

Appendix 2:

Survey Consultation Feedback and Evaluation

Introduction

From 1 September to 17 October 2021, Wiltshire Council jointly consulted on its draft Climate Strategy and draft Green & Blue Infrastructure Strategy for Wiltshire - Wiltshire's Natural Environment Plan 2022-30. The purpose of the consultation was to gain the views of the public and stakeholders to inform the development of the strategies.

Methods used included three webinars, and four face to face events in libraries. This was accompanied by extensive communications through social media as well as traditional press releases. Direct notifications of the consultation were sent to Parish, Town, and City Councils (Local Councils), other public sector partners, business forums, the Local Resilience Partnership, Wiltshire Wildlife Trust and Wiltshire Climate Alliance asking them to promote this opportunity to their membership and partners. Copies of the GBI Strategy as well as an executive summary were displayed in all public libraries and mobile libraries along with the Climate Strategy.

An online survey was set up to allow for public feedback on the Strategy, but additional comments could be sent in via email.

This report, together with the supporting Annex 1, summarises the activities and results of the online survey consultation and feedback sent via email, together with the council's response.

1. Overview

A total of 211 survey responses were received. Of these, 180 were from the online survey and 31 were additional written responses sent via email. Most of those responding were individuals, with 34% of those stating that they were a member of a local environmental organisation. 60 responses were from organisations of which 31 emails were received separately from stakeholder organisations, some of whom also completed the survey. Where possible, more generic comments sent by e-mail have been included in the data presented in this report. More specific comments received, and the council's response to them, can be found annexed to this report.

Overall, the comments submitted can be placed under three broad headings

- **Timescales for action** - the need for action, targets and urgency
- **Clarity of message** - graphics and text sizes
- **Inclusivity** - technical phrases used and a lack of explanation as to their meaning.

Whilst the 2011 census records BME communities making up 6% of the population of Wiltshire (excluding Swindon) 3% who responded to the demographic questions identified as BME. 9% of the population of Wiltshire have some form of disability or long-term illness whilst 12% of respondents who responded to the demographic questions stated they had a disability or long-term illness. There was a slight underrepresentation of those who identified as male under the gender demographic at 35.8%.

Proportionally, younger and working age people were underrepresented and those of 55+ years overrepresented. 61% of respondents were aged 55 and over whilst this age group makes up 36% of the population of Wiltshire. Only 4% of respondents were aged between 18-34 years compared to 17% of the population of Wiltshire being in this age bracket. It has proved very difficult to engage this age group in the consultation of the GBI strategy despite extensive social media coverage which reached over 75,000 individuals, although not all perhaps based in Wiltshire.

The format of the survey was kept simple and in line with the Climate Strategy survey to aid completion of the two surveys simultaneously. 88.8% of respondents found the GBI strategy either understandable or very clear and easy to understand. 96.6% of respondents having read the strategy felt the GBI Strategy was either important or very important.

When asked to rank the three main strategy goals all three were ranked highly although 'halting loss and improving biodiversity' was seen as more important than 'adaption and resilience to climate change' and 'contribution to health and wellbeing' respectively.

When respondents were asked to rank delivery themes the result was as follows:

- 1st - Nature Recovery and Landscape Management
- 2nd - Sustainable Farming and Land Management
- 3rd - Woodland and Trees
- 4th - Flood and Water Management
- 5th - Healthy Living
- 6th - Economic Recovery and Valuing Natural Capital

When the survey asked if respondents would be interested in partnership working in the future 77% said they would either like to be fully involved or kept actively engaged in some way. It is great to see that so many respondents wish to continue engaging on the GBI Strategy and its related work into the future. 56% of respondents were members of environmental groups of some sort which again shows active engagement in the subject with those involved.

Many questions were able to be answered during the live webinar sessions with any additional questions being noted down and subsequently answered on the Climate strategy Q an A page [here](#).

2. Analysis of GBI Strategy consultation responses

Whilst the main responses have been outlined in the overview above this analysis provides a more detailed look at the individual online survey questions.

