



# Wormwood Scrubs

## A consultation on usage and barriers to use

Prepared by the London Development Trust  
Impact & Evaluation Team, 2022



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# Chapter 1.

## About the Consultation

**Wormwood Scrubs is a 76.8-hectare site of wild, public, open land located in the London Borough of Hammersmith & City. A unique mixture of scrubland, woodland, grassland – it is a site of great importance and a sanctuary for both human and nonhuman communities.**

The development and implementation of a Biodiversity Masterplan is vital as the borough and area surrounding the Scrubs are experiencing a period of significant change. To the north the Old Oak site is undergoing one of the UK's largest regeneration projects with 25,500 new homes being built and 65,000 jobs created. The Scrubs will therefore host a large number of new visitors and residents accessing it for recreation.

This consultation has been commissioned by London Borough of Hammersmith & Fulham (LBHF) in conjunction with the Wormwood Scrubs Charitable Trust Committee as part of their work to produce a Biodiversity Masterplan. Consultants Land Use Change (LUC) produced a Biodiversity Masterplan released Feb 2021, but their consultation with local stakeholders was deemed not far-reaching enough. In 2022, LBHF commissioned London Development Trust (LDT) to carry out a wider reaching consultation to elicit more diverse voices and opinions on the ways local people experience the Scrubs.

The aims and objectives of this report is to gather the views of local stakeholders, both existing and potential users of the Scrubs, to ensure the council create a Masterplan that meets the needs of the 185,500 (and rapidly growing) population whilst continuing to provide a critical support system for fauna and flora.

Our primary aim was to consult with a diverse range of Scrubs users, local residents, groups and other stakeholders so that the findings are representative of the local population and are not skewed by over representation from specific interest groups. Given that the Scrubs is directly flanked by a breadth of urban infrastructure – social housing, schools, a major hospital, transport hubs, sports facilities, a pony club and an infamous prison of the same name – it's of little surprise the views put forward are as diverse as the borough and the Scrubs itself.

This myriad of opinions, although a potential source of challenge, is a cause for celebration. As it's only when such a variety of voices are heard that a plan can be developed that serves as many members of community as possible.

This report is divided into three key themes. Wormwood Scrubs – Past. Wormwood Scrubs – Present. And Wormwood Scrubs – The Future. We have taken this approach so we can get a clear picture of what the Scrubs has been, is currently, and what it can be in the future to ensure it serves the needs of all.

### 1.1 Who Are London Development Trust (LDT)?

London Development Trust is a pan London community development charity, born out of a need for a different way of managing community engagement and community led spaces. LDT evolved from a previous charity, Manor House Development Trust (MHDT) which has over 15 years of experience running consultation and social impact measurement with diverse communities.

LDT's work is centred around five keystones. These are: connecting, empowering, creating space, influencing the powerful and running a robust and sustainable organisation.

Connecting means that we provide the practical means for organisations to work together. By collaborating with local authorities, community groups and tenants' associations we form long-term partnerships to serve the needs of our community.

Empowering means we empower communities and individuals to achieve their goals and aspirations. We do this by directly providing expertise, training, resources and finance to local people and community groups.

In order to create space, we manage spaces which are safe and accessible to the community, where individuals, community groups, start-ups and small businesses can thrive. We also advise through consultation about the best use of public space.

To influence the powerful, we help communities influence those who make plans and policy in the local area. When talking to decision makers we use an evidence-based approach to demonstrate the impact of our work.

We run a robust and sustainable organisation by diversifying income streams, employing a dedicated team and embracing the core values of collaborative working and innovation.

LDT's work is a broad and diverse mix of 'hands on management' of community assets, working in partnership with different charities, local authorities and developers as well as offering consultancy and training packages.

### 1.2 More about the former consultation & how this consultation differs

Prior to this consultation another report was produced by Land Use Change. This consultation contained some fantastic research and insights but was not far reaching enough into the local community to be truly representative and relied too extensively on input from specific interest groups.

The survey focussed solely on people who were using the Scrubs at the time. Although attempts were made to approach people who did not use the 'Scrubs, they lacked depth. communication relied heavily on the Friends of Wormwood Scrubs, and statutory bodies namely the High Speed Two railway (HS2), London Borough of Hammersmith & Fulham (LBHF), Old Oak and Park Royal Development Corporation (OPDC) and Old Oak Primary School.

This meant that it was largely only adults who were either current users, or who were actively involved in local debates who were in a position to become involved in the consultation. There were 11 primary school children who contributed to a workshop. However, although interesting and insightful, this demographic sample alone was not representative of the local population.

The previous consultation was weighted heavily towards regular users of the Scrubs, with little outreach to 'harder to reach' groups who do not regularly use it, or do not regularly participate in statutory consultations (for example, young people). Likewise, the consultation did not address power imbalances between certain interest groups and other stakeholders.

We know unless extensive and targeted outreach is conducted, it tends to be people who are white, female, often (but not exclusively) middle class and age 40 plus, who participate in public consultations.

This is a trend that plays out nationwide and relates to the amount of free time and capacity people have, education levels, interest levels, and sense of empowerment as to who feels able to participate in democratic processes. Many groups feel excluded and unwelcome in civic spaces, and that their voices will not be heard, so they choose not to participate. These people are often people who face discrimination in UK society, people who are from ethnically and culturally diverse communities and/or are disabled, neuro or gender divergent, on lower incomes, do not speak English as a first language, and young people. Often people fall into more than one category (Taylor, 2007).

We therefore built on the work done by LUC and used our expertise in reaching local communities, particularly hard to reach groups, social housing residents and young people, to bring parity to the consultation.

We conducted our consultation with the aim of reaching these groups, as well as reaching people who were not regular users of the Scrubs. We did this in a number of ways as evidenced in our methodology.

Following critical analysis of the existing consultation data and our own preliminary evidence, we identified four crucial areas of focus that we would add to the consultation process.

1. Managing the relationship between the needs of human and nonhuman nature
2. Physical accessibility
3. Beyond physical accessibility:  
A voice from excluded users
4. Listening to local institutions as stakeholders.

A substantial amount of work was put into contacting a diverse pool of local stakeholders. We reached out to 31 local stakeholders – groups, institutions, civil society – who have a significant interest, investment and knowledge about the Scrubs – the majority of which are physically located on the site itself or within an approximately ½ mile radius of it.

These stakeholders are:

- The Linford Christie Stadium
- Wormwood Scrubs Pony Centre
- Imperial College Hammersmith Campus
- Hammersmith Hospital
- Queen Charlotte & Chelsea Hospital
- HM Wormwood Scrubs Prison
- Old Oak Community & Children's Centre
- Old Oak Primary School
- Friends of Wormwood Scrubs
- Friends of Little Wormwood Scrubs
- For Brian CIC – Dementia Support Grassroots Community Group
- Ark Burlington Danes Academy
- Parkrun (Saturday Morning Weekly Park Runs)
- Land Use Consultants
- Thames Valley Harriers (Athletics Club)
- St. Charles Centre for Health & Wellbeing
- Old Oak Neighbourhood Forum
- Brentworth Rd Residents Association
- College Park Neighbours Residents Association
- Woodman Mews Resident Association
- Resident-Led Disability Commission
- Fulham Irish GAA Club
- ID Verde Grounds and Maintenance
- Old Oak & Park Royal Development Corporation
- Local Resident of Dalgarno Wedge Social Housing
- Venture Community Organisation
- Urbanwise London
- The Urban Birder
- The Model Aircraft Flying Club
- Professional artist
- A local teacher who runs activities for children

## Chapter 2. Methodology

**To conduct the consultation, we employed mixed methods to access a variety of different kinds of qualitative and quantitative insights. Quantitative data is expressed in numerical forms and can be analysed statistically. Qualitative data is descriptive. Both are significant and complementary to one another.**

We designed and distributed a survey (available in the appendix), completed by 422 people, conducted 13 stakeholder interviews in person and online, and conducted workshops with 45 young people in the Scrubs.

We kept in regular communications with London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham via fortnightly meetings where we discussed findings, challenges and agreed adaptations of our approach.

### 2.1 The Survey

The aim of the survey was to engage the local community – both current users and nonusers of the Scrubs – on how they experience the Scrubs and how they would like it to change or stay the same.

It also provided an opportunity for people to air their views, ideas and concerns about the Scrubs and how it could better serve the community. We ensured there was space for participants to write open-ended answers as this provides deeper insights than numerical data alone.

We promoted the survey in a variety of ways to ensure maximum uptake of diverse groups.

This included:

- Sending survey to all stakeholder groups to share with networks via newsletters, social media and websites
- Promoting it via LBHF's communication networks
- Promoting it on a banner displayed at the Scrubs with a QR code
- Delivering it to people's home (door knocking) to encourage and assist with completion
- Shared via physical flyers delivered to 800 homes and businesses within a ¼ mile radius of the Scrubs
- Promoted by LDT research officers who spent five days on the Scrubs approaching people to complete the survey
- Made available for completion with the support of LDT research officers based in the local community centre – something important to bridge the digital divide

## 2.2 Demographic of Survey Respondents

Table 1 below indicates the number and percentage of participants in terms of their age groups in our sample. Figure 1 is to visualise a quick comparison of the LBHF population data versus LDT's consultation respondent data by age.

Sample Age Range	Count	Percentage
16-25	16	3.8%
26-35	44	10.4%
36-45	63	14.9%
46-55	121	28.7%
56-65	112	26.5%
66-75	44	10.4%
76+	22	5.2%
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>422</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

Table 1: LDT Consultation participants by age

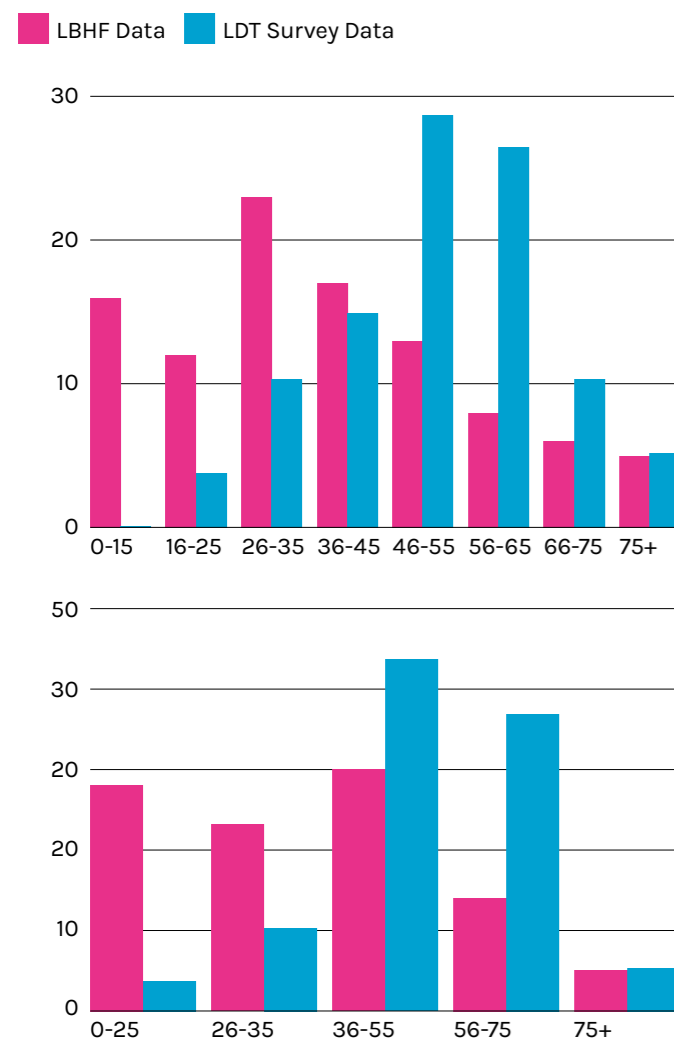


Figure 1: Comparison of age groups in the LBHF population demographics and LDT's consultation respondent data

Table 2 below indicates the number and percentage of consultation participants in terms of ethnicity. Figure 2 is to visualise a quick comparison of the LBHF population demographics data and corresponding LDT consultation sample by ethnic background.

Sample ethnicity frame	Count	Percent
British (White)	251	59.5%
Other (White)	64	15.2%
Irish (White)	24	5.7%
Other (Mixed)	16	3.8%
Other	15	3.6%
White and Asian (Mixed)	10	2.4%
Caribbean	10	2.4%
(Black / Black British)		
White and Black Caribbean (Mixed)	10	2.4%
Indian (Asian / Asian British)	5	1.2%
Other (Black / Black British)	4	0.9%
Other (Asian / Asian British)	3	0.7%
African (Black / Black British)	3	0.7%
Arab	2	0.5%
Chinese (Asian / Asian British)	2	0.5%
White and Black African (Mixed)	2	0.5%
Irish Traveller (White)	1	0.2%
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>422</b>	<b>100%</b>

Table 2: Consultation participants data by ethnicity

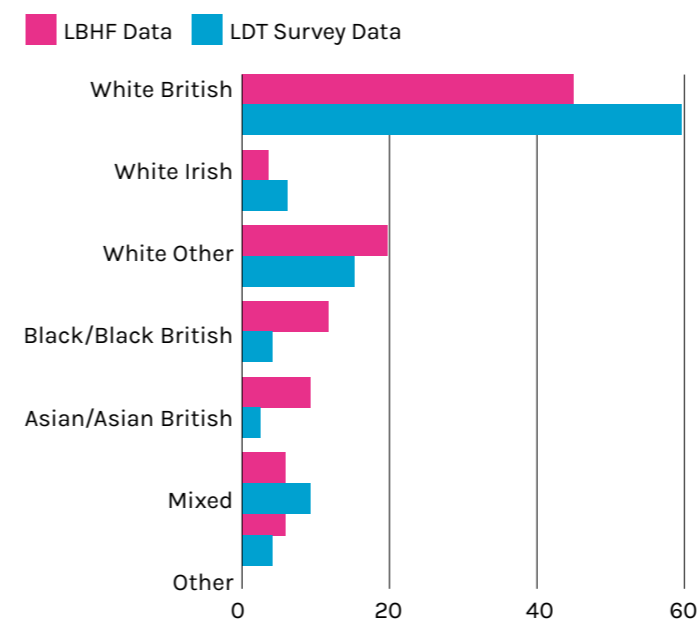


Figure 2: A comparison of ethnicity of the LBHF population demographics and LDT's consultation respondent data

Table 3 below indicates the number and percentage of participants by gender in our sample.

It shows a comparison of the LBHF population data and our respondent data by gender. Please note LBHF's gender categories do not match LDT's.

LBHF Population Demographics	Percentage	Percentage	Count	LDT Consultation Respondents
Female	51%	61.1%	258	Female
Male	49%	33.2%	140	Male
		0.7%	3	Non-binary
		5.0%	21	Prefer not to say
	100.0%	100.0%	422	Grand Total

Table 3: A comparison of gender of LBHF population demographics and LDT's consultation respondent data



## 2.3 Demographic data, outreach efforts and adjustments made during the consultation process

As the survey results began to come in, we realised the survey was being filled in by a larger demographic of older, white people than was representative of the population of LBHF.

To mitigate this weighting, we continued to ask stakeholders who had networks of harder-to reach groups involving younger and culturally and ethnically diverse community members to circulate the survey. We distributed flyers about the survey to local homes and businesses to include people not part of specific interest groups and who may not be online or users of social media. Although the representation improved, the figures above show the sample did not achieve complete representation of the borough population.

We found that people age 75 plus represented the borough population well in the survey, middle-aged participants were overly represented, and young people underrepresented, with 14.2% of respondents under 35 years old, compared with 25% who make up the population.

Of LBHF residents 31.9% identify as coming from ethnically and culturally diverse backgrounds versus the 19.6% of consultees.

Just as different methods bring different kinds of insight, different methods reach different people. Therefore, we decided to focus efforts on securing more young voices – and in particular young culturally and ethnically diverse voices – through a series of interactive workshops and interviews.

## 2.4 The Workshops

The workshops were delivered in collaboration with London Dreamtime Storytelling and were designed to gain a deeper, more nuanced understanding of people's emotional connection to the Scrubs.

From experience and academic research, we know that memories and feelings are evoked with greater depth through embodied experiences in place. We are sensory creatures and being immersed in the space in question plays into how we experience environments, which is intricately tied to our emotional memories, fears, hopes and dreams. So it was important the workshops took place on the Scrubs.

It was also important the workshops gathered qualitative data from demographic groups we had fewer responses to the survey, in particular, young people from culturally and ethnically diverse backgrounds.

To reach these target groups we approached 31 organisations/individuals who run activities for these community members in and around the Scrubs to utilise their networks. These organisations promoted the workshops in their newsletters, social media platforms and via SMS text and WhatsApp groups. LDT officers approached 50 young people on the Scrubs to invite them to the workshop with a £10 Amazon voucher offered in exchange for their time and energy.

