

Business and Employment Survey 2020

February/March 2020

RESPONSES

168 paper copies were distributed, by hand or post, to businesses operating within the Forest Edge South NDP area and including Parkend, Yorkley, Pillowell, Whitecroft, Viney Hill and Oldcroft.

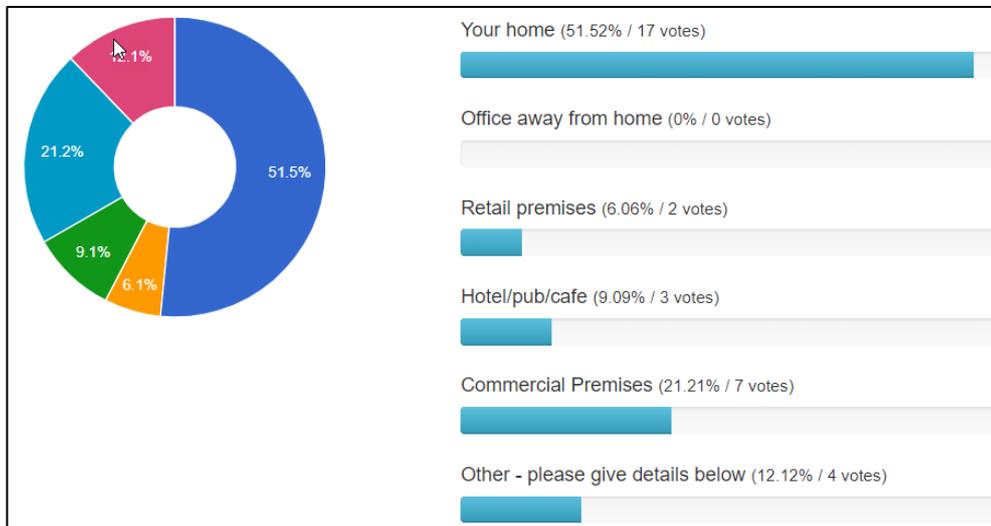
32 completed surveys were received by the cut-off date March 9th 2020

RESULTS

BUSINESS

Types of business

- accountancy/book-keeping
- architects
- building contractors
- churches
- commercial fit out and refurbishment
- consultancy and management consultancy
- cycle centres
- education – schools and music teaching
- energy and building services
- flooring
- graphic and web design
- hotel and holiday accommodation
- public houses/restaurants
- repairing garage and MOT station
- retail outlets
- takeaways
- tourism and leisure attractions
- transportation
- wellbeing, dance and health

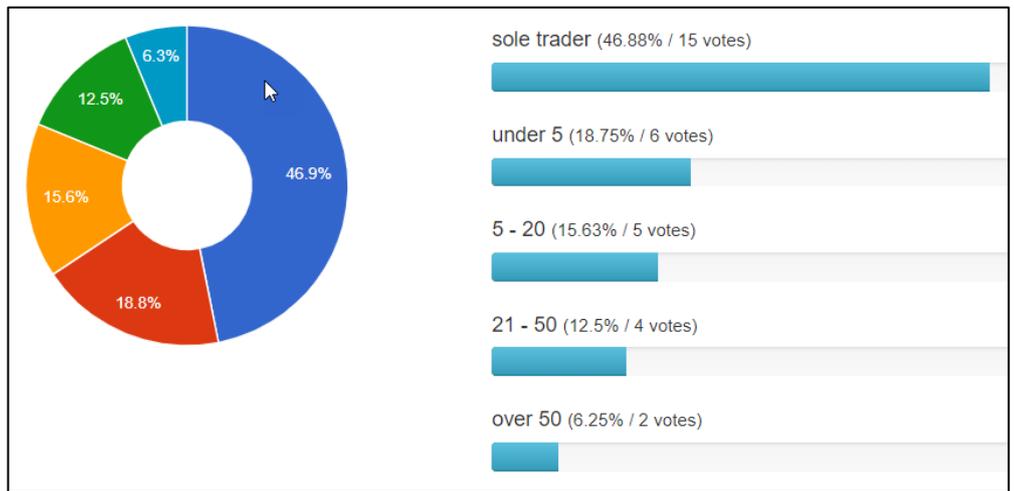


Where is your business carried out from?

