

The Highland Council

Resources Committee – 25th November 2015

Agenda Item	28(d)
Report No	RES/122/15

Citizens' Panel Survey 2015 – Climate Change

Report by Head of Policy and Reform

Summary

A survey of the Citizens' Panel on issues relating to climate change was completed in March 2015. It covered a range of topics, including attitudes towards climate change, energy, transport, land use and resources, and the economy. This report presents an overview of initial findings and puts these into context with the Highland Council's priorities.

1. Executive Summary – Key Findings

- 1.1 The key findings from the Citizens' Panel survey on Climate Change, 2015 are:
1. People in Highland view "Climate Change is an immediate and urgent problem." (66.4 % in 2015, compared to 53.8 % in 2011);
 2. 87.2% of people in Highland feel that climate change is either partly, mainly, or entirely caused by human activity, compared to 81% for the UK;
 3. The top three priorities for addressing climate change in the Highlands are: Developing low carbon transport infrastructure; small-scale renewable energy schemes; and protecting and improving landscapes to store and capture carbon in soil and plants.
 4. 36.7% indicated it was "Difficult" or "Very Difficult" when answering "In winter how easy or difficult, financially, do you find it to heat your home to a temperature which is comfortable?" Also, 24.7 % of respondents are unable to afford to heat their homes to comfortable levels;
 5. The main barriers for reducing the amount of energy used in homes were "it is difficult because of the type of house I live in" (33 %) and "I can't afford to" (23 %). This highlights the difficulties faced in improving the energy efficiency of Highland properties, and that more financial support may be required;
 6. 18% of respondents indicated that they spend over £100 a month on fuel for their private vehicle, and 35.7% indicated that they spend £50 - £99 a month. This indicates a high level of dependence in the Highlands on private transport. This level of spending may also reflect the priority placed on improving options for low carbon and sustainable transport;
 7. 5.5% of Highland residents travel to work by bicycle. This has increased from 2013, when 3.9 % of people in Highland regularly cycled to work;
 8. Respondents consistently value the natural environment, and show high levels of support for community projects that would enhance or improve use of the natural environment; and
 9. Highland residents are connected to their communities and have a desire to support local businesses and community projects that would contribute to addressing climate change issues.

2. Background

- 2.1 A survey of the Citizens' Panel on issues relating to climate change was completed in May 2015. The survey covered a range of topics, including attitudes towards climate change, energy, transport, land use and resources, and the economy. This report presents an overview of the initial findings from this survey. The data provided by this survey illustrates some key priorities that Highland residents feel are important in relation to climate change issues.
- 2.2 The 44 questions in the survey were designed based on a number of factors: A survey conducted by the Council in 2011 on attitudes towards climate change; priorities identified through the Carbon CLEVER conference in 2014; and questions asked in national surveys to allow the Highland response to be compared to national trends.
- 2.3 The questionnaire was sent to the Citizens' Panel of 2,439 people, which is designed to be representative of the adult population in Highland. A response rate of 42% (1,027 responses) was achieved. The response rate means that a 95% confidence level was achieved with a +/- 3% confidence interval. This means that we can be 95% confident that if the entire adult Highland population had been surveyed the responses they would give would have been within +/- 3 % of those provided by the panel¹.
- 2.4 This report provides the responses on key questions. The survey is a rich source of information and further analysis and the data will be published on the Highland Council website in due course.

¹ Whilst this is a small margin of error, not all respondents answered every question. The data needs to be treated accordingly.

3. Attitudes towards Climate Change

3.1 Question: “Which of these statements, if any, comes closest to your view?”

- a) Climate change is an immediate and urgent problem
- b) Climate change is more of a problem for the future
- c) Climate change is not really a problem
- d) I’m still not convinced that climate change is happening
- e) None of these
- f) Don't know

