

Report

Energise Galashiels Trust
Build a Better Gala 4
Market Research Report
May 2024

McGowan Marketing

Executive Summary

McGowan Marketing carried out market research to assess the impact of the Build a Better Gala 4 project, delivered by Energise Galashiels Trust, and funded by South of Scotland Enterprise and Scottish Borders Council. The aim of the research was to determine if the final year of the Vibrant Gala Plan project resulted in positive change in the town.

The Build a Better Gala 4 project encompassed 17 sub-projects delivered by a hybrid of volunteer and paid-for resources.

The overall aims of the Build a Better Gala 4 project were:

- Improve the economic performance of the town centre (EP)
- Enhance community activity and wellbeing (CAW)
- Strengthen the capacity and breadth of the Trust (SCBT)

To assess if the project has resulted in positive change, specifically over the last 12 months, a range of market research sources and methods were used to identify evidence of change and ensure a robustness to the approach.

Overall, the evidence suggests the Build a Better Gala 4 project has resulted in positive change in the town.

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Glossary of Abbreviations

- BBG: Build a Better Gala
- BID: Business Improvement District
- CAW: Community Activity and Wellbeing
- EGT: Energise Galashiels Trust
- EP: Economic Performance
- GDPR: General Data Protection Regulation
- GToS: Great Tapestry of Scotland
- SBC: Scottish Borders Council
- SCBT: Strengthen Capacity and Breadth of the Trust
- SOSE: South of Scotland Enterprise

1. Introduction

Energise Galashiels Trust (EGT) commissioned McGowan Marketing to carry out market research to assess if positive change had occurred as a result of the Build a Better Gala (BBG) 4 project, the final year of a three-year Vibrant Gala Plan regeneration project, funded by South of Scotland Enterprise (SOSE) and Scottish Borders Council (SBC), and delivered by Energise Galashiels Trust (EGT).

1.1 Energise Galashiels Trust

Established in 2014, EGT is a Scottish Charitable Incorporate Organisation. EGT's aim is to provide a focus for engaging with the Galashiels community, to develop a vision for the town, and deliver actions to improve Galashiels and create a more vibrant, welcoming, and confident community.

1.1.1 The Vibrant Gala Plan and the Build a Better Gala Project

In 2021, EGT launched the Vibrant Gala Plan which provided the framework for the BBG projects. Working with partner organisations, SOSE and SBC, the Project secured agreed funding of up to £1,035,000 over a three-year period to support a range of regeneration activities, delivered in Galashiels town centre. The key aims of the project were to:

- Improve the economic performance of the town centre (EP)
- Enhance community activity and wellbeing (CAW)
- Strengthen the capacity and breadth of the Trust (SCBT)

The 2023—2024 financial year was the final year of the Vibrant Gala Plan.

1.2 Research Aims

A requirement of the BBG 4 project is the completion of an assessment of impact. This report is intended to supplement the Impact Evaluation carried out for the BBG 3 project. The research aim is to identify impact in relation to the project aims listed in section 1.1.1.

1.3 Research Methods

A range of research sources and methods were used to assess if positive change had occurred as a result of the BBG 4 project, and the findings presented within the report are drawn from:

- The Scottish Borders Council 2023 Town Centre Footfall Survey Excerpt
- The Scottish Borders Council 2023 Town Centre and Retail Survey Excerpt
- The Scottish Government's Scottish Economic Bulletin March 2024

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- The Great Tapestry of Scotland Visitor Numbers
- Regeneration Award Criteria
- Online town survey
- Review of EGT's digital platform data
- Business owner interviews
- Review of social media comments
- Listing of EGT volunteer hours

1.3.1 Research Context and Limitations

A market research report should note any relevant wider environmental context and clearly state limitations. For the BBG 4 research, the following have been identified:

- Survey fatigue: At the time of launching the online survey, two other town surveys were live. While all three were driven by EGT, with distinct audiences, there was a degree of crossover. The number of surveys caused confusion and resulted in people commenting on their frustration at being presented with “Yet another survey”. This reduced response rates that were generated through organic social media posts, which, in previous years, had been very positive.
- Social media paid adverts: Relating to the above, paid-for social media advertising was used to improve the online survey response rates. While this is an acceptable method of generating survey responses, it does differ from the approach used for the first two surveys and potentially impacted the results as responses could have been submitted by people who were less aware than those received from people reached via organic posting
- Budget constraints: As with BBG 3, the budget was limited, impacting on the breadth and depth of information gathered.
- Data recording: As with BBG 3, in evidencing capacity and strength building of EGT, there is consensus that without volunteers, the BBG 4 project would not have been delivered, but there was a limitation in accurately reporting sub-project volunteer hours and other volunteer contributions.
- Limits to causation: As social research does not allow for a control sample, i.e. another Galashiels where there is no BBG 4 project, positive (or negative) causation is not 100% attributable.

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1.4 Report Structure

The remainder of the report is structured as follows:

- Section two provides a general overview of the project management and delivery
- Section three presents the research results
- Section four details the assessed impact

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2. General Overview of the BBG 4 Project Management and Delivery

The Vibrant Gala Plan launched in 2021, provided a framework for the BBG projects. As with the preceding years, the aim of BBG4 was to achieve town centre regeneration in Galashiels, categorising all activity under three main themes:

- Making Galashiels More Active, Attractive & Accessible
- Developing Tapestry Way Community-Led Projects & Events
- Marketing and Digital Gala

Again, as with previous years, within each theme there were a series of sub-projects. The sub-projects for BBG 4 are listed in Tables 1 to 3 in section 2.2.

2.1 The Project Management Structure

As with previous years, the project delivery was based on a hybrid model of paid-for and volunteer resources. Each main project was allocated a volunteer project lead whose role was to oversee the delivery of the activity and feedback to the EGT Trustees.

Paid resource was in the form of one employee and third-party suppliers were used to deliver:

- Overall project management, including collating and sharing monthly progress reports and attending monthly funder meetings
- Management of the main projects and writing of monthly update reports
- Management of the delivery of the activity for each sub-project, including procurement of additional suppliers and resources

2.2 The Project Activities

The tables below detail each main project and the sub-projects for the BBG 4 project.

Main Project	Sub Project
Making Galashiels More Active, Attractive & Accessible	Design and installation of festive pole banners
	Installation of Sheep Seats
	Erection of bin store on Bank Street

Table 1: Making Galashiels More Active, Attractive & Accessible Projects

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Main Project	Sub Project
Developing Tapestry Way Community-Led Projects & Events	Sculpture Placement 2
	Tangled Fibre Festival
	Community Art Project Workshops
	Maroon'd @ Gala Festival
	Little Arts Hub
	Town Team Project
	BIDs Project
	Galashiels Heartland Awards

Table 2: Developing Tapestry Way Community Led Projects & Events Projects

Main Project	Sub Project
Marketing/Digital Gala	Digital Maintenance
	Regular Maintenance
	Digital Infrastructure
	Communications
	Communications Collateral
	Impact Assessment

Table 3: Marketing/Digital Gala Projects

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3. Researching Build a Better Gala 4

To ensure the research is as thorough and robust as possible, while working within the budget allocation, primary and secondary research methods were used.

3.1 Secondary Research

As part of the research method, a review of relevant secondary research was carried out. This included:

- The Scottish Borders Council 2023 Town Centre Footfall Survey Excerpt
- The Scottish Borders Council 2023 Town Centre and Retail Survey Excerpt
- The Scottish Government's Scottish Economic Bulletin March 2024
- The Great Tapestry of Scotland Visitor Numbers
- Regeneration Award Criteria

3.1.1 Scottish Borders Council 2023 Town Centre Footfall Survey Excerpt

The full Scottish Borders Council 2023 Town Centre Footfall Survey report has yet to be published. Below is an excerpt from the report:

Galashiels has not recovered from the significant 33% decrease in footfall, caused by the pandemic restrictions in 2020. There was a decrease of 7% in footfall in 2023 (from 2022).

Although the town has the second highest footfall overall, which correlates with having a larger population, Galashiels town centre footfall is less than half its 2007 count.

As the main habitation in the Scottish Borders, Galashiels does benefit from having the second highest footfall overall. However, as is the case with many towns and cities throughout the UK¹, the return to pre-pandemic footfall levels is proving a challenge, with changes to working patterns and the cost-of-living crisis just two of the attributable factors.

An email received by the EGT Manager² confirms:

Through conversations with funding partners and general community intelligence, EGT understand that one of the large supermarkets (Tesco) attracts up to 30,000 weekly

¹ <https://www.itv.com/news/2023-01-25/high-street-footfall-down-18-amid-rise-in-hybrid-working>

² Email from Angela Crow, EGT Manager, 13th May 2024

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footfall. EGT consider this is worthy of including to highlight that although relatively high numbers of people are coming to the wider Galashiels area, the town centre does not appear to measurably attract the same footfall levels.

