



Surrey's Greener Futures: Resident Engagement

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Context

In July 2019 Surrey County Council declared a climate emergency in recognition of the severe and imminent threat that climate change poses for our residents and communities. Surrey's district and borough authorities have also declared a number of their own climate emergencies and emissions reduction targets.

Surrey's Climate Change Strategy has been developed which sets out our intended delivery on these ambitions, it centres upon a joint framework for collaborative action on climate change across Surrey's local authorities to reduce emissions to net zero between now and 2050

In order to ensure that the Surrey Greener Futures programme and the strategy was is centred on resident insight, we ran three stages of engagement. These were;

1. School Workshops
2. Resident Focus Groups
3. Resident Panel Survey

By using three different methods, we were able to gain rich insight from our residents. We should however bear in mind a couple of limiting factors such as self-selecting bias, age and gender skews. These are explained in detail below in the methodologies.

The main objectives for undertaking these engagement processes included:

- Understand the current knowledge of climate change, its causes and impacts in our resident population
- Identify potential methods to engage with our residents to increase their understanding and action on these issues
- Discover ongoing work by our residents, communities and businesses to tackle climate change that can be supported and promoted
- Understand the priority actions that residents would like to see taken on climate change including by their local authorities, national government or other partners.

Engagement Methods

School Workshops

To gain a deep understanding of the views of young people on the topic of climate change, we reached out to two local schools in Surrey who are going beyond the curriculum to engage their students around the topic of climate change.

Two workshops were designed for two different age groups, the first group were 11 to 13 years old and the second group were between 14 and 16 years old. The workshops consisted of activities



focused on co-development of solutions that we can all take to tackle climate change, focusing on a range of themes, including diet, fashion, transport and energy use in the home/school.

It is important to note students participating were self-selected and there was a significant bias towards female students, with just 5 male students out of a total of 50 students. This vouches further exploration into the lack of male students engaging with the topic of climate change.

Resident Focus Groups

In the second stage of resident engagement, we ran four focus groups from the 8th – 12th February 2020, consisting of roughly 8-10 participants per group. Each group had a different sector to focus on - Transport, Waste, Consumer Behaviour and Housing – considering its emissions impact and how we may act to reduce this.

Participants were recruited via Surrey Says and had actively elected to take part in Surrey Council related research; in total, there were 193 signups.

Participants were selected based on demographics in order to try and attain four groups with all genders, ages, ethnicities and nationalities represented. However, it is important to note that this was a self-selecting group of residents – in the sense they were required to sign up - with a keen interest in the topic of climate change. There was a low number of sign ups from young people, despite efforts to reach out to these younger groups, with only 13% of total sign-ups being within the 18-34 age group, despite making up ~23% of the population from 18 – 90+.¹

The purpose of the focus groups was twofold;

1. To encourage in-depth discussion between residents around climate change generally and more specific climate change themes such as; transport emissions, energy efficiency, waste management and industrial emissions.
2. To gain insight into resident's priorities, concerns and suggestions for action to mitigate, prevent and/or adapt to climate change.

The first group focussed on Consumer Behaviour, the second on Waste, third on Housing and Buildings, and the final group focussed on Transport.

Resident Panel

On 11/3/2020, a survey was sent out to the Surrey Residents Panel, a database of 700 Surrey residents that have been recruited to contribute to market research. The makeup is reflective of Surrey County demographics and the survey was in field for two weeks.

¹ [Surrey Census, 2011.](#)



