



St Annes Sea Wall

Analysis of responses to public consultation

June 2021



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Background and context.

Background.

Fylde Council has obtained funding from the Environment Agency to develop a feasibility study to investigate various options for improving coastal erosion and flood risk management at Pleasure Island, St Annes.

A number of options are currently being considered, and following a consultation with over 100 stakeholders (local businesses and organisations), a preferred option was agreed.

Public consultation information on the preferred option was published on the Discover Fylde website on Friday 14th May 2021 and the public was invited to send their comments via email.

This resulted in an overwhelming response, so much so that the mailbox was temporarily closed on Monday 17th May 2021.

The consultation was then relaunched via an online form, which asked the public to provide answers to the following questions:

- *Do you support the proposal to replace the sea defences at The Island?*
- *What do you like about the proposal?*
- *What do you dislike about the proposal?*
- *Do you feel that there is anything that has been missed, not included or should be improved?*

The online form was closed on Wednesday 9th June 2021. All comments received via the email and via the online form have been analysed and included in this report. A further 27 comments sent via email after the 14th May and a letter from at.golf (MiniLinks) in support of the sea wall have been included in the analysis.

Context.

In total, there were 2029 responses: 1582 email responses and a further 447 responses to the online form. 203 respondents entered responses to both the email and online form (identified by duplicate email addresses). These 'duplicate' responses have only been counted once and are included in the online form data.

Any percentages reported should not be considered as representative of all residents in the borough and it should be noted that not all respondents are residents.

This report summarises the key themes amongst responses. All responses have been coded to identify these themes and example comments are used to illustrate them.

In the online form, respondents provided postcode data and analysis by postcode has been conducted and reported on when appropriate.

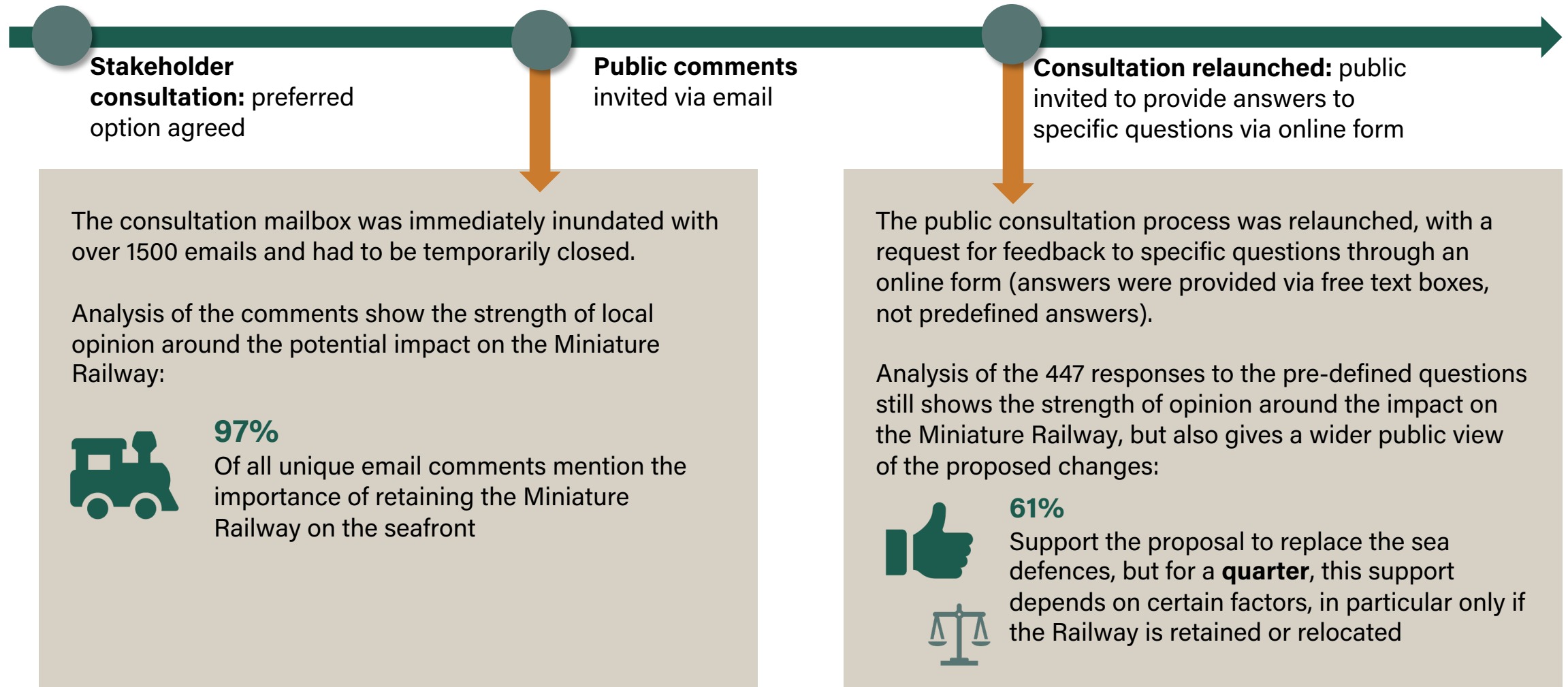
59% of all responses came from people living in the FY8 postcode area. The map across shows the geographical spread for all other respondents, demonstrating the wide-ranging interest in the consultation.

Where respondents live (excluding FY8)



Story of the consultation.

The consultation timeline.



Initial reaction.



