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Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area 2023 Visitor Survey

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Summary

This report details the methodology and results of visitor surveying conducted at 30 locations across the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area (TBH SPA) in the summer school holidays of 2023. This is the 4th round of surveys that have been conducted, which has allowed a comparison to previous surveys to be made, as part of the long-term monitoring of access on the SPA.

Surveys consisted of 60 days (480 hours) of fieldwork, split evenly between weekdays and weekends at the 30 locations. However, due to issues with anti-social behaviour some survey points were abandoned, and the total hours of surveying was 469.4.

Tally counts:

- Tally counts recorded a total of 7,208 people, including 1,039 minors, and 3,986 dogs.
- The average number of people per hour recorded passing at survey points was 15.4, but highest at a single survey point was 46.3 people per hour at Point 24: Shore's Road.
- There was significantly more footfall recorded at weekends, than weekdays (around 1.4 times higher). In addition, group size was higher at weekends (1.77), compared to on weekdays (1.55).
- The mean group size was 1.68 people per group, of those 0.24 were minors, and a group was typically accompanied by 0.92 dogs, with 0.14 members of the group on bicycles.
- The number of people entering per hour was compared between survey years. The 2023 value was higher than in any of the other previous surveys at 23 of the 29 comparable survey points (80%).
- The overall entering per hour count across all survey points was 7.2 – this was a 5% increase on 2012/13 figures and a 13% increase on the 2018 figure. However this considers all 30 locations, not just the 29 comparable locations.
- Considering just the 29 comparable locations, the total number of people entering per hour has increased by 16% compared to 2018 and 8% compared to 2012/13.
- Excluding the survey point at The Lookout (which moved slightly this year causing a lower footfall than previous recorded), an increase of 16% on 2012/13 and 27% on 2018 in the number of people per hour entering was observed across the 28 survey points.
- For reference, the number of dwellings as of January 2023 within 5 km of the SPA had increased by 11% since December 2011, and 6% since January 2018.

Interviews:

- A total of 1,841 groups (groups can include lone individuals) were approached for interview, of these 1,118 (61%) completed the interview.
- Overall, 97% of interviewees were on a short visit travelling directly from their home.
- Most interviewees were walking, either with a dog (74%) or without a dog (19%).
- Around a quarter of interviewees (24%) were visiting daily and visitors were typically on site for around an hour.

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- The most common alternative sites visited by interviewees were: Chobham Common, Virginia Water and Horsell Common. Of all the named locations, 17% referred to SANG locations and 30% the SPA.
- Of all the interviewees who provided an alternative location, 25% gave an SPA location as their first choice, compared to 17% who gave a SANG alternative as their first choice.
- When asked about habitats or species that could be affected by recreation, 60% of interviewees made a comment regarding birds and a quarter about ground nesting birds.
- 22% of interviewees had heard of the Thames Basin Heaths Partnership and 10% of Heathland Hounds.
- When asked about improvements to the site, just under a third of interviewees (29%) stated that the site should be left as it is (i.e. no changes). Suggested changes often related to more dog waste bins, dog fouling issues, littering and more/better parking.
- Interviewees typically lived within 2.4 km of the SPA (median) and 75% lived within 4.6 km.
- Of those visiting directly from home, 92% of interviewees lived within 5 km of the SPA boundary – in 2018 this figure was 92% and in 2012/13 this figure was 94%.
- Overall, most aspects of the visitor interviews were similar to that of the previous surveys, although some direct comparisons were difficult to make, due to the presentation of only the 'local' subsets in 2018.

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Visitor survey fieldwork was conducted by Rachel Barnes, Jo East, Jenny Price, Philip Precey, Mitchell Ray and Marcus Turley.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This report describes a visitor survey for the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area (TBH SPA). The work has been commissioned by Natural England, for the Thames Basin Heaths Partnership. This is the 4th survey in a series dating back to 2005 and is an important part of the long term monitoring programme.

Thames Basin Heaths

- 1.2 The TBH SPA was classified under the EC Birds Directive (Council Directive 2009/147/EC on the conservation of wild birds) in March 2005. A subset of the area is also designated as a Special Area of Conservation (SAC).
- 1.3 The area designated is composed of 13 separate Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) totalling 8,274 hectares and separated further into isolated fragments. Many are surrounded by high levels of housing and are subject to heavy visitor pressure.
- 1.4 The SPA habitats are distributed across three counties (Surrey, Berkshire and Hampshire) and cover 11 local authorities. About half (c. 4,000 ha) is within the Ministry of Defence Training Estate, with the remainder owned and managed by Local Authorities, Conservation NGOs, Forestry Commission and private landowners.
- 1.5 The SPA includes areas of dry and wet heathland, mire, oak and birch woodland, gorse scrub and acid grassland, plus conifer plantation. The area supports internationally important breeding populations of a number of birds of lowland heathland. The TBH SPA is classified for three species of birds listed on Annex I of the Birds Directive: Nightjar *Caprimulgus europaeus*, Woodlark *Lullula arborea*, and Dartford Warbler *Sylvia undata*.
- 1.6 The designation, protection and restoration of European wildlife sites, such as the TBH is embedded in the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017, as amended, which are commonly referred to as the 'Habitats Regulations'. Importantly, the most recent amendments (the

Conservation of Habitats and Species (amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019¹) take account of the UK's departure from the EU.

Impacts and importance of access

- 1.7 A challenging issue for UK nature conservation is how to respond to increasing demand for access without compromising the integrity of protected wildlife sites. Areas that are important for nature conservation are often important for a range of other services, including the provision of space for recreation for an increasing population.
- 1.8 Visits to the natural environment have shown a significant increase in England as a result of the increase in population and a trend to visit the countryside more (O'Neill, 2019). The issues are particularly acute in southern England, where population density is highest and the Covid-19 pandemic has changed access; there was a marked increase in recreation use during the pandemic (Burnett et al., 2021).
- 1.9 There is a strong body of evidence showing how increasing levels of access can have negative impacts on wildlife. Issues are varied and include disturbance, increased fire risk, contamination and damage (for general reviews see: Liley et al., 2010; Lowen et al., 2008; Ross et al., 2014; Underhill-Day, 2005).
- 1.10 However, it is now increasingly recognised that access to the countryside is crucial to the long term success of nature conservation projects, enforcing pro-environmental behaviours and a greater respect for the natural world (Richardson et al., 2016). Access also brings wider benefits to society that include benefits to mental/physical health (Keniger et al., 2013; Lee & Maheswaran, 2011; Pretty et al., 2005) and economic benefits (ICF GHK, 2013; ICRT, 2011; Keniger et al., 2013; The Land Trust, 2018).

The TBH Delivery Framework

- 1.11 Concerns were raised about the impacts of access in the TBH in the early 2000s when it was a potential Special Protection Area (pSPA). Work was

¹ The amending regulations generally seek to retain the requirements of the 2017 Regulations but with adjustments for the UK's exit from the European Union. See Regulation 4, which also confirms that the interpretation of these Regulations as they had effect, or any guidance as it applied, before exit day, shall continue to do so.

undertaken by Footprint Ecology which analysed data from the first TBH visitor survey in 2005 (Liley, Jackson, et al., 2006), to derive spatial maps of visitor 'pressure' within the SPA and looked at Nightjar numbers and distribution in relation to visitor pressure (Liley, Clarke, et al., 2006). The visitor survey and various other pieces of evidence were used to develop a groundbreaking and innovative approach to addressing the impacts of development, the Thames Basin Heaths Draft Delivery Plan. In 2009, the Thames Basin Heaths Delivery Framework (Thames Basin Heaths Joint Strategic Partnership Board, 2009) was published which set out the recommendations on measures to enable development to take place without having a significant effect on the SPA as a whole; including the 5 km zone of influence.

Long term monitoring

- 1.12 The first visitor survey was conducted in August 2005 (Liley, Jackson, et al., 2006) and set a useful baseline for the long term monitoring. The surveys were conducted at 26 access points, using our standard approach of 16 hours per survey point, split evenly between weekday and weekend.
- 1.13 A second survey was conducted by Footprint Ecology in 2012/2013 (Fearnley & Liley, 2013), following the same methodology, but with 30 survey points (24 from 2005, plus 6 new ones). The interviews were conducted in two separate blocks in May/June and August 2012. Due to difficulties conducting interviews and tallies simultaneously, repeat tally counts were undertaken at 5 survey points in August 2013.
- 1.14 In 2018, the visitor surveys were conducted by Ecological Planning & Research (EPR) an independent ecology consultancy, with visitor surveying by Marketing Means (UK) Ltd, a market research company. The surveying followed our methodology and used the same 30 locations as in 2012/2013.
- 1.15 The on-site visitor surveying sits alongside other monitoring mechanisms, including vehicle counts, automated people counters and SANG visitor surveys.

2023 survey

- 1.16 There have been significant changes since the last survey with continued housing growth around the heaths (discussed in more detail later). The increased housing is also set in the context of the impacts of the Covid-19

pandemic, such as changes in access patterns, work patterns and dog ownership (Brand et al., 2022).

- 1.17 This study repeats the 2012/13 and 2018 surveys to allow direct comparison following the same methodology, with a change to one survey location and revisions to the questionnaire. A comparison of the questions asked over time is summarised in Appendix 3 (Table 24).

2. Methods

- 2.1 Visitor interviews and tally counts were carried out at 30 survey locations within the TBH SPA (see Table 1 and Map 1) in the summer school holidays of 2023.

Survey locations

- 2.2 The survey points selected were based on the requirement for a direct repeat of the previous survey locations. We considered the 30 locations that were used in the 2018 and 2012/13 surveys, but 1 location change was necessary.
- 2.3 All survey locations were visited as part of our own risk assessment and for the creation of detailed survey point recording methods to ensure exact repeatability in where surveyors stand and how tally counts are recorded. On visiting one location (26: Boldermere car park at Wisley & Ockham), there were obvious signs that it was being used as a PSE (Public Sex Environment). This was noted in the previous survey, however on our visit it appeared the use had increased as a result of changes in access. The car park was used for construction vehicles/ building materials as part of nearby work on the nearby M25 junction. With the change in use at this location, the survey point was moved to the nearby location of Pond Car Park, roughly 300m away from Boldermere, to better reflect recreational use of the SPA. Pond Car Park had been used in previous surveys (2005, and was already assigned an ID of 40, and therefore was considered appropriate and unlikely to change the overall long-term visit patterns. All other 29 survey locations remained the same.

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2023 Visitor Survey

Table 1: The named 30 locations used in the 2023 visitor survey. Numbering is not a complete sequence due to the constant revisions to the survey point locations.

ID	Name	OS grid ref	What3Words
1	Mytchett Place Road	SU8939254925	stiff.slams.miss
2	Nightingale Road / A323	SU9044351202	unhappily.attending.shielding
3	The Lookout	SU8798766056	holds.burn.chose
4	Top of Bracknell Road	SU8903862359	flop.galloped.uncle
5	Top of King's Ride	SU8753262129	intensely.unwraps.pixies
6	Bourley Road	SU8438950937	restriction.discussed.countries
8	North entrance to Warren Heath	SU7604561321	crab.districts.deed
9	Car Park off Cricket Hill Lane	SU8219459651	grace.boss.baseballs
10	Car Park off A30, Haywards Cottage	SU8387859416	deeply.blindfold.poems
12	Chobham Common, Roundabout Car Park	SU9653465001	move.gross.spike
13	Chobham Common, Staple Hill Car Park	SU9732164855	birds.golf.casino
14	Lightwater Country Park	SU9157561979	comic.irritable.special
15	Sandpit Hill	SU9383161310	sock.lawn.switch
16	Queens Road, Cowshot Common	SU9428957235	nests.salon.along
17	B3011 opposite Arrow Lane	SU7603657574	jetliner.starters.honeybees
18	Play area, Springfield Avenue	SU7656957465	detained.wonderful.arise
19	South Road	SU8503262953	guides.churn.dragonfly
20	Off Crowthorne Road	SU8384063052	format.magic.winter
21	Salt Box Road	SU9818552974	club.stages.salon
22	Burdenshott Road	SU9871854235	patrol.detail.glue
23	Chobham Road	TQ0020360472	handle.galaxy.cares
24	Shore's Road	TQ0122160381	joke.passes.belly
25	Wren's Nest Car Park	TQ0658058947	clash.spare.lonely
27	Layby opposite Windrush House, Chapel Lane	SU9544055685	taken.able.rift
28	Path intersection off Sandy Hill Road	SU8322149338	mock.grunt.miles
29	Car Park east of Foresters Arms Pub	SU8270152759	jaws.relating.cooked
30	Car Park off B3348/A3095 roundabout	SU8550365540	crowd.moved.vital
31	Path intersection adjacent to layby south side of A30	SU8274758985	pythons.rescue.reminder
32	Second layby on Old Guildford Road	SU9006456008	approach.snowy.autumn
40	Pond Car Park	TQ0797958352	fluid.began.points

Survey timing and effort

- 2.4 Surveys took place between 22nd July and 31st August 2023 (see dates in Appendix 1).
- 2.5 As far as possible severe weather events were avoided, and fieldwork was rescheduled, but there was a considerable volume of survey work within a short period. We avoided undertaking surveys on the August Bank Holiday Monday and days of local events (e.g. Heath Week) which may have influenced visitor use. We initially planned to avoid major sporting events, as per our protocol, but due to rescheduling around weather, it was not possible to avoid the FIFA women's world cup semi-final and final matches (see later comments).
- 2.6 Surveying effort followed the standard protocol we designed in 2005, which has been used ever since and remains our standard protocol. Each survey point was surveyed for 16 hours, with 8 hours on a weekend day and 8 hours on a weekday. Surveys were split into 2-hour periods to provide breaks for the surveyors and comparable survey windows across all locations.
- 2.7 The session timings were: 07:00-09:00, 10:30-12:30, 14:00-16:00 and 17:00-19:00. These timings differ slightly from those used in the previous surveys but are the updated timings that are currently used for all our visitor surveys. The previous survey timings were: 07:00-09:00, 10:00-12:00, 13:00-15:00 and 17:00-19:00.

Questionnaire design

- 2.8 The questionnaire (Appendix 2) was designed using Snap Surveys software, Snap XMP, and was conducted using tablet computers running the Snap Offline Interviewer app. The surveyor read the questionnaire off the tablet and the interviewee did not see the screen. Routing was used so that interviewees were only asked questions that were relevant to them, based on their answers to previous questions.
- 2.9 The app enables interviews to be completed offline in the field and then uploaded the next time that the device is connected to the internet. The interview data was then available for Footprint Ecology staff to download for cleaning and analysing during the surveying.
- 2.10 The route that the interviewee had taken on site (or planned to take) was drawn by the surveyor onto a paper map, using a unique reference number

to match it to the corresponding questionnaire data. Back in the office, the routes were digitised using QGIS to enable spatial analysis, including segmentation by interview data variables, such as the interviewee's main activity.

- 2.11 The questionnaire was based on a combination of our old standard surveys, used in 2005 and 2012/2013, the EPR revised 2018 questionnaire, and our latest version of the standard visitor questionnaire. The previous questions were examined and compared, see Appendix 3, and updated in discussion with the client. In 2018, concerns on the length of the survey were raised and meant some of the previous 2012/13 questions were cut. Due to our improved methodology, surveying software and question routing, we no longer regarded this as an issue and allowed for more questions to be asked than had been in the previous surveys.

Protocol for visitor surveys

Survey logistics

- 2.12 The Footprint Ecology Fieldwork Co-ordinator arranged the field surveyors and survey logistics. If surveyors encountered anti-social behaviour, or felt uncomfortable or threatened then they ceased undertaking survey work, contacted the Fieldwork Co-ordinator to discuss the situation off-site, and were usually advised to leave and not return that day. Usually this only affected the last part of the surveying session and if it was only the first day of surveying, the second survey day was still attempted. At MoD owned sites, surveyors contacted the MoD Southeast Operations Room to inform them when arriving and leaving survey points.

Visitor interviews

- 2.13 Surveyors wore a branded hi-vis green tabard and a name badge, and carried business cards which could be given to any members of the public who wished to see identification or request further information. They also carried leaflets to give out to members of the public with more information on the TBH Partnership (TBHP). For surveys at Wisley and Ockham SSSI, surveyors also had leaflets about the significant road works on the M25 at junction 10, which caused major disruptions to traffic and therefore access.
- 2.14 Face-to-face interviews were conducted with a random selection of visitors, with surveyors selecting the next person they saw after completing the

previous interview, and only one person was interviewed per group. The number of interviews completed at each survey location therefore depended on how busy the location was and on the flow of people on that particular day. No unaccompanied minors (under 18s) were approached or interviewed.

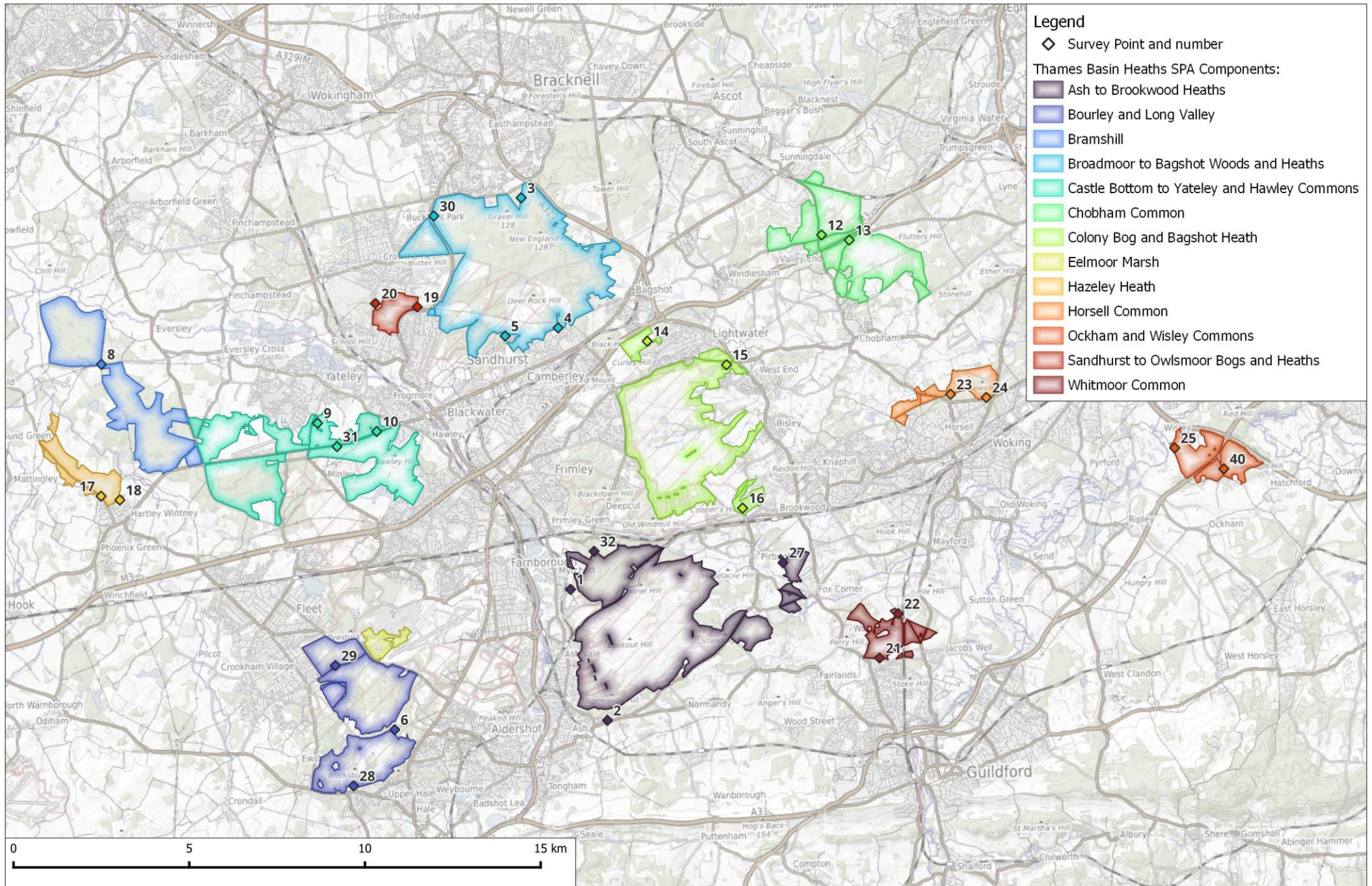
Tally counts

- 2.15 Alongside the interview data, surveyors maintained a tally of all people passing, recording the number of groups (of any size, including lone individuals), and the number of people (total headcount, including minors), minors, dogs, and cyclists within each group. These counts enabled a comparison across survey points in terms of visitor volume/footfall, and to identify the proportion of visitors interviewed at each location.

Additional data

- 2.16 In the 2018 EPR surveys, surveyors recorded the maximum number of cars and commercial dog walking vehicles parked at the survey location throughout each session. We were concerned that this would prove difficult at larger car parks, and would comprise another element for surveyors to record, taking their attention away from the main purpose of the surveys - collecting interview data. Surveyors instead carried out a single count of all vehicles present at the end of each 2-hour survey session. In addition, EPR surveyors recorded whether a Thames Basin Heaths Partnership warden was present at all during each survey session. This provided additional, useful data that was simple to collect and therefore was also recorded.

Map 1: Survey point locations within the Thames Basin Heaths SPA



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Weather

2.17 The weather during the survey period was very unsettled². Overall conditions were warm (temperatures above average), but thundery showers were common and hard to predict in the forecasts. As far as possible, adverse weather conditions were avoided, but some sessions were conducted in periods of rain. Weather conditions on the dates when the surveyors were on site are summarised in Table 2.

