

Annual Customer Review 2011-12

Aims of survey

The aim was to remind customers about the range of activity we were involved with in 2011-12 and to gain an indication of which of our priorities for 2012-13 were of most relevance.

About the survey

A link to the survey was emailed to over 1500 people on 18/06/12 and the survey was open until 08/08/12. We received 157 responses (125 last year).

About our customers

Of those who responded, 28% are leaders (21% last year), 35% are officers and managers supporting leaders (49% last year) and 32% are experts (30% last year).

Responses primarily came from the public sector (41%, 45% last year) followed by the private sector (32%, 35% last year) and lastly the voluntary sector (28%, 20% last year). This indicates that we are well connected to the public sector and it shows improved contact with the voluntary sector through our increased efforts to engage with the sector. Having a third of responses from the private sector is a good response rate.

There was a reasonably even spread across the West Midlands sub-regions for responses, with the highest number of responses coming from those working in Birmingham probably due to our location and work in the city. (This is the same result as last year.)

The voluntary sector customer base has increased this year to provide an improved overall balance of types and geographical spread of our customers.

How do people hear about us?

The results show that word of mouth, our events, our website and our newsletter are the main ways in which people have heard of us which is positive as it shows that our reputation precedes us and that our events and website are reaching people from our target audience. (This is the same result as last year.)

Our impact in 2011-12 - policy advice, cross-sector events, and communications

6 out of 9 (66%) of our policy advice and cross-sector events from the past year were most frequently rated as highly relevant to the West Midlands (compared to 26 out of 38 (68%) the year before). Of these the most relevant were:

- Dissemination of low carbon evidence base to Local Enterprise Partnerships
- Development of climate adaptation partnership and regional risk assessment
- Support and promotion of Sustainable Housing Action Partnership work on retrofit
- Voluntary sector support - green job opportunities and community renewables
- Coordination and support for Local Authorities sustainability officers network and sharing good practice
- Local authority low carbon support - finance, procurement, planning and schools

In terms of sharing success, our website and newsletter were rated most frequently as excellent to good at providing information about:

- SWM projects (80% good or excellent, 80% last year)
- West Midlands events (84% good or excellent, 82% last year)
- West Midlands news (84% good or excellent, 80% last year)

Representative quote:

“Concise electronic format very welcome.” University of Birmingham

Our careers service for graduates

It is being evaluated through a separate survey to gain feedback from those using the website and receiving the email bulletins.

Our performance 2011-12 against our vision, mission and values statements

We were most frequently rated as making 'good' progress against our vision, mission and value statements. The highest ratings were for our performance against:

- Our Vision: By 2020 businesses and communities are thriving in a West Midlands that is environmentally sustainable and socially just (56% good or excellent, 61% last year)
- Our Vision: By 2012 our leaders are clear on what a sustainable West Midlands looks like, have set clear milestones and their organisations are making strong progress (48% good or excellent, 54% last year)
- Our mission as sustainability advisers to the leaders of the West Midlands (81% good or excellent, 82% last year)
- Our value of being business led and business like - we seek and expect others to maintain personal and professional standards (78% good or excellent, 77% last year)
- Our value of being creative and positive - we are always looking for better ways of working with others (80% good or excellent, 79% last year)
- Our value of being respectful - we respect nature's limits and the needs of future generations, we respect each other and celebrate our diversity so that everyone can give their best (83% good or excellent, 76% last year)

Our priorities for 2012-13 - policy advice, cross-sector events, and communications

For all of our priorities for the coming year, the majority of people said they would have high or medium relevance and 10 out of 13 (77%) of priorities were most frequently rated as highly relevant (16 out of 24 (67%) last year). Of these the most relevant were:

- Decentralised energy
- Low carbon transport
- Waste
- Promotion of sustainable procurement guidance
- Local Authority low carbon leadership
- Climate Adaptation Partnership
- Local Enterprise Partnerships and the low carbon economy
- Environmental infrastructure
- Coordination of green business clubs

- Sustainable housing

In terms of sharing success the most relevant priorities were:

- Website - signposting to resources
- Newsletters - monthly, members quarterly update and West Midlands leaders six month update
- Grow active members and opportunities to contribute

Representative quotes and comments:

“Need a better link between environmental policies/strategies and poverty. ‘Poor’ people often feel penalised for their lack of environmental awareness and are possibly the least able to do anything about it.” Unknown

“Stronger on social impacts (quality jobs), resource efficiency at regional level.” Unknown

“Updating the vision for 2020 - it's not strong enough.” Birmingham Friends of the Earth

“Energy security + peak oil. I remain disappointed that these issues were not explored (as far as I could see) within the Low Carbon Economy packages in 2011/12. A missed opportunity- which might have led / lead to different sets of priorities.” Local Authority

“Can you lobby central government to give LAs some “Teeth” please?” Local Authority

This means that our work with business, local enterprise partnerships, and local authorities around the low carbon economy as expressed in our sustainability priorities and communications is perceived as highly relevant, compared to our growing voluntary sector work, our annual conference and our sustainable suppers.

Perception of West Midlands’ progress against the seven sustainability priorities

This was the second time we asked about how people felt progress was being made by others working together on the newly published sustainability priorities.

- Retrofitting existing housing stock and buildings to improve energy efficiency (76.8% very well or well, 54.7% last year)
- Improved low carbon transport choices - flexible working, cycling, walking (53.2% very well or well, 49.1% last year)
- Public sector sustainable procurement to stimulate innovation & save costs (52.6% very well or well, 47.2% last year)
- Development & coordination of initiatives to stimulate low carbon jobs & skills (58.1% very well or well, 49.1% last year)
- Infrastructure for diverting commercial & industrial waste from landfill (57.1% very well or well, 56.5% last year)
- Environmental infrastructure to enhance water supply, flood defences & green spaces (48.1% very well or well, 44% last year)
- Decentralised energy networks focused on regeneration areas (34% very well or well, 30.8% last year)

Representative quotes and comments:

“Generally, I don't think that organisations in the West Midlands work together on the priorities.”
Business

“Environmental Infrastructure - BESST is working with Shropshire Wildlife Trust and the EA on securing WFD based funding for the Telford Urban Catchment project. BESST approach to integrated NISP workshops was used as a case study at IWCAIS, the results of which were used for UN Rio+20.”
SWM Business member

“Continued failure of national government to formulate coherent national policy and strategy in virtually all areas relating to sustainability, and demonstrable kow-towing to the interests of the dirtiest industries and interest groups render such efforts as are made by organisations such as SWM and the more enlightened local authorities and businesses far less effective than they might be as they are undermined by both lack of perceived official support and the constant barrage of negative anti-green spin which media organisations receive from vested interest groups and disseminate largely uncritically to an already ill-informed and largely unenthusiastic public.” Unknown

“There is not much of a strategic or partnership approach to either low carbon transport or green jobs as far as I can see.” SWM Voluntary sector member

“Since public funding cuts organisations don't work well together. Lack of finance is limiting progress as more effort is being put into stimulating economic development through traditional high carbon economy industries such as manufacturing.” SWM Business member

“Lack of financial resources has stifled progress in many areas.” Unknown

This means that a few priority areas, such as the retrofit of housing, low carbon jobs & skills and low carbon transport, are perceived as being progressed more rapidly than the rest.

Conclusions

From the customer survey is:

- SWM is engaging with the right level of individual and has a good geographical and sector spread. The voluntary sector base has increased substantially to help SWM to become more cross-sector with strong private and public sector engagement.
- The best way of communicating about us is still members' and others' recommendations, our events, website and newsletter - not trade stands.
- We have made improvements in the delivery of our mission and values.
- Our previous activity is seen as of high relevance with particular elements standing out such as our coordination and support for Local Authorities sustainability officers network, Local Authority low carbon support, and the development of climate adaptation partnership and regional risk assessment.
- Our planned activity is seen of high relevance with particular elements standing out such as Local Authority low carbon leadership, sustainable housing, and low carbon transport.
- A few West Midlands sustainability priority areas, such as the retrofit of housing, low carbon jobs & skills and low carbon transport, are perceived as being progressed more rapidly than the rest.
- The improvements we need to make are to continue to focus on the low carbon economy and economic benefits of the different sustainability priorities. This is because during the

recession and budget cuts, much of the longer term and collaborative leadership we were seeing has been forced into 'short-term survival mode'. Therefore the short-term business case will be required again.

Laura Simpson, 9th August 2012