



Action for the River Kennet

Consultation Results

Results of a public consultation run by Marlborough Town Council and Action for the River Kennet to inform the management of Stonebridge Meadow.

September 2014

For more information please call 01672 513 672 or email: info@riverkennet.org

STONEBRIDGE MEADOW

CONSULTATION FEEDBACK

Stonebridge Meadow

1. Summary

Marlborough Town Council and Action for the River Kennet (ARK) own and jointly manage Stonebridge Meadow, a 15 acre water meadow to the east of Marlborough bound by the River Kennet to the north and Stonebridge Lane on the west. It was agreed that there should be a consultation to inform a review of the Stonebridge Meadow Management Plan.

2. Methodology

At the Town Council's Amenities and Open Spaces meeting on 9th June 2014, a final version of the consultation document prepared by ARK was amended and agreed. It was launched at a *Discover Stonebridge* Workshop at the Town Hall on Saturday, 21st June 2014. The survey was posted online on the Town Council website at www.marlboughtowncouncil.gov.uk. A copy of this is at **Appendix 1**. Links were posted on the Council's and ARK's Facebook pages. Hard copies of the survey were available at the Town Council offices and the Library. It was promoted via the July edition of *Marlborough – Town and Country*, *Marlborough News Online* and editorial in the *Gazette and Herald*. Leaflet drops also took place in the areas adjacent to the meadow.

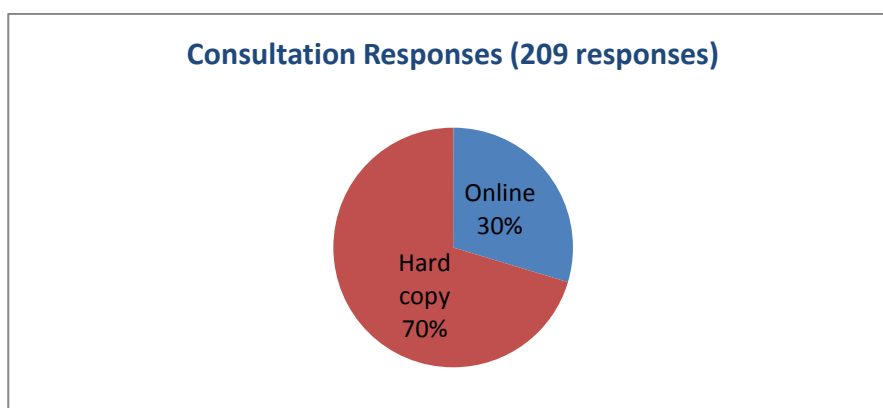
Many of the questions allowed for multiple response answers with options. Some respondents did not complete all questions and some gave more than requested (e.g. at Question 2 where only 3 responses are requested). All respondents were asked for a postcode to help identify those living within the parish. No breakdown has been given for Ward responses. Only one response was permitted for the online version from each IP computer address. Consultation responses were collated and data entered into Microsoft Excel spreadsheets for analysis.

Comments were also requested from respondents and are set out at **Appendix 2**.

3. Consultation Feedback – The Stats

The consultation ran from 21st June – 2nd August. A total of **246** responses were received. Broken down by postcodes, **37 (15%)** were received from outside of the Parish of Marlborough and **23** of these were received online and **14** as hard copy surveys. These are not included in this report but relevant breakdowns will be published separately. There were around 80 responses to the consultation undertaken in 2012 and the most recent is, overall, three times more in total responses.

This report deals with the **209** responses received within the parish. **147 (70.3%)** of these were in hard copy form and **62 (29.6%)** received online.

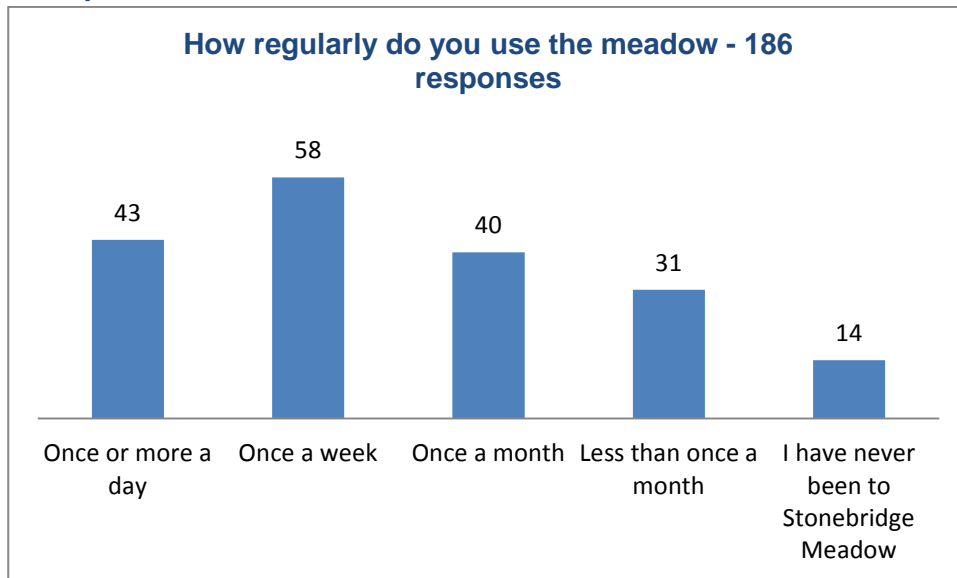


4. Survey Responses

Feedback to the survey questions are as follows:

