



Partnership Engagement Network Conference: 7th June 2023

About PEN

The Tameside and Glossop Partnership Engagement Network (PEN) – established by Tameside Metropolitan Borough Council (TMBC), NHS Greater Manchester Integrated Care Tameside, and NHS Tameside and Glossop Integrated Care Foundation Trust (T&G ICFT) – is a multi-agency forum to engagement. It provides the public and partners with a structured method to influence public services, and to proactively feed in issues and ideas.

Introduction

On 7th June 2023, the public, stakeholders, representatives from VCSE organisations, and representatives from PEN's three founding bodies came together for the second PEN Conference in 2023. This conference was a hybrid event – held virtually and in person at Dukinfield Town Hall – in the evening. Overall attendance was 30 people.

Facilitated Sessions

There were two topics on the agenda:

1. The regeneration of Ashton and Hyde town centres
2. Anti-social behaviour

Ashton and Hyde Town Centre Regeneration

The presentation aimed to outline the current position of regeneration in Ashton and Hyde town centres. At the start, it was mentioned that the other towns in Tameside had not been forgotten.

Ashton Town Centre:

For regeneration in Ashton, £19.87 million was granted under the Levelling Up Fund. (Across the UK, an overall £4.8bn was made available for such regeneration projects by the Government).¹

The funding for Ashton was split into three different pots:

¹ Source: [New levelling up and community investments - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-levelling-up-and-community-investments)



	Proposal	Description	Funding Amount
1	Land remediation and enabling works at the former interchange site	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Remediation and service works to the former transport interchange site;Unlocks the site for future development with adjacent sites to facilitate potential wider mixed use development with residential, commercial, leisure and community uses.	£5.3m
2	Public Realm Improvements	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Public realm improvements across the town centre.Refurbishment of the Market Square	£11.2m
3	Restoration of Ashton Town Hall	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Funding towards the restoration of Ashton Town Hall following closure in 2015; andSupports re-purposing of Town Hall and delivers phase 1 and 2 of restoration.	£3.4m

Table 1: *Levelling Up funding for Ashton town centre.*

The public realm improvements (pot 2) were the main subject of the presentation.

Ashton Market Square:

The Public Realm Strategy for Ashton started in March 2021. A primary focus has been the refurbishment of the Market Square. Stakeholder groups (e.g. market traders) were asked what they want from the Market Square. Following consultation, a masterplan was drawn up.

