RAIL USERS' SURVEY 2026

bishop line
Community Rail Partnership

RAIL USERS' SURVEY 2026



NORTHERN

Prepared by The Friends of the Stockton & Darlington Railway for Bishop Line Community Rail Partnership and Northern Trains.

Friends of the Stockton & Darlington Railway
www.SDR1825.org.uk

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Conducted over May 5th to 16th by 14 Members of the Friends of the Stockton & Darlington Railway (FSDR):

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1.INTRODUCTION

As indicated by the two logos of the preceding page, the Bishop Line Community Rail Partnership and the Friends of the Stockton & Darlington Railway share a common interest. Community Rail Partnerships exist to undertake the task of connecting communities with their railways and stations, through working with stakeholders to ensure that rail services and stations meet community needs and confidence. The Friends of the Stockton & Darlington Railway were established to safeguard and promote the heritage of the line, including through their conservation of (what is agreed as) the world's oldest railway station, at Heighington.

Northern Trains' service between Bishop Auckland and Saltburn runs almost entirely along lines built eventually by the Stockton & Darlington Railway Company. However, the section under Bishop Line's responsibility runs over a major part of the historic original route of 1825 between the East Coast Main Line (exclusive) at Darlington and Shildon. The important route from there via Shildon Tunnel to Bishop Auckland was built in 1842.

As part of their work, the Bishop Line have previously found it useful to engage in market research among Bishop Line passengers**.** This survey of 2026, commissioned with the Friends, was intended to provide policy information for the Partnership of the Bishop Line service of Northern Trains, between Bishop Auckland and Darlington, and its promotion along with the Friends of the Stockton & Darlington Railway. Adopting a target of 600 interviews, the Friends achieved a response from **588** passengers. This comprised 481 by self-completion, using the QR code which we supplied, together with 107 (18%) by interview. The total was greatly assisted by the use of the codes, through use of mobile phones. and the ready willingness of many passengers to support the survey.

There is inevitably an element of self-selection as regards which passengers accepted or refused the survey. It is in any case very difficult to achieve a fully random sample for a survey on board a train (see the last section of this report "Note on Survey Methods"). Nonetheless, the results, spread fully across the range of ages (and thus types of Railcard) and with 56% male to 44% female among those supplying their gender, are substantial and robust.

Travel patterns are repetitive. A major objective was to provide continuity from, and comparison with, previous surveys commissioned by Bishop Line. The size of response in fact allows direct comparison of results with responses to appointed consultants of 579, 630, 668 and 776 in the years up to and including the last previous survey of 2019. To that end, the discussion of the 2026 questionnaire deliberately relied on repetition of questions from the 2019 survey (the main omissions being about the doubling of the line's frequency to hourly from 2017).

The new intention was to enquire into respondents' knowledge and awareness of the survey participants, Bishop Line and the Friends, and their activities (Although the Bishop Line logo had been mentioned at the end of the previous survey). The Friends themselves had invited all members to submit questions about passengers' knowledge of the S&DR, the Friends' activities and possible future activity, and ten were received from which to select. The resulting draft, agreed with the Community Rail Officer, was tested as a paper document on April 17th and 18th by four of us undertaking 24 pilot interviews on the line, all satisfactorily, and taking 6 to 8 minutes each,

This use of open-ended questions led to the validation or extension of existing answer codes and the identification of codes for new questions, to facilitate self-completion in the main survey. The interest of the new questions is brought out in the first part of the summary of results, immediately below.

2 SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS

(a) <u>New additional questions of 2026 found that</u>

- between 220 and 300 of the 588 had seen the logos of Bishop Line, Bishop Trains, the FSDR and SDR200 and large numbers knew about the work of Bishop Trains
- 473 (83%) had heard of the Stockton & Darlington Railway (96 hadn't!!), and
- while just 118 (20%) knew something about FSDR
- 332 could be encouraged to celebrate the railway's history
- Remarkably, people gave high marks to the line for safety; 53% saying it was "very safe" and a further 45% 'safe' to travel on
- 17% said they had a long-term illness or disability, for whom the height of some platforms was an issue
- On the other hand, no less than 53% had walked to their boarding station
- 73% had bought their ticket on an App

(b) <u>Comparisons with 2019 (where available, in blue) are available for leading results</u>

The data appear to show a resumption of a gradual decline in car and bus usage since the 2014-9 period by the rail passengers.

As before, the route is shown to be fairly self-contained, with only a quarter of respondents boarding or alighting their train outside of the Bishop Line. Darlington (Bank Top) and Bishop Auckland accounted for more than half of total arrivals and departures.

The proportion of rail users travelling to work has increased slightly to 32% (from 29%), but the proportion using it for leisure trips (21%) is also notable. The primary reason for choice of train travel was again convenience, mentioned by 67% (52%), followed by speed of journey (45%), and cost, 30% (35%). The route is inevitably faster than the parallel X1 bus service.

In terms of regularity of use, nearly two-thirds 64%, (61%) of rail users had made the journey at least three times in the last month, of whom 56% (57%) made their journey before 10am, predominantly towards Darlington. Conversely, 58% (63%) of respondents who had made their journey at least three times in the last month had made their journey after 4pm, predominantly towards Bishop Auckland.

20% (32%) of rail users said that they travelled over this route by train only. Forty-two per cent had used the bus, 41% had travelled as car passenger, and 31% as car driver. The respondents who indicated that they travelled by other transport were asked were asked why they sometimes did so. The biggest reason for choosing another form of transport lay

simply in cancellations and delays (33%) (not coded as such in 2019), followed by the availability of a car on certain days, 30% (19%)

Awareness of the effects of change

Asked if there was anything that would encourage them to use the Bishop Line more than at present, 165 (28%) said "No". Among the other respondents, 54% said that cheaper fares would encourage them to do so, 35% mentioned later evening trains and 32% better connections to other rail services.

Rail users were again asked, if the service were more frequent during the day, whether they would be more likely to make the journey by train more often. 80% (76%) overall said that this would make their use "more likely": 61% (52%) "much more likely".

Just 17% of journeys reported continued "east of Darlington", i.e. on the present through service from Bishop Auckland to Saltburn via Darlington (although. 43% said that they "frequently" travel on). The new platform layout at Darlington Station adds to the time taken in changing trains, and lends itself to the possibility that Bishop Line services might be separated entirely in future from a Darlington - Saltburn shuttle service. There is no public information on this possible question for the future, but it's clear that the views of through passengers have not changed. When asked how long a wait would be reasonable when changing trains, a quarter of all respondents (28%, 26%) thought 5 to 9 minutes and two fifths (40%, 38%) thought between 10 and 14 minutes.

3 INTRODUCTION TO DETAILED RESULTS

Presentation

The 2026 results are presented from here in the form of coloured diagrams, i.e. bar graphs and pie charts, introduced by text. The order for each question is as follows:

Introductory, explanatory text
Diagram
Question number and wording,
followed by "Response – x/y"

where "x" is the number of responses to the question and "y" is the relevant population eligible to answer; this **varies** for two reasons; firstly, some of the respondents may be ineligible to answer a particular question because it refers to only part of their number, for example (as above) to "rail users who had made the journey at least three times in the last month"; secondly, the individual may, in certain appropriate questions, be invited to give more than one answer, for example as to why they used the line.

This is the same notation used in the 2019 report and is important in reading the resulting bar graphs and the numbers shown with them to derive percentages in the text.

Only a small proportion of questions, a small number which are nugatory or misleading, are omitted from the report, while simple questions producing a YES/NO pattern of answers are reported in the text only, as not meriting a chart. Many respondents to Questions 1 to 4 seeking numbers of passengers by individual train departures could not identify the train they were on, so the results are properly compared later in this report with Qs 15-18 where passengers stated their preferred time of day for travel on this route by any mode of transport.

