

Parks Youth Engagement Consultation 2023



Picture 1 Strawberry Woods Play Area

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Introduction

The Youth Engagement Consultation 2023 aims to understand how young people and children who live in and visit the borough currently interact with Parks and Open Spaces managed by London Borough of Richmond upon Thames. The Parks Team want to understand what they like and what improvements they would like to see in local parks and open spaces. The consultation will help us to understand any barriers that young people are facing to accessing parks and open spaces, we will then be able to work to mitigate against these. The Parks Team will invest in our open spaces with the findings of the report in mind.

The consultation was initially run for a period of 7 weeks, with a further 16-day extension to gain additional responses. The consultation started on the 11th of August and closed on the 15th of October 2023.

The Parks Team held a free event at Kings Field, Hampton Wick which was promoted through youth organisations, schools and through posters in the parks. There were free activities for visitors to take part in including drumming, street art and tennis. Visitors were also asked to fill out the consultation during the event. The event was well received and helped to increase the responses to the consultation, there was an estimated 30-40 attendees to the event.

Number of Respondents

The consultation received 235 responses. Respondents were asked to select which category they fell into, there was an option for parents to respond on behalf of their child. This was the category with the highest number of respondents (48%).

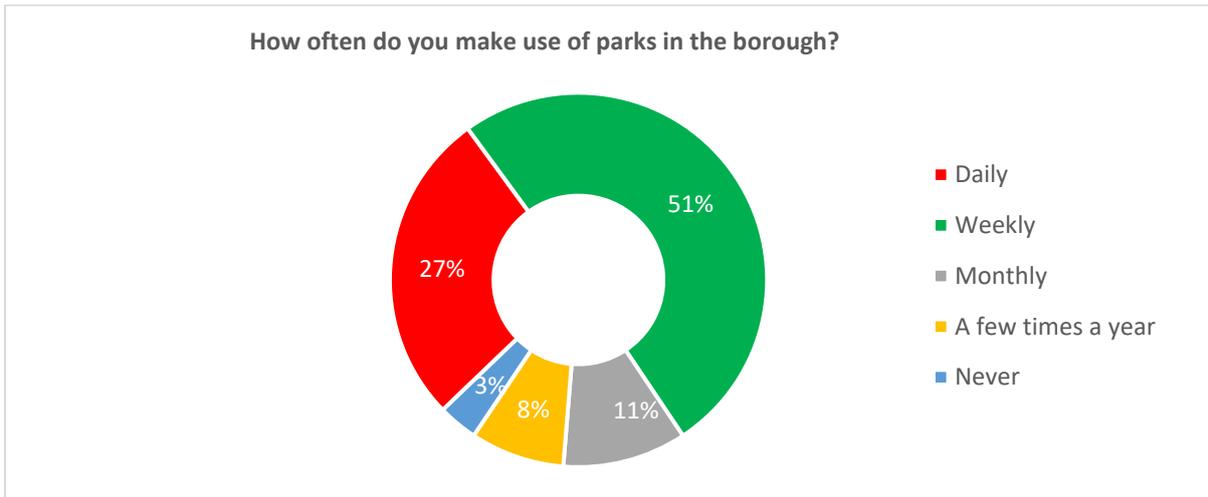
Response	Number of respondents	Percentage of all respondents
Young person over 16	27	11%
Under 16 with a parent/guardian's consent	88	37%
Parent/Guardian on behalf of child(ren) under 16	112	48%
Other, please specify	8	3%

Of the people who selected 'Other', there were 3 grandparents, 3 who were park users, 1 was a charity and 1 was a resident with children who were above 16. Seven out of the eight people who selected other listed themselves as 19 and above, one person preferred not to say.