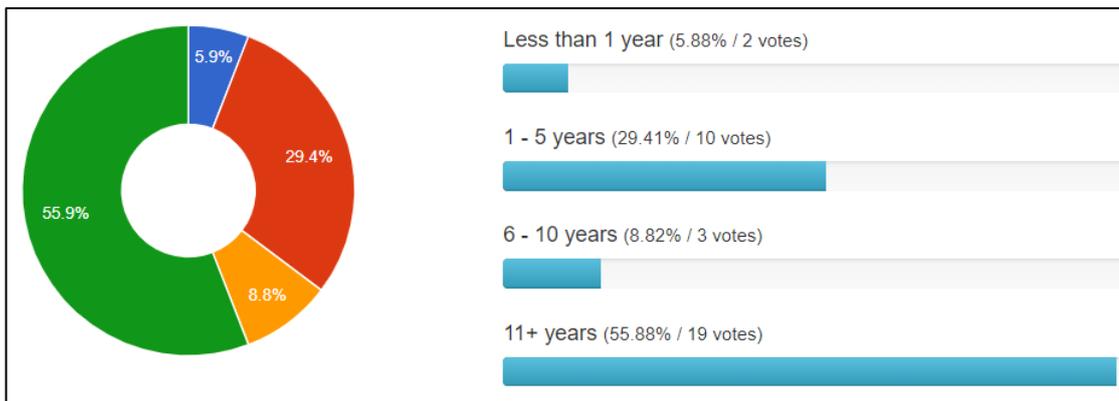
Comments

- Church premises
- School
- From the Hotel
- Home and 2 churches plus cathedral office in Gloucester
- Commercial premises & village rooms
- Not sure how to answer, I don't live at the premises, it is a holiday cottage
- Also office away from home and retail premises
- With frequent trips to various client sites

How many people do you employ?



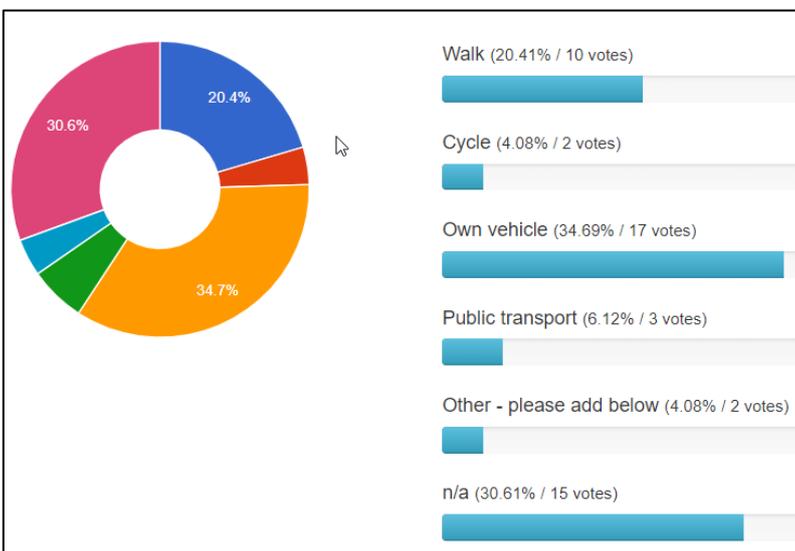
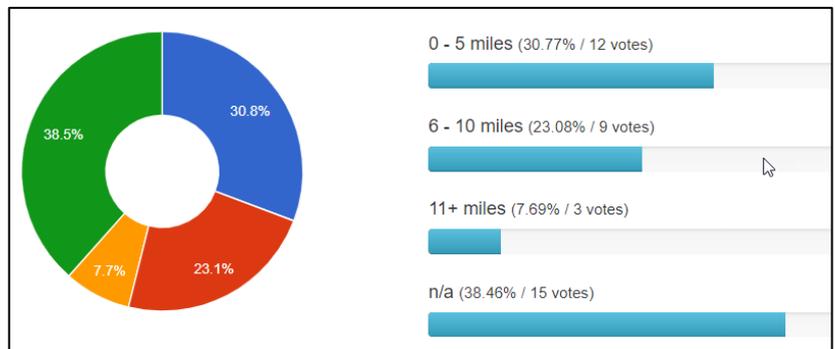
How long have you operated in this area?



How far do your employees travel to work?

Interpretation issue

As many people work from home some chose to enter 1 - 5 miles or n/a.