1367

Unique responses to the email consultation

Key themes amongst the coded email responses:



97%

Of all email comments mention the importance of retaining the Miniature Railway on the seafront



4 in 10

Are concerned the proposed option will affect the history and unique character of St Annes



Most common reasons given for why the Railway is so important to people:

- It is a key part of **St Annes history** and **unique character** (mentioned in 37% of comments)
- It is a **key attraction** (18%)
- It holds many **special memories** (17%)
- It is a key attraction for **families/children** (16%)

Response to wider questions.



447

Responses to specific consultation questions via the online form



Level of support for the proposal:

61%

Support the proposal to replace the sea defences to some degree, but for **a quarter** of all respondents this support is conditional on certain factors, in particular only if the Railway is retained or relocated

Main aspects people like about the proposal:



23%

Feel the sea walls need improving

21%

That it will protect the town from future floods

Main aspects people dislike about the proposal:



83%

That the Miniature Railway will be removed



18%

The impact on the other seafront amenities

Putting it all together.



The volume and strength of response should be recognised.

The consultation received the best part of 2000 responses, both from local residents and those from further afield. Whether they support it or not, there is clear interest in the plans for a Sea Wall and the impact it could have on the area.



There is some support for a Sea Wall.

- When asked the question, 3 in 5 support the plans to some extent. More than half caveat their support with conditions or things they would like to see though.
- The strength of support appears greater amongst those living closest to the sea in the area.
- There is general acknowledgement that a sea wall is needed to protect the town in the future.



But many don't want to see local attractions and amenities lost as a result.

- The Miniature Railway has dominated the consultation, particularly the early feedback by email.
- The main reasons people feel it is so important to retain it are the impact on the history and character of St Annes and that it is seen as a key attraction for the area.



1 in 10 would like more information on the plans and further public consultation opportunities.



Feedback from email responses.

There is overwhelming support for the Miniature Railway to remain on the seafront.



Coded responses from email responses to the consultation (n=1367)

Many responses detail how the Railway is a part of St Annes history and character and is a key traditional attraction for both locals and tourists.



Many emails gave reasons for why they feel the Railway should be retained. The key themes amongst these comments are:



It is a key part of St Annes **history** and unique **character**

37%



It holds too many special **memories** to be removed

17%



It is a **key traditional attraction** for locals and tourists

18%



It is a key local activity for **families/children**

16%

Coded responses from emails (n=1367)

The importance of the train: example comments from the email responses.



“ Do not get rid of St Annes Miniature Railway. A real piece of our history and an attraction for locals and visitors alike.

”

“

I am totally against any plan that will remove the miniature railway and close down a family business. This railway is part of St Annes history and gives pleasure to so many local and visiting child and their parents. We are a seaside town that needs attractions for our visitors and removing one doesn't make sense.

”

“ This train carries a lot of memories for a lot of people who still live in St Annes. People enjoy and look forward to bringing their own children to ride the train. If that goes, what would attract tourists to that part of the promenade?

”

“ I don't live in St Anne's but travel to take my grandchildren to this area specifically because it is a great area for children. They all love the train. To remove this will also remove one of the reasons that families visit your town as being honest there's not much else to attract families other than the beach. It's part of the town and should remain.

”

“

I think the train track should be kept as part of the history and heritage of the attractions of St Anne's. For something to be taken away that forms part of people's memories and traditions is really sad and things like this should be celebrated and developed in order to keep for future children to enjoy.

”

The concern about the impact on St Annes' history and character is also a wider concern amongst respondents.



Other, less prominent themes amongst the email comments include:



7% mention the need to find a solution that does not affect any seafront amenities, including the **golf** and **beach huts**



A further **6%** of comments (not specific to the removal of the railway) relate to the concern that proposed changes will further erode the **history** and unique **character of the town**



6% say they support the need for a new sea wall in principle



2% feel that there is either no need for a new sea wall and that the area rarely floods

Coded responses from emails (n=1367)

Example comments from the email responses.



“ As a local resident I think it's important to retain the family heritage on the front at St Annes. It should not be overlooked that these long loved activities have provided so much family fun and joy for both local and visiting families young and old. I am sure that it also encourages tourism offering a different holiday than that offered in Blackpool. The pitch and put golf, miniature railway and trampolines provides a great alternative to the beach and the St Annes pier for families. Whilst I am all for modernization, in this case , I feel that these activities support traditional family tourism and distinguish St Annes from other seaside resorts. ”

“ I don't understand at all why a sea wall needs to be built in that location - what a complete waste of money when it must have flooded a handful of times in a 100 years? Even if there was a freakish high tide/storm then the mini links acts as a natural sea defence. The worst comes to the absolute worst then the beach huts should be moved and a defence could be built there. ”

“ Whilst improvements to the seafront at St Annes are welcome, removing facilities such as the miniature railway is a retrograde step, akin to the previous “improvements” to the prom which robbed the town of traditional facilities which are now very much in vogue. ”

Some points raised, whilst not made in volume, reflect on the potential wider impact of the proposed changes.



A range of comments were made on the negative impact on:

- The local economy of removing key attractions
- Residents and local businesses whilst the changes are made
- The quality of the view

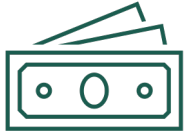
Some respondents question the need for the sea wall to be so high and are not convinced that St Annes is in danger of flooding now or in the future

Parents of some children with physical and/or learning disabilities mention that the train is one of the only accessible activities for their children in the area

A number of families commented that they have scattered the ashes of loved ones at the site of the Railway

Some respondents would like more information and for further public consultation to take place

A minority of respondents made suggestions as to how the proposed plans could be changed or improved.



