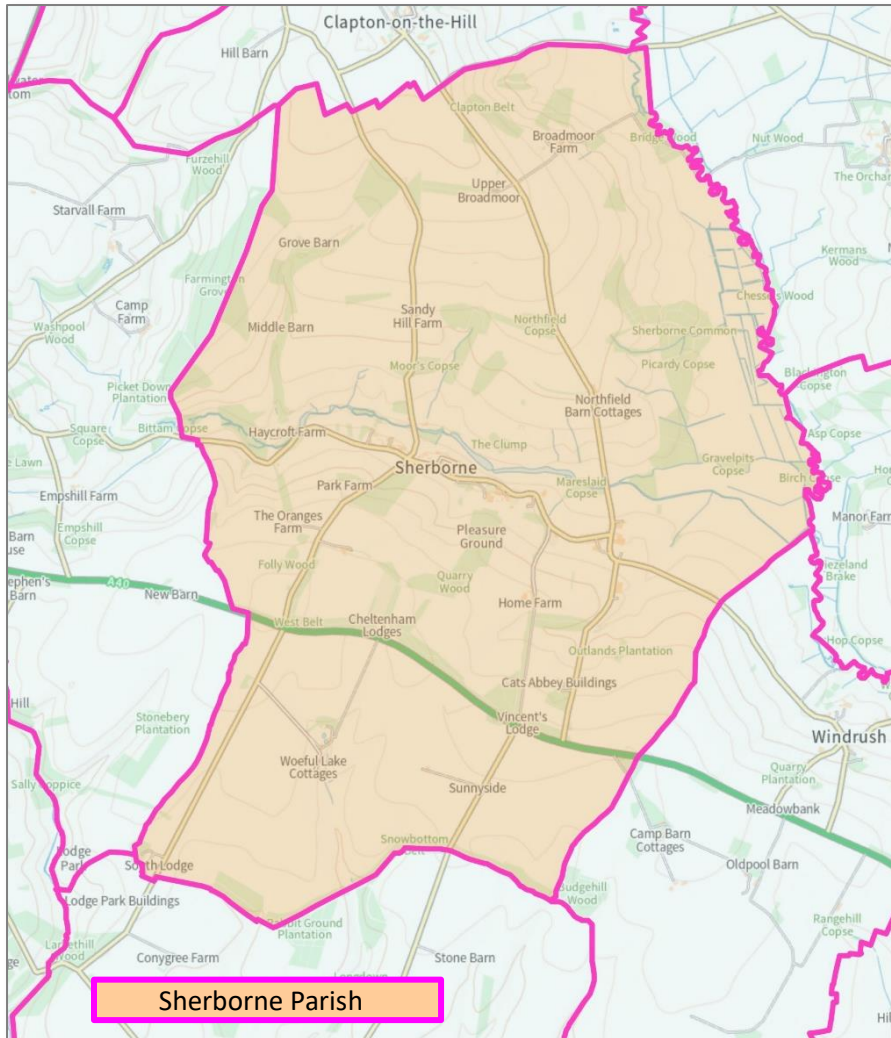


Sherborne Parish Council

National Trust Accommodation Research



Summary Report v4

January 2024

Introduction and Context

Background

The National Trust has been responsible for the upkeep of 81¹ houses within Sherborne Parish for nearly 40 years. Being the Parish's predominant Landlord, and owner of circa 4,000 acres of farm and park lands within and around Sherborne Parish, the National Trust has a significant impact on the social wellbeing of Sherborne Parish and its residents.

Over recent months, a significant and growing number of National Trust Tenants have made representations to the Parish Council about the quality of their accommodation and experiences of the National Trust as their Landlord.

In accordance with its responsibility to the Community, the Parish Council agreed it was necessary to gain a formal overview of the issues National Trust Tenants are experiencing.

The questionnaire

During April and May 2023, the Council invited Sherborne's National Trust Tenants to complete a questionnaire designed to identify and catalogue views and experiences relating to their National Trust accommodation.

The questionnaire was designed to be simple and quick to complete with space for additional notes/comments as required.

Responses were received via post (using stamped addressed envelopes provided) and the returns box located inside the Village Shop.

All responses have been treated in absolute confidence with the following commitments made to respondents:

- *You do not need to provide your name or contact details if you would prefer not to.*
- *Individual responses will not be published in any form.*

- *The published report will only ever show a consolidated view (all responses grouped together) of answers to each question.*
- *Any additional notes you provide will be anonymised (so they are not personally identifiable) before inclusion in the published report.*
- *Once the results have been collated and the report has been published, all individual responses will be destroyed.*

The published report will be:

- *Made available to all Sherborne Parish residents, the Tenants' Association of the National Trust (TANT Sherborne group and national management team), the National Trust (Sherborne and national management teams), Sherborne's District Council representative and Sherborne's MP.*
- *Used to proactively encourage appropriate stakeholders to act in the best interests of Sherborne's National Trust Tenants.*

In all, 29 responses were received (a response rate of 38%) and now form the basis of this report. Each question is accompanied by a graphic view of responses and anonymised written notes are included where provided. One questionnaire was returned blank, so each question lists responses taken from 28 responses.