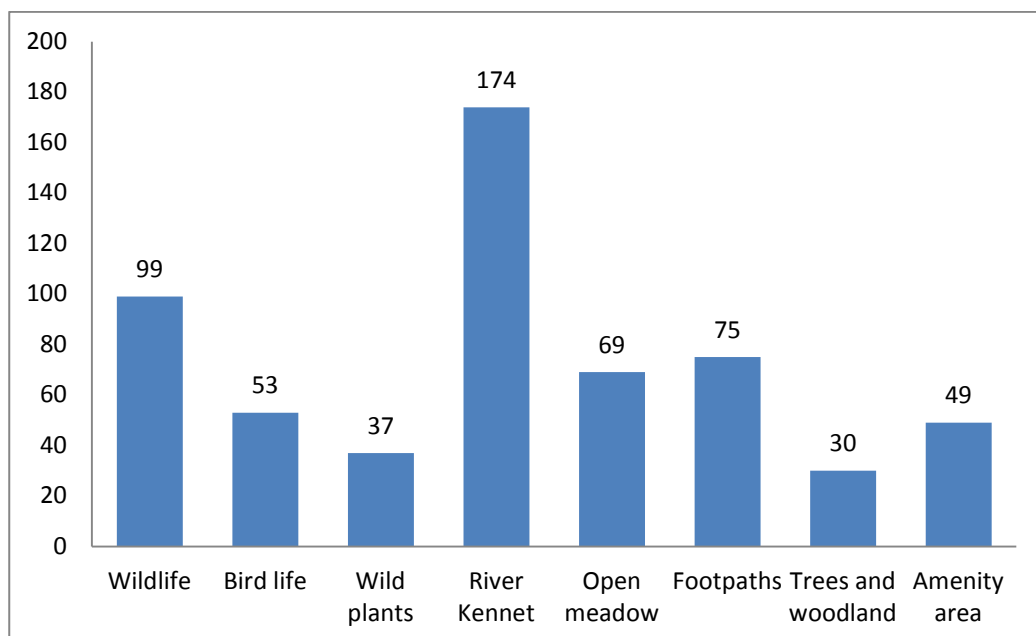
Question 1 – How regularly do you use the meadow?

A total of 186 responses



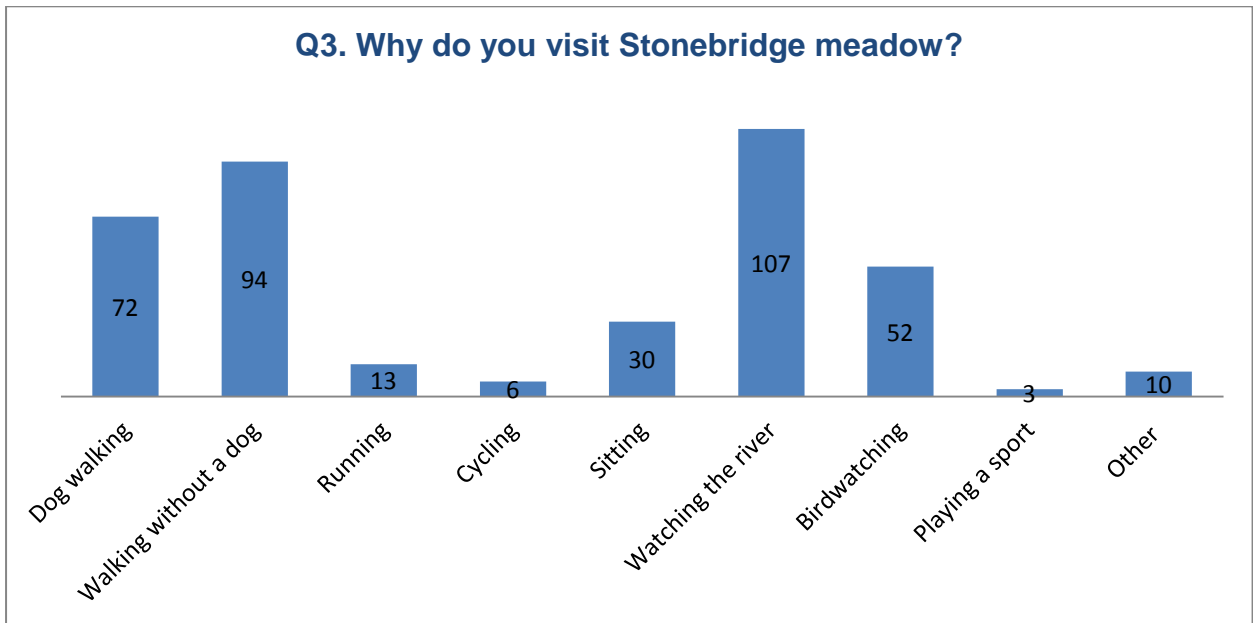
Question 2 - What are the top three things that make Stonebridge Meadow special?

A total of 586 preferences given (many giving more than 3)



Question 3 - Why do you visit Stonebridge Meadow?

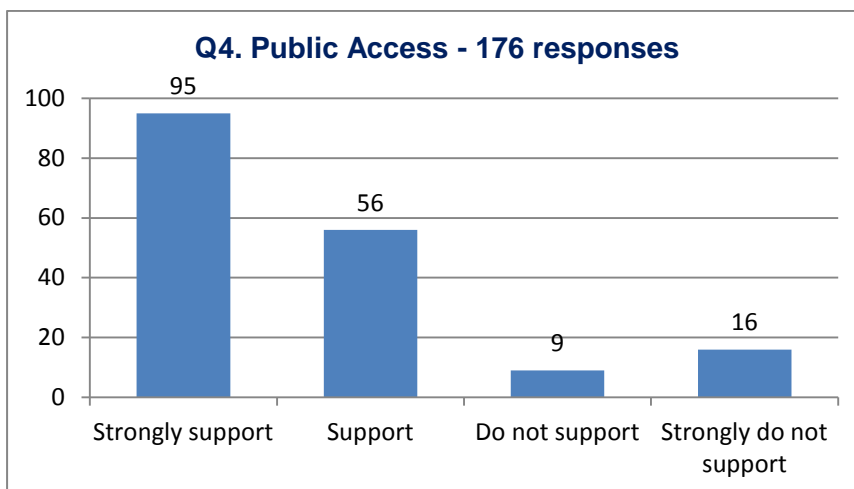
A total of 221 preferences given



Other than the pursuits listed, respondents also included trips for grandchildren, access to the allotments, peace and quiet, recording of species, the countryside, children playing in the river, drawing, writing and photography.