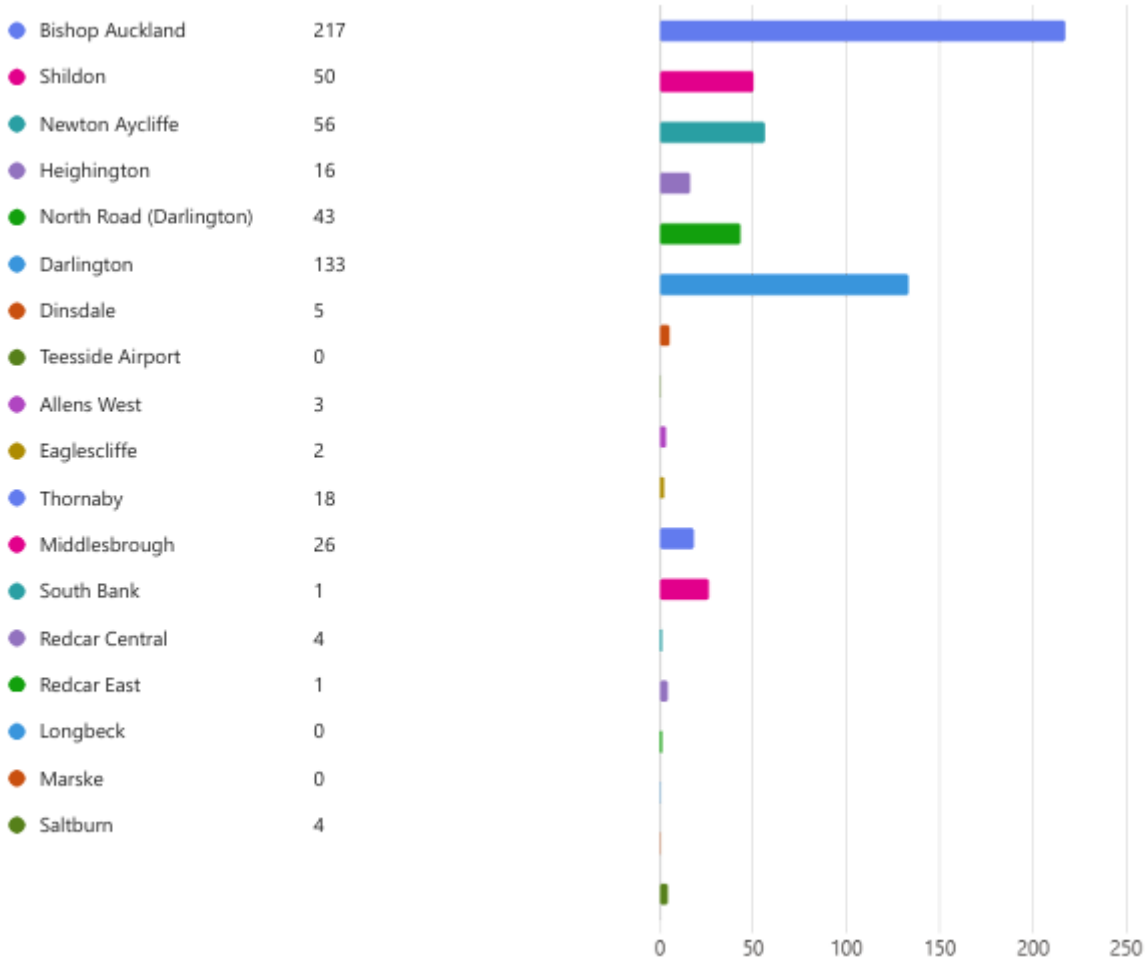
4 THE GEOGRAPHICAL PATTERN OF TRAVEL

Beginning therefore with Q5, **the outstanding feature is the relatively self-contained usage of the Bishop Line** section of the overall hourly through service between Bishop Auckland and Saltburn. Nearly all Bishop Line trains run through to and from Saltburn, but are relatively little used by our passengers beyond Darlington other than to Middlesbrough (to be expected because of its size) and Thornaby. In the actual journeys in this survey, only 17% terminated east of Darlington, and accordingly only 10% lived in TS postcodes; although, in response to Q25, 43%, said that they did travel "frequently" east of Middlesbrough.

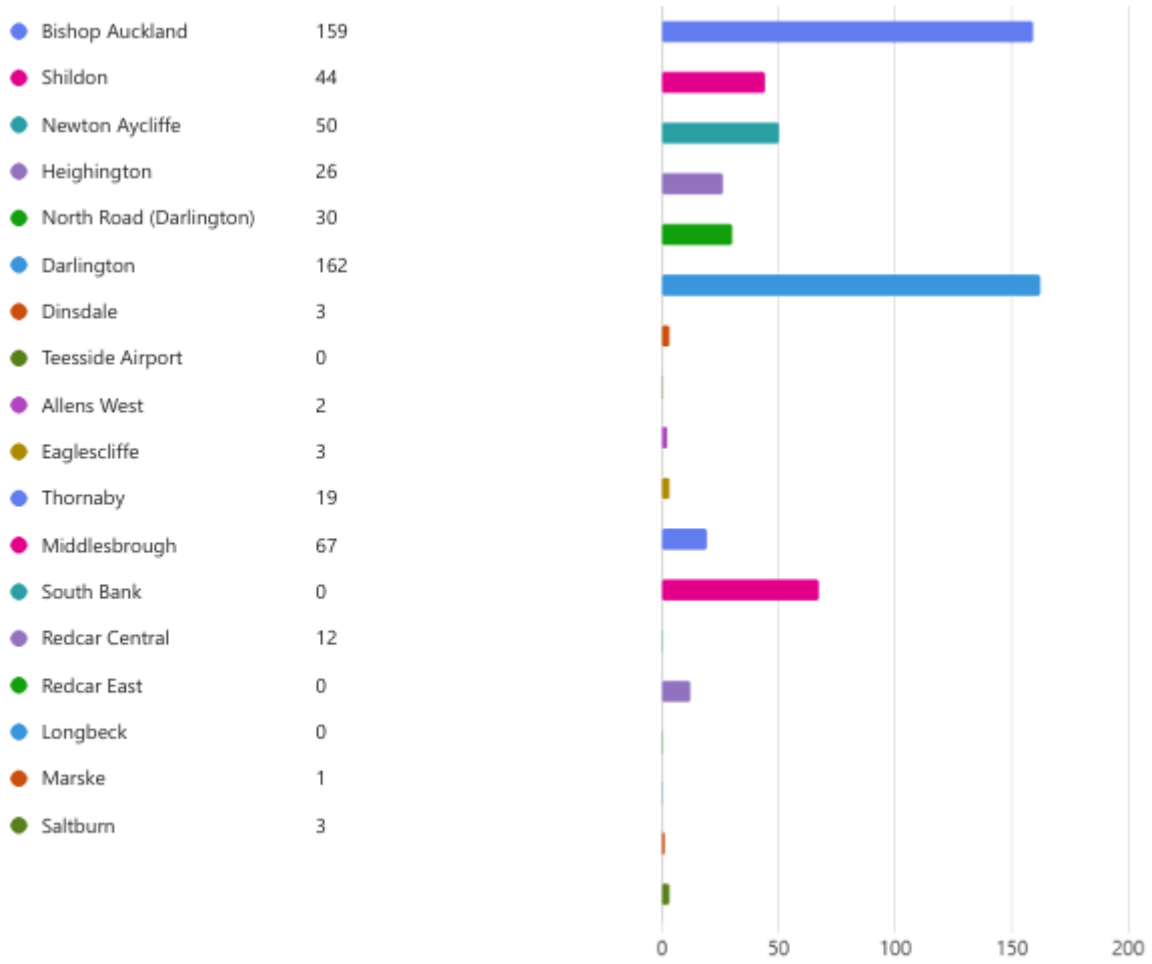
The charts for Qs 5 and 6 further show that 60% of Bishop Line journeys started or finished at Bishop Auckland or Darlington, Bank Top stations, many being directly between the two. The **low patronage of the intervening stations** is surprising at first sight, but must be due, except in the case of North Road, to their lacking centrality in their respective settlements: there simply is not a lot of housing actually near these stations, and this, despite new housing at Shildon, must remain a constraint on usage of the line.

