

Getting about the Dyfi Valley



An assessment of local people's priorities for transport

Commissioned by Communities First Bro Ddyfi
in partnership with Camad, Ecodyfi and Powys County Council

Written and researched by Lynn Sloman and Nat Taplin
Transport for Quality of Life

Transport for Quality of Life
Bwlch Y Maen, Cwm Einion, Furnace, Ceredigion SY20 8TD
01654 781358
lynsloman@merrygoround.fsnet.co.uk

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1 Summary

This report looks at how people in the Powys part of the Dyfi Valley would like to see transport improved. It identifies key priorities for action, mainly aimed at meeting local need although also likely to benefit visitors. Taken together, these actions could deliver a much better transport network, which in turn would bring benefits in other areas of concern to Communities First, especially health, training and the economy.

There is a high level of dissatisfaction with bus services in all areas except Machynlleth itself and villages immediately to the north (e.g. Aberllefenni, Ceinws). Outside these areas, between 77% and 100% of residents say the service is quite or very poor.

The main improvements people would like are:

- More frequent buses on main routes, especially Machynlleth – Newtown
- Some form of community bus two days per week for villages off main roads
- Better bus services in the evenings and on Sundays
- Buses that connect with trains
- Up to date timetables at bus stops, and better information generally
- Better maintained buses, with low floor access and space for bikes, pushchairs and shopping bags.

There were many examples of bus timetables that simply did not work – for example, allowing either 40 minutes or 4 hours for shopping in Machynlleth, or getting people to work but not back home in the evening, or vice versa.

Train services were felt to be better than buses. The main changes people would like are:

- A train request stop between Machynlleth and Caersws
- Better train services at weekends and in the evening
- Buses that meet trains
- An hourly service between Aberystwyth and Shrewsbury.

Conditions for walking and cycling were a cause of much concern. In villages on main roads, 66% said pavements were quite or very poor; and more than half said traffic speeds were much too fast. People wanted to see:

- Foot / cycle paths on main roads, especially from Machynlleth to Penegoes and Derwenlas, and also from Cwm Llinau to Cemmaes Road and in Llanbrynmair. Many people argued for these to be on *all* main roads, including for example Machynlleth – Aberystwyth.
- Lower speed limits and better enforcement in Cemmaes, Llanbrynmair, Commins Coch, Derwenlas and Machynlleth.
- Better signing and maintenance of public rights of way.
- Better cleaning of paths away from the main streets in Machynlleth.

People's opinions were sought about eight specific transport improvements. These were:

- An ‘on demand’ shared taxibus at evenings and weekends on the main roads out of Machynlleth, which 55 – 81% of people on the different corridors said they would definitely use, or might use.
- Foot / cycle paths to Penegoes and Derwenlas, which 90% of Penegoes residents and 81% of Derwenlas residents said they would definitely use.
- A car-sharing scheme, which would be most valuable for the 60% of people with jobs in Aberystwyth, Machynlleth and Newtown, especially those living in villages without a bus service.
- Safe routes to school schemes. The most useful parts of these would be foot / cycle paths from Penegoes and Derwenlas (to Machynlleth schools) and a path from the ‘Lloyd George’ bridge to the village centre (Llanbrynmair school).
- A Village Link community bus, which 50% of households in villages on possible routes said they would or might find useful. There was a strong preference for this to run on Fridays or Saturdays (in addition to market day) and to give people 2 – 3 hours in town, preferably in the morning.
- A car club. The greatest interest in this was in Machynlleth, where 84 people said they would or might find it useful.
- Wheels to Work, which about a quarter of potentially eligible households said they would or might use.

The report examined whether small-scale transport improvements could help the environment and reduce traffic. It found that for as many as a third of car journeys to work, drivers were receptive to the idea of travelling by public transport, foot or bike *and* this was currently possible or could readily be made so. The main improvements that would facilitate such a shift were:

- Targeted information about services that are already available (e.g. personalised journey planners), or information and help to start walking or cycling.
- Development and promotion of a car-sharing database.
- Outward *and* return public transport at the start and end of the working day between Newtown, Machynlleth and Tywyn, with interavailable tickets for buses and trains.
- Foot / cycle paths between Derwenlas, Penegoes and Machynlleth.

For shopping trips, of which 73% are currently made by car, a home delivery service might be popular and effective at reducing car travel.

Fifteen issues were identified as priorities for future work. These were:

- Village Link bus
- Foot / cycle paths from Machynlleth to Derwenlas and Penegoes
- Development and promotion of a car-sharing database
- Better information and marketing of public transport services and targeted promotion of walking and cycling
- More frequent bus service from Machynlleth to Newtown, possibly using demand-responsive taxibuses
- Saturday night bus or taxibus
- Review of existing bus schedules to better meet local need for work and shopping
- More accessible buses

- Increased speed enforcement and lower speed limits in villages on main roads
- Foot / cycle path in Llanbrynmair
- Development of the Machynlleth car club
- A shopping home delivery service
- Hourly train service from Aberystwyth to Shrewsbury
- Lobbying for a rail halt between Machynlleth and Caersws.

2 Introduction

This report presents the results of a consultation with people living in the Powys part of the Dyfi Valley about how they would like to see local transport services improved.

It is based on data from two sources:

- A questionnaire which was sent to all 2664 households in the area and returned by 467 households, representing a total of 1048 people.
- Three discussion groups held in the villages of Cwm Llinau, Aberhosan and Llanbrynmair.

The questionnaire (included as an appendix to this report) mainly consisted of questions for which 'tick box' responses were sought. These focussed on how people travelled at present, their opinions about the current transport situation, and how useful they thought a series of transport 'solutions' might be to them personally.

The questionnaire also asked for any additional comments on transport improvements people would ideally like to see, and in the event this was an unexpectedly rich source of information with more than 500 comments made. These are available as a separate source document, collated by topic.

The households responding to the questionnaire were broadly representative of people living in the area, as compared with the 2001 census: 23% were aged over 60, with 12% aged 70 or over and 21% aged 17 or under. Nearly half of the households lived in Machynlleth, with the rest living in villages around Machynlleth. About 20% of households did not have a car. However, the number of people without regular access to a car is higher than this figure suggests, because in households where the only car is used for a family member to get to work, other members of the household will not have day-time use of a car. This was the case in a further 15% of households.

The three discussion groups each involved between 10 and 14 people, recruited by someone in touch with Communities First who lived in or near the village. Each discussion lasted about an hour, and covered broadly the same ground as the questionnaire. Records of the discussions are available.

The discussion groups involved older people, parents, and young people, and a mixture of drivers and non-drivers.

Sections 3 and 4 of the report record what people said about the transport problems and solutions which were the focus of the questionnaire and discussion groups. In each section, we look sequentially at (a) the quantitative data from the questionnaire; (b) the qualitative, unprompted comments from the questionnaire; (c) the opinions expressed in the discussion groups. The results we report are mainly about what people would personally like to see happen, to make their own lives better or more convenient.

Section 5 asks a wider question: what do our results tell us about whether and how car traffic in the Dyfi Valley could be reduced? This is important for our global environment (because of the growing role of cars in climate change) and because of

the local environmental damage caused by too much traffic (for example the noise, danger and visual intrusion in villages on main roads).

The facts and comments gathered through this process are individually unsurprising, and many of them would be familiar to anyone who lives in the Dyfi Valley. However, taken together they present a powerful image of what is wrong with transport in this area and – more importantly – some practical and simple solutions which might help put it right. In the final section of the report, we summarise what we see as the most important of these.

It is worth reiterating that the results of this consultation – and hence the recommendations – relate specifically to what people in the *Powys* part of the Dyfi Valley told us. We did not survey residents in Gwynedd or Ceredigion. Although some of the recommendations would benefit people throughout the valley, there will clearly be some specific changes, not covered here, which residents of Gwynedd and Ceredigion would like to see.

Many of the recommendations would benefit visitors to the area as well as residents. In some cases, visitors' use of new or better services would also contribute to their financial viability.

Decent transport is important to almost all the issues of interest to Communities First, but especially health, training and the economy:

- Provision for safe walking and cycling is essential to enable people to lead active, healthy lives, reducing obesity and the risk of illnesses such as coronary heart disease.
- A good transport network enables people to access jobs and training.
- Attractive, safe routes to walk and cycle and good public transport links to visitor attractions will encourage sustainable tourism – which in turn will boost the local economy.

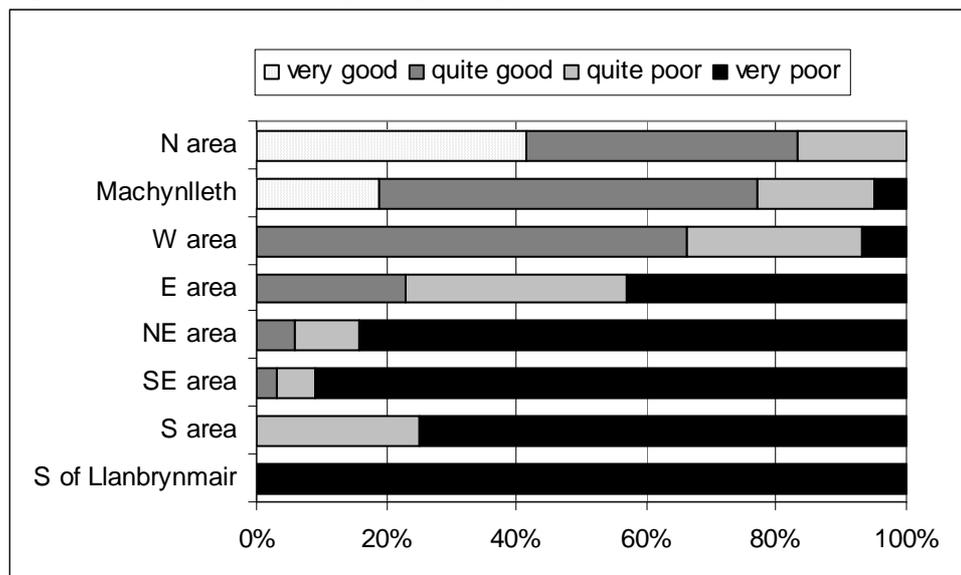
Thus, we believe that the recommendations contained in this report could make a substantial contribution to achieving the aims of Communities First.

3 What people say about existing transport

3.1 Bus services

There is a huge difference in people's opinion of the quality of local bus services, according to where they live (figure 1).

Figure 1: The bus service for my village is...



Machynlleth residents generally felt positive about the bus service, with 77% of them saying that it was quite or very good¹. People who live north of Machynlleth (in Friddgate, Pantperthog, Ceinws, Aberllefenni or Corris) felt even more positive about bus services, with 82% saying that they were quite or very good. This is perhaps not surprising given the more frequent services in this corridor. West of Machynlleth, Derwenlas residents also felt positive about bus services, with 67% saying they were quite good.

