Friends in Green Places

Empowering communities through Friends of Parks groups

Data Output Report

This Data Output report accompanies the Final report published by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government.

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Introduction

This Report is part of a project commissioned by the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government at the behest of the Parks Working Group – the green space sector body tasked with liaising with Government to address key green space issues and challenges. This project aimed to better understand how community empowerment and involvement in green spaces is being achieved by the thousands of Friends of Parks and Community Groups in the UK (henceforth referred to as “Friends Groups”) and explore how the Friends Groups movement can be better supported and developed. To do this, the National Federation of Parks and Green Spaces **(**the umbrella organisation that co-ordinates the Friends Groups movement across the UK) in partnership with the University of Sheffield conducted two online surveys between November 14th and December 7th 2025.

The first survey was for greenspace community groups - Friends Groups or their equivalent - who were invited to answer questions about their group, site, activities and needs. **938 Friends Groups responded.** This constitutes around 13% of the 7,000 UK Friends Groups, making this the largest survey of Friends Groups ever carried out. The second survey was for Area Forums - a local network or Forum which brings together Friends Groups in a given geographic area (usually a Local Authority area). They were invited to answer questions about their Forum, organisation, activities and needs. **28 Area Forums responded.** This constitutes around 40% of the 70 or so Area Forums in the UK. Those 28 Forums represent over 2,000 Friends Groups.

We set out a presentation of the full and collated responses to all survey questions, including some relevant extracts from the open ‘comments’ submitted by respondents. All comments have been anonymised to remove any site or group identification. This is in line with the project approval secured from the University of Sheffield’s School of Architecture and Landscape Ethics Committee before data collection and analysis was conducted. This Data Output Report is published as reference material accompanying the Final report which provides analysis, disucssion and wider context.

Some responses to questions add up to more than 100% due to them containing ‘tick all that apply’ options. The wording of the sections below reflects the verbatim survey questions. We hope that Friends Groups and Area Forums will use and share the data in this report and therefore provide tables and charts in a legible format.

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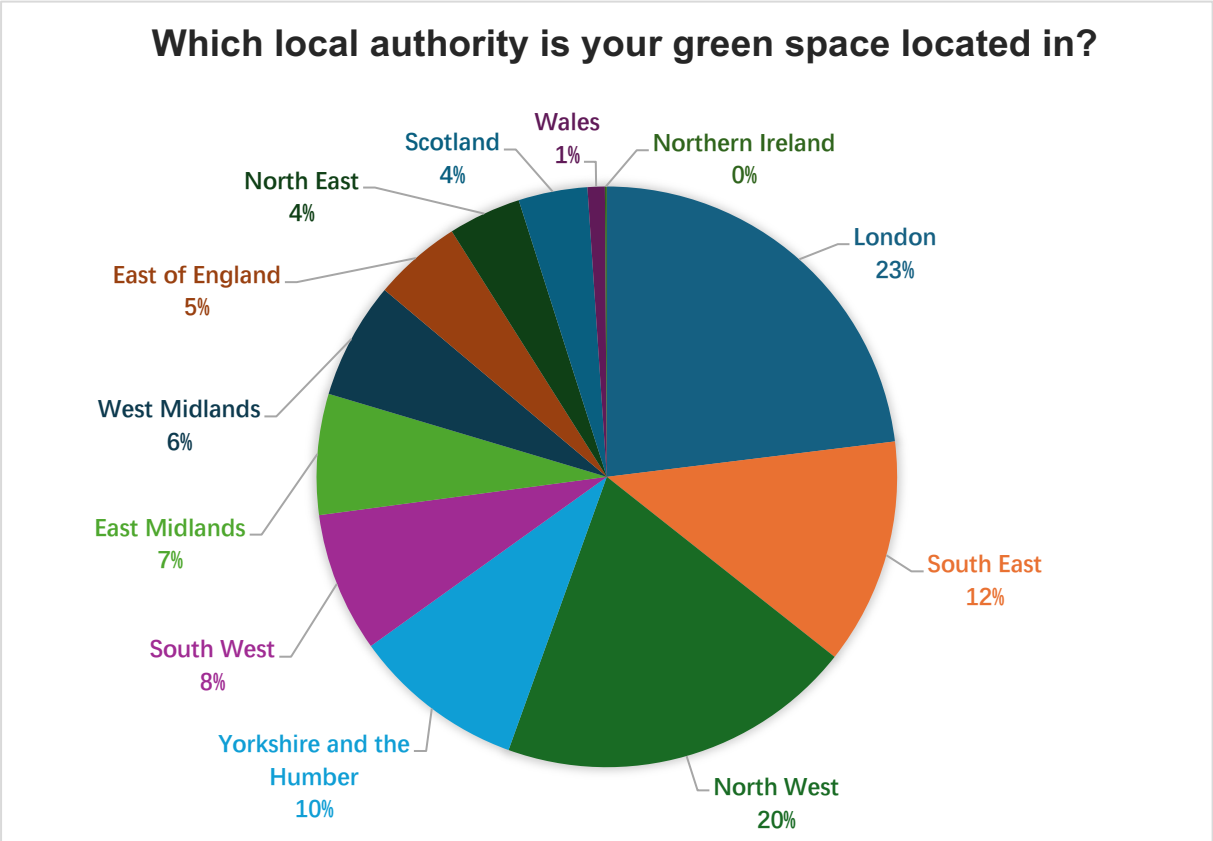
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42.Are you aware of Parks Community UK resources (created by and for Friends Groups)? See https://parkscommunity.org.uk/ 106
45.Does your Forum currently seek specialist online advice and guidance from any other source? 106
46.If yes, please provide the details. 106

SURVEY ONE. FRIENDS GROUPS.

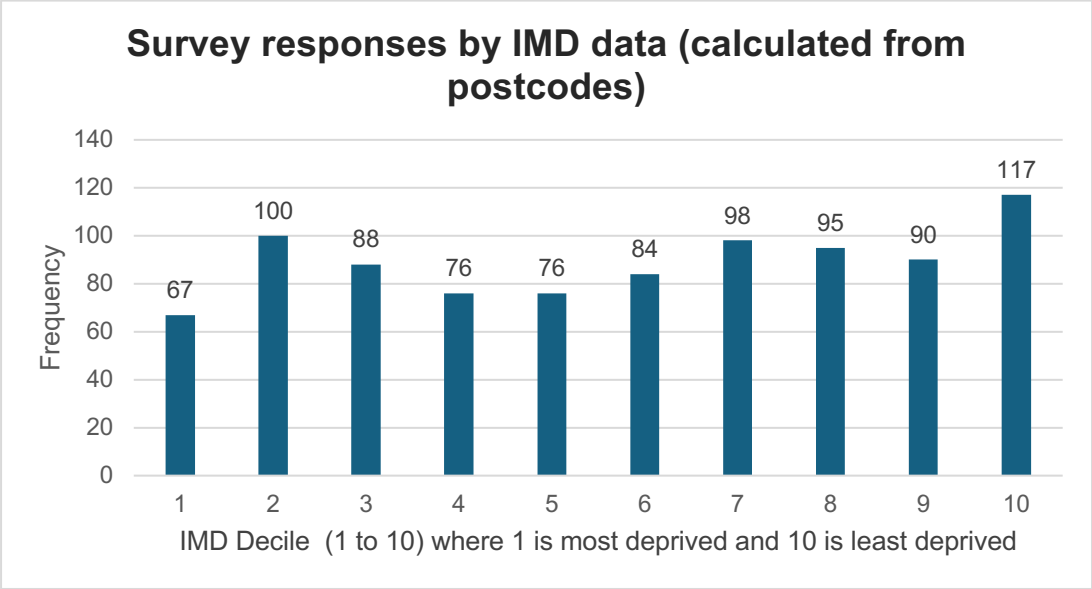
Context about your site and group

Q4. Which local authority is your green space located in?[1]



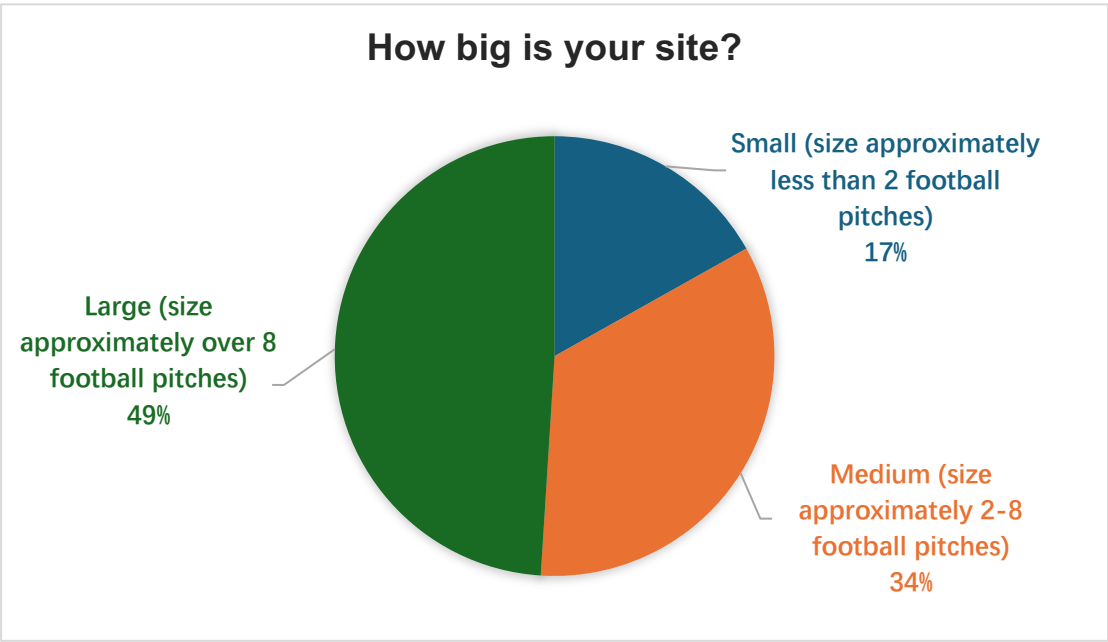
[1]Q1-3 ask 'What is the Name of your Group?', 'Your role in group' and 'What is the name of your green space?'. The results of these questions are not reported here for reasons of anonymity.

Q5. Please provide a full postcode of your green space (or a postcode nearby).



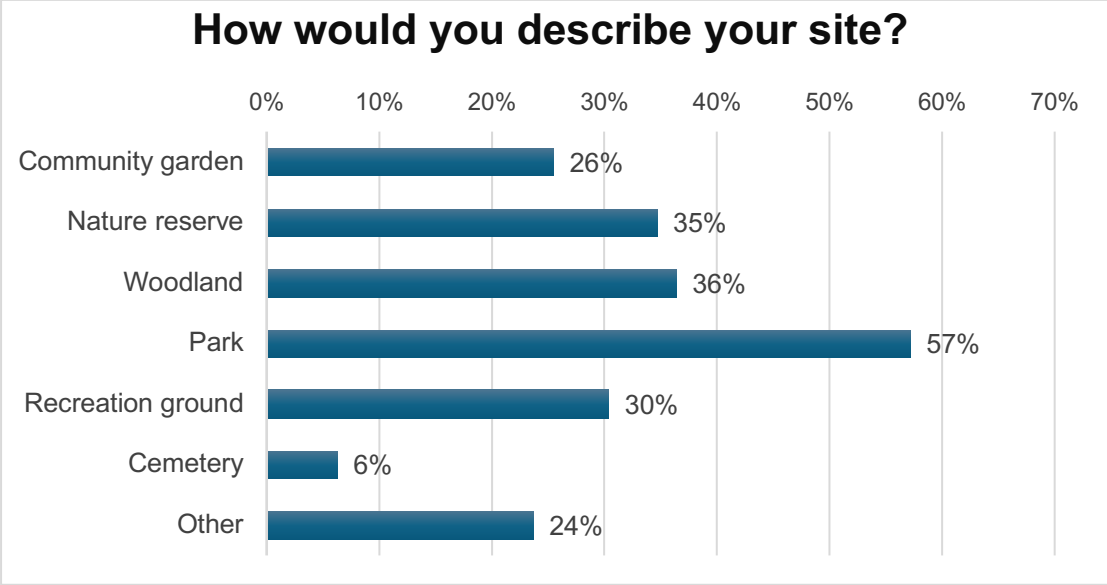
Q6. How big is your site?

Small (size approximately less than 2 football pitches)
Medium (size approximately 2-8 football pitches)
Large (size approximately over 8 football pitches)



Q7. How would you describe your site*? Tick all that apply.

*If you look after more than one site, please focus on what you consider to be your main site.



Categories for Q7 (Other)

1) Historic/heritage sites (n ≈ 30)
Historic parks and landscapes; ruins and scheduled monuments; medieval / Edwardian features.
Examples:
"Monastic ruin"
"Ancient Iron Age hillfort"
"Scheduled Ancient Monument"
"Medieval moat and historic gardens with listed structures"
"120-year-old Edwardian ornamental park"

2) Waterbodies and waterways (n ≈ 29)
Lakes/ponds/open brackish water; rivers/canals/riverside parks and paths.
Examples:
"Lake";
"Park/pond";
"Open brackish water;"
Riverside;
Canal verge;
"Thames riverside park";
"The Thames Path passes through the park"
"…a river and 6 millponds…"

3) Sports and recreation grounds (n ≈ 25)
Sports pitches and playing fields; bowling greens; skate parks; golf; mixed play.
Examples:
“Sports ground”;
“Playing field”;
“Bowling green”;
“various play grounds, sports facilities”
“Bowling green & playground”
“Skate park”;
“Golf course”.

4) Orchards (community/heritage) (n ≈ 19)
Examples:
“Community orchard”;
“Heritage orchard”;

5) Grassland/meadow types (n ≈ 16)
Covers a wide range of grass- and meadow-dominated sites:
Examples:
“Wildflower meadow and chalk banks for butterflies”
“Meadow, flood plain”
“Grassland”
“Chalk grassland surrounded by scrubby woodland.”

6) Residential / amenity greens (incl. pocket parks) (n ≈ 16)
Small public/amenity greens within estates or new developments; “green space.”
Examples:
“In between social housing but public space”
“Designated green space as part of a new housing development”
“Amenity land”;
“Pocket park”;
“Green space”

7) Commons and village greens (n ≈ 11)
Common land/commons; Village Green; Millennium Green.
Examples:
“Common land”;
“Village Green”;
“Millennium Green”.

8) Linear parks / corridors (n ≈ 7)
Linear parks, cycleway strips and former railway corridors.
Examples:
“250 hectares linear park of 4 km length.”

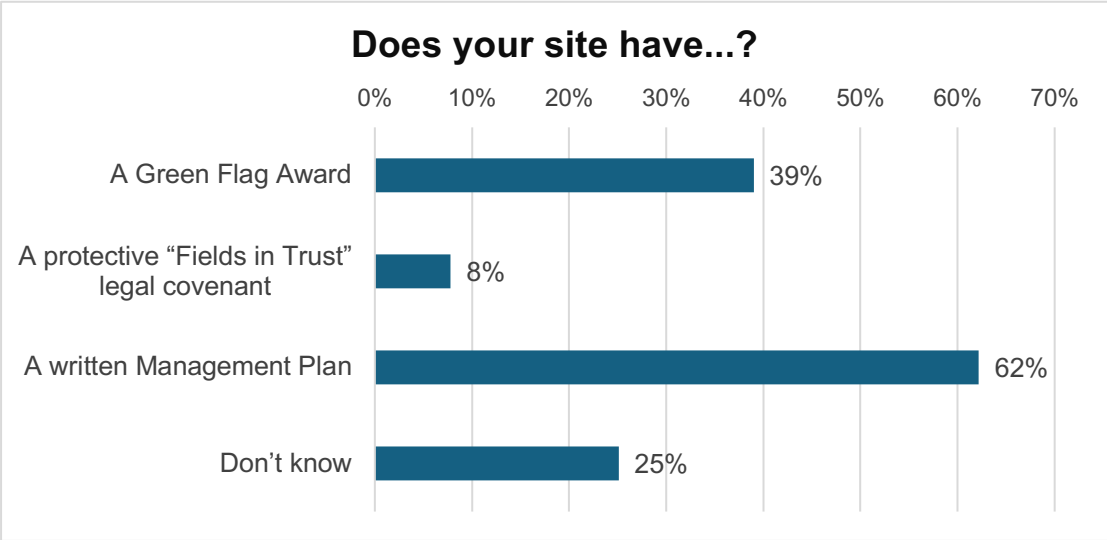
“Ex-railway line now footpath and cycleway”;
“Strips of land along cycleway.”

9) Specialist site types
Botanic / arboretum (n ≈ 5)
Moor / heath / AONB / SSSI escarpment (n ≈ 9)
Wildlife / education (n ≈ 9)
Memorial / faith (n ≈ 8)
Allotments and community food-growing spaces (n ≈ 9)
Country parks (n ≈ 6)

10) Other attributes
Facilities/uses: café, pedalo pool, rides, storage, apiary, Changing Places, food hub.
Designations/labels: SSSI, SAM, AONB, SINC, Forest School, Dementia Friendly, Green Belt, etc.
Status notes: *“Cemetery is disused”* etc.

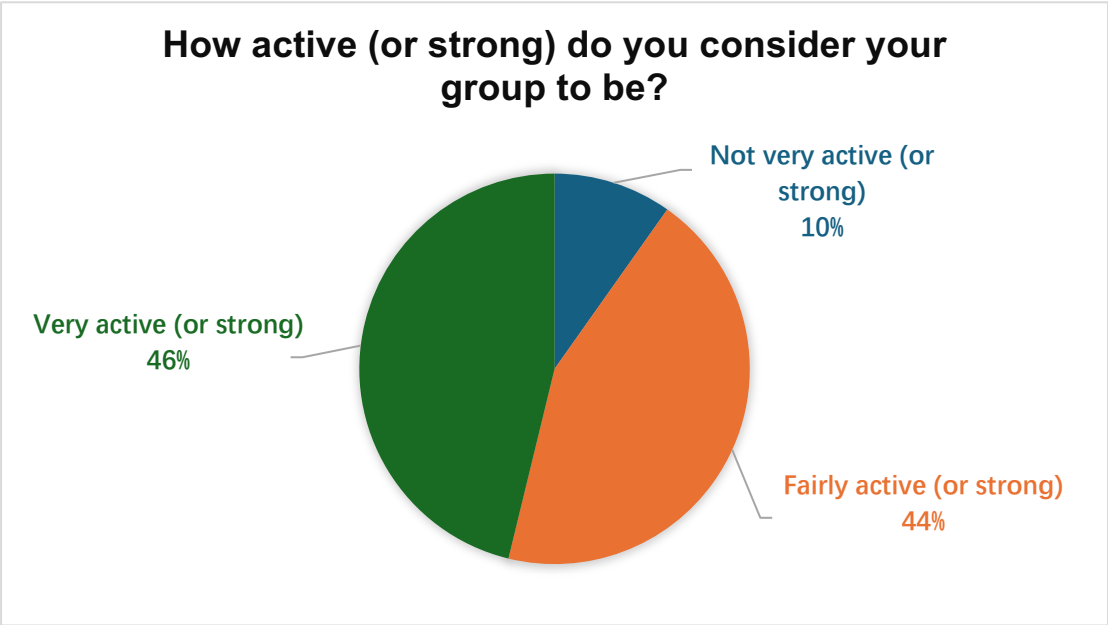
Q8. Does your site have... (tick all that apply)?

A Green Flag Award
A protective “Fields in Trust” legal covenant
A written Management Plan
Don’t know

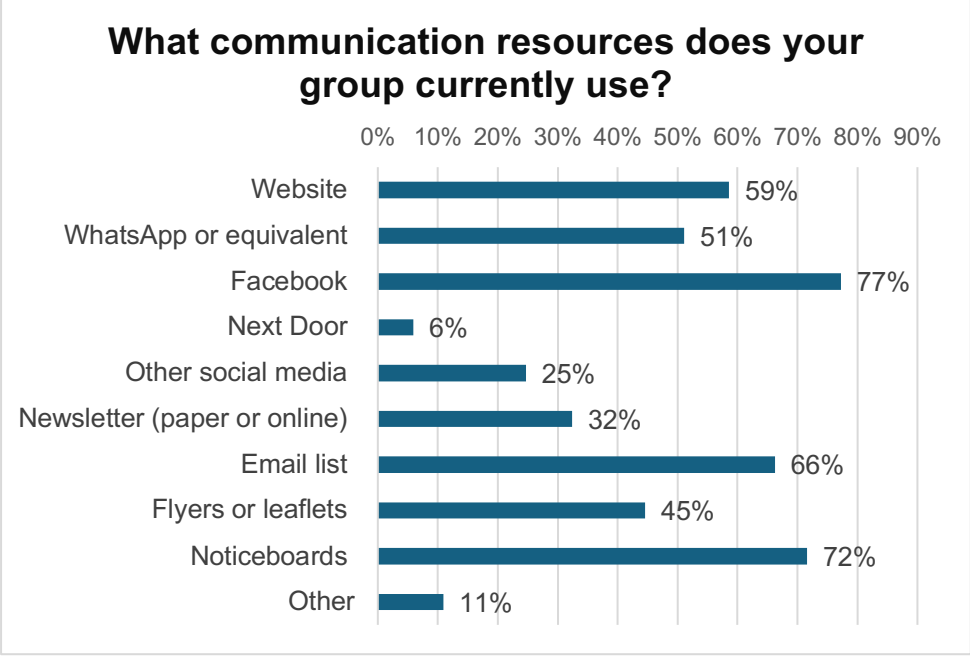


Q9. How active (or strong) do you consider your group to be?

Not very active (or strong)
Fairly active (or strong)
Very active (or strong)



Q10.What communication resources does your group currently use? Tick all that apply.

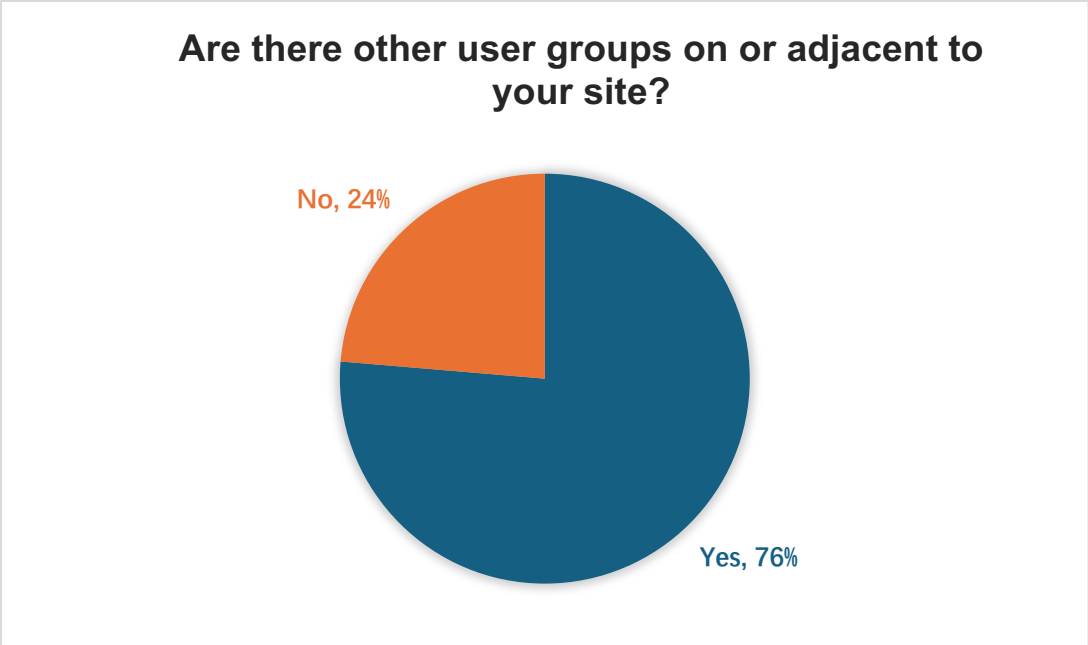


Categories for Q10_Other

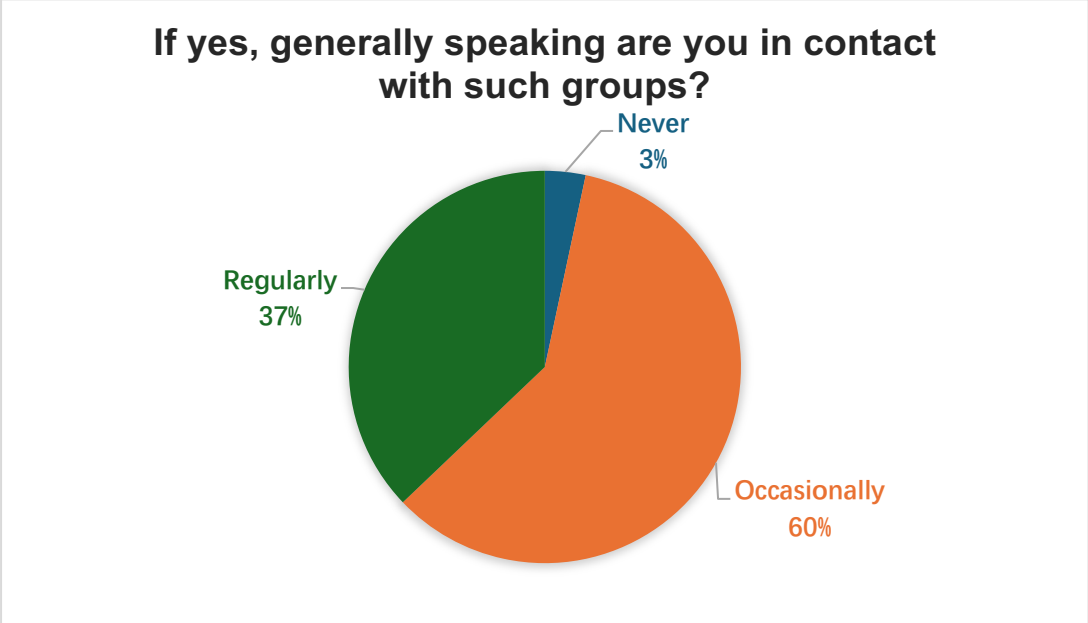
Category	Keywords	Examples
Supplement to option 'Website' (n≈8)	Event and volunteering platforms; APPs	*"Eventbrite";* *"MeetUp for twice weekly volunteer event organising";* *"Cannock Chase Can app";* *"TiCL"*
Supplement to option 'Other social media' (n≈15)		*Instagram; X; BlueSky; YouTube*
Supplement to option 'Newsletter' (n≈12)	Community or free newspapers, local print/online outlets, and press releases to raise profile.	*"Monthly article in local free magazine and press releases in local newspapers";* *"Local print and online media";* *"Press releases";* *"Monthly article in community newspaper";* *"letters to people who do not have email";* *"Local publications";* *"Local Quarterly Circular"*
Supplement to option 'Email list' (n≈2)		*"Mailchimp";* *"Local Quarterly Circular"*
Supplement to option 'Flyers or leaflets' (n≈10)	Posters, banners and notice holders	*"Banners";* *"Posts with posters throughout Parish";* *"War/Weatherproof holders in each cemetery"*
Word-of-mouth / personal contact / meetings and in-person touchpoints (n≈25)	Informal, face-to-face sharing at events, meetings or through existing networks.	*"Word of mouth, personal contact";* *"Word of mouth meetings";* *"Tenants and residents meetings";* *"meetings";* *"Meeting minutes";* *"Open mornings at park cafe and free events for children in our Woodland Garden";* *"Promotional stalls"*
Council and partner channels (n≈12)	City/borough council websites, bulletins and councillor newsletters; partner organisations' newsletters and social feeds.	*"City Council Website and Bulletins";* *"Council publish our events";* *"Promotion via councillor newsletters";* *"Town residents association";* *"Newsletters and social channels of aligned and partner local organisations"*
Schools and community networks (n≈4)		*"Local schools";* *"Networks with other Lewes environmental groups"*
Other channels (n≈4)		*"Part of a wider charity…";* *"A variety of quiz sheets";* *"Local radio"*
None / limited communication (n≈2)		*"none, just starting";* *"am committee member only"*

Working with other groups on your site

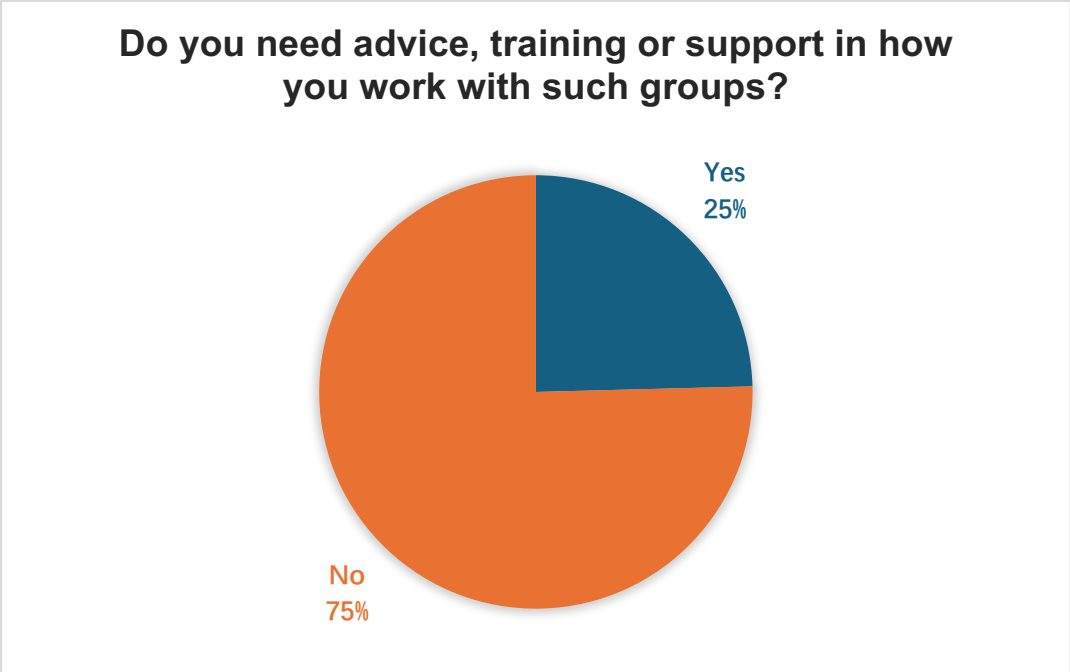
Q11.Are there other user groups on or adjacent to your site (e.g. sports team, walking group or school)?



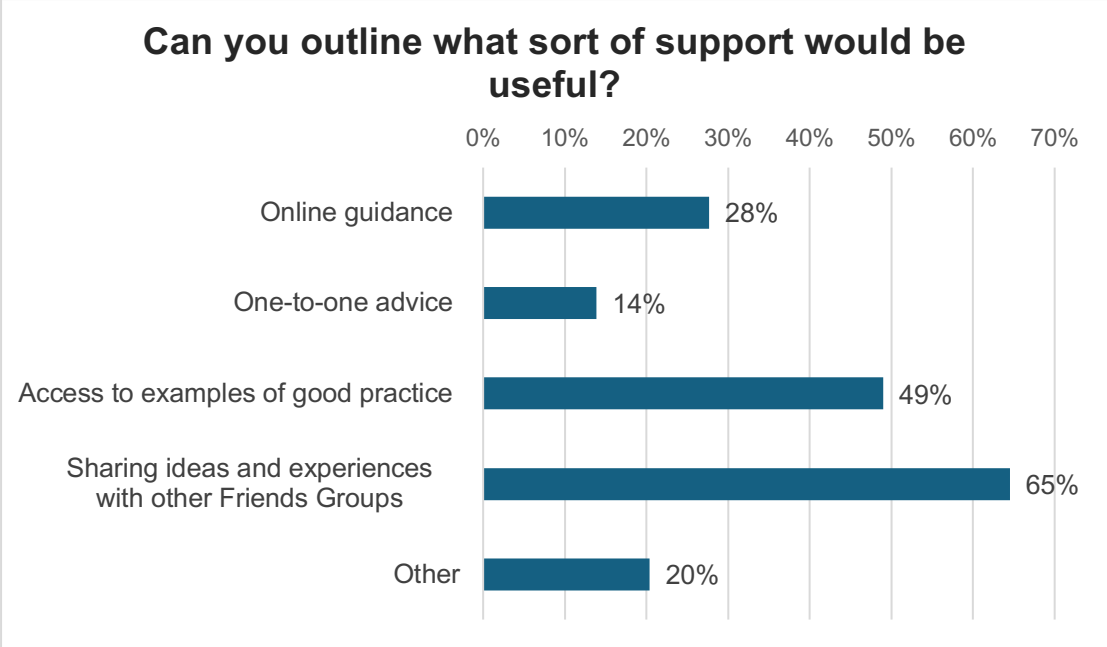
Q12. If yes, generally speaking are you in contact with such groups?



Q13. Do you need advice, training or support in how you work with such groups?



Q14. Can you outline what sort of support would be useful?



Categories for Q14_Other

1.Working with the council / landowner (n ≈ 12)

“Better organised council officers.”;
“Good communication with official park staff is useful.”

2.Funding and general financial support (n ≈ 12)

“Bid writing”;
“Funding”;
“Financial support for overheads”;
“Access to grants and people needed to enable our moat to be dredged”

3.Volunteer recruitment and retention (n ≈ 11)

“Recruitment of more volunteers.”;
“Help with recruitment and retention.”;
“Involve more people.”

4.Networking / peer links (n ≈ 10)

“Networking.”；

5. Training and capacity-building (n ≈ 7)

“safe-guarding training”
“Help with social media”

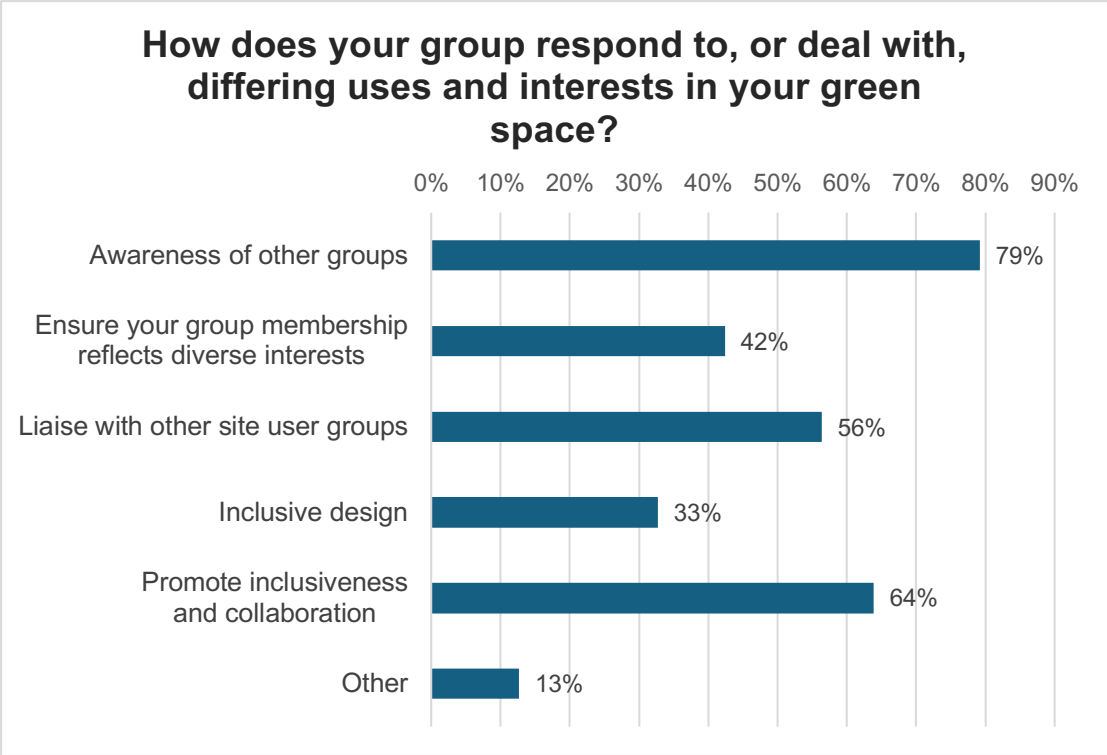
6. Legal and protection-related support (n ≈ 4)

“Legal advice to secure Asset of Community Value status and register paths as PROWs”

7.Sharing good practice

“We have been in membership with Council for Voluntary Services since we established and CVS. We receive outstanding support from them and they enabled us to get the Queens Voluntary Award for our group. We work in partnership with other groups all year round and are the umbrella organisation for Mental Health Hub”;
“For disability groups and neurodivergent groups, we work with Sensory Trust”;
“We link in to not parks federation and other local friends group as part of Green Umbrella (I am on committee) so are well linked.”
“We have a Forum for all users but it is little used due to inaction by owners”
“WE have been established since 2011 and have developed lots of contacts. I am not saying we couldn't learn more. I just can't think of any immediate training needs. Recently we have bene giving advice/training to newer groups.”
“We find good communication with official park's staff is useful.”