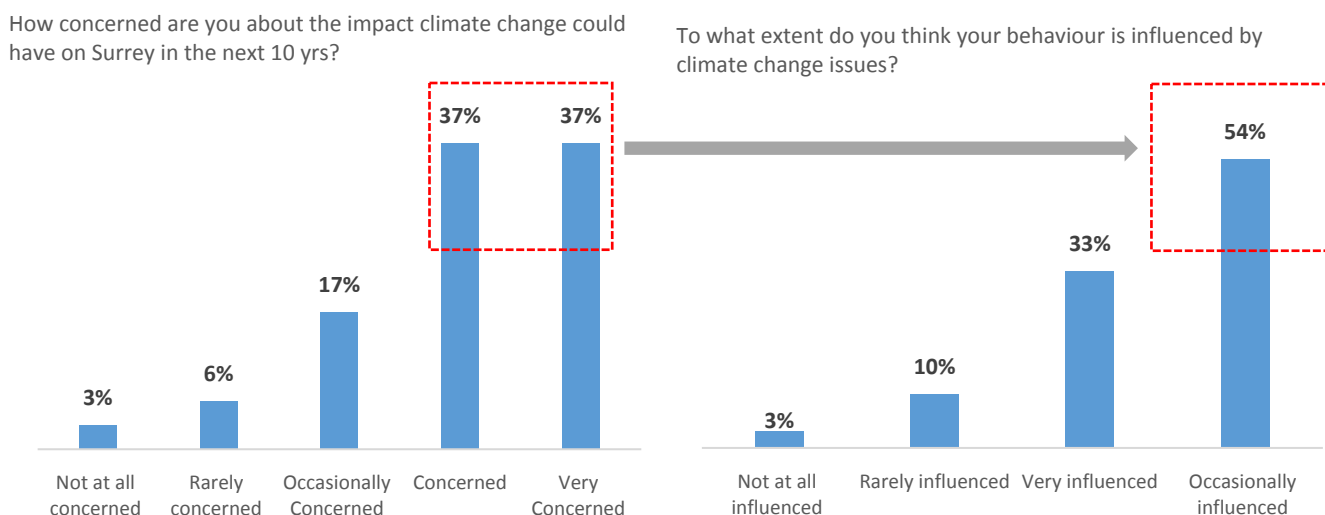
The purpose of this survey was to obtain respondents views on climate change, gain a better understanding of respondents perceived priorities and gauge more about respondent’s current behaviours. There were 240 responses to the survey, a relatively strong result which will provide indicative results. 62% of respondents were over 55 years, which is representative but notable.

Findings

Knowledge and Concern for Climate Change

Across all three resident engagement methods, there was demonstration of significant resident knowledge on the topic of climate change. The students in the school workshops demonstrated great knowledge on climate change and the complexities that surround it, likely due to the Eco-club and UNICEF group the students were members of. The majority of focus group participants were enthusiastic towards the subject and referred to facts and figures throughout conversation.

However, the resident panel engagement indicated a concern around the impact of climate change but a possible lack of understanding of the impacts of their own actions on these emissions.



The graph above shows that nearly $\frac{3}{4}$ of panel respondents were concerned or very concerned about the impact of climate change. This was also echoed across the four focus groups, in which the urgency of climate change and the frustration in the apparent slow progression in the area was expressed. However, half of the panel respondents felt their behaviour would only occasionally be influenced by climate change issues. This suggests a disconnect between the strength of feeling about the issue and the appetite to or knowledge of how to make behavioural changes and address the issue.



Interestingly, the theme of accountability was also reflected in the school workshops. When students were asked about the actions that they can take to reduce emissions, students placed the highest expectations for change with the Government rather than with the general public.

Transport

Public Transport to be enhanced and improved in its reliability, efficiency and affordability

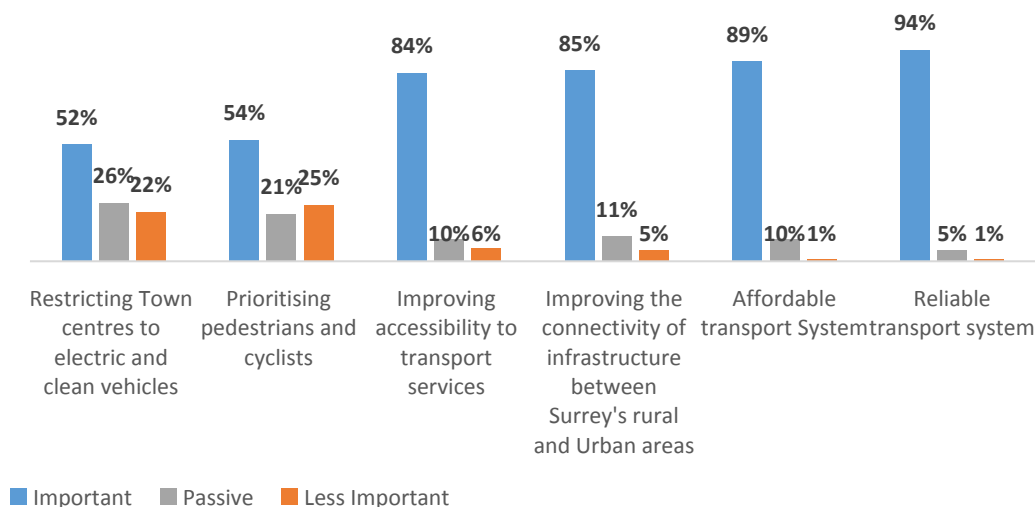
Across all 3 resident engagements, addressing transport emissions was mentioned a significant amount more than any other emission producing sector. 92% of respondents noted emission reducing actions in the transport sector are important, with over half of respondents scoring transport as 'very important'. When given the opportunity to explain what they thought SCC should prioritise to address climate change, 72% of respondents mentioned transport.

