

Transport Scotland

Future of Public Engagement Virtual Exhibition

Website Report October 2020

AECOM

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ch2m: **FAIRHURST**

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Contents

Introduction	Page 3
Enquiries and Feedback	Page 4
Findings from individual questions	Page 5
Questions asked via feedback forms	Page 9
Organic social media	Page 10
Press adverts	Page 11
Press coverage	Page 12

Introduction

Transport Scotland recently held a virtual exhibition on Future public engagement. We asked for comments / views on how we engage with the public when we can't hold public exhibitions, while still ensuring accessibility for all. This report gives a summary of the responses to that engagement.



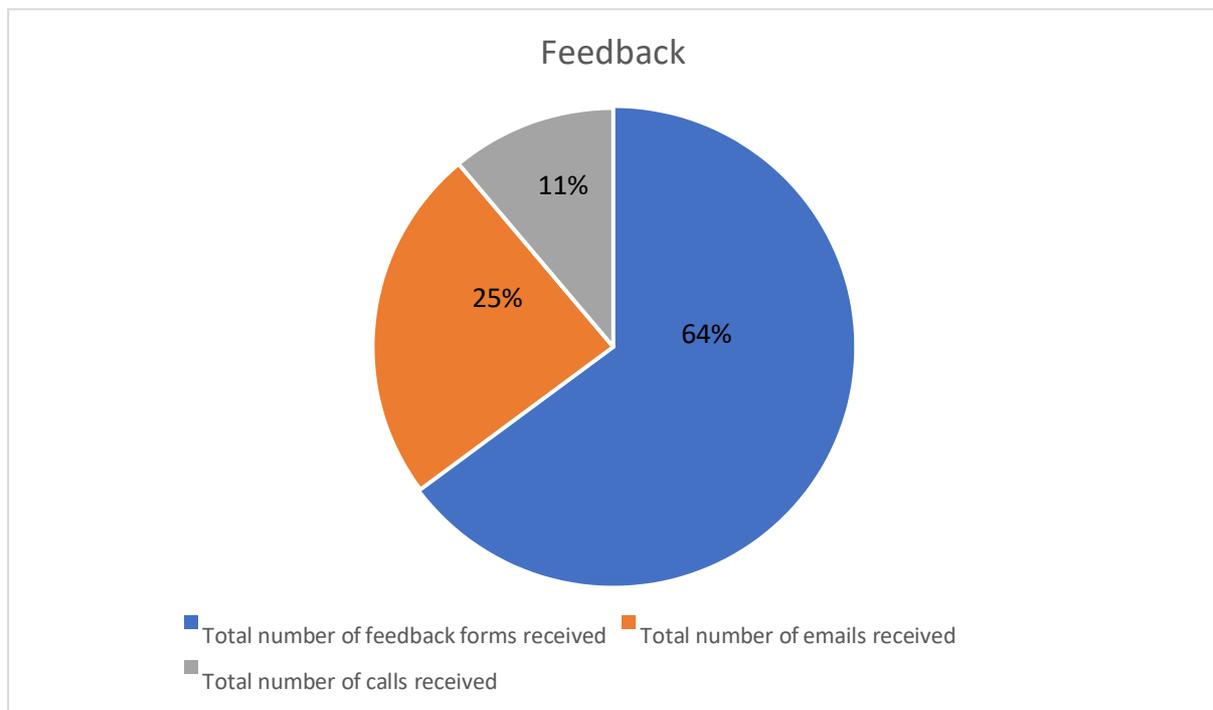
One of the social media adverts used for to promote the virtual exhibition

Enquiries and feedback

Approximately **56** members of the public engaged with the consultation via feedback form, the telephone hotline service and email.

A total of **7** respondents asked for hard copy materials.

Total number of feedback forms received	36
Total number of calls received	6
Total number of emails received	14



Phone enquiries

100% of phone enquiries were to request a copy of the exhibition materials.

