

The Future Rutland Conversation

Narrative summary report:
Business Owners

June 2021

A summary report outlining the key findings and themes identified as part of
the Future Rutland Conversation with business owners

Contents



1. Introduction	page 3
2. Method statement	page 4
3. Who took part?	page 5
4. Thoughts and feelings about key issues	page 7
5. Business operations	page 9
6. Doing business in Rutland	page 11
7. Sharing further feedback	page 12

*We asked and this is what you told us.
Is there anything we've missed?*

1. Introduction

The Future Rutland Conversation is just that: a conversation with everyone who lives and works in Rutland, to find out what's most important to local people – both now and in the future.

Using a series of specially designed surveys, open forums and live discussion events held over a period of two months in the spring of 2021, people of all ages and backgrounds from across Rutland were invited to share their views on wide range of important issues. They were:

- Your Life in Rutland
- Climate change and the environment
- Getting around
- Leisure and recreation
- Health and well-being
- Living in the county
- Learning, skills and employment
- Local services and public spending

There were dedicated surveys and discussions for young people, businesses and visitors to the county. Local stakeholders, schools and new digital channels, like Instagram, helped to reach the widest possible audience. People without internet access were also supported to take part in Future Rutland Conversation by phone, making sure that everyone had an opportunity to share their views.

In total, 2022 people took part in the Future Rutland Conversation. This comprised 1,557 adults who registered online, plus 465 children and young people who were not required to register their details. Together, these participants provided more than 4,500 responses across multiple themed surveys. Alongside these surveys, more than 1,000 contributions were made across nine online forums and some 250 people took part in live discussion events.

The aim of all this is to develop a new shared vision of Rutland – a set of common goals and aspirations based on the things that matter to local people, and which can help to shape a bright and prosperous future for our county.

The following report summarises the comments and feedback received as part of Future Rutland's conversation with business owners.



2. Method statement

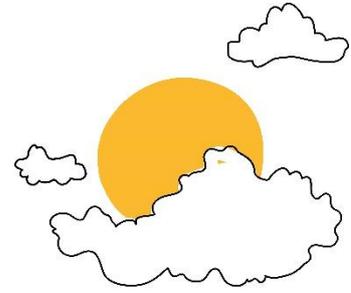
The Future Rutland Conversation ran for a period of eight weeks, from April to June 2021. During this time, 15 online surveys were launched, asking participants more than 100 questions. This was supported by eight two-hour engagement events led by independent facilitator Michael Maynard, plus a further seven two-hour face-to-face video calls with the Leader and Chief Executive of Rutland County Council. Feedback was also gathered in the form of submissions from Rutland County Councillors and Parish Councils, who provided responses from local meetings and other forms of engagement. A significant awareness-raising campaign took place online and through traditional local media outlets, such as newspapers and radio stations. This helped to support engagement with children and young people, visitors to the county and local businesses, as well as those who live, work and were educated here in Rutland.

The many thousands of pieces of raw data and information resulting from the eight-week conversation were sent for analysis by Rutland Community Ventures (RCV), a community-based company in Oakham and operating independently of Rutland County Council. RCV's analysis involved watching and transcribing verbatim comments from hours of video-recorded Zoom conversations; listening to audio files; analysing and summarising survey data; reading and annotating event notes and reports; and reviewing the highly detailed statistics derived from the online surveys. This intensive independent analysis was undertaken over a three-week period without influence from Rutland County Council. The results of the analysis were then submitted by RCV to the Council, who have published this material in a series of theme-based reports. These reports summarise while fully representing participants' original uninterpreted views, opinions and experiences.