How do your employees get to work? (multiple answers given)

Other comments

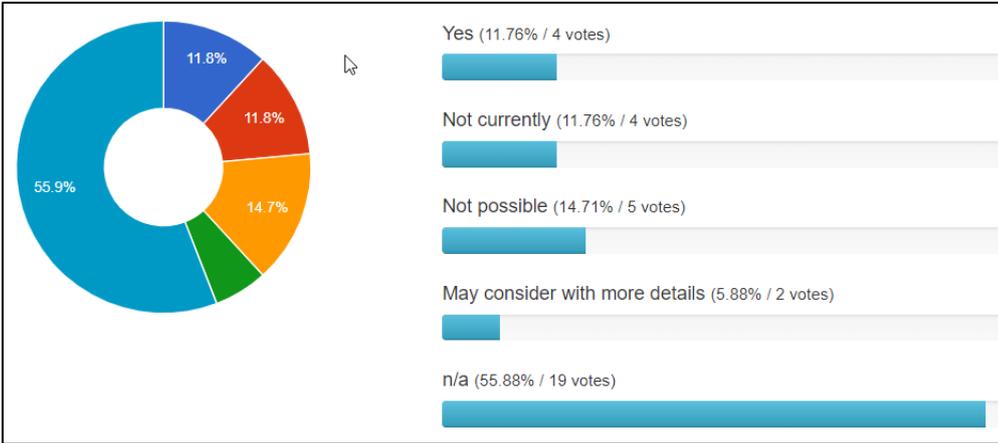
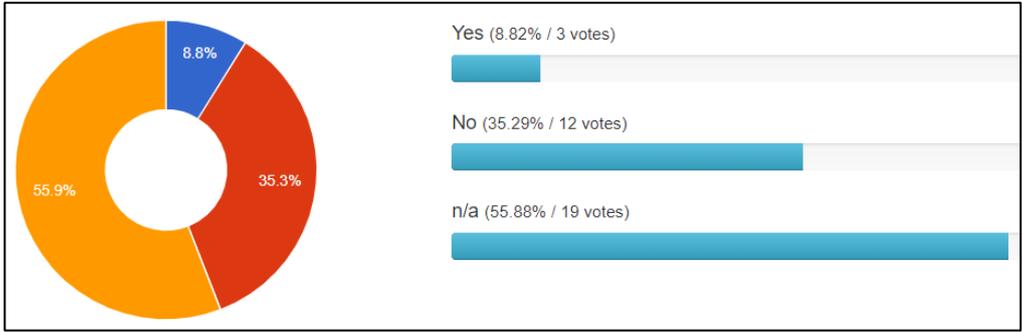
- Use train for most meetings at client sites
- Car shares (unknown number of people)
- Taxi
- I would LOVE to cycle from Lydney

Interpretation issue

One business specified taxi as they are in an area very poorly served by public transport. It is unknown how many people this represented and whether it was for late shift staff etc.

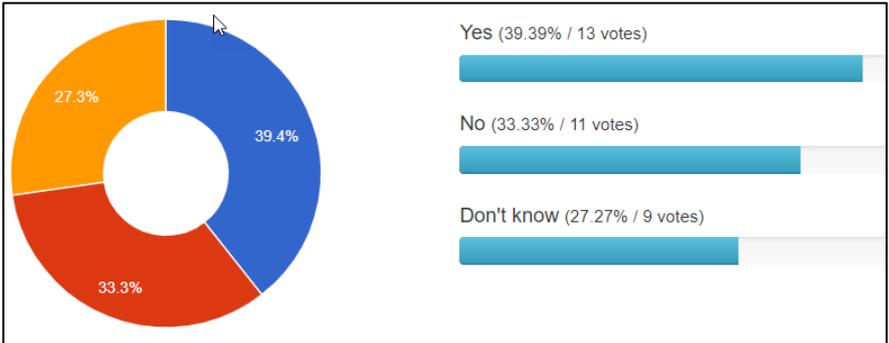
ADDRESSING CLIMATE EMERGENCY

Do you offer the 'Cycle to Work' scheme?
 (<https://www.cyclescheme.co.uk>)