To ensure maximum participation we offered four interactive workshops on a variety of dates, days and times. These sessions were open to anyone aged between 11-30 years old. Young people between 11-16 years were asked to get a parental consent form signed if they wanted to attend on their own and one session was designed for primary school aged children to attend with carers.

The sessions were about telling stories, listening to one another's memories of the Scrubs and describing hopes for the future. Each session was designed to last an hour and included fun competitions and small prizes.

The 'roving' e.g. moving workshops were delivered across the Scrubs and stopped in four locations – the playground for young children near the Oak Community Centre and Children's Centre, a shaded area near the prison wall and path, an area in front of the Linford Christie stadium, and an area near the pony centre. We did not take young people into the wilder parts of the Scrubs as then the workshops would not have been accessible.

We aimed to reach 40 young people via workshops and achieved 45, 12.5% higher than our participation target. Interestingly only 5 young people signed up in advance and the rest were approached directly by our research officers while on the Scrubs.

The London Dreamtime facilitator talked to the young people about what they do in the Scrubs, what they see as its strengths and weaknesses, and what they'd like changing. As we expected, doing the workshop allowed participants to show us locations in real-time and helped them to describe their suggestions to improve a particular area.

## 2.5 Stakeholder Interviews

Conducting stakeholder interviews is an effective way of gathering in-depth, nuanced insights from local individuals and organisations. The unrestrictive nature of a conversation versus a survey is people are able to give more detail and can go back to previous questions if they remember additional points. Interviewees can also potentially 'open up more' and be more honest when in conversation with a real person – albeit this can work in the reverse with people feeling more free to be completely honest in a faceless survey format so it's effective to use both methods.

Interviews with people representing groups and organisations is an effective way of hearing the needs of a larger, specific community and in particular communities that would find it potentially challenging to complete an online survey – such as some of the users of the Wormwood Scrubs Pony Club who are severely disabled or have dementia.

We endeavoured to reach as many diverse voices as possible in these interviews with conversations taking place with local social housing residents, a professional artist who delivers children's workshops in the Scrubs, a teacher who works with local children, a representative from Land Use Consultation, two representative from OPDC, a social housing resident who is a climate change activist, three representatives from FOWWS, the Urban Birder, a representative from Urbanwise, a representative from Irish Fulham GAA, a representative from ID Verde, and a representative from Wormwood Scrubs Pony Centre.

We reached out to 31 organisations to access interviewees and through these connections conducted 13 interviews with 16 people.

Please note we have not identified interviewees specifically in the report but noted their occupation, organisation they represent or connection to the Scrubs where relevant.

# Chapter 3.

## Introduction to WWS

**Wormwood Scrubs is a 76.8 hectare open public space in the north-eastern region of Hammersmith and Fulham Borough, London. It is one of the largest areas of common land in London that includes grassland (mown and long), scrubland and woodland.**

The Scrubs has been protected for public use since the commencement of the Wormwood Scrubs Act in 1879. As it is common land, unlike a council managed park, it is open at all times of the day and year and is never locked.

Although perhaps most noted for its wild spaces, the Scrubs houses a substantial amount of grassland for sports pitches (nine full size football, seven junior size football, two Gaelic football, 1 rugby and 1 lacrosse pitch); two outdoor gym areas; children's play apparatus; a memorial to TDC David Wombwell, DS Christopher Head and PC Geoffrey Fox killed on duty in 1966 in the Braybrook Street/Wormwood Scrubs massacre; a car park; a designated dog walking area; cycling routes and a modal aircraft runway.

Housed in its outer perimeter or directly flanking the edges of the Scrubs are a range of facilities and institutions including HM Wormwood Scrubs Prison (the grade II listed building at the western end of the Scrubs), Imperial College London Hammersmith Campus including the Wolfson Education Centre, Hammersmith Hospital, Queen Charlottes & Chelsea Hospital, the Linford Christie stadium, Wormwood Scrubs Pony Centre, the Ark Burlington Danes Academy, Old Oak Community & Children's Centre, Fulham Irish GAA club, London Sports Youth Baseball & Softball Club and the Hitachi North Pole Train Maintenance Centre.

Scrubs users feel passionately about its protection and over the years local residents have stood up to defend it from encroaching development and environmental damage. The recent Save Our Scrubs campaign observes and protests the impact of HS2 on the Scrubs. Lester's Embankment – an area designated as a Nature Reserve in the 1980s – was done so after a long campaign by local residents including the then 14-year-old keen bird spotter Lester Holloway, who is now the editor of *The Voice*, the UK's only exclusively black focused newspaper.

There are two key groups, both registered charities, that hold the most power with regards to the Scrubs. The Wormwood Scrubs Charitable Trust and the Friends of Wormwood Scrubs

(FOWWS). The Wormwood Scrubs Charitable Trust (WSCT) is part of Hammersmith & Fulham Council, and the trustee board currently consists of three councillors and two members of the FOWWS committee who do not have voting rights. This means the only members of the local community that have participatory access to WSCT meetings are also members of FOWWS. This gives FOWWS more power and influence than any other local stakeholder group.

FOWWS is a very active, dedicated and engaged group of Scrubs users who define their purpose as, "A charity whose mission is to cherish and protect Wormwood Scrubs Open Space, a unique 75-hectare green space in the heart of London." The FOWWS website describes the Scrubs as, "More wild than tamed," and this wildness is something group members cherish and work to maintain. The groups website noted they hoped the needs of 'the plants and animals' would not be forgotten during this consultation process.

Due to its proximity to the dense, urban concrete sprawl of Hammersmith & Fulham, the Scrubs provides a host of environmental and ecosystem services to the borough's residents. It acts as a carbon sequestration system, improves the quality of the air, absorbs heavy rainfalls reducing the likelihood of flooding, and lowers temperatures in what are predicted to be increasingly hot summers. It also provides shade, fresh air and respite from poorly ventilated dwellings (not designed for the sort of temperatures London is now seeing) who's residents often have no other access to private or communal green space.

The multiple functions of urban greenspaces and water, in building climate resilience as well as contributing to healthy, happy, and cohesive neighbourhoods are now broadly recognised in planning (LDT, 2021). For example, the Greater London Authority's London Plan 2021 advises planners to consider nature-based solutions and green infrastructure because they deliver multiple benefits for communities while providing environmental services from air purification to temperature management and biodiversity benefits. Urban planning is increasingly characterised by an aspiration for greener cities (GLA 2021).

### 3.1 Natural Significance

The Scrubs is recognised by Natural England as an important site of national significance. According to the London Natural History Society each year over 100 species of birds, at least ten notable and rare species of butterflies and 250 species of wildflowers (one sixth of UK flora) are identified there.

In 2002, seven acres of woodland and course grassland were designated as Local Nature Reserve because of the wide variety of plants, insects, and animals they support. A large proportion of the western side of the Scrubs comprised of long grassland and scrub is identified as a Site of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC).

London Natural History Society lists the seven wild areas of the Scrubs as, "Central Copse, Martin Bell's Wood on the south eastern corner close to Scrubs Lane, Scrubs Lane Wood – a strip of woodland along the eastern and northern edge; Chats Paddock – a area of thick scrub on the northern edge; Lester's Embankment – an area of scrub, brambles, hogweed and gorse marking the north-western border; North West Corner – a small area of woodland on the western edge, and Braybrook Woods – a woodland strip on southern edge bordering the prison through to the western edge adjacent to Braybrook Street."

On the society's website they report the Scrubs provides, "Nesting habitat for birds including four species of warbler; hosts a small breeding population of Meadow Pipit (possibly the closest to central London) and enjoys a healthy annual passage of migrants that usually include Turtle Doves, Cuckoos, Yellow Wagtails, Nightingales, Whinchat, Wheatear, Ring Ouzal, Common Redstart" – and a host of other birds.

David Lindo, a broadcaster, writer and nature connection educator known as the Urban Birder, who visited the Scrubs since the 1990s and written and recorded various programmes and articles about the Scrubs, says:



**“In the time I’ve been there, we’ve recorded over 150 different species of bird, which is just under half of what’s been seen in the whole of London in total over the years. So, it’s a very special place.”**

For those of us who aren’t twitchers, why are healthy bird populations important? Ornithologists (scientists who study birds) say birds keep our ecosystems in balance and running smoothly. They eat pest insects amounting to hundreds of tons per year, including biting insects like mosquitoes, a species tipped to grow in the UK as summers get hotter. They disperse seeds spreading plants into new areas. Some pollinate plants. Larger birds like owls keep mouse and rat populations in check.

Mammals, reptiles and amphibians found on the site include the solitary Rabbit, Grey Squirrel, Hedgehog, Field Vole and Red Fox. Less common sightings include weasels and badgers. Common bats and Soprano Pipistrelle frequent the site as does the Common Lizard, Slow Worm, Common Frog and Common Toad.

Butterfly sightings include the Small Skipper, Large Skipper, Essex Skipper, Meadow Brown, Gatekeeper, Speckled Wood, Peacock, Red Admiral, Common Blue and Small Tortoiseshell. And insects include several species of Bumble bee, Harlequin and Stag Beetles.

In December 2021 FOWWS organised a Butterfly Conservation session to search for butterfly eggs on young black hawthorn adjacent to a wildlife hedge. A brown hairstreak egg, an elusive butterfly, was spotted and the first formal record of it made at the Scrubs.

Insects provide a wealth of free, underrated services to humankind. According to Lincoln and Nebraska University website Science Outreach page, they, “Keep pest insect populations in check, pollinate crops we rely on for food and act as sanitation experts, cleaning up waste so that the world doesn’t become overrun with dung.”

Animal pollination is essential for reproduction in many plant species and has been valued globally at €153 billion p.a. and at £510 million plus p.a. for UK crop production (Ollerton, 2011). Declines have been reported for all key insect pollinator groups, including honeybees, bumblebees, solitary bees and hoverflies. Habitat loss and fragmentation (including urbanisation), pesticides, pathogens and their interactions are proposed drivers of pollinator decline (Baldock et al, 2015).

Urban areas are growing, and improving their value for pollinators, particularly insects, should be part of any national strategy to conserve and restore pollinators (Baldock et al, 2015). Biodiversity is central to the health of any ecosystem. In order to be able to provide the services we – and all life – depends upon, diverse and flourishing ecosystems are of critical importance. While animal populations are part of this, maintaining a diversity of plant species is also crucial.

David Lindo, the Urban Birder says: **“the UK is one of the most nature depleted countries in the world and I find that embarrassing, especially coming from England myself. We need to do all we can to try and reverse that.”**

In summary, the importance of biodiversity and healthy ecosystems cannot be overstated. This is especially pertinent given the climate crisis which is putting additional pressure on already strained natural environments. Given their general lack of greenspaces, urban areas are ‘pinch points’. However, urban greenspaces can be particularly useful for ecosystem services and can home a huge variety of species, in many cases, due to the prevalence of industrial farming, with more diversity than countryside locations. Urban greenspaces have the added importance of being a site for people to engage with nature, for educational opportunities and for physical and mental wellbeing for people who live in cities. (LDT 2021)

## Chapter 4. Wormwood Scrubs: The Past

**When planning for the future– it’s prudent to look at the past. How has the space been used historically? What impact have previous users had on the land? Have there been any major social or environmental events?**

These enquiries yield an understanding of permanent imprints on a place that potentially shape how it can serve communities in the future. So, a little about the Scrubs history.

According to the Royal Borough of Kensington & Chelsea website, the first record of Wormwood Scrubs and neighbouring Little Wormwood Scrubs was in 1189. At this time, it was referred to as ‘Wormholt’ and was being cleared of natural undergrowth to make way for agricultural usage (RBKC 2022).

They state. “Little Wormwood Scrubs was part of the ancient forest of Middlesex standing on 38-million-year-old, agriculturally inhospitable London marl, a mix of clay and silt soil. For a long time, it was considered ‘waste’ ground of the Manor of Fulham, used for ‘depasturing cattle and swine of copyhold tenants.’ The ancient track of Turvens Lane passed along the east side of the ‘Scrubs going north to Harrow Rd. In 1844, following the road, an embankment was built for the Bristol, Birmingham and Thames Junction railway. Later known as the West London Railway, it dissected Wormwood Scrubs and brought Little Wormwood Scrubs into existence.”

In the early 19th century, the whole district surrounding the Scrubs was open fields and included areas of common land. Common land was owned by Royalty or Lords of The Manor (and his successors) but everyday Londoners e.g. commoners were given commoners rights to use it.

Prior to the 19th century, everyday Londoners depended on the commons for firewood, bedding, roof thatch, food, and a place to graze pigs, cattle, sheep, horses and other animals. They had many rights as commoners but the main five were the right to pasture, the right of estovers (harvesting bracken, reeds, heather and wood for domestic use), right of turbay (right to dig for peat and turf), right of piscary (could remove fish from streams, rivers and other water courses) and right of the soil (could take minerals, stone, coal, gravel and sand from the soil).

Between 16th and 19th century, much of the commons in and surrounding London were sold off to make way for housing or to be enclosed for development by their wealthy owners. The Scrubs surviving this mass sale makes it significant and special in itself. Today most common land (what’s left!) is usually owned by councils (as is the case of the Scrubs), the heritage and conservation charity The National Trust or other entities.



According to the Hammersmith & Fulham Borough website in 1812 an area of 77 hectares, what's now known as Wormwood Scrubs, was leased by the war office from the Manor of Fulham in order to exercise cavalry horses.

In 1879 Parliament passed The Wormwood Scrubs Act and placed the land in care of the Metropolitan Board of Works. The act stated the Scrubs was to provide a metropolitan exercising ground for the military and be available for, "the perpetual use by the inhabitants of the metropolis for exercise and recreation." However, the military were able to prevent access to the Scrubs when they were training. The act banned the military from building permanent structures other than rifle butts - one of which stands today as a wall - and banned the military from training on public holidays. The military released the last land it held to the London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham in 1962.

The Scrubs sporting relevance has a long heritage. Between 1893 and 1896 it was home to Queens Park Rangers Football Club. More recently since 2011 it's been home to the Fulham Irish GAA Club, the only club in the capital to offer Senior Gaelic Football and Senior Hurling. In March 2016 the BBC reported "history had been made" when a Gaelic football team from a British army regiment played their first official game at the Scrubs - the Irish Guards playing an all-English born team from city club Tir Chonaill Gaels.

The Linford Christie Stadium is an athletics stadium in Wormwood Scrubs, West London, England. According to Wikipedia the stadium, "Initially had a cinder running track, which was upgraded to a synthetic surface in 1973. In 1993 the stadium was renamed after Olympic 100 metres gold medallist Linford Christie, who trained there with the Thames Valley Harriers.

The stadium was redeveloped between 2004 and 2006, when facilities for football, rugby and hockey were installed. The work was funded by London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham, the Football Foundation, Chelsea F.C. and Barclays Bank. Chelsea players John Terry and Shaun Wright-Phillips attended the re-opening. The video for "So Many Roads" by Example was filmed here in 2007."

Today many parts of the Linford Christie Stadium are in a state of dire disrepair. The changing rooms and toilets look like a building site despite still being used for summer children's sports camps and sporting events. There have been discussions about the redevelopment or/and sale of the Linford Christie site for numerous years. Sporting clubs such as the Gaelic football club have taken proposals to the council to fix up these facilities but they have not progressed, presumably due to the likelihood of the sites eventual sale or complete redevelopment.

The proximity of HM Wormwood Scrubs prison and some high profile incidents means the Scrubs is synonymous with crime. The 1966 Braybrook Street Massacre - also known as the Wormwood Scrubs Massacre - saw three police officers - Sergeant Christopher Head, Constable David Wombwell and Constable Geoffrey Fox lose their lives. In 2016 on the 50th anniversary of their death a small memorial was placed at the spot they died. Prior to that nothing marked the location.

## Chapter 5. Wormwood Scrubs: The Present

This chapter draws on our interview, survey and workshop data to provide an overview of how people use the Scrubs presently, and what they value most about the space.

### 5.1 What The Scrubs Mean to Local Stakeholders?

To find out what the Scrubs means to local stakeholders we asked if they could describe it with one word (Figure 3). The most cited words were WILD and OPEN, indicating an appreciation for the space's unique openness and natural presentation.

Our semantic (study of words) analysis shows us that 86% people chose positive words, 14% negative words.

The positive words have been grouped in the following categories.