When it comes to the **direction** of flow, the overwhelming fact is that the line is serving the needs of Bishop Auckland rather than Darlington residents. Among those respondents who supplied their basic postcode details, 32% of our passengers lived in the DL14, Bishop Auckland, post code area, compared with 16% in Darlington itself (post codes DL3 and DL4). The line is the boundary between postcodes DL14 6 and DL14 7 within Bishop Auckland, with the majority of passengers living to the south of the line in the Cockton Hill, Woodhouse Close and Henknowle housing areas.

The origins of this imbalance undoubtedly lie in the greater depth and range of the Darlington economy compared with Bishop Auckland's smaller range of jobs since the closure of the surrounding coalfield, shown today in higher economic activity rates. This is reflected in tidal flows across the hourly service of trains throughout the day (see below)

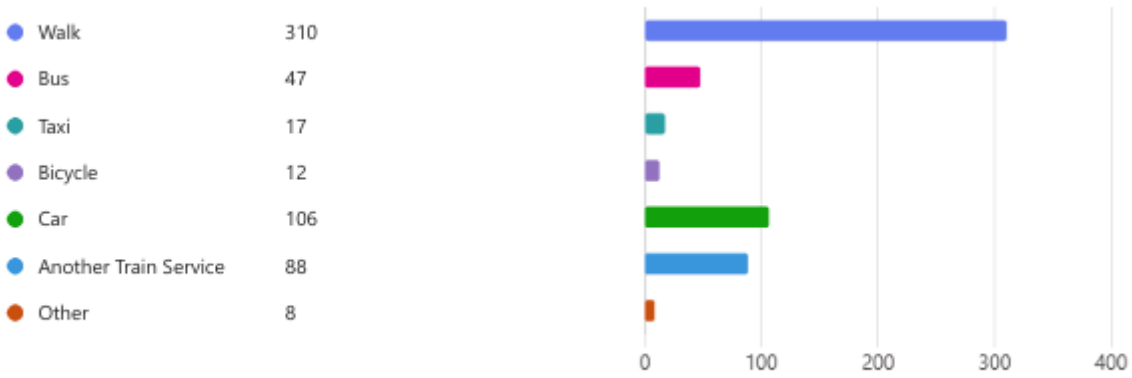


Q5: Where did you board this train today? Response – 573/588



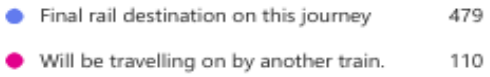
Q6: And where will you be getting off? Response– 568/588

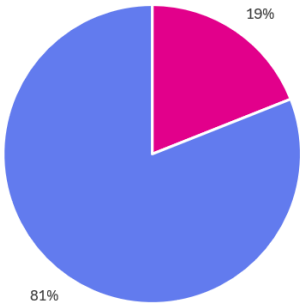
The points about the location of housing are relevant to the next question, which is new to these surveys. It asked about passengers' mode of travel to their departing station. Excluding those who reached the Bishop Line from a connecting train, the most important mode of access was on foot, accounting for a full 62% of passengers. Among other modes, the use of a car amounted to 21%, leaving bus access with a paltry 9%. While bus access has to be acknowledged as poor at Bank Top Station, services are frequent at both Shildon and Bishop Auckland stations (in the latter case with many services altered to run between the Bus Station and the Tindale Crescent out-of-town shopping area, i.e. past the Station). This is a very poor result for road/rail integration. 19% travelling on to further rail destinations, led by Newcastle and York, *followed* by London, a pattern which broadly could be predicted in transport theory based on the size and distance of UK cities.



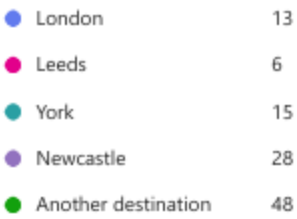
Q7 How did you travel to the boarding station? – Response - 499/500 excluding rail connections

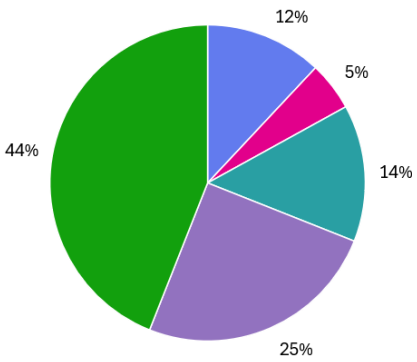
Two questions show train connections, i.e. at Darlington and Thornaby, to be moderately important, with 19% travelling on to further rail destinations, led by Newcastle and York, *followed* by London, a pattern which broadly could be predicted in transport theory based on the size and distance of UK cities.





Q.13 Is where you get off the train your final destination or will you need to travel on by train? Response – 587/588

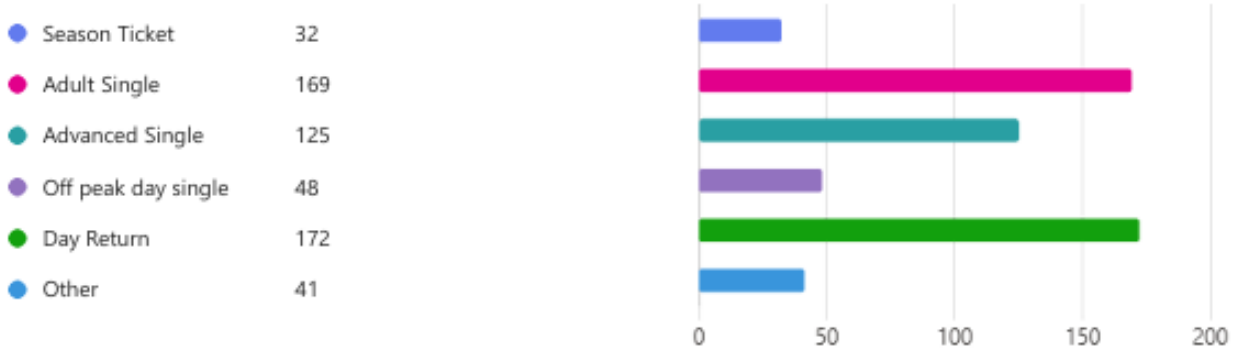




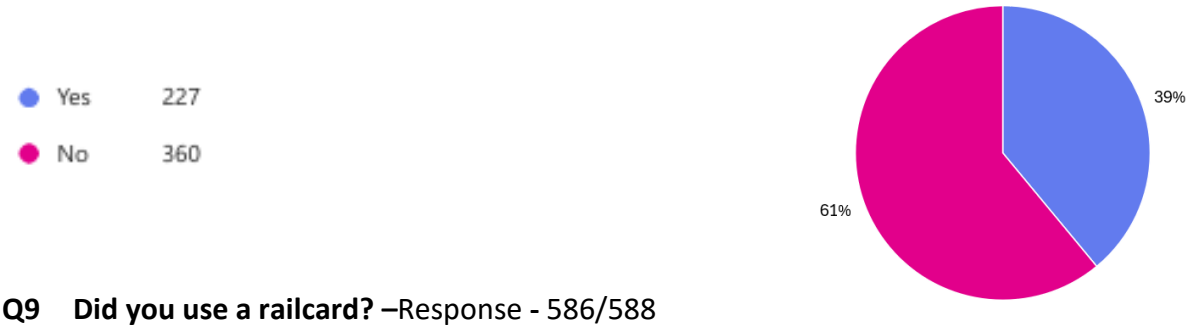
Q14 If you are travelling on by train, where is your final destination? Response – 110/110

5 TICKETING

Three new charts about ticketing show a clear pattern. Adult Single and Day Return tickets each enjoy usage by 29% of passengers, followed by the Advance Single. Only a minority, 39%, use an accompanying Railcard, but the great majority now, 73%, buy their ticket with an App.; however, 15% continued to buy tickets at a station ticket office, a facility at both Bishop Auckland and Darlington, in the former case run by and promoted by Bishop Trains.



