

## CROMWELL BOTTOM CONSULTATION: SUMMARY OF RESULTS

OCTOBER 2015

### BACKGROUND

Cromwell Bottom is a Local Nature Reserve in the Calder valley between Brighouse and Elland. Calderdale Council owns the site, and the adjacent former landfill site known as North Bank Loop, which has recently been restored.

In April 2015 the Council's Cabinet agreed to look at the feasibility of future development of the area. A programme of consultation was planned to find out how people use Cromwell Bottom at present, and how they would like it to develop in the future.

### HOW WE CONSULTED PEOPLE

The consultation ran from June to September 2015. A survey questionnaire was devised, aiming to analyse why people visit or don't visit Cromwell Bottom, and what might influence people's visiting patterns in future. The questionnaire was posted on the Council's website, with posters, press releases and a touring exhibition designed to encourage people to take part.

Consultation drop-in sessions were held at Cromwell Bottom Nature Reserve on a number of week days and weekends, and at local events including the Brighouse 1940's weekend, Brighouse Gala, Brighouse Canal & Music festival and Elland Vintage Fair. Council officers were on hand at these events with a model or plans of the site to discuss potential developments for the site and to encourage people to complete the questionnaires.

The questionnaire was also distributed to the Council's 'E-panel' of Calderdale residents.

This report summarises the results of the 1811 completed survey questionnaires that were returned.

Discussions have also been held with local stakeholder groups and with neighbouring land owners and businesses. The results of these discussions are recorded separately and will be taken fully into account in the development of future plans for Cromwell Bottom.

A separate questionnaire was distributed to local schools but response to this was limited. Discussions are continuing with individual schools to establish their views on Cromwell Bottom.

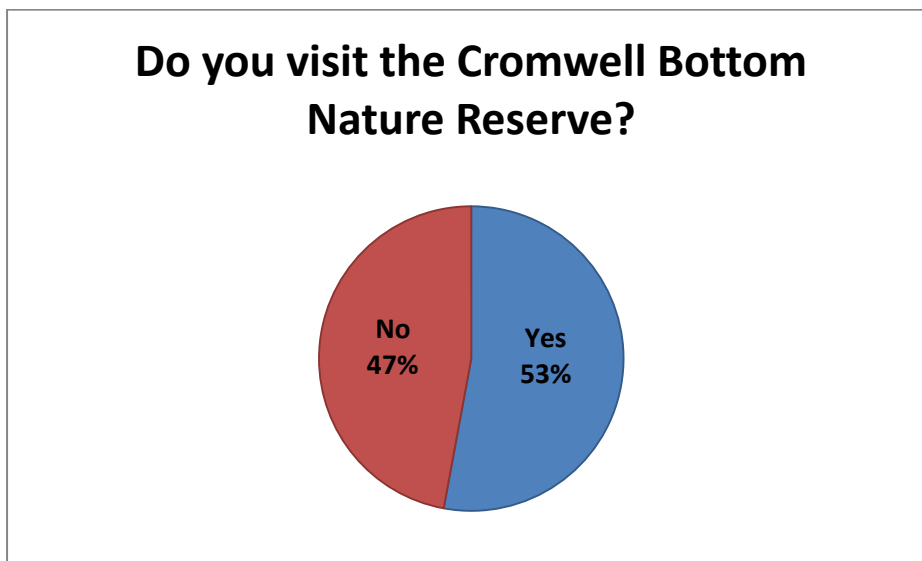
### HOW THE SURVEY INFORMATION HAS BEEN PRESENTED

The majority of questions on the questionnaire called for a 'tick box' response, enabling a quantitative analysis through graphs and diagrams. Many of these questions allowed multiple responses, meaning that percentages shown on these graphs will add up to more than 100%

