



Living in Lancashire Survey

Winter gritting service

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www.lancashire.gov.uk





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1. Executive summary

This wave of Living in Lancashire looked at people's views on winter gritting. The survey was sent by email or by post to all 2,779 members of the panel on 15 February. A reminder was sent on 7 March and the fieldwork ended on 23 March 2012. In total 1,971 questionnaires were returned, giving an overall response rate of 71%.

1.1 Key findings

- Nearly two thirds of respondents are satisfied with the winter gritting service (65%).
- Over a third of respondents feel well informed about winter gritting this year (35%), but over half of respondents don't feel informed (33% not very well informed and 23% not informed at all).
- Panel members were most likely to get their information on winter gritting services from radio travel bulletins (28%), word of mouth (25%) and their local newspaper/local newspaper's website (22%). Around a fifth of respondents didn't receive any information through the listed channels (21%).
- Panel members would prefer to receive information on winter gritting services through radio travel bulletins (50%), followed by television travel bulletins (43%), the council's winter leaflet (39%) and local newspaper/local newspaper's website (37%).

1.2 Conclusions and recommendations

Based on the findings in wave 32 (March 2011) the Winter Gritting Service and Communications Service increased the distribution of the winter leaflet and included more detail within the leaflet about how residents can ensure they are prepared for winter. Similar messages about how to prepare for winter were also included in winter bulletins on the radio.

The significant differences between the weather conditions in 2010/11 and 2011/12 make direct comparisons between the Wave 32 and Wave 36 results difficult. This said, the changes to the communications strategy appear to have been successful in increasing how well informed respondents feel about winter gritting, as the proportion of respondents who feel well informed about winter gritting has increased between March 2011 and March 2012. This supports the case for continuing with the strategy of using the winter gritting leaflet and winter bulletins on the radio to get the county council's winter gritting messages across. It also suggests that increasing the use of these channels could lead to a further increase in how well informed respondents feel. If the Communications Service decides to increase the use of these channels this winter, repeating this question

in a future survey will help the service monitor the impact of this strategy, although any conclusions will again have to take into account the influence of weather conditions on respondents' perceptions.

However, while there has been an increase in how well informed respondents feel, the proportion of respondents who don't get any information has remained at around a fifth (21%). Although it is recognised that many of the people who didn't receive any information about winter gritting this year also don't want to receive any information in future, increasing the circulation of the winter leaflet and using radio bulletins may help to reach respondents who didn't receive any information this year but would like to in future, as these are the channels that these respondents most commonly identified that they would prefer to use.

The proportion of respondents that get their information on winter gritting services from Lancashire County Council's winter leaflet has increased. Despite this increase, the overall proportion of respondents who get their information from the winter leaflet remains quite small (13%). These findings, when taken with the fact that around two fifths of respondents would like to receive information about the winter gritting service from Lancashire County Council's winter leaflet (39%) should be used to help inform the Communications Service's strategy for distributing the winter leaflet in 2012/13.

The Communications Service may wish to note the increase in the proportion of respondents who would like to receive information about the winter gritting service via social media from Lancashire County Council (3% in March 2011 to 8% in March 2012), as this relatively new communication channel may become more widely used by respondents in future.

Responses to some of these questions have changed very little from the responses last year. It is therefore recommended that the questions about the winter gritting service are reviewed before the panel are asked them again.

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 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 ie 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 how informed people feel about the activities of the winter gritting service. Questions looked specifically at:

- satisfaction with the winter gritting service;
- where respondents get their information on winter gritting; and
- how respondents would prefer to receive information in future.

4. Methodology

This wave of Living in Lancashire was sent to 2,779 members of the panel on 15 February. A reminder was sent on 7 March, with a final closing date of 23 March 2012.

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 1,957 members and the online questionnaire was sent to 822 members.

In total 1,971 questionnaires were returned, giving an overall response rate of 71%.

