



On behalf of
Skegness Town Council

Community Consultation Report

December 2017

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1.0 Introduction

Natter Limited was commissioned to undertake a public consultation exercise on behalf of Skegness Town Council to help inform the proposed Skegness Town Neighbourhood Plan. The aim of the consultation was to get the views of the residents of Skegness on their attitudes to Skegness and its facilities.

The consultation process started with a teaser campaign on Instagram and Twitter, featuring the hashtag #myskegness. The aim of this initial phase was to raise awareness of the campaign and its hashtag which would later be linked to a Facebook chat group. The teaser campaign involved photographs of Skegness, featuring the #myskegness with a teaser line, such as 'what's it all about' or 'coming soon, in places around the town. This was picked up by local media and residents who began to follow the Instagram and Twitter feeds.

After the initial teaser campaign a Facebook chat group was launched and advertised on both traditional and social media. A targeted advert for the chat group was published on Facebook. This advert was seen by over 7800 people living in Skegness.

Natter initially invited members of the Facebook group to upload photos of their favourite places in Skegness and held a weekly competition for the best photo. Once a sizeable number of members had been reached we invited members to tell us their views of Skegness, encouraging comments and open discussions about the town. Once the conversation was in full flow, we finally asked a number of specific questions, directed by Skegness Council and Community Resource Planning Limited.

Natter also undertook a "pop-up" consultation event. This took place in The Hildreds Shopping Centre and involved members of the team, along with a number of Town Councillors, asking members of the public to complete questionnaires.

The Facebook discussions and answers to the questions have been analysed along with the questionnaires and the conclusions have been set out below.

2.0 Facebook

The Facebook chat group gained around 500 members over the course of the consultation period which ran from 13th September 2017 until 17th November 2017. The answers to the specific questions and the discussions indicate that the membership covers a wide demographic from Skegness and the immediate surrounding area.

On the whole the comments posted were helpful and informed and covered a wide variety of topics.

A number of issues raised fall outside the scope of the Town Council's remit, but are clearly very important to the residents of the town. These included the issue of streetlights being turned off at night, vagrants and drinking on the streets and the general condition of private buildings in the town. The issue of homeless people on the street was also raised on a number of occasions, with many commenting that more needed to be done to help.

There was some reservation expressed about the workings and decisions taken at County, District and Town council level, with members suggesting that more services should be undertaken and controlled at a more local level.

The comments, generally, expressed a great deal of fondness for Skegness, despite its perceived faults and shortcomings.

3.0 Pop-up Consultation

The “pop-up” consultation event, took place in The Hildreds Shopping Centre, on Thursday 2nd November 2017. The event included banners which gave a brief explanation of the Neighbourhood Plan process and asked for the public’s views via a questionnaire. Members of the Natter team, along with Town Councillors, were available to further explain the process and assist with the questionnaires.

Over the course of the day around 60 questionnaires were completed and a further 18 were completed and returned direct to the Town Council.

The questions were similar to those asked on the Facebook group with the opportunity to engage face to face giving the team a good understanding of the public’s feelings towards the various topics.

Once again those questioned seemed generally fond of Skegness and many expressed a real liking for the town. Many viewed the town as generally a good place to live although with the faults and shortcomings observed in most similar towns.

4.0 The Questions and Answers

The questions on Facebook and in the questionnaire were similar although not identical. The final question was asked just on Facebook, all other questions show the answers from both the questionnaire and the Facebook group along with relevant comments from the Facebook discussions.

1. What do you like best about Skegness?

There were many varied responses but by far the greatest number was for the beach, closely followed by the seafront/sea.

The people and the community was another popular response.

Specific areas high on the list of likes were Tower Gardens and Fairy Dell. Fresh air, cleanliness and low crime were all given as likes by a number of respondents. Shopping and entertainment were also high on the list.

2. What do you like least about Skegness?

This question generated the most number of answers.

For ease, the answers have been split into eleven specific groups.

1: Street Maintenance

This group of answers was the greatest but covered just three general complaints. The general state of the roads, mainly the number of potholes, the general state of pavements and the streetlights being turned off at night.

2: Vagrants

The most noted here was “drunks on the street” followed by “beggars” and “druggies”. Homeless people and anti-social behaviour were answers given by far fewer respondents.

3: Shopping

“Too many charity shops” stood out as the dominant answer in this section along with too many arcades.

4: Transport

Parking was the main grievance in this section with complaints about both cost and lack of car parking.

The other points raised were the poor bus service and lack of transport links.

5: Infrastructure

Derelict and scruffy buildings dominated this group of answers along with individual complaints about the sewerage system, disabled access and general lack of investment.

6: Dogs

Dog mess was high on the list of dislikes in Skegness, along with dogs on the beach and the lack of a dog warden. The lack of dog litter bins was also listed.

