South Downs National Park

Visitor Survey 2012:

Environment Element

Final Report

For:	**South Downs National Park Authority**
From:	**Acorn Tourism Consulting Ltd and Natural Values**
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Abbreviations

Key	
CLA	Country Land and Business Association
IBA	Important Bird Area
LCA	Landscape Character Area
LNR	Local Nature Reserve
LWS	Local Wildlife Site
	Listed Building Grade I
	Listed Building Grade II*
	Listed Building Grade II
NFU	National Farmers Union
NNR	National Nature Reserve
Ramsar site	Wetland of International Importance for Birds under the Ramsar Convention
SAC	Special Area of Conservation
SDNPA	South Downs National Park Authority
SDLMG	South Downs Land Managers Group
SINC/SNCI	Site of Importance for Nature Conservation
SM	Scheduled Monument
SPA	Special Protection Area
SSSI	Site of Special Scientific Interest

Executive Summary

Context

The Environmental Element of the Visitor Survey is part of a wider suite of surveys that are being undertaken by the SDNPA during 2012.

The aim of the Environmental survey was to identify and quantify the impacts visitors have on the landscape, biodiversity and cultural heritage they come to enjoy, so that appropriate visitor management, conservation and enhancement programmes can be developed and implemented.

The Environment survey involved undertaking two quantitative surveys: one with land managers of primarily privately owned or tenanted land, the other with specific nature conservation and cultural heritage sites. In addition qualitative data was collected through consultation with managers of nature conservation and cultural heritage sites to create best practice case studies.

The final survey samples were relatively small with 72 responses to the Land Manager's survey, which represents 8% of commercial landholdings in the National Park. The 73 responses to the Nature Conservation and Cultural Heritage Site survey represents 35% of the main nature conservation or cultural heritage sites and attractions in the National Park. Generalisations made from the data should therefore be treated with caution,.

Visitor issues impacting on Land Managers

The Land Managers' survey, distributed to 230 members of the SDLMG, elicited a 31% response rate and the 72 were well distributed geographically across the National Park and its Landscape Character Areas. However it should be noted that the relatively small number of limited the depth of analysis possible in some areas.

The majority (81%/58 respondents[1]) of respondents were located rurally, were using their land for livestock grazing (83%/60) and arable farming (68%/49). Public rights of way crossed most land holdings, in the form of footpaths (86%/62) and bridleways (63%/45), although there were relatively few cycle trails (10%/7). The public could also access around a third (37.5%/27) of these properties due to permitted access areas and open access land.

Not all land managers had visitors on their property; a quarter had no visitors at all (24%/17), while half (54%/39) had up to 5,000 per year and only five received more than 50,000 visits a year. The highest proportions of visitors to landholdings appeared to be clustered along the route of the South Downs Way and along the southern boundary of the Park, near the urban fringe. These locations appear to be hotspots for visitors.

Most of those that did have visitors accessing their property (72%/52 of all the respondents) felt that visitors caused issues with the management of their land. Not surprisingly, due to the accessible nature of the National Park, most visitor issues tended to be associated with public access (60%/44) and there was a predominance of sites with visitor issues located

[1] Due to the small sample size the number of respondents has been included alongside the percentage figures.

along the South Downs Way National Trail and the southern urban fringe, with a particular concentration of issues reported between Brighton and Seaford.

Walking was the visitor activity that caused the most (59%/81 out of 138 issues raised) issues for land managers, particularly when dogs were being walked off the lead. The main problem was with visitors that ignore rights of way and walk across private land, where no public access is allowed. This resulted in damage to wildlife and disturbance to stock, for example due to gates being left open or, in one or two cases, sheep being attacked by dogs. The lack of control over dogs was considered to be a major cause of disturbance to wildlife.

Cyclists riding too fast on footpaths and horse riders that don't keep to the public rights of way also caused problems with land management and wildlife, on 12% and 8% of sites (17 and 11) respectively. Motorbikes, quad bikes and 4x4s used the rights of way inappropriately on 11% of landholdings (15).

Wildlife or conservation designations applied to more than half (54%/39) of landholdings. The most frequent were Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) and Scheduled Monuments. The types of visitor issues that were experienced at sites with conservation designations were similar to those reported across all sites, with no particular trend of issues specific to landholdings with Scheduled Monuments or nature conservation status.

Visitor attractions, both paid or unpaid, were provided by half of landowners (51%/37) and visitor accommodation was offered by a quarter (26%/19) of sites, the majority of which was self-catering. The farm stay experience is a popular concept for visitors generally and the lack of this type of accommodation in the National Park may be a gap in the market for land managers. The issues these sites raised in relation to visitors were similar to those experienced at other sites; there was no pattern between the types of issues and presence of a visitor attraction.

The busiest months for visitors were April to October, however visitors and their related issues were present throughout the year, which may reflect the Park's popularity for all year activities such as walking, riding and cycling.

Although a high proportion of sites raised issues relating to the management of visitors, it was remarked that only a small minority of visitors cause the problems. However land managers felt that visitor management in the National Park could be improved and some of the visitor impacts reduced through better signage of public rights of way and improved education about the meaning of public access with both visitors that travel away from home and those that live locally.

Visitor Impacts on Nature Conservation and Cultural Heritage Sites

The Survey

Having identified the main issues associated with visitors on privately owned or tenanted land from the first survey; the second survey aimed to further understand the impact of these issues on visitor attraction sites that had either a nature conservation or cultural heritage designation, or both, or were heavily used for recreation.

A total of 205 sites that matched the criteria were surveyed, 73 sites (35%) replied. The sites showed a reasonable geographical distribution and covered the main LCAs. However the

maximum numbers of sites in each habitat was 50 with 20 or less sites being present in most habitats. This made it difficult to identify representative trends in visitor impacts and visitor management for each habitat area. The only sites that completed both surveys were the five visitor attractions in the Land Manager's survey that receive more than 50,000 visitors per year, plus one other.

Eighty per cent (59) of sites had nature conservation or cultural heritage designations with a quarter (26%/19 sites[2]) having both. As with the first survey, SSSIs and Scheduled Monument designations occurred most frequently (38%/28 and 30%/22 respectively), a quarter of sites (27%/20) were also Local Wildlife Sites.

Visitor activities and their impacts

Learning and education featured as a visitor activity at over 80% (59) of sites. The nature conservation and cultural heritage sites manage their sites to offer an educational experience to visitors which brings environmental benefits by encouraging the public to get involved in volunteering and by raising awareness of conservation objectives.

Walking and wildlife watching and photography were the most popular outdoor activities (at 78% (57), 60% (44) respectively), with picnicking, cycling and horse riding and other land-based activities occurring at more than 20% of sites (49% (36), 40% (29), 32% (23) and 26% (19) respectively).

The impact of these visitor activities usually creates a combination of environmental and social issues. Pollution due to litter and dog fouling (both arising at around half of the sites (38 and 37 respectively)) occurred most frequently. Trampling, soil erosion and the loss of wildlife habitats or species were the environmental only impacts identified (at 37% (27), 22% (18) and 16% (14) respectively).

The positive benefits of visits were primarily socio-economic and related to education, health, income generation and employment (81% (59), 60% (44), 58% (42) 50% and (35) respectively).

Impacts on habitats and species

The impact of visitor activities was assessed for each of the local habitats: woodland, chalk downland/ grassland, other grassland habitats, heathland, arable, wetland and marshland, rivers and streams, coast and sea and formal gardens and parkland.

Overall the impact of most visitor activities on local habitats was considered to be neutral. (264 responses for neutral, 145 for positive and 140 for negative)

All habitats, except arable and coastal sites, recorded the positive impacts generated by guided walks, wildlife watching and photography.

In terms of negative impacts, walking and cycling caused the majority of problems, particularly where visitors walked with dogs and cycled off marked tracks.

[2] Due to the small sample size the number of sites has been included alongside the percentage figures.

Chalk downland was more sensitive to path erosion from walkers and horse riders than woodland. It also experienced more activities such as grass boarding, zorbing, and kite flying that could cause damage to plant life and aerial activities that could disturb wildlife.

Woodlands were less susceptible than other habitats to path erosion caused by walkers and horse riding but suffered disturbance to wildlife from most activities.

Heathland was sensitive to erosion and wildlife disturbance from walkers, cyclists and horse riding.

Disturbance to wildlife was the main problem reported for wetlands. Formal gardens experienced path erosion and sheep worrying from walkers with dogs. Issues specific to arable land were crop damage and erosion caused by motorised off-road activities.

There was no negative impact reported on species by three quarters of sites (71%/52 sites), however where there was an impact it was most likely to affect plants (35%/12 sites) through trampling, birds (32%/11) through general habitat disturbance or invertebrates such as butterflies (15%/5). Where they occurred these impacts were spread across the Park and not related to any specific type of habitat. It is also important to note that alongside visitor presence, a range of variables can affect the presence of species including natural population changes, climate change and habitat management regimes.

Impacts on cultural heritage sites

The impact of visitor activities was assessed for sites that incorporated Scheduled Monuments, archaeological sites, historic houses, historic industrial heritage, other historic features and historic gardens. The features occurring most often at sites were Scheduled Monuments (33%/24) and archaeological sites (27%/20).

The sites that were set up primarily as visitor attractions; the historic houses, gardens and industrial heritage sites, generated the most positive impacts from their visitors. By contrast, Scheduled Monuments and archaeological sites tended to lack interpretation or specialised visitor management and suffered from damage and erosion from walkers, cyclists, horse riders and metal detectors.

Visitor management

Overall the nature conservation and cultural heritage sites felt that the positive impact of visitors outweighed the negative issues they can create.

A relatively small (28%/12) proportion of impacts caused by visitors were considered to be permanent; the majority of impacts could be reversed, given sufficient time and funding.

More than three quarters of sites (77%/50) wanted to attract more visitors in order to increase visitors' knowledge and awareness of the Park's natural and cultural heritage; to support the financial management of the site; and to help with habitat and species management. The sites that didn't receive any financial benefit from visitors tended to be the ones that did not want more visitors.

The main costs associated with managing visitors are the tidying up of sites, the cost of signage and interpretation, repairs to gates, fences and access roads. Less visitor

management expenditure is associated with habitat restoration or the restoration of heritage features.

A wide range of visitor management activities were employed by sites including the provision of information, managing access, education delivered through guided walks and information sessions, regular site maintenance and wardens.

Although sites provide information about their own attraction there is a clear lack of information being provided to visitors about how their behaviour can impact on the National Park. These sites are well set up to deliver information to visitors and could be an effective channel to help inform visitors of their responsibilities to the countryside.

The majority of sites (82%/46) considered that they were not over capacity and could take more visitors and more than half (56%/41) had aspirations to develop their sites further with increased educational opportunities, interpretation and visitor facilities.

Where alternative sites for visitors were recommended they tended to be managed by the same organisation or were Country Parks and forests where more visitor facilities were available, than on sensitive wildlife sites.

Overall the nature conservation and cultural heritage sites were well placed to attract more visitors and there may be opportunities for them to work with private land managers to alleviate visitor pressure and assist with visitor management practises.

Case studies

Following completion of the two surveys and analysis of the data, a range of organisations were contacted for further information on the management of visitor issues associated with their sites. Organisations were selected based their known expertise in managing sites, the large number of sites managed by them within the National Park, or their ability to provide useful insights into visitor management. Organisations that responded to both surveys were also contacted.

The case studies highlighted the findings from the two surveys. In addition, further examples of good practice in visitor management were identified.

Issues relating to uncontrolled dogs, especially dog fouling and disturbance to wildlife and livestock, were frequently cited in the case studies; responsible dog walking was a recognised need. Examples of good practice in preventing visitors from wandering away from designated routes included creating clear paths and desire lines and positioning objects or materials to prevent people from creating their own routes thereby causing erosion.

Providing visitors with information on why certain management interventions are required was considered one of the most effective ways of addressing issues. It was generally felt that people respond to requests if they know the reason why something is necessary.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Visitor activities cause issues that are mostly localised, reversible (given sufficient time and funding) and therefore do not cause an overall detrimental impact on the National Park's landscape.

At natural and cultural heritage sites the manager generally deals with issues that do arise, although there is a wider problem with the erosion caused to Scheduled Monuments. These sites would mostly welcome more visitors. However on privately owned land nearly three quarters of sites reported issues that affect the management of their land. Both survey's highlighted that walkers and cyclists not staying on public rights of way and uncontrolled dogs are the main cause of litter pollution, erosion and disturbance to wildlife.

In terms of the impacts on local habitats, woodlands suffered less impact from visitors than chalk grassland, which is more sensitive to erosion and trampling. The low number of respondents in wetland and river areas and on the coast made it difficult to assess the impacts on these habitats but no significant issues were raised.

Visitors to the National Park benefit from the educational activities offered and from the health benefits of the outdoor activities available. In turn they contribute to conservation activities and bring economic benefits to local communities through income generation and related employment.

Both surveys highlighted the need to educate visitors about their responsibilities to the National Park and that good visitor management helps deliver positive benefits and minimise the negative impacts.

Recommendations therefore concentrate on the need for a Visitor Management Strategy that focuses on educating a wide range of audiences about the benefits of good visitor management and the impacts visitors can have on the environment in the National Park.

1. Introduction

1.1 The South Downs National Park

The South Downs National Park extends over an area of 1,658 square kilometres[3]. The main land uses are agricultural (85%), which includes grassland and arable land, and woodland. It is estimated that there are 928 farms located within the National Park boundary (2009 June Agricultural Census)[4].

The National Park includes a range of habitat types[5]: 38,420 hectares of woodland (23% of the National Park area), 6,617 hectares of chalk grassland (4%), 2,431 hectares of floodplain grazing marsh (1.5%) and 1,595 hectares of lowland heath (1%). Other significant habitat types within the National Park include rivers and the coast.

The wildlife importance of the various habitats and species in the National Park is reflected in the many nature conservation designations. Of international significance are the 12 Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) and one Special Protection Area (SPA) and Wetland of International Importance under the Ramsar Convention (Ramsar site). There are 86 Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs), which are of national importance for their wildlife and natural features, and nine National Nature Reserves (NNRs). At the county level there are over 850 Local Wildlife Sites (SINC/SNCI) and a number of Local Nature Reserves (LNRs).

The rich cultural heritage of the National Park reflects the long historical use of the landscape. Archaeological sites date back to prehistoric times and more recent features of the landscape are the large estates, country houses and parkland. The National Parks' important built historic environment includes over 4,500 listed buildings: 37 Grade I, 203 Grade II* and 4,431 Grade II. In addition there are around 600 Scheduled Monuments.

1.2 South Downs Visitor Survey

It is this rich and varied landscape that is the main attraction for visitors to the National Park and is the reason why 73% of visitors come to the South Downs. This study is the Environmental Element of a wider suite of Visitor Surveys being undertaken by the South Downs National Park Authority (SDNPA) during 2012 to establish the number of visitors and their social, economic and environmental impact on the National Park.

The aim of the Environmental Element of the Visitor Survey is to identify and quantify the impacts these visitors have on the landscape, biodiversity and cultural heritage that they come to enjoy. Two surveys were undertaken for this element of the Visitor Survey with two different audiences; the first was with Land Owners/Managers, the second was with Nature Conservation and Cultural Heritage sites managed to accommodate visitors.

The data from this study will form part of the evidence base for the South Downs National Park Management Plan and Local Plan. It will also feed into the State of the Park Report and guide the development and implementation of appropriate visitor management, conservation and enhancement programmes.

We would like to thank all those individuals and organisations that generously completed the survey and shared their experiences and knowledge and contributed to the report.

[3] http://www.southdowns.gov.uk/learning/facts-and-figures.
[4] SDNPA pers comm
[5] http://www.southdowns.gov.uk/looking-after/biodiversity/habitats.

2. Survey 1: Land Managers

2.1 Introduction

The first survey undertaken as part of the Environmental Element of the South Downs National Park Visitor Survey was with land managers. This followed initial discussions with the South Downs Land Managers Group (SDLMG) where concerns were raised about the existing and potential impacts of visitors on farmland.

In January 2012 the Land Managers Visitors and the Environment survey was sent by e-mail and/or post to the 230 members of the SDLMG. It was also publicised as being available for any land manager to respond via the online link on the SDNPA website and the South Downs Forum was used to further publicise the survey to land managers. Press releases were sent out via the CLA and the NFU to encourage a response from land managers who are not members of the SDLMG.

Land owners and managers were asked to provide details of their landholding, its main uses, conservation designations and whether visitors create any positive or negative issues with the management of their land.

Detailed data obtained from the survey is recorded separately. A copy of the questionnaire sent to landowners can be found in Annex 1.

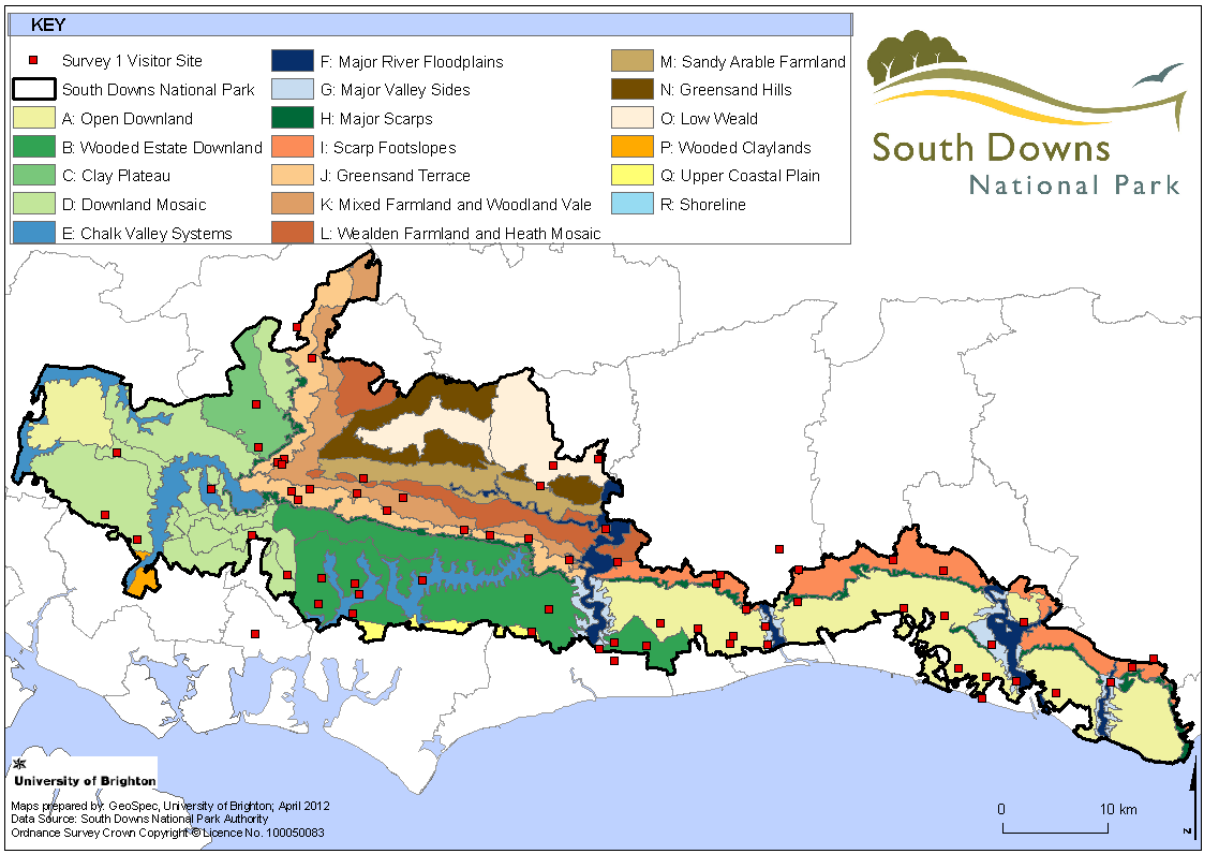
The original brief for this study was to send the survey to all landowners via the rural Payments Agency. This methodology would have surveyed the majority of the 900 farms in the National Park. This methodology was not possible within the timeframe of the study and distribution of the survey was kindly undertaken by the SDLMG. However this has resulted in a much smaller sample than was originally intended, which in some areas has impacted on the depth of analysis that could be achieved.

The number of land managers that responded (a total of 72) represents around 8% of the total number of commercial landholdings in the SDNP. Due to the relatively small sample size the number of respondents to each question has been included in the report along with percentages.

2.2 Number and geographical spread of respondents

The survey generated a strong response rate from the SDLMG, at 31%, with a total of 72 respondents distributed across the three counties covered by the National Park. Just over half the respondents (55%/40) were from West Sussex, 26% (19) were from Hampshire and 18% (13) from East Sussex. Due to the sample size, responses should not necessarily be considered representative of all land managers across the National Park.

Figure 1: Distribution of respondents by Landscape Character Area



Geographically the properties that responded to the survey covered a reasonable spread of the National Park and its Landscape Character Areas (LCAs).

It appears that the survey generated a relatively high response from properties located close to the southern boundary of the Park and close to the route of the South Downs Way which may reflect an interest from Land Managers who are most affected by the concentration of visitors that use the National Trail or who are located on the urban fringe.

Respondents have been mapped on the basis of the grid reference of their administrative office; a small number of these addresses are located outside the National Park, however the responses were for sites that are located in the SDNP.

2.3 Site details of respondents

2.3.1 Introduction

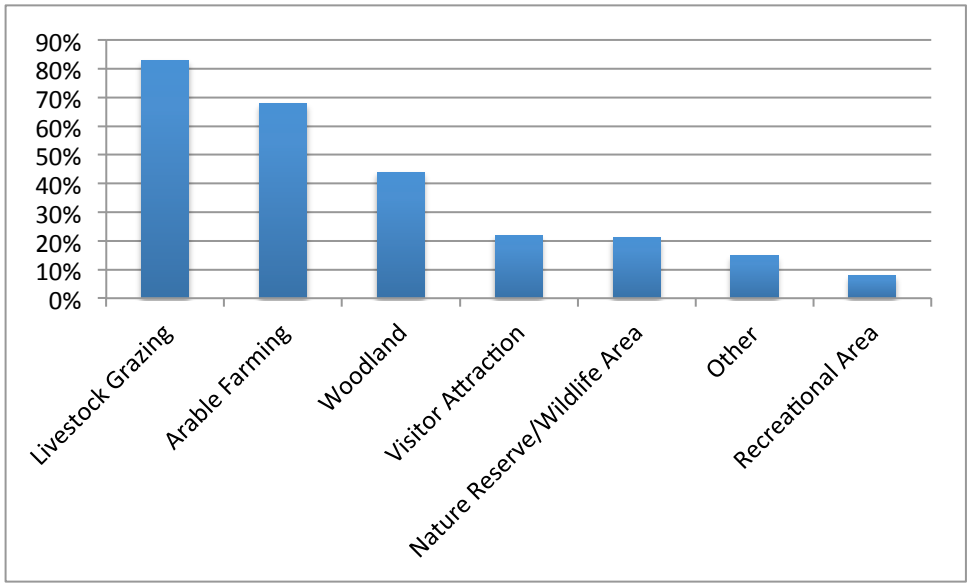
Respondents were asked whether their land was in a rural or urban fringe area and what it is used for. They were also asked how large their landholding was, whether rights of way pass through it, whether it includes open access; has any conservation designations or offers any visitor facilities.

2.3.2 Land use

The majority (81%/58) of landholdings fell within a rural location as opposed to urban fringe and most land managers reported more than one main land use.

The main land use was for livestock grazing (83%/60), followed by arable farming (68%/49). Woodland was a main use for 44% (32) of respondents. This reflects the main land uses across the National Park.

Figure 2: Main land use of respondents



Visitor attractions (22%/16) and nature reserves or wildlife areas (21%/15) were present on around one fifth of properties.

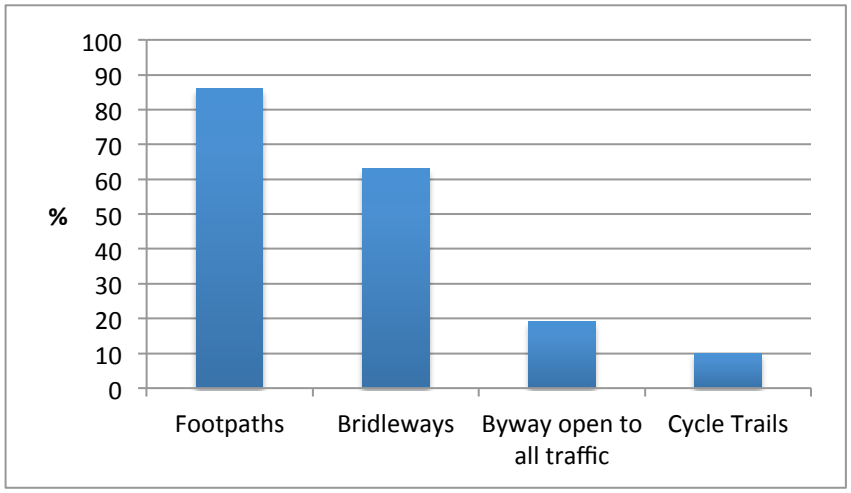
The other land uses included a campsite, horse livery, fruit growing, a school and a vineyard.

2.3.3 Rights of Way and access

A high proportion of the land managers who responded had some form of public access to their land; for the majority this was in the form of footpaths (86%/62) and bridleways (63%/45).

Nearly 20% (14) of respondents had a byway that is open to all traffic, crossing their land. However access using a cycle trail was relatively low, with only 10% (7) of respondents having cycle trails passing through their properties.