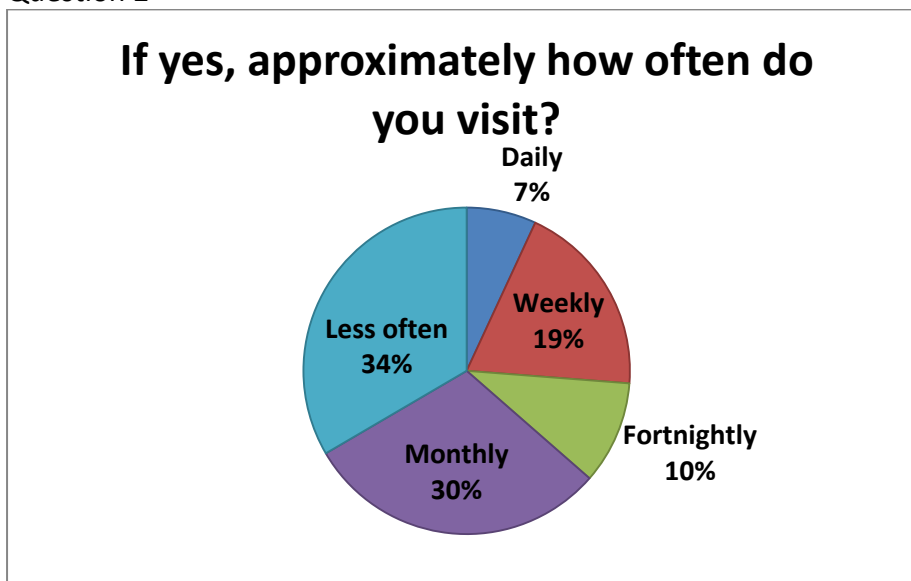
Some questions were more open, or asked for supplementary comments following a tick box answer. These questions required more subjective qualitative analysis of responses, and with help from the University of Bradford School of Management, responses were grouped into categories and a narrative interpretation of results has been presented. Total numbers of responses to these questions varied widely, but results have been presented as percentages of responses falling within particular categories.

## WHAT WE FOUND OUT

### Question 1



### Question 2

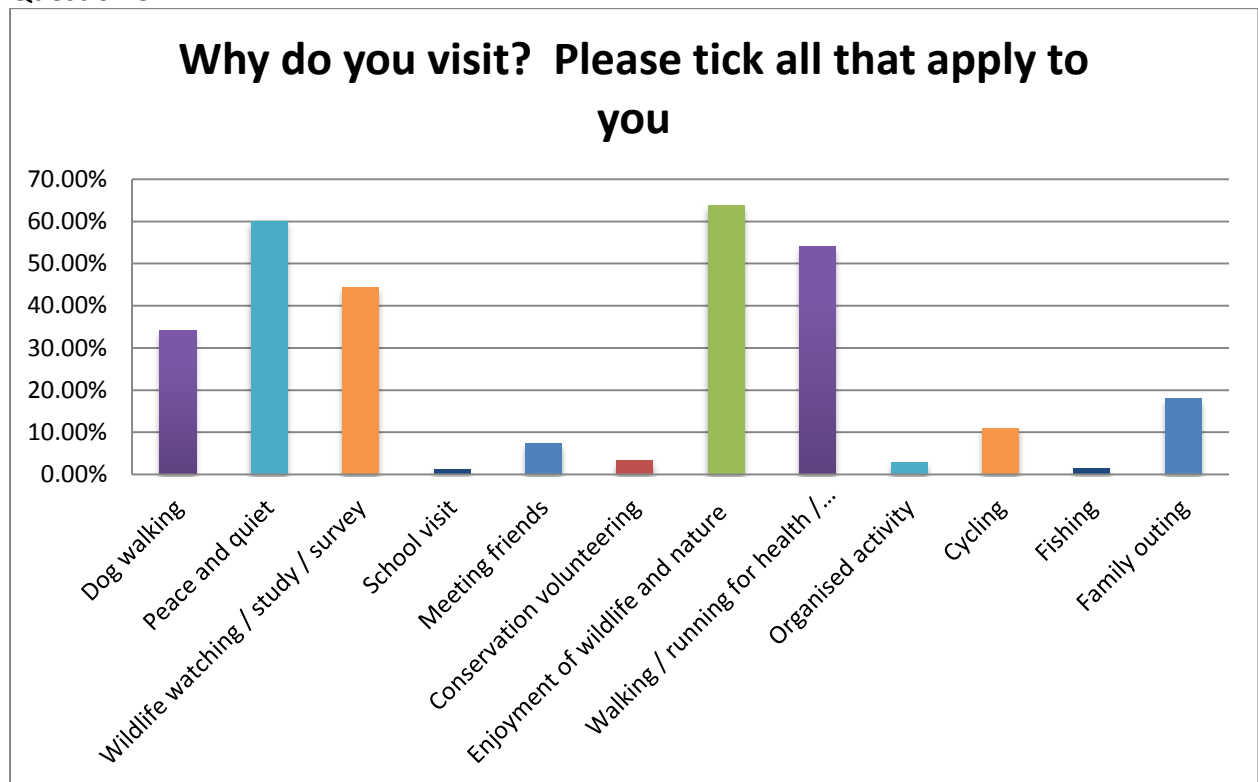


Seven percent of people responding to the survey claim to visit Cromwell Bottom every day, equating to around 67 people. A further 29% (some 276 respondents) visit at least once per

fortnight. If extrapolated, figures suggest annual visitor numbers to Cromwell Bottom of something over 40,000 based only on people taking part in the survey.