If you would like to view all of the original data and information behind these summary reports, this can be read in full online at:

future.rutland.gov.uk/business

3. Who took part?



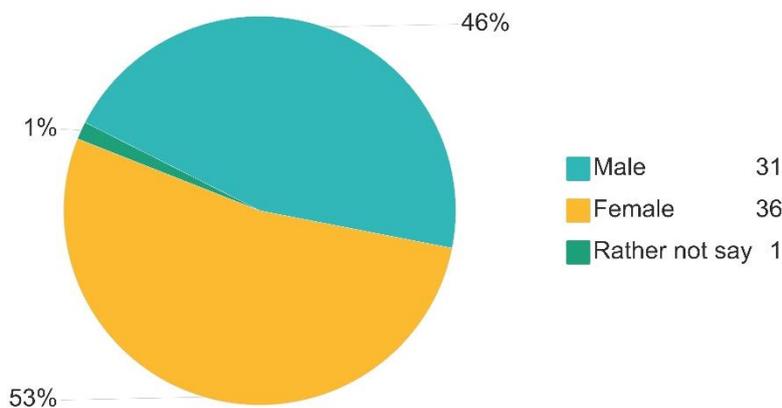
69 responses

There were a total of 69 responses to the survey that ran as part of the Future Rutland’s ‘Business Owners’ conversation. This was in addition to a live discussion event chaired by independent facilitator Michael Maynard and promotion through local business networks.

Gender profile

Of those who provided details, there was a near-even split between the number of men and women who responded to the ‘Business Owners’ survey. Just over half of respondents (53%) were female, 46% were male and a very small number (1%) chose not to share that information.

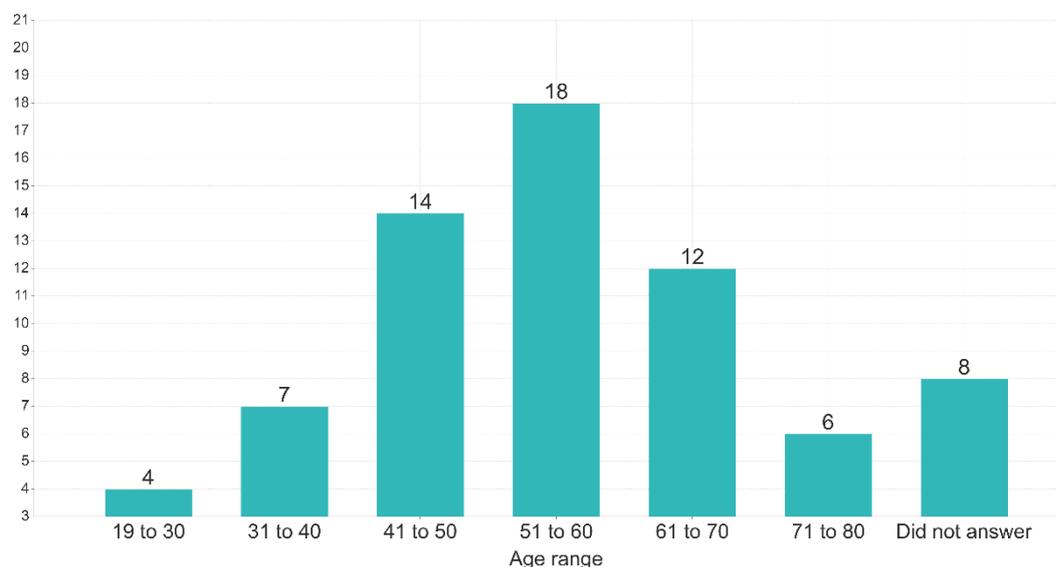
Figure 1 – Gender profile of ‘Business Owners’ respondents



Most of those who took part in the survey identified themselves as the owners or directors of their business.

Age range

The largest number of responses to the ‘Business Owners’ survey came from the 51-60 age group. This group accounted for just a quarter of all response, followed closely by the 41-50 category.



Connection to Rutland

Respondents were also asked to provide details of their connection to Rutland. All 69 respondents confirmed their status as the owner of a business located in Rutland. Just 10% live out of county.

