

Sandbach Clean Team
Quality of Streetscape Survey 2009
Sandbach Businesses and the Environment

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Executive Summary

This survey, commissioned by The Sandbach Clean Team through The Sandbach Partnership, and funded jointly between Sandbach Town Council and the NWDA through The Sandbach Partnership, had the following objectives;

1. To develop a greater awareness amongst the businesses of Sandbach of their responsibilities regarding recycling and the reduction of litter.
2. To reduce the amount of litter that businesses create directly from their operations.
3. To increase the amount of recycling undertaken by the businesses within Sandbach.
4. To reduce the amount of litter that businesses within Sandbach generate indirectly through the actions of their customers.

For the purposes of this survey references to Sandbach mean the wider Sandbach area including Sandbach Heath, Wheelock, Ettiley Heath and Elworth as well as the town centre.

302 surveys were distributed in a one week period in the middle of February. 93 responses (31%) of the total had been received by the deadline.

About 190 were distributed in Sandbach, 20 in Wheelock, 5 in Sandbach Heath and 90 in Elworth and Ettiley Heath.

Some key findings:

- 62% feel that the streets of Sandbach are very clean or clean.
- There is limited awareness of the fines that can be imposed on those who create a litter with 63% aware of the fine for an individual dropping litter, and only 39% aware of the business fine for the same offence.
- 80% of businesses who recycle paper, recycle about 74%, despite the fact that recycling facilities are limited.
- Whilst 88% of businesses support a reduction in the number of plastic bags used by consumers just 15% would contribute to a Sandbach reusable bag scheme.
- Whilst 51 different types of business responded there were limited replies from newsagents, take away shops and off licences.
- There is strong agreement that litter leaves areas looking unsightly and encourages more litter.
- 81% feel the person who dropped the litter should pick it up. Combined with the information on fines some form of educational programme may be appropriate.

Introduction

Provident Marketing was selected by The Sandbach Partnership to conduct a survey to establish the degree of understanding within business of the causes of litter and the importance of litter reduction and recycling.

For the purposes of this survey references to Sandbach mean the wider Sandbach area including Sandbach Heath, Wheelock, Ettiley Heath and Elworth as well as the town centre.

302 surveys were distributed in a one week period in the middle of February. To encourage responses the surveys were hand delivered with an explanatory sheet and an SAE. 93 responses (31%) of the total had been received by the deadline.

Of the total about 190 were distributed in Sandbach, 20 in Wheelock, 5 Sandbach Heath and 90 in Elworth and Ettiley Heath.

For further information on this survey please contact Dick Macaulay, The Sandbach Clean Team Co-ordinator, at d.macaulay@talk21.com

Section 1

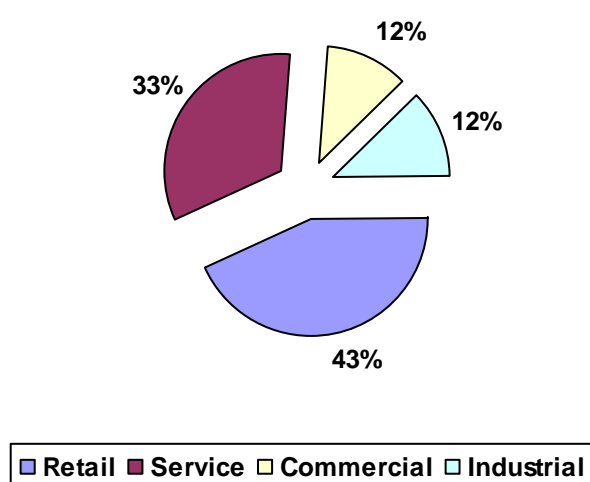
About your business

Question 1

What sector is your business in?

There were 93 responses split as follows:

Figure 1: Split of responses.



The four choices the respondents had are explained as follows:

Retail (40 respondents, 43% of the total): mainly dealing with consumers.

Service (31, 33%): dealing with consumers providing a service not a product.

Commercial (11, 12%): dealing with a mixture of consumers and businesses.

Industrial (11, 12%): mainly dealing with other businesses.

Question 2

What is the main part of your business?

Accountant	2	Hairdresser	3
Arts and craft	1	Health Clinic	1
Butcher	4	Health food shop	1
Building contractor	1	Interior design	1
Cards	1	Jewellers	1
Car accessories	1	Mobility aids	1
Carpet shop	2	Mortgage planning	1
Charity Shop	2	Optician	3
Chemist	2	Pet shop	2
Clothes	6	Photographic	1
Coffee shop/café	1	Post office	2
Construction company	2	Pub	3
Construction materials	1	Printers	2
Community aid	1	Restaurant	1

Delicatessen	1	Self adhesive paper	1
Dentist	4	Sign writers	1
DIY Goods	1	Soft furnishings	1
Dry cleaning	1	Software	1
Electronics	1	Solicitor	1
Engineering	6	Supermarket	1
Estate agent	2	Takeaway food	1
Financial planning	1	Therapy	1
Flooring	1	Travel agent	2
Florist	3	Transport	4
Garden products	1	Undertaker	3
Gifts shop	2		

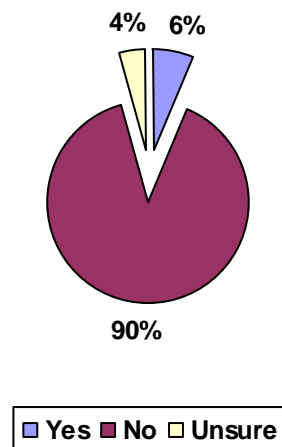
Whilst 51 different types of business responded there were limited replies from newsagents, take away shops and off licences and only one supermarket took part in the survey.

Question 3

Are you a 'Carbon Neutral' company?

Carbon neutrality means that a business has calculated its daily/annual Carbon Dioxide emissions and has an offsetting arrangement in place.

Figure 2: Is your business carbon neutral?



