

wavehill

Social and economic research
Ymchwil cymdeithasol ac economaidd

wavehill.com

Evaluation of the Flintshire Town Centre Investment Programme



Wedi ei ariannu gan
Llywodraeth y DU



Funded by
UK Government

Wavehill: Social and Economic Research

Our offices

- Wales office: 21 Alban Square, Aberaeron, Ceredigion, SA46 0DB (registered office)
- West England office: St Nicholas House, 31-34 High Street, Bristol, BS1 2AW
- North of England office: The Corner, 26 Mosley Street, Newcastle, NE1 1DF
- London office: 2.16 Oxford House, 49 Oxford Road, London, N4 3EY

Contact details

Tel: 0330 1228658

Email: wavehill@wavehill.com

Twitter: [@wavehilltweets](https://twitter.com/wavehilltweets)

More information

www.wavehill.com

<https://twitter.com/wavehilltweets>

© Wavehill: social and economic research.

This report is subject to copyright. The authors of the report (Wavehill: social and economic research) should be acknowledged in any reference that is made to its contents.

Report authors

Dr Huw Lloyd-Williams, Charlie Bagley, Oliver Allies

Any questions in relation to this report should be directed in the first instance to Huw Lloyd-Williams (huw.lloyd-williams@wavehill.com)

Date of document: 21/02/2025

Version: Final

Client details

Karen Whitney-Lang (karen.whitney-lang@flintshire.gov.uk)

Contents

Executive Summary.....	i
1. Introduction.....	1
1.1 Evaluation Aims and Questions	2
1.2 Methodology.....	3
2. Programme Overview and Project Synergy.....	6
2.1 Context and Rationale	6
2.2 Programme Objectives	7
2.3 Project Descriptions	9
2.4 Assessing project synergies	10
3. Programme Performance.....	11
3.1 Performance against Spend Targets	11
3.2 Performance against Output Targets	13
3.3 Performance against Outcome Targets	15
4. Findings – programme level	18
4.1 Programme Design.....	18
4.2 Programme Governance and Management	18
5. Findings – Project Level	20
5.1 Project 1 - Town Centre Property Improvement Grant (TCPIG) Scheme	20
5.2 Project 2 - Development of projects for future investment.....	24
5.3 Project 3 - Investment in Green Spaces.....	25
5.4 Project 4 - Employment of Markets Promotion and Engagement Officer	28
5.5 Project 5 - Town Centre Events & Activities Grant Scheme	32
5.6 Project 6 – Place Making Plans Development	36
5.7 Project 7 – Tailored Business Support	39
5.8 Project 8 - Communications & PR Project	47
5.9 Project 9 – Evaluation	49
5.10 Project 10 – Connah’s Quay Docks	49
6. Conclusions and Recommendations	53
6.1 Relevance and Appropriateness of Programme Design	53
6.2 Performance Against Targets.....	54
6.3 Management and Governance	54
6.4 Impacts and Legacy.....	55

6.5	Recommendations	56
-----	-----------------------	----

Table of Figure Contents

Figure 4.1: Management and Governance Structure – TCIP	19
Figure 5.1 Before and after pictures of HiQ Tyres and Autocare in Queensferry	20
Figure 5.2: What would you have done without the support received from the grant?	22
Figure 5.3: Footfall – no event (1 st June)	29
Figure 5.4: Footfall D-Day Event (8 th June)	29
Figure 5.5: Mold market on the 19th October 2024	30
Figure 5.6: Young people showing their Young Traders Awards certificate.....	31
Figure 5.7 Lantern Parade in Buckley	32
Figure 5.8: How did you find out about the Activities and Events Grant from Flintshire County Council (FCC)?.....	34
Figure 5.9: Satisfaction with the support received from the FCC Regeneration team	35
Figure 5.10: Beneficiary response to “How many years have you been trading”	41
Figure 5.11: Beneficiary response to “How did you first hear about the SavetheHighStreet Business Support?”	42
Figure 5.12: Challenges faced by businesses when first engaged with support (multiple responses)	42
Figure 5.13: “When you first engaged with the business support with either Jo or Lorna, Business Mentors who delivered this support, was your business facing any of the following challenges?”	43
Figure 5.14: “Thinking about your interactions with Jo and/or Lorna from Save the High Street, to what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements”	44
Figure 5.15: “To what extent have any of the following been impacted by the support you received from the Save the High Street programme?”	45
Figure 5.17: Overall, to what extent is your business now in a better place as a result of the support you have received?.....	47

Table of Tables Contents

Table 1.1: Key evaluation questions	2
Table 1.2: Response rates by project.....	3
Table 2.1: TCIP overarching logic model.....	8
Table 3.1: Original costings and funding sources	11
Table 3.2: Reprofiled costings and funding sources – November 2024	11
Table 3.3: Programme spend to date (as of 30 th November 2024).....	12
Table 3.4: SPF Output Targets and Achievements (as of 11/02/2025)	13
Table 3.5: SPF Outcomes Targets and Achievements.....	15
Table 5.1: Place Making Stages.....	37
Table 5.2: Jobs created and safeguarded since engaged with the support	46

Executive Summary

Flintshire County Council (FCC) commissioned Wavehill to undertake an evaluation of the Flintshire Town Centre Investment Programme (TCIP). The TCIP is comprised of 10 projects which were successfully awarded £1.5m of Shared Prosperity Fund (SPF) investment to deliver against the three SPF investment priorities of:

- Communities and Place
- Supporting Local Business
- People and Skills

The ten projects are focussed on the regeneration of town centres across Flintshire and are designed to respond to identified needs as set in the FCC's Council Plan which includes aims associated with protecting the economic viability of Flintshire's town centres.

Programme objectives included:

- Proactively responding to, and actively encouraging town centre investment opportunities
- Supporting front-line services in town centre locations
- Identifying key sites for future redevelopment or diversification to enhance sustainability and vitality
- Target vacant or underused town centre properties for intervention
- Promote community enterprises and ownership of community assets
- Promote town centres and support stakeholders in the development of action plans
- Support businesses in adapting to evolving economic conditions
- Pursue external funding opportunities to support the programme

- Enhance monitoring to assess and improve town centre vitality.

Approach

The evaluation has sought to assess:

- Appropriateness of programme design
- Performance against targets
- Management and governance of the programme and projects
- The emerging outcomes, impacts and legacy of the interventions

Key Findings

Appropriateness of design

The programme, and individual projects, were well designed to address recognised and evidenced socio-economic challenges facing the area. The Projects were informed by robust data sources, and wider public consultations, providing a clear understanding of local needs and opportunities.

The programme addressed immediate needs while laying the groundwork for future strategy, impact and legacy. The programme was designed with a forward-looking approach, underpinned by long-term regeneration and placemaking.

The programme effectively addressed key gaps in funding provision and internal capacity. One of the programme's key strengths was its ability to fill gaps left by other funding streams and internal resource constraints. The use of external delivery partners in certain projects also helped mitigate internal capacity and resource issues within FCC, ensuring the project could effectively meet its objectives.

Flexibility in funding and design enabled a broader reach and relevance. The programme's flexibility in offering both

capital and revenue investments, as well as geographic coverage across the county, enabled it to address a diverse range of needs across Flintshire.

Collaborative and participatory approaches were central to the programme's design. Projects actively engaged and leveraged inputs from a wide range of stakeholders and beneficiaries. This participatory approach not only ensured projects were well-aligned with local needs but also raised wider awareness of FCC's offerings and strengthened relationships with local stakeholders.

The programme's strategic and interconnected design fostered synergies between projects, enhancing the overall impact. The programme's holistic nature was evident in the synergies created across projects, with many initiatives complementing each other to enhance the overall impact.

The programme's adaptability in project design was a significant strength, enabling responsiveness to a changing landscape. Several projects were intentionally designed with flexible structures, allowing for iterative improvements during delivery.

Performance Against Targets
The programme demonstrated strong financial performance with effective progress in expenditure.

The programme achieved or exceeded all output and outcome targets. All SPF output and outcome indicators have either been achieved or exceeded with further outputs/outcomes likely before the programme end. Across all projects, this level of overachievement reflects the

programme's effective design and delivery.

Management and Governance

The programme was effectively managed, with stakeholders highlighting strong leadership and governance processes throughout delivery.

Stakeholders consistently praised the strong project management capabilities of the programme leaders, highlighting a methodical and detail-oriented approach as key to the programme's success from the early stages of grant application to ongoing delivery and oversight. Regular engagement with individual project managers, liaison with local and regional SPF teams and well-structured reporting mechanisms ensured that progress was closely monitored, and potential issues were addressed promptly.

The programme was strategic in project selection underpinned by a desire to primarily tackle issues of community and place within town centres through targeted support and the establishment of a clear evidence base to help shape future funding submissions and strategic opportunities.

Short-term funding timeframe posed challenges. As with many SPF-funded initiatives, the short-term nature of the funding was widely recognised as a challenge by stakeholders. Strategic project selection ensured that the majority of initiatives were both realistic and deliverable within the funding period, as reflected in the programme's strong performance against outputs and outcomes. However, some projects, would have benefitted from additional time for planning and consultation.

The complexities associated with evidence collection and reporting occasionally placed additional burden on individual project managers, highlighting the demanding administrative requirements of SPF projects. This was further complicated by a lack of clarity regarding evidence requirements early on within project delivery.

Impacts and Legacy

The TCIP has **delivered substantial benefits given the modest funds that were available for its implementation.** This was mainly testament to the effective use of resources and the personnel deployed to deliver and manage the different projects.

Strengthened stakeholder and community engagement as a core legacy across programme. The projects have successfully deployed a range of often innovative approaches to strengthen stakeholder and community engagement in Flintshire. Collectively this has left Flintshire County Council well positioned to respond to future opportunities for regeneration activity as they arise.

The programme has effectively embedded placemaking principles as central to Flintshire County Council's future activities. One of the most significant strategic legacies of the programme is the embedding of place-making values internally, which will now serve as a cornerstone of the council's long-term regeneration strategy. This should strengthen the council's ability to deliver cohesive and impactful regeneration efforts in the future.

The programme has laid strong foundations for future initiatives, leveraging the activities delivered through SPF. Collectively, the outcomes achieved had demonstrated the programme's capacity to enable long-term, sustainable benefits beyond the immediate funding period.

Many programme outcomes and impacts are likely to be realised beyond the scope of this evaluation. Consequently, while this report captures significant progress and achievements, the true extent of the programme's impact will likely transpire over time.

Recommendations

1. Ensure that the progress that has been made by the projects is effectively shared within FCC and with partners so that those involved in the development of ideas, proposals and applications for funding are aware and can build upon the progress that has been made.
2. Sustain and where possible develop the partnership and 'team-approach' that has evolved in the management and delivery of the programme
3. Identify and secure resources to sustain the momentum of key project activities during the 2025-26 SPF funded transition year for regeneration activities.
4. Maintain management information systems that have proved successful in monitoring the progress of all projects.
5. The considerable number of lessons learnt (collectively detailed in the lessons learnt log for the TCIP) should be reflected as part of future project design, development and delivery.

1. Introduction

Flintshire County Council (FCC) was allocated a total of £13.1 million of UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) funds for investment by March 2025, broken down into £11 million of core funding and £2.2 million for the national 'Multiply' programme. The funding covered the three SPF investment priorities:

1. **Communities and Place:** building pride in local communities and improving life chances.
2. **Supporting Local Business:** supporting the growth and development of local businesses.
3. **People and Skills:** developing people's skills and improving their employability.

From that funding, the FCC Regeneration Team, was successful in being awarded just over £1.5 million to deliver the **Flintshire Town Centre Investment Programme (TCIP)** and commissioned Wavehill to undertake an independent evaluation of the programme.

The projects that are the subject of this evaluation are:

- **Project 1: Town Centre Property Improvement Grant Scheme** – an intervention to regenerate commercial buildings in town centres
- **Project 2: Development of Projects for Future Investment** – the production of feasibility studies and business cases for future regeneration projects
- **Project 3: Investment in Green Spaces** – interventions to implement green infrastructure (GI) installations and improvements across towns in Flintshire
- **Project 4: Town Centre Markets Team Promotion and Engagement** – the appointment of a dedicated officer and a budget for promotion and engagement of market activity in Mold and Holywell
- **Project 5: Town Centre Events and Activities Grant Scheme** – grants awarded to host various events and activities in town centres
- **Project 6: Place Making Plan Development** – the development of 7 place making plans for 7 of the towns across Flintshire
- **Project 7: Tailored Business Support Provision** – bespoke business support for small businesses operating from Flintshire town centres
- **Project 8: Communications and PR** – project to deliver communication campaigns including, but not limited to, promoting the 'offer' and 'best bits' of Flintshire
- **Project 9: Programme Evaluation** – an evaluation of the programme both through a traditional report and also through a film
- **Project 10: Connah's Quay Docks** – a project to improve community safety and visual aspects of a deprived area

This report presents findings of the evaluation of the programme's design, delivery and impact, through to February 2025. It should be noted that this programme was awarded an

extension to allow SPF investment to continue through to March 2025. However, due to the evaluation report being required by the funder on 28th February 2025, it is necessary to project some achievements of the projects (particularly in section 3).

1.1 Evaluation Aims and Questions

The following table outlines the key evaluation questions that this report will seek to answer:

Table 1.1: Key evaluation questions

Topic	Evaluation Question
Relevance and Appropriateness of Programme Design	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Were the programme and individual projects well designed to address socio-economic challenges facing the area? • How were decisions made about programme design? • Did the programme or individual projects change design over the course of delivery? If so, why, and did that affect their ability to respond to the programme aims? • Did any aspects of the delivery context change over the course of delivery? If so, how did that affect programme relevance and appropriateness?
Performance Against Targets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How did the programme perform against its spend targets? • What progress did the project make towards the achievement of its output and outcome indicators? • What factors explain variations, including under- or over-performance against contracted targets?
Management and Governance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How were the individual projects delivered? • How effective was the delivery approach for each project? • What worked well or less well in project delivery? • What were the decision-making processes and governance structures for the programme? • How effectively did these structures and mechanisms work? • How are delivery, spend and impact achievements measured, monitored and evaluated?
Impacts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What outcomes and impacts has or will the programme deliver? • To what extent has the programme delivered against its original objectives? • What wider added value has the programme generated? • What, if any, unexpected or unintended outcomes or impacts have occurred?

1.2 Methodology

The following summarises the methodology used to undertake the evaluation.

1.2.1 Logic model and evaluation framework

Initial scoping interviews were conducted in July/August 2024 with the lead officer for each project with the aim of gathering a broad insight into the individual projects. Questions were asked of each project lead around the rationale for the project, the activities to be delivered, the inputs required, the short and long terms outputs and outcomes as well as any assumptions that had been made and any barriers encountered. This information was then entered into an overarching Logic Model for the programme (these are available in section 2.2). Further to this an Evaluation Framework was then designed, based on the information from the initial scoping interviews, that allowed us to establish what evidence existed and what needed to be collected in further surveys or wider stakeholder and beneficiary interviews.