2.18 A total of 84 survey sessions had rain at some point (35% of all sessions). A number of sessions (15 in total, 6%) were recorded as having rainfall for the whole duration. These were across a number of survey points (2, 5, 9, 15, 16, 22, 24, 32 and 40), but for no more than 2 sessions in total at each survey point.

Table 2: Summary of weather conditions during survey work.

Survey point	Sessions with some rainfall		Average cloud cover (8ths)		Average temperature (°C)	
	Wkdy	Wknd	Wkdy	Wknd	Wkdy	Wknd
1: Mytchett Place Road	0	0	5	6	16	18
2: Nightingale Road / A323	2	4	8	8	15	15
3: The Lookout	2	1	8	6	18	18
4: Top of Bracknell Road	2	3	8	7	18	15
5: Top of King's Ride	4	0	8	6	15	14
6: Bourley Road	1	2	7	7	17	18
8: N Entrance to Warren Heath	0	0	4	4	17	16
9: Car Park off Cricket Hill Lane	3	3	8	7	15	15
10: Car Park off the A30	0	0	3	5	19	20
12: Chobham Road, Chobham Common	2	2	6	7	20	20
13: Staple Hill	3	2	5	7	16	19
14: Lightwater Country Park	0	2	3	4	20	16
15: Sandpit Hill	2	4	7	7	20	16
16: Queen's Road, Cowshot Common	0	2	6	6	20	16
17: B3011 opposite Arrow Lane	2	3	6	4	19	19
18: Play area, Springfield Avenue	1	0	8	5	16	18
19: South Road	1	0	7	5	17	19
20: Off Crowthorne Road	0	0	3	4	15	20

² <https://www.metoffice.gov.uk/research/climate/maps-and-data/summaries/index>

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Survey point	Sessions with some rainfall		Average cloud cover (8ths)		Average temperature (°C)	
	Wkdy	Wknd	Wkdy	Wknd	Wkdy	Wknd
21: Salt Box Road	0	0	3	3	17	20
22: Burdenshott Road	2	0	8	6	16	20
23: Chobham Road, Horsell	0	4	4	5	20	16
24: Shore's Road	0	2	7	6	19	15
25: E of Aberconway House (Wren's Nest CP)	1	3	8	5	19	19
27: Layby opposite Windrush House, Chapel Lane	0	0	6	6	20	20
28: Path intersection off Sandy Hill Road	4	1	7	2	17	16
29: Car Park east of Forester's Arms Pub	0	3	5	4	19	16
30: Car Park off B3348/A3095 roundabout	1	2	5	4	16	17
31: Path intersection adjacent to layby south side of A30	0	1	8	5	16	20
32: Second layby on Old Guildford Road	0	3	3	8	19	15
40: Pond Car Park	2	2	8	6	13	18

2.19 An important consideration for long term analysis is the variability in weather conditions in each survey year, which are summarised in Table 3. This is briefly summarised as:

- 2005: fine and warm, with some unsettled weather, but relatively low rainfall and lots of sunshine.
- 2012/13: weather described as 'atypical' with some periods of rain in 2012.
- 2018: at the time was joint hottest on record, with members of the public advised to avoid walking dogs during the hottest part of the day. There were many wildfires.
- 2023: very unsettled for most of the month, periods of sunshine amongst periods of rain and occasional thunderstorms.

Table 3: Summary of Met Office data for South East/Central South England in August of each survey year.³

Survey year	Mean temperature °C	Hours bright sunshine	Total rainfall (mm)
2005	16.6	240	55
2012/13	17.3	201	48
2018	17.5	191	67
2023	16.9	184	70

Incidents

- 2.20 A number of sessions were forced to be cut short due to the use of the sites as Public Sex Environments (PSE). In these situations, surveyors were intimidated or approached, and were generally uncomfortable with the situation, and in such situations were advised to leave. In addition, the activities deterred other visitors from the sites and therefore reduced the usefulness of the site for further surveying. At these locations surveyors tried to persist and if abandoning a session, would try for the next session, and in failing this would always try to survey the following day. Usually it was the last session of the day which was aborted or cut short. A total of 6 sessions were shortened or aborted and the total survey hours reduced from 480 (as planned) to 469.4 hours. The affected locations were: 10: Car Park off the A30 (Castle Bottom to Yateley and Hawley Commons), 13: Staple Hill (Chobham Commons), and 40: Pond Car Par (Ockham and Wisley Commons). Individual dates that were cut short are marked in Appendix 1.
- 2.21 In addition, at survey point 28: Path intersection off Sandy Hill Road (Bourley and Long Valley) on the 14th August, interview numbers were low in the afternoon session. It transpired that parts of the site were being used for filming and therefore some visitors were being turned away.
- 2.22 Survey dates at 4 survey points coincided with the FIFA women’s world cup semi-final and final. Peak viewing figures were 7.3 million (10.8% of the UK population) for the semi-final (16th August between 11:00 to 13:00) and 11 million (16.2%, 20th August between 11:00 to 13:00) for the final. Survey point 14: Lightwater Country Park (Colony Bog and Bagshot Heath) was surveyed on the 16th August and 19: South Road (Sandhurst to Owlsmoor Bogs and Heaths), 22: Burdenshott Road (Whitmoor Common) and 31: Path

³ <https://www.metoffice.gov.uk/research/climate/maps-and-data/uk-and-regional-series>

intersection adjacent to layby south side of A30 (Castle Bottom to Yateley and Hawley Commons) were all surveyed on the 20th August. Both of these days were very warm and sunny and therefore it was deemed necessary for surveying to commence, to ensure surveys were completed on fair weather days. No refusals at any site were stated as being caused by the football, it affected a relatedly short period of the day, and it is likely some visitors would have just walked earlier/later in the same day.

Analysis

- 2.23 All route and postcode data were analysed using QGIS 3.16. Home postcodes were geocoded using Royal Mail PostZon postcode data from 2022. Only full, valid postcodes were used in analysis of visitor origins. Partial postcodes or named towns/villages were not included in any analysis due to the variation in precision.
- 2.24 The data collected was analysed using R and Minitab statistical software packages, with graphs and tables produced using both R and Microsoft Excel. The graphs include examples of stacked barplots, histograms, and box and whisker plots. Basic descriptive statistics (i.e. mean, median values within categories) are used to summarise the dataset. The output from appropriate statistical tests (Kruskal-Wallis) is also used to identify statistically significant differences within the dataset to highlight results in which we have confidence of a genuine difference.

3. Results: visitor numbers

Tally counts

- 3.1 In total, over 60 days of fieldwork (469.4 hours), 7,208 people were recorded across all sites, including 3,986 dogs and 1,039 minors. This includes all people entering, leaving and passing (i.e. total footfall). As such the average people per hour across the dataset was 15.4 people per hour.
- 3.2 The highest number of people recorded in the tally counts was at 24: Shore's Road, with 740 people passing the survey point in 16 hours. This equated to 46.3 people per hour, whereas the average people per hour across the survey points was 7.1. Point 24: Shore's Road, had the highest number of groups (433) and dogs (479), but a relatively low number of minors (103) and dogs (107). Survey point 3: The Lookout, which had the second highest number of total people (624), had the highest number of minors (160).
- 3.3 For individual survey points the total footfall at each location is summarised in Appendix 4. However it should be noted that complete survey sessions were not achieved at all survey points and therefore this approach accounts for variable survey effort. This also accounts for variable survey effort in older surveys, allowing comparisons to be made (assuming these accounted for survey effort correctly). Values as people per hour at each survey are used beyond this point.

Difference between weekdays and weekends

- 3.4 At all but 6 of the survey points, the numbers of people per hour in total footfall recorded was higher at weekends than weekdays. Overall, there were statistically significant differences between weekdays and weekends (Kruskal-Wallis, $H = 3.10$, $df = 1$, $p = 0.078$). The typical number (median value) of people per hour passing surveying at weekends was 14.6, compared to 10.6 at weekdays. On average the total footfall was around 1.4 times greater at weekends.
- 3.5 On each day the number of people during each survey session was examined. The lowest counts were usually during the first of the 2hr survey sessions (07:00 to 09:00), with 17 of the 30 weekend counts and 9 of the 30 weekday counts. Highest counts were usually in the second session of the

day (10:30 to 12:30), with 25 of the weekend counts and 14 of the weekday counts.

Group sizes and composition

- 3.6 The total footfall figures gave a mean group size of 1.68 people per group, 1.44 adults per group and 0.24 minors. Each group was typically accompanied by 0.92 dogs, and 0.14 members of the group were on bicycles. A small number of people were noted on horseback, however these were not consistently quantified in the tallies. Group size was larger on weekends at 25 of 30 survey points, with group size at weekends averaging at 1.77, compared to 1.55 on weekdays.
- 3.7 The group size and composition of groups varied greatly between survey points. Largest group size, by some margin, was at 3: The Lookout, with an average of 2.45 people per group, of which minors made up around 26% of people (an average of 0.63 minors per group). The smallest group size was 1.31 people per group, recorded at survey point 31: Path intersection adjacent to layby south side of A30. The highest proportion of minors was at 4: Top of Bracknell Road, with 0.66 minors per group, where minors accounted for 38% of all people passing.
- 3.8 At just one survey point there were more dogs recorded than people: 25: Wren's Nest Car Park. At this location, there were 1.82 dogs per group (the average across all survey points was 0.92).
- 3.9 The highest proportion of cyclists per group was recorded at 3: The Lookout (0.42 cyclists per group and 17% of people on bikes), 4: Top of Bracknell Road (0.44 and 25%) and 19: South Road (0.40, 24%). Across all survey locations, 8% of the people counted were on bicycles.

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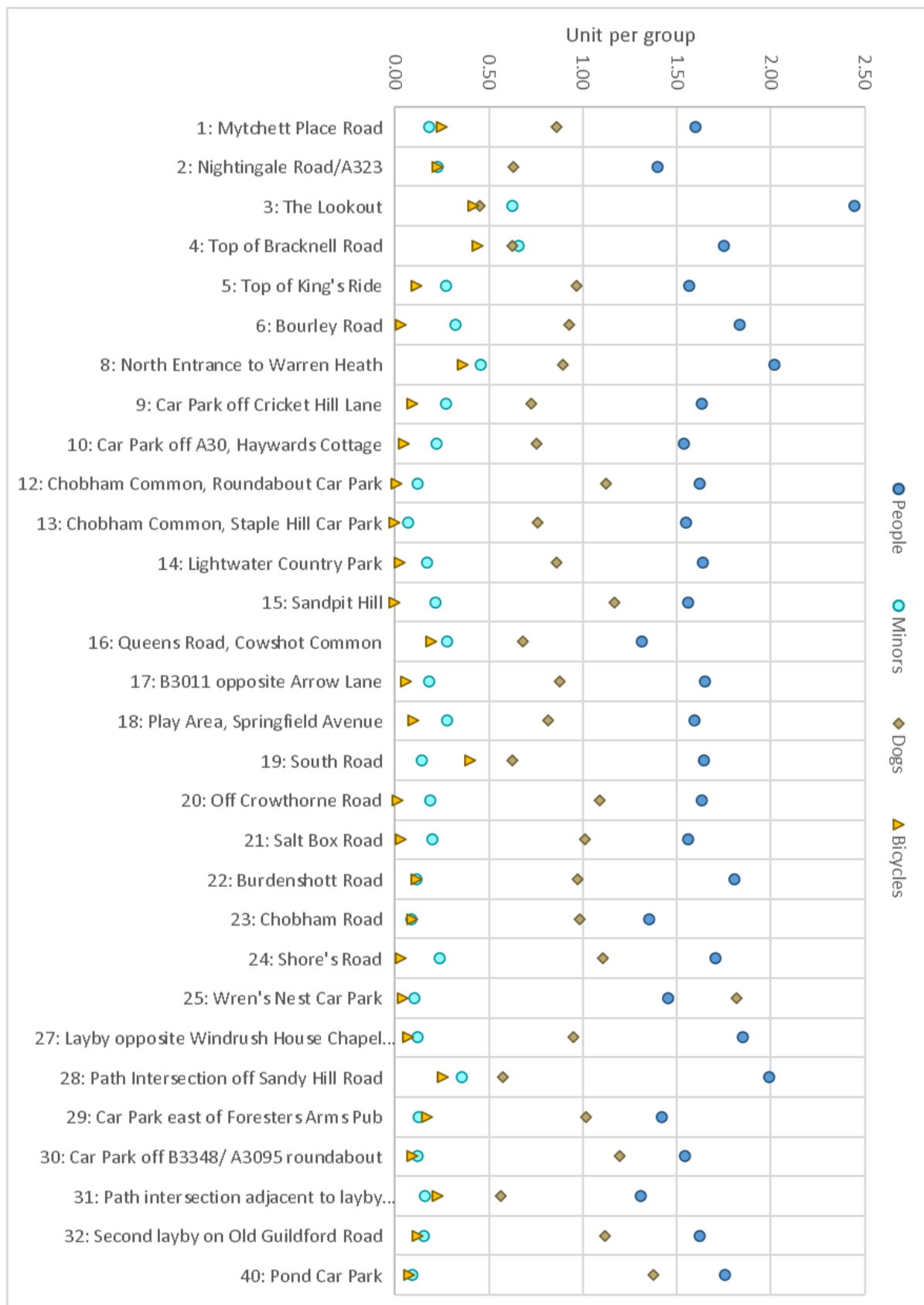


Figure 1: Typical group size and composition, shown as the average number of people, minors, dogs and bicycles per group from the tally data.

People entering over time

- 3.10 People entering is often a better way to examine people using the site, rather than total footfall. The number of people entering per hour at each survey point is shown in Figure 3 (with supporting values in Figure 5); these largely reflect the total footfalls already discussed.
- 3.11 Comparison to the previous surveys in terms of the number of people entering per hour at each survey point is also shown in Figure 3 (and by SSSI in Figure 4). This suggests a pattern of increased levels of access in the most recent survey, with 23 of the 29 comparable survey points (80%) having a higher value this year than in any of the other previous surveys.
- 3.12 However, it is important to note that some differences may be due to changes in how counts were conducted and site infrastructure. The Lookout, previously the location with the highest or second highest count is now greatly reduced. This is due to resiting of the survey point, to avoid those using the new Go Ape facilities, which were not previously present.
- 3.13 The overall average number of people entering per hour across all 30 survey points was 7.2 (see Table 4). This would represent a 13% increase on the 2018 survey and a 5% increase on the 2012/13 survey.

Table 4: Summary of the tally counts of people entering. Note 30 survey points used in each survey, but only 29 were directly comparable.

Survey year	Survey hours	Number of survey points	People entering per hour	% change to 2012/13	% change to 2018
2012/13	948	30	6.8		-
2018	480	30	6.3	-7%	-
2023	480	30	7.2	5%	13%

- 3.14 The 2012/2013 surveys were based on 32 hours at each access point, while 2018 and 2023 were based on 16 hours at each access point and so it is appropriate to use the hourly rates rather than total numbers. However, the survey points used differed and therefore we have only considered the 29 points which were identical.
- 3.15 The values for each year are summarised in a boxplot in Figure 2 which shows the pattern of access between years. The values for mean and median, which are shown graphically in Figure 2 are given in Table 5. Based on median values, it would suggest a very large increase in the typical level of

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access; a 36% increase in the median number of people entering per hour at each survey point in 2012/13 compared to 2023. However, the mean gives a more conservative estimate; a 4% increase in the mean (2012/13 to 2023), and the summed entering per hour values across all survey points a similar overall level; an 8% increase.

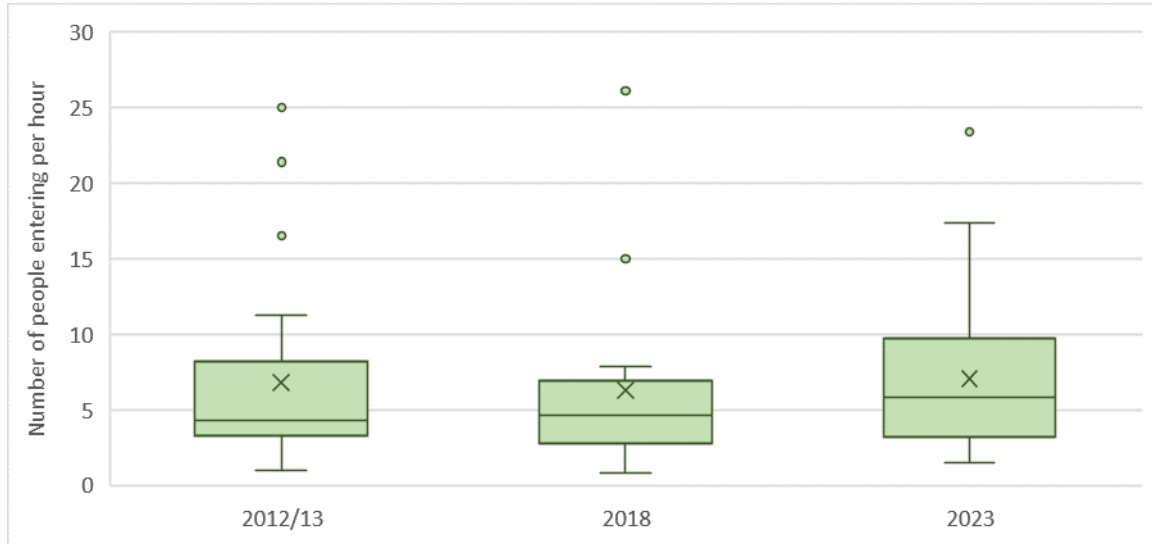


Figure 2: Boxplots summarising the entering tally counts based on the 29 comparable survey points (numbers 1-6,8-10,12-25, 27-32). The horizontal line is the median and the cross is the mean.

Table 5: Summary of entering tally counts based on the 29 comparable survey points (numbers 1-6,8-10,12-25, 27-32). The last row considers the change between the 2023 values and the two previous survey years having removed survey point 3: The Lookout from all the data.

Survey year	Summed entering per hour	% change to 2012/13	% change to 2018	Mean entering per hour	% change to 2012/13	% change to 2018	Median entering per hour	% change to 2012/13	% change to 2018
2012/13	196.9			6.79			4.3		
2018	182.9	-7%		6.31	-7%		4.6	7%	
2023	212.3	8%	16%	7.08	4%	12%	5.9	36%	27%
2023 (exc. 3: The Lookout)	199.1	16%	27%	6.87	12%	23%	5.9	41%	33%

- 3.16 Figure 3 and Figure 4 also allow for comparison between the different survey years but showing the individual points and highlighting key locations where the increases and decreases have taken place. It is important to note that The Lookout is the key survey point which drives the decrease in values entering per hour as the location was deliberately shifted to a quieter location.
- 3.17 A statistical test to look for clear differences between the entering per hour values in 2012/13 compared to 2023 (the most obvious difference) based on 29 survey points suggested no statistically significant differences (Kruskal-Wallis, $H=0.40$, $df=1$, $p=0.529$).
- 3.18 An attempt was made to compare to the 2005 survey, however, this is very limited, with only 22 comparable survey points and overall figures suggest a 10% reduction in the number of people per hour entering between 2005 and 2023.

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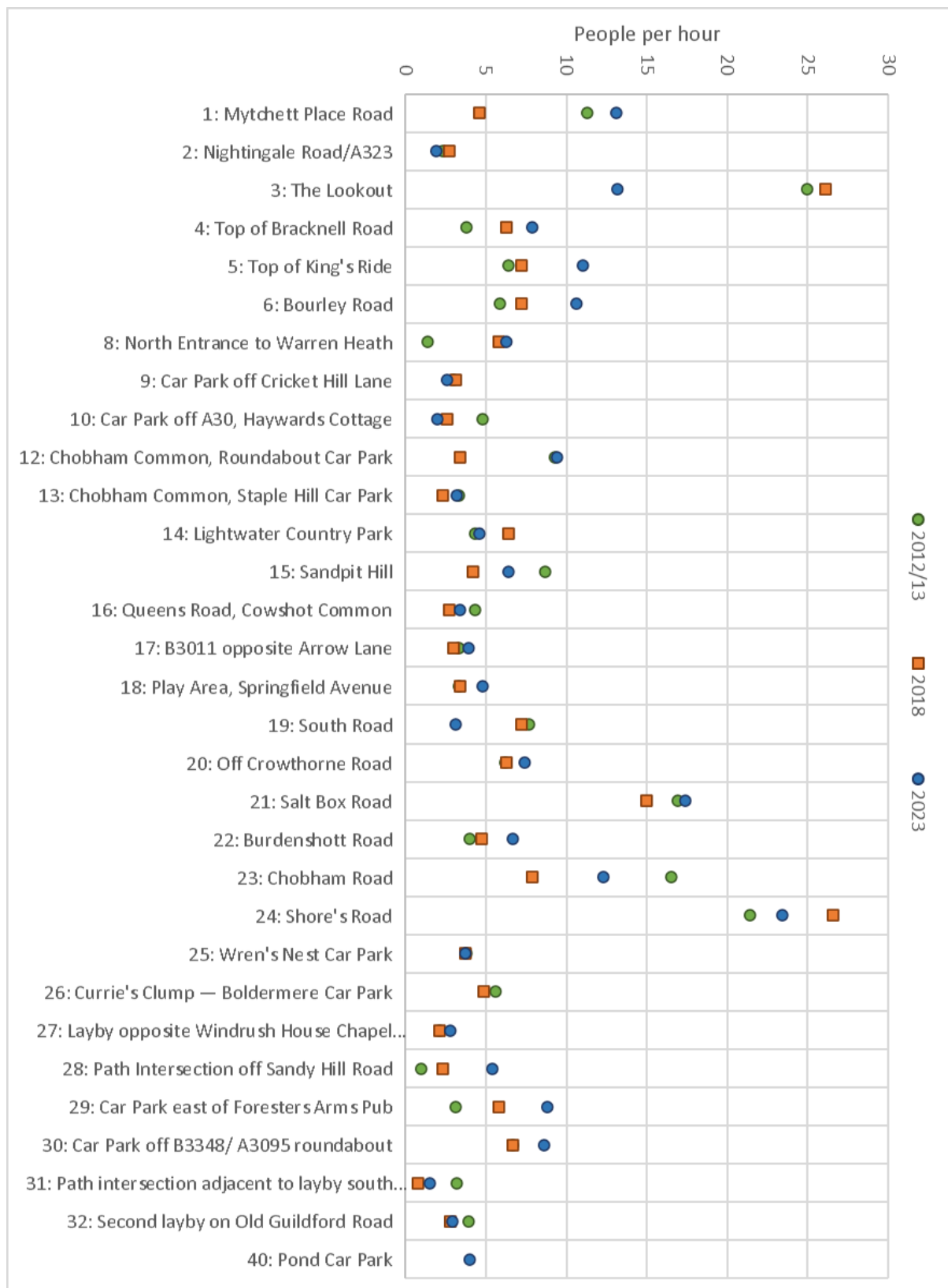


Figure 3: Plot showing the number of people per hour entering at each survey point in the 2012/13, 2018 and 2023 surveys.