Figure 3: Public Rights of Way passing through respondents land

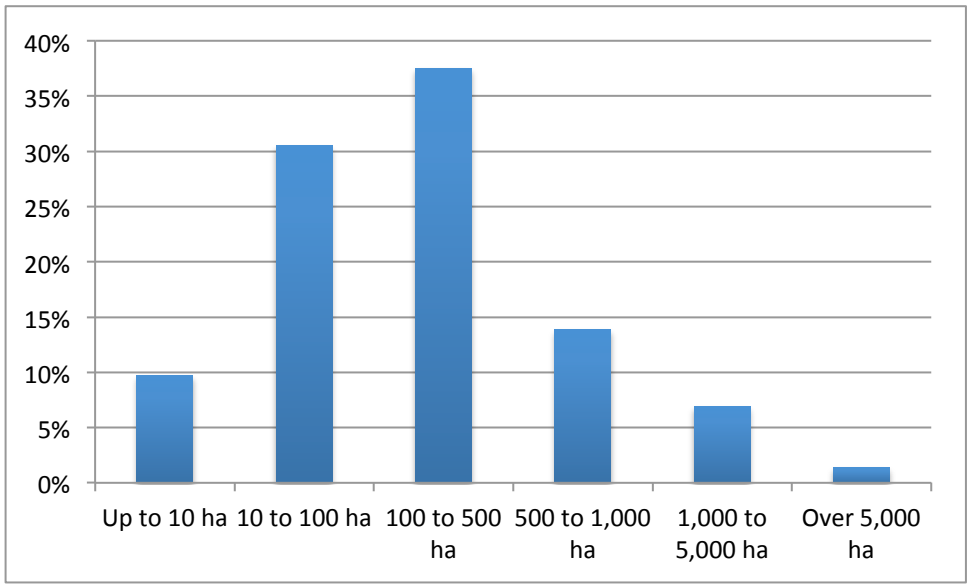


In addition, permitted access was allowed on 38% (27) of respondent's land and Open Access land occurred on 32% (23) of respondent's land.

2.3.4 Size of landholdings

The majority of respondents (68%/49) had landholdings of over 10 hectares and under 500 hectares.

Figure 4: Size of landholding

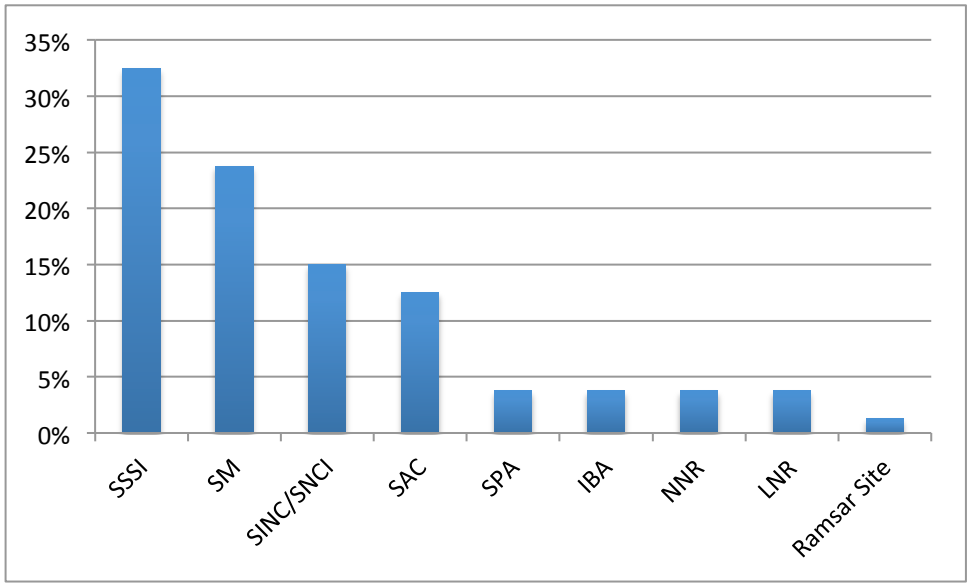


Only five respondents had properties with landholdings between 1,000 and 5,000 hectares and only one was larger than 5,000 hectares.

2.3.5 Conservation designations

Just over half (54%/39) of respondents had a wildlife or conservation designation on their land. Of these, just over a fifth (22%/16) had one designation and a third (32%/23) had two or more designations.

Figure 5: Conservation designation applicable to any part of landholding



The predominant designation reported was a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), which was present on 36% (26) of landholdings. This is to be expected as the other wildlife designations, Special Areas of Conservation (SAC), Special Protection Areas (SPA), Ramsar sites and the National Nature Reserves (NNR) need to be designated as SSSIs before qualifying for these additional designations. This was also the case for the second survey.

Scheduled Monuments (SM) were present on landholdings of around a quarter of respondents (26%/19). It is worth noting the number of these monuments, as it became evident from the results of the second survey of Nature Conservation and Cultural Heritage sites that Scheduled Monuments are not generally managed for their protection and there is limited interpretation associated with them.

2.4 Visitor facilities and accommodation offered by respondents

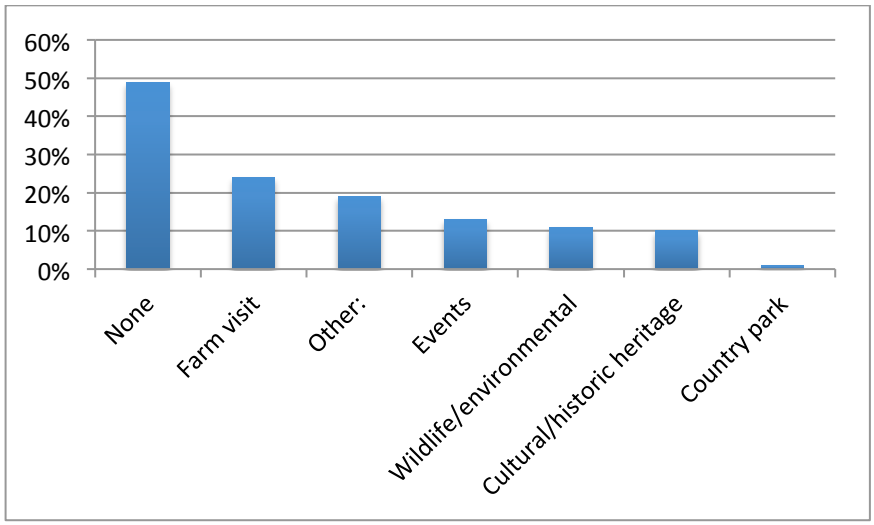
2.4.1 Visitor facilities

Respondents were asked if they provided a paid for or unpaid visitor attraction or visitor opportunity.

Over half (51%/37) of land managers provided a paid or unpaid visitor attraction, not including public rights of way. Farm visits were the most frequently offered (by 24% (17)) as an attraction for visitors.

A small number of land managers were also organising events and offering visitors wildlife and cultural heritage activities.

Figure 6: Type of visitor facilities provided by respondents



Most visitor facilities are linked to visitor attractions, with two fifths (44%/32) of landholdings offering visitor facilities, most of which are multiple facilities.

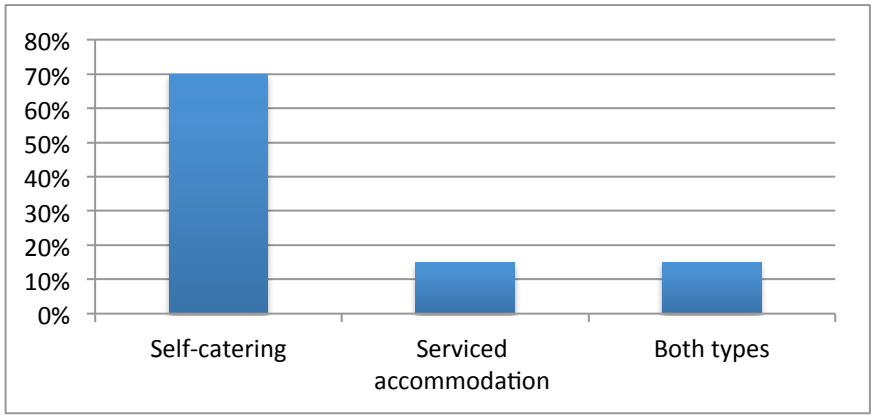
Of those offering visitor facilities, nearly all provide car parking, half provide toilets and nearly half provide visitor information (representing 31% (22), 18% (13) and 15% (11) of all respondents respectively).

2.4.2 Visitor Accommodation

About a quarter of respondents (26%/19) offer visitor accommodation, the majority of whom offer self-catering accommodation such as holiday units, camping sites, or camping barns.

The number of serviced accommodation providers ie, bed and breakfasts, guest houses and hotels was low by comparison (30%/6) and those that do offer this type of accommodation also tend to offer self-catering accommodation.

Figure 7: Type of visitor accommodation offered



Of those respondents who do not offer accommodation, 20% (11) are considering doing so in the future.

The popularity of offering self-catering accommodation rather than bed and breakfast or other serviced accommodation may reflect the access land managers have to underutilised farm buildings that are available for conversion, and also the lack of time available to look after guests.

However it is worth noting that the farm stay experience is a popular concept for visitors generally and the lack of this type of accommodation in the National Park may be a gap in the market for land managers.

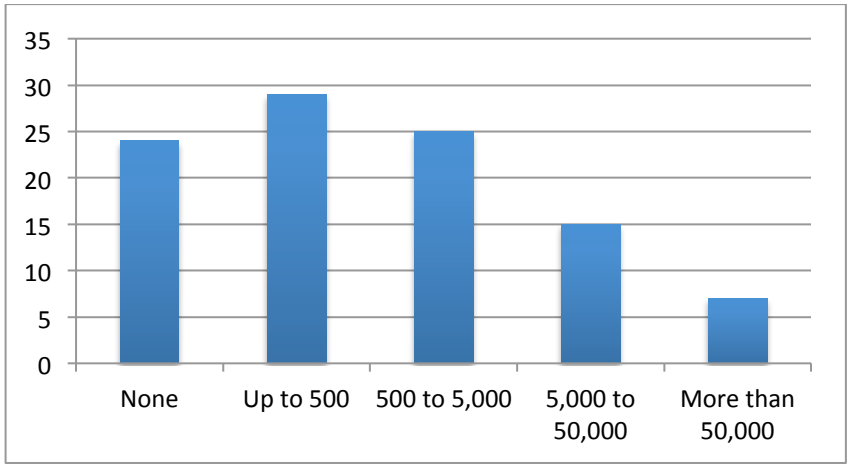
Accommodation providers and particularly those offering serviced accommodation have the potential to be ambassadors for the National Park and can be in a good position to raise awareness of visitors' responsibilities when using the National Park. The NPA could consider encouraging farmer to develop this type of visitor accommodation where appropriate.

2.5 Number of visits and seasonality

2.5.1 Number of visits

Respondents were asked how many visits they have to their land each year and when they received most visits.

Figure 8: Number of visits per year



Half of the sites that responded either had no visitors (24%/17) or only received less than 500 visits a year (29%/21).

However another quarter (25%/18) of the landowners who responded have between 500 to 5,000 visits each year.

Sites receiving more than 5,000 visits a year could consider themselves as visitor attractions. This applied to 22% (16) of landowners, of whom five sites (7%) were major visitor attractions and received more than 50,000 visits per year. Of these five sites, four were in West Sussex and one is located on the edge of Brighton and Hove.

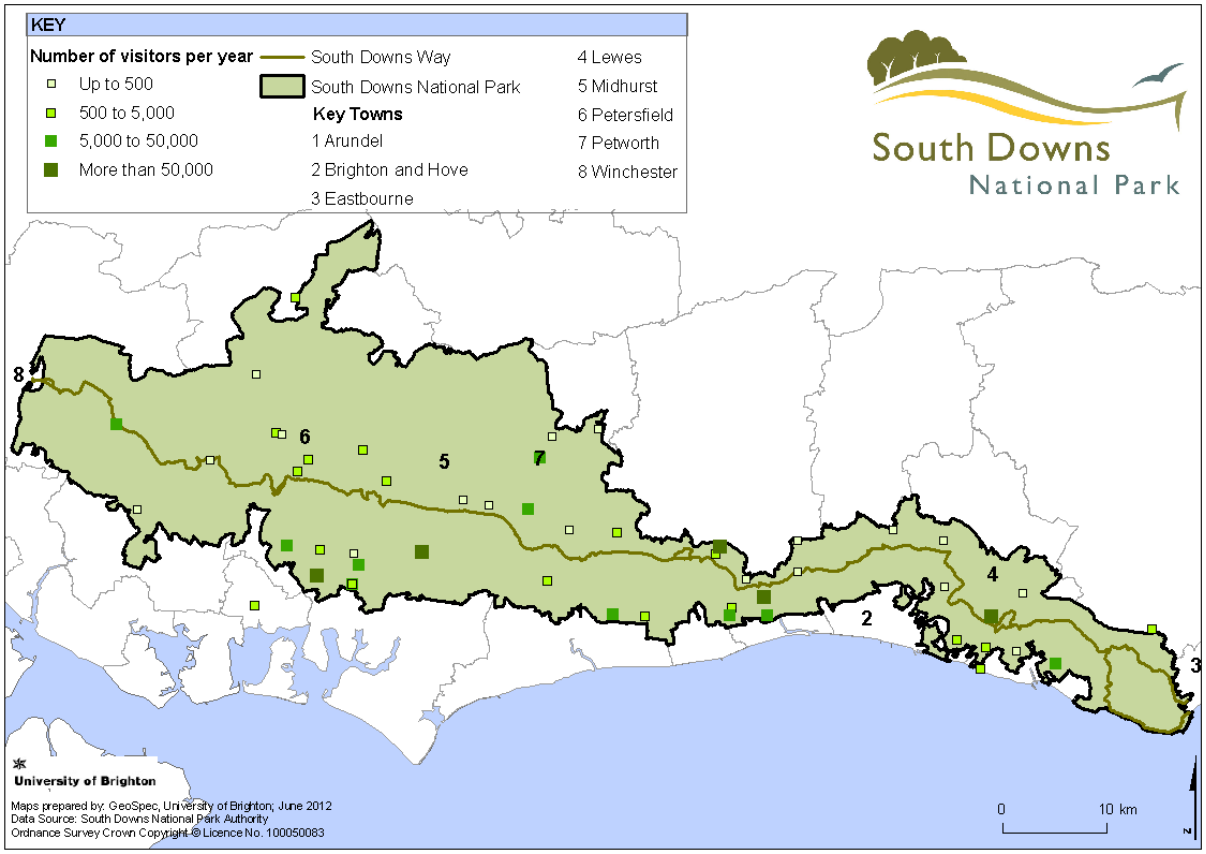
These five sites, all in rural locations, were Coombes Farm, which offers farm visits and includes fishing at Passies Pond; Stanmer Park which is owned by Brighton Council and is open to the public, the historic house and grounds at Stansted Park Estate, West Dean Estate which has gardens, a college, conference facilities and runs events; and the Wiston Estate, which is open for conferences and weddings.

There was no particular pattern to the types of issues that arose on sites with more than 50,000 visits.

2.5.2 Geographical distribution

The distribution of the sites by visitor number is shown in Figure 9 below.

Figure 9: Distribution of respondents by visitor number



There does not appear to be any particular pattern to the spread of the larger visitor attractions across the Park or the Landscape Character Areas in which they are located. However there seems to be clusters of landholdings located along the southern boundary of the Park, near the urban fringe, and close to the route of the South Downs Way, which appear to be hotspots for visitors.

2.5.3 Seasonality of visits

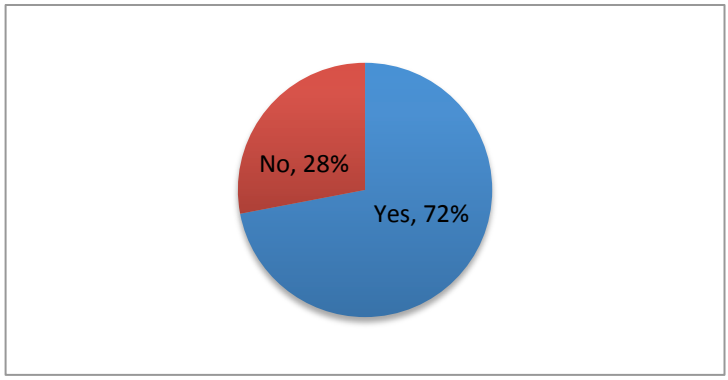
Although respondents indicated that the presence of visitors on sites was heaviest from April to October, the seasonality of visits during the summer months was not as pronounced as might have been expected, with a substantial proportion of visits taking place all year. This may reflect the popularity of the National Park for all year activities such walking, riding and cycling.

2.6 The impact of visitors

2.6.1 Sites with issues caused by visitors

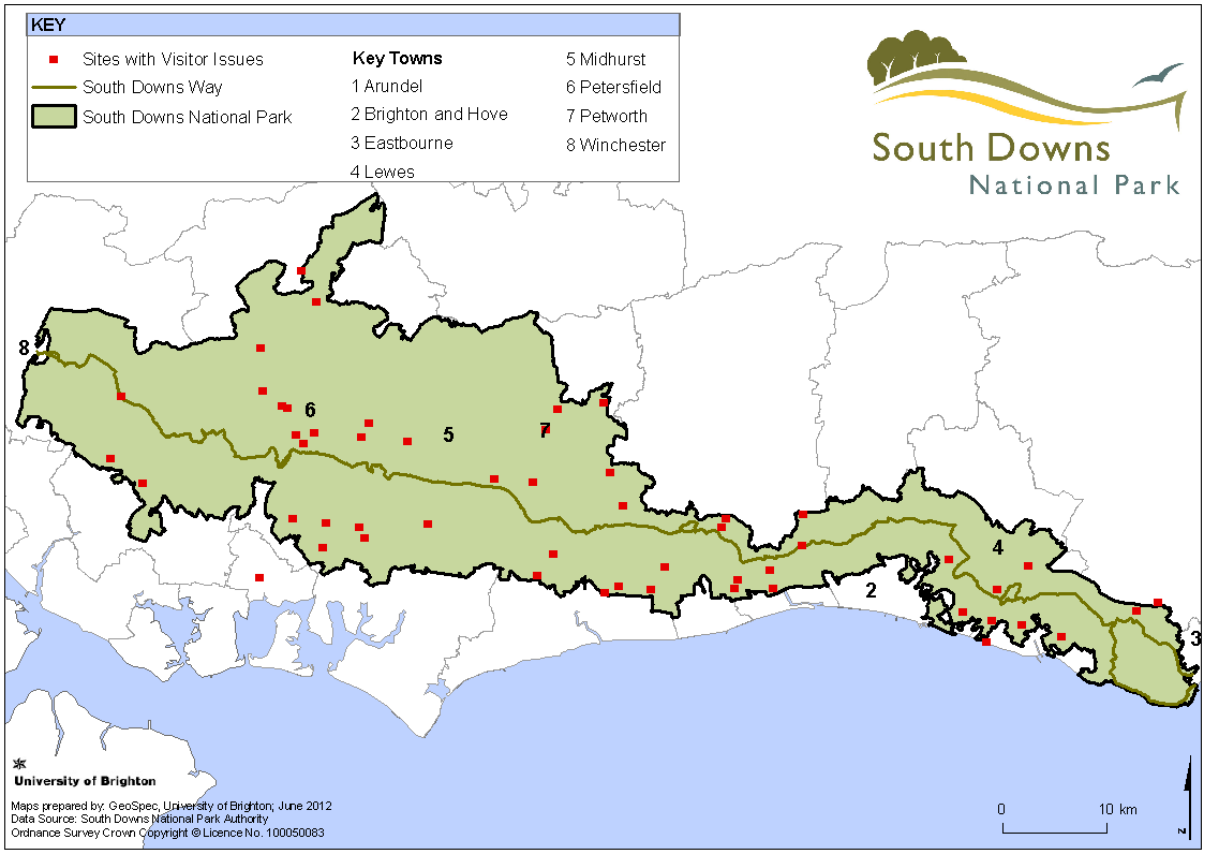
Visitors caused issues with land management for 72% (52) of respondents.

Figure 10: Proportion of landowners with land management issues caused by visitors



For most landowners (69%/36) visitor issues are localised in one or a few areas, rather than being spread widely across the whole landholding.

Figure 11: Location of sites with Visitor Issues



The majority of sites reporting issue with visitors are located in the areas that could be expected to receive the most visitors ie, along the South Downs Way National Trail and the southern urban fringe.

2.6.2 Issues with Access and Rights of Ways

Visitor issues were associated with public access on 61% (44) of landholdings and the presence or proximity of a public right of way on its own was associated with visitor issues by a third (24) of land managers.

Over half of land managers (58%/42) reported that impacts were associated with the presence or proximity of a public right of access on its own or in combination with other forms of access.

There were only five land managers who had no public rights of way through their land. However there were still issues for two of these land managers who reported that walkers didn't follow the public rights of way or that they accessed private land.

Open Access land did not cause quite as many problems with visitors as public rights of way, with only nine of the 23 land managers (39%) who had Open Access land reporting this as the cause of the visitor issues they experienced.

The issues related to Open Access were similar to those experienced by other sites, as defined in the next section.

2.7 Issues related to visitor activities

A variety of issues that land managers have to contend with were raised in relation to activities of visitors to the National Park. In total 138 issues were raised by the 72 respondents, highlighting that:

- Over half (59%) of the issues related to walking with/without dogs, of which 22% of issues were specifically related to dogs
- The main issue cited in relation to walking was people walking anywhere and off public rights of way with consequential damage to wildlife and disturbance of stock
- The main issue cited in relation to walking with dogs was dogs not being on leads and out of control with resultant disturbance to wildlife and stock
- Cycling accounted for 12% of the issues with concerns relating to cyclists misusing footpaths and causing disturbance; night cycling with powerful lights was raised by two respondents
- Use of motor bikes, quad bikes and 4x4s accounted for 11% of issues with the main concern being inappropriate use of the countryside and rights of way
- Riding away from designated bridleways was the main concern associated with horse riding which accounted for just 8% of the issues.

The majority of reported issues relate to walking and dogs. Geographically there is a concentration of issues of all types around the south east coastal fringe of the National Park between Brighton and Seaford.

Visitor issues are not solely related to the presence of a visitor attraction or facilities, but most sites that include a visitor attraction or nature reserve as a main land use have issues associated with visitors. However there was no pattern between the type of issues and presence of a visitor attraction.

2.8 Additional visitor management issues

Additional information was provided by approximately half (35) of respondents and gave further details on issues associated with visitor activity and management difficulties.

It is worth noting that some respondents indicated that the majority of visitors do not cause problems but that there is a substantial minority that generate the issues raised.

The key issues highlighted through these comments and the survey responses are:

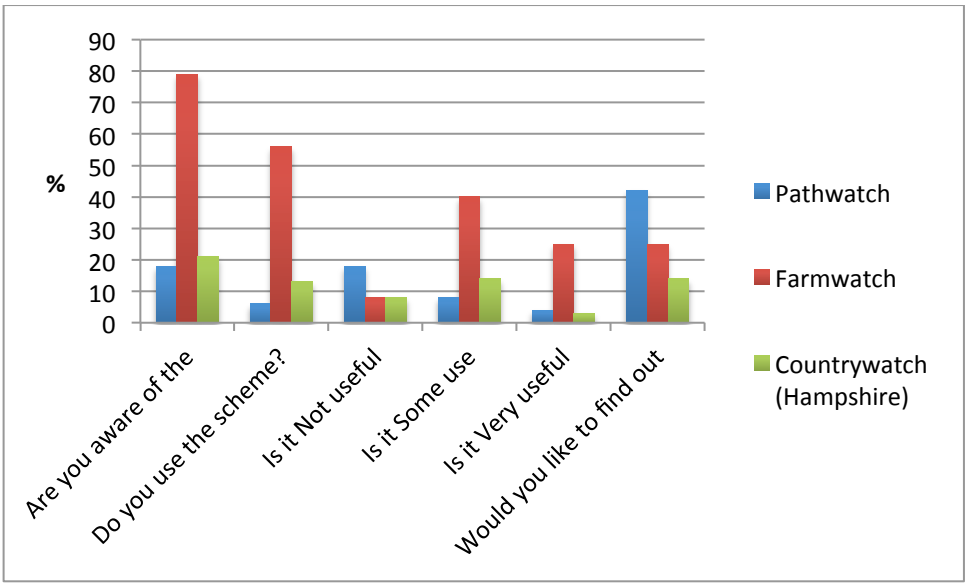
- A lack of understanding by visitors, and need for education, about access rights within the National Park:
    - National Park designation has been used as an excuse by visitors to walk anywhere and on private land, particularly by local visitors
    - An assumption that National Park status allows a right to roam
    - A lack of map reading skills
    - The need for improved signage
- The impact of dogs:
    - Lack of control by owners (including professional dog walkers)
    - Stock worrying (cattle, sheep, horses)
    - Chasing wildlife, disturbing ground nesting birds
    - Dog faeces not cleared up, plastic bags left on fences
    - Dog faeces carrying Neospora
- Damage to gates and fences
- Litter
- Need for increased police support for landowners in relation to illegal activities.

2.9 Awareness of countryside schemes

Respondents indicated the following levels of awareness and use of existing schemes that are designed to help report illegal activities and rural crime.

Over three quarters (79%/57) of land managers were aware of Farmwatch. This was also the most used scheme, with just over half of respondents (56%/40) using it. The scheme was also considered to be either very useful or some use by 65% (47) of respondents.

Figure 12: Awareness of Countryside schemes



Less than a quarter of land managers (21%/15) were aware of Countrywatch, which only operates in Hampshire.

Pathwatch was the least known scheme. Those that did use it didn't consider it useful. However just under half of respondents (42%/30) would like to find out more about it.

2.10 Summary of Land Manager's survey

2.10.1 Land Manager's Survey

Livestock grazing (83%/60) and arable farming (68%/49) were the main land uses of the landholdings that responded to the survey, with woodland being the main land use for 44% (32) of landholdings. Most (81%/58) of landholdings fell within a rural location.

The majority of respondents had some form of public access on their land with footpaths passing through 86% (62) of landholdings and bridleways crossing 63% (45) of properties.

Landholdings tended to be relatively small with 40% (56) of properties being less than 100 hectares.

Around half of the sites had some form of conservation designation with more than a third (36%/26) having SSSI status and a quarter (26%/19) containing a Scheduled Monument.

Half of landowners (51%/37) provided a paid or unpaid visitor attraction with a quarter (24%/17) offering farm visits.

A quarter (26%/19) of properties provide visitor accommodation with the majority of those (85%/17) offering self-catering accommodation.

Just more than half (54%/39) of landholdings had up to 5,000 visits per year, with a quarter (24%/17) not having any visits and 22% (16) receiving in excess of 5,000 visits per annum.

Landholdings receiving the greatest numbers of visitors appear to be clustered along the southern boundary of the park, near the urban fringe, and close to the route of the South Downs Way; these areas appear to be hotspots for visitors.

Most visits to the National Park took place throughout the year, with some increase in visits from April to September and with November to February being the quietest months.

Nearly three quarters (72%/52) of landowners felt that visitors caused issues with the management of their land. Most of these issues (69%/36) were localised in one or a few areas rather than being spread across the whole landholding.

