

Living in Lancashire Wave 32 survey

Communications

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1 Executive summary

This wave of the Living in Lancashire panel looked at communications from the council on a range of topics – winter gritting, the council's budget proposal and the Heysham-M6 road link. The survey was sent by email or by post to all 3,974 members of the panel on 18 February and the fieldwork ended on 25 March 2011. In total 2,742 questionnaires were returned, giving an overall response rate of 69%.

1.1 Key findings

Winter gritting service

- Around half of respondents were satisfied with the winter gritting services on main roads across Lancashire this winter (52%) while around a third were dissatisfied (35%).
- Respondents from West Lancashire district were more likely to be dissatisfied with the winter gritting services this winter (60% dissatisfied).
- Three quarters of respondents didn't feel informed about winter gritting services provided by the council (74%).
- Respondents most commonly received information on winter gritting services by word of mouth (28%) and from radio travel bulletins (27%). Around a fifth of respondents didn't receive information through any of the listed channels (22%).
- Fewer than one in twenty respondents got their information on winter gritting services through county council channels.
- In line with the most used sources, the sources respondents found most useful were radio travel bulletins (47% very or fairly useful) and word of mouth (44% very or fairly useful).
- Respondents would prefer to hear about the winter gritting service through radio travel bulletins (48%), local newspapers or local newspaper websites (41%) and television travel bulletins (41%).
- Around two fifths of respondents would prefer to receive information through the council's winter leaflet.

Heysham-M6 link

- Two fifths of respondents were already aware of the plans to build a road linking the Heysham and Morecambe peninsula to the M6 motorway (40%) while around three fifths were not already aware (57%).
- The majority of respondents in Lancaster were already aware of the plans (96%).

- Less than a third of respondents know that the road link is now going ahead (29%). Two thirds weren't aware that it is going ahead (66%). Respondents in Lancaster are more likely to know that the link is going ahead (77%).
- Two thirds of respondents think the plans for the Heysham-M6 link are a good idea (67%) while only around one in twenty think they are a bad idea (6%). Around three in ten respondents say they don't know (27%).
- In Lancaster, three quarters of respondents think the plans are a good idea (76%) with just over half thinking it is a very good idea (53%).

Budget proposal

- Three quarters of respondents weren't aware of the council's three-year budget proposal (72%).
- Of those respondents that were aware of the proposal, half heard about it through newspapers (50%) and two fifths heard about it on TV (39%).
- Of those respondents that were aware of the budget proposal, two fifths felt informed about the proposal (39%) while just over half felt uninformed (54%).
- A quarter of the respondents who were aware of the proposal said they don't know (25%) what impact it will have on their lives. Half of respondents felt it would have a moderate or slight impact on their lives (51%). A fifth of respondents felt it would have a significant impact (18%).

1.2 Recommendations

Winter gritting service

Despite the fact that many respondents didn't feel informed about the winter gritting service this year, only a third were dissatisfied with the service. The use of council channels to receive information on the winter gritting service has been low – respondents have used other channels such as radio travel bulletins and through word of mouth. Respondents would also prefer to use the non-council channels in the future to get information on winter gritting services. A significant number of respondents suggested, unprompted, that they didn't want to be informed about the gritting service as long as it was being done. These results suggest that efforts to inform the public about the winter gritting service should be concentrated through external channels. However, there is some interest in receiving information on the gritting service through the council's winter leaflet so it may be worth publicising and circulating this leaflet more widely.

Respondents from West Lancashire were notably less satisfied and felt less informed than respondents from other districts. It would be worth investigating why this is and whether anything can be done to rectify this in the future.

Heysham-M6 link

Awareness of the Heysham-M6 link road plan is not particularly high. Around two fifths of respondents were already aware of the plans but fewer respondents knew that the plan is now going ahead. In Lancaster, where the road will have the strongest impact, nearly all respondents were already aware of the plan but only around three quarters knew that the plan is going ahead. This suggests that the ongoing development of the road link could be more widely publicised.

Despite the lack of awareness there is broad support for the plans with only a minority of respondents thinking it is a bad idea.

Budget proposal

Less than a quarter of respondents were aware of the council's budget proposal. More could therefore be done in future to publicise the council's budget plans.

More could also be done to explain budget proposals to respondents. Of the respondents who had heard about the proposal, more felt uninformed than informed and a quarter didn't know what impact the proposal would have on their lives.

Consultation activities could also be more widely publicised. While many respondents had filled in the previous Living in Lancashire survey about council spending priorities, the number who had taken part in any other activities was small and a quarter of respondents weren't aware of any opportunities to take part in consultations.

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 representative of the population as a whole.

3 Research objectives

The objective of this survey is to look at people's views of communications from the council on winter gritting, the Heysham-M6 road link and the council's budget. Questions looked specifically at:

- people's awareness of the topics;
- the channels people receive information from; and
- how satisfied they are with the communication they receive.

4 Methodology

This wave of Living in Lancashire research was sent to 3,974 members of the panel on 18 February. A reminder was sent on 11 March, with a final closing date of 25 March 2011.