Question 4 - How much do you support the approach described below regarding public access?

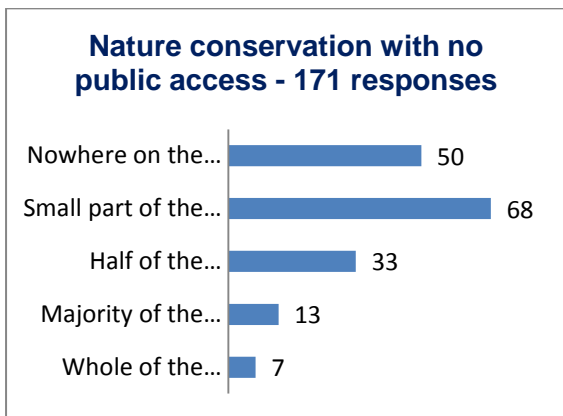
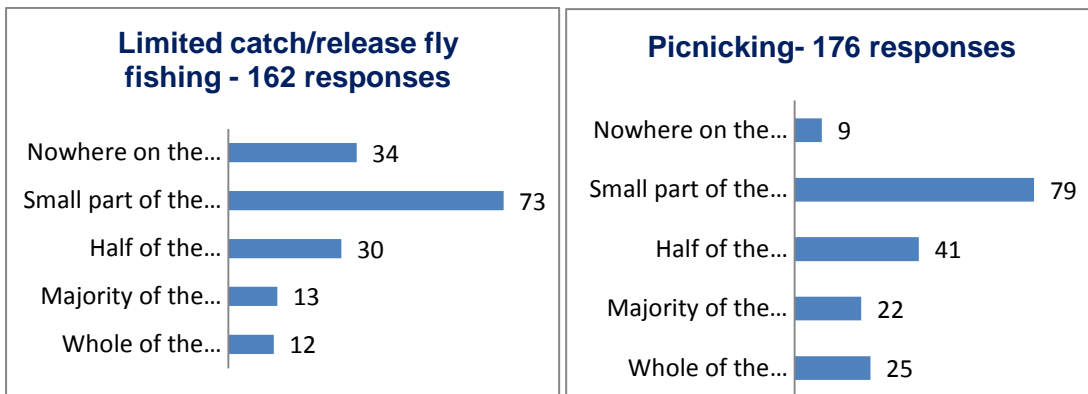
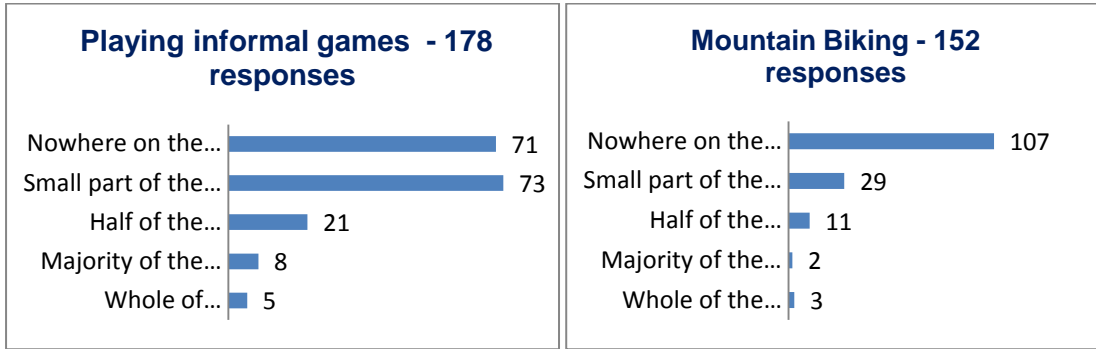
When the site was bought, the river was fenced off with barbed wire. One third is now unfenced, enabling free access to the river on the first third of the site. The remainder of the river has been re-fenced to protect the river banks and the wildlife which lives in the reedy margins. Wildlife we are conserving includes water vole, water shrew, a kingfisher nesting site and ground nesting birds such as warblers, moorhens and coots.



Additional comments included that public access was key and that a viewing point was needed.

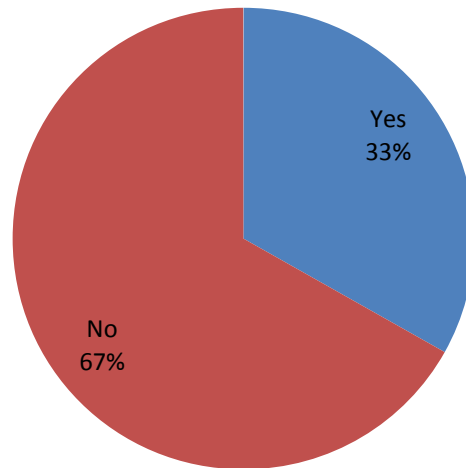
Question 5 - Please indicate which of the activities you think should be encouraged at Stonebridge Meadow and to what extent?

- Response offers**
- Nowhere on meadow/river
 - Small part of the meadow/river
 - Half of the meadow/river
 - Majority of the meadow/river
 - Whole of the meadow/river



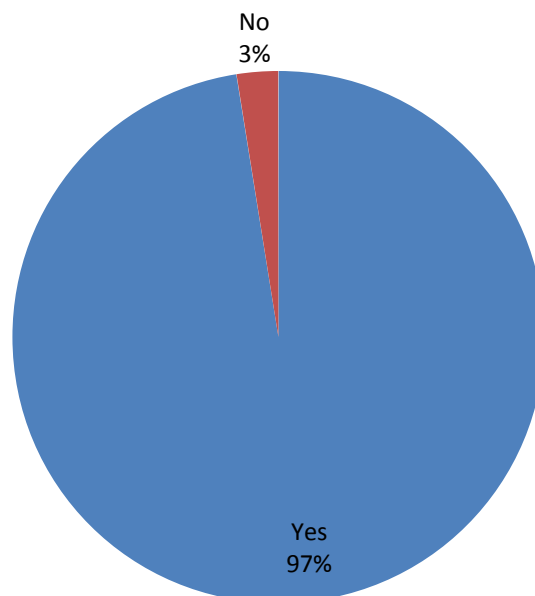
Question 5a - Would you support part of the wild meadow/scrub habitat being transferred to neighbouring Marlborough Town Football Club to convert to football pitches to increase?