The data set is 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 1,358, 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% |
| 1,000 | 3% | 3% | 2% |
| 2,000 | 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% (ie +/- 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 | 1,000 | 5% | 5% | 3% |
| 2,000 | 2,000 | 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 (eg of opinion, service usage).

For each question in the survey, comparisons have been made between different sub-groups of respondents (eg 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.

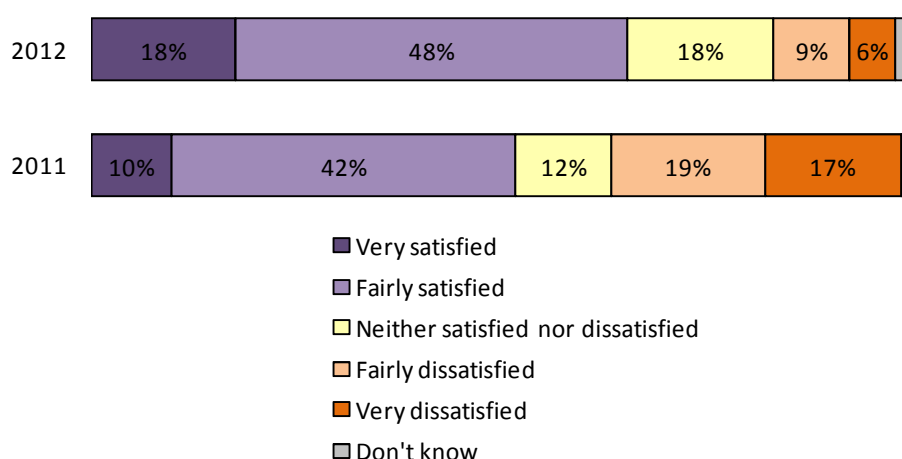
In charts or tables where responses do not add up to 100%, this is due to multiple responses or computer rounding.

5. Main research findings

Respondents were asked for their views regarding the winter gritting service, specifically how they keep informed about winter gritting. The same questions were asked in wave 32 of Living in Lancashire (March 2011); for comparison, where appropriate, the responses from wave 32 are included in the subsequent charts and, where significant differences exist, further analysis has been provided.

Nearly two thirds of respondents are satisfied with the winter gritting service on main roads across Lancashire this winter (65%), which is an increase from March 2011 when just over half of respondents were satisfied with the winter gritting service (52%). This difference may reflect the fact that there was a cold winter in 2010/11¹ and a milder winter in 2011/12².

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



Base: All respondents 2012 (unweighted 1,954, weighted 1,421)
All respondents 2011 (unweighted 2,622, weighted 2,016)

Respondents in Fylde are more likely to be satisfied with the winter gritting service (75%).

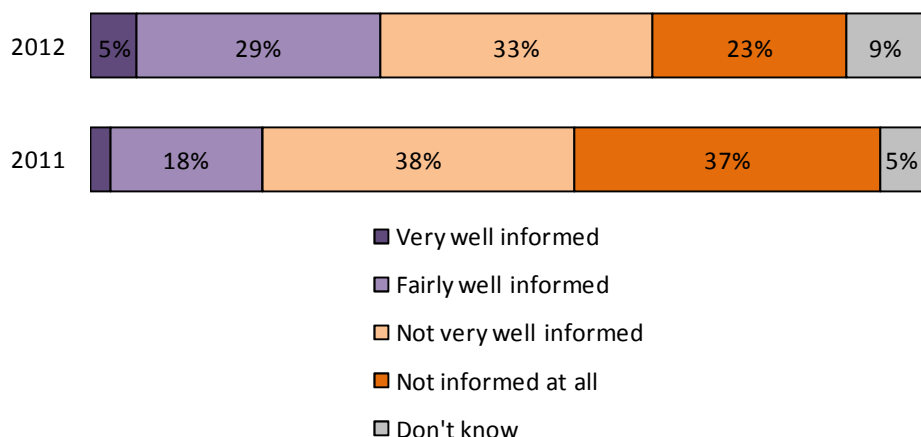
Respondents in east Lancashire are more likely to be dissatisfied with the winter gritting service (22%), with respondents in Burnley and Rossendale the most likely to be dissatisfied (31% and 30% respectively).

