

SUMMARY OF VISITOR MONITORING AT UPTON COUNTRY PARK SANG (PHASE 1, ROUND 2)

AUGUST 2018

Summary:

Monitoring was carried out in the phase 1 area of Upton Country Park SANG in August 2018, 3
years after the site opened and initial surveys were carried out. 32 surveys hours were
completed, and 127 visitors interviewed.

Survey data suggests:

- 97% of interviewees described themselves as local.
- 88% of interviewees described their main activity at the site at the time of interview as dog walking.
- 63% of interviewees had been visiting Upton Country Park for 10 years or more. 2% of visitors were visiting the SANG for the first time.
- 85% of the interviewees suggested that they visit equally over weekdays and weekends and
 91% all year round.
- 79% of interviewees travelled to the site by car/van. 20% had walked to the site and 1% used 'other' forms of transport.
- The most common reasons visitors chose to visit the SANG rather than another site related to site being good for their dogs and dogs enjoying the site.
- Data and feedback suggests that interviewees liked that dogs can be let off the lead, the
 variety of habitats and the scenery, that the site felt safe, the facilities and the wildlife and
 nature.
- Improvement suggestions included more dog poo bins and better car parking. Most interviewees suggested 'other' improvements which mainly related to better signage for cyclists to slow down and picking up dog mess as well as comments relating to parking charges (see Figure 13 and 25 for full list of improvement suggestions and comments). Nearly a quarter of interviewees suggested no improvements were needed.
- Alternative locations that interviewees described that they would visit, had they not been able
 to visit the SANG on the day included Upton Heath, 'beach', Canford Heath, Hamworthy Park
 and Baiter.
- Interviewees suggested proximity to home, variety of habitats and familiarity as the main reason to visit other sites.
- Interviewees on average travelled a median distance of 2.44km to walk their dog, 5.29km for a walk and 4.98km for a family outing at the SANG.

- Of the visitors interviewed, 73% suggested that they followed a normal route on the site whilst 22% said that they had no typical route.
- Access numbers
- 98% of interviewees scored their visit on the day a 6 or above (on a scale of 1-10 where 1 is poor and 10 is excellent).

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspaces (SANGs) are new or enhanced greenspaces of a quality and type suitable to be used as mitigation for development likely to affect the Dorset Heathlands European and internationally protected sites. They are designed to absorb recreation pressure that would otherwise occur on these designated wildlife sites.
- 1.2 The SANG at Upton Country Park was created by the Borough of Poole as part of the package to mitigate from the impact of increased pressure from recreation arising from new development in the borough. The SANG was officially opened in April 2015 with an official car park designed to serve the site opened on Friday 31st July 2015. The first phase of visitor monitoring was carried out at the SANG during August 2015. A second round of follow up visitor monitoring was carried out during August 2018.
- 1.3 The SANG monitoring followed principles set out in the Dorset Heathlands SPD and consisted of onsite tally counts, onsite interviews, installation of automated people counters and car park monitoring in line with the Dorset Heathlands Monitoring Strategy.

2. On site tally counts

- 2.1 On site tally counts were conducted at the same time as the visitor surveys at the two main entrances to the site; along the path from the Pony Drive car park (398787, 92985) and the base of the hill from Grove Woods (399027, 92788). 32 survey hours were completed during two-hour sessions (7am-9am, 10am-12noon, 1pm-3pm, 5pm-7pm) with an even spread over weekends and weekdays. To date, 64 survey hours have been completed.
- 2.2 A total of 683 people were recorded entering the site at both entrances during the sessions (Table 1). An average of 21 people per hour. The average group size entering the site was 1.9. The number of dogs was high with an average of 1.1 dogs per group.

Table 1: Summary of tally data per survey point for people, groups, dogs and minors entering the site.

Survey Point	Number of people entering	Number of groups entering	Number of dogs entering	Number of minors entering
Pony Drive entrance	306	176	186	46
Grove Woods entrance	377	188	208	63
Total	683	364	394	109

- 2.5 Any reasons for unusual numbers of visitors were also recorded. On the weekend of the 5th and 6th of August, Upton Country Park hosted the Poole Town and Country Fair (from 10am-5pm). Surveys were carried out on both dates.
- Also recorded to gain an idea of 'busyness' at the site was number of people on the site in addition to entering the site (number of people leaving the site were also recorded). A further 263 people were recorded on the site (not entering or leaving at time of tally count, but utilising site). Of those people, 11 were on bicycles, 2 were running, 8 had pushchairs with them and 16 were riding Segways (as part of a tour offered at Upton Country Park).
- 2.5 Dogs/owners using the dog training area was an average of 2.2 per hour during the survey hours.
- 2.6 Basic weather, including cloud cover, rainfall and temperature was recorded at the time of tally counts. For reference, weather during August 2018 was unusually hot, with summer of 2018 being the hottest on record. Most sessions had no rain although some later in the month experienced some showers with the temperature described as mild and windy during that time.

3. On site interviews

- 3.1 Face to face interviews were carried out at the same two locations as the tally counts using a specific SANG survey designed for the site by Footprint Ecology, in line with previous SANG and heathland visitor surveys. The surveys were conducted on a tablet and using site maps to mark routes that visitors took on site.
- 3.2 127 visitors were interviewed during the 32 survey hours on the site (Table 2), again at the same time as the tally counts, in two-hour time periods, equally across weekdays and weekends.

