Southsea Coastal Scheme: Frontage 5 – Speakers Corner to the Pyramids feedback consultation

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Introduction

Introduction

Background and methodology

The Southsea Coastal Scheme is the UK's largest local authority-led coastal defences project, worth more than £185M. It will stretch for 4.5km from Old Portsmouth to Eastney and help to reduce the risk of flooding to more than 10,000 homes and 700 businesses. The most recent project in the coastal defence scheme is Frontage 5: Pyramids to Speakers' Corner. Construction of Frontage 5 between the Pyramids and Speakers' Corner began in Summer 2023 and the area reopened to the public on 19 December 2024. Now that Frontage 5 has been opened to the public, Portsmouth City Council wanted to collect feedback on the scheme from visitors.

An online quantitative survey was launched on 18 March 2025 and was open until 17 April 2025. The survey was promoted through relevant e-bulletins and at feedback events related to the new works where attendees were also invited to complete paper copies of the survey.

Objectives

The main aims of the research are to:

- Collect feedback on the works that have been completed so far
- Understand what residents would like to see in future works
- Find out how informed residents feel on the current works and signpost to information channels

Response rate

In total the survey received 280 responses. It is difficult to calculate the statistical robustness of this consultation because it is unclear how many individuals engage with the area. Assuming a 'total population' of 170,818 (the latest 2021 census data from the Office for National Statistics for people aged 16+ in Portsmouth) this volume of responses ensures a 95% confidence level with a margin of error of 6%, within acceptable parameters, although this does exclude the visitor population.

Management summary i

Overall satisfaction with the new works

- The vast majority of respondents consider themselves ‘very’ or ‘mostly’ happy with the new works (85%)
- Respondents feel the works have improved the area and like the way they look. They feel the works have been well designed and thought out, and appreciate the cultural inclusions through historic features, art, and local businesses or events
- However, some suggest improvements to accessibility (e.g. wheelchair access) and seating/shelters or express concerns over how the area will be kept clean and maintained. Some express dislike for the concrete flooring, feeling it is too plain and bleak

Quality of the new works

- Respondents largely rate the quality of the new works as ‘good’ or ‘very good’ (96%)
- They feel the works have been finished to a high standard and are of good quality, and that they have been well designed with attention to detail. Many also appreciate the professional manner of the contractors
- Some raise concerns over the quality of the new works, however, reporting that there is rust on the concrete and that some areas could have been finished to a higher standard

Favourite features

- Respondents most like the general appearance of Frontage 5 (73%), followed by the historic shelters (57%) and the street furniture (44%)

Management summary ii

Future projects

- 10% of respondents would like more of the same in future projects
- 13% mention planting and greenery for future projects, whilst 10% each give considerations to the inclusion of local culture and community, and more seating

Visiting

- 92% of respondents report that the appearance of the new seafront makes them want to visit more regularly

Communications

- Respondents generally consider themselves well informed about the coastal scheme (96%)

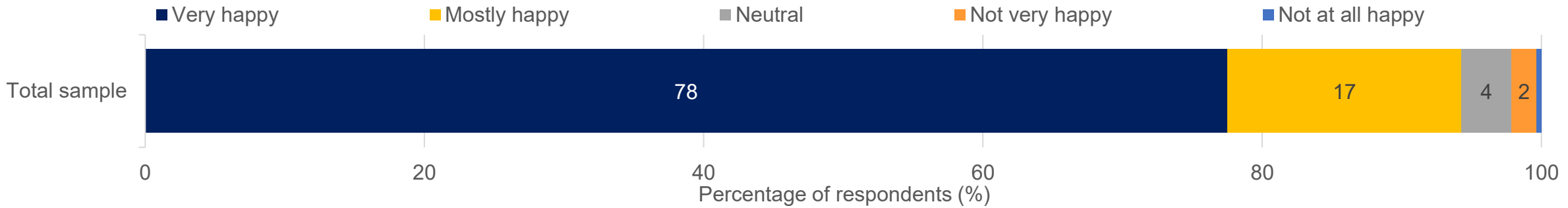
Further comments

- 30% of respondents leave comments giving praise for the works done so far
- 6% mention appreciation for how the local area and community has been considered in these works, whilst the same proportion mention considerations for cleaning and maintenance