1.2.2 Survey Design

For five out of the 10 projects a dedicated survey was designed to capture evidence that would inform our research questions. These were for:

- Project 1 (Town Centre Property Improvement Grant),
- Project 3 (Investment in Green Spaces),
- Project 4 (Town Centre Markets Promotion and Engagement),
- Project 5 (Town Centre Events and Activities Grant Scheme) and
- Project 7 (Tailored Business Support Provision).

It was deemed, following meetings with the client, that these projects would be most commensurate for an online survey whereas the other projects would warrant a more qualitative approach (see below).

The following table presents the response rates for the surveys that were sent out to beneficiaries:

Table 1.2: Response rates by project

Project	Response Rate (%)
1: Town Centre Property Improvement Grant	8 (73%)
3: Investment in Green Spaces	0 (0%)
4: Town Centre Markets Team Promotion and Engagement	2 (13%)
5: Town Centre Events and Activities Grant Scheme	10 (63%)
7: Tailored Business Support Provision	14 (31%)

We were unable to secure responses in relation to Project 3 as the project required cold weather to enable the planting season to commence. An unseasonably mild October meant a delay to planting (the core element of project delivery) and as a result beneficiaries of the project could not be contacted until January 2025 (beyond the fieldwork window for the evaluation). The regeneration team has subsequently successfully engaged with schools and other groups to capture feedback from 53 beneficiaries of the project. More completed surveys are also expected to come in outside of the period of this evaluation.

A poor response rate for project 4 was obtained despite the trialling of multiple engagement approaches (including a visit to one Market town and the distribution of an online survey) but work pressures were deemed one of the primary challenges that inhibited participant engagement. However, during the course of project 4, the regeneration team distributed in person and online surveys targeting the towns of Holywell and Mold that captured data from 858 people and a further online survey currently remains open online with findings still to come outside of the scope of this evaluation report.

Resource and time constraints with the evaluation led to a deviation from the initially proposed qualitative approach to a reliance on survey, and primarily quantitative data. For project 4, direct engagement with two market traders in the form of qualitative interviews complemented the quantitative evidence. More widely, the inclusion of an evaluation film in project 9 and a markets film in relation to project 4 and the sharing of that evidence has enabled the inclusion of further qualitative data in this report.

1.2.3 Wider stakeholder and beneficiary qualitative interviews

Across the programme, a total of 24 stakeholders were engaged in qualitative interviews. Some of these reflected strategic engagement whilst others were project specific, particularly where an online survey was not deemed appropriate, or it was felt that a more qualitative approach would prove more valuable. This was the case for:

- Project 2 (Development of Projects for Future Investment) – Teams interview and a site visit to Buckley Town Council.
- Project 6 (Place Making Plan Development) – Teams interviews with four stakeholders and a site visit to Buckley Town Council.
- Project 8 (Communications and PR) – Teams interviews with six stakeholders
- Project 10 (Connah's Quay Docks) – site visit to Connah's Quay docks where four stakeholders were engaged.

1.2.4 In-depth interviews with project managers

An interview was conducted with each project manager to delve deeper into the workings of each project. Questions were concentrated on rationale, design, strength and weaknesses, cross-cutting themes, legacy and lessons learned. The results of these interviews are reported in the Findings section of this report (section 4 & 5).

1.2.5 Desk Review and analysis of monitoring data

A review of various documentation was undertaken as part of the evaluation to provide contextual understanding of the projects and to obtain evidence that complemented the primary fieldwork activity. Strategic documents reviewed included the project applications, grant applications, quarterly claims, and associated progress reports and a project change request.

Monitoring data supplied by FCC on expenditure of the programme along with the latest available KPIs on outputs and outcomes is presented in section 3.

2. Programme Overview and Project Synergy

2.1 Context and Rationale

With a focus on town centre regeneration, the Town Centre Investment Programme is designed to deliver against the priority of Economy in Flintshire County Council's Council Plan. The sub-priority being to "regenerate re-invent our town centres" through "protecting the economic viability of our town centres".¹

The suite of funded projects also seeks to address key issues in the Flintshire Local Development Plan 2015-2030, adopted on January 24, 2023, which outlines the county's strategic framework for sustainable development. Perhaps the most apt element of the plan, in relation to TCIP, is in Infrastructure and Community Facilities where the plan emphasises the importance of providing necessary infrastructure and community facilities to support new development, promoting cohesive and well-served communities.

The specific design and scope of the projects was informed by a scoping exercise in Flintshire through consultations with key stakeholders to draw on their local knowledge and expertise in relation to town centre needs. Project design was also informed by the six principles set out in the Design Council for Wales'; "[Placemaking Guide](#) of: People and Community, Location, Movement, Mix of Uses, Public Realm and Identity" further informing project design.

More widely, the TCIP reflects to the Welsh Government's 'Town Centre First' principle, adopted by both Welsh Government and local government. The principle seeks to position the health and vibrancy of town centres as the starting point for locational decision-making. The policy identifies how town centres are focal points of communities; increasingly becoming places to live, centres of community and cultural activity, a focus for public services such as health and education, and the location of new co-working spaces.

The TCIP also had the remit of responding positively to previous central government Levelling Up priorities of:

- Boosting productivity, pay, jobs and living standards by growing the private sector, especially in those places where they are lagging.
- Spreading opportunities and improve public services, especially in those places where they are weakest.
- Restoring a sense of community, local pride and belonging, especially in those places where they have been lost.

¹ Council Plan 2023-28, Flintshire County Council.

The strategic context was complemented by evidence gathered through various surveys and audits (e.g. 2016 NRW survey, Green Space Survey, Green Infrastructure (GI) audits) to identify issues and justify projects.

Data gathered as part of these surveys, and consultation with local stakeholders, was used to justify the rationale for the whole programme. In some cases, projects were a continuation of what had already been delivered (e.g. **Project 1**) or scaled down projects that had failed to receive other sources of funding (e.g. **Project 10**).

2.2 Programme Objectives

Set against the above backdrop in terms of context, the objectives of the TCIP can be summarised as follows:

- 1) Proactively respond to market interest in town centre investment and actively encourage investment whenever appropriate opportunities arise.
- 2) Support front-line service outlets in town centre locations to facilitate access to Council and partner services while sustaining footfall.
- 3) Implement Local Development Plan policies for town centres to manage land use changes that promote sustainability and vitality.
- 4) Identify key sites for future redevelopment, focusing on diversifying land use to enhance sustainability and vitality.
- 5) Subject to available capital resources and thorough commercial viability assessments, initiate the acquisition of key sites for redevelopment.
- 6) Target vacant or underused properties in town centres for intervention, utilising the full range of Council enforcement powers where necessary.
- 7) Promote the growth of community asset ownership and community enterprises in town centres.
- 8) Support town centre stakeholder groups in developing and implementing action plans, alongside County-wide initiatives such as promotional activities to bolster town centres.
- 9) Assist businesses in adapting to evolving economic conditions.
- 10) Actively pursue external funding opportunities to support the programme.
- 11) Enhance monitoring efforts to assess and improve town centre vitality.

An overview of the TCIP and its anticipated outcomes and impacts is presented in the logic model overleaf.

Table 2.1: TCIP overarching logic model

Inputs	Activities: including outputs that can be used to measure the scale of these activities	Outcomes: short term – what will these activities directly lead to?	Outcomes: long term – what will be the more long-term outcomes?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> £1.5m SPF funding £364k match funding Stakeholder insight Staffing support and oversight 	<p>Activities across Flintshire town centres:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Marketing/promotion of SPF interventions Consultation/engagement with various groups Design & development of feasibility studies, plans (including placemaking) Grant application support to businesses, community groups & property owners Improvements to green infrastructure commercial properties Community safety infrastructure improvements <p>Outputs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> No. of commercial buildings completed/improved No. of organisations receiving grants No. of feasibility studies developed Green space created/improved No. of trees planted No. of amenities/facilities improved No. of local markets, events or activities created/supported No. of organisations/enterprises receiving non-financial support People attending training sessions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Jobs created/safeguarded No. of vacant units filled No. of projects arising from feasibility studies Improved perceptions of facility/infrastructure project Improved perception of markets No. of volunteering opportunities from support No. of enterprises supported No. of enterprises engaged in new markets Jobs created as a result of support Number of vacant units filled 	<p>Increased town centre vibrancy and vitality evidenced by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reduction in town centre vacancy rates Increased footfall Increased market activity Higher rates of spend per town centre visitor Increased business resilience Increased levels of entrepreneurial activity in town centres Sustained programme of cultural activity in town centres Leveraging in of further investment targeted at regeneration and town centre growth Increased biodiversity across Flintshire towns

2.3 Project Descriptions

Project 1 – Town Centre Property Improvement Grant (TCPIG) Scheme

This project aims to enhance commercial properties in town centres across Flintshire by implementing a grant scheme. The Regeneration Team have assisted property owners (who are often local businesses) from the initial inquiry stage through project scoping, development, and application. Funded projects seek alignment with local needs, regeneration plans and place making priorities.

Project 2 – Development of Projects for Future Investment

A series of works associated feasibility studies, masterplans, business cases and technical reports were funded which would inform future town centre regeneration and place making investment.

Project 3 – Investment in Green Spaces

Involve green infrastructure (GI) installations and improvements across Town Centres in Flintshire such as street planting/green walls, key gateway features improvements and public realm improvements to improve town centre environments for residents and users and to create a stronger sense of place.

Project 4 – Employment of Markets Promotion and Engagement Officer

The Markets Promotion and Engagement Officer was tasked with implementing communication and promotional campaigns to encourage greater market usage, boosting footfall, spending, and enhancing the Mold and Holywell markets' viability and vibrancy.

Project 5 – Town Centre Events and Activities Grant Scheme

The grant scheme provided local people/ organisations with an opportunity to develop and deliver events and activities which contribute to a stronger sense of community within towns and the overall vibrancy of town centres across Flintshire.

Project 6 – Place Making Plan Development

Additional resources were provided to finalise the development of the seven Place Making Plans (PMPs) across Flintshire, as required by the Welsh Government. The towns included in the PMP development are Buckley, Connah's Quay, Flint, Holywell, Mold, Queensferry, and Shotton. The placemaking plans are intended to provide a mechanism for communities to engage creatively with the planning process and are a key prerequisite for securing future Transforming Towns funding from the Welsh Government.

Project 7 – Tailored Business Support Provision

This project facilitated business engagement activities and offer tailored one-to-one support and training for town centre businesses to support them to sustain, grow, and thrive. The initiative was available to both new and existing businesses in the seven designated town centres: Buckley, Connah's Quay, Flint, Holywell, Mold, Queensferry, and Shotton.

Project 8 – Communications and PR Project

This project sought to improve the promotion of the offering of Town Centres in Flintshire and operated as the marketing arm of all TCIP SPF activity in the area.

Project 9 – Programme Evaluation

The project commissioned an (this) external evaluation and a film company to deliver a film that presenting the impact of the programme in a visual, engaging manner.

Project 10 – Connah’s Quay Docks

This project was a late addition to the suite of SPF projects as a result of underspend on other projects freeing up resource. It aimed enhance the Connah’s Quay Docks area by improving safety along Dock Road, reducing the fear of crime, and creating a safer environment for residents, users and visitors. The project has focused on three key areas: (a) Installation of CCTV; (2) Upgraded lighting; and (3) Environmental enhancements.

2.4 Assessing project synergies

It is apparent that there are synergies between the projects with many examples found of projects working together and influencing each other. This highlights the holistic nature of the programme in that the whole was ‘greater than the sum of its parts’.

Project 6 can be seen as the bedrock of the programme feeding into all other projects in some way highlighting the importance of place making throughout the programme. All projects have an element of place making in them and **Project 6** formalises this in its development of 7 place making plans.

In the same way, **Project 8** influenced all other projects with its focus on promoting the SPF programme to the beneficiaries of all projects and wider public and in providing consultations. It was helpful in the promotion and engagement of communities in the Place Making plans developed through **Project 6**.

Projects 4 and 5 fed off each other to a large extent, for example stakeholders identified through **Project 4** activities (e.g., events and markets) went on to apply for **Project 5** grants and successful events adopted by the Promotion and Engagement Officer for the markets.

Project 3 is linked with **Project 2** in that the Green Infrastructure audits developed therein informed the Green Spaces project. There were also links between **Project 3** and **Project 10** in that a scheme developed in the former was used in the latter.

Links were found between **Project 1** and **Project 7** (Examples of businesses using TCPIG and business support) and **Project 10** (Kathleen & May building was funded by **Project 1**).

3. Programme Performance

This section outlines what the programme was designed and expected to achieve, assessing performance against those expectations based on levels of achievement at the time of writing.

3.1 Performance against Spend Targets

The original programme budget is set out in table 3.1 below, it illustrates that around two thirds of the original spend were to be met through SPF funding with the remainder from match funding.

Table 3.1: Original costings and funding sources

Contribution	Value (£)	Proportion of funding
SPF Funding	£1,178,452	65%
Match Funding	£630,311	35%
Total Project Costs	£1,808,763	100%

In May 2024, a change request was put forward and approved by the SPF Regional Team. As illustrated in table 3.2 below, this led to an increase in the SPF grant and a reduction in the proportion of match funding. The adjustments to match funding (primarily Welsh Government funding) related to various project specific factors but primarily because the Welsh Government funds were not used to co-fund an activity associated with a project but rather were used to invest in specific activities that formed part of a project (for example commission technical works from external data analysis and place making consultation costs).

Table 3.2: Reprofiled costings and funding sources – November 2024

Contribution	Value (£)	Proportion of funding
SPF Funding	£1,500,432	80%
Match Funding	£363,760	20%
Total Project Costs	£1,864,192	100%

Table 3.3 shows that £1,472,256.80 has been spent to date² with a remainder of £391,935.20 to be spent over the rest of the programme.

² 30/11/2024

Table 3.3: Programme spend to date (as of 30th November 2024)

Eligible Expenditure	Total expenditure claimed to date	Remaining expenditure	Proportion of allocation remaining
Total Capital UKSPF grant amount	£ 595,927.25	£223,788.75	37.5%
Total Revenue UKSPF grant amount	£ 543,431.53	£137,284.47	25%
Total Match Beneficiary Funding amount - 30% Cash match from applicant Property Improvement	£ 232,189.09	£9,542.91	4%
Total Match Beneficiary Funding amount - 20% Cash match from applicant Events /Activities	£ 84,940.93	£17,377.07	20%
National Resources Wales	£15,768.00	£3,942.00	25%
Total Project Costs	£1,472,256.80	£391,935.20	27%

A series of output and outcome indicators were identified as targets for achievement by projects as a result of this investment. The next two sections outline the Key Performance Indicators that the project had at the outset and how these have been met during the course of the programme.

3.2 Performance against Output Targets

Table 3.4 outlines each project and the SPF intervention they were intended to target along with the actual SPF target and what has been achieved and what will be anticipated to be achieved by the end of the programme.