Q8 What type of ticket do you have? –Response **-** 586/588



Q9 Did you use a railcard? –Response **-** 586/588

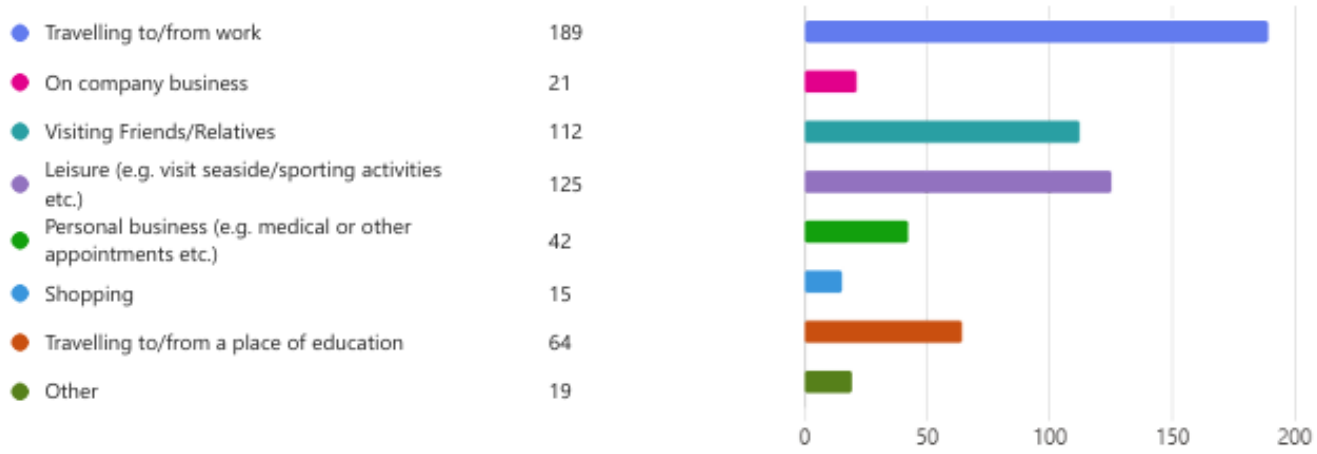


Q10 How did you buy your ticket today? –Response - 586 /588

6 PURPOSE AND TIMING OF TRAVEL

All the indications show the line to be used principally for the journey to work, sufficiently to produce a tidal pattern of flow, from Bishop Auckland to Darlington in the morning and the opposite in the evening. However, the morning peak is more pronounced than the afternoon/evening one.

The following chart shows the main single function of the line as providing travel to work, representing 32% of recorded trips, which aligns with the point that 56% of all trips are by males. However, **leisure is an important aspect of the line**, with 21% of trips, and 19% visiting friends and relatives, the latter showing the greatest increase compared with 2019 and being an important purpose of rail travel generally. Educational trips, involving colleges at Bishop Auckland, Newton Aycliffe and Darlington amounted to 11% of recorded trips.



Q11 What is the main purpose of your journey today? Overall 586/586; please tick one box only.

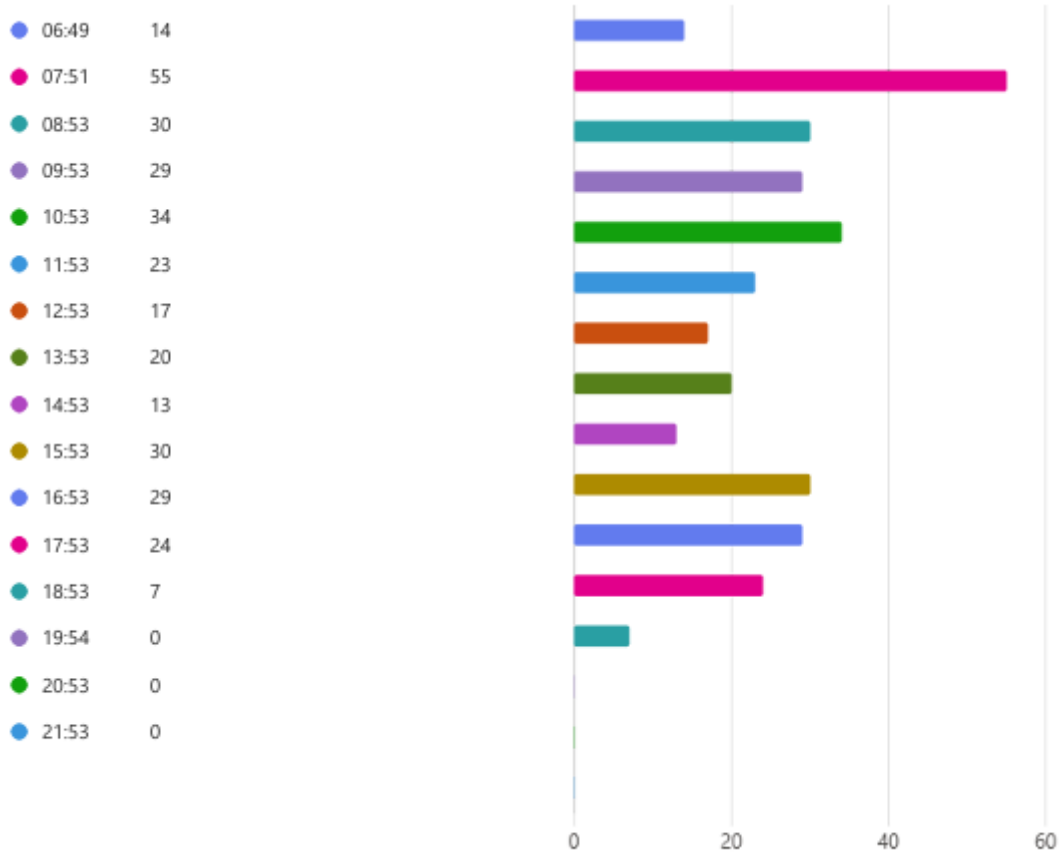
Many rail services in present day timetables are based on a regular "clock face" pattern. As shown in the next charts, the Bishop Line service is strictly hourly on the seven days of the week, with nearly all trains originating or terminating at Saltburn. While contributing to operating convenience, it leaves marked variation in load to reflect demand hour by hour.

This is not a loading issue, as recent data supplied from Northern Trains shows only two services running at more than 50% capacity, the 07.51 service from Bishop Auckland on Tuesdays and Wednesdays. This stands out because the second and third most popular services have much lower loading. In the opposite direction, the highest loading was of 34 to 36% on Friday and Saturday afternoons.

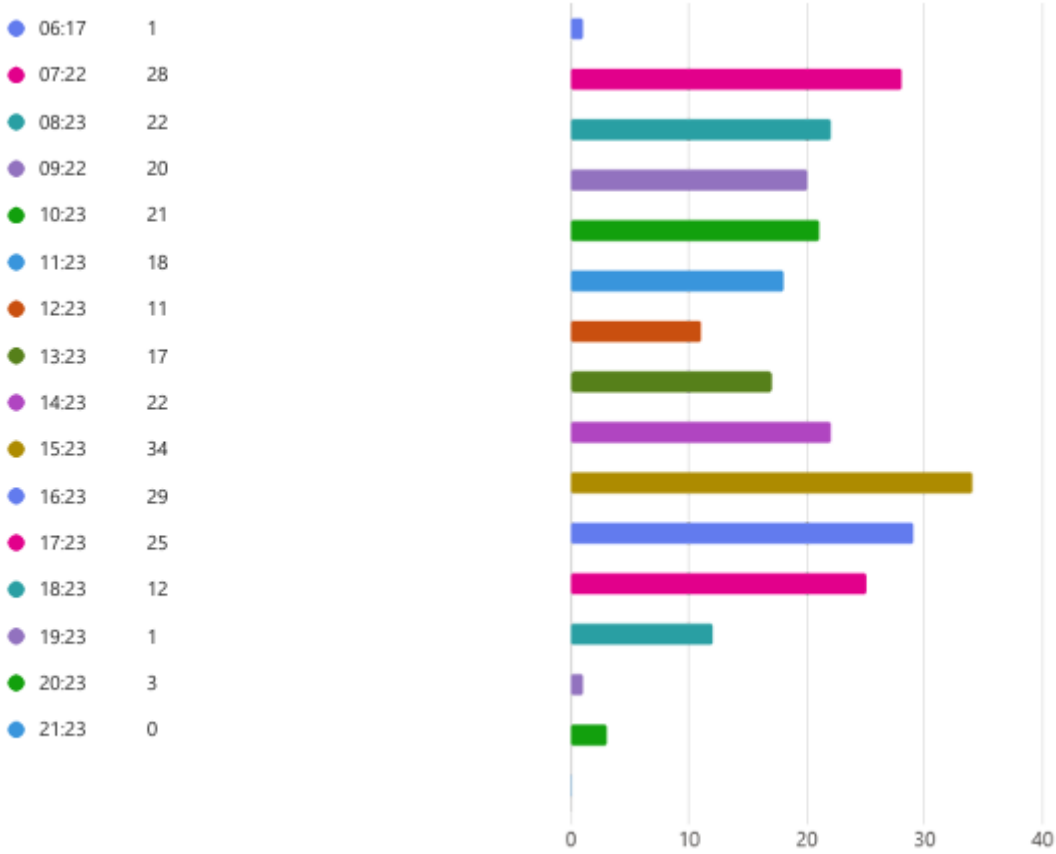
These data are complementary to our survey which is based on numbers of passengers, and their distribution between times of the day, as in the next four charts. This distribution,

in precise terms, is inevitably affected by the shift system under which interviewers were allocated to different hours of the day.

