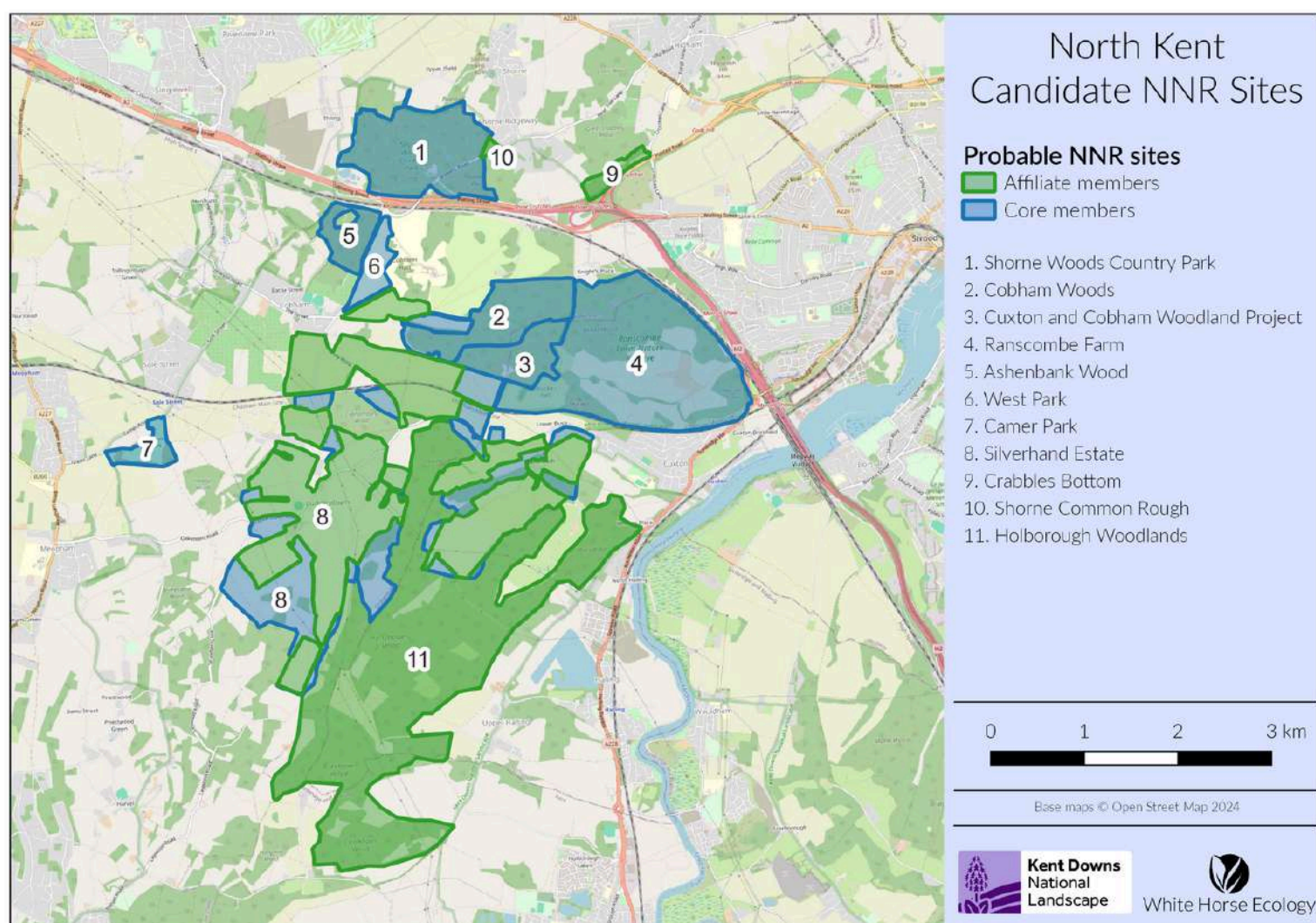


Community consultation for the proposed new National Nature Reserve in North Kent - Summary Report

2024



This work is in partnership with Kent Downs National Landscape
with support from Natural England, funded by National Highways.



**Kent Downs
National
Landscape**



North West Kent
COUNTRYSIDE
protect / explore / enjoy



Visitor Surveys

We developed a survey that was hosted online on Microsoft Forms. This was promoted on social media, and via posters at Shorne Woods Country Park and Ashenbank Woods. It was also sent out by email to relevant stakeholders, and modified by Medway Council to be hosted on their online survey platform.

The online survey was constructed to allow respondents to give different answers for each green space they access.

A shorter, printed version of the survey was taken to key sites in the candidate NNR to gather responses from people using the site. We carried out a series of community events and in person survey days in order to collect questionnaire responses.

Across the multiple survey types, we received a total of 261 survey responses



Survey poster at Shorne Woods Country Park



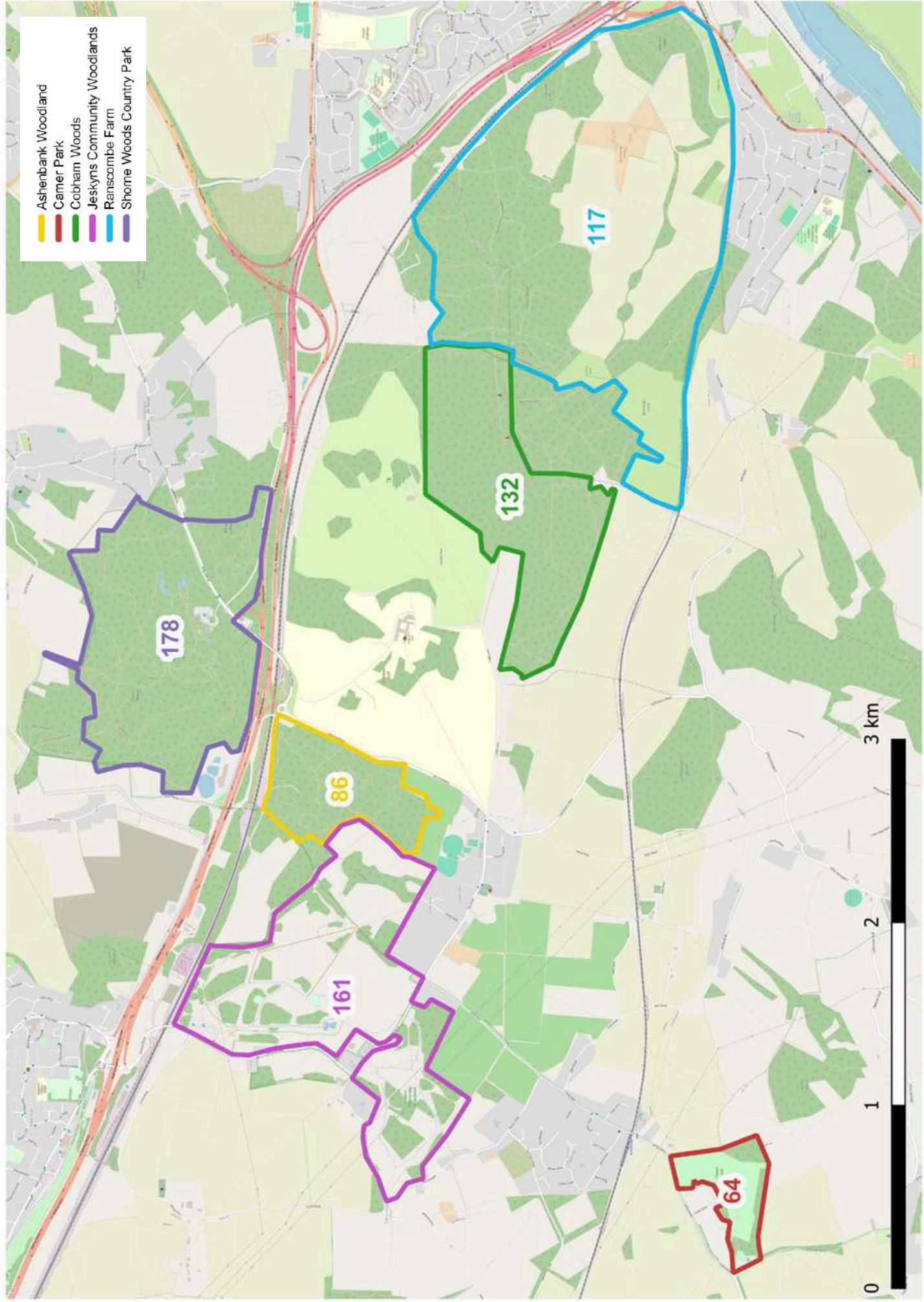
Ashenbank Woods community event



Shorne Woods Country Park community event



Ranscombe Farm community event



Map 1: The number of survey participants that visit each of the larger, publicly accessible sites in the proposed NNR area.



Map 2: The number of survey participants that visit other locations in the proposed NNR.

The maps above show where the survey participants have visited, the data is a combination of the paper surveys, our MS Forms survey, and Medway Councils modified survey.

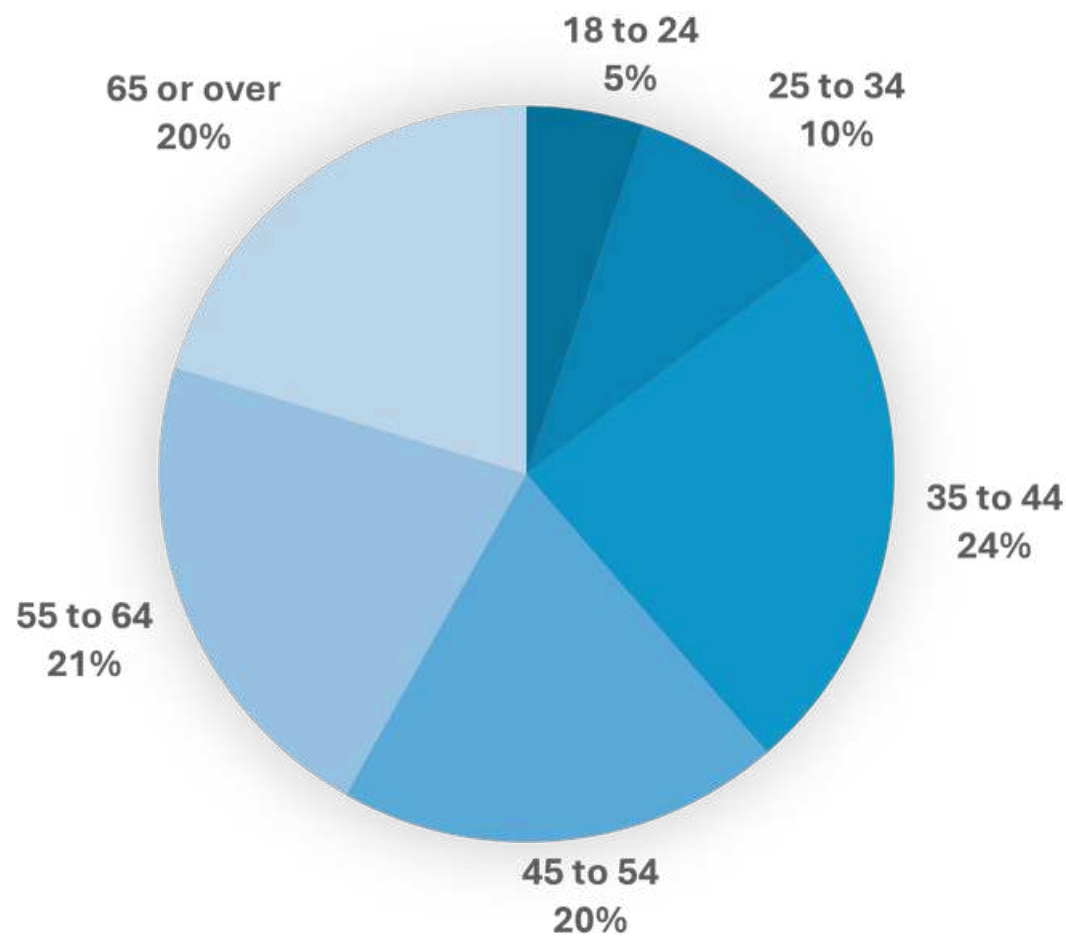
We reached people in these postcodes:



The top three postcodes of survey respondents were:

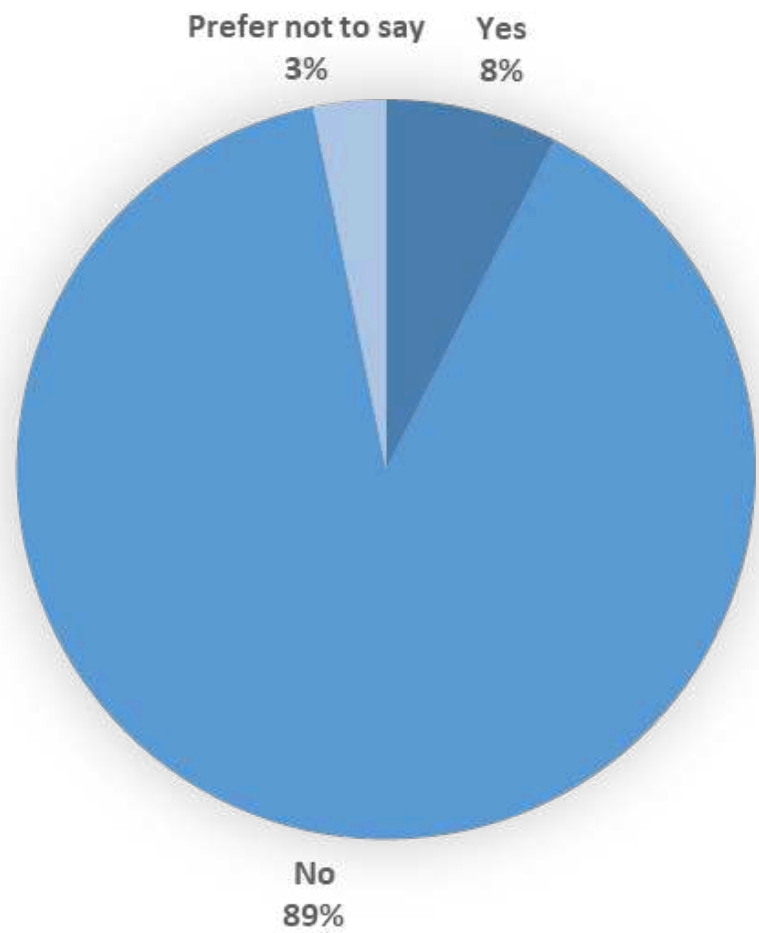
- ME2 (Strood, Cuxton and Halling) at 21% of responses.
- ME3 (Chatham, Rainham, and Gillingham) at 11% of responses.
- DA12 (Gravesend, Shorne, Cobham) at 10% of responses.

Age ranges of survey respondents:



Disability and access requirements

Do you have a disability that can affect your ability to access green spaces?



How does your disability affect your ability to access green spaces?

"I have mobility issues (registered disabled) so horse riding is my only access to getting out into nature. My horse acts as my legs, so if my horse doesn't have access, neither do I.

Access to horse riders seem to have been ignored more and more with each new development, and what does have access is usually made unsafe by irresponsible dog owners not having control of their dogs."

"Balance and mobility on uneven paths. Sometimes lack of parking."

"Walking difficulty, use rollator."

"I have some days of limited mobility where having access to parking would make it easier for me to enjoy the sites."

"Knee and hip problems, fortunately I live within Jeskyn Parks boundary."

"Age related problems with access – stiles"

"I am unable to walk very far due to hip problems, so am only able to use one of the trails as it is flat."

