



Three Parishes Big Local Trust Questionnaire Analysis

November 2011

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The Community Council of Shropshire (CCS) was commissioned to carry out the analysis of the three parishes Big Local survey designed and distributed by the project steering group. The following report summarises the key findings from the survey.

A total of 421 completed questionnaires were returned throughout September and October 2011 using either the freepost address provided by CCS; collection boxes within the parishes; or using the online survey hosted on the CCS website. Approximately 3,300 questionnaires¹ were originally distributed; therefore the return rate is in the region of 13%. Although this is only an approximation it still represents a low response rate and therefore additional consultation should be considered before drawing any firm conclusions or assuming the priorities of the community for any future projects.

32.3% of the surveys (136) were returned from Gobowen residents, 22.3% (94) from St Martins residents and 45.4% (191) from those living in the parish of Weston Rhyn. Responses came from a range of areas within each parish with representation from people living in central areas of each parish as well as the outlying rural areas (see Appendix 2 for full area breakdown).

As Figure 1 shows, age ranges in households varied amongst respondents. In each of the parishes those aged over 50 were well represented but there were fewer responses from households with under 21s living there.

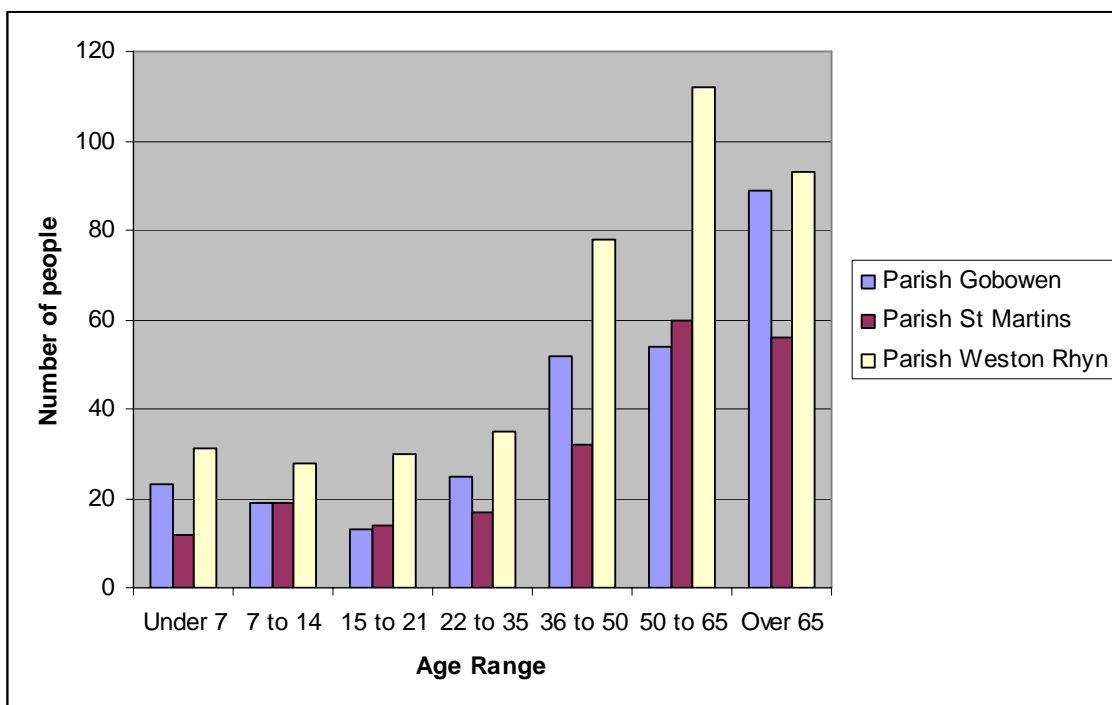


Figure 1: How many people live at your address in each of the age ranges?

¹ The steering group does not know the exact number of questionnaires that were distributed, therefore approximations are being used. Every respondent did not answer every question, but unless otherwise stated, all percentages are reported as a percentage of the total number of returned questionnaires.

What is the best thing about living in the area?

395 people commented about what the best thing is about living in the area. There were several main areas of comment relating to living in or near to the countryside, access to amenities and services as well as transport links and the friendliness of people in the community.

There were 137 comments about enjoying living in the countryside, a rural community with good access to open spaces and walks.

"Countryside views and green open spaces" Gobowen resident.

"Fairly good facilities yet a lovely rural setting" St Martins resident.

"It is a rural, scenic area, relatively crime and vandalism free. Added bonus of being a World Heritage site and having lots of historical buildings in the locality." Weston Rhyn resident.

