



Re-opening Sampford Courtenay Station Survey report

Introduction

Following announcements of the re-opening of the Dartmoor Line between Okehampton and Exeter it was revealed that none of the stations previously used along the route would be opened for customers in the first phase.

Sampford Courtenay Parish Council, jointly with North Tawton Town Council and Bondleigh Parish Council have formed a working group to co-ordinate a response that understands the needs and wishes of the communities north & east of Okehampton and make representations and undertake negotiations with train companies regarding the feasibility of opening Sampford Courtenay Station alongside the future plans for the new Okehampton Parkway.

In order to collate the views and interest from the residents a survey has been undertaken and this report gives an outline of the responses received.

Methodology

It was decided to provide a choice of ways for respondents to complete the survey and whilst parishioners in each of the Council area's were provided with a paper survey to complete they and members of the wider community in West Devon were encouraged to complete the survey on-line.

The survey was compiled and then advertised through various mediums including -

- ❖ the Parish/Town Council meetings
- ❖ advertisement in Roundabout Parish Magazine
- ❖ on the local Parish Websites
- ❖ through the local Facebook pages
- ❖ on the village notice boards
- ❖ personal encouragement during local organised social events

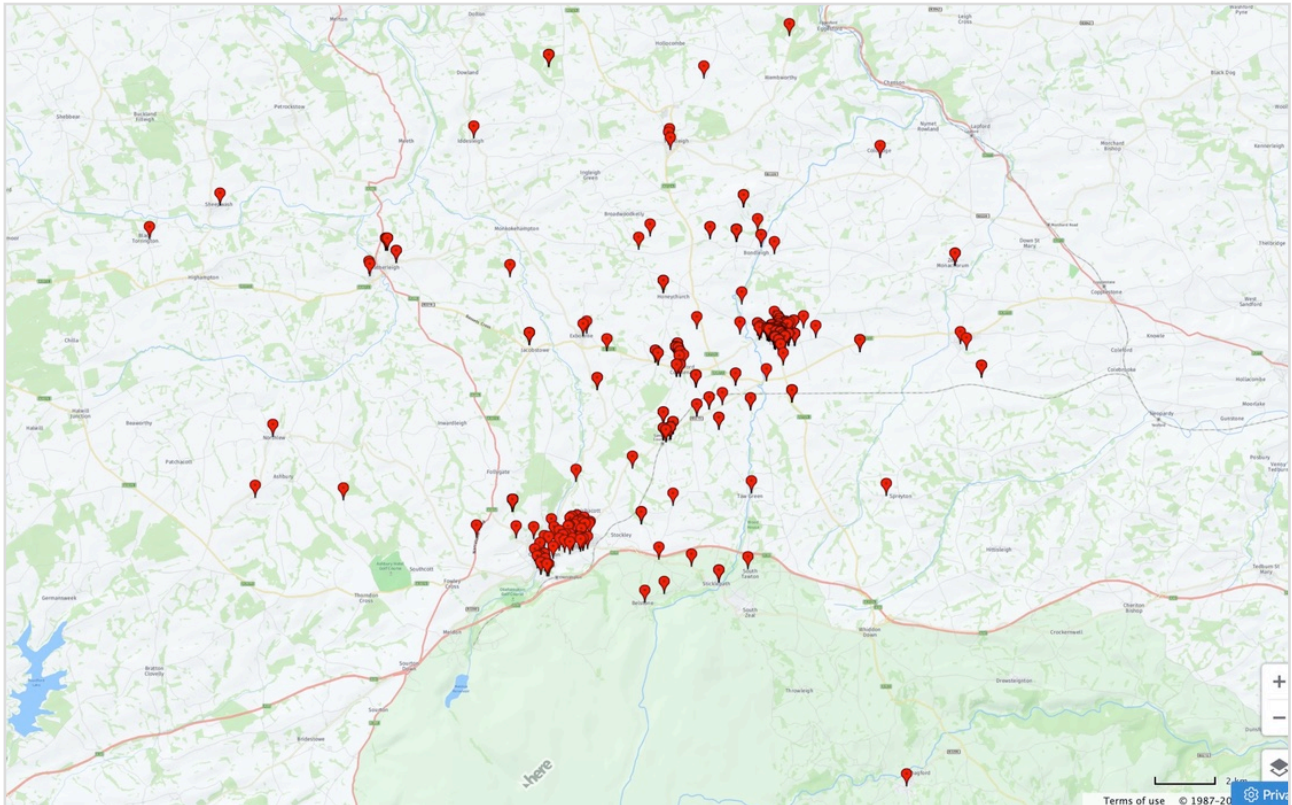
Objectives of the survey

The objectives were to -

- a) Ensure effective consultation with the community
- b) Identifying needs / desires of residents both now and in the future
- c) Enable collation of data for presentation to Network Rail as part of a feasibility report for the opening of the Station at Sampford Courtenay
- d) Understand the needs for improved and integrated public transport links to the railway