Visitor issues were mostly associated with public access and the presence of a right of way, rather than the presence of a visitor attraction or visitor facilities such as accommodation.

Walking was the visitor activity that caused most problems. In total 59% (81 out of 138 issues) of issues related to walking with or without dogs caused by visitors walking off public rights of way.

Twenty two per cent (31) of the walking issues were specifically related to dogs, mostly being off leads, out of control with consequent disturbance to wildlife and stock and faeces not being cleared up.

Cycling caused 12% (17) of issues and motorbikes, quad bikes and 4x4s caused another 11% (15) of issues. Night cycling appears to be a specific activity causing disturbance to people and wildlife.

Anecdotally there was a feeling that the National Park designation was used as an excuse, particularly by local visitors, to walk anywhere on private land.

Better signage and improved education of visitors about their impact on the environment were felt to be necessary to reduce the negative impact of visitors.

2.10.2 Summary of trends

The trends identified in the Land Managers survey were:

- Greatest numbers of visitors appeared to be to landholdings clustered along the southern boundary of the park, near the urban fringe, and close to the route of the South Downs Way, which might be considered to be visitor hotspots (as illustrated in Figure 9).
- Visitor issues occurred on most landholdings (72%/52)
- Visitor issues on landholdings were localised (69%/36)
- Visitor issues were mostly associated with public access and the presence of a right of way (60%/44)
- Walking with or without dogs was the most reported (59%/81 out of 138 issues) visitor activity that resulted in issues, the main ones being walking away from public rights of way and uncontrolled dogs causing disturbance to wildlife and stock
- Better signage and improved education of visitors was the main means identified to address issues (as identified from general comments given by respondents).

From the survey sample obtained, no relationship was found between visitor issues and type of land use, presence of a conservation designation, presence of a visitor attraction or facility, or the time of year.

3. Survey 2: Nature Conservation and Cultural Heritage Site

3.1 Introduction

3.1.1 Survey sample

The aim of the second survey was to gain a more in-depth understanding of the visitor impacts on the National Park's natural and cultural heritage.

Specific nature conservation or cultural heritage sites were selected that cover the main landscape character areas with a good geographical spread across the Downs, including a variety of different types of sites. Sites had to be covered by an environmental or/and heritage protection designation or/and be heavily used for recreation.

These sites are managed to accommodate visitors and therefore the questionnaire was different from the Land Managers' survey. It was designed to identify:

- The types of visitor activities occurring at each site or visitor attraction
- The types of impacts arising from these activities
- The activities and impacts in relation to specific habitat and cultural heritage features
- Whether nature conservation and cultural heritage sites would like more or fewer visits to their site/attraction
- Good practice in visitor management
- Suggestions for improved visitor management

To establish the survey sample for the second survey a list of the 205 natural and cultural heritage visitor sites and attractions within the South Downs National Park was identified; particularly those that carried some form of designation. Area Managers were consulted to ensure all key sites were included.

The categories of sites included in the sample were:

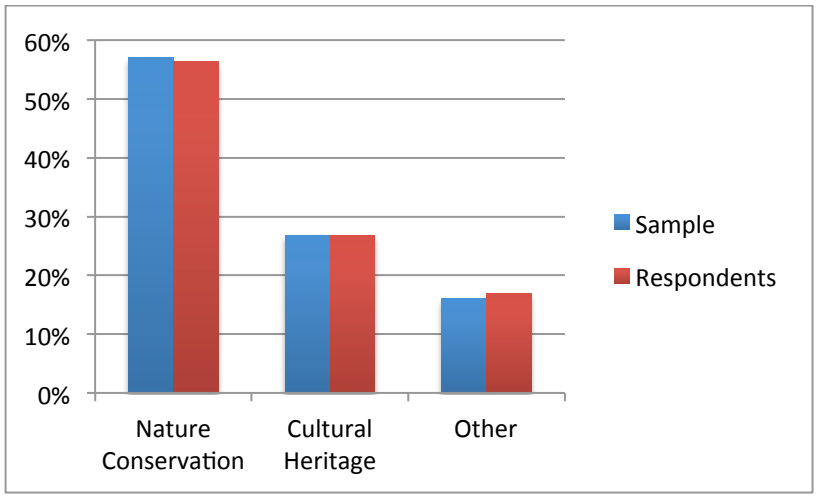
- Nature Conservation sites, including:
    - Country Parks
    - Forests and Woods
    - Nature Reserves
    - Open Access Land
- The Cultural Heritage sites, including:
    - English Heritage and National Trust properties
    - Outdoor Museums
    - Private Estates and Attractions
- Other Attractions, including:
    - Farms and Small Attractions
    - Golf Courses
    - Wildlife Attractions

Site managers and rangers were contacted by e-mail in February 2012 and asked to complete the online *Visitors and the Environment Survey.* E-mails were followed up by phone to encourage completion of the questionnaire and the survey was raised as a topic on the SDNPA Forum reminding people to complete their survey.

3.1.2 Survey response

There was a 35% response rate to the survey, which generated a total of 73 respondents. Figure 19 shows how the proportion of the types of sites that responded closely matched the total sample surveyed.

Figure 13: Types of Sites Surveyed



Nature Conservation sites made up 57% (41) of the sample; Cultural Heritage sites accounted for a further 27% (20) and Other Attractions comprised the remaining 16% (12).

The categorisation of sites is based on their main use, however many sites have both nature conservation and historic designations; these are examined in more detail in Section 3.2.3.

3.1.3 Sites completing both surveys

The sites selected for the second survey were chosen because they actively engaged with visitors in some way. Therefore the cross over with the respondents to the first survey, which selected land managers who were members of the Land Managers Group, was small.

The five sites from the first Land Manager's survey that receive more than 50,000 visitors each year all responded to the second survey for all or part of their property or were consulted for the case studies. In addition Dunreyth Alpacas replied to both surveys.

Figure 14: Site owners that responded to both surveys

Survey 1 **Land Managers**	**Survey 2** **Nature Conservation, Cultural Heritage sites**
Coombes Farm	Passies Pond
Dunreyth Alpacas	Dunreyth Alpacas
Stanmer Park, Northease Park, St. Marys	Brighton & Hove Council
Stansted Park Estate	Stansted Park Estate
West Dean Estate	West Dean Gardens, Weald and Downland Open Air Museum, Kingley Vale
Wiston Estate	Horseshoe Rifle Range, Steyning Downland Scheme

Stansted Park, Steyning Downland Scheme, Weald and Downland Open Air Museum and West Dean Estate were all consulted by phone for the case studies.

3.1.4 Issues arising from survey data

It should be noted that while there was a good response rate, the final sample size meant that the number of sites in each of the LCAs and habitat types was small. For each habitat the sample was less than 50 and for seven of the 9 habitats and all but one of the cultural heritage features the sample size was 20 or less, which meant that it was not possible to identify robust trends in visitor impacts and any resulting visitor management.

In addition respondents did not always answer the questionnaire in a consistent way. A response may have been made to the early question ‘What visitor activities take place on your land?’, but then not followed through with answers in the more specific questions in relation to habitats and cultural heritage features. The reverse also occurred. Questions in the first section of the survey therefore give an overall view, which is generally indicative of visitor activities and impacts on sites.

3.2 Overview of respondents: sites, visitor activities and impacts

3.2.1 Distribution of sites geographical and by Landscape Character Area

Sites contacted

The sample of sites contacted for the survey was mapped to ensure that there was an even geographical spread across the South Downs National Park and across the Landscape Character Areas (LCA) to confirm that all the main LCAs were represented in the survey.

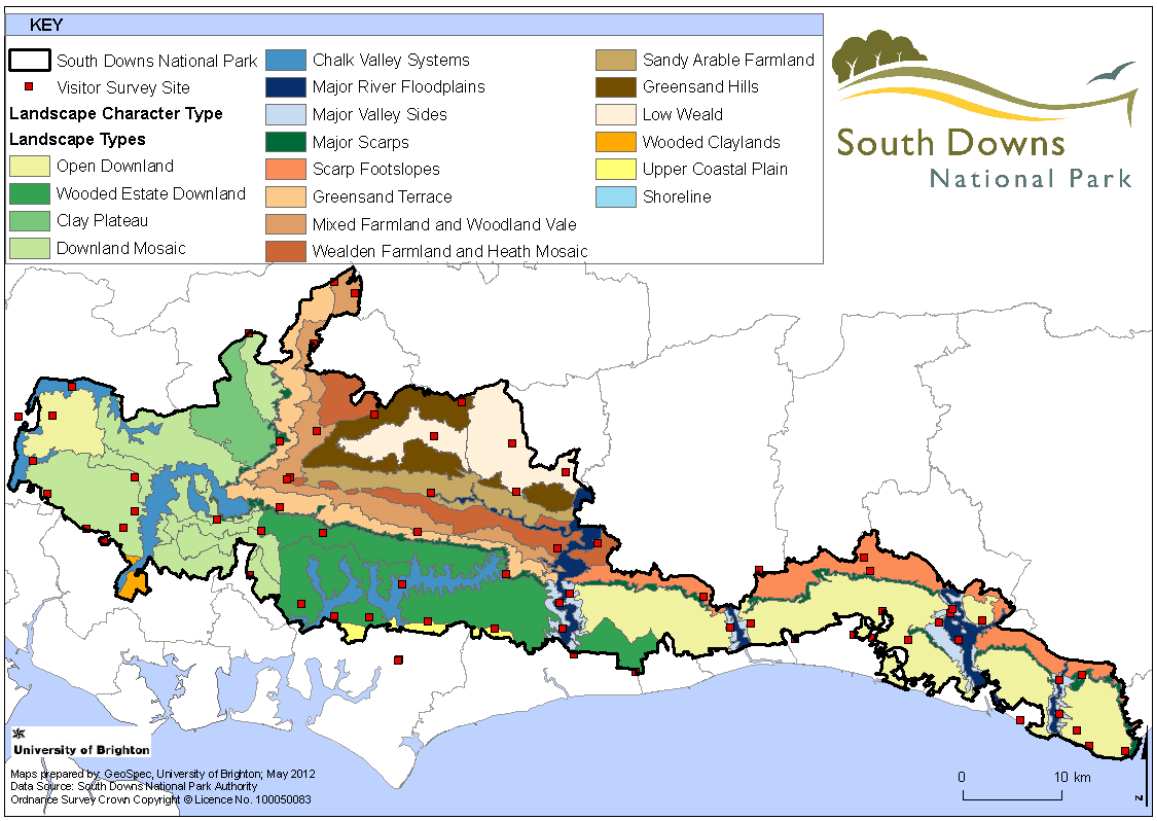
The sites were mapped based on the postcode and grid reference of the site manager's office address. In a handful of cases the site manager's address was located outside the National Park although the site itself was within the Park boundaries.

Sites that responded

The 73 sites that responded to the survey were also mapped to check the geographical spread and their distribution across the Landscape Character Areas and how they were distributed across the National Park's Ranger Team boundaries.

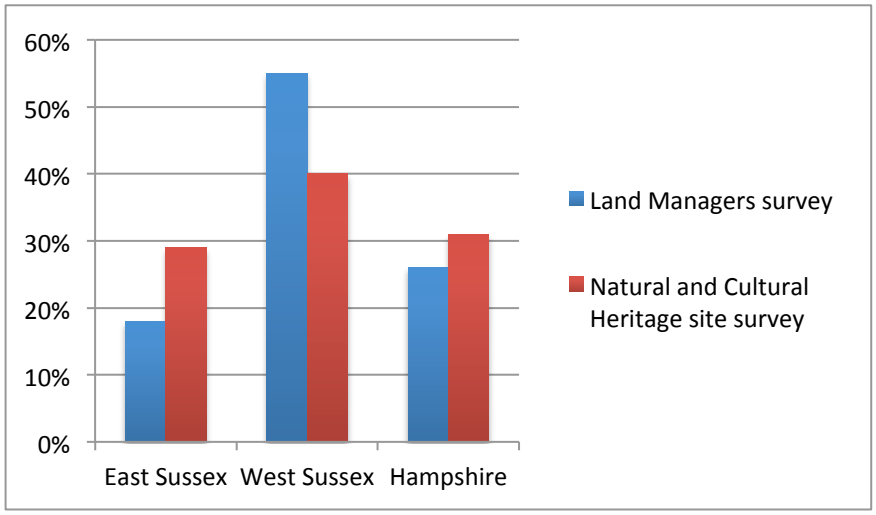
Figure15 shows that the distribution of the respondents covered the main LCAs and was evenly spread across the National Park although there were fewer sites in the eastern quarter of the Park. In part this is due to the fewer nature conservation and cultural heritage sites and attractions towards the east of the Park.

Figure 15: Distribution of Respondents across the South Downs National Park



The sites that responded were distributed across the three counties with the majority (40%/29) located in West Sussex, 31% (23) in Hampshire and 29% (21) in East Sussex.

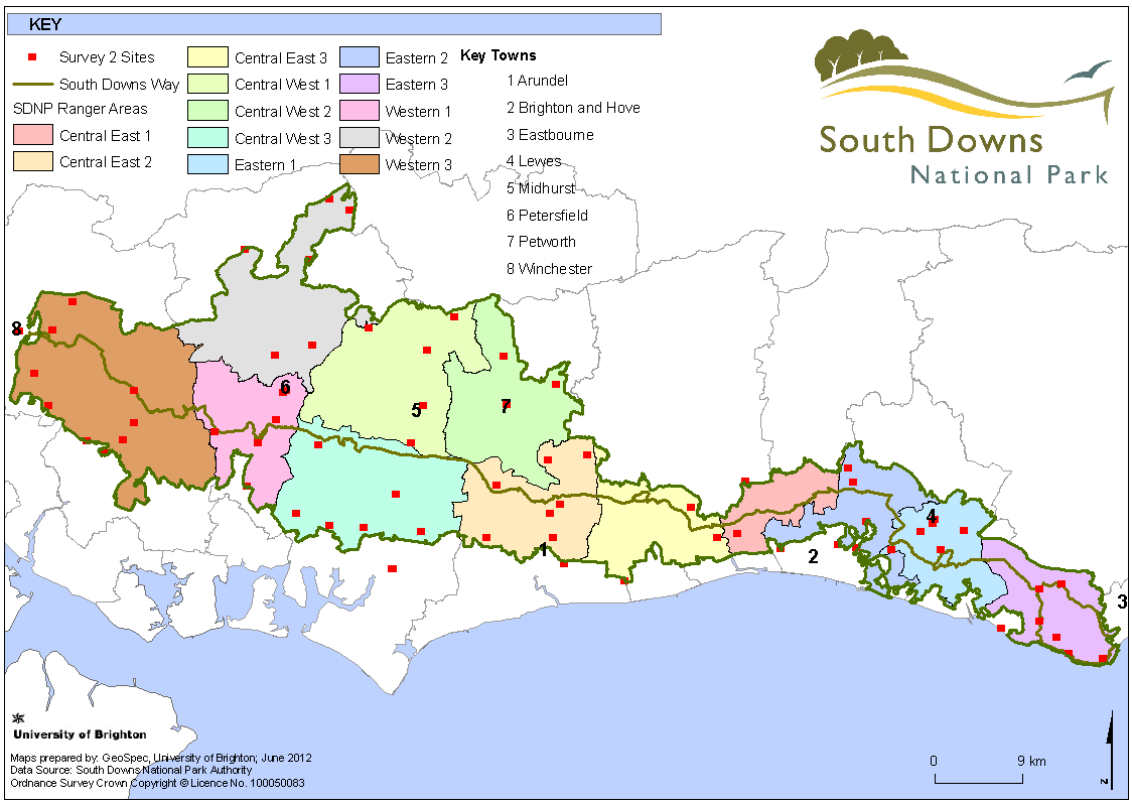
Figure 16: Proportion of respondents by county for both surveys



Compared to the Land Manager's survey, there were a greater proportion of respondents from East Sussex and fewer from West Sussex.

The spread of respondents was also mapped over the National Park's Ranger Area boundaries. This distribution is shown in Figure 17 below.

Figure 17: Distribution of Respondents by Area Team Boundaries

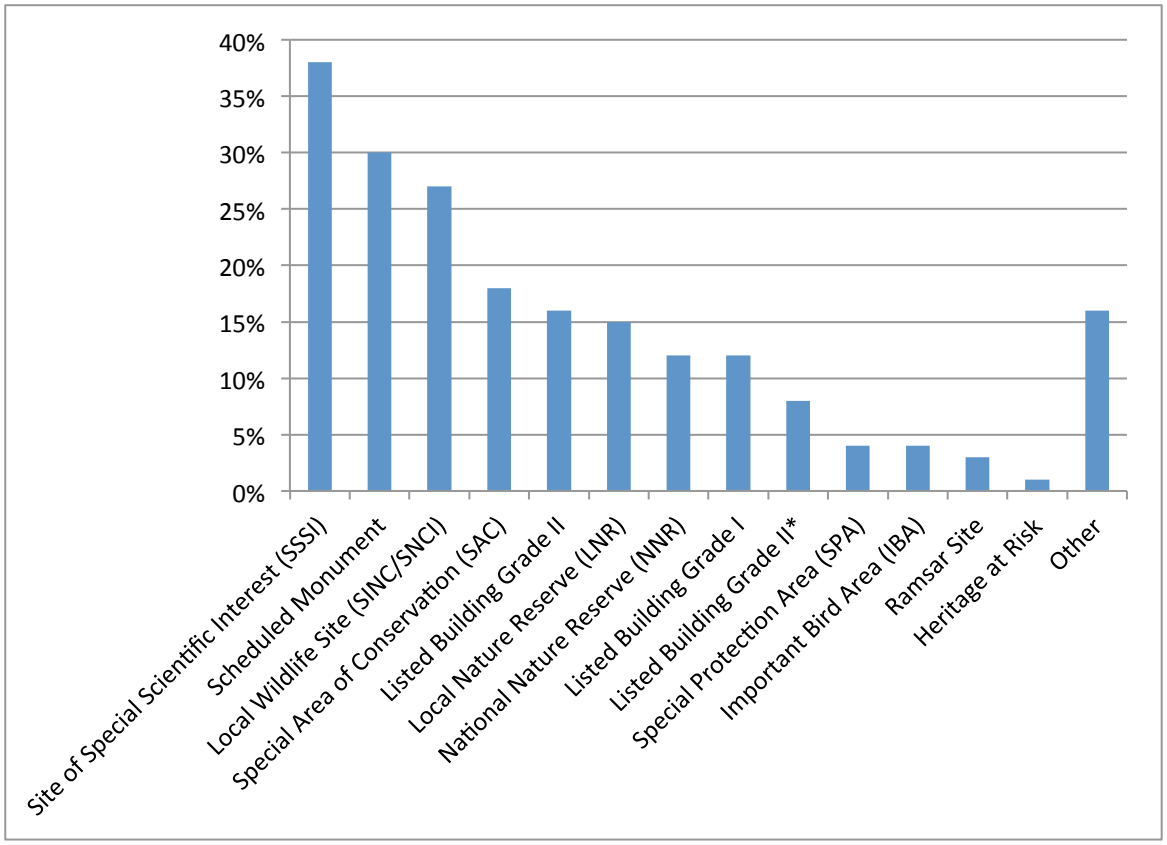


Sites from all ranger areas were included in the survey with 40% (29) of respondents being located within the Central Area, 33% (24) within the Western Area and 27% (20) within the Eastern Area, reflecting the distribution by county.

3.2.2 Conservation designations

All but 14 sites carried some form of either nature conservation or built heritage designation (Annex iii). Those without any form of designation included farm related attractions, recreation establishments and visitor centres.

Figure 18: Proportion of sites with Conservation Designations



The most frequent designations, which occurred in more than a quarter of sites, were Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) at 28 sites, Scheduled Monuments (SMs) at 22 sites and Local Wildlife Sites (LWS) at 20 sites. This reflects the higher instance of these designations across the National Park.

3.2.3 Sites with nature conservation and built heritage designations

There were just over a quarter (26%/19) of the sites that had both nature conservation and built heritage designations.

The majority of these were nature conservation sites that included a Scheduled Monument. These sites accounted for 15% (11) of the total respondents and were:

- Birling Gap
- Castle Hill NNR
- Ditchling Beacon
- Ebernoe Common
- Kingley Vale
- Magdalen Hill Down
- *Mount Caburn NNR*
- Petersfield Heath and Pond
- *Queen Elizabeth Country Park*
- *RSPB Pulborough Brooks*
- *Twyford Waterworks*

An additional 10% (8) of sites were Listed Buildings with nature conservation designations, of which half also included a Scheduled Monument.

The sites that had Listed Buildings designation, combined with nature conservation designations were:

- Liphook House and Garden
- *Stansted Park*
- Uppark House and Garden
- *Woods Mill*

The sites that had Listed Buildings designation, combined with nature conservation designations and a Scheduled Monument were:

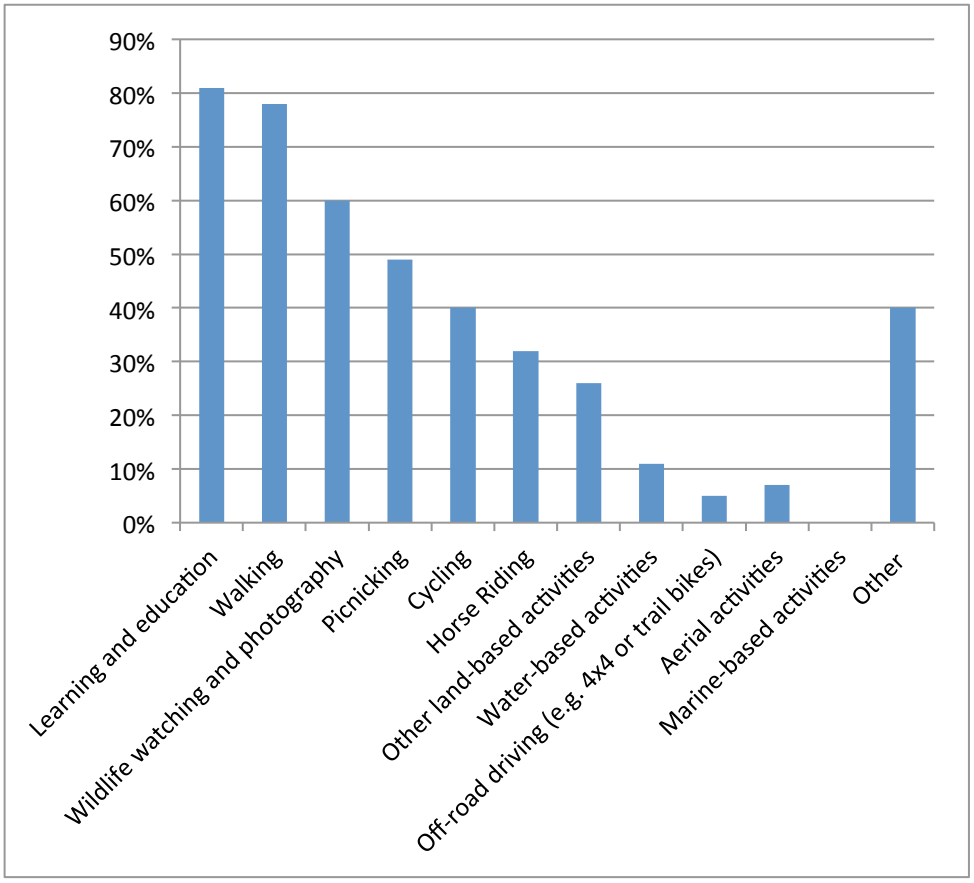
- Goodwood Estate
- *Seven Sisters Country Park*
- Slindon Estate
- *West Dean Estate*

A selection of sites from each of these categories has been included in the in-depth interviews undertaken for the case studies (these are highlighted in italics).

3.2.4 Visitor activities

A range of activities occurs at sites and attractions. Some sites are specifically set up for certain activities, for example golf courses, while others provide activities as a means of enjoying the site, for example providing tractor rides or children's play facilities. Many sites, such as nature reserves and historic houses, offer a place for enjoyment of the surroundings by encouraging people to walk around the site and by providing learning opportunities.

Figure 19: Proportion of sites where visitor activities occur



Trends in visitor activity data showed:

- Learning and education was the most frequently reported activity (at 81% (59) of sites)
- Walking was the second most frequent activity occurring on 78% (57) of sites
- Wildlife watching and photography was the third most frequently reported activity occurring on 60% (44) of sites
- Picnicking (49%/36), cycling (40%/29) and horse riding (32%/23) are also common activities
- Off-road driving (eg, 4x4 or trail bikes) occurred at 5% (4) of sites.
- Aerial activities, paragliding and hang gliding, were limited to chalk grassland sites at Beachy Head Countryside Centre and Queen Elizabeth Country Park, and paragliding at Mount Caburn NNR
- Other activities include archaeological activities, campfires, events, golf, research studies and tractor rides.

Compared to the Land Manager's survey, it is noticeable that the role of learning and education at natural and cultural heritage sites features strongly.

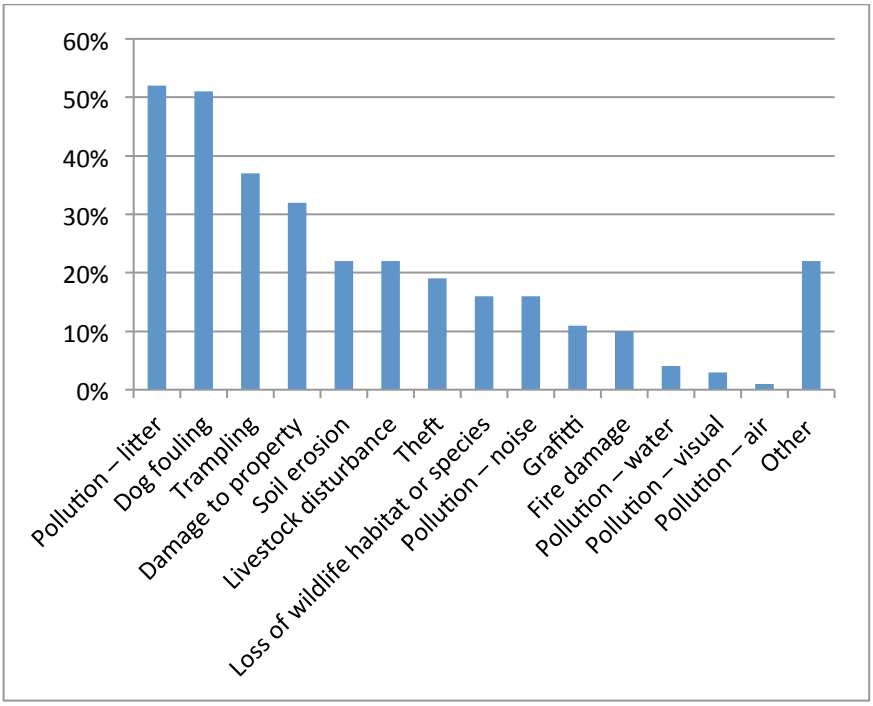
3.2.5 Negative impacts arising from activities

Negative impacts fall into different categories: some are more social (or anti-social) in nature (damage to property, theft and graffiti); some are purely environmental (trampling, soil erosion and loss of wildlife habitats or species); while others may be considered as both social and environmental issues (pollution, dog fouling, livestock disturbance and fire damage). The 'Other' negative impacts reported included conflict between users, dumped motorbikes and other waste and over clearance impacting on wildlife.

