

West Felton Parish Plan 2014

Business Survey Analysis Report

Last Updated: July 22, 2014

Table of Contents

| | | |
|-----|--|----|
| 1 | Introduction | 3 |
| 2 | General..... | 4 |
| 2.1 | Employees & Vacancies | 4 |
| 2.2 | Target Market | 5 |
| 3 | Your Future Business | 5 |
| 3.1 | Grants..... | 5 |
| 3.2 | Networking..... | 5 |
| 3.3 | Broadband..... | 7 |
| 3.4 | Childcare | 8 |
| 3.5 | Support & Advice | 8 |
| 3.6 | Recruitment | 8 |
| 3.7 | Training & Apprenticeships..... | 9 |
| 3.8 | Support Services | 11 |
| 4 | Likes & Dislikes about Being a Business in West Felton | 11 |
| 4.1 | Likes..... | 11 |
| 4.2 | Dislikes | 12 |
| 5 | Transport..... | 13 |
| 6 | Crime..... | 14 |
| 7 | General Comments | 14 |
| 8 | Conclusions | 15 |
| 9 | What Happens Next? | 15 |
| 10 | Contacts | 16 |

1 Introduction

In addition to creating the West Felton Parish Plan 2014 for households, the Parish Plan Committee decided it would also enable local Businesses, including the Self Employed, to voice their opinions about running a business in the Parish.

A team of us put together a questionnaire template which we thought would cover the majority of subjects relevant to businesses in a rural community such as ours. Although we recognise that we didn't know all of the right questions to ask, we left many opportunities to express free views.

Our main objective was to gather information and to act as facilitators between the businesses, Shropshire Council and other potential service providers so that going forward businesses are able to be aware of and fully utilise the products available to them, such as grants, apprenticeships, training etc. We want to open communication channels between the businesses and Shropshire Council business departments.

We asked about the good things for businesses in this area and also the bad.

As a Committee, we can't make any promises that improvements will be made but it is our intention to notify the appropriate departments about any grievances or requests for improvement.

So how did we compile our list of businesses?

This was no easy task! There is no single database which can be used as a reference. We started with Companies House and downloaded information from almost 1 MILLION Limited companies into a spreadsheet. Next we extracted by post code before arriving at a grand total of 38 businesses! Unfortunately we later found that not all of these are still active.

Next we "trawled" through different business directories such as Yell, Thomson and 192. This proved more fruitful and eventually we arrived at a grand total of 128. As we progressed we came across additional businesses and also identified that several on our original list no longer traded. **In all we believe there to be in excess of 100 businesses operating from West Felton Parish.**

An advertisement was included in two editions of the *Round and About West Felton* magazine offering businesses to contact us if they wished to participate in the fact gathering process. Alas this returned a grand total of zero responses ☹

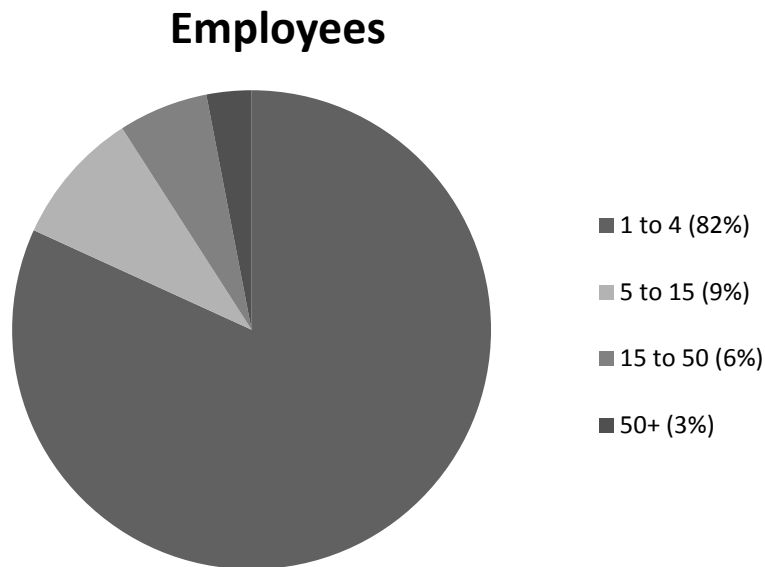
From our list of 100 we made contact with approximately half asking if they would participate by completing our questionnaire. We received 33 completed questionnaires which we believe equates to around one third of the businesses in the Parish.