Nature and Wildness: Unspoiled, Reserve, Wild, Wilderness, Wildlife, Untouched, Spacious, Green, Lung, Scrubland, Biodiverse, Diverse, Varied, Countryside, Fresh, More wild than tamed, Natural, Nature, Refreshing, Refreshingly Unkempt, Rugged, Country, Home, Refuge

Peace and Wellbeing: Tranquil, Relaxing, Serene, Peaceful, Haven, Blissful, Sanctuary, Calming, Bracing, Mindfulness, Liberating, Restorative, Retreat, Revitalising, Sprit lifting, Uplifting

Beauty: Beautiful, Stunning, Magnificent, Wonderful, Amazing, Fabulous, Glorious, Great, Heaven, Oasis, Incredible, Lovely

Positive Emotional Response: Inspiring, Magical, Freedom, Exhilarating, Blissful, Rewarding, Glorious, Exciting, Stunning, Surprising, Enjoyable, Interesting

Importance: Rarity, Irreplaceable, Invaluable, Valuable, Important, Essential, Vital, Everything, Needed, Necessary, Precious, Priceless, Gem, Historical, Asset, Different, Special, Unique

Access: Accessible, Free, Social Community Space

Size: Big, Expanse, Grand, Large, Vast, Field

Future: Potential, Multifaceted



Figure 3: The word cloud as to how participants describe WW Scrubs \*The size of the words refers to their frequency.

Some participants described the Scrubs with negative words that can be grouped into the following categories.

Utility: Abandoned, Underused, Forgotten, Neglected, Empty, Waste of Space

Safety: Bleak, Unsafe, Chaos, Dreadful

Concern About Future: Threatened, Ruined, Sad, Underrated, Vulnerable

Access: Unwelcoming, Discriminatory, Politic-torn, Remote, Grim, Unwelcoming

These descriptions suggest the presence of issues which some users – and potential users – are expecting to be addressed.

Appearance: Muddy, Barren, Scraggy, Scruffy, Scratchy (unkempt), Unappealing, Mess Spoiled, Scrubby, Dated, Disorganised, Unmaintained

Barriers to accessing the Scrubs are discussed in chapter 6.

## 5.2 Who Uses The Scrubs & For What Purpose?

Today Wormwood Scrubs is valued, appreciated and visited by a great variety of people. This section of the report looks at who these users are, how they use the Scrubs, and how this enriches their lives. In chapter 6, we will look at who doesn't use the Scrubs, why, and what barriers if any are preventing them from doing so.

In the Introduction of this consultation, we highlighted the different nonhuman communities – birds, insects, mammals – that rely on the Scrubs as a habitat, nesting site or nature corridor and the critical free services they offer to humankind. So much can be said about the complex, unique and little understood world of these creatures. However, we will leave this, and any support or enhancement suggestions to be made, to the biodiversity specialists involved in the creation of the Biodiversity Masterplan. In this aspect of the consultation, the focus is on human users.

## 5.3 The Demographic of Current Scrubs Users

Of the 422 people who completed our consultation survey, 415 were Scrubs users (frequent and infrequent) and 7 were none users. Broadly, their reasons for not visiting the Scrubs included lack of knowledge, lack of interest and discomfort around packs of dogs. One noted, she visited the Scrubs a long time ago but did not return because it was, "filled with dogs." She noted her intention to be a frequent user by saying, "We would like a place to go and have a peaceful walk."

The 415 Scrubs users who completed the survey can be defined as mostly white British (61.2%), middle aged (70% between 36-65 years old) and female (59.5%). Within our data it is not possible to separate those who regularly, infrequently and never use the Scrubs. Whether our sample consists of people who use the Scrubs most or are the people most likely to fill in our survey, is impossible to establish.

We did extensive outreach to people who were not regular users; but it is logical that if people don't use the Scrubs, they will be less interested in it therefore unlikely to take the time to fill in a survey about it. The opposite is also true. People who are enthusiastic users of the Scrubs are more likely to want to be involved in a consultation about it.

The profile of Scrubs users differs to the population profile of Hammersmith & Fulham Although by both age and ethnicity. Our data is more heavily weighted towards white people appearing to use the Scrubs more regularly, and young people and people from culturally and ethnically diverse groups using it less regularly. However, when our researchers visited, they observed extensive numbers of people from ethnically and culturally diverse communities – carers, cyclists, children, dog walkers, bird spotters, exercises – using the Scrubs.

This discrepancy between users and consultation participants highlights the existence of more complex barriers to young people and specific community groups taking part in civic exercises such as this consultation.

We explore and expand on these barriers in Chapter 7.



## 5.4 When Do People Visit the Scrubs & How Do They Get There?

Table 4 below illustrates current Scrubs users who completed our survey visit all year round with a relatively small drop in numbers in the Winter. Unsurprisingly Summer was the most popular season closely followed by Spring, Autumn and finally Winter.

Survey respondents selected as many seasons as appropriate with 65.1% visiting all year round.

Seasons	No. of responses	Results
Autumn	364	87%
Winter	285	68%
Spring	371	89%
Summer	405	97%

Table 4: Scrubs users' preference of seasons to visit

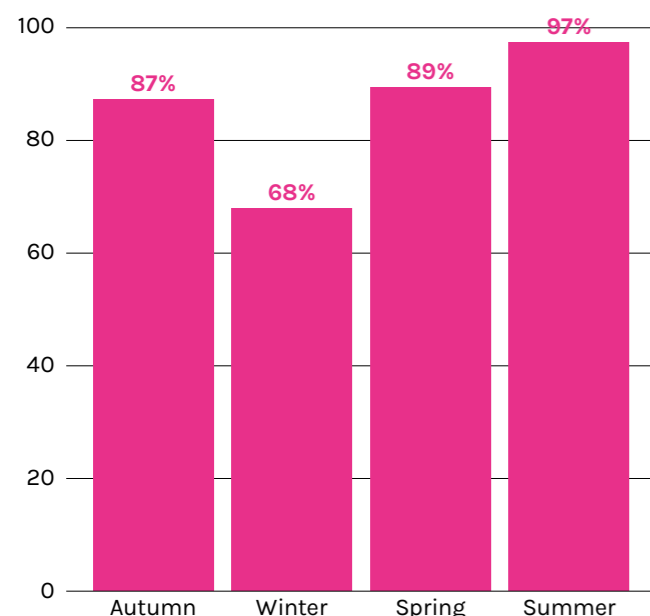


Figure 4: Scrubs users' preference of seasons to visit

Walking was the most common method of travel to the Scrubs for 69% of survey respondents, which suggests nearly half the visitors to the Scrubs live within three miles of the site. 32% arrived by car, 27% by bicycle and 11% by public transport. The low number of people who arrive by public transport suggests visitors are either very local, public transport connections are limited, and/or people located further afield get there by car. Some respondents selected multiple ways such as walking and cycling.

Transport	No. of responses	Result
Walk	290	69%
Public trans	45	11%
Ride	115	27%
Car	134	32%
Other	12	3%

Table 5: How users travel to the Scrubs

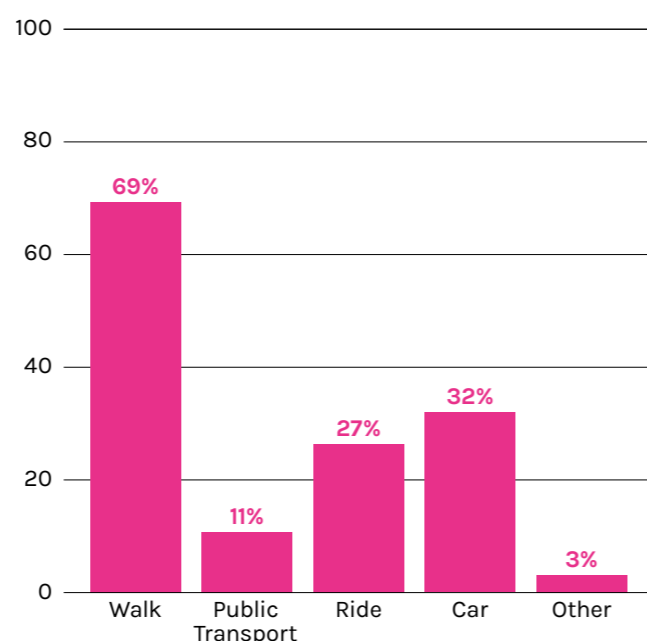


Figure 5: How users travel to the Scrubs

## 5.5 How Do Current Users of the Scrubs Perceive It's 'Value'?

Existing visitors to the Scrubs value it for many reasons.

Value of Scrubs	No. of responses	Result
Provides an opportunity for physical exercise and/or recreational play	285	68.2%
Enables me to live a healthier lifestyle	271	64.8%
Provides a space to relax and recharge	329	78.7%
Provides a space to socialise	126	30.1%
Provides aesthetic beauty (i.e., flowers, trees, meadows, woodlands)	309	73.9%
Contributes positively to the community by enabling people to meet	156	37.3%
Involvement of community activities	88	21.1%
Provides cleaner air to the city and reduces the risk of flooding	278	66.5%
Contributes to biodiversity and a home for wildlife	336	80.4%
Other (please specify)	30	7.2%

Table 6: Value Of The Scrubs To Current Users

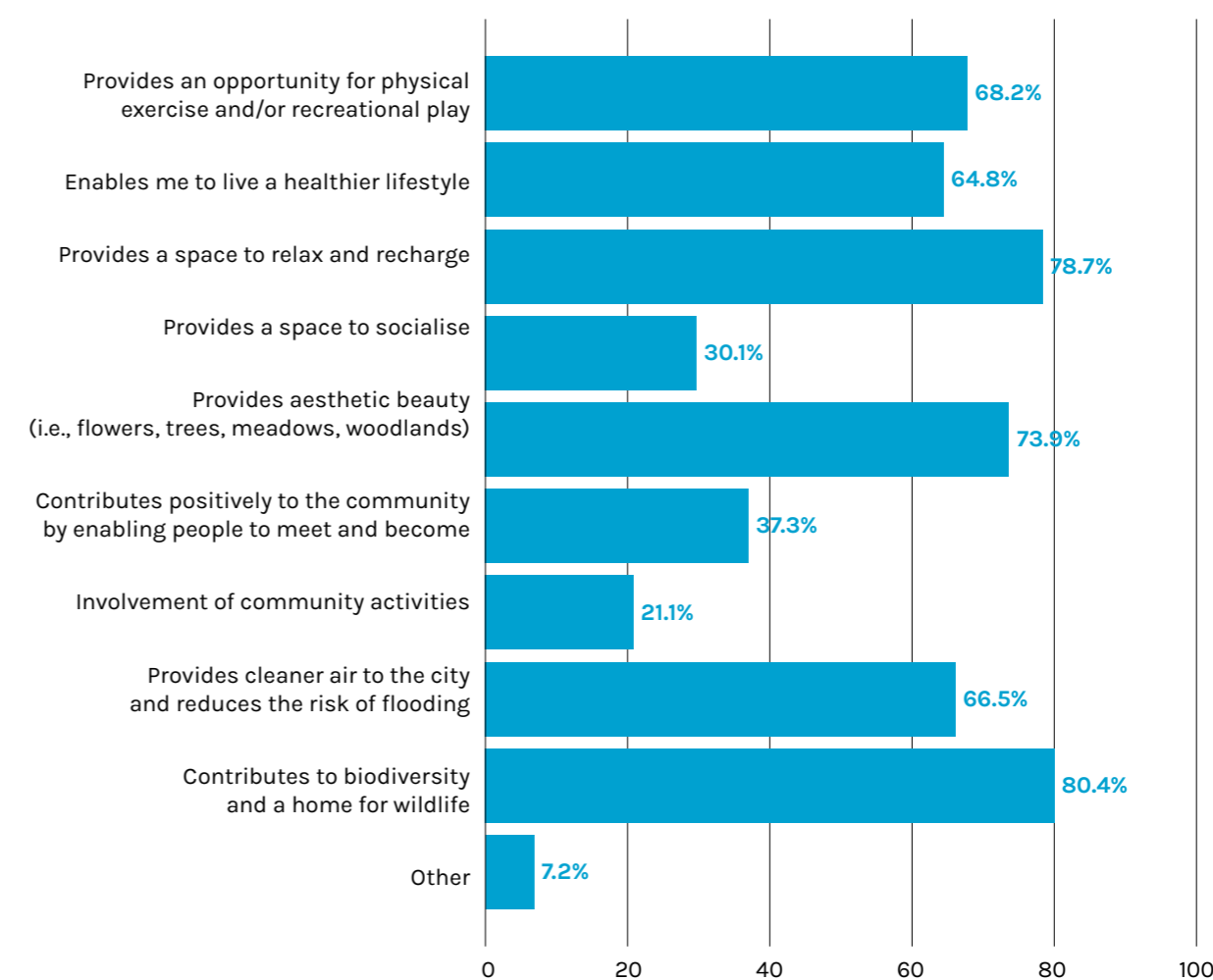


Figure 6: Value of the Scrubs To Its Users

### Individual Value to People

Many respondents valued the Scrubs for its direct benefits to individuals.

- 68.2% value it as an opportunity for physical exercise and/or recreational play
- 64.8% value it as it enables visitors to live a healthier lifestyle
- 78.7% value it as a space to relax and recharge

### Value To Environment

Many survey respondents value the Scrubs for its benefits to the environment which are of course of value to people – humans are not separate from the environment, yet many people feel they are.

- 66.5% value it as it provides cleaner air for the city and reduces the risk of flooding
- 80.4% value it as it contributes to biodiversity and is a home for wildlife
- 73.9% value it as it provides aesthetic beauty (i.e. flowers, trees, meadows, woodland)

### Value To Community

A smaller but still significant number of survey respondents valued the Scrubs for its benefits to create and enhance community.

- 30.1% value it because it provides a space to socialise 37.3% value it because it enables people to meet
- 21.1% value it as a space to hold community activities

## 5.6 A Closer Look at Current Scrubs Users

An assessment of facilities and events happening at the Scrubs, along with data gathered by our researchers on eight visits between March-August 2022, allowed us to identify 25 core types of users.

These groups are:

- Personal Dog Walkers
- Professional Dog Walkers
- Families & Professional Carers of Children
- Children playing & Teenagers hanging out
- Carers Of Disabled & Neurodivergent Adults & Children
- Adults With Dementia & Their Family, Friends & Carers
- Nature Enthusiasts
- Amateur & Professional Conservationists
- Foragers
- Stewards/Custodians\*
- Bird Watchers
- Players & Spectators of Organised Team Sports
- Exercisers – Solo & In Groups
- Horse Riders
- Recreational Cyclists
- Modal Aircraft & Drone Flyers
- Recreational Walkers – Solo & In Groups
- Walkers & Cyclists (As a short cut and/or for recreation)
- Peace Seekers – Meditation, Solo Walking, Enjoying Quiet, Prayer
- Outdoor Readers
- Family Picnic & Party Goers
- Young People & Adults Picnic & Party Goers
- Plane Spotters
- Musicians – Drum Circles, Informal Jams
- Visitors to HM Wormwood Scrubs\*\*

\*Stewards/custodians are users who take particular interest in preserving and protecting the Scrubs for wildlife and monitor how human activity and developments such as HS2 impact it.  
 \*\*Although we cannot identify this group visually and no one interviewed identified as such, we can presume visitors to the HM Wormwood Scrubs prison use the Scrubs prior to or after visiting times, Monday to Friday 9am-11am and 2pm-4pm respectively.

Survey respondents were asked how they ‘used’ the Scrubs and the results confirmed the user types we had identified.