Table 2: Number of interviews shown per survey point.

Survey Point	Number of people interviewed
Pony Drive entrance	70
Grove Woods entrance	57
Total	127

Visitor Situation

3.3 97% of the interviewees described themselves as on a day trip and visiting from home. Only 2% were on holiday and 2% visiting with friends or family. Figure 1 shows these responses.

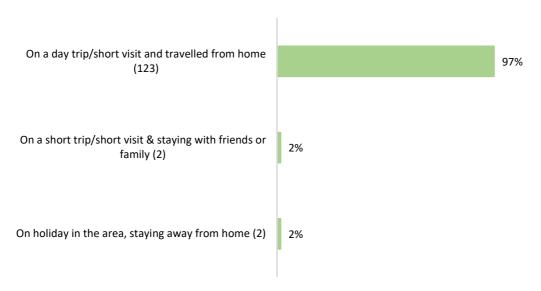


Figure 1: Responses to Q1, which asks interviewees to describe their situation. Percentage of respondents shown next to frequency bars and number of interviewees in brackets.

Activities

- 3.4 Visitors were asked what their main activity was that they were conducting on their visit to the site at the time of the interview. Only a single response was accepted, any other comments about further activities carried out on site on different days or visits are noted in the free comments and feedback text later in the questionnaires.
- 3.5 88% of visitors described their main activity at the time of survey as dog walking, 6% walking, 2% commercial dog walking, 2% jogging/running, 2% on a family outing and 1% as 'other' activities. Figure 2 shows interviewees responses.

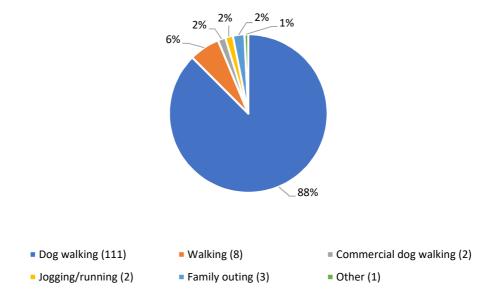


Figure 2: Responses to Q2, which asks visitors what their main activity is during their visit on the day of interview. Number of respondents in brackets and percentages shown on the chart.

Length of visitation

3.6 Although the SANG area of Upton Country Park only opened 3 years ago, many visitors could have been visiting the site prior to the opening of the SANG. Therefore, to gain an understanding of visitor use of the park as a whole, along with the SANG, interviewees were asked how long they had been visiting both. Answers ranged from first visit to 10 years and over (Figure 3). 63% of interviewees had been visiting the park for 10 years or longer and 26% had been visiting between 1 and 9 years (with an average of 3.8 years). 2% were on their first visit to the site and SANG.

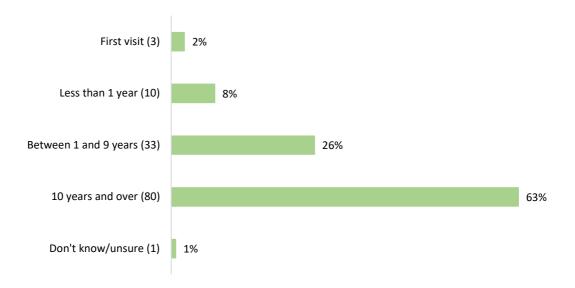


Figure 3: Interviewee responses to Q3 regarding how long they had been visiting Upton Country Park. Percentage of respondents shown next to frequency bars and number of respondents in brackets.

Visit duration

3.7 Visitors were asked how long they had/will spend during their visit on the day of interview.
60% of interviewees said that their visit would last between 1-2 hours and 43% said they would spend between 30 minutes and 1 hour on site. 2% said they would spend 2-3 hours and 1% more than 3 hours on site. 2% said their visit would last no longer than 30 minutes.
Figure 4 shows interviewees responses.

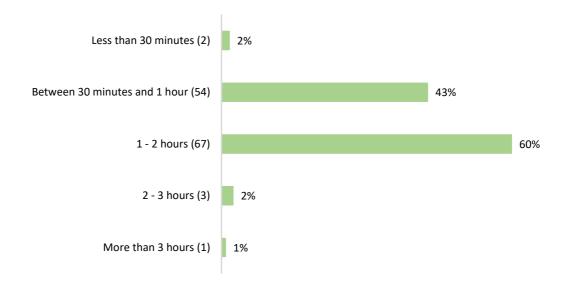


Figure 4: Interviewees responses regarding their estimated duration of their current visit to the site on the day of interviewing. Number of interviewees shown in brackets and percentages next to frequency bars.

Visit frequency

3.8 Visitors were asked how frequently they visited the site and responses are shown in Figure 5.

Nearly half of visitors said that they visited the site more than once a week (43%) with over a quarter either visiting daily (19%) or more than once a day (7%).

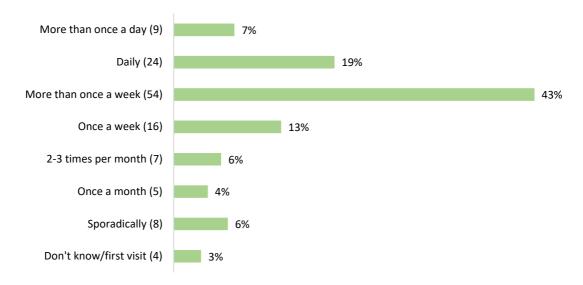


Figure 5: Responses to how frequently interviewees visited the site. Number of interviewees in brackets and percentages next to frequency bars.

