



FOREST OF DEAN: MARKET TOWN REGENERATION REPORT







THE FOREST OF DEAN

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INTRODUCTION

Flying Geese has been commissioned by Forest of Dean District Council to research the unique identity and public sentiment towards the District's four Market Towns: Cinderford, Coleford, Lydney and Newent.

Each town has the potential to become a vibrant and prosperous destination for residents and visitors to enjoy, within the natural beauty of the wider Forest of Dean. But there are also challenges that have been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, cost of living crisis, and other global uncertainties such as climate change.

This report explores the role, function and unique qualities of each town, identifying the strengths, opportunities and challenges they face. The findings of our research and the included recommendations can influence regeneration strategies across areas of business, retail, hospitality, cultural and community safety strategies. The colour palettes, moodboards, photography and copywriting will work as a style guide for aesthetic urban regeneration.

METHODOLOGY

The report has been compiled using a combination of primary and secondary research sources. While residents were asked specifically about the towns they live in, the consultation respondents contributed to the research for all four towns.

Primary consultation with the Market Towns' communities, key stakeholders and specific community groups includes:

- Online survey with 948 responses in total. 170 from Cinderford, 313 from Coleford. 269 from Lydney and 160 from Newent
- 69 street surveys, with approximately 20 from each town, and 9 in Newent
- 24 stakeholder interviews with key members of the community
- 6 'Meet and Greets' with sector influencers who helped us spread the message about the project
- A children's art project where children were encouraged to make a collage that represented their town and inspire the design of this work
- In person focus groups, including three secondary schools, Cinderford Luncheon Club, Lydney Neighbourhood Plan consultation event, Broadwell Social Club for vulnerable people
- 8 online focus groups

Desk research brought together key data from multiple sources to help paint a picture of the towns. Data within this report comes from:

- Census 2021, MSOA population data
- Public Health England
- The Audience Agency
- TGI/ LMSE consumer data (Local Market Size Estimate from BMRB Target Group Index survey)
- Local Insight profiles (Oxford Consultants for Social Inclusion)
- MHCLG - Energy Performance Certificates for domestic buildings (Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government)
- Forest of Dean District Council Annual Town Centre Monitoring Reports (22/23)
- Forest of Dean District Council Climate Energy Plan
- Forest of Dean District Council Draft Local Plan 2041

REPORT STRUCTURE

Each Market Town has its own chapter of analysis according to the following themes and metrics:

- Visual identity
- Headline information and summary
- Thriving business
- Arts, culture & heritage
- Social factors
- Health & wellbeing
- Environmental factors

A summary of insights from under-represented communities is included as follows:

- Elderly or Older People
- Disabled People
- Families, Children and Young People
- LGBTQI+
- Global Communities

Recommendations form the final chapter of the report and include:

- A vision and ambition to unite the 4 Market Towns
- Regeneration through a gold and silver thread of Art's Heritage and Culture and Active Living and Nature
- Regeneration recommendations:
 - Urban regeneration
 - Community cohesion and improved wellbeing
 - Economy, business and hospitality development
 - Regeneration through education
 - Regenerating the night time economy and community safety
- Regeneration in partnership with communities



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

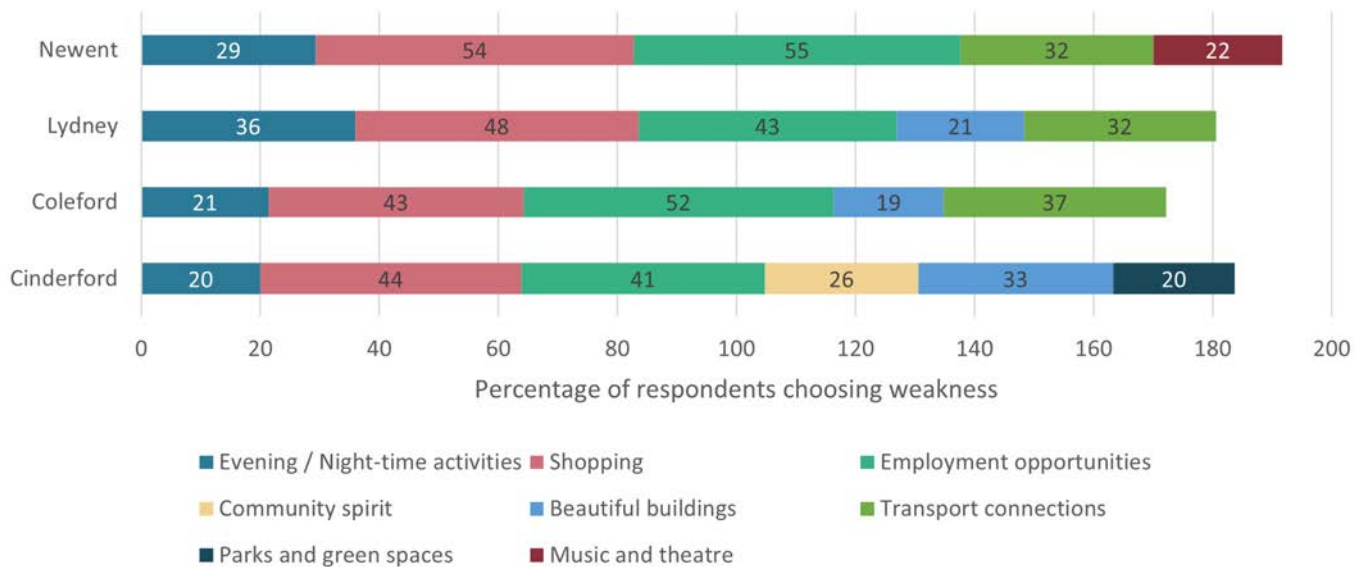
It is advised that the Forest of Dean Market Towns have a cohesive and complementary regeneration strategy that unites them and celebrates the Forest community as a whole. By celebrating each town’s strengths, sharing knowledge and resources, there is opportunity to overcome shared challenges and generate support in the community for prosperity, regeneration and positive development.

There is a high level of overlap between the strengths of each town. In all four towns, approximately 25% of respondents consider Community Centres such as libraries to be a strength and top place to visit. Community Spirit is also cited, particularly in Coleford, as is History and Heritage, although these two strengths are less marked in Lydney.

Lydney and Cinderford both value the Natural Environment surrounding the towns, whereas Newent cherishes both its Beautiful Buildings and Green Spaces. Events and Festivals make Coleford unique whereas Cinderford is well known for its offer of Arts and Crafts.



FoD Market Towns Top 5 Weaknesses



The four towns share common challenges and weaknesses, in particular in their Evening and Night Time activity, Shopping and Employment opportunities. Cinderford is equally as concerned about its lack of parks and green spaces. There is an opportunity for the District Council to enforce planning laws and prioritise the maintenance of historic buildings in towns, especially where conservation areas are in place.

Residents are concerned by transport connections in Newent, Lydney and Coleford, and while not within the top 5 weaknesses for Cinderford, transport, its infrequency and the lack of connection to other Forest towns was still cited. Despite commitments to green targets, the Forest is an isolating place to live without access to a car, especially as services such as leisure centres and pools are no longer available in every town and many residents report needing to leave the Forest to get what they need due to the lack of shopping options within their towns.

Cinderford is unique in seeing Community Spirit as a weakness as well as a strength, but all towns share significant challenges around community cohesion and the celebration of diversity.

Vision for the future

Our vision sees the 4 Market Towns become united by an overarching regeneration strategy that facilitates a collective effort in overcoming shared challenges, all the while allowing each town to shine in their strengths and enable the other towns to learn in the sharing of best practices.

Collaboration is the strongest tool to overcoming the towns' shared challenges and create a culture of resilience and progress. By pooling collective resources, strengths and examples of best practice each town can transcend their individual challenges with unity and purpose, for the greater good of the district.

We have identified a gold thread of 'arts, heritage and culture', and silver thread of 'active living and nature' to lace together all regeneration sub-strategies.

Arts, heritage and culture has an unrivalled power to breathe new life into the heart of regeneration, fostering a renaissance of creativity and vitality across the 4 Market Towns. It is a golden thread that has an impact across the individual strategies of community cohesion, community aspiration, education, mental health & wellbeing, business development, hospitality, community safety, and the urban regeneration of the towns.

Embracing an active lifestyle and connecting with nature is our second catalyst for town regeneration. When communities prioritise activities such as walking, cycling and outdoor recreational activities, they reap benefits far beyond personal health. The Market Town's proximity to the Forest lends itself so naturally to position active living as central to its regeneration plans.

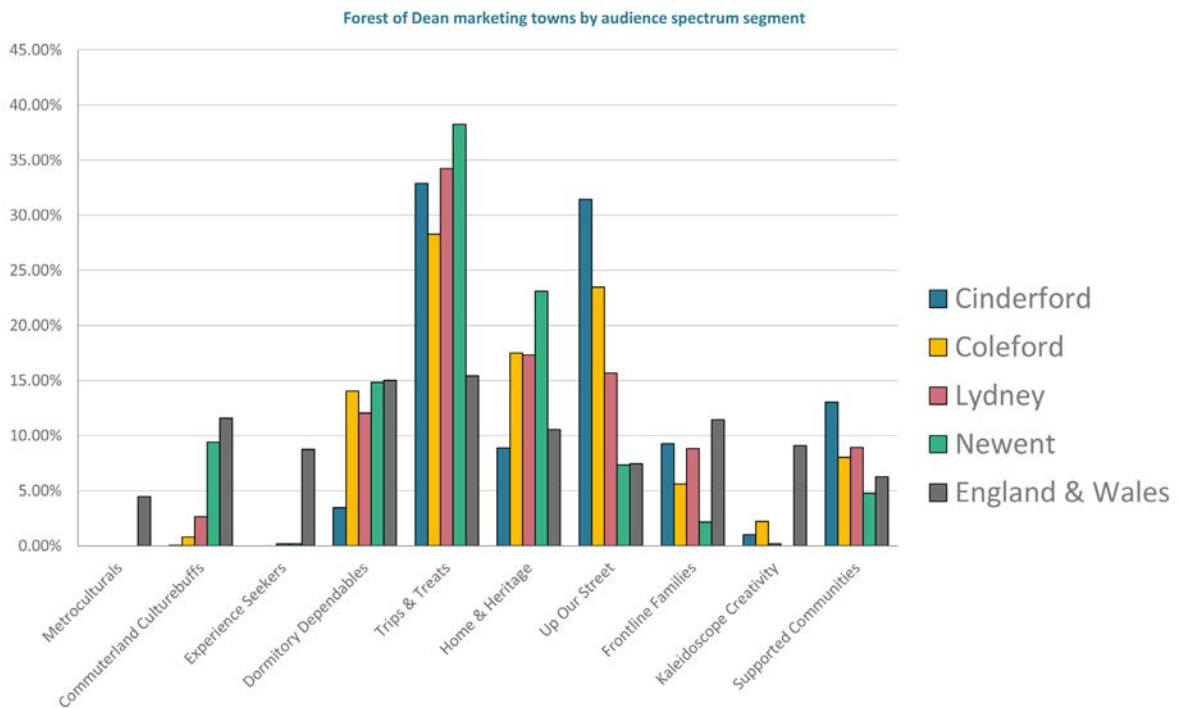
Our ambition positions the nuanced differences between each town as shining examples of strengths, so that other towns not only learn from best practice, but can collaborate and innovate to make the 'best' of each town become 'even better' for all towns.



WHO LIVES IN THE MARKET TOWNS, WHAT ARE THEIR NEEDS AND ARE THEY CURRENTLY BEING MET?

We have used a tool called Audience Spectrum to understand who lives in the 4 Market Towns. Audience Spectrum is a geo-demographic profiling tool that defines motivations and barriers to attendance, participation, and engagement with arts heritage and culture. We are referencing it here as an innovative way to guide our recommendations towards establishing a pride of place amongst Forest of Dean residents.

Audience Spectrum segments the UK population into ten segments, which can be grouped by High, Medium, or Low levels of cultural engagement.



For all of the Market Towns, the majority fall into the Trips and Treats segment. It is vital for any regeneration strategy and town economy strategy to appeal to this segment. Trips and treats are a family group with the following key characteristics:

- They live comfortable but modest lifestyles close to relatives and where they grew up
- Like to be busy with a wide range of leisure interests
- Decisions are strongly influenced by children's interests and family and friends
- Enjoy taking part in mainstream arts, culture and heritage activities

Our primary research suggests that all four Market Towns have low levels of provision suitable for the Trips and Treats age range, and even where provision does exist, families perceive that it is not suitable and not enough. **Less than 20% of people surveyed felt that their town catered well for families, children, or young people** and secondary school-aged students spoke of the lack of entertainment options and activities in their towns. Most young people from Cinderford, for example, head to Ross or Gloucester for their entertainment and activities.

In Cinderford and Coleford the second largest segment is Up Our Street, an older segment with the following key characteristics:

- Modest incomes e.g. average or below-average pensions
- Locally-minded and disinclined to travel far
- Look for mainstream, low cost arts, heritage and leisure activities

In Lydney and Newent the second largest segment is Home & Heritage, also an older segment, but slightly more affluent than Up Our Street

- Appreciates all things traditional
- Enjoy engaging in heritage activities available to them in their locality
- Like to get out and about to daytime events and activities

THE FOREST OF DEAN AND THE CLIMATE EMERGENCY

Politics

Forest of Dean is one of only eight local authorities in the country with a Green Party-led administration. In this case, the Green Party holds 15 of 38 seats (39%) (as of 2024).

While people vote Green for multiple reasons in addition to the environment, it can be seen as a reasonable proxy for the level of concern about environmental issues in the Forest. However, only two of the Green Party councillors represent the Forest's Market Towns (two representatives in Lydney), with Coleford, Cinderford and Newent voting for other parties or independents. This risks a perception that the administration does not represent voters of the Market Towns.

Forest-wide aspirations

In 2018, the Forest of Dean was the first predominantly rural council in the UK to declare a climate emergency. This is reflected in key recent strategies and plans.

Forest of Dean Council's Corporate Plan for 2019 to 2023 had a target to make the Council and District Net Zero by 2030. Protecting and enhancing the local environment and addressing the climate emergency were stated as one of five top priorities.

The new plan for 2024 to 2028 has similarly strong commitments, and includes powerful exhortations about understanding that 'only radical solution options remain' and 'the catastrophic consequences of inaction'.



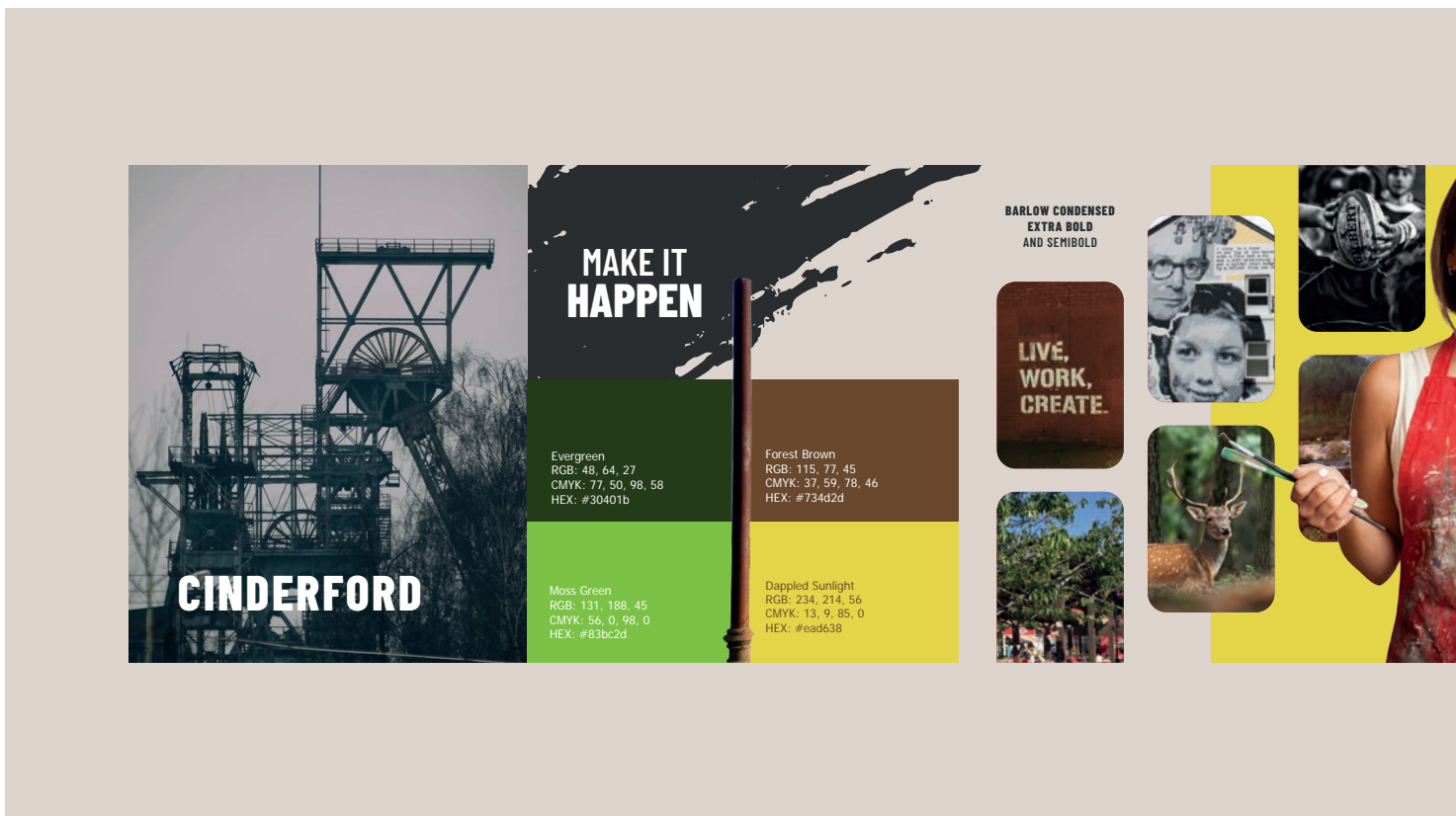
CINDERFORD

- ♥ Make it happen
- 💪 Arts & craft and outdoor adventure
- 🏃 Team sports

Stylescapes

CINDERFORD

Cinderford's primary colour is 'Dappled Sunlight'. Yellow is one of the colours of the rugby club which is central to the town, it's also in the crest of the football team and it's the colour of the new Music Works building in the centre of town. It also represents the brightness of its creative residents, who radiate warmth and want to 'make things happen'. The browns and greens represent Cinderford's proximity to the forest and it's active lifestyle of 'outdoor adventure'.



Primary

Accent



Dappled Sunlight
RGB: 234, 214, 56
CMYK: 13, 9, 85, 0
HEX: #ead638

Forest Brown
RGB: 115, 77, 45
CMYK: 37, 59, 78, 46
HEX: #734d2d



STRENGTH

Closest to the Forest, Cinderford embraces outdoor adventure and sporting prowess. With its "Make it happen" sentiment, industry and creative arts, Cinderford shows how close-knit grass root communities can be brought together when united in common interests.

Cinderford's heart
Close Knit Community

Cinderford's strength
Arts & Crafts and Outdoor Pursuits

Cinderford's active life
Team Sports

We Can Do It!

MAKE IT HAPPEN

GO EXPLORE

WORK TOGETHER

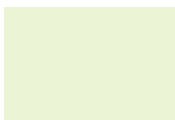
Supporting colours



Evergreen
RGB: 48, 64, 27
CMYK: 77, 50, 98, 58
HEX: #30401b



Moss Green
RGB: 131, 188, 45
CMYK: 56, 0, 98, 0
HEX: #83bc2d



Free Roaming Sheep
RGB: 243, 245, 219
CMYK: 7, 0, 20, 0
HEX: #f3f5db

Nestled within the centre of the Forest, Cinderford embraces its connection to **outdoor adventure** and its **sporting prowess**. With its **“Make it Happen”** sentiment, emphasis of connection to **manufacture and industry**, and its uprising of **creative arts**, Cinderford can celebrate its sporting and outdoor pursuits specialisms and show how **close-knit grass root communities** can be brought together when united in common interests.

KEY DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION



- **Largest of the Forest towns - 12,961 residents (MSOA)**



- **Highest percentage of lone parent households - 10.6%**



- **Youngest of the towns - median age 44**
- **Largest working age population (16-64) - 60.3%**



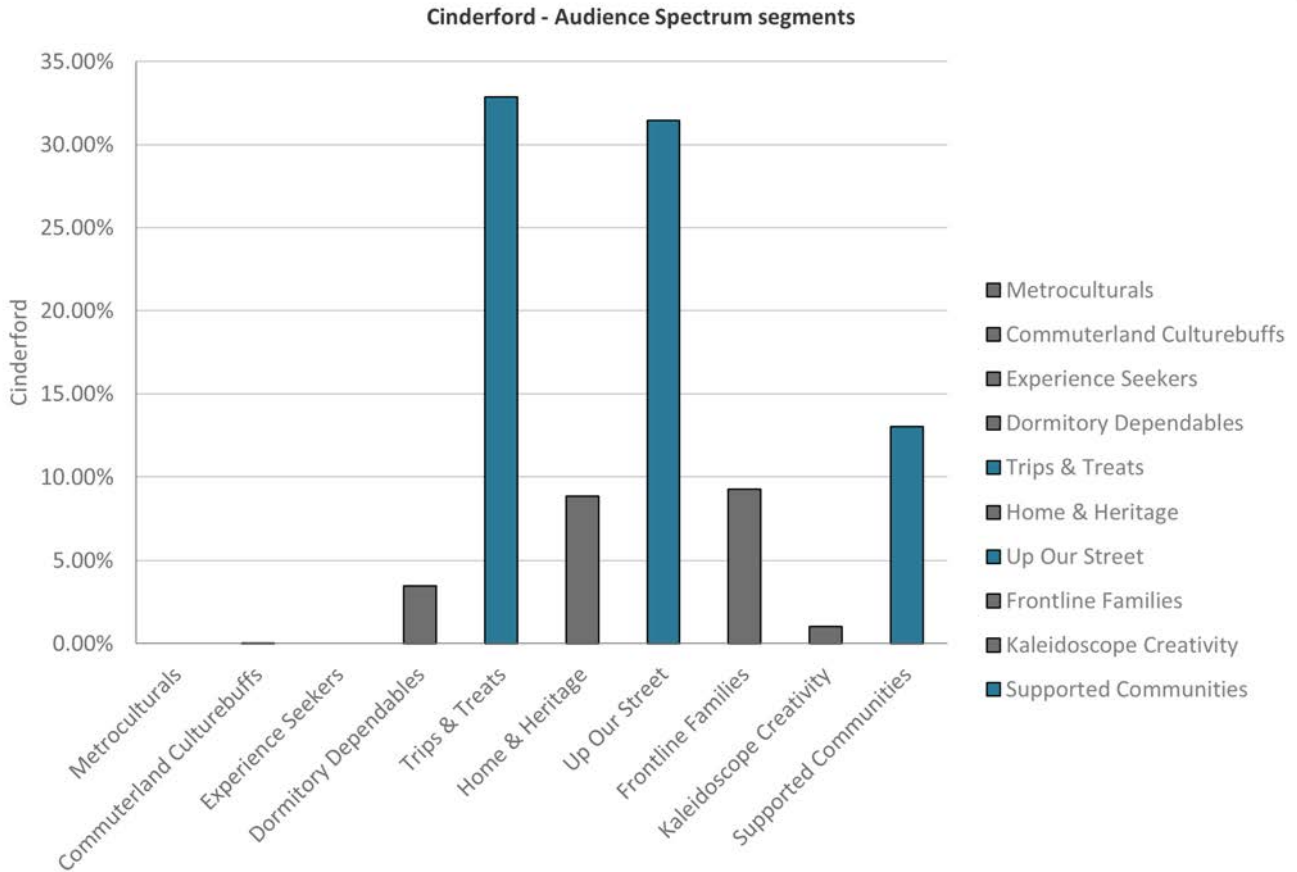
- **Largest population from Global Communities - 4%**



- **Highest percentage with no qualifications - 22.3%**



WHO LIVES IN CINDERFORD?