Figure 3 – Connection to Rutland

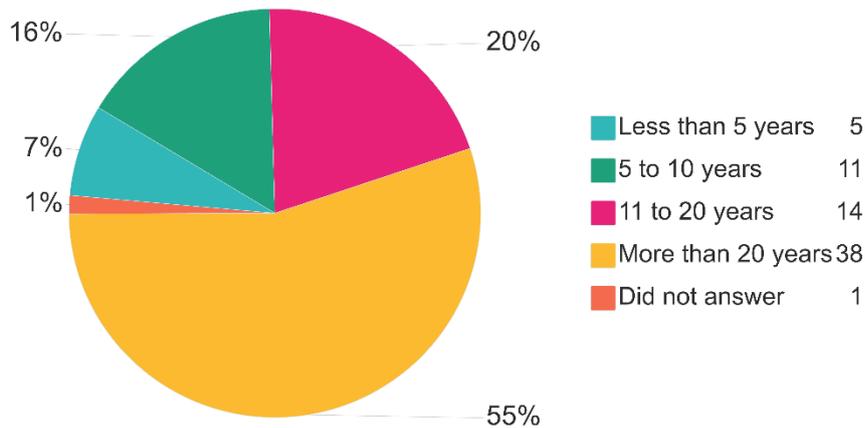
Own a business Live in Rutland



Length of residency

Of those who identified themselves as local residents, more than half (55%) have lived in the county for more than 20 years. Just 7% of respondents have lived in the county for less than five years.

Figure 4 – Length of residency



In terms of geographical location, the majority of responses to the 'Business Owners' survey came from the following areas:

- Oakham (32%)
- Uppingham (10%)
- Exton (3%)
- Langham (3%)
- North Luffenham (3%)

4. Thoughts and feelings about key issues

Future Rutland's live discussion event for business owners invited participants to talk openly about all aspects of our local economy, including the benefits and drawbacks of being based in Rutland. The feedback from this small group of business owners has been separated into for areas:

- Strengths
- Weaknesses
- Opportunities
- Threats

Some comments and feedback on business-related matters from Future Rutland's 'Your Life in Rutland' conversations has also been included to provide the widest possible range of views.

Strengths

Participants in the 'Business Owners' live discussion identified the following strengths:

- The attitude of Rutland people, specifically those in business, is a strength. One participant who visits a number of different business in the areas commented on the general willingness to grow and progress in Rutland
- The community of businesses in Oakham is a key strength, creating a sense that business all in it together
- A good relationship between Rutland businesses and the Council's economic development team
- The people are the essential hub for business growth
- Access to major roads (A roads and motorways)

Quote: "It's been nice seeing the amount of new businesses in Oakham, particularly seeing where we are."

Weaknesses

Participants felt more change was needed in the following areas:

- A lack of support for new businesses (particularly during COVID)
- A lack of publicity and information about services that are available to support businesses
- The cost of commercial rents within Rutland (specifically Oakham). Further work is needed to make things affordable
- A Lack of accessibility to the Council for help and support

Quote: "I feel a little bit unsupported in Rutland."

Opportunities

The following opportunities were identified by business owners:

- Schemes to encourage more businesses to open, particularly in Oakham
- Regeneration of the high street, to encourage more businesses to start and occupy in a central location
- Greater support schemes for micro and small businesses
- Creation of a village/market town independent business hub
- Further links with other counties to enable Rutland businesses to access different services
- More affordable housing to encourage new residents to reside in the county
- Police presence to be increased to keep crime rates low (as they currently are)

Quote: *“If you create a hub of independent businesses then it snowballs and creates an attraction”*

Quote: *“Oakham and Uppingham have a shop local vibe. Rutland can be a real champion of this.”*

Threats

The following threats to local business in Rutland were picked out by participants:

- Businesses will fail if not supported or having the right infrastructure
- Residents would either move or start businesses outside of the county

The key strength identified by participants was the people and business owners in Rutland. The key weaknesses was the feeling of isolation or being unsupported. Their wish was to see the creation of a local business hub based around micro and small businesses.