Visit timing

3.9 Visitors were asked whether their visits tended to be during the week, weekends or equally over both. 85% said that they visit the site equally over weekdays and weekend. Weekday (6%) and weekend (8%) visit split was similar with a slightly higher proportion visiting the site at weekends (Figure 6).

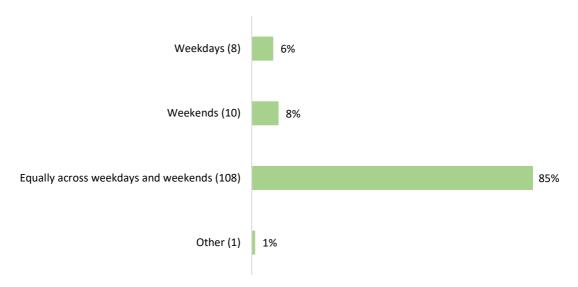


Figure 6: Responses of interviewees regarding timings of their visits to the site across weekdays and weekends. Number of interviewees shown in brackets and percentages next to frequency bars.

3.10 Visitors were also asked in line with the previous question, whether they frequented the site at a particular time of day. Multiple answers were allowed. Figure 7 shows the most frequent time of day was before 9am (21%) or after 4pm (14%) although almost half of all visitors (49%) said that it could vary/they did not know/was their first visit. The quietest times of the day were between 12 and 4pm, when the weather was likely to be hottest.

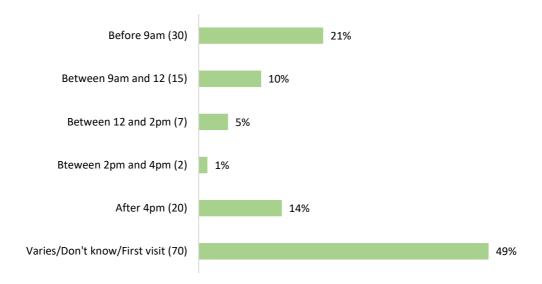


Figure 7: Interviewees responses to which time of day they tended to visit the site. Number of interviewees shown in brackets and percentages next to frequency bars.

3.11 Visitors were also asked if they tended to visit the site at a particular time of year. Multiple answers were allowed. Figure 8 shows that most visitors suggested that they visited the site equally all year (91% of visitors).

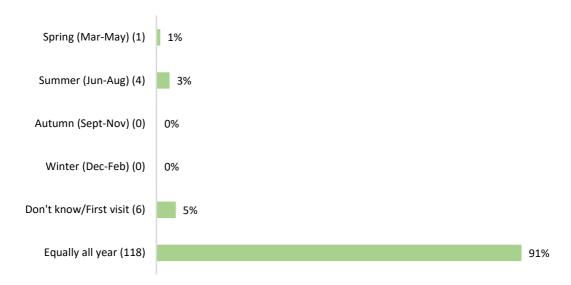


Figure 8: Interviewees responses to the particular time of year that they tend to visit the site. Number of interviewees shown in brackets and percentages next to frequency bars.

Transport to site

3.12 Visitors were asked what form of transport they used to get to the site. Figure 9 shows that 79% travelled by car/van and 20% had walked. 1 interviewee had taken a train (classified as 'other' from Manchester to the closest train station and then walked to get to the site for a wedding.

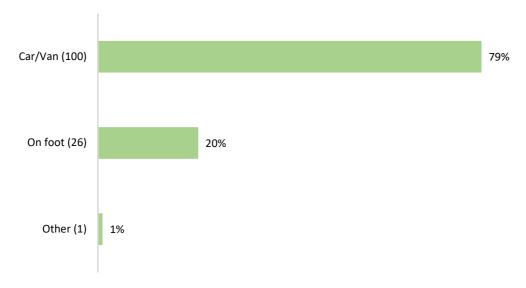


Figure 9: Interviewee responses to how they travelled to the site on the day of their visit. Number of interviewees shown in brackets and percentages next to frequency bars.

Visit influences

3.13 The next question asked visitors why they had specifically chosen to visit this site and the most common responses are shown in Figure 10. The primary reasons that visitors suggested they had specifically chosen to visit the site were because the site was good for dogs/dogs enjoy it there, because owners were able to let their dogs off the lead and the variety of habitats and scenery. Further comments are shown in Figure 11.

