

# INTERNAL MEMORANDUM



**CAMPAIGN  
FOR  
REAL ALE**

To:	Branch Chairmen
Date:	30th October 2014
Subject:	Branches Survey 2014
CC:	
From:	Christine Cryne
Status:	For information

## **BRANCHES' SURVEY 2014**

### **1. Synopsis**

These are the results from the survey conducted with branches during summer 2014. It raises a number of issues as well as providing information that was requested from various committees. It includes some suggestions as to how some areas may be addressed.

### **2. Summary of Observations and Recommendations**

The following is a breakdown of some of the key points raised in the survey.

The overall deduction is that, although there have been some improvements in a number of areas that are initiated/controlled from the centre, there is still some room for improvement needed. Similarly, there is a mixed picture at branch level, some of which can be influenced centrally but there remain a number of local issues impacting on the lack of volunteers that will not be addressed without a change in attitude.

This document is the summary of the feedback.

### **3. Branches**

#### **3.1 Summary**

Feedback is that most branches are in need of new volunteers and there are comments throughout this report about an 'ageing' branch. However, some branches appear not to make the effort to try to resolve this; 29% saying they do not contact new members (this is an increase from 2011), 7% saying they never make contact and only 32% branches saying they have someone designated to meet new faces.

57% say they have vacancies on their committee and only 25% say they hold only one post, significantly down from 2011 (39%). It was not probed but the increase in the number of breweries and thus the need for BLOs might account for at least part of the increased number of posts held by volunteers. Public Affairs Officer remains the most difficult post to fill with a third of branches quoting this. The concern is that one in ten branches say they have more than 4 vacancies, which is double 2011's numbers.

There were comments about the workload that branches are expected to be doing is too high. This is mentioned throughout the survey.

Only 15% of branches do not run a beer festival. Venues, competition and lack of volunteers were the most reasons quoted.

Despite some doom and gloom, 92% of branches said that they had seen new faces (almost 60% said they had seen more than 3 and 86% said they had new committee members).

#### **3.2 Recommendations**

- Branches should make contact with their members. The new emailing system on the new Members' website will help.

- The Volunteers Committee will look to encourage branches to use the situations vacate pages on the new Members website when it is up and running and increase awareness that the role descriptions for most posts are available.
- Public Affairs Committee are going to put together a strategy to increase the understanding of what a public affairs officer does and provide training.
- MarComs will put together some training for dealing with the media and putting together marketing plans.
- Volunteers Committee will continue to look for opportunities to raise the profile of volunteering within the membership.

## 4. Campaigning

### 4.1 Calendar

This probed the issue re Cider and Mild Months and, although the data is reported here, the matter is being dealt with by Key Campaign 3. The majority of branches wanted specific months for campaigns but also the freedom to choose when they did things. There was general agreement that the beginning of the year was too busy.

### 4.2 Pubs campaigning

74% of branches said they were happy with their pubs campaigning. The key issues were again lack of volunteers, attitude of the branch, too many pubs closing to make a difference, lack of success leading to demotivation and the lack of training and perceived support.

### 4.3 Recommendations

- Move Pub of the Year, Club of the Year and Community Pub Month to later in the year and spread out the campaigns. This will be looked at for 2016.
- Sharing best practice/case studies
- Pubs Group have re issued support material and other Committees will look at opportunities to support campaigns eg templates
- Increased campaigning centrally
- More professional planning support from the centre
- Training

*Most of the above recommendations on pubs are in hand. Some are being covered by the afternoon discussion groups at the Super Regional Conferences.*

- Issue guidelines to branches re funding of pub campaigning socials. Finance and General Purposes Committee have been asked to look into this.

## 5. Support

### 5.1 Campaigner

Of those who got the Campaigner and read it, it was generally thought useful. However, awareness was low (49%).

### 5.2 IT

The branches seem to be split between those with a reasonable number of techie people and those who were lacking in IT technical skills. A few questions were asked about help and support for a number of areas including Pubzilla, Spile, WhatPub, National Beer Scoring Scheme, Beer Engine and websites. None of the areas gave major cause for concern except Beer Engine, although all might be improved and the report gives some suggestions that were mentioned. However, it did raise some branches' scepticism about NBSS and its usefulness. Some concern was raised by some branches about the way that IT is implemented within CAMRA.

Branches were also asked about what they would like to see in future. A number of areas were raised including launching Apps, accountancy packages, support for beer festival staffing, improvements to systems including easier loading of photos onto WhatPub and once again training. There seemed also to be a lack of awareness of what was already available.

### **5.3 Recommendations**

- We will look for activities to raise the awareness of the Campaigner is needed.
- ITAG are looking to put together training, clear instructions/manual for all of the IT systems supplied.
- ITAG have agreed to consult with branches on the IT strategy and any IT developments before they are implemented.
- ITAG will inform branches of the support that is available including Beer Engine .

## **6. Communications**

### **6.1 General**

Overall, there was a feeling that the communication from CAMRA centrally had improved and that the introduction of the synopsis had proved useful. Most of the comments around the level of communication was positive but there were a few suggestions for improvement including an aide memoire/bullet points on the key campaigns.

76% of respondents said that they were clear on CAMRA's strategy and key campaigns with only 8% saying they were not.

### **6.2 Contact and responses**

91% of respondents said they knew where to go for help, which is a slight improvement on 2011. When asked if they had any problems when they contacted a member of the NE, RD, National Committee or member of staff, almost one in six said they had. There were several areas/people that were mentioned a number of times, mainly about a lack of response. It is apparent that the NERDs responding within 24 hours is not being adhered to and this is creating a few issues.

### **6.3 Recommendations**

- National Executive, Regional Directors, Committee Chairmen and staff to respond to emails within 48 hours as previously agree even if it is just a holding email. Members are asked to bear in mind that most people have jobs and if they do not get a reply, they should try again including picking up the phone. Some instances have been caused by incorrect email addresses and spam filters.
- The complaints procedures for dealing with NE etc and those for dealing with staff will be re-issued but also covered at the Super Regional Conferences

## **7. Views of volunteers**

### **7.1 Summary**

This area had some good and bad responses. 58% said they felt valued as a CAMRA volunteer and just over 50% said the National Executive respect the work that branches do but only 32% think the NE understand the issues faced by members. Also, 38% indicated that they thought branches were being asked to do too much. There were also a few comments around the personal cost of carrying out CAMRA activities. These opinions were backed by a number of comments, which indicated that:

- Some volunteers felt the NE thought that they were only there for the income they generate.
- The NE were generally seen as remote and not approachable
- Members thought they were not listened to or consulted with the NE trying to push things through.
- It was thought that there was a lack of understanding; not all branches are the same particularly with reference to rural versus urban.
- Some Branches should be given financial help with travel expenses within a branch particularly regarding pub surveying
- Too many campaigns running concurrently and not enough notice
- Lack of volunteers to spread the workload and those who are active have limited time
- Mixed comments about which campaigns CAMRA should be concentrating on and what should be dropped.

## **7.2 Recommendations**

We will try to:

- Ensure that all communication indicates appreciation of any work that branches are asked to undertake and avoids 'demands' ie all missives should request/ask/show.
- Ensure that branches are consulted on any major plans or strategies before they are implemented where feasible.
- Produce pen pictures of NE and what they do locally on new members' website
- Ensure that communication is in clear language and in non technical terms
- Issue guidelines regarding what a branch may spend regarding CAMRA activities such as pub surveying

## **8. Nominations to be a RD or Member of the NE**

### **8.1 Summary**

The number of people who said that they have stood for the NE has reduced to 3% from 6% in 2011. The reasons for not standing included the view by a few that it was a closed shop and people had to be asked ie.. there was a lack of encouragement for people to stand.

For both roles there was a lack of understanding as to what was involved and a feeling that it was too bureaucratic. However, by far the biggest reason given for not standing was lack of time and the perceived workload. As a result, some people thought they should be paid posts or at least an honorarium.

### **8.2 Recommendations**

- We will look to communicate on the role of NERDs and clarify how people get elected.