Figure 20: Social and environmental impacts associated with visitor activity

Negative impacts resulting from activities	Social and/or environmental issue	Number	%
Pollution – litter	Social/Environmental	38	52%
Dog fouling	Social/Environmental	37	51%
Trampling	Environmental	27	37%
Damage to property	Social	23	32%
Soil erosion	Environmental	18	22%
Livestock disturbance	Social/Environmental	16	22%
Theft	Social	16	19%
Loss of wildlife habitat or species	Environmental	14	16%
Pollution – noise	Social/Environmental	12	16%
Graffiti	Social	8	11%
Fire damage	Social/Environmental	7	10%
Pollution – water	Social/Environmental	3	4%
Pollution – visual	Social	2	3%
Pollution – air	Social/Environmental	1	1%
Other	Social/Environmental	16	22%

Figure 21: Proportion of sites with negative impacts arising from visitor activity



The greatest proportion (54%/130 out of 238 issues)[6]of reported issues occurring across sites fell in the category of both social and environmental issues. Purely environmental and social issues accounted for 25% and 21% (59 and 49) of impacts respectively.

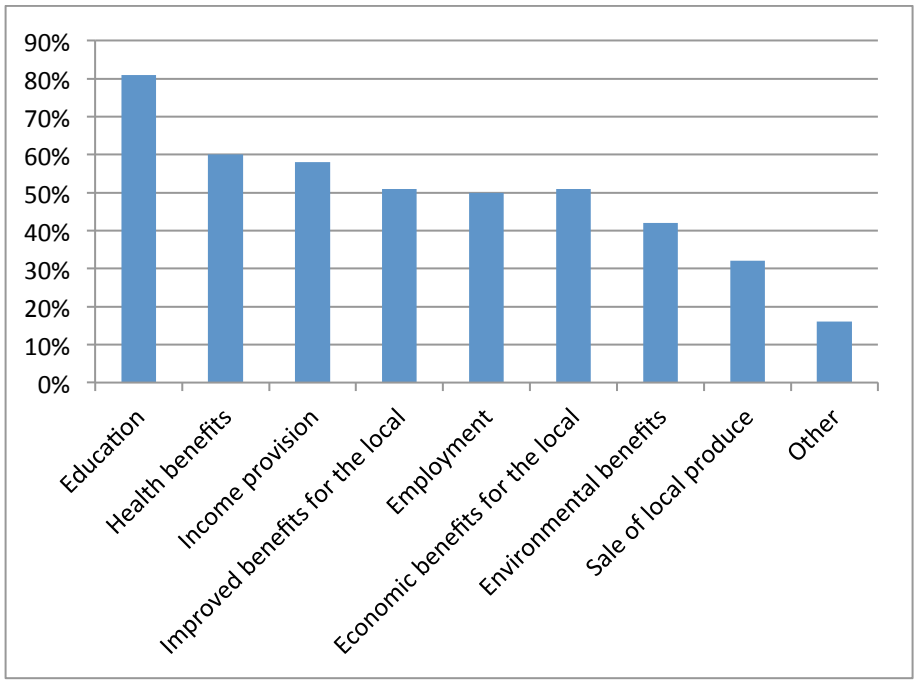
The main negative impacts resulting from activities at sites:

- Litter and dog fouling were the two most reported negative impacts each occurring on over 50% of sites (38 and 37 sites respectively)
- The main environmental (only) impacts were trampling and soil erosion occurring on 37% (27) and 22% (18) of sites respectively
- The main social (only) impacts were damage to property occurred at nearly a third of sites (32%/23) and theft that occurred at 19% (16) of sites.

3.2.6 Positive impacts resulting from activities

Most of the positive impacts identified are socio-economic in nature and benefit people. However environmental benefits also arise in conjunction with the socio-economic benefits.

Figure 22: Positive impacts of visitor activities



The main points arising on positive impacts were:

- Education was a positive outcome on most sites (81%/59)
- Health benefits were considered a positive outcome in relation to 60% (44) of sites
- Income, benefits to the local community and employment were each considered on 50% or more of sites (58% (42), 51% (34) and 50% (35) respectively)
- Environmental benefits (42%/31) were considered to be achieved from involving the public in volunteering activities and support for conservation aims through increased knowledge and awareness.

The nature conservation and cultural heritage sites frequently offer visitors an educational experience, which can benefit the environment through raised awareness and participation in conservation activities.

[6] Identified from the question: *What negative impacts result on your site or land from these activities?*)

3.3 Habitats and visitor impacts

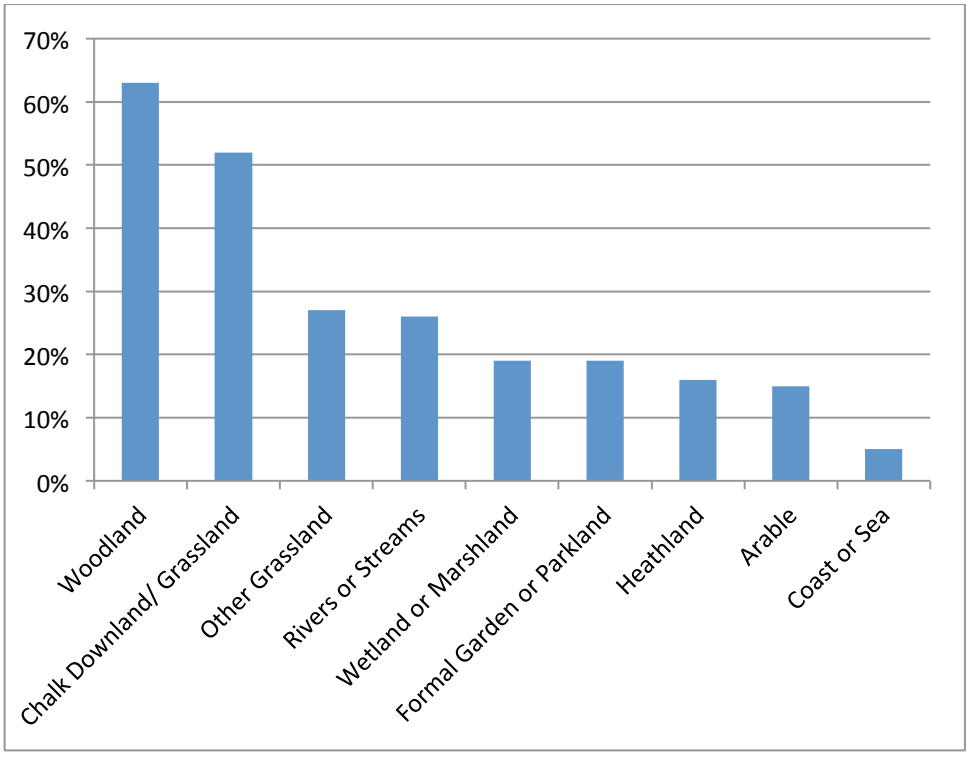
3.3.1 Overview

The habitats that occurred most frequently in the survey were woodland (63%/46) and chalk downland/ grassland (52%/38). As Figure 23 shows, the number of sites in each habitat category is small, therefore identifying trends in visitor impacts and management approaches has been limited.

Figure 23: Number and percentage of sites in each habitat category

Habitats	Number	%
Woodland	46	63%
Chalk Downland/Grassland	38	52%
Other Grassland	20	27%
Rivers or Streams	19	26%
Wetland or Marshland	14	19%
Formal Garden or Parkland	14	19%
Heathland	12	16%
Arable	11	15%
Coast or Sea	4	5%

Figure 24: Proportion of sites containing different habitat types



The relatively high response from sites including woodland habitat, compared to the proportion of the National Park it covers, may reflect woodland's greater wildlife value and a higher usage of woodland for visitor attraction sites in comparison to arable land.

Other grassland, rivers and streams, wetland, formal gardens, parkland, heathland and arable land occurred less frequently. The SDNP has a short coastline of 20km, four of the sites that responded were located on the coast.

More than 80% (62) of sites recorded the presence of more than one type of habitat.

The following section examines whether the different visitor activities undertaken in these habitats had positive, neutral or negative impacts.

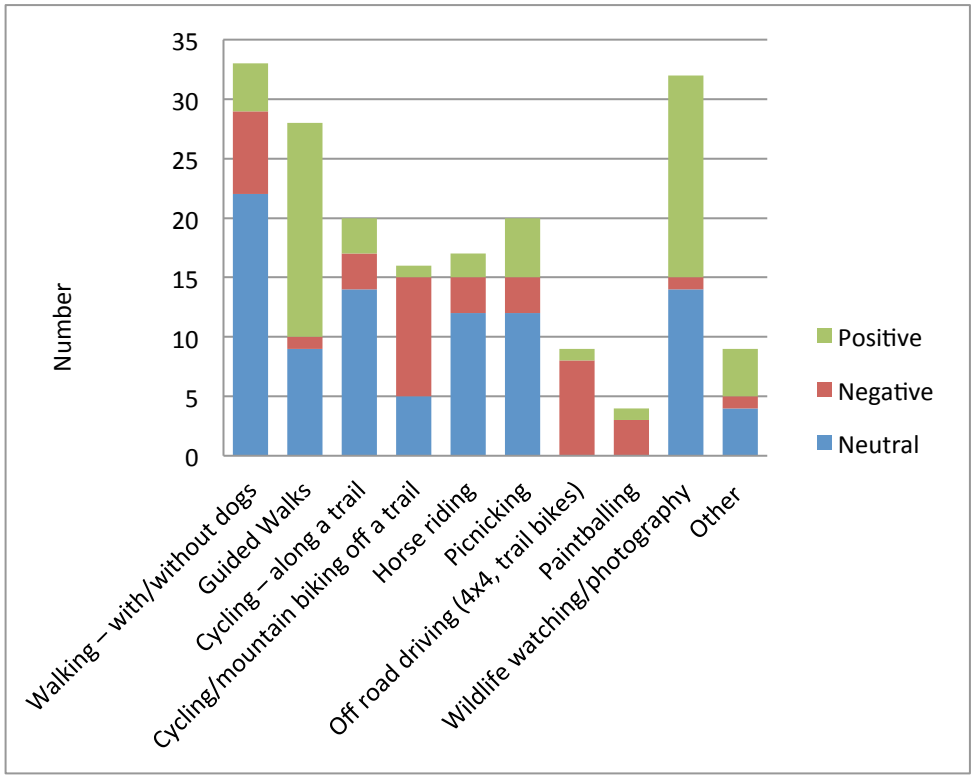
3.3.2 Woodland

Nearly two thirds (63%/46) of the sites surveyed included woodland. Positive and negative impacts from activities were wide ranging.

Walking with dogs, cycling and horse riding and picnicking raised the following negative issues:

- The main issues associated with walking in woodlands are dog fouling and disturbance to wildlife
- Cycling along trails can have the negative effects of erosion and conflicts with other users
- More issues were raised with cycling off trails compared to cycling along trails
- As well as erosion, cycling off trails results in disturbance to habitats and wildlife
- Horse riding mainly tends to be an issue where riders move off or away from bridleways when disturbance to ground flora and other wildlife occurs
- The main issue associated with picnicking is litter.

Figure 25: Impact of visitor activities on woodland habitat



The activities with more positive impacts were:

- Guided walks are generally viewed as positive with the main outcome being education and raised awareness of habitats, species and conservation objectives
- Wildlife watching and photography are generally viewed to have positive outcomes such as raised awareness of the natural environment. One example was given of improved wildlife records for the site.

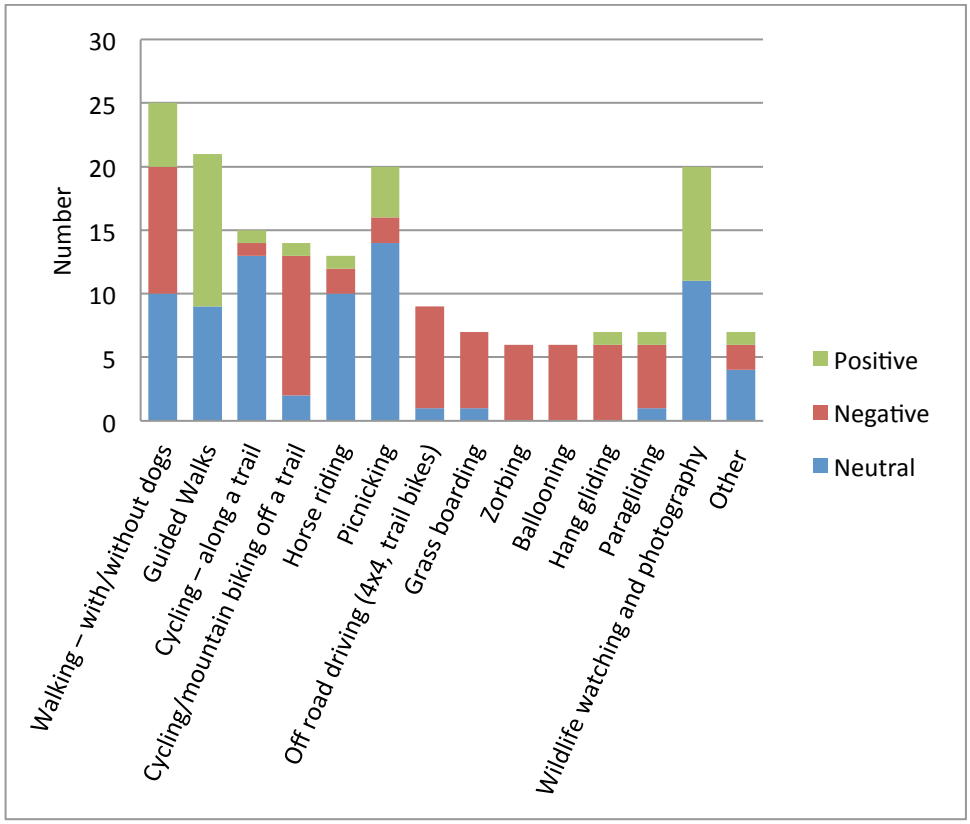
3.3.3 Chalk Downland

Over half of the sites (52%/37) included chalk downland habitat.

In addition to the negative impacts caused by walking, particularly with dogs, cycling, horse riding and litter from picnicking, chalk downland attracts other land and aerial based activities because the topography provides suitable take-off sites for hang gliding and paragliding. These activities can cause problems for the environment although hang gliding and paragliding only occur at sites where they are permitted. Overall:

- The main impacts associated with walking on chalk downland are dog fouling, disturbance to wildlife and path erosion
- Erosion was the main impact resulting from cycling and horse riding
- Litter was the main issue associated with picnicking on chalk downland habitat
- Grassboarding and zorbing are generally unpermitted activities and where they take place they result in damage to plant life and invertebrates
- Where kite flying occurs it results in disturbance to plants invertebrates and birds
- Aerial activities, such as ballooning, hang gliding and paragliding, generally occur on chalk downland sites. The main impacts from these activities are disturbance to vegetation and bird life.

Figure 26: Impact of visitor activities on chalk downland habitat



The positive impacts identified are similar to those that occur in woodland.

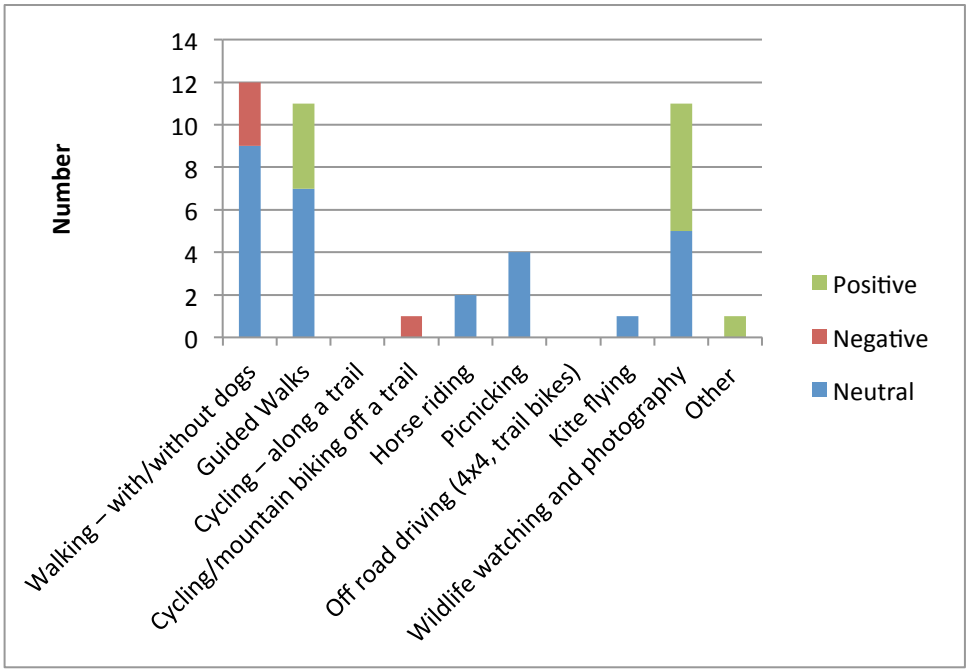
- Guided walks are generally viewed as positive and provide for education and learning as well as engagement with the natural environment
- Wildlife watching and photography was generally considered as positive enabling engagement with the natural environment, education and learning.

3.3.4 Other (not chalk) grassland habitat

Grassland other than chalk occurred on 27% (20) of the sites. In general, most activities were considered to be neutral in their impact on grassland (not chalk) habitat however:

- Walking is the main activity taking place in other (not chalk) grassland which can result in disturbance to habitats and wildlife
- Cycling/mountain biking off trails in this habitat caused only negative impacts.

Figure 27: Impact of visitor activities on grassland habitat



Guided walks and wildlife photography had positive outcomes and are to be encouraged:

- Education and appreciation of the natural environment were cited at the main outcomes from guided walks and wildlife watching/photography.

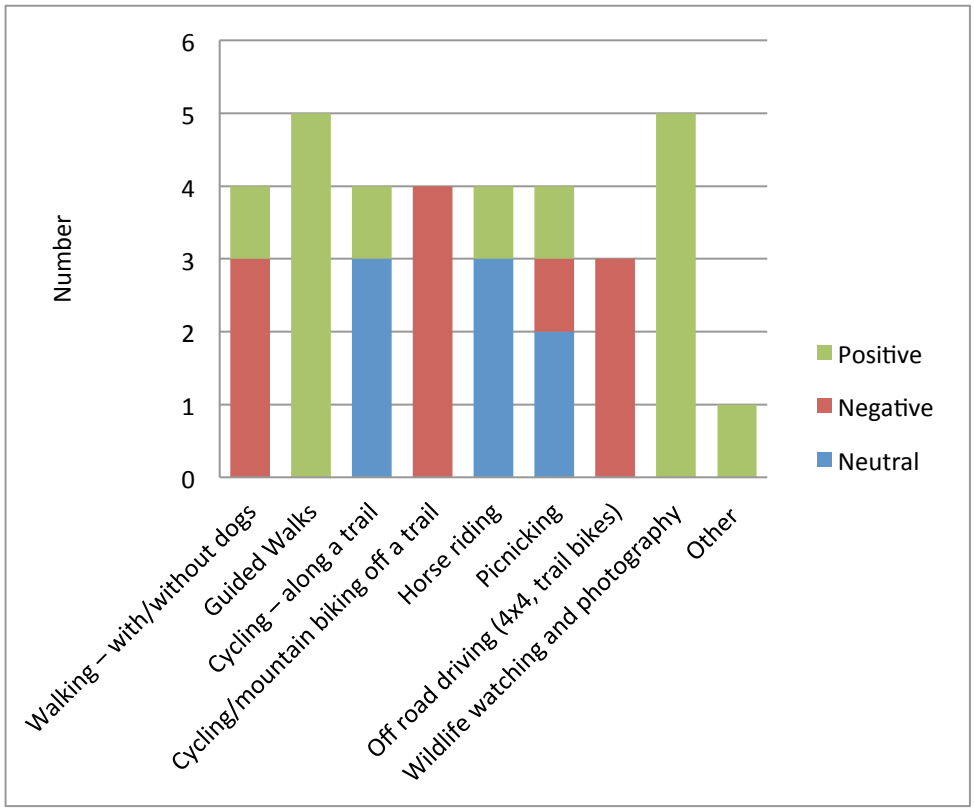
3.3.5 Heathland

Heathland habitat occurred at 16% (12) of the sites surveyed.

Walking with or without dogs, cycling off a trail and off-road driving caused the most negative impacts:

- Wildlife disturbance, erosion and dog fouling were the main impacts resulting from walkers on heathland habitat
- Cycling and horse riding, whether on or away from trails or bridleways, have the potential to cause erosion
- Off-roading causes damage to habitats, invertebrates and disturbs wildlife.

Figure 28: Impact of visitor activities on heathland habitat



Positive impacts were most frequently recorded for:

- Guided walks which provide education and learning opportunities
- Wildlife watching and photography that enables engagement with the natural environment and provides for education and learning.

3.3.6 Arable

Arable was included in the survey as it can be a large component of some landholdings. It occurred at 15% (11) of sites/attractions. The main finding was that where visitors access arable land, whether for walking, cycling, horse riding, or off-roading by 4x4s, it could result in crop damage and erosion of paths.

This also reflects the findings from the Land Managers survey where arable farming occurred on 68% (49) of sites and similar issues were identified.

3.3.7 Wetland/marshland

Wetland or marshland occurred at 19% (14) of sites:

- Walking, guided walks, picnicking and wildlife watching/photography were the main activities occurring on wetland/marshland habitat and access was generally restricted for most activities
- Guided walks and wildlife watching/photography were considered to have positive or neutral impact
- Walking and picnicking had either neutral or negative impacts
- The main negative impacts from visitor presence are disturbance to wildlife.

3.3.8 Rivers/streams

A quarter (19) of the sites included rivers or streams:

- The main activity associated with rivers and streams is wildlife watching/photography
- In general, activities such as swimming, fishing and boating do not appear to be an issue
- Overall, rivers and streams do not appear to be negatively affected by visitors

3.3.9 Coast or sea

The coast touches the South Downs National Park in East Sussex only. Just 5% (4) of the sites included the coast and sea. Walking, guided walks and picnicking were considered to have neural impacts, and the only negative impact reported was barbecue/fire damage.

3.3.10 Formal garden/parkland

Formal gardens/parkland occurred at 19% (14) of sites:

- Walking, guided walks, picnicking and wildlife watching/photography are the main activities that occur
- Negative impacts or visitor activities are erosion and sheep worrying by dogs
- Education is a positive outcome from guided walks and wildlife watching/photography

3.3.11 Summary of impacts on habitat types

The impact of the majority of visitor activities on local habitats was considered to be neutral.

Responses to the question 'Does the activity have a positive, neutral or negative impact?' showed that, overall, the impacts of activities on all habitat types taken together were considered to be neutral as illustrated in Figure 29.

Figure 29: Total responses for positive, neutral and negative impacts for all activities on all habitats

Impact	No.
Positive	145
Neutral	264
Negative	140

It should be noted, however, that many activities may have a mix of positive, negative and neutral impacts and it is the overall impact of the activity on the habitat that has been reported in the survey.

The positive and negative impacts that were reported by respondents indicate that walking and cycling cause the majority of negative impacts on habitats, particularly when visitors are walking with dogs or cycling off the marked trails.

The main types of negative and positive impacts raised by respondents are summarised in Figure 30 below. (This does not reflect the number of issues that relate to each impact).

Figure 30: Summary of impacts on habitats caused by visitor activities

Activity	Impact	Woodland	Chalk Downland	Other Grassland	Heathland	Arable	Wetland	Rivers, Streams	Coast	Formal Gardens, Parks
Walking	Path erosion									
	Disturbance to wildlife									
	Crop damage									
With dogs	Dog fouling									
	Sheep worrying									
Cycling	Erosion									
Off trail	Disturbance to wildlife									
	Conflicts with other users									
	Crop damage									
Horse riding	Erosion									
Off trail	Disturbance to wildlife									
	Crop damage									
Picnicking	Litter									
	Disturbance to wildlife									
	BBQ - fire damage									
Grassboarding	Damage to plant life									
Zorbing	Damage to plant life									
Kite flying	Damage to plant life									
Arial Activities										
Ballooning	Disturbance to wildlife									
Hang gliding	Disturbance to wildlife									
Paragliding	Disturbance to wildlife									
Motorised	Erosion									
4x4 off-roading	Crop damage									
Guided walks										
Wildlife watching										
Photography										

Negative impact
Positive impact

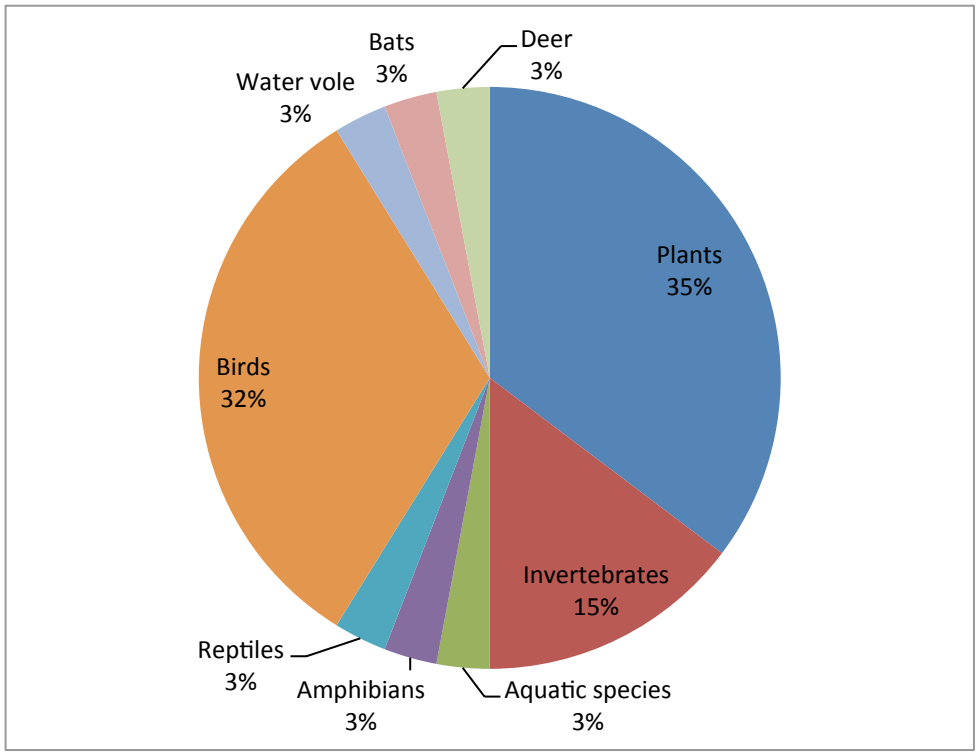
The most frequently reported negative impacts were erosion, disturbance and damage to wildlife and plant life, dog fouling and litter. These were reported most frequently on chalk downland and in woodland.

