



re3 Project Team

WASTE TRANSFER STATION – REGULAR USER SATISFACTION SURVEY

Background

Between September and November 2010, a user satisfaction survey was carried out with regular council users of the waste transfer stations in Smallmead, Reading and Longshot Lane, Bracknell. This survey was conducted as a means of managing the contract; identifying any potential areas of improvement and making recommendations where necessary.

Council vehicles in particular require that their visit to the transfer station to deposit their waste is quick and straight-forward. This ensures that that the crews are able to complete their work efficiently and cost-effectively each day. Subsequently the regular council users of the transfer stations were identified and these groups were given the opportunity to partake in the survey. In addition, those charities that tip under the council's accounts were also approached.

Methodology

Surveys with the refuse, recycling and garden crews were all conducted through a face-to-face approach. This was due to the limited literacy skills of some of the target group and so that clarification could be sought on the answers where necessary. All other surveys were provided for self completion by the crew.

The short survey consisted of questions to assess the respondent's opinions on the site facilities, the running of them and their overall level of satisfaction. Where possible, questions were asked in a similar way as in the public user satisfaction survey, so as the results could be compared.

Respondents

A total of 73 responses were received. This included most refuse, recycling, garden waste and street cleansing crews from Reading, Wokingham and Bracknell councils as well as 16% of the approved charities and a handful of other regular users. The overall composition of the respondents can be seen in Figure One.

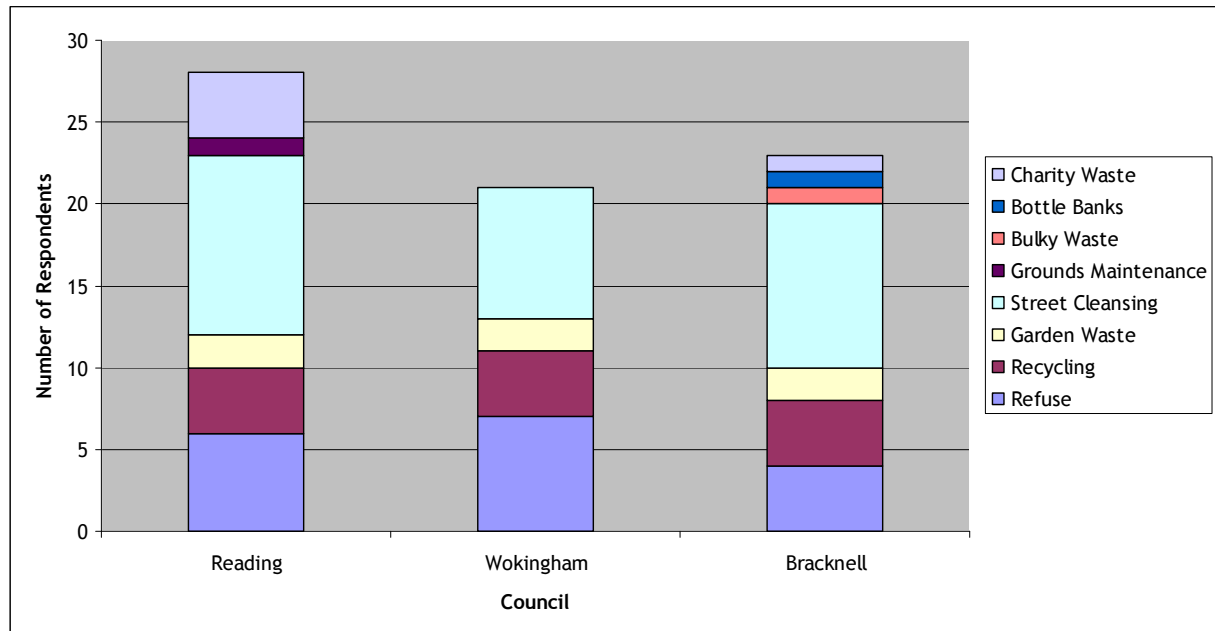


Figure One: Survey Respondents by Council and Material type.

In the majority of cases, the surveys were filled out by the driver of the crew. In a few cases however, the remaining crew members were also present, despite not always visiting the waste transfer station on a daily basis.

Unfortunately the data gained from the charity and street cleansing surveys is less detailed than that from the refuse, recycling and garden waste crews. This is because, where surveys were self-completed, not all questions were answered and very few comments were received to explain the answers given. In addition, whilst complete, or largely complete, survey sets were received for most groups; numbers of questionnaires received from the charities and Reading Borough Council’s parks team were limited. The results from these surveys may not therefore be representative of these groups as a whole.

Finally, it should be noted that there were language barriers in some cases. This was particularly true when talking to the Wokingham crews, as a large proportion did not speak English as their first language. Here every effort was made to make the questions understood and to understand the answers given, seeking clarification and justification where necessary.

Results and Discussion

Entering the Site

The results of the questions relating to how long vehicles have to wait in order to pass the weighbridge and access the sites are considerably varied and this can be seen in figure two.