Q5a. Conversion of scrubland to football pitches total of - 208 responses

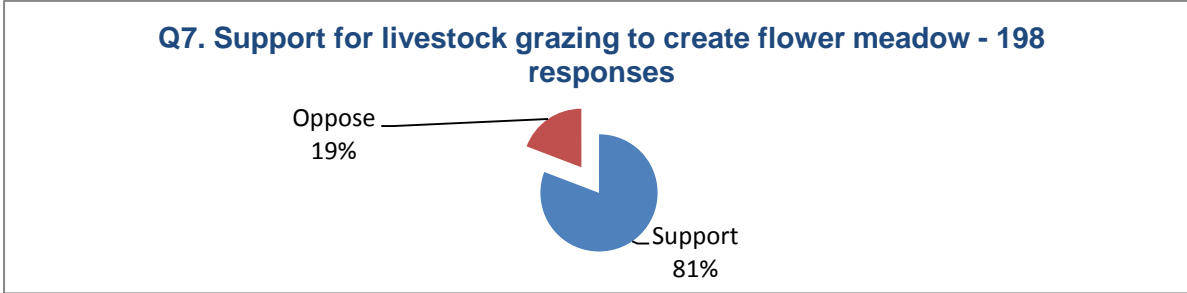
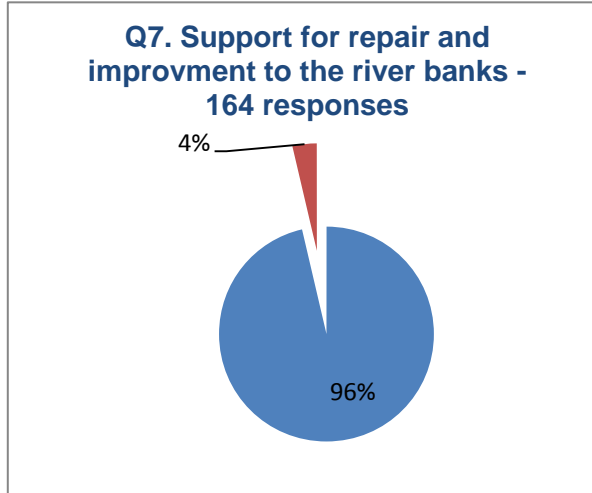
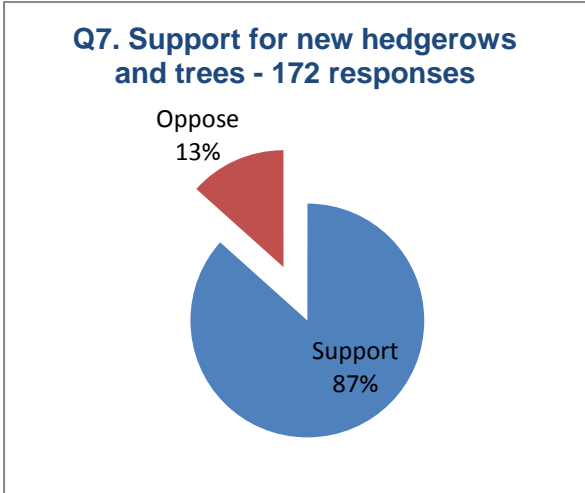
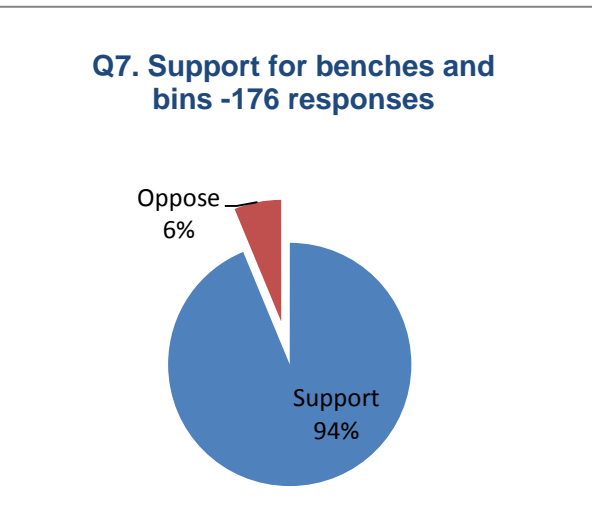
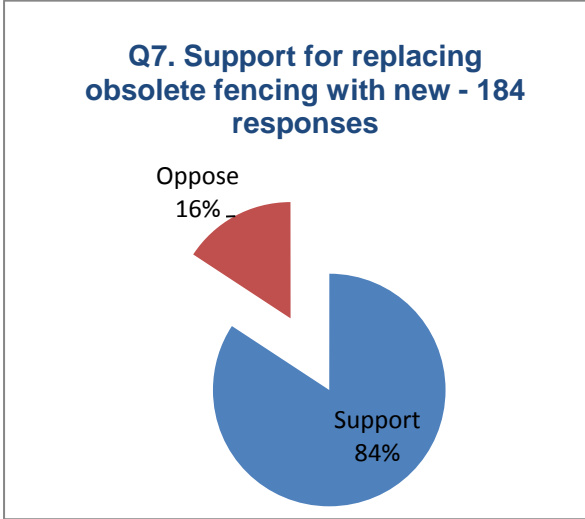
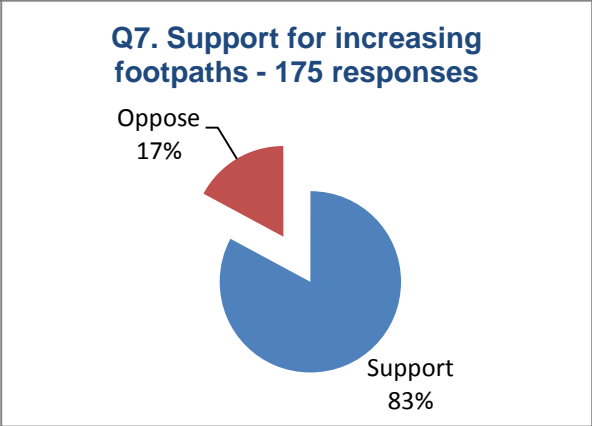
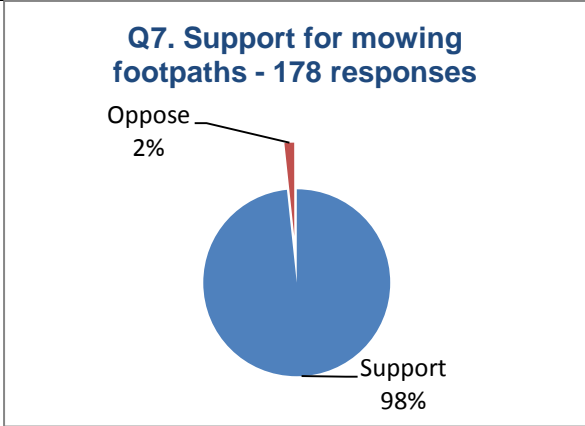