Findings

Satisfaction with the new works

Q: ***'How happy are you with the new works?'*** | *Base: Total sample (280)*



What respondents like about the works. | *Base: Total sample (280)*

Key themes	%
General praise/ 'well done'/ they have improved the area	18
Looks good/ aesthetically pleasing	18
Well designed/ thought out/ executed	11
Cultural inclusion – historic features, arts, local businesses and events	6
The openness of the area	6
Improved sea defences	3
Accessibility is good	3
Seating is good	2
Other e.g. communications	1

"A really great look and massive improvement to the promenade area. Looks very fresh and modern, great attention to design detail but keeping the historic detail."

"A well thought out scheme that has delivered everything it promised."

"Beautiful blend of the historic and the new. Like the artwork."

"Looks great and has created a spacious flowing environment."

- The vast majority of respondents are happy with the new works, with 78% considering themselves 'very happy' and a further 17% considering themselves 'mostly happy'
- Respondents give a lot of praise to the works, feeling they have improved the area, look good, are aesthetically pleasing, and that they have been well designed and thought out. Some appreciate the cultural inclusion of the works, such as the historic features (e.g. the shelters) and bringing new art into the space

Satisfaction with the new work – issues and concerns

Issues and concerns raised by respondents.

| Base: Total sample (280)

Key themes	%
Accessibility needs to be improved e.g. not enough ramps	3
Dislike concrete flooring e.g. too plain and bleak, miss the zigzag style paving, will be hot in the summer	3
Seating and shelters – feel that there are less than before	3
Will need good maintenance and cleaning/ preservation of greenery	3
Practical features e.g. better lighting, showers, more visible bins, water facilities	2
Safety concerns e.g. cyclists using area, should be a fence around the children's park, bike locking facilities	2
Cultural inclusion could be better e.g. more consideration for skaters, missing artworks that were promised, play area not very good	1
More planting and greenery	1
Other e.g. would prefer natural approach to sea defences, would prefer not to lose beach access for long periods	1

"More accessibility for wheelchairs please e.g. the art works. And cues for visually impaired such as edges."

"The acres of blond concrete are so dull - and blinding in bright sunlight. Why are there no patterns - like the old Grecian fret?"

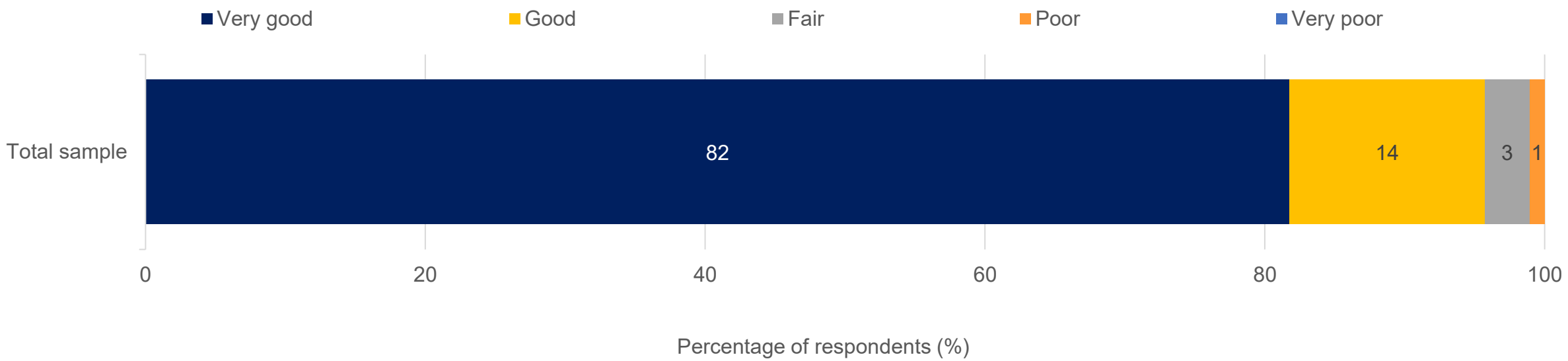
"Some areas have [been] poorly maintained since with the telescope being out of order for an extended period and repeated lights being broken. Bins have been left caked in flies."