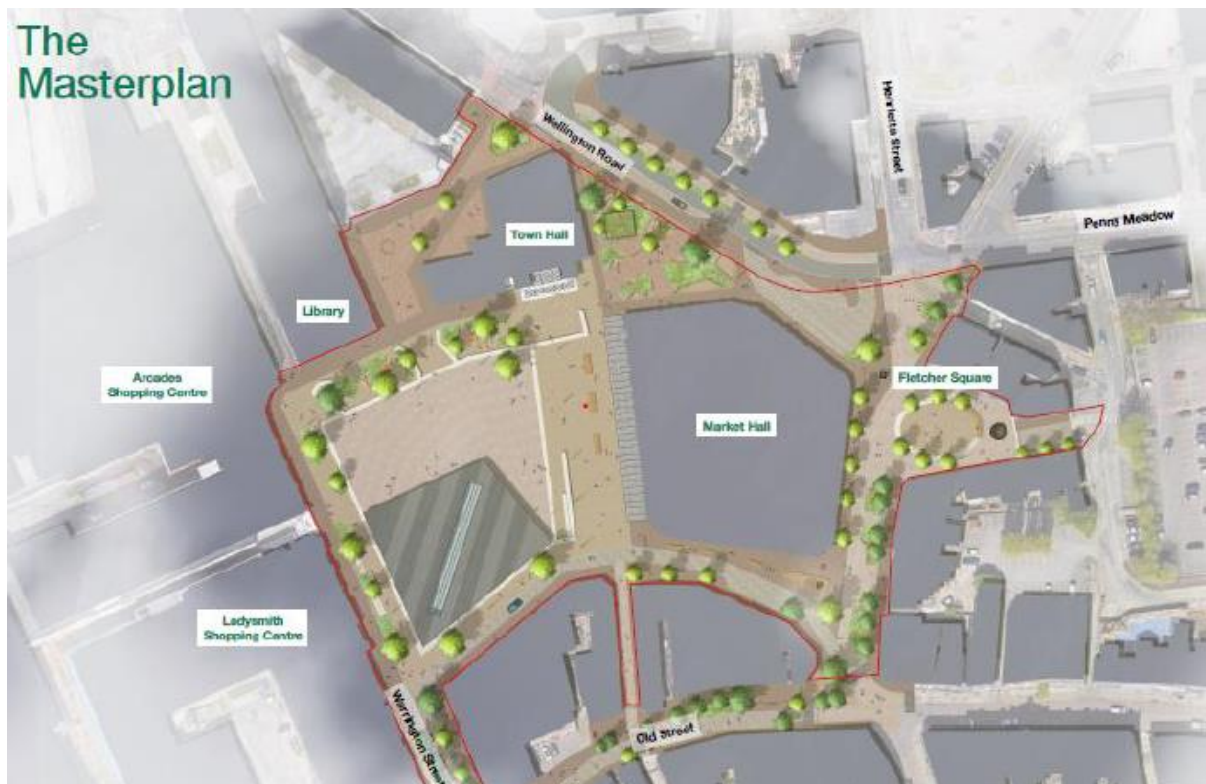




Figure 1: Ashton Masterplan: *aerial view of Ashton Market Square.*

The masterplan aims to incorporate a new canopy structure and integrate new kiosk features, primarily focusing on food and drink. The current market offer will be condensed, with the intention to improve the offer. Green infrastructure will be included, with trees being planted at the periphery. The design will aim to occur to drive out anti-social behaviour.



Figure 2: *Planned new canopy structure in Ashton Market Square.*

These designs are continually evolving, almost on a day-to-day basis.

St. Petersfield:

In St. Petersfield, another area of focus under the Levelling Up Fund, nine plots have been identified for regeneration. Amongst these plots, various land uses have been identified: residential, hybrid commercial, offices, food and beverage, and a hotel.

According to feedback received so far, there is too much commercial in the masterplan, so Plot 1 has been earmarked for residential land use.

At Plot 4, Ashton Old Baths is a Grade II listed building that was regenerated. Currently, there is not much food and drink provision, so an 'Old Baths Coffee Bar' is a prospective plan.

At Plot 8, 'Hotel St. Petersfield' is a prospective plan. There is only one hotel in Ashton at the moment. This is an excellent commercial opportunity, with proximity to the motorway network and not being located too far from Manchester Airport.

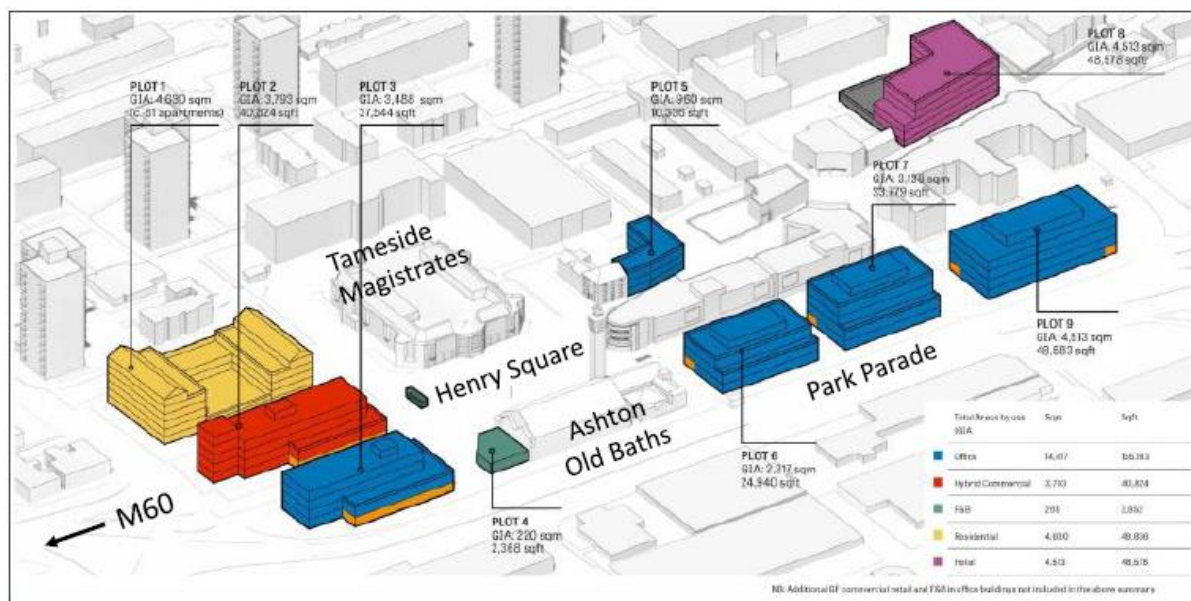


Figure 3: Ashton St. Petersfield land use plots



Figure 4: 'Hotel St Petersfield'