Question 6 - We are keen to promote responsible dog ownership at Stonebridge Meadow and want visitors to 'bag it and bin it' when their dog fouls. Would you support a campaign to this effect?

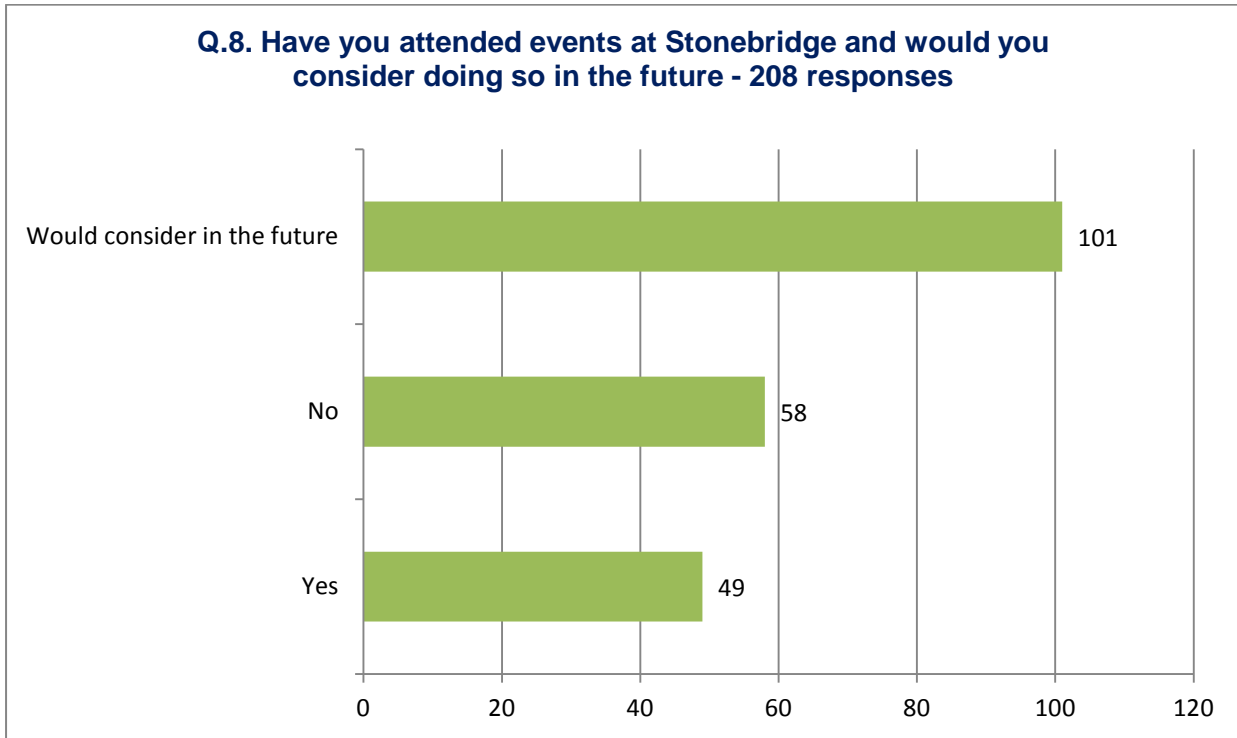
Q6. 'Bag it and Bin it' campaign for dog fouling - 198 responses



Question 7 - We would like to know whether you support or oppose the following developments which have taken place over the last two years.



**Question 8 - ARK run free public events at Stonebridge Meadow, for example, Bat Walk & Talk evenings, Moth Nights, Meadow Days, Hedge Planting afternoons and Meadow Sowing afternoons.
Have you attended any of the above and would you consider attending such events?**



5. Conclusion

The statistics show that most feedback for work undertaken at the meadow by ARK and the Town Council since 2012 is supported by respondents. Over 54% of respondents are using the meadow at least once a week and many of these are walking with or without their dogs. The biggest attractions are the River Kennet and the meadow's wildlife. There is support for developments such as mowing paths, grazing animals, improving the riverbanks, benches and bins, etc. Lots of support for the 'Bag it and Bin it' campaign. One observation is that around a third of all respondents have indicated that they would support the scrubland area being transferred for use as football pitches – not a majority but a significant number indicating a need for increased sports opportunities.

Comments set out at **Appendix 1** support the statistical findings.