"The loss of access to a major part of the sea front for such a long period of time is bordering on unacceptable, particularly in the summer months."

- Respondents express concerns about the accessibility of the new works, particularly about the lack of wheelchair access
- Whilst many like the look of the new area, some express dissatisfaction with the look of the concrete flooring, describing it as plain or bleak, with some commenting that they would have liked to see some patterning on the floor
- Some suggest improvements to the seating and shelter from weather, as well as more practical features like lighting, showers and bins
- A few respondents comment that the area will need to be kept clean and maintained, including the preservation of the new greenery

Quality of the new works

Q: ***'How do you rate the quality of the work?'*** | *Base: Total sample (280)*



- Respondents largely rate the quality of the new works as 'good' or 'very good' (96%); 3% rate the quality as 'fair', whilst just 1% rate it 'poor'
- Reasons for these ratings are explored on the next slide

Quality of the new works – likes and concerns

What respondents like about the quality.

| Base: Total sample (280)

Key themes	%
Finished to a high standard/ good quality	9
Well designed and thought out/ attention to detail	6
General praise e.g. well done, looks good	6
Praise for contractors e.g .professional, done with minimal disruption	3
Good sea defences	1
Other e.g. smooth surfaces, clean, should last well	3

"Quality materials and quality work throughout."

"So much thought and planning has gone into the construction of the new seafront."

"It has improved the sea defence element and improved the overall appearance of the strand."

"The contractors have worked hard to provide a high quality product."

Concerns and considerations raised by respondents.

| Base: Total sample (280)

Key themes	%
Rust	2
Finishing could be better in places	2
Concerns about maintenance and cleaning	1
Suggestions e.g. glass barriers instead of concrete	1
Other e.g. dislike design, pollution into sea	1

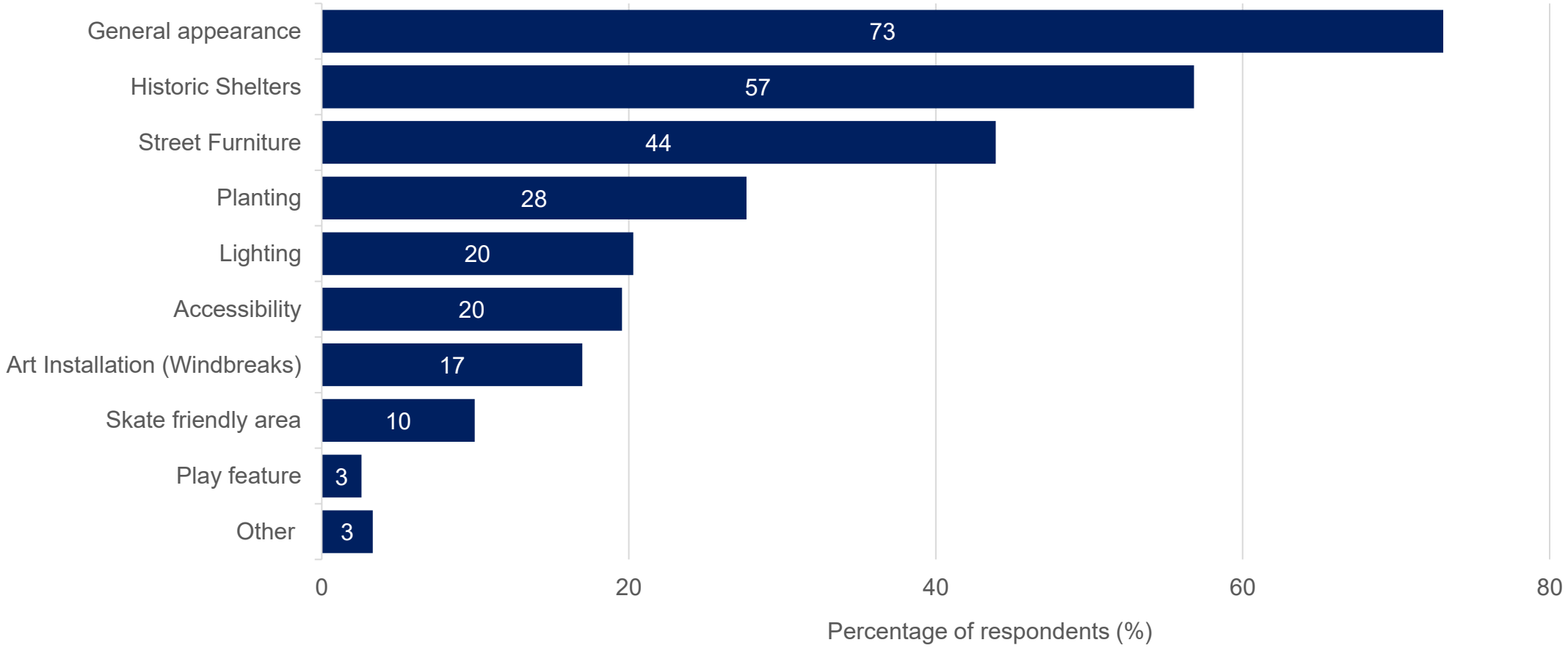
"There are stains on the blond concrete from rusting concrete."