Visiting purposes	No. of responses from 420 respondents	Percentage of respondents
To be in touch with nature	299	71.2%
To exercise on my own or informally with friends (i.e., running, cycling, outdoor gym)	234	55.7%
To spend time alone	222	52.9%
To meet up with friends and socialise	163	38.8%
Dog walking / dog training	159	37.9%
To see wild species	153	36.4%
To take children to play	128	30.5%
To hang out or socialise	105	25.0%
For birdwatching	102	24.3%
To watch or play sports	91	21.7%
I pass through/use as a short cut	81	19.3%
To feel connected with the community/make new friends	63	15.0%
Other (please specify)	54	12.9%
To go to an organised fitness session (park run, walking group)	51	12.1%
To volunteer at an organised session	28	6.7%
To fly model aircraft	11	2.6%
I have never visited Wormwood Scrubs before	7	1.7%

Table 7: Visiting purposes



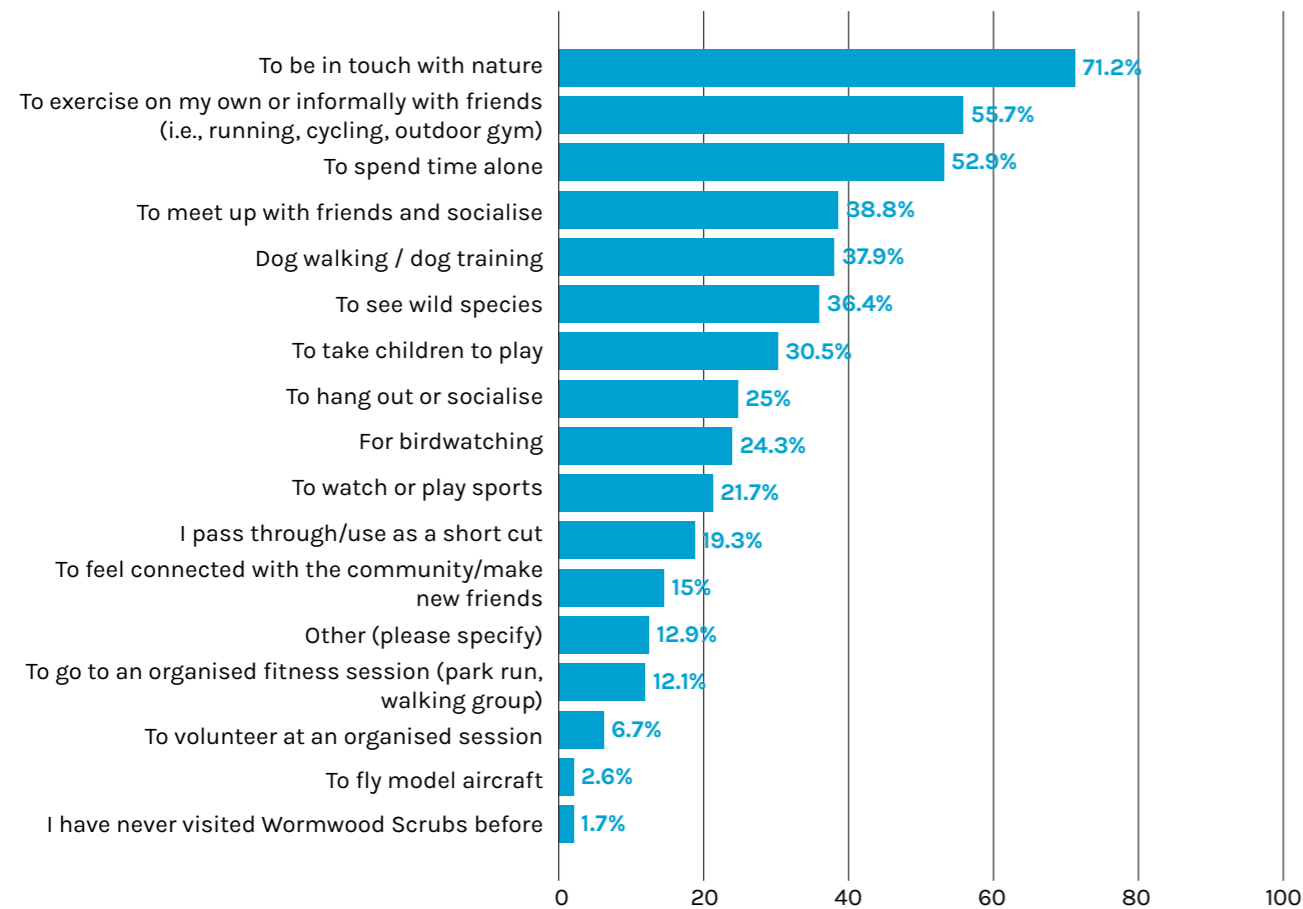


Figure 7: Visiting purposes

The three most frequently cited reasons for visiting the Scrubs was to be in touch with nature 71.2%, followed by exercising alone or with friends 55.7% and to spend time alone 52.9%.

The next three most commonly cited reasons for visiting the Scrubs was to meet friends and socialise 38.8%, for dog walking or/and dog training 37.9% and to see wild species 36.4%.

This is an interesting intersection of ways people use the Scrubs as each have the potential to enhance or diminish each other. Dog walkers appreciate walking their dogs in an unrestricted space, yet other respondents lament wild species being damaged by dogs off leads going into nature reserves. Wild species can be enjoyed whilst socialising with friends and/or while dog walking. Socialising with friends, depending on whether a walk or a more lively gathering, could potentially damage wild species.

The next three reasons cited for visiting the Scrubs were to take children to play 30.5%, to hang out or socialise 25%, for bird watching 24.3%, to watch or play sports 21.7%. Notice how visiting the site for nature-based reasons, socialising and exercise/sports are featured once again albeit in different forms.

The remaining reasons cited were to feel connected to the community/make new friends 15%, to go to an organised fitness session 12.1%, to volunteer at an organised session 6.7%, passing through/use as a short cut 19.3% and to fly model aircraft 2.6%.

Our survey questions featured open text boxes so respondents could elaborate on their answers. Activities people wrote about included:

- Foraging and eating edible plants
- Observing planes arriving at Heathrow
- Taking dogs to a large space without feeling constricted
- Enjoying the changing seasons
- Watching sunrise and sunset
- Enjoying liberty in an urban setting
- Seeing the sky, breathe and feel calm and relaxed
- Reading outside
- Drumming practice
- Accompanying horse riding lessons
- Spotting lizard and slow worms
- Improving mental health with the help of exposure to greenery and trees
- Meditating and/or pray

## 5.7 Regular Goings-On at the Scrubs

There are regular goings-on at the Scrubs which provide a deeper sociological (study of development, structure and functioning of human society) flavour for how the space is used. These can be divided into the following event types:

- Nature Observation
- Conservation Volunteering
- Workshops & Learning
- Group Sport & Exercise
- Group Musical Practice
- Group Model Aircraft & Drone Flying
- Picnics & Celebrations
- Playing & Hanging Out
- Other

### 5.7.1 Nature Observation & Appreciation

FOWWS (Friends of Wormwood Scrubs) organise these types of events with past fixtures including a bat walk, a walk in Martin Bell's Wood, Friends of Wormwood Scrubs Open Day, Butterfly Walk a Virtual Butterfly Identification & Recording Workshop. Urbanwise and local community youth workers conduct nature discovery sessions for young people alongside forest-school type sessions in den building and blackberry picking.

Local community interest company For Brian CIC, an organisation that supports people with dementia, has done great work promoting the biodiversity of Wormwood Scrubs. They commissioned biodiversity celebration posters by local artist Chris Peyton which were erected by Community Police Officers on the exterior of the local corner shop and other locations close to the Scrubs.

They said:

**“For Brian is working to increase access to the benefits of nature and sport for people with dementia and their families and friends, and raise awareness about the climate emergency, so everyone can benefit from our resources with minimal carbon footprint. If you get things right for people with dementia, you tend to get it right for everyone in the community. This poster celebrates the biodiversity of Wormwood Scrubs and intends to encourage discourse around the importance of protecting it.”**

### 5.7.2 Conservation Volunteering

Conservation sessions and workshops for local residents, corporate teams and FOWWS members take place periodically. In October 2021 Groundwork London held a large corporate volunteering conservation day (with 80 participants) which members of the general public could also sign up to. Activities included wood chipping the perimeter path and copse (small woodland), cutting back and laying dead-hedging, habitat creation and works to improve the forest school classroom and seating. In February 2022 hedge laying sessions with FOWWS and experts from Groundwork London took place. The work commissioned by Hammersmith & Fulham Council to Groundwork to enhance and instal nature corridors to allow improved passage for bats and other wildlife, was not without controversy with some Scrubs users complaining it would change its characteristic openness.

### 5.7.3 Workshops & Learning

A variety of groups and individual practitioners use the space to conduct workshops, training, education and even educational childcare. In summer of 2021 The Floating Classroom delivered a series of free forest school sessions for children on the Scrubs for six consecutive Saturdays. The New School of Art utilises the Scrubs as the setting for its Landscape Masterclasses. Nearby Little Wormwood Scrubs is managed like a park and is host to many exciting workshops such as circus skills, children’s writing courses, Shakespeare performances and much more. Local schools have expressed an interest in using the Scrubs more but this is limited due to the lack of an educational centre and/or adequate toilet facilities.

### 5.7.4 Group Sport & Exercise

The Scrubs has a continuous flow of sporting events. Every Saturday morning a 5K Parkrun attracts on average of 65 runners, joggers or walkers. The annual Tackle Africa fundraising football tournament takes place as does Race for Life Hammersmith. Various British Athletics League Meetings take place and the Fulham Irish GA Football Club have two pitches utilised by their senior and junior teams. The Fulham Irish GA would like to develop their presence on the Scrubs. Currently their players change on the side of the pitch in all weathers. Multiple schools across the locality use the site for their Sports Days.

Every weekday morning the WWS Pony Centre hold hacking sessions. A host of local personal trainers and fitness professionals use the Scrubs for training clients and small outdoor classes.

The Scrubs hosts a variety of exercise meetings for groups with additional needs. Every Friday For Brian CIC run a supported cycling event where tricycles are loaned to people suffering from dementia and their friends/carers. The Wormwood Scrubs Pony Centre supports a range of disabled riders to access horse riding through support teachers and carriage riding. They are a member of the RDA – Riding for The Disabled Association.

### 5.7.5 Group Musical Practice

During the COVID19 pandemic the Scrubs, as did many outdoor spaces, became venues for musical groups. Drumming circles, band rehearsals, informal jams, solo musicians and even a choir have been seen utilising the Scrubs. Although this type of activity would have happened prior to the pandemic, we can hypothesis it increased when meeting indoors was prohibited and venues and community spaces were closed.

### 5.7.6 Group Model Aircraft & Drone Flying

There is a designated model aircraft and drone flying space on the Scrubs. The Wormwood Scrubs RC (Radio Controlled) group meet here informally and on specific days. Owners and flyers of RC vehicles travel here from across London and surrounding areas as it’s one of the few designated model aircraft flying zones.

### 5.7.7 Picnics, & Celebrations

The Scrubs has long been used for picnics, parties and other celebrations as part of its role of providing Londoners with a space for recreation. During the COVID19 pandemic many people used their local green spaces, some for the first time, for birthdays, anniversaries and cultural and religious celebrations. The Scrubs has been known to be used by local community groups for carnival practice prior to Notting Hill and other cultural festivities.

Young people and adults used the Scrubs at night in replace of bars, nightclubs and pubs during – and after – the pandemic which has been a source of tension. Small and large sound systems have been – and still are – wheeled onto the Scrubs to facilitate these events and there was and still is an issue with litter.

In 2014 Norman Jay’s inaugural Good Times In The Park festival was planned to take place in Little Wormwood Scrubs (although it was advertised as happening in Wormwood Scrubs) but was cancelled. There has been discussion since 2018 about the redevelopment of the Linford Christie stadium and its potential use for premiership football clubs and music events. In 2020 it was proposed in a council meeting that as early as 2021 a test event with 10,000 people aged 25-35 could be held there. This did not transpire.

### 5.7.8 Playing & Hanging Out

The Scrubs is visited by children with adult carers, and unaccompanied older children and teenagers as a free place to play and hang out. Teenagers sit together on benches and play equipment nearest the residential streets chatting and looking at their phones.

Children play on the park equipment, albeit the park aimed at 0-6 year olds is used infrequently as it’s so inadequately facilitated.

A group of four teenage boys who took part in the consultation workshops said a major issue of the Scrubs was that it lacked the facilities, or upkeep of facilities such as the sports pitches, stadium and play parks, to keep them and the wider community busy. They said a number of their friends used to spend time with them at the Scrubs but are now involved with illegal activities because there wasn’t enough free activities and facilities to occupy them.

### 5.7.9 Other

The Scrubs provides a venue to a number of one-off events that don’t fall into the above categories. The upcoming Wormwood Scrubs Dog Show held by FOWWS in June being one. The event was billed as the ‘Scrubs first ever dog show and as a fun day for all.



### 5.7.10 Disharmony On the Scrubs

During the COVID19 pandemic more people discovered and used the Scrubs. This influx of new people brought with it new challenges such as an increase in litter, noise pollution and designated wildlife areas being trampled and not respected. Whether this was intentionally or from lack of understanding about wildlife areas is not known.

During the pandemic, two regular Scrubs users and members of FOWWS describe:

“a vacuum of management” with regards to the Scrubs and describe how other groups and individuals took matters into their own hands. This included directly approaching and reprimanding people about their ‘use’ of the Scrubs and creating home-made signs telling people where they should and shouldn’t walk.

One of them described:

“Some of the keenest protectors of the area put up additional notices which upset a lot of people. The councils’ notices are quite gentle. Please don’t walk here. And then – you get a lot of other ones. The Scrubs is not a notice board. Last year there were notices stuck on every tree and bench.”

This was added to:

“There was pretty much open warfare between various Scrubs users last year. Very close to actual violence on more than one occasion...there are extreme views on either side. There are people who think this is not for public consumption...who think all people and dogs banned...and people who want floodlighting, tarmac paths and every inch of the Scrubs super friendly and accessible.”

## Chapter 6. Wormwood Scrubs: The Present Continued... Who Isn’t Using the Scrubs & Why Not?

**A crucial aspect of this consultation was to look beyond existing, frequent users of the Scrubs and consult with a wider stakeholder group, particularly communities living in close proximity.**

In answer to the survey question – Do you think Wormwood Scrubs serves the needs of the community at large? – 78% said the Scrubs serves the needs of the community at large. In contrast 22% disagreed with this statement and pointed to specific groups whose needs are not met. 22%, so 1 in 5, is a significant number of users and potential users whose needs are not currently met.

Interestingly, the consultation found that the group of people most cited as their needs not being met were the local communities living in and around the immediate area of the Scrubs (by postcode).

This was closely followed by people who needed flat, smooth, wide ground to travel on e.g. the elderly; visually impaired; mobility challenged; users of wheelchairs, mobility vehicles & other mobility aids; and carers of children with baby prams, strollers and scooters.

Other groups consultation respondents said the Scrubs didn’t serve effectively were children, dogs and dog walkers (due to the restriction on them to use the space), people who work nearby but limited access points make it difficult to use, BAME communities, low-income people, sports lovers of all ages and music/party lovers.

When we asked survey respondents about potential barriers to access, only 23% (95 out of 414) of responses said they never face barriers which limit their visits, substantially less than the 78% who described the Scrubs as serving the community at large. For the rest of respondents (22%) there are some groups whose needs are not met.

This discrepancy is common in community consultation work as people can perceive a space as serving everyone but when asked about specific barriers, they’re able to identify numerous ones. Our consultation delved deeper into specific barriers that may be preventing people from accessing the Scrubs – either regularly or entirely.

## 6.1 Current Barriers Preventing People from Accessing the Scrubs

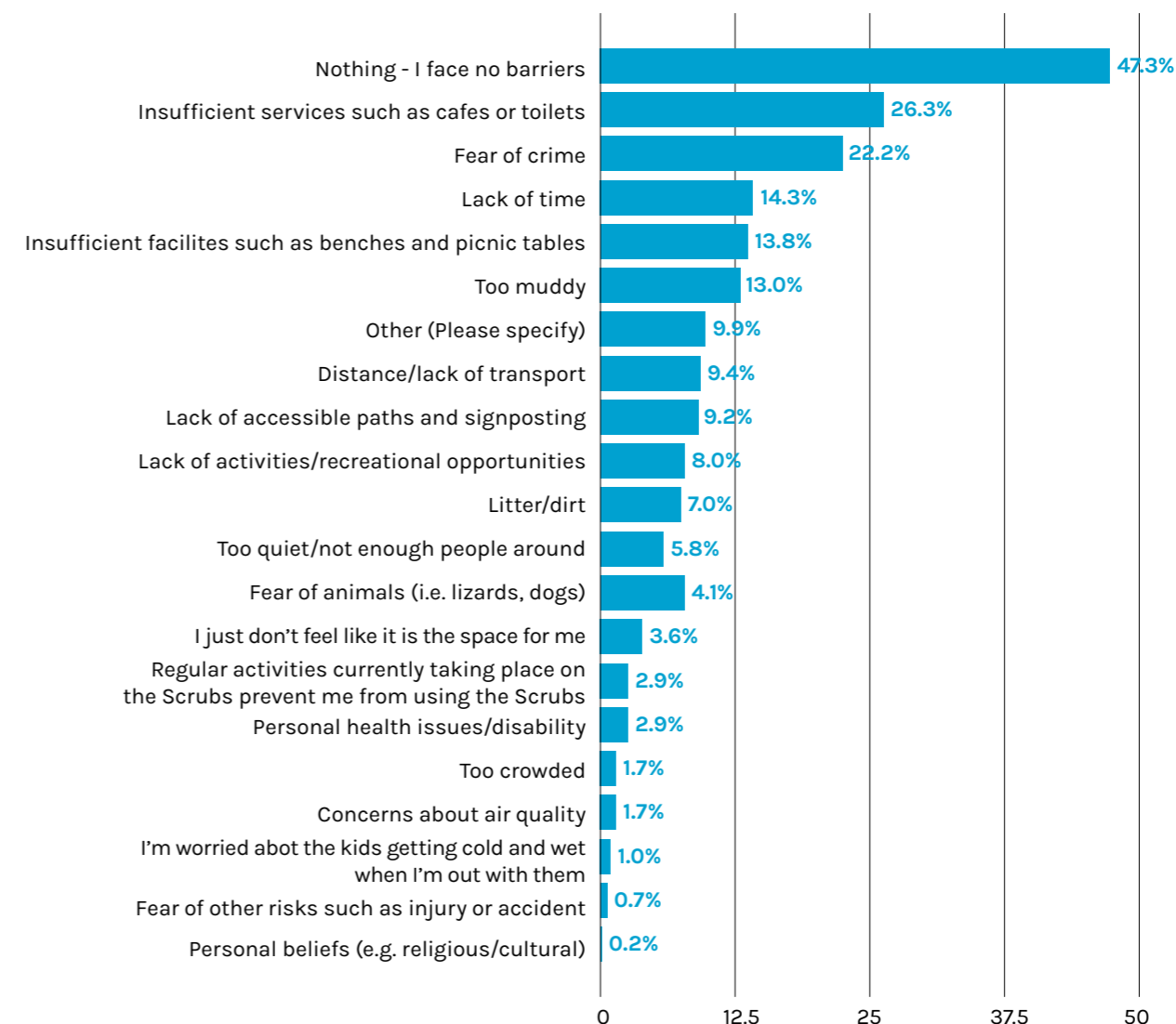
Based on the survey results to the question ‘What limits you from using or making use of Wormwood Scrubs more often?’ and interviews with local stakeholders, the main barriers to access can be categorised as:

- Flow and mobility
- Facilities
- Orientation
- Safety
- Access
- Maintenance
- Time & Resources
- Representation
- Inclusion & Power Imbalances

Barriers to visit	No. of responses	Result
Nothing - I face no barriers	196	47.3%
Insufficient services such as cafes or toilets	109	26.3%
Fear of crime	92	22.2%
Lack of time	59	14.3%
Insufficient facilities such as benches and picnic tables	57	13.8%
Too muddy	54	13.0%
Other (Please specify)	41	9.9%
Distance/lack of transport	39	9.4%
Lack of accessible paths and signposting	38	9.2%
Lack of activities/recreational opportunities	33	8.0%
Litter/dirt	29	7.0%
Too quiet/not enough people around	24	5.8%
Fear of animals (i.e. lizards, dogs)	17	4.1%
I just don't feel like it is the space for me	15	3.6%
Regular activities currently taking place on the Scrubs prevent me from using the Scrubs	12	2.9%
Personal health issues/disability	12	2.9%
Too crowded	7	1.7%
Concerns about air quality	7	1.7%
I'm worried about the kids getting cold and wet when I'm out with them	4	1.0%
Fear of other risks such as injury or accident	3	0.7%
Personal beliefs (e.g. religious/cultural)	1	0.2%

Table 8: Barriers to accessing the Scrubs

Figure 8: Barriers to accessing the Scrubs



## 6.2 Flow and mobility

In both the survey results and in stakeholder interviews the lack of flat, smooth, wide, accessible paths – and a perimeter path – was cited as a major barrier. This particularly impacts people – their friends and family – who are elderly; visually impaired; mobility challenged; users of wheelchairs, mobility vehicles & other mobility aids; and carers of children with baby prams, strollers and scooters. A lack of picnic tables and benches was cited as a barrier – these furnishings critical for people who are elderly; have ambulation challenges or have health conditions which require them to take regularly rests.

Barriers survey respondents said they faced to access the Scrubs:

- 1.4% personal health issues/disability
- 4.5% lack of accessible paths and signposting
- 6.7% insufficient facilities such as benches or picnic tables
- 0.4% fear of other risks such as injury or accident (potentially due to falls and trips)
- 3.4% litter/dirt

We asked if people would like more smooth paths suitable for wheelchairs and buggies:

- 35.8% said I'd like more
- 53.7% said What's there is about right
- 10.5% said I'd like less

When asked about the growing local population and its impact on the Scrubs, Ben Shakespeare of Land Use Consultants, the company that conducted the 2018 draft of the Biodiversity Masterplan consultation, said:

**“It will need more paths and more improved paths... a popular request was to have a tarmac path around the Scrubs so that you could go around in a wheelchair or pushchair...If we can have more internal routes, then we spread the load of people... and the impact on the ground is reduced... where we proposed habitats, we leave mown grass paths between them with multiple different ways to explore.”**

On the topic of paths Claire Morris, founder of For Brian CIC, a dementia support organisation, commented:

**“We need to get rid of the coaches driving students in to the Linford Christie Stadium. It’s a cycle route, but they’re allowing coaches on it. If you’ve got an old lady in her side-by-side cycle taxi and you meet the coach, it’s bad...how people access the Scrubs isn’t about driving, it’s about maintaining the opportunity for people to walk and cycle.”**

When asked what barriers prevented them from accessing the Scrubs 6.4% said it was too muddy and 3.4% said the litter/dirt. Flooding in the winter also prevented access due to waterlogged areas and how muddy the site consequently gets. One survey respondent said:

**“The only times I don’t go to the Scrubs is when it gets very muddy in the winter.”**

Natural spaces being described as ‘too muddy’ can be divisive. However, this is to forget practical issues some residents face such as having no access to outside taps to wash shoes and clothing; limited indoor and outdoor space for washing/drying/storing

shoes and clothing; lack of clothing and shoes for colder/wetter months; and lack of multiple sets of clothing/shoes. Keeping items clean and dry therefore becomes extremely important – something people with utility rooms, outdoor clothes lines, taps and the means to run a dryer and have multiple sets of weather appropriate clothing/shoes may not be sensitive too.

Some practical features which could be added at designated entrances to aid residents who have limited sink and outdoor space access include boot scrapers/brushes and washing taps which switch off automatically after a designated period of time.

During stakeholder interviews, an expert ecologist and regular Scrubs user suggested a wetland, or SUDS (sustainable urban drainage system). This has the dual benefits of keeping water and mud to specific areas – reducing one of the key barriers to people using the Scrubs – and provide wetland habitats for biodiversity and accessible water for wildlife.

When asked about the introduction of a pond, wetland or other water area, David Lindo, the Urban Birder was not enthusiastic about ponds but did see potential for wet woodlands. He said:

**“It’s all well putting it in, but if there’s no management it’s a waste of time. It would encourage people to dump scooters and shopping trolleys in it...there’s areas that get marshy so maybe some wet Woodlands would be nice. But a pond or a lake I’m against. If I had confidence in who was managing this, it might be different. I’m a vice president for the Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust... If I was talking to them, I’d have confidence because it’s been put in by people who know what they’re talking about. I don’t trust ecologists who work for the Council or for people like HS2...they’re scared to say what they really believe.”**

## 6.3 Facilities

The lack of facilities such as a café, toilets, picnic tables and benches were cited as barriers to access. This potentially affects all human users (we all eat, drink, use the toilet and require rest), but it particularly impacts girls and women of menstrual age; pregnant women; girls and women of different religious and cultural groups; the elderly; people with health conditions (diabetes, bladder issues, heart conditions); carers of children; children and babies; and people who experience mental and physical challenges.

The lack of facilities and any type of hub space was also cited by local schools as a barrier for using the Scrubs to deliver learning experiences.

Survey respondents said they faced the following barriers to access the Scrubs:

- 12.9% said insufficient facilities such as cafes or toilets
- 6.7% said insufficient facilities such as benches or picnic tables as barrier

In the workshop a mother of two children said she often sits on the gym equipment while her children play in the park as there was no seating located near the play equipment. This reduces the amount of time her children can spend there as she feels tired and uncomfortable. Another noted that there used to be two picnic tables in the area but they were removed and never replaced.

A group of teenagers socialising in the Scrubs also noted that picnic benches would add to their experience of the Scrubs as they could come and meet with friends even when the ground was wet.

We asked about the number of toilets at the Scrubs:

- 71.4% said I’d like more
- 24.9% said What’s there is about right
- 3.7% said I’d like less

An Education Officer for Urbanwise said: **“We work a lot with young kids. The first thing we plan, even when it’s a workshop about bird watching or insect identifying is, where are the toilets? The water? If there’s no toilets, it’s limiting how far you can go which is a shame.”**

On the topic of toilets, one local resident said: **“If more toilets are being put in, put in a water access point. You know drinking fountains and a tap... I planted young Hazel saplings last year and I had to walk a long way to fetch water.”**

The lack of facilities such as toilets or something more extensive like a café was cited as an issue by Liam Barry, Chairman and John Doyle, Treasurer of Fulham Irish GA Club:

**“We’ve a match down here on Sunday and there’s 300 kids coming cross country and there’s nowhere for their parents to go. It’s not like you can get a cup of tea, go to the toilet easily or anything. It’s a beautiful open space of course... We’ve put in plans to the council to develop the old Nigerian rugby clubhouse, but they didn’t give us much feedback. We’ve met the Council on a few occasions to see if we could help to improve the facilities down there (Linford Christie Stadium), but there was never any movement.”**

One of our researchers met two health professionals at the Scrubs who work in the nearby hospital. They suggested more benches and picnic tables close to the hospital side for staff and patients to utilise for lunches and time outside for wellbeing.

Due to the large amount of land dedicated to mown grass and sports pitches (pitches make up the largest amount of facilities in the Scrubs), we asked people’s views on the volume of football pitches:



- 5.1% said I'd like more
- 70.5% said What's there is about right
- 24.4% said I'd like less

The topic of the current outdoor gym was written about in survey text boxes with respondents describing it as, "small, not age-friendly, with no safe all-weather flooring." Suggestions to change this centred around re-designing and upgrading the area as opposed to removing it.

## 6.4 Orientation

The Scrubs features few information boards and signposting – whether informative about nature reserves and the different features of the Scrubs or basic orientation. This is a particular barrier to new users of the Scrubs; people new to using outdoor spaces; people topographically agnostic/disoriented (people who get lost easily); people of differing neurotypes; and people without smart phones for easy access to maps. London A-Zs don't work for orientating around the Scrubs and ordinance maps are a specialist tool most people except serious ramblers own.

4.5% of responses sited lack of accessible paths and signposting as a barrier.

A team member on the OPDC, part of the Mayoral Development Corporation, visited the Scrubs with her daughter for research. As a new, first-time user she found the site intimidating and difficult to navigate: "It's quite challenging if you're new to it. First you have to find your way in. And then it's like, OMG how do I get out?...none of us want to make it manicured. But I do feel like it's one or two notches too far on the spectrum of being very difficult and challenging for newcomers."

## 6.5 Safety

The issue of safety featured extensively in our survey and stakeholder interviews. In response to the statement 'I have felt unsafe, or anxious on the Scrubs in the last year', survey respondents said:

- 6.7% Strongly Agree
- 21% Agree
- 31.1% Neither Agree nor Disagree
- 26.7% Disagree
- 14.6% Strongly Disagree

The topic of safety came up in a variety of guises over the course of the consultation. In the survey results, in stakeholder interviews and in interactions young people during workshops. We will deal with the different aspects of safety separately.

### 6.5.1 Being Alone on The Scrubs

Numerous people cited concerns about being alone on the Scrubs – both during the day and night. Many had strategies about how they 'keep safe' on the Scrubs such as limiting themselves to visiting in daylight, busy hours; visiting with other people; and avoiding the quieter more concealed parts of the Scrubs.

One respondent said this considerably impacted her mental health, particularly during the shorter daylight hours of winter: "I have to limit when I can use the Scrubs due to safety fears as a woman. Even in the late afternoon in the winter, I do not feel safe enough to walk even in the more open areas. This needs to be addressed. Women should not have to risk safety for access to open spaces, we should have equal access to open spaces and the right and safety to use them. The lack of being able to use the space has a serious impact on my mental health and isolation feelings. It also forces women to walk local streets as an alternative which is neither pleasant nor safe."

Another respondent said:

"I mostly feel safe there on my own but, as a woman, I would only go in the daytime when it is busier. I more often go with my husband, kids or a friend."

This respondent said:

"I have been there on my own and found myself being followed by a man. It has put me off going except in a group. I would like it to have a café and toilets to give it a much wider usage (I suspect some people pee in the bushes because of the lack of toilets). I know it is lovely to have wild space but the area with the pitches etc could be a bit friendlier and more inclusive."

To our survey question in relation to safety 2.8% of responses described the Scrubs as, 'Too quiet/not enough people around.'

Despite these safety concerns many people value the opportunity the Scrubs affords them to be alone in the quiet. Of course, these two facets are not mutually exclusive – you can enjoy being alone in the quiet, but still be concerned about safety.

In response to the statement, 'I enjoy the quietness and being the only person in the area':

- 26.2% strongly agreed
- 37% agreed
- 23.7% neither agreed nor disagreed
- 8.7% disagree
- 4.4% strongly disagree

### 6.5.2 Avoiding Specific Areas of The Scrubs

Some people told us they intentionally avoided specific areas of the 'Scrubs, generally the wilder more densely covered areas. One respondent said:

"I love the 'Scrubs but I do not walk through the woodland areas by myself because of fears of individuals hiding and exposing themselves."

### 6.5.3 Crime & Anti-Social Behaviour

The subject of avoiding specific areas is closely linked to the issue of anti-social behaviour that takes place in the more concealed parts of the Scrubs – with 10.9% of survey respondents stating fear of crime as a barrier to access. Drug use and drug sales, prostitution and other sexual activity, gang use and violent crimes were flagged – as both directly experienced or witnessing the aftermath in the form of left-over detritus. Some respondents noted the reoccurring presence of human faeces.

One survey respondent who visits the 'Scrubs at least five times a week said:

"Unfortunately, at the entrance on the Wormwood Scrubs side... you can often find used condoms and other detritus, which is very unsavoury."

Another survey respondent noted how this made it particularly unsafe for children:

"I think some groups use the eastern wooded fringes of the Scrubs as a meeting point for drug taking and sexual activity. It's highly unpleasant and potentially dangerous for a child to pick the paraphernalia up."

Another survey respondent reported:

"I know there are illicit activities (prostitution and drug dealing) going on in the woods near Scrubs Lane. I have heard and seen evidence of at least two attacks on the tiled path after dark. My nephew got attacked and I saw lots of blood spatters and hair on the path on another occasion."

A local resident who's worked with young people at the school and community centre for years, says:

"I think the 'Scrubs is really important for children to go and explore, especially in the woods and stuff, they can do den building and blackberry picking...the problem is I don't always think it's safe. Parents have told me that it's a concern for them."

According to some people the recent changes on the Scrubs has made it more dangerous. One survey respondent aged 66-75 said: **“The attempt to hijack a large part of the area – the bit on the map described as the airplane flying zone, has led to areas that are unsafe and dangerous. It is only a matter of time that someone is raped or assaulted.”**

In April 2022 a heinous crime took place on the Scrubs when a man picked up a woman in Islington and drove her all the way to Wormwood Scrubs to rape her. The crime was reported by The Evening Standard. You have to ask, why the Scrubs? What was it about the site that motivated the perpetrator to drive his victim all the way there to commit the crime?

News reports of the goings on at HM Wormwood Scrubs prison impacts the overall impression (and reality) of safety. Escaped prisoners, prisoners mistakenly released, stabbings, suicides, rampant drug use, physical abuse and guards punished for criminal treatment of inmates – issues widely reported – do not leave an ‘impression’ of safety for people considering visiting the area of the prisons namesake.

It is ‘known’ that local gangs smuggle illegal items such as drugs into the prison via the Scrubs access side.

A local resident and education officer for Urbanwise told us:

**“I was in the Scrubs with a school and a gang on mopeds were smuggling things into the prison (via the Scrubs side) ...it was shocking to be there with thirty kids asking, ‘What’s going on there?’ and no security or police to react to the situation...most of the time my visits are incident-free, but you need to be alert.”**

On the topic of safety and policing, a member of FOWWS said:

**“In some case’s there’s maybe a need for more law enforcement controls as opposed to cutting things (hedges/ trees) down.”**

A consultation participant who is a local resident and has worked with young people at the community centre and school added: **“There’s been times when people have found things like guns and knives on the Scrubs, obviously because the prisons there. I’ve taken the kids on trips, and we’ve been coming back, and we’ve seen guys on motorbikes throwing stuff over the prison ward. So, that’s quite dangerous in itself.”**

#### 6.5.4 After Dusk

We asked survey respondents how safe they felt on the Scrubs after dusk by posing the statement, ‘I would not worry about walking over the ‘Scrubs after dusk’. In contrast to the number of people who said they felt safe on the Scrubs – the prospect of going there after dusk was, not surprisingly, a different matter.

To this statement:

- 9.8% strongly agreed
- 15.3% agreed
- 17.9% neither agreed nor disagreed
- 34.6% disagree
- 22.4% strongly disagree

The issue of safety after dusk, in any location, particularly for women, women of black and brown ethnic heritage, and members of trans and gender non-conforming communities, is an enormous societal issue that runs far deeper than the parameters of this consultation. Members of these communities are not yet ‘safe’ at home, at work, at school, on public transport and on busy streets during daylight hours – so being safe in an area like the Scrubs after dark, lighting or no lighting, seems unlikely.

