



MANOR WOODS VALLEY PEOPLE SURVEY

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Manor Woods Valley Group, April 2021

SUMMARY: WHO VISITS MANOR WOODS VALLEY AND WHO MISSES OUT?

Manor Woods Valley Group carried out an on-line survey of users in the autumn of 2020. We wanted to find out who, apart from the wildlife, are visitors to the nature reserve and what attracts them to it, so that we might improve communications about its benefits. Just under 200 replies to the survey were made through our Facebook page, other local Facebook groups and through a link in our monthly email newsletter. This is a summary of the results: the full report is available on our website [HERE](#).

The top themes that emerged from the results are:

1. Access to the benefits of Manor woods Valley is not shared equally by all groups;
2. There is potential for conflict between different groups;
3. There are benefits to be gained through collaboration with other local green spaces groups;
4. Appreciation of nature has increased during the pandemic and more people are willing to volunteer.

Almost all the respondents were White British (96%) or White Other (3%). There were no responses from people that identify as Asian or Black. This mirrors exactly the membership of Manor Woods Valley Group and its regular volunteers. Given that green spaces and nature reserves across Bristol and nationally are known to be proportionately underused by people of colour and given that Black and Minority Ethnic communities are also known to be underrepresented among the membership of parks 'friends' groups, national nature reserves committees and environmental groups; this is a concern. On three days in February 2021, we carried out a further visual survey of people in Manor Woods Valley. The average hourly number of 'passes' at a central point in the reserve was 108 adults, 40 children and 23 dogs. Only four Visible Minority Ethnic people were counted across the three days.

Survey results also suggest that the users of Manor Woods Valley are almost exclusively in the 25 to 65 age range. It is probable that the lower and higher age groups are less likely to have responded through email and Facebook and we need to, post pandemic, survey these groups by other means. We are aware, however, that physical access by higher age people to the nature reserve is made more difficult by the gated barriers at the entrances.

The main reasons given for visiting Manor Woods Valley are walking (including dog walking), other exercise, wellbeing and to enjoy nature and family visits with children. A minority of users are cyclists – the shared pedestrian and cycle path runs the length of the reserve and connects with the Malago Greenway. From experience we know that there are occasional conflicts between different user groups. For example, dogs off-lead can sometimes harass wildlife and people, and their presence is likely to prevent ground nesting; dog faeces is unsightly and a health risk; and cyclists and pedestrians can have too close contact with each other. The increased footfall during the pandemic has also caused some ground damage and more intrusion into the secluded wildlife areas.

Of course, people who visit Manor Woods Valley are also likely to visit other green spaces and frequent mention was made by respondents to visiting Crox Bottom, Northern Slopes, Bedminster Down Green and Dundry Slopes. This points to the potential benefits of working together to improve connections between green spaces for the benefit of wildlife, and also of people.

Manor Woods Valley Group relies on volunteers to manage wildlife habitats and improve visitor experience. Over half of respondents expressed an interest in volunteering, including litter picking, habitat management, nature surveys and tree planting. Others indicated an interest in joining guided walks and family events. There were lots of positive responses to the question about changes in attitude to nature during the pandemic. Walking and running, connecting with neighbours, buying locally and sustainably, appreciation and importance of nature were all cited as positive changes.

The survey results have given us plenty of food for thought and motivation for further action. We are encouraged by the optimism of the many positive responses and by the willingness of more people to become involved in volunteering. We are also aware of the concerns and challenges they raise, particularly on equal access and issues of potential conflict. We look forward to pursuing the issues and outcomes with our local communities and others.

INTRODUCTION

Manor Woods Valley Local Nature Reserve in South Bristol is made up of woodlands, wildflower meadows, open parkland, an orchard and the middle stretch of the Malago. It is a site of Nature Conservation Interest and has a long history dating back to the Domesday Book of 1086 and before that.

Manor Woods Valley Group is the 'friends' group for Manor Woods Valley LNR. We work with Bristol City Council Parks Services to help maintain and develop it for the benefit of wildlife and people. Examples of our work include controlling invasive weeds, creating wildflower meadows, coppicing woodland areas, tree planting, developing a community orchard and litter picking. We also organise events such as family nature activities, guided walks and talks; and we support conservation research and wildlife surveys by university students.

We conducted this survey in, partly in October 2020 and partly in February 2021. The aim was to gather information about the characteristics of people who come to Manor Woods Valley and the reasons for their visits. Survey questions captured demographics, interests, attitudes and behaviors. This information will help us plan how best to maximize the potential of the nature reserve as a location for wildlife conservation, learning and recreation. It will also help us fulfil our commitments as a signatory to the Bristol Equality Charter, to promote inclusion, participation and equal access to the benefits and activities provided by our Group. It is hoped that Bristol City Council, Bristol Parks Forum and environmental organisations will find it useful in developing plans and policies involving the protection and development of Bristol's green spaces.

This Report is presented in the following sections:

- Research Rationale
- Methodology
- Results - Key Findings and Action Plans in relation to the Challenges
- Results - Responses to individual survey questions
- Discussion
- Limitations of the Survey
- Outcomes: Recommendations for Further Research
- An appendix on sample headcounts.

RESEARCH RATIONALE

The Survey is a first step toward meeting a number challenges that we have identified, and will provide ideas about working towards strategic outcomes.

Challenges:

1. Lack of ethnic minority access to green spaces is acknowledged as a national issue and in Bristol. There are no people of colour on our committee or among our regular volunteers. We are committed to change this.
2. Conflicts sometimes occur between different interest groups and communities, for example, with some dog owners whose dogs are not under their control, between cyclists and pedestrians and between wildlife and

people and their pets. It was hoped that the survey would help us better understand these and other potential conflicts.

3. The maintenance and improvement of Manor Woods Valley relies heavily on the work of volunteers (as well as, of course, the council's parks services). The survey results will help us recruit and retain more volunteers.
4. The long-term security of Manor Woods Valley as a nature reserve will depend largely on the support of local communities. The survey will help us understand who visits Manor Woods Valley, and why they come.
5. It is an ambition that everyone should live within a ten minute walk of a green space. The survey will help us understand what other green spaces in south Bristol and beyond that our visitors also frequent.
6. Finally, we are keen to lead a local response to the climate and ecological emergencies. The survey will help us understand respondents' attitudes to nature conservation.

