

Derbyshire Dales Business Survey Results

This business survey was carried out during March 2025 and a total of 160 responses received. A significant proportion of those who completed the survey were contacted directly by phone and encouraged to complete.

The survey was carried out to provide updated information on specifics from the 2 previous business surveys; one in 2018 for which a focus was business accommodation needs and the other from 2022 which sought information from businesses on business support, namely events and workshops required.

A further section in the 2025 survey sought information from businesses regarding decarbonisation and environmentally sustainable practices and opinions.

Overall this survey demonstrated little change in business needs in terms of accommodation and issues restricting business growth.

General business information

Results of this survey have been compared, where possible to results from either the 2018 survey which focussed on sites and premises or from the 2022 more general, survey.

Respondents in 2025 were primarily Micro (81%) (73% in 2018 survey) and Small businesses (14%) with the majority in the hospitality/tourism sector (26%), closely followed by manufacturing and engineering (23%). Service industries made up 12% of respondents. This split is very similar to the 2018 respondents, 28% of whom were manufacturing or engineering and 13% service.

Types of business who responded to this 2025 survey included:

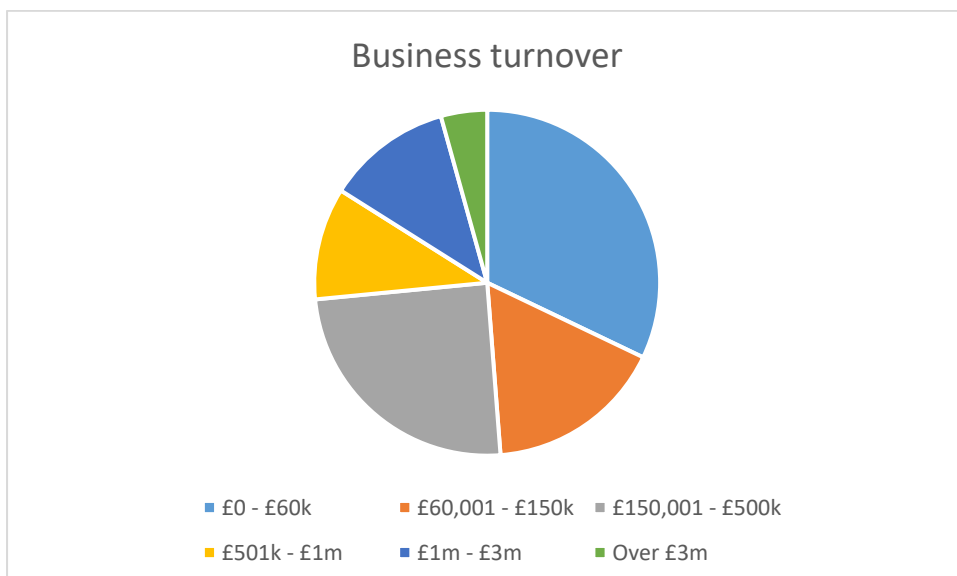
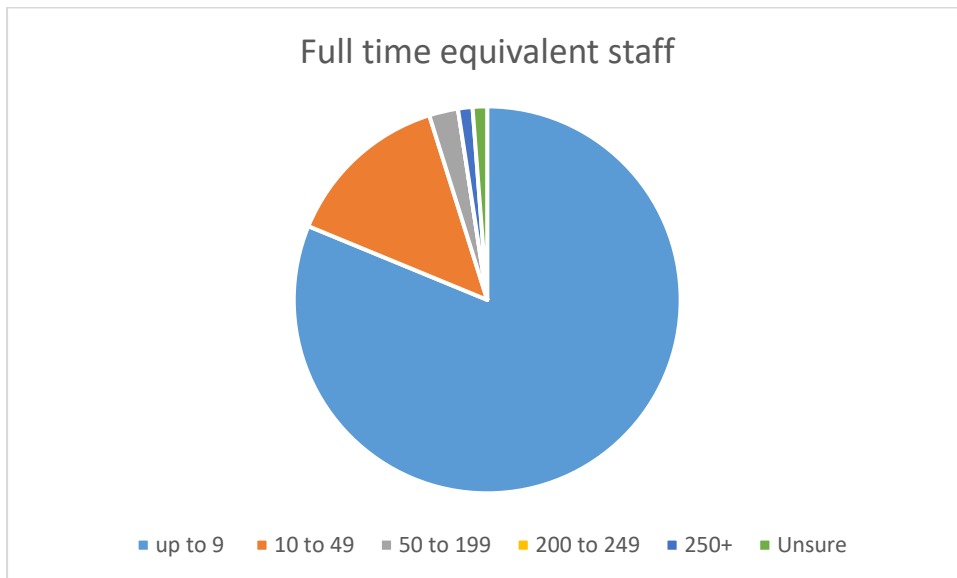
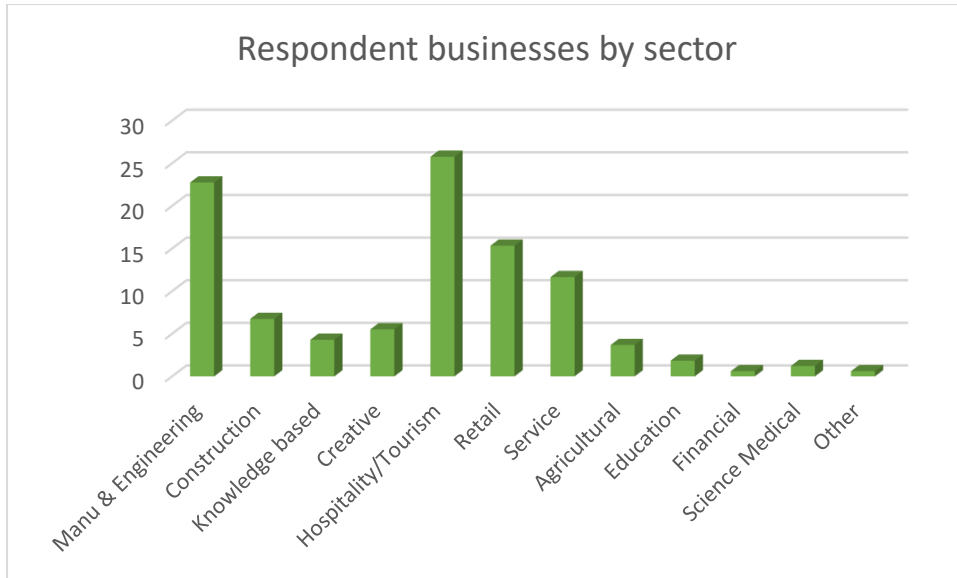
A business that designs, manufactures and distributes professional communications accessories

