to be common knowledge to people who live in the town, and some chime with and complement findings of previous reports such as the Community Action Plan consultation. **But others may be less expected** or suggest priorities and ways of developing the town over the medium term. We hope it provides some useful insight and data that the town can use as it navigates a new period of economic and political change.

### Key points:

Broadly speaking **residents of Newtown seem to like it!** It is a nice place to live and there is a reasonable level of satisfaction with many aspects of town life. It provides basic services for the community, has a good degree of social cohesion and seems outward looking and engaged with wider issues beyond the immediate area. Overall people seem optimistic about its future. It also seems the town has, or is developing a 'do it ourselves' culture, evidenced by initiatives such as Newtown Unlimited, the town council led Big Lottery Fund proposals, and efforts to proactively plan a post-bypass future.

Like many "New Town's", Newtown does face challenges. It has some divisions; the needs of some areas may be masked by the relative affluence of others. The provision of services is a major issue for many – most starkly around healthcare, but more generally over the decline in other services in the town. There is an underlying **concern about economic decline**, specifically the availability of good quality jobs and the lack of opportunities for younger people. This is tied to concerns about a general decline, a sense of pride and place and a feeling that the town needs a boost to revitalise its economic foundations.

One key finding from this research is that residents are **unclear about the role of the Town Council** and the scope of its responsibilities compared to other decision and fund-holding bodies such as the county council. People also express fears about **being forgotten** and left behind. This partly relates to the lower prominence of the town within mid Wales post-DBRW (Development Board for Rural Wales), but also to the perceived decline in services, in the economic fortunes of the town, and the effects of the **bypass** (to quote: 'it will kill or cure it').

Many suggestions and requests made by residents reinforce each other. For example, 'cleaning up the town' improves the quality of life of residents AND makes it more appealing for tourists. We see a need for a clear strategy or vision for what sort of town Newtown is to become to provide a basis for arguing for and justifying the needs of the town. This need not be comprehensive, but should address issues that town residents and the town council can directly influence, as well as those that sit elsewhere; such as with the Powys CC, Welsh Government and over the border to England.

Included in the report are sections covering:

- Specific requests for enhancements to particular parts of Newtown
- The tourism offer
- Views on globalisation
- Hopes and fears for the future

## Introduction

This report provides an overview of a survey of residents of Newtown and Llanllwchaiarn conducted in September 2016. Many of the findings will be unsurprising to those who live in the town. However, our hope is that it will provide some additional data or evidence for the town council, community members and groups as they plan for future changes.

The report is structured as follows:

1. Background to the Survey
2. Key figures and overview of main messages
3. Discussion of findings by themes emerging from the research

## 1. Background to the survey

In September 2016 Aberystwyth University conducted a survey of people in Newtown and Llanllwchaiarn, supplemented by additional shorter street surveys.

The survey is part of the wider research project, “Global-Rural”, which is investigating the ways processes of globalisation are experienced by rural communities in different parts of the world. Over the past two years the research team have been engaging with people in Newtown through interviews, focus groups and fieldwork research. They have been researching the past, present and future of Newtown, trying to find out what it takes for a small town to survive in a global age.

The survey was an extension of that work, aiming to collect views of residents about life in their town and how they would see the town changing, whilst also trying to understand more about how they view ‘globalisation’. Included in the survey were questions suggested by Newtown and Llanllwchaiarn Town Council.

### About the Survey and Respondents

For the household survey we visited a fifth of the residential properties in Newtown, selected at random and calling on each at different times of the day (between 10am and 7pm). We arranged appointments with people willing to take part within the timescale available (two weeks).

In total 162 people participated in the main household survey, with an additional 72 responses from the street surveys.

These in-depth surveys took between 30 and 45 minutes to complete and covered a range of subjects, some about Newtown specifically but many asking questions about issues such as consumption habits, attitudes to global issues, and civic engagement. This report summarises survey results that relate to questions about Newtown.

Some questions were of an ‘open’ type - the surveyor wrote down what the respondent said rather than choosing from a menu of responses. Asking open questions means respondents can say *anything* (see Figures; 4, 6, 8, 11, 21, 22, 25). Responses are then coded into clusters around particular themes which can be lumped together into larger and larger groups (e.g. in Figure 11, Traffic calming, Parking, Public Transport could be lumped together as “Accessibility” to give a larger

number of responses (41). This has the advantage of *appearing* to give a stronger and clearer response. We have chosen not to do this as we think the detail is more useful at this stage).

We also asked questions that gave people a menu of choices (e.g. about International Issues). These provide responses that are statistically more meaningful but tell us less about what people actually think. Combining the two approaches hopefully gives a fuller picture of the situation in Newtown.

Due to sample size and sampling methodology we do not claim the results are representative of the views of residents in any statistical sense. They do represent the views of those people interviewed.

The largest age group in our sample were aged between 45-64 (around 36% of the respondents). People under 18 were not included in the survey. Over 75% of the sample was over 45 years old. The 2011 census data for this area indicates 42% of residents in this area are 45 or older. It follows that the sample includes a larger number of retired people (36% of the sample, compared to 15% of the wider population), with home owners, people not in full time employment and female respondents slightly over represented compared to the census data (further details can be found in the Appendix). Additionally response rates in different parts of the town varied, with a higher response rate from residents in the Milford Road, Penygloddfa, Barn Fields, Canal Road and TreHafren parts of the town (between 15% and 22%) than those in TreOwen, Maesyrrhandir, Vaynor (between 9% and 14%).

Clearly in interpreting results there will be some influence on findings based on relative age, employment status and affluence of respondents. Whilst skewed towards older residents and those likely to be at home, we think broadly the responses provide some useful pointers and supporting information for Newtown and Llanllwchaearn Town Council and Powys County Council to use in developing policies, plans and project ideas to benefit the area.

## 2. Key figures and overview of main messages

The selected figures on the next few pages show the responses to key questions asked of respondents. Section 3 looks in more detail at some of the themes that these first few figures draw attention to. What these main figures reveal is a broadly positive picture of Newtown life.

### Perceptions about the town – Figure 1

We asked 217 respondents to look at a series of statements about the town (such as ‘Newtown is a manufacturing town’) and to identify how strongly they agreed or disagreed with the statement (see Figure 1). This reveals some very positive things about Newtown and what people feel about living here.

The town is seen as ‘welcoming’ (by an overwhelming 81% of respondents!) with most feeling it has a ‘strong sense of community’ and a ‘good standard of living’. That said for a fifth of people their experience is less positive. Respondents who disagreed that there is a strong sense of community in Newtown were more likely to live in rented accommodation (though this is not by a statistically significant margin).

Two areas of concern arise from the responses to this survey question.

- Firstly, the economy of the town is clearly perceived as struggling, both in terms of the “range of employment opportunities” (see also ‘Jobs’ in Figure 2) and sense of how well the economy is doing. Significantly, only 20% of people felt the town had a ‘thriving economy’. This is picked up in later discussion on ‘The Future of Newtown’.
- Secondly, given talk about the bypass (see later discussion) and the potential role of tourism for stimulating the local economy, within the town itself less than 50% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement “Newtown is a tourism town” (38% ‘disagree’ with the statement). Interestingly given its history as a manufacturing town, only 55% agreed with the description that “Newtown is a manufacturing town”.

### Perceived Local Issues – Figure 2

Respondents were asked to identify the three most important local issues to them. As will be well understood, concern about access to health services was the top issue (178 out of 229 responses mentioned this). It is by far the most frequently selected issue and comes up again in relation to questions about the ‘rating of local services’ (Figure 3), ‘priorities for the Town Council’ (Figure 4) and ‘Hope and Fears for the Future of Newtown’ (Figure 22). The provision of health services are seen as problematic throughout Powys where levels of satisfaction with overall health services, care received at GP and hospital appointments were the lowest in Wales (National Survey for Wales Powys bulletin 2014-2015).

Whilst health services are an issue that largely falls outside the responsibilities of the Town Council, this is clearly an area where there is a desire and expectation the Town Council is active in some way, whether as advocates or supporting initiatives to alleviate these concerns.

Figure 1: What sort of place is Newtown? We asked to what extent respondents agreed with these statements about Newtown. Responses = 217

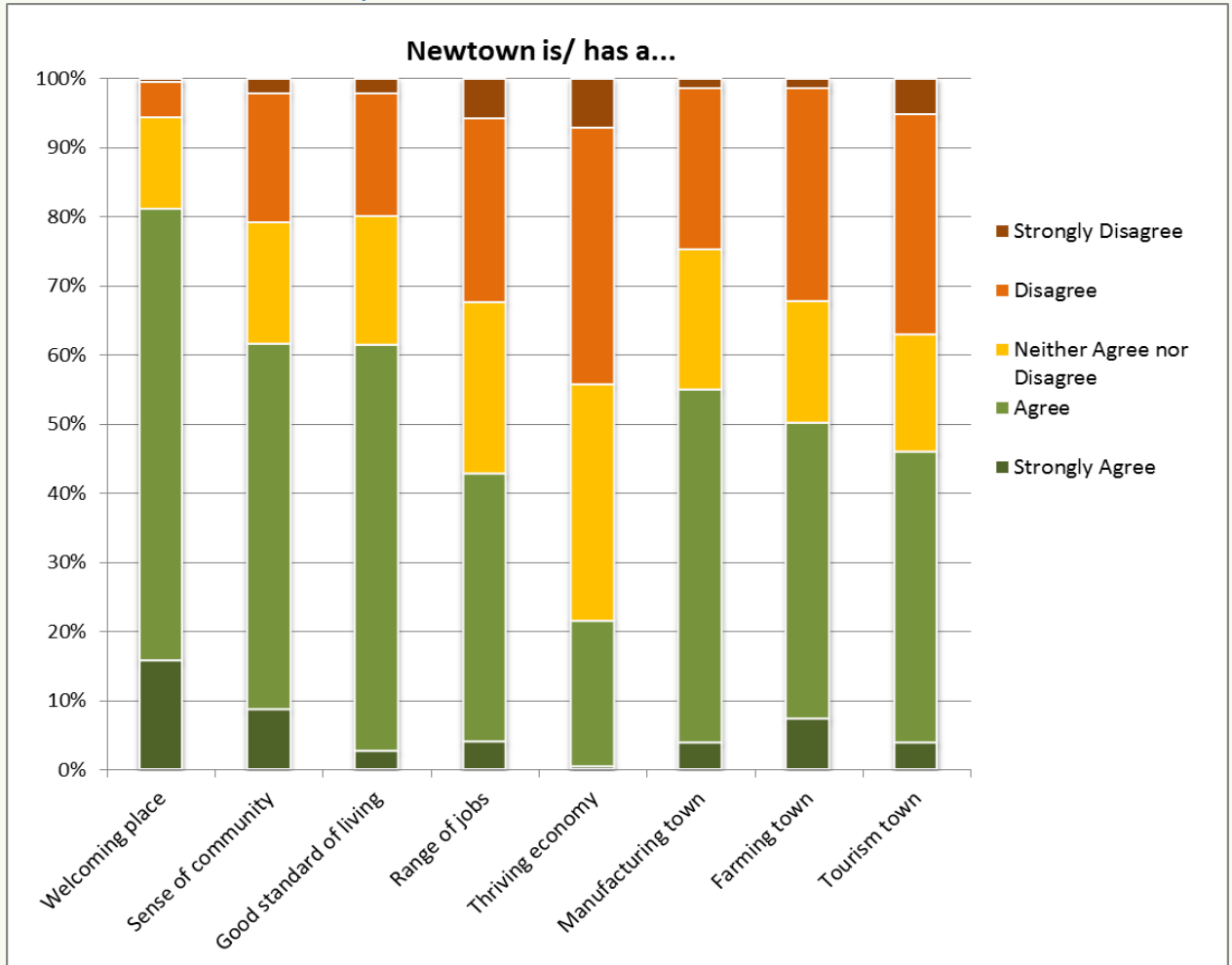
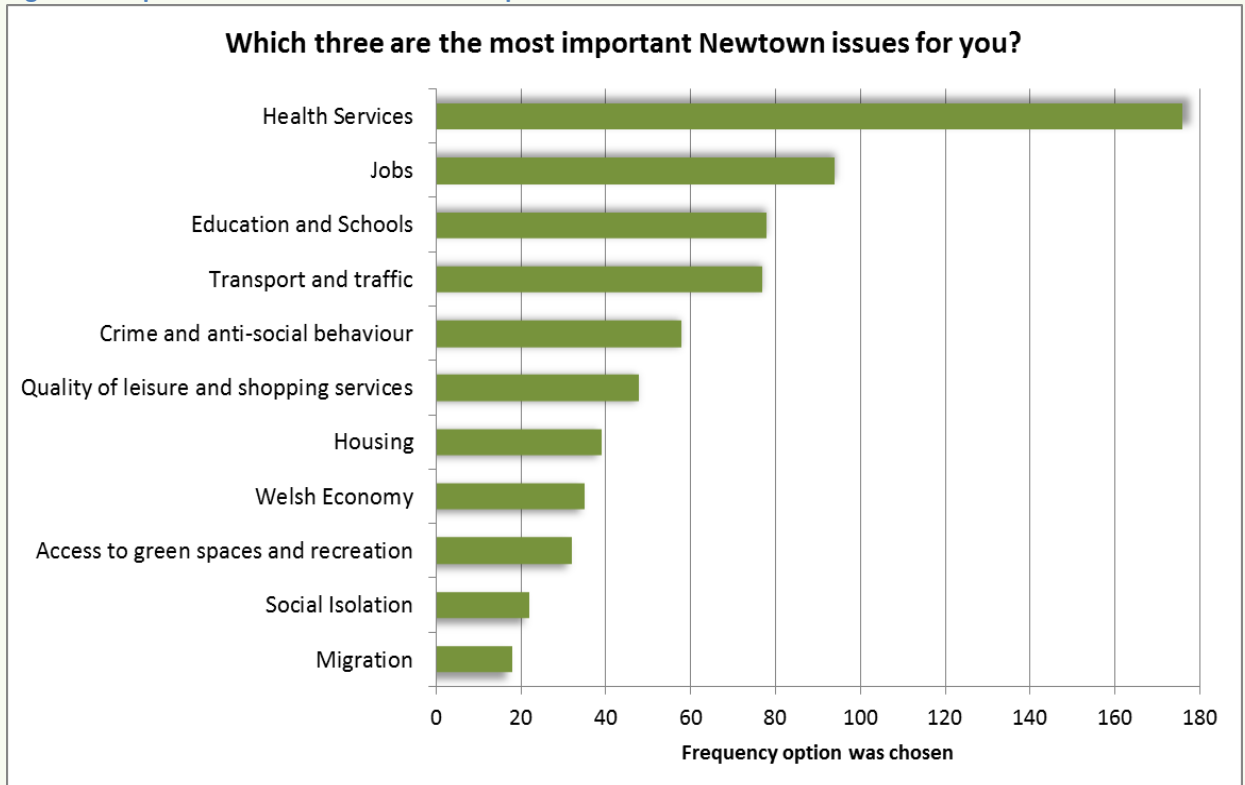


Figure 2 –Important issues for Newtown. Responses = 229



Those living in Powys are *most* likely to be satisfied with their job according to the latest National Survey for Wales data (2017). However, chiming with findings of the Newtown Community Action Plan, (regarding ‘opportunities for skilled employment’), ‘Employment opportunities’ came up as the second most important local issue (chosen by 41% of people). This is also reflected in ‘priorities for the Town Council’ (Figure 4) and discussion regarding the ‘Hopes and Fears for the Future of Newtown’ (Figure 22).

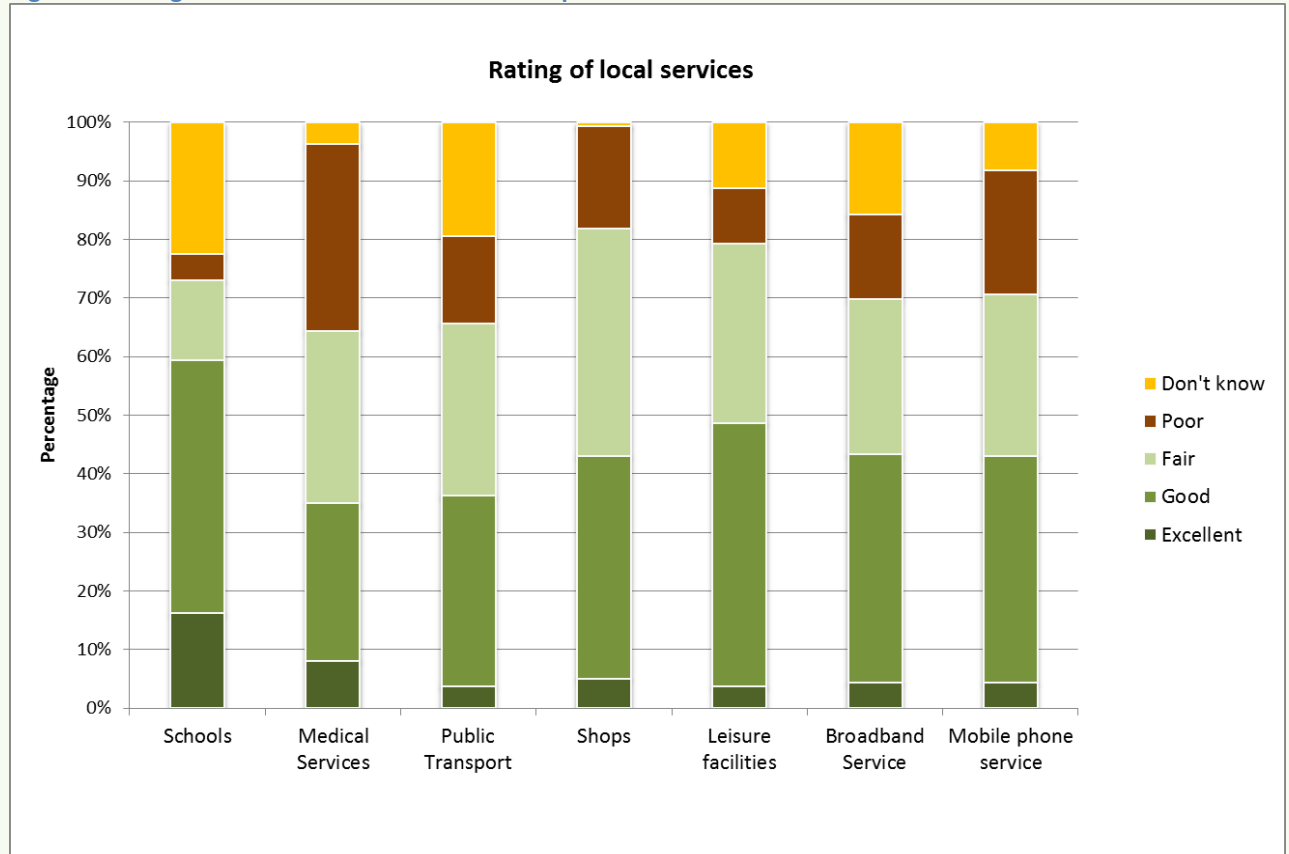
Around a third of respondents mentioned Education and Schools, or Transport and Traffic, as one of their 3 most important local issues. Concerns over ‘traffic and transport’ are unsurprising given responses to the Community Action Plan and general discussion around the building of the bypass.