Q15. How does your group respond to, or deal with, differing uses and interests (e.g. dog walking / playing sports, bird watching / social gatherings) in your green space? Tick all that apply.

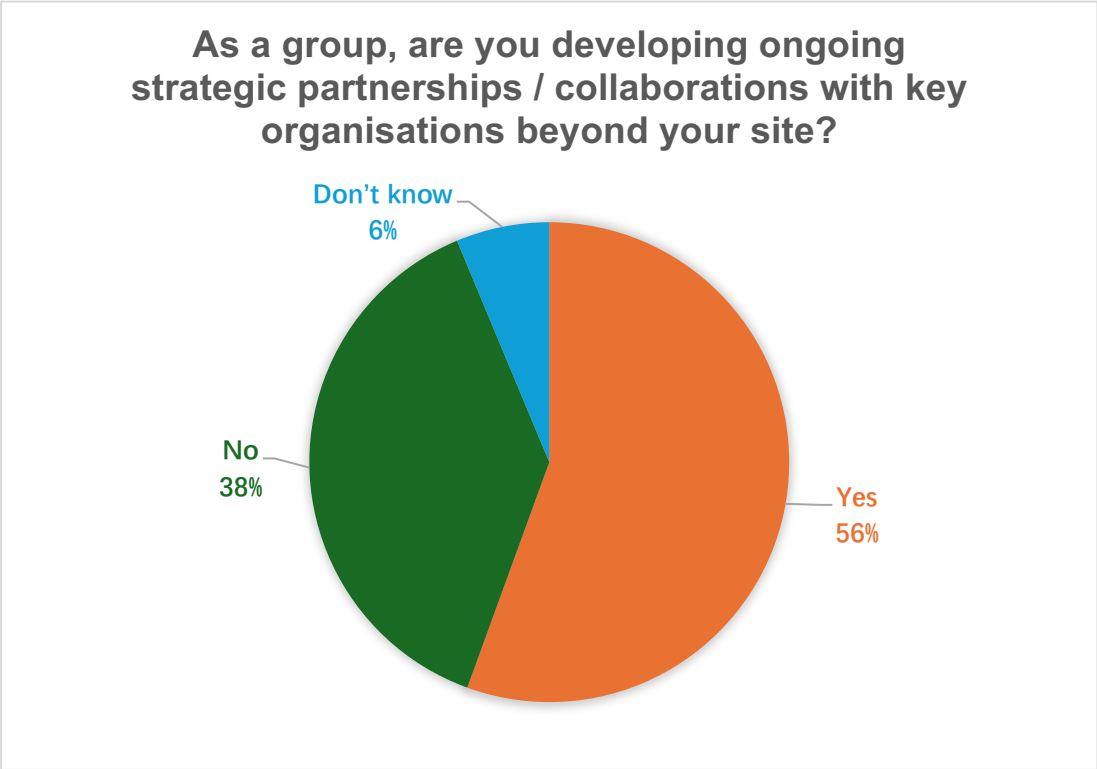


Categories for Q15_Other

Q15_Other Category	Example
Supplement to option 'Liaise with other site user groups' (n ≈ 22)	*"We have school groups, special needs groups…,"; "Liaison… with Swan Sanctuary."*
Supplement to option 'Inclusive design' (n ≈ 11)	*Emphasis on being open to all; ensuring the park "offers well-being."; "Using working parties to address site needs."*
Supplement to option 'Promote inclusiveness and collaboration' (n ≈ 10)	*"Standing invitations for our annual Apple Day event"; guided walks with partners; frequent events in the walled garden; ecology activities. "many events in our walled garde and ecology work in the park"*
Communication, consultation and meetings (n ≈ 17)	*"communicate 'why' decisions are made"; "Talking to users"; "Noticeboards. Open meetings. Consultations…,"; "Promote joining our mailing list through posters and press releases."; "surveys and member discussions"; "We work in partnership with all sectors all year round and listen to our service users needs by observing, as well as listening and by very varied ways of listening."*

Q15_Other Category	Example
Liaison with the council or other managers (n ≈ 9)	*"Liaison with Council officers";* *"Depending on what it was the local authority might take the lead.";* *"Other groups contact the Council, as landowner, directly if they wish to use the site.";* *"Bird life protection via liaison with Swan Sanctuary"*
Open-access / low-conflict, case-by-case or tolerant approaches (n ≈ 18)	*"Just open access";* *"Have a very flexible approach!";* *"live and let live";* *"negotiating use when needed"*
Dog-related management (n≈ 6)	*"Ensure dog walkers pick up dog faeces";* *"Dog walking can be quite separate and owners exclusively focus on the exercise their dogs require.";* *"Some dog walking professionals are members of the group"*
Not applicable / no interaction / new group / don't know (n ≈ 25)	*"Tend not to know who is using the site."* *"no contact";* *"not got that far"* *"We don't find a lot of conflict"* *"We are not involved with other groups"* *"Most of these are not appropriate in the Cemetery"*

Q16. As a group, are you developing ongoing strategic partnerships / collaborations with key organisations beyond your site? e.g. citywide disability alliance, heritage network or faith organisations.



Q17. If yes, please give examples.

Category 1	Category 2	Example
Local authority and local networks	**Other Friends Groups / Forums / green-space networks / umbrella bodies (n≈95)**	*"Monthly community meetings in local church with other groups";* *"We are an active part of our Friends of Parks Forum. We invite other organisations in the park and in the wider area to participate in our community events and consultations e.g. cycling organisations and growing/gardening organisations"* *"We collaborate and work closely with… other local greenspaces groups (via our umbrella group)…"*
	Local authority / councils (n≈80)	*"…Strong relationship with council Ecology team as well as park team";* *"Working with County Council… Borough Council";* *"We have regular contact with council officers from several departments."*
	Faith organisations & places of worship (n≈60)	*"Encouraging local churches to increase their use of the space for open air services; encouraging the school to make more use of the recreation ground (they currently use it for PE lessons and Sports Day)";* *"We do lots of collaborations with the local church."*
	Parish / town / community associations (n≈30)	*"Meads Community Association";* *"Local community forum";* *"Community Works."*
	Sports and recreation clubs / leagues (n≈30)	*"WORK CLOSELY WITH THE LOCAL BOWLS CLUB AND RUGBY CLUB";* *"local petanque league";* *"Parkrun."*
	Businesses, corporate CSR & sponsorship (n≈20)	*"Local businesses for paid corporate volunteering";* *"Corporate Sponsorship & Partnership events";* *"Using local commercial development funds to sponsor Green Area improvements."*
	Housing associations / landowners (n≈10)	*"Onward (housing association)";* *"W Homes (landowner)";* *"Trying to develop a relationship with Jigsaw Homes."*
Education bodies (Schools, colleges and universities)	**Schools / youth schemes, Scouts / Guides, DofE etc (n≈80)**	*"We support local schools with environmental education including a local Jewish Girls school.";* *"Working with local schools and faith groups";* *"Local schools – raising environmental awareness.";* *"Duke of Edinburgh scheme";* *"local scout groups";* *"Youth groups."*
	Colleges, universities (n≈20)	*"collaborations with Imperial College to design nature-connected communications for different user groups…";* *"University Guild of Students(Community Wardens)";* *"Working with city council and both universities to develop farm to fork toolkit in schools and on the moving and eating for good health strategy";* *"universities including QMUL for scientific research…"*
Nature, culture and heritage organisations	**Wildlife trusts / nature & conservation NGOs (n≈70)**	*"Working with wild life, mole river watch and our local authority";* *"We have a good working relationship with Nature New Mills to safeguard biodiversity interests within the Orchard as well as the wider community";*

Category 1	Category 2	Example
		"Wildlife Trust"; *"RSPB";* *"Wildlife Trust."*
	Heritage bodies & historic environment (n≈55)	*"Historic England"; "National Trust Urban Green";* *"Joined Up Heritage."*
	Arts, culture, museums (n≈50)	*"Civic Trust";* *"Collaboration with Friends of Museum and Friends of Abbey";* *"Heritage walks led by Civic Society."*
Charities / volunteer platforms (n≈40)		*"TCV – corporate volunteers";* *"GoodGym";* *"Friends of the Earth."*
Water and regulation partners (n≈35)		*"Canal and River Trust";* *"Thames 21; Environment Agency";* *"Rivers Trust."*
Health and inclusion partners (n≈35)		*"Social Prescribing, NHS, faith networks"; "Green Gym have four plots on site and work with adults with learning disabilities. Disability Direct has two plots on our site called Plot to Plate.";* *"NHS Primary Care Network.";* *"Collaboration with local NHS Primary Care Network Collaboration with Your Park regarding various inc disability access"* *"Sensory Trust";* *"Able (disability charity)";* *"Partially Sighted Society."*
National / area-wide partnerships & catchment groups (n≈30)		*"river Valley Partnership";* *"City of Nature Alliance";* *"Biodiversity Partnership."*
Lack of knowledge / resources (n≈10)		*"Would like to but don't know how or have the knowledge/ people to do it";* *"We are not but we probably should, It would be helpful to have some suggestions or examples of how others are.";* *"Trying to! But it has been hard to get traction/responses."*
Not collaborating / NA / unsure / barrier (n≈45)		*"We have not been approached by other organisations."* *"nothing formal"* *"Our local authority does not recognise our group and has set up it's own, politically biased, group to undermine our efforts. It is therefore difficult to work with other organisations."*

Sharing good practice:

"We are constantly evolving what we develop and learning about our heritage in partnership. For example we lost the Museum in April, but we started working with National Landscape instead. We work throughout the year with our young people and our most vulnerable. We support a braille group every Friday and are constantly learning about new groups, new aspects of our history and finding new ways of sharing our new knowledge that is interesting for those taking part and delivering the projects. We learned about the English Civil War and made a Cavalier and Roundhead Scarecrow with Scouts to support our friends at the nearby Park for

their Scarecrow Festival during October half term. All our work is shared with the Council on their Wellbeing app"

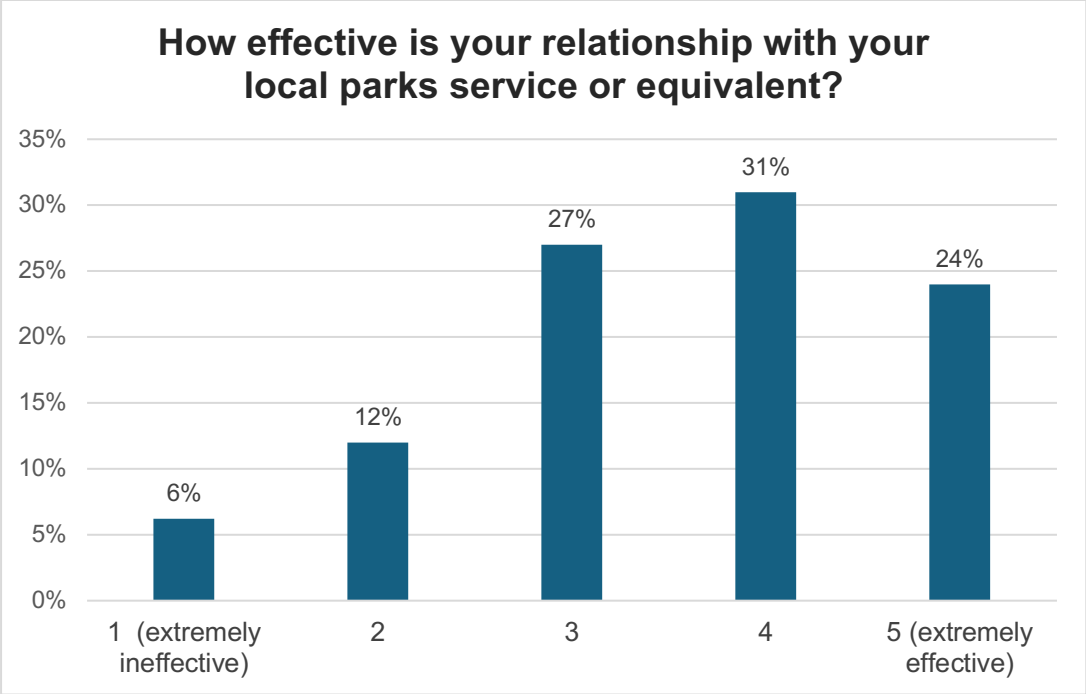
"Working with partners to improve lake water level and install bridge and Memorial. Working with local community cafe on events that include walking or celebrations in the park. Heritage walks led by our previous chair. Regularly work with Asylum Link with lots of volunteers helping on Sundays, some returning every fortnight. Play Action Council hold summer fun days in the park. Contributing to Active Travel plans, attending consultations with the council. Attending TAN (Teams around the Neighbourhood) meetings covering use care and safety of parks and greenspaces in the area. Attendees include police, social services, community groups and the council including the Neighbourhood Officer"

" work with a wide range of schools and community organisations. In 2025 we opened a new Community & Creative Campus that will transform underutilized areas of a Grade 1 listed Estate into a vibrant community hub, including:
19 affordable studios for artist makers; A new learning centre and a volunteer base, adjacent to the historic Kitchen Garden, encouraging people to engage with nature through horticultural and creative projects that boost wellbeing, mental health and confidence.

A rescued 17th century walled garden transformed into a beautiful, biodiverse space for community learning and celebrating. The Campus will double the capacity of our community programme from 50 to 100 partners p.a. and increase the capacity of our Schools Programme from 300 children p.a. to 5000+ children p.a. We also work with other charities to deliver our social and environmental objectives: The Artist Studio Company manages the affordable artist studios and Groundworks maintains the gardens whilst offering training and employment opportunities for trainee gardeners."

Your relations with management

Q18. How effective is your relationship with your local parks service or equivalent (this could be a local authority, landowner or a manager on their behalf, i.e. contractor)? (where 1 is extremely ineffective and 5 is extremely effective).

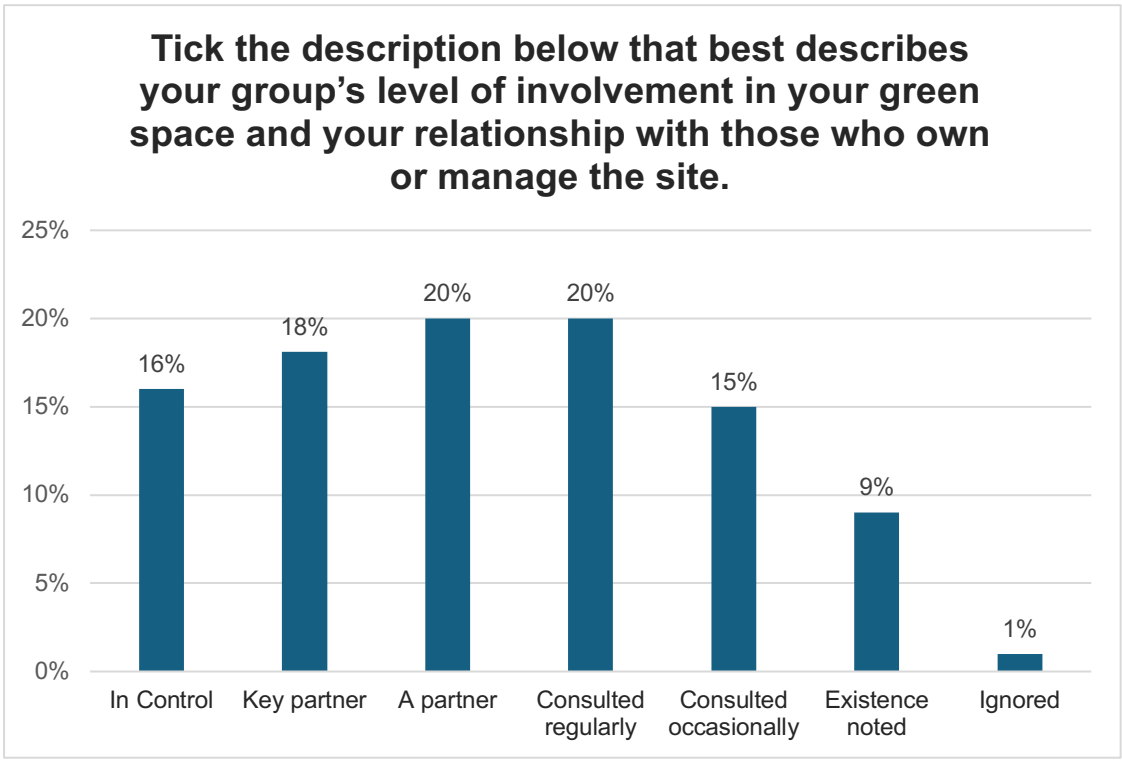


Q19. Tick the description below that best describes your group's level of involvement in your green space and your relationship with those who own or manage the site.

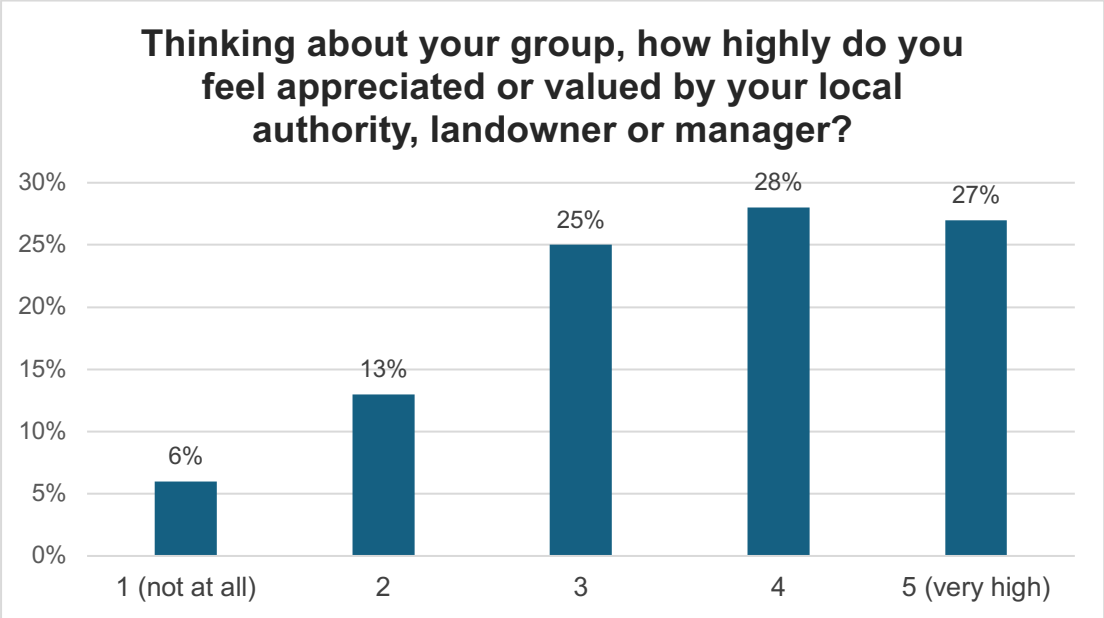
LADDER OF INVOLVEMENT

for a Friends of the Park Group at a site, or part of site

In Control	You run your site, or the parts of it you want to.
Key partner	You are fully informed about all matters you want to know about. Involved in all the decision-making you are interested in.
A partner	Regularly informed about some key issues. Involved in some of the decision-making
Consulted Regularly	Informed about some things. Consulted sometimes.
Consulted occasionally	Only contacted when it suits the management, maybe on one issue. Your emails and phone calls are replied to.
Existence noted	Your activities and views are noted but carry little weight.
Ignored	Your efforts and views are ignored.



Q20. Thinking about your group, how highly do you feel appreciated or valued by your local authority, landowner or manager? (where 1 is not at all and 5 is very high).



Q21. In one sentence, please explain your answer in Q20.

Summary:

- Cross-cutting theme: the quality of communication to a great extent determines perceived value. As scores rise from 1 to 5, comments move smoothly from “ignored/one-way” to “regular meetings/joint decision-making.”
- Resource constraints recur across all groups, but in higher-scoring groups they are offset by trust and workable mechanisms, while in lower-scoring groups they are experienced as excuses.

Codes for each option

Q20 = 1（not at all）

1） **Communication breakdown / no response / ignorance（n=21）**

“Emails go unanswered regarding community groups wanting to refurbish and reuse park lodge .We have been trying for 25 years! Little to no interaction from Council”;
“Emails rarely get answered, questions or concerns raised during in person meetings are sidelined, refund of payments (eg insurance) take months.”;
“TOTALLY IGNORED.”

2） Obstruction / undermining（n=16）

“Our local authority has tried to undermine our group from the very start. They have even set up their own, labour controlled, rival group and provided them with support that we were requesting.”;

“Local authority very obstructive and dragging their heels on giving permission.”

3) Excluded from decision-making / consultation（n=6）

“The local authority will not let us get involved and have barred us from the Working Party…”;

“We are not consulted on planting, particularly of trees, or tree work - the latter is usually poor quality & causes damage…”

4) Ownership / governance complexity（n=6）

“Not a local authority site owned privately and local authority not interested in our difficulties in managing this private open space.”;

“Cemetery is privately owned, but the owner is very difficult to contact.”

5) Resource and maintenance gaps（n=4）

“We tackle 95% of the park maintenance and repairs at our own expense”;

“We complete over 300 hours of free work every month… they only remove cuttings and mow the lawn.”

6) Recognition issues（n=4）

“The local authority's website does not have the name of our group on their list of green space volunteer groups and also allowed a new local group to utilise our group's name.”;

“We get very little support or recognition from BC”

Q20 = 2

1) One-way communication or slow responses（n=27）

“I feel it is one-way communication - local authority act on issues (e.g. fallen trees blocking paths) only when informed by me”;

“Communication with the council is poor, we often don't get told when things happen, we've been waiting for months for things to happen that have been agreed…”

2) Transactional rather than partnership working（n=16）

“The site is leased by a Leisure centre company, but is not part of their operations. They do appreciate that we have transformed their land (which has public rights of access - but was totally ignored for 20 years) from fly-tipped wasteland to clean habitat mosaic, and largely allow us to do what we want. They don't appreciate us commenting on their planning application for development in the MOL or (to give a recent example) their leaving firework debris in the SINC!”

“Sometimes feel we are a nuisance and not valued as a strategic partner.”

3) Under-resourcing and staffing constraints（n=15）

“The… parks service is very under resourced…”;

“They don’t have the budget to help.”

“The City Council parks service (including rangers) is very under resourced and has been gradually run down over the last 20-30 years in terms of its people and the ongoing management and investment in the physical infrastructure of the green spaces.”

4) Procedural, superficial or box-ticking consultation（n=14）

“At this moment in time we feel the relationship with the parks management is at a low and decisions have been taken with no consultation with our Friends group”

"The local authorities only need is to tick a box and then move on.";
"We were formed to help get a grant, a tick box benefit."
"Say nice things but their actions don't match the words."

5) Low priority / strategic neglect & unfair treatment（n=10）

"Overall, our local council has been negligent of their responsibilities to us…"；
"There is a total lack of vision for allotments in the city"；
"Our site receives less favourable treatment and funding than other sites which are in favour with the local authority"；
"As non-statutory entities, parks and green spaces do not rank high in the Council's policy priorities…"

Q20 = 3

1) Recognition of groups' efforts, but dependent on individuals & weak institutional backing（n=61）

"Appreciated by [ranger] but not by higher echelons";
"We have an excellent working relationship with the Senior Countryside Manager who has responsibility for the woodland. However, we feel less known and acknowledged at County Hall, possibly because we do much of the maintenance work which the local authority no longer does, so are probably less visible to the hierarchy. Local Town Councillors are, however, very appreciative and supportive of our work";
"Staff keep changing so relationships are not easy";
"We have a good relationship with the council ground level maintenance team in the park and their supervisor. Management above that level rarely communicate and often ignore us…"
"We work closely with the Countryside Warden… highly appreciated by him."

2) Volunteer substitution due to austerity（n=42）

"Local Authority has limited resources";
"BC cut the grass – the rest is up to us."

3) Some support provided but not proactive（n=35）

"Council officers have been supportive, but are not proactive in offering support and often do not respond quickly enough with requests for help and advice."

4) Basic but slow communication（n=21）

"Communication is generally poor… last to know…"; "Communication is sporadic and often one way…";
"Th CG has been asking for a Community Asset Transfer on unused Council land in order to plant trees for approx. a decade. Still waiting for a decision!"

5) **Selective consultation ("only when needed") & lack of transparency （n=33）**

"We are consulted only when it suits management"; "Council tolerate… but often feels like we are a hindrance";
"…but there are some things we are kept in the dark about and are not consulted with. There is a perceived lack of transparency on some decision making within the council which can be equally dispiriting."

6) **Contractor/outsourcing issues（n=9）**

"BCouncil… does not do enough to manage the maintenance contractor";
"Contracts are too rigid…"
"Have regular contact with parks manager but little with the contractor Idverde"

Q20 = 4

1) Bureaucratic friction despite goodwill（n=80）

"Sometimes things don't happen";
"They do like to keep things under their hat."

2) Explicit appreciation and recognition（n=64）

"We are acknowledged and thanked for our work frequently"; "They are appreciative… provide resources.";
"We are involved in discussions about the area with both Councils & we have received awards after being recommended by the Councils for our skills in maintaining the group's ethos of "managed but natural " landscape."

3) Stable working relationship and regular contact（n=48）

"Quarterly meeting with councillors and team…";
"Good interaction with off-site Park Manager and very good (at least weekly) interaction with Park Supervisor and staff";
"Our relationship with the Parks Department at the District Council has been good for many years."

4) Joint decision-making / joint projects（n=35）

"Opportunities for input and consultation. Several joint projects undertaken.";
"we are consulted and allowed to lead on many aspects of park development.";

5) Pragmatic support under tight budgets（n=19）

"Council is severely underfunded and appreciates what we do"; "Green Spaces Team thin on resources.";
"…although resource is extremely limited we can often influence and negotiate for things we need or want. This is received well and parks are generally happy to support us, and address/progress some of the required actions…"

6) Uneven support across levels / departments / landowners (n = 12)

"Highly valued by the Parks team, less recognition from wider Council and Councillors"；
"helpful Landscape Services Team but overall the Council could improve appreciation"

Q20 = 5（very high）

1) Positive feedback and awards（n=101）

"We were awarded a Civic Honours award…";
"Publicly designated… partner in the management of the park."

2) **Established liaison across levels（n=43）**

"There are regular meetings… our views are taken seriously";
"Very helpful at all levels and encouraging."

3) Strong partnership / co-governance（n=27）

“Consulted in all strategic decisions”;
“Over many years we have jointly evolved a powerful voluntary/public partnership.”;
“The Park Manager attends all our monthly meetings and provides an update of Council activity ongoing or planned in the Arboretum and we are regularly involved in the decision making process in addition to directing activity in certain specific areas that we maintain.”

4) High trust and delegated autonomy（n=18）

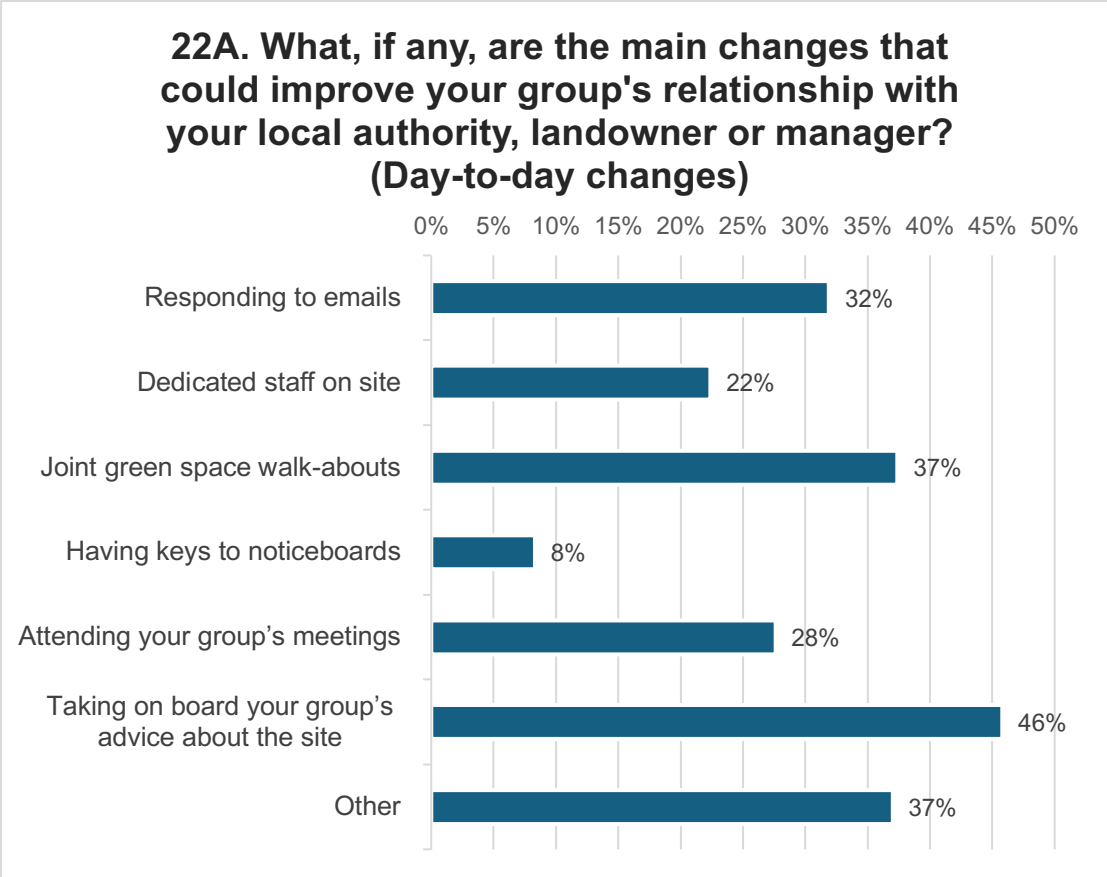
“They trust us and let us get on with what we want to do”;
“Allowed to decide our own priorities for maintenance activities.”;
“A high degree of trust has been established with stakeholders that include City Council officers from various relevant departments.”

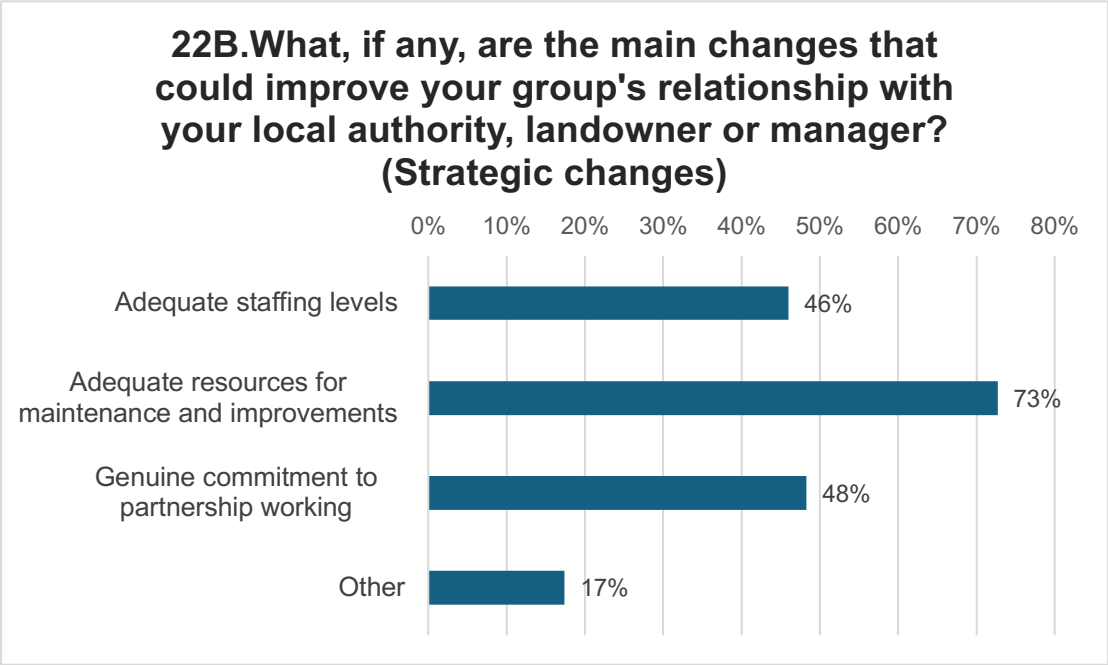
5) **Supportive despite limited budgets（n=9）**

“They are as supportive as they can be given the impossible demands…”;
“Under-resourced yet supportive.”;
“Within tight budget constraints they do all we ask,”

Q22. What, if any, are the main changes that could improve your group's relationship with your local authority, landowner or manager?

Tick all that apply.





Category for Day-to-day changes - 'Other'

1) **Communication: faster replies, advance notice, clearer updates, transparency (n≈45)**

"Better communication"; "Responding more quickly to emails. Giving more notice for requesting meetings and walkarounds"; "Providing timely information and updates keeping in touch regularly"; "Explaining the overall management strategy and its rationale."

2) Funding / resources (incl. council or government) (n≈28)

"More funding and staff resources"; "Financial commitment"; "Dedicated funding from the government."

3) **Operational collaboration / taking advice / joint planning (n≈22)**

"Taking on board our group's advice… having a say on management of park"; "Joint strategic development & planning"; "Joint management plan"; "Allowing actions by the group to be undertaken."

4) **Dedicated staff/presence or a named contact (n≈19)**

"None of the above… could do with more dedicated staff on site"; "Allocating a specific person to liaise with us"; "A key person who understands the site and has authority to make decisions."

5) **Maintenance and on-the-ground issues (n≈18)**

"Better onsite tree management"; "Just getting the maintenance done in time"; "Taking on board our concerns about anti-social behaviour"; "We need help with one big issue – 'dredging the moat'."

6) **Meetings / walk-abouts / attendance (n≈13)**

"Regular face to face meetings"; "Attending meetings more often"; "More joint green space walkabouts."

7) **Storage / keys / tools / permission to use equipment (n≈11)**

"Secure storage for kit"; "Allowing us to have a container for tools"; "Permission to use battery tools"; "Supplying PPE and more branded uniforms."

8) **Trust / respect / recognition (n≈10)**

"Learning to trust us"; "Valuing our work"; "Council departments… lack respect for Friends groups."

9) **Publicity/signage/website (n≈8)**

"Listing all groups on Council website to publicise our existence"; "More opportunities for signs and communication in the park"; "Having a noticeboard?"

10) Positive/no change already good or in place (n≈40)

"No changes necessary"; "We do these already"; "Relationship is good"; "N/A."

Category for Strategic changes - "Other"

1) Funding / budgets; capital vs maintenance (n≈20)

"Provide a budget for the parks"; "More funding… we raise 70% of running costs"; "Turn the clock back… don't implement capital schemes with no ongoing revenue"; "Money for benches and signage, not just vanity projects."

2) Staffing levels / cuts and capacity (n≈17)

"Not enough support staff"; "Due to the massive reduction in staffing… 2 FTE vs 5 FTE a decade ago"; "More volunteer staff from local council."

3) Partnership working / structured strategy (n≈13)

"Move to a structured and strategic relationship"; "Requirement to show proper partnership working"; "Re-establishment of Greenspace Forum"; "Working to management plan."

4) Governance / accountability / competence (n≈10)

"Tackle poor behaviour by local councillors"; "Accountability… before and after photos of maintenance"; "Assign us a contact who actually knows and understands green spaces"; "Recognise volunteers as skilled staff."