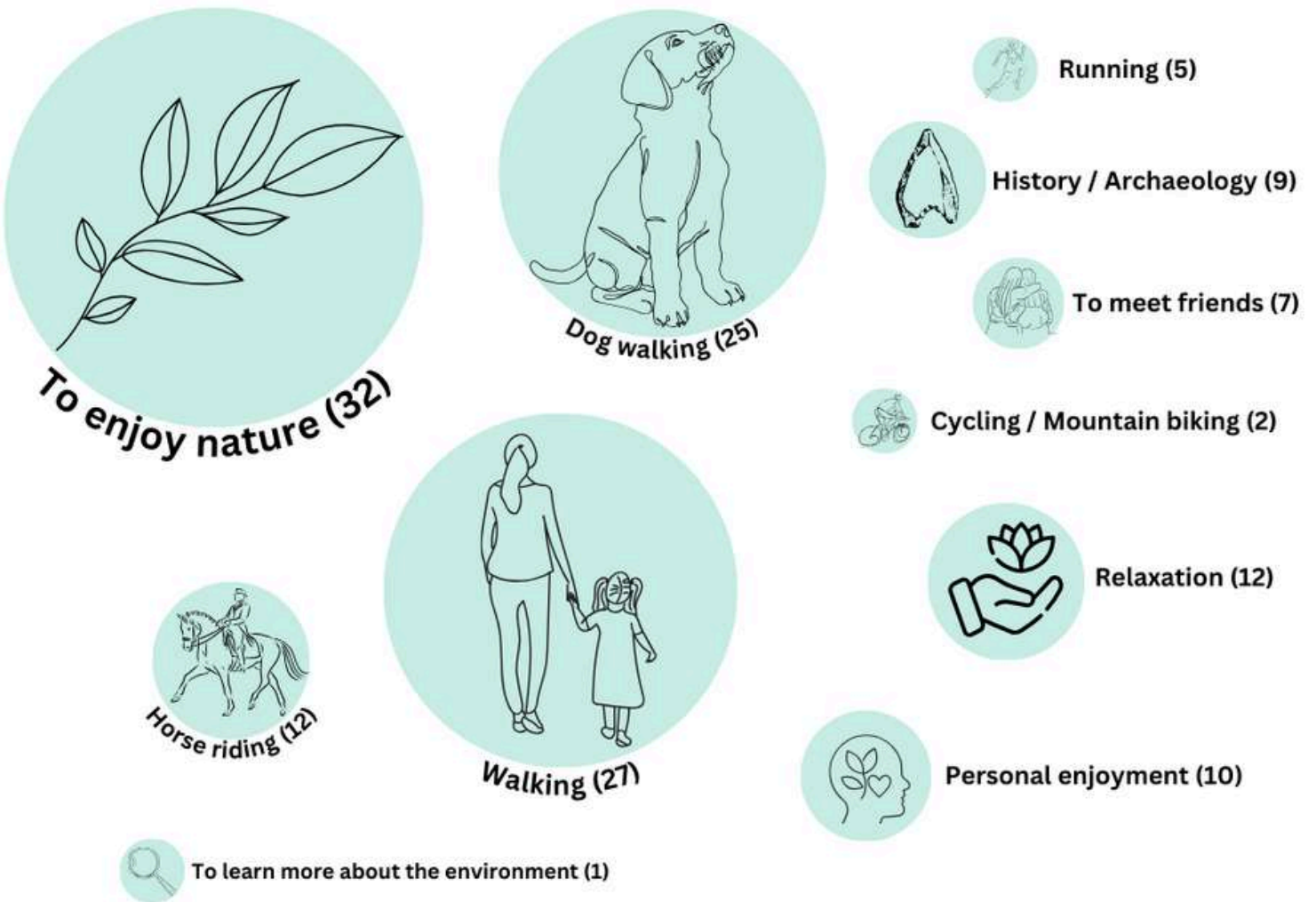
"Can only walk small distances"

"Deaf so have dizziness if windy"

Ashenbank Woods

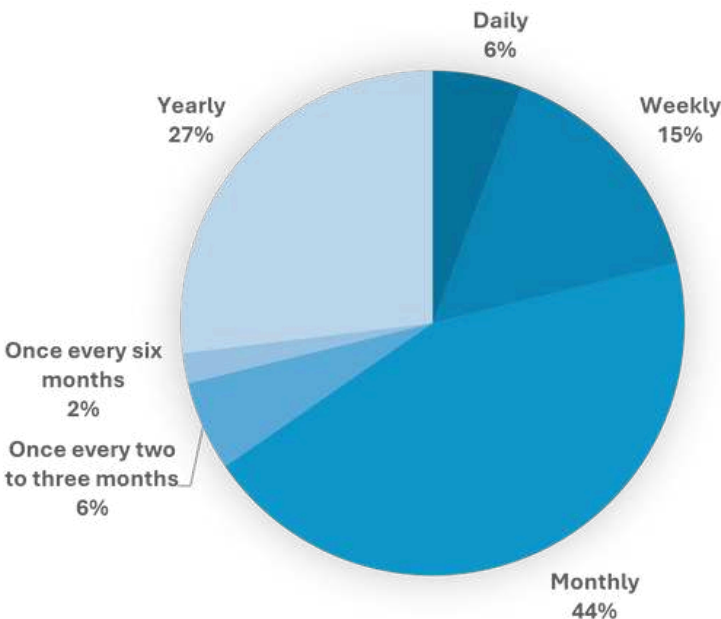
Of the 184 people who complete our online survey and Medway councils online survey, **55 people** stated they visit Ashenbank Woods.

Reasons for visiting Ashenbank Woods:

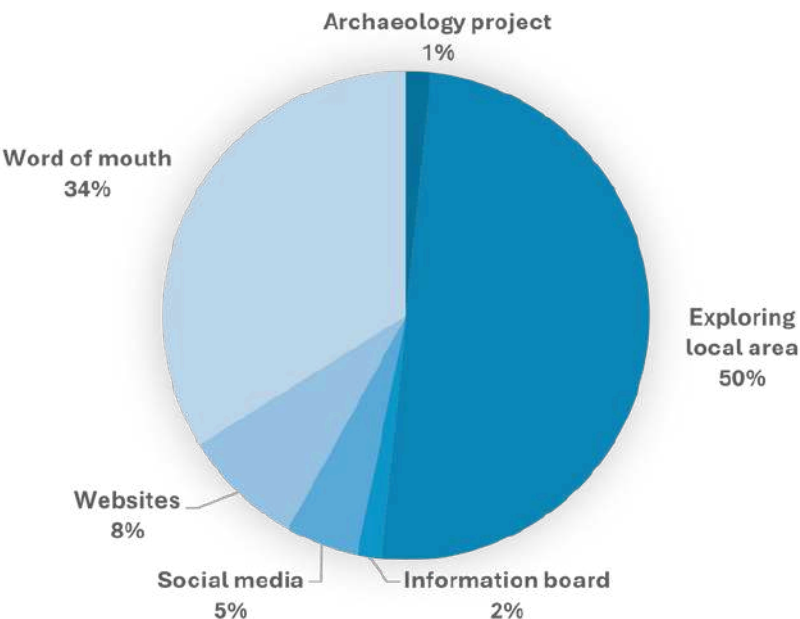


The number in brackets indicates the number of responses.

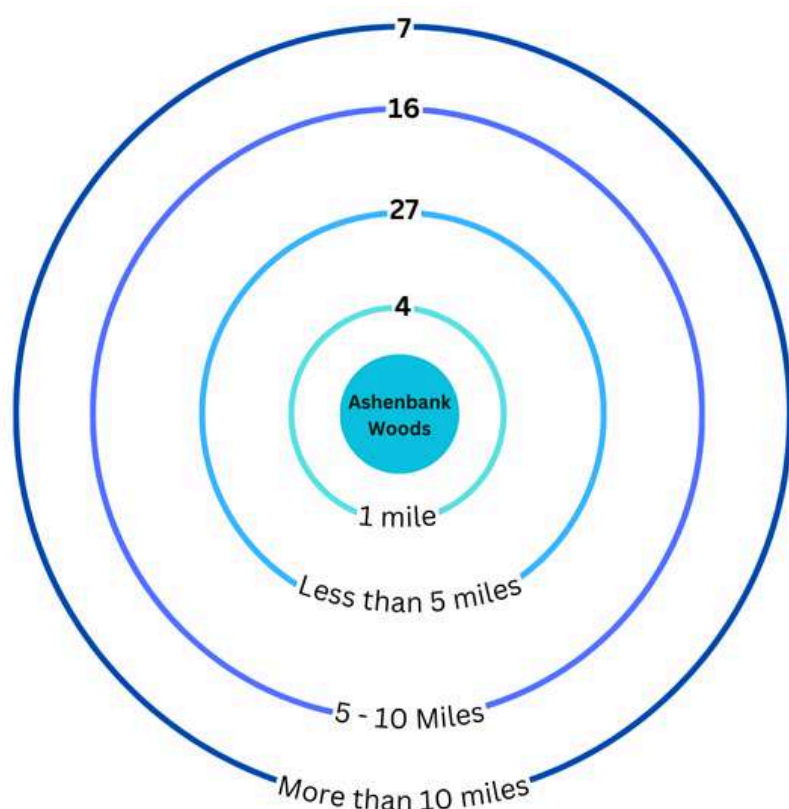
How often are people visiting Ashenbank Woods?



How did people find out about Ashenbank Woods?



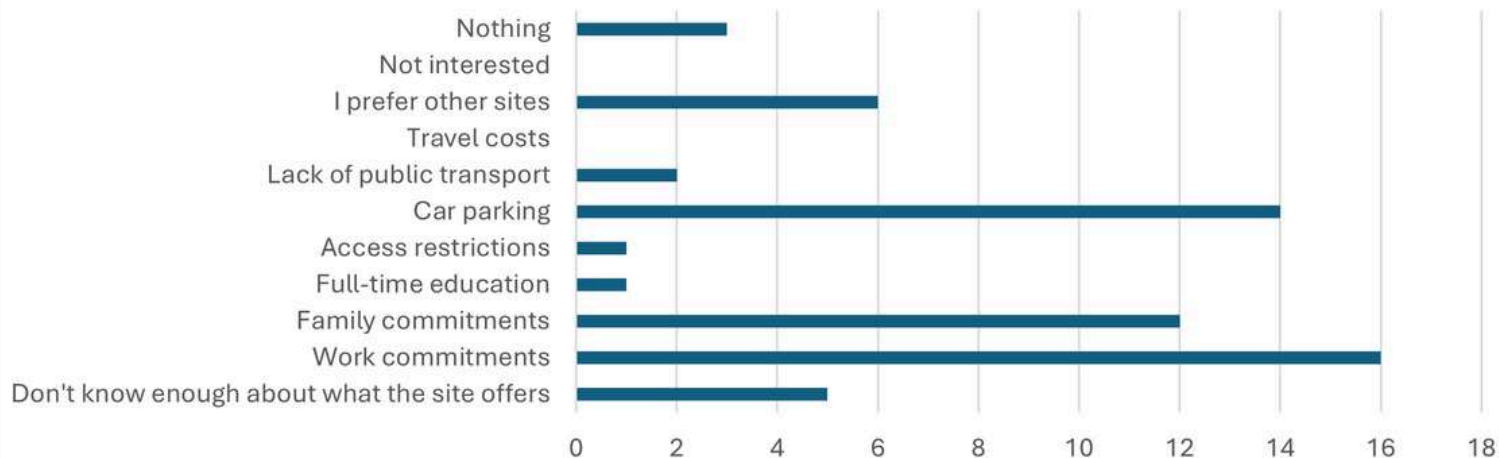
How far are people travelling to Ashenbank Woods?



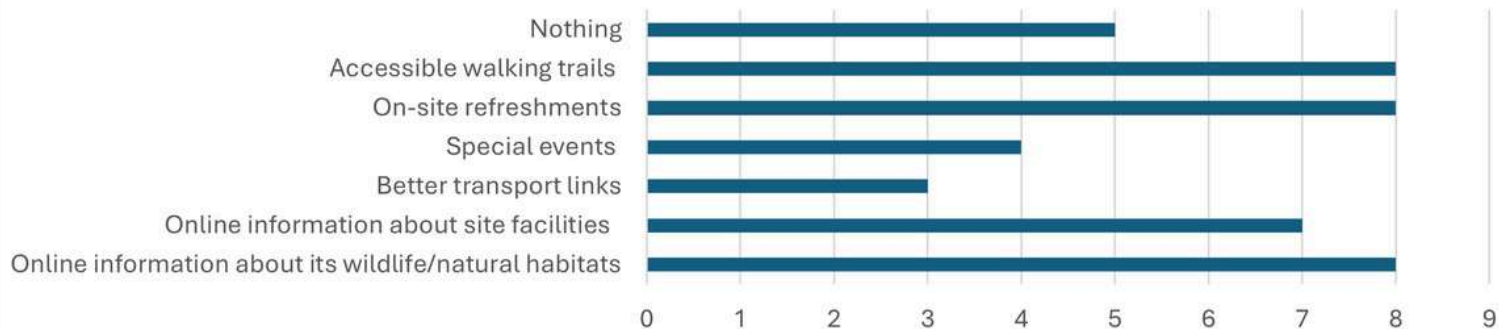
What people like and don't like:



What prevents people from visiting?



What would encourage people to go more often?



Data collected from Medway:

Medway Council added additional questions to the survey hosted on their site. Their survey had 10 people say they visit Ashenbank wood, of these 10:

- 70% journey there by car, 30% travel there on foot.
- 30% use Ashenbank Woods to take part in hobbies, such as bird watching .
- 30% feel the woods would benefit from increased warden presence.

Additional Comments:

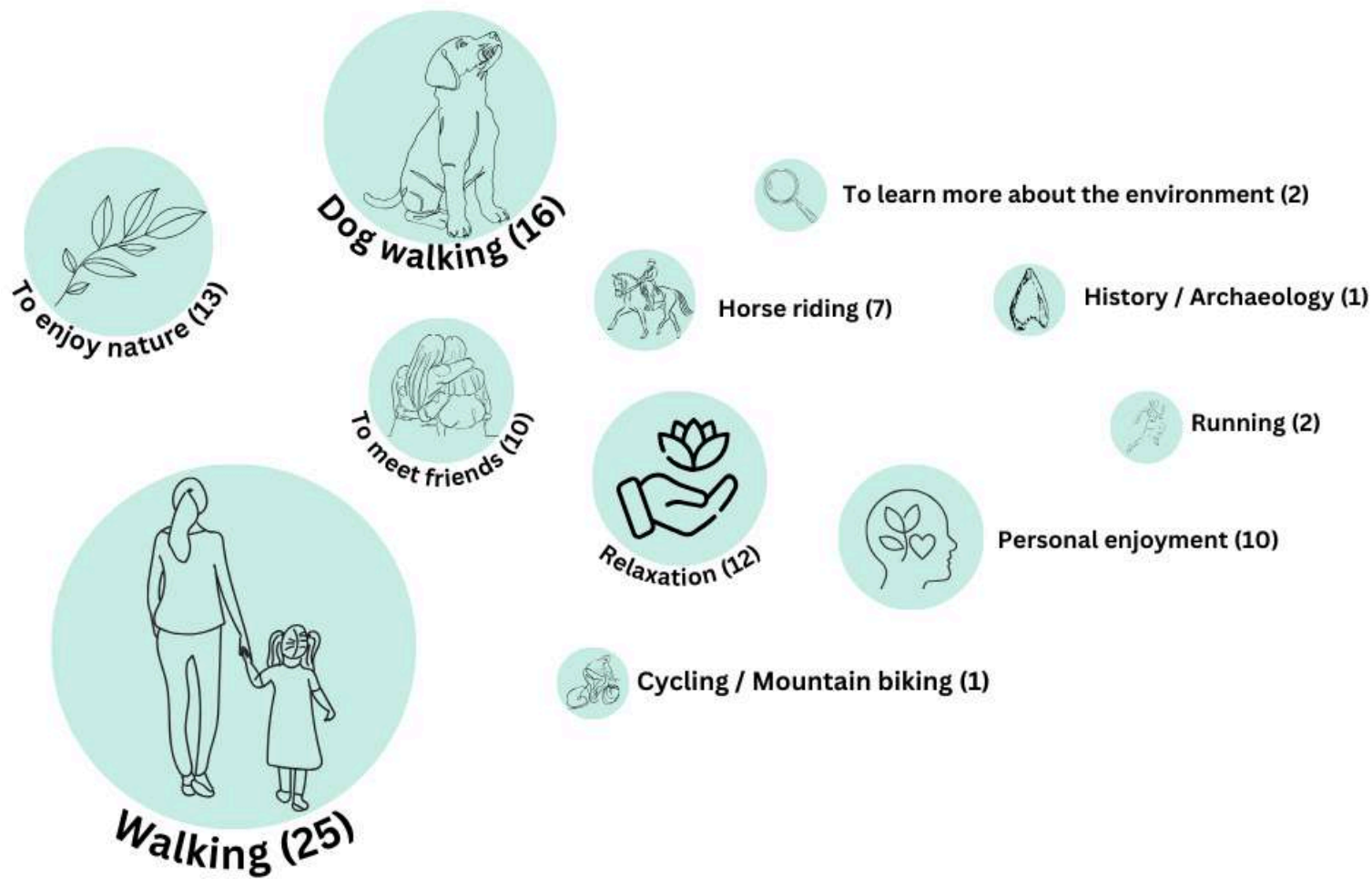
It was whilst surveying at Ashenbank Woods concerns over the Lower Thames Crossing were raised most frequently. The risk of losing ancient woodland was a concern for many of the people spoken to.

The size of the car park was also raised frequently, on a busy day the car park is full at all times, leaving many people parking along the road. Additionally, the lack of unrestricted parking for horse transport parking and the lack of facilities was noted.

Camer Park

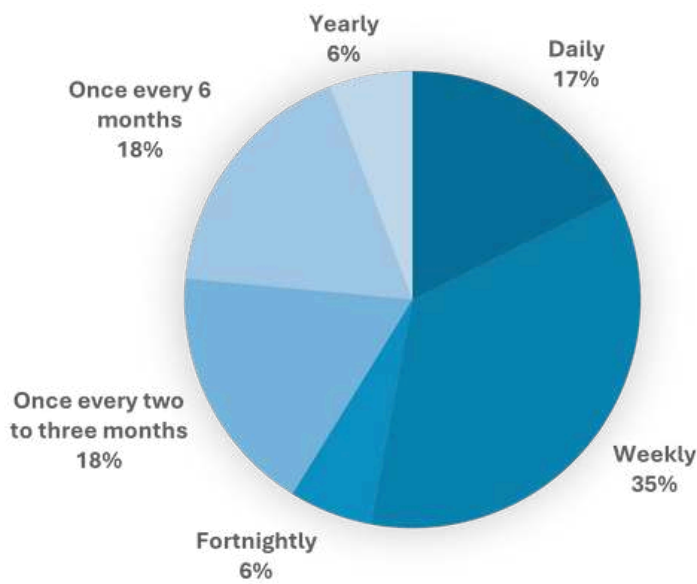
Of the 184 people who complete our online survey and Medway councils online survey, **34 people** stated they visit Camer Park.

Reasons for visiting Camer Park:

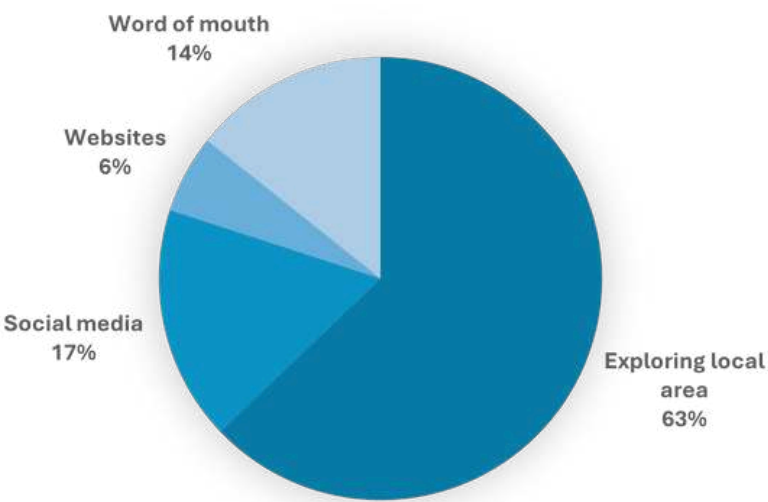


The number in brackets indicates the number of responses.