Microbiology laboratory

Ecological surveys, reports and advice

Brewery

Design and assembly of products used in security screening



In terms of turnover, the majority of businesses cited a turnover of less than £500k which is representative of the fact that the majority are Micros. No comparison is able to be made with previous surveys as businesses were not asked about their current turnover.

Respondent businesses were largely well established with over 35% having been trading for over 21 years and only 8% for less than 3 years. As with turnover, no comparators are available for this measure.

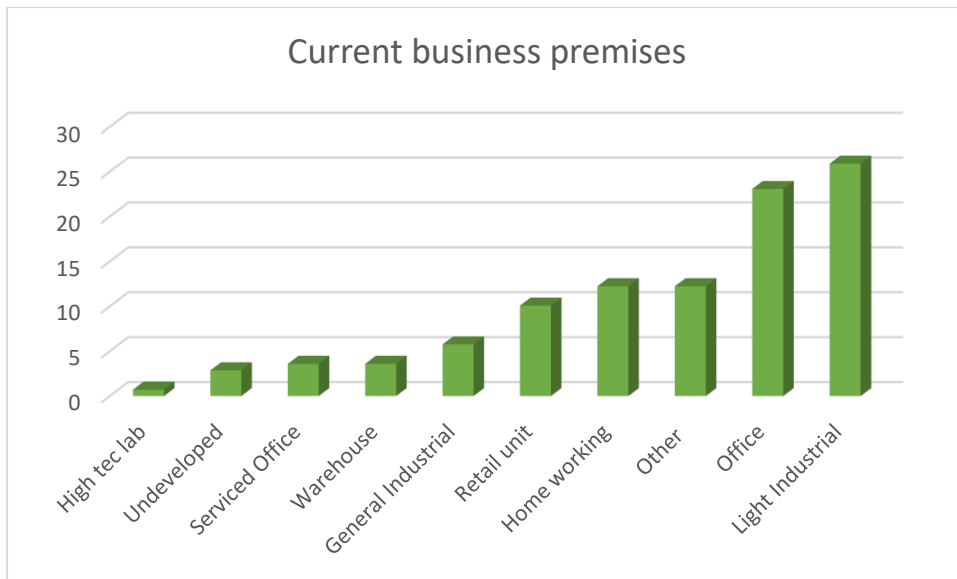


Section 1 - Current Business Premises

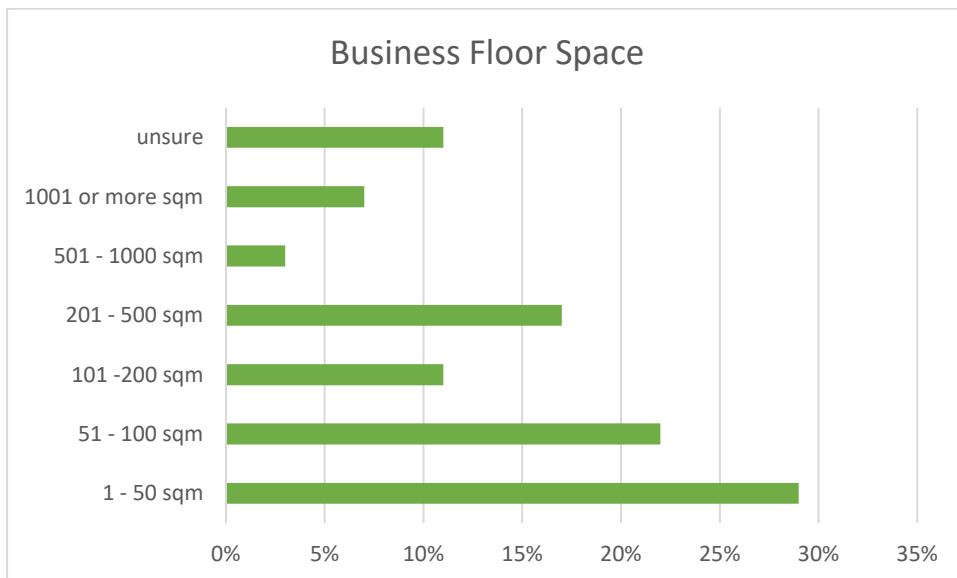
Businesses surveyed are predominantly in light industrial (26%) or un serviced office accommodation (23%). 6% stated they are in general industrial and 10% in retail space. The 'other' category at 12%, accounts for businesses that class themselves as tourism or hospitality. It should be noted, this survey was sent to a broader range of sectors than the previous survey with a significant proportion (12%) of respondents stating they were home workers.