It should be noted that the data was collected at a time when there were hourly buses between Machynlleth and Aberystwyth via Derwenlas. This has recently been cut to a two-hourly service. It is unlikely that Machynlleth and Derwenlas residents would feel so positive about bus services following this cutback. The timetable north of Machynlleth has also been cut since the survey, although not so severely.

Elsewhere, people had a much lower opinion of bus services:

- In villages on the main road between Machynlleth and Newtown (Felingerrig, Penegoes, Cemmas Road, Commins Coch, Llanbrynmair, Dolfach and Talerddig), 77% said the bus service was quite or very poor.
- Among people living NE of Machynlleth (Llanwrin, Cemmas, Cwm Llinau and Aberangell), 95% said the service was quite or very poor.

¹ Throughout section 3, the reported percentages relate to respondents who expressed an opinion about current services, and do not include people who expressed no view.

- In villages SE of Machynlleth (Abercegir, Aberhosan, Darowen, Dylife, Forge, Melinbyrhedyn and Tal y Wern), 97% said the service was quite or very poor.
- All (100%) of Glaspwll residents felt the service was quite or very poor.
- All (100%) of people living in the villages south of Llanbrynmair (Tafolwern, Llan, Bont Dolgadfan and Pennant) felt the service was *very* poor.

Many households made comments related to the bus service, most often related to the frequency of buses. The key themes are summarised in table 1.

Table 1: Improvements in bus services

<i>Better bus services on Sundays, on bank holidays and in the evening (25)</i>	Regular bus (and train) services on Sundays and bank holidays and a late evening public transport service between Machynlleth, Aberystwyth and Newtown for nights out were requested.
<i>Better integration of bus and train services (22)</i>	People pointed out the frustration of buses that were scheduled so they arrived just too late to connect with train services, resulting in a two hour wait. Synchronising bus – bus connections was also mentioned.
<i>Rescheduling of timetables (16)</i>	There were many comments pointing out that buses (and trains) ran at times which simply did not meet people’s main travel needs: for example arriving too late for work, or with the outward and return buses giving either a very short or very long time for shopping in Machynlleth.
<i>More frequent bus services on main routes (16)</i>	Most comments in this category related to the bus service between Machynlleth and Newtown (serving Penegoes, Cemmaes Road, Commins Coch, Llanbrynmair, Talerddig), which people felt should be more frequent.
<i>Better bus services for villages not currently served (15)</i>	Residents of Darowen, Abercegir, Aberhosan, Cemmaes, Cwm Llinau and Bont Dolgadfan asked for a bus service, with many suggesting that a better post bus or a two day per week service or the proposed Village Link service would be welcome.
<i>Generally more frequent / cheaper bus services (13)</i>	13 people simply said ‘more frequent buses’ or ‘at least hourly bus services’. Several felt bus travel was too expensive and asked for cheaper fares.
<i>Buses to destinations that are not currently served (6)</i>	The near impossibility of reaching south Powys by bus, especially Llandrindod Wells and Llanidloes, was mentioned.
<i>Buses should carry bikes (6)</i>	Six people suggested it would be helpful if buses were able to carry bicycles.

Figures in brackets refer to number of people commenting on the issue. Only issues mentioned by at least six people are listed.

People's frustration at poor bus services came across strongly in the discussion groups – and not surprisingly, many of the themes were the same as those that came up in the household survey. In Cwm Llinau, the attitude of people at the meeting was summed up by one man who said:

'Rubbish! What transport?'

On weekdays, Cwm Llinau has one bus into Machynlleth in the morning, and one bus back mid-afternoon. There is an extra service on market day. The bus service is of no use to anyone who works in Machynlleth, and, apart from on Wednesdays, it is not satisfactory for getting to the shops. As another person in Cwm Llinau pointed out:

'I would use the bus if there was a return bus at a convenient time. You can get in but there's nothing to get you back again. You arrive in Machynlleth at 8.30 am – which means you are there before anything's open – and you can't get back till 3.30 pm. 8.30 to 3.30 is no good.'

In Aberhosan, the situation is even worse. There are no bus services, apart from the post bus which is a very slow way to make the trip into town. One member of the group in Aberhosan said:

'That's all we've got, and that doesn't go when we want.'

Some of the older people at the Aberhosan meeting remembered that the village had once had a well-used bus service:

'There used to be a bus, but it stopped in about 1964. It was Wednesdays and Saturdays, one journey a day into Machynlleth. It stopped at the ends of all the lanes. The bus in was at about 11am and return about 5.45. And Saturday it was 1pm out and back at 6pm and it was quite full. But later on people had their cars and it went altogether.'

In Llanbryn-mair, people do have a bus service of sorts, but there was great dissatisfaction with it, as it does not run at the times people need to travel and the buses are old and frequently break down. One woman summed up the pros and cons of the Llanbryn-mair bus service:

'I'm a keen bus user and I do want to make them viable. Some positive things – we have a timetable now at the stop which is very useful and we have excellent drivers who will help people with their shopping. But there are frequent breakdowns. Modern buses have low steps – that would be marvellous. You can't get a bike on a bus – that would be a good summer thing. They're important for work, college, shopping. But at the moment they are very inconvenient for shopping – if you go to Machynlleth you either have 40 minutes or 4 hours. In the evening you can get into Machynlleth but you can't get back. The telephone enquiry number doesn't always answer. There's no Sunday service. We really need real-time information, to know am I waiting for nothing.'

The main comments on buses in the discussion groups were:

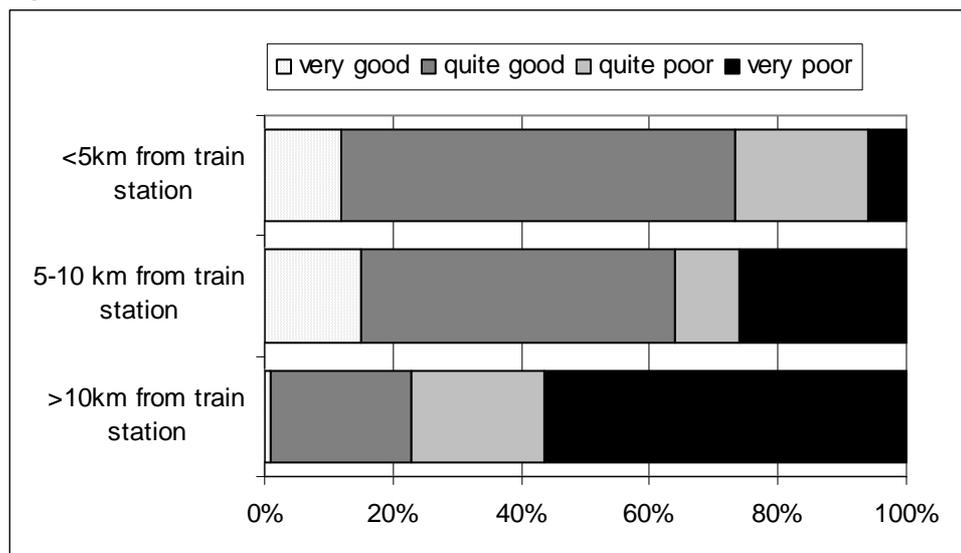
- Bus services on the Machynlleth – Newtown route are simply not frequent enough to be useful. People also expressed dismay at the recent service cutback between Machynlleth and Aberystwyth.
- Villages off main roads (and even some that are on main roads, such as Cwm Llinau and Cemmaes) have an extremely poor or non-existent bus service. The school bus to Cwm Llinau is used as a public bus, but this is not satisfactory as it gets very full.
- The buses that do run are inconveniently timed, both for work and shopping. For people working in Machynlleth and living in villages on the main road between Machynlleth and Llanbryn-mair, there is no bus service to get in to work for 9am, although there is a bus shortly after 5pm to get home. For people working in Newtown, the opposite is the case: you can get to work, but there is no bus home at a sensible time. For shopping in Machynlleth, the buses are timed so that you either have a very short time to do shopping, or far too long.
- Many bus stops do not have timetables, and so people simply do not know what services *are* available. Timetables had recently been put up at the bus stop in Llanbryn-mair, and this was appreciated.
- Bus services should be able to divert off the main roads to drop people at their homes.
- Buses between Machynlleth and Newtown are not low-floor accessible vehicles, and this makes them difficult to use for older people and people with mobility difficulties. They are also old, uncomfortable, and regularly break down.
- Older people appreciate the fact that bus travel is free – although in fact many of them make little use of it because there are so few services. In Aberhosan, older people valued the taxicard, but in Llanbryn-mair there was a feeling that because it is such a long journey by taxi to Machynlleth or Newtown, travel in this way was still very expensive.
- Given the low frequency of public transport services, it would be very helpful to be able to carry a bike on the bus. Space for bikes could also be used for pushchairs and groceries.
- The quality of local bus drivers was highly praised.

3.2 Train services

As with bus services, the questionnaire asked people to rank the train service on a scale between ‘very good’ and ‘very poor’. In analysing what people said, we divided the questionnaire returns into three groups according to how close people lived to Machynlleth train station: less than 5km, 5-10km and over 10km. The results are shown in figure 2.

There was little difference in perceptions of train services between the first two groups, with 74% of those who lived closest to the station and 64% of those who lived 5-10km from the station saying that train services were very or quite good. However, people living over 10km from the station did not have such a high opinion of the service, with only 24% saying it was very or quite good and more than half (57%) considering it very poor. The villages in this third group were Llanbryn-mair, Cemmaes, Commins Coch, Cwm Llinau, Dylife, Aberangell, Bont Dolgadfan, Dolfach, Llan, Pennant, Tafolwern and Talerddig, most of which would benefit from a train halt at Llanbryn-mair or nearby.

Figure 2: The train service in the area is...



Respondents to the survey made a good number of comments about train service improvements, although fewer than for buses (table 2). By far the most common request was for a new request stop between Machynlleth and Caersws, with most people asking for this at Llanbrynmair but some suggesting Cemmaes Road, Carno or Talerddig.

Table 2: Train service improvements

<i>New train halt (34)</i>	Many people asked for the train station at Llanbrynmair to be re-opened, with some suggesting Cemmaes Road, Carno or Talerddig.
<i>Better train services at weekends and evenings (23)</i>	A decent train service on Sundays and later evening trains (and buses) were requested.
<i>Better integration of bus and train services (17)</i>	Better timed links between trains and buses were often mentioned as essential to enable people to use the train network.
<i>More frequent train service (17)</i>	An hourly service between Aberystwyth and Shrewsbury was requested.

Figures in brackets refer to number of people commenting on the issue. Only issues mentioned by at least six people are listed.