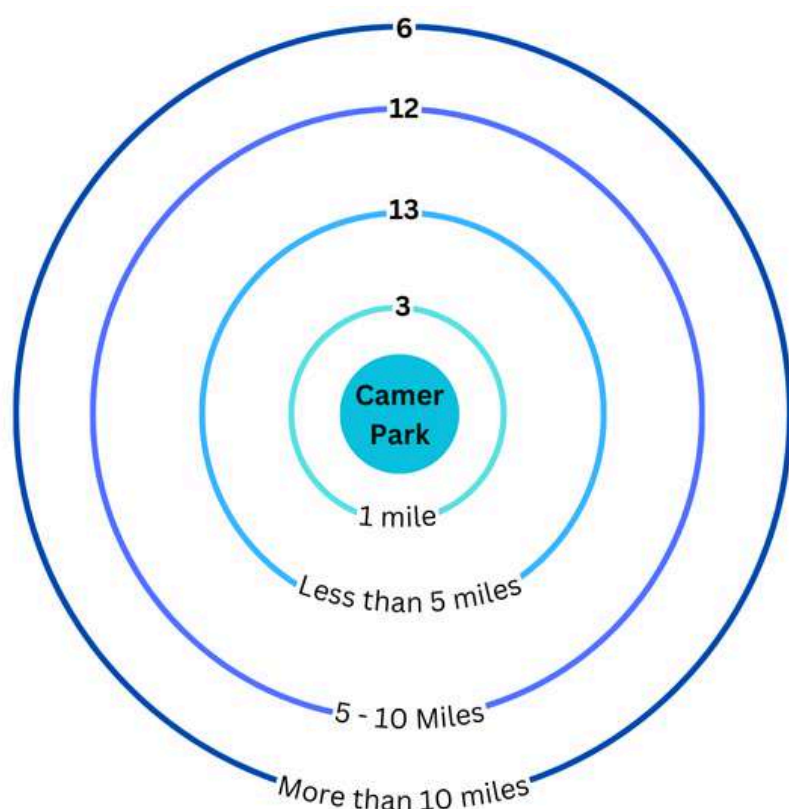
How often are people visiting Camer Park?



How did people find out about Camer Park?



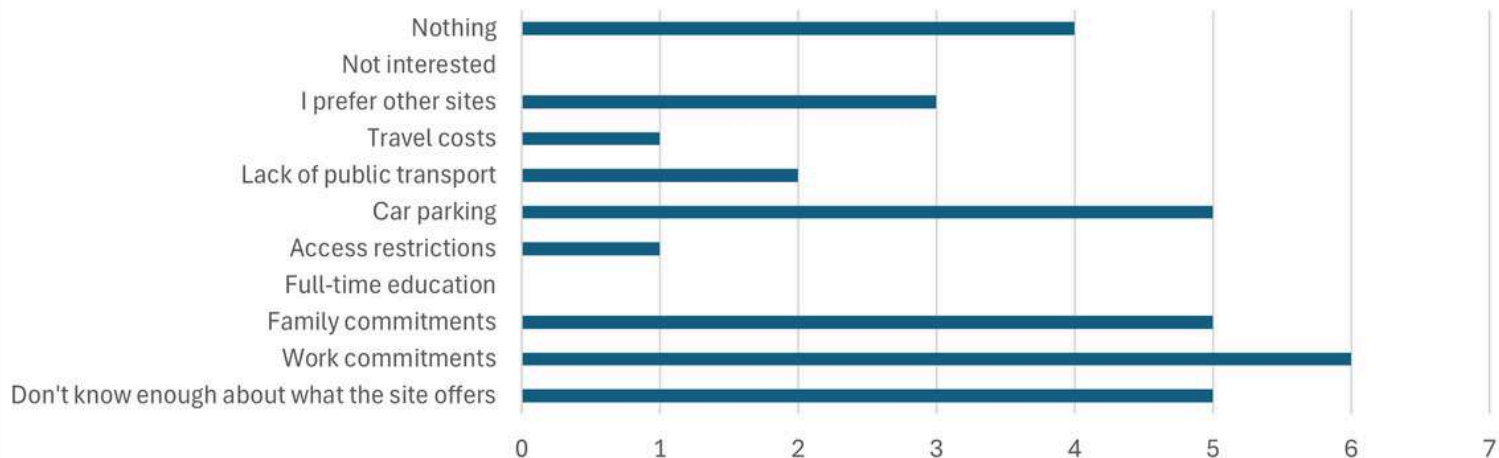
How far are people travelling to Camer Park?



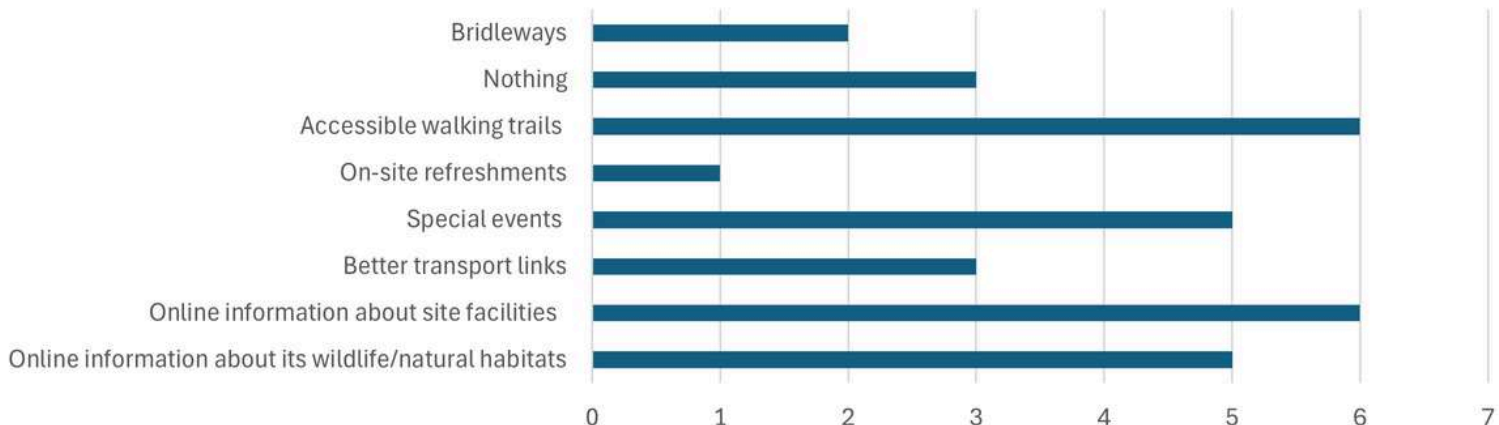
What people like and don't like:

✓	✗
• Footpaths (15)	• Litter / Vandalism (14)
• Nature (14)	• Unsure which paths I can use (4)
• Facilities (10)	• Difficulty finding parking (4)
• Variety of the landscape (7)	• Footpaths are difficult to access (2)
• History (3)	• Nothing (2)
• Activities / events on offer (2)	• No bridleways (2)
• Quiet (1)	• Dogs off lead (2)
• Free parking (1)	• No activities / events of interest (1)
• It's convenient (1)	• Not many links to surrounding countryside (1)

What prevents people from visiting?



What would encourage people to go more often?



Data collected from Medway:

Medway Council added additional questions to the survey hosted on their site. Their survey had 8 people say they visit Camer Park, of these 8:

- 80% journey there by car, 13% travel there on foot.
- 13% use Camer Park to take part in hobbies, such as bird watching.
- 25% feel the park would benefit from increased warden presence.
- 25% would like to see improved access for those with disabilities.

Additional Comments:

Visitors to Camer Park particularly appreciate the free parking, the refreshments, and the toilet facilities.

The lack of bridleways linking the green spaces in the area is an issue that has been raised frequently throughout the consultation. One person commented this about Camer Park:

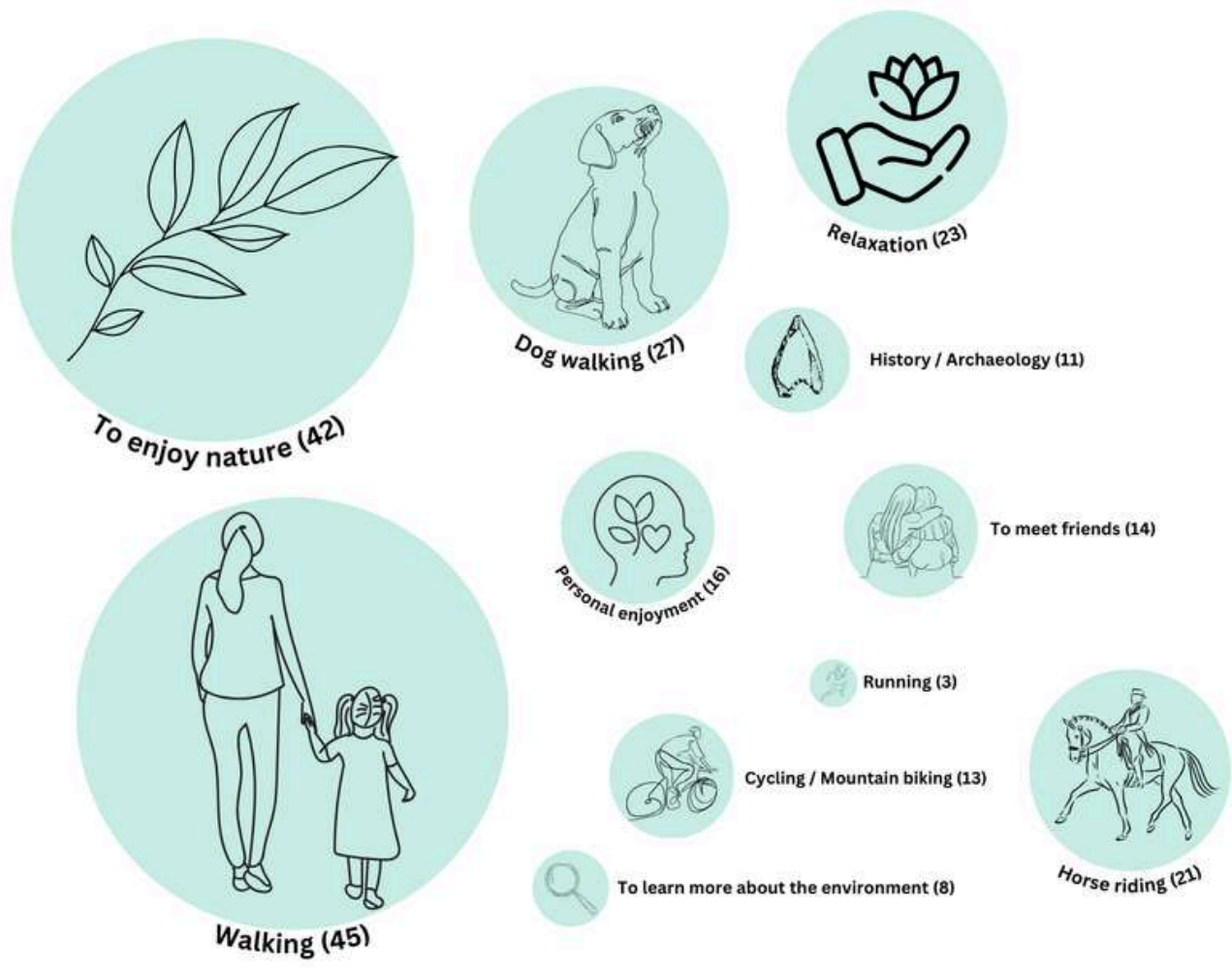
“A couple of lovely bridleways but they do not link to any other safe off road riding in the area. Traffic is increasing locally more safe off road riding required”

It was frequently mentioned how muddy the routes can get around the main route, making it less accessible for people with wheelchairs and pushchairs.

Cobham Woods

Of the 184 people who complete our online survey and Medway councils online survey, **78 people** stated they visit Ashenbank Woods.

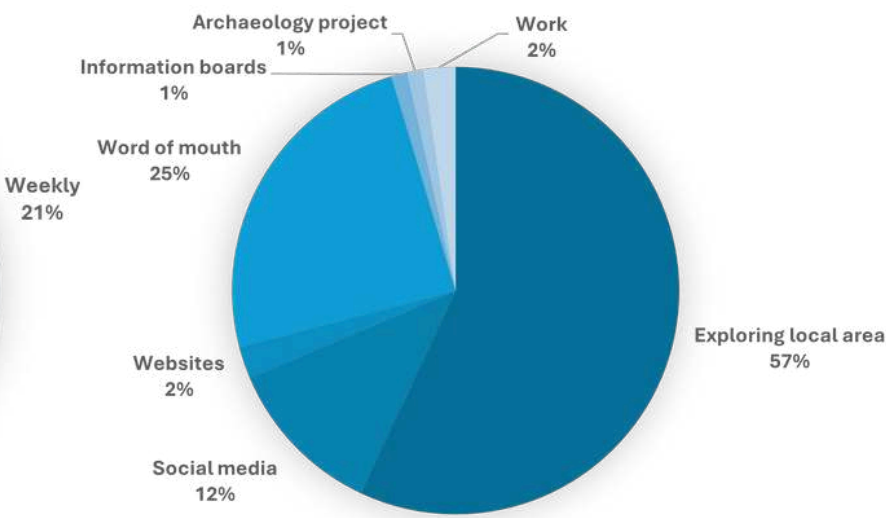
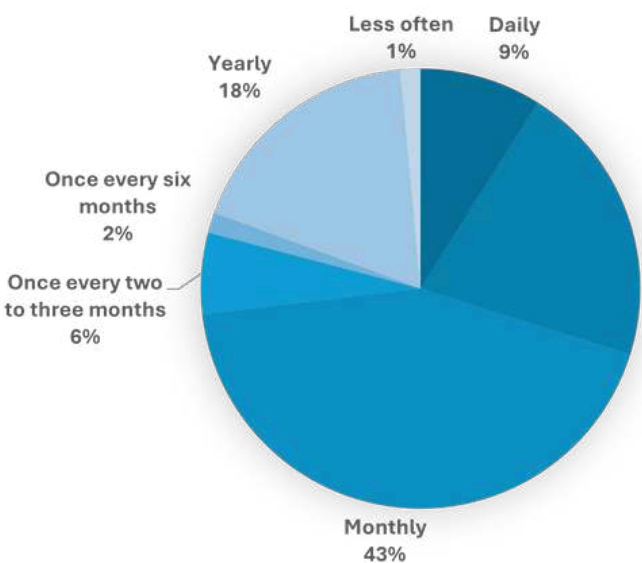
Reasons for visiting Cobham Woods::



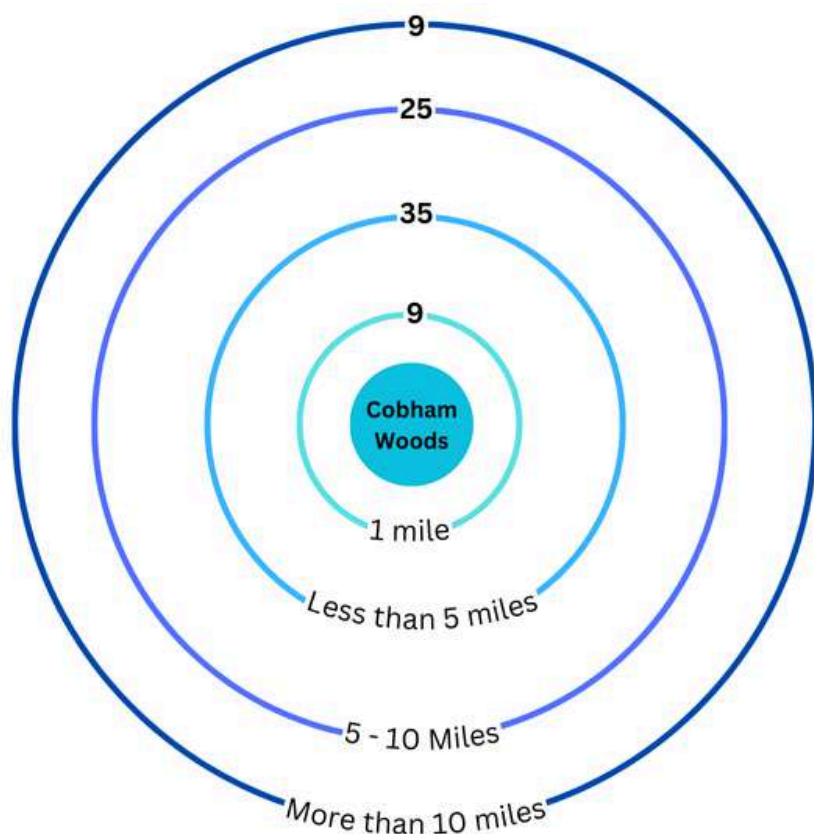
The number in brackets indicates the number of responses.

How often are people visiting Cobham Woods?

How did people find out about Cobham Woods?



