

LYDNEY FORWARD

CONSULTATION FEEDBACK REPORT

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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Introduction

Lydney town centre, like many, has experienced a decline in footfall and commercial activity over time. This is a theme that has been seen in many towns across the UK as there has been a shift in consumer behaviour with the rise of online retail and larger out of town stores. Such decline presents a challenge for town centres and Lydney is not excluded from this.

The way a community views and interacts with its town centre has changed. In response to this Lydney Town Council commissioned Place Studio to design and implement a scheme of local community and stakeholder engagement to understand the aspirations of the local community for their town while also identifying its shortcomings. This initiative is named **Lydney Forward**.

This engagement provides an evidence base of local knowledge and aspirations to inform the future development of a town centre master plan and detailed regeneration strategy.

The scheme is comprised of three key elements which will work in conjunction with one another to create a robust foundation and direction for the future of Lydney. These elements are:

1. Stakeholder and Community engagement.
2. Local business engagement towards informing the optimum local business organisation which would take a leading role in delivery of ongoing regeneration.
3. Advising on sources of future funding and potential programme costs for future phases, including production of the town centre master plan.

1. Stakeholder and Community Engagement

The engagement took place across a series of workshops and outreach events consisting of:

- i. Town Councillor and Forest of Dean Council Walking Workshop
- ii. Stakeholder Workshop
- iii. Business Outreach
- iv. Community engagement on street event

In response to the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic Lydney Forward also adopted an online approach to engagement with the community. Lydney Town Council built a bespoke project website and consultation platform to complement the in person events.

- v. Lydney Forward Website

The engagement took place between mid April 2021 and the end of July 2021.



This section provides an overview of the methods and techniques used during the various streams of public engagement. These engagement events were designed to capture a range of views from the community and local stakeholders. In response to COVID-19 these events were designed to be safe and comfortable for all participants.

Walking Workshop

An initial fact finding “workshop” was held with Town Council Members of the Town Centre Sub-Committee and an invited officer from Forest of Dean Council, who represented Destination Lydney Harbour.

The activity involved a survey, discussion and consideration of SWOT issues and suggestions whilst walking through the town centre from the Civic Offices at the western periphery to the junction with Union Street at its eastern gateway.

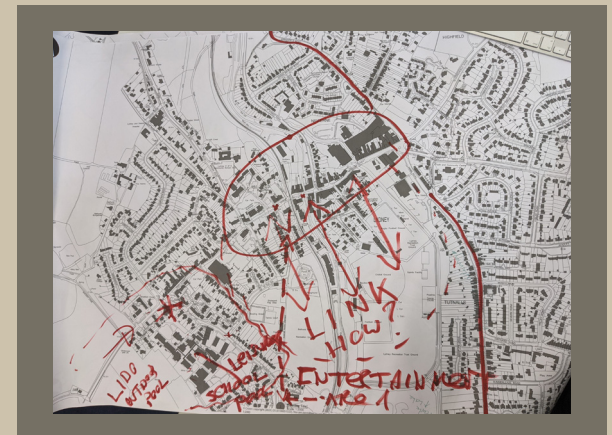
Feedback relating to the SWOT of the town centre was uploaded to the Lydney Forward website. The findings are included in the website section of the main report.

Event took place: 23 April 2021

Stakeholder Workshop

Stakeholders were asked to meet at the local community centre. From here there was a briefing of the aims and objectives of the workshop and following this the participants were split into two working groups.

The working groups were each then tasked with producing a tabletop SWOT analysis of Lydney town centre. This analysis focussed on identifying key issues and opportunities that were important to the participants.



Event took place: 28 May 2021

Business Outreach

Alongside the Stakeholder workshop, business outreach interviews were conducted. These were conducted by two teams consisting of a Lydney Town Councillor and a consultant from Place Studio. The two groups worked from each end of the High Street to ensure coverage of the entire street.

A total of 16 businesses were interviewed. The full list of business names is available in the main report.

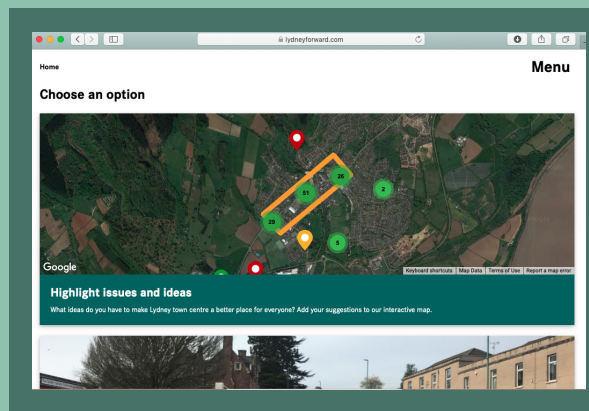
The results from these sessions are available in summary form in the responses and key themes section of this report and in full in the main report.