Business-related comments from ‘Your Life in Rutland’ conversation

 *“The convenience of having the railway station and being near the A1 [is good for business]. It is in the middle of the country.”*

 *“We need to have promotional events to make county’s residents aware of the services that we have so that people choose to shop in Rutland rather than moving outside to the bigger shopping malls and parks.”*

 *“The first thing I wrote down was ‘Rutland brand’. What is Rutland? What is the brand? Looking forward, it will be great for me to see Rutland as an aspirational place for all sorts of reasons: a place to come to; a place to stay in; a place to feel served by the community. And so how can we develop that? What would it look like? Not just for those people who can afford to be here but for those people who struggle as well.”*

5. Business operations

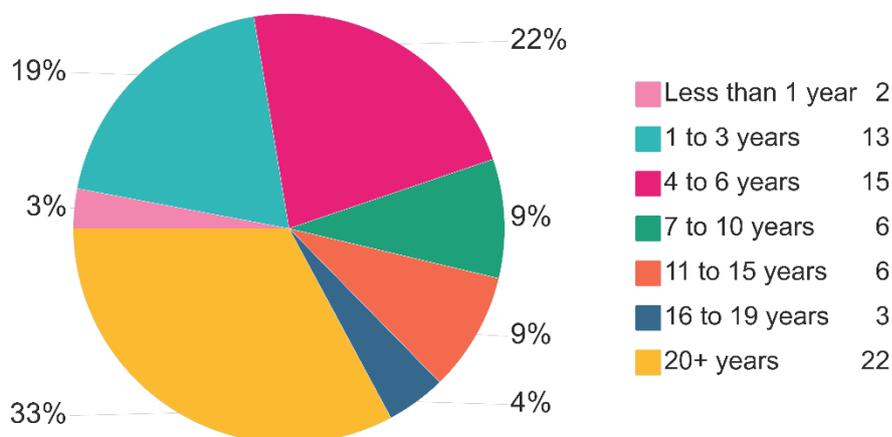
Respondents to Future Rutland's 'Business Owners' survey were asked specific questions about their business operations and the conditions in which they are currently operating.

The majority of respondents operated businesses that fell outside of the categories prescribed in our survey. Thereafter, the greatest number fell under the following classifications:

- Service activities
- Arts, entertainment and recreation
- Agriculture, forestry and fishing
- Human health and social work activities
- Professional, scientific and technical activities
- Accommodation and food service

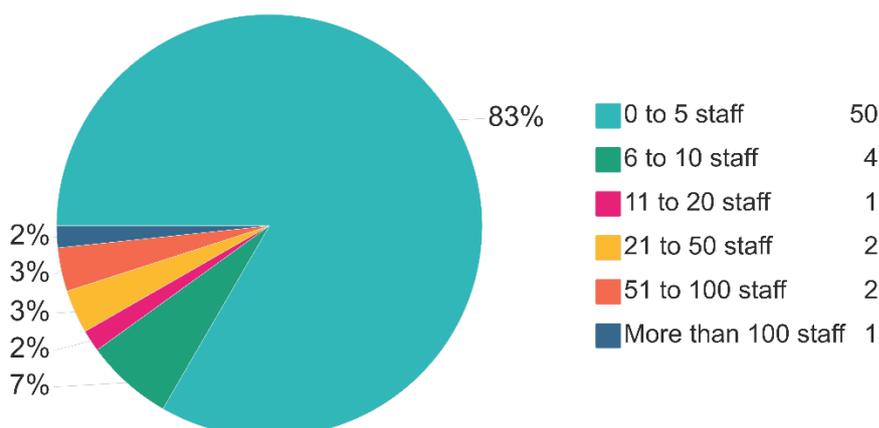
Respondents were also asked how long their business has been trading. A third of those who answered had been in business for more than 20 years. A fifth of respondents had been operating for 1 to 3 years. Two respondents were in their first year of trading.

Figure 5 - How long has your business been trading?