3.1.2 Scottish Borders Council 2023 Town Centre and Retail Survey Excerpt

The full Scottish Borders Council 2023 Town Centre and Retail Survey report has yet to be published. Below is an excerpt from the report:

The unit vacancy rate in Galashiels has decreased by 1% since the last audit in winter 2022 and by 2% since summer 2022. Over a five-year period, there have been fluctuations in the figures with a high of 19% in winter 2021 and a low of 15% in summer 2019. The figure of 17%, recorded in the latest audit, shows the vacancy has remained above the Scottish Borders unit vacancy of 12%. There is a cluster of vacant units around and near Douglas Bridge, the top of Channel Street and the northwest end of the High Street. Much of the remaining vacant units are interspersed throughout the town centre. The opening of the Great Tapestry of Scotland, on the High Street in August 2021, was anticipated to add to the revitalisation of the town centre. The vacancy rate decrease, therefore, is an important indicator figure and monitoring will continue to be undertaken.

With a marginal improvement in retail vacancy rates, the situation remains stable with a degree of positivity. Douglas Bridge, the top of Channel Street and the High Street are still the areas where vacant properties are a challenge. However, an email from the EGT Manager² confirms:

Galashiels has seen almost 30 new enterprises start trading or expanding in the town centre area over the last 18 months. These include new social enterprises who support reducing food waste and tackling food poverty; promoting walking and cycling as active travel; and supporting local artists with affordable, pop-up retail space.

3.1.3 Scottish Economic Bulletin: March 2024

The following points are taken from the Scottish Government's Economic Bulletin published in March 2024³. The purpose of the excerpts is to give broader economic context.

The first estimates of GDP for Q4 2023 show that the Scottish economy contracted in the final quarter of the year by 0.6%, although unlike the UK as a whole, it avoided falling

³ <https://www.gov.scot/publications/scottish-economic-bulletin-march-2024/pages/7/#>

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into a technical recession over the second half of the year after growth of 0.4% in the third quarter.

The Business Insights and Conditions Survey (BICS) for March indicates that businesses' concerns around energy prices (13.4%) and falling demand (12.6%) have largely converged as the two main business concerns at the start of the year. This is followed by inflation of goods and services (11%) and competition with other UK businesses (10.2%).

While all the sentiment sub-indicators have strengthened over the past year, households continue to report on balance that the economy is performing less well than last year (-6.8) and their personal financial security is weaker (-9.4). Looking ahead to the coming year, households expect the economy to improve (8.8) however continue to expect their personal financial security to weaken (-4.2). This is reflected in the spend indicator which remains significantly negative (-21.6) and reflects that households are not currently relaxed about spending money.

The macro environment continues to be less stable than would be desirable at a time when there is investment into town centre regeneration.

3.1.4 The Great Tapestry of Scotland Visitor Numbers

For the financial year 2022/2023, the visitor number for the Great Tapestry of Scotland Visitor Centre, was 20,752⁴ (excluding the café and retail) which is a 14% decrease on the previous financial year.

While the drop in visitor numbers is disappointing, it is reflective of the drop in footfall noted in section 3.1.1. with the cause potentially attributable to the factors noted in section 3.1.3.

3.1.5 Award Wins

Scottish Regeneration Forum (SURF) Awards – Improving Scotland's Places

In 2023, Galashiels was one of three finalists for the Improving Scotland's Places category at the Scottish Regeneration Forum (SURF) Award.

Entries were expected to show the journey that the place has been on, demonstrating progress against the following aspects:

⁴ Email from Graeme McMurdo, Strategic Programme Manager, 6th March 2024

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- Participation
How has the project supported effective participation with the community, public and third sector organisations, and other bodies?
- Resilient Economy
In what ways has the project improved economic opportunities for local people and businesses, and delivered better engagement with private businesses and social enterprises?
- Outcomes for the Community
How has the project achieved social and other benefits for local residents, workers and service users?
- Physical Improvements
How has the project improved the whole place, such as better public spaces, access to public services, transport and digital infrastructure?
- Pride of Place
How has the project improved the image/identity of the place, and enhanced 'pride of place'?

EGT and the work in Galashiels was selected as the winner of the Improving Scotland's Places Award in 2023⁵.

Scotland Loves Local – Creative Town Award 2023

A total of 21 entries were submitted for the Creative Town Award at the national competition hosted by Scotland's Towns Partnership. Entries were open to anyone who could demonstrate initiatives which contribute to the creative vitality or unique identity of a place.

Qualifying projects could involve the following:

- Arts projects improving the public realm (murals, lighting, beautifying vacant spaces etc.)
- Creative and arts-based events and performances
- Heritage-based projects and regeneration
- Initiatives to engage and develop the local creative community

The cumulative work of the Vibrant Gala Plan was considered by the judges, resulting in Galashiels being awarded the title of Creative Town in 2023⁶.

The two award wins in 2023 demonstrate an unbiased appraisal and acknowledgement of the impact of the Vibrant Gala Plan, with the wins coming in the year of BBG 4.

⁵ <https://surf.scot/surf-awards/surf-awards/surf-awards-2023/4257-2/>

⁶ <https://lovelocal.scot/creative-community-award-2023/>

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3.2 Primary Research

As part of the research method, a review of various forms of primary research were carried out. These included:

- Online town survey
- Review of EGT's digital platform data
- Business owner interviews
- Review of social media comments
- Listing of EGT volunteer hours

3.2.1 Online Town Survey

The objectives of the online town survey were:

1. To capture the views of the local community on:
 - a. The time spent in the town
 - b. The purpose of their time in town
 - c. Feelings towards the town
 - d. Awareness of projects within the town
 - e. View of what more could be done in the town
 - f. Thoughts on the future for the town
 - g. The awareness of the town brand
 - h. The feelings towards the town brand
2. To compare the views of the local community with the 2023 survey

3.2.2 Survey Method

The research method used for the town survey was an online survey hosted on the Energise Galashiels Trust SurveyMonkey account. The survey was published using digital channels (email marketing, Facebook post, Facebook paid-ads, Instagram posts and stories, and X posts) in February 2024.

Top Line Survey Statistics

1. 22 questions
2. 926 responses
3. 81% completion rate
4. Average 7-minute completion time

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3.2.3 Survey Results

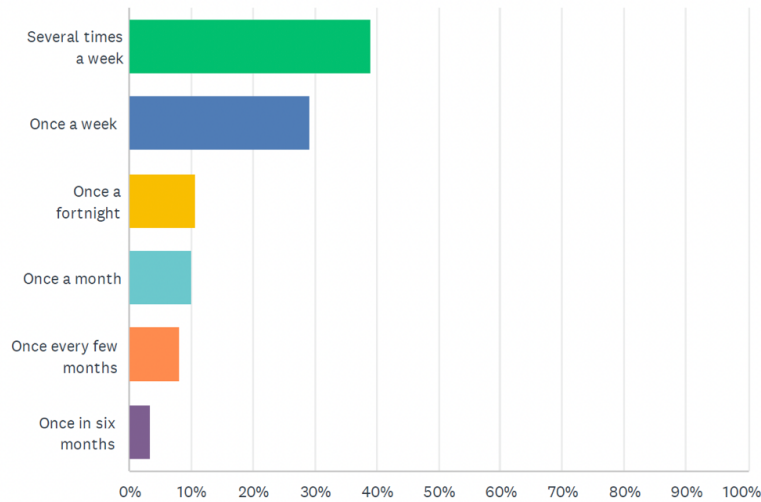
The survey included 22 questions, including screening and demographic data capture questions (appendix 1).

The results of the questions that relate directly to the project are noted below with comments on the comparison to the 2023 survey.

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Q: Over the last six months, how many times have you visited Galashiels town centre?

Answered: 924 Skipped: 2

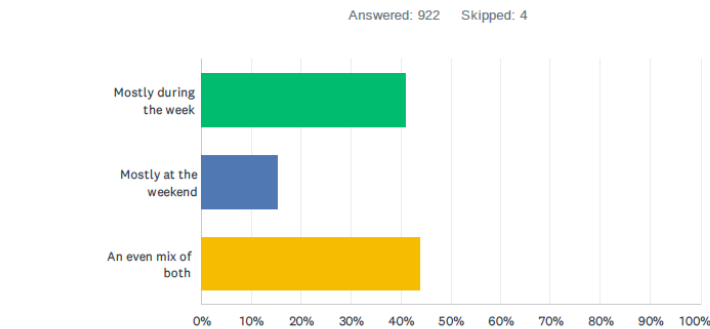


ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Several times a week	38.96%	360
Once a week	29.11%	269
Once a fortnight	10.61%	98
Once a month	9.96%	92
Once every few months	8.01%	74
Once in six months	3.35%	31
TOTAL		924

Two thirds of respondents visit Galashiels at least once a week, with almost 40% being in town multiple times a week. This is on par with the 2023 survey result, suggesting people are still making frequent visits to the town.