For a town described by the overwhelming majority as ‘welcoming’, and for whom a significant number describe the feeling of ‘safety and low crime’ as one of the best things about the town, it is worth noting a quarter of respondents placed “Crime and Anti-social behaviour” in their top three local concerns. This is also an issue picked up in later discussion on “Hope and Fears for the Future”. One in 13 people included ‘migration’, and less than one in 10 included ‘social isolation’ as one of their top three local issues.

### Serving the community – Figure 3

We asked respondents to rate local services. Local schools are in general well-thought-of by those with children in or having been through primary or secondary education in the area – over 70% of the sample rated them as good or excellent (see Figure 3). Shops and Leisure facilities are also broadly thought to be fair or good.

Figure 3- Rating of local facilities and services. Responses = 160





Whilst not a surprise, it is worth noting that a third of respondents identified provision of medical services as “poor”, with particular complaints of a lack of A&E, GP waiting times and the lack of a ‘proper hospital’. This was also well documented in the Newtown Community Action Plan 2015-2020. Issues of access to GP and Adult community Services have been aggravated by retirement and difficulty recruiting GPs to the Park Street Surgery, with 14,500 patients served by 4/5 GPs and 5 Practice Nurses.

Improving health services were also the second most frequently mentioned ‘priority’ for the Town Council, with supporting local services also widely mentioned (see Figure 4). Many of these issues can only be addressed by the Powys Teaching Health Board or other external agencies. Although this may reflect confusion over the role and responsibilities of the town council it also suggests this is an issue residents have some expectations of community leadership to try and resolve. The recent draft Health and Care Strategy for Powys (January 2017) has emphasised more joined up service provision, for example moving towards a “community hub” mode of delivery where a range of services are brought together. Park Street already does this for many health services but there may be scope supporting the coordination and linking up of an array of health and wellbeing services in Newtown as a community hub.

## Priorities for the Town Council

The survey asked “*what priorities do you think the Town Council should have for Newtown and Llanllwchaiarn?*” - 224 people responded.

Interviewers did not explain the role of the town council but were interested in seeing what sort of things residents might mention. Responses were recorded as open answers and have been coded into different categories. These are shown in Figure 4, which provides a lot of food for thought.

Figure 4 is colour coded to reflect issues where we believe the town council may play a central role, or where they may have some shared influence or little capacity for resolving the problem. It depicts the number of times an issue was mentioned, with some respondents listing a number of different issues. The sorts of things people actually said about these issues are illustrated in quotes on page 11 (Figure 5). Taken together, Figures 4 and 5, point to areas for discussion (rather than necessarily suggesting a plan of action).

Some of the ‘priorities’ shown in Figure 4 might seem closely related (e.g. ‘improve appearance of the town’ and ‘littering’). We have kept them separate here because for some people litter was a specific issue, whereas others said things like “the town council should be concerned with the environment of the town – with ‘pride’” which expresses a slightly different sentiment than simply cleaning the streets. Some residents may have confused town and county councils; several expressed some uncertainty but then subsequently identified priorities or functions.

A number of the issues raised clearly sit outside the remit of the Town Council (e.g. health services, education, waste, housing, business support) yet many others are in areas where the Town Council may have some influence or capacity to act (e.g. either directly through services provision, or indirectly through facilitating community action or supporting others to deal with the problem).

Figure 4: Town Council priorities. Summarised responses from 211 answers.

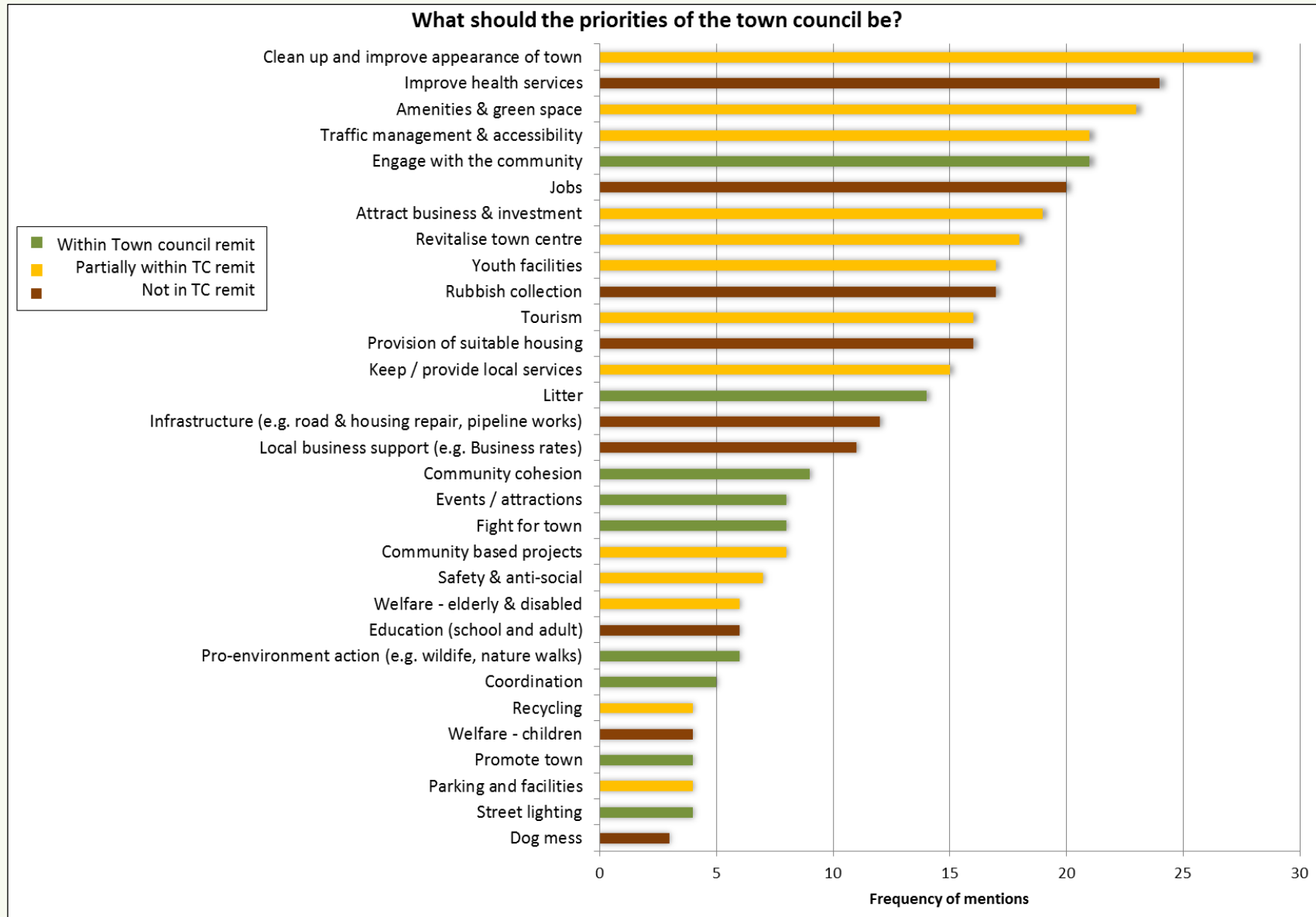
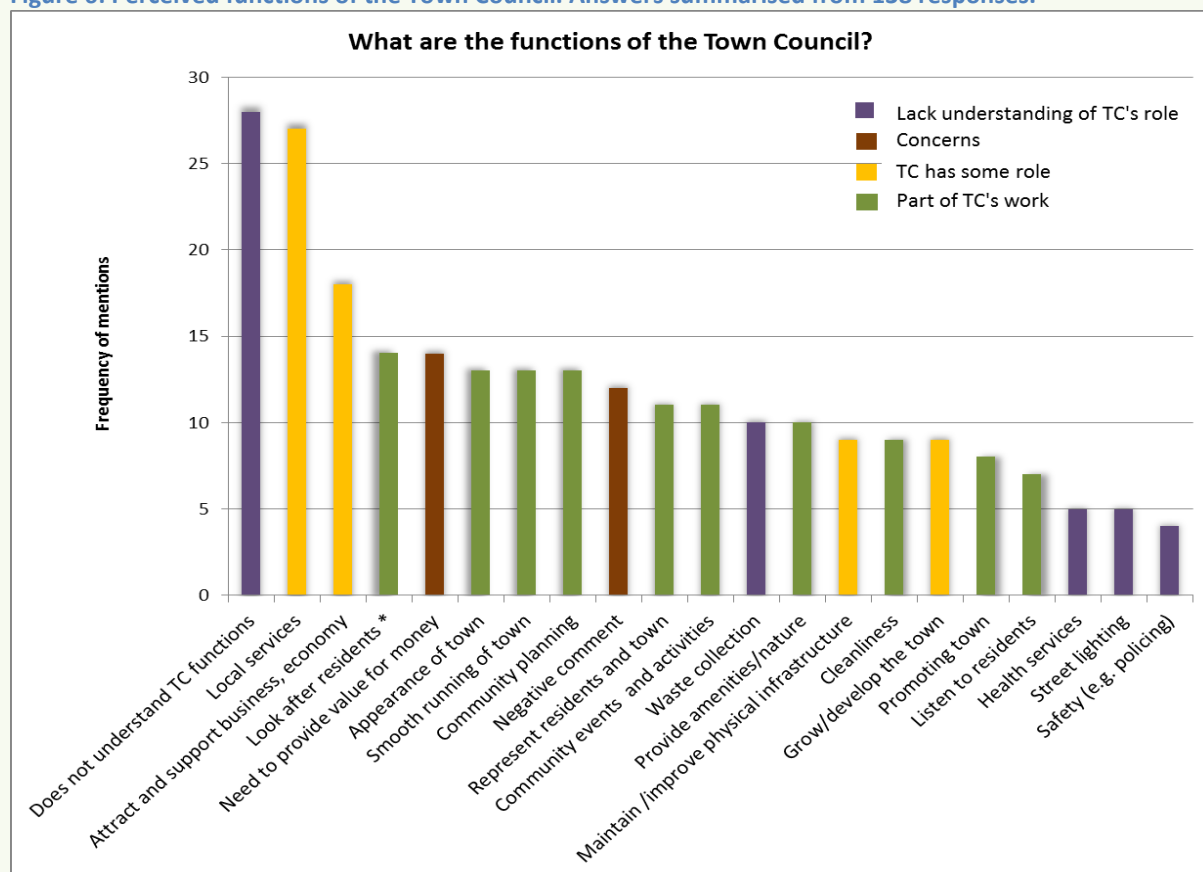


Figure 5: What people told us about Town Council priorities



Further emphasising the degrees of confusion are responses to another question “*What do you think are the key functions of the Town Council?*” (Figure 6). There is clearly an issue of communication and understanding to be addressed. Many people seem confused about the role and functions of the town council. 15% of the 157 people asked chose not to answer this question and 17% of those who did said they did not know what the Town Council functions were. A significant minority of these also held negative opinions about the Town Council. Interestingly the National Survey for Wales found that 73% of Powys residents agreed they have a “good understanding of what my local councillor does for my local community”. This may be a reflection of the way our survey question was phrased, asking about functions rather than what councillors do.

Figure 6: Perceived functions of the Town Council. Answers summarised from 138 responses.



There is a lot happening in Newtown. There is also an evident sense that **community matters** and is one of the main things that residents like about living in Newtown (see Figure 8). Improving community spirit / fear for declining community cohesion are also highlighted in Figure 22.

The Town Council have identified developing a communication plan and engagement strategy as a priority. One element of ongoing community engagement might involve setting the actions, capacities and priorities of the Town Council within a wider **strategic vision** for the town, one which is bought into more broadly. This may include elements that are outside the remit of the Town Council or local community groups to tackle directly (e.g. on industrial development, skills and training provision, role of tourism in town economy, health and community services etc.), but would at least provide a benchmark and consistent basis for articulating a vision and the needs of the town to those that might be able to do so. It would also provide a sense of direction or aspiration for the community to connect with and hopefully also press for in other arenas.

A clear sense of the Town Council's role and residents expectations do however emerge around some specifics:

- Engaging with the community and acting as a catalyst for improving community cohesion
- Improving the look and feel of the town
- Providing amenities and green space
- Creating a vision for the revitalisation of the town centre
- Improving provision of youth facilities
- Promoting the town externally, both to encourage economic activity (e.g. tourism, new businesses) and to be an advocate of the town with other partners

### 3. Thematic discussion of findings

Newtown is the largest town in Powys. It is the oldest Newtown and one of the last “New Towns” built in the UK. It contains a mix of historic buildings principally associated with its rise as an economic and industrial centre in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, as well as green spaces and riverside walks. It has sites of historic and cultural interest such as the Robert Owen Museum, the Textile Museum, the Oriel Davies Gallery and Theatre Hafren, as well as newer industrial, commercial and housing estates - many built as part of the “New Town” designation in 1967. As a result the town, like most small semi-rural towns, combines a mix of old and new, retaining its identity as a major urban centre for a wider agricultural region whilst economically dominated by light manufacturing and public service provision.

#### The New Newtown

Newtown is confusingly also a “New Town”. The UK New Towns programme emerged post-war and ran until 1970. It was designed to respond to the significant social problems of dense urban living by growing industries and communities with planned ‘low density development’ (lots of open space). Designs and construction occurred in an era when infrastructure needs for transport, for materials and for technologies (such as IT) were rather different and when ideas about jobs, industry and the economy of the UK were also rather different. As a New Town, Newtown was designed for growth; for creating a new larger community populated by people attracted by the promise of work and a decent quality of life. Recently New Towns have been subject of review by the government, looking at what their legacy has been.

Although recognised as broadly successful in terms of growing their economies, according to the House of Commons Transport, Local Government and the Regions Committee Report of 2002 (titled: ‘The New Towns: Their Problems and Future’) common problems afflicting New Towns include:

- creating car dependence, exacerbated by poor bus services,
- unattractive and unsocial shopping centres,
- housing and industrial sites built using innovative designs and materials of the time which have reached the end of their design life,
- declining residential estates that had been built and actively managed by Development Corporations but minimally maintained since transfer to Council or private ownership,
- outdated or absent community facilities and play areas,
- pockets of deprivation with high levels of unemployment and housing need within the towns masked statistically by areas of relative affluence within the same town and so ineligible or absent from government intervention programmes,
- higher maintenance and management costs associated with the extensive landscaping common to planned towns

Some of these challenges seem to resonate with the findings of our survey. In other respects they don't. For example, Newtown in our analysis seems unusually well-knit in terms of its sense of place and community and level of civic participation. As Newtown and Llanllwchaearn moves into a new phase in its history, in an era where government spending is declining and powers or responsibility for managing change in communities is being relocated (rightly or wrongly) from the state to local communities themselves, this poses challenges and opportunities. Some of these are highlighted below.

### *Making Newtown*

A large percentage (189 individuals - 80%) of our 235 respondents had moved to Newtown at some point, either as a child, as an adult or a few had left Newtown and come back again. Figure 7 shows where survey respondents lived before they moved to Newtown. Seventy eight (41%) had moved from elsewhere in Wales, of whom 45 had relocated from elsewhere in mid Wales/Powys. Ninety seven (51%) had moved from other parts of the UK, the largest numbers from the West Midlands (30 people), the South East of England (15 people), and twelve people each from Greater London, the North West of England and the South West of England. Only one person had moved from the East of England, and none from Northern Ireland or the North East of England.

Thirteen respondents (5.5%) had moved to Newtown from outside the UK: two from Ireland, two from Argentina and two from Australia, and one each from California, the Philippines, Cyprus, Crete, Malta, Germany and Poland. Although measuring a different thing (movement rather than birth place), this is similar to ONS Census data for 2011 (5.3% of Newtown resident population born outside UK).

