



Public consultation on the future  
management of Ditchling Beacon Nature  
Reserve – a report for the Sussex Wildlife  
Trust

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All photographs by Footprint Ecology unless otherwise stated.

# 1. Introduction

## Background

- 1.1 Ditchling Beacon (Tenantry Down) has been managed as a nature reserve by Sussex Wildlife Trust (SWT) since 1976. In 2019, SWT became a partner in the Changing Chalk<sup>1</sup> project, a partnership connecting nature, people and heritage on and around the South Downs, led by the National Trust and supported by the National Lottery Heritage Fund. Sussex Wildlife Trust became a partner in 2019, providing the opportunity to carry out the first phase of a public consultation on the management of Ditchling Beacon to ensure that the site is managed for the benefit of current and future generations.

## Site description

- 1.2 Ditchling Beacon is just over 24ha in total size and more than four fifths of it is registered as Common Land under the Commons Registration Act 1965. The site is managed by SWT on behalf of the owners, Ditchling Beacon and Commons, a registered charity. The pay and display car park located at the summit of the Beacon (and a small area of land extending to the parish boundary) is owned and operated by the National Trust. The site ownership of the wider area generally known as “Ditchling Beacon” is as follows:
- Ditchling Beacon and Commons – 19.08 ha (Purchased 1950)
  - Sussex Wildlife Trust - 4.29 ha (Purchased 2011)
  - National Trust Car Park area - 0.19 ha (Purchased 1984)
  - National Trust Beacon areas – 2.78 ha (Purchased 1953 and 2012)
  - Pt Park Farm – 27.04ha (Purchased 1999)
- 1.3 In this report, we use “Ditchling Beacon” to refer to the area registered as common land.
- 1.4 Ditchling Beacon forms an obvious landmark within the landscape of the South Downs. At 248m tall it comprises the tallest point in East Sussex and provides an unobstructed panorama across the Weald and downs. It lies within the historic, linear, parish of Ditchling, which follows the downs and, in doing so, incorporates historically grazed areas on the steep northern scarp,

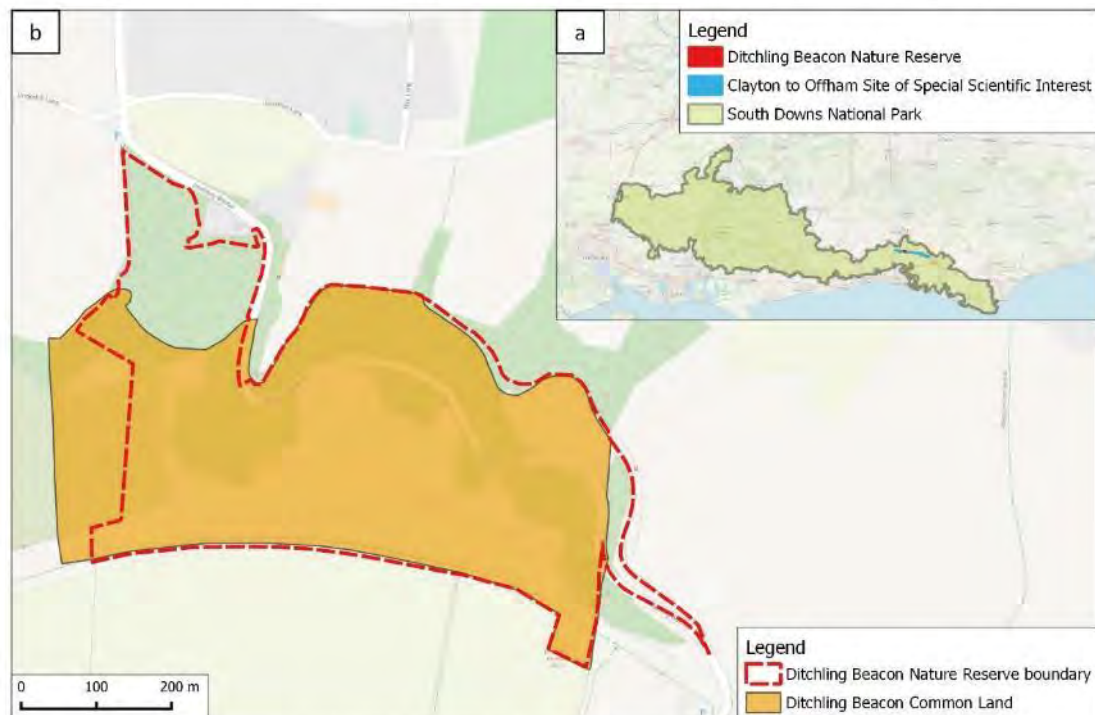
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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/projects/the-changing-chalk-partnership>

patches of woodland, and cultivated areas in the downland dip slope (all of which were required to maintain the parish's inhabitants in the past).

- 1.5 Located south of the village of Ditchling and situated within easy travel distance of Brighton (it has its own dedicated bus route), the site is used regularly by both local people and those from further afield for a variety of activities, including walking, dog walking, horse riding, cycling, and wildlife watching. Several footpaths traverse the site, and the South Downs Way bridle path runs along its southern border. The ascent afforded by the busy Ditchling Bostall road, which runs up the steep northern scarp slope, is popular with cyclists, and forms one stretch of the annual London to Brighton Bike Ride.

**Map 1: (a) Location of Ditchling Beacon Nature Reserve and (b) the extent of Common Land on site.**



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## Key features of interest

### *Wildlife*

- 1.6 Ditchling Beacon is part of the Clayton to Offham Site of Special Scientific Interest ([SSSI](#)<sup>2</sup>), with the reserve playing an important role in wider habitat connectivity across the larger site. The reserve's ecological value arises from its location on the steep chalk escarpment, with nationally uncommon chalk grassland comprising the dominant habitat, although the site also incorporates areas of Ash and Hawthorn dominated woodland and scrub. The areas of secondary woodland at Ditchling Beacon are already suffering the effects of Ash Dieback disease (which arrived in the UK within the last decade and is already having major impacts upon Ash trees across the south).
- 1.7 The grassland habitats support a range of rare plants, including several species of orchid, such as the declining Musk Orchid and the Marsh Fragrant Orchid (the latter outside of its typical habitat type). Autumn Gentian, Round-headed Rampion and the diminutive Adder's-tongue Fern comprise some of the other attractive and range-restricted plants found on site.
- 1.8 The reserve is also important for breeding and passage birds, and a sizeable number of butterfly species have been recorded. The latter include populations of both Dingy and Silver-spotted Skippers, as well as Chalk-hill Blues. These butterfly species are dependent upon short grassland swards, which receive high levels of sunlight and support a variety of nectar sources.
- 1.9 In recent decades large areas of chalk grassland within the site have been lost to encroaching scrub and trees, due to a decrease in the level of grazing – historic photographs indicate that much of the woodland on site is only about 60 years old. SWT estimates that 90% of the site was grassland in the 1940s, compared to just over 41% now (with only 11% classified as chalk grassland). Many of the rare plants and animals found at Ditchling Beacon are reliant on the short and open sward which results from grazing on downland soils. Once grazing levels decrease, more robust, generalist grasses outcompete many of the more specialist chalk grassland species.

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<sup>2</sup>

<https://designatedsites.naturalengland.org.uk/SiteDetail.aspx?SiteCode=S1002124&SiteName=&countyCode=14&responsiblePerson=&SeaArea=&IFCAArea=>

Reduced grazing levels also ultimately allow scrub to become established within former grassland areas.

- 1.10 Scrub is, however, of benefit in its own right, providing habitat for breeding and passage birds, while scrubby edges provide a marginal microhabitat for species that require warm, sheltered, conditions or that are vulnerable to grazing.
- 1.11 Natural England, the government's adviser for the natural environment in England and the body responsible for designating SSSIs, has recently assessed the site unit that comprises Ditchling Beacon (004) as "[unfavourable recovering](#)<sup>3</sup>" as grazing and scrub management is underway to restore areas of chalk grassland, but more progress is needed to move the site to "favourable" condition.

### *Archaeological/historic heritage*

- 1.12 The remains of an Iron Age hillfort are located on the top of the beacon, although these have been partly damaged by ploughing in the past. Other heritage features within the site include an 18th/19th century dewpond, highlighting the historical importance of the locality for stock grazing, and a parish boundary stone dating back to the 1800s.

### *Commoning*

- 1.13 The freehold of the registered common is held by the charity, Ditchling Beacon and Commons (previously Ditchling Common and Tenantry Down Ltd) who hold the land for the benefit of the commoners and the wider public. The registered commoners have the following common rights on the property as specified by the Commons Register:
- To graze sheep.
  - Estovers (the right to take wood for the use or furniture of a house or farm).
  - Warren (the right to keep beasts or fowls of warren such as hares, coneys, partridges, pheasants, etc).
- 1.14 These common rights are not currently exercised.

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3

<https://designatedsites.naturalengland.org.uk/ReportUnitCondition.aspx?SiteCode=S1002124&ReportTitle=Clayton%20to%20Offham%20Escarpment%20SSSI>



## Current management

- 1.15 The steep terrain presents challenges in terms of day-to-day management of the site. Habitat management (including scrub clearance and tree thinning) is predominantly carried out using hand tools by members of the local community, alongside other volunteers, and is overseen by SWT. More technologically innovative methods, such as the use of automated 'robomowers' to remove areas of scrub on steep scarp slopes, have also been trialled in the past, although the associated cost and skilled labour requirements may limit their use in the future.
- 1.16 The arrival of Ash Dieback disease in the UK in 2012 means that many of the Ash trees on site are dying, and treefall has consequently become a health and safety concern for members of the public accessing the reserve. The thinning and removal of potentially dangerous trees has therefore recently become an important component of day-to-day management on site.
- 1.17 Livestock are also used as a management tool, with grazing currently carried out on <50% of the reserve and concentrated within one fenced area in the south of the site. Traditionally, a mix of British White and Sussex cattle have been used in the summer. Sheep also play an important role in the grazing management of the chalk grassland, with Herdwick sheep grazed on Ditchling Beacon in the winter months. The absence of a permanent standing waterbody however poses a constraint to grazing, with any water required currently bowsered onto site.
- 1.18 Previously an attempt was made to secure consent for cattle grids on the Ditchling Bostall Road to allow a larger area to be grazed. However this was rejected by the Highways Authority, who stated that "unless significant changes occur in the future to considerably reduce the volume of traffic using Ditchling Bostall Road (without the introduction of stand alone traffic regulation orders restricting vehicle usage), an open grazing scheme involving cattle grids and/or traffic calming is not appropriate for this section of road".

## The consultation process

- 1.19 SWT is keen to determine the best way to manage Ditchling Beacon to help meet its vision of making Sussex a place where wildlife and people can thrive. Ditchling Beacon is registered common land and is used by a wide range of people who appreciate many different aspects of the site. SWT

therefore wishes to engage as fully as possible with all stakeholders to ensure that all those with an interest in the common can contribute to decisions about its future management. To ensure a structured and inclusive approach, SWT is following the guidance set out in A Common Purpose (Natural England, 2012), and commissioned Footprint Ecology to support the process. This report details the actions taken and results of the first stage of the consultation. The second stage will involve a similar consultation on more detailed options developed with the input of key stakeholders.

## 2. The consultation

- 2.1 The consultation about the future management of Ditchling Beacon ran from Wednesday 14th October to Friday 18th December 2020 and was then extended to Friday 15th January 2021 due to Covid restrictions during the previous November. The consultation aimed to provide accessible information about the site, its features of interest and the challenges of managing it, and to provide different types of opportunities for stakeholders to feed back about what is important to them about the site and the type of management they would like to see. The consultation included the components listed in Table 1.
- 2.2 The process was unavoidably impacted by restrictions in place relating to the Covid pandemic. The consultation planning took place before the start of the pandemic and originally included guided walks and face-to-face drop-in(s) in an indoor location (with space for displays and handouts) and facilities for people to answer the online questionnaire. This consequently had to be changed to an almost entirely digital approach, although there was still the opportunity for a single face-to-face event at the Ditchling Beacon car park. Nevertheless, the overall number of individuals and organisations who engaged with the consultation was still relatively high.

### Stakeholders

- 2.3 A comprehensive list of stakeholders (see [Appendix 1](#)) was identified following the guidance given in A Common Purpose (Natural England, 2012). This included owners and rights holders, the people of the neighbourhood, other site users, and representatives of areas of public interest (including nature conservation, the conservation of the landscape, the protection of public rights of access and the protection of archaeological or historic features).

## Publicity

- 2.4 A [Changing Chalk page](#)<sup>4</sup> was created on the SWT website to provide a convenient single location for downloads and links that could then be publicised. Publicity was through the SWT social media platforms ([Twitter](#)<sup>5</sup> and [Facebook](#)<sup>6</sup>), the regular SWT eNews (which has around 40,000 subscribers) and through posters positioned at 11 locations around the site (plus at the Green Welly Café and the Post Office in the village of Ditchling) prior to the consultation. The posters were replaced on 25/11/2020 to enable the additional event dates to be publicised (see below). Key local organisations (e.g. The Ditchling Society) were also asked to circulate information provided through their mailing lists.

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<sup>4</sup> Page views: 1,437 Unique views: 1,218

<sup>5</sup> 7 posts: 15,762 Impressions, 470 Engagements. Engagement rate: 2.98

<sup>6</sup> 5 posts: 15,202 Reach, 269 Engagements. Engagement rate: 1.77%

# DITCHLING BEACON COMMONS CONSULTATION

**Table 1: Components of the 2020 consultation on the future management of Ditchling Beacon.**

Component	Description	Metrics
<b>(1) Interactive online presentation</b>	The explanation of the background to the consultation, the important features of Ditchling Beacon, the management options, and signposting readers to the questionnaire (see below) was hosted on a new <a href="#">Changing Chalk page</a> of the SWT website. This was available as an interactive online presentation (in Microsoft Sway) and as a <a href="#">downloadable pdf</a> . Contact details were provided to enable people to request copies if they could not view them online.	1,437 view (1,218 unique) of Changing Chalk webpage  2,253 views of video via social media, 187 views on YouTube
<b>(2) Questionnaire</b> (see Appendix 2)	Hosted on the same website page, this was designed to gather respondents' views on Ditchling Beacon, including why they visit the site, the activities they undertake, what they value and what changes, if any, they would like to see. The questionnaire was available online and as pdf for the period of the consultation.	209 questionnaires completed
<b>(3) Direct contact by email or letter drop</b>	A number of key stakeholders were contacted directly by email ( <a href="#">see Appendix 1</a> ) to ask for their views on the future management of Ditchling Beacon. A similar letter was delivered by hand to properties in the immediate vicinity of the common.	54 letters sent 10 responses received. 22 hand delivered letters (13-23/10/2020)
<b>(4) Webinars</b>	Webinars involved a 30 minute <a href="#">presentation</a> about the common, its features of interest and management options (given by Footprint Ecology staff). This included a pre-recorded <a href="#">video</a> by Steve Tillman (SWT Reserves Manager) out on site, introducing people to key features and issues. Steve was present for each webinar and, at the end of the presentation, participants were invited to ask questions or share comments by video, audio, or in the chat.	3 x webinars (11/11/2020, 18/11/2020, 16/12/2020)  23 participants overall
<b>(5) On-site drop-ins</b>	Face-to-face events designed to raise the profile of the consultation and provide an opportunity for site users to chat informally were based at the Ditchling Beacon car park and staffed by SWT, supported by South Downs National Park (SDNP) staff with the SDNP interpretation trailer.	One event held on 3/11/2020 <i>2 further events cancelled due to national Covid restrictions</i> 30 people engaged with directly

### 3. Questionnaire results

#### Overview

- 3.1 A total of 209 respondents completed the questionnaire (see [Appendix 2](#)), with the vast majority doing so online. A small number of respondents declined to answer all of the questions however, and this is indicated where relevant in the following sections which provide a summary of the responses.

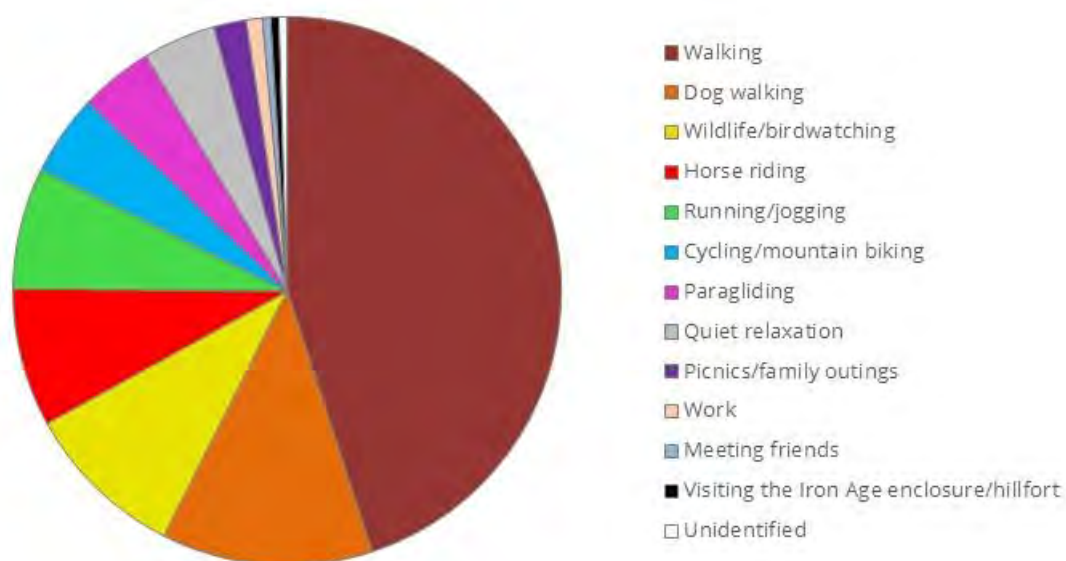
#### Main activity of respondents (Q1)

- 3.2 All bar one of the 209 questionnaire respondents identified the main activity which they carry out at Ditchling Beacon (see Table 2 and Figure 1). Walking was the most commonly identified activity (45% of respondents), dog walking the second (13% of respondents), and wildlife/birdwatching the third (10% of respondents). Other frequent activities amongst respondents comprised horse riding (8% of respondents), running/jogging (7% of respondents), and cycling/mountain biking (5% of respondents).
- 3.3 Fewer than 5% of respondents identified paragliding, quiet relaxation, picnics/family outings, and work as their main activity, with single respondents identifying meeting friends and visiting archaeological features.