The discussion groups spent less time discussing train services than buses. On the whole, the Cwm Llinau and Aberhosan groups felt happy with the train service. People felt that the trains were clean and that the staff were helpful. The real-time information display installed at Machynlleth last year was appreciated. The main negative comments were that the trains were sometimes late, and that they could be overcrowded. One person said:

'I've often found the train in the evening very crowded. It would be better if they put an extra carriage on.'

People also felt that *getting* to the train station was quite difficult. In Cwm Llinau two young people said that they relied on lifts to the station from their parents when they wanted to use the train to go shopping in Aberystwyth or Shrewsbury. In Aberhosan, one person said:

'The trains are very good. But to get down to them is the trouble.'

In Llanbrynmair, the issue of getting access to the station is particularly acute, since Machynlleth and Caersws stations are both some distance away. People who drove to Caersws for the train felt that more secure car parking was needed there:

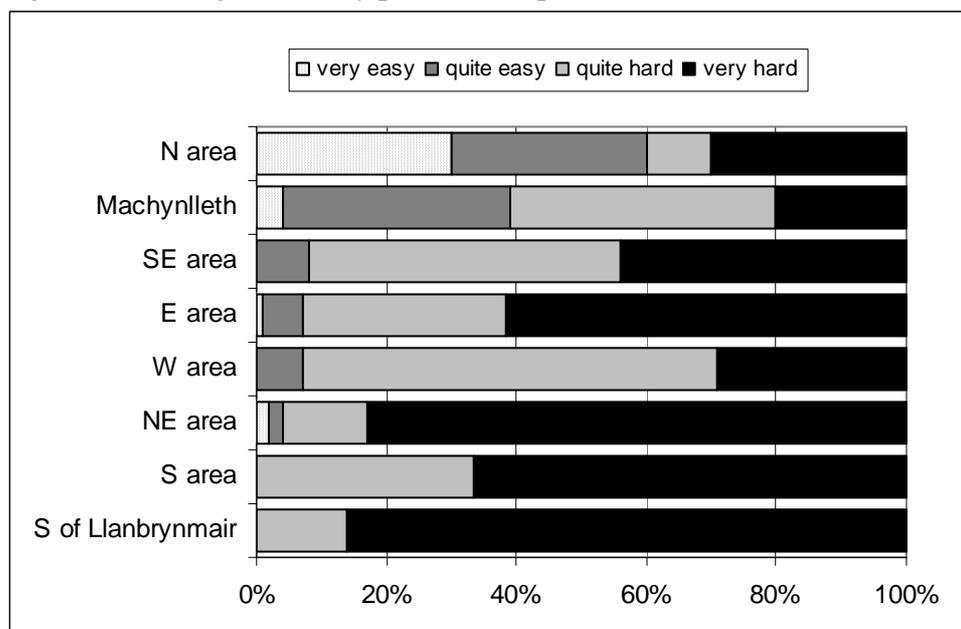
'If they only provided a decent car park at Caersws that was safe, I'm sure more people would use it. But you need secure parking. They have it in Newtown.'

3.3 Getting around by public transport at weekends

We have already seen that the lack of public transport at weekends and in the evening is a source of frustration, with many people commenting that they would like better Sunday services or late night buses or trains back from Aberystwyth or Newtown.

The survey included a specific question about travel by public transport at weekends. Almost everywhere, 90 – 100% of households said that getting around by public transport at weekends was quite or very hard (figure 3). The only areas where a significant number of people felt that there was a viable public transport service at weekends were Machynlleth (where 39% said weekend travel was quite or very easy) and the villages north of Machynlleth on the bus route to Corris and beyond (where 55% said it was quite or very easy).

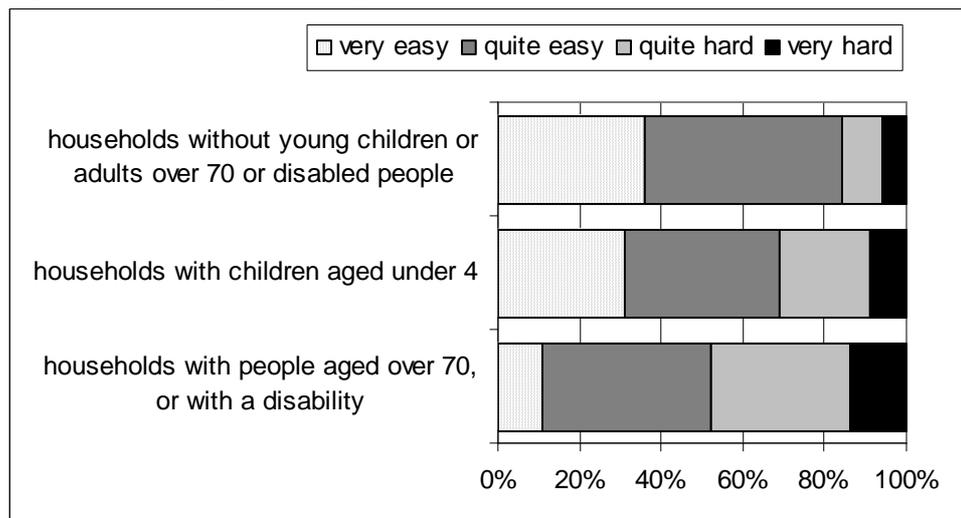
Figure 3: Getting around by public transport at weekends is...



3.4 Getting on and off buses

Some of the buses in the Dyfi Valley are low floor, but many are not. This poses problems for disabled and older people, those travelling with young children, and even people who are carrying heavy shopping. Households including disabled and older people are significantly more likely to report problems getting on and off buses, with 48% saying this is quite or very hard (figure 4). In households with young children, 31% say getting on and off buses is quite or very hard.

Figure 4: Getting on and off buses is...



Some questionnaire respondents asked specifically for low floor buses:

'Buses with easier access for wheelchairs / pushchairs (main reason I don't use buses) or more helpful drivers (some are, not all).'

The Llanbrynmair and Cwm Llinau discussion groups both included at least one person who had difficulty using the bus service because of the steps:

'I think it is lousy to be honest. I've done a letter to Arriva and told them all we get is reject buses from the inner cities. People like me – and another six regular people in Carno – can hardly get on it.' (Llanbrynmair)

'I don't like the ordinary bus because the first step is high. You can't get on and off. They've got low buses in Shrewsbury and Wyn Lloyd [Lloyd's Coaches] uses a low floor bus at Ceinws.' (Cwm Llinau)

3.5 Getting around on foot or by bike

The survey asked three questions about how safe or pleasant it feels to get around the area by foot or bike. Households were asked about:

- The quality of pavements in the places where they wanted to walk
- How safe it feels to cycle
- Whether traffic speed on the main roads through villages felt 'about right', 'a bit too fast', or 'much too fast'.

In our analysis, we looked at the data in two ways. First we checked whether there was a difference in people’s answers according to where they lived (figures 5-7). We then looked at whether certain groups of people – parents with young children and older people – were more concerned about speed and safety (figure 8).

Figure 5: Where I want to walk, the pavements are...

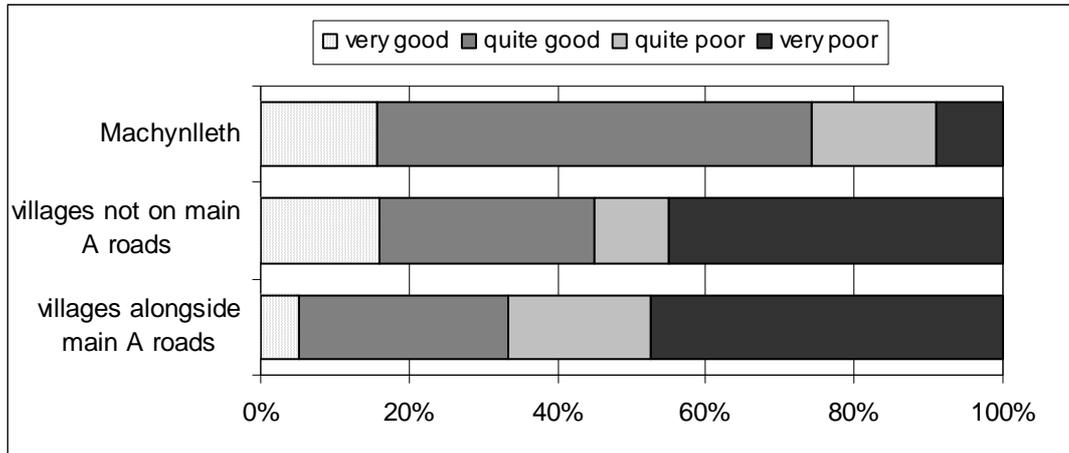


Figure 6: Getting around by bike feels...

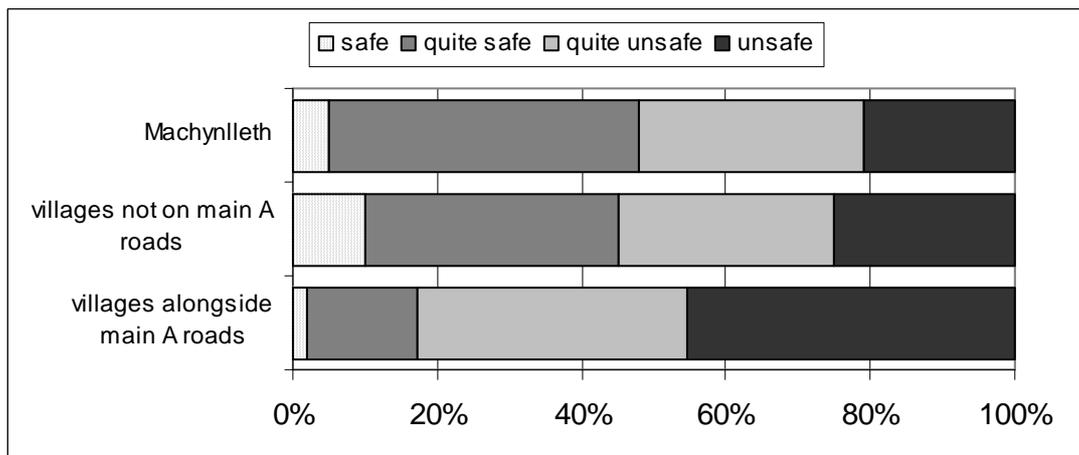
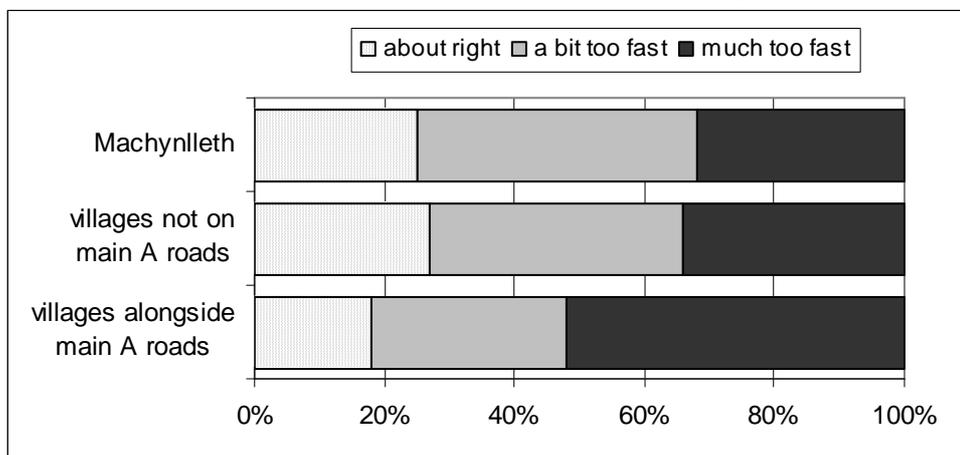


Figure 7: Traffic speed on the main roads through villages is...