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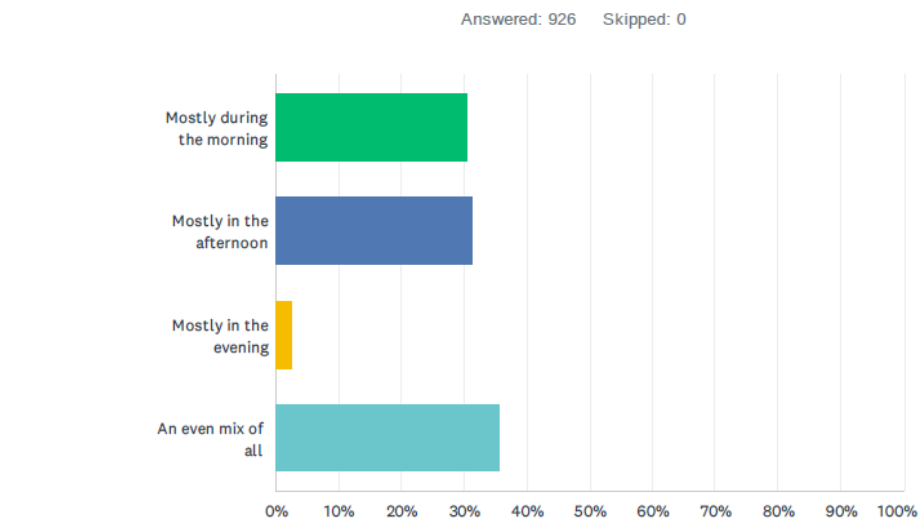
Q: When you spend time in Galashiels town centre, do you visit



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Mostly during the week	40.89% 377
Mostly at the weekend	15.29% 141
An even mix of both	43.82% 404
TOTAL	922

In a change from the 2021 and 2023 surveys, the responses show an almost even spread of people visiting the town mostly during the week and a mix of during the week and at the weekend.

Q: When you spend time in Galashiels town centre, do you visit

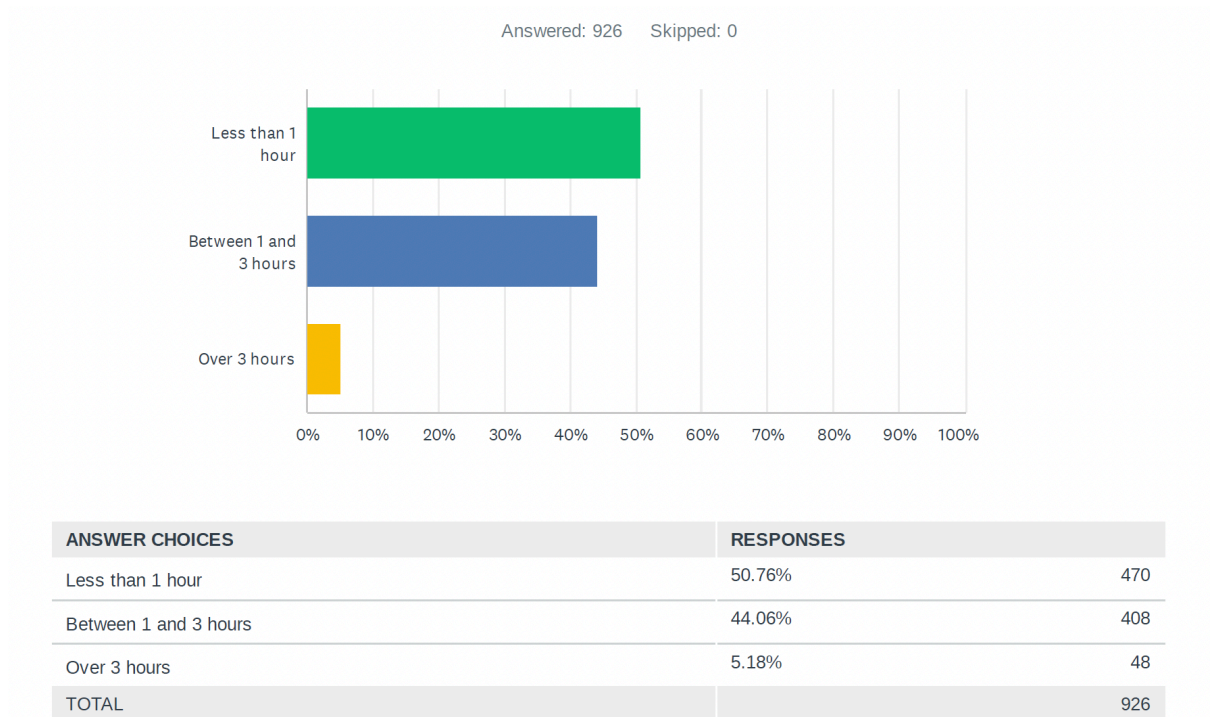


ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Mostly during the morning	30.45% 282
Mostly in the afternoon	31.43% 291
Mostly in the evening	2.59% 24
An even mix of all	35.53% 329
TOTAL	926

Reverting back to the trend noted in the 2021 survey there is a mix of when people spend time in town during the day.

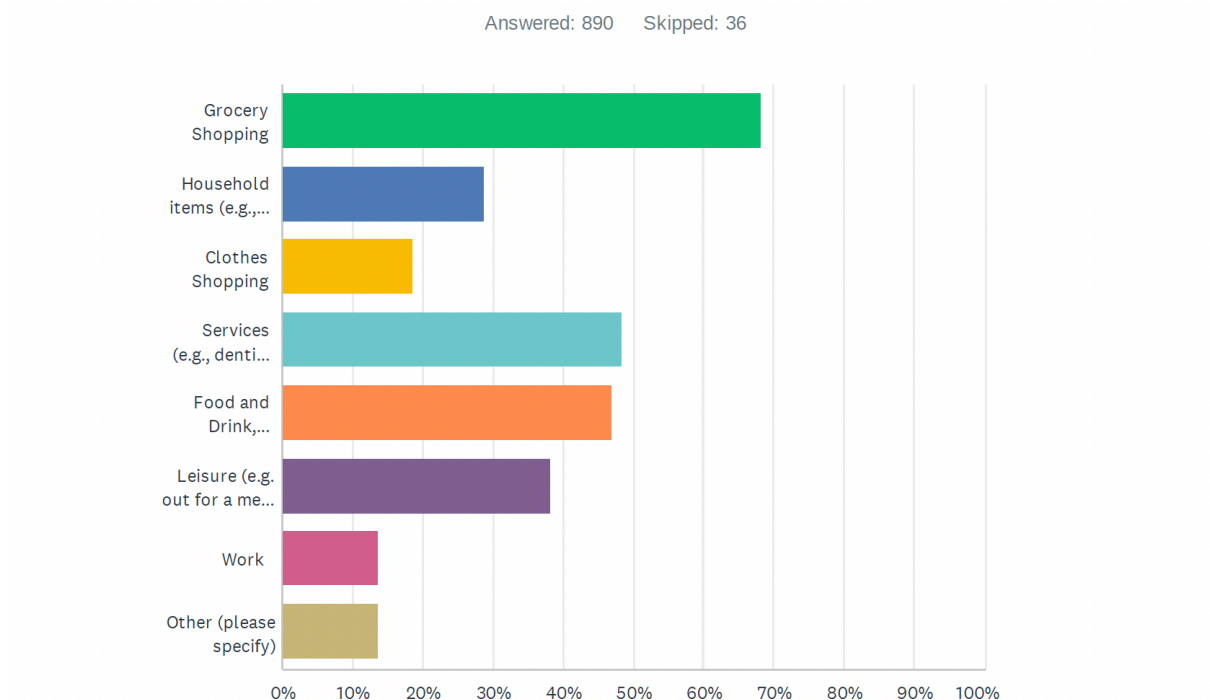
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Q: On average, how long do you spend in Galashiels town centre?



Over 94% of people spend up to 3 hours in Galashiels town centre, and while the spread of results is different than the 2023 survey, which noted 20.22% of respondents spending over 3 hours in town, the result still suggests there is enough in town to engage people.