Wider modernisation and investment

- Invest more in the railway and extend it along the coast
- Upgrade the trampolines
- Simply repair and renovate the current sea walls
- Invest the money in a wider regeneration of the town instead



Change the design

- Differentiate St Annes from the other recent sea wall developments, e.g. in Fairhaven
- Include railings to make the design safer
- Move the beach huts and reduce the size of the golf rather than the railway



Feedback from online form responses.

6 in 10 support the overall idea to replace the sea defences, with this support conditional for a quarter.



Not clear/unsure:
6%

Yes: 37%

No: 33%

Yes , but only
if...: 24%

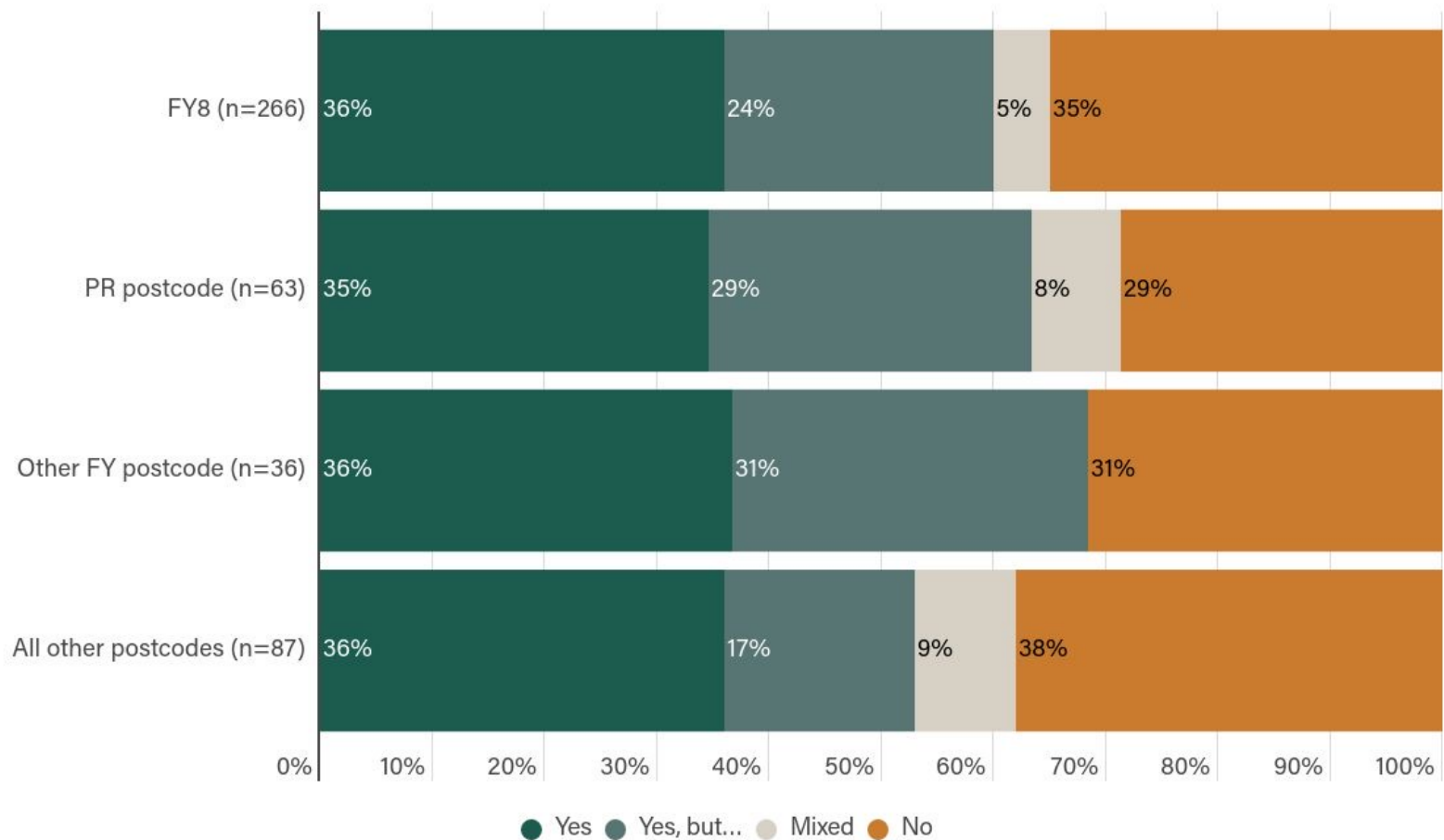
Q1: Do you support
the proposal to
replace the sea
defences at The
Island?

Respondents were given an open text box to record their response, and were not asked to give a reason for their support or objection.

However, many respondents did give more context to their responses which can be seen later in this report.

Coded responses from answers to the online form (n=447)

There are few differences in the level of support when we look at the location of respondents.



The proportion of respondents indicating overall support for the plans is virtually the same across all location areas.