2.1 How Clear was the Document?

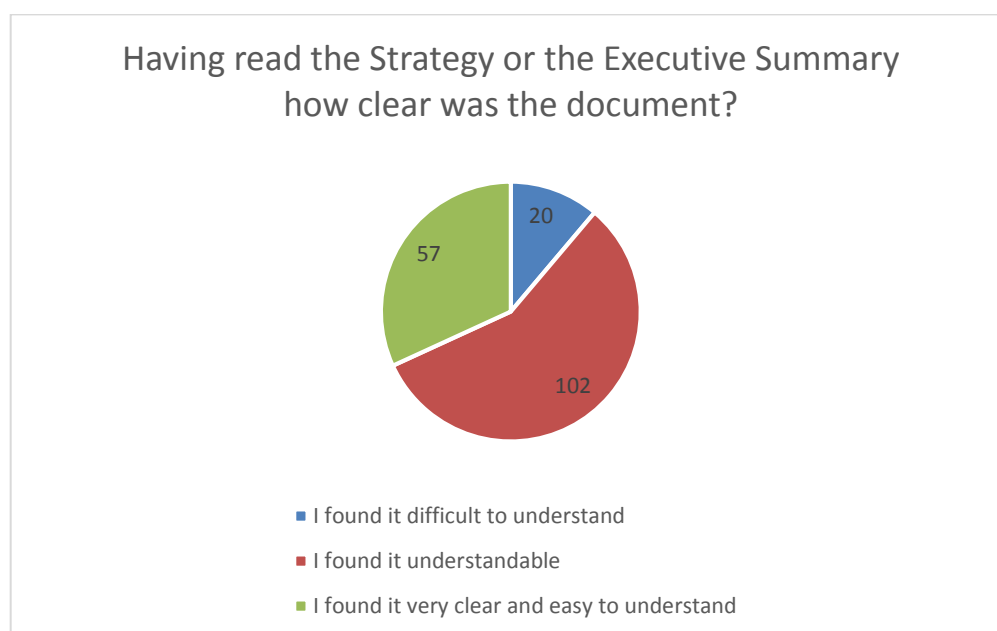
Many of the comments regarding the GBI Strategy were regarding its readability. Only 31.8% found the document clear and easy to understand whilst a majority 56.9% found it understandable. Within this latter group there were many comments regarding use of technical language and repetition in the text. Even the much shorter executive summary was felt not to simplify the concepts enough.

Following these comments as well as dealing with any graphic issues such as font size and clarity in the document, a glossary of terms in the back of the strategy now sets out what many of the technical phrases and acronyms that appear throughout the document mean.

It is also proposed to produce an 'easy read' version of the finalised document following adoption, to assist those with learning difficulties and other disability impairments who may not cope with the long-read version. This was trialled with the Climate Strategy and found to be very successful in engaging a demographic who often feel excluded from consultations on public policy.

Some of the comments also referred to a lack of concrete targets and that the text seemed very 'wordy' without showing steps to be taken for clear action. Whilst attempts were made in the GBI strategy document in the introduction to explain that the more detail plans would be coming through the Wiltshire Local Nature Recovery Strategy and GBI Settlement Frameworks, this was missed by many reading the document. As part of the amendments made to the document the introduction and other sections have been re-written to ensure the function of the GBI Strategy and how it provides an overview for more detailed policy coming forward shortly can be better understood.

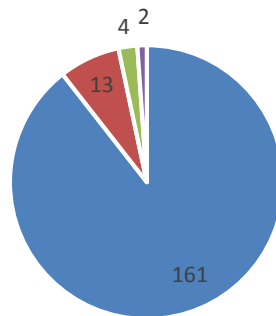
It is also proposed to include more hyperlinks both across the document to make navigation through the document easier but also to outside sources to ensure references can be more easily found.



2.2 How important do you think the GBI Strategy is?

Whilst there was some criticism of the format of the GBI Strategy and the lack of targets, the importance of the Strategy overall and its goals and themes were overwhelming endorsed. As has been noted already many of the respondents are already actively engaged in this space in either a personal or professional capacity and are therefore pleased to see Wiltshire Council engaging actively in this topic and willing it to move as fast as possible in developing and adopting policy that benefits the environment.

Having read the Strategy or the Executive Summary
how important do you think the GBI Strategy is?



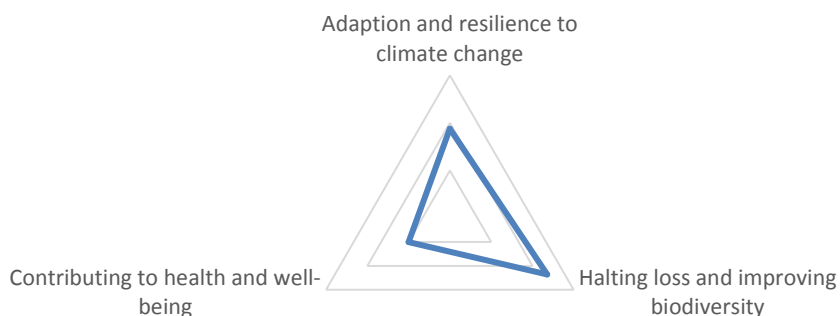
■ It is very important ■ It is important ■ It is not important ■ prefer not to say

2.3 Rank the Three main Strategy Goals in importance

Whilst it was not surprising that 'Halting loss and improving biodiversity' was the highest ranked of the three GBI Strategy goals due to the focus of many respondents on the natural environment the fact that 'adaption and resilience to climate change' came very close in importance shows how closely correlated in the minds of respondents to two subjects are. It would seem to support the decision to run the public consultations together as they are so interlinked in the minds of the wider community.