METHODOLOGY

We used Survey Monkey to design an online questionnaire to collect responses from local residents. Links to the survey were shared via our monthly newsletter email, our Facebook page and shared to other local Facebook groups. Most questions had several pre-coded response categories and an 'Other' category. There was space to add additional information in the 'Other' category. Respondents were able to tick as many responses as they wished rather than having to choose between the available options. Where free text responses were available, the resulting data were analysed thematically.

The survey was distributed in October 2020 and was available online for about six weeks.

The demographic data were compared to the 2011 Census data for the Bristol wards that are close to Manor Woods Valley to establish how representative the respondents were of the local population. These wards are Bedminster, Bishopsworth, Hartcliffe & Withywood, Hengrove, Whitchurch and Knowle.

RESULTS

It is important to note that the survey took place during a period of national lockdown in the UK owing to the COVID-19 pandemic, so the results may not be typical of general usage. The restrictions in place at the time of the survey included limiting meetings to six people indoors and outdoors. To gauge whether respondents' behavior has changed recently owing to the national lockdown, respondents were asked which, if any, activities they have been participating in more as a result of lockdown. Future work will be able to ascertain whether or not such changes are long-or short-term.

194 people responded to the survey, of whom 172 accessed it via Facebook and 22 via the MWV newsletter email.

KEY FINDINGS IN RELATION TO CHALLENGES

CHALLENGE 1:

Lack of ethnic minority access to green spaces is acknowledged as an issue nationally and in Bristol. There are no people of colour on our committee or among our regular volunteers. We are committed to change this.

Findings: The User Survey collected ethnic data, as a guide to investigating the level of black and minority ethnic people using Manor Woods Valley. This is a first step towards investigating how to encourage a wider mix of visitors and identify obstacles. Further work is needed in this area.

In the 2011 census, across the local wards, 'White British' had the highest percentage population - between 85% and 95%. Between 3.6% (Whitchurch Park) and 8.9% (Knowle) belonged to a black or minority ethnic group. The survey data will be reviewed again in the light of the results of the March 2021 Census.

Data from our 2020 survey do not reveal how representative the respondents are, since, out of 194 respondents, 10 did not answer the ethnicity question and 4 ticked 'prefer not to say'. Of the 180 who responded, 95.6% were White British, 3.3% were White Other and 1.1% were 'Mixed Ethnic'. There were no responses from people that identify as Asian or Black.

Action Plans: Improve communication to under-represented minority ethnic groups, so that more inclusive use is made of the green space. In the first place contact will be made with local Black and Green Ambassadors for advice and support in responding to this challenge.

CHALLENGE 2: Conflicts sometimes occur between different interest groups and communities, for example, with some dog owners whose dogs are not under their control; between cyclists and pedestrians; between wildlife and people and their pets; and between barriers erected to exclude unauthorised vehicles and the unintended exclusion of users of mobility. It was hoped that the survey would help us better understand these and other potential conflicts and work towards resolutions.

Findings: The survey provides data on who the main groups of respondents. There was a relatively even split of people across all age groups except the 65+ and 18-24 age brackets. The top five groups are walkers, people seeking other forms of exercise or wellbeing, people wishing to enjoy nature, dog walkers and visitors with children. Only 9% of people said they used Manor Woods Valley for cycling. However, there is a well-used cycle route across the area, which can be used as part of a longer ride, without a dedicated cycle lane. Such multi-use paths are known to cause conflict between different groups in other areas of Bristol.

Action Plans: Improve communication with under-represented age-groups of users, in particular children and young people and those aged 65+, aiming for more inclusive use. The survey results can be used as a tool for campaigning to improve facilities for these age-groups, for example improved entrances with access for mobility scooters and double buggies, more seating. We also aim to use the site as a venue for educational activities for younger children, for example establishing a Forest School.

Further work is needed into ways of avoiding conflicts, such as dogs off leads worrying other users, including wildlife, and respecting the needs of all user groups on the shared pathway.

CHALLENGE 3: The maintenance and improvement of Manor Woods Valley relies heavily on the work of volunteers (as well of, of course, the council's parks services). The survey results will help us recruit and retain more volunteers.

Findings: The survey asked questions about respondents' interests. Perhaps surprisingly, well over 50% said they would be interested in a range of volunteering activities (for details see RESULTS below). This may reflect the restrictions on many activities and increased use of local green areas caused by the national lockdown. We can use the survey results to provide targeted messaging and increase recruitment of volunteers.

Action Plans: Improve communication to potential volunteers, via the website and local leafletting. This includes specifying the location of the site, local bus routes etc.

CHALLENGE 4: The long-term security of Manor Woods Valley as a nature reserve will depend largely on the support of local communities. The survey will help us understand who visits Manor Woods Valley and why they.

Findings: The survey shows the home postcode of users of MWV. 80% are from BS13 and 15% are from BS3, with smaller minorities from BS4, BS15, BS39, BS1, BS8 and outside Bristol.

Action Plans: Increase awareness of the site, encourage usage and volunteering opportunities through targeted communication. Consider advertising, writing articles etc. about Manor Woods Valley in magazines covering a wide readership in South Bristol e.g.: The Pigeon, South Bristol Voice

CHALLENGE 5: It is an ambition that everyone should live within a ten minute walk to a green space. The survey will help us understand what other green spaces in south Bristol and beyond that our visitors also frequent.

Findings: The survey asked about other green spaces used by respondents. The majority of respondents also visit Crox Bottom, Bedminster Down Green, Dundry Slopes, Northern Slopes and other green spaces in South Bristol. Some also travel to green spaces on the Bristol fringes and beyond. We are aware of the absence of an overall strategy amongst local green spaces, leading to variation in messaging. For example, nature reserves may be more concerned with wildlife and nature whilst parks prioritise messaging about play and relaxation.

Action Plans: Create connectivity between the local green areas, as an opportunity to share skills and projects amongst users and volunteers in relation to wildlife conservation, using consistent and impactful messaging.

CHALLENGE 6: Finally, We are keen to lead a local response to the climate and ecological emergencies. The survey will help us understand respondents' attitudes to nature conservation.

