

St Dogmaels and Poppit Sands Active Travel Consultation

January 2025

ST DOGMAELS AND POPPIT SANDS ACTIVE TRAVEL CONSULTATION REPORT

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1. Introduction

1.1 Purpose of the report

Engagement has been undertaken by Pembrokeshire County Council (PCC) to gain feedback on the following active travel route proposals:

- Creation of a safe active travel link between St Dogmaels and Poppit Sands.
- Active travel improvements through the implementation of shared use paths in St Dogmaels.

In this report, shared use paths (SUPs) are defined as routes designed to accommodate the movement of people who walk, wheel and cycle, and active travel is defined as a way of getting around that involves physical activity, such as walking, wheeling or cycling.

This engagement has been undertaken as part of the wider engagement for the active travel improvements across Pembrokeshire. For St Dogmaels and Poppit Sands, this comprised of a community survey and a public consultation workshop and drop-in session. The survey engagement period ran for four weeks from Monday 21st October to Monday 18th November 2024. The public consultation commenced with a workshop on Monday 21st October with drop-in session between 10:00 – 12:00, 13:00 – 16:00 and 18:30 – 20:00 at St Dogmaels Memorial Hall.

This engagement report provides a summary of how the public engagement was undertaken and how the responses received were analysed. The results of this analysis and an outline of PCC will consider the responses at the next stage of the project are presented. The feedback received has also provided the Council with valuable local insights that will benefit both this project and other projects in the local area.

1.2 Report structure

This engagement report is structured as follows:

- Chapter 2 Project overview: project context and summary of previous engagement.
- Chapter 3 Engagement approach: methods of engagement, promotion and materials, feedback, analysis and accessibility.
- Chapter 4 Analysis of responses: common themes arising from the engagement.
- Chapter 5 Summary of feedback: a summary of the key findings from the engagement.
- Chapter 6 Next steps: sets out the next steps following engagement.

2. Project overview

St. Dogmaels is one of the more popular tourist destinations within Pembrokeshire, located at one end of the Pembrokeshire Coastal Path. Home to approximately 1,543 people (Census 2021), the village is also the site of a 12th Century Abbey. The village has grown around its historic routes and is characterised by narrow roads, often with limited footways for walkers, cyclists and wheelers. Parking is a challenge, with most residents parking on street or in limited parking areas through the village.

Traffic flow surveys were conducted in 2017 and 2019. The main road (the B4546) leads on to Poppit Sands, approximately 1.8 miles to the north. Traffic flow data from Easter (April) 2017 indicated 662 vehicles travelled north of the village between 07:00 and 19:00 (almost one car per minute). Department for Transport (DfT) traffic count data on the B4546 shows an average daily vehicle flow of 935 in 2019¹.

The proposals to improve pedestrian and cyclist movements through St. Dogmaels have been raised by local residents through the Local and County Councillors. Requests to seek a safe pedestrian route, which can then link on to Poppit Sands, form the basis of this current scheme.

Existing parking in and around St. Dogmaels is limited, with many residents parking within unallocated on-street parking spaces. This can lead to additional pressures on the network in terms of traffic flow and pinch-points.

The proposals aim to:

- Create a safe active travel link between St Dogmaels and Poppit Sands.
- Improve road safety for people who are walking, wheeling or cycling.
- Encourage socially inclusive active travel for all types of journeys including tourism and leisure.
- Reduce the levels of car dependency, reducing carbon footprint, pollution and congestion.
- Improve the environment, health and social wellbeing of the community.

2.1 St Dogmaels to Poppit Sands

This scheme looks to provide a segregated SUP adjacent to carriageway along the B4546 to Poppit Sands (a distance of 1.8 miles, shown in Figure 2-1). Poppit Sands is a popular destination for many local residents and visitors but there are no dedicated facilities for active travel users. The main road, Feidr Fawr (B4546), is a narrow road with fast traffic, blind bends and blind summits where drivers are unable to see people who are walking, wheeling or cycling or children. This is shown by the 3 slight collisions and 1 serious collision that have occurred on the B4546 between 2019-2023². The speed of traffic, with high hedges also impairing forward visibility, particularly on the section of the B4546 that heads north out of St Dogmaels, is also a significant concern and makes the provision of a scheme a necessity in terms of safety and encouraging modal shift to walking, wheeling and cycling.

This scheme was first proposed by the local community in 2006, and a local working party made up of residents was set up in 2013. Three feasibility studies have been completed on an off-road route between St Dogmaels and Poppit, the first by Pembrokeshire County Council in 2013, the second by Cam Nesa, and the third by WS Atkins Consulting Engineers in 2021. Further to these, an online petition calling for PCC to provide a safe and accessible walking and cycling path from St Dogmaels to Poppit Sands was launched in February 2024.

¹ Road traffic statistics - Manual count point: 811812

² CrashMap

There is significant community support for the scheme which suggests that once the route is in place, it will result in a modal change away from private car use for journeys to and from Poppit Sands.