**Table 2: Summary of questionnaire respondents by main activity carried out at Ditchling Beacon**

Activity	Number of respondents (%)
Walking	94 (45.2)
Dog walking	26 (12.5)
Wildlife/birdwatching	20 (9.7)
Horse riding	17 (8.2)
Running/jogging	15 (7.3)
Cycling/mountain biking	10 (4.9)
Paragliding	9 (4.4)
Quiet relaxation	9 (4.4)
Picnics/family outings	4 (2.0)
Work	2 (1.0)
Meeting friends	1 (0.5)
Visiting the Iron Age enclosure/hillfort	1 (0.5)
Unidentified	1 (0.5)
Total	209 (100)





**Figure 1: Main activity carried out at Ditchling Beacon identified by questionnaire respondents (n = 209)**

## Frequency of visit (Q2)

- 3.4 206 respondents provided answers to Q2. Overall, most respondents (39%) visit Ditchling Beacon less than once a month (see Table 3 and Figure 2), with a further 23% visiting on a monthly basis. Nevertheless, more than a fifth of respondents (22%) visit at least weekly, with 3% of respondents visiting daily.
- 3.5 These patterns generally hold true across the more commonly recorded main activity types, although runners/joggers, horse riders, and dog walkers tend to visit slightly more frequently, with 27% of the latter group visiting more than once a week/daily.

**Table 3: Visitation frequency at Ditchling Beacon of questionnaire respondents, arranged by main activity (with row percentages). The largest value in each row is highlighted in dark grey, and the second largest in light grey. Note that 3 questionnaire respondents did not answer this question**

Activity	Frequency of visit						Total
	Daily	More than once a week	Weekly	2 to 3 times a month	Monthly	Less than once a month	
Walking	2 (2.2)	10 (10.7)	6 (6.4)	10 (10.7)	17 (18.1)	49 (52.2)	94 (100)
Dog walking	1 (3.9)	6 (23.1)	4 (15.4)	4 (15.4)	7 (27)	4 (15.4)	26 (100)
Wildlife/ birdwatching	0 (0)	1 (5.3)	1 (5.3)	4 (21.1)	4 (21.1)	9 (47.4)	19 (100)
Horse riding	0 (0)	1 (6.3)	4 (25)	4 (25)	4 (25)	3 (18.8)	16 (100)
Running/ jogging	0 (0)	1 (6.7)	1 (6.7)	5 (33.4)	4 (26.7)	4 (26.7)	15 (100)
Cycling/ mountain biking	1 (10)	1 (10)	2 (20)	2 (20)	3 (30)	1 (10)	10 (100)
Paragliding	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	1 (11.2)	4 (44.5)	4 (44.5)	9 (100)
Quiet relaxation	1 (11.2)	0 (0)	1 (11.2)	2 (22.3)	3 (33.4)	2 (22.3)	9 (100)
Picnics/family outings	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	1 (25)	1 (25)	2 (50)	4 (100)
Work	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	1 (50)	1 (50)	2 (100)
Meeting friends	0 (0)	0 (0)	1 (100)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	1 (100)
Visiting the Iron Age enclosure/ hillfort	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	1 (100)	1 (100)
Total	5 (2.5)	20 (9.8)	20 (9.8)	33 (16.1)	48 (23.4)	80 (38.9)	206 (100)

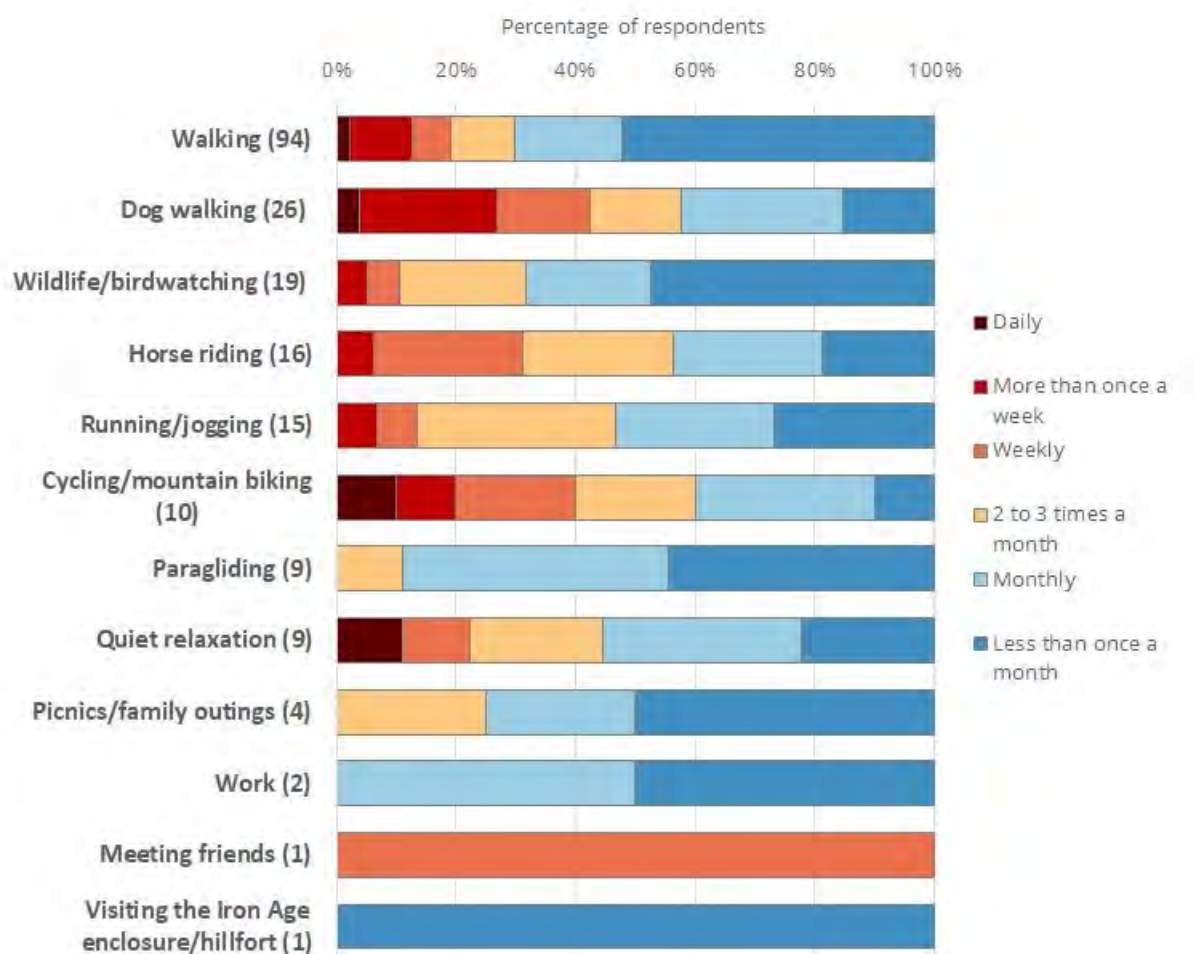


Figure 2: Visitation frequency at Ditchling Beacon of questionnaire respondents, arranged by main activity (number of respondents per activity type in parentheses). Note that 3 questionnaire respondents did not answer this question.

## Time of year (Q3)

- 3.6 Questionnaire respondents could provide multiple answers to this question. The majority of responses (45%) indicated that respondents visit equally across the year, with a fifth (20%) visiting more during the summer months. Few responses (5%) indicated a preference for winter visits (see Table 4).
- 3.7 This pattern generally held true across the more commonly recorded main activity types, although both horse riders and wildlife/birdwatchers indicated that they were equally or more likely to visit during the summer months (30% and 29% of responses, respectively).

**Table 4: Preferred time of year for visit to Ditchling Beacon by questionnaire respondents, arranged by main activity (with row percentages). The largest value in each row is highlighted in dark grey, and the second largest in light grey. Note that individual questionnaire respondents could provide multiple answers to this question**

Activity	Equally all year	Spring (Mar-May)	Summer (Jun-Aug)	Autumn (Sept-Nov)	Winter (Dec-Feb)	Total
Walking	63 (47.8)	23 (17.5)	23 (17.5)	16 (12.2)	7 (5.4)	132 (100)
Dog walking	22 (68.8)	1 (3.2)	3 (9.4)	3 (9.4)	3 (9.4)	32 (100)
Wildlife/ birdwatching	9 (29.1)	6 (19.4)	9 (29.1)	5 (16.2)	2 (6.5)	31 (100)
Horse riding	8 (26.7)	8 (26.7)	9 (30)	5 (16.7)	0 (0)	30 (100)
Running/jogging	14 (82.4)	1 (5.9)	1 (5.9)	1 (5.9)	0 (0)	17 (100)
Cycling/ mountain biking	6 (37.5)	4 (25)	4 (25)	2 (12.5)	0 (0)	16 (100)
Paragliding	5 (41.7)	2 (16.7)	3 (25)	1 (8.4)	1 (8.4)	12 (100)
Quiet relaxation	3 (20)	3 (20)	4 (26.7)	4 (26.7)	1 (6.7)	15 (100)
Picnics/family outings	1 (14.3)	3 (42.9)	2 (28.6)	1 (14.3)	0 (0)	7 (100)
Work	1 (25)	1 (25)	1 (25)	1 (25)	0 (0)	4 (100)
Meeting friends	1 (100)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	1 (100)
Visiting the Iron Age enclosure/ hillfort	0 (0)	0 (0)	1 (100)	0 (0)	0 (0)	1 (100)
Total	133 (44.7)	52 (17.5)	60 (20.2)	39 (13.1)	14 (4.7)	298 (100)

## Mode of transport (Q5)

- 3.8 207 respondents provided answers to Q5. The majority of responses overall (55%) indicated that respondents travel to Ditchling Beacon by car/van, with a further 24% doing so on foot (see Table 5). The majority of horse riders (59%) travel to site using a horse-box or lorry however, with the remainder doing so on horseback, and 100% of cyclists travel by bike (rather than arriving by car then cycling).

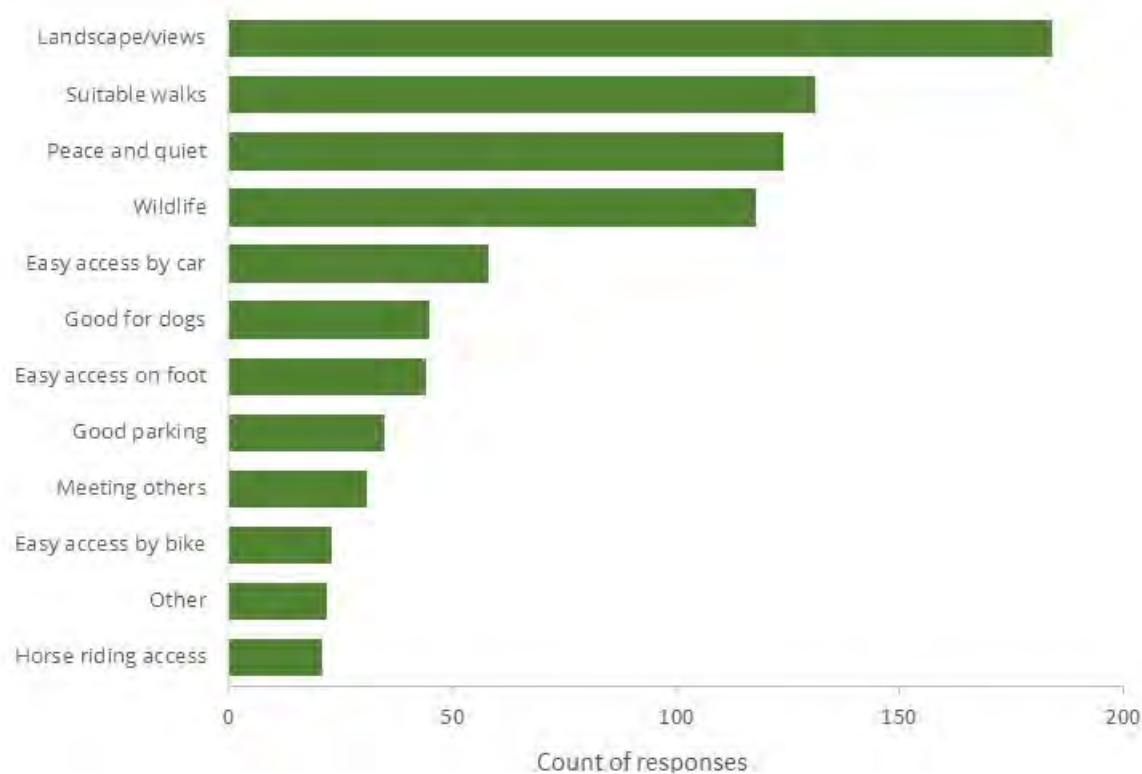
**Table 5: Mode of transport used by questionnaire respondents to access Ditchling Beacon, arranged by main activity (with row percentages). The largest value in each row is highlighted in dark grey, and the second largest in light grey. Note that 2 questionnaire respondents did not answer this question**

Activity	Mode of transport						Total
	Car/van	On foot	Cycle	Horse-box/lorry	Public transport	On horseback	
Walking	57 (60.7)	27 (28.8)	5 (5.4)	0 (0)	5 (5.4)	0 (0)	94 (100)
Dog walking	16 (61.6)	9 (34.7)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	1 (3.9)	26 (100)
Wildlife/ birdwatching	13 (68.5)	3 (15.8)	1 (5.3)	0 (0)	2 (10.6)	0 (0)	19 (100)
Horse riding	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	10 (58.9)	0 (0)	7 (41.2)	17 (100)
Running/ jogging	7 (46.7)	8 (53.4)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	15 (100)
Cycling/ mountain biking	0 (0)	0 (0)	10 (100)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	10 (100)
Paragliding	8 (88.9)	1 (11.2)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	9 (100)
Quiet relaxation	6 (66.7)	1 (11.2)	0 (0)	0 (0)	2 (22.3)	0 (0)	9 (100)
Picnics/ family outings	3 (75)	1 (25)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	4 (100)
Work	2 (100)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	2 (100)
Meeting friends	1 (100)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	1 (100)
Visiting the Iron Age enclosure/ hillfort	1 (100)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	1 (100)
Total	114 (55.1)	50 (24.2)	16 (7.8)	10 (4.9)	9 (4.4)	8 (3.9)	207 (100)

## Reasons for visiting (Q7)

- 3.9 Questionnaire respondents could provide multiple answers to this question. Just under a quarter of respondents (22%) identified the landscape and views from Ditchling Beacon as one of the main reasons for visiting, with a further 16% identifying the availability of suitable walks on site (see Figure 3). 15% of responses highlighted the peace and quiet of the site as a key attractant, and 14% identified the site's wildlife as one of the main reasons to visit.

- 3.10 A smaller proportion of responses (7% or less) identified the presence of parking and easy access for cars/bikes/horse riders/people on foot as an important reason to visit, as well as the site being good for dogs and providing opportunities to meet other people.



**Figure 3: Reasons for visiting Ditchling Beacon given by questionnaire respondents. Note that individual questionnaire respondents could provide multiple answers to this question.**

- 3.11 3% of responses identified “other” reasons for visiting, including the suitability of the site for launching paragliders (including 5 respondents who did not identify paragliding as their main activity when visiting). A further 6 responses identify easy access by public transport, 2 the presence of cultural heritage, and 1 that the site is suitable for kiting.

### Location of questionnaire respondents (postcode data)

- 3.12 172 of the questionnaire respondents provided identifiable home postcodes, with Map 1 showing their locations in relation to the Ditchling Beacon Nature Reserve boundary. Within the local area clusters of respondents can be identified in Ditchling, Hassocks, Lewes, and Brighton and Hove, with other, more distant, clusters in Eastbourne and Hailsham. The entire spread of



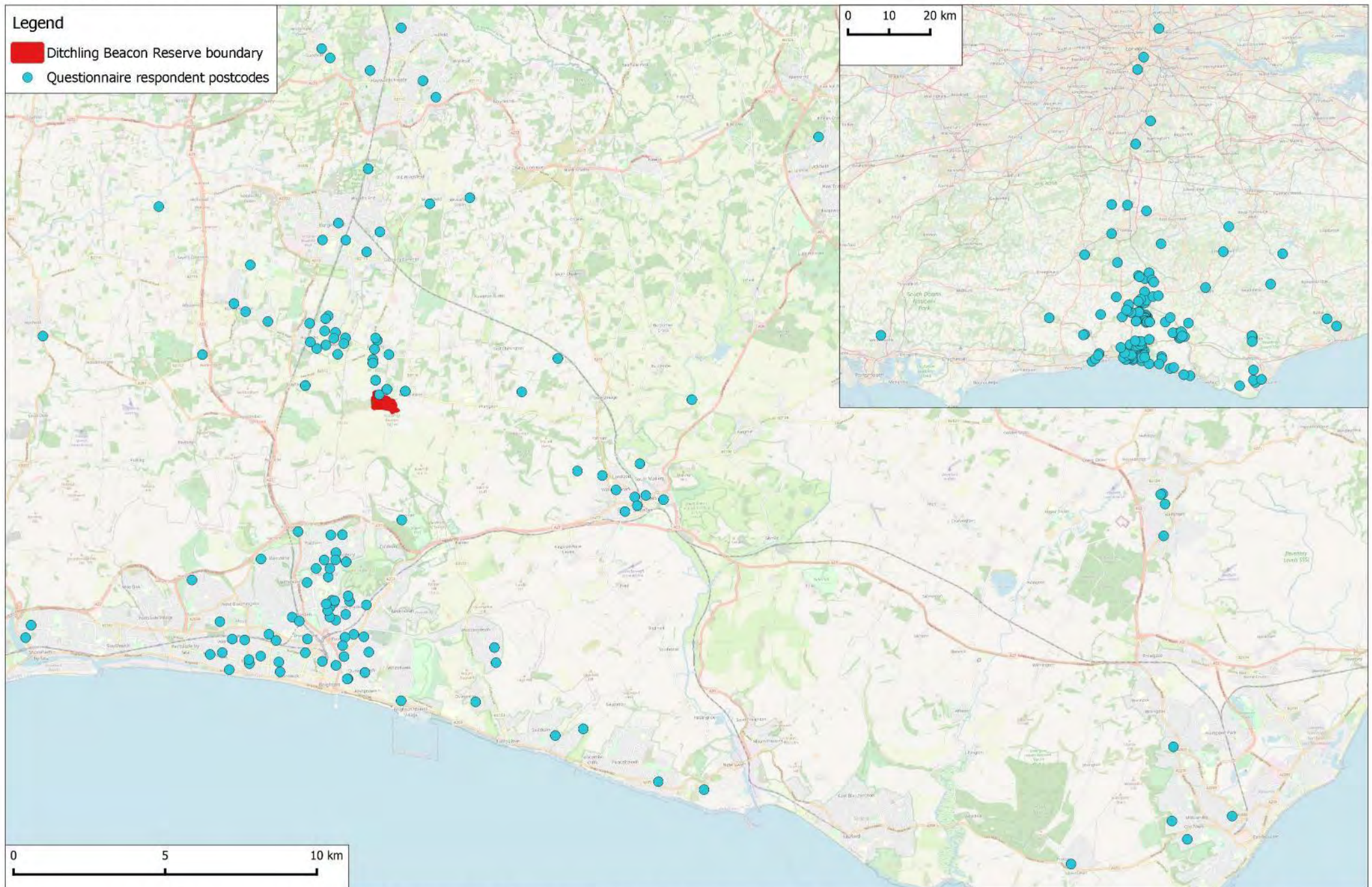
respondents stretches from Portsmouth in the west to Hastings in the east, and north into London.

