St Helens (IOW) Parish Council Village Consultation 2025: Key Findings

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In summer 2025, a comprehensive village consultation was conducted to capture residents' views on the key issues

facing St Helens — both now and in the years ahead. It provided an opportunity for everyone in the village to share what matters most to them, highlight local priorities, and help shape future decisions by the Parish Council and community partners.

The results will guide the Parish Council's work over the coming years and support local groups seeking grant funding for community projects. By identifying the activities and improvements residents most want to see, this consultation will help ensure that time and resources are focused where they can make the greatest difference to village life.

The consultation covered fourteen topics, ranging from the environment and local facilities to traffic, youth provision, and potential new activities. Each section began with a short introduction, and some questions were submitted by local groups or organisations. Residents could answer as many or as few questions as they wished.

Several questions explored views on funding priorities, including whether residents would support modest increases to the Parish Precept (the local element of council tax used to fund parish services) to deliver specific projects.

Thank you to everyone who took part. Your responses reflect both pride in St Helens and a shared desire to keep it a friendly, well-kept, and distinctive village — one that continues to evolve while preserving the qualities that make it special.



As stated in the consultation:

"Your answers will help the Parish Council and other community groups establish priorities for the next few years. Your responses will also support local organisations by measuring interest in projects seeking grant funding. These projects have the potential to add greatly to the quality of village life."

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1) "What are the top 3 things you value about the Village?"

Residents most value the greens and natural setting, the community spirit and friendliness, and the essential local amenities (pub, shop, post office, school) that preserve St Helens' identity, beauty, and liveability.

From all the responses, three clear clusters dominate:

1. The Greens, Open Space & Natural Setting

Repeatedly mentioned as the most valued asset. Includes the Village Green, Duver, beach, marshes, and surrounding countryside. Valued for beauty, peacefulness, and recreation (sport on the green, walks, National Trust site). Pride in its upkeep and importance in maintaining separation from neighbouring areas ("Green Belt").

2. Community Spirit & Friendliness

Strong sense of community, kindness, and pride. Emphasis on friendliness, village feel, safety, and welcome. Community events (fêtes, carnival, fayres, horticultural shows, café, community fridge) are highly valued. Seen as a safe haven, not overdeveloped, with a strong identity.

3. Local Amenities & Facilities

Pub, shop, post office, school, doctors, bus service, Community Centre, chapel, and local businesses (including bookshop and cafés/restaurants) are consistently listed. The pub is described as the "hub of the village." Post office and shop are seen as lifelines, the school anchors family life, and the bus service is a vital connection.

Other Recurrent Points

Peace and quiet; views and natural beauty (sea, marshes, countryside); history and heritage (chapel, house styles, originality); and the village's small scale and distinct atmosphere.

Some direct feedback from the consultation:

"The village has a real sense of community — people look out for one another."

"Peaceful, friendly and by the sea — we're lucky to live somewhere so beautiful."

"The Green and the beaches make it special — it still feels like a proper village."

"I love that you can walk everywhere and still see familiar faces."

2) "What are the 3 issues or challenges connected with the Village that most affect your quality of life?"

Residents say the main challenges are traffic and parking, poor transport and accessibility, and gaps in facilities and services, with added concerns over dog mess, development pressures, and declining seafront amenities.

From all the responses, three clear clusters dominate:

1. Traffic, Parking & Road Safety

The most frequently raised issue. Speeding on Station Road, Upper Green Road, and Duver Road is a major concern, alongside parking on pavements, double yellow lines, or blocking the Post Office. Noise from traffic and inconsiderate driving also affect quality of life. Road safety worries are especially noted for children and those with mobility needs.

2. Transport & Accessibility

Limited bus service (only hourly, with poor evening provision) is a significant frustration. Uneven and overgrown footpaths, poor lighting, and a lack of safe crossings make walking difficult. Wheelchair and mobility access to key amenities is limited, and there is also no safe pedestrian access to the church.

3. Facilities & Local Services

Concerns over the post office's inconsistent opening hours, limited village shop provision, and the lack of public toilets. Underused or derelict community buildings (youth club/chapel) are viewed as wasted assets. The poor condition of Duver beach huts and the limited provision of activities for young people are also recurring themes.

Other Recurrent Points

Cost of living pressures (council tax, water bills, expensive café); environmental concerns (over-mowing, poisons harming wildlife); increasing second homes and unsuitable development; and noise or antisocial behaviour from parties, vehicles, and youth gatherings.

Some direct feedback from the consultation:

"Too much traffic speeding through the village — it's dangerous for children."

"The seafront and beach huts look run down; they should be a source of pride."

