



Liverpool City Region and West Lancashire Visitor Surveys 2021-22

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Summary

This report has been commissioned by Sefton Council on behalf of the Liverpool City Region (LCR) local authorities and West Lancashire Borough Council. It presents the results of visitor surveys carried out between November 2021 and August 2022.

The surveys have been commissioned to ensure the relevant local planning authorities have the information they need to understand the likely effects of increased housing growth in terms of recreation use of the coast and what mitigation might be necessary. The coastline is internationally important for nature conservation, with a number of 'European sites' (or 'Habitats sites'), that are part of the national site network and are subject to strict legal protection. Increased recreation use involves a range of potential risks to the qualifying features of the European sites, for example through disturbance to birds. To comply with legislation and ensure adequate protection is in place, it is necessary for local planning authorities to be able to demonstrate that they can rule out harm from the cumulative impacts of new housing growth. The visitor survey results will underpin a Recreation Mitigation Strategy (RMS) for the area.

There were four elements of data collection:

- Vehicle counts at locations along the coast/estuaries to provide data on how visitor numbers and distribution vary through the year;
- Face-to-face interviews and visitor counts at locations along the coast/estuaries to understand who visits the coast, why and where they come from;
- Face-to-face interviews and visitor counts at greenspace sites inland of the coast, these represented a selection of potential Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspaces ('SANGs'), greenspaces that could be enhanced to provide additional space for recreation); and
- An online questionnaire aimed at providing additional information on the use of the coast and inland greenspaces by local residents.

Vehicle counts

Counts involved 6 different transect routes, each driven simultaneously to cover all parking locations along the coast on a given date and start time. Counts took place on 12 dates through the year covering a range of times of day and types of day. Key findings included:

- 145 parking locations were included in the counts and the maximum number of spaces available for people to use on a given date was 9,723 (this figure varied across dates as some car parks were closed and some overflow areas were open on certain dates).
- The total number of vehicles counted along the coast at any one time ranged from 1,147 to 4,743, with an average of 2,366 (mean) and 1,924 (median).
- Peak counts coincided with bank holiday weekends and represented a four-fold increase in visitors on these dates compared to the lowest count. The number of vehicles was broadly similar on the Easter and August bank holiday (slightly higher in August).

- On both the busy bank holiday weekend counts there were still at least half the available parking spaces around the coast unused, and on average each car park was at 62% capacity.
- The vast majority of motor vehicles counted were cars with no other associated trailers, roof boxes etc. Other types of vehicles included unbranded vans (2.7% of all vehicles counted), cars with roof racks (2.5%), commercial vans (excluding dog walkers, 1.8%), campervans and caravans (1.1%), minibuses and coaches (0.3%), cars with rear-mounted bike racks (0.2%), branded commercial dog walking vans (0.1%).

On-site survey at European sites and SANGs

On-site surveys involved visitor counts (tallies of people passing the surveyor) and face-to-face interviews with a random sample of those people. They took place at 19 survey locations on the coast (European sites), that included the Ribble, the Sefton Coast, the north shore of the Mersey and the Wirral. All 19 locations were surveyed during the winter 2021/22 with 16 hours of survey work at each location (evenly split to cover weekends and weekdays and spread over daylight hours). In addition, selected locations had additional 'pulses' of fieldwork in spring 2022 (6 locations) and/or summer 2022 (4 locations), reflecting particular site sensitivities or interest.

Similar surveys took place at 19 potential SANGs. These were not intended to be an exhaustive list of potential SANGs but rather were selected to cover a range of different types of location and at a range of distances from the coast. SANG surveys took place in March and early April 2022.

Key findings from the counts included:

- At the European sites, 7,852 groups (of any size, including lone individuals) were noted entering, leaving or passing through at the survey point over 464 hours of visitor counts. These groups contained a total of 15,837 people (of which 2,882 were minors) and 4,901 dogs.
- From these totals the mean group size was 2.0 people (of which 0.4 were minors) and 0.6 dogs. There was 1 dog for every 3.2 people. Minors made up 18% of the people counted and 10% of people were on bicycles.
- During the winter surveys, when all 19 European site survey locations were surveyed, the busiest locations (in terms of the total number of people) were Crosby south, West Kirby and Leasowe Bay.
- At the potential SANGs survey points, 5,892 groups (of any size, including lone individuals) were noted entering, leaving or passing through at the survey point over 304 hours of fieldwork. These groups contained a total of 10,440 people (of which 2,227 were minors) and 3,111 dogs.
- From these totals the mean group size was 1.8 people (of which 0.4 were minors) and 0.5 dogs. There was 1 dog for every 3.4 people. Minors made up 21% of the people counted and 11% of people were on bicycles.
- The busiest potential SANG locations (in terms of the total number of people) were Spike Island, Southport Botanic Gardens and Croxteth Hall & Country Park.

