



Aberdeen City **voice**

Aberdeen's Citizens' Panel Newsletter
Number 12, February/March 2008

Welcome to the twelfth citizens' panel newsletter. This newsletter gives feedback to you, a member of Aberdeen citizens' panel, on the results of the 12th questionnaire. Topics in this questionnaire covered the Community Planning themes of Land Use and the Environment, Clean City and Transport & Connections.

This newsletter provides a summary of the results of the questionnaire you completed last October, and how we plan to use this information. Your responses are important in informing and contributing to future plans by all partners of the City Voice.

Questionnaire data is analysed by our research consultants at The Robert Gordon University. As always, all information provided is kept strictly confidential.

The 13th survey, focusing mainly on the Community Planning themes of Health & Social Care and Safety is included with this newsletter. Many thanks to all of you who have continued to complete the questionnaires and have returned them promptly over the last couple of years.

Please continue to get in touch if you wish to make any comments on the citizens' panel. You will find my contact details at the end of the newsletter.

Philippa Corley
City Voice Co-ordinator

Aberdeen City Voice is an initiative by Aberdeen's Community Planning Partnership, including Aberdeen City Council, Grampian Police, Grampian Fire & Rescue Service, Scottish Enterprise Grampian, NHS Grampian, Communities Scotland and Aberdeen Council of Voluntary Organisations.

News

Firstly, many thanks to all of you that responded to the extra questionnaire we sent to you in December 2007 on behalf of Grampian Fire and Rescue Service. We received responses from over half of the Panel and at such a busy time of year, this is a great response! The results from your completed questionnaires were passed to Grampian Fire and Rescue Service for analysis as part of their wider consultation and I look forward to reporting back on what the results were and how they will be used later this year.

Last June, we conducted a pilot online version of the City Voice questionnaire called the 'Virtual Voice'. The aim of the Virtual Voice was to run an identical version of the questionnaire on-line to give panellists more choice on how they complete and submit their questionnaires. The pilot encountered several difficulties due mainly to the computer software being unable to cope with the size and complexity of the questionnaire.

Some panellists also reported difficulties accessing, opening and submitting the questionnaires. These issues, coupled with the low on-line response rate have led us to rethink how we offer this service in the future. For the time being, I will continue to send all panellists a paper copy of the questionnaire and you can continue to download a copy from www.aberdeencityvoice.org.uk and return it to the Freepost address on the back of this newsletter. I apologise for any inconvenience but I hope you understand that any alternative questionnaire method needs to be as effective and reliable as possible.

Many thanks to all of you who responded to both this most recent, and the last questionnaire. Again we received many additional comments, which have been passed on to the relevant service for response.

12th Questionnaire – Panel Response

Here are the results of the 12th questionnaire you kindly completed in October 2007. The results have now been analysed and a summary is presented in this newsletter. At the time of issuing the questionnaire there were 803 of you on the panel – this gives us an overall response rate of approximately 83%. This is a fantastic response rate but it is important that as many of you as possible respond each time. This will help us put all your views and concerns before the Partnership which is involved in providing services for Aberdeen residents and planning for your future.

Please let me know if there are any reasons for you not replying. Are the questionnaires too complicated? Too long? Are we asking about things of little interest to you? What would you like us to ask you about? Please let me know by completing the tear off slip at the back of this newsletter.



Land Use and the Environment

Footpaths

Aberdeen has a large number of tree-lined streets and footpaths. Unfortunately, in some areas the trees and their roots are causing problems with drainage, damaging the services that run underground and creating trip hazards. We wanted to know your views on tree-lined footpaths and streets in Aberdeen and how we should deal with these problems.

Your responses told us that just over 50% of you live on a tree-lined street and 64.5% of you regularly walk on a tree-lined street. A massive 94.9% of you agreed or strongly agreed that tree-lined streets are an attractive aspect of Aberdeen's urban landscape. Your reasons for this included that trees added greenery to urban areas, that trees were good for the environment, that they attract wildlife and that they break up the 'greyness' of the Granite City landscape.

Approximately 41% of you told us that if a tree-lined street was being upgraded and a tree was causing problems, that we should remove the tree and replace it with one that is more suitable.