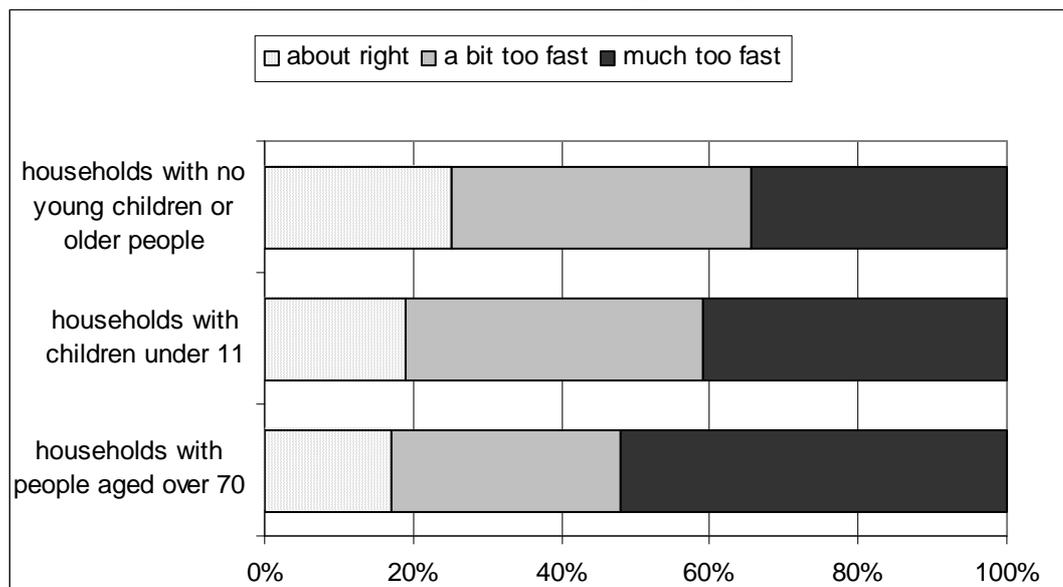


People living in villages alongside the main ‘A’ roads (Cemmaes, Cemmaes Road, Commins Coch, Cwm Llinau, Derwenlas, Llanbryn-mair, Penegoes, Dolfach, Felingerrig, Ffriddgate, Pantperthog and Talerddig) were the most concerned about these issues. In this group, 66% said pavements were quite or very poor; 83% said getting around by bike felt unsafe or quite unsafe; and 82% said traffic speeds on main roads through villages were a bit too fast or much too fast (with more than half saying speeds were *much* too fast).

People living in Machynlleth or in villages away from the main roads were less concerned about these issues, but still not happy about them. The proportion saying traffic speeds were a bit or much too fast was 75% in Machynlleth and 73% in villages away from ‘A’ roads. The proportion saying that getting around by bike felt unsafe or quite unsafe was 52% in Machynlleth and 55% in villages away from ‘A’ roads. Finally, the proportion saying that pavements were quite or very poor was 26% in Machynlleth and 55% in villages away from ‘A’ roads. Thus the only question which revealed reasonably high levels of satisfaction was on the quality of pavements – and then, only amongst people living in Machynlleth.

We might have expected to find much greater concern about the safety of walking or cycling amongst older people and families with young children, but in fact concern about this was shared by all age groups. In the three household types we looked at (households with someone over 70, households with children under 11 and households with no young children or retired people), the proportion thinking that traffic speeds were either a bit or much too fast was similar, at 75 – 80% (figure 8). The proportion thinking pavements were quite or very poor was also similar, at 43 – 47%. The only substantial difference in attitudes related to getting around by bike, where older households were more likely to say that getting around by bike was quite unsafe or unsafe (76%), compared to families with children under 11 (68%) and households without children or retired people (60%).

Figure 8: Traffic speed on the main roads through villages is...



The poor – or in some cases, life-threatening – conditions for walking and cycling were one of the most frequently mentioned issues in the survey. Comments are summarised in table 3. By far the most common request was for much better provision for cycling and walking along main roads, with 103 people asking for this. Foot/cycle paths linking Machynlleth to Derwenlas and Penegoes were mentioned most often, probably in part because these had been listed earlier in the questionnaire. However, it was also clear that many people had aspirations for a much more extensive cycle and pedestrian network alongside the main roads. As one person commented:

‘Pavements to all roads and lanes for foot and cycle. These could be constructed as an ongoing programme. Roads and lanes are now only ‘safe’ for cars etc. Remember 50 years ago there were no motorways. It’s time to improve our rural network for pedestrians.’

Another typical comment illustrates why people feel so strongly about this issue:

‘A footpath from Penegoes to Machynlleth, which would be used by a lot of people. At the moment we are afraid to walk to town because of speeding traffic. Since I have lived in Penegoes, in the summer months you are housebound because you are afraid to walk along the road (so come on let’s get a footpath)!!!’

Several people pointed out that new paths must be continuous and easy to use. The Machynlleth – Ffriddgate cycle path aroused particular comment because it has five gates that cannot be opened without dismounting. This route is particularly useful for people working at or visiting the Centre for Alternative Technology, and could potentially encourage substantial flows of cyclists, especially if extended along the gentle gradient of the old tramway. One person said of it:

[We need] more cycle paths which are useable. The section of cycle path which runs along the river by the Machynlleth bridge has 5 gates on it which you have to get off your bike to open, therefore most cyclists don’t bother with the short path that comes out on a dangerous stretch of road.

Table 3: Improvements for walking and cycling

<i>Cycle paths on main roads outside Machynlleth (67)</i>	Very many people wanted safe cycle paths alongside the main roads. People wanted <i>continuous</i> tracks (with the Millennium path to Ffriddgate often cited as an example of poor quality). Foot/cycle paths between Penegoes, Derwenlas and Machynlleth were most often requested. Others asked for cycle tracks between Machynlleth and Aberystwyth, Machynlleth and Corris, and Cwm Llinau and Cemmaes Road.
<i>Footpaths along main roads (36)</i>	Many people asked for pavements or footpaths along main roads, especially Penegoes – Machynlleth and Derwenlas – Machynlleth, but also Cwm Llinau – Cemmaes – Cemmaes Road and from Machynlleth to Taliesin and to Aberdyfi.
<i>Lower speed limits / better enforcement (20)</i>	5 people in Cemmaes asked for a 30 mph limit or traffic calming. 5 people wanted better enforcement

	of the 30mph limit in Machynlleth. Speed humps or better enforcement of the existing limit was also requested in Llanbryn-mair, Commins Coch and Derwenlas.
<i>Better signing and maintenance of public rights of way (16)</i>	Better upkeep and signing of footpaths around Machynlleth was requested. Some clearing of blocked paths is needed.
<i>Better cleaning of pavements in Machynlleth (8)</i>	Away from the main streets, more frequent cleaning to remove litter and dog mess is needed.

Figures in brackets refer to number of people commenting on the issue. Only issues mentioned by at least six people are listed.

All three discussion groups included one or more participants who used a bike to get around, or would like to. In Cwm Llinau, one of the women said that she would like to cycle, but was put off by the traffic: *'I would cycle, but I'm frightened off the main road, especially where there's a bend.'* In Aberhosan, seven group members cycled regularly. They obviously felt that cycling was a convenient way of travelling, but pointed out that it would be even more useful if trains and buses were geared to taking bikes.

People did not like walking on the main roads. They felt that traffic speeds were too high and there was no safe space. Typical comments were:

'It's not safe to walk on the main road – so you sit in the car. Walking you can be squashed in the hedge.' (Cwm Llinau)

'I've observed speeds of 50 + [miles per hour] and I've had to dive into the hedge myself.' (Aberhosan)

'I walk with my daughter down to school [along the main road] and the drivers don't slow down at all.' (Llanbryn-mair)

All the groups felt that better pavements and cycle paths were needed (though, as one cyclist pointed out, these must be properly designed – that is, they should be continuous and not require cyclists to dismount frequently, or give up at narrow sections of the road where they are most needed). They also wanted to see better speed enforcement. In Llanbryn-mair, one person said:

'The speed limit of 40mph – it's taken 20 years to get that. But then it's the enforcement of it. You can come along this road [past the school] – it has a 30mph limit, but people drive at 50mph.'

