

SUMMARY OF SARK PERCEPTION SURVEY RESULTS

Overview

We received 225 responses to the survey and most respondents provided detailed commentary on questions asked. Land use and planning was the issue which most concerned respondents, with environment and conservation, healthcare, government administration and economic development also consistently raised as issues of concern.

There were a variety of opinions on many issues, however, some clear trends did emerge and cross-cutting issues that came out of the responses include:

- the need to preserve what makes Sark special and unique, while ensuring it is able to deal effectively with the challenges it faces;
- worry that divisions have been created on Sark which are preventing the Government of Sark dealing with the issues it is facing;
- Concerns about the cost of living, including medical insurance, electricity, shipping;
- the need to ensure there are employment and housing opportunities for the younger generation;
- more effective land use policies which maintain and strengthen the environment and infrastructure (including in relation to road management, sewage and waste management);
- the need for a better understanding of who is living on the island and for those living on the island to be taxed fairly; and
- more effective government planning and better communication and openness when dealing with the population.

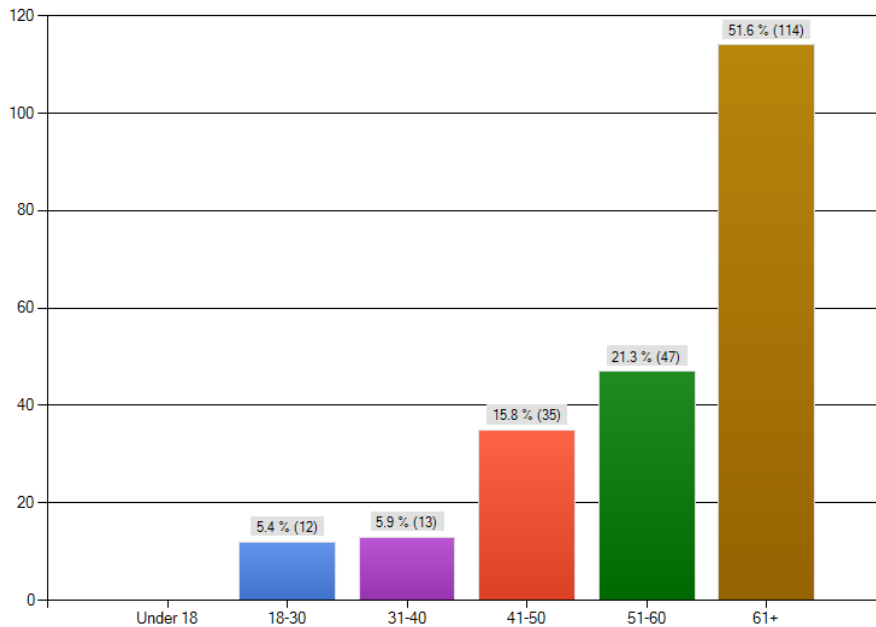
Methodology

The UK Ministry of Justice facilitated this survey, supporting the design and administration of the survey, following workshops with the Chief Pleas and the General Purposes and Advisory Committee and information on best practice provided by the UK Office of National Statistics. Officials used the survey monkey website to collect and analyse the data. All paper copies of the survey – which were anonymous - were sent (unopened) to the Ministry of Justice who then entered the data on to the survey monkey website.

This summary document is not intended to reference all opinions offered in individual responses and it is recommended that Chief Pleas, in looking at each of the key policy issues, reviews responses in detail. However, many of the questions asked respondents to comment, and we have conducted a brief textual analysis to determine key trends and perceptions.

Demographic and level of response

We received 225 responses to the survey via post and through the internet link. 52% of respondents were over 61 years old and no respondents were under 18 years. With there being no recent census data for Sark we are unable to comment on whether this is a representative sample. There are currently 444 people registered to vote on Sark, so this represents 51% of registered voters (assuming that all those who filled in the survey were registered to vote in Sark).



