FINDINGS OF THE CITIZENS' PANEL SURVEY ON THE NEW COMMUNITY PLAN

FINAL REPORT

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1.0   OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY

OBJECTIVES

1.1   This document sets out the findings of the twelfth survey of the Argyll and Bute Citizens' Panel, fieldwork for which was conducted during April and May 2007.

The survey was designed to inform the development of a new Community Plan for Argyll and Bute and it therefore sits alongside other aspects of consultation that fed into the development of the Plan. In particular, the design of the questionnaire built on the issues that emerged from an initial Partnership day that was conducted in January 2007. Subsequent to this, IBP liaised with colleagues in the Policy and Strategy Department of Argyll and Bute Council and with the Community Planning Manager in the development of the questionnaire. This questionnaire is reproduced as Appendix 1 of the appendices which have been provided under separate cover to the Council.

1.2   The survey sought feedback from the community in Argyll and Bute with regard to the following issues that were of relevance to the development of the Plan:

➢ The Overall Vision

➢ Outstanding Environment

➢ Vibrant Communities

➢ "Forward Looking"

➢ "What do you want to see in the plan?"

➢ Communicating the Plan

➢ "Your Overall Views"

These are addressed, in turn in sections 2 to 8 of this report. IBP's overall conclusions are then noted briefly in Section 9.

METHODOLOGY

1.3 A postal survey of the Argyll and Bute Citizens Panel was conducted. At the outset of fieldwork, Panel membership was 1,242. During fieldwork, 17 people asked to be removed from the Panel, leaving on active membership of 1,225. It should be noted that a substantial number of people have not responded to any of the three previous Panel surveys (this could be for a variety of reasons such as a change of address, change in circumstances or lack of interest). It is proposed to delete these people from the Panel database for future surveys.

1.4 An initial questionnaire was mailed out to Panel members in March 2007 and a reminder mailing was issued in April, with a closing date of 23rd April 2007. In total, 506 responses were received, which is a response rate of 41.3%, based on the Panel size of 1,225. This is somewhat lower than has been achieved in some previous surveys although this was anticipated given that the subject matter was less "immediate" than has been the case in previous Panel surveys. Appendix 2 provides further detail of the breakdown of responses.

1.5 For illustrative purposes, a random sample of 506 provides data accurate to $\pm$3.35% for the sample as a whole[1].

1.6 This document provides an overview of the survey results and highlights the most common distinctions in terms of the response from different geographical areas and with respect to other demographic criteria. The detailed data tables, which form Appendix 3 to the report, provide a more detailed breakdown of these responses. These should be read alongside Appendix 4, which provides full details of the verbatim responses to the open-ended questions that were included in the survey. For reasons of space, these have been provided under separate cover and are available from the Chief Executive's Unit at Argyll and Bute Council.

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[1] Based on a 50% estimate at the 95% confidence interval. Thus, if 50% of the sample answers in a given way, then we can be sure that if the whole population had been asked then the results would have been between 46.65% and 53.35%.
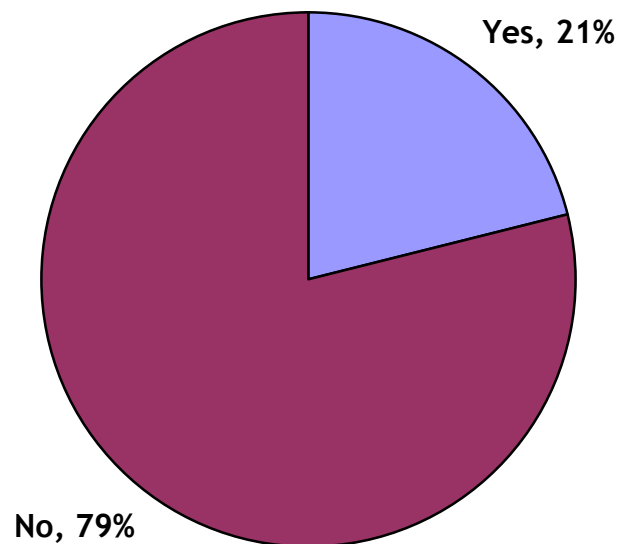
2.0 THE OVERALL VISION

2.1   As illustrated in Figure 2.1 below, at the time of the survey fieldwork, awareness of the "Leading Rural Area" vision that the Community Planning Partnership had adopted was confined to a minority of respondents.

Figure 2.1: Awareness of the Overall Vision

Yes, 21%

No, 79%

Base: 506

2.2   As a follow-up to this, and a preamble to the remainder of the survey, the following question was posed of respondents:

What would you personally most like to see for Argyll and Bute by the year 2011?

The main themes and illustrative comments associated with each theme are set out below:

Theme	Illustrative Comments
Outstanding Environment	*Litter free* *Visitor friendly* *A used, but not over-used, area that is well cared for and conserved*
Vibrant Communities	*More leisure and sports facilities* *Lots of houses at a reasonable price* *Good employment rates* *More inward investment* *More young people remaining or returning to the area*
Forward Looking	*An improved road network and the quality of the roads improved* *Irish/Ayrshire Ferry improvements* *More Play Areas for children*
Specific service provision	*Improved community services for clients with dementia* *High standards of educational attainment*
Leadership	*More dynamic leadership from the Council*

A full verbatim listing of comments is included in the appendices.

2.3 In general, it is worth noting that the great majority of the comments made fit within the three core themes of the Leading Rural Area vision, which services as an endorsement of that vision. In particular, many of the comments made relate to issues such as housing and employment (which are considered under the Vibrant Communities theme) and road and transport improvements (which sit within the Forward Looking theme).

There are few comments made which cannot be related to these themes. Those that are made tend to relate to service needs or improvement priorities for specific partners and to the above-mentioned desire for "leadership".
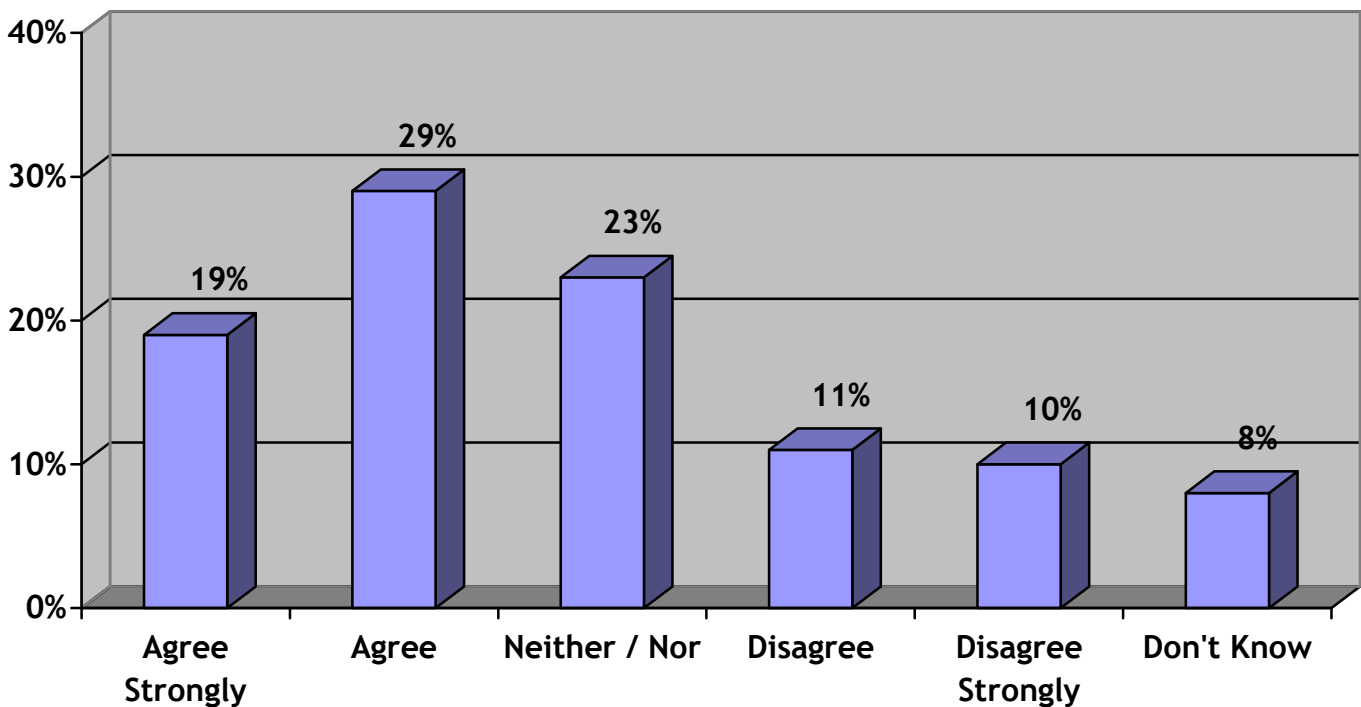
3.0 OUTSTANDING ENVIRONMENT

3.1 As an introduction to this section of the survey, the following explanatory statement was provided:

The Partners describe an outstanding environment in the following ways:

- *High quality environment that is valued, recognised and protected.*
- *The environment is respected as a valued asset that can provide sustainable opportunities for business.*
- *An identity that is recognised and appreciated globally with a range of businesses that use the high quality image.*
- *An area that is accessible, yet retains its remote character.*

3.2 It was noted that the main objective under this heading was the establishment of Europe's first Marine and Coastal National Park. Figure 3.1 illustrates that there is majority support for this amongst those who express a view but that significant numbers of Argyll and Bute residents are either unsure or express a negative view about this.