That 'Health and well-being' is not seen as so important with green and blue infrastructure despite numerous empirical studies showing the benefits of nature to human health may point to the need to further expand public knowledge on this important part of the GBI strategy and green and blue infrastructure in general. This will be considered as part of the GBI settlement work.

Rank the three main Strategy Goals in importance
on a scale from 1 - 10

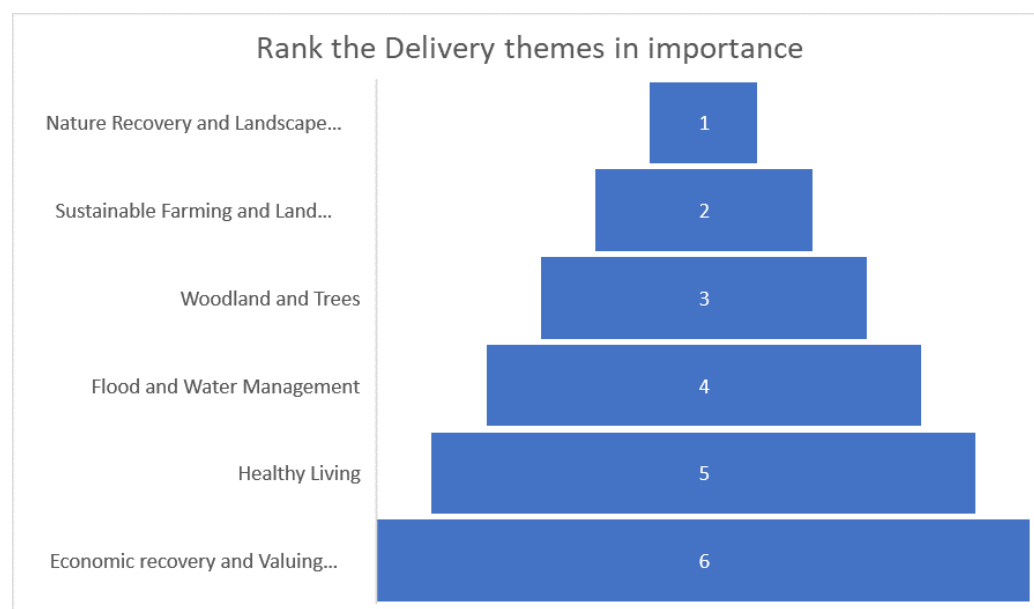


2.4 Rank the Delivery Themes in importance

Some respondents noted that they did not want to rank the responses as they felt all of them were important, however when compiling the questionnaire, it was felt helpful to try and understand the relative importance of these themes for those responding so that our efforts can be suitably focused in the future.

It is likely that successful GBI schemes will cover most if not all these themes when being delivered, but when undertaking public consultation, the results from this survey show that highlighting nature recovery and sustainable farming practices as primary themes over benefits to healthy living and economic recovery are likely to gain more public support than schemes that place economic recovery and valuing natural capital over the benefits say to woodlands and trees.

There may also be some residual confusion over the terminology and perhaps even some resistance to 'monetise' environmental 'goods' by survey respondents which mean that linking accountancy terms to biodiversity benefits might be felt to be incongruous by those more interested in the survival of plants and animals rather than economics. Often economic progress is linked to environmental harm. A solid and positive case for economic progress being linked to environmental good may need to be made going forward.



