



Survey Results

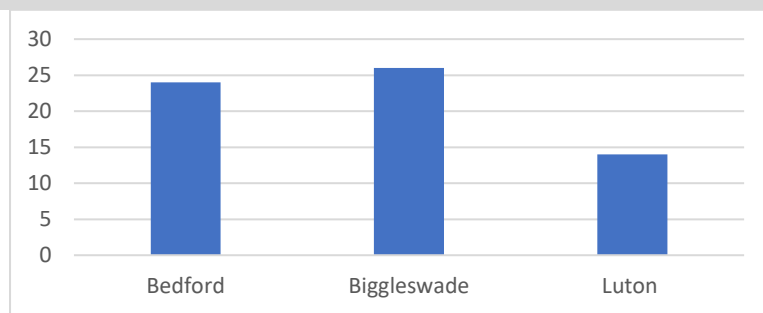
What should the Bedfordshire Association of Church Bell Ringers look like in the 21st Century?

This survey was conducted between July-September 2022. Thank you to everyone who took part!

Section 2: About the respondents

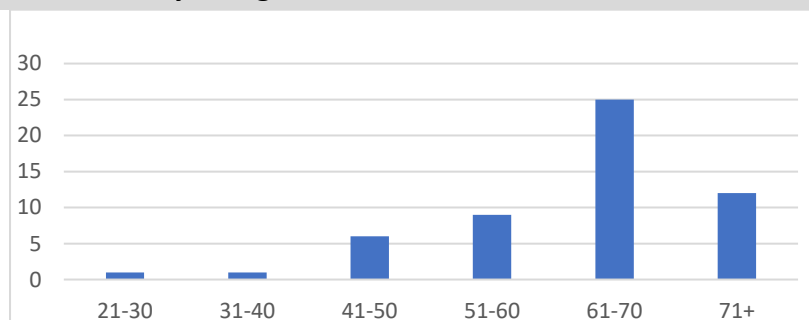
65 responses were received, representing 32 towers (2 unattached)

Q3. District?



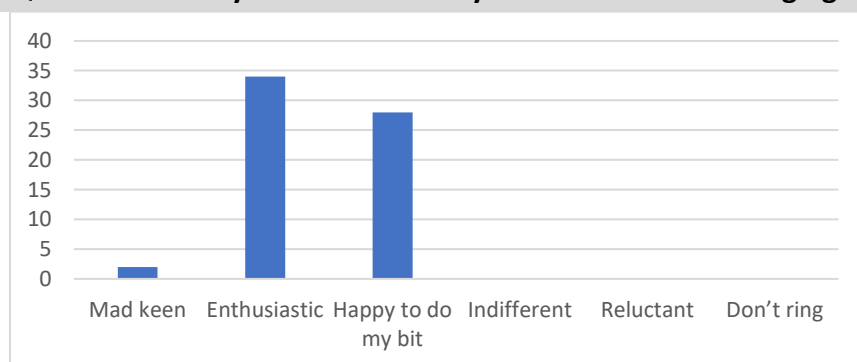
District	Responses
Bedford	24
Biggleswade	26
Luton	14

Q4. What is your age?



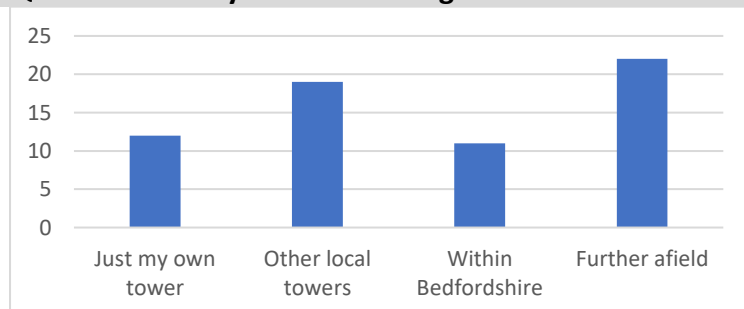
Age range	Responses
21-30	1
31-40	1
41-50	6
51-60	9
61-70	25
71+	12

Q5. How would you best describe your enthusiasm for ringing?



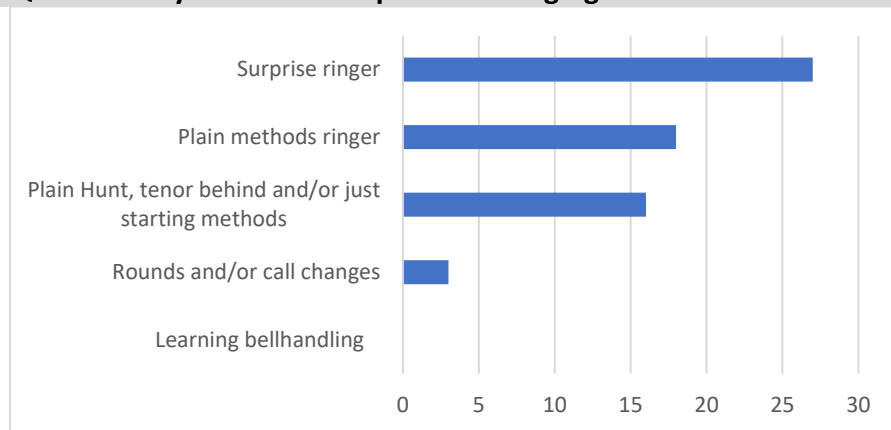
Level of enthusiasm	Responses
Mad keen	2
Enthusiastic	34
Happy to do my bit	28
Indifferent	0
Reluctant	0
Don't ring	0

Q6. How far do you travel to ring?