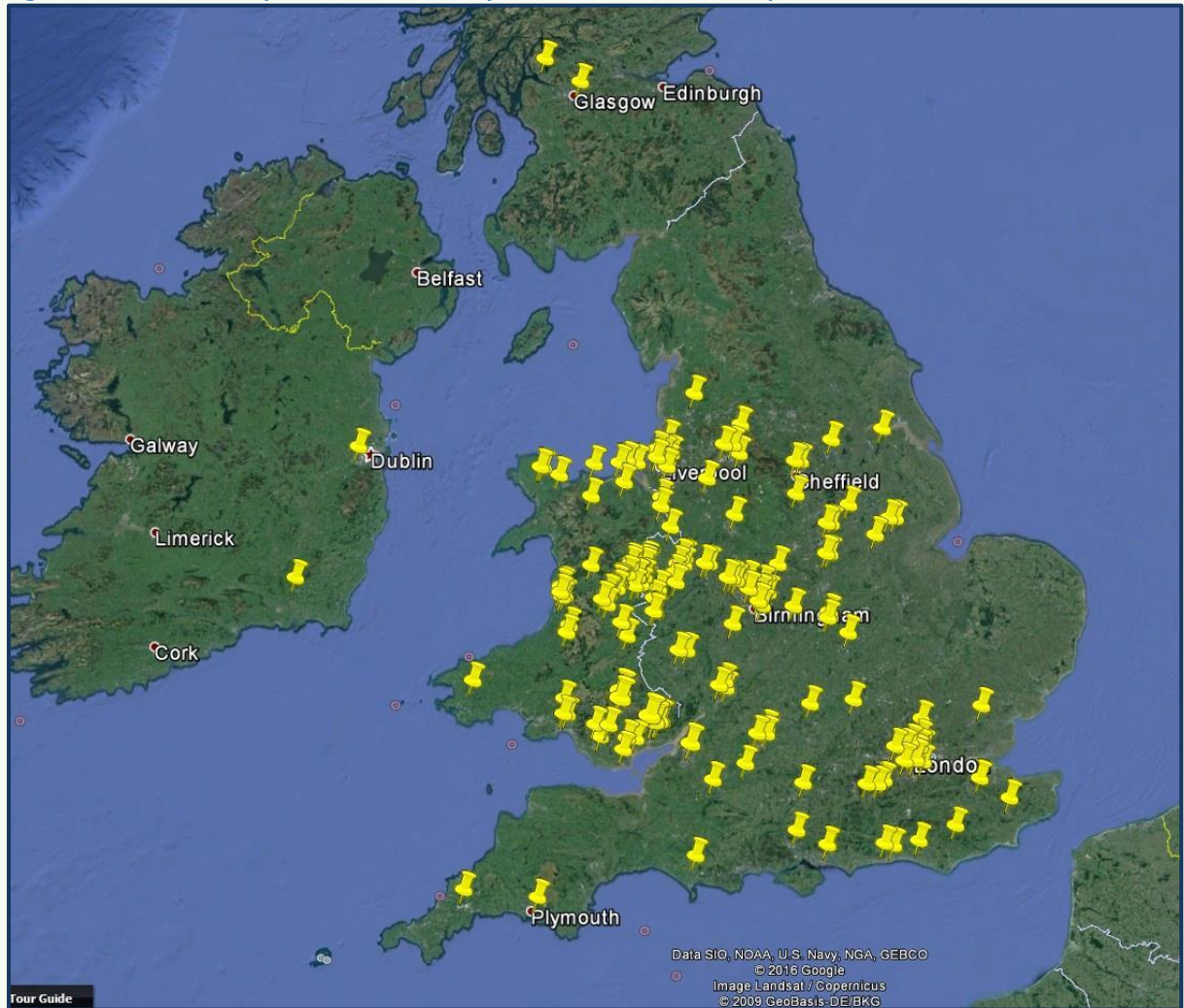
A significant cohort were long term residents of Newtown: 52 (22%) respondents had lived in the Newtown area since birth.

### *Sense of community*

The *One Powys Plan* (2016 update) emphasises community self-reliance, active volunteering and the transfer of community services from Powys County Council to local communities and groups. Moves to transfer such services to the town level are already reflected in the Newtown Community Action Plan (2015) and the policies of Newtown and Llanllwchaearn Town Council. Irrespective of the politics motivating such a transfer of services and responsibilities it would seem from our survey that Newtown has a good basis (in terms of community cohesion, civic participation (see Figure 10) and community aspirations for the town's future) for making a success of such initiatives.

Although largely remade with incoming families from the surrounding area and further afield from the 1950s onwards, there is a very positive sense about 'the community' in Newtown. Respondents generally see it as friendly, welcoming, peaceful with a good standard of living and sense of community (as shown in Figure 1). Some respondents do not see things in such glowing terms, and there is some concern about a cultural and economic divide within the town.

Figure 7: Location of respondents before they moved to Newtown. Responses = 189



## Observations

### Cohesion

The perception of Newtown as a friendly place reflected in Figure 1 is also represented by the high number of respondents (63) citing friends, family and community related factors as the best thing about living in the area (see Figure 8). This fits within a broader statistical picture of Powys, which scores highly across all community cohesion indicators, 88% feel they belong to the local area and 95% agree “people in the area treat each other with respect and consideration” (National Survey for Wales 2014-2015). Nevertheless, we were struck by the proportion of Newtown residents who talked to their neighbours either daily (55%) or weekly (34%) (Figure 9).

Caring for neighbours or friends was the second most frequent civic activity (Figure 10) with 57% of the respondents reporting they have done this in the last 6 months. This is noticeably higher than in a larger, national scale survey of rural Welsh households in 2013 (Welsh Rural Observatory 2013), where 39% of residents reported they had provided care in the last 12 months.



This sense of Newtown as a friendly place is also reflected in comments about hopes for the future shown in Figures 22 (“That is keeps its friendliness”) and fears (“no-one will interact with each other anymore”).

Figure 8: Best Thing About Newtown - Summarised results from 216 responses.

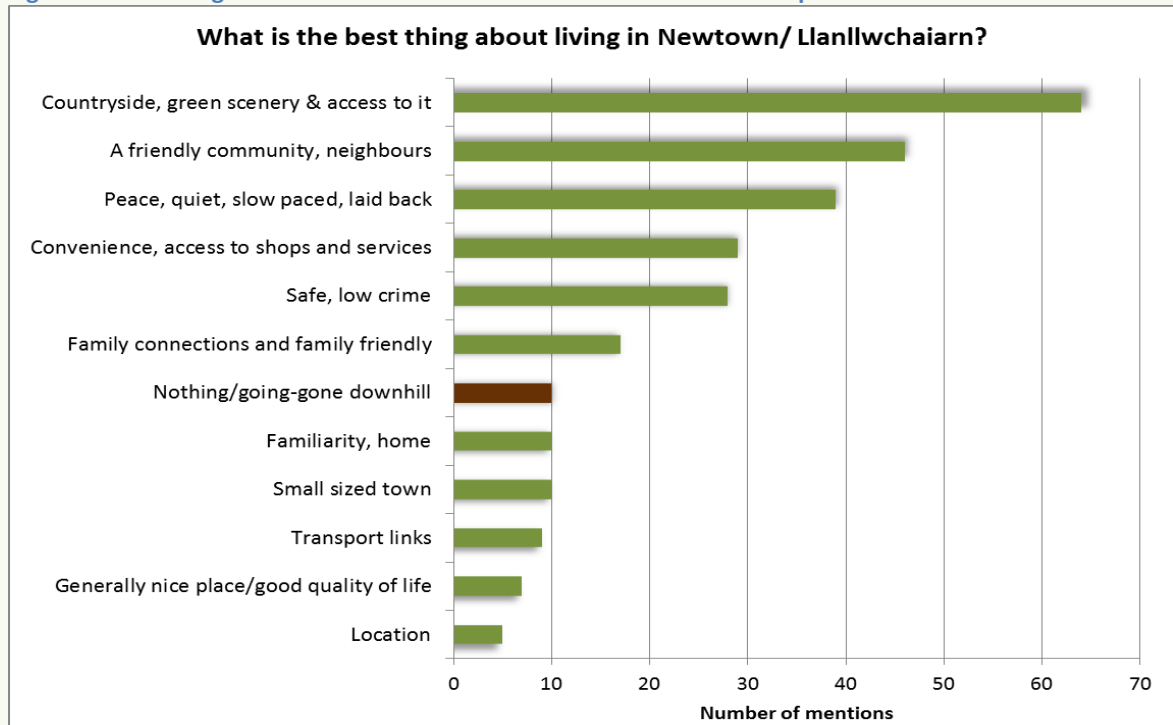
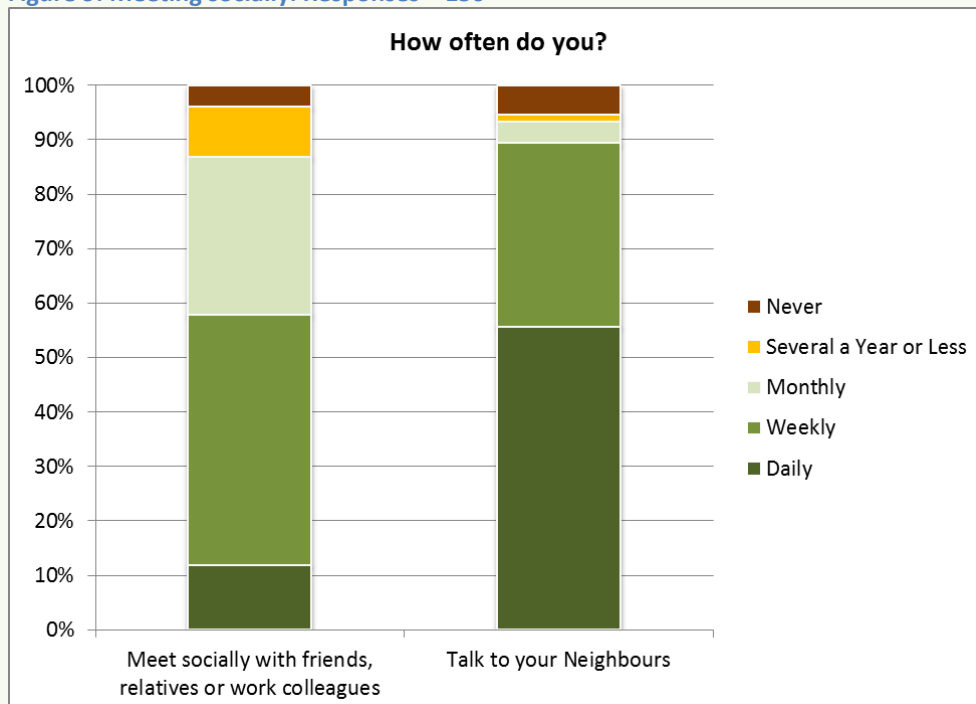


Figure 9: Meeting socially. Responses = 150



## **Divisions**

Overall, although respondents are generally positive about the town and hopeful for the future, there are a sizeable number of people who are more pessimistic and negative. Some people seem to have a sense of the town gone into decline, for example 10 people responded to “What is the best thing about living in Newtown” negatively (see Figure 8) and the notion that the town was “Dying” or would become a “ghost town” was mentioned by 18 people in response to a question about hopes and fears for the future and the impact of the bypass (see Figures 22 and 25). This split between more or less optimistic perspectives emerges more starkly around the changes that the new bypass will bring.

Our ongoing interview research has also detected a sense of internal divisions and tensions within the town, both in relation to the different housing estates (notably those south of New Road, and to the west of the town) and in relation to provision for different parts of the community (youth services, popular cultural events). This is partly reflected in the “What does your patch need” responses (Figure 11).

## **Civic participation**

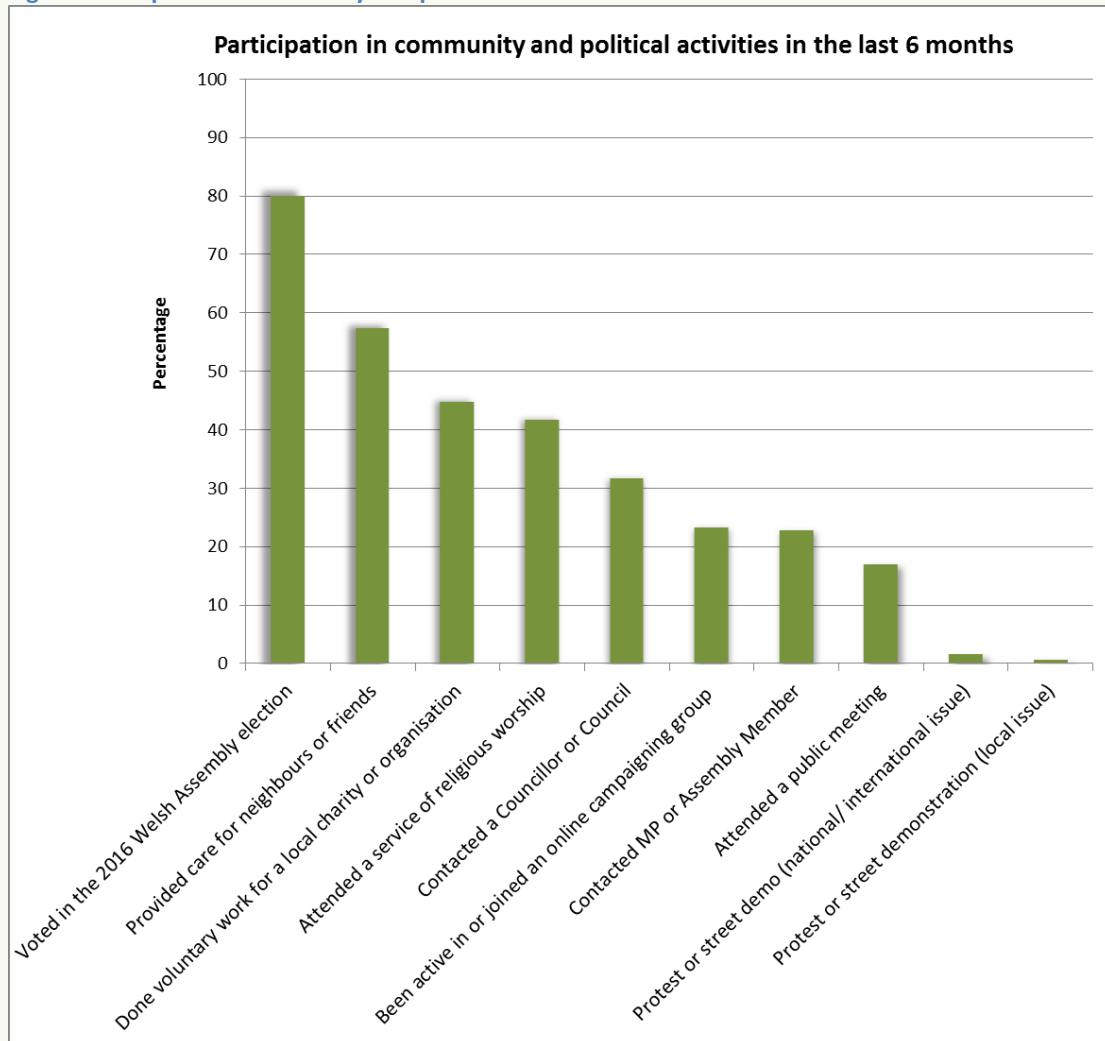
Care needs to be taken when evaluating self-reported participation. For example, national turnout for the 2016 election was 45.3% and for Montgomeryshire 48.5% whereas our sample report an 80% turnout in Newtown. This may reflect a well-recognised problem of ‘response bias’ in surveys, with respondents over-reporting activities that seem to carry a social desirability to them. It may also reflect on the characteristics of those choosing to complete the survey (i.e. those willing to give up time to complete the survey being more inclined to being civically active).

With that caveat in mind, it is worth noting that some forms of civic participation are high in Newtown, as shown in Figure 10. For example, 45% of respondents reported to have undertaken some form of voluntary work in the last 6 months. Again, this compares favourably to the national figures, in which 33% of those sampled reported to have taken part in voluntary work (Welsh Rural Observatory 2013) and within Powys where this is under 25% (One Powys Plan). Newtown respondents also appear to contact councillors more often, over 30% of our sample, compared to 19% overall in rural Welsh areas (Welsh Rural Observatory 2013) and 16% in Powys (National Survey for Wales 2014-2015). Attending religious services is also a frequent activity.

## **Self-reliance**

The high rate of voluntary activity (Figure 10), identification as a community and civic participation bodes well in relation to the wider local context. Within the broader framework of funding cuts to council services, the One Powys Plan states that “services are retained and run by the community where they are important to that community” (One Powys Plan : 2016 update p13). While our survey suggests that Newtown has a strong sense of community, and that many people are active participants in their community, actually channelling and mobilising community action around this agenda is not automatic.

Figure 10: Reported civic activity. Responses = 190



In terms of national governmental bodies and representation residents in Powys generally were the least satisfied in Wales (joint with Rhondda Cynon Taf) with how the Welsh Government does its job (National Survey for Wales 2014-2015). Interestingly in terms of how Newtown residents view who shapes the town and its future, respondents almost universally identified local actors (such as businesses, residents and local politicians) rather than national or non-local actors as the most significant figures (Figure 24). This seems to suggest a sense of do-it-yourself self-reliance is a feature of the town’s character.

People volunteer for the things they care about, and they take part in community events and activities that resonate with their interests and concerns. A clear example from the survey of the sort of issue that residents seem to be concerned about, and over which they have a capacity to make a difference, is in relation to the clean-up and appearance of the town (Figures 4, 5 and 12). Given concern with issues of amenities and green open spaces, youth facilities (Figure 4), revitalising the town centre and protecting/providing local services (Figure 6), (which also chime with priorities in the Newtown Community Action Plan), the Town Council seems well placed to take a lead role as a catalyst for action. Recent initiatives such as the Big Lottery Fund application and Tidy Newtown Week are good examples of the potential for this ‘self-reliance’ in action.

