

Budget Consultation
Co-chomhairle Buidseit **2012**



The Highland Council
Consultation Analysis

The

Environment

Budget Consultation 2012

The Environment

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Energy

What else would you like to see the Council do to reduce energy?

and

Should the Council continue to invest significantly in renewables in an effort to be at the forefront of reducing carbon emissions, supporting the growth of the renewables industry in the Highlands and reducing fuel poverty?

and

Should the Council invest further in energy generation schemes?

and

Should we continue to look for reductions in costs from street lighting?

and

To save energy would you be supportive of street lights being switched off between midnight and 6am in smaller communities with less than 150 street lights and reducing energy costs in urban areas by switching to LED lights?



What else would you like to see the Council do to reduce energy?

Quantitative Analysis

The Citizens' Panel were not asked any specific questions on reducing energy and investing in renewables.

Qualitative Analysis

147 separate responses were received on the question “*What else would you like to see the Council do to reduce energy?*” These were mainly from online, emailed and posted questionnaires, with responses also received from ward forums.

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Organisational responses were received from Community Councils and from the focus groups held with People First and Highland Youth Voice.

Respondents to the question on what else the Council could do to reduce energy provided suggestions across five key areas – Council buildings; street lighting; renewables; staff ways of working; general areas.

Council Buildings

A number of respondents provided suggestions that the Council needs to be more energy efficient with regards to its own buildings. It was suggested that a reduction in the number of buildings would assist towards this, along with a reduction in the number of staff, which would also lead to a reduction in buildings. Unused or underused Council buildings should be mothballed in order to save energy.

It was reported that Council owned buildings, including schools, need to be more energy efficient. This includes being better insulated, draft proofed, double glazed and making use of renewable sources such as solar panels.

A number of respondents reported that the heating of Council buildings needed to be addressed. It was suggested that the heating was too high in a number of Council buildings, both public and private. Whilst some respondents suggested that more efficient heating or better thermostatically controlled heating systems should be installed, others suggested turning down the current heating levels. It was also suggested that heating should not be on in the evenings or at weekends.

A further area where respondents felt the Council could do more to reduce energy was in relation to lighting its buildings. It was suggested that sensors should be in place to ensure lights go off if no one is present and that this would ensure lights do not remain on overnight. Some respondents felt that energy efficient lighting should be installed in Council buildings which would also assist in reducing energy. A number of respondents identified outside lighting at Council owned buildings that could be turned off in the evenings and at weekends.

There were some responses received which suggested that all electronic equipment in Council buildings should have an automatic shutdown installed in order to prevent equipment being left on overnight.

A suggestion from one respondent was that each Council building should have an individual responsible for co-ordinating energy saving amongst staff.

Street Lighting

A considerable number of respondents to this question highlighted the need for the Council to look at street lighting in order to reduce energy. Respondents varied in whether to turn lighting off entirely, dimming provision, turning off every second light or introducing sensor activated lighting.

Respondents also suggested that there was a need to reduce the amount of decorative lighting, lit road signs and lighting on main roads and bridges.

Further details on the views of respondents on ways to reduce street lighting can be found in the analysis of the specific questions on street lighting.

Renewables

It was suggested that the Council should make greater use of renewables in order to reduce the costs of energy and generate further income. Small scale wind turbines and solar panels could be positioned on Council buildings and it was suggested that district heating and micro-hydro schemes should be explored. A small number of respondents suggested that a waste energy plant should be developed, in order to prevent waste being sent south.

These ideas are discussed in more detail on the questions related to renewables and energy generation/

Ways of Working

A range of responses were received in relation to the way that Council staff work. It was suggested that a significant area for reducing energy was in relation to transport costs. Greater use of cycling and trains were suggested and switching to electric or hybrid cars for use on Council business. One respondent suggested that fuel and cars should no longer be provided to Council staff.

The need to assess whether journeys were essential was highlighted. It was suggested that video or tele-conferencing should be used more frequently – whether within Highland or for meetings outwith. It was also felt there should be less frequent centralised meetings. One respondent suggested that the rules should be changed so that Councillors no longer had to attend meetings in Inverness in person in order to participate, thus reducing travel.

It was questioned whether buildings should be kept open and heated for one or two employees who had chosen to work flexibly.

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There was a need for staff to be more aware of the need to reduce energy and it was suggested that there should be an incentive scheme for staff to encourage turning off lights and reducing heating.

General

There were a number of additional areas suggested by respondents as potential ways to reduce energy:

- Stop using street cleaning machines
- Stop watering plants when it has been raining
- A reduction in Council tax for improved energy efficiency
- Penalties for too much household waste
- Stop printing documents in Gaelic.

***Should the Council continue to invest significantly in renewables in an effort to be at the forefront of reducing carbon emissions, supporting the growth of the renewables industry in the Highlands and reducing fuel poverty?
and
Should the Council invest further in energy generation schemes?***

Quantitative Analysis

The Citizens' Panel were not asked the question on the Council investing in renewables.

The question on reducing energy was introduced as follows: "Your Council can generate income through the Government's Feed in Tariffs (FITs) and Renewable Heat Incentives (RHIs) from renewable energy installations such as wind turbines, solar panels and woodchip boilers. We already have a number of these schemes in place. The added benefit of generating our own energy is that it reduces energy costs and carbon emissions."

Respondents were then asked: "Should we invest further in energy generation schemes?" Their views are found in the table below.

Respondents' views on further investment in energy generation schemes

| “Should we invest further in energy generation schemes?” | All Respondents % |
|----------------------------------------------------------|-------------------|
| Yes | 81 |
| No | 19 |
| Total | 100 |

N=1,008

Some 81% of respondents agreed – and 19% disagreed - that further investment in energy generation schemes should take place.

Qualitative Analysis

The responses to the two questions on investing in renewables and investing in energy generation schemes have been analysed together given that people have answered in a similar way to both. 163 separate responses were received on the question on the Council investing in renewables and a further 167 comments received on the question on investing in energy generation schemes. For both questions responses were mainly from online, emailed and posted questionnaires, with responses also received from ward forums. Organisational responses were received from Community Councils and from the focus groups held with Sight Action, People First and Youth Voice.