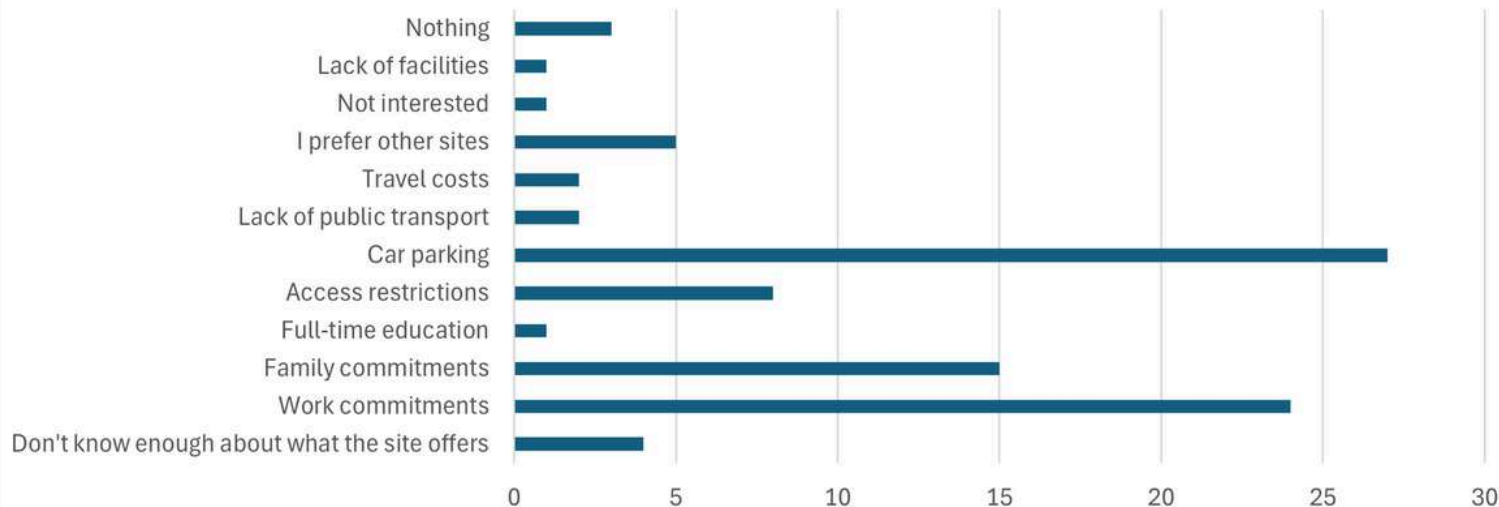
How far are people travelling to Cobham Woods?



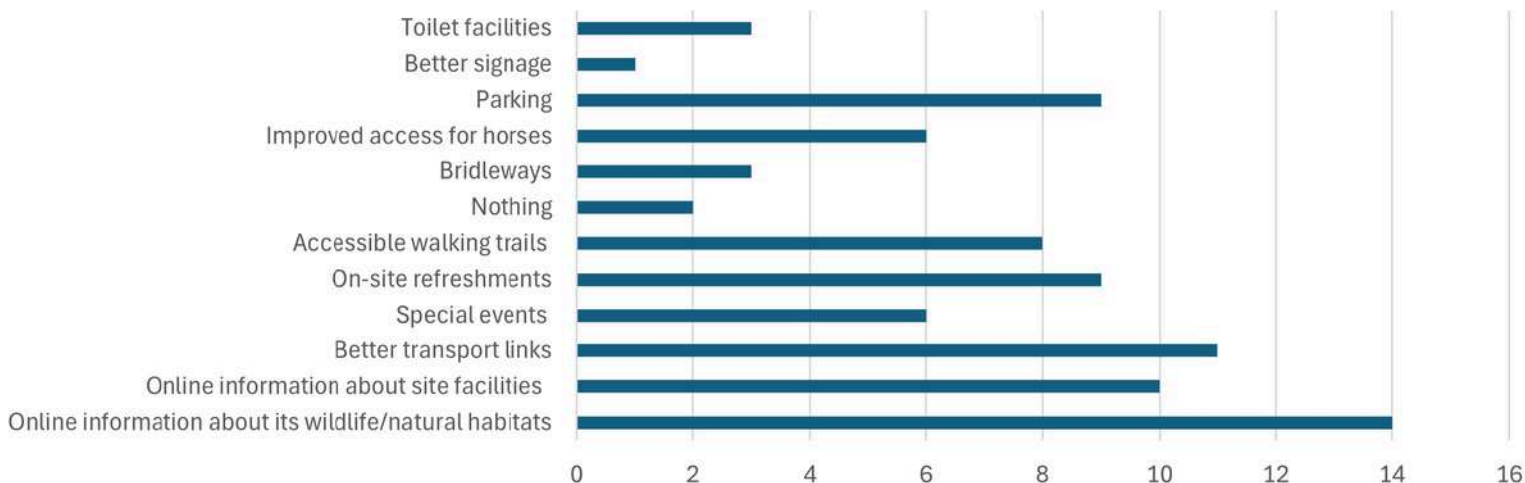
What people like and don't like:

✓	✗
• Nature (48)	• Difficulty finding parking (33)
• Footpaths (41)	• Litter / Vandalism (19)
• Variety of the landscape (39)	• Unsure which paths I can use (16)
• History (23)	• Footpaths are difficult to access (5)
• It's convenient (3)	• Need more bridleways (2)
• Activities / events on offer (1)	• Dogs (3)
• The facilities (1)	• Nothing (1)
• Bridleways (1)	

What prevents people from visiting?



What would encourage people to go more often?



Data collected from Medway:

Medway Council added additional questions to the survey hosted on their site. Their survey had 14 people say they visit Cobham Woods, of these 14 people:

- 79% journey there by car, 7% travel there on foot, 7% use public transport, and 7% ride on horseback.
- 14% use Cobham Woods to take part in hobbies, such as bird watching, or highland cow spotting.
- 14% feel the woods would benefit from increased warden presence.
- 21% would like to see improved access for those with disabilities.

Additional Comments:

Cobham Woods does not have its own car park, this was raised by most of the people who access this site. Visitors would like to be able to park near by without putting pressure on local villages.

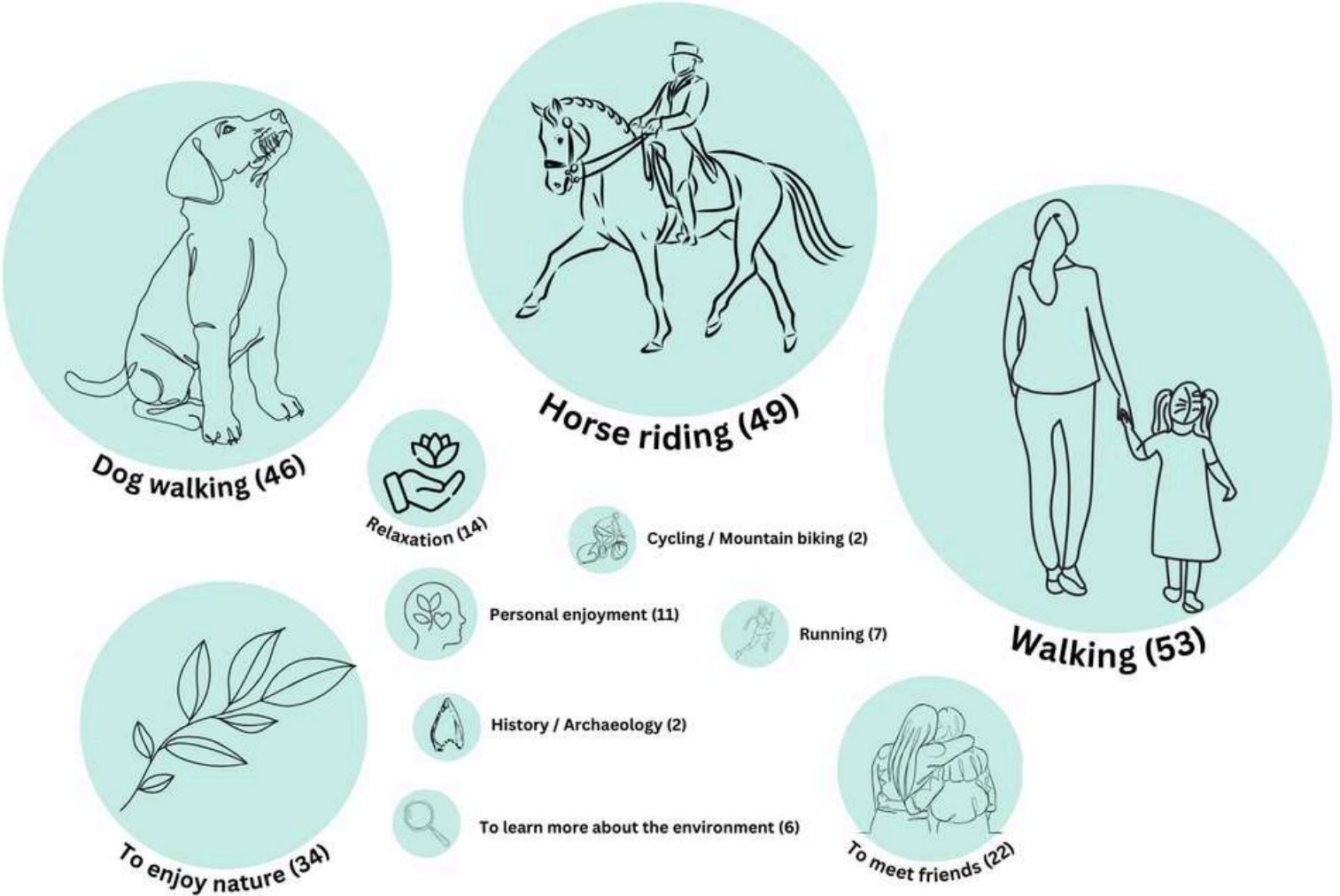
However, one regular visitor commented:

“ I go there as often as I can, keeping it as it is makes me go there lots ie not great for parking so limits visitors which means more wild and less litter”

Jeskyns Community Woodland

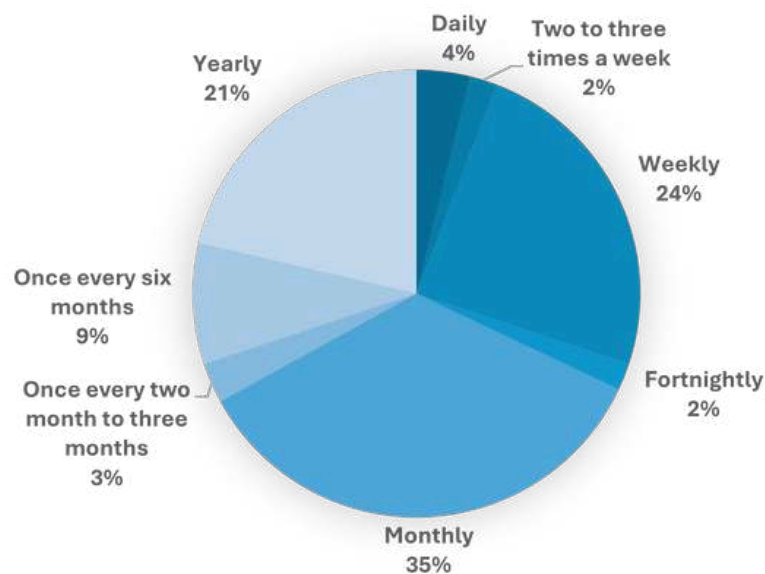
Of the 184 people who complete our online survey and Medway councils online survey, **103 people** stated they visit Jeskyns Community Woodland.

Reasons for visiting Jeskyns Community Woodland:

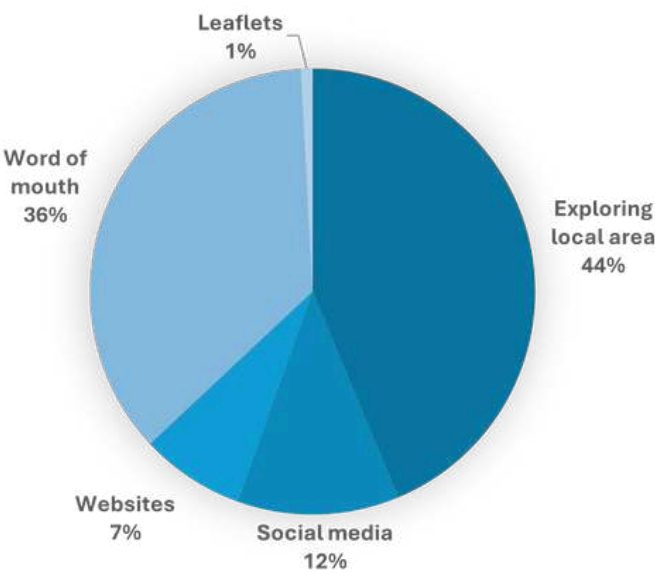


The number in brackets indicates the number of responses.

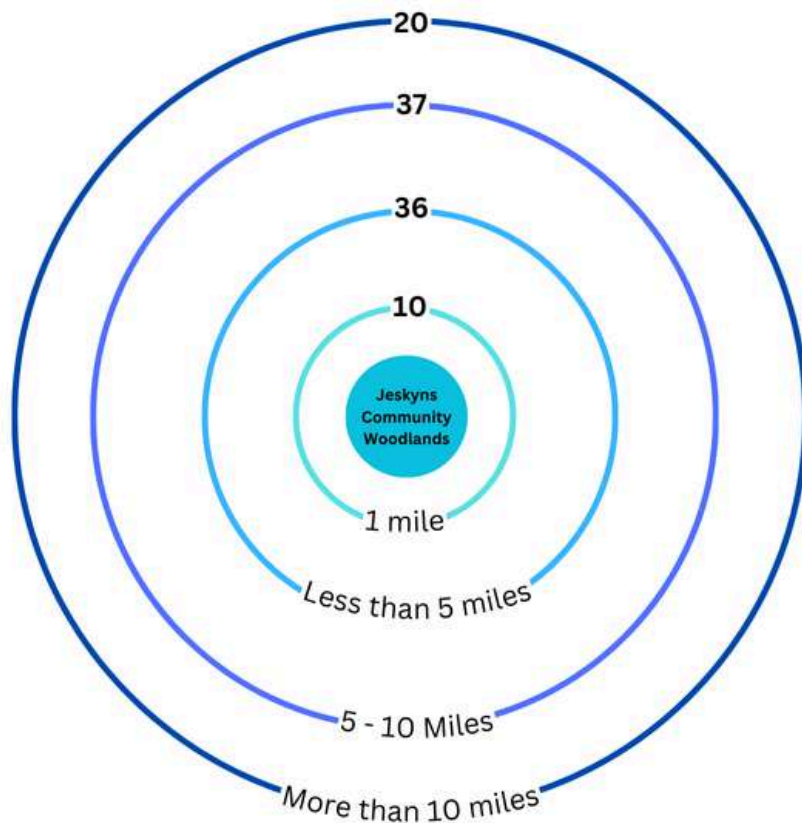
How often are people visiting Jeskyns?



How did people find out about Jeskyns?



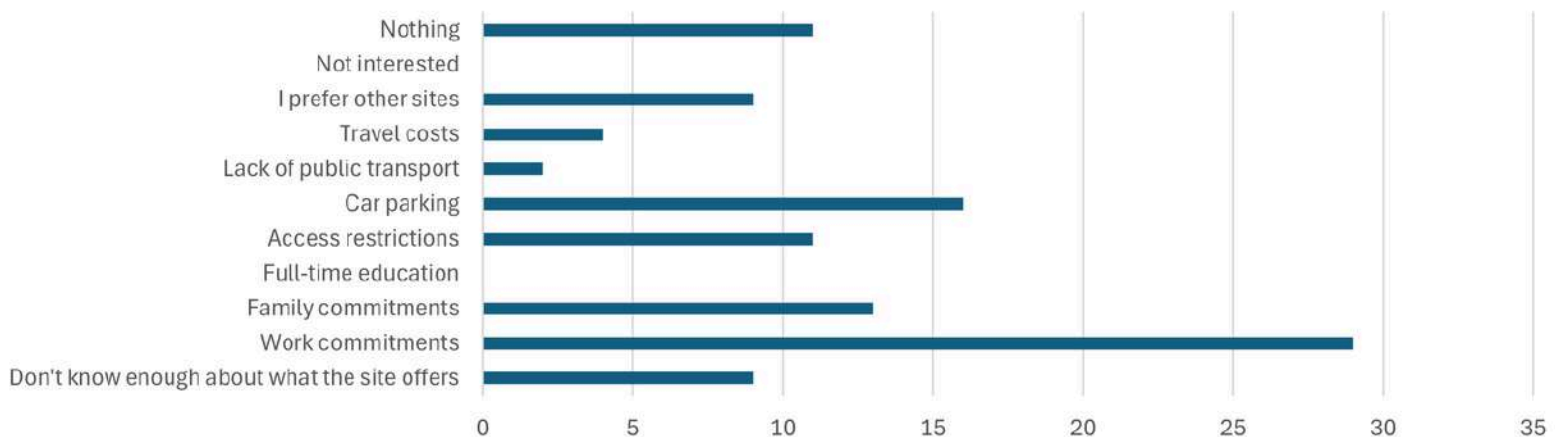
How far are people travelling to Jeskyns?