Results

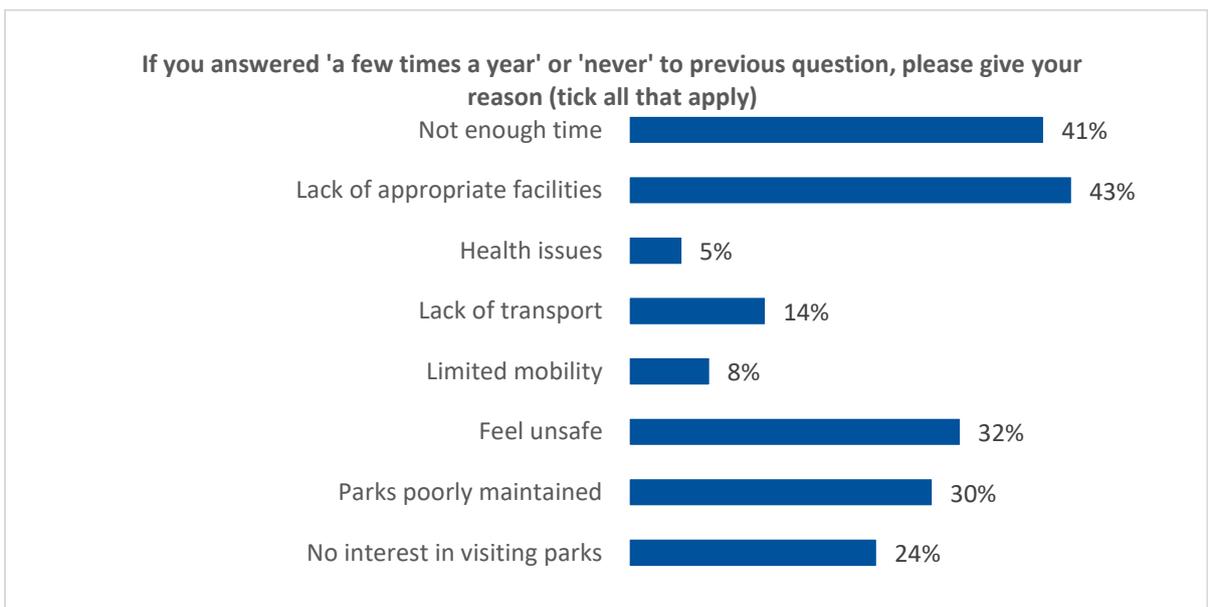
Park Usage

Respondents were asked how often they used parks in the borough. All respondents answered this question. Over half of respondents (51%) stated that they used parks weekly and 27% stated they used them daily.



Those that answered ‘a few times a year’ or ‘never’ were asked to provide a reason. Respondents were able to select more than one answer. The answer with the most responses was ‘lack of appropriate facilities’ at 43% and 41% answered that they did not have enough time.

There was the option to provide a free text ‘other’ response. There were 8 answers, of these 6 of the respondents noted that the park they visit the most often was not one of those that the London Borough of Richmond upon Thames manage.

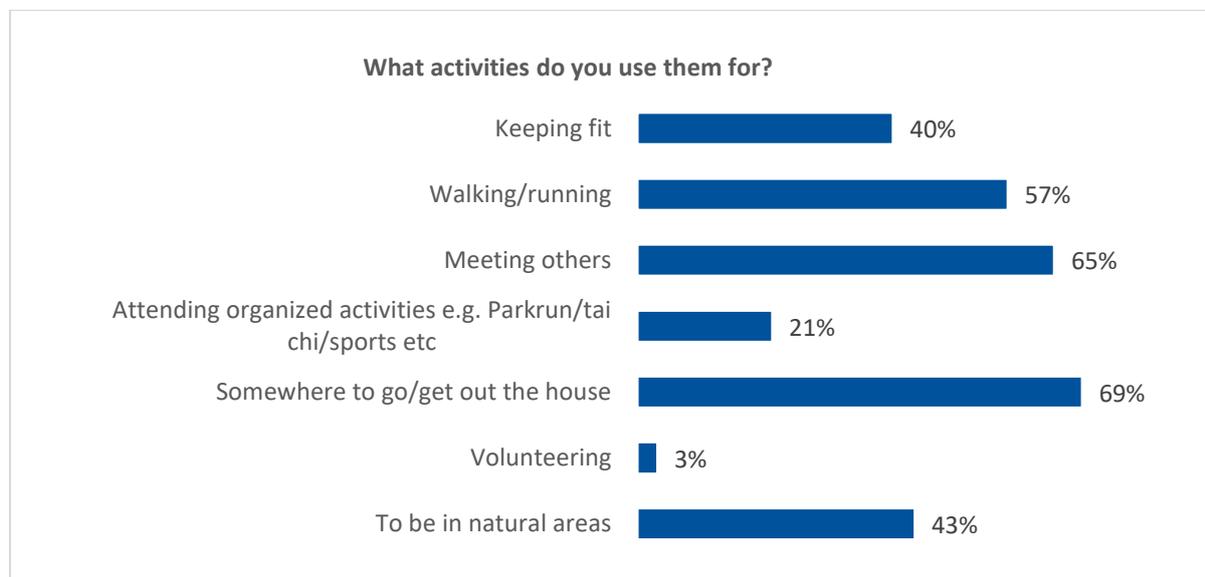


All respondents were asked which parks they visit most often, the most visited Council managed park were Kings Field and Moormead and Bandy Recreation Ground, each with 21 respondents.

The parks with the highest number of respondents are identified below. We did receive responses for 50 parks in the borough and 15 either not in the borough or not managed by the Council.

Open response (free text) question	Responses
Bushy Park	22
Kings Field	21
Moormead and Bandy Recreation Ground	21
Kneller Gardens	15
Richmond Park	13
North Sheen Recreation Ground	11
Marble Hill House and Park	10
Old Deer Park	10
Mortlake Green	9
Church Road Play Area	7

Respondents were asked what they use the parks for, there were 209 responses to this question. The respondents were allowed to select more than one option. The most selected answer was ‘somewhere to go/get out the house’, with 69% of respondents and 65% said ‘meeting others’. The least chosen option for volunteering, with only 3% respondents selecting this.