In places, *Italic text* is used where specific details, which could identify individual respondents, have been replaced with text of the same meaning.

The purpose of the research and this report is to assist the Parish Council in gaining wider insight into the current situation and to help encourage the National Trust meet the statutory and moral obligations expected by their Tenants.

Prior to publication a copy of this report was provided to the Sherborne Estate National Trust team for comment. The response is included at Appendix 1.

¹ Currently, four of the 81 houses are empty pending funding or commencement of work. For the purposes of calculating the response rate to this survey, a total of 77 houses has been used.

Summary and Recommendations

The results of the Parish Council's survey identify high levels of dissatisfaction with the quality of Sherborne's National Trust (NT) housing and poor-quality customer service provided by the NT. Most notably, widespread presence of damp, inadequate heating systems, poor quality workmanship, and slow response times.

- 79% of respondents said they either disagree or strongly disagree with the statement 'My home is free from damp and mold growth'. 11% said they either agree or strongly agree with the statement.
- 50% of respondents said they either disagree or strongly disagree with the statement 'My home is adequately insulated and free from draughts, making it easy to keep warm'. 25% said they either agree or strongly agree with the statement.
- 54% of respondents said they either disagree or strongly disagree with the statement 'My home has an affordable whole house controllable heating system'. 29% said they either agree or strongly agree with the statement. 32% of respondents' houses are provided with Dimplex Quantum Duo Heat Storage heating.
- 61% of respondents said they either disagree or strongly disagree with the statement 'I am confident the National Trust will carry out good quality repairs in a timely manner when I report a problem'. 14% said they either agree or strongly agree with the statement.
- 46% of respondents said they either disagree or strongly disagree with the statement 'I've been satisfied with the National Trust's response to repairs issues about my home in the past'. 44% said they either agree or strongly agree with the statement.
- 43% of respondents said they either disagree or strongly disagree with the statement 'I am happy with the overall condition of my home'. 39% said they either agree or strongly agree with the statement.

Within the non-question specific comments section of the questionnaire:

11% of respondents were positive about their overall experience citing:

- *Grateful for an affordable property in an expensive area - the Trust have saved the village from becoming a haven for weekenders which has been the fate of many other villages.*
- *We love the village and the people in the village. If it was not for the NT, would not be able to afford to be in this area which is where we grew up and our families love to v. grateful.*
- *We are quite happy living here and we don't imagine that will change.*

36% of respondents were less positive about their overall experience citing:

- *Poor/little work done on our house, poor communication - endless stress and expense - haven't received a copy of the [NT] survey done in February 2023 - house has uncontrollable electric storage heaters - only now the damp and drafts are being addressed.*
- *I felt like I was being bullied – I was threatened with eviction - it caused me a lot of stress.*
- *I had problems with a boiler that was installed - many problems on a regular basis - the replacement boiler is difficult to control and means more oil used - not great for me or environment.*
- *Many maintenance repairs reported - outcome of very limited response!*
- *Struggle with heating bills so usually house v cold and mould increases. I have no secondary glazing and most of my electric storage heaters are the less modern ones. I love my house though and am very grateful to live in such a lovely village and community.*
- *A fore mount of work would improve the situation!*

- *The heating is shocking - spending a fortune and yet still cold. Always being told that there is no budget for repairs and having to fight to get anything done.*
- *It is such a shame that the work takes so long to be carried out - contractors are brilliant - other people are not good - don't finish anything - ends up worse than before they fixed it - always a bodge job - cheaper for the Trust to fix issues once properly than keep bodging it - Tenants love and care for their homes and lucky to have them it's a shame the Trust don't care more about them - still waiting since 2022 for work to be finished.*

It is concerning that after circa 40 years of ownership, the NT are seemingly unable to provide many of their Tenants with even a most basic level of customer satisfaction.

Recommendations

The Parish Council now urges the NT to:

- Attend to the existing reported maintenance backlog and inform each Tenant when their specific concerns will be addressed.
- Conduct an independent housing condition survey for each of the houses in the NT's care.
- Create a resulting plan of action designed to bring each house to the nationally recognised standard, at the very least, of repair and energy efficiency expected by Tenants, and in many cases, demanded by relevant statutory standards.
- Communicate a resulting plan of rectification works to each Tenant including committed timescales.

Continue to update the Parish Council and Sherborne TANT group on progress pertaining to the above points.

The purpose of this report is to raise awareness amongst relevant stakeholders and encourage near-term actions leading to a high proportion of NT Tenants within Sherborne Parish reporting high levels of customer satisfaction.

To measure progress, the Parish Council proposes to repeat the survey during early Q4 2024.

In the meantime, concerns raised by individual Tenants to the Parish Council, or to the Parish Council by Sherborne's TANT group, will be circulated to the NT and recorded within the Parish Council meeting minutes as additions to this report.

Useful information concerning the responsibilities of the National Trust, and their commitment to Tenants, can be found within the [Residential Tenants Handbook, April 2022](#) via the National Trust website.

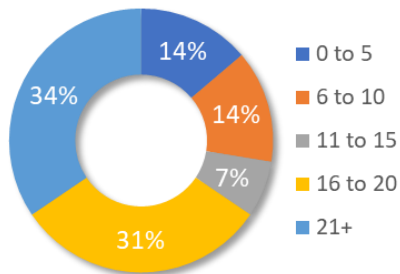
Sherborne Parish Council, October 2023.