2018 sites and premises survey had 27% in light industrial, and 23% un serviced office; the same as 2025.

In terms of tenure, 48% were in leasehold accommodation and 40% Freehold. A small percentage stated that they were unsure.



Floor space: for those for whom it was relevant, the results were as follows. There was a good spread across size of premise, with over 50% of businesses having either up to 50 sqm or up to 100 sqm.

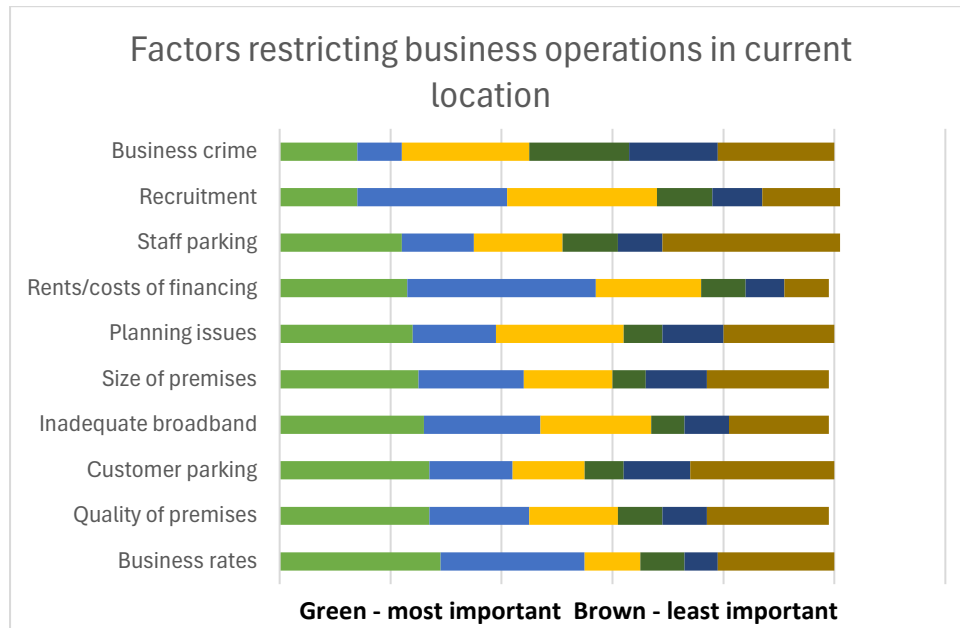


Businesses were asked if there were any factors which restricted the operation of their business in the current location, and to rank them. There was a distinct variety in factors that were considered more important, with very similar results across a number of 'most important' factors, including Business rates (29%) Quality of premises (27%), Customer parking (27%) and inadequate broadband (26%). Size of premise, rents or cost of financing and staff parking scored slightly lower in the 'most important' section with recruitment and crime being the least 'most important'.

Overall the results show that generally, different factors are affecting different businesses.

There are clear similarities in some aspects, to the results of the 2018 survey. This indicated that 31% of businesses saw inadequate broadband as a restriction to business operations, with size of premises, parking for staff and customers also scoring highly. The main differences are that recruitment of staff was more of an issue in 2018 (37%) whereas in 2025, only 14% ranked it as the most important issue affecting operations.

Another difference was business rates which did not score highly in 2018 but 29% of businesses stated in 2025 that it was the most important restrictor.



In terms of how long current premises will be adequate for business needs, the responses showed quite a mixed picture. 19% felt that their current premises were already inadequate, with 15% citing that premises would only be adequate for the next 2 years. Conversely, 37% of respondents noted their current premises would be suitable for five or more years. However, a significant percentage of businesses (21%) were unsure so this statistic will affect the true picture.

The 2018 survey showed that 10% felt their business premises were not adequate at that time, and 19% that they would be inadequate after two years.

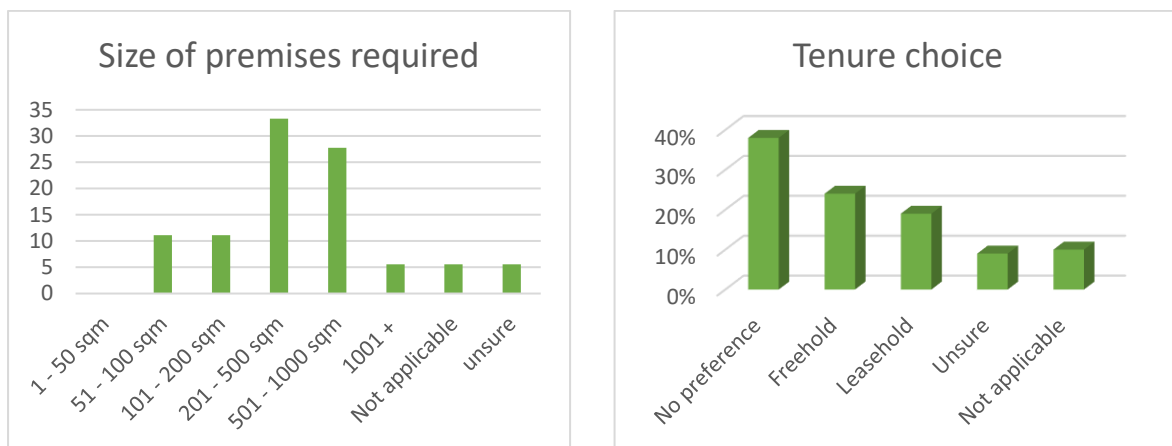
Section 2 - Future business accommodation needs

Businesses were asked if they had plans to expand: 35% suggested that they did and 38% stated that they were not currently thinking about expansion. Nearly 20% said that they were unsure which could be indicative of there being some reluctance or lack of certainty due to the current economic climate.