#### 6.5.5 Visibility

The issue of visibility came up a lot in relation to safety. Many consultation respondents

talked about liking the openness of the Scrubs and some avoided walking on the paths surrounded by woodland and bushes.

One consultation participant who works with children from the school and community centre suggested lowering the height of the bushes near the Braybrook Street side so that parents could sight their children playing in the park. They said:

**“Families that live in the houses there (Braybrook Street) are reluctant to let the children go to the park and play in the playground by themselves because you got all those bushes which are quite high. I’m not saying remove them, but maybe if they were lower, families would feel more comfortable sending their older children across the road. Then you can watch them from your kitchen.”**

#### More Safety Measures

With regards to safety measures at the Scrubs we asked people if they’d like to see more safety precautions in the form of neighbourhood patrols, CCTV and lighting introduced. The responses were:

- 45.4% I’d like more
- 48.1% What’s there is about right
- 6.5% I’d like less

There is a rough 50/50 split between people who would like to see more, and new safety measures introduced, and people who think the existing measures are about right. Some users are willing to sacrifice greater human safety to prioritise the protection of wildlife. One survey respondent said: **“I generally do not feel anxious during daylight hours. I often run and walk there on my own, but I would not venture into any park after dusk or night. I would feel anxious on my own but would happily walk with friends or family. Please do not use this as an excuse to introduce well-lit pathways all around.”**

In a similar vein another consultation respondent expressed an almost acceptance

of crime in the Scrubs and stressed that the primary purpose of the site was for wildlife: **“Inevitably there will be some risk of both petty and violent crimes in such a space in a city environment. But I think the primary purpose of such a space is for wildlife, biodiversity, and education as a human activity. Let us use the margins and other green spaces for sport and ‘serviced’ socialising e.g., cafes etc.”**

On the introduction of CCTV cameras and more lighting, David Lindo, the Urban Birder, said: **“I think that the idea of CCTV and stuff, it’s about society and how scared we are of everything...CCTV well, OK, in the areas where there’s roads maybe. But the more lighting you have, the less it becomes a natural place because you know things like bats can’t handle too much lightning..I think there’s not much that should be done other than to rewild it a little bit, to manage it with a bit more love than it has been over the last few years, or even in the last decade. I’ve had such a vested interest in this place, and I’ve dedicated a lot of my life to it... It breaks my heart when I hear about CCTV cameras and lights.”**

Another consultation respondent suggested adding lighting to areas where there are structures such as the play area and certain paths. They said: **“I understand you need to protect wildlife, but for me, a child’s life experiences are more important. If it means a child never goes on the Scrubs and spends all their time on the computer inside because his Mum doesn’t feel it’s safe – then I’d rather there was some lighting. Not everywhere. Not in the designated nature areas. I don’t know that much about biodiversity but why can’t they have better safety around the areas children play. Other than having wardens, I can’t think of anything other than lighting that would make it safer.”**



## 6.6 Dogs

Of the survey responses 2% stated a fear of animals as a barrier to accessing the Scrubs. Yet this topic came up frequently in stakeholder interviews. This question does not reveal at kind of animals but some respondents provided more details about their concerns which revolved around free ranging dogs (dogs off leads), large packs of dogs (both on and off leads) with professional dog walkers walking together in pairs and groups, and dogs encouraged to be aggressive by irresponsible owners.

This can be a barrier to people with children, the elderly, people who are scared of or have had bad experiences of dogs, and people who culturally do not regard dogs as 'pets' and might find being in the presence of large numbers of dogs unsettling.

One parent said:

**“My six year old was knocked over by a poorly controlled dog there once and sometimes it feels like dog walkers are poorly regulated.”**

On the subject of barriers to access one survey respondent said:

**“There is an overabundance of dog walkers who do not control their animals.”**

While another said:

**“Large numbers of dogs in the care of just one person and dog owners not taking responsibility for their dog.”**

During our workshops with young people many cited dogs as an issue. They were described as, 'scary', 'too many' and even as ruining games of football. One 6 year old boy said 'long grass' was scary but then clarified by saying it was because he couldn't see dogs running out of them towards him. Carers raised the issue of dog fouling and worrying about older children's safety in the park due to the prevalence of dogs.

One survey respondent suggested charging professional dog walkers for using the Scrubs and having a dedicated area for professional dog walking. They said:

**“Professional dog walkers are supposed to limit their numbers to 4 per walker but they group up so you can have 20 dogs free ranging. These walkers think the dogs are benign but for a lot of people including the elderly and some cultures, this can be threatening especially if they're suddenly run down by a group of dogs. There should be a managed area for professional dog walkers and a significant charge made for them using a public space because of the associated mess it generates. Okay, they can put it in the bins but who empties the bins and how regularly and who pays for this?”**

Another survey respondent wanted to stress that they were not fearful of animals but thought:

**“The proliferation of dog walkers, and lack of dog control is a real issue. Growing levels of dog fouling, animals out of control and off leash, running up to people who might be afraid, also chasing around the meadow and hedge areas disturbing wildlife. Professional dog walkers often walk in pairs, talking to each other, looking at their phones with 10-12 dogs mostly off leash and not paying attention to them. For me they're the second biggest blight after HS2.”**

Although not directly connected to human safety, the issue of safety for wildlife and biodiversity in relation to dogs was also noted. One respondent said:

**“I'd like to see more community commitment to persuading dog walkers not to let their dogs trample in wildlife protected areas. Some ways to fine and stop repeat offenders. It is very upsetting to see this and to see even trustees of FOWWS unable to take issue with it.”**

Dog walkers also commented on the safety of their dogs in the Scrubs. One respondent mentioned reports of people laying down poison near the community centre:

**“Nothing stops me from visiting Wormwood Scrubs,”** they said.

**“However, the threat to my dog is often a huge concern as there are often reports of people laying down poison, especially surrounding the community centre area.”**

## 6.7 Access

There were a number of barriers described by consultation participants relating to access – both physical and cultural. We will deal with them as separate points.

### Physical Access

A number of consultation respondents commented on the limited amount of entry points and that the numerous developments over the years that boundary the Scrubs have exacerbated the issue.

One respondent said:

**“The local plan for access and egress to and from WWS is very poor. It is bounded in the north and south by railways and the fairly impenetrable and forbidding car park and hospital to the south.... I think the railway footbridge to the south is a quaint relic and could really do with a ramp for better disabled and cycling access across the Scrubs.”**

Another respondent commented:

**“It is also apparently impossible to access the Scrubs from the eastern (Imperial College) side of the hospital. This was very poor planning at the time but I'm sure it can be changed somehow. In any case, the pavement to the west of the hospital (along the prison wall) is narrow and that prison wall should have a mural.”**

The condition of the car park was also noted alongside these entry point challenges:

**“The state of the access between the hospital and prison is poor but the car park and appearance of the stadium are much worse and need work.”**

A number of consultation respondents said there wasn't enough car parking and free parking at the Scrubs and that the cost of parking prohibited and/or limited their visits. Some participants cited access needs – health conditions, physical challenges – that means they have to drive if they want to visit.

One consultation participant said:

**“I have a health issue and live too far away to walk to the Scrubs so even though it's not far I have to drive. The parking is limited, and you have to pay which I can't always afford. I think there should be more accessible parking. Parks shouldn't just be a space for fit people. I've paid the same taxes as them all my life.”**

In contrast to the above one respondent said:

**“I think the LC car park should be downsized to encourage more cycling, walking and public transport use.”**

We asked what people thought of the current level of car parking and cycle storage.

- 29.7% I'd like more
- 60% What's there is about right
- 10.3% I'd like less



## 6.8 Maintenance

The issue of maintenance as a barrier (as opposed to biodiversity maintenance which is a separate issue) and how hands off/on the Scrubs is managed came up repeatedly throughout the consultation. In terms of barriers to access 3.4% of consultation respondents said litter and dirt were a barrier. We have previously talked about the issue of excess mud in an earlier part of this chapter.

‘Litter’ is covered in the Safety section of this chapter as items left on the Scrubs include dangerous items such as used condoms, drug paraphernalia, broken alcohol bottles, cigarette stubs etc.

The aforementioned issue of human faeces found in the wooded areas and presentation of the car park, back of the hospital and prison wall, were all described as needing improving and managing.

## 6.9 Time & Resources

External factors such as having enough time and resources to visit the Scrubs was cited as a barrier to access. Although the Scrubs is free and open at all times, most people would not consider using the space after dusk which limits when working people can visit. 7% of responses included lack of time as a barrier. Likewise, not having enough resources for things such as travel, parking fees, bikes/bicycle maintenance and appropriate outdoor clothing were cited as barriers by some consultation respondents with 4.6% of responses stating distance/lack of transport as a barrier.

Although tackling these social inequalities fall out of the remit of this consultation, it's imperative that barriers such as this are considered to ensure the Scrubs is accessible equally to all borough residents.

## 6.10 Representation, Inclusion & Power Imbalances

An important element of ‘access’ is whether local people feel represented, included and fairly involved with the Scrubs – not just as users but as decision makers. The consultation identified barriers of representation, inclusion and power imbalances mainly felt by local working-class residents living in social housing in close proximity to the Scrubs.

The Urban Birder, David Lindo, frequently talks about the lack of representation (he himself is black) in the ecology and natural history field in the UK. We asked him why he thought so many of the consultation respondents were white. He told us:

**“I think a lot of ethnically diverse people feel they do not have a place there, or anywhere else for that matter, when it comes to Natural History... it's the way that nature is sold to us by the media, as something presented by white middle class, middle-aged men. And I think people, especially kids, turning on their TVs in inner city areas and seeing that do not relate to it, which makes more of a divide in terms of getting involved.”**

To address inclusion and power imbalances, lets recap from the Introduction which groups hold the most power on the Scrubs.

There are two groups that hold the most influence. The Wormwood Scrubs Charitable Trust and the Friends of Wormwood Scrubs (FOWWS). The Wormwood Scrubs Charitable Trust (WSCT) is a registered charity, with The London Borough of Hammersmith & Fulham acting as the sole corporate trustee. The trustee board consists of three councillors (voting members) and two members of the FOWWS committee who do not have voting rights. This means the only members of the

local community that have participatory access to WSCT meetings are also members of FOWWS. This gives the FOWWS group access and influence greater than any other local stakeholder.

This structure has potentially produced a lack lustre approach to proactive management of the Scrubs. A member of FOWWS we interviewed said:

**“I think this is a legacy issue around Wormwood Scrubs Charitable Trust not having full control as it were...there's been a lack of overall management...the new grounds maintenance contract is a significant improvement on what came before... there is a plan to hire a Scrubs manager, because the charitable trust at this point doesn't have any employees. Therefore, there's no focal point and that will change once the right person can be found.”**

Just like ecology and ecological systems, there is strength and benefits to diverse groups of people versus limitations and critical absences of homogeneity. For a community organisation of such influence (FOWWS is the only group with such a direct communication channel to the WSCT and thus the council), it is crucial this group is representative of local stakeholders and the community at large – or other groups are invited to participate. When considering if a group is ‘representative’ areas to consider are age, ethnicity, culture, religion, employment status, gender identity, income, education, housing status and whether someone is differently abled – and how this compares to the local population community surrounding the Scrubs.

Lack of diversity and representation on UK charity boards is a sector wide issue yet existing data is old and incomplete. A Charity Commission report dated 2017 found 92% of charity trustees are white, two thirds are male, and the average age is 55-64. In July this year Money4YOU sent an open letter signed

by Charities Aid Foundation, Charity So White, New Philanthropy Capital, Reach Volunteering, Race On The Agenda, Voice4Change England and other organisations to the Charity Commission requesting trustee and executive diversity data be updated so action can be taken to address this sector wide issue. Activists, trainers and experts working in the representation and equality space (focusing on things such as race, gender, sexual orientation, disability, religion etc) say work needs to be done before historically non-diverse boards begin diversity recruitment drives to ensure these spaces are ‘safe’ for incoming members (NCVO 2022)

This work may look like training in active listening, allyship, anti-racism and the co-creation of policies so the approach of the organisation is written into practice. It may also look like the creation of working-groups that specialise in different areas of inclusion, setting diversity targets, and looking at the existing working culture and whether it uses processes, systems and jargon that may prevent active and equal participation (NCVO 2022. Anti-racism and Inclusion & Diversity experts say this work to be effective must ongoing and not a tick-box, do it once and done type of exercise.

There is currently no mechanism for members of the general public and wider stakeholder groups to participate in WSCT meetings. However, the meetings are held online, recorded and published on YouTube for anyone to watch. The FOWWS group has an invitation on their website for people to become members. This invitation is open to all. However, this alone does not seem to have been effective in opening the group up to local residents from communities that live next to the Scrubs.

This research was echoed in the views of a number of consultation participants who said FOWWS was not representative of the local, working-class community. Some participants said they felt shut out, had reservations about joining, and were not aware of any work to address this lack of representation.

Another local resident who leads educational workshops on the Scrubs said:

“To be frank, the Friends group is mainly a bunch of white middle class people, and that’s fine. But there’s a bunch of other people who live in the area who have no representation, no voice... So, one possible solution could be how could the friend’s group be more open, inclusive and representative of the local community? That’s a big issue on whether you think could there be another group who brings all these people together? Because The Friends’ group, as I said, have a very specific aim, shape, form, governance and tradition. But they are not the only people in the Scrubs. However, they’re kind of the official voice of the Scrubs.”

They go on to comment on the Friends approach: “We also need to recognise the Friends hard work. They’ve been working hard to preserve the Scrubs and fight the council and developers and so on. Which is great but I think can create a siege mentality and that’s blocking off representation and inclusivity.”

Another consultation respondent said: “The use of the Scrubs has been dominated by dog walkers and conservationists – meaning the local community often feels left out and that it is not for them. I think that should change. As it is underused it does become a haven for anti-social behaviour, drug use etc. I think it is time for the local community to feel that they own it rather than the self-elected ‘Friends of the Scrubs’.”

Repeatedly we were told that the voices of the very local people who live immediately next to the Scrubs are not heard. One participant said: “You know some people’s voices, some of the loudest voices here are actually people who don’t live on the estate. So, from the Kensington Chelsea end.”

Some consultation participants talked about the issue of different groups – the FOWWS, the council, the community centre, education providers, local residents etc – existing and working in silo, and that not enough was being done to bring these different people, experts and interest groups together.

One consultation respondent, who is a local resident and works in education on the Scrubs said:

“The issue is lack of integration, inclusivity in the area that people are in their own little silos, and nobody is bringing them together...I could argue is it perhaps the council’s job to bring all these groups together?”

#### Other Barriers to Access

Other barriers cited by a much smaller number of consultation participants are below.

- 1.4% Regular activities held on the scrubs prevent me from using the Scrubs
- 0.1% Religious or cultural beliefs
- 0.8% Too crowded
- 0.8% Concern about air quality

## Chapter 7. Wormwood Scrubs: The Future – Human Needs Versus Wildlife Needs

A dichotomy and tension? Or an opportunity for the two to be brought together?

### 7.1 The Separation of Humans from Nature

In August 2016, the Anthropocene was formally designated the current geological epoch at the International Geological Congress (Carrington, 2016). The Anthropocene, in essence, designates human activity as a primary, geological force – that people are making largescale, irreversible impacts on all earth systems: air and climate; plants and animals; the very fabric of the earth itself. The idea of the Anthropocene has provided a powerful framework through which to account for and represent the entangled forces of human and nonhuman activity within planetary systems (Grusin, 2017). Some of the most entrenched concepts of western thought and capital are based on a flawed but deep-rooted understanding of humans as separate to, and apart from ‘nature’ (Latour, 2013, Moore, 2017).

The separation of ‘humans’ from nature, particularly in the western hemisphere, is not only nonsensical, but a diverse range of experts believe it to be one of the root causes of the climate crisis (e.g., Latour, 2013, Moore 2017). Yet, we – as humans – are animal. We depend on the natural world for the food we eat, the air we breathe and the water we drink (Moore, 2017).

As little as 150 years ago, humans were very much a part of the land and used spaces such as the commons to collect firewood and bracken, graze animals, forage for food and more. This was done with hand tools on a small but frequent basis so served to enhanced biodiversity as opposed to destroying it, unlike industrial logging and other such practices today.

Recent academic studies have found that a connection to nature connectedness was positively associated with pro-environmental behaviours. (for example, Martin et al, 2020). Indigenous communities with land-based life practices would no doubt raise an eyebrow that a scientific study was needed to prove this.

The study also concluded that, visiting nature at least once/week was associated with better health and nature connectedness was positively related to *eudaimonic* (producing happiness) wellbeing. So overall, \*informed humans being facilitated to spend time in nature seems to be both good for people, and good for the planet. Here, the term ‘informed humans’ is used to imply knowing how to behave respectfully in nature and doing the least amount of harm to plants, animals and insects whilst performing essential human functions.