5) Training / skills (n≈7)

"Shared skills and training"; "Greater level of skills, knowledge and experience."; "Investing in training and skills to become more competent"; "Giving us First Aid training."

6) Green plans / designation / mowing schedules (n≈7)

"Consultation about mowing schedule"; "Designation of greenspace in Local Plan"; "Planned maintenance rather than only essential repairs."

7) ASB / safety / noticeboards / gates (n≈6)

“Response to anti-social behaviour”; “Restore entrance noticeboards with contacts”; “Ensure garden gates are locked in a timely fashion.”

8) Leases / rent / tenure (n≈5)

“Providing ongoing free rent and extending lease”; “More haste in granting us a lease… Heads of Terms unacceptable.”

9) Contractors/procurement/outsourcing (n≈5)

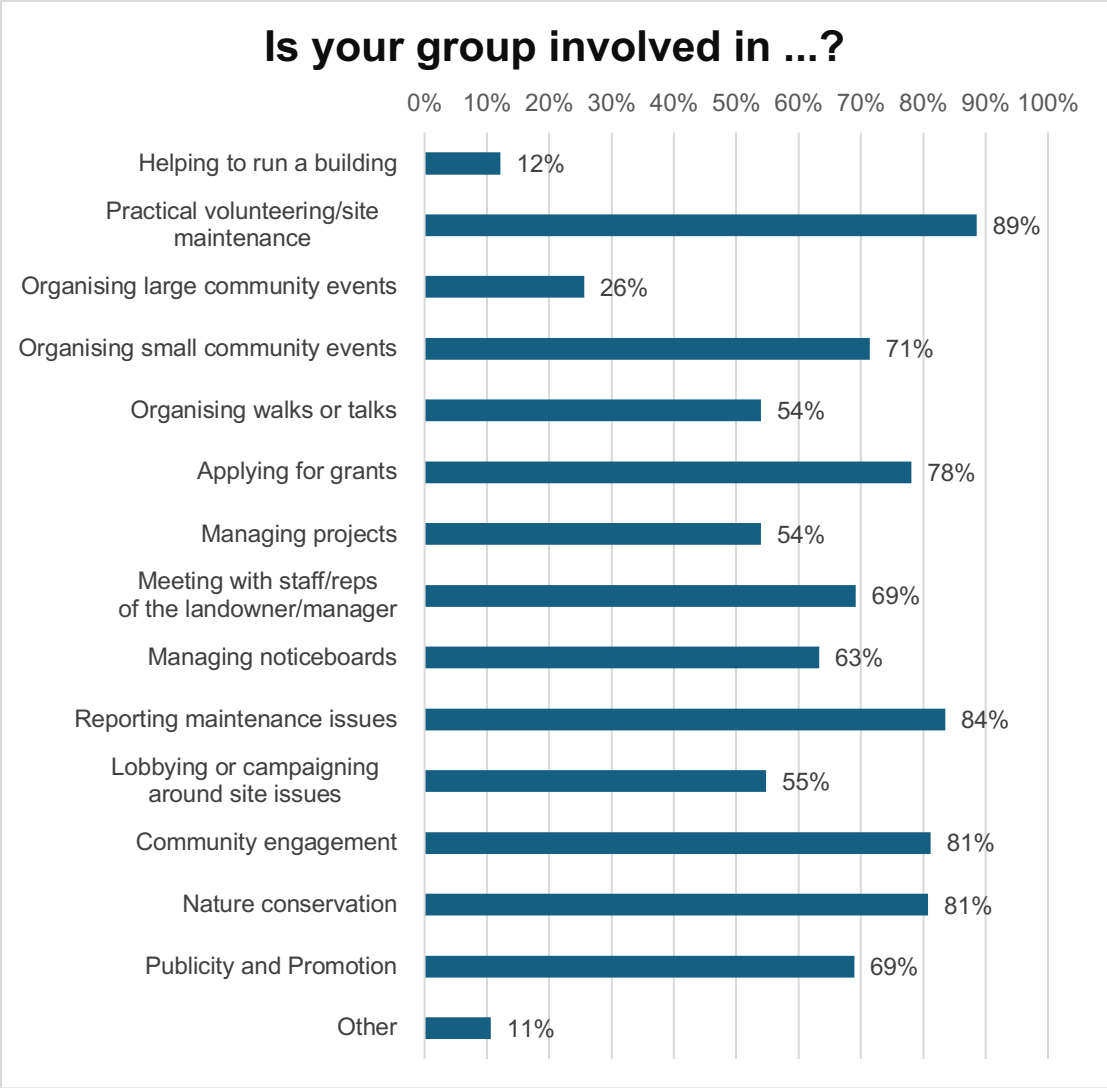
“Contractors just do their own thing”; “Key issue is nature of procurement.”

10) Nothing / already good / N/A (n≈40)

“Nothing”; “These are broadly in place”; “We operate autonomously”; “All good.”

What your group does

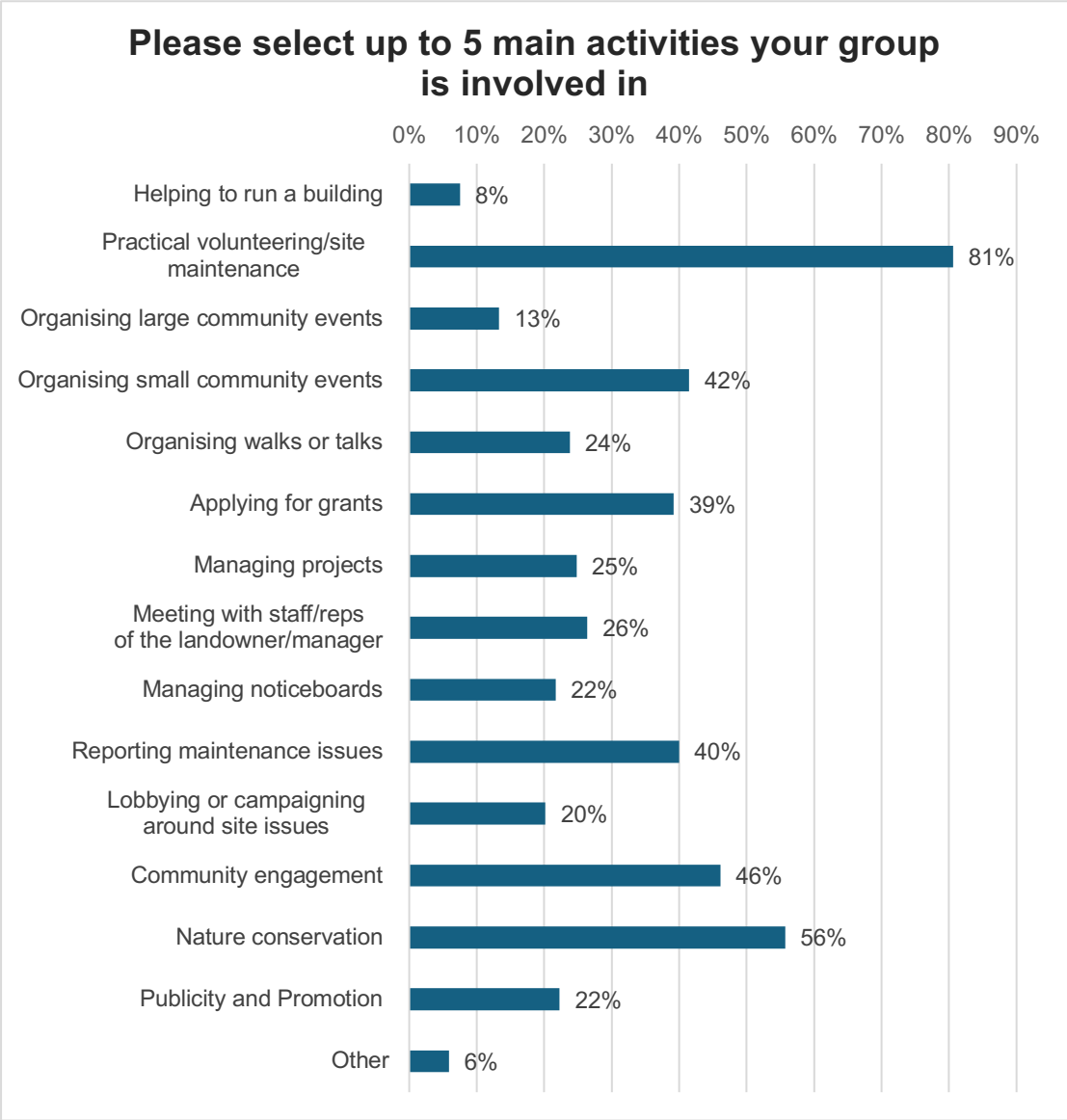
Q23. Tick all that apply. Is your group involved in ...



Category for Q23 'other'

Category 1	Category 2	example
supplement to option 'Organising small community events'	**Education, interpretation and wellbeing activity (n≈17)**	*"School education visits, adult entry level courses, grow food";* *"Education and wellbeing sessions";* *"wellbeing activities such as sound baths and Qi gong classes";* *"… run a Wildlife Centre, giving nature study lessons to school parties."*
supplement to option 'Practical volunteering/site maintenance'	**Site management / ownership and extended maintenance (n≈21)**	*"We conduct the majority of our own maintenance.";* *"Grounds maintenance"; "Maintaining specific gardens and the Heritage Orchard (120 trees)";* *"Mowing, strimming, planting.";* *"Litter picking";* *"Monthly litter picking."*
supplement to option 'Community engagement'	**borough-wide networking (n≈7)**	*"Link up with other local groups";* *"A volunteer group across Borough";* *"Engage in planning issues. Participate in borough-wide independent greenspaces forum";* *"Creating partnerships… telling Parish councils and others about strategic policies LNRS."*
	Heritage collaboration and commemorations (n≈7)	*"Engage with Museum Service re heritage sites in the park";* *"Memorials, creating art such as statues…";* *"Volunteers… assist with marshalling at the well attended Remembrance Service."*
supplement to option 'Applying for grants'	**Fundraising and income generation beyond grants (n≈9)**	*"Raising funds as a charity (not just grants) and planning strategically for the future";* *"We… directly provide funding to the green space annually";* *"Running a community cafe."*
Research and ecological monitoring (n≈15)		*"Participatory research project"; "We see the changes in social culture as it is happening on the ground.";* *"Species recording and monitoring, actions from Borough BAP";* *"Carbon sequestration through better land management."*
Liaison on complaints and public realm amenities (n≈4)		*"Liaising with Parks and community police to address graffiti… Anti social behaviours, and damage";* *"We are not responsible for reporting maintenance issues but… end up having to chase them when we receive complaints from the public";* *"Opportunities for children to play."*

Q24. Please select up to 5 main activities your group is involved in (i.e. what you spend most of your time oganising and doing).



Category for Q24 "Other"

Q24 Category	Example
Supplement to option 'Practical volunteering/site maintenance' (n≈8)	*"Grounds maintenance"; "Monthly litter picking"; "Activities involving one-off tasks with the help of others."*
Supplement to option 'Nature conservation' (n≈7)	*"Trying to conserve wildlife, planting and the welfare of our river and flow management"; "We organise conservation grazing and look after grazing animals when they are on site"; "Himalayan Balsam Bashing"; "Wildlife recording- regular surveys."*
Supplement to option 'Community engagement' (n≈7)	*"Grow food for the community"; "Creating opportunities for children to play"; "Liaising and engaging with school children.";*

Q24 Category	Example
	"Taking school children out on visits."; "Creating Opportunities for children to play"
Supplement to option 'Managing projects' (n≈4)	*"Working on plans for a new playground"; "Improving facilities / amenities"; "Managing a wider area"*
Supplement to option 'Lobbying or campaigning around site issues' (n≈4)	*"Strategic policy work, telling churches about Eco Awards…"; "Keeping local Councillors engaged."*
Supplement to option 'Meeting with staff / reps of the landowner/manager' (n≈2)	*"Meetings"; "We have our own Admin group with one of our Councillors getting involved."*
Supplement to option 'Managing noticeboards' (n≈2)	*"There used to be two noticeboards - now there are none… members of the public… report problems."*
Supplement to option 'Reporting maintenance issues' (n≈2)	*"Unfortunately some items in the park that need replacing have been broken for ages"; "We are not responsible for reporting maintenance issues but we end up having to chase them when we receive complaints from the public."*
Supplement to option 'Organising large community events' (n≈1)	*"One larger community event each year c300 attendees."*
Health and wellbeing/social inclusion (n=1)	*"Combatting loneliness."*

Q25. What is your proudest achievement in the last year?

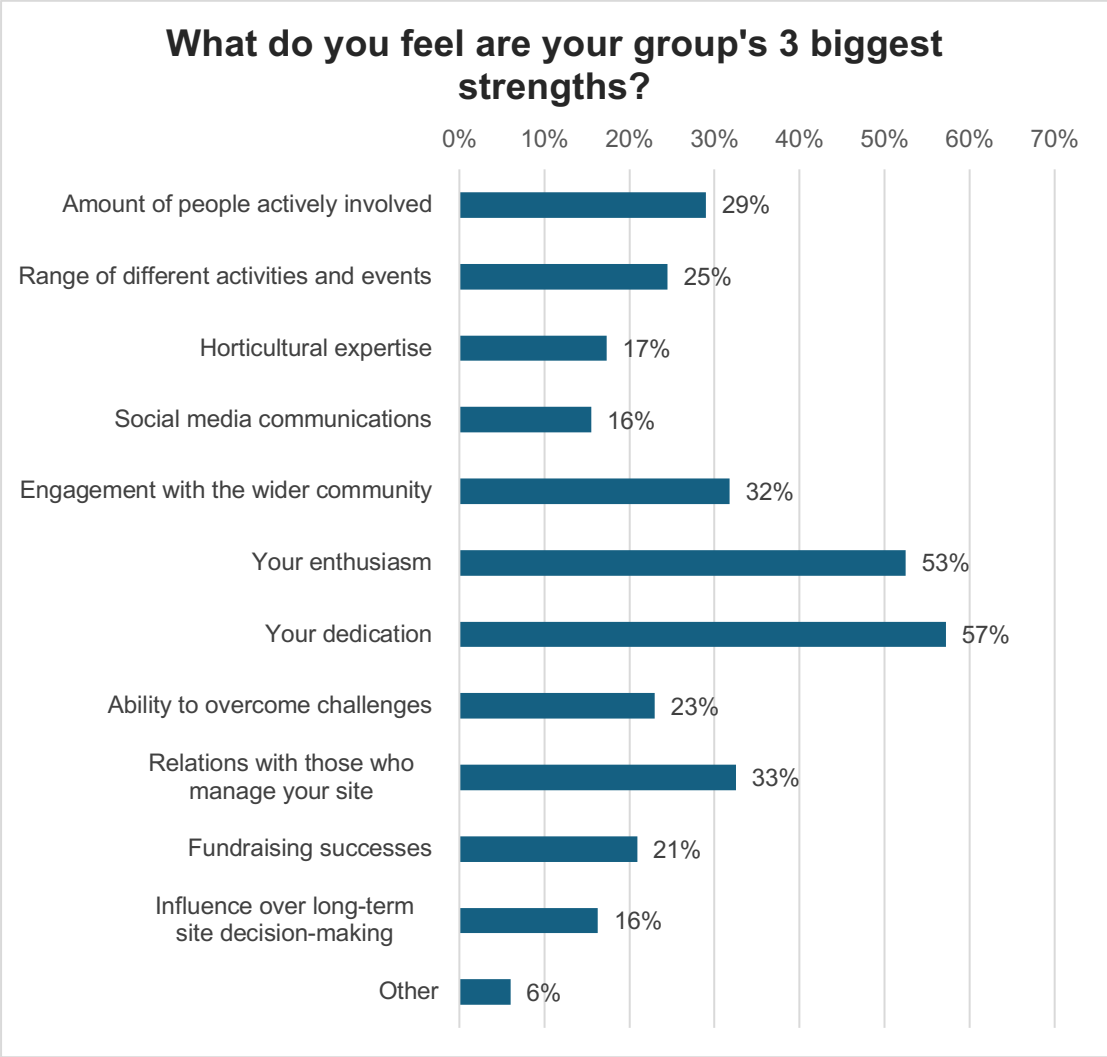
Summary: Most groups are proudest of tangible ecological gains and visible improvements (paths, ponds, playgrounds), closely followed by big community events and keeping the volunteer engine running. Awards, funding and policy wins sit slightly behind but are clearly important markers of success and legitimacy. And underneath the celebration, there's a quiet recurring message: "we're still here, still doing this, despite everything"… which, frankly, is an achievement in itself.

Category1	Keywords	Category 2	Example
Nature conservation and habitat enhancement (n≈200)	biodiversity, survey, habitat, wetlands, meadow, acid mosaic, species count, monitoring, bird/bat/bee, dormouse, orchard, coppice, hedge laying	Biodiversity enhancement (n≈60)	*"Creation of significant new areas of acid mosaic habitat from bramble mono-culture"*
		Horticulture/ Hedge / Orchard (n≈55)	*"Restoring a neglected rockery garden."*
		Trees planting (n≈45)	*"Planting 57 trees around a sport field."*
		Species Monitoring / invasive Species Control (n≈25)	*"Removing more than 90% Himalayan Balsam.";* *"Recording of new species of wildlife and plant on site."*
		Wetlands / Ponds (n≈22)	*"Creation of wetlands adjacent to the site."*
		Meadows / Grassland (n≈20)	*"Revival of our wildflower meadow and increasing diversity of bird species."*

Category1	Keywords	Category 2	Example
		Water quality & catchment （≈10）	*“Getting United Utilities to take action to mitigate sewage outflow into the stream.”*
Infrastructure and accessibility improvement (n≈125)	wheelchair access, paths, replanting, lower maintenance	Paths / Bridges / Drainage (n≈40)	*“Making steep paths erosion proof due to rain.”*
		Seating / Boards / Cycle Stands (n≈25)	*“Installing eight new benches in our walled garden.”*
		Food growing, orchards & community allotments（n≈20）	*“Installation of community orchard.”; “Planting a mixed fruit tree orchard in a previously ‘derelict’ area…”*
		Play Areas / Recreation (n≈15)	*“We have built a Pump Track for children and young people.”*
		Accessibility (n≈10)	*“Creating a circular wheelchair access.”*
		Sport & Active Use (n≈8)	*“Facilitating 16 cricket teams on 1 ground.”*
		Toilets / Water (n≈6)	*“We lobbied for and funded three additional female toilet cubicles.”*
		Storm / Flood / Erosion Resilience(n≈6)	*“Built a series of dams in the stream to reduce flooding.”*
Events and community engagement (n≈85)	Event, fairs, festivals, open days, craft/wildlife days, bandstands, tea party, well-attended, engagement	Community events & festivals (n ≈ 55)	*“A successful community Apple Day”*
		Arts, culture & creative programming （n≈18）	*“Light Up The Park! A new lantern parade… lantern-making workshops in local schools.”; “Artist-in-residence… carving in situ from a fallen holm oak.”; “Delivering a community event on the theme of nature’s lost words… with authors and poets.”*
		Commemorations & Anniversaries (n≈12)	*“Celebrating 25 years… planting 25 Silver Birch trees…”*
Volunteers, and organisational capacity (n≈65)	Volunteer recruitment, retain, numbers, rota, corporate volunteers	Volunteers, retention (n≈40)	*“Increasing numbers of volunteers and retaining those we already have.”; “Maintaining volunteer levels and enthusiasm after a fire…”*
		Organisational development (n≈25)	*“Becoming a charity so we can do a better job.”; “Finding a great new Treasurer so that I was able to take over the Chairmanship.”*
Learning, education & Outreach (n≈70)	college students, BTO survey, partnership, training	Interpretation (n≈20)	*“Organising a 'Whispering Trees' trail… hear stories of fifteen different trees.”*
		Heritage conservation (n≈18)	*“Clearing the cemetery and discovering hidden headstones… preserving Jewish heritage.”*
		Surveys, audits & evidence gathering （n≈15–20）	*“Carrying out a survey of park users… nearly 400 responses.”; ““Large response to a road safety survey.””*
		Health, Inclusion & Social Support (n≈8)	*“Helping a couple of our regular volunteers to overcome social anxiety.”*
		Digital Communications (n≈3)	*"Acquiring the funding for and then setting up a new website that includes a searchable database of the over 50,000 people buried there. It is free for everyone to use."*

Category1	Keywords	Category 2	Example
Daily Maintenance & Safety (n≈55)	maintain, upkeep, litter pick, tidy, mowing, weeding, repair, anti-social behaviour management, safety improvements	Maintenance & Cleanliness (n≈45)	*"Re-starting monthly practical sessions that are well attended.";* *"Monthly community litter-picks and practical work parties."*
		Anti-social Behaviour & Safety (n≈10)	*"Complained about the tents and got them taken away."*
Awards and Recognition (n≈55)	Green Flag, award, recognition, in bloom, IYN, Kings Award, Outstanding, Gold		*"Retaining our Green Flag for the 8th year."*
Funding & Grants (n≈50)	grant, funding, raise		*"Raising £225k for a new playground."*
Governance, Policy & Designation (n≈45)	Local Nature Reserve designation, management plan, policy	Planning & Consultations (n**≈20**)	*"We helped to secure our designation as a Local Nature Reserve."*
		Petitions & Appeals (n**≈15**)	*"Lobbying elected members and chief officers to stop a development in the park that was proposed for an inappropriate location, then getting it moved - twice - to the right place. "*
		partnership & collaboration (n**≈10**)	*"Collaboration with a local college and with the British Trust for Ornithology (BTO).";* *"Working with the Uni Biodiversity Action Group…"*
Negative or conflict notes (n≈10)	obstructive council, lack of effort		*"Resigning from the chair's post because of the obstructive local council.";* *"It was a failure trying to get the LA to contact the maintenance firm"*

Q26. What do you feel are your group's 3 biggest strengths?



Category for Q26 'Other':

1) Supplementary to "Horticultural expertise" （n≈11）

"The knowledge of the ecology and needs of the nature reserve.";
"Specialist scientific knowledge applied to management area…";
"We have made a positive difference to biodiversity and pollution mitigation by ongoing planting of trees, bushes, plants, bulbs and other flowers.";
"Knowledge of nature conservation."

2) supplementary to "Engagement with the wider community" （n≈8）

"Attracting new visitors to the park, from the local and wider communities.";
"Out warm and open invitation to all volunteers who wish to join us.";
"Accessibility and inclusivity. Welcoming."

3) Governance and leadership（n≈7）

"leadership by the board of trustees.";
"High powered chairman and very competent committee members…";

“We have a dedicated committee with great horticultural and biodiverse knowledge.”;
“My leadership and vision.”

4) Partnership and collaboration（n≈6）

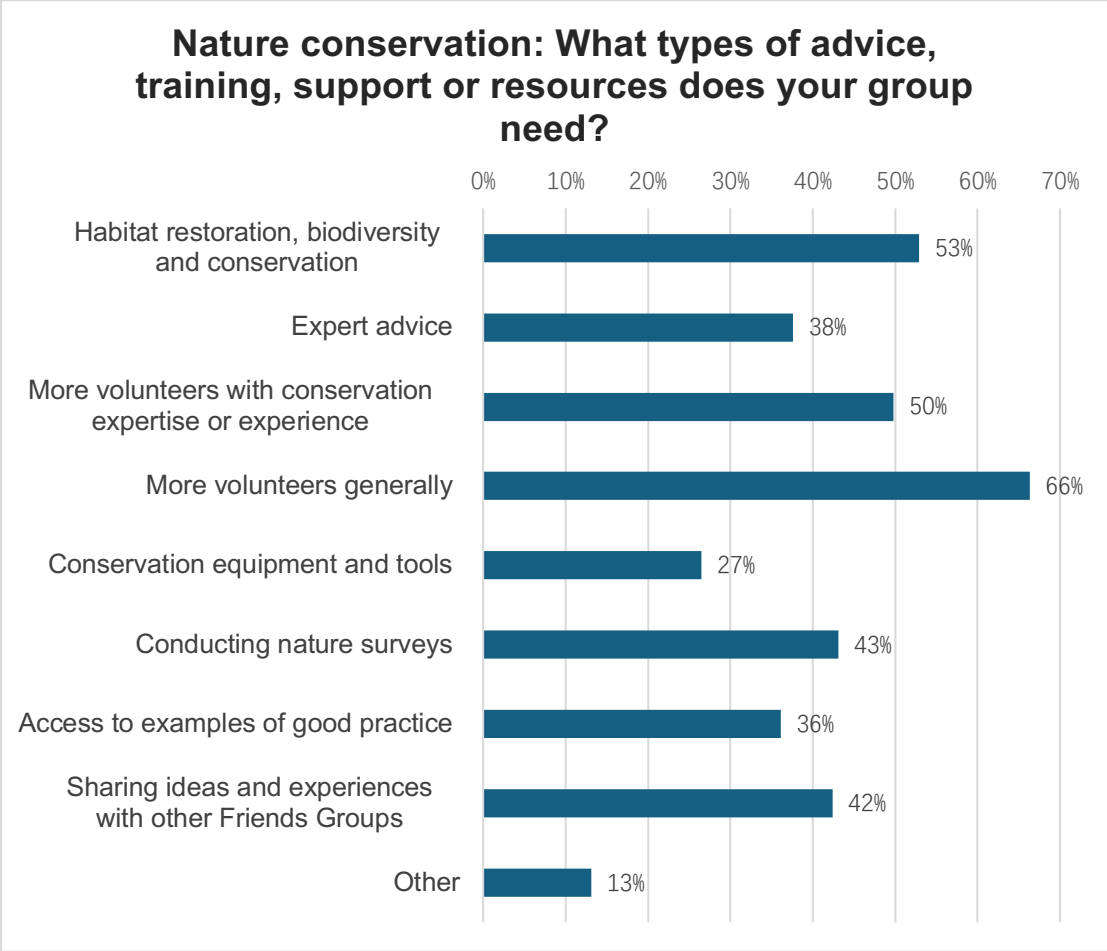
“Relationship with Park Ranger and Council staff.”;
“Working with other stakeholders… ensuring good outcomes through mitigation and compensation.”;
“Working with other groups, working as a team.”;
“Working in partnership through lottery funding.”

5) Statements of strain, fragility and volunteer retention problems （n≈7-8）

“Unfortunately the Friends group is withering through lack of volunteers to get involvement on the committee. The last Chairperson was very interactive but when she retired things started to fall apart.”;
“The above qualities are our strengths but they lie in a small number of individuals… We desperately need environmental expertise and more volunteers.”
“The Trust is experiencing great difficulties and may cease to exist over the next 2 years unless more funding/recruitment of Trustees is achieved.”;
“We don’t have any!”

What your group needs

Q27. *Nature conservation*: What types of advice, training, support or resources does your group need? Tick all that apply.



Category for Q27 'Other':

1) Stronger local authority engagement & policy / structure fixes (n≈19)
"Having the local authority on board… support from Parks Department.";
"More staff / delivery capability in the various silos of the Council.";
"Overcoming local authority need for us to spend thousands on totally pointless audit.";
"A change of Local Authority — one with commitment to env legislation."
2) Funding and grant support (n≈15)
"Funding and grant application assistance.";
"More access to finance."
3) Volunteers capacity & leadership (n≈17)
"Younger volunteers — we're almost all retired.";
"More resilience… people willing to lead working parties.";
"Skilled volunteers to help support the more vulnerable volunteers."

4) Practical training & conservation skills (n≈10)

"Skill training e.g. power tools, coppicing, wild flower maintenance."

5) Conservation equipment, citizen-science kits & storage (n≈7)

"Citizen science equipment to hear bats… trail cams.";

"PPE."

"Secure storage space for large items — like a shredder, barrows, composting area.";

"Not sure where we would keep tools."

6) Networking with expert bodies (n≈7)

"Stronger relationships with… educational institutions, Youth groups, U3A."

7) Governance, management plans(n≈4)

"There is no management plan for the park. This should be a priority.";

"Legal advice on ACV acquisition and PROW adoption.";

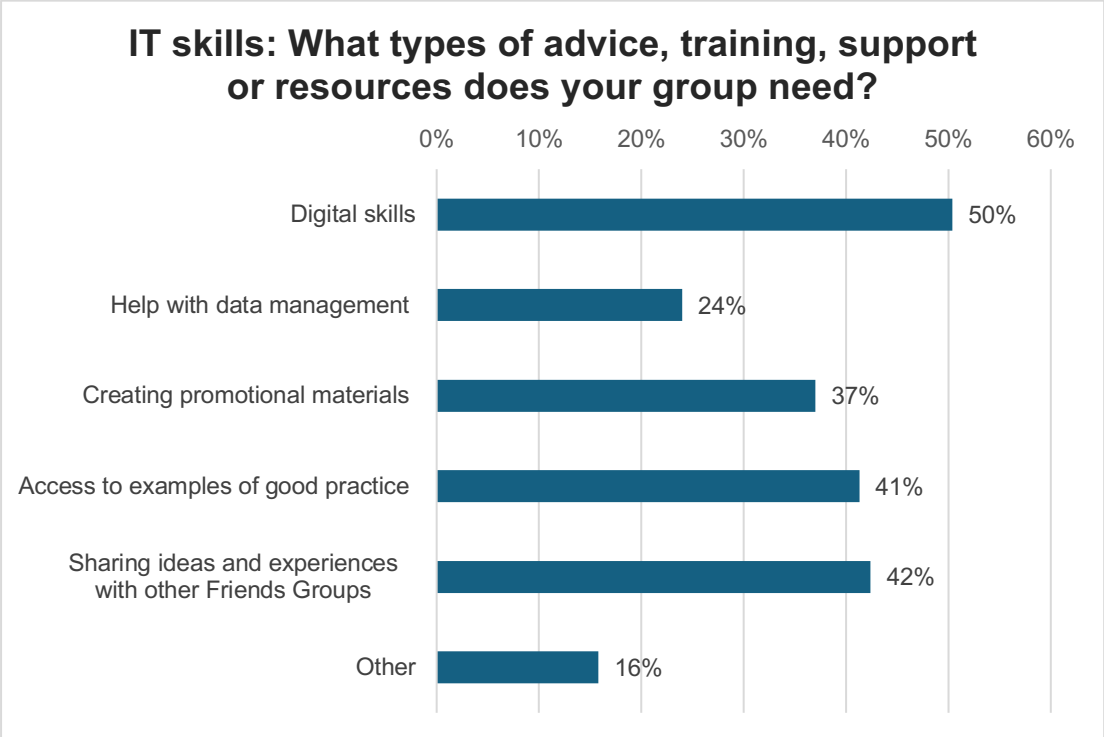
"A hydrology report."

8) Already covered / not applicable (n≈25)

"None — we are well supported";

"Nature conservation doesn't form part of our activities."

Q28. *IT skills*: What types of advice, training, support or resources does your group need? Tick all that apply. (By IT skills, we mean e.g. social media, flyer design, data management).



Category for Q28 'Other':

1) **Supplementary to "Digital skills/Help with data management/Creating promotional materials"（n≈12）**

"Database creation, graphic design.";

"Access to European Computer Driving License type courses.";

2) **Volunteer capacity and time（n≈22）**

"Time and/or other volunteers to share the load.";

"Weakness is that these skills tend to reside with a few individuals.";

"We don't really lack skills we just lack people."

3) **Funding and hosting：Regular costs for domains, hosting and software（n≈13）**

"Payment of website hosting.";

"We need a web developer and funding for this that is ongoing."

4) **Equipment and kit（n≈3）**

"Laptops and tablets.";

"Security cameras."

5) **supplementary to "Creating promotional materials（n≈4）**

"Low key media.";

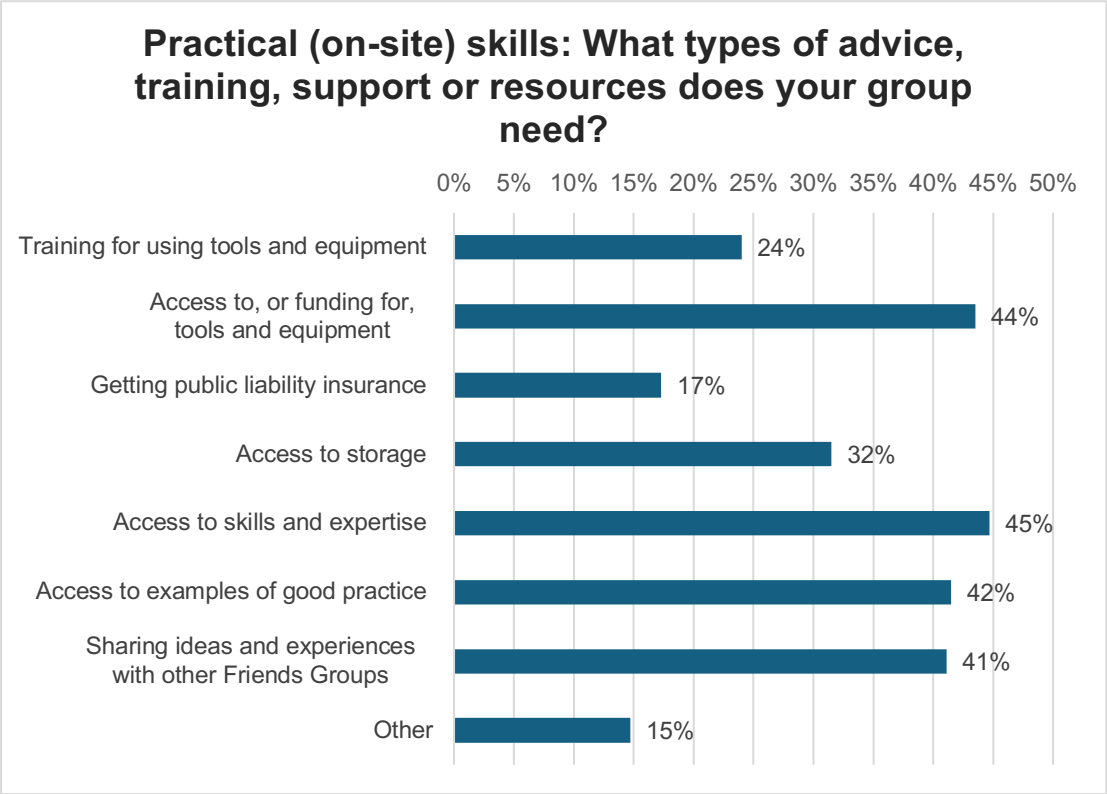
"We could do more promotion and improve Website... Too much time is spent on running the park day to day."

6) **no support needed（n≈40）**

"Our new website... will be managed by a company sympathetic to our aims.";

"We are very lucky... professional web design/digital skills."

Q29. *Practical (on-site) skills*: What types of advice, training, support or resources does your group need? Tick all that apply.



Category for Q29 'Other':

1) Supplementary to "Training for using tools and equipment": chainsaw / woodland management、arboriculture、coppicing、strimmer use、first aid、pond building、horticultural skills （n≈10–14）
"Licensed Chainsaw user! Woodland management expertise.";
"Skill training e.g. power tools, coppicing, wild flower maintenance.";
"Field studies equipment, help with iNats and bug boxes."

2) Supplementary to "Access to, or funding for, tools and equipment": Requests for access to powered tools and machinery, and on-site storage（n≈8-12）
"mechanised equipment"; "access to battery-powered tools";
"Younger… professionals and means of paying people for training."

3) Supplementary to '<u>Access to storage</u>' （n≈6-9）
"As we have taken over so much gardening… we need storage space and what we have is appallingly inferior."

4) Supplementary to "Getting public liability insurance" （n≈6–8）
"Despite us having our own public liability insurance, they won't allow us to use power tools."

5) Supplementary to "Access to skills and expertise" （n≈7–10）

“Having professional guidance on site to take responsibility for volunteers.”;

6) More volunteers generally, especially younger volunteers/stronger volunteers

“We can get the training but we need the people to volunteer to be trained!”