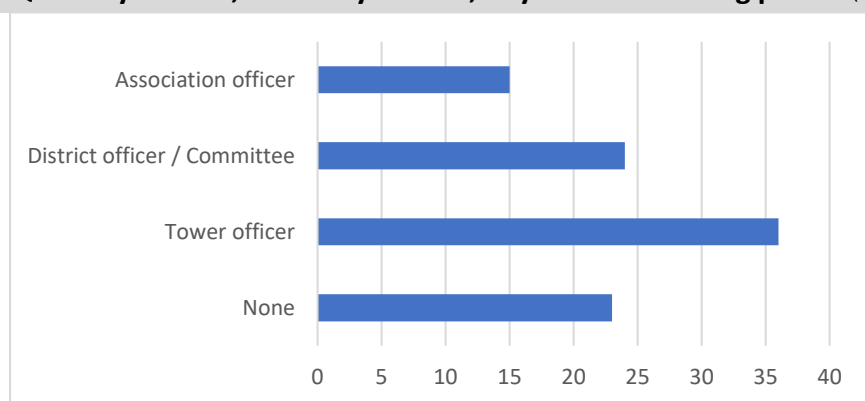
Distance travelled to ring	Responses
Just my own tower	12
Other local towers	19
Within Bedfordshire	11
Further afield	22

Q7. What is your level of expertise in ringing?



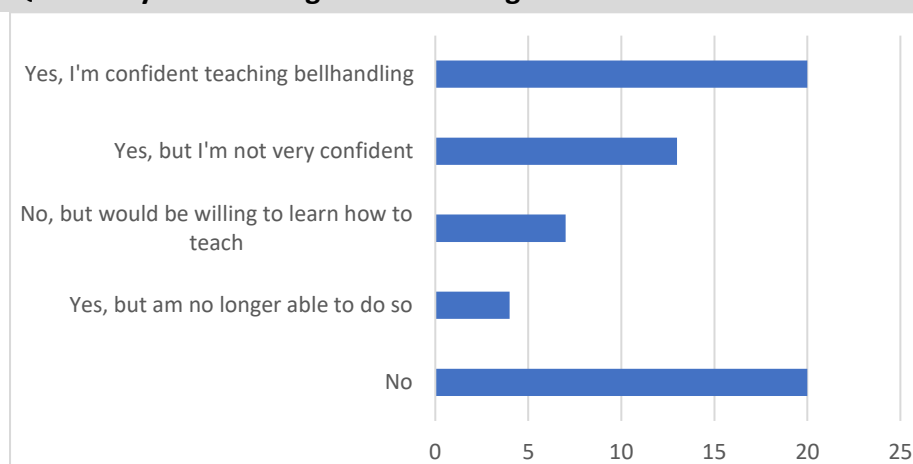
Level of expertise	Responses
Learning bellhandling	0
Rounds and/or call changes	3
Plain Hunt, tenor behind and/or just starting methods	16
Plain methods ringer	18
Surprise ringer	27

Q8. Do you hold, or have you held, any of the following posts? (Please tick all that apply)



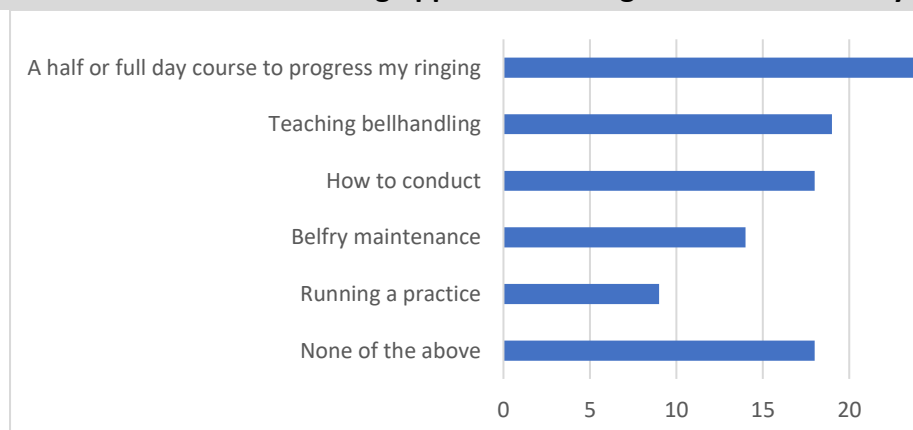
Posts held	Responses
Association officer	15
District officer / Committee	24
Tower officer	36
None	23

Q9. Have you ever taught another ringer to handle a bell?