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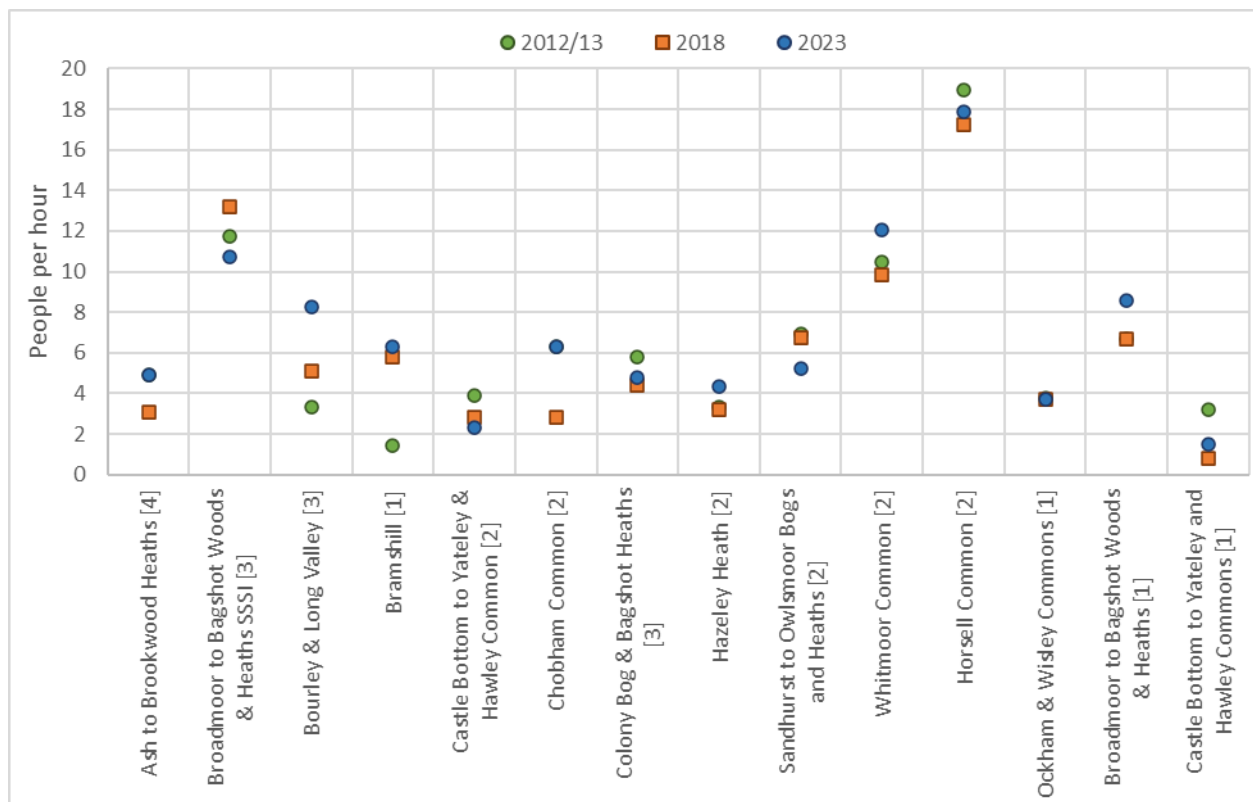


Figure 4: Plot showing the number of people per hour entering at each SSSI in the 2012/13, 2018 and 2023 surveys. Values in brackets indicate the number of survey points for each site.

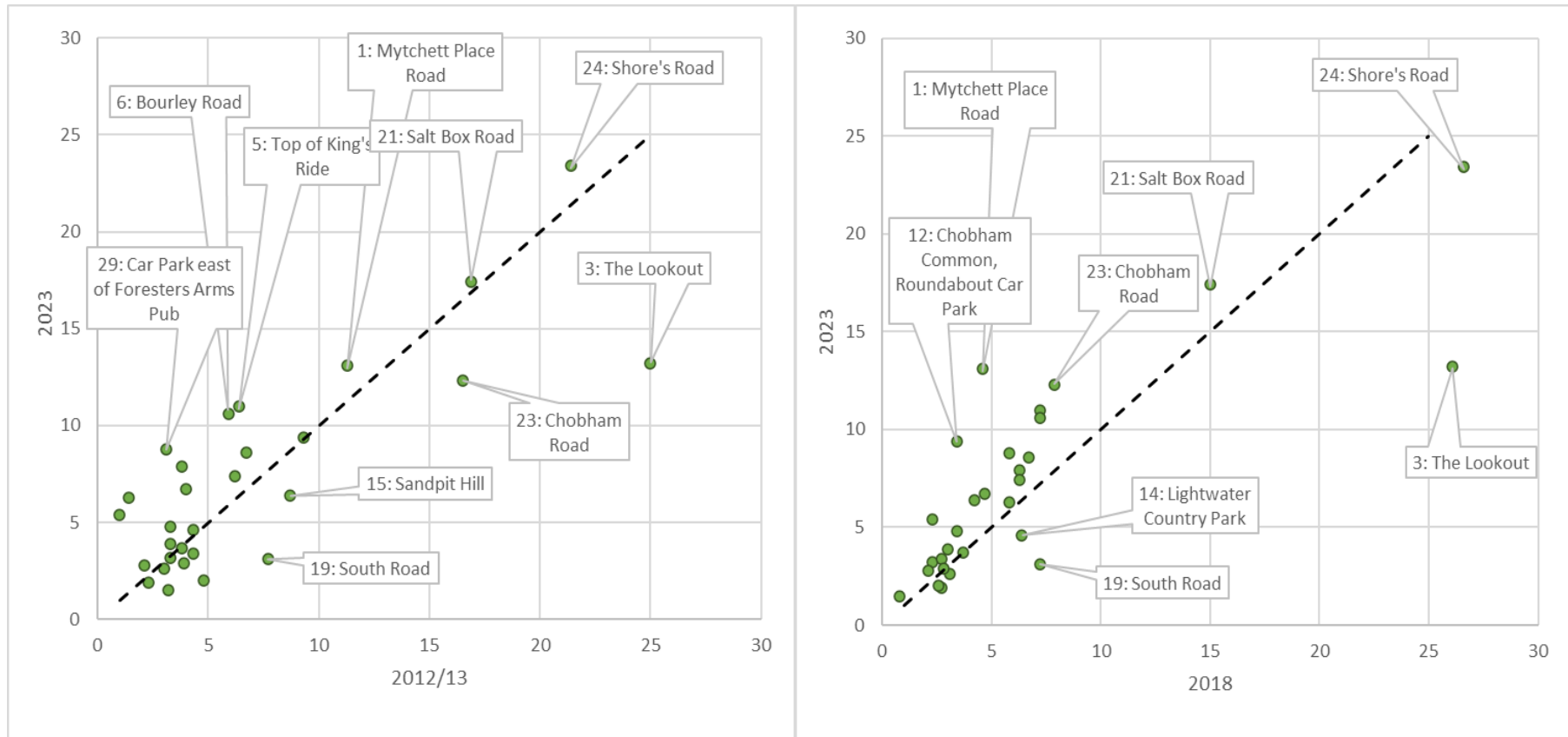


Figure 5: Scatterplot to compare the number of people entering per hour recorded in the current survey to the previous two surveys. The dashed line shows the 1:1 line (line of equality), such that values above it indicate an increase in the number of people entering per hour in 2023 compared to the relevant previous survey, and values below the line indicate a decrease in the value recorded in 2023 compared to previously. Key survey points are labelled.

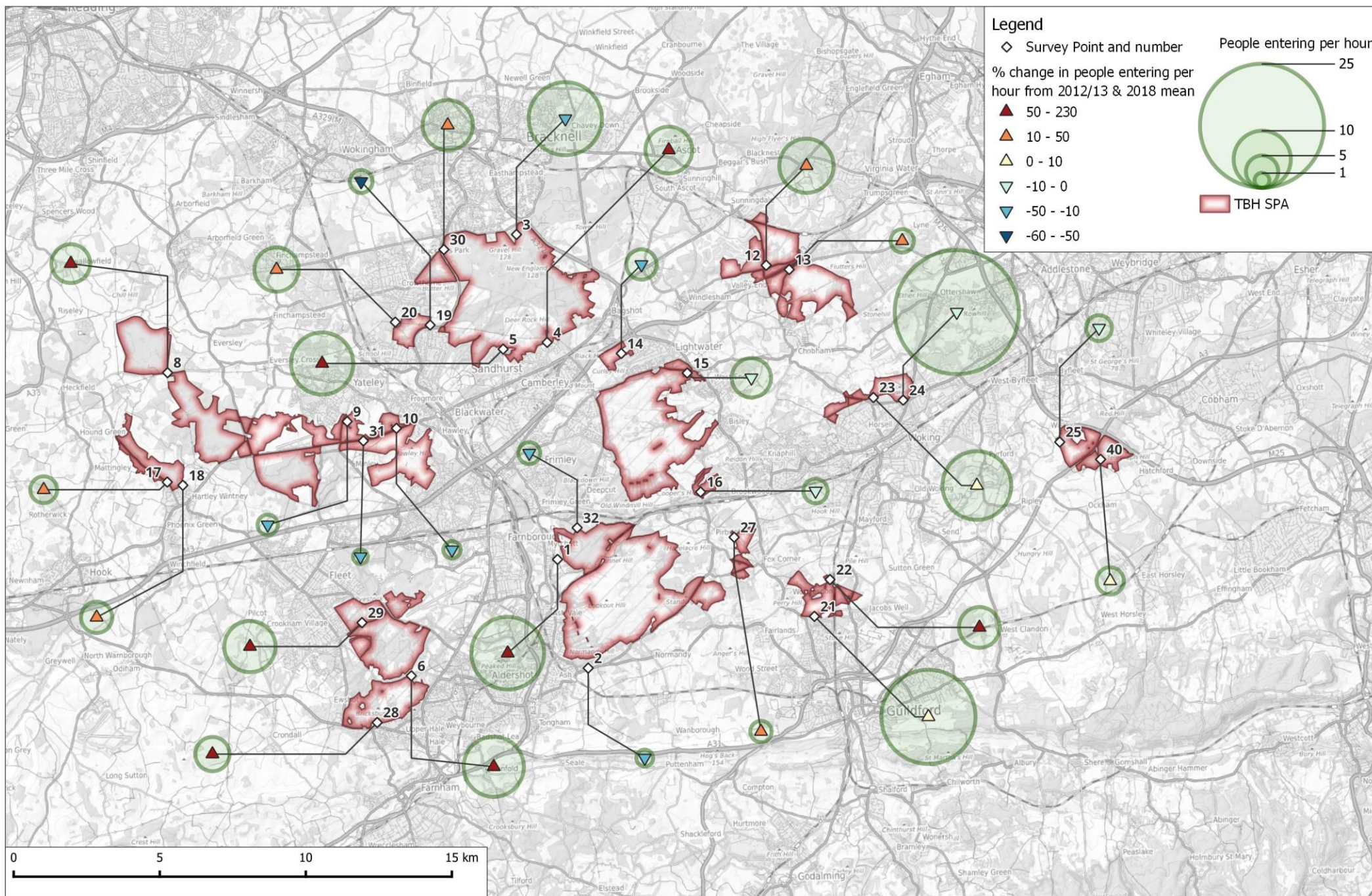
Table 6: The number of people entering per hour at each survey point, and the percentage changes.

Survey point	2012/13 Hourly rate	2018 Hourly rate	% change from 2012/13 to 2018	2023 Hourly rate	% change from 2018 to 2023	% change from 2012/13 to 2023	% change from the mean 2012/13 and 2018 to 2023
1: Mytchett Place Road	11.3	4.6	-60%	13.1	185%	16%	65%
2: Nightingale Road/A323	2.3	2.7	18%	1.9	-30%	-17%	-24%
3: The Lookout	25.0	26.1	4%	13.2	-49%	-47%	-48%
4: Top of Bracknell Road	3.8	6.3	67%	7.9	25%	108%	56%
5: Top of King's Ride	6.4	7.2	13%	11.0	53%	72%	62%
6: Bourley Road	5.9	7.2	22%	10.6	47%	80%	62%
8: North Entrance to Warren Heath	1.4	5.8	313%	6.3	9%	350%	75%
9: Car Park off Cricket Hill Lane	3.0	3.1	3%	2.6	-16%	-13%	-15%
10: Car Park off A30, Haywards Cottage	4.8	2.6	-47%	2.0	-23%	-58%	-46%
12: Chobham Common, Roundabout Car Park	9.3	3.4	-64%	9.4	176%	1%	48%
13: Chobham Common, Staple Hill Car Park	3.3	2.3	-30%	3.2	39%	-3%	14%
14: Lightwater Country Park	4.3	6.4	48%	4.6	-28%	7%	-14%
15: Sandpit Hill	8.7	4.2	-52%	6.4	52%	-26%	-1%
16: Queens Road, Cowshot Common	4.3	2.7	-37%	3.4	26%	-21%	-3%
17: B3011 opposite Arrow Lane	3.3	3.0	-10%	3.9	30%	18%	24%
18: Play Area, Springfield Avenue	3.3	3.4	2%	4.8	41%	45%	43%
19: South Road	7.7	7.2	-7%	3.1	-57%	-60%	-58%
20: Off Crowthorne Road	6.2	6.3	2%	7.4	17%	19%	18%
21: Salt Box Road	16.9	15.0	-11%	17.4	16%	3%	9%

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Survey point	2012/13 Hourly rate	2018 Hourly rate	% change from 2012/13 to 2018	2023 Hourly rate	% change from 2018 to 2023	% change from 2012/13 to 2023	% change from the mean 2012/13 and 2018 to 2023
22: Burdenshott Road	4.0	4.7	17%	6.7	43%	68%	54%
23: Chobham Road	16.5	7.9	-52%	12.3	56%	-25%	1%
24: Shore's Road	21.4	26.6	24%	23.4	-12%	9%	-3%
25: Wren's Nest Car Park	3.8	3.7	-2%	3.7	0%	-3%	-1%
26: Currie's Clump — Boldermere Car Park	5.6	4.9	-12%				
27: Layby opposite Windrush House Chapel Lane	2.1	2.1	-2%	2.8	33%	33%	33%
28: Path Intersection off Sandy Hill Road	1.0	2.3	124%	5.4	135%	440%	227%
29: Car Park east of Foresters Arms Pub	3.1	5.8	90%	8.8	52%	184%	98%
30: Car Park off B3348/ A3095 roundabout	6.7	6.7	1%	8.6	28%	28%	28%
31: Path intersection adjacent to layby south side of A30	3.2	0.8	-75%	1.5	88%	-53%	-25%
32: Second layby on Old Guildford Road	3.9	2.8	-27%	2.9	4%	-26%	-13%
40: Pond Car Park	-	-	-	4.0			
All survey points	6.8	6.3	-7.5%	7.1	13%	4%	8%

Map 2: Summary of tally counts; green circles sized by the number of people entering and triangles to show change in tally count since 2012/13 & 18.



Vehicle counts

- 3.19 Surveyors were also asked to record the number of vehicles present in the car park. Vehicle counts were taken at the end of each survey period (i.e. at 09:00, 12:30, 16:00, 19:00), and provide an additional estimate of levels of access. Vehicle counts were accurate at all but The Lookout, where due to the large size of the car park, broad estimates were made rather than counting every vehicle, which would have taken significant time. At 3 locations, there was not a clear associated area of parking and therefore a count was not made. These locations were 14: Lightwater Country Park, 18: Play area Springfield Avenue and 28: Path intersection off Sandy Hill Road.
- 3.20 The averages from the 8 counts (4 on each survey day) ranged from 146.3 (3: The Lookout) to 0.1 (16: Queens Road, Cowshot Common), see Table 7.
- 3.21 When compared to previous survey data, the 2018 report states that The Lookout (3), Salt Box Road (21) Shore's Road (6) were the busiest locations, which is consistent with the findings in the 2023 survey.

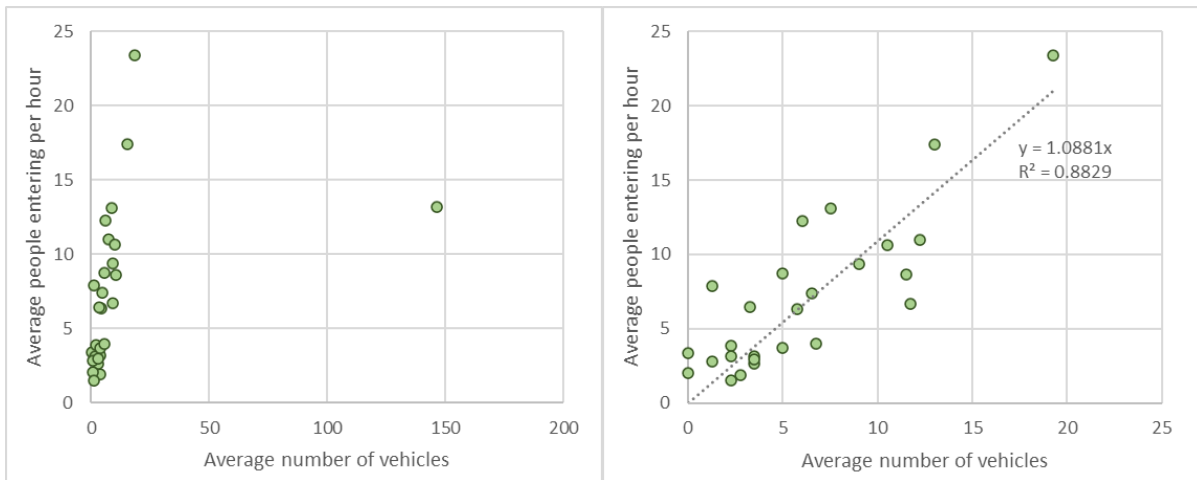
Table 7: Car park counts across Thames Basin Heaths, busiest and quietest locations only.

Survey locations	Average vehicles
Busiest 5 locations:	
3 - The Lookout	146.3
24 - Shore's Road	18.5
21 - Salt Box Road	15.4
30 - Car Park off B3348/A3095 Roundabout	10.5
6 - Bourley Road	10.0
Quietest 5 locations:	
16 - Queen's Road, Cowshot Common	0.1
10 - Car Park off A30	0.6
27 - Layby opposite Windrush House, Chapel Lane	0.6
4 - Top of Bracknell Road	1.4
31 - Path intersection adjacent to layby southside of A30	1.4

- 3.22 Overall totals for each location on weekdays and weekends (see Table 8) suggest an increase of 14% in the number of vehicles recorded at weekends compared to weekdays. This is less than the 38% increase suggested by the tally counts, perhaps related to the larger group size at weekends.
- 3.23 The counts of vehicles related well to the counts of people entering, suggesting that the counts work well as a proxy, as shown in the scatterplots

in Figure 6. The counts at survey point 3: The Lookout, were poorly correlated due to the large number of vehicles accessing the facilities (Discovery Centre, café, Go Ape etc.) and the survey point focused on one main path, rather than trying to cover the entire car park.

3.24 Attempts to understand the level of change between these counts and any previous collected data were beyond the scope of this reporting, but would be possible to be aligned with the TBH vehicle counts.



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Table 8: The average number of vehicles recorded from the 4 counts taken on each weekday and weekend of surveying. For 3 locations a count was not recorded as there was not an associated car park.