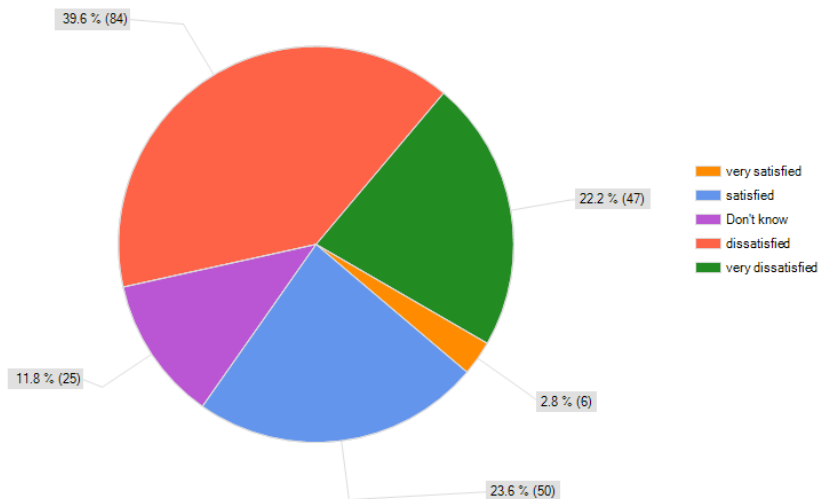
What people liked and didn't like about Sark

While there was a variety of opinion about the relative importance of the issues Sark is facing, there was significant agreement on what made Sark special. Over 50% of people cited community spirit and the friendliness of island as important and an equally high number noted the natural beauty of the island. The quality of life, low crime rate and the simple fact it was home, were mentioned by many as key factors.

The issue which most concerned respondents was the divisions that exist within the community, which included those between the Government of Sark and the Barclay Brothers/SEM. This issue was raised by more than 30% of respondents. Concerns were expressed about the role of the Sark Newsletter/Sark Estate Management/Barclay Brothers, and the fear that they were having a detrimental effect on the Island. Other issues raised by a significant number of respondents include the cost of living (including food, electricity, health insurance and shipping), the effectiveness of the Chief Pleas, concerns over nepotism in government, the influence of outsiders/newcomers, environmental concerns including vineyards, waste management, changes to the use of arable and pasture land.

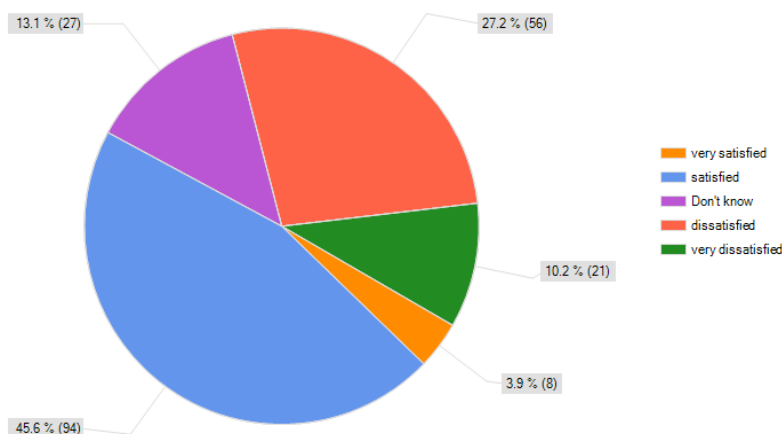
Land use and planning

Land use and planning was of great concern to most respondents, with 62% of those surveyed being either dissatisfied or very dissatisfied. 109 respondents ranked it as an important issue – making it the highest ranked issue of all. While some respondents felt the current system worked well, and were strongly opposed to any changes to it, most commentators suggested either a review of land use and planning or further legislation – including the activation of Land Reform legislation currently in existence. Linked to the concerns over land use, many respondents (approx 27%) cited concerns about the increase in the coverage of vineyards. Concern was also expressed by several respondents about the way planning decisions are currently made by the DCC; some respondents remarked that approval of planning applications was helped “if the face fits”.