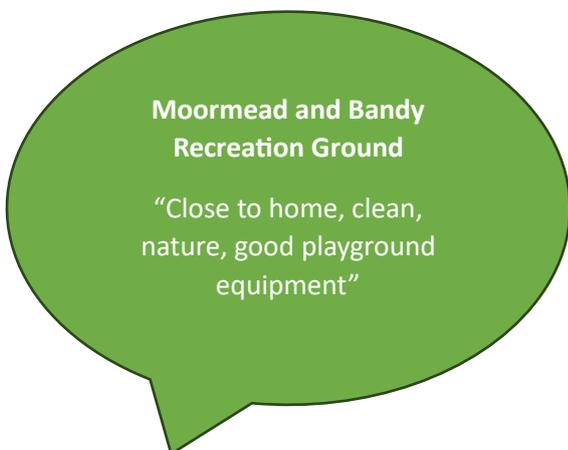
Respondents were able to provide a free text response if they selected ‘other’. There were 73 responses in other. The majority of respondents stated that they visited the park to use the play facilities (34 respondents). Other respondents stated they visited the park for skateboarding (10), ball games (11) and other sports (9).

Opinions of The Park

Respondents were asked what they like about their most visited parks. The results have been analysed not including parks that the Council do not manage.

In total there were 180 responses to the question for Council managed parks. The responses have been reviewed and the most common topics are highlighted below.

What they Like	Responses	Percentage of the 180 responses
Nature/Greenery	64	36%
Play Area	55	31%
Open Space	35	19%
Friendly/Social	26	14%
Sports	24	13%
Good for walking	15	8%
Café/Toilet	14	8%
Proximity to home, schools, work	14	8%
Safety	14	8%
Good maintenance	10	6%
Exercise facilities	6	3%
Accessible	4	2%
Skateboarding	4	2%





Picture 2 Moormead and Bandy Recreation Ground

Respondents were also asked what improvements could be made to their most visited park, there were 170 responses excluding those for parks the Council do not manage. There have been analysed and the most common topics are highlighted below:

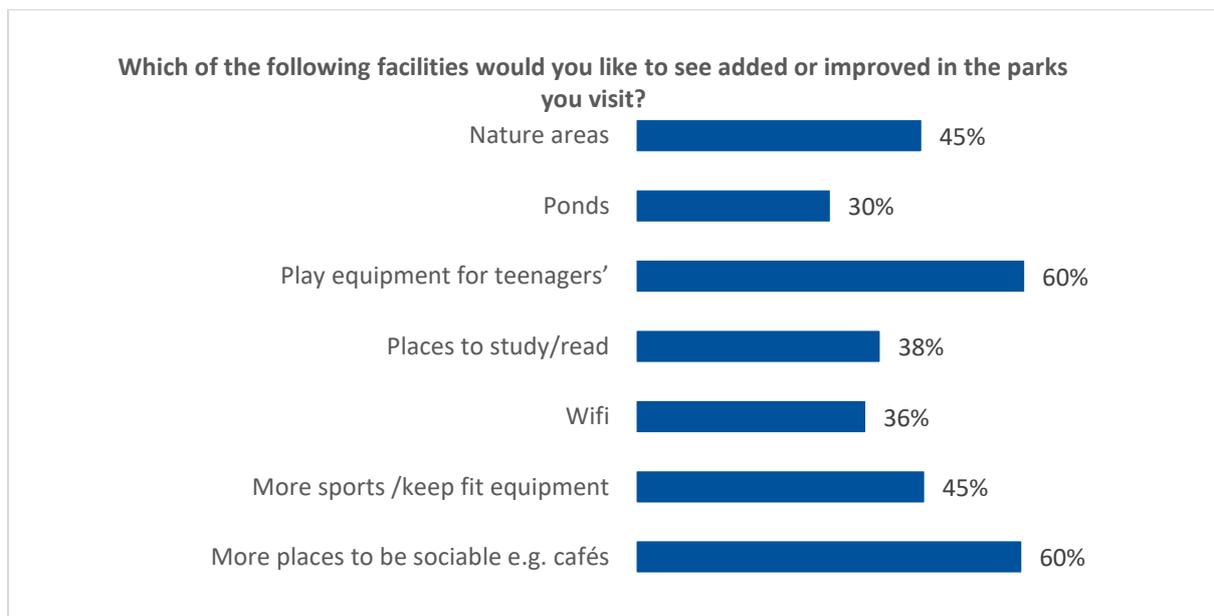
What can be improved	Responses	Percentage of the 170 responses
Play Area	48	28%
Sport Facilities	37	22%
Pavilion/toilet/café	29	17%
Dogs Control/Dog free areas	20	12%
Equipment for Teens	19	11%
Litter	15	9%
Skate facilities	13	8%
Lighting	12	7%
Safety	12	7%
Benches	12	7%
Maintenance	11	6%