"Parking is chaotic around the Green and makes walking difficult."

"We're losing local facilities and spaces for the community to meet."

3) "If only one of the ideas or proposals contained in this survey could be realised, which one should it be?"

From all responses, three clear clusters dominate:

1. Spaces and Opportunities for Young People

The strongest theme across all age groups. Residents consistently called for better facilities and activities for children and teenagers — spaces that encourage creativity, sport, and social connection. While some suggested re-using the former youth club building, most focused on the *need* rather than the *site*: more to do locally, particularly safe, inclusive and inter-generational spaces.

Feedback from the school reinforces this: children want more play and sports facilities, creative clubs, and fun indoor or outdoor activities such as table football, trampolines, art sessions, and small-scale games areas. They also highlight practical needs — safe crossings near the Green, bins and bird-proof bins on the Duver, and generally a cleaner, safer environment.

- "Something for young people to do in the evenings."
- "Outdoor equipment for older children swings, climbing frames, tree play."
- "A place where we can go after school that isn't just sport."

2. Beach Huts & Seafront Improvements

A close second. Residents see the seafront as a key symbol of local pride but also a neglected space. There is widespread desire to restore or replace the beach huts, improve maintenance of the Duver and public toilets, and ensure the area feels welcoming to residents and visitors alike.

- "Replace the beach huts they could bring life back to the seafront."
- "Tidy and restore the Duver; it's the first impression of the village."

3. Road Safety & Traffic Management

Calls for safer roads run through many comments. Priorities include traffic calming, clearer crossings (especially near the Green and school), 20 mph limits, and better pathways for pedestrians and cyclists.

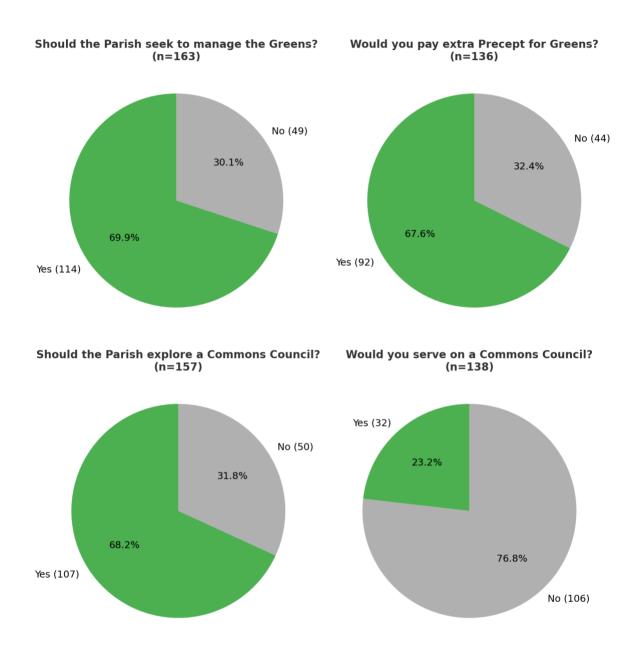
- "A zebra crossing near the playground is vital."
- "Slower traffic through the village centre especially for children walking or cycling."

Other Recurring Points

Parking and access solutions; better public transport (e.g. minibus, community bus); environmental enhancements — tree planting, wildflower areas, litter picking; and securing the future of the Community Centre as a flexible hub for events and wellbeing activities.

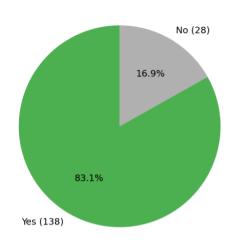
4) The Greens & Environment

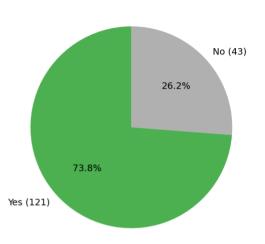
The managing authority and 'custodian' of the St Helens Greens – which are 'common land' – is the Isle of Wight Council. This limits what the Parish Council may do with respect to the Greens, within the confines of the legislation controlling use of the Greens. In the light of this:



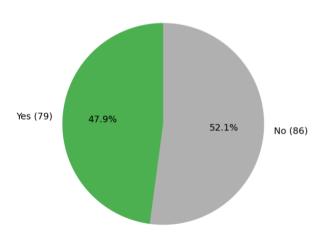
Support dropped kerb for wheelchair access? (n=166)

Support widening the pathway? (n=164)





Support EV charging points in village? (n=165)