- 3.13 Map 2 and Table 6 depict the respondent postcode locations by main activity type and provide summary distance statistics for each, respectively. Of the 5 most commonly recorded main activities amongst the postcode dataset, dog walkers and runners/joggers tend to reside closest to the site boundary (with mean distances of 6.5km and 8km respectively). Walkers, horse riders, and wildlife/birdwatchers tend to live a similar distance away, on average (with mean distances of 11.5km, 11.7km, and 10.1km, respectively). These patterns are largely repeated in the other summary metrics, although the walker postcodes show a much higher maximum distance value (64.6km from the site boundary). Amongst the other main activity types, it is clear that paraglider respondents tend to live much further away from the site (with a mean distance of 48.1km, and a range of 25.6km to 71.6km).

**Table 6: Questionnaire respondents' main activity at Ditchling Beacon and summary statistics describing the straight-line distance in km that respondents live from the Nature Reserve boundary. N is the sample size (number of valid postcodes) and Q3 is the 75th percentile**

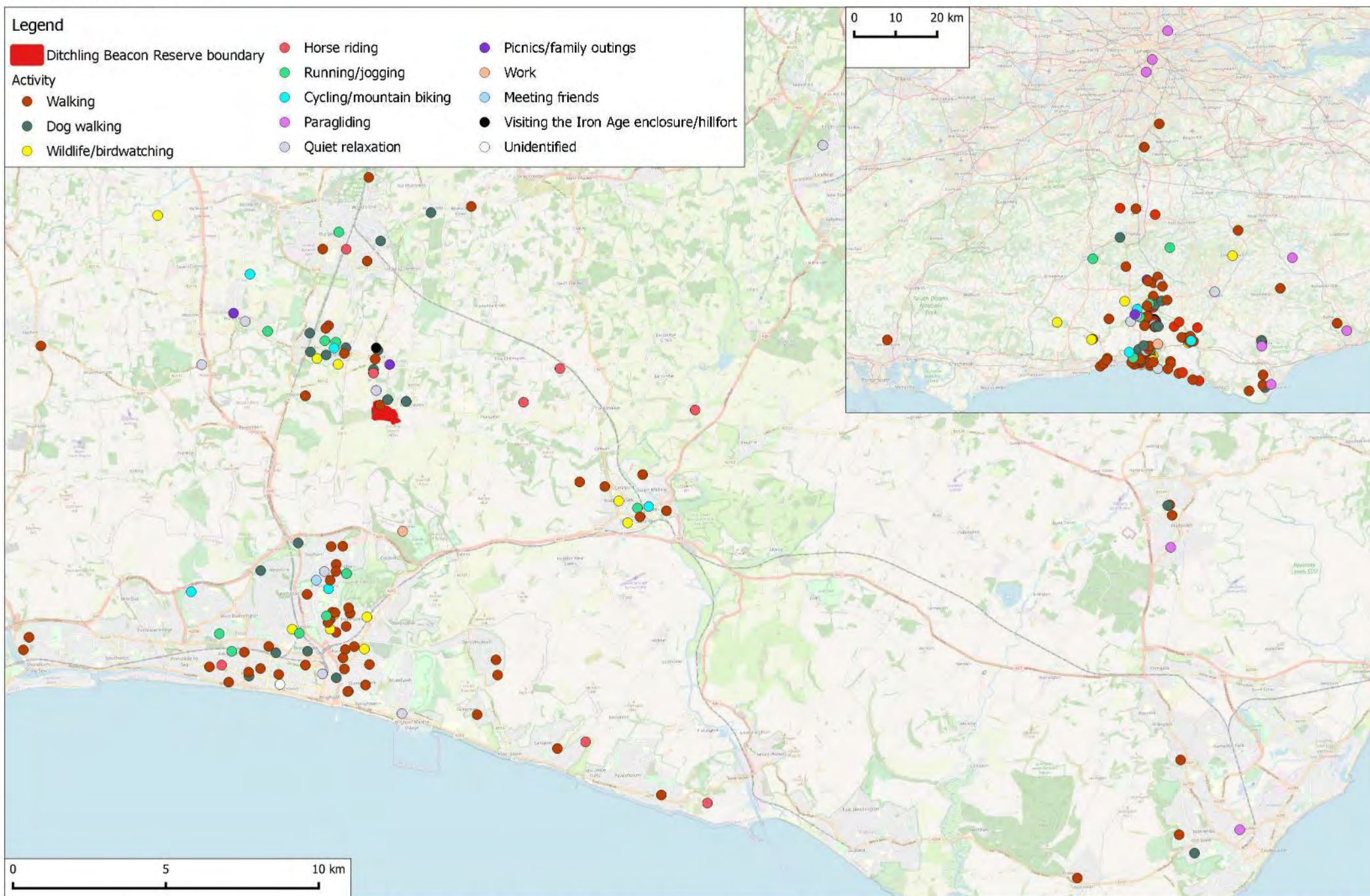
Activity	N	Mean (+ 1SE)	Minimum	Median	Q3	Maximum
Walking	82	11.5 (+ 1.3)	0.0	8.2	11.9	64.6
Dog walking	23	6.5 (+ 1.7)	0.3	3.1	8.3	29.6
Wildlife/birdwatching	14	10.1 (+ 1.9)	1.7	7.6	13.9	25.3
Horse riding	11	11.7 (+ 2.8)	0.9	9.5	16.0	29.8
Running/jogging	13	8.0 (+ 1.7)	2.3	6.6	8.8	22.1
Cycling/mountain	7	5.3 (+ 1.2)	0.3	5.9	8.2	8.6
Paragliding	7	48.1 (+ 6.8)	25.6	45.8	64.6	71.6
Quiet relaxation	8	7.7 (+ 1.7)	0.4	7.2	10.2	16.5
Picnics/family	3	6.1 (+ 2.9)	1.3	5.5	11.4	11.4
Work	1	3.6	3.6	3.6	*	3.6
Meeting friends	1	5.6	5.6	5.6	*	5.6
Visiting the Iron Age enclosure/hillfort	1	1.8	1.8	1.8	*	1.8
Unidentified	1	9.2	9.2	9.2	*	9.2
Total	172	11.3 (+ 1.0)	0.0	7.6	11.4	71.6

**Map 1: Location of identifiable home postcodes from questionnaire survey respondents (n=172). Note that the inset map shows all postcodes, whilst the larger map excludes 24**





**Map 2: Home postcodes from questionnaire survey respondents organised by main activity (n=172). Note that the inset map shows all postcodes, whilst the larger map excludes 30**



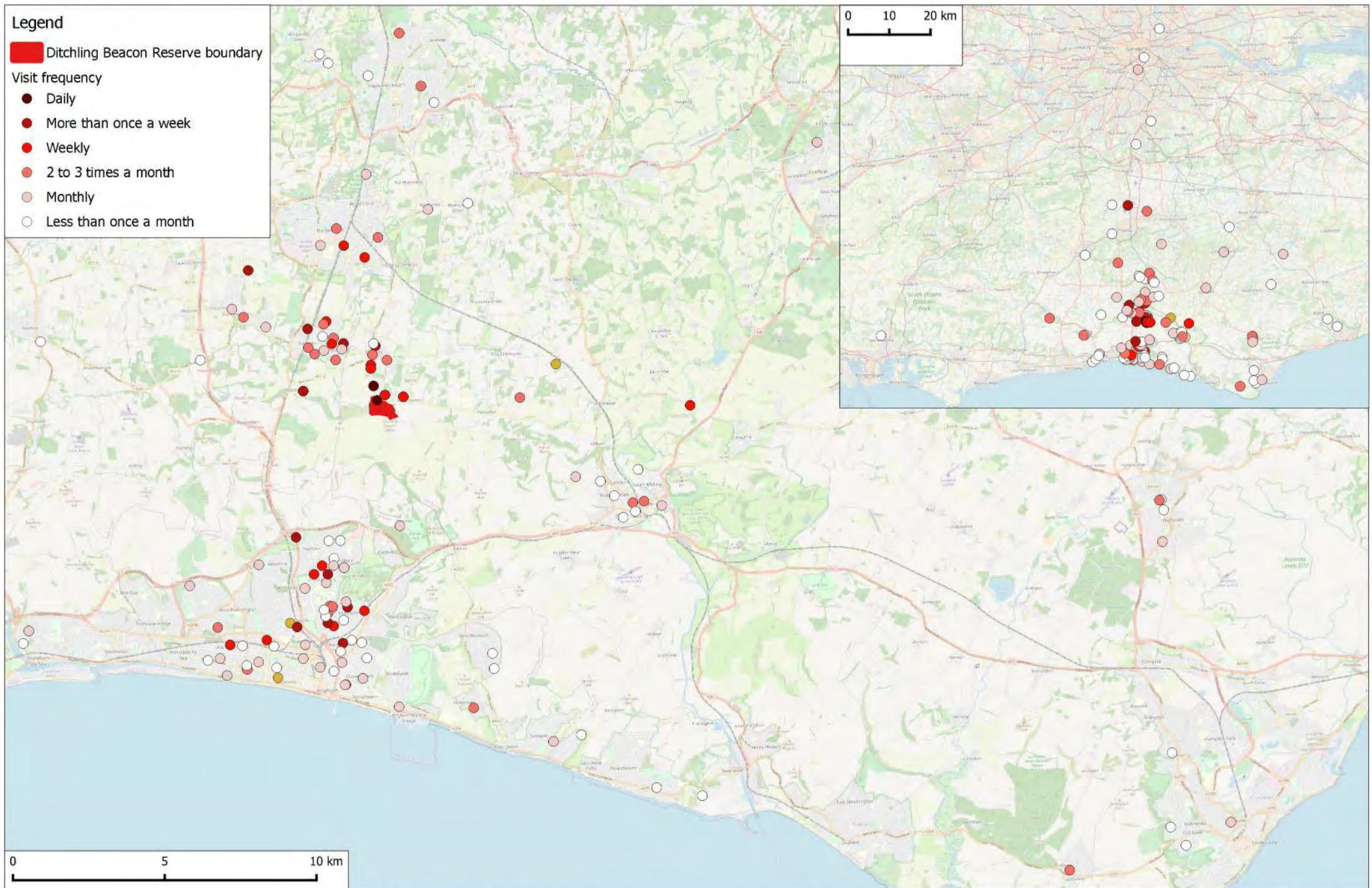
3.14 Map 3 and Table 7 depict the respondent postcode locations by frequency of visit to Ditchling Beacon Nature Reserve and provide summary statistics for each category, respectively. Perhaps unsurprisingly, daily visitors tend to live closer to the site boundary (mean distance of 0.3km) whilst respondents who visit less than once a month tend to live much farther away (mean distance of 17.5km). It can be seen that the mean distance that respondents live from the site boundary increases as visit frequency decreases. Nevertheless, some respondents who live more distantly still visit frequently, with a maximum distance of 28.8km recorded from a respondent who visits more than once a week.

**Table 7: Questionnaire respondents frequency of visit to Ditchling Beacon and summary statistics describing the straight-line distance in km that respondents live from the Nature Reserve boundary. N is the sample size (number of valid postcodes) and Q3 is the 75th percentile**

Visit frequency	N	Mean (+ 1SE)	Minimum	Median	Q3	Maximum
Daily	5	0.3 (+ 0.1)	0.0	0.4	0.4	0.5
More than once a week	18	4.8 (+ 1.6)	0.3	2.7	6.6	28.8
Weekly	17	4.5 (+ 0.7)	0.3	5.1	6.8	9.7
2 to 3 times a month	28	9.5 (+ 1.5)	1.3	7.5	11.6	27.1
Monthly	42	10.8 (+ 1.7)	0.5	8.1	9.6	61.6
Less than once a month	59	17.5 (+ 2.1)	1.8	9.9	25.4	71.6
No response	3	7.4 (+ 1.1)	5.6	7.4	9.2	9.2



**Map 3: Home postcodes from questionnaire survey respondents organised by frequency of visit (n=172). Note that the inset map shows all postcodes, whilst the larger map excludes 25**



- 3.15 Table 8 depicts provides summary statistics for postcode distance categorised by the mode of transport used by the respondent to visit Ditchling Beacon. The data indicates that cyclists and people accessing the site on foot tend to live closest (mean distances of 5.6km and 7.9km, respectively), whilst those doing so by car/van tend to live further away (mean of 13.8km).

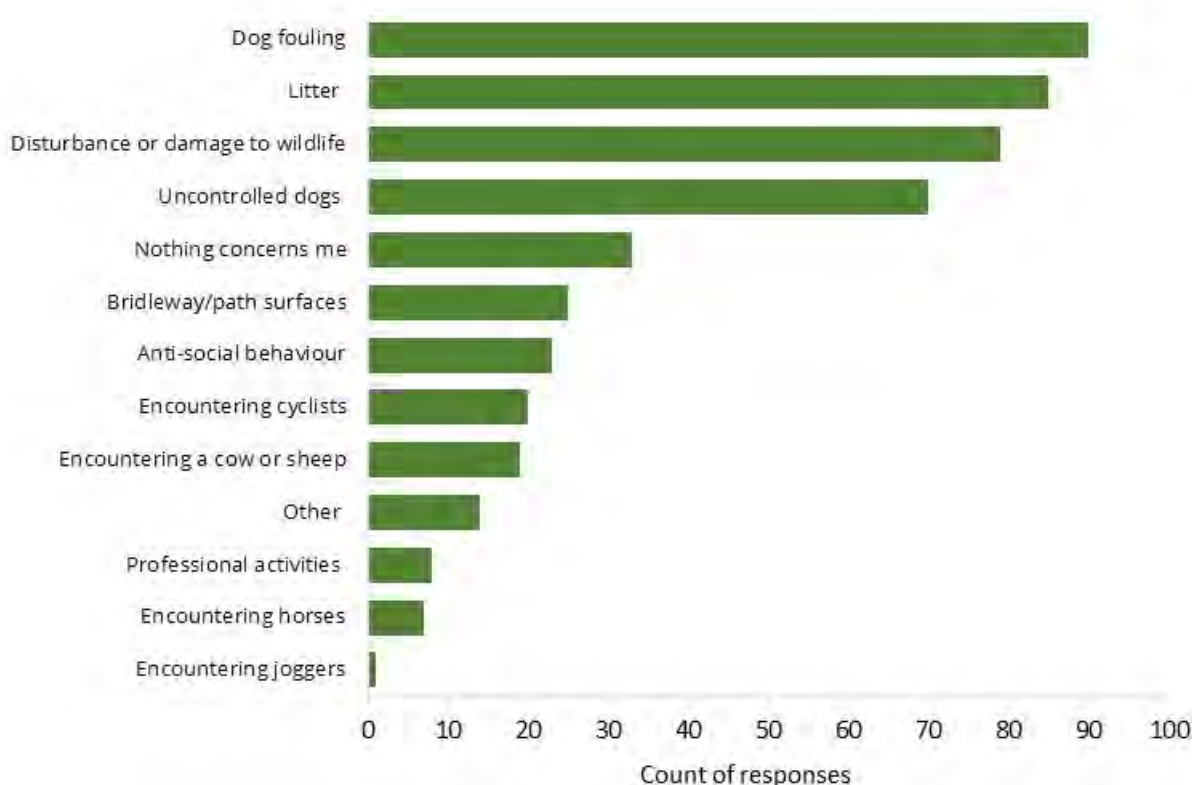
**Table 8: Questionnaire respondents mode of transport used to get to Ditchling Beacon Nature Reserve and summary statistics describing the straight-line distance in km that respondents live from the site boundary. N is the sample size (number of valid postcodes) and Q3 is the 75th percentile**

Mode of transport	N	Mean (+ 1SE)	Minimum	Median	Q3	Maximum
Car/van	91	13.8 (+ 1.3)	0.3	8.9	16.0	64.6
On foot	45	7.9 (+ 2.3)	0.0	2.3	7.0	71.6
Cycle	13	5.9 (+ 0.8)	0.3	6.4	8.2	8.7
Horse-box/lorry	7	16.2 (+ 3.3)	8.9	12.1	27.1	29.8
Public transport	9	8.2 (+ 0.4)	6.5	8.2	9.2	9.9
On horseback	5	9.1 (+ 5.2)	0.9	5.1	17.6	29.6
No response	2	8.3 (+ 0.9)	7.4	8.3	*	9.2

## Visitor concerns (Q8)

- 3.16 Questionnaire respondents could provide multiple answers to this question. The 4 most commonly reported concerns from respondents comprised dog fouling (18% of responses), litter (17% of responses), disturbance or damage to wildlife (16% of responses), and uncontrolled dogs (14% of responses); see Figure 4. 7% of responses indicated that nothing concerns the relevant respondents, whilst a smaller number of responses (5% or less) identified the conditions of paths and bridleways, anti-social behaviour, professional services, or encountering a cyclist, sheep, cow, or horse as a concern.
- 3.17 3% of responses identified “other” reasons for visiting, with 6 responses concerned about parking availability or price, and 4 about dangers associated with people parking on the road verge. Single respondents were also concerned about the speed of traffic on the road, drone activity, the strength of the springs on some of the gates, and about preserving the view.