This question was asked to establish the level of concern regarding carbon emissions and the subsequent effects on the environment. Carbon offsetting can be seen as controversial as companies continue to consume carbon resources then 'offset' the emissions by investing in such schemes as planting trees or alternative energy projects. 83 of respondents (90%) said they were not carbon neutral. This is not a priority in this geographical area but this does not necessarily mean that businesses are not aware of their environmental responsibilities.

Section 2

The Survey

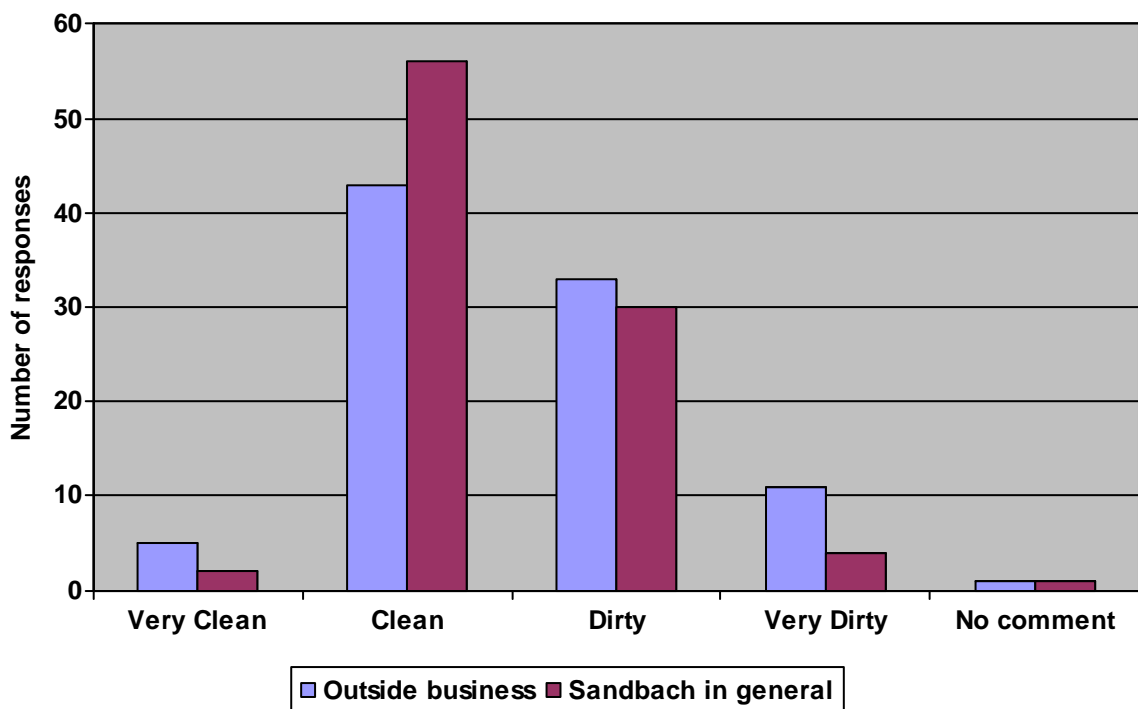
Question 1

How clean do you think the street outside your business is?

Question 2

How clean do you think the streets are in general?

Figure 3: How clean are the streets (all responses)?



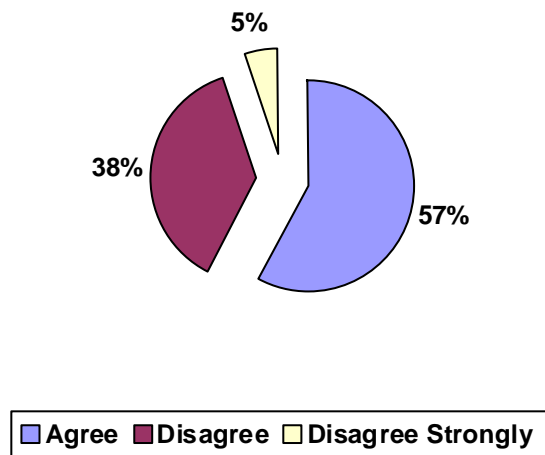
58 of all respondents (62%) believe the streets in general are clean or very clean although this drops to 48 (52%) when considering the streets right outside their business and depends on the location of the business. This is reflected in two comments:

“The biggest contributor is dog mess. Therefore stricter rules should apply “

“Cigarette butts from neighbouring pub”

The overall results are a reasonable reflection of the view across all individual areas. Looking just at retail whilst 57% agree the streets are clean 38% disagree as shown in the following Figure 4.

Figure 4: How clean are the streets? The retailers view.



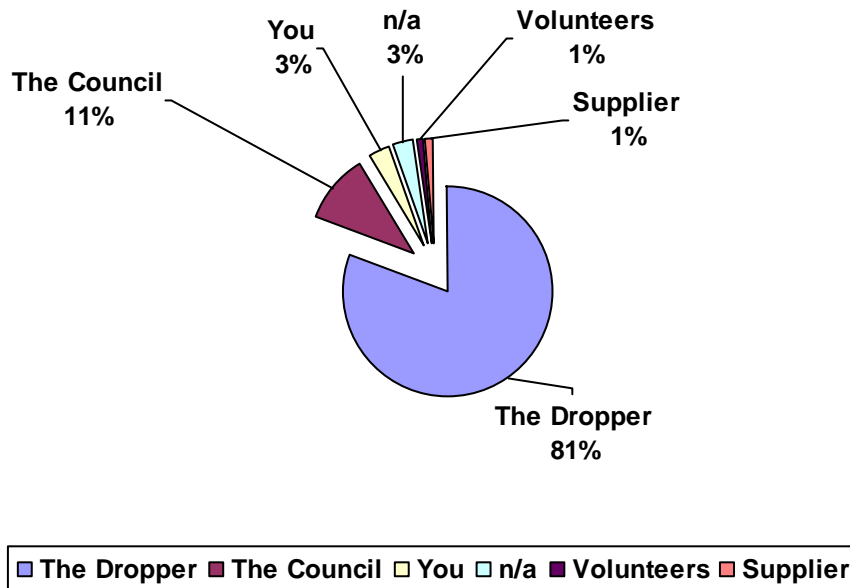
A couple of comments, similar to the one below were made:

“What has happened to the council paid cleaner who used to sweep the streets?”