Cinderford is dominated by two Audience Spectrum segments:

- Trips and Treats (33%) - “Mainstream arts and popular culture fans influenced by children, family and friends”.
- Up Our Street (31%) - “Sociable retirees looking for inexpensive, mainstream, local leisure opportunities.”

An important third segment is:

- Supported Communities (13%) - “Culturally low engaged, health poor, craft circle and church group seniors and youths.”

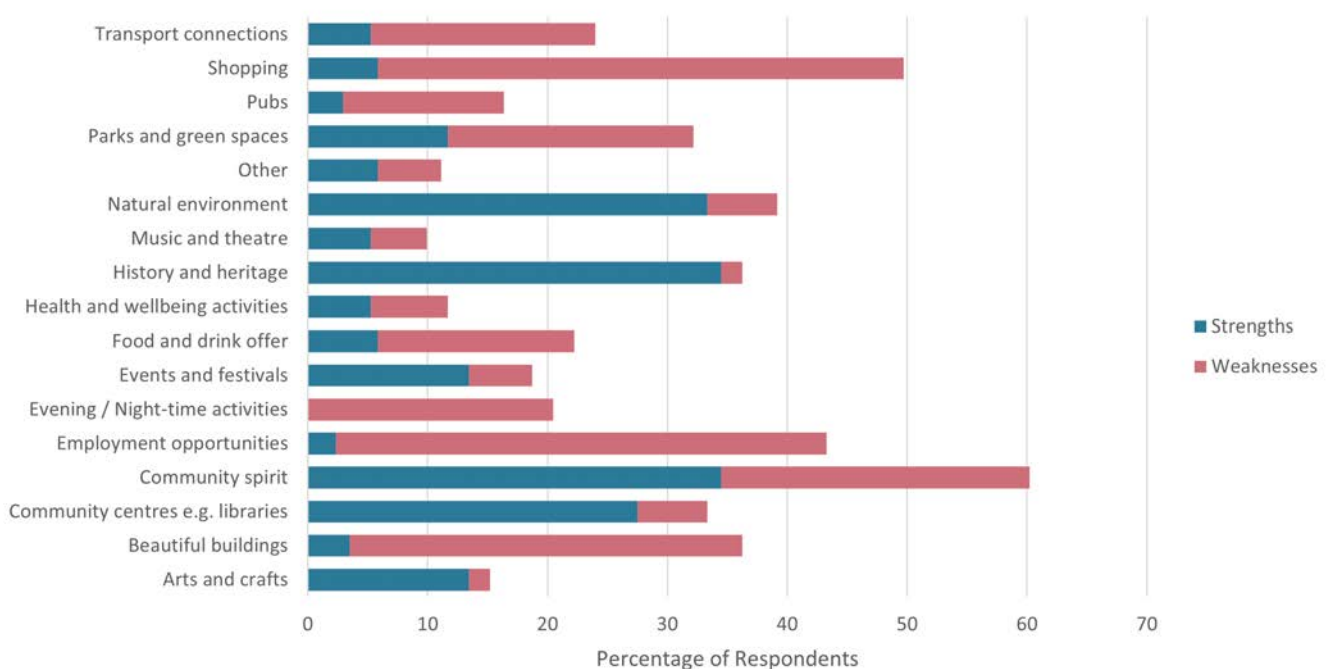
STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES OF CINDERFORD

Cinderford is the only town which considered Arts and Crafts to be one of its top 5 strengths (13% of respondents). With its arts venues, and arts organisations, cinema, craft shop and craft market, it's unique amongst the towns for its strength in visual arts and its potential in music and culture.

The town also highly values its Community Spirit (35%). Its “can do” community-led volunteering attitude is characterised by a key stakeholder in the town FVAF (Forest Voluntary Action Forum). Other strengths include its sentiment to History and Heritage (35%) and its Community Centres (27%), such as the library, The Wesley and Rheola House.

Similar to the other three Market Towns, Cinderford is lacking in its Shopping (41%) and Employment Opportunities (41%) and suffers from tired and dilapidated buildings and shop fronts in the centre of the town. However it is unique with overt community cohesion challenges and it struggles to celebrate the diversity of its population. Community Spirit (26%) is seen as a weakness as well as a strength. Despite being surrounded by natural beauty, Cinderford itself has very little Green Space (20%). Many of its businesses close early in the afternoon apart from the cinema, leaving the town centre feeling very quiet and unsafe into the evening.

Cinderford: Public Perception of Strengths and Weaknesses



Strengths

- Residents loyalty to the town centre - most repeat visitors
- High number of skilled tradespeople
- Arts organisations including Wyldwood Arts and Artspace Cinderford
- Arts Council England investment via NPO and Project Grants funding
- Host organisation of Gloucestershire-wide creative health programme
- Lowest reported crime rate of the Forest towns

Weaknesses

- Fewest tourists/visitors from outside 10 mile radius
- High vacancy rate and empty shops
- Lowest number of people with no qualifications or have never worked
- Poor energy efficiency ratings of buildings
- No designated conservation area - perception that Cinderford is not as attractive as other Forest towns
- Lack of green spaces and parks within town boundary

Opportunities

- Position town as the centre of visual arts in the Forest of Dean
- Make the industrial history of the town official by introducing relevant events such as **Trevithick Day** in Camborne or create something akin to the **World Heritage Site for Cornish Mining** by combining smaller projects across the Forest.
- Position Cinderford as a pioneer Market Town for the transition to green energy - giving it a new 'industrial' identity.
- Redeploy vacant lots at low/free rent for arts, culture and heritage projects
- Celebrate concept of 'making' in Cinderford, encompassing traditional industry, skilled trades and the arts

Threats

- Low rates of physical activity in the population and high rates of childhood obesity
- Continued economic decline
- Lack of well-paid jobs meaning young people move out of the area

THRIVING BUSINESS IN CINDERFORD

Footfall

Cinderford is the second most visited town after Lydney and boasts the most repeat visitors.

Cinderford town centre averaged 27,753 unique visitors per month between June 2022 and July 2023 (source TownandPlaceAI, as deployed by Forest of Dean District Council).

On average, each unique visitor came to Cinderford 5 times per month, compared to 4 times a month in Coleford and Lydney and 3 times a month in Newent. (Footfall 142,838 / unique visitors 27,753)

80% of visitors to Cinderford come from within a 10 mile radius.

Friday is the busiest day to visit Cinderford.

Empty shops

Cinderford has the highest percentage of empty shops (18%)

Cinderford suffers significantly from empty shops. In 2023 it was the town with the highest percentage (18%) of vacant shops which was a drastic increase from the year before. Urgent action needs to be taken to address the rapid decline, for example, allowing empty units to be used by community groups or arts organisations who can be creative with the space.

Employment

Only 21% of residents are in higher paying managerial roles, but an impressive 9% of people in skilled trade occupations.

59% of Cinderford residents are considered to be economically active. This is only slightly less than the national figure of 60%.

However, other factors suggest that employment opportunities for Cinderford residents are the most limited of the Forest towns and that the town's economy is comparatively struggling:

- Cinderford has fewer residents employed in higher-paying higher managerial, administrative and professional occupations than the other three towns. **21.6%** compared to 33% nationally
- Cinderford has more residents employed in lower-paid routine and manual occupations, **42.8%** compared to 28.8% nationally
- Cinderford also has the highest number of never worked or long-term unemployed **8.7%**

However

- Cinderford also has the highest number of people employed in skilled trades occupations **9%**, the highest of the Forest towns, and much higher than the national figure of 6%



Public sentiment

Public sentiment towards Cinderford's business offer is somewhat mixed. People are loyal and want to be proud of their town, and residents are supportive of local businesses, but they are frustrated at the lack of options for shopping, food and drink, evening entertainment and employment opportunities.

Cinderford is not considered to have Thriving business (60%). The vacant shop units, Shopping (45%), Employment (42%) and Food and Drink offer (17%) are some of the greatest weaknesses of the town, and contribute to **67% of people saying they leave the town to get what they need** because there is nothing that interests them in Cinderford. However residents value the offer that is there suggesting that new offers would be equally supported.

Camerons Butchers, Greenhill Coffee, and the Palace Cinema were three of the top ranked places to visit and the reopening of a centrally located pub has been welcomed. Local markets are highly valued but there is frustration because local traders do not capitalise on the extra footfall that markets and events generate. The lack of pavement space limits opportunity for food and drink businesses to spill out onto the street and generate a busy and thriving vibe.

There is a call to think creatively about how to attract thriving new businesses to the High Street and add variety beyond

hairdressers, barbers, takeaways and charity shops, by lowering rates for specialist types of business and incentivising landlords to better maintain their properties.



The community is united in its lament for the lack of night time options in Cinderford. Takeaways, Tescos and the cinema were mentioned as the only options, although neither offer places to socialise. Tesco is seen to be the only safe option with good lighting open at night and many value the Cinema, especially secondary school aged children. Although the cinema is a great asset, the lack of before and after options for food and socialising forces many to leave the Forest for evening entertainment. This has a knock-on effect to footfall and even popular places close at between 3:30 - 5:00 pm, adding to the sense that the centre of town is deserted and neglected. 0% of people consulted thought that evening and night time entertainment was a strength of the town.

Older and disabled people struggle without a bank and students do not visit the High Street after school due to its lack of provision. Tesco is perceived to be expensive and therefore smaller corner shops and the new Greggs are a greater draw.

Foyle and the Construction School are considered to be the main employers, however public opinion is that employment opportunities are lacking. Employment is gained through self-starting establishments with little start-up costs such as barbers and hairdressers.



CINDERFORD'S ART, CULTURE & HERITAGE

Arts, culture and heritage organisations

Artspace Cinderford is the only Arts Council England National Portfolio Organisation in the District, receiving £45,000 in funding annually. Cinderford is particularly noted for its visual arts, with the Picture House Gallery, Artspace Cinderford and Wyldwood Arts operating in the town. Artspace is involved in the Gloucestershire Creative Health Consortium, a nationally-leading programme believed to have the largest dataset on creative health in the world. There is also the noted writers mural depicting local writers Leonard Clark, Winifred Foley and Harry Beddington.

Cinderford has 11 arts, cultural, heritage, tourism or community destinations listed in the FODDC town report. These include Picture House Gallery, Artspace, Wyldwood Arts, Palace Cinema, The Wesley, Littledean Jail, Dean Heritage Centre, Rheola House, Mallards Pike Lane and the Rusty Pole. This is the highest number of any of the Forest towns.

Cinderford is the only Market Town where organisations have received Arts Council England National Lottery Project Grants funding for activities specifically in the town:

- Wyldwood Arts £49,875 (20/21) for its Connect, Heal and Grow programme
- Wyldwood Arts £29,930 (22/23) for its Collaborate, Create, Celebrate programme
- John Slater Poetry Salmon at Dean Heritage Centre £7,549 (23/24)

There are also a number of annual cultural events, including:

- CindyFest
- Cinderford Drum Festival
- Pride

Leisure

Cinderford performs very poorly in regard to leisure.

It has no parks, gyms and children's play areas within its town boundary. The leisure centre is well used, but it is outside of the Market Town centre.

Arts, culture and heritage attendance

Cinderford ranked 3rd of the Market Towns in terms of its level of arts and heritage attendance.

We have used data from the Audience Agency to understand how people engage with arts, culture and heritage. These reports suggest that within the last 12 months.

- 24% of residents are likely to have visited an art gallery
- 37% of residents are likely to have attended theatre
- 36% of residents are likely to have attended a rock or pop concert
- 15% of residents are likely to have visited museums
- 12% of residents are likely to have visited nature reserves

Public Sentiment

Cinderford is the only town who rated Arts and Crafts as a top 5 strength of the town. While it is well served by arts organisations, there is very low public awareness of these nationally recognised assets making improved public promotion needed. The cinema is considered the top place to go in the town. The leisure centre is largely considered an asset, but it is rundown. Residents cite the lack of green space and beauty in the town centre as a real shame, and despite its proximity to the Forest, it is considered to have a grimy feel and a disconnect from the beauty around it. Although 35% of survey respondents cite History and Heritage as the town's strength, young people, regardless of their background, were unanimous in feeling that Cinderford's History and Heritage was not something they personally connected with.

Calls for improved green space and visual beauty in Cinderford's town centre is common, as are improved walking and cycle paths between the town, the Forest and other Market Towns. Although the sporting clubs are highly valued and offer a sense of community, there is a wish for a soft play, an arcade/games room, more youth centre provision, increased sheltered outdoor seating and safe places for families, the home education community and young people to hang out.

Despite the consultation not asking specifically about arts and culture attendance, almost every Cinderford respondent mentioned how the Cinema was an asset to the town. Although there is a call for the town to offer pre and post cinema food and drink options (especially in the evening). It is clear that the cinema is regularly used and valued.

Arts and crafts appeared in the top 5 strengths of the town (13%). The Wesley could become a future venue for music and theatre as people are heading to Bristol, Cardiff, Gloucester and to a lesser extent Ross and Monmouth to get the entertainment they need.

Cinderford does not have an accredited museum in the town. Older people value the miner's statue and consider mining to form the town's identity.

“

“Every time I visit I can't help but notice the dreary buildings and overall greyness, it is not inspiring to the people that visit/live there. To be restored to a Market Town should mean bringing back the life & colour it would've once had, and don't forget more plants!”

Online survey respondent

Residents of all ages expressed sentiments such as “stuck in the past,” “held back by the past,” “needs a new identity,”. The heritage of the town is neither celebrated nor contextualised, and there is an opportunity to grow and develop the heritage into something new for the future that can be embraced by both new and old generations, whether new residents or old.

The centrally located rugby, football and cricket clubs develop a strong sense of community, but young people consider that aside from organised sport, there is nothing for them to do but appreciate having a skate park close to town. The CANDI drop in Youth Centre is known and valued and the community would appreciate extended opening hours. Students do attend youth uniformed organisations, but in other towns.

While the Leisure Centre and pool is an asset it seems stuck between a conflict of responsibility for maintenance. Students said how it was located in a beautiful place but you couldn't see anything of that from inside, which was a shame. Families enjoy using the playpark in Ruspidge although secondary students consider it less friendly after dark.

Linear Park and woodland, other nature parks outside the town boundary, and walking through the Forest are important leisure activities. Residents wish for joined up thinking and improved maintenance, signage and accessibility of the footpaths and cycleways between the town and the Forest, and between the other Market Towns.

There is a need for a more cohesive leisure offer that caters for the full range of residents and allows Cinderford's communities to be in safe and pleasant spaces together. The Library is well attended and valued and is considered to be a 'hub'. Residents agree a day out of shopping, food and entertainment is not possible in the Forest and certainly not within Cinderford. Although the events and festivals provide much appreciated and valued opportunity for residents to spend time in the town on a one-off basis. All demographics acknowledge the positive role these events play in community cohesion and pride in the town and a high value is placed on these events and their impact.

“

“This [mining] is not our history.”

Secondary School Focus group member

“

“I've never heard anybody say they care about Cinderford, especially not someone from outside the Forest.”

Secondary School Focus group member

“

“Being creative and embracing the future rather than thinking small and being held back by the past.”

Online survey response

SOCIAL FACTORS IN CINDERFORD

Crime rates

Cinderford has the lowest reported crime rate of any of the Forest towns.

(Police statistics from June 2022 to July 2023). Overall crime levels were thought to have decreased by 15.4% from the previous year. It should be noted that not all crime is reported and public perception suggests that crime in Cinderford is higher than statistics suggest. It is plausible to suggest that communities have become accustomed to crime and despondent to things improving, and consequently crime is infrequently reported.

Household deprivation

Cinderford is the town with the highest level of deprivation.

According to Census 2021, 56.8% of Cinderford households are deprived on at least one of the four dimensions - employment, education, health and disability, and household overcrowding. This is marginally the highest of the four Market Towns, 0.1% higher than Coleford (56.7%).

Socialising

There are 26 known places to socialise in Cinderford (combining community spaces, recreational spaces, food venues and pubs/bars).

Despite key demographic information indicating that Cinderford is the largest town, it has the third largest social provision.



Public Sentiment

Despite Cinderford boasting the lowest crime rates, respondents to our consultation overwhelmingly focused on crime and anti-social behaviour issues. The town lacks social spaces, with few pubs and limited venues open after school for all age groups, yet despite this there is a strong sense of community spirit and camaraderie, and the town council's focus on events and activities is praised.

“

“[I wish for]...a non-drinking leisure space for small communal gatherings (free of charge to use).”

Online survey respondent (identifying as LGBTQI+)

Both residents and those from outside perceive Cinderford's crime as pervasive and worsening. There's a unanimous call across demographics for heightened police visibility and a proactive crime prevention approach. Young people, in particular, witness drug dealing and describe the town to be "scary," "dangerous," and "neglected". Families are considering relocating for safety, and 41% of survey respondents cite Safety as the biggest deterrent for visiting the town. The closure of the police station and limited policing, especially on public transport, concern young people who advocate for audio recording cameras on buses and increased police presence.

Requests for indoor and outdoor socialising spaces are widespread. Although there's a strong sense of community spirit and camaraderie, newer communities struggle with social cohesion issues, including xenophobia and racism. Local schools and voluntary

organisations work tirelessly to address these challenges. The town council's focus on events, activities, and community space development is praised, with residents valuing events, sports clubs, libraries, and community hubs as vital to town life.

“

“[I wish for]...nice safe places to hang out and socialise.”

Online survey respondent (parent/carer)

Residents hold mixed views on cultural diversity and multiculturalism, with complex emotional responses to rapid changes after decades of stagnation. There's concern that pride in the Forest and its heritage is misunderstood by those who live outside of the Forest and some Foresters have experienced people imposing derogatory stereotypes.

HEALTH AND WELLBEING IN CINDERFORD

Disease prevalence

With 12.1% of reception age children classified as obese, rates of childhood obesity are highest in Cinderford.

Cinderford has higher disease prevalence against the national average of the majority of diseases catalogued by the House of Commons Library (19/20).

These include key indicators of day-to-day health and wellbeing:

- Depression 12.4%
- Asthma 8.1%
- Diabetes 9%
- High blood pressure 14.7%
- Obesity 14.2%

Physical activity

Major funding from DCMS (Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport) is currently being invested in Cinderford to develop levels of physical activity.

According to the 2020 Active Lives survey, 62% of Cinderford are 'physically active'. This is equivalent to Lydney and Coleford but lower than Newent (67%). It is lower than the national average of 64%.

Disability benefits claimants

A lower percentage of people in Cinderford claim benefits compared to Coleford and Lydney.

9% of the working age population claim a Personal Independence Payment (previously Disability Living Allowance), compared to 8.1% nationally. 3% claim PIP for a mental health condition (equal to the national figure).

Public Sentiment

Public sentiment towards the level of health and wellbeing activities within Cinderford is neutral - neither particularly good nor particularly bad. The leisure centre is a vital place of social connection and walking, rugby, football, cricket and cycling are highly regarded.

Cinderford is unique in having rugby and football, swimming and leisure centre facilities fairly centrally located. The rugby club is active and successful in creating a community around the sport. Cycling and walking paths are mentioned as strengths of the town, but need improvement to become safe, encourage greater use, and to link Cinderford to the wider network of recreational paths in the greater Forest area.

The leisure centre is a highly valued community space and mentioned by a number of older residents as a friendly community space where people look out for one another, but it is also in need of investment and redevelopment.

“

“[The] Leisure Centre... in Cinderford is amazing! It attracts people from the entire District and it is essential for the health and wellbeing of the community to keep it going!”

“

“[We] need to start seeing the Forest as an entire community instead of a group of towns. Better connect Lydney and Cinderford via a woodland cycle trail if possible and connect the leisure centres by having a flagship aspect at each one... e.g. the best gym at Cinderford, the best pool and spa facilities in Lydney, redevelop the athletics track in Coleford.”

ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS IN CINDERFORD

Conservation areas

Cinderford is the only Forest town without a designated Conservation Area.

Future Development

Approximately 400 new dwellings are planned to be built in Cinderford.

Energy efficiency ratings

Cinderford's buildings perform very poorly in respect of energy efficiency.

Cinderford's buildings score 61.7 on the Standard Assessment Procedure (SAP), compared to 66.7 in Lydney and a national figure of 64.1.

Public Sentiment

Cinderford residents appreciate the Forest surroundings, woodland walks, scenic views, proximity to nature reserves and the easy access to cycle and walking paths. Residents are overwhelmingly negative about the lack of maintenance to the High Street, shop fronts and buildings and there is opportunity for the District Council to enforce licensing regulations. The new housing development has mixed reception, with young people mentioning the strain on roads and local services.

“

Repair shop-fronts retaining heritage features and paint buildings bright colours”

online survey respondent

There are mentions of wildlife, with mixed feelings towards boars, mostly from younger people and the unanimous agreement on the beauty of the landscape.

There is a general sense of dissatisfaction with the level of rubbish in the town centre and on the High Street with multiple requests to “paint,” “repair” and “tidy up,”. Investment in high quality branding, marketing and business support at a town and district level for independent businesses would be welcomed.

The town council does invest in flowers and street cleaning, however the problems lie in the private ownership of most buildings which are not well maintained, nor upgraded for energy efficiency.

Many residents hope that the hospital and new housing would bring people to the town and support the economy, but acknowledge that the current offer is unlikely to do that, despite the valued cinema.



COLEFORD

♥ Quality and artisan

💪 Festivals & events and tourism

🚶 Walking and cycling

Stylescapes

COLEFORD

Coleford's primary colour is 'Rust Red', it represents Coleford's unique red brick buildings. Orange 'Autumn Leaves' represents the colour of the Forest in the Autumn, as well as the optimism and brightness of it's 'festival-goer' community. These colours sit against a back drop of 'Leaf Green' and 'Ochre', which represents it's artisanal produce such as coffee and bread.

CRUSHED
BARLOW CONDEMNED EXTRA BOLD
Original Surfer

Known for its Artisan quality and sentiment, Coleford's preservation of historical buildings, infuse the streets with a unique charm. Coleford demonstrates how local artists, festivals and events bring communities together.

Coleford's heart
Quality And Artisan

Coleford's strength
Festivals & Events and Tourism

Coleford's active life
Walking and Cycling

made Here in Coleford
SMALL BATCH

	Rust Red RGB: 187, 70, 44 CMYK: 20, 81, 86, 10 HEX: #bb462c		Leaf Green RGB: 111, 140, 48 CMYK: 62, 27, 98, 10 HEX: #6f9c30
	Autumn Leaves RGB: 233, 141, 55 CMYK: 6, 52, 84, 0 HEX: e98d37		Ochre RGB: 195, 171, 126 CMYK: 24, 28, 53, 8 HEX: #c3ab7e

COLFFORD

Primary

Accent



Rust Red
RGB: 187, 70, 44
CMYK: 20, 81, 86, 10
HEX: #bb462c

Autumn Leaves
RGB: 233, 141, 55
CMYK: 6, 52, 84, 0
HEX: e98d37



Supporting colours



Leaf Green
 RGB: 111, 140, 48
 CMYK: 62, 27, 98, 10
 HEX: #6f8c30



Ochre
 RGB: 195, 171, 126
 CMYK: 24, 28, 53, 8
 HEX: #c3ab7e



Light Ochre
 RGB: 227, 220, 214
 CMYK: 13, 13, 16, 0
 HEX: #e3dcd6

Coleford thrives on its **events and festivals** and dedication to detail. With its **artisan and quality** sentiment, ever growing public programme, and its preservation of **historical and red brick buildings**, the local **artists and artisans** infuse the streets with a unique charm, character and identity. Coleford is well placed to demonstrate how **community events** positively **bring people together** for the greater good of the economy.