Hyde Town Centre:

In 2021, Hyde town centre was designated as a High Streets Task Force Area. An expert from the High Streets Task Force was appointed to assist the Council. This does not mean Hyde has been provided with funding for regeneration; however, it has received resources from and obtained a higher profile with the Government. Herein, the Hyde Town Centre Masterplan has been developed, which has gone out to consultation.

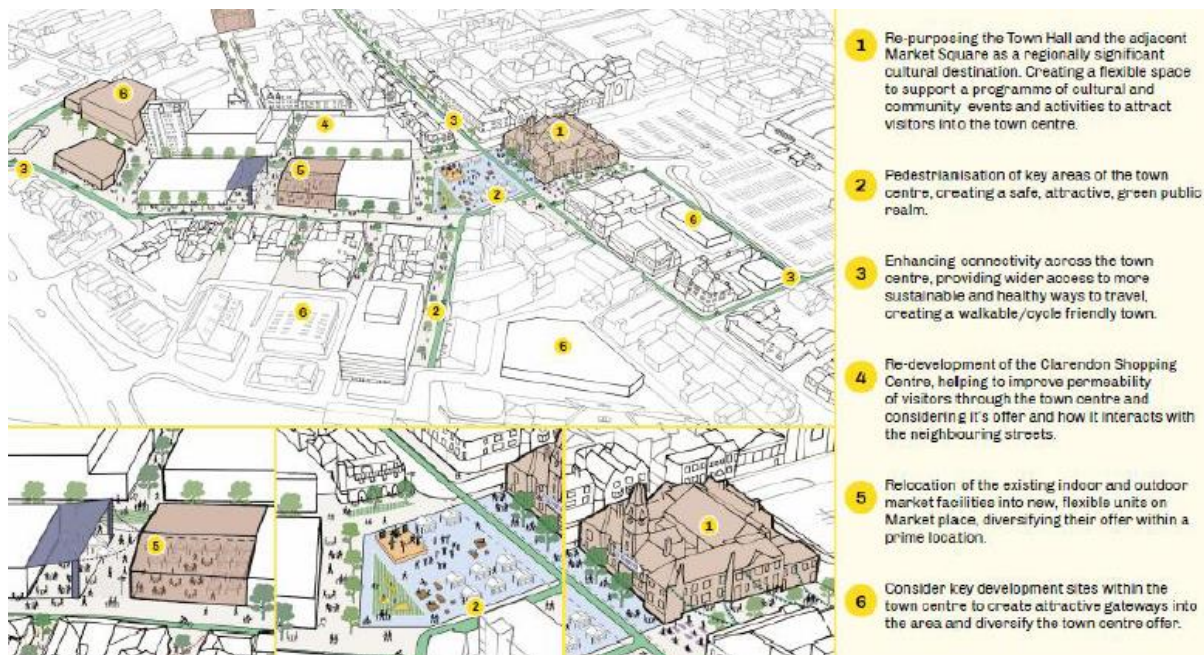


Figure 5: *Hyde Town Centre Masterplan.*

Under the Masterplan, it is proposed that the Town Hall will be integrated more into the Market Square as a civic and cultural space to attract visitors into the town centre. The owners of Clarendon Shopping Centre have also notified that they have short-term aspirations to improve the retail offer and long-term aspirations to redevelop. Proposals have been put forth to pedestrianise Clarendon Street, which will improve the streetscape for businesses and attract people from the bus interchange up to the town centre.

Breakout Discussions:

Ashton Town Centre:

Discussions concerning Ashton focused on Ashton Market Square (AMS). As it stands, Ashton Market Square is broadly viewed negatively. There is a negative atmosphere in the Square due to how it is currently structured, e.g. Tameside One feels isolated at particular times of the day, and the current



market offer is lacking and dilapidated, with the market stalls being described as “not currently fit for purpose”. Contributing to the negative atmosphere in the evenings is the limited opening times of market stalls, so working people cannot visit the market. Accordingly, market traders have lost customers over time.