Survey point	Average vehicle count: Weekday	Average vehicle count: Weekend	Average vehicle count
1: Mytchett Place Road	10.3	7.5	8.9
2: Nightingale Road/A323	4.8	2.8	3.8
3: The Lookout	141.3	151.3	146.3
4: Top of Bracknell Road	1.5	1.3	1.4
5: Top of King's Ride	2.3	12.3	7.3
6: Bourley Road	9.5	10.5	10.0
8: North Entrance to Warren Heath	2.8	5.8	4.3
9: Car Park off Cricket Hill Lane	2.5	3.5	3.0
10: Car Park off A30, Haywards Cottage	1.3	0.0	0.6
12: Chobham Common, Roundabout Car Park	9.3	9.0	9.1
13: Chobham Common, Staple Hill Car Park	4.7	3.5	4.0
14: Lightwater Country Park			
15: Sandpit Hill	3.3	3.3	3.3
16: Queens Road, Cowshot Common	0.3	0.0	0.1
17: B3011 opposite Arrow Lane	1.5	2.3	1.9
18: Play Area, Springfield Avenue			
19: South Road	1.0	2.3	1.6
20: Off Crowthorne Road	2.8	6.5	4.6
21: Salt Box Road	17.8	13.0	15.4
22: Burdeshott Road	7.0	11.8	9.4
23: Chobham Road	5.8	6.0	5.9
24: Shore's Road	17.8	19.3	18.5
25: Wren's Nest Car Park	3.0	5.0	4.0
27: Layby opposite Windrush House Chapel Lane	0.0	1.3	0.6
28: Path Intersection off Sandy Hill Road			
29: Car Park east of Foresters Arms Pub	6.3	5.0	5.6
30: Car Park off B3348/ A3095 roundabout	9.5	11.5	10.5
31: Path intersection adjacent to layby south side of A30	0.5	2.3	1.4
32: Second layby on Old Guildford Road	2.5	3.5	3.0
40: Pond Car Park	3.5	6.8	5.7

4. Results: interviews

Number of interviews

- 4.1 A total of 1,841 groups (groups can include lone individuals) were approached for interview across 469.4 hours of fieldwork. Of these 1,118 (61%) completed the interview. Of those groups who did not take part in the interviews, 29% (537) refused to take part, 2% (30) did not take part due to language issues and 8% (156) were unable to due to having been already interviewed at the location.
- 4.2 The breakdown of interviews, refusals and already interviewed groups is shown in Table 9. The highest number of groups who refused were recorded at 2: Nightingale Road/A323 (15, 60%), 28: Path Intersection off Sandy Hill Road (42, 53%) and 29: Car Park east of Foresters Arms Pub (31, 61%). Reasons for these were diverse and included people on their way to work, runners, and to a lesser extent; cyclists, groups with children not willing to stop and those not stopping due to rain. The highest proportion of people approached who had already been interviewed was very notably 25: Wren's Nest Car Park (16, 33%), where almost half the people approached had already been interviewed, followed by 4: Top of Bracknell Road (8, 16%) and 8: North Entrance to Warren Heath (8, 16%). A high proportion is indicative of a high repeat visitor rate and the visitors were often very local or very regular, site faithful visitors (see later analysis).
- 4.3 A total of 30 groups approached had language issues, such that an interview was not attempted. Within the 1,118 interviews, 19 were conducted but noted that there were some language issues. This factor, alongside people in a rush and the weather conditions, meant for a number of interviewees some questions were skipped.

Group size and composition

- 4.4 The mean group size of the interviewed groups was 1.57 people (in the tallies it was 1.68 people per group) and the mean number of dogs with interviewees was 1.11 (in the tallies it was 0.92 dogs per group). As such the interviews were broadly representative of the proportions seen from the tally, discussed in more detail in the limitations section. Overall 79% of interviewees had a dog with them (in 2018, this figure was 76% interviewees),

and of the overall total of dogs observed with interviewees (1215), 478 were recorded off lead at the time of the interview (39%).

Table 9 : Summary of interview totals by survey location. Each number is given followed in brackets by a percentage for the survey point (counting across each row). The top and bottom 3 percentages in each column are highlighted in red and blue respectively.

Survey point	Number (%) refusals	Number (%) with language issues	Number (%) of groups already interviewed	Number (%) of Interviews	Total groups approached
1: Mytchett Place Road	24 (32%)	1 (1%)	2 (3%)	49 (64%)	76
2: Nightingale Road/A323	15 (60%)	0 (0%)	1 (4%)	9 (36%)	25
3: The Lookout	29 (37%)	1 (1%)	3 (4%)	46 (58%)	79
4: Top of Bracknell Road	14 (32%)	1 (2%)	8 (18%)	21 (48%)	44
5: Top of King's Ride	33 (40%)	0 (0%)	10 (12%)	39 (48%)	82
6: Bourley Road	20 (29%)	6 (9%)	8 (11%)	36 (51%)	70
8: North Entrance to Warren Heath	13 (25%)	0 (0%)	8 (16%)	30 (59%)	51
9: Car Park off Cricket Hill Lane	7 (18%)	0 (0%)	4 (11%)	27 (71%)	38
10: Car Park off A30, Haywards Cottage	8 (13%)	0 (0%)	5 (8%)	48 (79%)	61
12: Chobham Common, Roundabout Car Park	29 (36%)	1 (1%)	4 (5%)	47 (58%)	81
13: Chobham Common, Staple Hill Car Park	6 (35%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	11 (65%)	17
14: Lightwater Country Park	21 (30%)	0 (0%)	5 (7%)	44 (63%)	70
15: Sandpit Hill	26 (25%)	0 (0%)	6 (6%)	70 (69%)	102
16: Queens Road, Cowshot Common	15 (31%)	1 (2%)	3 (6%)	29 (60%)	48
17: B3011 opposite Arrow Lane	9 (13%)	2 (3%)	0 (0%)	56 (84%)	67
18: Play Area, Springfield Avenue	18 (16%)	0 (0%)	12 (11%)	82 (73%)	112
19: South Road	14 (25%)	6 (11%)	8 (15%)	27 (49%)	55
20: Off Crowthorne Road	9 (27%)	0 (0%)	4 (12%)	20 (61%)	33
21: Salt Box Road	27 (29%)	1 (1%)	11 (12%)	55 (59%)	94
22: Burdenshott Road	13 (16%)	1 (1%)	4 (5%)	64 (78%)	82
23: Chobham Road	27 (39%)	0 (0%)	3 (4%)	39 (57%)	69
24: Shore's Road	29 (31%)	2 (2%)	8 (8%)	56 (59%)	95
25: Wren's Nest Car Park	6 (16%)	0 (0%)	16 (43%)	15 (41%)	37

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Survey point	Number (%) refusals	Number (%) with language issues	Number (%) of groups already interviewed	Number (%) of Interviews	Total groups approached
27: Layby opposite Windrush House Chapel Lane	6 (20%)	0 (0%)	3 (10%)	21 (70%)	30
28: Path Intersection off Sandy Hill Road	42 (53%)	4 (5%)	5 (6%)	28 (35%)	79
29: Car Park east of Foresters Arms Pub	31 (61%)	0 (0%)	4 (8%)	16 (31%)	51
30: Car Park off B3348/ A3095 roundabout	21 (33%)	1 (2%)	3 (5%)	38 (60%)	63
31: Path intersection adjacent to layby south side of A30	10 (18%)	2 (4%)	5 (9%)	39 (70%)	56
32: Second layby on Old Guildford Road	9 (20%)	0 (0%)	2 (4%)	35 (76%)	46
40: Pond Car Park	6 (24%)	0 (0%)	1 (4%)	18 (72%)	25
All survey points	537 (29%)	30 (2%)	156 (8%)	1115 (61%)	1838

Visit type (Q1)

- 4.5 The majority of interviewees (1,090, 97%) were on a short visit travelling directly from their home. A minority were visiting friends and family (17, 2%) and the remaining 1% were either on holiday and staying away from home (4 interviewees) or on route to/from work (4 interviewees, 2 of which were MoD staff).
- 4.6 The percentage visiting directly from home was 96% in 2018 and 98% in 2012/13.

Activities (Q2)

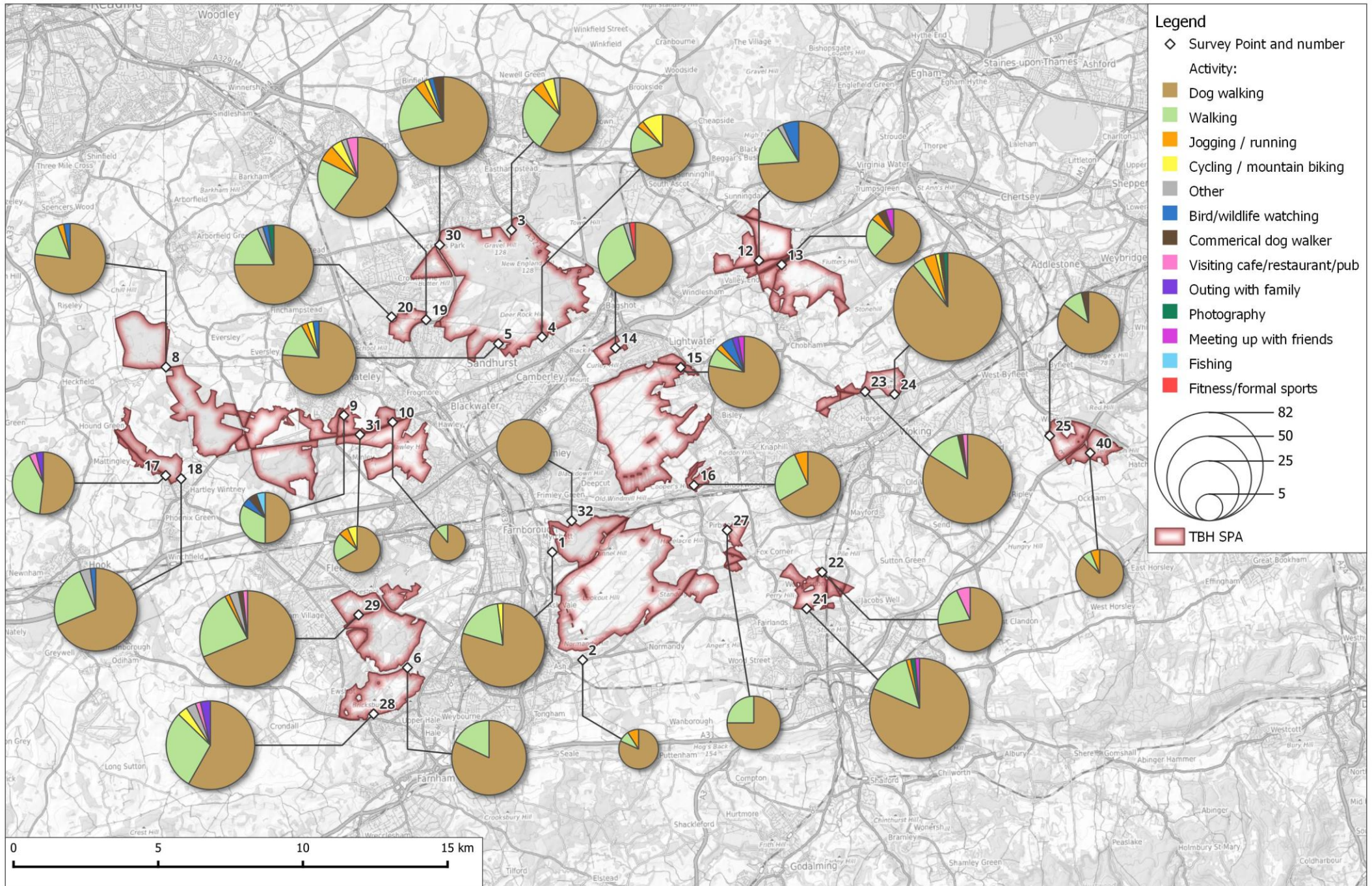
- 4.7 Main activities undertaken by interviewees are summarised in Table 10. The majority of interviewees were walking, either with a dog (74%) or walking without a dog (19%). This is consistent with the 2018 survey, where 75% were visiting for dog walking, but an increase on the 2012/13 when this figure was 66%.

Table 10: The single main activity of interviewee, including results from the 2018 survey. Note that question wording had changed since 2018 survey and categories were reduced.

Main activity	Count in 2023	% in 2023	Average dogs per group in 2023	% 2023 (visiting from home only)	% 2018 (visiting from home only)
Dog walking	820	73.7%	1.4	74.1%	74.6%
Walking	207	18.6%	0.2	18.6%	9.8%
Jogging / running	22	2.0%	0.3	1.9%	4.0%
Cycling / mountain biking	14	1.3%	0.1	1.2%	6.4%
Bird/wildlife watching	11	1.0%	0.2	0.9%	-
Commercial dog walker	8	0.7%	5.1	0.6%	-
Visiting café/restaurant/pub	8	0.7%	0.3	0.6%	-
Outing with family	4	0.4%	0.5	0.3%	-
Photography	3	0.3%	0.3	0.3%	-
Meeting up with friends	3	0.3%	0.7	0.3%	-
Fishing	1	0.1%	0.0	0.1%	-
Fitness/formal sports	1	0.1%	0.0	0.1%	-
Other	11	1.0%	0.2	0.9%	2.9%
Total	1,113	100%	1.1	100%	100%

- 4.8 It is important to note that these are self-reported main activities and people could be conducting multiple activities (e.g. family outing and dog walking, jogging and with the dog). Those who stated their main activity as dog walking had an average of 1.4 dogs with them, compared to 5.1 dogs per interviewee for commercial dog walkers. Table 10 gives the average number of dogs per group for all main activities. In total, 79% of interviewees had a dog with them – including those who gave their main activity as activities other than dog walking but had a dog with them. Therefore this percentage, as observed by the surveyors, is different from the percentage of interviewees who reported as dog walking in the interviews.
- 4.9 The proportion of interviewees conducting different activities is shown in Map 3 (data table given in Appendix 5). At all survey points dog walking was the most common main activity recorded, and consistently followed by walking as the second most common (except at survey point 32: Second layby on Old Guildford Road, where all interviewees were dog walkers).

Map 3: Summary of interviewee activities, with pie charts sized by the number of interviewees.



Transport (Q8)

- 4.10 Approximately three-quarters of interviewees (828 interviewees, 74%) accessed the site by car or van. A further 24% (268) visited on foot, 1% (11) by bicycle and less than 1% (4) accessed the site using other means (train, motorbike or e-bike). At all but 6 survey points the main mode of transport was car or van.
- 4.11 This is similar to previous years, although note the 2018 figure is based on those visiting from home only. There is a slight decrease in the proportion of interviewees driving to the site (80% in 2018 to 74% in 2023) and an increase in those accessing the site on foot (from 19% in 2018 to 24% in 2023).

Table 11: Mode of transport used by interviewees to access the site.

Mode of transport	Count in 2023	2023	2023 (visiting from home only)	2018 (visiting from home only)	2012/13
Car/van	828	74%	75%	80%	75%
On foot	268	24%	24%	19%	22%
Bicycle	11	1%	1%	1%	2%
Other	4	<1%	0%	-	-
Total	1,111	100%	100%	100%	100%

Visit patterns

Visit duration (Q5)

- 4.12 Across all interviewees, approximately half stated that they were visiting the site for between 30 minutes and 1 hour (54%, 601 interviewees). A further third stated that they were spending between 1 and 2 hours on site that day (34%, 372 interviewees), 8% (89) were spending less than 30 minutes, and approximately 4% (47) were spending over 2 hours. Across all interviews, the typical visit duration⁴ was estimated to be just over an hour (1 hr 3 minutes)
- 4.13 Duration on site varied across the main activity types. Dog walkers were more likely to spend a shorter amount of time, between 30 minutes and 1

⁴ We converted the categories into single numbers as follows: Less than 30 minutes = 20 minutes; Between 30 minutes and 1 hour = 45 minutes; 1 to 2 hours = 90 minutes; 2 to 3 hours = 150 minutes; 3 to 4 hours = 210 minutes; 4+ hours = 270 minutes.

hour (59%) compared to 42% of visitors who were walking (without a dog). Walkers were also more likely to spend between 1 and 2 hours on site than walkers with dogs (40% and 31% respectively). Figure 7 gives the reported visit duration for each interviewee by activity and shows averaged visit durations ranged from 45 minutes, for fitness/formal sports to 135 minutes for fishing (but both are based on just one interviewee).

4.14 In comparison to previous years, most groups were also spending between 30 minutes and 1 hour on site: 57% in 2018 (local visitors only) and 64% spending less than 1 hour on site in 2012/13 (62% in 2023).

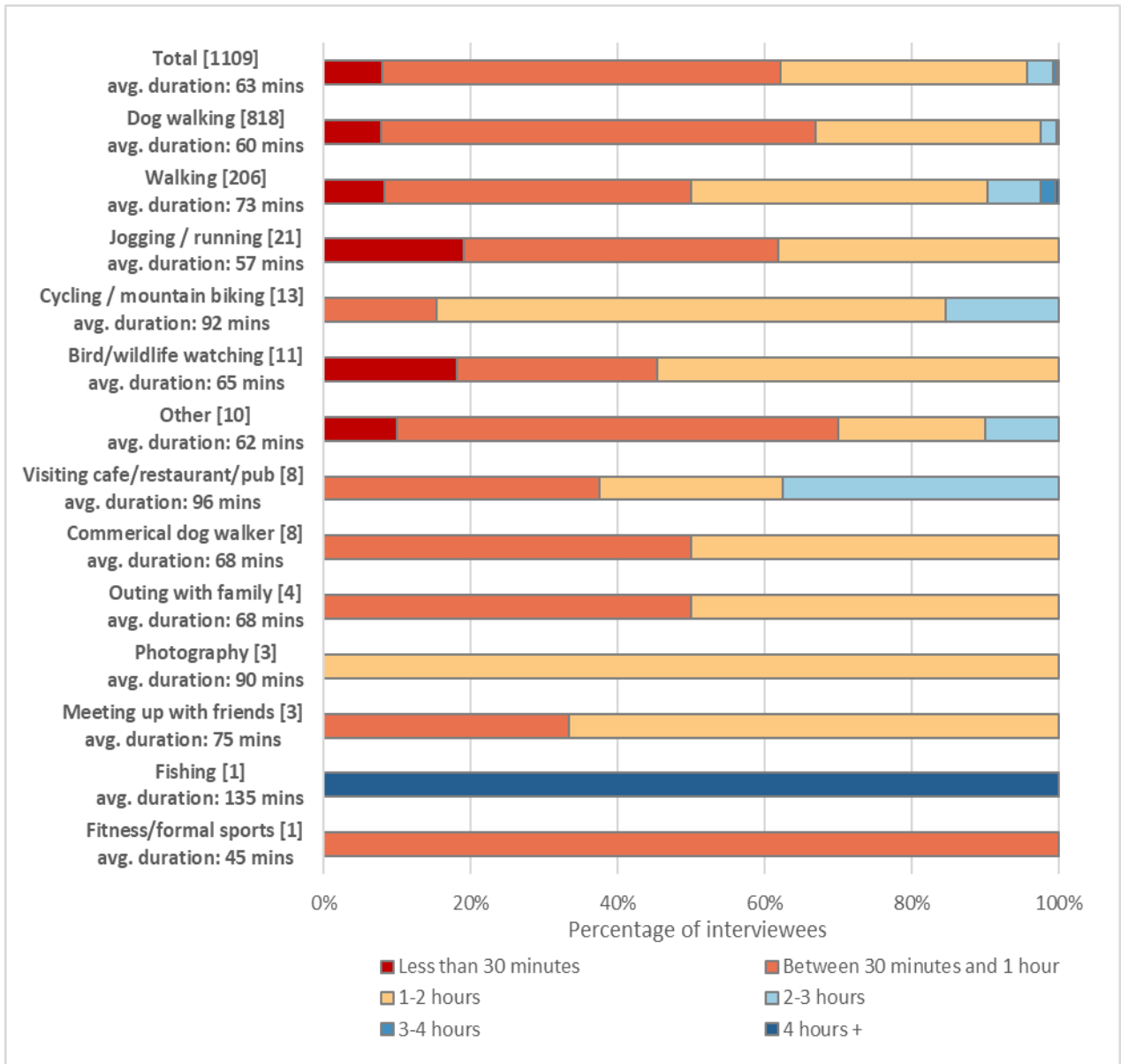


Figure 7: Summary of visit duration by main activity. Values in square brackets give the N, and an averaged visit duration is given in minutes.

Visit frequency and proportion (Q3-4)

- 4.15 Interviewees were asked to state how often they had visited the interview location over the last year. Over two thirds of interviewees stated that they visit the site at least weekly (68%, 759) and of those 24% (269) are visiting on a daily basis. An estimation based on these categories⁵ suggested a typical visitor makes 155 visits per year. This varied between various factors such as activity, day of visiting, distance from site and SSSI, as shown in Figure 8.
- 4.16 Frequency of visits is similar to those reported in 2018, which found that 36% were visiting daily (considering “locals only”). This would suggest the proportion of interviewees that are visiting on a daily basis has decreased by 12% since 2018. However, categories in the 2018 survey were not directly comparable, and included a proportion of “sporadic” responses.
- 4.17 In addition, interviewees were asked to consider what proportion of their weekly visits for their main activity take place at the survey point. Overall, 38% (422 interviewees) said that 75% or more of their visits for their main activity took place on the heaths including 13% (137) who said that all (100%) of their visits for the activity took place here. In contrast, 30% of interviewees (331 respondents) said that less than a quarter of their weekly visits occurred here.
- 4.18 Almost half of the interviewees who were cycling/mountain biking (43%, 6) said that all their visits for cycling/mountain biking took place at the site. In comparison this was only 12% (98) and 9% (19) for dog walkers and walkers respectively. But considering those making 75% or more of their visits for their main activity on the heaths, this increased to 40% (230) for dog walkers, 29% (60) for walkers and 79% (11) for those cycling/mountain biking.

⁵ We scaled up the categories as follows: “More than once a day” visits per year = 700; “Daily” = 350 visits; “Most days (180+ visits)” = 200 visits; “1 to 3 times a week (40-180 visits)” = 110 visits; “2 to 3 times per month (15-40 visits)” = 27.5 visits; “Once a month (6-15 visits)” = 10.5 visits; “Less than once a month (2-5 visits)” = 3 visits; and “First visit” = 1.