Where visitor activities are managed through guided walks or are focused on wildlife watching and photography, the educational benefits and raised awareness of wildlife are considered to be positive.

3.4 Species and visitor impacts

The majority of sites did not report specific species that were affected by visitors. However visitors did have a negative impact on species at over a quarter (29%/21) of sites, with a range of species affected.

Figure 31: Species affected by visitor activities



The sites that reported negative impacts on species are spread across the National Park and are not confined to any specific type of habitat. However, the most frequently occurring habitats on sites where species issues were reported are woodland and chalk downland.

There is no evident correlation between the impact on a species and the type of habitat where the impact occurs. However it should be noted that sample sizes were small and therefore cannot be taken as fully representative of the impacts to species across the National Park.

The main groups of species to be affected by visitor activities are plants, birds and invertebrates (such as butterflies), reflecting the nature of the habitats and types of species present in the National Park (Annex xii). In general, plants are affected as a result of trampling and bird life through general habitat disturbance.

While the question of which species were affected by visitor activities was asked in the survey, the question of the type of activity resulting in an impact was not. However, the open question on types of species affected by visitor activities elicited some indication of the factors causing an impact.

The distribution of plant species can be affected by trampling, whether from walking, cycling horse riding or some other activity. For example, at Catherington Down orchids and other wild flowers were reported to be affected by trampling.

Some impacts on species arise as a result of difficulties of managing a site due to visitor related impacts. For example, at Ditchling Beacon the problem of dogs worrying livestock means that it is difficult to graze the chalk grassland site, a management regime that is critical to maintaining the quality of the grassland sward and associated invertebrate life.

On some sites species are affected as a result of wilful damage, for example at Green Ridge Brighton where trees have been uprooted, cut down and damaged.

When considering visitor impacts on species it must be borne in mind that there may be a range of natural or human induced variables influencing the presence, absence and overall distribution of species. These variables will include natural population changes, climate change and habitat management regimes, as well as visitor disturbance. On sites where it is considered that visitors are having a significant impact on the presence and viability of species populations, then appropriate visitor management measures may be required to address the situation.

3.5 Cultural heritage and visitor impacts

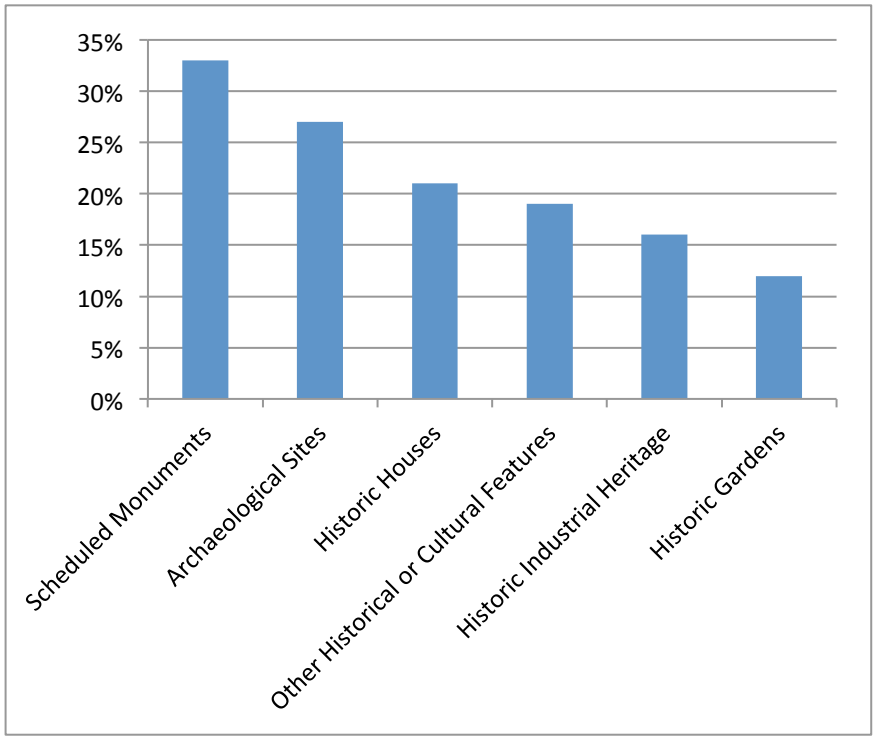
3.5.1 Overview

The survey covered sites with a variety of cultural heritage features including Scheduled Monuments, archaeological sites, historic houses, historic industrial heritage and historic gardens. As with the habitat categories it is important to note the small number of sites in each category.

Figure 32: Number and percentage of sites with cultural heritage features

Cultural Heritage Features	Number	%
Scheduled Monuments	24	33%
Archaeological Sites	20	27%
Historic Houses	15	21%
Other Historical or Cultural Historical Features	14	19%
Historic Industrial Heritage	12	16%
Historic Gardens	9	12%

Figure 33: Cultural heritage features of respondents



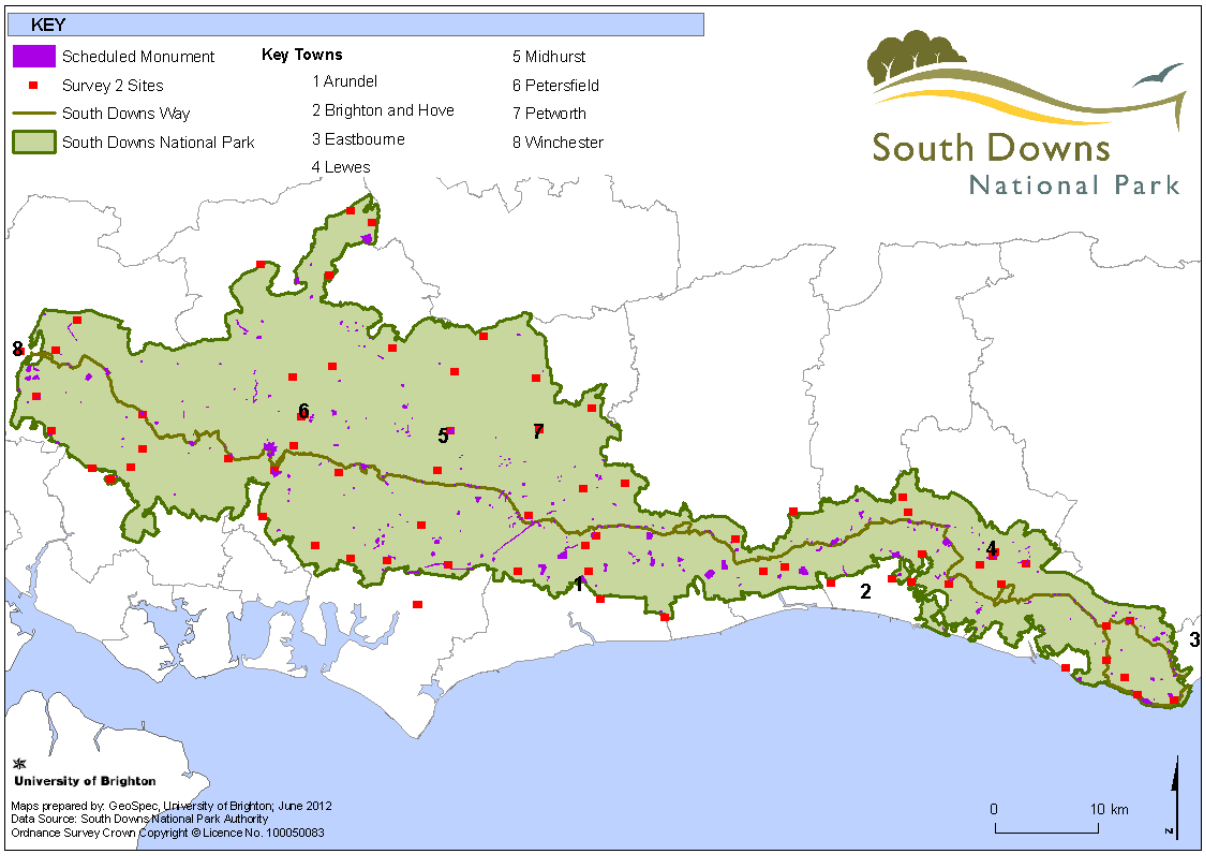
Scheduled Monuments were present on more than a third (24) of sites, and more than a quarter of sites (20) included an archaeological site.

Section 3.2.3 above highlighted that Scheduled Monuments were often located in nature conservation sites as well as on sites with listed buildings.

3.5.2 Scheduled Monuments

A third (23) of the sites that responded included Scheduled Monuments. Figure 34 below illustrates the large number (around 600) of Scheduled Monuments that are located within the National Park and their relationship to the sites that responded to the survey.

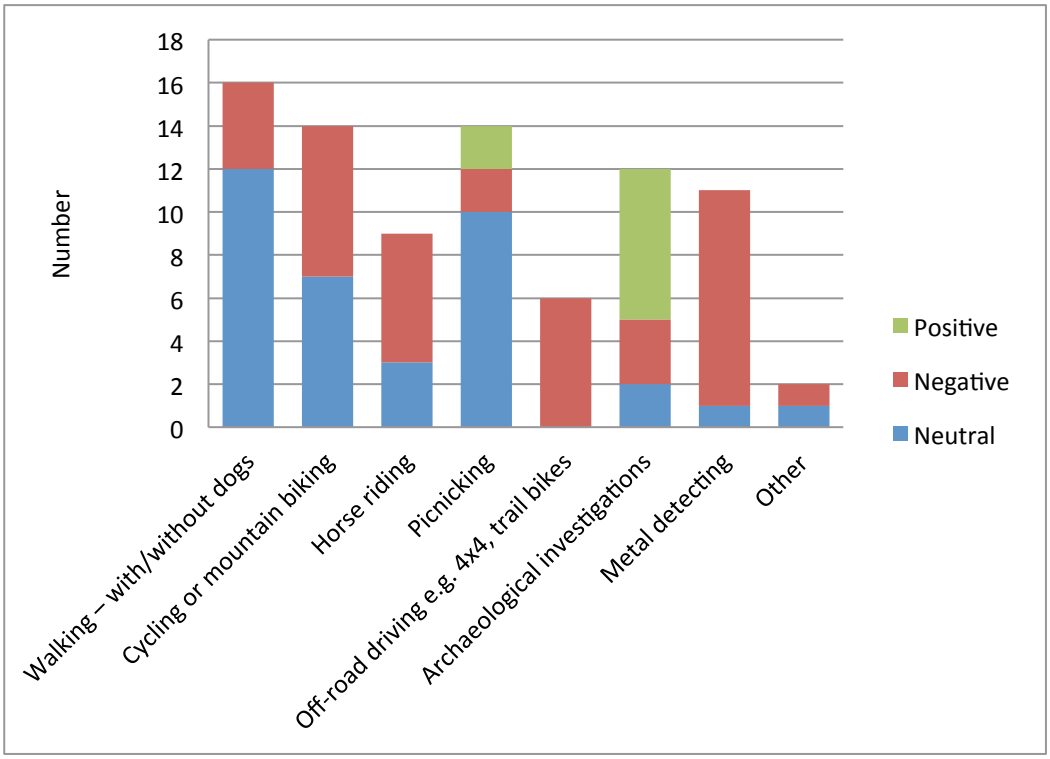
Figure 34: Location of visitor sites and Scheduled Monuments



The impact of visitor activities on Scheduled Monuments is shown in Figure 35 below. With the exception of archaeological investigations, which are only permitted under licence, visitor activities have almost entirely negative or neutral impacts.

This is in contrast to sites with other cultural heritage designations where good visitor management tends to offset some of the negative impacts of visitor activity.

Figure 35: Impact of visitor activities on Scheduled Monuments



- Erosion and trampling were the main issues associated with walking, cycling and horse-riding in relation to Scheduled Monuments
- Metal detecting was a year round problem and had a negative impact at all but one site, where it was considered neutral
- Off-road driving damages features and causes erosion.

The consultations undertaken for the case studies investigated why there were none of the positive education and interpretation benefits for scheduled monuments that were present at other types of sites.

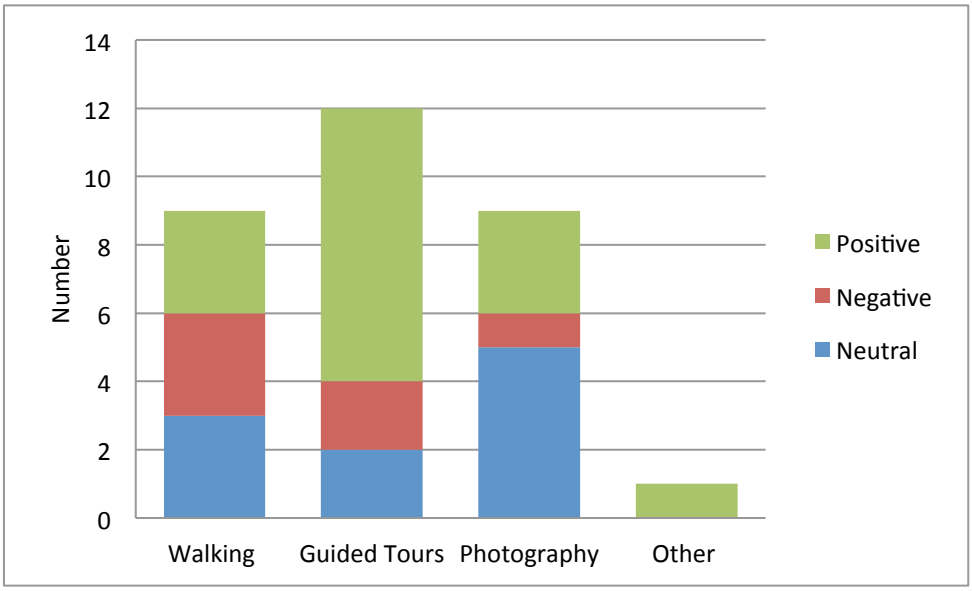
The ownership of Scheduled Monuments by nature conservation sites tends to mean that the priority for the site is focused on managing the natural habitat rather than on any built heritage.

Some owners were aware of this limitation and expressed a desire to improve the interpretation and management of these sites. However it is clear that there needs to be greater awareness amongst site managers as well as visitors about the significance of these monuments and the need for further interpretation.

3.5.3 Historic houses

A fifth (15) of the sites that responded to the survey were historic houses and the visitor activities that took place (walking, guided walks and photography) were mostly considered positive.

Figure 36: Impact of visitor activities on historic houses



- Negative impacts relate to wear and tear on interior of houses
- Positive outcomes in the form of learning opportunities arise from guided walks/tours.

3.5.4 Historic gardens

Historic gardens occurred at 12% (9) of sites:

- Activities (walking, guided tours and picnicking) in historic gardens are generally considered to have neutral or positive impact in the form of enjoyment and education
- Negative impacts include erosion and occasional litter.

3.5.5 Historic industrial heritage

Historic industrial heritage accounted for 16% (12) of sites/attractions:

- Impacts of visitor activities (walking, guided tours, picnicking and photography) on historic industrial heritage sites are positive or neutral
- Negative impacts are minimal and where they occur relate to occasional litter.

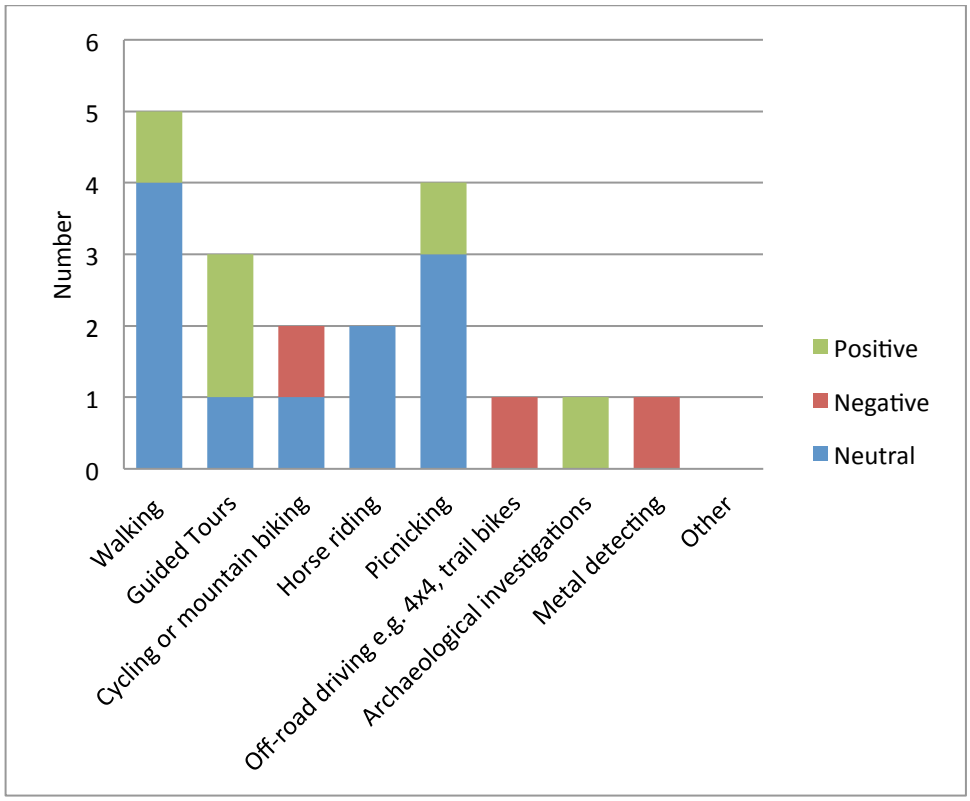
The positive impact of visitors and the lack of negative impacts at the historic industrial heritage sites in the National Park may indicate that they are fairly robust sites that could take more visitors.

3.5.6 Archaeological sites

Over a quarter (20) of sites included archaeological features:

- Impacts of visitor activities on archaeological sites are generally positive or neutral
- Trampling is the main negative impact arising from cycling, off-road driving
- Concerns were also raised about metal detecting.

Figure 37: Impact of visitor activities on archaeological sites



3.5.7 Other historic/cultural heritage attractions

Other historic/cultural heritage attractions included a mixture of wildlife sites, built heritage and heritage assets such as documents. These heritage features were recorded at 19% (14) of sites/attractions. Impacts of activities were generally positive, such as enjoyment and learning.

3.5.8 Summary of impacts on cultural heritage features

Responses to the question 'Does the activity have a positive, neutral or negative impact?' showed that, overall, the impacts of activities on all cultural heritage sites taken together were considered to be neutral as illustrated in Figure 38.

Figure 38: Total responses for positive, negative and neutral responses

Impact	No.
Positive	48
Neutral	80
Negative	54

Individual responses to the question showed that historic houses, gardens, industrial heritage sites and archaeological sites experience mostly positive or neutral benefits from visitors. By contrast the experience of Scheduled Monuments in relation to visitors tends to be negative (Figure 39). It should be noted that Figure 39 does not reflect the number of issues that relate to each impact but merely whether there were more positive or more negative impacts reported.

Figure 39: Positive and negative impacts on cultural heritage sites

Activity	Impact	Scheduled Monuments	Archaeological sites	Historic houses	Historic gardens	Industrial heritage
Walking						
	Trampling, erosion					
Cycling	Trampling, erosion					
Horse riding	Trampling, erosion					
Picnicking						
Off-road driving	Erosion, damages features					
Metal detecting						
Archaeological investigations						
Learning opportunities						
Guided tours						
Photography						

Negative impact
Positive impact

Generally historic houses, gardens and industrial heritage sites are managed to attract visitors and generate the associated benefit; they may be well placed to attract more visitors.

Scheduled monuments and archaeological sites however, can be located on sites that are not specifically designed to manage them. This is particularly evident where Scheduled Monuments are found on nature conservation sites that are primarily focused on managing the natural habitat.

There is a clear need for improved interpretation and greater awareness of the significance of these monuments amongst both visitors and site managers.

3.6 Visitor management of sites/attractions

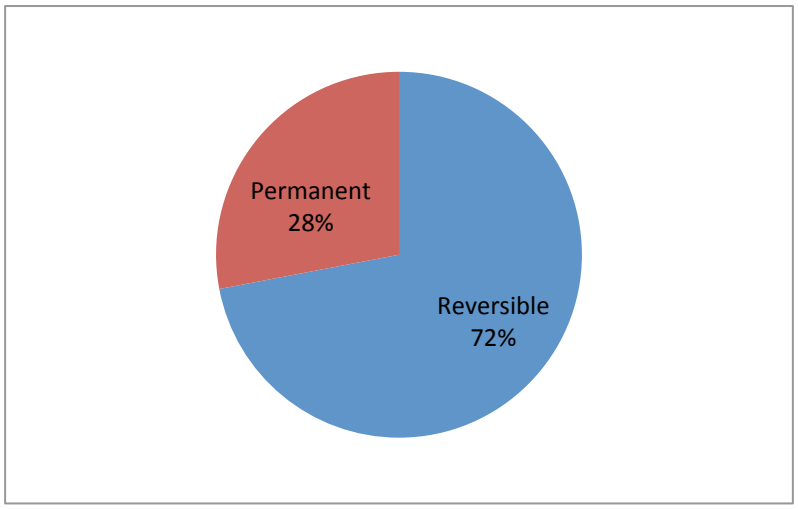
3.6.1 Introduction

A range of questions were asked to gauge the severity and consequences of visitor impacts on the environment and also to identify good practice in visitor management as well as ideas and aspirations for the future.

3.6.2 Reversible or Permanent damage to environmental assets

Depending on the nature of the impact it can be possible to restore degraded or damaged wildlife or cultural assets given sufficient funds and/or time and good management. However some impacts can result in irreversible damage such as erosion of archaeological features or the destruction of ancient trees.

Figure 40: Proportion of permanent or reversible damage from visitor activity



- The majority (72%/31) of negative impacts caused by visitor activity were considered to be reversible
- However 28% (12) of those who responded to the question considered that some irreversible damage had been done to habitats or historic heritage features

Of the various natural and historic features that have suffered permanent damage, the most frequently reported damage was erosion of archaeological features/Scheduled Monuments, path networks and habitats. In addition ancient trees had been destroyed at one site and artefacts and documents had been damaged at two other sites. Some of the damage described as permanent, such as vandalism and graffiti could be reduced if additional management and safeguards were put in place.

Eleven sites that had experienced permanent damage provided details of the type of damage incurred, including:

- Castle Hill NNR in East Sussex and Catherington Down SSSI experienced erosion to their archaeological sites.
- Cowdray Estate, in West Sussex, suffered from vandalism and graffiti
- At Ditchling Beacon there was erosion to the path networks.

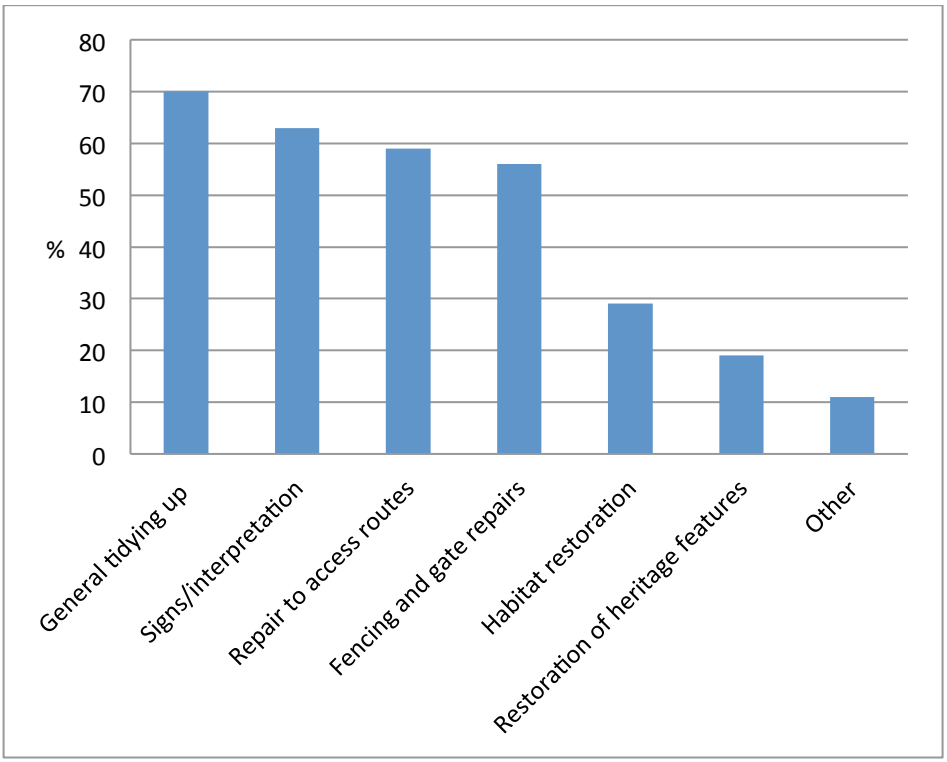
- At the Horseshoe and Rifle Range in Steyning, West Sussex, there was general erosion. It is considered that much of the habitat loss is not due to people but to lack of management, which they are now reversing.
- Kingley Vale NNR's ancient trees were damaged and destroyed and cannot be replaced.
- Lullington Heath NNR in East Sussex, where some lynchets have eroded as a result of crossing right of ways.
- At Mount Caburn NNR in East Sussex, sections of the Caburn Hill Fort SAM are eroded.
- Petersfield Museum with the Flora Twort Gallery and West Sussex Record Office experienced adverse treatment of artefacts and documents that cannot easily be reversed.
- West Dean Gardens and Estate have serious damage to tracks from 4X4 driving.