Their views follow...

2 General

2.1 Employees & Vacancies

The vast majority of businesses operating in the Parish can be classified as small, employing between 1 and 4 people.

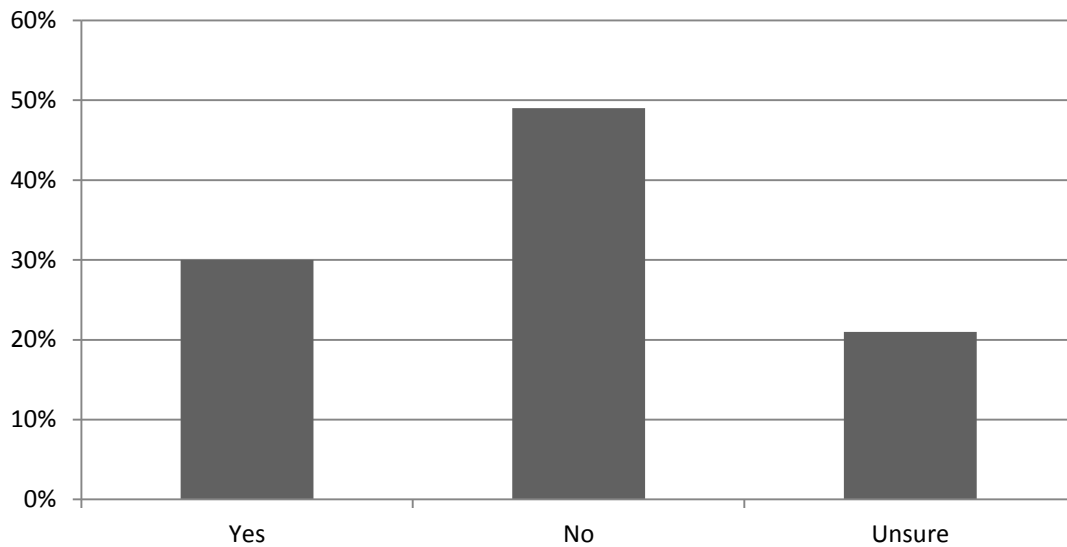


58% declared that they are operating at full capacity with **42%** stating that they are operating below.

When asked if they had recruited any staff over the last 12 months, **33%** said they had and **67%** answered “no”. The declared number of staff recruited during the last 12 months was **26**.

When asked if they expected to have any vacancies over the next 12 months, **30%** said that they did:

Vacancies in next 12 months



2.2 Target Market

24% of organisations said that they sell/provide goods/services overseas, **70%** said that they didn't, **3%** were unsure and the remainder abstained.

