

WPCC Master Plan and Levy Increase Consultation Report



Neil Smith, Mike King and Meg Ellis, February 2023

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Contents

WPCC MASTER PLAN AND LEVY INCREASE CONSULTATION REPORT	1
CONTENTS.....	2
INTRODUCTION	3
THE BRIEF.....	3
THE TEAM	3
THE METHOD	4
SUMMARY OF FINDINGS.....	6
DETAILED ANALYSIS.....	21

Introduction

This report presents the results and conclusions drawn from public consultations on the Masterplan for Wimbledon and Putney Commons, and the ‘in principle’ increase in the levy. The report presents:

- A summary of the findings
- The combined results of the in-person and online survey data
- Separate analysis of the in-person and online survey data
- Some recommendations

The findings are unequivocal and positive.

The brief

Established in 1871, the Wimbledon and Putney Commons Conservators (WPCC – a charity – also known as the Conservators) were established under an Act of Parliament with the following purpose: ‘preserve...the natural aspect and state of the commons’ and to keep them ‘for ever uninclosed (sic) and unbuilt on...for purposes of exercise and recreation’.

In pursuit of their duties, WPCC has developed a Masterplan for the future management of the Commons. To ensure the works completed through the plan can be adequately maintained, WPCC want to ensure a more viable financial base by potentially increasing the levy placed on 40,000 households in and around the Commons. To test the ideas in the Masterplan and the reaction of the public to a potential increase in the levy, WPCC decided to carry out a consultation exercise.

The aim of the consultation were to obtain the views of:

- Users of the Commons on the proposals contained in the draft Masterplan for the natural landscape, access and signage (consulting on volunteering proposals was postponed).
- Levy payers on the principle of increasing the levy paid by each household in order increase funding for the management of the Commons, including the improvements set out in the Masterplan.

Resources for Change provided a fix-price proposal against this brief in May 2022.

The team

Resources for Change provided an experienced consultation team of four people:

1. Neil Smith, contract lead, Director
2. Mike King, Director
3. Scott Sullivan, Director
4. Meg Elliot, research assistant

Nicholas Tod provided technical support to the online survey.

Due to injury, Neil Smith was not available for the consultation work until November and so three of the four in-person consultation sessions were provided by Mike King and Meg Elliot.

The method

The consultation work comprised two main elements: in-person consultation stalls on the Commons and an online survey.

In-person consultation stalls on the Commons were held on the following dates:

- Sunday 25th September at Wimbledon Common – Mike and Meg
- Saturday 1st October at Wimbledon Common – Mike and Meg
- Tuesday 1st November at Wimbledon Common – Mike and Meg. This included an evening presentation to members, held at the golf club
- Tuesday 9th November at Putney Lower Common and Wimbledon Common – Neil and Scott

The people engaged through the consultation stalls and the online survey were asked the following questions and were given a range of pre-set responses to select:

1. How often do you use the Commons?

Responses: daily, weekly, monthly, at least once a year, less than once a year, first visit

2. Are you broadly in favour of the projects to improve the Commons?

Responses: yes, no, don't know

3. Is there a project you think is particularly good?

Responses: ponds and wetlands, woodlands, heathlands and grasslands, paths and ditches, signage and bike racks

4. If you have concerns, what are these?

This was a matrix question with the five main project areas listed in question three set against the following options: this will disturb nature, I disagree with the cost, things are fine as they are, the Commons should not be like parks and 'other'.

5. On a scale of one to five, how strongly do you support the Masterplan projects?

This was a matrix question with the five main project areas listed in question three set against the following options: strongly don't support, don't support, not sure, support, strongly support.

6. Are you a levy payer?

Responses: yes, no, don't know

7. Do you agree in principle that the levy should be increased to meet the necessary investments and maintenance requirements of the Commons?

Responses: yes, no, don't know

8. If you agree, and subject to further consultation, would you support an increase in the levy in the order of £8 per household per year (for a Band D property, which at present is £32.14 per year) outside of any annual inflationary increase?

Responses: yes, no, don't know

9. Comments

People were given an opportunity to make other comments. The in-person consultation stalls provided the team with the opportunity to discuss the questions with the respondents.

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The in-person consultation stalls were held under two gazebos, one of which was used by the WPCC team to present a summary of the Masterplan projects, the other of which was used by R4C to present the questions. The following photograph show the typical layout of the consultation stalls.



The WPCC information gazebo is on the left and the R4C question gazebo is on the right. Photograph taken on 9th November at Wimbledon Common.

The questions were answered using pinboards, as shown in the following photographs. The stalls provided an opportunity to hear why people made their responses, to discuss different perspectives and to explain the Masterplan ideas. With regard to whether or not people were levy-payers, we were able in person to show them the levy-payers map and so there were no ‘don’t know’ responses, whereas the online survey did not provide this information.

On a scale of 1-5 how strongly do you support the Masterplan projects?
1 being not at all, 5 being full support.

	1 ☹️	2	3 😐	4	5 😊
Ponds and Wetlands	1 pin				15 pins
Woodlands	2 pins				12 pins
Heathlands and Grasslands	3 pins				10 pins
Paths and Ditches	2 pins				12 pins
Signage and Bike Racks	3 pins				10 pins

Are you a levy payer?

Yes No

Yes: 10 pins. No: 10 pins. Handwritten notes: 'I don't know if I'm a levy payer. I think I might be. I don't know if I'm a levy payer. I think I might be. I don't know if I'm a levy payer. I think I might be.'

Do you agree in principle that the levy should be increased to meet the necessary investment and maintenance requirements of the Commons?

Yes No

Yes: 10 pins. No: 10 pins.

If you agree, and subject to further consultation, would you support an increase in the levy in the order of £8 per household per year (for a Band D property, which at present is £32.14 per year) outside of any annual inflationary increase?

Yes No

Yes: 10 pins. No: 10 pins.

The online survey opened on 24th September and closed on 30th November 2022.

Summary of findings

The broad conclusion that can be drawn from the consultation work is that people are in favour of the Masterplan projects and in favour of the in-principle increase in the levy. A small percentage of people would rather the Commons were 'left to nature' to manage. A significant proportion of people think the levy area should be increased.

The findings are based solely on the data gathered on the in-person consultation stalls and through the online survey, two-thirds of whom are levy payers. As explained in the next section, the number of people engaged – 619 – can be judged to be a representative sample.

The main findings are as follows:

1. Most users consulted on the Commons live within a three to four kilometre / two-to-2.5-mile radius of the Windmill. Two-thirds of them were levy payers
2. Most people used the Commons daily or weekly (85% combined)
3. More than nine out of ten people were broadly in favour of the Masterplan projects
4. There was broad support for all the projects, but more so for the ponds and wetlands, and the heathlands and grasslands projects
5. The main concern, where expressed, was that the Commons should not be like parks – they should retain a feeling of being natural spaces
6. Nearly nine out of ten people agreed in principle that the levy should be increased
7. A small proportion of respondents – 5% or so – disagreed with an increase in the levy, but mostly because they thought this is not how the Commons should be funded e.g., the levy area should increase to cover the three adjacent Boroughs
8. 97% of respondents agreed with the typical increase of £8, with many people happy to pay more
9. There are some differences in the responses made by levy and non-levy payers, more noticeably in relation to the proposed levy changes, but the reasons for this are a matter of conjecture e.g., non-levy payers may feel these questions were not for them to answer.

The summary of findings combines the responses from the in-person and online consultation approaches. The analysis section looks at the responses separately, highlighting any differences in results from the different consultation methods.

Recommendations

We have some incidental recommendations to make which may help to gather more support as the projects are implemented, and which may have a bearing on the modernisation of the Act governing the Commons.

1. **Inform people about consequences of not intervening in the management of the Commons.** A small minority of people believe strongly that the Commons should be ‘left to nature’ and that people should not interfere. They typically do not understand the consequences of this approach, especially in a landscape which, in fact, is not natural – for example, it lacks the large herbivores needed to reduce scrub and to make clearings.
2. **Consider increasing the area from which levy payers are drawn,** potentially increasing the overall revenue for the Commons, and / or decreasing the average amount of the levy per household (by spreading the budget across more payers). There was surprisingly strong support for this approach.
3. **Sharpen and shorten consultation communication.** People found the WPCC website hard to navigate and to find information on e.g., the consultation page was too wordy and the important links were ‘buried’ too far down the page. We assisted people at the stalls to help them find links as they could not find the information themselves.
4. **Reconsider the signage and bike rack project.** Whilst only relatively disliked, it was notable that this project attracted the most negative reaction. To balance this, those cyclists spoken to or who left comments on the online survey reported ‘hostility’ towards them as a user group, which seems unnecessary. Is there an engagement opportunity here?

Our sense was that the objections related more to increased signage which people fear will make the Commons like any other park, rather than objections to some more bike racks.

5. **Recognise the importance of the Commons as social and community spaces.** It was clear from observing behaviours and from conversations with the public that the Commons served an important social and community function. People meet through regular dog walking, or to run in groups, meet for a coffee or a walk, and so on. Recognising and enhancing this aspect of the Commons e.g., by improving and extending facilities at the Windmill site would further support the social and community benefits of the Commons.

Number of people engaged

Online	In-person	Total
189	430	619

The consultation stalls engaged with a good number of people, engaging with an average of more than 100 per event. This level of engagement is broadly comparable with our usual in-person consultation work. Using stalls is an effective way of engaging with people in and around the Commons; people welcomed being engaged face-to-face, asking questions and having discussion.

The number of people engaged through the online survey was surprisingly low given the publicity given to the survey by WPCC. Given the results of the in-person and the online survey responses, we speculate that people are not overly worried by the proposed Masterplan projects or the possible increase in the levy and so were not motivated to respond. It is usually true that more people will respond, and more vocally, to a threat e.g., proposing a housing development in the Commons would no doubt have ensured a much stronger reaction. However, the level of online response is still below what we usually experience for online engagement and surveys.

Sample size and confidence levels

We set the sample size as 40,000, this being the number of households paying the levy. We wanted a confidence level of 99.9% in the results with a margin of error of no more than 2%. To achieve this, we would have needed to engage with 396 people; we exceeded this number by more than 50%, however this includes responses from levy and non-levy payers. Levy-payers only constitute 69% of those consulted and so the sample size and confidence levels break down as follows:

Total sample size	Confidence level	Margin for error
619 / 40,000	99.9%	2%

Levy-payers sample size	Confidence level	Margin for error
427 / 40,000	99.9%	2%

Whilst the consultations can be split between levy and non-levy payers, care should be taken in seeing them as entirely separate audiences. They are all users of the Commons, but clearly 2/3rds of those consulted pay for the privilege and their views could have more weight in subsequent deliberations. Counter to this is the general willingness of those consulted for the levy to be increased in amount and also in reach, to take in areas which currently do not pay the levy.

Responses by levy / non-levy paying respondents

The following table shows the proportion of responses by engagement method, cross-referred with levy / non-levy paying status.

	Levy payer	Non-levy payer	Not sure
Online	67%	24%	9%
In-person	72%	28%	-

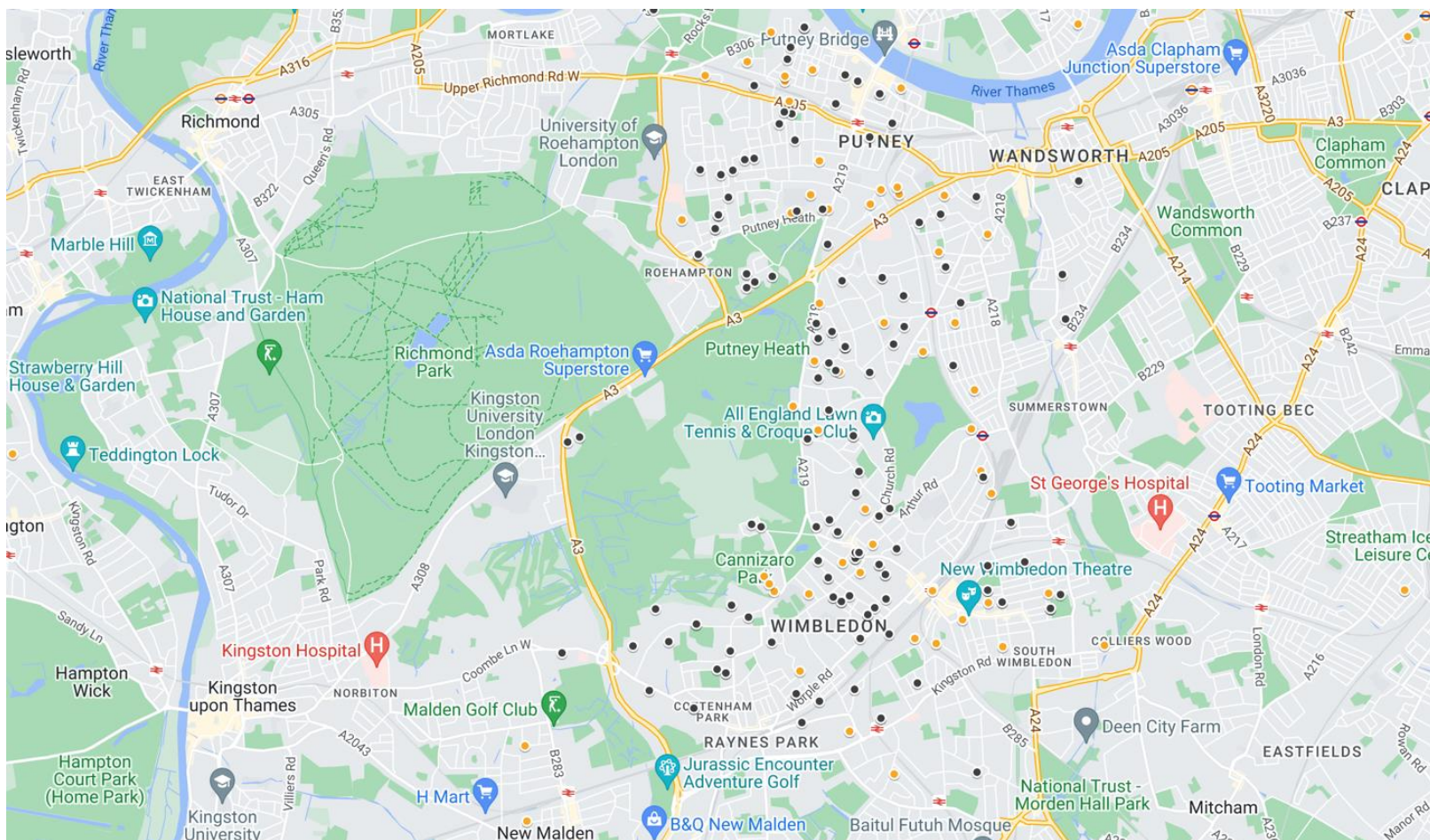
Overall, 69% of responses online and in person were from levy payers.

Limitations of the data

Whilst the response level has provided a high degree of confidence, there were limitations to combining the data from the two consultation techniques i.e., in-person consultation stalls on the Commons and an online survey. The responses to the in-person consultation stalls were not trackable across the questions e.g., their responses were not linked to a postcode or any other question response. For the purposes of analysis, we can only present data on levy / non-levy payers based on the online survey.

Where do the people who use the Commons come from?