Picture 3 Vine Road Recreation Ground

Facilities and Activities

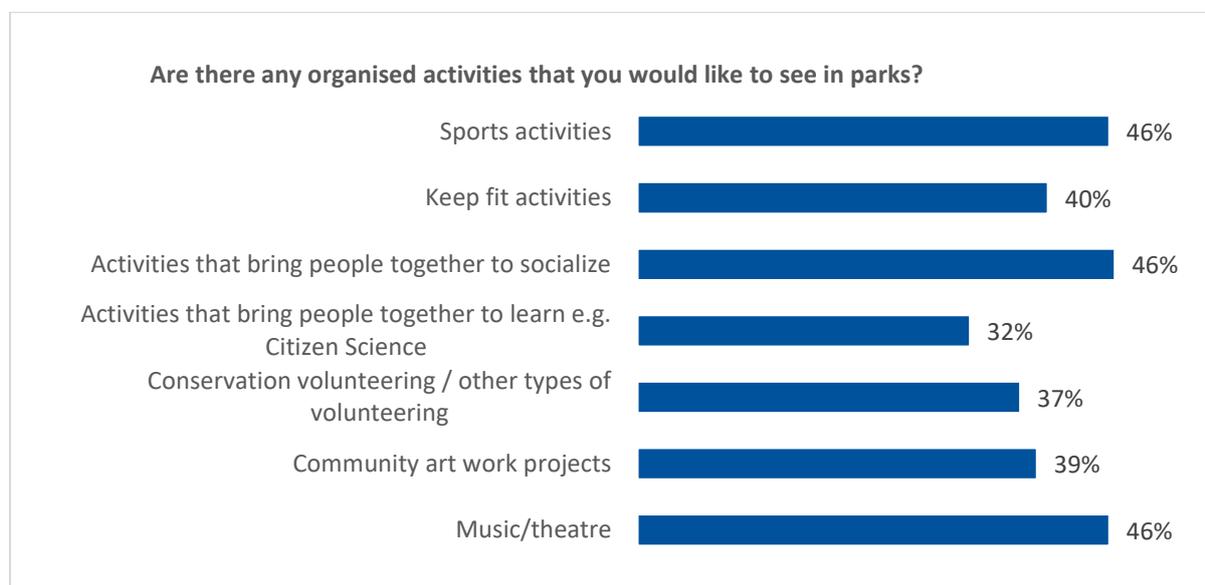
Respondents were asked to select options for what they would like to see added or improved in the parks that they visit. Respondents were able to select more than one response. There were 220 responses to this question.



Over half of the respondents wanted play equipment for teenagers (60%) and more places to be sociable (60%). Respondents were also able to provide other responses for which there were 58 comments. The main responses are categorised below.

Other improvements	Responses	Percentage of the 58 responses
Play Area	15	26%
Sport facilities	12	21%
Toilets/Café	11	19%
Skate facilities	9	16%
Lights	3	5%

Respondents were asked ‘Are there any organised activities that you would like to see in parks?’ There were 186 responses to this question and respondents were able to select more than one answer.

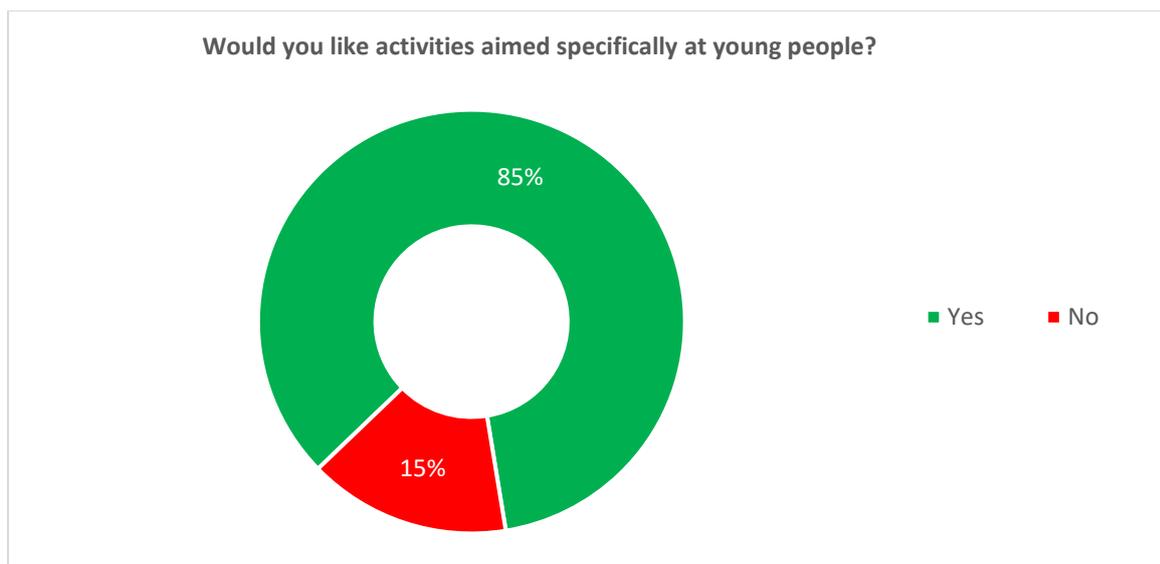


The most selected responses each with 46% of respondents answering, were sports activities, activities that bring people together and music/theatre.