September 2014

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Very impressed by the flyer delivered at home on Stonebridge Meadow events.
We used to walk our dog through Stonebridge meadow but it was overgrown with narrow paths and frequently muddy and waterlogged. Having returned recently we were we were amazed at the transformation. It is now a spacious peaceful oasis which must be protected at all costs for both wildlife and the public. Whilst I agree in encouraging sport this cannot happen in Stonebridge as the increase in people and noise will be disastrous. Also football on a flood plain?
I think supplying Marlborough Town Football Club with some land to expand their playing area would greatly benefit the town's football facilities and increase the area for children to play their sport and get fit.
Adding football pitches would ruin a quiet wild area of calm
I was absolutely astounded to hear that transfer of any land could be considered. The jointly approved management plans were for wildlife and people and should remain so.
We have enough football pitches in Marlborough and we do not need anymore. How anyone could think you turning part of a beautiful meadow into a sports ground is unthinkable. The wild meadow is appreciated by young and old and is home to many wildlife species.
The work carried out by ARK and MTC grounds team is excellent. Members of the public, the scenery and the wildlife benefit greatly from the work already carried out in this area. It is a super place where members of the public can visit to relax and enjoy nature.
I am totally opposed to any of this public resource being stolen by the football club. Who do not encourage access and mess up our skies with light pollution.
I totally disagree with the meadow being changed into football grounds. Marlborough has plenty of football facilities and not enough wildlife habitats and certainly not room for more cars and parking facilities.
As a local resident to this site I would like to see measures to decrease anti social behaviour and noise.
Like the managed look. Didn't like the unmanaged look initially
It can only be a good thing being managed by responsible people and not falling into disrepair
Living very close by - this area floods! Spend any excess money on encouraging all sport in another area. Wildlife is very important.
I am strongly opposed to the use of this land for further football pitches.
Already got a football pitch. Never see it being used on a regular basis. Meadow used daily and constantly. Football pitches when used?
I am appreciative of the work that goes into maintaining such a beautiful area for the public. As a responsible dog walker I am particularly grateful that footpaths are maintained
Beautiful as it is.
Just enjoy walking around
Leaflets placed through neighbouring door promoting activities but not when changes concern the near residents. Please get your facts right. I was born and raised in this town and spent many hours with my brothers and sister playing in the river exploring the waterlife without harming any without signs telling us what to do and not to do. I see many insects and wildlife in my garden. We have had hedgehogs, badgers, rats, mice, butterflies and dragon flies so why don't you put ponds in your own gardens plant flowers, shrubs, put nest boxes etc. barbed wire, animals and leave nature in Stonebridge to carry on as it has for many years, before you were all born. Do you not think that when you are trampling over the meadow day and night you are disturbing and killing wildlife? As I said before, concentrate on your back garden and leave well alone. All you have done is ruin an area of nature. Take

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down signs they are making the area unsightly. Oh how would you ARK people feel if this was happening on your door step because you don't live nearby. All outsiders.
Football pitch would be welcome. Good for the future of Marlborough football.
The piece of land requested would not have any effect on the rest of the meadow or wildlife but would create more facilities for the towns children and teenagers to play football.
51% of the meadow was bought by the Town Council on behalf of all residents of Marlborough. Therefore at least 51% of the meadow must be used as an amenity area for everyone, not just a minority with specialist interests.
I think you should get of walkers to clean up their mess as children are playing there. The bins may help as food left after picnics bring rats.
Improve public footpath
I would like to see Marlborough Town Football Club have the support of the pitches to aid the development of the town's children.
Fantastic work so far. Can't see a problem with the proposal of the football pitches or the Bag it and Bin it campaign. Both seem like very good ideas and would help the local community.
The amenity area needs to be bigger with more seats and picnic tables. There should also be more access to the river. Scrub area should be smaller.
The scrub area should be in smaller blocks with rough grass in between to encourage more wild flowers.
I think it is good to have quiet meadow in Marlborough for people to walk and take in nature. There is a football ground in Elcot Lane do we need another one in this lovely peaceful meadow.
No No No to football pitch. There are enough in town already and not used. It would negatively affect the whole meadow. Some of the poplars need topping - old ones. Lover of creepy crawlies, animals and wildlife.
I would like to see the rubbish cleared from the river more often. It would also be a good idea to have the meadow sowing at a time the school children can attend.
Over all fantastic project. Public access to the river should be stopped entirely. Paths are to wide. Western area should not be mowed, but left to grow. Dogs should not be allowed in the scrub area. Benches make the area to urban.
Stonebridge Meadow is an essential nature reserve for Marlborough. It hosts a wide variety of wildlife. I have myself attended the monthly moth nights and also volunteer for ARK. We must ensure that this special place is not lost to the people of Marlborough.
On the few ARK visits I have been amazed to learn how much wildlife is there. Just on the periphery of the town. Such a rich and quiet oasis of calm.
I strongly object the idea that this area of land should be 'formalised' and designated for sport (football). Several people have remarked on how peaceful and beautiful the Meadow is. There are very few areas left like this. If the meadow was turned into a football pitch (it would be totally unusable for much of the year) it would need to be raised substantially and so increase the risk of flooding to houses in Cornerfields and lower part of Barrow Close. ARK have been doing a good job on limited resources to preserve valuable wildlife and habitat so easily lost forever. We should support ARK in their work - we can all join in it is for everyone.
The football pitch idea would completely destroy the scrub area as an effective wildlife zone. The current pitch is massively underused. There is a large grass area between the existing pitch and Elcot Lane that could be used. I sincerely hope that money is not a factor in the decision and I cannot understand why ARK does not vehemently oppose this plan.
People live in a world and share it with wildlife. There is more to life than money. More space for wildlife is important as farmland is too intensively used. There is less wildlife in farmland nowadays.
Stonebridge Meadow was a forgotten area. It is good to be bought back into constructive

