

Online Annual User Survey- Outdoor Partnerships 2014/15

The purpose of the survey

The survey has been produced to establish:

- Which of our Outdoor Recreation resources are being used
- For what reasons they are being used
- The frequency and duration of use
- The reasons which detract from use and how improvements could be made
- The willingness of our users to participate in active volunteering

Results

There were 342 responses to the online survey in 2014/15, down from 668 responses in 2013/14.

98% of these people use footpaths, bridleways or other RoW, 67% use countryside sites and 40% use town parks

85% of people use the outdoors to improve their health and for exercise, 78% for walking, 68% to experience nature and wildlife and 59% for the peace and quiet.

Things that put people off enjoying the outdoors include overgrown vegetation (53%), intimidating livestock (42%), lack of signposting/ waymarking (35%) and ploughing and cropping issues (34%).

Most people like to use circular walks (82%), long distance promoted walking routes (51%), countryside parks and site walks (48%) and linear walks (47%).

77% of people use outdoor assets at least once per week, with 18% using them daily. 62% use them for 2 hours or more. They are mostly using them with friends and family (over 37%), 24% are with a dog and 22% are with an organised group.

For those who are out with an organised group, 54% are with a local walking group, 34% with the Ramblers Association and 30% with Walking for Health. Only 5% are with a cycling group. People were involved with a wide range of different groups.

People joined groups to learn new walks, make friends and get fitter (54-61%).

Most people had seen little improvement in their level of activity over the past 12 months, although there were slightly fewer inactive and moderately inactive people.

Where activity levels had decreased, 65% said this was due to ill health.

Almost 50% of people are satisfied with the RoW network, 46% have noted improvements over the past 12 months and 54% in the last 3 years.

Over 50% of people were satisfied with parks and sites in their areas, with 26% noticing an improvement in the past 12 months and 30% in the past 3 years.

94% of people felt better for taking some exercise and 92% enjoyed being out and wanted to do more.

Over 50% found out something new whilst they were out, with 42% finding out more about their community.

The following were the most popular improvements that could be made:

- Nearly 50% of people wanted to see more circular walks
- 37% better signage
- 33% more walks with gates instead of stiles
- 29% more online guides and interpretation
- 27% more walk linked to public transport
- 26% more dog friendly walks

Most people use printed leaflet and guide books (57%) to find out what is available and going on in the outdoors, with 35% using local papers, 32% using local websites, 32% organised groups and 30% the Shropshire Walking website.

86% of people living close to our facilities thought it had a positive or very positive impact on their quality of life.

Over 70% said they lived 'close' although for some people this meant 30-45 minute walk.

62% did not want to get involved with volunteering. Of those that did, RoW surveys and P3 groups were the most popular.

General comments

Many people were alarmed by the lack of funding for RoW maintenance in the future, for example:

"It is ESSENTIAL THAT THE POWERS THAT BE at County Hall RECOGNISE THE IMPORTANCE OF MAINTAINING - and increasing - the RoW maintenance budgets when bearing in mind the importance of HEALTHY EXERCISE and the contribution of WALKING TOURISM TO THE RURAL ECONOMY, and to COUNTER OBESITY."

Respondents

- 58% female
- 84% over 45
- 98% White British
- 13% had long standing illnesses