Table 3.4: SPF Output Targets and Achievements (as of 11/02/2025)

TCIP Project Number	Intervention Number	Output Indicator	Unit of Measure	Approved Target	Total Achieved to Date (11 th Feb 25)	Expected by March 2025 Claim	Anticipated End of Programme Total	Target Achieved or Exceeded
1	W1 Improvements to town centres & High Streets	Number of commercial buildings completed or improved	Number of buildings	13	13	0	13	Achieved
1	W1 Improvements to town centres & High Streets	Number of organisations receiving grants	Number of organisations	13	13	0	13	Achieved
1	W12 Community engagement schemes, local regeneration	Number of organisations receiving non-financial support	Number of organisations	25	30	10	40	Exceeded
2	W14 Relevant feasibility studies	Number of feasibility studies developed as a result of support	Number of studies	10	17	0	17	Exceeded
3	W3 Creation of and improvements to local green spaces	Amount of green or blue space created or improved	Square metres (M2)	100	717.14	5.4	722.54	Exceeded
3	W3 Creation of and improvements to local green spaces	Number of trees planted	Number of trees	25	360	0	360	Exceeded

TCIP Project Number	Intervention Number	Output Indicator	Unit of Measure	Approved Target	Total Achieved to Date (11 th Feb 25)	Expected by March 2025 Claim	Anticipated End of Programme Total	Target Achieved or Exceeded
3	W3 Creation of and improvements to local green spaces	Number of amenities/facilities created or improved	Number of amenities or facilities	6	7	1	8	Exceeded
4	W16 Open markets & town centre retail & service sector	Number of local markets created or supported	Number of markets	3	6	0	6	Exceeded
5	W8 Funding for the development and promotion of wider campaigns and year-round experiences which encourage people to visit and explore the local area.	Number of local events or activities supported	Number of events/activities	16	34	17	51	Exceeded
5	W12 Community engagement schemes, local regeneration	Number of organisations receiving grants	Number of organisations	17	17	0	17	Achieved
5	W12 Community engagement schemes, local regeneration	Number of organisations receiving non-financial support	Number of organisations	25	30	10	40	Exceeded
7	W23 Strengthening local entrepreneurial ecosystems	Number of enterprises receiving non-financial support	Number of enterprises	50	53	0	53	Exceeded

TCIP Project Number	Intervention Number	Output Indicator	Unit of Measure	Approved Target	Total Achieved to Date (11 th Feb 25)	Expected by March 2025 Claim	Anticipated End of Programme Total	Target Achieved or Exceeded
7	W23 Strengthening local entrepreneurial ecosystems	Number of people attending training sessions	Number of people	25	32	0	32	Exceeded
10	W5 Build & Landscaped environment to design out crime	Number of neighbourhood improvements undertaken	Number of improvements	3	4	3	7	Exceeded

For all projects that had output targets all have been achieved or more often exceeded, showing considerable success in delivering the programme.

3.3 Performance against Outcome Targets

Table 3.5: SPF Outcomes Targets and Achievements

TCIP Project Number	Intervention Number	Outcome Indicator	Unit of Measure	Approved Target	Total Achieved to Date (11 th Feb 25)	Expected by March 2025 Claim	Anticipated End of Programme Total	Target Achieved or Exceeded
1	W1 Improvements to town centres & High Streets	Jobs created as a result of support	Number of Full time equivalent (FTE)	3	4	1	5	Exceeded

TCIP Project Number	Intervention Number	Outcome Indicator	Unit of Measure	Approved Target	Total Achieved to Date (11 th Feb 25)	Expected by March 2025 Claim	Anticipated End of Programme Total	Target Achieved or Exceeded
1	W1 Improvements to town centres & High Streets	Number of vacant units filled	Number of vacant units filled	4	5	2	7	Exceeded
2	W14 Relevant feasibility studies	The number of projects arising from funded feasibility studies	Number of projects	4	8	1	9	Exceeded
3	W3 Creation of and improvements to local green spaces	Improved perception of facility/infrastructure project	Number of people	50	53	5	58	Exceeded
4	W16 Open markets & town centre retail & service sector	Improved perception of markets	Number of people	70	661	0	661	Exceeded
5	W8 Funding for the development and promotion of wider campaigns and year-round experiences which	Increased footfall	Number of people	1000	6365	102	6467	Exceeded

TCIP Project Number	Intervention Number	Outcome Indicator	Unit of Measure	Approved Target	Total Achieved to Date (11 th Feb 25)	Expected by March 2025 Claim	Anticipated End of Programme Total	Target Achieved or Exceeded
	encourage people to visit and explore the local area							
5	W12 Community engagement schemes, local regeneration	Number of volunteering opportunities created as a result of support	Number of volunteering roles created	33	310	13	323	Exceeded
7	W23 Strengthening local entrepreneurial ecosystems	Increased number of enterprises supported	Number of enterprises	50	50	0	50	Achieved
7	W23 Strengthening local entrepreneurial ecosystems	Number of enterprises engaged in new markets	Number of enterprises	12	14	0	14	Exceeded

In terms of project outcomes, it can be seen that most outcome targets have either been achieved or as is mostly the case, exceeded. Again, this is evidence of the considerable success of the programme.

4. Findings – programme level

4.1 Programme Design

Flintshire TCIP SPF projects were designed to address immediate needs while laying the groundwork for future actions, impact and legacy. Collaborative and participatory approaches were central, leveraging inputs from various stakeholders and beneficiaries to address local challenges effectively. This was especially apparent in projects 2 and 6, where the groundwork was laid to inform many of the other projects.

There was also flexibility in terms of locations and funding types (capital and revenue investments) enabling broader reach and relevance. The SPF framework allowed this flexibility in terms of the ability to choose locations and funding types (to an extent).

As alluded to in section 2.4, there were strong links between projects, several project managers mentioned overlaps and synergies between projects as a strength of programme design. Essentially the programme demonstrated effective use of data-driven, and feedback-informed approaches to provide a rationale for each project within the programme. A logic model provides an overview.

4.2 Programme Governance and Management

In terms of management of the programme, there has been a robust system in place for monitoring and evaluation of SPF activity by FCC helping the authority to keep track of progress against targets. The application process for SPF funding was two staged where stage one was light touch and removed those projects that did not meet local priorities while the second stage identified projects that were worthy of further exploration and this programme succeeded at this stage.

‘The Town Centre Investment Programme application scored very highly just because it addressed everything we were looking for through the SPF.’ (Flintshire SPF Team)

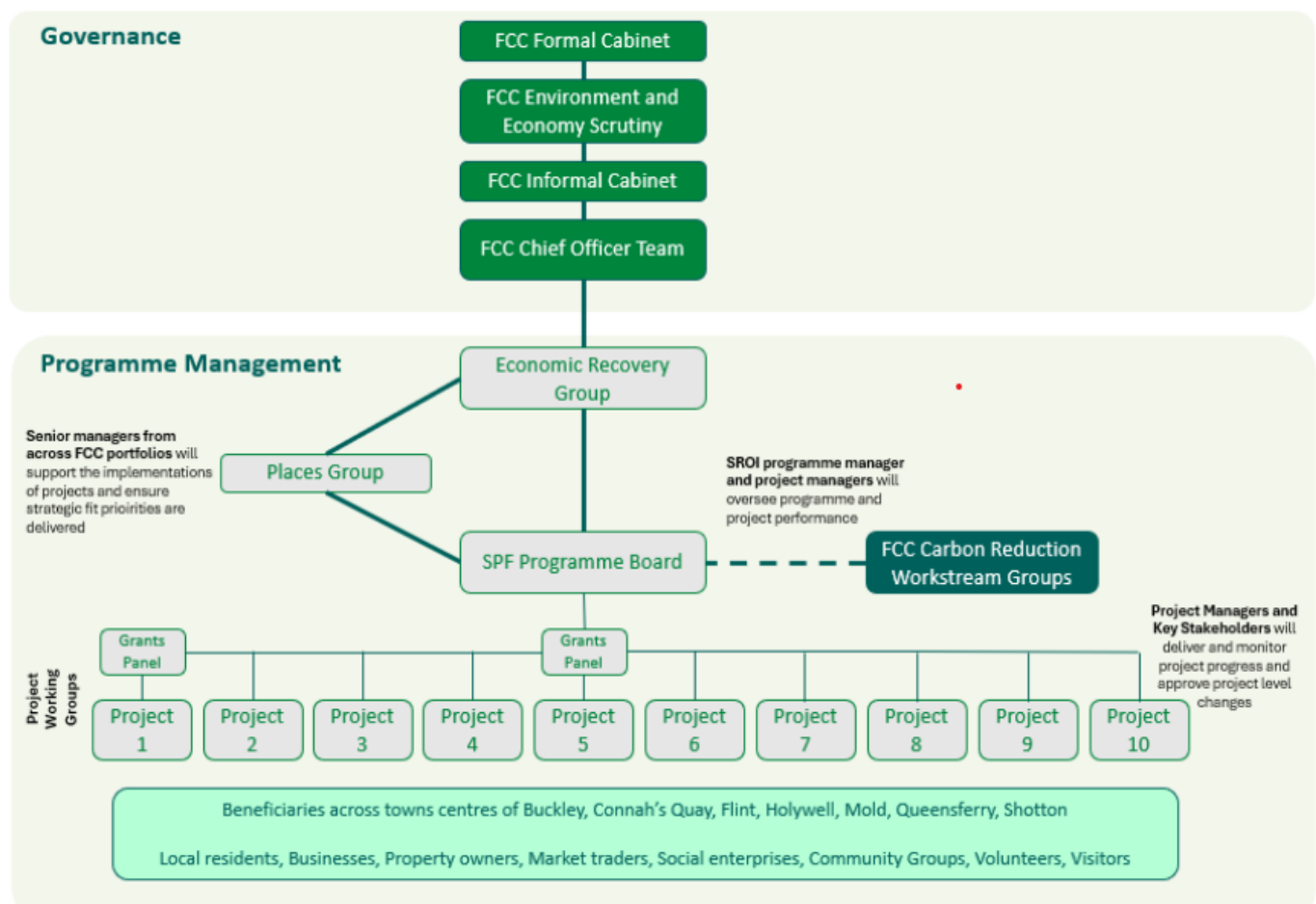
In terms of governance, it was felt by the strategic leads at FCC that the programme fitted well with other programmes while complementing other finance and monitoring models.

Overall, it was believed by the strategic stakeholders interviewed, that governance of the programme was one of its key strengths and strategic stakeholders applauded the passionate leadership shown and the sheer amount of work done by FCC’s Regeneration Team to meet and exceed their targets and deliver a programme that was holistic and realistic.

Strategic stakeholders felt that guidance from the lead Local Authority (Gwynedd CC) was quite broad and lacking in detail (compared with previous EU structural funds guidance). For example, outputs and outcomes need to be prescriptive rather than subjective otherwise there would be a situation of comparing ‘apples and pears’. It was argued that the evidence guidance provided for SPF outputs was too vague and open to interpretation although it should be acknowledged that much of this related to UK government guidance rather than guidance developed by the lead Local Authority.

The management and governance structure for the programme followed a ‘triangular pyramid of management’ format which can be seen below:

Figure 4.1: Management and Governance Structure – TCIP



Each project is answerable to the SPF programme board which, through the People and Places group answers to the Economic Recovery Group (it should be noted that this group was subsequently, following the development of this structure, renamed the Economic Collaboration Group). The People and Places group scrutinise and support the implementation of projects to ensure that priorities are delivered. The management of the programme is then linked in to its governance where all executive decisions are made by FCC’s formal cabinet.

5. Findings – Project Level

This section provides reviews each project highlighting the aims and objectives and achievements of the project before proceeding to discuss strength and weaknesses, lessons learned and the legacy of the project.

5.1 Project 1 - Town Centre Property Improvement Grant (TCPIG) Scheme

Project 1 Evaluation Film: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=17n0NeEdnnc>

5.1.1 Design

The TCPIG scheme aimed to enhance commercial properties in town centres across Flintshire through a grant scheme administered by a grant panel. The initial aim was to improve at least 12 properties and approximately 500 m² of commercial floorspace. Capital grants ranging from £5,000 to £50,000 were made available, covering up to 70% of eligible project costs. Beneficiaries (property owners or long-term tenants) have been required to provide match funding for the remaining 30%.

Eligible improvements included external works such as shopfront enhancements, upgraded display windows, improved signage, new windows and doors, external lighting, roofs and chimneys, rainwater systems, rendering, stone cleaning or repairs, re-pointing, and structural work. Internal works were also funded but only as part of a comprehensive package that includes external improvements.

Figure 5.1 Before and after pictures of HiQ Tyres and Autocare in Queensferry



Applicants engaged qualified professionals (e.g., architects, quantity surveyors, construction contractors) to design and implement their projects. Funding applications needed to demonstrate value for money, tangible benefits to the property and town centre, and alignment with the project timeframe.

The FCC Regeneration Team oversaw the scheme, promoting it, managing the grant application and award process, and monitoring outcomes. They also assisted property owners with initial inquiries, project development, and application preparation to ensure alignment with the town centre's placemaking and regeneration priorities. FCC's legal and finance teams supported the grant administration process to ensure due diligence for each project.

A total of 14 town centre property improvement proposals have been approved by the grant panel, with one property receiving two separate grants. As a result, there are 13 unique beneficiaries. This project has exceeded its target, achieving improvements to 13 buildings (compared to the 12 originally committed to in the stage two application).

An example of a successful project is the building that hosts the 'Full Circle Security' business. Prior to them purchasing it, it was vacant building. The applicant was awarded a grant for a new driveway, rendering, replacement windows and doors, an electric car charging point and new Velux windows. More work has been done through the use of a significant amount of private investment to bring the building up to modern standards. The improvement in the building has led to business expansion and, in turn, two new jobs have been created.

The TCPIG was piloted on a smaller scale in three towns across Flintshire' in financial year 2023-24 with funding from WG and so only minor tweaks were needed to the design of the project to make it relevant for SPF. On reflection the project manager felt that enhanced guidance, possibly through the use of a more extensive FAQ may have improved overall delivery.

5.1.2 Outcome of the beneficiary survey

Our survey produced eight responses out of a possible 11³ with all knowing that the funding had come from SPF. Six out of eight businesses reported that they found out about the TCPIG through FCC with only one respondent hearing about it through word of mouth.

The majority of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed to the statements that the grant application process was simple, the amount of information required was reasonable and that feedback was timely and constructive. Asked whether the amount of information requested was reasonable, 7/8 – 88% said they agreed or strongly agreed. Lastly in terms of feedback from FCC being timely and constructive all respondents (8/8 – 100%) either agreed or strongly agreed that this was the case.