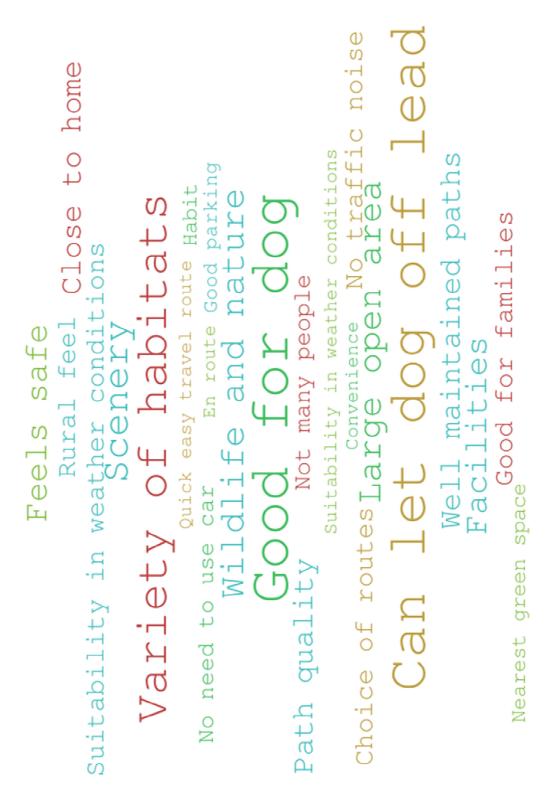


Figure 10: Responses of interviewees as to why they had specifically chosen to visit the site on the day of interview rather than another local site.

Paths good for my mum who has glaucoma. It's quiet here. Love the cafe, play balls and the walled garden. Good café. Love going to the tea rooms. Can stop off at the tea rooms. Lovely place and I like the tea rooms. Good tea rooms. It's free. Water for dogs. Like the water for dogs. It's free. Affordable and so well used. Makes for a cheap day out with the kids. I like that there is shade and water. Like the water for dogs. There's free parking. The dog facilities are excellent. I enjoy the freedom. Free car park. Free! Water for dog. Very relaxing. Free parking, I would never go anywhere that I had to pay with the dog. Training area.

Figure 11: Interviewees further comments about why they chose to visit the site on the day of their visit.

Improvement suggestions

3.14 Interviewees were asked what, if any, improvements they would like to see on the site.

Nearly a quarter of interviewees suggested that no improvements were needed (24%). 25% of interviewees suggested that they would like to see more dog poo bins on site and 9% said that the site could do with better car parking (Figure 12). The highest proportion of visitors suggested 'other' improvements (36%). Figure 13 shows these suggestions and further comments.

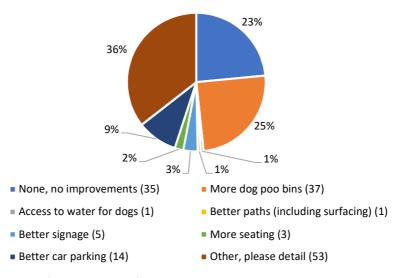


Figure 12: Responses of interviewees of improvements they would like to see at the site. Number of respondents in brackets and percentages shown on the chart.

More poo bins before you get to the woods, and along by the factories.

Better grass cutting.

Don't want to pay for parking but small car park gets so crowded and full that you have to wait for a space.

Lots of poo bags chucked by factory, more bins? Don't let kids mess with dog stream, put bench there.

Better variety of food in the cafe and more as it runs out. After park run have coffee ready as you get a long queue and parking will run out. Or extend parking time so you have time to get a coffee.

Don't let it get too commercialised.

In the Pony Drive car park people park in front of gate when its full blocking access. Can you put sign on gate to stop this or put marking on the floor? Worries me in case there's a fire or someone hurts themselves that emergency vehicles won't be able to get in.

Don't charge for parking in the main car park.

Make more natural, too commercial.

Don't like that you have to pay for parking.

Would like to go off the paths.

Security cameras! Gate on Pony Drive car park ruined.

Since parking charges were put in people park up in Creekmoor where we live.

Manage the grass a bit better.

Water fountain for drinking water.

Open up more of the house.

Won't pay for parking but smaller car park gets so busy and you have to wait for a space a lot of the time as it's too small.

Car parking fees heavy.

Dog wash in dog car park? Better access to water. Preferred when the cafe was run by disabled. Annoying main car park isn't free. Make the free car park bigger. Empty the bins more often and a bin by sign after bridge in woods. Pick up poo, more climbing activities for children in the woods, poo bin by sign near factories. Coffee shop this side as other side dogs on leads and not welcome inside. Poo bins down factory side. Fix the gate by Pony Drive car park, cyclists and runners get in the way and rude, education for them? Ducks in the pond but it's drying up. Make families more aware where dog area is as I've had problems with kids throwing rocks at dogs. Also, free car park gets full, so I feel sorry for the residents as everyone just parks along the roads. Empty the poo bins more when it's hot. Clean pond as gets boggy. Enforcing irresponsible dog owners. Litter bins too. Poo bin round factory side. Free car park sometimes busy so I have to pay for the other car park when I'd rather not. Improve marking for bays in the Pony Drive car park, cyclists rude and fast, separate paths? Runners with dogs don't pick up poo. Slow bikes down, patrol for dog walkers not picking up poo, park run is a massive inconvenience, they are very rude, litter bins by the benches. Maybe more dog wardens, lots of poo and dogs with no collars. Water fountain for dogs. Water fountain. Can't always access the cafe and staff are rude. Fix the gate by the Pony Drive car park. Fix the swing, bigger range of splash for other age groups, dog on lead area annoying. Check water quality of stream as it made my dog ill. Put signs up if that's the case to warn owners. More play bits for kids on trails. Ice cream area. More toilets. Useful if season ticket could work for whole family so multiple cars included.

Go back to free car parking.

Don't charge for parking.

Could you use a parking app?

Stream in new area is dangerous, could do with some work.