¹ <http://www.metoffice.gov.uk/climate/uk/2011/winter.html>

² <http://www.metoffice.gov.uk/climate/uk/2012/winter.html>

Respondents were then asked how well informed they feel about the winter gritting service. This year, over a third of respondents feel they are well informed (35%), which is an increase from March 2011 when a fifth of respondents felt well informed (21%).

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



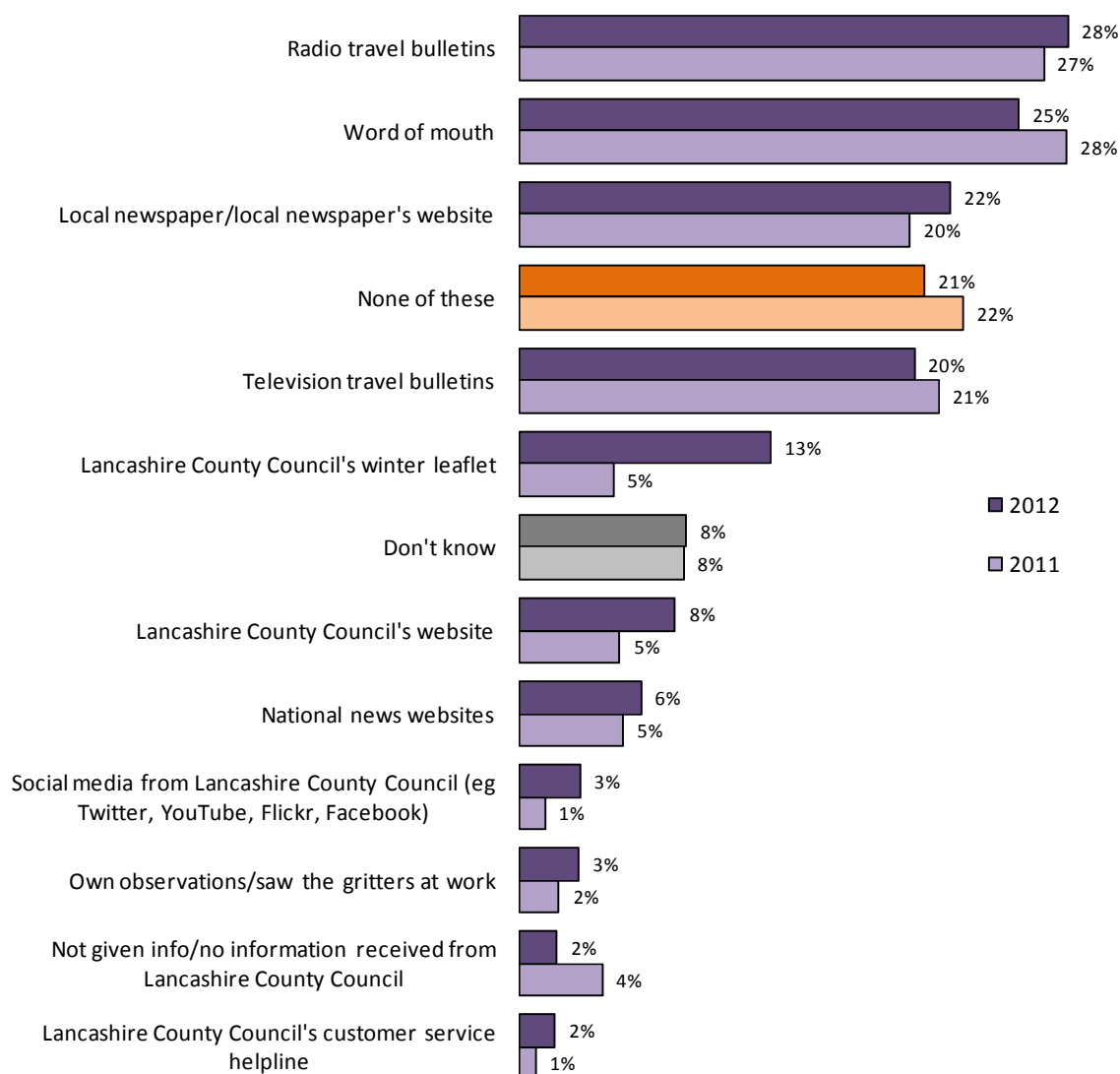
Base: All respondents 2012 (unweighted 1,954, weighted 1,421)
 All respondents 2011 (unweighted 2,651, weighted 2,022)