## It's all about Newtown

In this section we reflect further on questions and previous research about issues specific to Newtown and compare them to previous research in the area undertaken to create the Newtown Community Action Plan (CAP) in 2015. This research is not a mirror of the 2015 community consultation and did not ask the same questions or seek to prioritise issues in the same way, but it does seem to complement some of the outcomes of that exercise. Our survey also included the opportunity to express what residents thought their part of town needed through open answers. These responses are summarised in Figure 11. Where issues were identified with particular parts of the town we have illustrated these in Figure 12. The responses shown in Figure 11 relate to the number of times an issue was mentioned, and unsurprisingly these are diverse and often mentioned specifically by a handful of people. As a result they provide some pointers to issues or areas of action.

### *Newtown Issues*

#### **Transport, traffic and parking**

Concerns over traffic and parking issues were prominent in both surveys. The CAP reports that 39% of those surveyed chose 'Traffic lights at Tesco & McDonalds need changing' as one of their five priority areas and 35% chose 'Free car parking / single annual charge for residents'. Transport and traffic was selected as a top three local issue by over a third of our survey respondents (see Figure 2). Twenty five people mentioned traffic, accessibility and parking issues as a priority for town council action.

When asked about specific needs in their area traffic and accessibility issues were the most frequently mentioned – 37 times in aggregate (see Figure 11). As Figure 12 highlights, particular areas of concern were traffic speeds in the Treowen area and on Milford Road. Milford Road and Canal Road were also flagged for improvements in pedestrian access. Longer and later bus services were requested in Newtown South and more bus stops were wanted in Newtown South and Llanllwchaiarn North.

#### **Appearance (town centre and housing estates)**

Improving the appearance of the town was the most mentioned priority in our survey, as shown in Figure 4. Improve the town's image can also be related to those suggesting revitalising the town centre, improving provisions for tourists and waste collection priorities. Whilst the frequencies in our survey are lower (due to the method of questioning), and the approach of the CAP survey was different, our results support the CAP findings here (19% of the CAP residents surveyed chose improving the town's image as a priority, 13% increased provision of litter and dog waste bins and 11% selected 'More flowers throughout town, main road & parks, fruit trees, community gardens & allotments').

Responses in Figure 11 illustrate that in residential areas, tidying up, concerns over litter and the maintenance of public spaces and infrastructure (such as housing estates and roads) are relatively common. Concerns over cleanliness are particularly noted in the Newtown East area, where physical environment is ranked poorly in the Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation.

## **Green spaces**

Newtown's location within a countryside setting, and with its access to green areas was mentioned as one of the best things about living in the area - by 64 people, the most frequently mentioned attribute (see Figure 8).

We then asked a further question: "how important are Newtown's green, open and recreational spaces to you?" Two thirds of the 150 people who responded said they were highly important to them and a further 22% described them as important. Clearly the green spaces of Newtown are a key characteristic of the town that respondents value highly. This corroborates the Community Action Plan research in which green spaces were most frequently rated as extremely important.

A supplementary question found that nearly two thirds of people said they used Newtown's green spaces on a 'daily' or 'weekly' basis (although 22% either 'never' or 'very rarely' used them). Again this supports the findings from the CAP where most people reported they made frequent use of these areas. Many participants in our survey mentioned enjoying these areas for walking, dog-walking and as family spaces.

A small number of respondents (five) suggested improvements to the children's play facilities, access and their cleanliness in relation to this question. Additional/improved recreational facilities were also flagged up by 18 respondents as something that 'their patch' of Newtown needed (see Figures 11 and 12).

## **Engagement**

'Engaging the community' was mentioned as one of the top priorities for the Town Council (see Figure 4). There are two aspects to this.

One involves finding ways to communicate with and involve the community more fully in the decision making and activities of the town council.

The other relates to the role of the Council in catalysing civic participation and community based activities.

The desire for more community activities is evident in the CAP survey where 11% of residents prioritised increasing these provisions. In our own survey, this is highlighted by 46 mentions of community engagement, community cohesion, providing events and community based projects as priorities of the town council (Figure 4), and with 10% of respondents identifying increased community spirit or events as hopes for the future of the town (Figure 22).

Our survey complements suggestions in the CAP (for resident's newsletters, information points and regular open meetings). Points raised around engagement and community cohesion as priorities for the town council, and the confusion evident in response to questions about the functions of the town (Figure 6) suggest developing a strategy for engagement and trialling experiments (such as the recent 'Newtown Town Council Facebook live Q&A') are important elements of future town council planning.

Figure 11: Different needs in different places. Summarised comments from 143 responses.

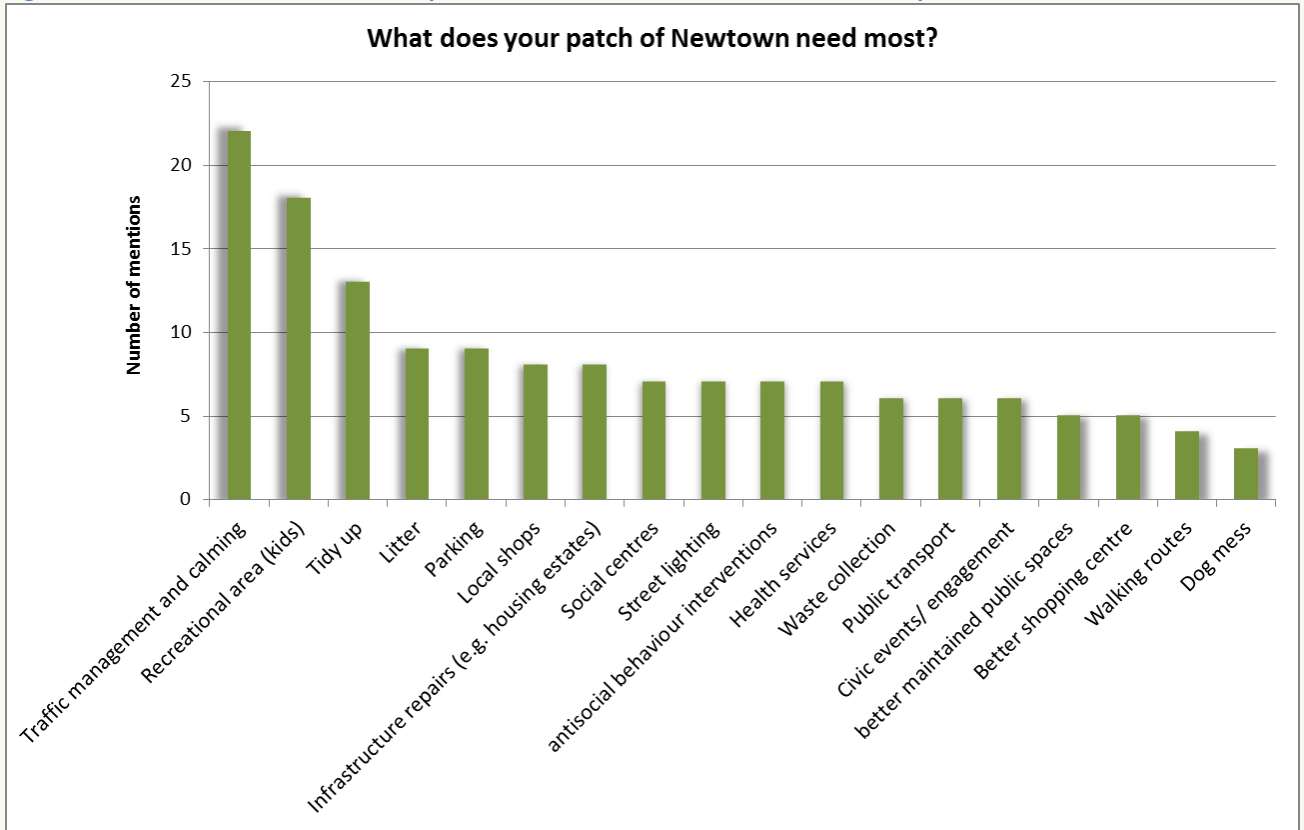
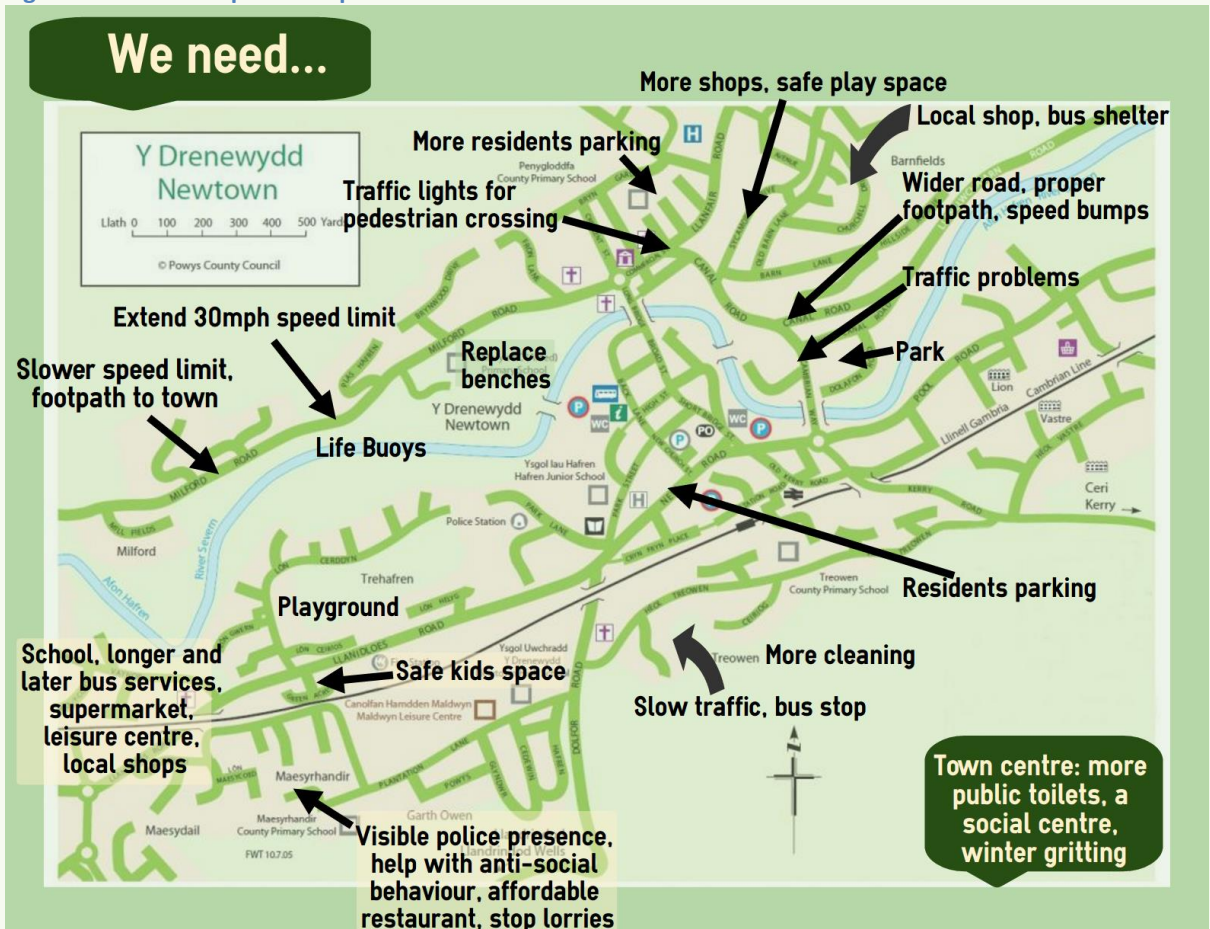


Figure 12: Location specific requests



## Representation

Many respondents remembered or moved to the town during the Development Board era. There is a sense from some respondents of Newtown specifically (and mid Wales more generally) now being neglected by government, coupled with a fear that with the investment in the by-pass this will be exacerbated - with Newtown becoming 'ignored' in the future (Figure 22). Clearly within the context of Powys Newtown is one of a number of relatively small towns that are facing similar challenges, not only resulting from austerity policies but also from issues of accessibility, infrastructure investment, out migration of younger, skilled workers, and provision of skills training for new industries and employment sectors.

Despite being the largest town in Powys a number of people have expressed concerns that the town itself is in decline and suffering from lack of investment or prioritisation in broader government action. This perception colours the sorts of things respondents want the Town Council to do. Listening to residents, representing their needs and promoting the town (to tourists, to attract new business, and to public bodies to secure funding) were all perceived as roles of the Town Council, albeit often phrased more strongly ("Fight for the town", "Fight its corner for funding" etc.). This relates back to the suggestion of a **strategic vision** for the town (Section 2).

## Local community services

There is a concern amongst respondents about the 'loss of local services'.

The most obvious concern is over health service provision in the town (see Figure 2) but residents also commented more generally about "keeping local services". These included some specific examples such as "helping the library to stay open" or improvements in rubbish collection, recycling, street lighting, facilities for younger people, the provision of a social centre for the town and social centres for communities within the town, along with events to encourage community interaction. With Grow in Powys/Powys County Council promoting the idea of 'community hubs' to deliver flexible, multipurpose community-led spaces this might be something Newtown may wish to take forward, bearing in mind the financial responsibilities this generates.

Some of these issues are something to be addressed at a higher level and speak to wider problems, for instance, the recycling rate and levels of satisfaction with the collection service are low and the level of satisfaction with Local Authority services in Powys is dropping (National Survey for Wales 2014-2015). In contrast to the CAP survey the provision of public toilets, although mentioned, did not emerge as a major issue.

The local area profile for Llanllwchaiarn North shows that 'access to services' in this area is rated in the bottom 20% in the Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation, a frequent problem across Powys, though not elsewhere in Newtown.

Some issues were raised in relation to services specific to different parts of the town (mapped in Figure 12). As well as the general concern over crime and anti-social behaviour seen in Figure 2 (25% of respondents chose this as one of their top three issues), some people in Maesyrrhandir were particularly concerned about anti-social behaviour and asked for a visible police presence.

In Vaynor, some residents think a supermarket and local shops in this area of town would be an improvement. Residents in Treowen were concerned about cleanliness, whereas concerns in Newtown central were mainly around street furniture and safety along the river.

## **Youth**

There seems quite a strong perception within our sample that there are limited opportunities for young people in the town (“more jobs for younger people”, “teenage delinquency”, “more activities and opportunities for youth”). This is particularly prominent when we asked residents about their hopes and fears for the future. Many hoped for more facilities, jobs or opportunities for young people specifically and feared the next generation leaving due to a lack of these things (see Figure 22). This can be connected with the perception that Newtown is not necessarily a thriving place, with a wide range of jobs available (Figure 1).

Youth facilities, such as youth clubs and training opportunities were also mentioned as priorities for the Town Council by 17 people (Figure 4). At a county wide level, it appears that having places for children to meet and get together, particularly aged 11-15 is something that needs addressing. Only 30% of Powys parents were happy with levels of provision in 2014-2015 (National Survey for Wales), with satisfaction higher (though still not good) for younger children (44%).

New recreation areas, particularly for young people, were the second most frequently mentioned (see Figure 11). Residents in Llanllwchaearn North, Newtown South and Newtown Central were most specific about this (see Figure 12). In some cases this was related to concerns over safety, proximity to roads and accessibility. It should be noted that the Powys Local Development Plan Topic Paper: Community Facilities (2016) outlines plans to scale back and consolidate Youth facilities to five hub centres within the county. The Town Council should lobby to ensure one of these hubs is located in Newtown.

Concerns over youth delinquency and anti-social behaviour are also connected to this issue. Although those concerned about crime and anti-social behaviour logged in our survey do not map onto the larger national data sets, it is worth noting the comparatively high rate of youth offenses in Newtown East, coupled with a low community safety ranking (32<sup>nd</sup> worst in Wales) in the Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation.

## **Developing the tourist offer**

The drive within tourist strategies for ‘destination management’ effectively promotes the development of critical mass and capacity to offer a tourist experience beyond simply accommodation. According to this approach, infrastructure (parking, toilets, visitor information, leisure spaces), accommodation and activities for visitors (events, activities in a range of settings and for a range of target markets), and a setting providing a rich cultural and/or natural experience (museums, arts, landscapes, walks), all need to be present to maximise spend and staying time in an area and grow visitor numbers. In other words, it is all about creating the ‘whole package’.

Montgomeryshire is an emerging destination for tourism, albeit one sandwiched between other more well recognised destinations. It lacks the status and profile of relatively nearby destinations with protected area designation (Brecon Beacons, Snowdonia, Shropshire Hills AONB). Nevertheless the historic county has a number of significant attractions, based around sub-destinations like the Cambrian Mountains, Dyfi Biosphere, and Lake Vyrnwy.



In a wider context tourism is one of the largest employers in mid Wales and Powys, accounting for 8% of employment in Powys as a whole. Although an industry susceptible to the vagaries of weather and economic fortunes in other places there has been a long term decline in visitor numbers over the past decade, though with a small uptick in 2015 (Powys STEAM Report 2015).

The broad pattern of tourism in Powys can be seen in Table 1 which summarises numbers, economic impact and types of stay of visitors in Powys in 2015.

Day Visitors are numerically the most significant, however these include people travelling within the region (from rural areas to towns for example). According to Welsh Government figures (Visit Wales - Mid Wales Regional Team, Tourism Report) day visits are dominated either by people travelling less than 5 miles (24% in 'Mid Wales') or more than 40 miles (44% in 'Mid Wales'). Those travelling a distance are most likely to originate either in other parts of Mid or South Wales or from the West Midlands. Just over 1/3<sup>rd</sup> of day visits are to Montgomeryshire (nearly 50% are to Brecknockshire).