Less often, please state: The bulk of people responding to this question have fairly regular usage at around 3-6 times a year probably making up around 34% of users. There is a user bracket of around 9% which visit very regularly numerous times in a week for example. Around 20% visit in an ad hoc fashion, with the weather or when a situation or circumstance dictates. Around 27% of respondents visit 2 to 3 times a year and a smaller number on an annual basis.

### Question 3



The most frequent responses relate to enjoyment of nature, with 64% listing these as reasons for visiting, and peace and quiet (60%). Walking / running for health & exercise was important for 54% and wildlife watching for 44%. Over a third of respondents (34%) mentioned dog walking.

Other, please list: Given the high level of responses to other open questions this was relatively incomplete with just 25 responses. Most responses were not repeated often so it's not really possible to form large indicative categories, however 'photography', 'easy walking' and 'good for children' were all mentioned multiple times.

#### Question 4

### **What do you most like about Cromwell Bottom?**

This open question prompted a wide range of responses, with by far the most common (31%) falling into the 'peace and quiet' category, using words like peaceful, calm and tranquil.

A further category of 'judgement of appearance', included phrases that link with unspoilt, pleasant, beautiful, setting, used in around 8% of responses.

Nature and the diversity of habitats / wildlife also scored highly with around 23% of responses.

Around 18% of respondents mentioned accessibility generally, including closeness to home along with easy / flat walking and access for buggies, wheelchairs and mobility scooters.

Other smaller categories include bird watching and the bird feeding area (5%), the generally undeveloped / wild nature of the place (5%) and the feeling of safety / being away from traffic (3%) (Total responses recorded for this question: 1461)

#### Question 5

### **What do you dislike about Cromwell Bottom?**

The most common response to this question (25%) is people essentially saying 'nothing': they are happy with the site as it is.

However there were large numbers of negative responses, falling into several categories including 'poor appearance' (19%), with respondents mentioning dilapidated buildings and general untidiness especially around the main entrance.

Around 14% of respondents mentioned dogs and their negative impact on people and the environment, especially dog mess and the lack of dog bins.

Lack of facilities especially toilets was mentioned by around 10% of respondents and 9% considered cyclists had a negative impact.

Other smaller categories included anti-social behaviour / not feeling safe; problems with parking, lack of seating provision, poor signage / information and the threat to the site of development. (Total responses recorded for this question: 770)

#### Question 6

### **What would make Cromwell Bottom better for you when you visit?**

The largest category could be considered 'facilities', with around 12% of responses to this question mentioning toilets, 11% mentioning café and a further 5% mentioning visitor or information centre.

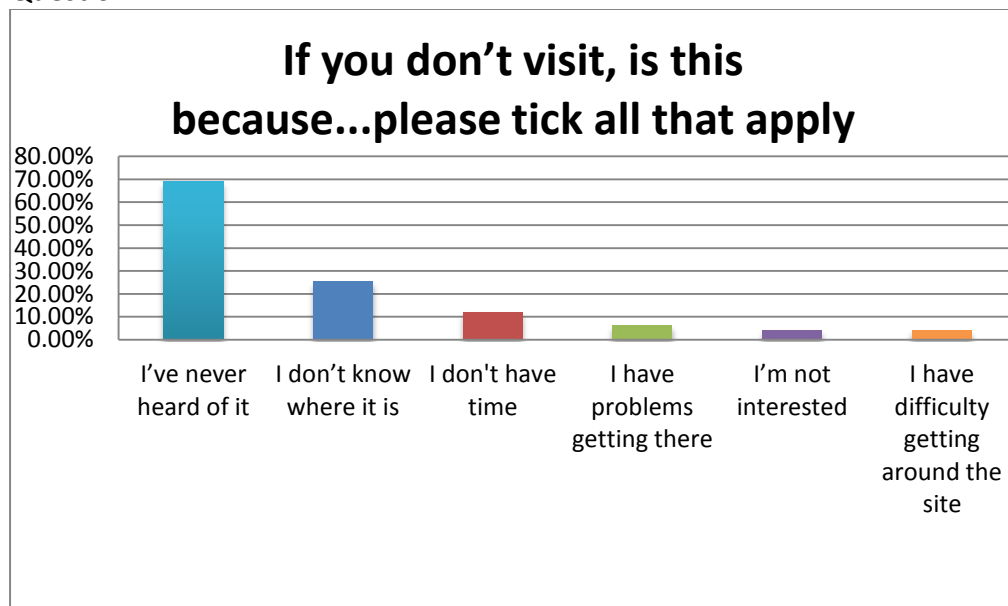
General signage and information are important, with around 12% of responses mentioning better information, signs and maps. Improved paths and trails (8%) and better access and car parking (7.5%) are also mentioned consistently, as is better seating and picnicking provision (8.5%).