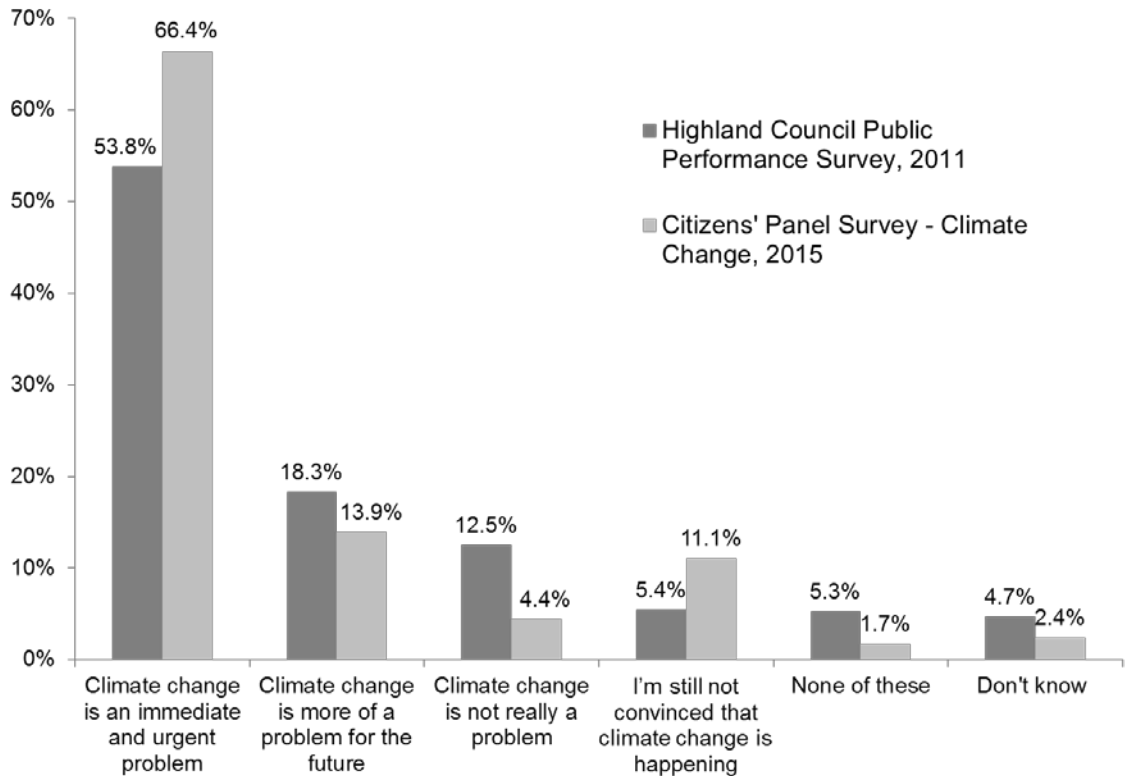


Figure 1: Views on climate change. Data from the 2015 Citizens’ Panel survey - Climate Change (989 respondents), and the Highland Council 2011 Public Performance Survey.

3.2 Approximately two thirds of respondents to the Citizens’ Panel Survey 2015, indicate that “Climate Change is an immediate and urgent problem.” This has increased from that reported in a similar survey conducted by the Council in 2011, when 53.8% agreed with this statement.

3.3 From 2013, the Scottish Household Survey has included the same question, and it was previously contained in the Scottish Environmental Attitudes and Behaviours Survey 2008. In 2014, 45% of people surveyed in Scotland viewed climate change as an immediate and urgent problem. People in Highland are more likely to see climate change as an immediate and urgent problem than in Scotland as a whole based on the 2015 survey responses.

3.4 The difference in survey responses could be due to Highland experiencing more events associated to climate change, such as more severe weather events or changes in rainfall patterns. Additionally, Highland residents may have a greater awareness of the natural environment, which tends to increase awareness of climate change.

3.5 Question: “Thinking about the causes of climate change, which, if any, of the following best describes your opinion?”

- a) Climate change is entirely caused by natural processes
- b) Climate change is mainly caused by natural processes
- c) Climate change is partly caused by natural processes and partly caused by human activity
- d) Climate change is mainly caused by human activity
- e) Climate change is entirely caused by human activity
- f) I think there is no such thing as climate change
- g) Don't know