Better signage for cyclists as they go very fast.

More of the historical features open.

Dog wash at other side of park.

Puts gates back on to make it secure for dogs.

Lots of kids in dog walking in dog off lead area and some aggression towards dogs and owners.

Better refreshments.

Don't like that you have to pay for parking.

Get rid of paid parking. Often come with disabled groups but if we haven't got the money for parking we'll go to Poole park.

Prefer it natural and not the commercial parts.

Free car parking in all car parks.

Free car parking please.

More educational and visitor centre areas.

More toilets around.

Another dog training area, more rope swings for kids, check fences by factory side.

Cyclists go too fast, need more signage perhaps to remind people to slow and to let families with children know where off lead dog areas are.

More play areas for kids.

More trees in open areas, general code for cyclists, runners and dog owners.

Maintain fence by railway.

Prefer old views, come here less now there is charging for parking.

Too bigger spaces between benches.

More litter picking.

Holes in the tables so people could put umbrellas in to have shade.

Less people, more dog awareness.

Keep up good work.

Miss the old shoreline path.

More free parking. Parked on Allens road today as free car park was full.

Figure 13: Further comments about improvements that visitors would like to see at the site.

Visit/activities proportions to site

3.15 Interviewees were asked what proportion of their weekly visit for the given activity was carried out at the site compared to other sites visited. The highest proportion of visitors suggested that all their weekly visits for their given activity was carried out at the site (31%), with a quarter suggesting 75% or more was carried out on site (24%). 9% of visitors said that less than 25% of their visits for the given activity was spent on the site and 6% were not sure or were on their first visit.

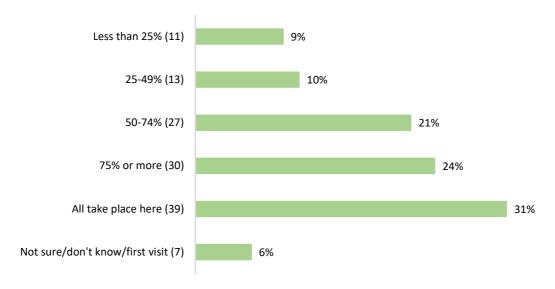


Figure 14: Responses to proportion of weekly visits for the chosen activity that take place at the site compared to other sites visited. Number of interviewees shown in brackets and percentage next to frequency bars.

Other sites visited

- 3.16 Interviewees were asked which locations they would have visited for their chosen activity had this site not been visited on the day of interview. Visitors were asked to provide up to three alternative sites, with note taken on the primary site they would have visited.

 Considering all the responses for named sites, 33 different sites were given. The top five commonly named sites were Upton Heath (28), 'beach' (22), Canford Heath (12), Hamworthy Park (12) and Baiter (9). Figure 15 shows all responses in a word cloud demonstrating the range and frequency of sites.
- 3.17 Interviewees were asked why they would choose the alternative sites suggested in Figure 15 in preference to this site. Suggestions included they were close to home, there is a variety of habitats and out of habit and familiarity. Figure 16 shows these responses.



Figure 15: Responses of interviewees of alternative locations that they would have visited had they not been able to visit Upton Country Park for their chosen activity.



Membership of organisations

3.18 39% of people interviewed were members of the names organisations Dorset Wildlife Trust,
Dorset Dogs, the RSPB and the National Trust. 61% were not members of these
organisations. Figure 17 shows this information.

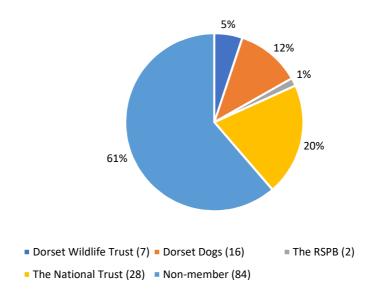


Figure 17: Responses of interviewees for whether they were members of any of the named organisations. Number of respondents shown in brackets and percentages shown on the chart.

How found out about site

3.19 Interviewees were asked how they first found out about the site and responses are shown in Figure 18. The highest number of visitors heard about the site through knowledge other than local press and word of mouth (55%) which generally meant visitors had always lived locally and knew the site was here. Other common responses were through local knowledge: word of mouth (23%), saw a sign/drove past and through specific recommendations.

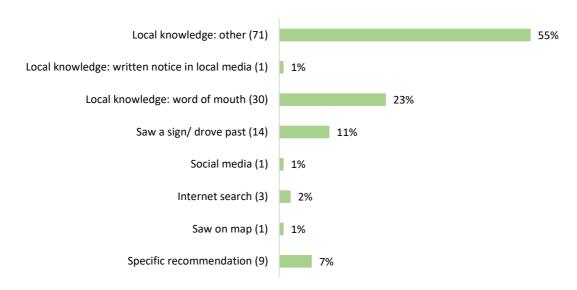


Figure 18: Responses from interviewees as to how they had first heard about the site. Number of interviewees in brackets and percentages next to frequency bars.