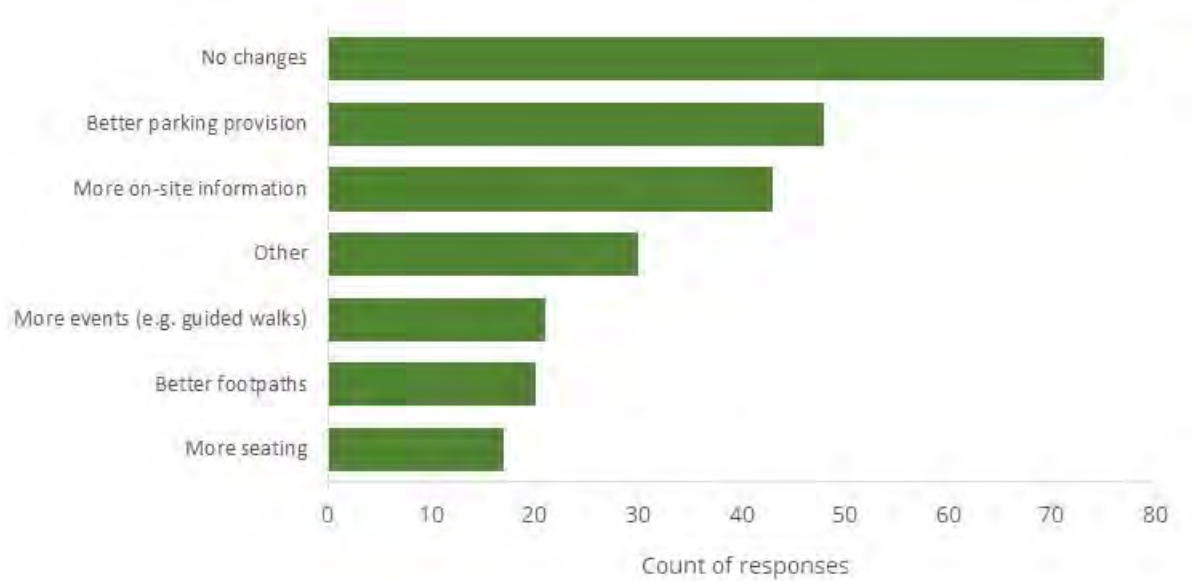


**Figure 4: Concerns when visiting Ditchling Beacon identified by questionnaire respondents. Note that individual questionnaire respondents could provide multiple answers to this question.**

## What changes would visitors like to see? (Q9)

3.18 Questionnaire respondents could provide multiple answers to this question. The largest proportion of responses (30%) indicated that they would like to see no changes to the nature reserve, whilst 19% and 17% of responses, respectively, identified better parking and provision of more on-site information; see Figure 5. A smaller number of responses (8% and 7%, respectively) identified better footpaths and the provision of more seating as a change that the respondents would like to see.

3.19 12% of responses identified “other” changes that the respondents would like to see. 7 respondents would like to see better promotion of and/or links with public transport, and 5 would like improved and/or safer access for cyclists. 3 respondents stated that they would like to see all dogs on short leads when on site. The creation of a safer road crossing, an increased focus on conservation, and a larger number of litter/dog waste bins on site were each identified by 2 respondents.



**Figure 5: Changes that questionnaire respondents would like to see at Ditchling Beacon. Note that individual questionnaire respondents could provide multiple answers to this question**

- 3.20 Single responses also identified the following changes that they would like to see: access to secure, cattle free, areas for horse riders; better presentation of, and access to, the Iron Age enclosure; better wildlife management; lighter springs on gates; reduced parking; reduced tree and scrub cover; volunteer days; putting a stop to anti-social behaviour on site, and; “greater respect”.

### Has site use changed during the Coronavirus pandemic? (Q4)

- 3.21 207 respondents provided answers to Q4. The majority of responses overall (47%) indicated that respondents use of Ditchling Beacon Nature Reserve had not changed during the Coronavirus pandemic, with an equal split of the remainder visiting more or less overall (see Table 9). This pattern generally held true across the main activity types, although an equal number of both horse riders and wildlife/birdwatchers indicated no change and a decrease in visits. Runners/joggers and cyclists indicated that they were generally visiting more, and paragliders that they were visiting less.

**Table 9: Changes in use of Ditchling Beacon by questionnaire respondents during the Coronavirus pandemic, arranged by main activity (with row percentages). The largest value in each row is highlighted in dark grey, and the second largest in light grey. Note that 2 questionnaire respondents did not answer this question**

Activity	No change	Visiting less	Visiting more	Total
Walking	45 (47.9)	24 (25.6)	25 (26.6)	94 (100)
Dog walking	15 (57.7)	7 (27)	4 (15.4)	26 (100)
Wildlife/ birdwatching	7 (36.9)	7 (36.9)	5 (26.4)	19 (100)
Horse riding	7 (41.2)	7 (41.2)	3 (17.7)	17 (100)
Running/jogging	6 (40)	2 (13.4)	7 (46.7)	15 (100)
Cycling/ mountain biking	5 (50)	0 (0)	5 (50)	10 (100)
Paragliding	3 (33.4)	5 (55.6)	1 (11.2)	9 (100)
Quiet relaxation	6 (66.7)	2 (22.3)	1 (11.2)	9 (100)
Picnics/family outings	0 (0)	2 (50)	2 (50)	4 (100)
Work	1 (50)	0 (0)	1 (50)	2 (100)
Meeting friends	1 (100)	0 (0)	0 (0)	1 (100)
Visiting the Iron Age enclosure/ hillfort	1 (100)	0 (0)	0 (0)	1 (100)
Total	97 (46.9)	56 (27.1)	54 (26.1)	207 (100)

## Membership of Sussex Wildlife Trust (Q6)

3.22 207 respondents provided answers to Q6. The majority of respondents overall (66%) indicated that they were not members of the Sussex Wildlife Trust (see Figure 6). This pattern generally held true across the main activity types, although (perhaps unsurprisingly) more wildlife/birdwatchers (58%) were members. Excluding the less commonly recorded activity types (i.e. those with fewer than 4 records), the greatest disparity in membership was seen amongst paragliders (100% non-membership), horse riders (82% non-membership), cyclists/mountain bikers (80% non-membership), and runners/joggers (73% non-membership).

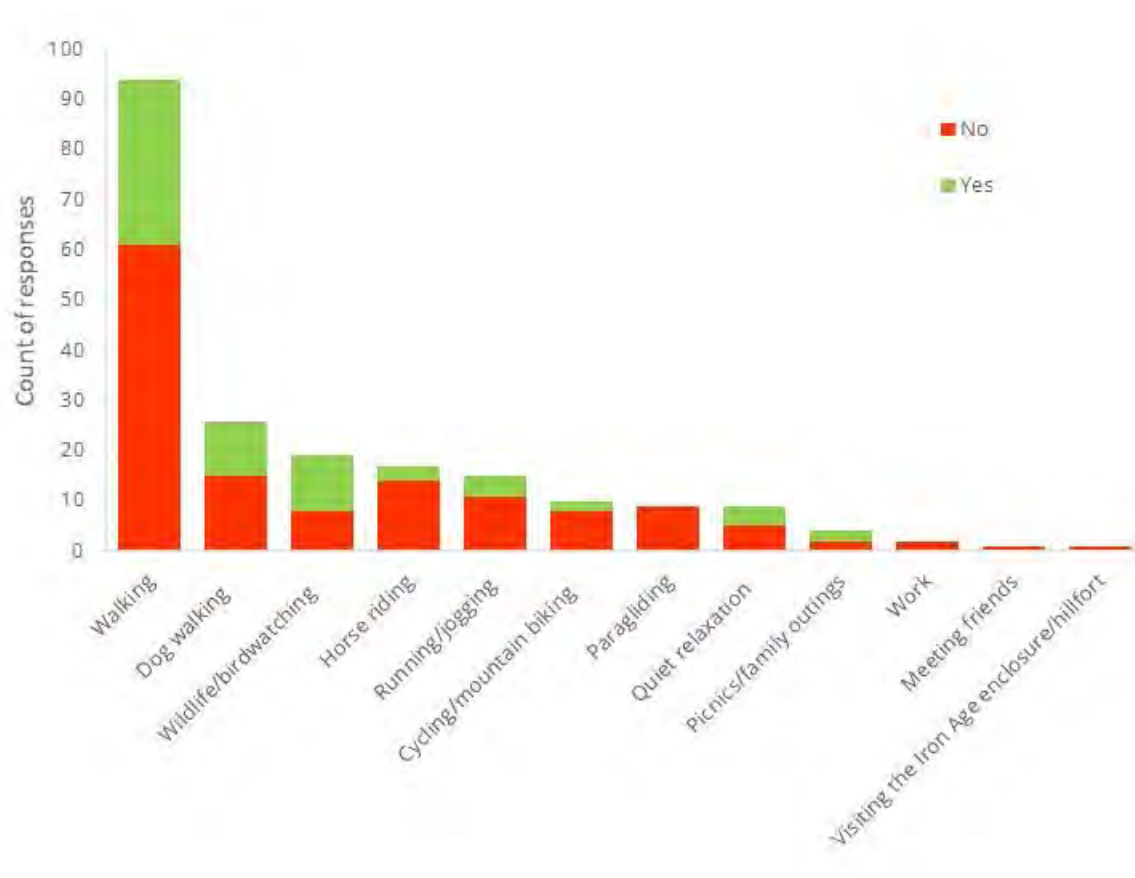


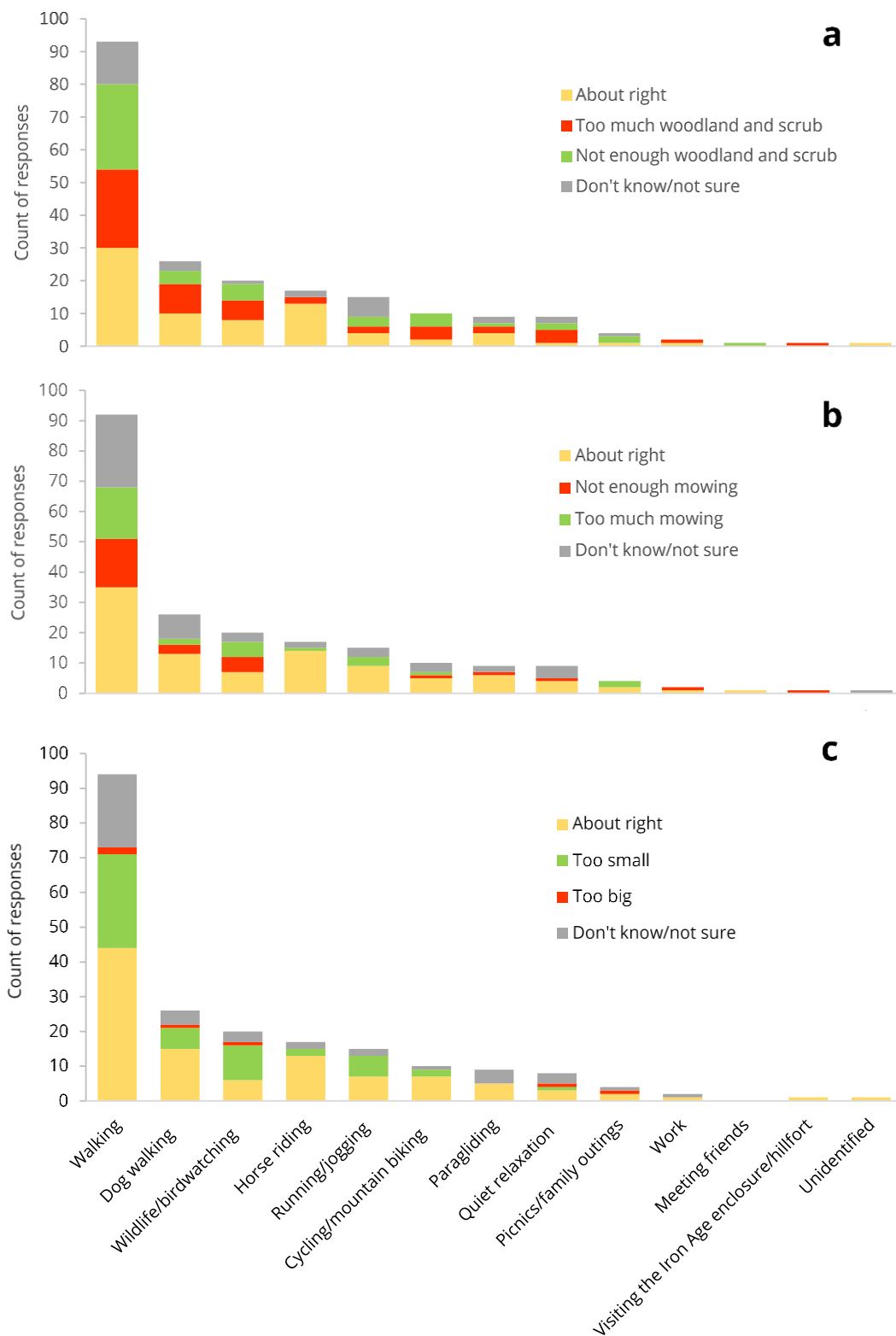
Figure 6: Membership of the Sussex Wildlife Trust by questionnaire respondents, arranged by activity

## Changes in habitat management (Q10-13 and postcode data)

- 3.23 208 respondents answered Q10 (tree and scrub extent), 207 answered both Q11 (mown area extent) and Q12 (extent of grazed area), and 204 answered Q13 (type of stock enclosure).
- 3.24 36% of respondents overall thought that the current balance of trees and shrub and open grassland on site were about right, with 27% and 23% respectively stating that there is too much and too little woodland and scrub on site. Overall, 15% of respondents didn't know or were unsure. This pattern generally held true across the main activity types, although there were indications that more dog walkers and wildlife/birdwatchers thought that there were too many trees and areas of scrub on site (see Figure 7a).
- 3.25 47% of respondents overall thought that the extent of the mown area on site was about right, with 24% unknowing or unsure. An approximately equal number of the remainder thought that the area was too big or too small, respectively. This pattern generally held across the main activity types (see Figure 7b).
- 3.26 51% of respondents overall thought that the extent of the grazed area on site was about right, with 26% stating that it was too small and 3% that it was too big. This pattern generally held across the main activity types (see Figure 7c), with the exception of wildlife/birdwatchers, of whom 50% stated that the area was too small, and 30% that it was about right.



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**Figure 7: Views of questionnaire respondents on the current extent of (a) woodland and scrub, (b) mown areas, and (c) the grazed area at Ditchling Beacon, arranged by activity**

- 3.27 When cross-referenced with the postcode dataset, there is a suggestion that respondents more in favour of increasing the extent of trees and woodland on site tend to live closer to the site boundary (see Table 10), with a mean distance of 6.5km between their home postcodes and the nature reserve boundary. Conversely, those more in favour of decreasing the extent tend to live further away (mean distance of 13.7km).

**Table 10: Questionnaire respondents views on the current extent of woodland and scrub at Ditchling Beacon and summary statistics describing the straight-line distance that respondents live from the Nature Reserve boundary. N is the sample size (number of valid postcodes) and Q3 is the 75th percentile**

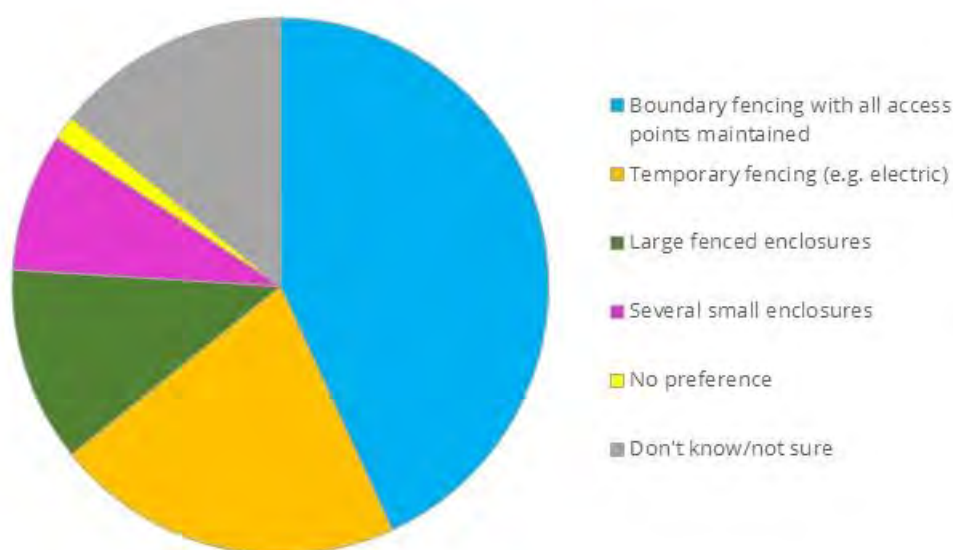
View on extent	N	Mean (+ 1SE)	Minimum	Median	Q3	Maximum
About right	64	9.7 (+ 1.3)	0.3	7.0	9.6	64.6
Not enough	37	6.5 (+ 0.8)	0.0	6.2	8.5	25.4
Too much	47	13.7 (+ 1.9)	0.3	8.6	23.5	61.6
Don't know/not sure	23	15.9 (+ 3.7)	1.9	8.4	19.5	71.6
No response	1	64.6	64.6	64.6	*	64.6

- 3.28 Similarly, there is a suggestion that respondents who think that the current grazed area is too large tend to live closer to the site boundary (see Table 11), with a mean distance of 6.2km between their home postcodes and the nature reserve boundary. The relationship between distance and the other views on this subject are however less clear.