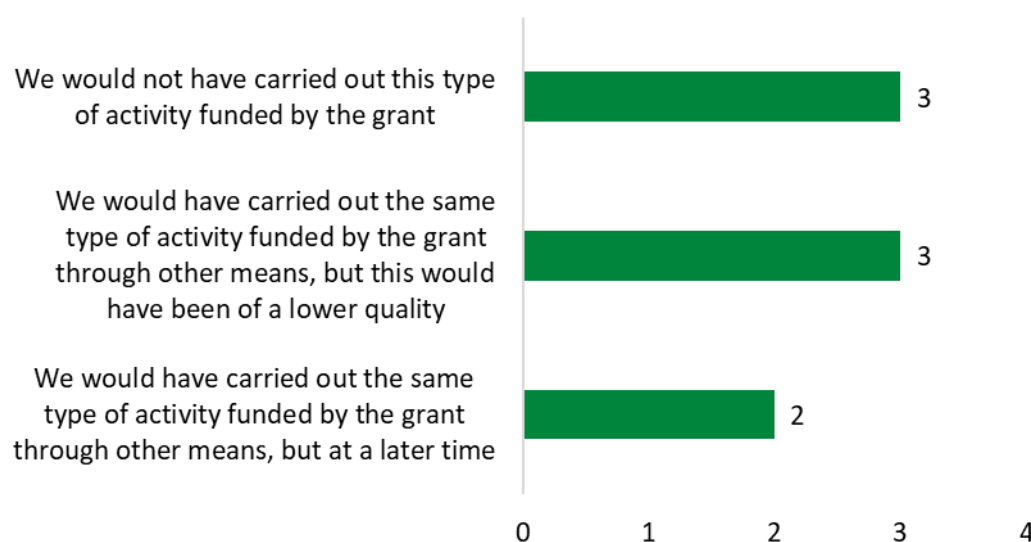
Almost all the respondents were very satisfied with the grant application process however one respondent complained that there were some delays in the process whereby it seemed there was a lack of communication between Council departments and a 'silo' attitude whereby one department seemed to be reluctant to push other departments for the information needed to progress the claim.

³ 11 were included of the overall 13. The other 2 (of 13) were later delivering and ongoing when the research was carried out.

Grant beneficiaries were also happy with the promptness of payment with all respondents stating that the grant money was paid promptly after they put in their claim. Also, the arrangement, where the minimum grant available was £5000 and maximum £50,000 and up to 70% of the overall costs were eligible to be paid by the grant, worked well for all respondents.

When asked 'what would have happened anyway without the grant' most of the beneficiaries either would have continued albeit on a lower level in terms of quality or not proceeded at all. For the remainder, the availability of the grant accelerated their investment in their property. It can be said therefore that the TCPIG was quite instrumental in allowing businesses to embark on improvements to their buildings in town centres in Flintshire.

Figure 5.2: What would you have done without the support received from the grant?



“The Flintshire regeneration team were very enthusiastic, supportive and helpful from start to finish. A well organised project that has made a huge positive impact on the premises and the surrounding area in the town it is located... a brilliant way of improving the area” (Project 1 Respondent)

Seven of the thirteen were vacant prior to the grants being awarded, when asked “How successful has the property improvement been on a scale of 1 to 5 (1 – not successful; 5- very successful)” seven of eight respondents rated it a 5 out of 5 (the remaining responding rated it a 4).

Most respondents felt the work the grant enabled, had helped improve the town centre they were located in (7/8 respondents said the improvements they have made, helped to improve the town centre overall) as well as fostering a better sense of community in the area (6/8).

Five of the respondents claimed that the grant led to the creation of new jobs within their respective organisations with 7 full time and 6 part time positions reportedly being created by those who responded to our survey. If the rate of job creation was replicated for all grant recipients (rather than purely those who responded to the survey) this would equate to 11 full time and 10 part time positions.

Two grant scheme beneficiaries were interviewed by Follow Films and their accounts also supported the general sense of positivity in response to the project. One respondent stated:

“Since Covid I’ve had nothing but support from Flintshire County Council. They were very receptive to the work that we wanted to do to improve the site and improve the look on the high street. 100% pleased with it. Can’t fault it.” (Project 1 Beneficiary)

It was felt that the successful delivery of this project also improved the reputation of FCC among the local community.

5.1.3 Strengths

What was seen as a real strength was the way the project guided the applicants in the process of applying for funds and in supporting the design of the application so that it benefits the town centre as well as the individual applicant:

“I’ll always make some suggestions to say this is what would make this project a better project that would be more acceptable by an independent panel”

“I’ve managed to manoeuvre things to make it best for the town and not just the landlord really.” (Project 1 Manager)

Another strength has been in supporting businesses that otherwise would have looked to relocate outside the town centre. Anecdotally, according to the Project Manager there were various examples of this taking place:

“By putting in something, some intervention to help a business stay in that town, improve their business within the town, it will help regenerate the town in itself.” (Project 1 Manager)

The project has enabled so-called ‘positive externalities’ whereby the regeneration of buildings in town centres has led to an improved look and feel to the area with potential to attract people back into town centres to spend locally.

5.1.4 Legacy

There is a certain circularity about the legacy aspects of this particular project. It is argued that improving buildings within town centres, as this project has done, will attract and have knock on effects on the local economy by attracting more people and their commensurate spending within localities will further boost town centres' economies.

When communities see investment they see confidence in a location, neighbouring properties are encouraged to invest but in more peripheral locations they would still benefit from public sector intervention to facilitate that.

5.2 Project 2 - Development of projects for future investment

Project 2 Evaluation Film: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wmBvXTTB89E>

5.2.1 Design

The project was designed to address an identified need for preparatory work in regeneration efforts. As FCC's regeneration team was newly established, it had limited resource and capacity, resulting in fewer, ready to implement, projects. By developing feasibility studies and business cases across seven towns, the project created a pipeline of potential initiatives, enabling the council to take a more strategic approach to investment opportunities and potentially capitalise on future capital funding.

A notable strength of the project design was the collaborative approach, drawing on community, voluntary and private sectors as both beneficiaries and end users. The model not only facilitated broader engagement and consultation, but also bridged a key gap for organisations that would otherwise struggle to finance early-stage feasibility or capital works.

By overseeing each initiative directly, the council maintained a standardised process for commissioning external consultancy support, while tailoring efforts to meet the needs of different stakeholders. Strong in-house management further reinforced this consistency, ensuring a coherent and consistent approach throughout the project, and for future development works undertaken by the regeneration team. Furthermore, it was felt that this design choice proved more efficient than a capital grant-based approach, which, as seen elsewhere on the programme, would have been more resource-intensive and reliant on recipients who may lack the expertise for feasibility work.

Another strong element of the project's design was its capacity to leverage seed funding to attract co-investment. Several beneficiary organisations provided co-funding contributions, recognised as match funding for the Shared Prosperity Fund. One standout example is the Sustainable Drainage System (SuDS) work in Buckley, where an investment of just under £4,000 attracted almost £16,000 in external support from Natural Resources Wales. This illustrates how a relatively small outlay of council funding can generate a significantly larger

financial commitment from other sources, facilitating more ambitious schemes and ensuring the project's long-term viability.

Whilst the project design proved effective overall, some stakeholders suggested refinements to maximise its impact. A two-stage approach for project selection and development would have been beneficial, with the current approach somewhat constrained by the short funding timeframe. If a longer timeframe had been available, a second window could have been introduced to refine and advance projects further.

5.2.2 Strengths and Challenges

The project has established a solid foundation for future investment opportunities. A key strength has been the tight project management, which ensured stakeholders and beneficiaries were informed of timelines and integrated project activities into their broader programmes. This structured approach helped facilitate key initiatives, such as the development of a business plan for Rivertown, enabling a successful funding application of £750,000 from the Welsh Government. Additionally, the programme identified viable projects and aligned them with future Welsh Government funding allocations, positioning Flintshire to advance these initiatives when resources become available.

Stakeholders also noted the project faced some delivery challenges. One barrier was the limited understanding among some stakeholders regarding funding models and requirements, such as the need for upfront financial contributions or matching funds. This lack of awareness complicated early engagement and project development, requiring the team to provide additional guidance to bridge knowledge gaps. Another challenge was the limited capacity and resources of local stakeholders, with a small number of individuals often managing multiple responsibilities, from applying for funding to working on business plans.

5.2.3 Legacy

Multiple projects have demonstrated their feasibility, opening avenues for future financial support. As a result, this has strengthened the reputation of FCC's Regeneration Team, with local stakeholders increasingly turning to the team for guidance, signposting and support in project development. It is hoped the strong collaborative working with beneficiaries can continue into the next stages of respective projects, beyond the parameters of this funding programme.

5.3 Project 3 - Investment in Green Spaces

Project 3 Evaluation Film: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Yn_22eozXI4

5.3.1 Design

This project focused on implementing green infrastructure (GI) enhancements in Flintshire towns, particularly Buckley, Holywell, and Shotton. These towns had completed comprehensive GI audits (Spring 2023) that outlined priority GI interventions, including detailed costings and maintenance plans for each proposal.

The GI investments included street planting, green walls, enhancements to key gateway features, and public realm improvements with the aim of benefitting local businesses, the general public, and the environment by making the towns more attractive, thereby encouraging increased footfall, longer dwell times, and may lead to higher spending. Additionally, the investment has supported carbon reduction goals outlined in FCC's Carbon Reduction Strategy and has been designed to be accessible to all sections of the community.

The project has been managed by FCC's Regeneration Team in collaboration with the FCC Biodiversity Officer, building on an existing partnership that successfully commissioned the recent GI audits.

The project consists primarily of four activities, some of which have been identified by Project 2 (Development of Projects for Future Investment) through Green Infrastructure Audits:

- Green Screening Project (an installation of green screening planters outside a school situated next to a main road): Croes Atti School, Shotton.
- School Greening Project: various installations including hedgerow saplings and trees were undertaken in Five Schools across Flintshire.
- Urban Tree Pit Project: Connah's Quay - the installation of urban tree pits in Connah's Quay town centre.
- Connah's Quay Memorial Garden: Installation of Green Space as part of the current amenity around the Connah's Quay War Memorial.

Most activities have now been completed after initial stalling due to an unseasonably mild October.

The project has delivered well against key indicators. There was a target of 25 trees and 100 m² of green space improvements and six amenities/facilities improved. The completion of the Urban Trees Project, School Greening Project and Memorial Garden takes the total square meterage of green space improved in Project 3 to date to 717.14m², which demonstrates an overachievement of 617.14m² to date, against the 100m² output target. The tree planting target was also overachieved with a total of 360 trees planted against the target of 25. Two further interventions, underway at the time of writing this evaluation report, improving green spaces around the Connah's Quay Docks Heritage Centre, will serve to increase final m² and number of trees further still.

As part of the scheme at Croes Atti and across the other schools, a series of learning opportunities have been delivered on environmental and sustainability issues. The Connah's Quay Memorial Garden acquired funding through both this Project 3 and 5 (Activities and Events Grants) to improve the amenity. Footage of interviews with beneficiaries regarding these GI projects can be found here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Yn_22eozXl4.

According to the beneficiary who applied for funding the Connah's Quay Memorial Garden:

“(The SPF funding) was my last hope and I never looked back. There’s thirty Planters and they’re putting in forever plants... in years to come this will be the sort of thing that will keep the place going” (Project 3 Beneficiary)

The same beneficiary later informed the project manager that local community groups had requested to sponsor a planter to ensure its longevity and maintenance. This is noted as an unanticipated outcome related to community engagement, investment, and sense of pride in place.

5.3.2 Feedback from wider stakeholders and beneficiaries

A representative from the biodiversity team at FCC said that Project 6, in particular the Green Infrastructure Audits, was a catalyst for the collaborative work in this project. Once the first two audits (through Project 2) had been created they were able to set up a cross-department group in FCC – the Town Centre Green Infrastructure Working Group with members from StreetScene⁴, the education department, air quality, and the engineering department. Indeed, the audits have enabled identification of projects early on and promoted thinking along the lines of green infrastructure.

There was also involvement from the climate change team at the council who assessed the environmental impacts of the projects within Project 3. They are involved in explaining the benefits of green infrastructure to the wider audience at the council. They highlighted that it is resource constraints that usually prevent the council from implementing various projects and insofar as this is true the SPF funding has been instrumental in getting these projects up and running. In terms of the balance of benefits, whilst from a climate perspective the projects had a fairly small impact there are wider benefits around air quality, quality of life and improving the attractiveness of the town centres as a result of these investments.

Due to the timing of the planting season, most GI interventions were completed following the data collection period of this evaluation. However, Flintshire County Council distributed a survey capturing the views of school children regarding the GI interventions, receiving 53 positive responses as of 11th February 2025. Along with the positive accounts from staff and students at Flint High School, captured in the evaluation film, feedback from surveys included:

“Thank you for helping us to make our school more eco friendly”

⁴ An easy point of contact set up by FCC for all services associated with streets, highways and open spaces.

“I feel that it’s a good addition to the environment and the nature to us and the people walking past they can notice the wildlife and notice that it makes the surrounding area better” (Project 3 Beneficiaries, Ysgol Bryn Deva)

5.3.3 Legacy

The project investments have provided visual, environmental and community impact through green infrastructure. Active community engagement and taking ideas forward can be built upon for the future and retaining this engagement will be crucial going forward.

The investment has also provided access to green spaces for people from all backgrounds. This provides an opportunity for all the community to engage with their local environment and appreciate the green spaces that have been created.

Further, maintenance agreements have been put in place for schools, the Inter Service Committee and FCC’S StreetScene Service for the four projects to ensure that the green infrastructure assets that have been developed, are maintained.

5.4 Project 4 - Employment of Markets Promotion and Engagement Officer

Project 4 Evaluation Film: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LjPdWKHNlno>

5.4.1 Design

This project has involved the recruitment of a new fixed-term position: Promotion and Engagement Officer (October 2023 – March 2025), to support the existing Markets Team in managing indoor and outdoor markets in Mold and Holywell. The role has also contributed to the setting up of artisan markets and events, which can be rolled out to other town centres across Flintshire.

The postholder has engaged with stallholders and key stakeholders to utilise communication and promotional campaigns aimed at increasing market usage, enhancing footfall, boosting spending, and improving the viability and vibrancy of the markets. The project has played a vital role in developing a future strategy for markets in Flintshire.

Here are some accomplishments of this project:

- As a result of publicity and local engagement, the Promotion and Engagement Officer has established a Young Traders market in Mold and secured stalls for the young traders at the Mold Food Festival in September. This and other additionalities to the festival have been supported through the Festival Committee’s application for an Activities and Events Grant from Project 5. This support for young traders is understood to have been instrumental in attracting the National Market Traders Federation back to Mold in 2025 to host local heats and the regional final of the Young Traders Market Awards 2025.

- The inclusion of Mold Market as a destination for half day coach tours significantly increasing footfall to the market.
- The creation of two new open-air markets in Flintshire and supported a third by improving the attractiveness or viability of the market through event creation.
- The organisation of a number of events such as the 'D-day event' and new summer pop-up events in partnership with Outside Lives, a local charity.