Key themes from public feedback

- Internet accessibility and digital concerns: **23** mentions
- Transport Scotland projects: **19** mentions
- Increased publicity and advertisement of exhibitions: **8** mentions

Question 1: Would you take the time to visit a virtual exhibition for any road project you are interested in?

Responses received: 38

Key points from individual comments:

Constructive:

- Currently there is little advance notice of exhibitions – local residents should be emailed
- Publicity is key
- Efforts must be made to include the older generations
- The virtual exhibitions are expensive and not economical
- Worry over unreliability of internet and broadband access
- Videos should be used

Positive:

- This is a very good idea
- Useful as an adjunct to actual physical face to face exhibitions

Question 2: Would you take part in a webinar for any road project you are interested in?

Responses received: 36

Key points from individual comments:

Constructive:

- Those affected by the road must be contacted
- Slow internet connection in the area will make this difficult
- People will not have the time to sit in on a webinar
- Must be a two-way dialogue session
- Webinars must be advertised well in advance
- Webinars should use actual symposiums, presentations, and discussions
- Would be too stressful for those who are directly affected by projects

Positive:

- This would be beneficial if webinars are available to replay after they have been broadcasted
- Will be an easier way to digest information
- Easier for those who are working during the day

Question 3: As we can't hold face-to-face public exhibitions at the moment, do you have any views on our proposals for a dedicated phone line or answering machine, a dedicated email address or an online chat room facility?

Responses received: 31

Key points from individual comments

Constructive:

- Answering machine could lead to frustration on the caller's part
- Face to face is the preferred option
- People do not have the time for a group discussion
- Reliance on public notices in the printed media unfortunately will not ensure an inclusive process
- There needs to be a safe space for people to actually see what is being planned and discussed
- A dedicated phone line or answering machine, or dedicated email address, is unlikely to deal satisfactorily with the range of specific questions involved
- Decisions affecting people's lives cannot be left to phone lines, best to delay allowing people to attend public exhibitions
- Transport Scotland should contact landowners directly by telephone with updated on the road plans frequently
- Using social distancing, sanitising and masks would enable public exhibitions to go ahead
- People don't like speaking to answering machines
- Wait until the pandemic is over

Positive:

- Dedicated phone line and emails addresses would be effective
- Perhaps short concentrated exhibitions where experts are available on webinar's or chat rooms and then that could be followed by a lengthier opportunity for people to view the information and put comments through email
- A dedicated phone line with answering machine is a good idea
- The use of all methods available to engage with stakeholders is supported
- Chat line would be useful for those with hearing difficulties
- Skype conferences should be used
- Chat facility would be most effective for asking specific questions
- These are great ideas and would be greatly appreciated by those of us interested in your work
- Even when we are not experiencing a pandemic, it is often difficult for people to get to public exhibitions, so all available systems should be used.

Negative:

- Face to face exhibitions are useless due to lack of notice for those most likely to be affected

Question 4: For those without access to a computer or other mobile device, will you ask for a hard copy of the exhibition material for any road scheme you are interested in?

Responses received: 32

Key points from individual comments

Constructive:

- Need to include all affected people
- Making it accessible to all is important
- For those who don't have internet access or have limited/poor connectivity, alternative physical materials must be made readily available
- Sometimes it's easier to study large scale drawings and maps on paper
- Must be clear that hard copies are made available
- There should be a plan to mail hard materials to every household within 1km either side of each road development
- Must ensure that all notices go out on a variety of platforms simultaneously
- Ambitious assumptions about accessibility to computers

Positive:

- Making these accessible in local library might help
- Would be helpful for those who are visually impaired
- Would be beneficial as its difficult to see maps on a laptop

Question 5: Please feel free to make any other general comments you have on this virtual exhibition and on our plans for future public engagement.