Question 3

When you see litter who do you think should pick it up?

Figure 5: Who should pick up the litter?



81% feel that the person who dropped the litter should pick it up with a further 11% thinking it is the councils’ job. The good news for the clean team is that only 1% feel that volunteers should pick it up. Just 3% of businesses will pick up litter if they see it. However, if 81% believe the person who dropped it should pick it up that begs the question ‘How do we educate people that litter is their responsibility?’

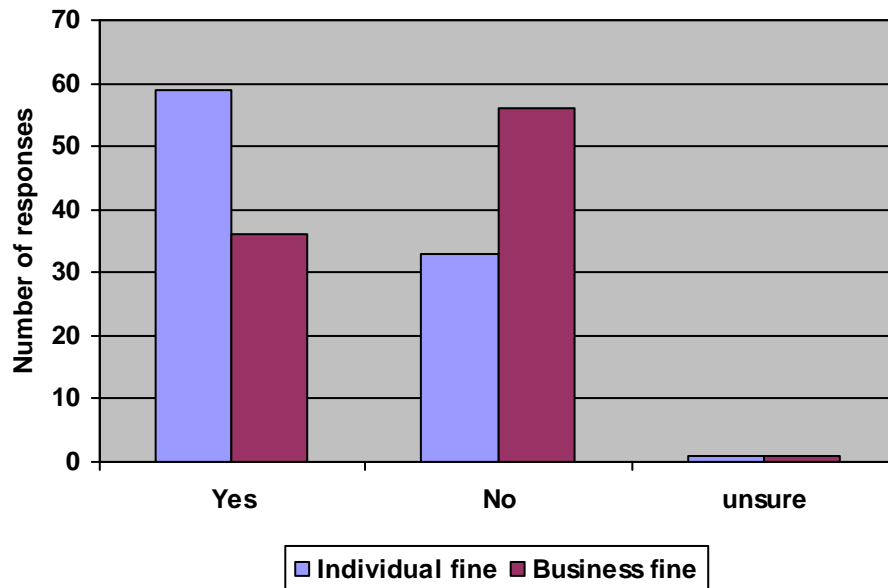
Question 4

Are you aware that individuals can be fined up to £2,500 for dropping litter?

Question 5

Are you aware that a business faces a fine up to £50,000 and imprisonment for creating litter?

Figure 6: Awareness of fines.



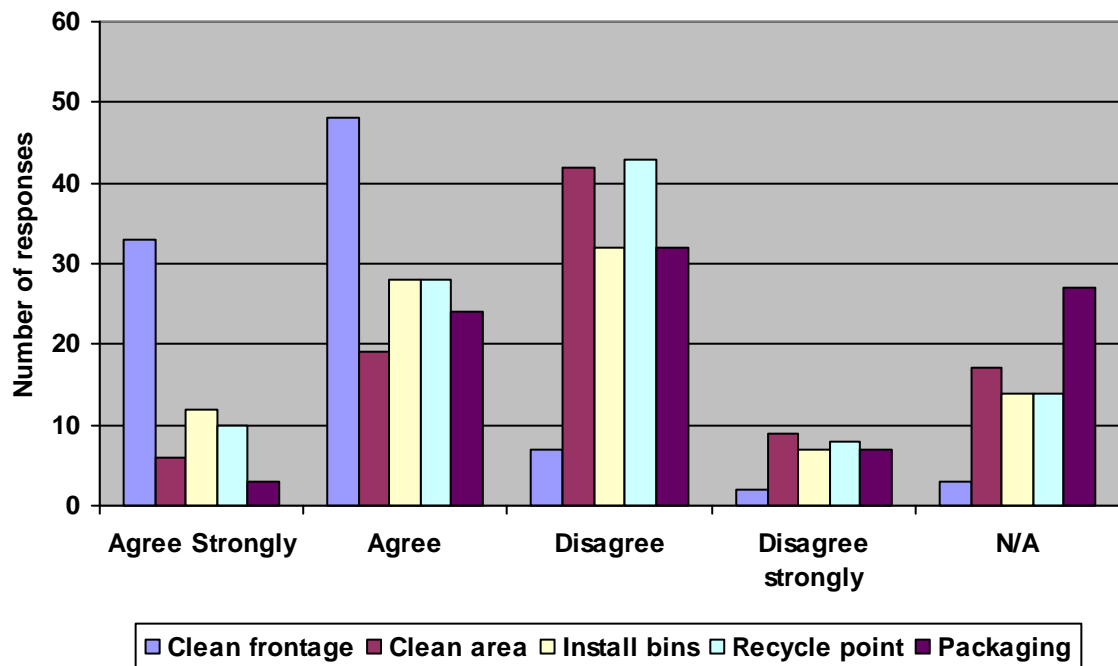
There are a surprisingly large number of businesses that do not know they can be fined for creating litter (56 respondents or 60% of the total), and a significant number do not know that individuals can be fined (33 respondents or 36%). This suggests that some form of education and enforcement programme may have an impact on litter within Sandbach.

Question 6

Would you agree to undertake any of the following?

- Keep your frontage clean
- Adopt an area to keep clean
- Install bins
- Offer recycling point
- Change packaging

Figure 7: What will you do to help?