Figure 3.1: Establishment of Marine and Coastal National Park

Base: 506

3.3   Respondents were also asked to give brief details of any other issues that they felt should be included in the Community Plan, which fell under the theme of "outstanding environment". Again, these comments are extremely diverse and are listed in full in the appendices. The main themes and illustrative comments are shown below:

Theme	Illustrative Comments
Planning Considerations	*Housing has to be a priority* *Land for housing should be cut back* *Planners take more notice of local objectives*
Biodiversity	*More native tree planting*
Energy	*Grants for people to install other methods of energy use* *Increase the number of wind farms* *Our outstanding rural environment should not be spoiled by wind farms*
Access	*Cycle paths* *Encourage use of area by all types of visitors*
Physical Environment	*Litter, dog fouling, grass cutting* *Greater effort on beach cleaning*
Environmental Behaviour	*Bigger and better recycling facilities*

3.4   A detailed perusal of the various comments suggests that there is a widespread consensus around a number of areas such as a desire for improved litter control, protection of the natural environment and sensitive access to this environment. Two potential areas of tension become apparent, however. These relate to the planning implications of addressing the desire for more affordable housing and the divided views regarding the siting of wind farms in the area.

4.0 VIBRANT COMMUNITIES

4.1 The following descriptive preamble was provided for this section of the questionnaire:

The Partners describe "vibrant communities" in the following ways:

- *Safe supportive communities with positive culture and sense of pride in the area.*
- *Well balanced demographically with young people choosing to stay or move to the area.*
- *Vibrant local economy that is based on core attitudes of the area, flexible and open to new opportunities.*
- *A sense of history with a view to the future.*
- *Housing that is appropriate and affordable with local people able to participate in the housing market.*
- *High quality public services and leisure/community facilities that attract people to settle in Argyll and Bute.*

4.2 A number of "draft objectives" were put to Panel members for their agreement or disagreement. The results of this are set out in Figure 4.1 below (it should be noted that for ease of presentation, the different levels of agreement or disagreement have been collapsed into single agree/disagree variables; a full breakdown of the data is included in the appendices). When numbers do not add to 100, this is due to "neutral" or "don't know" responses.

**Figure 4.1: Agreement with Draft Objectives
for the New Community Plan**
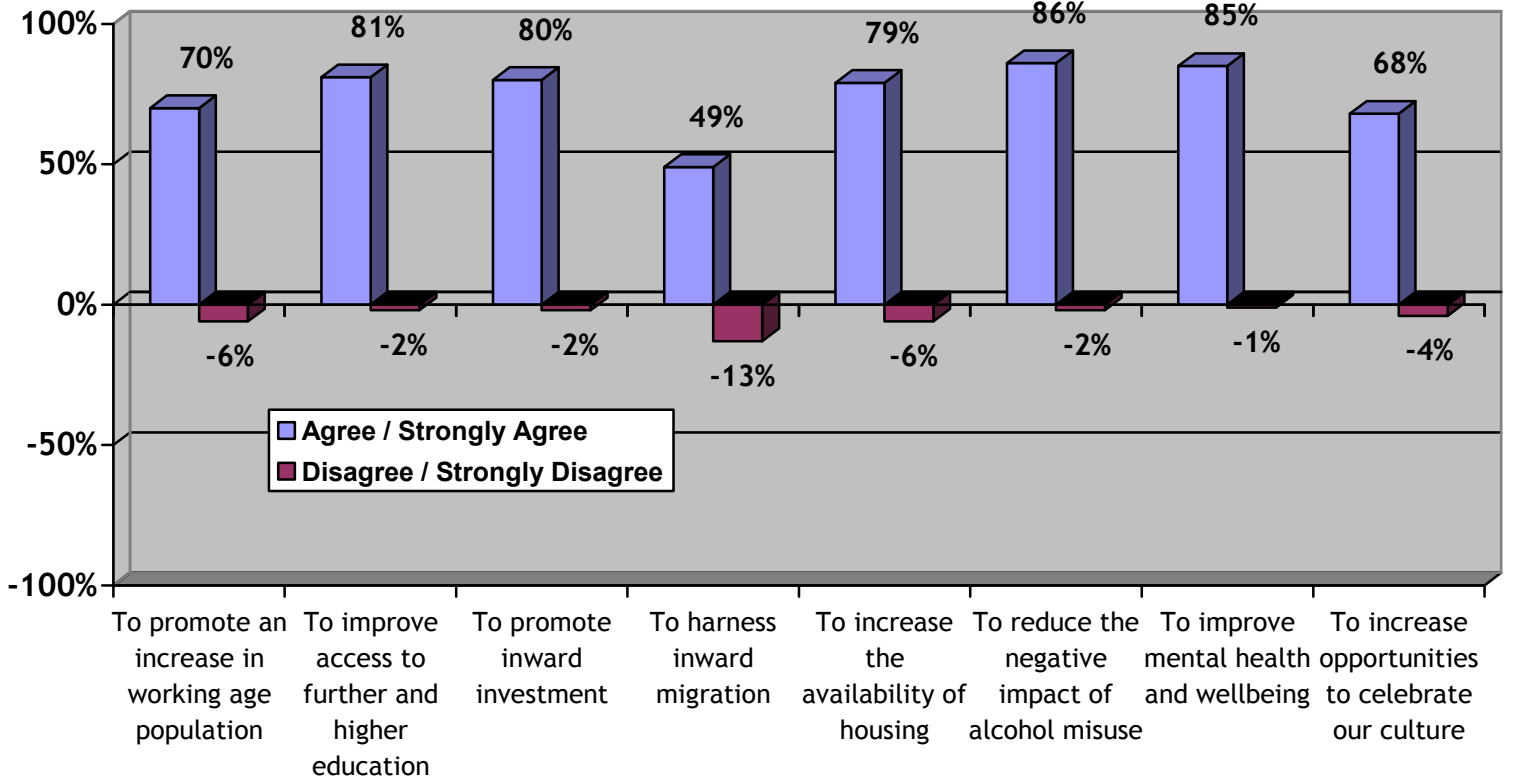
Base: 506

4.3 Clearly, agreement is high and outright disagreement is very limited with regard to the majority of these objectives. This is particularly so in relation to those that relate to access to education, promotion of inward investment, reduce the impact of alcohol misuse and improving mental health and well-being.

Support is slightly lower (but still very positive) with regard to promotion of an increase in the working age population, increased availability of housing and increases opportunities for celebration of "our culture".

There is only one area where less than 50% express outright support; this is in relation to the draft objective to "harness inward migration". This is largely due to a high "neither/nor" and "don't know" response and those who express support outnumber those who express outright opposition by a factor of almost four to one.

4.4 Respondents were then asked to indicate which elements they considered most important by choosing up to three items from the list of "draft objectives".

Figure 4.2: Which of these do you think are most important?
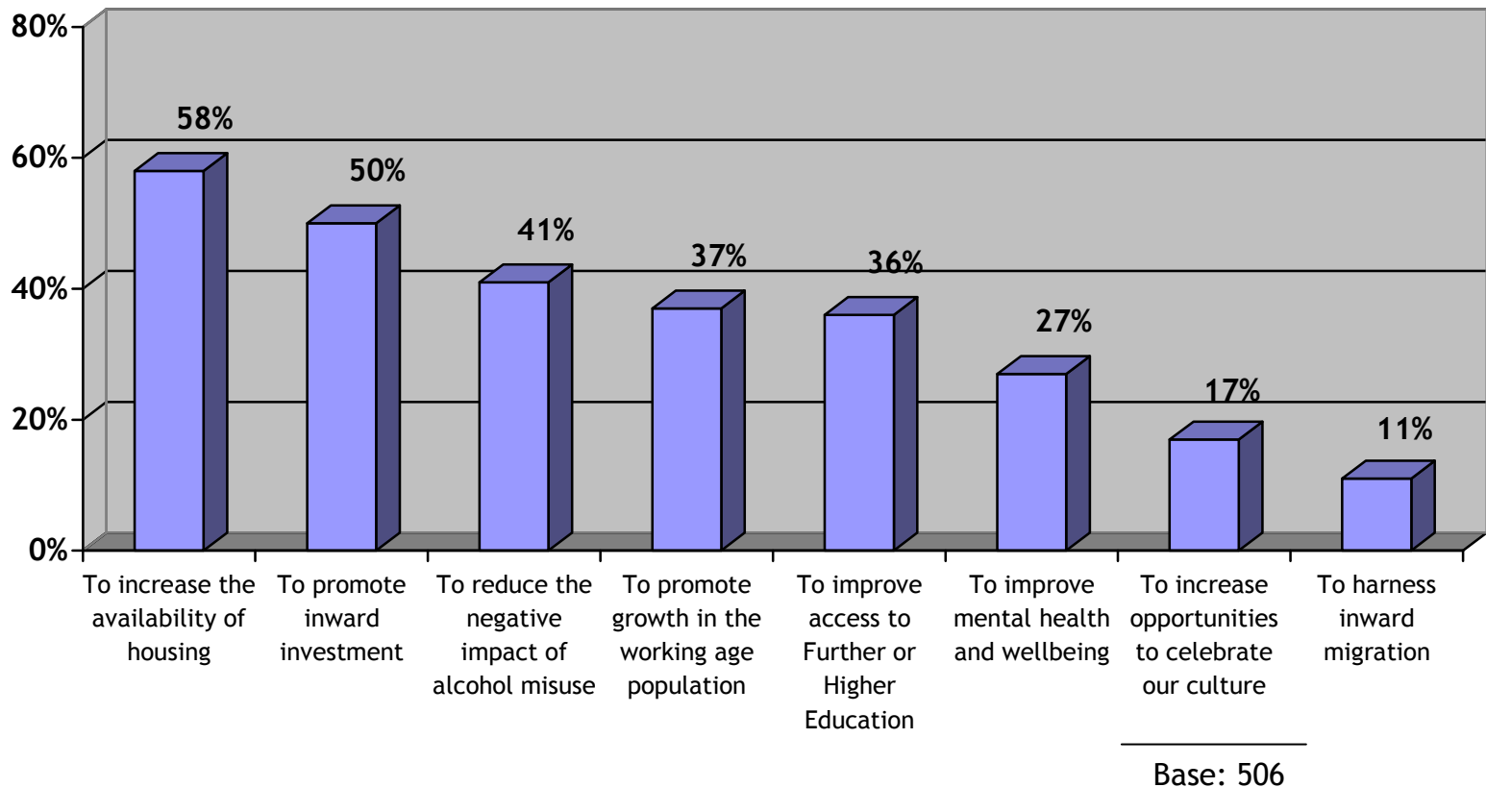