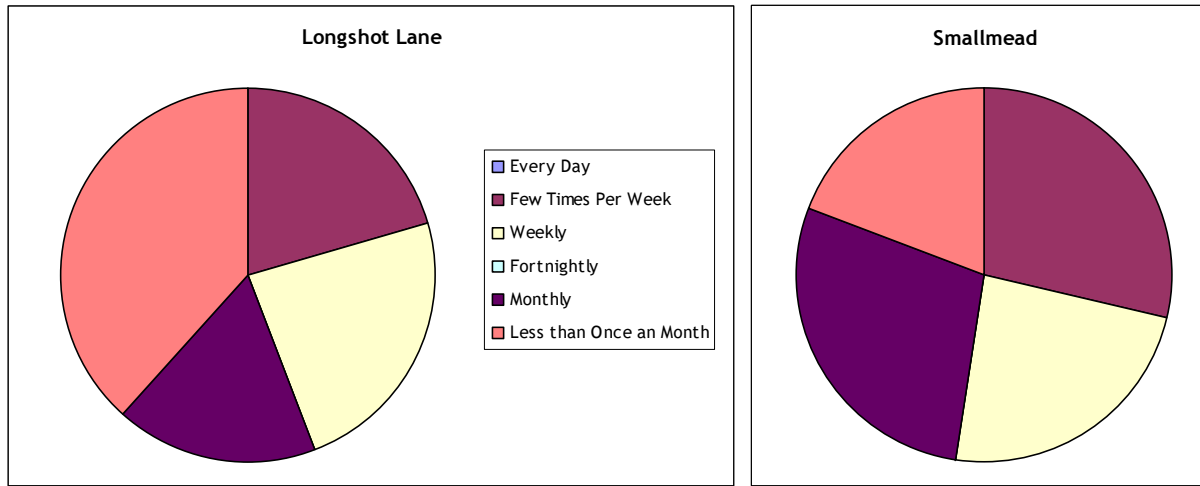


Figure Two: Responses to the question “How often do you wait more than 15 minutes to pass the weighbridge”.

The variability in these results may be a product of the different times in which the crews visit. This is because the comments received from the refuse and recycling crews indicate that the sites are busiest around break and lunch times and when the crews finish. This can be seen in figures three and four below.

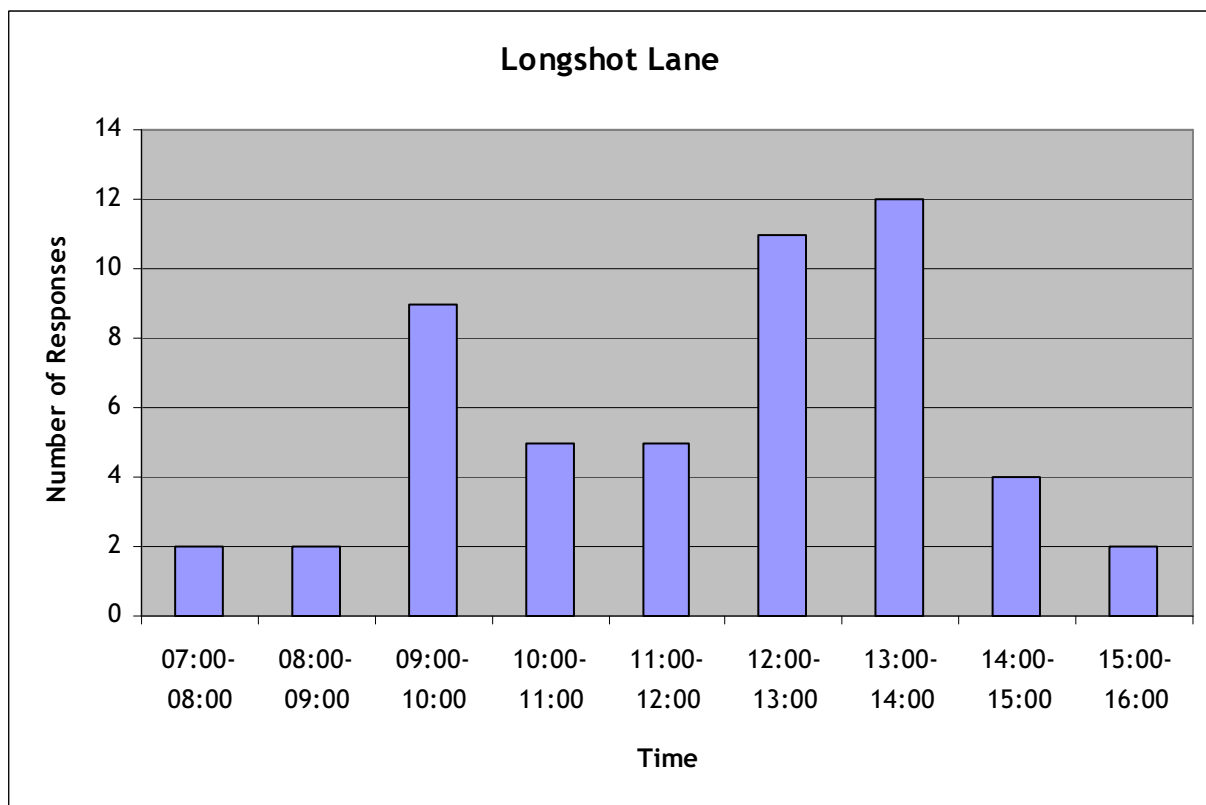


Figure Three: Times considered busiest at the Longshot site.