## **9. Other**

### **9.1 Summary**

Branches were asked if there was anything they wanted to add not covered elsewhere. Main comments were repeats of elsewhere eg lack of volunteers (and some suggestions why) but there were requests for:

- More open questions on Cider and Mild Months in the survey
- An opinion on Craft Beer requested
- Support for members who have no on-line facilities
- More interactive website
- Online training (most of the suggestions are in hand)
- More support for Public Transport Sub Group
- A response on the beer festival stillage issue

### **9.2 Recommendations**

- We will circulate the activation level to branches so that they can benchmark themselves
- Look to hold a national training day on PubCos

# RESULTS OF THE BRANCHES' SURVEY 2014

## 1. Background

An initial survey was undertaken in 2011. Another survey was conducted this year to:

- See if the action taken in some areas had resulted in improvements
- To track a number of areas to identify if there had been any changes
- To seek the views of branches to inform future actions/decisions
- To identify areas where help was still needed.

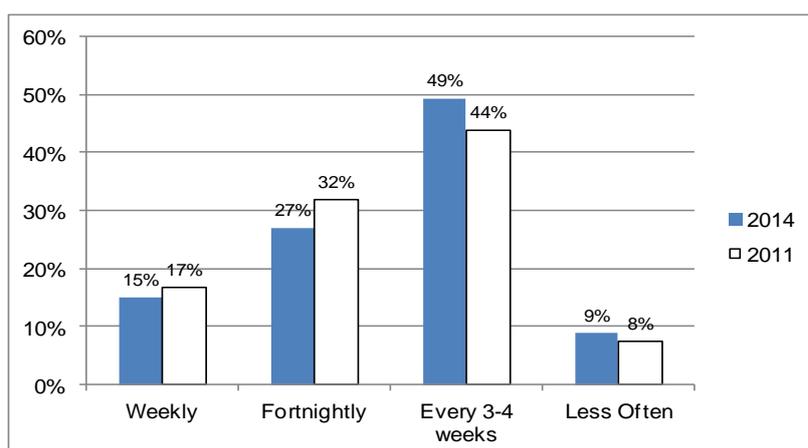
## 2. The respondents

There were 489 responses from individual members incorporating 156 branches. This is significantly up from the 2011 research (107 responses from 84 branches). It can therefore be deduced that these results will be a generally good reflection on branches' views.

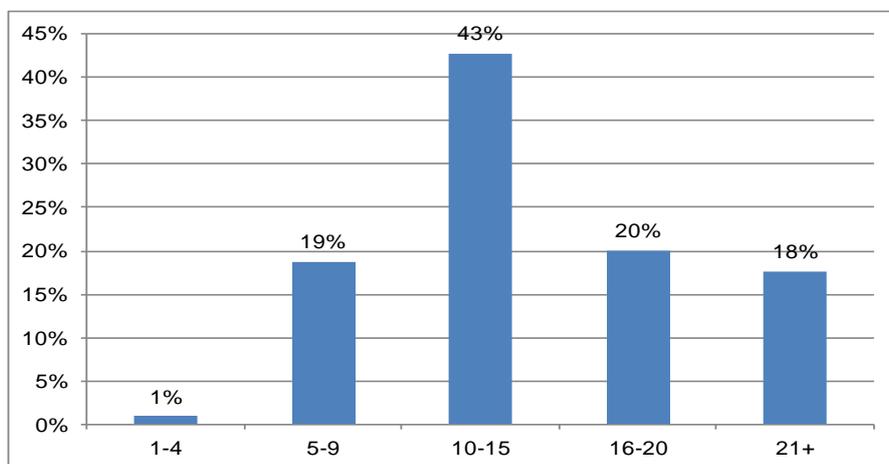
## 3. Health of the branches

### 3.1 Meetings & Socials

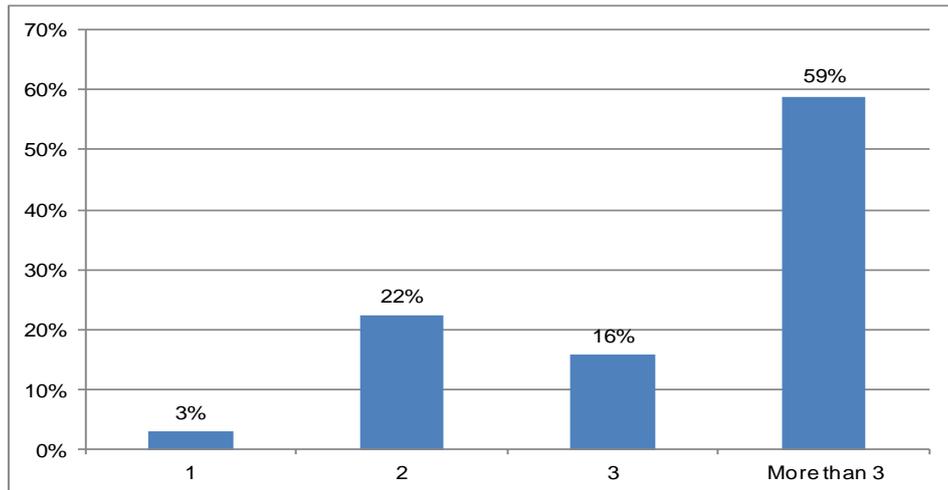
The frequency of meetings or socials seems to have declined with only 42% of branches saying they meet every fortnight or more compared to 49% in 2011.



On average, most branches see between 10 and 15 people at their socials and meetings but almost one in five see over 20 people.



But the good news is that 92% of branches say they have seen new faces in the last year and the majority have seen more than 3.

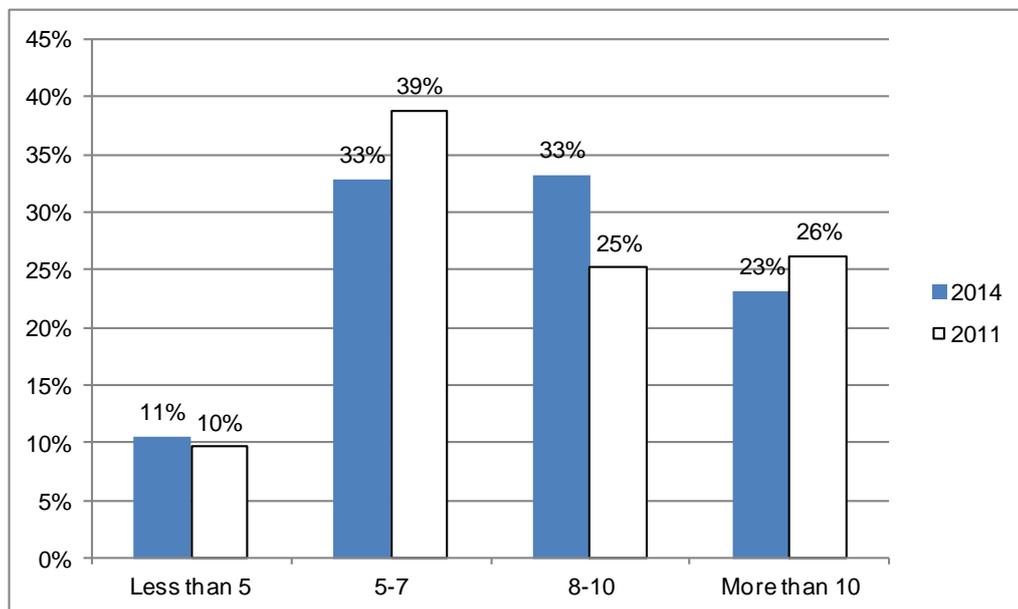


One key way of getting new faces along is obviously to ask them. 71% say they contact their new members; this is down from 78% in 2011. 7% say they do not contact (comparable to the last survey) and 21% say sometimes (15% last time).