The survey

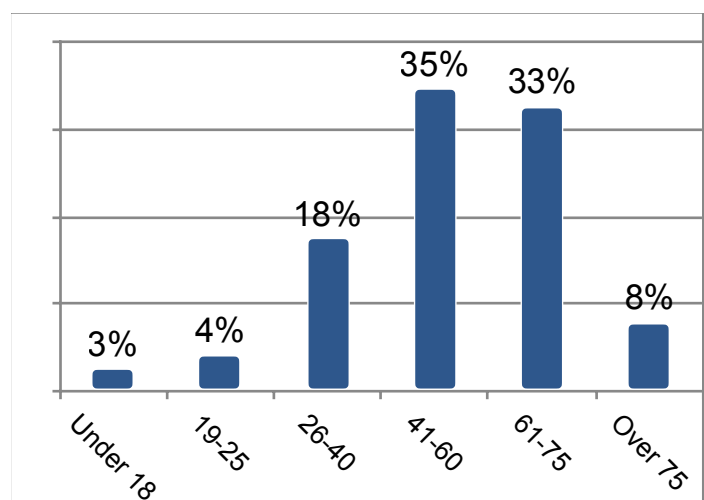
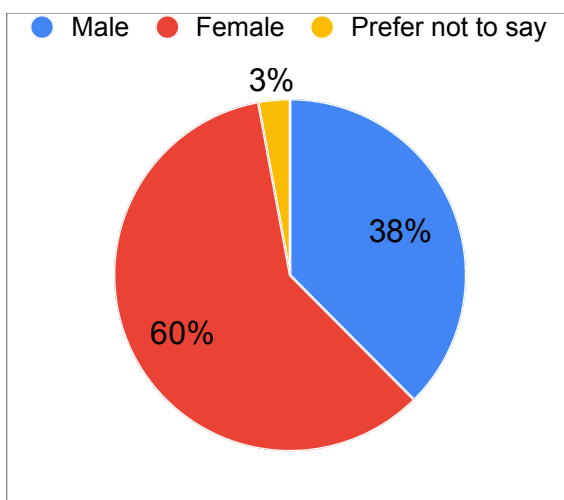
Since the survey was distributed at the end of August 2021 511 people engaged and had their say. The survey was completed on 30 Sept 2021. Assessment of the postcode area's of those that have responded is depicted through geo-mapping below. (This depicts the 450 locations provided by respondents and there are 5 additional surveys that were completed by respondents living further afield)



Survey summary

509 respondents indicated their gender

510 provided details of their age



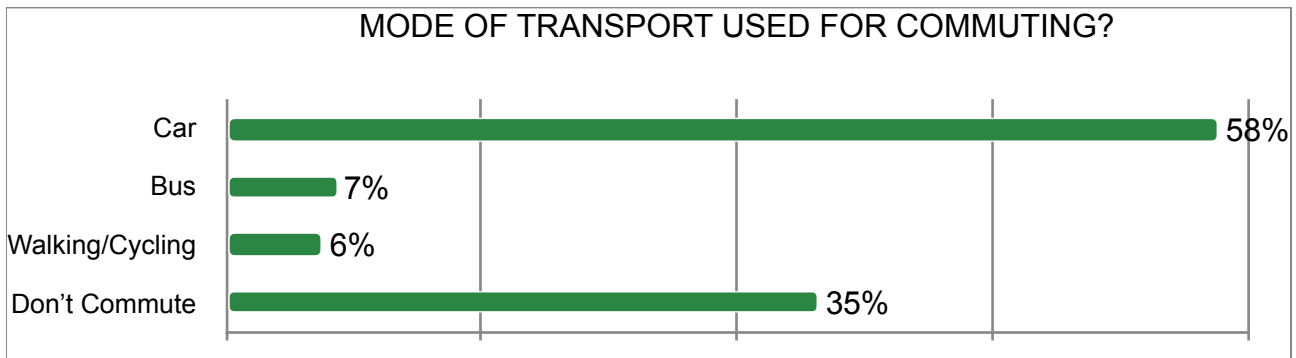
KEY OBSERVATIONS (from the responses received)¹

