



# Lancashire Countryside Service consultation 2016

**Report**

[www.lancashire.gov.uk](http://www.lancashire.gov.uk)



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## 1. Executive summary

This report summarises the responses to Lancashire County Council's Lancashire Countryside Services consultation 2016.

For the consultation, paper questionnaires were made available at Lancashire Countryside Services' sites. Online questionnaires could be accessed from [www.lancashire.gov.uk](http://www.lancashire.gov.uk).

The fieldwork ran for twelve weeks from 4 January 2016 until 27 March 2016. In total, 966 completed questionnaires were returned (126 paper-based and 840 online).

Although the questionnaire was published online for anyone to respond to, and available at Countryside Services' sites, the majority of respondents (96%) had used at least one Countryside Services' site in the last 12 months and therefore the consultation findings predominantly represents the views of this group.

The findings presented in this report are not representative of the views of the population of Lancashire and should only be taken to represent the views of people who were made aware of the consultation, had the opportunity to respond and felt compelled to.

### 1.1 Key findings

- Respondents were most likely to say that they had Beacon Fell Country Park (56%) and least likely to say they have visited Chisnall Hall (1%).
- Two-thirds of respondents said that they had visited a Countryside Services site at least once a month in the last 12 months (67% of respondents stated they had visited 'more than once a week', 'about once a week' or 'about once a month').
- When asked what they use Countryside Services sites for the most common responses were for walking (88%), wildlife/heritage interest (53%) and for a café (48%).
- Respondents were most likely to say well-maintained paths (80%), a lack of litter/dog mess (75%) and toilets (69%) are important to them when visiting a Lancashire Countryside Services' site.
- Nearly nineteen out of twenty respondents (93%) said that they were satisfied with the Countryside Services in Lancashire.
- When asked how Lancashire's Countryside Services ceasing will impact upon them the most common responses were that they 'worried about how sites will be maintained' (25%), they worried about the 'impact on litter collection' (22%) and they are concerned about reduced opportunities for good quality family-based activities (20%).

- When asked which, if any, roles they would consider volunteering for, two-fifths of respondents (40%) said that they would consider litter picking and keeping the site tidy, and just over a quarter of respondents (27%) said that they would consider volunteering for vegetation cutting.
- Of those respondents who said that they would consider volunteering, about three in ten respondents (29%) said that they would be willing to volunteer for less than two hours each week and two-fifths of respondents (40%) said that they would be willing to volunteer for 2-4 hours each week.
- Over three-quarters of respondents (77%) said that an established national or regional charities would be appropriate and over half of respondents (53%) said that a local community group would be appropriate to look after sites.

## 2. Introduction

The county council continues to face an unprecedented financial challenge. Over the next five years to 2020/21 the council needs to make savings of £262m on top of those agreed within previous budget processes. This extremely difficult financial picture is the result of continued cuts in funding by Government, rising costs and rising demand for key services.

Based on current spending and forecast demand for services, the council will not have sufficient financial resources to meet its statutory obligations by April 2018, even if we no longer continue to deliver any of the non-statutory services. The council will need to rely heavily on reserves in order to set a balanced budget for 2016/17 and 2017/18.

The provision and maintenance of countryside sites is not a statutory requirement and it is proposed that Lancashire County Council ceases to provide this service in April 2018. We will be looking for new ways to manage the countryside estate and will be working with partners, other organisations and local people to explore a range of options to ensure that the key sites will continue to be available and well looked after for visitors.

The county council owns and manages a range of green spaces across the county. Countryside Services looks after sites including country parks at Wycoller (Colne), Beacon Fell (Preston) and Lee Quarry (Rossendale). Other sites include Crook O' Lune (Lancaster), Conder Green (Lancaster), Spring Wood (Whalley) and Marles Wood (Ribble Valley).

There are also many sites close to urban areas, the result of the county's land reclamation and tree planting programmes, eg Rowley (Burnley), Townley (Burnley), Woodnook Vale (Accrington), Preston Junction (South Ribble) and Fleetwood Marsh (Wyre). These green spaces provide the opportunity and incentive for physical exercise such as walking and cycling, with the associated benefits to the physical and mental health of the population.