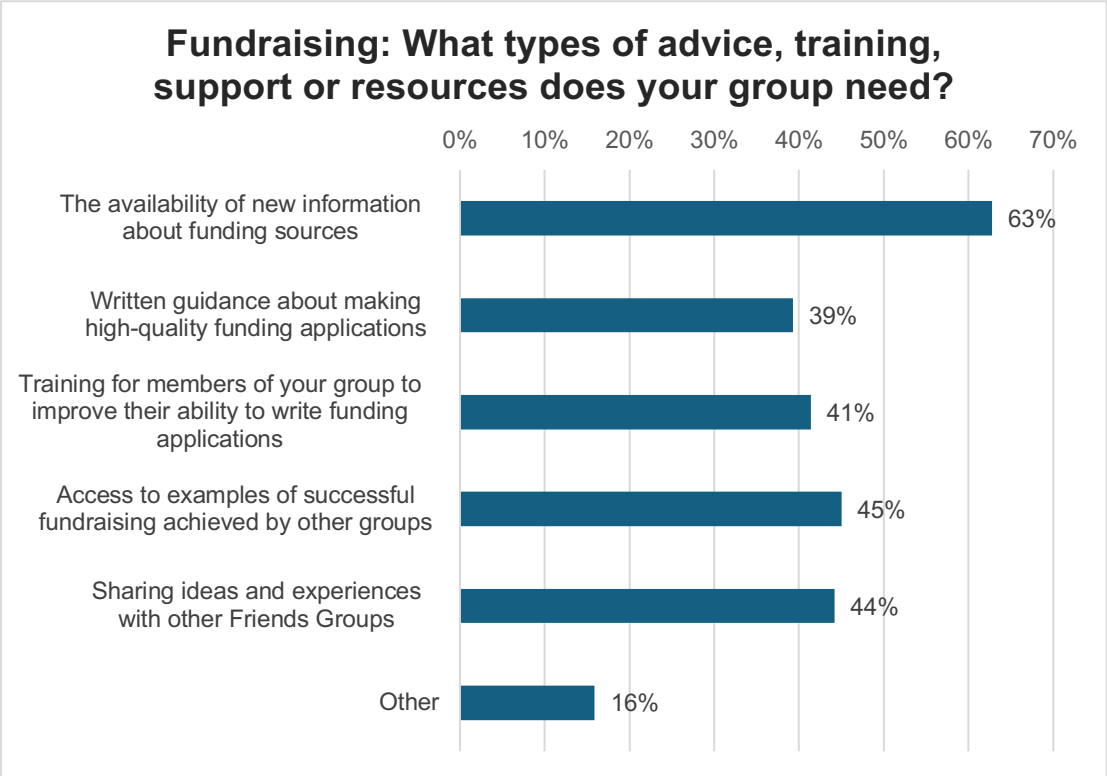
7) Permissions and institutional blockers（n≈12–15）

“Permission to use machinery… H&S restrictions prevent volunteers from doing the necessary.”

8) no support needed（n≈20-26）

“None of the above.”； “We have what we need.”； “We're an advisory body only, so most of this section is not relevant.”

Q30. *Fundraising*: What types of advice, training, support or resources does your group need? Tick all that apply.



Category for Q30 ‘Other’:

1) Supplement to: “Availability of new information about funding sources.” (n≈9)

“easier access to larger funds and entry pathways to things like Bio Net Gain units”;

“help locating funders who are locally based”;

“Where to seek funding”;

2) Supplement to: “Written guidance/Training for applications.” (n≈8)

“help to create supporting documents e.g. maps for bids”;

“Admin help & support in making a self-sustaining organisation with a shared load”;

"applications very complex… welcome all advice";
"extra reporting work loads."

3) **Supplement to**: "**access to examples of successful fundraising achieved by other groups**" (n≈3)

"Advice on seeking corporate support";
"Best Value case studies… under £1k/£5k/£10k/£50k+."

4) **Bid-writing capacity: more people and time** (n≈25)

"people to write funding bids for us";
"More time to actually do fundraising";
"Volunteers with expertise (and time) in writing funding bids";
"More volunteers willing to take on the role of funding… few seem to want to do it";
"We have the support… I just need more time to apply for funding, deliver the projects and complete the evaluations."

5) **Funding landscape barriers (n≈9)**

"No one wants to fund replacement items (e.g. vandalised notice boards)";
"Funding is nigh impossible as so criteria driven";
"it has become much more competitive recently."

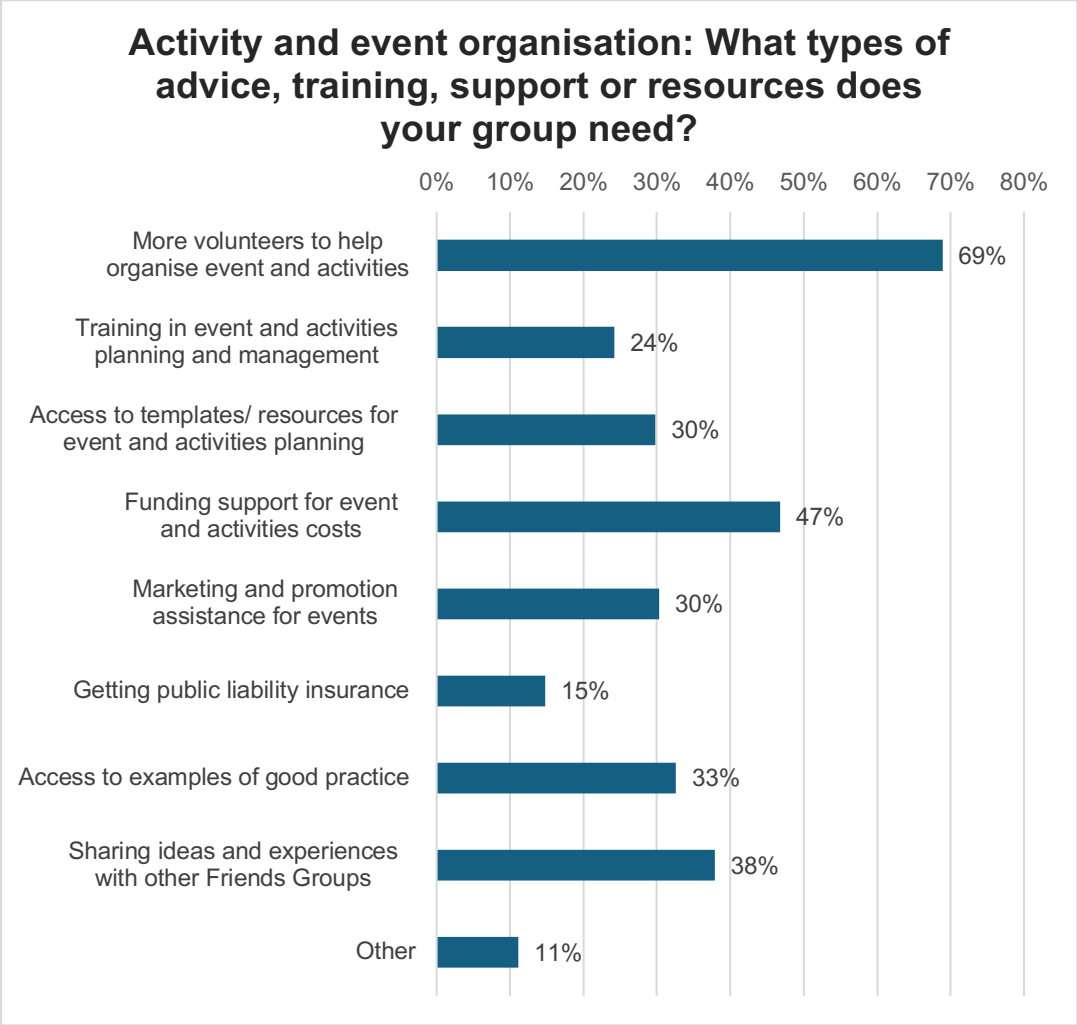
6) **Local authority role** (n≈6)

"Information from Council on funding availability";
"stopping our LA favouring councillors";
"council has never really worked with us on this in any positive way."

7) **No additional support needed / sharing ideas** (n≈45)

"Fundraising not required really";
"None – the group has experienced bid writers";
"We have raised enough funds for our group.";
"We don't see it as our job to raise funds";
"we are members of syfab.org.uk… plugged into funding opportunities";
"Our Community and Voluntary Service does this already."

Q31. *Activity and event organisation*: What types of advice, training, support or resources does your group need? Tick all that apply.



Category for Q31 'Other':

1) **supplementary to "More volunteers to help organise event and activities" (n≈7)**

"More volunteers and leaders"; "How to recruit volunteers to help run events"; "Succession planning for retirement of key volunteers"

2) **Local authority barriers & need for better institutional support (n ≈ 10)**

"Central authority that could have some impact on the local council's poor behaviour and lack of support – they are non-accountable."; "Stopping LA preventing us from delivering"; "Again, support and less bureaucracy from the LA"

3) **Risk assessment, health & safety & compliance (n≈6)**

"Training in Risk Assessment for events"

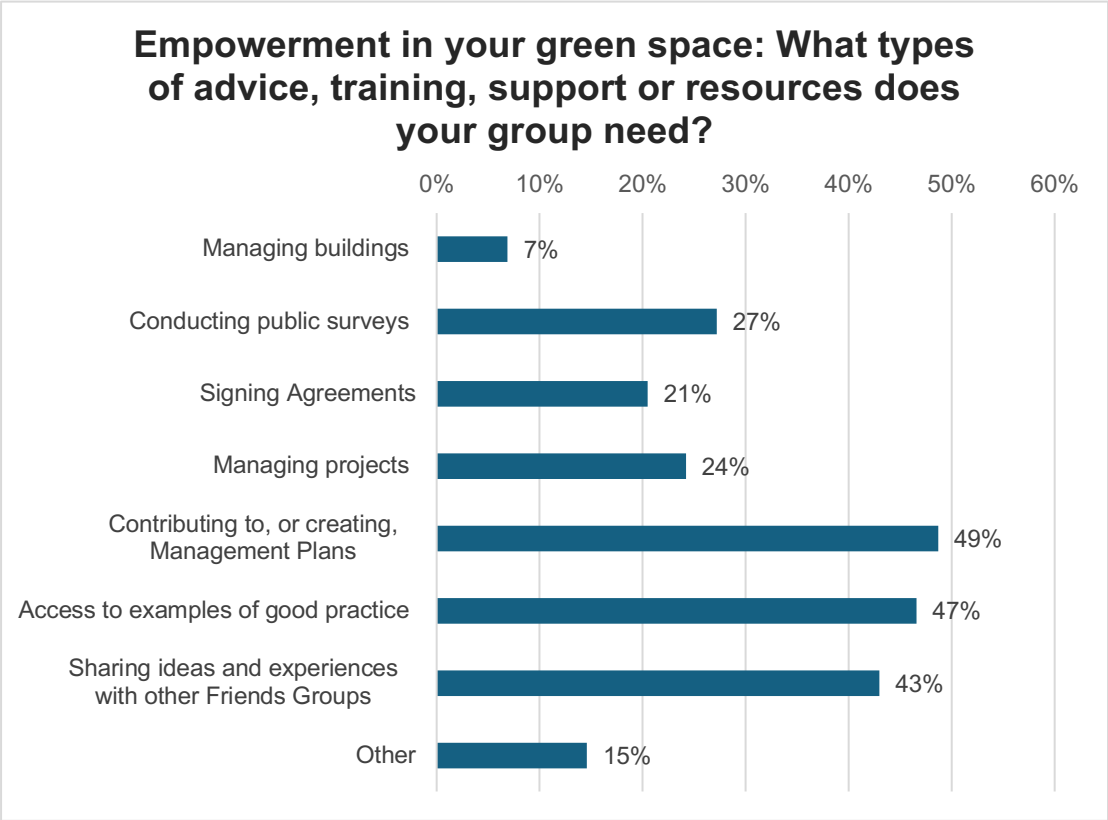
"Risk assessment and other organisational admin, advice and guidance"

4) No extra help needed / already covered (n≈20)

"We're very good at this already"; "Don't think we need help"; "partners already support us"; "We have lots of expertise as part of a large estate."

Q32. Empowerment* in your green space: What types of advice, training, support or resources does your group need? Tick all that apply.

*by empowerment, we mean being or becoming involved in decision-making affecting your green space.



Category for Q32 'Other':

1) Supplementary to 'Signing Agreements' （n≈9）

"Advice on partnership agreements."；"lack of a multiyear agreement holds us back."；"Dealing with HMRC."；"possibility of leasing a small building for storage."

2) Council / landowner engagement & accountability（n≈18）

"SLA needs to have commitments from the Local Authority."；"The council needs to put more staff resource into these tasks…"；"we make all the decisions sadly without input from the landowners… until something goes wrong."

3) Boundary-setting: keep it simple / working-party only（n≈7-8）

"We avoid getting involved in formalities in order to keep things simple and adaptable."；"we wish to remain as a working party."

4) Volunteer capacity, leadership & succession (n ≈ 7–9)

"Succession planning for retirement of key volunteers."; "I'd like to find people willing to take on tasks. We already feel empowered."

5) Funding & financial advice linked to empowerment (n ≈ 7)

"As per previous answer: All of the above would come from a modest level of base funding to initiatives of our type."

6) No additional needs / already covered / not applicable（n≈30-35）

"We have done all the above successfully."；"city council are the land owners and do all this."

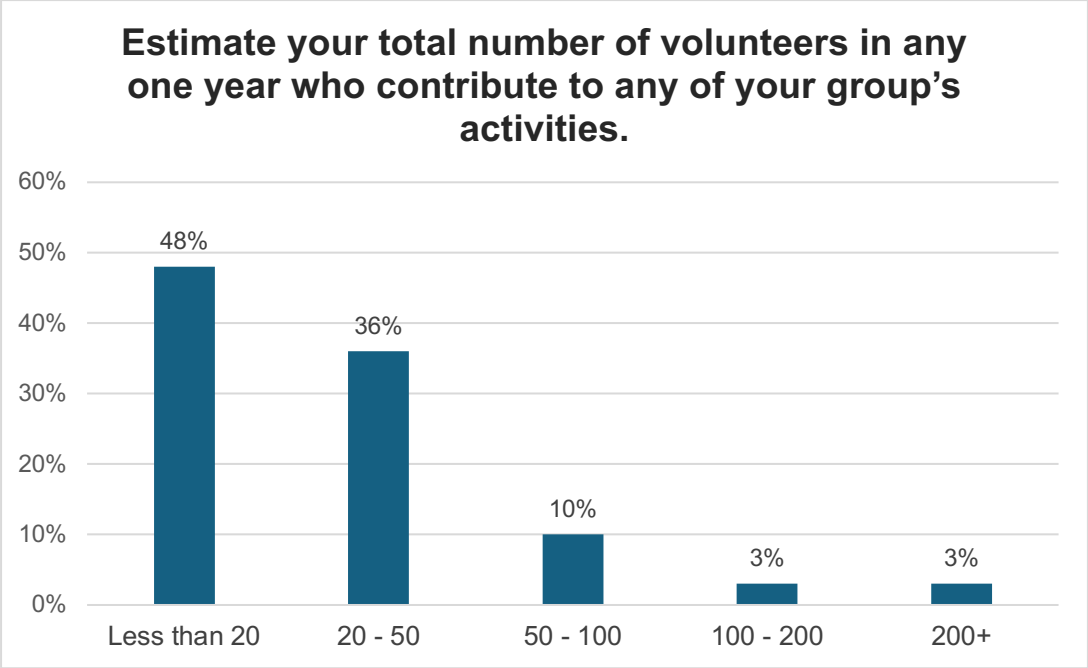
33. Please give an example of where your group has helped empower people in your green space.

Theme	What it covers (how people were "empowered")	Examples / signals from responses
Community volunteering & stewardship (n≈170-190)	Organising regular, open volunteering so residents directly care for the space: routine workdays, weeding/pruning/planting, litter picking, light repairs, and "adopt-a-bed/tree" schemes that build local ownership.	*"Monthly work parties open to all"; "adopted planters by residents"; "people feel ownership"; "Encourage local user groups to look after the space"*
Nature restoration & citizen science (n≈100-110)	Hands-on habitat improvement and monitoring so people can see and measure ecological gains.	*"over 120 volunteers restored wildflower meadow"; "Testing river water quality"*
Engagement of wider range of community (n≈130-140)	Creating routes for young people to participate and lead, school nature and gardening projects, youth volunteer teams and event crews.	*"Successfully running DofE schemes at Bronze, Silver & Gold"; "school pupils built bird boxes"; "we support people with learning disabilities to be active valued members of the team"*
Skills training & knowledge sharing (n≈120-130)	Teaching practical and transferable skills; volunteers gain certificates, references and confidence.	*"Scything training now used independently"; "species ID walks"; "All of our volunteers are automatically trained towards a Certificate we created the Ceritificate of Volunteer Training, which trains them in all the basic types of work they do…"*
Events that build agency & inclusion (n≈110-130)	Co-created events that draw people in and give them a role	*"Our annual Woodland Fair… introduced local people to the positive experiences to be had from engaging with nature."; ""inclusive, welcoming events"*
Representation, campaigning & governance influence (n≈90-110)	Enabling residents to shape decisions: petitions and evidence to halt or amend developments, restore PROWs, change mowing or dog rules, secure leases/agreements and formal roles in site governance.	*"Saved park from 32-acre development"; " petition for PSPO in nature reserve"; "25-year lease agreed"; "We have organised and run a campaign to retain our 3 ground staff on site and another to keep our beautiful cafe open, where others had closed overnight due to a change of*

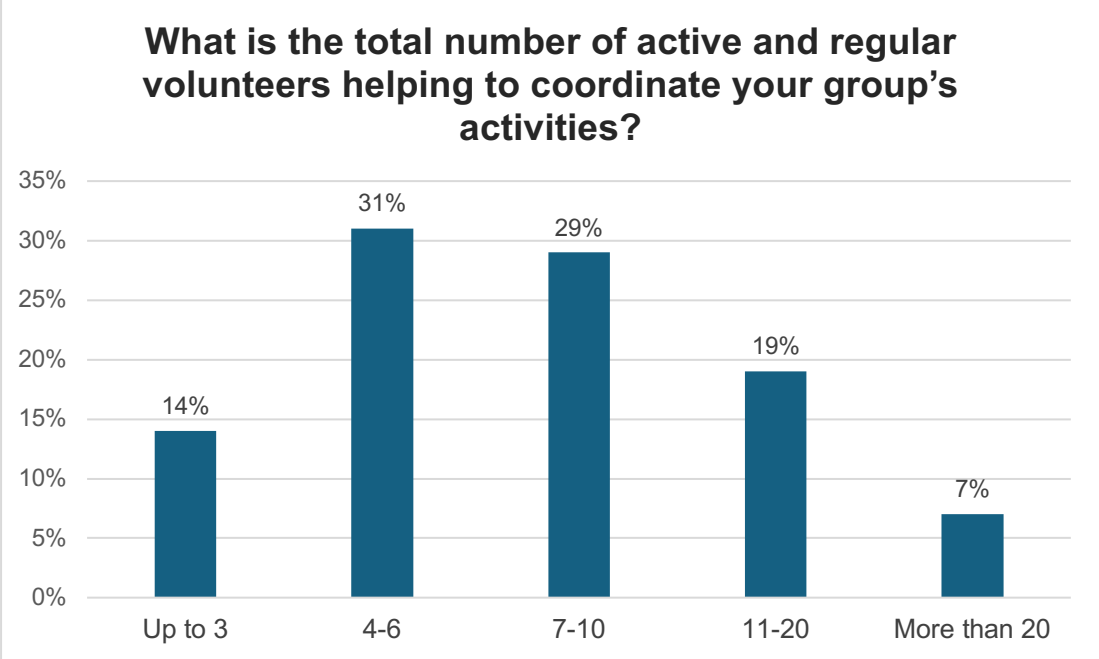
Theme	What it covers (how people were "empowered")	Examples / signals from responses
		management. Together with VJ Day above, these actions have involved all park visitors and online supporters, giving them a much appreciated voice."
Health, wellbeing & social connection (n≈100-120)	Social prescribing groups, walking clubs, therapeutic gardening, coffee mornings and partnerships with disability, mental-health and recovery services.	*"Weekly wellbeing garden group";* *"lonely volunteer gained confidence and work";* *"Tai-chi class funded"*
Communication channels, Consultation, surveys & co-design (n≈80-90)	Running public surveys and drop-ins, gathering preferences and co-designing plans; turning community input into designs, schemes or updated management plans.	*open consultation meetings in a café";* *"Public survey for playground design";* *"co-design workshops; views shaped the SUDS/playground";* *"noticeboards + surveys + Facebook votes";* *"Members of the public come to us all the time with things that need doing and we work with the council to try and get things done."*
Youth sport, play & positive use (n≈40-50)	Mobilising communities to create or manage positive youth spaces。	*"Cricket space co-created tackling discrimination";* *"youth picked skatepark kit via workshops"*

Volunteering and Membership

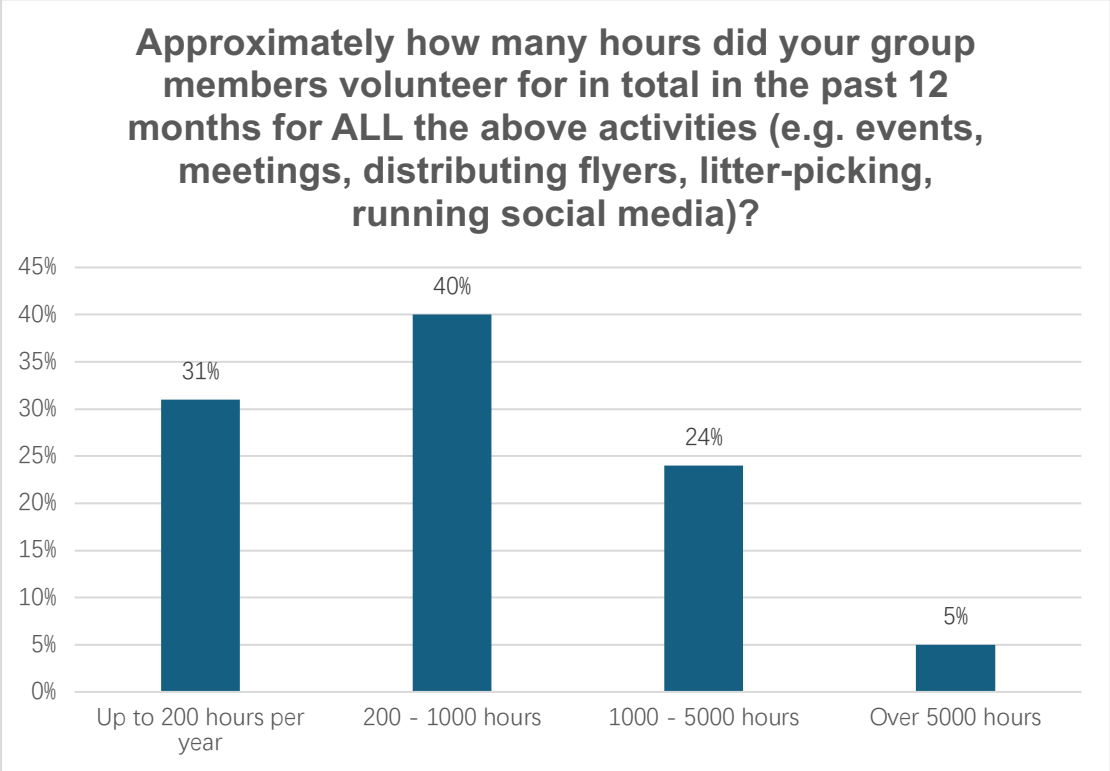
Q34. Estimate your total number of volunteers in any one year who contribute to any of your group's activities.



Q35. What is the total number of active and regular volunteers helping to coordinate your group's activities?



Q36. Approximately how many hours did your group members volunteer for in total in the past 12 months for ALL the above activities (e.g. events, meetings, distributing flyers, litter-picking, running social media)?



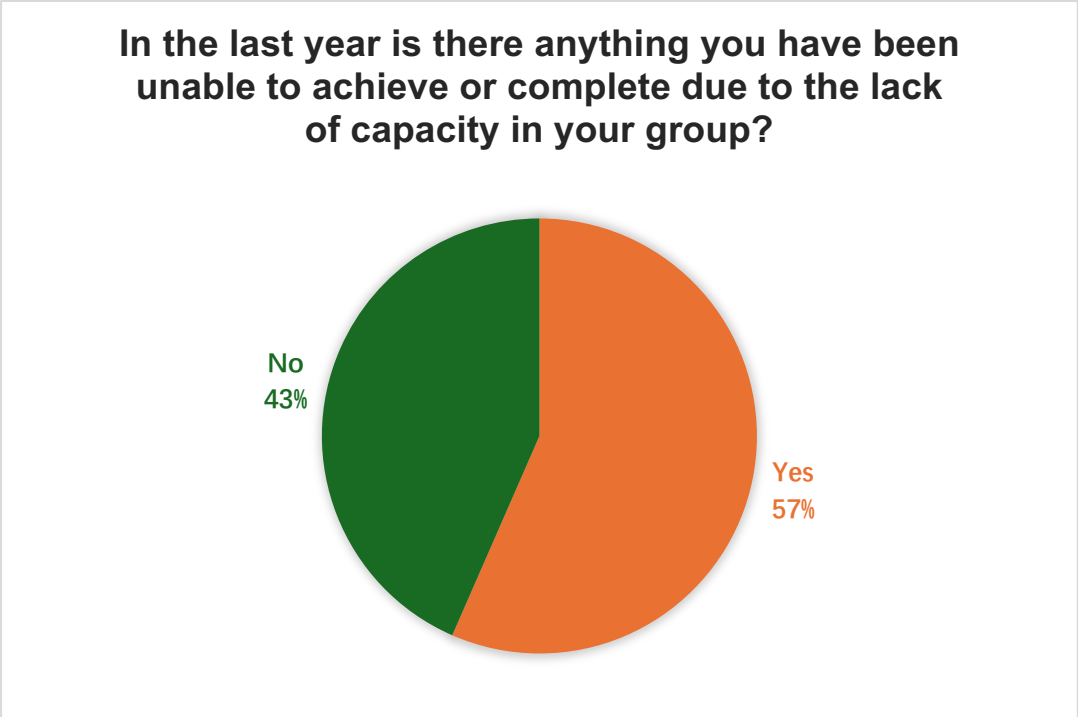
Q37.Which of the following does your group need advice, training, support or resources regarding recruiting and managing volunteers? Tick all that apply.



Category for Q37 'Other':

1) **Volunteer leadership, committees & succession (n≈15)**
"Getting volunteers to take responsibility… organising seems too much."; "Doing all organising myself is very tiring."; "Difficult to get committee officers."; "We need some core people committed to getting a bigger group together."
2) **Youth & mid-life recruitment (n≈7)**
"Involving younger people."; "Most of the committee are older people… need young people."; "Especially those in their 30s, 40s & 50s."
3) **Local authority engagement & barriers (n≈4)**
"Support to deal with the local town council who are obstructive."; "Assistance from the Local Authority."
4) **No additional need / already covered (n≈30-35)**
"I think we're ok… we have those we need for now."; "None of the above… volunteering regularly for 25 years."

Q38. In the last year is there anything you have been unable to achieve or complete due to the lack of capacity in your group?



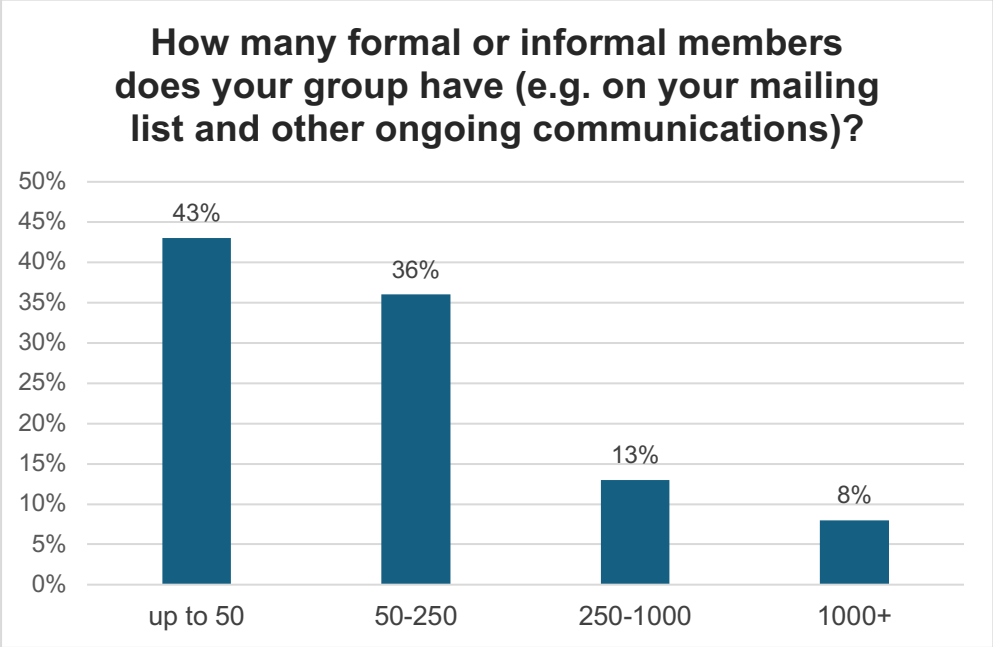
Q39.If yes, please explain.

Category	Example
Too few volunteers and an ageing cohort （n≈110）	*"We want to carry out a habitat survey but didn't have enough volunteers to cover the size of the site";* *"We could have achieved more if we had some younger volunteers.";* *"Mainly older volunteers meaning some heavier work has to wait until a younger 'friend' can be co-opted"*
Barriers or weak support from the local authority/contractors （n≈70）	*"Unable to deliver our funded projects due to lack of support from the local council who are the landowner";* *"The inability to engage the City Council."* *"Event management plans too complicated to get approval by council"*
Funding, time and admin capacity shortfalls （n≈65）	*"Some good funding opportunities were missed…due to lack of capacity"* *"funding, we only have one person doing funding applications"*
Nature conservation and monitoring backlog （n≈55）	*"We are trying to clear invasie species e.g. laurel and more volunteers would help with this.";* *"Depletion of volunteer numbers meant that we had to focus on a few key tasks (mainly related to path maintenance and tree planting / maintenance) and cut back on or avoid other work (e.g. control of invasive Himalayan Balsam)."*

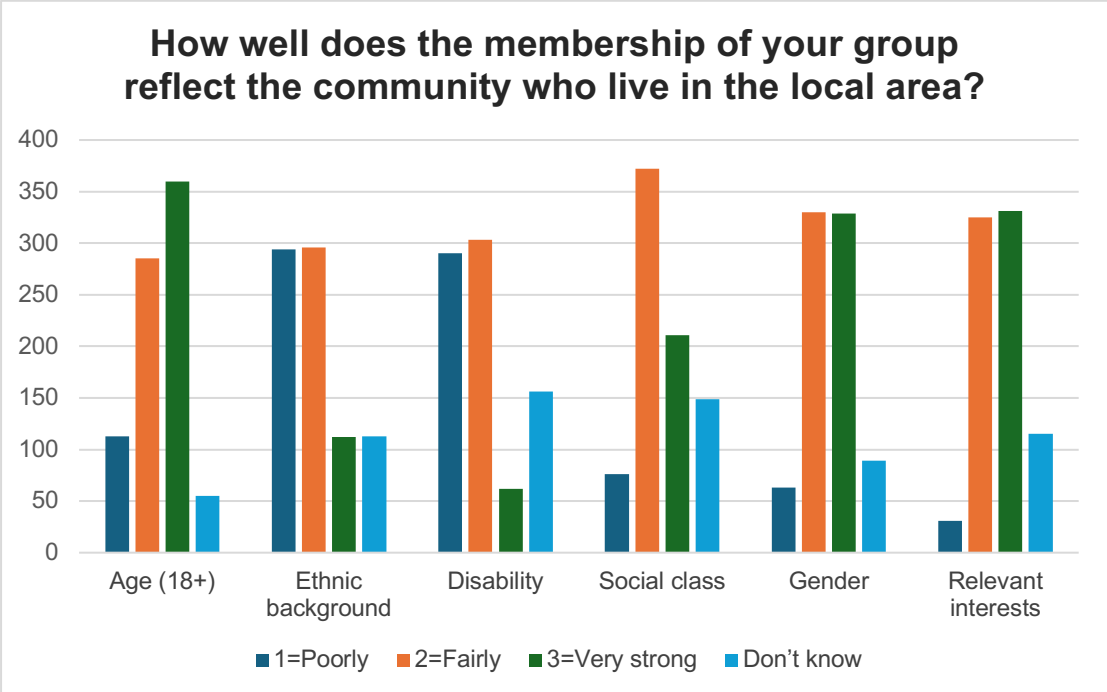
Category	Example
Events and community programmes reduced or cancelled（n≈50）	*“Events such as Apple Day and Tree Dressing did not happen through lack of capacity”;* *“An annual ‘Apple Day’ was cancelled due to reduced volunteers available.”*
Basic maintenance issues（n≈45）	*“We cannot maintain all the flower beds in the park. We have to prioritise.”*
Equipment, professional skills constraints（n≈40）	*“A specific project for hand-carved seating (from existing on-site logs) is currently stalled due to lack of a licensed chain-saw user, and difficulty moving large pieces of timber.”;* *“Expertise and tools for amphibian survey”;* *“clearance of larger trees with ash die back needing arboricultural expertise (chainsaw use) which Borough Council can not fund.”;* *“Installation of informal benches using felled conifer trunks - only feasible with the use of heavy lifting equipment and the expertise that goes with it.”*
Leadership, succession and governance gaps（n≈30）	*“It is difficult to recruit and retain trustees and active volunteers to organise and manage activities.”;* *“Set up a charity status and have regular governance meetings.”;* *“Change Legal status of group from unincorporated friends group to chatty”*
Insufficient communication and IT capabilities（n≈25）	*“We are struggling to create and maintain a new website and an increased social media presence…”;* *“We have been unable to establish a much-needed website and e-group for the membership”;* *“More active social media presence”*
Site conditions and wider social issues beyond group capacity（n≈20）	*“We have a flooding issue that is beyond our small group. we also have rough sleepers in the park and are not trained to deal with them”;* *“Drug use, drug dealing and urination continues to be a challenge that we’re unable to curb”*

Membership of your group

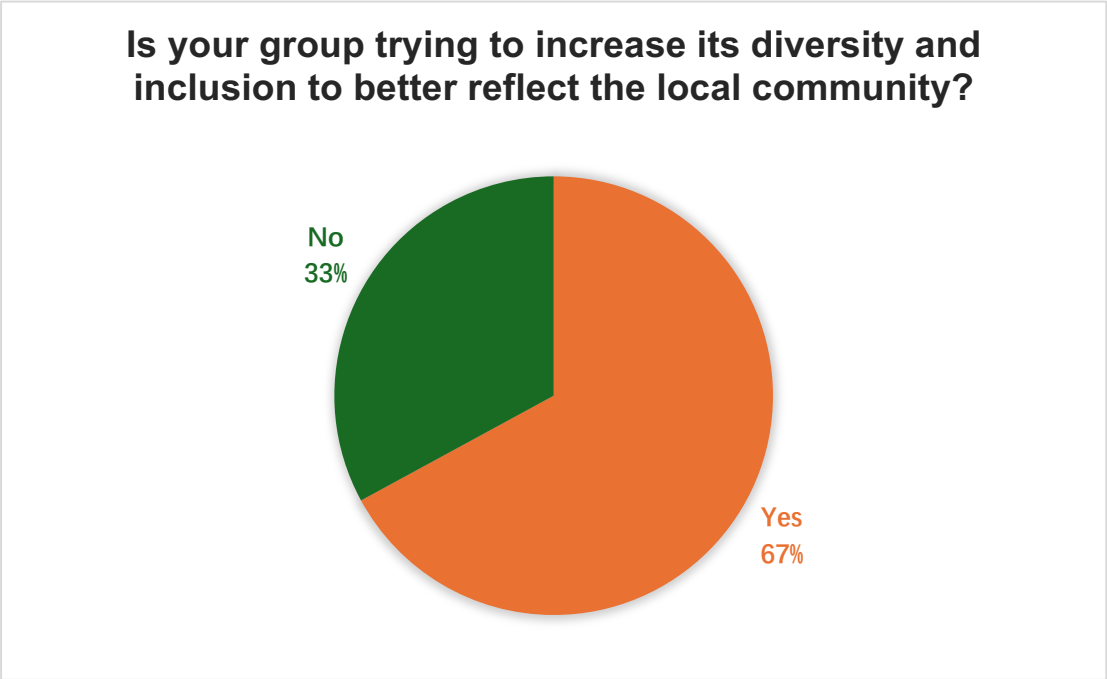
Q40. How many formal or informal members does your group have (e.g. on your mailing list and other ongoing communications)?