In general people were in favour of both the Council investing further in renewables and also the Council investing further in energy generation schemes. For both, a number of respondents suggested that this was dependent on a range of factors, in particular financial considerations. Respondents also provided suggestions on what types of renewable/energy generation schemes they would be supportive of, similar answers being received for both questions. There were a group of respondents to both questions who were not in favour of the Council taking this area of work forward. Amongst the rationale for this was that this was not core Council business and that the Council needed to focus upon its customers.

In favour

Financial Benefits

Most respondents indicated that they would be in favour of the Council investing in renewables and energy generation schemes. Some respondents focused upon the income that could be generated from such schemes, whilst others concentrated on the reduction in energy use for the Council. A number of respondents highlighted that this should only be taken forward however if it was shown that there was a clear financial benefit to the Council and that any schemes were demonstrated to be value for money. It was also felt that there needed to be identifiable savings and one respondent suggested that a clear business case needed to be drawn up prior to progressing any scheme.

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A further view was that the Council should only be taking forward if Government subsidies were provided. A number of respondents suggested that investment in renewables should only be progressed if it were cheaper than alternative energy sources.

General benefits

In addition to financial benefits, it was proposed that there should be benefits to the public at large if investment was made in this area. The benefits may be in the medium to longer term but should be there. There were a number of responses which indicated that taking any schemes forward needed to be considered as part of the overall budget and judged where the priority areas for the Council lie.

One respondent felt that investment in renewables needed to be for the right reason and not purely for the emissions register.

Types of Schemes

Respondents suggested a range of areas, similar for both questions, which the Council should be investing in. Hydro schemes, wood boilers, solar panels, wind, wave and tidal, biofuels, ground source heat pumps and energy generation from waste were all suggested as possible areas of investment by respondents.

The use of solar panels and wood boilers in new builds were something suggested that could be included as planning conditions by the Council. A further view was that Council buildings should be utilising both.

Wind turbines were an area that divided respondents. Many in favour of the Council investing in renewables specifically stated that this did not include wind energy. It was suggested that this was not an effective or efficient way in which to generate energy and that efforts should be focused elsewhere. However, some respondents were in favour of further wind turbines, suggesting that the Council should be setting up its own wind farms. A further view was that the Council should take over existing schemes when they come up for lease. Off-shore wind turbines were put forward as an alternative to land based schemes and there was support for small community based wind turbines.

It was suggested that the Council should be supporting communities to invest in renewables themselves, with one view that this should be prioritised over the Council taking on projects themselves.

Additional Council Roles

Respondents also suggested a range of additional areas which the Council should be taking forward. Electric vehicles or hydrogen fuelled vehicles should replace all

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current Council vehicles. It was also suggested that the Council should be investing in communal heat schemes, especially in rural areas, in order to reduce costs. A further view was that the money generated from renewable and energy generation schemes should be used to make all homes in the area energy efficient.

The Council's role as a planning authority was seen by some respondents as important in this area. It was suggested that development companies should have to pay more to develop in order to compensate the local area. It was also proposed that the leases should not be renewed on current wind farms unless there was a significant increase in the community benefit paid to the area.

Not in favour

There were a number of respondents to both questions who were not in favour of the Council getting involved in renewables or energy generation. It was reported that this was not the core business of the Council and that it should be focusing upon its customers. It was suggested that the Council should only be installing renewables on its own premises and only where appropriate.

A number of respondents highlighted that where the Council had been involved in renewables and energy generation schemes, such as Caithness Heat and Power, this had been unsuccessful and therefore they should not be taking forward any such schemes again.

A number of respondents highlighted that wind energy had been proven not to be effective and therefore the Council should not be getting involved.

A further view was that the Council should not be concerned about reducing carbon emissions or supporting the growth of renewables but instead should be concentrating on fuel poverty.

Finally, the question on renewables included a reference to reducing fuel poverty. A number of respondents reported that there were better things the Council could be doing to reduce fuel poverty than investing in renewables. A further view was that the investment in renewables only increases fuel poverty due to the repayments made to energy companies and the corresponding high energy prices.

Street Lighting

Should we continue to look for reductions in costs from street lighting?

Quantitative Analysis

The Citizens' Panel were asked about street lighting. The question was introduced this way: "Following the last consultation, we have undertaken a number of trials to reduce energy costs for street lighting. Trials have suggested the preferred options are dimming and conversion to energy saving lighting."

Respondents were then asked: "Should we continue to look for reductions in cost from street lighting?" Their views are found in the table below.

Respondents' views on continuing to look for reductions in costs in street lighting

| "Should we continue to look for reductions in cost from street lighting?" | All Respondents % |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Yes | 84 |
| No | 16 |
| Total | 100 |

N=1,033

Some 84% of respondents agreed – and 16% disagreed – with the proposal that their Council should continue to look for reductions in costs from street lighting.

Qualitative Analysis

203 separate responses were received on the question "*Should we continue to look for reductions in costs from street lighting?*" These were mainly from online, emailed and posted questionnaires, with responses also received from ward forums.

Organisational responses were received from Community Councils and Parent Councils and from the focus groups held with Highland Users Group, Minority Ethnic Community, Sight Action and Youth Voice.

The vast majority of people responding to the question of '*Should we continue to look for reductions in cost from street lighting?*' indicated that they were in favour of the Council exploring this further. Respondents reported that there were too many street lights currently in use and made a series of suggestions on how to reduce lighting but also how to better manage current lighting.

In favour

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The majority of respondents to this question were in favour of the Council seeking further savings from street lighting. It was felt that there were too many street lights currently in use and that it would be possible to reduce the level of lighting in many areas.

A number of respondents reported though that safety must be taken into account prior to reducing or switching off lighting in certain communities. This was something particularly noted by Community Councils. A further view was that each community needs to be considered individually, and the impact upon this community assessed prior to decisions being taken on whether reduce lighting.