There is some degree of enthusiasm for keeping a frontage clear. Some 83 respondents (87%) are willing to do this and some already do, although one respondent had had enough;

“I pay a lot for refuse collection. I used to keep it clean but now not worth doing”

There is the markedly less enthusiasm for keeping an area clean. This is a pity because it would suggest that in some areas business will not work together to clean an area. But areas do exist where the opposite attitude applies. A good example is Georges Walk. There were three responses from this area where they do appear to make an effort, with one saying:

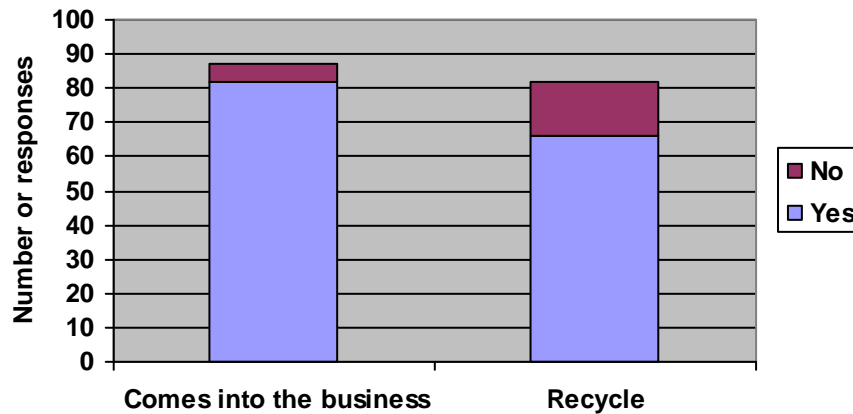
“Georges Walk is ignored by any initiatives regarding litter or clean ups. The only involvement we have been offered is the flower tubs. We are an important part of Sandbach too as it is one of the busiest thoroughfares into town and gives new visitors their first impressions of the town. We strive to keep this area clean.”

40 respondents (43%) either agree or agree strongly that they could install bins with a similar number (38 or 40%) interested in recycling points.

Question 7

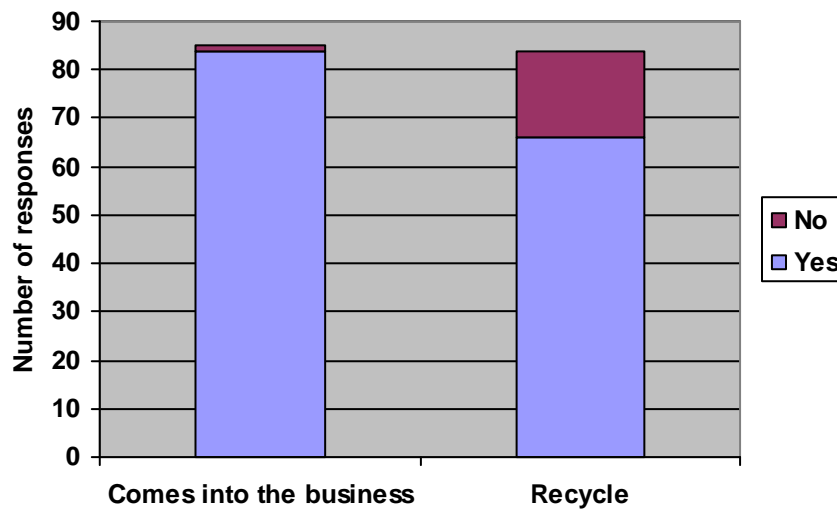
Which of the following items that come into your business do you recycle and how much do you recycle?

Figure 8: Paper recycling.



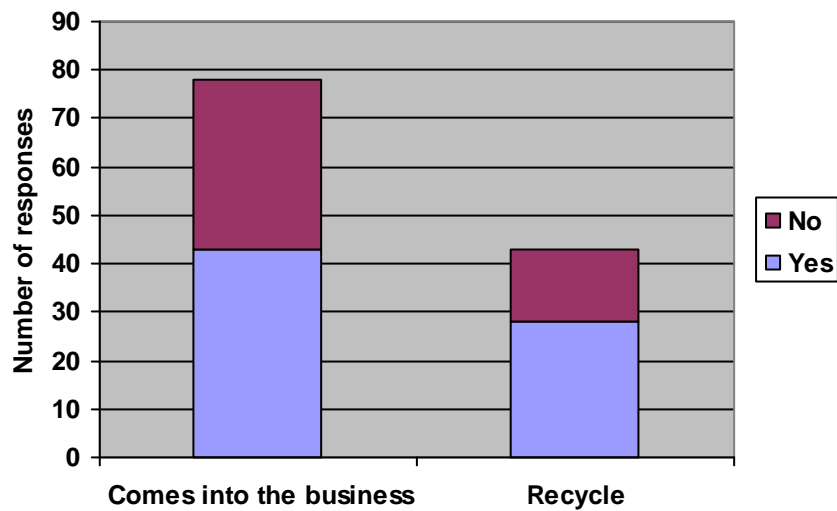
82 businesses have paper coming in. Of these, 66 or 80% recycle. Based on an average of the 66 responses (not shown) they recycle 74% of the paper.

Figure 9: Cardboard recycling.



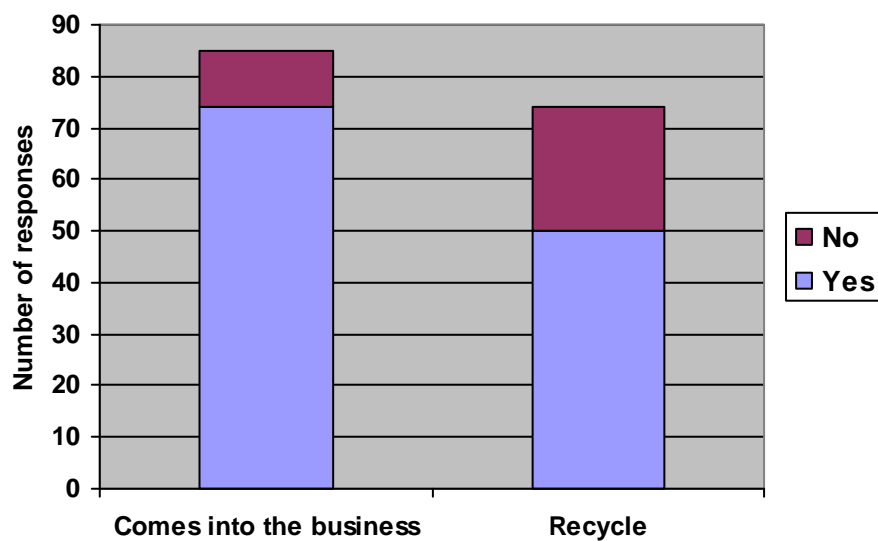
84 businesses have cardboard coming in. Of these, 66 or 78% recycle. Based on an average of the 66 responses (not shown) they recycle 78% of the cardboard.