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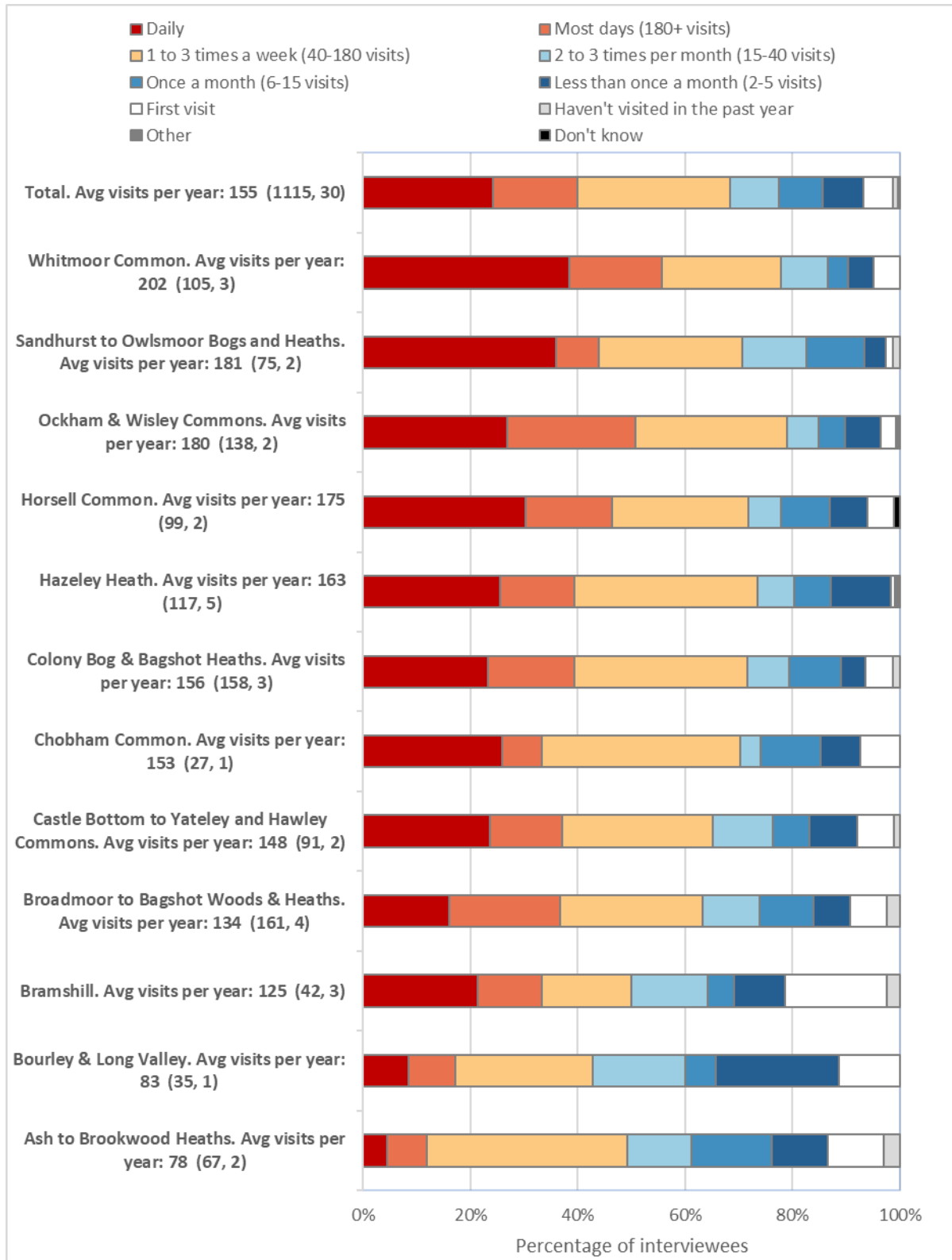


Figure 8: Visit frequency of interviewees, grouped by SSSIs. Values in brackets indicate the number of interviewees, followed by the number of survey points grouped in the site.

Years visiting (Q6)

4.19 Excluding those individuals who said they were on their first visit to the site, only 7% (75) had been visiting for less than a year. The majority of interviewees have been visiting the heaths for a number of years; around a third had been visiting for 1 to 5 years (29%, 305) and another third had been visiting for more than 20 years (29%, 301).

Seasonality (Q7)

4.20 Access to Thames Basin Heaths appears to remain constant throughout the year, with 76% of interviewees (885) stating that they visit equally all year round (excluding those on a first visit to the site). Of the remaining 21% (275) who stated a preference and selected one or more seasons, most said they were more likely to visit in the summer months (June to August, 122 responses, 11% of interviewees), while 4% (63) stated spring and 3% (54) autumn.

4.21 Interviewees that visit for walking were more likely to show a seasonal trend than visit equally all year (60%, 126) compared to the 76% average stated above. Of the walkers, 18% were more likely to visit in the summer months, 9% more likely to visit in the spring and 8% in the autumn. Conversely dog walkers were more likely to visit equally all year round (82%, 713).

Reasons for site choice (Q9-10)

4.22 Interviewees were asked to state their reasons for choosing to visit the current site, with multiple reasons able to be recorded. Almost half of the interviewees stated one of their reasons as the site being close to home (45%, 506). This was followed by “scenery / variety of views” (24%, 267), “good for dog / dog enjoys it” (22%, 245) and a wide range of other factors, shown in Table 12.

4.23 When asked to consider the main reason (i.e. a single choice from the list of multiple reasons) for choosing the site for their activity, being ‘close to home’ was the reason given by 30% of all respondents (325). Approximately 10% stated that they visited for the ‘scenery/variety of views’ (116) or stated that it was ‘good for the dog/the dog enjoys it’ (7%, 80).

4.24 Overall, the single reason for site choice was consistent with the total when compared to just those interviewees with a dog; top reasons for site choice

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being “Close to home” (29% vs 29% total); “Good for the dog” (9% vs 7% total) and “Scenery or variety of views” (10% vs. 10% total) – see Table 12.

4.25 Comparison to the 2018 survey gives very different percentages, with many more factors given by each interviewee, as such, direct comparison would be difficult.

Table 12: Reasons given for site choice, by all interviewees and by those that were with dogs (not just those whose main activity was dog walking).

Reason for site choice	All multiple reasons	Single main reason	All multiple reasons (with dogs)	Single main reason (with dogs)
Close to home	506 (45.4%)	325 (29.1%)	398 (45.9%)	255 (29.4%)
Scenery / variety of views	267 (23.9%)	116 (10.4%)	196 (22.6%)	87 (10%)
Good for dog / dog enjoys it	245 (22.0%)	80 (7.2%)	244 (28.1%)	80 (9.2%)
Other	194 (17.4%)	93 (8.3%)	125 (14.4%)	53 (6.1%)
Rural feel / wild landscape	174 (15.6%)	39 (3.5%)	130 (15.0%)	27 (3.1%)
Choice of routes	126 (11.3%)	27 (2.4%)	107 (12.3%)	18 (2.1%)
For a change / variety	117 (10.5%)	81 (7.3%)	97 (11.2%)	68 (7.8%)
Ability to let dog off lead	112 (10%)	38 (3.4%)	112 (12.9%)	38 (4.4%)
Habit / familiarity	111 (10%)	47 (4.2%)	88 (10.1%)	36 (4.2%)
Not many people	107 (9.6%)	32 (2.9%)	91 (10.5%)	29 (3.3%)
Away from roads/traffic	76 (6.8%)	19 (1.7%)	60 (6.9%)	17 (2.0%)
Feels safe here	56 (5.0%)	10 (0.9%)	49 (5.7%)	9 (1.0%)
En route/close to something else	43 (3.9%)	32 (2.9%)	30 (3.5%)	25 (2.9%)
No need to use car	39 (3.5%)	19 (1.7%)	27 (3.1%)	13 (1.5%)
Quick / easy travel route	34 (3.0%)	17 (1.5%)	24 (2.8%)	13 (1.5%)
Good / easy parking	33 (3.0%)	10 (0.9%)	30 (3.5%)	10 (1.2%)
Appropriate place for activity	32 (2.9%)	6 (0.5%)	22 (2.5%)	2 (0.2%)
Suitability of area in given weather conditions	29 (2.6%)	17 (1.5%)	27 (3.1%)	16 (1.8%)
Particular wildlife interest (e.g. birds, plants)	27 (2.4%)	6 (0.5%)	14 (1.6%)	2 (0.2%)
Other dog related	25 (2.2%)	13 (1.2%)	24 (2.8%)	13 (1.5%)
Expansive site	23 (2.1%)	12 (1.1%)	20 (2.3%)	9 (1.0%)
Quiet/peaceful	20 (1.8%)	10 (0.9%)	18 (2.1%)	10 (1.2%)
Refreshments / cafe / pub	19 (1.7%)	6 (0.5%)	10 (1.2%)	3 (0.3%)
Meeting friends	14 (1.3%)	10 (0.9%)	11 (1.3%)	7 (0.8%)
Shady	11 (1.0%)	3 (0.3%)	9 (1.0%)	1 (0.1%)
Free parking	10 (0.9%)	0 (0%)	8 (0.9%)	0 (0%)
Total	1115 (100%)	1115 (100%)	867 (100%)	867 (100%)

Visitor routes (Q11-14)

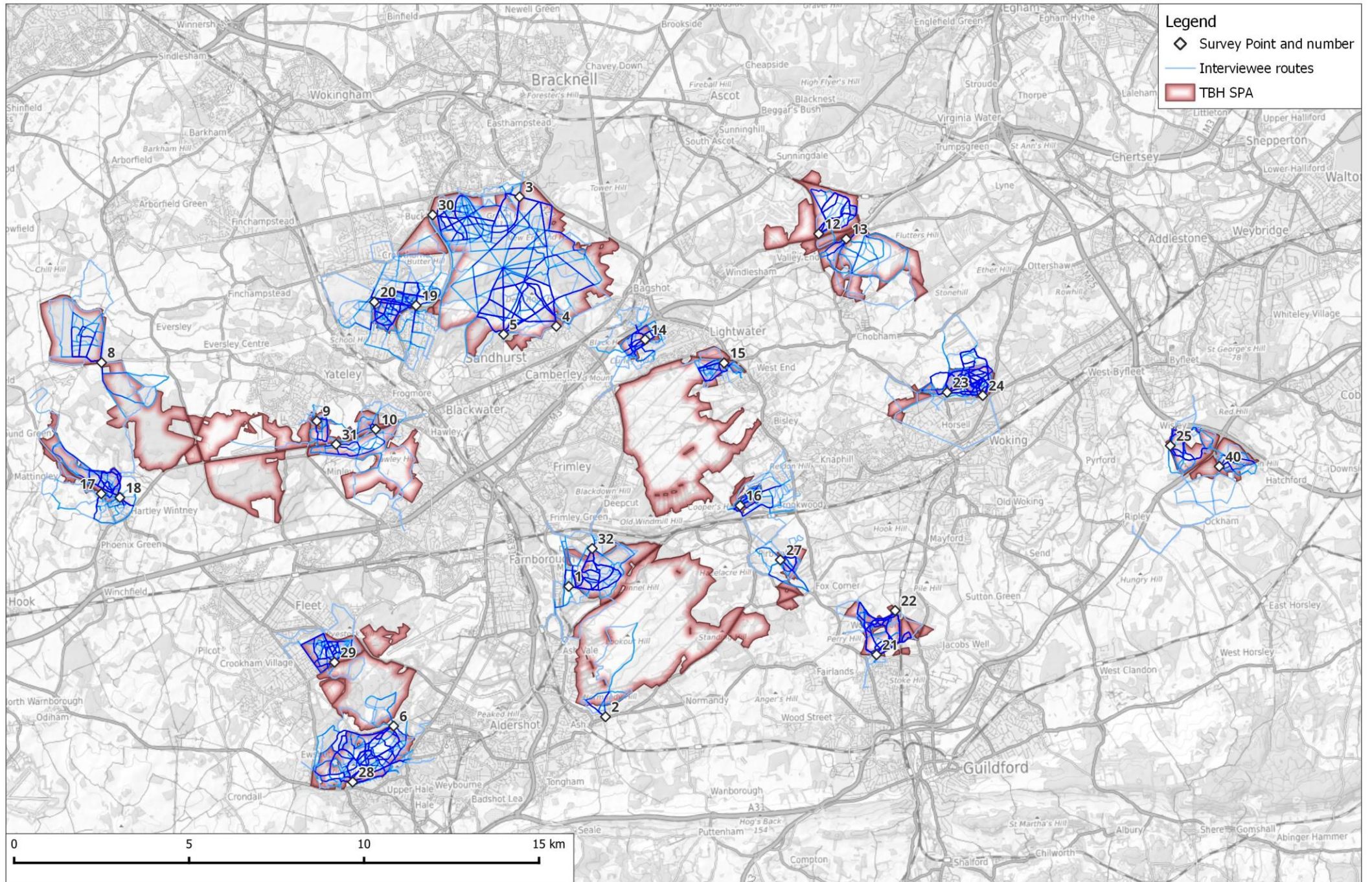
- 4.26 Interviewee routes were recorded for a total of 997 interviewees (89% of all interviewees) – many respondents were unclear as to where they were going or unable to show the surveyor on the map. The route lengths ranged from 220 metres to 16 km, but typical length for an individual was around 3.3 km (mean) or 2.9 km (median). Route lines are shown in Map 4 and as a heatmap in Map 5 using a 100m hexagonal grid. Map 5 highlights the levels of use and the spread of routes; for example at Sandhurst to Owlsmoor Bogs and Heaths, only 5% (6) cells had a 0 count, with no routes through them and the median number of routes per cell was 12. This compares to Ockham and Wiseley Commons, only slightly larger, also with 2 survey points, where 54% (179) cells had a 0 count and the median was 1.
- 4.27 Routes were slightly longer at weekends than weekdays (median of 3.0 km and 2.8 km respectively), but without statistically significant differences. Daily visitors conducted the shortest routes (median 2.7 km) compared to other visit frequencies, with confidence in these differences between categories ($H=13.97$, $df=8$, $p=0.082$). Furthermore, those visiting for less than 30 minutes conducted the shortest routes (median 1.8 km), there was a highly significant difference between the categories ($H=197.24$, $df=5$, $p<0.001$).
- 4.28 One of the clearest differences in route length was in regard to interviewees' activities, with highly significant differences ($H=51.32$, $df=10$, $p<0.001$), as shown in Table 13.

Table 13: Summary of typical route lengths by interviewee main activity. Activities ordered by the number of interviewees.

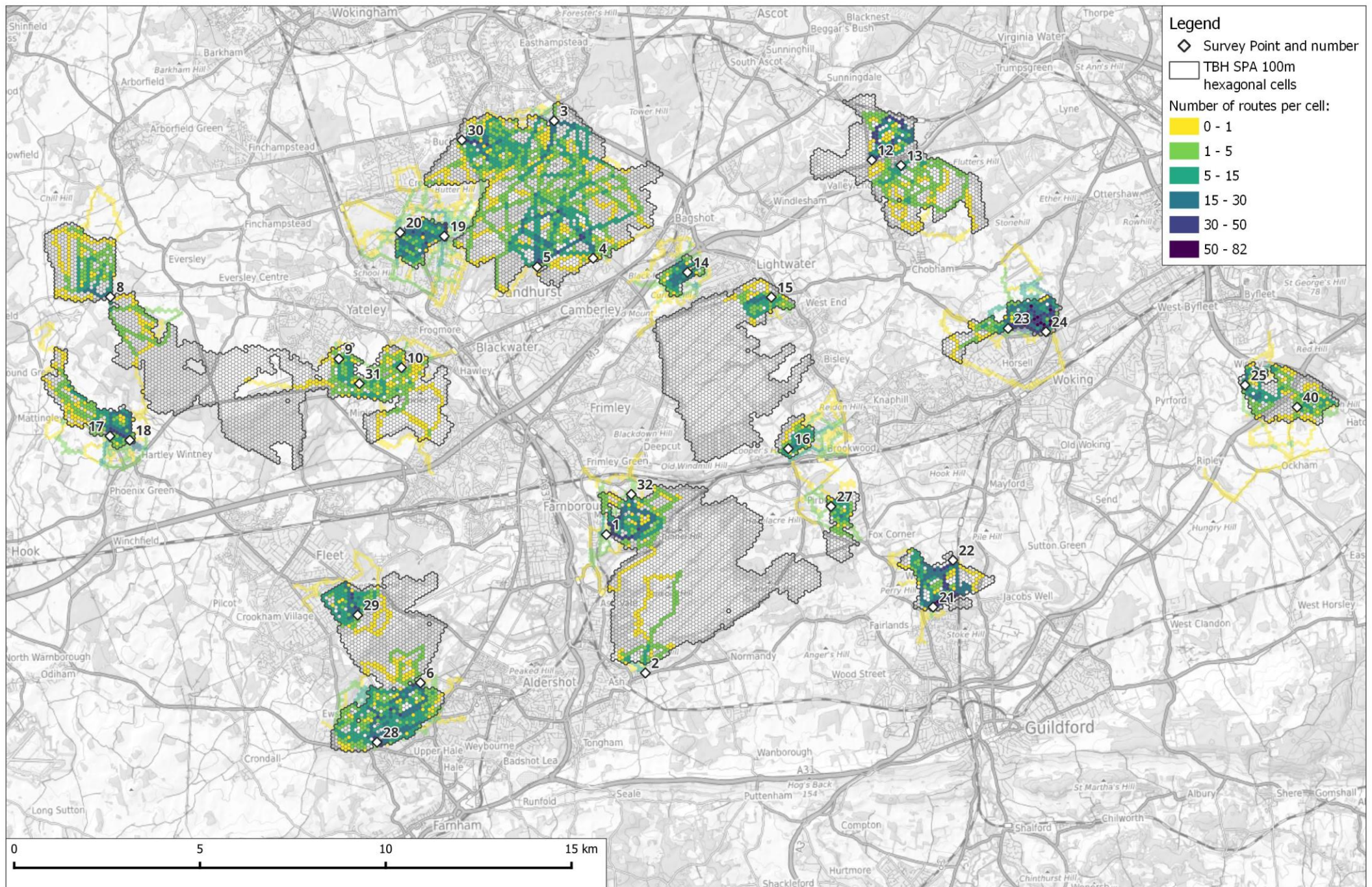
Main activity	Number of routes	Median route length (km)
Dog walking	757	2.85
Walking	171	3.25
Jogging or running	19	5.35
Cycling / mountain biking	13	7.31
Bird / wildlife watching	10	3.10
Other activity	9	3.04
Visiting café / restaurant / pub	6	3.12
Outing with family	4	1.98
Photography	3	1.81
Meeting up with friends	2	3.76
Fitness / formal sports	1	2.72
Total	995	2.94

- 4.29 Of the interviewees who provided a route, and were able to answer Q13 (i.e. not on a first visit), most interviewees stated their route was fairly typical (76%, 790). Of those who stated it was longer or shorter, just 3% (27) stated it was longer than normal, and 11% (110) stated it was shorter than normal, and therefore statistics for route lengths are likely to be a slight underestimate. Factors that affected their routes were: habit (29%, 300), exploring/wandering (17%, 181), time (15%, 158), avoiding other people (11%, 111), weather (10%, 104) and being led by their dog (10%, 101).
- 4.30 In 2018 the average route length was 3.0km (this is assumed as the mean, but it was not clear). In 2012/23 the median route length was 2.38 km.

Map 4: Interviewee routes summarised as a single map where darker lines indicate more overlapping routes.



Map 5: Interviewee route density summarised using a 100m hexagonal grid.



Alternative site choices (Q16-17)

- 4.31 When asked where they would have gone (for the same activity) if they could not have visited the survey location that day, around 3% (39) were not sure / did not know and 6% (70) of interviewees stated they would not have visited anywhere else – the highest rate at any SSSI was at Hazeley Heath (13%, 10).
- 4.32 Of those that did provide one or more site names in response, the named sites were diverse, but the most common answer given overall was Chobham Common (66 responses), followed by Virginia Water (54 responses) and Horsell Common (48 responses). Respondents were asked to give a first choice, then two alternative choices; Chobham Common was the most popular destination in both the first named alternative and all named alternative choices. These results are summarised in Table 11 below.

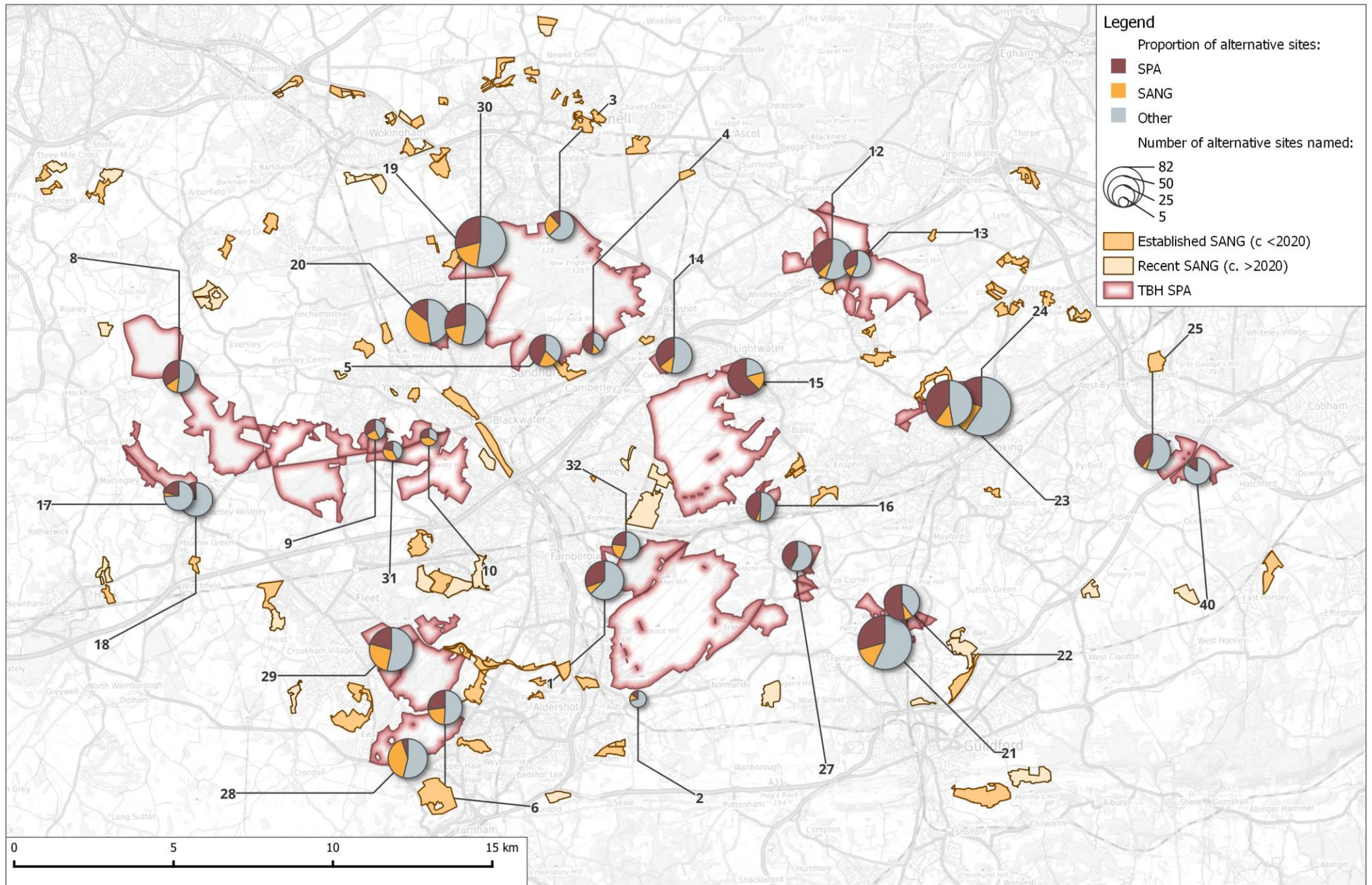
Table 14: The most common alternative site choices by interviewees, ranked by answer for both overall results (up to 3 sites could be named by each interviewee) and first choice only.