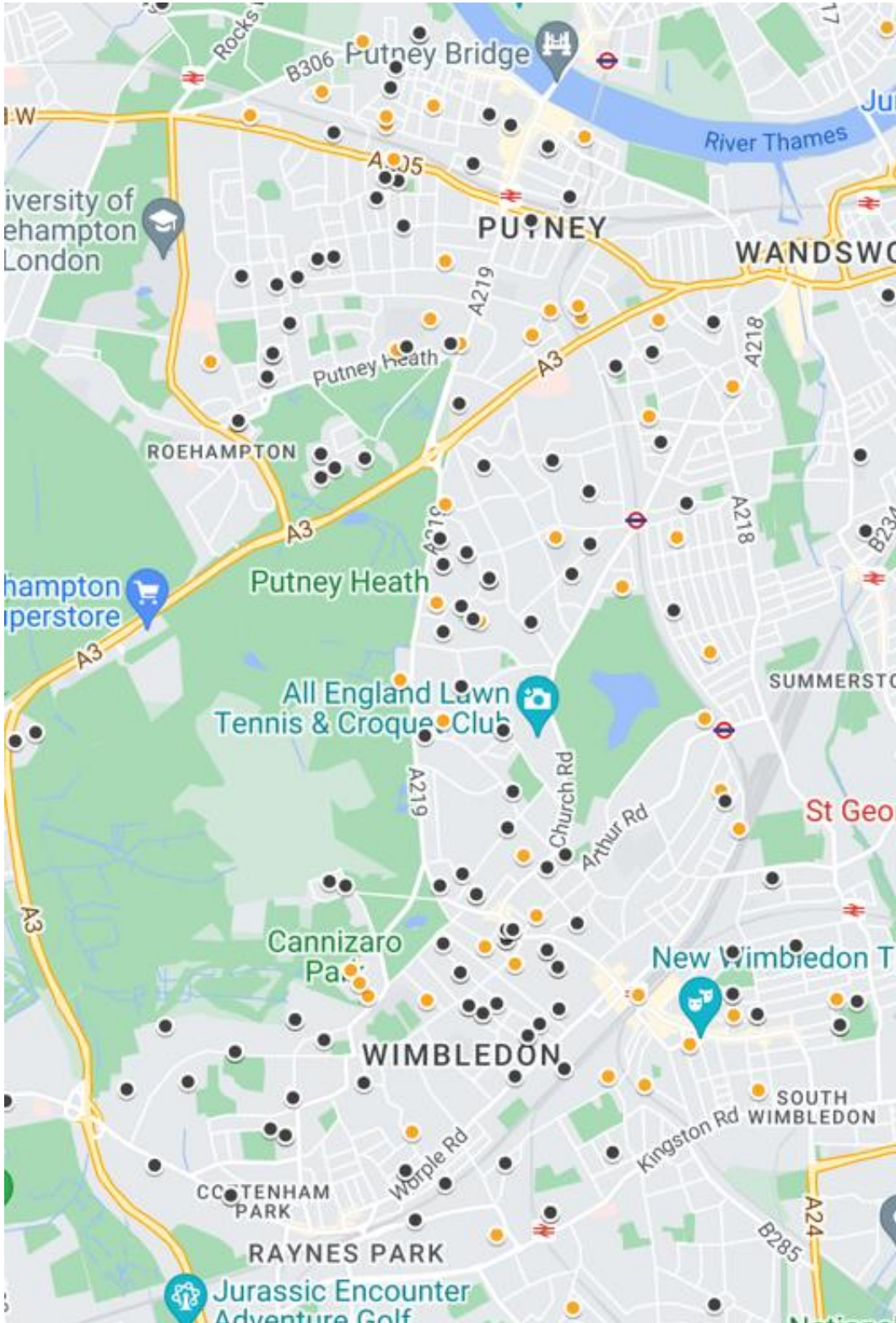
People come from as far away as Twickenham to the west, Streatham to the east, Fulham to the north and New Malden to the south to use the Commons. Most users of the Commons engaged live within a three to four kilometre / two-to-2.5-mile radius of the Windmill.



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The orange markers show the postcode locations of the people engaged in-person and the black markers show the postcode locations of the people who engaged through the online survey.

The overwhelming majority of people live to the north and east of the Commons. Some users come from further afield e.g., Guildford and Kew. The next map shows that the majority of people engaged in-person and online came from within the immediate Wimbledon and Putney area, a short walk or drive away.

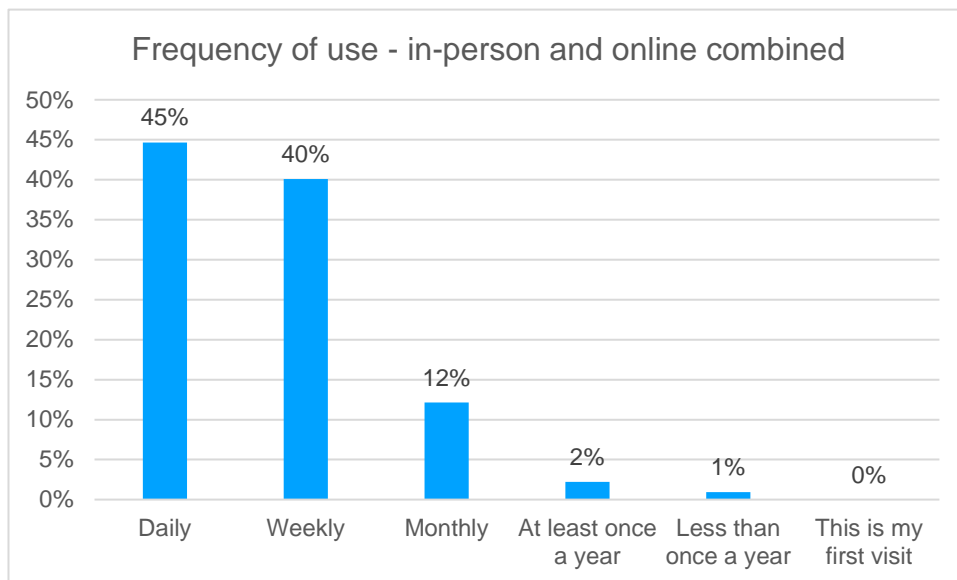


The orange markers show the postcode locations of the people engaged in-person and the black markers show the postcode locations of the people who engaged through the online survey.

Very few of those responding to the consultation came from the west of the Commons.

Frequency of use

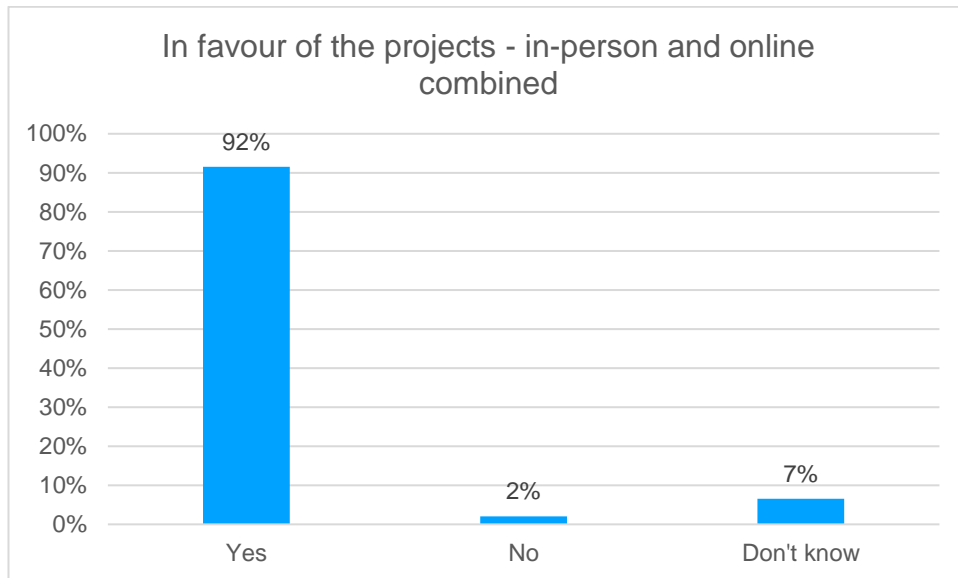
Overall, most people use the Commons daily or weekly (85% combined). All the people engaged on Putney Lower Common use the Common daily for dog walking. 97% of those surveyed use the Commons daily, weekly or monthly.



People talked of using the Commons for many years – decades in some cases – and of the Commons being an important part of their life.

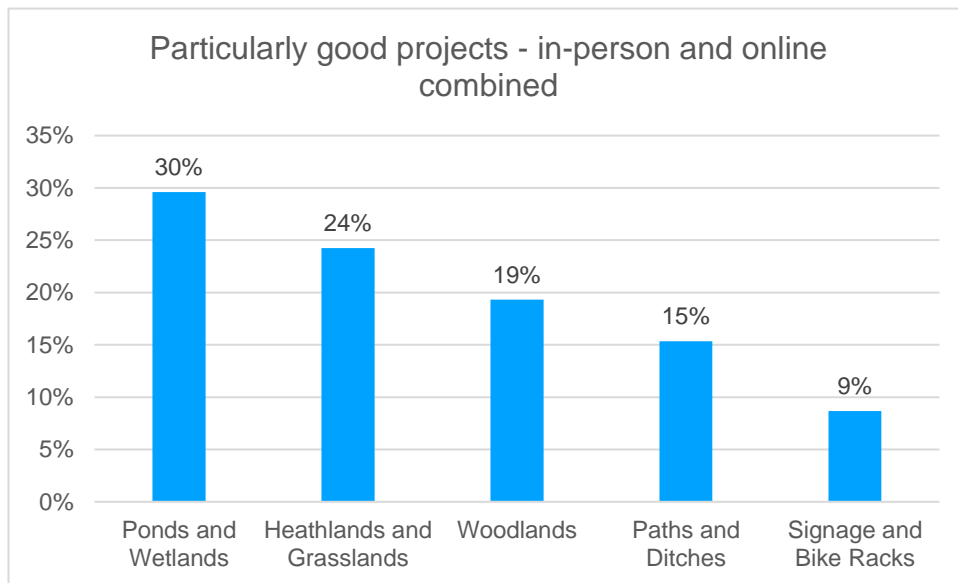
Proportion of people broadly in favour of the projects to improve the Commons

Overall, 92% of the people engaged are broadly in favour of the projects to improve the Commons, with 7% of those surveyed unsure.



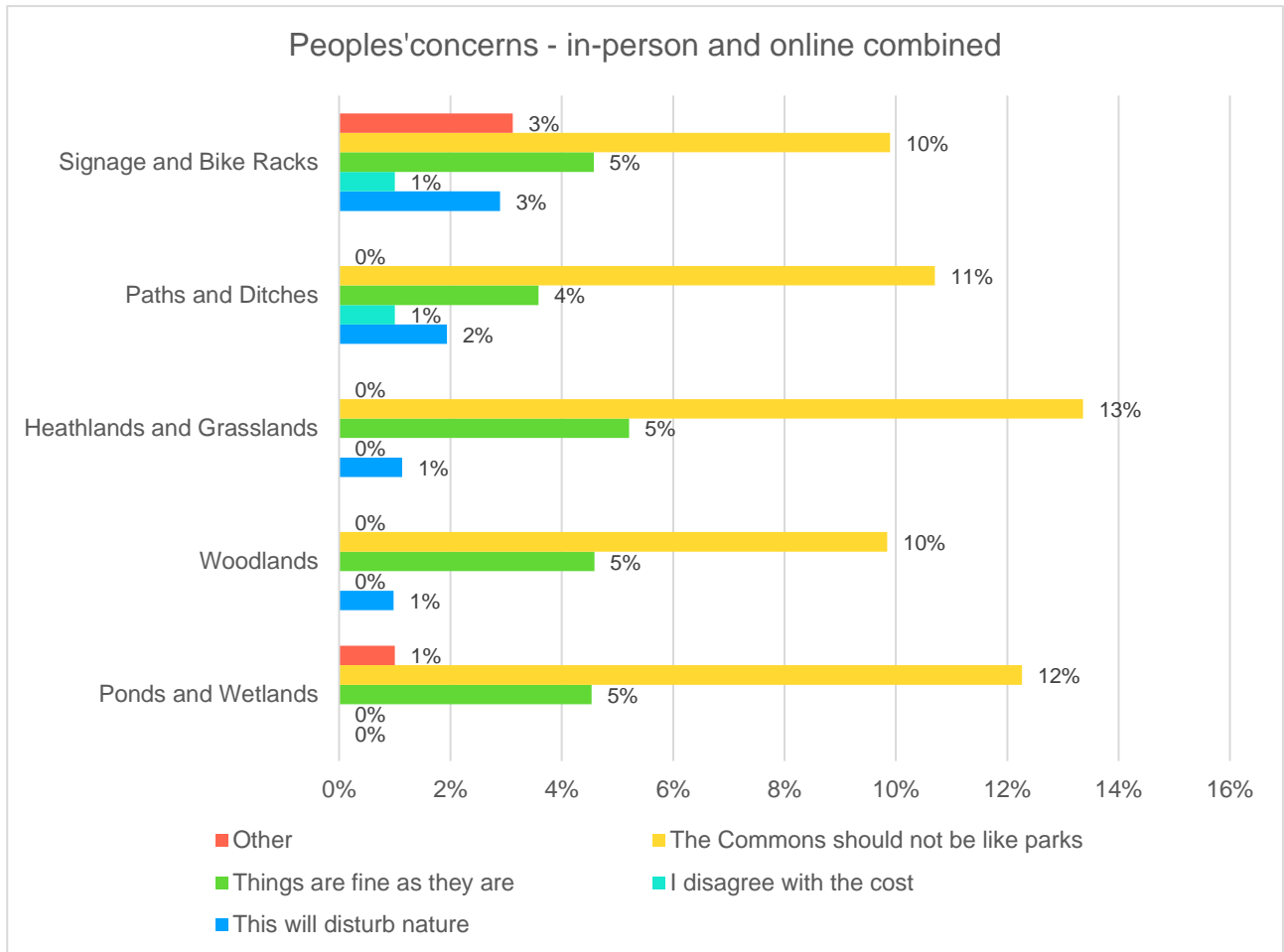
The projects people think are particularly good

Overall, most people engaged think that the ponds and wetlands (30%), and the heathlands and grasslands projects (24%) are particularly good. Some people reported that the ponds are visibly in a poor state. The signage and bike racks project gets the least amount of support. This finding is reinforced in the analysis below relating to the strength of support for the different projects.



The projects people have concerns about and why

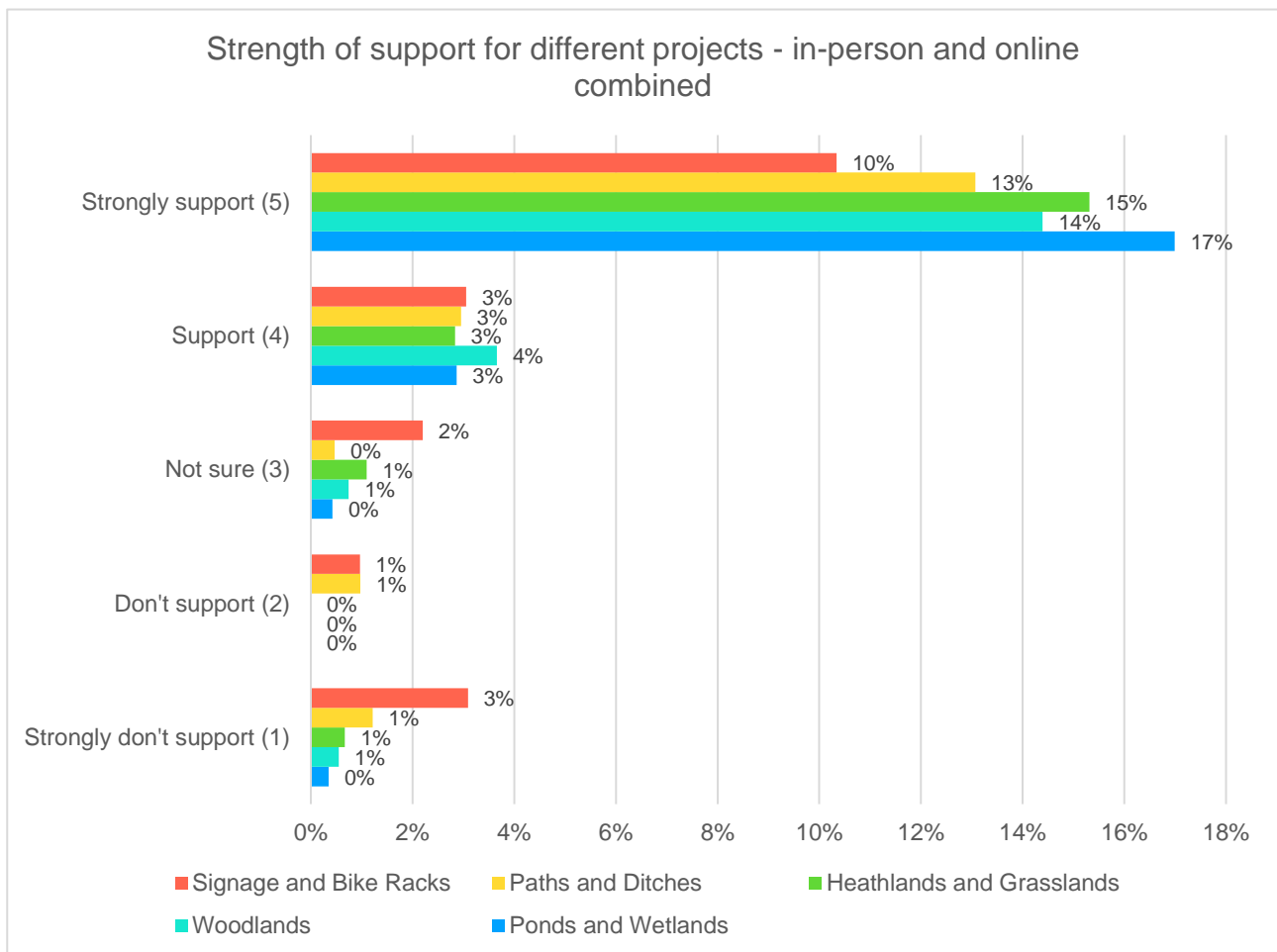
There was a clear and consistent response with regard to what those consulted do not want – they do not want the Commons to become like municipal parks. This concern is most notable for the heathlands and grasslands project which some fear may lead to a large-scale, short-length mowing regime (which is not the idea at all). We were not always sure that people understand what a heathland is.