In addition to day-to-day maintenance of sites, including dealing with litter and vandalism, the Ranger Service provides an annual events programme, environmental education for schools and other groups, supports over 100 volunteer rangers, provides trampers (all terrain mobility scooters) for people with disabilities or mobility problems at a number of sites, and provide advice and guidance to the many visitors.

The consultation asked for the public's views about the proposal that the county council no longer provides the countryside service and about new ways of looking after the sites the Countryside Services maintains.

## 3. Methodology

For the consultation, paper questionnaires were made available at Countryside Services' sites. Online questionnaires could be accessed from [www.lancashire.gov.uk](http://www.lancashire.gov.uk).

The fieldwork ran for twelve weeks from 4 January 2016 until 27 March 2016. In total, 966 completed questionnaires were returned (126 paper-based and 840 online).

The questionnaire asked respondents about which Countryside Services sites they used and how frequently they use them, their reasons for visiting them, what they think are important when visiting a Countryside Services site, what the impact on them would be of ceasing Countryside Services and if they would be willing to volunteer at any of the sites.

Although the questionnaire was published online for anyone to respond to, and available at Countryside Services sites, the majority of respondents (96%) had used at least one Countryside Services site in the last 12 months and therefore the consultation findings predominantly represents the views of this group.

The findings presented in this report are not representative of the views of the population of Lancashire and should only be taken to represent the views of people who were made aware of the consultation, had the opportunity to respond and felt compelled to.

### 3.1 Limitations

Although the questionnaire was published online for anyone to respond to, and available at Countryside Services sites, the majority of respondents (96%) had used at least one Countryside Services site in the last 12 months and therefore the consultation findings predominantly represents the views of this group.

The findings presented in this report are not representative of the views of the population of Lancashire and should only be taken to represent the views of people who, were made aware of the consultation, had the opportunity to respond and felt compelled to.

In charts or tables where responses do not add up to 100%, this is due to multiple responses or computer rounding.