A total of 2,602 interviews were conducted (1,562 interviews at the European sites and 1,040 interviews at potential SANGs). Key findings included:

- On average there were larger groups at the European sites (2.0 people per group) compared to the SANGs (1.6 people per group). There was also a higher proportion of interviewees with dogs at the SANGs (58%) compared to the European sites (47%).
- 96% of interviewees across both the European sites and potential SANGs were on a day trip or short visit from home.
- Only 2% of all interviewees were staying away from home, on holiday; these holiday makers accounted for 5% of the interviews on European sites in the summer, 4% in the spring and 2% in the winter.
- Dog walking was the most frequently cited main activity (41% at European sites, 54% at potential SANGs), followed by walking (40% and 33%).
- Overall, 52% of interviewees were visiting the location where they were interviewed for less than 1 hour; visits to the European sites were typically slightly longer (87 minutes) compared to those at potential SANGs (63 minutes).
- 60% of interviewees said that they visit the location where they were interviewed at least once a week, those at potential SANGs were more frequent visitors, with 72% indicating that they visit at least once a week, compared to 52% at the European sites.
- We estimate that those people visiting the European sites typically make around 128 visits a year, this compares to 194 visits per year to potential SANGs.
- 74% of interviewees visit the site where interviewed equally all year round, this was particularly the case at the potential SANGs (81% of interviewees visit all year round), compared to European sites (69%).
- The percentage of interviewees arriving by car/van was higher at the European sites (69% by car, 25% on foot) compared to the potential SANGs (55% by car, 42% on foot).
- Routes were mapped as part of the interview; interviewees at the European sites covered significantly longer routes (median of 2.64 km) compared to those at the SANGs (median of 1.86 km).
- Choice of location to visit that day for those interviewed at the European sites was influenced by the scenery/views (38%), being close to home (36%) and being near to the coast/water (25%); while key factors at the potential SANGs were close to home (57%), the scenery/views (27%) and being good for the dog (17%).
- Relatively few interviewees (11%) gave details of any information sources or recommendations that they had used to plan their visit on the day they were interviewed; the most common information source was websites, used by 5% of interviewees.
- Interviewees at the European sites tended to name other parts of the coast or estuaries as alternative sites they would have visited that day. At the potential SANGs, the alternatives reflected a mix of urban parks as well as coastal/estuary locations named.
- 46% of interviewees at European sites were either unaware of, or unable to name, any habitats or species that might be affected people visiting the site. Responses did however reflect a reasonably good awareness of Natterjack Toads (named by 21% of interviewees), wintering waterbirds (18%) and breeding terns and waders (15%).
- Common themes in terms of potential improvements to sites (European sites and potential SANGs) related to litter (9% of interviewees), toilet facilities (6%), dog waste bins

(5%) and footpath improvements (5%), however 42% of those interviewed could not identify changes or didn't want to see changes at the site interviewed.

- A total of 2,481 interviewees (95%) gave full valid postcodes that could be plotted in GIS. These interviewees came from a wide area, covering 93 local authority areas, with the most from Wirral (22%), Sefton (19%) and Liverpool (17%).
- Of those interviewed at the European sites, the proportion of interviewees from each of the commissioning local authorities was: Wirral 26%, Sefton 19%, Liverpool 16%, Halton 5%, West Lancashire 4%, Knowsley 3%, St Helens 1%.
- The postcode data shows those visiting the coast coming from a much wider area (median distance home postcode to interview location = 5.3 km) compared to those visiting potential SANGs (median 1.3 km).
- Among those interviewed at the European sites there were significant differences in the distances (home postcode to interview location) between different parts of the coast, with those visiting the Sefton & Ribble locations living the furthest afield (median 8.9 km) and those interviewed on the North Wirral and Mersey Narrows (median 2.1 km) and the Mersey (median 3.2 km) being the most local.

Online survey

The online survey was promoted by local authorities through social media and emails. It was broadly similar to the on-site questionnaire but designed for self-completion. Most of the survey was around the respondents' recall of the last visit they made to a greenspace (defined as any public outdoor space such as parks, woods, beaches, estuaries, nature areas, footpaths in the countryside etc.). The survey ran from February through to July 2022 and the majority of respondents completed it in May.