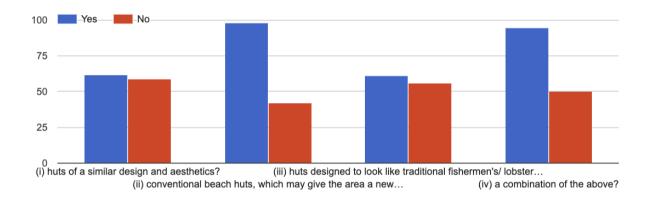
5) The Beach Huts at the Duver

(Questions provided by Duver Enterprises Ltd)

Duver Enterprises Ltd has a new lease for the area of the Duver currently occupied by all the beach huts - including the converted railway carriages — and the caravans. At the Parish Council's recent Annual Parish Meeting they set out proposals to restore and update the area, and would value your response to the following:

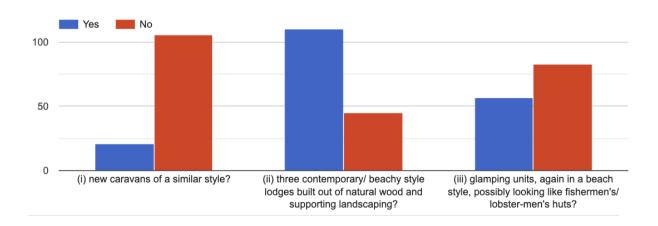
Railway Carriages

Question: The old railway carriages are probably beyond economic repair. The IOW Steam Railway wants to take the carriages and preserve as much of their heritage as possible at the railway site. Do you support replacement of the railway carriages with:



Caravans

Question: The caravans have reached the end of their days and have suffered irreparable vandalism. Do you support their replacement with:

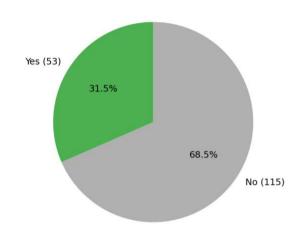


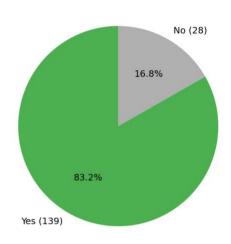
Seaside Facilities

Overwhelming support for community beach huts, low demand for a mobile sauna.

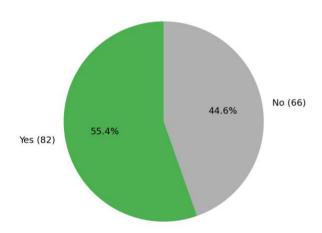
Takeaway: Residents prefer modern beach-style lodges over caravans or glamping units.

Would you welcome a mobile sauna at the Duver? Support additional beach huts for local groups? (n=168)





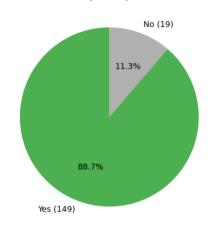
If yes to huts, would you use them? (n=148)



6) Young People in the Village

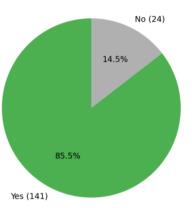
Since the closure of the Youth Club building in Lower Green Road more than 20 years ago, the village has been without any facilities for young people. In the light of this:

Would you like to see greater provision for young people? (n=168)

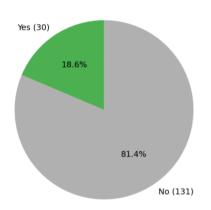


(n=165)

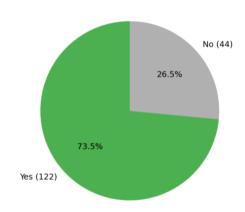
More access to outdoor/digital-free spaces beneficial?



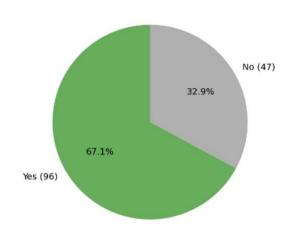
Would you volunteer to help run youth provision? (n=161)



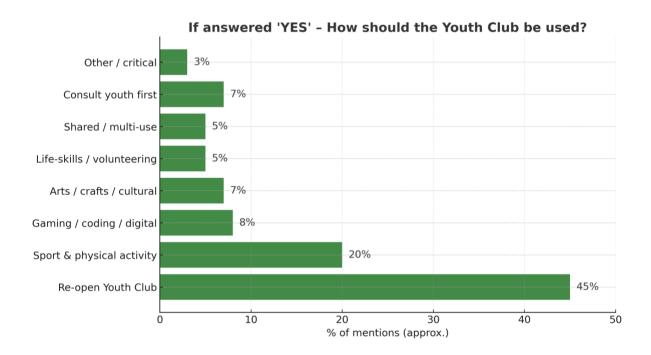
Should Parish register Youth Club as asset of community value?