Footpaths – this is what we're doing

The answers you gave us in the 12th City Voice questionnaire have been useful on two counts. Firstly, they have reassured us that our current policy on managing trees on footpaths is heading in the right direction. Secondly, your responses are being used to develop the City's Tree Replacement Programme and Tree Management Plan. The City Voice has helped us gain a strategic, city wide understanding of your views and this will help us ensure that our approach to this issue is fair and consistent.

Mike Cheyne

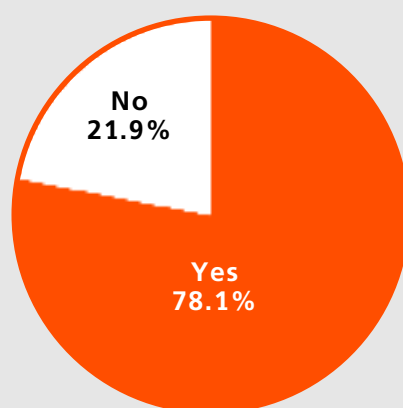
Road Manager
Neighbourhood Services (South Area)

Safety of Play Areas

Over the last few years, we have been improving children's play areas in Aberdeen City to provide more play opportunities for children of all ages and to meet European safety standards. These improvements include safer surfacing, new multi play units and putting in more facilities for older children. However, some evidence suggests that play areas are not being used as much as they used to be because children don't find them adventurous enough. We wanted to find out if children you had regular contact with use the play areas in Aberdeen City, and if not, why not.

Approximately 43% of the citizens panel have regular contact with children. Of this percentage, approximately 78% said that these children use play areas. When we broke these results down into Neighbourhood Service Areas, we found that approximately 82% of panellists who had regular contact with children in the Neighbourhood Services (North Area) used play areas, as opposed to approximately 74% in Neighbourhood Services (South Area) and approximately 79% in Neighbourhood Services (Central Area).

Figure 1: Do children use children's play areas?



We asked you which play areas you visited and how often you visited them. You told us that you visited a good mix of smaller, local parks on a daily basis with larger parks including Duthie, Westburn, Hazlehead and Seaton getting higher weekly and monthly visits.

Finally, we wanted to know if you thought that we were making the play areas 'too' safe and therefore not adventurous enough for children. 51.7% of you disagreed with this statement and 26.7% agreed.

Safety of Play Areas - this is what we're doing

The information you provided on the play areas you visited was really useful. You told us that the most visited play areas were in Duthie Park, Hazlehead Park and Westburn Park. This result was not unexpected as they are some of the largest City parks with good access and parking. It was surprising however, to see that Seaton Park was used much less by comparison. This may be due to its location and relatively secluded access points.

We also wanted to know what you thought were the most important factors when choosing to visit a play area. Your top three factors were:

- That it was clean and had litter bins
- That it was local
- That it had a range of activities.

This confirms our view on play provision. Although local provision is largely dependent on the availability of suitable greenspace, we are currently focusing on improving the range of activities available on all sites. We aim to ensure that all sites incorporate play opportunities including those of Swing, Spring, Climb and Slide.

You also gave us some fantastic ideas on what would encourage you to visit play areas more often. These included improving toilet facilities and more seating for adults. All the information you gave us will feed into our plans for redeveloping the City's play areas.

Jim Nicol

Design and Development Officer
Neighbourhood Services (South Area)

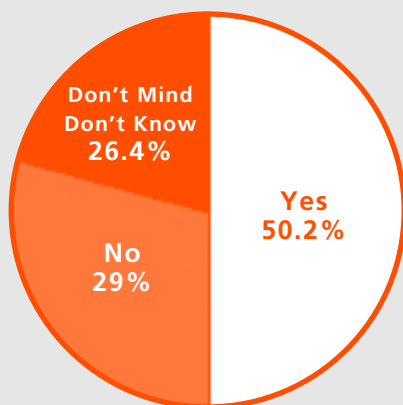
Soft Landscaping

Historically, Aberdeen City Council has used 'hard landscaping' in inner City areas. Examples of this include paving, granite setts (cobble) and grass. However, the Council has recently rethought its policy and is now considering introducing more 'soft landscaping' into public sites. This means that we would use more shrub/tree planting and seasonal flowerbeds. Such work would also include removing large areas of cobble from central reservations and replacing them with roses, shrubs or trees. In order to do this, the Council would need to increase the money that we spend on landscaping and we were interested in what you thought about this.