Figure 2-1 - St Dogmaels to Poppit Sands



2.2 St Dogmaels improvements

Improvements in the centre of St Dogmaels have been split by two prioritised options, and four alternative options.

2.2.1 Prioritised options

The two prioritised routes are listed below and shown in Figure 2-2:

 Creation of an approximately 460 metre SUP connecting Feidr Fach footway and a cantilever boardwalk onto Pilot Street (Boardwalk Route); or the Creation of an approximately 645 metre SUP along High Street, Feidr Fawr and Pilot Street (B4546) (Village Centre Route).

The proposals aim to deliver one of these routes as part of phase 1 of improvements in St Dogmaels. Phase 1 includes looking at detailed design, leading to construction of the Boardwalk Route or Village Centre Route. The Boardwalk Route is the preferred route for construction first with the highest priority.

The Boardwalk Route aims to upgrade existing infrastructure in the area to provide safe and user-friendly connections along an existing Public Right of Way (PROW) along Feidr Fach. Elements of this route would require a cantilever boardwalk section near the tidal estuary.

The Village Centre Route aims to improve footway connectivity to Feidr Fach through a series of pedestrian improvements, including footway widening. This route also proposes priority flow for vehicle traffic at the High Street / Feidr Fawr junction. This includes the provision of a raised table, surface narrowing, and prioritisation of southbound traffic flow; enabling safer pedestrian movement through the area.

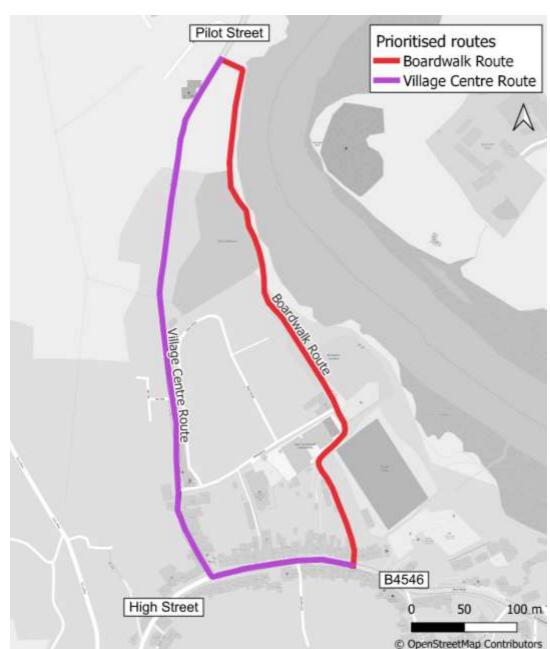


Figure 2-2 - St Dogmaels - prioritised routes

2.2.2 Alternative routes

Four potential alternative routes through St Dogmaels have also been considered and are shown in Figure 2-3. These would form part of Phase 2 and improve active travel links through the village core.

- Playing Fields Route offers an alternative option to the Boardwalk Route. It would require the ability to gate either end of the route and/or fence the route off from the playing fields. It is currently not a Public Right of Way or existing route and, therefore, would require completely new construction.
- Quiet Streets routing would use existing infrastructure and quiet ways to the east of the village. Designs will review
 the existing quiet streets route to ensure that they provide a safe, user-friendly connection via a new SUP to the
 east.
- Mill Street Quiet Way is an alternative quiet way routing to Quiet Streets. This routing is less desirable due to the estuary tidal range, with less direct connectivity along narrow, quiet streets.
- Estuary Walk is currently not a feasible route as a it is not classified as a Public Right of Way and is within the estuary tidal area. It is proposed that this route is discarded and not advanced any further.

Due to the unsuitability of the fourth option along Estuary Walk, PCC are only seeking feedback on the remaining three alternative options.

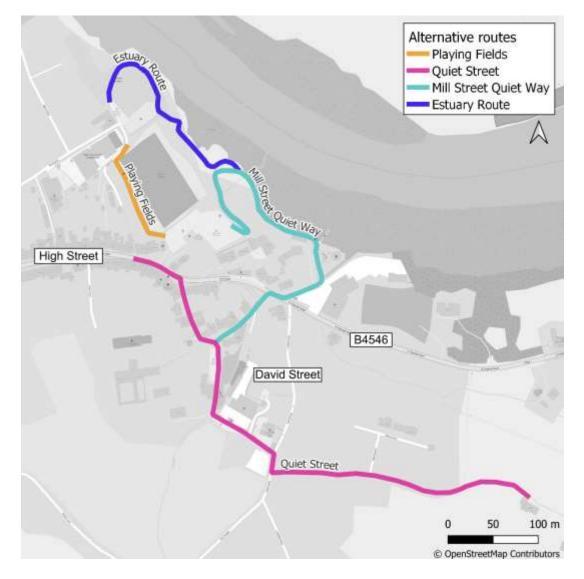


Figure 2-3 - St Dogmaels - alternative routes

3. Engagement approach

The purpose of this round of engagement was to formally engage with the local community on the proposed routes for active travel improvements, as part of the wider engagement for active travel improvements across Pembrokeshire. The public consultation aimed to gather feedback on proposed changes, gathering opinions on preferred route options where appropriate, and on initial feasibility designs.