Section 1: Your details

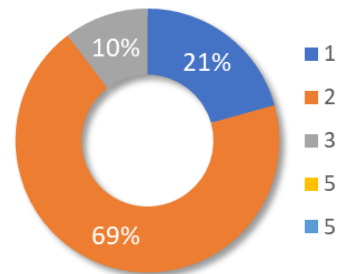
Question 1 was 'Your Contact Details' so not included within this report.

In places, *Italic text* is used where specific details which could identify individual responders, have been replaced with generic text with the same meaning.

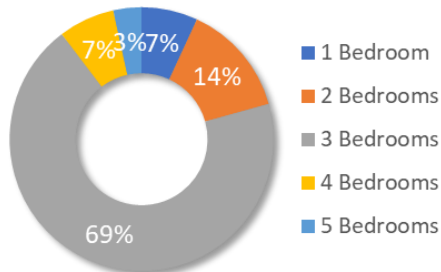
Question 2: For how many years have you lived in Sherborne?



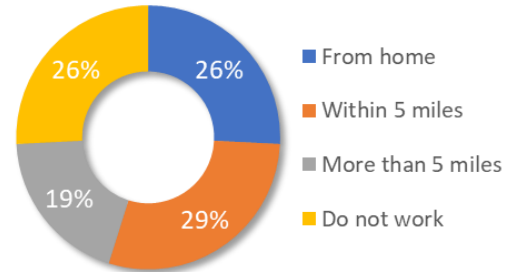
Question 3: Including yourself, on behalf of how many adults in your household are you responding?



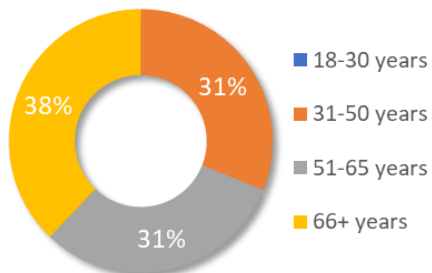
Question 4: Your type of accommodation



Question 5: Your employment



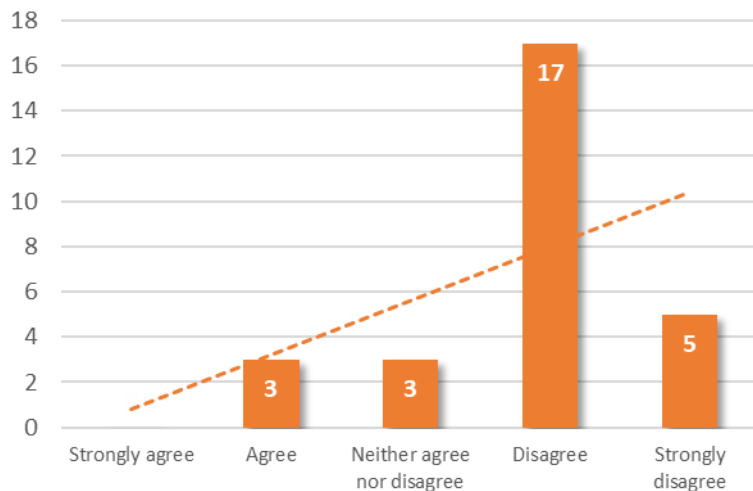
Question 6: Your age



Section 2: Your National Trust accommodation

Question A:

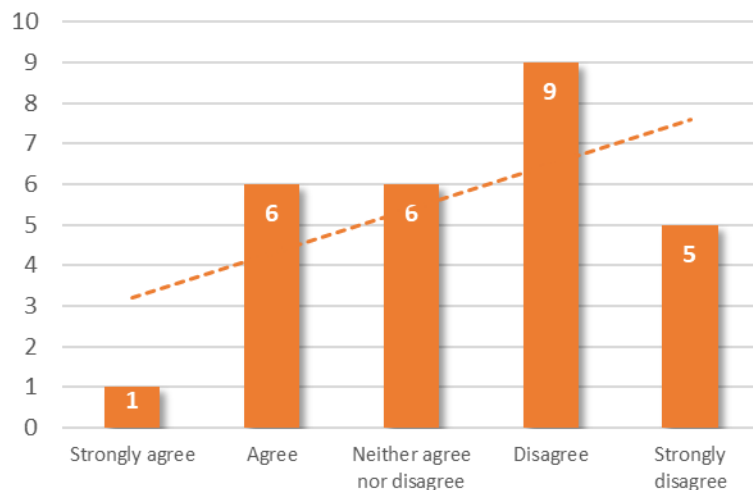
My home is free from damp and mold growth.