Figure 10: Glass recycling.



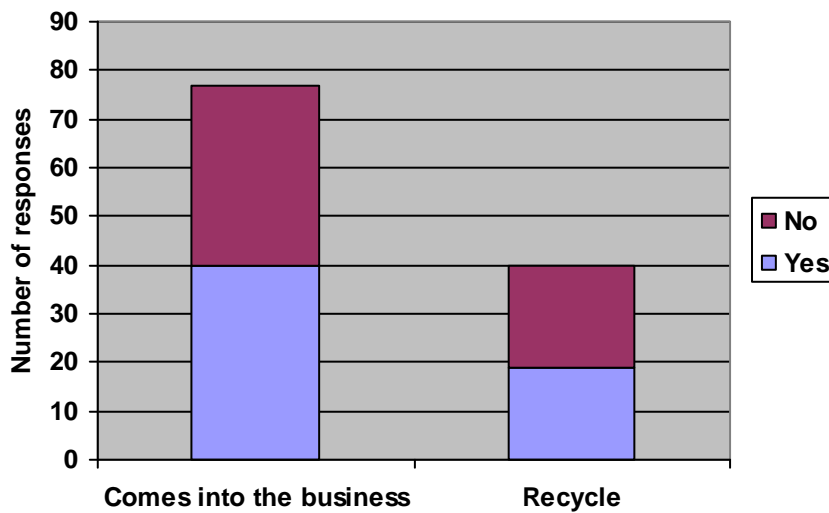
43 businesses have glass coming in. Of these, 28 or 65% recycle. Based on an average of the 28 responses (not shown) they recycle 77% of the glass.

Figure 11: Plastic recycling.



74 businesses have plastic coming in. Of these, 50 or 67% recycle. Based on an average of the 50 responses (not shown) they recycle 69% of the plastic.

Figure 12: Polystyrene recycling.



40 businesses have polystyrene coming in. Of these, 19 or 47% recycle. Based on an average of the 19 responses (not shown) they recycle 65% of the polystyrene.

Figure 13: Summary of internal recycling.

Material	Number who use material	Number who recycle	% recycled
Paper	82	66 (80%)	74%
Cardboard	84	66 (78%)	78%
Glass	43	28 (65%)	77%
Plastic	74	50 (67%)	69%
Polystyrene	40	19 (47%)	65%

Where businesses have the materials coming in, 47% to 80% recycle (depending on the material involved) and they recycle between 65% and 78% of the material. These results are encouraging as there is little incentive for a business to recycle as this comment makes clear:

“The council offers us as a business no recycling and we have to pay for any extra rubbish to be removed”

Question 8

Which of the following items of packaging that go out of your business do you encourage your customers to recycle?

This question was designed to see if businesses were actively encouraging the recycling of materials or careful disposal of materials that went out of their business. This includes re using bags, asking the customer to return packaging for recycling and using biodegradable packaging.

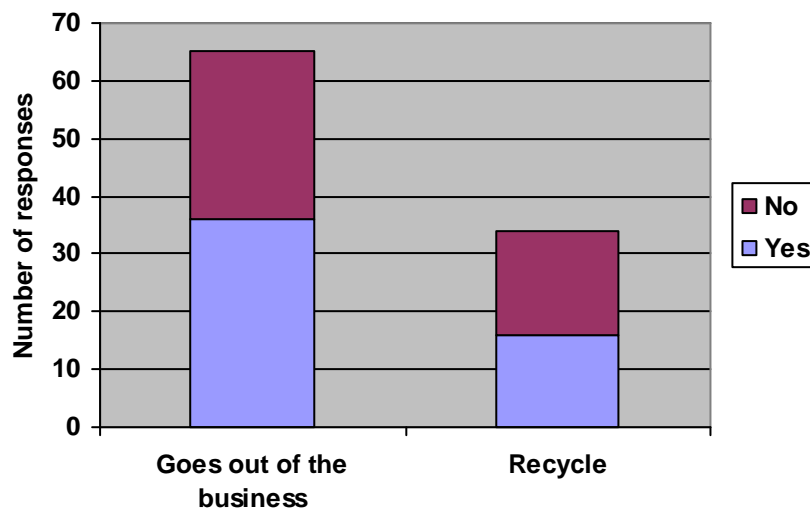
Responses dropped to around 60 with 30 or so for each material either declining to answer or feeling it was not relevant to them. A typical response was:

"I have no control about what happens to the wrapping when it leaves my shop!"

Of course, we are hoping that in the example above the wrapping is made from recycled paper. The survey was hoping that the shop would remind the purchaser to recycle the paper but that may not be happening in this case.

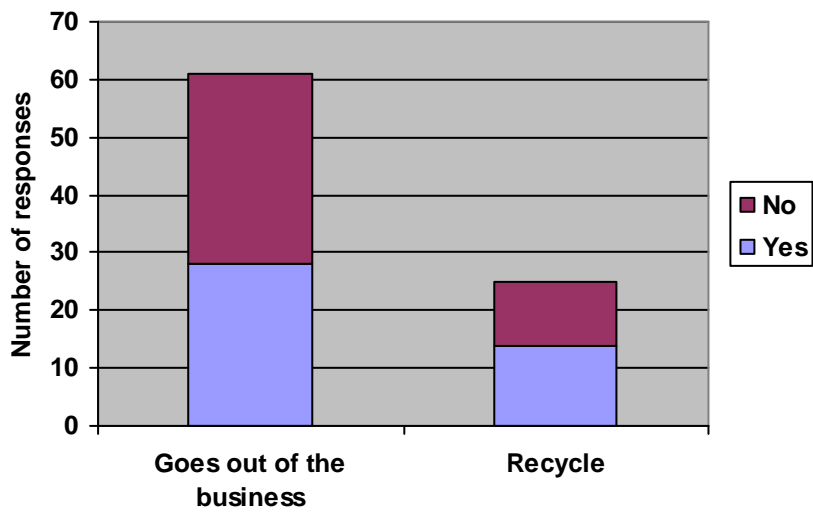
The results below need to be read with these points in mind, but 60 responses are still 64% of the surveys sent out.