The issues of housing availability and promotion of inward investment are clearly seen as being of particular importance.

4.5   A set of specific tasks that could be delivered in pursuit of these objectives was then put to respondents and they were asked to state whether they considered these to be good or bad ideas (again, the very/quite variables have been collapsed for presentational purposes).

Figure 4.3: Views on Specific Tasks
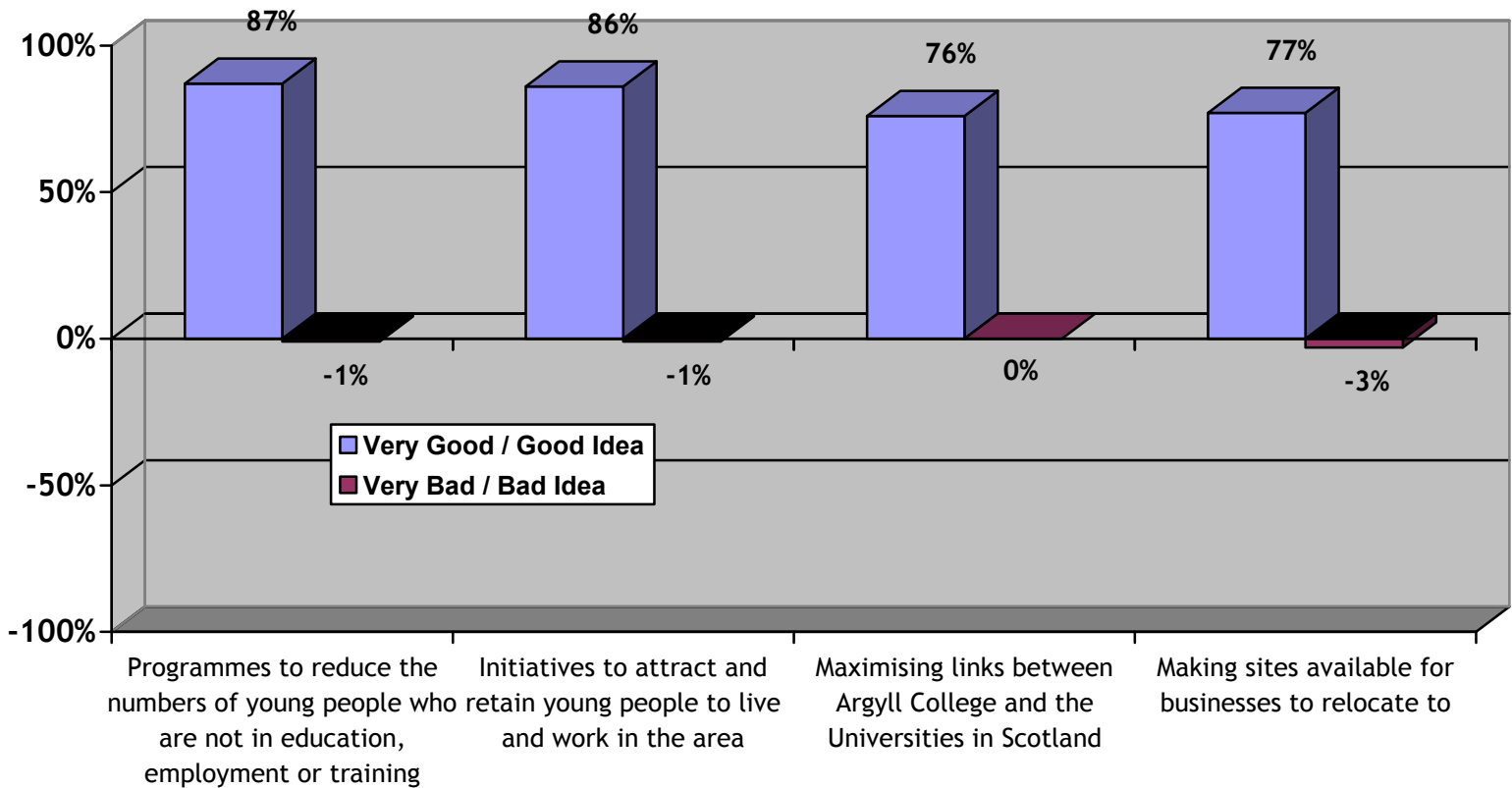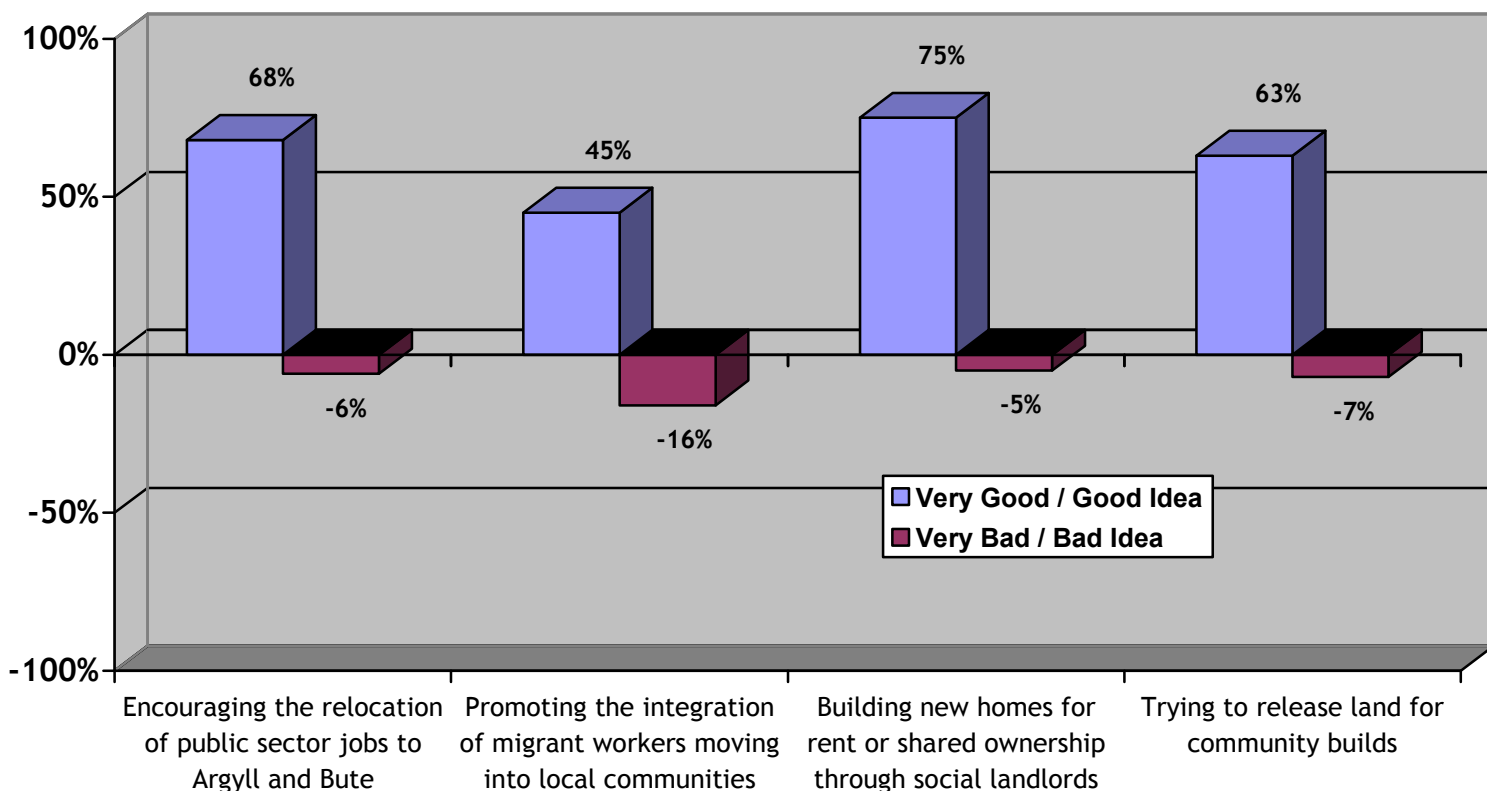
Base: 506

Again, some tasks receive overwhelming support and little negativity:

➢ Programmes to reduce young people in the "NEET" category

➢ Initiatives to attract and retain young people

➢ Maximising Further and Higher Educational links

➢ Making sites available for business

➢ Building new social housing

Support for encouraging the relocation of public sector jobs and for release of land for "community builds", where people get together to build their own homes is slightly less overwhelming but still very positive.