The focus group with Sight Action also highlighted that the needs of individuals with sight problems must be considered as part of any process to reduce lighting. The group reported that many individuals with sight issues cannot see in the dark without street lighting. Whilst the group were not against the reduction of lighting, it was noted that at least one route would need to remain with full lighting for accessibility purposes.

Suggestions for reducing

A series of suggestions were made by respondents as ways to make reductions on the costs of street lighting. More efficient lights, for example LED lighting, were suggested by a number of respondents, whilst lights powered for solar panels or lights with sensors attached that would only be activated if required, were further suggestions. It was reported that these would be ways to make savings from lighting without switching any off.

Further suggestions included reducing the number of street lighting columns, dimming current lighting or switching off for part of the night. A further idea was that, rather than switching off in residential areas, switching off should be targeted at main routes, bridges and junctions where it was reported there is often considerable waste.

A number of people were in favour of switching of lighting completely in small communities and in rural areas. An alternative suggestion was that lighting should only remain on in Town Centres. For one respondent, lighting should only be on in Town Centres at weekends. This particular aspect is discussed in more detail in the responses to the next question.

Management of current lighting

A number of respondents made suggestions on how to make savings from current lighting provision. It was noted that the timings for lighting coming on and off could be improved. It was noted lighting currently comes on when it is often still light. It was also suggested that street lighting on bright summer nights was often not necessary.

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A range of suggestions were also made regarding the lighting up of buildings. It was reported that schools are often lit at weekends when they are unused and decorative lighting on buildings and monuments could be reduced. One Community Council reported that their public toilets are lit outside throughout the winter months although the toilets themselves are closed.

Commercial representation

A representation was received from a private company which supplies replacement LED street lights. It was reported that the replacement of a typical sodium street light with one LED would be around 80%; Halogens 60 to 70%; Incandescent 92% and Tubes 50% +. The company suggests that they would supply and be paid out of the savings in energy and agreed maintenance costs.

Not in favour

A small number of respondents were not in favour of the Council seeking further savings from street lighting. Safety concerns were highlighted alongside a query whether savings in this area were possible. One respondent reported that as the majority of Highland is uninhabited, then the areas requiring lighting are the minority and the costs should therefore be met.

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To save energy would you be supportive of street lights being switched off between midnight and 6am in smaller communities with less than 150 street lights and reducing energy costs in urban areas by switching to LED lights?

195 separate responses were received on the question of switching off street lights in smaller communities and moving to LED street lighting in urban areas. These were mainly from online, emailed and posted questionnaires, with responses also received from ward forums. Organisational responses were received from Community Councils and Parent Councils and from the focus groups held with People First and Youth Voice.

The majority of respondents reported that they were in favour of switching off street lights in smaller communities and switching to LED lighting in urban areas. There were however a group of respondents, that whilst in favour of switching to LED lighting, were concerned about the proposal to switch of lighting entirely in smaller communities. A small number of respondents were against both proposals.

In favour

Overall respondents were generally in favour of both switching to LED lighting in urban areas and switching lighting off entirely in smaller communities. As with responses to the previous question, individuals noted that there is a need to reduce lighting overall.

There was strong support for an introduction of LED lighting. It was suggested that the introduction of this should not be restricted to urban areas but introduced in rural areas too. A small number of respondents highlighted however that LED lighting should only be introduced if it is cost effective.

There were a group of respondents who felt that switching off lights entirely should not be restricted to rural areas. It was suggested that if it were considered safe, then this should be extended to every area. Mirroring responses to the previous question, it was also suggested that lighting would often not be required at all during the summer months or periods of full moon.

A number of respondents, whilst in favour of the proposals, felt that each community should be assessed individually. It was suggested that lighting should only be switched off in rural communities if the community itself were in favour of it. It was also suggested that it should only happen in areas where it was considered safe, there was no concerns regarding crime and that the police agreed to the proposal.

There were a number of representations regarding the proposed times for switch of, with some regarding them as too long and others too short.

Concerns regarding switching lights off in rural areas

There were a group of respondents that, whilst in favour of changing to LED lighting, were concerned about switching off street lighting completely in rural areas. It was suggested that smaller communities perhaps need street lighting more due to the lack of pavements and concerns were expressed regarding the fear of crime within communities.

Although not in favour of switching off lighting completely, this group of respondents appeared to generally be in favour of reducing lighting within rural areas. It was suggested that switching off every other, or every third, light should be considered, or that dimming lighting would be more appropriate. A further suggestion was sensor controlled lighting, so that lighting would be off unless required.

Not in favour

A small number of respondents were not in favour either of LED lighting or switching off lighting in smaller communities. Concerns cited included safety concerns for individuals given how dark it can be in rural areas and the potential increased risk of crime.

Waste

What can communities do to reduce the amount of waste produced and at the same time further increase the level of recycling?

and

Would you be supportive of stopping the collection of green waste during the months of December to February to save £30,000 each year?

and

Would you be supportive of introducing local waste treatment facilities which would see more waste treated within the Highlands? For example:

- Treatment facilities which remove recyclable waste and turns the residual waste into fuel.***
- Treatment facilities which remove recyclable waste and uses the residual waste to provide hot water and electricity.***
- Treatment facilities which remove recyclable waste and then converts the residual waste into bio-fuels.***

What can communities do to reduce the amount of waste produced and at the same time further increase the level of recycling?

Quantitative Analysis

The Citizens' Panel were not asked any specific questions on communities increasing recycling.

Qualitative Analysis

162 separate responses were received for the question, *“What can communities do to reduce the amount of waste produced and at the same time further increase the level of recycling?”* Responses were received mainly from the online form and from discussions at ward forums. There were also responses collected from posted and emailed forms, from the budget blog and from discussions at focus groups with Sight Action, People First and Highland Youth Voice. Organisational responses were received from Community Councils and Parent Councils.