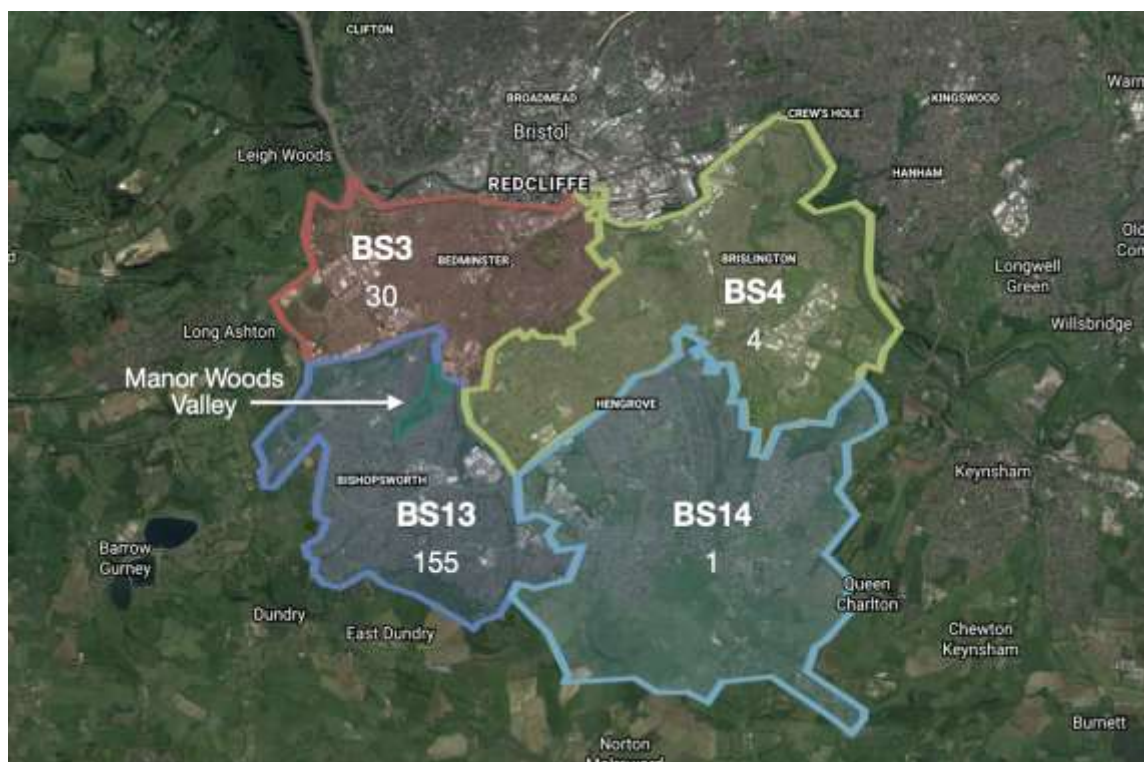
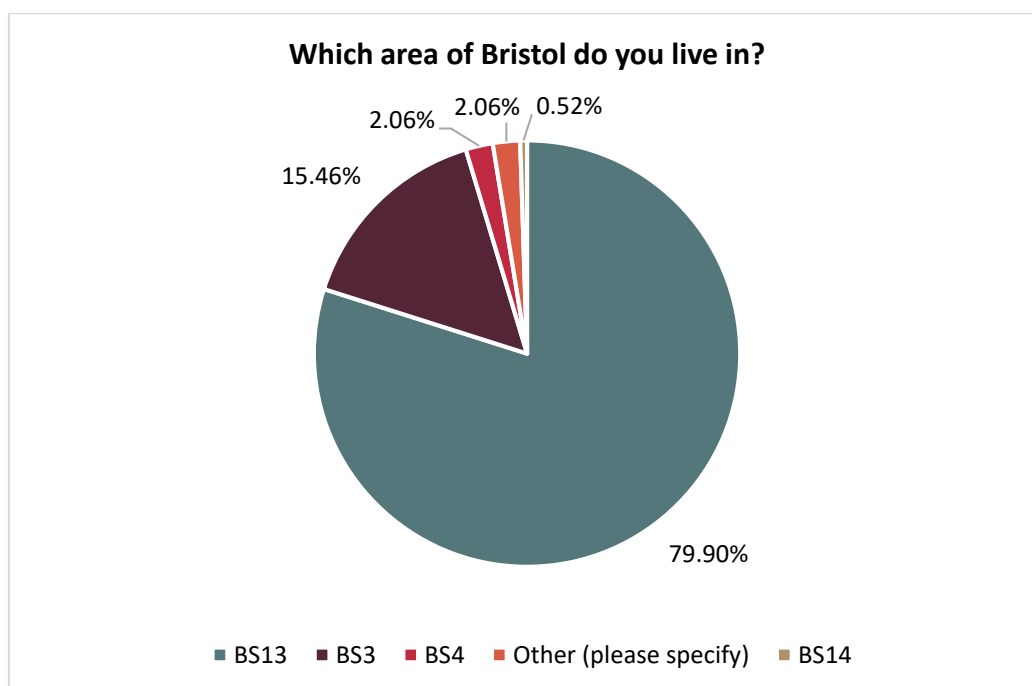
Findings: Survey questions asked about people's attitude towards nature and the environment, whether these attitudes have changed during the pandemic, and what action people are prepared to take, if any, to restore nature. Respondents indicated an increase in walking and running, and a more local lifestyle, connecting more with neighbours, working from home and spending more time with their family. Other changes included buying from more local shops and buying more sustainable products. Respondents said they had an increased awareness and appreciation of nature and the environment, and accessibility of local green spaces.

Action Plans: Capitalise on this growing awareness to develop more projects and attract more users and volunteers to Manor Woods Valley.

SURVEY RESULTS (N=194)