Again, it is with regard to the integration of migrant workers into local communities that a small, but identifiable, degree of opposition exists.

4.6   Again, participants were asked to note any other issues under the theme of 'Vibrant Communities', which they felt to be missing from the information presented to them. The key themes and illustrative comments are highlighted below:

Theme	Illustrative Comments
Community facilities	*More, and inexpensive, leisure facilities, particularly for young people* *Local schools, even if small, are essential for a vibrant community* *Lack of tourist attractions in seaside towns*
Population	*More emphasis on keeping our young talent* *Limit the amount of migrant workers as this can drive down people's wages*
Health	*Health and hospital facilities* *Measures to reduce the use of drugs*
Transport	*Improvement in our roads to assist many of the above objectives* *Transport links from rural communities* *Affordable and frequent transport links….especially ferry services*
Housing	*More housing opportunities for First Time Buyers*
Community Spirit and Engagement	*Organise community get-togethers* *Increase support to local Community Councils and community organisations* *Civic pride and personal social responsibility*
Anti-social Behaviour	*Good policing* *Programmes aimed at primary schools to prevent them starting anti-social behaviour.*

4.7   It could be argued that some elements which emerge from these comments are not made explicit in the Community Plan. For example, the tackling of anti-social behaviour and development of community spirit. In most cases, however, the comments made again reflect some of the priorities that have been considered. Within this section, comments surrounding a desire for enhanced sports and leisure facilities and improved transport were particularly apparent.

Again, however, different views are apparent in relation to perceptions of the positive or negative impact of migrant workers coming to the area.

5.0 FORWARD LOOKING

5.1   The following explanatory statement was provided to participants at the outset of this section:

The Partners describe "forward looking" in the following ways:

- *Communities that are culturally rich with a desire to excel.*
- *Proactive communities where local people and organisations look for and create opportunities.*
- *Decentralised public sector with more delivery of high quality 'professional' services from Argyll and Bute.*
- *Partnership working across all sectors to coordinate developments, market Argyll and Bute and remove constraints that limit possibilities.*
- *Communities that learn and use that knowledge.*

5.2   Respondents were again asked to agree or disagree with a set of "draft objectives" as illustrated in Figure 5.1 below:

**Figure 5.1: Agreement with Draft Objectives**
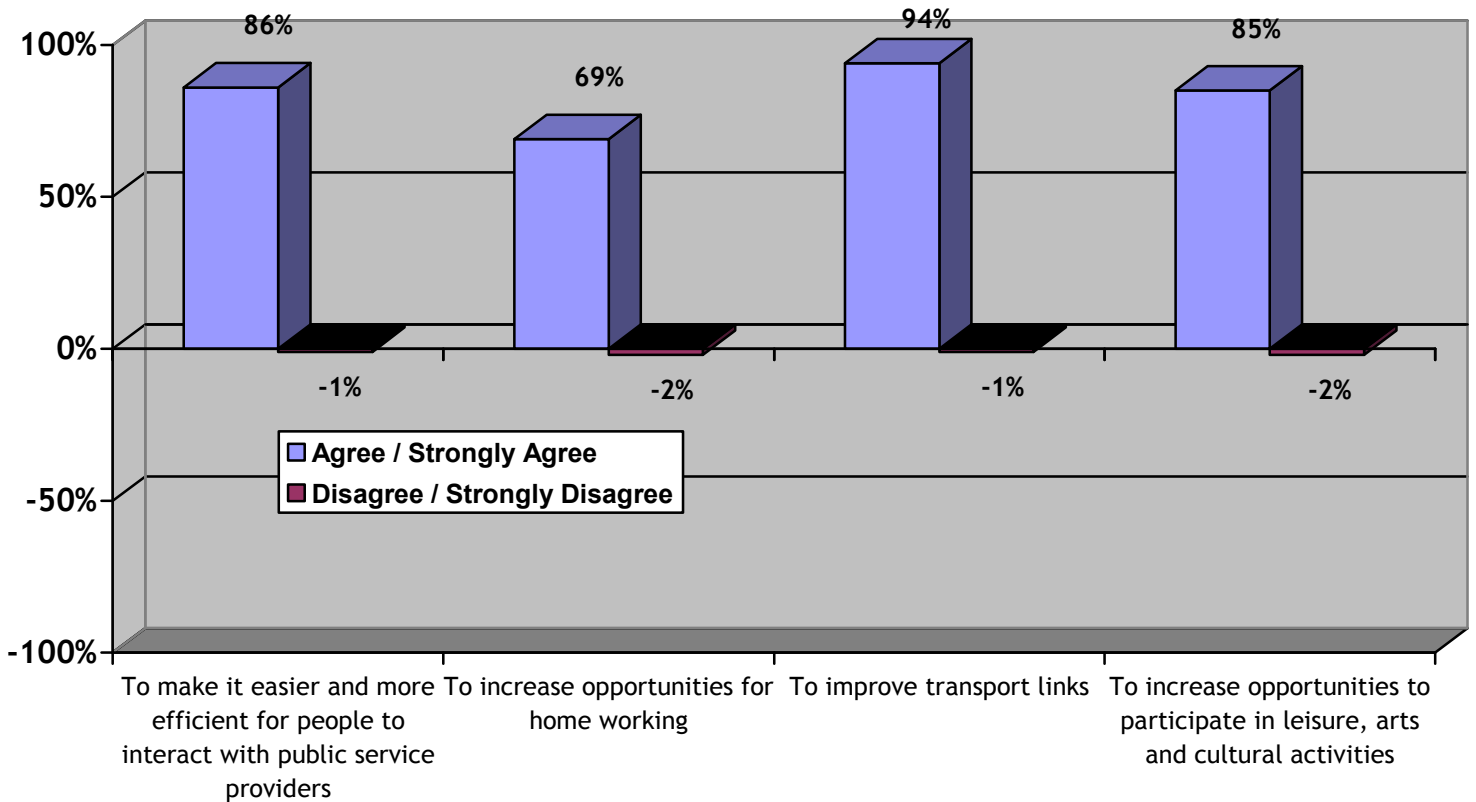
Base: 506

Clearly, there is near unanimous support for these objectives and it is only with respect to "home working" that levels of agreement tail off due to a somewhat higher "neither/nor" and "don't know" response.
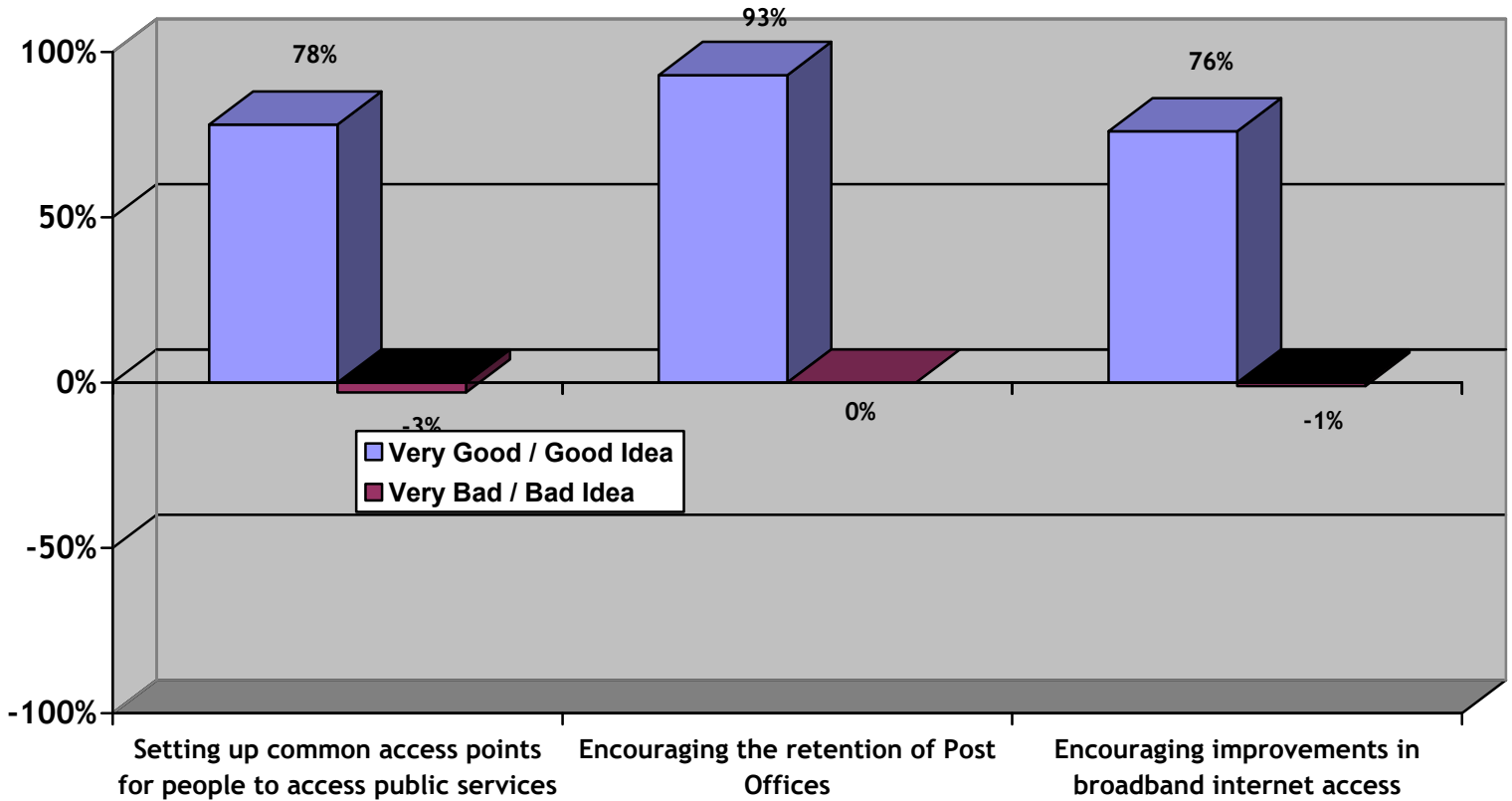
5.3   As illustrated in Figure 5.2 below, respondents accorded particular priority to the improvement of transport links.

Figure 5.2: Importance of Objectives
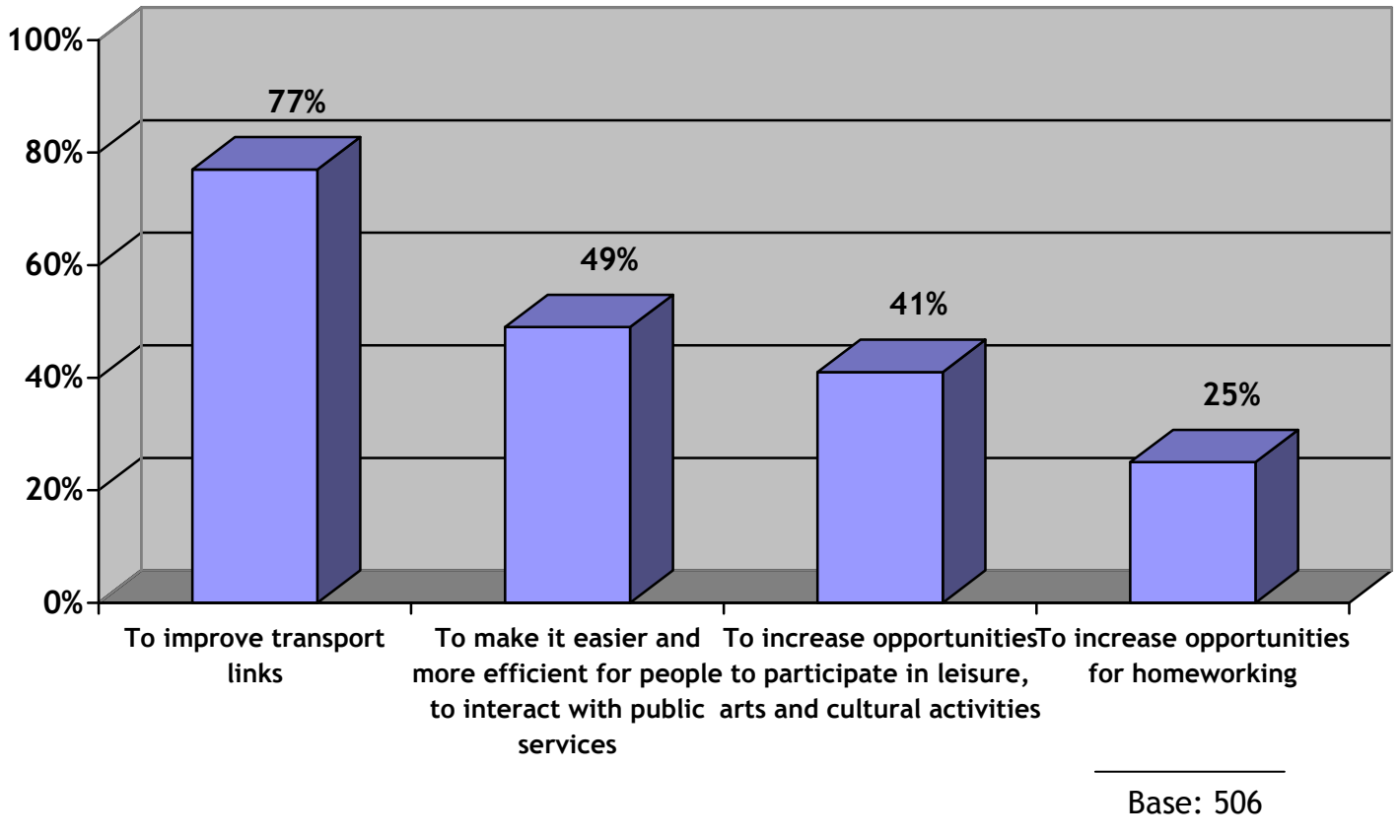
Base: 506

5.4   A range of specific tasks were also put to respondents under the
      "Forward Looking" heading and responses to these tasks are
      illustrated below:

Figure 5.3: Views on Specific Actions

Base: 506

Clearly, there is overwhelming support for each of these elements
and, in particular, for work to encourage the retention of Post
Offices.

5.5 Once again, respondents were asked to identify any other issues that they felt should be considered under the "Forward Looking" theme. The key themes and illustrative comments are again set out below:

Theme	Illustrative Comments
Public Services	Much more decentralisation of public services Provision of local banking in rural areas Common Access Points should include the public services
Environmental Impact	Global warming will lead to new agricultural opportunities Encourage people to adopt micro-power generation Use of renewable energy sources
Technology	Rapid dissemination of new technology opportunities Making internet access affordable and easy Tourist-related information to be delivered in Post Office, website and interactive screens with local information at the touch of a button.

5.6 In many respondent's minds, new ways of enabling local access to public services sits comfortably within the "Forward Looking" theme. There is also a sense that new technology should be used to best effect and made affordable as well as a strong environmental dimension to this.

6.0 WHAT DO YOU WANT TO SEE IN THE PLAN?

6.1 Respondents were provided with a prompted list of six elements that they would like to see in the Community Plan and were asked to choose up to three such elements. The results of this are set out below.