KEY DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION



- Population of Coleford MSOA - 10,854



- Highest percentage of residents born in the UK - 97%



- Oldest of the towns - median age 48



- Highest percentage of couples with children - 23.7%

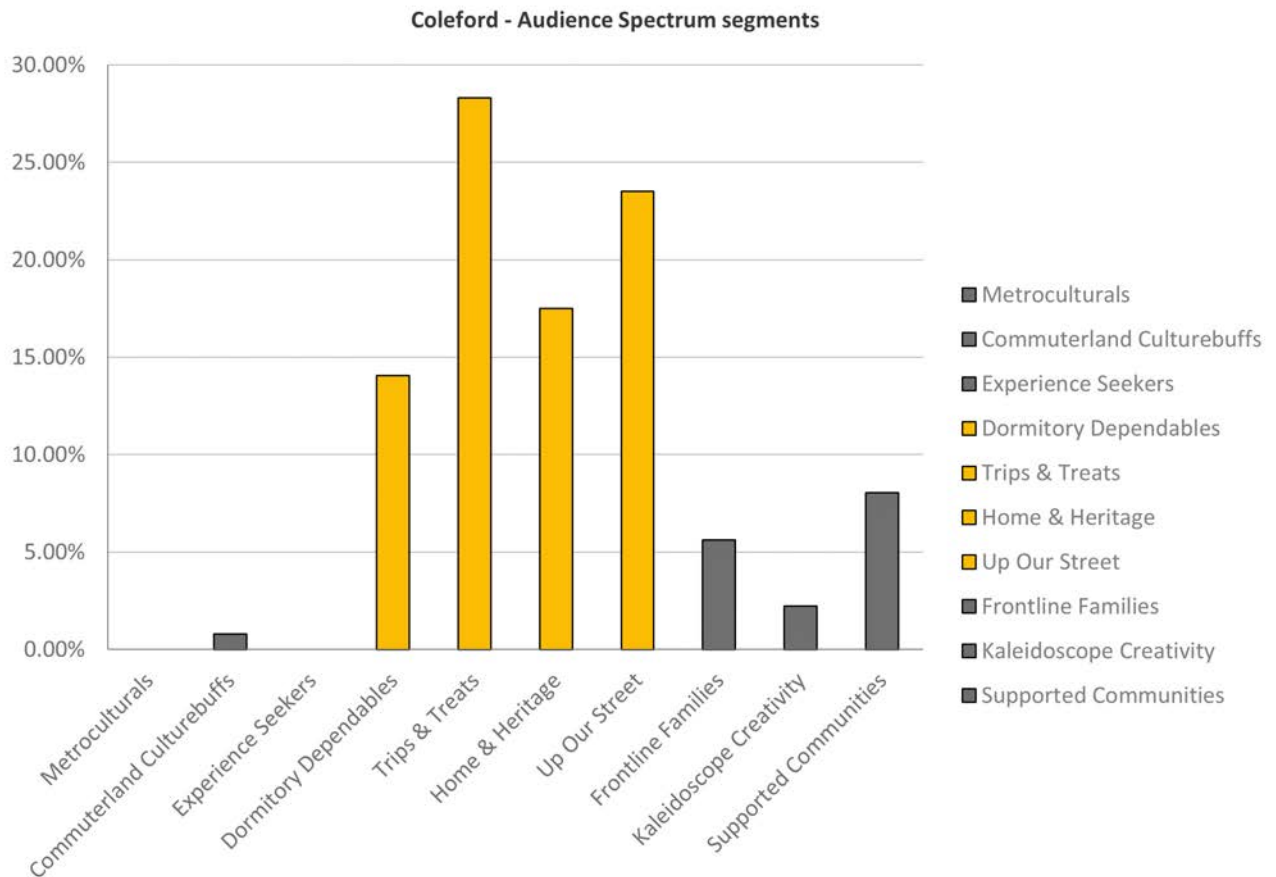


- Lowest Global Communities population - 1.7%



- Highest percentage of social renters - 18%

WHO LIVES IN COLEFORD?



There are four important Audience Spectrum segments in Coleford:

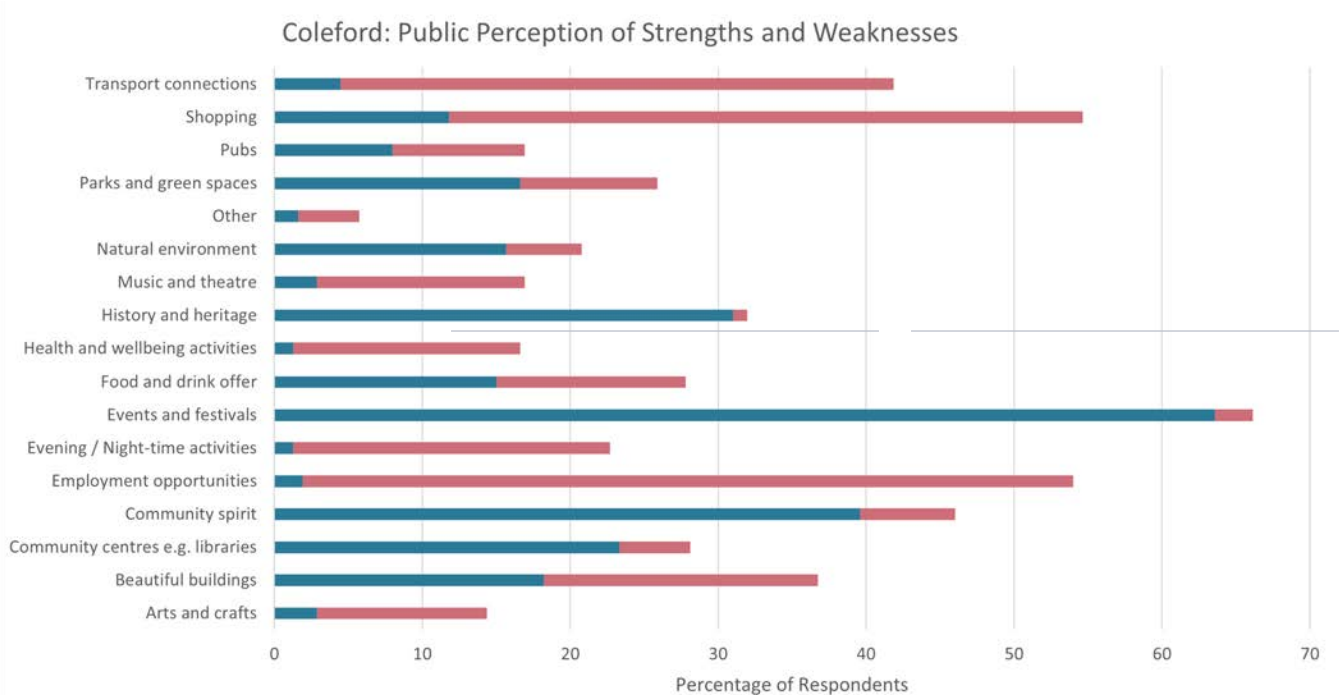
- Trips and Treats (28%) - “Mainstream arts and popular culture fans influenced by children, family and friends”
- Up Our Street (24%) - “Sociable retirees looking for inexpensive, mainstream, local leisure opportunities”
- Home & Heritage (18%) - “Rural and small town pensioners attracted to daytime activities and historical content”
- Dormitory Dependables (14%) - “Suburbanites and small towners interested in heritage activities and mainstream arts”

STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES OF COLEFORD

Coleford is unique as the only Market Town where Events and Festivals is not only considered a top 5 strength but is also recognised as the foremost strength of the town (65%), by both Coleford and residents and those from other towns.

The town also highly values its Community Spirit (40%), History and Heritage (31%) and its Community Centres (23%), such as the library and The Main Place. The clock tower and market are a key part of its identity, as are its beautiful buildings. The independent and artisanal nature of the shops, cafe and bars also contribute to making it uniquely special.

Much like the other three Market Towns, Coleford is perceived to be lacking in its Shopping (42%) and Employment Opportunities (52%). Like Lydney, residents also feel Transport Connections (37%) are a great weakness. Coleford is unique in having Beautiful Buildings perceived as both a strength and a weakness (19%). There is a perceived struggle to maintain buildings and tidy up the town because the historic buildings are largely privately owned, and the feeling that the conservation area is being eroded as planning rules are not enforced. Evening and night time activities are also within the top 5 weaknesses (21%), largely due to the lack of venues for entertainment aside from the cinema. The food and drink offer, even in the evening, is considered to be improving.



Strengths

- Pre-existing branding as ‘the Jewel of the Forest’
- Attractive architecture protected by Conservation Area and Neighbourhood Development Plan
- High proportion of visitors/ tourists, especially during the summer
- The town is reversing its town centre decline with a reduction of empty shops
- Nearby tourist attractions e.g. Puzzlewood
- Higher levels of arts and culture engagement
- Higher number of pubs and restaurants than Cinderford, perception that these are the highest quality in the Forest

Weaknesses

- No galleries or spaces for visual arts
- No Arts Council England funding
- High and increasing levels of crime, especially in the summer months
- High levels of certain diseases, such as high blood pressure and diabetes
- No known creative health programmes. addressing the town’s health issues

Opportunities

- More permanent locations to celebrate and sell visual arts, especially at tourist hot spots
- Build on 'tourism' identity - as the most attractive town in the heart of the Forest, it is a natural base for visitors
- Low levels of childhood obesity at reception age suggest Coleford may be starting to turn around some of its health issues (this requires more detailed study to confirm)

Threats

- Crime and safety issues deter local people from using the town centre, especially in the evenings
- Increasing reported crime from 2022 to 2023.
- Cost of living increasing number of people deprived on at least one of the four dimensions

THRIVING BUSINESS IN COLEFORD

Footfall

Coleford is the third most visited town.

Coleford town centre averaged 27,383 unique visitors per month between June 2022 and July 2023 (source TownandPlaceAI). Each unique visitor visited approximately 4 times per month (113225 footfall / 27383 unique visitors).

70% of visitors come from within a 10-mile radius, with an increase in visitors from further afield in the summer months.

Friday is the busiest day to visit Coleford, followed by Saturday.

Empty shops

Coleford has the fewest empty shops compared to the other Market Towns.

In 2023 it had 9 empty units (6% of total), a decrease of 3 from the previous year, making it the only town on a positive trend.

Employment

Because Coleford has a higher percentage of retirees, it has lower levels of people in employed occupations.

Coleford is distinctive in that it has the lowest percentage of economically active people (56%), but this is in part due to the higher number of retirees (28%) compared to nearby Cinderford (24%).

Public Sentiment

Public sentiment towards Coleford town is overwhelmingly positive. The town centre is described to have high quality artisan shops, however there is a call for greater variety of more everyday items such as clothing and gifting. The various events and festivals enjoy widespread support and the markets, street markets, and cafe culture, create the perception of a family friendly town with energy and heart.

Coleford town centre is described as quirky, charming and quaint with a good number of independent cafes and coffee shops as well as

bakeries, greengrocers, butchers and independent shops. It was described on a number of occasions by stakeholders as a town with “heart” and a good sense of place, however like in Cinderford there is a perception of recent increase in crime and problems with drugs.

Events and festivals are considered the number one strength of the town and are largely accessible to everyone, including older people and those with disabilities, especially in the summer. There is widespread appreciation for the increased footfall and trade that these events bring and some traders such as Forest Deli have capitalised by staying open later on event days, although there is room to encourage more business to do the same, especially as a means of developing the evening and night time offer, which is gradually improving.

Coleford's Tourist Information Centre adds to its uniqueness, being entirely volunteer-operated and maintained. This sets Coleford apart not just within the region but also across other towns in England. Providing training for volunteers could enhance their ability to promote the Forest of Dean more comprehensively.

“

“Recently we've seen some businesses open like the Dog House, and a couple of other lovely bars to make it worth spending an evening there.”

Online survey respondent

“

“Have a banking hub for the Forest which would increase the footfall and help local traders and encourage more traders to move to Coleford.”

Online survey respondent

Employment Opportunities are considered to be the town’s biggest weakness (52%) and despite the strength of its High Street, Shopping is however rated as one of the top two weaknesses of the town (43%), and the most common reason for not visiting Coleford is people not being able to get what they need. The lack of a bank and the lack of variety of business is seen as a real issue especially the elderly and vulnerable who perceive a lack of transport to Lydney and Gloucester where the bank branches are.



COLEFORD'S ART, CULTURE & HERITAGE

Arts, culture and heritage organisations

The town includes the Great Western Railway Museum, but has no galleries or spaces for visual arts. Coleford Music Festival is an established annual event.

Coleford has 8 arts, cultural, heritage, tourism or community destinations listed in the FODDC town report. However, 4 of these are tourist-focused attractions located out of the town centre, such as Puzzlewood.

There are no arts spaces or museums in the town centre. Arts Council England and the National Lottery Heritage Fund has not invested in any organisations or projects in/for Coleford since at least 2020.

Leisure

Coleford has 3 outdoor leisure facilities, the park at Bell's Field and a Skate Park.

These spaces distinguish it from nearby Cinderford, which is lacking in outdoor spaces.

Arts, culture and heritage attendance

The estimates for theatre and rock/pop concerts are higher than the national figure, but the lack of cultural infrastructure in Coleford itself suggests people are leaving Coleford (and the Forest) for their entertainment.

We have used data from the Audience Agency to understand how people engage with arts culture and heritage. These reports suggest that within the last 12 months.

LMSE estimates for 2022 on 5 key metrics are:

- 32% visited an art gallery
- 48% attended theatre
- 45% attended a rock or pop concert
- 18% visited museums
- 16% visited nature reserves

Public Sentiment

Heritage in Coleford is seen as a real strength (31%) as is the annual music festival and The Festival of Transport who enjoy positive acclaim and widespread appeal and give Coleford its identity of doing 'Fun for all the family' events and festivals really well. But these are annual events and the continuous provision of cultural activity is lacking. The cinema is a key part of Coleford's leisure offer and draws people to spend time in the town, even in the evenings. The growth of night time food is also supporting the twilight economy.

Coleford's residents have little to say about its arts and culture offer, confirming our suggestion that people leave town for their entertainment and the on-going arts and culture offer is largely seen as a weakness (12%), with only 3% of respondents considering it a strength. Although the Baptist Church is considered by some to sometimes act a bit like a theatre, there is negative sentiment to the town's old theatre having closed, albeit years ago.

Residents enjoy the Annual Heritage Open Days and The Coleford Hidden Heritage app. Additionally, locals appreciate nearby tourist attractions like Puzzlewood and Perrygrove Railway, often visited for leisurely walks and family outings.

While provision for older people is considered good (53%), there's a perceived lack of support for families (79%). This indicates that while the town's events, festivals, and outdoor leisure facilities cater well to families, there's a shortage of consistent activities suitable for them.

Although The Main Place building, home to the library and "Makers Space" enjoys strong support and offers community space for hire, the absence of a gallery space presents a hurdle for artists seeking exhibition venues.

“

“Music festival and various live music events all lift Coleford up out of the usual run of the mill small town. All this needs to be developed. Coleford is grand - but it could be even better.”

Online survey respondent

Young people consider the skate park to be the main asset for them in the town, although they feel there are few options to choose between, and even fewer that are considered to be safe. The various recreation grounds, parks and green spaces are valued but are not seen as a particular strength or weakness of the town overall, suggesting that they meet expectations, fulfil the needs of the town but have room for improvement.

“

“I really feel like we need some sort of social centre where groups and organisations can hold lots of different things like performances... Workshop spaces for artists and that kind of thing... we just really don't have anything like that, [no] central place for creatives or culture or history.”

Stakeholder interview
Coleford resident

SOCIAL FACTORS IN COLEFORD

Crime rates

Unlike the other Market Towns, crime in Coleford Town Centre increased dramatically in 2023.

With a 40% increase in crimes reported than the previous year, with a peak in the summer months when footfall increases.

Household deprivation

Coleford is the town with the second highest levels of deprivation.

According to Census 2021, 56.7% of Coleford households are deprived on at least one of the four dimensions.

Socialising

There are 29 known places to socialise in Coleford (combining community spaces, recreational spaces, food venues and pubs/ bars).

“

“I enjoy visiting the library! Always welcoming, always something happening.”



Public Sentiment

Coleford is considered to be reasonably safe with only 9% of respondents thinking otherwise, however there is a sense that crime is increasing and that the feeling of charm and safety in the town centre, which is so highly valued, is being eroded. A strong emphasis is placed on the friendly and welcoming nature of the community. The absence of a museum, gallery, or cultural space in the town means there's no central hub for people to connect with others who share similar interests.

The community events, festivals, and gatherings as well as the celebration of the shared history are important to the town. There is appreciation for the sense of belonging and close-knit community spirit in the town and although there is a call for more community venues, the existing ones are highly valued.

Situated at The Main Place, The Library is highly regarded as a hub of community activity, hosting various groups and social gatherings. Additionally, venues like the Angus Buchanan recreation ground are valued community spaces.

While various restaurants, cafes, bars, and pubs were mentioned as favourite spots in town, Forest Deli and Art of Coffee are top choices. There is a positive sentiment towards the identity of "cafe culture" and only a minority of respondents suggested there might be "too many cafes."

While evening entertainment and night time activities are considered to be one of the main weaknesses of the town, people do mention the gradual increase in businesses open in the evenings for food and drink and social connection and the widespread appreciation for the Cinema suggests people are starting to see Coleford as a place which has an evening entertainment offer.

Older people feel they are well catered for in the town. Focus group participants were highly complimentary of council funded social groups (such as funded lunch and coffee clubs) for vulnerable, isolated and older people and how they offer mental health benefits. On the contrary, parents and carers of young children and teenagers mention the lack of provision.

“

“My wish for Coleford is something for young children I.e soft play which is open on sundays.”

Online survey respondent
(parent/carer)

“

“Enable the community to create more opportunities to support each other through flexible use of spaces.”

Online survey respondent

HEALTH AND WELLBEING IN COLEFORD

Disease prevalence

Rates of obesity for reception age children are the lowest of the four towns at 8.1%, suggesting effective interventions are happening for younger children, however, Coleford has the highest overall disease prevalence of the four Market Towns towns.

This could be due to Coleford's ageing population.

These include key indicators of day-to-day health and wellbeing:

- Depression 12%
- Asthma 8.3%
- Diabetes 9.6%
- High blood pressure 19.5%
- Obesity 14.8%

The figure for high blood pressure is particularly striking, with 1 in 5 Coleford residents affected by this condition.

Physical activity

Coleford is unique amongst the others for becoming the first town in the Forest of Dean District to gain accreditation to the Walkers are Welcome UK network. The town also holds an annual Walking Festival, which brings people to the town and involves local people in activities. There are a number of local walking groups and an accessible walking trail at Bells Field.

According to the 2020 Active Lives survey, 62% of Coleford are 'physically active'. This is equivalent to Lydney and Cinderford but lower than Newent (67%) and the national average (64%).

Walkers are Welcome has a membership of over 100 towns and villages in the UK, whose main aim is to assist with their respective communities' economic growth, physical health and mental well-being through walking. The accreditation was awarded to "Coleford Welcomes Walkers Steering Group" (CWW) on behalf of the town. CWW is a volunteer group made up of local residents from walkers, business owners, and local community group leaders. The group is community-led and membership is open to all members of the public who live in the town.

Disability benefits claimants

Coleford has the highest percentage of people claiming benefits.

10% of Coleford residents claim Personal Independence Payments (PIP) (including 3% for mental health conditions).

Public Sentiment

Residents consider Coleford's infrastructure sufficient enough to encourage walking and the town find a sense of community, enjoyment and connection through the Walking Network. Residents look forward to the annual Walking Festival and businesses maximise on the increased tourism. Many Coleford residents are cyclists but there is a call to improve the infrastructure as the local cycling trails frustrate cyclists who are forced to use busy roads.



“

“I love walking into town using the cycle path from Parkend.”

Online survey respondent

“

"We are surrounded by bike trails, we should advertise Coleford as a hub for bikers, better storage, lock ups."

Online survey respondent

There is positive sentiment towards walking, cycling, rugby, football and golf. The Angus Buchanan Recreation ground and Bell's Field which includes the skate park, exercise trail and a MUGA and BMX track are considered good, family friendly and accessible local facilities for sports and recreation. Coleford does however suffer from the lack of a leisure centre and pool, with residents needing to drive to Lydney or Cinderford to use these facilities.

Communities, particularly older people, highly value the exercise on prescription from local GP surgeries. Overall 15% of respondents see health and wellbeing activities as a weakness of the town compared to only 4% who consider it a strength, suggesting that whilst walking and outdoor pursuits are well catered for, other sports and activity options are limited. There is a call from residents across all Market Towns to upgrade the athletics track and facilities at Five Acres.

“

"It would be amazing if there was a swimming pool in Coleford as I do not drive so I feel it's a struggle as a mum to take my children swimming. Affording a bus money plus swimming money is just not affordable for me and I feel I have let my children down as they are missing out on being able to learn to swim"

Online survey respondent
(parent/carer)

ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS IN COLEFORD

Conservation areas

Coleford has an extensive conservation area covering much of the town.

It includes 17 listed buildings, with a historic close knit street pattern converging on the market, combining local red-brown sandstone and Georgian architecture.

Future development

Approximately 450 new dwellings are planned for Coleford.

Energy efficiency ratings

Coleford is the second best performing town for energy efficiency.

Despite the high number of historic buildings, Coleford scores well, with a SAP rating of 66.3, the second highest in the Forest.

Public sentiment

The Clock Tower and Marketplace are considered to be the visual focal point of the town and the backdrop to almost every view of the centre, however the lack of transport is preventing people from accessing the town. The look of the town centre is important to residents, with Beautiful Buildings considered a real strength (18%) and there is opportunity to maximise this with the District Council enforcing planning and conservation regulations.

The town council is perceived to do a lot of work with local traders and in maintaining and preserving the Clock Tower and other buildings and their efforts to keep the town clean and tidy are welcomed. Residents would like to see investment in flower planters and hanging baskets, especially in tourist season, encouraging traders to take pride in their shop fronts.

“

“My wish for Coleford is that the District Council holds property owners to account for upkeep of properties in the Conservation area; upper floors of many buildings [are] disgraceful.”

Online survey respondent

However, the iconic and historic town buildings are largely privately owned which makes it harder for the town council to influence their appearance and consequently 18% of respondents consider historical buildings to be a weakness. The clock tower which is town council owned is a financial strain due to the rising repair and maintenance costs.

There is a call to develop safe walking and cycling routes into and out of the town to encourage fewer people to use cars and make the town more accessible to those without private transport. Older people hinted that there were groups and activities that they would like to join, but they could not easily get to them due to transport and accessibility issues - thus the transport issues are preventing people from being able to use their town. People wish for better transport links across the Forest and into Gloucester, along with proper consultation with the community for a transport solution that works.

“

“My wish for Coleford is slower traffic and therefore a safer place to walk for pedestrians on the Gloucester Road and other main roads going through town.”

Online survey respondent



LYDNEY

- ♥ Breathe and recharge
- 💪 Shopping and living history
- 🚶 Relax and stroll

Stylescapes

LYDNEY

Lydney's primary colour is 'Recharge Blue', it represents Lydney's close connection to water which is valued by it's residents and visitors. It's supported by 'Boar Brown and 'Wood for the Trees', representing it's working railway and proximity to the Forest. 'Free Roaming Sheep' gives lightness to Lydney's colour palette and compliments the 'restoration' feel of this coastal Market Town.



Primary

Accent



Recharge Blue
RGB: 159, 208, 220
CMYK: 42, 4, 14, 0
HEX: #9fd0dc

Boar Brown
RGB: 87, 68, 63
CMYK: 50, 58, 55, 55
HEX: #57443f

Lydney's connection to water offers restoration. Its green spaces, boating lake and coast facilitate a moment to recharge. The working docks and railway demonstrate how traditional trades are central to the working life of today.

LYDNEY'S HEART
Breathe and recharge

LYDNEY'S STRENGTH
Shopping and Living History

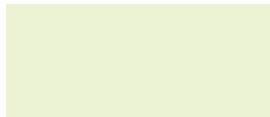
LYDNEY'S ACTIVE LIFE
Relax and stroll



Supporting colours



Wood for the Trees
RGB: 85, 102, 58
CMYK: 66, 40, 83, 32
HEX: #55663a



Free Roaming Sheep
RGB: 243, 245, 219
CMYK: 7, 0, 20, 0
HEX: #f3f5db

Lydney's inherent beauty and its **connection to water** offers an air of **mental restoration**. Its renowned green spaces, the boating lake and a **stroll around the docks** enables people to take a moment to **recharge**. The investment in the docks and the working railway are shining examples of how **traditional trades and skills** of the past are still central to the **working life** of today.