Figure 14: Paper recycling.



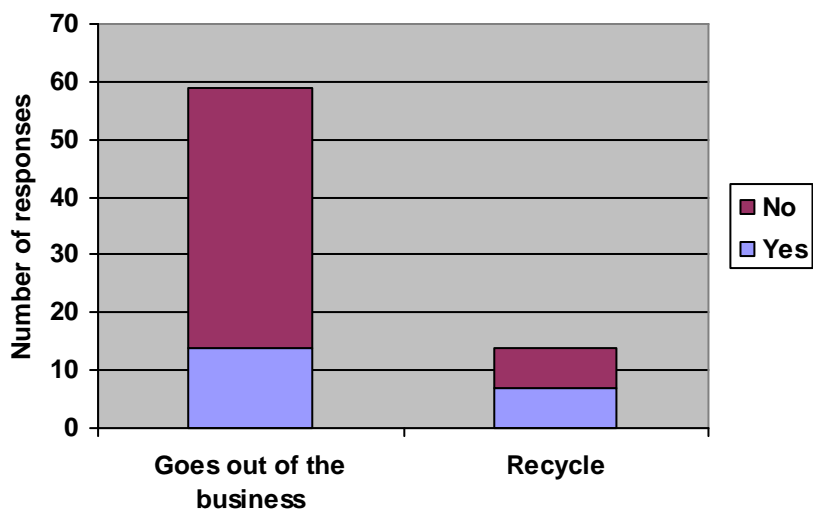
36 businesses have paper going out. Of these, 16, (44%) encourage recycling.

Figure 15: Cardboard recycling.



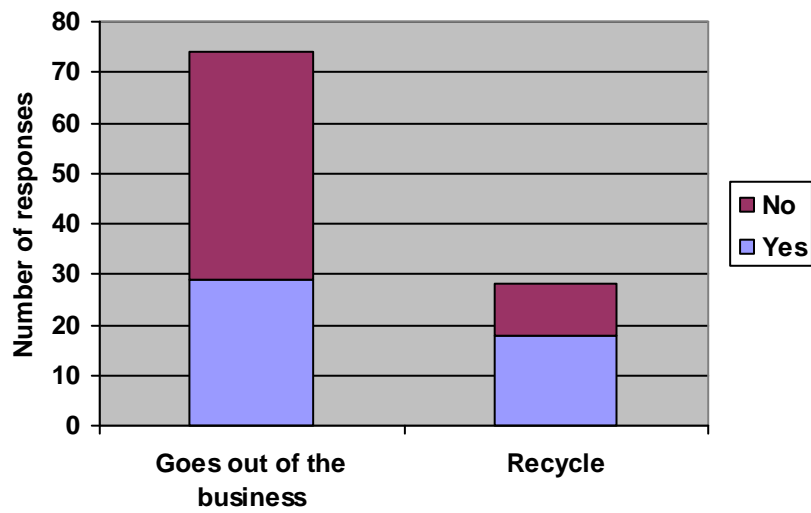
28 businesses have cardboard going out. Of these, 14, (50%) encourage recycling.

Figure 16: Glass recycling.



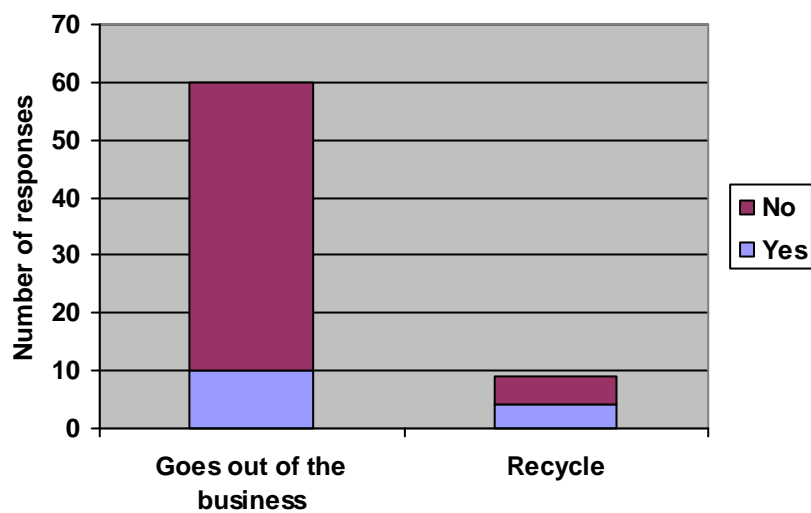
14 businesses have glass going out. Of these, 7, (50%) encourage recycling.

Figure 17: Plastic recycling.



29 businesses have plastic going out. Of these, 18, (62%) encourage recycling.

Figure 18: Polystyrene recycling.



10 businesses have polystyrene going out. Of these, 4, (40%) encourage recycling.

Figure 19: Summary of external recycling.

Material	Number who use material	Number who encourage recycling
Paper	36	16 (44%)
Cardboard	28	14 (50%)
Glass	14	7 (50%)
Plastic	29	18 (62%)
Polystyrene	10	4 (40%)

The summary chart makes clear that the number of suppliers who actively encourage the recycling of material that leaves their premises is relatively low at between 44% and 62% of users. The following two comments help explain this:

"I can not have customers leaving my shop with purchases not wrapped. I have no control about what happens to the wrapping when it leaves my shop!"