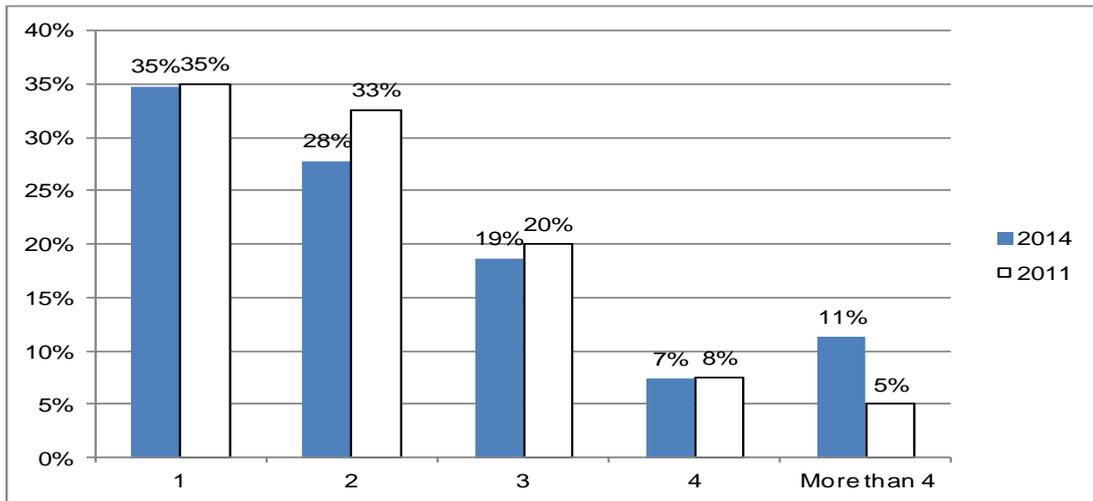
Only 32% of branches have a designated person to meet new faces.

### 3.2 Committees

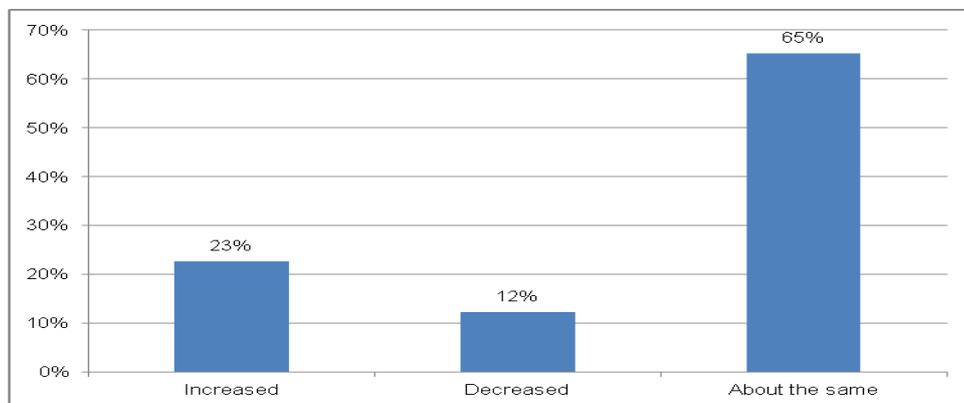
The average size of committees has increased slightly in the 8-10 size but the median remains around 8 branch positions.



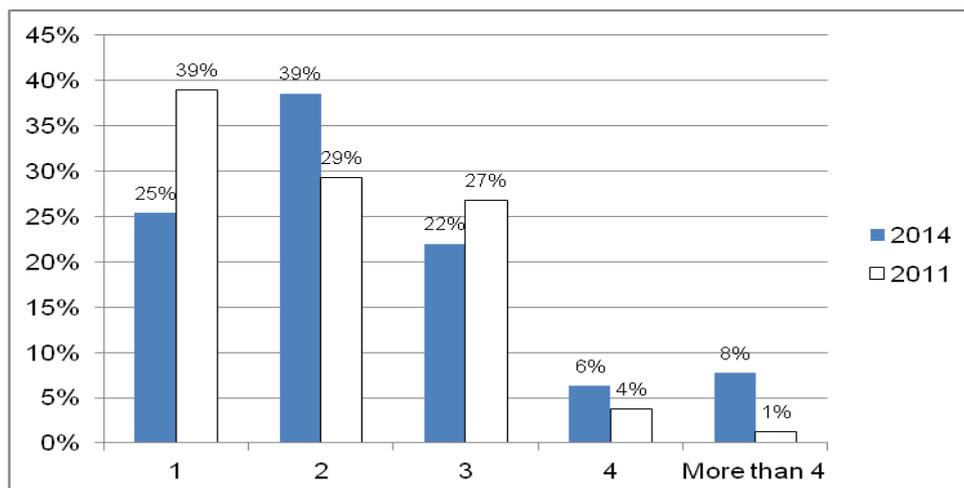
86% of branch committees have seen new faces but 57% said they still had vacancies. Of these that have vacancies, around a third say one vacancy although one in ten say they have more than four vacancies. This is double the number in 2011.



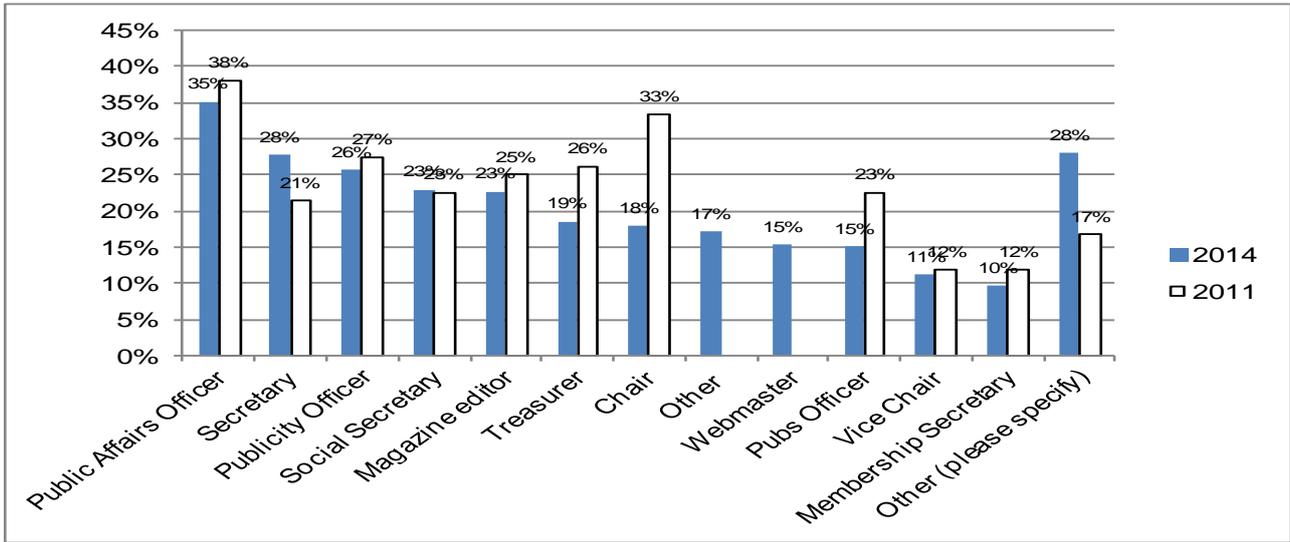
Branches report that for many, the vacancy numbers have remained the same over the last two years but 23% said the vacancies have increased. This might be due to the expansion of the number of branch committee posts in some branches but gaps of over 4 does suggest that some branches may be having difficulties.



It is known that many committee members hold more than one post. There has been some movement upwards ie more members are holding more than one post. This might be due to the requests for more branch posts or possibly an increase in the number of BLOs needed.



The post that is still the most difficult to fill is the Public Affairs Officer with secretary now second, with Chairman falling down the rankings. Publicity Officer remains in the top three.