The respondents were also able to provide an answer if they had any other suggestions. There were 17 other suggestions. Of the suggestions, there were 2 for a ‘skate jam’, 2 for ‘children’s activities’ they suggested singing and storytelling. There were 2 suggestions for music events.

The consultation asked respondents if they would like activities specifically aimed at young people. There were 215 responses for this question.

The majority (85%) of respondents agreed that they would like activities aimed at young people.



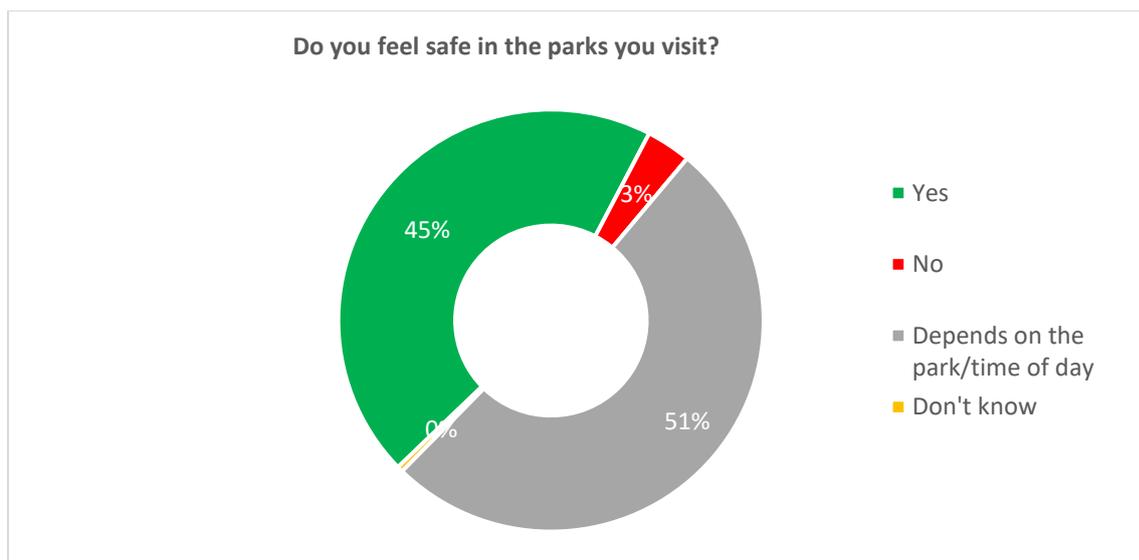
Of the 33 respondents who did not want activities aimed at young people, 15 of these were under 16 with a parent or guardians’ consent and 8 were over 16.

Respondents were asked if they had any other suggestions for activities. There were 61 responses. The main suggestions were focused on sports activities with 16 respondents suggesting these. There were 14 suggestions for more or improved facilities rather than activities.

Other Activities	Responses	Percentage of the 61 responses
Other sports/fitness events	16	26%
Facilities	14	23%
Parents/Others able to join	9	15%
Nature/Environment focused	6	10%
Arts (music, theatre, cinema etc)	6	10%
Social event/spaces	3	5%
Free events	3	5%
Book club	2	3%
Fairs	2	3%
Litter picking/Clean up	1	2%
Food growing	1	2%

Safety and Accessibility

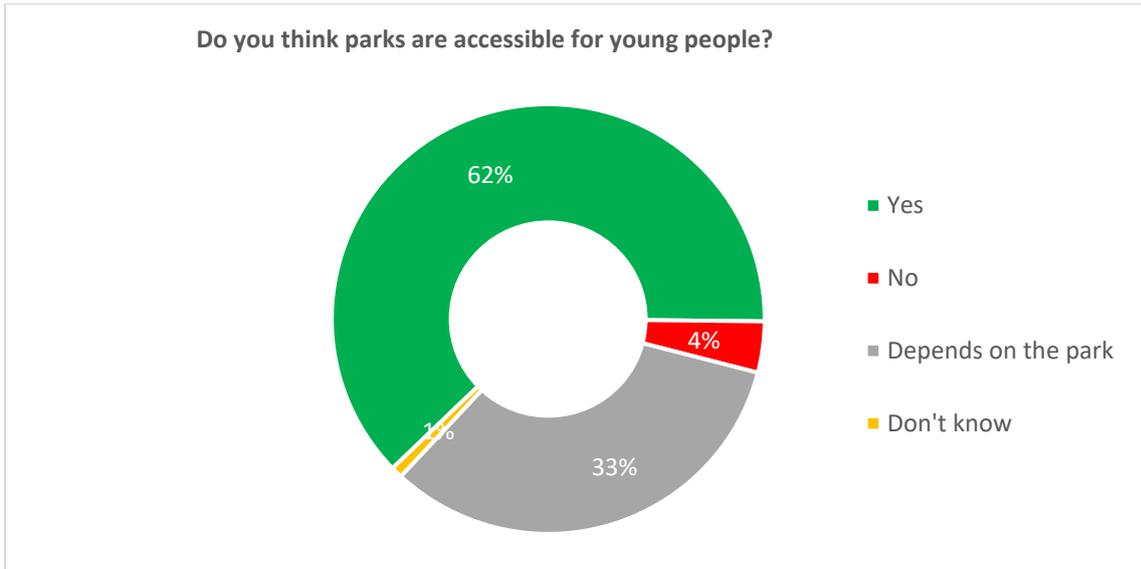
We asked the respondents if they feel safe in the parks that they visit. Over half of the respondents stated that it depends on the park/time of day with 41% of respondents stating they do feel safe and 3% saying that they don’t feel safe.