There is an apparent conflict between a group of respondents suggesting more cycle paths against a group who suggest cycling should be banned or regulated for safety primarily. There is strong feeling around this area.

There is a focus on dogs, either limiting their access or providing better facilities against dog mess which is seen as an important issue. More dog bins is mentioned in around 6% of responses.

Smaller categories include improvements for wildlife / habitats generally, and better facilities for wildlife watching; generally improved appearance or tidying up, and the need for staff presence or a warden. (Total responses recorded for this question: 961)

### Question 7

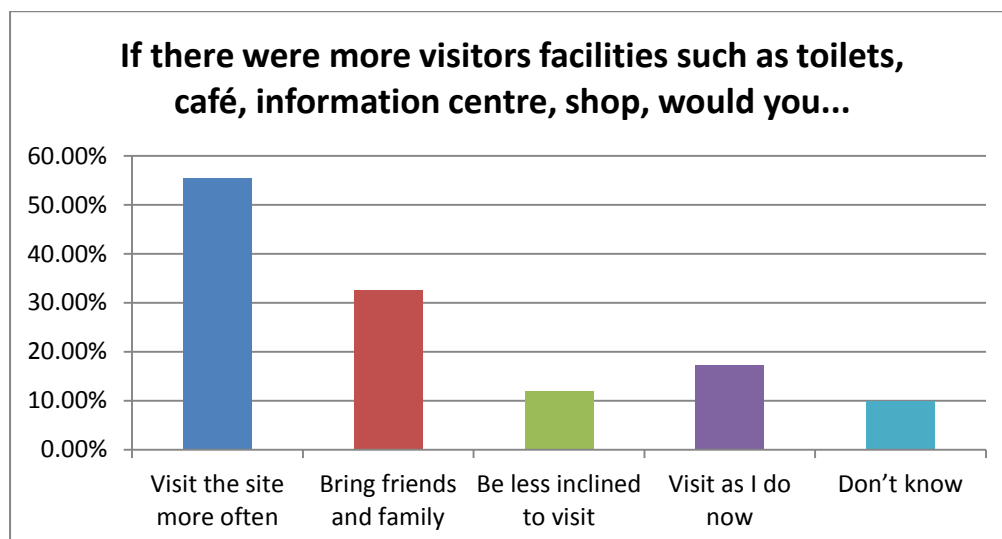


Almost 70% of respondents to this question claim not to visit because they haven't heard of it.

Other, please state: The bulk of issues lie with awareness, with around 40% of responses claiming to be unaware of site, where it is and what is there.

There are some issues with accessibility for disabled, some issues with people thinking it's just too far or remote, and some with lack of facilities. (Total responses recorded for this question: 186)

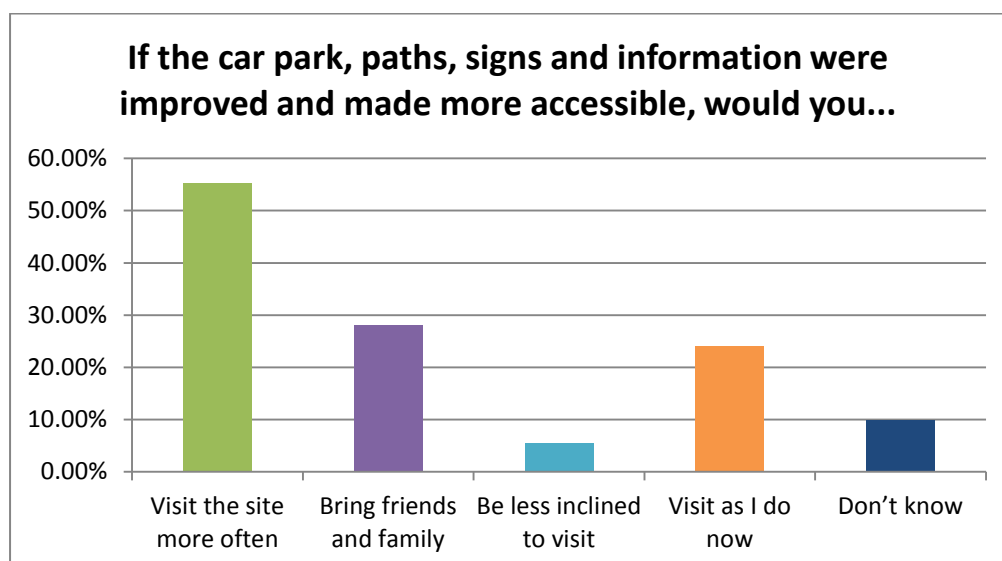
### Question 8



55% of respondents claimed they would visit the site more if more visitor facilities were provided. 12% would be less inclined to visit.