7: Facilities

The biggest complaint was the lack of facilities all year round with the impression given that most of the entertainment and facilities close over winter.

Specific points were a lack of a multiplex cinema, the size of the swimming pool and the lack, or early closure, of public toilets.

8: Cleanliness

Litter, too much rubbish on the street and lack of street cleaning stood out as the main concern, along rubbish on the beach.

The lack of, and insufficient emptying of, bins was also noted.

9: Caravan Sites

There were seven specific comments about caravans. Four were generally negative about caravans in general whilst the other three complained of the winter closure and the cost of ground rents.

10: Upkeep

Eight comments were made about the upkeep of Skegness with comments such as, "looks run down", "seafront run down", "rough state of town" and general upkeep.

11: Others

These answers covered a wide variety of individual dislikes ranging from, “people moaning about Skegness” and “...moaning about holiday makers” to the selling of public land and the cost of green bins.

3. What should Skegness be like in the future?

General comments were split between those who wanted a more modern up to date Skegness and those who wanted to keep it the same traditional seaside town.

People wanted Skegness to be clean, welcoming, busy and friendly with more traffic free areas with better shops and parking.

There was a support for a more “all year round” resort with more attractions and entertainment.

Other things that people felt Skegness needed in future were a bigger hospital with A&E, more doctors surgeries, a bigger swimming pool, cinema, ice rink and roller rink.

4. Is the right type of housing available for you and your family?

The majority of respondents to this question answered yes with just three answering no. However, when asked what housing was needed there was a clear indication people felt there was a lack of social and low cost housing to rent. A number of respondents felt there was a lack of bungalows whilst others felt Skegness needed more, larger family homes.

On Facebook a poll was undertaken asking which type of housing residents would like to see more of, with the following results,

Affordable housing	45
Starter homes	18
Retirement homes	11
Large family homes	11
Wheelchair accessible homes	8
Flats/ apartments	5
All year round static caravans	1

5. What should be done with the B&Bs if there is no market?

This question pointed out that there are many bed and breakfast hotels for sale at the present time and asked what should be done if there was no market for them.

Many respondents felt that they should stay as B&Bs and that the Council should offer incentives to keep them open and encourage updating.

Of those who offered an alternative use, the majority favoured residential use as family homes, quality flats and apartments. There was clear support for affordable housing as well as council and social housing.

HMOs had limited support with a number of respondents indicating that there should be no more HMOs or bedsits.

Others suggested homeless shelters, a hotel training establishment, a youth hostel and self-catering holiday accommodation.

6. How easy is it to get about? What transport do you use?

Most respondents indicated the use of either buses or car with fewer stating train, walk and one respondent was a cyclist.

Those using a car found it generally easy, especially out of season, with congestion presenting problems during peak holiday times. One respondent suggested a need for a park and ride.

Bus travellers were less happy, pointing out problems with lack of busses to certain destinations, bus services finishing too early, and no services on Sundays or bank holidays. However, there were positive comments about the services to Boston and Lincoln.

There were a small number of comments made about train services. Two respondents felt the service was good or not too bad, and three pointed out the poor service to Sutton on Sea, the late start to services on Sunday, and the lack of carriages at busy times.

7. What is parking like in the town?

The responses to this question were mixed.

A small number of people felt that the parking offer in Skegness was good, not an issue, quite good or no problem. However the majority of respondents brought up a series of issues.

A number of people stated that the parking offer was “rubbish”, “dreadful”, “terrible” and “bad” and many felt what was available was too expensive.

Many people responded that Skegness needed more car parking, with some suggesting a multi storey or park and ride.

Others suggested that parking in the winter was fine but during the summer months was difficult and expensive. There was some support for a scheme of resident’s permits during the summer months being introduced.

8. Do you use the parks and green spaces in Skegness? What would you change about them?

Only a small number of people indicated that they didn’t use one or more of the parks or green spaces in Skegness.

The most popular appears to be Tower Gardens, with Fairy Dell also mentioned.

Many people indicated that the parks and gardens should be left as they are, pointing out that they were well maintained and clean.

Those that felt something needed changing wanted the Pavilion refurbished or redeveloped, with suggestions including a café and a museum.

Others wanted to see more maintenance and cleaning, with some planting at Tower Gardens.

There was some concern about the number of vagrants in these area and damage to play equipment by older children and youths.

People would like to see more public toilets, seating and benches with picnic tables, and more use of the bandstand.

Other suggestions included a big play park, a country park and for more outside display areas.

9. Do the shops and services in Skegness meet your needs?

Although more people answered a direct yes when answering the specific question, there were many things people would like to see in Skegness.