3 Your Future Business

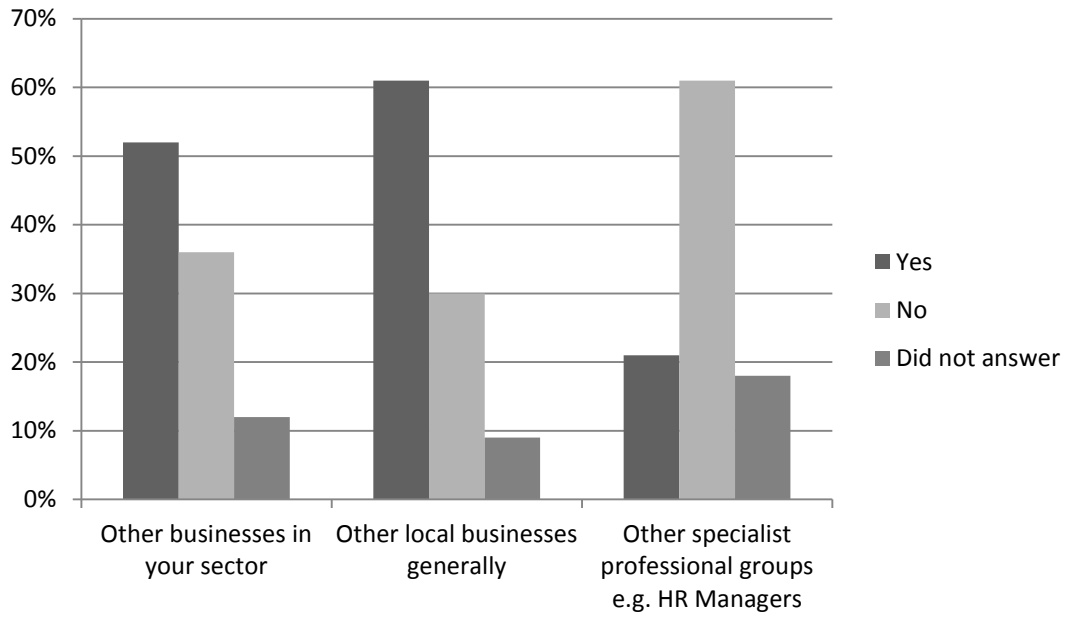
3.1 Grants

When asked if they would like to receive information on grants available for business development, **70%** answered "yes" and **30%** "no".

- **The list of businesses that chose to receive information relating to grants will be passed to the Business & Enterprise Team at Shropshire Council**

3.2 Networking

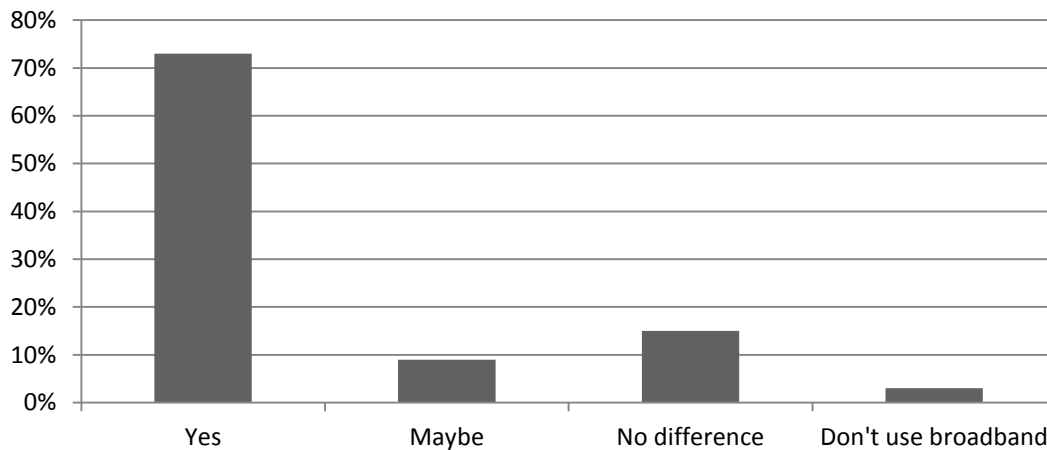
Businesses were asked if they felt they would benefit from networking with other organisations and answered as follows:



3.3 Broadband

The availability of superfast [fibre optic] broadband was overwhelmingly endorsed. When asked if it would improve their future performance, responses were:

Would superfast broadband improve future performance?



➤ **UPDATE! Extract taken from [connectingshropshire](#) website:**

Work has begun in the next 25 exchange areas to benefit from the £24.6 million Connecting Shropshire programme. On Friday 7th February, partners Shropshire Council and BT today announced more details about the areas where people will be able to start accessing faster fibre broadband over the next 14 months.