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 3,155 members and the online questionnaire was sent to 819 members. Where members didn't respond to the online questionnaire they were sent a paper reminder.

In total 2,742 questionnaires were returned, giving an overall response rate of 69%.

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 1,983, 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%
500	4%	4%	3%
1000	3%	3%	2%
2000	2%	2%	1%

On a question where 50% of the people in a sample of 1,000 respond with a particular answer, the chances are 95 out of 100 that the answer would be between 47% and 53% (i.e. +/- 3%), versus a complete coverage of the entire Lancashire population using the same procedure.

The following table shows what the percentage differences between two samples on a statistic must be greater than, to be statistically significant.

Size of Sample A	Size of Sample B	50/50	70/30	90/10
100	100	14%	13%	8%
100	200	12%	11%	7%
500	1000	5%	5%	3%
2000	2000	3%	3%	2%

(Confidence interval at 95% certainty for a comparison of two samples)

For example, where the size of sample A and sample B is 2,000 responses in each and the percentage result in each group you are comparing is around 50% in each category, the difference in the results needs to be more than 3% to be statistically significant. This is to say that the difference in the results of the two groups of people is not due to chance alone and is a statistically valid difference (e.g. of opinion, service usage).

For each question in the survey, comparisons have been made between different sub-groups of respondents (e.g. age, gender, disability, ethnicity, geographic area) to look for statistically significant differences in opinion. Statistically valid differences between sub-groups are described in the main body of the report.

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

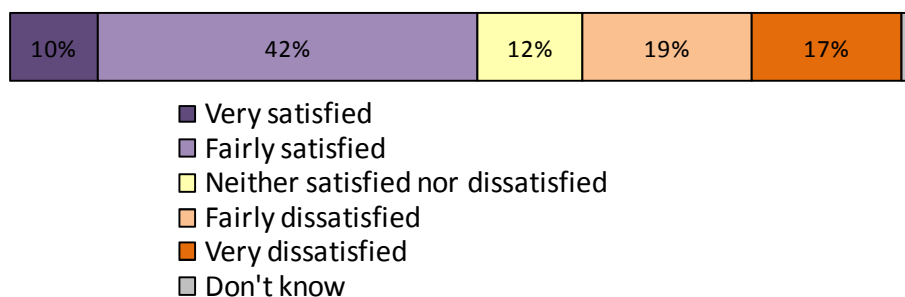
5 Main research findings

5.1 Winter gritting service

The first section of the survey asked panel members about the winter gritting service this year, how informed they felt about it and how they got their information.

Around half of respondents were satisfied with the winter gritting services on main roads across Lancashire this winter (52%) while around a third were dissatisfied (35%).

Chart 1 - How satisfied or dissatisfied were you with the winter gritting services on main roads across Lancashire this winter?

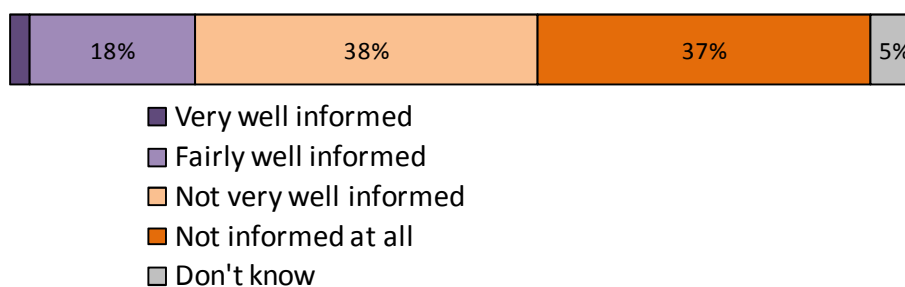


Base: All respondents (unweighted 2622, weighted 2016)

Respondents from West Lancashire district were more likely to be dissatisfied with the winter gritting services this winter (60% dissatisfied).

Three quarters of respondents say they didn't feel informed about winter gritting services provided by the council (74%).

Chart 2 - How well informed did you feel about winter gritting services provided by the county council?