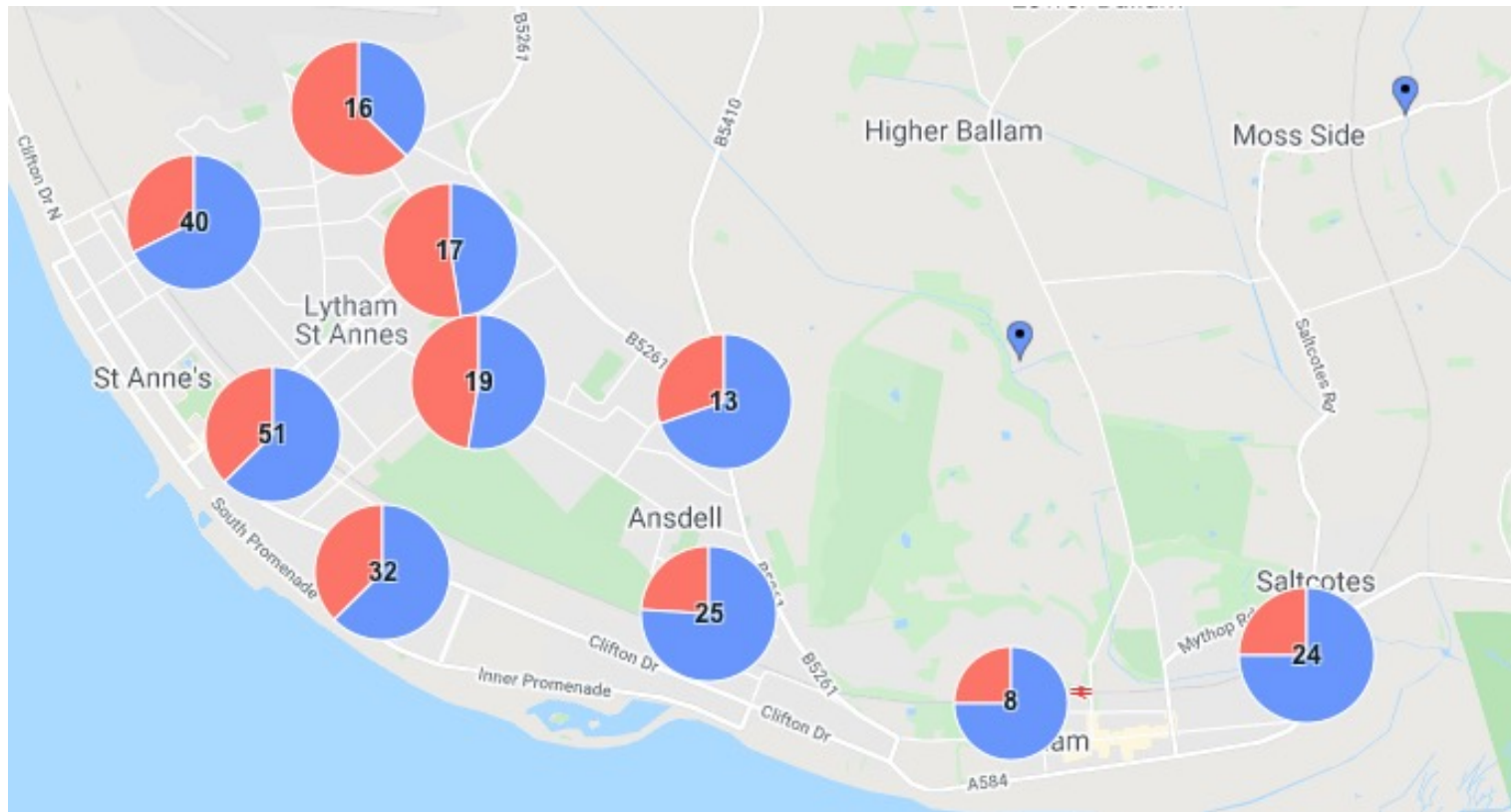
Those responding from postcode areas outside of FY and PR appear slightly more likely to be against the proposals, although this is not statistically significant.

Coded responses from answers to the online form (breakdown of 'n' totals in the chart)

But those living closer to the sea appear more likely to support the proposals.



Support the proposals to some extent | Do not support the proposals



This map shows whether or not respondents from the FY8 postcode area indicated overall support for the proposals.

Focusing around Lytham and St Annes, those who live closer to the sea appear more likely to support the proposals (blue), whereas those further inland appear more likely to oppose the plans (red).

Map generated using BatchGeo on 18 June 2021

Of those caveating their support, **64%** state they would not support a proposal that results in the loss of the Railway.



Yes: 37% indicated their support without detailing any reasons/conditions

Yes, but only if: 24% indicated that their support is based on certain conditions

No: 34% indicated that they do not support the proposal

Yes, but only if...



...the Railway is not removed

64% of these respondents say they are not in favour of a proposal that would result in the loss of the Miniature Railway



...it doesn't impact any seafront amenities

30% of these respondents say they are not in favour of a proposal that impacts negatively on any of the key seafront attractions/amenities, including the railway, golf and beach huts

Coded responses from answers to the online form (n=109)

Overall support: example comments from online form responses.



“ I support trying to update the sea wall but not at the cost of losing the miniature railway. I have very fond memories of riding on this train when I was a child and also taking my children on for rides and now my grandson. It is a local heritage and should be made so. ”

“ Yes but it is not absolutely necessary. The only flooding has been in the car park and that was because the drains were blocked. So I only support the proposal if an option is chosen retaining the miniature railway ”

