

Habitat Regulations Executive Committee

Appendix (D): Wildlife Refuge Areas Consultation

Online questionnaire results July / August 2017

How we did the consultation

A formal online questionnaire was devised. The intention of the questionnaire is to gather in people's text comments in a more structured way, rather than to find out percentages of people that would or wouldn't change the proposals.

The questionnaire was publicised widely using press releases, social media publicity, was sent out to those on the Exe Estuary Management Partnership database and was sent out to those who had taken part in the last stage of the consultation and gave their email address. Paper copies of the questionnaire were made available on request.

We received 157 completed questionnaires.

Summary of results

157 completed questionnaires were returned.

In the last 12 months these are the most popular ways in which respondents had used the Exe Estuary:

- 65% for sailing
- 49% for walking / jogging / running
- 48% for birdwatching
- 30% for canoeing / kayaking / stand up paddleboarding
- 67% of respondents had been to / used the proposed Wildlife Refuge area near Dawlish Warren one to five times or less in the last 12 months.
- 59% of respondents had been to / used the proposed Wildlife Refuge area at Exmouth one to five times or less in the last 12 months.
- The most common places that respondents lived were Exmouth, Exeter, Topsham, Dawlish and Lympstone.

Exmouth Wildlife Refuge Area

69% would make further changes to the Wildlife Refuge area proposal for Exmouth.

When asked about the changes they would propose the most common comments (with the number of people that gave that comment in brackets) were:

- Abandon the proposal (50).
- There isn't any / enough evidence to back up the proposal (38).
- Public opinion is against the current proposals / people don't support them so they won't work (18).
- The Wildlife Refuge areas need to be used for safety reasons, to keep some users out of the strong tidal current (17).
- Non engine water users don't have any / much impact so shouldn't be included (16).
- People using the area don't have any / enough impact on the estuary (14).

Dawlish Warren Wildlife Refuge Area

64% would make further changes to the Wildlife Refuge area proposal for Dawlish Warren.

When asked about the changes they would propose the most common comments (with the number of people that gave that comment in brackets) were:

- Abandon the proposal (50).
- There isn't any / enough evidence to back up the proposal (38).
- Public opinion is against the current proposals / people don't support them so they won't work (18).
- The Wildlife Refuge areas need to be used for safety reasons, to keep some users out of the strong tidal current (17).
- Non engine water users don't have any / much impact so shouldn't be included (16).
- People using the area don't have any / enough impact on the estuary (14).

Other comments

There were a wide variety of comments. The most common comments (with the number of people that gave that comment in brackets) were:

- Evidence says the proposals aren't necessary / not enough evidence to justify the proposals (34).
- I support the proposals to protect wildlife, it's a vitally important area for birds / It's a sensible balance between humans and wildlife (21).
- You haven't listened to comments in previous consultation / you won't listen to what we say (19).
- Concerned about how the Wildlife Refuge Areas will be managed / policed / enforced (13).

Full results

1. Are you completing this questionnaire as:

157 respondents answered this question:

- 95% were individuals
- 4% were official representatives of an organisation
- 1% were official representatives of a business

Of those that were official representatives of organisations, they were representing:

- Exmouth Water Users Group
- Exekiteboarders
- Exe Sailing Club
- Devon Wildlife Trust
- Starcross Yacht Club

A – Proposals for Exmouth Wildlife Refuge

A Wildlife Refuge would be an area of the estuary which has been identified as having particular importance for protected species and habitats. It is by agreement that there should be the minimum possible recreational access in these areas, preferably no recreational activity at all.

We propose to apply a Wildlife Refuge area from the existing northern boundary in the estuary (just South of Lympstone Manor) to the Duck Pond (see map on the webpage). However, in response to concerns about users being pushed into the navigation channel, the western boundary of the proposed Refuge has been moved significantly eastwards. It would apply to all users between mid-September and December when the area is used by over wintering birds.

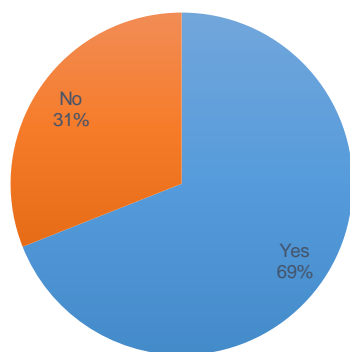
This will include all users, for example:

- Kitesurfers / windsurfers
- Stand up paddleboards
- Kayakers, canoers
- Dogwalkers
- Bait diggers / crab tilers
- Etc....