The distribution between hourly trains, shown in the next tables, also shows usage of the 07.53 from Bishop Auckland towering above other services in popularity, followed by an almost continuous drop in usage till the 15.53, exclusive. The peak in the reverse direction actually falls on the 15.23 departure from Darlington, with volumes declining through the rest of the day. In this direction, however, there is a secondary peak of travel on the 7.22 from Darlington.



Q3. Based on the scheduled time the train departed from Bishop Auckland, which train are you on? –Response - 325/588



Q4. Based on the scheduled time the train departed from Darlington, which train are you on? –Response **-** 264/588

The "overall" response rate to these questions, as shown, is, however, problematical; the low response shown may be because self-completion respondents from the intervening stations could not identify their train easily with the departure times we supplied with the question.

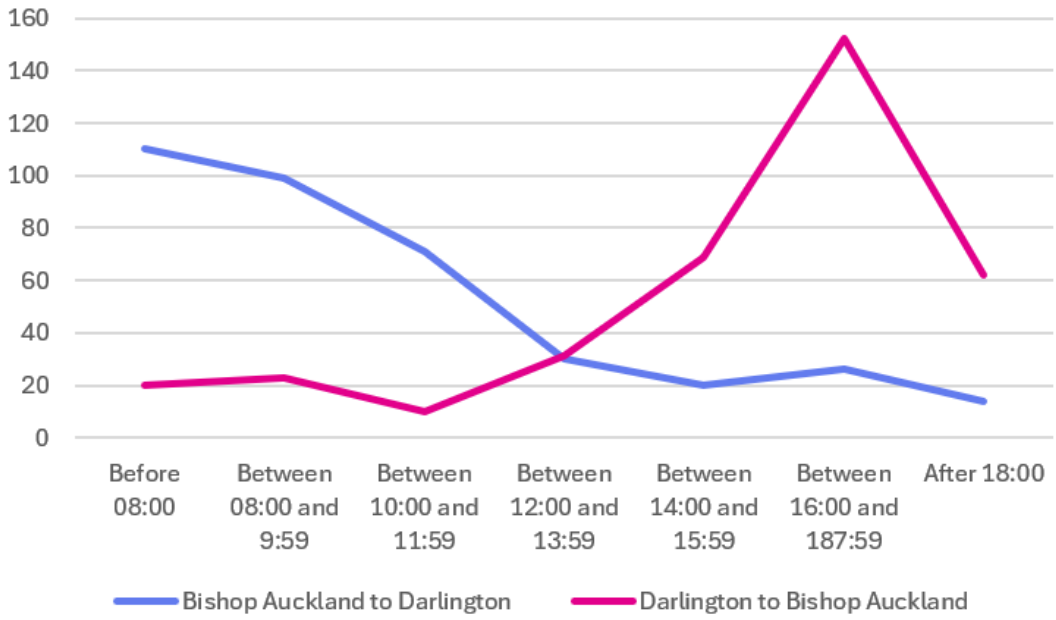
However, a fuller completion rate is available for the alternative questions 16 and 17. Using 2-hour time bands it shows the tidal pattern of flow on the line very clearly. We should, however, note two further differences. The results "indicate the time of day you most often travel", i.e. respondents' generalisation rather than recorded journeys (usually regarded as less perfect than the actual record). Secondly, they include <u>other</u> forms of travel by these rail passengers and exclude the 36% of our respondents who travelled on this <u>route</u> less than three times per month:

.



Q.15 How often have you travelled on this route between Bishop Auckland and Darlington in the last month by <u>any form</u> of transport? Response - 588/588

So, we can now measure more precisely the tidal flow which was introduced above: among the regular travellers (those found among our train passengers); a majority – 56% southbound and 58% northbound –fell in the same peak time periods of travel. In the southbound direction these were the hours before 10 am. In the return direction, flows are more sharply peaked, with very low occupancy before 14.00 hours before the strong concentration of travel between 16.00 and 18.00 hours. The last four departures from Darlington, hourly from 18.23 to 21.23, are at times of little interest to travellers over this route by any mode, but the comparatively early finishing time of the rail service (21.23 northwards, returning southwards at 21.53) was mentioned in responses to question 20.

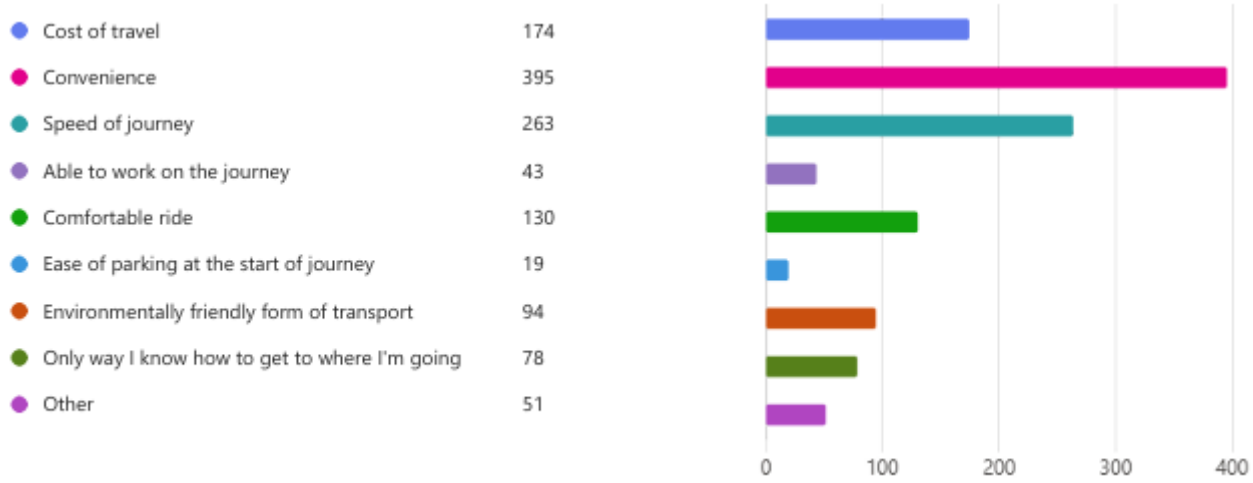


Q.16 and 17 If you have made this journey three or more times in the last month, at what time do you usually use make the journey? Direction from Bishop Auckland in blue Response - 369/375 **and from Darlington in mauve R**esponse - 366/375