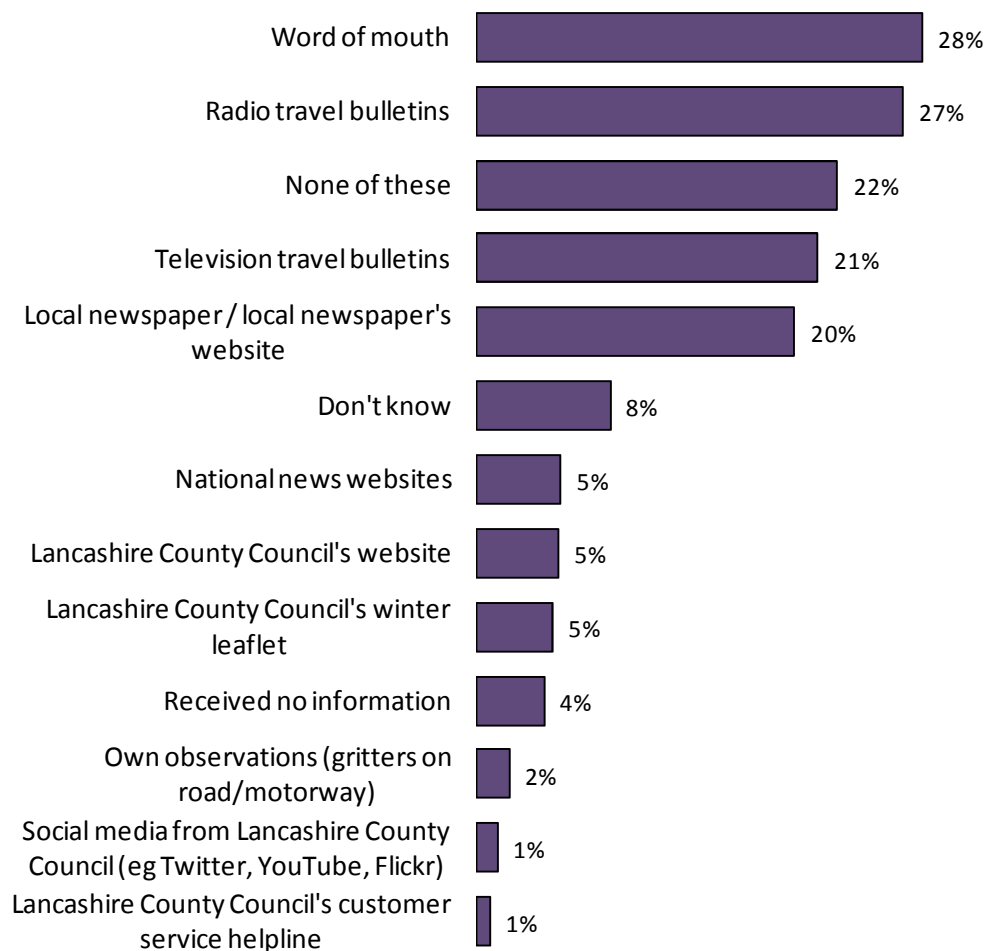


Base: All respondents (unweighted 2651, weighted 2022)

Respondents from West Lancashire district are more likely to say they didn't feel informed about winter gritting services (86%).

Panel members were then asked where they get their information on winter gritting services. The most common responses are by word of mouth (28%) and from radio travel bulletins (27%). Around a fifth of respondents didn't receive information through any of the listed channels (22%). One in twenty or fewer respondents get their information on winter gritting services through county council channels (website: 5%, winter leaflet: 5%, social media: 1%, customer service helpline: 1%).

Chart 3 - Where did you get your information on winter gritting services?



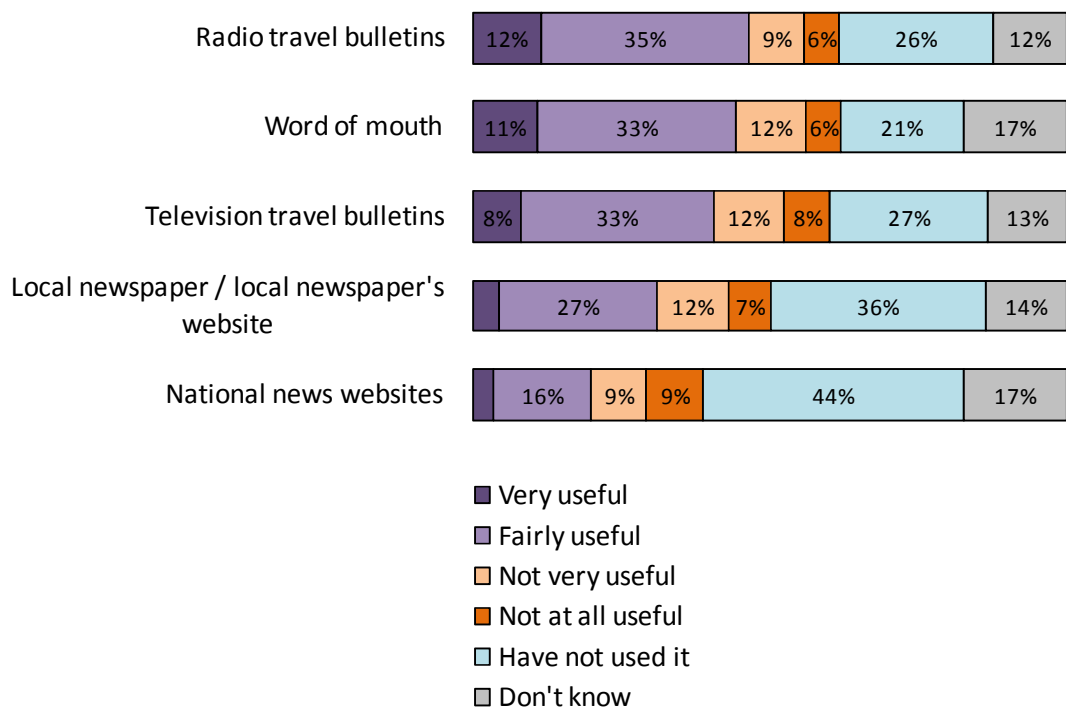
Base: All respondents (unweighted 2669, weighted 2041)

Respondents aged 60 or over are more likely to use local newspapers to get their information on winter gritting services (26%) but less likely to use the council website (3%). Respondents aged 25-44 and BME respondents are

more likely to use social media from the council (3% and 4% respectively). BME respondents are less likely to use local newspapers (12%) and radio travel bulletins (17%).

