

# **Living in Lancashire Wave 28 survey**

## **Winter highway maintenance**

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## **1 Executive Summary**

This wave of the Living in Lancashire panel looked at perceptions of winter highway maintenance services and perceptions of how we communicate information relating to it. The survey was sent by email or by post to all 2,626 members of the panel on 10 February and the fieldwork ended on 26 March 2010. In total 2,019 questionnaires were returned, giving an overall response rate of 83%.

### **1.1 Key findings**

- There are significantly more respondents dissatisfied with the winter maintenance this year than are satisfied (53% dissatisfied versus 35% satisfied). This has seen a significant drop since the same question in 2008 (59% satisfied), which may partly be attributable to seasonal differences in the fieldwork dates or the harsher 2010 winter.
- There is lower satisfaction with people with a disability, and residents of Pendle and Rossendale (31%, 37% and 45% very dissatisfied respectively).
- Seven-tenths of respondents said that the amount of salting on the road network was not high enough (72%), only 26% saying it was about right.
- Only one in seven respondents know where to find information on winter maintenance services (15%), and fewer people have actually used this information (9%).
- The information sources people found most useful were radio and television travel bulletins (85% and 70% useful), and newspapers were found least useful (25% not useful).
- The majority of respondents have not used the highways telephone helpline (63%) or Highways Agency website (45%) for information.
- The most preferred communication channels for information on winter highway maintenance is radio traffic and travel news (59%), followed by newspapers (46%).

### **1.2 Recommendations**

- There are opportunities to improve awareness of where people can find information on winter maintenance services, so in the event of needing to access it people know where to go.
- Consider the most appropriate communication channels for important messages, bearing in mind the preference for radio travel news.

- Communicate the reasons why some roads are gritted and others aren't, as a lack of public awareness potentially contributes to the lower levels of satisfaction with the service.
- Continue to review which roads have priority for salting during icy conditions.
- Look further into the reasons why satisfaction with the winter maintenance service was lower among residents in Pendle and Rossendale.
- Work with the public and other interested parties (eg businesses) to provide informed consultation on gritting priorities, and communicate these outcomes locally.

## **2 Introduction**

Lancashire County Council has used Living in Lancashire regularly since August 2001 (formerly known as Life in Lancashire). A panel of willing participants is recruited and is approached on a regular basis to seek their views on a range of topics and themes. Panel members are voluntary participants in the research they complete and no incentives are given for completion.

The panel has been designed to be a representative cross-section of the county's population. The results for each survey are weighted in order to reflect the demographic profile of the county's population.

The panel provides access to a sufficiently large sample of the population so that reliable results can be reported at a county wide level. It also provides data at a number of sub-area and sub-group levels.

Each wave of Living in Lancashire is themed. Firstly, it enables sufficient coverage on a particular topic to be able to provide insight into that topic. And secondly, it comes across better to the residents completing the questionnaires if there is a clear theme (or 2-3 clear themes) within each survey.

The panel is refreshed periodically. New members are recruited to the panel and some current members are retired on a random basis. This means that the panel remains fresh and is not subject to conditioning i.e. the views of panel members become too informed with county council services to be unrepresentative of the population as a whole.

## **3 Research Objectives**

The objective of this survey is to look at perception of the winter highway maintenance service, looking in particular detail at how it is communicated.

## 4 Methodology

This wave of Living in Lancashire research was sent to 2,626 members of the panel on 17 February. A reminder was sent on 10 March, with a final closing date of 26 March.

The survey was conducted through a postal questionnaire, and an online version of the same questionnaire being emailed to members who had previously requested to take part online. The postal questionnaire was sent to 2,019 members and the online questionnaire was sent to 607 members. Where members didn't respond to the online questionnaire they were sent a paper reminder.

In total 2,169 questionnaires were returned, giving an overall response rate of 83%.

All data are weighted by age, ethnicity and district to reflect the Lancashire overall population, and figures are based on all respondents unless otherwise stated. The weighted responses have been scaled to match the effective response of 1,432, which is the equivalent size of the data if it had not been weighted and was a perfect random sample.

### 4.1 Limitations

The table below shows the sample tolerances that apply to the results in this survey. Sampling tolerances vary with the size of the sample as well as the percentage results.