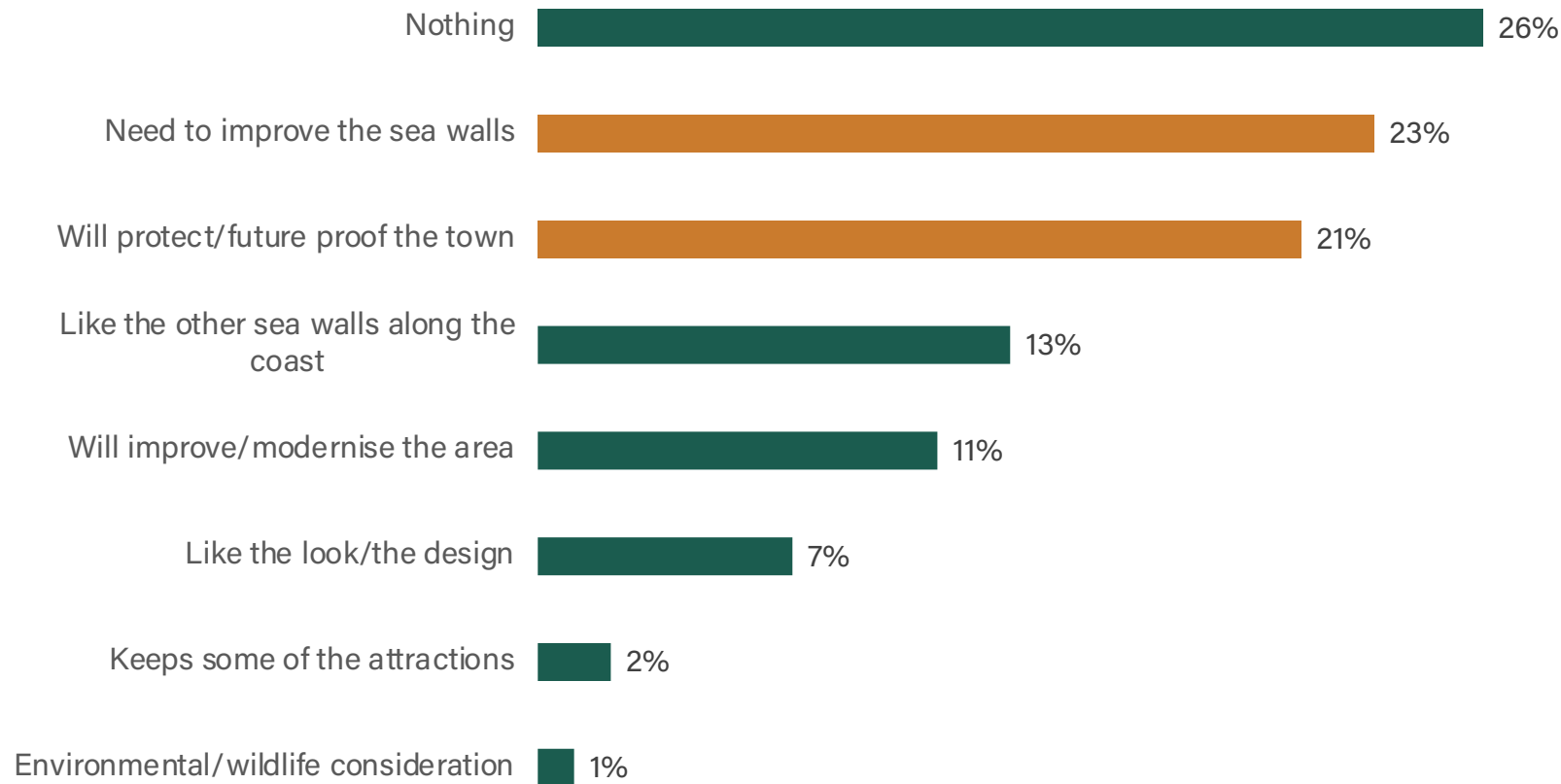
“ Absolutely. Yes. The work at Fairhaven lake is magnificent and it would be wonderful to improve the St Anne's sea defences in the same way. After seeing what you've done at Granny's Bay, I know you will do the work beautifully. ”

“ Somewhat, it is good to protect the front from flooding, although I've lived in St Anne's 14 years and don't seem to recall flooding as a common occurrence, there needs to be consideration for the local businesses, ie the miniature train, I feel if it was a large corporation with a business there they would be protected. The train needs either needs funding to work with the new defense or the defence altered to keep the train. ”

The most liked aspects are that the sea wall will be improved and will protect the town from future floods.



Q2. What do you like about the proposal?