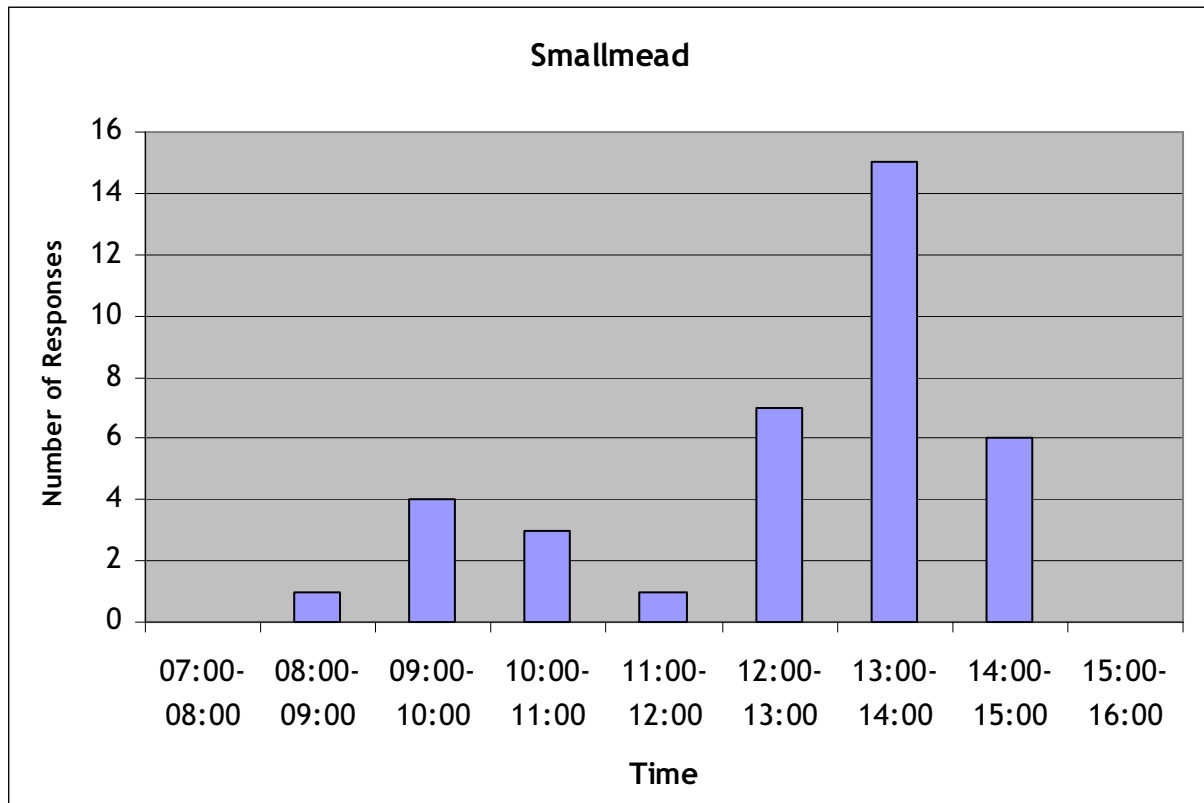


Figure Four: Times considered busiest at the Smallmead site.

A fifth of the respondents however, responded by saying that the site was either not busy when they visited or that the busy periods varied, depending on when the large articulated vehicles were on site. Of these, 80% said they tended to only wait longer than 15 minutes either monthly or less.

It may however be that time spent queuing is perceived to be longer than it really is. This is because, with almost half of all respondents saying they queue for longer than 15 minutes at least once a week, it would be expected that on any given day, at least a proportion queue for this length of time. This was not the case on the surveyed days. This is shown in table one.

Table One: Times spent queuing to access the sites on the days of the surveys.

	<5 Minutes	5-15 Minutes	> 15 Minutes
Longshot	76%	24%	0%
Smallmead	68%	32%	0%

Overall, the amount of time waited received mixed responses, but with the most common response at Smallmead being ‘average’ and at Longshot being ‘good’. The charities rated the length of time spent queuing, slightly better than the council vehicles, but it should be noted that as only four responses were received, the results from these surveys may not be representative of this group as a whole.

On the Site

Opening Hours

Respondents were asked how often they felt the site opening hours were sufficient for their purpose. In total, 83% of drivers said that opening hours were always sufficient, whilst 15% said they were usually sufficient. Only one person said they were never sufficient. This person was from a charity and they requested that the weighbridges be open more often at weekends.