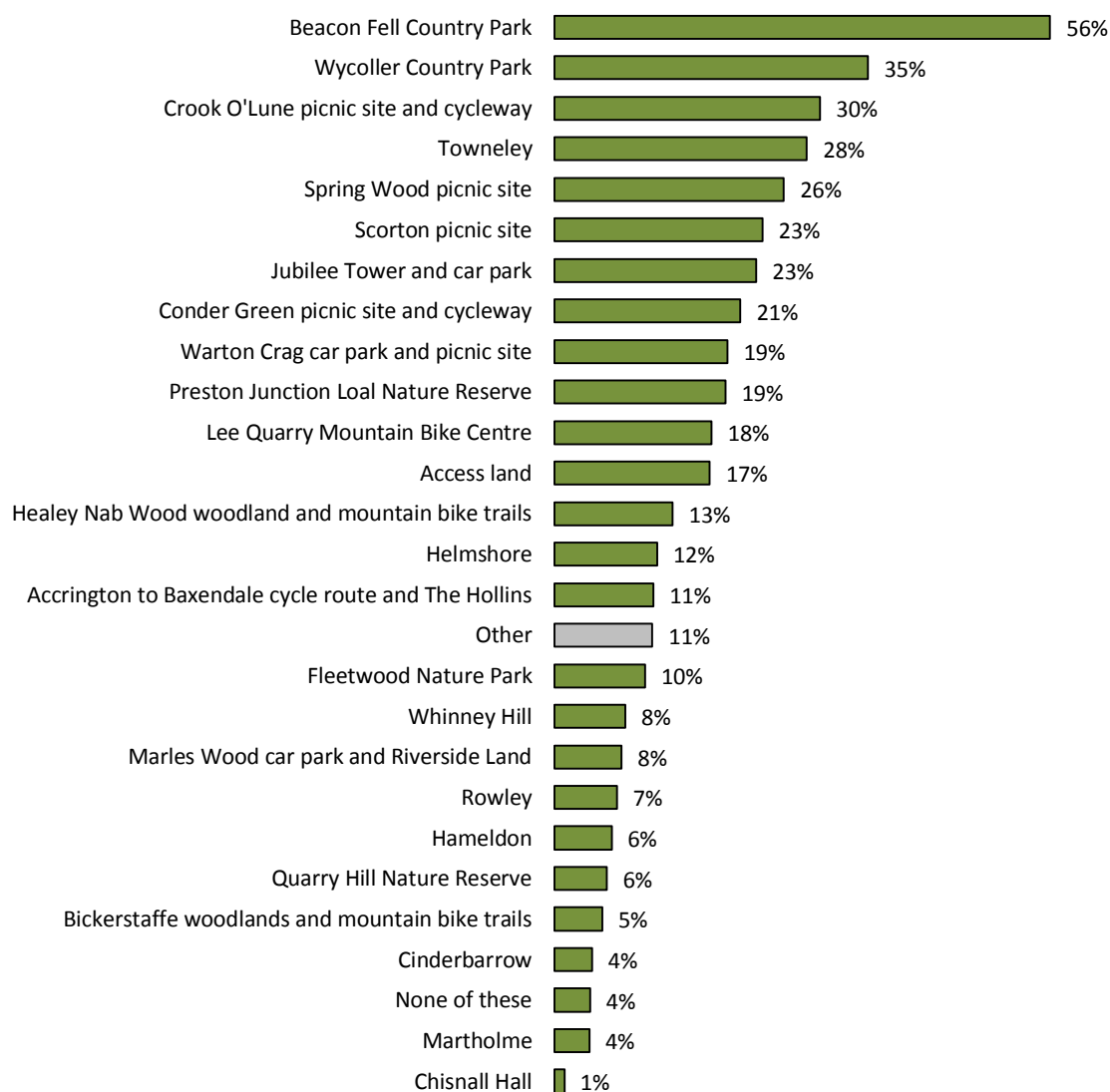
## 4. Main consultation findings

### 4.1 Use of the Countryside Services

First, respondents were asked which Lancashire Countryside Services' sites, if any, they have visited or made use of in the last 12 months.

Respondents were most likely to say that they had Beacon Fell Country Park (56%) and least likely to say they have visited Chisnall Hall (1%).

**Chart 1 - Which, if any, of these Lancashire Countryside Services' sites have you visited in the last 12 months?**



Base: all respondents (961)

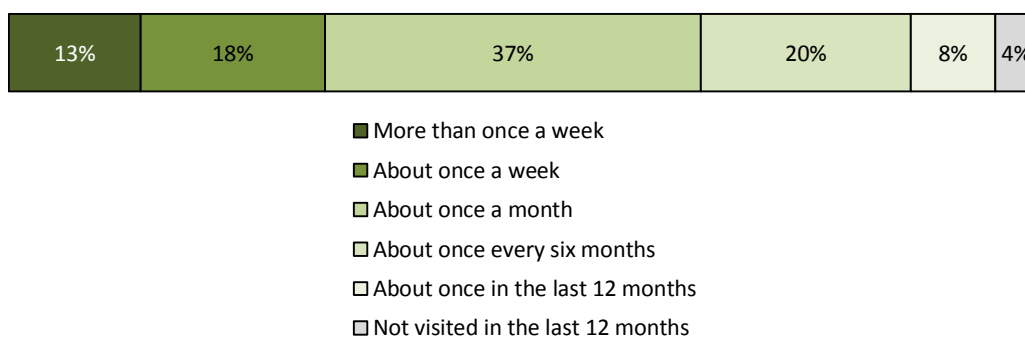


Respondents were then asked how often, if at all, they have visited these sites in the last 12 months.

Two-thirds of respondents said that they had visited at least once a month in the last 12 months (67% of respondents stated they had visited 'more than once a week', 'about once a week' or 'about once a month').

About one in twenty respondents said that they have not visited in the last 12 months (4% in the last 12 months).