In further comments, a large category highlighted improvements such as toilets (18%) and café (9%), or were in general supportive of improved facilities (17%). Another large category (14%) expressed concern about major overhauls which might impact on the existing natural feel and wildlife at the site, with these people wanting very little development so as to have minimum impact on increasing visitor numbers and consequent spoiling of the site. A further 7% were against shops and businesses generally although around 14% would support development as long as it was sympathetic to the environment. (Total responses recorded for this question: 224)

### Question 9

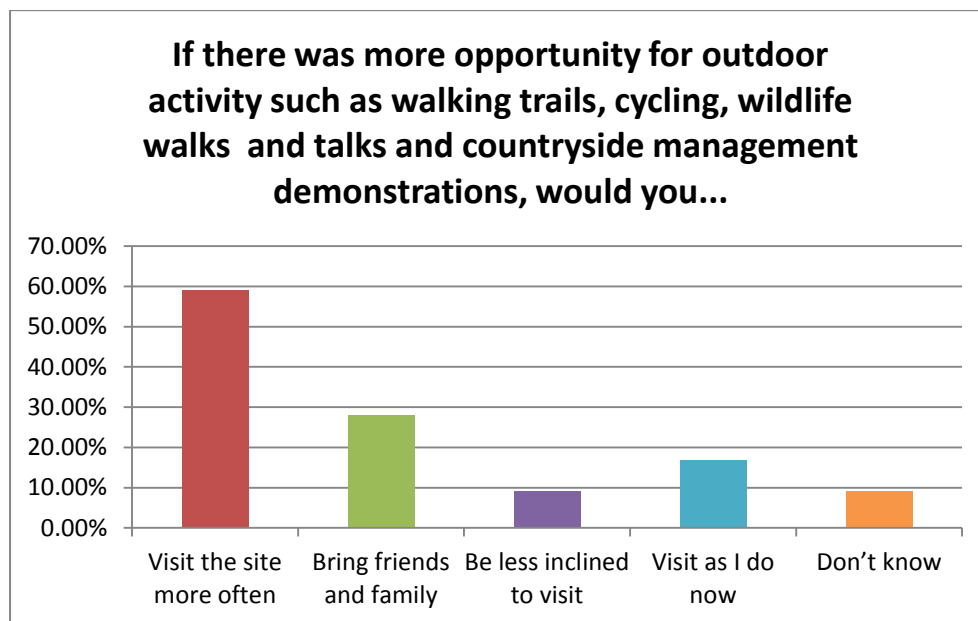


55% of respondents claimed that they would visit the site more often if these improvements were made. 24% of respondents claimed this would make no difference to their visiting

patterns, possibly reflecting the large numbers of visitors who walk to the site and those who already visit regularly. Just 5.5% of respondents would be less inclined to visit.

In further comments, there are indications that better signage would be welcomed, with around 36% mentioning signage and publicity generally. Around 20% of responses mentioned support for improved paths. Car park improvements were also mentioned consistently but around 24% of responses either called for the site to be left as it is or mentioning concerns about encouraging an increase in footfall which may be bad for the wildlife and natural habitat and wildness of the place. (Total responses recorded for this question: 126)