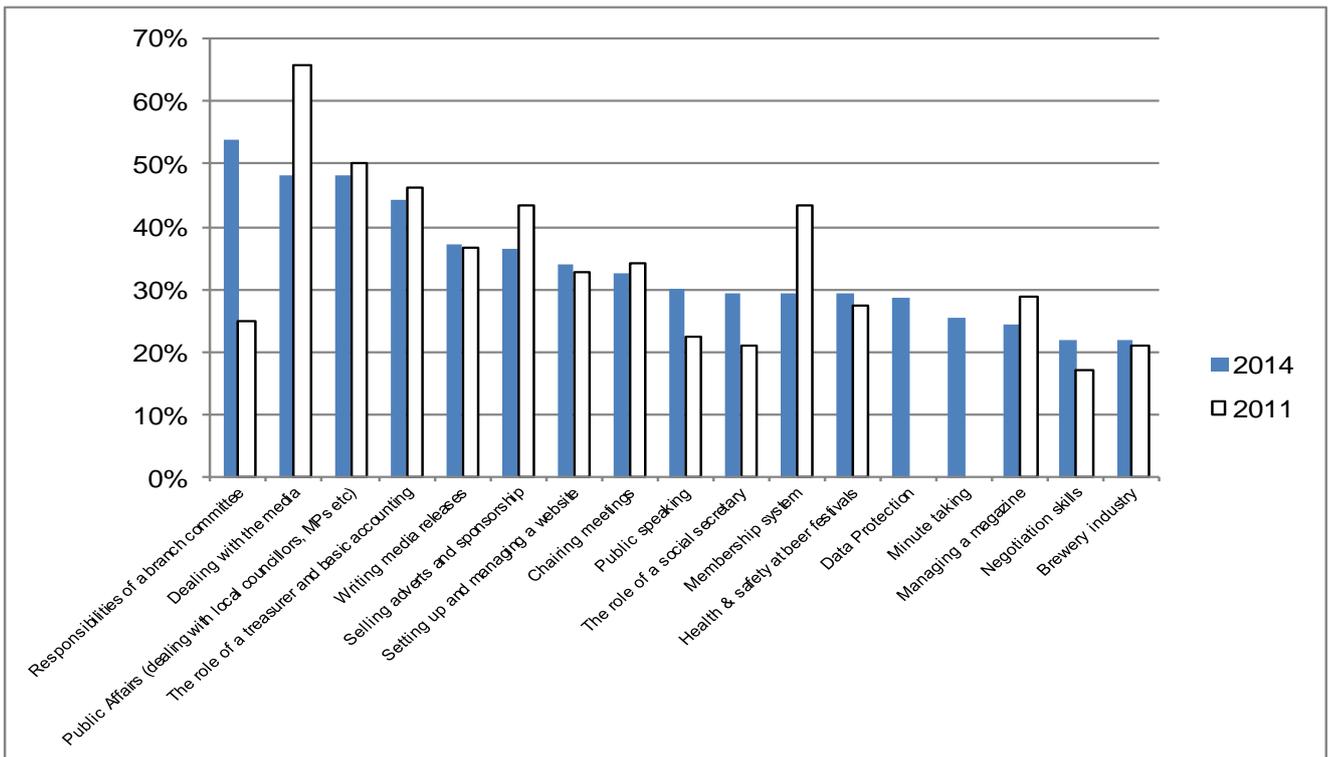
In 'Other', the biggest mention by far was Young Members Rep, which accounted for almost half the comments, then Pub Protection (17%) and the Cider Officer (6%).

### 3.3 Addressing the vacancies

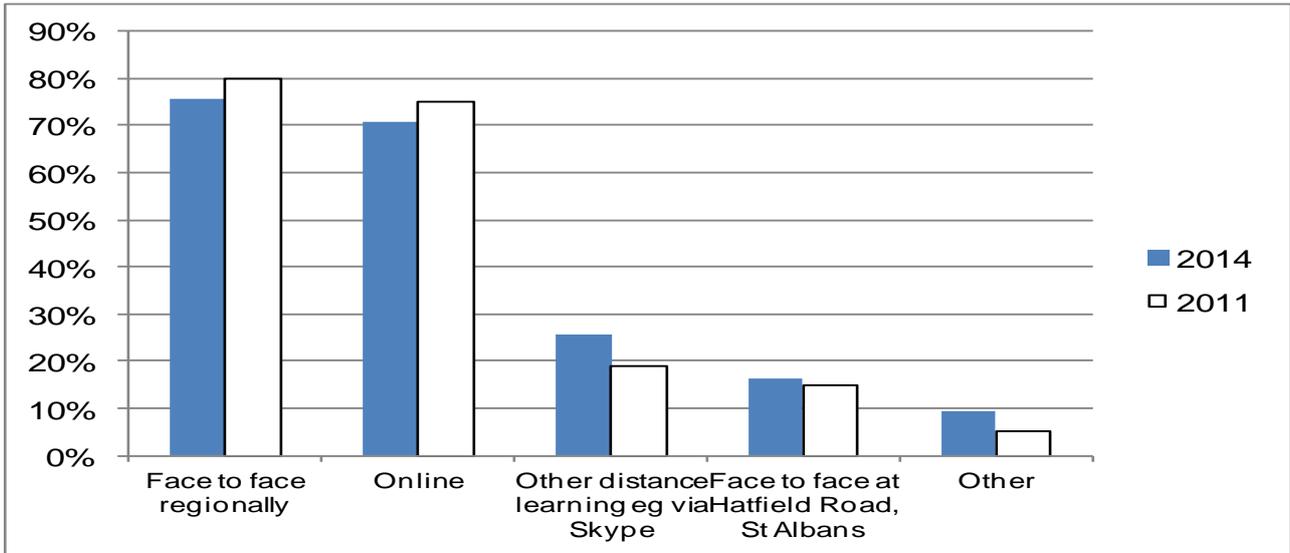
Members were asked if they would use the facility for advertising vacancies on the new members' website. A third said they would and 62% said maybe. They were then asked if they had any ideas that could be done centrally to help. The key themes were:

- Role description - there is a low level of awareness of these
- Workload - too high
- Promotion/communication - more coverage in What's Brewing and elsewhere
- Activation- the issue of trying to attract new blood

74% of respondents said they thought training might help people come forward to fill the vacancies. 70% said yes. When asked what type of training would be relevant, the responsibilities of a branch committee came top followed by dealing with the media, public affairs and the role of a treasurer. These latter three were the top requests in 2011.



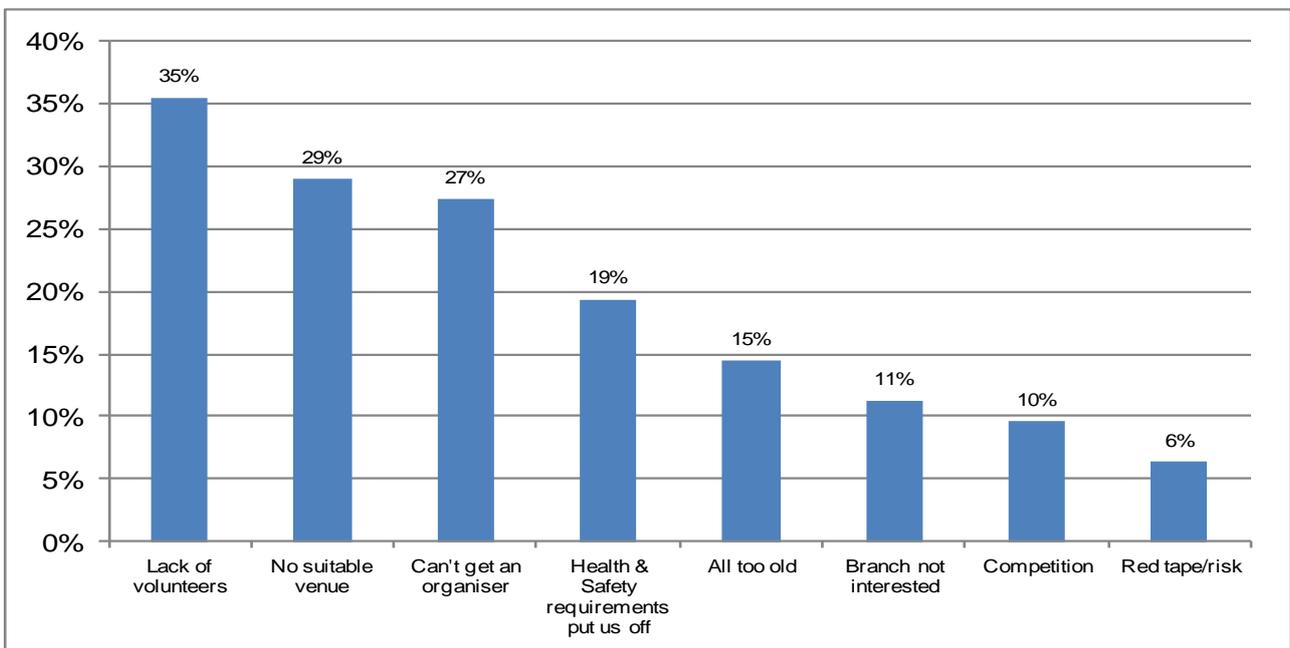
When asked how the training should be delivered, the answers were similar to 2011.



Under 'Other' the most replies were for training to be delivered locally face to face with a few for handbooks.