Panel members were asked how useful each of the sources of information on winter gritting services had been. For the non-council sources, at least a fifth of respondents said that they hadn't used each source. In line with the most used sources, the sources respondents found most useful were radio travel bulletins (47% very or fairly useful) and word of mouth (44% very or fairly useful).

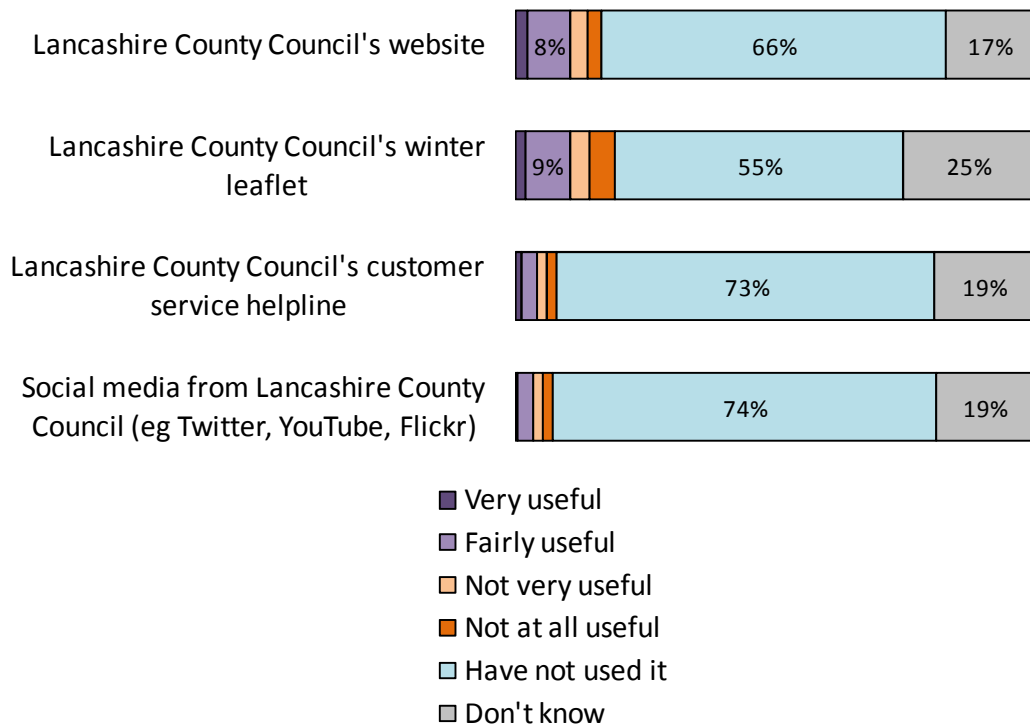
Chart 4 - How useful, if at all, did you find the following sources of information on winter gritting services?



Base: All respondents (unweighted 1944, weighted 1571)

The majority of respondents said they hadn't used sources which come direct from the council.