1,060 people completed the online questionnaire but there were marked differences in the number of responses from different local authorities (998 respondents gave a complete, valid postcode that could be assigned to a local authority area). Most respondents were from St Helens (39%), Halton (30%) or Liverpool (12%).

Key findings relating to general questions on visits to greenspaces and types of location visited:

- Respondents had undertaken a mean of 5.6 (median=5) visits to greenspaces over the previous week and this was broadly consistent across local authorities.
- Woodlands and forests (including community woodlands) were the type of site which had the highest proportion of respondents visiting 'regularly' (583 respondents, 55%) while coasts (including beaches and estuary shorelines) were the type of site that had the highest proportion of respondents visiting 'occasionally' (421 respondents, 40%).
- The percentage of respondents from each local authority who regularly visited the coast (i.e. at least weekly) were: Wirral 72%, Sefton 53%, Liverpool 31%, Halton 20%, Knowsley 13%, St Helens 7%, West Lancashire 6%.
- The percentage of respondents that never visit the coast was broadly similar across authorities, accounting for 6% or less of respondents.

- The north shore of the Mersey (between Liverpool and Widnes) and the Sefton Coast were the two areas of coast that were visited by the most respondents.

A total of 1,000 respondents were able to think back to the last time they had visited a greenspace and were able to ask questions about it. Key findings included:

- 982 respondents named the location they had visited and from these we identified around 220 different locations visited.
- The most popular recently visited locations were Spike Island and Oglet Shore.
- 36 of the named locations were within or provide access to European sites and of the 982 respondents who could recall a visit and had named a location, 26% had potentially visited a European site in the Liverpool City Region as their most recent visit to a greenspace and 27% had visited the coast (either in the Liverpool City Region or elsewhere).
- The most common activity undertaken on the recent visit was walking without a dog (55%), other activities (named by at least 5% of respondents) were: dog walking (44%), meeting up with friends or family (35%), bird or wildlife watching (31%), jogging or running (12%) and mountain bike/off-road cycling (8%).
- The percentage of those visiting the coast that were dog walking was slightly smaller than for those visiting other types of site and there were a wide range of activities such as watersports and beach activities that were almost solely undertaken at the coast.
- 51% of respondents had travelled on foot and 40% had travelled by car. For those who recalled a visit to the coast rather than other types of site the percentage arriving by car was much higher (66%).
- The average group size (i.e. number of people making the visit) was 2.8 with 0.8 dogs. There was no significant difference in the group size (number of people) visiting the coast compared to other types of site, however those visiting the coast did have significantly fewer dogs with them.
- Most visits to all types of greenspace had been made late morning.
- The visit duration (all types of greenspace) was estimated to typically be around 98 minutes with those visiting the coast tending to visit for longer (around 118 minutes).
- Close to home was the main reason people had chosen to visit the given location (all greenspaces combined), cited by 70% of respondents. For those who had visited the coast however the main reason was scenery/variety of views (72% of those visiting the coast).
- Relatively few respondents indicated that any information had informed their recent visit to a greenspace. For those whose visit had been influenced by information, word of mouth was the most common information cited (26%) with friends being the key source.
- Respondents identified improvements they would like to see at the sites visited. The most common improvements were more bins/less litter (33% of respondents) and more dog bins (32%). Strong themes for particular sites where a given improvement was cited by a high proportion of respondents included: Colliers Moss (more bins/less litter, more dog bins), Clock Face Country Park (more dog bins) and Spike Island (improvements to habitat/scenery).

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Fieldwork was co-ordinated by Fenella Lewin and Phil Saunders, and was undertaken by a team of Footprint Ecology sub-contractors. Data were entered by Emma Bishop, Ben Arkless and Aaron Templer.

Cover photo: Leasowe Bay © Footprint Ecology

1. Introduction

Overview

- 1.1 This report has been commissioned by Sefton Council on behalf of the Liverpool City Region (LCR) local authorities¹ and West Lancashire Borough Council. It presents the results of visitor surveys that were carried out between November 2021 and August 2022. The purpose of the visitor surveys is to inform a Recreation Mitigation Strategy (RMS) for the area.