1. Of those that commute almost 83% currently use their car and only 9% use the bus services that are available (5% use more than one mode of transport)
2. Of those that do commute over 61% travel to either Okehampton or Exeter (15% indicated that they travelled to more than one location)
3. When travelling to undertake activities other than commuting almost 92% use their car with only 8% using the current bus services (18% indicated that they used more than one mode of transport)
4. 66% of people indicated more than one reason for using their cars - over 60% indicated that they had no other options due to their rural location, 43% indicated it just wasn't practical to use public transport, 31% of which indicated that it was because currently public transport did not fit with their work times
5. 53% of people indicated that they were highly likely or potentially likely to use the Dartmoor train line to commute to work
6. This increased to 61% if the station at Sampford Courtenay were to open
7. Over 88% of people indicated that they were highly likely or potentially likely to use the train line for other journeys in the future
8. This increased to 91% if the station at Sampford Courtenay were to open
9. Almost 92% of people indicated a likelihood of using the train if an improved transport system were in place
10. 76% of people indicated that they would consider using the train if additional charges were created to travel and park in Exeter
11. The key themes for peoples reasons for using the train line were grouped into Cost, Convenience, Environmental and Other

¹ N.B. not all 515 respondents answered every question and on some questions respondents were able to select more than one choice

The Survey Analysis

Question 1. Which is your current mode of transport for commuting? i.e. work/education

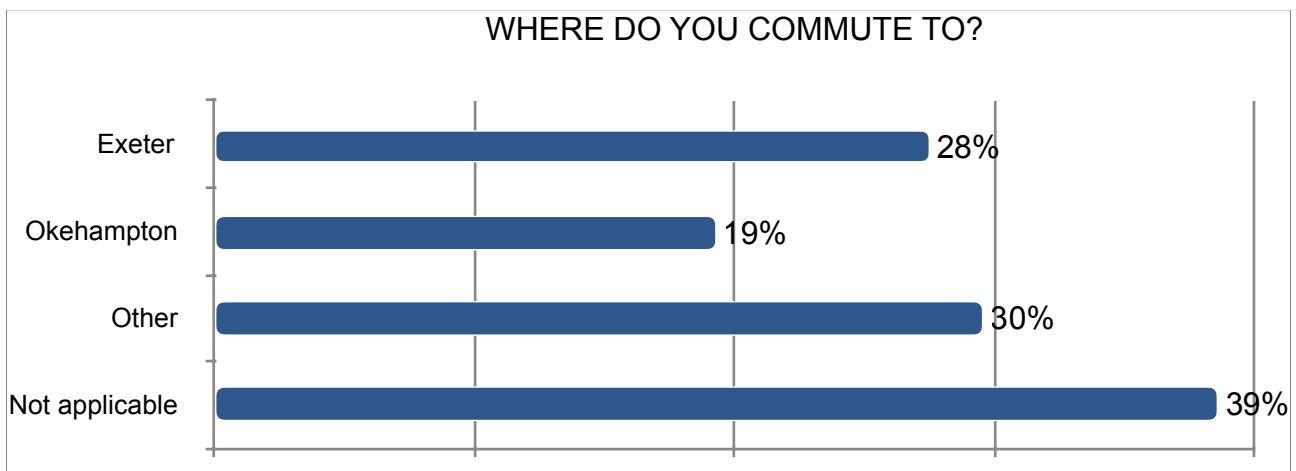


Of those who completed the survey -

35% do not commute and of those that do commute almost 83% currently use their car and only 9% use the bus services that are available (5% use more than one mode of transport)