Teaching bellhandling?	Responses
Yes, I'm confident teaching bellhandling	20
Yes, but I'm not very confident	13
No, but would be willing to learn how to teach	7
Yes, but am no longer able to do so	4
No	20

Q10. Which of these training opportunities might be of interest to you? (Please tick all that apply)



Training opportunities	Responses
A half or full day course to progress my ringing	25
Teaching bellhandling	19
How to conduct	18
Belfry maintenance	14
Running a practice	9
None of the above	18

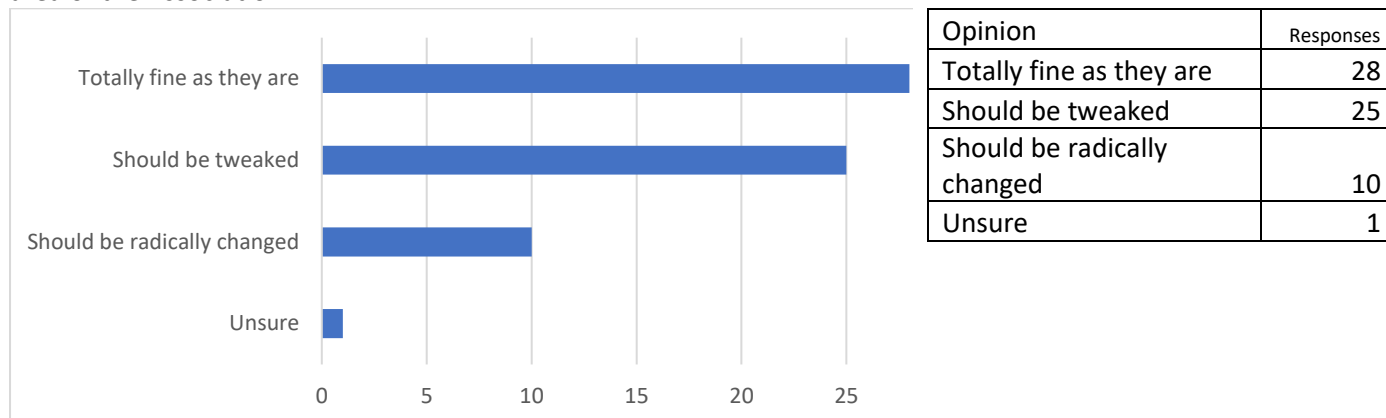
Section 3: About the Bedfordshire Association of Church Bellringers

Q11. Are you a member of the Bedfordshire Association of Church Bell Ringers?

61 respondents were members of the Association; 4 were non-members.

Q12. What is your opinion regarding the current objects / purposes of the Association?

Note: These are (i) The promotion of ringing for divine service. (ii) The cultivation of scientific change ringing. (iii) The preservation of proper belfry conduct. (iv) The encouragement of ringers to take part in the worshipping life of the church. (v) To promote and support the care, maintenance, improvement and restoration of bells within the area of the Association.



Optional question: Please provide suggested changes to the objects / purposes if you have any.

Bell ringing should also be encouraged for itself for community value, team work, musical interest and health benefits!!

I think the purpose should be simplified but more importantly they should be acted upon.

We need to accept that ringers are not necessarily members of the church.

To include the teaching of bellringing to all to ensure the ongoing health of the activity and pass on our knowledge and enjoyment to future generations.

Encourage and publicise bell ringing to encourage new ringers and young people to ring.

Not sure of the relevance of "(ii) The Cultivation of scientific change ringing." It should be replaced with "Striving to improve ringing standards".

Language needs updating, not sure that (iv) is appropriate any longer.

Recruitment, training and development of ringers. Fundraise to assist in care and restoration of bells.

Simple ringing as recreation for health and fitness of mind & body.

The language used needs to be updated. There shouldn't be the need for ringers to be part of church services if they don't wish to be.

Personally I do not worship and I don't feel comfortable that this is an objective of the Association. At a time of decline in bellringing I feel that this might discourage or preclude non-worshippers who might be interested in the science of Bellringing from taking it up.

I feel that as we are using the church's equipment to ring, ringing for divine service should be a priority. Secondly there needs to be a major and ongoing effort to recruit, train and retain ringers (including in bell maintenance and belfry care).

Brought up to date and shorter.

One possibly to active encourage new entrants.

They need to be brought up to date.

No doubt you are aware that, as a registered charity, any proposed changes to the objects clause (including any tweaking) would require the prior approval of the Charity Commission.

(i) and (ii) are ok with minor tweaking to the actual wording - perhaps (i) might read The promotion of service ringing or similar and (ii) lose the word scientific. (ii) Not sure we really need (iii) it sounds somewhat outdated. (iv) would also be a turnoff to some as many ringers ring because they enjoy it but have little or no religious beliefs but are happy to support service ringing. We live in a largely secular society now and wouldn't want to alienate potential loyal recruits.

Make the rules in line with today's values.

Object (iv) : I don't think that ringing and worship need to be intertwined.