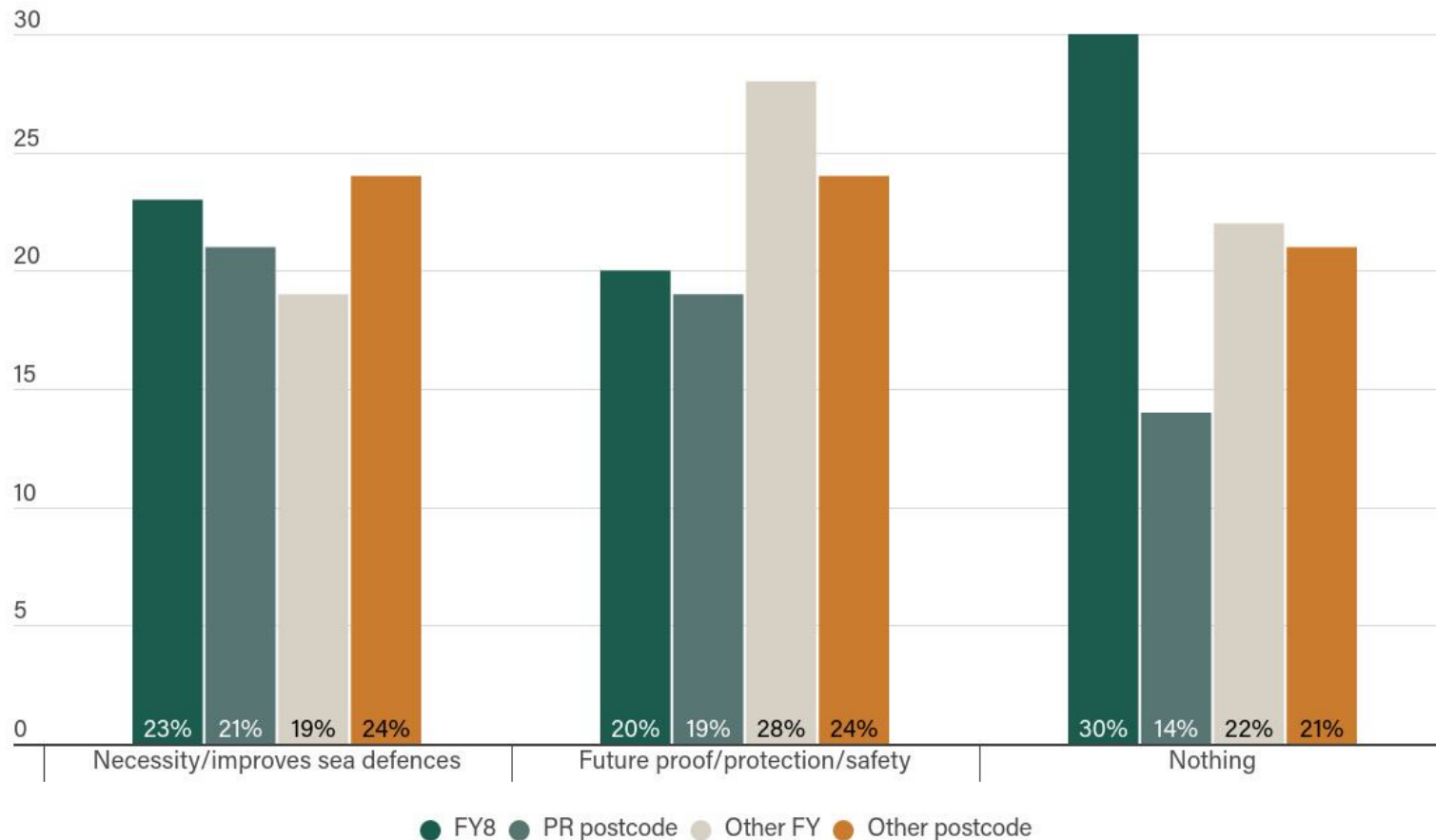


Respondents were given an open text box and asked to comment on what aspects they like about the proposal.

- Just over a quarter (26%) said they don't like any aspects of the proposal
- Around a fifth (23%) feel that improving the sea walls needs to be done
- Around a fifth (21%) like that it will protect the promenade and town from future flooding
- Just over 1 in 10 (13%) mention that they like the other sea wall improvements, such as at Granny's Bay and Fairhaven

Coded responses from answers to the online form (n=447)

Local people in FY8 were more likely than others to say that there is nothing they like about the proposals.



Looking at three key themes from the coding of question 2 (what people like about the proposal):

- Those outside of the area (both in other FY postcodes and further afield) appear more likely to recognise the importance of future proofing, protection and safety in the proposals
- 3 in 10 of those most local in FY8 indicated that there is nothing they like about the proposals

Coded responses from answers to the online form (n=447)

Aspects liked: example comments from online form responses.



“ It is important to protect St Anne's from further floods, but maybe you could find another way....one that doesn't result in the destruction of a much loved attraction - the miniature railway holds many fond memories for so many people. ”

“ It brings no benefits whatsoever, you can't even design a different prom - the same as Lytham the same as Fairhaven - wow the variety will excite visitors to the town. Yes Lytham and Fairhaven are good, but same again? Where it is not needed? ”

“ I'd like to see a headland built out as they've done in Blackpool and the area developed along the promenade from the pier to Fairhaven including a train along that stretch. The two areas should be connected and would be a massive attraction to the area. ”