Strength of support for the different Masterplan projects

Overall, the project(s) which people support most strongly are ranked as follows:

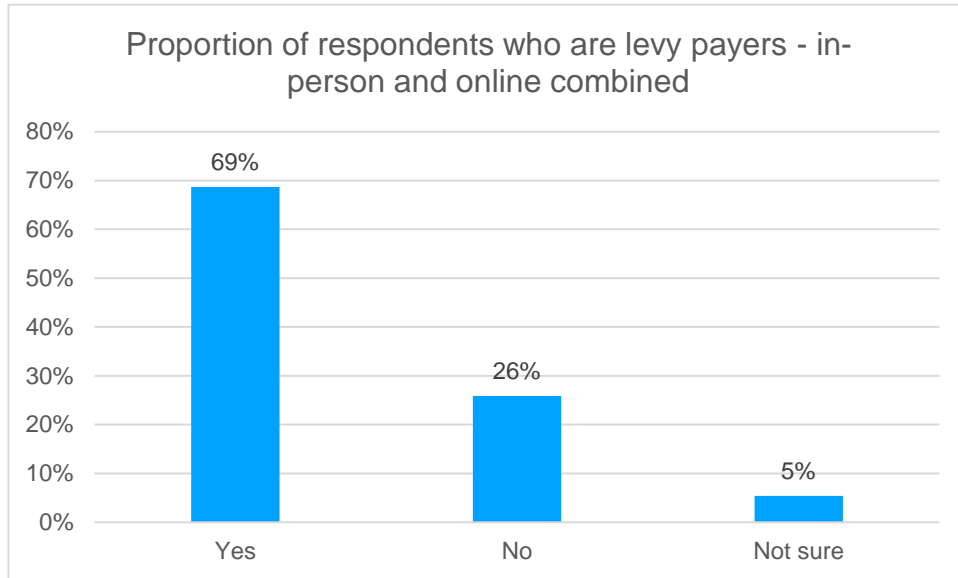
1. Ponds and wetlands
2. Heathlands and grasslands
3. Woodlands
4. Paths and ditches
5. Signage and bike racks



The proportion of people consulted who support or strongly support all the projects is 85%. The proportion which does not support or which strongly does not support all the projects is 8%. More than a quarter of this proportion object to too much signage and/or bike racks, feeling that this might make the Commons more like a municipal park (see the feedback for the question above).

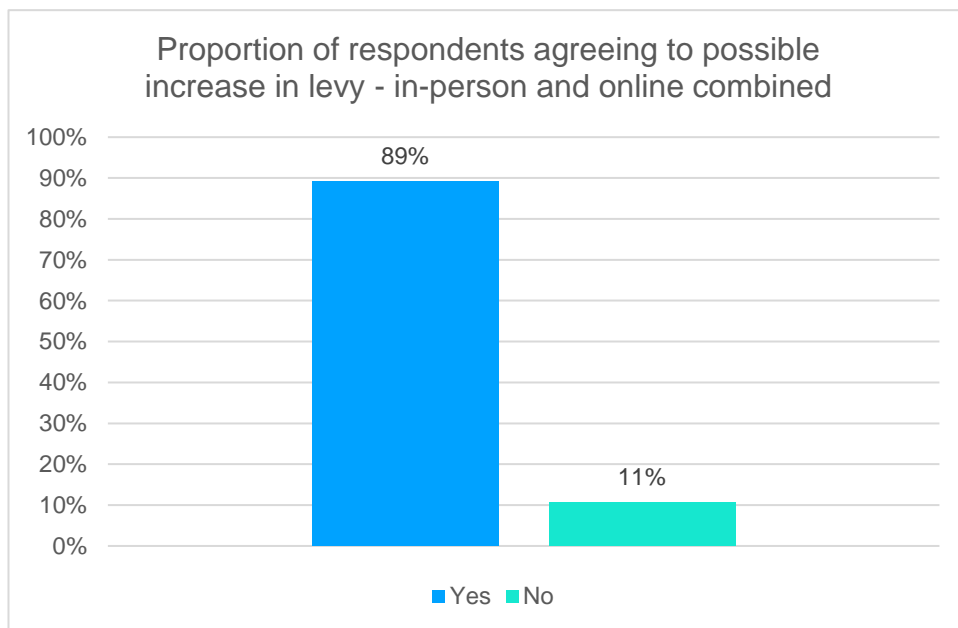
The proportion of respondents who are levy payers

Overall, the proportion of those engaged who were levy payers was 69%, with 26% non-levy payers and 5% not sure whether they pay the levy or not. Other people came to the Commons from further afield.



The proportion of respondents agreeing, in principle, that the levy could be increased

Overall, the proportion of those engaged who think the levy could be increased was 89%.



There was no correlation between those paying the levy and unhappiness with the increase, but there was a difference between those engaged online and in-person, with nearly one in five responding online saying they would not agree to this change, compared to just 2% of those consulted in person.

Typical comments included the following, reflecting support for raising revenue in other ways:

“The levy should be higher – people around here can afford it.”

“We live outside the levy area but would be happy to pay as we use the common daily.”

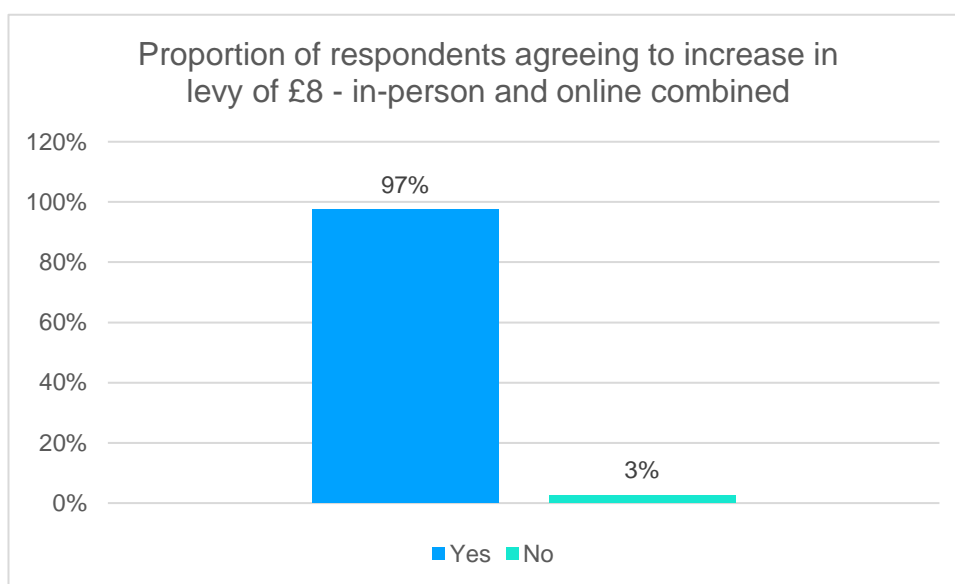
“Professional dog walkers should pay for walking on the common.”

“You should charge people for parking.”

The next section expands on the reasons why people think this is not the way to fund the Commons.

The proportion of those engaged who would support an increase in the levy in the order of £8 per household per year

Overall, the proportion of those engaged who support a typical levy increase of £8 is 97%.



Feedback from the public includes:

“Is an £8 rise enough? Would be better to raise it more.”

“I’d pay 20 times that (25% rise) to keep the commons.”

For those who were against the increase, comments include:

Reasons for not agreeing to the levy increase

The percentage of those consulted who disagree with the proposed increase is 3%, with the reasons given breaking down as follows, with the highest proportion of objections relating to how the Commons are funded rather than the amount per se.

“The timing is not right with the cost of inflation. If the council tax remains flat, the increase is fine. Maybe raise the levy next year.”

“This is not how the Commons should be funded.”

Suggestions for other ways in which the Commons could be funded or could supplement income include the following, broadly in line with the suggestions made by the public earlier in the report:

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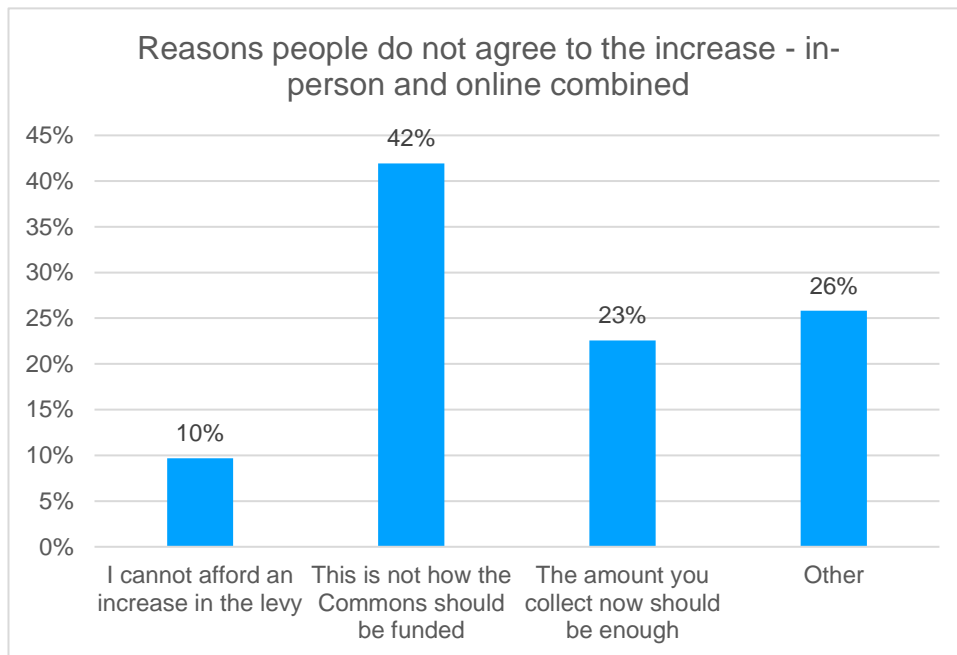
“You should charge businesses a levy.” (Extend the levy to businesses and not just households)

“Charge for parking.”

“The windmill is free to visit, why can’t we charge for entry to use to repair the building?”

“The park run takes over the parking every Saturday morning. Potential for a commercial partnership with them?”

“Lady from Wandsworth pays a donation of £100 per year to the WPCC. She knows people around Wandsworth who would do this. She believes this would be a good fundraising opportunity.”



Please bear in mind that the proportion of people not agreeing with the £8 increase is very small e.g., just 13 people think ‘this is not how the Commons should be funded’ – just 2% of the overall responses.

Detailed Analysis

The analysis looks at the engagement methods combined and then separately to highlight any differences which may have arisen because of the consultation method.

Number of people engaged

Online	In-person	Total
189	430	619

Number of people engaged in person

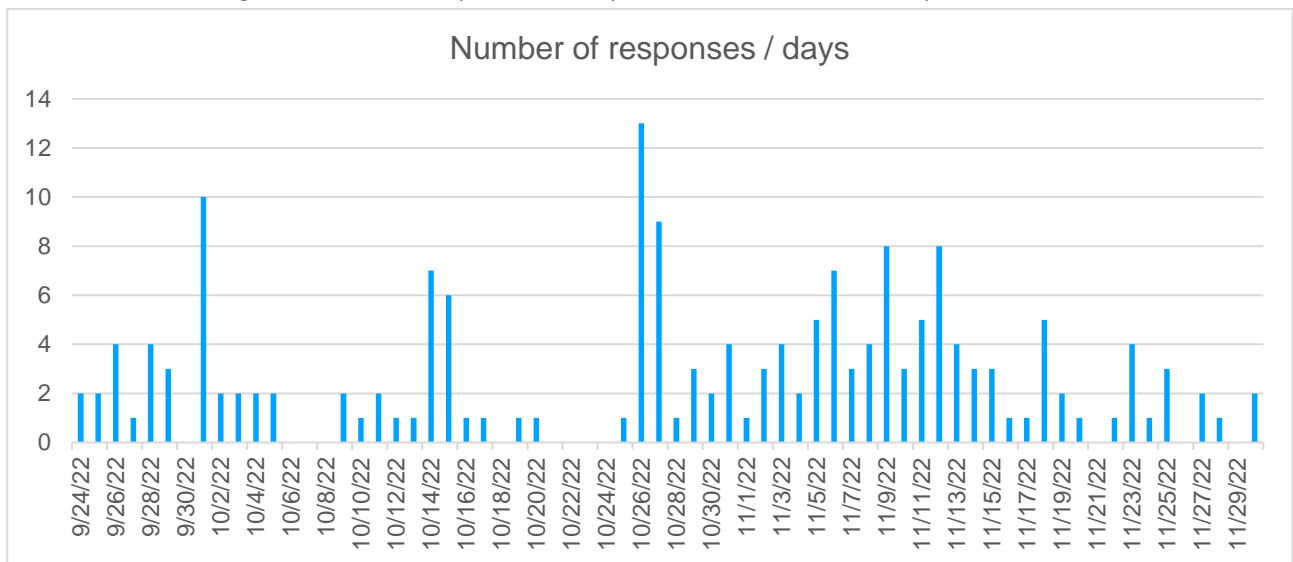
The numbers from the consultation stalls was 430. Note that at times there were too many people around the stalls for the team to count accurately and so these numbers are conservative counts.

25 th September	1 st October	1 st November	9 th November
128	192	20	90

The weather on 1st November was very wet and windy (we lost our gazebo) and the team made a tactical withdrawal to the Rangers’ garage which was hard to see from the road. The Conservators’ AGM drew most of our survey responses. The consultation stalls on 9th November included a half-day on Putney Lower Common.

Number of people engaged online

The numbers engaged through the online survey was 189.



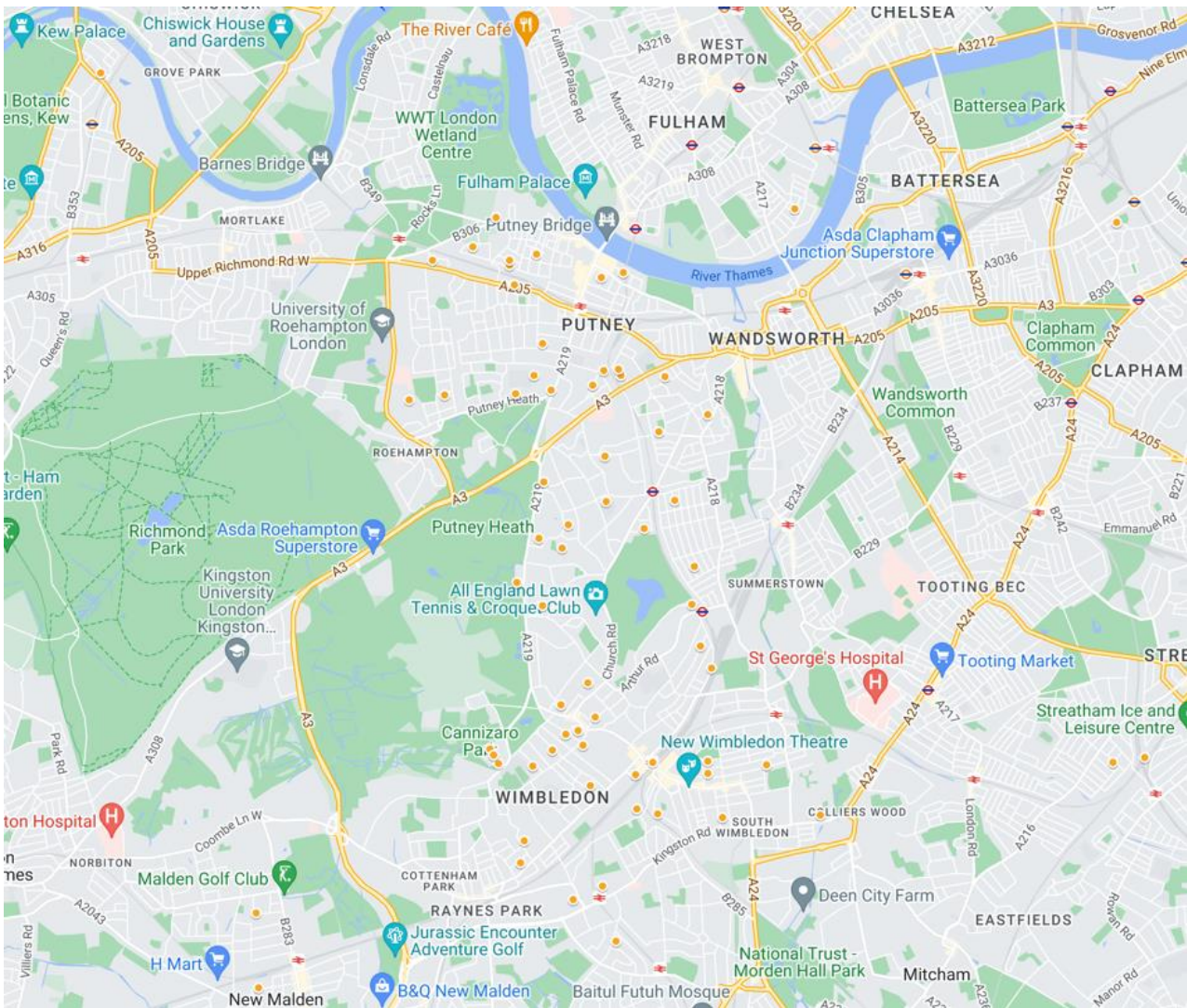
Where did the consultees come from?