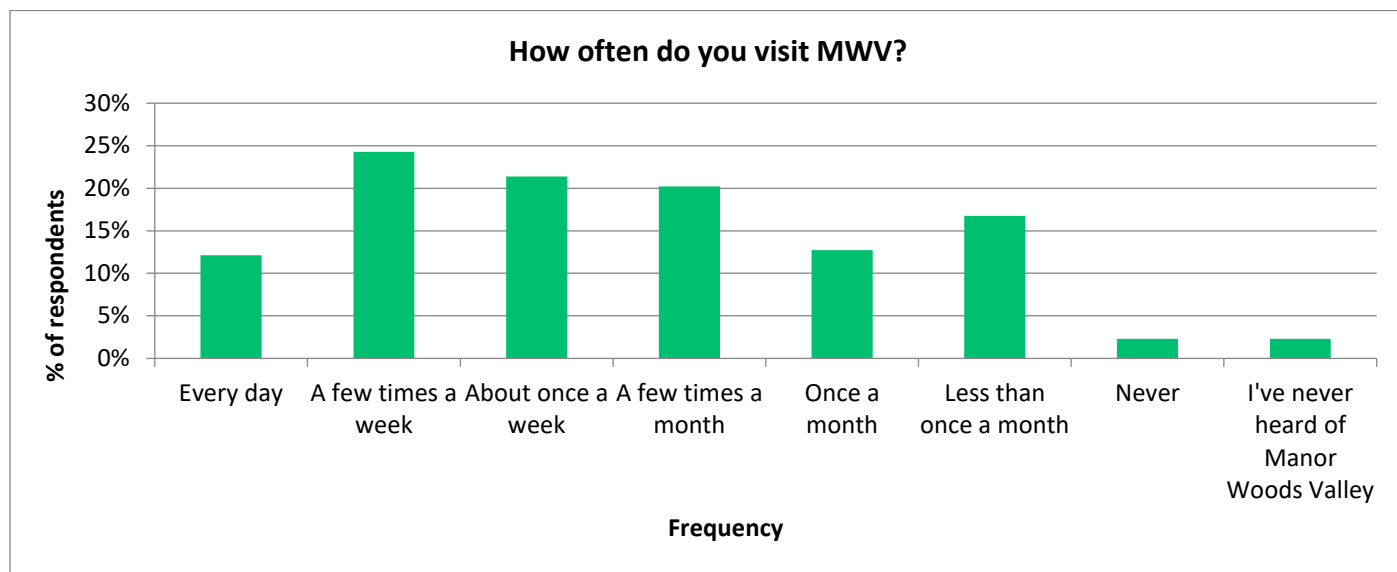
QUESTION 1

Skipped=0



QUESTION 2

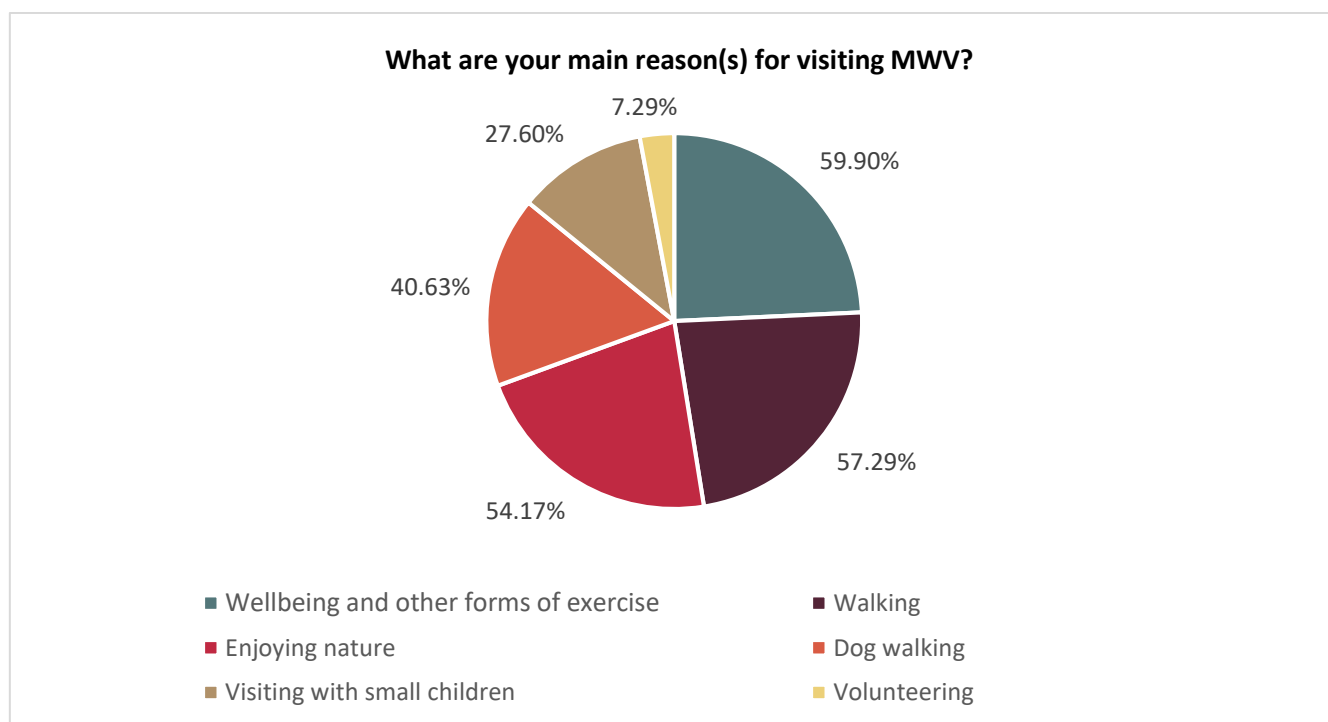
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QUESTION 3