There is an existing powerboat zone which is permitted through byelaw provision, which would not be affected by these proposals.

2. Would you suggest any further changes to the Wildlife Refuge area proposal for Exmouth?

There were 143 respondents to this question.



If yes, please tell us what changes you would make:

Please tell us how you feel your changes would improve what we are currently proposing:

The answers to both of these questions were combined and the results are shown in the table below.

Most common comments: Those made by 3 or more people.	Number of respondents
Abandon the proposal.	50
There isn't enough / any evidence to back up the proposal.	38
Public opinion is against the current proposals / people don't support them so it won't work.	18
The Wildlife Refuge Areas need to be used for safety reasons, to keep some users out of the strong tidal current. For example for less confident users, learners, kayakers, dinghies.	17
Non-engine water users don't have any / much impact so shouldn't be included.	16
People using the area don't have any / enough impact on the estuary.	14
It will be detrimental to human activities and wellbeing.	11
Have a voluntary code of conduct instead.	10
Enforce the current byelaws and speed limit instead.	9
Educate users, no need to legislate.	7
Abandon it or change it to reduce costs.	7
Reduce the size of the Wildlife Refuge Area (particularly take out the Duck Pond).	6
Water users can't use the area at low tide when feeding happens anyway.	6
People using the estuary already respect the wildlife there.	6
The Wildlife Refuge Areas should be bigger to protect more wildlife.	5
Should only apply to certain water users e.g. powerboats, dog walkers, kitesurfers, dredgers.	5
Re-do the consultation and provide more information / make it more meaningful / listen to us.	5
The proposals will be illegal (Right of Navigation of Tidal Waters).	5
Extend the time that the Wildlife Refuge Area applies.	4
The proposals could / will reduce the habitat it seeks to protect.	3
The proposals aren't proportionate.	3

B – Proposals for Dawlish Warren Wildlife Refuge

A Wildlife Refuge are would be an area of the estuary which has been identified as having particular importance for protected species and habitats. It is by agreement that there should be the minimum possible recreational access in these areas, preferably no recreational activity at all.

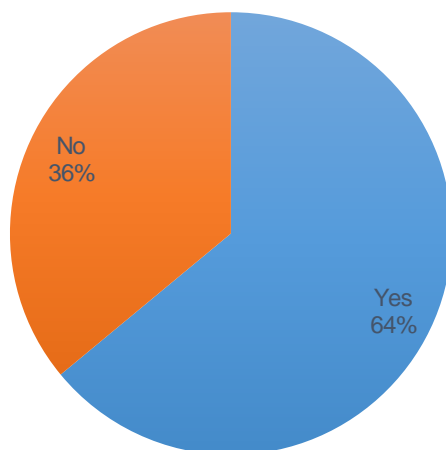
A new Wildlife Refuge applying to all users is proposed, for the most part within the existing boundary of the National Nature Reserve (see map on the webpage). In response to concerns about the use of the area and about users being pushed into the navigation channel, we have reduced the northern boundary by approx. 0.5kms (now aligned with the steps at Cockwood) and allowed a 100m buffer around most of the eastern boundary. In recognition of its significance, the Wildlife Refuge would still apply all day, all year round.

The Dawlish Warren Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) condition assessment particularly highlights that bird declines at the Warren, (an important high tide roost), may be the cause of declines across the estuary, thus indicating that suitable, good quality high tide roosting sites may be critical to the ecological integrity of the Special Protection Area (SPA). We believe the proposed Wildlife Refuge would allow birds suitable, good quality undisturbed high tide roosting sites and low tide feeding areas.

A small number of crabtilers would be able to continue to work under permit in the northern part of this area, in adherence to the Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority (IFCA) byelaw and following robust codes of conduct.

3. Would you suggest any further changes to the Wildlife Refuge area proposal for Dawlish Warren?

There were 127 respondents.