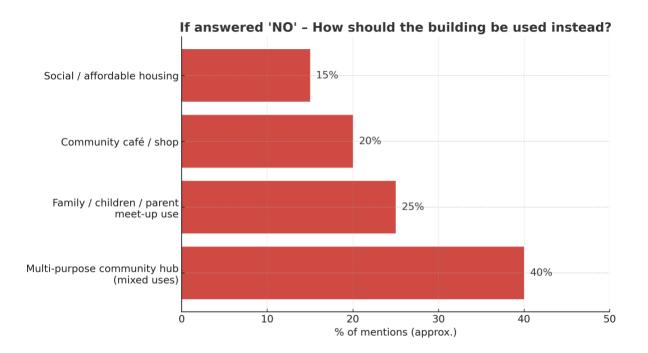
If yes, restore Youth Club building as youth club? (n=143)



If answered "Yes" to Youth Club



If answered "No" to Youth Club



A number of respondents said 'if you really want to know about what young people want, just ask them' - so we did...

7) Village Consultation: Feedback from primary school activity

Who did we speak to?

- We ran a one-hour session with 26 children in Years 5 and 6 in the last week of the summer term.
- Children worked in groups to answer questions and capture their answers on large maps of the village.

Note: Only 8 of the children live in the village – several said that they have no engagement with village life outside of coming to school, using the playground after school, and attending birthday parties in the Community Centre.

What have children done in the village?

Who has been to the community centre?	26 (mostly for birthday parties)
Who has been to the pavilion or played on the sports pitches?	22
Who has taken part in any sports days on the green?	4
Who has been to St Helens carnival?	15
Who has played on the greens?	25
Who has done the horseshoe trail?	5

What do children do/where do they enjoy going in the village?

The majority mention:

- The playground
- Playing on the greens
- The beach/Duver
- Birthday parties

A couple mentioned going to The Vine, either for quiz night or to meet family.

Everything else happens outside the village:

- Football in Bembridge mentioned by several.
- Other activities include:
 - Sailing in Bembridge
 - Horse riding in Newport
 - Gymnastics in Newport
 - o Rock climbing in Sandown
 - o Tennis in Ryde
 - Martial arts
 - o Bike riding in Bembridge
 - o Guides in Seaview
 - Wrestling in Sandown
 - Kickboxing in Lake
 - o Rugby in Wootton
 - o Basketball in Bembridge

What do children want in the village?

The main things that children want are related to

A safer, cleaner village

- A zebra crossing from the Vine side of the road to the playground/greens
- Signs to tell the traffic to slow down
- A water fountain
- Speed cameras on Upper Green Road
- More bins and bird-proof bins at the beach
- More dog poo bins on the Duver

Outdoor play

- More play equipment for older children in the playground (including a specific type of net swing that they have in Bembridge and see saws)
- Nets in the goals on the football pitch for play
- Bigger outdoor equipment monkey bars, climbing frames, tree adventure stuff, tree swing etc.
- Sandbox and hopscotch in the park
- More horse riding and nature trails
- And in the fantasy category Swimming pool, zip line, skate park, free-to-play tennis courts
- Trampolines (unclear whether indoor or outdoor, but big)

Other ideas

- Table football (very popular)
- Evening art classes in the community centre (like in the summer holidays?)

- Tesco Express/bigger corner shop (this mainly seems to be about an expanded range of sweets and snacks)
- A Greggs ("There isn't one on the island so it's not fair that I'm missing out. I've never been to one")
- An arcade
- Take-aways, including Chinese
- A cat/dog/duck petting centre

What about a youth club?

None of the children know what a youth club is. When the idea was explained to them, the things they would want to do in a club included:

- Table football
- Air hockey
- Table tennis
- Pool
- Roller skating
- Dancing/disco
- A gym
- Arcade games
- Snacks

What do they want at school?

- In **Wakes Woodland** proper picnic tables and chairs (huge demand for this); water fountain; more creative lessons; a pond (banned for health & safety reasons); a tree swing; shelter; bird feeders; blankets.
- The **library bus** heating; deep clean; more beanbags; more/new books
- The trim tail more equipment, as listed under outdoor play above

8) St Helens Village School

(Questions provided by St Helens Primary School)

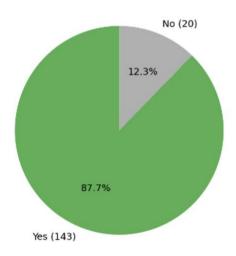


The School plans to seek funding to improve some of its facilities, and would value an indication of the wider community's interest in these. In the light of this, would you support an application by the School for funding to:

Question: Develop the environmental area at the rear of the School?