Multiple responses allowed

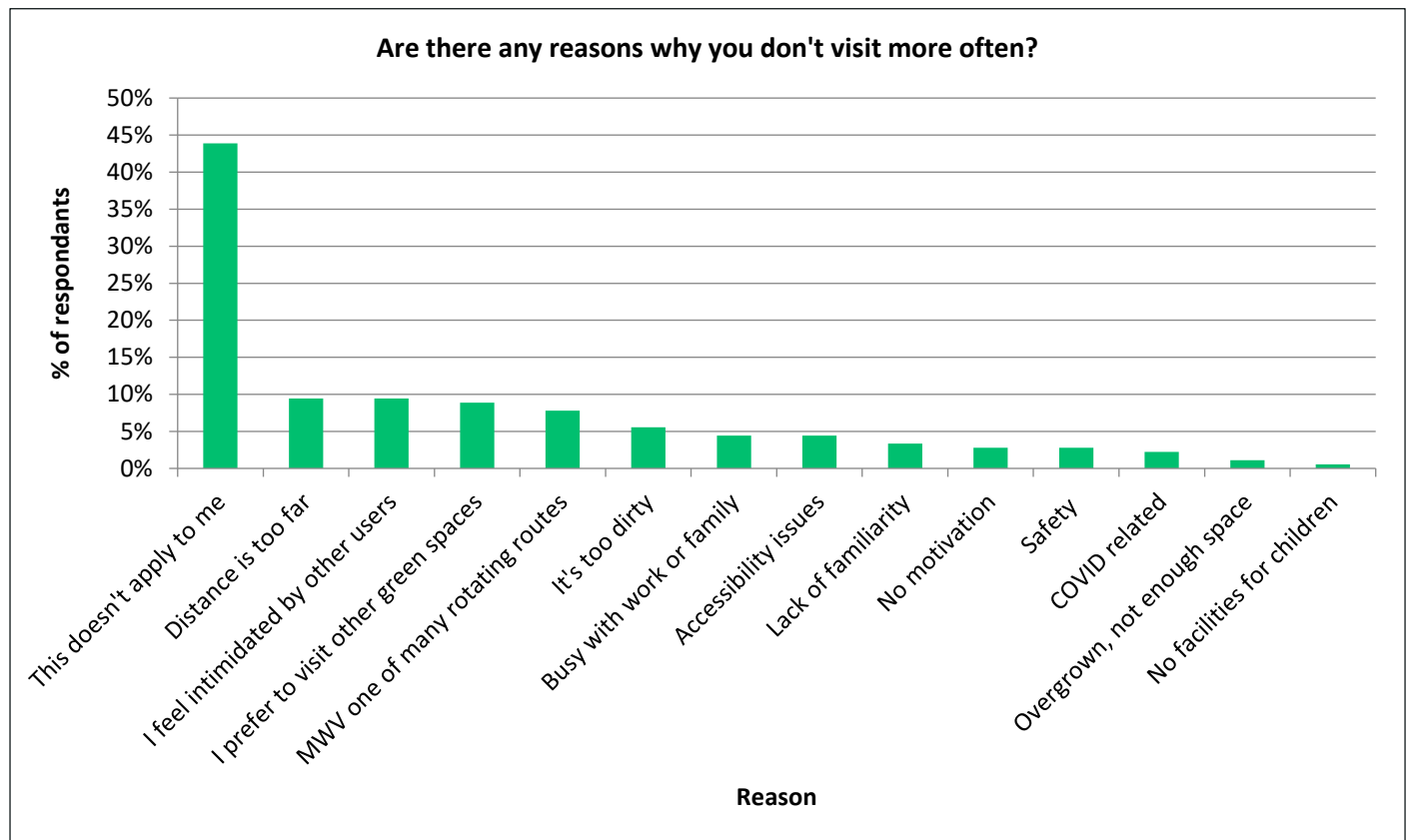
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QUESTION 4