**Table 11: Questionnaire respondents views on the current extent of the grazed area at Ditchling Beacon and summary statistics describing the straight-line distance that respondents live from the Nature Reserve boundary. N is the sample size (number of valid postcodes) and Q3 is the 75th percentile**

View on extent	N	Mean (+ 1SE)	Minimum	Median	Q3	Maximum
About right	89	11.3 (+ 1.4)	0.3	7.4	11.7	64.6
Too small	45	10.4 (+ 1.3)	0.0	7.9	12.2	43.5
Too big	4	6.2 (+ 0.8)	5.3	5.5	7.8	8.6
Don't know/not sure	32	12.9 (+ 2.9)	0.5	7.5	14.1	71.6
No response	2	11.1 (+ 5.5)	5.6	11.1	*	16.5

- 3.29 The largest proportion of respondents (43%) identified the use of boundary fencing with maintained access points as the preferred option to contain livestock, in the event that the extent of grazing is increased on site (see Figure 8), with 21% identifying temporary fencing as the preferred option. 12% and 8% of responses respectively identified the use of either large fenced, or several small, enclosures as a preference. A significant minority of respondents (14%) were nevertheless unsure or unable to identify a preference.



**Figure 8: Preferred methods of livestock containment identified by questionnaire respondents if grazing were to be extended on site at Ditchling Beacon (with full public access maintained at all times)**

- 3.30 These trends generally held true across the main activity types, although the largest proportion of paragliders (45%) preferred the use of temporary fencing, and the second largest proportion of dog walkers (20%) preferred the use of several small enclosures. The majority of runners/joggers (53%) were unsure.
- 3.31 In addition to the summarised responses above, the questionnaire gave respondents the option to provide further information or comments with respect to their answers to Q10 to 14. These are repeated verbatim in Appendices 3 to 7 at the end of this report.





- 3.34 The comments received for Q15 were again largely supportive of the work of SWT, although a variety of suggestions and concerns were voiced. This included improving access for cyclists and horse riders, and the use of different gates on site, as well as key concerns about road safety and dogs on site. There were mixed views on the car park, with some respondents suggesting it should be increased in size and others suggesting it be made smaller. A need for an improvement in/promotion of public transport links was also mentioned.
- 3.35 Paragliders highlighted that the site is an important location for their activities and hoped that access would continue into the future<sup>7</sup>. Antisocial behaviour and litter on site, as well as increases in the number of visitors, were identified as issues by some respondents. Views on the conservation management of the site, including tree and scrub removal, were again mixed.

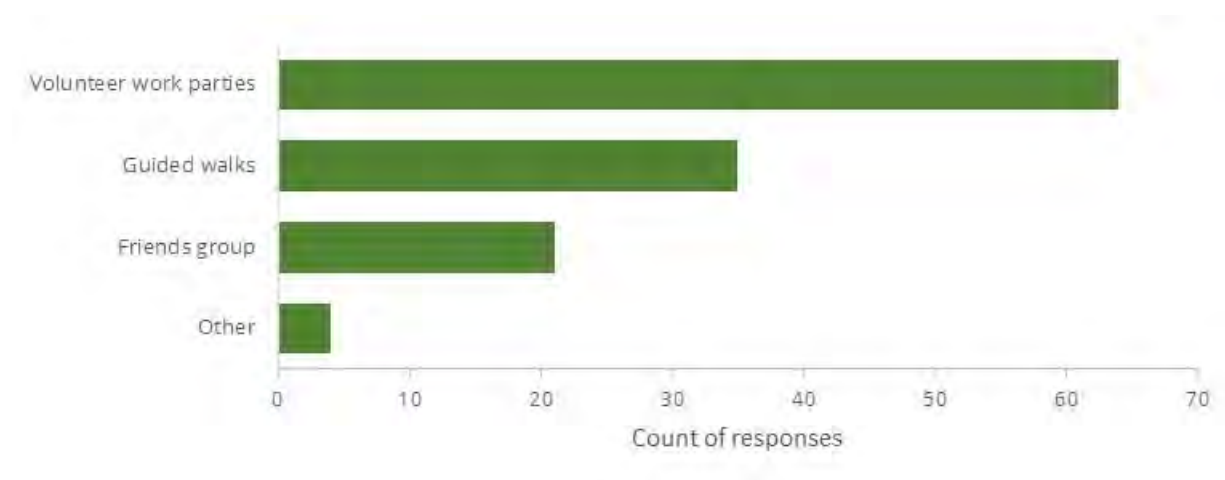


Figure 10: Word cloud giving free text responses to Q15 (comments on general site management). Graphic created using the [Wordclouds](#) app

<sup>7</sup> There is no access for paragliders on the registered common; they are thought to be referring to the adjacent land owned by National Trust



- 3.36 Respondents could provide multiple answers to Q16 (interest in other activities on site), and 124 responses were received (see Figure 11). Most interest was shown in volunteer work parties (64% of responses), with some interest also in guided walks (28% of responses) and the establishment of a “friends group” (17% of responses). 4 “other” responses were received, comprising requests for wildflower and butterfly identification sessions and to be kept informed about what’s going on on-site, an offer of assistance with surveys for bees and wasps, and someone wishing to make a donation to SWT.



**Figure 11: Interest of questionnaire respondents in taking part in other activities at Ditchling Beacon. Note that individual questionnaire respondents could provide multiple answers to this question**

## 4. Individual consultation responses

- 4.1 Written responses from organisations and individuals are summarised below in Table 12 and Table 13 respectively. Points raised during the discussions following the webinars, or during the on-site drop-ins, are listed in [Appendix 9](#). Areas discussed included joined up management with neighbours, the state of the bridleway, the management of archaeological features (located off the SWT site), concerns about tree and scrub removal, questions over Ash die-back, discussion around grazing, requests for notification before livestock are moved on site and up-to-date grazing signs, concerns over cycle events and litter, and clarification over the consultation process and the site boundary.

Table 12: Responses from organisations

Organisation	Response
<b>British Horse Society</b>	<p>Commented that as a NT common there was equestrian right of access<sup>8</sup>. Notes that NFU and CLA have recently been lobbying for simplified diversion procedures in relation to livestock presence and that introducing livestock to an area with public access goes against this. Notes that many horses are not happy in close proximity to livestock and owners will avoid an area containing cattle in particular.</p> <p>Requested that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If fencing is necessary, temporary enclosures would be preferred.</li> <li>• Gates that are not two way and/or have self-closing mechanisms which close the gate sharply [see British Standards 5709 2018] must be avoided. Handles must be operable from horseback and the ground. Gates should be padlocked open when livestock are not present.</li> <li>• Would welcome the opportunity to work with SWT should further grazing be planned.</li> </ul>
<b>Brighton &amp; Hove Archaeological Society</b>	<p>Usually regular visitors to Ditchling Beacon, conducting walks around the Ditchling Beacon area and along the South Downs Way to Streat Farm, and other walks down into Stanmer. The Society monitors the remains of the Iron Age hill-fort (which is in a poor state) and reports to Heritage England about any concerns if monument are being damaged by vandals or animals.</p> <p>The hill-fort is a Scheduled Ancient Monument (SAM) and is protected by law, despite being one third a car park and one third being ploughed away. The Society would like to become involved in any future project, as it would be important to ensure that no ancient sites are damaged or destroyed.</p>

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<sup>8</sup> Note that the common is not however owned by NT

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Organisation	Response
<b>Buglife</b>	<p>Fully supportive of the need to manage chalk grassland for the benefit of all invertebrates, as well as other wildlife. Invertebrates require a mosaic of short and long grass, wildflowers and a certain amount of scrub, therefore supports:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Grazing at an appropriate time of year to allow a long flowering period, ensuring that the floral resource is not removed during the summer flowering period e.g. grazing in the autumn and/or winter often with a mix of cattle and sheep. Occasional localised summer grazing may be required to help control more coarse vegetation. This will require fencing and potential compartmentalization, either permanently or with electric fencing.</li> <li>• An increase in scrub management through cutting and mowing, with arisings removed.</li> </ul>
<b>Ditchling Society</b>	<p>Supportive of the SWT's intentions for Ditchling Beacon, but no opinion expressed on the detail of habitat management beyond recognition of the need to return the site to chalk grassland. State that there should be equal respect for all users of the Beacon and this should underpin plans for developing the nature reserve and attracting more visitors. Notes that car parking is a significant issue on busy days, with roadside and field gateway parking when the car park is full. Organised cycle events (large and small) can have a significant impact on the amenity value of Ditchling Beacon - the value of these events for those who participate is recognised but occasionally the highway is closed, commercially-organised events can disrupt traffic on the Beacon and lead to congregations at the summit. Litter and dog mess may be an intractable problem. The Society requests that SWT:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promotes alternative ways to visit the Beacon – the reserve leaflet should indicate that the reserve is best accessed by other means than by car, suggesting how to get there by public transport, horseback, cycle or on foot and possibly including the Clayton windmills carpark.</li> <li>• Corrects the map in the SWT leaflet, which shows the main bridleway from Ditchling, along Underhill Lane and then up to the Beacon on the north margin of the reserve as a footpath.</li> <li>• Considers improving the surface of this bridleway as it is very difficult for horses to ascend or descend safely, and this could make it (with suitable advertising) a more attractive alternative for</li> </ul>

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Organisation	Response
	<p>those cyclists who are unable to tackle the Beacon road (and currently put themselves and others at risk by pushing their bikes up).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Educates and informs visitors (e.g. via QR codes rather than fixed installations) before and during their visit to enhance visitors understanding of the natural and historical significance of the site, the work of SWT, the fragility of the natural environment and the need to respect livestock they may encounter. This could include information about the SDNP and the UNESCO Biosphere.</li> <li>• Manages litter and dog fouling through installing litter bins and keeping them in a usable state.</li> <li>• Explore Some of these events need to be managed better and ways need to be found to make cycle events of benefit to all users of the Beacon.</li> </ul>
<b>Ditchling Beacon &amp; Commons Charity</b>	<p>The DBCC charitable purposes have a central focus on maintaining the chalk flora and fauna. The Charity wished to clarify landownership (and dates) of the various components of the Ditchling Beacon and commons. It questioned how wide an interest the public take in the area, noting that casual observation suggest that most visitors use the car park to access the South Downs Way. A casual observation while standing in the car park shows a very significant number of visitors arrive by car and merely use it to access the SDW with few venturing north or south and that few visitors are aware of the size and special interest of the site. The charity recognises the need for ongoing management to protect and preserve the chalk downland and also the pressures of funding bodies to demonstrate the benefits of the site to the public. The charity recommends:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reviewing signage and interpretation, adding local destinations with timings to directional signs</li> <li>• Improving the surface of the N-S bridleway and the highway drainage issues causing it to deteriorate.</li> <li>• Improvements to the carpark at the foot of the Beacon off Underhill Lane (owned by ESCC), which offers challenging but rewarding access to the northern parts of the Beacon (any significant increase in car parking at the NT Beacon site is not considered to be either desirable or feasible due to the adverse visual impact on the landscape).</li> <li>• Modest increase or improvement to layby parking along the Ditchling Road between High Park Corner and the Beacon linking with a comprehensive network of existing paths</li> <li>• Support for public transport reaching the area as at peak times demand for parking outstrips availability.</li> <li>• Improved communication with organisers and users of cycling events around littering</li> </ul>



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Organisation	Response
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support to NT to present the site in a well-maintained manner (with specific reference to littering).</li> </ul>
<b>Historic England</b>	No specific comments on Phase 1 Consultation but would like to be consulted on phase 2. In general supportive of management works which does not disturb the ground and notes that works that involve any ground disturbance require an application for Scheduled Monument Consent to Historic England well in advance of any works taking place.
<b>Natural England</b>	<p>Emphasized that the SSSI is still only in 'recovering condition' due to the levels of scrub encroachment and despite some areas of extremely good quality chalk grassland. The <a href="#">condition assessment</a><sup>9</sup> has recently been brought up to date and emphasizes the need to follow up scrub and tree removal with an increase in the area of grazing.</p> <p>NE therefore supports work that helps to maintain the mosaic of habitats. Intensive management is likely to be needed to maintain, enhance and expand the area of pristine chalk grassland. Mowing with the removal of arisings is acceptable where necessary, however, an increase in the area of grazing is the most sustainable and beneficial tool. Scrub cutting to diversify the structure plus establishing broadleaved tree cover for shelter/nesting habitat and food for birds will also be needed.</p>
<b>National Trust</b>	<p>NT own a parcel of land at Ditchling Beacon which includes the car park, bus turning area, area of hillfort (SAM), SSSI grassland and a small patch of arable reversion. The bus and car park allow a large number of visitors to enjoy this site. NT also owns a larger area of chalk grassland scarp slope to the west of SWTs land holding at Ditchling Down and share a boundary here with SWT.</p> <p>NT has a good practical partnership with SWT and is very happy to explore further partnership working to enable excellent chalk grassland management, mainly through improved grazing across both holdings, whilst ensuring an excellent experience continues to be offered for visitors.</p>

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<sup>9</sup> <https://designatedsites.naturalengland.org.uk/UnitDetail.aspx?UnitId=1008326>

# DITCHLING BEACON COMMONS CONSULTATION

Organisation	Response
<b>Open Spaces Society</b>	<p>Focussed on car parking<sup>10</sup>, suggest that, while it is important that people who are car dependent have access to the tops of the downs, the large number of car parking spaces near the top of the beacon has created a honeypot area which has resulted in traffic jams, verge parking and a general eyesore. Suggests that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The numbers of car parking spaces is reduced</li> <li>• Parking charges are collected</li> <li>• No parking zones on the road are enforced</li> <li>• Consideration is given to subsidising an extension of the current bus service to the beacon so that the service runs down to Ditchling village and perhaps back to Brighton via the village.</li> <li>• Other parts of the downs nearby are publicised</li> <li>• The car park is relocated</li> <li>• If the car park remains in its current location, access facilities for the less-abled are considered e.g. allocating a greater proportion of parking spaces as disabled spaces, improving the surface of nearby paths and placing more seats.</li> </ul>
<b>Skylark Paragliding</b>	<p>The club uses launch points adjacent to the common land and fly over it – it is a lesser used site but an important launch for local pilots. It is also of great historic significance, being the site of the first hang glider flight in Europe right at the start of the 1970s.</p> <p>The club fully support projects like this to clear scrub as this improves the airflow making flying more pleasant. The club has liaised with NE over similar projects at other locations, providing a pool of labour on occasions.</p> <p>No conflicts are foreseen, as pilots are very responsible countryside users and spend little time in contact with the ground.</p>

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<sup>10</sup> The car park is owned and managed by National Trust, not SWT

# DITCHLING BEACON COMMONS CONSULTATION

Organisation	Response
<b>South Downs National Park Access Forum</b>	<p>Fully supportive of any efforts by SWT to improve Ditchling Beacon for people and wildlife, with particular concern for any possible impacts on recreational access. Feel management of the site should be focussed on conserving and maintaining its unique character for the benefit of people and nature alike. Suggests that a careful mix of management strategies is required with some scrub clearance and carefully managed grazing regime is the best way forward. Notes tensions between maintaining open landscape and managing the chalk grassland and recognizes challenges that grazing can present. Suggests that fencing will decrease open feel, but so would expanding scrub. Notes that questionnaire did not ask about ease of access via public transport or the option to improve the public transport links. Would like to see SWT:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promote bus access to Ditchling Beacon in all leaflets and web pages relating to the site, quoting examples of linear walks they make possible.</li> <li>• Work with the Breeze up to the Downs Partnership, to look at opportunities to improve public transport access to Ditchling Beacon for visitors from the surrounding area.</li> <li>• Look proactively for opportunities to improve access, particularly for disabled visitors as well as encouraging young people, people of limited means and those from ethnic minorities to enjoy the unique landscape and wildlife of the Beacon.</li> </ul>

**Table 13: Responses from individuals**

Individual	Response
Individual 1	<p>A professional ecologist and sustainability expert of long-standing and a visitor to Ditchling Beacon since 1973. Concerned about changes brought on by the change to pay and display in the car park that have changed site usage away from informal visits that foster well-being and a sense of guardianship of the area to formal, scrutinized visits that have changed the dynamic and sense of connection with the site – comments that this is a widespread feeling and that the right to roam and free access to countryside should be a vital principle. Parking to other nearby greenspaces is also charged, which is limiting for</p>

## DITCHLING BEACON COMMONS CONSULTATION

	locals. Not in favour of GPS controlled cattle. Surprised that the issue of dog walkers disliking livestock is a consideration, as the habitats need to be managed to exist.
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- 4.2 An additional email was received by the site manager, Steve Tillman, after the end of the consultation period. The correspondent expressed concern over the amount of litter on the road verges running through the common and requested SWT support in lobbying Lewes District Council to clean it up.

## 5. Consultation effectiveness

- 5.1 Overall, we consider that the consultation was effective in reaching out to stakeholders, including local residents, visitors and a variety of user groups and organisations representing different interests.
- 5.2 Restrictions in place due to the Covid pandemic mean that it was only possible to hold one one-site drop in and no guided walkers (which were originally planned) but, while we think that more face-to-face opportunities would have been beneficial if possible, the webinars provided a better opportunity for more detailed discussions. We received positive feedback about the materials provided (e.g. *"Members of the Forum have studied the very helpful online documents and presentation"*) and the webinars (e.g. *"super-informative"*, *"very interesting"*). Ideally, the consultation would also have been advertised in the local Parish Magazine, but unfortunately this was not possible due to the long lead-in for publications. We therefore asked specific local organisations to forward the information and links provided to their membership/ mailing list,
- 5.3 It is noted that the questionnaire did not specifically ask for respondents views on ease of access via public transport or the option to improve public transport, but that this information could have been useful.