**Chart 2 - How often, if at all, have you visited these sites in the last 12 months?**



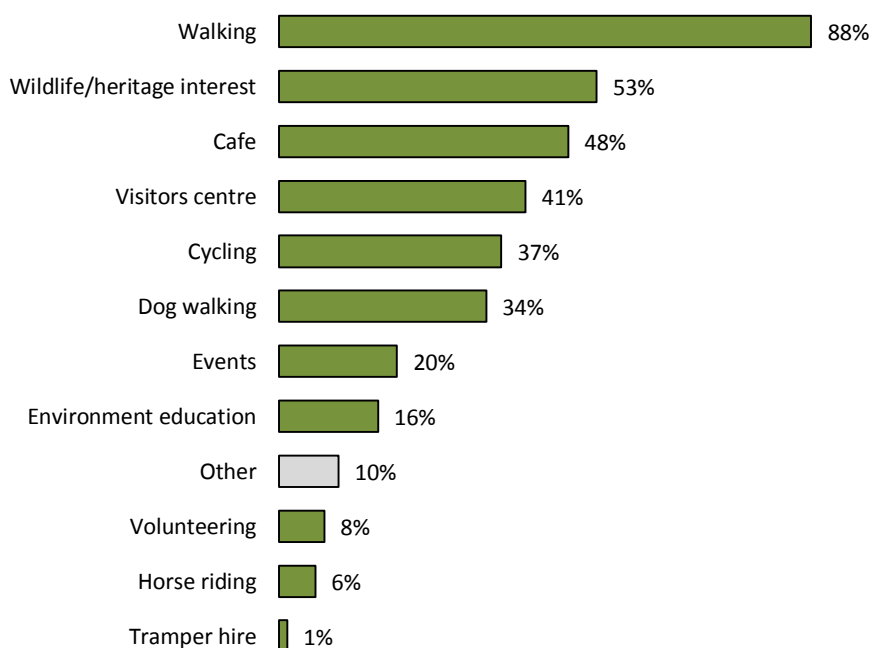
Base: all respondents (960)

Respondents were presented with a list of activities that can be done on Lancashire Countryside Services' sites, and asked what they used any of the Lancashire Countryside Services' sites for.

Respondents were most likely to say they used them for walking (88%). Around half of respondents stated they use them for wildlife/heritage interest, or for a café (53% and 48% respectively).

Respondents were least likely to say they used them for tramper hire (1%).

**Chart 3 - And, what do you use any of the Lancashire Countryside Services' sites for?**

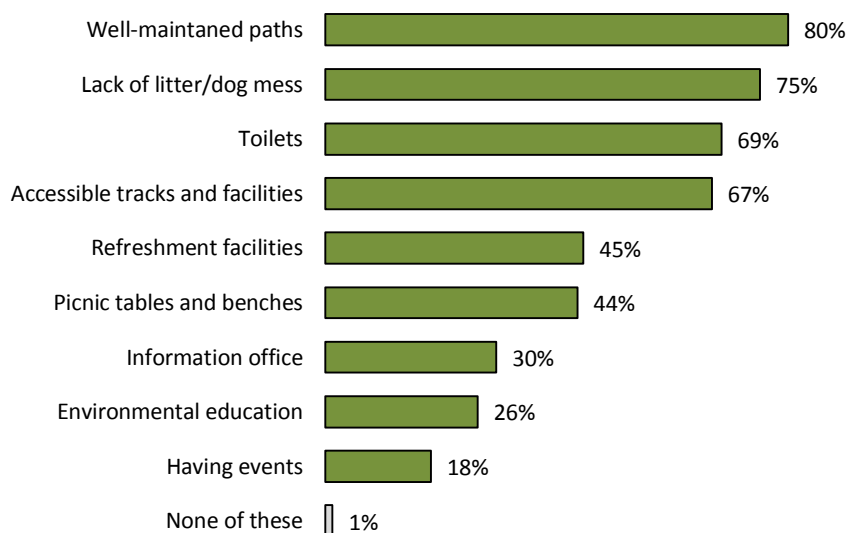


Base: all respondents (951)

Respondents were presented with a series of options and were then asked which, if any, are important to them when visiting a Lancashire Countryside Services' site.

Respondents were most likely to say well-maintained paths (80%), a lack of litter/dog mess (75%) and toilets (69%) are important to them when visiting a Lancashire Countryside Service site.

**Chart 4 - Which, if any, of the following are important to you when visiting a Lancashire Countryside Services' site?**



Base: all respondents (953)

Respondents were then asked that overall, how satisfied or dissatisfied were they with Countryside Services in Lancashire.

Nearly nineteen out of twenty respondents (93%) said that they were satisfied with the Countryside Services in Lancashire.