Following on from this round of consultation, PCC will identify the final preferred option for each route. The feedback received from the local community will help to shape this option and the preferred option will not be finalised until all feedback has been analysed.

3.1 Survey

To better understand people's views on how to refine the scheme design, PCC developed a survey which was published online and promoted within the community. The survey was hosted on Microsoft Forms and was accessed via a link from PCC's website. Paper copies of the designs and survey, along with a comments box, were available at County Hall. Plans were also available from the Local County Councillor. The survey was available in Welsh in both formats, and posted copies of the designs and survey were made available upon request.

The survey questions aimed to gather feedback on the separate proposals. The questions included several open and closed questions, with each question set (one for each proposal) focusing on how often individuals travelled along each route, if individuals felt that the proposed routes would improve accessibility, and if they supported the proposed changes.

The survey ran for a period of four weeks from Monday 21st October to Monday 18th November 2024.

3.2 Face to face engagement

The public consultation period commenced with a drop-in session on Monday 21st October, between 10:00 – 12:00, 13:00 – 16:00 and 18:30 – 20:00 at the St Dogmaels Memorial Hall. The sessions each had representatives from PCC in attendance to answer any questions that arose. Visitors to each drop-in session were able to look at paper copies of the designs, which were also shown on story boards at the event. Individuals attending the drop-in sessions had the opportunity to fill in paper copies of the survey, as well as to leave any additional comments via the comments box. There were in excess of 105 attendees throughout the day, with representatives from the Local Town Council, St Dogmael's Footpath Association, Pembrokeshire Wheelers and general public.

The printed versions of the designs and paper surveys were available at County Hall or from the Local County Councillor until Monday 18th November, whereafter any remaining copies were collected and removed.

4. Analysis of responses

4.1 Survey

102 responses were received to this survey through online responses and paper copies received. The survey was advertised online from Monday 21st October to Monday 18th November.

It is important to note that, although 102 individual respondents answered the survey questions, in the following section, graphs with responses over 102 are where responses to multiple questions have been combined. Additionally, percentages in graphs may not add up to 100% due to minor rounding discrepancies. Questions in the survey were all optional for respondents to answer, including the *About You* question set.

All responses have been considered in the survey feedback.

4.1.1 Travel purpose

Figure 4-1 shows the split of the reasons that survey respondents gave for visiting St Dogmaels and Poppit Sands. Respondents were allowed to select more than one reason for their visits, totalling 142 responses.

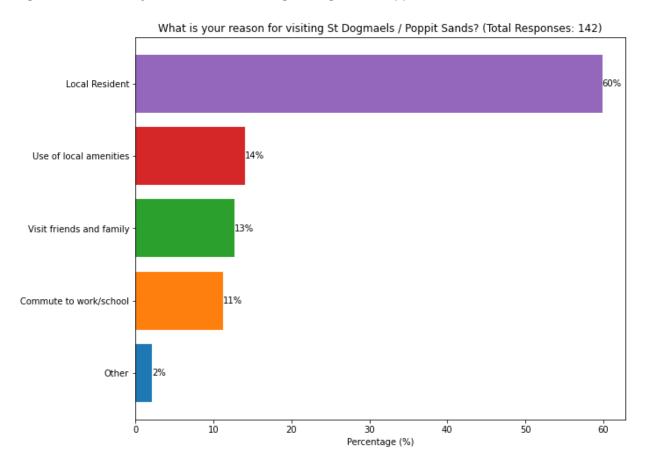


Figure 4-1 - What is your reason for visiting St Dogmaels/Poppit Sands?

The majority of respondents are local residents (60%), with trips to local amenities or to visit friends and families making up a combined 27% of responses. Commuting to work or school made up 11% of the responses, with 'other' journeys making up the final 2% of responses. This suggests that responses received from the consultation provide a strong sample of feedback from both residents and visitors to St Dogmaels.

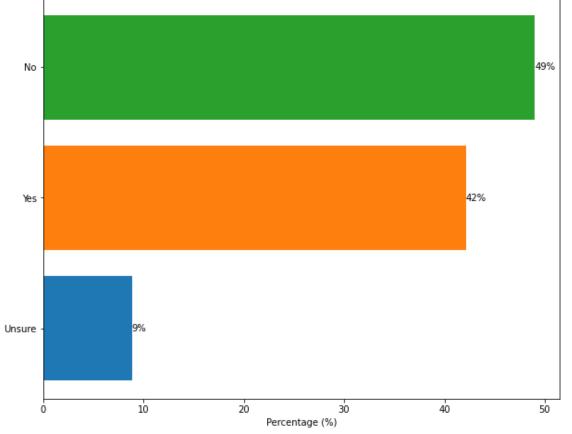
4.1.2 Opinions on the prioritised routes

Figure 4-2 shows whether survey respondents support the proposed SUPs presented in Figure 2-2. These routes are:

- Boardwalk Route Creation of an approximately 460m SUP connecting Feidr Fach footway with a new shared use path and a cantilever boardwalk linking onto Pilot Street via the existing PROW (red route on scheme plans).
- Village Centre Route Creation of an approximately 645m SUP along High Street, Feidr Fawr and Pilot Street (B4546) (purple route on scheme plans).