## 6. Management recommendations

- 6.1 Ditchling Beacon is a cultural landscape that was formed and maintained through the interaction of people with their environment. This means that without ongoing human intervention the habitats will continue to move towards secondary woodland at the expense chalk grassland and its specialised flora and fauna.
- 6.2 As part of this consultation, the habitat management actions likely to be needed to move the site to a more favourable condition were described in the interactive online presentation/paper and the live webinar (see section 2). The responses from individuals and organisations are presented in the previous sections and have helped to inform the following management recommendations for the site.

### Habitat management

- 6.3 A combination of habitat management approaches will be needed to restore Ditchling Beacon SSSI to favourable condition. At the same time, the historical and archaeological features of the site must be taken into account, and the preferences of the visitors who know and love the site considered. In general, the consultation showed that many visitors are content with the current management but that there is diversity of opinion over, in particular, scrub and tree clearance and grazing. Of the organisations who responded formally to the consultation, all of those who responded about habitat management were in favour of appropriate levels of scrub and tree clearance and grazing.
- 6.4 A small number (three) of respondents to the questionnaire expressed a preference for a “do nothing” approach that would eventually lead to the dominance of broad-leaved woodland (although the composition will change due to Ash Die-back) and the resultant loss of chalk grassland and the valuable interface with scrub, as well as associated species. These respondents were a small minority, although given the current burgeoning interest in rewilding, SWT may wish to consider reframing nature recovery work carried out in semi-natural habitats to engage with those people primarily interested in rewilding and carbon storage/sequestration. Such reframing would need to explain how the management of nature-rich, semi-natural, habitats fit within those processes. This site does not, for example,

fall within the areas identified for woodland planting/regeneration in a recent strategic review by the RSPB.<sup>11</sup>

### *Scrub clearance/tree felling*

Questionnaire responses were quite mixed, with 36% thinking the current balance of scrub and trees is about right, 27% thinking there is too much, 23% too little and 15% unsure. In contrast, the written responses that addressed habitat management generally requested or acknowledged the need for more scrub control with the retention of some scrub with a varied structure for birds.

- 6.5 Around 90% of the scrub and secondary woodland is thought to have colonised the site since the 1940s, when grazing ceased. Scrub clearance will be required on an ongoing basis to prevent further encroachment of scrub into chalk grassland and to restore areas of chalk grassland to prevent further loss of species and diminution of populations and promote resilience in the face of climate change (species confined to small, isolated patches of habitat will be less resilient). Scrub cutting should not be indiscriminate, but instead carefully targeted in areas that retain chalk grassland interest before this is lost. Species-rich scrub (rather than that dominated by Bramble) should be retained to maximise structural diversity and provide suitable nesting, sheltering, and foraging habitat for birds. Scattered shrubs with a gradual interface with grassland are likely to be of greater benefit than large blocks.
- 6.6 Ongoing selective tree-felling will be necessary to ensure the health and safety of visitors to the site. The secondary Ash wood on Ditchling Beacon has been particularly hard hit by Ash Die-back and badly impacted trees will need to be removed. Pockets of woodland should be retained on the lower slopes and the structure and species composition managed in line with [Natural England's recommendations](#) for the management of Ash woodland impacted by die-back on SSSIs<sup>12</sup>. Scrub and tree retention should ensure that the iconic views from the site are retained and should screen the Borstal

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<sup>11</sup> <https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/1ea3da7bc65847ddb087bb17121c2a91>

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/managing-woodland-sssis-with-ash-dieback-hymenoscyphus-fraxineus>

Road, both for aesthetic reasons and to shield the grassland from atmospheric pollution derived from road traffic.

- 6.7 The information on frequency of visit (with a large minority visiting less than once a month) suggests that many visitors are not that regular, therefore ongoing engagement with site users will be useful to explain that, without management, the important chalk grassland will be lost and remaining areas will not be resilient. A “Friends of Ditchling Beacon” group supporting volunteer tasks on site could be a useful advocate.

### *Mowing*

47% of questionnaire respondents considered the that the current extent of mown areas was about right, with 24% unsure and about equal numbers considered that the area was too big or too small, respectively. This pattern was fairly consistent between user types. Three respondents suggested grazing in place of mowing. The response from Natural England stated that some mowing with the removal of arisings was acceptable.

- 6.8 Mowing is a useful tool to reduce the dominance of bulky, competitive species. At Ditchling Beacon there is a need to control ruderal species such as Hemp Agrimony and Willowherb that can dominate the sward following scrub clearance. Once these have been suppressed, the resulting grassland although nutrient enriched, is generally better managed through grazing than mowing, particularly on steep slopes. Although in some ways mowing replicates grazing, provided the arisings are removed, it creates a uniform sward and does not result in the creation of small areas of bare ground that provide a warm microclimate for invertebrates.
- 6.9 It is recommended that mowing is used to improve the sward subsequent to scrub clearance, as needed.

## Grazing

51% of questionnaire respondents thought that the extent of the grazed area on site was about right, with 26% stating that it was too small. This was consistent between different activity groups except for wildlife/birdwatchers, of whom 50% stated that the area was too small and 30% that it was about right. Natural England and Buglife both recommended the use of livestock grazing and National Trust expressed interest in partnership working to improve grazing across the adjacent National Trust and SWT holdings.

If grazing were to be increased, a large minority (43%) of respondents said they would prefer boundary fencing with 21% preferring temporary fencing and 12% and 8% large or several small enclosures respectively as a preference. 14% were unsure. Buglife identified the need for either boundary or compartment fencing, suggesting compartments would offer more control. The British Horse Society expressed a preference for temporary fencing.

A large number of general comments (just under 100) were made about grazing, and can be read in [Appendix 7](#).

- 6.10 The chalk grassland of the South Downs was created and maintained over centuries by livestock grazing. Without grazing, coarse grasses and then scrub become dominant, shading out more sensitive plants and changing the habitat so that it is no longer suitable for characteristic butterflies and other invertebrates. Livestock also provide microhabitats for plants and invertebrates through creating patches of bare ground and swards of different heights. From an ecological perspective, the site should be grazed to maintain and improve the quality of existing areas of chalk grassland and to help restore those (such as the plateau, which supports more mesotrophic grassland) where coarse grasses and scrub have been developing on the site since the decline of grazing from about 1940 onwards.
- 6.11 We suggested that, to improve and maintain the chalk grassland, grazing is increased to include areas that are currently ungrazed. Grazing will however need careful management. For example, heavy summer grazing should be avoided, as this would result in the loss of flowers and eliminate nectar sources. A special community of liverworts that is restricted to north facing downland (the “southern hepatic mat”) is vulnerable to cattle poaching in winter. It is suggested that the site is grazed with sheep in winter, with small

numbers of cattle grazing parts of the slopes and the mesotrophic plateau. The use of pesticides (wormers) should be avoided and bulls should not be used.

- 6.12 Extending grazing would require boundary or compartment fencing plus the use of temporary fencing or a GPS system<sup>13</sup> to focus grazing on restoration areas. Gates should conform to the appropriate standards and any unnecessary fencing should be removed. Some existing fencing may need replacing. Piped or pumped water will also need to be installed, as there is currently no water supply. There were a large number of additional comments in the questionnaire about grazing, particularly in contrast to the small number of comments about tree and scrub removal and mowing. It will be essential to engage further with stakeholders to explore the most acceptable plan for the necessary grazing infrastructure and to provide cattle-free areas for visitors to whom this is important (there were 10 questionnaire responses from people worried about encountering livestock when they visited the site).

## Other recommendations

- 6.13 A number of other issues were identified by respondents. These included parking, bridleway surfacing, interpretation/information and historical/archaeological heritage features. However, 30% of responses to the questionnaire indicated that the respondents did not want to see any changes (note that respondents could have multiple responses to this question).

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<sup>13</sup> For example <https://www.nofence.no/en/>

*Transport*

Car parking and public transport links were both raised as issues. 19% of questionnaire respondents identified better parking as a change they would like to see while one respondent suggested fewer parking spaces should be made available. One written response suggested an alternative parking location that could be enhanced on Underhill Lane and suggested laybys could be made suitable for parking. One respondent complained about anti-social behaviour at the car park in the evening. Six respondents were concerned about parking availability or price, and 4 about dangers associated with people parking on the road verge. The speed of traffic was raised as a concern by one respondent

Two respondents suggested closing the Borstal Road to cars/blocking it at the top so cars could not travel through.

It was noted in one written response that the questionnaire did not specifically ask about improving access public transport but 7 respondents commented that they would like to see improved public access links; this was also highlighted in four written responses.

- 6.14 To reduce the dependence of visitors on transport by car, we suggest that bus access is promoted in all leaflets, web pages, and other media relating to the site and that greater emphasis is given to this than to the car park. We suggest that SWT works with the [Breeze up to the Downs](https://www.buses.co.uk/breeze-downs)<sup>14</sup> Partnership to look at opportunities to improve public transport access to Ditchling Beacon.
- 6.15 The informal car park on Underhill Lane at the north-west corner of the nature reserve (off the common) should be formalised to provide an alternative for visitors wishing to explore the northern section of the site. Ditchling Beacon and Commons received confirmation during the consultation period that this area is owned by East Sussex County Council. An exploration of the suitability of the car park at Clayton Windmills for walkers wishing to visit Ditchling Beacon could also be undertaken.
- 6.16 Some questionnaire and consultation responses referred to the parking charges at the National Trust car park. We suggest discussion with NT about

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<sup>14</sup> <https://www.buses.co.uk/breeze-downs>



the possibility of some free parking provision, for example for SWT members wishing to visit the reserve.

### *Rights of way and access*

Problems with the surface of bridleways/paths were noted by 25 respondents and 8% of questionnaire respondents identified better footpaths as a change they would like to see, while improvements to the bridleway running south from Underhill Lane was requested in one written submission.

Five respondents requested improved and/or safer access for cyclists and there were several suggestions about creating a cycle lane on the Borstal Road or even closing the Borstal road to motorised vehicles.

Two respondents requested a safer road crossing and one written submission included a request to improve disabled access.

- 6.17 Ditchling Beacon is designated Open Access land under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act (2000) and has two bridleways (including the South Downs Way, a national trail) and two footpaths running across it. There is a long-standing history of public access to the site. Linking people and nature and bringing nature's benefits to people are two core elements of SWT's vision, and providing for public access, use and enjoyment without compromising the conservation needs of the site is one of SWT's objectives for the site.
- 6.18 We recommend that the condition of the rights of way on the site are reviewed with the ESCC and SDNP Rights of Way officers and solutions for improving surfaces in a sensitive and appropriate way where necessary are explored. This should include a review of the feasibility of making the bridleway running south from Underhill Lane more suitable for cyclists. This was restored some years ago with funding from the British Horse Society but quickly broke down and became rutted due to poor highway drainage maintenance which meant that the new surface washed away each time it rained and therefore this should be pursued with the Highways Authority if necessary.

*Interpretation and information*

17% of responses identified the need for more on-site information, including about the heritage features, the site ownership and management

Two written submissions included requests for improved interpretation, noting that this need not be traditional boards but could include information accessed digitally via QR codes.

- 6.19 Interpretation is currently limited to a SWT leaflet showing the recent land acquisitions and a joint SWT/NT panel in the car park highlighting ownership and the conservation value of the site. There is a clear need to improve interpretation about the site. We recommend that a review is undertaken of pre-visit, point of entry and within site interpretation, with the aim of increasing peoples' understanding and appreciation of the site, including its heritage and management. This should co-ordinate with interpretation/information provided by NT where possible.

*Infrastructure*

More seats and were requested by 7% of respondents and in one written submissions. Two respondents requested more dog bins. No mention was made of other infrastructure.

- 6.20 There is currently a dog bin in the NT car park. Additional dog bins should be considered, but it is noted that there is a cost implications (e.g. £700 for installation and ongoing payment for emptying). Raising awareness about the need to remove dog mess from site is an alternative approach that should also be considered.
- 6.21 The request for more seats to allow use of the site by those needing to sit down at intervals should be considered in conjunction with the SDNP authority.

*Archaeological heritage*

One respondent requested better presentation of, and access to, the Iron Age enclosure while one participant in the webinars discussed restoration of the earthworks and improved interpretation.

- 6.22 The site includes a number of features of archaeological and historical interest including an Iron Age hillfort, the site of a beacon, a 19th century boundary stone, chalk pits, a tumulus and a dewpond. The hillfort was damaged as a result of ploughing on neighbouring land in the 1940s, and is only now visible as crop marks. However, the earth works persist on Ditchling Beacon.
- 6.23 We recommend that appropriate interpretation about these heritage features is developed and a means to indicate the location of the damaged area of the earthworks is explored in partnership with the neighbouring landowners (for example using low banks or posts to mark out the position of the earthworks). We suggest SDNP is contacted as a potential lead partner as a first step.

*Visitor behaviour*

Ninety respondents stated that they were worried about uncontrolled dogs on the site and three that they would like to see all dogs on short leads when on site. One expressed concern about anti-social behaviour in the car park in the evening. A later correspondent expressed dismay over the large amount of litter on the road verges.

- 6.24 Shaping peoples' perception of the site, and therefore their behaviour on site, is an important consideration. We recommend the formation of a "Friends of Ditchling Beacon" group to help build stronger links with the local community plus enhanced interpretation to help visitors from further afield understand and appreciate the site and adapt their behaviour accordingly.

## 7. Summary and next steps

- 7.1 This consultation came about through concern from SWT, the land managers, about the condition of the site in terms of nature conservation. In accordance with the principles laid out in *A Common Purpose* (Natural England 2012), this first phase of consultation has gathered information and engaged with the landowners, the local community, other site users, local representatives of relevant statutory agencies and other stakeholders to share this. We have then obtained the views of stakeholders on what is important to them about the common how they feel it should be managed going forwards. This was done through a range of means including a questionnaire, a site-based face-to-face event, three webinars, a presentation available online and various forms of social media. This report makes summarises those views available to stakeholders (together with the background to the consultation).
- 7.2 Based on the above, we have provided a series of recommendations around the different types of management that should be taken forward.
- 7.3 The next step will be to formulate a shortlist of more detailed options. These should include mapped information, such as the possible locations of any new features or potential changes. A second phase of the consultation should then be carried out to re-engage all relevant stakeholders on the these more detailed options including drop-in days, webinars, guided walks (depending on circumstances at the time) and direct correspondence and meetings as required. Based on consultation with stakeholders, preferred options (including any amendments agreed on) will be identified. A second written report will be created and made available to stakeholders. Any necessary permissions will then be secured (including an application to the Planning Inspectorate for structures, should this be necessary) and an implementation programme developed.
- 7.4 Ideally, the second stage of the consultation should follow on as soon as possible after the first stage, to ensure continuity and maintain engagement. The second stage is likely to take around six months to complete.

## References

Natural England. (2012). *A Common Purpose-A guide to community engagement for those contemplating management on common land-Revised edition*. Natural England.

## Appendix 1: Stakeholders

The table below lists those stakeholder organisations contacted for their views on the future management of Ditchling Beacon. Five neighbouring/nearby farmers were also contacted directly, in addition to the letter drop of nearby properties.

Contacted stakeholders in alphabetical order
Bricycles - Brighton and Hove Cycling Campaign
Brighton and Hove Archaeological Society
British Horse Society
Buglife
Butterfly Conservation
CLA
CPRE
CTC East Sussex
Disables Ramblers
Ditchling - Westmeson Parish Council
Ditchling & Westmeston District councillor
Ditchling Beacon and Commons
Ditchling Society
Dog's Trust
East Sussex Ecologist
East Sussex County Archaeologist
East Sussex Cycling Assoc
East Sussex Highways
English Heritage
ESCC Countryside team manager
ESCC rights of way
Forestry Commission
Kennel Club
Lewes Archaeology Group
Lewes District Council
London to Brighton Cycle event organisers
Lower Plant recording society
Maria Caulfield MP (Lewes)
National Park
National Trust
Natural England
National Farmers Union
Open Spaces Society
Ouse Valley West & Downs County Councillor
Plantlife
Ramblers Association
RSPB
SDW ROW



**Contacted stakeholders in alphabetical order**

South Downs Local Access Forum

South Downs National Park trails officer

Southdowns Mountainbike club

Sussex Amphibian &amp; Reptile Group

Sussex Archaeology

Sussex Fungi Group

Sussex Ornithological Society

The Southern Hang Gliding Club

West Weald Fungus Recording Group

Worthing and District Radio Amateur Club

## Appendix 2: Questionnaire



**Sussex**  
Wildlife Trust



**FOOTPRINT**  
ECOLOGY

### Ditchling Beacon Questionnaire

We would like to hear about your long-term aspirations for the common and the wider landscape, and any changes you would like to see.

This survey is being carried out by Footprint Ecology on behalf of Sussex Wildlife Trust. It is part of the 'Changing Chalk' project, which is supported by The National Lottery Heritage Fund. Please see [here](#) for further information.

All the data we collect will be anonymous.