In the UK and indeed many parts of the world today 'nature' and 'wildlife' is so damaged, encroached upon and unconsidered – conservationists have found it necessary to separate humans from nature with designated areas turned into protected reserves. The Scrubs is no different, with specific areas of the site protected after tireless campaigning from local nature enthusiasts and conservationists, many whom are members of the FOWWS group.

There are mixed views about altering the Scrubs so it can better accommodate human visitors. Some think it should be left as it is and visitors actively discouraged, while others believe there is a need to plan for and accommodate the inevitable increase in human traffic the site will see over the next 10 years. As one interviewee notes:

**“We need to achieve an enhancement of the biodiversity so that it can still be enjoyed by people walking in a relatively wild space in larger numbers...not an easy challenge.”**

## 7.2 Wildlife And Biodiversity Are Important to All

The consultation process yielded an encouraging consensus that 78.1% of participants replied Strongly Agree when asked to comment on the statement, 'Wildlife and biodiversity are important to me.' This was followed by:

- 17.8% Agree
- 3.4% Neither Agree nor Disagree
- 0.2% Disagree
- 0.5% Strongly Disagree

The next question was, 'On a scale of 1-10 what method of maintenance and management would you feel is most suitable for Wormwood Scrubs?'

In response to the proposition. 'Fully maintained for aesthetic purposes (planned flowers, regular mowing, pruning and

weeding)', we asked participants to rate from 1 to 5. 1 being very suitable and 5 being not suitable at all:

- 11.6% rated for 1: meaning very suitable
- 9.8% rated for 2
- 16.5% rated for 3
- 24.2% rated for 4
- 38% rated for 5, meaning not suitable at all

The reverse of this was proposed, 'Sensitively maintained for wildlife, biodiversity, and environmental functions such as flood protection (but not regularly mowed and pruned), we asked participants to rate from 1 to 5. 1 being very suitable and 5 being not suitable at all.

- 64.4% rated for 1: '1' means very suitable
- 14.4% rated for 2
- 7% rated for 3
- 3.8% rated for 4
- 10.3% rated for 5: '5' means not suitable at all

78.8% of respondents (responses from 1 & 2 combined from second statement) would like to see it sensitively maintained for wildlife, biodiversity and environmental functions. 21.4% of respondents (responses from 1 & 2 combined from first statement) want the Scrubs to be managed more like a park.

The importance with which consultation participants regard nature and biodiversity is connected to a desire for more information about it at the Scrubs.

When asked their thoughts on the introduction of, 'Signs that tell me about the nature in the area', consultation participants said:

- 67.3% I'd like more
- 28.7% What's there is about right
- 4.1% I'd like less

Some participants said they'd appreciate tree and plant identification labels, information about the mammals and nesting birds in the protected areas, and other interesting sights such as, 'the big crowd of green parrots.' (the parakeets).

There is an interest in environmental activities and training courses on the Scrubs. When asked what type of activities they'd like to see respondents said:

- 11.2% Formal Courses
- 29.9% Informal Nature Walks
- 27.7% Community Tree Planting
- 27.7% Volunteering Such as Building 'Dead Hedges' For Wildlife
- 3.5% Other

In the open section of the survey respondents added they'd like seasonal children's walks and an ecology centre (more on this later).

The theme of education is continued in the proposition to introduce a community education facility on the Scrubs. 72.5% consultation respondents said 'Yes, they would welcome the development of a community education hub,' and 27.5% said they would not.

The introduction of a facility of this nature would enhance possibilities for community events, socialising, volunteering, learning more about wildlife and nature, making new friends and could be utilised by the numerous children's centres, primary schools and secondary schools surrounding Wormwood Scrubs. It would also be an opportunity to 'grow' the amount of local people who regard themselves as stewards and guardians of local wildlife.

In stakeholder interviews the subject of the introduction of a water habitat – pond, stream or small wetlands – came up on a number of occasions. The installation of which could be an opportunity for community participation and engagement. The building of a wetland was also cited by a local ecologist as a solution to the mud and water logging that occurs in the winter.

Some consultation participants believe more areas of the Scrubs should be safeguarded for wildlife and that this could be done without impacting human usage:

**“I would like to see a long-term management plan for the Scrubs... The Scrubs is being encroached on all sides, what impact will the increased footfall have, and how will this be managed? How can we protect it for the long term? For wildlife to survive surely some areas could be protected from human interference and footfall? The Scrubs are big enough for people and wildlife to survive. Signposts and cordoned-off or hedged off areas would help.”**

## 7.3 Wildlife Protection Above Human Needs

The consultation process has revealed a dichotomy of views with regards to the Scrubs better serving human needs so it can be a more inclusive and accessible space. These differing aims are talked about by some consultation participants as mutually exclusive, as if it's impossible for both to be simultaneously achieved.

There is concern amongst some consultation participants that new facilities for human benefit will be at the expense of plants and animals. This is understandable given how little rights and consideration plants and animals have been given to date in human development projects.

One consultation respondent said:

**“The Scrubs is one of the few wild and in a good sense undermanaged green spaces in London. More street lighting, paved paths, signs, cafes and managed areas and this wildness will be destroyed. It is that sense of wildness that makes the Scrubs unique, every effort should be made to maintain this.”**



Another consultation respondent described the barriers to access for some community members as, “imaginary.” They said:

**“There seems to be a concern to encourage more people to visit the Scrubs by addressing imaginary obstacles through more facilities. The Scrubs is a wild place. That is its identity and value. People who want picnic tables and no mud should go to their local park – and H&F has lots of these.”**

Some consultation participants were willing to forego their human needs to prioritise those of wildlife. One consultation respondent (referred previously in the chapter 8) described how despite acknowledging they would not walk in the Scrubs after dusk due to safety concerns, they did not want this to justify the introduction of well-lit paths all over the site due to its impact on wildlife.

One idea tabled in the LUC proposal was the introduction of grazing cattle in SNIC areas to replace more damaging and impactful mowing equipment. The cattle would need to be fenced in and thus limit human and dog activity in these areas.

Ben Shakespeare of LUC says:

**“Cattle can graze side by side with all sorts of different types of wildlife. They’d need to be fenced in so that would stop people walking across protected areas...If you want things like skylarks to nest, they need nice areas of short grasslands.”**

## 7.4 Human Needs & Wildlife Needs Can Both Be Met

Some consultation participants shared a more pragmatic stance about how the needs of humans can be met whilst being sensitive to the needs of wildlife.

Ben Shakespeare of LUC said:

**“It is possible to find a balance. Any human activity tends to disrupt wildlife, and particularly things like lights. Lights are very bad for bats who need darkness to go around and hunt at night. And dogs are pretty bad for disturbing birds and nesting ground birds. And peeing and pooping everywhere, that isn’t good.... But, as long as there’s enough space, you can have cafes, paths and people and wildlife together.”**

One consultation respondent said:

**“There has been an overzealous attitude to protecting wildlife that has been off putting. It limits the enjoyment of the Scrubs by introducing guilt for being human.”**

While another respondent said:

**“A café and toilets would be great – although it would need to be in sympathy with the Scrubs. It would be a shame to spoil its wilderness atmosphere.”**

And this respondent, as quoted previously with regards to safety said:

**“I have been there on my own and found myself being followed by a man. It has put me off going except in a group. I would like it to have a café and toilets to give it a much wider usage (I suspect some people pee in the bushes because of the lack of toilets). I know it is lovely to have wild space but the area with the pitches etc could be a bit friendlier and more inclusive.”**

In the previous consultation conducted by LUC, it was noted in the public consultation meeting that the Gaelic Football Pitches were wrongly located in the SINC (sites of substantive nature conservation value). It was acknowledged the pitches and sports club that used them were of importance but could be relocated or reduced within the Scrubs so not to impact on wildlife.

However, it is worth noting that the Fulham Irish Gaelic Football Club are extremely happy with their current pitch location. That it doesn’t flood even after stormy weather, and that they have invested themselves in the goalposts and other features of the pitch. Liam Barry, Chairman of club says:

**“WW Scrubs is unique in that it has space for two pitches. Over the years the ground has settled really nicely. I was up there yesterday evening at Scrubs and playing soccer is excellent, absolutely excellent. Drainage is very good. When it comes to the latter months of the year, Scrubs is one of the few pitches you can play games after a lot of adverse weather because the drainage is so good.”**

There are a number of wild spaces in London that could be looked to for ideas and inspiration in terms of balancing the needs of humans with those of wildlife.

Highgate Wood, Queens Wood, The Woodberry Wetlands, Hackney Marshes, Tower Hamlets Cemetery Park, Abney Park, Camley Street Natural Park, Walthamstow Wetlands, Hollow Ponds, Gunnersbury Triangle Nature Reserves, Mile End Park and South Norwood Country Park to name just a few. These sites feature a host of differing approaches and wealth of facilities such as community gardens, cafes, mobile coffee and food trucks, multiple entrances, multiple toilet sites, ecology centres and classrooms, boating, information and orientation signs, and even adventure parks and tree top rope courses.

It’s worth noting none of them feature all of these facilities, but usually between 1 and 3 from the above list. Some utilise fencing and hard boarders between wildlife designated areas and habitat and spaces for humans, other sites have soft borders where human and wildlife use blends on the edges.

LDT recommend compiling a concise, highly visual portfolio of these sites – and potentially other inspiring sites from wild spaces in global cities – their human-centred facilities and the wildlife these sites support, to inspire and inform Hammersmith & Fulham residents of the possibilities for the Scrubs. A working group of diverse and engaged residents from a range of stake holder groups could embark on field trips to visit some of these sites. To ensure access and inclusion we recommend compensating people for their participation in this group.

Some consultation participants think it’s asking too much of the Scrubs to accommodate so many new people. When asked if it’s possible to make the Scrubs a space for both people and wildlife, one local resident told us:

**“Frankly, I don’t think it’s possible. I think they’re asking too much. I see the nature meadow being gradually destroyed by the level of footfall, no matter how they try to maintain it. You have to ask. Do you want a nature reserve, or do you want a space for the public that is really well paved and really well-lit? You can’t do both. They’re trying to get too much out of this space, and something will give, and it will be nature.”**

# Chapter 8.

## Summary and Recommendations Raised Within the Consultation

The openness and wildness of the Scrubs are simultaneously its appeal to some; and to others, these same attributes make it scary, inaccessible and off-putting.

Although there are naturally tensions between these two groups of users, there is a huge amount of common ground which we believe can be integrated into plans to make the Scrubs more accessible to more diverse visitors, while at the same time retaining its wild, natural charm and critical function as a supporter of biodiversity.

It is worth noting, that this summary does not suggest a 'one size fits all' plan for the Scrubs. Varying groups of people have different needs, and use different parts of the Scrubs in different ways.

For example, a young mother may frequent the playpark with her child and like to see improvements in that area, while never venturing to other parts. Someone who uses the Scrubs as a pleasant shortcut, might prioritise the introduction of CCTV and lighting near the paths close to the prison wall. And a nature enthusiast may visit the wilder parts of the Scrubs and like to see more efforts to protect and encourage biodiversity.

The needs and hopes for varying users, while different, are not necessarily in conflict. A better maintained playpark and access options at one side, does not diminish the possibility for more wildlife habitats on the other. We hope that many groups differing needs can be accommodated with balance, sensitivity, common sense and a little compromise.

It is also worth noting that when an individual or group has been long tasked with 'protecting' something like an encroached upon wild space like the Scrubs, any suggestions of change can be triggering and the worse possible outcomes be presumed. We invite people to digest our recommendations with an open mind, empathy and the spirit for which they are intended e.g. to create a space that affectively serves both human and nonhuman communities over the next ten years when visitor numbers will most certainly grow.

Having digested the consultation results and participants suggestions for the Scrubs improvements, we have coupled this with our community development expertise to make the following recommendations.

### 8.1 Wildlife & Biodiversity Is Protected & Enhanced

79% of survey respondents agree or strongly agree with the statement 'the 'Scrubs should be sensitively maintained for wildlife, biodiversity and environmental functions like flood protection'. Additionally, the most frequently cited reason for visiting the 'Scrubs was 'to be in touch with nature'. In interviews and workshops, the qualitative data reinforced the value local people hold for the natural value of the 'Scrubs.

Based on further data collected from interviews with amateur and professional wildlife and biodiversity experts, we offer the following recommendations:

- Designated wildlife areas which exclude both humans and dogs. Areas that are designated as wildlife only zones to enable ground nesting birds, small mammals and invertebrates safe and undisturbed spaces to enable populations to flourish. This will be particularly important as the footfall increases as projections suggest. We recommend taking expert advice on the best places to site these zones.
- The creation of a sustainable urban drainage system (SUDS) in the form of a wetland, swale, bog or natural pond. As one ecosystem expert we interviewed said water "is one of the most important things to improving biodiversity". The north west and south eastern corners of the 'Scrubs is prone to flooding, making standing water and mud a barrier to access. The two issues could be resolved with a sensitively designed sustainable drainage system. This will be particularly important to mitigate against the effects of climate change such as droughts and floods, which we are already experiencing and are only set to amplify.

In response to the statement about the need to maintain the 'Scrubs for wildlife, it is remarkable that 21% of people disagree;

or 1 in every 5 people. The 'Scrubs, therefore, has potential to not only protect and support wildlife and biodiversity, but also act to educate local people on the benefits and necessity of healthy ecosystems.

Based on our survey, interview and workshop data, we suggest this could be done through the following ways:

- Educational signage. 68% of survey respondents would like to see more 'signs that tell me about the nature in the area'. To add to this, the types of information people would like includes: tree and plant identification, information about mammals and nesting birds, and recent interesting sightings.
- 72.5% of survey respondents would welcome the development of a community education hub. In order of preference, people would like to see the following environmental activities for adults take place on the 'Scrubs: informal nature walks (30%), community tree planting (28%), volunteering (28%), formal courses (11%) and other (3%). There is a request for more education activities and facilities for children and adults on the 'Scrubs; we recommend these are planned in a way that adds to, rather than replicates nearby provision (for example the new ecology centre which is planned in Kensington and Chelsea).

Overall, our consultation found that biodiversity was highly valued by visitors to the 'Scrubs. Further to this, many respondents identified ways that the 'Scrubs could be improved for the benefit of ecosystems.

While our findings demonstrate the value of biodiversity, they also suggest that there are a number of barriers that people experience. Addressing these barriers would enable a more inclusive public use of the 'Scrubs and benefit the local community. We believe that a variety of solutions to overcome these barriers can be undertaken without sacrificing the highly valued biodiversity.



## 8.2 Barriers To Access Are Lowered So All Can Enjoy The Scrubs

In answer to the survey question – ‘Do you think Wormwood Scrubs serves the needs of the community at large?’ – 78% agreed while conversely, 22%, do not agree. This means that a significant number of users and potential users – 1 in 5 people – feel their needs are not currently met by the ‘Scrubs.

Further data analysis, broken down by postcode, demonstrates that people who live in the immediate area of the ‘Scrubs were more likely to feel their needs are not being met. This was closely followed by people who needed flat, smooth, wide ground to travel on e.g., the elderly; visually impaired; mobility challenged; users of wheelchairs, mobility vehicles & other mobility aids; and carers of children with baby prams, strollers and scooters.

Based on analysis of our survey, interview and workshop data, we have identified a number of barriers which prevent people from using the ‘Scrubs as much as they would like to. We have categorised these into the following headings:

- Flow and mobility
- Facilities
- Safety
- Access and orientation
- Maintenance
- Representation and inclusion.

### 8.2.1 Flow and mobility

36% of survey respondents would like to see more smooth paths that are suitable for wheelchairs and buggies, with 5% of respondents identifying the lack of paths as a major barrier.

Although the percentage in the survey supporting more paths is not remarkably high, it was an issue that came up repeatedly in stakeholder interviews and workshops, which is why we include it as a pressing issue.

During stakeholder interviews and informal workshops, the issue of paths was identified in particular by people with a range of mobility issues. This is a large and diverse group includes: disabled people who have difficulty walking on very rough ground; carers of adults in wheelchairs; parents of children in buggies; and people with visual impairments among others. It may be easy enough for an able-bodied adult or child with adequate outdoor clothing to roam across open grassland or scrubland. However, for people who do not have the physical ability to do this or the correct clothing, a lack of paths becomes a major barrier; and a regressive barrier at that. Therefore, the lack of adequate paths disproportionately affects disabled people, young families and people on low incomes.

As an ecology expert described “[the ‘Scrubs] will certainly need more improved paths... At the moment, people walk round parts of the edge. If we can have more internal routes, then we spread the load of people... and the impact on the ground is reduced.” So, paths not only improve the experience for visitors, but has the dual benefit of improving biodiversity by keeping people on those paths.