They were then asked if there was anything that would make them feel safer, the responses were analysed not including those that were provided for non-Council managed parks. There was a total of 67 responses.

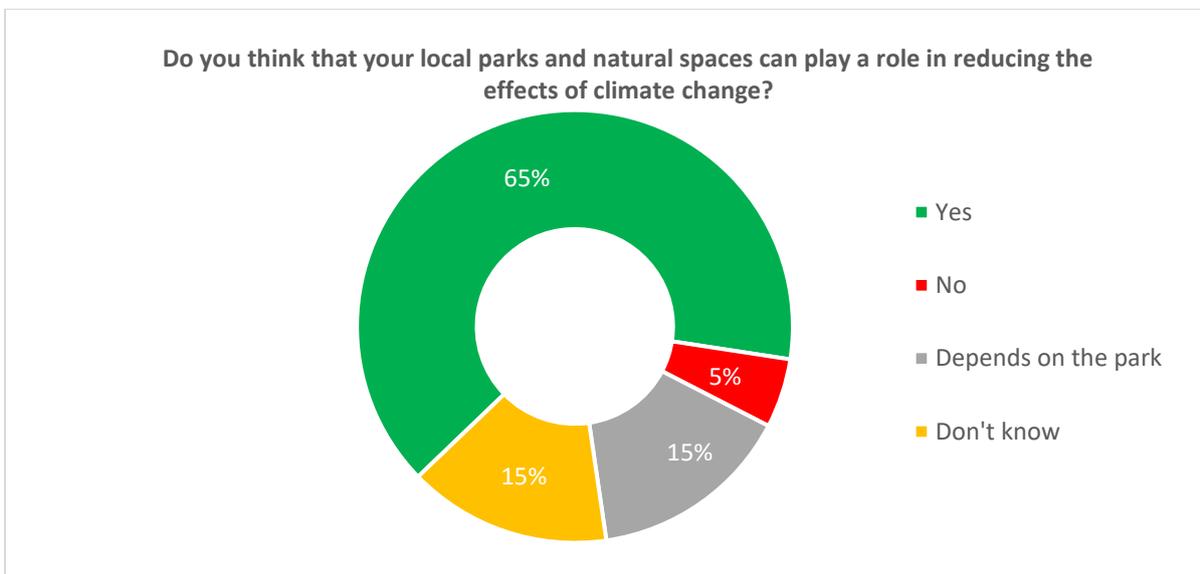
Suggestion	Responses	Percentage of the 67 responses
Lighting	33	49%
CCTV	13	19%
Police/Wardening Patrols	11	16%
Dog Control	6	9%
Safety/Emergency equipment (phone)	5	7%
Controlling ASB/illegal activity	4	6%
Attendant present	3	4%
Café/Toilet	3	4%
Improved access (crossing, roads, entrances)	3	4%
Other people present (doing activities)	2	3%
Improved cleansing	1	1%
Improved equipment	1	1%
Restrict vehicle access	1	1%

Respondents were asked if they thought parks were accessible for young people. The majority of the respondents (62%) stated that they thought they were accessible, 33% of respondents selected that it ‘depends on the park’. There were a minority of respondents who said that parks were not accessible for young people (4%) and 1% said they didn’t know.