The exchange areas are:

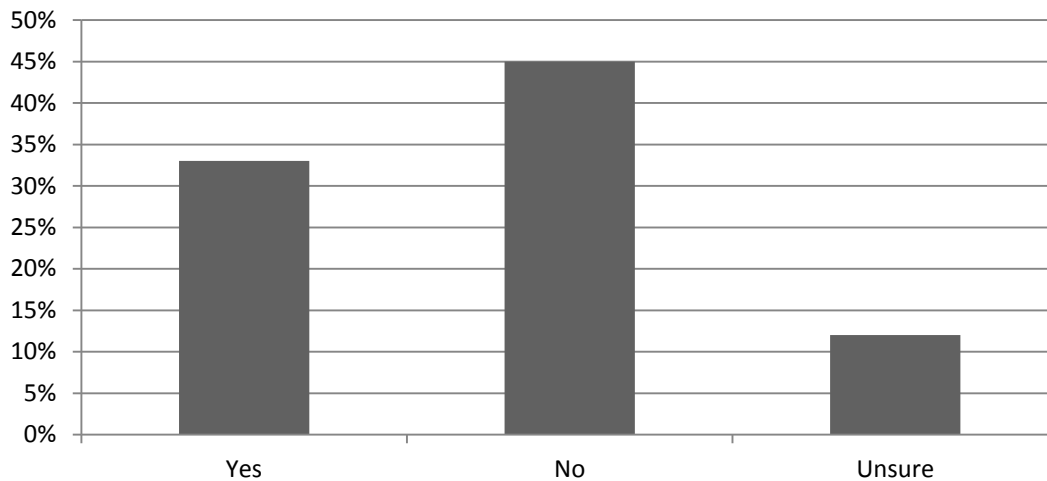
- *Queens Head*

According to this statement made back in February 2014, the Queens Head exchange upgrade should be achieved by no later than April 2015.

3.4 Childcare

When asked if they were aware of any difficulties that employees have with finding affordable childcare, the responses were:

Aware of problems finding affordable childcare?



3.5 Support & Advice

We asked if over the last 12 months businesses had received any general support or advice regarding the day to day running or longer term development. Support/advice had been sought from the following:

- Bank Manager
- Accountant
- NFU
- Tax Office
- Business Advice Centre relating to Employment Law

Comments were also made that businesses faced too much red tape.

3.6 Recruitment

On the subject of recruitment **58%** said that they were able to recruit the right type of employees locally, **18%** said they were not and **24%** indicated that the question was not applicable to them. Comments in this area included:

- a. No problems recruiting sales staff but difficult to recruit specialised technicians.
- b. Trained nurses sometimes difficult to recruit due to the rural location.

When asked what skills were difficult to find, the following were mentioned:

- a. Qualified pool/spa technicians
- b. Graphic designers
- c. Telecoms experts – wiring/installation
- d. Website developers
- e. Traditional building repairers
- f. Old paint & metal work skills

Asked if finding suitable employees was difficult, **42%** responded “yes”, **33%** “no” and **25%** indicated that the question was not relevant to them. Comments made for this question included:

- a. Quality office/administration staff have been difficult to find.
- b. Difficult to find local people for farming.
- c. Plumbers, electricians and builders often provide unreliable feedback.
- d. Sometimes difficult to find people to work unsociable hours.
- e. Some people lack the drive and ambition to care about their work.
- f. Some people are not interested in hard, physical and often dirty work with limited wages.