Q: When you spend time in Galashiels town centre, is it mainly for (please select all that are applicable)

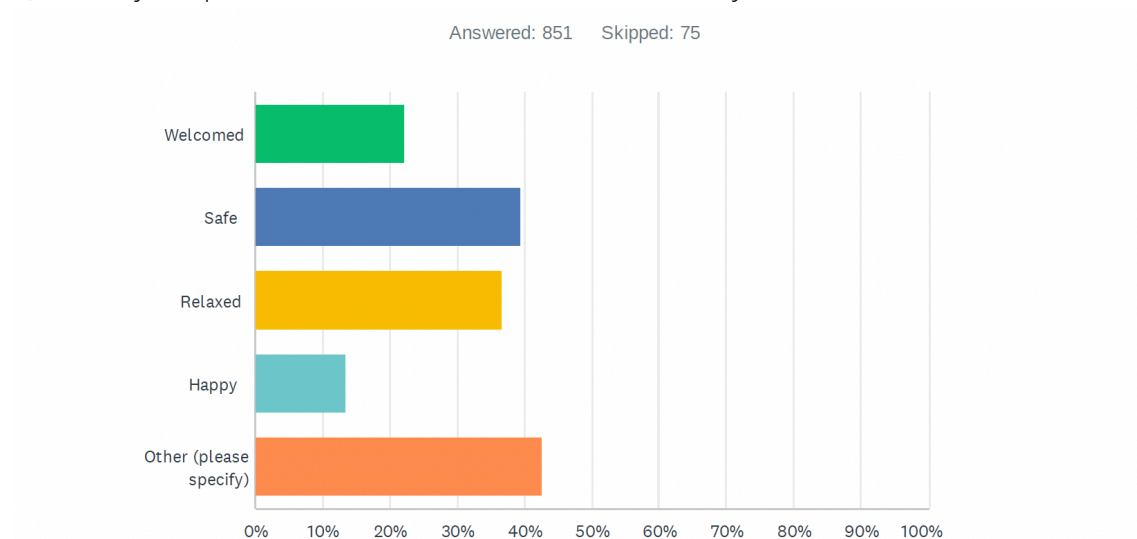


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ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Grocery Shopping	68.20%	607
Household items (e.g., home decorating)	28.76%	256
Clothes Shopping	18.65%	166
Services (e.g., dentist, optician)	48.43%	431
Food and Drink, including take-away	46.97%	418
Leisure (e.g. out for a meal, visit a bar, attend an event)	38.20%	340
Work	13.60%	121
Other (please specify)	13.60%	121
Total Respondents: 890		

As with the previous surveys, there remains a good range of reasons why people visit the town. Grocery shopping remains the top reason for visiting the town, with a notable increase in visiting for food and drink and leisure compared to the 2023 survey.

Q: When you spend time in Galashiels town centre, do you feel...



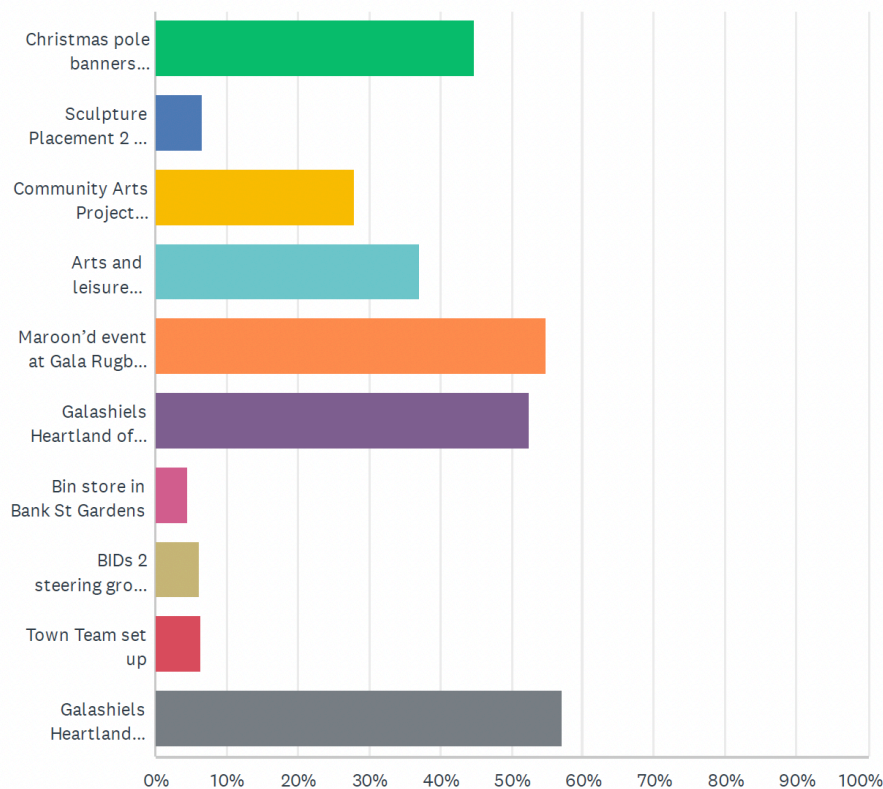
The majority of responses, over 50%, give positive feelings when spending time in Galashiels town centre. However, with the 'Other' category as the single most popular response, a word cloud is used to present the most common words/phrases given. The word cloud suggests that people still experience less than positive feelings when in Galashiels town centre.

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Q: Are you aware of any community regeneration projects in Galashiels town centre?

Answered: 589 Skipped: 337



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ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Christmas pole banners (designs by primary school pupils)	44.82%	264
Sculpture Placement 2 – “King of Kings” on display in town centre on the 2nd December for public consultation. Now displayed in different businesses.	6.62%	39
Community Arts Project (several themed workshops run by Transform Arts over several months)	28.01%	165
Arts and leisure activities at The Heartland Market in March and April 2023	37.01%	218
Maroon'd event at Gala Rugby Club	54.84%	323
Galashiels Heartland of the Borders platform/social media	52.46%	309
Bin store in Bank St Gardens	4.58%	27
BIDs 2 steering group set up	6.28%	37
Town Team set up	6.45%	38
Galashiels Heartland Awards 2024	57.05%	336
Total Respondents: 589		

The awareness of each project is mixed suggesting some were more effectively communicated than others.

Q: What would you like to see offered in Galashiels?



The results of the question yield a mix of positive comments about the work that is being done and comments about more needing done. Overall, answers are more positive than negative and the familiar responses (i.e. ‘more shops’, ‘do something with the empty shops’, ‘cleaner streets’, ‘more events’) obviously still present in the minds of respondents.

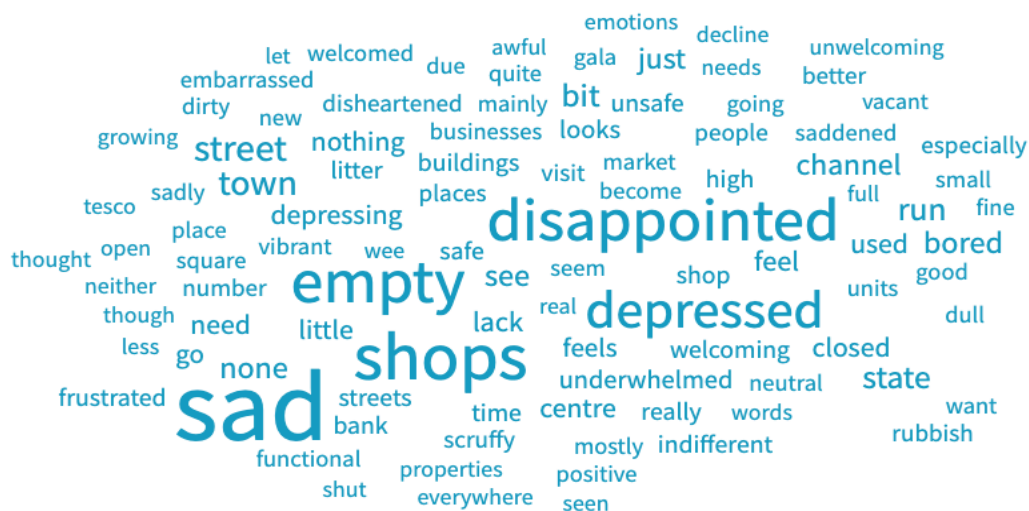
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Q: March 2024 marks the end of the Build a Better Gala project, the four-year South of Scotland and Scottish Borders Council-funded initiative. Over the last four years there have been over forty small projects, programmes, and initiatives delivered within the town centre. Please share your view on the impact of these projects.



The word cloud indicates positive views towards the BBG 4 project.

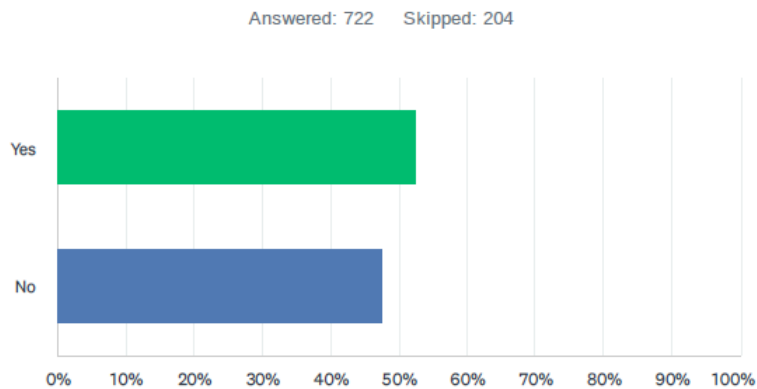
Q: Share your views on the future for Galashiels



The results of the question yield mostly negative comments in relation to the town's future, indicating that there remains work to be done on regeneration.