Examples of good visitor management practises that help to minimise the negative impact of visitors and restore damage were discussed during the consultations and are provided in the case studies.

3.6.3 Expenditure resulting from visitor impacts

The survey asked about the type of expenditure resulting from visitor issues. Exact costs were not asked for in the survey as this information was considered unlikely to be readily available to respondents. Also, such expenditure was likely to be part of a wider budget associated with the general management of the habitats or cultural features and/or site education and interpretation.

Figure 41: Types of expenditure incurred due to visitor pressure



The main points arising from this question were:

- The most frequently reported expenditure (by 70% (51) of respondents) resulting from visitor pressure related to general tidying up of sites after visitors have left
- Expenditure on signs/interpretation, repair to access routes and repair to fences and gates were frequently cited (63%/46, 59%/43 and 56%/41 respectively)
- Habitat restoration was an issue on 29% (21) of a range of sites including Nature Reserves and Country Parks.

3.6.4 Benefits of more visitors

A range of benefits arise from visitors to sites/attractions which mainly relate to social and economic outcomes:

- The majority (77%/50) of those who responded to the question said that they would like more visitors to their sites or attraction
- Sites not wishing to have more visitors were mainly those where no income was gained from visitors accessing the site.

Figure 42: Proportion of sites wanting to received more visitors

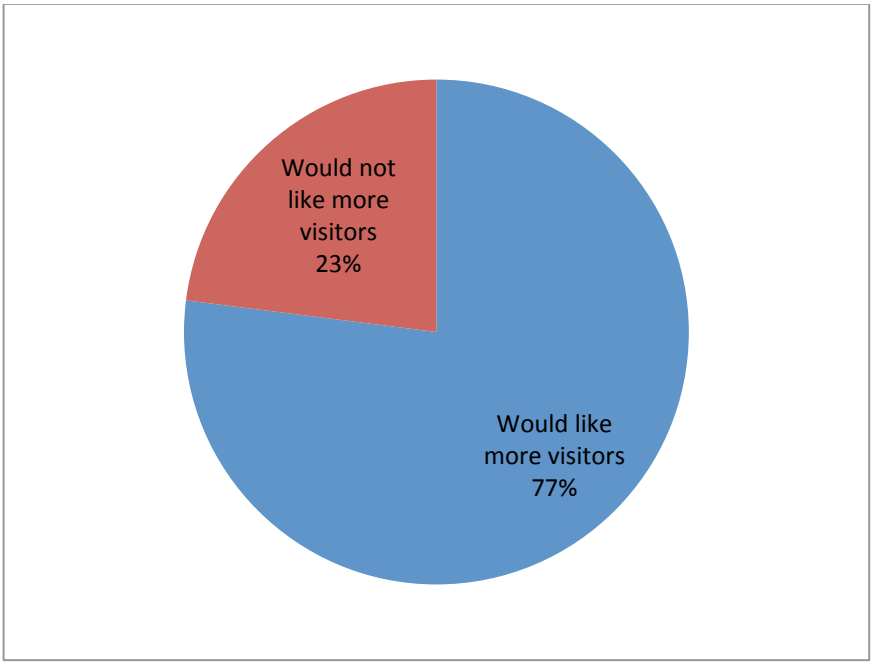
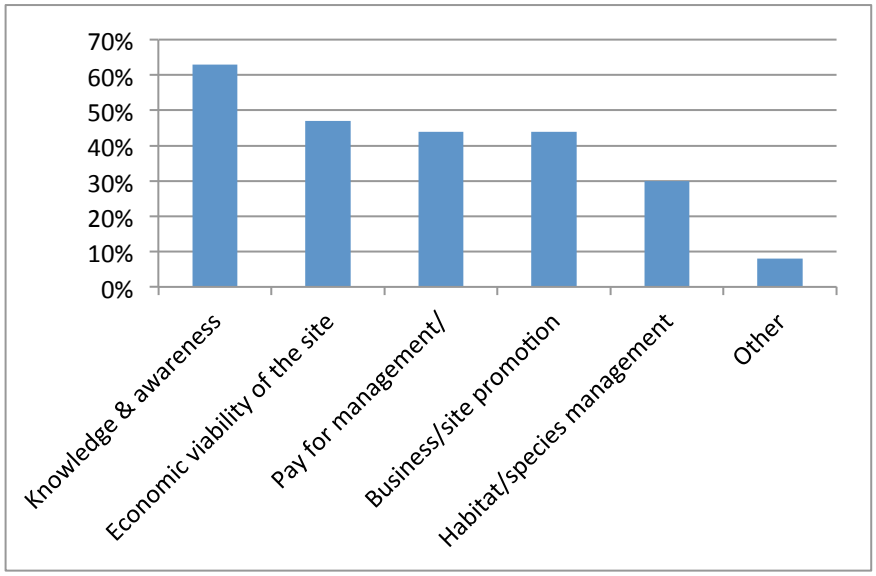


Figure 43: Benefits to sites from receiving more visitors



The reasons for wanting more visitors were:

- Increase in knowledge, awareness and education was the main reason for promoting sites to more visitors. This correlates with the responses to questions elsewhere in the survey where education was highlighted as a positive outcome of visitor presence on site
- Business viability and promotion were also key benefits from more visitors
- Paying for site management, restoration and habitat or species management were less significant reasons for wanting more visitors
- Other benefits of more visitors were for improved health and fitness and public enjoyment.

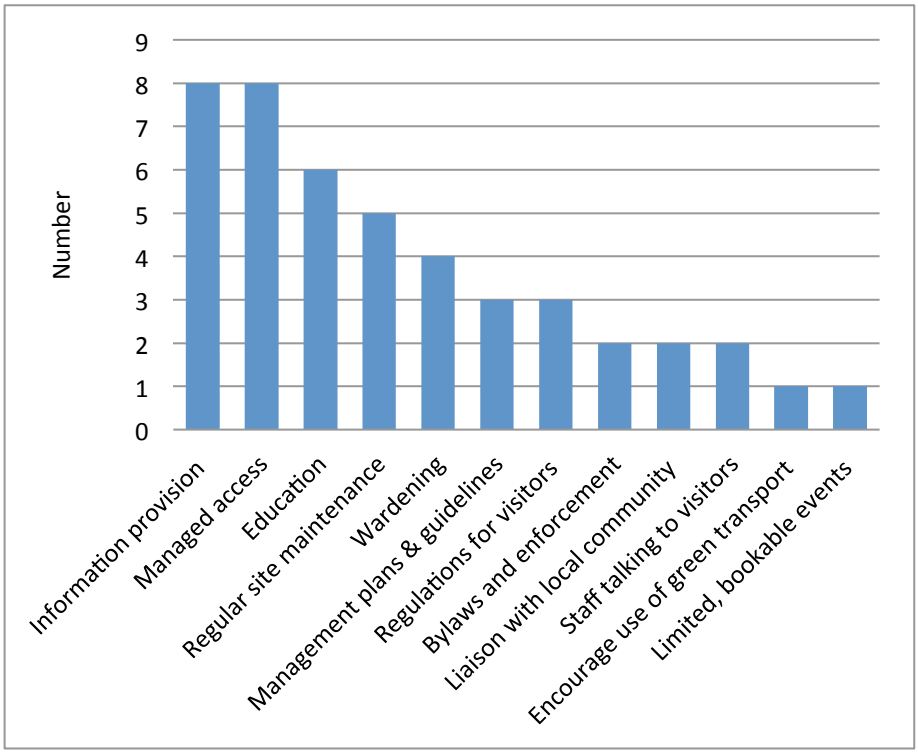
3.6.5 Good practice in managing visitor impacts on the environment

Respondents were asked what methods of good practice they have for managing visitor impacts on the environment.

A variety of good practice examples were given:

- Information provision and managed access were the most frequently cited examples of good practice for managing visitors on site
- Information provision covers welcome signs, other signage, leaflets and positive messages on websites

Figure 44: Good practice methods used by respondents to manage visitor impacts



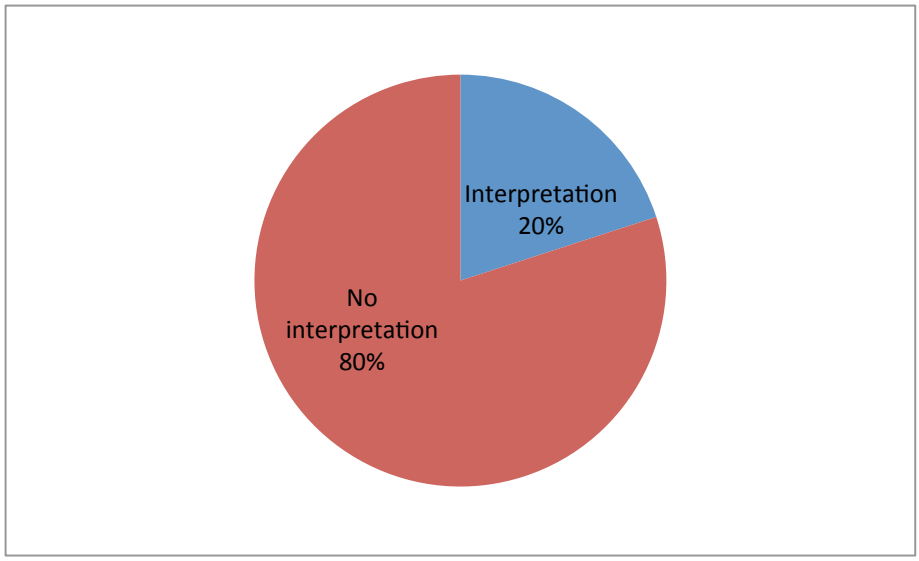
- Examples of managed access included clearly marked paths and controlled access routes
- Education was also favoured as good practice management and included guided walks and information sessions, which covered raising awareness of wildlife issues and care for the countryside
- On site management of visitors and impacts was also frequently cited; this covered taking action following regular site assessment, site maintenance and wardening
- Visitor management plans and guidelines were used by some sites
- Management of visitors to buildings and outdoor locations through tight regulations and enforcement of bylaws was described for some sites; controls for buildings included no high heels, buggies or photography which could result in damage heritage assets
- Other examples covered direct communication with local people as well as visitors.

The interviews undertaken for the case studies picked up on these examples and explored visitor management issues in more detail.

3.6.6 Interpretation about visitor impacts

Explaining the impact of visitors on sites through interpretation can be one means of educating people about care for heritage assets.

Figure 45: Proportion of sites that provided interpretation about the impact of visitors on sites



Only 20% (13) of those who responded to the question said that they had interpretation that covered visitor impacts.

These sites, that already deliver information to visitors about their own heritage, could provide an effective channel to help inform visitors about the impact their activities have on the Park.

3.6.7 Alternative sites

As a means of alleviating pressure from certain sites, alternative locations were proposed for sites that might be suitable for absorbing more visitors.

In general, Country Parks, with visitor facilities such as toilets and cafes, were suggested as alternatives to more sensitive wildlife sites, where no visitor facilities were available. Other suggested alternatives were about visitors being able to make more use of the surrounding area and similar attractions. Where managers owned more than one site, the opportunity to cross promote sites was suggested.

3.6.8 Number of visitors and sites capacity

The trends in numbers of visitors at sites/attractions are:

- Over a third of sites (23) receive between 5,000 and 50,000 visits each year
- Just over a quarter of sites (17) receive between 500 and 5,000 visits each year and just under a quarter (15) receive more than 50,000
- Not surprisingly, as the survey was targeted at known sites and attractions within the South Downs National Park, only a few sites (7) receive less than 500 visits each year.

Figure 46: Number of visitors to nature conservation and cultural heritage sites

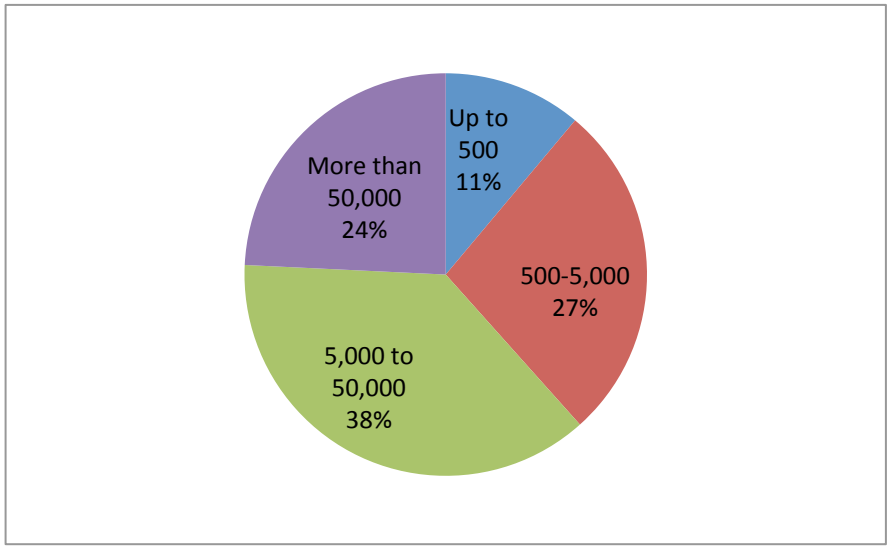
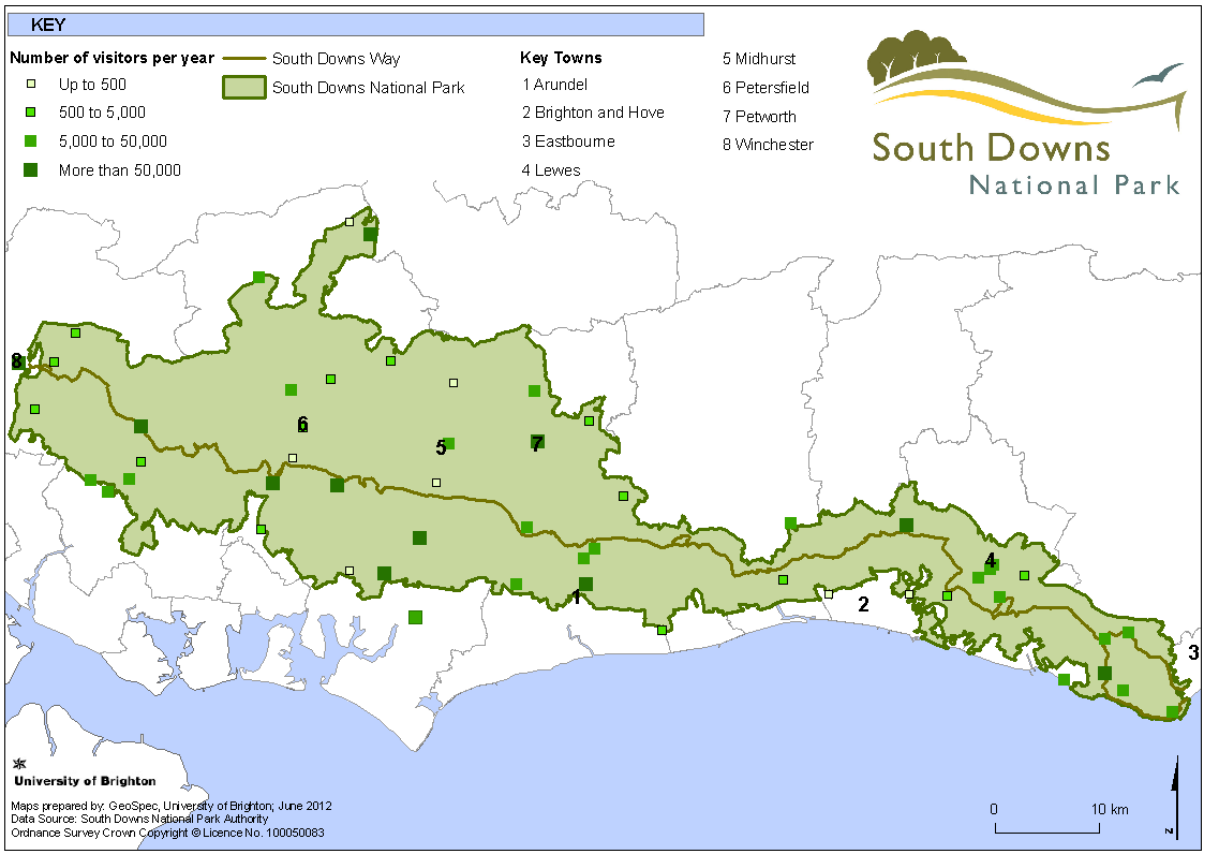
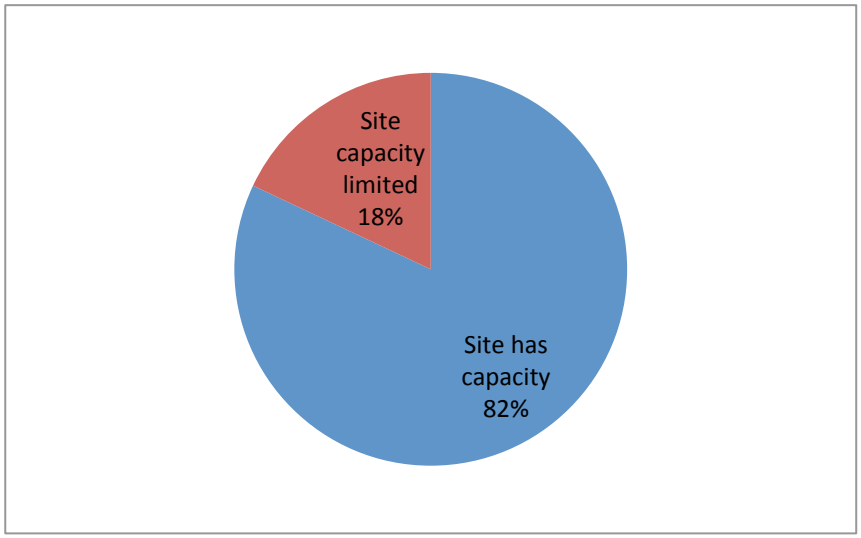


Figure 47: Number of visitors to sites



The 82% (46) of respondents that said that their sites were not over capacity could take more visitors.

Figure 48: Proportion of sites that have capacity to take more visitors



Seven sites felt that they did not have the capacity to take more visitors but were not yet over capacity. These were:

- Beacon Hill NNR, Hampshire
- Bentley Station Meadow, Hampshire
- Horseshoe and Rifle Range, Steyning, West Sussex
- Magdalen Hill Down, Hampshire
- Old Winchester Hill NNR, Hampshire
- Seven Sisters Country Park
- The Long Man of Wilmington

However three sites, Ditchling Beacon, Kingley Vale NNR and Woods Mill considered that they were over capacity and could not take more visitors.

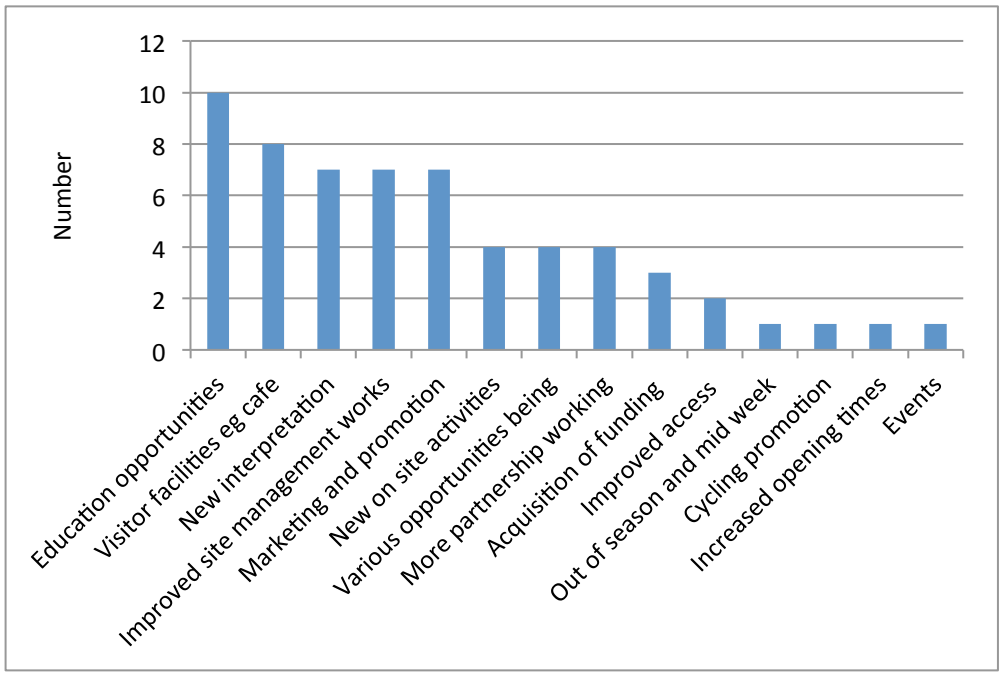
3.6.9 Time when activities occur

Most activities were reported to occur all year round. At a few sites, some activities occurred more frequently from spring to autumn such as guided walks and school visits. The only activity reported for winter only was sledging on chalk grassland sites.

3.6.10 Aspirations for developing sites

More than half (56%) of the sites had aspirations to develop their recreational services for visitors. Various themes emerged regarding the range of aspirations site managers had for their sites. The range of aspirations is illustrated in Figure 49 below.

Figure 49: Types of aspirations for improved visitor recreation services



The predominant aspiration is to develop and enhance educational opportunities at sites.

Many sites recognise the need for visitor facilities (toilets, cafes) to accommodate visitor needs, and also to attract more visitors.

There are various aspirations for an enhanced visitor experience through improved site management, new interpretation and development of activities.

Several sites wish to promote themselves to a wider audience and to out of season and mid week visitors.

The need for funding and planning permission to develop visitor facilities, were raised in relation to developing the attractions at these sites.

There is clearly capacity for these nature conservation and cultural heritage sites to absorb more visitors and extend the educational and interpretive work they already undertake with visitors.

3.7 Summary of Nature Conservation and Cultural Heritage Site survey

3.7.1 Summary of findings

For the second survey specific nature conservation and cultural heritage sites were selected that included a variety of different types of sites that had environmental and/or heritage protection designation or/and are heavily used for recreation.

A total of 73 sites responded with 57% (41) being Nature Conservation sites, 27% (20) being Cultural Heritage sites and 16% (12) comprising of Other Attractions. The sample was reasonably well distributed geographically and across the LCAs. A total of 6 sites responded to both surveys.

80% (59) of sites carried some form of nature conservation or built heritage designation, with SSSIs, Scheduled Monuments and Local Wildlife Sites each occurring in more than a quarter of sites. A quarter (26%/19) of sites had both nature conservation and built heritage designations of which most were Scheduled Monuments.

The visitor activities that occurred most frequently, at 81% (59) of sites, were learning and education. Walking took place at 78% (57) of sites and wildlife watching and photography were undertaken at 60% (44) of sites. Picnicking (49%/36), cycling (40%/29) and horse riding (32%/23) were all common activities. Aerial activities and off-road driving occurred at less than 10% (4 and 5 sites respectively) of sites.

The negative impacts of visitors could be defined as social or environmental or both. Litter (38) and dog fouling (37) were the main socio-economic negative impacts reported at over 50% of sites. The main environmental-only impacts were trampling (37%/27) and soil erosion (22%/18), with loss of wildlife habitats or species occurring at 16% (14) of sites. The species most affected were plants, invertebrates and birds. These negative impacts were reported most frequently on chalk downland and in woodland and were primarily caused by walking with and without dogs and cycling on and off trails.

The positive impacts of visitors are mostly socio-economic; education, health, income, employment. Environmental benefits arose from involving the public with volunteering, and increasing their knowledge and awareness, which supported conservation objectives. These positive outcomes were achieved where visitor activities were managed through guided walks or wildlife and photography.

Scheduled Monuments were located at around 30% (22) of sites. Unlike sites with other heritage designations, where good management offsets some of the negative impacts, visitor activities at Scheduled Monuments were considered to have either neutral or entirely negative impacts. Erosion and trampling caused by walkers, cyclists, horse riders and off-road drivers were the main problems. Scheduled Monuments are frequently found on nature conservation sites, where land is managed for nature and not built heritage, leaving Scheduled Monuments under managed and interpreted.

At historic houses, gardens and industrial heritage sites, walking, guided walks, photography and picnicking were all considered positive with minor negative impacts relating to erosion and litter.

Most of the negative impacts (72%/31) caused by visitors were thought to be reversible, with erosion of archaeological features/Scheduled Monuments being the main impact that was considered permanent.

General wear and tear and tidying up after visitors was the most frequent cost incurred by sites, together with signage and interpretation and repairs to gates, fences and access roads. Relatively little was spent on the restoration of habitats and heritage features.

The majority of sites (77%/50) were keen to attract more visitors in order to increase awareness and generate income. Those that weren't interested in more visitors were sites that didn't gain any income from providing visitor access.

Only 20% (13) of sites produced interpretation materials that explained the impact of visitors have on the environment and the National Park's natural and cultural heritage sites.

Good practise in managing visitor impacts on the environment included information provision, managing access, education and providing wardens. These management practises are explored more fully in the case studies.

A few sites proposed alternative sites to alleviate visitor pressure; these were mostly other sites under the same ownership or country parks with better visitor facilities.

Most sites (64%/40) attracted between 500 and 50,000 visits and there were only a few large attractions that brought in more than 50,000 visits per annum. In fact, 82% (46) of sites reported that they had capacity to take more visitors and 56% had aspirations to further develop their recreational services and facilities.

There appears to potential for the nature conservation and cultural heritage sites within the National Park to take some of the visitor pressure away from private land managers or to assist them with visitor management practises.