KEY DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION



- **Population of Lydney MSOA - 11,303**



- **Lowest percentage of lone parent families - 8.7%**

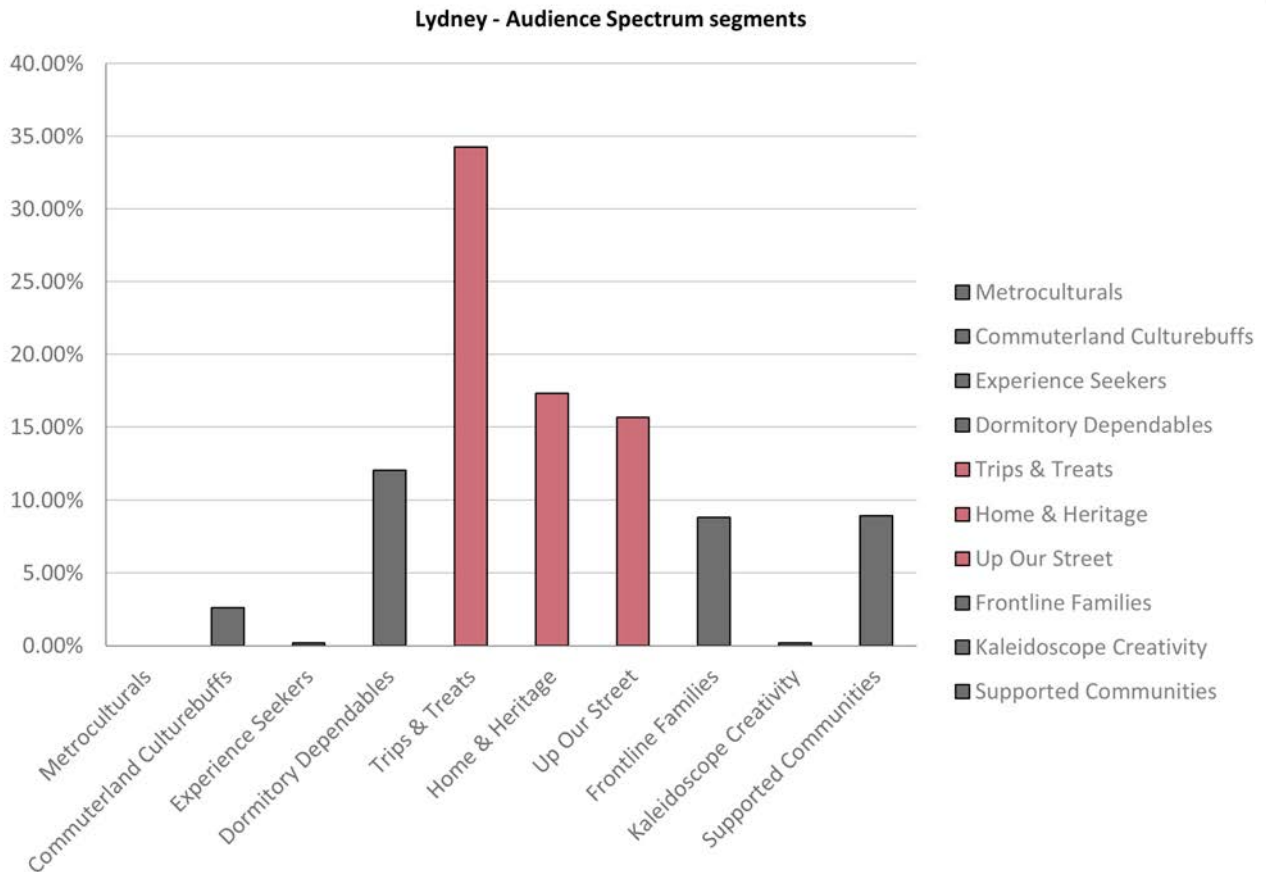


- **Median age - 45**



- **Global Communities population - 2.4%**

WHO LIVES IN LYDNEY?



The three largest Audience Spectrum segments in Lydney are:

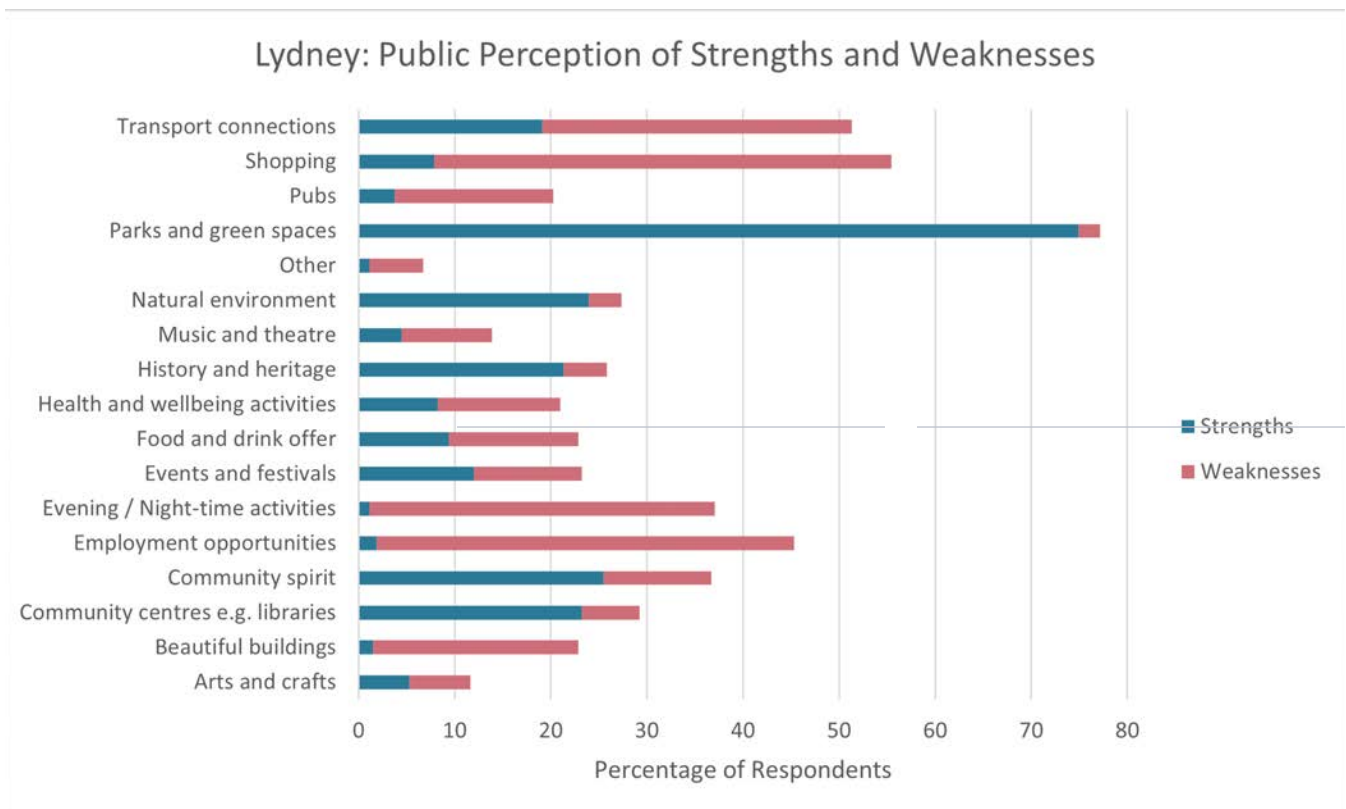
- Trips and Treats (34%) - “Mainstream arts and popular culture fans influenced by children, family and friends”
- Up Our Street (17%) - “Sociable retirees looking for inexpensive, mainstream, local leisure opportunities”
- Home & Heritage (16%) - “Rural and small town pensioners attracted to daytime activities and historical content”

STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES OF LYDNEY

Lydney stands out from other Market Towns for its Parks and Green spaces which rank as the top chosen strength of the town (75%) and surpasses any other strength across all four towns.

Although to a lesser extent, Community Spirit (25%), Natural Environment (24%), Community Centres e.g. libraries (23%) and History and Heritage (21%) are also considered to be strengths.

Lydney is characterised as clean, with very little litter. The lakes, parks and floral displays in town are all well maintained by the town council and people talk about the parks and outdoor spaces positively across the board. Policing is considered visible and adequate.



Strengths

- Gateway to the Forest and the Coast
- Nearby wildlife habitats - Lydney Town Marsh & Sidings, Severn Estuary European Marine Site
- Highest footfall of the four towns
- Community spaces e.g. Lydney Town Hall
- Best connected of the Forest towns e.g. only one with a train station
- Variety of shops compared to the other Market Towns (despite shopping being perceived as a weakness by Lydney residents)

Weaknesses

- Separation of town centre from some of the residential areas - sense that it is not 'one community'
- Lack of office space
- Problem with vacant lots in the town centre
- No investment from Arts Council England or National Lottery Heritage Fund
- Highest level of reported crime in the Forest towns
- Highest level of depression of the four towns

Opportunities

- Clear vision for Lydney as a coastal Market Town "gateway to the sea"
- Better connect the town centre to the docks/river, bringing the 'coastal town' vision to life - not just physically, but through visual assets such as art, murals and coastal inspired shops
- Redefine Lydney as a Market Town with a weekly farmers' market or fish market to maximise coastal resources
- Redevelopment of the Harbour area

Threats

- Crime dissuades people from using the town centre
- Risk of becoming a dormitory town as people travel to bigger towns and cities to work and shop

THRIVING BUSINESS IN LYDNEY

Footfall

Lydney had the highest footfall of each of the Market Towns. Each visitor visited approximately 4 times per month.

Lydney town centre averaged 41,768 unique visitors per month between June 2022 and July 2023 (source TownandPlaceAI). Each unique visitor visited apx 4 times per month (178276 footfall / 41768 unique visitors).

70% of visitors come from within a 10-mile radius and around 77% of its residents visit the town centre every month, which is the highest of all towns, suggesting fewer people need to travel out of the town to get what they need. Summer sees an increase in visitors from further than 10 miles away, Autumn also shows a peak in footfall.

Friday is the busiest day in Lydney, followed by Saturday. Lydney is unique in the Forest in having a train station but even so transport connections are named as a weakness in the town by 32% of respondents.

Empty shops

Lydney is the second best performing town for percentage of empty shops.

Lydney has the largest number of vacant units of the Market Towns (23). However, as Lydney has more units, the percentage empty is 14%, lower than Newent (17%) and Cinderford (18%).

Employment

Lydney and Newent have the equal highest percentage of economically active people of the four Market Towns (59%).

Although Lydney and Newent have equal highest percentage of economically active people, the levels of economic activity between each town, are relatively similar. For example, 56% in Cinderford, 56.3% in Coleford and 59,1% in both Lydney and Newent.

Public Sentiment

Public sentiment towards business in Lydney is largely positive, but is quickly becoming perceived as a dormitory town, where people only sleep in Lydney while they work, play and spend in other towns. Despite 64% of people saying they can't get what they need in the town, Lydney offers the biggest variety of independent, mainstream, charity shops and a bank. Some consider the appearance of the town to be rundown and more flower planters and general maintenance and tidying up of shops would improve things.

Local people consider the lack of Employment Opportunities in the town as its greatest weakness (43%) after Shopping, a very similar sentiment to all the other towns. People ask for more varied and "mainstream" shops, improved services (to include doctors, school places and food options) and an improved shopping experience. However, there is a split in sentiment as others consider the lack of chain stores to be a benefit.

People from other towns consider Lydney's bank branch a strength, although seemingly under-mentioned by Lydney residents and the inconsistent opening hours and the early closing is considered to be a big issue with the commercial offering.

“

“More choice for food shopping”

Online survey respondent

The charity shop culture is considered to be good and aligns itself nicely with circular economy initiatives - encouraging people to reduce, reuse and recycle. It also develops a sense of community for local charities who are in need of local support, both in volunteer hours and income.

“

“[I wish for] a better choice of shops and businesses.”

Online survey respondent

Although the town has a train station it is considered far from the centre of the town and many buses do not connect to it. Secondary school children, families with children and walkers consider the walking route connecting the station to the town to be problematic due to its proximity to a very busy road. All of these issues affect how easy it is for people to come into the town centre to shop or support local businesses.

LYDNEY'S ART, CULTURE & HERITAGE

Arts, culture and heritage organisations

Lydney has 9 arts, cultural, heritage, tourism or community destinations listed in the FODDC town report. 5 of these are tourist-focused attractions located out of the town centre, such as Dean Forest Railway.

Key venues in Lydney include: Lydney Town Hall, Nas Lane Community Hall and Victoria Centre. There are no arts spaces or museums in the town centre. Arts Council England and the National Lottery Heritage Fund has not invested in any organisations or projects in/ for Lydney since at least 2020. The town used to have an Arts Festival but this is no longer in operation.

Leisure

Lydney has 9 leisure facilities, significantly more than the other Forest towns.

These include two parks and two swimming pools within walking distance of the town centre, a skate park, a boating lake and various sports clubs.

The nearby wildlife habitats of special interest - Lydney Town Marsh & Sidings and Severn Estuary European Marine Site - provide further opportunity for outdoor activities and exploring nature.

Arts, culture and heritage attendance

Lydney is ranked second out of the four Forest towns for its level of attendance at arts, culture and heritage activities.

We have used data from the Audience Agency to understand how people engage with arts culture and heritage.

These reports suggest that within the last 12 months:

- 29% visited an art gallery
- 44% attended theatre
- 40% attended a rock or pop concert
- 17% visited museums
- 14% visited nature reserves

Although there are questions over whether people enjoyed this in Lydney or in other towns.

Public Sentiment

There are pockets of arts and cultural activity happening in Lydney - arts classes at the community centre, amateur dramatics groups, dance, the Lydney Town band and the band stand at Bathurst Park hosts local bands and music groups over the summer in a series of concerts.

Outdoor recreation and leisure is hugely important to the town. Parks and green spaces are the greatest strength although young people mention that there is nowhere to sit. The Harbour/Docks as a whole is the most visited specific place in Lydney along with Bathurst Park and the Boating Lake.

Although events and festivals are considered to be a main strength of the town (12%), Lydney is not particularly known for its arts and culture. Lydney Town Hall is a popular venue which welcomes theatre groups, music events and other cultural and entertainment offers on a very regular basis. The Docks/Harbour, Bathurst Park and other outdoor recreation areas are considered enjoyable places, as is Taurus Crafts (9%).

“

"Town hall have amazing live music and shows on a regular basis"

Online survey respondent

Lydney's Art/Sculpture trail at the Harbour is considered to have potential if it were more thoughtfully connected to the history and heritage of the town. Despite the sculpture subject matter being a contentious issue for some, who feel that improved communication is needed for residents to understand its relevance, there is a call to develop the arts and culture offer. People acknowledge that Taurus Crafts and other organisations such as Wyldwood and Canopy are doing great things for arts and craft in the Forest, as well as encouraging community cohesion and inclusion. The arts and performances classes that are available are spoken about positively.

Leisure facilities are well used and valued. The completed regeneration of the Docks area is highly anticipated but a number of people suggesting that better connections and signage to the town are needed in order to prevent them from being forgotten.

“

“Lydney Harbor is spectacular and the Art Trail in Lydney Harbour is amazing.”

Stakeholder Interview

“

“Lydney Docks is nice and could be much nicer if the derelict land was cleared / developed and if the docks could be better connected to the town.”

Online survey respondent



SOCIAL FACTORS IN LYDNEY

Crime rates

Crime rates in Lydney have remained relatively static, with an increase of 2.5% on the previous year.

According to police statistics from June 2022 to July 2023, Lydney was the most crime-afflicted of the Forest towns, which could be why residents feel safer due to higher police presence in the town.

Household deprivation

Lydney is the second lowest percentage of households that are deprived.

According to Census 2021, 53.2% of Lydney households are deprived of at least one of the four dimensions. This is lower than Coleford (56.7%) and Cinderford (56.8%). However, in Lydney there are pockets of higher levels of deprivation, and the picture is not uniform throughout the town.

Socialising

There are 32 known places to socialise in Lydney (combining community spaces, recreational spaces, food venues and pubs/ bars).

“

[I go to] The Library, especially great for children/families.”

Online survey respondent

Public Sentiment

Lydney's community centres are cited as a key strength (23%) and 8% of respondents mentioned the library, with its groups, classes and activities, particularly valued by older people and families with children. Families and children mention the lack of indoor activities and play spaces for children and families to socialise.

Coco and Bliss, The Daily Grind and various other cafes and pubs are favourite social places and Hips Social, Hips Harbourside and Forest Friendly are particularly seen as community hubs.

The crime rate in Lydney might be the highest in the Forest, but most consider Lydney to be safe, with only 5% of respondents saying that a lack of safety prevented them from spending time in the town. Secondary school aged students notice the visibility and presence of police in the town.

Although there are pubs and restaurants, there is a general lack of places open in the evening to socialise and as the town has no cinema there is very little to do aside from attending paid events. While there is a youth hub in Lydney, safe, social activities for teenagers and young people are considered few and far between.

“

“The library is wonderful -we are so blessed to have such friendly staff, free tea and coffee and so many books and activities”

Online survey respondent

“

“HIPS SOCIAL. This place is an absolute godsend. The food is fantastic, the owners are delightful and full of community spirit. This place has brought more to Lydney than is realised.”

Online survey respondent

“

“We have nothing. We go out of town for most things and to socialise. We need more restaurants, places for people to gather.”

Online survey respondent

HEALTH AND WELLBEING IN LYDNEY

Disease prevalence

Lydney has the highest disease prevalence and depression of the four Forest towns, but lower rates of asthma, diabetes and obesity than Cinderford and Coleford.

These include key indicators of day-to-day health and wellbeing:

- Depression 15.5%
- Asthma 7.5%
- Diabetes 8.5%
- High blood pressure 19.5%
- Obesity 13.6%

Rates of obesity for reception age children are equal highest of the Forest towns at 11.2%.

Physical activity

According to the 2020 Active Lives survey, 62% of Lydney are 'physically active'.

This is equivalent to Cinderford and Coleford but lower than Newent (67%) and the national average (64%). (Source OSCI report)

Disability benefits claimants

Lydney has the second highest percentage of claimants of Personal Independence Payments (PIP) in the Forest at 9.6% (including 3.2% for mental health conditions).

Note that the higher levels of depression in Lydney do not equate to a higher rate of PIP recipients for mental health conditions.

Public Sentiment

The public sentiment regarding health and well-being activities and outdoor recreational activities in the Lydney is mixed. Despite recreational facilities such as rugby, cricket, and tennis clubs, and the popularity of walking and enjoying parks and green spaces, there is still a perceived gap in provision for certain sectors of the population and older people express a need for more organised community activities that are adequately funded and long-lasting to effectively address isolation.

Although more people (8%) view health and wellbeing as a strength in Lydney than they do in other towns, higher still (13%), consider it to be a weakness.

While mountain biking, cycling, and walking are popular activities, and the proximity to the Forest is considered an asset, residents express dissatisfaction with the maintenance of related infrastructure, and consequently drive. Young people mention difficulties in accessing cycling infrastructure and perceive leisure facilities to be somewhat disconnected from each other. However, parks and green spaces are frequented regularly. Specific locations such as the open-air pool at Bathurst Park and the Freedom Leisure centre and pool are highly valued by everyone, especially for families to get children moving.

Despite its popularity, the Leisure centre is criticised for its inadequate size and facilities, and families with young children suggest that the play equipment at the parks need upgrading.

“

“I have lived here a very long time and I would love to see more structure in activities as in Q1- ie evening/day classes, fully funded etc. For e.g. the lovely course I did at the Community Centre was only funded for three terms by Adult Ed. I enjoyed my course and made nice friends. However, that was 'it', no more (of that course).”

Online survey respondent
(aged 65+)

“

“We need ... a MUCH bigger gym than Freedom Leisure. Sure, there's crossfit gyms but a big gym would benefit the community massively. Freedom Leisure is too small for the capacity it takes.”

Online survey respondent

ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS IN LYDNEY

Conservation areas

Lydney effectively has four mini conservation areas spread across the town.

These help preserve smaller areas of Lydney that were not subject to development in the late 20th century. There are 70 listed structures.

Future development

Approximately 1,160 new dwellings are planned for Lydney, the highest in the Forest.

Energy efficiency ratings

Lydney has the highest energy efficient domestic buildings in the Forest.

Lydney scores well, with a SAP rating of 66.7, the highest in the Forest.



Public sentiment

Public sentiment towards development is mixed. There are requests to “stop building more houses” but people also accept it happening. Mixed feelings arise due to the perception that services, retail and infrastructure are not keeping up with the increase in housing. Lydney stands out among the towns for its relatively positive feedback on transport links and accessibility.

Although there is the odd comment about the maintenance and upkeep of the town's infrastructure, with some residents considering the town to be rundown and in need of a tidy-up, there are fewer complaints from Lydney residents about the erosion of the conservation areas, than there are in other towns.

Some residents believe that Lydney falls short of its potential as the gateway to the Forest, as visitors often pass through without being drawn into the town by a compelling offer. While transport connections from Lydney to destinations outside of the Forest are generally praised, connectivity within the Forest itself is perceived as lacking. There are calls for better integration and safety enhancements among the various transport options, including the station, walking paths, and cycling routes, to create a more seamless and enjoyable experience for users.



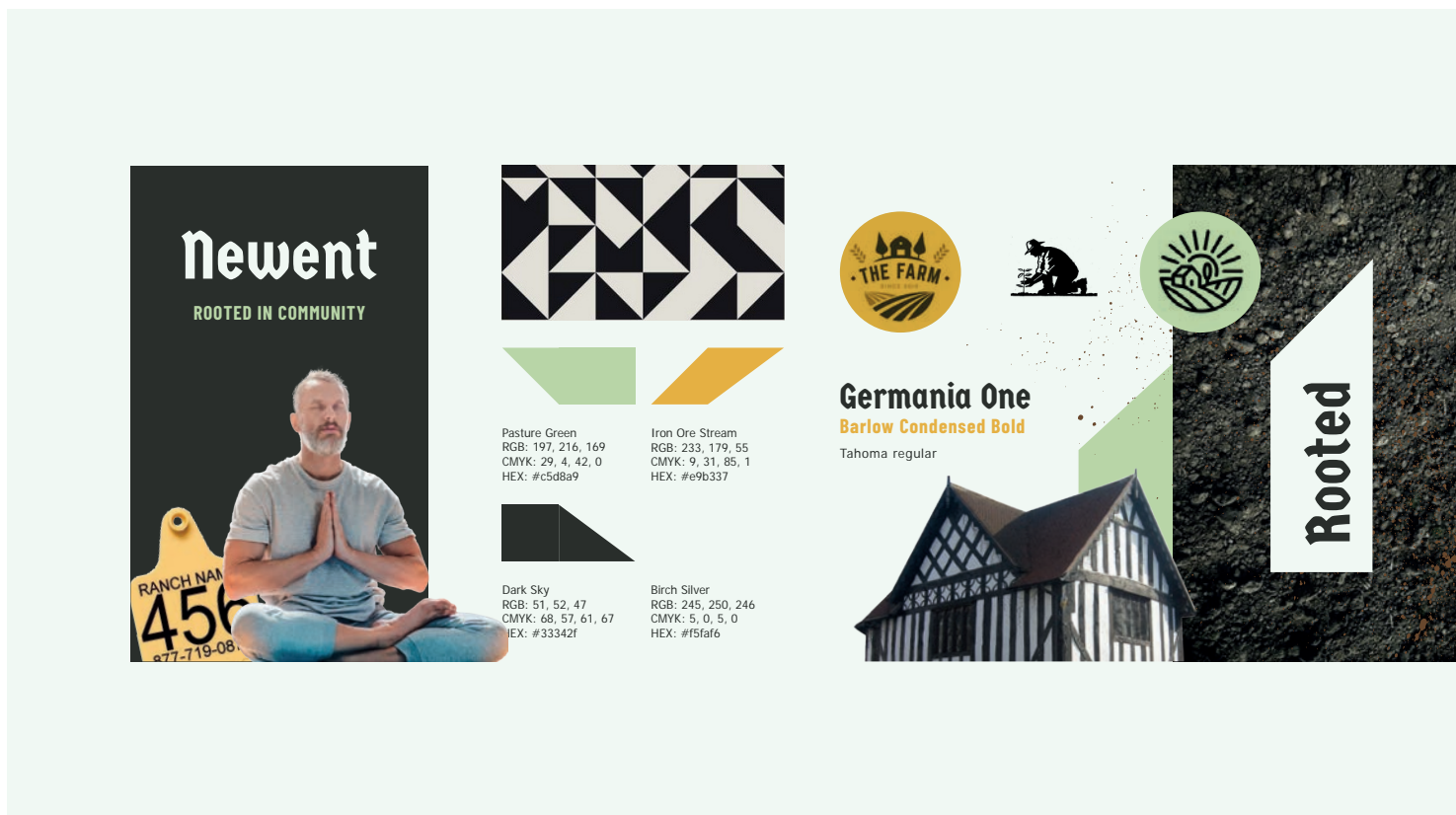
NEWENT

- ❤ Connection and heritage
- 💪 Holistic health and homegrown bounty
- 🏃 Working outdoors

Stylescapes

Newent

Newent's primary colour is 'Pasture Green', it represents the towns connection to green fields, spaces and nature - including the lake, arboretum, canal, agriculture and gardening centres. It also suitably compliments Newent's active lifestyle of 'working outdoors'. The orangey, yellow colour of 'Iron Ore Stream' represents the sunny nature of working outdoors and Newent's rugby and football clubs. Both colours sit against a background of 'Dark Sky' and 'Silver Birch' which represent Newent's unique Black and White 17th century buildings.