Figure 4-2 - Do you support the proposed SUPs highlighted in purple and red on the attached plans?

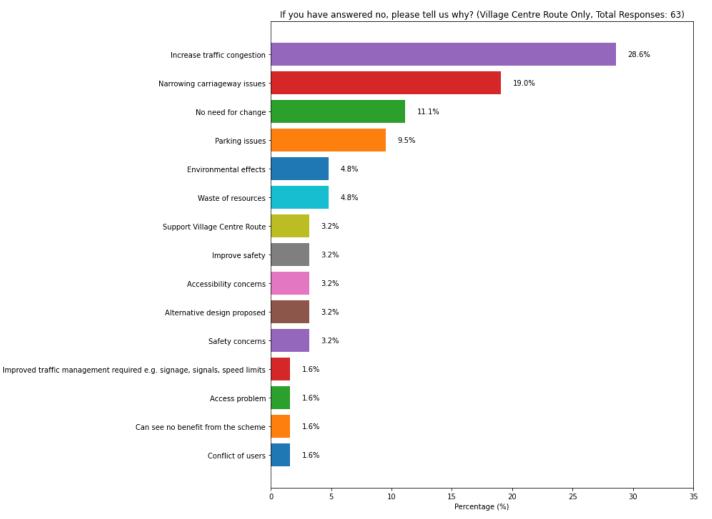
Do you support the proposed Shared Use Paths highlighted in purple and red on the attached plans? (Total Responses: 102)



The majority of respondents (49%) indicated that they do not support the proposed SUPs, as currently presented. This is a high-level answer, however, as a lot of feedback during the drop-in session was in favour of the Boardwalk Route, and less support for the Village Core Route. The online survey did not ask about the two options separately and would have given a more detailed response if it had. However, 42% did express support for the proposals and 9% of respondents indicated that they were 'unsure'.

If they responded 'no' or 'unsure' to this question, respondents were also asked to provide a reason why via an open question. Analysis of the common themes arising, as associated with each route, has been split out based on which route the comments refers to. 63 comments relating to the Village Centre Route were received, whilst only 23 were left regarding the Boardwalk Route. Additionally, 13 comments were categorised as general comments across both proposals. Figure 4-3 to Figure 4-5 show the breakdown of the most common themes for the routes and general comments.

Figure 4-3 - If you have answered no to question 3, please tell us why? (Village Centre Route)

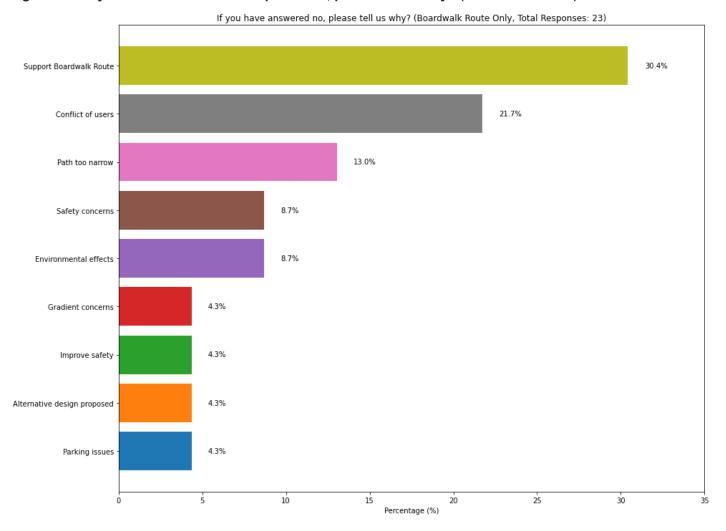


The most common themes in regard to the Village Centre Route were concerns over increased traffic congestion and a narrowed carriageway as a result of the scheme. In contrast, the most common theme for the Boardwalk Route was support for this route, with the main concern being the potential conflict of users.

It is worth nothing that some comments around the Village Centre Route via the High Street of St Dogmaels were supportive of the idea of improvements to safety. However, most respondents who answered 'no' or 'unsure' to the previous question, felt that the narrowing of the carriageway would cause severe issues particularly in terms of increasing queuing traffic and emergency vehicle access, including RNLI call outs. Respondents felt that the priority flow would cause congestion by creating a bottleneck and this could potentially have negative health effects for residents and visitors of the High Street via increased car emissions. Concerns arose around deliveries for shops on the High Street who could also pose a potential issue with the priority flow, blocking traffic in both directions.