**Q1 What activity do you most often visit Ditchling Beacon for? Please tick one.**

- ☐ Walking
- ☐ Dog walking
- ☐ Cycling/mountain biking
- ☐ Horse riding
- ☐ Running/jogging
- ☐ Quiet relaxation
- ☐ Wildlife/bird-watching
- ☐ Picnics/family outings
- ☐ Meeting friends
- ☐ Work

Other (please detail):

**Q2 How often do you visit Ditchling Beacon? Please tick one.**

- ☐ Daily
- ☐ More than once a week
- ☐ Weekly
- ☐ 2 to 3 times a month
- ☐ Monthly
- ☐ Less than once a month

**Q3 Do you tend to visit more at a particular time of year? Please tick all that apply.**

- ☐ Spring (Mar-May)
- ☐ Summer (Jun-Aug)
- ☐ Autumn (Sept-Nov)
- ☐ Winter (Dec-Feb)
- ☐ Equally all year
- ☐ Don't know

**Q4 Has your use of Ditchling Beacon changed since the start of the Covid-19 pandemic? Please tick one.**

- ☐ No change
- ☐ Visiting more
- ☐ Visiting less

Any other changes (please detail):

**Q5 How do you usually travel to Ditchling Beacon? Please tick one.**

- ☐ Car/van
- ☐ On foot
- ☐ Cycle
- ☐ Public transport
- ☐ Horse-box/lorry
- ☐ On horseback

Other:

**Q6 Are you a member of Sussex Wildlife Trust? Please tick one.**

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

**Q7** Why do you visit Ditchling Beacon? **Please tick all that apply.**

- ☐ Landscape/views
- ☐ Peace and quiet
- ☐ Wildlife
- ☐ Suitable walks
- ☐ Good for dogs
- ☐ Meeting others
- ☐ Easy access on foot
- ☐ Easy access by car
- ☐ Easy access by bike
- ☐ Good parking
- ☐ Horse riding access

Other (please give details):

**Q8** When visiting Ditchling Beacon do any of the following concern you? **Please tick all that apply.**

- ☐ Nothing concerns me
- ☐ Disturbance or damage to wildlife
- ☐ Bridleway/path surfaces
- ☐ Dog fouling
- ☐ Litter
- ☐ Uncontrolled dogs
- ☐ Encountering horses
- ☐ Encountering joggers
- ☐ Encountering cyclists
- ☐ Encountering a cow or sheep
- ☐ Professional activities
- ☐ Anti-social behaviour

Other (please give details):

**Q9** What changes would you like to see, if any, to how Ditchling Beacon is managed for visitors? **Please tick all that apply.**

- ☐ None
- ☐ Better parking
- ☐ Better footpaths
- ☐ More on-site information
- ☐ More seating
- ☐ More events e.g. guided walks

Other (please give details):

**Q10** Tree and scrub management will be necessary to keep the open grassland, and Ash Dieback (Chalara) means that tree removal for safety is necessary. Do you think the current balance of open grassland and woodland/scrub at Ditchling Beacon is:

- ☐ About right
- ☐ Too much woodland and scrub
- ☐ Not enough woodland and scrub
- ☐ Don't know/not sure

Further details:

**Q11** Some mowing is required to help prevent scrub encroachment and maintain the area of open grassland. Do you think the area currently mowed at Ditchling Beacon is:

- ☐ About right
- ☐ Too much
- ☐ Not enough
- ☐ Don't know/not sure

Further details:

**Q12** Livestock grazing is necessary to maintain the area and diversity of flower-rich grassland. Do you think the grazed area at Ditchling Beacon is:

- ☐ About right
- ☐ Too small
- ☐ Too big
- ☐ Don't know/not sure

Further details:



**Q13** If grazing were to be extended, it would be necessary to ensure the animals did not stray off the site or onto the road. Which of the following fencing methods would you prefer at Ditchling Beacon (given that full public access would be maintained at all times)?

- ☐ Large fenced enclosures
- ☐ Several small enclosures
- ☐ Boundary fencing with all access points maintained
- ☐ Temporary fencing (e.g. electric)
- ☐ Don't know/not sure

Other (please give details):

**Q14** Do you have any other comments regarding grazing at Ditchling Beacon?

**Q15** Do you have any other comments regarding Ditchling Beacon?

**Q16** Would you be interested in taking part and doing more at Ditchling Beacon? Please tick all that apply.

- ☐ Volunteer work parties
- ☐ Friends group
- ☐ Guided walks

Other (please give details):

If you are interested in volunteering at Ditchling Beacon, please get in touch, either by email: [swtvolutneering@sussexwt.org.uk](mailto:swtvolutneering@sussexwt.org.uk) or phone: 07796844641.

**Q17** What is your home postcode (to enable us to see where site users come from)?

Please press submit to complete the survey.

Thank you for your participation.

## Appendix 3: Additional questionnaire responses to Q10 (current extent of trees and scrub)

The following additional responses were supplied to Q10 and are repeated verbatim.

Responses in alphabetical order
A good mix is maintained with what is currently being done
Although the areas already cleared should be managed to prevent regrowth of cleared scrub and trees and encourage as diverse grassland as is possible.
But only reduce North of the road. If reduced on South then the road is highly visible from the surrounding area as headlights at night and shiny cars glinting as a steady stream in the daytime destroying the beauty
Down land turf is precious but scrub does provide an additional habitat. Not sure if more or less scrub is desirable. Perhaps scrub can be controlled by natural browsers (deer, ponies hardy cattle)?
Enough woodland and scrub. Need to preserve and enhance the chalk grassland.
I feel hugely disappointed about the ongoing removal of trees, removal of scrub is ok if it helps the wildlife, but the dead logs are unsightly, and potentially dangerous, not just ash is removed, and
I quite like a bit of woodland to vary the landscape, but that's not what is being discussed here. It's not what I like. it seems odd to cut down healthy trees which have been there for years.
I realise responsible management is necessary but the more healthy woodland and scrub, the better in my opinion.
I would have thought it was right until seeing the presentation which implies there is insufficient open land
Is it not true that trees and shrubs help to prevent soil erosion on hillsides. Should we not be leaving some scrub which is also a wildlife habitat and only remove diseased trees?
It depends on the future plan and habitat management
It doesn't all need removing - wind breaks & diversity are good.
It's important to protect all the chalk grassland we have, and to try improve / extend it. However I would be happy to see more tree and scrub cover in areas that would not support chalk grassland
More planning of bushes and trees please.
More small discreet natural scrub areas and allowing existing hedgelines to grow to some maturity to provide shelter and food, particularly with nesting/migrant birds in mind.
Much improved by the tree and scrub clearance recently. More please.
Stop 'managing' the area. Allow it to return to nature.
The area if young ash lost to dieback could be replaced or reverted to grassland
The grass is not the natural state. Compare wooded downs further west. Think of climate change.
There is far too much woodland and scrub on what should be an open chalk grassland with scattered scrub
This is part of the declining <4% of chalk grassland across the SDNP. Ash Dieback provides an opportunity to reclaim some of this lost internationally important habitat

Walking along the lower pathways is a delight, and loss of these would be bad news. I'm less concerned about the upper levels.

We really appreciate the work that has already been done by the Trust

Whilst it is important to keep areas grazed there is an inadequate mixture of scrub and trees to encourage enough birds such as nightingales.

## Appendix 4: Additional questionnaire responses to Q11 (current extent of mowed area)

The following additional responses were supplied to Q11 and are repeated verbatim (i.e. no attempt has been made to correct grammar, spelling, etc).

Responses in alphabetical order
Again I think that rewilding is important but I recognise I am no expert on rewilding myself.
Downland turf can be controlled naturally see Q10 response
In conjunction with grazing
It depends what needs to be achieve re habitats
it dies resemble a football pitch most of the time, not great for chalk grassland species
More should be grazed
Mowing is damaging climate
Ok short-term, but not a sustainable or ecologically-sensitive solution
Probably not enough
Same reasons as above, though mowing should be used minimally and grazing preferred
Some of the steeper sections of regrowth could be mown with a remote flail
The area should be rewilded and tree coverage allowed to return
We do need an area of mowed land to have a safe paragliding takeoff, so it would be great to be consulted
Would it be possible to use grazing rather than mowing

## Appendix 5: Additional questionnaire responses to Q12 (current extent of grazed area)

The following additional responses were supplied to Q12 and are repeated verbatim (i.e. no attempt has been made to correct grammar, spelling, etc).

Responses in alphabetical order
A map on site showing the grazing areas would be useful
Although some more targeted grazing may be useful in recently cleared areas.
As much of the common as possible should be grazed
But happy for more
Cattle damage climate
Despite recent improvements there is still a lot of trees and scrub
Grazing seems like a more sustainable option, livestock are part of the countryside so people should cope.
I am in favour of livestock grazing but am sometimes concerned by irresponsible people who do not control their dogs
I would prefer grading to mowing any day.
Perhaps variation in grazing in sympathy with insect, bird
Probably not enough
Selfishly I'm a dog walker not having to worry about livestock is more desirable
Should be rewilded. The UK is one of the most tree-depleted countries in Europe.
Should be sheep grazed
sometimes feel intimidated by cows on the path
The whole areas needs grazing - this is what made the landscape, conserved this special habitat.
We need to expand flower rich grassland if at all possible
We need to look after the deer
Would welcome site being more widely grazed to restore / maintain chalk grassland.

## Appendix 6: Additional questionnaire responses to Q13 (preferred type of enclosure if grazing were to be taken forward)

The following additional responses were supplied to Q13 and are repeated verbatim (i.e. no attempt has been made to correct grammar, spelling, etc).

Responses in alphabetical order
And room to access through with horses please
Come on - the road/cars/highways must not dictate the solution. Cattle grids (like New Forest) and open range grazing,
Do not extend grazing. Allow tree cover to return.
Don't mind any, as long as you can access and use from horseback
Fencing at the top of the hill should consider paragliding take offs
From dog walker perspective rotational grazing so that there are also areas without livestock would be great.
Getting the balance right for visitors & livestock. BIG notices re not letting your dog worry livestock!
GPS invisible fencing, grazing across the road using cattle grids
Has ticked all of the first three and said 'no, dangerous' to electric fencing
I'd rather it were not extended
I'd be happy with electric as long as access was still available
I'd be happy with whatever fencing options were necessary, as long as access points were maintained.
Just do whatever works, if you go to the countryside you should expect animals, gates and fences and work around them!
Natural willow fencing
No more grazing
No preference - whichever works best
NoFence technology within a boundary fenced area would be ideal to really get grazing levels done right
Open the whole area, use cattle grids on the road, create a real biodiverse area. cars would slow down. Nature returns
Small enclosed areas that horse riders and walks can get around without having to go in!!
Some dogs couldn't get through
Try 'Nofence' and collared cows and ponies
Whatever is best for farmers, we'll adapt
Why not complete proper sheep fencing along the beacon road. I've put sheep back in . No electric thank you
With occasional temporary fencing to target areas where necessary.



## Appendix 7: Additional questionnaire responses to Q14 (general comments on grazing)

The following additional responses were supplied to Q14 and are repeated verbatim (i.e. no attempt has been made to correct grammar, spelling, etc).

### Responses in alphabetical order

An expansion in the area that can be grazed would be wonderful and would improve the site's wildlife value.

Any changes to landscape management should have due regard to the potential impacts to known and as yet unknown heritage assets (i.e. installation of irrigation, fencing, use of heavy machinery, etc). Further advice can be sought from the ESCC County Archaeologist

As a walker it is lovely to see the landscape being grazed by animals.

As in other national parks in UK the landscape is not natural. The survey is very parochial and you need to consider the whole planet.

Avoid electric fencing.

Can information be posted around the car park about what areas are currently being grazed? This is a help to plan what route to follow on a dog walk.

Cattle can be intimidating & we don't entirely trust GPS fences.

Close the road, link both sides better on key days, drive large flocks of sheep on special days.

Concerned for the reptile population, so would prefer pulse grazing, and maintain enough scrub for them.

Consider goats with appropriate large fencing.

Dexters are friendly and good at this sort of thing!

Docile cows and maybe goats would be good.

Feed the animals.

Fewer cows. More sheep. Use goats better at taking down scrub.

Grazing animals are a natural sight in the countryside however the general public are not great at understanding them so protecting the animals must be vital too.

Grazing is grate but once scrub starts to take hold the animals often keep away and the scrub can grow considerably. Still think it's needs management to not allow it to get too big.

Grazing is important, but not keen on ponies grazing due to she horse riding they have been known to chase after you and cause potential accidents.

Grazing to keep scrub in check seems necessary on Downland but which animals are used seems to be important, horses, sheep, cows etc all effect grassland and shrub differently.

Greater variety of herbivores should be used.

Happy for your to do what is necessary to improve the habitat for the future.

Hopefully it is not overgrazed.

I enjoy seeing the animals grazing and would love to see more.

I have come across a bull occasionally with the cattle herd. Bit scary but they are docile enough. But are they always? Guess that would worry many people quite a bit.

I have had difficulty with cattle grazing on several occasions when calves were relatively young & the group were on the main SDW path to the east of the Beacon.

I have read about the benefits of animals grazing in Isabella Tree's book on Knepp and if she is to be believed there is scientific evidence it is good for the land and wildlife.

I have safety concerns about walking through areas grazed by cattle. I have no such concerns regarding areas grazed by sheep.

I have some concerns about my safety walking close to herds of heifers/bullocks.

I love seeing the grazing sheep.

I love to see it in action.

I love to see the cows and sheep grazing freely.

I only get worried when I come across cows! I'm happy to support more sheep.

I really like to see the animals ranging around in a natural habitat.

I run from Lewes to Blackcap and sometimes on to Ditchling Beacon and Clayton windmills. I always prefer the landscape around Blackcap. The Beacon is very busy and scrub-like with less vegetation variety.

I see no problem with it, it's natural land management.

I support this method of maintaining the chalk downland in a non-invasive way, and I enjoy seeing the sheep grazing.

I think it works well as it is. No reason to change.

I would look at the whole site in its entirety and just fence the boundary. I support conservation grazing by animals across the site however, in places this scarp is very steep and if naturally not accessed by the livestock these areas would develop into scrub/woodland which would favour other wildlife species particularly birds. The species rich chalk grassland is a marvellous habitat but I don't think that every square inch of the downland needs to be returned to this state when clearly it is not naturally occurring and would need massive, continuous human input to maintain it.

I would love to see a wild landscape. I understand that any site where there is human interaction for recreation needs some management and in some cases to promote better biodiversity, but the less the better.

I would prefer to see more trees, but agree scrub needs to be kept in check. However, in some places sheep have been taught to graze in woodland so the woodlands are maintained by the sheep.

I would recommend a mix of cattle, sheep and ponies to create the right mix of sward habitats. Care must be taken to ensure low intensity grazing as a build up of nutrients would ultimately reduce diversity of flora and encourage a grass monoculture.

I'd ask that more trees and scrub are allowed to grow across the south downs. Ditchling Beacon could lead the way in transforming the downs to the National Park it should be with wildlife roaming free, and nature deciding what is 'best' to allow to grow. Hands off approach with removal of fences and re-introduction of lost species.

I'd support as much grazing as possible at Ditchling Beacon, as well as any additional fencing required. I understand that there is the historic 'Commons' rules that need to be maintained, but I actually feel we should take a flexible approach to this e.g. make sure access is maintained but allow fencing for longer periods on a temporary basis if that would help the chalk grassland habitat.

Implement what is best for nature and help the visitors understand why it is necessary and educate them in how to support this.

In comparison to other SWT nature reserves DB is overgrazed and looks more like farmland with open access than a nature reserve. It is great for skylarks and ground nesting birds and I have seen many goldfinches there but it needs more interest and balance. Are the cattle treated with chemicals? I've never seen a dung beetle on Ditchling Beacon.

Increase level of info to public on types of livestock - have some form of reporting system on dogs and livestock to reduce risk and incidence.

It appears that Ditchling Beacon Nature Reserve to the west of the car park is used by two general groups - the serious walkers, nature studiers etc, and recreational walkers with dogs and/or young family, who start & finish in the CP making as little as half an hours visit. Both appreciate the scenery, access etc, but their requirements differ in some respects, particularly with respect to separation from other 'users' such as sheep, cows and to some extent horse riders & cyclists. Both use the South Downs Way. The issue of cows/sheeps/dogs would be best resolved by fencing off the grazing animals with stock fencing punctuated by stiles/gates, from the SDW to which the off-lead dogs and less serious visitors tend to confine themselves. Sometimes it is possible to avoid grazing animals by taking the eastern route across the road. But sometimes the farmer grazes cows at the same time, but the trust can hardly be expected to 'anti-synchronise' its grazing with the farmers!

It is good to see and I support it.

It is good.

It is nice to see the sheep and cattle grazing.

It is not enough to control the scrub.

It would be ideal if there was signage to prewarn dog owners so they could put dogs on leads with exact locations of livestock.

It's good to see the heritage flock grazing the hillside.

Its a beautiful place, lets keep it that way.

Keen to see overgrazing eliminated at all costs, perhaps a range of herbivores is beneficial?

Keep grazing at a level that preserves chalk grassland species.

Love seeing the beautiful animals.

Love seeing the livestock.

Love to see free roaming animals.

Love to see more grazing.

Love to see the animals grazing. Do what is best for them and the land.

Lovely to see the sheep and cattle. I don't mind walking through them. I don't have a dog.

More grazing is desirable.

More grazing/cattle grids should be put either end of the Bostal Road so live stock can graze across the road, speed limit should be reduced and priority points to slow traffic. You could also make the Beacon Road one way at weekends and have it special closure days for bus only and cycling. This could easily be done in consultation with ESCC Highways dept.

More info (interpretation of the local biodiversity) and human history there. Significance of the beacon then people are more likely to respect it.

More information on breeds.

More sheep and less cattle. The cattle do so much more damage to the land. But then I guess there is very little money in sheep which is why the trend has been away from. Sheep and towards cattle in recent years. It has to make sense for the farmers I guess.

More varied species might help; browsers as well as grazers.

My main worry is dogs and owners that do not control them.

Need for information to the few ignorant dog owners about how to behave around livestock. BIG notices to warn folks not to let their dog/s worry livestock. I'm a dog owner myself and also grew up in a farming environment. Also get the balance right for both visitors and livestock as well as making sure the livestock is checked regularly and having signage with a phone number visitors can ring if they see anything of concern with the livestock.

Need to make sure its dog proof.

Need to use grazers that eat Tor Grass.

Not small areas as difficult to negotiate getting in and out on horseback. Website signage kept up to date to show where/which area is currently holding cattle on would be very much appreciated.

Overall I think it works well.

Permanent fencing can be easily well sited on steep slopes, set into the hillside, not along the top / visual skyline places. Sheep grazing must be the long-term answer, with some cattle as and when needed, plus anything else (eg ponies) as specific circumstances require. A partnership with neighbours would be the ideal (grazing, stock, water etc) - landscape scale solution.

Please do what is best for species diversity and ecosystems.

Please no more sheep. I understand they damage biodiversity.

Seems like the most sustainable option and can add value - mowing is a less attractive option.

Sometimes get nervous when there are a lot of cows going east.

Support grazing where it can be done safely.

Target grazing with small enclosed areas.

The Downland grass species developed as a result of intensive grazing. Mainly sheep. Is there not a sheep species that can cope with dogs e.g. big horns.