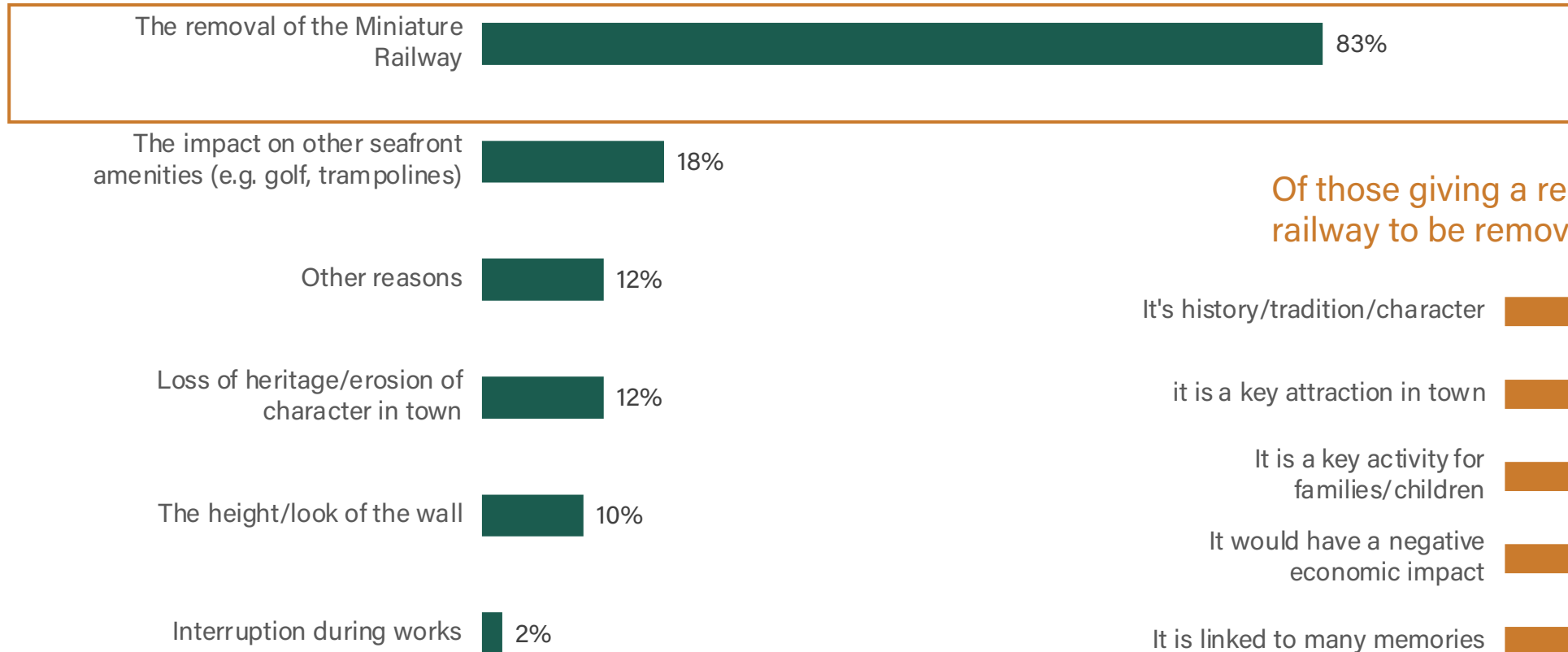
“ I like the improved beach access by the step feature like Granny's Bay. Also will give improved protection for nearby properties. ”

“ The step system similar to Fairhaven will greatly enhance the area and improve the view. This will also attract more tourists to the area. ”

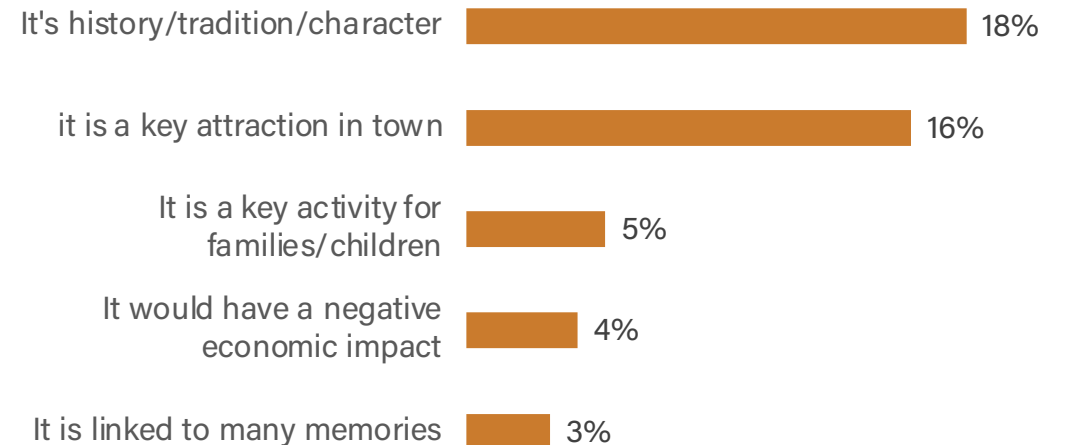
The removal of the Railway is by far the most disliked aspect of the proposal: 8 in 10 say they dislike this.



Q3. What do you dislike about the proposal?



Of those giving a reason for not wanting the railway to be removed, the key themes are:



Coded responses from the open text answers to the online form (n=447)

Coded responses (all those mentioning the railway, n=369)

Aspects disliked: example comments from online form responses.



“ The proposed height is too much, I also consider a sea defence like Fairhaven to be dangerous. If someone were to be knocked over by the cyclists travelling at speed there is nothing to stop them falling down the whole defences to the beach. Similarly strong winds could cause someone to stumble and fall with nothing to stop them. ”

“ It will completely take any charm that our promenade has away. We are a gorgeous Victorian town and more and more our heritage is being stripped. Why would we want to look the exact same as everywhere else? Why would anyone bother visiting a town that looks a complete carbon copy of the surrounding towns? ”