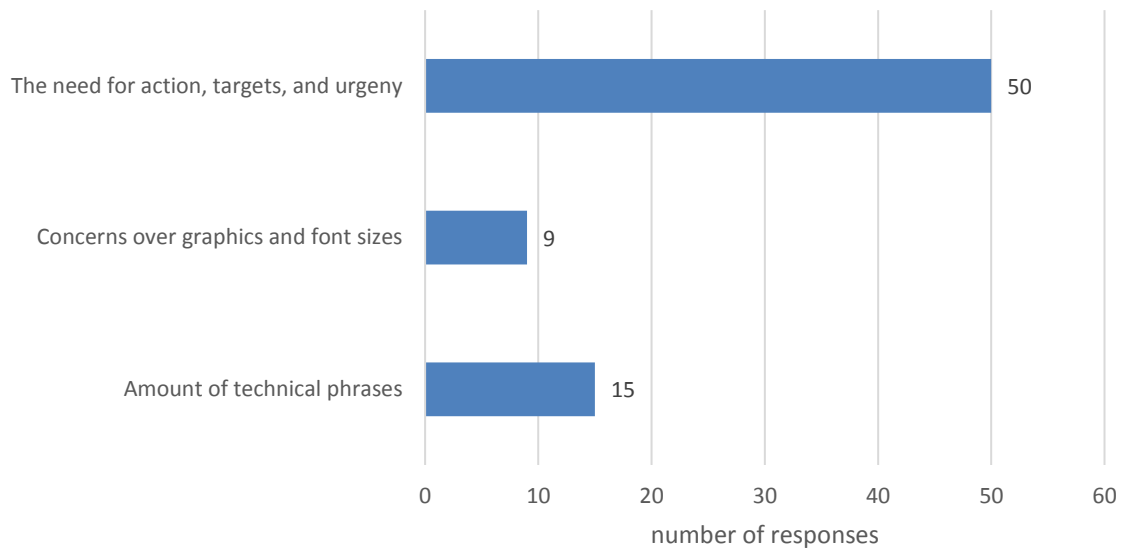
2.5 Written comment topics

The comment topics could be ranked under three main headings.

- **Timescales for action** - the need for action, targets and urgency
- **Clarity of message** - graphics and text sizes
- **Inclusivity** - technical phrases used and a lack of explanation as to their meaning.

As can be seen from the graph below most written responses were regarding the need for action, targets and urgency by some margin. There were some additional themes which appeared in the comments, but these were more to do with wider planning considerations rather than specific GBI themes and goals such as comments on recent planning decisions.

Written Comment topics

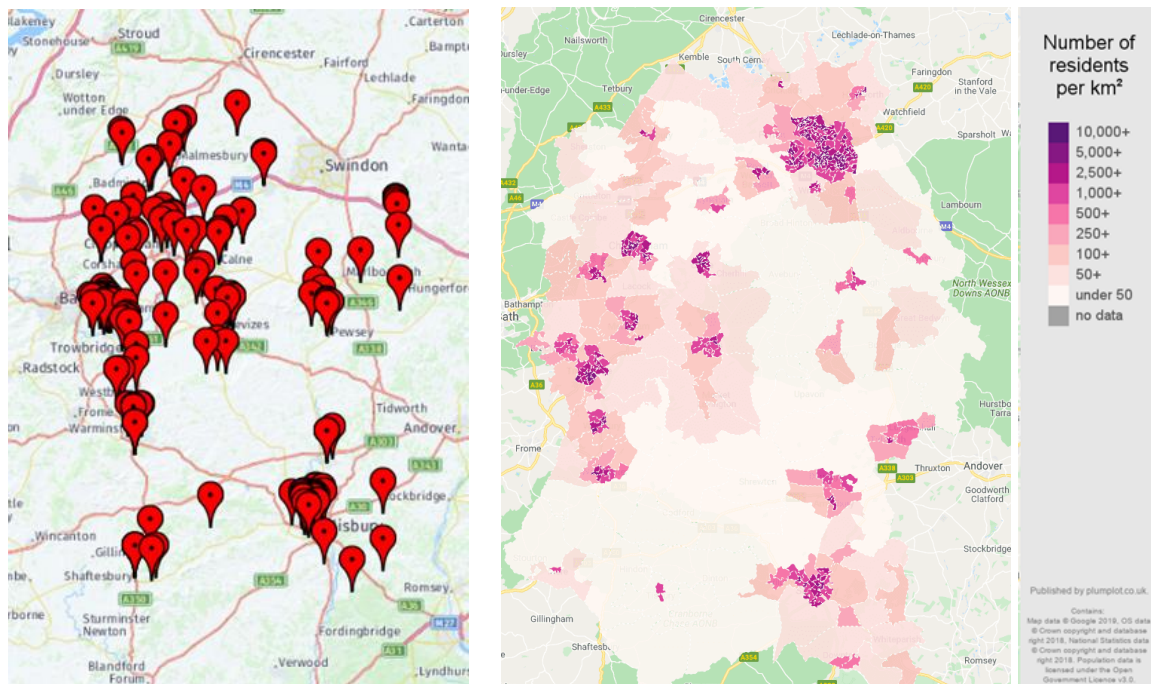


3. Reach of Consultation

A demographics survey was included within the online questionnaire to understand the spread of results and how these matched up to the demographics of Wiltshire. The following provides a rundown of the results.