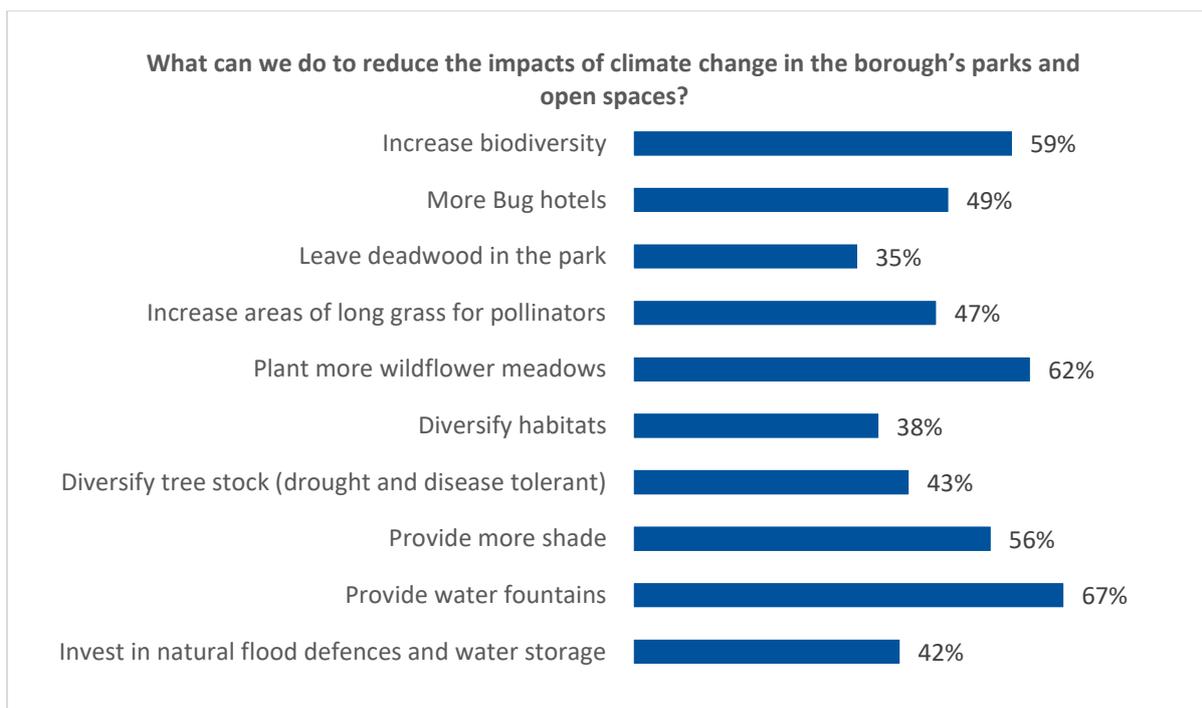


Climate Change and Local Parks

The next question in the consultation was ‘Do you think that your local parks and natural spaces can play a role in reducing the effects of climate change?’ There were 232 responses to this question. Of the responses, 150 respondents (65%) thought that local parks and natural spaces can play a role in reducing the effects of climate change and just 12 (5%) respondents thought that local parks can’t play a role in mitigating the effects of climate change. There were an equal percentage of respondents that said it depends on the park or that they didn’t know (15%).



Respondents were asked ‘What can we do to reduce the impacts of climate change in the borough’s parks and open spaces?’ and were provided a list of options. They were able to select more than one option. There were 213 responses to this question.



The most selected responses were ‘provide water fountains’ (67%), ‘plant more wildflower meadows’ (62%) and ‘increase biodiversity’ (59%). Consultees were also able to provide other suggestions. There were 38 other suggestions.

Suggestion	Responses	Percentage of the 38 responses
Increase biodiversity	7	18%
All of the above	5	13%
Decrease/Change car usage	5	13%
Reduce mowing	4	11%
Water/Wetland Areas	2	5%
Recycling/litter picking	2	5%
Education	2	5%
Increase shade	2	5%
Use sustainable materials	2	5%
Conservation	2	5%
Increased use of parks	1	3%
Stop fires	1	3%
Conservation	1	3%
Vegan food	1	3%
Events	1	3%
Cycle Storage	1	3%

The most suggested response related to increasing biodiversity and 4 respondents specifically mentioned changing or decreasing mowing regimes.

Final Comments

Respondents were asked if they had any further comments about parks in the borough, there were 75 responses.

The majority of responses expressed their love and appreciation for their local park, there were 18 responses which related to improving the facilities and 11 mentions for more or improved equipment for teenagers or older children.

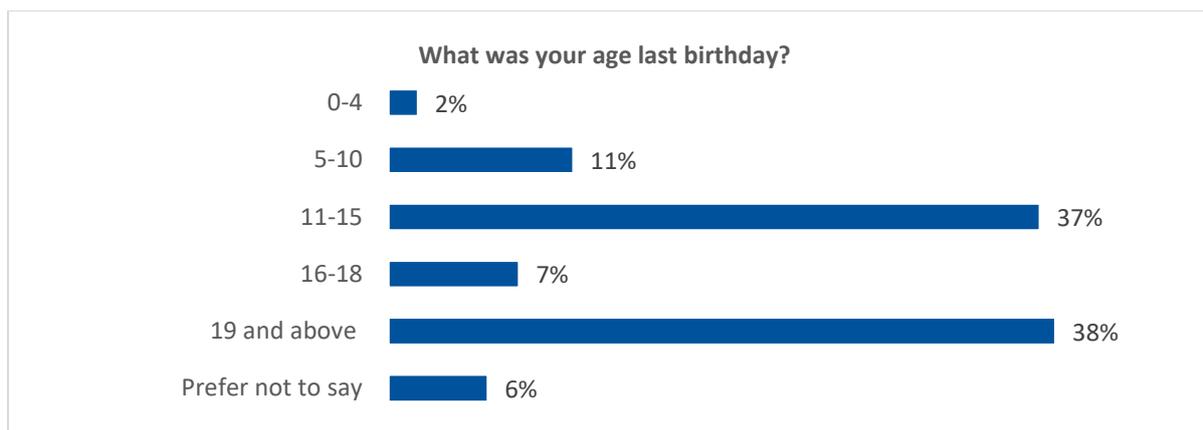
Comment	Responses	Percentage of the 75 responses
Love/like their local	22	29%
Improve facilities/Equipment (water, toilets, café, seating, lighting, shade)	18	24%
Equipment/Space for teens and older children	11	15%
Praise/Thanks	7	9%
Litter/Cleansing Improved	4	5%
Protect	4	5%
Improved Dog Control	4	5%
Attendant	2	3%
Cycle infrastructure	2	3%
Increase biodiversity	2	3%
Improve communication/reach	2	3%
Play equipment for young children	1	1%
Use sustainable materials	1	1%
Increased patrols	1	1%
Safety	1	1%
Community Growing	1	1%
Education	1	1%
More green spaces	1	1%
Facilities for elderly	1	1%
Improve accessibility	1	1%