3.6

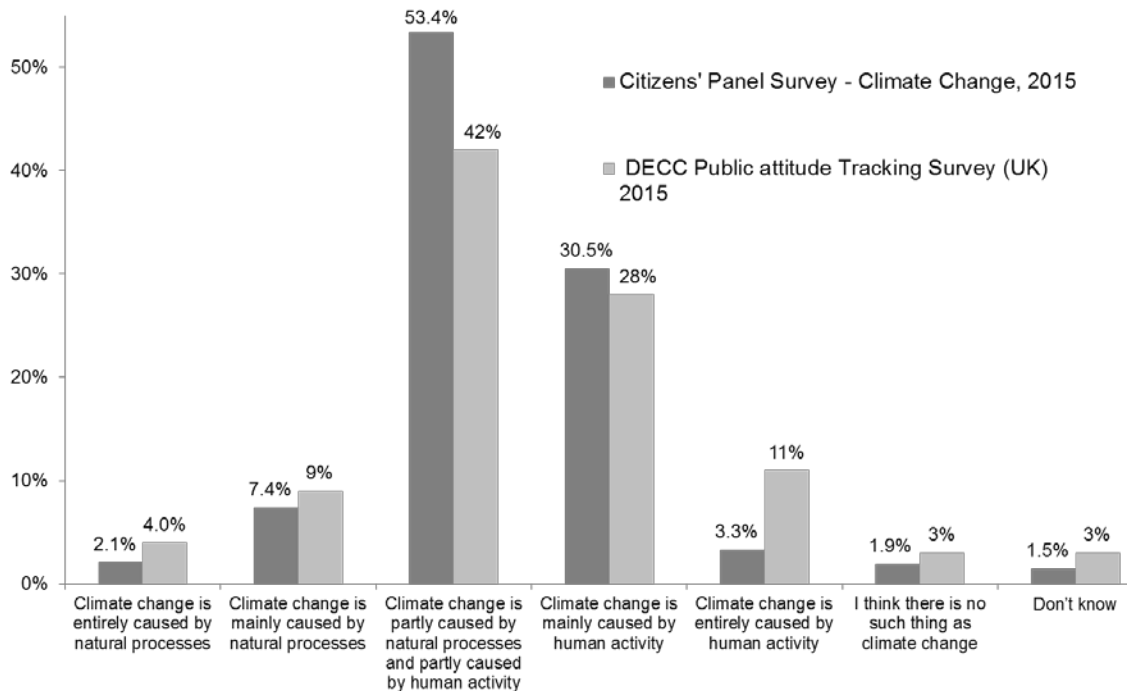


Figure 2: Comparison of perceptions on the causes of climate change. Citizens’ Panel Survey, 1019 responses, and the Department of Energy and Climate Change (DECC) Public Attitude Tracking survey 2015.

3.7 87.2% of respondents to the Citizens’ Panel survey indicated that climate change is either partly, mainly, or entirely caused by human activity, compared to 81% for the UK as a whole. The majority (53.4%) of people in Highland feel that climate change is partly caused by natural processes and partly caused by human activity.

4. Key priorities for the Highlands

4.1 Question: “There are many initiatives that can reduce carbon emissions in the Highland area. Which of the following options do you think are most important?”

- a) Small renewable energy schemes (e.g., solar panels)
- b) Large scale renewable energy installations
- c) Low carbon transport infrastructure (e.g. improved public transport options, safe cycling and walking routes, electric vehicle charging points)
- d) Protecting and improving landscapes so that carbon is stored in soils and plants rather than in the air (e.g. Peatland and forestry restoration schemes)
- e) The creation of jobs in new low carbon industries (e.g. renewable energy)

4.2 **Table 1:** “Addressing carbon emissions in Highland”, 959 responses

	Most Important		Least Important		
	1	2	3	4	5
	(%)				
a) Small renewable energy schemes	19.5	27.7	22.2	18.6	12.0
b) Large scale renewable energy installations	24.1	17.2	20.0	17.5	21.2
c) Low carbon transport infrastructure	21.4	24.7	26.0	19.4	8.5
d) Protecting and improving landscapes so that carbon is stored in soils and plants rather than in the air	28.3	19.7	16.9	20.9	14.3
e) The creation of jobs in new low carbon industries	6.7	10.6	14.8	23.7	44.2

- 4.3 By totalling the percentages for respondents’ top three choices, the top priorities for addressing climate change in the Highlands are (in order):
- Developing low carbon transport infrastructure
 - Small-scale renewable energy schemes
 - Protecting and improving landscapes to store and capture carbon in soil and plants

4.4 These priorities are a reflection of how residents see the role of the Council in supporting climate change action in the region. By providing strategic direction and leadership in these areas, the Council has the opportunity to take significant steps to address climate change, build stronger partnerships with communities and external organisations, and deliver innovative change across the region. The priorities identified are aligned to a number of commitments in the Highland First programme, and also supported by other Council priorities.

4.5 Low Carbon Transport Infrastructure

This priority has close links to commitments in the Highland First programme, notably:

- 6. “...Public Transport: We will work with public transport providers to improve the integration of services for communities across Highland.”
- 36. “Developing Local and National Infrastructure”
- 38. “Cycle Tracks”
- 70. “Transport” (Inverness City – the Capital of the Highlands)

The implementation of Council transport commitments should be done in a way that supports low carbon transport infrastructure choices, in line with the priorities identified by survey respondents. For example, 73% of respondents would be in favour of installing electric vehicle charging points in their local communities.