3.1 Geographic spread of respondents

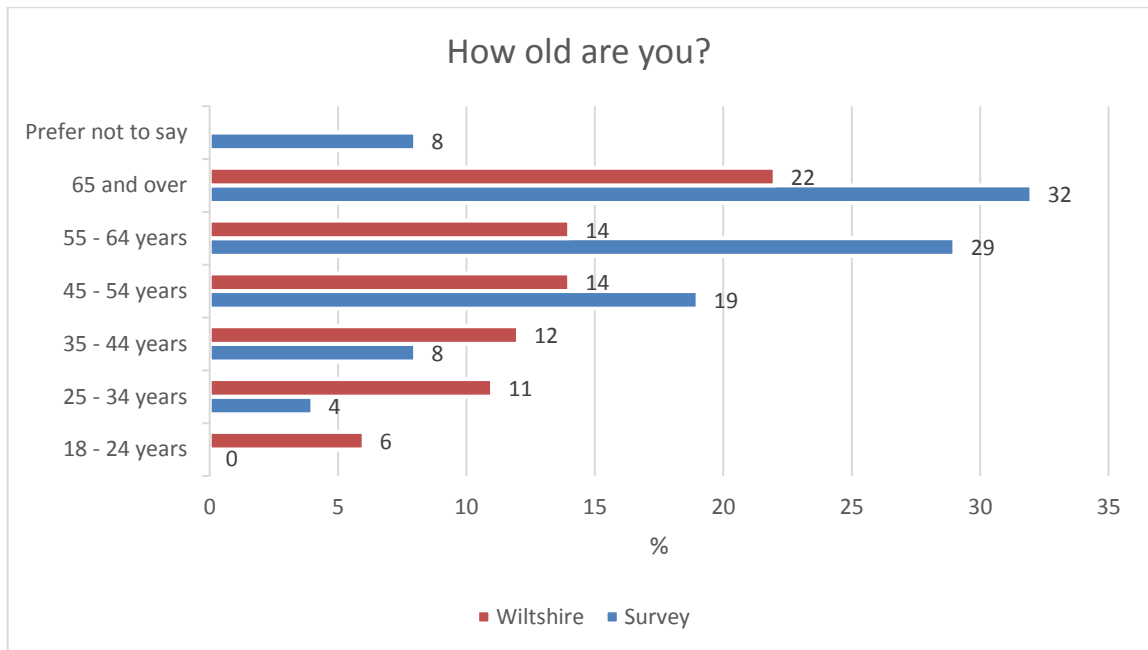
As part of the online survey respondents were asked to provide a postcode so that an understanding of the geographical spread of those responding could be obtained. Most of the respondents provided a postcode and these results were fed into a Google Maps based online postcode plotter with the results shown below:



Whilst there were four outlier results in Gloucestershire, Devon, and Buckinghamshire as can be seen by the map the majority of respondents were from inside Wiltshire and corresponded well with a recent population 'heat' map of the County shown on the right.