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Respondents mainly suggested actions that the Council could take to help communities reduce waste and increase recycling. These included providing more local recycling facilities, recycling more types of materials and collecting a wider range of materials in kerbside collections. A small number of respondents felt that communities could not do any more to reduce the amount of waste produced or increase recycling.

Suggestions for actions

Local recycling points

Several respondents believed that there should be more or larger local recycling points and that these should be more easily accessible with longer opening hours. It was noted that it is not energy efficient to travel by car to out-of-town recycling centres, and that communities could help to look after their own recycling areas. One respondent suggested that the European model was followed, with one large recycling bin per street. However, another believed that there should be no additional recycling bins.

There were mixed views about current recycling centres. While some respondents reported that these were excellent, especially those outside Nairn, others felt that staff were not customer focused. In particular, one respondent believed that the Recycling Service Point at Lochcarron was abused and not emptied adequately.

Recycling a wider range of materials

A number of respondents noted that the Council should recycle more plastics, including medical plastics. Other suggestions for materials which should be recycled were non-animal waste for animal feed, electrical items, envelopes and rubber tyres for roof tiles or playground surfacing.

Kerbside collections

Several respondents felt that glass should be included in kerbside recycling collections, with the collection of waxed cartons and clothing also supported. Respondents reported that elderly people and those without cars often find it hard to take glass to be recycled, and noted that communities should ensure that everyone is able to participate in recycling by assisting people with taking glass to recycling bins. Some respondents mentioned the Golspie Recycling and Environmental Action Network, reporting that this had been a valuable service which allowed glass to be collected from people's homes.

Some respondents suggested that there should be more kerbside collections, proposing weekly blue bin collections or more brown bins, with the possible introduction of brown bins in rural areas. However, one respondent stated that fortnightly blue and black bin collections worked well for their household of six

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people, and another felt that the number of waste collectors should be reduced where possible. One respondent was not in favour of blue bins at all, believing that they were too expensive to provide and that too few types of materials can be put in them.

Encourage shops to help

A number of respondents believed that the Council should encourage supermarkets and producers to reduce packaging, suggesting that this could be done by charging supermarkets for excess packaging, by lobbying milk producers to use glass bottles, by imposing a local tax on plastic bags or by offering incentives for shops if they ensure that their packaging is recyclable. It was proposed that supermarkets could be taxed for waste disposal and that packaging could be retained by shops and returned to suppliers for reuse. One respondent felt that supermarkets should always offer customers the option of taking shopping home in reused cardboard boxes, and another believed that people should be discouraged from buying products with excessive packaging.

One or two respondents suggested that all supermarkets should have a prominent area for recycling items such as batteries, coffee pods and excess packaging. One respondent believed that people should be encouraged to purchase locally, including the Highland Council, while another proposed discouraging supermarket developments in the Highlands so that excess plastic is not produced.

Educate people about recycling

Some respondents felt that more people should be educated about the importance of recycling. Respondents mentioned that the importance of recycling should be highlighted as part of the curriculum in schools, and that links could be made through projects such as the Ross-shire Waste Action Network. It was noted that children may then persuade their parents to recycle as much as possible.

Respondents noted that people should be regularly reminded of the need to recycle, and suggested campaigns to encourage people to reuse leftovers or to split mixed packaging for recycling. One or two respondents suggested that tips should be given about composting and that communities should be advised about how they can make money from aluminium cans.

Composting and food waste

A group of respondents were in favour of increasing composting, as described in the question on green waste collection below.

It was suggested that local recycling schemes should be set up for food waste, or that the Council should subsidise or negotiate bulk buy prices for food digesters for people with garden space. One or two respondents proposed that food near its sell

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by date could be given to people suffering from food poverty, or that volunteers could use this food to create meals for those in need, composting all remaining waste.

Incentives and fines

Some respondents proposed that communities should be given recognition for recycling effectively. It was suggested that an annual challenge could be introduced to award the best community-led ideas to recycle waste. Additionally, a green flag scheme could be set up and waste figures widely published. It was proposed that the community with the lowest waste figures over a period of time could win a prize donated by a local business.

One respondent reported that Council Tax could be reduced depending on the weight of a household's rubbish, with less charged the more a household recycles. A respondent proposed charging people who do not use recycling schemes, while another noted that fines should be imposed for littering.

Community- run recycling shops

It was suggested that communities should run reuse sheds or recycling shops, similar to the Greenhouse in Dingwall, which could help to generate income and increase employment. A respondent proposed that there should be a „crafts“ collection within each community, so that parents can cheaply purchase used items such as toilet rolls and plastics for children's craft activities. One respondent reported that recycled products such as park benches could be produced in Highland, to be used by the Council and to be sold on to others.

Incinerators

A small number of respondents suggested that systems should be developed to turn waste into energy. It was proposed that small incinerators could be used to power buildings such as community halls and visitor centres. However, a respondent noted that incinerators can be controversial.

Additional suggestions

Respondents made a number of additional suggestions for ways in which waste could be reduced and recycling increased:

- Council taking note of good practice – Fife Council was mentioned in particular
- Reducing paper use – through increasing the use of IT and the Council sending out fewer leaflets
- Undertaking an independent audit of energy savings between methods, and considering the efficiency and cost returns of recycling processing
- Promoting local environmental groups, as Highland-wide groups were considered too big
- Privatising the waste and recycling sector

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- Individuals or communities having bonfires to dispose of waste.

Belief that communities cannot do any more

A small number of respondents felt that communities had done well so far and needed time to rest and consolidate. One respondent felt that people either care about recycling or they do not, and that the Council should not waste money trying to encourage people further. One or two respondents noted that the current recycling scheme is good and should not be changed.

Would you be supportive of stopping the collection of green waste during the months of December to February to save £30,000 each year?

Quantitative Analysis

The question on green waste collection was posed as follows: “We currently provide a full year garden waste service (brown bin collection) in the urban areas. Would you be supportive of stopping the collection of garden waste (brown bins) during the months of December to February to save £30,000 each year?” The views of respondents are found in the table below.