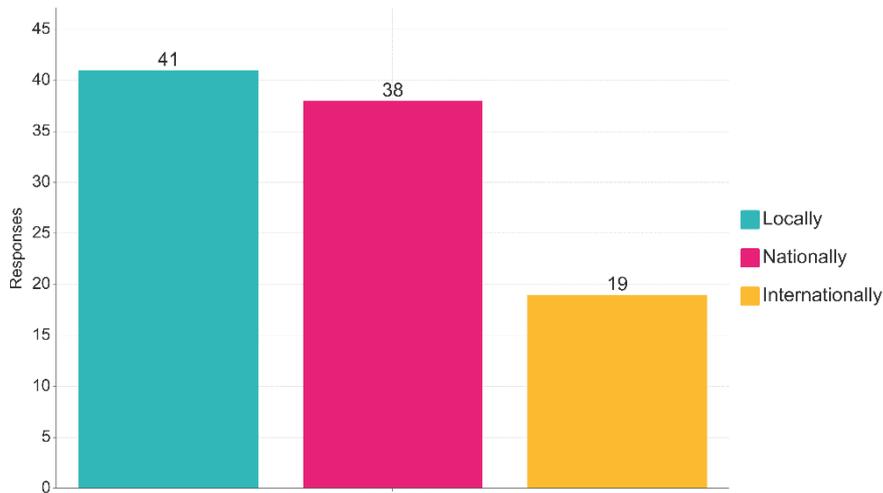
Business owners were also asked how many staff they employ. Most respondents (83%) said they employ fewer than six staff. Only one respondent employed more than 100 staff.

Figure 6 - How long has your business been trading?



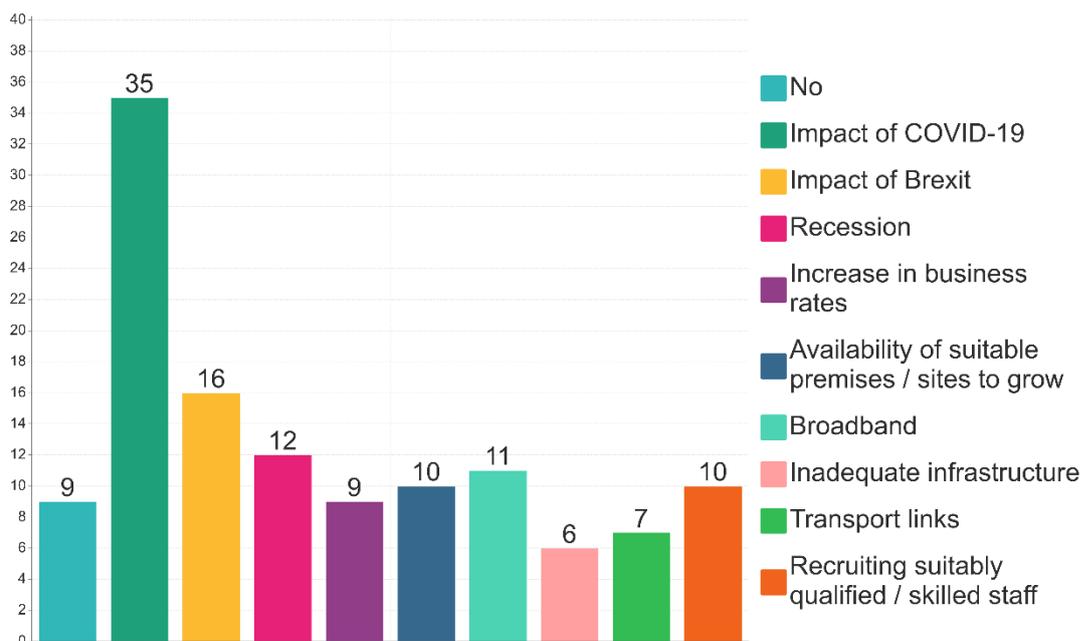
Just over half of respondents to the 'Business Owner' survey (56%) said that they traded nationally. Just over a quarter of respondents (28%) were involved in international trade. A very small number (10%) were exporters, and only two of the respondents said they had any ambition to export.

Figure 7 – Where do you trade? (Select all the apply)



In order to understand some of the difficulties facing Rutland's local businesses, respondents to the 'Business Owner' survey were asked what operational challenges they are concerned about. More than half of those who answered this question identified the impact of COVID-19 as a challenge for their business. Brexit, the recession and broadband were also among the issues most frequently identified. A number of businesses said they face no challenges at all.