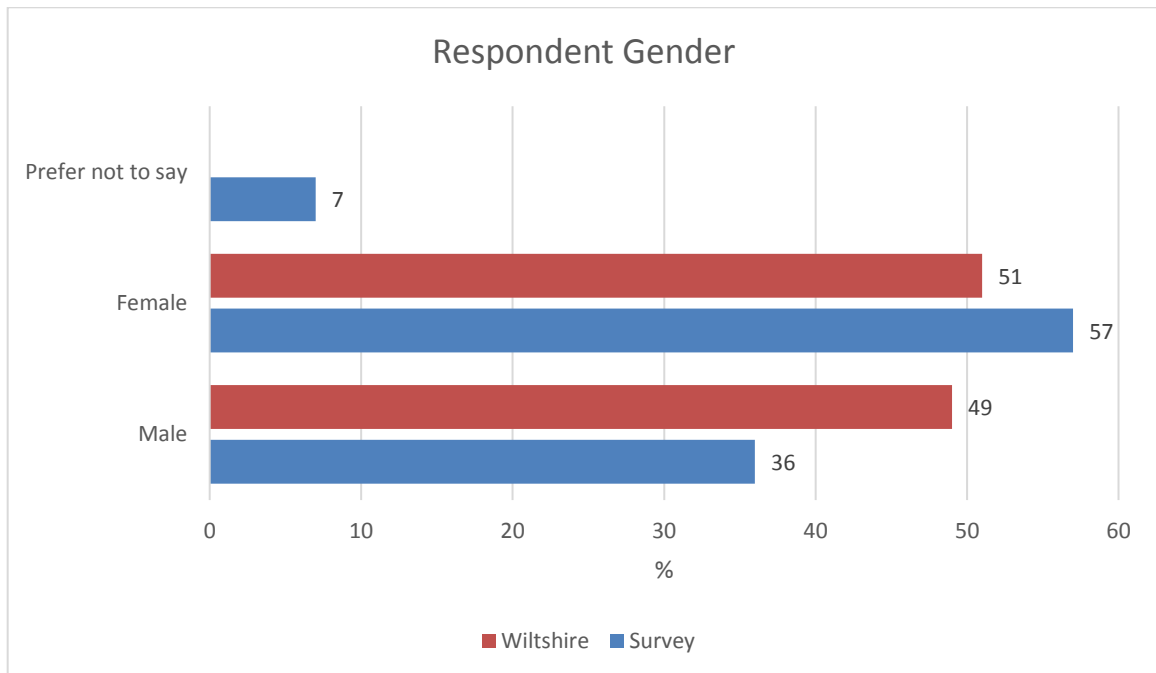
3.2 Age

As can be noted here the age profile of respondents was very much overrepresented in the older age groups with poor representation in the younger age groups.



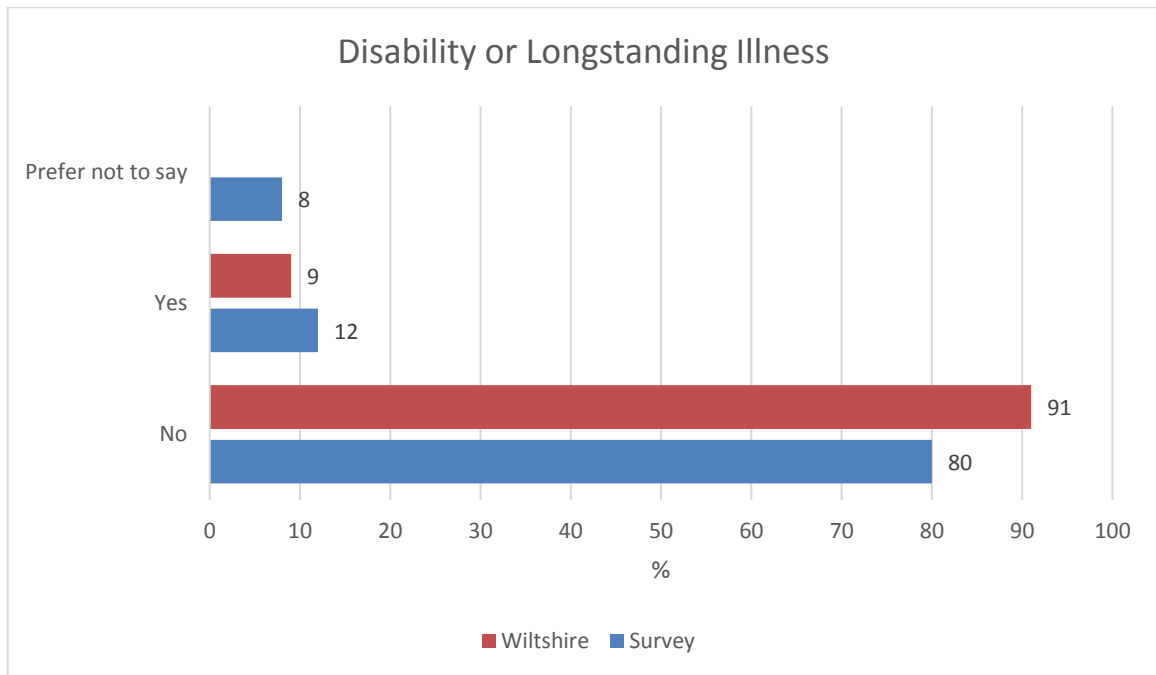
3.3 Gender

Men were generally under-represented and women slightly overrepresented based on the data received. The survey did not allow for other gender identities to be considered.