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and thoughtful use.
Building football pitches on the water meadows is totally unsuitable for the following reasons - (1) It destroys the natural nature of the area and creates urban sprawl (2) The land is flooded most of the winter to create pitches the land would need to be raised creating flooding to neighbouring properties. (3) Creation pitches would restrict public access to an area of quiet pasture. (4) The vegetation of the area would be changed with adverse impact on wildlife in the area. (5) Low level power lines across the site present a significant hazard.
I am a support worker for Together Working for Wellbeing, I support people with enduring mental health problems. We have a 2 year move on project in Marlborough this involves supporting people with various things i.e. social interaction, finances, living skills etc. to enable them to move on and live independently after 2 years. I have introduced several clients to ARK and would like to stress how much this has done for their mental well being. They have become socially interactive as well as feeling part of a group and working outside on regular days and times which is always good for mental well being. Anna Forbes has been particularly accommodating and has met with myself and clients to give them background information on ARK before they start volunteering and has always made them feel welcome and kept them well informed of anything that goes on within the ARK project. Each client that has attended has benefitted enormously and I would thoroughly recommend ARK to other clients. I am extremely impressed with all of the work they do and look forward to referring more clients to their project.
I was one of the campaigners who fought to maintain the public right of way (Minal footpath) across the south side of the meadow which is no longer passable and an unauthorised diversion takes its place. The creation of a wildflower rich meadow is unnatural in a water meadow. The suggestion of letting Marlborough Town FC take over an area is because they plan to sell their land to developers.
When asked why oak trees were planted in a water meadow I was told they would be cut down when ready!! When asked why the footpath was not being mown I was told that it would be diverted and not needed. We fought hard to protect the foot path. I would guess that every ARK member will be filling in one of these regardless of where they live.
A few years down the line what will the wetlands actually consist of? I hope it doesn't become a stagnant fenced off pond. These fields/meadows have been enjoyed by a very large section of the community long before ARK became involved. Over the 45 years I have constantly used these meadows. I have seen Kingfishers, Herons, wildflowers, owls, cuckoos even grass snakes 2 of which came from my garden. I will be very disappointed if well intentioned people turn this lovely wild natural area and it ends up as a well manicured yuppi park. Do the people of ARK actually use these meadows or are they just a project to be involved in at this particular time.
I feel the meadow should be preserved and that making part of it into a football pitch would be detrimental.
Two areas of excavation should be filled in or fenced off more securely. The wild shrub habitat as you say is home to a vast array of wildlife. It should not be turned into a football pitch. Do I hear the rattle of silver? I have walked these meadows for over 50 years.
I walk my dog at Stonebridge Meadow and am very pleased with the work carried out so far. Mowing the paths is good: shoes getting too wet. I am looking forward to the pond and reed bed, plus the wild flower meadow. Keep up the good work.
I walk my dog at Stonebridge Meadow and feel it is a peaceful place to go. I like all the walks you have carved out. I would like to see more animals, more wildflowers in the meadow. Looking forward to the new development pond, wild flower meadow etc
We live adjacent to the football pitch and the wild meadow where we enjoy the views, watching the birds and wildlife. We would strongly object to it being transferred to the football club for football pitches
I use the seats and walks to get away on summer evenings from noisy neighbours and sit

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and read so please don't lose the quiet and tranquillity.
If you must give over part of it to sport why not tennis. There are plenty of football spaces elsewhere.
For sports facilities hockey, tennis, rounders etc this will be a thorny issue. Badly worded - transferred to MTFC is a no no! Allocated to balls games is different.
I am very disturbed by the idea that part of the wildlife scrub could be destroyed to make way for football. It seems inconceivable that this is even being considered at the point that such headway is made , so many species of wildlife being discovered and recorded, so much support and recognition of the work ARK do being given by local and national bodies and the excitement caused locally by an otter sighting. It is crucial that this valuable environment is protected, the least reason being, that the credibility of ARK and MTC would be at risk were they to agree with part of it being destroyed.
I believe ARK is doing a good job here. It will take time to achieve results - I am willing to wait.
The area is a flood plain and for the past 2 years has been underwater for the best part of the winter. Unless there is free drainage for surface water from Elcot Lane, London Road. If our drains cannot cope: last night's storm of 1/2 hour sent water rushing into our garage as drains in road were overwhelmed.
I think the two areas that are fenced off where they have been excavating should be filled in as soon as possible as I have personally told children to go away from it before a tragedy occurs, as they were very young children that could not read danger notices. They were in the care of older children that were not watching them. I have walked the field for 50 years.
The idea of transferring any of the meadow to the football club is not a sensible idea. It gets waterlogged every winter and would be unusable for a football field. The other point is that the existing football fields are most of the time unused for football games. Why do they want more land.
The changes to the water meadows since I first discovered them, mainly underwater, in 2007 have been astounding. Every time I go there with my dogs I'm amazed at the care and dedication to keeping them looking superb and it's fantastic to see the wildlife and wildflowers returning.... well done ARK.
I love the way that the environment along the River Kennet, including Stonebridge Meadow, has been improved over the last few years. This has resulted in the fostering of a unique habitat and an increase in the flora and fauna of the area. It would be a disaster if this area were converted to 'general amenity area' instead of a unique habitat. I have no problem with providing an amenity area for football and mountain biking but feel that there are other areas in the town where this could be more suitably provided - e.g. the common.
The close mowing of the public access area, (with the new benches) is to be a regular event, it is a disaster in my view. It has been cut far too close if this is a regular event. This should be treated like the rougher sections of the common. Mown once a year...
I think the scrub area is too big. This could be halved with still plenty of scrub area! I don't agree with the 'flow diversion' in the hatch pool. Water will always find its course. This water diversion is an eye soar. The hedge row needs sorting out upstream from the hatch pool. It is good to see bird boxes.
More access to the river bank, and the river bank to be cleaned from tree's and hedges.
I support the work that ARK does 100%. I believe that without their tireless work the River Kennet at Marlborough would have been a dying river, but now the diversity of wildlife in and along the river is rich and is an invaluable and increasingly unique benefit to this town, it encourages visitors to Marlborough and the fact that otters and kingfishers to name but two are living within the town is something to be proud of and sung from the rafters. Well done ARK. No football please and limited access to the river is fine.
It is a unique area. Very peaceful and a lovely place to walk the dog. The town council shouldn't just focus on providing more male-orientated activities for young people (football,