Event took place: 28 May 2021

Lydney Forward Website

In response to the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic Lydney Forward adopted an online approach to engagement with the community. Lydney Town Council built a bespoke project website and consultation platform at

www.lydneyforward.com.



Website was open for comment
XX until 1 August 2021

Community engagement on street event

Resulting from the relaxation of the COVID-19 regulations the Town Centre sub-committee resolved to supplement the existing community engagement with an on street drop-in event. The intention of this event was to capture the views of any local community members and residents that may not have been reached using the other methods.

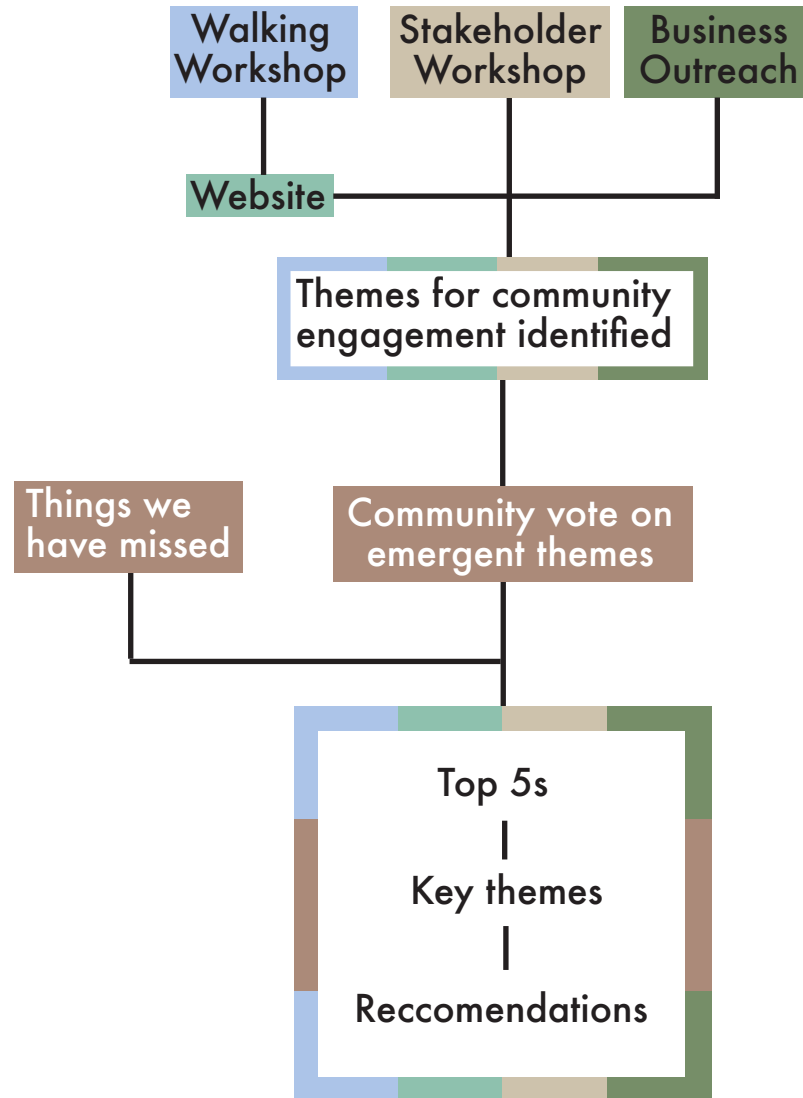


Event took place: 24 July 2021

Figure 1 shows the way the various streams of engagement feed into each other to form a cohesive base of local knowledge and aspirations that reflects the views of as much of the local population as is possible.

The initial workshops and business outreach events were combined alongside feedback received from the lydneyforward.com website to form themes that would shape the community feedback sessions.