- Agree – largely due to use of our own de-humidifiers and constant airing of property.
- Agree
- Agree.
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree – Not serious damp in a couple of places in house with peeling plaster.
- Disagree
- Disagree
- Disagree
- Disagree
- Disagree
- Disagree
- Disagree
- Disagree - Bad in bedrooms.
- Disagree - Need heat to keep house warm then you can cope with damp and mould and a lot of wiping down. But heaters do not get that warm.
- Disagree
- Disagree – ongoing damp issues. Some mold in damp corners and cupboards.
- Disagree – damp in the front room and dining rooms walls. Also, in bedrooms causing black mould.
- Disagree
- Disagree – A couple of the bedrooms have patches of mould.
- Disagree - We run X dehumidifiers daily. We regularly open windows. Ground floor was flooded (slightly) when rain overwhelmed the drains.
- Strongly disagree – We have had many years of damp and mould – not properly addressed by National Trust.
- Strongly disagree – dampness. Little mould
- Strongly disagree – The National Trust took months to respond to severe damp. It's an ongoing battle. We have all had continuous coughs.
- Strongly disagree – damp in all rooms, everything in wardrobes cupboards etc gets all fusty.
- Strongly disagree.

Question B:

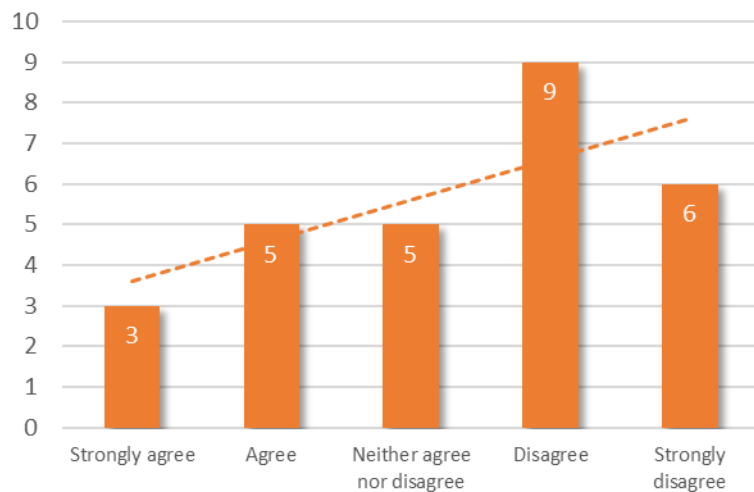
My home is adequately insulated and free from draughts, making it easy to keep warm:



- Strongly agree.
- Agree – The whole house is well insulated – it's just the X door letting it down.
- Agree
- Agree
- Agree – much improved since secondary glazing.
- Agree – secondary double glazing fitted.
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Disagree
- Disagree
- Disagree – no double glazing.
- Disagree
- Disagree – we have double glazing however the front door has a huge draughts. Also, not double glazed so it gets quite cold.
- Disagree
- Disagree
- Disagree
- Very difficult to keep warm. Need new fitted front and back doors. Ill-fitting secondary glazing still not fixed.
- Strongly disagree – Draughty
- Strongly disagree.
- Strongly disagree - Hard to insulate this kind of house? Heating may be under-specked (can't maintain 18 degrees C). No wall/floor insulation. Doors are drafty.
- Strongly disagree - It's an old cottage so there is a lot of draught so heat from heaters goes under the doors.
- Strongly disagree.

Question C:

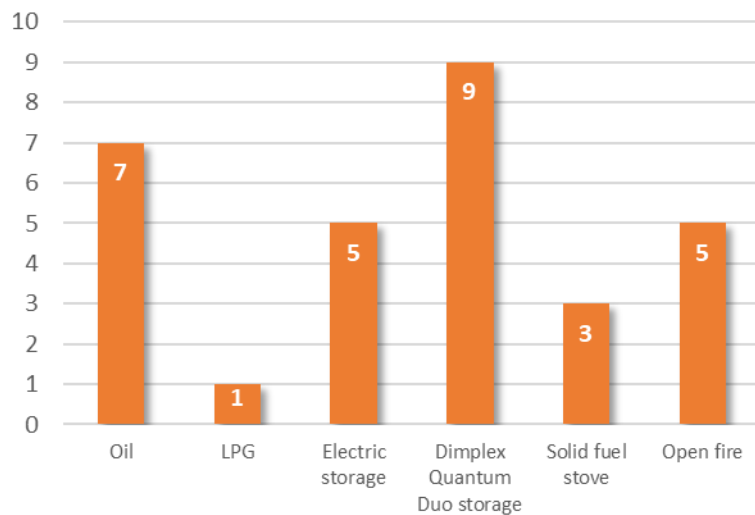
My home has an affordable whole house controllable heating system:



- Strongly agree - Oil central heating and wood burner
- Strongly agree.
- Strongly agree.
- Agree
- Agree
- Agree
- Agree
- Agree – oil central heating – expensive now!
- Neither agree nor disagree – old style radiators without temp controls – Oil fired boiler. *Stove* – v expensive
- Neither agree nor disagree - Storage heaters have good level of control. No option to centrally control all heaters. Heating demand means big energy bills (!) even when set to 17 degrees C.
- Neither agree nor disagree – it would if it had secondary glazing.
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree – open fire with back boiler electric heaters.
- Disagree
- Disagree
- Disagree
- Disagree
- Disagree
- Disagree
- Disagree - Due to poor insulation.
- Strongly disagree – can't control these heaters they seem to have a will of their own – cold one day hot the next. If they think room is to warm.
- Strongly disagree.
- Strongly disagree – had new heating fitted X
- Strongly disagree – Wrong heating system for this house as stated on Dimplex website. Unaffordable, uncontrollable.
- Strongly disagree.
- Strongly disagree – storage heater inefficient expensive to own.