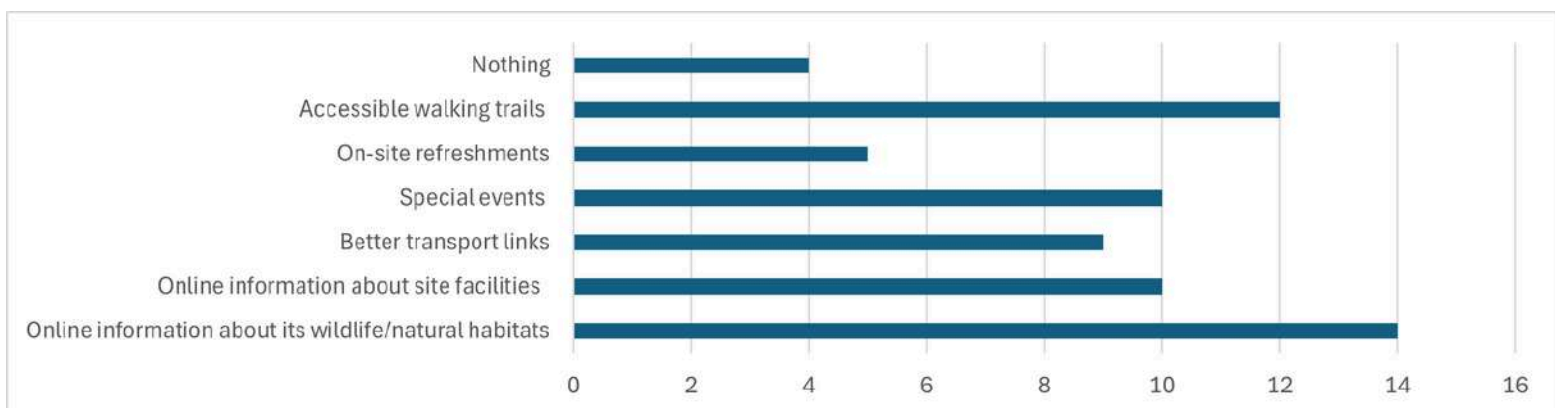
What people like and don't like:

✓	✗
• Footpaths (57)	• Nothing (17)
• Nature (43)	• Unsure which paths I can use (15)
• Variety of the landscape (30)	• Difficulty finding parking (15)
• Facilities (28)	• Dogs off lead (14)
• Equestrian trails (6)	• Litter / Vandalism (11)
• Activities / events on offer (6)	• No events / activities of interest (7)
• It's convenient (6)	• Cost of car park (6)
• Secure dog field (1)	• Footpaths are difficult to access (5)
• History (1)	• Lack of equestrian parking (2)
	• Not as varied habitat (2)
	• Need more bridleways (1)
	• Can be busy (1)
	• Lack of safe paths to get there (1)

What prevents people from visiting?



What would encourage people to go more often?



Data collected from Medway:

Medway Council added additional questions to the survey hosted on their site. Their survey had 22 people say they visit Jeskyns Community Woodland, of these 22 people:

- 86% journey there by car, 14% travel there on foot.
- 18% use Jeskyns Community Woodland to take part in hobbies, such as bird watching.
- 27% feel the woods would benefit from increased warden presence.

Additional Comments:

One of the most frequently received comments regarding Jeskyns Community Woodlands was the cost of parking, this is discouraging people from using the site more often. People like the facilities and would use them more frequently if parking was cheaper.

One visitor suggested:

“A yearly parking pass to use at ALL parks as I like to vary walks each day and can't afford a yearly pass for each park.”

Jeskyns Community Woodlands is very popular with horse riders, therefore many comments recieved related to bridleways and horse and rider safety.

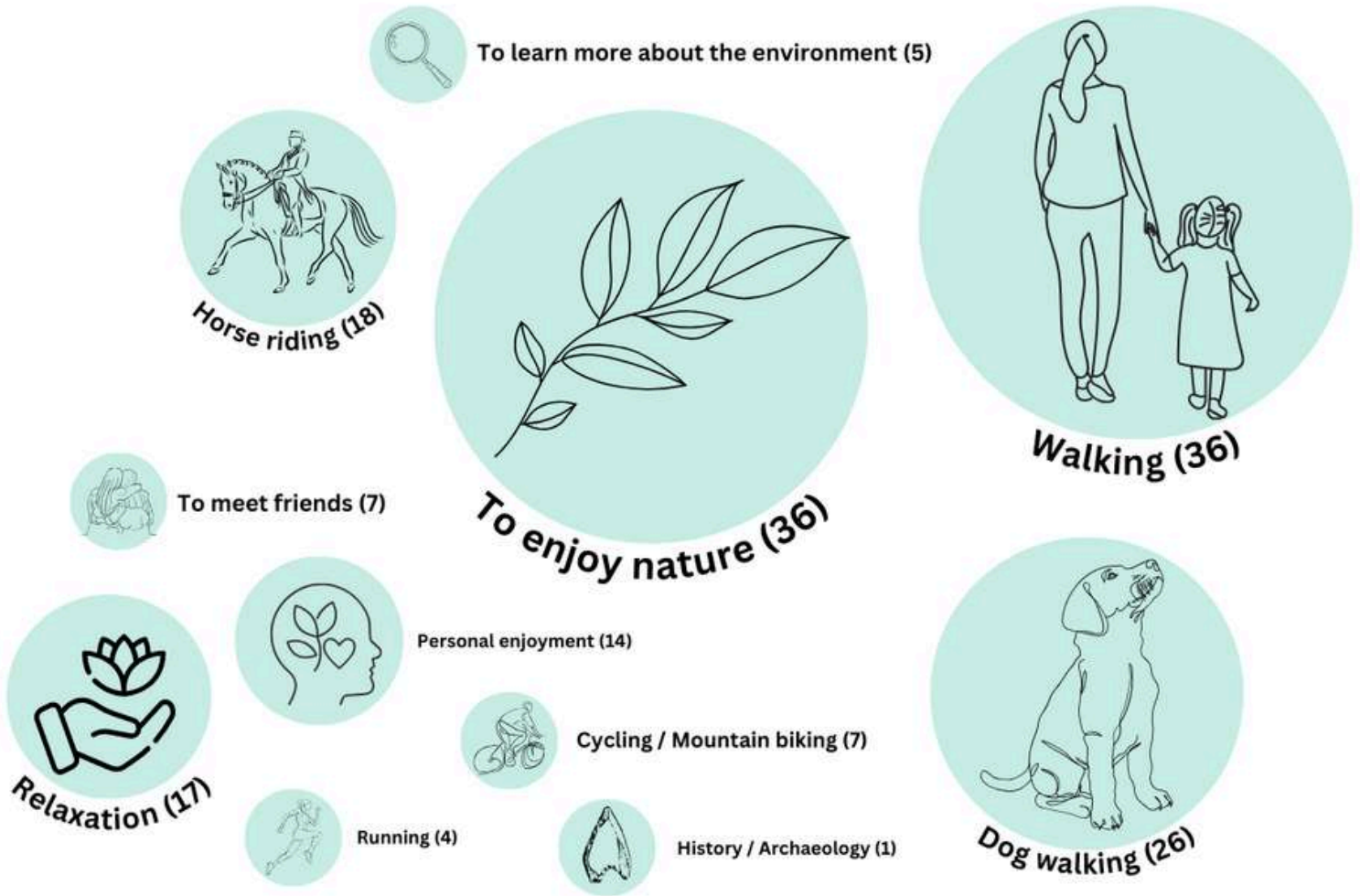
Many people commented that there is a lot of riding on roads required to reach Jeskyns, and more connecting bridleways would be appreciated. This issue was also raised by cyclists.

Jeskyns Community Woodland is also very popular with dog walkers, many of the horse riders would like the horse riding trails more clearly marked so dog walkers are more aware of where they might encounter horses.

Ranscombe Farm

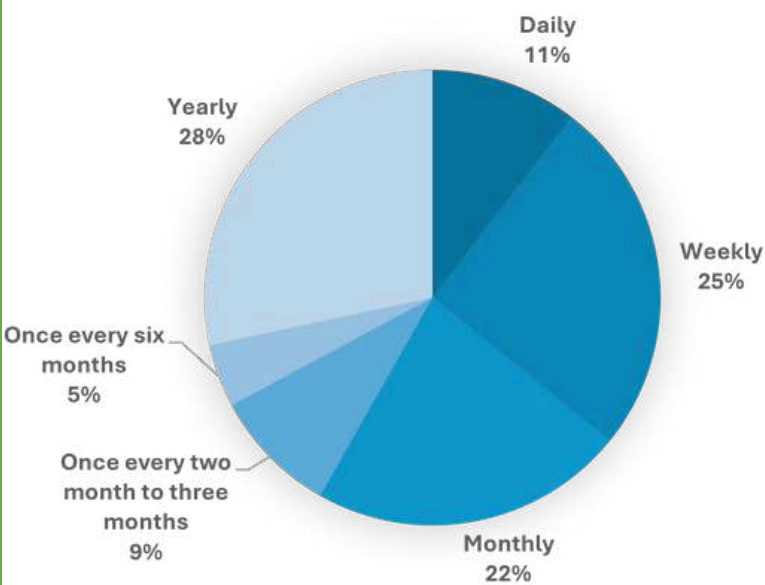
Of the 184 people who complete our online survey and Medway councils online survey, **67 people** stated they visit Ranscombe Farm.

Reasons for visiting Ranscombe Farm:

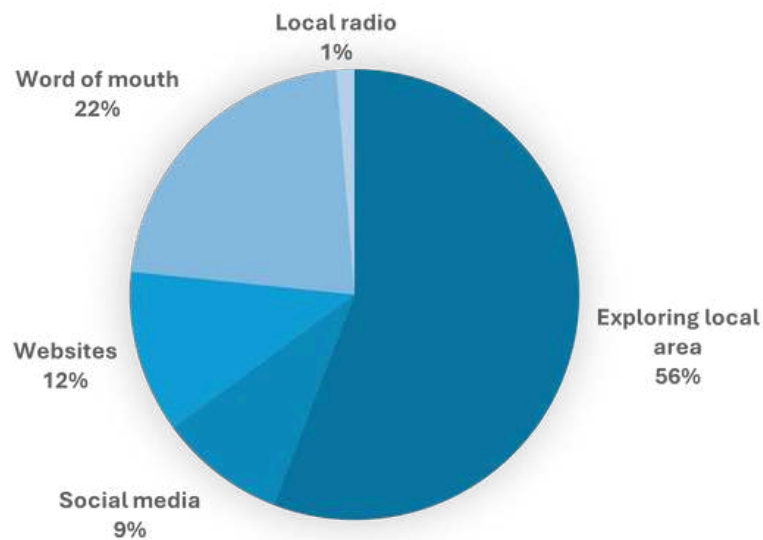


The number in brackets indicates the number of responses.

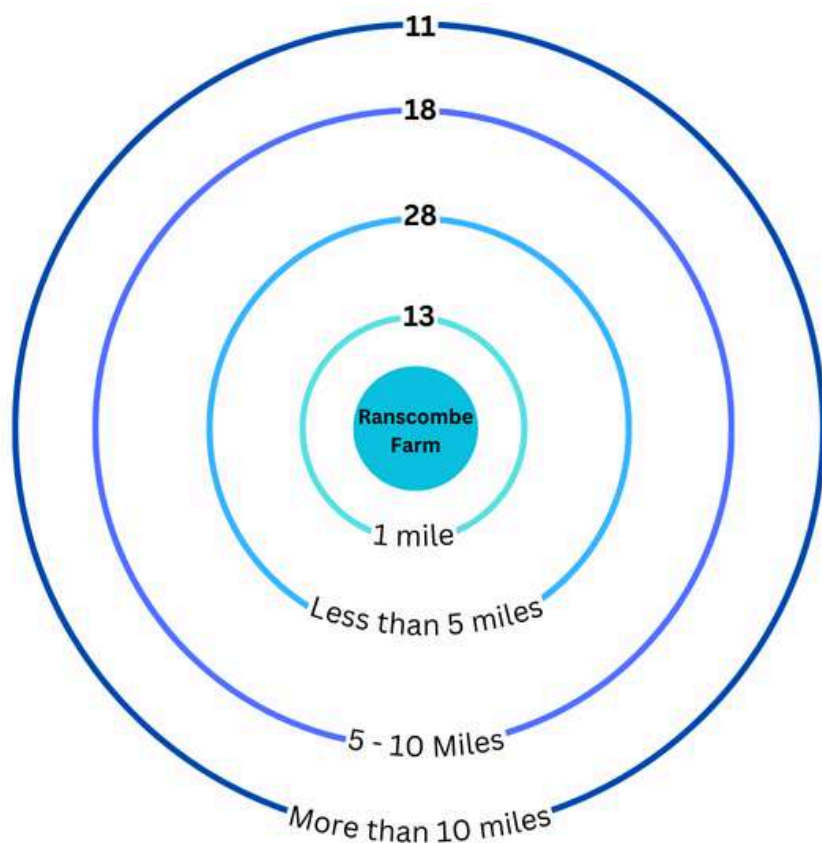
How often are people visiting Ranscombe Farm?



How did people find out about Ranscombe Farm?



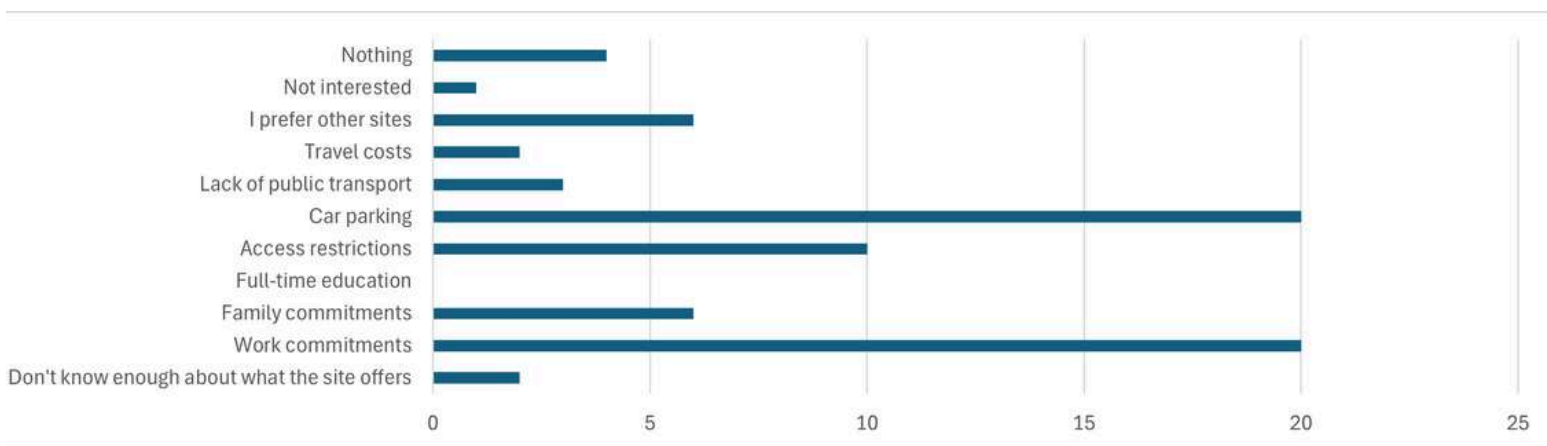
How far are people travelling to Ranscombe Farm?



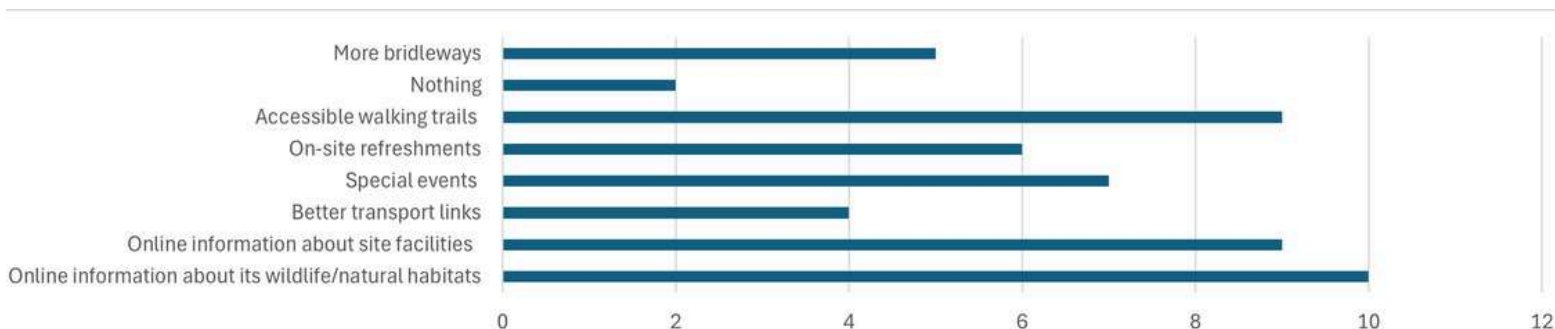
What people like and don't like:

✓	✗
• Nature (39)	• Difficulty finding parking (29)
• Variety of the landscape (38)	• Unsure which paths I can use (16)
• Footpaths (30)	• Litter / Vandalism (12)
• History (10)	• Footpaths are difficult to access (4)
• Facilities (4)	• Not enough horse trail signage (3)
• Activities / events on offer (2)	• Need more linking bridleways (2)
• It's convenient (3)	• No events / activities of interest (2)
• Wildflowers (1)	• Nothing (1)
• Bridleways (1)	

What prevents people from visiting?



What would encourage people to go more often?



Data collected from Medway:

Medway Council added additional questions to the survey hosted on their site. Their survey had 16 people say they visit Ranscombe Farm, of these 16 people:

- 88% journey there by car, 6% travel there on foot, 1% travel there on horseback.
- 31% use Ranscombe Farm to take part in hobbies, such as bird watching.
- 19% feel the farm would benefit from increased warden presence.
- 25% would like to see improved access for those with disabilities.