Of those that expressed an intention to expand, 34% said that they would need new premises, 30% said that they would be expanding their current premises and 9% said that they would need land, rather than premises. A significant proportion (15%) said that they were unsure what was required for expansion of their business.

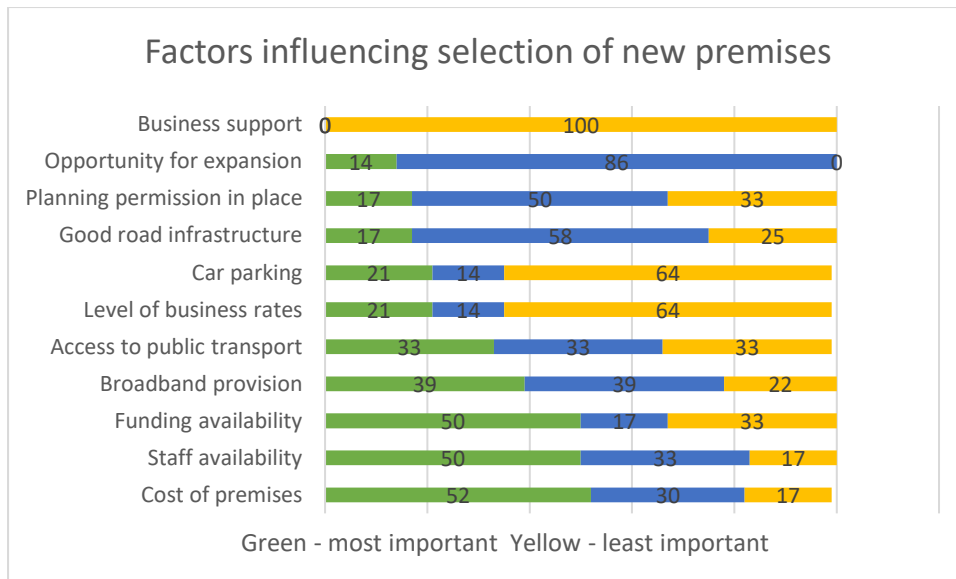


For those who reported the need for new premises, the majority needed 201 – 500 sqm metres (33%) with 27% requiring 501 – 1000 sqm. In terms of tenure, the majority (38%) had no preference and there was a relatively even split between those preferring leasehold and those preferring freehold.



Businesses were asked to name 3 factors important to them in choosing new premises, from a choice of 11 and rank them in order of importance.

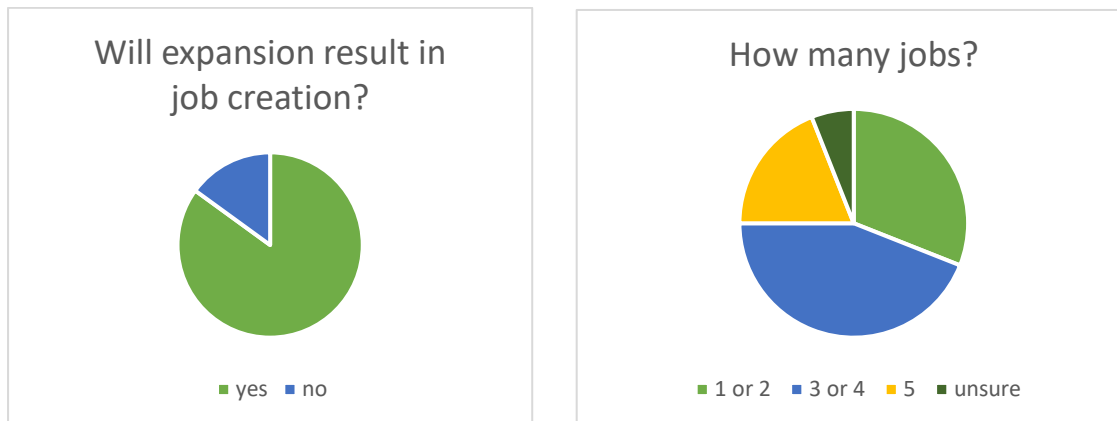
The results were as shown on the table below. Results demonstrate that the cost of new premises is the most cited factor influencing its selection. This is mirrored in the availability of funding and staff.



Businesses were asked if they would be willing to move to a different location within the Derbyshire Dales in order to find new premises. 67% reported that they would whilst 24 % said they would not. The remainder were unsure.

Of those that said they would be willing to relocate their business, 29% suggested that they would like to remain within a 5 mile radius of their current location, with 14% willing to move up to 10 miles from their current location.

Businesses were also asked if additional jobs would be created as a result of business expansion. The vast majority of businesses (85%) said that new jobs would be created as a result of expanding their business.



Businesses were also asked how many jobs they thought would be created and were also asked if those jobs would be higher skilled.

The definition of 'higher skilled' provided, was *'skilled labour is a segment of the workforce that has specialized know-how, training and experience to carry out more complex physical or mental tasks than routine job functions. Skilled labour is generally characterized by higher or specialized education, as well as expertise levers attained through training and experience, and likewise generally corresponds with higher wages.'*

Responses received indicated that 84% of jobs created would be higher skilled with only 16 being lower skilled.