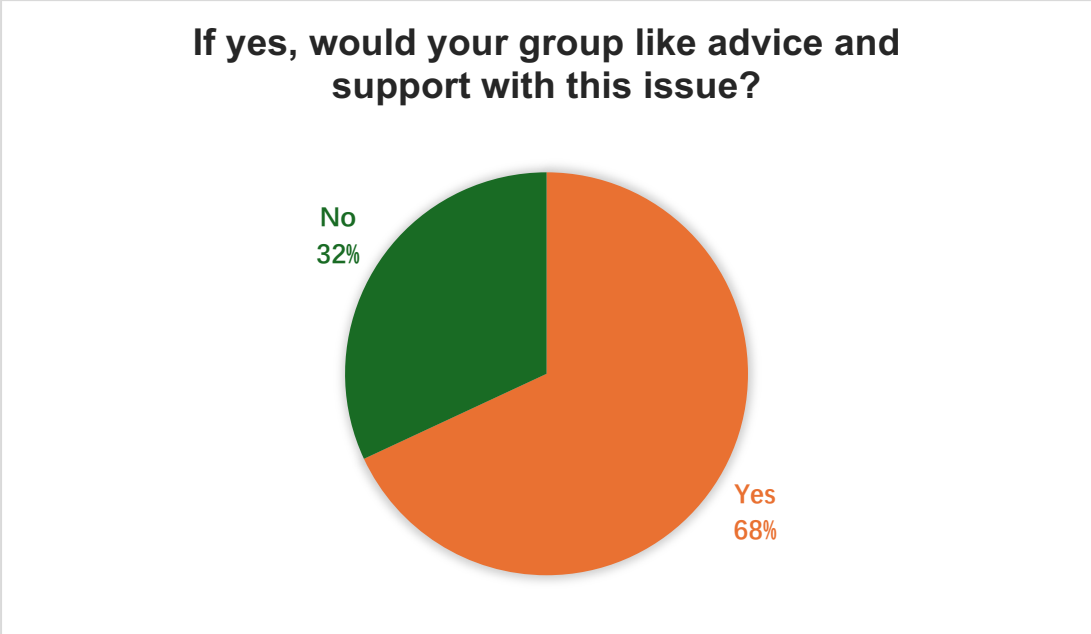
Q41. How well does the membership of your group reflect the community who live in the local area?



Q42. Is your group trying to increase its diversity and inclusion to better reflect the local community?



Q43. If yes, would your group like advice and support with this issue?



Q44. Please tell us about an example of good practice in your group's activities that has successfully engaged a more diverse range of park users.

Category 1	Category 2	What it covers	Example
Activities and events that broaden participation	**Inclusive public events and festivals (n≈70)**	open days, fairs, picnics, bandstand concerts, free theatre, community celebrations.	*"Our large annual community event does reflect our community and attracts people if all ages and ethnicities."* *"Apple Day receives more visits every year from all social groups…"* *"FREE MHG festival, open to all"*
	Nature education, citizen science and guided walks (n≈32)	Bat / fungi / bird walks, Bioblitz, bug hunts, species surveys, foraging and medicinal plant tours.	*"Hosting a bat walk"* *"Taking part in Bioblitz surveys encounters users successfully"* *"Guided history/natural history walk for a group of non English speakers."*
	Community gardening, orchards and food-focused activities (n≈27)	community gardens, orchards, planting and produce - sharing, cafe offers.	*"Creating our Community Orchard has engaged a more diverse range of park users"* *"The cafe which has run for over 13 years encourages people into the park…"* *"Family Fuddle… encourage tenants to bring in their own home-made food to share"* *"We invite them to pick fruit from the trees"*
	Children and family activities (n≈25)	trails, egg hunts, bug hunts, storytelling / arts, youth bands and festivals.	*"Holding a Community Tree Planting Day, with an emphasis on families with young children"* *"Easter egg hunt for children"*
	Sport and activity programme (n≈18)	walking groups, cycling, skatepark, cricket festivals, outdoor gym, petanque, youth performance.	*"Hosting an annual charity cricket festival to celebrate Pakistani Independence Day";* *"Sunday Tennis for Free."*
Working with various groups and partners	**Work with schools, youth groups and DofE (n≈48)**	curriculum sessions, DofE placements, Scouts / Guides / Cubs, youth clubs, university groups.	*"Link with local school where children have limited access to green space…"* *"Young people, reaching out to local cub scout groups."* *"We have worked closely with local international university students"*
	Partnerships with community, faith and health organisations (n≈38)	mosques, churches, refugee/asylum seeker groups, social prescribers, Mind, SEND providers, disability charities.	*"By working alongside The Church, we have engaged with a cross section of their congregation."* *"Working with social prescribers and other members of our PCN…"*
Volunteering that's open, flexible and hands-on	**Litter picks and practical "have-a-go" sessions (n≈55)**	open work days, varied tasks/effort levels, different times/days, "open to all" culture.	*"We always consider the abilities of those present… people are welcome to contribute through photography, nature-spotting, talking to park users, or just enjoying being outside"* *"Always emphasise our openness to people of all ages and abilities to volunteer, and ensuring that there is a good range of tasks…"*
	Flexible, welcoming volunteering offers (n≈26)	regular litter picks, planting / hedge days, path repairs as public-facing gateway activities.	*"Our quarterly litter picks are attracting a number of families, many of Asian heritage"*

Category 1	Category 2	What it covers	Example
Outreach, communications and community voice (n≈44)		door-to-door leaflets, posters, stalls at other events, local press, noticeboards, targeted invites, social media pushes.	*"Door to door leaflets" "Publicity at the site." "We leaflet our activities to all the residences around the Gardens…" "Letters in the local press." "Have put adverts for volunteers in the City Volunteers website and local community newsletters"*
Access, facilities and physical improvements (n≈36)		path upgrades, benches/picnic tables, accessible toilets, toddler/Inclusive play, step-free access.	*"provided an all weather path and access points in the park for wheelchair and baby buggy access." "Installing benches makes it more attractine to the less mobile." "Repairing of footpaths for wheelchair user."*

Q45. Regarding membership, which of the following does your group need advice, training, support or resources with? Tick all that apply.



Category for Q45 'Other':

1) Converting members into active volunteers and future leaders (n≈7)

"How to get active members who volunteer & can lead projects."

"Increasing overall membership is less of an issue than recruiting members who are able to commit to regular involvement"

2) No formal membership model (n≈8)

“We don't actually have a membership system, only supporters.”
“we do not have official membership; people ask to be included in our emails or fb etc; unless they attend a work session etc we don't know what 'characteristics' they consider they have.”

3) Other aspects of membership management & capacity (n≈21)

“A platform or digital system to manage membership (other than MailChimp)”
“Insurance”
“Training needs to be focused on our needs and local otherwise we lose time attending low value training.”
“activity incentives for the under 50s”

4) No additional support needed / N/A (n≈29)

“Not needing to increase membership actively as it is increasing quite fast on its own… we do not have the number of volunteers or trustees to support an absolutely larger number of members”

Other Support

Q46. Are there any other aspects for which your group might need advice, training, support or resources?

1. **Volunteer capacity, recruitment and leadership (incl. planning for longevity) n≈70**

   Covers attracting regular and skilled volunteers, getting people to take responsibility or lead projects, officer replacement, energising committees.

   Examples:

   “Just how to get people to take responsibility for a project or an event or a role - it seems one person (me) does all this.”
   “More volunteers prepared to take on leadership roles, do fundraising and footfall surveys, deliver the invisible but often arduous backroom jobs.”
   “We need some strong young people to help with heavy digging.”
   “Succession planning for key roles e.g. chair and treasurer, to ensure the continues longevity of the group.”
   “Our group largely consists of 4 retired people… We need middle-aged people to gradually succeed the older ones.”

2. **Working with councils and landowners (engagement, responsiveness, decision-making, recognition) n≈55**

   Examples include wanting better consultation, quicker replies, being included in working parties, learning how to “get the council to engage” and manage relationships with officers.

   Examples:

"Need to be consulted by the local authority, included in their Working Party, and listening to our views and comments."

"How to get more engagement from the council. How to get the council to view as collaborators rather than an annoyance."

"We would just ask that the local authority communicate, listen and respect our considerable efforts instead of riding roughshod over us."

3. **Funding, grants and sponsorship (how to find, apply, manage) n≈45**

   From small-grants help to major fundraising, commercial sponsorship, ongoing costs that capital grants don't cover.

   Examples:

   "Support in applying for small grants and funding in general…"

   "Securing commercial sponsorship from local businesses."

   "Quite often we find we can get capital grants for new projects but ongoing maintenance, insurance and promotion costs are difficult to fund."

4. **Technical training & safety (power tools, first aid, risk assessments, safeguarding / DBS) n≈35**

   Requests for certificated tool use, first aid, policies, safeguarding knowledge, PPE.

   Examples:

   "How to get essential training for free such as First Aid outdoors."

   "To assist the local authority better it should… offer training in the safe use of power tools where volunteers wish to use them."

   "Power tool usage training. First aide. … Policies, writing and implementing, training."

5. **Ecology, conservation and horticulture expertise n≈30**

   Need for specialist surveys (entomology, amphibians, meadows, woodlands), biodiversity management, tree management, sustainable gardening.

   Examples:

   "Specific ecological roles (technical surveys for grassland fungi, woodland condition etc)."

   "Our aims are to enhance the park's amenity value and biodiversity… there is a dearth of skills in monitoring."

   "Horticultural expertise would be helpful, so we can plan what to purchase for our walled garden…"

6. **Governance, legal and finance admin (structures, charity/CIO status, insurance, banking) n≈30**

   Includes legal advice, charity transitions, trustee roles/effectiveness, accounts/banking, public liability insurance.

   Examples:

   "Understanding charitable governance matters, as new status (applied for)."

“CIO account keeping. Advice on legal status regarding relationship of our CIO with the Local authority.”

“Legal advice for the future.”

7. **Communications, IT and publicity (social media, websites, mailing tools) n≈25**

   Help with websites, Mailchimp, broader publicity, using newer platforms, consistent comms.

   Examples:

   “We need help to set up and manage social media.”

   “Someone to run and develop our website.”

8. **Equipment, facilities and site infrastructure n≈25**

   Access to machinery and operators, storage, sheds, drainage/path resurfacing, toilets, cafés/indoor bases that aid community-building.

   Examples:

   “Reliable access to larger machinery and operators to maintain the meadow.”

   “Equipment and a larger shed.”

9. **Event design and delivery (planning, running, risk, simple fundraisers) n≈15**

   Training to run park events, tips for small engagements, project/contract management for activities.

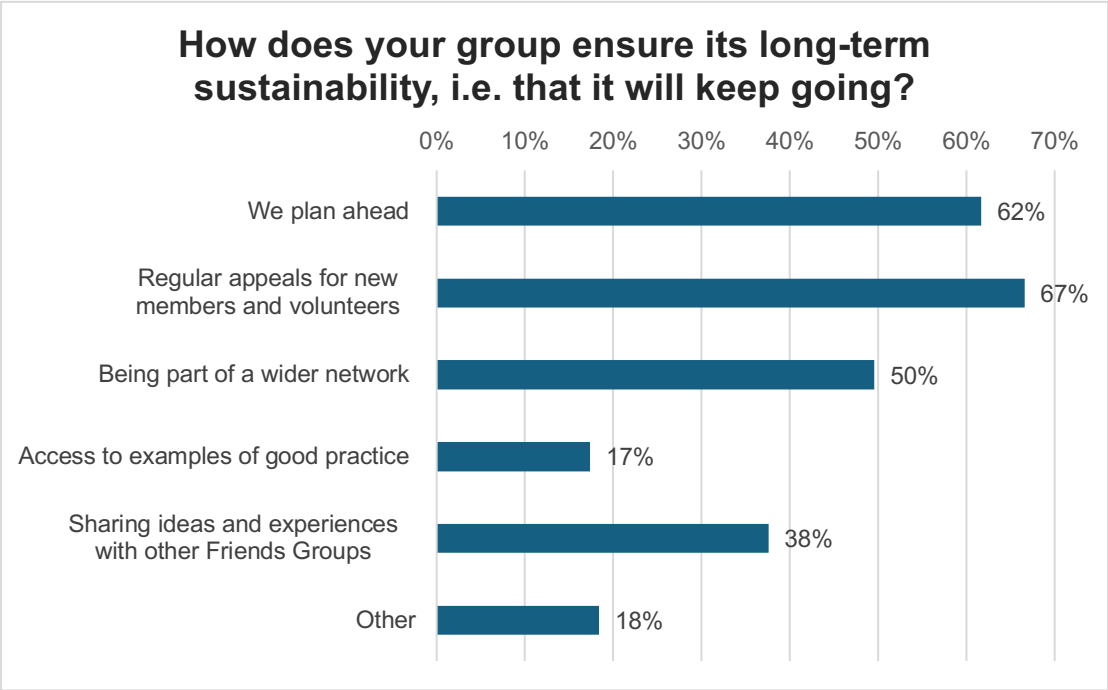
   Examples:

   “Tips on running small events to engage the public.”

   “Running different types of practical sessions.”

10. **No additional needs stated — n≈ 160**

Q47. How does your group ensure its long-term sustainability, i.e. that it will keep going? Tick all that apply.



Category for Q47 'Other'

1. **Supplementary to option 'We plan ahead': Succession planning & written management plans (n≈10)**

"I am writing a management plan for the site to enable others to take a lead in programming and leading activities."

2. **Supplementary to option 'Regular appeals for new members and volunteers': Recruitment tactics, community presence (n≈24)**

"Being on site in yellow jackets a lot. People we talk to become interested and join us at volunteer sessions"

"Articles in the local parish magazine"

3. **Supplementary to option 'Being part of a wider network': Networks and umbrella bodies (n≈13)**

"We are members of the Bristol Parks Forum the network for Friends groups for parks and green spaces in Bristol."

"the Harrow Nature Conservation Forum … has been essential to our survival."

4. **Reliance on a highly committed core (n≈19)**

"Maintain low but enthusiastic members"

"The 4 Officers are very active and keep the group going."

5. **Funding resilience: raising, reserves, frugality (n≈17)**

"We have developed a financial reserve."

"We are extremely frugal and make the best use of every £1 that comes in."

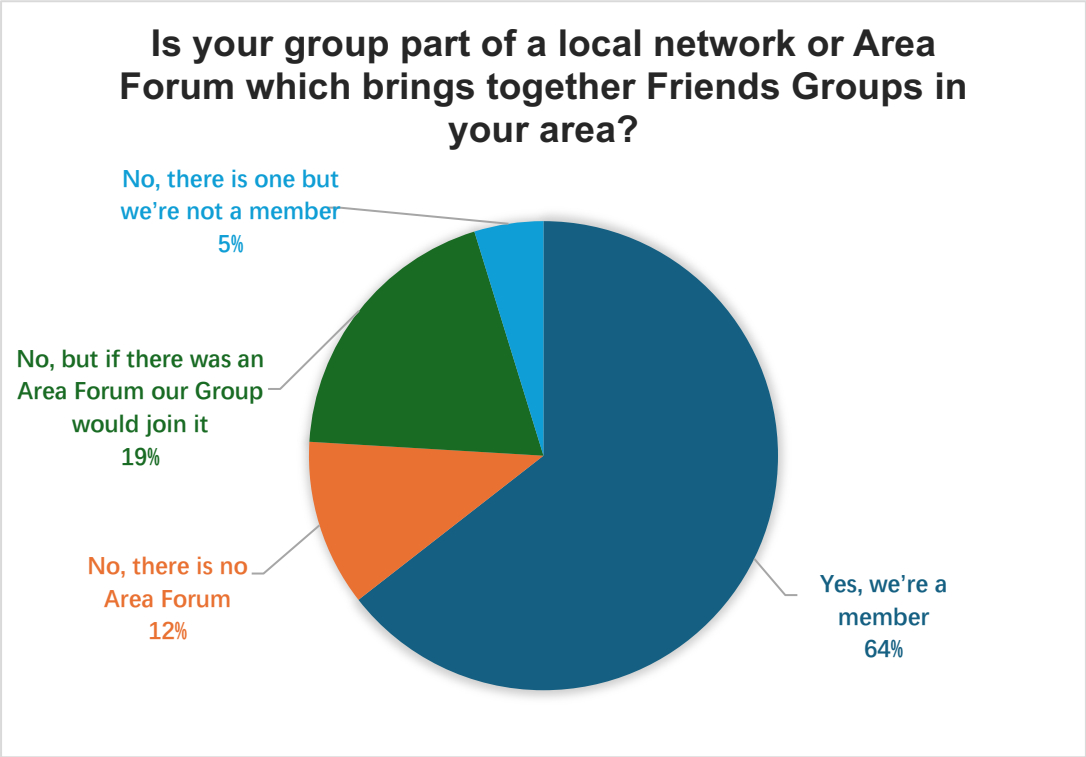
6. **Governance capacity & trustee strength (n≈9)**

“By keeping the group aware and involved in what is being actioned and quarterly meeting”
“We would like a few more committed volunteers especially to strengthen the trustees.”
“Regular meet-ups.”

7. **No clear sustainability plan / pessimism about continuity (n≈38)**

“We don't have a long term sustainability plan.”
“We are limping along really”
“We don't. Long term resilience is an issue as there's a lack of interest in committee and leadership roles”

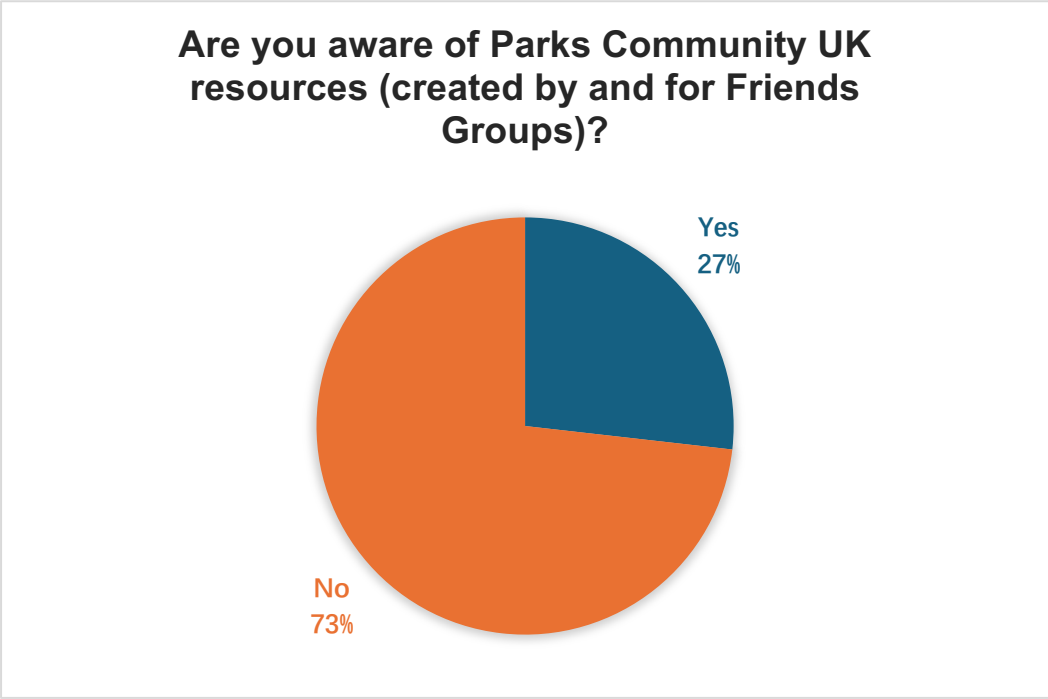
Q48. Is your group part of a local network or Area Forum which brings together Friends Groups in your area?



Q49. Many thanks for taking the time and putting in the thinking power to do this survey! If you would be interested in doing a follow-up interview to help us generate a **case study** from your experience that other groups can benefit from, please provide us with an email address so we can get in touch with you.

Response: 470 respondents confirmed they would be willing to be involved in a Case Study

Q50.Are you aware of Parks Community UK resources (created by and for Friends Groups)? See https://parkscommunity.org.uk/

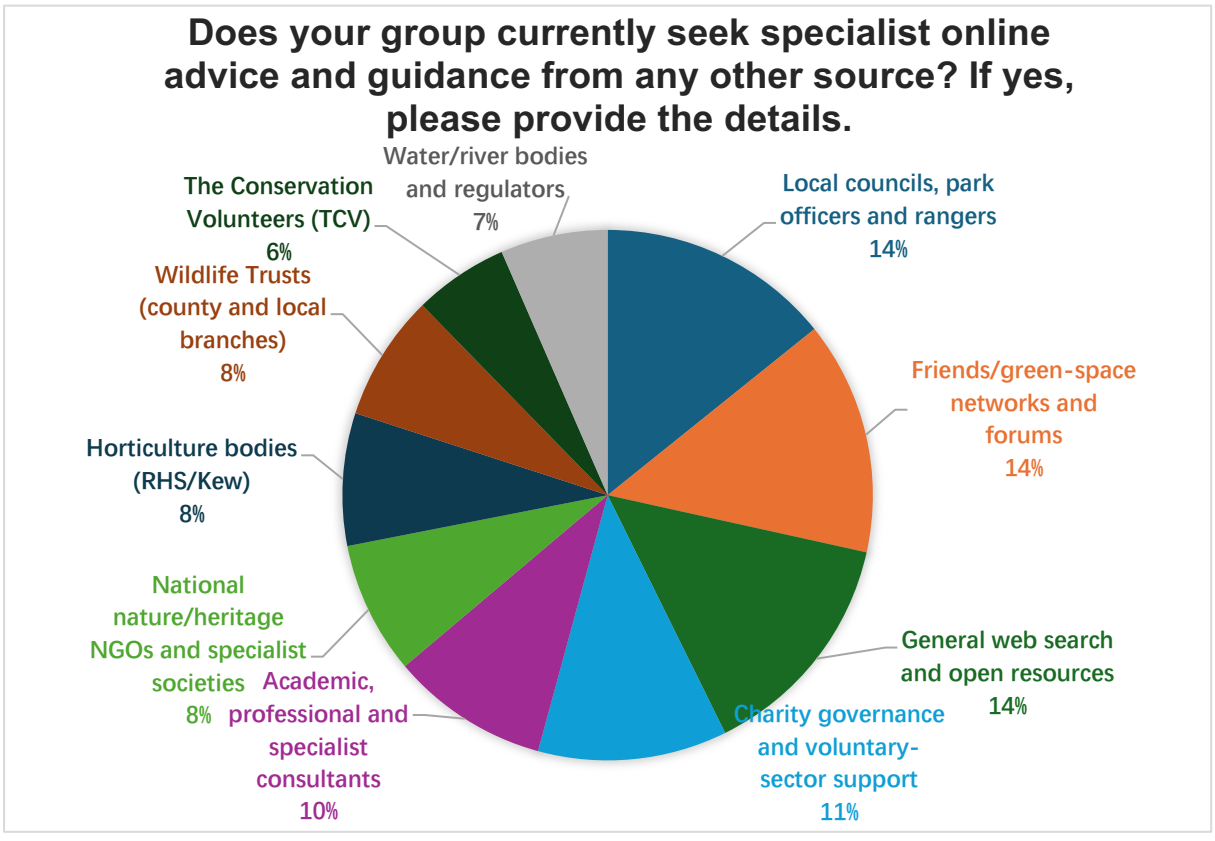


Q51.Does your group currently seek specialist online advice and guidance from any other source?

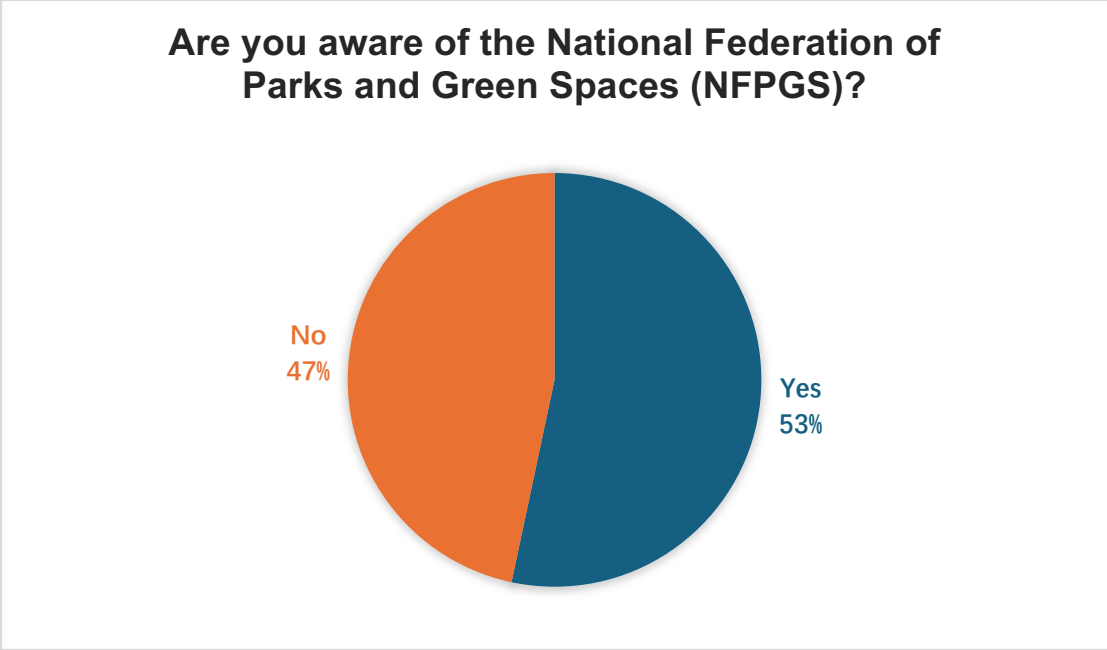


Q52.If yes, please provide the details.

1. Local councils, park officers and rangers (n≈37)
2. Friends / green-space networks and forums (city, regional, national) (n≈37)
3. General web search and open resources (n≈37)
4. Charity governance and voluntary-sector support (n≈30)
5. Academic, professional and specialist consultants (n≈25)
6. National nature/heritage NGOs and specialist societies (n≈21)
7. Horticulture bodies (RHS / Kew etc.) (n≈21)
8. Wildlife Trusts (county and local branches) (n≈20)
9. The Conservation Volunteers (TCV) (n≈15)
10. Water / river bodies and regulators (n≈11)
11. None / N/A / unsure (n≈17)



Q53.Are you aware of the National Federation of Parks and Green Spaces (NFPGS)? See https://natfedparks.org.uk/



Q54.Would you like to sign up to the NFPGS newsletter? If yes, please insert your email address here.

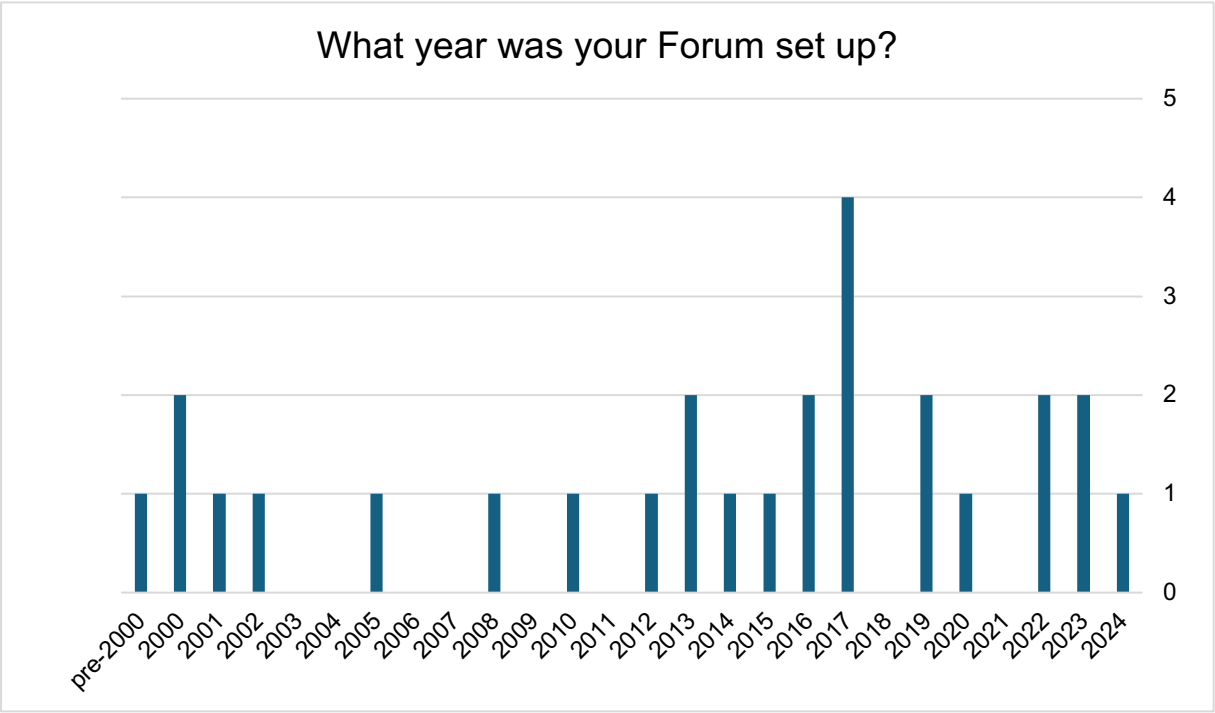
Response: 520 respondents signed up.

SURVEY TWO. AREA FORUMS.

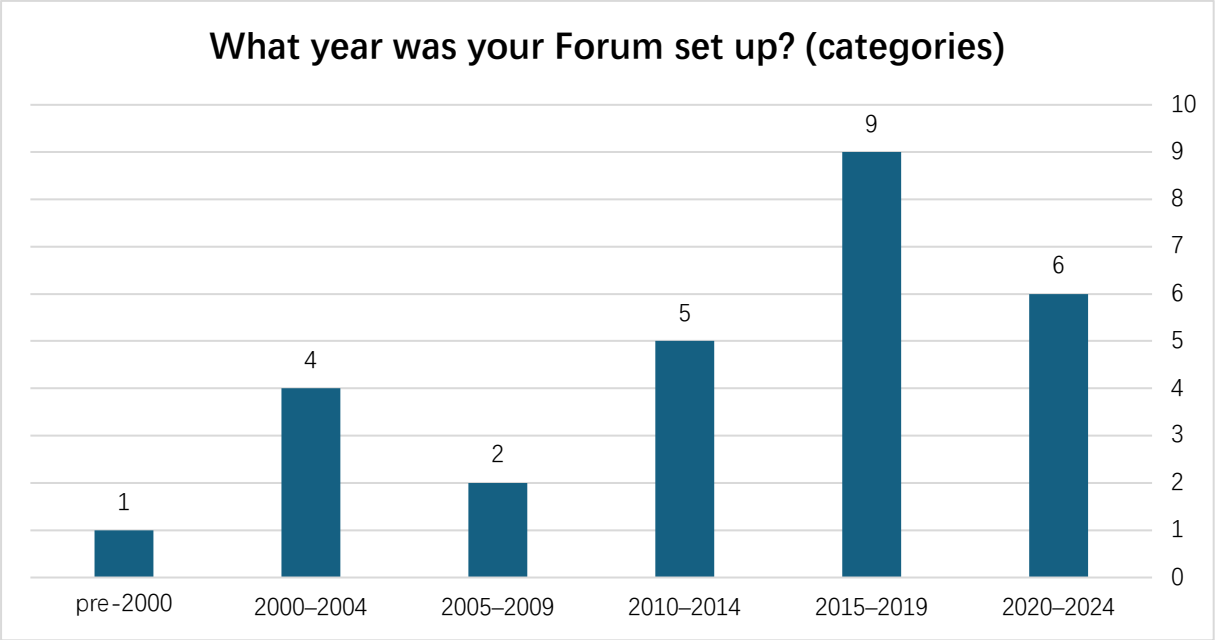
2.What is your role or position in the Forum?[2]

Role or position in the Forum	No. of responses
Chair/ Co-chair	19
Secretary	2
Treasurer	3
Other committee member	4
Total	28

3.What year was your Forum set up?



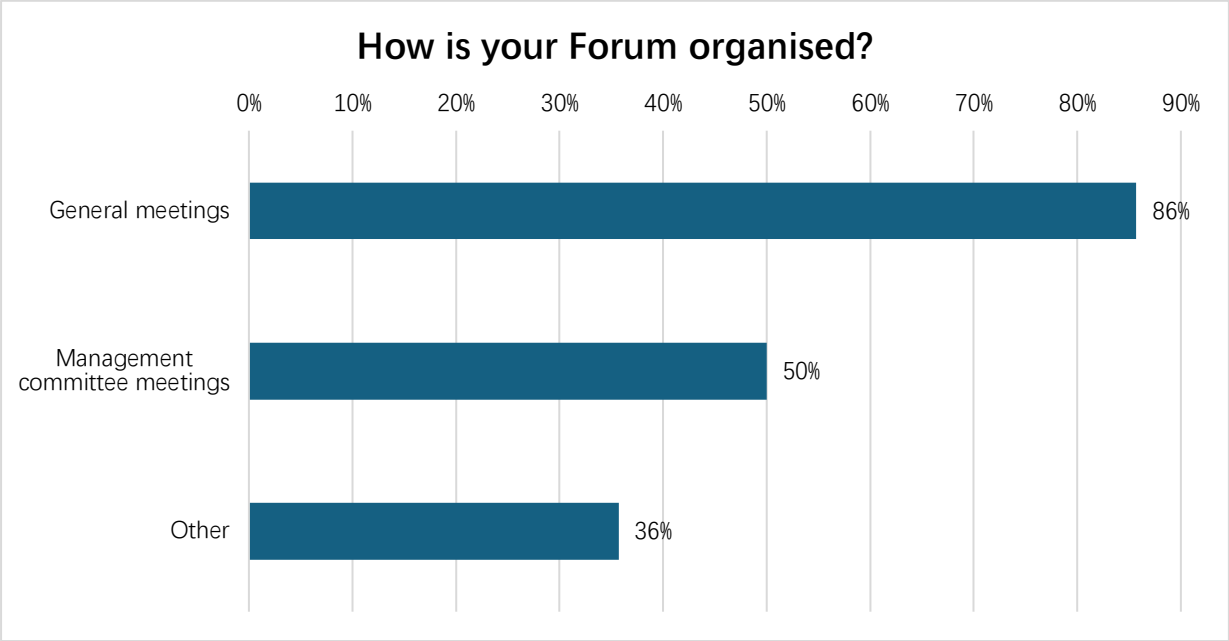
[2] Question 1 asked 'What is the Name of your Forum?'. The results are not reported here for reasons of anonymity.


What year was your Forum set up? (categories)
10
9
8
7
6
5
4
3
2
1
0
1
4
2
5
9
6
pre-2000
2000–2004
2005–2009
2010–2014
2015–2019
2020–2024

4.Which Local Authority area or region do you represent?