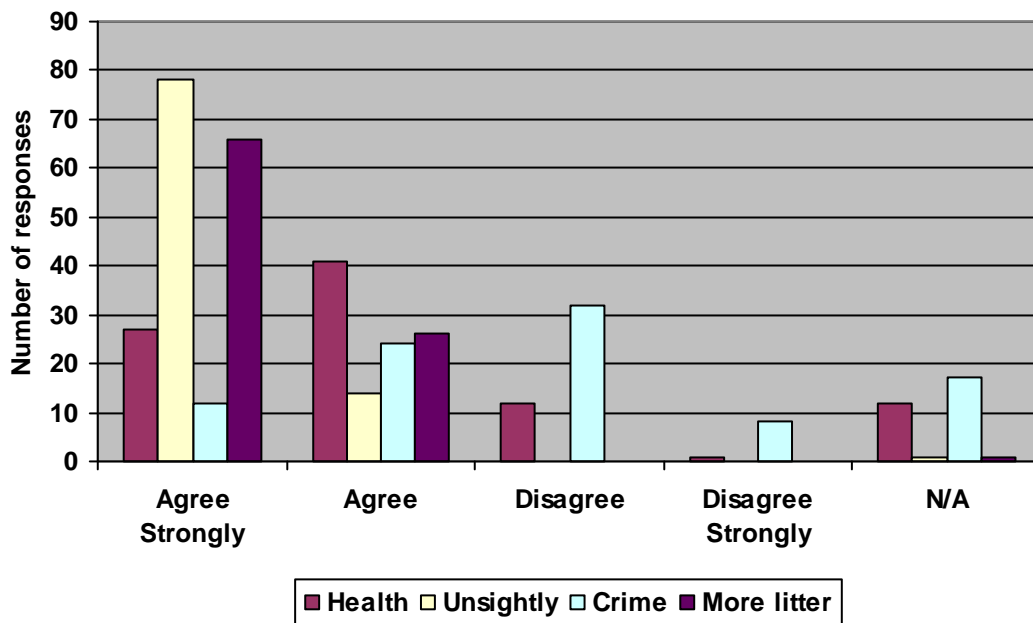
"We live in a nanny state as it is and I am certainly not going to start thinking for the customers!"

Question 9

What do you think are the main problems associated with customers dropping litter?

Potential health problems
Areas left looking unsightly
Encourages crime
Encourages more litter.

Figure 20 Problems associated with litter

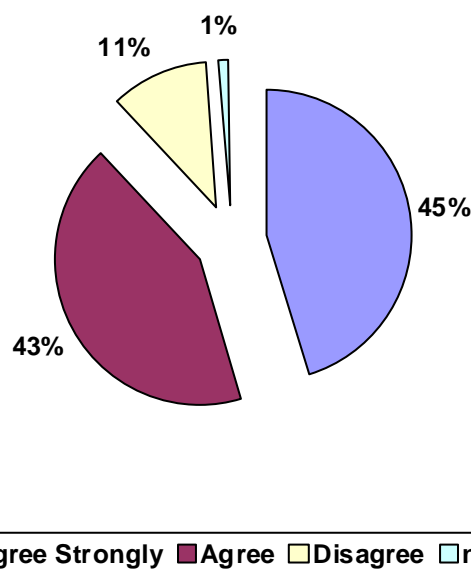


Respondents seem relatively unconcerned about litter leading to crime. There is strong agreement or agreement that litter encourages more litter and that it is unsightly (both 98%).

Question 10

Do you think Sandbach traders should seek to reduce the number of plastic bags that consumers use?

Figure 21: Should we reduce plastic bag usage?



It is evident there is strong support from the business community to reduce the number of plastic bags, with this comment being fairly typical:

"We only give out plastic bags if asked"

However, enthusiasm to actively invest in a programme to reduce plastic bags met with more resistance.

Question 11

If we were to try to reduce the number of bags which of the following do you think is the right approach?

Respondents were given three options:

A durable bag with an initial charge that is then replaced free when worn out.

A natural bag that is purchased but not replaced free.

Free natural bags.

Figure 22: Durable bag bought once by the consumer but replaced free.

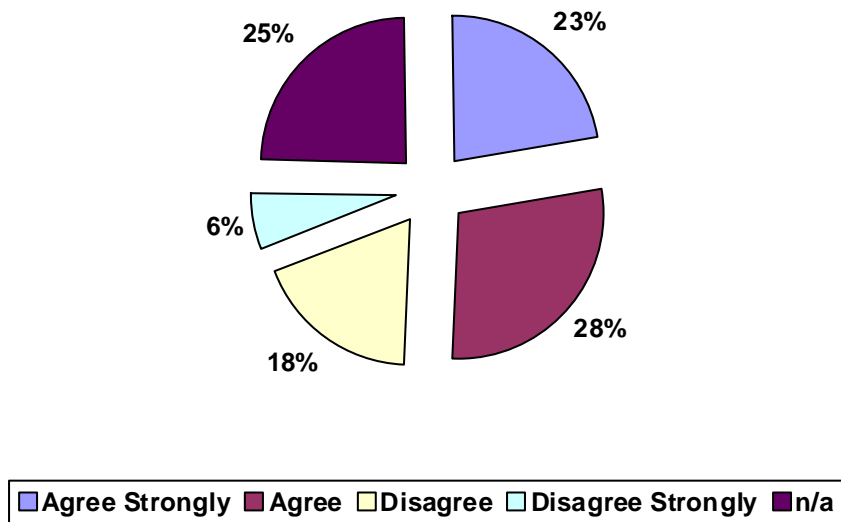


Figure 23: Natural fibre bag bought by the consumer.

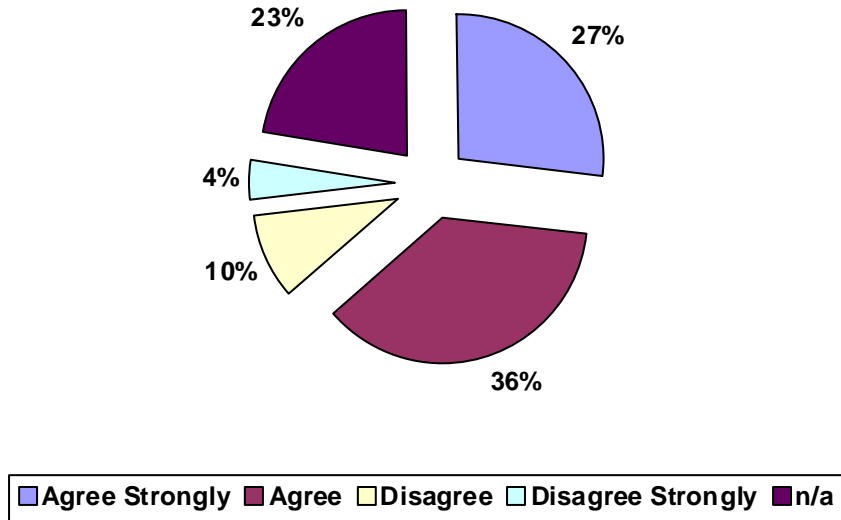


Figure 24: Free natural bags.