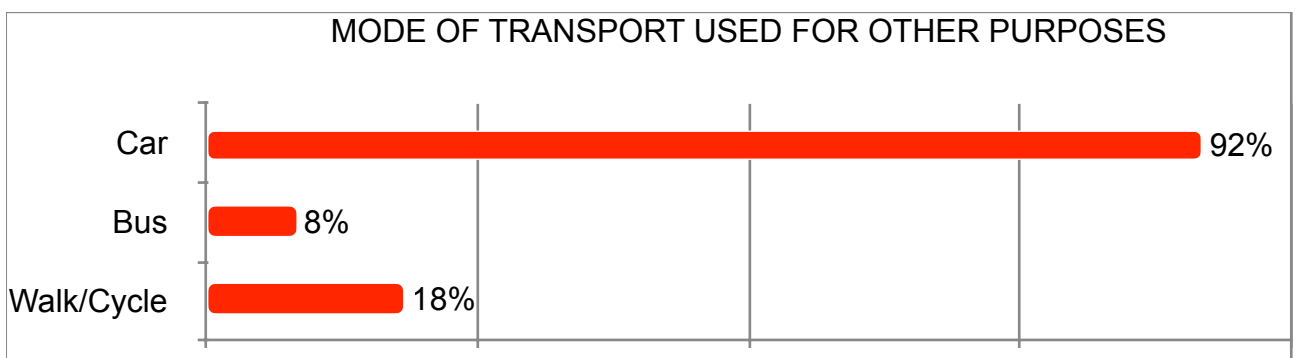
51% of those commuting in their cars are 41-60 years and 28% are 26-40

Question 2. Where do you currently commute to?

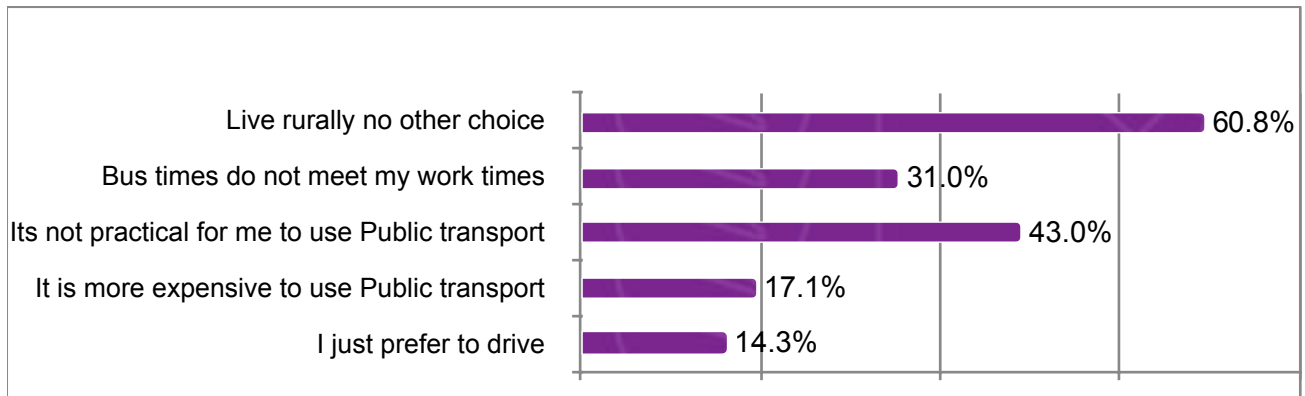


Of those that commute to Exeter 64% only use their cars whilst 5 people use the bus only.

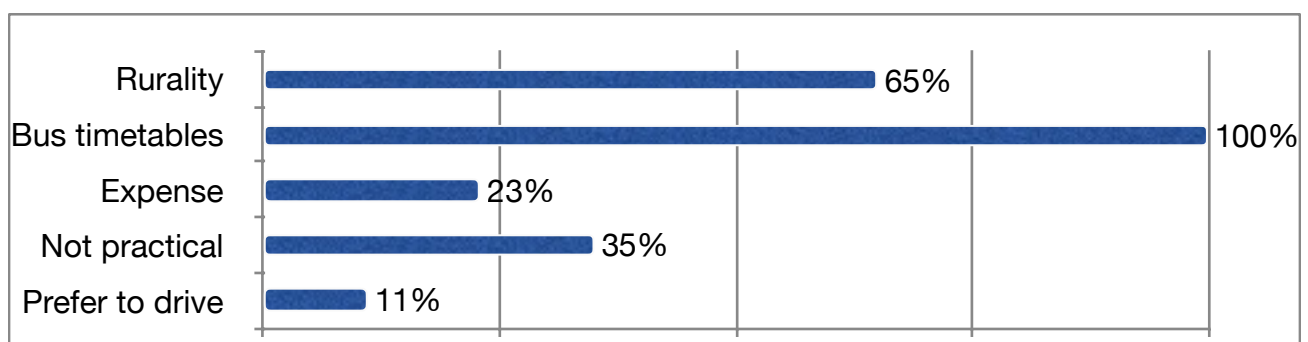
Question 3. Which is your current mode of transport for other purposes? i.e. recreation



Question 4. If you chose car in Q1 or 3, what is the reason(s) for that choice of transport



Of those that indicated for Q1 or 3 that they travelled to Exeter by car stated they did so because of -



Of note only 3 people completing the survey (who commute to either Exeter or Okehampton currently do so using the bus.