61 people commented that the best thing was the peace and quiet of the area, which in many cases was linked to comments about liking living in rural area.

"The peace and quiet of a rural location" Weston Rhyn resident

"It's quiet, not much trouble, safe place to live" Gobowen resident

In addition to comments about enjoying the natural surroundings there were also 2 comments from people living in St Martins who like the heritage and history of the village and the buildings in the area.

"The lovely old building The Miners Institute is a testament to the heritage of the village and should be valued by the community"

75 people commented about enjoying the good access to local shops, amenities and nearby towns.

"Most essential services are to hand and swift access to the open countryside. Established shops and businesses have been augmented with a pharmacy and dental practice" Gobowen resident.

"Easy access to shops, schools and amenities" St Martins resident

"In the country but easy to get to towns and major cities" Weston Rhyn resident

41 people from Gobowen also commented that the best thing about living in their area was the good transport links, road; rail and buses allowing them to travel relatively easily.

"Good access to road and rail links"

52 people said that the best thing was the friendliness of the people who lived in the area, having good neighbours and the real sense of community.

"Good friendly area, people friendly and helpful" Gobowen resident

"Community feel, good neighbours" St Martins resident

"Being able to live alone but feel secure- my neighbours are friendly and kind and the children are a joy- they play outside together and therefore also feel and are safe" Weston Rhyn resident.

Which are the least attractive features of the area, and how would you change them?

In total there were 365 comments about the least attractive features in the area, and again these were very similar across each of the parishes. The comments can be broadly categorised into the following areas: Physical environment and roads, traffic and transport.

121 people thought that there were some neglected areas, run down buildings, unkempt land and property that were in need of some attention, brightening up, better maintenance or improving by planting of flowers.

“Run down, neglected and even burnt building makes the village look very scruffy. Buildings should be better maintained or action taken against people who refuse” Gobowen resident

“Village Centre around shops and post office – do up neglected properties and encourage flower displays. The village roundabout – almost always looks unkempt” Gobowen resident

“St Martins Miners Institute and grounds – in need of major refurbishment” St Martins resident

“Institute car park and surrounding areas. Gardens at community centre very untidy and overgrown not looked after” St Martins resident

“Sadly the Cross Keys pub is now in a sad state of repair, it’s been a centre piece of the village for many years and really it’s sad to see old buildings and our heritage disappear” Weston Rhyn resident

“Some of the buildings i.e. the local pubs are really run down in appearance and this spoils the village” Weston Rhyn resident

89 people commented about problems with litter and dog fouling and many people suggested that potential solutions could be installing more bins, enforcing fines and providing better education to people about responsible behaviour.

“Poor amenities for litter/dog fouling – provide more bins” Weston Rhyn resident

“Rubbish on roads – take it home or put in bins provided” Weston Rhyn resident

“Rubbish dumped and just left everywhere, educate people to look after what a good place we have” St Martins resident

“Litter/dog fouling – provide more bins” St Martins resident

Road and traffic issues were mentioned by 74 people including speeding, lack of safe crossing places and volume of traffic and suggested solutions including a range of traffic calming measures as well as lowering speed limits, installing speed bumps and speed activated signs as well as calls for safer crossing areas in Gobowen.

“Cars speeding along Chirk Road and parking on school ‘zigzags’ and in School Lane – speed cameras to visit and CSO to be visible at school times on regular basis” Gobowen resident

“Speeding on Chirk Road and St Martins Road, create speed bumps on both roads” Gobowen resident

“Speeding traffic and volume of HGVs going through (introduce speed calming measures)” St Martins resident

“Some cars, not residents, use the narrow lanes as race tracks – a 15-20mph speed limit needs to be introduced” St Martins resident

“The speed of vehicular traffic along Old Chirk Road through the hamlet, the road could be considered for reduction to a 20mph limit” Weston Rhyn resident

“Influx of traffic and speeding vehicles on Station Road in Weston Rhyn. Putting speed bumps from beyond the canal bridge, past the school to slow cars” Weston Rhyn resident

Linked to these comments, 45 people from Gobowen and Weston Rhyn commented that there were problems with parking and disruption caused by inconsiderate parking at various locations within their villages particularly associated with areas by the shops and by the school at pick-up and drop-off times. Solutions included road widening to allow the traffic to still be able to move freely whilst giving space for parking; use of the school field for parking; possibly converting one of the old pub sites into a car park; and introducing double yellow lines to restrict parking.

“Parking around post office, a real nuisance.” Gobowen resident

“Parking around school – create parking area on unused area of school field. Parking on High Street – double yellow lines” Weston Rhyn resident.