Number of respondents	50/50 + / -	30/70 + / -	10/90 + / -
50	14%	13%	8%
100	10%	9%	6%
200	7%	6%	4%
500	4%	4%	3%
1000	3%	3%	2%
2000	2%	2%	1%

On a question where 50% of the people in a sample of 1000 respond with a particular answer, the chance are 95 out of 100 that the answer would be between 47% and 53% (ie +/- 3%), versus a complete coverage of the entire Lancashire population using the same procedure.

In charts or tables where responses do not add up to 100%, this is due to multiple responses or computer rounding.

## 5 Main Research Findings

Lancashire County Council aims to provide a winter maintenance service which, as far as practicable, allows the safe movement of traffic on priority roads at all times and will keep to a minimum delays and accidents in which ice or snow is a contributory factor. The county council does this by salting and snow clearance, either directly or through its agents and partners.

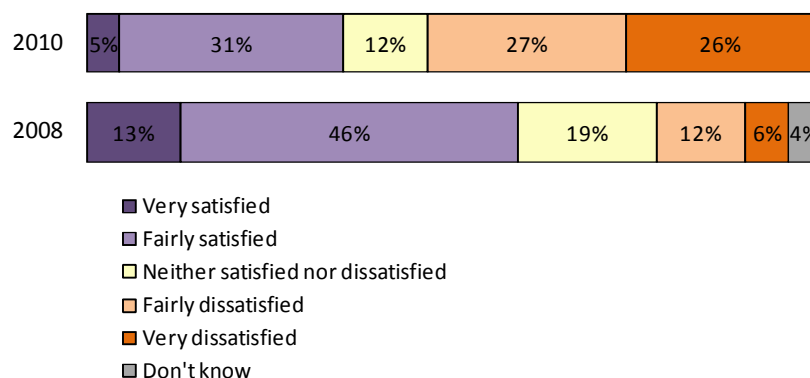
This winter resources were targeted towards salting of all A and B roads as well as other main roads that help keep traffic moving around the county. The county council sets aside around £4.2 million each year to deliver the winter maintenance service although in severe winters it often spend over and above this amount.

The questionnaire looked at public perceptions of the winter maintenance services provided by the county council, and how it can keep people better informed about them.

### 5.1 Satisfaction with winter maintenance services

The first question looked at overall satisfaction with the winter maintenance service this winter. There were significantly more respondents dissatisfied with the winter maintenance this year than are satisfied (53% versus 35%). The level of satisfaction has seen a significant drop since the 2008 survey (59% satisfied), which may in part be attributable to seasonal differences in fieldwork periods or the harsher 2010 winter.

**Chart 1 - Thinking about your local area, overall, how satisfied or dissatisfied were you with the quality of winter maintenance services this winter?<sup>1</sup>**



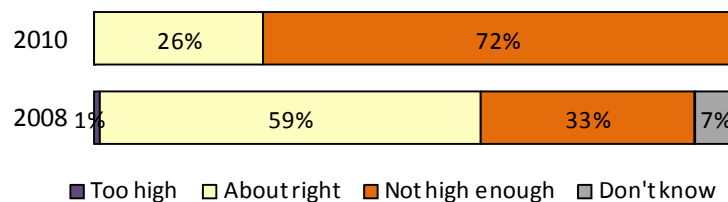
Base: All respondents 2010 (unweighted 2141, weighted 1497)  
All respondents 2008 (unweighted 2493, weighted 2105)

<sup>1</sup> The questionnaire in 2008 was sent between June and July, therefore the 2010 questionnaire going out in the midst of winter may have had an effect on responses as experiences are fresher in the minds of respondents

Those people who are less likely to say that are satisfied with winter maintenance services are people with a disability (31% very dissatisfied), and residents of Pendle and Rossendale (37% and 45% very dissatisfied respectively).

When respondents were asked about the amount of the road network that is salted during frosty and icy conditions seven-tenths of respondents said that it was not high enough (72%), and only a quarter said it was about right (26%). This represents a significant increase since the 2008 survey when a third of respondents wanted more roads to be salted (33%).