Approximately 74% of you said that you thought a mix of both hard and soft landscaping was desirable in public areas in Aberdeen City. When we asked you where you wanted to see more soft landscaping, the largest response was for retail areas, public parks and central reservations.

Figure 2 tells us that approximately 50% of you think we should increase the money spent on soft landscaping and 29% think the Council should not. When we broke this figure down into age groups, we found that older panellists were more likely to support this idea with younger age groups, slightly less keen.

Figure 2: Do you think the Council should increase the money they spend on soft landscaping in public areas?



Soft Landscaping—this is what we're doing

It is very reassuring to hear that almost three-quarters of the Citizens' Panel share our views on the future of landscape planning in Aberdeen City with 74% of you saying that a mix of hard and soft landscaping is the most desirable option. The information you provided has already been put into action by helping us apply for grant funding to help us achieve these aims. As well as new projects such as improving the landscaping on the Beach Boulevard, we will continue with ongoing projects like the Gateway Planting scheme, which is increasing soft landscaping on the main artery roads into Aberdeen.

50% of panellists agreed that the Council should increase spending on soft landscaping in public areas. This is extremely encouraging and reaffirms the importance of the landscaped environment for the residents of Aberdeen.

David Forsyth
Environmental Manager
Neighbourhood Services (South Area)

Clean City

A Clean City

We wanted to find out your views on the cleanliness of Aberdeen City. As well as finding out which areas you thought were clean or unclean, we also wanted to hear where you thought we should be prioritising our efforts to keep the city clean.

You told us that the areas you thought were particularly clean were the parks, the West End, the Beach and some parts of the city centre. When we asked you to list areas that were particularly unclean, the top areas listed were Union Street, George Street, Market Street and King Street.

We also wanted to know your views on which issues Aberdeen City Council should be prioritising in order to clean up the city. The top three priorities outlined by you were to clean up litter (including gum removal), take action on flytipping and take action on dog fouling.

A Clean City – this is what we're doing

A clean city is a challenge for all cities. Aberdeen City Council currently focuses on the state of the streets and waste collected to ensure our city remains clean, but we know that future service provision needs to take account of new challenges. The information you gave us was really useful and is helping us plan our future priorities.

Keeping the city clean is no longer a '9-5' job. The expansion of the night time economy and other changes in society means that we need to ensure that the city is clean 24 hours a day, 7 days a week and your responses reflected this.

We asked you who you thought should be responsible for keeping the city clean. You said that as well as the Council, it was the responsibility of local business and individuals so we think its important to work together to achieve this. As well as keeping the streets clean, you told us that we need to do more to prevent fly tipping and dog fouling. We will use this information to plan for future service delivery.

Jan Falconer

Strategist – Sustainable Development

Biodiversity

Biodiversity means the number and variety of plants, animals, insects and other life (including humans) within a specified geographic area. It also considers the relationship between species and how we live together. We were interested in finding out if you thought the term 'biodiversity' was easy to understand and if not, was there a term that suited this definition better.