**Chart 5 - Overall, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the Countryside Services in Lancashire?**

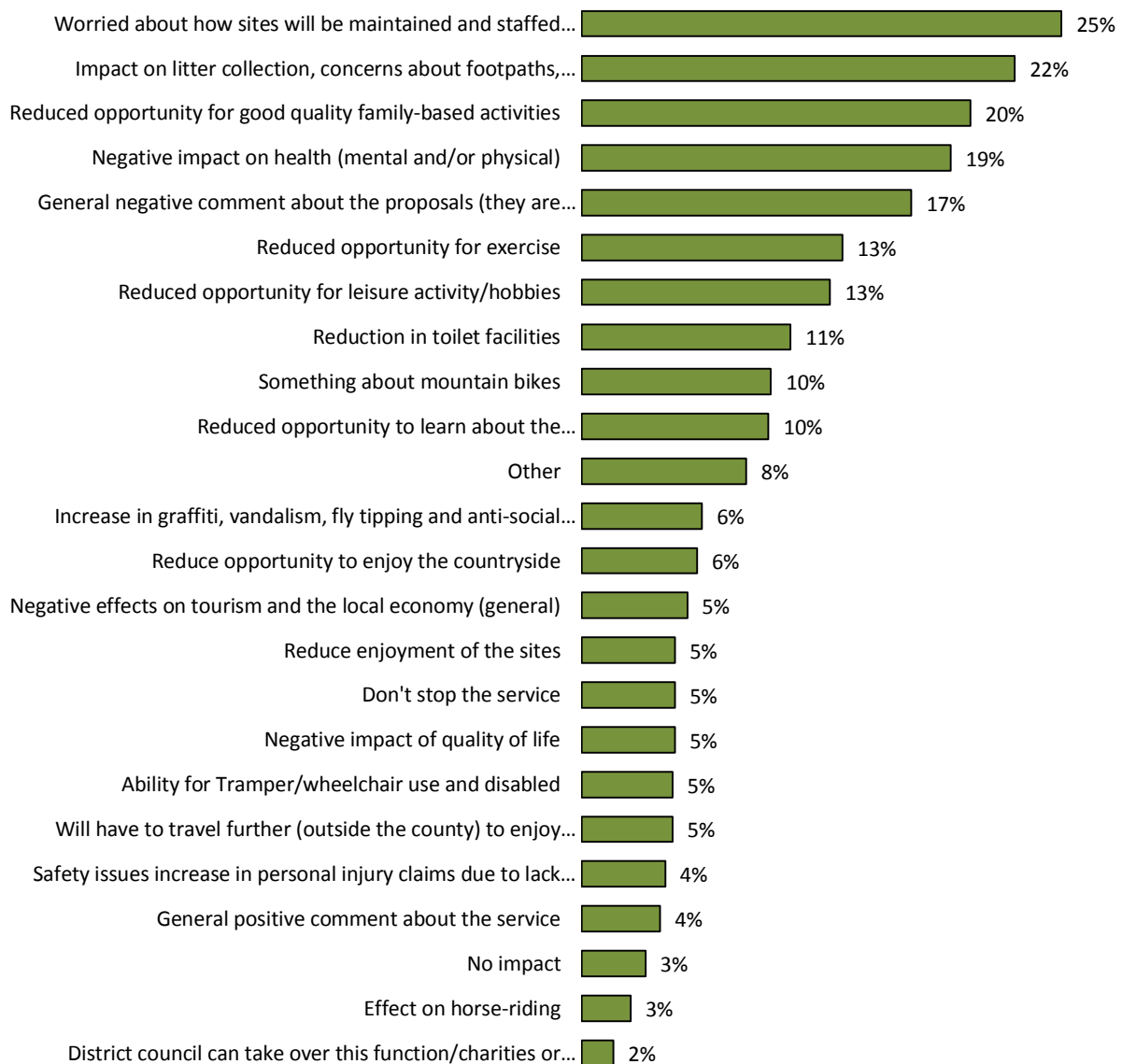


Base: all respondents (962)

All respondents were then asked how Lancashire's Countryside Services ceasing will impact upon them.

The most common responses were that they 'worried about how sites will be maintained' (25%), they worried about the 'impact on litter collection' (22%) and they are concerned about reduced opportunities for good quality family-based activities (20%).