### 3.4 Beer Festivals

85% of branches run a beer festival with some being run jointly. There are also a handful of branches who take part in a regional festival eg Edinburgh, North Manchester, rather than running one alone. Of those that do not run a festival, the reason most mentioned was a lack of volunteers followed by a lack of a suitable venue. In addition, there were a number of mentions about existing competition and in a few cases, a preference to support others' beer festivals.



### 4. Campaigning

A few questions were asked around campaigning. We have been picking up anecdotal feedback that we are asking branches to do too much in the Spring but we also wanted to know if dedicated campaigning months were losing their appeal. Also, there was a request to probe how members were coping with the Pubs campaigning.

## 4.1 Dedicated campaigning months

People were asked two questions around dedicated months for campaigns.

	Yes	No
Specific months for a campaign eg Community Pubs Month, Mild Month	77%	23%
The freedom to choose when you run a campaign	53%	47%

It is clear from this that the majority of respondents would prefer to have specific campaigning months. This contradicts slightly with the answers to the next question but they are not mutually exclusive nor are the numbers significantly in favour of greater flexibility.

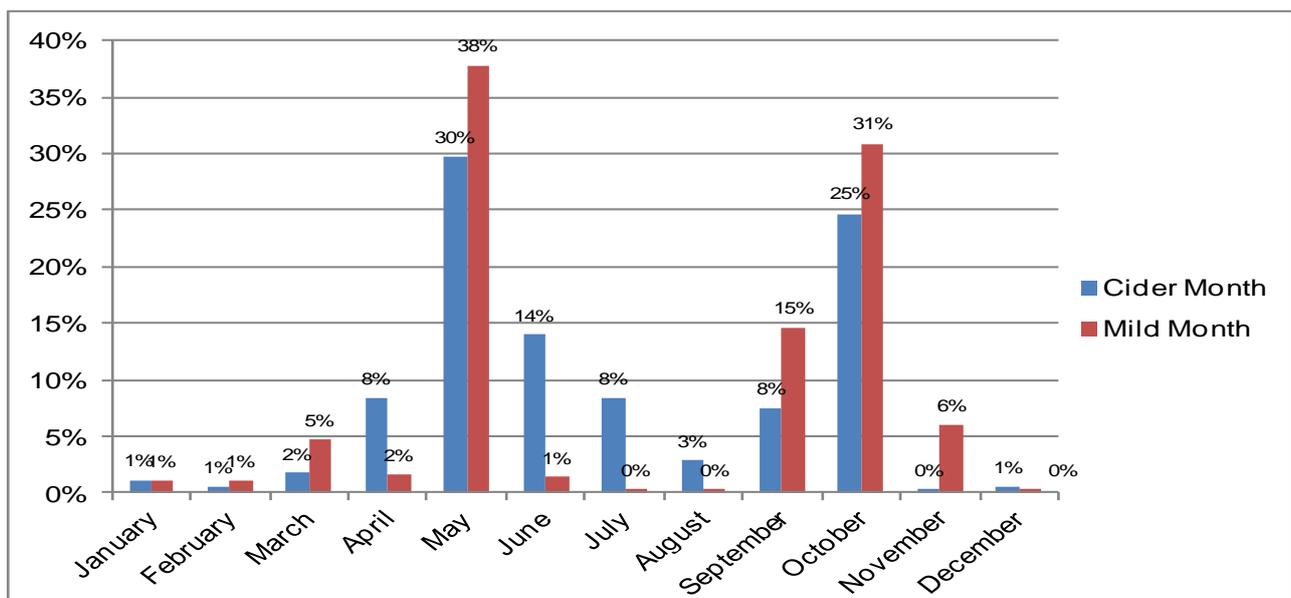
## 4.2 Annual Calendar

People were asked a question around campaigning in the first third of the year:

	Yes	No
Should we move the Pub of the Year, Club of the Year and Community Pub Month (assuming we continue to have a dedicated month) away from the Pricing and Good Beer Guide Surveys and the requests around the lobbying for the Budget	61%	39%

This question quantifies the anecdotal evidence that the beginning of the year is too busy for many branches and a rethink of the campaigning calendar is needed.

Questions were then asked what month they would prefer to have a dedicated month for Cider and Perry (if they were in favour of a dedicated month). The results were as follows:



The results were not clear cut. It can be seen that the respondents favoured having both Mild Month and Cider Month in May! October for Mild scored higher than Cider for the same month and there was noticeable support for having Cider in June and Mild in September.

## 4.3 Pub Campaigning

Branches were asked if they were happy with its current campaigning on pubs. The results showed that the majority were, with 74% saying yes and 27% saying no.

A second question was then asked as to if they were not happy with their pub campaigning, why that was. The replies broadly fit into a number of headings:

- Lack of volunteers/suitable volunteers/too many other things to do
- Branch not interested
- Lack of training/perceived lack of support
- Lack of success in saving pubs causing demotivation
- Too many pubs closing to make a difference/to cope with
- Need for more central campaigning to give branches the teeth to be successful
- Some questions as to why we are campaigning for pubs at all.

#### 4.4 Support

In order to see what might be done; branches were asked what extra help they would like to campaign more effectively on pubs. These are broken down under various headings. It was noticeable that Volunteers (or lack of them) was again raised. The other headings were:

- Communication - including the sharing of best practice, case studies etc
- Central support - request for more professional support (which has been done with the appointment of Matt Brown)
- Support material/training - requests for guidance packs, standard articles, promotional material
- Leadership/Central campaigning - feeling from some that we need to take a harder hitting approach centrally and to give more direction to branches
- IT/WhatPub - some ideas for development
- Funding - requests for funds to visit rural pubs

### 5. Support

#### 5.1 Campaigner

The Campaigner is a mechanism for sharing ideas and best practice amongst volunteers but only 51% of respondents said they received it. Of these:

Not aware	49%
Too much to do to read it	17%
Used to get it, seems to have stopped	6%
Not interested	4%
Not got around to it	3%

Generally, those that did get it found it useful quoting areas such as:

- Sharing different approaches to various campaigns.
- New ideas and information
- "How our branch did xxxx" are helpful for new ideas.
- Articles written by committee members.
- Stories about how other people are performing the same role

However, there were numerous comments that there was simply not time enough to read it and that it does sometimes feature the same areas.

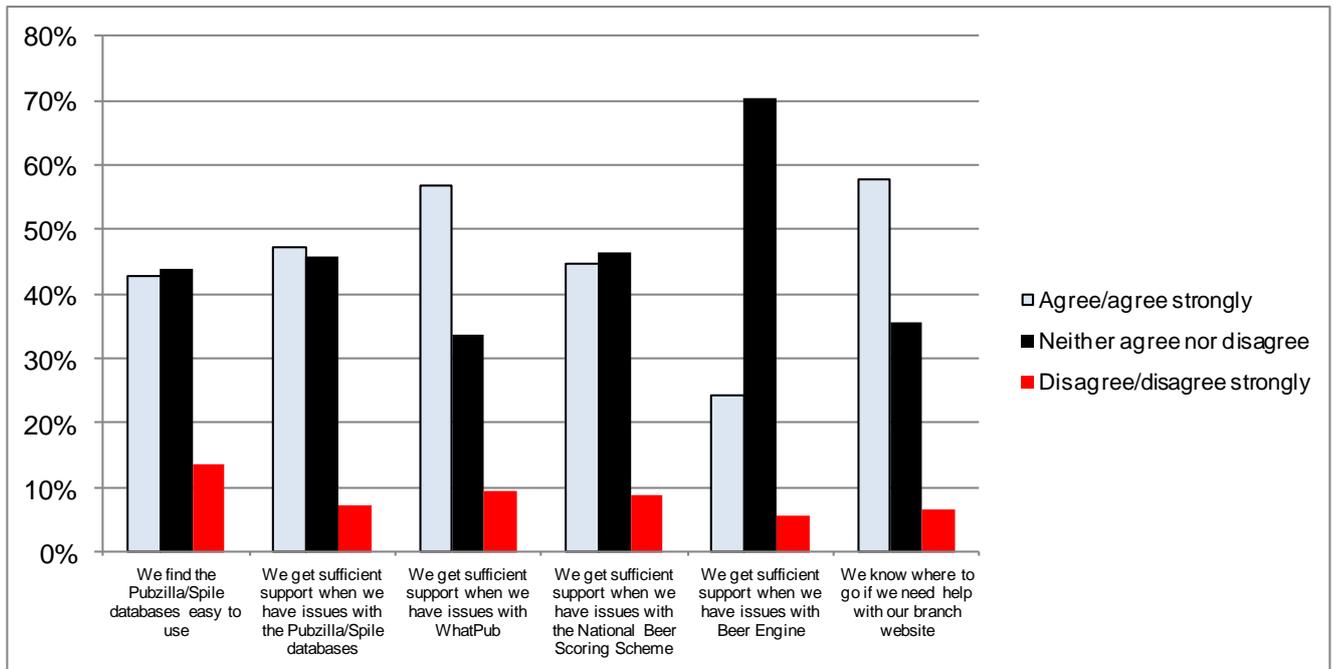
A fuller survey amongst those who have signed up for the Campaigner was carried out separately.