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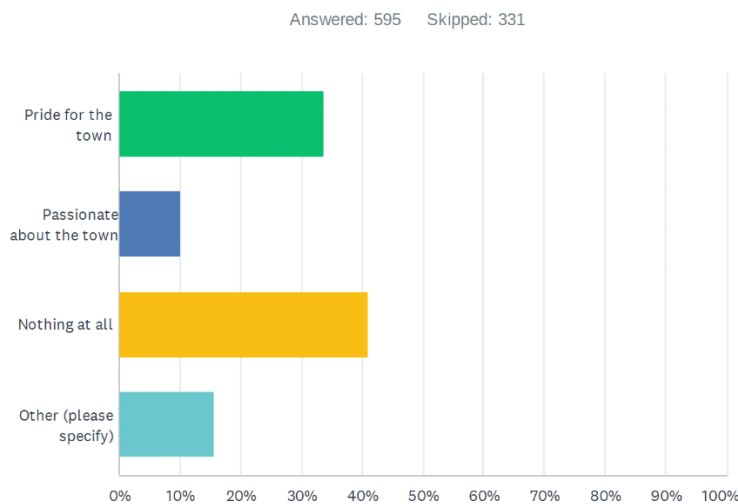
Q: Are you aware of the Galashiels town brand?



ANSWER CHOICES		RESPONSES	
Yes		52.49%	379
No		47.51%	343
TOTAL			722

There has been a drop in the awareness of the town's place brand since 2023.

Q: How do you feel when you see the brand?

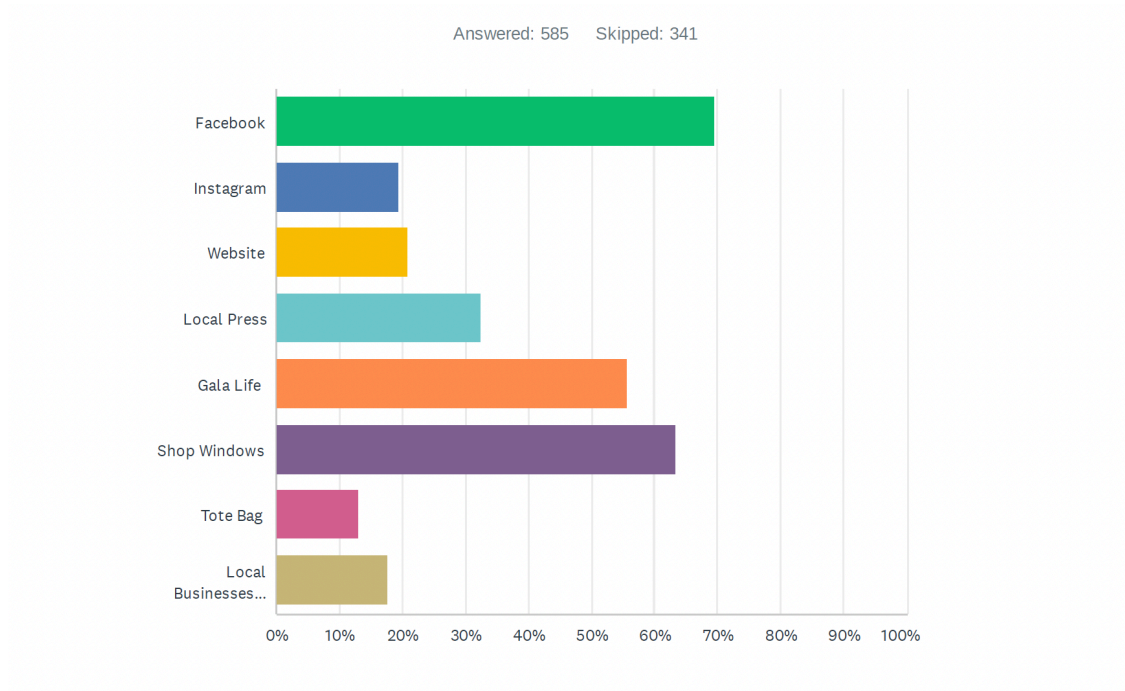


ANSWER CHOICES		RESPONSES	
Pride for the town		33.61%	200
Passionate about the town		10.08%	60
Nothing at all		40.84%	243
Other (please specify)		15.46%	92
TOTAL			595

Overall, respondents are feel positive towards the brand but there is also an increase in the 'Nothing at all' response.

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Q: Can you list all of the places you recall seeing the brand (please select as many as relevant)

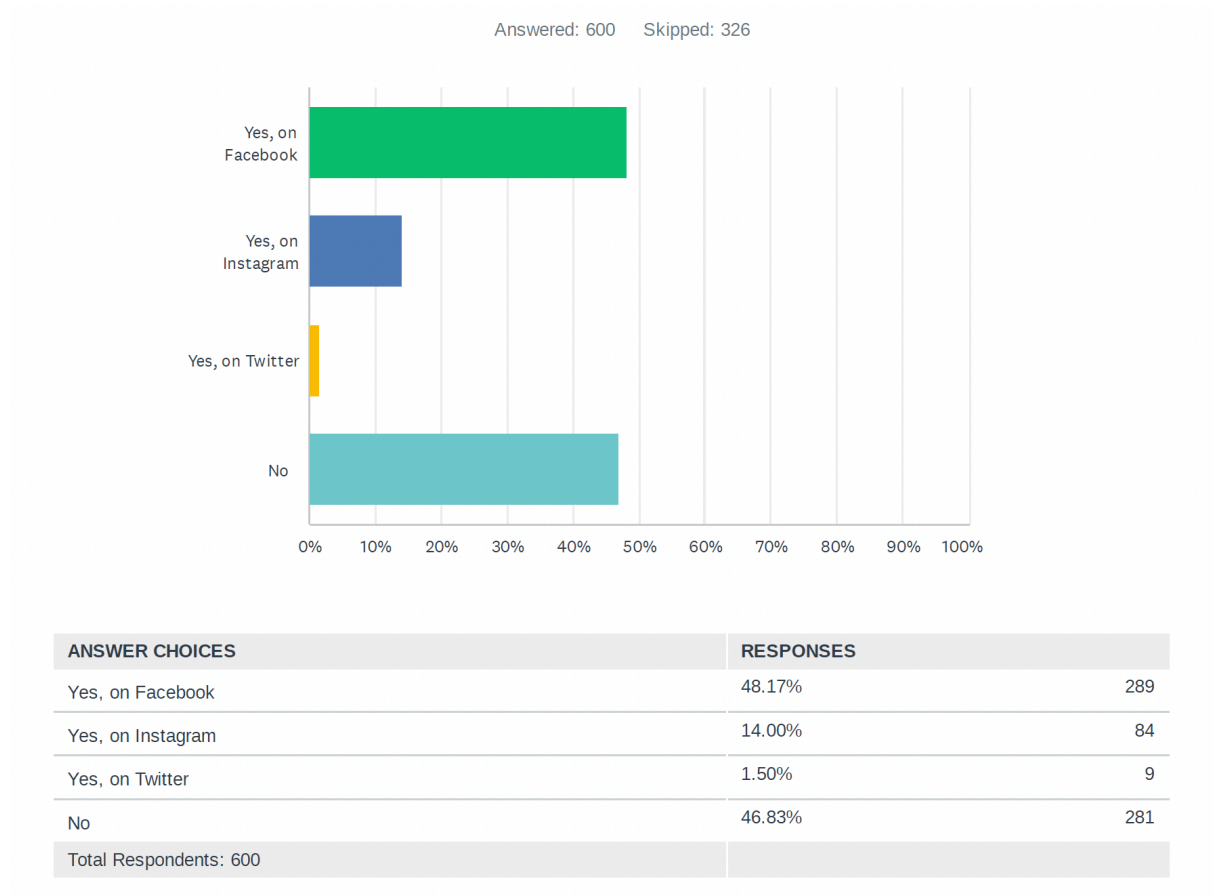


ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Facebook	69.57%	407
Instagram	19.49%	114
Website	20.85%	122
Local Press	32.31%	189
Gala Life	55.56%	325
Shop Windows	63.42%	371
Tote Bag	12.99%	76
Local Businesses Products	17.61%	103
Total Respondents: 585		

People continue to see the brand in a range of media, indicating the efforts to promote the brand is working – with physical brand placement in show windows coming in second top.