Primary

Accent



Pasture Green
RGB: 197, 216, 169
CMYK: 29, 4, 42, 0
HEX: #c5d8a9



Iron Ore Stream
RGB: 233, 179, 55
CMYK: 9, 31, 85, 1
HEX: #e9b337



Renowned for its rich agricultural heritage, farm to table sentiment and care of its 17th Century buildings. Influenced by the Cotswolds and Cheltenham, Newent showcases the bounty of locally grown produce

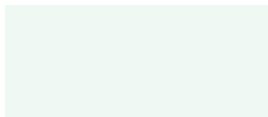
- ▶ **Newent's heart**
Connections and Bounty
- ▶ **Newent's strength**
Holistic Health and Homegrown bounty
- ▶ **Newent's active life**
Working outdoors



Supporting colours



Dark Sky
RGB: 51, 52, 47
CMYK: 68, 57, 61, 67
HEX: #33342f



Silver Birch
RGB: 245, 250, 246
CMYK: 5, 0, 5, 0
HEX: #f5faf6

Newent is renowned for its **rich agricultural heritage**. For “**farm to table sentiment**”, its care and emphasis of 15th Century and 17th Century buildings, and its connection and influence of nearby areas such as the Cotswolds and Cheltenham, Newent can showcase **the bounty of the area** where ‘**locally grown**’ and ‘**locally produced**’ are shining examples of the skills of the region.

KEY DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION



- **Smallest of the Forest towns - 6,376**



- **Highest percentage over people 65+ - 25.1%**



- **Lowest percentage of residents born in UK - 89.5%**



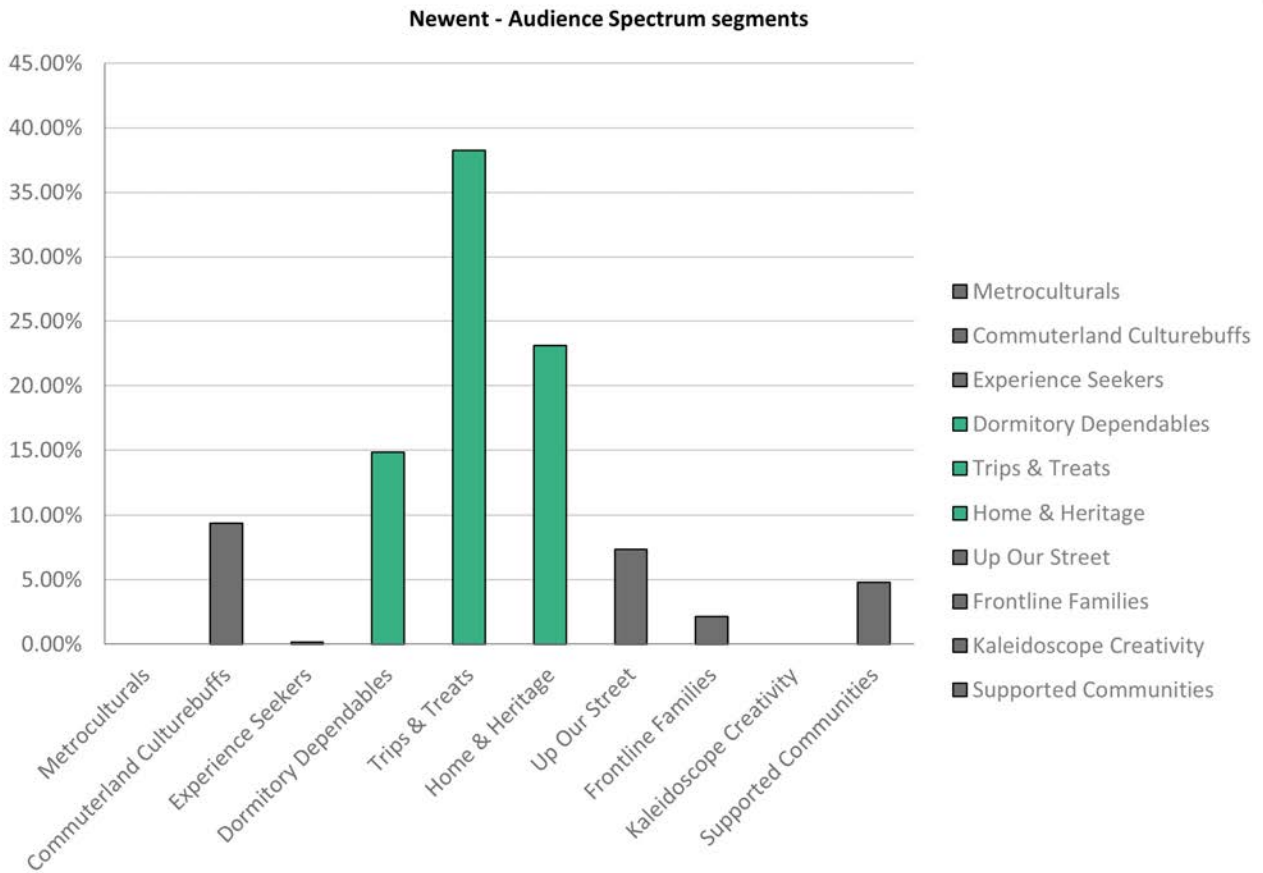
- **Median age - 46**



- **Lowest percentage of working age adults (16-64) - 57.7%**

- **Significant ‘other White’ ethnicity - 7.2% including 2.7% Polish and 2.3% Romanian**

WHO LIVES IN NEWENT?



The three largest Audience Spectrum segments in Newent are:

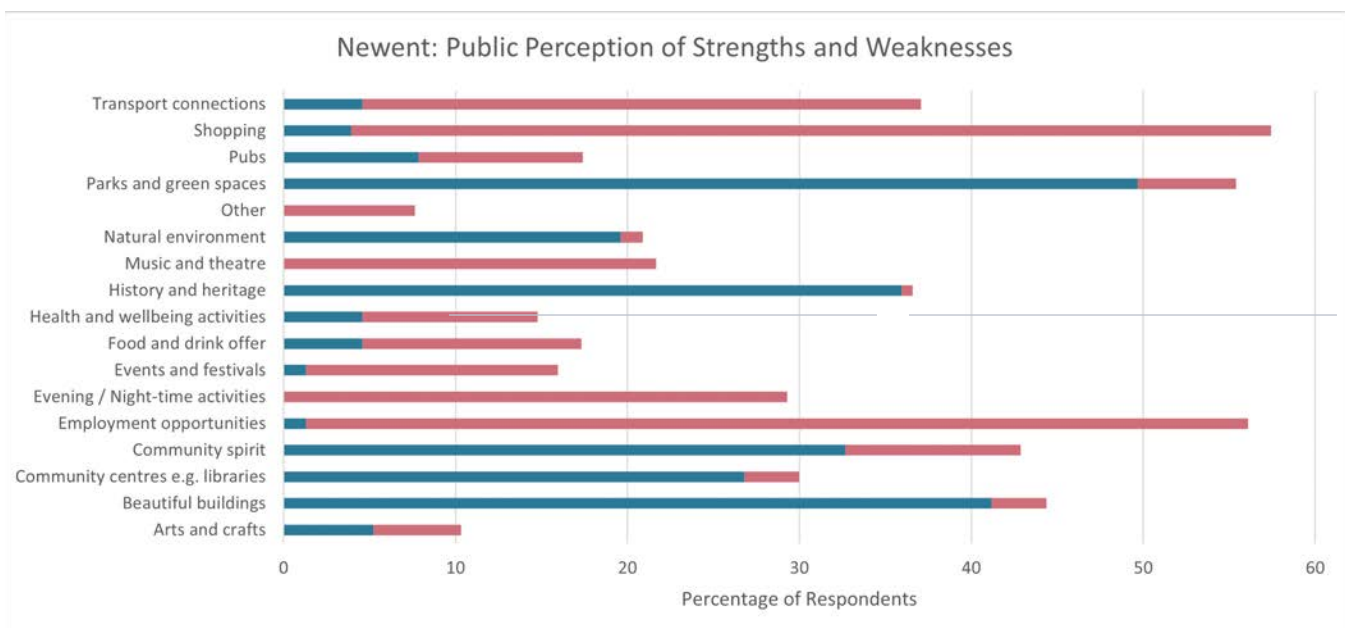
- Trips and Treats (38%) - “Mainstream arts and popular culture fans influenced by children, family and friends”
- Home & Heritage (23%) - “Rural and small town pensioners attracted to daytime activities and historical content”
- Dormitory Dependables (15%) - “Suburbanites and small towners interested in heritage activities and mainstream arts”

STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES OF NEWENT

The greatest strength of Newent (like Lydney) is the quality of its parks and green spaces. The beauty of its buildings, its rich history and heritage, and its strong sense of community spirit are close runners up. The value placed on the local library and community centres is also high. These aspects contribute to the town's appeal and enhance perceptions of its liveability and attractiveness to residents and visitors alike.

The emphasis on green spaces and community facilities suggests that Newent is able to focus on promoting well-being, social interaction, and cultural engagement within the town. Newent is distinct because it is largely surrounded by agricultural and farmland, something that residents value ahead of its proximity to the Forest.

Residents perceive Newent to be lacking in its Shopping (54%) and Employment Opportunities (55%), Transport Connections (33%), and Evening Entertainment (29%). Newent is often compared to its neighbouring cities and as such, it is the only Market Town to cite music and theatre as a weakness (22%), despite its popularity.



Strengths

- Higher level of qualifications than other Forest towns
- More people employed in higher paid jobs
- Some unique attractions e.g. Secret Gallery, Museum of Board Games
- Higher levels of physical activity and lower disease prevalence than other Forest towns, especially depression
- Strong historic character throughout, as well as industrial history
- Highest energy efficiency ratings of buildings of the Forest towns

Weaknesses

- By far the lowest footfall of all the Forest towns
- Low use of town centre on Saturday - not a weekend leisure and shopping destination
- Lack of local employment - most people in higher paid jobs commute to Gloucester
- Few places to socialise
- Isolation from other Forest towns and what is considered the core of the Forest of Dean
- Lack of generational community cohesion

Opportunities

- Repositioning the town as an idyllic small town rural destination due to its unique architecture and proximity to the Forest of Dean, the Malvern Hills and Gloucester
- Be famous for food and drink in the Forest of Dean - making the most of it's 'farm to fork' sentiment
- Attracting visitors from the thriving UK board game scene due to the Museum of Board Games
- 25 minutes from Gloucester - possibility of attracting new residents and visitors due to road links from M5 and M50
- Decline in crime statistics from an even higher base

Threats

- Lack of post-pandemic recovery of town centre use, especially compared to other Forest towns
- 17.2% of retail units vacant
- High crime levels dissuading residents from the town centre

THRIVING BUSINESS IN NEWENT

Footfall

Newent is the smallest town with the lowest footfall. Since the Pandemic, footfall in Newent has been slower to recover.

Newent town centre averaged 13,867 unique visitors per month between June 2022 and July 2023. In context, Newent gets only 23% of Lydney's footfall. Each unique visitor, visits Newent on average 3 times per month (41024 footfall / 13867 unique visitors).

As with all the Forest towns, Friday is Newent's busiest day. Newent is particularly struggling as a weekend leisure and shopping destination (Saturday is the 5th busiest day) suggesting that people go elsewhere on the weekends. Only 70% of visitors come from within a 10 mile radius, and each visitor only visits 3 times per month, the lowest of the Forest towns.

Empty shops

Retail vacancy rates are on the rise.

17.2% of retail units are vacant (4 % more than last year).

Employment

Newent residents are more highly qualified and a higher percentage are in more managerial positions.

59% of Newent's residents are economically active, roughly average for the Forest towns. However, there are clear differences between employment patterns in Newent:

- Newent has the highest percentage of retired people of the Forest towns (29%)
- 33% of residents have a Level 4 qualification or above, considerably higher than the other towns (e.g. Cinderford 19%). However, this is still some way short of the national average (38%)
- 13% of residents are employed in higher paid managerial, administrative and professional occupations, the highest figure of the Forest towns

Public Sentiment

There is a desire to protect and improve Newent, with shops fairly close together and near to services the town is considered attractive, and people enjoy walking around. There is a sense that Newent's community comes together to get things done and support its local businesses and organisations. It is however perceived to be lacking in its Shopping (54%) and Employment Opportunities (55%), and residents also feel Transport Connections (33%) are a great weakness. When combined, these factors challenge what could be a thriving town centre.

Residents lament the closure of local businesses like butchers, grocers, bakeries, and banks in the town, a trend exacerbated by the pandemic. There is widespread concern about the out-of-town development which is perceived to be turning Newent into a dormitory town, without an accompanying increase in facilities, which only exacerbates the reputation of not providing what people need (71%).

Newent and District Business Club, The Trader's Association and The Newent Initiative Trust bring like-minded people and organisations together for cohesive planning. Examples include keeping cafes open over the weekend - traders taking turns to open on a Sunday so there is something open in the town, raising money to support town improvements and the development of amenities, as well as a shop local reward scheme. The Recycling Shop is a community interest company which ploughs resources back into community building initiatives as well as providing service to residents.

“

“Attractive Historic High Street/centre with the potential to easily walk to all amenities you need to live and enjoy life. Doctors, library, supermarket, cafes, pubs, parks, clothes shops.”

Online survey respondent

There's a resounding call in Newent for recovery and investment address the potential downward spiral of economic activity, as shops close early in the week or remain shut on Sundays. Disappointed visitors subsequently deter future visits, perpetuating a cycle of earlier closing times and eventual closure of shops altogether. The closure of highly valued national attractions such as the Bird of Prey Centre and the Onion Fayre prevents the town having a specific 'point of interest' to 'pull' people in, something that is needed given the towns geographical distance from the rest of the Forest.

Consequently, residents feel they have more in common with people from other nearby districts than they do with the Forest of Dean.

The Friday market and a “market to your door” van are an appreciated opportunity for people to buy locally grown and produced food, but residents are price sensitive and cost drives the call to improve the variety of shops on offer.



“

“[I wish for] an Aldi or discount supermarket then wouldn’t have to travel to Gloucester or Ledbury.”

Online survey respondent

“

“[I wish for] first and foremost a decent supermarket that doesn’t cost the earth like the co-op does! It is an absolute rip off shopping there and we have to go into Gloucester to spend our money which we don’t like doing.”

Online survey respondent
(parent/carer)

NEWENT'S ART, CULTURE & HERITAGE

Arts, culture and heritage organisations

The Newent and District Choral society based in the town has around 50 members. The Newent Orchestra draws players from Gloucestershire, Worcestershire and Herefordshire. Newent's venues have a quirky edge - here you can find things you won't find elsewhere in the Forest of Dean. These include the Museum of Board Games and The Secret Gallery.

Newent has 7 arts, cultural, heritage, tourism or community destinations listed in the FODDC town report. This is the fewest number of the four towns, but expected as Newent is the smallest town.

Newent has attracted National Lottery Heritage Funding in recent years with a £10,000 grant to mark the centenary of Newent Cricket Club (outside the town centre).

Leisure

Newent has just 4 recorded leisure venues.

A swimming pool, boating lake, gym and children's play area serving the small town. The nearby restored canal also provides opportunities for walking and exploring the local area.

Arts, culture and heritage attendance

Despite the popular choir and orchestra, Newent residents engage in arts and culture less frequently than the other Market Towns.

We have used data from the Audience Agency to understand how people engage with arts culture and heritage.

These reports suggest that within the last 12 months:

- 20% visited an art gallery
- 30% attended theatre
- 27% attended a rock or pop concert
- 11% visited museums
- 10% visited nature reserves

These figures are significantly lower than the other towns, for reasons including the older population, fewer opportunities locally and Newent's relative isolation.

Public Sentiment

Despite the presence of the long-standing choir and orchestra Newent stands alone in identifying Music and Theatre as a weakness (22%). The allure of nearby cathedral cities known for their strong choral traditions, heightens awareness of the musical and cultural activities lacking in Newent. The Shambles, Secret Gallery, Museum of Boardgames and the Recycling Shop offer a slightly different proposition to other Market Towns and are both valued and well supported, offering social connection for like-minded people.

Although Newent is home to the positively received orchestra, choral society, dance school and theatre group, participants hail from a wider geographical area. As the town's newer developments attract residents relocating from larger towns, many maintain ties to their previous communities, including their cultural interests. Consequently, opportunities for music and theatre in Newent appear limited, particularly in the absence of dedicated venues.



Newent might be small and have few options for leisure compared to the other towns, but the Lake, Arboretum, Library and various Cafe's are enjoyed and supported. The Secret Gallery in particular is considered to be a place worth visiting for its monthly exhibitions and is a hub for artists and makers. It supports the creative life of the town with its shop and by being a place for artists to show their work.

The Market House contains some small heritage exhibits and along with the Market square area, is an asset to the town. History and Heritage is a strength of the town (36%), but there is no real hub for heritage apart from the Market House and the niche Boardgames Museum.

People use and appreciate the leisure centre and pool. There are concerns that the outdoor gym at the Lake is in disrepair and concerns lie over the suitability of its concrete base.

“

“...the market house is very interesting.”

Stakeholder interview



SOCIAL FACTORS IN NEWENT

Crime rates

Newent saw a 35% decrease in crime since last year.

According to police statistics from June 2022 to July 2023, Newent had 153 reported crimes.

Household deprivation

Newent has the lowest level of deprivation.

According to Census 2021, 51.6% of Newent households are deprived on at least one of the four dimensions, the lowest of the Forest towns. However, this is still higher than the national figure of 49%.

Socialising

Newent has the fewest places to socialise (as expected for the smallest town)

Public Sentiment

A significant portion of respondents (27%) identified community centres like the library as a strength of the town. However, the closure of the community centre is felt by residents as its absence leaves a void in the community's meeting spaces. Cafes are popular gathering spots, and the Library serves as a valued meeting place and community hub. Events and Festivals are considered a weakness of the town (15%).

There is a call for more variation in Newent's cafe offer and an increased number of places where people can gather, especially as the population is growing with residents used to a more varied offer of a larger town or city.

The community cafe and other coffee groups are arranged by organisations such as St. Mary's church, which, along with other churches are considered to be important places that people enjoy visiting. Although families and young people consider social provision, groups and clubs are mainly aimed at the older generation. The Friday market also presents opportunities for people to meet and socialise, and The Shambles, Secret Gallery and the Recycling Shop are enjoyed and seen as a place where like-minded people can go.

People miss the Onion Fayre which used to provide an annual opportunity to socialise, celebrate what the area has to offer and draw tourists to the town. Evening and Night Time activities are also within the top 5 weaknesses of the town, due to the lack of places to socialise. There is a desire for a Saturday market to bring the town together, and people from the new developments together.

Newent residents largely feel safe in their town, although as can be expected there are a small number of respondents who notice a lack of a police station and would like a more visible police presence in the town.

“

[I wish for] improving services and opportunities for children, families and young people.”

Online survey respondent



HEALTH AND WELLBEING IN NEWENT

Disease prevalence

Newent has the lowest disease prevalence and depression rates of the four Forest towns, lower than national figures in many respects.

These include key indicators of day-to-day health and wellbeing:

- Depression 7%
- Asthma 6.4%
- Diabetes 6.7%
- High blood pressure 15.7%
- Obesity 7.9%

Rates of obesity for reception age children are 8.8%.

Physical activity

Newent has higher levels of physical activity.

According to Active Lives, it has the highest percentage of physically active residents of the Forest towns (67%), corresponding to Newent's lower levels of disease.

Disability benefits claimants

Newent has by far the lowest rates of PIP recipients.

Only 6.5% of working age adults receive PIP, and only 2% receive PIP for mental health conditions.



Public Sentiment

Data suggests that Newent's population is healthier than in other Market Towns, and with 10% of respondents considering health and wellbeing provision to be a strength, and 5% considering it a weakness, it is fair to say its provision is adequate for the current size of the town. The leisure centre and pool are mentioned as specific places that residents like to visit, but after the outdoor spaces, cafes and the library.

People are proud of the sporting history of the town and the strength of the rugby and football clubs. There is however a sense that there is a lack of facilities and a lack of community around sports for children, and there is a lack of facilities for non-competitive sports like BMX/mountain biking. Better infrastructure for kids and teens sports and active leisure is called for.

“

“[My wish is for] mountain bike tracks and more outdoor places for teens and all to be active - non competitive sports.”

Online survey respondent

People consider the Lake to be a great asset to the town and the walking path around it is well used (56%). The Lake's outdoor adult gym facility and children's play area are viewed less positively and people feel they are in need of refurbishment or rethinking especially regarding their surface underfoot which is seen to be dangerous. The community is frustrated because of tree planting initiatives, and the introduction of distance markers on the footpath, have resulted in saplings being removed as a result of miscommunication.



“

“The Arboretum is a fantastic area for those that walk their dogs. However, it doesn't have the kind of facilities for young people or families and children. So I think ensuring that those environments are appropriate for everybody to share [is needed].”

Stakeholder interview

While the Arboretum is appreciated for its scenic beauty, there's recognition that it lacks activities specifically geared towards families and children. Although it serves as a communal space for everyone, there's acknowledgment that it doesn't equally meet the diverse needs of the community.



ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS IN NEWENT

Conservation areas

The town has a strong historic character throughout.

Much of Newent is a conservation area, with many 15th to 17th century timber frame buildings, as well as buildings representing the town's coal mining and glass-making past.

Future development

Approximately 600 new dwellings are planned for Newent, the second highest in the Forest after Lydney.

Energy efficiency ratings

The energy efficiency of Newent's domestic buildings are in line with the national average.

Newent scores well, with a SAP rating of 64.8, vs national average of 64.1.

Public sentiment

The community perceive Newent's top strengths to be its Beautiful Buildings and its History and Heritage, following closely behind its Parks and Green spaces. Residents are better connected to the town's agricultural heritage, rural surroundings and its buildings than they are to glassmaking or mining heritage. There is a real desire for better public transport connections, cited as a weakness in the town by 32% of respondents.

“

“[I wish for the] Local (sic) council to ensure the facades of buildings are kept up to scratch.”

Online survey respondent

“

“Improve walking and cycling connections to new estates. Cycle paths and cycle parking in town. Possibly restrict car access at certain times.”

Online survey respondent

There is great positive sentiment towards the built environment and the picturesque, well preserved nature of the town’s buildings but there is significant opportunity to enforce conservation area planning rules and hold landlords accountable for building maintenance.

There is a call to link the old town and new developments together with better walking and cycling infrastructure to encourage people to shop, socialise and support the local businesses in the town. It is acknowledged that the new developments have the potential to bring the needed improvements to the transport infrastructure amid an underlying fear of the changes that the new development will bring to the character of the town and the impact this will have on local services.



HEARING FROM EVERYBODY

THE FOREST THROUGH THE LENS OF THE POPULATIONS SECTORS

How does provision for each population sector compare across the towns?