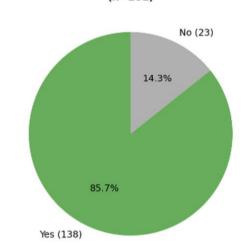
The School would like to 'bring the classroom outside' and enable the children to have bespoke working spaces to help support their learning. Many subjects, including geography, science, art, English, and music could benefit from such a development.

Support school project: develop environmental area? (n=163)



Question: Reinvigorate its library bus and update its stock of books?

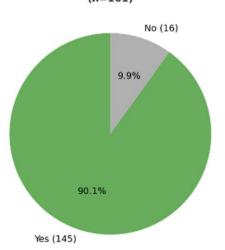
The bus is a unique selling point but can be cold and damp in the winter. This affects the children's enjoyment of it, as well as the wellbeing of the books. It needs to be better ventilated and heated, with better windows or even seals, a well fitted door, and appropriate lighting and decoration: these would bring this location to life. The children love the bus and the School would love to see it being utilised more — which it would be, if it became a warm and vibrant space stocked with all the latest books.



Support school project: reinvigorate library bus? (n=161)

Question: Update its PE equipment and playground facilities?

The trim trail is very old and in need of renewing in the near future: schools which have modern trim trails (like that pictured here) and outside gym equipment, find these are very popular with the children.

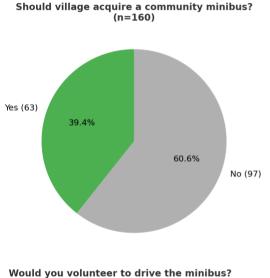


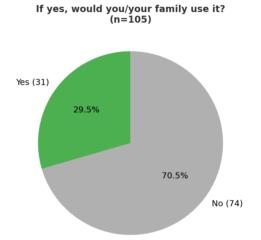
Support school project: update PE & playground? (n=161)

9) Community Minibus

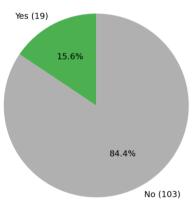
A shared minibus could be of benefit to societies and organisations in the village which organise trips for their members or who would value being able to transport people from A to B efficiently and cheaply.

The initial purchase of the vehicle would be funded by a grant and donations, with the ongoing costs covered by hiring fees (a second-hand 17-seater minibus in good condition might be in the region of £18--30k). In the light of this:

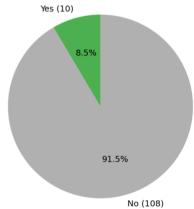




Would you volunteer to drive the minibus? (n=122)







10) Active Travel: Walking & Cycling Connectivity

In 2022, St Helens Parish Council, Bembridge Parish Council and Brading Town Council contracted the Community Interest Group 'People Powered' to assist in the production of a joint Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) for the East Wight area.

An LCWIP is a long-term (10 year minimum) strategic plan that sets out local priorities for improvements to walking and cycling infrastructure. In consultation with local residents and stakeholders, it identifies key routes and zones within a town or group of settlements where new infrastructure and the implementation of more walking and cycling-friendly policies will provide high quality, safer environments for people to get around on foot, wheelchair, mobility scooter, pushchair, and bike.

The LCWIP came up with several hundred proposals, and you are invited to comment on some of the most significant affecting St Helens. The full report is here. A high level of support for a proposal is no guarantee that it will happen!

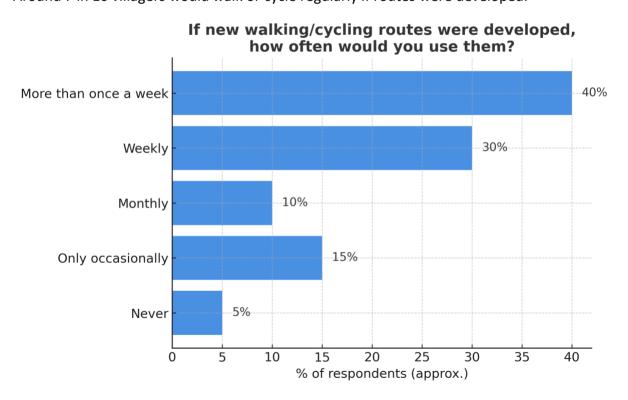
Overall message

Responses show very strong local support for improved walking and cycling routes — particularly those linking Bembridge, Brading, and St Helens, and improving safety along Station Road, Carpenters Road, Eddington Road, and Duver Road.