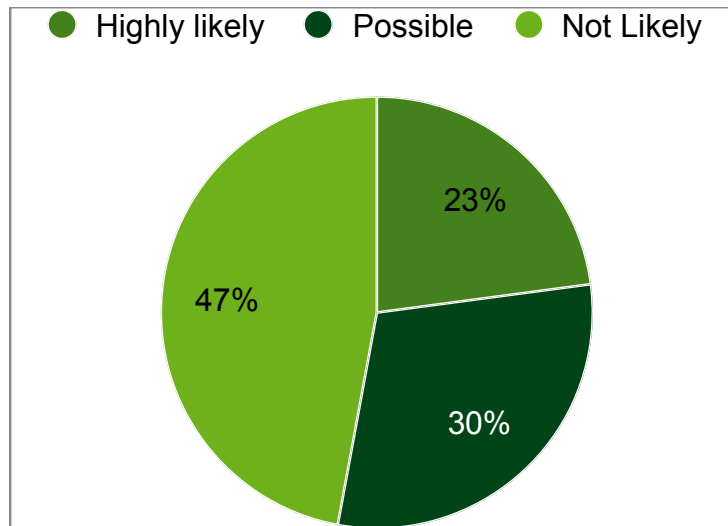
Question 5. Respondents provided other reasons for their choices?

Many of the responses mirrored the issues highlighted in Q4 but key comments included:

- Would like more options to travel to work
- We would still currently need cars to get to any station so it needs appropriate parking facilities (At no extra cost)
- Local bus service restricts distance and times for travelling
- No bus times suitable for evening activities
- Buses not frequent enough
- Bus not practicable for shopping
- Car is convenient due to disability
- No buses on Sundays
- My son is starting Exeter college next month so my hope is that the train starts running from sampford Courtenay!
- I eagerly await the reopening of the station so I don't need the car as much. I am however very concerned about the increase in traffic using Okehampton town station without a parkway or other local stations also being opened
- Public transport does not always offer enough flexibility and can be expensive.

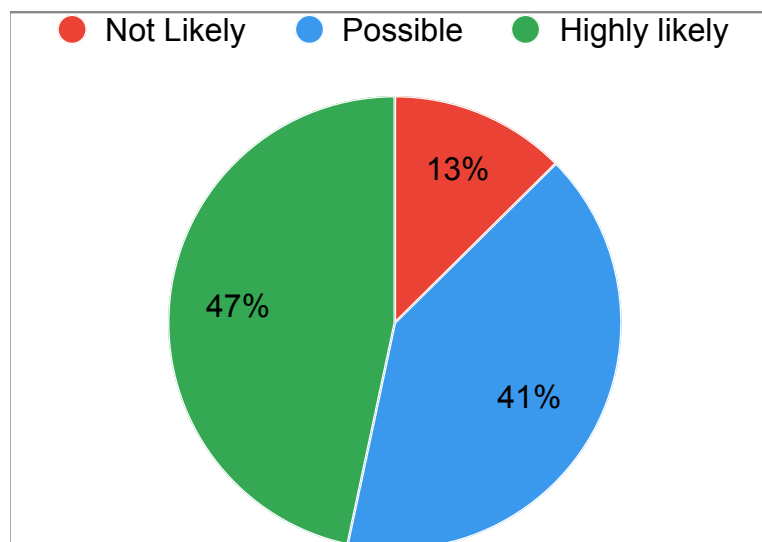
- As my family live a far having access to the train line means that I can take my suitcase easily to the station and get to Exeter to then go to London or for them to come down as well it also makes socialising easier as we like going to Exeter for meals etc. Plus I am all helping reduce pollution and try to change my means of travelling.

Question 6. How likely are you to use the train to commute when the station re-opens in Okehampton later this year?