3.7.2 Summary of trends

The trends identified in the Nature Conservation and Cultural Heritage Sites survey were:

• The most frequently reported visitor activities were learning/education and walking	At 81%/59 and 78%/57 sites respectively
• Litter and dog fouling were considered to be the main negative impacts arising from visitors to sites	At 52%/38 and 51%/37 sites respectively
• Education was the main positive outcome of visitors to sites	81%/59 sites
• Overall the impact of most visitor activities on habitats was considered to be neutral	See Figure 29
• Walking with/without dogs, cycling/mountain biking off trails and off-road driving were the most frequently reported activities resulting in negative impacts across woodland, heathland, chalk downland habitats and other grassland habitat	See Figures 25, 28, 26 and 27
• Dog fouling and disturbance to wildlife were the most widely reported negative impacts resulting from walking with/without	See Sections 3.3.2, 3.3.3 and 3.3.5

dogs across woodland, heathland and chalk downland habitats	
• Damage to habitats/wildlife and erosion were the most widely reported negative impacts resulting from cycling/mountain biking off trails and off-road driving across woodland, heathland and chalk downland habitats	See Sections 3.3.2, 3.3.3 and 3.3.5
• Guided walks and wildlife watching/photography were the most frequently reported activities resulting in positive impacts across nearly all habitats: woodland, heathland, chalk downland, other grassland, arable, wetlands/marshland, formal garden/parkland	See Figures 25, 26, 27 and 28.
• Education, through raised awareness of wildlife and its conservation, was the most frequently reported impact arising from guided walks and wildlife watching/photography	See Sections 3.3.2 to 3.3.10
• Plants, birds and invertebrates were the main species groups to be adversely affected by visitor activities through trampling and general disturbance	See Figure 31
• Woodland and chalk downland were the most frequently occurring habitats on sites where species issues were reported	See Section 3.4
• Overall, impacts of visitor activities on cultural heritage features were positive or neutral, with the exception of Scheduled Monuments where the impact was either neutral or negative	See Figures 38 and 39
• Guided tours resulting in increased learning and enjoyment was the main positive impact reported for cultural heritage sites (other than Scheduled Monuments)	See Sections 3.5.3 to 3.5.7
• Erosion of archaeological features/Scheduled Monuments was the most reported impact resulting in permanent damage	See Sections 3.5.2
• General tidying up after visitors had left was the most frequently reported type of expenditure arising from visitor pressure	70%/51 sites

Trends in visitor management are difficult to discern due to the limited sample size, however, information provision and managed access were the most frequently cited examples of good practice in visitor management (see Figure 44).

There were no trends for negative impacts from activities in the following habitat types: arable, wetland/marshland, rivers/streams, coast/sea, or formal garden/parkland. Similarly, there were no trends in types of negative impacts arising from visitor activities on cultural heritage sites.

4. Consultations and Case Studies

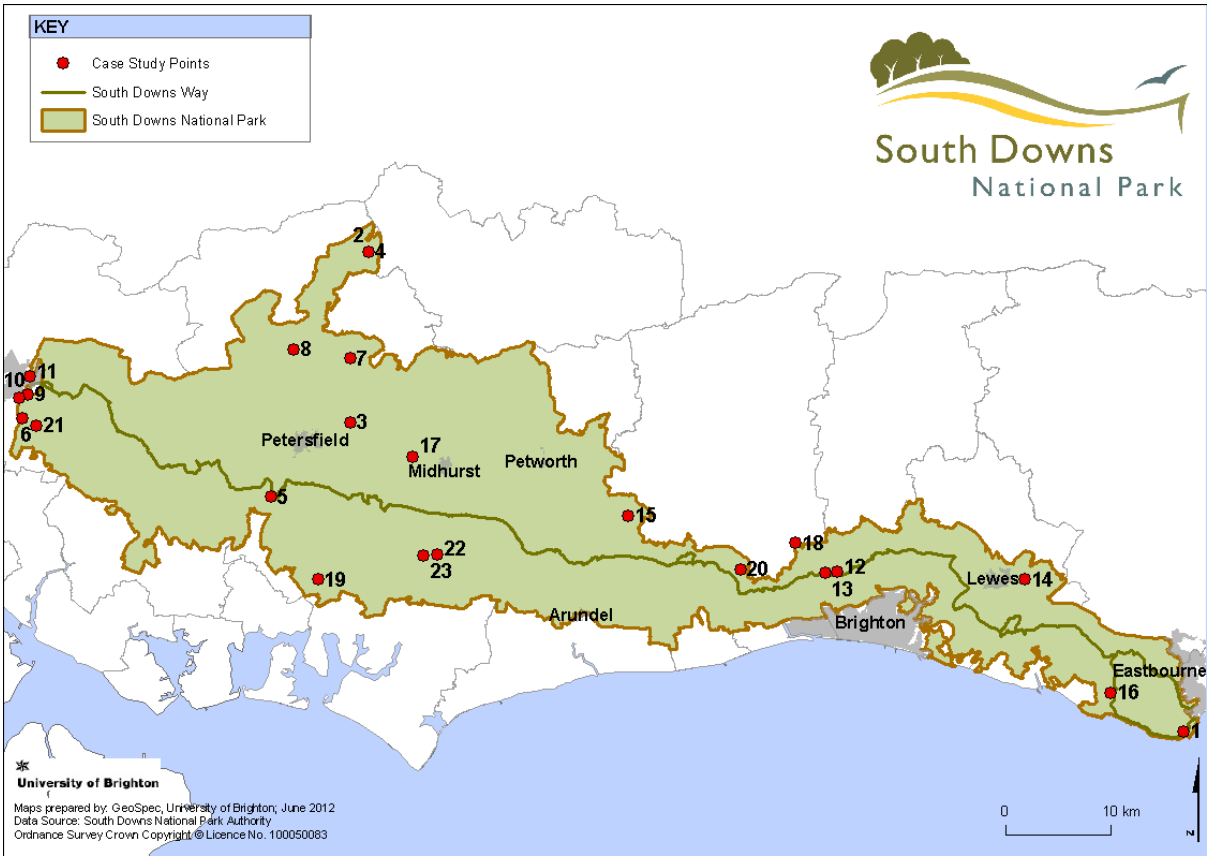
4.1 Case studies

One to one consultations by phone or in person were held with a range of organisations. Organisations contacted were well known for their site management expertise. Some selected for consultation managed several sites within the National Park, others had not responded to the survey, and yet others were considered to offer useful insights into visitor management.

Case studies were undertaken with the following organisations:

Site Manager	Site	Site number on map
Friends of Beachy Head	Beachy Head Countryside Centre	1
Forestry Commission	Alice Holt	2
	Rogate Wood	3
	West Walk	4
Hampshire County Council	Queen Elizabeth Country Park	5
Hampshire Wildlife Trust	Itchen Heritage Trail	6
	MOD land in NE Hants	7
	Noar Hill	8
	St Catherine's Hill	9
	St Cross's Meadow	10
	Winnall Moors	11
National Trust	Devil's Dyke	12
	Fulking Down	13
Natural England	Mount Caburn NNR	14
RSPB	Pulborough Brooks	15
East Sussex County Council	Seven Sisters Country Park	16
Sussex Wildlife Trust	Iping and Stedham Commons	17
	Woods Mill	18
Stansted Park	Stansted Park House and Estate	19
Steyning Downland Scheme	Horseshoe Rifle Range	20
Twyford Waterworks Trust	Twyford Waterworks	21
Weald and Downland Open Air Museum	Weald and Downland Open Air Museum	22
West Dean - The Edward James Foundation	West Dean Estate and Garden	23

Figure 50: Sites contacted for the Case Studies



The results of the case studies have been presented in relation to specific visitor impacts and highlight good visitor management practice for the environment.

Box 1. Forestry Commission approach to visitor management

Visitor issues covered:

- Sustainability
- Reporting of anti-social behaviour
- Poaching by horse riders
- Cycle tracks
- Picnicking and barbecues

Forestry Commission sites are managed for multiple objectives at the landscape scale. This means that not all objectives are achieved at every site but that all objectives are achieved across a suite of sites within the landscape. Objectives covering the three pillars of sustainable development (economic, social and environmental) are incorporated into a Forest Design Plan and stakeholders are consulted to determine the balance of the various needs. An integrated approach is then taken with management operations to take account of: the economic business requirements of the Forestry Commission and opportunities for local businesses; recreation use and potential future uses, including filming opportunities; environmental outcomes for the landscape, cultural features and species diversity; and overall cost-effectiveness. Thus the needs of, and opportunities for, visitors are one set of objectives that are taken into account when planning management works at a site.

Positives from negatives

The Forestry Commission is fully aware that the impacts of any visitor activity are not simply good or bad. Furthermore the Forestry Commission has experience of seeing positives arising from negative situations. For example, at Alice Holt a play area was set fire to the night before it was due to open. The area was cleared of debris and left as an open area. In time a wildlife rich meadow developed which otherwise would not have been created. So something of environmental benefit arose out of an initially damaging action.

Examples of good visitor management practice in relation to different activities

Walking: In woodland areas most people stick to the paths and few people stray away; also dogs generally stay close to their owners. Paths are made with a good walking surface appropriate for a woodland setting.

Dog walkers: People who regularly use the woods feed back information on any issues they come across such as fly tipping and anti-social behaviour. Some also have good wildlife knowledge and provide information on species they have spotted.

Horse riding: Permits are given for horse access. This enables horse riders to be contacted when woodland management works are underway to advise on avoiding particular routes. One of the main issues with horse riding is poaching of a muddy surface, which simply means that others are unable to use the path. At West Walk riders are allowed to go anywhere rather than being limited to particular tracks and as there are only a few riders it is not considered to be an issue. This gets round the problem of conflicts of space between different users of the same route.

Mountain biking: When people started mountain biking at Rogate Wood, the activity created cycle tracks. While this might be considered to damage wildlife habitat the Forestry Commission recognised the benefits to health. As cyclists followed the same tracks the impact was limited. However, liability was a concern and so the CTC, the national cyclists' organisation, became involved to encourage people to join and obtain insurance.

Examples of good practice in people engagement

Ranger service: Rangers are on site to talk to people. This can include talking to people about, for example, putting their barbecue on a slab to prevent the grass from being burnt.

Community Forum: At Alice Holt there is a Community Forum which provides an opportunity for building understanding and trust between all parties about the future for the site.

Box 2. Hampshire Wildlife Trust and general visitor management issues

Visitor issues covered:

- Litter
- Species disturbance
- Creation and erosion of informal footpaths
- Damage to river bankside vegetation

Benefits of visitors on sites

Sites in the Winchester area (Winnall Moors, St Cross Meadow and St Catherine's Hill) that receive a lot of visitors benefit from being self policing. Issues with trees, broken fences or livestock escaping, are reported by visitors. This is of enormous help when staff resources for checking sites are stretched.

Visitors and logistics

Drastic conservation work can lead to logistical problems with visitor management on site as there may be a need to move people away from an area for health and safety reasons. In addition, there may be opposition to conservation work, such as cutting down trees, where people do not understand the conservation reasons for doing so.

Visitors and litter

Litter is a particular problem when mixed with livestock. During the midsummer days 'party season' bottles and cans are left where livestock are grazing and in snowy winter, carrier bags and bin bags used for sledging and other litter is left behind after the snow has melted.

Species affected by disturbance

Otters will lie up in day time in scrub not far from where people are walking but presence of dogs will move the otters on.

Skylarks no longer breed at St Catherine's Hill. Research has shown that this attributable to dog disturbance. Dogs are also a contributory factor to the loss of breeding wading birds on the River Itchen.

Controlling permanent damage on sites

St Catherine's Hill: Informal paths on the ramparts of the early Iron Age hill fort at St Catherine's Hill have resulted in erosion and damage to the chalk grassland. Further damage has been minimised by the installation of steps, which help to guide footfall on the downland.

Photo: Steps on ramparts at St Catherine's Hill, Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust

Itchen Heritage Navigation Trail: Bankside vegetation can suffer long term negative effects from dogs and paddlers getting in and out of the water. Where erosion has been exacerbated by dogs, dog dips – made from oak sleepers – have been installed along the Itchen Heritage Navigation Trail to allow a controlled point of access and to minimise erosion.

Photo: Dog dip, Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust

Box 3. Sussex Wildlife Trust – Iping and Stedham Commons

Visitor issues covered:

- Dog fouling
- Bird disturbance
- Litter
- Fire risk
- Damage to Scheduled Monuments

The heathland expanse of Iping and Stedham Commons is an important area for wildlife, recognised through its notification as a Site of Special Scientific Interest and designation as a Local Nature Reserve. The site, which is managed by Sussex Wildlife Trust, is also registered Common Land and includes two Scheduled Monuments (Bronze Age burial grounds).

Visitor management and the heathland habitat

Presence of visitors has both negative and positive effects in managing the heathland for wildlife. Dog mess is an issue around the two car parks and further afield there is the potential for dogs to disturb ground nesting birds in summer. This is addressed by asking dog walkers to keep to paths during the bird breeding season. Litter is picked up regularly to keep the site tidy and encourage people not to drop litter. Fire is a high risk factor particularly during very dry weather. Last year, rather than close the site during the very dry spring it was decided to keep the site open on the basis that the more people on site the more likelihood of a fire being reported. Visitors, along with volunteers, help to oversee conditions on the site and report back on site issues, such as problems with litter.

Raising awareness of the wildlife importance of the heathland is achieved through interpretation boards, leaflets, guided walks and talks. The leaflet covers the impact of dogs on ground nesting birds and responsible dog walking is covered during talks. A telephone

app is being developed to provide information and take visitors on a guided walk. In addition, a dog day event is being planned for May at Woolbeding Gardens with the National Trust and National Park Authority with the idea of attracting dog owners and providing an opportunity to raise awareness of dogs and the countryside.

Visitor management and Scheduled Monuments

The two Bronze Age burial grounds are managed as part of the site complex. To prevent horse riders from riding over and causing damage to one of the Scheduled Monuments, branches are placed in the way as a means of encourage riders to keep to the paths. The other monument, which is located at the top of a hill, is used as a viewing point. Whilst damage is not considered severe, this has resulted in an eroded path and the occasional fire. Important aspects of the site, including the Scheduled Monuments, are pointed out on guided walks, although the focus tends to be on the wildlife.

Box 4. Hampshire Wildlife Trust – Noar Hill

Visitor issues covered:

- Livestock worrying
- Dog fouling
- Visitor behaviour

Noar Hill is a secluded, 20 ha species rich chalk grassland site important for orchids and butterflies. Although there isn't a car park, there is a good network of footpaths in the area and the site is a popular location for visitors who like to picnic there in good weather. As the site is quite fragile it can easily be damaged though insensitive use.

One of the main issues relates to dogs which cause disturbance to livestock and fouling results in increased nutrient levels. Signs request dogs to be kept under control especially during the summer months when the site is grazed. In the past grazing took place during winter however a couple of sheep were badly attacked by dogs and so had to be put down. Despite the signs, the need to keep dogs under control is not always respected.

Other issues relate to the large volumes of people who climb up and down the slopes and inadvertently sit on orchids. To help address the various issues volunteer wardens are on site at weekends to talk to people and manage visitor behaviour through education. Guided walks also provide an opportunity, not only to show features of interest at different times of year, but also to explain the impact of visitor behaviour.

There is no desire to exclude people from Noar Hill, however more evidence is needed on the numbers of people using the sites and the peak times of activity so that the site can be better managed. Hampshire Wildlife Trust recognises that there is a fine balance between managing sites for wildlife and visitor enjoyment. The natural environment is there to be enjoyed and being able to access special places helps gain public support for the nature conservation value of these sites.

Box 5. Hampshire Wildlife Trust – Grazing for Wildlife Project

Visitor issue covered:

- Dog fouling

Working with the Ministry of Defence (MOD), the Hampshire Wildlife Trust has an agreement to graze and restore heathland in North East Hampshire. One of the main concerns to the MOD is that of dogs, especially dog fouling. Not only is it particularly unpleasant for the army when training and crawling through dog mess, but uncontrolled dogs disturb ground nesting birds and livestock. Volunteer lookers go out to check the cattle that are grazing the heathland; while there, they set a good example and have the opportunity to chat to people about dog behaviour.

Box 6. Stansted Park

Visitor issues covered:

- Dog fouling
- Livestock worrying
- Litter
- Health and safety in relation to tree felling
- Provisions for cyclists

The house and estate of Stansted Park is open to the public between April and September.

Use of signs in the grounds

The grounds include forest and farmland with permissive access routes. People walking in restricted areas, dog fouling and litter are the main issues associated with visitors; dogs chasing deer and sheep worrying are also of concern. The environmental impact of visitors is managed by having maps and signs showing where people can and cannot go and asking people to keep dogs in leads. The most effective signs are those which say that access is restricted due to it being a conservation area. However, the need for people to exercise their dogs is recognised and this is accommodated by having information available to show where people can go with dogs. Generally visitors respond to signs if they know the reason why certain areas are shut, for example because of tree felling. Likewise horse riders are made aware in advance if an event is happening so that they are aware of increased traffic coming in and out of the site.

Movement of visitors through the house

There is a high focus on education for visitors to the house. Other than general wear and tear, there are no real impacts of visitors on the cultural heritage. People move through the house via a set visitor route with minimal barriers to avoid detracting from the overall appearance; instead people are restricted from moving to certain areas by strategically placed objects. In areas of free flow volunteers are on hand to guide and talk to people. Overall, people appreciate and respect the way the house is set out.

Cycle provision

Stansted Park is a popular destination for walkers and cyclists. There is no public transport to the site and so most people arrive by car. However for those who do cycle a new cycle park has been built which includes a point for recharging electrical bikes.

Box 7. Hampshire Wildlife Trust – Dogs on reserves project

Visitor issue covered:

- Dog related issues

As a means of tackling the problems with dogs on nature reserves, the Hampshire Wildlife Trust has started a project to identify the hotspots and tackle the issues. A range of initiatives has been developed on four pilot sites, one being St Catherine's Hill, to educate dog walkers in responsible dog walking. These initiatives include: new signage that communicates in a positive way rather being a list of 'don'ts'; giving the reasons why dogs must be put on leads; and producing inviting artwork that encourages people to read and follow information provided. Hampshire Wildlife Trust intends to roll out good practice across all of its reserves and recruit volunteer 'dog walker ambassadors' to talk to dog walkers and to give out leaflets and dog waste bags.

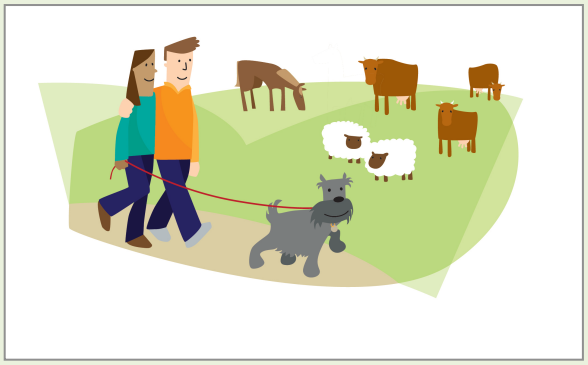


Illustration: Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust

Box 8. Hampshire Wildlife Trust – Green infrastructure strategies

Visitor issue covered:

- Dog walking

As many Local Authorities no longer allow dogs in certain playgrounds and parks, particularly those used by children, people are seeking alternative locations to exercise their dogs and throw a ball around. Thus the problem is moved from one location to another. As this can then cause problems in areas being managed specifically for wildlife, the Hampshire Wildlife Trust is promoting the concept of attractive areas for dog walking with special facilities, such as dog washing areas, to be included within Local Authority Green Infrastructure Strategies.

Box 9. Hampshire Wildlife Trust – Winnall Moors

Visitor issues covered:

- Anti-social behaviour
- Public access
- Interpretation

Zoning visitor access and installation of infrastructure to enhance the visitor experience has been used at Winnall Moors to control anti-social use that was previously associated with the site. Located close to Winchester, the site is popular place for visitors. Public access is available across a fifth of this large nature reserve, while in the rest of the site there is controlled access in the form of supervised visits or guided walks. HLF funding is being used to demonstrate best practice in visitor management in a way that is compatible with the needs of wildlife. A circular board walk has transformed the public access area along with benches and a pond dipping platform. Interpretation is used to celebrate the positive attributes of the site. Where activities are excluded (such as no fishing or no cycling), small, universally recognisable signs are used as post markers.

Photo: Board walk at Winnall Moors, Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust

Box 10. RSPB – Pulborough Brooks

Visitor issues covered:

- Access
- Species disturbance
- Education
- Scheduled Monuments

Pulborough Brooks is a predominantly wetland site that also contains a variety of other habitats including woodland, heathland and grassland. It's national and international importance for its habitats and bird life is recognised through its designation as a Site of Special Scientific Interest, Special Protection Area and Ramsar site. It also contains a round barrow, a Scheduled Monument.

Good practice – trails and personal communication

Due to the nature of the site and sensitivity of the wildlife visitors are restricted on where they can go and so movement around the site is directed along nature trails. Some species, such as adders, are easily disturbed; to avoid disturbance but at the same time inspire people about wildlife, volunteers talk about and point out wildlife to people.

While visitors are interested in wildlife not all are aware what the RSPB is aiming to achieve

at Pulborough Brooks. The thrust of visitor management in relation to the environment is therefore through education. Information is provided in the form of written material and face-to-face communication. Personal contact is seen as the best way of getting information across to visitors, especially as there is a tendency for people not to read signs. At Pulborough Brooks there is a group of 'Hides and Trails people', volunteers who talk to visitors about what to see on site.

Visitor management and Scheduled Monuments

The round barrow is managed as part of the reserve. As it is covered with vegetation, the trees are cut and the area around it managed sensitively. While there is public access to the barrow, the public do not cause harm as paths go around the barrow. The RSPB is keen provide an education opportunity and explain the history of the heathland where the barrow is located.

Box 11. National Trust – Devil's Dyke

Visitor issues covered:

- Disturbance to wildlife
- Fly tipping
- Controlling visitor access

Management of visitor activities and impacts

Walkers and dogs: The major recreation impact is from walkers and dogs; dogs cause more disturbance to wildlife than any of the other activities.

Car parks: Around the car park the vegetation is different to the rest of the hill due to heavy trampling. However as people tend not to walk far from their cars, the impact is localised.

Picnicking: Barbeques are popular in summer and if placed on the ground instead of a stand the grass can die and an erosion scar form by the wind blowing and creating a hollow.

Fly tipping: As fly tipping is more likely to occur if a place looks abandoned, and well managed site are generally better respected, the site is maintained by fencing, grazing and litter picking.

Aerial activities: Devil's Dyke is a popular spot for hang gliding, paragliding and model glider flying. These activities are allowed on the National Trust land as the location lends itself to these activities with minimal impact on the chalk grassland other than a few more people walking on the area. Flyers unload from the main car park at the top of the hill and fly from there. If hang gliders and paragliders land at the bottom of the hill they can easily be picked up by car.

Good practice: creating desire lines

Paths are cleared and site lines created to attract the attention and encourage visitors along particular routes. Paths are managed at a higher standard that other routes to steer people in certain directions and concentrate disturbance in a few areas. As people tend to walk away from bushes and trees, these are cut back along the sides of paths to avoid erosion scars from developing around the path edge. Trails and leaflets cover different walks that people can do and guided walks introduce visitors to a series of paths which they then use again on subsequent visits.

Box 12. National Trust and creating desire lines at Fulking Downs

Visitor issues covered:

- Visitor access routes
- Scheduled Monuments

Desire lines can be created to encourage people to move along a particular route. When an erosion scar developed on the tumuli from being walked over, the vegetation was allowed to grow up over it. A sign was erected to say that it was a Bronze Age burial ground and a path was mowed around it to encourage people in a particular direction.

Box 13. Weald and Downland Open Air Museum

Visitor issues covered:

- Visitor access routes
- Car parking

Visitor pressures

The Weald and Downland Open Air Museum experiences high visitor numbers but low visitor pressure. There is not a huge impact on the heritage buildings other than general wear and tear mainly to floors through footfall and to walls from people rubbing against them. Dogs are encouraged and do not cause problems with fouling or being a nuisance to other visitors. Litter is minimal.

Good practice for managing visitors on site

Physical features, such as fences and obstacles, are used to direct people around the site to reach the main body of buildings and prevent visitors from creating their own routes from one point to another and affecting the visual layout of the site.

Developing alternative means of transport to the museum

The Weald and Downland Open Air Museum main car parks have been built into the hillside to retain and attractive environment. Due to its location, north of Chichester, there is no rail transport and buses are infrequent. Instead the Open Air Museum would like to work with partners on developing a cycling route to the site.

Box 14. Twyford Waterworks

Visitor issues covered:

- Visitor access
- Scheduled Monument

Twyford Waterworks is a Scheduled Monument located close to Winchester. This industrial heritage site has received considerable investment for its restoration from the Heritage Lottery Fund and Southern Water. On Open Days most of the site is freely available to explore. Trails around the waterworks site provide information on the social history of area, with the story of water extraction and softening. The site includes 3 ha of chalk grassland, which is managed for wildlife, and a small nature trail that skirts the perimeter of the grassland to avoid effects of trampling. Located close to the boundary of the National Park, Twyford Waterworks is keen to develop further as a visitor location and act as a discovery area for the National Park. Currently the site is only open to the public on certain days.

Box 15. West Dean Gardens and Estate

Visitor issue covered:

- Visitor access

West Dean Estate covers 2,590 ha and includes 22 miles of public rights of way. Included within the estate are the separately managed Weald and Downland Open Air Museum, Kingley Vale National Nature Reserve and West Dean Woods Nature Reserve. West Dean Gardens are open to the public and receive 70,000 visits per annum.

Use of signs

Helpful signing is used to encourage visitors in particular directions and to discourage from accessing more sensitive areas. For example, information is provided about an area containing wild daffodils and the reasons for access being restricted as a means of encouraging people to view the area from a vantage point instead.

Box 16. Seven Sisters Country Park

Visitor issues covered:

- Visitor behaviour
- Beach litter
- Bird disturbance

Seven Sisters Country Park with its chalk grassland, river valley and coastal location is a popular spot for visitors partaking in a variety of activities.

Good practice with visitor management

Personal communication: Presence of rangers and volunteers working on site demonstrates that the site is cared for and doesn't just look after itself. Rangers and volunteers are also available to talk to the public about the site and their work.

Beach cleaning events: Running beach cleaning events, as part of Beachwatch and the National Litter Survey, not only clears the beach but also helps make people more aware of the problem of marine litter.