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<p>skateboarding) but should also consider the benefits of this peaceful corner of the town, where people can spend time observing wildlife or just relaxing. I like the mown pathways but don't want the area to become too sterile.</p>
<p>I am new to Marlborough and found this amazing area by chance. Marlborough is lucky to have such an area (Hungerford has the marshes and common) and should protect it for wildlife. There are other open spaces for ball games etc.</p>
<p>The custodians of the meadows should have the powers to restrict access when the conditions require extra protection - i.e. nesting birds, saturated ground being impacted by footpaths, etc</p>
<p>Marlborough needs wild accessible areas. Don't make it too municipal park-like.</p>
<p>I love the meadow and its wildlife and feel so lucky every day to have it on my doorstep. I'd feel very sad for it to be used for anything other than walking and chilling, absorbing the beauty of the surroundings and enjoying nature undisturbed.</p>
<p>The water meadow is so very lovely, it is perfect as it is!</p>
<p>The meadow is quiet and peaceful beautiful nature retreat for walkers/dog walkers/wildlife lovers and residents to enjoy, would be a great shame to turn it into football pitches this only represents a small number of the community. There are already enough sporting fields in the area to accommodate football and ball games. As a miniature country park this has much more appeal for the town of Marlborough.</p>
<p>I think ARK is doing a fantastic job with the conservation and I wish that I could do more to support them. I think that we should all appreciate the hard work done which has made the meadow as good as it is and it is brilliant that the project is still ongoing with as much enthusiasm as ever.</p>
<p>I strongly oppose the football club encroaching on the scrub land, and equally oppose mountain biking or anything similar which would spoil the tranquillity of the meadows. The area now provides a wonderful place for wildlife where people can enjoy the birds and animals, the river and the open space in peace. That was the whole point of ARK and the Town Council buying the meadows: to even consider anything that would reduce the attraction of the area to wildlife - and people wanting a bit of peace - runs totally counter to that original aim.</p>
<p>Whilst I understand the need for fencing to protect sensitive areas, I find barbed-wire fencing to be inappropriate. Perhaps more natural looking wooden fences could be used. The council should be pushed to put measures in place to allow MTFC to use the alternate adjacent land known as Elcot Lane Green.</p>
<p>Strongly oppose the idea of football pitches as it would be a disaster for the wildlife and natural habitats.</p>
<p>ARK have done a great job so far. Long May it continue.</p>
<p>This site was bought jointly by ARK and MTC for the benefit of wildlife and people. There are plenty of facilities for people to enjoy this site therefore no need whatsoever for the football club to now try and claim some of the land for their own use. It is better served for the wildlife and quite outrageous that it should be considered otherwise.</p>
<p>I love the meadows! Very fun and interesting to go around, it would be a shame to see it turned into a football field as the ARK team have spent A LOT of time making it as wonderful as it is today, we recently went on an ARK walk and learnt of all the wildlife around the meadow, it would be dishonouring to see all that life destroyed for football...</p>
<p>The Nature Reserve is an important element of the towns dedication to protecting the environment. I was particularly impressed by the results of the moth walk and will look out for the next event.</p>
<p>I heard today that MTFC are planning to level a part of the water meadow and build ANOTHER football pitch. I hope very much that this is not allowed to happen. As a resident of Barrow Close, I would be hugely disappointed to see the meadow changed from a beautiful nature area to a football pitch surrounded by ugly 2 meter high fencing. They</p>

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<p>already have a pitch that they enjoy using, and we have a water meadow that we love. Let's just leave it as it is.</p>
<p>Although Marlborough sits within an AONB, there are few places within the town itself that residents can experience a 'wild' river and water meadow. The football club already has a very large area for sports, and the common, as well as the recreation ground. In addition to both the St. John's School and Marlborough college sports facilities, I would say that 'sporting opportunities' are well provided for in this town.</p>
<p>I think this area has potential to become an important part of Marlborough. If a small section if it could be used to expand MTFCs training facilities, that would present excellent opportunities for the future of the town. Encouraging people to play sports is a very important part of life. I also see why people would oppose this too. However, if done correctly, the wildlife in the area can be left alone and contained slightly. I have never seen any activity in the section next to the football club to warrant a reason to not expand.</p>
<p>Avoid prettification, statues, plaques, hard-edges - this is not a municipal park!</p>
<p>I cannot say how strongly I oppose sacrificing any land for football pitches or for any other minority group.</p>
<p>Personally I see it that this area could be made into an orchard or natural fruit and vegetable grove.</p>
<p>I think there is enough room for everyone the MTFC only want a small strip for which I feel is a eye saw at the moment from what I can see. Let work together it will benefit everyone that's what we're all about.</p>
<p>The water meadow has occasionally been under threat from various development schemes over the past 25 years. I am happy and relieved that this valuable habitat has been bought by MTC and ARK and that they will work together to save it as a wildlife area and as an essential flood plain for the Kennet Valley.</p>
<p>Control of dog mess should be a priority , dog free zone should be considered and heavy penalties for the mess they make</p>
<p>I believe Marlborough at this point in time has an equal amount of wildlife areas as it does football/sport fields. This making it unnecessary to take the Stonebridge Meadows away from Marlborough. If it was replaced with sporting pitches, there would be litter, people would take advantage of it and it wouldn't last long without vandalism - look at the recreation ground. Lovely new equipment, and some has been vandalised, and because of people hanging round there, kids do not want to go there due to feeling unsafe.</p>
<p>If the meadows get taken away there will be; anti-social behaviour, vandalism, and no wildlife.</p>