



## November 2004 Citizens' Panel Survey – Feedback of Results

In November 2004 we sent you our tenth Citizens' Panel survey. It concerned the issues of Access to the Countryside, Access to Libraries and Freedom of Information. Thank you to those of you who responded! We received 1297 completed questionnaires, which represents a response rate of 62%. 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)

### ACCESS TO THE COUNTRYSIDE

Results show that half of you use public rights of way at least once a week or more frequently. Your responses tell us that those of you aged between 40-49 years are the most frequent users of public rights of way. The majority of you use public rights of way for the purpose of pleasure, with health/fitness being the next most important reason.

#### Information about public rights of way

In respect of where to go in the countryside, what to do in the countryside and what to expect in the countryside when you get there, around 50% of you did not find a lack of information provision to be a problem. However, 10% of you said it is a problem that puts you off or prevents you from using public rights of way.

#### Condition of public rights of way

You cited overgrown paths, dog mess, litter and poor surfaces as the issues of most concern in terms of the condition of public rights of way. However, for all of the issues the majority of you said that these were not enough of a problem to prevent you from using public rights of way.

#### Confidence in using public rights of way

48% of you said that personal safety concerns are a problem affecting your confidence when using public rights of way, of which 22% were prevented from using public rights of way because of this.

The top three factors that would encourage you to use public rights of way in Worcestershire are:

- Paths that are clear of litter/dog mess
- Paths that are clear of overgrown vegetation.
- Better signage with destinations and way markings.

**Worcestershire County Council's Senior Access Development Officer says** "Worcestershire County Council's Countryside Service is encouraged by the results received. Half of all respondents use public rights of way at least once a week. There are a number of improvements required on the rights of way network and these results help to highlight the issues that are most important to Worcestershire residents.

*The results will help shape the Rights of Way Improvement Plan, this is a strategic document, which will influence how rights of way and other forms of access routes will be managed and planned over a 10-year period. Further information about this plan can be found at [www.worcestershire.gov.uk/countryside](http://www.worcestershire.gov.uk/countryside)*

## ACCESS TO LIBRARIES

Most of you are aware of the various loan facilities provided by Worcestershire libraries. 65% of you knew that Worcestershire libraries provide free access to the Internet.

Just under a third of you use a Worcestershire County Council building based library about once a month. Nearly twice the amount of you aged 65+ use the library at least once week compared to the other age groups.

We asked you about your satisfaction levels in terms of the services provided by libraries in Worcestershire. 73% said you were satisfied with the library service overall. In comparison with other districts, respondents from Worcester City were less satisfied with the books provided and the library service overall.

You identified the following as the top three factors that would encourage you to use the library:

- More convenient opening hours during the week (outside 9am – 5pm)
- More library based activities
- More convenient opening hours at the weekend.

You told us that early evening (5-7pm) and later evening (7-9pm) would be the most useful times to use a library beyond the standard opening times of 9am – 5pm.

***Worcestershire County Council's Library Services Manager says*** "As a result of this survey several actions will be taken in order to improve our library service in Worcestershire. We will be marketing the other facilities that Worcestershire libraries offer in addition to loaning books, such as computer facilities and community language books. You told us that there was a limited range of books available at Worcestershire libraries and therefore we are going to improve the circulation of stock at libraries especially smaller libraries. We will also be reviewing current library opening hours."

## FREEDOM OF INFORMATION

We asked you about your satisfaction levels in terms of whether the County Council conducts its business and makes its decisions openly and how transparent and open we are about the way information is published about our services. 39% of you said you were very or fairly satisfied that the Council conducts its business and makes its decisions openly, compared to 10% who were fairly or very dissatisfied. 43% of you said you were either very or fairly satisfied that the Council is open and transparent about the way we publish information about our services, compared to 6% who were fairly or very dissatisfied.

In the future you are most likely to make a request for information about:

- Land, planning and building
- Schools
- Education Policy

***Worcestershire County Council's Records and Information Services Manager says*** "As a result of this survey we will be further publicising the publication scheme amongst Worcestershire residents, we want to make sure the public are aware of how they can access information produced by the Council. It is interesting to see that the areas people were most interested in making requests for information are the areas we have already received the most requests for since the Freedom of Information Act came into force in January 2005."