The audiences engaged in-person and online highlighted the high proportion of local people who use the Commons, although there are some users who come from further-afield. The proportion who use the Commons for walking dogs is very high (100% on Putney Lower Common) with lower proportions using it for walking, running and cycling.

Where did the consultees come from – in-person and online combined

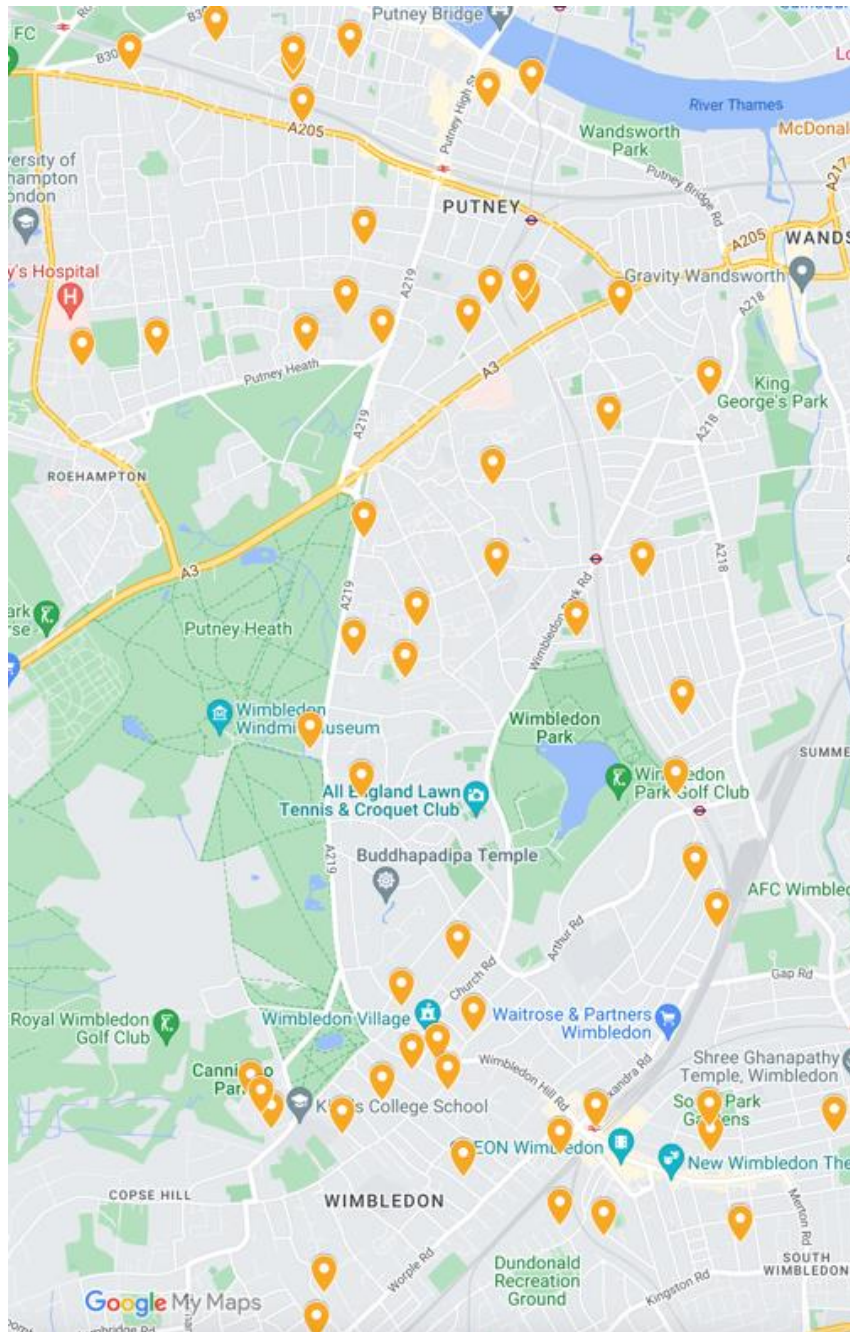
People come to use the Commons from as far away as Twickenham to the west, Streatham to the east, Fulham to the north and New Malden to the south. Most users of the Commons who engaged with the consultation live within a three to four kilometre / two-to-2.5-mile radius of the Windmill.

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This map shows the postcode locations for people engaged in-person on the Commons.

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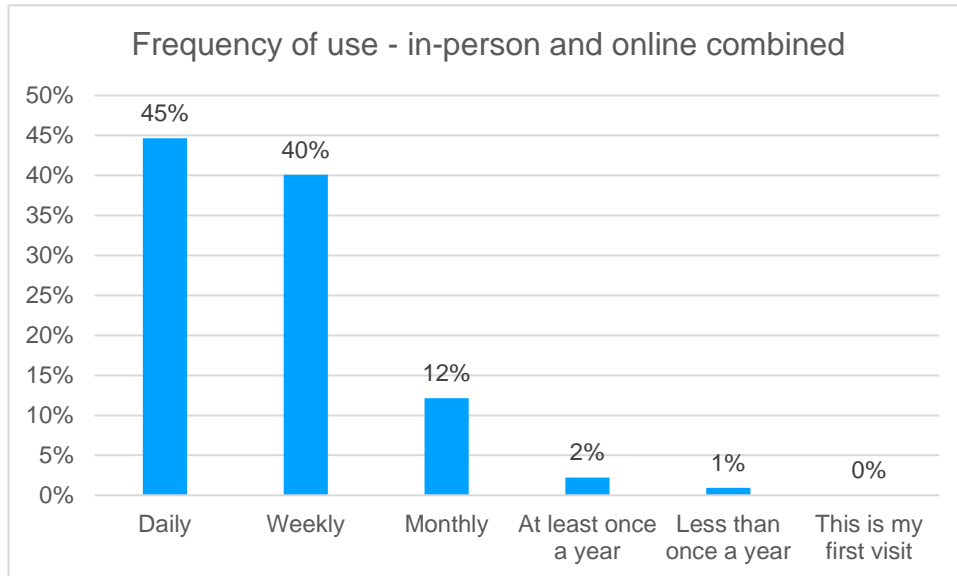


This map shows the postcode locations for people living close to the Commons.

The overwhelming majority of people live to the north and east of the Commons. Some users come from places such as Guildford and Kew.

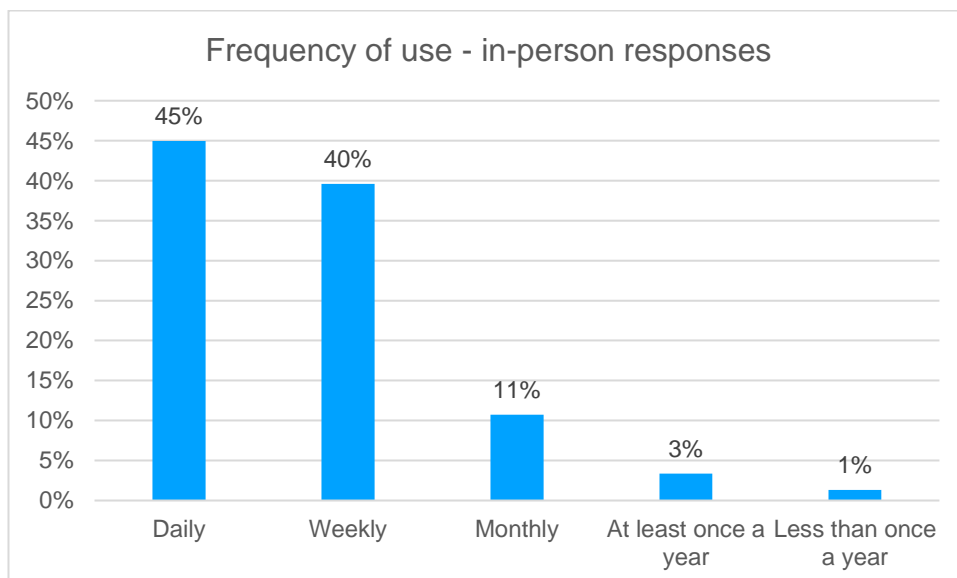
Frequency of use

Overall, most people engaged used the Commons daily or weekly; nearly all people engaged report using the Commons at least monthly. People talked of using the Commons for many years – decades in some cases – and of the Commons being an important part of their life. Users of Putney Lower Common largely lived close by, to the east and north of the Common. There was no significant difference in the frequency of use between those engaged in-person or online.



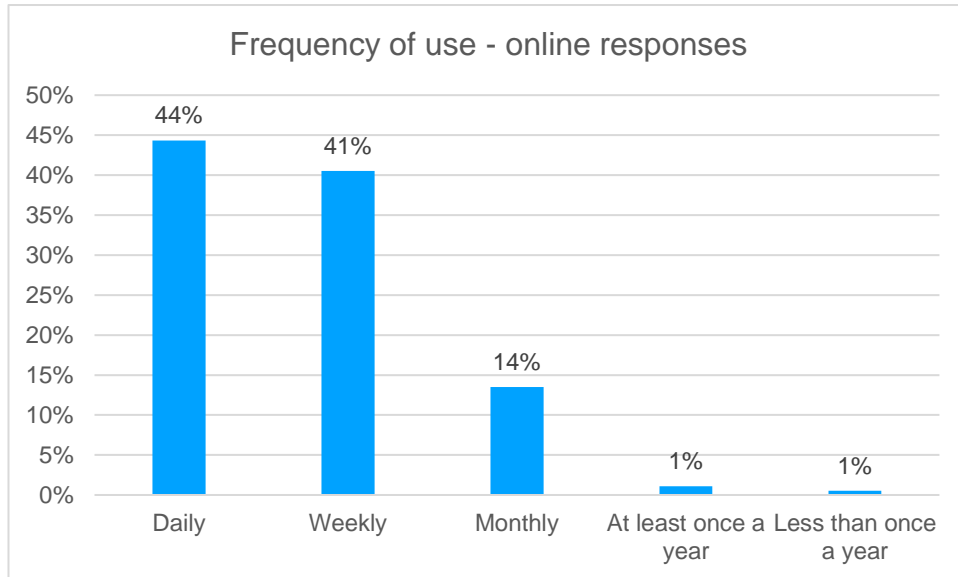
In-person engagement – frequency of use

Most of the people engaged at the consultation stalls (85%) used the Commons daily or weekly. All the people engaged on Putney Lower Common used the common daily for dog walking. Overall, 96% of the people engaged in person used the Commons daily, weekly or monthly. This highlights the importance of the spaces as an amenity for local people.



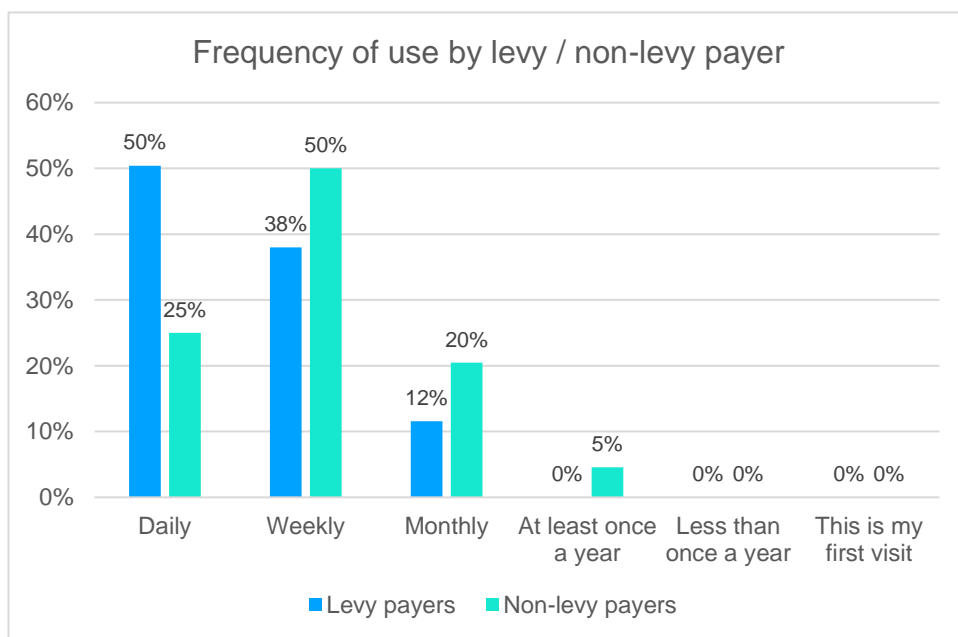
Online engagement – frequency of use

Most of the people engaged through the online survey used the Commons daily in a slightly higher proportion to those engaged in-person at 87%. Overall, 99% of the people engaged in person used the Commons daily, weekly or monthly.



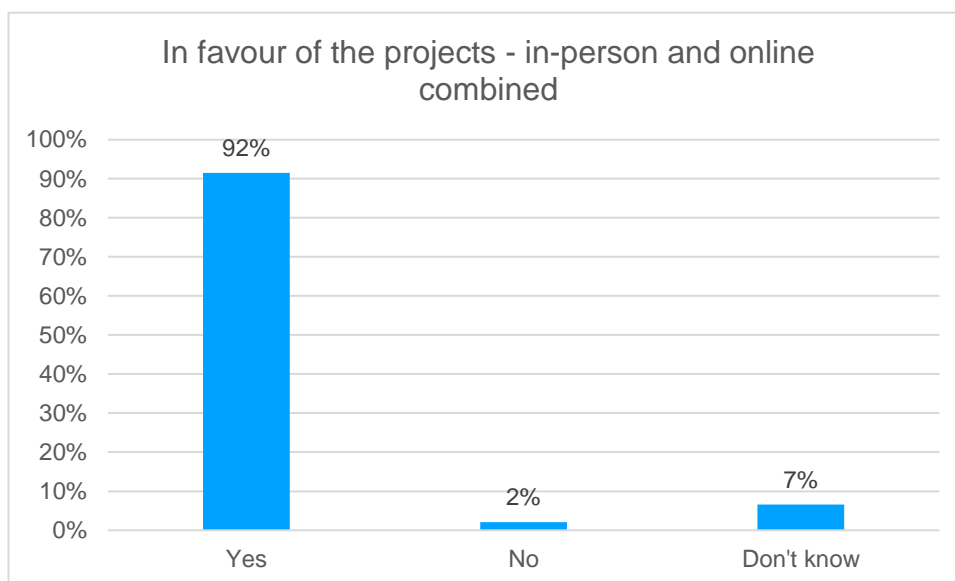
Online engagement – frequency of use – cross-referred with levy / non-levy payers

The frequency of use appears to vary according to whether or not the respondent is a levy payer or not, but this correlation is not necessarily definitive. The analysis shows that levy payers are more likely to use the Commons on a daily or weekly basis than non-levy payers (88% vs 75%), with double the proportion of levy payers using the Commons on a weekly basis. We have removed the proportion (9%) of people who were not sure if they were levy payers or not to make the graph less cluttered.



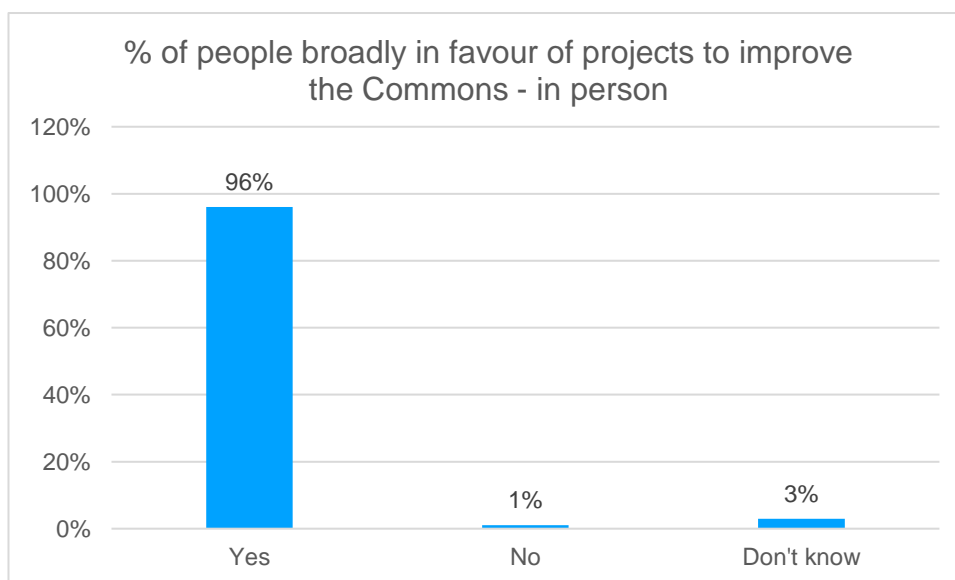
Proportion broadly in favour of the projects to improve the Commons

Overall, the overwhelming majority of people engaged – 92% - were broadly in favour of the projects to improve the Commons.