The need for a Recreation Mitigation Strategy (RMS)

- 1.2 The LCR coastline is internationally important for nature conservation and subject to strict legal protection. The coastline experiences a range of pressures that include increasing recreation use associated with a growing local population and new housing. To comply with legislation and ensure adequate protection is in place, it is necessary for local planning authorities to be able to demonstrate that they can rule out harm from the cumulative impacts of new housing growth. The RMS is intended to provide this solution. The visitor surveys underpin the RMS.

The study area

- 1.3 The area of focus is the LCR coast, which includes 2 Special Areas of Conservation (SACs), 5 Special Protection Areas (SPAs) and 4 Ramsar sites (see Map 1). These are 'European sites' or 'Habitats sites', part of the national site network and subject to the highest tiers of protection for nature sites in the UK.
- 1.4 The inland site of Martin Mere is also within the general area and is an SPA and Ramsar site (and therefore subject to a similar level of protection). Early discussion with Natural England and relevant authorities ruled out the need to consider the site further within this study, as the SPA is a Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust reserve where access is restricted to paying visitors only who come to use the hides and see the wildlife present – different to the other sites.

¹ Halton Council, Knowsley Metropolitan Borough Council, Liverpool City Council, St Helens Metropolitan Borough Council, Sefton Council, Wirral Metropolitan Borough Council

- 1.5 The qualifying features for each of the European sites are listed in Appendix 1 which also provides links to the conservation objectives for each site. The coastal sites are summarised in more detail below.

The Dee Estuary SAC/SPA/Ramsar

- 1.6 The Dee Estuary is a wide, funnel-shaped estuary that straddles the boundary between England and Wales. It comprises extensive areas of intertidal sandflats, mudflats and saltmarsh and is of major importance for waterbirds. The site also includes the three sandstone islands of Hilbre with their important cliff vegetation, maritime heathland and grassland, mussel beds and reefs. It qualifies as an SAC for the habitats present and also for 2 fish and Petalwort, a liverwort. In the winter it is a feeding and roosting site for large populations of wildfowl and waders and in the summer, it supports breeding populations of Common Terns and Little Terns. It is also an important site for birds on migration.

Liverpool Bay SPA

- 1.7 Liverpool Bay SPA covers an area of 2,528 km² off the coast of north Wales and north-west England. Although mostly offshore, it also encompasses part of the Mersey Estuary as far as Rock Ferry and Liverpool Docks. It is classified to protect overwintering populations of Common Scoters, Red-throated Divers and Little Gulls, as well as breeding Common Terns and Little Terns.

Mersey Estuary SPA/Ramsar

- 1.8 Mersey Estuary is a large, sheltered estuary comprising large areas of intertidal sandflats, mudflats and saltmarsh. The Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar site covers parts of the estuary between New Ferry and Runcorn bridge, and borders the Manchester Ship Canal to the south. The estuary is important for its non-breeding populations of waders and wildfowl, as well as waders on migration in spring and autumn.

Mersey Narrows & North Wirral Foreshore SPA/Ramsar

- 1.9 The Mersey Narrows and North Wirral Foreshore SPA and Ramsar site cover the area around the northern coast of the Wirral, along the Mersey shoreline as far as Seacombe and also the man-made lagoons at Seaforth. Part of it is also within the Dee Estuary SAC. The extensive areas of mudflats and sandflats along the north Wirral foreshore support large numbers of feeding waders at low tide and also include important high tide roost sites. The

Egremont foreshore is an important feeding area for waders, whilst Seaforth nature reserve is a major roosting site for waders and is also home to a breeding colony of Common Terns.

Ribble & Alt Estuaries SPA/Ramsar

- 1.10 The Ribble & Alt Estuaries SPA and Ramsar site cover the Ribble Estuary and a wide stretch of coastline from Blackpool down to Crosby, including the Sefton Coast. It comprises a range of habitats including coastal saltmarsh, mudflats, sandflats, sand dunes and coastal grazing marsh. The site supports internationally important populations of wintering waterbirds as well as breeding populations of Ruff, Lesser Black-backed Gulls and Common Terns, and passage waders. As well as its bird interest, it is also listed as a Ramsar site for its important population of Natterjack Toads.

Sefton Coast SAC

- 1.11 The Sefton Coast SAC extends from Southport down to Crosby. Most of it overlaps with the Ribble & Alt Estuaries SPA and Ramsar site. It qualifies as an SAC for its range of sand dune and dune slack habitats, Petalwort and Great Crested Newts. Although not qualifying features of the SAC, the site is also home to Natterjack Toads and Sand Lizards.

Map 1: Coastal European sites relevant to the study.