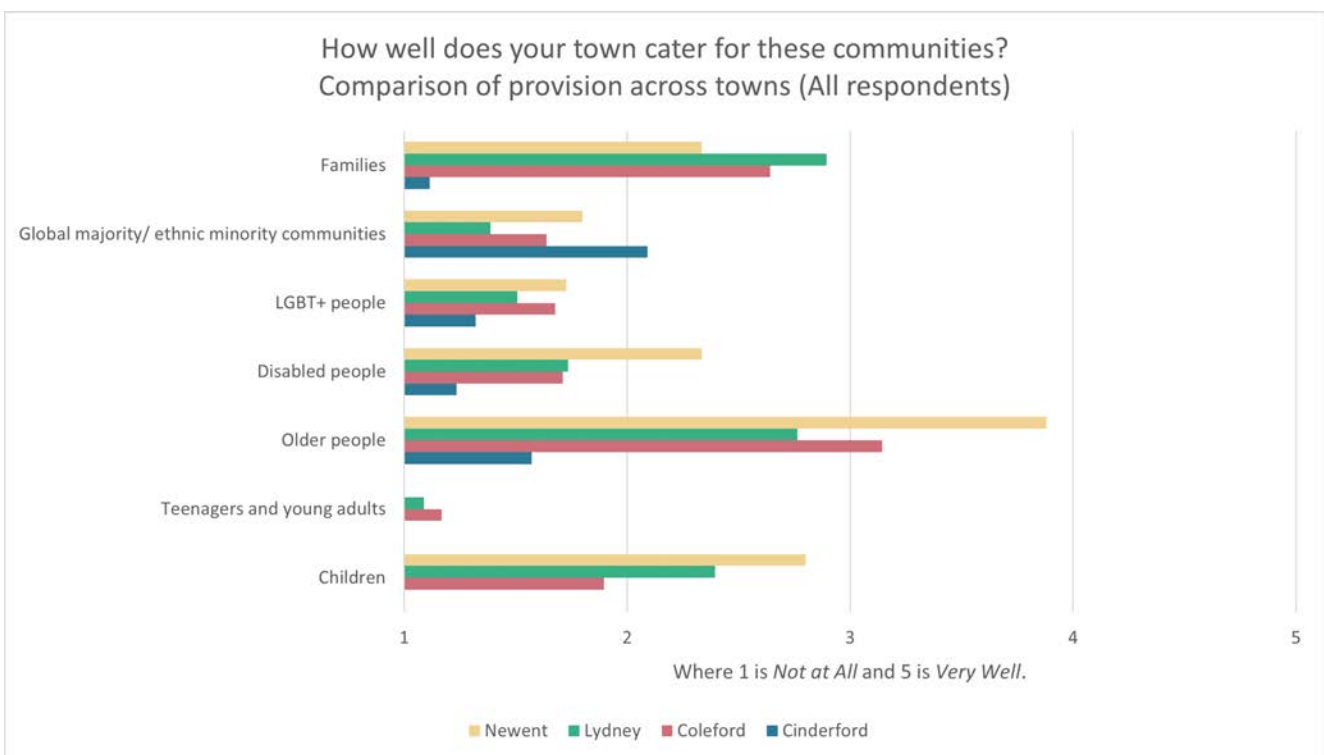
With provision for older people considered to be best, and for younger people to be struggling, the perception across all Market Towns is that the Forest of Dean is a good place to retire, but less so to be young, study or work.

However, with Newent and Coleford being the only towns to score over 3 out of 5 in its provision for older people, and all towns scoring less than 3 in its provision for all other demographic groups it can be concluded that there is significant opportunity to improve provision, and the communications of existing provision, across the board, especially for teenagers and young people where provision scored an average of 1 out of a possible 5 out of 5.

Provision in Cinderford is considered to be less for all demographic groups compared to other towns, except for Global majority/ethnic minority communities, where it takes the lead. Cinderford is equipped however, with a strong volunteer and community led efforts to change things.

Provision for teenagers and young adults is particularly void in Newent - scoring less than 1 out of 5 - a view shared by respondents of all ages, from all towns. It is a recognised issue and there are efforts from town councils and the voluntary sector to remedy it.

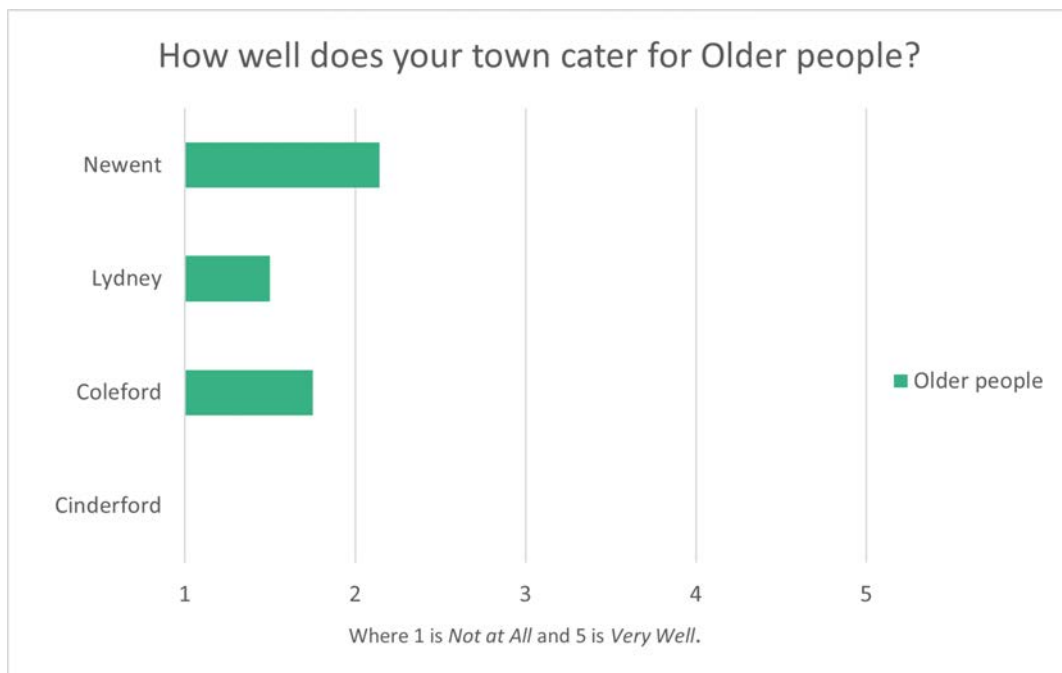
This data suggests that, broadly speaking, Lydney is best for families. Newent is best for older people, children, disabled people and the LGBTQI+ community. Coleford is best for teenagers and young people and Cinderford is best for global majority/ethnic minority people.



However, this is a sweeping measure from all respondents. It would have been best practice to have looked deeper into the thoughts of each community group exclusively, about what each group thinks of the provision for their individual needs, however, this proved particularly challenging within the consultation timeframe available and further research would be welcomed on this topic.

Elderly or Older People across the Forest

More likely to compare their town unfavourably now compared to recent years, older people call for banks, post offices and public toilets and would like to see independent shops like greengrocers, butchers and bakeries making a return to High Streets. However, older people are more satisfied with the current offer than the wider population.



Contrary to what might be expected, older people are less likely to feel unsafe in their town and they highly value community centres, the activities and groups available. It is important to advertise events away from digital platforms as older people often miss out on events that are only advertised digitally and their reliance on transport means they need information early. Health and transport links are the main barriers for older people engaging with community events.

People over 65 have a less positive view of their town's provision than the general population, although this is slightly less marked in Newent. Cinderford being on an incline with narrow pavements, makes it particularly difficult for older people to navigate.

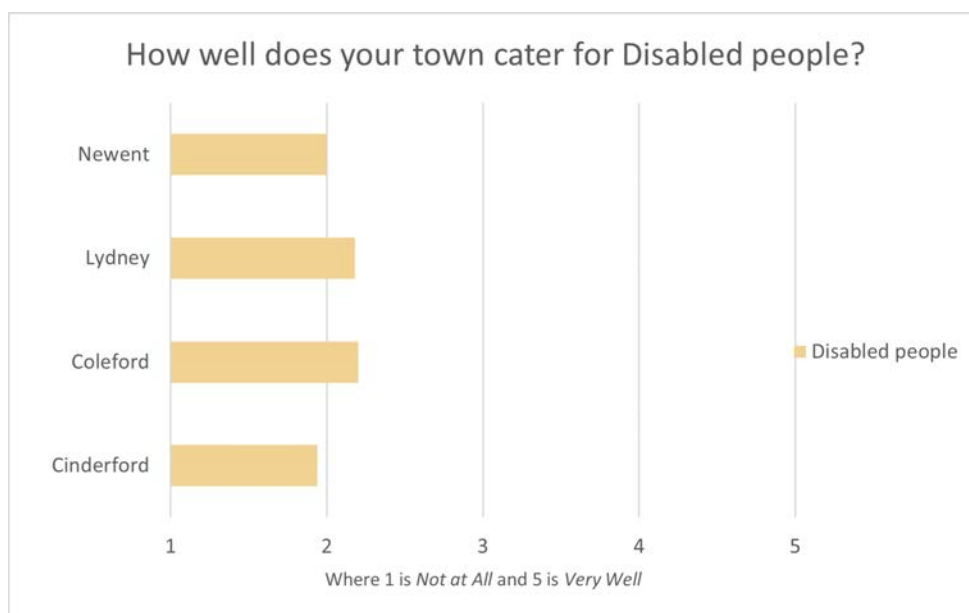


Disabled People across the Forest

Disabled people (and older people) struggle with parking issues, although slightly less so than families with children. Health, transport connections and the cost of activities, food and transport are a real barrier to engaging with their local town's offer. Although disabled people do feel that they can't get what they need and that there is nothing that interests them in their town, this is more closely on par with the wider population.

Perhaps surprisingly, disabled people cited caring responsibilities are a barrier to engaging with their community, as well as not feeling safe or like they belong. Making the towns accessible for disabled people requires investment in infrastructure and joined up thinking regarding parking, public amenities and transport connections.

Although Newent is considered by the majority of respondents to cater for disabled people the best of the four towns, when the data is segmented to look only at the responses from those who identify as disabled, Coleford scored highest although only marginally. Disabled people are disproportionately affected by the accessibility challenges around heritage buildings and similar issues to those which also affect older residents. Cinderford being on an incline with narrow, uneven pavements, makes it particularly difficult for those with mobility issues to navigate.





LYDNEY TOWN HALL

GIVE WAY

CHURCH ROAD

BUS STOP

Families, Children and Young People across the Forest

Families are more closely aligned with the views of the general population than the other demographic groups. However, they are most affected by cost pressures and caring responsibilities. The latter is unsurprising, but the influence of cost for a larger group attending events/entertainment or spending money on food and drink is a pressure to consider.

Families are slightly more likely to travel elsewhere to get what they need and are slightly less likely to have transport problems and coupled with their high parking concerns for both accessibility and cost, there are many factors to lure families away from their Market Towns.



With a high regard for 'value' families need free and low-cost provision to engage with social opportunities and stay active. The Trips and Treats Audience Agency segment, to which most families will belong, live comfortable but modest lifestyles and are very much led by the interests of their children, friends and family. It is vital that any regeneration strategy appeals to this segment.

Families tend to enjoy good health, know where to go and are more likely to feel that they belong, however the percentage of respondents who indicate that they don't visit the towns (especially in late afternoon and evening) because they don't feel safe is stark – higher than the wider population and much higher than the older generation.

Young people in Cinderford were particularly vocal about the lack of visible policing and how they feel it is a scary and dangerous place to live. Young people in Lydney however, cited the regular police presence and a sense of safety. This is in direct contrast to the crime statistics for the towns - Lydney has the highest number of reported crimes, however the police presence could make it feel safer and that crime is being dealt with.

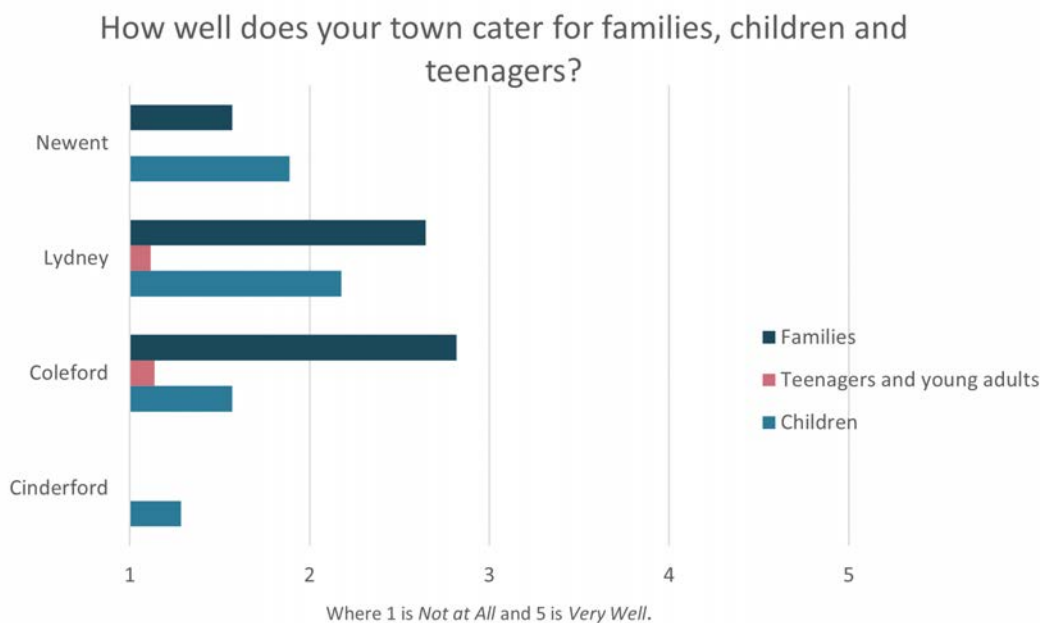
Young people acutely feel the lack of facilities for their age group across the towns. The skate parks and parks and green spaces are appreciated and used in Lydney and Coleford, but there is considered to be no sheltered places to sit, which prohibits social opportunities. Cinderford is considered to be lacking across the board for families and young people, aside from its organised and competitive sports. The lack of a swimming pool in Coleford is starkly felt. Lydney Lido is a place that local children say they enjoy visiting, along with the BMX and mountain biking provision just outside of town.

Families and young people consider there to be a lack of indoor provision with a call for fun restaurants, arcades and facilities where they can sit down with friends, eat, socialise and feel safe and welcome. They expressed frustration at cafes closing too early and although in Coleford and Cinderford the cinema is a good entertainment option, there is nowhere for them to go before or afterwards. Most young people who take part in activities do so through schools or travel outside of the Forest. There is a need to improve communications with young people about the Forest Youth Project, Music Works, and Youth Drop in's as many were unaware they exist and those in the know would like improved opening times.

Young people expressed a particular affection for the town festivals and events which they do attend with their families and friends such as Cindyfest, Coleford Music festival, Remembrance Day, Pride and the Christmas Lights Switch On.

Poor transport links result in young people relying on their parents as roads are considered to be difficult to navigate as a pedestrian. Lydney secondary school children described the station as removed from the town with a less than ideal walking route along a busy road, and few bus options to connect with.

Sixth Form and college options within the Forest are very limited and transport limits access to provision outside of the Forest and therefore those who can leave the Forest post 16, do.



Cinderford and Lydney children particularly described their affection for the Forest and how beautiful it was.

“

“It’s a good place to be a child.....but there’s nothing here once you grow up, maybe I’ll come back to retire.”

Focus group participant

This sentiment was echoed by an online survey respondent from Lydney who said:

“

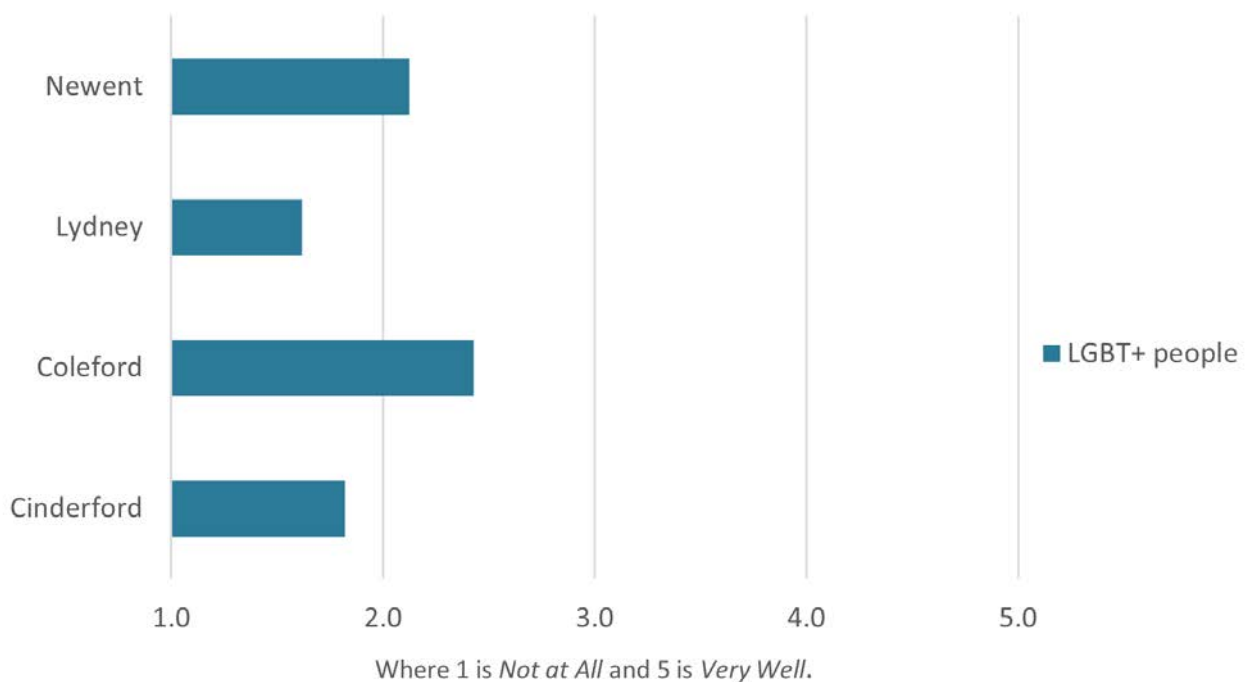
“[We need] More outdoor areas for older children - better skate park, pump track, climbing walls, older equipment in the park. Lydney has so much for younger children, my daughter at 9 is outgrowing the town, I find it so sad.”

Online survey respondent

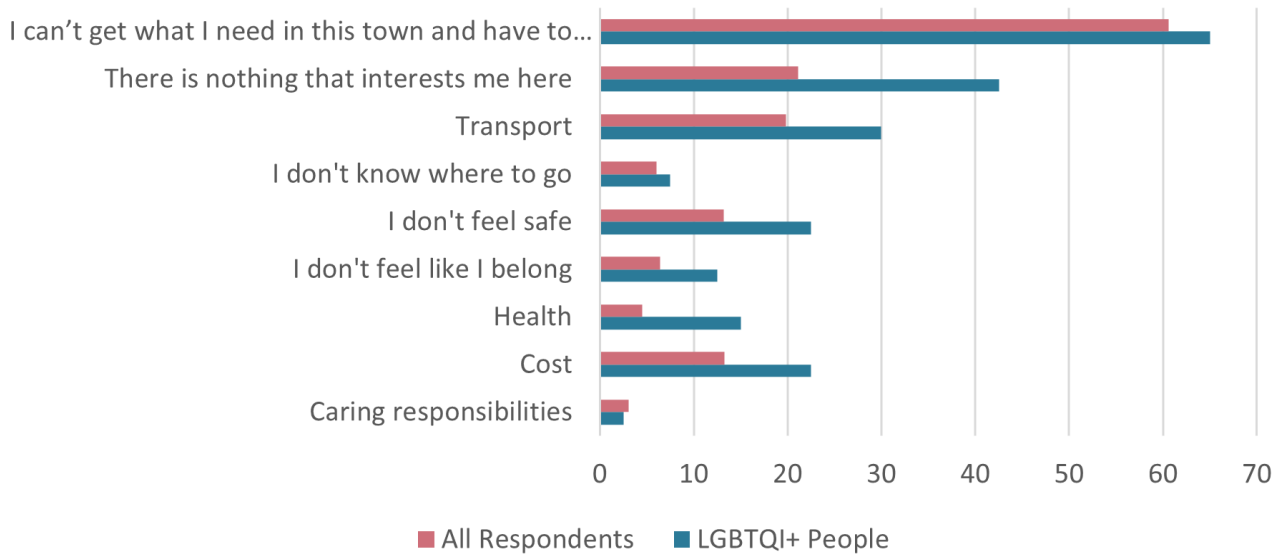
LGBTQI+ people across the Forest

LGBTQI+ people are twice as likely to feel there is nothing that interested them in their town, compared to the wider population. This community feels the pressure of cost, health, transport and not feeling safe more so than others, but they are slightly less likely to have caring responsibilities that prevent them from engaging in the local offer. The Pride event in Cinderford has been received positively, as is the fairly new Queering the Wye support initiative.

How well does your town cater for LGBTQI+ people?



What stops you making the most of what your town has to offer?



In line with best practice, responses from people who identify as LGBTQ+, suggest that Coleford and Newent are considered to offer the best provision, although no town scored more than 3 out of a possible 5 out of 5.

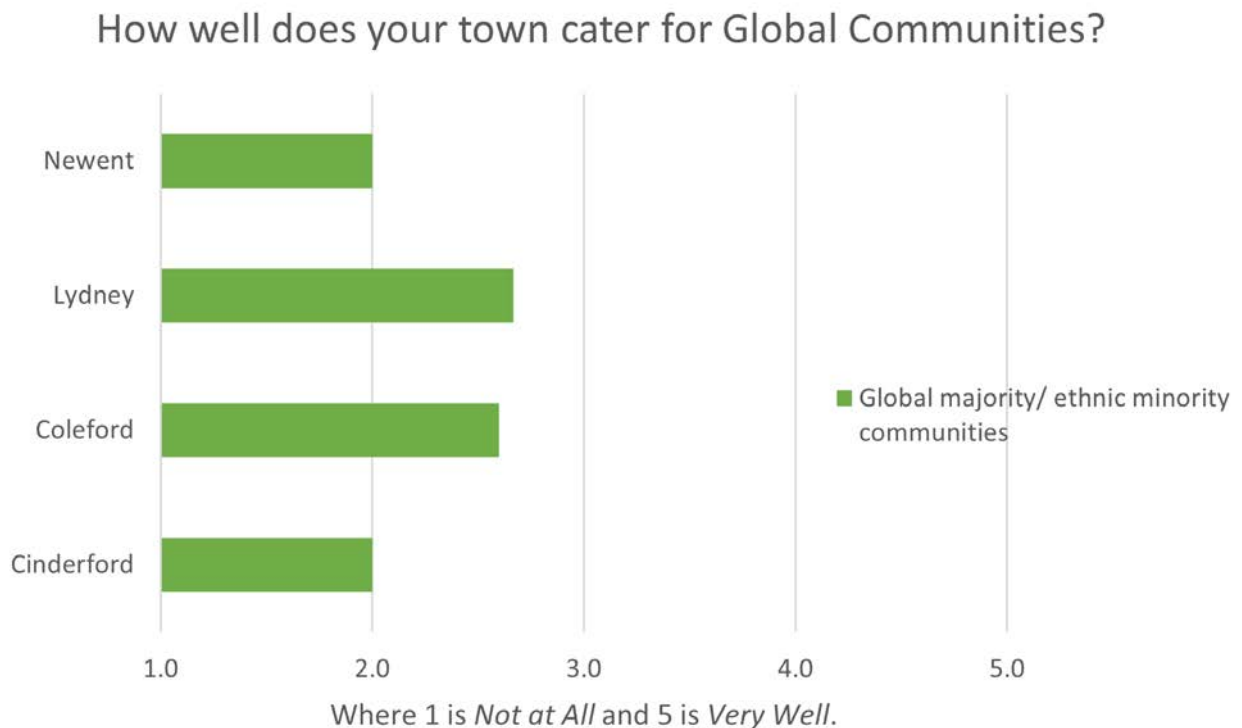


Global Communities

The number of survey responses from this group was low (15 responses, 2%) so it's difficult to extrapolate too much from this data. Usually we would seek to re-run the consultation, but we wanted to value those who did share their views by including them in our report.