There were a small number of comments that were individual to each parish. Eight people from Gobowen and St Martins commented about problems with young people hanging around the streets, which was also associated with other issues including underage drinking and other anti-social behaviour.

“Youngsters hanging about by the co-op and the railway station, we need CSOs or policemen more often.” Gobowen resident.

There were also several comments relating to poor public transport in terms of the lack of evening services from residents in Gobowen, poor broadband service and over development were mentioned by a few residents in St Martins and 13 residents from Weston Rhyn highlighted poor play areas and recreational spaces as one of their least attractive features of the area.

What are your top three suggestions for how the money from the Big Local Trust should be spent?

358 people responded, giving at least one suggestion for how the money from the Big Local Trust should be spent. The majority of the suggestions can be loosely fitted into three main categories, suggestions relating to: community services, facilities and activities; the physical environment; and roads and transport. Within these categories there were some slight variations between the three parishes which will be further detailed below.

Community services, facilities and activities (258 comments in total):

There were 94 suggestions that some of the money should be spent on providing more or improved facilities, activities and services for teenagers and young people.

“More facilities should be provided for the young people of the village i.e. a drop in centre” Gobowen resident

“Do activities to keep teenagers off the street and getting into trouble, activities like football. Improve the community centre and get things for older teenage people aged 10-17” St Martins resident

“Improve the Institute by providing more facilities for young people” Weston Rhyn resident.

59 people (mostly Weston Rhyn residents) suggested new or improved play areas and parks for younger children. A lack of these types of facilities was highlighted by some residents as the least attractive features in the area in an earlier question.

“Play equipment for the children, the local Rec has nothing for children, we have to walk to Chirk Bank and that’s a busy road and a nightmare to cross before the bridge.” Weston Rhyn resident.

“No play equipment, put multiple small play areas around the village.” St Martins resident.

32 people suggested using the money to pay towards refurbishment of community buildings in the area as well as to consider ways of increasing usage of these facilities in the parishes, specifically mentioning the community centre and Miners Institute in St Martins and the Institute in Weston Rhyn.

“Updating and improving facilities at Village Institute” Weston Rhyn resident

“Widen use of community hall” St Martins resident

44 people suggested provision of more community activities and events, promotion of what is already available and even subsidising some of these activities for the benefit of the communities.

“Better promotion of what’s on e.g. library, in the park, at the community halls.” Gobowen resident.

“Fund a community leadership post at the community centre to include support for the children and youth of the village.” St Martins resident.

“I think something, I am not sure at the moment what that is, needs to be done to really bring the community together. I recall the days when the village carnival literally brought everyone out, and now I am not even sure if we have one.” Weston Rhyn resident.

There were also a small number of comments from people (7) in the Gobowen area, that there was a need for more activities, facilities or support for older people within the community. Whilst not significant in number, the comments still link with some of the other suggestions for increasing usage of community buildings and provision of more community activities and events in general.

“More for pensioners to do, it seems everything is for teenagers” Gobowen resident

Physical and natural environment (82 comments in total)

Included in this topic area were suggestions for spending the money on tidying up and improving the look of the village; more dog and litter bins; and protection of the green spaces.

29 suggestions, all from respondents in Gobowen, were made for putting some of the money towards tidying up and improving the look of the village particularly the run down buildings and neglected spaces.

“Tidy up and beautify (flower tubs) centre” Gobowen resident

“Improve the village area – more colour- flowers i.e. hanging baskets, more litter bins. As you enter the village instead of just a sign ‘Gobowen’, why not a floral base to brighten and welcome visitors, and people passing through” Gobowen resident.

There were several comments across each of the three parishes suggesting that money could be spent on creating wild spaces (e.g. the meadows in Gobowen) and tidying up existing areas such as Perry River in Gobowen.

“Buy the meadows in Gobowen and make it into a nature reserve/explorer area.” Gobowen resident

“Protection of Gobowen meadows – possibly to become a nature reserve/country park etc.” Weston Rhyn resident

Linked to this there were also 11 suggestions from residents in Weston Rhyn and St Martins about the need to conserve and protect existing green spaces.

There were 12 suggestions that more dog and litter bins could be provided or at least some contribution towards improved signage or better education to help combat this problem. These were predominantly made by Weston Rhyn and Gobowen residents.