Respondent Profile

Based on the 229 people who answered the consultation, there were more female respondents (58%). There were 82 male respondents (36%), 11 (5%) who preferred not to disclose and 4 (2%) who prefer to self-describe.

There were 228 respondents who provided their age at their last birthday. The majority of respondents were 19 and above (38%), with 37% of respondents aged 11-15.

The majority of respondents (85%) do not consider themselves to have a disability, 8% of respondents do consider themselves to have a disability and 7% did not want to disclose the information.



Of the 223 respondents who specified their ethnicity, the majority were White (74%), 8% of respondents were Asian or Asian British, 7% of respondents were Mixed/multiple ethnic groups, 2% were an 'Other ethnic group' and 1% of respondents were Black/African/Caribbean/Black British. There were 17 (8%) respondents who did not want to disclose this information.

Conclusion

This consultation has provided useful data that the Parks Team can use to influence how we improve the parks and open spaces we manage. The results have given the Parks Team a better understanding of how young people currently use parks and open spaces, with the majority (51%) visiting parks on a weekly basis. Around two thirds (69%) of respondents visit parks to get out of the house or to meet people (65%).

The consultation has informed us that barriers to engaging with parks for children and young people include a lack of appropriate facilities (43%). The Parks Team have a programme of development and investment in our Parks and Open Spaces, we continually look to improve and increase facilities where possible. The results of the consultation will be used to influence the decisions we make when improving these spaces.

Most of the respondents appreciated their local parks because of the nature and greenery they offer. They suggested that the play areas and sports facilities are the top items that can be improved, 60% of respondents want more equipment for older children and teenagers and more social spaces in parks and open spaces. We will look to engage further with older young people to see what specific equipment they would be interested in seeing in parks, that would encourage them to visit and aim to install these where we are able to. Respondents wanted to see more sports, social and theatre/music activities in their parks and open spaces. They also want to see more activities that are specifically aimed at younger people.

Our local parks were highlighted by respondents as having an impact on the effects of climate change, with respondents suggesting that providing water fountains, increasing biodiversity and planting wildflower meadows can help to mitigate the impacts of climate change.

It is worth noting that whilst there was a good response from children and young people, there was a large number of responses from parents on behalf of their children which we cannot guarantee are the opinions of their children.

Next Steps

From the results the Parks Team have highlighted some quick wins which we will be able to carry out to improve our Parks and Open Spaces. These include adding '[Pollination Stations](#)' to more of our parks and increasing the provision of bins and benches including picnic tables where suitable. The report noted that 65% people use Parks to meet others - we recognise the social aspect of our parks and we will aim to improve and preserve this in line with our Strategic Principles (3 – Our parks will promote active, healthy living and social inclusion for people of all ages) by adding more social seating.

Another quick win would be to ensure we continually promote the use of Parks and Open spaces to young people as a place where they can spend time, meet friends and be involved in volunteering projects. An example of this which is currently in place, is working with Lets Go Outside and Learn's project in Ham, which is focused on giving young people experience of conservation volunteering. We currently promote our Parks and Open Spaces and activities on our webpages including our [explore webpage](#) and the [Seeds of Change project](#) which encourages use of Parks and Open Spaces by local people. We can build on this to create more opportunities and find new ways to promote on social media and our webpages that will reach and include young people.

The Parks Team will continue to work with the Youth Council and other youth organisations when developing new projects to ensure young voices are being heard. We will ensure that the outcome of this consultation is taken to the Youth Council for their comments on the findings. The Parks Team will aim to improve sites taking the results from this consultation into consideration and prioritising the improvements highlighted where possible. This includes the addition/improved play facilities for older children and teens and new or improved sports and fitness facilities.

The Parks Team will be focusing on improving our sports facilities (Multi-Use Games Areas) and outdoor gyms as these are key elements that have been highlighted in the consultation. We will seek to improve current facilities and add new facilities where we are able.

There will also be a focus on ensuring that all sites are safe and inclusive for everyone, especially women and girls. The Parks Team is taking part in Parks for London, Women's Safety Group which is a cross-borough group to develop practices and discuss improvements that can be made to sites. We are also updating our Parks Personal Safety Policy and will consult with the Youth Council, amongst others, as it is developed.