3.7 Training & Apprenticeships

39% of businesses said they would like to have more training available for employees:



Types of training required were listed as:

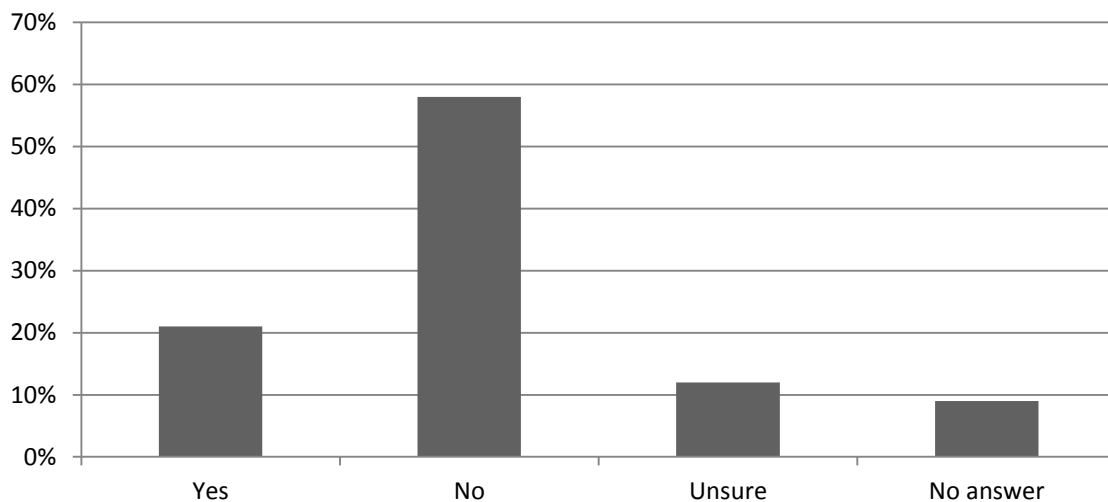
- a. Spraying, chain sawing etc.

- b. Use of traditional material and techniques in building renovation/repairs.
- c. Customer Service management.
- d. Local area wood work/forestry.
- e. Electrical work specific to petrol stations.
- f. Old paint and metal work skills.
- g. Specialist software courses.

➤ **The list of businesses that chose to receive information relating to more local training for employees will be passed to <County Training at Shropshire Council and Walford & North Shropshire College>.**

Asked about awareness of the main elements and different types of apprenticeship programmes, responses were:

Are you aware of apprenticeship programmes?



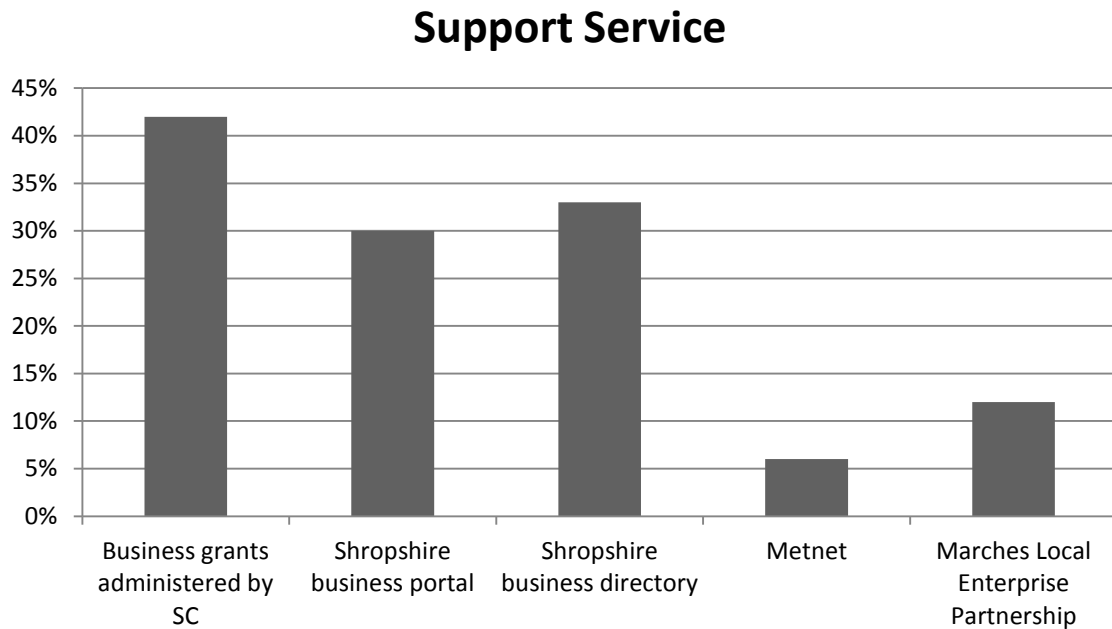
➤ **The list of businesses that chose to receive information on apprenticeship programmes will be passed to < County Training at Shropshire Council >.**