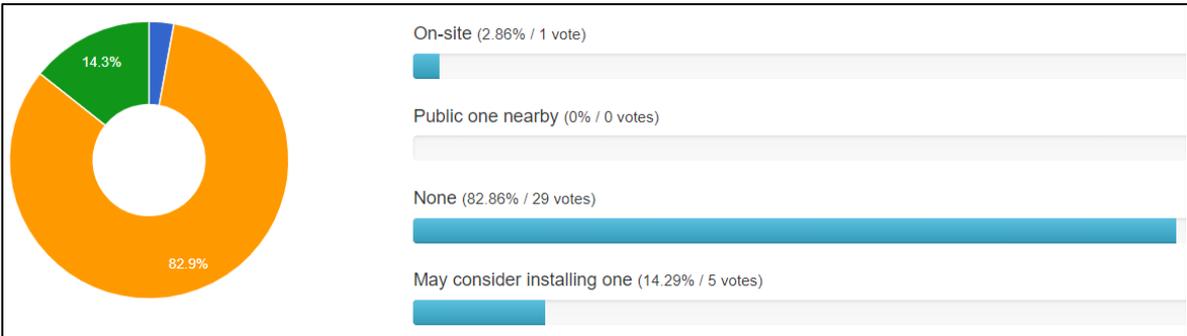
Do you offer changing / showering facilities if your employees choose to walk or cycle to work?

Would the planned Parkend to Lydney multi-use track benefit your business and/or staff?



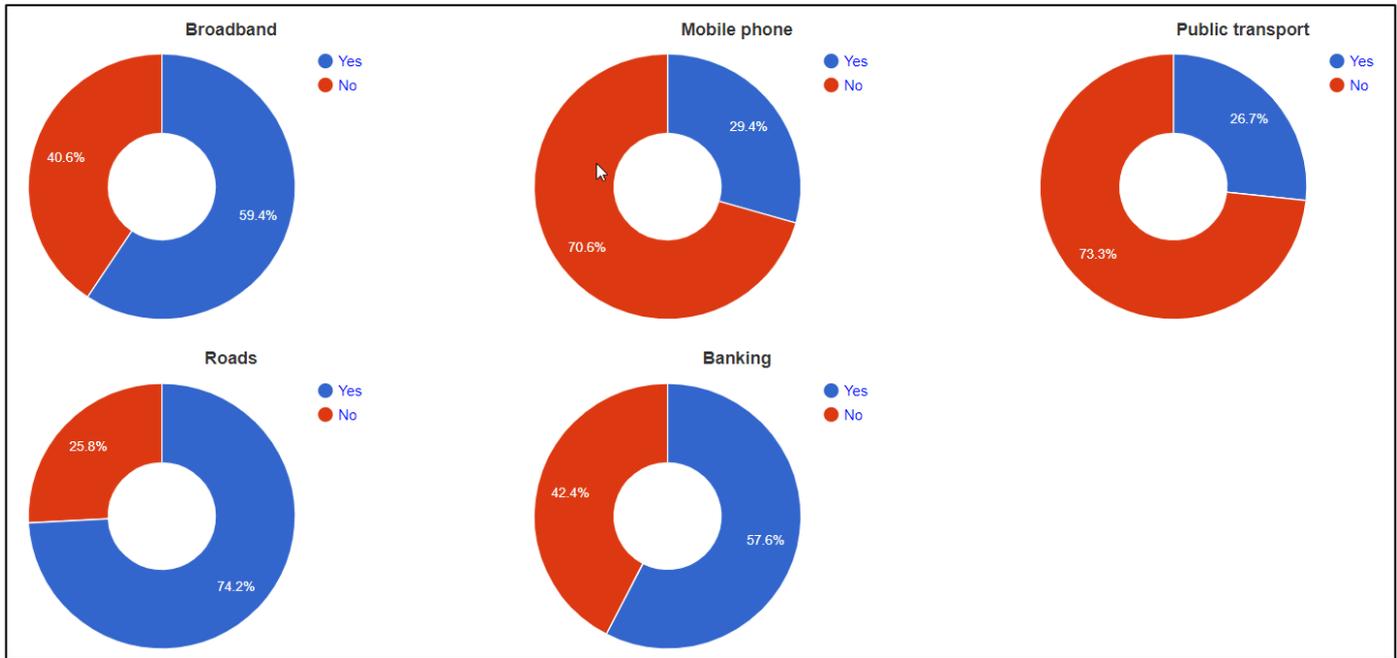
COMMENTS

- Would use for train travel when working away
- Depends on the route finally chosen and what the resulting access to Norchard for those using the track would be.
- For cycling to/from Lydney Station
- Currently don't employ anyone from Lydney
- It would make it a lot safer for cyclists and pedestrians and other road users. It would also mean that if my employees chose to cycle to work they could do so safely.
- Yes - creates a safe cycle route from the train station to access the forest.
- Cyclists rent out my cottage and would use the track
- Huge benefit, it will attract more customers and mean I can travel to work by bike
- Guests could walk or cycle to Lydney safely and visit Bathurst Pool etc.