If yes, please tell us what changes you would make:

Please tell us how you feel your changes would improve what we are currently proposing:

The answers to both of these questions were combined and the results are shown in the table below.

Most common comments: Those made by 3 or more people.	Number of respondents
Abandon the proposal.	32
There isn't enough / any evidence to back up the proposal.	26
The Wildlife Refuge Areas need to be used for safety reasons, to keep some users out of the strong tidal current. For example for less confident users, learners, kayakers, dinghies.	16
Non-engine water users don't have any / much impact so shouldn't be included.	9
It will be detrimental to human activities and wellbeing.	9
Public opinion is against the current proposals / people don't support them so it won't work.	8
Reduce the size of the Wildlife Refuge Area.	8
People using the area don't have any / enough impact on the estuary.	7
Re-do the consultation and provide more information / make it more meaningful / listen to us.	6
Have a voluntary code of conduct instead.	5
Abandon it or change it to reduce costs.	5
Enforce the current byelaws and speed limit instead.	4
Educate users, no need to legislate.	4
Water users can't use the area at low tide when feeding happens anyway.	4
The Wildlife Refuge Areas should be bigger to protect more wildlife.	4
Should only apply to certain users e.g. dog walkers	3

C – Any other comments

4. Please tell us about any other comments you have on our proposals:

Most common comments: Those made by 3 or more people.	Number of respondents
Evidence says the proposals aren't necessary / not enough evidence to justify the proposals.	34
I support the proposals to protect wildlife, it's a vitally important area for birds / It's a sensible balance between humans and wildlife.	21
You haven't listened to comments in previous consultation / you won't listen to what we say.	19
Concerned about how the Wildlife Refuge Areas will be managed / policed / enforced.	13
Need a proper / better / longer consultation.	9
It's unfair / unbalanced for humans and their activities.	9
Proposals should just target groups that cause the most disturbance e.g. dogs, powerboats, kite surfers.	8
Don't manipulate the situation / let wildlife and humans co-exist.	7
Enforce existing byelaws instead.	7
The proposals will make it unsafe for water users.	6
The proposals aren't supported by users.	6
The people promoting these proposals are too strong, it's not balanced.	5
I don't support the proposals.	4
Thanks for the amendments to the proposal after the last consultation.	3
It's a waste of money.	3
Not enough information was given with the consultation.	3
It won't be legal, there is a Public Right of Navigation.	3
Have voluntary codes of conduct instead.	3
The proposals would be flouted by some users.	3

D – About you

5. Are you filling in this questionnaire as:

155 respondents answered this question:

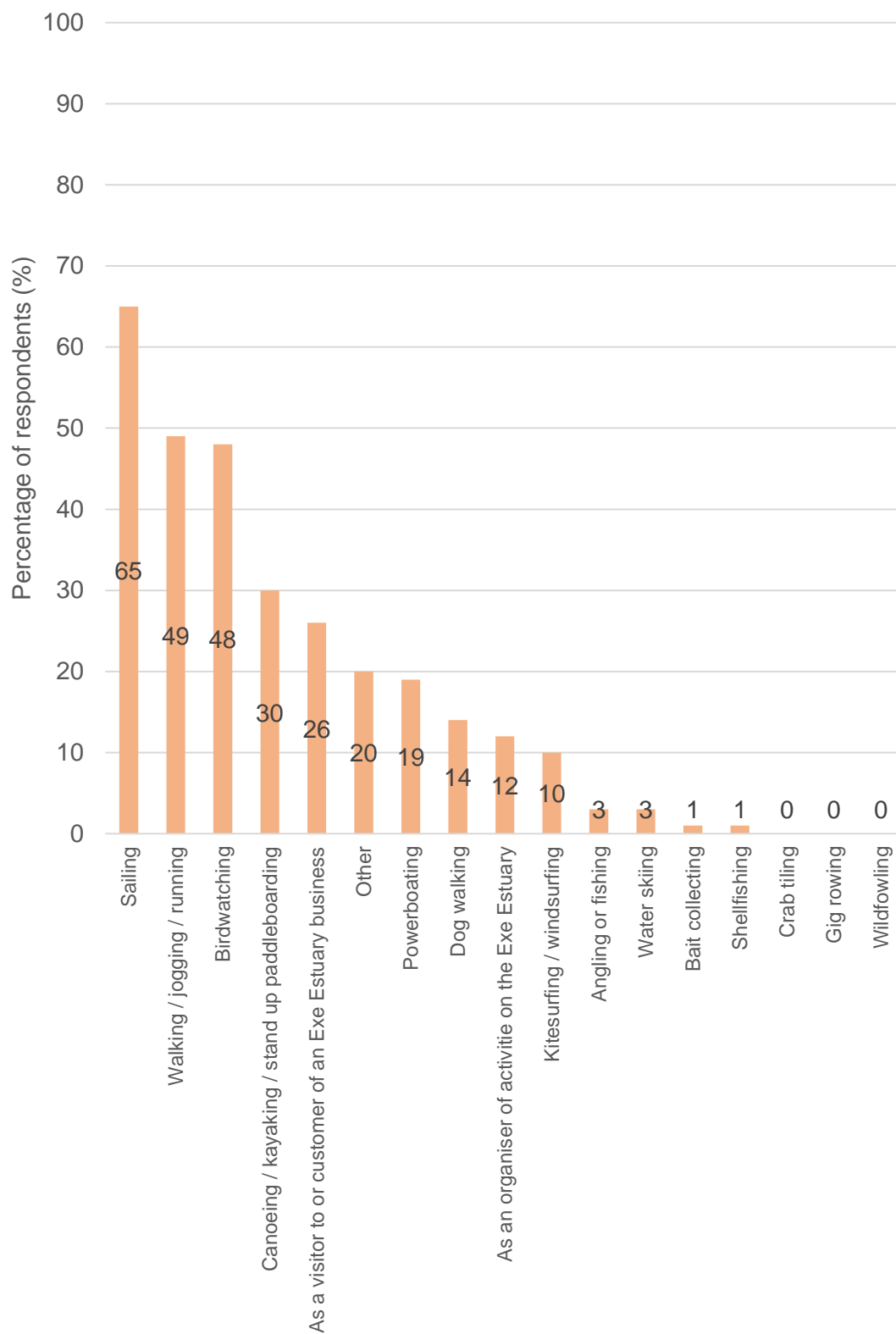
- 96% were individuals
- 3% were official representatives of an organisation
- 1% were official representatives of a business

6. Have you been to / used the Exe Estuary in the last 12 months?

All 150 respondents to this question had been to / used the Exe Estuary in the last 12 months.

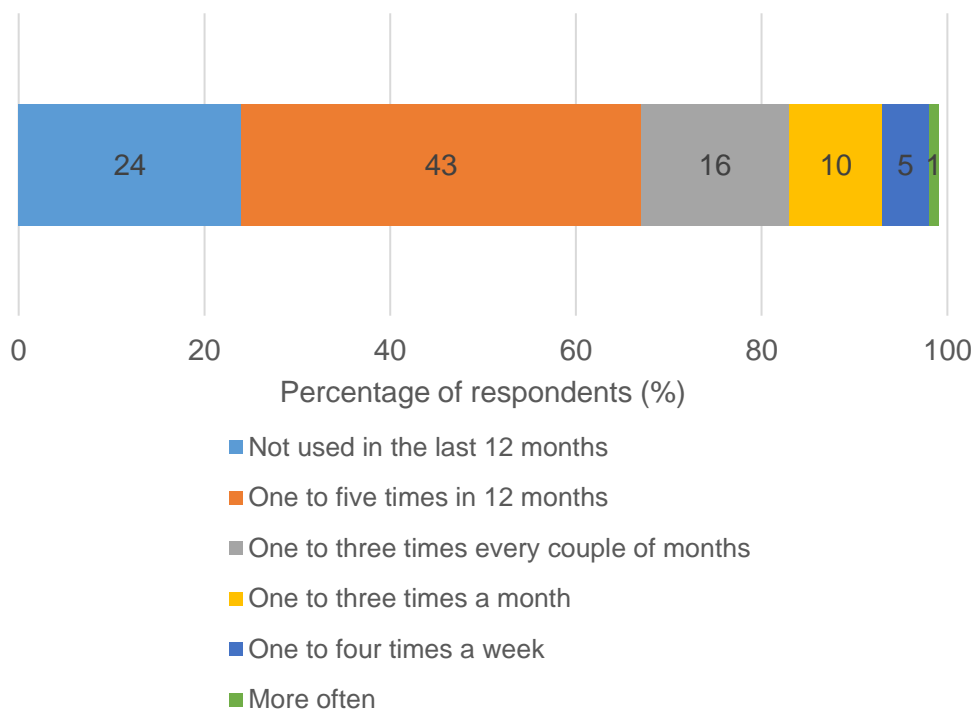
7. How have you used the Exe Estuary in the last 12 months?