Responses received: 29

Key points from individual comments

Constructive:

- Is this a paperwork exercise or will Transport Scotland actually take notice and act upon replies?
- URL linking would be useful for specific phrases (NMU)
- Public engagement must take into account electric vehicle users
- Video use must be used to display information
- There should be notices and advertisement of engagement exhibitions on TellmeScotland website, local post offices, local food retailers, TrafficScotland website
- There should be notices delivered to properties within 10km of the project and on the road network signs surrounding the project
- There must be greater communication with community councils and councilors
- Must do a better job in advertising the public about virtual exhibitions
- Request for specific webinars on EV charging facilities on the A9

- Webinars must be open for feedback and a two-way engagement with senior people like the Minister
- A printed format information pack must be required
- Consultants must take into account that many people do not necessarily have access to modern software
- Many people who would attend a 'real' exhibition and happily discuss issues 'face to face' will be put off by the sheer amount of data presented and the time needed to access and understand it
- Online and virtual exhibitions must only be a temporary way of communication
- Worry over poor connectivity in rural areas to access online material
- Won't be suitable for very disruptive, contentious and environmentally disruptive projects
- Usually the maps presented by TS are too small to be read easily on a phone, tablet, laptop or normal sized computer screen
- More advertisement on social media
- Certain sections of the public need particular consideration - for example those with sight and hearing problems - this needs to be taken into consideration but I can't see how virtual exhibitions will enable that
- Give the information is online there should be no time restraints
- The adverts in the paper should be more coherent.

Positive:

- I applaud Transport Scotland using technology to reach out to the public
- I am really pleased to see this. It is refreshing to see our government operate like it is 2020 and not 1990. Glad to see you offer the form in a well-made editable PDF rather than just a Word document.
- Since the pandemic, I have found on-line communications much easier than face-to-face were previously
- Will be useful in the short term
- I am pleased that Transport Scotland appear to have been working very productively during the Covid-19 lockdown.

Negative:

- Got to be better than current approach to public engagement which is very poor
- The suggestion of continuing online public engagement abhorrent in that you will potentially deny those with no or limited internet access to a process that may have a major impact upon their lives

Questions asked via feedback forms

“I would like to know if this is just a paperwork exercise or will Transport Scotland actually take notice and act upon replies?”

“You advised at last meeting you would tell us the route of the A96 round Inverurie before now. What has happened?”

“I notice from the map that nothing is happening south of the central belt, why?”

“Will the “new normal” see less demand for road travel? Would it be best to hold fire and see what changes manifest themselves in the next year before proceeding on what could be a huge a folly as HS2 is?”

“Would these virtual exhibitions be previews of upcoming exhibitions?”

“The offer of hard copy material shows how little Transport Scotland understands the needs of citizens. How will citizens know to ask for hard copy material?”

“It is unclear how phone or answer machine technology are suitable to deliver visual information or provide a realistic discussion about place, location, design etc. without images?”

“How will people become aware that this information is available?”

“What is a webinar? Anyway, PC speed likely to be too slow”

“Are TS considering revising any of their proposals to improve them for pedestrians and cyclists?”

“This feedback exercise is in itself an exercise in irony. The only means to complete and return it is electronic. How can that be inclusive?”

Organic Social Media Posts (TS channels)

Twitter



Facebook



Press adverts

As part of the consultation, print adverts were placed across national, regional and local Scottish press titles.

Titles included:

- The Scotsman
- Evening News
- The Press and Journal
- Evening Express
- The Courier
- Evening Telegraph
- Inverness Courier
- Strathspey and Badenoch Herald
- Highland News
- Perthshire Advertiser
- Daily Record
- The National

In addition, a news release was issued by Transport Scotland on the first day of the virtual exhibition which also gained editorial press coverage.

Press coverage

The virtual exhibition was additionally picked up by two media titles:

Transport Xtra ([online](#)) Virtual exhibitions for road schemes

Highways Magazine ([online](#)) Transport Scotland outlines future of virtual consultation