In terms of increasing footfall, there has been some data captured by the project through the use of sensors on lampposts to capture mobile phone signals. The results of this analysis identified a considerable increase in footfall during the D-Day event compared to the previous week:

Figure 5.3: Footfall – no event (1st June)

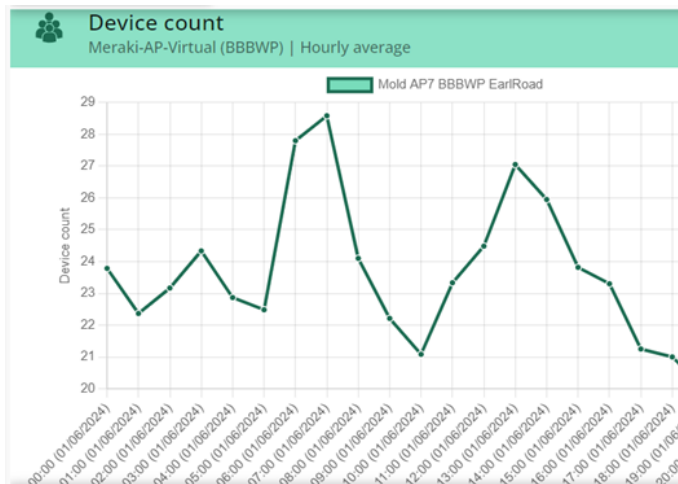
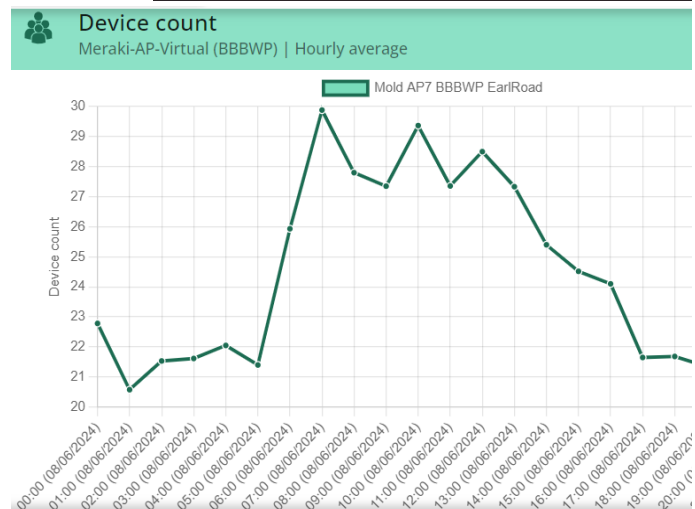


Figure 5.4: Footfall D-Day Event (8th June)



The project was set up to connect organisations with potential funders and it was felt by the project manager that this aspect worked very well. Also, it was believed that the project worked synergistically with Project 5 where grants available supplemented the other market events going on and further increased vibrancy. From an initial survey administered to market traders and a small number of local people it was identified that the main tools to increase footfall in the markets would be coach travel and events. The other element of the project that has brought success is the organisation of coach travel from as far away as Liverpool to visit the market towns of Mold and Holywell. This was then fed into the design of the project and offered a mechanism for bringing visitors to the markets which the team are looking to build on.

Surveys have been conducted with members of the public on their perceptions of the open-air markets in Mold and Holywell. The first survey (n=38 conducted in November 2023) showed the number perceiving markets as “good/very good” at 35% (17 of 49 responses). The second survey conducted online through Give My View (November 2024) secured a significantly larger number of respondents (n=820) and a more positive response with 59% of respondents reporting their perception of the two Flintshire markets to be “good/very good” (678 of 1,154 responses). When exploring this at the market town level, the percentage increase in positive perceptions since the start of the project has been 6% for Holywell and 37% for Mold. A third survey is currently still live online with results to be analysed as part of the final programme progress report and findings will be used to inform future programmes of investment.

5.4.2 Feedback from beneficiaries

Figure 5.5: Mold market on the 19th October 2024



Qualitative responses were gained from young market traders, through a film commissioned as part of this Project 4 (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EstmCqsqQ70>), which gives an insight into the state of play in markets in towns in Flintshire:

“All the areas are described as market towns, and I don’t think my generation understood what that meant ... but now it’s [market towns] on the rise and as a newcomer to the market I can’t believe how welcoming and lovely everyone is”
(Project 4 Beneficiary)

Another young trader gave us some insights into the benefits of Project 4.

“I first got involved with the Mold market when I was offered a free market stall as part of the Young Traders market. That was an amazing opportunity. We created an amazing community of young people... we connected with each other and supported each other’s businesses. It was just a lovely opportunity” (Project 4 Beneficiary)

Figure 5.6: Young people showing their Young Traders Awards certificate



5.4.3 Strengths and weaknesses

The project has increased footfall around events, and, the performance of the Markets Promotion and Engagement (P&E) Officer has been critical to the project’s success. They have played an important role in increasing engagement and awareness of the markets and in diversity the market offers in Mold and Holywell.

When reflecting on the success of the project, one of the areas that was a constraint on project success related to the limitations or the parameters on what the grant could be spent on. Again, there was a desire for extension of the timeframes to enable the team to build on the good work that had already been done.

5.4.4 Legacy

Plans are in place for the events organised as part of the project to be repeated. Securing engagement, not only with traders but also with the wider public has brought a more social, meeting space to the towns. “It’s creating good, positive experiences for the community.” (Project 4 Manager)

The engagement with young traders has also provided an opportunity for them to test trade and start their own businesses, building a community of young traders for the town and drawing on opportunities such as the Mold Food Festival to showcase their products.

5.5 Project 5 - Town Centre Events & Activities Grant Scheme

Project 5 Evaluation Film: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j7DxAJcH4hM>

5.5.1 Design

The Town Centre Events and Activities Grant Scheme was designed to enhance the vibrancy and placemaking potential of Flintshire's town centres. Recognising the need to boost footfall and animate the high streets, FCC proposed a grant-based initiative to enable community groups, voluntary organisations, businesses and town councils to deliver events and activities. The project has strong strategic alignment to the Design Commission for Wales (DCFW) placemaking Wales charter⁵, and is rooted in the priorities outlined within the charter, mainly the importance of delivering activities in town centres as a key strand of placemaking. The scheme offered grants ranging from £500 to £10,000, with 80% contributed by the council with 20% match funding. FCC's regeneration team oversaw administration, approval, promotion and monitoring of the grants.

Figure 5.7 Lantern Parade in Buckley



Stakeholders generally viewed the design of the project as robust and well aligned with revitalising Flintshire's town centres and boosting footfall. This view was echoed by wider beneficiaries such as town councils who noted the grant reinforced their existing activities and events, allowing them to expand in scope and attract more visitors. Additionally, the collection of monitoring information (MI) was highlighted as an effective feedback mechanism, enabling the council to assess indirect benefits from footfall and secondary spending in local restaurants and businesses. Importantly, MI enabled the project team to

⁵ [Placemaking Wales Charter, Design Commission for Wales, 2020](#)

identify and address challenges proactively, for example, by advising beneficiaries on venue suitability based on issues encountered by earlier applicants.

The project also proved effective in leveraging additional resources beyond the standard 80:20 grant-to-match ratio. In one notable example, a Welsh festival applied for £10,000 from the scheme to support an event with a budget of £50,000, contributing the remaining £40,000 themselves.

Furthermore, the Town Centre and Activities grant project has modest synergies with other projects across the programme. There is noticeable alignment with Project 4 (Market Engagement) with Mold and Holywell both having market initiatives that coincide with the events funded by the Activities and Events grant. The project has worked closely with the markets team to ensure that these activities align, strengthening the offer.

Despite these strengths, the scheme's paperwork requirements proved a minor challenge, particularly for smaller community groups with limited administrative experience. This led to higher-than-anticipated levels of assistance from the Project Manager, placing added resource strain on an already small team. Stakeholders suggested that adopting electronic or survey-based forms could help reduce this administrative overhead for both applicants and council staff.

5.5.2 Delivery

Stakeholders generally reported smooth delivery of the Activities and Events Grant Scheme. While individual participants occasionally encountered challenges, such as difficulty accurately forecasting costs or monitoring attendance for specific events, these were typically manageable with the flexible nature of the grant.

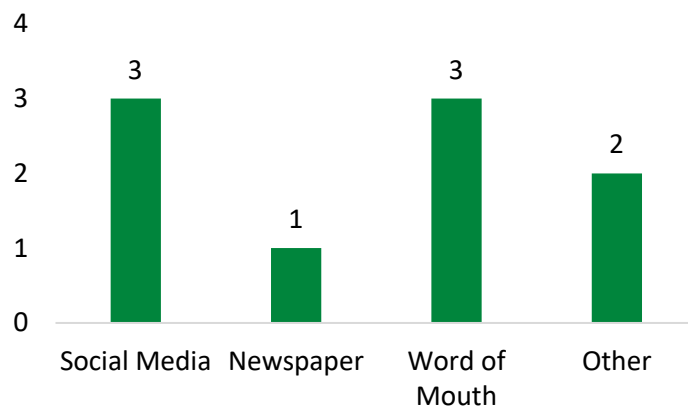
Another factor contributing to effective delivery, was the management structure that minimised direct liaison between the project manager and wider SPF teams. Instead, communications were channelled through a central point, leaving project staff free to focus on core delivery tasks. Stakeholders felt this arrangement prevented unnecessary complexity in an already intensive claims process.

There has been substantial overachievement of targets in this project with elements such as number of events supported, footfall and number of volunteers all exceeding their targets.

5.5.3 Outcomes of beneficiary survey

In terms of the survey results for this project all respondents (9) applied for a grant, and all knew that the funding had come from SPF. In addition, all stated that the grant money had been paid promptly after putting in their claim and all said the arrangement and funding value worked well. However, (in a shift from Project 1 findings) most of the grant recipients had heard of the grant either through word of mouth or social media.

Figure 5.8: How did you find out about the Activities and Events Grant from Flintshire County Council (FCC)?



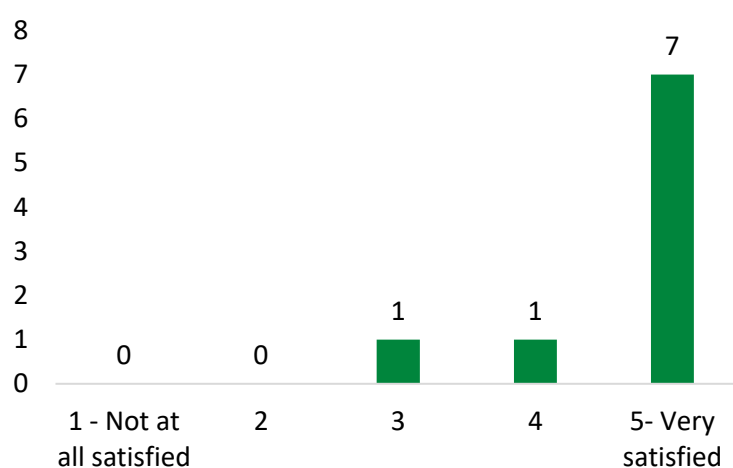
In terms of the application process most (7/9 – 78%) respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that the application process was simple to complete. Asked whether the amount of information requested was reasonable 6/9 – 67% said they agreed or strongly agreed. Lastly in terms of feedback from FCC being timely and constructive all respondents (9/9 – 100%) either agreed or strongly agreed that this was the case.

“As a first time claimer, it was all very new and sometimes a little daunting, however the support we received from FCC was second to none!” (Project 5 Respondent)

“Communication with lead contact was great throughout. Provided relevant feedback while completing the application, which supported us greatly” (Project 5 Respondent)

In terms of ‘what would have happened anyway’ of the nine respondents to the survey, six would have been unable to carry out the activity in the absence of a grant whilst two would have been able to carry it out to similar scale/nature through other funding sources. There was also a high level of satisfaction with support received from the FCC Regeneration team as identified in figure 5.9 overleaf.

Figure 5.9: Satisfaction with the support received from the FCC Regeneration team



Having said this, three (out of nine) respondents did feel that the process could have been improved with one respondent feeling that a lot of information was required for such a small grant that they were applying for and another stating that some of the evidence required was too ‘in-depth’ and difficult to obtain (due to issues such as GDPR). However, most respondents claimed that they would apply for similar funds in the future.

“Just a massive, big thankyou to FCC, the UK government and any other bodies involved. This grant has meant we can now repeat this again in 2025, secure in the knowledge we have generated a sustainable model for at least the next two to three years” (Project 5 Respondent)

A representative of one of the events organised gave an interview about their experience of working with FCC as part of this project. They were quite judgemental about the funding situation in general highlighting that it followed a ‘silo’ approach in that funding was streamed to particular groups of people (e.g. disabled, mental health etc). They advocated a ‘whole community approach’ whereby ‘ecosystems’ of people were identified, and each element of the ecosystem would support each other.

“Everyone can bring something to the table with everyone supporting each other bringing back a real sense of community” (Project 5 Beneficiary)

5.5.4 Legacy

The project has successfully enhanced Flintshire’s town centres by boosting community engagement, town centre vibrancy and increasing footfall. An important legacy of the project has been enabling beneficiaries to run pilot projects, providing them with the confidence and experience to independently organise their own events in the future. A local

ice hockey team for example expanded its tournaments after receiving grant support from the project, leveraging this experience to attract additional funding from other sources.

To ensure the lasting success of Project 5, stakeholders recognise that ongoing support for beneficiaries is crucial. This includes assistance with obtaining necessary permissions and managing logistical arrangements.

The project has also increased volunteers thereby providing additional capacity to organise further events. This increase in volunteers supports the town centres and their activities but also community organisations – strengthening the voluntary and the community infrastructure of a location:

“Volunteering is a major one that makes people feel better. It’s not just them putting on other events after piloting and having confidence and equipment. It’s also people volunteering who get a sense of achievement.” (Project 5 Manager)

The Holywell Gateway Project for example has instilled a sense of pride in the children that took part as can be seen in the film: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j7DxAJcH4hM>. It also is brought communities together through the organisation of multi-generational events targeting different age groups.

5.6 Project 6 – Place Making Plans Development

Project 6 Evaluation Film: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z5nEE7_POVA

5.6.1 Design

This project provided the additional resources necessary to support the development of Place Making Plans for seven town centres across Flintshire. The investment included a combination of staff resources to advance the development of Place Making Plans and a revenue budget to secure technical expertise and consultancy services to finalise the plans.

The approach employed by FCC’s Regeneration Team for developing Place Making Plans, placed significant emphasis on public consultation (a separate procurement to the procurement of a consultant to deliver the plan). The approach has been recognised as best practice by the Design Commission for Wales and members of FCC recently attended an event organised and hosted by DCfW to showcase their approach, to share learning and practice.

Upon completion, the Place Making Plans are expected to serve as a foundation for securing investment to implement town centre projects, forming a critical element of the exit strategy and future direction beyond the SPF funding period.

The work was carried out in three tranches (Tranche 1: Shotton, Holywell and Buckley. Tranche 2: Connah’s Quay and Queensferry and Tranche 3: Flint and Mold) with eight stages to be completed:

Table 5.1: Place Making Stages

Stage	Programme of work
1	Review of statistical information, complete range of audits, assessments and site visit(s)
2	Design and undertake public consultation – phase 1 (online and in person)
3	Quantitative and Qualitative Data Analysis of consultation findings
4	Creation of draft Place Making Plan
5	Stakeholder consultation on draft Plan – internal and external to the Council
6	Design and undertake public consultation – phase 2 (online and in person)
7	Analysis of feedback and complete Place Making Plan and Executive Summary
8	Finalisation of Place Making Plan – ready for submission to Scrutiny for review and Cabinet for approval

As of the 4th February 2025 each plan had reached the following stage⁶:

Tranche 1	Stage Achieved
Shotton	Stage 8
Holywell	Stage 8
Buckley	Stage 6
Tranche 2	Stage Achieved
Connah's Quay	Stage 5
Queensferry	Stage 5
Tranche 3	Stage Achieved
Flint	Stage 3
Mold	Stage 3

Also delivered as part of Project 6 was the Place Making Flintshire website, which has not yet gone live. This is a portal to keep all stakeholders informed of the development of the Place Making plans.