While the Brecon Beacons account for the vast majority of day visitors to Powys (about 4,000,000 day visitors a year), Lake Vyrnwy and Powis Castle (250,000 and 115,000 respectively), followed by Welshpool & Llanfair Railway (30,000) and the Museum of Modern Art in Machynlleth (23,000) are currently the major attractions in Montgomeryshire (Source: Powys LDP Tourism Topic Paper 2015).

**Table 1: Powys Tourism profile 2015, based on STEAM Report**

Type of stay	Number of visitors (000's of thousand)	Economic Impact (£million)	Jobs	Typical number of 'days' stayed (per visitor)
Serviced (hotels & B&Bs)	445	113	2,560	1.9
Non-Serviced (caravans, self-catering, camping)	790	481	5,350	7.3
Friends and family	200	28	280	2.4
<b>Sub-total overnight stays</b>	<b>1,435</b>	<b>622</b>	<b>8,190</b>	<b>4.9</b>
Day Visitors	3,100	97	950	1

While most visits to the region are by car (56%) a significant number of visitors use the train (37%). In 2013-14 the Office of Rail and Road estimated 130,000 passenger journeys beginning or ending at Newtown station (essentially 65,000 journeys). More recent figures, including the changed timetable services, have seen a 13% increase in passenger numbers exiting or entering Newtown station (147,000 in 2015/16). By comparison Aberystwyth received 321,000 passenger journeys (a rise of 6% on 2014/15) and Welshpool 157,000 passenger journeys (a rise of 18%). The extent of these a commuter and retail journeys from Newtown to other places is unclear. It might be that Welshpool is benefitting slightly more than Newtown from proximity to Shrewsbury and the shorter journey time for day visits to the town. Certainly Newtown, and other mid Wales station towns, might want to actively promote itself at Shrewsbury and key hub stations – though that would need to be within the context of having something to offer the visitor.

According to the Powys Visitor Survey (2013) the majority of visitors staying in Powys come from England, 30% from the south east, 25% from the Midlands. (It should be noted that the survey sampled from 'hotspots' such as the Elan Valley, or Powis Castle, rather than less obvious destination sites such as Newtown). The natural attributes of the county (its countryside and parts) provides a basis for many visitor trips. 60% of visitors come for a short-break rather than main holiday, and are more likely to camp than any other form of accommodation (19% of all visitors).

Significantly occupancy rates in the mid Wales region for all classes of accommodation are well below both UK and Welsh averages.

In comparison to the broader Powys tourist offer there are some significant differences in the organisation and nature of visitor/tourism in Newtown specifically.

### ***Newtown tourism***

In terms of numbers - between 2012-14 there were an annual average of 34,000 overnight visitors staying in Newtown from the UK, of whom 10,000 (30%) were on holiday, 16,000 were visiting friends and family (47%), and 8,000 (24%) on business visits. This is starkly different from overnight stays for mid Wales as a whole (72% on holiday, 21% visiting friends and family, and 5% on business visits).

As you might expect for an urban centre in the largely rural Mid Wales region a large proportion of visitors (38%) stayed in 'serviced accommodation', 44% with friends and family and just 6% in caravans and camping, compared with 26%, 22% and 37% respectively for the region. The remainder stay in self-catering or hostel accommodations.

*Average spend associated with overnight visits to Newtown from GB in 2012-14 is £3 million (Source: Welsh Government, Tourism and Marketing, personal coms).*

It is estimated that there were 1,000 visits a year to Newtown from abroad in 2010-15, around 3% of total overnights (compared to 9% for mid Wales more broadly). To put this in context Aberystwyth is estimated to receive around 15,000 international visitors a year, Brecon nearly 12,000. Across mid Wales over 50% of international visitors come from France, Germany, Ireland and the Netherlands.

For day visits the big drivers seem to be activities in the area (sports such as mountain biking, football, walking – see Figure 13) rather than destination tourism. Driving, rather than making use of an integrated public transport network and transport hubs, would seem currently to be the major means of accessing these.

The reopening of the Montgomeryshire Canal through to Newtown and tapping into the potential for heritage to play a greater role in expanding the tourism offer (e.g. the Textile Museum and Heritage Hub idea), were identified as specific projects that would "encourage tourism to support the economy" in our survey. Other community events such as the Food Festival were seen as important for drawing people into the town. However, it was striking that few mentioned things beyond these that might enable Newtown to capitalise on the opportunities presented by reduced traffic volume in the town, or ways to develop Newtown as a hub for accessing experiences in the hinterland outside of it.

## Connecting it all together

In our survey, although the majority of people surveyed would not describe Newtown as a 'tourist town' (see Figure 1), the role of tourism has emerged as a priority (see Figure 4) tied to concerns about the future of the town, the impact of the bypass and the need to 'promote the town' in general.

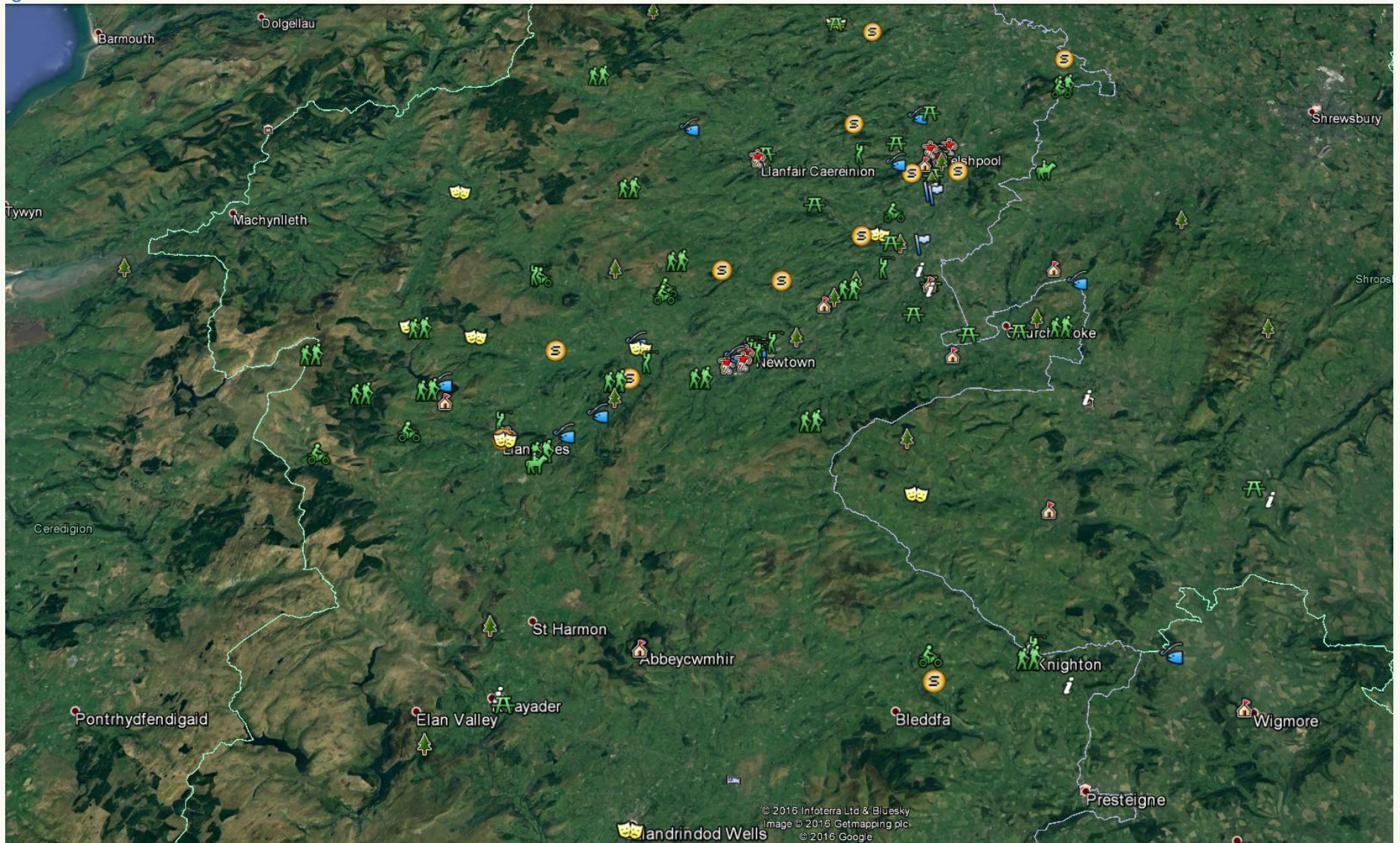
The Newtown Community Action Plan in particular highlights the development of tourist provision in the town. Examples included the restoration of the canal reaching Newtown (26% of respondents chose this as one of their five options) - creating a heritage centre, improving signage and promoting the town each had more than twenty votes as well.

In some respects Newtown, or Montgomeryshire more widely, is a gateway both to the uplands of Wales and the historic towns, hills and valleys of the Marches. Its difficulty is in capturing people as they move between the two, whether from overseas or domestically. Yet, this can also be a strength, it makes the area accessible and a market for short breaks that incorporate Newtown as a stop-off to and from other destinations could be developed. It is also possible to see a role for Newtown as a base for exploring the Mid Wales area.

Two things seem to be lacking currently however. The first is the brand, getting Newtown known as a distinct tourist destination. The second is the base – developing the facilities and activities on offer in and near the town. There is already a strong foundation to support such a direction. In our research we have identified **over 130 activity sites** within a 25 mile radius of Newtown (see Figure 13), ranging from rally driving to fishing to museums to sports centres to country sports to arts venues to historic houses.

Part of a strategic approach to tourism might be to concentrate on complementary activities that serve to improve the experience of residents AND tourists. Tackling some of these priorities and challenges should be seen as contributing to multiple objectives. Improving the appearance of the town, providing local services, connecting up the tourism offer with town level marketing and heritage promotion, enhancing the green spaces and recreational opportunities, tackling transport and parking provision, providing a strategic sense of direction for the town and a renewed sense of purpose reinforce each other. They enhance the experience of living in the town whilst also improving the experience and impression of visitors (whether as tourists, friends and family or as potential businesses) to the town.

Figure 13: Visitor sites within a 25 mile radius of Newtown



## Global Connections

As part of our research into globalisation processes we asked a series of questions that explored the connections people living in Newtown have with the wider world. These included tracking tangible connections such as visiting other countries as well as what global issues people in Newtown connected with and how they orientate themselves to them.

### *Cosmopolitan Newtown?*

We live in an increasingly connected world. This is made manifest in numerous ways; from the increasing mobility and distance families live from each other, the ways they keep in touch, the origins and ease of purchase of the things they consume, the changing skills we value and encourage young people to learn, the types of jobs they hold, the cultural reference points and forms of culture they consume, the ubiquity of telecommunications technology and electronic devices drawing media, ideas and information from all around the world etc. Although a small town in a rural part of Wales, Newtown is as embedded in these changing relationships as anywhere else in Europe.

Our wider research into business activities in Newtown reveals a surprising number of truly global businesses operating within the town. Though Newtown might not seem to be particularly cosmopolitan, it is certainly not an isolated 'rural backwater'. Over a quarter of respondents (41 of the 159 who answered these questions) have family or friends that live abroad. As discussed earlier, nearly 6% of Newtown residents hail from outside of the UK (Census 2011). In the national context, this appears low, given 12% of UK residents were born outside of the UK. More locally however, the Newtown figure is slightly higher than the proportion of people born from outside of the UK in Powys (4.6% 2011 Census, interestingly, 2015 updates reveal this has fallen in Powys to 3.8%, whereas it has risen within the whole of the UK).

Although in absolute terms the number of people speaking a language other than English or Welsh as their main/first language is rather small (just 2.4% of the resident population) the diversity of languages spoken as a main/first language is quite broad with 35 different languages (other than English and Welsh) being spoken as a main language, according to the 2011 ONS census (Figure 14).

Figure 14: Languages spoken in Newtown (Source: Census 2011)

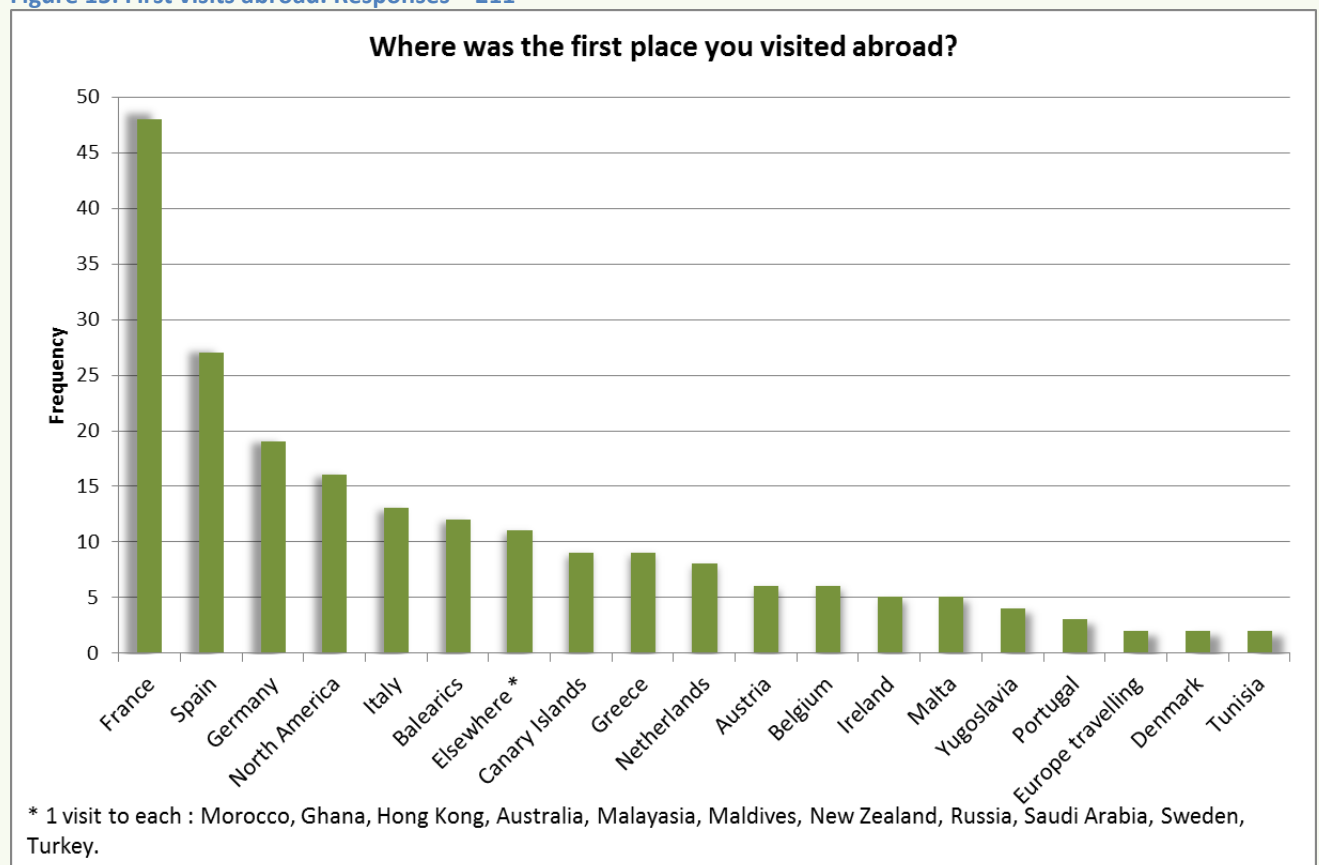


Over the past few decades, access to affordable travel has increased, largely through cheaper airfares, the rise of package holidays and last minute deals and technological innovations (such as the internet) that make organising the logistics of travel much easier. In Newtown, residents have by and large taken advantage of this.

The vast majority of those surveyed have visited another country, usually for a holiday. Fifteen people had never been abroad. Figure 15 shows most frequently (with 48 people each) that a ‘first trip overseas’ was either to France or Spain (when including the Balearics and Canary Islands as Spanish territory). The older generation (those 65 and over) were a little more likely to have stayed within Europe for their first trip, or come to travelling later in life. Over 90% have travelled in Europe at some point and over 40% to North America. A small minority (just 6 people) have been to all six populated continents.

Like the rest of the UK, Newtown has joined the ‘internet age’. Slightly fewer respondents in our sample buy goods or services online than the UK average (78% of our 157 respondents compared to 83% nationally). This may reflect a sample bias towards the older generation or the peripherality of Newtown in terms of the goods and services now available to purchase online (i.e. fastfood, clothing). From our survey over 70% of those who do not buy online are 65 or over.

Figure 15: First visits abroad. Responses = 211



## Food

Across the UK, dietary trends and culinary tastes have also been changing, reflecting our increasing connection with other cultures, as well as changes over time in dietary advice, increasing awareness about supply chain issues and the expansion in sources of information and inspiration.