All alternative sites	Count	First named alternative	Count
Chobham Common	66	Chobham Common	30
Virginia Water	54	Swinley Forest	26
Horsell Common	48	Farnham Park	26
Ash Ranges	44	Virginia Water	24
Swinley Forest	41	Ash Ranges	23
Newlands Corner	40	Fleet Pond	22
Farnham Park	38	Windsor Great Park	22
Fleet Pond	38	Horsell Common	20
Basingstoke Canal	36	Caesars Camp	19
Windsor Great Park	36	Heather Farm	17
Caesars Camp	33	Newlands Corner	15
Lightwater Country Park	27	Lightwater Country Park	15
Heather Farm	26	Local	15

- 4.33 All site names were assessed in relation to whether they were a SANG, within the TBH SPA or other sites. Nine interviewees explicitly stated the word “SANG” as part of the site named in their response. Overall 327 of the responses referred to sites which were SANGs, accounting for 17% of all site responses given. Known TBH SPA sites accounted for 30% (570) of the site responses, and the remaining 54% (1034) were “other” sites (neither TBH SPA or SANG). These include local paths, fields, public parks and gardens, and include high profile sites, such as Basingstoke Canal, Windsor Great Park.

- 4.34 When considering the individual interviewees, from those who named 1 or more site (1004 interviewees), 28% (282 interviewees) named a SANG as at least one of the alternative sites they visited. A total of 175 (17%) named a SANG as first choice alternative. In comparison, 40% (453) named an SPA location in their list of alternatives, with 25% (289) giving the SPA as a first choice.
- 4.35 The percentage of SANG, SPA and other sites at each survey point is shown in Map 6. The highest percentage of SANG sites named was recorded at 28 - Path intersection off Sandy Hill Road with almost half naming a SANG site (41%, 32) e.g. Farnham Park. This was closely followed by 40% (6) at 10 - Car park off A30, Haywards Cottage and 38% (37) at 20 - Off Crowthorne Road. Map 6 shows that the highest percentages of SANG responses were, unsurprisingly, related to the distribution of available SANG. The survey points on the east and west peripheries of the TBH SPA where there is little SANG provision had some of the lowest mention of SANG sites. The SANGs named most frequently were Farnham Park (38 responses), Heather Farm (26) and Horseshoe Lake (19).

Map 6: Summary of alternative sites, with pie charts sized by the number of sites named and categorised as SPA, SANG or other.



Awareness

Awareness of site sensitivities (Q15)

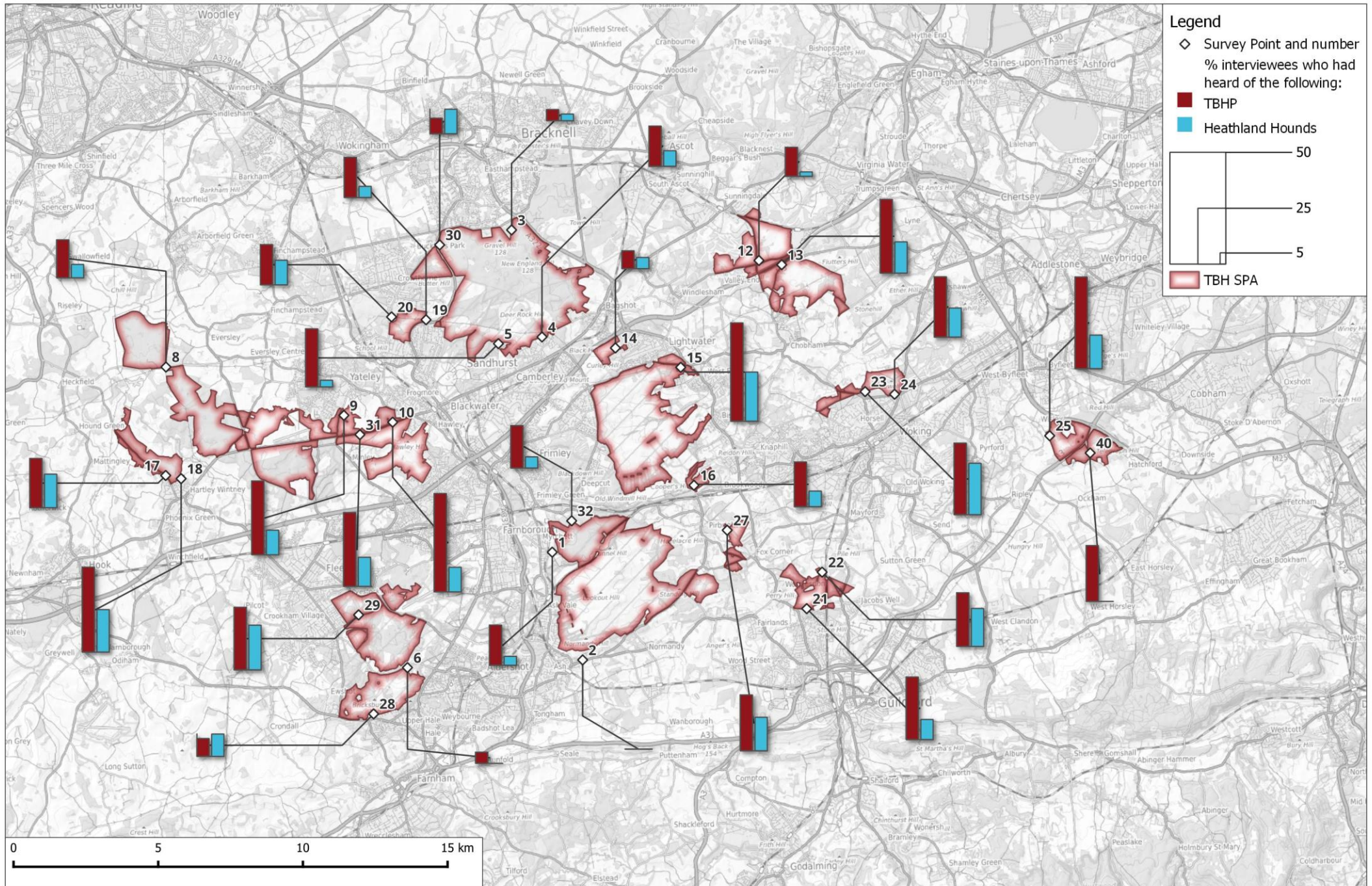
- 4.36 Interviewees were asked to consider what species or habitats might be affected by people visiting the area. A small proportion stated that they were not aware of any (13%, 255 interviewees), and just 3% (65) said they were aware, but couldn't name anything. Around three-quarters (73%, 815 interviewees) gave a response of an aspect they considered important (which may or may not have been relevant)
- 4.37 Of all interviewees, 60% (669) said they were aware and proceeded to make a comment that generally related to being important for birds (including those who made reference to specific SPA species). Overall almost a quarter (24%, 466) stated that they thought ground nesting birds in general might be affected, and some named the specific SPA species: Dartford Warbler (2.7%, 53), Nightjar 2.5%, 49), Woodlark (0.7%, 14).
- 4.38 Some of the awareness related to additional important, but non-SPA target species such as reptiles (10%, 195), invertebrates (4%, 87), and mammals such as deer (26%, 291), rabbits (5%, 50) and foxes (4%, 47).

Awareness of mitigation (Q19-20)

- 4.39 Mitigation measures include the communication (wardens, onsite/online messaging, events etc.) through the TBHP and through Heathland Hounds. Overall, 22% (242) of interviewees had heard of TBHP and 10% (115) of interviewees had heard of Heathland Hounds. Amongst those with one or more dogs with them, awareness was slightly higher, with 24% (216) having heard of the TBHP and 12% (104) heard of Heathland Hounds.
- 4.40 Awareness of mitigation measures varied across survey locations, as shown in Map 7 and Table 15. For the TBHP, the highest awareness of the scheme (over 40% of interviewees) was at survey locations 15: Sandpit Hill (44%, 16), 10: Car park off A30, Haywards Cottage (44%, 4) and 25: Wren's Nest car park (41%, 11). Similarly, greatest awareness of Heathland Hounds, of more than 20% of interviewees, was at survey locations 23: Chobham Road (23%, 13), 15: Sandpit Hill (22%, 8) and 29: Car Park east of Foresters Arms Pub (20%, 12).

- 4.41 Surveyors were also asked to record whether TBHP wardens or Heathland Hounds had been present during that session. Their presence was noted at a total of 6 out of 229 fully completed sessions.

Map 7: Awareness of the TBHP and Heathland Hounds.



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Table 15: Summary of the general awareness of visitors to recognising birds as sensitive features, awareness of the TBHP and Heathland Hounds. For awareness of the TBHP we also present the results from 2018, however note that questions were slightly different between years and therefore direct comparisons are only possible with caution. The top and bottom 3 values in each column are highlighted in red and blue respectively.

Survey point	% Recognising birds as sensitive	% Aware of TBHP (2018)	% Heard of TBHP (2023)	% Heard of Heathland Hounds
1 - Mytchett Place Road	47%	29%	18%	4%
2 - Nightingale Road/A323	82%	27%	0%	0%
3 - The Lookout	21%	23%	5%	3%
4 - Top of Bracknell Road	61%	34%	18%	7%
5 - Top of King's Ride	63%	48%	26%	3%
6 - Bourley Road	59%	23%	5%	0%
8 - North entrance to Warren Heath	69%	44%	17%	6%
9 - Car park off Cricket Hill Lane	67%	28%	33%	11%
10 - Car park off A30, Haywards Cottage	67%	29%	44%	11%
12 - Chobham Common, Roundabout car park	48%	57%	13%	2%
13 - Chobham Common, Staple Hill car park	67%	40%	33%	14%
14 - Lightwater Country Park	79%	53%	8%	5%
15 - Sandpit Hill	58%	42%	44%	22%
16 - Queens Road, Cowshot Common	77%	50%	20%	7%
17 - B3011 opposite Arrow Lane	59%	81%	22%	15%
18 - Play area, Springfield Avenue	65%	29%	38%	19%
19 - South Road	68%	33%	18%	5%
20 - Off Crowthorne Road	70%	87%	18%	11%
21 - Salt Box Road	69%	77%	28%	9%
22 - Burdenshott Road	62%	95%	24%	17%
23 - Chobham Road	77%	72%	32%	23%
24 - Shore's Road	66%	39%	27%	13%
25 - Wren's Nest car park	52%	44%	41%	15%

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Survey point	% Recognising birds as sensitive	% Aware of TBHP (2018)	% Heard of TBHP (2023)	% Heard of Heathland Hounds
27 - Layby opposite Windrush House, Chapel Lane	55%	77%	25%	15%
28 - Path intersection off Sandy Hill Road	38%	62%	8%	10%
29 - Car Park east of Foresters Arms Pub	39%	86%	28%	20%
30 - Car Park off B3348/A3095 Roundabout	61%	55%	7%	11%
31 - Path intersection adjacent to layby south side of A30	53%	50%	33%	13%
32 - Second layby on Old Guildford Road	71%	50%	19%	5%
40 - Pond Car Park	69%	-	25%	0%
All survey points	60%	-	22%	10%

Suggested improvements (Q18)

4.42 Interviewees were asked to consider if there were any changes they would like to see in terms of how the site is managed for access. Whilst 29% (430) stated that the site should be left as it is (i.e. no changes), the remaining 70% indicated that they would like to see some changes, which are summarised in Figure 9 below. Note that interviewees could provide multiple responses and categorisation takes into account broad themes (e.g. “more dog waste bins” encompasses responses such as “more regular emptying”).

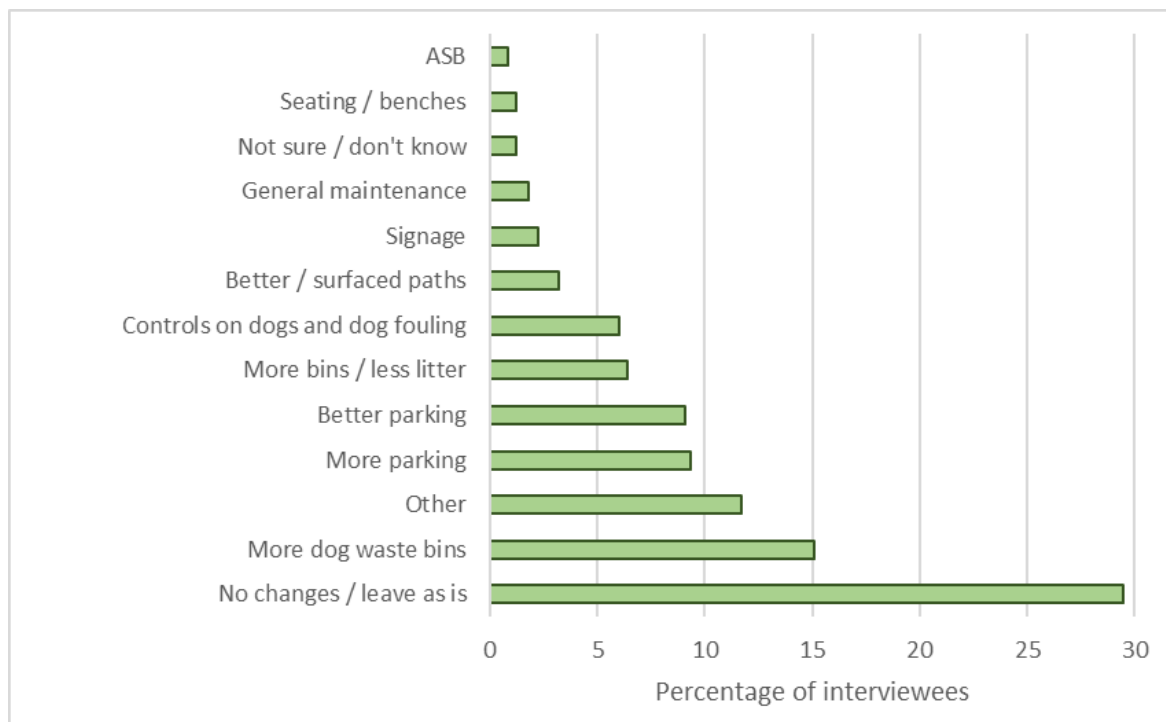


Figure 9: Suggested improvements across Thames Basin Heaths. Note that interviewees could provide multiple responses to this question (1,472 total responses). Responses given by more than 10 interviewees only shown.

4.43 Around 12% (170) of interviewees listed ‘other’ changes, which included for example, limits on commercial dog walking, fewer horses, control of cycling/motorbikes, MoD issues etc. around the sites. There were also other categories that were recorded by fewer than 10 interviewees that are not shown such as more accessibility, café or toilets, free/cheaper parking, changes to habitats / scenery.

Other comments (Q21)

4.44 Generally, verbatim comments after the survey were mostly positive, with the interviewees commenting on what a 'lovely' and 'peaceful' site they have visited and that they love coming here. In contrast, a small proportion used the opportunity for further comments to highlight issues already discussed in the survey, such as provision of facilities (including waste bins), litter and parking.

Visitor origins (Q22-24)

4.45 Of 1,115 interviewees, 1,092 provided a valid home postcode at the end of the questionnaire, a return rate of 98%. The geographic distribution of postcodes is shown in Map 8. In the 2018 visitor survey the return rates of postcodes was 83%, which the authors attributed to heightened media coverage of data protection issues.

4.46 The percentage of interviewees from each Local Authority is shown in Table 16, and these proportions are broadly similar to the previous surveys.

Table 16: Summary of the number and percentage of interviewees whose home postcode was located in each Local Authority, shown for all interviewees and those visiting directly from home in 2023, 2018 and 2012/13.

Local Authority	No. (%) of postcodes 2023	No. (%) of postcodes 2023 (visiting directly from home)	No. (%) of postcodes 2018 (visiting directly from home)	No. (%) of postcodes 2012/13 (visiting directly from home)
Surrey Heath	205 (19%)	204 (19%)	166 (21%)	540 (23%)
Hart	168 (15%)	167 (16%)	94 (12%)	341 (15%)
Woking	155 (14%)	155 (15%)	146 (18%)	355 (15%)
Guildford	136 (12%)	136 (13%)	95 (12%)	314 (14%)
Bracknell Forest	135 (12%)	130 (12%)	83 (10%)	270 (12%)
Rushmoor	71 (7%)	71 (7%)	55 (7%)	121 (5%)
Runnymede	51 (5%)	51 (5%)	37 (5%)	76 (3%)
Waverley	45 (4%)	44 (4%)	24 (3%)	70 (3%)
Wokingham	44 (4%)	43 (4%)	33 (4%)	112 (5%)
Elmbridge	15 (1%)	15 (1%)	13 (2%)	19 (1%)
Windsor and Maidenhead	12 (1%)	12 (1%)	3 (1%)	26 (1%)
Other	55 (5%)	38 (4%)	45 (6%)	72 (3%)
Total	1,092 (100%)	1,066 (100%)	794 (100)	2,316 (100)

Linear distances

4.47 The linear distance between the interviewee's home postcode and the survey point was calculated for all interviewees where the home postcode was known. The median distance was 2.4 km and the third quartile distance (Q3, or 75th percentile) was 4.6 km. Linear distance can also be compared to visit frequency, transport and main activity, summarised in Table 17 below.

Table 17: Interviewees distance from site and summary statistics describing the straight-line distances in km from home postcodes to the survey point. N is the sample size (number of valid postcodes) and Q3 is the 75th percentile. All interviewees, including those not visiting directly from home are included.

Variable	N	Mean (\pm SE)	Median	Q3	Min - Max
All interviewees	1092	6.6 (\pm 0.8)	2.4	4.6	0.0 - 343.9
Visit type:					
Day trip/visit directly from home	1066	4.4 (\pm 0.4)	2.3	4.4	0.0 - 318.0
Staying with friends/ family	17	112.1 (\pm 25.0)	108.0	206.6	0.0 - 314.5
On holiday	3	40.4 (\pm 6.3)	34.7	52.9	33.5 - 52.9
Other	6	83.4 (\pm 56.8)	4.6	192.7	2.3 - 343.9
Main activities (Top 5):					
Dog walking	815	5.1 (\pm 0.6)	2.4	4.4	0.1 - 318.0
Walking	199	9.1 (\pm 2.0)	2.4	6.3	0.1 - 314.5
Jogging/running	21	22.6 (\pm 16.4)	2.6	5.9	0.2 - 343.9
Cycling/mountain biking	14	2.8 (\pm 0.9)	1.6	3.7	0.3 - 13.7
Bird/wildlife watching	10	32.6 (\pm 26.0)	5.2	17.5	0.0 - 265.9
Frequency:					
Daily	265	1.6 (\pm 0.1)	1.1	2.1	0.0 - 8.5
Most days	168	2.5 (\pm 0.3)	2.9	2.9	0.1 - 39.1
1 to 3 times a week	311	4.6 (\pm 0.8)	2.6	4.4	0.1 - 207.9
2 to 3 times a month	100	5.2 (\pm 1.1)	3.1	5.4	0.2 - 108.0
Once a month	87	9.3 (\pm 2.9)	4.3	5.6	0.2 - 192.5
Less than once a month	84	17.8 (\pm 4.7)	6.2	12.3	0.8 - 318.0
First visit	60	23.7 (\pm 7.3)	7.7	18.5	1.3 - 343.9
Transport:					
Car or van	812	7.4 (\pm 0.8)	3.2	5.4	0.3 - 318
On foot	261	3.4 (\pm 1.5)	0.6	1.2	0.0 - 343.9
Cycle	11	1.9 (\pm 0.4)	1.4	3.5	0.3 - 4.0
Other	3	7.5 (\pm 3.8)	8.3	13.7	0.3 - 13.7
Other factors:					
Close to home	493	3.5 (\pm 0.8)	1.4	2.5	0.0 - 343.9

4.48 There was a highly significant difference in the distances between those visiting directly from home and other visit types ($H=43.82$, $df=3$, $p<0.001$).