Multiple responses allowed

Skipped=14

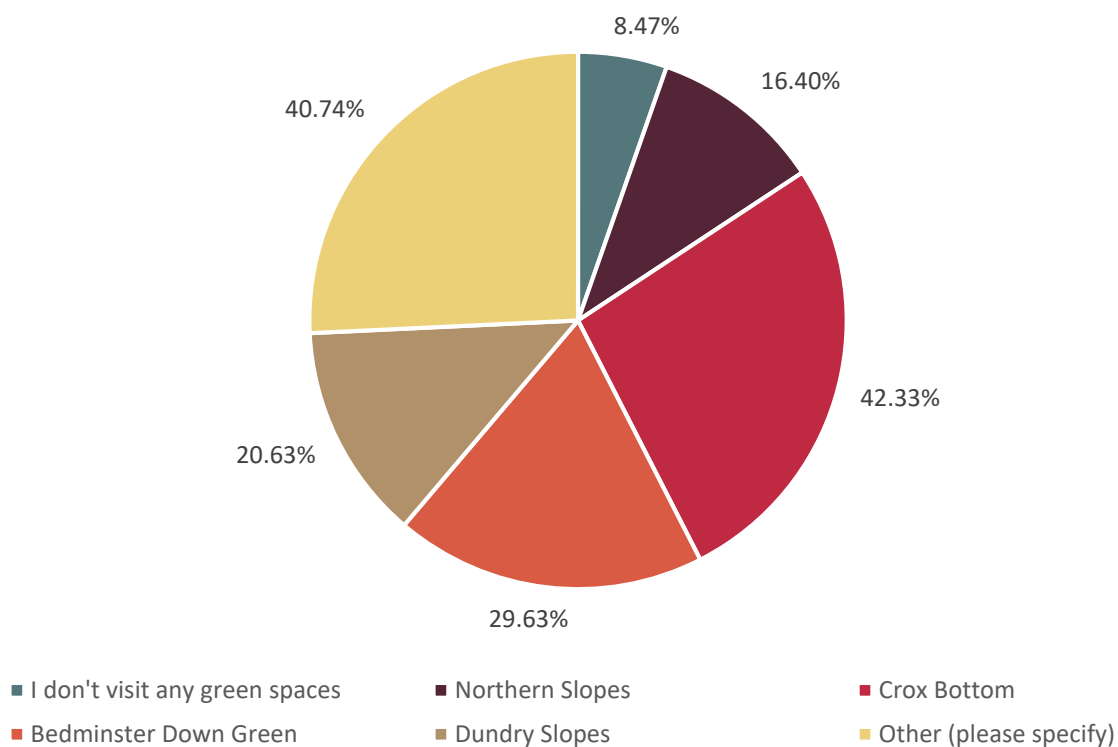


QUESTION 5

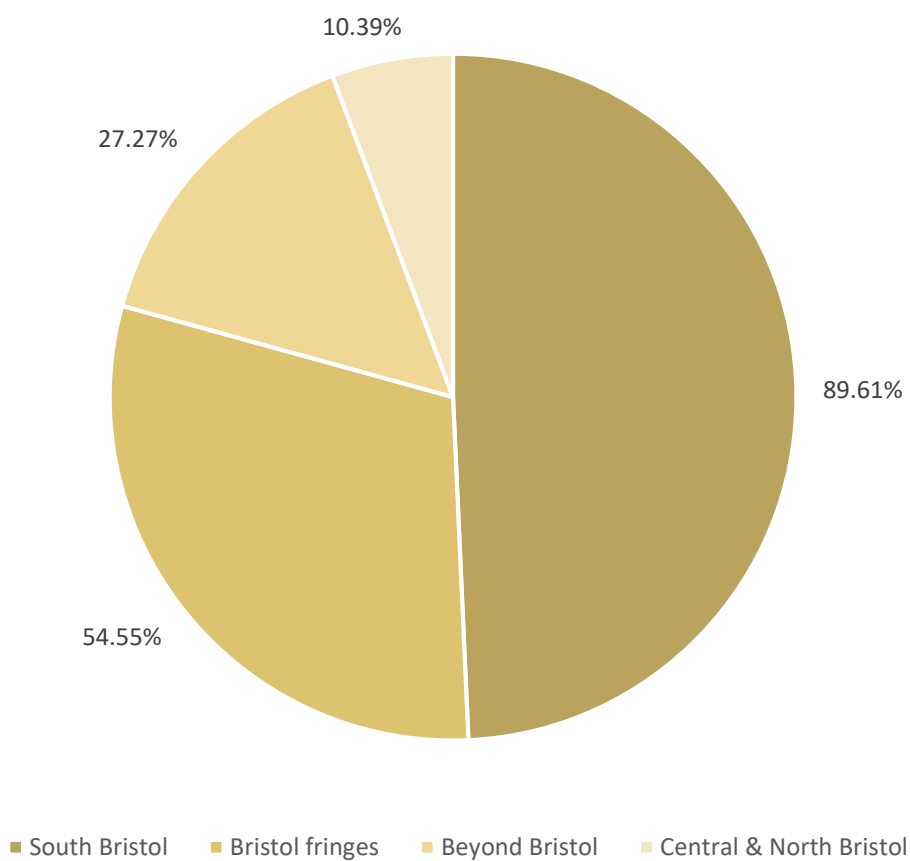
Multiple responses allowed

Skipped=5

Which other nearby green spaces do you visit (options offered)?



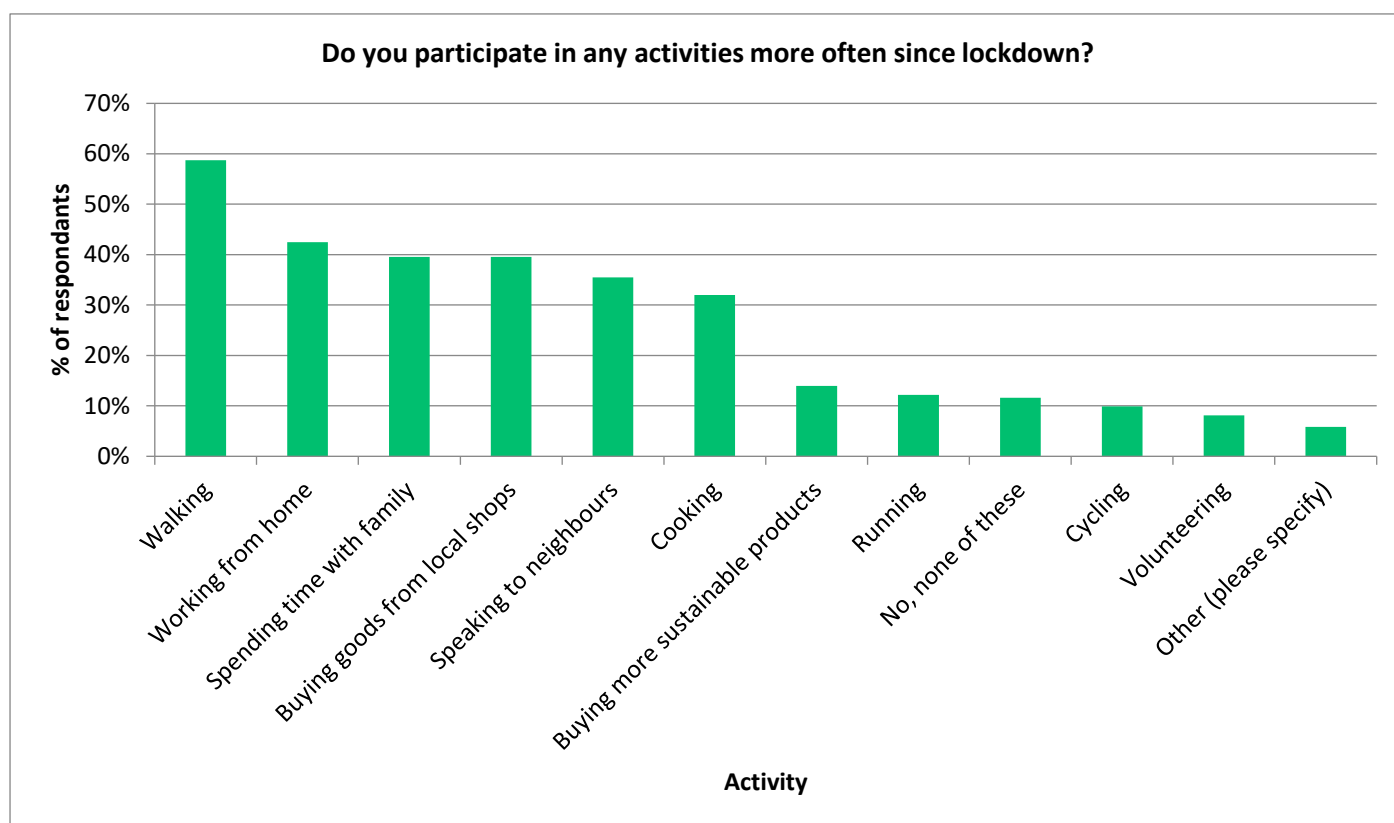
'Other' nearby green spaces visited



QUESTION 6

Multiple responses allowed

Skipped=22



QUESTION 7

Free text only

Skipped=44

How do you think your attitude towards nature and the environment has changed since lockdown, if at all?

35 respondents said that their attitude had not changed since lockdown, most saying that they had always loved nature.

The majority of the other respondents gave positive responses to this question. The main themes emerging from their comments are:

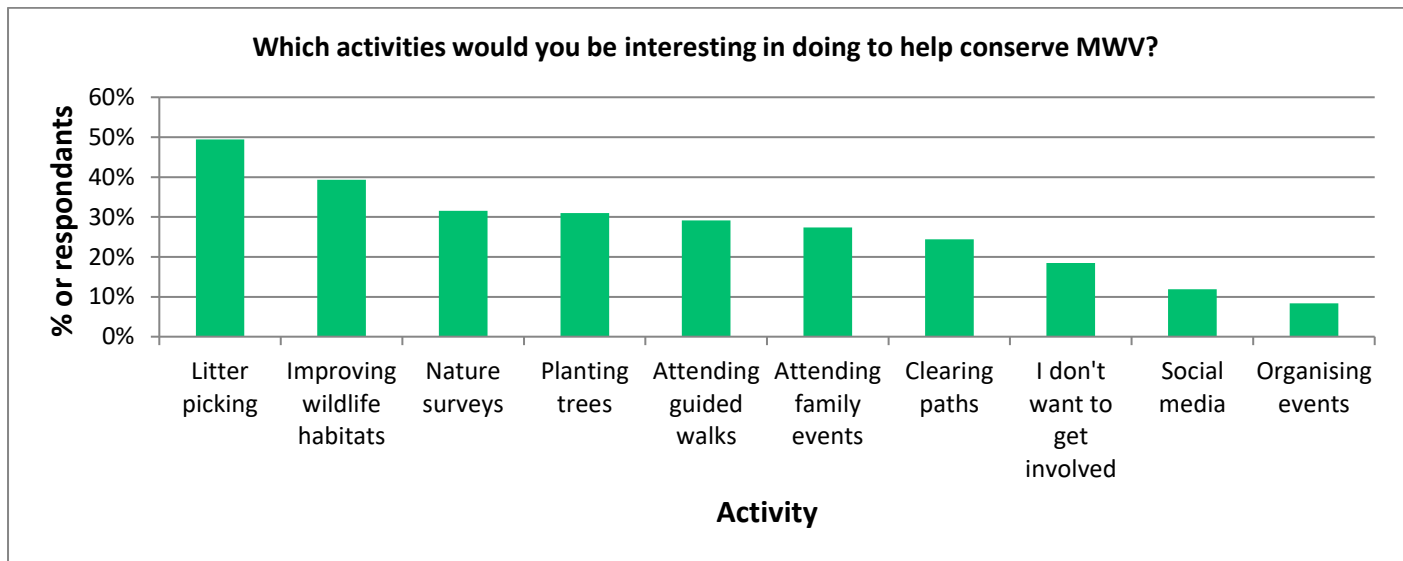
- Increased awareness and appreciation of nature and the environment since lockdown, a sense of it being 'essential'. Some said their connection with nature had been 'reinforced' or 'deepened' during lockdown.
- Increased awareness and appreciation of having accessible green spaces locally, 'on the doorstep'.
- Many people mentioned how much more aware of and interested they had become in all sorts of local wildlife, such as birds, insects, flowers.
- Many remarked on their enjoyment in noticing the changes in the seasons.
- There was increased recognition of the importance of nature and the environment for people's wellbeing, moods, physical and mental health.
- Many people commented in having more time during lockdown to go out for walks, discover new footpaths, making them feel fitter and healthier.
- Some respondents said they wished to help take better care of the environment in the future
- Lockdown gave more opportunities for children to be in nature.
- People appreciated the peace and quiet of the first lockdown, less traffic on the roads, less people around, and more ability to hear birdsong.

There were 14 people gave negative responses, most often alongside their positive comments. The main issues were:

- As visitor numbers to green spaces increased, some raised concerns about the sustainability of re-wilding projects.
- Some respondents became more aware of the amount of litter in their local green spaces, and other types of anti-social behaviour.
- Many felt that an increased focus on the environment had increased their awareness of and anxiety around the huge problems of climate change, the negative impact of humans on the environment.

QUESTION 8

Multiple responses allowed
Skipped=26



31 respondents said they ‘don’t want to get involved’. In the free text space provided the main reasons they gave were:

- MWV is too far from home
- Age or disability
- Don’t know where it is
- Other family member already involved
- Leaving the area shortly

QUOTATIONS FROM RESPONDENTS

I have walked far more in our local area this year and discovered new routes. I have noticed the changing seasons more. I feel fitter and far better.

I have actually been able to see and listen instead of look and hear.

I am more appreciative of spaces within walking distance to our house.

I want to look after it more after enjoying the local area more.

More time has given me ability to seek out lots of footpaths and areas around Bristol. Nature is so important to well-being.

As a geography teacher I’ve always loved nature. I now know the mental health benefits and want my children to benefit from being in nature.

Grateful for it; didn't pay much attention prior to lockdown but pleased it's there so we can take a breather and let our toddler run free.

I am using local green areas more often - I notice mess more now.

Being more open to finding nature nearer to home rather than getting in the car to find it.

I enjoy it more because I can walk at lunchtime because I work from home now.

More rubbish and anti-social behaviour taking place, a lack of respect for the environment.

Appreciate it a lot more, I find it improves my mood and anxiety and I enjoy teaching my 2 year old about nature, which he loves. (Free entertainment and educational for him!).

More aware of climate change and the amount of litter discarded - thoughtless.

Appreciate how lucky we are.

I appreciate the birdsong and the seasonal changes more. The reduced noise levels and the cleaner air. It feels more calming.

I am very annoyed at the litter being left by others on my walk to my mother's. Sometimes I have cut through Manor woods. I appreciate even more Mother nature.

Having watched Spring unfold properly for the first time in 57 years I now appreciate nature even more.

Families have placed more value on being outside and exercise in general.

Even more aware of the positive impacts of the natural environment on mental health and well-being.

It made me appreciate being able to walk my dogs in such a lovely place and take more interest in my surroundings.

Now more determined than ever to help tackle the climate and ecological emergencies.

I love it all the more, when I see rubbish collecting on the streets I want to go out and pick it up

DISCUSSION

- The survey was conducted during the COVID 19 pandemic with restrictions on the population such as staying home, working for home, home schooling, only going out locally, meeting people out of doors only, and encouraging daily exercise. Therefore, the responses may not be representative of more 'normal' times. Some activities, for example walking, running and cycling may have increased since COVID. Other behaviours such as working from home, reduced ability to travel, lack of possibility of meeting in family or friendship groups, the need for many people to shield, stay at home, only meet outdoors with one person, and the need to maintain social distancing may all have contributed to lower than usual usage of Manor Woods Valley. However, the extent and duration of the pandemic may well have given rise to long-term changes in behavior patterns and attitudes, such as those seen in the survey results.
- The survey adds information about user groups but may not help our understanding of conflicts between groups, which have been reported by our members, and how to reduce them. One of the stated aims (Challenge 2) is to 'better reconcile conflicts by having further knowledge of what the causes are'. More detailed, sensitive work will be needed to approach this topic. The fact that 17% of respondents ticked 'feeling intimidated by other users' as an answer to Q4 is obviously concerning, although we need to remember that the wording was provided as a pre-determined response category.

- The survey gives some positive indication of how people might like to help at Manor Woods Valley. A surprisingly high number of people appear to want to become volunteers and this represents a positive pool of potential recruits for the volunteer programme. Responses may be skewed by the 'Hawthorne' effect, people wanting to present themselves as helpful, particularly at a time of national emergency.
- The data on other green spaces visited gives us some indication of how far people are prepared to travel to get to a green space. The majority of people visit other green spaces local to Manor Woods Valley, giving us scope for joined up strategies and projects across the sites.
- The survey results offer scope for us to provide leadership in responding to climate and ecological emergencies, by recruiting more volunteers both in MWV and other local green spaces.