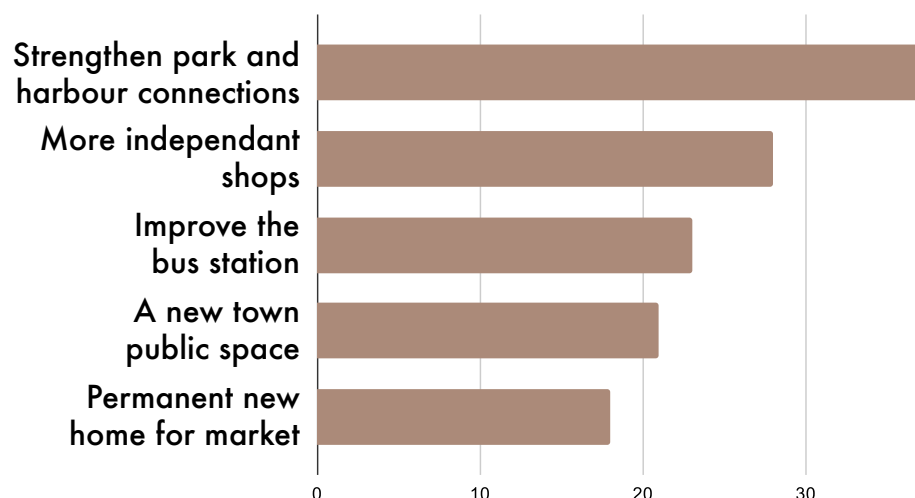
The emergent themes from the initial rounds of engagement were presented to the general public at a community engagement event. The public were then encouraged to vote on which they identified most strongly with. The public were also given the opportunity to highlight anything we had missed to ensure that no ideas or opinions were excluded from the discussion. It was found during the community



left:
Fig. 1

event that the public identified strongly with the emergent themes. This demonstrates that a general consensus exists within the community in regard to the key issues and priorities for improvement.

Figure 2: Long term priorities for change



The full report contains the in depth methodology and results from all the engagement sessions. For this executive summary the top 5 results from each category are presented. The categories are:

- What are your short term priorities for change in Lydney? (fig. 2)
- What are your long term priorities for change in Lydney? (fig. 3)
- What do you love about Lydney? (fig. 4)

On the following pages of this executive summary the Key themes and recommendations based on these will be presented.

Figure 3: Short term priorities for change

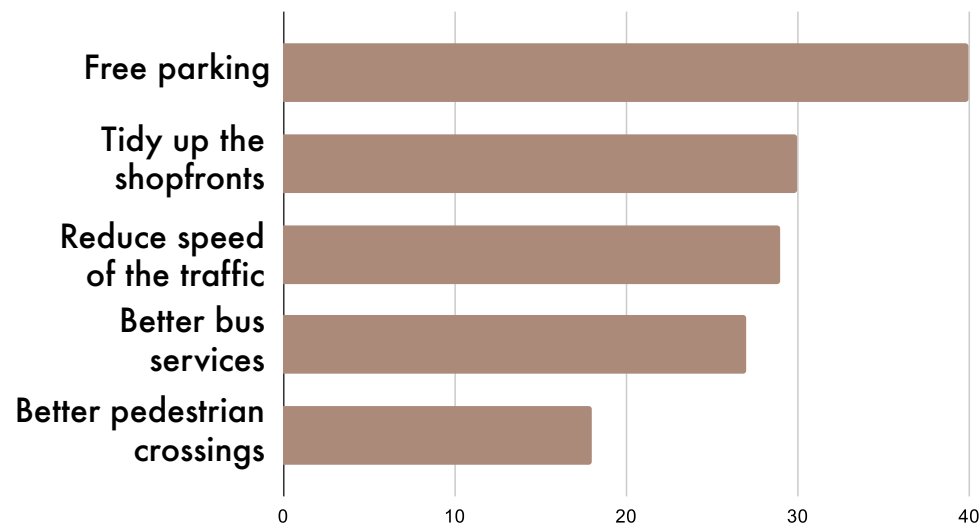
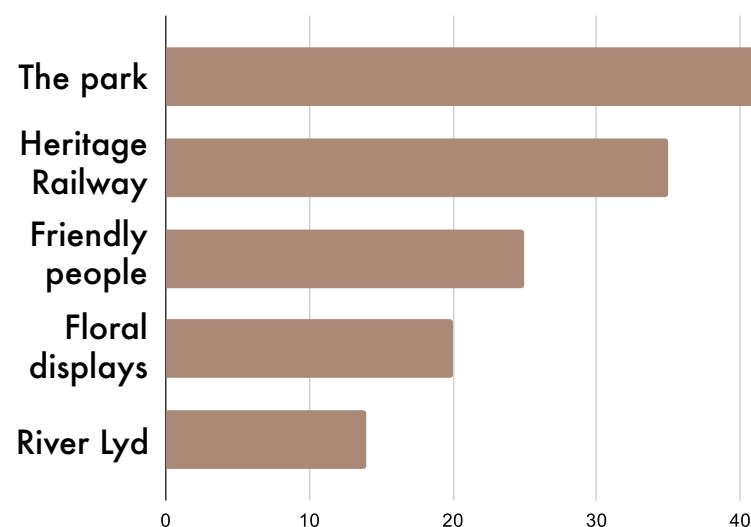