We discussed what action might be taken to tackle the problem of speeding – for example, flashing warning signs. One person commented: *'The Community Council has brought this issue of speeding up many times, and even contributed towards a speed gun, but the police don't target this area enough.'*

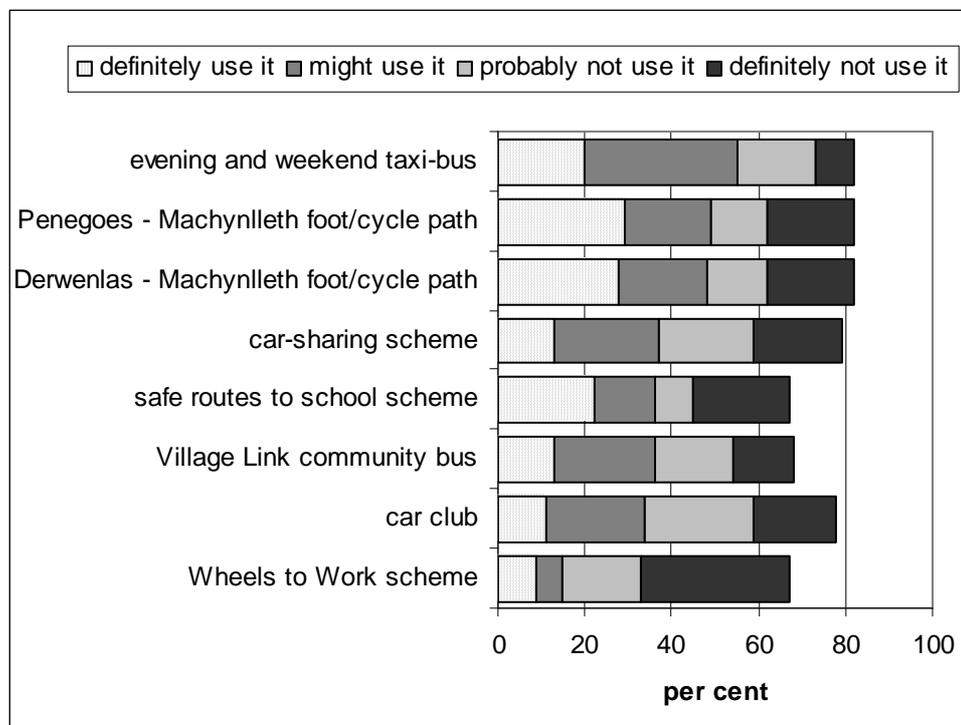
4 What people say about some possible solutions

The questionnaire suggested eight possible solutions to transport difficulties in the Dyfi Valley, and asked respondents to comment on how useful they would find each one. The same solutions were also discussed at the meetings in Aberhosan, Cwm Llinau and Llanbrynmair. The solutions were:

- Evening and weekend taxi-bus on the main roads out of Machynlleth. It would have a time-table, but only run if at least one person phoned to request it.
- Foot / cycle path alongside the main road between Penegoes and Machynlleth.
- Foot / cycle path alongside the main road between Derwenlas and Machynlleth.
- Car-sharing scheme. This would ‘match’ people with others making regular trips in the same direction (e.g. to work). People take turns to drive, or share costs.
- ‘Safe routes to school’ scheme with safe cycle paths and zebra crossings.
- Regular Village Link bus between Machynlleth and villages that are off the main roads. Two days per week, two trips each way, cost about £2 return.
- ‘Car club’ offering use of a community car and / or van for an hour or the day, for about 30p per mile.
- ‘Wheels to Work’ scheme to lend a bike or moped to young or unemployed people to get to work or training.

Figure 9 shows the overall reaction of all people filling in the questionnaire to the different ideas².

Figure 9: Possible solutions to transport problems in the Dyfi Valley



² In this and subsequent graphs, the percentages relate to all respondents, including those who expressed no view. This avoids any risk of artificially inflating the figures for the proportion of the total population who might actually use a particular service.

It should be noted that some of the solutions are only relevant to some people. For example the Village Link bus is only relevant for people who live in villages away from main roads, and Wheels to Work is only relevant to families with young or unemployed people. In later sections we look at how useful the different solutions would be to the ‘target’ population. However, at this stage it is worth noting that the solutions to emerge as the most popular overall are:

- Weekend / evening taxi-bus, which 55% of the people returning the questionnaire said they would definitely use, or might use.
- Foot / cycle paths linking Derwenlas and Penegoes to Machynlleth, which 48% and 49% of people said they would definitely use or might use.

The car-sharing scheme, safe routes to schools, Village Link community bus and car club all attracted similar interest, with 34 – 37% of people saying they would definitely use them, or might use them.

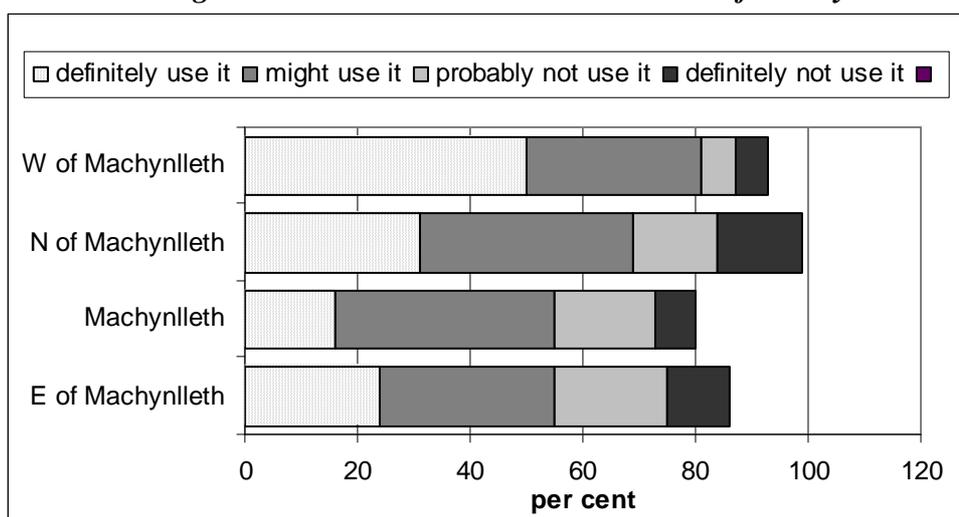
Wheels to Work was the least popular overall, with 15% of households saying it would definitely be useful or might be useful to them.

Subsequent sections look at each of the solutions in more detail.

4.1 Evening and weekend taxi-bus

An evening and weekend taxi-bus on the main roads out of Machynlleth is only useful to residents of Machynlleth itself and the villages that are on or close to the main bus corridors. Figure 10 shows that amongst these groups, there is very strong interest in a service of this type.

Figure 10: Evening / weekend taxi-bus on main roads out of Machynlleth



- West of Machynlleth, 50% of the people returning the questionnaire said they would definitely use such a service, and a further 31% said they might use it (though this is based on only 16 responses because the survey included Derwenlas but not settlements in Ceredigion).

- North of Machynlleth, 31% said they would definitely use this service, and a further 38% said they might (though again based on only 13 responses and does not include people living in Gwynedd).
- Along the main road east of Machynlleth, 24% said they would definitely use this service, and 31% might use it.
- In Machynlleth itself, 16% would definitely use the service and 39% might use it.

In Cwm Llinau, people were doubtful that a main road taxi-bus would work. They felt that if it was scheduled to run every hour on request, there would always be a driver waiting for a phone call to see if the bus should run. However, one person saw ‘*a late-night bus to get the young people home in the evening*’ as a top priority. It was pointed out that there is something on almost every night, and at the moment the Young Farmers (or other groups) have to pay to hire a bus.

Something close to a late-night taxi-bus service already exists in Aberhosan, as an informal arrangement with eight people each paying £1.50. It works well: ‘*It’s a good idea on a Saturday, and you get loads of fun in the taxi. My husband asks for it about 12 o’clock. But you have to find your own way down – they take turns to take the car down.*’

In Llanbrynmair, people felt that a taxi-bus might be useful, but that it should ideally have a flexible route and not be confined to the main roads: ‘*It would be OK if it could pick people up in Bont Dolgadfan and Pennant.*’

There was some discussion as to whether a taxi-bus might be better than the existing (generally derided) conventional bus service. People in Llanbrynmair would ideally like a bus service that runs every two hours. One person commented that the problem with a very infrequent service is that it is so unattractive that it gets little use: ‘*The big problem is that not enough people will use it. So a minibus that is more frequent would be better.*’

The group also suggested that: ‘*The bus should look distinctive – if it was a new bus with comfortable seats, people would trust it more.*’

4.2 Foot / cycle paths from Machynlleth to Penegoes and Derwenlas

As discussed earlier, foot / cycle paths on main roads were the improvements most frequently suggested by questionnaire respondents. Their popularity is borne out by responses to the specific questions about the Penegoes – Machynlleth and Derwenlas – Machynlleth paths.

The popularity of these schemes is even greater amongst those people most likely to benefit, the residents of Penegoes, Derwenlas and Machynlleth. Of 20 respondents living in Penegoes and Felingerrig, 18 (90%) said that they would definitely use a foot / cycle path to Machynlleth. There was also very strong support from people living in Machynlleth, where 40% of respondents said they would definitely use such a path and 27% might do so.

A Derwenlas – Machynlleth foot / cycle path was also very popular, with 13 of the 16 respondents from Derwenlas (81%) saying they would definitely use it and a further 19% saying they might use it. Amongst Machynlleth residents, 42% said they would definitely use it and a further 23% might do so.

Figure 11: Penegoes – Machynlleth foot / cycle path

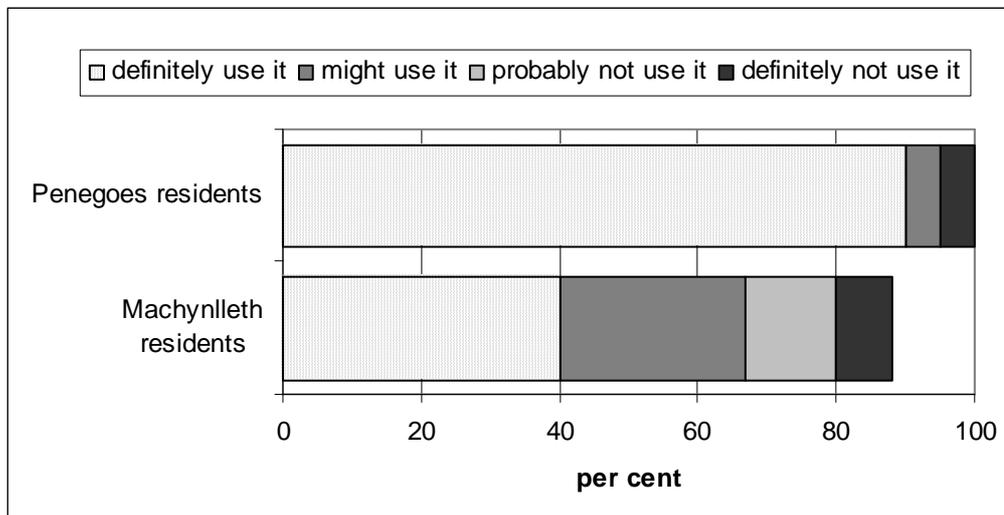
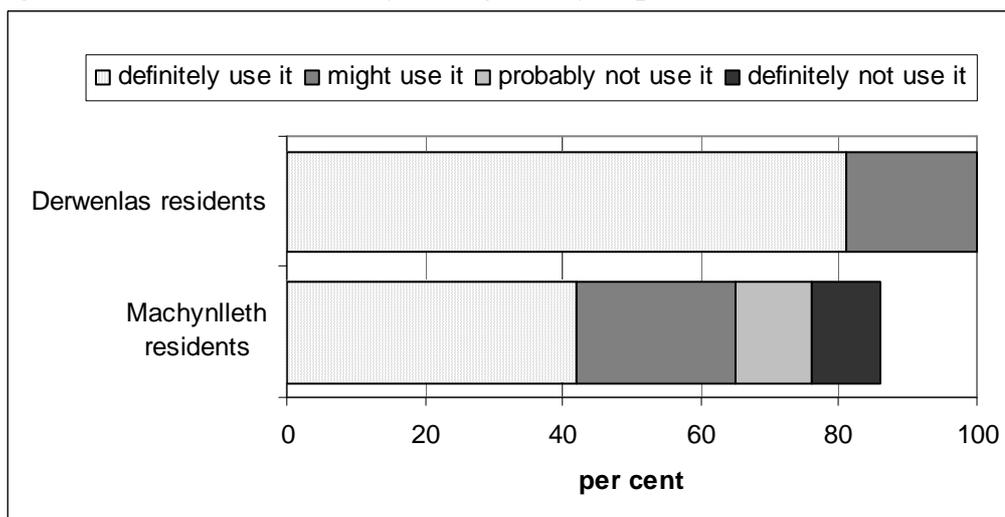


Figure 12: Derwenlas – Machynlleth foot / cycle path



4.3 Car sharing scheme

A total of 62 people (13%) said they would definitely use a car-sharing scheme and another 111 (24%) said they might do so. Looking at the patterns of regular journeys to work and college, it is clear that the greatest potential for car-sharing is for people who travel regularly to Aberystwyth, Newtown or Machynlleth. For example:

- 16 people at work or college in Aberystwyth are interested in car-sharing (i.e. said they would definitely or might use it). Of these, 12 live in Machynlleth, two in Forge and one each in Derwenlas and Aberhosan. Two of the Machynlleth residents currently take the bus but the rest all drive.