A majority of respondents said they would use new routes weekly or more often, showing this is one of the most universally supported themes across the consultation.

Frequency of use if new routes developed

Around 7 in 10 villagers would walk or cycle regularly if routes were developed.



Support for specific proposals

Proposal	% "Yes"
Footway on south side of Carpenters Road (Laundry Ln → Station Rd)	~90 %
Footway on Duver Road	~57 %
Footway + cycle track on Eddington Road	~72 %
Zebra crossing (north end of Station Rd)	~56 %
End to footway parking + dropped-kerb crossings	~67 %

Community interest

Several respondents also linked walking-route improvements to:

- Biodiversity ("wildflower corridors")
- Tourism & local business ("cycle café / bike racks near pub or shop")
- Education links ("safe school access")

Summary of engagement potential

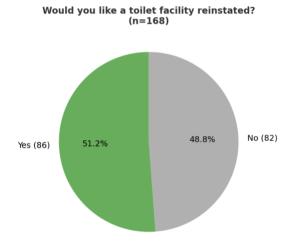
Residents view active travel as a health, safety, and community-connectivity issue rather than a niche cycling concern.

Type of proposal	Level of support	Notes
Safety & accessibility measures	Very strong (70-90 %)	Quick wins; minimal controversy.
Cycling infrastructure	Moderate to high (60-75 %)	Seen as family-friendly if off- road.
Duver Road footway	Split (55-60 %)	Concerns about space and surface.

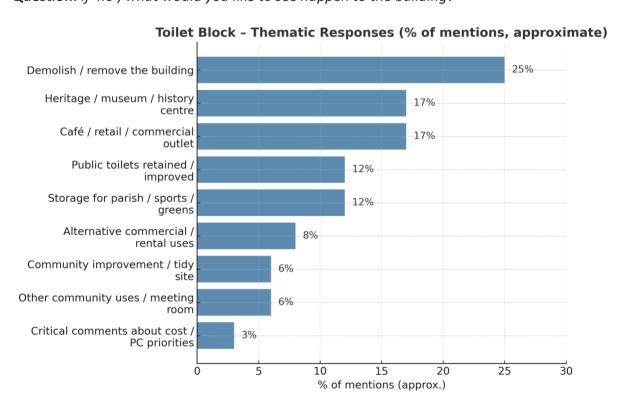
11) Disused Toilets (top of Station Road)

The public conveniences at the top of Station Road have been closed for several years, and although the building still houses a store for equipment used to maintain the Greens and the cricket pitch, it has become an eyesore and subject to minor vandalism. The Parish Council is in the process of obtaining the lease on this building, and will be seeking grant funding to enable it to be restored to public use. In the light of this:

Question: Would you like to see a toilet facility reinstated? If the whole building were to become a toilet facility, this would be likely to involve a 50% increase in the Parish Precept: for a Band 'D' household, an increase of around £1.50 a month.

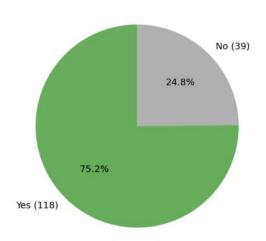


Question: If 'no', what would you like to see happen to the building?



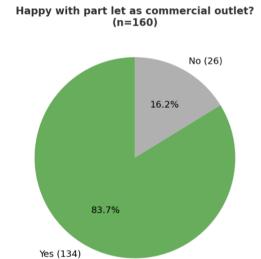
Question: If the building were converted for another use, would you like to see at least one of the toilets made available again for public use?

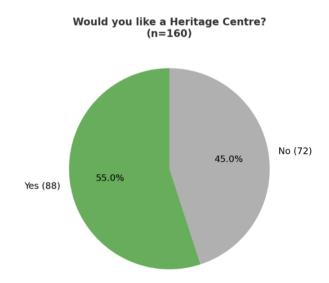
If converted, at least one public toilet retained? (n=157)



Question: Would you be happy if part of the building were let as a commercial outlet, to generate income to support the work of the Parish Council?

Question: Would you like to see part of the building used as a 'St Helens Heritage Centre'?





12) St Helens Churchyard and "Kids' Shed"

(Questions provided by St Helen's Church PCC)

The large churchyard surrounding St Helen's Church is the final resting place for many members of the village and surrounding area. It is well used by current residents visiting graves of family and friends, but also by those seeking peace and quiet, or an opportunity to study local flora and fauna, or to walk its labyrinth.