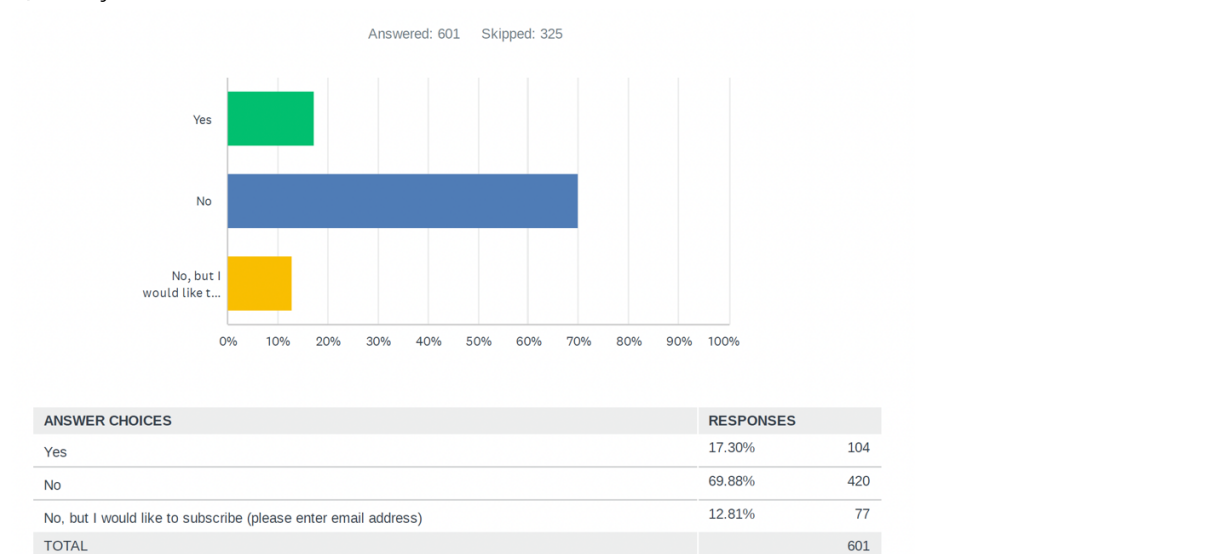
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Q: Do you follow Galashiels Heartland of the Borders on social media?



Almost 50% of respondents do not follow Galashiels Heartland on social media, indicating that there remains opportunity to engage with the people of the town.

Q: Are you subscribed to the Galashiels Heartland of the Borders newsletter?



Almost 70% of respondents are do not currently subscribe to the newsletter at the time of completing the survey. Approximately 5% subscribed through this survey.

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3.3.5 Summary

The survey results indicate a mix of positive and negative results. The work of the BBG 4 project has been acknowledged by the community and is encouraging, however, there remain challenges that are impelling the thoughts on the future for the town.

3.4 Audit of EGT's Digital Platform Data

3.4.1 Method

Analysis of the insights and analytics available for various digital channels used by EGT to communicate with and further develop an online community for Galashiels.

The channels include:

- The town website
- The town Facebook Page
- The town Instagram account
- The town X account
- The town email marketing system

3.4.2 Results

Channel	Engagement*	Comment
Website	Over 30,000 visits, with over 145,000 unique 'event' views (please note an 'event' is a point of interaction with the website)	The website is well used, with the traffic reports indicating a variety of content is viewed by site visitors
Facebook	The Page has over 6,200 followers Total reach of the channel for the year was over 263,000 views	The channel with the strongest growth over the last 12 months with visits up 90%, reactions up 133%, total reach up 153%. Most of the comments relating to the project and other news on the town are made via Facebook
Instagram	1149 followers	Consistently strong engagement in the channel
X	967 followers	X is not the main channel of communication but has been kept active

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Email	With 1149 subscribers, in audience segments including a monthly average open rate of 49%	The newsletter audience has grown over the last 12 months, with a consistently higher than sector-average open rate
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* Not all channel insights provide the same detail

3.4.3 Summary

The evidence suggests there is a very strong digital community in Galashiels. There has been growth across the channels in terms of following or subscription which has transferred into a growth in engagement in terms of open rates, comments, likes and shares.

3.5 Business Owner Interviews

3.5.1 Method

Semi-structured interviews were held with participants from the following sectors:

- Food and Drink
- Service and Repair
- Charity and Community Group
- Hair, Beauty and Care
- Leisure and Entertainment
- Best Retail and Shopping

The interviews were held at McGowan Marketing offices to allow for each participant to speak freely about the BBG project. A topic guide (appendix 2) was used to give a structure, with the opportunity for the conversation to flow.

Interviews were recorded and subsequently transcribed to enable thematic analysis to be carried out. Following the analysis, recordings and transcriptions were destroyed and all comments anonymised.

3.5.2 Results

The following summarises the analysis of the business owner interviews.

Theme One: Understanding of BBG 4 Project

Overall, participants had a high level of awareness of the BBG 4 project; they knew there was a focus on regeneration within the town centre, led by EGT. However, those who could list sub-projects were only able to recall a few:

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- Murals
- Galashiels Heartland Awards
- Galashiels Heartland social media
- The Heartland Market (not part of BBG 4)
- The Property Improvement Grants (not part of BBG 4)

There was less awareness of the other sub-projects, or specifically that sub-projects were supported by the BBG 4 project, e.g. Maroon'd @ Gala.

Comments included:

"There has been great work done in the town and it's made a real difference."

"I know there has been a lot of regeneration work, I'm not sure I could list everything, but I know things have been happening."

"Energise have done a great job! Keep going."

"What we need is someone who is willing and able to take a risk and deal with the empty properties in Channel Street."

Theme two: Engagement and Communication

All participants commented on how they only became aware of the projects after they had been delivered, with a few noting how they would like to have been involved in the decision making around the projects themselves.

"We should come together more as business owners to plan what's best for the town."

"I'm not sure who gets to make the decisions on what to spend the money on, but Channel Street is a mess so I would like to see money spent cleaning this up. Murals only mask the issue."

"It would be good to have an opportunity to be more involved in the decisions made about the work that happens in the town."

Conversation on engagement led to comments around communication. All participants acknowledged there are multiple communications channels offered by EGT.

"I know there's a newsletter so that's on me to read it."

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"I get the emails and always thing I'll go back to read them, but I never get the time. I know there would be an opportunity to be more involved if I had more time."

"Now we have an operations manager, we'll have more time to get involved in things like meetings."

Theme Three: The Impact of the BBG 4 Project

Overall, the participants felt that there have been improvements in the town and that it is visually more appealing, and while they all confirmed business was going well, they were unsure how much of their success could be attributed to the work of BBG 4.

"Yes, there has been a slight increase in footfall into our premises."

"Footfall is down but my business is up because people are engaging with me in different ways, but no matter what I would always want a high street presence in Galashiels."

"We are very busy, but not because people come to see the murals or visit the market, but we need these to help the town."

Theme Four: A Sense of Community and Pride

The participants gave mixed views on the sense of community and pride within Galashiels.

"I think we need to have more of a business community, where we work together more. Why can't we all give a little money and do something together?"

"Yes, I feel there is a community within Galashiels. I am not from the town but have lived here and chose to locate my business here, even though I live in Edinburgh. I like Galashiels."

"We absolutely feel part of the Galashiels community."

Theme Five: Future Outlook

All participants stated they felt positive about the future of their business, with one considering opening another premises in the town. However, there is acknowledgement that work on town centre regeneration needs to continue.

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"I feel positive about the future, even if only tentatively – things are better than last year so we're going in the right direction."

"Oh yeah, we feel okay about the future. Ideally, we'd like to relocate somewhere else in town but that would take investment or funding."

"I would maybe like to open another premises in Galashiels."

"The main thing for the future of the town is dealing with the empty shops in Channel Street. I know there are empty shops everywhere, look at Princes Street. This conversation will be happening in most towns "What do we do about the empty shops?"; I don't know who would be the people to deal with this."

3.5.3 Summary

The interviews with the business owners evidenced that across the sectors there is a general feeling of positivity towards the work of the BBG 4 project, even when their understanding of this is limited to a select few of the sub-projects. Direct impact of the project on business performance was less easy to evidence but all felt the project had played a part in the success of their businesses, as they see this being linked to the success of the town.

The participants also demonstrated a guarded positivity about the future of their business within Galashiels, acknowledging that more could be done, and all indicated an interest in knowing more about regeneration work within the town at an earlier stage but accepted that the practicalities around this are as much their responsibility, in terms of responding to communication, as it is the responsibility of EGT.

3.6 Audit of EGT Volunteer Hours

3.6.1 Method

Gathering of the number of hours spent volunteering for EGT by the committee and membership of the leadership group.

3.6.2 Results

An estimated 1098 hours were spent volunteering for EGT by the committee and members of the leadership group over the BBG 4 project, although it is noted that not all volunteers confirmed their annual total.

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The number of hours was a significant reduction on previous years but reflective of the number of sub-projects delivered over the last 12 months, with time given for the governance and leadership of EGT and direct delivery of some of the sub-projects.

3.6.3 Summary

As with previous years, the role of the volunteer in the delivery of the BBG 4 project has been considerable. Linking this with the comments from the business owner interviews, it is unlikely that a project of the size and scale of BBG 4 could be delivered without this level of (or more) volunteer hours.

3.7 Social Media Engagement and Comments

Social media platforms provide a rich source of insight into the mood and feeling of a community by means of reviewing social conversations and user generated content, such as comments, and they reveal views and feelings about a topic – i.e., Galashiels and goings on within the town.

3.7.1 Objectives

The objective of the research is to assess the mood of the town.

3.7.2 Research Method

Desk research, reviewing the posts and comments across three Galashiels Heartland of the Borders social media channels (Facebook⁷, Instagram⁸ and X⁹)

3.7.3 Review Results

Below are a selection of (unedited) comments posted on Galashiels' social media channels between 1st April 2023 and 25th March 2024.