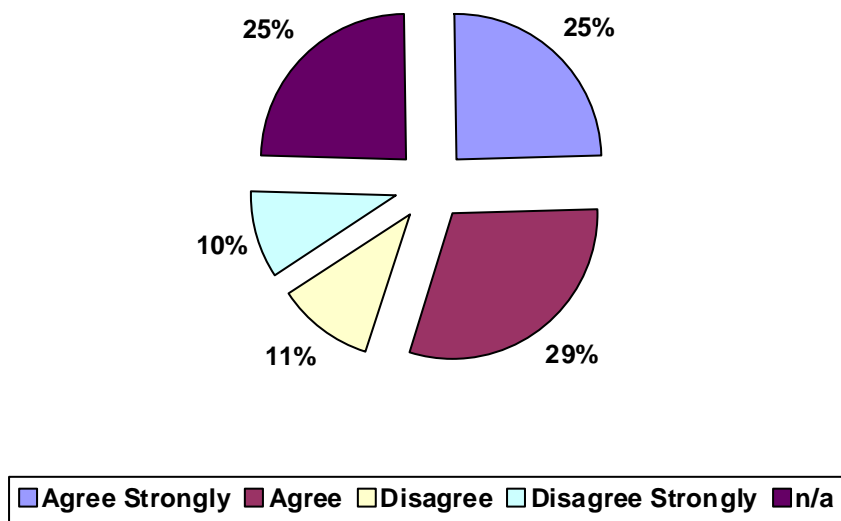


Figure 25: Would you contribute to a scheme?

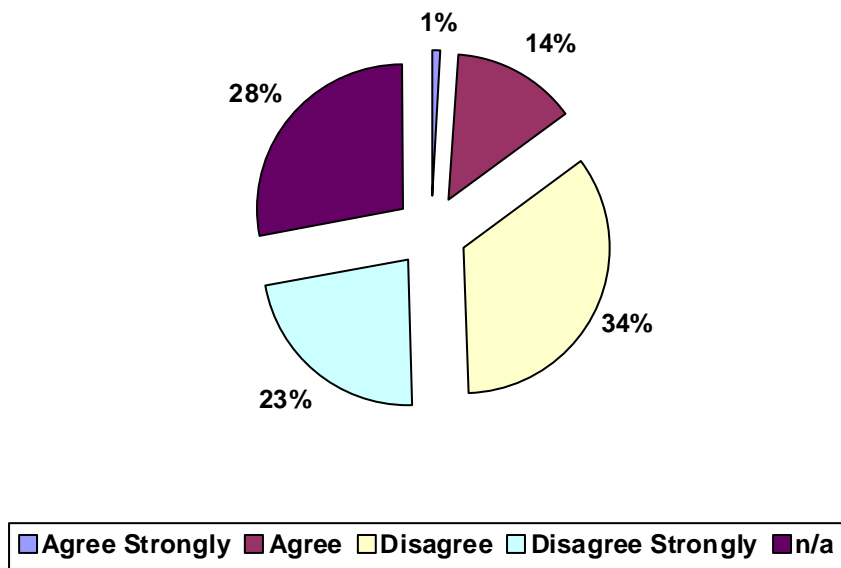


Figure 26: Summary of plastic bag options.

Material	Agree and Agree Strongly %	Disagree and Disagree Strongly %	N/A %
Durable bag	51	24	25
Paid natural bag	63	14	23
Free natural bag	54	21	25
Contribute?	15	57	28

Looking at the summary, 51% believe a durable plastic bag replaced free is a good idea. This is the Waitrose scheme and presumably the initial selling price would go a long way to covering the scheme costs.

63% believe a paid for natural bag is a good idea. This has the benefit of using natural materials in its construction and being paid for by the consumer would be at no cost to the retailer

54% even support the idea of free natural bags which suggests that businesses are prepared to invest until they are asked the question about whether they would contribute to the start up costs, at which point 57% either disagree or strongly disagree, with a further 28% making no commitment.

The questions were designed to see if there was any desire for a Sandbach reusable bag perhaps promoted by all the businesses. Cost would appear to be the issue but maybe there is a way of raising awareness and distribution of the Councils natural re usable bag which could be paid for out of the money paid by businesses to have their waste removed.

Conclusion

With a response rate of 31%, and the spread of businesses participating, the results can be considered to be representative of the area.

Litter is an on going problem throughout the country and this survey shows that our area is no exception. There is still much to be done to create an environment that every one thinks is clean. There is strong agreement that litter leads to more litter and creates unsightly areas.

There are educational opportunities around individual responsibilities and the fines that can be imposed on litter droppers.

Businesses seem to struggle to recycle because they do not have the same options as domestic users and even if they did there might be a lack of space for dedicated bins in some areas.

The town centre businesses are not allowed to use The Commons recycling points as they are not for trade. It would be interesting to know how often these central bins are emptied. Since the introduction of domestic doorstep collections the amount going into these must be reduced and therefore they may be available for at least some of the 'trade' waste. The impression gained in the survey was that some people would be prepared to use these points.

As can be seen in the comments section, and as the surveys were distributed in Millbuck Way, a few references were made to the recycling operations on this estate. The nature of the collection process and the gathering of loose material inevitably results in some of the material blowing around the roads of the industrial estate. There is a danger that this could have a detrimental effect on the whole recycling effort as well as making part of that estate look particularly untidy. It may be useful to have a regular council street clean in this area.