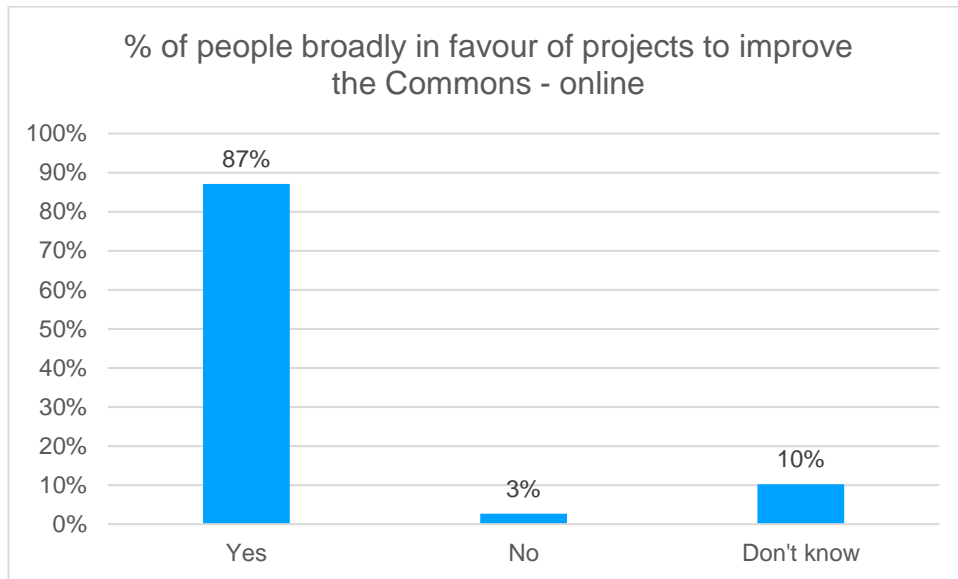
In-person engagement – in favour of the projects

Overall, 96% of the people engaged in-person were broadly in favour of the projects to improve the Commons.



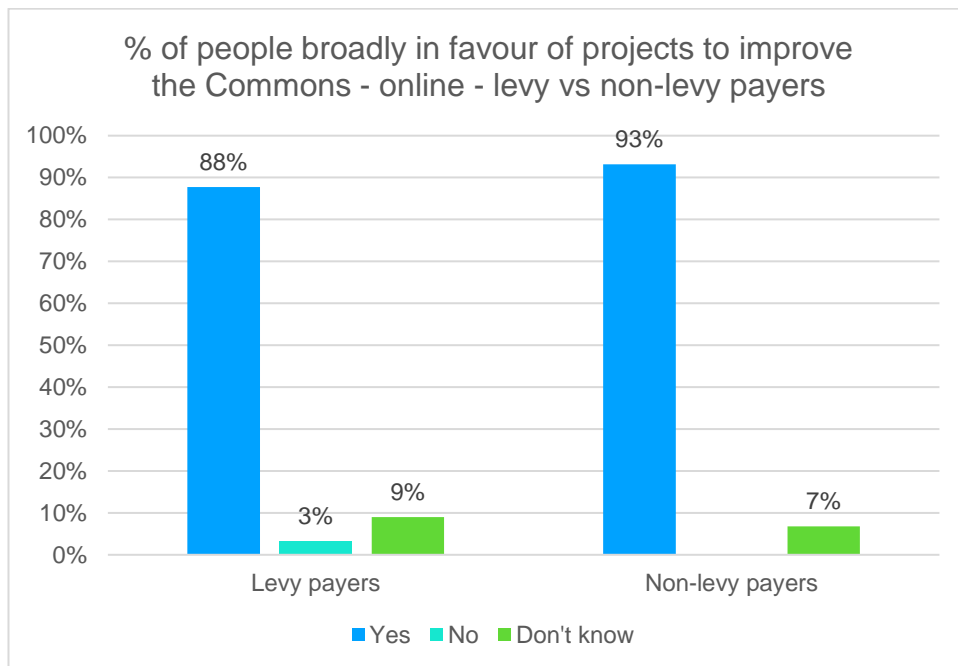
Online engagement – in favour of the projects

The majority of people engaged through the online survey were broadly in favour of the projects to improve the Commons, but not as strongly in favour as those engaged face-to-face at 88% overall. There is a higher proportion of 'don't knows' and we speculate that this is due to a lower understanding of what the projects were compared to those who engaged at the stalls, seeing and discussing the plans in person.



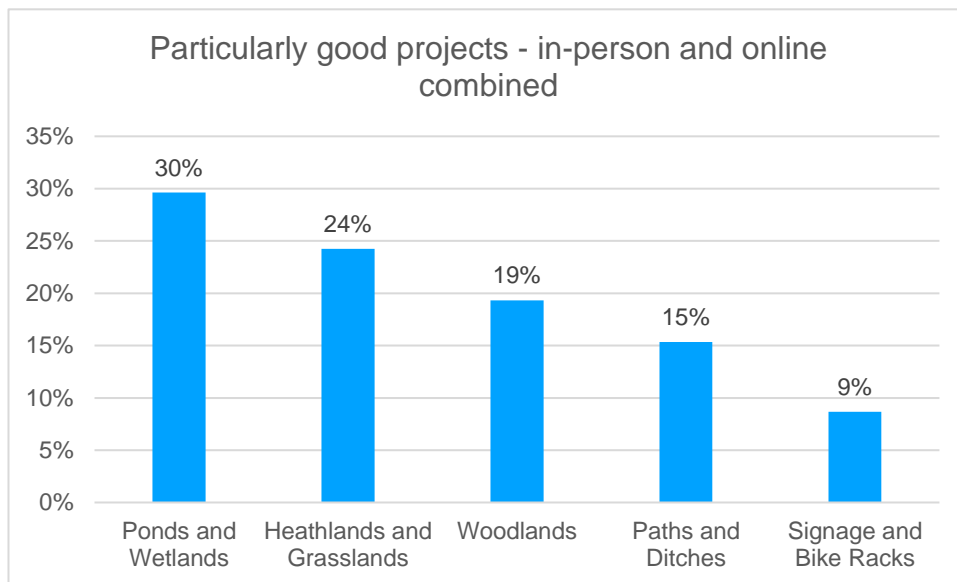
Online engagement – in favour of the projects – cross-referred with levy / non-levy payers

There is a small but significant difference in the proportion of levy and non-levy payers in favour of the masterplan projects. Nevertheless, the level of support was high in both groups at around 90% overall.



The projects people think are particularly good

The people engaged and online were asked which projects they thought were particularly good. The responses produced what is essentially a ranked list, where most people engaged thought that the ponds and wetlands, and the heathlands and grasslands projects were particularly good. The signage and bike racks project got the least amount of support. This finding is reinforced in the analysis below relating to the strength of support for the different projects.



There were comments from the public which reflected concerns about the ponds as they are now:

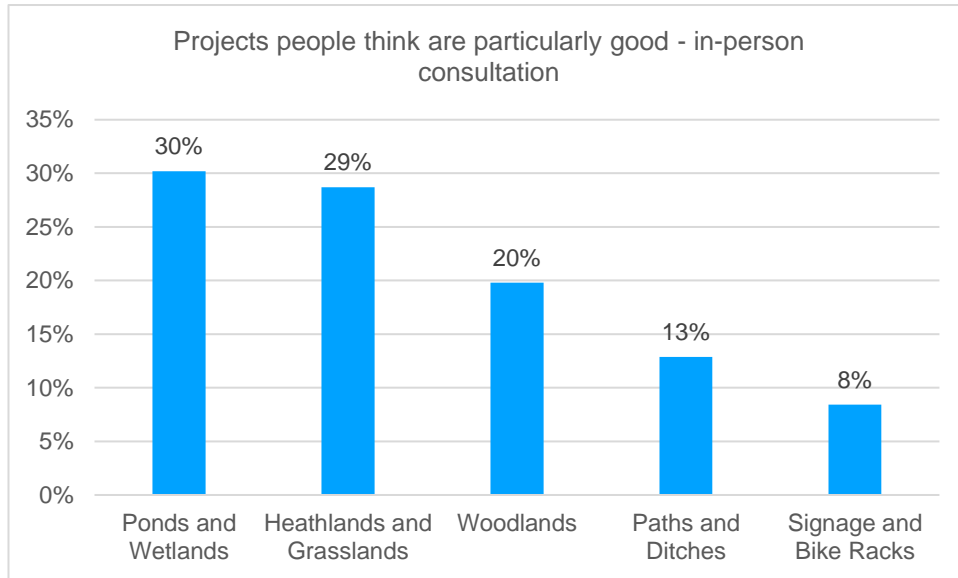
“Our dog got sick from drinking pond water.”

“De-silting the ponds should be a priority.”

“What is being done about the fish in the pond? They are dying.”

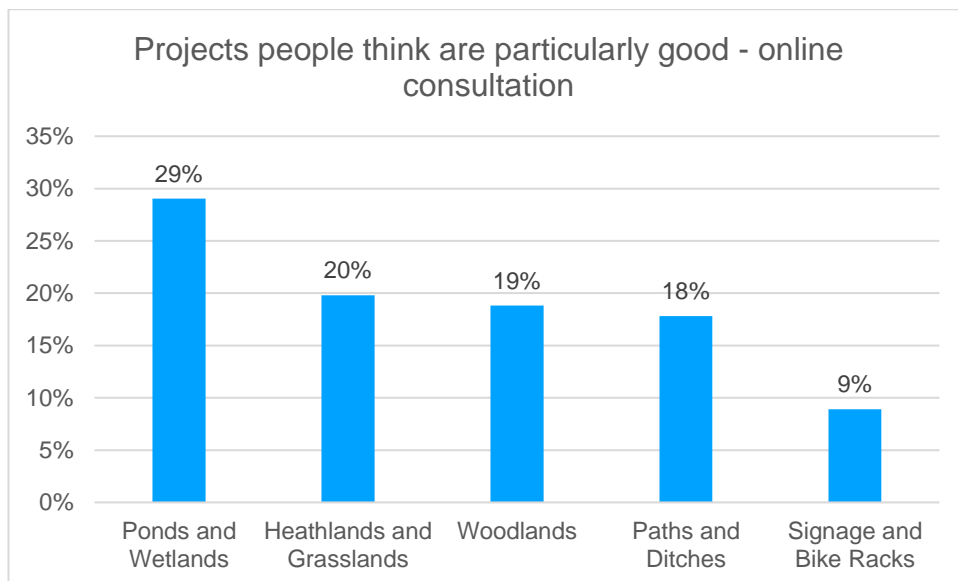
In-person engagement

Overall, most people engaged thought that the ponds and wetlands, and the heathlands and grasslands projects were particularly good. The percentages were consistent across each of the four consultation days.



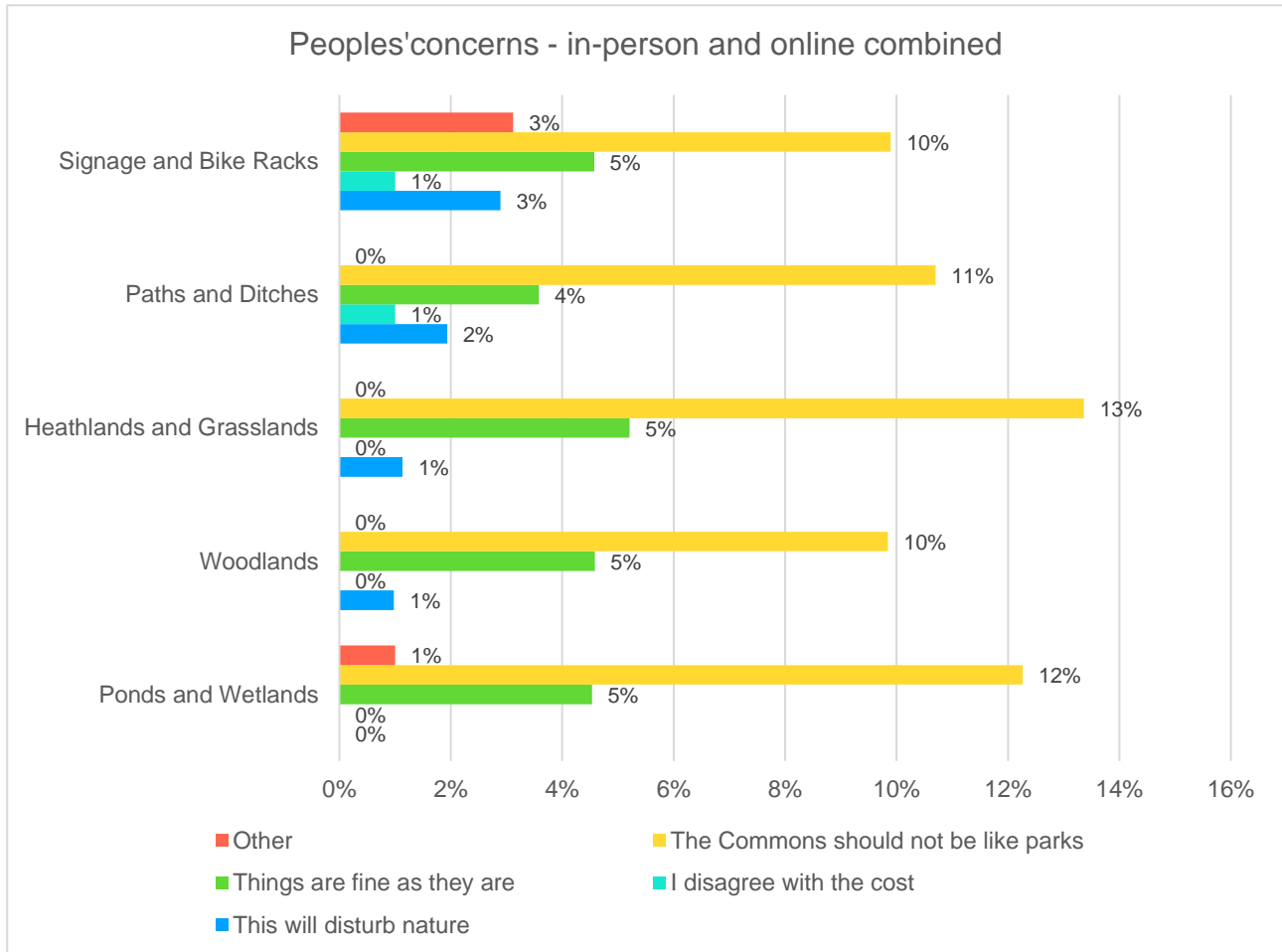
Online engagement

The majority of people engaged through the online survey thought that the following projects were particularly good. Support for the ponds and wetlands projects is more pronounced, with less support for the heathlands and grasslands projects, but more support for the paths and ditches work compared to the in-person responses. The differences are small.



The projects people have concerns about

Overall, the projects which people had a concern about were as follows, although please note that the calculations were based on the thoughts of 10% of those consulted; 90% or so of those engaged did not have concerns about the projects and skipped this question. The thing to note is why they object – the feeling consistent across the consultation that the Commons should not be like municipal parks. Any project which some people fear might lead in that direction were disliked.

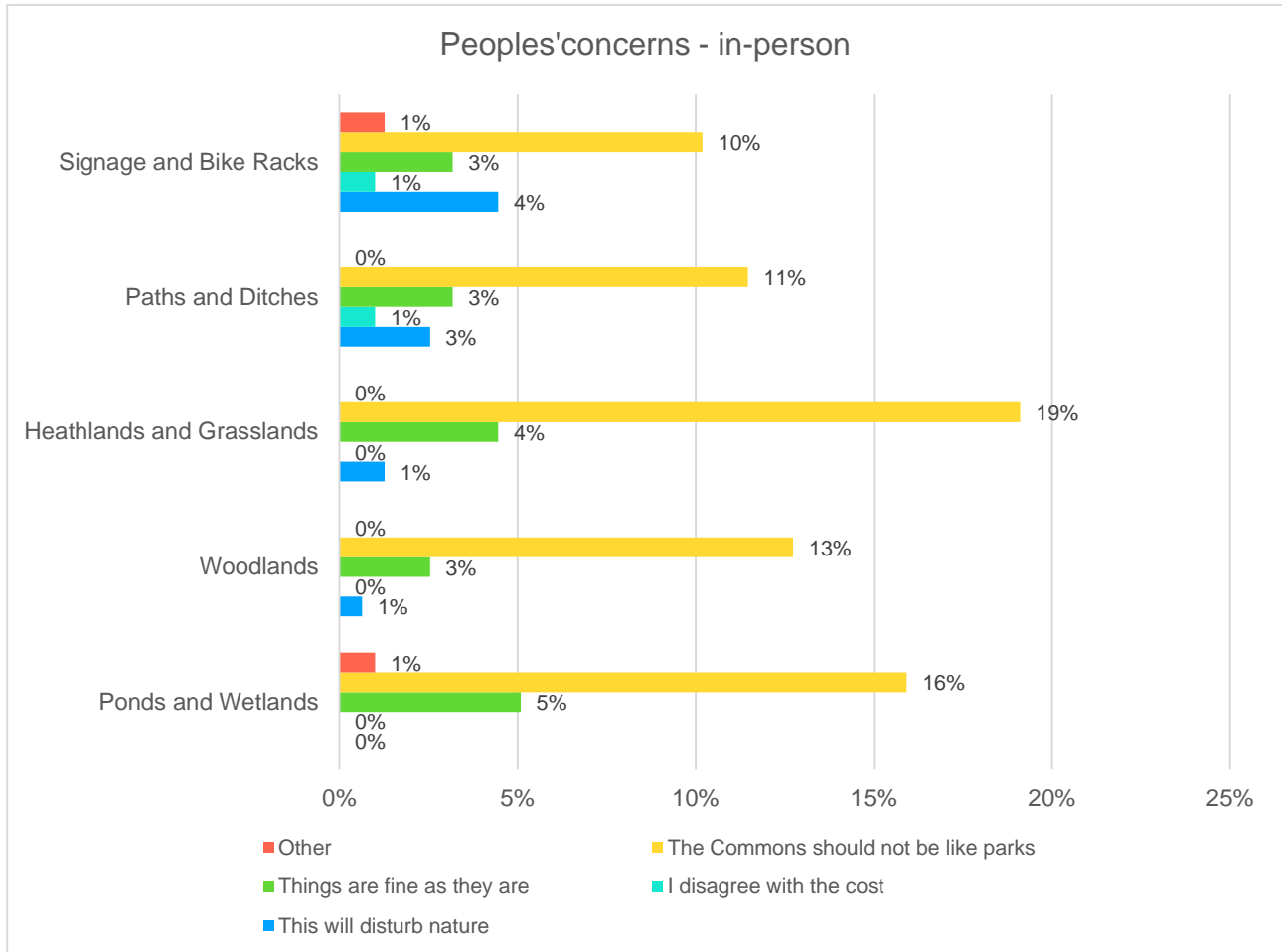


Some users of the Commons have a strongly non-interventionist attitude, believing that the Commons should be ‘left alone’ and ‘left to nature’. In-person engagement gave us the opportunity to explain the consequences of not intervening e.g., not removing scrub leading to the reduction or loss of heathland areas, but they were not persuaded.