Remove (iii), and (iv) and make (i) lower priority. Add "the recruitment, training and development of ringers"
iv could be off putting to some people.

Less pompous language.

Modernise and put into plain English. Definitely not 'scientific' change ringing; I'm not sure about the 'worshipping life of the Church bit nowadays but ringing does call people to church - is that the same thing? Belfry conduct - just old hat!

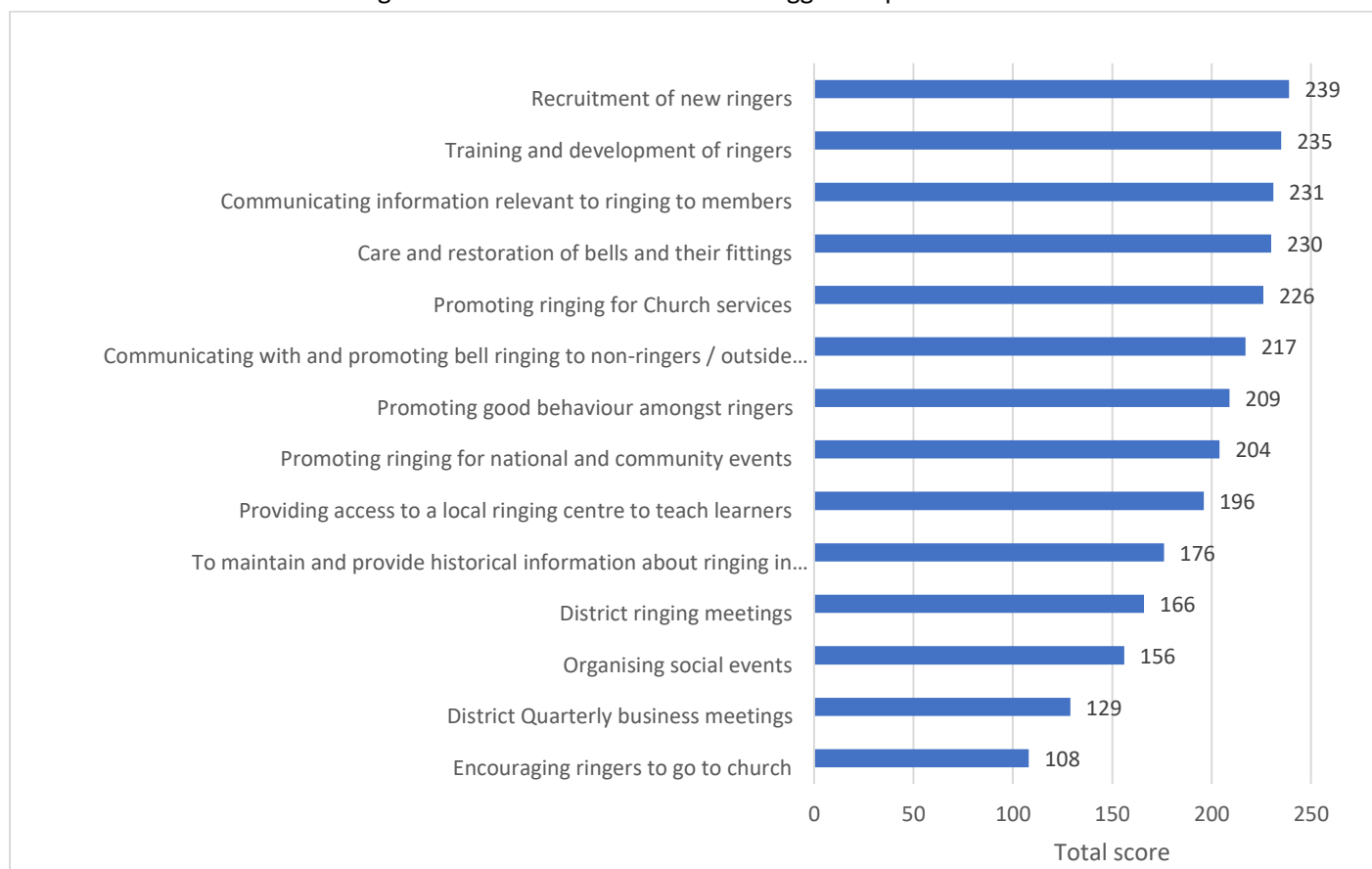
Add in something re safeguarding and promoting ringing to all, including other religions.

Q13. Which of the following should be the main priorities of the Association?

Responses were turned into a score between 4 -> 0 as follows:

Extremely important = 4; Quite Important = 3; Nice to do = 2; Not at all important = 1; No strong opinion = 0

The scores were then added to give a total score for each of the suggested priorities.



Optional question: Please provide suggested changes to the objects / purposes if you have any.

To encourage and promote bell ringing.

I personally do not relate ringing to attending Church as it is a personal choice attend Church

Encouraging ex-ringers to return to ringing.

Encouraging ringers to progress to heavier/lighter bells than they are familiar with. Like being allowed to ring the tenor bell with supervision.