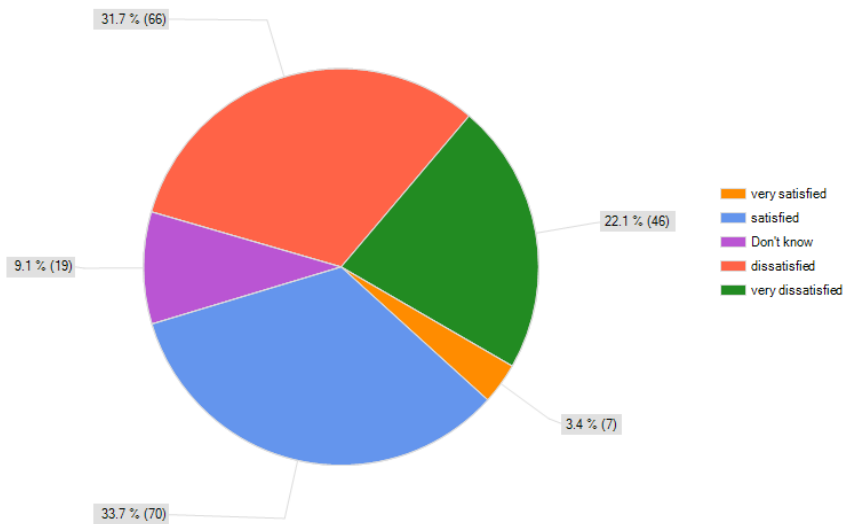
Housing provision

Almost 50% of respondents were either satisfied or very satisfied with housing provision on the island. However, many respondents raised concerns about the affordability of housing for first time buyers, high rents, quality of housing, the inability of people to obtain a mortgage and thereby to own their own homes. It should be noted that respondents in the age groups 18-30 and 31-40 were more dissatisfied with housing provision than other age groups, with 60% of these age groups either dissatisfied or very dissatisfied. Others felt the government should not have a role in housing provision.



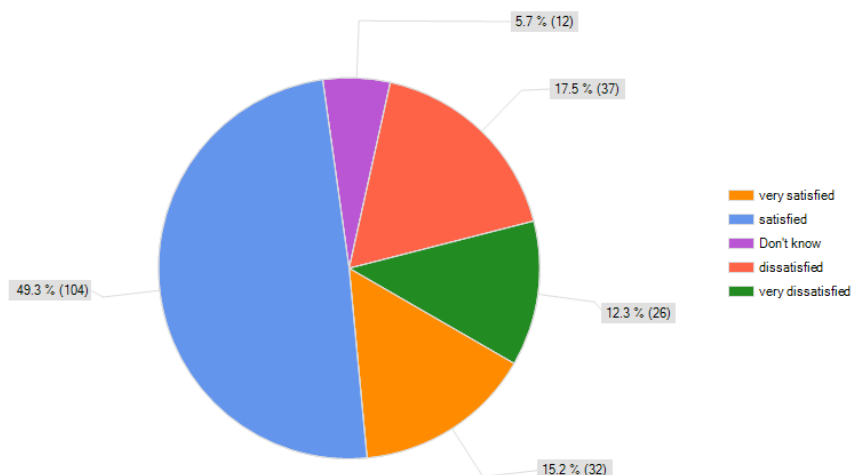
Environment and conservation

54 % of respondents were either dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with environment and conservation on the island. This was considered the second most important issue by those who completed the survey, with 83 people ranking it as a priority. This question was linked by many respondents to that of land use, with concern raised about arable and pasture land being converted into vineyards. Issues such as waste management and sewage disposal also provoked concern.