Figure 4: What do you love about Lydney?



2. A Networking Forum for Lydney Businesses?

Alongside the various streams of engagement undertaken by Place Studio and Streets Reimagined, Townswork also produced a report on the feasibility of a networking forum for Lydney businesses. This report "A Networking Forum for Lydney Businesses?" by Gerald Milward-Oliver is available in its entirety in the main report of engagement.

The report looked at previous initiatives alongside undertaking interviews with key business people in the local area with the intention of understanding the feasibility and desire for a town-centred business network.

Regarding the proposal of a Town-centred business network conclusions were:

"that a business networking forum will succeed if it is created by the business community itself – and the framework should be as an informal network rather than in the style of an outdated Chamber of Commerce governed by protocols, rules, membership costs etc."

(Townswork, 2021)

Further suggestions about how this might work are to be found in the full report. In addition to this:

"One strand that came out of discussions with the four business leaders was shared agreement that a workhub/coworking space would fit well with Lydney's evolving business community"

(Townswork, 2021)

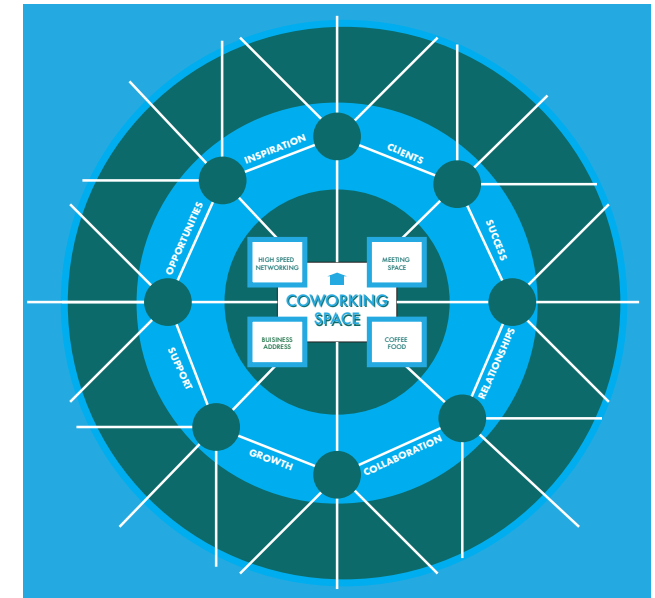


Figure 5: Diagram of a business network based around a coworking space

3. Conclusion of Phase One

The specification for the work undertaken by Place Studio, with Streets Reimagined and Townswork has set a baseline of analysis and collated community feedback that can inform future investments and improvements to the town centre.

Harnessing the collated feedback from events and surveys, this report highlights the key issues that have been raised by analysis and consultation respondents and suggests potential actions and projects that may be progressed as part of a phase two of the Lydney Forward Initiative.

These all relate to the key themes that have been drawn from analysis and community feedback.

1. Transport and Connections
2. Environment and Image
3. Offer and Value

All three themes should be addressed within a single comprehensive town centre master plan or strategy document. This will focus on progressing the delivery of medium and longer term projects and improvements.

Appendix 7 of the main report sets out our suggestions and recommendations for possible Quick Win strategies that complement potential longer term master planning goals.



3.1 Next Steps and Recommendations

The report has identified three priority projects:

1. Town Centre Strategy/Master Plan
2. Business Hub and Network Feasibility and Implementation Study
3. Town Centre Quick Win Projects Selection, Design and Implementation

Town Centre Master Planning and Strategy

Phase one SWOT analysis through stakeholder and community consultation has refreshed priorities for the future renewal and sustainable vitality of Lydney Town Centre, particularly in recovery from the impacts of Covid 19.