A primary concern about the present state of the Market Square amongst participants was anti-social behaviour. They felt that people avoid town centres due to previous negative experiences with anti-social behaviour. The Square currently feels unsafe to some, particularly with what appears to be “a proliferation of bikes, scooters, and skateboards”. One participant expressed their concerns: “Young people scare me and keep me away, they come at me on their scooters and bikes. I’m on a zimmer, they come at me and it’s awful and unsafe.”

The plans to regenerate Ashton Market Square were received positively by participants. In particular, it was encouraging that the quality and potential of the Square was being recognised. Numerous concerns were raised about the plans, though these concerns largely pertained to improving the existing plan rather than being against the plan itself. Despite the positivity associated with the plan, it was noted that public opinion is still sceptical due to previous unsuccessful attempts at redeveloping the market square. It was asked, “how will it be ensured that this development will work?”.

Discussions on the Market Square plans were predominantly around the commercial offer, canopy structure, market stalls, accessibility, greenery, and anti-social behaviour.

Commercial Offer:

Concerns were highlighted that the commercial offer is aimed towards people who do not yet use Ashton Market Square, potentially at the expense of those who currently do use it. It was stated the demographics of current shoppers should be considered. Tameside broadly has high levels of deprivation, so the commercial offer should include low price offers to not drive out low-income residents. Their needs and amenities should also be accounted for, e.g. an idea was provided that the old town hall space should operate as a financial hub, including a Post Office and the presence of high street banks.

Another concern was raised that the commercial offer seems oriented towards adults. There has been no mention of how this commercial offer will take children into account. It was stated that children’s events should be held in the square, and surmised that this could incorporate Ashton Library.



Canopy Structure:

It was felt that if the goal of the plans is to develop a commercial offer based on experiences (e.g. food/drink, events), then the canopy structure is necessary. It was noted by a facilitator that the canopy will be used to attract an experiential commercial offer, and traders will have to apply to trade in Ashton Market Square. It was promoted that this will likely increase the length of opening hours, allowing more people to visit, which addresses a concern expressed above.

One concern expressed about the canopy structure was that there will be more wind if the open space in the square is expanded. This was addressed by a facilitator, who notified that a wind survey had been conducted, in which the wind movement patterns were looked into. As a result, the height of canopy has been dropped to alleviate any problems caused by wind.

Market Stalls:

Amongst participants, there was a mixture of preferences as to the logistics of market stalls. One participant felt that a mixture of permanent and pop-up stalls would be preferred. However, another participant, who is a market trader, expressed that market traders would prefer static stalls compared to pop-up stalls.

Accessibility:

General concerns around accessibility were raised. It was expressed that car parking has been insufficiently addressed. There is uncertainty around car park opening hours, and it was felt that there is a lack of signage. Additionally, it appears that there is no vehicular access to the square in the plans. This will affect retailers and their ability to have deliveries, yet it was mentioned by a facilitator that a solution is being looked into.

Moreover, specific concerns around accessibility for particular groups of people were advanced. The lack of vehicular access to the square in the plans may detrimentally affect people with disabilities, making it harder for them to access the square. It was specifically asked whether disability groups have been consulted with on these plans.

Although it was felt that the commercial offer was oriented towards adults, it was acknowledged that the needs of children had been taken into account in other aspects of the plans. One facilitator noted that integrated play and seating will be included within the plan. As a result, a discussion occurred around particular types of play areas – e.g. natural/ adventure play areas, with rocks and logs as climbing features.



Greenery:

Although tree planting is scheduled to occur at the periphery of the square in the plans, several participants felt that there is insufficient greenery in the plans. One participant noted that “it looks sparser than before”. Another participant felt that as well as trees, there needs to be a range of greenery. It was felt that this redevelopment could enable the square function as a quasi-green space, thereby helping the mental health of those who frequent the square and improve the square’s atmosphere. Broadly, it was felt that this was a missed opportunity.

Anti-social behaviour:

Corresponding to the existing concerns surrounding anti-social behaviour in the market square, there was a large focus on how this is addressed in the plans. Participants were broadly in favour of features that will improve safety and feelings of safety, e.g. enhanced lighting. Two security features were desired by participants:

- CCTV – although it can be controversial due to privacy concerns, participants would feel safer with a clear presence of CCTV
- A security hub with a clear police presence

It was felt that if people feel safe, it would increase footfall to the market, thereby increasing the likelihood that the plans would be successful.