In-person engagement

As already mentioned, people overriding concern is that projects and improvements to the Commons should not ‘municipalise’ them e.g., make them like a council-run park with tarmac paths, multiple signs and short grass. This was a particularly strong finding on the second in-person consultation day. People explain this response in relation to any potential signage schemes with might be overly intrusive, but better signage and maps at the main entry points would largely be welcomed. Otherwise, there are very few material concerns.

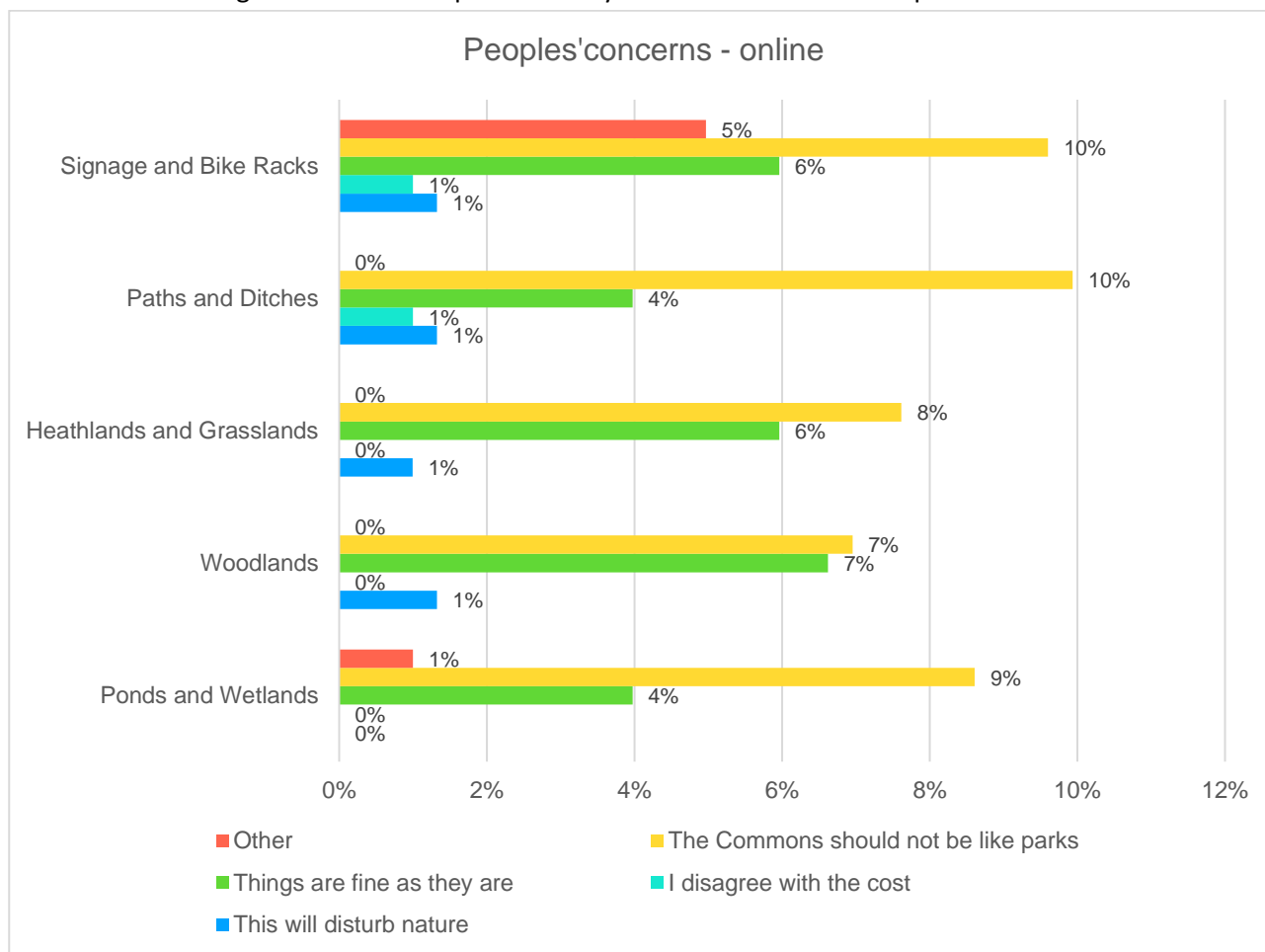
People value the diversity of the Commons and the feelings of ‘wildness’ so close to the centre of London. The findings in relation to heathlands and grasslands represents their feelings in relation to changing mowing regimes where people may not understand the reasons for changing the approach to grass collection. Some people were also against the clearance of scrub, but more people were in favour of this, feeling that not enough such work was being done.



The project attracting the most negative reaction relates to the heathlands and grasslands proposals. This is at odds with the findings for the projects which people think are particularly good. We interpret this as meaning that people are generally in favour of work on the heathlands and grasslands, but that these should be done in a way which does not result in these areas becoming ‘like a park’.

Online engagement

The projects of concern for the online audience showed a different distribution of issues, with the worry that the Commons should not be like parks again figuring significantly. However, when compared to the concerns expressed through the in-person consultations sessions, there is a stronger feeling that ‘things are fine as they are’, especially for woodlands, signage and bike racks.



Additional feedback

People also had ideas for projects which they think the Masterplan could include, with most comments related to the paths:

“Ensure main paths are well maintained and drained to stop people walking into the adjacent woods and damaging the soil and foliage.”

“Cycling and running does a lot of damage – can they be zoned?”

“Cycling: need separate paths for cyclists and walkers.”

“Flooding is an issue, so increased marshland would be good. Raised paths could make this more accessible too.”

“More bike paths and better maintenance of surfaces.”

But not everyone thinks the paths should be improved:

“Do not improve paths – leave them natural.”

Other suggestions include:

“A children’s park would be a good addition.”

“More recycling bins.”

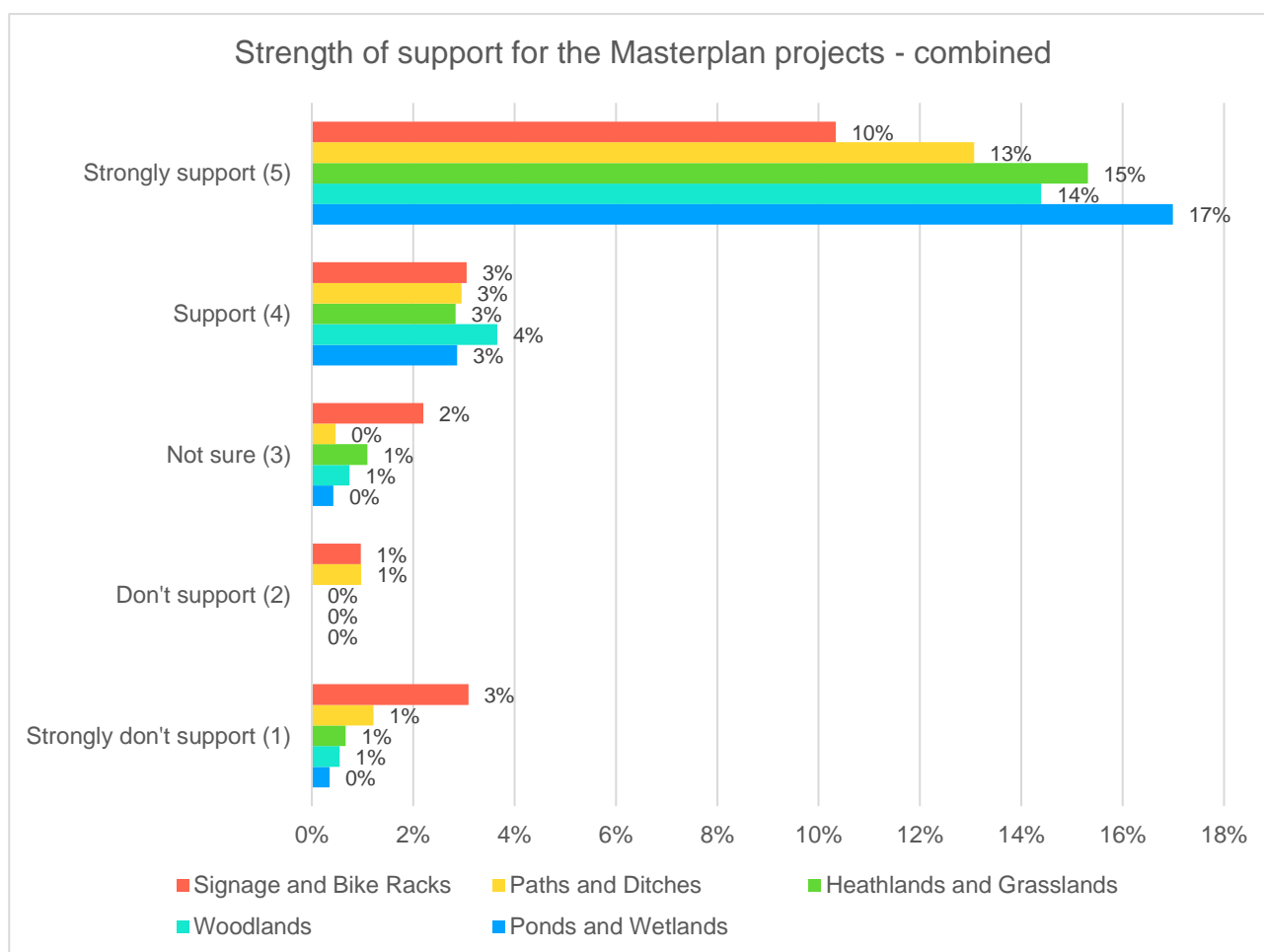
“Caesar’s Well was blocked in 1911 and there is black sludge in it currently. It would have been the sacred heart of the common. Please unblock this.”

Strength of support for the different Masterplan projects

Overall, the projects which people support most strongly were ranked as follows, but note that the spread of support is only 7% across the five project areas:

1. Ponds and wetlands
2. Heathlands and grasslands
3. Woodlands
4. Paths and ditches
5. Signage and bike racks

The vast majority of respondents were strongly in favour of all the projects (69%), or strongly support / support the projects (85%). Only 6% strongly didn't support any projects, and half of this group object to the signage and bike racks project, again reflecting the concern that the Commons might become too much like parks.

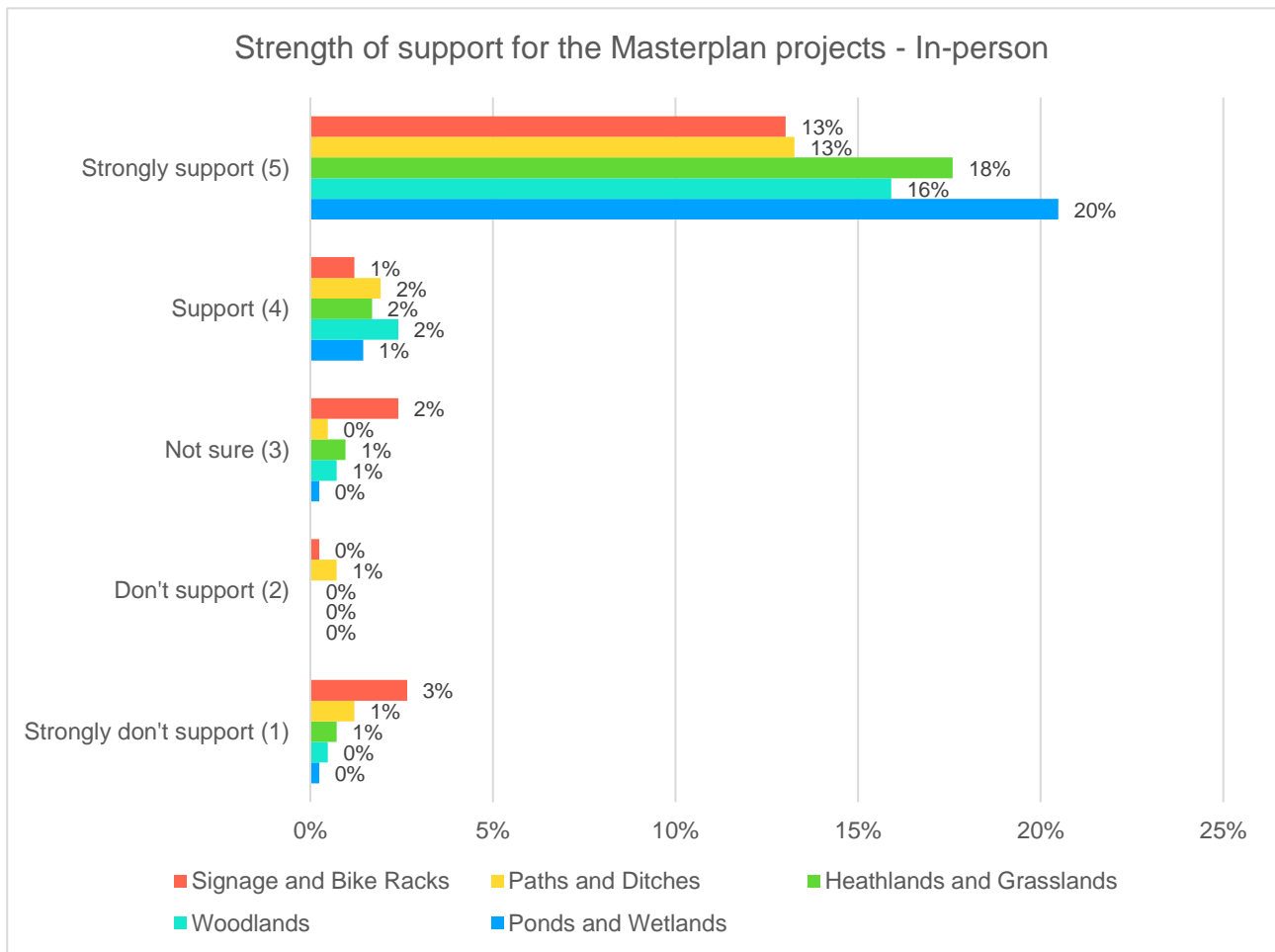


In-person engagement

The people engaged in-person at the consultation stalls support the following projects most strongly:

1. Ponds and wetlands
2. Heathlands and grasslands
3. Woodlands
4. Paths and ditches / Signage and bike racks

The vast majority of respondents were strongly in favour of all the projects (80%), or strongly support / support the projects (88%). Only 5% strongly didn't support any projects, and more than half of this group object to the signage and bike racks project, again reflecting the concern that the Commons might become too much like parks.