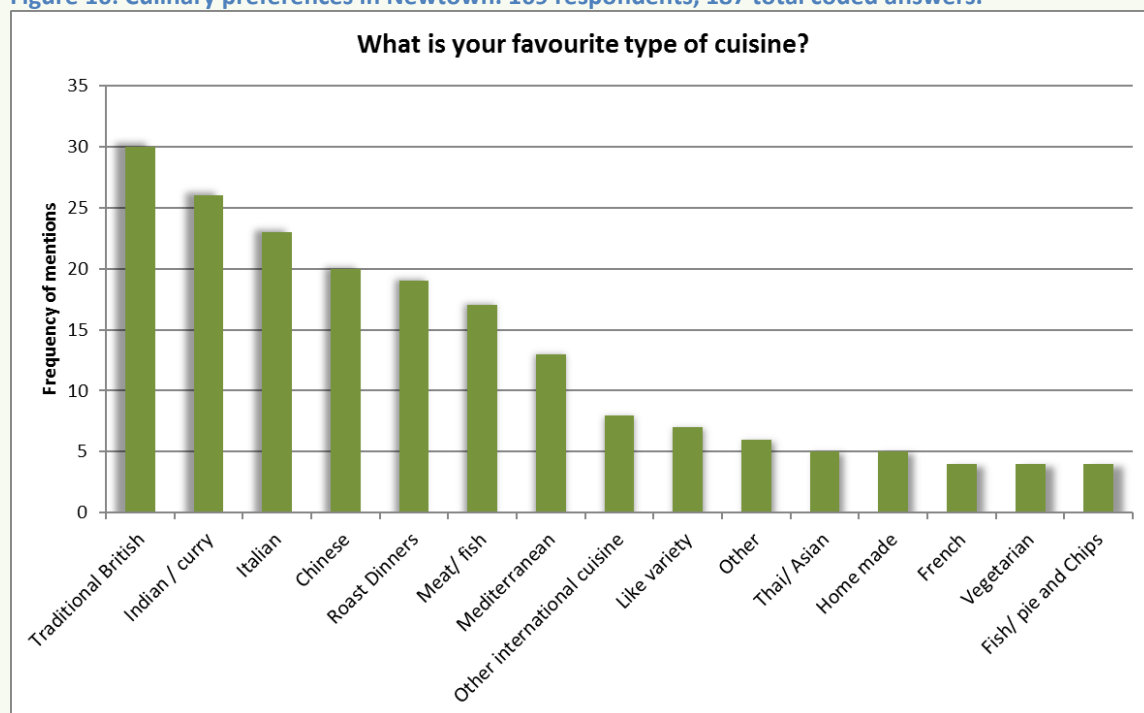
Non-traditional dishes such as pizza, pasta, curry and American style fast food have grown in popularity displacing more traditional cooking. Between 2003 and 2013 purchases of rice in Wales increased by 42% and pizza by 45%, whereas purchases of potatoes fell 31% (Food and Drink Wales 2015). The culinary scene in Newtown, according to our sample's responses, reflects some of these wider trends, for example, curry/Indian (mentioned by 15% of respondents), Chinese and Italian food all make the top five favourite cuisines of Newtown residents (see Figure 16).

That said when taken together "roast dinners", "traditional British/English or Welsh food" is clearly most popular cuisine with over a quarter of respondents including this as a favourite. Although not mentioned as a favourite cuisine Fish and Chip shops were the second most frequented eatery, with pub restaurants receiving the most recent visits, again reflecting the ongoing popularity of 'traditional' food.

While the bias towards older generations in our sample may influence preferences to some extent, from consumer studies Welsh consumers do maintain a more traditional palette, preferring less exotic fruits and vegetables than the UK as a whole (Kantar World Panel 2015).

Nearly 60% of the 156 respondents reported that they do think about where their food comes from. When asked what issues this includes, the most prevalent answer was a preference for local food, freshness and quality was the second most mentioned factor affecting choice. Whether food is sourced within Britain and other environmental and social factors such as food miles, animal welfare and fair trade also received attention.

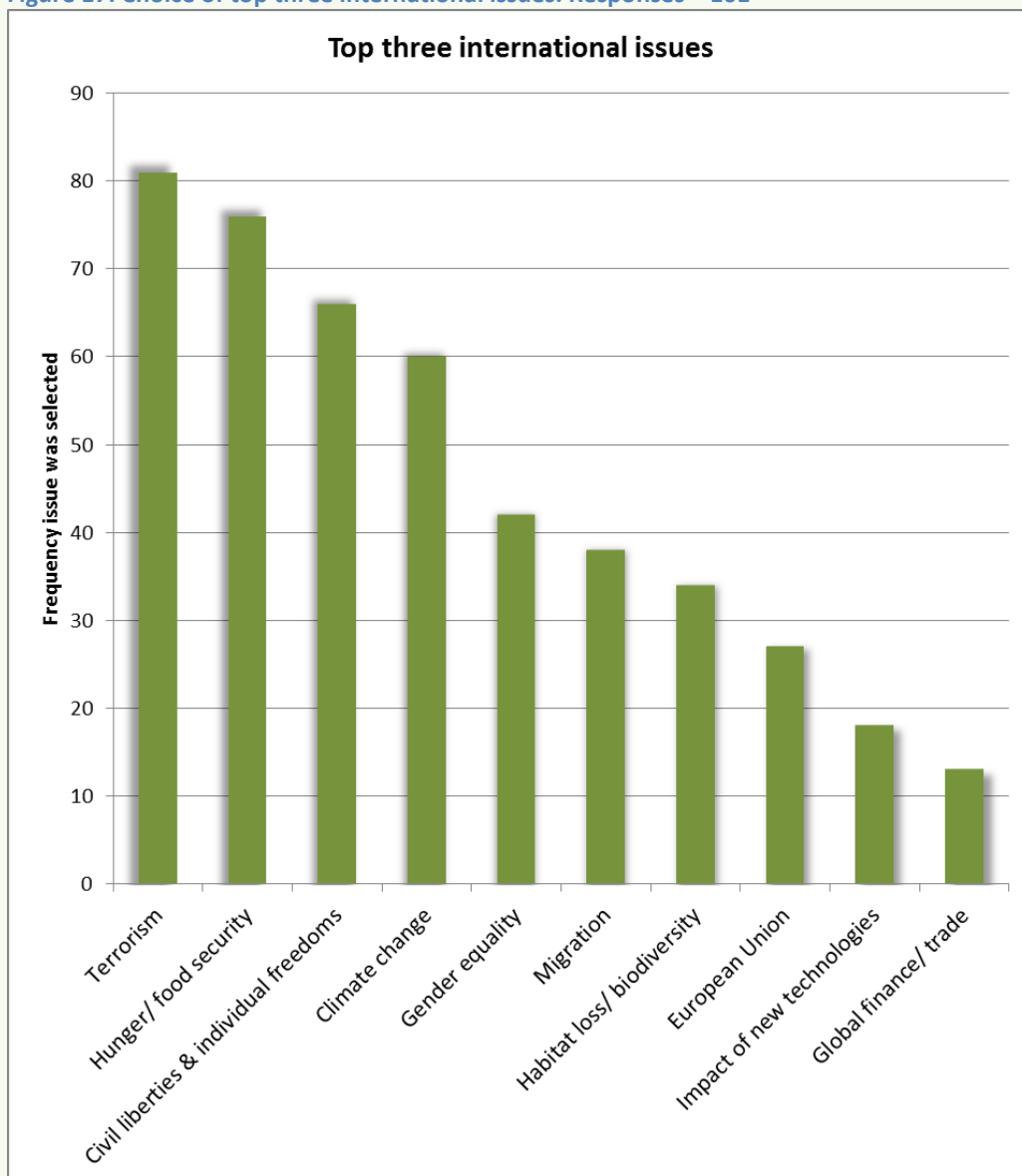
Figure 16: Culinary preferences in Newtown. 169 respondents, 187 total coded answers.



## Global Issues

As a community we often hear about a plethora of challenges and issues affecting us and the planet. To get a sense for how such challenges are engaged with in Newtown, we asked respondents to select the three international issues that were most important to them. Those most frequently chosen were terrorism (50%), hunger/ food security (47%) and civil liberties and freedoms (41%) (see Figure 17).

Figure 17: Choice of top three international issues. Responses = 161



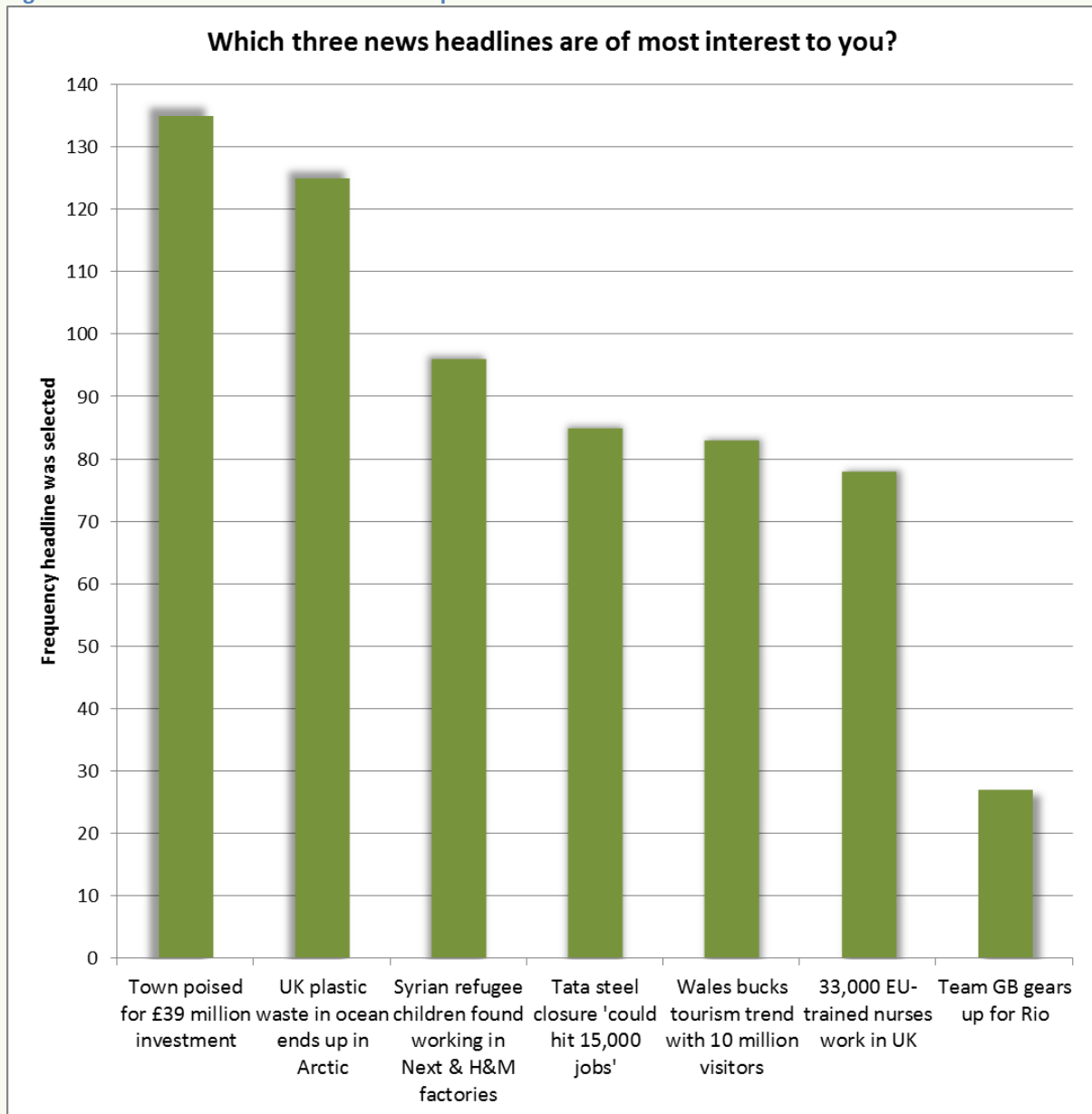
To get a more nuanced sense of how people connect personally with non-local and international issues we asked people to select which newspaper headlines would be most interesting to them (see Figure 18).

The most popular was the headline suggesting that a Welsh town would be getting investment and a boost to jobs (62% chose this option). The popularity of this story echoes the concerns elsewhere in the survey that Newtown might get “ignored” or passed over when it comes to investment.



The next most popular stories were those that connected the UK to global issues, environmental problems in the case of UK ocean waste travelling to the Arctic (58% chose this story) and high street brands employing Syrian refugees (45%). Interest in these stories seems to reflect the high level of social conscience and concern with environmental degradation also revealed in responses to Figure 17. They also reflect a sense of Newtown as outward looking as well as engaged with local issues.

Figure 18: Choice of fictional headlines. Responses = 213



### Climate change and renewable energy

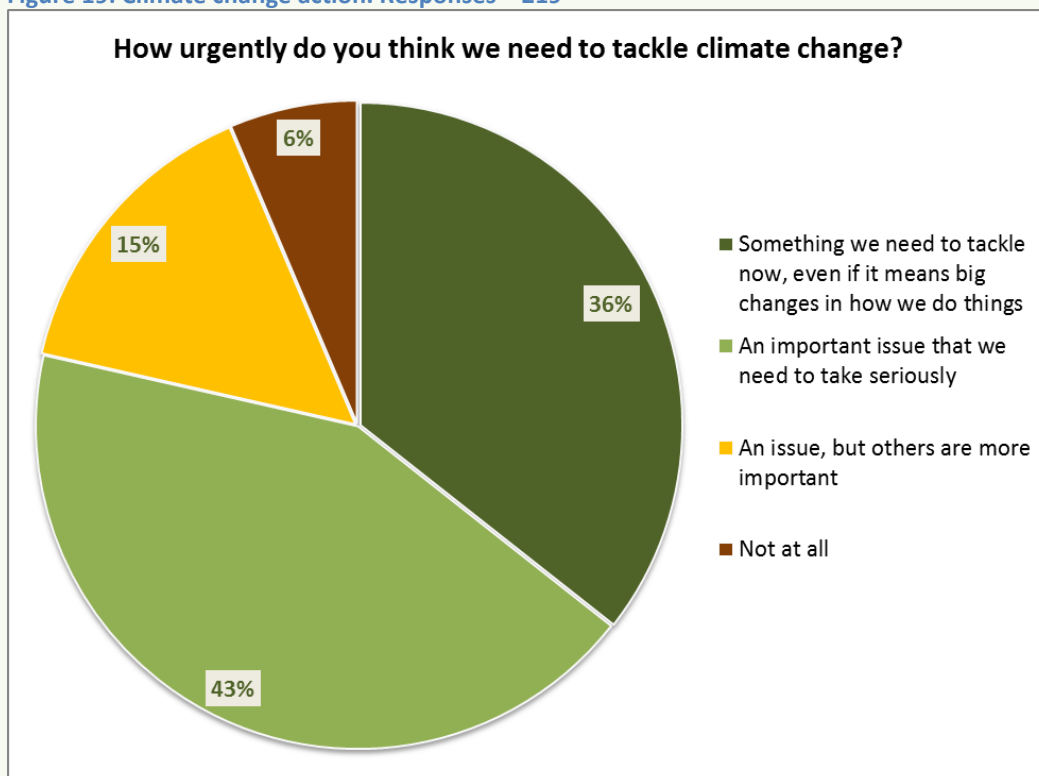
While the reality and effects of ongoing climate change are widely accepted in scientific and public debates it is less clear how prepared people are to act on this knowledge.

Climate change was identified as a top issue by 38% of respondents (Figure 17). Responses are broadly in line with previous research in Wales on public perceptions of climate change. For example, research for C3W (C3W, 2012) found 88% of respondents considered the climate was changing, with 88% believing this either entirely human caused or a combination of human activity

and natural processes. About 7% said they were 'not at all concerned' about the issue. Similarly the National Survey for Wales (2014-2015) found that 59% of the population think "in 25 years time the effects of climate change will be more of a problem than today".

Our survey asked a slightly different question – "How urgently do you think we need to tackle climate change?" - reflecting more the degree to which concern should result in action. The results (see Figure 19) suggest the majority of respondents (79%) considered climate change an issue over which action is needed, whereas 6% felt no action was required. Care is always needed in interpreting such survey responses where an affirmative response might be seen as socially desirable, especially as our surveyors were mostly in their twenties.

Figure 19: Climate change action. Responses = 219

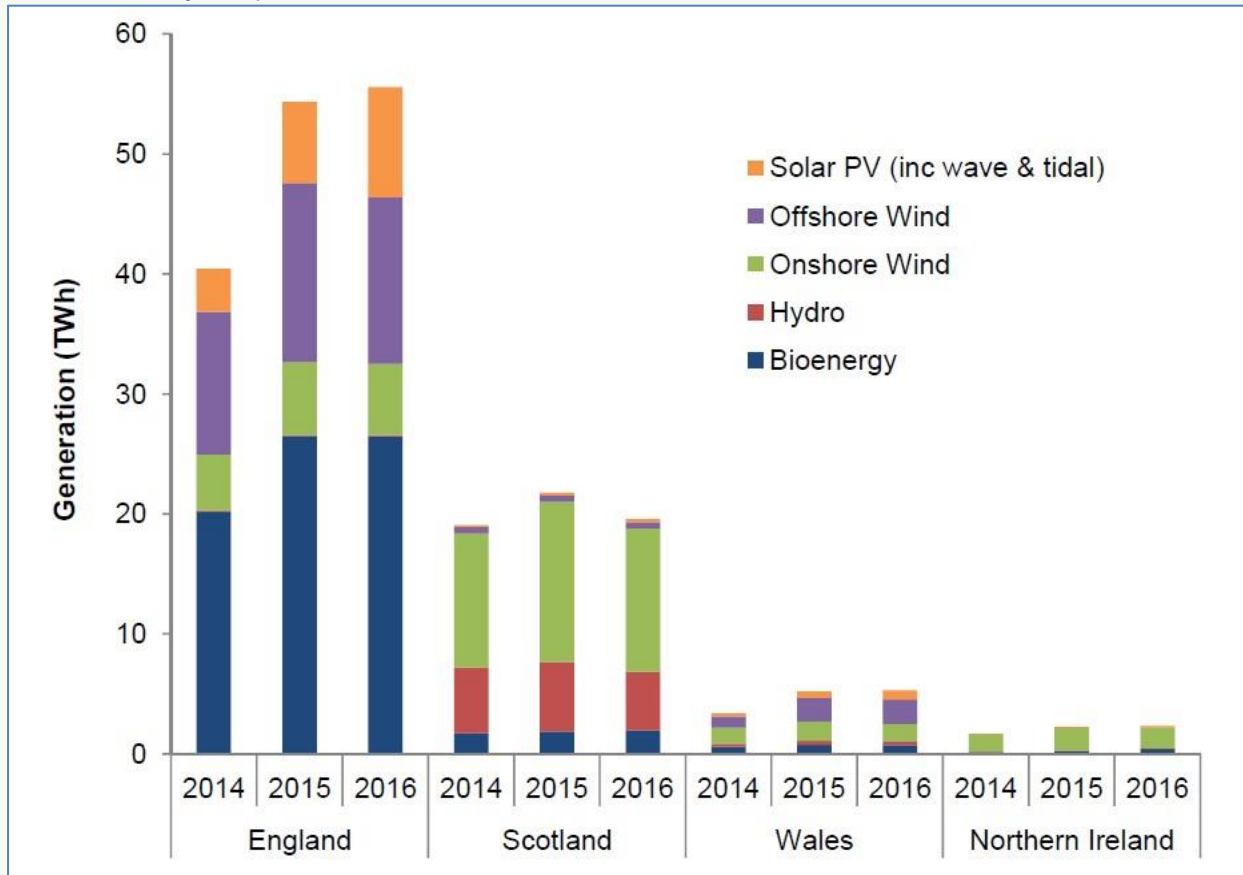


One option for acting to reduce greenhouse gas emissions is to increase renewable energy generation. Across the UK there has been a substantial growth (a tripling) in renewable electricity generation over the last decade, driven largely by a mix of off-shore, on-shore wind, a more recent expansion of solar and biomass technologies. Nationally the UK now generates about 24% of its electricity from renewable sources. In Wales, however, the renewables proportion is just under 10% of electricity generation (Source: Statistics for Wales), in part a reflection of the coal and gas power plants in operation (Figure 20 illustrates how much electricity is generated by different renewable technologies in the different countries of the UK).

