

Introduction

Knaresborough Connectors engaged the North Yorkshire-based Crowd Wisdom Project to run several Polis AI conversations about the town, culminating in a Polis AI conversation focused on the future shape of Knaresborough.

Polis AI is a machine-learning tool which surveys people in their own words. The first mission of Polis AI is to find consensus within any group of people. As a by-product of the anonymous conversation, Polis AI unearths people's ideas and provides a safe space for the digestion of diverse perspectives.

Outcome

Attached to this Executive Summary is the full report automatically produced by Polis AI. This link also contains the full report:

<https://polis.crowdwisdomproject.org/report/r9cmkuekryzmrhaershr>.

Methodology

The survey period commenced in mid-January 2024 and remains open. The Polis AI survey link was distributed by a number of Knaresborough-specific organisations and was shared by at least one media outlet. Of note, this media outlet shared the link in an article which contained an artist's impression of what the cliff lift might look like, which we suspect is likely to have shaped much of this conversation.

The initial statements used to populate the Polis AI conversation originated from an in-person meeting of Knaresborough Connectors.

Metrics

Total Voters: 160

Votes Cast: 7,878

Average votes per voter: 49.24

Approved statements by voters: 126

Percentage of Knaresborough Residents: circa 58%

Average new statements per voter: 2.74



Key Findings

The online, anonymous conversation discovered several key themes, where there was significant agreement or disagreement, which are crucial for understanding sentiment:

1. **Underutilisation of the Castle:** There was a strong consensus that the castle is under-utilised and under-valued, suggesting a desire for more community engagement and utilisation of historic sites.
2. **Community and Heritage:** High agreement was also seen on statements relating to Knaresborough's heritage, indicating a strong community desire to promote and celebrate the town's history.
3. **Divisiveness on the Cliff Lift:** The concept of introducing a cliff lift was highly divisive, showing a clear split in the community between those seeing it as progressive and those fearing it would detract from the town's aesthetic and heritage.
4. **Most voters regard Knaresborough as far more attractive than Harrogate.**

Opinion Groups

Polis AI discovered three main opinion groups (A, B, C), each with distinct viewpoints, though not all voters fell neatly into one of these groups, with only 135 of the 160 voters grouped.

1. **Group A: "Progressive Visionaries" of 53 voters**

Rationale: This group strongly supports the introduction of a cliff lift, viewing it as a sign of progress and a way to maintain the town's character while adapting to modern needs. This group tends to be forward-thinking and open to innovations that could enhance Knaresborough's appeal and accessibility without compromising its heritage, as they see it.

2. **Group B: "Heritage Guardians" with 54 voters**





















Rationale: Opposing the cliff lift due to concerns about its impact on the town's natural beauty and historical aesthetics, this group prioritises preserving Knaresborough's existing character. They are cautious about developments that could alter the town's identity and are deeply committed to protecting its heritage and natural surroundings.

3. **Group C: "Conservationists" with 28 voters**

Rationale: Represents a voice that values preservation, aesthetics, and the thoughtful integration of progress with heritage. Their stance suggests that any future development plans for Knaresborough should not only consider the practical benefits but also the impact on the town's character and historical integrity. This group is opposed to the cliff lift.



Majority Agreement

STATEMENT	OVERALL 135	A 53	B 54	C 28
8 The castle is under-utilised and under-valued.	 73% 10% 16% (105)	 84% 6% 9% (44)	 76% 11% 11% (34)	 51% 14% 33% (27)
53 More free events (like the festival or Glastonbury showing) for locals at the castle bring a pride and sense of community, plus they're fun!	 75% 8% 15% (83)	 96% 0% 3% (32)	 90% 3% 6% (31)	 20% 30% 50% (20)
81 Knaresborough's history and heritage is the jewel in North Yorkshire's crown it needs to be promoted and celebrated through local groups	 83% 0% 16% (66)	 96% 0% 3% (27)	 80% 0% 19% (21)	 66% 0% 33% (18)
84 Knaresborough has a lot of potential	 84% 0% 15% (59)	 96% 0% 4% (25)	 88% 0% 11% (17)	 64% 0% 35% (17)
109 If a lift is being considered , the design is critical to not being an eye sore.	 100% 0% 0% (23)	 100% 0% 0% (12)	 100% 0% 0% (4)	 100% 0% 0% (7)

We note that statement 109, which suggests that any potential cliff lift must not be an eyesore, garnered consensus across all groups, however, it must be noted that as this statement was added towards the end of the conversation, only 23 voters from the 160 voters voted on this statement. In an ideal world, more time would be required to determine whether statement 109 is the optimal consensus point.

General Observations

Aside from the Majority Statements above, Groups A and B are reasonably close in their views, given that there are a lot of high consensus, non-cliff related areas of agreement.

Comments 23-36, 39-51, 53-57, 60-63, 65-71, 75, 83-85, 89-93 appear constructive in character and have broad consensus (even, sometimes for group C). Statements 14-18, 20, 59, 76 and 96 are more controversial.

There are some interesting statements after 100, but not enough voters on them to adequately form a view.

We recommend that all the precise wording of the statements created by the voters are analysed, and the votes thereupon.