"More dog waste bins in Weston Rhyn, Chirk Bank" Weston Rhyn resident

"Provision of 'Doggie Bins' and litter bins along canal from Chirk Tunnel to the Lion Quays" Weston Rhyn resident

"Extra waste bins on playing fields. Perry River is a disgrace with rubbish thrown in it." Gobowen resident

Roads, Footpaths, Traffic and Transport:

There were 97 comments suggesting some of the money could be used for speed and traffic control measures, to address some of the parking issues in the parishes, and improve footpaths.

There were 45 comments about using the money to provide new speed and traffic control measures in the area.

"Road markings to slow traffic through the village. Make zebra crossing more visible" St Martins resident.

"Speed ramps on St Martins Road, as this is the route most parents walk their children to school" Gobowen resident.

Also linked with this there were also several additional comments on improvements in general to the roads including improving maintenance, junctions and pedestrian crossings.

"A pedestrian crossing in centre of village by co-op/post office/station area, busy road with no safe crossing point." Gobowen resident.

"Fix roads in Greenfields and wherever else they are in disrepair" St Martins resident.

"Improve width of road to Quinta Christian Centre as too narrow for buses." Weston Rhyn resident.

24 comments were made, by Weston Rhyn residents, about doing something to solve some of the parking problems in the area, specifically around the school and in the village centre.

"Assist school to create off road parking to create a safer environment!!" Weston Rhyn resident

"Road needs to be widened around the school to make room for cars to park without blocking traffic" Weston Rhyn resident.

There were also several comments from residents in Gobowen (5) about spending some money on widening the pavements and further comments from all areas about improving the footpath network.

Local facilities

Swimming pool at Rhyn Park:

Just under three quarters of those that responded indicated that they never use the swimming pool at Rhyn Park (304, 72%). 7% (31) use it occasionally and 4% (15) use it weekly. There were three additional comments from people who indicated that they used the swimming facilities in Chirk rather than Rhyn Park.

This facility was rated as satisfactory by over one third of people (30, 39%), 30% rated it as good. Some people who had previously indicated that they never use the swimming

pool did still decide to rate this facility; responses were split between poor (8) and satisfactory (12).

Sports centre at Rhyn Park:

Almost three quarters of respondents (308, 73%) said that they never use the sports centre at Rhyn Park, 6% (23) use it occasionally and 4% (16) use it weekly. There were also three additional comments from people suggesting that they used other sports facilities such as the Lion Quays and Chirk Leisure Centre.

Overall the sports centre was rated as satisfactory by respondents (41%, 26). Of those that use the facility on a more regular basis, either weekly or monthly 37.5% rated it as good and 31% rated it as excellent.

Your local village hall:

Overall, local village halls are used occasionally by 37.5% of respondents but 33.5% never use their hall.

The responses were filtered by parish to examine whether there were any differences between the three parishes based on the assumption that people would classify their 'local village hall' as the one within their parish. Mostly respondents from Weston Rhyn indicated that they use their local village hall occasionally (51%), 11.5 % use it on a weekly basis and 7% use on a monthly basis, a quarter of those that responded never use their village hall. Responses from those living in Gobowen and St Martins were fairly similar with people indicating that they either never used the facility (38% in Gobowen and 44% in St Martins) or only used occasionally (27% in Gobowen and 25.5% in St Martins). 42% (88) rated the facilities as satisfactory and 41% (86) rated them as good; there was little significant difference in the rating depending on frequency of use. Very few people (7%) rated these facilities as poor.

Village Youth Club:

Responses indicate that the majority of people do not use the village youth club, however it should be noted that this is likely to be because this is a facility for children and young people which is not wholly represented in the age range of respondents to the survey. Of those that responded, 7 people indicated that they use the youth club on a weekly basis and 8 people said that they use it occasionally. The facility was rated as good by 48% (21). 36% rated the facility as satisfactory although this was skewed slightly by ratings from some who had indicated that they never used the facility.

Cubs/Scouts/Brownies/Guides:

As with the village youth club, the majority of those that responded never use Scouts and Guides or any of their affiliated groups, which is more than likely to be because these activities are targeted at children and young people and these age groups were not well represented by respondents to the questionnaire.

21 people attend cubs/scouts/brownies/guides on a weekly basis whilst 8 attend occasionally. Those that use the facilities on a regular basis rated them as excellent (43%, 9), 33% rated them as good. 4 people who only occasionally use the facilities rated them as satisfactory whilst 11 people who never use them also rated them as satisfactory.

Railway Station at Gobowen:

57% of respondents use the railway station at Gobowen occasionally, 18% never use it and 17% use the station either weekly or monthly. This facility was rated as good by the majority of respondents (48%, 143), the same number that rated this facilities as excellent (24%) also rated it as satisfactory.