- 21 people at work or college in Newtown are interested in car-sharing. Of these, 7 live in Machynlleth, 10 live in Llanbrynmair or the villages immediately to the south of it or Talerddig; and the others in Derwenlas, Penegoes or Cemmaes Road. Four people currently take the bus but the rest all drive.
- 9 people who work in Machynlleth and live in the villages to the NE (Cwm Llinau, Aberangell, Cemmaes and Cemmaes Road) are interested in car-sharing. Eight of them currently drive and the other person takes a taxi.

Although Aberystwyth, Newtown and Machynlleth are the destinations with the most potential for car-sharing, the survey revealed several small-scale examples of people who live in the same village, make the same regular commute, and would like to car-share. For example, there are two people living in Penegoes who both commute by car to Welshpool; two people who live in Machynlleth and commute to Llanidloes; and three people who live in Penegoes and work in Machynlleth.

Clearly it will not always be possible to make car-sharing ‘matches’. Some people may work part-time or work irregular hours. However, these figures represent the minimum potential for car-sharing, as some of the questionnaire respondents who expressed interest in car-sharing did not complete the section of the survey asking where they worked.

The three discussion groups revealed that a lot of informal car-sharing already takes place:

‘I’ve got a car but I never go to town without ringing Mrs X to say I’m going, does she want to go. But if the doctor tells me I’m not to drive any more, it would be the end of our arrangement.’ (Aberhosan)

‘There are a couple of men who both work in the same place, and they share. I think people do it anyway.’ (Llanbrynmair)

However, some people were sceptical that any car-sharing database to ‘match’ people regularly making similar trips was necessary. This was mainly because it was felt to be too complicated, but there was also a perception that if people wanted to share, they would ‘do it anyway’ and no database was needed:

‘Sometimes you go to Newtown and see three or four households from Bont there, but it would be complicated to synchronise them.’ (Llanbrynmair)

‘It’s the sort of arrangement people make themselves – I can’t see the database working.’ (Llanbrynmair)

Nevertheless, other group members recognised that a car-sharing scheme might be useful:

‘If there was somewhere you could find out where people were doing a regular trip, that would be handy.’ (Aberhosan)

4.4 Safe routes to school

Just under a quarter of households had children of school age. Amongst these households, a safe routes to school scheme was very popular, with 41% saying they would definitely use it and 23% saying they might use it.

Amongst the households with school-age children that expressed interest in a safe routes to school scheme, 35 had children at school in Machynlleth, eight in Cemmaes Road and two in Llanbrynmair, with the others at school further afield (e.g. Tywyn, Aberystwyth and Llanidloes) or with the school not specified.

The survey results suggest that pupils who live in Machynlleth and go to school in the town almost all walk (77% walk; 4% bike; 19% car), and almost all of them (85%) say that the journey is 'very easy'. Almost all of them (96%) also say they would definitely use, or might use, a safe routes to school scheme. However, the fact that so many children already walk suggests that the benefits of a safe routes to school scheme (in terms of modal shift to walking or cycling, increased healthy activity, or greater road safety) might be quite limited if it was focussed on the roads in the immediate area around the schools.

Children who are at school in Machynlleth but live elsewhere get to school either by car (50%) or by bus (50%). None walk or cycle. In this group, 56% say they would definitely use, or might use, a safe routes to school scheme. This is lower than the figure for households living in Machynlleth, presumably because some households live too far away for their children to get to school by foot or bike. The households expressing interest in such a scheme live in Penegoes, Felingerrig, Commins Coch, Cemmaes Road, Melinbyrhedyn, Derwenlas and Glaspwll. Shared foot / cycle paths along the main roads into Machynlleth from these villages might have significant benefit in enabling older children (and accompanied younger children) to cycle to school.

Among the households with children at school at Cemmaes Road, 73% (eight out of 11 responses) say they would definitely use, or might use, a safe routes to school scheme. Most of the pupils currently get to school by car (73% car; 18% walk; 9% bus). The households expressing interest in a safe routes to school scheme live in Cemmaes Road itself, Cemmaes, Cwm Llinau, Darowen and Ceinws.

We had only four responses from households with children at school at Llanbrynmair. All of these live in Llanbrynmair, with two travelling to school by car and two by school minibus. Two households said that they would definitely use a safe routes to school scheme.

All three discussion groups were enthusiastic about safe routes to school schemes. In Cwm Llinau, two members of the group who attended Bro Ddyfi school said that most of their schoolfriends who lived in Machynlleth either walked or cycled (confirming the results of our survey). Those who lived in Penegoes did not cycle at the moment, and many of them came by car. For these pupils, a safe cycle path might make a real difference to their choice of transport.

In Aberhosan, one group member disapproved of the tendency of parents living in Machynlleth to drive their children to school, and pointed to the chaos outside the school gate caused by even a small number of people doing this:

'I find people take their cars to pick up their children from school but they only live a few doors down. Definitely they should look at cutting the number of vehicles outside the school.'

In Llanbrynmair, one group member attended the primary school. She thought that of the 43 children at the school, about six walked. Quite a number came by school minibus, but she thought that most children came by car. Her mother commented:

'It would be very nice to think that the children could consider coming on their bicycles. But there's no bike shed. And the road is too narrow and not safe.'

There was a discussion about improvements which would make it easier for children (and adults) to walk or cycle. People were particularly keen to see a shared pavement / cycle path from the 'Lloyd George' bridge over the railway into Llanbrynmair:

'We have approached the community council about putting pavement up to the bridge. There are quite a few people who walk up there this time of year. The space is there.'

'It would be of benefit to a number of people, including those at the caravan site. Some of the children would be able to use it [to get to school].'

4.5 Village Link community bus

CAMAD has recently been investigating the idea of a community bus which would operate two days per week and serve villages which are off the main roads and therefore without a bus service. They have identified two main areas which could be served by such a bus:

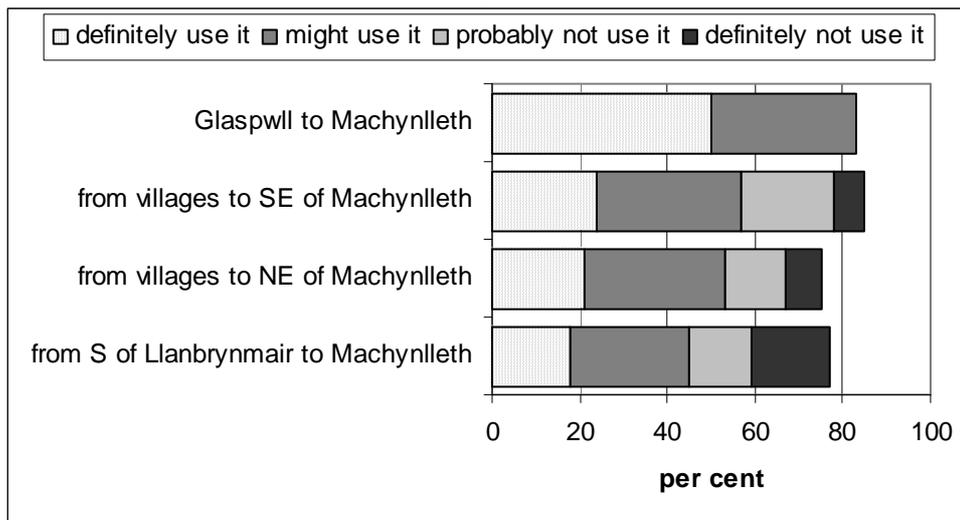
- the villages NE of Machynlleth (Llanwrin, Cemmaes, Cemmaes Road, Cwm Llinau and Aberangell)
- those SE of Machynlleth (Abercegir, Aberhosan, Darowen, Melinbyrhedyn, Tal y Wern and Forge).

We looked at the interest in a community bus in these two areas and in two other areas:

- along a route from the villages south of Llanbrynmair (Bont Dolgadfan, Pennant, Llan and Tafolwern) and then via the main road (Llanbrynmair, Commins Coch, Cemmaes Road and Penegoes) into Machynlleth.
- from Glaspwll into Machynlleth.

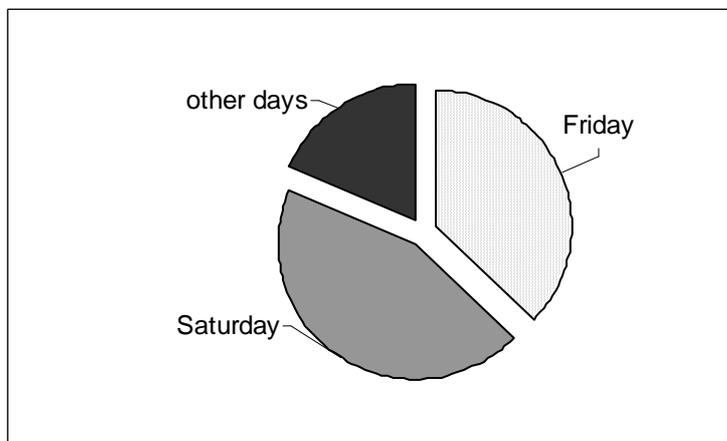
Figure 13 shows the results. All four areas show a high level of interest in the community bus, with about 50% of households saying they would definitely use it, or might use it. (The higher figure in Glaspwll is based on a small sample of only six survey returns.)

