

Analysis of the Community Area Transport Group (CATG) Survey's Results

Executive Summary

On the whole, feedback provided about Wiltshire's CATGs was positive. Most stated that the CATGs were working well, had been able to deliver tangible benefits and effectively ensured that there was a greater amount of local influence in decisions. When it came to suggestions for how CATGs could be improved, this primarily came down to a matter of funding and support resources.

Analysis of Results

The survey received 105 responses from Wiltshire Councillors, as well as Town and Parish Councillors. Taking there to be 98 Unitary Councillors and 252 Town and Parish Councils, this means that the survey had a response rate of 30%*¹.

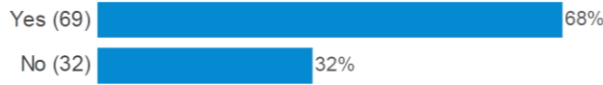
Would you say that having a Community Area Transport Group (CATG) has been an effective way of attracting and prioritising highway and transport investment in your area?



A majority of respondents stated that, primarily, CATGs are effective because they have delivered improvements to the highways in a local area, through schemes such as increased signage, dropped kerbs and yellow lines. Secondly, CATGs have ensured that more decisions have local-level input and they have facilitated improved partnership working between the key stakeholders involved in highways matters. A minority of individuals stated that CATGs were not able to be effective because they did not have adequate funding, or the process for implementing highway improvements was too lengthy.

¹ *As the survey was anonymous, there could be cases where several councillors from the same Town/Parish Council have completed the survey separately. For example, it could be that a Town Council provided three responses to the survey. Thus, the 30% response rate should be regarded as a rough estimate.

Do you think that CATGs have produced a clearer understanding of Council policies and the application of regulations at a local level?



Do you think that CATGs are a good way to assess and manage requests for highways improvements by local residents?



The comment sections related to the above two questions demonstrate that the key benefits of CATGs are that they facilitate better partnership working, ensure that decisions are made at a local-level and enable residents to understand the processes for bringing about change.

Do you think that the frequency of meetings for CATGs is about right?



As evidenced above, a majority of respondents agreed that the frequency of CATG meetings works well. From the minority that disagreed, the comments mainly centred on a CATG meeting more frequently.

Do you agree with how the membership of the CATG is organised?



Again, most respondents agreed with the organisation of CATG membership. From the minority that disagreed, comments predominantly stated that there should be greater grassroots level representation, as opposed to being Town/Parish/Unitary Councillor heavy.

In light of the overall budget and funding needs for the Highways service area, do you agree with how the funding is allocated for CATGs?



As shown from the above, CATG funding was a particularly key issue with no clear majority being drawn either way on agreement for how CATG funding is allocated. The comment section associated with this question predominantly received responses suggesting that more funding was required.

Do you think your local area understands how CATG funding can be spent?



Around two thirds of respondents listed that their local area does understand how CATG funding can be spent. From the 36% who stated that their local area lacks understanding, comments primarily noted that there needed to be greater publicity of CATGs and how they work, with others saying that an explanation of what a CATG does and can do needs to be simplified. Some also highlighted that an individual would only understand how CATG funding could be spent, once they had been involved in getting a scheme approved.

Do you agree with the governance arrangements of the CATG, i.e. that it reports to the relevant Area Board, who must agree any funding decisions?



Most respondents agreed with the governance arrangements of the CATG and, of the 16% who did not agree, suggestions for how the arrangements could be organised focused on the Area Board being seen as an unnecessary additional layer, which should only come into play when the CATG cannot agree on whether to fund a scheme.

What issues, if any, has your CATG faced to resolving small-scale, local highways matters?

The majority of issues reported were largely to do with funding. This was followed by many stating that the process for delivering the highway improvement was too slow and, although officers were praised for their contribution, respondents stated that the capacity of support for CATGs had led to difficulties.

When asked, respondents commented that these issues could be resolved by more funding being provided to the CATG, or if more information could be provided about where and how local areas can access delegated sources of funding. Others listed that greater resources were needed to support the CATG.

Without a CATG, do you think your local area's transport and highways network would have benefitted from more or less investment?



Comment section responses to this question can be split into two themes. The first is that CATGs have allowed local people's voices to be heard to a greater extent in the

decision-making process. Additionally, CATGs have seen specific funding set aside for small scale highways issues; which has been to the benefit of local communities.

Is there anything that you feel needs to be changed, so that CATGs can help to deliver an even better service for your local area?

As has been commonplace throughout the survey's responses, a majority stated that increased funding for the CATGs would deliver more. Others noted that there needed to be better explanations about what a CATG can achieve. Alongside this, increased resource to support the CATG was also a key theme in the responses to this question.

Conclusion

It is evident from the survey's results that most respondents believe CATGs have brought about benefits for Wiltshire's community areas. This is seen to be because, primarily without the existence of a CATG, respondents do not believe that their local area's highways would be in as good a condition. Secondly, respondents are clear that the CATG facilitates enhanced partnership working; with a CATG being the mechanism which establishes communication channels between all the key stakeholders.

Areas for improvement centre on increasing the funding available to CATGs, although some respondents recognised that this could be an impossible solution. On the whole, respondents felt that if the CATG had more support resources available to it, then it would be able to deliver an even greater service.