Question D:

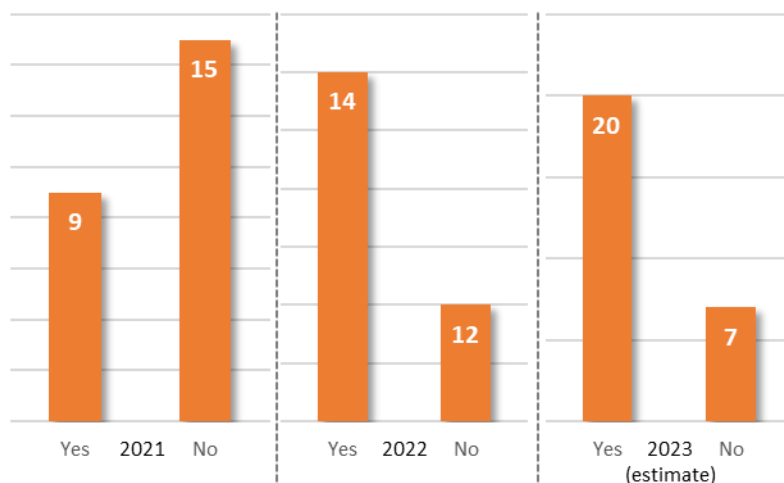
The main type of heating in your home:



- Dimplex Quantum Duo Heat Storage – Dimple Duo heaters wholly unsuitable for drafty dwellings. Inefficient and extremely expensive to run. Creates more condensation than radiators.
- Dimplex Quantum Duo Heat Storage/Solid fuel stove - Stove is only used occasionally.
- Dimplex Quantum Duo Heat Storage/ Open fire - warm burner fire in the living room.
- Dimplex Quantum Duo Heat Storage
- Dimplex Quantum Duo Heat Storage
- Dimplex Quantum Duo Heat Storage
- Dimplex Quantum Duo Heat Storage
- Dimplex Quantum Duo Heat Storage
- Dimplex Quantum Duo Heat Storage and Solid fuel
- Solid fuel stove
- Solid fuel stove – *(deleted to*
- Oil – efficient and controllable provides consistent temperature. Boiler service annually by NT. As I have mobility issues this is extremely important.
- Oil
- Oil
- Oil
- Oil
- Oil and Open Fire
- Oil and open fire
- Electric storage
- Electric storage
- Electric storage
- Electric storage
- Electric storage
- Electric storage /Open fire
- Open fire – Plus hot Pump. Radiators never seem very hot. House is easy enough to keep warm but generally a cold house which is ideal in the summer.
- Air source heat pump
- LPG

Question E:

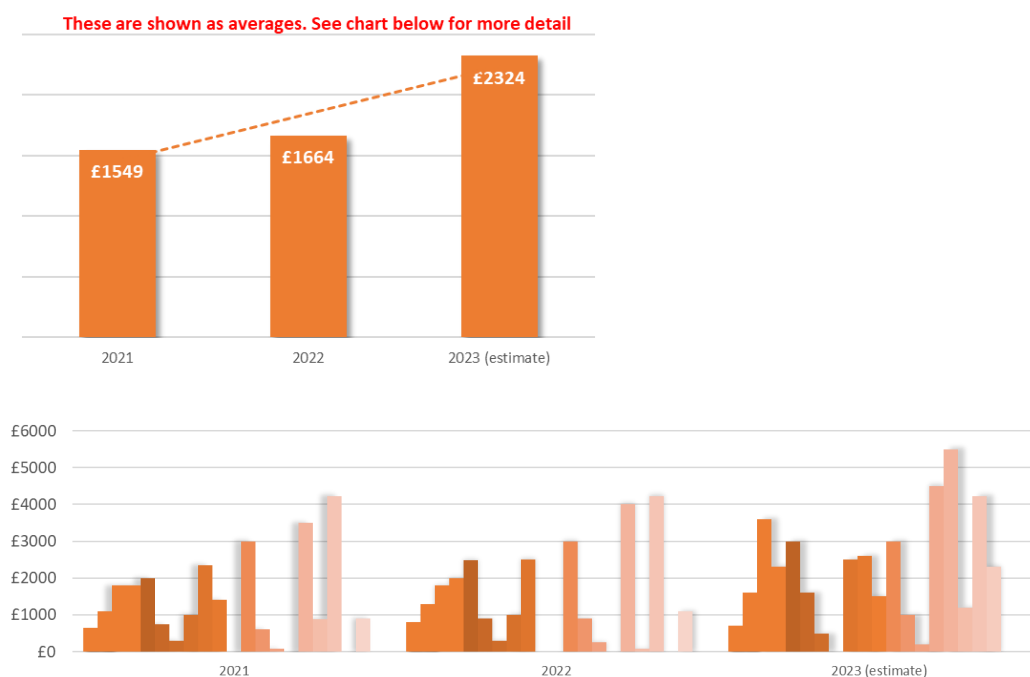
Have you/will you spend more than 10% of your net annual income heating your home:



- 2021 - yes 2022 - yes 2023 - yes – House not draft proof. Damp problems not addressed (until now) Dimplex Duo Heaters work by Thermostat uncontrollable and unaffordable.
- 2021 - yes 2022 - yes 2023 - yes
- 2021 - no 2022 - yes 2023 - yes
- 2021 - no 2022 - no 2023 - yes – electric up from £44 month to £93 month oil 2x price of previous years
- 2021 No 2022 No 2023 No
- 2021 - no 2022 - no 2023 - no
- 2021 – Yes 2022- Yes 2023 – yes
- 2021 – no 2022- Yes 2023 - yes
- 2021 – yes 2022- Yes 2023 – yes
- 2021 – yes 2022- Yes 2023 – yes
- 2021 - 2022 - 2023 yes – we spend a lot on too.
- 2021 – no 2022- Yes 2023 - no
- 2021 – no 2022- Yes 2023 - yes
- 2021 – no 2022- no 2023 - yes
- 2021 – no 2022- yes 2023 - yes
- 2021- Yes, 2022 – No, 2023 -Yes
- 2021 - No 2022 – No 2023 - No
- 2021 - No 2022 – No 2023 – No - This could be 'yes' if using 'boost' or trying to achieve 19-20 degrees C.
- 2021- Yes 2022 – Yes 2023 -Yes
- 2021 - No 2022 – No 2023 - Yes
- 2021 - - 2022 - - 2023 – Yes
- 2021 - yes 2022 - yes 2023 – yes – it would be wise to check what the new electric gadget would save came out on the market recently.
- 2021 - No 2022 – No 2023 – yes - getting very close to 10% in previous years – over 10% now.
- 2021- Yes 2022 – Yes 2023 -Yes- This has always been expensive but even more so now. The worst thing is even though it is prohibitively expensive we are still cold.
- 2021- - 2022 – no 2023 -Yes – since heating was done, It has been slightly
- 2021 - No 2022 - No 2023 – No
- 2021 - No 2022 - No 2023 – No

Question F:

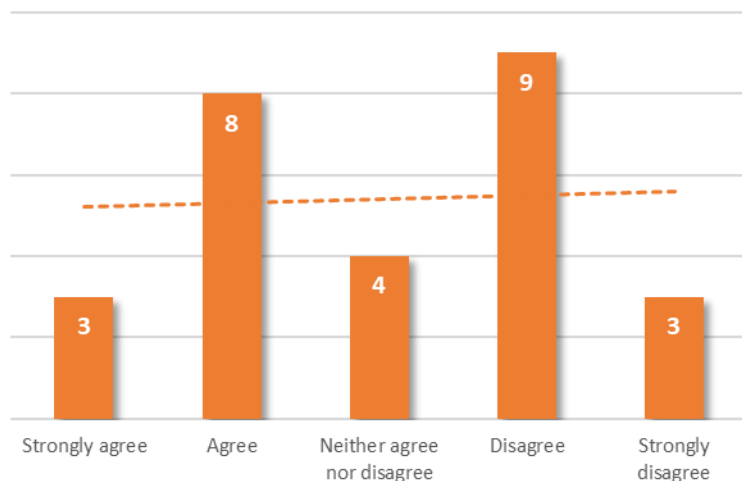
How much per year do you spend heating your home (please write in an approximate total for each year):



- 2021 -£900 2022-£1100 2023 - ? £3,500 per year without using all radiators all of the time.
- 2021- £650 2022 - £800 2023-£700
- 2021- £1800 2022 - £1800 2023-£3600 - 2021-2023 fixed energy tariff (before Ukraine etc) likely to double from this year (June).
- 2021 -£1800 2022-£2000 2023 - Including logs. approx.
- – Spend £352 per month all year so that I can keep in credit.
- 2021- £875 2022 - £975 2023-£1198.20 – January - January
- 2021 -£3500 2022-£4000 2023- £5500 - Oil £4500 Electric £1000
- 2021- - 2022 - - 2023-£4500 – we have to top up with logs to keep warm.
- 2021- £80 2022 - £250 2023-£200 (per month) – 2021 before all electric rises.
- 2021 -£600 2022-£900 2023- £1000 (estimates – heating combined with electricity) allocated 50% of electric bill to heating.
- – If all heaters were on the bills would come to approximately £5,000 per year due to the heaters uncontrollable and inefficient (even if switched on all the time, there is no guarantee of being warm.) We use the log burner. Our bills are still approx.
- – Gas £150, Electricity £2,250, Solid fuel, and wood £1500
- 2023 - £1500
- 2021 - £1400 2022 - ? 2023 – £2,600
- 2021 - £2350 2022 - 2500 2023 – £2500 – heating system, while expensive to run, is easy to operate/control and very effective.
- 2021 - £1000 2022 - £1,000 2023 – £n/a – too early to know 2023
- 2021 £300 2022 £300 2023 £500
- 2021 £750 2022 £900 2023 £1600
- 2021 £2000 2022 £2400 2023 £3000
- 2021 £1100 2022 £1300 2023 £1600
- 2021 - 2022 - 2023 - £2300
- 2021 £700 2022 £950 2023 £1100
- 2021 – £600 2022- £820 2023 - £1200
- 2021 – £990 2022- £1200 2023 - £1600