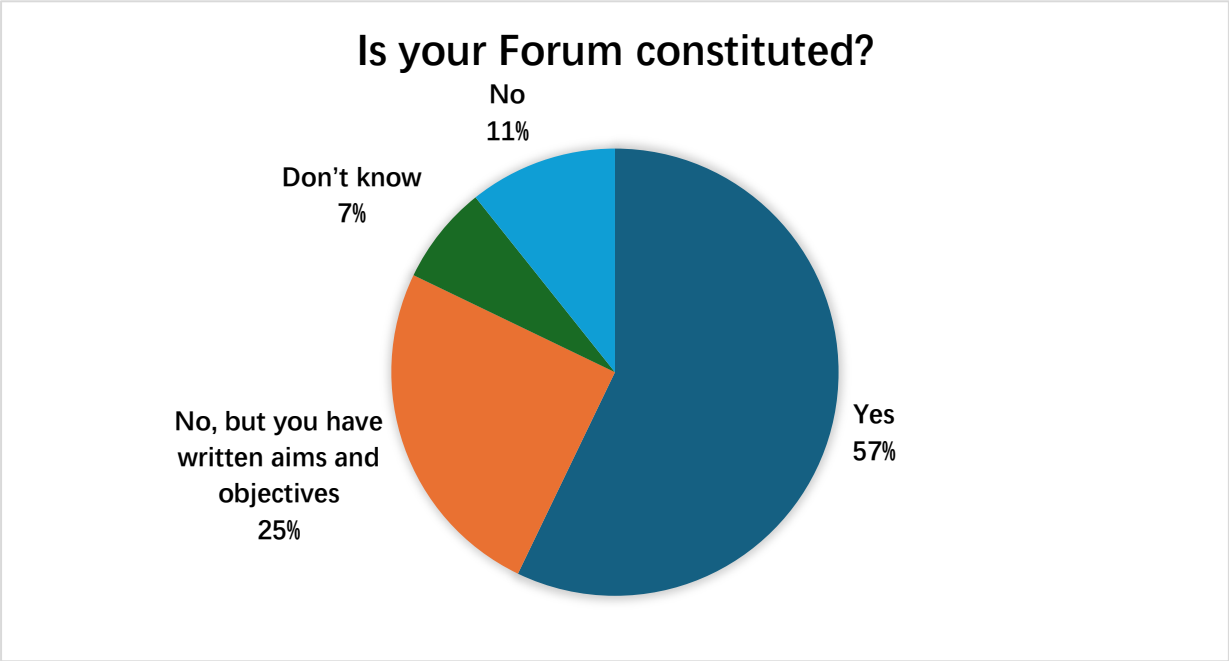


5.How is your Forum organised? Select all that apply.

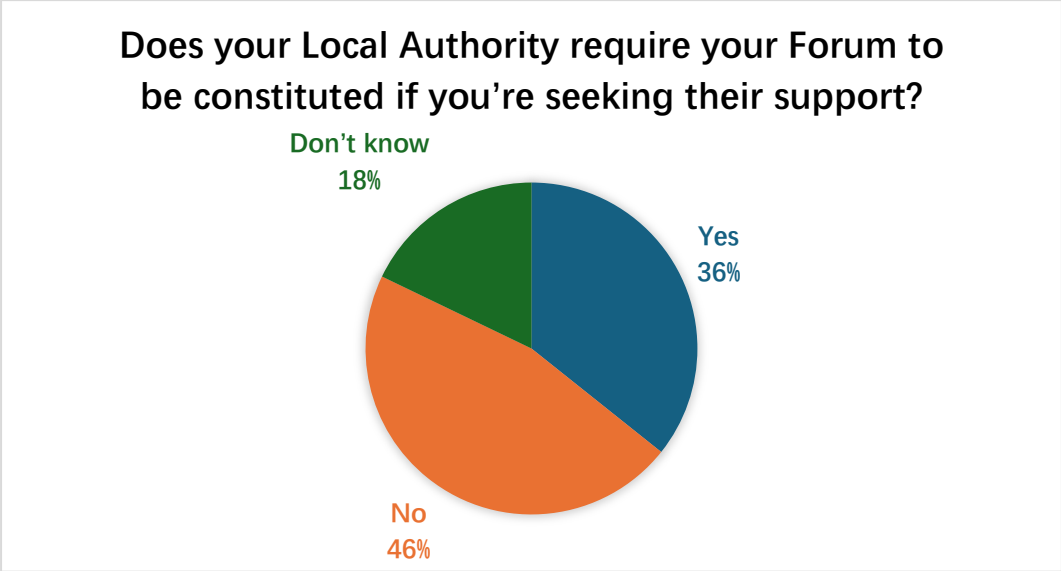


6.Is your Forum constituted?

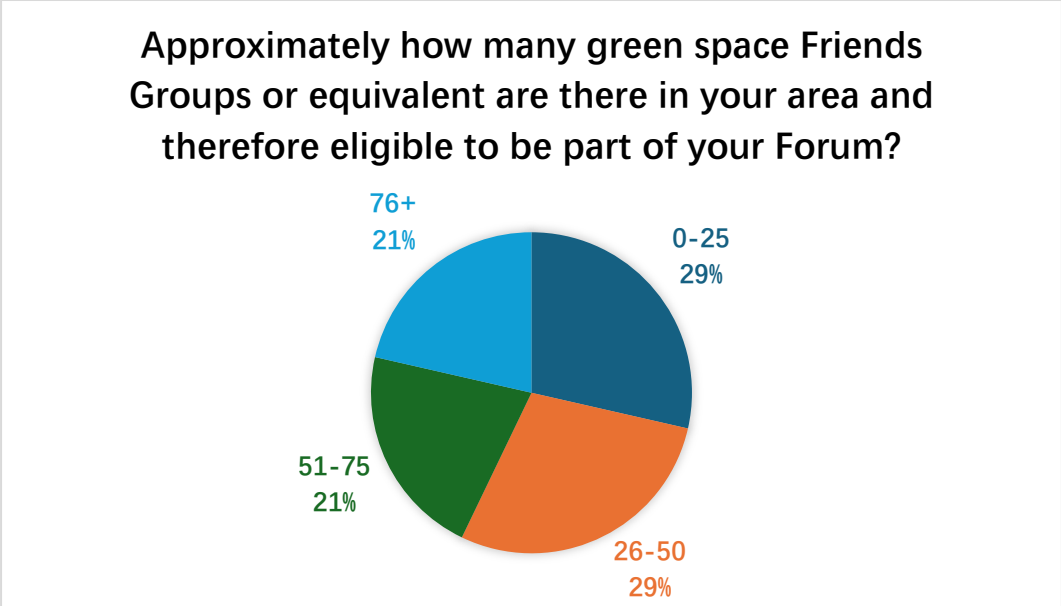
For an example of a constituted Forum, please follow this link: https://parkscommunity.org.uk/how_to_guide/friends-forum-sample-constitution/



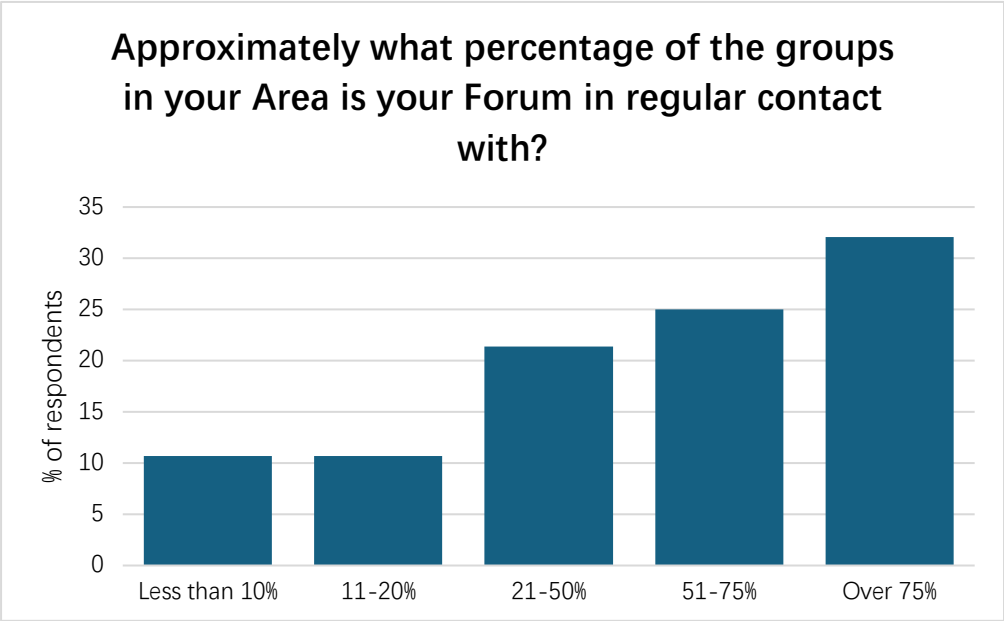
7.Does your Local Authority require your Forum to be constituted if you're seeking their support?



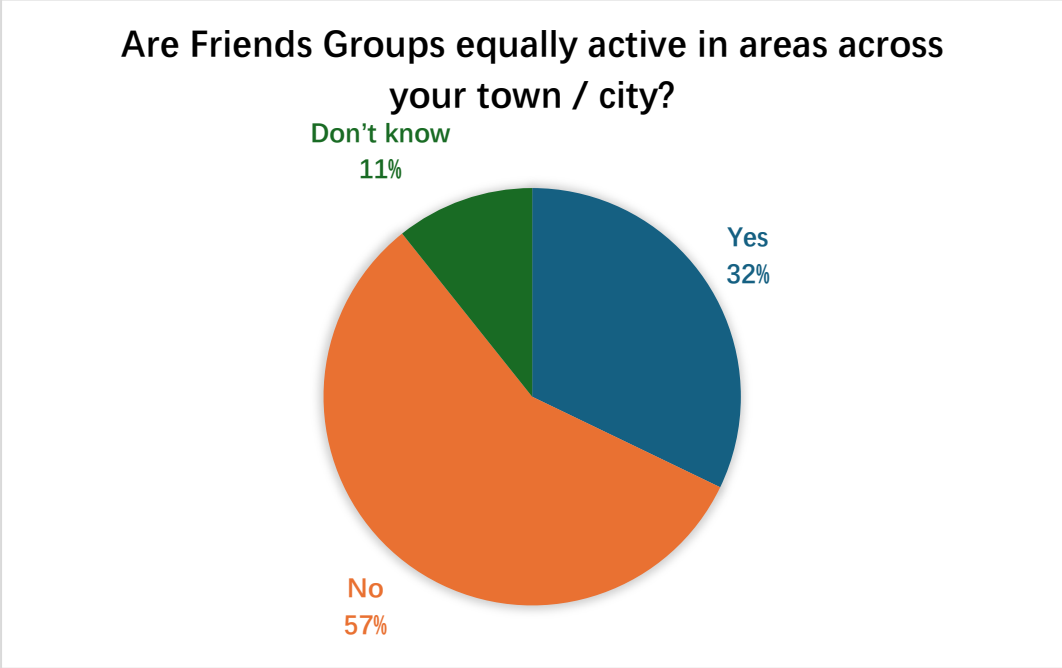
8.Approximately how many green space Friends Groups or equivalent are there in your area and therefore eligible to be part of your Forum?



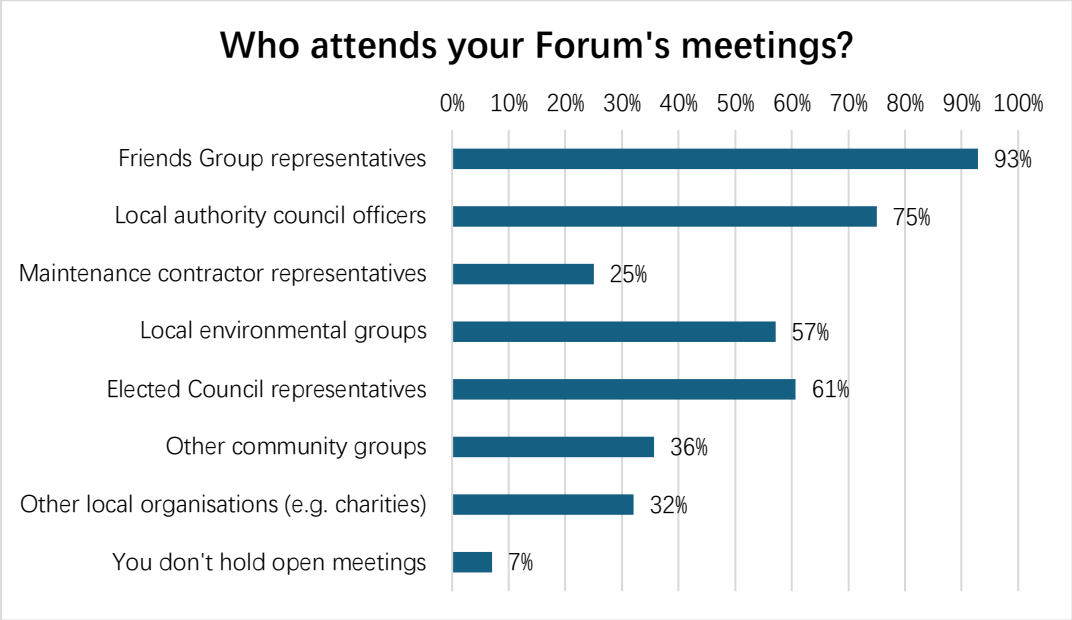
9.Approximately what percentage of these groups is your Forum in regular contact with?



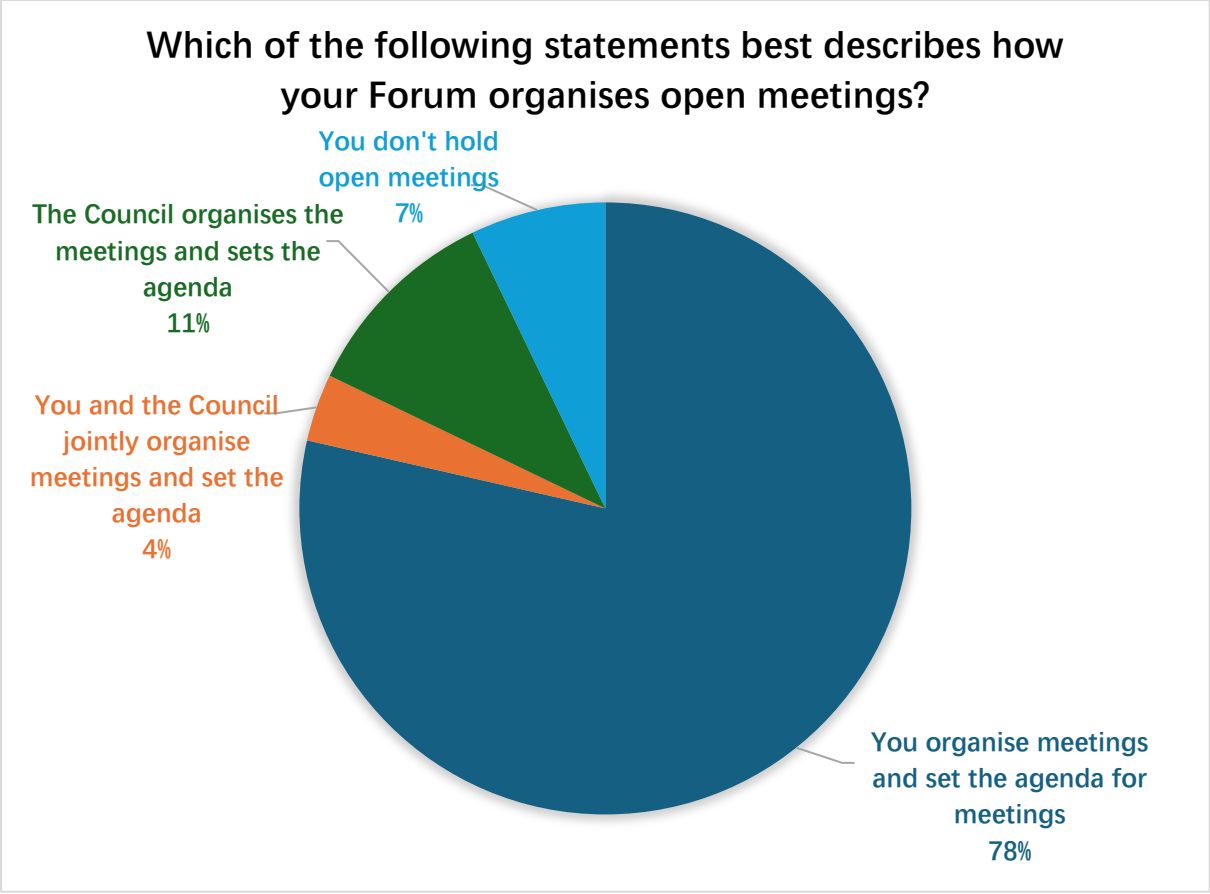
10.Are Friends Groups equally active in areas across your town / city - e.g. in working class or ‘traditionally under-represented’ areas, as well as affluent areas?



11.Who attends your Forum's meetings? Select all that apply.

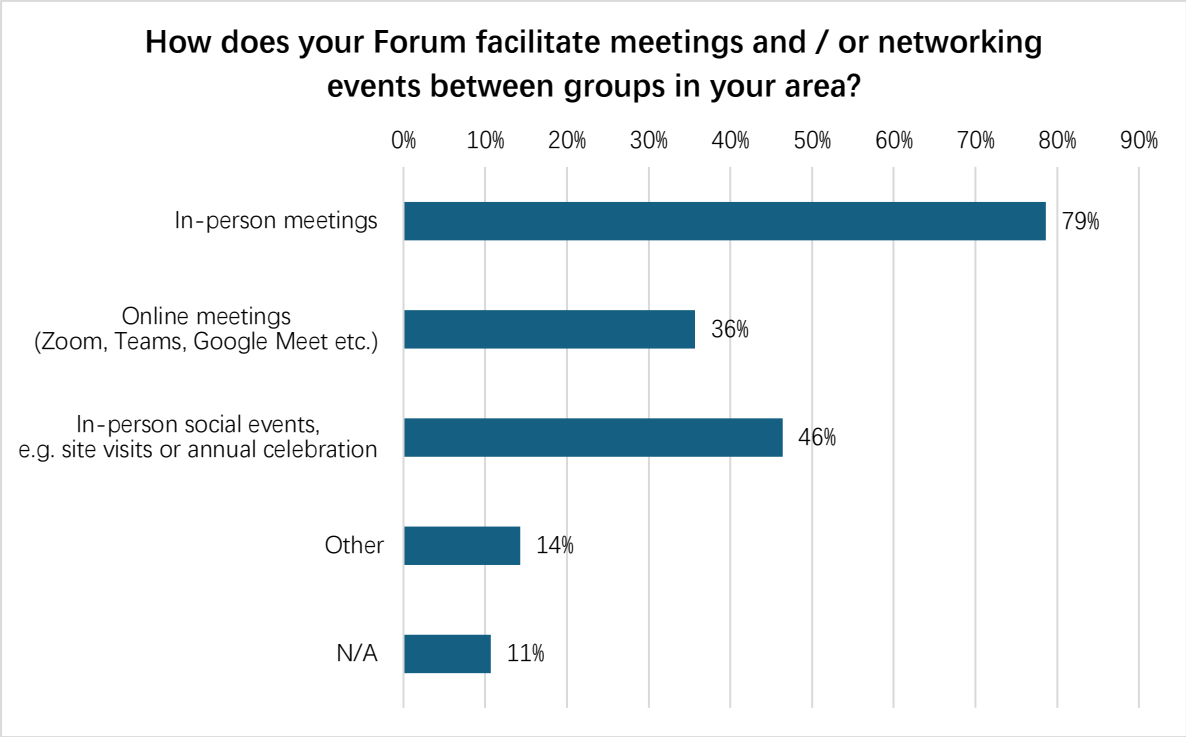


12.Which of the following statements best describes how your Forum organises open meetings? (please select one)

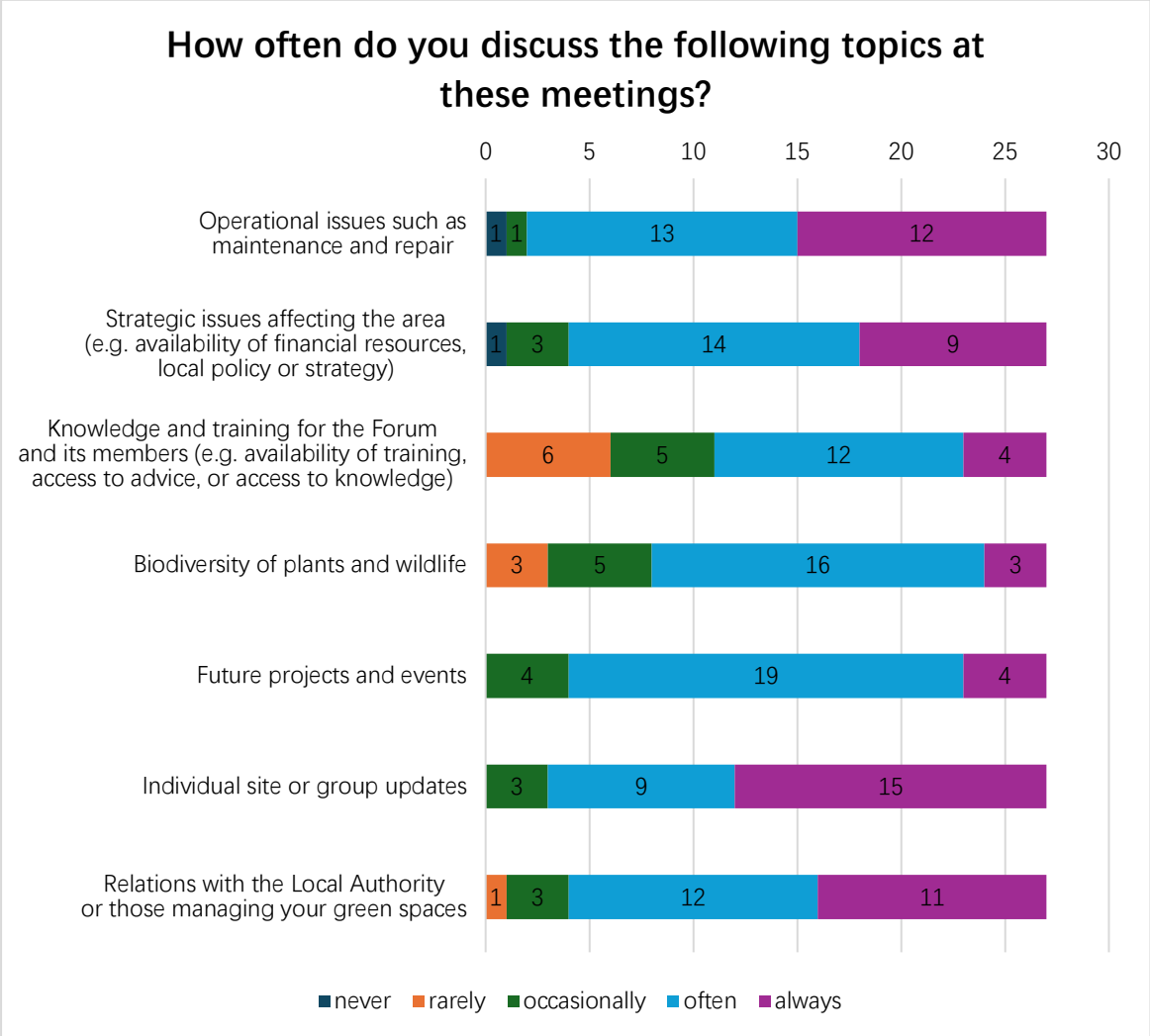


What your Forum does

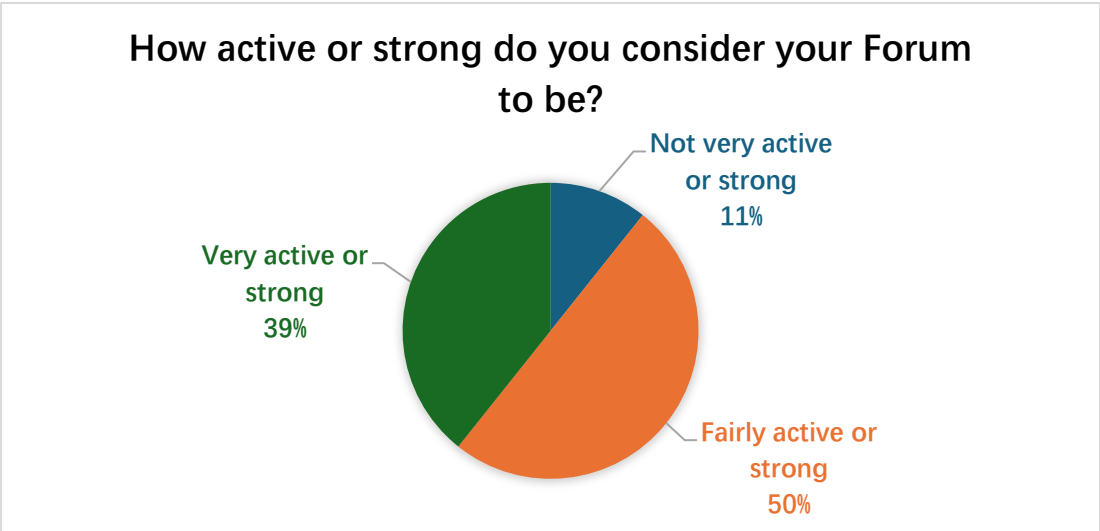
13.How does your Forum facilitate meetings and / or networking events between groups in your area? Select all that apply. If you do not facilitate meetings and / or networking events, please select N/A.



14.How often do you discuss the following topics at these meetings?



15.How active or strong do you consider your Forum to be?



16.What is your proudest achievement over the last 3 years?

Forums' proudest achievements over the past three years most commonly relate to **1) strengthening their influence within local governance**, **2) sustaining and consolidating Forum networks**, **3) building capacity and sharing knowledge among member groups**.

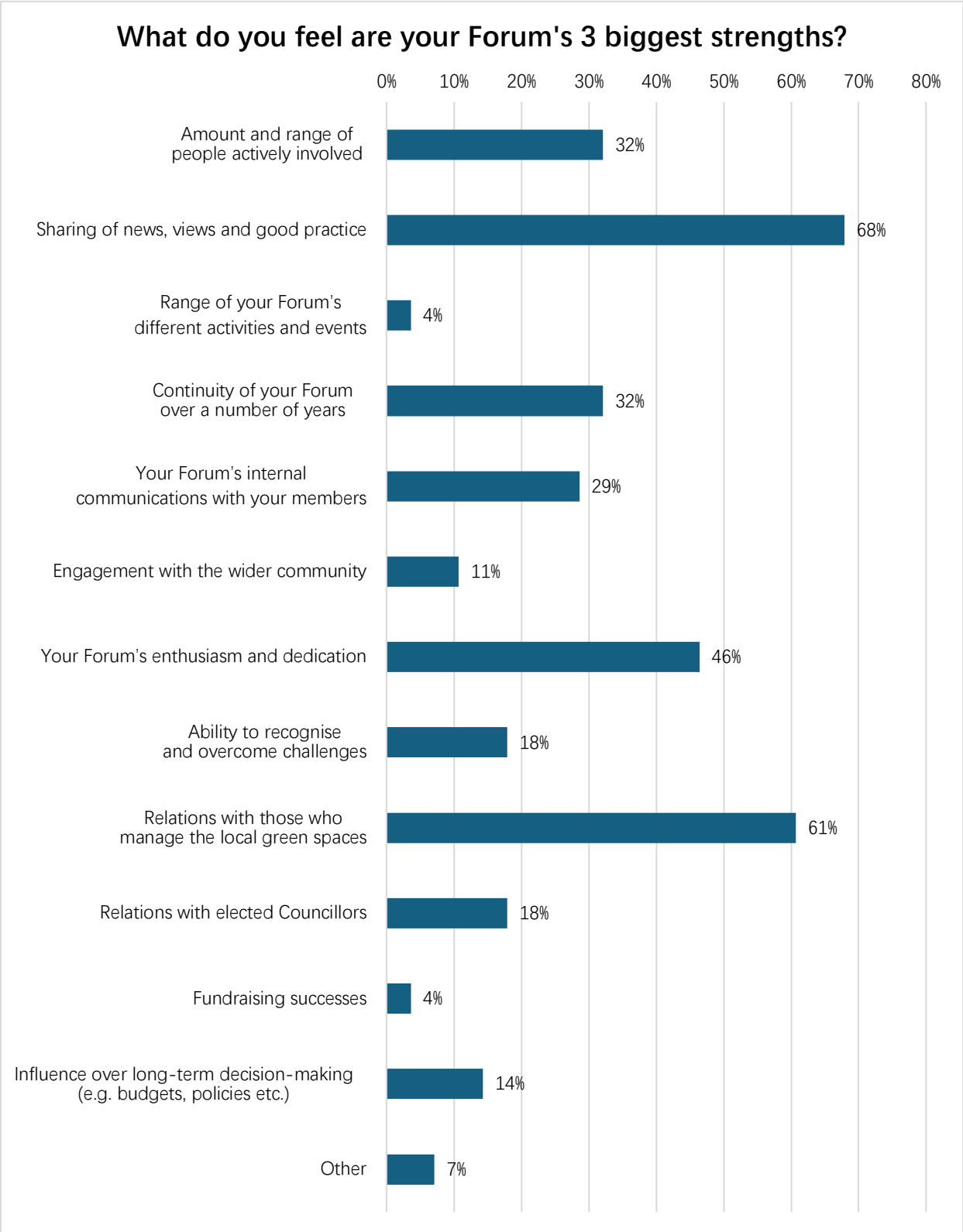
Many respondents highlighted **successful engagement with local authorities**, including influencing policy, maintenance contracts, planning processes, or securing formal protections for parks and green spaces. Others emphasised the significance of **simply maintaining Forum activity and member connections**, particularly in the context of long-term decline and the impacts of Covid-19. Achievements also included **knowledge sharing** through seminars and webinars, **practical resource support** such as insurance or grant mechanisms, and **initiatives to widen participation and support groups in less affluent areas**.

Answers:

Winning [Name of Place] Award.
Established processes to view planning applications to develop green spaces, parks
Continuation of our [Name] social events where we present all the awards from [Name of Award]. We have between 80-100 volunteers attending.
A productive partnership with the City Council's senior 'Parks' officers and Councillors
Staying strong, sharing news and views, and supporting each other
Bringing support to groups in low income areas.
Starting of a city parks map/website Tree planting projects Involvement with wider city Council
Establishing the Area Forum
Building the network of groups across the borough
Hosting webinars to help groups acquire knowledge and access expert support.
Too many to report
Continuing to function. Start of comprehensive mapping of spaces, Local Nature Reserves, parks etc
Green flag status
A strong cohesive group that holds the Council and others to account and gets to air views to those with abilities to effect change
Retaining contact with members
Input into the new parks maintenance contract
Managing the transition from Council to Charity led management and back again
Our annual Autumn Seminars which to which all groups are invited to meet one another and hear from Keynote Speakers.
Campaigning successfully to maintain the Council's Parks budget and not cut it

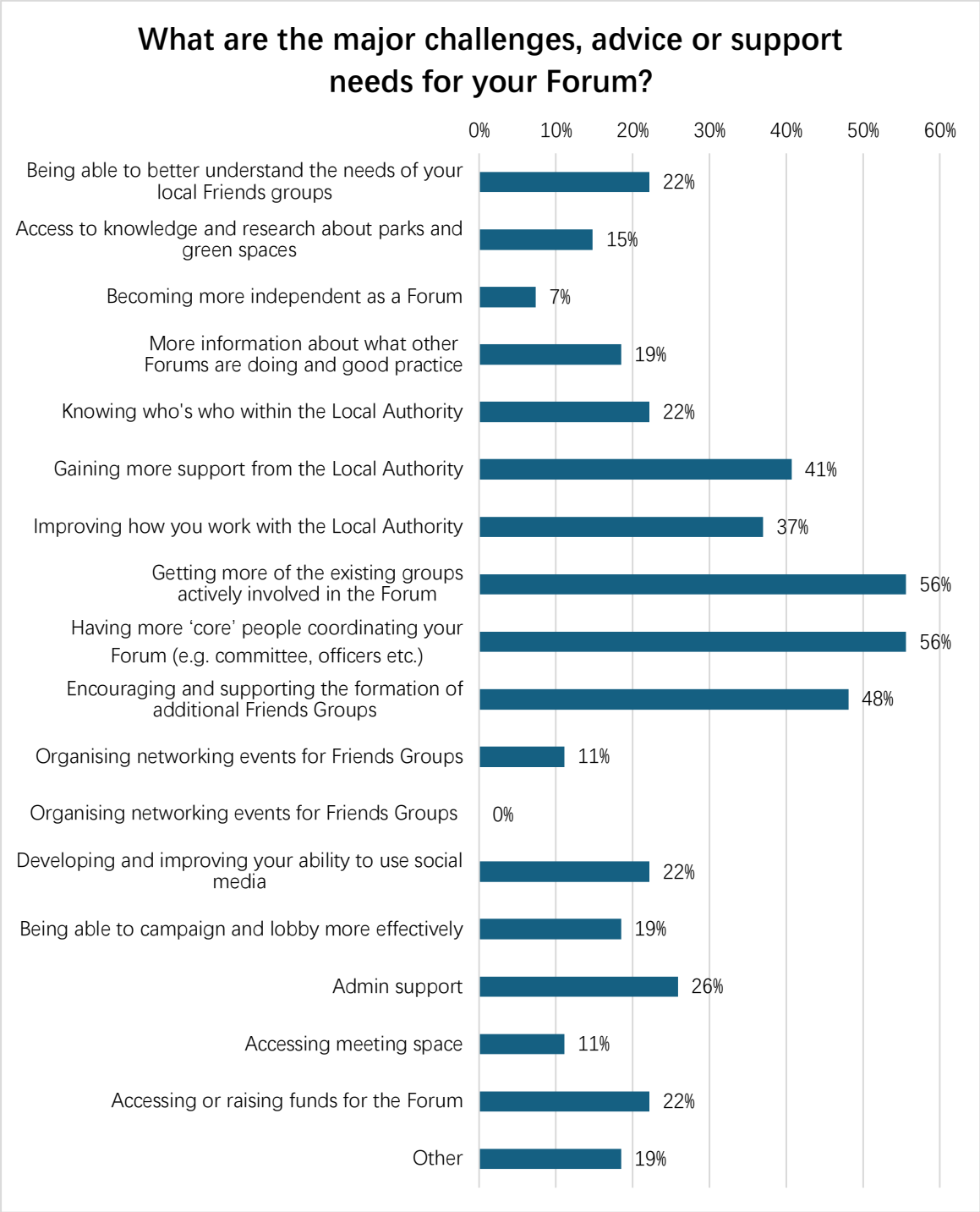
Arranging a variety of interesting speakers
Establishing ourselves, getting a great management committee together and achieving a very enthusiastic first General Meeting
We’re a formidable group & the council respects our input.
Particularly since Covid both the Forum and the number of active groups have declined significantly, though it has to be said this decline has been ongoing for over 10 years.
Getting the Council to contribute to the cost of groups public liability insurance
An event organised by the Parks & Countryside manager when we were invited to display photos of our groups and be part of the presentation to councillors, Borough staff and the rest of the Parks & Countryside team.
Getting 19 parks under the protection of Fields in Trust
Setting up a small grants scheme administered by the Parks Foundation so that groups can be refunded quickly, rather than payments being made via council systems. The council gives the Foundation a sum up front to do this. It covers things like public liability insurance for friends groups
Inclusion in Council’s Habitat Bank

17.What do you feel are your Forum's 3 biggest strengths?