Other comments around the Village Centre Route noted that active travel improvements could have the potential to obstruct access to residents' houses on the High Street or remove parking spaces outside their houses. Respondents felt that the removal parking places could affect local businesses by reducing the footfall on the High Street, noting that people with mobility issues may find it hard to access St Dogmaels via active modes. The removal of parking spaces was noted as a greater potential issue in the summer months, whereby car parks are often full of vehicles from visitors to the area. Interestingly, no removal of parking spaces has been proposed along the High Street within the plans, which indicates that this element was not made clear enough within the public consultation.

Additional comments mentioned the of conflict of users, with people who are walking and wheeling noting they would feel unsafe to share a path with people who are cycling, and the need for improvements to local bus services to encourage modal shift.



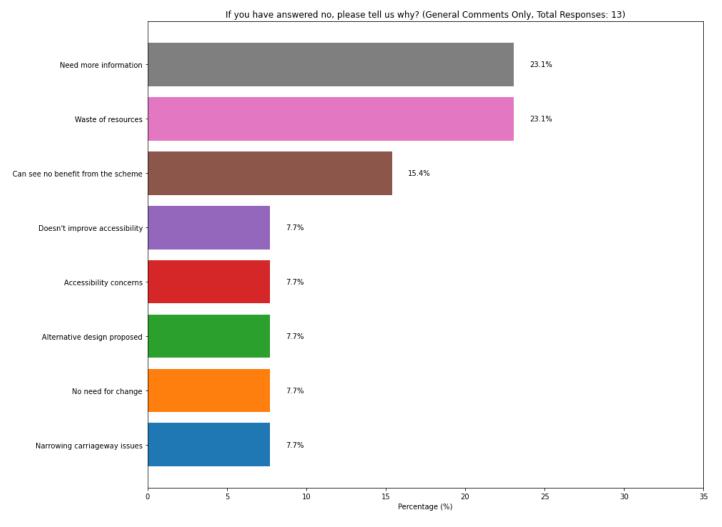


For respondents who provided comments on the Boardwalk Route, the sentiment was much more positive, despite the question only asking for further commentary for those who answered 'no' or 'unsure' to the previous question. Most of the comments supported the Boardwalk Route over the Village Centre Route and felt that the improvements had been required for a number of years.

Respondents felt that for it to work as a SUP, it would need to be sufficiently wide enough, or there would be a conflict of users. Comments felt that pinch points along the route could pose a risk to pedestrian safety and other users e.g. younger children on bikes or those with mobility issues. Separation between modes was suggested as a potential solution for the conflict of users.

Other comments noted that the surfacing and materials used for the Boardwalk Route should be considered for the longevity of the route, noting other local paths in need of repair.





The most common themes from the general comments were the idea that the scheme was a waste of resources or respondents requiring further information. Comments wanted to see further detail in the proposals and overall cost for the various options, whilst other comments felt that money could be spent elsewhere, suggesting expansion or construction of new car parks.

4.1.3 Opinions on alternative routes

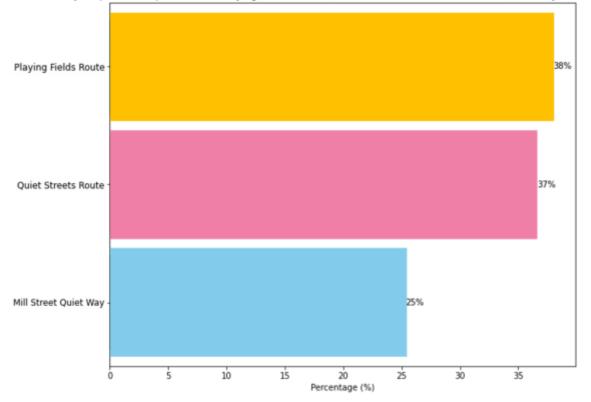
Figure 4-6 and Figure 4-7 show how respondents ranked their preferred and least preferred alternative route options respectively. The alternative routes are:

- Playing Fields Route (most popular)
- Quiet Streets
- Mill Street Quiet Way (least popular)

The Playing Fields Route was the most preferred option, accounting for 38% of responses, and received the lowest share of responses as the least preferred option, with 24% of responses. On the other hand, the Mill Street Quiet Way Route only received 25% of the share of the most preferred option, while receiving the highest share of responses for the least preferred option (46%).

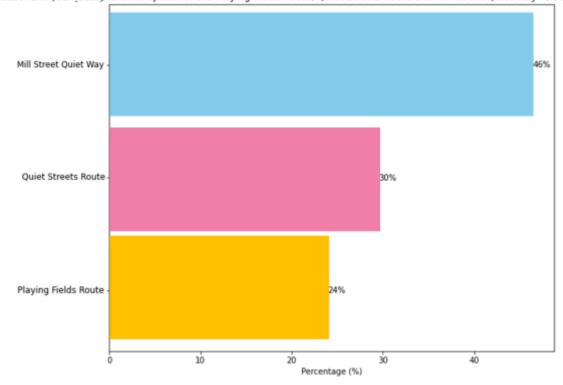
The responses show a preference for the Playing Fields Route, closely followed by the Quiet Streets Route.

Figure 4-6 - Please rank your preferred option for the Playing Fields, Quiet Streets and Mill Street Quiet Way Routes?