4.6 Small-scale renewable energy schemes

The Highland First programme commits to “Helping communities reduce their energy use and costs”, commitment 7. Developing small-scale, potentially

community-owned renewable schemes could help to deliver this commitment by providing low cost energy. It could also provide an opportunity for communities to generate income by selling excess energy to the grid.

4.7 45% of respondents indicated they would be interested in financially supporting community renewable energy schemes. Work to reduce grid access charges (Highland First: "Grid Connections") will also help to encourage renewable energy generation in the Highlands.

4.8 Protecting and improving landscapes to store and capture carbon in soil and plants

Respondents consistently value the natural environment throughout the survey, and show high levels of support for community projects that would enhance or improve use of the natural environment. 86% of respondents "strongly agree" or "agree" with the statement: *"Improving access to the natural environment can help to protect it, and encourage people to access, manage, and improve the environment they live in."*

4.9 Highland First makes a number of commitments that link to improving the natural environment of the Highlands. For example, commitments to improve and promote the positive impact of tourism (Highland First: "Tourism") will be enhanced by taking steps that improve the natural environment. Working with land managers (Highland First: "Forestry") and local communities to improve and protect this natural heritage in a way that also maximises the potential to store carbon in soil and vegetation could help to achieve both of these goals.

5. Energy

5.1 36.7% of respondents indicated it was either "Difficult" or "Very Difficult" when responding to the question *"In winter how easy or difficult, financially, do you find it to heat your home to a temperature which is comfortable?"* The Scottish Government define a person as living in fuel poverty if, in order to maintain a satisfactory heating regime, they require to spend more than 10 per cent of their household income on all household fuel use. The most recent Scottish House Condition Survey has reported that in Highland Council approximately 50% of households are in fuel poverty which is the third highest of all local authorities in Scotland.

5.2 24.7% of respondents selected "yes" when answering the question *"Are you currently heating your home to a temperature below a level at which you are comfortable due to cost?"* This indicates that nearly a quarter of respondents are unable to afford to heat their homes to comfortable levels. This can lead to poor quality of life and health problems which in turn will increase the costs on wider health and social services. Also, 27 % of respondents "disagree" or "strongly disagree" with the statement *"I am happy with my energy tariff"*

5.3 The main barriers for *"reducing the amount of energy you use in your home"* were *"it is difficult because of the type of house I live in"* (32.6%) and *"I can't afford to"* (22.7%). This highlights that it may be more difficult to improve the energy efficiency of properties in Highland, and also that more financial support may be required in the region.

- 5.4 When asked “What type of central heating does your accommodation have” Respondents answered: gas (37%), electric (18.9%), oil (37%), solid fuel (22.7%), biomass (2.5%), renewable system (2.9%). This corresponds with figures from the Department for Energy and Climate Change which estimates that 63% of Highland properties are not connected to mains gas supply.
- 5.5 Respondents indicated they had installed the following energy efficiency measure in their home: cavity wall insulation (38.1%); External wall insulation (14.9%); Loft insulation (88.9%); Energy efficient boiler (41.8%); Energy efficient light bulbs (84.1%); Smart energy meters (8.4%); Central heating timers (69.7%). This data indicates that a number of quick and low cost measures to improve the energy efficiency of homes in Highland have been undertaken. Remaining measures to improve the energy efficiency of Highland homes are likely to be expensive e.g. External wall insulation or upgrading to an energy efficient boiler.

6. Transport

- 6.1 18% of respondents indicated that they spend over £100 a month on fuel for their private vehicle, and 35.7% indicated that they spend £50 - £99 a month. This indicates a high level of dependence in the Highlands on private transport. This level of spending may also reflect the priority respondents placed on improving options for low carbon and sustainable transport, which could help to reduce transport costs and protect residents from future fuel price rises.
- 6.2 The survey shows that 5.5% of Highland residents travel to work by bicycle. This is higher than in 2013, when the Scottish Household Survey found that 3.9% of people in Highland regularly cycle to work. The 2011 Census found that across Scotland, 2 % of the population travelled to work by bicycle. The Scottish Cycling Action Plan has a target that by 2020, 10% of everyday journeys taken in Scotland will be by bike. For Inverness, the National census (2011) showed that 5.6 % of journeys to work are made by bicycle, higher than any other city in Scotland.
- 6.3 When asked “*Would any of the following encourage you to use public transport more often?*” the most popular options selected were: Increased frequency of service (62.9%); Improved timetable information (53%); and subsidised/ discounted tickets (51.4%). Respondents were not in favour of measures which would act as a disincentive to travel by car such as increased parking charges, although these have shown to be effective measures for changing behaviour elsewhere.