**Chart 2 - And would you say that the amount of the road network that is salted during frosty and icy conditions in your local area is...?**



Base: All respondents 2010 (unweighted 2143, weighted 1497)  
All respondents 2008 (unweighted 2496, weighted 2107)

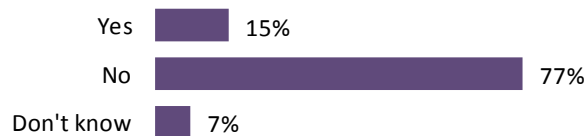
There are few differences in respondents' perceptions of the amount of the road network that is salted. However, those who are dissatisfied with the winter maintenance services are more likely to say the amount of roads that are salted is not enough (96%), and those who are satisfied with the service are more likely to say it is about right (60%). Women and those with a disability were more likely to say the amount of roads that are salted is not high enough (77% and 75% respectively).



## 5.2 Communication information on winter maintenance

The majority of respondents don't know where to find information on winter maintenance services (77%), only around one in seven people saying they know where to find it (15%).

### Chart 3 - Do you know where to find information on winter maintenance services (eg which roads in your area are salted as a priority in snow or icy weather)?



Base: All respondents (unweighted 2090, weighted 1456)

There are no differences between different groups of people and their knowledge of where to find information on winter maintenance services.

All respondents were then asked if they had used any information on winter maintenance services in the last six months. Few people have actually used information (9%), nine-tenths saying that they haven't (89%).

### Chart 4 - Have you used any information on winter maintenance services in the last 6 months?

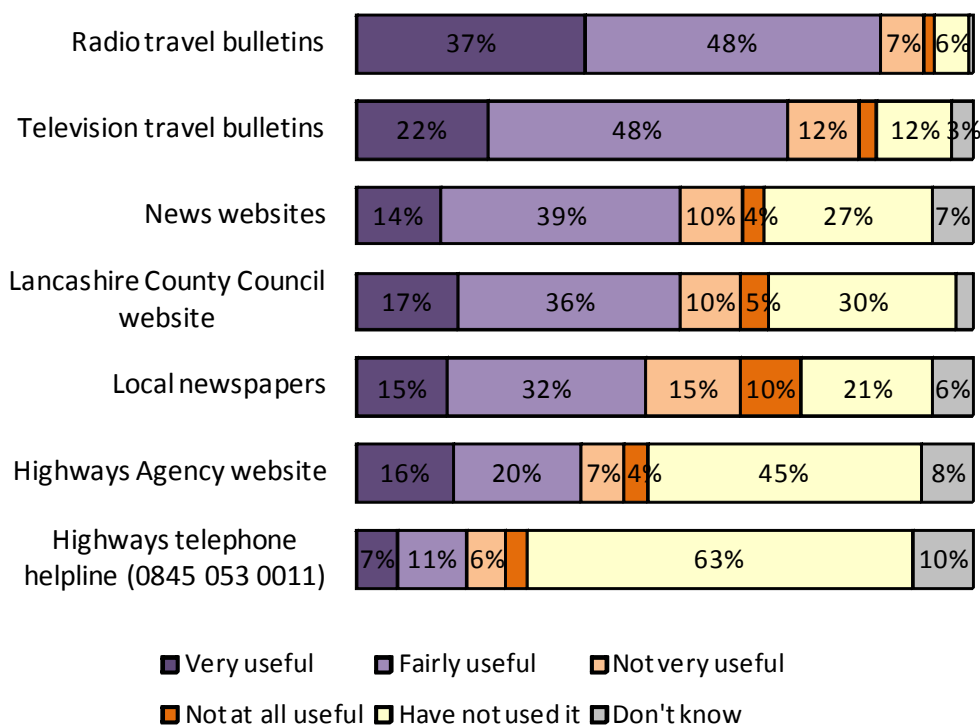


Base: All respondents (unweighted 2077, weighted 1455)

There are no differences in the usage of information between different groups of people.

The people who had used some form of information about winter maintenance services were asked to rate how useful they found it. As only 119 people responded to this question, results should be taken as indicative only of the overall pattern. The information sources people found most useful were radio and television travel bulletins (85% and 70% useful). It was newspapers that respondents found least useful (25% not useful). It is worth noting that few respondents had used the highways telephone helpline (63%), and Highways Agency website (45%) as a source of information. The county council website was also not used by three in ten respondents for winter maintenance information.