<p><i>“People need to have choices in relation to transport options to make it easier to travel sustainably”</i> Focus Group</p>	<p><i>“Effective low cost regular public transport to encourage more people to use it”</i> Resident Panel</p>	<p><i>“Subsidise / nationalise buses and trains”</i> School Workshop</p>
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Accessible, sustainable and affordable travel were discussed in all four of the focus groups, in order to reduce reliance on private car use. The current transport infrastructure in Surrey was described as 'dated' with a 'negative reputation'. More circular bus routes and organised timetables were suggested to make public transport a reliable alternative to car use. This is supported by the 94% of respondents to the panel survey who believed a reliable transport system to be the most important Strategic Priority for Surrey's Transport System. It is important to note that a significantly high amount of those 65+ scored reliable transport as the most important priority. 89% of respondents believe affordability of public transport is also important.



Please rate the following strategic priorities for Surrey's Transport System



Transport was agreed as the main areas that government ought to address by students, particularly improving the public transport infrastructure. However, young people appeared more concerned about the social aspect of their commutes, choosing to walk to school due to the social interaction this brings with it. Convenience and time also influence student’s choice of transport to school.

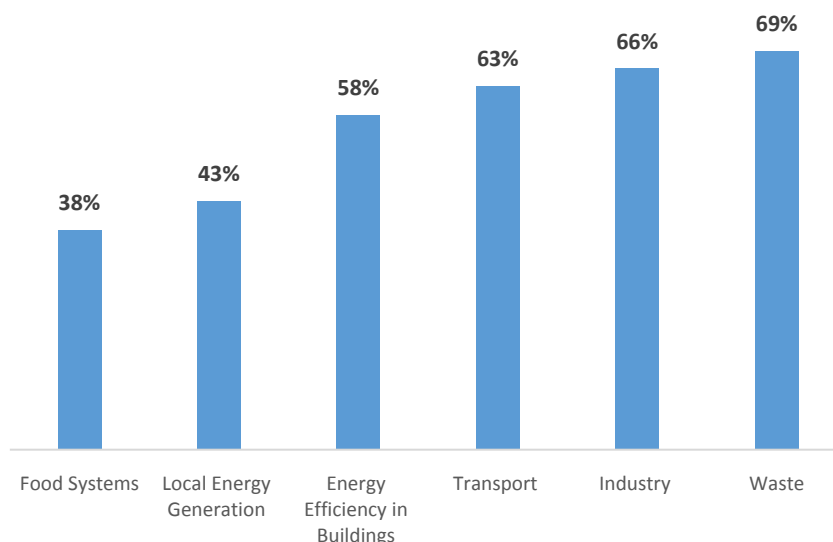
Waste

Standardise waste management processes, ensuring simple and accessible to all

Waste was considered the second most important sector to prioritise in the panel survey, with 94% of respondents scoring this sector as important and 69% scoring waste as ‘very important’. There was also significant mention of waste when respondents were asked what they thought Surrey County Council should prioritise, with discussion around improving recycling facilities, ensuring these are accessible to all and further educating people on how to recycle. However, work by Leeds University identified that emissions associated with the waste sector are significantly lower than other sectors. In 2017/18 emissions from waste in Surrey amounted to 138ktCO2e compared to 1,990 ktCO2e from housing in the same year.



% of Respondents scoring 'Very Important'



Amongst the focus group participants, there was concern over items not being recycled in the correct manner due to residents not being educated on correct processes. There was agreement on the need for a unified and simple waste management system across the county, in order to ease confusion surrounding processes.

It is important to note that 78% of panel respondents are currently increasing their recycling levels and 82% are reducing the waste their household produces. This could indicate that resource should be directed to alternative emission producing sectors. Alternatively, this could indicate that further education on correct processes is necessary. Penalising for poor waste management was viewed as unacceptable by a quarter of respondents and discussion in the focus groups favoured incentivisation and education over penalisation. School students held less focus on waste management and did not prioritise this as a top concern, suggestive of different age demographics having differing concerns.