In thinking about how to increase the sustainability and reliability of energy generation in Wales it is important to think about ways in which this can be increased to benefit local communities. The Town Council asked us to include the following question in our survey: "Would you support the development of renewable energy in Newtown, if this helped to fund community projects?" We also asked for brief explanations of their point of view.

In response to this question, and in the context of funding community projects, the majority of respondents were supportive of local renewable energy - 59% answered yes, a further 14.5% would support renewable development with some reservations (e.g. over the type of energy developed). 6% were completely against renewable energy development.

Figure 20: Renewable electricity generation, by UK country (Source: National Statistics, Energy Trends: renewables, May 2017)

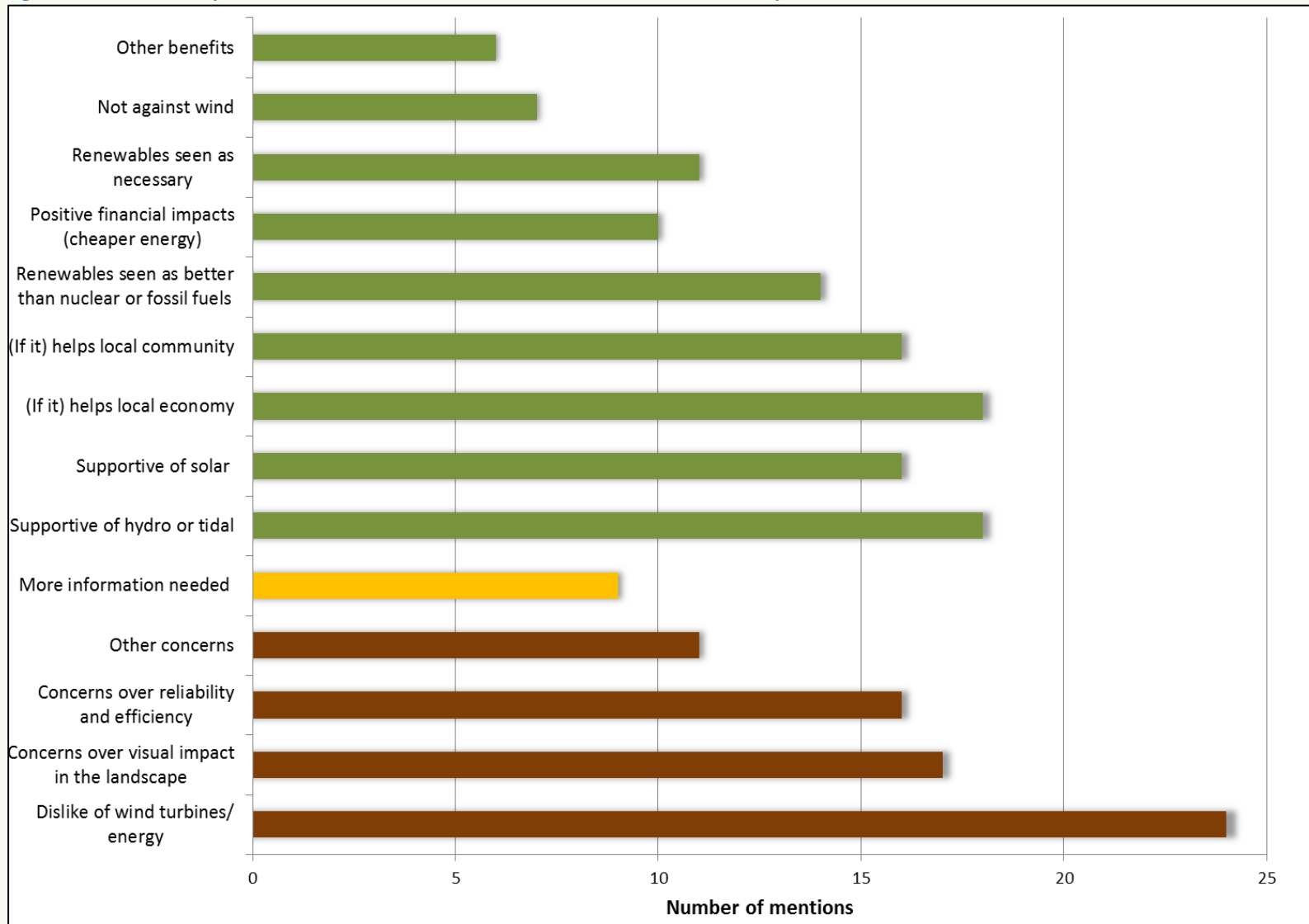


The most frequently cited reasons for supporting renewables projects were being “aware of climate change”, that “renewables are the future”, that they are sustainable and will “help the environment” (46 mentions). That said there are clearly some general anti-wind turbine sentiments (see Figure 21) and some of those supportive of renewables caveated that with reference to particular technologies (solar and hydro).

Broadly, however, we found there were a greater number of supportive comments overall than negative. Hydro development especially was popular, with several people suggesting that making use of the “greatest resource” of the River Severn would be a good idea.

Many also expressed support based on the possibilities of benefits to the local community and economy (particularly employment opportunities), believing that this would “make the town a better place to live”. Taken together benefits to the local area were mentioned more times than expressions of dislike for wind turbines.

Figure 21: Reasons for position on renewables. Comments summarised from 192 responses



## The Future

In this section we focus on how survey respondents view the future of Newtown, their hopes, fears, ideas for action and perceptions as to who might be involved in future changes.

Firstly, we asked: **do you think Newtown will be more or less prosperous in the future**. Almost 23% of respondents believe it will be less prosperous, 14% hoped it would be, and over 30% thought it would be more prosperous. Many comments in response to this question mentioned the effect of the bypass, seen as pivotal to the future success or demise of the town and often cited as a specific reason for being positive, negative or unsure about its future.

Then we asked about the changing role of the high street in an era of on-line retail and services provision. Online retail is growing at a faster pace than in-store retail and now makes up nearly 15% of all retail (Office for National Statistics 2017). So we asked whether our respondents thought the high street would survive the rise of online shopping.

Again, opinion was very split, with an equal number of 'yes' and 'no' answers to this question. For many respondents the main benefits of shopping on the high street were not just to do with buying items or seeing and touching the goods, but also the social contact it brings. Looking in more detail at the comments in response to this question the most frequent sentiment expressed was that the high street will need to change in some way. Comments hint at the sort of direction respondents expected of this change; small shops selling niche and local products, diversifying from what supermarkets offer, and the high street providing a more overtly **leisure space** for residents (with more cafés etc.). A similar idea that coffee bars should open in the early evening was prioritised as an action point in the CAP by 12% of the consultation respondents. These ideas could contribute to a proactive approach that plans for positive change through developing a town vision.

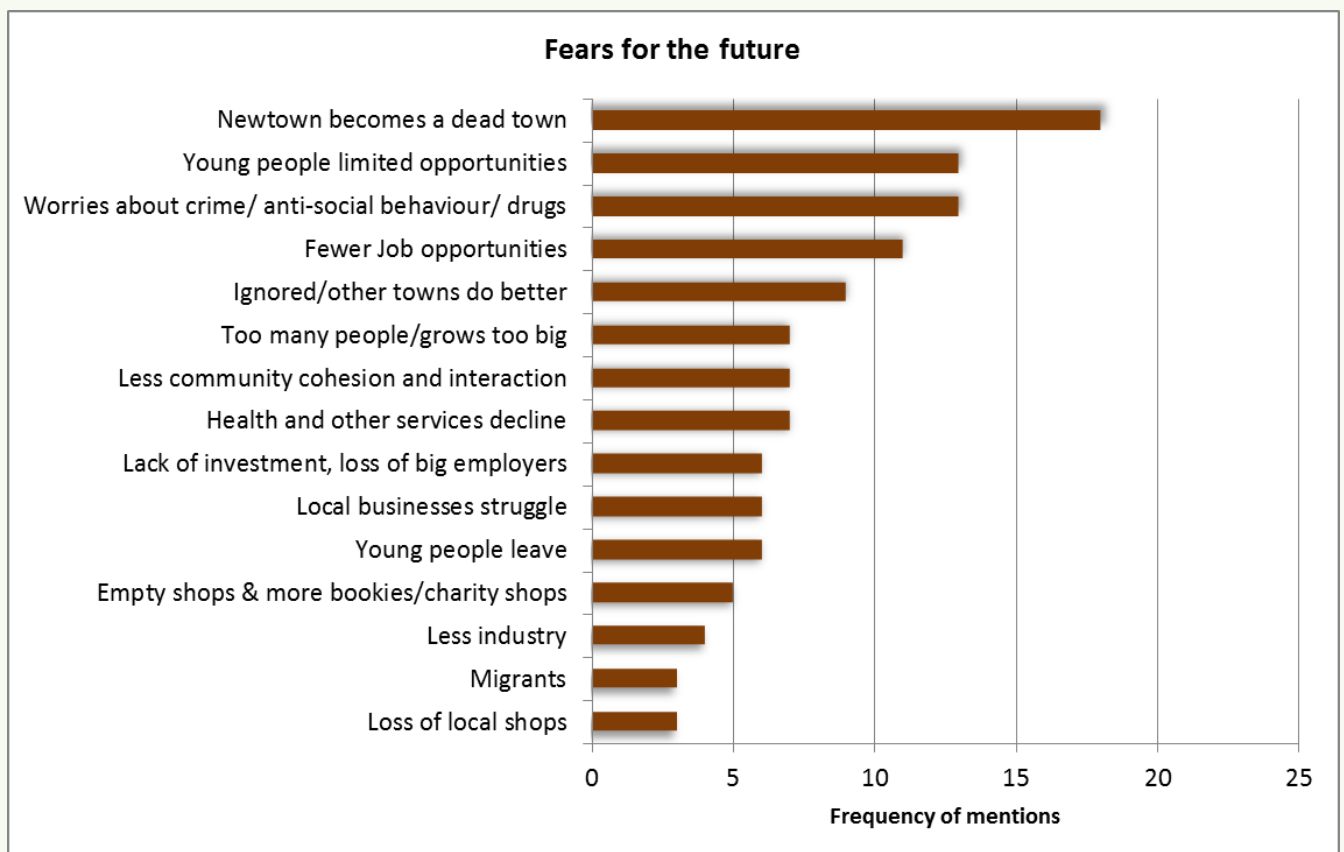
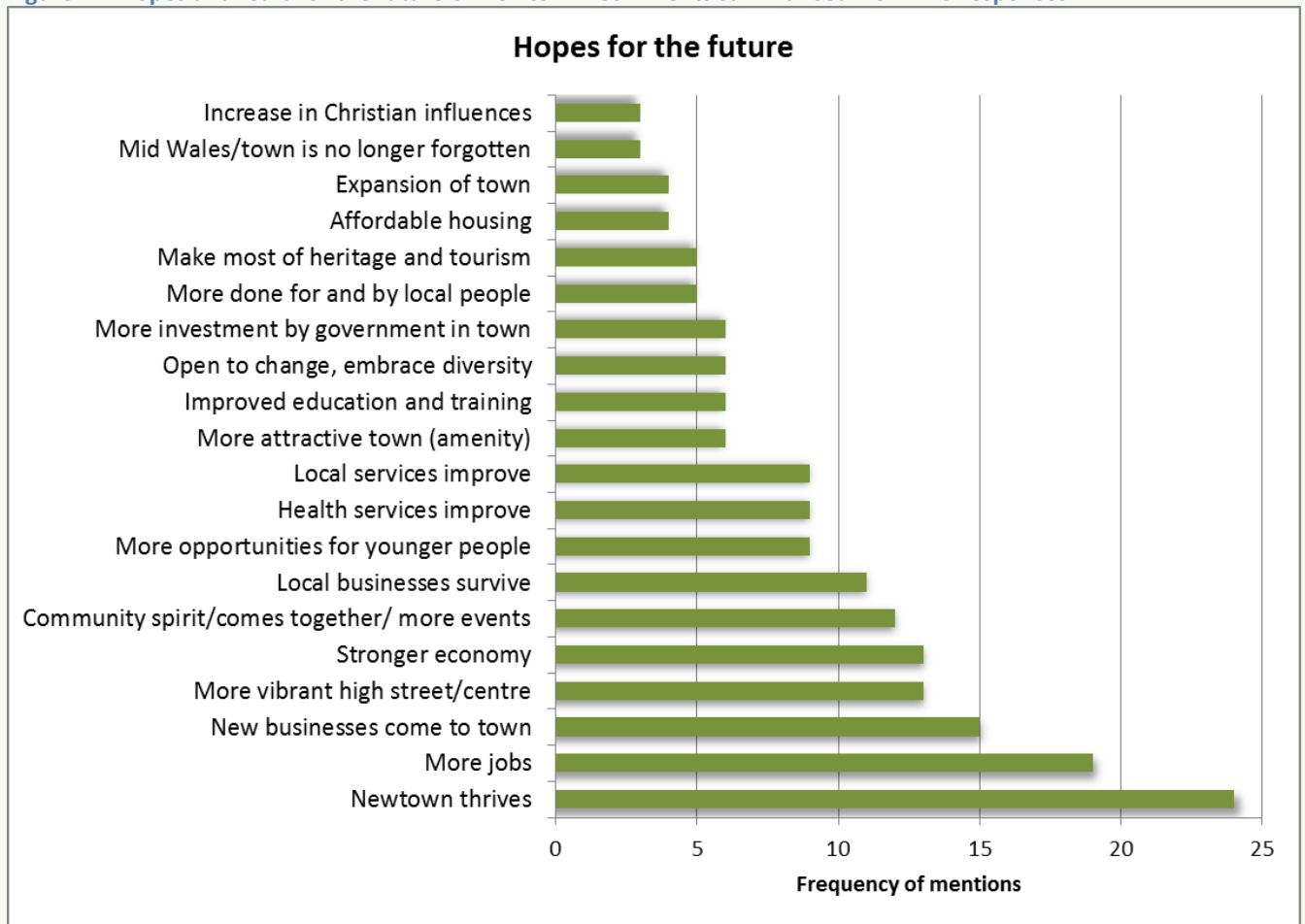
We then moved on to the bigger questions: **“what are your hopes and fears for the future of Newtown?”** Respondents could say anything they liked, which we recorded and then coded as shown in Figure 22 and accompanying graphics.

Reflecting an overall sense of optimism that seems characteristic of Newtown there were more hopes expressed than fears. That said many comments included hopes paired up with their polar opposite; for example, some people hoped for better health services and also feared that this not materialise. Reflecting the trends noted in Section 2, the big hope is that Newtown thrives. Other hopes frequently expressed relate to this theme - more jobs, new businesses, a stronger economy, community events and a vibrant high street.

In terms of fears the biggest and seemingly very real concern of many people is that Newtown will “die” or become a “ghost town”, in part relating back to the high numbers who did not agree that Newtown’s economy was thriving (see Figure 1). Again it is worth noting the concern over opportunities for young people and worries about anti-social behaviour and crime.

In responding to this question more broadly it is worth noting that a number of comments were focussed on actions and prioritisation for change, rather than specific hopes and fears (Figure 22). These comments give further support to the earlier findings over concerns surrounding the town centre, community activities, engagement and local services.