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

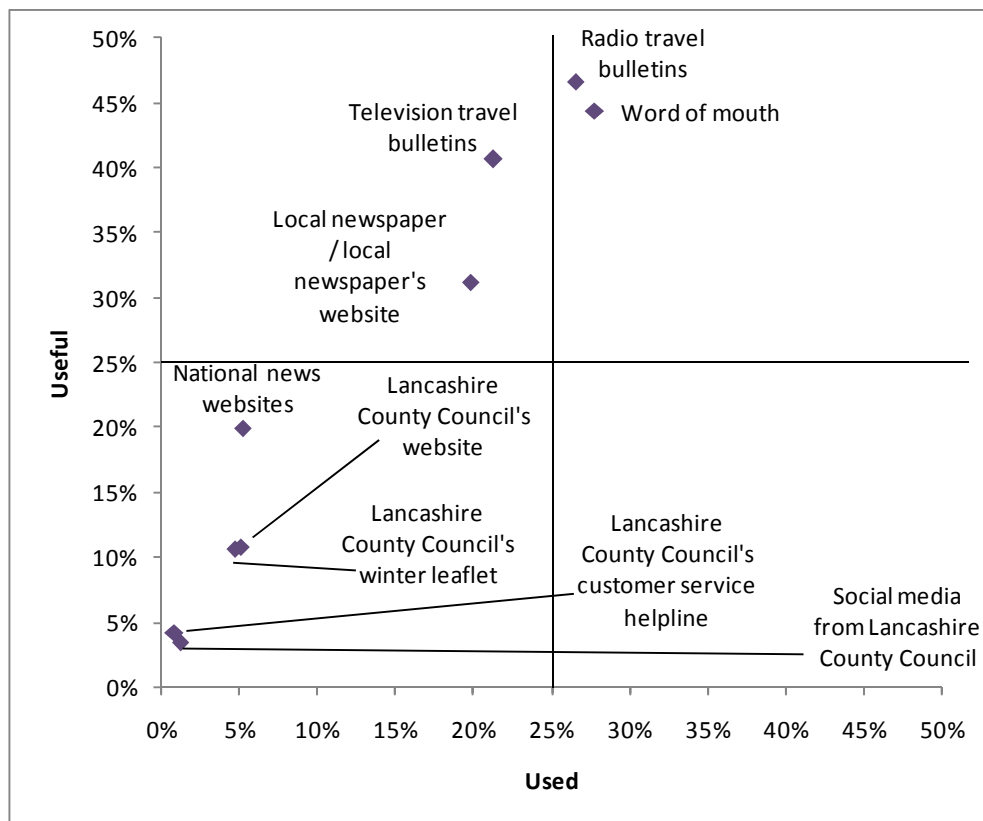


Base: All respondents (unweighted 1938, weighted 1567)

The following chart shows the proportion of respondents that used each source compared to the proportion that found the source useful (either very useful or fairly useful).

The sources that were most used (radio travel bulletins and word of mouth) were also the most useful. Although less used, television travel bulletins and local newspapers (or their websites) were also found to be useful.

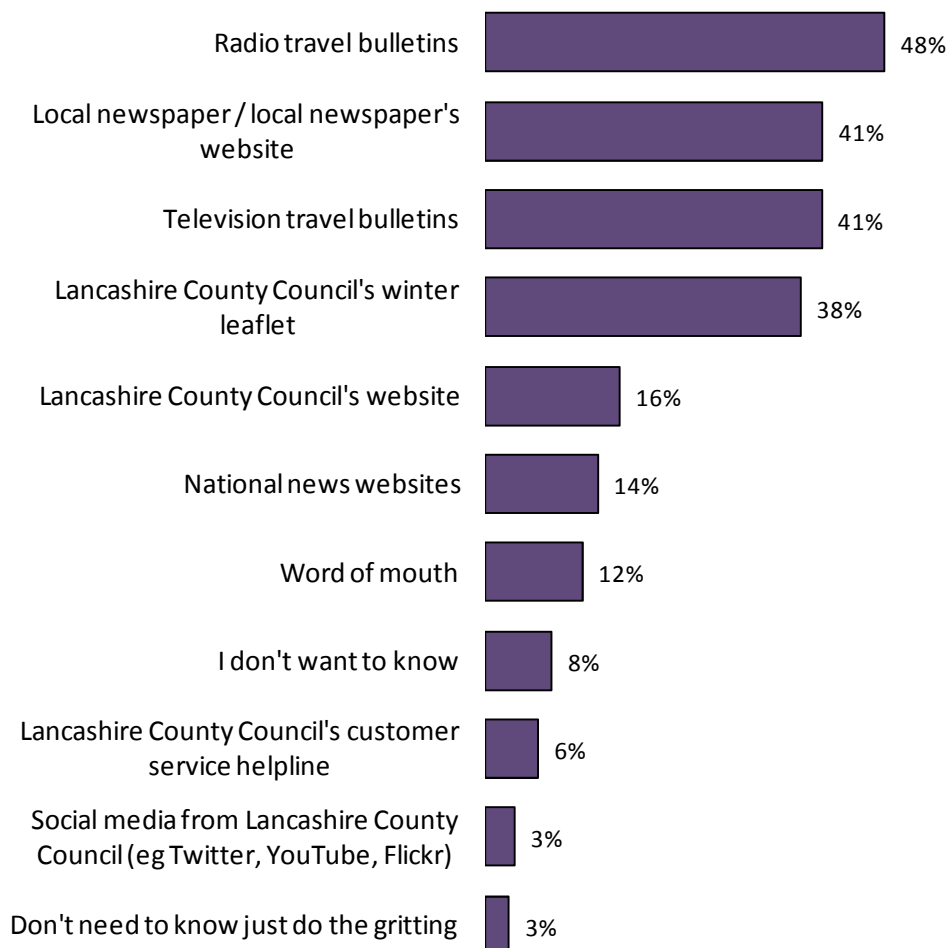
Chart 6 - Comparison of which sources were used and how useful they were



Panel members were then asked how they would prefer to receive information on winter gritting services. The most common response is through radio travel bulletins (48%) followed by local newspapers or local newspaper websites (41%) and television travel bulletins (41%). Around two fifths of respondents would like to receive information through the council's winter leaflet.

As well as the suggested answers, respondents were able to add their own sources of information. Around one in twenty respondents, unprompted, said they don't need to be informed about winter gritting services and that the council should just do it (3%).