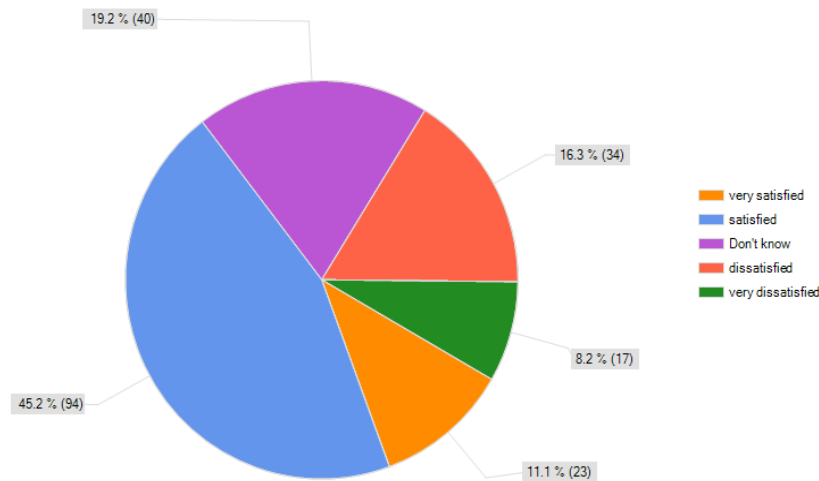
Healthcare provision

Almost 65% of respondents were satisfied or very satisfied with healthcare provision and it was considered the third most important issue to those surveyed, with 85 people ranking it as a priority. There was significant concern raised about the cost of health insurance, particularly for the elderly, with approximately 50% of respondents mentioning it. There was also significant support for the role of the doctor and emergency services. Several people commented that one of the strengths of Sark was that individuals were responsible for their own healthcare needs.



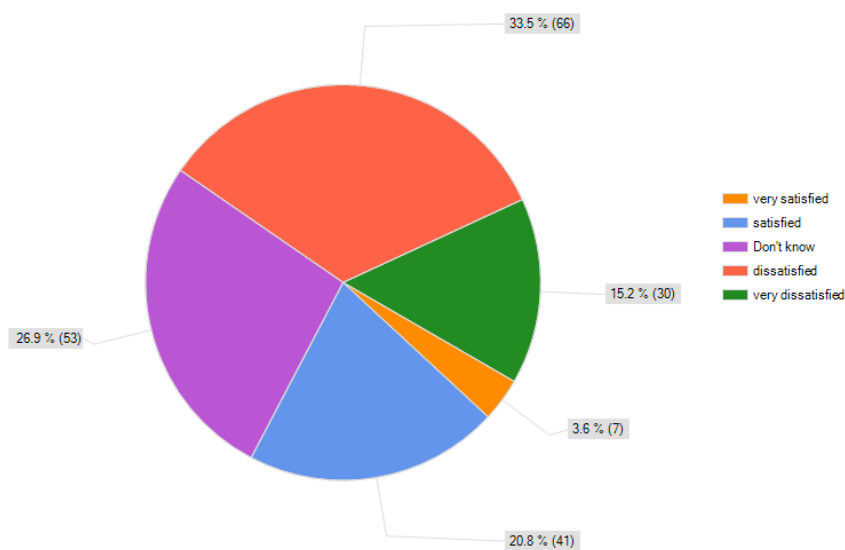
Social care provision

56% of those surveyed were either satisfied or very satisfied with the provision of social care. However, 19% said they did not know how to access help, and this was reflected in the commentary. This was very mixed, with some individuals really valuing the role of the Procurer and Douzaine, with others unaware of their role and feeling many people did not receive enough support. Some of the respondents worried that there was a stigma attached to receiving help, which prevented those in need asking for it.



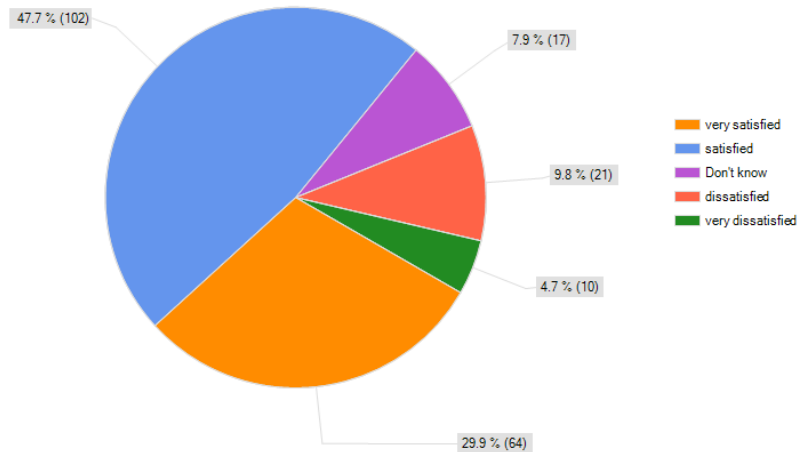
Economic Development

Only 24% of respondents were satisfied or very satisfied with economic development, with 49% of those surveyed either dissatisfied or very dissatisfied and 27% saying they didn't know. It was ranked as the fifth most important issue, with 81 people ranking it a priority. The majority of those that commented said there was a need for more planning and coordination on economic development, with the government working better with the private sector. Jobs for the younger generation were a concern. There was also concern that Sark needed to ensure it maintained its identity and supported its existing industries such as agriculture and tourism in particular. Suggestions were made for Sark to look at cottage industries and internet businesses. Some said that government should investigate what types of business could be attracted to Sark, while ensuring one business did not gain a monopoly.