"The finishing is poor in places. For example the Victorian shelters near the rock gardens are finished very poorly with the window frames looking very messy."

- Mostly, respondents feel that the new works are of good quality and have been finished to a high standard (9%). Respondents also express satisfaction as they feel the works have been well designed and thought out, showing attention to detail, whilst others offer general praise (6% each)
- A small proportion of respondents raise concerns about the quality of the works. Some mention signs of rusting already, or that certain elements could have been finished to a better standard (e.g. the Victorian shelters). Some also express a general consideration for how the area will be maintained and kept clean or make some suggestions about the works

Favourite features

Q: ***'What do you like most about Frontage 5? Please pick your top three.'*** | *Base: Total sample (271)*



- Respondents most like the general appearance of Frontage 5 (73%), followed by the historic shelters (57%) and the street furniture (44%)

Future projects

Q: ***'What would you like to see more of in future projects?'*** | *Base: Total sample (271)*

Key themes	%
Planting and greenery	13
More of the same – design, quality, communications	10
Culture/ community e.g. events (music), art, historic content, independent vendors	10
Seating	10
Aesthetics e.g. more colour, fairy lights, coloured lighting	6
Practical features e.g. bins, public toilets, water stations	5
Shelters	4
Accessibility and inclusivity e.g. ramps, more for older people	4
Better regulation and security e.g. no scooters/ bikes, CCTV	4
Cleaning and maintenance	3
More things for children	2
Wide spaces – for different modes of travel	2
Other	6
N/A / no comment	*46*

"More coastal type greenery to affect plain surface."

"The same approach to design and usability."

"Community activities making use of the new spaces."

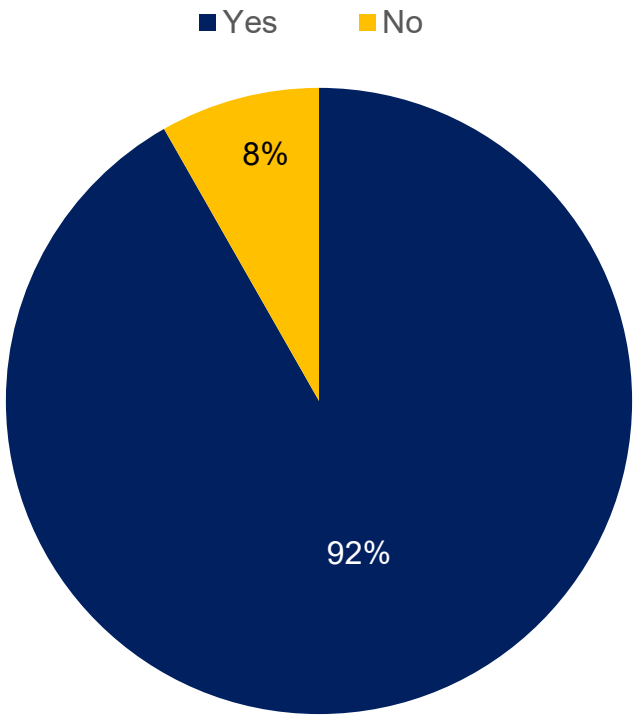
"Diverse and numerous bench/seating options."