Panel members were most likely to get their information on winter gritting services from radio travel bulletins (28%), word of mouth (25%) and their local newspaper/local newspaper website (22%). Around a fifth of respondents didn't receive any information through the listed channels (21%).

Of the communication channels used by the county council, the most commonly used by respondents are Lancashire County Council's winter leaflet (13%) and Lancashire County Council's website (8%).

The proportion of respondents who received their information from Lancashire County Council's winter leaflet increased from 5% in 2011 to 13% in 2012, indicating that the increased distribution of the winter leaflet was successful in informing more people about the winter gritting service's activities.

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



Base: All respondents 2012 (unweighted 1,946, weighted 1,413)
 All respondents 2011 (unweighted 2,669, weighted 2,041)

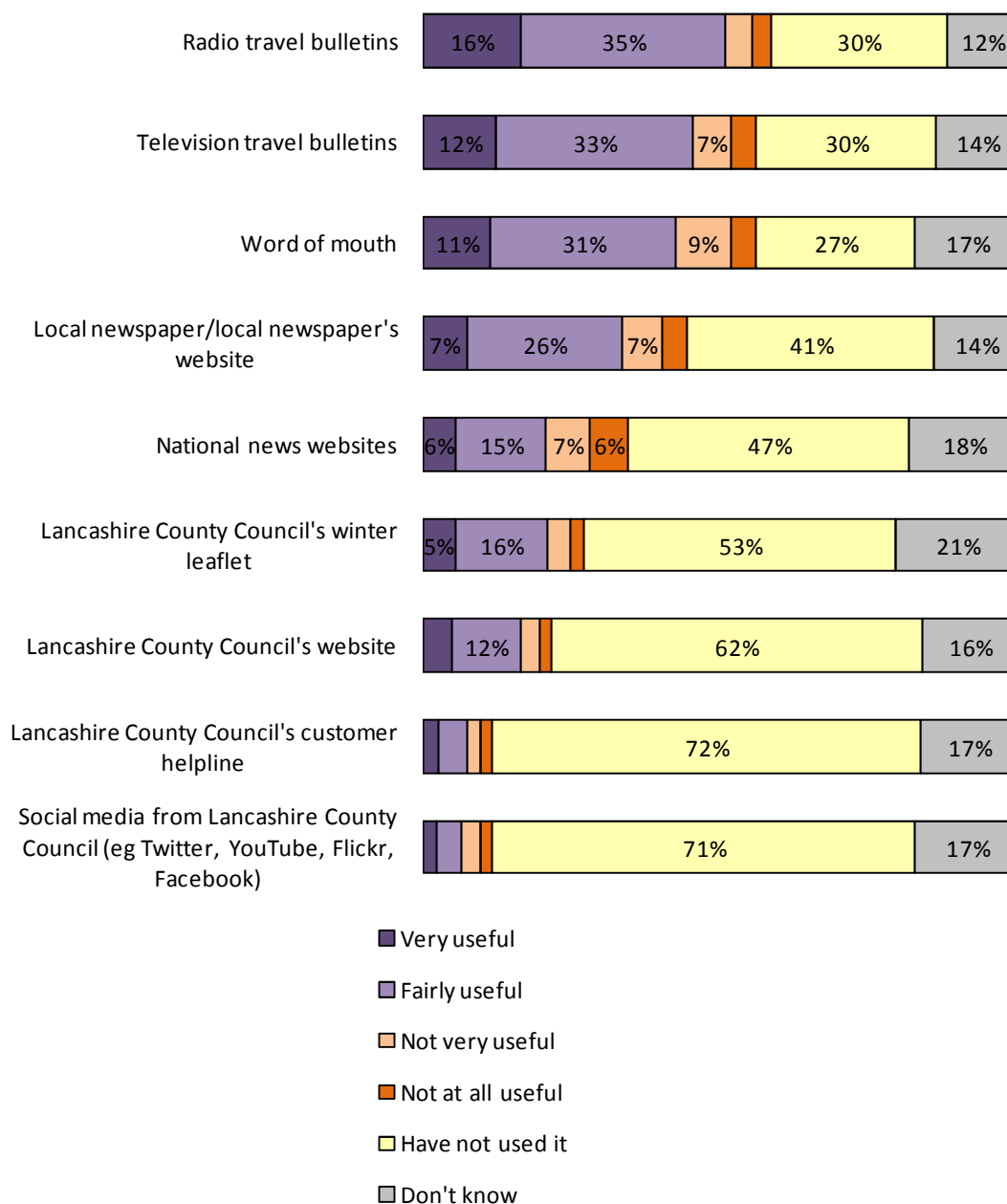
Older respondents (aged 60 and over) are more likely to get their winter gritting information from radio travel bulletins (33%), local newspaper/local newspaper's website (27%) and television travel bulletins (27%).