"Shops not open. When is this shop ever open, been in gala many times but its never open have to travel to Hawick to get my wool. MRS Finlayson"

"Little Art Hub. How exciting"

⁷ <https://www.facebook.com/GalashielsHeartlandoftheBorders/>

⁸ https://www.instagram.com/galashiels_heartland/

⁹ <https://twitter.com/GalaHeartland>

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"Need to fill the shops like the high street used to be now it's just barbers, hairdressers n beauty n charity shops I used to enjoy going down town at weekends when I was little with my mum now u go in a shop n its order online no wonder shops have closed"

"Shame it's not the original market that was set to be there least that was aimed at supporting local traders"

"Local councils should make sure shops in every centre have cheaper rates so they are never left empty. There should also be a farmers market to show support for farmers."

"Get rid of that huge taxi rank in the centre - no need!"

"Was so impressed how the children were so immersed in the various projects. Well none Transform Arts CIC."

"Pity the roads were not in better condition, visited the town last week and it was like driving on a Roman road that needed urgent attention. Disgrace. Bring back the Romans, they knew how to build roads."

"Good job he can't see the state o the town now eh"

"museum for inners!! As its a more popular destination nowadays"

"Beautiful pictures"

"Love Galashiels where I was born and brought up.i have been in Kilmarnock for 50 years but I still love Gala xxx"

"Hard to believe the town of Galashiels is so close to such beautiful woodland"

"SURF Win: Congratulations- very well deserved!"

"I love Gala, it's all about the people. They really are friendly"

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"a great move from East Lothian for us too. The people of Galashiels are lovely."



"I totally agree. Absolutely loved my time there. Well done Gala."

"Good Luck" (15 comments)

"Any events planned this year or event a bigger Christmas tree in Bank Street"

"Congratulations Sara



If anyone can get things moving for Gala then

it's you



"

"Well done Galashiels"

"Fantastic work"

"Loved this shop on my recent visit from Australia" (Tartan Plus Tweed)

"Great local business" (Dalgetty's)

"This one is my favourite" (G mural)

"They look brilliant" (murals)

"How about fixing the pavements" (mural post)

"Shame about the empty shops"

"Go outside the town centre the streets are filthy with weeds growing out of the pavements and half the street lights don't work at night. !!!!!!!!!!!!!!!" (Response to community events)

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"The gardens have looked amazing

. Well done to all involved



"

"The gardens are looking amazing, well done all volunteers. I love Guid Auld Galae"

"Great to see this written down. Inspiring for the current generation, I hope."

3.7.4 Summary

Overall, there is a balanced mix of positive comments relating to the work of the BBG 4 projects, with the negative comments relating more to elements of challenge that are out with the scope of the project – i.e., empty shops.

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4. Conclusion

As with the preceding years, the BBG 4 project key aims were:

- Improve the economic performance of the town centre (EP)
- Enhance community activity and wellbeing (CAW)
- Strengthen the capacity and breadth of the Trust (SCBT)

The broad-ranging and diverse research presented in this report is intended to evidence if positive change has occurred in Galashiels as a result of the BBG 4 project. The qualitative approach allows for a subjective appraisal, linked to the key aims. The assessed impact is rated and noted in table 5, with the rationale for the rating.

Key Aim	Impact	Rationale
EP	Medium	Footfall remains a challenge (including with the GTOS), however business owners all indicated business is good and felt positive about future performance.
CAW	Medium-high	Galashiels has a highly engaged on and off-line community with a pride in the town. Challenges with empty shops, cleanliness and perceptions around safety in some areas of town remain commonly noted issues.
SCBT	Low	The heavy reliance on volunteer hours for the delivery of BBG 4 indicated there has been limited strengthening of the capacity and breadth of the Trust, with the paid resource funded by the BBG 4 project.

Table 5

4.1 Summary

The BBG 4 project aimed to deliver positive change in Galashiels. The research carried out for this report indicated that positive change has occurred within the town.

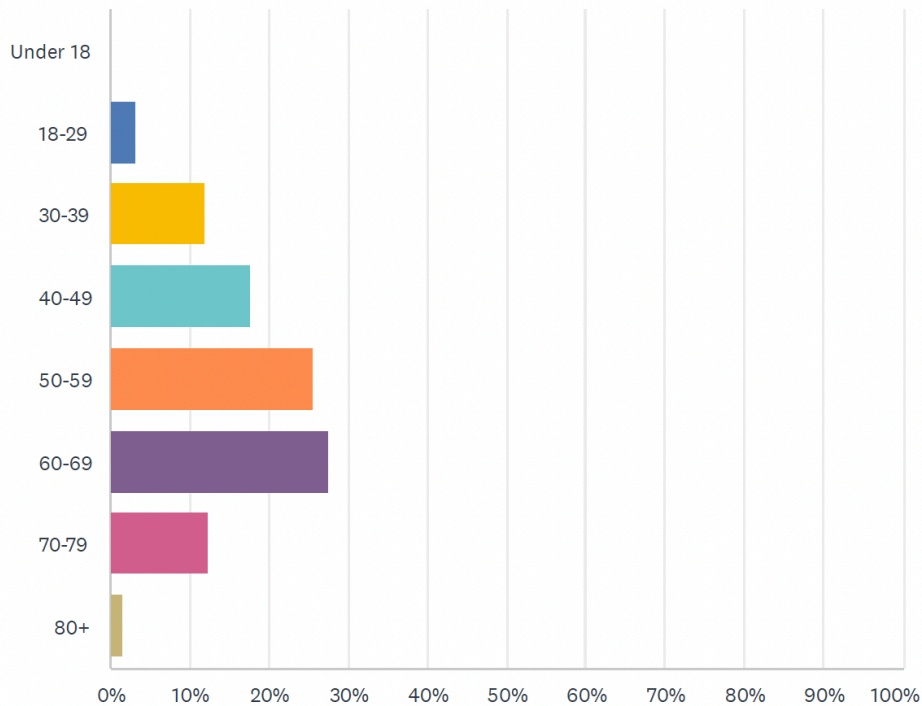
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Appendices

Appendix 1: Town Centre Survey Demographics

Q: Please select which age range you fall within

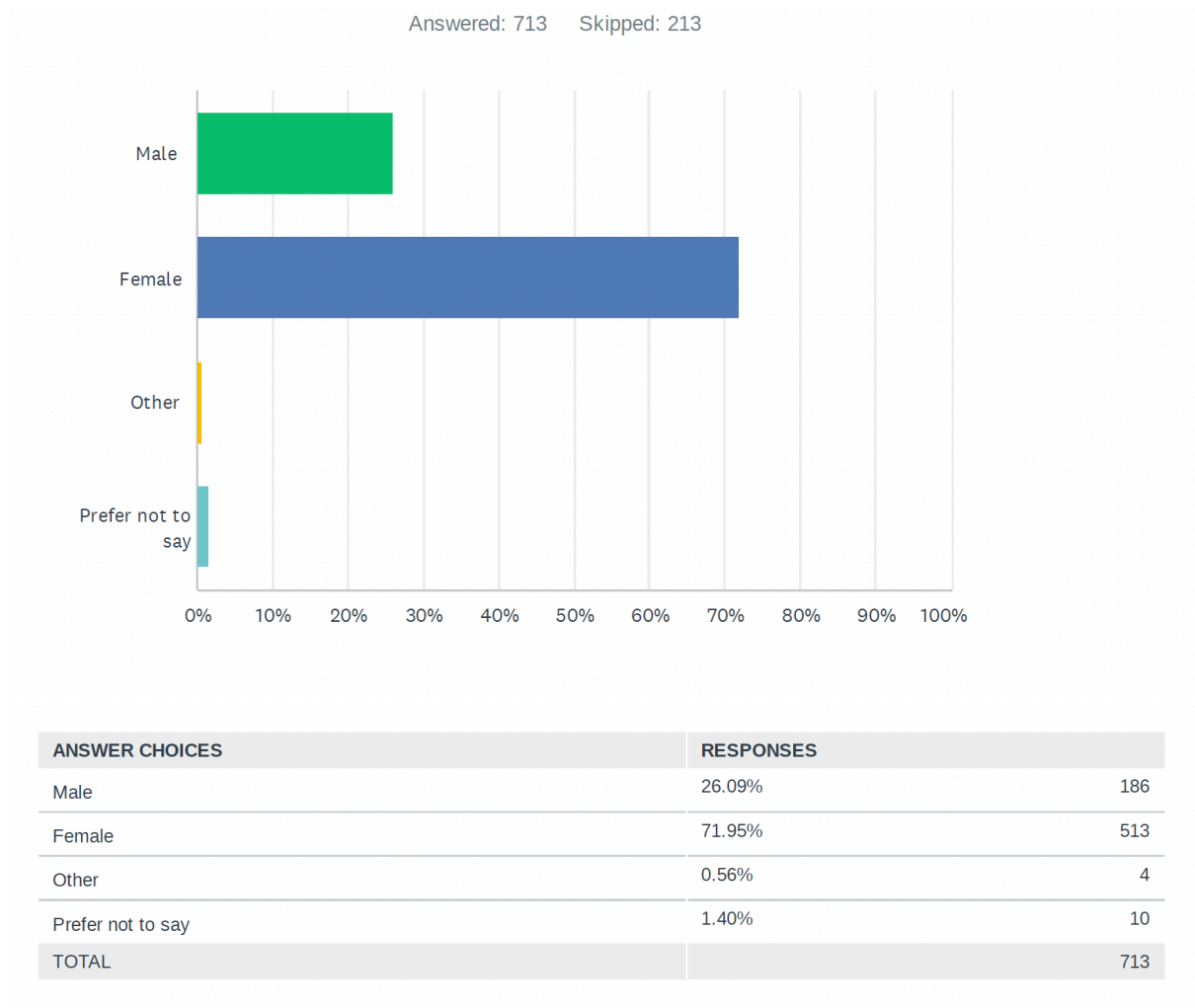
Answered: 711 Skipped: 215



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Under 18	0.28%	2
18-29	3.09%	22
30-39	11.95%	85
40-49	17.72%	126
50-59	25.60%	182
60-69	27.43%	195
70-79	12.38%	88
80+	1.55%	11
TOTAL		711