Ensure variety of ages, variety of genders and variety of ethnic backgrounds

To preserve the art of ringing for future generations and ensuring the survival of this uniquely British tradition

Work more closely with the church

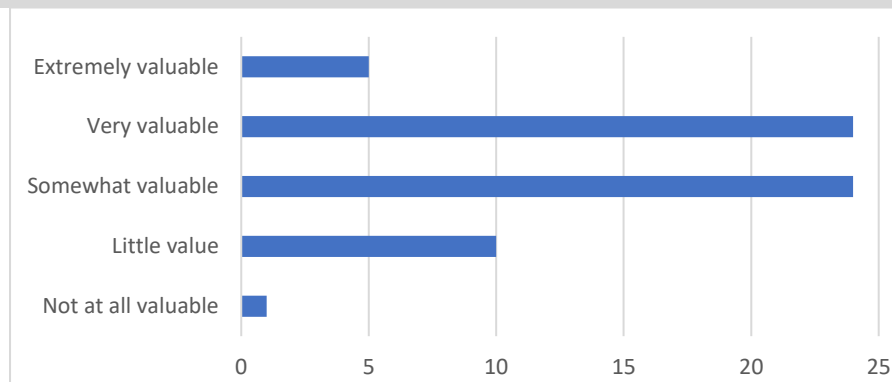
I would like to see the Association eventually functioning as one entity and coming together for countywide events. ie without the 3 separate districts and all their various post holders. I think this would be feasible as our county is one of England's smallest.

I do think we need to maintain good relations with the clergy and make sure they know what we do!

Promoting ringing in schools.

Re recruitment and training, consider if both of these should not only be by the association but also the association to support towers to recruit and train.

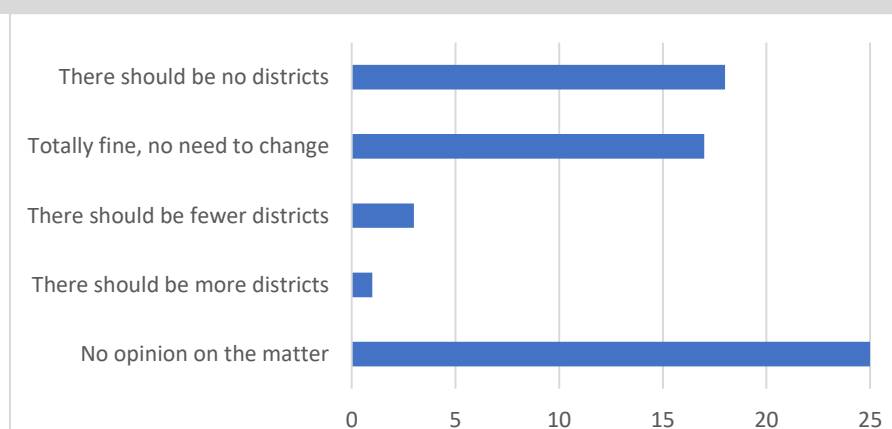
Q14: What is your view regarding the value you currently get from the Association?



Value	Responses
Extremely valuable	5
Very valuable	24
Somewhat valuable	24
Little value	10*
Not at all valuable	1

* Has changed recently since the start up of the Surprise Major practises but before this I got nothing from the Association other than emails telling me about Young Ringer events!

Q15. Currently the Association has three districts. (Bedford, Biggleswade, Luton). What is your view about this?



	Responses
There should be no districts	18
Totally fine, no need to change	17
There should be fewer districts	3
There should be more districts	1
No opinion on the matter	25

Optional question: Any further comments about the number of districts?

Business should not be at District level (although the BRFs could continue) but I will not travel to the other side of the county for ringing.

I'm not sure what value they give....

As a small county we could run the Association as a single entity.

As it is hard to get people to join committees. The districts should be combined.

It would be nice for everyone to work together and nobody to feel like they are taking sides. Could allow for more competitions to be entered with numbers decreasing after Covid.

I do not have enough experience / understanding of the Association works.

From what I see the system seems to work OK. If anything condensing to 2 districts may be a way forward i.e. North and South Beds.

We dilute our efforts by having 3 districts and very little happens in 2 of them anyway. One association would mean we can pool our resources to provide better services to members.

No feeling of locality with any.

Districts have less relevance in today's world, where mobility and communications are much improved from the time when the association was formed.

Three districts is more work but provides a tailored service on the ground throughout the county.

With dwindling numbers attending district events (well Luton anyway), maybe splitting the county into north and south would work.