Respondents’ views on stopping the collection of garden waste December to February

| “Would you be supportive of stopping the collection of garden waste (brown bins) during the months of December to February to save £30,000 each year?” | All Respondents % |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Yes | 91 |
| No | 9 |
| Total | 100 |

N=1,021

Some 91% of respondents agreed – and 9% disagreed – with the proposal to stop the collection of garden waste during the months of December to February each year.

Qualitative Analysis

196 separate responses were received for the question, “*Would you be supportive of stopping the collection of green waste during the months of December to February to save £30,000 each year?*” Responses were mainly received via the online questionnaire and from discussions at ward forums. Other responses were generated through emailed and posted forums and through discussions at focus groups with Sight Action, Highland Users Group and People First. Responses were received from Community Councils and a Parent Council.

Many respondents were in favour of the proposal, as long as recycling points or other community composting facilities were easily accessible. Some respondents offered alternative collection suggestions, or proposed that the Council should do more to encourage composting. Respondents who were not in favour of the proposal believed that a minimal saving would be made and stated that a significant amount of green waste was produced during this time.

In favour

Respondents who were in favour of stopping green waste collection from December to February stated that a small amount of green waste is produced during this time, as there are fewer daylight hours to garden and not many plants are growing. It was noted that staff and resources could instead be concentrated at recycling centres or on snow clearing or repairing roads. One respondent stated that they would much prefer for money to be saved this way, as opposed to shortening the school day.

Although in favour of stopping green waste collection from December to February, respondents also provided additional suggestions.

The need for local green waste points

Some respondents stated that they would only support the proposal if local recycling centres or composting sites were easily accessible. It was suggested that the Council provided garden skips at recycling points during the winter months, in the hope that this would discourage fly tipping.

Council encouraging composting

A number of respondents believed that the Council should encourage independent composting, either at an individual or community level. It was suggested that the Council re-advertise their compost bin scheme and provide compost bins to individuals. One or two respondents noted that the Council should work with local garden centres, so that they can provide advice on composting and then buy compost once it is made. A proposal was made for communities to compost waste at larger sites, with the compost then reused in the community.

Some respondents gave their views on the Council producing compost, suggesting that individuals could pay for their waste to be composted and then buy the compost for a reduced rate. One respondent noted that the Council should charge the correct amount when selling compost in bulk.

Ceasing green waste collection for a longer, or different, period

Several respondents noted that green waste collection could be stopped in October or November and not resumed until May. However, one respondent stated that they would like a full collection to resume between March and November. A small number of respondents suggested that the service could be stopped altogether, as residents in rural communities manage without it. Instead, more points where people bring their waste to be collected could be provided.

One professional gardener noted that green waste collection should instead stop between March and May, as this was the period in which the least garden waste was produced.

Another respondent felt that green waste collection should be stopped for a shorter time, from January to February.

Alternative proposals

Reducing, rather than stopping, provision

A group of respondents were not in favour of stopping the collection completely between December and February, but suggested that it could be reduced to a monthly collection. Other respondents proposed that green waste could be collected monthly all year round, and one or two noted that the frequency of blue bin collections should also be reduced to monthly. It was reported that householders should be educated about how to use their refuse bins more effectively, so fewer collections would be needed. One respondent suggested that brown bins should only be collected if individuals request this online.

Some respondents who were in favour of ceasing brown bin collections between December and February suggested that a special collection should be made in January for Christmas trees.

Reviewing service

One respondent suggested that the efficiency of the service should be reviewed before any decisions were made, while another proposed introducing a pilot scheme.

Respondents not in favour

Respondents who were not in favour of stopping brown bin collections between December and February noted that green waste is still produced during these months. It was reported that garden clearance is often done during these months, and that there are still many leaves in gardens.

Some respondents queried whether the proposal would make substantial savings in return for a significant service being cut. It was believed that savings would not be made on vehicles or staff, since vehicles would need to be used during the rest of the year and it is Council policy not to make any compulsory redundancies. Although some respondents cited this as a reason for not adopting the proposal, others were in favour of piloting the scheme, despite mentioning small savings.

One respondent noted that, even if more recycling centres or composting sites were provided, elderly people may still have difficulty transporting waste to them. Another felt that the Council was sending out a mixed message by not encouraging individuals to recycle during the winter months.

Would you be supportive of introducing local waste treatment facilities which would see more waste treated within the Highlands? For example:

- Treatment facilities which remove recyclable waste and turns the residual waste into fuel.***
- Treatment facilities which remove recyclable waste and uses the residual waste to provide hot water and electricity.***
- Treatment facilities which remove recyclable waste and then converts the residual waste into bio-fuels.***

Quantitative Analysis

The Citizens' Panel were asked about local waste treatment facilities as follows: "We currently spend around £7.5m per year disposing of waste in landfill sites out-with the Highlands and the cost of waste disposal for each household in Highland continues to increase. In 2010/11 the cost for each household was £183, and landfill tax is now £64 per tonne. Reducing the amount of waste individuals and communities produce is the best way of reducing financial and environmental costs but recycling also helps."

Respondents were then asked: "Would you be supportive of introducing local waste treatment facilities which would see more waste treated within the Highlands?" Their views are found in the table below.

Respondents' views on introducing more local waste treatment facilities

| "Would you be supportive of introducing local waste treatment facilities which would see more waste treated within the Highlands?" | All Respondents % |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Yes | 74 |
| No | 9 |
| Don't Know | 17 |
| Total | 100 |

N=1,032

Some 74% of respondents supported the proposal to introduce local waste treatment facilities while 9% opposed this suggestion. A further 17% selected the "don't know" option.

Qualitative Analysis

185 separate responses were received for the question, "*Would you be supportive of introducing local waste treatment facilities which would see more waste treated within the Highlands?*" Responses were received mainly via the online form but

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were also received from discussions at ward forums, from posted and emailed forms and from the focus group held with People First. Organisational responses were received from Community Councils and Parent Councils.