The proposal for a tarmac path was a divisive one. Some people were strongly for, while for others it was a ‘hard no’. We would therefore recommend avoiding a tarmac path. There are many environmentally friendly, sustainable and smooth alternatives which can be put in place. A variety of different kinds of path surface could be developed to manage footfall in different places.

### 8.2.2 Facilities

72% of survey respondents would like more toilets on the ‘Scrubs. This, in theory affects all people (we all eat, drink and use the toilet after all), however, again it affects some groups disproportionately more than others: women and girls of menstrual age; pregnant people, girls and women of certain religious and cultural groups; the elderly; people with health conditions (diabetes, bladder issues, heart conditions); carers of children; children and babies; and people who experience mental and physical challenges.

The lack of facilities was cited by local schools and organisations as a major barrier to being able to bring groups of children to the ‘Scrubs on educational visits. As one education officer describes “the first thing we plan, even when it’s a workshop about bird watching or insect identifying, is ‘where are the toilets?’ The water? If there’s no toilets, it’s limiting how far you can go”. A parent of a young child using the playpark described how she can only visit the ‘Scrubs for the maximum of an hour because she needs to leave the ‘Scrubs to find a toilet. On a visit, our researcher describes her experience of the toilets at Linford Christie stadium as being in a state of such disrepair, she was shocked and concerned. Additionally, witnessing or finding evidence of people urinating and defecating in the bushes was mentioned as a key concern by many interviewees and workshop participants.

We therefore recommend that toilet facilities are installed.

Other facilities that were suggested in the open text box of the survey, interviews and workshops were a café, benches, picnic tables and water fountains. During the workshop, picnic tables and benches were a recurrent theme: young people and people with small children strongly advocate for more benches and picnic tables. There was broad consensus across all groups that a café would be welcome based on survey and workshop data. This was particularly the case for parents who visit the play park for young children, or who take older children to sports events and then wait for them for upwards of an hour while the kids do sporting activities. In the interviews, however, there was less consensus. Participants articulated concerns for any type of building on the ‘Scrubs and an aversion to a café because it was seen as being to the detriment of wildlife.

We recommend more provision for seating. We recommend a feasibility study into a café which is designed with sustainability and careful respect for wildlife at its centre (the full extent of this was outside the remit of this consultation).

### 8.2.3 Safety

In response to the survey question ‘would you like to see more safety precautions in the form of neighbourhood patrols, CCTV and lighting introduced?’, 45% of respondents would like more and 48% think what is already there is about right. 11% of survey respondents state fear of crime as a barrier to access.

In the interviews and workshops, we examined in more detail visitor’s feelings of safety and security. Our respondents flagged drug sales and drug use, prostitution and sexual activity, smuggling items into the prison over the wall, gang activities and violent crimes as occurrences they had been victim to, witnessed or they had seen the aftermath of, as being things that alarmed them. These include: blood splatters and hair on a path after a violent crime, finding condoms, needles, a gun and knives in the bushes, and two people who had directly witnessed people on mopeds throwing items over the prison wall, one of whom was running a workshop for children at the time. People avoid certain areas of the ‘Scrubs which are associated with crime and antisocial behaviour, and the vast majority of people we spoke to avoid going after dark.

#### Litter and detritus

The litter, detritus and excrement (both dog and human) was a concern for many interviewees and workshop participants; referred to in the context of safety. We therefore surmise, that the unkempt state of the ‘Scrubs is a barrier to people feeling safe. As one participant suggests “manage it with a bit more love than it has been over the last few years, or even the last decade”. It follows that a more active plan for the removal of litter would benefit people by feeling safer and would have the additional benefit to wildlife.

We recommend a more active maintenance plan that includes litter removal.



### Lighting and CCTV

Regarding CCTV and lighting, there was a broad consensus among our interview and workshop participants that lights and CCTV would not be a welcome solution to the issue of safety and crime. Lighting was seen as impinging too much on wildlife, as one amateur ecologist describes:

**“the more lighting you have, the less it becomes a natural place because you know things like bats can’t handle too much lighting everywhere; it stops everything.”**

A workshop participant notes:

**“I understand you need to protect wildlife, but for me, a child’s life experiences are more important. If it means a child never goes on the ‘Scrubs and spends all their time on the computer inside because his mum doesn’t feel it’s safe – then I’d rather there was some lighting. Not everywhere. Not in the designated nature areas. I don’t know that much about biodiversity but why can’t they have better safety around the areas children play?”**

As this participant observes, there is perhaps a balance which can be found around lighting certain areas at certain times to enable more people to feel safer, while at the same time maintaining dark areas for wildlife.

We recommend working with ecology experts and specific users (parents of young children who use the playpark) to determine a level of lighting in some areas that means people feel safe while not having an adverse effect on wildlife.

### Dogs

Dog walking, dogs off the lead and uncontrolled dogs were issues that came up in the interviews and the workshops. Only 2% of survey respondents cited fear of animals as a barrier to using the ‘Scrubs. However, textual data from the survey, and data from interviews and workshops suggest a more complex picture.

One interviewee, who stressed that they are not fearful of dogs per se, describes the tensions as concerning:

**“the proliferation of dog walkers, and lack of dog control is a real issue. Growing levels of dog fouling, animals out of control and off leash, running up to people who might be afraid, also chasing around the meadow and hedge areas disturbing wildlife.”**

Although not directly connected to human safety, the issue of safety for wildlife and biodiversity in relation to dogs was also noted. One respondent said that they would:

**“like to see more community commitment to persuading dog walkers not to let their dogs trample in wildlife protected areas”**

To summarise our interview and workshop data as well as the text data from the surveys, it was not the presence of dogs on the ‘Scrubs in itself that was seen as an issue.

People were concerned about the amount of dogs, the fact that many are off the lead, and dogs that are either poorly controlled or encouraged to be aggressive. There was particular reference to professional dogwalkers who use the ‘Scrubs to exercise groups of dogs, often joining other dogwalkers thus forming even larger packs of dogs. Although there are regulations and licencing requirements for dog walkers, respondents report that the regulations are not adhered to. The amount of dog faeces on the ‘Scrubs was also noted.

Dog owners and walkers also raised concerns for the safety of their dogs in light of reports of poison being put down to harm dogs on the ‘Scrubs.

The presence of large numbers of dogs, and poorly controlled dogs is more likely to be a barrier to people with children, the elderly, people who are scared of or have had bad experiences of dogs, and people who culturally do not regard dogs as ‘pets’ and

might find being in the presence of large numbers of dogs unsettling.

Suggestions from respondents to address these issues keeping professional dog walkers to restricted areas, making the current ‘no dog’ zones larger and potentially introducing more, especially around the children’s play park and areas set aside for biodiversity habitats.

We recommend looking at extending the current provision of both dog specific zones as well as dog free zones. While the restrictions on dog walkers appear adequate, making sure that people adhere to the rules is something that needs addressing.

### Crime

The issue of personal safety is a societal one; this again affects certain groups disproportionately, often women and girls and BAME people Urban wildspaces and parks are known for being unsafe for certain groups after dark; and Wormwood Scrubs is no exception. Yet early in 2022, a man picked up a woman from Islington on the other side of London and drove her all the way to Wormwood Scrubs to rape her. This tragic story makes us reflect upon the appeal of the ‘Scrubs as a venue to commit crime.

Participants noted particular areas known for being crime hotspots as being the prison wall and the wooded areas at the north west side of the ‘Scrubs. Many people cited the proliferation of litter, and the detritus associated with evidence of crimes and anti-social behaviour to be factors in their feelings of safety within the ‘Scrubs. Improvements to accessibility, better security around the prison wall, addressing the antisocial behaviours that regularly take place in the ‘Scrubs would all add to feelings of security among visitors. Interview data suggestions include security wardens to patrol crime hotspots, and emergency phones. By making the site more welcoming and accessible to diverse groups, more people with different needs will come and we surmise that this will have a positive overall effect on safety, belonging and feelings of safety.

We recommend that more provision needs to be ringfenced for the safety of visitors to the ‘Scrubs. This is likely to include further consultation with more vulnerable user groups; young people, BAME people and women and girls who feel their safety is particularly threatened. This should be done in partnership with the local police.

### 8.2.4 Access and orientation

When asked about what people thought about the level of car parking and cycle storage, 60% said that what is there is about right, and 30% would like more. During interviews, a number of people brought up the issue of getting into and out of the ‘Scrubs. It is bounded by the north and east by railways, and to the south there are the Linford Christie stadium, a series of schools, Hammersmith and Queen Charlotte’s and Chelsea Hospital and Wormwood Scrubs prison. While there are entrances (taken to mean a place to enter and leave) between these institutions, one consultation respondent described the state of access between the hospital and the prison as “poor, but the carpark and appearance of the stadium are much worse and need work”.

Some participants cited access needs – health conditions and physical challenges – which means they currently have to drive to the ‘Scrubs if they want to visit. One consultation participant said:

**“I have a health issue and live too far away to walk to the Scrubs so even though it’s not far I have to drive... Parks shouldn’t just be a space for fit people. I’ve paid the same taxes as them all my life.”**

We recommend that more needs to be done to improve safe access to the ‘Scrubs. This is likely to include feasibility studies into improvements at different sites, especially as housing capacity increases with new planned developments. Improved provision for people with access issues will benefit those with mobility issues, and increasing cycle parking will enable more visitors to visit the ‘Scrubs using low carbon transport.

## Orientation

Once in the 'Scrubs, there is little in the way of orientation signage. The 'Scrubs features few information boards and signposting. This is a particular barrier to new users of the 'Scrubs; people who are new to using outdoor spaces; people who are topographically agnostic/disoriented (people who get lost easily); people of differing neurotypes; and people without smart phones for easy access to maps. London A-Zs don't really work for orientating around the 'Scrubs and ordinance maps are a specialist tool used more for countryside hiking.

As one participant noted:

**"It's quite challenging if you're new to it. First you have to find your way in. And then it's like, OMG how do I get out?...none of us want to make it manicured. But I do feel like it's one or two notches too far on the spectrum of being very difficult and challenging for newcomers."**

We have covered signage for biodiversity information previously in this summary. Adding simple orientation way markers to any additional signage would improve the experience for visitors. Having clear exits would also add to feelings of safety.

We recommend adding in orientation to the signage recommended earlier in this report.

### 8.2.5 Maintenance

When asked what barriers prevented them from accessing the 'Scrubs 6.4% said it was too muddy and 3.4% said it was because of litter/dirt. Flooding in the winter was also cited as a reason to prevent effective access to the 'Scrubs due to waterlogged areas and how muddy the site consequently gets. One survey respondent said, "The only times I don't go to the 'Scrubs is when it gets very muddy in the winter."

The issue of 'mud' and natural spaces being described as 'too muddy' can be divisive. However this is to forget practical issues many local residents have such as no access to outside taps to wash shoes and clothing; limited indoor space for washing/drying/storing shoes and clothing; no outside space for drying clothing/shoes; may not have access to appropriate clothing and shoes in colder/wetter months; and may not have multiple sets of clothing and shoes to enable them and their family to get things covered in mud or soaking wet – therefore keeping items clean and dry becomes extremely important.

Some practical features which could be added at designated entrances to aid residents who have limited sink and outdoor space access include boot scrapers/brushes and outdoor taps which switch off automatically after a designated period of time.

The issue of maintenance more broadly was brought up by a number of interviewees. There was a concern that the 'Scrubs was not being adequately maintained, and that there were not enough resources being put into the upkeep of the 'Scrubs.

Regardless of the type of planting, habitats and features of the 'Scrubs, multiple respondents raised concerns that if changes were made, but there were not the resources to upkeep them, then they would decay. On the subject of paths, one interviewee notes "all of this is pie in the sky if there's no long-term funding for maintenance. Forget anything if there's not a guarantee of 30 year funding for maintenance. Forget it. It's meaningless to put new things on here if there's no maintenance". This is echoed by another who says of a wetland area: "it's all well putting it in, but if there's no management it's a waste of time. It would only encourage people to dump their scooters and shopping trolleys in it..".

We recommend a more proactive, well resourced approach to the maintenance of the 'Scrubs.

## 8.3 Inclusion & Representation in the decision-making process

In order for access to the Scrubs to be fair and equitable, who gets to take part in the decision making processes needs to be representative of the users and local residents. An important element of 'access' is whether local people feel represented, included and fairly involved with the Scrubs – not just as users but as decision makers.

The consultation identified barriers of representation, inclusion and power imbalances mainly felt by local working-class residents living in social housing in close proximity to the Scrubs.

We, therefore, recommend that more needs to be done to include different voices in the decision-making process. This could be in the form of seats on the WWSCT held for those with 'lived experience' of the area, perhaps an alteration to voting rights, or a push for more diversity within the Friends Of Wormwood Scrubs group. We recommend if the latter is

chosen as a way forward, that the existing members of FOWWS undertake Anti-Racism, Allyship and Diversity & Inclusion training (please note these are not the same thing), and develop policies and practices around these critical topics prior to recruiting drive aimed at more diverse members.

Potentially a new temporary group could be formed with the sole remit of overseeing and developing changes on the Scrubs. This group could be comprised of FOWWS members, members of the general public and other stake holder groups identified by this consultation. This group we recommend visits other wild sites across London to see the varying inspiring and creative ways a balance has been struck between the needs of biodiversity and humans. To ensure equality of access members of this group should be compensated for their time.

Ideally it will be a combination of different approaches which will work together in a coherent plan to make this brilliant site the best it can be and to enable local people to speak up and work together to look after their local area.



## Chapter 9. Conclusions and closing comments

**In this report we have described London Development Trust's consultation on Wormwood Scrubs, commissioned by the London Borough of Hammersmith & Fulham. Our aim was to gather the views of local stakeholders, both existing and potential users of the 'Scrubs in order for this document to complement the Biodiversity Masterplan for the 'Scrubs by giving an illustration of how people use – and hope to use – the 'Scrubs in the past, present and future.**

There are many diverse opinions from many diverse groups of users, and a healthy amount of diversity within – not just between – stakeholder groups. This spectrum of opinions should be a cause for celebration; it demonstrates the broad range of ways that different people use and value this unique place. We made every effort to be as inclusive as possible and hear from as many diverse voices as we could, particularly those living in the immediate vicinity of the 'Scrubs. We used a variety of methods to engage with different people with different interests and collated these together into what we believe is a comprehensive critical analysis of local use of the 'Scrubs. This, of course is a timely document – it is a snapshot of how people view the 'Scrubs during the period of Spring to Summer 2022.

This has been a fascinating and engaging project for London Development Trust, and we would like to thank London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham for the opportunity to develop this consultation and this report.

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**Hammersmith & Fulham Council Population Profile**

**Population Profile Adapted to LDT Age Bands**

**LDT Consultation Data**

Age Range	Male	Female	Total (%)		Total (%)	Age Range
0-4	3	3	6		No data	No data
5-9	3	3	6		No data	No data
10-14	2	2	4		No data	No data
15-19	2	2	4	12	3.8	16-25
20-24	4	4	8			
25-29	6	6	12	23	10.4	26-35
30-34	6	5	11			
35-39	5	4	9	17	14.9	36-45
40-44	4	4	8			
45-49	3	4	7	13	28.7	46-55
50-54	3	3	6			
55-59	2	2	4	8	26.5	56-65
60-64	2	2	4			
65-69	2	2	4	6	10.4	66-75
70-74	1	1	2			
75-79	1	1	2	5	5.2	76+
80-84	1	1	2			
85-89	0.5	0.5	1			
90+	.	.	.			

Table: A comparison of age of the whole population (H&F Borough Council data) and sample (LDT consultation data)

**Hammersmith & Fulham Council Population Profile**

**LDT Data Adapted To Fit Categories of H&F\***

**LDT Consultation Data**

Official Ethnicity frame	%	%	%	Our Ethnicity frame
White British	44.9	59.5	59.5	White British
White Irish	3.5	5.9	5.7	White Irish
			0.2	White Irish Traveller
White Other	19.7	15.2	15.2	White Other
Black/Black British	11.8	4	0.7	Black/Black British - African
			2.4	Black/Black British - Caribbean
			0.9	Black/Black British - Other
Asian/Asian British	9.1	2.4	1.2	Asian/Asian British - Indian
			0	Asian/Asian British - Bangladeshi
			0.5	Asian/Asian British - Chinese
			0	Asian/Asian British - Pakistani
			0.7	Asian/Asian British - Other
Mixed	5.5	9.1	2.4	White and Black Caribbean (mixed)
			2.4	White and Asian (mixed)
			0.5	White and Black African (mixed)
			3.8	Other (mixed)
Other	5.5	4.1	0.5	Arab
			3.8	Other

Table: A comparison of ethnicity of the whole population (H&F Borough Council data) and sample (LDT consultation data)

\*LDT's consultation survey collected more detailed data on ethnicity than what LBHF collects. In order to be able to compare the data we needed to collapse LDT's more detailed data into H&F's ethnicity categories.



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