Please rank your preferred option for the Playing Fields Route, Quiet Streets Route and Mill Street Quiet Way? (Total Responses: 71)

Figure 4-7 - Please rank your least preferred option for the Playing Fields, Quiet Streets and Mill Street Quiet Way Routes?

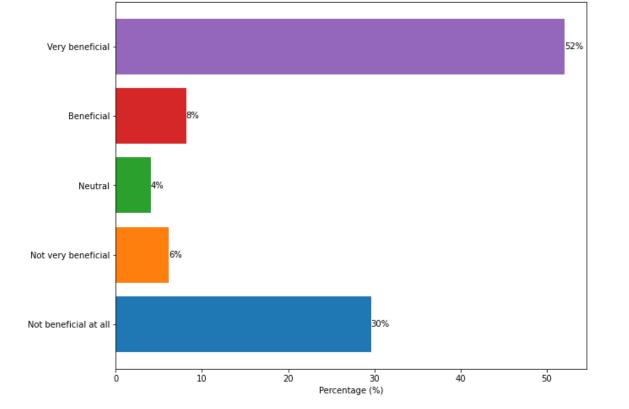


Please rank your least preferred option for the Playing Fields Route, Quiet Streets Route and Mill Street Quiet Way? (Total Responses: 71)

4.1.4 General opinions on the scheme

Figure 4-8 shows how beneficial survey respondents think the proposed connection from St Dogmaels to Poppit Sands would be. Encouragingly, 60% said 'beneficial' or 'very beneficial', compared to 36% saying 'not very beneficial' or 'not beneficial at all'.

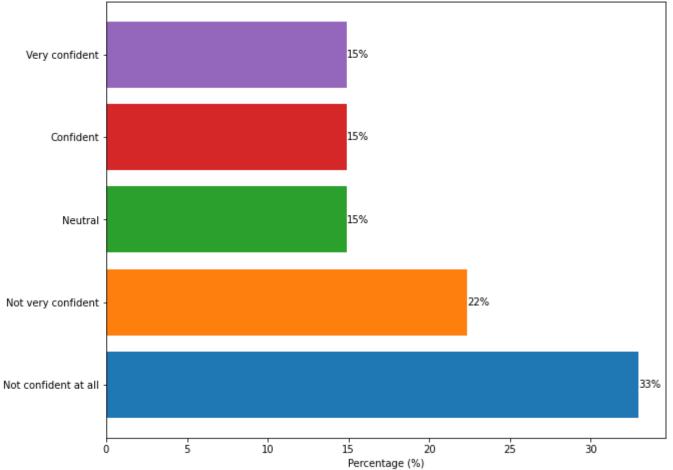
Figure 4-8 - In your opinion how beneficial do you think the proposed connection from St Dogmaels to Poppit Sands would be?



In your opinion how beneficial do you think the proposed connection from St Dogmaels to Poppit Sands would be? (Total Responses: 98)

Additionally, Figure 4-9 shows how confident survey respondents currently feel about cycling in the area. Only 30% said 'very confident' or 'confident' compared with 55% saying 'not very confident' or 'not confident at all'. These questions combine to show that there is a desire, and need for, an active travel route between St Dogmaels and Poppit Sands.





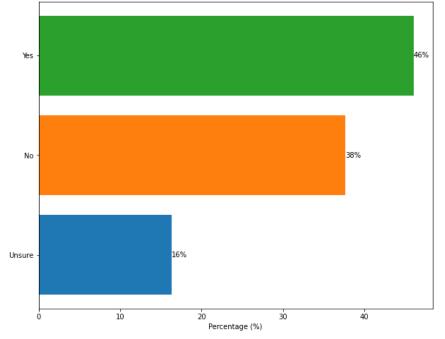
How confident do you currently feel about cycling in the area? (Total Responses: 94)

Figure 4-10 shows the responses to questions asking if respondents thought the implemented SUP would:

- Improve accessibility for those with mobility needs.
- Encourage the respondent to walk/cycle more.

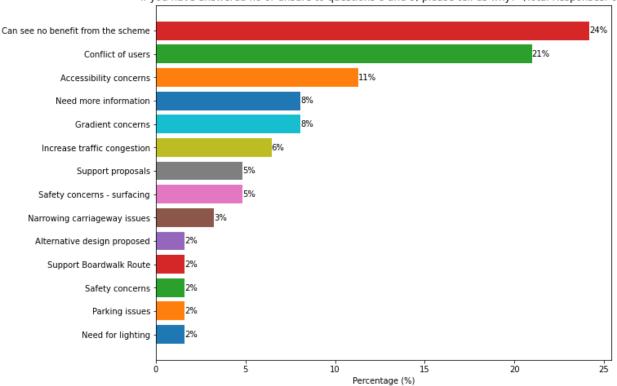
Figure 4-10 - Do you think the proposed SUP would encourage you to walk or cycle more and improve accessibility for people with mobility needs?