A small number of people answered, “shops are ok”, “shops are decent” and “happy with shops”, whilst many more suggested there were “too many charity shops” and “too many chip shops”.

Others wanted to see “more variety”, “better clothes shops for adults” and children and more “big name stores”.

Many people named specific brands that they would like to see in Skegness. The most popular of these, by some way, was Primark with Next, Asda and Matalan also being named.

There was some interest in seeing more specialist independent stores including a fishmonger, and a suggestion that a weekly farmers market would be good for the town.

When talking about services, as well as improved public transport, the hospital and number of doctors were cited as things in need of improvement.

There were a number of suggestions for major leisure facilities including, cinema, swimming pool, ice rink, roller park and many conversations lamenting the loss of Jump Warriors.

10. Is Tourism in Skegness well planned and promoted?

Again the majority of people answered yes or it’s ok. However, the corresponding comments had many criticisms and suggestions.

Of the positives, good posters, good events and good organisation were all mentioned.

The negatives included the need for more local and national promotion, more events, promotion being outdated and the tourism website being out of date.

There was a suggestion that Skegness needed a re-brand and new ideas.

There was also criticism of the look of the Christmas Market and the lack of resources from both District and Town Councils.

11. Do parts of the town need redevelopment? Where would you like to see redeveloped most?

Only one person answered no to this question.

Of the specific areas mentioned as being in need of redevelopment, those most mentioned were Roman Bank, Kwik Save and Lumley Road.

On Roman Bank two sites stood out, the old church and the Wiltex Building.

A number of people suggested that the station end of Lumley Road should be a better “gateway” and the road itself should be pedestrianised.

Other areas suggested include the seafront, North Parade, Grosvenor Road, the bowling green and the sweet factory.

More general comments were that there are too many derelict plots and scruffy buildings that need cleaning and a requirement for generally tidying up. It was also suggested that the roads and traffic flow need improving.

12. What are the most important considerations for new development in Skegness?

This question brought a wide variation of responses with no single topic standing out.

Housing, people’s views and all year round offerings were all mentioned along with infrastructure such as car parks, doctors and sewerage. There was also concern for local, year round, employment.

13. What should new development focus on?

There was strong support in the answers to this question for development that encouraged employment, particularly all year round and other than tourism, although “tourism” was also given as an answer by a number of respondents.

All year round entertainment was again a popular response with suggestions of a cinema, ice rink and leisure centre and the desire for more focus on local people.

Retail was mentioned with a suggestion for a retail park.

14. What business facilities are missing from the town?

This question received very few responses.

The responses which were received indicated a feeling that rents were too high, property was too expensive and town centre shops were mostly too small. It was also said that the town needed more small units suitable for craft type shops.

15. Which buildings, open spaces or views should be protected?

This question was only asked on Facebook.

The most popular answer was Fairy Dell along with Pier Fields, Waterway, the clock tower and the boating lake.

Others mentioned were the bowling green, the bandstand and the pavilion as well as the pier, Tower Gardens and the beach.

More general references were Victorian seaside features, the parks and the open spaces.

5.0 Conclusions

The consultation work carried out by Natter Limited has received strong support from the local community and produced informative and constructive results.

All areas of the community appear to have been represented, with the exception of the business community. The question relating to businesses within Skegness received just six responses and it is felt that further work will need to be undertaken directly targeting business owners within the town.

Summary of key issues arising from the responses

Positives

- Recreational spaces (beach, beach front and green spaces) are highly valued
- Retail offer is good
- Leisure and Entertainment facilities are valued
- Bus services are good

Negatives

- Poor image of town due to run down buildings and anti-social behaviour
- Accessibility is poor for people with impaired mobility
- Traffic dominates the town in the summer
- Lack of good, reasonably priced parking facilities
- Lack of good quality entertainment/leisure facilities
- Perception that there are too many caravan parks
- Perception that there are too many HMOs
- Train services are not frequent and have limited destinations

Aspirations for the Future of Skegness

The following is a summary of the key areas of change favoured by respondents:

- A stronger local economy
- Year round employment opportunities
- Well-designed buildings and public realm/open spaces
- More traffic free areas

- Better health facilities
- More affordable homes and starter homes
- More accessible/adaptable homes
- More retirement housing
- Conversion of B&Bs to affordable homes if there is a lack of demand
- More Further Education facilities
- Improvements to rail services - increased frequency and more destinations
- A new Park and Ride facility
- Protection of local heritage assets
- Better quality leisure and entertainment facilities
- A greater mix of retail uses
- A new farmers market
- Redevelopment of Roman Bank
- Redevelopment Lumley Road
- Redevelopment of key gateway areas
- A restriction on the number of HMOs

Our thanks go to all those who participated. The information gathered will be used to inform the Vision and Policies in the Neighbourhood Plan for Skegness.