Respondents showed some strong support for local waste treatment facilities, reporting that it would be more environmentally friendly and improve employment prospects. Others however felt that they would only support the proposal if the facilities were cost effective and if they were sited appropriately. A small number of respondents were not in favour of the proposal because of environmental concerns.

Respondents in favour

Respondents who were in favour of the proposal reported that it would reduce traffic and fuel use, which would be beneficial environmentally and financially. It was noted that processing waste locally would encourage sustainability and improve communities, making people more responsible for their own waste and increasing job prospects. Some respondents noted that similar schemes have been successful in many other places, mentioning facilities already in place in Sutherland.

Suggestions for running facilities

One respondent who was in favour of the proposal suggested that prisoners or people on community service should be used to run the facilities, while another believed that the services should be run at arm's length by an experienced provider.

Conditions

A group of respondents stated that they would only support the proposal if certain conditions were met. Several respondents commented that they would need more information, particularly on the cost of the facilities. It was noted that the proposal seemed good in theory, but concerns were raised over whether it was an affordable option at present. One respondent said that they would only support the proposal if services generated additional revenue that could be used to reduce rates, while another believed that the Council should initially look to save money and then reinvest.

It was suggested that small-scale pilot studies and a careful economic study should be undertaken before introducing the services on a larger scale. Similarly, respondents commented that a technical assessment or an independent audit of energy savings should be made to assess the kind of processing which would work best locally. Respondents stated that they would only support the proposal if the services were shown to be effective.

Concerns were raised over the siting of waste treatment facilities. While some respondents suggested that they would be useful in urban areas, so that heat and

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electricity is provided near where it is required, others noted that incinerators should not be placed in urban areas where communities do not want them. One respondent proposed that the facilities should be built on brownfield sites, such as the industrial area of Inverness.

Some respondents highlighted the importance of having local facilities, to ensure that transport costs were not too high. It was noted that communities are likely to accept waste treatment facilities if they are dealing with their own waste, but not if waste is brought in from a wider area. One or two respondents noted that waste treatment facilities should only be sited on existing sites.

One or two respondents noted that they were in favour of local waste treatment facilities, but not if there was any negative environmental impact, for example with pollution.

One respondent stated that treatment facilities which use waste to provide hot water and electricity should not be used if wind farms are in place.

Respondents not in favour

Respondents who were not in favour of the introduction of local waste treatment facilities suggested that the Council should instead consider other ways of transporting waste. Respondents suggested that trains and ships would provide more effective and cheaper bulk transportation to landfill, with the latter also supporting harbours.

A small number of respondents felt that the suggested waste treatment methods discouraged a reduction in waste, and suggested that the Council should concentrate more on collecting recyclables. One respondent noted that, if recycling is treated properly, there should be no residual waste to treat.

Respondents raised concerns about the environmental impact of the facilities, mentioning risks of atmospheric pollution and land and water contamination through high carbon dioxide emissions and possible accidents.

One or two respondents felt that the facilities would be too costly to set up and run, noting that these involved difficult technologies to run cost-effectively.

One respondent reported that no incineration plants have successfully sold hot water, while another noted that many of the figures and aspirations for products such as biofuels are optimistic and unproven.

A respondent questioned why the Council was supporting these schemes, when they objected to the citing of an incinerator in Invergordon.

Environmental Services

Should we reduce:

- *The frequency of grass cutting on road side verges?*
- *The frequency of grass cutting in towns and villages?*
 - *The number of flower beds maintained?*

and

Should we reduce the frequency of street cleaning and litter picking?

and

Can communities do more to maintain their community, with support from the Council, that will lead to an overall longer term reduction in costs?

Should we reduce:

- *The frequency of grass cutting on road side verges?*
- *The frequency of grass cutting in towns and villages?*
 - *The number of flower beds maintained?*

Quantitative Analysis

The question on grass cutting and flower bed maintenance was introduced in this manner: “We currently spend £2.8m each year on ground maintenance, including grass cutting on road verges, grass cutting in parks and public spaces and the maintenance of flower beds.”

Respondents were then asked whether they supported a reduction in each of three specified services. Their views are recorded in the table below.

Respondents’ views on reducing grass-cutting services and the number of flower beds maintained

| “Should we reduce” | Yes % | No % | Total % |
|------------------------------------------------------|-------|------|---------|
| The number of flower beds maintained | 42 | 58 | 100 |
| The frequency of grass-cutting on road side verges | 37 | 63 | 100 |
| The frequency of grass-cutting in towns and villages | 30 | 70 | 100 |

N=1,023-1,024

These results show:

- 58% of respondents were opposed to “**reducing the number of flower beds maintained**” while 42% are in favour of this proposal;
- 63% of respondents were opposed to a “**reduction in the frequency of grass-cutting on road side verges**” while 37% are in favour of this suggestion;
- 70% of respondents were opposed to a “**reduction in the frequency of grass-cutting in towns and villages**” while 30% are in favour of this proposal.

Qualitative Analysis

203 separate responses were received on the question “*Should we reduce the frequency of grass cutting on road side verges and grass cutting in towns and villages and the number of flower beds maintained?*” These were mainly from online, emailed and posted questionnaires, with responses also received from ward forums. Organisational responses were received from Parent Councils and Community Councils and from the focus groups held with Highland Users Group, Sight Action, People First and Youth Voice.

Respondents on the issues of grass cutting and flower bed maintenance had varying views on whether these services should be reduced. In the main respondents were in favour of reducing the maintenance of all three areas highlighted. There was a general suggestion that communities should be more involved and could take on the provision themselves. However concerns were expressed at the potential impact on road safety, in relation to road side verges, and the impact upon tourism.

In favour

There was strong support for reducing grass cutting and flower bed maintenance. It was suggested that this isn’t a priority and that a reduction would not be harmful. Some individuals suggested that cutting could start later, that different plants could be used, such as wildflowers, in order to reduce the levels of maintenance, and that reducing could have a positive impact on bio-diversity.