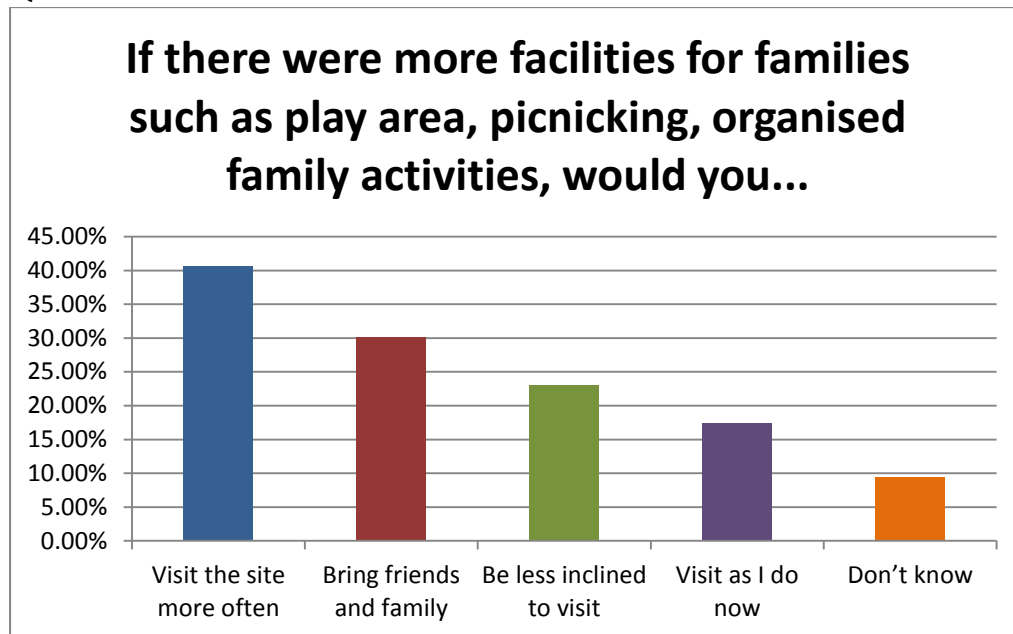
#### Question 10



There is general support for improved paths and trails and educational activities with 59% of respondents claiming this would encourage them to visit more

In further comments, around 19% expressed anti-cycling feeling concerning the dangers and the behaviour of cyclists, with a perception that cyclists may drive other people and wildlife away. However around 17% of responses expressed support for cycling. Around 20% expressed general support for organised activities around nature and walking. Again, there was some concern expressed about over development and increased numbers of people leading to disturbance of wildlife, with around 13% of responses within this category. (Total responses recorded for this question: 215)

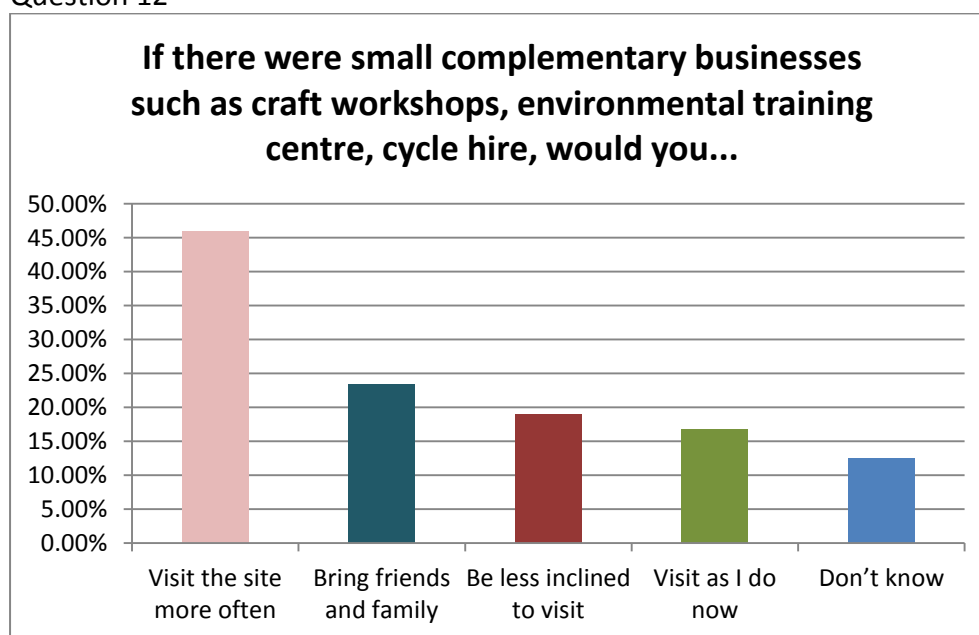
### Question 11



Whilst 40% of respondents claimed this would encourage them to visit more, around 23% claimed they would be less inclined to visit – a larger negative response than for the previous questions.