Biodiversity – this is what we're doing

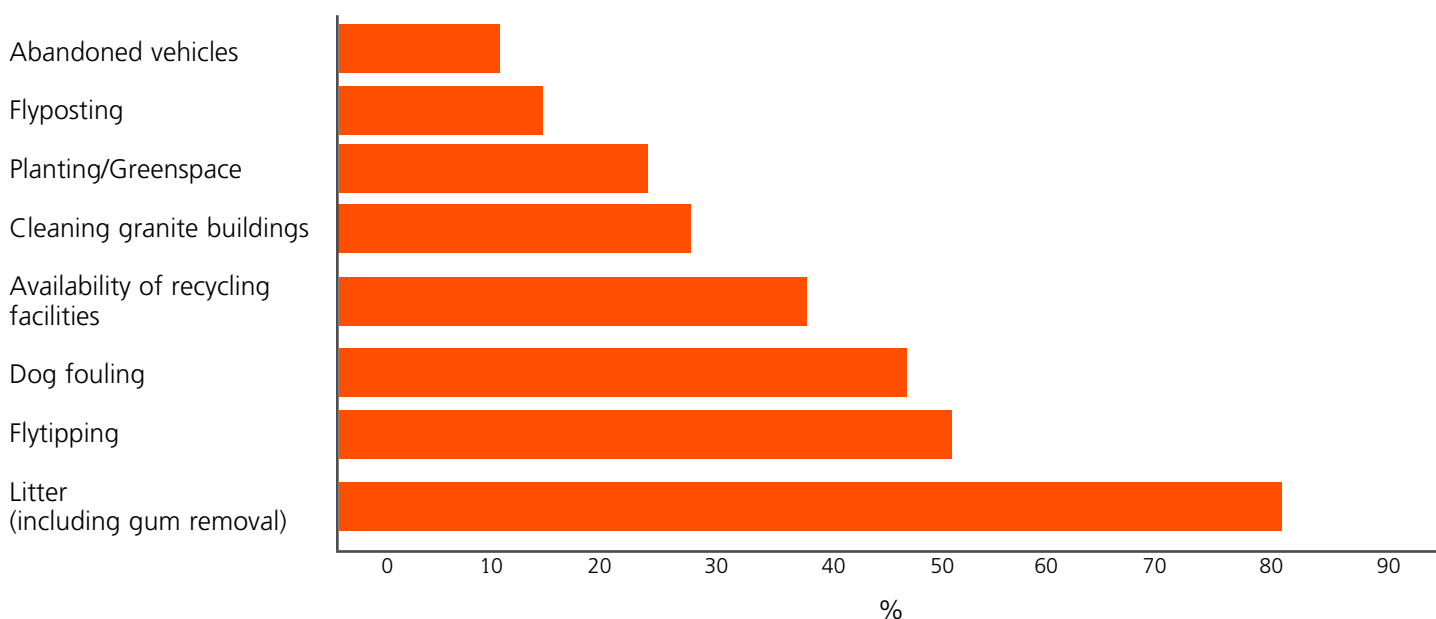
Approximately 64% of you did not think that 'biodiversity' was easy to understand and when we asked you which term you thought may explain it better, over two thirds of you thought 'the Natural Environment' was easier to understand.

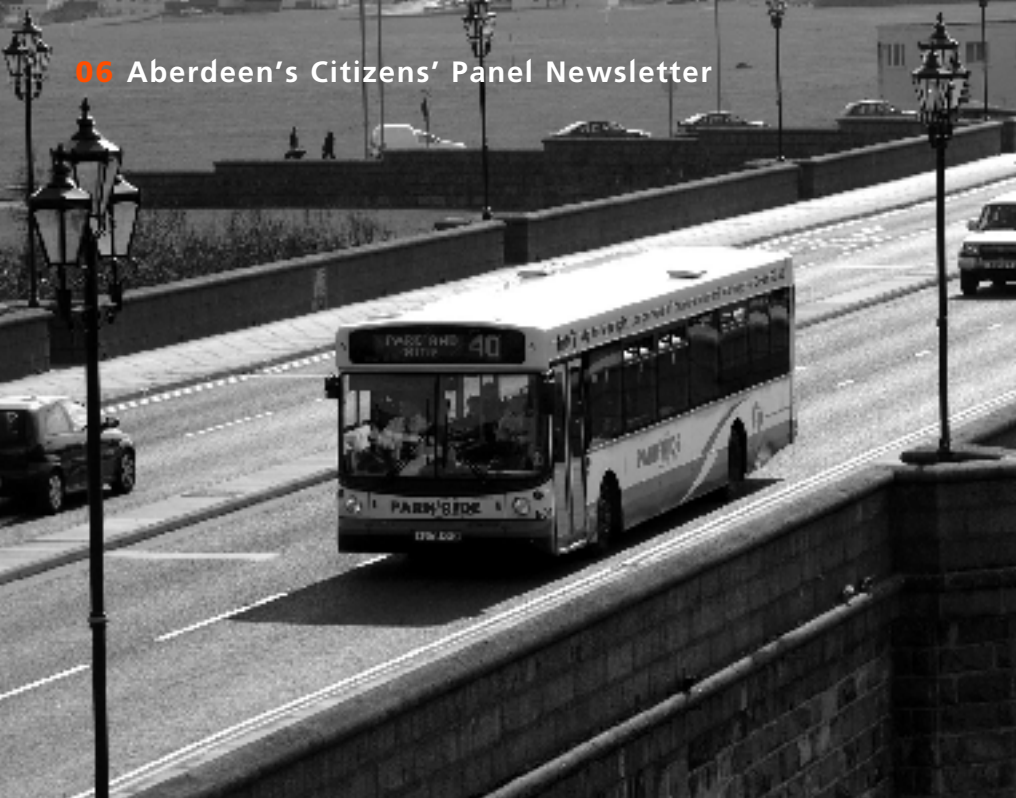
We will use this information to shape future information and publicity on the subject.