7. Land use and resources

- 7.1 Respondents consistently value the natural environment, and show high levels of support for community projects that would enhance or improve use of the natural environment:
- 86% of respondents “*strongly agree*” or “*agree*” with the statement: “*Improving access to the natural environment can help to protect it, and encourage people to access, manage, and improve the environment they live in.*”
 - 79% of respondents indicated that it was “*very important*” to have public

gardens, parks, countryside or other green spaces nearby.

- 51.3% of respondents indicated that they “*definitely will support*” habitat restoration or tree planting projects and 34.9% of respondents “*definitely will support*” community growing or allotment schemes.
- 86% of respondents “Strongly Agree” or “Agree” with the statement “*To achieve a low carbon Highlands, it will be important to ensure that we protect, restore, and enhance the region’s carbon stores.*”

7.2 94% of respondents “Strongly Agree” or “Agree” that: “*Using resources more efficiently is an effective way to reduce the carbon footprint of the Highlands.*” The Waste (Scotland) Regulations 2012 will enforce a ban on biodegradable municipal waste going to landfill from 2021, and, as outlined in the “Highland First” Programme the Council are committed to achieving this obligation.

8. Economy

8.1 In order to continue to develop Highland as a diverse and thriving region, there needs to be a strong economy providing desirable job opportunities for local people. The survey indicates that Highland residents are connected to their communities and have a desire to support local businesses and community projects that would contribute to addressing climate change issues.

8.2 45% indicated that they would be interested in financially supporting community-owned renewable energy projects in their local area.

8.3 92% of respondents indicated their reason for “*buying locally sourced products*” is to support local businesses, with 73% indicating that they prioritised “*locally sourced*” when buying fresh food.

8.4 21% of respondents who indicate they currently volunteer in a community group or organisation are currently taking action to address climate change or are involved in environmental sustainability.

9. Further analysis and reporting

9.1 The survey has provided a rich source of data. Further analysis will be undertaken to explore some topics in more detail, and this will be published on the Council’s webpages and shared with partners. The findings of the survey will help in identifying priorities with community planning partners and to support relevant Council policies relating to land use, transport, the natural environment, affordable warmth and community action.

9.2 The survey has captured a large range of data on individual behaviours and preferences. If the survey was repeated in the future, this could be used to measure changes and trends in attitudes and ensure the Council is working on what is important to the Highland community.

9.3 The data is an excellent source of information to better understand fuel poverty in the Highlands. The Climate Change team will be working with Glasgow Caledonian University and other partners as part of a fully funded research project to better understand the costs of heating homes in rural areas in order to influence national policy on fuel poverty.

10. Implications

- 10.1 Resource, Risk, and Gaelic Implications – There are no resource, risk, or Gaelic implications arising from this report.
- 10.2 Legal Implications – The Council has a duty to assist Scotland achieve its national carbon emission reduction targets as set out by the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009. From 2015/16 the Council will mandatorily report on its carbon emissions and action taken to tackle climate change.
- 10.3 Equalities Implications – The survey collected information that will help identify perceptions and attitudes towards climate change in specific demographic groups.
- 10.4 Climate Change/Carbon Clever Implications – Through the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009, the Council has a duty to encourage and work with others in the local community to take action to adapt to the impact of climate change, to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and to make public its commitment to action. The Citizens' Panel survey helps to gain an understanding of perceptions, attitudes and local priorities, and assist the Council to meet its statutory duties.
- 10.5 Rural Implications – As part of the survey, respondents indicated which area of Highland they live in. The relative sample sizes at a regional level are too small to have statistical confidence that they are representative, so it is not possible to analyse the responses at a finer spatial scale.

Recommendations

Members are asked to:

1. Note the initial findings of the Citizens' Panel Survey – Climate Change, 2015;
2. Note that further analysis will be conducted, with the findings and data published on the Council's website;
3. Note that the findings of the survey will help in identifying priorities with community planning partners and to support relevant Council policies relating to land use, transport, the natural environment, affordable warmth and community action; and
4. Note that the results of the survey will be used in a research project being led by Glasgow Caledonian University.

Designation: Head of Policy and Reform

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