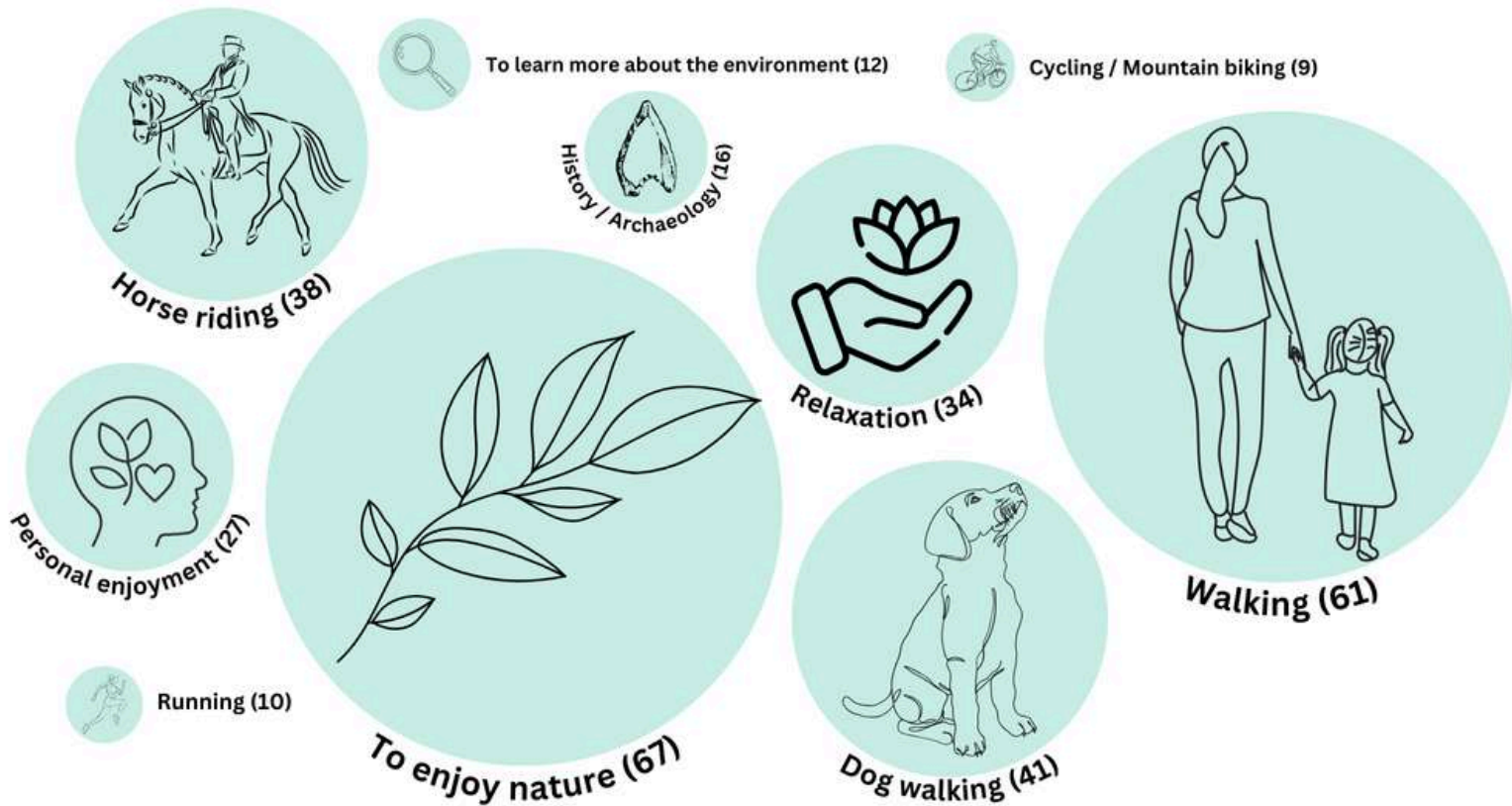
Additional Comments:

Difficulty finding parking was the main additional comment received, due to the small size of the car park. However, many visitors preferred it this way as it keeps the site quiet.

Shorne Woods Country Park

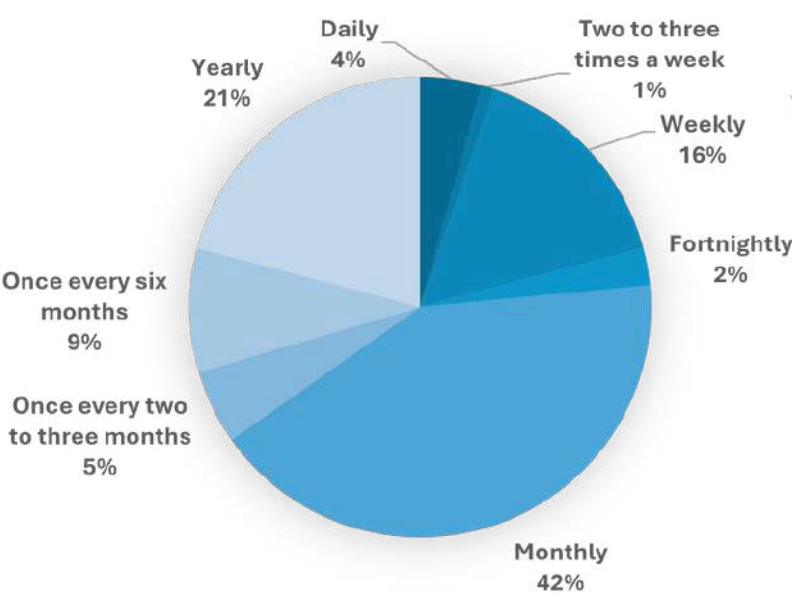
Of the 184 people who complete our online survey and Medway councils online survey, **113 people** stated they visit Shorne Woods Country Park (SWCP).

Reasons for visiting SWCP:

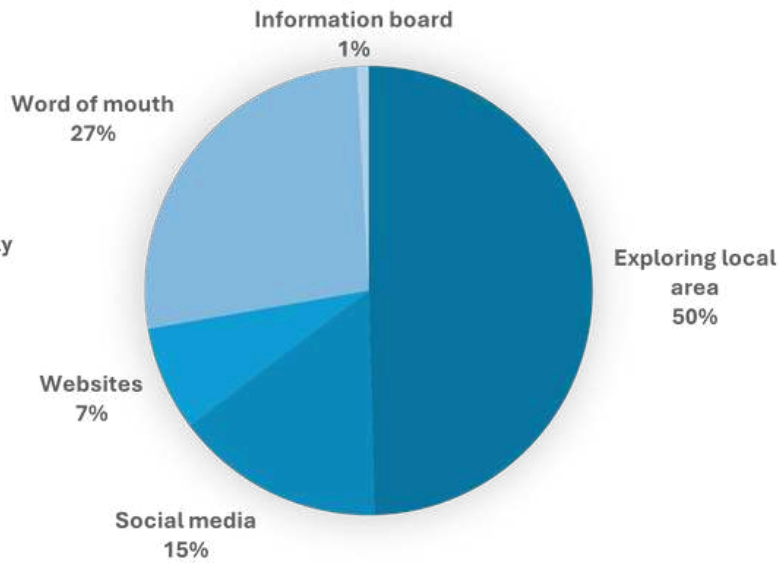


The number in brackets indicates the number of responses.

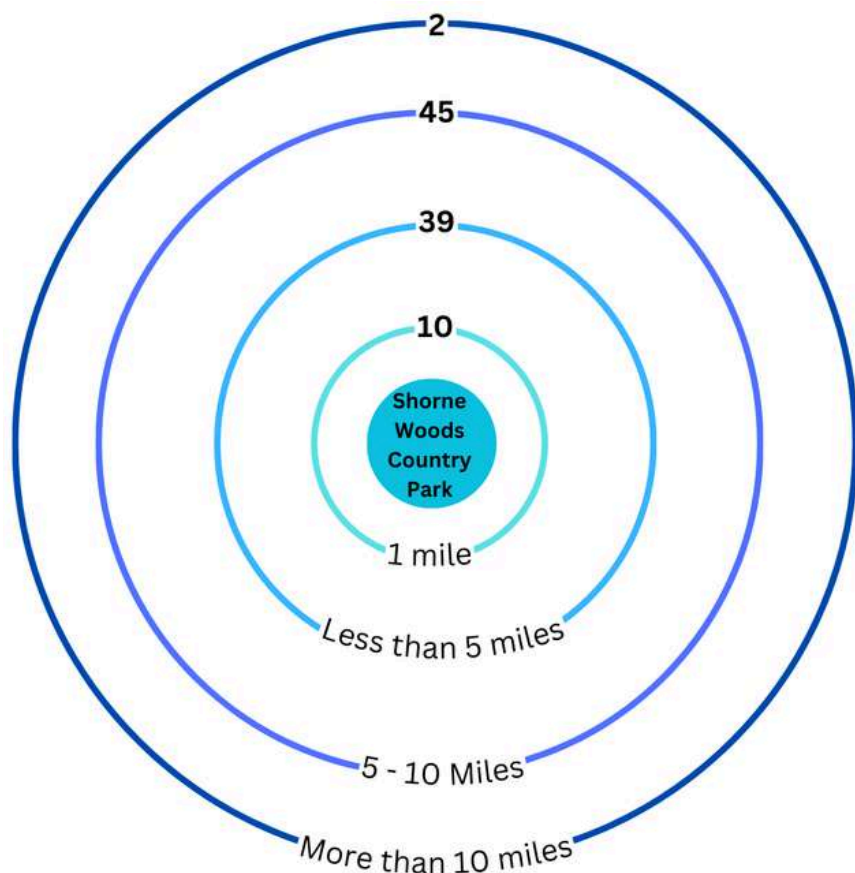
How often are people visiting SWCP?



How did people find out about SWCP?



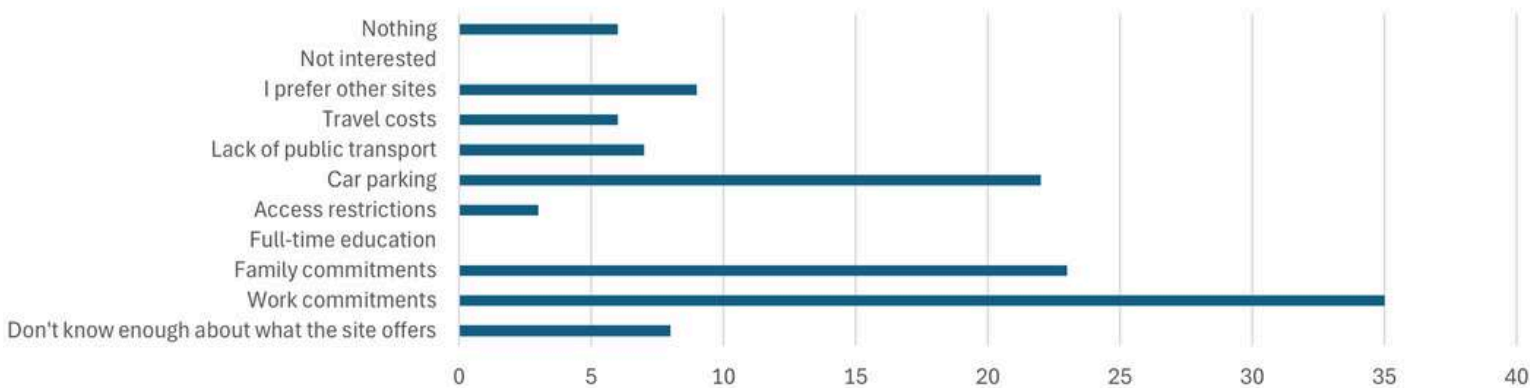
How far are people travelling to SWCP?



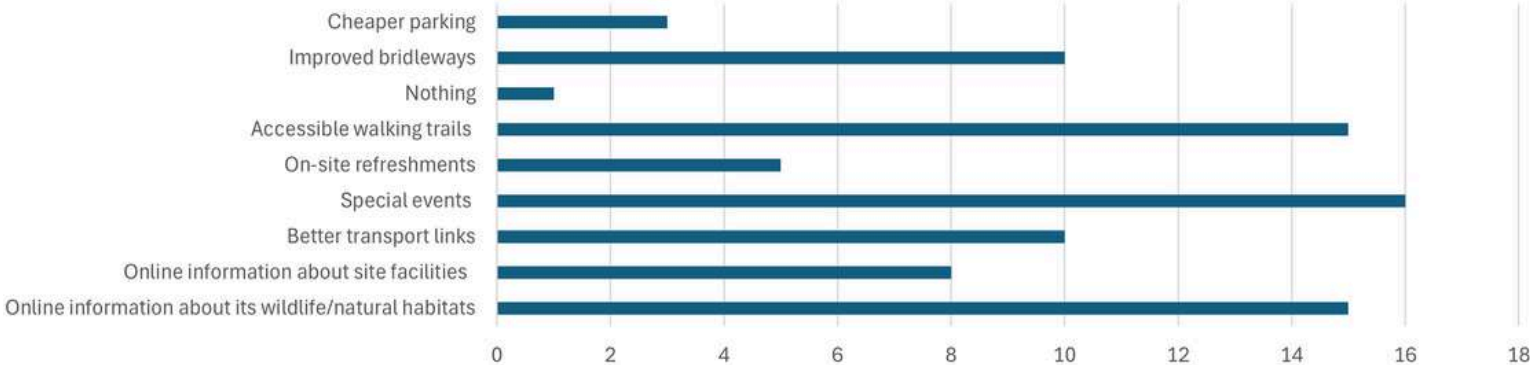
What people like and don't like:

✓	✗
• Footpaths (66)	• Litter / Vandalism (24)
• Nature (54)	• Unsure which paths I can use (17)
• Facilities (49)	• Difficulty finding parking (19)
• Variety of the landscape (47)	• Nothing (13)
• History (23)	• Parking cost (7)
• Activities / events on offer (16)	• No events / activities of interest (6)
• It's convenient (6)	• Dog fouling (5)
• Play area (1)	• Can be busy (4)
	• Footpaths are difficult to access (3)
	• Need more linking bridleways (3)
	• Car park opening times too short (2)
	• Limited cycling tracks (1)
	• Horse route too short (1)
	• Dogs off lead (2)

What prevents people from visiting?



What would encourage people to go more often?



Data collected from Medway:

Medway Council added additional questions to the survey hosted on their site. Their survey had 28 people say they visit Shorne Woods Country Park, of these 28 people:

- 86% journey there by car, 7% travel there on foot, 7% travel there on bicycle.
- 25% use |Shorne Woods country Park to take part in hobbies, such as bird watching.
- 14% feel that SWCP would benefit from increased warden presence.
- 14% would like to see improved access for those with disabilities.

Additional Comments:

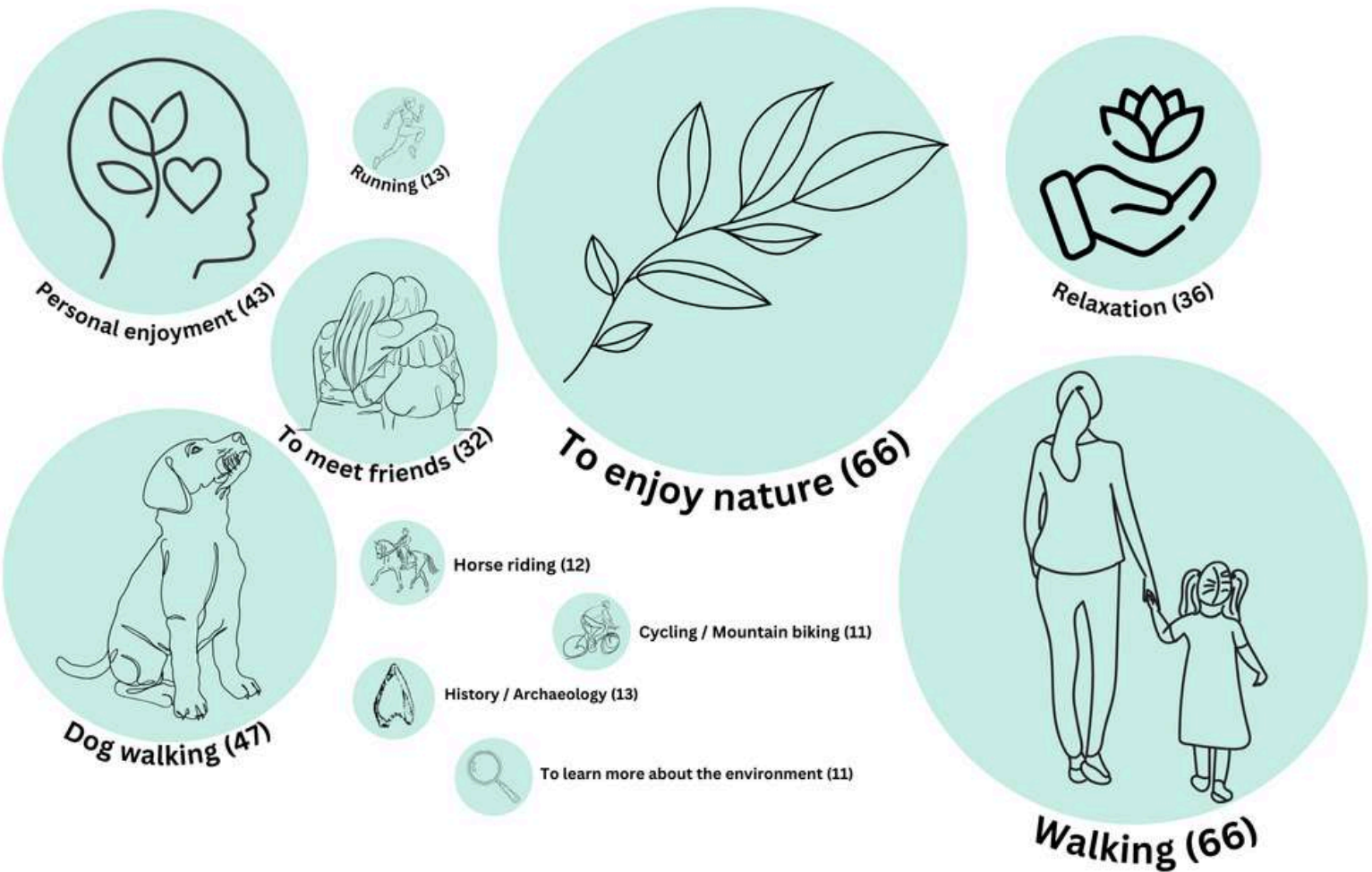
The cost of car parking was raised by many of the visitors to the park as something that discourages them from visiting, it was noted that more people would use the facilities if they did not have to pay for all day parking.