Jan Falconer

Strategist – Sustainable Development

Figure 3: Where should Aberdeen City Council be putting our efforts to make the City clean?





Outdoor Access and Core Paths

Aberdeen City Council are currently developing a system of core paths throughout the city to give you more opportunities for outdoor access. By outdoor access, we mean activities such as walking, cycling, horse riding, canoeing and other activities for all ages and abilities, rather than activities that require the use of a motorised vehicle, for example.

We asked you to tell us how important the quality of Aberdeen City's outdoor environment was to your lifestyle. Over 60% of you told us that it was 'very' or 'fairly' important. Approximately 15% of respondents rated the quality of Aberdeen City's outdoor environment as 'fairly unimportant' or 'not at all' important.

51% of respondents accessed the outdoors for walking on a daily basis whilst 4.4% access the outdoors for cycling daily. We hope that the Core Path's plan will increase these figures and we will use the City Voice to monitor this over the coming years. We also wanted to know what factors would encourage you to take part in outdoor access more often. 'More off-road options' and 'new paths links' were both seen as important but you said that 'better information' was the most important factor.

Finally, we asked you if you were familiar with the guidance given in the Scottish Outdoor Access Code on responsible access to the outdoors. Your responses told us that just over 50% of you were familiar with the guidance.

Transport and Connections

Local Transport Strategy

City Voice panellists have been invaluable in helping us with the development of the Local Transport Strategy (LTS). One of the main objectives of the LTS is to encourage higher levels of walking, cycling and public transport use. In order to measure this in the long term, we needed to find out about your current travel patterns.

The results from the 12th questionnaire told us that the majority of panellists (approximately 51%) have 1 car or van in their household. Approximately 29% have two cars or vans and only 4.4% had three or more cars or vans. Approximately 15% of households do not have a car or a van.

We were interested in finding out why you chose to use your car to get to work. 18% of panellists said that their car was essential to perform their job. Other frequently cited reasons included that public transport was not quick enough or frequent enough. When we asked you what improvements and initiatives would encourage you to use alternative modes of transport, approximately 48% said 'cheaper public transport'. Other popular factors included more frequent public transport (45.1%) and more reliable public transport (43.2%).

Local Transport Strategy - this is what we're doing

The City Voice has played a vital role in the development of Aberdeen's Local Transport Strategy (LTS). In the 11th questionnaire, you told us what you thought about the main ideas in the strategy. We called on you again in the 12th questionnaire, this time to tell us about your travel patterns, what you think about public transport and how we could encourage you to use alternative modes of transport in the future.

The information you gave us will allow us to monitor our progress in delivering the strategy. Asking the same questions next year will help us identify changing trends and patterns, and allow us to measure the impact of Council strategies on delivering the aims of the Local Transport Strategy. If you would like to find out more information on the Local Transport Strategy, please visit Aberdeen City Council website on www.aberdeencity.gov.uk

Richie Fraser
Planning and Infrastructure

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Future Questionnaires

This newsletter, and the full results of the 12th questionnaire, are available to view on the Community Planning website (www.aberdeencityvoice.org.uk). Internet access is provided at libraries throughout Aberdeen City and hard copies will be available shortly at The Point (Broad Street), and all city libraries. Alternatively, hard copies can be posted out by contacting me on the details below.

I plan to issue Newsletter No.13, a summary of the results of the enclosed questionnaire in mid June, along with the 14th Questionnaire.

If you have any further queries or would like to feedback your comments, please contact me:

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Community Planning
in Aberdeen



Additional Comments - Please let us know if your personal details have changed:

Name: _____

Previous Address: _____

New Address: _____

I no longer wish to be a panellist

Please return the above information in the prepaid envelope provided, or email pcorley@aberdeencity.gov.uk.

Thanks for your assistance.