

New Library Space Usage Survey - Citizen's Panel Research (Barry Residents)

1. Background

The redevelopment of the Grade II Listed Barry Town Hall is now nearing completion, with the new County Library opening in the New Year. Within the renovated building there are the Mayor's parlour, Council offices and a Town Centre Management Office. The Town Centre Manager, Emma Smith, will be based in this office and will be available for local retailers and members of the public to talk through any issues regarding the town centre through a surgery system with allocated appointments. The events officer will be developing a programme of events to take place in King Square. The new library will provide IT facilities, a children's reading garden and an exhibition space. The Town Hall and external improvements (including the exhibition space) has been part-funded through a European grant. The exhibition space has been designated for local community use and is subject to state aids. Suggestions include: displays of local art, photographs and other artwork and a meeting place for local community groups such as neighbourhood watch or the local historical society.

The survey was designed to obtain public opinion around the potential uses of the exhibition space. It asked respondents to identify three possible options, from an extensive list, for usage of the space, however further questions specifically looked at whether there would be any desire for a coffee shop to be located in this space.

This report outlines the findings of the survey and indicates the general views about potential usage of the exhibition space.

2. Aim and Objectives

The principle aim of the survey was to establish if members of the general public in Barry had any particular preference for the potential use of the exhibition space in the Town Hall, specifically whether locating a coffee shop in this space would be welcomed.

Other objectives of this survey included:

- Determining current levels of usage of the libraries throughout the Vale of Glamorgan.
- Establishing the most popular potential uses of the Barry Town Hall exhibition space.
- Determining how regularly and at what times a coffee shop would be used.
- Establishing if there would be a desire for an outdoor seating area.
- Finding out what people would be interested in buying from a coffee shop, and what they would be prepared to pay for each item.
- Discovering which coffee franchises people would be interested in seeing in the Town Hall.

3. Methodology

The survey was mainly designed to provide quantitative data, however there are qualitative questions included. The questionnaire was kept short to encourage people to respond.

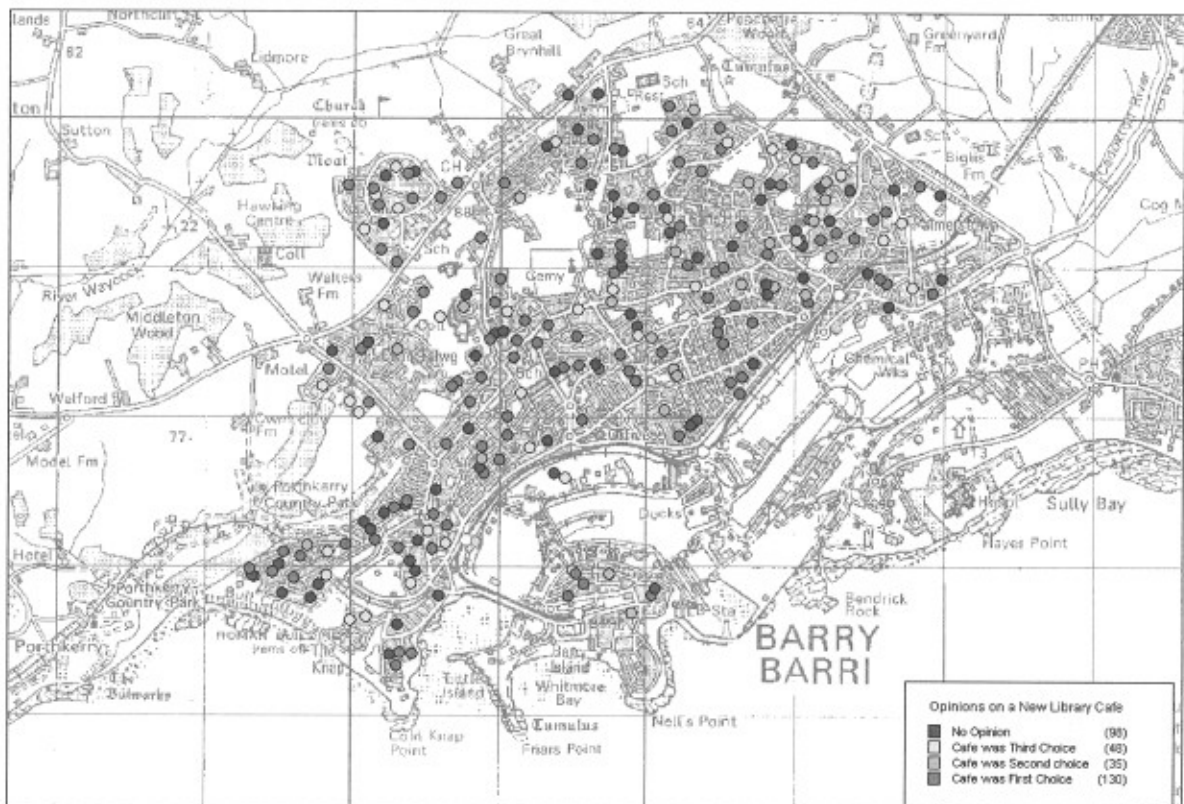
Surveys were sent to members of the Citizens Panel who live in the Barry area. A total of 462 surveys were sent out in September 2006, and respondents were asked to return them to the Chief Executive's Department by the 29th September 2006. A total of 317 completed surveys were received, representing a 68% response rate. This is a very high response rate, with a margin of error of $\pm 5\%$; due to the relatively small original sample size.