Figure 6.1: Issues in Respondents' Top Three Priorities
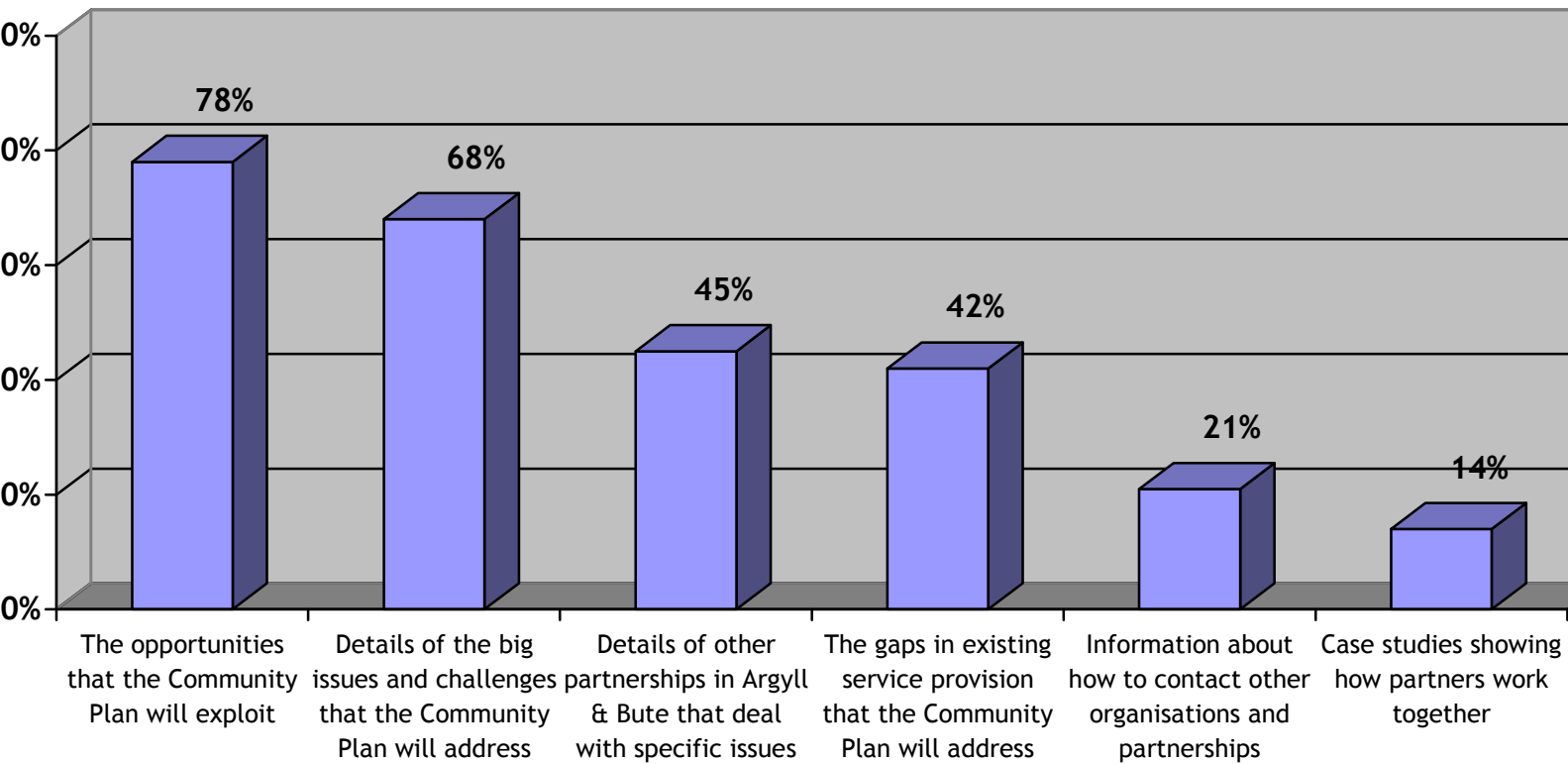
Base: 506

6.2 There is an apparent desire for information on the opportunities that the Community Plan will exploit and in relation to the "big issues and challenges" that it will address. The Community Plan is less likely to be seen as a medium for communication of partners' contact information and few people see case studies as a priority.

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7.0 COMMUNICATING THE PLAN

7.1 Within this section, respondents were asked if a brief written plan, with more detailed information on the CPP website, would be sufficient for their needs. As illustrated below, a significant minority suggested that this would not be sufficient.

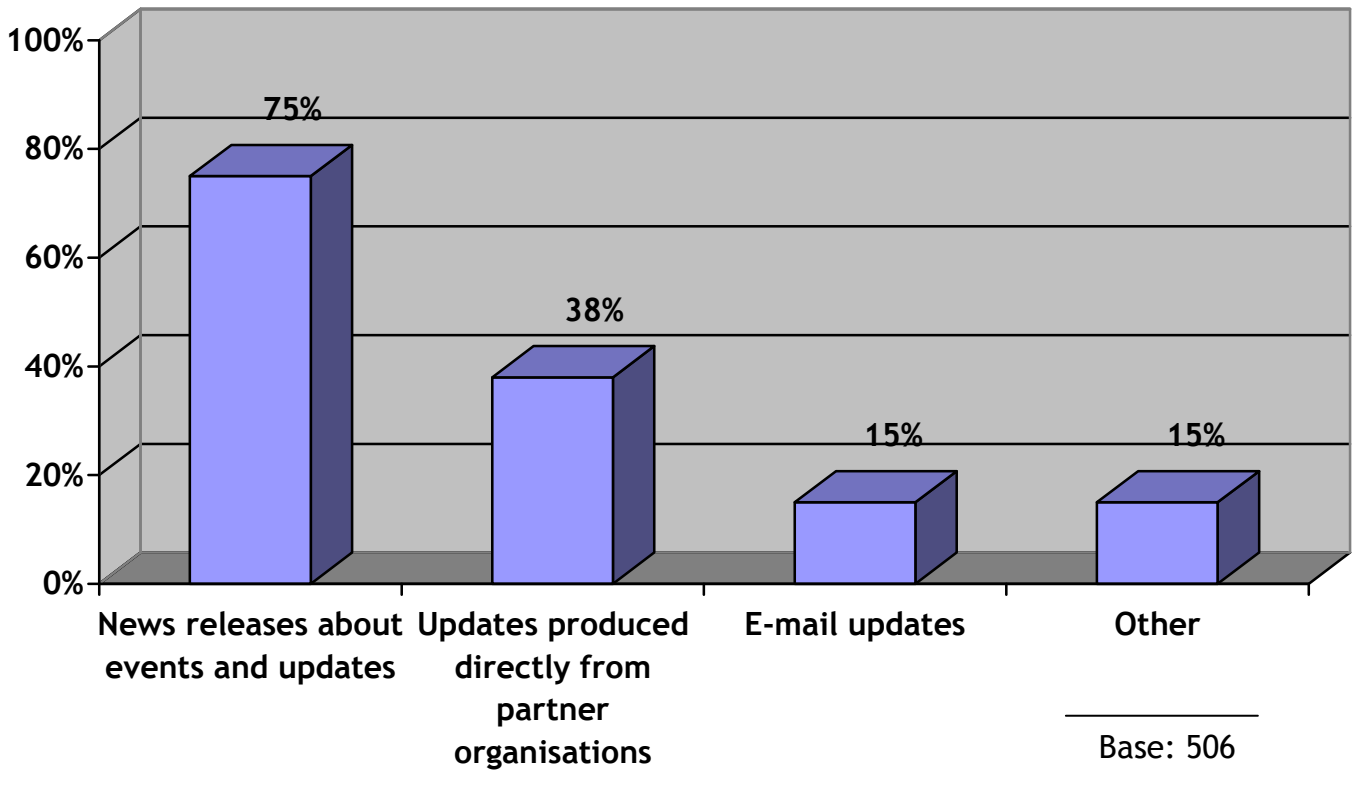**Figure 7.1: Will written plan with more detail on website be sufficient for your needs?**

No, 38%

Yes, 62%
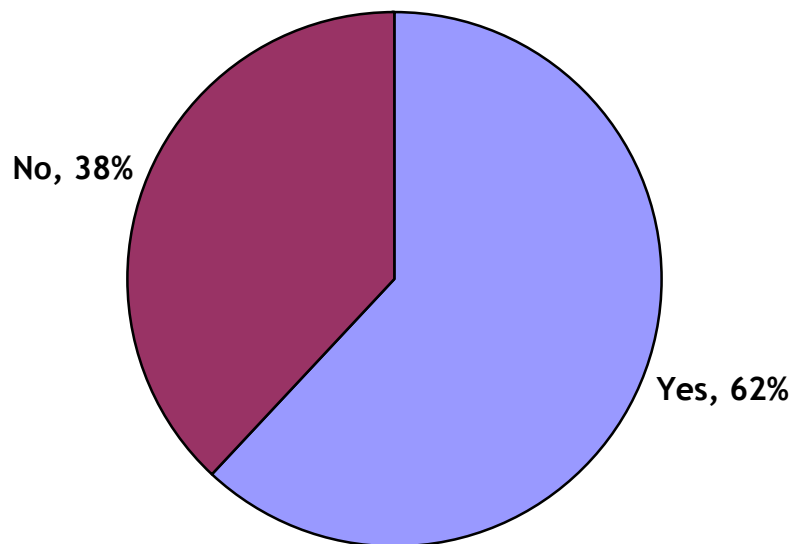
Base: 506

7.2 Respondents who felt that such an approach would **not** be sufficient were then asked a supplementary question as to what they would like to see.

Figure 7.2: If not, what would you like to see?

Base: 506

The most important element to emerge from this is broader "news releases about events and updates".