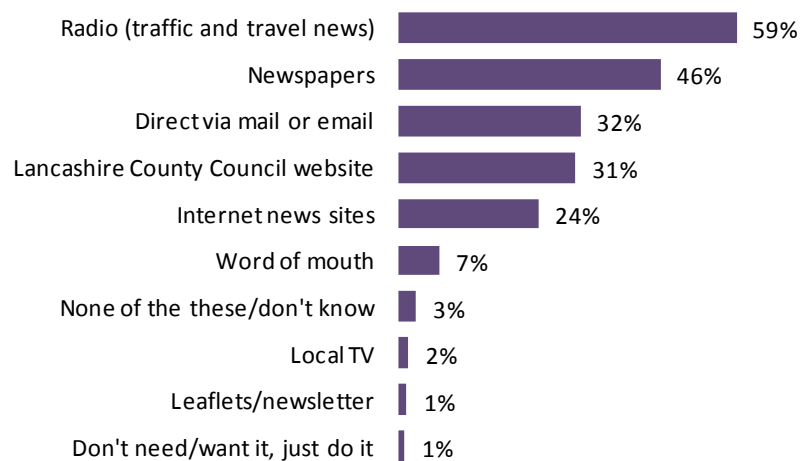
**Chart 5 - How useful, if at all, did you find the following sources of information on winter maintenance services?**



Base: All respondents (unweighted 119, weighted 100)

When all respondents were asked about their preferences for receiving information on winter maintenance services the most popular choice was on radio traffic and travel news (59%), followed by newspapers (46%). Websites were less popular, both the county council site (31%) and internet news sites (24%).

**Chart 6 - And, how would you prefer to receive information on winter maintenance services (eg winter gritting)?**



Base: All respondents (unweighted 2093, weighted 1468)

Sub-group analysis shows that for the top two preferred methods of communication there are few differences between respondents, the only difference being respondents from a BME background being less likely to name radio (47%). Those over 60 years old were less likely to prefer websites as a source of information (county council website 17%, other news sites 11%). However other news sites were preferred more by BME respondents (37%) and those in socio-economic group AB (36%). Respondents from a BME background were also more likely to prefer direct communication through email or the post (47%).

## 6 Recommendations

- There are opportunities to improve awareness of where people can find information on winter maintenance services, so in the event of needing to access it people know where to go.
- Consider the most appropriate communication channels for important messages, bearing in mind the preference for radio travel news.
- Communicate the reasons why some roads are gritted and others aren't, as a lack of public awareness potentially contributes to the lower levels of satisfaction with the service.
- Continue to review which roads have priority for salting during icy conditions.
- Look further into the reasons why satisfaction with the winter maintenance service was lower among residents in Pendle and Rossendale.
- Work with the public and other interested parties (eg businesses) to provide informed consultation on gritting priorities, and communicate these outcomes locally.

## **7 Appendix**

### **7.1 Socio-Economic-Group Definitions**

These groups are based on Market Research Society definitions and on the respondent. They are graded as A, B, C1, C2, D and E.

#### **Group A**

- Professional people, very senior managers in business or commerce or top-level civil servants.
- Retired people, previously grade A, and their widows

#### **Group B**

- Middle management executives in large organisations, with appropriate qualifications
- Principle officers in local government and civil service
- Top management or owners of small business concerns, educational and service establishments
- Retired people previously grade B, and their widows

#### **Group C1**

- Junior management, owners of small establishments, and all others in non-manual positions
- Jobs in this group have very varied responsibilities and educational requirements
- Retired people, previously grade C1, and their widows

#### **Group C2**

- All skilled manual workers, and those manual workers for responsibility for other people
- Retired people, previously grade C2, with pensions from their job
- Widows, if receiving pensions from their late partner's job

#### **Group D**

- All semi skilled and unskilled manual workers, and apprentices and trainees to skilled workers
- Retired people, previously grade D, with pensions from their late job
- Widows, if receiving pensions from their late partner's job

#### **Group E**

- All those entirely dependant on the state long term, through sickness, unemployment, old age or other reasons
- Those unemployed for a period exceeding six months (otherwise classified on previous occupation)
- Casual workers and those without a regular income