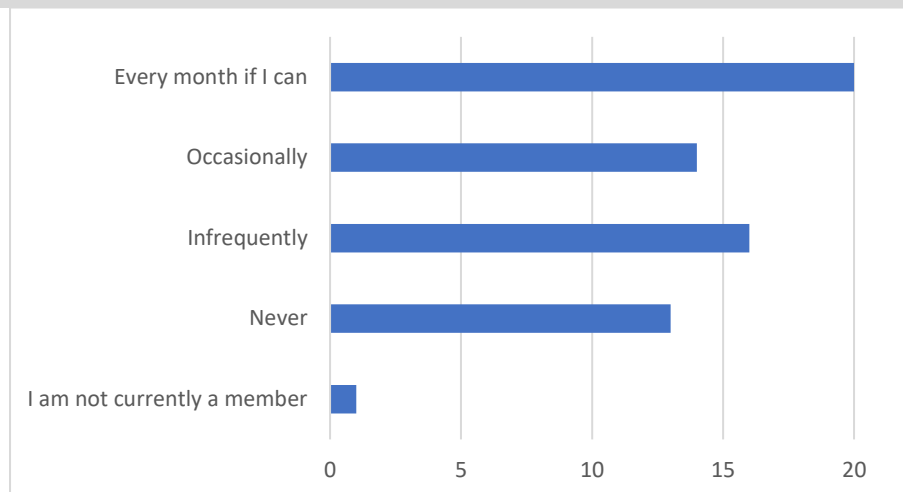
The bureaucracy associated with the current district structure is unnecessary, adds no value, and is not sustainable. The number of towers and membership of the Association is too small to support three districts.

(Some ringing and other events could still be organised on a district basis without the need for the organisational structure)

We're a small county - the current District structure is past its time but District BRFs will be an issue.

Make sure they are relevant for ringing today. Make them more porous at the borders, towers can be in more than one District to make sure places are not out on a limb.

Q16. How often do you attend district meetings?



Frequency	Responses
Every month if I can	20
Occasionally	14
Infrequently	16
Never	13
Not currently a member	1

Optional question: Any further comments about district meetings ...

It is currently liberating not to go every month to the 'same old'.

The same people come each month and we ring the same things.

Interesting to see what effect timing has ie are daytime ones better attended than evenings.

My fault for v. poor attendance not yours, although I do feel slightly inadequate for not being able to ring more methods.

Sorry, I should attend some district meetings especially if held locally.

They seem to be attended by the same people each time.

With working full time now finding time to attend meetings regardless of when they're held can be difficult.

Can't due to work commitments.

We need targeted training that people find useful, not just a low level practice, show up if you feel like it.

They seem to lack focus, what about method(s) of the month, rung 2/3 times at a meeting.

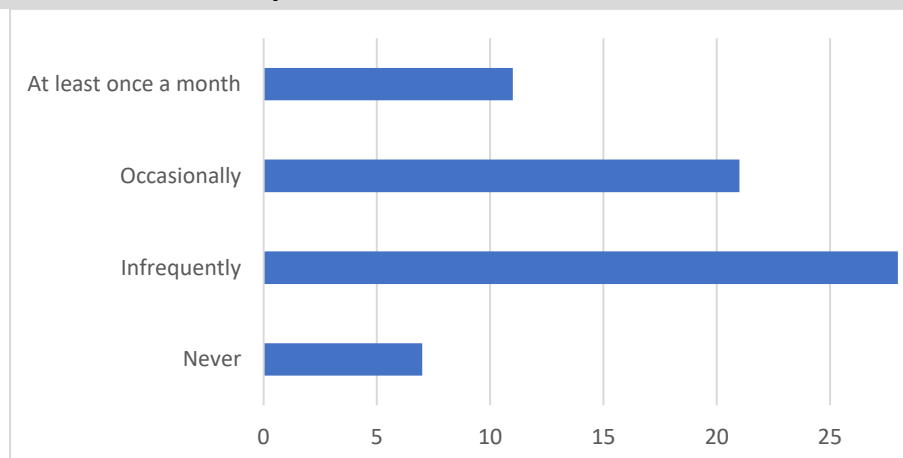
To link with earlier question, could the meetings be publicised to the local community, perhaps encouraging new ringers to come along and have a go (at least for part of the session)? This would also explain to local residents what's going on in their church, thereby increasing the awareness of the Association and bellringing in Beds.

There is a risk that business meetings become a self-fulfilling activity. This is pointless. Don't have meetings unless they actually add value to the association.

They serve no useful purpose at present. The ringing is usually of a low standard and without any focus or objective or guarantee of there being sufficient numbers to achieve any objective and the business meetings are little more than a legacy of the past.