Amongst the key "other" suggestions were the following:

"Please remember that not everyone has internet access"

"Local Press"

"A specific plan, not a brief one"

"Specify, not these vague ideas"

Whilst brevity is clearly important to people, it is fair to say that this should not be at the expense of specificity and substance.
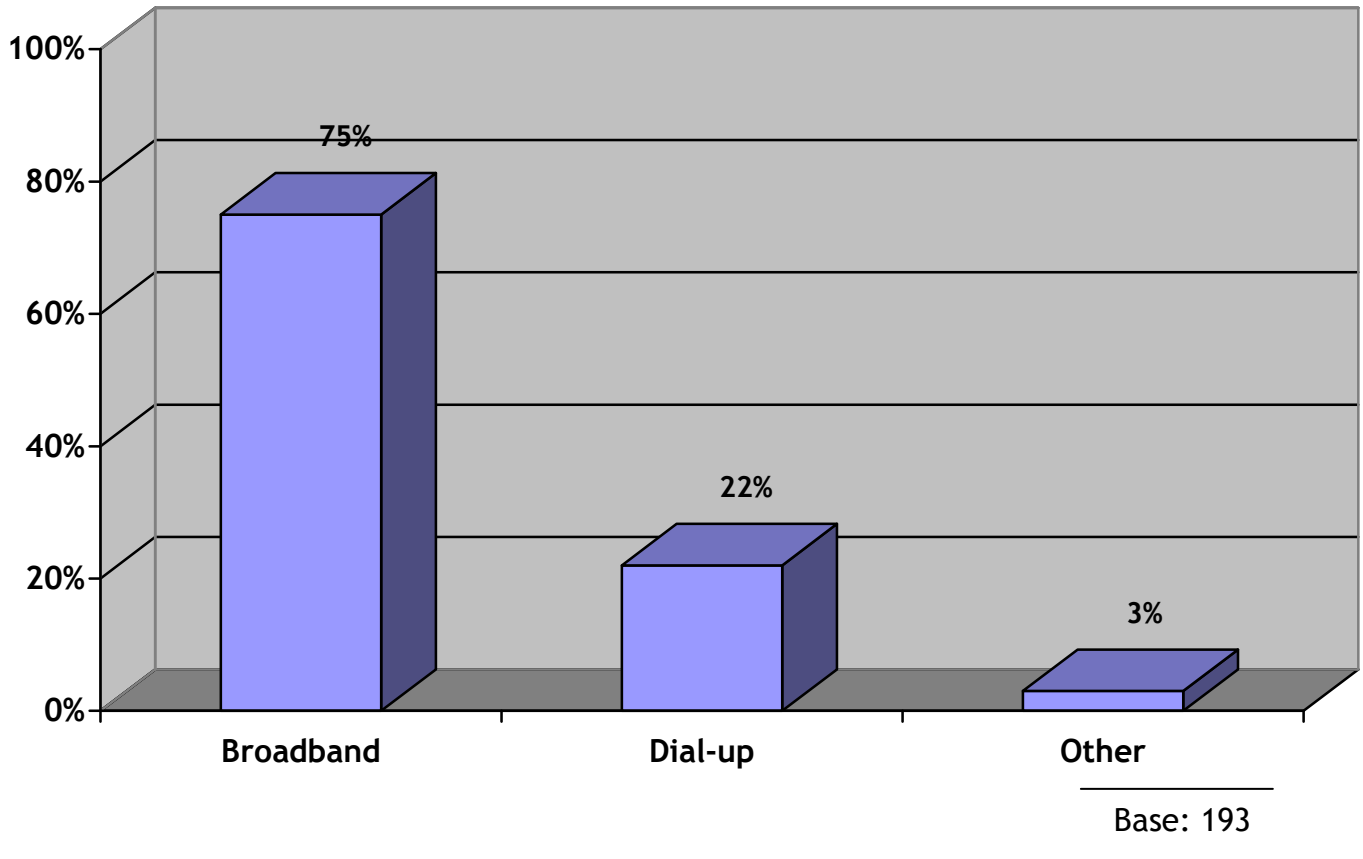
7.3 As illustrated below, home internet access amongst Panel members has now reached 70%, which compares favourably with the national average:

Figure 7.3: Internet Access

- At home only: 44%
- Home and work: 26%
- Work only: 2%
- No / Refused: 27%

Base: 506
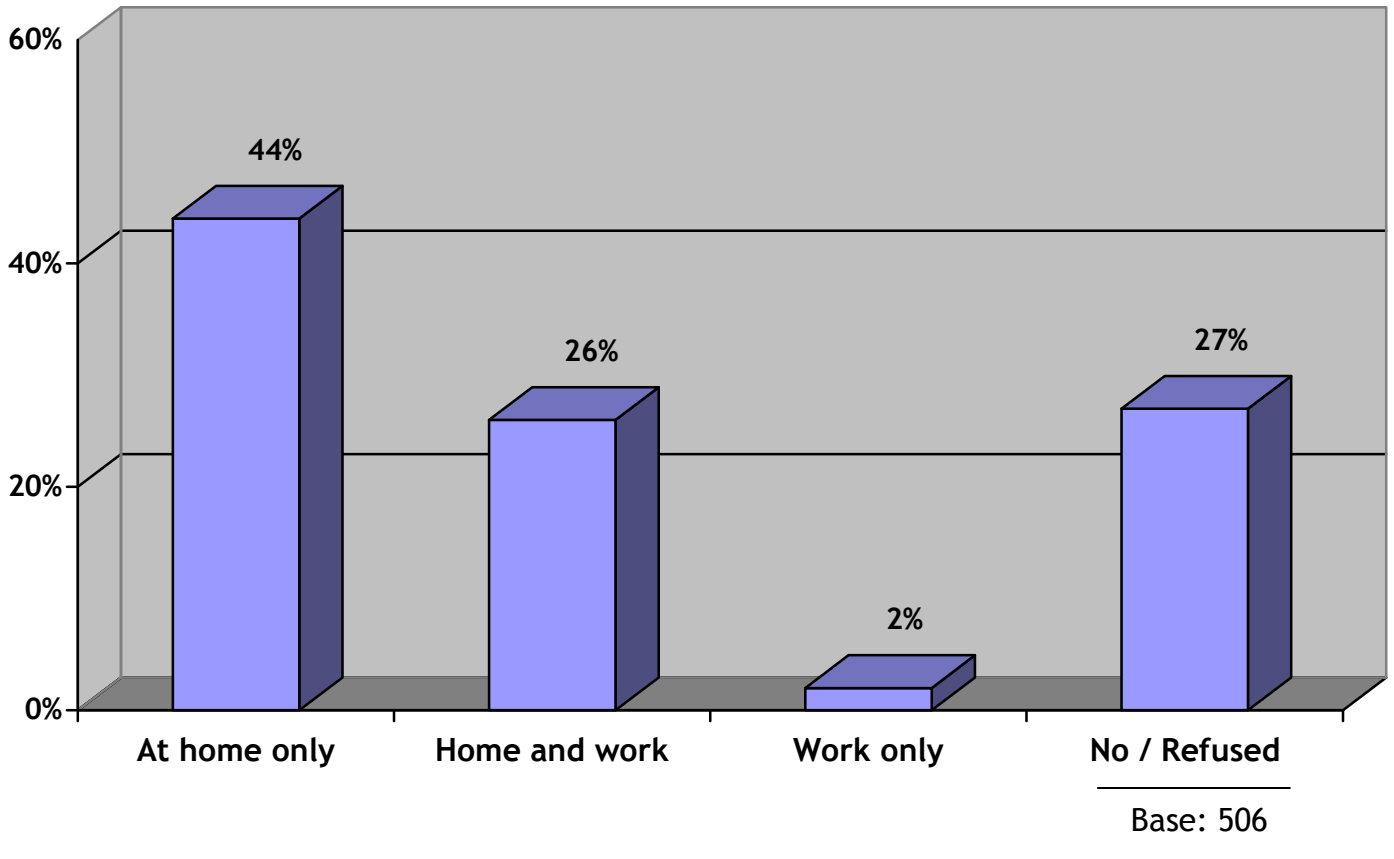
7.4   Added to this, the majority of internet connections are now
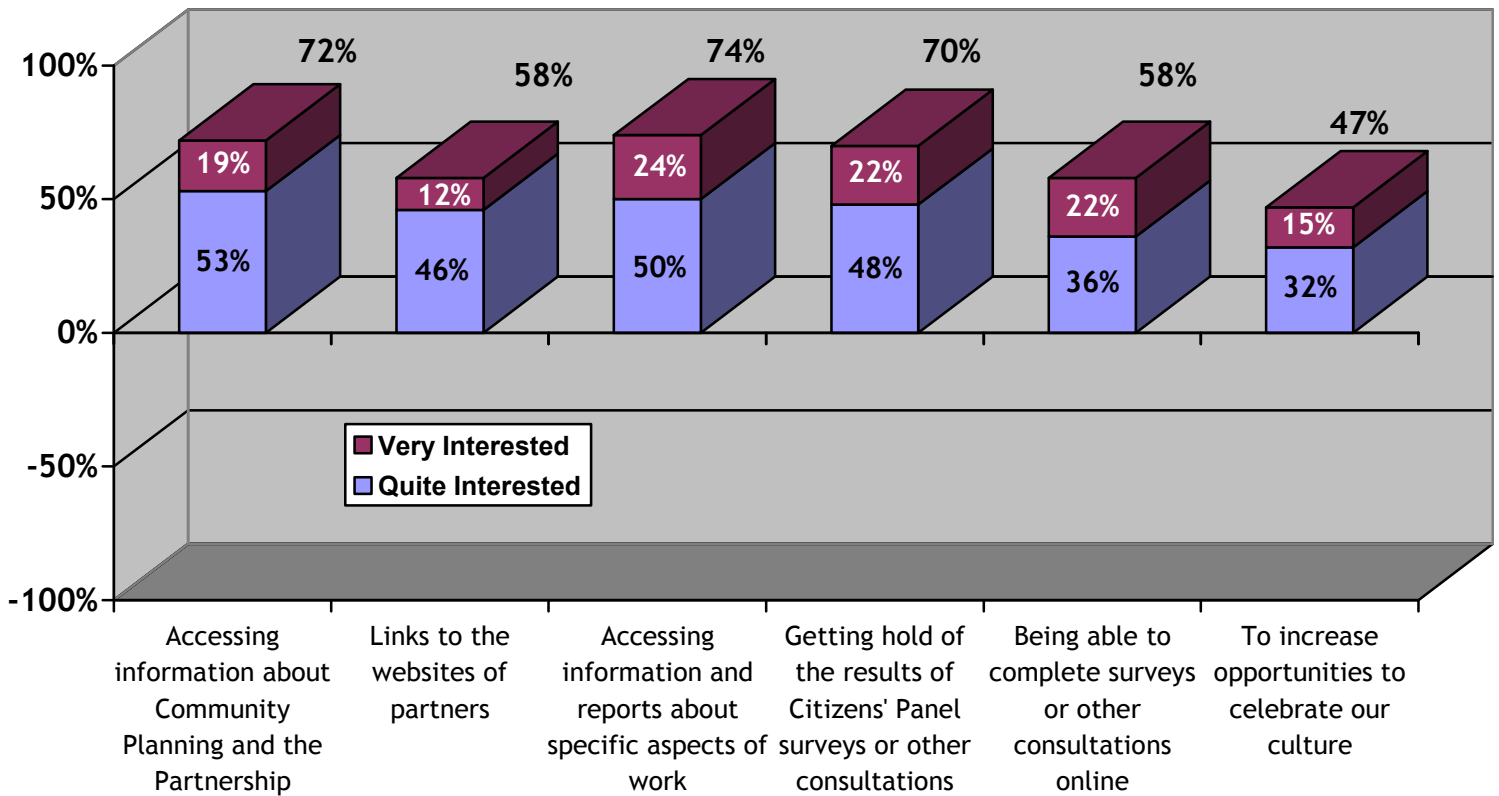   Broadband:

Figure 7.4: Home Internet Connections

Base: 193

7.5   Those respondents with internet access were asked to comment on their level of interest in accessing various elements of the Community Planning Partnership website. The results of this are set out in Figure 7.5 below:

Figure 7.5: Interest in Aspects of CPP Website (those with internet access only)


Base: 335

Amongst those who do have internet access, there is strong ostensible interest in accessing the CPP website for a variety of purposes. In particular, accessing general information, sourcing information and reports and accessing survey results are all areas for which there is considerable support.

8.0 YOUR OVERALL VIEWS

8.1   A final "overall" question was posed to participants as illustrated below:

Figure 8.1: Having heard about the 'Leading Rural Area' and about the objectives and Actions being included in the new Community Plan, to what extent do you think these Objectives fit with the real needs of Argyll And Bute?
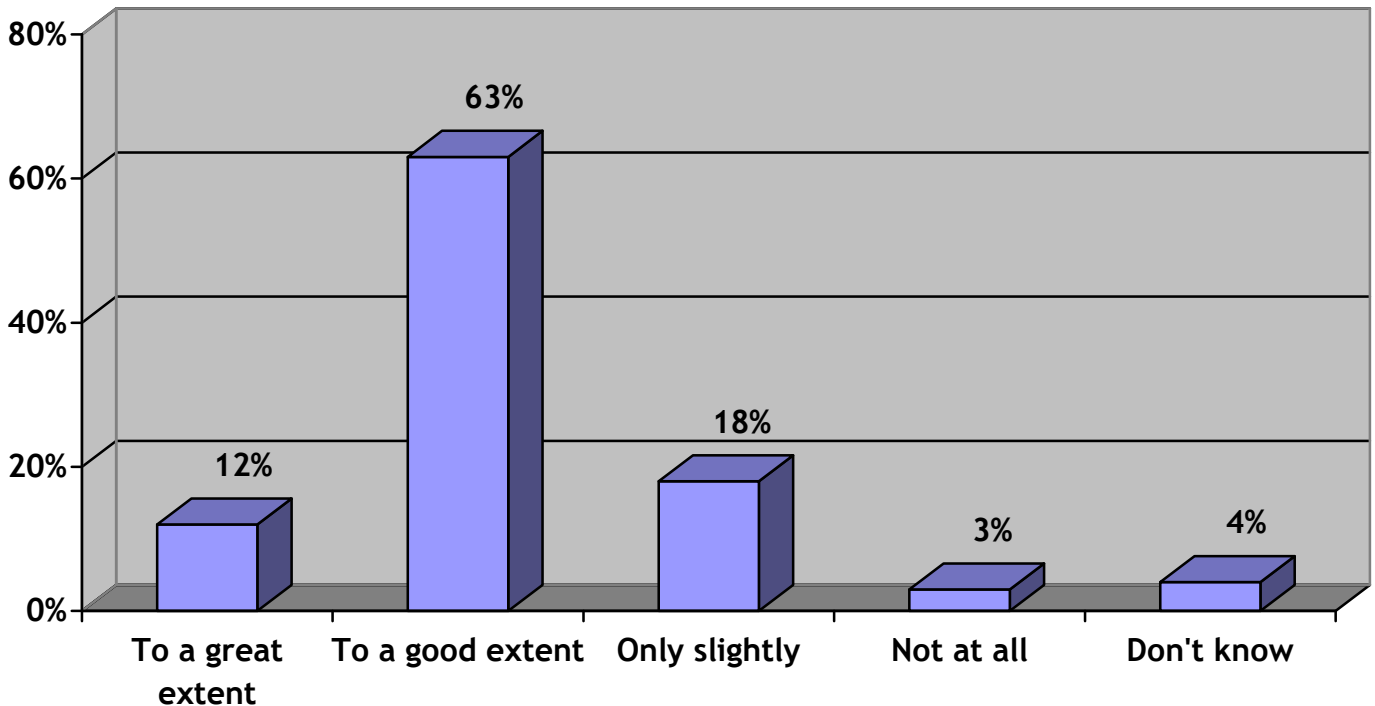
Base: 506

It should be seen as encouraging that 75% of respondents feel that the objectives and actions identified for the new Community Plan fit the needs of Argyll and Bute to at least a "good" extent.

8.2   Respondents were provided with a final opportunity to comment on any objectives or issues that the felt had been omitted or to make any further comments that they desired. The main themes and illustrative comments have been covered in previous sections. It is worth noting that some scepticism is evident:

"Many clever phrases but does it really make any difference?"

"I am beginning to think this whole exercise is "jobs for the boys""
Such scepticism is, however, balanced by many positive points:

"The plan seems well structured….let's hope when its implemented the goods are delivered"

"Must implement the plan to realise the vision and give hope to people"

"Make it happen!"

The strong desire to see visible implementation of the Community Plan content highlights the need for ongoing communication with the public as to what is actually happening.

9.0 Conclusions

9.1 The development of a draft of the new Community Plan has taken place in parallel with fieldwork for this study. It is intended that the findings described below be used to inform the process of further refinement of the Plan, prior to its final adoption. More importantly, it should be recognised that the implementation of the Plan is an ongoing process and the findings herein should inform this process.

9.2 Overall, we believe that the vision developed for Argyll and Bute and the key themes within this provide a strong fit with aspirations of Panel members. Some specific issues, such as housing, employment and roads and transport, are accorded particular priority.

9.3 There is a majority support for the establishment of a Marine and Costal National Park as an integral element of the "Outstanding Environment" theme. However, significant numbers remain unsure of this, suggesting a need for further profile building.

9.4 Whilst these is a consensus around the important of issues such as litter control and environmental access and protection, the write-in responses to the survey suggest that there are very distinct views as to the way ahead with respect to two important issues: the planning implications of house building and the siting of wind farms.

9.5 There is strong support for the draft objectives that were tested under the "Vibrant Communities" theme and, in particular, in relation to access to education, promotion of inward investment, reduction in the impact of alcohol misuse and improving mental health and wellbeing. The single issue which is most likely to be seen as important is the availability of housing. There is also strong support for a number of the specific potential tasks described under this theme.

9.6 Support for the encouragement and integration of migrant workers within Argyll and Bute is more lukewarm, though still positive. An increase in the number of migrant workers is a cause of concern for some.

9.7 There is support for the draft objectives outlined under the "Forward Looking" theme and, in particular, for the improvement of transport links. The issue of roads and transportation is raised by respondents in relation to all of the key themes of the Leading Rural Area strategy.

9.8 Respondents also see initiatives to modernise the delivery of public services (whilst maximising local access), the adoption of new technological approaches and adoption of new environmental measures as potential elements of a "Forward Looking" theme.

9.9   There is a strong desire for the Plan to focus on the opportunities and challenges facing Argyll and Bute. Whilst there is a majority view that a brief written plan, with additional detail on the CPP website, would be appropriate, there is also a concern that this could lead to a lack of specificity and substance in the Plan. There is a high level of Broadband internet access and support for the CPP website to be used as an important part of the communications mix, whilst ensuring that the needs of non-internet users are met.

9.10   Overall, there is general acceptance that the key points of the merging Plan fit with the needs of Argyll and Bute. However, there is also a desire to see real progress in implementation and the Plan should identify explicitly how progress in its delivery will be reported to the people of Argyll and Bute.