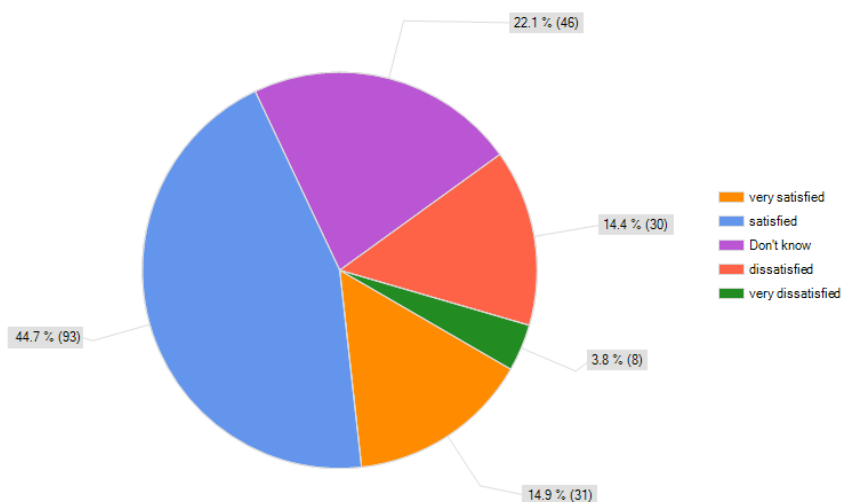
Policing

Almost 88% of those surveyed were satisfied or very satisfied with policing on Sark. In the commentary there was significant support for the constables and appreciation of their role. However, many respondents raised concerns over whether the current system needed reviewing in the light of increased pressures on the police. While some were concerned about the increasing involvement of the Guernsey Police, others felt the Constables should be able to call directly on their assistance, without the intervention or permission of the Seigneur. Concerns were raised about how drugs, alcohol, gun ownership, smuggling and bullying were being dealt with on the island.



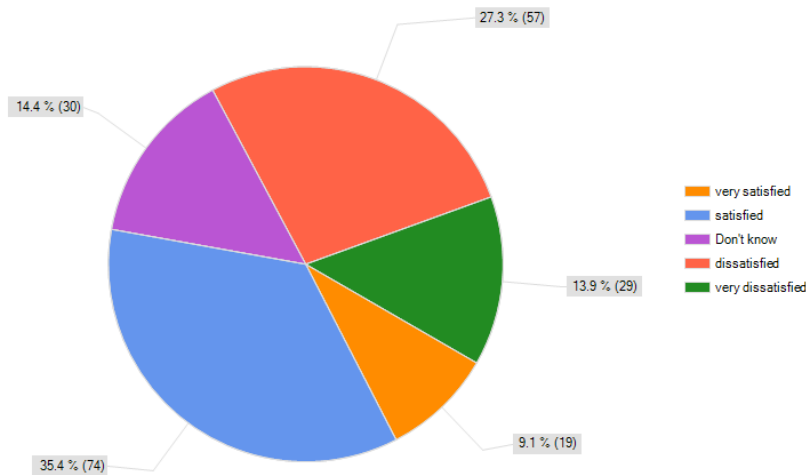
Education provision

Just under 60% of those surveyed were either satisfied or very satisfied with education provision. However, while most respondents praised the primary level education, many commented on the difficulties of providing secondary education, the cost of taking GCSEs, the ability to teach a range of subjects to older children and the significant costs of sending children to Guernsey or the UK. Concern was expressed by some respondents about the ratio of teachers to pupils and the proportion of Sark's budget which was spent on education.