Respondents aged 25-44 are more likely to use the county council's website to get their information on winter gritting (10%).

Respondents in east Lancashire are more likely to get their information from local newspaper/local newspaper's website (26%).

Panel members were asked how useful they found various sources of information on winter gritting services. Chart 4 shows that the sources of information that respondents use are largely considered to be useful.

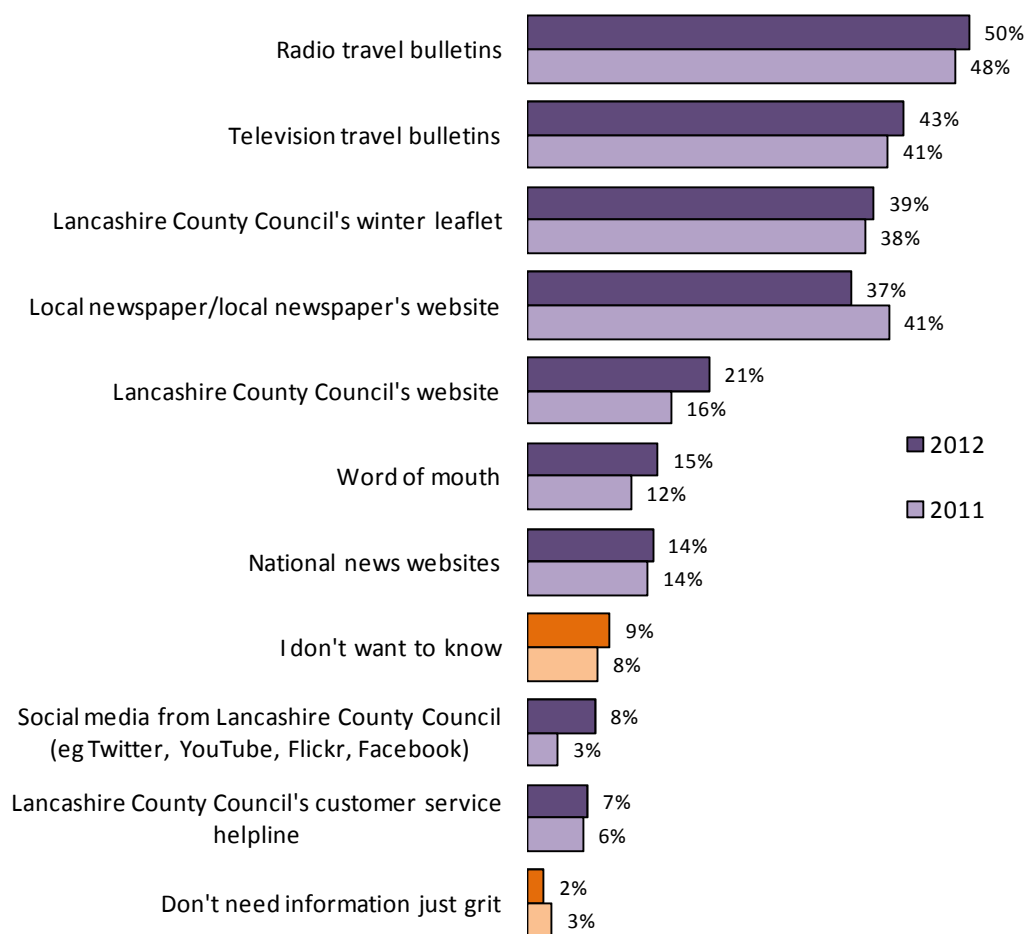
Chart 4 - How useful, if at all, did you find the following sources of information on winter gritting services?