Do you think the proposed SUP would encourage you to walk or cycle more and improve accessibility for people with mobility needs? (Total Responses: 202)



There is a slightly higher response from those who agree (48% of responses) and those who disagree (38% of responses) with the statements. 16% of responses were 'unsure' on the two statements.





If you have answered no or unsure to questions 8 and 9, please tell us why? (Total Responses: 62)

Respondents that selected 'unsure' or 'no', were able to provide free text responses as to their reasons why, and these are shown in Figure 4-11. The most common themes were concern over there being no benefits to the scheme (24%) and a concern over the route causing conflicts between users (21%), highlighting the importance of considering segregation between different modes, if the scheme continues to the design stage.

Regarding the conflict of users, some respondents noted that the path would be used and supported proposals, only if the path was suitably wide enough to accommodate all users. Other comments noted that they felt cyclists should use the road network instead, as the speed in which they travel conflicts with those walking, wheeling or with mobility issues.

Respondents who noted that they had accessibility concerns felt that the introduction of the SUP would restrict car use, which is essential for those with mobility issues. There were also questions around how any steps or gradients on the route would be suitable for wheelchair users.

Other comments to note focused on the surface of the path. Respondents felt that the path would be beneficial if the surfacing was of good quality i.e. not slippery in wet weather or uneven, and if lighting could be installed along the path to allow use in darker periods.

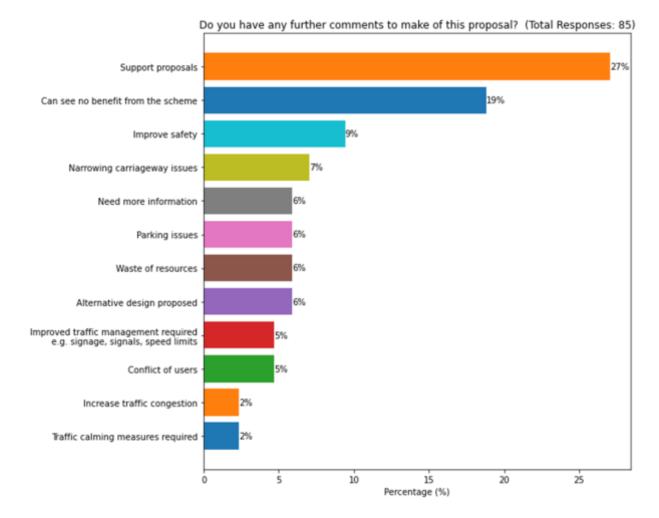


Figure 4-12 - Do you have any further comments to make of this proposal?

The most common theme for further comments on the proposal (Figure 4-12) was support for the proposals (27%). An additional 9% of comments referenced the scheme improving safety. Common negative themes included seeing no benefit from the scheme (19%) and concerns over issues caused by narrowing the carriageway (7%).

Support for proposals noted that a traffic-free route from Poppit Sands to St Dogmaels would be a significant improvement on the current route. Respondents felt that the path would be highly beneficial for improving access to Poppit Sands via active modes, promoting healthier modes of travel and helping to increase safety for all users, particularly children and those with mobility issues.

Regarding St Dogmaels improvements, those who supported the proposals felt that safer walking routes on the high street would be welcomed, particularly regarding children using the path. Some respondents suggested that further traffic management measures, such as enforcement of the 20mph speed limit, would also help to improve safety.

Comments from those who stated they could see no benefit from the scheme felt that the scheme was tailored for tourists and leisure trips, as opposed to residents living and working in St Dogmaels. Respondents felt that narrowing of the high street would lead to an increase in traffic congestion, and there are further concerns that this could affect emergency services accessing other parts of the village, including the RNLI who need to access the Lifeboat Station.

Additionally, respondents felt that the proposals would lead to a reduction of parking spaces, and that in busy summer peaks with the car park at capacity, this would cause an issue for residents and those with mobility issues.

4.1.5 Social and demographic questions

Figure 4-13 shows the age demographic of respondents to the survey, of the 102 surveys completed, 99 respondents answered this question.

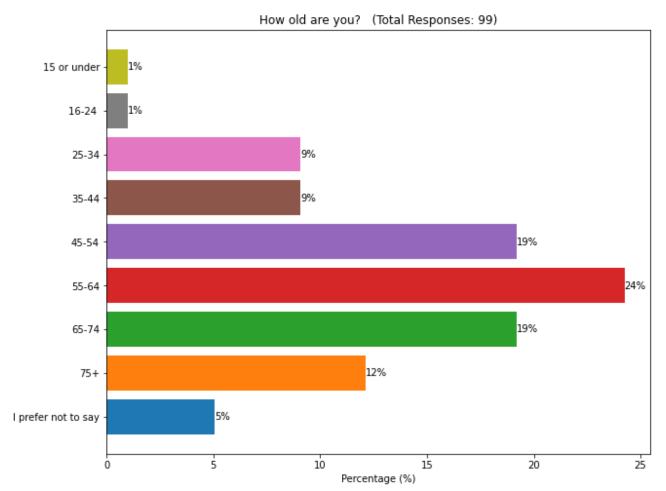


Figure 4-13 - How old are you?