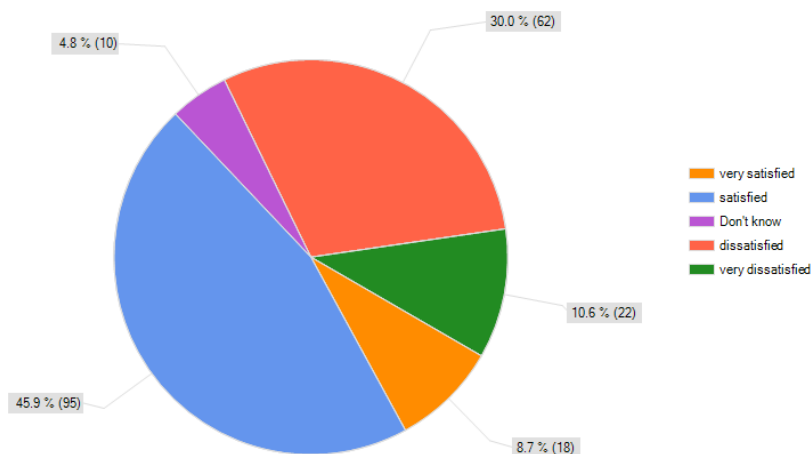
Government administration

There was a polarisation of views on Government administration. 44% of respondents were satisfied or very satisfied and 41% dissatisfied or very dissatisfied. This was considered the fourth most important issue by those surveyed and this was reflected in the commentary. Many respondents noted the pressure on the Conseillers and the voluntary nature of the work they do. Most, however, wanted improvements to Government administration; the streamlining of government, with better leadership, a new committee structure, more openness and transparency and better communication with the public. However, there was concern over cost and mixed views on the need for a civil servant.



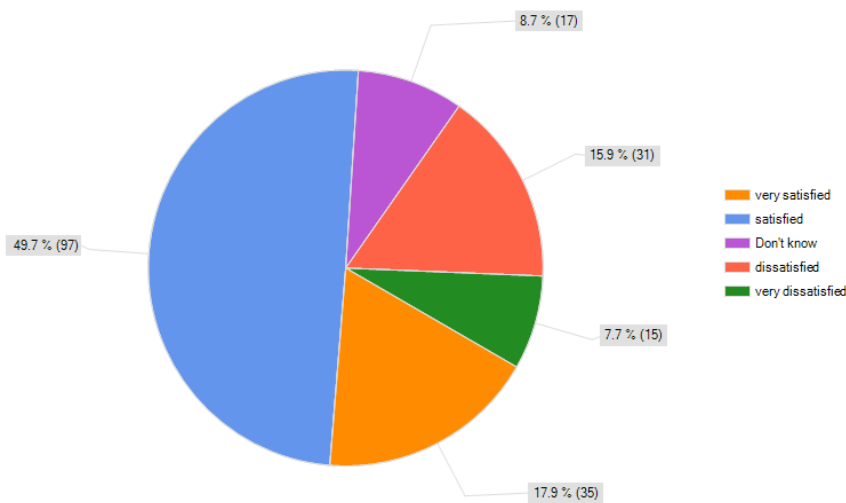
Infrastructure

While just under 55% of respondents were satisfied or very satisfied with infrastructure overall, there was significant concern expressed about the state of the roads, and waste and sewage disposal. Respondents also raised concerns about the costs of shipping, including the cost of the services, timetabling issues and whether it was possible to have a dedicated service to France and Jersey.