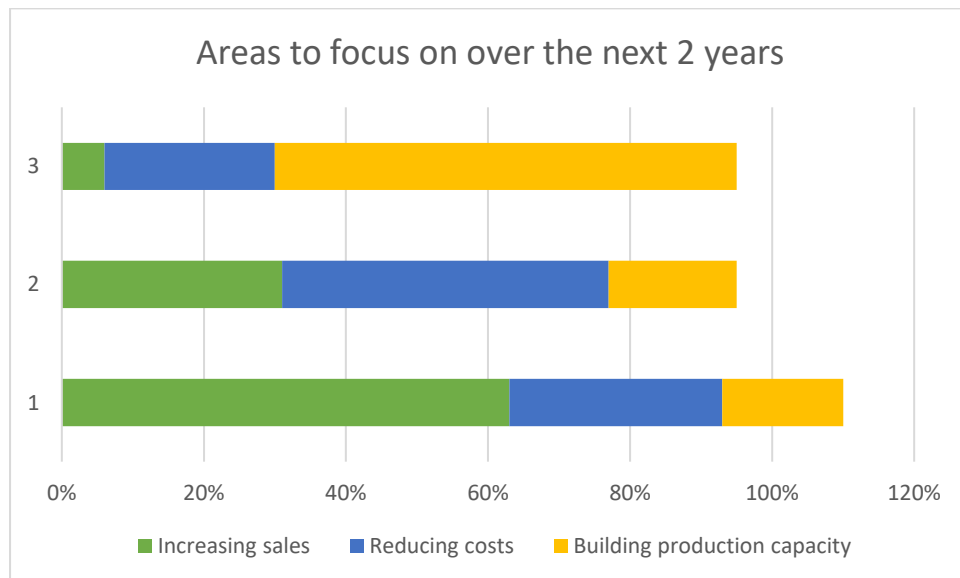
Section 3 - Forward Plans excluding premises/land

The primary focus for business in the next two years was increasing sales, followed by reducing costs and then building production capacity. This suggests businesses have spare capacity and are not fulfilling their potential, rather than struggling to meet demand.

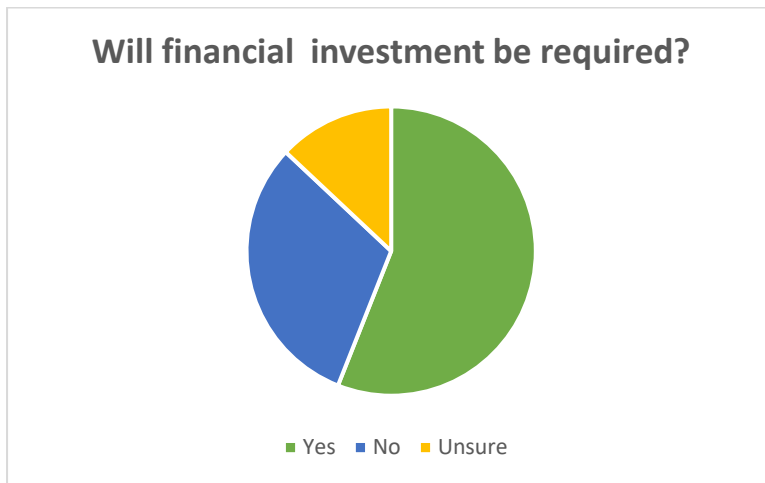
This is indicative of a demand-side rather than a supply-side challenge and reflects the results from the business survey carried out in 2022 which demonstrated the same order of focus for businesses when asked the same question.

Businesses were asked what other areas they needed to focus on, comments were varied but included:

- Recruiting appropriate staff
- Managing increasing red tape in our industry
- Focus on environmental issues
- Adapting to new government schemes



Businesses were then asked if the activities to focus on over the next two years would need financial investment; the majority said yes.



Those who said yes were asked what type and level of investment would be required across a range of areas. The table shows that in terms of new equipment machinery or new technology, 39% would need to invest up to £10k whilst 24% would be looking at spend up to £50k. Only 7% would be looking to invest between £50k and £100k and 10% over £100k.

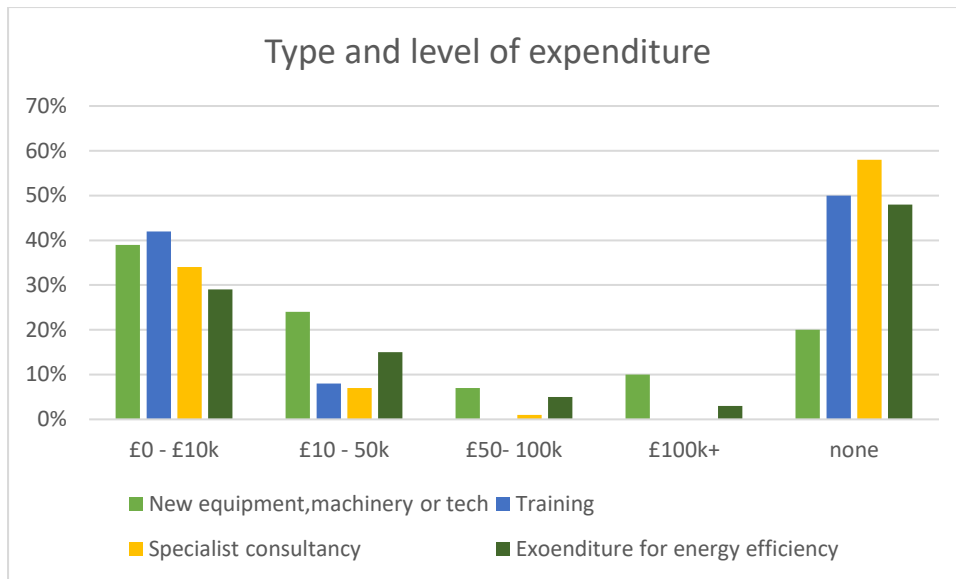
21% suggested that this type of expenditure was not applicable for them currently. Comparatively, the survey from 2022, showed a similar result; the largest proportion of businesses suggested spend up to £10k on equipment et cetera.