Chart 7 - How would you prefer to receive information on winter gritting services?



Base: All respondents (unweighted 2693, weighted 2061)

BME respondents are more likely to prefer to receive information through council channels (winter leaflet: 52%, website: 24%, social media: 8%) while respondents aged 60 and over are less likely to prefer council channels (website: 10%, social media: 1%). Respondents in the lowest socio-economic class, DE, are more likely to prefer to receive the council's winter leaflet (48%).

5.2 Heysham-M6 link

The county council has recently received the green light on funding to build a road linking the Heysham and Morecambe peninsula to the M6 motorway. Panel members were asked about the plan.

Two fifths of respondents were already aware of the plans to build a road linking the Heysham and Morecambe peninsula to the M6 motorway (40%) while around three fifths were not already aware of the plans (57%).

Chart 8 - Were you already aware of the plans to build a road linking the Heysham and Morecambe peninsula to the M6 motorway?

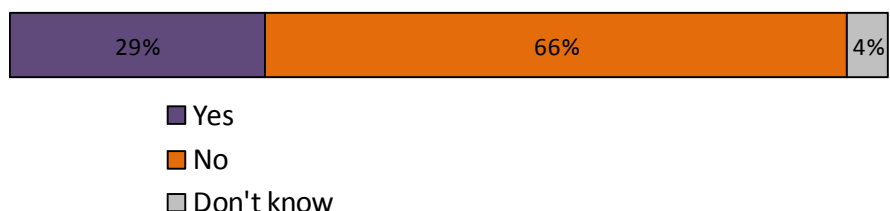


Base: All respondents (unweighted 2697, weighted 2061)

Males and respondents aged 60 and over are more likely to already be aware of the Heysham-M6 road link plans (48% and 50% said yes respectively) while respondents in socio-economic class DE are less likely to be aware of the plans (66% said no). Unsurprisingly, the majority of respondents in Lancaster were already aware of the plans (96%). Respondents from districts further away from the M6 are less likely to be aware of the plans (Pendle: 74% said no, Rossendale: 75%, West Lancashire: 78%).

Less than a third of respondents know that the road link is now going ahead (29%). Two thirds weren't aware that it is going ahead (66%).

Chart 9 - Did you know that the road link is now going ahead?



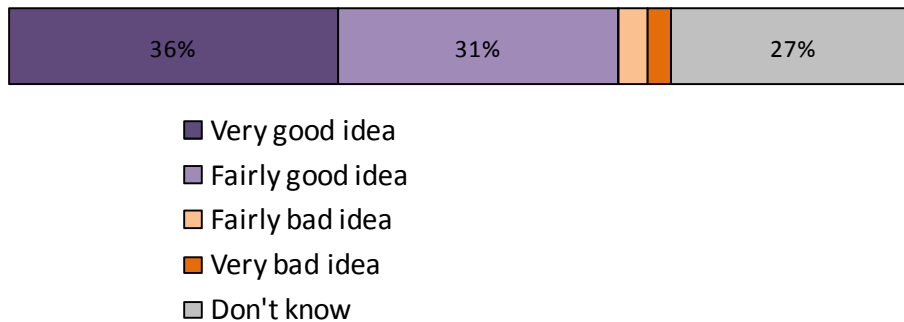
Base: All respondents (unweighted 2689, weighted 2048)

Females and respondents in socio-economic class DE are less likely to know that the road link is now going ahead (73% and 75% say no respectively).

Respondents in Lancaster are more likely to know that the link is going ahead (77%).

Two thirds of respondents think the plans for the Heysham-M6 link are a good idea (67%) while only one in twenty think they are a bad idea (6%). Around three in ten respondents say they don't know (27%).

Chart 10 - Do you think the plans for the Heysham-M6 link are a...?



Base: All respondents (unweighted 2693, weighted 2053)

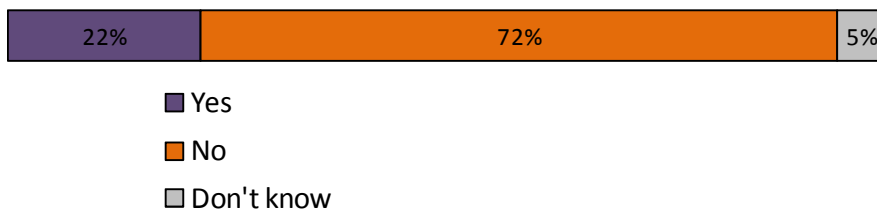
In Lancaster, three quarters of respondents think the plans are a good idea (76%) with just over half thinking they are a very good idea (53%).

5.3 Budget proposal

In January 2011, Lancashire County Council's cabinet published a three-year budget proposal. Panel members were asked about what they knew about the cabinet's budget proposal.

Three-quarters of respondents weren't aware of the council's three-year budget proposal (72%).

