

SEP - Sedbergh Main Street Survey Report

Executive Summary

- 1.1 Sedbergh Economic Partnership carried out a business survey in spring 2024, incorporating Main Street and Finkle Street. This survey was to hear first-hand the issues facing businesses on Main Street and to hear, directly, any suggested changes that managers and owners thought would help Main Street and their individual business.
- 1.2 SEP member, John Barraclough, visited 32 shops and commercial businesses and hand-delivered the two-page survey and accompanying SEP information document.
- 1.3 There was an overall response rate of 81% plus a further 8 surveys collected from volunteers at the Tourist Information Centre. Feedback centred around perceived key issues affecting the economic progress of Main Street and highlighted a desire to see improvement in the infrastructure of the town.
- 1.4 Analysis of results has provided several areas for action and a working party should now be set up to drive forward positive change.

Background

- 2.1 Sedbergh Economic Partnership (SEP) is a collaboration of organisations (public, private and voluntary) working together to increase the economic prospects of Sedbergh. Its mission is to 'facilitate and support the delivery of economic growth for Sedbergh as defined in the Sedbergh Framework for Growth'.
- 2.2 In October 2023, SEP changed focus away from general delivery of the Sedbergh Growth Framework to progress against five key themes:
- 2.3 Facilitating more housing.
- 2.4 Improving connectivity (transport and infrastructure).
- 2.5 Supporting the vitality of Main Street.
- 2.6 Growing new business and networks.
- 2.7 Promoting Sedbergh as a place to work and visit.
- 2.8 Sedbergh Main Street plays a vital role in the local economy and community life. It is Sedbergh's shop window, it needs to be vibrant, open, full and welcoming both to regular shoppers and to visitors.
- 2.9 In recent years, high streets have faced significant challenges, exacerbated by the rise of online shopping and shifting consumer preferences. The aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic has further accelerated these trends, leading to store closures, reduced foot traffic, and economic hardship for many businesses.
- 2.10 Current occupiers of the main shopping areas in Sedbergh run differing opening hours and the town lacks sufficient evening economy options; vacancy rates are increasing and parking areas to support the Main Street are limited, especially on event days. Retail unit sizes in Main Street are quite small and restrictive and significant long-term empty properties remain.
- 2.11 Following concerns raised at SEP meetings on the economic situation of Main Street, Sedbergh Economic Partnership agreed to undertake a small survey of businesses to gather feedback on key issues and concerns.

- 2.12 The survey would help to provide information which could be documented, prioritised, shared with partners and put forward for action under a project plan.
- 2.13 John Barraclough volunteered to take on the task and worked with JG on survey questions, distribution and collection.
- 2.14 Comments and opinions were sought on the following: Opening Hours, New Shops & Businesses, Council (local or parish), Highways, Parking, Business Network & any further comments were invited.
- 2.15 The survey was open-ended, providing businesses with a chance to share opinion at length if desired.

Distribution and Collection

- 3.1 Survey sheets were the primary tool for collecting feedback from businesses. To protect anonymity, survey sheets were not marked with identifying information, thus safeguarding the privacy of respondents and encouraging candid responses from participants. The process of gathering feedback for this report was conducted in person over a span of three months.
- 3.2 Feedback collection was facilitated through direct engagement with stakeholders, including face-to-face interactions with business owners and employees. This approach allowed for meaningful conversations and the opportunity to delve deeper into specific issues and concerns raised by participants. Additionally, it fostered a sense of trust and rapport, encouraging individuals to share their perspectives openly and honestly. Feedback ranged from a few words to a few pages but, on average, businesses kindly provided a thorough detailed response.
- 3.3 SEP held an informal business information event with input from the Economic Development Team on 27 March and 25+ businesses attended. The event was used to provide an overview and share initial survey feedback. Comments from attending businesses were gathered and have been added to the report.

General response summary

- 4.1 Local businesses valued being asked about the issues affecting the high street economy and for their own views.
- 4.2 The following points represent highlights in each category and the full response detail can be found in the Appendix:
- 4.3 Council – there is indifference about the interaction of either the local or parish council but more presence of the former would be appreciated. There are several issues with re-cycling and commercial waste contracts.
- 4.4 Highways – businesses unhappy with footfall, uneven pavements, poor planning for road closures, dire road conditions and lack of measures to slow down traffic through Main Street.
- 4.5 Parking – businesses highlighted considerable demand for more parking, generally 30-40 more spaces, a desire for free short-stay parking, problems with Joss Lane car park (visual and practical) and various comments on where residents should or should not be able to park.