No respondents had caring responsibilities or thought that cost was a barrier to visiting or engaging with their local towns but our experience leads us to believe this is unlikely to be true for the majority of Global Communities. Interestingly, transport is the most distinct barrier faced by Global Communities from our limited consultation. In line with the wider population Global Communities struggle with the provision and leave the Forest to get what they need.

In line with best practice, the views of Global Communities suggest that Lydney and Coleford serve people from global majority/ethnic minority backgrounds the best. However, this is contrary to views from all survey respondents, who consider Cinderford to be the top town for Global Communities, followed by Newent. Cinderford is the most diverse of all the Forest towns - but people who live there cite problems with community cohesion.





RECOMMENDATIONS FOR REGENERATION

A vision uniting the 4 Market Towns

Our vision sees the 4 Market Towns become **united** in one overarching regeneration strategy that facilitates a **collective effort** in overcoming shared challenges, all the while allowing each town to **shine in their strengths** and enable the other towns to **learn** in the sharing of best practice.

Ambition to unite the 4 Market Towns

Our ambition for regenerating the 4 Market Towns harnesses each town's unique strengths to revitalise the united market-town regeneration strategy. With collaboration and innovation at the heart, we can make the 'best' of individual towns become 'even better' for all towns, so that every town can benefit.

Collaboration is the strongest tool to overcoming the towns' shared challenges and create a culture of resilience and progress. By pooling collective resources, strengths and examples of best practice, each town can transcend their individual challenges with unity and purpose, for the greater good of the district. Regeneration cannot be achieved by the Forest of Dean District Council alone, it requires unwavering support and participation from communities across the district to work together towards united regeneration plans and goals.

What each town can bring to the table

Newent is renowned for its rich agricultural heritage.

For "farm to table sentiment", its care and emphasis of 15th Century and 17th Century buildings, and its willingness to connect outside of the Forest and be influenced by nearby areas such as the Cotswolds and Cheltenham, Newent can showcase the bounty of the area where 'locally grown' and 'locally produced' are shining examples of the skills of the region.

- Newent's heart - Connection and heritage
- Newent's strength - Holistic health and homegrown bounty
- Newent's active life – Working outdoors

Cinderford, nestled within the centre of the Forest embraces its connection to outdoor adventure, sporting prowess and visual arts.

With its “Keep Calm and Make” sentiment, connection to manufacture and industry, and its uprising of creative arts, Cinderford can celebrate its sporting and outdoor pursuits specialisms and show how close-knit grassroot communities can be brought together when united in common interests.

- Cinderford’s heart - Make it happen
- Cinderford’s strength - Arts & crafts and outdoor adventure
- Cinderford’s active life – Team sports

Lydney’s inherent beauty and its connection to water offers an air of mental restoration.

Its renowned green spaces, the boating lake and a stroll around the docks enable people to take a moment to recharge. The investment in the docks and the working railway are shining examples of how traditional trades and skills of the past are still central to the working life of today.

- Lydney’s heart – Breathe and recharge
- Lydney’s strength – Shopping and living history
- Lydney’s active life – Relax and stroll

Coleford thrives on its events and festivals and dedication to detail.

With its artisan and quality sentiment, ever growing public programme, and its preservation of historical buildings, the local artists and artisans infuse the streets with a unique charm, character and identity. Coleford is well placed to demonstrate how community events positively bring communities together for the greater good of the economy.

- Coleford’s heart – Quality and artisan
- Coleford’s strength – Festivals & events and tourism
- Coleford’s active life – Walking and cycling

REGENERATION THROUGH A GOLD AND SILVER THREAD

We have identified a gold and silver thread which laces together all regeneration sub-strategies as well as dovetailing nicely with each other.

- **Golden thread: Arts, Heritage and Culture**
- **Silver thread: Active Living and Nature**

Golden Thread: Arts, Heritage and Culture

Arts, heritage and culture has an unrivalled power to breathe new life into the heart of regeneration, fostering a renaissance of creativity and vitality across the 4 Market Towns.

It is a golden thread that has impact across the individual strategies of community cohesion, community aspiration, education, mental health & wellbeing, business development, hospitality, community safety, and the urban regeneration of our towns.

Creating a regeneration strategy that serves to unite the four towns as detailed above, using arts heritage and culture as its golden thread, allows each individual town to entwine their values and take a lead in their strength areas.

Silver Thread: Active Living and Nature

When communities prioritise activities such as walking, cycling and outdoor recreation, they reap benefits far beyond personal health.

The Market Town's proximity to the Forest lends itself so naturally to position active living and nature centrally to its regeneration plans. Creating a regeneration strategy that serves to unite the four towns as detailed above, using active living and nature as its silver thread, allows each town to lead with their strength while encouraging other towns to be inspired.



URBAN REGENERATION THROUGH ARTS, HERITAGE AND CULTURE

The **Golden Thread of arts, heritage and culture will rejuvenate the urban landscapes of our Market Towns amid the natural landscape of the Forest.**

Neglected and tired spaces can turn into vibrant cultural hubs and workshop areas, underused retail units can be reborn as craft centres, wellbeing retreats, skills development spaces, galleries, community areas and studios. Public spaces can be revitalised as murals and sculptures, turning streets into outdoor galleries, inviting exploration and interaction from visitors.



Recommendations include:

- Explore ways in which vacant **retail outlets can be transformed into galleries**, art studios, and intimate performing spaces, providing space for local artists to showcase their work and engage with the community through exhibitions, workshops, and open studio events.
- Support the transformation of **disused buildings into vibrant cultural and wellbeing centres** that host a variety of activities such as film screenings, yoga classes, toddler sessions, live performances, lectures, and cultural workshops. These centres can serve as hubs for community engagement and creative expression.
- Try to **convert urban wasteland into urban heritage sites** which celebrate history, traditions and cultural heritage, which represent the people and communities within the town today.

Through active living and nature

By investing in pedestrian-friendly infrastructure, such as wide walkable streets, cycle lanes, and green spaces, towns create inviting environments that encourage physical activity and social interaction.

This fosters a sense of community pride and connectivity, as residents come together to enjoy shared outdoor spaces. Moreover, promoting active lifestyles attracts visitors and new residents drawn to the towns' recreational amenities, contributing to economic growth and vitality.

Recommendations include:

- Prioritise the **upkeep and improvement of walkways and cycle routes in town centres** by clearing brambles, installing lighting and raising the profile of distance markers and signage that encourage people to use these routes as part of their every day fitness.
 - Develop **urban wasteland into urban wheel parks** for skates, boards and scooters. These parks enable disconnected young people to come together through a shared interest, bring life and movement to otherwise neglected spaces and increase fitness. Ensure people using wheel parks have access to facilities, food and drink to increase dwell time in these recreational spaces.
-

COMMUNITY COHESION AND IMPROVED WELLBEING

Through arts, heritage and culture

Social cohesion will blossom as community members use arts, heritage and culture to come together to celebrate shared experiences, bridging divides and fostering a sense of belonging, empathy and social support. Through collaborative projects, workshops and shared experiences, people find solidarity, understanding and validation in the company of new friends in their community.

There is a wealth of evidence to support the transformative power that arts, heritage and culture has in positively improving mental health and wellbeing, due to the profound connection between identity, self-expression, and creativity becoming pathways to healing and wellness. Arts, heritage and culture is the most sensitive, transformative and impactful way to enable underrepresented and unheard communities to find their voice, have ownership over how they express their identity, tell their stories and become integrated within their community - inclusion increases through new levels of understanding and empathy.

Recommendations include:

- **Community mural projects** enable people to collaborate with local artists to create large scale artworks that celebrate the history, diversity and spirit of their neighbourhood. These projects provide opportunities for residents to work together, express themselves creatively and beautify public spaces.
- Work with artists to facilitate **cultural exchange events**: cultural exchange events, and intergenerational projects bring people together from diverse backgrounds to share and celebrate traditions, customs, heritage and identity. They bring people together to promote understanding, respect and friendship among community members.
- Create a series of **contemporary heritage stories** that are gathered from all types of communities across the district. Individuals are given the opportunity to tell their story, share their heritage and celebrate their identity in connection to the Forest of Dean and the wider world, both historically and today. These contemporary story collections form baseline material for other suggested creative outputs such as urban wasteland regeneration, community murals and other visual art projects.

Through active living and nature

Active living plays a pivotal role in building social cohesion by bringing people together, fostering connections, and strengthening community bonds.

Whether it's joining a community sports team, participating in group fitness classes, or simply walking through a neighbourhood park, active living provides common ground for people to connect and engage in meaningful social interactions. Through these shared experiences, individuals develop a sense of belonging, trust, and solidarity, which in turn strengthens the social fabric of communities and promotes a sense of unity and collective well-being.

Recommendations include:

- Support **existing grass roots organisations and neighbourhood activities by offering low-cost space**. Active practitioners (yoga teachers, dance teachers, mindfulness practitioners) would welcome support towards renting spaces, or being gifted unused spaces, in which they could bring the community together to run their classes.
 - Support **strategic partnerships with active living organisations** such as Active Gloucestershire, established sports teams and the leisure centre providers to explore ways in which people might toe dip into activities for the very first time by bringing their sports and activities into the town centres as 'pop up' opportunities.
 - Use the natural environment and connection to nature to inspire social cohesion projects in the town centres. These might include **community vegetable patches** in Newent (using the town's strengths of 'home-grown' produce, or **community gardening projects** in Cinderford to bring nature and greenery into the town centre. **Encourage nature journaling** projects to share community stories about how residents value green spaces and nature in their towns, explore how this could transcend in to bigger visual nature inspired projects in the town centres. Build on the existing passion for walking and cycling in Coleford by having **accessible 'events for beginners'** to encourage engagement for first timers.
-

Through arts heritage and culture

Arts, Heritage and Culture plays a catalytic role in fostering innovation and entrepreneurship.

It spurs job creation, attracts talent and catalyses investment, transforming areas in need of levelling up into vibrant cultural districts with economic potential as cultural hubs and activities to attract visitors, stimulate tourism and invigorate local businesses. Exposure to arts, heritage and culture opens up a range of career pathways and lifelong learning, be it in arts, humanities, education, business or other fields, the skills acquired in connection to arts, heritage and culture are highly sought after in today's workforce.

Recommendations include:

- Explore how **underused buildings can be transformed into creative hubs, studios and coworking spaces**, where people working in any sector can find a sense of community working from home or in a co-working space. This is particularly beneficial for start up businesses, artists, designers and entrepreneurs who are restricted financially and struggle to find affordable spaces to work in. This way, they are able to share resources and support each other. These spaces can also foster a sense of community and support career progression, especially for people who may not want to go to university or on to further formal education pathways.
- Support **cultural events and festivals** that celebrate and showcase the diversity, heritage and creativity within the Forest. Festivals and events draw visitors, stimulate spending and generate revenue for local businesses such as restaurants, shops, hotels and transport services.
- Enable, encourage and **foster public-private partnerships** that leverage the strengths and resources of both sectors. Examples from the private sector can improve resilience in the creative sector, and inspiration from the creative industries can lead to ground breaking innovation in the private sector.
- Develop individual town **retail strategies to reflect the interests of residents in each town**. For example, arts, crafting and outdoor sports shops in Cinderford, walking, cycling and gift shops in Coleford, leisure and wellbeing shops in Lydney and food, music and gardening shops in Newent.
- Consider **expanding successful examples of 'out-of-town' retail or industrial park visitor destinations**, such as The Forest Upcycling Project into the High Street, possibly through smaller franchised stores or 'pop-up' shops.

Through active living and nature

Active living contributes significantly to economic growth and business development by creating vibrant, dynamic communities that attract residents, visitors, and investment.

When cities and towns prioritise infrastructure that supports walking, cycling, and outdoor recreation, they create environments that are more attractive to businesses and entrepreneurs. The promotion of active lifestyles can lead to increased demand for goods and services related to health and wellness, creating opportunities for businesses in sectors such as fitness, sports equipment, and outdoor recreation.



Recommendations include:

- Work with large and small-scale employers to develop a series of **initiatives and benefits for employees** who adopt healthy lifestyle habits. Active employees are likely to have increased energy levels, reduced stress, improved mood, maintain longer focus and increase mental clarity which enhances productivity in the workplace. The goal-setting mentality amongst active people often correlates to people becoming more goal oriented and therefore productive at work.
- Find solutions with landlords to offer **favourable rates to new 'active or nature focused' businesses** who start up in the Market Towns, such as retail establishments i.e cycling, skating and gardening shops. This would make it more possible for new independent business owners to occupy currently underused spaces, or for the established outdoor adventure businesses within the wider Forest to develop a new income generation stream of retail to the town centre market.

REGENERATION THROUGH EDUCATION

Through arts, heritage and culture

Both formal and informal education pathways flourish as arts and culture initiatives inspire creativity, critical thinking and lifelong learning.

Through arts, heritage and culture, people develop skills to think outside the box, analyse information from multiple perspectives and express their ideas in innovative ways. These skills are transferable across all disciplines and are essential for success in academic and professional contexts.

Recommendations include:

- Promote **civic engagement projects** that use arts, heritage and culture as useful tools to inspire civic engagement and social change. Addressing social issues and expressing ideas through creative outputs, raises awareness of local issues and mobilises communities into civic responsibility and action.
 - Initiate **local business, creative and education partnerships** that bring together three cornerstones of industries to make for a progressive community. Support schemes that bring business, creatives and schools together so that young people can learn from the best of all three and exposes students to diverse work practices.
 - Champion the **social and emotional education** that comes hand in hand with engagement with arts, heritage and culture, which naturally lends itself to collaboration and team working. Softer skills such as confidence building, self-expression, stress release and emotional exploration contribute to a rounded emotional education of individuals.
-

Through active living and nature

Active living and nature significantly enhances education strategies by promoting overall well-being, cognitive function, and academic achievement.

It not only improves children's physical health but also enhances their mental and emotional well-being, creating an optimal environment for learning. Research shows that regular exercise boosts brain function, memory retention, and concentration. It improves attention spans, engagement levels, and classroom behaviour which leads to improved academic performance.

Recommendations include:

- Prioritise the **regular upkeep of footpaths and cycle lanes** and possibly introduce new cycle lanes to encourage families to walk or bike to school. Appoint stewards who might walk school children together in groups, or lead a group of cyclists to travel together, especially in the Winter months when it is darker and more dangerous to travel.
 - Encourage schools to run **extracurricular activities**, challenges or events that bring the whole community together, starting and ending at the school, but looping in their local Market Town as well. Examples include step challenges, mile runs or fitness courses.
-



REGENERATING THE NIGHT TIME ECONOMY AND COMMUNITY SAFETY

Through arts, heritage and culture

If the Market Towns were to embrace arts, heritage and cultural activity in the evening and into the night time, it would bring a variety of people into the towns for different activities.

Arts, heritage and culture bring people together from all backgrounds and walks of life. Its broad and eclectic programme can be moulded to appeal to everyone. A staggered timetable of start times, finish times and length of duration would ensure a constant flow of diversity coming into and out of the towns, which would diversify and dilute the 'pub culture' which currently dominates. People find a sense of safety in numbers and in diversity because if everyone is diverse, no one is diverse, and a diverse programme of activity at night time would improve the economy and sense of safety.

Recommendations include:

- Organise **large scale touring events** where food, music, workshops, creative skills, crafts, and interactive heritage activities combine to make an iconic travelling market which visits each town in rotation. A large scale event will create a buzz amongst the community (akin to a travelling fairground) and will give people a sense of safety in numbers and something worth coming into town for.
- Support **new and emerging musicians and artists** who struggle to afford performance spaces by offering outside performance spaces in the town centre – perhaps in the form of open mic night's or introducing a 'busking' spot in the town centres. New and live music uplifts the spirits of those walking through the towns and the artists themselves are likely to bring their own audiences who will come and go for their favourite musician or stay and support other artists with performance slots.
- Introduce **light installations which illuminate darker areas of town**, celebrate heritage spots and tell stories. Light festivals (akin to the Bristol Light Festival) draw people into the towns, introduce people to lesser known areas, act as tourist attractions and support the night time economy. Longer term or permanent displays serve to improve safety as well as reduce anxiety when walking through isolated areas of town.

Through active living and nature

Developing a range of active living opportunities within the 4 Market Towns offers increased variety and reasons to encourage people to enjoy the towns for their evening offer.

From evening strolls in well lit streets, to participating in classes that take place in cafe's or vacant retail outlets, a bustling scene of people coming and going for a variety of activities will offer a constant footfall within the towns with the opportunity of supporting restaurants and cafes before and after events as people get together to socialise.

Recommendations include:

- Work with landlords to find **attractive rates and dynamic schedules for small independent class teachers** who could deliver movement, wellness and active sessions in vacant units. Consider ways in which multiple independent teachers or practitioners might be able to pool their commitment to one landlord to find a workable solution between independent practitioners who may work only a few hours on occasional evenings per week, with the landlords desire for a full time income.
 - Support evening **activity groups such as night time running, walking or cycling** groups with a view that their routes go through the Market Towns. A group of active people coming and filling the streets with energy and conversation would make the streets come alive. Especially if the meet and end points were centrally located in the towns, there would be opportunity to socialise after the event in pubs, cafes and restaurants, encouraging longer opening hours in town centres.
-



I sleep in a room
at the top of the house
with a flea and a fly
and a soft scratching mouse
and a spider that hangs
by a thread from the ceiling

Harry
Beddington



WOODSIDE
STREET



ANFIELD
ROAD



to my s... tried man;
a 'sloppy little hussy'

REGENERATION IN PARTNERSHIP WITH COMMUNITIES

Regeneration cannot be achieved with the Forest of Dean District Council working in isolation. It requires the unwavering support and active participation of the four Market Town communities. By involving residents in decision-making, planning, and implementation. Regeneration projects can harness the collective power of the community, fostering a shared sense of ownership, pride, and responsibility for the transformation of their own Market Towns.

Communities are the heart and soul of any regeneration effort, possessing invaluable local knowledge, insights, and connections that are essential for success. It is important that the perfect balance is struck, between the Council being positively supportive and leading the way in regeneration, all the while devolving empowerment to the communities and the grass roots activities that already exist, as it is here that diverse perspectives come to the table and enrich the regeneration process with creativity, innovation, and inclusivity.

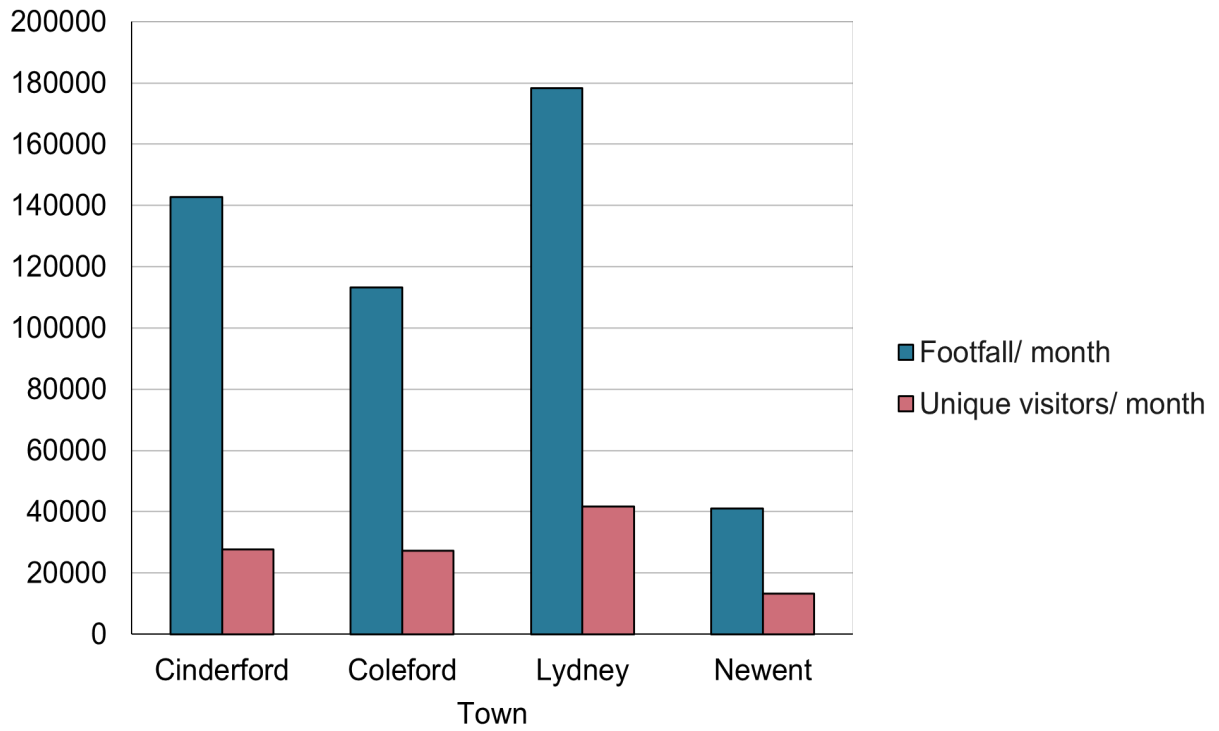
Ultimately, regeneration is not just about physical revitalisation; it's about empowering communities to shape their own destinies, build resilient futures, and create vibrant, sustainable places where people thrive and prosper together.