Protecting ground nesting bird areas: Special measures are taken during the redshank nesting season. Nesting areas are fenced off and there are signs to explain the reason for this, what the issues are with dogs and what the species requires in terms of its habitat. People generally respect requests when explanations are given.

Box 17. Steyning Downland Scheme at Horseshoe Rifle Range

Visitor issues covered:

- Mountain biking
- Helicopter use

The 73 ha of chalk downland, on part of the Wiston Estate, next to Steyning is heavily used by the local community and is a hang out space for young people.

Catering for community enjoyment

The Steyning Downland Scheme, established in 2007, invites the community to be involved in conservation, recreation and education. The focus is on working with people to cater for their enjoyment and to ensure that the area is used responsibly and treated with respect. As an example, mountain bikers had built some well constructed jumps, but over a badger sett. Rather than simply push people away from the area, the mountain bikers were helped to pursue their sport in a way that did not affect the environment of the site by developing a specific biking area. So the scheme works with the community for the benefit of everyone's needs.

The site is also used by the Air Training Corps which takes off and lands helicopters about three or four times per year. In exchange for using the site, the Steyning Downland Scheme is supplied with photographs of the site.

Box 18. Queen Elizabeth Country Park

Visitor issue covered:

- Speed flying

As Queen Elizabeth Country Park is a public open space, people assume that they can try out their new hobby there. However many new activities are not appropriate to the Country Park and so rangers are on hand to deal with any issues as they arise.

One of the latest activities, causing a negative effect on the site, is speed flying where individuals launch themselves from the steep scarp slope for a straight 'flight' to the bottom and then walk back up the hill. Speed flying uses a speed flyer (also known as a speed glider or speed wing) that is smaller than a paraglider and is faster than paragliding.

Box 19. Beachy Head Countryside Centre

Visitor issues covered:

- Information provision
- Hang gliding and paragliding

Beachy Head is a popular destination for visitors and is referred to as a Gateway to the South Downs National Park. The Centre, which is open for seven months of the year, provides information and interactive displays relating to the natural and cultural heritage of Beachy Head including the Lighthouse. The Countryside Centre is run by volunteers whose focus is on the centre itself rather than outside.

Hang gliding and paragliding are permitted at Beachy Head and proceed without damage to the chalk grassland.

Box 20. Natural England and Mount Caburn National Nature Reserve

Visitor issues covered:

- Opinions of local residents
- Hang gliding and paragliding

Community liaison

It is Natural England Policy to be more open and active in engaging with local communities. Rather than holding events on Castle Hill and Mount Caburn National Nature Reserves, which might attract a wide range of people but not necessarily those living nearby, the decision was taken to attend events, such as village fetes, held by the local community instead. By their very nature village events are attended by the community, thereby providing the opportunity to talk to local people and hear their views. Having a stand at one of these events enables local people to learn more about the National Nature Reserve on their doorstep and for reserve staff to learn about the reserve from people living nearby. Getting to know the local community helps build relationships and also results in more eyes and ears caring for the reserve.

Aerial activities

Hang gliding is not permitted at Mount Caburn. It is not the activity itself that is the issue but everything else that is associated with the activity; for example, hang gliders would need a 4x4 and trailer to reach a launch site.

Paragliding is permitted at Mount Caburn, as a person can walk to the launch site with everything on their back. There is therefore no additional impact on the site due to the activity.

4.2 Summary of good practice in managing visitor impacts

4.2.1 Visitor impacts on the environment

The impact of any visitor activity on the environment can be both positive and negative. This is recognised by the Forestry Commission (Box 1) which also takes the view of seeking the positive from any negative situation. Following a fire to a newly installed play area at Alice Holt, the area was cleared and left. In time, a wildlife rich meadow developed which otherwise would not have been created.

4.2.2 Benefits for the environment from visitor presence

Visitors gain health and well-being benefits from being outside enjoying the natural environment. Furthermore the environment benefits from presence of visitors in that there are people around who report issues, such as fires, issues with livestock and concerns about the general fabric of a site. In this way visitors contribute to the overseeing and management of a site, which is much appreciated by organisations such as the Forestry Commission (Box 1), Hampshire Wildlife Trust (Box 2) and Sussex Wildlife Trust (Box 3). In addition, some visitors have extensive wildlife knowledge and report species that are new to sites (Box 1).

4.2.3 Dog walking

The main issue raised through the two surveys and in the case studies related to uncontrolled dogs. Dogs can cause disturbance to wildlife, such as ground nesting birds and otters (Boxes 2 and 3), reducing the suitability of habitats for these species and decreasing breeding success.

Dog disturbance to livestock (Boxes 4, 5 and 6) means that it can be difficult to manage sites appropriately for wildlife. In extreme cases dog attacks on livestock can result in animals being killed or having to be put down, as happened at Noar Hill (Box 4). Livestock grazing is critical for the conservation management of grassland and heathland sites (Box 5). Furthermore, profit from the sale of stock can be ploughed back in to the cost of managing sites, but if grazing becomes impossible then this source of income can be lost.

If left, dog mess results in nutrient enrichment (Box 4) conducive to the growth of coarse species, such as nettles, displacing plants which favour the nutrient poor soils of chalk grasslands and heathlands. Dog fouling is also unpleasant for others using a site, for example with army training on MOD land (Box 5).

Various initiatives have been established to advise dog walkers of the issues associated with dogs. Various sites have signs requesting that dogs are kept under control, for example at Noar Hill (Box 4) and Stansted Park (Box 6). Leaflets covering the impact of dogs on ground nesting birds are provided for dog walkers at Iping and Stedham Commons; in addition responsible dog walking is covered during talks to the local community groups (Box 3). Where rangers or volunteers are present on sites, advice can be given on responsible dog walking. At Noar Hill, wardens are on site at weekends to talk to visitors (Box 4). As part of the Hampshire Wildlife Trust Grazing for Wildlife Project volunteer lookers go out on site to check the cattle and at the same time talk to visitors about keeping dogs on leads (Box 5).

To address concerns with dog walking, the Hampshire Wildlife Trust has embarked on a 'Dogs on reserves project' (Box 7). The purpose of the project is to educate dog walkers in responsible dog walking. New signage has been developed with attractive artwork to encourage people to read it. The communication is positive and explains the reasons why dogs should be kept under control and on leads. The Trust is also recruiting 'dog walker ambassadors' to talk to dog walkers and give out leaflets and dog waste bags.

Another initiative involves the construction of 'dog dips' at intervals along the bank of a river to address the problem of permanent bank erosion from continued access to the water (Box 2). Rather than stopping dogs from accessing rivers the dog dips enable not just dogs, but also paddlers, to get in and out of the river without damaging bankside vegetation.

Pressure is being put on wildlife sites for dog walking, especially those close to urban areas, as Local Authorities have banned dogs from many playgrounds and parks. Thus a problem in one area is simply being moved to another location. As dogs can create problems with managing sites for wildlife and there is an obvious requirement to cater for dog walking, the Hampshire Wildlife Trust is promoting the need for special dog walking areas to be included within Local Authority Green Infrastructure Strategies (Box 8).

4.2.4 Walking

People wandering away from designated public rights of way was a key concern raised in the Land Managers Survey. At some visitor sites and attractions people are allowed to move freely around while at others visitors are encouraged to move along specific routes. Sites that cater for visitors manage movement of people in a variety of ways.

At Winnall Moors (Box 9) visitor access is restricted to a fifth of the site enabling wildlife to thrive undisturbed in the remainder. A boardwalk enables visitors to move through the site and passes by key viewing areas. Nature trails are used to guide people around Pulborough Brooks (Box 10) enabling people to view and enjoy wildlife without disturbing species, such as adders. Education is a key factor in raising awareness of wildlife.

The National Trust creates desire lines to encourage movement of people in particular directions (Box 11). Paths are cleared and site lines created to encourage visitors along particular routes. As people move away from trees or shrubs, where they line a route they are cut back to prevent creation of a wider and eroded footpath edge. Desire lines can also be used to manage movement of people away from sensitive structures, such as tumuli (Box 12).

At the Weald and Downland Open Air Museum visitors have been known to create their own route from one point to another, via the shortest distance, to visit the historic buildings. These eroded paths detract from the layout and appearance of the site and so physical features, such as fences and obstacles, are used to direct people around the site (Box 13). Set trails are also set out at Twyford Waterworks to guide people around the site and avoid areas sensitive for wildlife (Box 14).

Pressure of visitors walking particular routes can result in erosion of informal paths on Scheduled Monuments (Boxes 2 and 3). At St Catherine's Hill, steps have been installed on the ramparts of the Iron Age hill fort to minimise further damage and erosion of the chalk grassland (Box 2). To deter visitors from walking over the round barrow within the heathland at Pulborough Brooks, paths are created around the monument to guide footfall (Box 10).

Signs are used to guide people around many sites and to encourage people to avoid accessing certain areas (Boxes 6 and 15). This may be due to the presence of wildlife

sensitive to disturbance such as the wild daffodil colony as West Dean (Box 15) or because forestry or other management operations are in progress (Box 6).

Presence of wardens, rangers and volunteers, for example at Noar Hill, Pulborough Brooks and Seven Sisters Country Park, enables personal communication with visitors about the site and their work (Boxes 4, 10 and 16). Guided walks not only provide a means of telling people about a site but also introduce visitors to a series of paths, for example at Devil's Dyke, which they then use again on subsequent visits (Box 11).

At Stansted House (Box 6) visitors move through the house via a set route and are restricted from moving to certain areas by strategically placed objects. Again, volunteers are available to guide and talk to people as they move through the house.

4.2.5 Cycling and mountain biking

Cycling is a popular activity and the needs of cyclists are recognised, for example, with cycle park provision at Stansted Park (Box 6).

Mountain biking can be an issue where cyclists set their own routes and conflict with the conservation management of a site. The principle taken by the Forestry Commission and the Steyning Downland Scheme has been to work with the mountain bikers and provide for their needs (Boxes 1 and 17). A cycle route was established at Rogate Wood and due to concerns with liability, the Forestry Commission started working with the CTC, the national cyclists' organisation, to encourage mountain bikers to join a formalised club and obtain insurance (Box 1). On the chalk grassland site at Horseshoe Rifle Range, near Steyning, mountain bikers had constructed jumps over a badger sett (Box 17). As the location for the activity was not suitable the Steyning Downland Scheme worked with the cyclists to create a specific course in an area that did not harm the local wildlife and habitat.

4.2.6 Horse riding

Horse riding does not tend to have a huge environmental impact; the main issues that tend to arise are conflicts with other users as identified in the Land Managers Survey. In wet conditions, horse riding can result in poaching of a muddy surface which makes the path unsuitable for other users. To avoid this situation and resolve conflicts of interest between different users, as there are only a few horse riders at West Walk they are allowed to go anywhere (Box 1).

Horse riding can be damaging to historic features in the landscape. At Iping and Stedham Commons horse riders were causing damage to a Bronze Age burial ground by riding over it. The problem was overcome by strategically placing branches in the way as a means of encouraging riders to keep to the paths (Box 3).

Needs of horses and riders are taken into account with the management of sites. Issuing of permits by the Forestry Commission enables horse riders to be contacted when woodland management works are underway to advise them about avoiding particular routes (Box 1). At Stansted Park horse riders are made aware in advance if an event is happening so that they are aware of increased traffic coming in and out of the site (Box 6).

4.2.7 Picnicking

Picnicking can be an issue if people do not take their litter away. Barbecues can also be a problem if the barbecue sits directly on the ground as this causes the vegetation to be burnt. This is particularly a concern at Devil's Dyke where, if the grass under the barbecue dies and the wind blows, a hollow erosion scar develops (Box 11). Presence of rangers on site can help to encourage people to place their barbecue on a stand or slab (Box 1).

4.2.8 Litter and fly tipping

As well as detracting visually from the landscape, litter is a problem when mixed with livestock. Animals can inadvertently cut themselves on sharp objects, get tangled or ingest litter. The amount of litter tends to be greater at particular times of the year (Box 2). During the summer, and especially during the midsummer 'party season', bottles and cans are left where livestock are grazing. If there is snow in winter, carrier bags, bin bags and other items used for sledging is left behind after the snow has melted.

Marine litter arises not just from people dropping litter on the beach but also from discard at sea. However, beach cleaning events can help to raise awareness of litter problems (Box 16).

Fly tipping can occur if a site appears abandoned. Presence of wardens, rangers and volunteers shows that a site is being cared for (Box 11).

4.2.9 Grassboarding and Zorbing

Activities such as grassboarding and zorbing are not permitted and so do not arise as issues on nature reserves or wildlife sites; they only tend to occur where facilities are set up to cater for the activity. Where land based activities, that are inappropriate to the site, do occur rangers tackle the issue, for example at Queen Elizabeth Country Park (Box 18).

4.2.10 Hang gliding, paragliding and other aerial activities

Hang gliding and paragliding are only permitted where clubs have permission from the land owner. This needs to be where the layout of the land and access by car suits the activity with minimal adverse impact on the surroundings. Devil's Dyke lends itself to these activities with minimal impact on the chalk grassland other than a few more people walking on the area (Box 11). Hang gliders and paragliders unload from the main car park at the top of the hill and fly from there. Likewise, Beachy Head, which has good access, is also a suitable location for hang gliding and paragliding (Box 19).

Paragliding, but not hang gliding, is permitted at Mount Caburn National Nature Reserve. While hang gliders require a vehicle and trailer to carry their gear to a launch site, paragliders can carry everything on their back and so can access launch sites by foot (Box 20).

The newer activity of speed flying is having a negative impact at Queen Elizabeth Country Park (Box 18). Unlike paragliding, speed flying is faster and the flight is generally closer to the ground.

In keeping with the community use of the chalk grassland site at Horseshoe Rifle Range, helicopters, used by the Air Training Corps, are permitted to take off and land (Box 17).

4.2.11 Community liaison

Liaison with the people living close to sites and attractions has a range of benefits. The Forestry Commission consults stakeholders on plans for sites to gain the views and input of local people (Box 1). The Community Forum at Alice Holt also provides an opportunity for building understanding and trust between the Forestry Commission, users and neighbours about proposals and management for the site.

Building relationships with the local community is achieved by Natural England through attending village events. Rather than trying to talk to local people by getting them to come to an event on a nature reserve, Natural England have found it to be more effective to have a stand at local events, such as village fetes, attended by the local community (Box 20). This provides the opportunity to talk about the wildlife, features and management of reserves, to hear their views and any concerns about visitors and to gain more volunteer support.

5. Conclusions and Recommendations

5.1 Conclusions

5.1.1 Impacts are localised

Both surveys indicate that most issues caused by visitors are localised and therefore do not appear to cause an overall detrimental impact on the landscape of the National Park. However the relatively small sample sizes, particularly for the Land Managers' survey, means that the data should not be considered as representative of all sites across the Park.

Natural and cultural heritage sites are generally organised so that the manager can deal directly with impacts caused by visitors, however for agricultural land visitor management is not usually the main focus. With nearly thee quarters of landowners (54) reporting that visitors cause issues with the management of their land, visitor activity across the National Park is clearly a key issue that needs to be addressed.

Overall visitor impacts across the National Park are not concentrated in certain areas. The areas where there are higher pressures from activities are likely to be the Country Parks eg Queen Elizabeth and Seven Sisters where a greater variety of activities are permitted and along the South Downs Way National Trail, and on the urban fringe.

5.1.2 Types of visitor activities

Walking caused negative impacts for Land Managers when visitors walked off marked trails, whereas for natural and cultural heritage sites, where visitor routes were proactively managed, the impact of walkers was mostly neutral.

Walking with uncontrolled dogs caused the greatest negative impact for all types of sites, and included leaving uncollected faeces and disturbing wildlife and stock. Picnicking resulted in litter pollution.

Problems caused by cycling were less frequent than those caused by walking and dogs, however they are a particular problem when visitors cycle off marked trails disturbing wildlife and stock and causing erosion. Land Managers raised night cycling as an emerging concern.

Horse riding was not considered a major problem except for conflicts with other users and churning up trails in wet weather, making them difficult for other visitors.

For Land Managers off-road driving by motorbikes, quad bikes and 4x4s caused as many problems as cyclists. However this was less of a problem for the natural and cultural heritage sites where greater levels of visitor management are in place.

Aerial activities and land based activities such as grass boarding and zorbing tended to only occur at permitted sites and did not cause particular problems.

The activities that achieved positive impacts through their educational value and raised awareness of the environment were guided walks, wildlife watching and photography. These benefits were found at the sites that were proactively managed for visitors.

5.1.3 Key visitor impacts

The impacts visitors have on the environment can be grouped into social or environmental impacts, with the majority being both.

Negative impacts

Litter pollution and dog fouling were the most frequent problems and there is a clear need to address both. Other socio-environmental problems identified by more than 10% of sites in the second survey were livestock disturbance (16 sites), noise pollution (12 sites) and fire damage (7 sites).

For Land Managers, 80% (60) of whose main land use is livestock grazing, disturbance to livestock was a more extensive problem than for the natural and cultural heritage sites.

Damage to property and theft were more serious social problems reported. Amongst Land Managers, around 8% (5) reported damage to property, mostly to fences or gates and attacks on sheep. Damage to property was also a problem for nearly a third (32%/23) of natural and cultural heritage sites, of which 19% (16) reported incidents of theft. The nature of these issues means it is not always possible to establish if they are caused by visitors or local residents.

The environmental issues caused by visitors to different habitat types were trampling, soil erosion and the loss of wildlife species and habitats.

The impact of visitors on cultural heritage sites was mostly considered neutral or positive, however this was not the case for Scheduled Monuments, which suffer from erosion and trampling from walkers, cyclists, horse-riders and off-road driving. Many Scheduled Monuments tend to be managed as part of the natural habitat rather than for their own sake and are lacking in any interpretation.

In most cases the negative impacts caused by visitors to the National Park are reversible, given sufficient funds, time and good management. However 28% (12) of impacts, particularly erosion, damage to ancient trees and museum artefacts, were considered permanent.

Positive impacts

The positive impacts of visitors to the National Park are mostly socio-economic and are of benefit to local communities or to the visitors themselves, in terms of education and health.

Education is seen as a key benefit at most sites and was identified by Land Managers as a means of raising awareness of the responsible use of the countryside. The increased knowledge and levels of awareness also generate environmental benefits through support for conservation projects and the involvement of the public in volunteering activities.

Economically, income generation and employment benefit the local communities.

Impacts on habitats

It is difficult to assess the impacts on specific LCAs due to the number and spread of however this can be done via habitat types. On the whole woodlands can take more visitors than chalk grassland sites that are more sensitive to trampling and erosion. There were only a few for wetland and rivers but as these areas are more difficult to access then impacts appear to be less. There were only a few for coastal areas but again the coast is a robust habitat and no significant issues were raised.

5.1.4 Visitor Management

The findings from both surveys and the case studies highlighted the need for education of visitors about their responsibilities in the National Park and that good visitor management minimises the negative impact of visitors on the environment and delivers positive benefits. The recommendations therefore focus how good visitor management could be achieved in the National Park.

5.2 Recommendations

The purpose of the recommendations is to inform the preparation of the management plan for the National Park. Recommendations are made for those with a remit within the National Park (SDNPA and partners) to deliver.

5.2.1 Visitor Management Strategy

A visitor management strategy that encompasses the education of a range of audiences and uses a variety of communication channels could deliver positive benefits to the environment of the National Park by encouraging a change in visitor behaviour.

Target audiences for the Visitor Management Strategy

Visitors from outside the region

Visitors coming to the National Park from outside the region are more likely than local users to research their visit prior to departure. This provides the opportunity to deliver educational information through the SDNPA website and other promotional channels to inform them about the potential impact their activities could have on the National Park's environment, and to encourage them to behave in ways that are not detrimental to the Park.

Encouraging more visitors to stay overnight rather than just visit for the day, and to travel to and from the National Park by public transport, will increase their economic value to the National Park and reduce their environmental impact..

People who are not used to visiting the National Park may need help reading maps to locate rights of way and to find out about local facilities using accommodation providers, information points or leaflets.

Local visitors

Local visitors are also regular users of the National Park and may feel that it is their 'home patch'. They are unlikely to be using any 'pre-visit' information that could be provided on the website for people planning a visit to the National Park from farther way and will need to be reached through local communities organisations, including schools, events and using local media channels.

This user group is particularly important because in addition to their own use of the Park, they may also be hosts to visiting friends and relatives and therefore would be in a position to influence their guests' behaviour.

Local users also include local businesses such as dog walking companies, who can cause considerable negative impacts to the Park's environment and need to be targeted in any visitor management initiatives.

Delivery of the Visitor Management Strategy

The Visitor Management Strategy will need to be agreed and delivered in partnership with the public and private sector stakeholders that are involved with visitors to the National Park.

Develop a Visitor Management Programme for Land Managers

Land Managers are generally managing their land for purposes other than visitors and irresponsible behaviour by visitors causes them considerable nuisance.

The benefits of good visitor management were identified through the consultation with the natural and cultural heritage sites and there may be scope to develop a visitor management programme for land managers to help them alleviate problems and deal with difficult visitors. Links between the managers of these two types of sites should be encouraged and experiences shared.

Inform Rangers, Wardens and the Volunteer Ranger Service about best practice

Rangers, wardens and volunteers all need to be well informed about the best practice in visitor management as they are well placed to communicate with visitors face-to-face.

Inform Accommodation Providers about the impacts of visitor activities

Accommodation providers have regular communication with visitors, both in person and through their websites. Ensuring that these local businesses, both in and adjacent to the National Park, are well informed about the impacts of visitor activities and a South Downs NPA visitor code of conduct (that out-lined how best to prevent these impacts from happening) would enable them to communicate these messages to visitors.

Local and Unitary Authorities to be involved in good visitor management

County Councils and the Unitary Authority, as the Local Highway Authority, have responsibility for the public Rights of Way, path maintenance and signage, and need to be aware of the issues caused by visitors and be involved in developing good visitor management practices.

Planning Authorities to consider benefits of good visitor management

The SDNPA and adjacent planning authorities should be aware of the benefits to the environment that can be achieved by good visitor management at visitor attractions and consider any planning applications for attractions in this light.

Police enforcement for anti-social issues

Enforcement by the police is required for more serious anti-social issues arising in the Park. It would be beneficial to ensure they are also aware of good visitor management practises.

Destination Management Organisations, District and Borough Councils to promote good visitor behaviour

Destination Management Organisations (DMOs), District and Borough Councils that are involved in promotion of areas of the National Park as destinations for visitors should also promote a code of conduct for good visitor behaviour.

Use Local Access Forum to advise on visitor access issues

The SDNPA Local Access Forum advises the National Park Authority and others on how best to manage access to the Park. It would be useful for the Forum to be aware of the visitor issues and best practice raised in this report.

5.2.2 Address key visitor management issues

Create a Visitor Code of Conduct

It is clear from both surveys that there is a need to focus on developing responsible visitor use of the countryside. One way to achieve this could be through a Visitor Code of Conduct that could be used to underpin all educational initiatives about visitor management. This could be developed and distributed in conjunction with the local authorities.

Best practice at other National Parks should be examined. For example, the New Forest National Park Authority have produced their PROGRESS codes of conduct for dog walkers, cyclists, walkers and a general out and about leaflet. These were compiled by a forum of local people, representing both conservation and recreation interests.

Encourage responsible dog walking

Responsible dog walking by both individuals and dog walking companies should be given particular attention, as dogs cause the most negative impacts in the National Park. Examples of best practice could be researched and partnerships developed with the Borough and District Councils, and other organisations to tackling these issues. The Hampshire Wildlife Trust for example have developed a 'Dogs on Reserves' project and are working with the Local Authority Green Infrastructure Strategy (see case study).

Improve signage and management of pubic Rights of Way

Good signage at natural and cultural heritage sites combined with desire lines or physical barriers enable visitor managers to direct visitors along set routes, minimising their impact. In woodlands visitors tend to follow paths for fear of getting lost. However elsewhere, particularly on chalk grassland sites with good views, people tend to roam off marked trails. Ensuring good signage of public rights of way combined with providing interpretation, through wardens and relevant websites, about the effect on wildlife and stock of roaming freely could help reduce the negative impacts.

Use Interpretation to explain impact of people on natural and cultural heritage

Interpretation produced by the SDNPA and by visitor attractions and sites needs to cover the interaction between people and wildlife and other heritage. Several sites eg Seven Sisters and Stansted Park highlighted during the case studies that people generally respect a request if they understand the reason behind it.

Prioritise interpretation of Scheduled Monuments

Scheduled Monuments are a priority for interpretation. Their profile needs to be raised and their management needs to be improved.

Prioritise restoration of habitats and heritage features

Relatively little is spent by sites on the restoration of habitats and heritage features compared to the tidying up of sites and repairing gates, fences and access roads. The SDNPA could consider how to raise the profile and interpretation of these important features of the National Park and how their restoration could be supported.

5.2.3 Use a range of communication channels

An effective Visitor Management strategy will need to use a range of communication channels to communicate its messages to the different target audiences.

Work in partnership with natural and cultural heritage sites

Effective visitor management practises are already in place at many of the attractions in the National Park. The SDNPA could work in partnership with these organisations to communicate the impacts of visitor activities to visitors and work with Land Managers to help them develop appropriate visitor management techniques.

Attend local community events

Attending local events is an effective way of engaging with local communities, and thus local visitors. This is valuable for communicating the activities being undertaken by the SDNPA and for conducting a positive discussion about visitor pressure and behaviour. It also helps to inform the SDNPA about the needs of local people and encourage a sense of ownership of the National Park.

Promote and improve existing schemes

Land Managers expressed interest in finding out more about the Pathwatch scheme. These existing schemes could be looked at in more detail to see if they provide a useful channel for further education of visitors and support for land managers.

Use rangers, wardens, volunteers

The presence of wardens, rangers and volunteers on sites demonstrates that they are cared for. Personal contact and communication is one of the most effective ways of addressing and encouraging appropriate use of sites.

Develop and utilise the SNDPA website and forum

The SDNPA website and Forum have the potential to be effective means of communicating visitor issues and best practice to all target audiences. The website should include relevant information and be kept up to date with any visitor management initiatives.

Annexes

i) Land Manager's Survey Questionnaire

ii) Nature Conservation and Cultural Heritage Survey Questionnaire

iii) Nature Conservation and Cultural Heritage Site Designations