Figure 8 – Are there any operational challenges facing your business that you're concerned about? (Select all that apply)



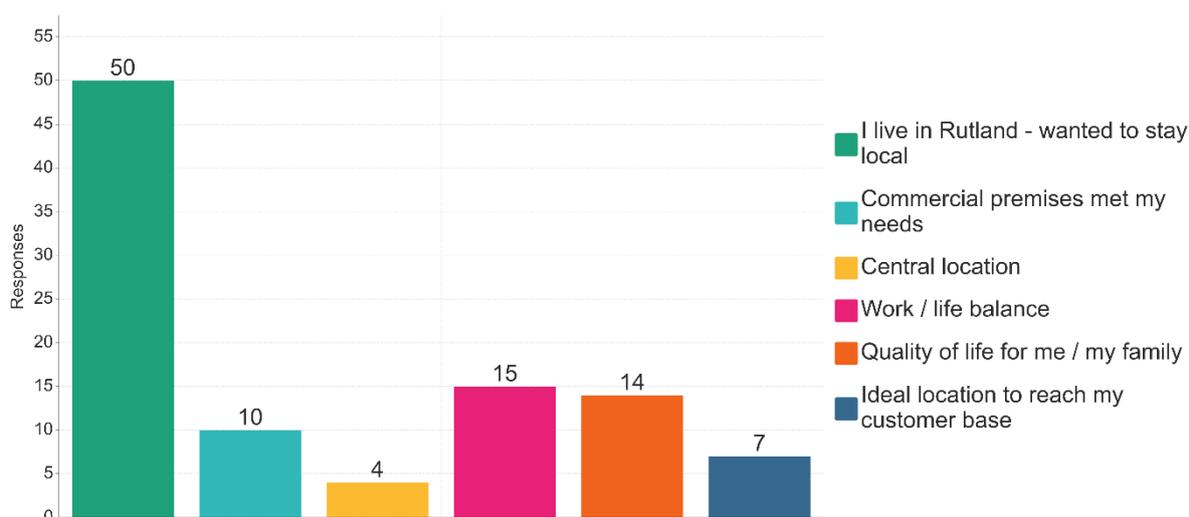
6. Doing business in Rutland

As well as seeking information about general operations, Future Rutland's 'Business Owners' survey asked a number of specific questions about running a business in Rutland.

Respondents were asked to give their two main reasons for choosing Rutland as the place to start or grow their business. The biggest reason, chosen by almost three quarters (74%) of people, was that they live in Rutland and wanted to stay local. Other popular reasons were work/life balance, quality of life and the availability of commercial premises to meet their business needs.

None of the respondents selected 'Availability of skilled workers' as one of their reasons for doing business in Rutland.

Figure 9 – What were your two main reasons for choosing Rutland as the place to start / grow your business?



Being located in Rutland helps the majority of business owners to achieve their business plans, largely due to the availability of suitable premises and the ease with which they can reach their customer base.

Those who felt that being located in Rutland was a barrier to growth cited lack of suitable premises as the prime reason.

7. Sharing further feedback

This report summarises the comments, feedback and survey responses collected throughout Future Rutland's 'Business Owners' conversation. The purpose of gathering this feedback is to develop a new shared vision for Rutland – one that's based on things that really matter to local people and helps organisations like Rutland County Council plan for the future.

Please remember that you can read all of the original data and information behind this summary report by visiting: future.rutland.gov.uk/business.

Getting your views and feedback was just the first step of the Future Rutland Conversation. Now, we need to know if we heard you correctly. To tell us what you think about this report and whether you feel it's an accurate representation of what matters to people in Rutland, please go to: future.rutland.gov.uk or email: rutlandconversation@rutland.gov.uk. If you don't have access to the internet, you can call us on 01572 722 577.

Once we're sure that there's nothing we've missed, we'll use all this information to develop a draft vision for the county, which we hope to publish before the end of summer 2021 to invite even more discussion and feedback.

[Click here to comment on this summary report](#)



#future Rutland conversation