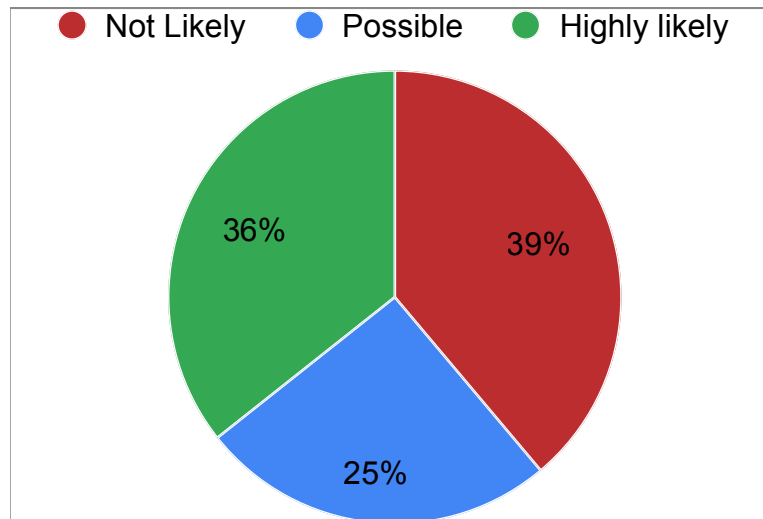
In order for this to change to a more positive response we clearly need to look at the weaknesses identified in the freetext comments in question 5 and consider what actions can be planned to persuade people to use the train.

Question 7. How likely are you to use the train for other journeys when the station re-opens in Okehampton later this year?

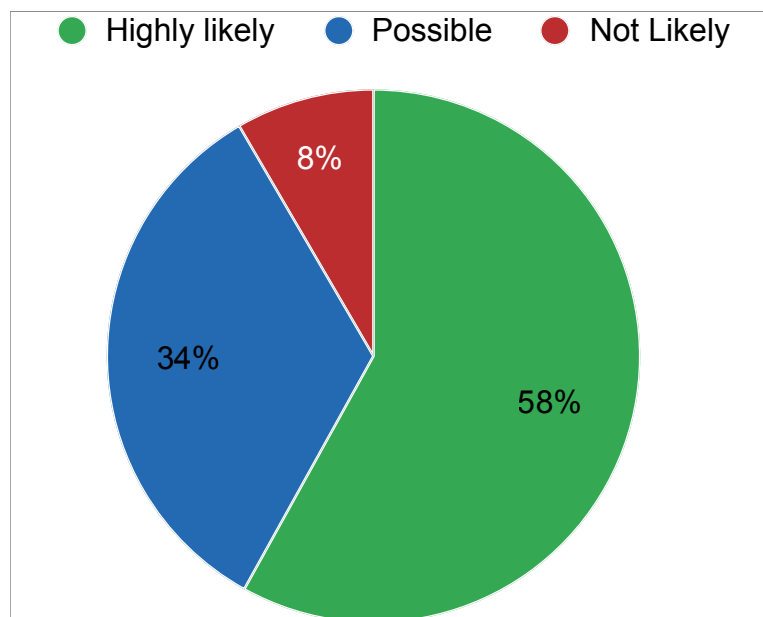


This response for the increased use so the rail line when it opens for other journeys is very encouraging and would be further supported with an improved transport network to get people to the trains without the need for the use of a car.

Question 8. How likely would you be to use the train for your commute if Sampford Courtenay Station were to re-open?



Question 9. How likely would you be to use the train for other journeys if Sampford Courtenay Station were to re-open ?



This is a very positive response and when considered together with the increased % for Q11 this highlights the needs to be backed up by improved transport to get to the station and where/if necessary opportunity to park safely.

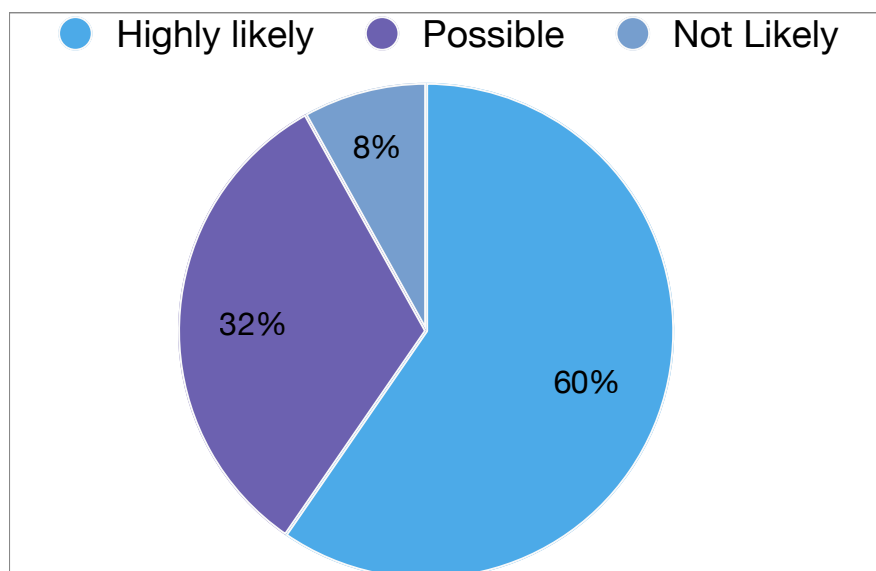
Question 10. What are the reasons for your answer to question 6-9 above?