St Helen's Church employs a groundsman, and meets all the expenses involved in keeping this community space well-maintained – approximately £15k per year. For the financial year 2025/6, the Parish Council has donated £1k towards this cost.

In line with its commitment, as a Gold Eco-Church, to maintain the churchyard to the highest possible standard, both for our community and for wildlife, the church is inviting the charity 'Caring for God's Acre' to help it draw up a 3-year management plan for the area.

Overview

Community responses to the churchyard and "Kids' Shed" questions show strong support for nature-friendly management, combined with a desire to retain accessibility and neatness. There is also clear backing for grant funding or Parish Council contributions to support upkeep. The "Kids' Shed" idea was viewed positively by a majority, especially for its potential to engage young people in outdoor activities.

Churchyard – Key Findings

Question: How do you feel about the churchyard being managed to help attract more nature while remaining easy to visit?

- Most respondents rated 4 or 5 (positive) on the 1–5 scale.
- Only around **10–15**% expressed concern about less formal maintenance.
- Strong support for a balanced, "wildlife-friendly but tidy" approach.

What Matters Most in Management

Priority	Approx. % selecting
Sustainable to manage	85–90%
Easy to access all monuments	~65%
Colourful and attractive	~60%
Wildlife-friendly / biodiversity	~35%
Neatness / order	~30%

Fields of Interest

• Wildlife & biodiversity: ~70%

Local history / monuments: ~40%

• Church / faith-related interest: <10%

Volunteering & Financial Support

Practical volunteering interest is modest, but there is broad willingness for collective funding via grants or the Council.

Question	Yes	No / Unsure
Willing to volunteer for maintenance / visits / research	~25%	~75%
Willing to make a personal financial contribution	~10%	~90%
Support Parish Council contributing annually	~60%	~40%
Support grant application to fund upkeep	~55%	~45%

"Kids' Shed" Project

Question: Would a "Kids' Shed" benefit young people and the wider community by fostering an interest in the outdoors?

- ~65–70% said Yes
- Positive comments highlighted the link to nature, learning and practical skills, with support from both parents and older residents.
- Negative comments mainly related to church control or duplication of existing facilities.

Question: *Expected Use?*

• ~15% thought they or their organisation would use the space directly.

Question: Support for Grant Funding?

- ~60–65% supported pursuing a grant to fund community access and involvement.
- Villagers are open to external funding and inclusive projects on church-owned land.

13) General Village Life

In addition to the themed questions, residents were asked about everyday aspects of village life — from volunteering and local events to community behaviour and social cohesion. These responses reveal how people experience daily life in St Helens, what strengthens community ties, and where small improvements could make the biggest difference.

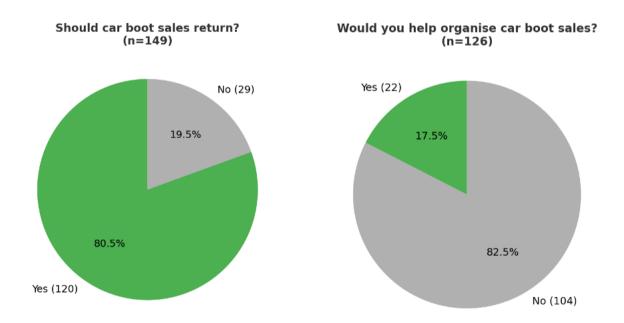
Community Events and Car Boot Sales

The majority of respondents supported the return of community events such as car boot sales, with around two-thirds expressing interest. Comments highlighted the social value of these gatherings — bringing residents together, attracting visitors, and helping local groups raise funds.

A smaller proportion were indifferent or unlikely to attend but had no objection to them taking place.

- "Car boot sales returning would bring people together."
- "I wouldn't go myself, but it's good for those who enjoy them."

Takeaway: There is strong appetite for informal, low-cost community activities that create regular opportunities for social interaction and fundraising.



Antisocial Behaviour and Village Environment

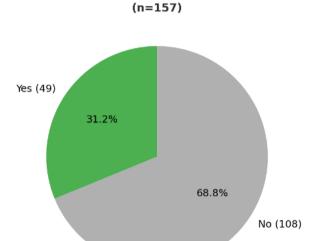
Most respondents reported few or no major issues with anti-social behaviour, though some raised concerns about speeding, litter, and inconsiderate parking. These were typically framed as practical matters rather than signs of social breakdown.

Many comments linked environmental pride with community responsibility — a clean, cared-for village was seen as reflecting local values.

- "Anything that keeps young people engaged and active helps prevent problems."
- "Tidy greens and better maintenance make such a difference."