Other comments received were both positive and negative. On one hand, some of the drivers were happy with the amount of flexibility offered, whilst on the other they commented that they were not always able to make the hours if they had experienced a breakdown or when working on a Saturday.

Site Safety

The respondents were asked if they had seen a copy of the site rules at the facility. To this, 81% of Longshot visitors and 76% of Smallmead visitors said they had.

With this question however, it may be that respondents gave the answer they thought they should give. (Indeed this question had to be discounted from the Bracknell Street Cleansing responses as the answer 'yes' had been pre-filled on all questionnaires.)

The results were therefore tested by asking the drivers to list the items of personal protective equipment (PPE) they required to access the site. A total of 48 drivers answered both questions, and the relationship between their answers can be seen in figure five.

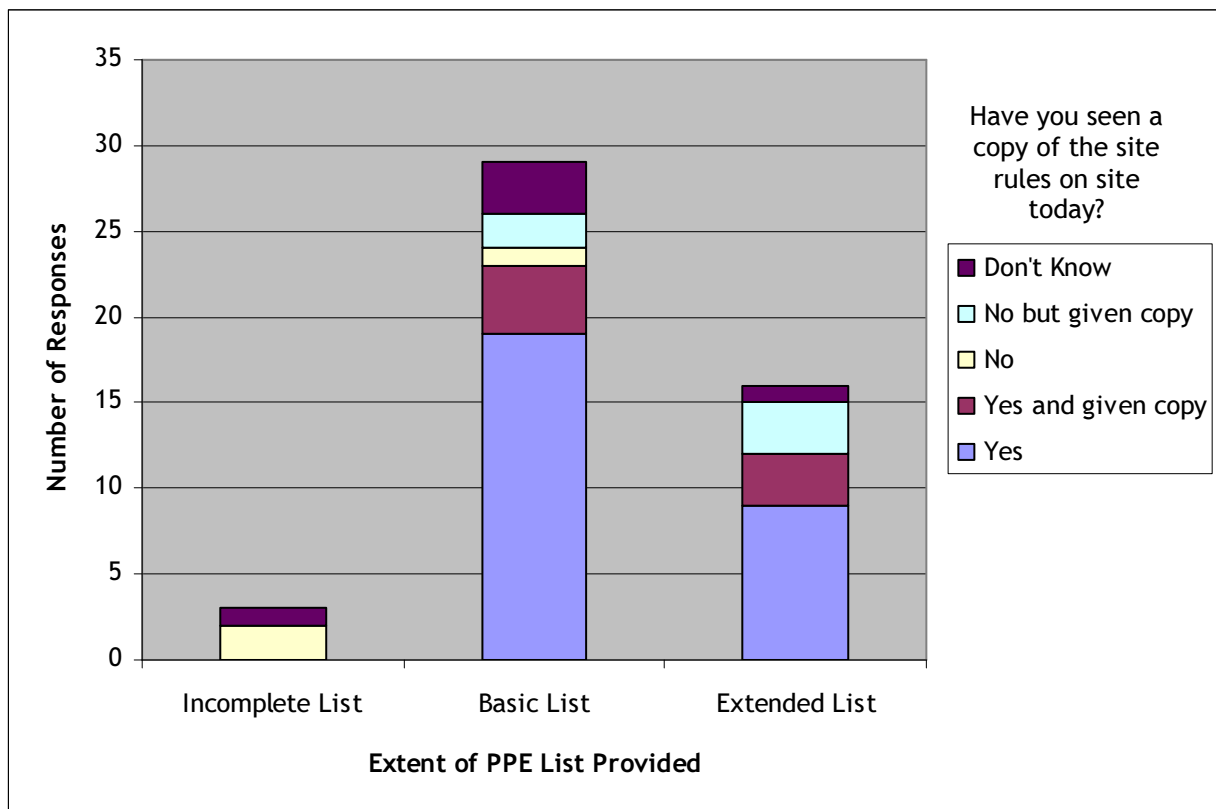


Figure Five - Affect of site rules on knowledge of site PPE requirements (where the responses are those given to the question "have you seen a copy of the site rules on site today?")

Everyone who said they had seen a copy of the site rules, either on site or as a written copy, could provide at least a basic list of PPE required (Hard hat, steel toe-capped boots and high visibility jacket) with a number producing an extended list, adding in trousers and gloves. As expected, those who had not seen the rules, were most likely to provide an incomplete or inaccurate list. It should be noted however that those who could not provide a list were all Wokingham refuse/recycling crews for whom English was not their first language. In addition only 36% of the respondents who self-completed the questionnaire, answered this question.

Of the refuse and recycling crews, only 66% claimed to have seen the copy of the site rules on site. It may therefore be that the most regular users no longer pay attention to signs and notices on site.

Respondents were then asked whether the sites felt like a safe place to visit and the results can be seen in figure six.