Some of the responses clearly set out the positives for individuals and businesses but also raise concerns regarding safety. Overall there appears to be great positivity regarding the opening and the working group can now break down and review the opportunities that would encourage the maximum number of residents getting back on the railway.

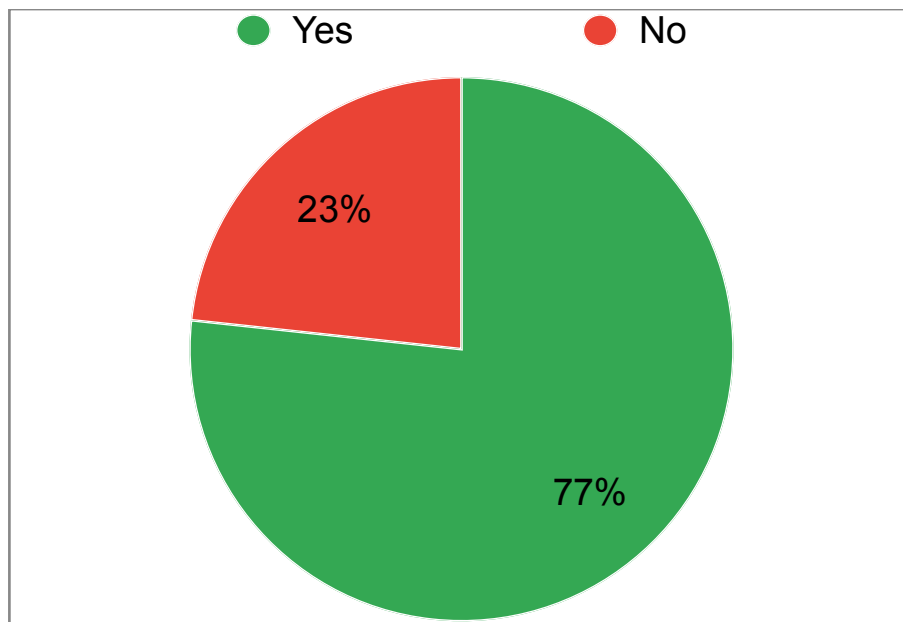
- A huge asset to the community. One which we would all like to use to go to Exeter and afar without the car!!
- Definitely prefer to go from S C than drive to Okehampton first
- Although I am closer to the Okehampton Parkway station, I assume the Sampford Courtney station could be reopened quicker than the Parkway could be built so it would
- make more sense for me to use Sampford Courtney instead of driving through town in Okehampton to get to the station
- Although I don't commute I would prefer to use the train for other travel when possible as I find driving tiring with my disability
- As you will see from our post code we live at Sampford Courtenay Station and are supportive of the re-opening of the train line.
- Until a cost effective VERY RELIABLE bus service, has trust of the people. then will continue to drive to a station.
- Be great to have access to a local village train station. It would reduce the need to take the car out. Would love to be able to travel on the train from a convenient station. It will also help connect rural communities.
- Depending on the accessibility to a train station and the times the trains run, would have a bearing on whether we would use the train to commute to school or work, how- ever we would probably use for leisure to visiting Exeter
- If there's adequate parking at the station, I'd possibly use the train to go into Exeter on a weekend.
Environmental reasons. Would like to be less dependent on driving. I enjoy train travel.
- Frequent travel to London to do childcare, we are always anxious about finding parking at Exeter St Davids and would leave the car at SC instead. We would also use SC station to shop in Exeter and much prefer to go by train!
- Getting into Exeter for shopping, links to national rail and watching Exeter Chiefs.
- Hourly trains from SC makes absolute sense to me. It would certainly encourage me to return to using public transport for short or longer journeys - but access has to be short and services reliably regular. SC station would be great.
- I would only use Sampford Courtenay Station if a suitable shuttle bus was put on to serve the station, and the cost of the journey would need to be affordable.
- I can see both stations enjoying very worthwhile numbers of every class of traveller, be they commuters, shoppers, tourists or just recreational / cultural trips such as to the Northcott theatre / cinemas / music, etc. I consider the reopening of either or both stations to be a complete "no brainer". I wish this sensible campaign the best of luck.
- I enjoy walks on Dartmoor and the Dartmoor line will enable an efficient journey to Okehampton. I often have friends and family stay whom I have to pick up from Exeter - this station would provide an access point to the national rail network.
- I live in Okehampton and I visit Exeter often and travel to London occasionally. It would be easier for job opportunities to have a reliable train service. I hope it wont be more expensive than buses.