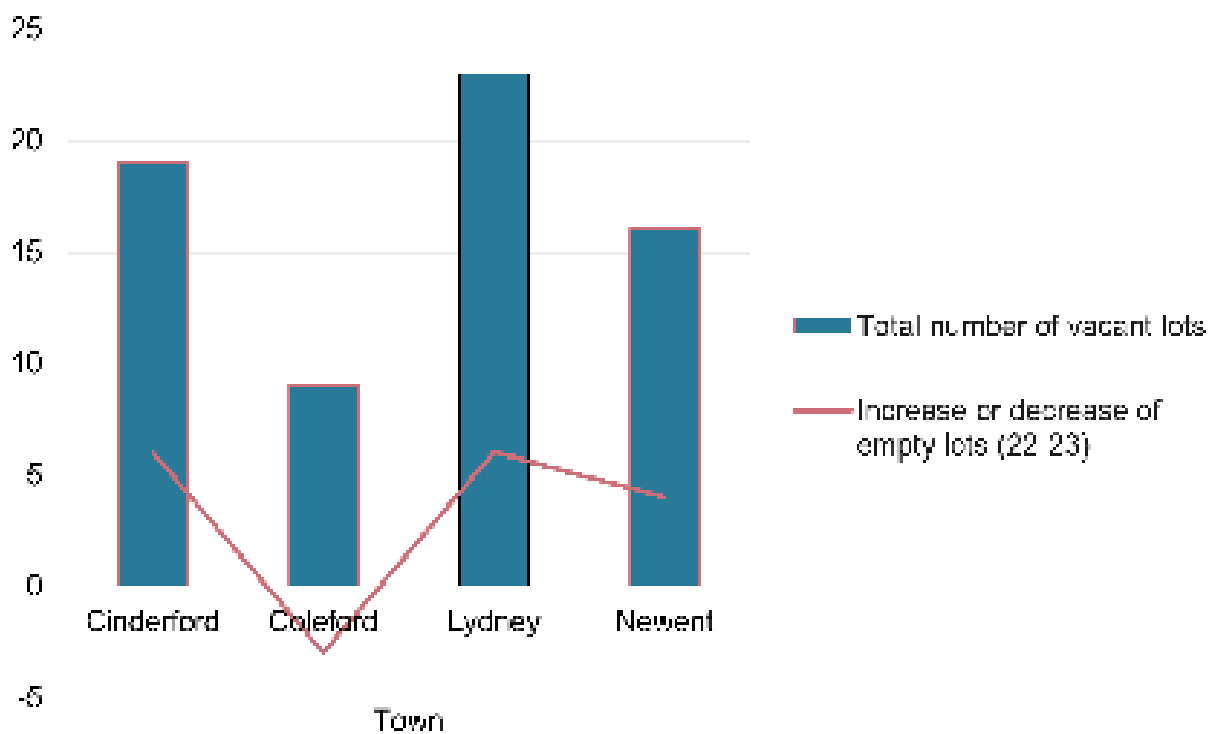
APPENDIX

APPENDIX

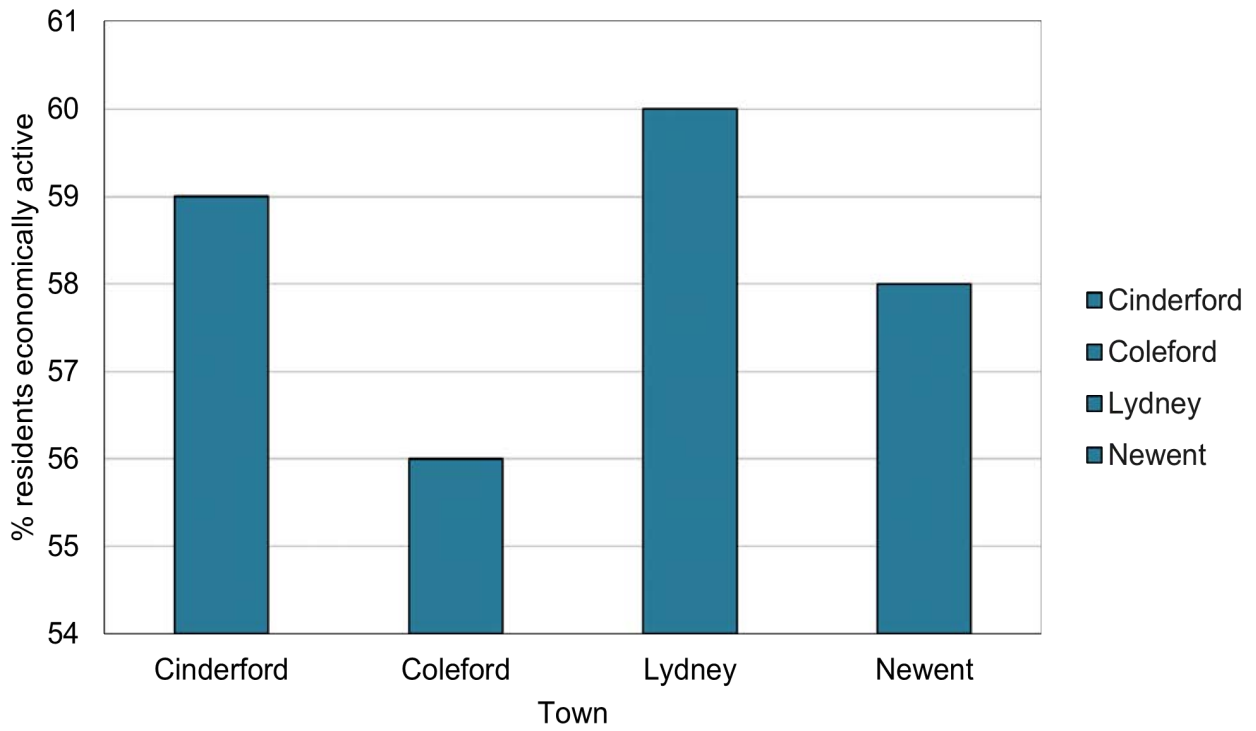
Footfall in each market town



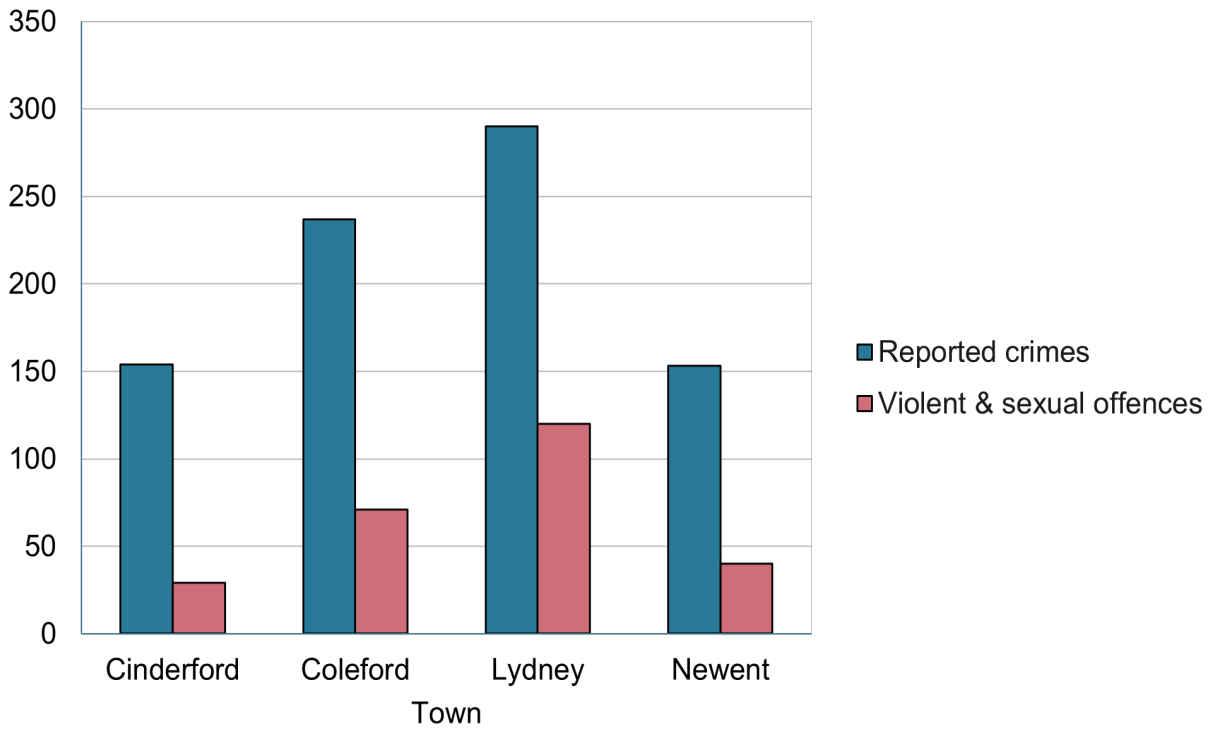
Vacant lots in Forest of Dean town centres



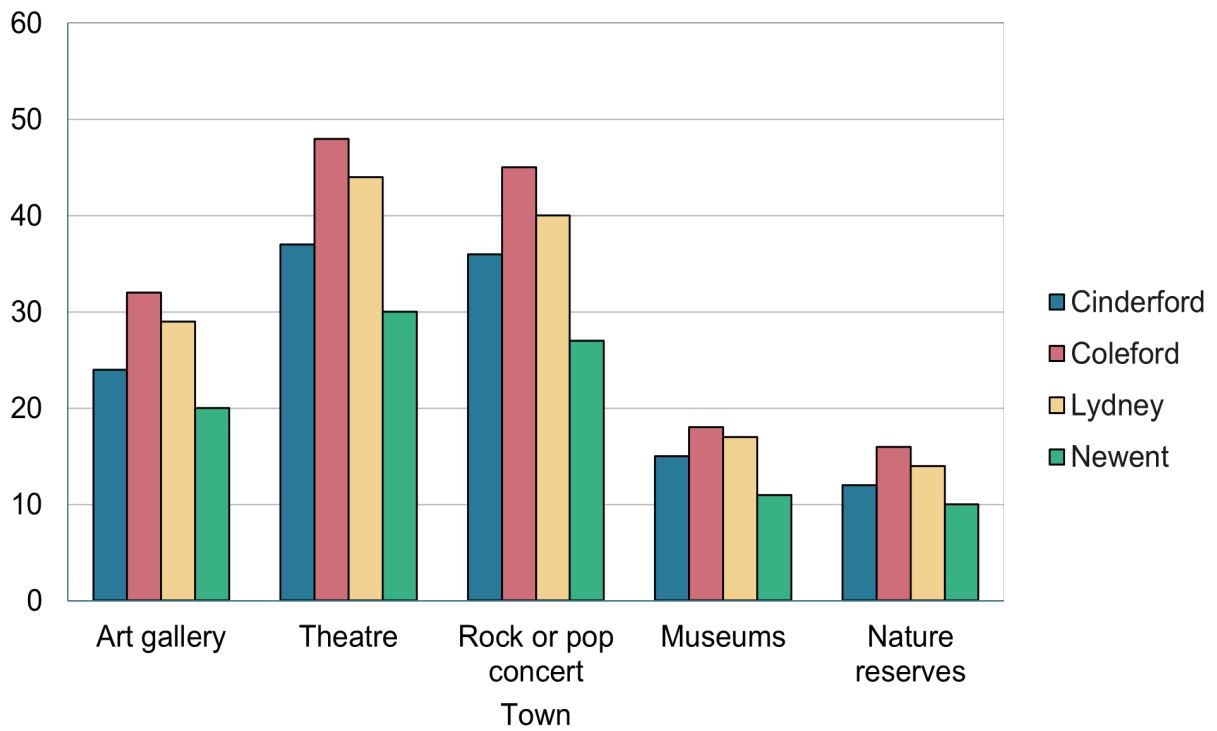
Economically active residents in Forest of Dean towns



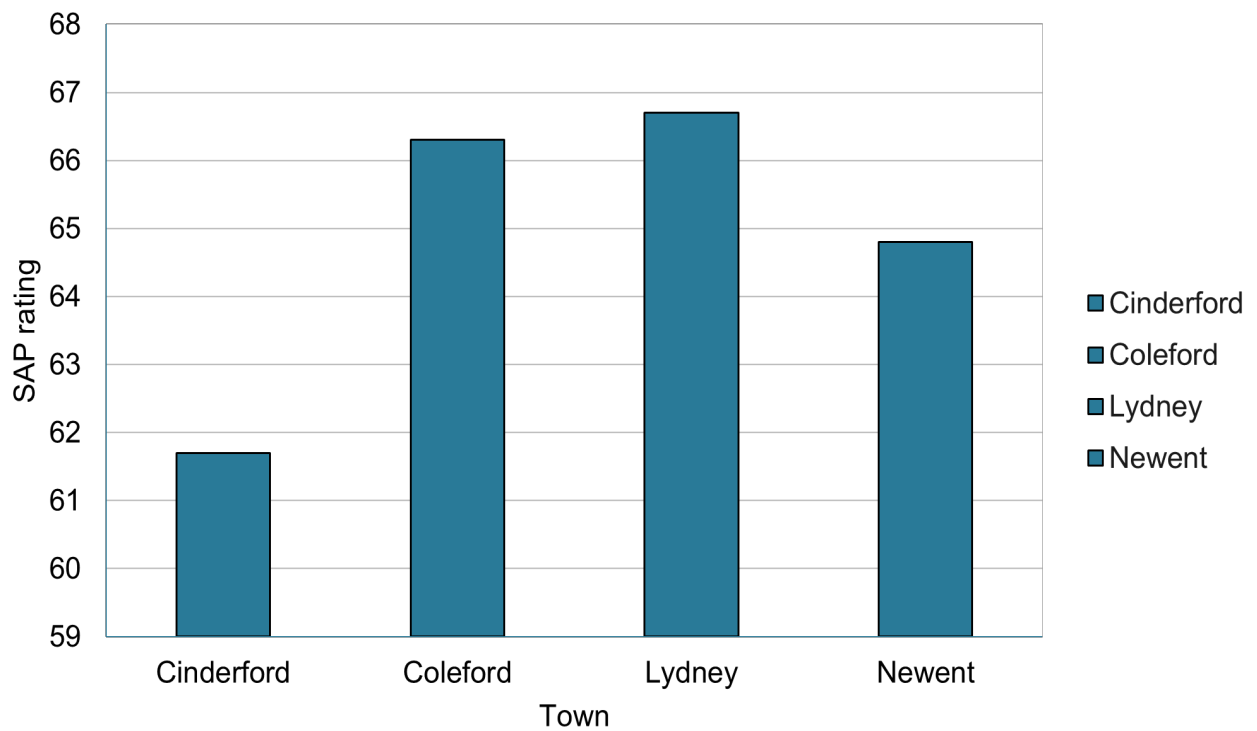
Reported crimes



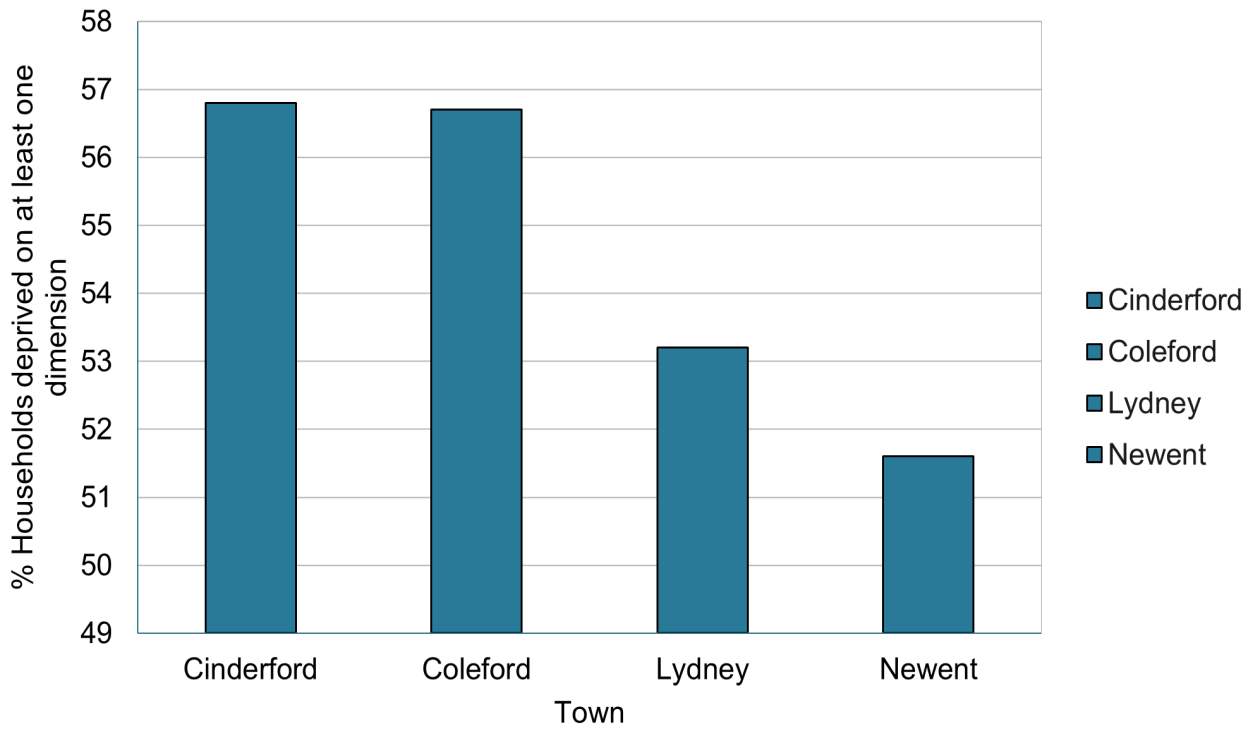
Estimated arts and leisure attendance in Forest of Dean towns (LMSE)



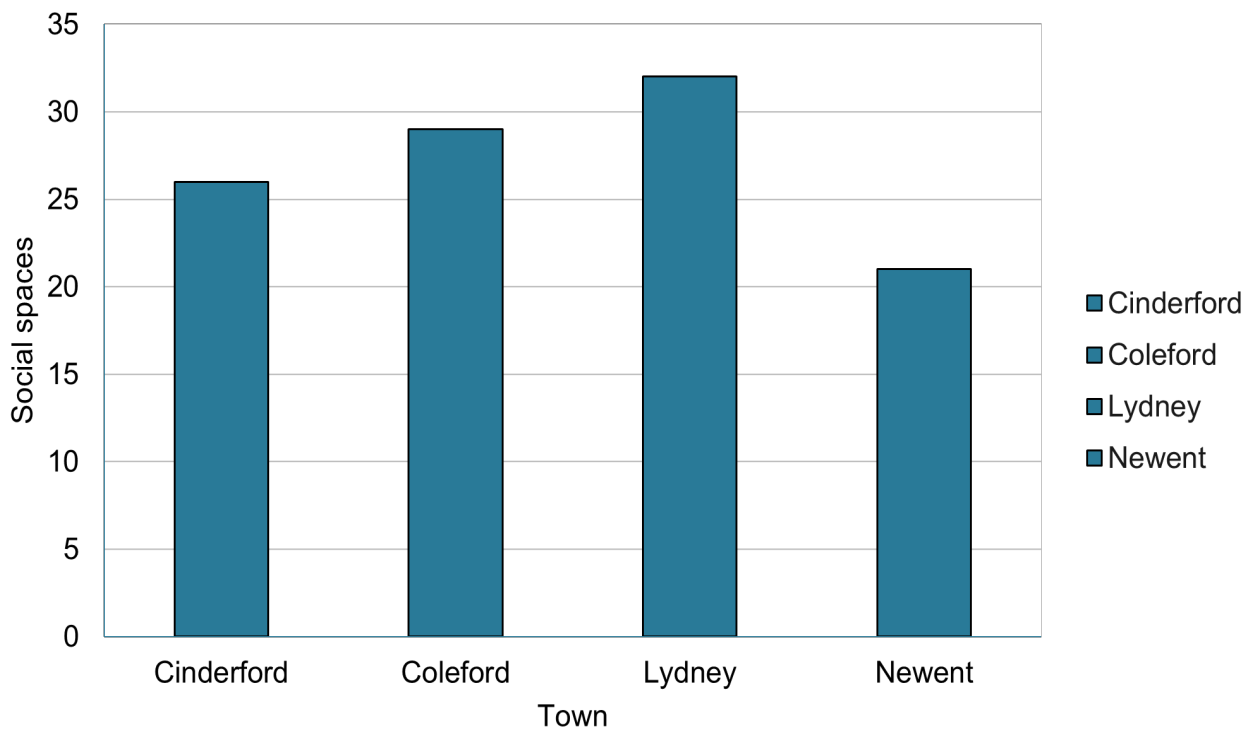
Energy efficiency ratings of buildings in Forest of Dean towns



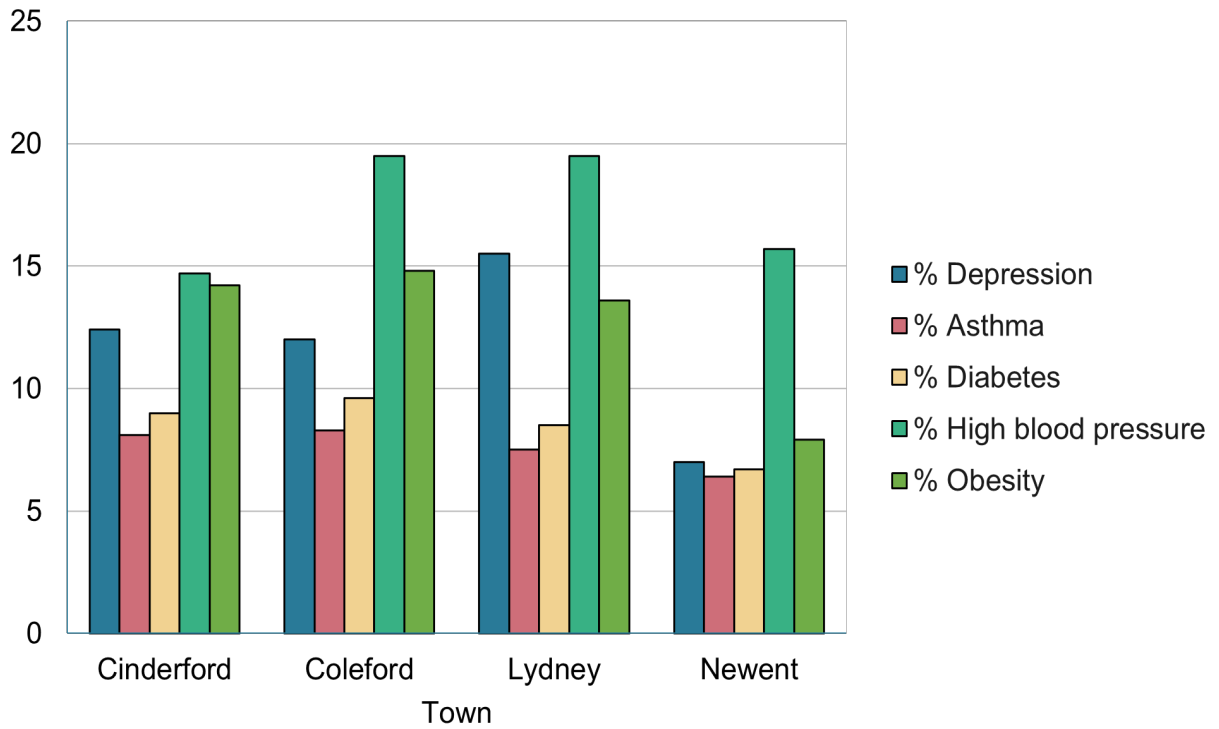
Household deprivation in Forest of Dean towns



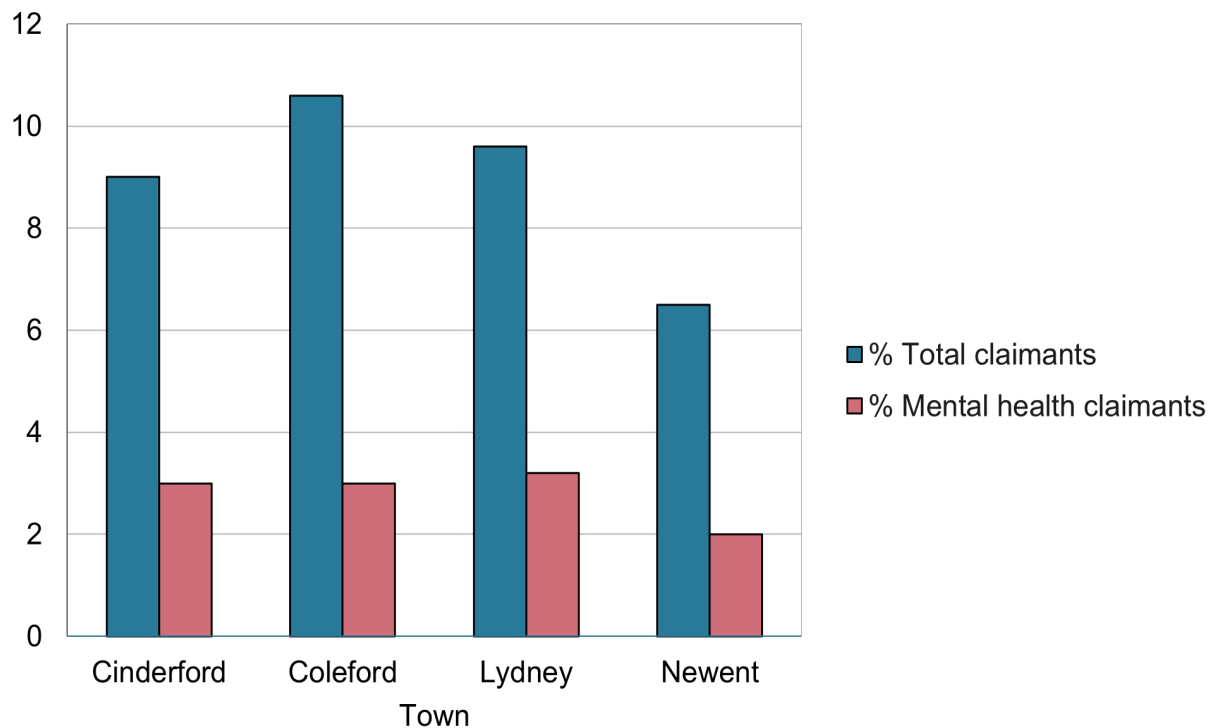
Number of social spaces in Forest of Dean towns



Disease prevalence in Forest of Dean towns



Disability benefit claimants in Forest of Dean towns



We would like to thank Artist Jenny Cashmore for her inspiration and contribution towards the development of colour palettes in this report.



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