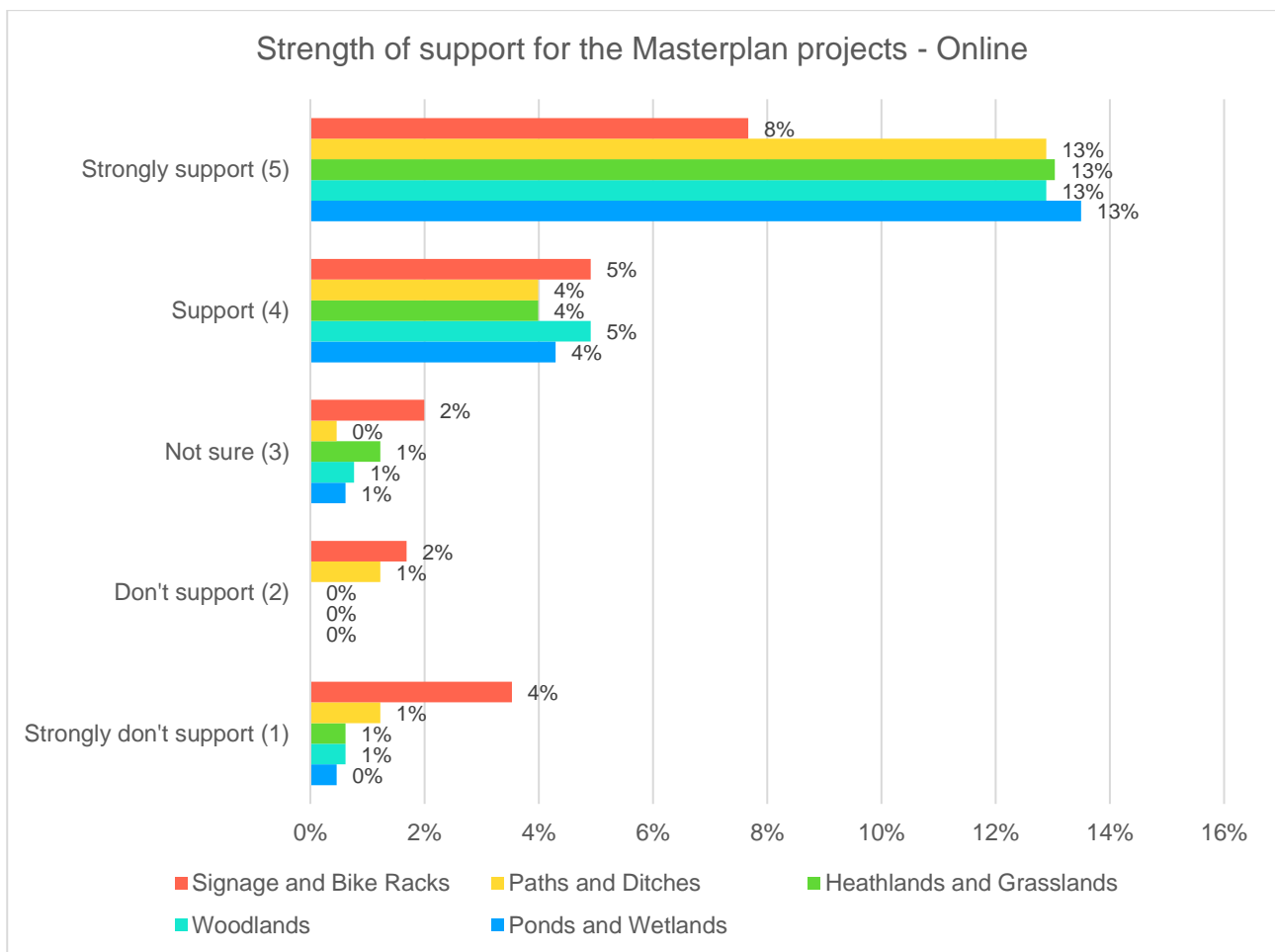


Online engagement

The majority of people engaged through the online survey support the following projects most strongly:

1. Ponds and wetlands
2. Heathlands and grasslands
3. Woodlands
4. Paths and ditches / Signage and bike racks

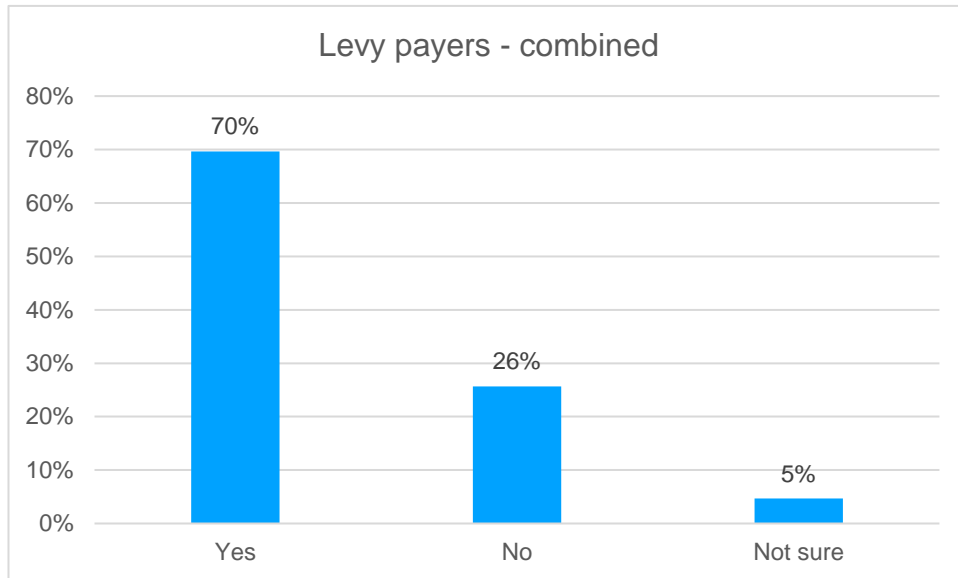
The vast majority of respondents were strongly in favour of all the projects (60%), or strongly support / support the projects (82%). Only 5% strongly didn't support any projects, and more than half of this group object to the signage and bike racks project, again reflecting the concern that the Commons might become too much like parks.



The proportion of respondents who are levy payers

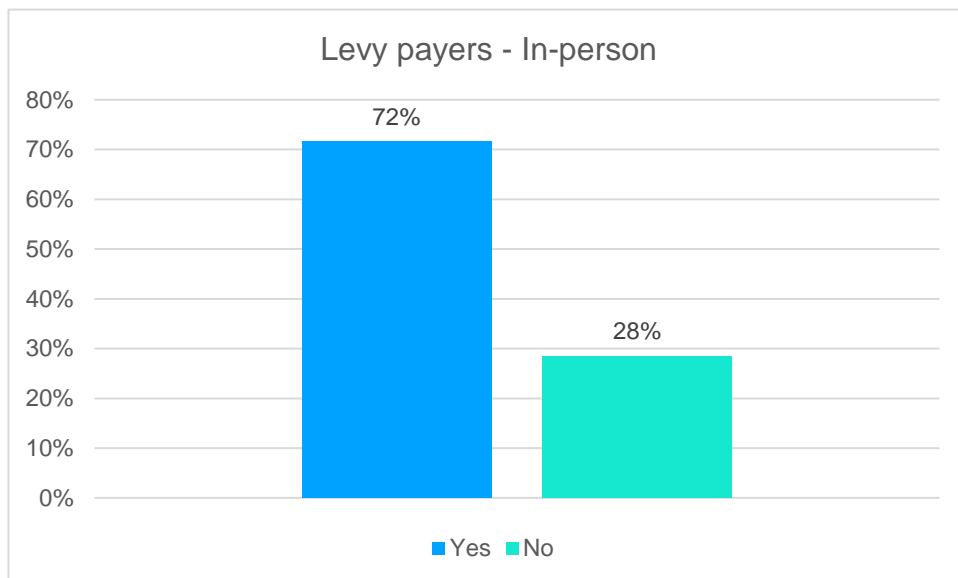
Overall, the proportion of those engaged who were levy payers was 70%.

The maps showing where the people engaged came from illustrates that most are in the levy paying area or close to it, predominantly to the east and north of the Commons.



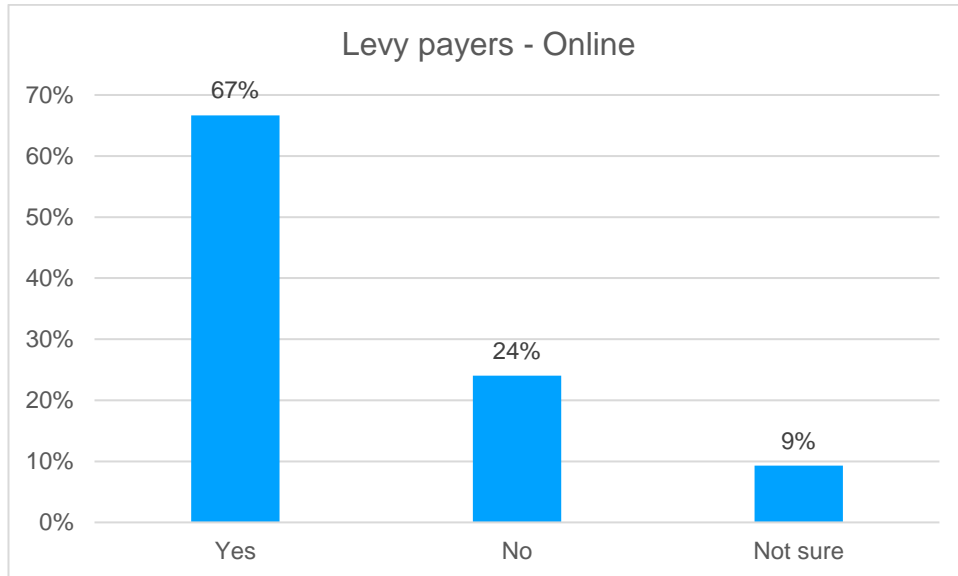
In-person engagement

The proportion of those engaged through the consultation stalls who were levy payers was 72%.



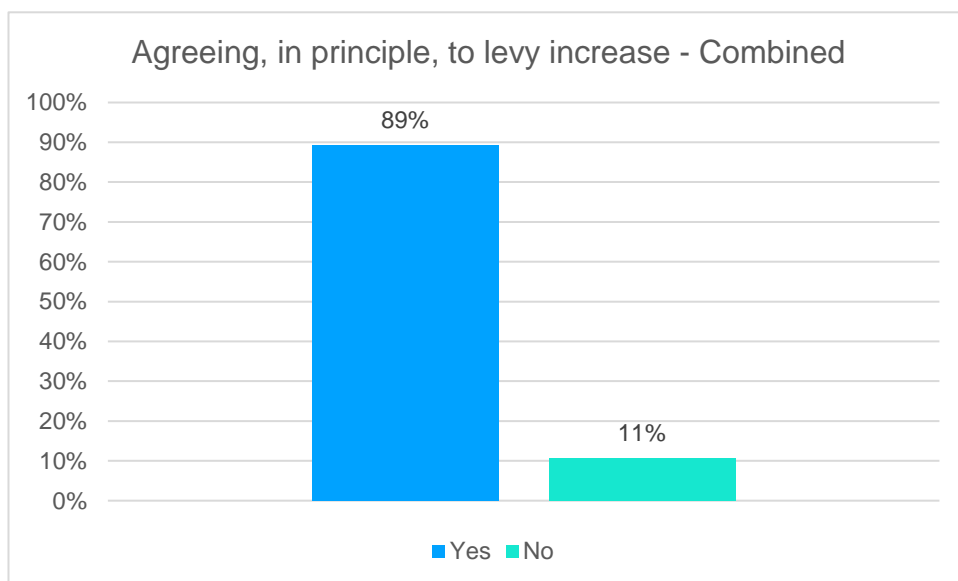
Online engagement

The proportion of those engaged through the online survey who were levy payers was 68%. Some people were not sure; this was a question we were able to address with people through the in-person consultations by showing them the levy area map and finding their address.



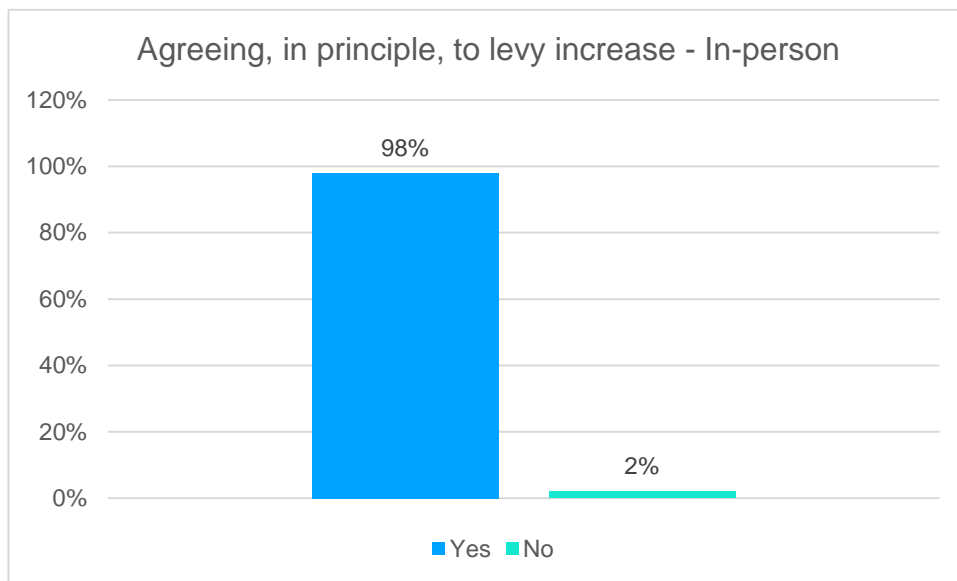
The proportion of respondents agreeing, in principle, that the levy could be increased

Overall, the proportion of those engaged who think the levy should be increased was 89%.



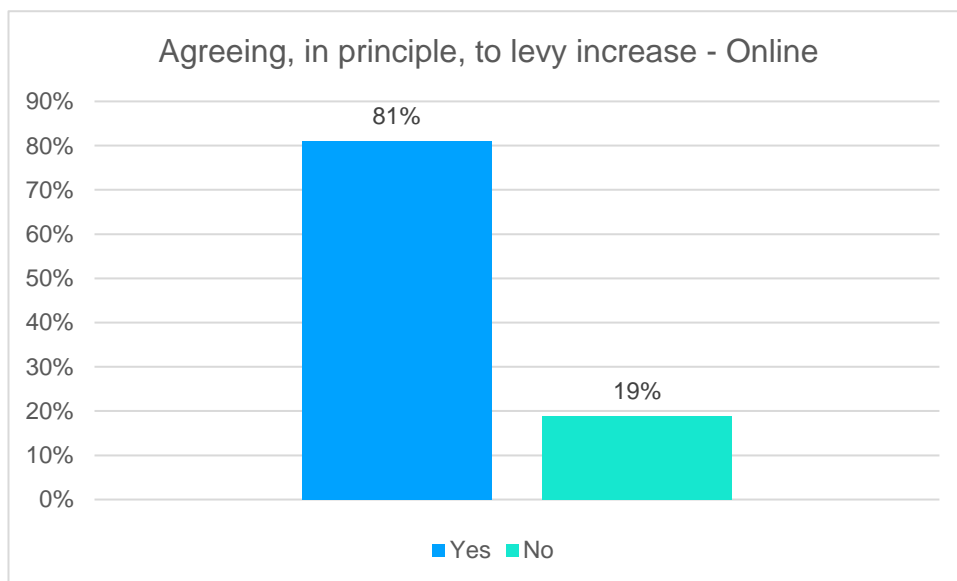
In-person engagement – agreeing, in principle, to levy increase

The proportion of those engaged through the consultation stalls who believe that the levy could be increased was near-unanimous at 98%.



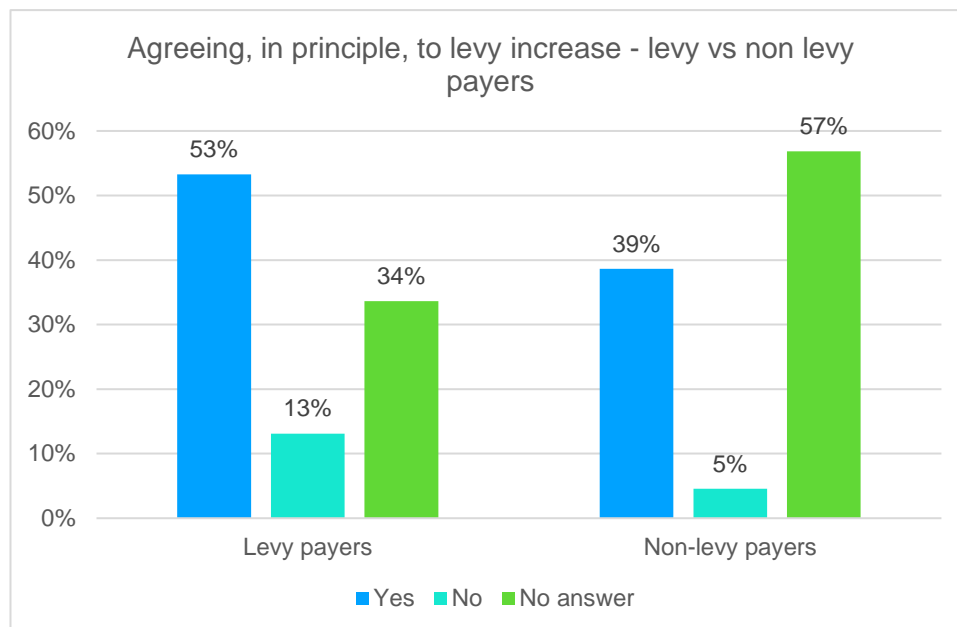
Online engagement – agreeing, in principle, to levy increase

The proportion of those engaged through the online survey who think the levy could be increased was 81% of those who answered this question, a significantly lower proportion than for those who were asked in person. However, note that a lower proportion of online respondents answered this question than those who answered the question in-person (62% online vs 73% in person). The totals also exclude the 'did not answer' respondents, 40% of all online respondents to this question.