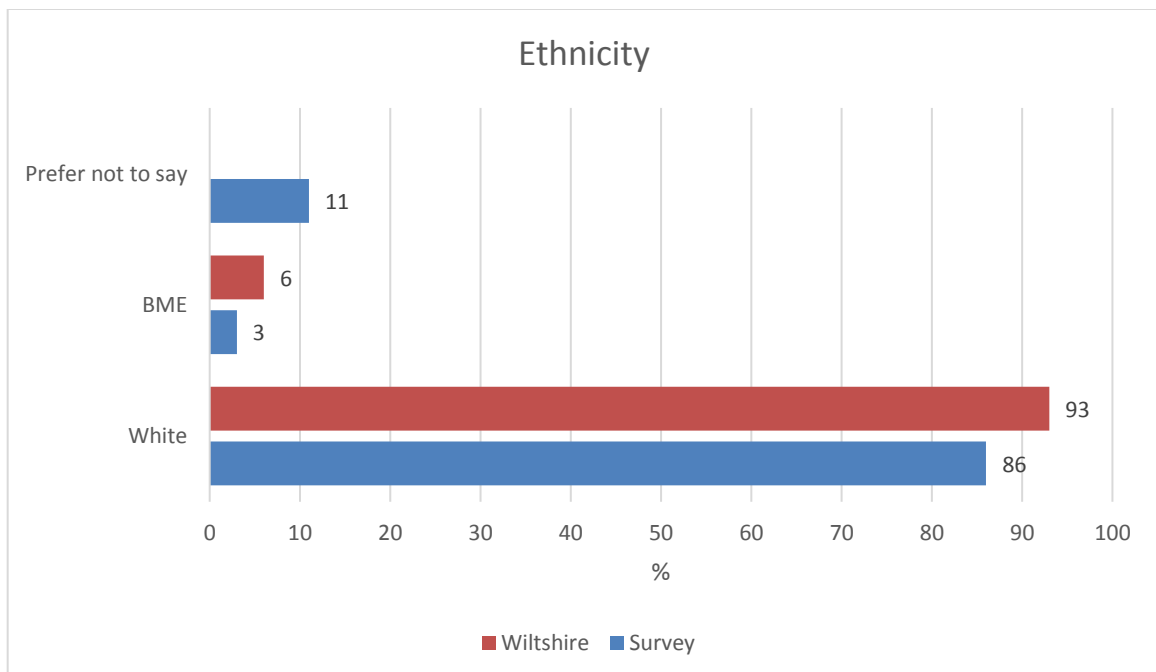
3.4 Disability or long-term illness

Despite some concerns over readability the GBI strategy still managed to reach a greater proportion of disabled people than would be expected from the Wiltshire population.



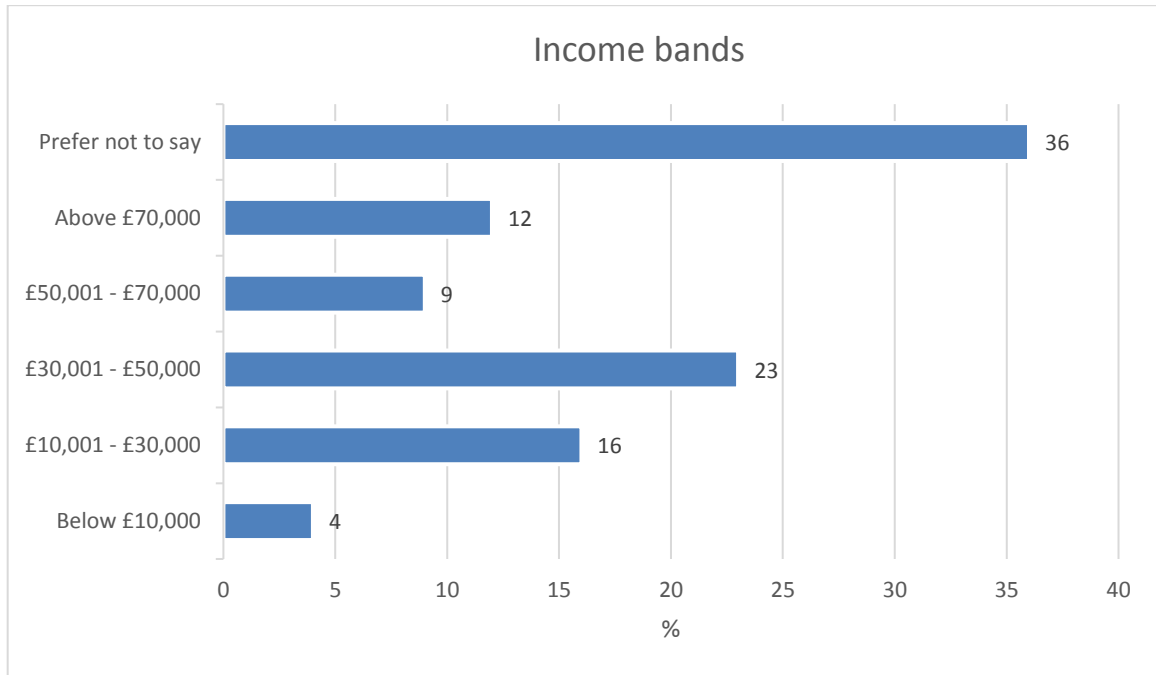
3.5 Ethnicity

There was underrepresentation in BME groups from the survey although due to the limited nature of the data requested in the survey this may have affected the results as respondents may not have been sure if they corresponded with the choices provided and this may have led to the higher percentage of 'prefer not to say.'