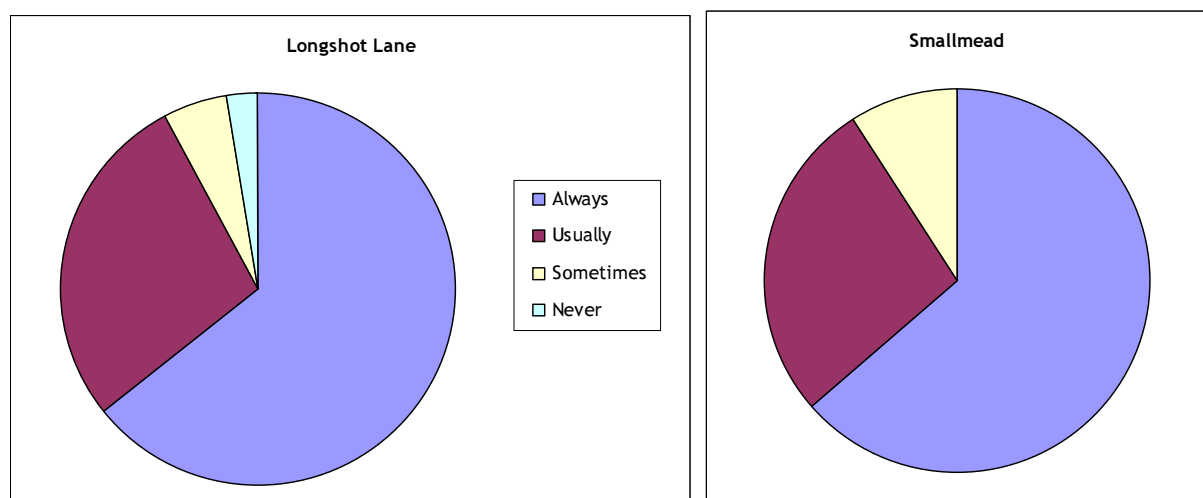


Figure Six: Responses to the question "How often does the site feel like a safe place to visit?"

Approximately a third of all respondents thought that safety could be improved on the site. No one issue dominated the suggestions, but individual comments were made regarding the slippiness of the floors, the amount of traffic on site and the fact that not everyone obeys the lights. A couple of comments were also made however, that the staff are very safety conscious.

Time Spent on Site

The biggest single factor affecting how long most drivers spent on site was 'other users' followed by 'queuing to pass the weighbridge' (Figure seven). Where comments were given however it can be seen that almost all of these responses relate to the loading of articulated vehicles and the use of private vehicles respectively.

The charities however responded slightly differently, with the main factor being the vehicle tipping time.

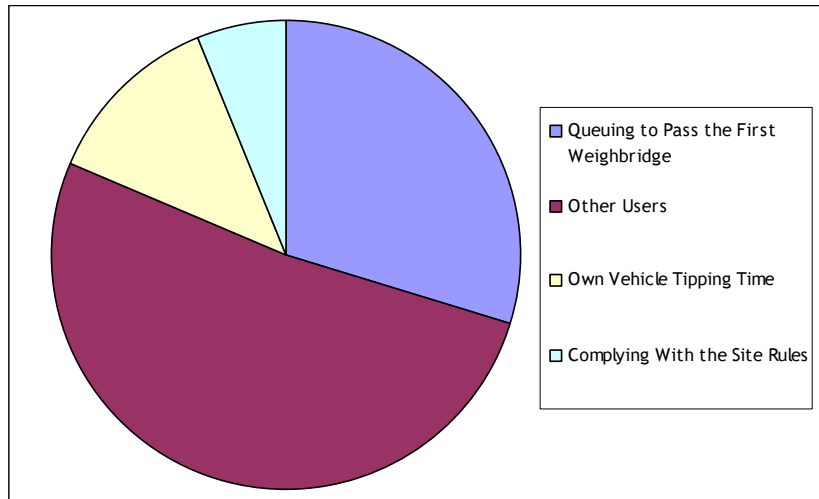


Figure Seven: Biggest factors affecting how long crews spend on site.

Overall most crews are happy with the length of time they spent on site. In total, 70% of the refuse and recycling crews thought the 20 minute turnaround time policy was about right, with only 3% of drivers believing it insufficient. Of the remaining groups, 88% of Longshot visitors and 59% of Smallmead visitors thought the length of time they spent on site was either 'good' or 'excellent', with only one person (a visitor to the Smallmead site) rating it as poor.

Other on Site Factors

All survey respondents were asked to rate various aspects of the site they visit most often out of five and the results can be seen in table one and figures eight and nine.