One business made the following comment:

- a. The modern version of the apprentice is for the most part pitiful and degrading.

3.8 Support Services

A question was included asking the organisations which additional support services they had heard of, the response was:



SC = Shropshire Council, Metnet = Marches Environmental Technology Network

4 Likes & Dislikes about Being a Business in West Felton

4.1 Likes

Businesses were asked about the good aspects of being located in West Felton Parish and answered as follows:

- **30%** commented on the good networking, communication and support amongst local residents.
- **27%** enjoyed the pleasant and quiet atmosphere of a rural environment.
- **27%** commented on the good road network, particularly the A5.
- **18%** liked the affordability of goods and services in the area.
- **6%** enjoyed the close proximity to where they lived.
- **6%** commented on the good access to local firms.

Other comments worthy of a mention:

- a. Reasonable broadband access.

- b. Good proximity to Manchester/Birmingham airports.
- c. Plenty of space.
- d. Good local magazine for advertising in.

4.2 Dislikes

Businesses were asked about the things they disliked about being located in West Felton Parish and answered as follows:

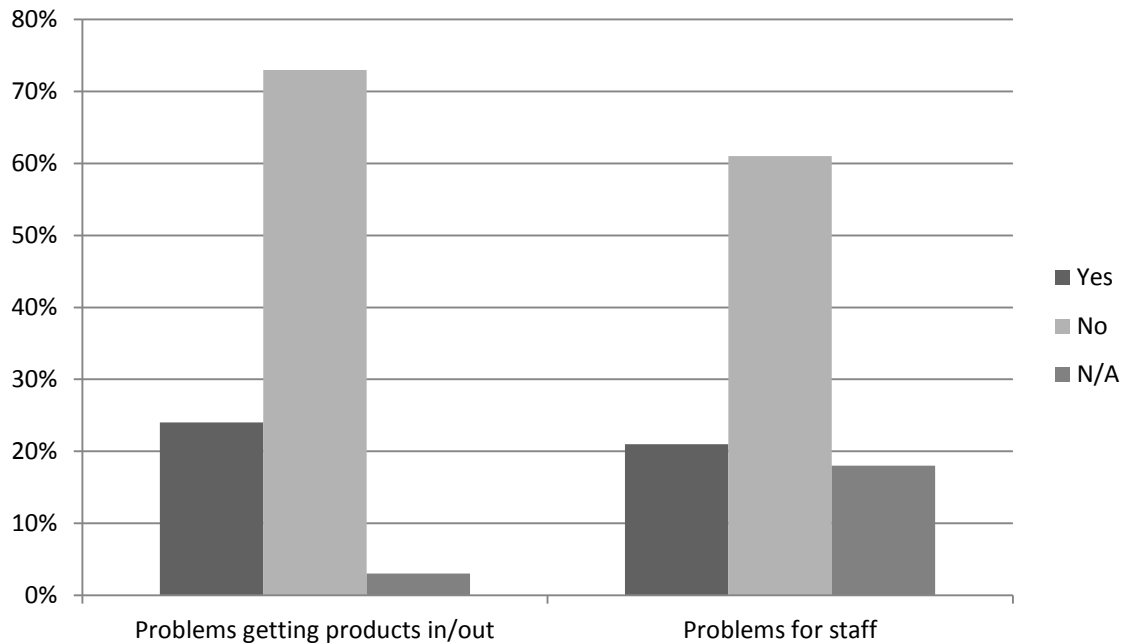
- a. Broadband speed caused the most concern with **21%** saying that they were unhappy with it.
 - **Refer to section 3.3 for the latest update.**
- b. **15%** are unhappy with the telecom/mobile phone service in the area.
- c. The condition of the roads registered a few comments:
 - **12%** are unhappy with the mud and dust on the roads.
 - **3%** are concerned with access onto the A5.
 - **3%** commented on uneven and narrow roads.
 - **3%** stated that better road signage is required.
 - **3%** are concerned about “racers” on the roads.
 - A specific mention was made about the road between Queens Head and Rednal.