Takeaway: Residents value a safe, well-kept village environment. Tackling small but visible issues like litter and parking could strengthen the sense of shared ownership.

Concerns about anti-social behaviour?

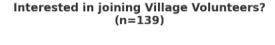


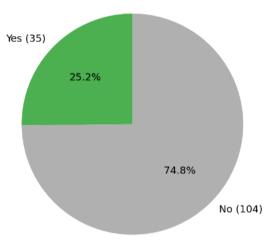
Volunteering and Community Involvement

There is clear willingness within the community to get involved. Roughly four in ten respondents said they would consider volunteering in some form — from helping at local events to practical conservation work, youth activities, or the upkeep of village spaces. Comments suggest that flexibility and clear communication are key: people are keen to help, but want to know what's needed and how their time would make a difference.

- "Happy to help, but it needs to be well-organised and clear what's involved."
- "If everyone gave a little time, it would make a big difference."

Takeaway: Building a light-touch volunteer network — perhaps using a mailing list or social-media group — could harness local goodwill and sustain community projects.





14) Potential Village Activities

The consultation invited residents to suggest what kinds of activities, clubs or community sessions they would most like to see in St Helens. Over 140 people responded, highlighting a strong appetite for social, creative, and family-friendly opportunities that build connections across age groups.

Key findings

- **High interest** in sociable, low-cost and informal events especially those combining creativity and community spirit.
- Moderate interest in physical activity or sport-based ideas, generally favoured by smaller groups.
- Lower interest in highly structured or committee-type activities.

These patterns suggest that future programmes should focus on *regular*, *easy-to-join* sessions rather than one-off or formal clubs.

Most Wanted Village Activities (Across All Venues)

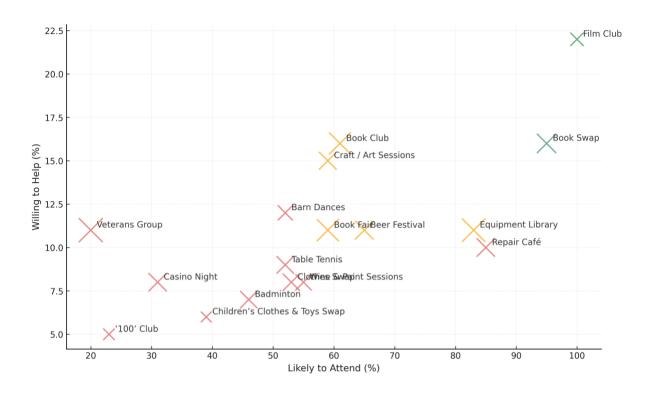
- **Top three activities** Film Club Book Swap / Club Repair Café / Equipment Library.
- **Best mix of enthusiasm and volunteer potential:** Craft/art sessions and book-related activities.
- Lowest but still notable interest: Veterans group and one-off fundraising events.

Takeaway: Residents favour simple, sociable, creative events that build community connection without heavy commitment or cost.

Most Wanted Village Activities (Across All Venues)

Rank	Activity / Idea	Likely to Attend (%)	Willing to Help (%)	Summary Insight
1	Film club	100	22	Highest overall interest; simple, social, multi-age appeal.
2	Book swap / Book club	95 / 61	16 / 16	Low-cost, easy to host; builds social connection and literacy.
3	Repair café	85	10	Strong support for practical, sustainability-focused ideas.
4	Equipment library	83	11	Strong support for practical, sustainability-focused ideas.
5	Beer festival	65	11	Seen as community-building; often linked with fundraising.
6	Craft / art sessions (evenings)	59	15	Popular with adults; potential tie-in with youth or creative hub.
7	Book fair / local authors	59	11	Strong literary interest; could link with school or library.
8	Wine and paint sessions	55	8	Relaxed, sociable events for mixed age groups.
9	Barn dances	52	12	Traditional, inter-generational fun; draws larger groups.
10	Clothes swap	53	8	Sustainable, low-cost; good use of shared indoor space.
11	Children's clothes and toys swap	39	6	Sustainable, low-cost; good use of shared indoor space.
12	Table tennis / Badminton	52 / 46	9/7	Healthy, low-barrier physical activity options.
12	Veterans group	20	11	Niche audience but valued socially.
13	Casino night	31	8	Occasional novelty event; fundraising potential.
14	'100' Club	23	5	Lower direct engagement; may appeal for fundraising only.

Most Wanted Village Activities (Across All Venues)



Bubble Chart

- X-axis = % likely to attend
- Y-axis = % willing to help
- **Bubble size** = overall popularity (attendance %)
- Colour: strong viability, medium, low

15) St Helens Village Consultation Wordle