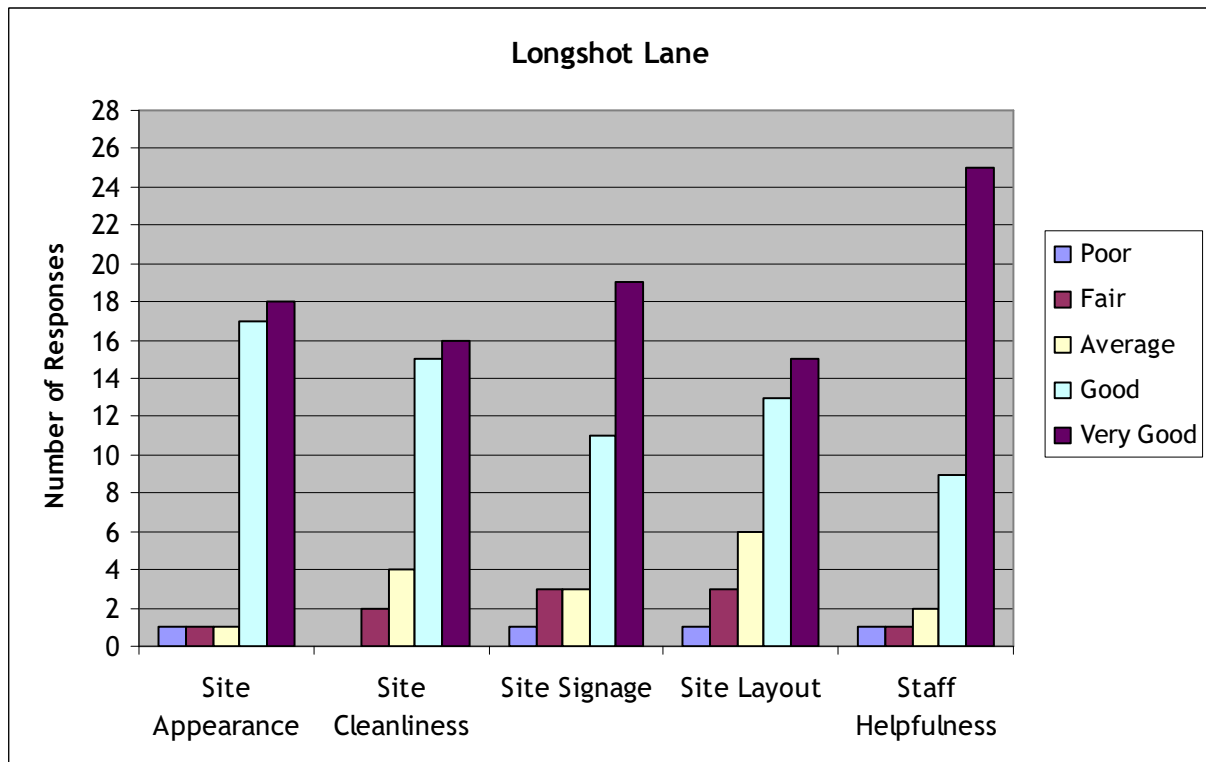


Figure Eight: Rating of site aspects at Longshot

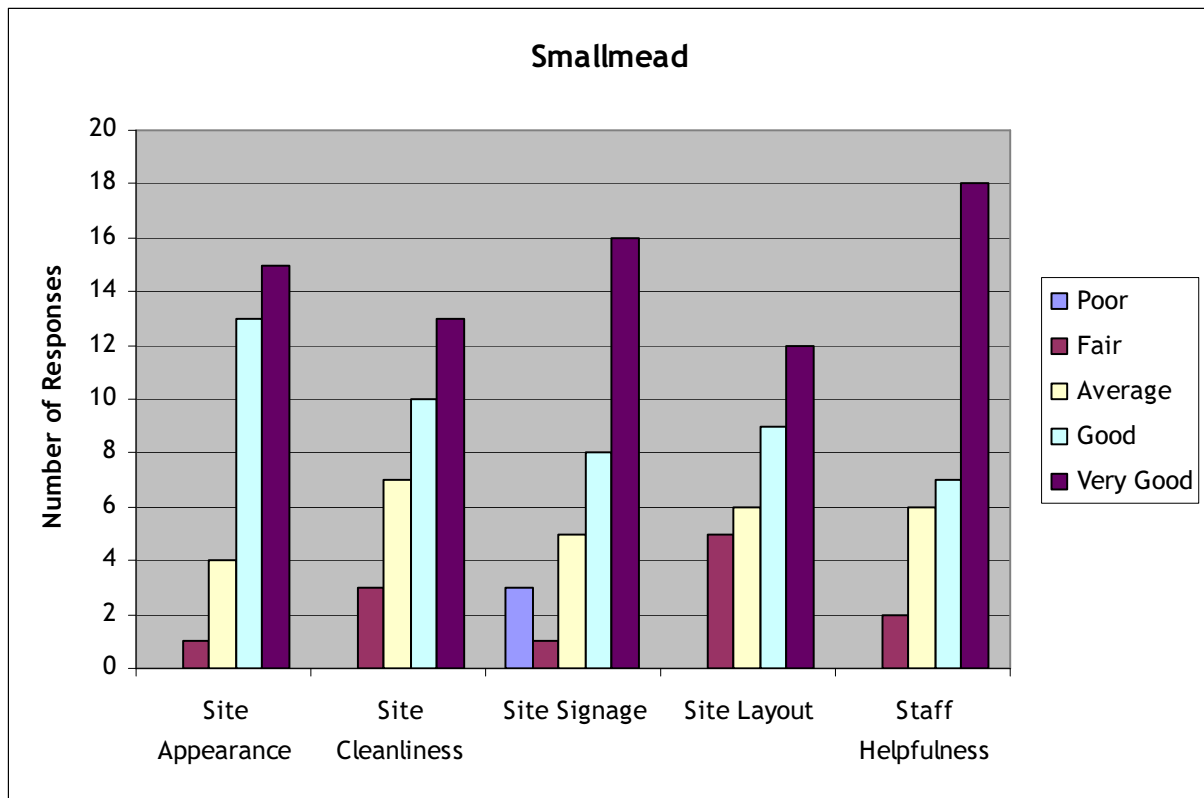


Figure Nine: Rating of site aspects at Smallmead.