3.6 Income

It is difficult to accurately judge the income band data as so many respondents (36%) preferred not to give these details. However generally upper- and middle-income bands seemed to be more represented than lower income bands. Unfortunately, it has proved difficult to find comparison data for Wiltshire as a whole.



4. Organisations that responded to or were mentioned in the GBI Strategy Survey

Whilst many responses were received from organisations (29) on the online survey many did not write down the names of the organisation in the online survey box and so the list below is not a complete record. This list also includes the names of organisations that provided written email responses to the GBI Strategy survey.

Avon Needs trees
Bradford on Avon Town Council
Carbon Neutral Aldbourne
Chippenham Devizes and North Wiltshire Green Party
Chippenham Town Council
Climate Friendly Bradford
Climate Friendly Bradford on Avon Active Travel Group
Climate Friendly Bradford-on-Avon Biodiversity Group
Corsham Town Council
Corsham Town Council's Environmental Task Group
Corsley Parish Council
Cranborne Chase AONB
Dilton Marsh Parish Council
Drews Pond Wood Project
Eden Renewables
Forestry Commission
Future Chippenham
Malmesbury Town Council
Melksham Without Parish Council
MOD
NFU Wiltshire
Positive Nature

Private Consultant
River Avon Bioregion Group and Wiltshire Wildlife Trust
RSPB
Salisbury & Wilton Swift Group
Salisbury Civic Society Development Committee
Sedgehill and Semley Parish Council
St Paul Malmesbury Without Parish Council
Sustainable Sherston
Sustainable Warminster
Vistry Group
Wessex Water
West Wilts Ramblers Group
Wild Colerne
Wiltshire and Swindon Countryside Access Forum
Wiltshire Climate Alliance
Wiltshire Council
Winsley Parish Council
Woodland Trust

The following is a list of organisations that individual respondents belonged to but were not responding on behalf of:

Aldbourn Carbon Neutral
Aldbourn Wildlife
Butterfly Conservation
Calne Without Parish Council,
Carbon Neutral Aldbourn
COGS
CPRE
CPRE Wiltshire
Cranborne Chase Landscape Trust Stakeholders Group
Cycling UK (Wiltshire)
Eco Bromham
Friends of Becky Addy Wood
Friends of Harnham Meadow
Friends of the Earth
Green Party
Kennet and Avon River Trust
Malmesbury Climate Action Network
Melksham Energy Group
Melksham goes wild
More than one
Pauls Dene Verges group
Pewsey Roots and Shoots
Plantlife
Quidhampton Parish Council climate change workgroup (and Nature project)
Royal Wootton Bassett Environmental Group
Salisbury Area Greenspace Partnership
Salisbury Community Energy

Salisbury Green Party ...
Salisbury Transition City
Sustainable Calne,
Sustainable Devizes
The Badger Trust
The National Trust
Tisbury & District Natural History Group
Tisbury Natural History Society
Transcoco (Transition Community Corsham)
Transition city
Trowbridge Chamber of Commerce
Trowbridge Civic Society
Trowbridge Town Council Environmental Working group
Westwood Biodiversity Group
Wild Colerne
Wilton Wildlife Group
Wiltshire Tree Wardens
Wiltshire Butterfly Conservation
Wiltshire Green Party
Winterslow Environment Volunteers group
WOS
XR
XR BoA
XR Chippenham
XR Salisbury
Zero Chippenham

5.0 Conclusion

The feedback from the consultation was generally supportive and the revised strategy has been amended to reflex comments received. Annex 1 provides more details of comments received by email and the council's response.

The GBI Strategy is not a statutory document and as such there were no statutory requirements for the consultation. However, Consultation was undertaken in respect of this strategy and the consultation that was undertaken is considered sound as it was undertaken when proposals were still at a formative stage and provided sufficient information and time for consultees to provide appropriate comment. The feedback is felt to be representative, if not completely aligned, with Wiltshire's demographics.

The consultation feedback have led to changes to the final proposed strategy and provides an appropriate summary for the decision maker to have due regard (see Annex 1).

ANNEX 1

(See separate pdf. Document)