7 CHOICE OF RAIL

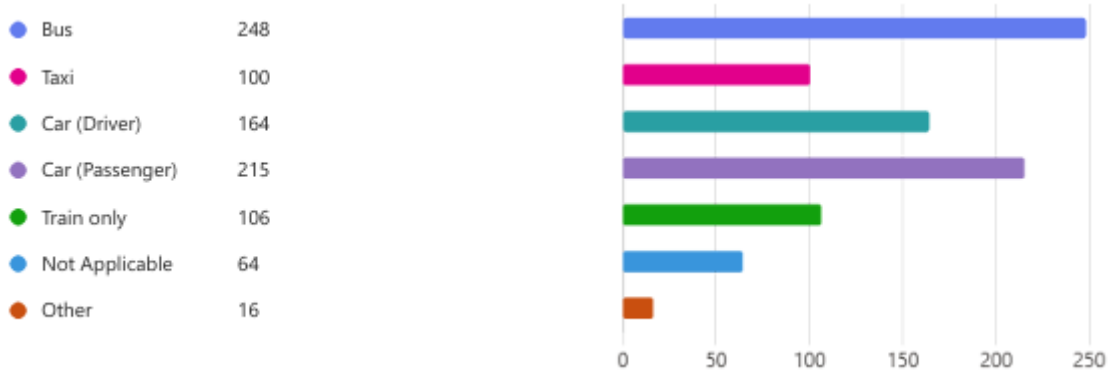
The survey now turns to the line's comparative position relative to other modes of travel. This multiple choice question attracted a large number of answers, so that the average respondent reflected more than two issues. The next chart shows that fares were certainly not attracting passengers to use the line, as cost of travel was mentioned by only 30% of respondents as a reason for travelling by train. Rather, it was the "convenience" of the line, to get people close to their destinations, mentioned in 67% of responses, followed by the separate identification of speed. This suggests that, for those living near Bishop Line stations, **it has a strong advantage over the parallel X1 bus service.** Use of the limited parking at stations was almost insignificant as a factor. There was recognition of the environmentally friendly nature of rail travel.

It is worth noting that the 2019 survey, which included car and bus users, also cited the leading factor of convenience for using the train, offset by a preference for the car and living at a distance from a station.



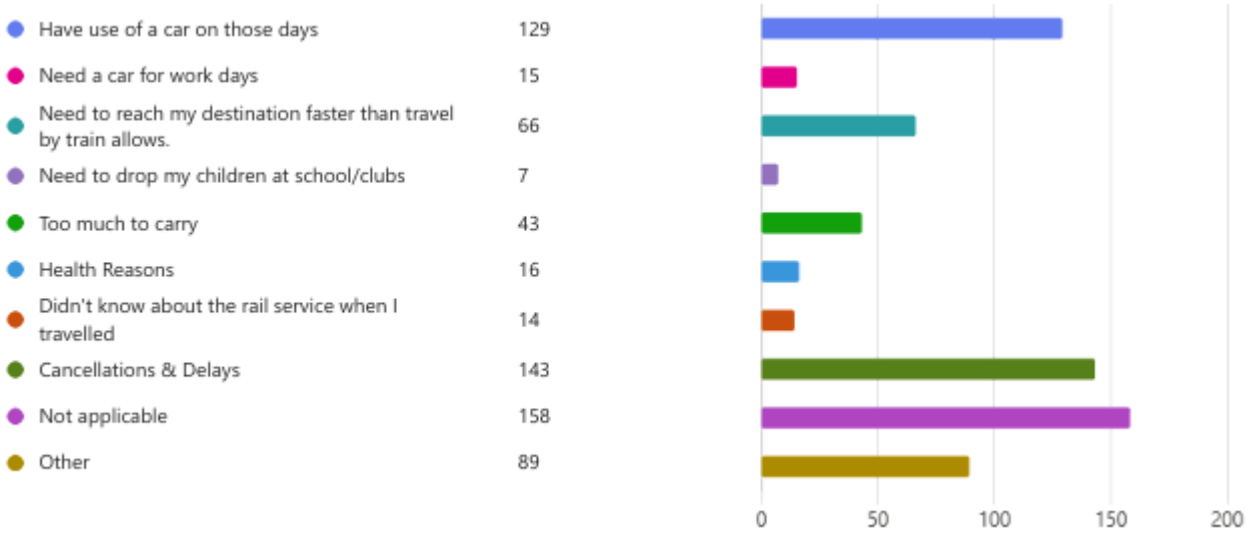
Q 12 Why did you choose to travel by train today? Response - 1246/588 Multiple Choice answers.

Taking the more regular travellers, i.e. the 64% of passengers making a journey on this route three or more times in the last month, we asked what other forms of transport they had ever used on this route. Looking at the range of options, the **outstanding point is that the line has few captive travellers.** Only 20% of respondents had never used another form of transport for this journey, compared with 23% in 2019, whereas the car had been used by 41% as car passengers and 31% as drivers, notably reflecting **car-sharing**. This represents a continuation of the *decline* in car usage from 2014 to 2018, whereas bus usage, at 27%, showed a small drop from 2019 (30%) after steady decline from 2014.



Q.19 What other forms of transport have you EVER used when travelling on this route? Response–912/524 Multiple Choice answers

The biggest single explanation for this use of other modes is shown in question 20; simply that of cancellations and delays to the service, mentioned by a quarter of relevant passengers, 27%. This code was added from our 2026 pilot survey rather than being one available to 2019 respondents, when it was a part of a small sub-group of "other" responses. The second key factor was the availability of a car on the day in question, presumably within respondents' families



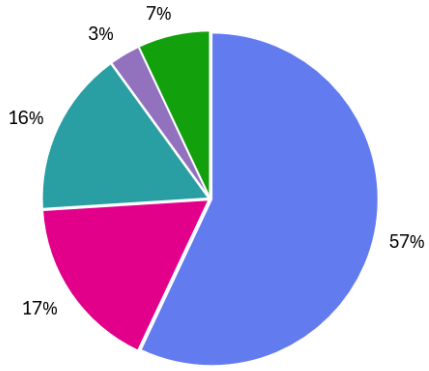
Q.20 Why did you sometimes choose another form of transport for this journey over the train? Response - 521/430 Multiple Choice answers

8 FREQUENCY OF SERVICE

In response to the wording of the next question, 61% of respondents (compared with 58% in 2019), said that a half hour frequency of service would make them "much more likely" to use the train.

The Bishop Line Community Rail Partnership continues to investigate the feasibility of increasing the service during the day. In response to the wording of this question, 61% of respondents (compared with 58% in 2019), said that a half hour frequency of service would make them "much more likely" to use the train.

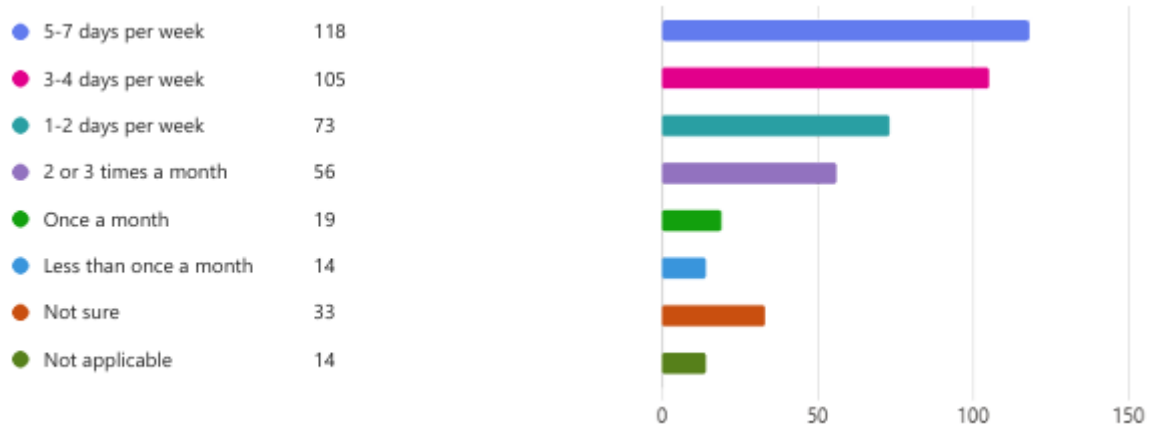
Much more likely	332
A little more likely	102
Unlikely to make a difference	96
Not sure	18
Not applicable	41



Q21 The Bishop Line Community Rail Partnership is investigating the feasibility of increasing the service during the day from an hourly to a half hourly service. If the service was more frequent during the day, would you be more likely to make this journey by train (more often)?

