

REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR, YOUTH, FAMILIES AND CULTURE

RUFFORD ABBEY COUNTRY PARK SATISFACTION SURVEY 2015

Purpose of the Report

1. To inform the Committee of the annual visitor satisfaction survey and its results for Rufford Abbey Country Park.

Information and Advice

2. A survey is commissioned each year from a market research company. This is for the following reasons:
 - To better understand customer profile and behaviour
 - To tell us more about local tourism – for example, where visitors travel from
 - To check how satisfied they are with various aspects of the park, ranging from catering and shops to grounds maintenance and toilets.
3. In 2015 the survey was taken in the October half term week. This differs from previous years when it has been taken in the school summer holidays. Researchers interviewed visitors face to face and helped them input their own answers on an iPad. 307 parties of visitors were surveyed, comprising 1,321 individuals.
4. A full copy of the visitor survey is available as a background paper. The following is a short summary of the key points.

Visitor profile

5. 91% of interviewees had been to the park before. This was an autumn survey. First time visitors tend to be higher in the summer season and lower in autumn / winter.
6. Asked how many times those visitors used the park, 36% said three times per year, which was the most frequent response. But 29% said every month and a hardcore 2% of users visited the park every day.
7. 63% of those questioned came from North Nottinghamshire. 10% came from Lincolnshire and South Yorkshire. 27% were from further away. Typically, the percentage of tourists rises in summer and drops in autumn / winter.

8. Just under half of interviewees said they intended to visit other attractions during their day out or local stay. Sherwood Forest and Clumber Park were the two most mentioned destinations.
9. 11% of parties included someone who considered themselves disabled or mobility impaired. This is down on the last survey and attributable to the fact that the survey took place at the same time as the popular annual Halloween Trail, which tends to attract more young children and young families than the normal age mix. It was noted that the park was less used by care groups than in the last survey, which was attributed to more organised outings for the warmer summer season than for autumn / winter.
10. Last year's summer survey saw visitors aged 60+ years as the most represented age group. This year it was 5-12 year olds.
11. The average group size during this survey was 4.3, higher than the average for past surveys which is 3.
12. Asked what source of information visitors used to plan their day out, 68% said they would go online and search Google. This is 36% up on the last survey and perhaps reflects the younger prevailing age group of this half term survey. 16% had used the County's printed "What's On" guide, showing a significant percentage still rely on printed brochures.

Visitor Experience

13. Asked what part of Rufford they most enjoyed visiting, 91% had enjoyed the lake, 55% the children's play facilities. 80% of those questioned had visited the café or tea shop – a higher percentage than in the previous summer surveys as might be expected out of 'picnic season'. The number of people visiting the gardens had dropped this year from 72% to 54%.
14. Reasons for visiting the park were asked. A majority cited the simple joys of walking in the fresh air. Over a quarter of those interviewed however, had come specifically to do the popular children's Halloween Trail.
15. Quality of the various park facilities was rated. 100% of interviewees felt general park cleanliness was Good or Very Good. Grounds maintenance also scored an impressive 99%. Asked how they rated facilities for disabled visitors, 64% of those who answered rated them Good or Very Good but a percentage wanted more disabled parking spaces.
16. This survey saw increased levels of satisfaction with catering. Last year 66% rated it Good or Very Good. This year's figure was 83%.
17. Satisfaction with on-site shops had also increased from 63% to 72% of users rating them Good or Very Good.
18. Cleanliness of toilets was rated as Good or Very Good by 88% of people. (8% had not used a toilet so could not comment).
19. 100% of those questioned said they felt safety and security was Good or Very Good.

20. Visitors were asked their view on the £3 car park fee they paid. 73% of respondents felt it reasonable, but over a quarter (27%) felt it “unreasonable.”

Other Options Considered

21. The report is for noting only.

Reason/s for Recommendation/s

22. The report is for noting only.

Statutory and Policy Implications

23. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of finance, the public sector equality duty, human resources, crime and disorder, human rights, the safeguarding of children, sustainability and the environment and those using the service and where such implications are material they are described below. Appropriate consultation has been undertaken and advice sought on these issues as required.

Implications for Service Users

24. The survey would appear to demonstrate that a record level of visitor satisfaction has been reached, with a noticeable positive shift in satisfaction levels with both catering and retail. This is encouraging given the budget economies and increased income targets which have been absorbed over the past few years, and reflects the enduring popularity of the park with both local residents and tourists.

Financial Implications

25. The cost of the annual visitor survey is £5,000. However, it is felt to be good value as an objective method of monitoring service quality. It is also shared with Experience Nottinghamshire to add to local tourism intelligence, and includes some questions which are useful to Corporate Communications.

Public Sector Equality Duty Implications

26. The survey includes questions specifically to quantify the use of the park by visitors with disabilities or mobility impairments, and to check how well it responds to their needs.

RECOMMENDATION/S

- 1) That the information about the annual visitor satisfaction survey and its results for Rufford Abbey Country Park be noted.

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Constitutional Comments

27. As this report is for noting only, no constitutional comments are required.

Financial Comments (SS 16/12/15)

28. The financial implications of this report are contained within paragraph 25 above.

Background Papers and Published Documents

Except for previously published documents, which will be available elsewhere, the documents listed here will be available for inspection in accordance with Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972.

Full visitor survey report.

Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected

All.

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