148 respondents gave 443 responses to this question as they could select all that applied.



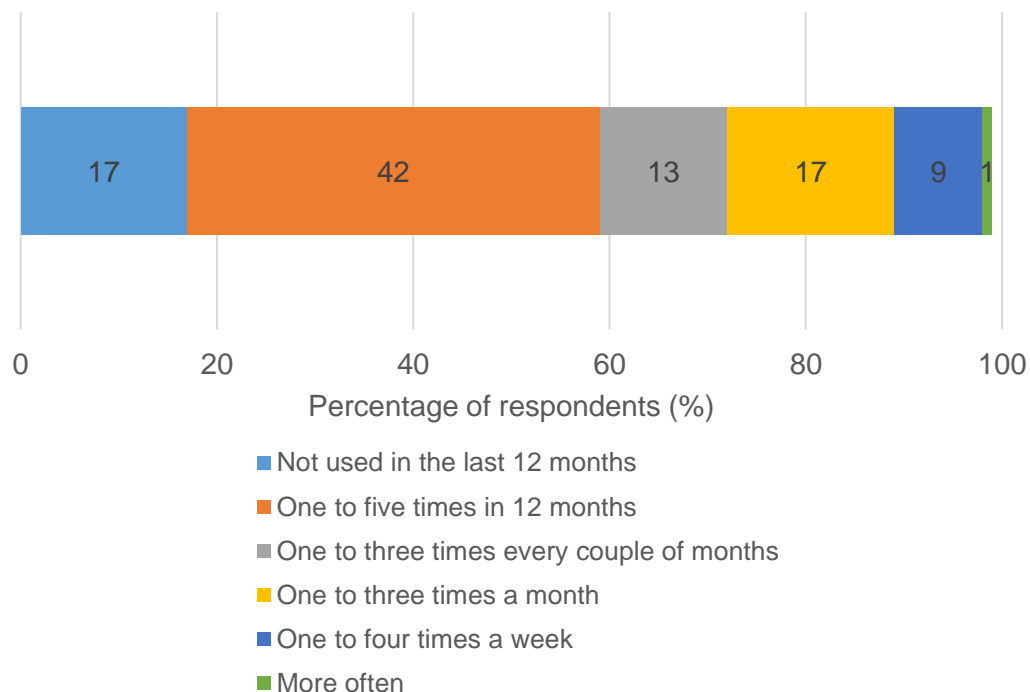
8. On average, how often have you been to / used the proposed Wildlife Refuge area near Dawlish Warren in the last 12 months?

There were 148 respondents.



9. On average, how often have you been to / used the proposed Wildlife Refuge area at Exmouth in the last 12 months?

There were 149 respondents.



10. Which town or village do you live in?

143 respondents commented.

Town or village	Number of respondents
Exmouth	39
Exeter	24
Topsham	18
Dawlish	9
Lympstone	7
Starcross	5
Budleigh Salterton	4
Clyst St Mary	4
Teignmouth	4
Newton Abbot	3
Exton	2
Totnes	1
Bishopsteignton	1
Plymouth	1
Stoke Canon	1
Broadclyst	1
Bridgwater	1
Chudleigh	1
Kenton	1
Woodbury Salterton	1
Cockwood	1
Silverton	1
Doddiscombeleigh	1
Cullompton	1
Newton Ferrers	1
Harcombe	1
Chudleigh Knighton	1
Bradinch	1
Jacobstow	1
Wellington	1
Ottery St Mary	1
Axminster	1

11. Do you have a long-standing illness, disability or infirmity that limits your day to day activities in any way?

There were 148 respondents to this question, 8% stated that they did have.

If yes, please tell us the nature of your disability:

17 respondents answered this question.