People noted they would like to see more facilities for horse riders, such as drinking stations. People would like to see more infrastructure to help them observe wildlife, such as bird hides.

In person survey results

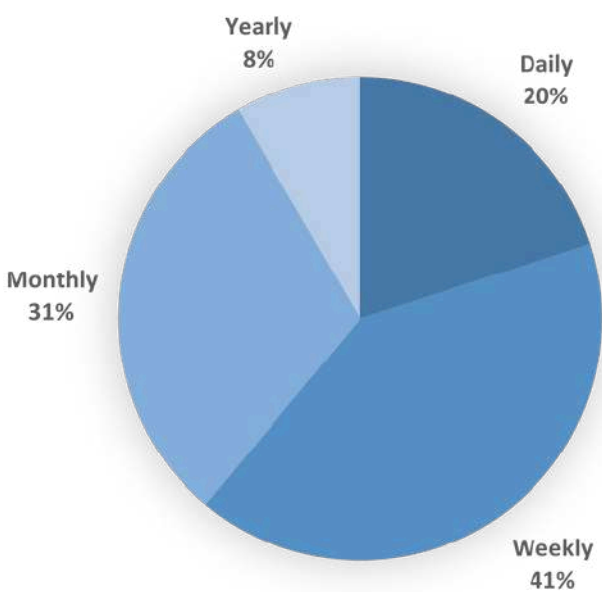
We had **95 people** complete our in person surveys, these were not site specific therefore give a more general picture.

Reasons for visiting green spaces in the proposed NNR:

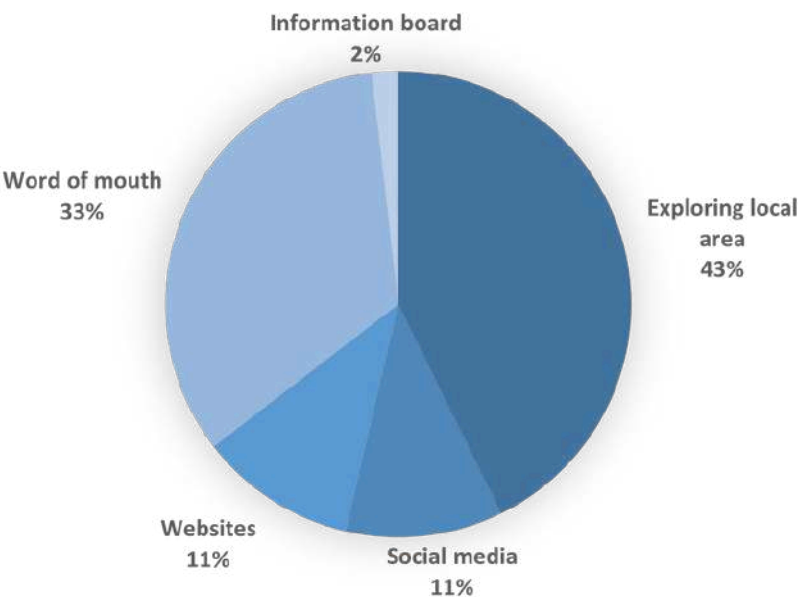


The number in brackets indicates the number of responses.

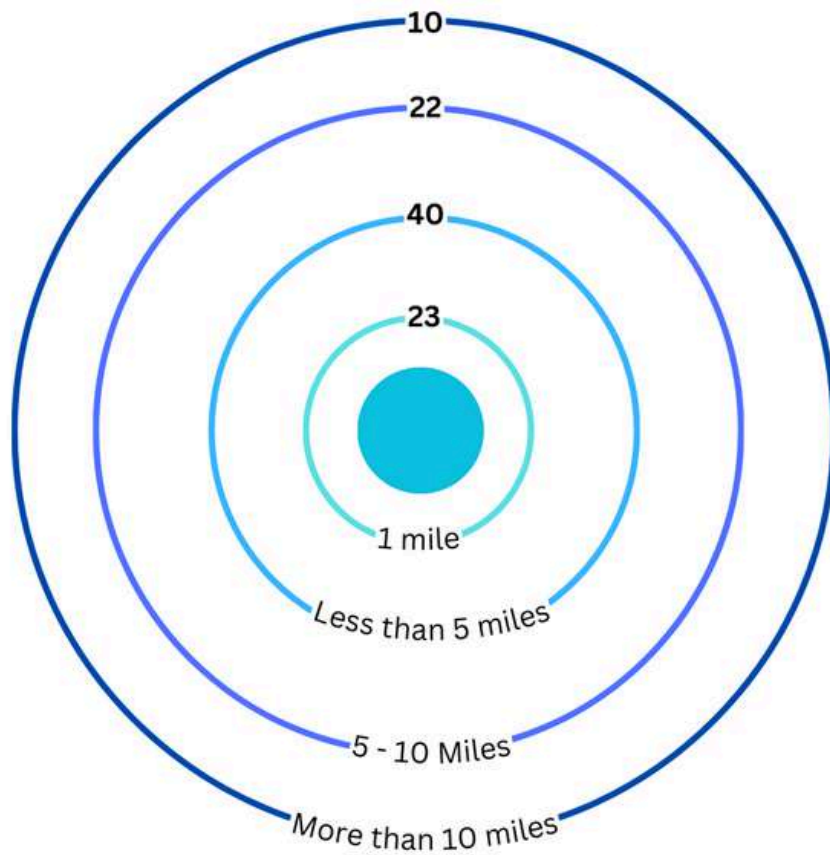
How often are people visiting?



How did people find out about the area?



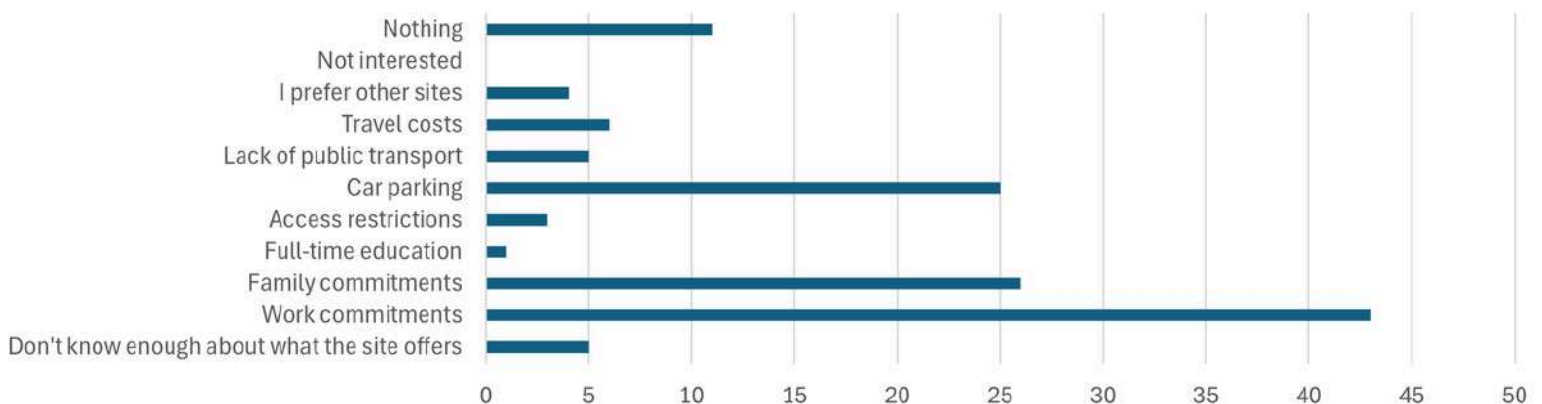
How far are people travelling to SWCP?



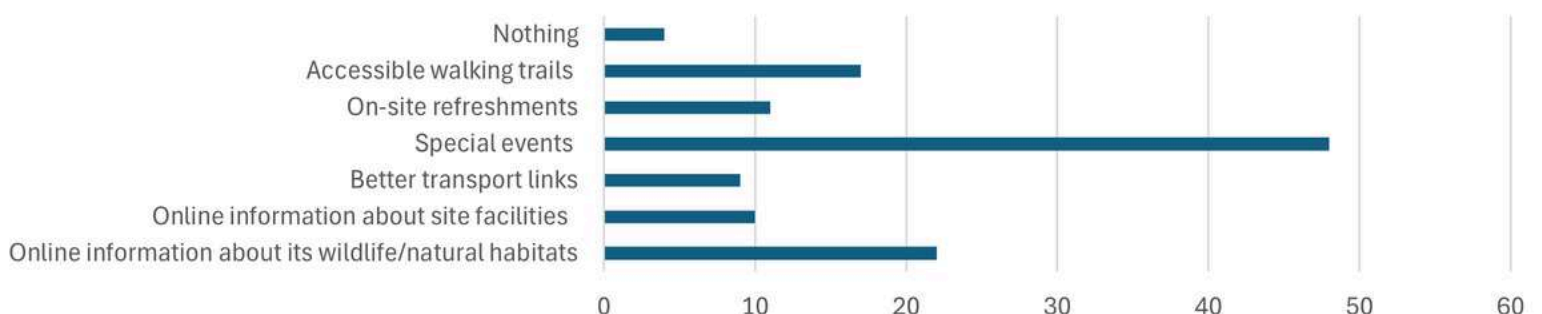
What people like and don't like:

✓	✗
• Nature (81)	• Litter / Vandalism (31)
• Footpaths (73)	• Unsure which paths I can use (15)
• Variety of the landscape (48)	• Difficulty finding parking (12)
• History (20)	• Footpaths are difficult to access (8)
• Activities / events on offer (17)	• Parking cost (3)
• Facilities (4)	• No events / activities of interest (2)
• Peace and quiet (2)	• Dog fouling (2)
• Free parking (1)	• Motorbikes on paths (2)
• Everything (1)	• Can be busy (4)
	• Don't feel safe on my own (1)
	• Overgrown footpaths (1)
	• Dogs off leads (1)
	• Lack of bins (1)
	• Lack of horse box parking (1)

What prevents people from visiting?



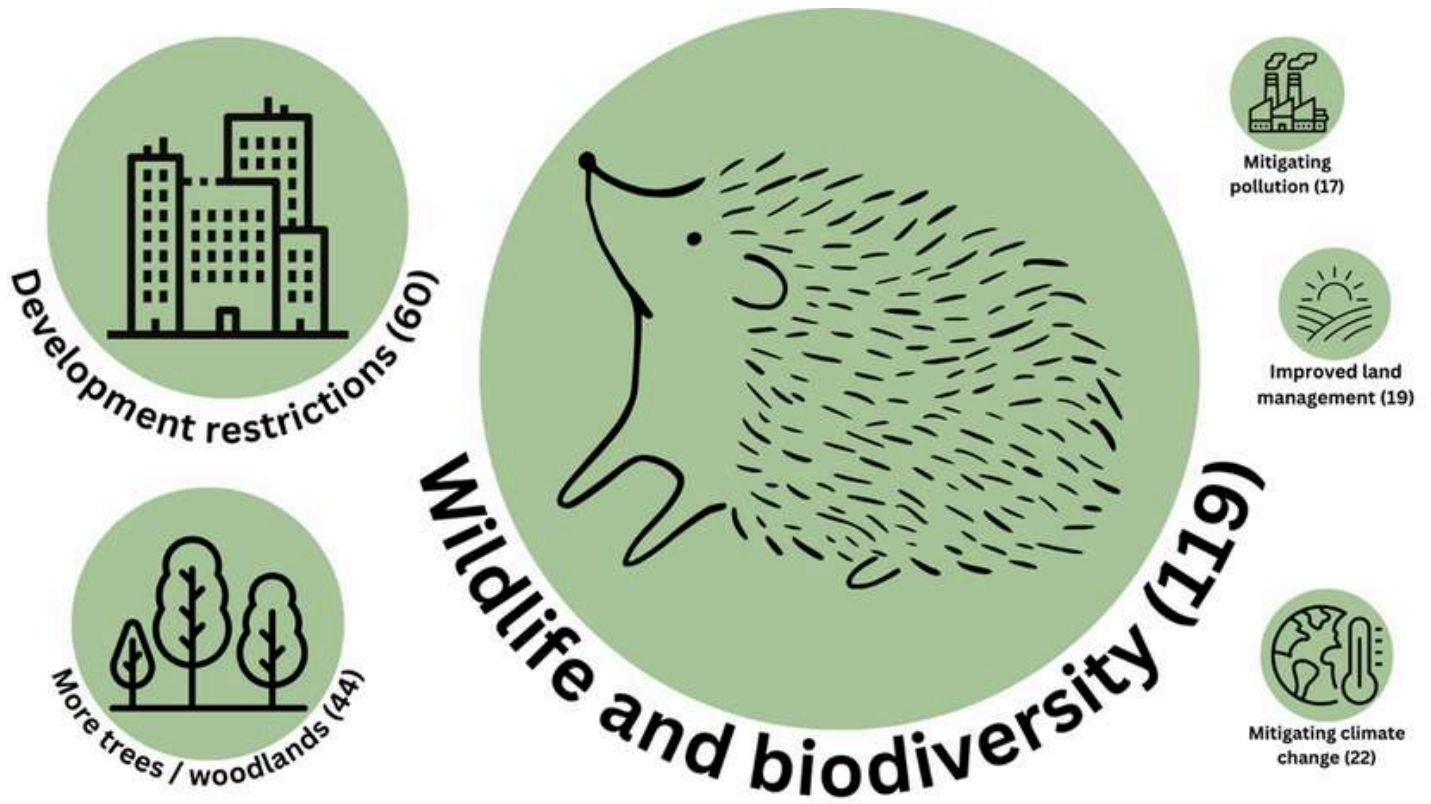
What would encourage people to go more often?



Final Questions

Across all versions of the survey, the last two questions were the same:

What is your top priority for nature?

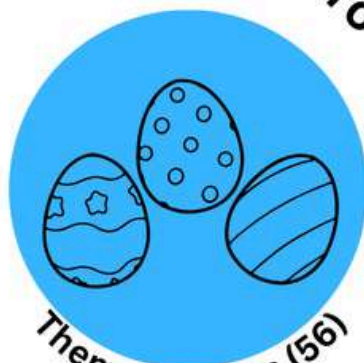


The number in brackets indicates the number of responses.

Additional comments:

People highlighted the need for more wildlife corridors and connections between sites.

What events and activities would be of interest to you?



The number in brackets indicates the number of responses.

Additional comments

Survey participants had the option to provide additional comments at the end of the survey. These are listed below.

Horse riders and cyclists

"Please more **horse box parking** and **longer riding trails**"

"**Safe access** for all vulnerable road users"

"We need much **better equestrian facilities** and trails/riding opportunities across our green spaces and beyond to **get horse riders off the increasingly very dangerous roads....** There are so few safe places for equestrians in Kent- it's appalling"

"With more houses need more **off road routes for horse riders and cyclists.**"

"Also a **cycle path** along A228 to link peters village bridge and m2 bridge to make a safe loop."

"Would be great to have **more bridleways that connect up**. There's so few actual bridleways as it is so to connect the existing ones would be helpful"

"We need **more horse riding trails** in the area. A lot of places are close and you can ride from one to another. However, horse riders are losing a lot of the countryside to development. We need access to more off road riding without the risk of vehicles. A lot of nature reserves have taken away riding access or restricted it. Parking that's not high in price just because it's a horse box or trailer and more access to be able to park. **Horse riders should be able to enjoy the countryside as much as dog walkers and walkers.** More also needs to be done about dog walkers using route that are designed for horses. The amount of times I've met out of control dogs off lead in places they shouldn't be. There should be someone patrolling at random times to stop an accident waiting to happen. I want to enjoy nature and enjoy riding my horse as much as someone who wants to walk there dog without the risk of my horse being injured."

"**Access to horse riders seem to have been ignored more and more with each new development,** and what does have access is usually made unsafe by irresponsible dog owners not having control of their dogs, making it dangerous for us."

"**As a rider you need to feel that you and your horse will be safe.** More signage saying 'you share these trails with Horse riders, cyclist, dog walkers, families and ramblers please respect everyone's enjoyment and safety by keeping dogs under control and on leads' something like that"

"I would love to get to Shorne country park and Jeskyns from Cobham Woods but there is **no safe route on horseback** you have to do road work and the roads are just too dangerous."

"**More bridlepaths** put in would be better as there is a lot of horses in the area which would benefit from children doing more riding lessons as well and being outdoors"

"**More horse riding routes need to be made available to get riders off the dangerous roads.**"

"The only concern is dogs with poor recall and owners/cyclist not knowing how to behave around horses"

"The **roads really are too dangerous** now to ride on in the majority of areas despite how well you train your horse some idiot could still crash into you so there needs to be more horse and also

shared access routes for people to be able to safely ride walk and cycle together “

"This area and its wildlife needs protecting. If areas can be managed under one umbrella that would be great. I would really love to see more safe off road riding linking the areas. Traffic is on the increase making riding in the Cobham, Luddesdown and Sole Street Area. Perhaps up grading a couple of footpaths to bridleway or permissive routes agreed with Land Owners."

"I love all of the outdoor spaces in our area. It would be great if there were **better cycle routes between them.**"

Accessibility

"A member of my family uses a wheelchair full time and as much as he would love to experience the wildlife, **there is not much that is accessible at Shorne Park.**"

"Better access for all"

Dogs

"Dog poo in bags but **few bins**"

"Untrained loose dogs have made the last couple of years more hazardous"

"More dog friendly areas away from kids areas"

Parking and transport

"A **yearly parking pass** to cover all parks and woodlands would be great. As a dog walking group we visit a different green space each day of the week but **cannot afford a pass for each individual park.** We tend to pick 2 'paid parking' parks a week and go to free places such as Capstone and Bredhurst etc in between to keep costs down. With a more flexible pass we would visit these places more and use the facilities."

