

Denbighshire County Council Public Convenience Strategy 2024-2027

Public Consultation data summary report

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Purpose of this report

This report aims to provide a summary of community responses received from interested parties with regards to Denbighshire County Council's draft Local Toilet Strategy 2024-2027.

A detailed breakdown of the consultation data received is included in the Local Toilet Strategy 2024-2027 Consultation Detailed Data report.

Background to the Local Toilet Strategy

Legislative requirement to have a Local Toilet Strategy

Under the requirements of Part 8 of the Public Health (Wales) Act 2017, we are required to develop and publish a Public Toilet Strategy.

The Strategy should identify how we assess the need for public toilets in Denbighshire, and how we will manage this need.

Note: There is no legal requirement for the Council itself to provide public toilets, however the Council is required to:

1. Provide evidence that it has reviewed the needs of the local population
2. Developed a Strategy that evidences how these needs are being met, or will be in the future, for example through Community Toilet Schemes.

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Requirement to consult on the development of a local Needs Assessment, to support the Local Toilet Strategy

To support the development of the Local Toilet Strategy, the Council is required to produce an assessment of need for toilets within local communities. This can include use of existing statistical data (such as population information) but should also include consultation with interested parties including:

1. Members of the public, including people who live in Denbighshire, work in Denbighshire, or visit Denbighshire for any other reason (such as tourism).
2. Elected Members (Councillors) of Denbighshire County Council, or any other elected representative covering wholly or in part, the area of Denbighshire. This would usually include both Aelodau'r Senedd (Members of Welsh Parliament) and Members of UK Parliament, and representatives of City, Town and Community Councils within the county of Denbighshire
3. Members of staff working for Denbighshire County Council
4. Businesses based wholly or partially within Denbighshire
5. Charities, third sector or other organisations supporting people or communities who may have increased need for toilets when compared with the wider population (for example, Crohn's & Colitis UK, Age Cymru etc)

About the consultation

The Council ran a consultation to inform the final version of the Draft Needs Assessment, which will, in turn, inform the development of the next version of the Council's Local Toilet Strategy, which the Council must consult on separately once drafted.

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Marketing and promotion of the Needs Assessment consultation

The consultation ran from 22 July 2024 until 17 September 2024. A web page and a consultation survey were made available on the Council's County Conversation Portal website, and paper copies were made available in local Libraries.

Individual City, Town and Community Councils with existing Council-owned or Council-maintained toilets within their communities were emailed about the consultation and given 8 weeks to respond, in line with the Council's City, Town and Community Council Charter.

The consultation was promoted to the wider public via a news release on the Council's website, and via posts on the Council's social media pages.

In total the 3 social media posts had a reach of 34,872 and the link to the consultation was clicked a total of 826 times.

The Council understands that the consultation and survey links were shared elsewhere on social media but has no way to track these.

General observations

The potential closure of the Council's own public toilets portfolio was discussed by the Council's Communities Scrutiny Committee on 14th March 2024, although no decision was made on the public toilet portfolio at the time.

This previous discussion by the Communities Scrutiny Committee led to some confusion amongst members of the public about the purpose of the Needs Assessment consultation.

As a result of this confusion, around 455 entries out of the 1,411 entries received were from respondents under the impression they were 'voting' on a decision on whether or not the Council's public toilet portfolio should be retained, rather than taking part in a consultation about assessing the general need for toilets in Denbighshire.

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Data Summary

Summary of respondents

1. 76% of respondents were residents of Denbighshire
2. The majority of respondents were from Rhyl, Prestatyn and Llangollen, comprising around 64% of all respondents
3. Around 6% of all respondents were tourists or visitors to Denbighshire
4. Around 63% of respondents identified as having a disability or long-term health condition which impacts upon their toilet needs
5. Around 52% of respondents were over the age of 65
6. Around 12% of respondents were the parent or carer of a child or children under 4 years of age

Summary of responses for 'baseline' need for toilets

Respondents were presented with the suggested ratios to meet the 'baseline' need for toilets (i.e. based only on the needs of the residential population)

1. Over 80% of respondents **agreed** with the baseline provision for the following:
 - a. *At least* one facility in every community with a residential population of 5,000 or greater.
 - b. *At least* one cubicle per 550 females and *at least* one cubicle per 1,100 males for every community that needs a facility.
2. Across all remaining categories for the 'baseline' provision, between 65-80% of respondents **agreed** with the following suggested provision:
 - a. At least one unisex disabled facility per 10,000 population
 - b. At least one Changing Places facility per 10,000 population
 - c. At least one unisex baby changing facility per 10,000 population

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As there is a majority consensus, it is suggested that the 'baseline provision' of the Needs Assessment can be ratified without further need for consultation.

Summary of responses for additional need for toilets

Respondents were presented with additional requirements for toilets, based on population demographics and seasonal variations.

1. Overall, 82% of respondents agreed with the additional provision for an older population: an additional 1 male and 1 female cubicle for every 5% of the population over the age of 65, above the Wales average of 21.2% of the population
2. Overall, 78% of respondents agreed with the additional provision for people with disabilities or long-term health conditions
3. Overall, 78% of people agreed with the additional provision for baby-changing facilities
4. Overall, 84% of respondents agreed with the additional regular provision for tourism, and 75% agreed with the additional Changing Places provision for tourism

Note: tourists or organisations representing tourists/tourism businesses were under-represented in the survey.