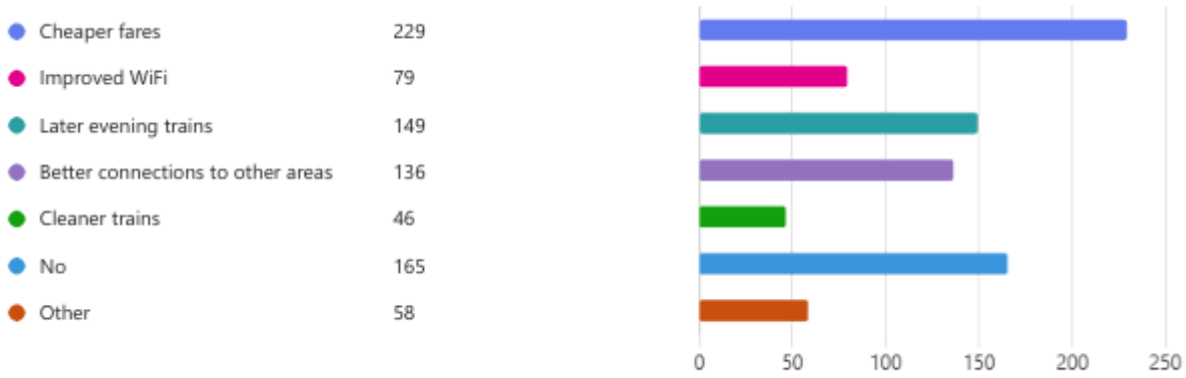
Response –547/588

Among those saying they would be more likely to use the line, we then asked about possible increased frequencies of travel by the respondents. A full 30% said they would use the line on 5-7 days per week, with a further 26% 3-4 days per week, and a steady fall off to lesser frequencies. These are remarkably similar to 2019; 32% and 23% respectively. So, we can report that **demand for the increased frequency is remarkably persistent.**



Q22 How frequently would you envisage using the service if the number of trains increased? Response – 398/417

To balance previous questions, we asked about possible factors that would encourage respondents to use the line more, answered by 81% of all respondents. They confirm the importance of cost, as cheaper fares were mentioned by 54% of the total, well ahead of two other factors which are nonetheless of interest. 35% mentioned provision of later evening trains in the timetable (the last train from Darlington is, as mentioned earlier, at 21.23, but we know that this and earlier trains have low patronage); 32% mentioned a need for better connection to other lines, ie at Darlington and Thornaby. It's notable that "cleaner %. trains" were mentioned by only a small minority, 5%.

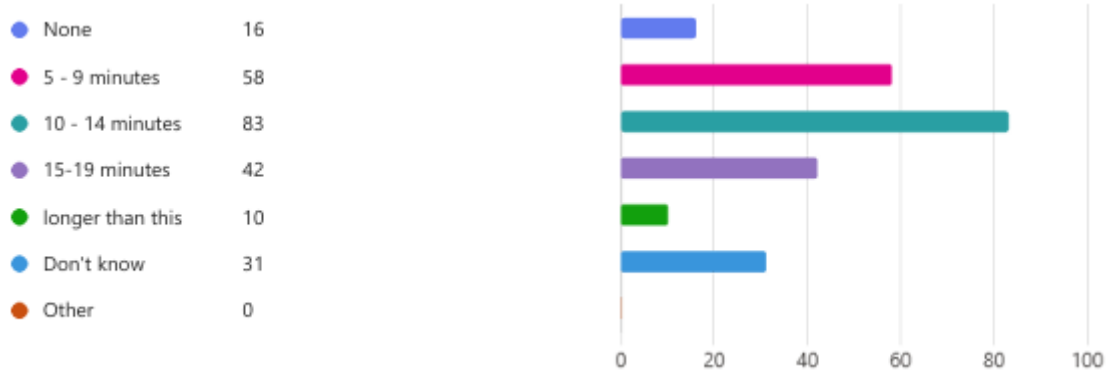


Q24 Is there anything that would encourage you to use the Bishop Line more (than you currently do)? Response – 860/588

9 POSSIBLE CHANGES TO THE SERVICE PATTERN

The survey was, as it happens, completed in the last week before the extension of Darlington Station to include a new Platform 6, useful to accommodate terminating services from Saltburn without conflict with the main north-south running lines. This has led on to speculation that the alternate hourly services, those at present continuing to provide nearly all Bishop Line services to Bishop Auckland, might be diverted to terminate at this platform, leaving a truncated separate service between Darlington and Bishop Auckland from Platform 1 or 4. It has to be said that timetabling so far has continued exactly as before. Nonetheless it was considered necessary to repeat the following question, as from the 2019 survey:

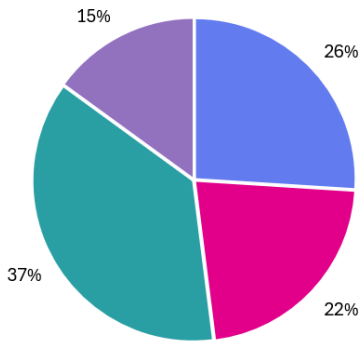
Taking the two most popular answers from the 220 passengers who said that they frequently travel on trains east of Darlington, 64% said that they would wait for 5 to 9 or 10 -14 minutes. This must be viewed in the context of recommended inter-connection times, that are understood to be raised to eight minutes to take account of the walking time taken between the old and new platforms.



Q 26 Currently the full service runs from Bishop Auckland to Saltburn via Darlington. If there was a need to change trains in Darlington and a wait became necessary to travel on towards Middlesbrough and beyond, how long a wait do you feel would be reasonable?
Response - 209/240

In conclusion, it is interesting that needing to change trains at Darlington would be "unlikely to make a difference" for 37% of respondents, whereas **half would be "much less" or a "little less" likely to continue making the journey.**

Much less likely	65
A little less likely	53
Unlikely to make a difference	92
Not sure	37



Q 27 How likely then would you be to make this journey by train? Response – 247/247

10 AWARENESS OF BISHOP LINE HERITAGE AND PARTNERS

This new part of the survey produced strong results, at least in terms of prompted recognition of the logos of partners in support of the line, with the average respondent identifying two of the five:

50%	**41%**	**45%**
37%	**14%**	

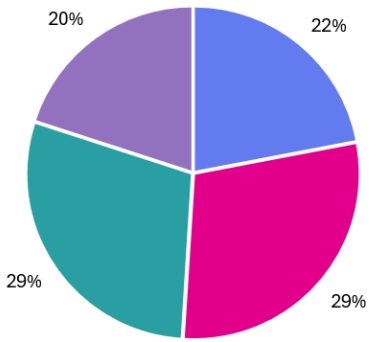
Q29 Have you seen these logos before? IF YES – TICK ALL THAT APPLY (Response - 1106/588)

Evidence of knowledge of the Partnership was elusive. Indeed, comment from another Community Rail Partnership was that this was not necessarily to be expected as the partnerships don't necessarily have direct relations with the public. It was not possible to elicit answers to the question below in the pilot survey, and most respondents to the main survey said that they knew "nothing" of the Partnership, with a few more saying "little" or "very little".

Q30 What do you know about the Bishop Line Community Rail Partnership? (Response – 408/588)

However, Bishop Trains, with its office in Bishop Auckland Station, generated codes in the pilot survey that were recognisable to large numbers of the line's total number of passengers, notably over timetables and ticketing.

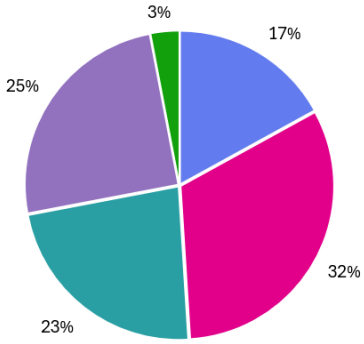
Station Staff	135
Ticket Office	172
Timetable	178
Other	122



Q31 What do you know about Bishop Trains? (Overall – 607/588)

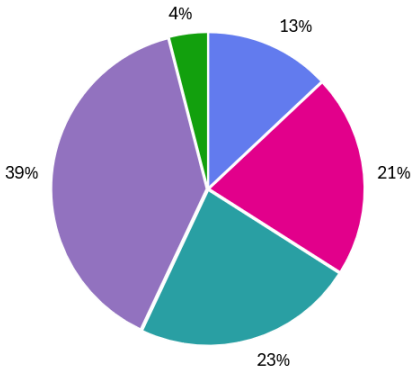
As mentioned in the introduction to this report, the great majority of respondents, 80%, had heard of the Stockton & Darlington Railway. Of them, a total of 20% (118) knew something about the Friends of the Railway, choosing on average two answers from the prompted answers shown; the 2025 celebrations; work on Heighington Station; conservation work; and the guided walks.