"Cheaper parking"

"Due to **no transport locally**, a lot of these areas have to be driven to, **little parking, very expensive charges** (Jeskyms and Shorne parks)."

"These areas need **more parking and free parking**"

"Other than **sometimes difficulty in parking**, everything is good. No need for change."

"Would love for parking to be free at all of the sites"

"Love being out in nature would like to see **more economical access** to sites so not reliant on car to get to them."

"Love the site [Ashenbank] and again although sometimes the carpark is full which is a problem as **nowhere else to park**, it keeps it quiet and peaceful which is the reason for coming."

"Don't make car drivers 'the enemy' thats how most people will get there - so **decent parking** - charge if you have to. but make it **easy and safe to park**"

"Do not charge for car parking. This is the reason I never go to Shorne Country park and others like it. I go to National Trust and RSPB Site where parking is free"

"I imagine this will be an excuse for you to charge for car parking at all locations. Currently many of these have free parking. I can't afford to pay parking charges every time I walk my dogs and currently only go to the free sites."

Nature and wildlife

"Visited these sites for the first time on Saturday. Had a wonderful walk on the Darnley Trail. Will definitely visit again. We are mainly interested in walks , nature, flora etc. **Thought the area was brilliant "**

"I think it's [NNR] a great idea and am very excited to see how all these wonderful sites link up and work together!"

"Any cross site habitat management plan would be a good thing as it counters fragmentation and makes a more coherent wildlife strategy across a wider area possible."

"Beautiful area needs to be joined up and better waymarking signs"

"I hope that these spaces can be preserved and managed for the benefit of wildlife and biodiversity"

"I think it is really important that whatever changes are considered it must be with the mindset of what is ultimately best for nature, because if the point of the project is to protect nature and increase biodiversity then any changes need to align with that in mind, as could be very easy to be distracted from that main goal. There is always a balance between the need for people to have access and fall in love with nature so that more people are on board to help protect it, but more access generally means more noise and most definitely litter! and that's regardless as to whether there are bins available or not. We know the devastating impact of litter on wildlife. **We need places like Shorne where it is very accessible for everyone with good paths and facilities, but nature also needs spaces which are less visited so nature can thrive** and it does that best when humans sadly aren't around. And I think we need to remember that that's ok. It's ok to have places left more to nature than people, rather than nature having to work round our needs all the time. I know this is easy for me to say as I am lucky to be fit and healthy enough to walk from where I can park to access, but one day that won't be the case, and I will be glad that even if I can no longer enjoy it, nature can. The talk of access really concerns me as I think ultimately will have a big impact on nature, am fearful that rather than the project have a positive impact on nature, anything good will be outweighed by the impact of increased human presence. Definitely need to **encourage nature talks with kids at Shorne**, like school trips etc as really need to help this new generation understand how amazing nature is and how we all need to protect it starting with not dropping litter. Signs should be put up about dangers of litter and doggy bags being left around at Shorne, so hopefully when kids grow up/adults whose kids are older, and start to explore elsewhere, they will be more responsible. What would really help if coffee shops at Shorne (and the Riverside country park which doesn't fall under this but I litter pick there) aren't allowed to serve drinks in throw away cups which is so bad for the environment and so many get dumped in bushes. People either drink in washable mugs on site (as even onsite drinks are put in disposable cups so bad for the environment when we should be reducing waste) or in refillable cups only."

"It would be nice to embrace nature and get more people to country parks however I would be concerned about areas such as Cobham woods and Silverhand estate which are my local areas, **increased footfall from non-locals would be a negative thing**"

"Natural untouched space, local people love it, very popular with dog walkers, **don't want to change anything about it.**"

"Identify a common goal(s) between organisations and work towards these to maximise the benefits. Also consider other benefits such as **NFM and climate adaptation.**"

"Any **protection of green spaces** for future generations is welcome.

"Opportunity to be a **nature warden volunteer**"

Development concerns

"Concern with the Thames Crossing"

"**Development should not happen on these areas of the National Nature Reserve** and pollution should also be cut out, that is litter and car exhausts."

"Not happy about part of site [Ashenbank] going for a lorry park"

"New National Nature Reserve would help to stop the gradual building of homes which gradually creep into the green belt."

Vandalism

"I have volunteered with the plotlands group i.e. the Cuxton woodland project the most inaccessible. I'm aware of challenges there have been in the past with this area though. The current biggest issue at Ashenbank woods appears to me to be **vandalism damage to seats gates the bunkers etc hopefully additional awareness raising and funding can help with this.**"

Children

"Kids love the park and outside areas."

"Lovely park, **great play area**"

"One of our children is neurodiverse, therefore at times can be challenging to attend certain events. **Outside areas such as these are very welcoming for us as a family.** Thank you for your time holding such events."

Archaeology and history

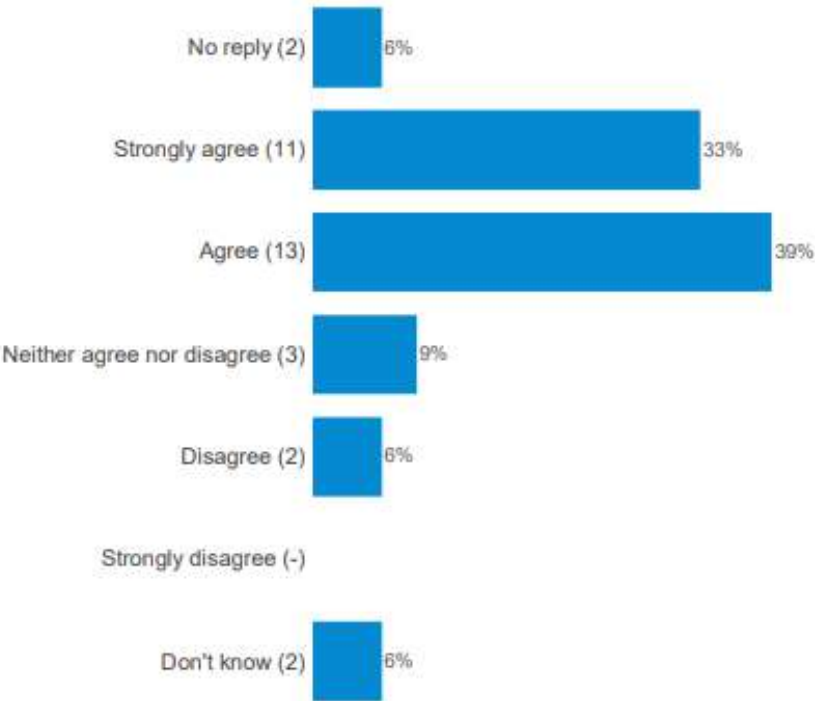
"More Archaeology promotions please"

"**More information of how the landscape evolved through time** from the stone age to the present day, not just its biodiversity."

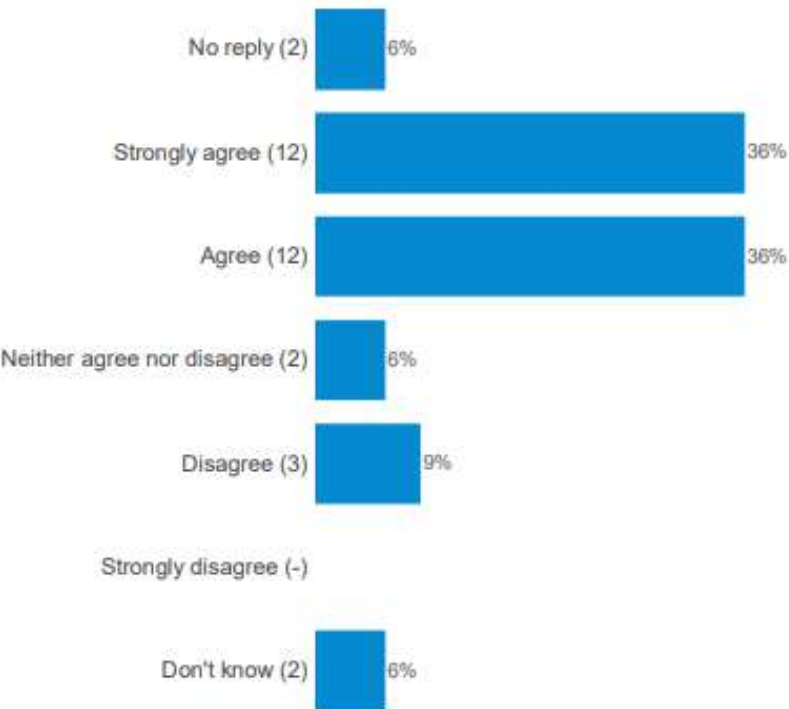
Additional Medway Questions

For the 33 people who completed the Medway Council survey, the below questions were asked.

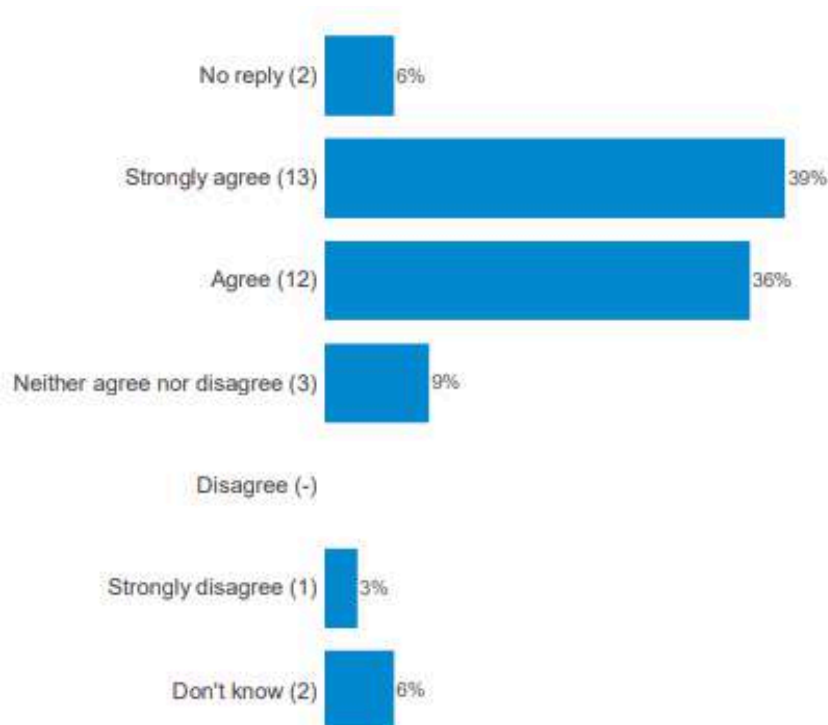
To what extent do you agree or disagree that establishing these sites as a National Nature Reserve would **Make a significant contribution to nature recovery in the locality:**



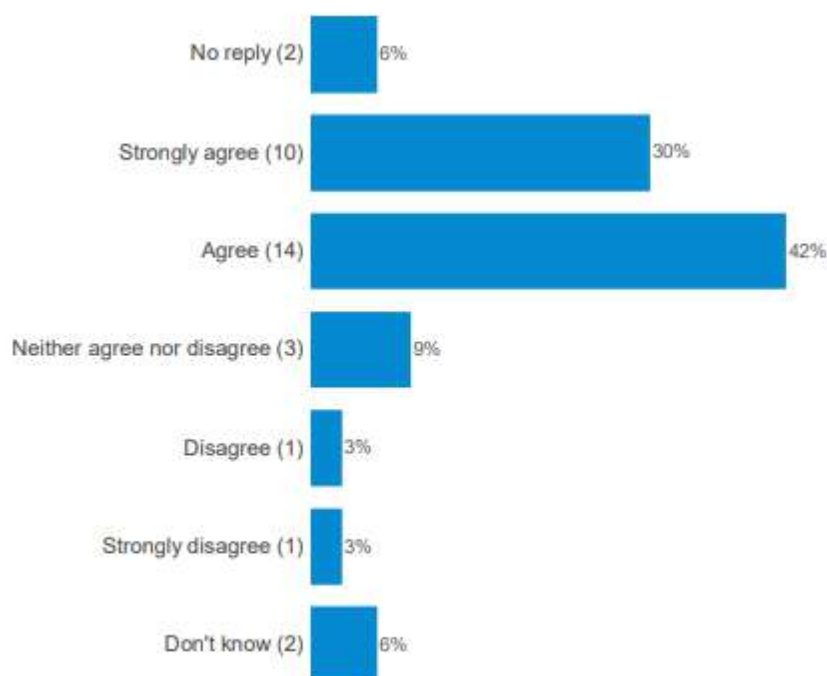
To what extent do you agree or disagree that establishing these sites as a National Nature Reserve would **Safeguard or help the recovery of nationally important biodiversity and geodiversity (minerals, rocks, sediments, fossils, soils and water features:**



To what extent do you agree or disagree that establishing these sites as a National Nature Reserve would **Provide opportunities for conservation and environmental science:**



To what extent do you agree or disagree that establishing these sites as a National Nature Reserve would **Encourage people to experience, engage with and enjoy nature in a variety of ways, without compromising conversation:**



Stakeholder Consultations

We carried out 5 SH consultations, this consisted of a short presentation about the proposed NNR followed by a Q&A, and a chance for the stakeholders to feedback. We reached local community groups and interested local people.

We asked attendees four questions:

What are your priorities for nature?

What are your priorities for engagement?

Which groups should we be engaging with?

What are your priorities for access?

The comments we received are listed below.

What are your priorities for nature?



What are your priorities for engagement?

Walks with family
Promote archaeology group events
School Dog walking
visits to sites with educational guide
SWAG extend their reach and work beyond Shorne Woods Country Park
Consult local experts (i.e. Shorne Woods Archaeology group on heritage aspects)
Ensure local groups (i.e. SWAG) are still able to carry out usual activities (digging)
Ensure local community groups have the resources and support to accommodate increased interest
Organised
rides (bikes/horses) using user groups to advertise and facilitate
Engage the public to care about the environment
Promote NNR through social media
Bike access Promote community groups through NNR website
Connecting with local community groups
App for
info (fencing if virtual, visitor info, what to look out for (seasonal))
Organise public events to encourage responsible use and consideration of land and animals
School
talks importance of wildlife and how to enjoy safely
Bring back the (very popular) BBQs in Shorne Woods Country Park
Get local people involved in wildlife surveys
**Corporate/ business
support & sponsorship**

Which groups should we be engaging with?

Forest Schools
Duke of Edinburgh students
Local schools
Local Scouts, Cubs, Guides
Local Landowners
Riding clubs

What are your priorities for access?

Waymarkings

Map of footpaths and permissive paths

Public access & parking to Silverhand Estate at Bush Road

Arrange

walks from places with parking facilities already in place

Ambitious

walking, cycling, equestrian, transport planning

Walking

routes to join up different areas

Ensure

good signs & info posters to encourage importance of taking responsibility to protect nature and wildlife

e.g. dogs

on leads near cattle, dangers of litter to wildlife

Liaise with local

businesses & landowners for parking vehicles & horseboxes i.e. using business car parks on the weekend

Enough car parks to accomodate additional visitors without putting pressure on local villages

Increase car park opening times

Plans for

Reduce parking costs

walkers and cyclists need to be realistic

New parking in harder to access areas

New

permissive paths for all users

Ensuring

right balance so its as much about wildlife as human wants and needs

Make it clear to users and land owners where is publically accessible

Keep some places with reduced access for wildlife and tranquility

Ensure

adequate bins to reduce litter

Promote parking space app

Interpretation boards

Summary

We successfully achieved our aim of reaching people local to the proposed National Nature Reserve, 51% respondents are from postcodes that are shared with sites in the proposed NNR, immediately adjacent to NNR sites, or within 2km of a NNR site. Over half (54.4%) of people stated they travel fewer than 5 miles to visit the areas in the proposed NNR.

Many of the responses to our online survey, and most people we spoke to at events and consultation sessions raised concerns about parking in the area. There is a strong feeling that there needs to be more parking at a lower cost to ensure visitors park in a safe manner. The main concern is that at busy times parking can be very difficult, for example, there are fewer than 15 parking spaces at each of Ashenbank Woods and Ranscombe Farm, these spaces fill up very quickly at weekends and school holidays. Respondents were not unanimously against parking charges, however most would like to see parking charges remain affordable, as a high cost of parking would prevent some people from visiting the area.

Our online survey had a very strong response from local horse riding groups. One clear priority for horse riders, and other bridleway users, was a need for more connected pathways between sites. Many feel that the roads in the area are too dangerous to ride on, so avoid travelling between sites when they are using the area. This limits horse riders to the relatively short trails at each site.

It was clear throughout the consultation that the people value their local green spaces very highly, and 'to enjoy nature' is often stated to be a primary reason for visiting these areas. Some people raised concerns about whether a NNR designation would increase visitor number to the area and therefore put more pressure on the wildlife and sensitive habitats. However, most people spoken to were very positive about the proposed NNR as they hope it will help protect their local green spaces and encourage more engagement with nature, it was frequently commented that a more connected space for nature is an exciting prospect and would be welcomed.

Next steps

Many of the people we spoke to are interested in the National Nature Reserve and would like to know more about it. Multiple people mentioned they would like a social media account where all updates on the NNR can be shared in one place. This would help increase awareness of the NNR.

Local groups would like to be involved in the development of the NNR, for example, Shorne Woods Archaeology Group expressed interest in sharing their knowledge on the history of the area.

Once awareness has increased about the NNR a series of workshops would be beneficial, to gather the thoughts of the local community as the development of the NNR progresses.



Kent Downs
National
Landscape



North West Kent
COUNTRYSIDE
protect / explore / enjoy



MEDWAY SWALE
ESTUARY PARTNERSHIP