Regarding training, 42% would be looking to invest up to £10k over the next 2 years, with half of respondents suggesting that training was not necessary.

Specialist consultancy needs were unnecessary for 58% of businesses but 33% noted they need to invest up to £10k in this area.

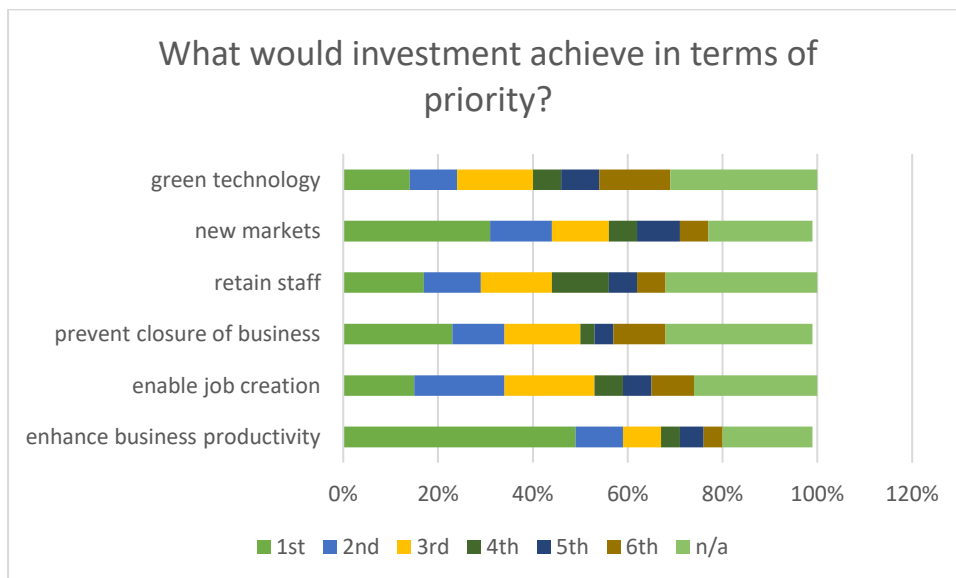
In terms of enhancing energy efficiency, 30% of businesses are thinking about investment at the lower end (up to £10k) and 15% between £10 and £50k.

In respect of 2022 survey results, a larger proportion of businesses at that time were looking at buying in training at under £10k (71%) compared to 2025 and a larger proportion of businesses were suggesting spend on specialist consultancy services (70%).



Asked what the investments would primarily achieve, the highest percentage of businesses (49%) suggested that enhancing business production would be the priority from the investment.

This was followed by opening up new markets (31%), with a significant number of businesses (22%) stating that the priority of the new investment would be to keep the business operating. 2022 results also had an enhancement in business productivity as a primary benefit of investment.



In terms of staff recruitment over the next 6 to 12 months, there was a fairly even split with 44% stating they were anticipating recruitment and 56% that would not be recruiting soon. Of those that said they would, the vast majority (96%) were anticipating recruiting between 1 and 5 new staff. 2% were looking at 6 to 10 staff and 2% more than 20 new recruits.

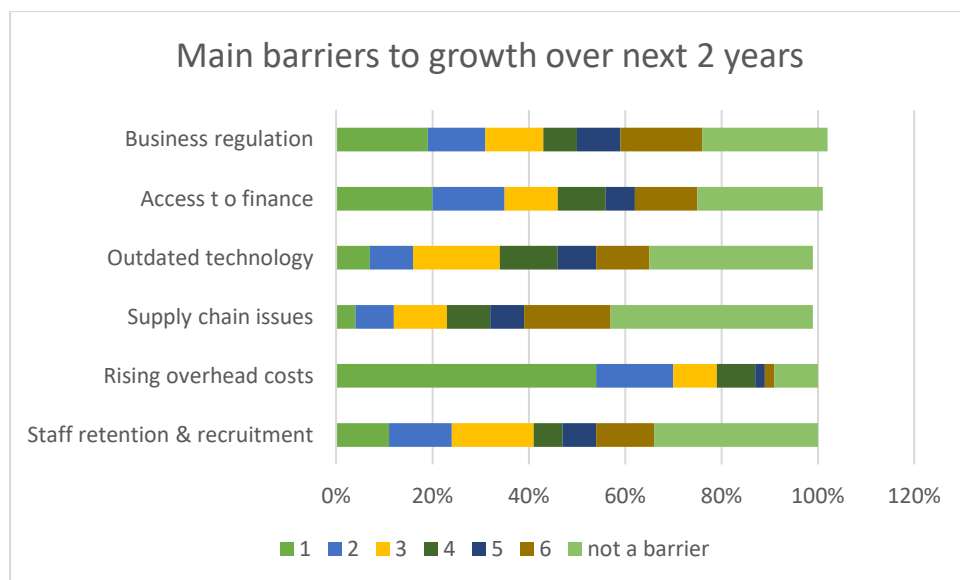
The 2022 results were similar, with 40% at that time, looking to recruit staff over the next 6 to 12 months and 60% saying no.

The 44% of businesses who stated that they would be recruiting new staff, suggested that the largest proportion of these would be at a level up to £25,000 per annum (69%) with 38% at £25,000 to £30,000 per annum. 31% would be between £30,000 and £40,000, 16% up to £65,000 and only 7% upwards of £65,000.