Table Two: Site qualities - ratings out of five.

		Smallmead	Longshot
Site Appearance	Average	4.3	4.3
	Standard Deviation	0.8	0.9
Site Cleanliness	Average	4.0	4.2
	Standard Deviation	1.0	0.9
Site Signage	Average	4.0	4.2
	Standard Deviation	1.3	1.1
Site Layout	Average	3.9	4.0
	Standard Deviation	1.1	1.1
Staff Helpfulness	Average	4.2	4.5
	Standard Deviation	1.0	0.9

Table two shows that whilst results for the two sites are close, Longshot scores higher than Smallmead in every aspect. These results are therefore consistent with those given by the Wokingham crews.

Further details are given below.

Site Appearance

No negative comments were made about the appearance of either site, but a handful of positive comments were received about the recent improvements to both sites.

Site Cleanliness

The most popular comment about the cleanliness of the site, related to the condition of the floor. At both sites the drivers considered the floor in one or more parts of the site to be slippery and hazardous, with a total of six comments made. Comments were also received from other drivers however to say that the level of cleanliness was acceptable for a tip.

Another couple of drivers said that there were too many obstacles on the site.

The responses received within the questionnaires were quite consistent. For example, those people who had made comments about the cleanliness of the site needing to be improved for safety reasons, did not give the site the top mark in the safety question.

Site Signage

Of those refuse and recycling drivers surveyed about their opinions of Smallmead, 44% made comments that the signage and direction on site needs to be improved. Their comments included the fact that it was difficult to know where to go as a new driver, that hand signals can't always be seen through the tilted windows, that more guidance is required in the recycling area and that the staff on site responsible for giving direction, do not always notice the waiting vehicles.

The comments received about Longshot Lane were mainly about the traffic lights on site. They said that the direction received would be poor for infrequent users, that the traffic lights are not always in use, and that even when the lights are green, they can be told to wait. In addition a comment was made that staff are not always around to guide the vehicles.

Overall the impression received was that a more consistent method of communication is required.

Site Layout

The main comments made about Smallmead related to not having much space to manoeuvre (the doors being too close to the weighbridge) and to having to wait whilst articulated vehicles are loaded.

Most comments at Longshot were made about the entrance. Some drivers considered this tight and they also mentioned that there was a blind spot. In addition, they said that having the same entrance as the public, sometimes meant they had to queue unnecessarily. Instead they would like to enter from John Nike Way.

A comment was made at both sites however to say that the layout had improved since the changes.

Staff Helpfulness

The overall impression received was that on the whole, the staff at both sites were very helpful and that the vehicle drivers found them friendly.

When asked if the sites had sufficient staff, 83% of drivers said yes, there were enough, whilst 17% said no, more were needed. In particular, four of the 40 refuse and recycling crews surveyed said more people were required to cover breaks on the weighbridge and two drivers said more people were required to give directions about where to tip.

Weighbridge Procedures/Leaving the Site

A total of 94% of respondents believed the process for collecting their weighbridge ticket to be efficient. Four people said the process was not efficient, with one charity commenting that the same detailed information had to be processed each time and one refuse driver remarking that the process is inefficient when one of the weighbridge staff is on a break. A couple of people did however comment on the good use of proximity cards and another couple requested that they had them.

A number of drivers had not received a weighbridge ticket on at least one occasion after tipping at one of the sites. These drivers were from across all three councils and services and totalled 13 from Longshot and two from Smallmead. (No reference was made to dates however, so these occurrences may have been some time ago.)

One of these drivers later went on to say he received a hand-written ticket rather than an automatic one, however the remainder all claimed to have had their ticket forwarded to their office later or had picked them up when they next visited the weighbridge.

Two people also mentioned having previously received incorrect tickets.

Comparison of Sites by the Wokingham Crews

Wokingham Borough Council crews, being situated geographically in between the two waste transfer stations, might theoretically use either site. Questions were therefore asked as to how they make their decision and the results can be seen in figure ten.