5.6.2 Delivery

The project manager described the breadth of consultation as a key strength of the project with a wide variety of partners actively engaged. It was felt that the approach to place making plans in Flintshire was slightly different to other LAs in Wales in that the consultation aspect was separated out from the commission of the plans themselves. Indeed, so novel was their approach that they attended a national Webinar to present their

⁶ 4th February 2025 Placemaking Plans Update, Flintshire County Council.

approach on Place Making in Flintshire. The governance structure around Project 6 was linked in to the People and Places group⁷ involving at least 30 other organisations.

The Place Making Plans provide an opportunity for increasing the alignment of service delivery providing a coherent strategy for places that is corporately aligned and providing the basis for the case for future funding from WG where the opportunities exist.

The consultation engagement with the public and town councils was outsourced to LandTech⁸ through its Give my View platform as part of Project 8 and so the data from these consultations were used in the place making plans. Furthermore, FCC separately commissioned the commercial appraisal, the socioeconomic assessments of the green infrastructure audits, with a mixture of blended approach around digital (conducted by the Give my View platform) and face to face consultation.

The baseline work was undertaken by FCC and the consultancy analysed and sifted through the data and produced the plans. It is understood that this collaborative approach to the placemaking plans worked well.

In terms of challenges, the fact that FCC had undertaken the consultations may have meant that some of the *tone, spirit and emotion* of the responses were missed by the contractors which made the process a little more difficult for the contractors.

5.6.3 Strengths and weaknesses

A key strength of this project was having plans that could be used in the future which are well informed by local people and local organisations and their needs. The plans also provide a platform for further delivery.

‘We've got commitment and then there's a further piece of work that will sit after the funding programme period for SPF and that's looking at turning the long-term strategies into a viable one-to-two-year action plan.’ (Project 6 Manager)

The level of buy in from the public of ‘turning the long-term strategies into a viable on to two-year action plan’ has also been a real strength with survey⁹ respondents giving an average of 8.5/10 scoring of the placemaking plans developed.

The real strength of the project according to the stakeholders interviewed was to provide an ‘opportunities framework’ to FCC rather than anything prescriptive because that then gives more flexibility for future regeneration activity.

⁷ A cross-institution group comprising of FCC, the local health board, FSB, town and community councils.

⁸ A local technology company specialising in Social Media engagement.

⁹ Conducted by FCC.

Reflecting on the lessons learnt from the project, the activity proved to be more resource intensive than anticipated with some consultation approaches proving more cost effective than others e.g. online engagement being more cost effective because of the lower running costs highlighting the success of this approach. However, inclusivity gained from a diversity of consultation approaches also should be acknowledged. Also, it was pointed out that online engagement was much preferred approach with around 8,800 responses to the consultations as opposed to 20-30 people engaging in consultation at public events.

The success of the Give My View online platform for engagement, as evidenced by the very high response rate alluded to above, has led to them being commissioned again by FCC up until June 2026.

5.6.4 Legacy

In terms of legacy, the webinar that FCC delivered on their unique approach to Place Making was seen as a real showcase of the work that has been happening. Also, a training module containing an illustrative animation, that has been developed (through Project 8) will sit in the e-learning portfolio illustrating how awareness can be raised around Place Making in general. Most importantly perhaps is the legacy created for the seven towns of Flintshire with plans in place or in progress that will enable these locations to secure government funding in the future.

5.7 Project 7 – Tailored Business Support

Project 7 Evaluation Film: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ynqGdNd7kPw>

5.7.1 Design

The project was designed to address identified gaps in support for high street businesses within town centres. Research conducted during the first phase of place-making within FCC revealed a significant number of empty shops in the region as well as an unmet need for localised support. Business Wales' support was largely geared towards national priorities, such as start-ups and online businesses, leaving many high-street businesses in Flintshire town centres lacking tailored support. Recognising this gap, FCC commissioned a bespoke support project, and, due to limited internal capacity, appointed SavetheHighStreet (STHS) through a tender process to deliver the project.

5.7.2 Strengths

A key strength of the project design was its three-phased structure. The first phase began as a pilot scheme involving a cohort of fifteen businesses receiving 1-2-1 support following a period of engagement activities. Upon successful completion of this cohort, FCC commissioned two additional cohorts, divided between phase two and three. From the council's perspective, this phased approach served as a risk mitigation strategy, allowing them to gauge demand without fully committing resources from the outset. Additionally, it allowed the programme to develop organically, incorporating lessons learnt from each phase. For instance, feedback from the pilot phase indicated a need to expand outreach

efforts to fully subscribe cohorts and maintain reserve lists. As a result, phase two and three offered additional free in-person and online events, along with a renewed focus on digital and social media workshops, which proved to be the most popular in the initial phase.

Another highlight was the eight-week, one-to-one support model, praised by both stakeholders and beneficiaries for its tailored approach. The project also demonstrated strong synergies across the entire programme, particularly with Project 1 (Town Centre Property Improvement Grants) through cross referrals, which complemented the business support provided. These cross-programme connections enhanced the overall impact of FCC's efforts to revitalise town centres. That being said, stakeholders felt this was only a partial realisation of potential synergies across the programme. Although some businesses benefitted from accessing both business support and property improvement grants, stakeholders noted that integration across other initiatives, particularly Project 5 (Activities and Events), was not as realised. This challenge was determined by the project manager to be a limitation of working with a private third party such as STHS, where differing priorities can limit cross-programme collaboration.

Despite the overall effectiveness of project design, stakeholders noted initial challenges around communication and co-ordination with STHS. Early misalignment on data collection requirements caused delays in obtaining accurate monitoring outputs. However, these issues were resolved through the introduction of more structured reporting processes and clear expectations – a benefit of the phased design, which allowed the team to address and rectify problems as the project evolved.

Ultimately, the project's design was well-conceived and adaptable. Its phased structure supported iterative improvements, while the focus on tailored, one-to-one support received strong feedback from both stakeholders and businesses. Indeed, this can be evidenced by the meeting the target for number of enterprises engaged in support (50 out of 50) and then exceeding targets in relation to the number of people attending training sessions through the project (32 which exceeds the target of 25).

5.7.3 Delivery

Delivered by STHS, the project combined business diagnostics with actionable strategies relating to the specific challenges faced. Each business owner underwent an evaluation of their objectives and challenges, followed by a tailored action plan to address areas where they lacked expertise or capacity. As delivery staff noted, the action plans were particularly impactful, and were supplemented by weekly one-hour, one-to-one sessions.

A key strength of the project's delivery was its proactive marketing and engagement strategy, blending in-person outreach with digital marketing. STHS conducted field days, visiting businesses directly to introduce themselves and raise awareness about the programme. Flyers with QR codes were also distributed, complemented by additional promotion through business forums and town councils to raise awareness. This initial groundwork ensured widespread interest, and as the first cohort progressed, word-of-mouth further boosted participation.

Furthermore, the project manager highlighted that STHS’s network and expertise added significant value and was effective in supplementing the council’s limited resources, enabling specialised support for beneficiaries.

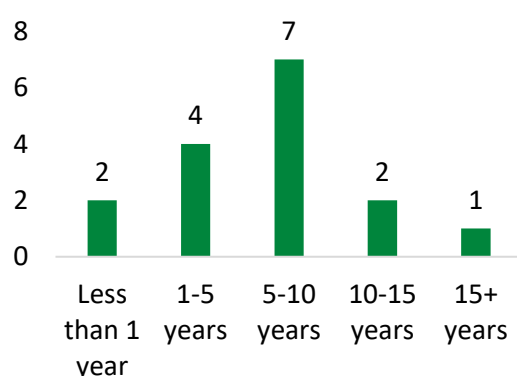
Both project manager and delivery staff highlighted challenges around participant commitment, often influenced by external factors. Although the eight-week allowed for meaningful engagement, it sometimes proved difficult for businesses to fully commit. Dropouts were an occasional issue, however strong outreach efforts and a reserve list mitigated against this, ensuring that cohorts remained on track and targets were consistently met.

5.7.4 Outcomes of the Beneficiary Survey

Profile of beneficiaries

A survey was distributed to 45 beneficiaries who received support from STHS through the programme. In total, 16 responses were received from businesses in three Flintshire towns: Mold (8 respondents), Holywell (6 respondents), and Shotton (2 respondents). As shown in Figure 5.10, the majority of respondents (63%, 10/16) had been trading for five years or more, indicating they were relatively well-established on the high street.

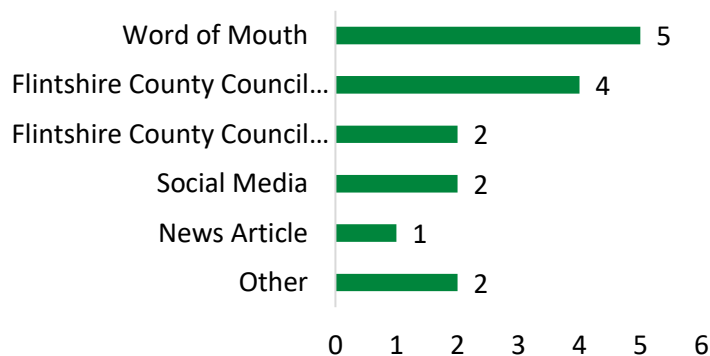
Figure 5.10: Beneficiary response to “How many years have you been trading”



Base: 16

As shown in Figure 5.11, the most common channel for finding out about the project was word of mouth (31%), followed by a leaflet from FCC (4/16, 25%). Smaller portions of respondents cited social media (13%, 2/16) and referrals from a Council officer (2/16, 13%). The prominence of word of mouth reflects the strong early engagement efforts of STHS and the subsequent role of business networks in raising awareness of the support.

Figure 5.11: Beneficiary response to “How did you first hear about the SavetheHighStreet Business Support?”



Base: 16

When asked about the challenges they were facing prior to receiving support from STHS, as shown in Figure 5.12, the most prevalent were a lack of access to business support and advice (64%, 9/14) and the need to establish an online presence (50%, 7/14). Other common challenges included difficulties accessing new markets or customers and low confidence (43%, 6/14), alongside cash flow issues, skills gaps, and reduced footfall (all 36%, 5/14) and business planning (29%, 4/14). Less frequently mentioned were limited experience (14%, 2/14), and a lack of resources (7%, 1/14).

Figure 5.12: Challenges faced by businesses when first engaged with support (multiple responses)

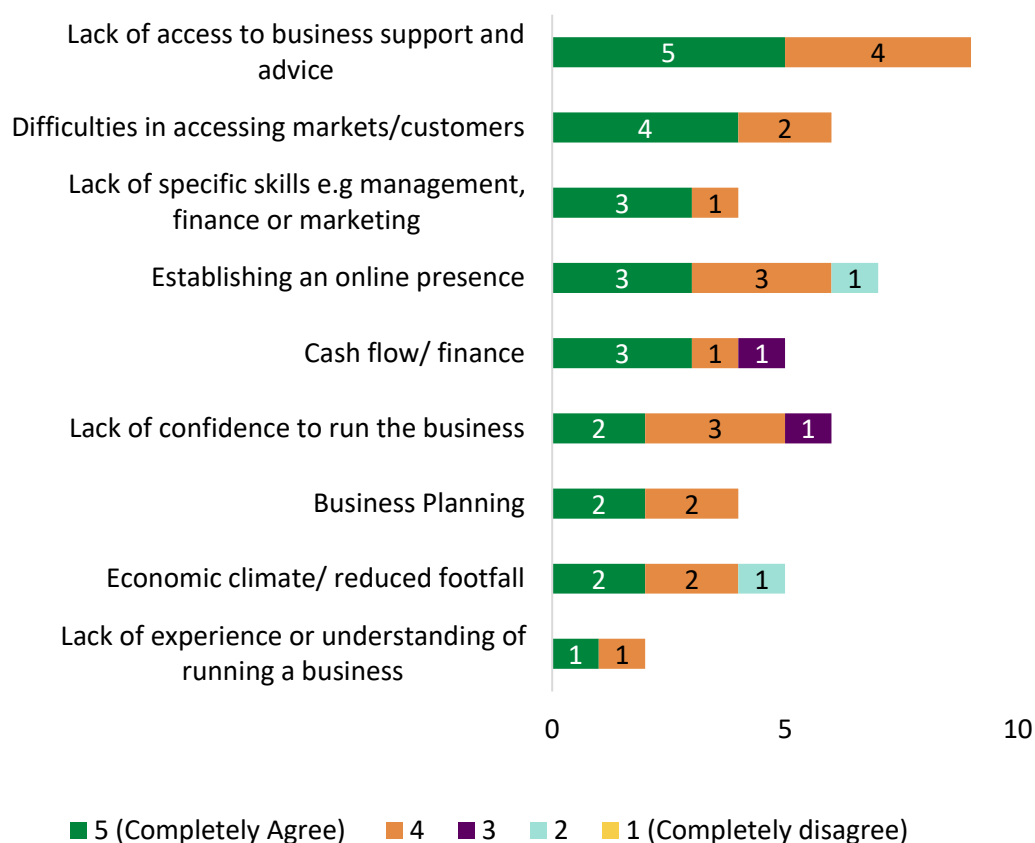


Base: 14

Experiences of support

Nine participants rated how well the support they received met their expectations across various areas. “Access to business support and advice” garnered the highest level of satisfaction: five respondents completely agreed (rating of 5), and four mostly agreed (rating of 4) that their expectations were met. Challenges related to establishing an online presence, and accessing new markets also saw strong agreement, with six respondents in each category giving ratings of 4 or 5. By contrast, only two participants gave top ratings for “lack of experience in running a business,” indicating that while foundational knowledge was generally in place, participants primarily needed help with more targeted areas such as marketing, finance, and strategic support.

