

Report on Coalgate Residents View on Proposed Dam

15 August 2005

Overview

During July this year the Coalgate Township Committee sent out survey forms to each resident. Their intention was to get a better idea of residents' viewpoints on how much support / opposition there was to the Central Plains Water proposal to build a dam on the edge of the village of Coalgate. Approximately 200 forms were distributed and 74 replies were mailed back to the committee. The majority of residents were opposed to the dam being built in the proposed location but there is very strong support from a few residents. Most residents saw the dam as detrimental to themselves personally, their community and the surrounding environment. A minority see some benefit in employment opportunities and some see a benefit in the recreation potential of having a nearby water body. Those responding to the survey listed a wide variety of concerns and made many suggestions as to how Coalgate, if it was to become a "host community" for this project, might be compensated for what they see as the costs of having this project on their doorstep.

There were seven questions in the survey and the responses to each question is briefly summarised below.

Question 1 asked how long the resident had lived in Coalgate. 26 people had lived in Coalgate 1-5 years, 12 had lived there 6-10 years, 11 had lived there 11-15 years, 4 had lived there 16-20 years and 17 had lived there over 20 years.

Question 2 asked if they were permanent or holiday home residents and all but one respondent was a permanent resident.

Question 3 (a) asked residents to indicate the degree of support they had for the project on a continuum of Strongly Against, Against, Support, Strongly Support. When these viewpoints were given numerical values of 0 1 2 3 respectively the support for the dam came out at 0.6 which would be near the mid-point between Strongly Against and Against. The table below shows the numbers and percentage of responses in each category. (NB several of those surveyed did not answer this question.)

Do you support the building of the dam in the proposed location just north of Coalgate?

	Numbers	Percentage	
Strongly Support	5	7.0 %	
Support	6	8.4 %	15.4% Strongly Support or Support
Against	15	21.1 %	
Strongly Against	45	63.4 %	84.5% Against or Strongly Against

Question 3 (b) asked residents who were against the proposal if they would be supportive if the site of the dam were located approximately 500m up the valley. The table below shows the responses to this question. It should be noted that in these totals are some people who were supportive of the dam in 3(a).

	Numbers	Percentage	
Yes Definitely	8	12.5	
Yes	14	21.9	34.4% Yes Definitely or Yes
No	17	26.6	
Definitely Not	25	39.1	65.7% No or Definitely Not

Question 4 (a) asked residents to **rank order 7 possible benefits** that the scheme might bring. The township's perception is shown in the table below. For the analysis of this question rank values were taken as written on the questionnaires, even though many respondents did not rank order but just wrote down the value they placed on each of the choices. When an analysis of just those who rank ordered the choices was done the order of the perceived benefits changed very little.

Benefit	Value	Rank Order
Benefit to local economy	3.1	1
Employment	2.8	2
Real estate Values	2.3	3
Canterbury Economy	2.2	4
Recreation Value	2.2	4
Increased production	1.3	6
Increased value in value of farmland	0.9	7

Question 4 (b) offered residents the opportunity to list **other benefits** of the scheme. Three residents listed other positive benefits, such as the need for irrigation, and the preservation of Canterbury aquifers. Twenty-two responses were negative, stating opinions like "no benefits", or "The farmers would get richer and everyone else would pay the price" or "I can see absolutely no benefits for Coalgate residents". A few responses made neutral comments such as "The scheme needs to focus on drought prevention rather than dairying" and one took the humorous approach suggesting there would be "More water with whisky at hotel therefore less driving risk".

Question 5 (a) asked residents to rank order a **range of concerns** that they might have and the results are shown in the following table:

Concern	Value	Rank Order
Hazard of Dam Failure/Overspill	4.9	1
Windblown dust when reservoir is empty	4.0	2
Negative affect on Canterbury Environment	3.9	3
Lower Local Real Estate Values	3.8	4
Construction Noise	3.7	5
Recreation Noise	3.6	6

This table not only shows that the hazard of dam failure is ranked as the greatest concern, but that this concern scores a much greater value than the second ranked concern. There is little difference separating each of the other five concerns.

Question 6 (a) gave residents the opportunity to suggest what ways CPW might compensate the "host community" if this project were to go ahead. Nine people made very negative comments such as "no deals" or "no compensation is enough". Twenty two suggested that there needed to be some form of financial compensation which ranged from relocating the township to paying residents downstream of the dam at twice market rates. Several suggested CPW pay for a new township water scheme. Several suggested some form of landscaping or access to recreation.

Question 6 (b) surveyed the villagers' support for the idea of a recreational lake to be built adjacent to the township. The table below shows that most residents are against this idea, and the comments from several suggested this was just a rationalisation of CPW's need to get the shingle for the dam from somewhere, and thus their need to dig such a hole. However, there is a significant number of residents who see this lake in positive terms.

	Number	Percentages	
Strongly Against	30	42.3 %	
Against	15	21.1 %	(SA + A= 63.4%)
Support	16	22.6 %	
Strongly Support	10	14.1 %	(S + SS=36.6%)

Question 6 (c) asked residents their view on the importance of whether such a lake, if it were to be built, should be a "no motors lake"? Again the table below shows how residents felt about this idea.

	Number	Percentages	
No Importance at all	7	(10.8%)	
Not important	9	(13.8%)	(NI+NIaA = 24.6%)
Important	8	(12.3%)	
Very important	41	(63.1%)	(I+VI = 75.4%)

As can be seen from this table over three-quarters felt that it was "Important" or "Very Important" that any such lake should be for non-motor sports only: no doubt a reflection of the location of this water body virtually within the township.

Question 7 gave residents the chance to make **other comments**. These reflected a wide variety of opinions and thoughts, the gist of which tended to follow the viewpoints that were shown earlier in their survey forms. The overwhelming majority of comments made to this question expressed anger and bitterness over the location of this project.