Energy Efficiency

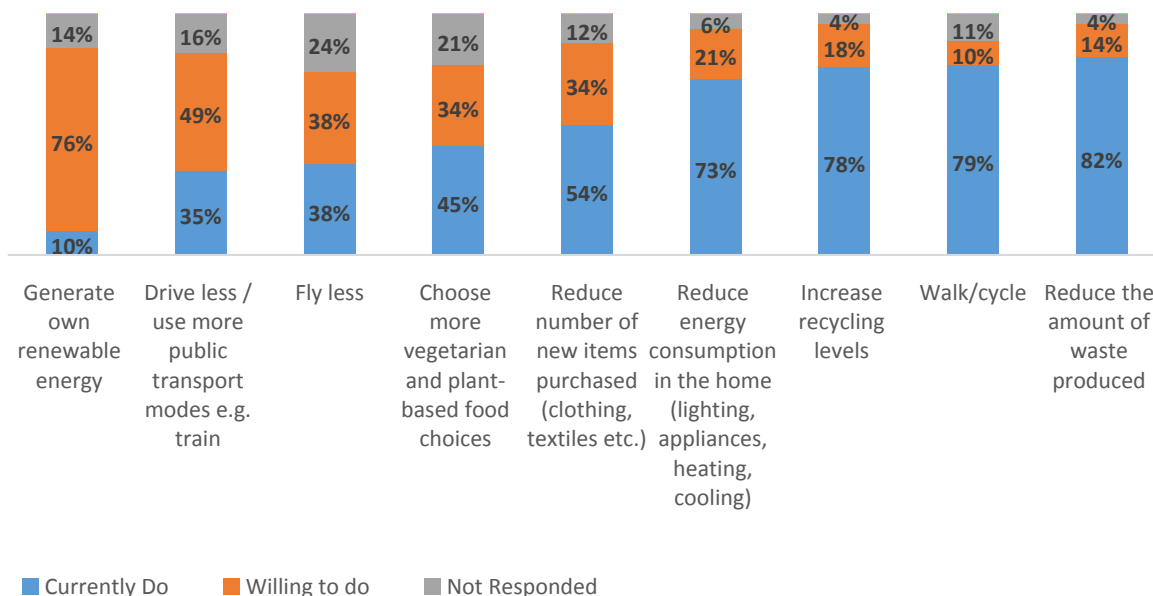
Support residents in adopting sustainable energy measures in the home

Energy efficiency in buildings was thought to be important to 93% of the panel respondents and over half felt this was 'very important'. 87% felt local energy generation was important. A significant number of respondents also highlighted that green energy generation and supply should be prioritised to tackle climate change. Within the focus groups, there was also agreement on domestic energy being a large contributor to carbon emissions. Although only 10% of



respondents are currently generating their own renewable fuel, it is important to note the high level of willingness to do this in the future.

Please indicate which of the following actions you currently do and if not, whether you would be willing to do them



76% of respondents are willing to generate their own renewable energy. Respondents suggested that help from the government to generate their own renewable energy would help them to become more sustainable, with 25% of respondents specifically mentioning an appetite for this.

“Would generate own renewable energy if it was not so expensive to install the equipment” Resident Panel

“Incentivise people to shift onto a new heating system – moving away from purchasing gas boilers” Focus Group

There was discussion in the focus groups around electric heating and installation being too expensive in comparison to gas heating, as well as facing barriers to using renewable energy sources and retrofitting homes due to lack of knowledge on where to start. There was clear agreement across the groups that residents need to be educated on renewable energy alternatives, signposted to professionals capable of fitting sustainable systems and incentives should be put in place to switch to green energy suppliers.

School students held more of a focus on the individual responsibilities of residents and the need to raise awareness of individual’s roles in reducing emissions. Around 50% of their proposed solutions were rooted in behavioural change, including actions to increase energy efficiency in the home.





Next Steps

The resident engagement undertaken will be used to steer our approach to tackling climate change as a county and has created actionable insight. We have greater understanding of what is important to residents and their beliefs on what should be prioritised to tackle climate change.

There are clear priorities of residents as an outcome of these engagements, with transport appearing the highest priority, particularly improving the public transport infrastructure. Other priorities include addressing and re-evaluating the waste management process and how we communicate with residents about waste management, and incentivising energy efficiency and renewable energy generation and supporting residents in their efforts to become more sustainable in the home.

There is a need to develop our understanding of different age demographics priorities, as this was noted during the engagements. Further work will also need to be carried out around identifying and defining incentives for change, as this was recognised as a better approach than penalising residents to force change.

- Further efforts to engage with those from younger age groups, particularly 18-34
- Draw on these outputs to feed into Surrey's Climate Change Strategy throughout
- Continue to support residents as they develop solutions to climate change through community activities, business response and household actions
- Further engage with residents on more specific programmes and actions we take on climate change in the future, as will be outlined in the Strategy

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