Businesses were also asked about barriers to growth. Overall, the most important barrier to growth in the next two years was rising overhead costs which equated to 55% of respondents. This is to be expected as it is in line with current government plans to rise the NI contribution for employees and in addition, there are expected significant increases in energy costs in the new financial year.

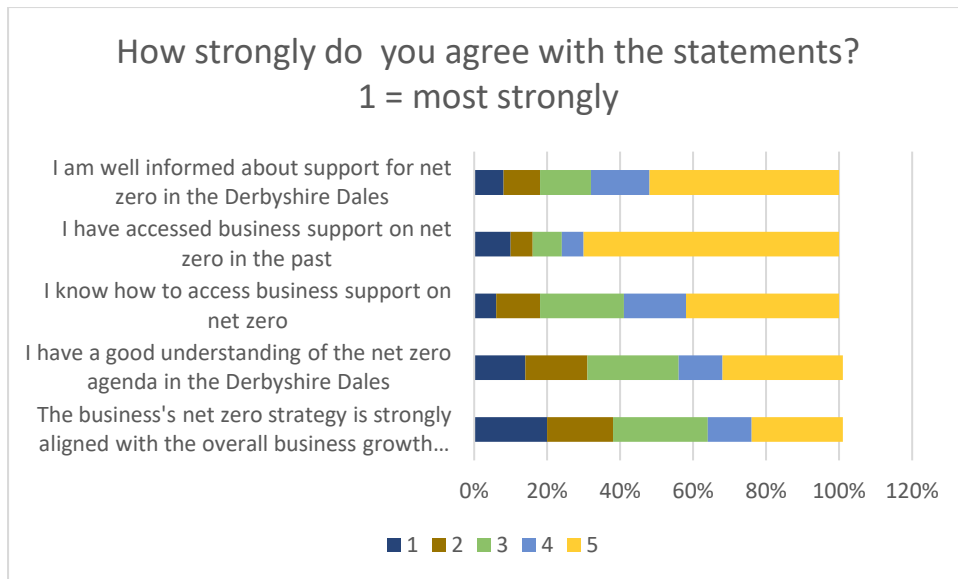
This result was reflected in the 2022 survey, with 73% at that time, suggesting that rising overhead costs were a significant concern in terms of barriers to growth. Significant differences between 2022 and 2025 are that much fewer businesses now, see supply chain issues as a predominant issue and similarly outdated technology, potentially indicating that businesses invested in tech over the last 2 years. Staff retention is also seen as less of a barrier to growth in 2025, than it was in 2022.

Access to finance and business regulation were also cited as being important in terms of barriers, as was staff retention and recruitment (12%).



Section 4 - Environmental sustainability

In the first question below, businesses were asked to say how strongly they agreed with the statements given. The results indicate that there is a need to strengthen communications with businesses about the help that is available in relation to their net zero journey. Only 14% said that they most strongly agreed that they had a good understanding of the green agenda in the district and only 6% knew how to access business support in relation to decarbonisation.



Businesses were also asked what their level of investment was in decarbonisation initiatives over the last year and 51% said that no investment had been made, 24% said that they had invested up to £1,000 which, when compared to the proportion of small businesses who completed the survey, is encouraging, despite those who had invested nothing, which could be due to a lack of knowledge about support in the area.

In terms of sustainability already practiced by businesses, 87% recycle and 46% actively try to conserve energy. 58% reduce waste and 22% conserve water. 30% engage in sustainable sourcing and 20% have electric vehicles. Other methods which were put forward were:

- Car sharing and use of public transport
- Zero packaging and manufacturing of recycled goods
- Composting
- Reduced plastic use
- Solar panels

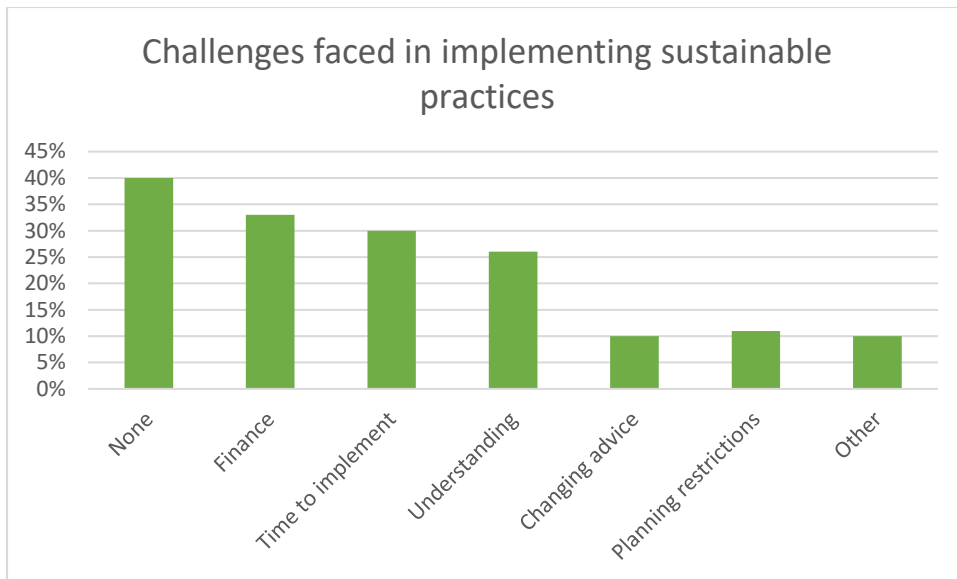


However, when asked if they had a formal sustainability/low carbon strategy, only 23% said they had and 77% did not. The reasons for not having were many and varied and included:

- Not sure what would be required
- Not high on priority list
- It has not been considered
- No time to do one
- Currently at stage 2 ISO 14001
- Prohibitive cost of implementation
- Low priority for a small business
- My business is already low impact
- Haven't got round to it
- Has not been relevant to date
- In place, just not formal

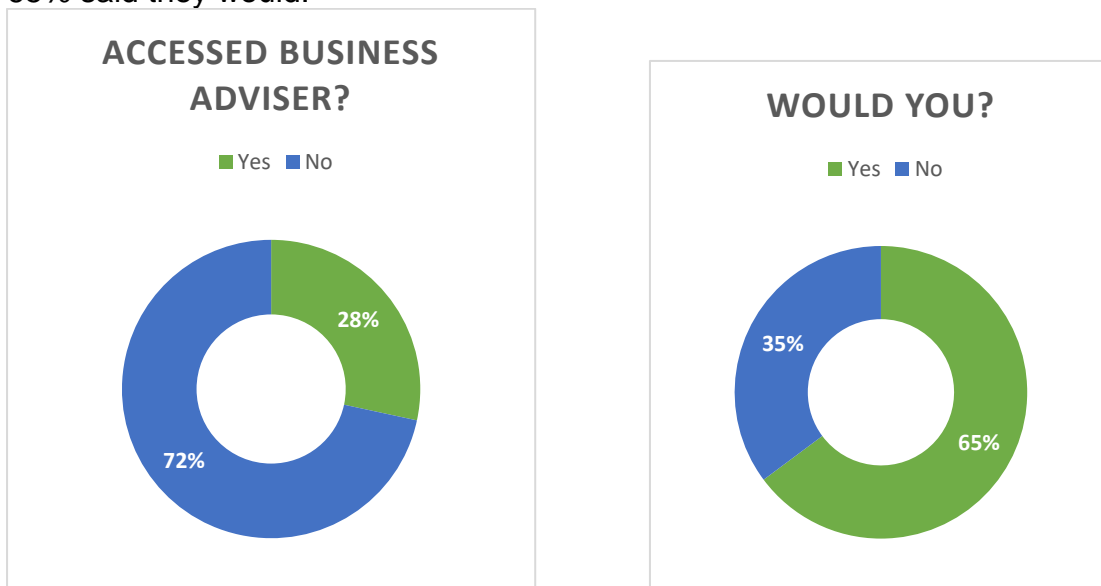
Overall, many businesses suggested that they did not have the time or thought they were too small to bother with a policy. On the other hand, some reported that they already had an informal policy. This indicates that some businesses are actively thinking about how to cut their effect on the planet but have not thought that formalising was necessary, as action can be perceived as more important than a written policy for micro businesses.

Businesses were also asked what challenges they face in implementing sustainable practices. 40% reported that they did not face any challenges, whilst 33% suggested finance was a barrier. A significant 26% said that they lacked understanding, once again demonstrating a need for effective communication to businesses in relation to sustainable practices and reduction of CO₂.



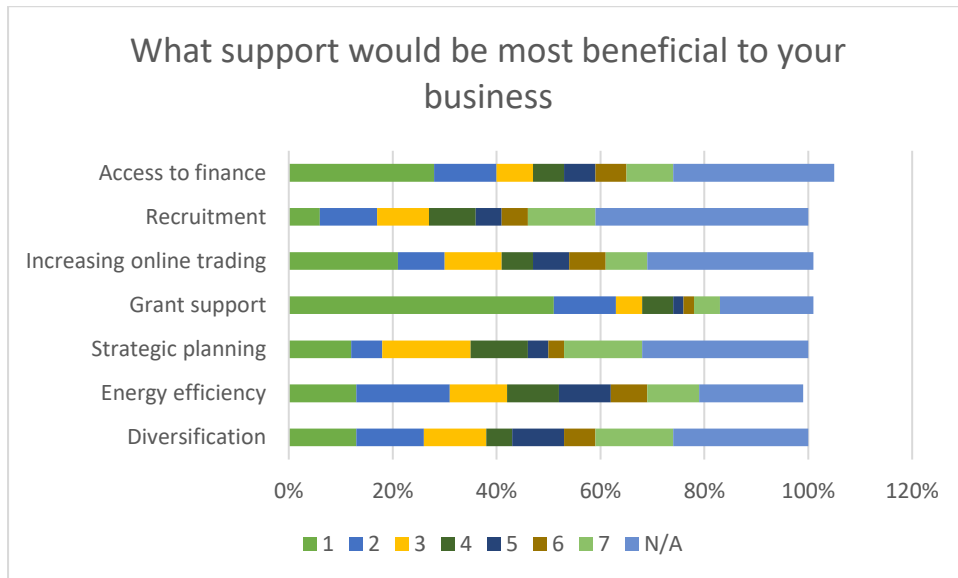
Section 5 - Business Advice/Events

Businesses were asked about their access so far to the Derbyshire Dales business adviser and 28% reported that they had accessed advice, and of those who had not, 65% said they would.



Businesses were then asked what support would be most beneficial to them over the next two years. 50% said that accessing grant support would be most beneficial to them and 28% cited access to other forms of finance as most important, whilst support with recruitment issues was the least beneficial.

The 2022 survey similarly had grant funding as the most important with 77%. A greater proportion of businesses in 2022 were interested in becoming energy efficient at 32% compared to 2025's 13%.



Finally, businesses were asked what subjects they would like to have offered at business events and workshops. 18% said general networking with 31% suggesting sector specific networking. 37% asked for help with marketing and 20% understanding AI. 19% asked for financial skills, 25% employment law and legal matters and 46% how to increase sales. 40% asked for investments to reduce overheads.