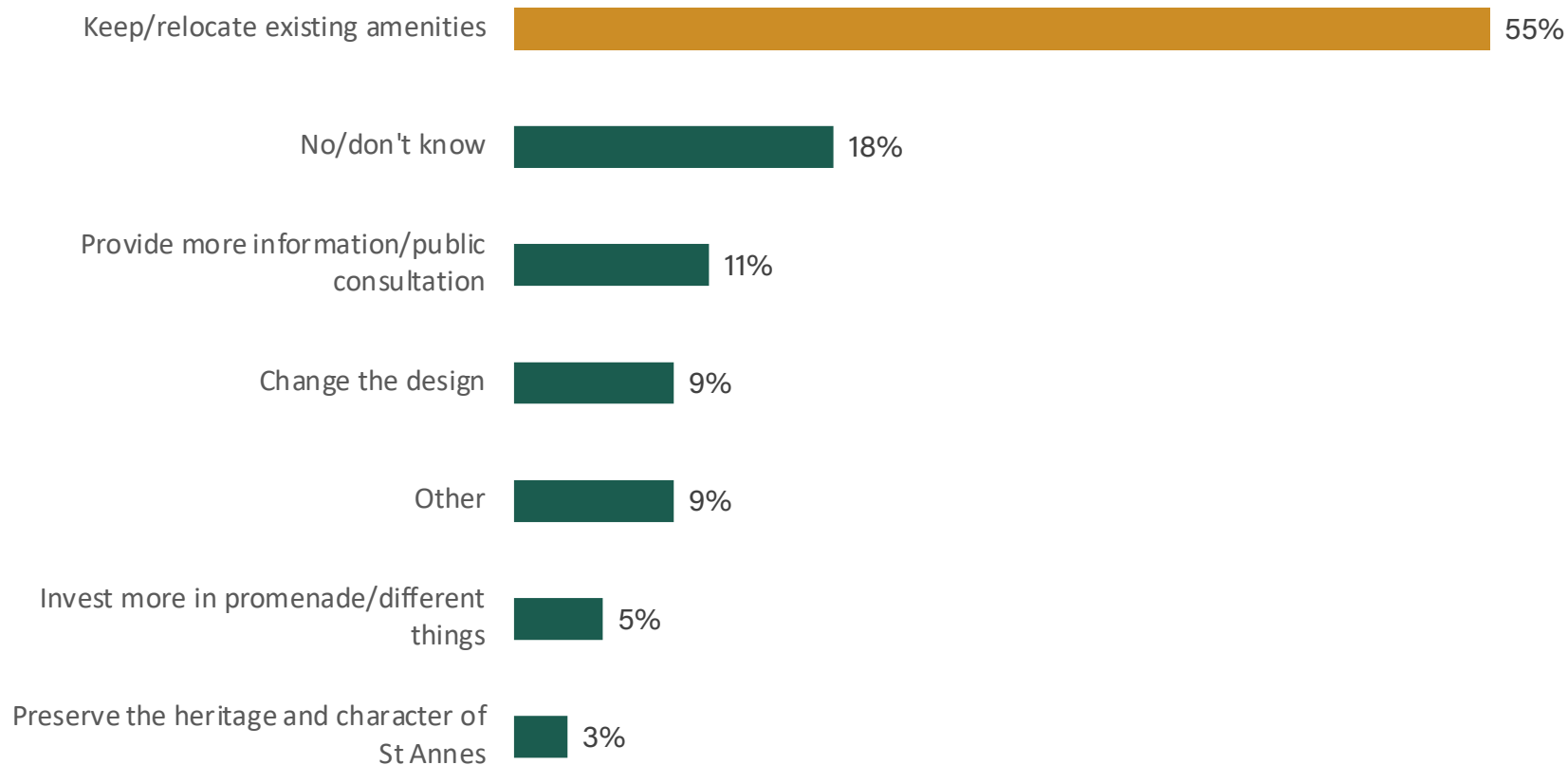
“ Possible loss of leisure amenities, particularly the miniature railway. This is part of St Annes heritage, enjoyed by many generations and it is important to keep it. Tourists visit to enjoy the beach huts, golf & railway. To lose these, even temporarily, would surely affect the economy generally. ”

“ Not replacing the track for the miniature railway. It is disgraceful to give preference to the beach huts which have only been there for a few years over the train which has been there for over 50 years and is iconic in St Annes. ”

Over half of respondents would like existing amenities to be included in the plans.



Q4. Do you feel that there is anything that has been missed, not included or could be improved?



Respondents were given an open text box and asked to comment on what they feel has been missed, not included or could be improved.

Over half (55%) mention the need to keep or relocate the existing amenities, in particular the Miniature Railway.

Almost a fifth were either unsure or did not feel anything had been missed or could be improved.

Just over 1 in 10 feel more information should be provided and/or that further public consultation is needed.

Coded responses from answers to the online form (n=447)

Things to include or improve: example comments from online form responses.



“ There is a fantastic opportunity to enhance the overall "seafront visitor experience", an opportunity that should be fully explored and planned in detail as part of an overall bigger picture. ”

“ Picture 38 on page 19 is a shot of the beach. What will happen to the beach when the defences are put in place? Will there be any dry sand? How will the main beach be effected? Will there be railings to prevent small children just toppling down the steps? Will there be railings on the steps to help people with mobility issues? Will there be wheelchair/pushchair access? ”

“ I accept that the sea wall needs replacing but more effort and thought should be put into having the miniature railway & other amenities placed elsewhere- maybe running along to Fairhaven or something. There's massive public opinion the railway should stay - it's one of the things St Annes is known for . The council have got rid of many structures / attractions over the years which have been a mistake . ”

“ It brings no benefits whatsoever, you can't even design a different prom - the same as Lytham the same as Fairhaven - wow the variety will excite visitors to the town. Yes Lytham and Fairhaven are good, but same again? Where it is not needed? ”

There are some points raised by smaller numbers of respondents throughout the online form.



And these are very similar to those raised in the email feedback

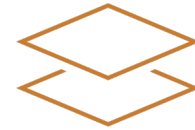


A range of comments were made on the negative impact on:

- The local economy of removing key attractions
- Residents and local businesses whilst the changes are made
- The quality of the view



Parents of some children with physical and/or learning disabilities mention that the train is one of the only accessible activities for their children in the area



Suggested improvements include:

- Invest in other areas, such as an outdoor pool and providing toilets
- Improve the accessibility within the design, e.g. include railings, ensure there is wheelchair access
- Use less concrete in the design



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It all starts with good research.