

WASTE AND SUSTAINABILITY

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In November 2003 we sent out our Winter survey. It was all about waste and sustainability. Sustainability means planning for tomorrow and our future today. Your views are important in helping us to do that. Thank you to those of you who responded! We received 1346 completed questionnaires which represents a response rate of 69%. Here are some of the headline results. You can view the full analysis of results on our Website [www.worcestershire.gov.uk/citizenspanel](http://www.worcestershire.gov.uk/citizenspanel)

**Composting**

Our results show that many of you are already taking active steps to minimize waste – by composting at home. Your latest responses show that 48% of you compost your waste at home (compared to 44% in July 2002). Of those of you who are composting at home, 40% compost your waste using a plastic compost bin bought via a council scheme or by using an open compost heap, 39%. You also told us you would be encouraged to compost if we provided a free compost bin, gave you more information on how to compost and the benefits of composting.

Recall of the composting leaflet was high, 52% of you say you remember receiving it. It's encouraging to learn that as a result of receiving the composting leaflet 11% of you started your own compost bin/box, 6% ordered a plastic compost bin and 43% of you said you read and retained the information.

**Worcestershire County Council's Waste Minimisation & Promotion Officer says:** *'The increase of 4% more people composting translates into potentially a lot of rubbish diverted from the waste stream where it would otherwise end up in landfill. If all those new converts composted all of their kitchen and garden waste - this could translate into a potential 558 less dustcart loads per year. It goes to prove that every little bit helps!'*

**Sustainability – Purchasing Choices**

When purchasing goods or services from local businesses, you said that the following factors were most important;

- the business does not pollute the environment,
- the business tries to reduce the amount of waste it produces,
- the business has measures in place to reduce the chance of causing pollution.

16% of you always try to buy locally produced food and drink and 34% of you said if you see it you will buy it. Most of you buy locally produced food and drink from farm shops (64%) and farmers markets (42%). Your main reasons for buying locally produced food and drink is because it supports local producers, you think it's fresher, it tastes better and it's better quality.

Many of you (77%) would be encouraged to buy, or buy more locally produced food and drink if it was more widely available. 72% said you would be encouraged if locally produced food and drink was clearly labeled as being local and 53% said if it was cheaper than other similar products. Less important to you was a charter mark that signified quality (22%) and benefits to the local economy and the environment (14%).

**Genetically Modified Food - Purchasing**

Almost three quarters of you (73%) agreed that whether to purchase GM Food and Drink is up to the consumer to decide – but you want clear information about what you are buying. Most of you (74%) disagreed with the statement 'I'm not really bothered whether food contains GM ingredients'. Nearly all of you (96%) thought that food containing GM ingredients should be clearly labeled and over half of you (53%) agreed with 'I don't think any food should contain GM ingredients.'

**Genetically Modified Food – Growing**

55% of you do not think that farmers need to grow GM food in order to remain competitive. In addition most of you (55%) think that and that growing GM crops will not increase peoples' choice in food compared to 20% who think it will. 67% of you think that it is unnatural to interfere with nature in this way, whilst over three quarters of you (78%) think that organic farming techniques should be developed instead. Just 14% of you said you don't really understand what GM is compared to 72% who do.

**Worcestershire County Council's Sustainability Officer says:** *'There seems to be a strong demand for locally produced food, which is good news for our local producers. These results will help us in work to develop the local food & drink economy. Responses will also be used in work encouraging local businesses in improving their impact on the environment. Your responses on GM Food will contribute to District & County responses to Central Government on this issue.'*

## Climate Change

Our results show that the national debate over climate change is reflected here in Worcestershire! Most of you (57%) believe that Climate Change is a problem that everyone can do something about and 18% said 'It is essential we all take drastic action to combat the problem immediately.' However other opinions indicated that 14% of you think Climate Change is entirely natural, 7% said Climate Change is due to human activities and there isn't anything we can do about it and 3% said that Climate Change is not happening.

You also told us your preferred means for informing residents about the issues surrounding Climate Change were; provide more grants to reduce energy loss from homes, target schools and workplaces with energy efficiency education programmes and send leaflets to households explaining the issues.

## Water

The results indicate that you have a high level of awareness of the need to conserve water and manage this valuable resource effectively. 66% disagreed with the statement 'Our future water needs are expected to stay at current levels'. However many of you (68%) think that flooding incidents will occur more frequently in the future and 51% of you think that droughts are likely to occur more frequently in the future.

Encouragingly the majority of you already take measures in order to save water such as using the half load cycle on the washing machine and using a watering can instead of a hosepipe.

**Worcestershire County Council's Sustainability Officer says:** *'We are very encouraged by the fact that most of you felt that Climate Change is an issue that everyone can have an impact on. Councils and other organisations across the County are starting to work together on what they can do to reduce Climate Change gas emissions and ensure the County is prepared for the predicted impact that Climate Change will have on the County. Your responses will be used in developing a plan of action to direct that work.'*

*In terms of water, again we were pleased to see the high level of awareness and action taken to conserve water in the County. More needs to be done, however in making people aware of the just how much more important it may become to conserve water in the near future.'*

## Energy Efficiency

In terms of energy efficiency we asked you what would encourage you most to have your walls insulated. Results reveal that receiving a grant to help towards the costs, knowing it guaranteed to save you money on fuel bills, that it improved home comfort and knowing a reliable contractor to guarantee the work would encourage you the most.

**Warwickshire & Worcestershire Energy Efficiency Advice Centre says:** *'Many of the results were not unexpected. The main issues that concerned respondents have in fact already been addressed locally; information on insulation & grants is available from the Energy Efficiency Advice Centre (Telephone 0800 512012) and has also been sent to nearly every home in Worcestershire through the ECHO newspaper. Despite this we are concerned the message is still not getting through to everyone. We need to do more work in getting information to those who need it and encouraging people to take advantage of our assistance in improving the energy efficiency of their homes.'*

## Biodiversity

This Survey reinforced previous findings that the quality of our local environment and preservation of green spaces is important to you. Over 90% of you thought that seeing wild plants and wild animals, the preservation of urban green spaces and public open spaces and retaining the distinctive landscapes of Worcestershire were very important / important.

Just under half of you said you currently do wildlife-friendly gardening at home and the majority of you (74%) visit nature reserves and feed birds or provide nesting boxes (74%). Many of you already learn about Worcestershire's wildlife (24%) and 57% of you said you would consider doing this.

**Worcestershire Biodiversity Partnership's Biodiversity Action Plan Manager says:** *'It is reassuring to have confirmation that the local environment, and its wildlife and landscape, continue to be so important to the public. Raising greater awareness of biodiversity amongst local communities is one of the current priorities of the Worcestershire Biodiversity Partnership so it is particularly relevant to see that, whilst a relatively small proportion are currently learning about Worcestershire's wildlife, a much greater majority are willing to consider doing so. The value of green spaces for biodiversity, landscape, well-being, community engagement and increasing the levels of social inclusion are also important to us. The Biodiversity Partnership is currently seeking funding to encourage greater community ownership and involvement in the local environment and its biodiversity. The County Council is similarly developing information for the general public about the landscape character of the county.'*