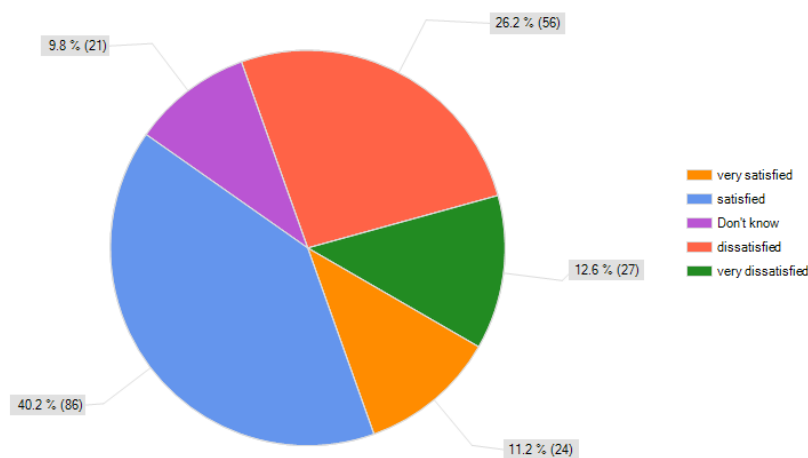
Leisure facilities

Almost 68% of those surveyed were satisfied or very satisfied with leisure facilities on Sark. Many respondents said that the island was itself a leisure facility with its beaches, walks, fishing and open areas to play in. The sporting facilities were also commented upon favourably. However, others said that the island had no facilities and many respondents raised concerns about what was on offer in the winter months, unless one went to the pub. This was particularly true of the younger respondents as 73% of those aged between 18-40 said they were dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with leisure facilities. There was also concern about activities for younger children and teenagers, with the suggestion of Scouting and Duke of Edinburgh awards. The fact that the Island Hall was not open on Sundays was questioned. Respondents suggested its use, both for residents and also for tourists, if the weather was bad or there was an opportunity to make use of its facilities for the community. Some also felt there should be a gym and swimming pool for inhabitants.



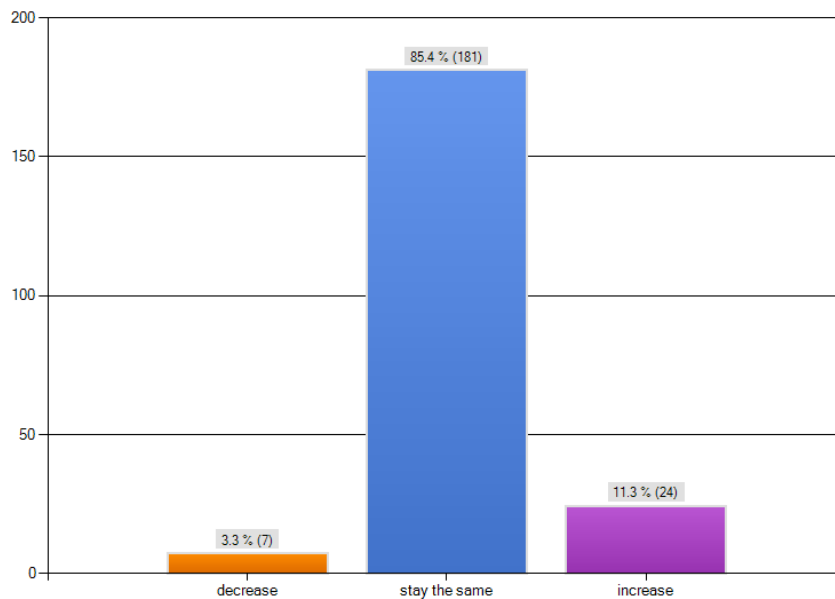
Power provision

While 51% of those surveyed were satisfied or very satisfied with power provision on the island, most respondents raised concerns about the cost of electricity. While some felt the pricing structure should be investigated and some were concerned about Sark Electricity's monopoly, others worried about interference by Chief Pleas. There were also suggestions about the need to investigate sources of renewable energy and what role Chief Pleas could or should play in this.



Population Management

Over 85% of those surveyed said that they would like the population of Sark to stay the same, with concerned expressed that Sark's infrastructure could not sustain an increase in the population. While many believed Sark's population was self-regulating, others thought a census should take place. The suggestion was made that a system of work permits might be introduced, to address concerns that inhabitants did not know the level of the working population at any one time. Concern was also expressed that young families should be able to make their life on Sark and the implications of an ageing population for the future of the island.



Taxation

While 26.8% of those who responded thought that, should Sark need to raise more tax, it should be done through the current tax system, many felt that the Chief Pleas should look at other methods of financing and taxation. Many respondents said that the rich were not taxed enough, to the detriment of the less well-off. There is a concern that some people do not pay any tax at all – particularly those who were resident only part of the year not paying tax. Some respondents expressed the view that seasonal workers should be taxed and that a business tax should be considered. While some respondents said income tax should be fairer, concern was expressed about the bureaucracy needed to administer such a system. There was also a concern that government expenditure should not rise. However, others thought that a proportional taxation should be introduced and that too many people used the island for tax advantages. Some commented that those involved in the so-called “Sark Lark” should be taxed specifically.

as presented at a Public Meeting in the Island Hall, Sark
3rd December 2012