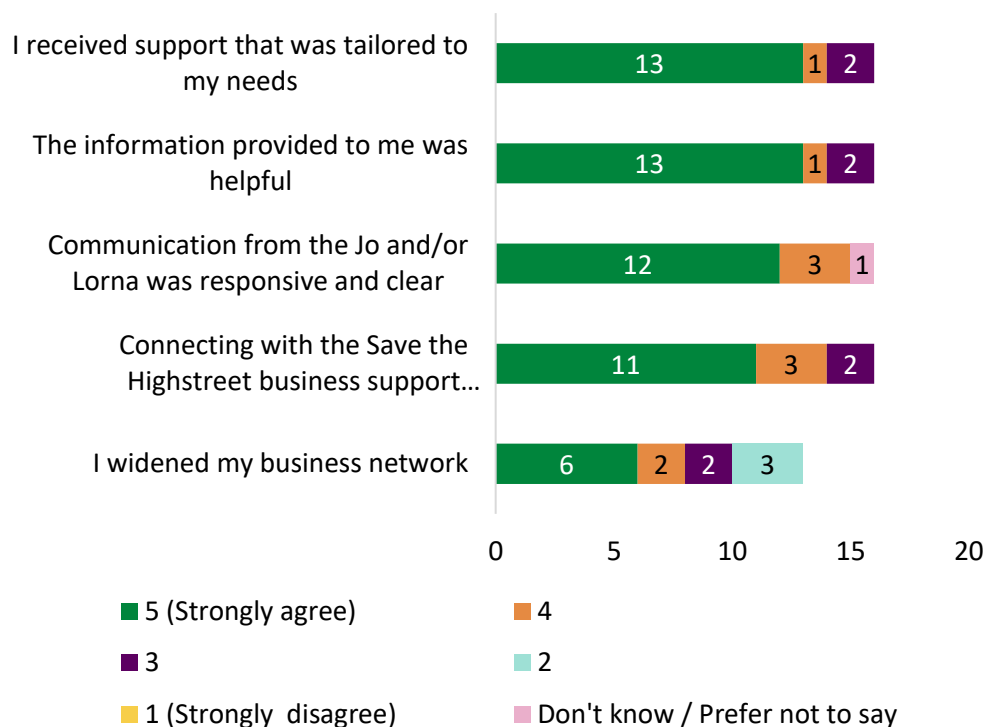
Figure 5.13: “When you first engaged with the business support with either Jo or Lorna, Business Mentors who delivered this support, was your business facing any of the following challenges?”



Four in every five respondents (81%, 13/16) strongly agreed that the support they received was tailored to their individual needs, and an equal proportion found the information provided to be helpful (81%, 13/16). Communication from the Save The High Street advisors, Jo and Lorna, was also highly rated, with three quarters (75%, 12/16) strongly agreeing and 19% agreeing that it was responsive and clear. Meanwhile, eleven out of sixteen respondents (69%) strongly agreed that joining the business support programme was straightforward, and a further three (19%) agreed.

The impact on business networking however showed a more mixed response. While 46% (6/13) strongly agreed that they had widened their business network, 15% (3/13) were neutral, and 23% (3/13) selected a rating of 2, indicating less agreement. Despite this variation, the overall feedback suggests that most participants perceived the support as accessible, customized, and beneficial in addressing their specific challenges, with only a small minority expressing uncertainty or lower levels of satisfaction.

Figure 5.14: “Thinking about your interactions with Jo and/or Lorna from Save the High Street, to what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements”



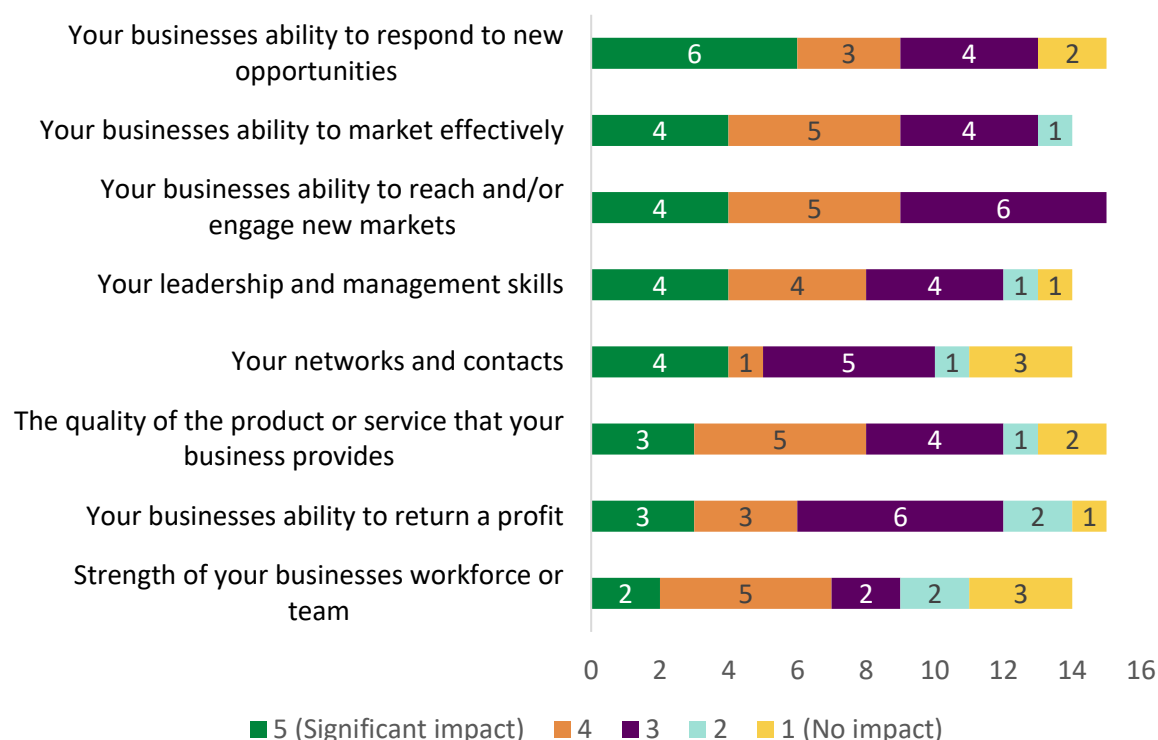
Base: 16

Outcomes/Impacts of support

Reflecting on the extent to which aspects of their business have been impacted by the support, respondents reported the most significant reported impact (40%, 6/15) was on their businesses' ability to respond to new opportunities. Marketing effectiveness, leadership and management skills, and networks/contacts followed closely behind, each with around three in ten participants reporting a significant impact. Meanwhile, the ability to engage new markets was also notably affected (27%, 4/15).

In contrast, fewer respondents indicated a substantial effect on workforce strength (14%, 2/14), suggesting that while the support positively influenced strategic and marketing areas, changes in team composition or capabilities were less pronounced. Overall, the data shows that the programme helped many businesses become more adaptable and confident in targeting new opportunities, reaching fresh audiences, and refining their leadership approaches.

Figure 5.15: “To what extent have any of the following been impacted by the support you received from the Save the High Street programme?”

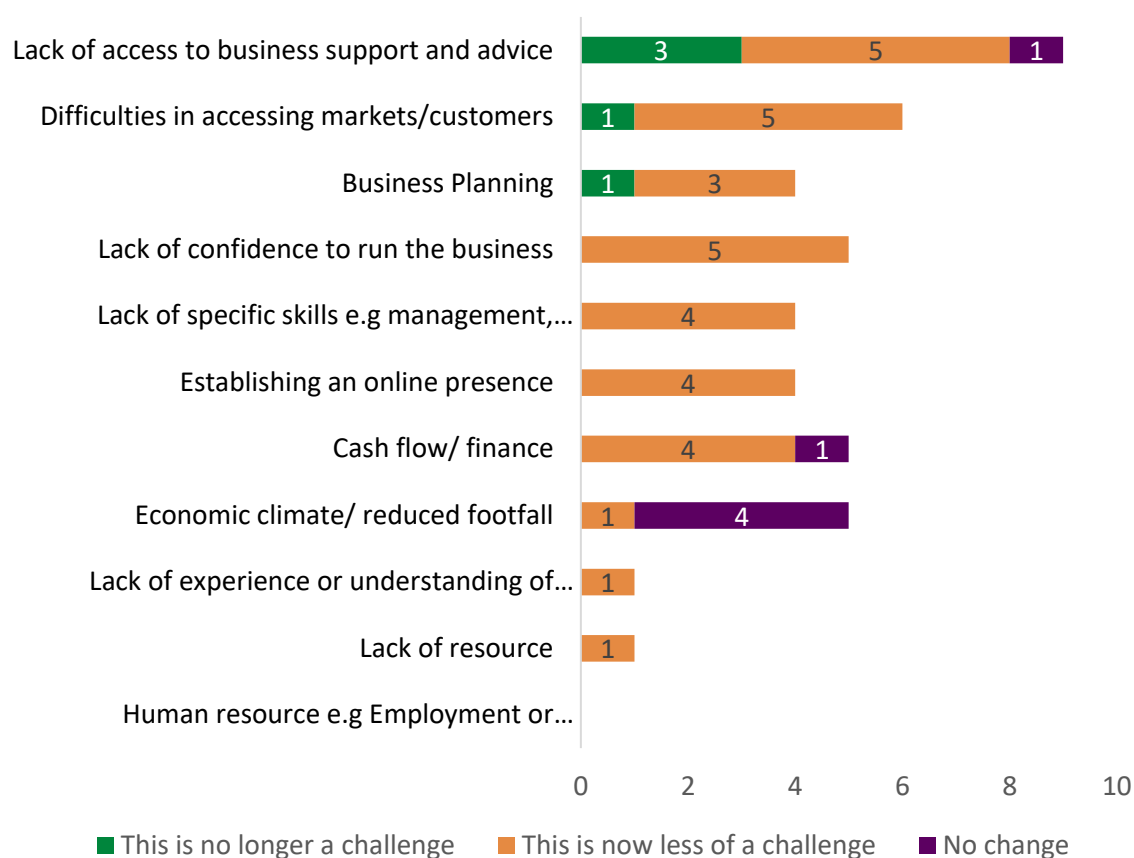


Beneficiaries were asked to assess how the support they received from the programme had impacted the specific challenges their business had been facing. Perhaps unsurprisingly, “a lack of access to business support and advice” showed the greatest improvement overall: three respondents indicated it was no longer a challenge, and five reported it had become less of one.

“Difficulties in accessing markets/customers” and “lack of confidence” also saw strong improvements, with five respondents each saying these issues were now less challenging, and one respondent reporting “difficulties in accessing markets” was completely resolved.

Several areas saw moderate improvement, for example “cash flow/finance”, “lack of specific skills”, “business planning” and “establishing an online presence” each had multiple respondents (three or four) noting these problems were less severe. However, certain challenges such as “economic climate/reduced footfall” remained largely unchanged for most respondents, although it is fair to say this was largely outside the scope of the support offered.

Figure 5.16: Impact of support on identified challenges



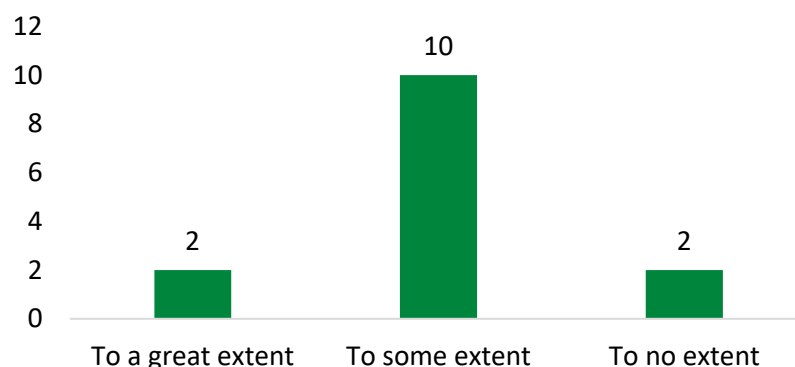
As shown in the table below, among the 15 respondents, 3 businesses (20%) reported an increase in their number of employees since engaging with the support, while the majority (80%, 12/15) experienced no change. However, when asked about safeguarding jobs, nearly half (43%, 6/14) indicated the support helped them retain existing roles within their organisation. These findings suggest that, although the programme may not have driven widespread job creation, it did play a notable role in stabilising employment for almost half of the respondent businesses.

Table 5.2: Jobs created and safeguarded since engaged with the support

	Jobs created since engaged with support	Jobs safeguarded since engaged with support
Yes	3	6
No	12	8

Fourteen businesses shared how much the support improved the situation of their business, with most (71%, 10/14) saying they benefited “to some extent.” A smaller but still notable group (14%, 2/14) respondents felt the support had boosted their business “to a great extent.” Meanwhile, the remaining 14% (2/14) reported no improvement at all. This indicates that the majority experienced at least some positive impact, although only a limited number felt the benefits were transformative.

Figure 5.17: Overall, to what extent is your business now in a better place as a result of the support you have received?



Base: 14

5.7.5 Legacy

The core legacy of the project has been achieved by equipping businesses with the tools and skills for long-term self-sufficiency, addressing key challenges, and reducing reliance on external support.

To sustain the impact of the project, local champions and strengthened trader networks have been established, fostering collaboration and peer-to-peer support among businesses in Flintshire. Stakeholders have recognised that maintaining engagement through these networks will be key for providing a foundation for the Council to build on for future initiatives.

While the project’s future remains unclear, STHS have committed to providing ongoing discounted support to participating businesses, ensuring its benefits extend beyond the funded period.

5.8 Project 8 - Communications & PR Project

Project 8 Evaluation Film: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n5BsL1P3UdM>

5.8.1 Design

The Communications and PR project was designed to complement and enhance the other nine initiatives within the programme, providing a cohesive platform to raise awareness, foster community engagement, and showcase outcomes. From the outset, the project aimed to highlight what towns and communities offer and establish a strong link to placemaking, both internally and externally.

A notable strength of the projects design was its flexibility, allowing for a variety of outputs and engagement methods, including internal training resources, social media campaigns and press releases. Notably, the design enabled the project to go beyond simply promoting Flintshire's towns but focused on elevating the programme as a whole.

Stakeholders praised the holistic approach to project design, which effectively tied together multiple projects that may otherwise have been promoted in isolation. Historically, communication efforts across the council have often been fragmented, with positive news stories presented in isolation. By emphasising interconnectedness and framing the programme as a unified effort underpinned by placemaking, the project was successful in creating a more cohesive narrative.

Furthermore, the project embedded placemaking ideals among both internal and external stakeholders to support the programme's long-term vision. This included training modules aimed at integrating placemaking principles into everyday decision-making by council staff, as well as the creation of animated videos to share these concepts to the wider public.

While the project's design was largely considered effective, one area identified for improvement was the timing of the training module's development. Budget uncertainties cast doubt on its feasibility, delaying its introduction. Although the team ultimately secured extra funding, stakeholders noted that implementing the module earlier could have enhanced its impact and provided more immediate support to both staff and external partners.

5.8.2 Delivery

A core strength of the project has been its close integration with other projects, resulting in a cohesive overall approach of placemaking. For instance, social media support for Buckley Baths (Project 2) boosted wider awareness of the project, while site signage and award plaques (Project 1) and banners for events and markets (Project 4) visibly showcase activities within the community. In turn, newly commissioned photographs have enhanced multiple projects and provide the council with assets for future communications and PR.

Furthermore, whilst not initially built into the design, the project was able to utilise the GiveMyView platform, something that had been commissioned through Project 2.

Stakeholders highlighted several external challenges that impacted project delivery. One of the most notable was the unexpected announcement of the July 2024 general election. During this period, all marketing and public relations activities had to be paused, creating gaps in public engagement. In some cases, this led to scheduled digital and physical activities being delayed by up to three months.

Additionally, the change in government led to a shift in branding guidelines, necessitating a redesign of key project materials. Initially, the project aimed to capitalise on economies of scale by purchasing materials in bulk, however the incoming government's branding necessitated the immediate redesign and replacement of key elements such as project signage, plaques and promotional materials.