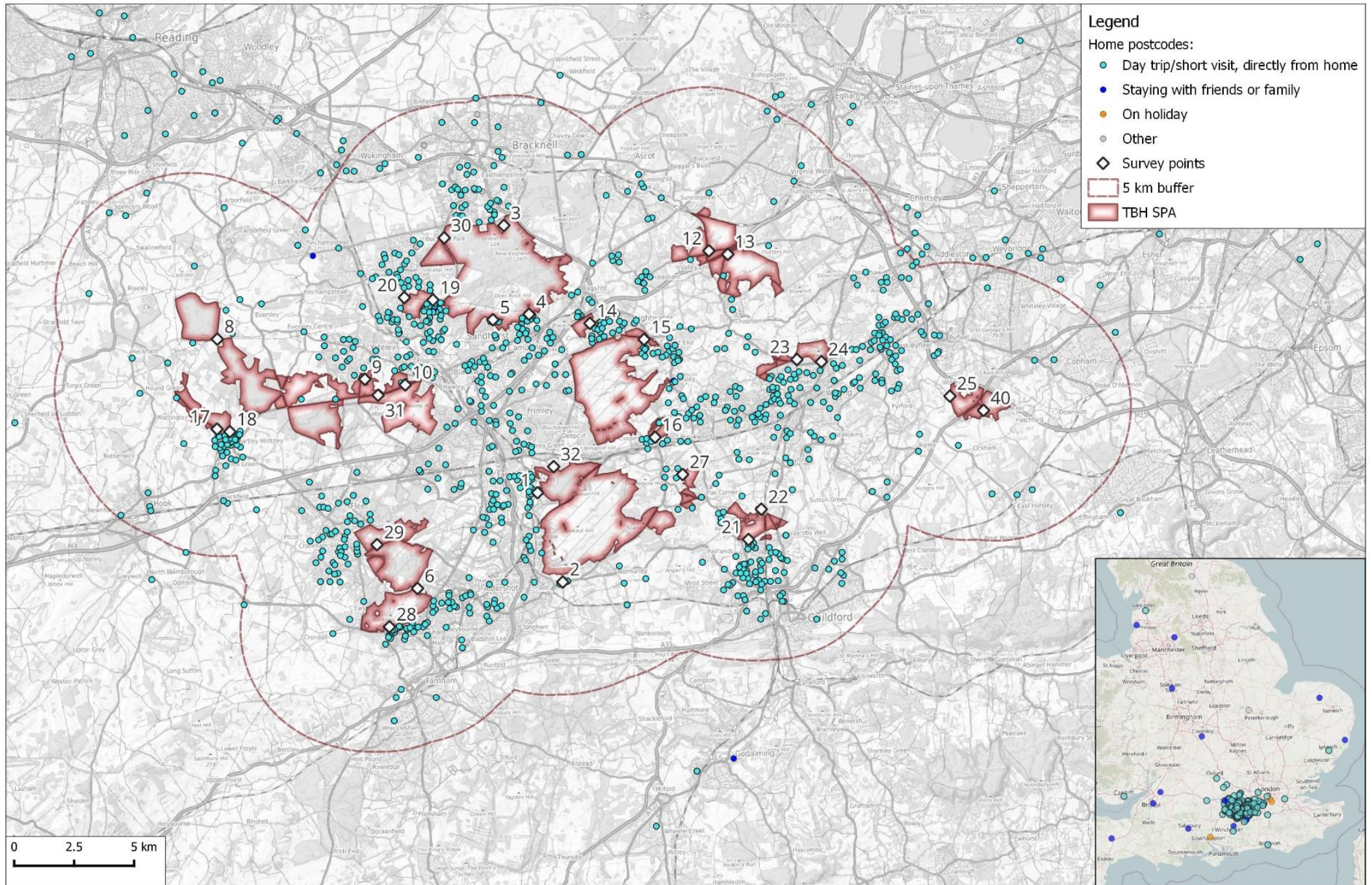
There was also a highly significant difference in the mode of transport used ($H=405.66$, $df=4$, $p<0.001$) – also explored in Table 18.

Table 18: Comparison of the Q3 (75th percentile) linear distance from interviewee’s home postcode to the survey point, shown separately for those visiting on foot and by car, across the survey timeline. Only those interviewees visiting directly from home are used.

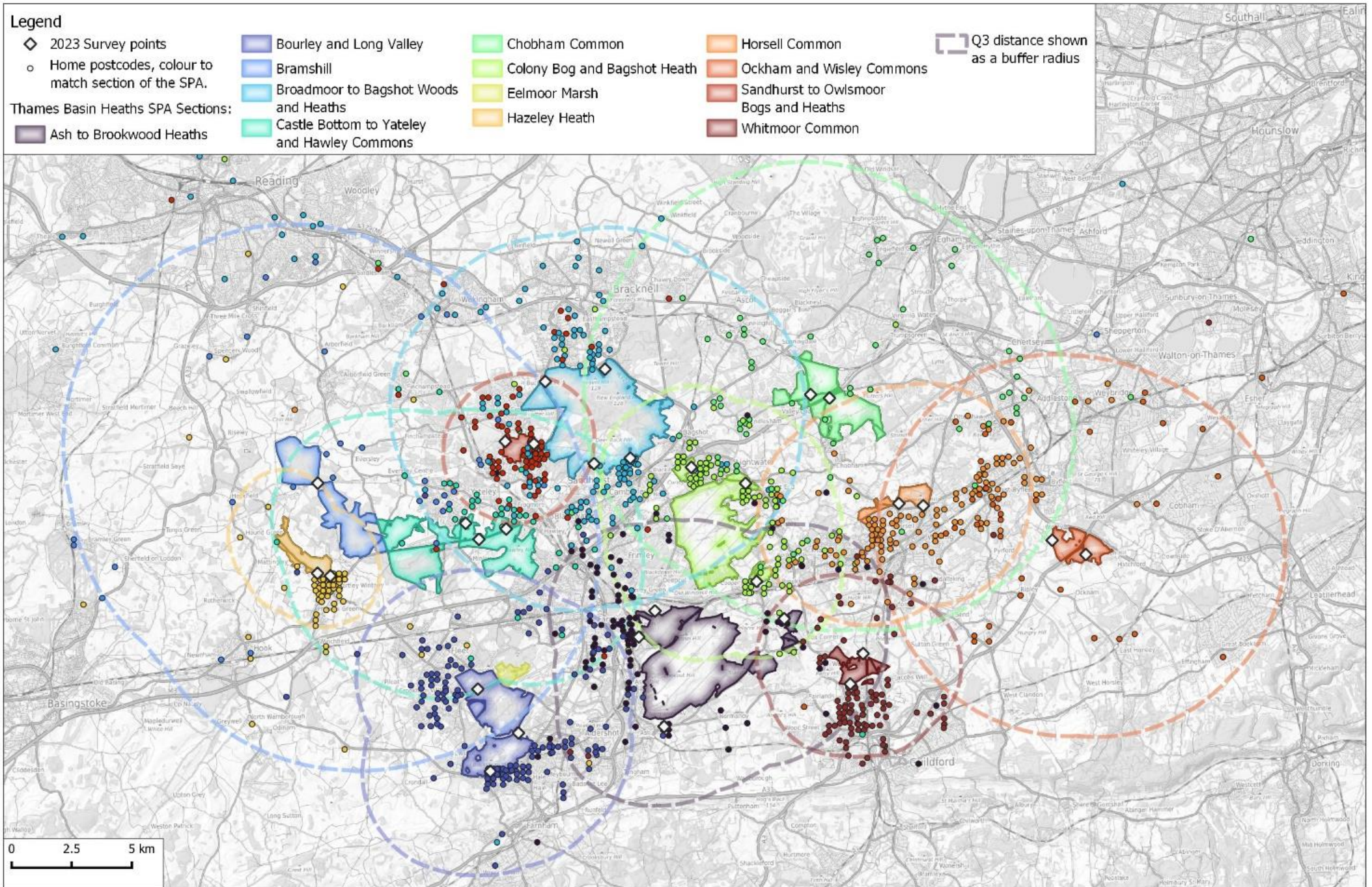
Variable	2023 N	2023 Q3	2018 N	2018 Q3	2012/13 N	2012/13 Q3
All interviewees	1,066	4.4 km	794	4.6 km	2,316	Not reported
Interviewees arriving on foot	255 (24%)	0.6 km	150 (19%)	1.0 km	512 (22%)	0.9 km
Interviewees arriving by car	794 (75%)	5.3 km	636 (80%)	5.0 km	1,728 (75%)	4.6 km

- 4.49 Linear distance from home to survey point decreased as visit frequency increased, i.e. interviewees visiting the site daily lived the closest. The difference between the categories was highly significant ($H=299.54$, $df=8$, $p<0.001$). Interestingly, for interviewees that gave the reason for visiting the site as ‘being close to home’, 75% live within 2.5 km and therefore consider this distance close.
- 4.50 Linear distances to home postcodes could also be compared across survey locations, summarised in Table 19 and Map 9 below. The Lookout (3) and the Car Park off A30, Haywards Cottage (10) appear to have the widest catchment area, with 75% of interviewees living within 15.3 km and 14.8 km respectively. The locations with the most localised use appear to be location 4: Top of Bracknell Road and 18: Play area, Springfield Avenue (both show 75% living within 1.4 km).
- 4.51 Overall 92% of interviewees visiting directly from home were located within 5 km of the SPA boundary. In 2018 this figure was 92% and in 2012/13 this figure was 94%, suggesting a very similar visitor draw.
- 4.52 Map 9 presents a simple buffer around each SSSI using the 75th percentile distance for each SSSI. This shows marked variation between SSSIs, however, it is important to remember that some sites are based on a single survey point and a relatively small sample size. Therefore it is better to consider the 75th percentile distance from all survey points together to understand the range of access.

Map 8: Interviewees home postcodes, separated by visit type.



Map 9: Interviewees home postcodes, separated by section of Thames Basin Heaths SPA.



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Table 19: Interviewees' linear distance from the survey point, summarised by each survey location. N is the sample size (number of valid postcodes) and Q3 is the 75th percentile.

Survey point	N	Mean (\pm SE)	Median	Q3	Min – Max
1: Mytchett Place Road	49	2.4 (\pm 0.4)	1.6	2.7	0.1 – 12.8
2: Nightingale Road/A323	11	3.6 (\pm 1.3)	2.6	4.8	0.1 – 11.8
3: The Lookout	39	10.4 (\pm 1.9)	5.3	15.3	0.6 – 48.9
4: Top of Bracknell Road	26	1.0 (\pm 0.2)	0.8	1.4	0.2 – 4.4
5: Top of King's Ride	36	11.9 (\pm 8.8)	2.3	4.7	0.1 – 318.0
6: Bourley Road	38	4.1 (\pm 0.3)	3.8	5.2	1.1 – 10.8
8: North Entrance to Warren Heath	32	7.1 (\pm 1.0)	6.8	8.8	0.7 – 33.0
9: Car Park off Cricket Hill Lane	16	2.6 (\pm 0.6)	1.7	4.5	0.1 – 7.9
10: Car Park off A30, Haywards Cottage	8	7.2 (\pm 4.6)	3.5	4.3	0.2 – 39.0
12: Chobham Common, Roundabout Car Park	45	6.4 (\pm 0.6)	5.7	7.9	0.9 – 19.4
13: Chobham Common, Staple Hill Car Park	20	12.9 (\pm 7.0)	5.5	7.7	0.9 – 144.3
14: Lightwater Country Park	39	3.7 (\pm 1.7)	1.0	2.9	0.3 – 65.8
15: Sandpit Hill	34	2.6 (\pm 0.4)	2.0	4.1	0.0 – 9.1
16: Queens Road, Cowshot Common	30	2.4 (\pm 0.9)	1.3	2.1	0.2 – 28.2
17: B3011 opposite Arrow Lane	27	3.0 (\pm 0.6)	1.5	4.4	0.3 – 12.0
18: Play Area, Springfield Avenue	45	1.7 (\pm 0.5)	0.4	1.1	0.3 – 13.8
19: South Road	43	1.3 (\pm 0.2)	0.7	1.6	0.2 – 5.9
20: Off Crowthorne Road	43	6.8 (\pm 3.8)	1.5	4.2	0.4 – 165.9
21: Salt Box Road	69	2.4 (\pm 0.3)	1.6	2.6	0.2 – 21.2
22: Burdenshott Road	28	3.3 (\pm 0.5)	2.6	3.4	1.0 – 12.8
23: Chobham Road	53	2.6 (\pm 0.2)	2.1	3.7	0.5 – 10.0
24: Shore's Road	79	5.1 (\pm 1.1)	3.1	4.4	0.5 – 64.5
25: Wren's Nest Car Park	26	6.0 (\pm 0.9)	4.4	6.2	2.0 – 18.5
27: Layby opposite Windrush House Chapel Lane	19	2.5 (\pm 0.5)	2.3	4.3	0.1 – 7.6
28: Path Intersection off Sandy Hill Road	50	1.9 (\pm 0.3)	1.0	2.4	0.2 – 13.9
29: Car Park east of Foresters Arms Pub	63	4.3 (\pm 1.0)	2.4	4.0	0.8 – 51.4
30: Car Park off B3348/ A3095 roundabout	47	5.9 (\pm 1.0)	3.2	5.6	1.0 – 39.1
31: Path intersection adjacent to layby south side of A30	14	4.1 (\pm 1.1)	2.9	4.6	1.2 – 17.9
32: Second layby on Old Guildford Road	21	3.5 (\pm 0.4)	3.2	4.2	1.1 – 9.0
40: Pond Car Park	16	6.6 (\pm 1.0)	6.0	7.6	1.8 – 15.3
Total	1066	4.4 (\pm 0.4)	2.3	4.4	0.0 – 343.9

5. Discussion and implications for mitigation

Key metrics from the visitor survey

5.1 A brief summary table of key metrics from the visitor survey is presented in Table 20 for ease of examination. Further discussion around some of these is made in the context of other European heathland sites in Table 22.

Table 20: Selected metrics from the survey. 'Home only' indicates the metric is extracted only for those on a day trip/short visit from home (from Q1).

Metric	Result
Month/year	August 2023
Number of survey points	30
Number of interviews	1118
% of interviewees on a day trip/short visit from home	97%
% of interviewees with main activity of dog walking	74%
% of interviewees with main activity of walking	19%
% visiting daily	24%
% visiting all year round	76%
% arriving by car/van	74%
Median route length	2.9 km
% stating close to home as most important reason for site choice	30%
Median distance from home postcode to survey point	2.4 km
75 th percentile distance from home postcode to survey point	4.6 km
Median distance from home postcode to survey point (home only)	2.3 km
75 th percentile distance from home postcode to survey point (home only)	4.4 km

Limitations

5.2 Repeated surveying of exact locations is a valid approach, allowing for very direct comparison and standardization. It is the ideal approach, but in reality access patterns shift over time. Changes in access patterns recorded by the repeated visitor survey may be a reflection of changes in access provision (dilapidation or improvement of facilities/access infrastructure), and the nature of location (change in the presence or absence of activities which have a negative impact on visitors). As such, whilst the direct repeat approach is considered appropriate, it will always have to be reactive to changes in access. This means survey points may need to be changed, as was the case in this survey.

- 5.3 Despite changing some of the locations that were affected by anti-social behaviour and PSE, these remained an issue at other survey points and forced sessions to be cut short. We suggest that future surveys include provision to re-evaluate the selection of survey points. This would need to consider locations that may be inappropriate for visitor surveying, adapting to changes in access and how to achieve an overall representative sample.
- 5.4 Interviews were only conducted with a subset of visitors, and while every effort was made to ensure a random sample, some types of visitors such as those running or cycling are harder to intercept and persuade to stop and be interviewed. We try to minimise this by surveying at pinch points, where these individuals are forced to slow down, or parking locations where they have arrived/departed and therefore are stationary. However, we acknowledge that runners/cyclists were more common in the tallies than interviews and therefore will be slightly underrepresented. However, this factor is a constant limitation for on-site visitor surveys.
- 5.5 The surveys took place well after any restrictions on movement associated with the Covid pandemic had been lifted. Nonetheless, the pandemic may still have had some influence over access patterns. There was an increase in dog ownership and the use of local greenspaces during the pandemic (Morgan et al., 2020; Ugolini et al., 2020) which may mean access patterns for many have changed in the long term.
- 5.6 Finally, comparison to the 2018 report is difficult due to changes in methodology and a lack of transparency around these changes. Similarly, data is not always presented fully and the report conducts much of the analysis using only the “local” subset. This is a valid approach but is less transparent and not in line with the 2012/13 report, and so direct comparison is difficult between all of the previous surveys. In addition, surveys in 2018 were conducted in August school holidays, but two survey points were forced to be surveyed in September, so these locations may show marked differences.

Housing change

- 5.7 The number of residential properties within 5 km was provided in all previous reports and is updated in Table 21. A total of 345,510 residential properties were within a 5 km radius of the SPA, an increase of 20% since 2005, and a 6% increase since 2018.

- 5.8 In the period 2018 to 2023 the rate of development has been the highest to date (4,067 dwellings per year), compared with 2005 to 2012 (2,989) and 2012 to 2018 (2,663).
- 5.9 The number of residential properties within 400m was presented in the previous EPR report by Southgate *et al.* (2018), and we have updated these values. However, as there is a general presumption against any development within 400m, combined with the accuracy of postcodes at this scale, it is not considered a particularly useful measure.

Table 21 : Summary of the housing change around the TBH SPA. Figures for historic years are taken from relevant previous reports.

Housing change	2005	2012/13	2018	2023
Number of residential properties within 5 km	288,109 ⁶	310,525 ⁷	325,174	345,510
% change on previous	n/a	8%	5%	6%
% change on 2005	n/a	8%	13%	20%
Number of residential properties within 400m	not reported	not reported	30,235	30,312
% change on previous	n/a	n/a	n/a	0.3%

Comparison with other heathland sites

- 5.10 Table 22 compares some of the key metrics from this survey with visitor surveys carried out by Footprint Ecology at other European sites that also contain heathland habitats. All surveys used the same methodology, and all had a broadly similar questionnaire. However the survey effort at each site varied, with some having just 2 days of fieldwork at each survey point and others involving multiple ‘pulses’ of fieldwork at different times of the year. Most surveys were conducted in spring or summer; however some were done in autumn e.g. Epping Forest.
- 5.11 Dog walking and walking accounted for the majority of interviewees’ activities in all of these visitor surveys, with dog walking usually the more common activity of the two. The third most common activity was usually cycling, although there were some surveys where it was running/jogging, bird/wildlife watching or a family outing. The activity types from this TBH

⁶ 2003 figure

⁷ December 2011 figure

survey are broadly similar, but the percentage of dog walkers (74%) is the highest observed, equal only to the Dorset Heaths survey.

- 5.12 Across this selection of surveys, the median route length that interviewees took during their visit was typically around 2-4 km, so the median of 2.9 km in this survey is very similar to that of the other sites.
- 5.13 The median and 75th percentile distances between the interviewee's home postcode and the location where they were interviewed are quite varied, and the interviewees from this TBH survey are much more local than at some of the other sites. For example, interviewees at Birklands and Bilhaugh (Sherwood Forest), Breckland and the New Forest came from much further afield. Interviews at these sites also included a higher proportion of interviewees who were staying away from home (i.e. on holiday or visiting friends/family) reflecting their appeal as tourist destinations.
- 5.14 Overall, these data indicate that the visitor profile at Thames Basin Heaths is most similar to the Dorset Heaths and the Wealden Heaths, with local dog walkers comprising the majority of interviewees.

Table 22: Summary of key metrics for other sites from Footprint Ecology on-site visitor surveys. The percentage of each activity includes those interviewees who reported it as their main activity. Route length refers to the route that they have taken on site during their visit. Postcode distances refer to the straight-line distances between the interviewee's home postcode and the survey point they were interviewed at. The top and bottom 2 values in each column are highlighted in red and blue respectively.

Site name	Year	Number of survey locations	Number of interviews	% on day visit from home	% dog walking	% walking	% cycling	Median route length (km)	Median postcode distance (km)	Q3 postcode distance (km)
Thames Basin Heaths	2023	30	1,118	97%	74%	19%	1%	2.9	2.4	4.6
Epping Forest	2022	16	674	97%	45%	38%	5%	2.6	2.0	6.9
Ashdown Forest	2021	20	549	94%	57%	33%	<1%	2.8	5.5	13.5
Birklands and Bilhaugh	2021	2	152	86%	36%	47%	1%	3.7	9.9	33.9
Pebblebed Heaths	2021	6	223	97%	61%	27%	2%	2.5	5.3	8.5
Dorset Heaths	2019	23	946	92%	74%	15%	3%	2.3	1.5	4.4
Epping Forest	2019	17	662	97%	40%	30%	8%	2.6	2.6	6.7
New Forest	2018/19	60	5,236	83%	55%	26%	6%	3.0	7.8	21.4
Cannock Chase	2018	20	988	97%	43%	23%	21%	3.8	6.2	15.3
Wealden Heaths	2018	23	457	96%	71%	12%	5%	2.1	2.3	3.9
Epping Forest	2017	15	462	99%	49%	22%	8%	3.9	3.1	6.2
Ashdown Forest	2016	20	452	98%	69%	18%	<1%	2.6	4.9	9.6
Breckland	2015/16	9	195	95%	48%	16%	21%	4.0	8.8	29.2
Pebblebed Heaths	2015	12	492	93%	73%	11%	5%	3.1	5.4	8.2
Purbeck Heaths	2013	21	677	80%	47%	18%	23%	3.6	7.3	18.8
Breckland	2010	11	297	87%	36%	24%	16%	3.0	8.8	22.9
Sandlings	2009/10	18	596	87%	53%	22%	6%	3.3	7.1	16.4

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Appendix 1: Survey dates

Table 23: Summary of the survey dates for each survey point and the total hours at each survey point. Those survey points with less than 16 hours were those affected by anti-social behaviour.