However, a lot of the concerns surrounding anti-social behaviour mentioned children and young people. A counterpoint was raised that children and young people were being overly demonised, and as a result, may be driven out of town centres. It was noted that people often do not understand what it is like to be young nowadays. Contrary to increasing security, a more holistic approach should be taken, which should include education on matters pertaining to anti-social behaviour.

Hyde Town Centre:

In the breakout discussions, there were less discussions pertaining to Hyde. This was partly because some participants felt the plans for Ashton were ‘actual’ or ‘real’, whereas the plans for Hyde were considered as ‘potential’. This relates to the funding picture, with Ashton currently in receipt of funding, whereas the current plans for Hyde are being drawn up to entice further funding.

Discussions on the Hyde plans were predominantly about the retail offer, community spirit, and the role of the private sector.



Retail Offer:

Participants broadly felt that Hyde's current retail offer is very tired and needs refreshing. Clarendon Shopping Centre was largely perceived negatively, with one participant labelling it as a "dominant monolith". Participants were in favour of redevelopment, yet it was recognised that this would take a few years to deliver and be very disruptive. Clarendon Street was also recognised as in need of regeneration, but the street itself should not be regenerated in isolation. The buildings on the street should be revitalised and "brought back to life". Overall, it was felt that there is no easy solution and that what needed to be undertaken were long-term endeavours. One facilitator noted that shorter-term interventions are currently being looked.

Community Spirit:

It was stated that Hyde has a strong community spirit, e.g. Hyde Community CIC. It was felt that any redevelopment in Hyde should involve and serve the local community. In terms of involvement, redevelopment should take a partnership approach with local communities. In terms of outcome, one goal of redevelopment should include getting the people living in Hyde town centre to frequent the town centre. These would be vital to achieve community buy-in.

Role of the Private Sector:

The benefits of private sector involvement were recognised. As local authority funding is tight, it was noted that developers should be attracted to Hyde and put their planning applications in. However, a masterplan to serve the local community may be difficult to enforce with private interests, so it was suggested that, in addition to the partnership approach with local communities, there should additionally be partnerships with local businesses. It was questioned whether social value is being considered when contracts go out to tender; more specifically, whether large contracts are going to large contractors or are local businesses being considered. An advantage of the latter, it was suggested, that local contractors will feed money into the local economy.

One participant proffered that a bid strategy should be undertaken, whereby local businesses can take control over commercial rates paid to the Council, and a select proportion is put towards public expenditure. This would allow local businesses to "look after their own doorstep", and potentially serve as a catalyst for regeneration.

Irrespective of which private sector entities are involved, the necessary precursor is community buy-in. If there is community resistance, this will turn away most private interests.



Anti-Social Behaviour

The presentation aimed to set the context behind the Anti-Social Behaviour Policy that the Council are planning to introduce.

Anti-social behaviour (ASB) is defined in the Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime, and Policing Act 2014, Section 2, Paragraph 1 as:

- a) Conduct that has caused, or is likely to cause harassment, alarm, or distress to any person,
- b) Conduct capable of causing nuisance or annoyance to a person in relation to that person's occupation of residential premises, or
- c) Conduct capable of causing housing-related nuisance or annoyance to any person.

This is a wide definition, so to understand ASB better, it can be split into three main categories:

- 1. Personal – incidents that deliberately target an individual or group of people, rather than the community.
- 2. Nuisance – incidents affecting the community, rather than an individual victim. This is when an act, thing, or person causes the community trouble, annoyance, or suffering.
- 3. Environmental – incidents where individuals or groups impact their wider surroundings. It includes environmental damage and the misuse of public spaces or buildings.

Responding to ASB is not the remit of one organisation; it is addressed through partnership working in a multi-agency approach. There is a statutory duty placed on the Responsible Authorities, which are the Local Authority, Police, Fire and Rescue, Probation, and Health. This is achieved through relationships formed under Community Safety Partnerships.

The Act provides the police, local authorities, and other local agencies with flexible tools and powers with the intention to respond to ASB quickly and effectively. These include civil injunctions, criminal behaviour orders, public space protection orders, community protection notices, dispersal powers, and closure powers.