Do you have any access to any electric vehicle charging points?

Are the following public services / infrastructure in the local area adequate for your business?



COMMENTS

- Absent regular buses or cycle lane, tend to have to drive to station poor travel to and from Bristol and London out of main working day makes evening events difficult to attend. Very high peak hour prices to London in particular, makes travel on day near-prohibitive
- Poor coverage adversely affects communication for customers and for staff, particularly aggravating for pre-bookings where the booker is trying to show on-line verification
- No phone signal is ridiculous in 2020 and a constant source of annoyance to customers
- Train times are quite erratic - holes in timetable mean can't make full use of main line services at Gloucester and Newport (NB hope to resolve broadband issue with supplier - video conference not currently workable)
- Guests without their own transport unlikely to come.
- Slow and erratic broadband makes all online reporting difficult - needed for many insurance companies. Also using online practice management software including diary. Patients unable to attend by public transport - may use Dial-a-ride or voluntary car service.
- Yes, it wastes time, having poor mobile signal and slow broadband.
- We have to travel to Chepstow to use our bank
- Inadequate parking facilities outside church prevents easy access
- We have to use banks in Chepstow, Monmouth or Ross on Wye
- No signal in Forest. In emergency situations, Instructors have to find signal on phone to call emergency services or find radio signal to then call the cabin who then alert emergency services. Public transport not frequent enough to Mallards Pike. Multiple changes needed from certain villages in Forest.
- No mobile signal in Parkend. Only 1 bank in Lydney and Coleford. Public transport limited and expensive. Roads are a disgrace - loads of potholes sunken drain covers and broken drain covers.
- 1. Internet is not fibre to the property 2. Mobile phone signal Parkend is non-existent! 3. Roads are dreadful, Public transport limited
- Broadband is flaky and slow speed. Mobile phone - no signal whatsoever. Public transport almost non-existent.
- Hugely - the broadband really limits what we can do on site but meaning we often have to do marketing from home.
- Not able to contact clients using a mobile phone, clients not able to get to my office using public transport. Not enough local banks available.

- Very limited bus service. Make it difficult to employ people without their own vehicle outside the village. Banking is 3 miles away, so no cash machine is available within 3 miles for my customers to withdraw cash.
- Broadband - despite supposedly being high speed, it drops quite significantly during the late afternoon. If I am undertaking Skype calls or mobile calls, that affects the quality of the call connection Mobile Signal - we have no mobile signal. I have to use an EE signal booster box to actually get one and that is reliant on my broadband. If we have a power cut I cannot use my mobile phone. Public transport - poor bus connections, hit and miss train connections. I have had to wait 1.5hrs for connections to Lydney from Gloucester before and this is unacceptable. Roads - full of potholes and the A48 to Chepstow and Gloucester has now reached capacity. Commuting is now a complete nightmare. Banking - banks have pulled out of Coleford and Cinderford, my bank has gone from Monmouth now and the nearest business branch is Hereford!
- A48 traffic to Gloucester causes issues. Poor mobile signal is infuriating
- Internet is slow and mobile phone signal is poor
- Poor, slow Broadband and mobile signal. (Complained about this for years) Used to have excellent bus service allowing staff to use it but now service has been drastically reduced making public transport impossible.
- No mobile signal at property affects business adversely. Guests are sometimes unhappy they receive no mobile signal. Guests like to be contactable especially in an emergency. I have had complaints my broadband often drops out and is extremely slow even though paying for fibre to receive better service. Guests sometimes arrive by train to Lydney but have difficulty reaching the accommodation by public transport. My nearest bank is now 25miles away since the local branch of Santander was closed.
- Can't help my students to find the way to my classes when teaching at Parkend Memorial Hall or Newland Village room
- Public transport is limited. Mobile phone service is nil.
- Pot holes around Parkend and general street scene around Hughes Terrace puts off guests from booking/re booking. Many guests hope to travel by bus and train but this isn't often possible. Lack of phone signal is a real off putter for our guests.
- Mobile phone - doesn't affect me. I choose not to use them except in emergency. Guests do not mind. Roads - I want to cycle from Lydney but the road is too dangerous meaning I have to travel by car thus increasing traffic.
- Poor Signal for both broadband & Mobile, Public transport it bad - no bus services regular.
- No mobile signal in Parkend Very limited bus service esp. Parkend to Lydney and non on Sunday. The only bank now is Lloyds in Lydney. The Post Office in Parkend does free cash withdrawals but not deposits for our bank. We have to go to Ross-on-Wye, Monmouth or Gloucester.