Figure 22: Hopes and fears for the future of Newtown. Comments summarised from 129 responses



# Hopes

More houses will be built

**I'd like Newtown to be a thriving town again**

**More jobs for younger people**  
*That Laura Ashley and Control Techniques stay*

FOR NEW BUSINESSES AND SHOPS TO ESTABLISH HERE

**That it grows and becomes economically vibrant place**

To see more people speaking Welsh in Newtown

*Keeping Newtown a "personal town" and place to live rather than just to reside*

**That the canal gets opened all the way to Newtown**

More investment

**Bring in new business**

*It will become more environmentally, socially and economically friendly town to live in*

That the bypass improves travel routes, making Newtown appealing to businesses and better-paid jobs

**To create more jobs, security and better health services**

*Hope population will increase and town expands*

That big employers stay in the town

*Newtown becomes bigger*

For a stronger local economy (especially local food production)

**More opportunities for young people**

**HOPE TO SEE IT BECOME MORE FULLY INTEGRATED - A BIT SPLIT AT THE MOMENT**

That it keeps its friendliness

For more activities for youth

*For openness to change*

Health services will improve

*Would like to see a more diverse culture and community*

**ENCOURAGE TOURISM TO SUPPORT ECONOMY**

# Fears

*That it becomes a 'ghost town'*

That the town centre dies

CHANGE IS BEING PREVENTED BY THE OLDER GENERATION

**The town will have a natural death**

**Worried about drugs coming into the town**

**We're going to be a dead town**

**That the bypass causes decline of town**

*That the next generation have to move away as there are no career paths here*

**That it becomes forgotten**

*Town used as a depository for drug problems, ex-convicts or other vulnerable people*

**The ongoing 'brain drain'**

**That the window of opportunity with the bypass will be lost**

**MORE EMPTY SHOPS**

*Teenage delinquency*

Will be an increase in anti-social behaviour

Will be too many migrants

**That no-one will interact with each other anymore**

*Build more housing estates without the jobs to support them*

Things like post office and banks will have gone, replaced by pubs and charity shops

Local businesses will struggle

**People will become fearful of difference**

*That people's values will change - less community minded, more anti-social behaviour*

**That social isolation increases**

**CONTINUE TO HAVE LONG DISTANCES TO TRAVEL FOR MEDICAL TREATMENT**

Overdevelopment

Facilities and resources will be diverted to other towns e.g. Welshpool

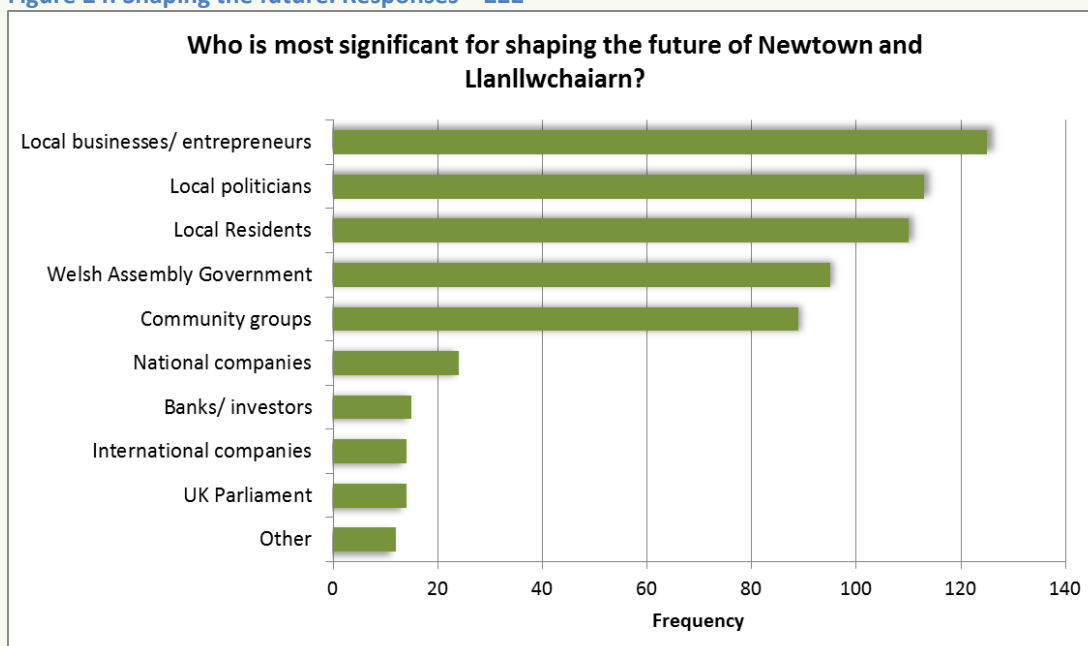
Figure 23: Demands for action, prompted by thinking about hopes and fears for the future.



We then asked respondents to choose up to three key actors they thought were most significant in shaping the future of Newtown and Llanllwchaern. Interestingly local actors of various sorts were selected far more frequently than national and international ones. Figure 24 shows this distinction clearly. A few respondents selected the ‘other category’ identifying that a few particularly active local people exerted a strong influence over the town.

Local businesses or entrepreneurs are seen as the most significant, and UK parliament the least. Whether this reflects a sense of futility in relation to external actors making a positive contribution to the town (that fear that ‘the town will be ignored’) or a more positive reflection of local ‘self-reliance’ and willingness to ‘just get on with it’ is unclear, but it might support the view that Newtown both needs to and can take ownership of its plans and future.

Figure 24: Shaping the future. Responses = 222





## The Bypass

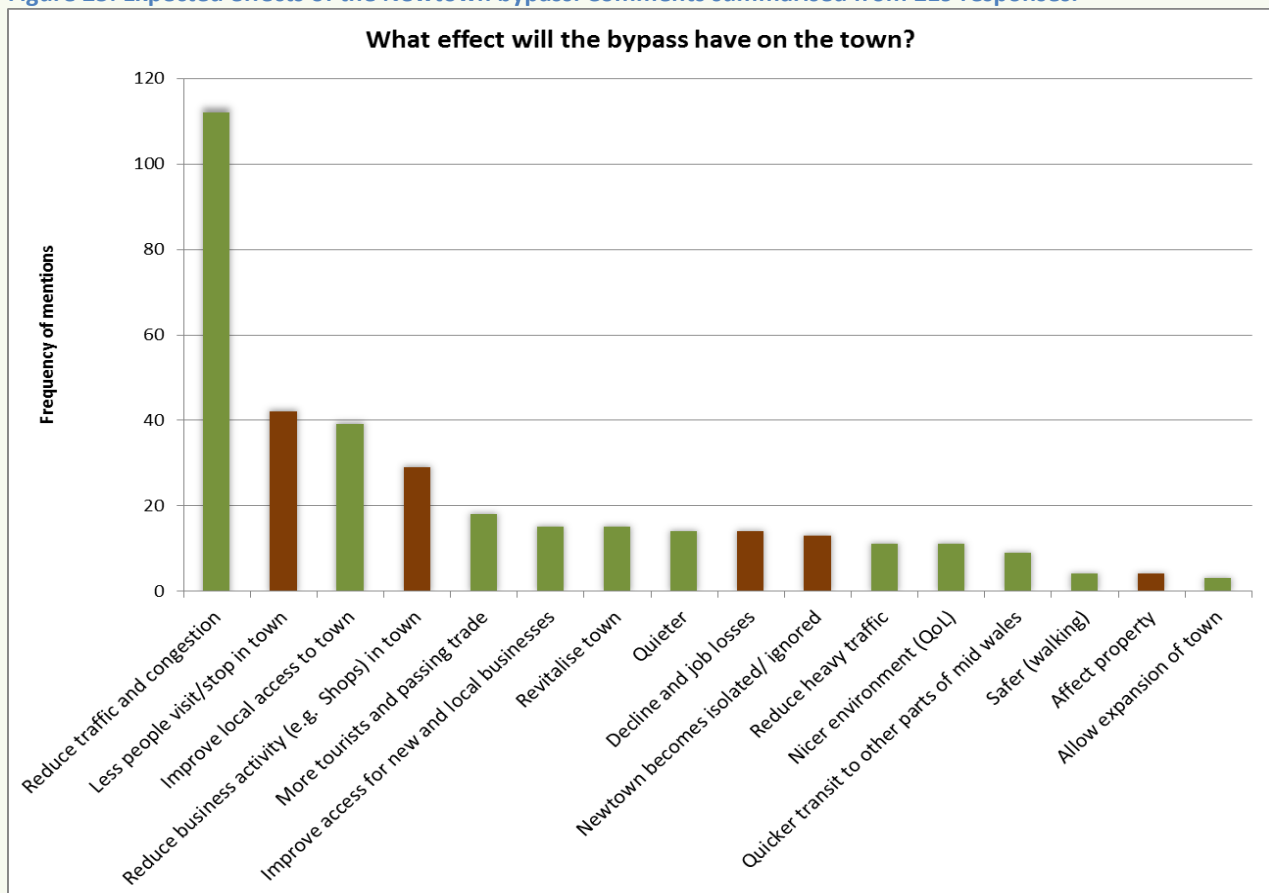
The coming bypass is currently at the centre of resident’s feelings about the future of Newtown. In addition to sentiments expressed in previous questions respondents had the opportunity for an open ended response to the question “How do you think the new bypass will change the town?” On the whole, the sample was optimistic about the changes the bypass will bring, with approximately 55% of the 219 respondents being positive and holding an expectation of an overall improvement. The most frequent expectation is that traffic and congestion problems will be reduced (see Figure 25).

There is considerable uncertainty however. Over a quarter were more unsure and expressed mixed feelings about its effects – there is a general sense of “it will kill or cure it” as one respondent put it. A sizeable minority (over 15%) think the overall effect will be negative, in particular over traffic being taken away from the town centre resulting in less business and closures and reductions in local trade. Such comments voiced a fear that people “will whizz past” and it will “discourage people stopping in town for a cup of tea”.

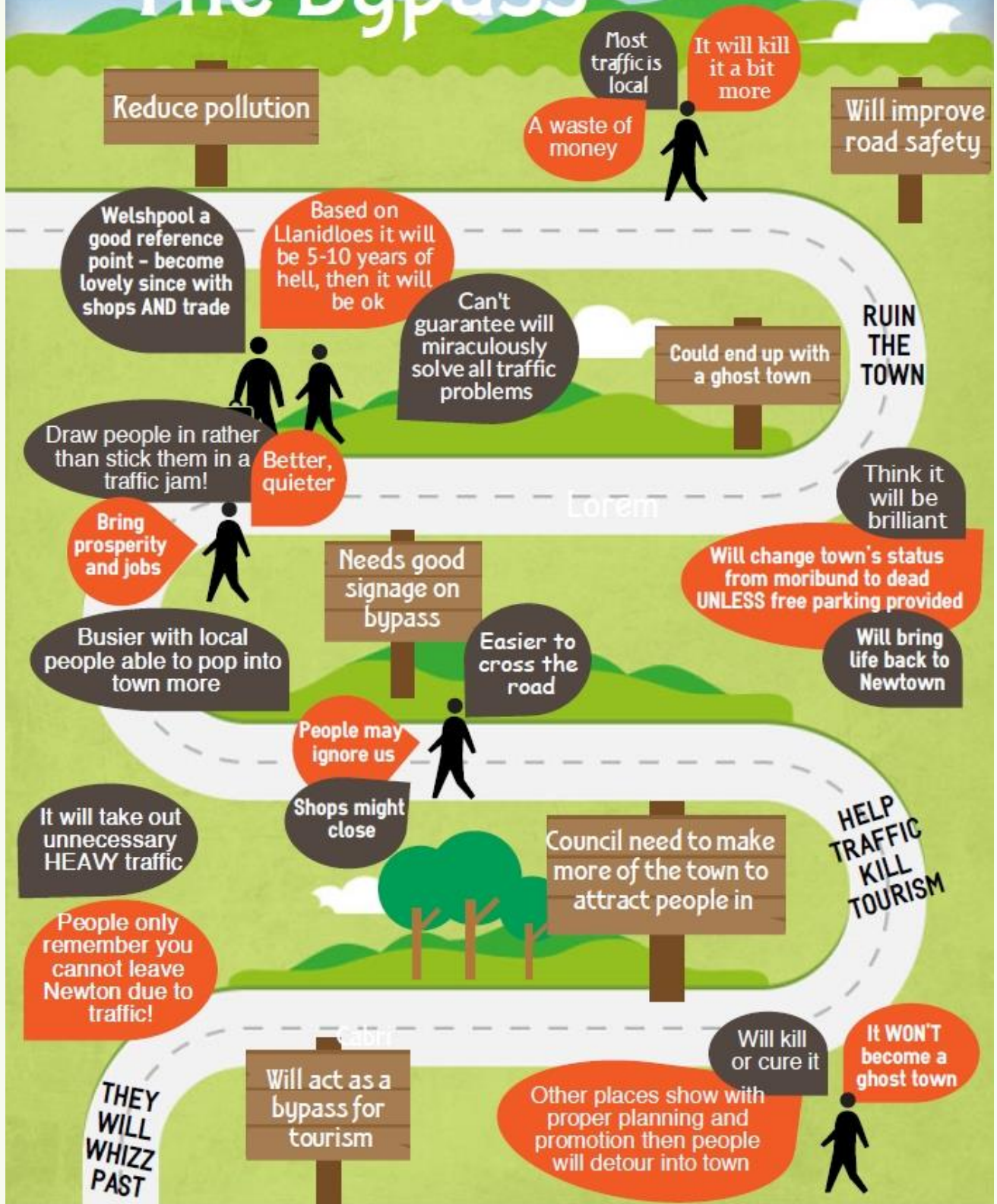
Reflecting these responses many spoke of the need to be proactive and prepare for the bypass - promoting and improving what the town can offer, which in turn should be signposted from the new road.

Given other local experiences, such as in Welshpool and Llanidloes, there is a common perception that “other places show that if people plan and properly promote themselves then people will detour and come into town”. This coincides with the sense that residents would like to see tourism facilities and services improved, and that the town should work on developing its ‘brand’ and place in the world. It also fits more generally with the idea that a clear vision for the future direction of the town would be beneficial and something that the Town Council and wider community could initiate.

Figure 25: Expected effects of the Newtown bypass. Comments summarised from 219 responses.



# The Bypass



## 4. Where can I find out more?

More information about the research undertaken in Newtown can be found on the website:

<http://www.assemblingnewtown.org/en>. An exhibition of this work is due to be held in Newtown September 2017.

Information about the wider Global-Rural research project: <https://globalruralproject.wordpress.com/> and you can follow our project Twitter feed: @globalrural.

Report prepared by Dr Marc Welsh and Samantha Saville for the Global-Rural research team, Aberystwyth University, January 2017.



### Data and external reports referred to

2011 Census Key Statistics, Powys County Council (2013) available:

<http://www.powys.gov.uk/en/statistics/view-statistics-about-your-area/detailed-census-information/>

Food and Drink Wales, Brookdale Consulting (2015) Available:

<https://businesswales.gov.wales/foodanddrink/sites/foodanddrink/files/Food%20-%20Research%20-%20Export%20Report%20updated%20to%202015%20-%20FINAL.pdf>

Grocery Shopping in Wales, Kantar World Panel (2015) available:

<https://businesswales.gov.wales/.../Kantar%20Sub%20Sector%20slides%20-%20Grocery%20Shopping%20in%20Wales%20FINAL%20Presentation>

National Survey for Wales, Welsh Government (2014-2015 release) available: [gov.wales/statistics-and-research/national-survey/](http://gov.wales/statistics-and-research/national-survey/)

National Survey for Wales Powys Report (2014-2015) available:

[http://pstatic.powys.gov.uk/fileadmin/Docs/Statistics/Themes/Social\\_and\\_Welfare/NatSurWales201415\\_en.pdf](http://pstatic.powys.gov.uk/fileadmin/Docs/Statistics/Themes/Social_and_Welfare/NatSurWales201415_en.pdf)

Newtown Community Action Plan, Resources for Change (2015) available:

<http://newtown.org.uk/pages/newtown-community-action-plan>

One Powys Plan 2014-2017, April 2016 Update, Powys County Council, available:

[http://pstatic.powys.gov.uk/fileadmin/Docs/Democracy/One\\_Powys\\_Plan\\_UPDATEeng\\_2016-17\\_V6\\_-\\_03\\_May\\_2016\\_.pdf](http://pstatic.powys.gov.uk/fileadmin/Docs/Democracy/One_Powys_Plan_UPDATEeng_2016-17_V6_-_03_May_2016_.pdf)

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Retail Sales in Great Britain: Jan 2017, Office for National Statistics, available: <https://petition.parliament.uk/petitions/129823>

Rural Household Survey 2013, Wales Rural Observatory, available: <http://www.walesruralobservatory.org.uk/sites/default/files/Rural%20Household%20Survey%202013.pdf>

The Draft Health and Care Strategy for Powys: A vision to 2027, Powys Teaching Health Board (2017) available: <http://www.powysthb.wales.nhs.uk/health-and-care-strategy-summaries/>

The Welsh Index for Multiple Deprivation, Welsh Government (2014) available: <http://gov.wales/statistics-and-research/welsh-index-multiple-deprivation/>

## Appendix – Survey sample demographics

### Appendix A: Age range

Age range	Our total survey sample	Household survey only	Newtown Census 2011
16-24	4.3	4.3	11.8
25-44	20.1	17.3	24.8
45-64	35.9	35.8	25.6
65-74	24.8	25.3	8.7
75 and over	15	17.3	7.9

### Appendix B: Sex

Sex	Our total survey sample	Newtown 2011 Census
Female	57%	51%
Male	43%	49%

### Appendix C: Employment status (for those aged under 75)

	Our total sample	Household survey only	Newtown Census 2011
FT work	34.2	31.4	47.8
PT work	19.1	19.4	20.1
Unemployed	8	6.7	5
Retired	33.2	36.6	14.6
Student	4	4.5	7.1
Carer	1.5	1.5	5.3

### Appendix D: Household ownership

Ownership	Household survey sample	Newtown 2011 Census
Owned (outright or mortgage)	69%	52%
Rented	30%	46%
Not answered / Other	1%	2%