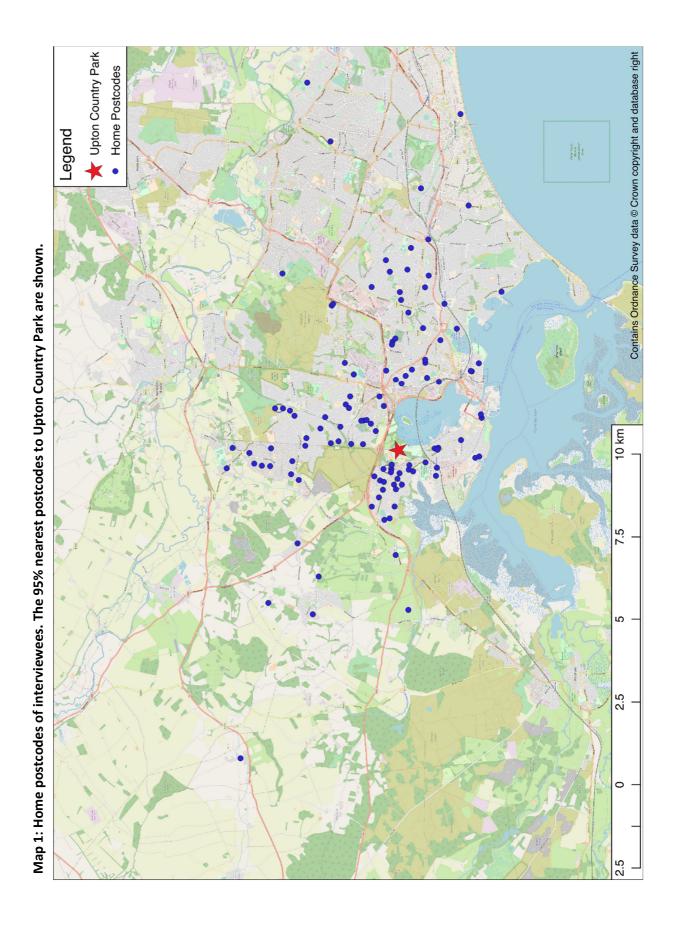
4. Distance to site

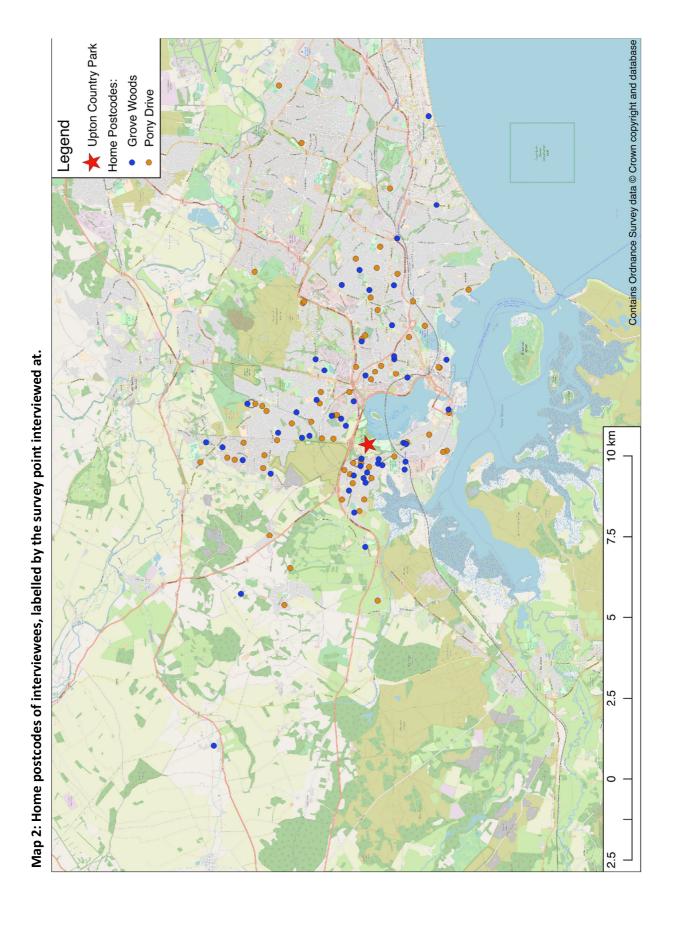
4.1 121 interviewees gave a complete and valid georeferenced postcode and 97% of visitors would be described as local. This is also in line with how they described themselves from Q1. Table 3 shows the median distance travelled by visitors per activity carried out to the centre of the site. The median linear distance travelled from home to the centre of the site for those who were interviewed by the Grove Woods entrance was 2.65km and for the car park opposite Pony Drive it was 3.22km.