There is a large range of ages, with responses from people under the age of 15 and over the age of 75. However, the responses are weighted towards people over the age of 45 (74%) compared with those under 45 (20%), with 5% preferring not to say. This is somewhat representative of the population of St Dogmaels, where people over the age of 45 make up 63% of the population³.

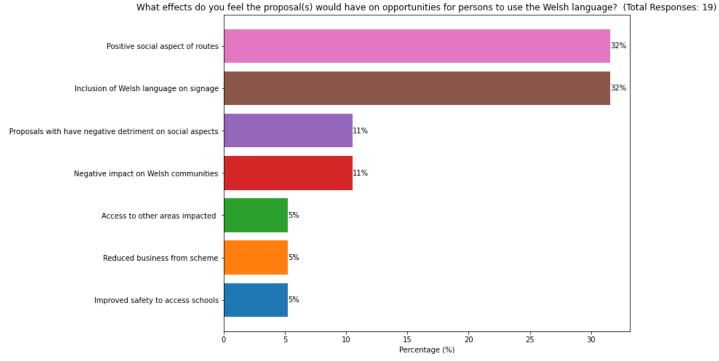


Figure 4-14 - What effects/opportunities would the proposals have on persons to use the Welsh language?

Figure 4-14 highlights opportunities and impacts that the proposals may have on use of the Welsh language. In response to this question, respondents noted that improved social cohesion caused by the encouragement of active travel will benefit the use of the Welsh language. Respondents felt that the introduction of active travel facilities would provide opportunities to meet and speak to other Welsh speakers also using the route. Some respondents noted that this opportunity this would help them to practice when learning the language, helping to facilitate a growth in local use of the Welsh language.

Additionally, there is a clearly identified opportunity to include Welsh language on the signage of the final proposal. Respondents felt that as well as directional signage, additional information boards such as information on the local nature/landscape and potential wildlife spotting could also be written in the Welsh language.

³ Build a custom area profile - Census 2021, ONS

5. Summary of feedback

Table 5-1 shows a summary of the conclusions from the survey analysis which will be used to inform the next steps of these proposed active travel route.

Survey section	Key themes			
Travel purpose	 The majority of respondents are local residents (60%), with leisure trips to local amenities or to visit friends and families making up a combined 27% of responses (Figure 4-1). 			
	 Commuting to work or school makes up 11% of the responses (Figure 4-1). 			
Opinions on the Village Centre and Boardwalk Routes	 There is a mix of responses, with 49% not supporting the SUP routes and 42% supporting the SUP routes, with 9% unsure (Figure 4-2). 			
	 Respondents supported the development of the Boardwalk Route over the Village Centre Route. Some comments noted that upgrades to the Boardwalk Route had been required for a number of years. 			
	 The most common theme for the Boardwalk Route was support for this route, with 30.4% of respondents to the question noting this. The main concern for the route is the potential conflict between users (Figure 4-4). This could be overcome through further detail design. 			
	 The most common themes regarding the Village Centre Route (which received many more comments than the Boardwalk Route overall) were concerns over increased traffic congestion and a narrowed carriageway as a result of the scheme (Figure 4-3). Respondents felt that the Village Centre Route would cause issues with traffic flows and negatively affect local residents. 			
Opinions on alternative routes	 The orange route was the most preferred option, accounting for 38% of responses (Figure 4-6), and received the lowest share of responses as the least preferred option, with 24% of responses (Figure 4-7). 			
	 On the other hand, the light blue route only received 25% of the share of the most preferred option (Figure 4-6), while receiving the highest share of responses for the least preferred option (46%) (Figure 4-7). 			
General opinions on the scheme	 There is a desire and need for an active travel route between St Dogmaels and Poppit Sands. Respondents generally think the proposals will be beneficial and are generally not confident cycling using the currently provided active travel infrastructure (Figure 4-8). 			
	 There is an even response between those who agree (48% of responses) and those who disagree (38% of responses) with whether the scheme encourages walking and cycling more and improves accessibility for those with mobility needs. 16% of responses were unsure on the two statements (Figure 4-10). 			
	 The most common themes for concerns over the proposals include believing there will be no benefits from the proposals, conflict between users, and issues with narrowing the carriageway. Despite this, the most common theme to the final open question was support for the proposals (Figure 4-11). 			
Social and demographic questions	 The responses are weighted towards people over the age of 45 (74%) compared with those under 45 (20%) (Figure 4-13). This is somewhat representative of the population of St Dogmaels, where people over the age of 45 make up 63% of the population. 			
	 There is a clearly identified opportunity to include Welsh language on the signage of the final proposal (Figure 4-14). 			

Table 5-1 - Conclusions from survey responses

6. Next steps

The purpose of this round of engagement was to formally engage with the local community on the proposed routes for active travel improvements, as part of the wider engagement for active travel improvements across Pembrokeshire. The summary from this engagement report can be used to feed into further iterations of the designs and can be taken forward to help with decisions on preferred alignments and take this project forward to design detail stage

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