LIMITATIONS

- The majority of the questions had pre-coded fixed response items for ease of analysis. Whilst this facilitates the provision of overall statistics, it gives limited space for individual expression.
- The survey was distributed electronically, and so the sample was drawn from people who are familiar with the use of FaceBook or email. There was no provision for non-electronic responses so may not be representative of the whole population of Manor Woods Valley visitors.
- Certain groups were under-represented in the survey: people aged 65+ and under 25; and people from Black and Minority Ethnic groups.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

- Conduct further non-electronic surveys, both paper based and face-to-face, both on site and in different community locations (see the **Appendix** for a preliminary survey of users on site).
- Investigate public transport routes from nearby areas with a broader ethnic mix e.g. Knowle, Totterdown, and add information about bus services to our leaflets and website.
- Investigate examples of successful initiatives elsewhere to improve access to under representative groups.

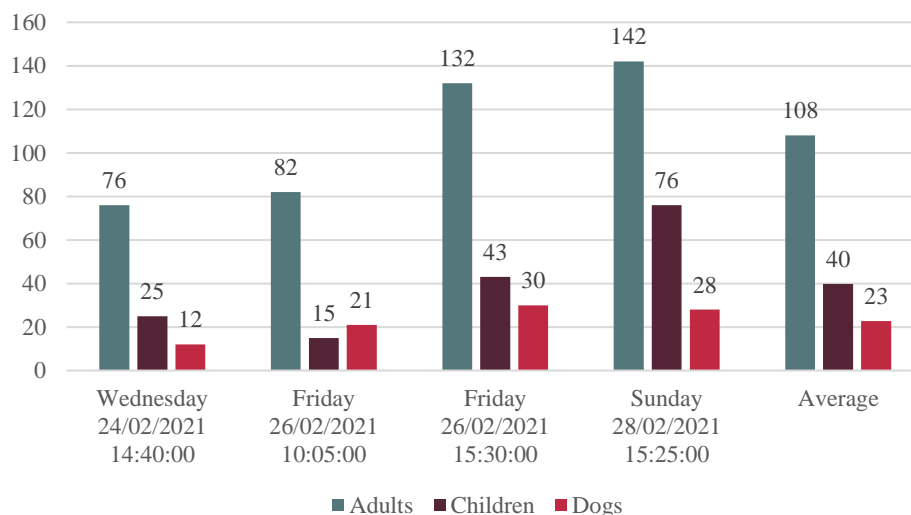
APPENDIX: VOLUME AND TYPES OF VISITOR TO MANOR WOODS VALLEY – A SNAPSHOT

On three days in February 2021, a survey of children and adults in Manor Woods Valley was carried out. Coronavirus lockdown restrictions (outdoor exercise was allowed in groups of no more than two or a single household) were in operation at the time of the survey. People were counted in two places: as they passed a point on the main path at the interceptor and the path at the top of the wildflower meadow. This path is unmade and was very muddy at the time of the observations. Observations took place for an hour on 4 occasions, in fine weather conditions: Wednesday, Friday and Sunday afternoon (around 3.00 pm) and Friday morning (11.00 am). Not all survey periods were a full hour - so the numbers have been adjusted to an hourly rate. These data provide preliminary information about visitors, their numbers and characteristics, on different days. This will help with targeting our information and publicity about the value of Manor Woods Valley to current and potential visitors.

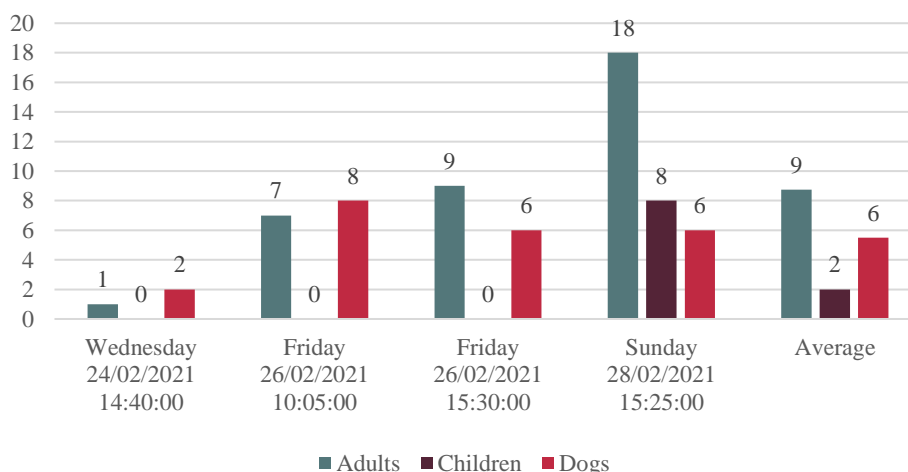
Direction of travel was noted: either from the Vale Lane entrance or the Bishopsworth entrance, but most people will have been counted twice, as they passed first one way then back again. Some will have only passed once - exiting the site at one end or the other. Hence this is a record of footfall rather than of discrete individuals. The average hourly number of 'passes' at the Interceptor was 108 adults, 40 children and 23 dogs; at the wildflower meadow the averages were 9 adults, 2 children and 6 dogs.

The two bar-charts below give an overview of the results. Not surprisingly, more people were walking along the surfaced main path than along the muddy meadow track.

'Passes' along Main Path at the Interceptor



'Passes' along top of Wildflower Meadow



Users were categorised according to Visible Minority Ethnicity, age (younger, older or children) and mode of use (walkers, dog walkers, power walkers/runners, cyclists/scooters).

Analysis of these data shows the following:

- Visible Minority Ethnic people were few (2 on Friday afternoon and 2 on Sunday)
- There were on average, across all the days, 8 times as many younger walkers and dog walkers as older people
- The greatest number of power walkers/runners was on Friday morning (16) compared to 1, 0 and 7 in the afternoon observations
- The greatest number of cyclists/scooters was on Friday afternoon (17) compared to 11, 3 and 1 at other times

In terms of direction of travel, discounting equal numbers of passes in each direction, the notable differences were more footfall from the Vale Lane entrance on the Friday morning and more footfall from the Bishopsworth entrance on Sunday afternoon, with greatly increased numbers of children on Sunday.

The overall conclusion of the survey is that Manor Woods Valley Local Nature Reserve is a busy and well-used green space.

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