**Chart 6 - How will Lancashire's Countryside Services ceasing impact upon you?**



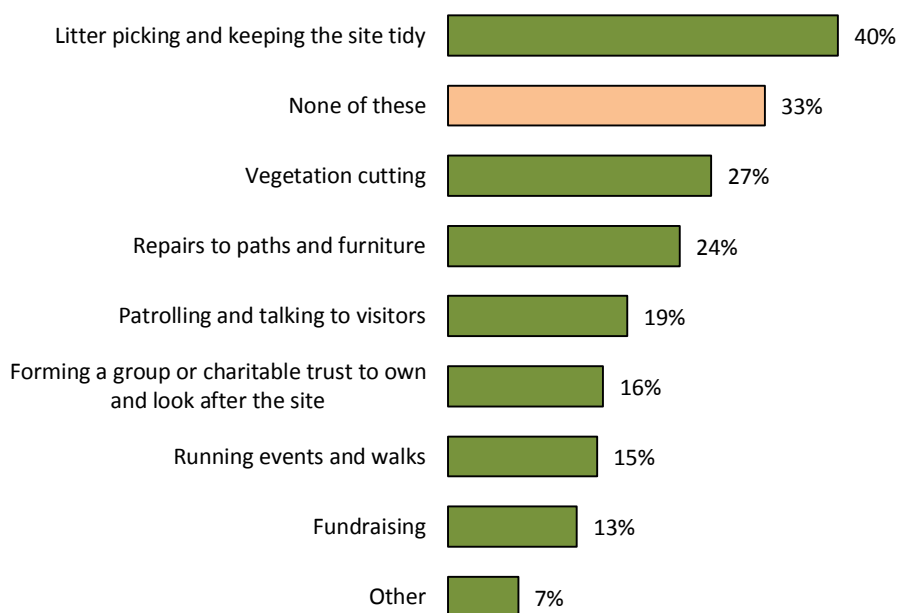
Base: all respondents (794)

## 4.2 Volunteering

Respondents were then asked which roles, if any, they would consider volunteering for.

Two-fifths of respondents (40%) said that they would consider litter picking and keeping the site tidy, and just over a quarter of respondents (27%) said that they would consider volunteering for vegetation cutting. However, one third of respondents (33%) said that they would not consider volunteering for any of these roles.

**Chart 7 - Which roles, if any, would you consider volunteering for?**



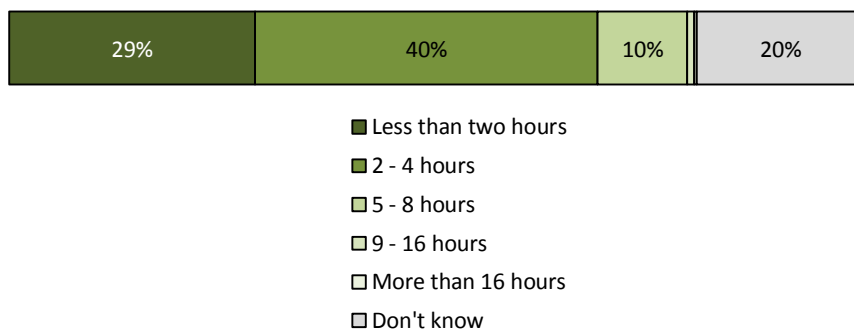
Base: all respondents (923)

Respondents who said that they would consider volunteering to do one or more of the activities listed were then asked on average how many hours a week they would be willing to volunteer.

About three in ten respondents (29%) said that they would be willing to volunteer for less than two hours each week and two-fifths of respondents (40%) said that they would be willing to volunteer for 2-4 hours each week.

A fifth of respondents (20%) said that they don't know how many hours each week they would be willing to volunteer.