Survey point	Total hours	Weekday	Weekend
1: Mytchett Place Road	16	25/07	23/07
2: Nightingale Road/A323	16	24/07	22/07
3: The Lookout	16	27/07	29/07
4: Top of Bracknell Road	16	28/07	30/07
5: Top of King's Ride	16	02/08	06/08
6: Bourley Road	16	03/08	13/08
8: North Entrance to Warren Heath	16	07/08	27/08
9: Car Park off Cricket Hill Lane	16	08/08	26/08
10: Car Park off A30, Haywards Cottage	14.8	09/08	20/08
12: Chobham Common, Roundabout Car Park	16	14-15/08	12 -13/08
13: Chobham Common, Staple Hill Car Park	12.3	14-15/08	12/08
14: Lightwater Country Park	16	16/08	26/08
15: Sandpit Hill	16	18/08	05/08
16: Queens Road, Cowshot Common	16	21/08	06/08
17: B3011 opposite Arrow Lane	16	24/08	12/08
18: Play Area, Springfield Avenue	16	25/08	13/08
19: South Road	16	29/08	19/08
20: Off Crowthorne Road	16	30/08	20/08
21: Salt Box Road	16	25/07	20/08
22: Burdenshott Road	16	24/07	19/08
23: Chobham Road	16	21/08	05-06/08
24: Shore's Road	16	28/07	05-06/08
25: Wren's Nest Car Park	16	27/07	29/07
27: Layby opposite Windrush House Chapel Lane	16	22/08	23/07
28: Path Intersection off Sandy Hill Road	16	14/08	27/08
29: Car Park east of Foresters Arms Pub	16	11/08	26/08
30: Car Park off B3348/ A3095 roundabout	16	25/08	27/08
31: Path intersection adjacent to layby south side of A30	16	04/08	19/08
32: Second layby on Old Guildford Road	16	10/08	22/07
40: Pond Car Park	10.3	31/08	30/07

Appendix 2: Questionnaire



Good morning/afternoon. I am conducting a visitor survey on behalf of Natural England, to find out how people use this area for recreation. Can you spare me a few minutes please?

Q1 ...

- Are you on a day trip/short visit and have travelled directly from your home today... *if no*
- Are you on a short trip/short visit & staying away from home with friends or family ... *if no*
- Are you staying away from home, e.g. second home, mobile home or on holiday
- If none of the above, How would you describe your visit today?

Further details

Q2 **What is the main activity you are undertaking today?** *Tick closest answer. Do not prompt. Single response only. Use the 'further details' box if they mention additional activities.*

- Dog walking
- Walking
- Jogging / running
- Outing with family
- Cycling / mountain biking
- Bird/wildlife watching
- Photography
- Meeting up with friends
- Visiting cafe/restaurant/pub
- Picnic
- Horse riding
- Fitness/formal sports
- Fishing
- Flying model aircraft
- Other, please detail:

Further details / other activities

Q3 **Over the past year, roughly how often have you visited this location?** *Tick closest answer, single response only. Only prompt if interviewee struggles.*

- Daily
- Most days (180+ visits)
- 1 to 3 times a week (40-180 visits)
- 2 to 3 times per month (15-40 visits)
- Once a month (6-15 visits)
- Less than once a month (2-5 visits)
- First visit
- Haven't visited in the past year
- Don't know
- Other, please detail

Further details:

Q4 What proportion of your weekly visits for [**given activity**] take place at this site compared to other sites. Can you give a rough percentage?

- 100% (i.e all visits take place here)
- 75% or more (i.e. "three quarters", "almost all visits")
- 50% to 74% (i.e. "half" or "just over half")
- 25% to 49% (i.e "a third" or " a quarter")
- less than 25% (i.e. "a fifth")
- Not sure / Don't know / First visit

Q5 **How long have you spent / will you spend here today?** *Single response only. Do not prompt.*

- Less than 30 minutes
- Between 30 minutes and 1 hour
- 1-2 hours
- 2-3 hours
- 3-4 hours
- 4 hours +

Further details:

Q6 **To the nearest year, how many years have you been visiting this site?** *Single response only, tick closest answer. Only prompt if interviewee struggles.*

- First visit
- Less than 1 year
- Between 1 year and 5 years
- Between 6 and 10 years
- Between 11 and 15 years
- Between 16 and 20 years
- 20 years and over
- Unsure / Don't know

Q7 **Do you tend to visit this location more at a particular time of year for [insert given activity]?** *Multiple answers ok. Do not prompt.*

- Spring (Mar-May)
- Summer (Jun-Aug)
- Autumn (Sept-Nov)
- Winter (Dec-Feb)
- Equally all year
- Don't know
- First visit

Q8 **How did you get here today?** *If necessary prompt with: What forms of transport did you use? If multiple forms of transport used, then tick the main one and give details of the others in box below.*

- Car / van
- On foot
- Bicycle
- Bus
- Train
- Other, please detail

Further details:

Q9 **Why did you choose to visit this specific location today, rather than somewhere else?** *Tick all responses given. Do not prompt, tick closest answers.*

- Don't know / others in party chose
- Close to home
- No need to use car
- Quick / easy travel route
- Good / easy parking
- Particular facilities
- Refreshments / cafe / pub
- Choice of routes
- Away from roads/traffic
- Feels safe here
- Not many people
- Scenery / variety of views
- Rural feel / wild landscape
- Particular wildlife interest (e.g. birds, plants)
- Particular historic or cultural interest
- Habit / familiarity
- Good for dog / dog enjoys it
- Ability to let dog off lead
- Appropriate place for activity
- Suitability of area in given weather conditions
- For a change / variety
- Other, please detail

Further details:

Q10 **Which of those reasons would you say had the most influence over your choice of location to visit today?** *Single choice, tick their main reason only. List is based on their answers to Q9.*

- Don't know / others in party chose
- Close to home
- No need to use car
- Quick / easy travel route
- Good / easy parking
- Particular facilities
- Refreshments / cafe / pub
- Choice of routes
- Away from roads/traffic
- Feels safe here
- Not many people
- Scenery / variety of views
- Rural feel / wild landscape
- Particular wildlife interest (e.g. birds, plants)
- Particular historic or cultural interest
- Habit / familiarity
- Good for dog / dog enjoys it
- Ability to let dog off lead
- Appropriate place for activity
- Suitability of area in given weather conditions
- For a change / variety
- Other reason

- Q11 **Now I'd like to ask you about your route today. Looking at the area shown on this map, can you show me where you started your visit today, the finish point and your route please.** *Probe to ensure route is accurately documented. Use **P** to indicate where the visitor parked (if applicable), **E** to indicate where they started and **X** to indicate where they finished. Mark the route with a solid line for the route already taken and a dotted line for the expected or remaining route, with arrows to indicate the direction.*

Enter the map reference below, or tick 'no map' if no route map completed.

- Q12 **Did you park at this survey point?** *You might not need to ask this question out loud, as it may be clear from the route. Only shows for those interviewees arriving by car.*

- Yes
 No

- Q13 **Is / was your route today the normal length when you visit here for [insert given activity]?** *Tick closest answer, do not prompt. Single response only.*

- Yes, normal
 Much longer than normal
 Much shorter than normal
 Not sure / no typical visit
 First visit

Q14 **What, if anything, influenced your choice of route here today?** *Tick closest answers, do not prompt. Multiple responses ok.*

- Weather
- Daylight
- Time
- Habit / usual route
- Other users (avoiding crowds, other dogs etc.)
- Group members (e.g. kids, less able)
- Avoiding muddy tracks / paths
- Followed a marked trail
- Location of cafe/restaurant/pub
- Activity undertaken (e.g. presence of dog)
- Birds / wildlife
- Followed their dog
- Interpretation / leaflets / promotion / app
- Viewpoint / feature
- Direct route to work / shops etc.
- Just wandering/exploring
- Other, please detail

Further details:

Q15 **Do you know what species (plants or animals) or habitats (where they live) could be affected by people coming here? If so, can you name them?** Do not prompt. Multiple answers ok.

- Not aware of any
- Yes, but unable to name any / vague
- Nightjar
- Woodlark
- Dartford Warbler
- Ground nesting birds generally (i.e. no species named)
- General comment about birds
- Reptiles (snakes, slow worms and lizards)
- Invertebrates (e.g. bees, beetles, butterflies, moths etc.)
- Rare plants
- General comment about heathland
- Other - provide details

Further details:

Q16 **Where would you have visited today for [given activity] if you could not have visited here?** Do not prompt. Ask for spelling if necessary.

- Nowhere / wouldn't have visited anywhere
- Not sure / don't know
- Site name:

Q16a

Please could you tell me the name of 2 other locations that you also visit for [given activity]? Do not prompt. Ask for spellings if necessary.

Q17a **Site name:**

Q17b **Site name:**

Q18 **Are there any changes you would like to see here with regards to how this area is managed for access?** *Do not give options or prompt. Tick closest option(s).*

- No changes / leave as is
- More parking
- Better parking
- More paths
- Better / surfaced paths
- More bins / less litter
- More dog waste bins
- Controls on dogs and dog fouling
- Facilities for dogs (e.g. training areas, washing facilities)
- More accessible
- Seating / benches
- Toilets
- Cafe
- Changes to habitats / scenery
- More natural / wild
- Not sure / don't know
- Other, please detail below

Further details:

Q19 Have you heard of the Thames Basin Heaths Partnership?

- Yes, have heard of.
- No, have not heard of.
- Don't know / Unsure

Further details:

Q20 Have you heard of the Heathland Hounds organisation?

- Yes, have heard of.
- No, have not heard of.
- Don't know / Unsure

Further details:

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Q21 **Do you have any further comments or general feedback about your visit and access to this area?**

Q22 **Finally, to identify how far people have travelled, what is your full home postcode?**
This is an important piece of information, please make every effort to record correctly. If necessary, reassure them that we don't want their full address, and it will only be used to work out where people are coming from.

Q23 *If visitor is unable or refuses to give postcode:* **What is the name of the town or area where you live?**

Q24 *If visitor is on holiday ask:* **Which town / area are you staying in?**

That is the end. Thank you very much indeed for your time.

TO BE COMPLETED AFTER INTERVIEW FINISHED.

Q25 Survey location:

- 1 - Mytchett Place Road
- 2 - Nightingale Road/A323
- 3 - The Lookout
- 4 - Top of Bracknell Road
- 5 - Top of King's Ride
- 6 - Bourley Road
- 8 - North entrance to Warren Heath
- 9 - Car park off Cricket Hill Lane
- 10 - Car park off A30, Haywards Cottage
- 12 - Chobham Common, Roundabout car park
- 13 - Chobham Common, Staple Hill car park
- 14 - Lightwater Country Park
- 15 - Sandpit Hill
- 16 - Queens Road, Cowshot Common
- 17 - B3011 opposite Arrow Lane
- 18 - Play area, Springfield Avenue
- 19 - South Road
- 20 - Off Crowthorne Road
- 21 - Salt Box Road
- 22 - Burdenshott Road
- 23 - Chobham Road
- 24 - Shore's Road
- 25 - Wren's Nest car park
- 26 - Currie's Clump - Boldermere car park
- 27 - Layby opposite Windrush House, Chapel Road
- 28 - Path intersection off Sandy Hill Road
- 29 - Car Park east of Foresters Arms Pub
- 30 - Car Park off B3348/A3095 Roundabout
- 31 - Path intersection adjacent to layby south side of A30
- 32 - Second layby on Old Guildford Road

Number of people in group (including minors)

Number of minors in group (under 18s)

Number of dogs with group

Number of dogs with group seen off lead

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Q26 **Did the interviewee struggle with answering questions because English was not their first language?**

Tick if you feel this may have influenced their responses.

Q27 **Surveyor comments.** *Note anything that may be relevant to the survey, including any changes to the survey entry that are necessary, e.g. typos/mistakes/changes to answers/additional information.*

Appendix 3: Questionnaire comparison

Table 24: Summary of the questionnaire design over time.

Topic	2012/13	2018	2023
Visit type	<i>Which of the following best describes your situation today?</i>	As previously used	Updated - layout changed to work better to our recent standard (1)
Activity	<i>What activity/activities are you undertaking today?</i>	Reworded to "main activity" i.e. Single response	As previously used
Years visiting?	<i>How long have you been visiting this site?</i>	As previously used, slightly reworded	Removed
Visit duration	<i>How long have you spent / will you spend in the area today?</i>	As previously used	As previously used
Visit frequency	<i>How frequently do you tend to visit this site?</i>	As previously used	Updated - <i>Over the past year, roughly how often have you visited this location?</i> (3)
Visit timing	<i>Do you tend to visit this area at a certain time of day?</i>	Removed	Removed
Visit timing	<i>Do you tend to visit this area more at a particular time of year for [insert activity]?</i>	Removed	As previously used
Proportion of visits	-	-	New - <i>What proportion of your weekly visits for [given activity] take place at this site compared to other sites. Can you give a rough percentage?</i>
Transport	<i>What form of transport did you use to get here?</i>	As previously used, slightly reworded	As previously used
Parking	<i>Where did you park?</i>	Removed	<i>Did you park at the survey point?</i> (plus recorded on maps)

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Topic	2012/13	2018	2023
Reasons for visiting (main & other)	<i>What makes you come here, specifically, rather than another local site? Which would you say had the most influence over your choice of visit location today?</i>	As previously used, slightly reworded	As previously used, slightly reworded to allow for all choices, then to select main
Alternative sites	-	<i>Is this your first choice of places to visit in the area?</i>	Removed
Alternative sites (transport and frequency)	<i>Aside from here, do you visit any other places (max 3) for {insert activity }? How do you usually travel there? Enter response in Q11b then ask How often on average to you go there?</i>	As previously used, slightly reworded. Did not ask transport and frequency	As previously used
Reasons for visiting alt sites	-	<i>What factors draw you to these other places? What do you like about them?</i>	Removed
Alt site improvements	<i>What features would be necessary to make AN-OTHER site attractive for you to use INSTEAD of here</i>	Removed	Removed
Improvements			<i>Are there any changes you would like to see here with regards to how this area is managed for access?</i>
Route	<i>Looking at the area shown on this map, can you show me where you started your walk or visit today. And the finish point. And your route please ?</i>	As previously used, slightly reworded	As previously used, slightly reworded
GPS apps	-	<i>Did you use any GPS tracking app today (e.g. Strava) and would you be prepared to share your data?</i>	Removed
Dog route	-	<i>Did your dog leave the marked footpaths or tracks during your visit today?</i>	Removed

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Topic	2012/13	2018	2023
Access point of entry	<i>Did you enter the heath from here or another access point</i>	Removed	Will be recorded in the maps
Route typical?	<i>Is/was your route today reflective of your usual route when you visit here for</i>	Removed	As previously used, slightly reworded
Paths	<i>Did your visit today involve walking off the paths ?</i>	Removed	Not asked
Choice of route	<i>What (if anything) influenced your choice of route here today?</i>	Removed	As previously used, slightly reworded
Other comments	<i>Do you have any other comments about this area?</i>	Removed	As previously used, slightly reworded
Postcode	<i>What is your full home postcode?</i>	As previously used, slightly reworded	As previously used, slightly reworded
Age of property	-	<i>Can you tell me the approximate age of your home?</i>	Not asked
Awareness of SPA etc	-	<i>Are you aware that the site is a protected conservation site?</i>	As previously used, slightly reworded
Awareness of TBH	-	<i>Finally, have you heard of the Thames Basin Heaths Partnership and its work?</i>	As previously used, slightly reworded and added Heathland Hounds
Party age	<i>How many of your party fall into the following age categories</i>	Removed	Removed
Party dogs	<i>Can I just check how many dogs you have with you today?</i>	Removed	Recorded at end of survey
Language issues			<i>Did the interviewee struggle with answering questions because English was not their first language?</i>

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Topic	2012/13	2018	2023
Surveyor comments			<i>Surveyor to record any comments</i>

Appendix 4: Visitor footfall

Table 25: Total footfall recorded on weekdays and weekends at each survey point.

Survey point	Weekday					Weekend				
	Footfall: groups	Footfall: people	Footfall: dogs	Footfall: minors	Footfall: bicycles	Footfall: groups	Footfall: people	Footfall: dogs	Footfall: minors	Footfall: bicycles
1: Mytchett Place Road	113	167	104	18	43	121	208	97	25	15
2: Nightingale Road/A323	22	34	13	6	4	13	15	9	2	4
3: The Lookout	71	167	30	36	13	184	457	85	124	94
4: Top of Bracknell Road	61	121	36	65	31	60	91	40	15	22
5: Top of King's Ride	72	88	83	11	5	132	232	114	45	19
6: Bourley Road	67	114	71	22	3	101	194	85	32	2
8: North Entrance to Warren Heath	43	82	44	19	12	62	130	50	29	26
9: Car Park off Cricket Hill Lane	19	23	18	5	2	25	49	14	7	2
10: Car Park off A30, Haywards Cottage	25	37	23	5	0	16	26	8	4	2
12: Chobham Common, Roundabout Car Park	62	93	75	9	0	115	194	124	12	2
13: Chobham Common, Staple Hill Car Park	13	18	8	1	0	29	47	24	2	0

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Survey point	Weekday					Weekend				
	Footfall: groups	Footfall: people	Footfall: dogs	Footfall: minors	Footfall: bicycles	Footfall: groups	Footfall: people	Footfall: dogs	Footfall: minors	Footfall: bicycles
14: Lightwater Country Park	64	102	57	17	2	84	141	70	8	2
15: Sandpit Hill	46	80	62	13	0	66	95	69	11	0
16: Queens Road, Cowshot Common	35	45	25	9	10	47	63	31	14	6
17: B3011 opposite Arrow Lane	25	37	21	6	3	41	72	37	6	1
18: Play Area, Springfield Avenue	81	110	73	13	0	93	167	69	35	17
19: South Road	101	141	56	16	40	54	114	41	6	22
20: Off Crowthorne Road	55	81	65	14	1	68	120	69	9	1
21: Salt Box Road	176	261	190	41	8	148	244	138	23	2
22: Burdenshott Road	27	46	32	4	0	50	93	43	5	9
23: Chobham Road	149	198	134	22	23	112	156	123	1	1
24: Shore's Road	214	345	239	56	8	219	395	240	47	5
25: Wren's Nest Car Park	40	57	74	4	1	55	81	99	6	3
27: Layby opposite Windrush House Chapel Lane	15	36	18	4	2	26	40	21	1	1
28: Path Intersection off Sandy Hill Road	75	166	52	34	13	154	290	80	48	46
29: Car Park east of Foresters Arms Pub	106	145	113	15	15	101	149	98	11	21

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Survey point	Weekday					Weekend				
	Footfall: groups	Footfall: people	Footfall: dogs	Footfall: minors	Footfall: bicycles	Footfall: groups	Footfall: people	Footfall: dogs	Footfall: minors	Footfall: bicycles
30: Car Park off B3348/ A3095 roundabout	94	126	125	6	9	89	157	94	16	8
31: Path intersection adjacent to layby south side of A30	28	32	13	3	8	34	49	22	7	6
32: Second layby on Old Guildford Road	23	34	29	5	1	35	60	36	4	6
40: Pond Car Park	13	13	17	0	1	40	80	56	5	3
All survey points	1,935	2,999	1,900	479	258	2,374	4,209	2,086	560	348

Appendix 5: Main activity by survey point

Table 26: Summary of interviewee activities by survey point.

Survey point	Dog walking	Walking	Jogging / running	Cycling / mountain biking	Other activity	Bird/wildlife watching	Commercial dog walker	Visiting cafe/restaurant/pub	Outing with family	Photography	Meeting up with friends	Fishing	Fitness/formal sports	Total
1: Mytchett Place Road	39	9		1										49
2: Nightingale Road/A323	9	1	1											11
3: The Lookout	23	11	2	2	1									39
4: Top of Bracknell Road	20	4	1	3										28
5: Top of King's Ride	29	6	1	1		1								38
6: Bourley Road	32	7												39
8: North Entrance to Warren Heath	27	6	1			1								35
9: Car Park off Cricket Hill Lane	9	6				1	1					1		18
10: Car Park off A30, Haywards Cottage	8	1												9
12: Chobham Common, Roundabout Car Park	34	8			1	3								46
13: Chobham Common, Staple Hill Car Park	13	5	1				1				1			21
14: Lightwater Country Park	25	12			1								1	39
15: Sandpit Hill	28	3	1			2			1		1			36
16: Queens Road, Cowshot Common	20	8	2											30
17: B3011 opposite Arrow Lane	14	11						1	1					27

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Survey point	Dog walking	Walking	Jogging / running	Cycling / mountain biking	Other activity	Bird/wildlife watching	Commercial dog walker	Visiting cafe/restaurant/pub	Outing with family	Photography	Meeting up with friends	Fishing	Fitness/formal sports	Total
18: Play Area, Springfield Avenue	33	12			2	1								48
19: South Road	27	10	3	2	1			2						45
20: Off Crowthorne Road	33	8			1	1				1				44
21: Salt Box Road	57	10	1							1	1			70
22: Burdenshott Road	21	6						2						29
23: Chobham Road	47	7					1	1						56
24: Shore's Road	73	3	3	1			1			1				82
25: Wren's Nest Car Park	23	3					1							27
27: Layby opposite Windrush House Chapel Lane	15	5												20
28: Path Intersection off Sandy Hill Road	32	16		2	2			1	2					55
29: Car Park east of Foresters Arms Pub	44	15	1		2		1	1						64
30: Car Park off B3348/ A3095 roundabout	40	10	2	1		1	2							56
31: Path intersection adjacent to layby south side of A30	10	3	1	1										15
32: Second layby on Old Guildford Road	21													21
40: Pond Car Park	14	1	1											16
All survey points	820	207	22	14	11	11	8	8	4	3	3	1	1	1113

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