- I live in Okehampton, would consider leisure trips (ie pub visit or dog walks) to Sampford Courtenay if that were an option
- To be able to catch a train from Sampford Courtenay or an Okehampton Parkway Station would make all the difference and allow the new service to be a practical proposition.
- I was brought up on trains and love them. Additionally, car travel can be frustrating and is bad for the environment.
- commuting on public transport is not feasible. However I would use the train service to Exeter for weekend trips, as currently driving and parking is not enjoyable or environmentally sustainable. It would also be good to be able to have a service which runs into the evenings to provide for those wanting to socialise at restaurants / bars in Exeter.
- I travel around the southwest fairly often and would definitely use the station to travel to Exeter and beyond.
- I would use the train with my children to be able to explore the UK more easily, as long as it was affordable.
- I'd rather reduce my reliance on the car for journeys to Okehampton and into Exeter. Partner commutes to London on occasion and a train link closer to home would be practical, more economical and desirable. There is already a bus route from Bow that would facilitate use of Sampford Courtenay and Okehampton stations.
- If parking is available and free at SC station or there is a shuttle bus to/from NT
- Re-opening of Sampford Courtenay Station is so necessary. It would serve smaller satellite communities east of Okehampton and avoid extra car travel between these communities and Okehampton, plus it would save time. This is after all also about, in our own small way, helping to alleviate the climate crisis.
- It has been a long time coming and is a great boost for the economy and if I can avoid driving and let the train take the strain I will. I live next to the line at Sampford Courtenay station and would love to walk across the road with my young family and go on many rail adventures. Much easier than loading the car and navigating into Okehampton.

Question 11. If there was a regular, reliable transport link to the Dartmoor Line stations including Okehampton, proposed Parkway and Sampford Courtenay, how likely would you be to use the train?



Question 12. If you were travelling to Exeter, would the future introduction of a congestion charge, restricted & increased parking charges have any impact on your decision to use the train as an alternative means to make your journey?



Question 13. Please let us know the reason for your answer to Q12

When reviewing the responses in this question there were key themes for peoples reasons for using the trainline which can be grouped into Cost, Convenience, Environmental and Other. Here are a few highlighting comments of note -

- A train from Sampford to Exeter central would make the journey pleasant as a day out for both visitors and local residents who don't feel comfortable on the bus on the big roads.
- Already use the bus service to Exeter, as I live conveniently close to the route, a good service and i have a bus pass.
- Any increase in cost in travel to Exeter whether through increased parking charges and/or introduction of a congestion charge would only encourage travel by train, it is a far more sustainable travel mode.
- By using the train it would make life easier to get to Exeter, as parking charges and limited parking are already an expense.
- It's not easy to change to different modes of transport to get to my destination because of my disabilities. Disabled parking may be required
Driving is currently very convenient and good value.
- Exeter is already very congested, it would be quicker and more pleasant to get the train
- Have used the train to go into Exeter shopping but from Copplestone but would certainly go from Sampford Courtenay if it was to re open.
- High car parking charges in Exeter. Would LOVE to be able to drive to Sampford Courtenay station, park for free then catch the train to Exeter
- I am very excited about a rail link and intend to use it as long as the pricing structure is sensible

- I would rather take the train to Exeter than drive but it just has to be cost effective and regular. Would avoid congestion, any future charges and the constant accidents on A30.
- If parking was easier at SC Station this would be the obvious choice - let the train take the strain.
- If the cost benefit of train over car was sufficient, I would use the train. Car parking costs at Oke or SC might be the deal breaker
- It already costs an arm and a leg to park in Exeter. There needs to be some form of address and one way would be a decent train service
- More likely to go for a meal or a drink in Exeter
- Mostly go to Exeter for Church on Sundays/Saturdays so would depend on times and costs of trains & parking costs at SC Station.
- Of course no one wants to pay more but the trains have to start early enough and finish late enough and be a reasonable price to encourage people out of their cars