Community Role

There was strong support for communities to have a role in the provision of these services. This suggestion was from both individuals in favour of the Council reducing grass cutting and flower bed maintenance and from those against these

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services being reduced. It was suggested community groups would be more efficient in providing this service and that it would have a positive impact of bringing communities together. It was highlighted that many communities already take on this role, especially in the area of flower bed maintenance. Community Councils and youth groups were suggested as possible avenues for taking on this work.

Of those in favour of reducing the service, individuals reported that communities should take on the services unless they wanted them to reduce. However, an alternative view was put forward that the Council should only reduce the service if communities were willing to take them on.

One individual proposed that the Canadian model be adopted in Highland – where scout groups, football clubs or schools would adopt a stretch of road or an area and maintain it on behalf of the community.

Other alternatives for providing the service instead of the Council included people who were unemployed, individuals on community payback schemes and that there was the potential to establish training schemes and target these at young people unable to find employment.

A further suggestion was that the Council should look for sponsorship for flower beds, roundabouts etc, in order to finance their continued maintenance.

Not in favour

A group of respondents were generally against reducing the frequency of these services any further. It was highlighted that there had already been reductions and that it would not be possible to cut back any further. It was suggested that the costs for these services are small in comparison with others the Council provides and yet have a significant impact.

Respondents suggested that undertaking these activities helped improve the environment for all residents which would have a positive impact on individual wellbeing. There were concerns that reducing these services further would result in an untidy environment which in itself could lead to increased vandalism and litter.

There were also concerns at the potential visual impact reducing this provision may have and whether this could in turn impact on tourism. The importance of tourism for the Highland area was highlighted and it was suggested that if reducing the service could impact upon the way an area looks then this should not be introduced.

In addition to general comments, a number of people responded specifically on individual areas. The responses for these are outlined below:

The frequency of grass-cutting on road-side verges

Respondents were split on the proposal of reducing the frequency of cutting road side verges. Many people were in favour, citing the positive impact this would have on bio-diversity, as long as areas where there were issues of road safety continued to be cut. One respondent highlighted that this approach is already operating successfully in Argyll, where they have taken account of safety aspects such as straight lines at road junctions.

Some respondents suggested that there was no need to cut verges at all and suggested wild flower verges.

A small number of respondents suggested a greener approach to managing verges through the use of sheep, whilst one individual cited the introduction of grazing lets for verges, as operated in Switzerland.

However, a number of respondents were concerned at the proposal to reduce the frequency of cutting verges. It was suggested that single track roads in particular needed verges cut for safety reasons. Concerns were also expressed regarding the impact upon tourism and the impression this gave visitors. There were some views expressed that this service had already been reduced too far and needed to be increased.

The frequency of grass-cutting in towns and villages

Some respondents were clear that they were happy for grass-cutting to be reduced in towns and villages. As outlined above, it was suggested that communities could play a greater role. Some respondents proposed that the Council could still take on the larger parks and areas but that communities, or individuals, could be responsible for small local areas.

There were a number of respondents however who were against reducing grass cutting in towns and villages. Civic pride and the impact upon tourism were cited as concerns should this be reduced. Concern was expressed at the impact the reduction of this service has already had on areas such as cemeteries.

The number of flower beds maintained

There was strong support for the reduction in the maintenance of flower beds, with respondents suggesting that this could be taken on by communities. It was reported that many communities already do this.

A further suggestion was that schools could assist in taking on this role and that some are already doing this through eco-school projects.

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An alternative proposal was that the design of flower beds should be changed to result in lower maintenance. Wild flower beds and the greater use of shrubs were amongst the suggestions.

However, there were some respondents who indicated that there should be no reduction in this area. It was suggested that flower beds give an area the „feel good“ factor and that they were good for tourism, helping to make areas look attractive.

Should we reduce the frequency of street cleaning and litter picking?

Quantitative Analysis

The question on street cleaning and litter picking was introduced as follows: “We currently spend £3.1m each year on street cleaning and litter picking.”

Respondents were then asked whether the Council should reduce the frequency of each of these services. Their answers are recorded in the table below.

Respondents’ views on reducing the frequency of street cleaning and litter picking

| “Should we reduce” | Yes % | No % | Total % |
|-----------------------------------------|--------------|-------------|----------------|
| The frequency of litter picking | 16 | 84 | 100 |
| The frequency of street cleaning | 18 | 82 | 100 |

N=1,011-1,014

These results show:

- 84% of respondents are opposed to a **“reduction in the frequency of litter picking”** while 16% are in favour of this proposal;
- 82% of respondents are opposed to a **“reduction in the frequency of street cleaning”** while 18% are in favour of this suggestion.

Qualitative Analysis

195 separate responses were received on the question *“Should we reduce the frequency of street cleaning and litter picking?”* These were mainly from online, emailed and posted questionnaires, with responses also received from ward forums. Organisational responses were received from Parent Councils and Community Councils and from the focus groups held with Highland Users Group, Sight Action, People First and Youth Voice.

Many of the respondents to the question on reducing the frequency of street cleaning and litter picking were against the proposal to reduce this service. Some of these respondents, although they were against the Council reducing the service, provided further suggestions of what could be done to improve the cleanliness of streets.

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Some respondents were in favour of the Council reducing the service, whilst a further group provided no opinion but suggested other ways to keep the street clean.

Not in favour

Many of the respondents not in favour of reducing the current street cleaning and litter picking service reported that this would result in an increase of litter in local communities. The service had already been cut and it was reported that this could not be reduced any further. It was suggested litter creates litter and that people are less likely to care for their environment if it is already dirty. This in turn would have a negative impact on tourism and how people perceive the area. It was also suggested that there would be health and safety issues associated with any reduction.

A further view was that there was already too much litter around and if anything the service should be increased. One respondent suggested that this was a good example of preventative spend – a clean, pleasant environment results in people behaving better and therefore has positive impacts upon crime and anti-social behaviour.

A number of respondents, whilst not advocating a reduction in service, did suggest that others could be involved in assisting to provide the service. It was suggested that those on community service, school or youth groups, prisoners or those unemployed through a community benefit service could all be involved in the provision of the service. A strong view was that the public do need to take more responsibility, individually and for their local area and that community groups should be encouraged to take on more. However, it was suggested that the Council should continue providing the service, at least until the public become more involved.