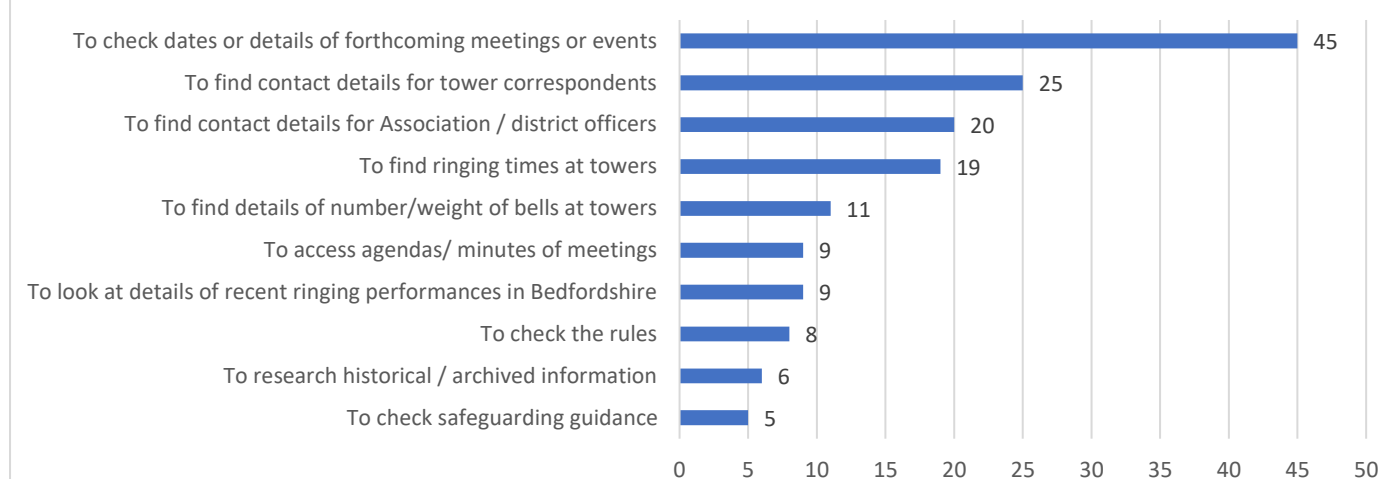
We have other hobbies and so have to spread thinly!

Q17. How often do you look at the Association website?

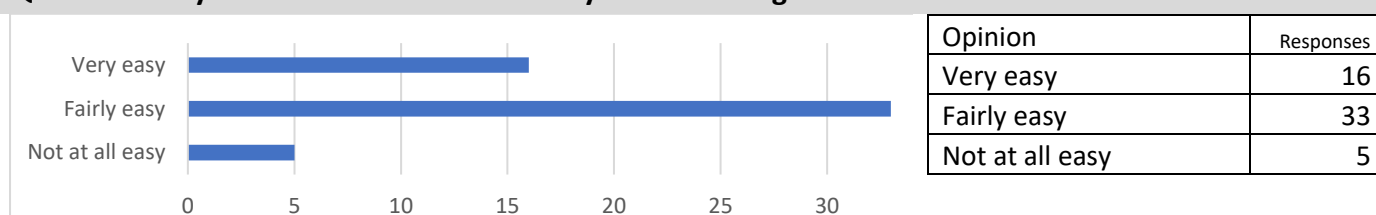


Frequency	Responses
At least once a month	11
Occasionally	21
Infrequently	28
Never	7

Q18. Why do you look at the website? (Please tick all that apply)



Q19. How easy is it to find the information you are looking for on the website?



Optional question: Any further comments about the website?

Actually I think the website is pretty good.

I appreciate the work involved in keeping it up to date. Well done.

It doesn't meet member needs and needs a group of members to redesign it from scratch.

The website currently has data that is out of date. It is important that it is kept up to date but it is recognised that to do this is a significant undertaking.

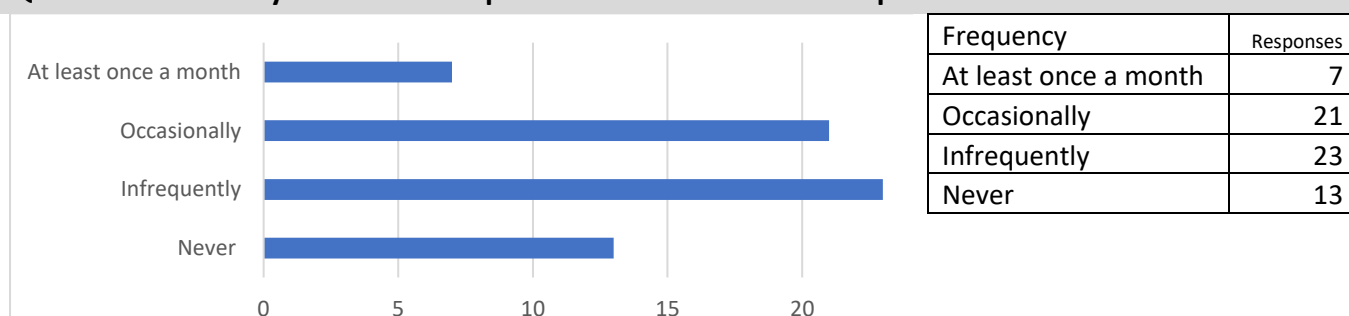
Regarding tower contacts and ringing times, it would be useful if the entry for each tower showed when the entry was last updated.

We also have a Facebook presence which is quite underused. I appreciate many choose not to use social media but in neighbouring Herts theirs is used extensively as a powerful comms tool especially amongst their young ringers.