Figure 13: Village Link bus for villages off main roads



CAMAD envisaged that the community bus might run two days per week, one of which would be Wednesday (market day). Households were asked which one other day they would like the bus to run, and the survey results show a clear preference for either Friday or Saturday in all four areas. Out of 113 households in the four areas which said they would definitely use or might use a community bus, 50 said they would like it to run on a Saturday and 42 said they would like it on a Friday, with 21 people suggesting various other days (figure 14).

Figure 14: Which day of the week would you like the community bus to run?



Households were asked how long they would like to stay in Machynlleth between the outward and return bus, and what time of day they would prefer to be in town. Among those households who expressed interest in using a community bus, most people (79%) said they would like to spend two or three hours in town (figure 15). There was a preference for being in town in the morning (50%) or over lunch (34%) rather than in the afternoon (figure 16).

Figure 15: How long would you like to have in Machynlleth?

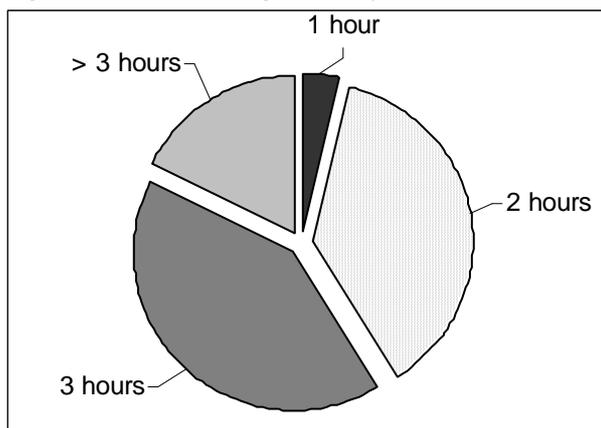
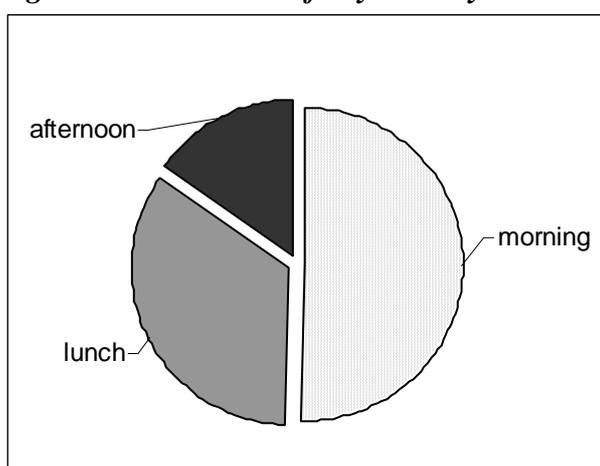


Figure 16: What time of day would you like to be in Machynlleth?



Finally, we asked whether people would be interested in volunteering to drive a community bus. There were potential volunteers in all areas, as shown in table 4.

Table 4: Number of people interested in becoming a volunteer driver

Route	Number of people	Where potential volunteers live
From S of Llanbrynmair to Machynlleth	7	Bont Dolgadfan (1); Pennant (1); Llanbrynmair (2); Commins Coch (1); Cemmaes Road (1); Penegoes (1)
From villages NE of Machynlleth	5	Cwm Llinau (2); Cemmaes (2); Cemmaes Road (1)
From villages SE of Machynlleth	2	Darowen (2)
Glaspwll	1	Glaspwll

In the discussion groups, a Village Link bus was one of the most enthusiastically received suggestions. The amount of time it gave in Machynlleth was felt to be critical:

‘Whether it’s useful depends on the return time – you don’t want to be in town for four hours. Two hours would be about right.’ (Cwm Llinau)

'I'd be interested if you didn't have to be in Machynlleth for hours and hours. If it was 1½ to 2 hours in Machynlleth I think I would definitely use it.' (Aberhosan)

'But for someone who doesn't drive and only goes to Machynlleth once a week, 1½ hours wouldn't be enough.' (Aberhosan)

The Aberhosan group agreed that ideally, the service would involve two options for getting back home, timed so that you could either have a short visit to Machynlleth, or a longer one.

Also in Aberhosan, people asked how long it would take to get into Machynlleth, and we looked at the draft timetable produced by CAMAD. One useful suggestion was that: *'It should do the route so that people who have a long trip out get a short trip back.'*

Other comments made by the groups were:

- The Village Link bus should connect with other buses (e.g. to Aberystwyth) and with trains.
- Friday or Saturday would be good days to have a service, so that you could do the shopping for the weekend.
- It would be good if the community bus could take bikes.

There was a strong sense from the groups in Cwm Llinau and Aberhosan that a Village Link bus would be a return to something like the 'good old days', and that it would be worth supporting:

'A bus service that we'd know we'd be able to use to get to town is the best option. Say it goes on Wednesday once, and Friday or Saturday once – like the old times. Friday or Saturday so you could get your food in for the weekend.'

'If there was a bus, I would leave the car at home and use it. I would support it.'

4.6 Car club

Car clubs are only likely to be workable if there is a sufficient concentration of people living within a few minutes walk of a site where vehicles can be stationed. There were five localities where this was the case, summarised in table 5.

Table 5: Areas where at least 6 people expressed interest in joining a car club

	Number saying they would definitely use it	Number saying they might use it
Machynlleth	24	60
Llanbrynmair	5	4
Cemmaes	2	8
Cwm Llinau	3	3
Derwenlas	2	4

About a quarter of the households who were interested in a car club did not own a car. For these people, car club membership would make certain trips easier – for example transporting heavy loads or going out in the evening. About three quarters of the households already owned a car. From experience elsewhere, some of these households would sell their own car if they joined a car club, and adopt a ‘mix and match’ travel pattern, using public transport or a bike when convenient and the car club vehicle at other times. This brings individual benefits, such as saving money (for households with a moderate car mileage, a car club is generally cheaper than owning a car); and less hassle (repairs, cleaning and insurance are either arranged by a paid member of staff, or responsibility is shared between several people). It also brings benefits to the environment, as overall car mileage typically falls by about a third.

None of the discussion groups were enthusiastic about a car club. This was for two reasons: a feeling that away from town people are generally too scattered, so it would be difficult to station a car somewhere convenient; and a perception that *‘either people have got a car, or they can’t drive’* (Aberhosan). However, the large number of people in Machynlleth who expressed interest in a club suggests there is potential to develop such a service here, and in time it might be possible to develop small ‘satellite’ clubs in places such as Llanbrynmair. A small car club with 15 members already operates in Machynlleth; this might be expanded or a new commercially-operated car club might be established.

4.7 Wheels to Work

Rather few households (15%) said that they would definitely use, or might use, a Wheels to Work scheme. However, amongst certain groups of people there was greater interest. A quarter of the households with someone at college expressed interest in Wheels to Work (13 out of 52 households). In households with people of working age, but no-one at work or at college, the figure was similar (12 out of 52 households, or 23%). These figures represent small numbers of people, but do suggest that transport is a significant difficulty for people wishing to pursue further education in the area, and for those who are trying to get a job.

Wheels to Work may not be the right, or the only, solution. Among households with someone at college which expressed interest in Wheels to Work, about half made journeys where a better public transport service (for example, buses and trains at the right times from Machynlleth and Llanbrynmair to Newtown) would probably help. However, the discussion groups suggested that for some young people, loan of a moped might be useful:

‘A lot of kids have to buy a banger, but it’s very expensive because of the insurance.’
(Cwm Llinau)

‘For my daughter, the taxi fetches her at 7.15 to meet the bus to go to Newtown to college. She’s got to do a placement from college in Aberangell, at the moment she doesn’t know how she’s going to get there. She’s in Forge two days a week – she goes on the bike but she finds the road dangerous.’ (Aberhosan)

5 Reducing our impact on the environment

The survey gathered data on where people travel for regular journeys, including to work, school, shop and for an evening out. It also gathered data on people's willingness to use public transport as an alternative to the car if there was a better service.

This information helps assess whether there is any potential to reduce car use in the Dyfi Valley through simple small-scale changes to the transport system, or through better information and encouragement to travel in a more sustainable way. For this part of the analysis, we concentrated on journeys to work and to the shops. These make a large contribution to overall car mileage and the fact that they are regular trips means there is more potential to influence how they are made.

There are several reasons for seeking to reduce car traffic:

- People living in rural areas make a disproportionate contribution to the emission of the gases which are causing climate change, because they drive further.
- Rising traffic levels have a negative effect on our local environment, especially for people living in villages on main roads, where traffic can carve a community in half, separate people from their neighbours and cause noise and visual intrusion.
- Growing volumes of traffic discourage walking and cycling, which means there is less opportunity for healthy active lifestyles.
- If more people used public transport, it would be possible to provide a better service.

5.1 Travel to work

Slightly over half of households provided information on where they worked and how they travelled there. From 258 responses, just over two-thirds (69%) travel to work by car. About 18% walk to work (these people mostly live and work in Machynlleth). The modal share is summarised in table 6.

Table 6: Mode share for travel to work

Car	69%
Walk	18%
Cycle	6%
Public transport (bus/ train / works bus)	5%
Other (motorbike / van / taxi)	2%

We were interested in what proportion of the journeys to work currently made by car could be made by public transport, walking or cycling. It is often assumed that travel by public transport in rural areas is impossible, or next to impossible, because people's journeys are so widely dispersed. But in fact, an examination of the work journeys on which we had information suggested that many people are making very similar journeys. Looking at the 142 regular car journeys to work for which full details of origin and destination were available, we found that 60% were to just three main destinations: Machynlleth, Newtown and Aberystwyth. We had no information

on how many of these trips were made as a car driver and how many as a car passenger, but national data (and simple observation of the roads in this area during peak commuting hours) would suggest the great majority are made by one person driving alone.

We divided these 142 car journeys to work into four categories:

A: Car trips for which a good alternative already exists. Either the trip is short enough to cycle or walk along a safe route, or there is a public transport service from home to work which arrives roughly between 8.30 and 9.15 am and leaves roughly between 5 and 6 pm.