"Some colour to break up the concrete, designs on the floor of the promenade."

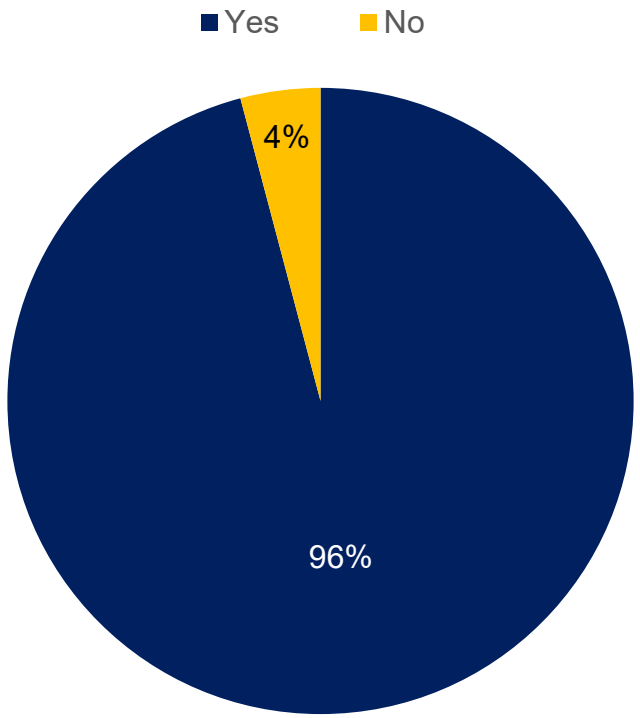
- 10% of respondents are pleased with the current works, expressing that they would like to see more of the same in future projects
- Many respondents mention the look of future projects and would like to see more planting and greenery (13%) or more consideration of the aesthetics, such as more colour or interesting lighting (6%). Some also mention permanent installations like seating, shelters, and practical features such as bins and toilets
- Respondents suggest the continued promotion of local culture and community, such as the inclusion of historic content and local art

Visiting and communications

*Q: **'Does the appearance of the new seafront make you want to visit more regularly?'** | Base: Total sample (267)*



*Q: **'Do you feel well informed about the coastal scheme?'** | Base: Total sample (267)*



- The majority of respondents report that the appearance of the new seafront makes them want to visit more regularly (92%), just 8% disagree with this
- Respondents generally consider themselves well informed about the coastal scheme (96%). Those who do not currently feel well informed were signposted to the Southsea Coastal Scheme website where they could sign up to the newsletter, to try and combat this

Further comments

Q: ***'Do you have any other comments?'*** | *Base: Total sample (267)*

Key themes	%
Praise for work so far	30
Local area and community has been considered e.g. minimal disruption due to works, professional manner of construction workers, historical features included, local opinion taken into account	6
Cleaning and maintenance will need to be considered	6
Praise for communications/ liked to be kept informed	5
Suggested additions e.g. accessibility (ramps), practical features like showers, different/ more trees	5
Excited to see future works	3
Concerns about shared use of space e.g. pedestrians, cyclists	3
More businesses e.g. cafes, ice cream huts	1
Issues or complaints e.g. could be more creative, defences will not be effective, lack of lighting, wave listening devices do not work	1
Other	3
N/A / no comment	*50*

"On the whole I think the entire scheme is excellent. It is clearly being done by people who recognise the importance of the seafront to Portsmouth."

"The whole scheme has been a great example of listening to the community."

"I was worried that the changes to the seafront would 'modernise' Southsea too much. However, that has not been the case and the history of the area has been maintained and promoted."

"One aspect that let's down the appearance is the staining of the prom surface around bin areas from leaking bins/bin liners. This is made worse each morning when the waste is collected from each bin and placed in a central place on the prom for disposal."

- Half of respondents left further comments
- The highest proportion leaving comments give praise to the work done so far (30%), whilst 6% appreciate the communications
- The consideration of the local area and community were also appreciated, with respondents mentioning minimal disruption during the works, the professional manner of the workers, and the inclusion of local opinions and historical features (6%)
- Some respondents mention consideration for the required cleaning and maintenance to ensure the area continues to look good