The notices on the gates are helpful, and the provision of dog leads was a good idea. But it would be good to extend the signage so walkers have advanced warning before they get to the grazing areas.

The only sustainable way to maintain biodiversity here. Need a variety of grazing animals.

The public, myself included, are not experts, so I would defer to you to do what's right, the current mix works for me, though more parking would be helpful, but I'd also prioritise protecting the area, so do what you feel is appropriate.

The use of signs warning dog walkers when livestock is present are really useful - as long as they are kept up to date (which SWT do) otherwise people will start ignore them.

There needs to be better education on grazing animals particularly aimed at dog owners.

There were cows grazing today. They were extremely polite.

This seems like a sustainable option. Grazing cattle that are used to people rarely cause any problems, and form part of the landscape. It makes far more sense to use animals and produce sustainable meat at the same time, than spending money employing people to carry out mechanical management that actually doesn't achieve the same outcomes. I don't think people can expect to arrive somewhere like Ditchling Beacon and expect there not to be animals. There are parks for that purpose. The countryside includes farm animals.

We should encourage biodiversity and allow nature to run its course rather than interfering.

Would like to see more wildlife growing naturally.

Would prefer cows to be kept off the bridle way paths (not easy I'm aware). Having been chased numerous times to the point that it's actually dangerous to ride if the cows are in the fields. (I do walk any routes I plan to ride ahead and change if there is cattle).

You would need to put educational notices for dog owners about keeping dogs on a lead in livestock areas, to reduce the risk of dog attacks on livestock.

You'll need some " dogs on leads around livestock" notices.

## Appendix 8: Additional questionnaire responses to Q15 (general comments on management of Ditchling Beacon)

The following additional responses were supplied to Q15 and are repeated verbatim (i.e. no attempt has been made to correct grammar, spelling, etc).

### Responses in alphabetical order

Also better gates/access. As a horse rider numerous gates are broken or hard to use and issue a risk of injury. Not to mention the amount of sheep that I've spotted out from the enclosed space due to a broken/unlatched gate.

As a paraglider pilot, I strongly support the maintenance of grazed land. We paraglider pilots value the beauty of the site and its wildlife. We spend as little time on the ground and as much in the air as possible!

As mentioned, the litter on the road up to the Beacon mainly from cyclists is an eyesore which spoils the beauty of it.

As noted a very important and beautiful paragliding site. I am a member of the southern hang gliding and paragliding club and we would love to be consulted on any major changes. Please see [shgc.org.uk](http://shgc.org.uk) for contact details.

As we live to the north public transport is not an option. A better lower carpark would be good.

Be nice if more mountain bike access was allowed in other areas - especially if tree felling is happening - that could be a chance to install some specific trails through those areas.

Beautiful area, thank you for managing it.

Beautiful.

Create more bridle ways. Create a maintained cycle route, between Hangleton Ditchling over the downs.

Ditchling Beacon environment must be maintained for us and future generations to enjoy and a big thank you to Sussex Wildlife Trust for making this happen.

Ditchling Beacon is a highly desirable destination for cyclists from far afield and they are having the greatest negative impact on the Beacon. Road safety is a major issue, many cyclists get off and push up the narrow and windy Beacon Road, and then free wheel down at dangerous speeds. Warning of forthcoming cycle events are rarely given and the road area around the car park becomes very crowded and dangerous with cars and bikes competing for space. In a nutshell, the Beacon is used as a resource by many event organisers and cyclists, without consideration for other users and the countryside. Litter left after cycle events is often shocking and a sign placed by the Ditchling Society to remind cyclists at the BHF Ride to not litter was found torn down the following day. It is only a matter of time before there is a serious accident. Littering by other visitors is also a major problem and bins are not emptied often enough, particularly around peak holiday periods.

Educate people about controlling their dogs.

Feel very uncomfortable trying to do Bat Transect for BCT when car park is full of people dogging.

Good luck - it's a great site and it would be brilliant if more sustainable management and new areas of chalk grassland can be achieved.

Great for views although mostly of farmland. Some field now have more wild edges and weed seeds which is great. It would be good to have more of a mix of scrub and trees to encourage more birds.

Great to see the coffee/icecream van.

Great to see the management taking place to restore chalk grassland.

Happy for your to do what is necessary to improve the habitat for the future.

I am concerned about the volume of people that drive to Ditchling beacon and park, even before COVID. More should be done to direct people to all of the great spots around the South Downs this way people may be able to walk to other spots from their homes, rather than driving for a walk.

I do worry about the budget implications for the Wildlife Trust. The Warden told me how much the Ash Dieback felling programme was costing. And I guess the manual scrub clearance costs must be hefty. If management will require 50-70 years will you have the finances to see through any management strategy? Our property has a backgate leading into the reserve so we use the reserve everyday. Thank you for the consultation and the mega informative presentation - great work. In the recent past the Warden mentioned extending out from our water supply pipes to provide a water supply for cattle grazing the reserve - if that helps you we are up for that (if you need access to our land).

I don't know the area well as I only visit occasionally with a friend who lives nearby. It's a lovely place with fabulous views which needs to be kept accessible but also managed for wildlife benefit - both fauna and flora (the two going hand in hand of course!) Habitat care and improvement being probably the most important thing we can do for wildlife..

I don't like the way this consultation has been presented to say that scrub management is 'necessary'. It is only necessary if we want it to remain as it is, ie with huge human impact.

I have lived at the bottom of Ditchling bostal for 23 years. The felling of large numbers of trees by SWT occurred many years before ash dieback disease and has been a blow to this particular habitat and its associated biodiversity. The removal of the trees has encouraged the scrub species which have not been well managed on the steep slope to the south of the road. This area is best managed as woodland and will likely revert as other species grow to replace the ash. It would be a good opportunity to plant elm.

I have to stress the road. Currently it is mostly hidden from the surrounding view of the Downs by trees on the North side of the road. This is also an important safety measure as people driving up the Beacon need to concentrate on the road and on cyclists around sharp bends. If the North side is cleared and the road vehicles can be seen by the surrounding area the beauty of the Beacon will be lost. But more dangerous is that vehicle drivers will look at the view and not the road and serious accidents will occur. Especially with cyclists. On a personal point I will then be affected by traffic noise, which currently isn't an issue apart from emergency vehicles, which I can hear. The Natural Barrier is essential. I support all your other scrub/ tree clearance, but not on the North side. It will also provide a habitat for the Deer I see and the Red Kite.

I love it, thank you for keeping it available for us to visit.

I puzzle over the interwoven functions and responsibilities of the SWT, NT, SDNPA, the County and Parish councils covering Ditchling Beacon. Who does what? Who is responsible for what? A short account at the site might prove instructive and interesting.

I think it would benefit more from more hedges though obviously that is a huge cost, but it would increase the wildlife.

I think there is too much provision for car parking and that it is imperative that parking does not spill over on to the verges of the road. The ease of access by car is not conducive to the



quiet enjoyment of the landscape, and does not accord with the need to reduce car travel in view of climate change.

I will leave the management to the experts. It is a beautiful place to visit.

I would love to see the road blocked at the top so cars from either direction could access the car park but could not drive through. I would also be happy to have (quiet) cattle grids at the top and bottom so the boundary fencing only need be literally around the boundary.

I'd love to see greater biodiversity - more trees and wildflowers.

I'm not sure what my access rights are on the Open Access land, it would be nice if this was a bit clearer.

I'm really grateful to have it. Thank you.

Improve the parking area to the west of beacon road, at the foot of the beacon on the right as you drive up. Really bad at the moment and add some signs and interpretation, give it a sense of place.

Incorporate a cycling lane up the Bostall. The orange bollards in the car park are unsightly and could be better designed.

Install a cycle path on the road. The way cars overtake cyclists is unbelievable round blind corners without giving enough space. It's a destination for cyclists but at the moment the car is king. Could there be a one way system implemented? Or ban cars all together. It's faster to take the A23 anyway.

Is there anyway a separate cycle track could be made up the beacon (maybe using the track from Underhill lane to the east of the bostal road) as the present mix of cyclists and vehicles is extremely dangerous and the government seems to be throwing money at improving cycle routes at present.

It is a great attraction for cyclists and I love to see them there. Is there though some way to enable them to cycle up and down without using the dangerous Ditchling Postal?

It is a lovely area that needs looking after.

It is a valuable paragliding site. It is used less compared to others (Like Devils Dyke) meaning the impact is minimal but still extremely important to enable pilots to spread out across the Downs greatly increasing safety.

It is a vitally important paragliding site one which the southern hang gliding club has flown safely for many years. I would like that to continue.

It is difficult to park there but a bigger car park would damage the environment. So I think the answer is more frequent buses that also run during the week and then you might gradually get people out of their cars. Also the bus fare is expensive, so a saver price would encourage more people to travel by bus. Maybe you need a bus shelter so people can wait in the dry for the bus home and maybe some public loos. And maybe a coffee and cake snack van with discounts if you travel by bus. And what about a hoppla bus which links Brighton with Ditchling Beacon and Ditchling village?

It is vital the chalk grassland is maintained. The encroachment of scrub and secondary woodland will ultimately lead to the loss of the chalk grassland.

It might be possible to employ tree cutters who use horses to take away the resulting debris as horses do far less damage to the soil than mechanised equipment. Horses also find it easier to work on slopes. I was very impressed when I saw a display of this type of work at the Woodland Fair at Bentley Wild Fowl Trust some years ago.

It would be good to have better wildlife areas at the top if better habitat can be created. Vital to retain the really rich grassland areas like chalk pits and steep slope with marsh fragrant orchids and skippers

It's a beautiful place and hopefully it will remain unspoilt to enjoy in the future.

It's one of my favourite places on the Downs, I often stop off for a breathing space between teaching and home. The walk to the nature reserve or the windmills is accessible.

It's a beautiful place and while I am not necessarily a frequent visitor, I would hate to see further restrictions or limitations in its use.

Keep up the good work!

Keep up the valuable work that you do.

Leave it alone. Let National Trust take care of the top part. They had this long before you had your area.

Management should combine with adjacent landholdings to increase the area under conservation management.

Maybe more information in the car park area about the archeology of the Beacon and surrounding area.

More focus on encouraging a diverse wildlife and wildflowers would be good.

Only that I wish dog owners would behave more considerately. It is often the people who visit regularly who are most careless when it comes to keeping their dog under control or on a lead when there is livestock grazing. Personally if more grazing is proposed then I would want all dogs to be on a lead and not running free. Several walks have been spoiled by out of control dogs (or rather, their owners!)

Over many years 50+ years visiting the area, I've seen the number of visitors around the Beacon car park grow exponentially with knock on effects on the surrounding environment - off road cycling, uncontrolled dogs, disturbing sensitive wildlife. There is a balance to be struck between catering for human visiting, and preserving/enhancing the wildlife that lives there/passes through. I fear all too often that human recreational "needs" are given precedence over needs of the natural inhabitants. Please consider no go areas for dogs, and visible notices requesting dogs on leads during March to August to protect ground nesting birds. Human needs in such a special environment should come second.

Please stop cutting back so many trees; its causing flooding and soil erosion which is impacting footpaths, roads and the houses below.

Remind visitors to remove litter it has been much worse this year especially during lockdown I was collecting more rubbish on my way up and on the Downs.

Since Covid the car park is always full. I used to walk the dog almost daily but struggle to get a space. It could be extended.

Steve Tilman and the Sussex Wildlife Trust do a great job managing the nature reserve for visitors and wildlife. Going forwards, it would be great to see less scrub and woodland, and a bigger area being grazed.

Stop parking.

Tackle ESCC again. It was agreed once, when the right highways engineer was in post; it was also agreed by BHCC, to extend the cattle grid concept all the way down to the urban edge at Hollingbury - we all let them off the hook and neither has happened (but it has at nearby Mill Hill, WSCC and Ashdown, ESCC). SDNPA took on HE and "won" (in the sense the A27 Arundel preferred route avoids the National Park). SWT needs to be as strong and committed. This is a statutory SSSI within a National Park. Stick to a bold vision and persevere.

Thank you for all that you do.

Thank you for taking care of it!

Thanks you for having the consultation with the public/stakeholders.

The balance between scrub and grass seems right. Since it's an artificially created landscape, it's going to need artificial methods to maintain it.

The Beacon is very open and exposed and I wonder why more trees would be a bad thing - but I am no expert. Wildlife should take precedence!

The car park area does get busy, and on some days you can't park at all. I understand its a way of limiting numbers, but maybe a small car park or layby with similar parking charges in another area would help.

The car park needs to be bigger. This will allow many more people to enjoy the Beacon. There are days I would love to go, but don't even attempt to because I know I won't be able to park.

The dominance of car traffic to, from and around the car park area impacts very negatively on the location and the tranquillity of the area. Please do more to promote and improve sustainable access, especially the wonderful weekend 'Breeze up to the Downs' bus services from Brighton. The bus allows people to do linear walks (eg returning to the city by bus from Stanmer Park or Devil's Dyke) and also offers stunning grandstand views of the downs on Brighton's doorstep en route to Ditchling Beacon.

The historical nature of the site needs to be better promoted and cared for. It's a shame that the ploughed area of the fort cannot be brought into the reserve.

The main issue these days is too many people using the site. I think there needs to be better traffic management along the road so that people don't park along there and cause hazards. Please don't increase the size of the car park, or introduce surfaced paths or anything as this will change it. The joy of the Beacon is unspoiled countryside, wild flowers, butterflies, skylarks and other birds. Encouraging people to the site doesn't benefit anyone, let people discover it themselves don't overcrowd it!

The previous owner left Ditchling Beacon in his will to the people. The National Trust should not be allowed to charge for parking. When they tarmacked the surface, the runoff ruined the bridleway down to the lane.

The quality of the bridleway on the northern perimeter running up from Underhill Lane is in a poor state of repair and getting worse.

The road at Ditchling Beacon should not be a through road for motor vehicles on Sundays, except for emergency vehicles. Allow access from Brighton and Ditchling, but not through traffic. That would make it safer for cyclists. It would require separate car parks though.

The road from Ditchling to the Beacon is being used increasingly by cyclists, though this is a good thing, there is a real danger of accidents because of cars overtaking often on blind corners. Some warning signage at the top and bottom of the Beacon wouldn't go amiss.

The site is highly valued by local paraglider pilots who launch and land there. We greatly appreciate the landscape and nature of the South Downs and are keen to help preserve it.

The site's proximity to urban areas is also its greatest asset - more volunteers could help to manage the site and shape its future ecology.

The size of the car park should be reduced and restricted to Blue Badge holders, with daily shuttle buses throughout the year operating from the car park of Asda and other properties in Carden Avenue.

The top car park will always be full no matter how large you make it. It would be good to try to improve and expand the car park at the base of the hill which will encourage more enjoy the all up.

There is often insufficient parking at the beacon carpark causing cars to park on the verges in a dangerous manner. however i feel like there is already a lot of pressure on the environment/wildlife from walkers and others so increasing the size of the car park probably wouldnt be useful. Maybe more regular public transport up to the top would mean not so many people travel by car. Also it feels very barren in some points as the ground has been so thoroughly trampled. It might be beneficial to wildlife to keep some areas out of bounds to walkers.

There is too much scrub and cotoneaster.

We are lucky to have it so close to the city.

We have recently given up our car. More public transport options - reliable small minibus?  
Could be good to reduce parking issues.

We need to celebrate the natural beauty more, such as the London Brighton Bike ride, a butterfly and orchid festival.

We really need a climbing lane for bikes, people come from miles to cycle up the hill, I have seen a number of accidents as cars try to pass cyclists.

We support habitat management to increase flowers and butterflies on the site.

We walk, dog walk, and cycle - on a nice day at the weekend it is a very popular spot, esp. with mt bikers - is there a way of tapping those numbers more effectively for funds for maintenance without a pay for access or tuning the site into a more managed location? ie maintain its open access and sense of openness etc.

We're so lucky to have it.

While access to nature is top priority right now, which activities are promoted should be looked at closely, changing surfacing and widening paths to facilitate cycling seems at odds with the landscape and increasing car parking space would go against the need to address carbon neutral targets and pollution concerns.

Why not put cattle grids on the road from Ditchling to the beacon?

Why not take back the ploughed land to create more grassland rather than reducing the scrub and woods?

With the current climate emergency it seems unbelievable that vast areas of woodland and trees have been destroyed. Surely we can leave trees on the steeper slopes that abut the bostal, without compromising the chalk habitats.

Would be good to have more stiles so more walks are accessible.

Would like more riding/ parking for trailer.

Would like to see more tree and scrub clearance.

## Appendix 9: Webinar and drop-in discussion points

Below is a list of points and questions raised by participants in the three consultation webinars and the on-site drop-in.

### Webinars

- Could consent for fencing from the Planning Inspectorate be obtained before the end of the consultation to move things along?
- Why does conservation grazing involve so few livestock if livestock grazing is a good thing?
- The area of scrub around the trig point is key for birds, although this area is owned by the National Trust, so not part of this consultation, but it might be better for the scheduled monument to prevent succession to woodland, and there is some chalk heath present.
- A query about the exact boundary of the site.
- How can the objective of retaining woodland be fulfilled in the context of Ash die-back
- Does Ash die-back present an opportunity for the restoration of chalk downland?
- Long-term management is very costly – what are the options and does SWT favour grazing?
- Is there resistance to the management plan?
- Are the three landowners/tenants of the area working together to safeguard the scheduled ancient monuments?
- Could the Iron Age hill fort be restored?
- Could there be some interpretation about the hillfort?
- Does recreation make the job harder?

### Drop-in

- Concerns over tree and scrub removal on the downs.
- Issues over conditions of public paths. Primarily the condition of the bridleway on north side of the Nature Reserve.
- Request for notification of grazing before animals arrive.
- Grazing signs not being removed once animals have been taken off.
- Concerns over too many cycle events and the litter they leave behind. Not all charitable events.
- Someone asking about the use of drones as a landscape tool. Not for recreation. Interested as a surveyor. Will communicate with our Comms expert.
- Concerns over the use of barbed wire. However understands why it is used.
- Ownership of private carpark on the northerly boundary of nature reserve. Poor condition.