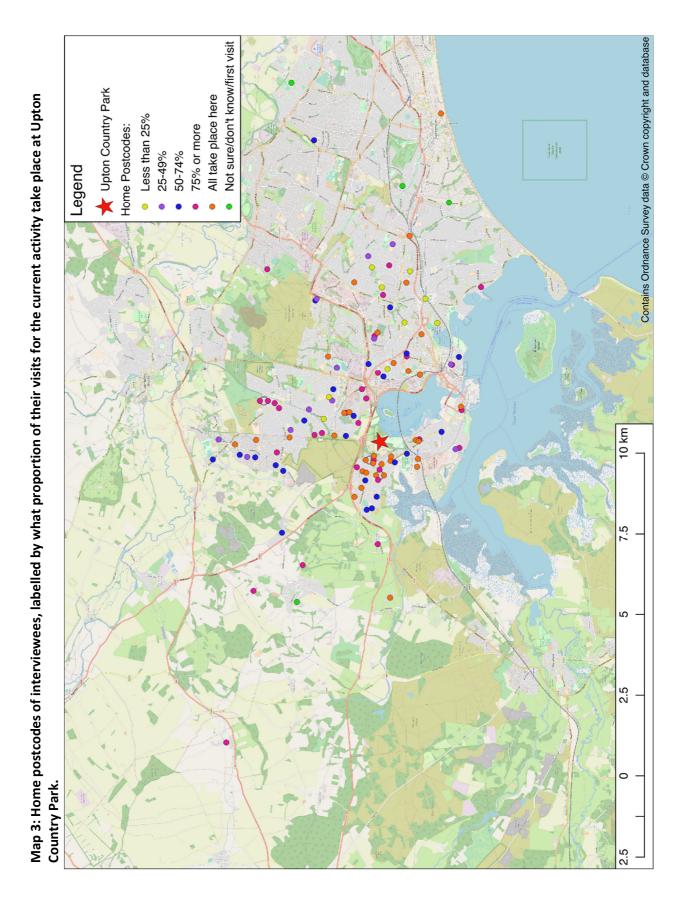
Table 3: Summary of median distances travelled from home for main activity carried out. Data used from the postcodes of interviewees.

Activity	Median distance travelled (km)
Dog walking	2.44
Walking	5.29
Commercial dog walking	6.54
Jogging/running	1.97
Family outing	4.98
Other	4.05

4.2 Map 1 shows the home postcodes of the 95% nearest to Upton Country Park SANG and Map 2 the home postcodes of the interviewees, labelled by survey point. Map 3 shows postcodes of interviewees, labelled by what proportion of their visits for the current activity take place at Upton Country Park.







5. Visitor Routes

- 5.1 Visitors' routes were recorded as part of the face to face interviews on maps of the site and then digitised in GIS following the interviews.
- 5.2 Interviewees were asked whether the route they had taken today was representative of the route that they would usually take at the site. Figure 19 shows the responses to this question with 73% suggesting it was their normal route and 22% suggesting they do not have a typical route.

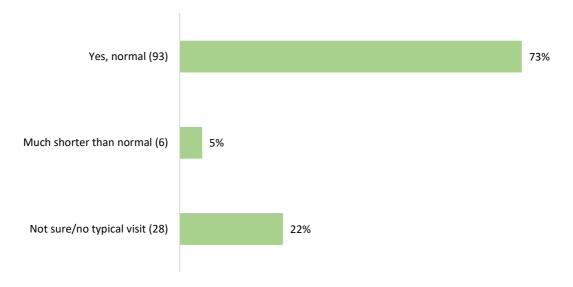


Figure 19: Responses to whether the route chosen today was reflective of their usual route when visiting the site. Number of interviewees in brackets and percentages next to frequency bars.

5.3 Visitors were asked what, if anything influenced their choice of route at the site on the day of their visit. The majority of visitors described the reason for their choice as due to the actions and activities of their dog (54%). 17% of visitors said that weather influenced their choice of route and so were walking in shaded areas as the weather was very hot. Figure 20 shows the different influences that visitors described.

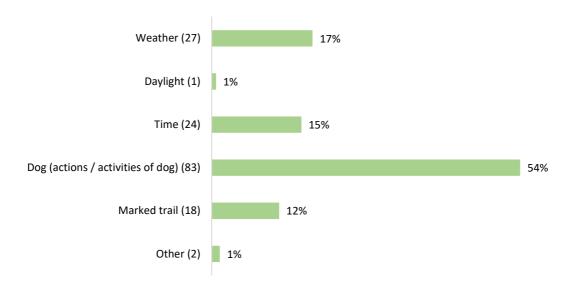


Figure 20: Interviewees responses to if anything influenced their choice of route at the site on the day of interview. Number of interviewees in brackets, percentages shown next frequency bars.

5.4 Map 4 shows the estimated density of recorded routes and use of entry points recorded from the interviews. The map shows that

5.5 Finally visitors were asked to rate aspects of their visit to the site. Firstly, all visitors were asked to rate the paths in the SANG. Figure 21 shows that 98% of interviewees rated the paths a 6 or above (where 10 is excellent and 1 is poor).

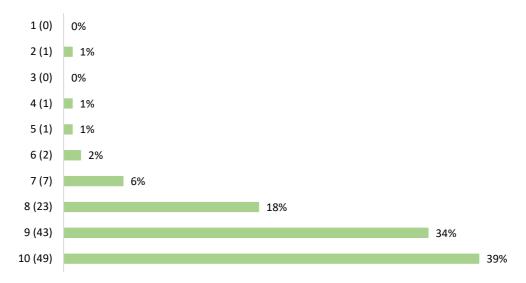


Figure 21: Responses of interviewees when asked to rate the paths on site. Number of interviewees in brackets and percentages next to frequency bars.

All visitors who had driven to the site on the day of the interview were asked to rate the parking on site. 89% of interviewees rated the parking as a 6 or above (Figure 22).