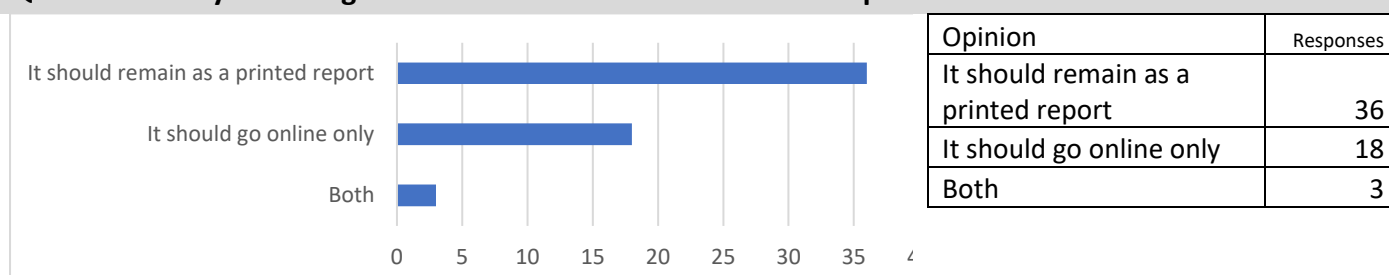
The current website is a bit of a half-hearted affair. It contains some useful and/or interesting information but could be a lot better from a content and presentation perspective.

I'm aware that the Information and business section has a lot of stuff buried in there - it could be better laid out now. A review would be good.

Q20. How often do you refer to the printed Association annual report?



Q21. What are your thoughts about the format of the Annual Report?



Optional question: Any further comments about the Annual Report?

Most useful for Tower contacts and ringing times.

You could give members the option to have it online.

If this was to go online only I would look at it even less than I do now. After a week on a screen it's nice to be able to put it down for a while.

The printed report is an extremely useful document. It's a lot easier to access than a document online.

A lot of duplication of existing readily available information, e.g. peal reports, tower information, rules. Not having it in a printed form would reduce our costs and carbon footprint.

I would support it going online but am conscious that as the Association doesn't maintain a peal book and therefore the hard copy report is the only historical record of performances rung for the Association.

The Annual Report in its current form is unnecessary and very expensive. Most of the information (rules, safeguarding, insurance, peal records etc) could very easily be put on the web site, and the annual report scaled back to the essential elements, - officers, accounts etc. Most people do not need a hard copy of an Annual Report. If necessary a handbook with rules etc could be made available for new members. It would be much better to spend the £400 printing costs on a professionally presented and maintained web site.

There should be printed copies for those who cannot access them online.

This is a difficult one - if it goes totally online no one will read it anyway, the report is the historical record of the Association's activities and membership and we are a charity.

Use it as a teaching aid as well, so it doesn't just gather dust in ringing rooms.

Consider online as default and opt in to hardcopy-numbers/ cost viability permitting. Overriding approach not to exclude anyone

Available by choice in both formats.

Both online and printed -promotes non members to look at it if copy kept in tower.

Consideration should be given to reducing the size of the printed report by moving some of the content online.

I question its value for money when the same info is easily presented online. If a paper record is required then print a small number.

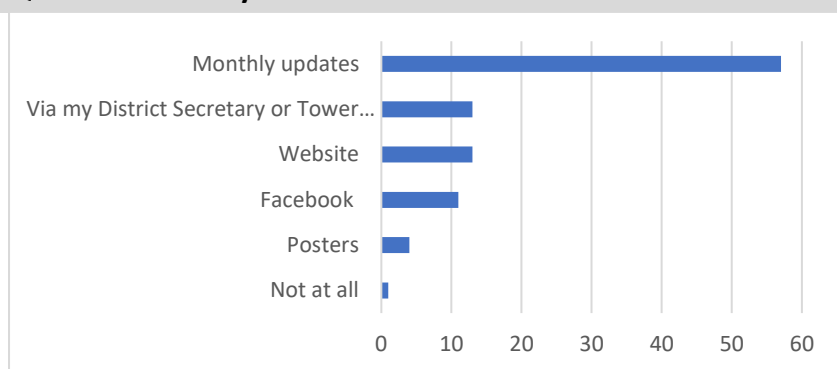
It should be online but the option to print should be available for those who are unable to access online.

It's a very useful 'quick reference' for info about a church's bells, tower contact, etc.

Suggest issue as a pdf as standard and only issue printed reports upon request.

There should be a printed option available to those who want it but the default should be online.

Q22. How would you like the Association to communicate with you? (Please tick all that apply)



Methods of communication	Responses
Monthly updates	57
Website	13
Via my District Secretary or Tower Correspondent	13
Facebook .	11
Posters	4
Not at all	1

Optional question: Any further comments about communications?

Happy to receive emails more frequently than monthly as the need arises

Communication about events is up to date and useful.

We need to assess what is useful.

Should be efficient and as easy as possible for those responsible for delivering the information.

It was 3 years after joining the association that I learned of the monthly updates. Maybe an electronic joining pack to new members outlining the purpose of the Association and its means of communications.

Tower Captain/Correspondents are often unaware who in their tower has received a communication from the Association or District, thus often resulting in duplication.

Communication sent via the district secretary is not always reliable and often a duplicate of that sent by the Association directly. These issues would be resolved if the districts were eliminated!