Online engagement – agreeing, in principle, to levy increase – cross-referred with levy / non-levy payers

There was a significant difference in the online levy and non-levy payer responses, with levy payers being 14% more likely to answer ‘yes’ i.e., to support the in-principle levy increase than the non-payers; this appears counter-intuitive – why should the non-levy payers care? – but there was also a significantly higher proportion of non-payers who did not answer this question.



We are reluctant to draw firm conclusions from this data as there was such a high proportion of people who did not answer, but the proportion who answered ‘no’ remains relatively small at around one in ten.

Note that the percentages in this graph include the ‘did not answer’ respondents and so the percentages will differ from those in the graph above which shows the proportion supporting the change amongst those who did answer the question.

Further comment

Typical comments included the following:

“The levy should be higher – people around here can afford it.”

“We live outside the levy area but would be happy to pay as we use the common daily.”

“Absolutely (to increasing the levy) – it’s a bargain.”

“You should charge businesses a levy.”

“Professional dog walkers should pay for walking on the common.”

“You should charge people for parking.”

This was the most common comment. It was mentioned that people park at the Windmill car park and then walk to work in the surrounding area. People feel this is unfair and that, for example, all day use should be charged for. Further comments included:

“The levy is an outdated concept. Should now be set much wider to cover three boroughs.”

“The levy needs to extend outwards to five miles by car.”

Where people objected to the levy, it was not an objection to paying for the upkeep of the Commons, but rather an objection to the way in which revenue is generated. The comments above reflect the general tone of this view i.e., that more people should pay something. Bringing in more people could increase revenue for the Commons but could lower the average cost per household.

Others feel it is a question of fairness – why should they pay a levy when others use the Commons and pay nothing? They are happy to continue to pay but think that additional charges should be made of other users:

“Very happy to pay the levy and agree that people should use the Commons, but there should be a nominal amount for people outside of the levy area to pay for parking etc.”

“Having the levy boundary half a mile round the commons made sense when everyone walked here, now so many people drive, so the levy area should reflect this.”

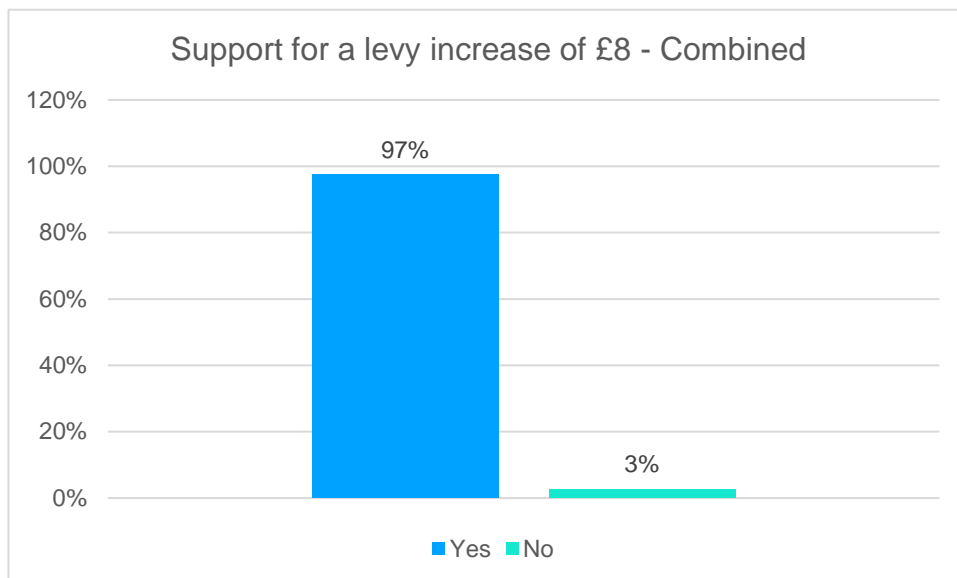
“Have an annual car park price for non-levy payers, or signs that say “you are in a levy paying area, a donation for parking for the upkeep of the commons would be greatly appreciated” etc.

“It is a shame for the levy payers to fund more people’s access to the commons (this also makes it a less nice place). It is unfair. Charge for parking at least.”

As such, the levy paying arrangements attracted the most comments.

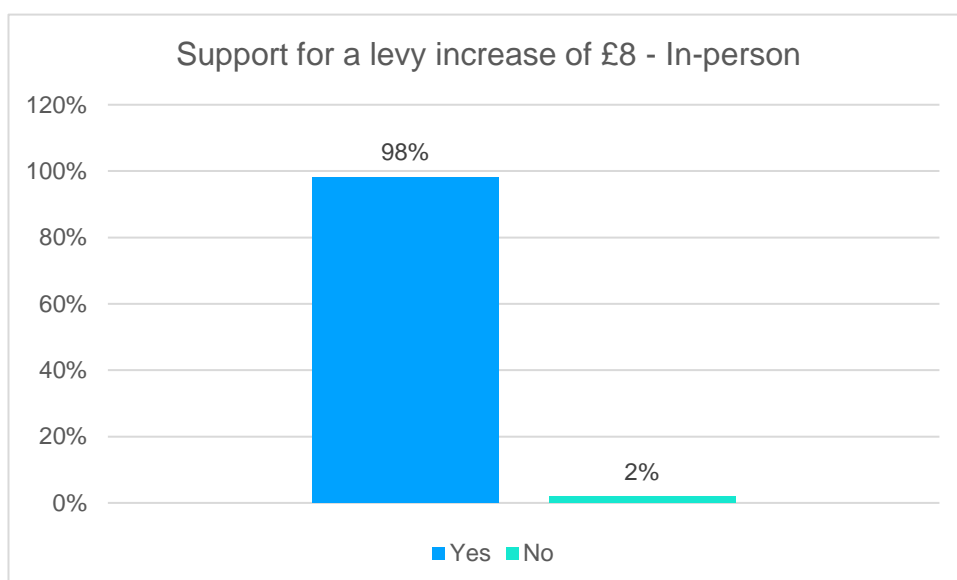
The proportion of those engaged who would support an increase in the levy in the order of £8 per household per year

Overall, the proportion of those engaged who supported a typical levy increase of £8 was near-unanimous at 97%. Nearly half the online respondents skipped this question entirely.



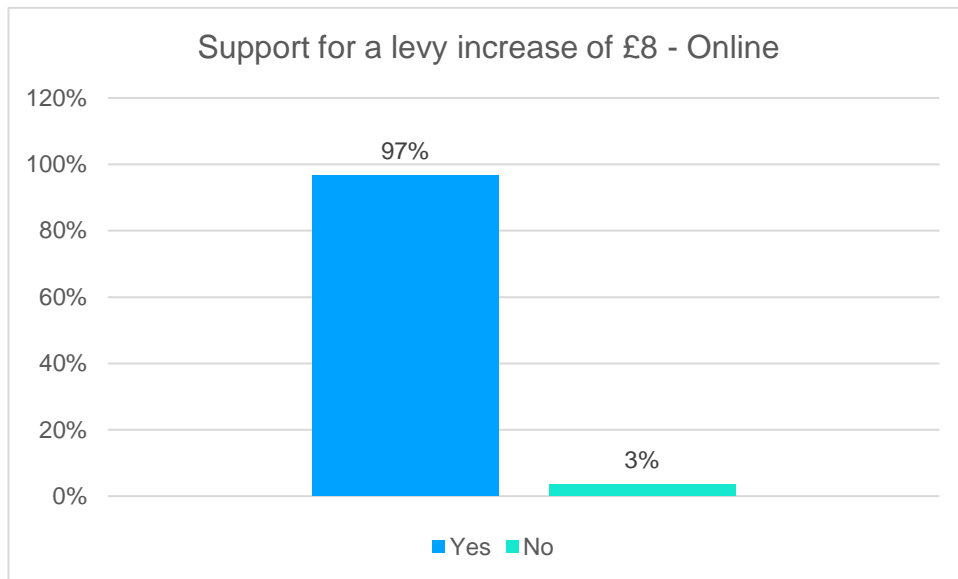
Support for levy increase - In-person engagement

The proportion of those engaged through the consultation stalls who support a typical levy increase of £8 was near-unanimous at 98%. The proportion of people who responded in person to this question was 73%.



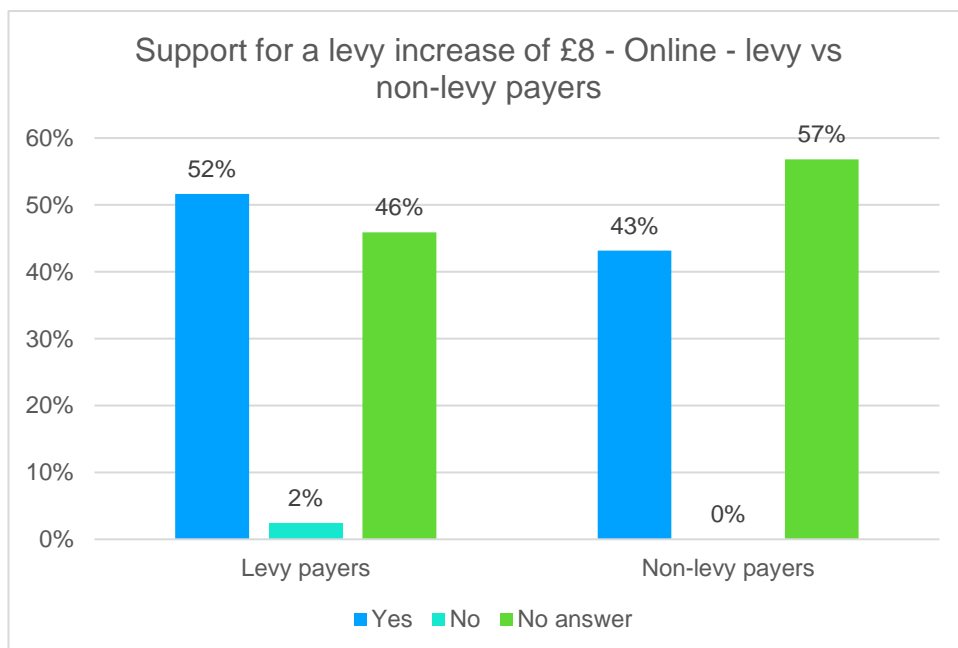
Support for levy increase - Online engagement

The proportion of those engaged through the online survey who support a typical levy increase of £8 was near-unanimous at 97%.



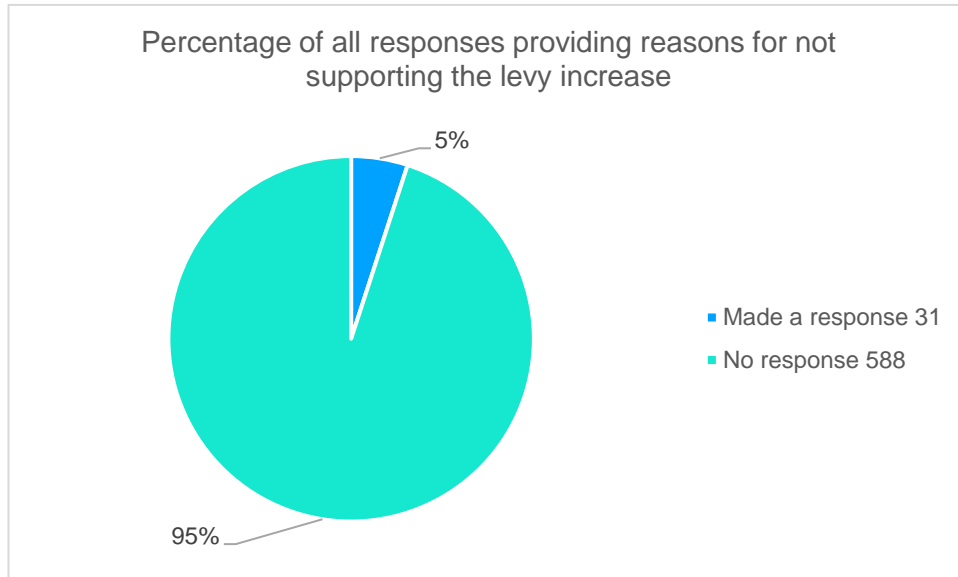
Support for levy increase - Online engagement - cross-referred with levy / non-levy payers

There are moderate but significant differences in the response from levy and non-levy payers, but again the proportion not answering the question is so high (around 50% across levy and non-levy payers) that it makes it hard to draw firm conclusions, especially amongst the non-levy payers. The proportion saying no to the increase remains very low or zero.

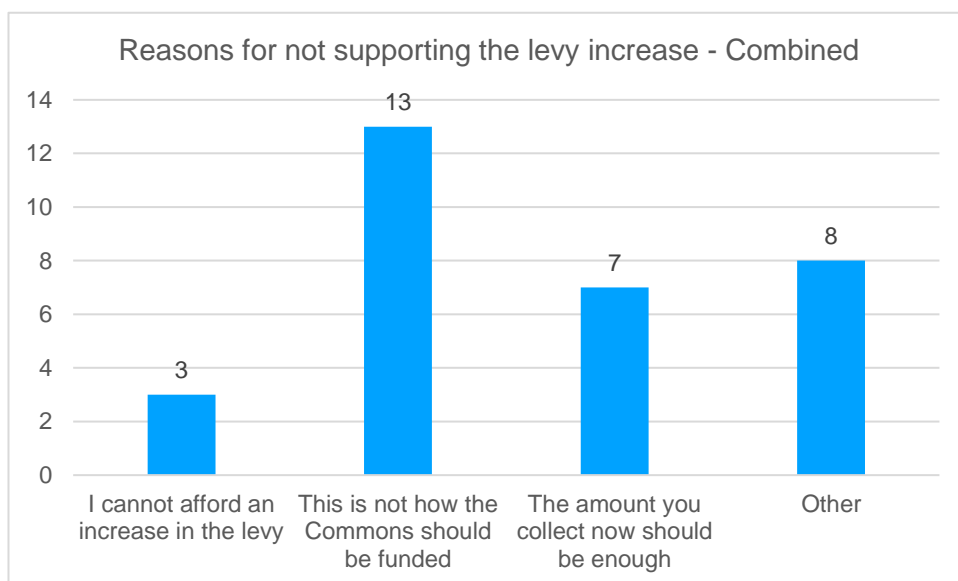


Reasons for not supporting the levy increase of c£8 per household per year

Only 5% of the respondents who answered this question were opposed to the increase in the levy, with 50% of those surveyed not responding to this question at all. The following analysis is based on 31 responses out of 619 combined in-person and online responses (5%).

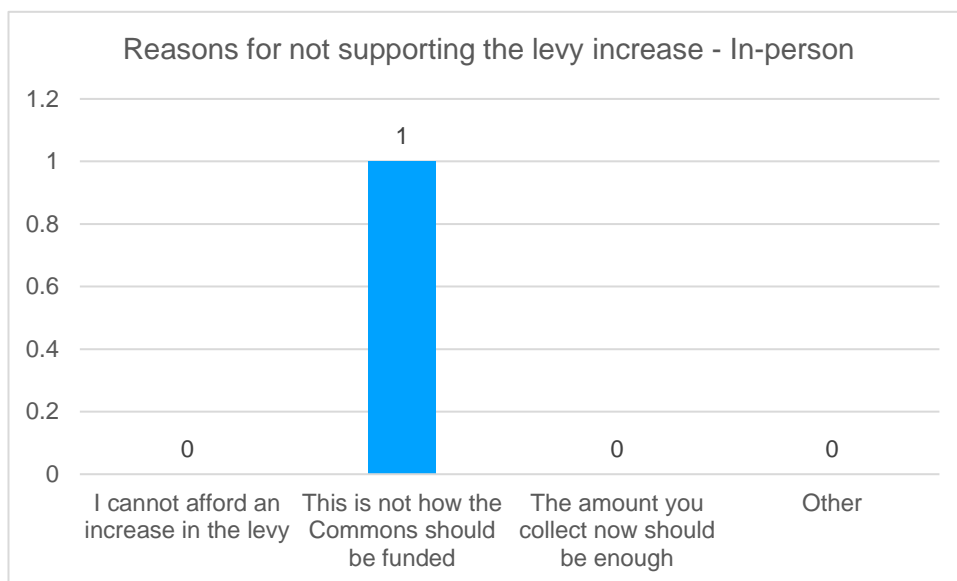


The main objection is to using a levy to fund the Commons, although the objection is more about the area which the levy is applied to rather than having a levy per se. One quarter of the objections – some seven people – think the existing amount of funding raised by the levy should be enough to maintain the Commons. Just three respondents felt that they could not afford the increase in the levy. The following graphs are based on the number of people’s responses rather than the percentage because the response number is a small proportion of the overall cohort of respondents.



Reasons for not supporting the levy increase - In-person engagement

Only one person who responded to the consultation in person objected to the increase and that was on the basis that this is not how the Commons should be funded.



Reasons for not supporting the levy increase - Online engagement

The number of people who objected to the levy via the online survey was 30 and so the combined results above are largely underpinned by these responses.