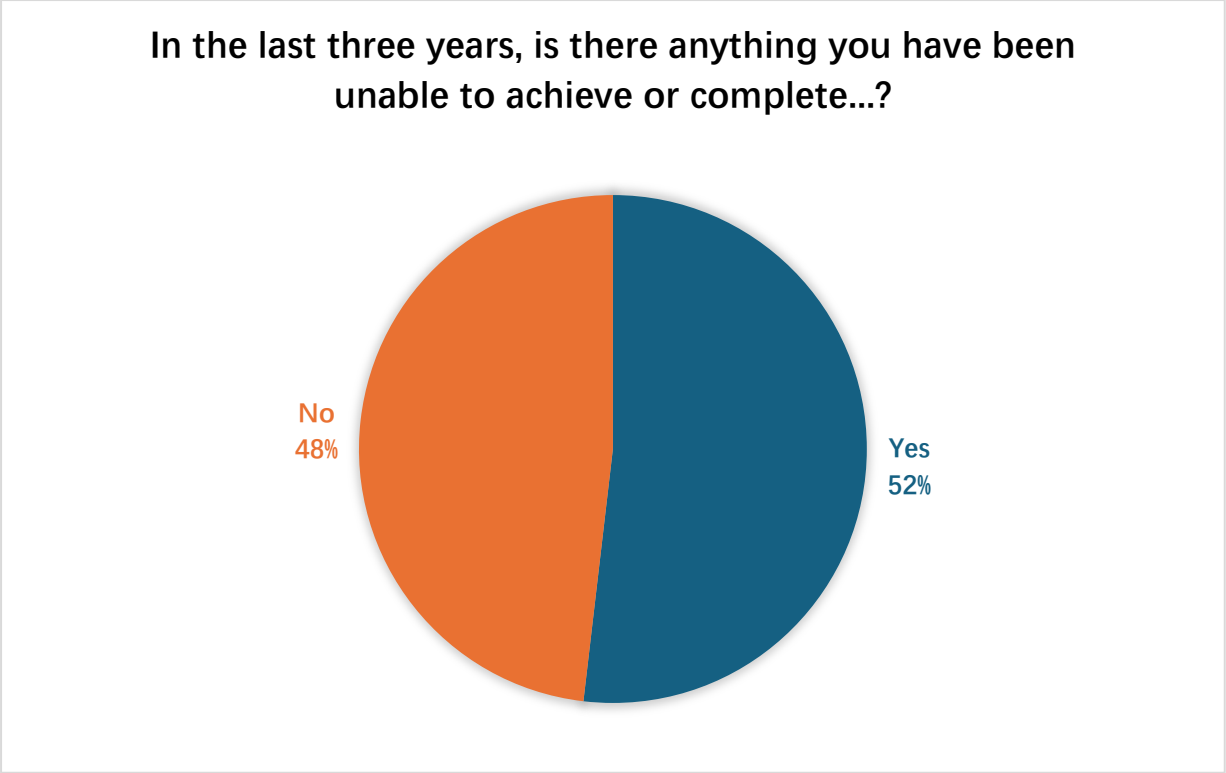
What your Forum needs

18.What are the major challenges, advice or support needs for your Forum? Select all that apply.



Option ‘Other’ include:
“Council staff time”
“Huge challenges associated with engaging and sustaining activity across such an extensive regional area”
“Lack of funds that the local authority has to spend on parks also contact lists up to date”

19.In the last three years, is there anything you have been unable to achieve or complete due to the lack of capacity, advice, guidance or support for your Forum?



20.If yes, please explain.

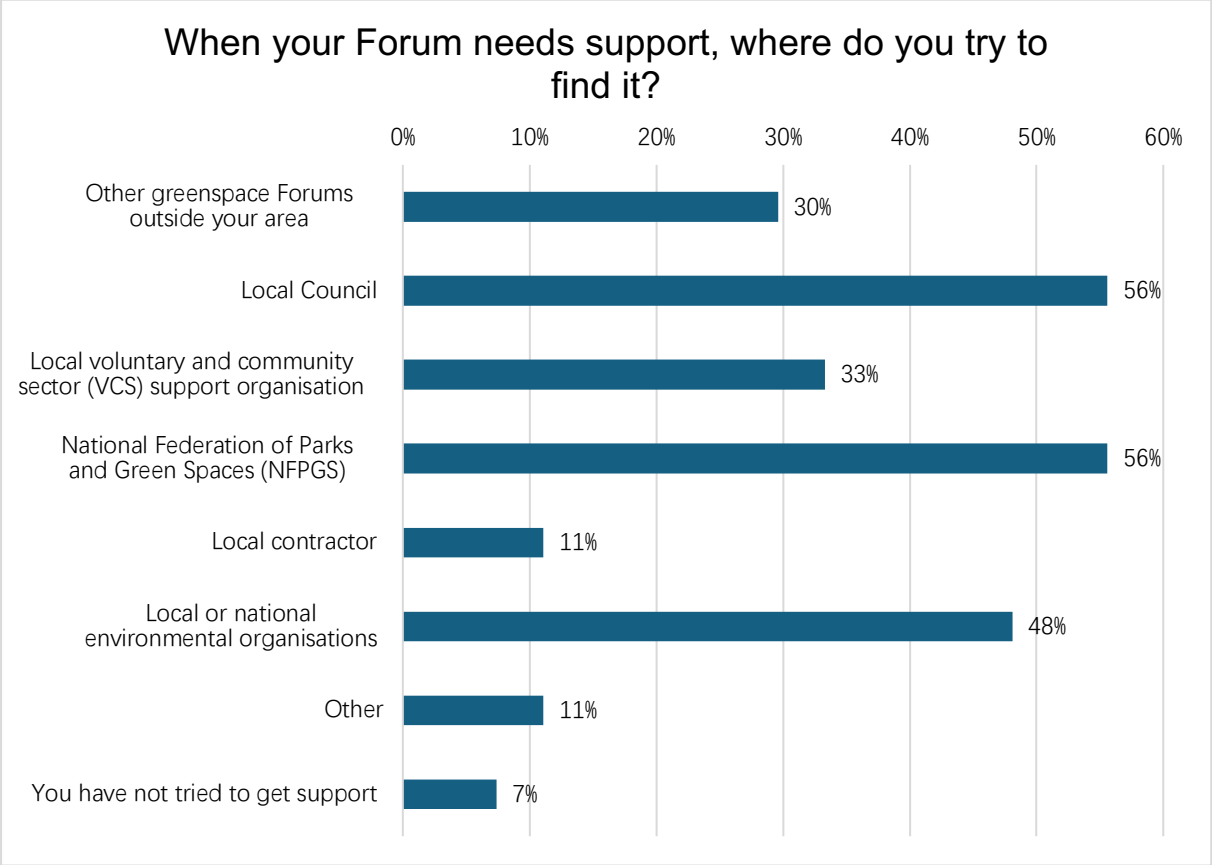
The most frequently cited barriers relate to **insufficient coordinator and committee capacity, limited paid support**, and **the inability to sustain follow-up actions, networking, and lobbying activity**. Several respondents also highlighted **structural constraints within local authorities**, including funding shortfalls, staff turnover, and reduced skills within council-owned contractors. Specific unmet needs included access to affordable training (e.g. first aid), support for developing effective working groups, and greater

autonomy for Friends Groups to act under shared management plans and insurance cover.

Answers:

Constant requirement to complete Freedom Of Information requests, file complaints, involve ombudsman and tackle councillors and MPs due to misinformation, misstatements, misleading documents, advertising errors and financial irregularities resulting in auditors qualifying accounts
Emergency First Aid training for all groups who need it, without them having to pay (average £70 pp)
Development of effective working groups to progress key issues
Capacity - a team of coordinators is required. Groups fundraise individually.
Limited number of active committee members so lack of capacity to support groups & complete projects
Having a paid project manager to support the Friends Groups has helped build capacity, but there is always more that could be done, particularly with the time intensive activities such as supporting new groups. The project manager is only contracted at 15 hours per week and funding may be about to run out.
Action within the council but this is in turn blocked by their lack of funding
Loss of networking due to loss of capacity and subregion contacts to sustain membership contacts
To follow up on action points from meetings and lobby contractor and council on key issues.
Friends Groups need some level of autonomy which management agencies are very reluctant to grant. Once the autonomy is in place (based on a shared understanding of the management plan for each green space), Council staff and Friends Groups volunteers can work toward the planned outcomes for each green space. This in turn should lead to Friends Groups volunteers working under the Council's insurance cover.
Setting up the first year of the Forum was time consuming, we only had the capacity for organising one General Meeting /Annual General Meeting.
Continuation of the Forum!
We asked questions around skills in the Council's wholly owned company contractor, starting with a skills audit, Then raised questions about apprenticeships and training. Had a very encouraging meeting with the Talent Manger for the company, who was impressive. Then [we were] told they'd let her go in a restructuring.
Lack of council involvement

21.When your Forum needs support, where do you try to find it? Select all that apply.



Option ‘Other’ includes:

“online search” and “Parks Manager”.

22.Please list up to 3 priorities your Forum has that you would like to have more advice and support from the NFPGS specifically

Priority 1

Priority 1 responses reveal that Forums' most urgent concerns relate to **structural risks to the survival and protection of green spaces**, particularly through planning processes, national and local policy frameworks, and chronic underfunding and understaffing. Alongside these external threats, respondents also highlighted internal capacity pressures within Forums themselves, with limited volunteer time and overstretched core committees threatening ongoing coordination and representation.

Answers:

Planning rules, local plan input
National policies regarding protection of green spaces
'Promoting the benefits of green space for health and well-being, including for clean air'.
Achieving adequate funding and staffing for green spaces
Protection of existing spaces with active community use.
Protection of green spaces
Campaigning for more resources for open spaces
Friends group reps don't have a lot of free time - they have their own group's commitments and also tend to volunteer with multiple other orgs - but it would be great to have more people actively involved in the core committee of our forum.
Assessment of our performance by comparison with other Forums
None
How to lobby for funding the council
Rejuvenate member contacts
Visibility of reported maintenance issues in parks and when they will be fixed
Insurance Cover at a Forum level (rather than individual Friends Groups)
Raising awareness of funding opportunities for green spaces groups (and Forums).
Loss of Local Green Space in our new Local Plan because [none] of our city's parks and green spaces have this protection
Attracting new Volunteers.
Examples of good practice and successful ways of Forums working.
N/A
Council recognising that having a highly skilled workforce would deliver better quality and value for money. Currently skills and experience low, the very few staff with good skills and experience are due to retire and the aspiration in terms of quality is low.
Influencing local councillors to value the importance to the community of parks and open spaces and to ensure sufficient funds are allotted to the budget

Access to funding
Examples of good practice,

22a. How could the NFPGS advise or support you to achieve this priority?

Summary: Requests for NFPGS support at this level focus on lobbying, policy influence, authoritative evidence, and national-level campaigning rather than localised or project-based assistance.

Answers:

Training
Continue with the informative newletters
Maybe with succinct stats, to make the point to funders. Maybe comparable with other Local Authorities. We shall be asking our Director of Public Health for this info, so we may not need the NFPGS to put effort into compiling stats/a report.
Help generate a strong national campaign of lobbying and protest to pressurise the Government to ensure adequate ongoing resources for the maintenance, management and improvement of all green spaces
Lobbying guidance, signposting to organisations who support green space protection.
awareness of relevant legislation and local bylaws
Organising a national campaign to get recognition of the value of green spaces by government at national, regional and local level
case studies?
Links to newsletter or annual conferences
None
State the need to government
Access to contacts
Provide an app like the Love clean streets app for parks
Negotiate with the insurance companies on our behalf
Perhaps a centralised site where information and application guidance is available for green space volunteer groups. Tailored to their language and priorities.
Advice and signposting how to overturn Inspectorate refusal to give any of Bristol's green spaces top level protection in the Local Plan
Working with government and other organisations to set up a campaign to reverse the apathy of the people in this country, not to stand back and wait for others to make change.
Sharing information, being available for Q&A and individual issue-based consulting.
N/A
Bang the drum for investment in training and skills to create highly competent parks teams. Build understanding that not having competent is costly, so a matter of you can't afford not to invest in training and skills rather than you can't afford to.
Continue to produce evidence and advice

Training courses and oversight of parks bids
Webinars, relevant documents

Priority 2

Priority 2 responses focus on strengthening Forums' **organisational effectiveness and connectivity**, including networking with other Forums, learning from successful practice elsewhere, improving member diversity and capacity, and addressing practical operational challenges such as website support, Management Plans, insurance.

Answers:

Understand the processes around key areas like monument land, Public Rights of Way etc
Encouraging and helping us grapple with the need to diversify the membership of Friends Groups
Greenspace enhancement
Networking with other Forums
Campaigning for the recognition of parks and open spaces as a statutory requirement
Would be good to know what the key successes were from other forums so that we can do the same.
Website support
Increase capacity
Litter and recycling strategy
Press Government to press Councils to work with Friends Groups and the wider community to develop and manage Management Plans for each green space.
Access to good value basic insurance for green space volunteer groups, perhaps with nationally negotiated low rates.
Recruiting more Committee members of all ages
Fundraising
UK and devolved government level campaigning for the importance of parks and green spaces to community and local environment, public health and biodiversity.
Ensuring that Parks are accessible by the public, by not charging for parking at the venues and ensuring sites are well-maintained and cared for.
More pressure on the local authority to carry their commitment to protect parks through Fields in Trust
Links to individuals experienced with particular issues e.g. applying for assets of community value

22b. How could the NFPGS advise or support you to achieve this priority?

Summary: Respondents seek NFPGS support through case studies, conferences, templates, and signposting, enabling Forums to work more efficiently and confidently within existing governance structures.

Priority 3

Priority 3 priorities include stronger national recognition of parks and green spaces, addressing inequalities in provision, reforming planning practices, and embedding good practice through training, guidance, and shared standards.

Answers:

Central Government recognition.
Identification of good practice
Good practice guidance
Advising this government of its stupidity in blaming newts and bats for its failure to build houses and in the process losing many votes
Inequity of provision in more deprived areas
Develop network activity
Increase nature positive initiatives
Press for planning guidelines which ensure environments don't change (the issue here is that development schemes are approved and the developers come back for another "bite" at a later date which means that work to improve environments may be totally negated (e.g. a nature reserve on the edge of a development where inappropriate paths and roads not included in the original application are being forced through (i.e. the planners are lazy))).
Access to basic health and safety training for green space volunteer groups. Preferably online with accreditation.
Advice on recruiting volunteering and diverse community participation.
N/A
Making it possible for Friends groups to apply for parks & green spaces legally protected, rather than this being the Council's responsibility
Keeping up to date with policies and legal requirements
good practice on engaging new groups

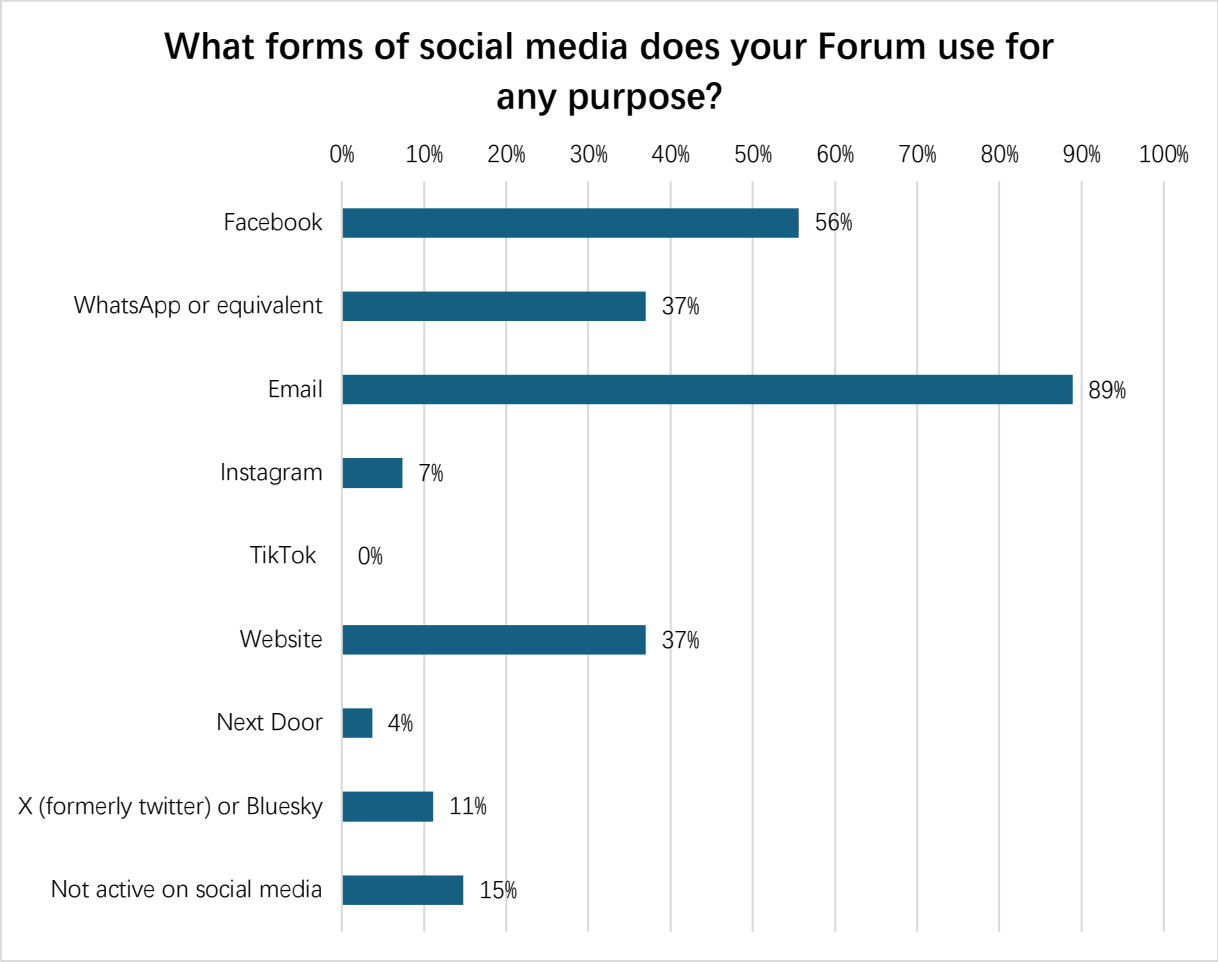
22c. How could the NFPGS advise or support you to achieve this priority?

A consistent and cross-cutting theme emerges in Forums' expectations of NFPGS support: a strong demand for **knowledge, evidence and information sharing**, particularly in forms that enable **comparison across Forums, local authorities and national contexts**. This includes requests for

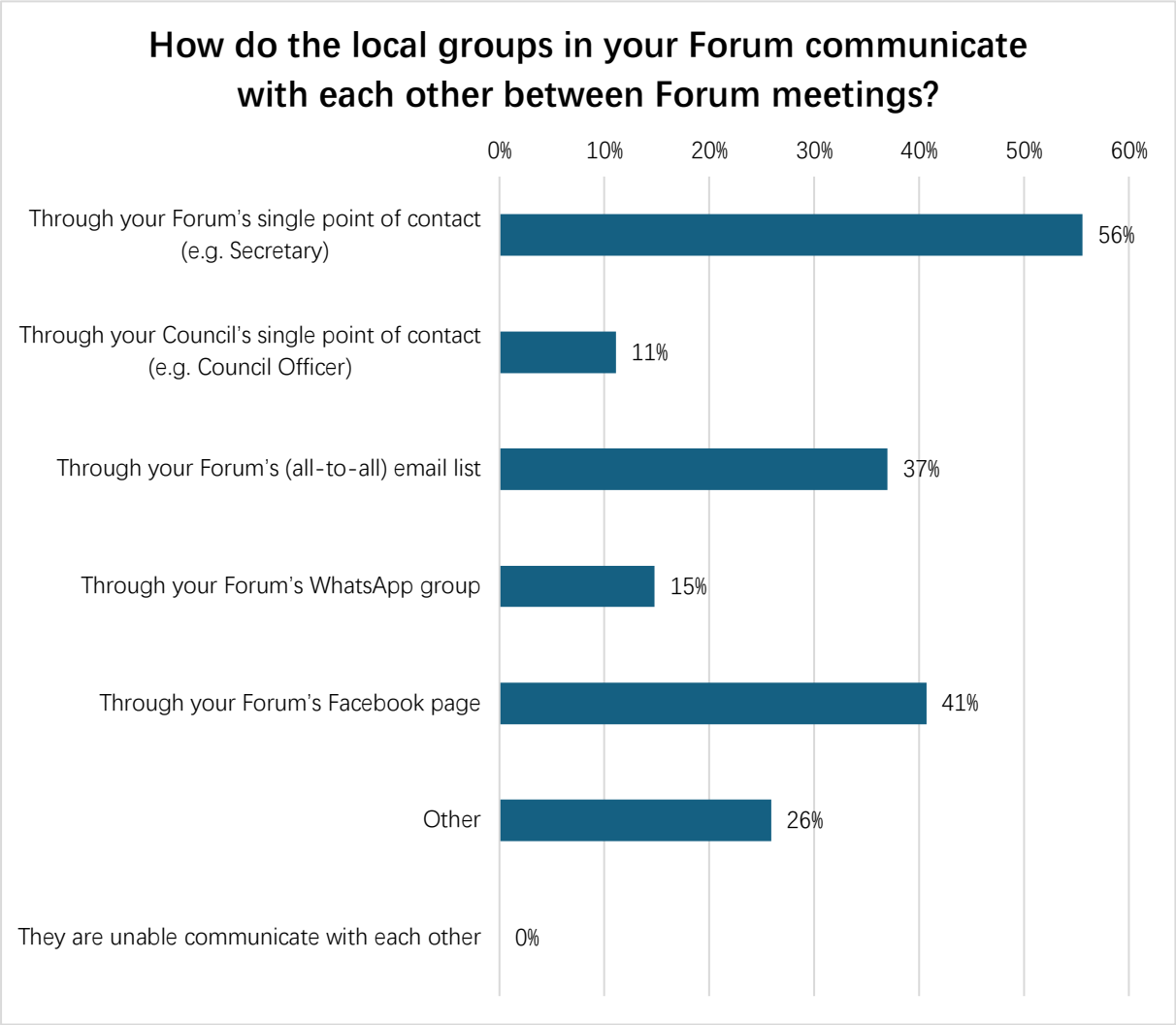
succinct statistics, comparative analyses, case studies, examples of good practice, and centralised repositories of guidance and resources.

How your Forum communicates

23.What forms of social media does your Forum use for any purpose? Select all that apply.



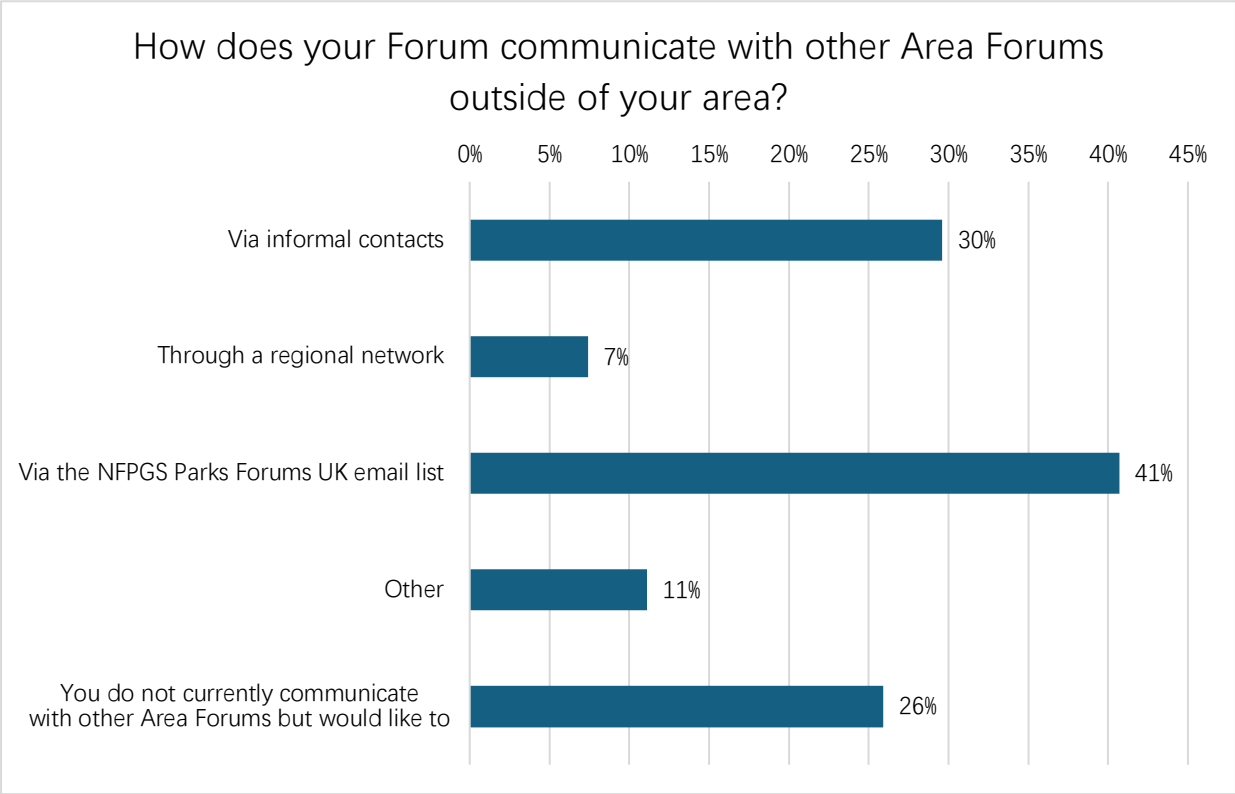
24.How do the local groups in your Forum communicate with each other between Forum meetings? Tick all that apply.



Option 'Other' includes:

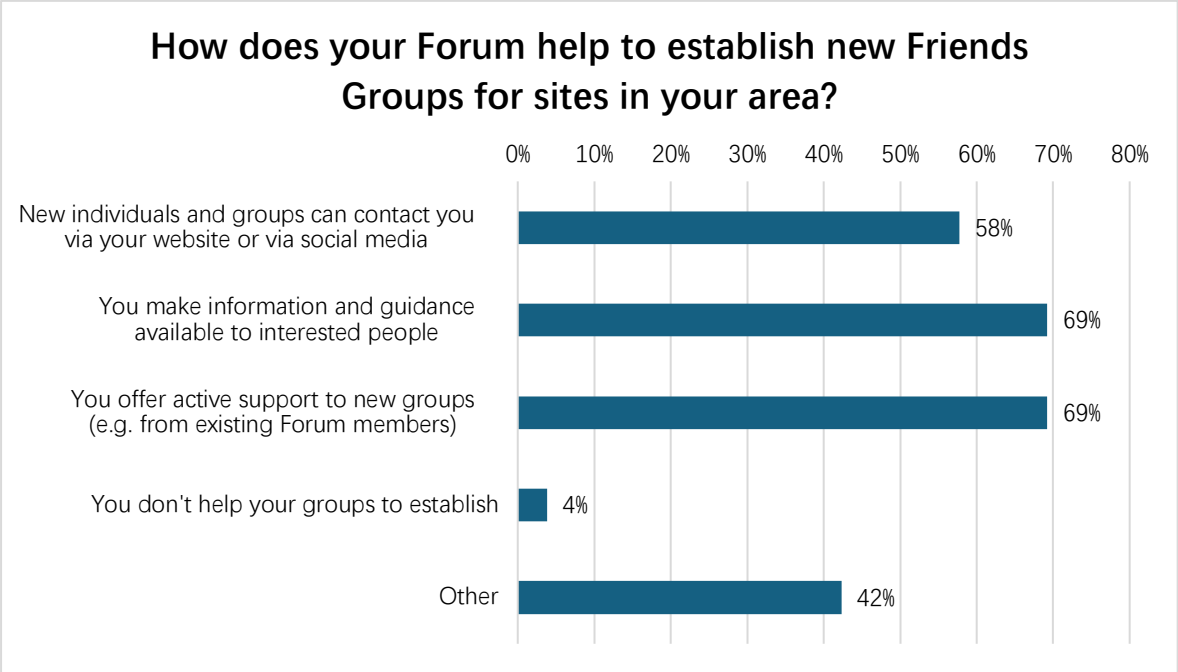
The 'core' members can communicate through a special Whatsapp group,
We have online communication, visits, phone communication, email communication across groups including all to all.
Mailchimp
Our website includes a member group directory and map. Groups often use these to find other groups contact details.
Some Friends groups have established local (geographical) group networks.
Directly with each other

25.How does your Forum communicate with other Area Forums outside of your area? Tick all that apply.



Answers to 'Other' include:
"We have had some contact with them but not many exist adjacent to us"
"We do not & do not feel a need to"

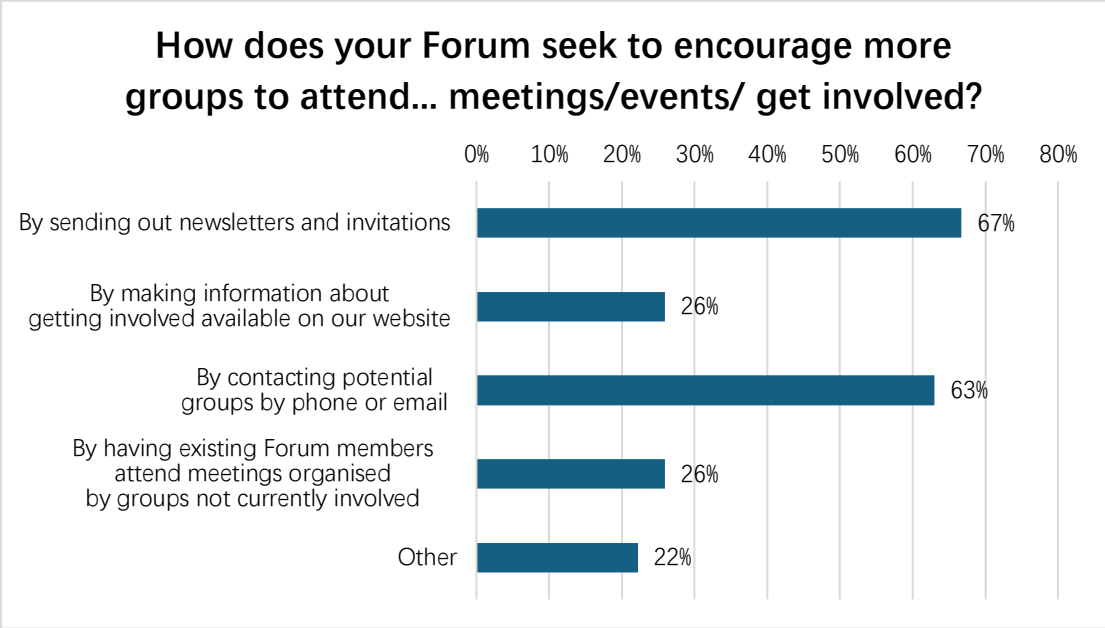
26.How does your Forum help to establish new Friends Groups for sites in your area? Select all that apply.



'Other' include:

We work with the Council's Ranger team who refer new groups to us.
A Forum rep will often chat on the phone in the early phases of a new group starting, and offer to attend their meeting. Also someone setting up a new group is welcome to attend a Forum meeting.
Council Parks Department and Councillors contact via email with potential new groups. Also TCV contact via email, phone and WhatsApp
Annual Public events organised by Council
Council contact
This is handled by the council
We will directly help new groups, this can include directing them towards resources help on the Parks Community Network website
The City Council has good info for Parks groups, specific webpages with links and support and how to set one up, access support and training from them and local city parks charity
We have not yet reached this level of work. At present the Council lead on this.
We offer to support.
Email

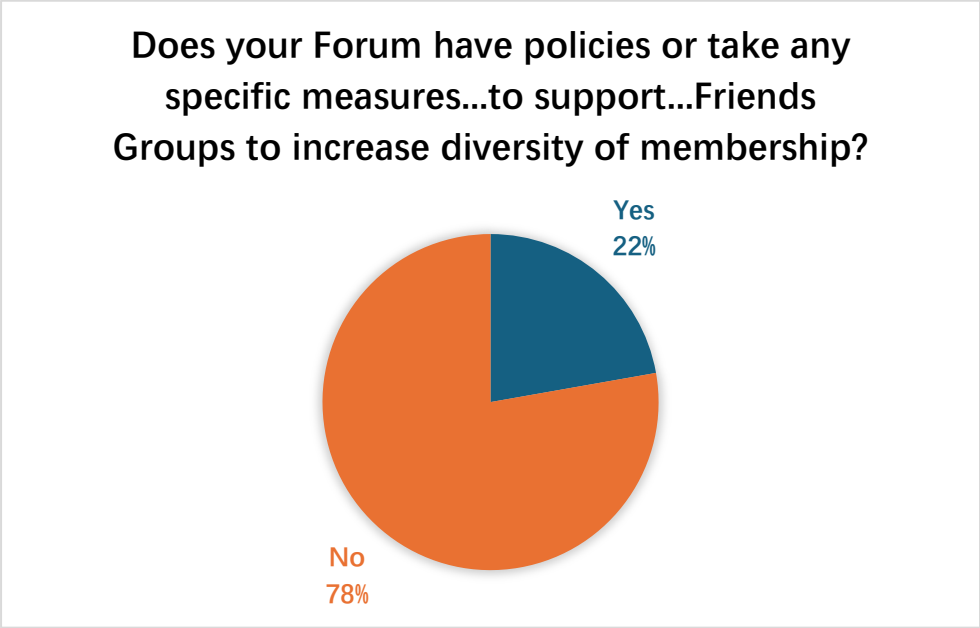
27.How does your Forum seek to encourage more groups to attend your meetings and events and get involved? Select all that apply.



'Other':

The offer of reimbursement of public liability and other insurance payments
We don't actively recruit
It's early days for us, the website to enable this is in process of being set up by the Council.
Invite goes to all Councillors so they pass on to new groups
open to all of the above

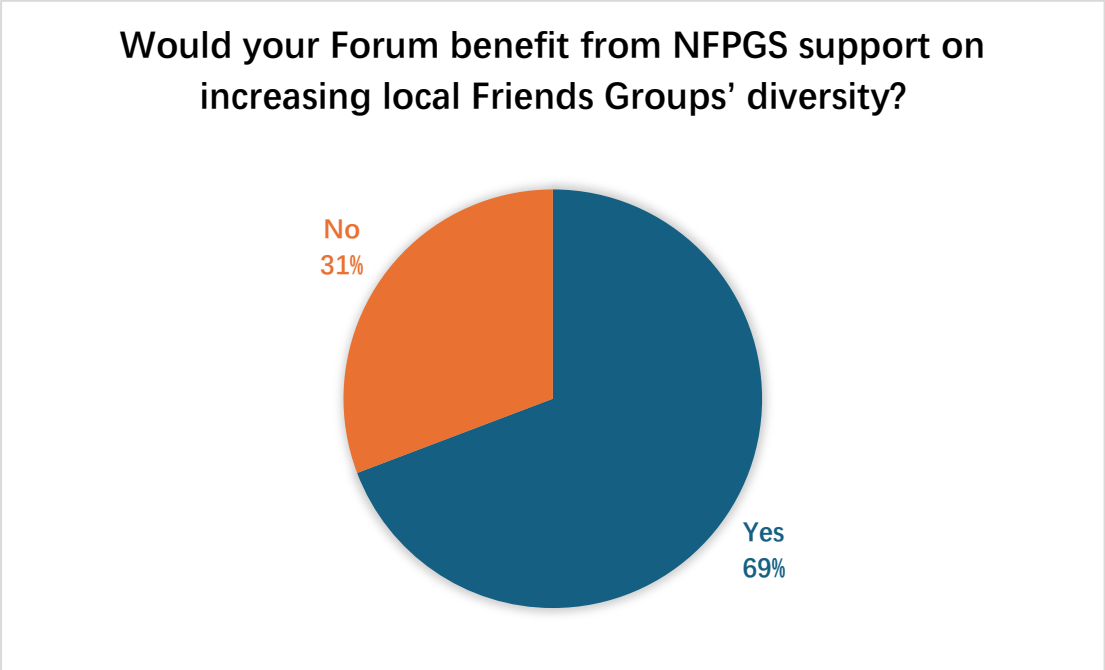
28.Does your Forum have policies or take any specific measures or actions to support efforts by Friends Groups to increase diversity among their own membership?



29.If you do, please provide more details.