- 4.6 Opening Hours – many respondents wanted to see cafes and eateries co-ordinate hours and openings providing a 7-day coverage, more general Saturday and Sunday opening and when shops should be open during the week.
- 4.7 New Shops and Businesses – two-thirds of respondents wanted to see a bakery on the Main Street, other suggestions included another café, speciality & delicatessen, local produce markets, gift shop, antiques & vintage shops, boutique & clothing stores and a series of pop-up shops.
- 4.8 Business Network – there hasn't been an active business group since the demise of the Chamber of Trade and results confirm a significant demand for one to be set up in Sedbergh.
- 4.9 Further Comments included the notion that Main Street looks scruffy and unwelcoming. There were many mentions of the empty Udale's building and its need to be renovated and its potential maximised. Uncertainty exists over the status of the Booktown and a new initiative to 'Shop Local' would be welcomed.

Next steps

- 5.1 The returned surveys and additional feedback via the Business event provide sufficient basis and encouragement to proceed to set up a working party, distil the results, establish priorities for action (consulting with relevant businesses, councils or other bodies with the aim of achieving progressive change) and develop an action plan for change.
- Ensure that all SEP partnership members receive the report by end of May and agree next steps.
 - Publish report on SEP website and share links via Lookaround, community social media etc.
 - Present the report to the parish council, garnering support and endorsement for proposed initiatives by end of June.
 - Finalise the project plan with input from all partners, ensuring alignment with strategic goals and setting clear milestones for implementation by end of July.
 - Seek representatives from local businesses to form the sub-group by end of July, ensuring balanced representation and commitment to tackle issues.

Appendices

Appx 1: Copy of the survey

Sedbergh Economic Partnership – Main Street Survey & Questionnaire
February 2024

WE WOULD VERY MUCH LIKE TO ASK FOR YOUR HELP IN COMPLETING THIS FORM

This is a campaign to improve the vibrancy on Main Street which could include:

- Identifying issues with appearance
- Monitoring vacancy rate
- Utilising empty shops as pop-ups
- Promoting the existing Main Street offer
- Encouraging local events to engage with Main Street more
- Growing night-time food economy
- Pushing for housing strategy to deliver above-shop accommodation
-?
-?
-?

Please add more topics and comment on any of the above overleaf

How do the following affect your business, either positively and/or negatively, and what changes would you like to see for the future?:

1. Council

2. Highways

3. Parking

4. Opening Hours

Are there any types of shops which you think we should have in Main Street?

There has been a proposal put forward to set up a Business Network for Sedbergh and the Main Street. Would this be of interest to you?

Further comments

IF WE HAVEN'T BEEN ABLE TO SPEAK TO YOU IN PERSON WHILE DELIVERING THIS FORM,
WE SHALL RETURN IN A WEEK'S TIME TO COLLECT IT.

THANK YOU, IN ANTICIPATION, FOR YOUR CO-OPERATION

Appx 2: Sedbergh Economic Partnership information sheet (accompanied survey)

What is the Sedbergh Economic Partnership?

Sedbergh Economic Partnership (SEP) is a collaboration of organisations (public, private and voluntary) working together to increase the economic prospects of Sedbergh.

Its mission is to 'facilitate and support the delivery of economic growth for Sedbergh as defined in the Sedbergh Framework for Growth'. Supporting business growth by:

- Facilitating more housing.
- Improving connectivity (transport and infrastructure).
- Supporting the vitality of Main Street.
- Growing new business and networks.
- Promoting Sedbergh as a place to work and visit.

Why have Sedbergh Economic Partnership?

The SEP provides an open forum for discussion, enhances information sharing and understanding of local economic issues. SEP helps to inform/influence formulation of policies and programmes affecting Sedbergh. SEP can help initiate, facilitate and support projects which benefit businesses and the town.

Who's involved, who can I speak to?

If it is about Main Street then please call John Barraclough, SEP lead for this project on 07979 640131 or njbarraclough@gmail.com. General enquiries can be directed to Joanne Golton, SEP co-ordinator 07989 355441 or jegolton@outlook.com

Organisation	who
Westmorland and Furness Council	Cllr Hazel Hodgson
Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority	Libby Bateman
4 x local businesses (must include Main St)	Wools of Cumbria Carpets, Black Bull, McGarrys, Rycrofts, White Hart, Westwood Books, Cobble Country
2 x local community groups	Jim Akins, Debbie Wilson
Sedbergh School	Peter Marshall
Sedbergh Parish Council*	Janey Hassan, Kevin Lancaster
Chairperson	Andy Cobb
Sedbergh Community Interest Company	Chris Woods
Settlebeck School	Sarah Campbell
Sedbergh Community Trust	Tony Reed-Screen
Farmer Network	Carole Moffat
Cumbria Tourism/ YDNP Tourism/ TIC	Francine Bult/ Julie Barker/ Debbie Wilson
Farfield Mill Arts & Heritage Centre	Debbie Richardson
Supporting officers	Matt Williams & Sam Butcher (Econ Dev) Gill Holmes (Comm Engagement) Peter Stockton (Planning Mgr), Joanne Golton (SEP)

*not attending currently

How do I participate/ get in touch?