#### 5.2 IT Support and development

To assist the IT development to support branches, a number of areas were probed.

##### 5.2.1 Help and Support

The following are the responses regarding help and support with databases, WhatPub, NBSS and websites.



When asked what could be done to improve matters, it was clear that many of the respondents had not heard of some (and in some cases any) of the systems mentioned. Of those that had, the topics that came up were:

- Pubzilla being difficult to use
- Need for clear instructions
- Some improvements needed on uploading photos onto WhatPub and on the way the search engine works
- Some scepticism about the National Beer Scoring Scheme
- The need for branches to be assured that there is a clear IT strategy and a way to contribute to it?

## 5.2.2 Future developments

Branches were asked about what future IT support they would like. There were calls for:

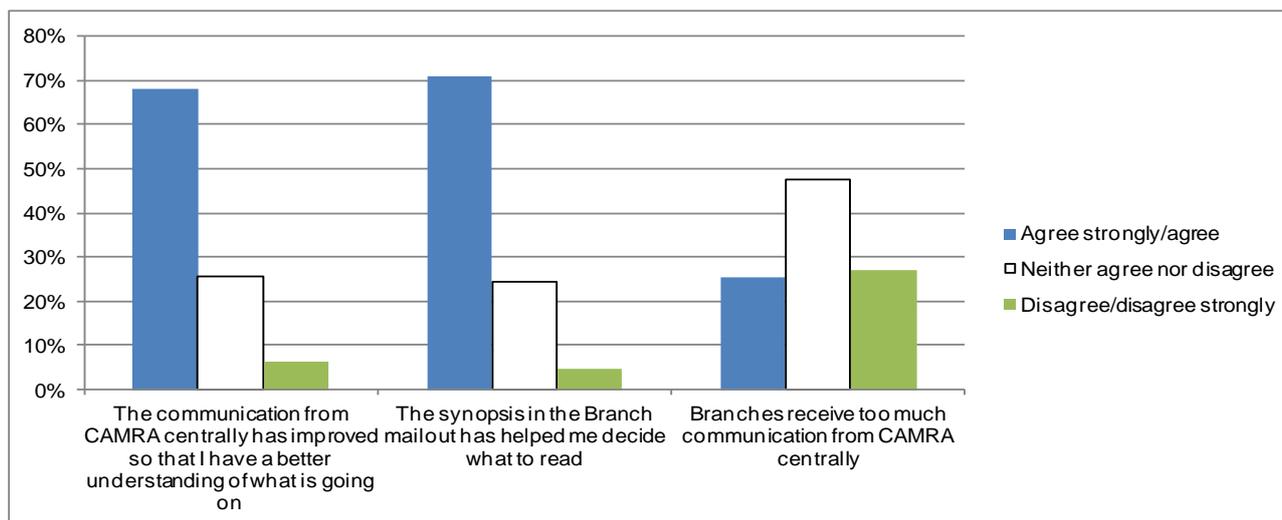
- Beer scoring app
- WhatPub app
- Method to email members (in hand)
- Improvements in SPILE, Pubzilla and WhatPub
- Unification of CAMRA's systems
- Help with websites as well as requests for templates
- Generic email addresses for branches
- Accountancy packages
- Improvements for the current membership system and website
- Support for beer festival staffing
- Help with understanding and using social media
- Training

## 6. Central communication etc

### 6.1 Branch mail outs and other communication

Branches were asked about the quality of the communication they received centrally. Overall, there has been an improvement in how well branches feel they are being communicated with (68%) with only 7% saying that there had not.

The introduction of the synopsis suggested by the Volunteer Committee appears to be liked by most. However, there is still a perception by 27% of branches that they are getting too much communication.



The communication on CAMRA's strategy does appear to be getting through with 76% saying they were clear on CAMRA's strategy and the key campaigns with only 8% saying they were not.

Comments around communications are detailed below

#### 6.1.1 Level of communication

Most of the feedback was positive

- I think we get just the right amount of communication.
- Communications from HQ are about right. What Branches are asked to do is consummate with achieving the Key Campaigns. We have a member of the National Executive on our Branch Committee.
- 1 Read the mailout regardless of synopsis 2 There's less lately
- As a very active member of the campaign, with a new of posts, I read all communication in full. Branches need the communications sent
- I disagree that CAMRA branches receive too much information.
- Communication from the centre to branches is important, and branches should be 'stretched' and 'challenged' to do things.
- Nothing I disagree strongly that branches receive too much communication - I think that sometimes we don't receive enough information, but others seem to think we receive too much.
- I have only answered this way as I feel that there is NOT too much communication from HQ
- I think we get good information and branches will do what they can with each idea
- I cannot see how anyone can say they receive too many emails - it's impossible to communicate too much; people should delete emails they don't want! In my role as PPO it would be useful to receive notification of successful campaigns across the country so we can replicate the arguments/campaigns in my branch.
- There is a lot of info we receive (but comms is a good thing and a lot of the mailings are opportunities). How to manage it best is the key issue. As Branch Sec what I do is review it and order it as "for action" or "to note" in the Committee agenda. We are an active Branch but need to decide where to spend our

limited resource - You have got better at resisting "do this" for the myriad campaign opps and now offering ideas we might do which is an improvement

- Keep up the volume of communication
- Less emails.
- Reduce the number of different e-mails from CAMRA and get the timing right e.g. CBoB communication was a shambles this year.
- There are far too many emails from CAMRA. Most now end up in junk where I leave them unread. Has anyone bothered to find out what the issues are which are being faced by branches?
- You are sending us far too much. We don't work for CAMRA. The key word is "volunteer". Sometimes it feels like being back at work. What we do for CAMRA, we do as an antidote to work
- Not everyone in the branch needs to get the e-mails; some of the campaigns are of no interest to certain branches
- Please post out correspondence. I get 100 emails daily, we miss important information.
- In principle, I would like to see HQ put more into encouraging Branches to share expertise. This would imply more central communication, not necessarily of the present kind.

### 6.1.2 Other suggestions

- Instead of having synopsis on memos make sure that they are as short as possible but explain clearly the subject and what is being requested in plain English. The title needs to clearly reflect the subject. As this is not always happening, it can give the impression that the NE don't understand the problems branches are facing.
- I can decide what I want to read without the synopsis, but appreciate it may help others.
- CAMRA comms tend to be a couple of paragraphs. These would best be communicated by putting them in text in the emails. But CAMRA dump all the work on the reader. First you have to click the link, then have to sign on the website, then go find the link again (because the website login doesn't retain position) and then download a pdf and open another piece of software to read a tiny amount of information. It is the information that is important, not the precise layout of a memo so please just send the info in the email and STOP with locking information in PDFs after a long chain of clicking
- I am irrationally irritated by getting emails pertaining specifically to an area of expertise/interest only to find that I then get told I have 'no access' until I've gone through another level of signing in etc. Surely our HQ email system can have activist members classified as able to receive all material,
- Greater clarity on agreed campaign issues
- Have available on the national website a synopsis of all current CAMRA policies
- A simple bullet point aide memoire of campaigns.
- Maintain a summary in What's Brewing for reference
- Stop wasting CAMRA's money by sending pubs poor quality materials which end up in the waste bin and undermine branch efforts to work with our pubs
- Local training sessions and information dissemination from CAMRA Central to branches, plus Q+A sessions, once a year to a branch maybe, with the disabled in mind who cannot travel long distances.
- Poor example of lack of communication is the Make May Mild campaign. Absolutely nothing was said about it. Was unable to find info on CAMRA website.