Subsequently, the challenges and delay that materialised during the election period was compounded further with the onset of the summer holiday period, with key stakeholders and members of the community unavailable for consultation and engagement, creating further set back.

5.8.3 Legacy

Project 8 has established a strong foundation for improved engagement and heightened awareness of FCC's offer. Stakeholders describe the work with the public as the "bedrock to future development" highlighting the importance of tools such as the GiveMyView platform. The platform has become central to several projects by facilitating open dialog and encouraging community input. As well as its public-facing activities, an institutional and strategic legacy has been created through the development of projects, like the placemaking training module and animated video, that embed placemaking ideals into FCC staff.

To sustain the positive outcomes achieved, stakeholders noted that ongoing investment and momentum are essential.

5.9 Project 9 – Evaluation

Project 9 Evaluation Film: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QzmlqF9Syu4>

As part of the programme, FCC commissioned video content production company Follow Films, in addition to Wavehill, to carry out a comprehensive evaluation. The approach adopted as part of Project 9, is particularly innovative as it combines two distinct yet complementary components. Wavehill produced a traditional report, offering detailed analysis and insight into the programme, while Follow Films developed a film featuring a cross-section of project participants, stakeholders and beneficiaries. This dual format approach has been effective in reinforcing the key findings of the evaluation, and the two organisations have collaborated closely to maximise its benefits. Furthermore, the outputs of Project 9, particularly the film, complement the legacy aims of Project 8 (Communications & PR), by showcasing the programme's success and impact to the wider Flintshire Community, thereby enhancing engagement and awareness of FCC's offer. Footage of the evaluation films produced by Follow Films can be found at the beginning of each project section of this report hosted on the FCC YouTube channel.

5.10 Project 10 – Connah's Quay Docks

Project 10 Evaluation Film: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V-VbHStQocQ>

5.10.1 Background

This project was a late addition to the programme in May 2024 that utilised underspend on other projects. The work of Project 10 is a small part of a much larger masterplan for the Connah's Quay Dock area.

With a lack of investment in the docks over the last 10-15 years there was an emphasis on using funds to improve the area and give it a 'heritage' feel. Events undertaken as part of the Connecting Coast to Countryside project and through wildlife tours had illustrated the potential of the area. The area though lacked security and felt unsafe and investment through project 10 sought to address these issues. As one member of the police community commented,

"The area is a known hotspot for anti-social behaviour, drug dealing, and the coastal path attracts this kind of behaviour and with the cameras being installed and lighting and general sprucing up of the area we know how much the environment affects people's behaviours and so collectively all these things will have a positive effect on the area"

"CCTV plays a significant part in designing out crime by attracting more people to the area this acts as a 'natural solution' to anti-social behaviour" Project 10 Wider Stakeholder

The CCTV has been installed as illustrated in the picture on the right.

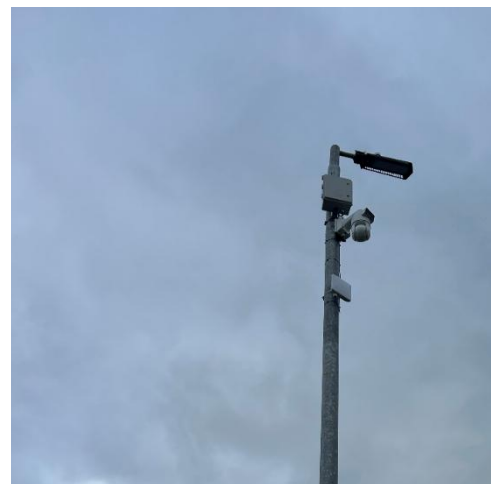
In addition to the CCTV new lighting has been installed along Dock Road to further contribute to the safety of the area to deter criminals from using the area and improve safety and visibility after dark alongside the installation of bollards along the Modern Quayside area (see picture below).



There have also been renovations on

the Kathleen and May community centre, which was partly funded by Project 1 in order for it to be used to host various community events. It is understood that the main tenants will be the Sea Cadets who will be based there for sessions twice a week. The building will also be a heritage centre promoting the rich history of the once thriving docks. Without the funding the centre would cease operation due to being

unviable. Other work that has been done included the commissioning of a local company to work on the hedgerows – a traditional form of hedgerow creation (see below).



In addition, the following activities were undertaken:

- Safety ladders have been installed on the dockside painted in yellow.
- Signage for commercial vehicles to be installed.
- 'Chicanes' will be installed to prevent motorcycles speeding along the road.
- A range of upgrades to the interior and exterior of the Kathleen and May building.
- A second car park will be renovated where all the bays will be remarked.
- The Wepre Riverside Park Project which involved boatyard clearance, carpark improvements, seating using heritage features (millstones), rock armour protection, hedge laying, improved water safety signage and facilities.
- The School Art Project – which worked with primary pupils in Connah's Quay to celebrate the rich industrial and natural heritage of the dock area including site visits. Then work with local artist to produce artwork that can be used on literature, signage, and other interpretive and promotional material.



The anchor, reflecting the cultural heritage of the area is currently a trip hazard and will be placed on a plinth:

A local business was approached to garner views about the improvements:



"Cameras is the biggest improvement. There was a lot of problems here with thieving, yards getting broken into, fly tipping etc. Not as big a problem as it used to be now, cameras are a big, big help. It is only early stages so there has been no effect on business so far. There used to be a lot of anti-social behaviour. Hopefully now it will generate more business for me, a tidier, safer place for people to come. The car park was a mess before (dumped cars and boats) but now it's been cleaned up." (Project 10 Beneficiary)

With hindsight it was felt that more staff resource could have been put into the project with their salaries being paid from the funding. However, the timescales of the project have made that option inviable. The project has been delivered through the time of the project manager and the goodwill of the local community, and it is recognised that this is not the best way to run projects, however the opportunity "was too good to miss" (Project 10

Manager) and the compromises that can be seen on the project are due to these factors of time scale and lack of staffing.

5.10.2 Strengths

The main strength of Project 10 was seen as the commitment of the people involved in its delivery. There was a real sense of galvanising the local community to take ownership of this run-down area with all involved “hugely committed to try and turn the place around “

The project has been able to demonstrate some early wins and has certainly benefitted from the funding, however, the late addition of the project meant that the timescale was extremely tight with a focus on quick wins and expenditure, the commensurate lack of purposeful design affected the project’s delivery.

5.10.3 Legacy

The main legacy the project will leave can be summed up by the following thoughts of the project manager:

“First of all, we will have a more secure environment. You know it will be better lit, and it will have CCTVs and those are permanent structures that the Council would maintain thereafter. So, I think that's probably the biggest legacy in safety terms down there. And you know, there's going to be, I think 16 cameras covering the docks and the side streets. So, I think that's going to make quite a big difference.” (Project 10 Manager)

Other aspects of legacy include the co-operation and collaboration between FCC and members of the local community. Momentum has been created by this project that may act as a catalyst to help return this area to the once thriving community that it was.

6. Conclusions and Recommendations

6.1 Relevance and Appropriateness of Programme Design

The programme, and individual projects, were well designed to address recognised and evidenced socio-economic challenges facing the area. The programme's design was highly strategic and evidence-based, effectively targeting challenges identified within Flintshire. Projects were informed by robust data sources, such as the 2016 NRW survey, Green Space Survey, Placemaking Charter and wider public consultations, providing a clear understanding of local needs and opportunities. Whilst highly strategic, the programme also demonstrated flexibility with its ability to seize opportunities that presented themselves. For instance, Project 1 (Town Centre Property Improvements Grants) was a continuation of an initiative which was piloted in a smaller number of towns prior to SPF funding, and Project 10 (Connah's Quay) representing a scaled down iteration of a regeneration scheme that had been unsuccessful in securing previous central government Funding.

The programme addressed immediate needs while laying the groundwork for future strategy, impact and legacy. Beyond addressing immediate socio-economic issues, the programme was designed with a forward-looking approach, underpinned by long-term regeneration and placemaking. By investing in projects with legacy potential such as community-led activities, "soft infrastructure" improvements and awareness-raising campaigns, the programme should facilitate sustainable impacts that extend beyond the funding period. For example, Project 2 (Development of Future Projects) has led to the creation of a pipeline of projects for future development with the potential to capitalise on future capital funding programmes as and when they arise.

The programme effectively addressed key gaps in funding provision and internal capacity. One of the programme's key strengths was its ability to fill gaps left by other funding streams and internal resource constraints. This helped address barriers for FCC, local organisations, and stakeholders, enabling them to access support that would otherwise have been unavailable. This co-ordination across multiple initiatives (e.g. placemaking, business support, tourism) highlights a strategic use of limited resource. The use of external delivery partners in certain projects also helped mitigate internal capacity and resource issues within FCC, ensuring the project could effectively meet its objectives.

Flexibility in funding and design enabled a broader reach and relevance. The programme's flexibility in offering both capital and revenue investments, as well as geographic coverage across the county, enabled it to address a diverse range of needs across towns in Flintshire.

Collaborative and participatory approaches were central to the programme's design. The project actively engaged and leveraged inputs from a wide range of stakeholders and beneficiaries. This participatory approach not only ensured projects were well-aligned with local needs but also raised wider awareness of FCC's offerings and strengthened relationships with local stakeholders. As recognised by Welsh Government, the project designed innovative approaches to engaging with the local community using platforms such as "GiveMyView" for public consultation.

The programme's strategic and interconnected design fostered synergies between projects, enhancing the overall impact. The programme's holistic nature was evident in the synergies created across projects, with many initiatives complementing each other to enhancing the overall impact. While several synergies were achieved (both directly and indirectly), projects involving non-council entities such as Project 7 (Tailored Business Support) had a less overall impact than anticipated in terms of generating cross-referrals between projects.

The programme's adaptability in project design was a significant strength, enabling responsiveness to a changing landscape. Several projects were intentionally designed with flexible structures, allowing for iterative improvements during delivery. Most notably, a three-phased approach in Project 7 (Tailored Business Support) provided opportunities to adapt delivery content based on the current business needs and incorporating lessons learnt from previous phases. Similarly, the use of monitoring information (MI) in Project 8 also accommodated real-time adjustments in project delivery, such as pro-actively addressing challenges before they emerged.

6.2 Performance Against Targets

The programme demonstrated strong financial performance with effective progress in expenditure. The project effectively managed its allocated budget of £1,808,763, with over 80% of funds spent by the end of November 2024.

The programme achieved or exceeded all output and outcome targets. All SPF output and outcome indicators have either been achieved or exceeded with further outputs/outcomes likely before the programme end. Across all projects, this level of overachievement reflects the programme's effective design and delivery.

6.3 Management and Governance

The programme was effectively managed, with stakeholders highlighting strong leadership and governance processes throughout delivery. Stakeholders consistently praised the strong project management capabilities of the programme leaders, highlighting a methodical and detail-oriented approach as key to the programme's success from the early stages of grant application to ongoing delivery and oversight. Regular engagement with individual project managers, liaison with local and regional SPF teams and well-structured reporting mechanisms ensured that progress was closely monitored, and potential issues were addressed promptly.

The programme was strategic in project selection underpinned by a desire to primarily tackle issues of community and place within town centres through targeted support and the establishment of a clear evidence base to help shape future funding submissions and strategic opportunities. This was particularly illustrated in town centres with the deployment of place making plans and with Connah's Quay Docks where initial investment is hoped will build momentum towards realisation of opportunities presented within the master plan.

Short-term funding timeframe posed challenges. As with many SPF-funded initiatives, the short-term nature of the funding was widely recognised as a challenge by stakeholders. Strategic project selection ensured that the majority of initiatives were both realistic and deliverable within the funding period, as reflected in the programme's strong performance against outputs and outcomes. However, some projects, such as Project 10 (Connah's Quay Docks) would have benefitted from additional time for planning and consultation, particularly in the case of capital development initiatives that often require years of preparation.

The complexities associated with evidence collection and reporting occasionally placed additional burden on individual project managers, highlighting the demanding administrative requirements of SPF projects. This was further complicated by a lack of clarity regarding evidence requirements early on within project delivery.

6.4 Impacts and Legacy

This programme has **delivered substantial benefits given the modest funds that were available for its implementation.** This was mainly testament to the effective use of resources and the personnel deployed to deliver and manage the different projects.

Strengthened stakeholder and community engagement as a core legacy across programme. The projects have successfully deployed a range of often innovative approaches to strengthen stakeholder and community engagement in Flintshire. Project 8 delivering communication initiatives has helped to strengthen community engagement activity whilst the process of delivering on place-making plans has brought about active involvement and interest from a range of key stakeholders. Collectively this has left Flintshire County Council well positioned to respond to future opportunities for regeneration activity as they arise.

The programme has effectively embedded placemaking principles as central to Flintshire County Council's future activities. One of the most significant strategic legacies of the programme is the embedding of place-making values internally, which will now serve as a cornerstone of the council's long-term regeneration strategy. The development of a training module via Project 8 to embed place-making values across all council staff reflects a commitment to institutionalising these principles, ensuring they are integrated into everyday operations and decision making. This approach should strengthen the council's ability to deliver cohesive and impactful regeneration efforts in the future.

The programme has laid strong foundations for future initiatives, leveraging the activities delivered through SPF. Stakeholders have emphasised that several projects provide a springboard for future work. For instance, Project 2 has created feasibility studies and business plans that can be readily implemented when new funding streams becomes available, effectively building a pipeline of regeneration opportunities. Furthermore, Projects 4 and 5 demonstrated the value of recurring events, acting as pilot initiatives for individuals and small organisations. These projects not only showcased the benefits of repeated events, but also instilled confidence in participants to deliver similar activities independently in the future. The successful outcomes from Project 7 highlight the potential for further business support activities, whilst the development of trader groups aims to foster long-term peer-to-peer networking support that can be utilised in the future. Collectively, these outcomes illustrate the programme's capacity to enable long-term, sustainable benefits beyond the immediate funding period.

Many programme outcomes and impacts are likely to be realised beyond the scope of this evaluation. While the evaluation provides an analysis of the programme's performance to date, it is important to note that at the time of writing delivery is still ongoing. This means that certain outcomes – such as the long-term impact of trader networks established under Project 7, or the full benefits of feasibility studies from Project 2 – may only become evident in the future. Consequently, while this report captures significant progress and achievements, the true extent of the programme's impact will likely transpire over time.

6.5 Recommendations

Several key recommendations have been identified by the evaluation:

1. Ensure that the progress that has been made by the projects is effectively shared within FCC and with partners so that those involved in the development of ideas, proposals and applications for funding are aware and can build upon the progress that has been made.
2. Sustain and where possible develop the partnership and 'team-approach' that has evolved in the management and delivery of the programme.
3. Identify and secure resources to sustain the momentum of key project activities during the 2025-26 SPF funded transition year for regeneration activities.
4. Maintain management information systems that have proved successful in monitoring the progress of all projects.
5. The considerable number of lessons learnt (collectively detailed in the lessons learnt log for the TCIP) should be reflected as part of future project design, development and delivery.

Contact us



0330 122 8658



wavehill@wavehill.com



wavehill.com

Follow us on our social



[@wavehilltweets](https://twitter.com/wavehilltweets)



[wavehill](https://www.linkedin.com/company/wavehill)