**Chart 8 - And, if you would consider volunteering, on average how many hours each week would you be willing to volunteer?**



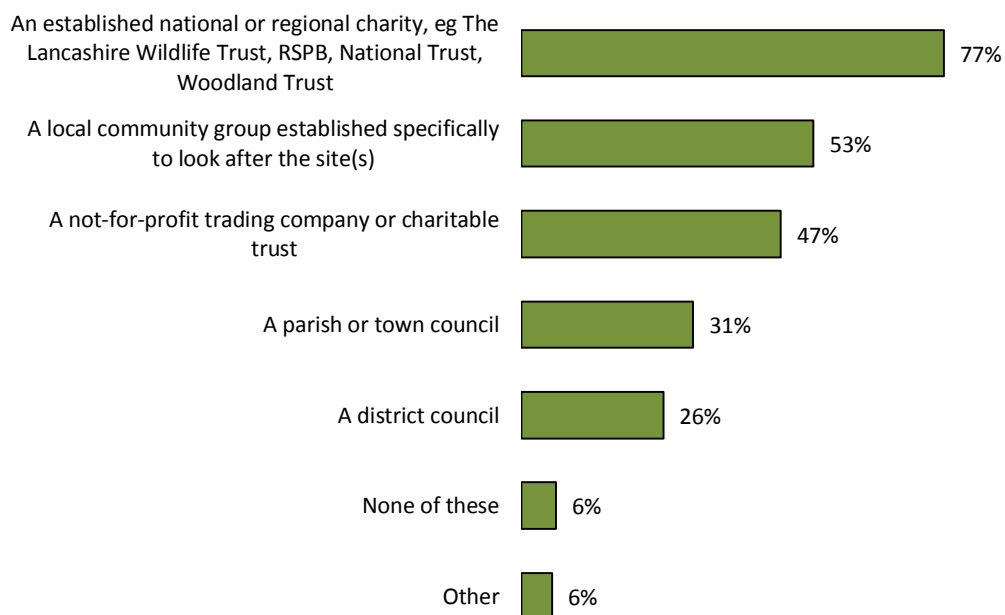
Base: all respondents (629)

Respondents were then asked which, if any, of the following organisations do they think would be appropriate to manage the sites.

Over three-quarters of respondents (77%) said that an established national or regional charities would be appropriate and over half of respondents (53%) said that a local community group would be appropriate to look after sites.

Only about a one in twenty respondents said that none of the organisations listed were appropriate (6%).

**Chart 9 - Which, if any, of the following organisations do you think would be appropriate to manage the sites?**



Base: all respondents (951)