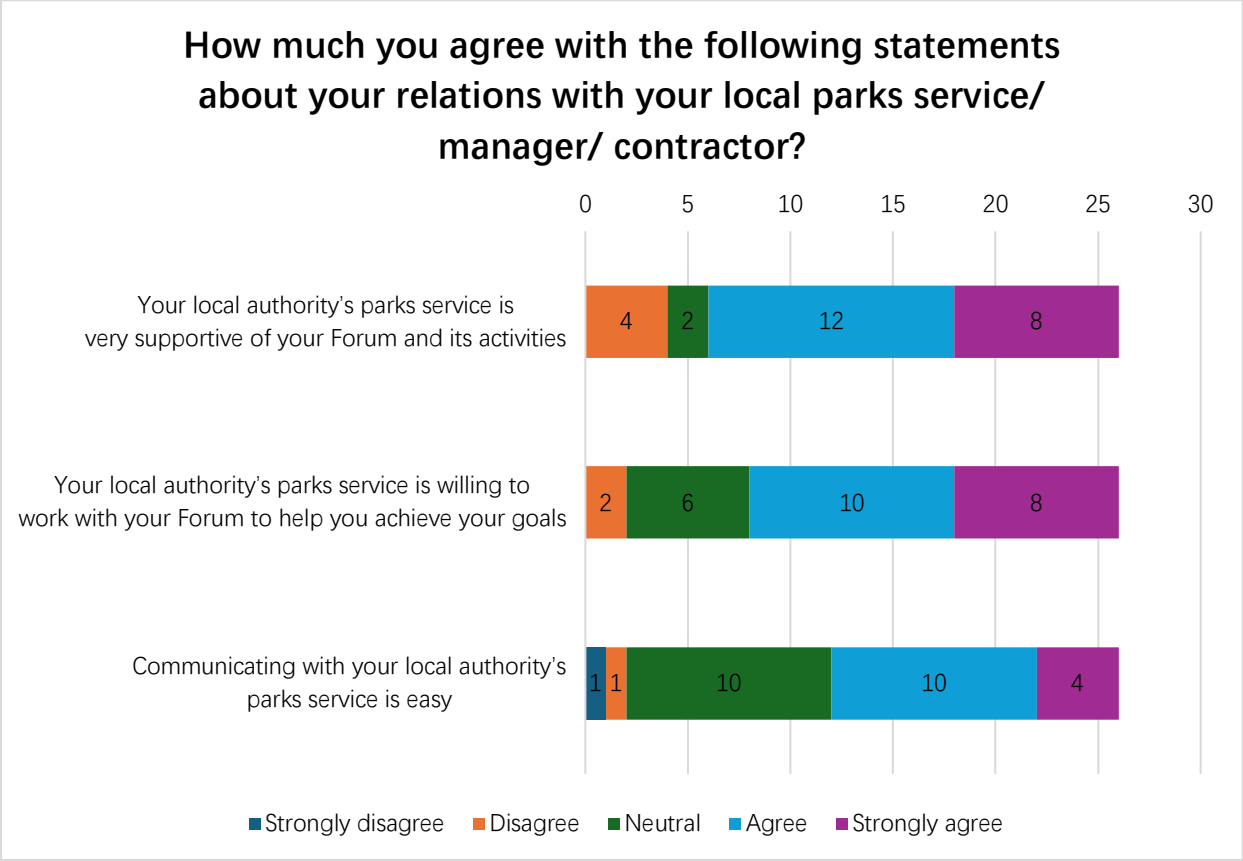
Equality and Diversity policy
We set up an Inclusion and Diversity Working Group for the Forum 3 years ago, to encourage local groups to discuss these issues and learn from others who have tried to improve their representativity. It met twice, minutes of meetings circulated to all groups. But it needs to meet again and work out if and how it can actively help groups tackle this important issue.
We introduce diverse groups to each other through community networks.
Some attempts to reach out beyond normal network by committee members
We've hosted webinars on the topic - presented by Friends Groups who do it well and by orgs who can advise on this.
General surveys, projects and advocacy use of good examples.
However there is recognition of the lack of equity of provision.

30.Would your Forum benefit from support from NFPGS on increasing local Friends Groups' diversity? (e.g. access to case studies, guidance documents, peer-to-peer discussions)



Your relationship with your local authority

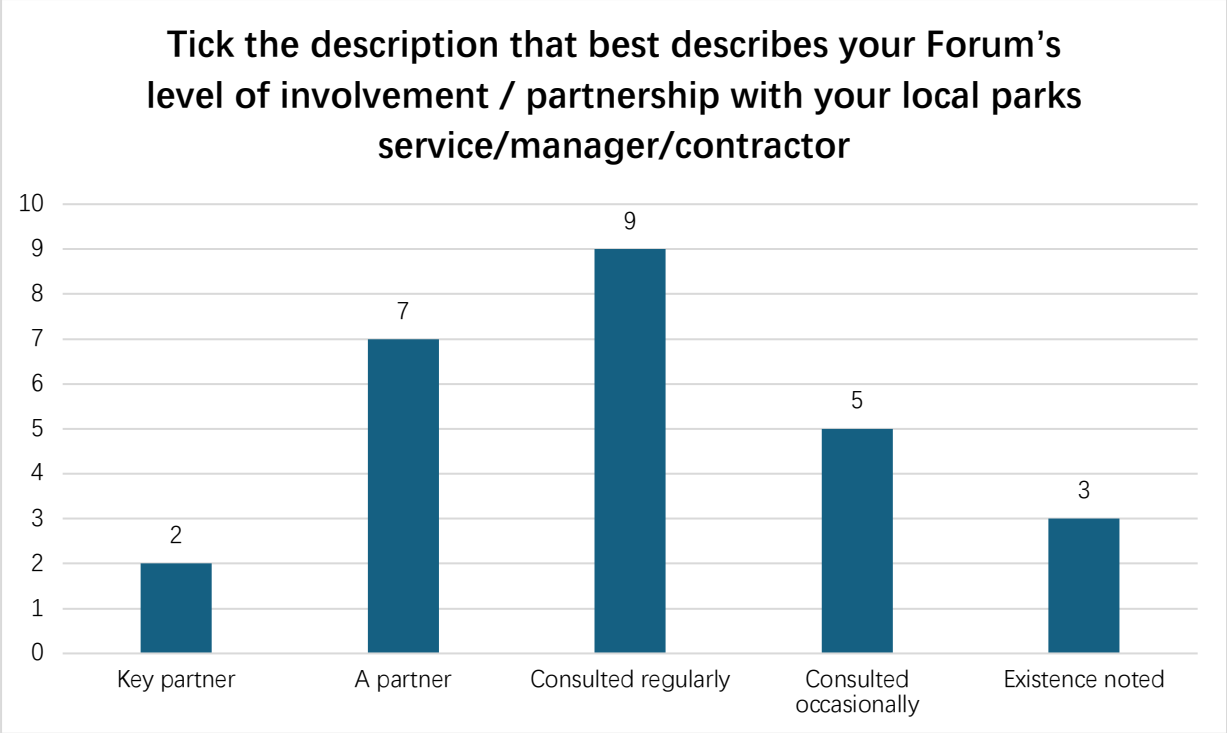
31.Please indicate how much you agree with the following statements about your relations with your local parks service or manager on their behalf, e.g. contractor?



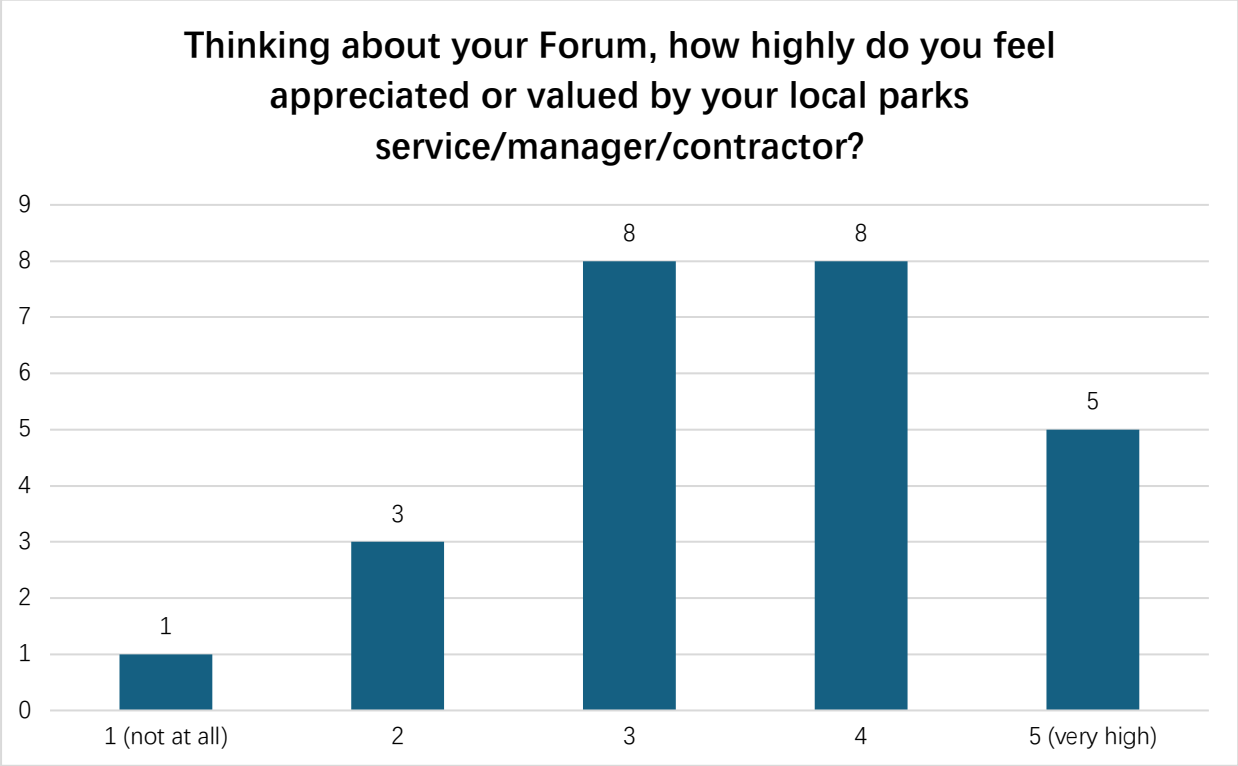
32.Tick the description that best describes your Forum's level of involvement / partnership with your local parks service or manager on their behalf, e.g. contractor?

LADDER OF INVOLVEMENT

Key partner	You are fully informed about all matters you want to know about. Involved in all the decision-making you are interested in.
A partner	Regularly informed about some key issues. Involved in some of the decision-making
Consulted Regularly	Informed about some things. Consulted sometimes.
Consulted occasionally	Only contacted when it suits the management, maybe on one issue. Your emails and phone calls are replied to.
Existence noted	Your activities and views are noted but carry little weight.
Ignored	Your efforts and views are ignored.



33.Thinking about your Forum, how highly do you feel appreciated or valued by your local PARKS SERVICE or manager on their behalf, e.g. contractor?



34.In one sentence, please explain your answer to Q33.

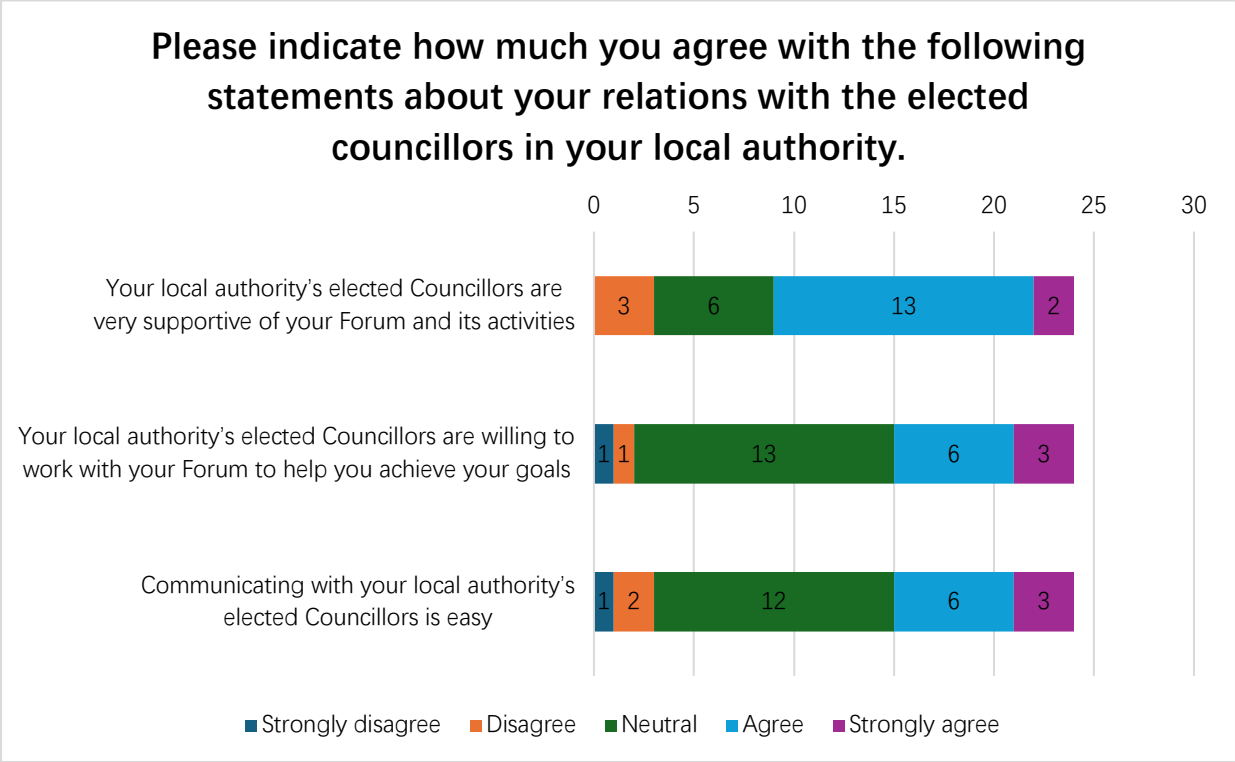
Across responses, several recurring issues emerge, including chronic underfunding and understaffing within Parks Services, reliance on individual officers rather than consistent organisational support, and limited visibility or influence where maintenance is delivered through contractors. Some Forums report feeling valued only when it aligns with council priorities, while others describe being consulted inconsistently or perceived as challenging when raising concerns. A smaller number of respondents report very positive relationships, typically linked to strong personal engagement from senior officers, ongoing communication, and practical support such as insurance or specialist advice.

Q33	Q34
2	They are grateful for our support but give little or nothing in return
3	I am seen as a trouble maker because I call out bad practice or sloppy work. This is the case for many of our groups.

Q33	Q34
4	Senior 'Parks' Council officer, or her deputy, attends our meetings (4 per year), will address questions/issues as prompt beforehand, and the effort of volunteers is regularly praised.
4	The intention is there. But due to chronic underfunding and understaffing of the Parks Service, and the constant pressure they are under to cut corners and make even further cuts, proper communications, a full partnership and genuine appreciation is hard to achieve. In that light, it is easy for officers to revert to the 'bad old days' of seeing strong and assertive community groups as a 'problem' requiring too much of their scarce officer-time.
4	Our work within projects is valued, individual Groups have varied experiences due to lack of funding to the parks department and a lack of biodiversity/ horticultural training for 2 key post holders to manage the contractor. Lack of staff recruitment uptake - means our contractor has only just over 50% capacity. Manager is not coping at all - the whole service is under strain. We have achieved Community Infrastructure Levy funding through lobbying, Council Scrutiny representation, Officers and Lead member meetings and Manifesto submission at the last local election. New manifesto being co-created by groups for 2026.
3	Can be patchy and different individuals have different approaches
3	Informed about some things, consulted sometimes
4	Although supportive and willing to engage with us there appears to be a reluctance to go one step further and see us as a key and engaged partner
5	regular support, contact and attendance at meetings
5	Lead officer is open to contact at all times and is committed to continuing financial support for insurance costs. Council has an agreement with the local Wildlife Trust to support all groups with specialist services, such as tree management, INNS (Invasive Non-Native Species) advice etc.
4	Communication reasonable due to lack of staff resources
4	All decisions and plans are shared with us, but we could be deeper involved in the decision making itself, e.g. representation on committees
2	The contract is between the council and the contractor so we don't have any power to change things. We have no visibility around maintenance regimes and simple solutions are often not acted upon. We feel we have good ideas and have far greater local knowledge but in the end our role is advisory and feel our input has little weight attached to it and it's not clear how we can encourage innovation and improve delivery within the existing framework
3	Whilst making the necessary noises, we (Forum and Friends Groups) are regarded as a necessary nuisance rather than fully engaged with
3	We feel that our Forum has earned some recognition with the council and parks service, but really only when it suits their agenda (e.g. when a new Director/Senior Manager arrives and wants to demonstrate community/volunteer engagement).

Q33	Q34
5	The Head of Parks always attends our Forum meetings even when it clashes with his birthday celebrations elsewhere in the country!
4	We have some pretty active groups who are very capable in their roles.
4	It is early days for us and this first year is establishing working relationships and support, the Council officers are being very supportive and developing papers and procedure for buy in by elected officials: Council officers definitely value the Forum, but how the Forum formally influences Council Parks practice is still to be determined.
2	Unfortunately lack of council support (political, financial, admin) has been a major factor in the Forum's demise, a far cry from 20 years ago when both the Council and Greenspace Forum were amongst the foremost in the sector.
3	No one else wants to organise the Forum and the Council would need to pay someone
3	When we meet our manager is very open and willing to share information, but he is frustrated by the constant restructuring of his staff and financial resources being taken from his budget, so plans do not always materialise or are delayed for months or even years.
3	Some park groups have a better relationship with the Local Authority than others and that can affect the relationship with the Forum
5	Outgoing parks manager, cabinet lead (and some rangers) are strongly supportive. There has been a recent change of Parks manager so we will see whether this continues.
1	No engagement

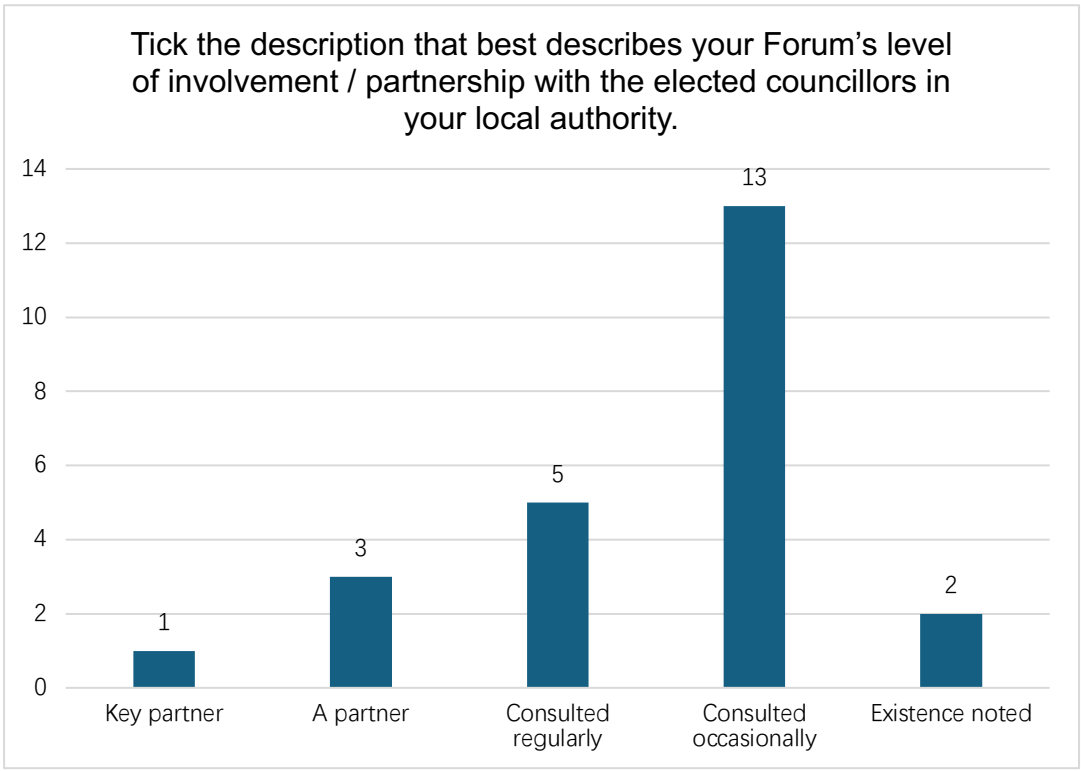
35.Please indicate how much you agree with the following statements about your relations with the elected councillors in your local authority.



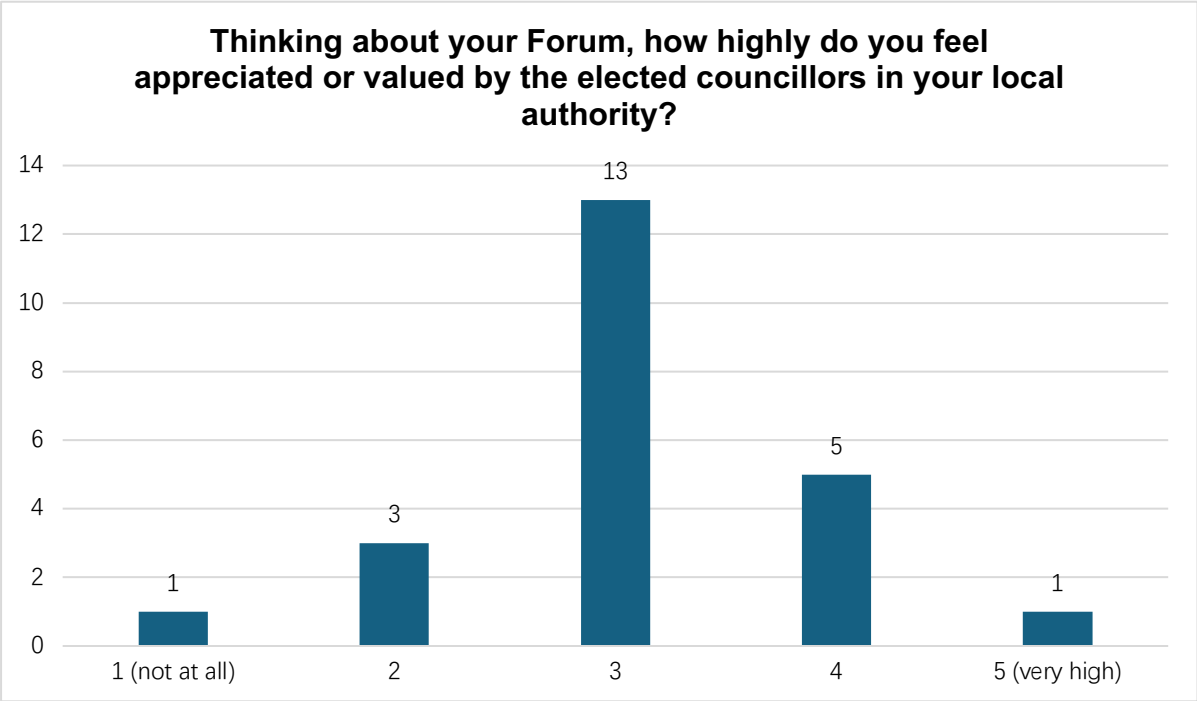
36.Tick the description that best describes your Forum's level of involvement / partnership with the elected councillors in your local authority.

LADDER OF INVOLVEMENT

Key partner	You are fully informed about all matters you want to know about. Involved in all the decision-making you are interested in.
A partner	Regularly informed about some key issues. Involved in some of the decision-making
Consulted Regularly	Informed about some things. Consulted sometimes.
Consulted occasionally	Only contacted when it suits the management, maybe on one issue. Your emails and phone calls are replied to.
Existence noted	Your activities and views are noted but carry little weight.
Ignored	Your efforts and views are ignored.



37.Thinking about your Forum, how highly do you feel appreciated or valued by the elected councillors in your local authority?



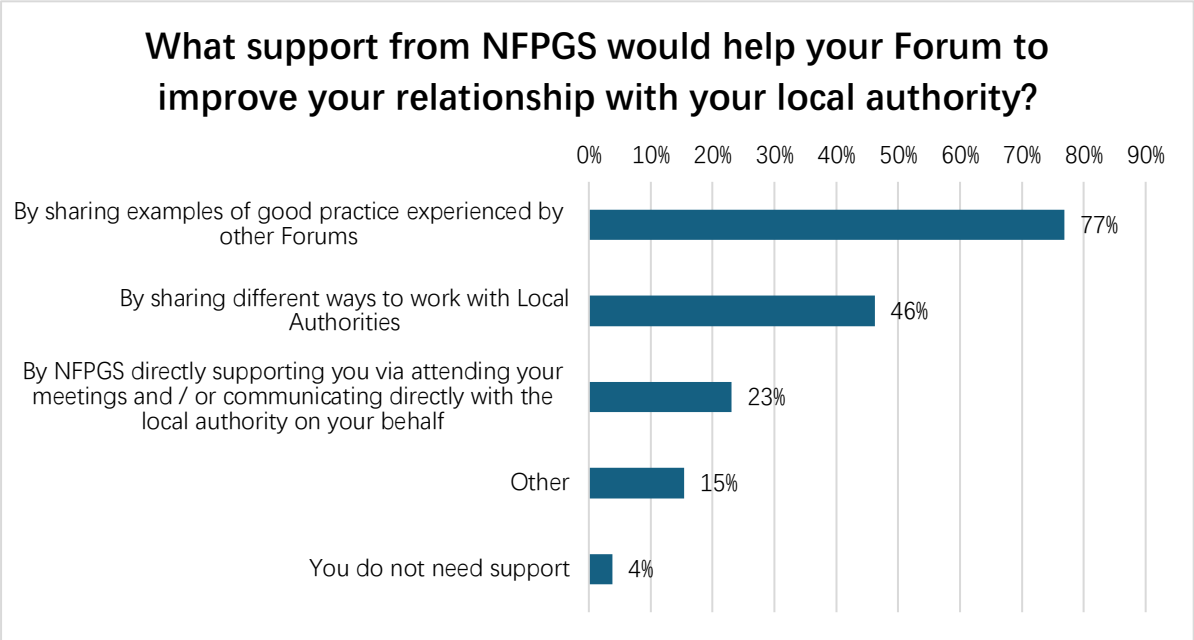
38.In one sentence, please explain your answer in Q37.

Responses to Q37 and Q38 suggest that Forums generally perceive lower and more uneven levels of appreciation from elected councillors than from Parks Service officers. Many respondents describe councillor engagement as highly variable, dependent on individual councillors, specific wards, or particular issues, rather than reflecting a consistent or systematic relationship at Forum level. Several respondents report limited awareness of the Forum among councillors, with engagement occurring mainly through a small number of supportive individuals rather than across the political group. Competing policy pressures such as adult social care, housing and budget constraints are frequently cited as reasons why parks and green spaces receive less political attention. A minority of Forums report strong engagement from senior or portfolio-holding councillors, including attendance at meetings and recognition of the Forum as a collective voice, while others report little or no direct contact, relying instead on mediation through Parks Service officers.

Q37	Q38
3	Time constraints
2	Most of them wouldn't even know of our existence. Few have green fingers!!!
3	It varies tremendously, according to their priorities, as might be expected with 99 Councillors.
3	The key Cabinet Members relevant to public green spaces, despite Council policies to the contrary (e.g. an explicit and public commitment to 'co-production') seem to prefer to be remote and rule by unilateral decision-making. This seems mainly motivated by the chronic underfunding of local services and the constant need to impose cuts on officers. However, regarding the Parks Service relationship with their key partners (Friends Groups and the Forum) this makes no sense as we are providing a huge range of services / volunteering hours / funding / promotion etc. So they should be falling over themselves to ensure we have, and know that we have, every possible support and encouragement.
4	It varies according to whom we are dealing with and what the issue is - overall our work is appreciated and valued - but parks and green spaces can be undervalued due to the overwhelming issues of Adult and Social Care, Housing, and youth issues. With so much Council Tax not collected by the Authority, this is one of the highest non collection figures in London.
3	Again it's patchy, very good relationships with some individuals. Less of a priority for others
3	Informed about some things, consulted sometimes
3	Active engagement with politicians around election time but otherwise we have to do all the running to get engagement on issues.
3	by some, very, by others not at all until they have a problem
5	Senior Councillors, for example the Leader and his Deputy, are actively engaged in Group activity.
4	There is recognition that the Friends of Groups are the council workforce, but only some councillors work with us.
1	We never see or hear from them unless we reach out on a specific topic
3	Whilst making the necessary noises, we (forum and FoGs) are regarded as a necessary nuisance rather than fully engaged with
3	We have a small number of councillors who are very supportive and have requested to go on our email distribution list. We actually have one councillor on our Forum committee.
4	Councillors including Chair of Committee responsible for Parks attends Forum as often as they can
4	Our Councillors appreciate having one body to represent the views and wishes of Friends groups
	I have not answered Q36 or Q37 because at present the Forum has not established a way of working directly with elected members: Forum matters with elected officers is at present happening via the Parks Dept staff we work with.

Q37	Q38
	In recent years the Forum has not been a priority for officers and councillors.
2	The local council is led by Labour councillors, who do not always support parks in all parts of the Borough and actually make decisions about specific parks that are detrimental, meaning the public does not have free access and therefore potentially bringing the council to decide to sell the site because it is under used.
3	In some wards the elected councillors are brilliant and support all we do but in others we have absolutely no contact
3	The Parks Foundation is strongly supported, as are individual friends groups; the Forum itself is lesser known by elected members.
2	These answers are very much councillor dependent.

39. What support from NFPGS would help your Forum to improve your relationship with your local authority (parks service or elected Councillors)? Select all that apply.

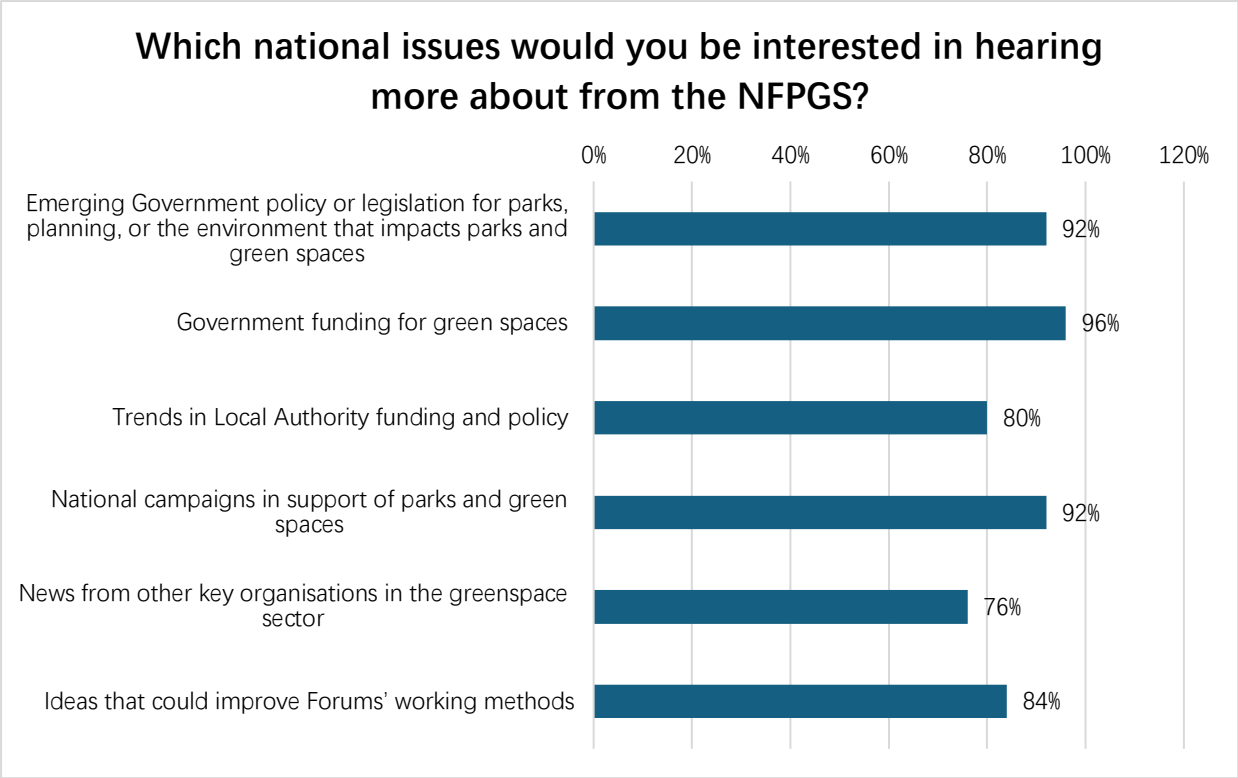


Answer to 'Other'

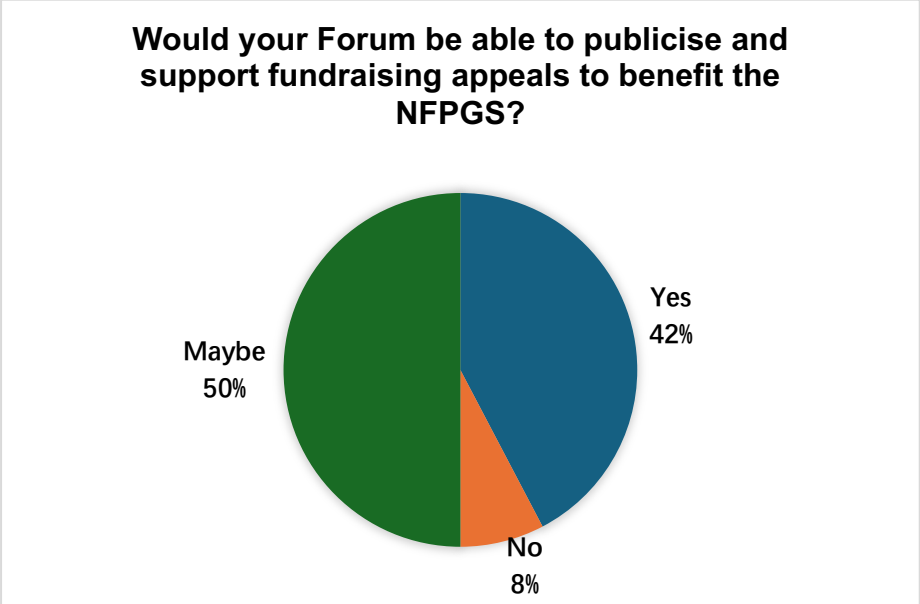
Copying in NFPGS to major issues to strengthen the support for importance of protecting and enhancing green spaces.
Lobbying on our behalf
By changing the attitude of Local Authorities towards volunteering and Friends Groups in general

Your relations with the NFPGS

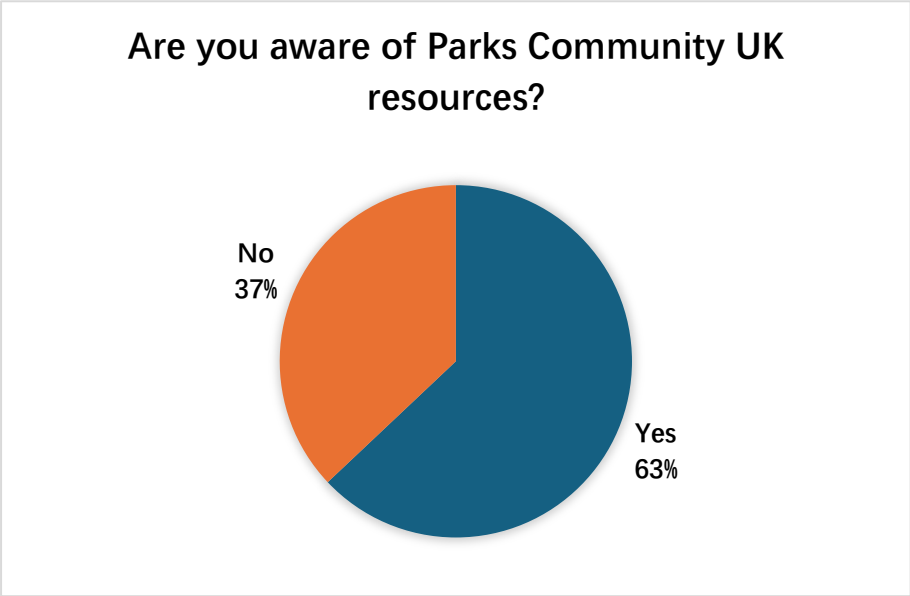
40.Which national issues would you be interested in hearing more about from the NFPGS? Select all that apply.



41.Would your Forum be able to publicise and support fundraising appeals to benefit the NFPGS and our efforts to support the Friends Groups movement?



42.Are you aware of Parks Community UK resources (created by and for Friends Groups)? **See https://parkscommunity.org.uk/**



45.Does your Forum currently seek specialist online advice and guidance from any other source?



46.If yes, please provide the details.

Environment Agency
University of Leeds - Dr Anna Barker (Safer Parks report, Safer Public Spaces for Women & Girls)
CPRE London, Fields in Trust, London Gardens Trust, Open Space Society. Locality, Council Grants services.
Other environmental organisations locally
We're in contact with various nature conservation orgs and other green spaces charities who speak to our members from time to time and contribute to our newsletters.

a range of sources
Many of us consult with other national bodies and experts on particular issues
ncvo.org.uk