Other comments worthy of a mention:

- a. Dissatisfied with the increase in population in the Parish affecting farming and the need to transport from field to farm.
- b. Unreliable power supply.
- c. The Parish is a “bit remote” for customers.

5 Transport

The question was asked about whether or not organisations experience any problems with transportation to/from their business:



Comments made about transport were as follows:

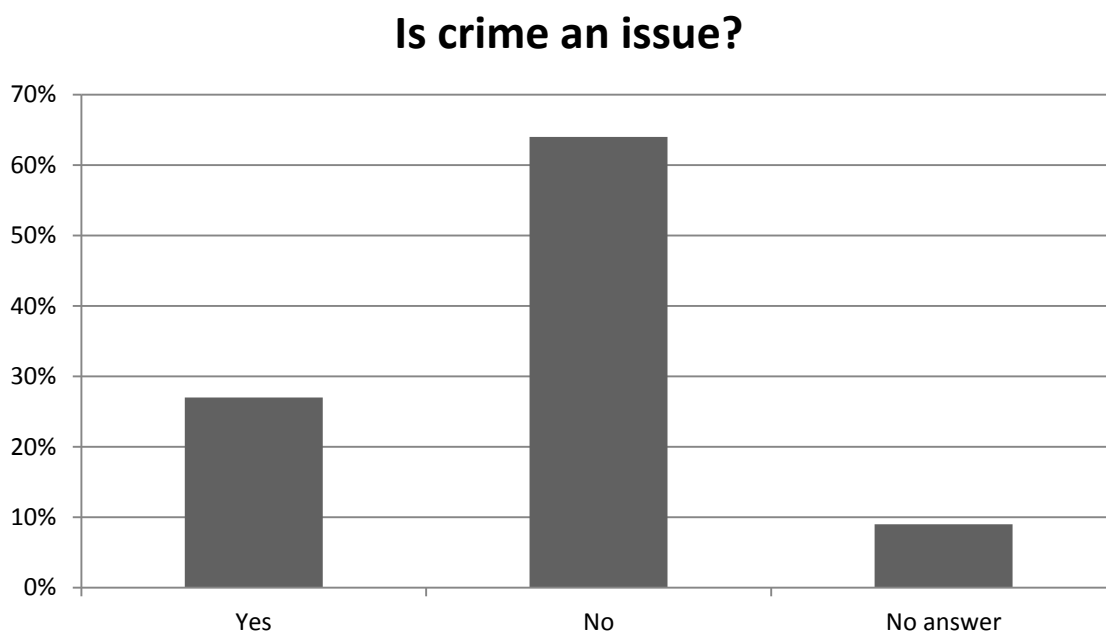
- a. If the A5 is closed it is difficult taking large vehicles down country lanes.
- b. Lanes are becoming very busy.
- c. Access to farms is difficult for large vehicles.
- d. Access along [Oak Farm] lane is sometimes blocked by parked cars.
- e. Some lanes require resurfacing.
- f. Roads are often muddy/wet and uneven.
- g. Too often, accidents at Queens Head or on the A5 cause delays with access to Rednal Industrial Estate.
- h. The road from Queens Head to Rednal requires improvement as it is uneven and too narrow in sections.
- i. Narrow sections of the road between Queens Head and Rednal should have speed restrictions.
- j. [Threadneedle Street] can sometimes be difficult for delivery vehicles to access the nursing home.
- k. Irregular public transport.
- l. Limited evening public transport has an impact on recruitment if unable to drive.
- m. No bus service to Rednal Industrial Estate. **This would be very useful as mentioned by 75% of those businesses based on the Industrial Estate.**
- n. Rednal Industrial Estate was not made to accommodate arctic lorries.