In all the questions respondents were asked to only indicate one answer, however it does appear that on some occasions respondents have indicated more than one response, or no response at all. This has been taken into account and the percentage figures have been calculated on individual basis for each question.

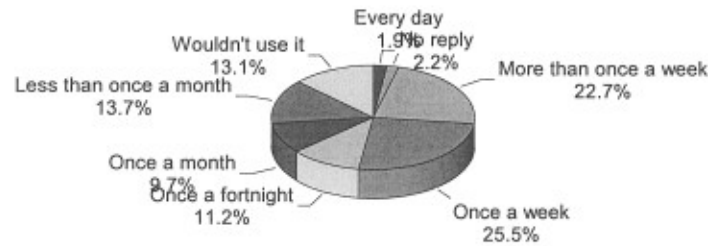
4. Findings

The survey found that:

- Just over 60% of respondents were members of a Vale of Glamorgan library, with approximately 50% of respondents using the library less than once a month.
- When asked their preferences for the use of the community space in the new library a coffee shop was the most popular choice, with 132 respondents indicating it would be their first choice and a further 87 suggested it would be their second or third choice. The other popular choices for usage of the space were for local art exhibitions, children's arts events and for national art exhibitions.
- Respondents were asked to indicate within which postcode area they live. This data has been used to analyse whether there are residents in particular areas are more inclined towards a coffee shop being located in the exhibition space of the library. The diagram below shows the dispersal of opinion regarding a potential coffee shop throughout Barry. It would appear that there is no significant pattern in terms of opinion, respondents indicated that a coffee shop would be their first, second or third choice in all parts of Barry.



If part of the community space was used to
house a coffee...



- When asked how frequently they would visit a coffee shop if it were opened, the majority of respondents (56% or 155 of 276) stated they would use it once a week or more, while only 15% of respondents said they would not use a coffee shop (see chart above). When asked at what times of day they would use a coffee shop, it was clear that the majority of the use (83% or 340 of 411) would happen between 10am and 4pm.
- The interest in having outdoors seating areas was also high, 230 of the 297 (77%) respondents indicated that they would be something worth considering.
- When questioned about how much they would be prepared to pay for items within the coffee shop, a large majority indicated they would like to pay between £1 and £1.50 for most items, with one exception being baguettes when the majority would be prepared to pay between £2 and £2.50.
- Finally, when asked which coffee franchise they would be interested in seeing in the Town Hall, there was a relatively even split between Costa Coffee (28%), Starbucks (27%) and another option (27%). Alternative suggestions, which were mentioned quite regularly, included using a locally based company and using fair trade products.

5. Summary

The survey illustrates that current library usage is not particularly high, with the largest proportion of respondents indicating that they do not currently use the library service. When questioned about potential uses of the new exhibition space within the Town Hall a coffee shop was, by a considerable margin, the most popular choice.

Further examination of the issue suggested that not only would a coffee shop be very welcome, it would also be regularly used by local residents. The possibility of outdoor seating also proved a popular idea among respondents.

It should be noted that this questionnaire was only sent to members of the Citizens Panel who reside in the Barry area. However the results are very encouraging, and it may be interesting to find out whether the coffee shop would attract visitors from further afield. This does not detract from the findings, and it would appear that a new coffee shop would be a welcome addition to the Town Hall.