Guided Walks	40
2025 Celebrations	75
Conservation of historic sites	56
Heighington Station/Locomotion no. 1 pub restoration.	59
Other	7



Q32 What do you know about the Friends of the Stockton & Darlington Railway? (Overall –237/118)

Volunteering opportunities	87
More information available	139
Social media	156
N/A	256
Other	26



As the next question refers to the Railway, 256 declared themselves not able to answer the question, but among those who did 38% of answers referred to what they could learn from

social media, 34% to the need for more information and 21% that they would be encouraged by volunteering opportunities.

Q35 What would encourage you to get involved in celebrating or protecting the railway's history, regarded as the first public railway using steam power? (Response - 407/332).

Bearing in mind the use of the line for leisure activities, it is interesting that the National Railway Museum at Shildon, Locomotion, had been visited by no less than 73% of respondents, followed by Auckland Castle and Hopetown, Darlington.

Q36 Have you ever visited these sites? (Response - 1150/490)

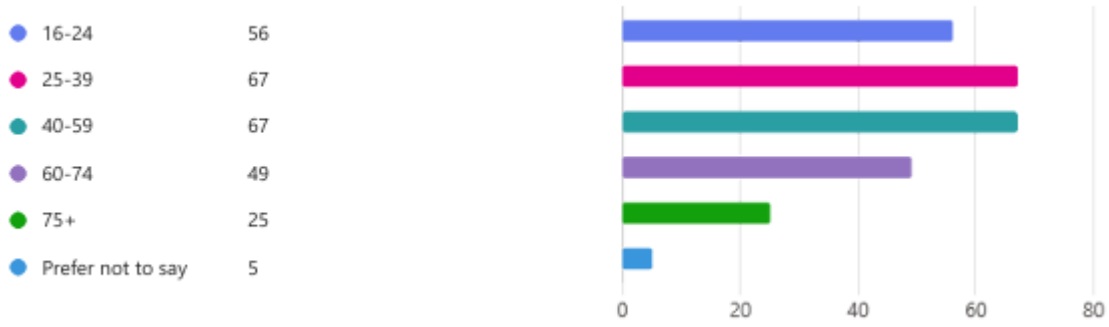
In a further question (Q. 37) 53% of the full set of respondents said that they would be interested in attending local events, exhibitions, or heritage activities celebrating the railway's history?

11 RESPONDENTS' CHARACTERISTICS

The wording of the questionnaire allowed respondents to skip the questions about personal characteristics. So, they were reported by 270 (46%) respondents and so bear some interest in their own right, and go some way towards assessing the representativeness of the survey in the next, final, section of the report.

Among those replying to this section was a preponderance of males, making up 56%, and a small proportion, six, or 2%, who considered themselves to be trans, or have a trans history, each in turn with different histories.

The replies show a good spread of usage of the line in the chart below, eligible for a number of types of Rail Pass. The main age groups appear to be approximately equal in volume in the chart. However, when adjusted for the differing numbers of years covered in the different bars, then the rate of usage appears highest in the 16-24 age group including College travel, followed by 25-39, perhaps reflecting the increase of car ownership with age.

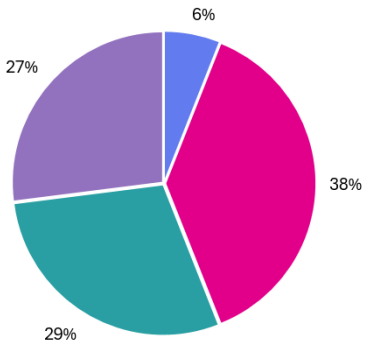


Q42 Which of the following age groups do you belong to? (Response - 263/588)

The proportion of older users is still significant and this has a bearing on the important question of disabled access. Of 267 respondents, 46, or 17%, said that they did consider themselves to have a long-term illness or disability, which limited their activities and/or affects their choice of travel (Q. 43)

When asked how their journeys could be made more acceptable, the known issue of the height of some station platforms on the line came up, along with the noise of underfloor train engines (this is perhaps more surprising, but was evident to interviewers as a possible factor).

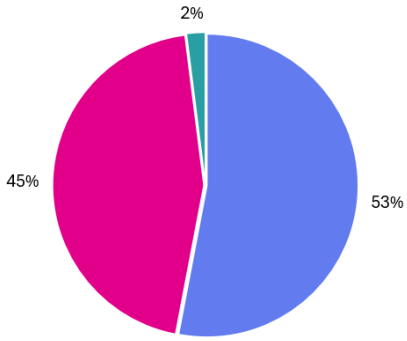
Access for disability scooters	2
Height of some platforms	13
Quieter trains	10
Other	9



Q43 If yes - Are there any ways in which your journey could be made more accessible to yourself? (Overall – 34/46)

To conclude the details of this report on a very positive note, the new question, prompted by some women members of FSDR, that asked how safe do you feel when travelling on a Bishop Line train, was answered in the positive by all but 12 respondents, 309, or 53%, saying "very safe". It was noted that this was being read as safety actually on the train, while safety waiting on station platforms was not tested.

Very safe	309
Safe	262
Unsafe	12
Very unsafe	0



Q28 How safe do you feel when travelling on a Bishop Line train? (Response – 583/588**)**

12 NOTE ON SURVEY METHODS

The survey appears to have the same broad level of robustness as those conducted for Bishop Line, before the COVID epidemic. Results, as shown in section 2a, were broadly similar to the last of those surveys in 2019.

Both surveys relied to a major degree on self-completion, in addition to direct interviews. The interview schedule took on average eight minutes to complete both online and in interview. So, it must be borne in mind that there is not much time for securing and completing multiple direct oral interviews in the journey of 23 minutes between Bishop Auckland and Darlington.

In the technology of 2019, blank questionnaires were placed on passenger seats with encouragement to self-complete by hand: in that of 2026, cards providing a QR link to the questionnaire on passengers' own devices were placed on passenger seats with encouragement to self –complete (which could be finished afterwards from home).

"Interviewers" were advised to achieve a balance of passengers without mobile phones, and to seek one between males and females, younger and older people and those travelling in groups. It was apparent to the writer that there was reluctance to participate among the small minority of (mainly younger) ethnic minority passengers.

In total, 481 out of the total of 588 returned questionnaires were submitted directly online. We do not have a record of the number of passengers who failed to complete the survey, once invited, and, as with the earlier surveys, we do not therefore have a response rate to quote. What can be said is that each of the 10 interviewers in the main survey, completing normally 16 journeys each in total, achieved an average of four returned questionnaires per journey, remembering that the tidal flow of passengers on the line leaves them with trains fairly empty of passengers on half the journeys.

Each Interviewer's eight hours of work were divided into two shifts of four hours, comprising four return journeys between Bishop Auckland and Darlington or North Road stations. Thus, our total coverage within the separate standard shift hours of 7am to 11 am, 11am to 3pm and 3pm to 7pm will be fairly even, subject to availability of passengers. Fewer shifts (four) were established over 11am to 3pm because it was known that there would be fewer passengers to receive the survey, compared with six shifts at 7am to 11am and eight from 3pm to 7pm. We also allocated one shift to the quieter earlier train, and one to the later trains. Thus, there may be some unevenness of coverage in the graphs for Questions 3,4,16 and 17.

As there is no way in which a train passenger survey can achieve full random sampling, we can only approach the question of the representativeness of the survey through the classificatory data of the questions about "Personal Details", 38 to 42. However, it is the result of self-completion, which allowed a preference for respondents not to answer these questions, that we have data for less than half of them, 46%, in a response which may itself be biased.

However, the proportion of 56% of respondents being male is entirely likely, and the broad spread across age groups reported above has a normal shape of the dimensions to be expected.

END