In further comments, the largest category (29%) included concern that these facilities could be out of keeping with the natural environment and in particular disturb the wildlife and a further 21% were expressly against a play area. There was a further category of support for play facilities generally with around 24% of respondents to this question in favour of play facilities, particularly if in keeping with the wild nature of the site. A smaller group claimed in addition that this would encourage them to bring children to visit. (Total responses recorded for this question: 138)

### Question 12

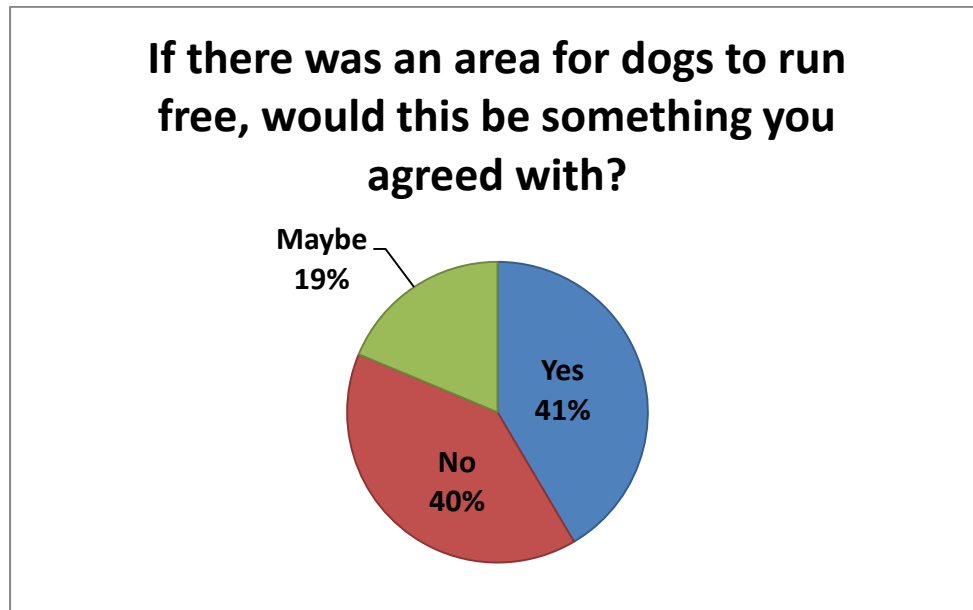


46% claimed this would encourage them to visit more, with 19% being less inclined to visit.



In further comments, the highest category of responses (around 30%) expressed some support particularly for craft type workshops provided this was done sensitively and in the right location. Another group (around 20%) expressed concern about overdevelopment / commercialisation and conflict with wildlife. There was some support (16%) for setting up of cycle hire business but around 10% of responses were against cycle hire or cycling generally. (Total responses recorded for this question: 128)

### Question 13

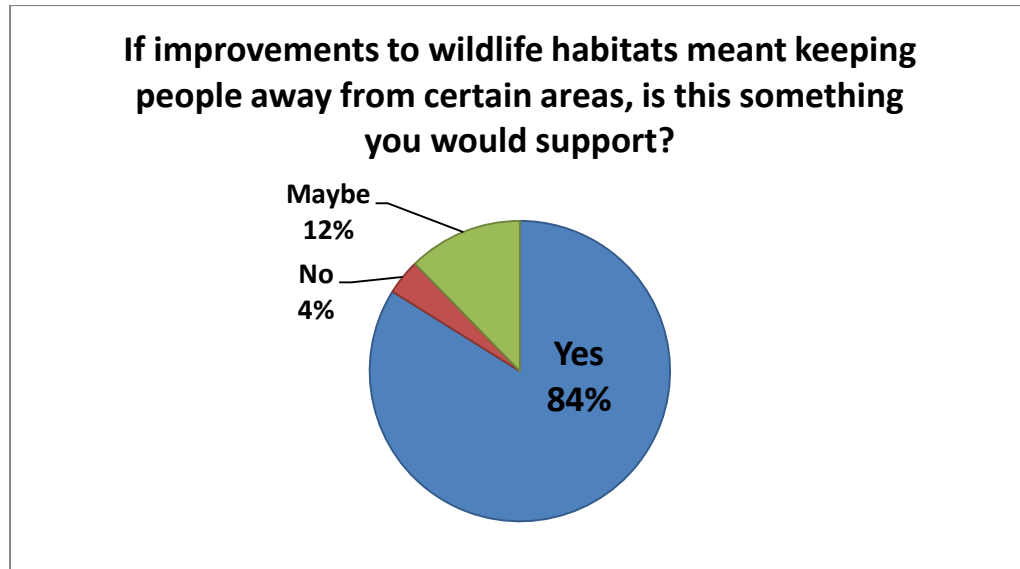


### **Do you wish to comment on dogs using the site?**

There is a balance of comments between ensuring dogs are kept under control or on leads (around 20%) and suggestions for segregation or specific 'dogs allowed / not allowed' areas (around 21%) There was support for more facilities to help and encourage responsible behaviour with dogs, for example signage, poo bins (around 13%). Around 12% of responses suggested no change with dogs allowed throughout Cromwell Bottom as at present. Around 5% of responses suggested dogs should not be allowed at all.