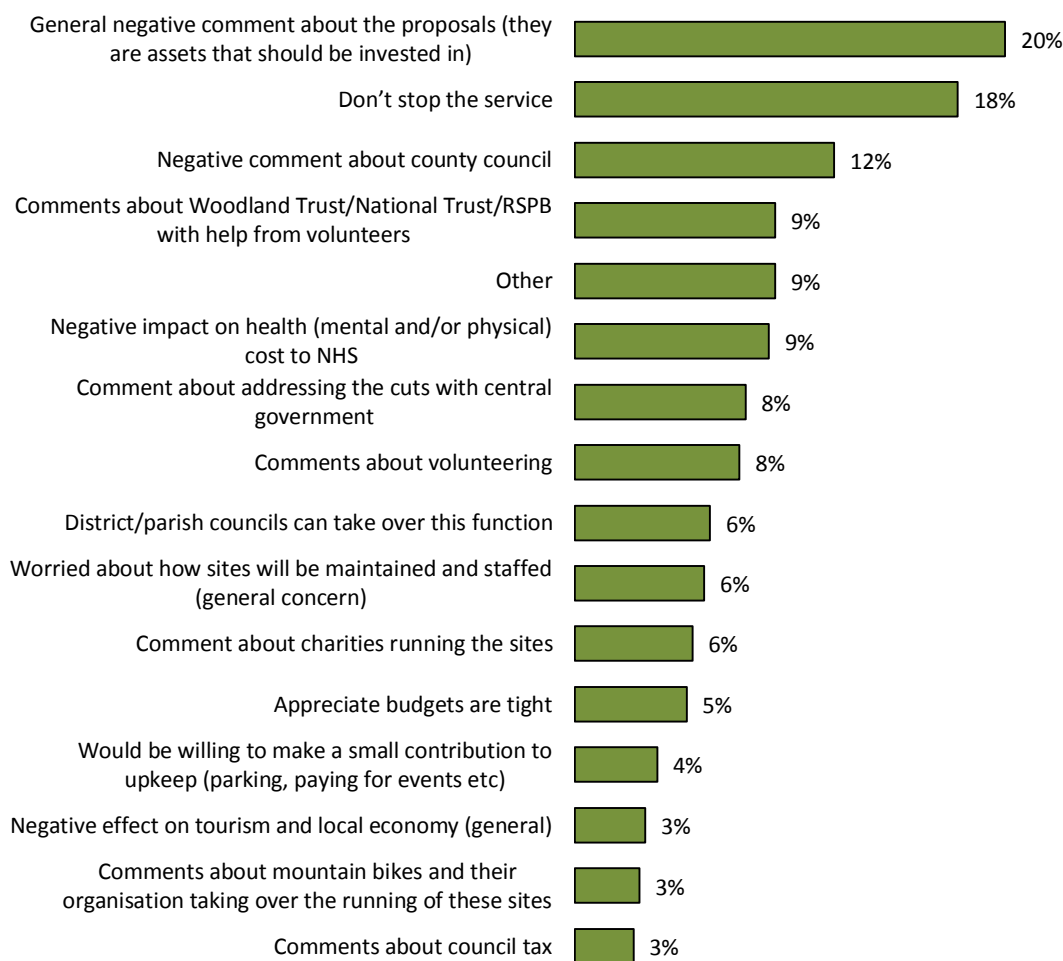


### 4.3 Other comments on the proposal

Respondents were then asked how the proposal, that the county council no longer provides the countryside service and new ways of looking after the sites are found, will impact on them.

The most common responses were a general negative comment and/or arguing that the sites deserved investment as public assets (20%), or to request that LCC not stop this service (18%).

**Chart 10 - Do you have any other comments about these proposals?**



Base: all respondents (363)

## Appendix 1: demographic breakdown

**Table 1 - Are you...?**

	%	Count
A Lancashire resident	93%	879
A member of a voluntary or community organisation	24%	224
An employee of Lancashire County Council	10%	97
Other	8%	80
A local business	5%	44
An elected member of a parish or town council in Lancashire	1%	8
An elected member of a Lancashire district council	1%	5
An elected member of Lancashire County Council	0%	1
<b>Total</b>		<b>948</b>

**Table 2 - Are you...?**

	%	Count
Male	44%	417
Female	56%	534
<b>Total</b>		<b>951</b>

**Table 3 - Have you ever identified as transgender?**

	%	Count
Yes	<1%	4
No	93%	884
Prefer not to say	7%	61
<b>Total</b>		<b>909</b>

**Table 4 - What was your age on your last birthday?**

	%	Count
Under 16	1%	6
16-19	1%	7
20-34	12%	112
35-64	68%	646
65-74	16%	149
75+	3%	24
<b>Total</b>		<b>944</b>

**Table 5 - Are you a deaf person or do you have a disability?**

	%	Count
Yes	9%	81
No	91%	852
<b>Total</b>		<b>933</b>

**Table 6 - Are there any children in your household aged under 20?**

	%	Count
No children aged under 20	62%	576
Yes, aged 5-8	12%	108
Yes, aged under 5	11%	105
Yes, aged 9-11	11%	103
Yes, aged 12-16	10%	94
Yes, aged 17-19	8%	75
No, but expecting	3%	28
<b>Total</b>		<b>935</b>

**Table 7 - Are there any children with a disability in your household aged 20-25?**

	%	Count
Yes	2%	20
No	98%	904
<b>Total</b>		<b>924</b>

**Table 8 - Which best describes your ethnic background?**

	%	Count
White	98%	911
Any other ethnic background	2%	9
<b>Total</b>		<b>920</b>

**Table 9 - What is your religion?**

	%	Count
No religion	42%	389
Christian	53%	488
Buddhist	1%	10
Hindu	0%	0
Jewish	<1%	1
Muslim	<1%	2
Sikh	0%	0
Any other religion	3%	27
<b>Total</b>		<b>917</b>

**Table 10 - Are you in a marriage or civil partnership?**

	%	Count
Marriage	62%	568
Civil partnership	3%	25
Prefer not to say	6%	54
None of these	29%	270
<b>Total</b>		<b>917</b>

**Table 11 - How would you describe your sexual orientation?**

	%	Count
Straight (heterosexual)	86%	772
Bisexual	1%	11
Gay man	1%	8
Lesbian/gay woman	1%	13
Other	1%	7
Prefer not to say	10%	91
<b>Total</b>		<b>902</b>