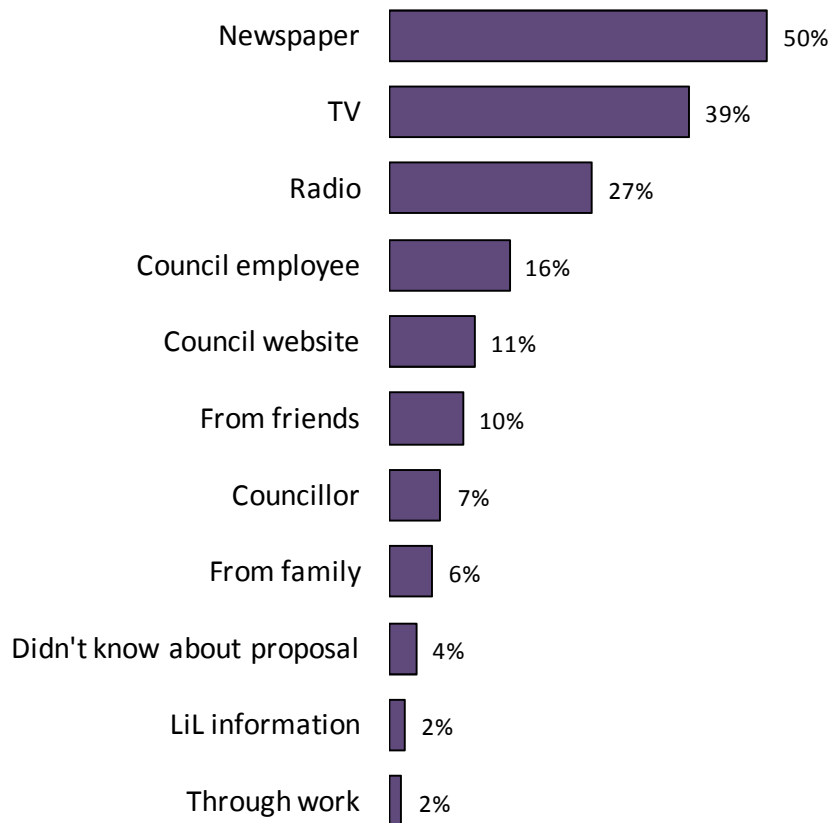
Chart 11 - Did you know about the council's three-year budget proposal?



Base: All respondents (unweighted 2697, weighted 2055)

Of those respondents that were aware of the budget proposal, half heard about it through newspapers (50%) and two fifths heard about it on TV (39%).

Chart 12 - How did you hear about the council's budget proposal?

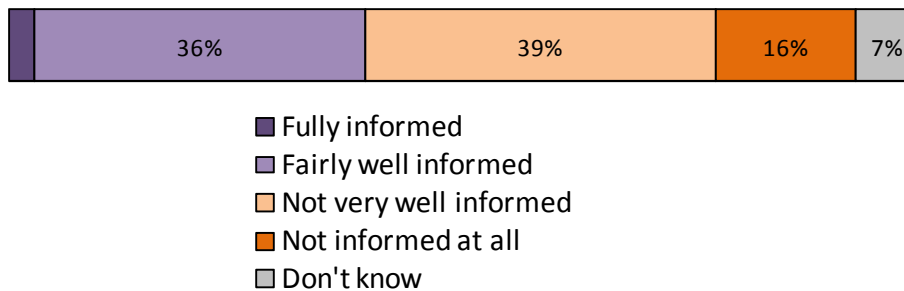


Base: Respondents who know about the budget proposal (unweighted 773, weighted 551)

Respondents in full-time employment are more likely to have heard about the budget proposal through the council website (19%) while respondents aged 60 and over are less likely to have heard through the website (5%).

Of those respondents that knew about the budget proposal, two-fifths felt informed about the proposal (39%) while just over half felt uninformed (54%).

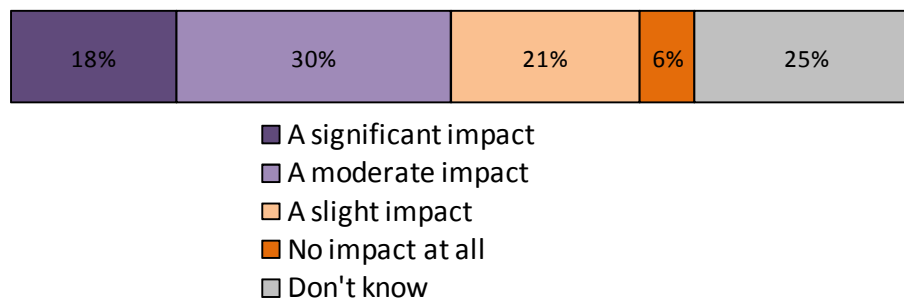
Chart 13 - How informed or uninformed do you feel about the council's budget proposal?



Base: Respondents who know about the budget proposal (unweighted 924, weighted 672)

Those respondents that knew about the budget proposal were asked what impact the proposal would have on their lives. A quarter of these respondents said they don't know (25%). Half of respondents felt the proposal would have a moderate or slight impact on their lives (51%). A fifth felt it would have a significant impact (18%).