There was some worry expressed about the impact of dogs near people, adults and children and on wildlife, and the general health dangers of dog mess. There were also concerns expressed about the behaviour and responsibilities of dog owners, particularly with statements about people not picking up dog mess or not being responsible on some fashion. (Total responses recorded for this question: 690)

Question 14



There is clear support for restricting public access on certain areas of the site for the benefit of wildlife.

**Q15 Do you visit other parks or nature areas in Calderdale?**

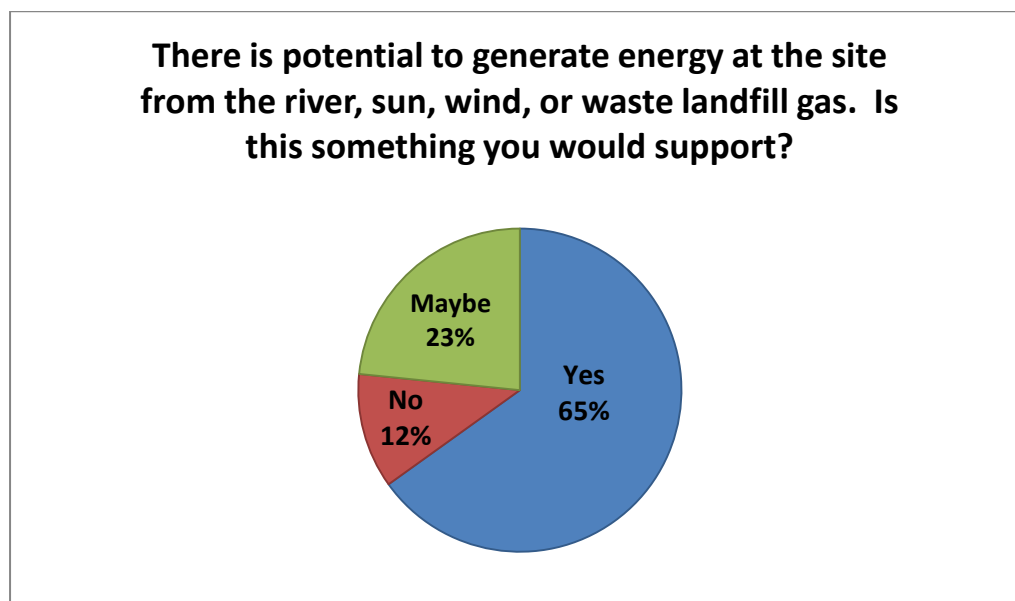
**Top 10 destinations:**

- Shibden Park**
- Manor Heath**
- Wellholme Park**
- Jerusalem Farm**
- Judy woods**
- Oakwell Hall**
- Hebden Bridge / Hardcastle Craggs**
- Savile Park**
- Hollingworth Lake**
- Elland**
- Crow Wood**

The two major destinations are Shibden and Manor Heath, these are mentioned around two-thirds more than the next park down Wellholme. Noted below are the top ten noted destinations.

The third most mentioned category was 'No': I don't visit anywhere else in Calderdale (above Wellholme Park) reinforcing the value that Cromwell Bottom has as a visitor resource for people who otherwise might not be involved in outdoor recreation.

## Question 16



There is clear support for this proposal with some qualifying comments, particularly against wind turbines.

## **Q17 Is there anything else you would like to say about Cromwell Bottom?**

A wide range of comments was received in response to this question, with an emphasis on concern that development could destroy the site, or suggestions that access and commercialisation should be limited so the wildlife is not damaged, expressed in around 18% of responses. This balances with responses generally supportive of improvements (14%) or supportive provided improvements are done sensitively or don't disturb the wildlife (16%).

Around 16% commented on the general lack of publicity for the site as a destination and there was support for more signage generally.

There is some concern about the impact of irresponsible behaviour from cyclists and the generally unattractive / industrial appearance of parts of the site.

There is particularly strong criticism of Calderdale Council and its plans for the site in around 3% of responses. There was a high use of 'obligation' words such as must, should, ought etc, reflecting strong feeling towards the ideas expressed in response to this question. (Total responses recorded for this question: 619)

### **WHAT WE WILL DO NEXT**

This report will be posted on the Council's website and circulated to all those who took part and left an email address.

We will use the results of the consultation to help in the development of feasibility studies which will in turn define the brief for the compilation of a master plan for Cromwell Bottom. Once the master plan is compiled in early 2016, we will once again undertake public consultation before the plan is finalised.