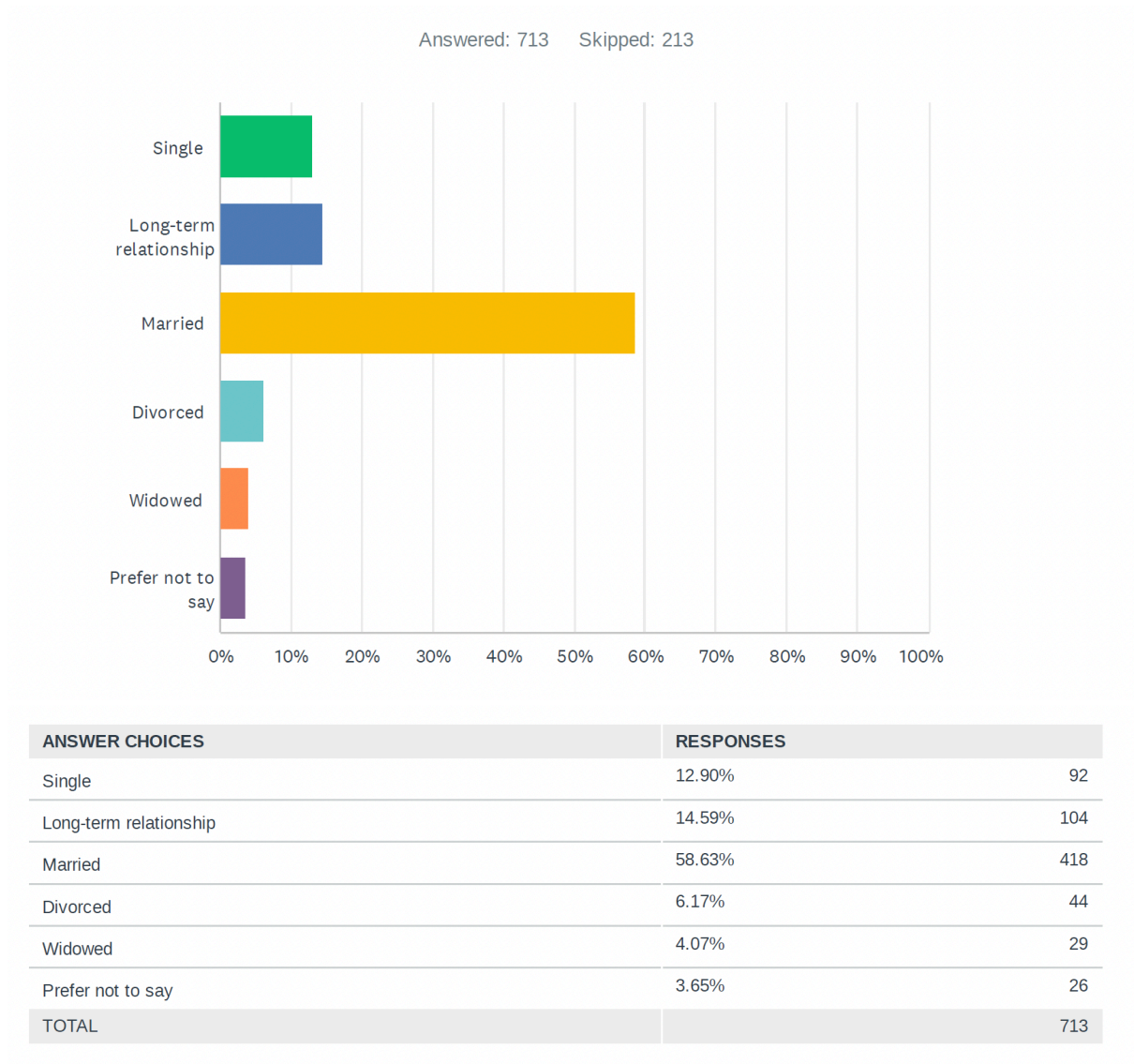
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Q: Please select which gender you identify as



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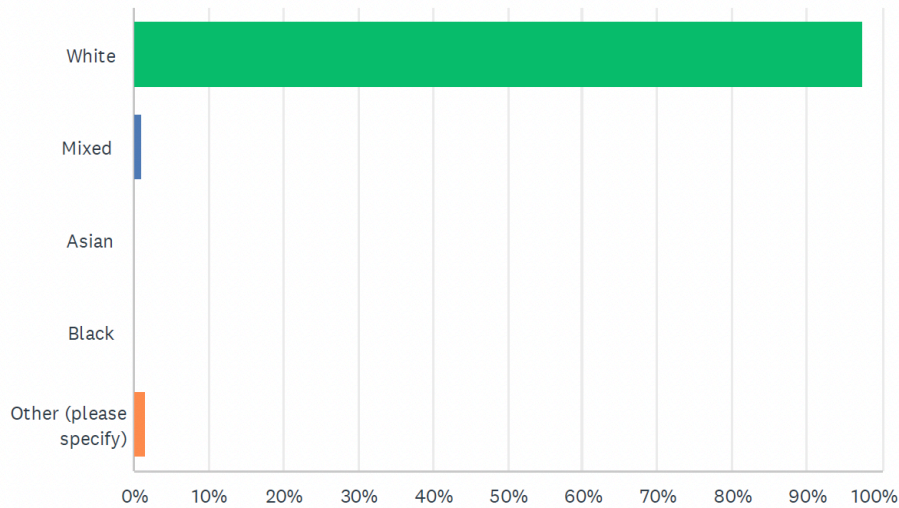
Q: Marital status



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Q: Ethnicity

Answered: 712 Skipped: 214



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
White	97.47%	694
Mixed	0.98%	7
Asian	0.14%	1
Black	0.00%	0
Other (please specify)	1.40%	10
TOTAL		712

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Appendix 2

Energise Galashiels Trust BBG 4 Impact Assessment Business Owner Interview Topic Guide

Introduction:

A brief overview of the Build a Better Gala project.

Clarification of the purpose of the interviews: to understand perceptions, experiences, and potential impacts of the project on local businesses.

Understanding Current Perceptions:

What are your initial thoughts and perceptions of the Build a Better Gala project?

How familiar are you with the goals and objectives of the project?

Have you noticed any changes or developments in the town due to the project?

What do you see as the potential benefits or drawbacks of the project for your business and the local community?

Impact on Business Operations:

How has the Build a Better Gala project affected your day-to-day business operations, if at all?

Have there been any challenges or opportunities arising from the project that have impacted your business?

In what ways do you think the project could further support or enhance the local business environment?

Community Engagement and Collaboration:

To what extent do you feel involved or engaged with the Build a Better Gala project as a business owner?

Have you collaborated with project organizers or other businesses in the area as part of the project?

What suggestions do you have for improving communication and collaboration between businesses and project stakeholders?

Economic and Social Impact:

How do you perceive the project's potential impact on the local economy?

Do you anticipate any changes in customer behaviour or foot traffic as a result of the project?

In what ways do you think the project could contribute to the overall social fabric and sense of community in Galashiels?

Future Outlook and Sustainability:

Looking ahead, what are your hopes or concerns regarding the regeneration activity in Galashiels?

What role do you envision for local businesses in supporting and sustaining the project initiatives?

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Are there any specific areas or aspects of the project that you believe require further attention or investment?

Conclusion:

Summarise discussion

Emphasise the importance of on-going engagement

Thank participant for valuable contribution

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QA Check	
Checked by	
Authorised by	Emily McGowan
Date	31/04/2024
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McGowan Marketing

McGowan Marketing

www.mcgowanmarketing.co.uk

5-7 Bank Street
Galashiels, TD11EN

t: 01896 208 792 | m: 07768 521194



McGowan Marketing (Scotland) Ltd.
Company N° 683164 | VAT N° 365 4380 84