91% said that there was sufficient space for staff to park at work. The remaining 9% did not answer.

82% said that there was sufficient space for deliveries, 6% said there wasn't and the remaining 12% did not answer.

6 Crime

When asked if there were any crime issues for their business locally, responses were:



Comments in this area included:

- a. Concerned about leaving things in vehicle due to recent break-ins locally in West Felton.
- b. Petty vehicle theft/break-ins.
- c. Scrap metal stolen.
- d. Some shed burglaries.
- e. Recently, wheels stolen off a car in a neighbouring unit on the Rednal Industrial Estate.
- f. More security required at the Rednal Industrial Estate.

7 General Comments

- a. Objection to the proliferation of housing development in West Felton.

- b. It would be useful to have contacts who are knowledgeable of West Felton Businesses and Council facilities.
- c. Thank you for your interest and effort.

8 Conclusions

For such a small Parish there is a thriving business community covering all manner of business types.

In addition to requests for support in grants, training and apprenticeships, some valid issues have been raised in areas such as broadband, general road conditions and lack of public transport to the Rednal Industrial Estate. We hope that this survey will help give priority to resolving some of those issues.

The West Felton Parish Plan Committee would like to take this opportunity to thank all of the businesses that contributed to this plan. We sincerely hope that some good comes of it.

9 What Happens Next?

For those businesses that requested additional information on the following subjects, your contact details and completed questionnaire will be passed to the appropriate Council department:

- Grants
- Training
- Apprenticeship programmes

Likewise, any businesses that specified obstacles for the future development of their business will have those obstacles reviewed to establish if anything can be done to help.

Those businesses which requested to receive a summary of our findings should now be reading this report.

Completed questionnaires will also be reviewed by West Felton Parish Council to determine if there are any issues which they may be able to address, either directly or by passing concerns on to the appropriate authorities.

- **Issues relating to the A5 will be passed onto Highways Agency.**
- **Public transport issues, particularly to Rednal Industrial Estate will be discussed with Arriva.**

The following section contains contacts of persons/departments that are there to help support you, so please do contact them when necessary.

10 Contacts

For enquiries about grants loans and incentives for business in Shropshire, contact:

Business and Enterprise Team at Shropshire Council,

Web: www.shropshire.gov.uk/business-support

Email: business@shropshire.gov.uk

Tel: 01743 252596

To receive information on Training, contact:

County Training

Website www.shropshire.gov.uk/county-training

Email: countytraining@shropshire.gov.uk

Telephone: 0345 6789023

Walford & North Shropshire College

Website: www.wnsc.ac.uk

Email: enquiries@wnsc.ac.uk

Telephone: 01939 262100

Harper Adams College

Website: www.harper-adams.ac.uk

Email: servicedesk@harper-adams.ac.uk

Telephone: 01952 815555

To receive information on Apprenticeships, contact:

County Training

Website www.shropshire.gov.uk/county-training

Email: countytraining@shropshire.gov.uk

Telephone: 0345 6789023

West Felton Parish Council:

Website: www.2shrop.net/westfeltonparishcouncil

Parish Clerk: Ian Hutchinson Tel: 01743 850504

Email: iahutchinson@btinternet.com

Shropshire Council:

Corrie Davies, Community Action Officer, Tel: 01691 677306

Email: corrie.davies@shropshire.gov.uk

ARRIVA:

Website: www.arrivabus.co.uk

Telephone: 0344 800 44 11
(Customer services)

Tanat Valley:

Website: www.tanat.co.uk

Email: info@tanat.co.uk

Telephone: 01691 780212