

Roads to Recycling

THE second citizen's panel survey was dedicated to finding out more about your environmental awareness and also a bit more about the concerns raised in the first survey about our roads network.

One of Angus Council's corporate themes is the improvement of the environment and the quality of life in Angus. This is obviously a priority endorsed by you as your responses show strong support for a broad range of environmental activities and initiatives from the promotion of cycleways and energy efficiency in the home to the protection of our countryside and coast. We now need to explore ways of harnessing that enthusiasm and commitment for the benefit of us all.

High car usage may not appear environmentally friendly but in a predominantly rural area it is almost inevitable. 83% of you are car owners so it is regrettable, but not surprising, that this detailed survey has revealed that around 40% of you are dissatisfied with the state of the county's roads network. Angus Council shares your concerns about the deteriorating condition of our highways and byways. Along with every other council we are actively lobbying the government about the persistent under investment in Scotland's vital roads network, currently estimated to be a staggering £1billion.

Angus has two major roads challenges to deal with the A92 Dundee-Arbroath road with its poor accident record and the failing Montrose Bridge. Both must be replaced and both require multi-million pound investment. Angus Council is pursuing the best possible financial packages for these essential projects but they will undoubtedly impact on our regular road programmes as well as other council projects.

Your feedback regarding the road network is invaluable to us in terms of highlighting users concerns, which to a large extent reflect our own. We now need to do some further work to find out where your main priorities lie. Difficult decisions lie ahead about where best to allocate our limited resources particularly as we note that only a minority of you are willing to pay more council tax to improve services.

Once again almost 70% of panel members participated in the survey, which coupled with those who responded first time around means that over 1,000 of you from the 1,200 strong panel have taken the time to give us your views.

Thank you for participating, the council values your continued support as it helps us to plan and provide the most appropriate services in the most cost-effective way.



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Highways and Byways

THIS survey confirms to us that despite our best efforts, you the road users are now experiencing the effects of the sustained under-investment in Scotland's roads network. Two thirds of you reckon there are too many potholes, 45% of you want repairs carried out faster and just over a quarter are happy with drainage maintenance.

Angus Council is working to keep the county's 1,800kms of roads and 243 bridges up to the best standard possible, with road safety our primary concern but this is limited by the budget available. We'd prefer to operate the good housekeeping 'stitch in time' regime but preventative maintenance has been a casualty of year on year budget cuts. More and more of the available budget is now going towards dealing with running repairs to infrastructure which should have been renewed years ago (pothole filling, blocked and broken drains, failing retaining walls, etc).

Reduce, Recycle, Reuse

YOUR responses show that not only are you well aware of the important things we can do to protect the environment - you're actually doing them! Most of you are trying to improve energy efficiency and more than 80% have double-glazing, and dry clothes outdoors when possible. 80% of you are keen recyclers, using the council's main centres for a huge range of items.

Thanks in part to your recycling habits, the council has maintained its top ranking in its national recycling category, and now also has the lowest percentage of waste going to landfill in Scotland but there is still a great deal of work to be done. For example, the half of you who threw your old phone books in the bin could follow the award-winning example of Langlands Primary who won £1000 for their school by recycling the most Yellow Pages per pupil!

Policies to Protect

WE are very pleased with the overwhelming support for the council's commitment to protecting the environment and your willingness to change your lifestyle to do this. 83% of you are concerned about the protection of the Angus landscape - an issue also of major concern to the council and addressed via the local and structure planning processes. The Angus Local Plan is about to be reviewed and extended to 2011 and we will once again be consulting widely to ensure that a good cross section of views are heard. The council is also an active partner in the Tayside Biodiversity Action Plan, which gives us the opportunity to ensure that wildlife is protected, an issue of concern to 83% of you.

Your responses have also shown that more needs to be done to make you aware of the policies the council has to support and guide your efforts and we need to make them as user-friendly and as accessible as possible.



Winter



OVER half of you believe the council did a good overall job with winter maintenance. Planning for winter is an unpredictable business and last winter was so severe the council had to find an additional £0.5m to treat the roads and pavements - an operation that involved not only every piece of equipment and manpower we had but the additional assistance of local farmers and private contractors. We understand that many of you would like to see pavements cleared sooner and we will look into that, but in times of such widespread and sustained severe weather, resources will always be concentrated on first keeping the main vehicle routes clear, a policy endorsed by 89% of you.

Lighting

YOUR comments regarding street lighting will be extremely useful to us in our continuing discussions with Scottish & Southern Energy (formerly Scottish Hydro Electric). Although 64% of you believe lighting is well maintained the council would like the electricity supply company to improve its performance, in terms of the speed with which repairs are carried out and the time taken to restore the power supply. Many of Angus' lighting failures are caused by old underground cabling which is going to be an ongoing problem until these out of date networks are replaced. Until then we will try to react quickly and play our part in rectifying reported faults.

Dogs, Litter, Vandalism

OUR surroundings are important to us so it comes as little surprise that 90% of you are concerned about vandalism, dog fouling and litter. It is anticipated that vandalism will cost the council over £130,000 this year, excluding the extensive uninsured costs of damage to street furniture, playground and sports equipment etc[N1]. Regrettably the culprits are members of our communities so when the issue is discussed at local area forums shortly we'll be exploring ways of working together to combat vandalism.

Travel

OVER 70% of you living less than three miles from work or study are willing to consider walking or cycling, although only a third of you are actually doing it! Around 45% of you would consider using public transport if services were more frequent and it was cheaper but for 30% of you there is no alternative to the car.

Safety is still perceived as an issue when considering cycling and walking more. Angus Council continues to tackle these concerns as we introduce cycleways, safe-routes to school, and a variety of traffic calming schemes but we know that there's still work that could be done to make more routes more pedestrian / cyclist friendly.

Food Safety

IT is nice to be able to report that you clearly appreciate the standard of food sold in Angus with over three-quarters of you either very or fairly satisfied with hygiene standards, quality of food and food labelling. That could explain why so few of you know little about the service provided by Angus Council's food safety team!

Traffic

64% appreciate the efforts being made with traffic calming. We are currently monitoring the effectiveness of the part-time 20mph zones being piloted at five Angus schools and will consider formal traffic calming schemes where there is a proven road safety issue. We are fortunate in Angus to have very few areas that require such extreme and expensive measures to be taken, and the only real solution is for people to drive at safe speeds in built-up areas.

Reporting faults

YOUR responses indicate that the CLARENCE freephone service (0800 232323) appears to be well used and appreciated as a convenient and effective means of reporting roads and lighting defects. However as only a fifth of you feel it is easy to report litter, vandalism, and dog mess, we need to consider how we can better publicise ways for you to report these things, such as via the council's ACCESSLine on 08452 777 778.