## 6.2 Contact & Responses

Members were asked whether they knew where to go for help 91% said yes and 9% said no. This is slightly up on 2011 when 89% said yes. They were then asked if they had contacted a member of the National Executive, Regional Director, National Committee or member of staff, if they have had problems with getting a response. 83% said no and 17% said yes. Most of these related to sending an email regarding a query and getting no response, which implies that the 48 hour response that was agreed to is not happening in certain areas. There were also a number of comments about leaving messages on the Hatfield Road answer phone and no one responding or people agreeing to do something and then nothing happening. There were also a few mentions of

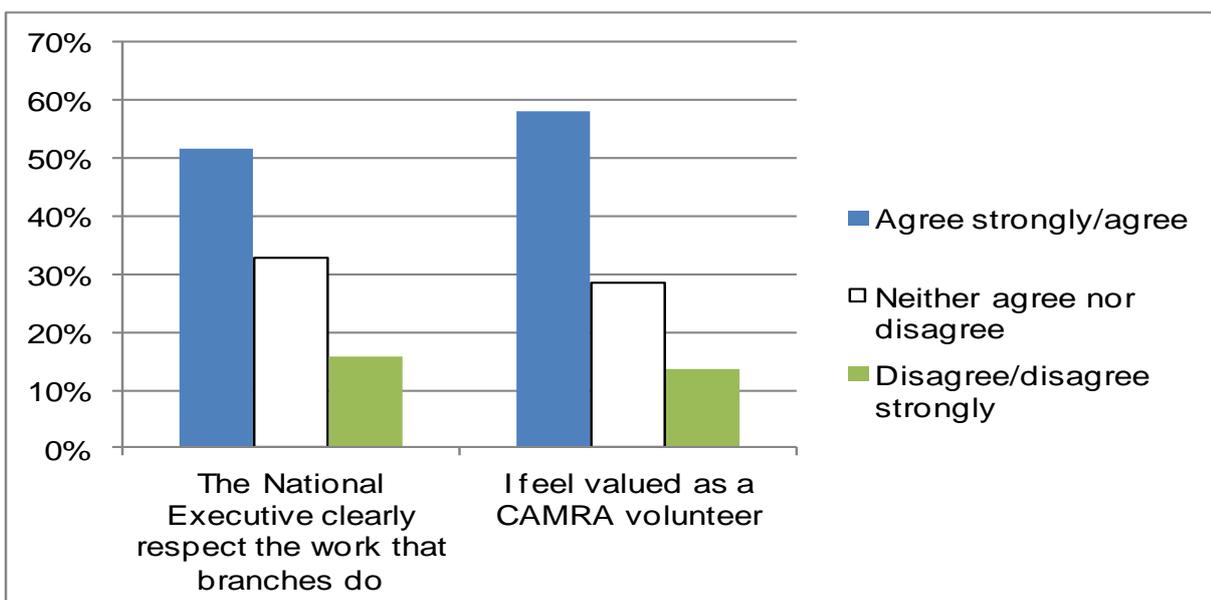
Membership Services but this is probably not surprising when the high number of contacts that the team receives is considered but was the numbers were not large.

There still remains some issues that members do not know where to go for help. Some comments worth noting are:

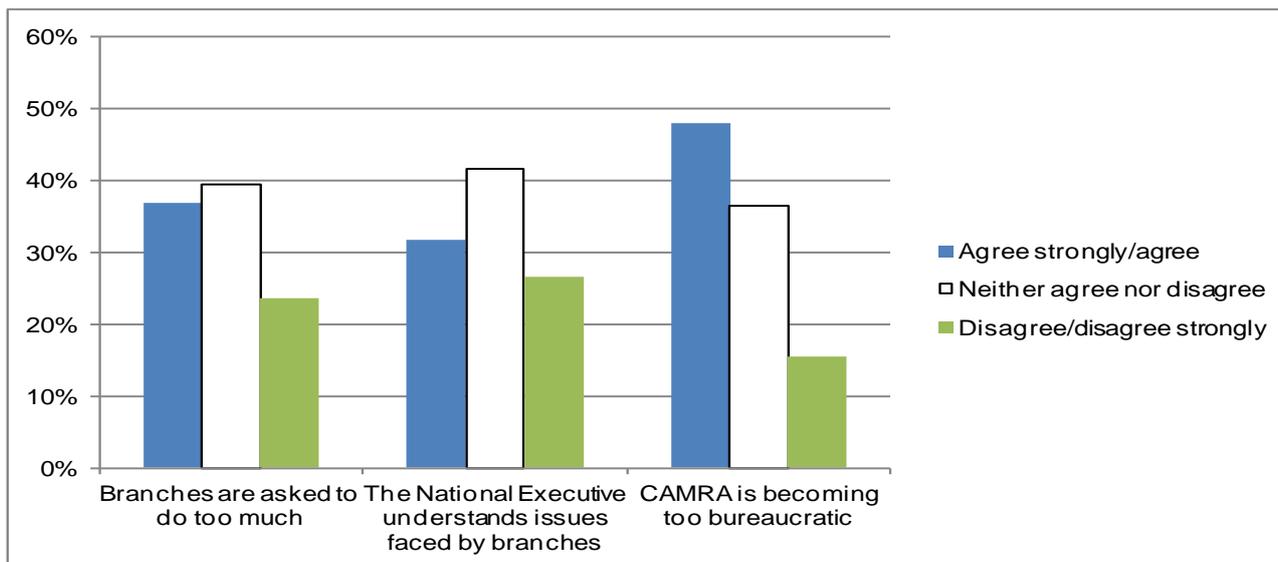
- Some GBG pubs still say they don't get publicity packs from HQ - despite the fact that we've reported this time and time again.
- It took Technical a bloody age to decide (and officially communicate) the position on beer at the Zerodegrees pub in our branch and it has never really pushed its decision for all to see. Important when dealing with numerous complaints about the beer there not being 'real' when it actually (well, technically) is...
- I have found that several staff at HQ use data protection as a false reason for not helping branch members find the people they want to talk to. HQ staff should be there to support branches in developing campaigns and not putting obstacles in our way.
- Emily is wonderful on help with pub preservation
- The BLO internal communication has been poor and confusing and we need to do better. Also the nature/style of the comms we get in this area is not very user friendly and frankly feels high-handed! We are all volunteers and doing the best we can, the leadership needs to demonstrate support and empathy in our shared mission.
- The answer phone is on a lot of the time, and it is a day or 2 before you get a reply.
- No so much as getting a response but the response I got was that of a bureaucrat.
- Various. Some reply efficiently, some with condescension and others not at all.
- Various members of staff when other staff members have answered phones and who say will get the member of staff needed to get back to me but never do.
- I will qualify the above by saying that whilst I have not had any problems lately - I do get feedback from other members at meetings saying that they don't know who to contact - but I think that is possibly because it is easier for them to ask me (branch secretary) to do what they want doing rather than contact HQ themselves, I suspect this as I pass relevant info on but get asked the same again at the next meeting....
- Just finding contact details for NERDS and HQ Staff (and what they do) e.g. on website more easily could be vastly improved.

## 7. Views of the members

Branches were then asked a couple of questions around how branches and volunteers feel. There is still some work to be done here with 52% agreeing that the National Executive respect the work that branches do and a slightly better response on feeling valued as a volunteer (58%).



The reason for these figures might be at least partially explained in the following feedback. 37% think branches are being asked to do too much and it is of concern that only 32% believe that the National Executive understand the issues faced by branches. In addition, almost half of respondents think that CAMRA is becoming too bureaucratic.



When asked what could be done, about a third of the respondents made a comment. These are broken down into a number of headings.

## 7.1 Being valued

There are a number of comments about the respondents not being valued. However, it is clear that a number of comments concerned with the apparent perceived lack of consultation/listening to members and the feeling by some that branches are not understood by the NE also add to the feeling of not being valued.

The comments were around:

- Not believing their opinion or the work that members undertake are valued
- NE being aloof and unapproachable
- Lack of understanding why people volunteer
- More thanks, respect and recognition are needed
- Being used just to generate money

These were not all aimed at a national level; some were aimed at branches and not being valued by them.

