

DISTRICT COUNCIL REPORT

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Village Survey - follow up.



The responses to all the questions in the survey are being presented to the relevant authorities – be they Westminster, The Highways Dept., OCC, VWHDC, Abingdon Town Council, or Drayton PC - asking for their reactions. Any received will be published in future Chronicles.

In this issue, as promised, I will attempt to sum up the comments made by the 500 people who completed the Survey Forms.

These comments were not asked for in the survey and, as far as possible, not prompted by the questions.

Three issues were commented on by 50+ people. These were:

- Bus Services.

More than 100 people said that they would use the bus services if a) they were more frequent (particularly at the beginning of the day), b) more reliable (i.e. not held up in traffic) and b) cheaper than a car. It seems that the people of Drayton would like a higher percentage of public money to be spent on frequent, efficient, affordable and environmentally friendly bus services than is being spent at present.

- Road and Pavement Condition.

Some of our roads and many of our pavements are in a deplorable state. Some pavements have not been repaired since they were laid more than 20 years ago. With the proportion of elderly people in our village, this is becoming a major source of concern.

- A34 Noise.

Those who live in the southern and western sides of the village have put up with this problem for years. The problem is getting worse and even those living to the East and North of the village centre are affected. Most of the noise is generated by a half mile stretch of the A34 immediately north of the Drayton/Steventon bridge.

All the above require expensive solutions, but given the proposed expansion of Didcot, the possible reservoir, the increasing development of Milton Park, Harwell etc, we must ensure that solutions are built into the authorities plans.

Of the other issues mentioned, three cropped up frequently requiring less costly solutions. These were:

- Tree cutting, hedge-trimming and weed control.

Some of this is Council work, but many of the concerns could be answered by owners of trees, hedges and weeds being a little more vigilant in controlling them – particularly where they border the public highway.

- Parking

With almost as many cars as people, parking is bound to be one of the most common causes of neighbour dispute in our village. As far as the law is concerned, no-one has a legal 'right' to park their car on the highway, even if there are no yellow lines. However, no-one will move you on unless they can prove that you are causing an obstruction. In other words, authorities are reluctant to get involved in parking disputes and expect us to solve them for ourselves. The authorities will take action against drivers who park where people cannot see to cross the road, or block entrances and exits or pavements.

- Dog Fouling

VWHDC has two Environmental Wardens who cover the whole Vale. They are responsible for preventing everything from serious fly-tipping to dropping cigarette butts in public places. They have the power to fine the owners of dogs who foul public areas. We can save them that duty if we dog-lovers clear up our own pet's poop, so that they can pursue the people who dump mattresses, sofas and cars in our lanes and lay-bys.

In the last issue, I summarised the responses to the various questions asked. Drayton's top issue was without doubt *Abingdon's* traffic problems. Clearly, these affect the whole area, causing inconvenience and frustration to thousands of people and, of course, damage to human and environmental health. As most of the other major findings in the survey centred around cars, roads and the vitality of our village and our nearest neighbouring town, now seems the time to raise the issue of air quality.

Air Quality

In an effort to understand the issues that most seem to concern the people of Drayton, I have got myself involved with the ABITS (Abingdon Integrated Transport Scheme) working group - trying to find ways of easing Abingdon's traffic problem, and the Abingdon Partnership – the group trying to address the issue of Abingdon Town centre vitality. I have also been working with the Vale's officers on an Air Quality Action Plan for Abingdon town centre.

Nitrogen dioxide levels have been measured to be in excess of European desired levels for the past few years. These are targets that we signed up to, along with our European partners. It was hoped that the ABITS scheme would fix the problem. Although it has helped, the figures remain above the recommended limit and show signs of increasing. It may seem like one more nail in the coffin of Abingdon's problems, but it may not be.

We want more people in Abingdon to keep it alive. More people mean more traffic and more pollution. Is the choice between traffic gridlocked in poisonous fumes and a desert of no shops, no cars and no people? It is entirely possible that the Air Quality Action Plan, in putting air quality above all else can act as a framework for all other initiatives in the town. A calm, clean, safe town centre with things to see and do, is one people will want to visit. The solutions to air quality problems have implications for everyone, from central government to each of us as individuals. Some of the solutions will be very expensive (bridges/by-passes etc) some very cheap (more use of bicycles, more thoughtful use of cars etc).

In Drayton, we cannot have it all ways. We have 1500+ cars. Yet we have a well-built, reasonably-safe bicycle route into our nearest town which needs our support. Complaining about Abingdon's traffic whilst we all contribute to it surely puts us on fairly rocky moral ground.

If you would like to contribute to the debate on the Air Quality Action Plan for Abingdon town centre, please go to the VWHDC website and click on 'Air Your Views'.

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