Question G:

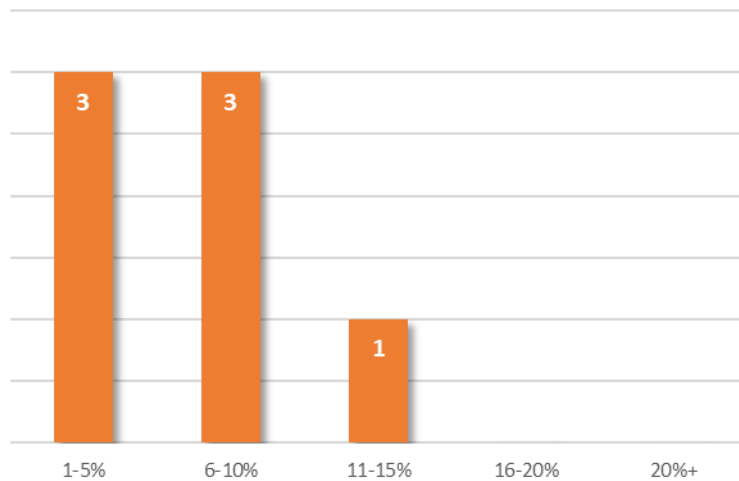
I am happy with the overall condition of my home:



- Strongly agree.
- Strongly agree.
- Strongly agree.
- Agree - I think I get a lot for what I pay for although wish it was better heated. V cold in winter.
- Agree - I love my home and its kept up together I think quite well.
- Agree
- Agree
- Agree
- Agree
- Agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree – finally have received secondary glazing. Front and back doors drafty. I have done most of the work on my home.
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Disagree
- Disagree – sometimes feel that things we do to improve our living conditions are undermined by the Trust's lack of concern with their properties.
- Disagree
- Disagree
- Disagree
- Disagree – constant battle to get repairs done.
- Disagree – still waiting repairs after years of complaining.
- Disagree – needs a lot still doing. Damp problem – rotten skirting boards, damp in exterior walls and bedrooms from roof, needs a new front door. Work has been started but not finished.
- Strongly disagree.
- Strongly disagree.
- Strongly disagree – We have done our best to maintain the house but have been badly let down by the National Trust.

Question H:

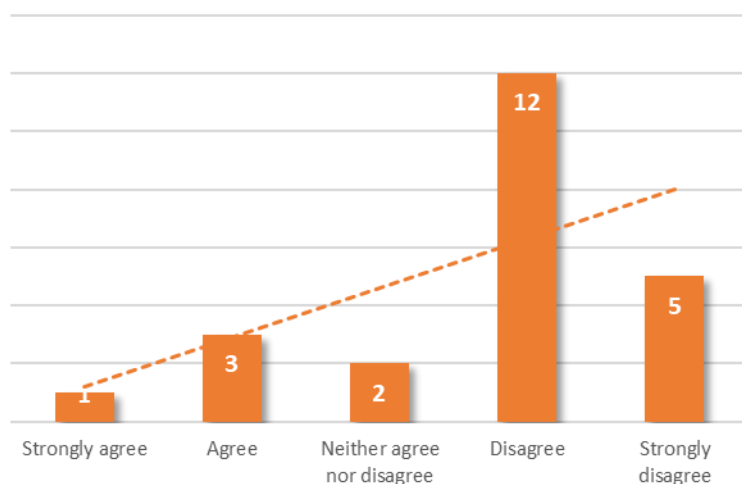
If your rent has been increased within the last 12 months, please indicate by how much:



- Increase refused – accepted by NT.
- 11-15% *early this year* next due *early next year*
- 6-10%
- 6-10%
- 6-10%
- 1-5% - gone up by £XX per month.
- 1-5%
- 1-5%
- *Increase due later this year.*
- Not increased
- Has not.
- N/A not increased.

Question I:

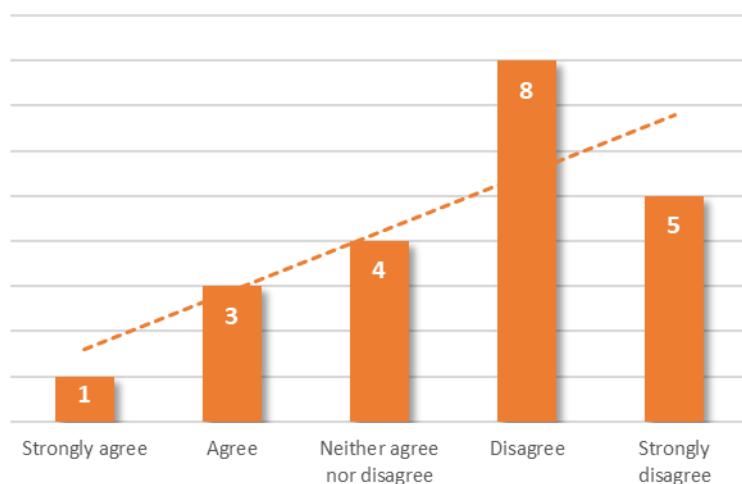
I am confident the National Trust will carry out good quality repairs in a timely manner when I report a problem:



- Strongly agree.
- Agree – normally get something fairly quickly. Not always good quality.
- Agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree – This statement was obviously written by someone with a sense of humour!
- Disagree – Many have been, but some major ones haven't.
- Disagree
- Disagree
- Disagree
- Disagree
- Disagree
- Disagree
- Disagree
- Disagree
- Disagree
- Disagree
- Disagree
- Disagree
- Disagree
- Disagree – They take forever!!! 2 years on and still have so much that needs doing!
- Disagree – Usually have to message a number of times before something is done. Have had to call out multiple times for the same issue as work done not of a good enough standard/thing broken again.
- Disagree – rarely timely, quality varies. We had work done in December + still not finished.
- Strongly disagree – We have had years of poor workmanship and poor communication. No job has ever been done properly.
- Strongly disagree – still waiting for repairs after years of complaining plus repairs are never great usually requiring further complaints.
- Strongly disagree – they do now only after we kicked up a huge fuss.
- Strongly disagree.

Question J:

I've been satisfied with the National Trust's response to repairs issues about my home in the past:



- Strongly agree.
- Agree - Hesitation
- Agree
- Agree
- Agree
- Agree
- Agree – After years of complaining about damp have started to build a new drain to prevent water filtering under the house as it has done.
- They have got better and did a lot in my house last year. I was very pleased.
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Neither agree nor disagree – depends which staff members deal with the repair issues.
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Disagree
- Disagree – although things have improved over the past few years responses can still be slow. Repairs often not carried out to Tenants satisfaction.
- Disagree
- Disagree
- Disagree – always a let-down. Who to communicate with? Always changing.
- Disagree
- Disagree - Took many years to have woodwork replaced and whole house repainted outside.
- Disagree
- Disagree – have normally had to chase up. Have noticed some improvements more recently.
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree
- Strongly Disagree
- Strongly Disagree
- Strongly Disagree
- Strongly disagree – we had huge falling tiles regularly and has taken them a year to actually Still waiting!

If you would like to add additional notes, please use the box below:

(Italic text is used where specific details which could identify individual respondents, have been replaced with generic text with the same meaning)

- Grateful for an affordable property in an expensive area. The Trust have saved the village from becoming a haven for weekenders which has been the fate of many other villages. Thanks are due to the PC for a chance to express our opinions.
- We love the village and the people in the village. If it was not for the NT, we would not be able to afford to be in this area which is where we grew up and our families love to v. grateful.
- Aside from the grumbles which this survey draws out, we are quite happy living here and we don't imagine that will change.
- The only real problem in my house is the heaters. They don't like draught and if room is warm at night, they don't come on hot the next day so a cold room, next morning so bed early. Come downstairs to heating cold and its dull and wet out – need heat on.
- *Poor/little work done on our house, poor communication - endless stress and expense - haven't received a copy of the [NT] survey done in February 2023 - house has uncontrollable electric storage heaters - only now the damp and drafts are being addressed.*
- *Regarding alteration to (removed to maintain anonymity) I felt like I was being bullied by when and came round. I was threatened with eviction if I did not conform to their requests. It caused me a lot of stress.*
- *I had problems with a boiler that was installed with many problems on a regular basis (time off work to be here repeatedly.) The new boiler is difficult to control and means more oil used - not great for me or environment.*
- Many maintenance repairs reported over a period of years with an outcome of very limited response!
- *I am (not included to protect anonymity) Government assistance: struggle with heating bills so usually house v cold and mould increases. I have no secondary glazing and most of my electric storage heaters are the less modern ones. I love my house though and am very grateful to live in such a lovely village and community.*
- Just got electric bill and just over £200 in credit but that is because of the government's help otherwise I would be owing the electric.
- A fore mount of work would improve the situation!
- The heating is shocking. Spending a fortune and yet still cold. Always being told that there is no budget for repairs and having to fight to get anything done.
- *It is such a shame that the work takes so long to be carried out - contractors are brilliant - other people are not good - don't finish anything - ends up worse than before they fixed it - always a bodge job - cheaper for the Trust to fix issues once properly than keep bodging it - Tenants love and care for their homes and lucky to have them it's a shame the Trust don't care more about them - still waiting since 2022 for work to be finished.*

Appendix 1

The National Trust's response to this report:

25 October 2023

Dear Sherborne Parish Council

Thank you for providing me with comprehensive feedback following the survey.

It is fair to say that there are some areas where the National Trust appears to be doing well and other areas where we need to focus our attention.

Our budgets are limited, and we need to prioritise where it can be best spent. We will be using the information from the parish council's tenant survey, the National Trust's tenant survey and our own local knowledge to inform those decisions.

The recommendations are sensible and not dissimilar to our own mid to long term plans (subject to funding). I cannot guarantee timescales, but I am committed to ensuring that the homes that are provided to every tenant will always meet the maintenance and compliance standards required by law (as a minimum).

Thank you to all those tenants who took the time to fill in the survey and provided valuable feedback.

Yours faithfully

Vicky Webbon

Senior Estate Manager, Somerset & Gloucestershire