## 7.2 Attitude of staff, NE etc

There is a perception amongst a number of branches that they are just seen for the income they generate. Also, there are a number of comments about the NE not being approachable/aloof/distant and the need to look at things from a branches' viewpoints i.e. not understanding branches. There was also some feedback on there being a 'Them' and 'Us'. Some typical comments were:

- Consider & value the work carried out by branches rather than the obsessions of NE members. Look at how things help branches rather than do what is easiest for NE & HQ.
- I sometimes feel that "diktats" come down from on high and volunteers are expected to be able to act and react to them in a way, which doesn't always reflect the voluntary nature of their position.
- NE seem to only value branches for the income they generate.
- Start listening to and supporting grass roots members. Stop talking down.

Some of the comments reflect the lack of understanding of how CAMRA operates and the relationship between NE and staff.

### 7.3 Knowledge/awareness/understanding of branch issues

These comments are around the perception that the National Executive are not aware of what it is like to be an active member of a branch. Here, and under miscellaneous, there are a number of comments relating to understanding rural branches and their specific issues. Also, once again the number of requests to undertake actions appear to be an issue and confusion between 'HQ' and NE.

- HO does not appear to understand or accept problems faced by Branches and that we are all volunteers. The harvest is great but the labourers are too few. Too much stick, not enough carrot.
- It's not clear that the NE understand branch issues. Whether this is because they don't understand or because they're failing to communicate effectively is a point for discussion.
- Need to send execs out to branch meetings to see how CAMA operates at grass roots level. From workshop at AGM NE does not seem to realise workload to run a branch eg What pub etc
- The NE think that all areas and branches are the same but no 2 branches are as in Cumbria Furness and Westmorland are totally different.
- Too often the decisions made take no account of the difficulties experienced in rural areas. The National Executive has too strong a bias towards urban issues
- The fact that we are at times bombarded with requests/info suggests a lack of recognition of problems Branches face.

### 7.4 Being involved/consultation

There is a feeling by some branches that there is no enough engagement and consultation. The comments were:

- Branches like to feel involved.
- Consultation with the ordinary member feels poor. I don't know these people I keep getting the info from and they sometimes feel like orders (this is what has been decided by a few faceless people and we are requesting you do this)
- Far too much is dictated from the centre.
- For publications, NE should consult branches much earlier. For example, thoughts on new breweries for book seem to be a last minute thought. Guidance of opening times for the GBG was issued after surveys were done and was not consulted upon.
- Give more decision making responsibility to Branches and their local members and reduce the amount of control from HQ
- There needs to be far more interest in what branches and volunteers say. Head Office staff and National Executive take no notice of us and just keep issuing orders.
- More involvement with choices and options, less dictatorial approach to things
- More liaison between the centre and branches
- NE fail to understand and support the ground troops. I.E. Try to push things through without proper consultation (think GBG allocations and use of What Pub!)
- Understand that NE members are very busy but they need to listen to those who know as much, or more about certain areas, such as IS/IT.
- Regarding "too much communication", nothing - although more information and consultation about the overall plan for WhatPub (not details of which data to record, but what benefits branches can expect and when) would help.

### 7.5 Workload

The high workload that most (but not all) branches believe they have is a de-motivator as is the lack of notice/short timetable for branches to act. Note that the NE recently agreed that branches should ideally be given 4-6 months lead times if they wanted their input. Typical comments were:

- Give more advanced notice of changes that will require big workloads from branches, and recognise that not every branch has unlimited resources of talent or time.
- Many of the mailouts are issued "late in the day" and give insufficient time for branch members to organise themselves and react. A typical example was the instruction regarding how to submit Good Beer Guide nominations to the Regional Director.
- Restrict the number of concurrent campaigns
- I feel that some issues were forced upon us too quickly. i.e.lack of training for WhatPub, then been told that our pubs would not go into GBG. This was after just getting used to the old method, for which we had training.
- We are ALL volunteers, but it appears the NE wish to take our support too far by asking/instructing too many events/campaigns - repeat we are volunteers not slaves and too much asked will only result in members withdrawing their free time.
- Listen to branches who are overwhelmed and stop asking us to carry out so many things at once and stop creating more posts for branches when we are already struggling to fill existing ones
- Realise that some (not all) branches struggle just to keep in existence without having endless initiatives, campaigns, etc etc loaded on them.

## 7.6 Volunteers

Some of these comments reflect that there is an acknowledgement that more volunteers would lessen the workload. There were also a number of comments about members multi tasking, the lack of younger members and what some branches do to put off members; typical ones were:

- Branches need to activate enough volunteers to spread the workload. Even my own branch has committee members holding two posts at the same time which either reduces the capacity of the volunteer or places undue workloads upon them
- Recently the NE seem to have at long last realised that the people running most branches across the country are getting old and that, partly due to this, numbers are dropping off placing an increasing burden on fewer, older members.
- Our local branch needs to get people more involved and to listen to new members views. We are losing volunteers because they suggest improvements but the old guard just say that it has always been done that way and they see no reason to change. The volunteer becomes disillusioned and leaves and the remaining volunteers find they have more of a load to carry and some resign.
- We need more active members and ways of getting the message across that we are not all bearded pot bellied oafs that only drink REAL ALE

## 7.7 Strategy

There were mixed comments on what the issues are for CAMRA:

- A greater focus on promoting the quality of beer. Less of an obsession with making money on everything. CAMRA members could do with visiting a wider variety of pubs & bars that serve real ale, rather than spending their vouchers in Wetherspoons, which don't promote real ale very well and generally serve poor quality beer. CAMRA's marketing material is generally poor too.
- Campaign needs a focus. Real Ale is not an issue any more
- CAMRA move into the 21st century and start to embrace the fast changing beer scene
- Refocus a little from "Campaigning" to "Preventing pub closures" - which is the biggest problem today
- Get back to the real ale, there are more than enough good pubs open and opening without worrying about the dregs closing. There are also enough freehouses and small PubCos with excellent real ale oriented Landlords and Managers doing a very good job without worrying about what the big lager sellers with lager drinking landlords are doing.
- I was unaware of the communication from CAMRA centrally until recently. When I first joined CAMRA in the 1970's, it was very clear what CAMRA stood for and what it was trying to achieve. This is clearly no longer the case. For example, the title stands for Campaign for Real Ale. What are we doing promoting cider? We need to get back to first principles or give up!!

## 7.8 Miscellaneous

There are a number of unrelated comments fed back from branches. There were a few areas that were not covered elsewhere:

- A feeling by some branches, particularly those covering a large area or are rural, to be allowed an allowance towards travel cost.
- The need to improve branch meetings
- More advice on how branches should operate including the monitoring of activities and evaluation
- CAMRA needs to offer web subdomains to both branches and regions and they have a system that allows good communication at all levels. We need [www.medway.camra.org.uk](http://www.medway.camra.org.uk) and [www.kent.camra.org.uk](http://www.kent.camra.org.uk). With a proper events system that works on all the sites with a single entry.

## 8. Nominations to RD and NE

The number of nominations for senior posts is often seen as a barometer as to health of an organisation. Successful organisations who put across that being involved is rewarding will get more people coming forward. Over the last few years, the number of nominations at either RD or NE level has not been huge so branches were asked a few questions around this.

People were asked if they have ever stood for either position. 5% said they have stood for RD and 3% for the NE. The latter is down from 6% in 2011. A second question was then asked as to what might be done to make the roles more attractive. The main areas were:

- Bureaucracy - the role is perceived as being too much paperwork
- Don't know enough about the role - some said there was a lack of information as to what the role entails
- Encouragement - there is a perceived lack of encouragement for people to stand and some misunderstandings including that you could only get on the NE by invitation. A couple of suggestions about getting prospective candidates to shadow incumbents.
- Not interested - includes some comments pertaining to being too old
- Payment - some calls for payment due to the high workload
- Prefer local activities/current role
- Workload/time - accounted for 47% of the replies with the main views that the workload and time needed was too much

## 9. Other comments

Branches were asked for any comments not covered elsewhere in the survey. These can be broadly broken down as follows:

- Cider: Mainly around the debate on when to have Cider Month.
- Activation/volunteers:
  - Technophobes dominating branches thus putting off younger members
  - The lack of turnover in people holding branch posts/people holding a post too long
  - Ageing active membership
  - Lack of 'management types'
- Beer Festivals
  - Charging beer festivals for necessities
  - Stillage hire
- Leadership/Support
  - The NE to consider what help they should be giving to branches eg unresolved stillage issues, service from HQ, IT support
  - Opinion on craft keg issues
  - Support for members who have no on-line facilities
- Training/Support: More interaction and the call for Pub Co training