The Sedbergh Economic Partnership (SEP) meets every two months. It acts as a forum with usually 15-20 attendees, all representing local economic interests. Notes from the SEP meetings and information on projects can be accessed at www.sedbergheconomicpartnership.org SEP especially welcomes input from the local business community. Please get in touch if you would like to attend a SEP meeting or have ideas you would like to share that would help Sedbergh's economy.

Sedbergh Key Stats

Service	Current capacity	Room for growth?
Settlebeck School	212 pupils	✓ capacity, 220 pupils
Sedbergh Primary School	152 pupils	✓ capacity, 210 pupils
Sedbergh Medical Centre	3929 patients	✓ capacity, up to 10% more patients
High street shops/ cafes	36 units	✓ capacity, 10% vacancy rate - 42 units
Sedbergh School	590 pupils / 430 employees	✓ 620 pupils / 450 employees
Public car parking spaces	110 spaces	✓ demand outweighs supply, especially peak season + events
Electric charging points	2 points	✓ suggest 6 stations
Dentist	Full	✓ capacity, subject to NHS contract
Early years full time childcare providers	24 spaces	✓ demand outweighs supply, suggest 40 spaces at new location
Housing units	1323 addresses inc 170 holiday lets	✓ capacity, suggest minimum 10% growth of 132 before 2040 (49 imminent)
Adult extra-care facility	No provision	✓ capacity, much needed - subject to council support
Road network	Operating within capacity	✓ Capacity but limited in winter months
Drainage and utilities	Operating within capacity	✓ Capacity, additional water run-off measures need improving
Rural transport	Daily service until autumn	✓ Capacity, room for improvement - subject to long term commitment/ funds
Broadband and 4G	Many operators	✓ Capacity, B4RN & Fibrus rolling out, funding gaps need Govt intervention

Appx 3: detailed survey results

Subject	No of responses	Accompanying comments
Councils		
	3	Not sure about or have little interaction with council for support
	2	PCC has limited impact
	2	W & F needs to have more substantial local presence
	1	Overly restrictive regulations or bureaucratic hurdles hamper business operations & growth
	1	Funding for window displays
	1	Relief on Business Rates should be maintained
	1	Put up bunting along Main St during the summer
	1	Problem with pavement boards since pavements are often not wide enough anyway
	1	More seats need to be allowed to encourage cyclists and others to stop
	1	Better waste collection needed
	1	Re-cycling containers need to be moved out of Joss Lane car park to allow more parking
	1	Recycling containers are now being abused and filled with the wrong materials
	1	Concern about increase in Cumbria Waste charges
	1	Main St is well-maintained
Highways		
	7	Uneven pavements, particular for wheelchairs, drains which don't function and loose grilles
	6	Need better planning and signage for road closures
	4	Poor road conditions, construction, closures and detours can deter visitors
	4	Need to slow down traffic in Main St - say 20 mph limit
	3	Shared surface needed on Main St to accommodate lack of/reduced space on pavements
	2	Potholes a constant problem

- 2 Some deliveries to shops on Main Street cause problems with arriving early mornings but mostly parking on the street
- 2 Improve signage for tourists into the town centre
- 2 Improve iron sign posts on Back Lane & Main St - contrast lettering has worn off
- 1 Improve traffic flow through Main St one way from the end of Station Rd
- Needs to be one way from Station Rd through to Finkle St which would provide pavement outside
- 1 Dalesman & P.O.
- 1 Black Bull access is very dangerous
- 1 Better lighting required on Main St
- 1 Would like closure to vehicles and pedestrianisation from Station Road giveway through Main Street

Parking

- 17 Limited parking spaces - we need 30-40 more
- 7 Car parks should have one or two hours free
- 3 Use of Joss Lane for market is a problem for parking
- 3 Joss Lane car park needs re-surfacing
- 3 Need a better drop-off and pick-up point for coach parties
- 2 Parking at the west end of Main St should not be personal to tenants of Main St flats
- 1 Proposal for herring-bone parking down Back Ln.
- 1 Parking charge is good value
- 1 High parking charges
- 1 One of the large car parks should be free
- 1 Layby time to be increased from 30 mins to 1 hour
- 1 More bike racks outside cafes
- 1 Joss Lane car park needs parking spaces clearly marked and access to Main St signposted and road marked
- 1 Coach parking in Joss lane is beneficial to business in Main St
- 1 Need to stop private residents using parking outside church
- 1 Holiday lets & Air BnB should be made to use car parks with a permit if they don't have off-street parking
- 1 Housing without owned land outside is a huge threat to shopper parking