Chart 14 - What impact will the budget proposal have on your life?

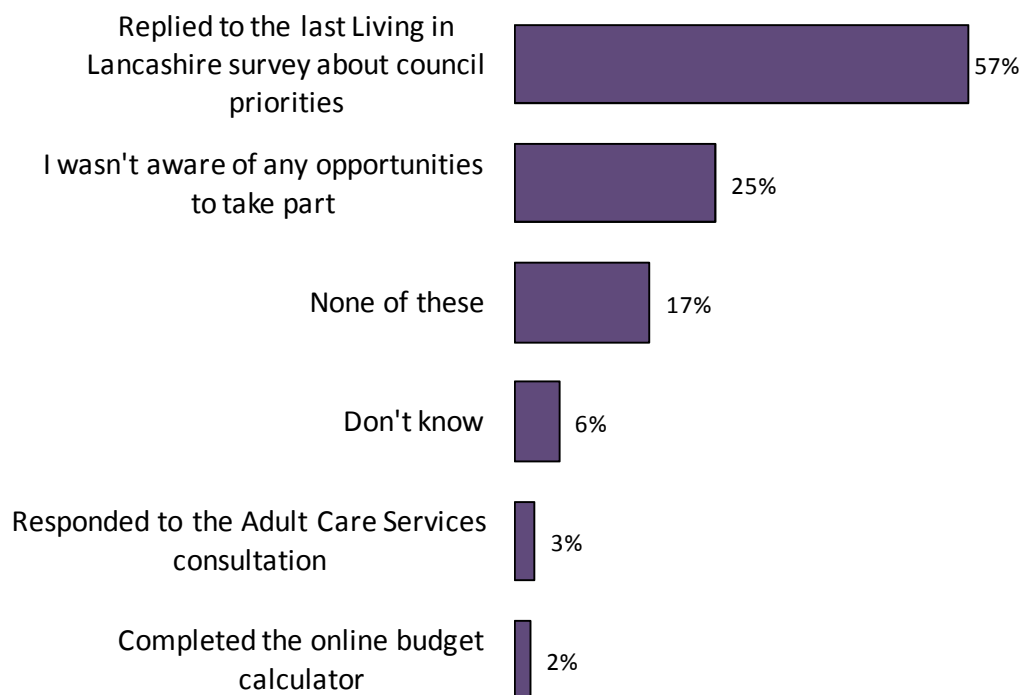


Base: Respondents who know about the budget proposal (unweighted 932, weighted 679)

Female respondents are more likely to think that the budget proposal will have a significant impact on their lives (23%). There are no other significant differences in response by sub-group.

Various consultation activities have been conducted about the proposed budget changes. Panel members were asked which activities they have taken part in. Around three fifths of respondents replied to the last Living in Lancashire wave which asked about council spending priorities (57%). A quarter of respondents weren't aware that there were any consultation activities to take part in (25%) and around a fifth hadn't taken part in any consultation activities (17%).

Chart 15 - Which of the following consultation activities about the proposed budget changes have you responded to or taken part in?



Base: All respondents (unweighted 2689, weighted 2050)

6 Conclusions and recommendations

Winter gritting service

Despite the fact that many respondents didn't feel informed about the winter gritting service this year, only a third were dissatisfied with the service. The use of council channels to receive information on the winter gritting service has been low – respondents have used other channels such as radio travel bulletins and through word of mouth. Respondents would also prefer to use the non-council channels in the future to get information on winter gritting services. A significant number of respondents suggested, unprompted, that they didn't want to be informed about the gritting service as long as it was being done. These results suggest that efforts to inform the public about the winter gritting service should be concentrated through external channels. However, there is some interest in receiving information on the gritting service through the council's winter leaflet so it may be worth publicising and circulating this leaflet more widely.

Respondents from West Lancashire were notably less satisfied and felt less informed than respondents from other districts. It would be worth investigating why this is and whether anything can be done to rectify this in the future.

Heysham-M6 link

Awareness of the Heysham-M6 link road plan is not particularly high. Around two fifths of respondents were already aware of the plans but fewer respondents knew that the plan is now going ahead. In Lancaster, where the road will have the strongest impact, nearly all respondents were already aware of the plan but only around three quarters knew that the plan is going ahead. This suggests that the ongoing development of the road link could be more widely publicised.

Despite the lack of awareness there is broad support for the plans with only a minority of respondents thinking it is a bad idea.

Budget proposal

Less than a quarter of respondents were aware of the council's budget proposal. More could therefore be done in future to publicise the council's budget plans.

More could also be done to explain budget proposals to respondents. Of the respondents who had heard about the proposal, more felt uninformed than informed and a quarter didn't know what impact the proposal would have on their lives.

Consultation activities could also be more widely publicised. While many respondents had filled in the previous Living in Lancashire survey about council spending priorities, the number who had taken part in any other activities was small and a quarter of respondents weren't aware of any opportunities to take part in consultations.

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 with 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 dependent 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