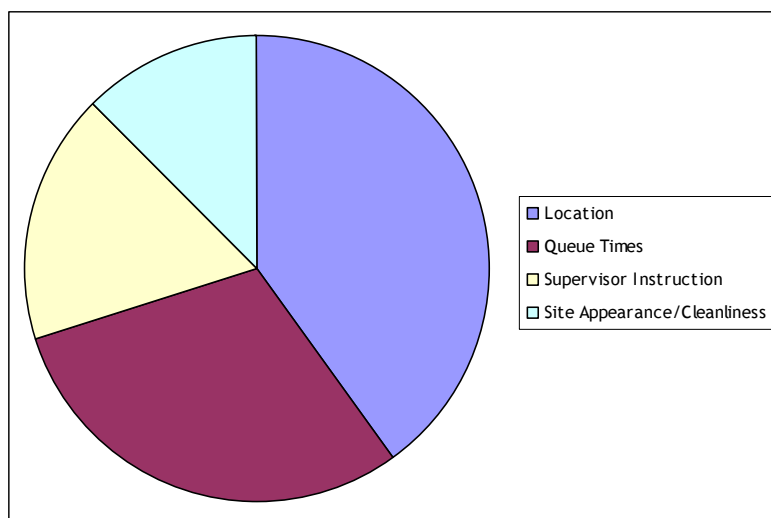


Figure Ten: Highest ranked factors affecting where Wokingham crews choose to tip.

The results show that the majority of crews choose where to tip solely, or mainly, based on the location of the site.

Of the Wokingham respondents (excluding the garden waste crews, who do not have the option to tip at Longshot), 45% said they usually use Longshot and 10% said they usually use Smallmead. In these cases, most crews said they occasionally made visits made to the other site, usually based on what day it is, and subsequently, where they are nearest to. Some crews however claimed that they never used the alternative site.

The remaining 45% of crews, claimed to tip equally at both sites. When asked what site they had tipped at on the day of the survey however, 78% of these had used Longshot. This is statistically high and may therefore suggest that the survey was carried out on days when the crews were working closer to the Longshot site. Alternatively it may be possible that some crews believe they should be tipping equally at both (biasing their answer to the first question), but that the second question shows the reality.

All Wokingham drivers surveyed, had visited both sites at some point in their employment. Consequently, the crews were asked to mark each site out of ten, in order to allow comparison of the sites.

A total of ten drivers gave Longshot a higher value than Smallmead, whilst only one gave Smallmead a higher value than Longshot. The remaining eight drivers gave the same value to each site. As a result, Longshot obtained an average rating of 9.1 whilst Smallmead obtained an average rating of 7.7. The most common reason given for these results was that Smallmead is a bigger, and therefore busier, site which tends to have more articulated vehicles and subsequently more queues. This reflects what is seen in figure ten and is consistent with the earlier results.

Additional Comments/Suggested Improvements

At the end of the survey the respondents were given the opportunity to add any further comments they felt relevant. These were varied and many related to the issues previously discussed. In particular the respondents reiterated the fact that they need better direction on when and where to tip on site and that they would like the better cleaning of the transfer station floors. However they also stressed the inconvenience caused when vehicles are loading. Some respondents therefore suggested positioning the vehicles so that crews could still tip, allocating a particular time for loading or redesigning the sites to have ramps like at Beenham.

Other suggestions included introducing a system whereby vehicles could jump the queue if their tipping bay was empty and allocating a time slot for private vehicles who have to complete paperwork.

Additional requests were also made for access to the conveniences on site.

Comparison with HWRC User Satisfaction Survey Results

Table three shows a comparison between some of the results obtained from this study, with the results obtained from the HWRC User Satisfaction survey, which was also carried out in autumn 2010.

Table Three: Percentages of respondents rating the sites 'good' or 'very good'.

	Longshot		Smallmead	
	Transfer Station	HWRC	Transfer Station	HWRC
Overall rating of the site	100*	99	80*	97
Site Accessibility (Queuing)	72	94	55	94
Time Spent on Site	88**	97	59**	95
Site Cleanliness	84	99	70	97
Staff Helpfulness	87	98	68	95

* Wokingham crews were asked to rate the sites out of 10. Marks of seven or above were assumed to be equivalent to good or very good.

** Excluding results from refuse/recycling crews as the question relating to time spent on site was asked in a different format.

The table shows that the transfer stations are rated less highly than the HWRCs. This may be because the public visit the sites on a less regular basis than the council vehicles. Alternatively the public may have experience of using other sites to which they compare those in the re3 partnership. Finally the reason may simply be that the transfer stations are in need of a greater level of improvement than the HWRCs.

The Longshot site also scores consistently higher than the Smallmead site, both at the HWRC and transfer station.

Recommendations

- Supervisors at Wokingham could review knowledge of the site rules with the crews for whom English is not their first language - there is no suggestion of any failing but, since we were unable to gauge their full understanding, this would seem sensible.
- That the contractor seeks to ensure there are two people on the weighbridge at busy periods, in order to minimise the likelihood of queues forming.
- That the contractor should review how often and how thoroughly the floors in the transfer station are cleaned, in order to minimise the safety concern raised by the drivers.
- That the contractor should review with its staff how they communicate with the drivers regarding when and where to tip, in order to maximise the level of consistency.
- That the contractor should review with its staff what should happen when there are computer problems at the weighbridge.
- That the contractor should review the positioning of articulated vehicles on both sites.