Do you have any plans to change your business?

- Tempted to move to a location better served by public transport, in particular, rail/bus to major centres
- YES - extending the line north from Parkend through Cannop Vale to Beechenhurst and, as a precursor, developing Whitecroft Station, including reinstating the passing loop. The former will be subject to regulatory approval and is conditional on being able to re-instate the Fancy Road (Travellers' Rest) level crossing. The improvements proposed for Whitecroft will allow greater flexibility in running services and, in particular, will allow quicker turnarounds at Parkend so that a train does not have to stand waiting until the second train arrives there.
- No changes planned (15 responses)
- Retire in 5-10 years
- Not fundamentally, but the business has been constantly growing
- New product at Beechenhurst - Adventure+
- No - Possibly electric car charging point but transformer along Folly Road is not capable of taking this without upgrade at cost to owner!! (Discussed with MEB April 2019)
- Always looking to increase and expand business and services offered. Recently added large new Function/wedding suite.
- Maybe convert another building into another holiday cottage

OTHER COMMENTS

- Would greatly appreciate better public transport connectivity with Bristol. a regular bus through the forest (Cinderford-Coleford-Lydney-Chepstow-Bristol would make sense in theory, but only if the M4 & M32 had bus lanes
- The Finance Director notes that the local banking facilities are as good as can be expected with branch closures. Banking is done weekly via Post Offices near Norchard, which has been found to be more efficient as less employee time involved and less mileage travelled (since Lydney branch closed banking was being done weekly at the Chepstow branch!). However, this does mean that the DFR, and doubtless others in the area, place greater reliance on the continued presence of Post Offices at Parkend and Yorkley, which should be addressed in the NDP.
- Business rates are by far the biggest obstacle obstructing local small business growth and development. If you want to help small businesses please tackle this.
- We are hindered from expanding and from being more green by a lack of electricity. Western Power have been to survey our site but, because their transformer cannot cope with any more lines coming off it - just 2 domestic supplies at present, we would have to pay for a new bigger transformer. Unless Western Power is made to upgrade their equipment, or the government starts offering grants, businesses cannot expand, offer charging points, install electric boilers etc - ground source and air source heat pumps are powered by electricity. We are not the only ones hit by inadequate electric equipment. We have also heard of the same scenario in Parkend.
- We have 5 employees and the rest are self-employed subcontractors - physios, acupuncturist, massage therapist, counsellor
- Before installing electric vehicle charging points it would be far more cost effective to improve public transport, more buses, cheaper fares.
- Public transport links need to massively improve to help tourists and local people access facilities without their car. All the local banks have now closed meaning we have to travel to Ross or Monmouth to bank.
- Biggest issues that put us at a disadvantage is the massive reduction in buses and the low quality poor Broad Band and mobile phone signal to our business. None of these factors have been addressed even after complaining for years.
- I have always felt conflicted renting out my cottage as a holiday let rather than to a family who could support local school. However, a holiday let brings a lot of money into the area for other local businesses, employs a local person (me!) and increases appreciation and understanding of our very special area and wildlife.
- Parkend is a thriving tourist village that supports employment for local people and local businesses.

CONCLUSION

Although this is a rural area within the Forest of Dean, it has many different businesses of all types and sizes. Parkend in particular is a tourist village which provides considerable opportunity for employment, especially casual work for young people and working parents. There are some large businesses and also many single owner working from home. The infrastructure in terms of public transport, mobile coverage, broadband and banking is poor due to services being eroded over recent years or money on improved infrastructure not forthcoming. These issues definitely hinder the local business community and this provision will be addressed in the Forest Edge South NDP.

COVID-19

This survey closed just as the pandemic hit the UK. As with many communities the arrival of this coronavirus has devastated all businesses. These unprecedented times have affected employment and future business plans; even to the point of closure for some altogether. For this reason it is important that in the future this sector is revisited with a new survey.