

Section 7: Conclusions

We have consulted with people face to face and online through questionnaires, as well as with a wide range of special interest groups in order to determine how the Princethorpe Woodlands Living Landscape project can best engage with people in the future.

The audiences for the community consultation events varied depending on location and venue. Workshops held in villages such as Brinklow, Ryton on Dunsmore and Weston under Wetherley generally attracted people who were, to a greater or lesser extent, engaged with their local countryside, either as Warwickshire Wildlife Trust members, volunteers or countryside walkers, horse riders, cyclists etc. These events were helpful in revealing the issues people felt strongly about and in building further support for the project.

The main issues emerging were: **the need to improve footpaths; clearer signage to give walkers confidence; need for information about what to do and where to go; the need for education on how better to use the countryside, particularly for new users; the need to strongly engage local people in the project, particularly younger people; the importance of events in engaging people and, in the southern part of the project area, concerns about the effects of HS2 on communities and the countryside.** Participants in the workshops from Brinklow, Ryton and Baginton in particular were keen that local heritage became better known and celebrated.

Discussions at the events in the more urban areas of Lillington in Leamington and Willenhall and Binley in Coventry tended to **focus on the difficulties people faced in making use of their local countryside** through such reasons as lack of a car or other means of getting out there, cost or a disability. People wanted to be certain where they were allowed to walk and advance information about where they were able to go would be helpful.

At the community cafe in Lillington in particular, which was attended by a number of people with disabilities, people thought that the countryside was great but difficult, if not impossible, to get to. On a positive note, **an eagerness for organised trips was voiced and more information with leaflets and events were required.**

Additional community consultation in Willenhall also highlighted the major barrier of transport to local people being able to access any of the wider Princethorpe Woodlands Living Landscape area despite interest in many of the activities suggested. This was backed up by consultation with local organisations who cited **cost, lack of information, lack of planning time and transport** as constraints to accessing the area. Limited use is made of Willenhall Wood, due either to age, disability, or perceptions of safety. Some Willenhall residents were concerned about a blocked underpass under the A46 and the consequent difficulty of reaching countryside areas. The A46 Coventry Bypass forms a significant physical and psychological barrier to people from the eastern edges of the city wishing to access their local countryside from home. **Engagement with people in Willenhall is therefore best done in partnership with Willenhall groups and organisations either in Willenhall or through an organised activity with transport provided and this should be included within the delivery phase.** The blocked underpass is considered in more detail in the Princethorpe Woodlands Living Landscape Access Report with recommendations as to how best to address the issue.

We also surveyed people using a questionnaire. Only 36% of respondents visited monthly or more frequently, 50% of people visiting to go for a walk, although 58% of people travelled to the area by car. Coombe Country Park, Ryton Pools Country Park, Brandon Marsh Nature Centre and Ryton Wood were the most popular destinations. Thirty five per cent of people visited with a family group, 28% of people visited with friends and 25% visited on their own. Only 9% of people visited as part of an organised group.

Events and activities were popular with all of the people and groups, the most popular events and activities being:

woodland crafts, local history, archaeology events, family events, children's activities, wooden sculpture trails, historical re-enactments, tree climbing, local geology sessions, outdoor survival skills, guided walks, outdoor activities, land art, carrying out wildlife surveys, practical conservation work, species identification, bat walks, coppicing courses, geocaching

These events and activities should therefore be included in the delivery phase of the project.

All of the **education sessions** carried out with local schools were very popular with both staff and children and so **should be incorporated into the delivery plans for the project**. Cost and transport were again issues so **outreach sessions** where delivery staff go into the schools would be preferable, whereas transport costs to sites such as Coombe Country Park or Brandon Marsh Nature Centre may need to be **subsidised** in order to get schools from some of the more deprived areas engaged.

It is clear that both young people and youth workers enjoyed the activities on offer and so **a range of activities for young people should be incorporated into the delivery plans for the project**. Activities should be delivered in conjunction with youth organisations in order to engage a wider and greater number of young people. Where possible sessions should be **outreach or transport provided or subsidised**. However one of the Wildplay sessions highlighted behavioural issues which need to be addressed with staff from the youth organisations before activities commence.

The historic environment practical sessions were also popular and so **similar activities should also be incorporated into the delivery phase**.

More than 30% of respondents to the questionnaire were interested in learning new skills relating to history and archaeology, wildlife surveying and heritage crafts such as charcoal making and coppicing. This was supported by the charcoal making, coppicing and grassland verge surveying and historic environment sessions delivered this spring. **All of these training sessions should therefore be incorporated into the delivery phase**.

There were a number of issues relating to access raised during the community consultation, consultation with parish councillors, the questionnaires, Warwickshire Wildlife Trust members survey and Historic Environment consultation. These issues included the need for parking and easy

access stiles and mobility scooter routes for older, less mobile visitors, improving the quality of footpaths and signage, improving access at key historic sites, improving cycleways and running routes. The many busy main roads across the Princethorpe Woodlands Living Landscape area act as barriers to access to many of the sites including access to Ryton Pools Country Park and Ryton Wood from Bubbenhall and access to Coombe Country Park by foot. Access is considered in detail in the Princethorpe Woodlands Living Landscape Access Report but **improving access to woodlands from settlements is important and should be included within the delivery phase.**

There were also a number of issues relating to information and interpretation raised during the consultation. When we asked people who had not visited the area why, they replied that it was mainly down to lack of information about the area and what there was to do there. Information and interpretation was raised with all of the individuals and groups that we consulted with and is discussed in more detail in the Princethorpe Woodlands Living Landscape Interpretation Report. **Improving information and interpretation will be a key part of encouraging people to discover the Princethorpe Woodlands Living Landscape area and should be included within the delivery phase. The preferred method of communication varied according to the different groups questioned, but it is clear that both digital and print communications are needed, and whilst downloadable digital information is important to some, then traditional interpretation boards are still used by a large majority of visitors.**

We also carried out site specific surveys at Brandon Marsh Nature Centre, Coombe Country Park and Ryton Pools Country Park and the key findings from these will be used to inform the activity plan.

Warwickshire Wildlife Trust members also felt that the following was most important: Species and habitat protection (85%), improving management on existing reserves (62%), helping people to enjoy nature (59%) and working with farmers and landowners to promote wildlife friendly land management (81%). **All of these key areas should therefore be addressed within the work detailed for the delivery phase of the project.**