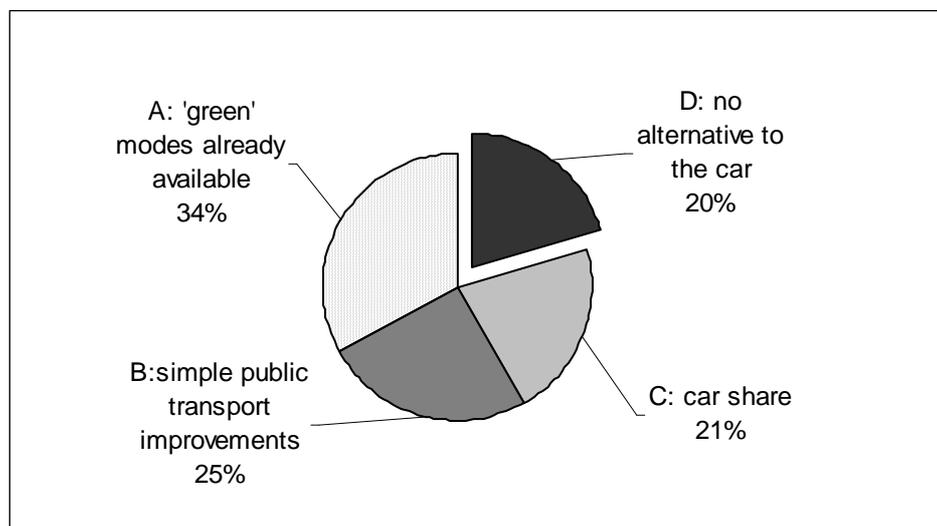
B: Car trips which cannot currently be made by other means, but where a fairly simple public transport improvement or construction of a cycle path would make the journey possible without a car and without an unacceptable disbenefit in terms of journey time or cost. We assumed six specific improvements: a bus from Newtown to Machynlleth leaving at about 5.15 pm; a bus from Llanbrynmair to Machynlleth arriving at about 8.45 am; a bus from Machynlleth to Tywyn arriving at about 9 am; cycle paths from Derwenlas to Machynlleth and Penegoes to Machynlleth; and interavailable tickets on buses and trains.

C: Car trips which are difficult to serve by public transport. However, they could be made as a car-share, and a potential car-share 'partner' who lives nearby and travels to the same destination can already be identified from the available data.

D: Car trips which would be very difficult to make by any means except by car, and for which car-sharing is not an option.

Figure 17 shows how the trips divided between the four categories. About a third of car trips to work could *already* be made by means other than the car. Another 20% could be made by car-sharing. About a quarter could be made by public transport or cycling with some fairly simple improvements to the local transport network. Only 20% were clearly impossible to make without a car and likely to remain so.

Figure 17: Potential to cut car travel to work



The availability of a non-car option is not enough on its own; people also have to be willing to use it. Two of the survey questions gave us information on what proportion of car commuters are receptive to trying a different option:

- For groups A and B, we looked at whether the respondent said they would be willing to travel to work by bus or train if there was a good service. We took a ‘yes’ answer to this question to indicate likely willingness to consider *any* other means of transport than the car, including walking or cycling, if the respondent was given the right support, facilities and information.
- For group C, we looked at whether the respondent said they would use a car-sharing scheme. We assumed a ‘definitely use it’ or ‘might use it’ response to indicate willingness to try car-sharing if given the right support and information.

The results are summarised in table 7.

Table 7: Proportion of car commuters willing to try an alternative

	Willing to consider an alternative	Not willing to consider an alternative
Green modes already available 34%	11%	23%
Car share is an alternative 21%	11%	10%
Simple public transport improvements would help 26%	15%	11%
No alternative to driving 20%	Not relevant, as no alternative is viable	20%
Total	37%*	64%

* Taking all those households which drove to work, 44% said they would be willing to consider an alternative. However, for some of these, no alternative is viable.

Looking now only at those people who said they would be willing to consider an alternative:

- For 11% of car trips to work there is *already* a good alternative. For this group of people, targeted information about the services that are useful to them might be all that is needed to cut car use. This might be a personalised bus or rail journey planner; or information about the health benefits of cycling and walking coupled with loan or repair of a bike or a ‘bike buddy’ scheme to increase confidence.
- For a further 11% of car commuting trips, car-sharing is a possibility. This requires a car-sharing database to be set up and intensively promoted. Car-sharing is especially worth promoting in villages away from main roads without regular public transport, because increased car-sharing in these areas will not subtract from public transport ridership.
- Finally, 15% of car commuting trips would become viable with some small improvements in public transport and safe cycle tracks. The main improvements are an outward bus in the morning and a return bus in the evening to Newtown, Machynlleth and Tywyn. (Viable outward and return train services already exist to Aberystwyth). Interavailable tickets on the trains and buses between Machynlleth and Aberystwyth, and Machynlleth and Newtown (as already exist to Aberdyfi

and Tywyn) would give more choice on some journeys. Finally, construction of foot / cycle paths from Machynlleth to Derwenlas and Penegoes would enable people living in these villages and working in Machynlleth to walk or cycle to work. These schemes would also benefit people who worked further afield, for example enabling someone to cycle from Derwenlas to Machynlleth station and catch the train to Newtown.

Taken together, these results suggest that up to a third of car trips to work could switch to public transport, walking or cycling through some relatively simple interventions.

Two caveats are necessary here. First, some journeys to work are undoubtedly more complicated than we have assumed. For people who work shifts, or work part-time, public transport during the peak morning and evening travel periods will not be an adequate solution. Second, the low frequency of public transport services will be unacceptable for some people: if there is a risk of missing the 5.30 pm bus home, it is not at all satisfactory to have to wait several hours to catch the next bus, or to take a taxi.

However, there is significant potential to influence car commuting. This would bring environmental and health benefits and financial savings for many residents.

5.2 Travel to the shops

397 households provided information on how they got to the shops. Of these, most travelled by car (73%), but a significant proportion walked (19%). Table 8 shows the breakdown of mode of transport.

Table 8: Mode share for travel to the shops

Car	73%
Walk	19%
Public transport (bus/ train)	5%
Cycle	3%
Taxi	0.3%

Almost without exception, the people who walked or cycled to the shops both lived and shopped in Machynlleth.

Among the households which drive to the shops, 45% said that they might make the journey by bus or train if there was a better service. This seems remarkably high, given the difficulties of carrying heavy shopping. However, it does suggest that home delivery of shopping might prove attractive to a significant number of households. We did not ask about shopping home delivery in the survey, but this idea came up spontaneously in two of the discussion groups:

'Someone in Taliesin said the Aberystwyth shops deliver there. Iceland deliver from their Barmouth store to Aberangell, but they won't come to Cwm Llinau. Spar [in Machynlleth] used to deliver, but I'm not sure if they still do it.' (Cwm Llinau)

In Llanbrynmair, people felt very positive about home delivery, but nobody in the group seemed to do it on a regular basis:

'Getting your shopping delivered is the best idea ever.'

'I think Spar does it.'

'What a pleasure – I'd much rather that than have to go shopping in my lunch hour.'
(Llanbrynmair)

There were 223 households who travelled to the shops by car and for whom full information was available on where they shopped. Of these, 41 shopped in Aberystwyth (although they all lived much closer to Machynlleth). Another 31 shopped in Newtown. These people almost all lived in Llanbrynmair, Talerddig or Bont Dolgadfan. Almost all the rest (129) shopped in Machynlleth.

The information we have suggests that a shopping home delivery service based in Machynlleth might have several benefits:

- It would be popular
- It would significantly reduce car trips
- It would be of benefit to the local economy in Machynlleth, as it might attract some people who currently shop further afield, such as in Aberystwyth.

As one of the discussion groups pointed out, the Spar in Machynlleth does operate a home delivery service already, but this is not well publicised and only delivers within a fairly short distance of the town.

6 Recommendations for action and conclusions

This report has identified a great many actions which would improve transport in the Powys part of the Dyfi Valley. Here, we summarise those likely to make the greatest difference and to be most appreciated by local residents. We distinguish between actions where some work is already afoot, and those which are more distant or likely to be harder to achieve. We commend all these recommendations for inclusion in the Bro Ddyfi Communities First and Machynlleth and District Local Forum Action Plans.

Action	Agency
<i>Actions for which some development work is already under way</i>	
1. Develop a Village Link bus serving villages to the NE and SE of Machynlleth and, if this is successful, consider expanding to villages south of Llanbrynmair.	CAMAD
2. Build a foot / cycle path from Machynlleth to Derwenlas (WAG has awarded funds to this for the current year).	Powys County Council
3. Make the case for a foot / cycle path to Penegoes, seeking funding for 2005/06 (WAG has agreed to fund further studies in the current year).	Powys County Council, (+ Ecodyfi, local community, cycling interests, schools)
4. Support the planned Powys / Ceredigion car-sharing database and work with the council to promote it.	Powys / Ceredigion Travel Plans Officer, Ecodyfi
5. Improve information about public transport, building on the existing Dyfi Transport Guide. Provide up-to-date information at bus stops and personalised information for people living near main bus routes. Provide information about the health benefits of walking and cycling, and support for people to try these modes.	Ecodyfi, Powys County Council, Powys & Ceredigion Inequalities in Health Officer
<i>Achievable actions for which development work should begin</i>	
6. Investigate options for more frequent bus service (ideally every two hours) on Machynlleth – Newtown route, possibly using demand responsive taxi-bus to provide higher frequency without greatly increased costs.	Powys County Council, Ecodyfi, Communities First, CAMAD, Arriva, Lloyd's Coaches, taxi firms
7. Investigate options for Saturday night bus or taxibus to cater for evenings out in Aberystwyth, Newtown and Machynlleth.	
8. Review existing bus service schedules, to provide a timetable that is better for work and shopping trips and that connects with trains.	Powys County Council, Bws Gwynedd, Arriva, Lloyd's Coaches
9. Improve disability access of buses between Machynlleth and Newtown.	Arriva, Powys County Council
10. Increase speed enforcement on main roads through villages, and reduce limits to 30mph where requested (e.g. Cemmaes).	Police, Powys County Council, community councils
11. Commission feasibility study for foot / cycle path from 'Lloyd George' bridge to Llanbrynmair, as part of safe route to school.	Powys County Council, community council,

	Llanbrynmair school
12. Investigate whether the existing car club in Machynlleth might be expanded, or a new commercially operated car club established.	Ecodyfi
13. Explore potential for a home delivery service from Machynlleth shops.	Ecodyfi, CAMAD, Spar, Co-op, other retailers, local delivery / taxi firms
<i>Longer term aspirations</i>	
14. Lobby Network Rail to make necessary track improvements to enable an hourly rail service from Aberystwyth to Shrewsbury.	Arriva Trains, county councils, Mid Wales Partnership, rail user groups
15. Develop case for a rail halt between Machynlleth and Caersws.	Powys County Council, rail user groups, Ecodyfi

Many of the opinions expressed during this consultation are unsurprising. However, the patterns that have emerged are surprisingly clear, and point to what are in many cases simple (and cheap) solutions. The suggestions of local people offer a strong and consistent expression of what needs to be done. We feel confident that by acting on these suggestions, the Dyfi Valley could become an example of excellence in the provision of transport that meets local people's needs and desires. The benefits – to health, access to jobs and training, the local economy, and the environment – would be large.