It was suggested that businesses should be encouraged to do more but a further view was that that, whilst individuals and communities could take more responsibility for residential areas, the Council needed to continue within town centres.

It was proposed that the Council could be doing other things to help reduce the amount of litter. More awareness raising and education regarding the problems of littering was needed both generally and within schools. Fining more frequently and at a higher level was suggested, along with the availability of more and larger bins, as in Edinburgh. A further suggestion was that the better use of new technology could assist the Council– machines that can do both street cleaning and snow clearing and salt spreading.

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In favour

Some respondents were in favour of reducing the street cleaning and litter picking service. It was felt that the service was not currently provided everywhere and should therefore be stopped on a principle of fairness. Others felt that it was undertaken too frequently in some areas and should be targeted more.

A further set of views was that residents should be more involved in caring for their environment and take on responsibility for keeping it clean. It was proposed that community groups should take on the provision of the service

Whilst in favour of the Council reducing the service, some respondents reported that this needs to be in conjunction with being harder on offenders through higher fines. The positive of this was that it would also generate income. Providing more bins and greater prevention were also suggested as being required for reducing the service to work.

No opinion on reducing

A number of respondents provided no view on the question of whether the Council should reduce this service but did suggest things that either should be considered or other potential ways in which to provide the service.

Some respondents felt that any reduction would need to be balanced against the potential impact on tourism and the views of people visiting the area. It was also suggest that a reduction would depend upon each individual area. Many rural communities do not currently have a service but this may be more of an issue around the holiday season for these areas. It was proposed that any reduction should really be a local decision as they know the extent of the problem.

It was suggested that school should play more of a role in litter picking, with some suggesting that children are often the cause of littering. Similar to other respondents however, it was felt that communities could play a greater role and that individuals need to take more responsibility for their environment.

Can communities do more to maintain their community, with support from the Council, that will lead to an overall longer term reduction in costs?

Quantitative Analysis

The Citizens' Panel were not asked any specific questions on communities doing more to maintain their community.

Qualitative Analysis

158 separate responses were received on the question “*Can communities do more to maintain their community, with support from the Council, that will lead to an overall longer term reduction in costs?*” These were mainly from online, emailed and posted questionnaires, with responses also received from ward forums. Organisational responses were received from Parent Councils and Community Councils and from the focus groups held with Sight Action, People First and Youth Voice.

There was strong support from respondents for communities doing more to maintain their environment. Many respondents felt that this was the clear role of the community and proposed areas where the community could be involved. A further set of views was that it needed both the community and the Council to work together to take this forward. A small group of respondents felt that communities already do enough and that this is the Council’s role to maintain communities across the area.

Community role

Respondents were generally in favour of communities having more of a role in maintaining their local area. Many respondents suggested areas which communities could take on and provide locally. Most of these reflected the areas discussed in the previous two questions such as litter picking, flower bed maintenance, grass cutting and street cleaning.

It was felt that many communities already have a role in these areas, for example litter picking and responsibility for flowers. Britain in Bloom was noted as a good example of community action and it was suggested that lessons could be learnt from this.

A number of respondents highlighted that communities needed to have more pride in their surroundings and need to take charge of their area. Money in order to make local decisions would assist in this process. It was noted that in many countries, this sort of community action is normal. A further suggestion was that eco-awareness needed to be taught in schools.

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A further area suggested by respondents for communities to have more of a role was snow clearing, with the suggestion that individuals should have the responsibility for clearing the front of their own property.

More recycling, composting and dog waste facilities would assist communities in taking forward these areas of service provision.

There was a concern noted about the impact greater community involvement may have on jobs and whether this will result in people losing their job. It was also noted that volunteers need to be acknowledged for their work in their local community.

Council and Community role

Many respondents suggested that communities and the Council need to work together if communities were to be more involved in maintaining their local area. It was proposed that work needs to be done to identify what areas communities could take on. This should be done in conjunction with communities on a community by community basis as some will be more capable than others. Certain communities will also need a higher level of support. One respondent suggested that communities should be asked for ideas, with prizes awarded for the best ideas.

A common view from respondents was that communities would need some funding if they were to have more of a role in maintaining their community. This would be similar to the areas at present that operate their local toilets and get a small grant to do so. One idea was that the cost of sponsoring roundabouts/flower beds should be reduced to encourage more interest. This would then provide funding for local groups to take on the maintenance of the service.

Community Councils were suggested by a number of respondents as being in the best position to co-ordinate any activity, if a small grant were provided. However, none of the Community Councils responding suggested this. A further view was that the Council need to financially support Community Councils and village halls if there is an expectation for them to do more and not reduce their funding.

Some respondents also suggested that the Council needed to provide practical support and assistance to communities to enable them to take on maintaining their area. Filling grit bins on a regular basis was suggested along with the need for the Council to consider insurance and other red tape issues which are often barriers to groups taking on services. It was felt that the Council needs to make it easy for groups to take on services.

A further view was that the Council should employ someone to organise and manage this process. It was suggested that individuals need direction and guidance and

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therefore this would be key going forward. For others though, it was important to be able to employ someone locally, for example village officers or wardens. One respondent suggested that they should be paid for from wind farm monies. It was noted that volunteers need to be supported.

However, it was felt that although communities could take on more of a role locally, the Council still had its part to play in, for example, street cleaning. One respondent also noted that although communities could take on these roles, the support the Council provided would be critical as to whether this worked.

Not in favour

A small group of respondents were against the idea of communities playing more of a role in maintaining their communities. It was felt that many communities wouldn't have the capacity to take these services on, with many people too busy. Also, if people did not get the appropriate support, then the service would not continue. There was a concern that many communities would only act if a service was taken away but then there was no guarantee that communities would take this on. One respondent suggested that this would only leave the problem of a shortfall in funding with the community rather than the Council.