The Council have produced a draft Anti-Social Behaviour Policy, though there is no statutory duty placed on the Council to do so. This has been produced to provide reassurance and increase public confidence that deterring and dealing with ASB is a top priority for the Council's ASB service.

Breakout Discussions:



Prior to the breakout discussions, participants were asked to scan through the draft Anti-Social Behaviour Policy. The breakout discussions were based around three main foci: lack of public confidence in addressing ASB, uncertainty around existing approaches to ASB, and aspects missing from the draft ASB policy.

Lack of Public Confidence:

Across the breakout discussions, participants revealed that they lacked confidence in the public bodies addressing ASB. Generally, there is mistrust in the Council's complaints procedure. Specifically, participants felt that there was a lack of information and communication after they have made complaints. There was an understanding that processes can take time, but they wish to be kept informed.

Other participants pointed out concerns about timeliness in complaints handling. Participants suggested that people usually make ASB complaints about issues that have been ongoing for a long time. So, whilst it may be the first time the Council is dealing with the issue, the issue could be at crisis point for the complainant. One participant detailed their experiences wherein they felt their complaint had been insufficiently addressed within reasonable timescales, that their case was reallocated to different case officers, and that the Council failed to act when they felt there was a real sense of danger.

Furthermore, some participants specifically highlighted a lack of confidence in the Police in addressing ASB. They expressed that they have been through different options with the Police, yet these have not worked. Similar issues were expressed in a lack of information and communication, such as not receiving updates after making complaints.

The lack of confidence in addressing ASB expressed by participants substantiates the need for an Anti-Social Behaviour Policy. However, this lack of confidence has created scepticism regarding the draft policy. One participant questioned how the policy will make a difference to the lives of residents. Another participant expressed: *"This [policy] feels like platitudes, not actions."* Therefore, there is a continual need to reassure the public. This was undertaken by one facilitator who recognised the validity of people's lack of confidence in addressing ASB, and to provide reassurance, they described the improvements that have been made to ASB services over the previous year. Twelve months ago, they acknowledged that not every complaint was responded or not every complaint received an outcome. Additionally, there was a problem with ASB reoccurring. Now, each complaint gets an allocated officer with an email address and phone number through which the



officer can be contacted, and a closure letter of outcome. If the complaint is not taken further, justification will be given. There is also an aim to address repeat incidents of ASB.

Improvements to ASB Policy:

Two main aspects were highlighted by participants as missing from the draft Anti-Social Behaviour Policy: prevention and service standards.

Prevention of ASB:

It was pointed out by several participants that the draft policy seems to focus mainly on enforcement *after* ASB has occurred, rather than preventing ASB before it occurs; so, some participants felt that the policy is reactive. Participants discussed that the underlying causes of ASB should be addressed – e.g. family breakdowns, substance misuse. It was stated that there is a lack of community spirit in helping young people who are potentially going through problems; they are often viewed as issues to be dealt with rather than people to be helped. This is reflected by the lack of facilities for young people.

In conjunction, people felt that there should be educational approaches for young people to prevent ASB. For example, Transport for Greater Manchester have a Travel Safe Partnership with the Transport Police called Foundation 92. This partnership promotes campaigns around educating young people what ASB is.

Service Standards:

Two service standards were mentioned by participants that they would like to see in the draft policy. First, it was highlighted by several participants that there should be greater awareness in procedures and amongst case officers of the mental health and wellbeing of complainants. As described above, people on the receiving end of ASB may have experienced it over a period of time, whereas upon report, the Council has only glimpsed its impacts. Some participants would like a more empathetic approach to be adopted into service standards, particularly more empathy from case officers. Similarly, they felt that it would be good practice to provide information on victim support where available.

Second, it was highlighted by some participants that there should be follow-ups after each case has had an outcome to determine whether or not the sanctions have worked.



Post-Event Feedback

Of those who provided feedback, all rated the event as “good” or “very good”. Respondents felt that the event was well planned and informative. Two aspects of the event were particularly favoured:

1. The hybrid set-up was recognised as being beneficial, with people in both domains able to contribute. Those attending in person were able to network and build connections.
2. Some respondents liked the breakout discussions, as they felt heard and were able to feed back more.

Some areas of critical feedback were mentioned that will be taken on board when planning future events:

- Provide etiquette rules at the beginning of breakout discussions to allow the discussions to have structure and flow.
- Feedback on previous agenda items should be provided at future events, so attendees know what has happened with input.