This has set out the community and stakeholder brief for priority

objectives for the strategy. However, it is stressed that further analysis and evidence will need to be gathered as part of the phase two master planning process to inform and underpin the strategy.

Suggested Delivery Route

Lydney Neighbourhood Plan (2014-2024) would benefit from review and refreshment of its policies if it is to remain an effective part of the development plan alongside the reviewed Forest of Dean Local Plan. It is capable of setting a raft of policies for the whole town council area. In particular a review creates an opportunity to review and bolster Town Centre Improvement Policy LYD CEN1. This policy is currently expressed as a policy to manage development proposals. There is an opportunity for this to be extended to more

directly relate to the delivery of a Town Centre Master Plan through both development requirements and priority projects to which contributions should be directed.

Lydney Town Centre “Design Code”

Budget & Funding

A plan review alone can cost between about £10K and £25k, depending on its complexity and level of change. The production of a masterplan for the town centre could require a budget of c£25K-£30K, plus an allowance for additional studies like conservation area review and car parking review.

Lydney Town Council is a “Qualifying Body” (QB) for a neighbourhood plan review. Locality (The Government’s neighbourhood planning support organisation), provide a basic grant of £10,000 towards the costs of undertaking a review. They may also grant a further £8,000 to QB’s that also wish to either allocate

development sites through their NDP or produce design coding or guidance. The latter grant may be applicable to the production of the town centre masterplan, or the environmental and design elements of it.

Locality also offer NDP groups technical support services provided free of charge by its consultant AECOM. This support is in addition to grant aid. Technical support services include assistance with master planning and design coding, which may be suitable to assist phase 2 work.

It may therefore be that progressing town centre policy and master plan strategy through the NDP review pathway offers an opportunity to secure significant

grant aid and technical support which Lydney TC is eligible to apply for.

We recommend this approach is considered to maximise the ability to manage appropriate development towards meeting community wishes, optimise the likelihood of harnessing resources through the planning process and because of the strong likelihood of securing resources.

Other Grant Support

High Streets and Town Centre renewal is the focus of Government and Local Authority attention due to the impacts of retailing change and the pandemic. Funding award packages are often related to the delivery of a distinct initiative that

meets criteria and are considered on a competitive basis. Phase 2 work can undertake a refined review of such opportunities as part of the master planning implementation strategy, when initiatives are more fully crystallised.

However, quick win priority projects may still be eligible for external funding support. This can be explored more swiftly as part of this distinct stream of work.

Business Hub Feasibility Study and Implementation Planning

The “Networking forum for lydney business?” report concludes that the preferred approach would be to:

“test the feasibility of setting up a coworking space in Lydney town centre. As part of the offer, the proposal is that the operators of the coworking centre would launch a Lydney business network, based at the Centre”

A distinct work stream for phase two should be the progression of feasibility and implementation analysis to progress this proposal.

Quick Win Projects

Appendix seven of the main report lists potential quick win projects to make early progress in enhancing the quality of accessibility, environment and the promotion of the town centre.

We recommend Phase 2 work prioritise quick win projects from

an agreed long list. It can then progress towards implementation and securing funding adding to Town Council capital.

Programming

This report recommends simultaneous progression of master planning, Business Hub feasibility and planning and the progression of quick win projects as each can be distinct and parallel streams of work. It will be necessary to ensure that there is dialogue between each stream to ensure that spatial requirements and options for the business hub are woven into the master planning and quick win projects do not conflict with longer term projects. We have also recommended master planning work is progressed as part of an NDP review.

Illustrative Phase 2 Sequencing

October 2021 – November 2021

- Phase 2 Project Brief, Delivery Methodology and Resolution to Proceed
- Confirmation of NDP Review Pathway

November 2021 – January 2022

- Support Appointment(s)
- Locality Grant Funding / Technical Support Secured

February 2022 – March 2022

- Initial NDP Review Analysis
- Initial Master Planning Evidence Collection/Surveys
- Business Hub Feasibility
- Quick Win Projects Selection and Design/Implementation Strategy

April 2022 – March 2023

- NDP review (to submission)
- Master Planning and Design Guidance
- Business Hub Delivery Progression
- Quick Win Project Delivery

April 2023 – March 2024

- NDP Formal Processes to Adoption (circa October 2023)
- Master Plan Consultation and Adoption
- Business Hub Project Delivery Progression
- Quick Win Project Delivery

2024 - 2030

- Longer Term Master Plan Projects Delivery
- Business Hub Delivery