- 1 Alternative site for coaches
- 1 Event parking
- 1 Closure of limited parking on Bainbridge Road puts pressure on the other parks
- 1 Could Loftus Hill car park be extended into the unused part of Lupton field?
- 1 Clamp down on people parking on double yellow lines near PO and butchers

Opening Hours

- 4 Cafes & eateries need to co-ordinate in order that visitors have somewhere to go all week
- 3 More businesses open on Sundays
- 3 Need to get back to 10am to 5pm especially during peak period
- 2 Too many shops closing at 4pm, Saturday afternoon and Sunday
- 2 Farfield Mill should be open between Christmas & New Year
- 2 Longer opening hours for refreshments particularly at weekends and in the summer
- 1 Nowhere for tea in the late afternoon
- 1 Farfield Mill should be open on Monday & Tuesday in the summer season
- 1 No point discussing hours until we move away from lifestyle businesses
- 1 Sporadic nature of some business hours and days can deter visitors
- 1 Not easy for shops to plan when to remain open when business is quiet
- 1 Difficulty of having shops open in the daytime and the evening
- 1 Powells need to be open after 5pm

New Shops & Businesses

- 10 Bakery
- 6 Gift shop
- 5 Another café
- 3 Speciality & Delicatessen
- 2 Antiques & Vintage
- 2 Boutique & Clothing

- 2 Bakery as part of a delicatessen
- 2 Eat-in reasonably-priced sandwich shop
- 2 Local produce markets
- 2 Pop-ups
- 2 Good curry/chinese sit down & takeaway
- 2 Another dental practice, perhaps built next to Health Centre
- 2 More specialist makers with workshops and retail
- 2 More daytime food required
- 2 Summer late night opening?
- 2 Udales - Planning permission for accommodation on the upper floors and short term lets on ground floor?
- 2 Soft play for children
- 1 Health & Wellness
- 1 Clothes shop for adults and children
- 1 Basic electrical supplier
- 1 General store with newspapers, bakery and soft drinks
- 1 Haberdashers
- 1 Toy exchange/children's equipment - maybe a pop-up
- 1 Opticians
- 1 Local history/museum
- 1 Public art installations
- 1 Small convenience store for the elderly at the east end of town
- 1 Upmarket food store like Sainsbury's Local/M&S/Booths
- 1 Care/nursing home
- 1 Businesses need to be able to survive through the winter months
- 1 Want to encourage daytime sessions such as lectures, yoga, Pilates and mindfulness
- 1 Suggestion for Booktown - Kirkudbright book week brochure
- 1 More retail shops selling products

- 1 Summer markets work well. Could we have buskers or other music on other Saturdays in Main St?
- 1 Costa
- 1 McDonalds
- 1 Co-working office space for increasing numbers working from home

**Business
Network**

- 13 Demand for one to be set up

**Any further
comments**

- 6 Main St looks scruffy and unwelcoming and needs re-painting and made to look more vibrant
- 4 No more holiday lets
- 4 Need to encourage local people to shop in town
- 4 What is the situation regarding the Booktown?
- 2 Include all of Main St in events, not just Finkle Street
- 2 Needs to be greater emphasis on growing the town - unused land to convert to affordable homes
- 2 Need a decent bus service for increasing older population
- 2 Pop-ups, possibly used by different banks each day of the week
- 1 Dental practice has vacancies for private patients
- 1 With insufficient purchasing power, our current businesses are competing for much of the same custom
- 1 Need more activities/events which put Sedbergh on the map so that it is a destination rather than a place to pass through
- 1 Some gutters are leaking
- 1 Reclaim bins need to be re-located
- 1 EV charger facilities required
- 1 Holiday lets need licensing
- 1 Younger people do not shop in town
- 1 Improved daily bus service required
- 1 Lack of strategic leadership/vision for the town

- 1 YDNP need to recognise the potential for growth of tourism through publicity and a fairer allocation of resources
- 1 Close proximity of Sedbergh to the M6 needs more promotion
- 1 Better access for disabled, prams etc by replacing river stiles with gates
- 1 Too many locals don't want change
- 1 Would like cheaper rent and business rates
- 1 Marketing the town as 'A Space To Breathe'
- 1 Need to promote what Sedbergh is good at - Walking, Biking and Running
- 1 Need to set up mountain and outdoor festivals
- 1 Night time food may lead to litter and vermin
- 1 Make Loftus Hill toilets into a shop if no longer required
- 1 Need a balance for Main St between a working and a tourist town
- 1 Promotional information of shops, pubs and cafes should be available at both car parks
- 1 Disabled toilet facility is not easily accessible
- 1 Difficulty for wheelchair accessing places to eat other than White Hart & Smatts
- 1 SEP is not considered as a voice open to all
- 1 Folk and/or beer festival
- 1 A map of the town on a board so that tourists can see the extent of shops