Railway Station at Chirk:

Responses were mixed in terms of use of the railway station at Chirk, 42% of respondents never use this facility, whilst 32% use it only occasionally. Overall the station was rated as good by most of those that use the facility (46%, 79).

Local Buses:

Use of the local buses by respondents was also mixed. Just over one third of respondents (35%) never use the buses, 30% use them occasionally but 21% indicated that they use them on a weekly basis. Slightly more people rated the local buses as good (39%, 91), followed by 32% (74) who rated them as satisfactory. Of those that use the buses on a weekly basis, ratings were higher, with 67% of these regular users rating them as either good or excellent.

Dial-a-ride:

The majority of respondents (282, 67%) indicated that they never use the dial-a-ride service. However, 12% (49) use the service occasionally and 3% (13) use it weekly. Rating of the service is mixed; responses are split between satisfactory and good (36% and 34% respectively).

Village Pubs:

In general slightly more people use the village pubs occasionally (32%) compared to 28% who indicated that they never use them. Very few use these facilities either weekly or monthly.

The responses were also filtered by parish to see whether this had any bearing on the responses. 37% of respondents living in St Martins use the local pubs occasionally and the same number (6%) use these on a weekly or monthly basis. Slightly more respondents in Weston Rhyn use the local pubs occasionally (32.5%) than never use them (30%) and 17% use either weekly or monthly. In Gobowen, as with the overall results, slightly more people never use the village pubs compared to those that use them occasionally.

Overall the village pubs were rated as satisfactory by 40%, followed by 27% (45) who rated them as good and 23% (38) who rated them as poor. The ratings were fairly mixed and varied depending on frequency of use and parish lived in. 46% of those living in Gobowen who use the village pubs rated them as poor and 42% rated them as satisfactory. Ratings from those living in St Martins were evenly spread, with similar numbers rating the local pubs as satisfactory, good and excellent (27%, 35% and 27% respectively). Those living in Weston Rhyn rated the local pubs as either satisfactory or good (40% and 34% respectively).

In addition to the listed facilities, respondents also indicated that they used several other facilities in the area. 34 people listed local shops including the post office which they use on a regular basis; 14 people listed various libraries including those in Gobowen and Chirk; and 8 people listed the Church or Chapel, which they felt should have been included in the main list on the survey. Of those that went on to give these facilities a rating, most (11) rated the shops as excellent. Ratings for the library facilities varied and were spread from excellent through to satisfactory. Few people rated the church facilities.

55% of respondents indicated that they would like to use the facilities listed more often. Using the multiple choice options given, those that would like to use the facilities more often indicated what was preventing them doing so now. Lack of personal time was cited by 48.5% of people, followed by financial reasons (34%). 21% said that timing of classes/sessions is impractical, whilst 19% said that there was little of interest.

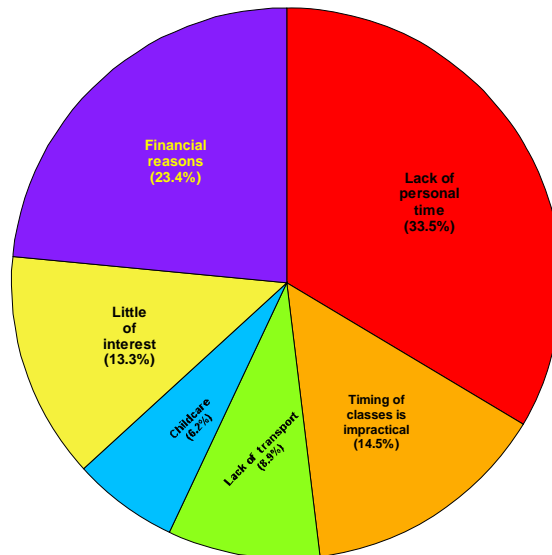


Figure 2: What is preventing you from using the facilities now?

There were 91 other comments, several of which simply reiterated some of the options given: no time or nothing that is of interest. There were 13 comments from people who simply said that they were too old or were no longer able to access some of the facilities because of ill health. There were 12 comments from people who didn't know what was available at Rhyn Park, there was a lack of information and some queried whether these facilities were actually open to the public.

"I would be interested to use the swimming pool/sports centre at Rhyn Park but have no idea of times etc when it is available to the public."

"Only just moved here. I intend to use the pool at Rhyn Park but the info on the internet is non existent. In fact, if you hadn't sent this out, I wouldn't have known it was available"

Finally, there were 11 comments from people who suggested that the bus service was too poor to allow them to access some of these facilities, there is no Sunday or late service.