Base: All respondents (unweighted 1,575, weighted 1,178)

Panel members would prefer to receive information on winter gritting services through radio travel bulletins (50%), followed by television travel bulletins (43%), the council's winter leaflet (39%) and from local newspaper/local newspaper's website (37%).

Chart 5 - And how would you prefer to receive information on winter gritting services?



Base: All respondents 2012 (unweighted 1,931, weighted 1,406)
 All respondents 2011 (unweighted 2,693, weighted 2,601)

Older respondents are more likely to prefer to receive information on winter gritting via radio travel bulletins (55%) and television travel bulletins (54%).

Respondents aged 25-44 are more likely to prefer to receive information on winter gritting from Lancashire County Council's website (24%) and social media from Lancashire County Council (13%).

6. Conclusions and recommendations

Based on the findings in wave 32 (March 2011) the Winter Gritting Service and Communications Service increased the distribution of the winter leaflet and included more detail within the leaflet about how residents can ensure they are prepared for winter. Similar messages about how to prepare for winter were also included in winter bulletins on the radio.

The significant differences between the weather conditions in 2010/11 and 2011/12 make direct comparisons between the Wave 32 and Wave 36 results difficult. This said, the changes to the communications strategy appear to have been successful in increasing how well informed respondents feel about winter gritting, as the proportion of respondents who feel well informed about winter gritting has increased between March 2011 and March 2012. This supports the case for continuing with the strategy of using the winter gritting leaflet and winter bulletins on the radio to get the county council's winter gritting messages across. It also suggests that increasing the use of these channels could lead to a further increase in how well informed respondents feel. If the Communications Service decides to increase the use of these channels this winter, repeating this question in a future survey will help the service monitor the impact of this strategy, although any conclusions will again have to take into account the influence of weather conditions on respondents' perceptions.

However, while there has been an increase in how well informed respondents feel, the proportion of respondents who don't get any information has remained at around a fifth (21%). Although it is recognised that many of the people who didn't receive any information about winter gritting this year also don't want to receive any information in future, increasing the circulation of the winter leaflet and using radio bulletins may help to reach respondents who didn't receive any information this year but would like to in future, as these are the channels that these respondents most commonly identified that they would prefer to use.

The proportion of respondents that get their information on winter gritting services from Lancashire County Council's winter leaflet has increased. Despite this increase, the overall proportion of respondents who get their information from the winter leaflet remains quite small (13%). These findings, when taken with the fact that around two fifths of respondents would like to receive information about the winter gritting service from Lancashire County Council's winter leaflet (39%) should be used to help inform the Communications Service's strategy for distributing the winter leaflet in 2012/13.

The Communications Service may wish to note the increase in the proportion of respondents who would like to receive information about the winter gritting service via social media from Lancashire County Council (3% in March 2011 to

8% in March 2012), as this relatively new communication channel may become more widely used by respondents in future.

Responses to some of these questions have changed very little from the responses last year. It is therefore recommended that the questions about the winter gritting service are reviewed before the panel are asked them again.

Appendix 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