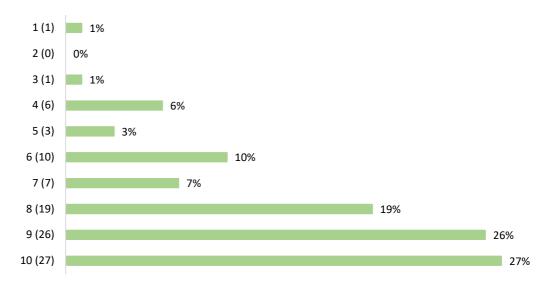


Figure 22: Responses of interviewees when asked to rate the parking for the site. Number of interviewees shown in brackets and percentages next to frequency bars.

5.7 Interviewees who had described their main activity on the site on the day of interview as dog walking were asked to rate the site for dogs out of 10. 99% of visitors rated the site as 6 or higher for dogs (Figure 23).

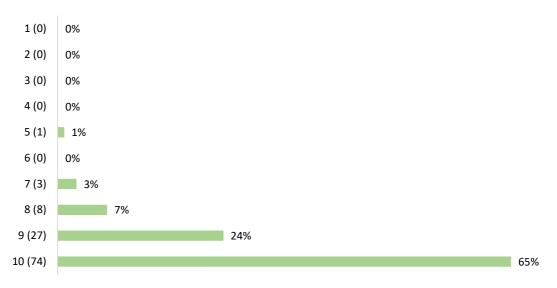


Figure 23: Responses of interviewees who had a dog with them on site when asked to rate the site for dogs. Number of interviewees in brackets and percentages next to frequency bars.

5.8 Lastly, all visitors were asked to give the site an overall rating out of 10. Figure 24 shows that 98% of visitors rated the site overall as a 6 or above.

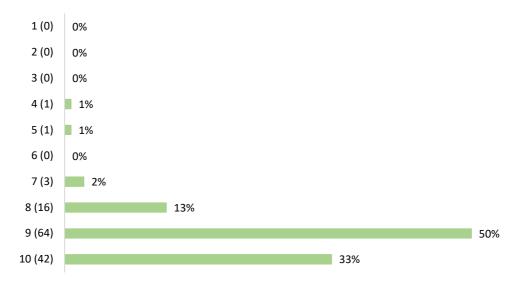


Figure 24: Responses of interviewees when asked to rate their overall experience today. Number of interviewees in brackets and percentages next to frequency bars.

5.9 All further comments about the site and how it is managed are shown in Figure 25.

Good facilities and always clean.

Better marking for car spaces in pony drive car park so more cars fit in it. Wider paths for cyclists.

Fabulous site.

Really love it but don't let it get too commercialised.

Love it apart from the parking, too expensive. Should do more evening events like the song festival you had.

Really love it other than the parking fees and the stones from the paths that get in my shoes.

Preferred it when the other car park was free as the other one gets so busy and full.

Think its excellent.

Free car park is great when it's not full. Had an annual pass but too expensive now.

Really love it here. Not everyone picks up so more signs for picking up poo perhaps.

Parking is terrible. Often so busy I have to park over the road on Pony Drive.

Free car park could do with being bigger and mark the bays better.

Fed up of people littering and leaving dog poo and the country park doing nothing about it.

Like the dog training area and all the improvements. Can't really fault it.

Love that there is the free parking.

Prefer to walk here as free car park is small and often full.

Love it here. Great place for dogs.

Perhaps signs to tell cyclists to ring their bells so people know to move to the side.

General tidiness has got worse over time. Also think you could have a greater range of events, maybe some concerts?

Deeper water for dogs would be nice.

Shame that people can't carry poo bags far. Maybe some more bins?

Better car parking as I parked on Pony Drive as the free car park was full.

Like that there is free parking but if its busy I'll park on the road rather than pay.

More dog poo bins.

Used to like parking in the little bit of the main car park at the bottom but don't now you have to pay.

Really love it here. Think it's great and lots of focus on conservation.

Parking prices lets it down. If you're making us pay you should offer more.

Thank you for the new dog bin!

Thank you so much for putting the new dog poo bin in by the factory side.

Fix the gates so its secure for dogs.

Really love seeing how the place has evolved. Keep up the good work.

Don't agree with parking price. Parked on Allens road as free and not busy. I'm a pensioner!

Figure 25: All further comments about the site and how it could be managed.

6. Car park transect surveys

6.1 The Dorset Heathlands SPA car park transect survey is carried out 14 times per year by the Urban Heaths Partnership and partner Heathland Mitigation wardens. Following the opening of the Pony Drive car, this car park was added to the transect as well as the two main car parks serving Upton Country Park to gain a snap shot of visitors using the car parks at the times of survey. Automated counters were also installed at the main car parks which can be used to gain a further level of understanding of visitor numbers at the site. Further information on car park transect figures across the Dorset Heathlands SPD project area are available on request from UHP.

7. Automated counters

7.1 Upon the original opening of the SANG, two pyro sensors were installed onsite to monitor numbers of visitors, counted as 'passes' onto the SANG. One is situated off the path in from the car park at Pony Drive (398787, 92985) and one down from Grove Woods (399027, 92788), close to where the visitor surveys were carried out. During 2018, a further 3 pyro sensors were installed on site that cover three other entrances to the SANG; Old Kiln entrance (98679, 92937), Allens Road entrance (98754, 92522) and Blandford Road entrance (98891, 91993). These sensors tie in with the other visitor counter sensors in the monitoring Strategy for the Dorset Heathlands SPA.