Therefore more engagement is recommended with these respondent categories in order to understand what visitors to Denbighshire might need out of public toilets.

The remaining categories for additional provision have a majority consensus from a statistically representative group of respondents, and therefore it is recommended that the additional provisions for an older population, disabled population and younger population are ratified into the final version of the Needs Assessment

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Habits and preferences

This section asked respondents about their habits and preferences when thinking about using public toilets.

1. Around 71% of people agreed that 300m as a **maximum** distance between public toilets and other facilities or amenities such as car parking, leisure attractions, beauty spots etc was acceptable
2. It should be noted that the majority of those who disagreed (around 20% of all respondents) felt that 300m was too far.
3. Around 25% of respondents said they would plan their day specifically around public toilet availability, however this rose to around 36% of respondents who identified as having a disability or long-term health condition which impacts upon their toilet use
4. Overall, the majority (43%) of respondents stated their preferred type of toilet was one which is close to parking or disabled parking facilities. This rose to 52% for respondents who identified as having a disability or long-term health condition which impacts upon their toilet use.
5. In terms of finding toilets:
 - a. Signage was the most important, with around 83% of respondents saying they would look for a 'Public Toilet' sign
 - b. Around 42% of respondents said they would visit a business they knew would be likely to have a toilet
 - c. Around 37% of respondents said they would use the internet to search for a toilet near to their location. Of these respondents:
 - i. Around 47% would look on the Denbighshire County Council website
 - ii. Around 27% would look for the website of a business they thought might have public toilets
 - iii. Around 26% would rely on Google to pull relevant data through and tell them where the nearest public toilets are

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6. Overall, around 60% of respondents were prepared to pay to use public toilets.
 - a. This rose to around 72% of respondents aged 65 or older
 - b. This dropped to around 48% of respondents (slightly less than half) with a child or children under 4 years of age.
 - c. Overall, around 37% of the respondents prepared to pay to use a toilet supported a charge equal to or greater than the existing charge of 40p, with 63% supporting a charge up to the current amount of 40p.
7. Overall, respondents were keen to see additional toilets (beyond what the Council provides) made available to the wider public
 - a. 66.5% of respondents wanted the Council set up a Community Toilet Scheme
 - b. 33.5% of respondents felt that larger businesses already providing customer toilets should open these up for wider public use

Observations and recommendations:

Whilst the majority of respondents did agree with the maximum outlined distance between public toilets and other facilities, amenities or attractions, it is clear there is a significant proportion of people who have identified that they would struggle with this distance. There was also a clear preference for toilets to be near parking or disabled parking.

Therefore, before this maximum distance is ratified into the Needs Assessment, it is recommended that further consultation or engagement is carried out with:

1. People with (or charities/organisations supporting people with) disabilities or health conditions impacting upon their toilet use
2. The individuals or teams within Denbighshire County Council responsible for reablement, equalities monitoring, blue badge administration, sustainable transport and active travel.

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In terms of finding toilets, physical wayfinding in popular locations is important to the majority of respondents. The Council will need to consider this when developing a Community Toilet Scheme.

Use of both the Denbighshire County Council website, and Google (which is a search engine, rather than a website) was also important to respondents.

It is therefore recommended that when developing the Community Toilet Scheme, the Council's own Webteam and ICT teams are consulted to ensure that any publishing format the Council uses to display community toilets will work well with third party search engines such as Google.

Developing a community toilet scheme

This section asked respondents to state what they would like to see out of a Community Toilet Scheme, if the Council were to develop one.

1. Supermarkets, visitor attractions and cafes, restaurants and pubs were the types of businesses respondents most wanted to see join the scheme
2. Around 65% of respondents said they would be more likely to support a business participating in a Community Toilet Scheme (by buying goods or services from that business), even if they weren't obliged to
3. Cleanliness, hygiene and being well-maintained in good working order were the most important criteria for most respondents when thinking about the type of community toilet they would like to visit.
4. Around 95% of respondents wanted toilets to be available during the day (9am to 5pm), and around 55% of respondents wanted toilets to be available during the evenings (5pm to 11pm). Fewer than 5% of respondents felt they needed access to toilets overnight.

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Final comments and observations

Overall, the Needs Assessment is mostly suitable for ratification.

A small amount of work needs to be done to ensure that the needs of disabled people or people with long-term health conditions are being met, and that adequate effort has been made to capture the views of tourists and tourism businesses.

This should also be reflected in the Council's Local Toilet Strategy, especially in communities where the outlined baseline and additional provision are not currently being met (even with the Council's own public toilet portfolio included).

There is a strong feeling amongst respondents that the Council's public toilet portfolio should be retained, and support for charging for their use. It is recommended that the implications of these views is researched before any final decision on the Council's public toilet portfolio is made.

There is enough information for the Council to begin drafting a Community Toilet Scheme and signing up potential businesses, however some internal engagement (i.e. engaging with other officers/teams around the Council) around how the scheme could actually be administrated, marketed and delivered is required.