Impacts and importance of access

- 1.12 A challenging issue for UK nature conservation is how to respond to increasing demand for access without compromising the integrity of protected wildlife sites. Areas that are important for nature conservation are often important for a range of other services, including the provision of space for recreation for an increasing population. Such recreation space can be used for a wide variety of activities, ranging from daily dog walks to competitive adventure and endurance sports.
- 1.13 Visits to the natural environment have shown a significant increase in England as a result of the increase in population and a trend to visit the countryside more (O'Neill, 2019). The Covid-19 pandemic has further had a marked effect on how people use local greenspaces and many locations across the UK have seen a marked increase in recreation use during the pandemic (Burnett et al., 2021).
- 1.14 There is a strong body of evidence showing how increasing levels of access can have negative impacts on wildlife. Issues are varied and include disturbance, increased fire risk, contamination and damage (for general reviews see: Liley et al., 2010; Lowen et al., 2008; Ross et al., 2014; Underhill-Day, 2005). There is evidence that the European sites along the LCR coast are already being damaged, and the condition of different areas are deteriorating².
- 1.15 The issues are not, however, straightforward. It is now also increasingly recognised that access to the countryside is crucial to the long term success of nature conservation projects, for example through enforcing pro-environmental behaviours and a greater respect for the world around us (Richardson et al., 2016). Access also brings wider benefits to society that include benefits to mental/physical health (Keniger et al., 2013; Lee and Maheswaran, 2011; Pretty et al., 2005) and economic benefits (ICF GHK, 2013; ICRT, 2011; Keniger et al., 2013; The Land Trust, 2018). Nature conservation bodies are trying to encourage people to spend more time outside and government policy is also promoting countryside access in general (e.g. through enhancing coastal access).

² the formal conservation advice for these European Sites (Conservation Advice Packages and Site Improvement Plans) and the Habitats Regulations Assessments of the Local Plans for each of the 6 Local Authorities

Legislative context

- 1.16 The designation, protection and restoration of European wildlife sites is embedded in the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017, as amended, which are commonly referred to as the 'Habitats Regulations'. Importantly, the most recent amendments (the Conservation of Habitats and Species (amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019³) take account of the UK's departure from the EU.
- 1.17 The Regulations provide strict protection for European sites and this extends to local plans. Regulation 105 *et seq* addresses the assessment of local plans and there is also Government Guidance on the interpretation and application of the Regulations which includes local plans⁴. Local planning authorities, as public bodies, are given specific duties as 'competent authorities'. A competent authority should only approve a project or give effect to a plan where it can be ascertained that there will not be an adverse effect on the integrity of the European site(s) (or exceptionally, if there is overriding public interest and no alternatives).

Aims of the study

- 1.18 It is therefore necessary for the relevant local authorities to be able to rule out adverse effects on European site integrity, including the cumulative impacts from housing growth across multiple authorities combined.
- 1.19 Existing information on who visits the coast and why are dated (e.g. Liley et al., 2017). Initial work towards an RMS has been undertaken by MEAS and Footprint Ecology. The aim of this visitor survey is to provide the necessary evidence to inform and implement an updated RMS. In particular, it is necessary to have up-to-date information on the links on who uses the coast for recreation, why and what mitigation measures might be effective. Key aims of the study are therefore:

³ The amending regulations generally seek to retain the requirements of the 2017 Regulations but with adjustments for the UK's exit from the European Union. See Regulation 4, which also confirms that the interpretation of these Regulations as they had effect, or any guidance as it applied, before exit day, shall continue to do so.

⁴ Habitats regulations assessments: protecting a European site. Defra and Natural England. 24 February 2021. <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/habitats-regulations-assessments-protecting-a-european-site> (accessed 4 March 2021)

- To understand the types of recreation use and where these take place around the coast, to inform the scale of impact;
- To better explore the range of variation across the LCR and West Lancashire in how people use the coast and why, to ensure fairness and proportionality in mitigation provision across different authorities and parts of the LCR;
- To understand the frequency with which people use the coast for recreation, again to inform the scale of impact and links between new housing growth and impact;
- To identify where visitors originate, i.e. their home postcodes, to allow a zone of influence for the RMS to be determined;
- To help inform the kinds of measures that might mitigate impacts on the coast, for example through engagement or access management;
- To understand which other sites away from the coast are also used for recreation and to identify which sites might be improved (and how) to inform the role of other green infrastructure mitigation.

2. Survey methods

Overview

2.1 The survey involved four different elements of data gathering, as summarised in Figure 1.

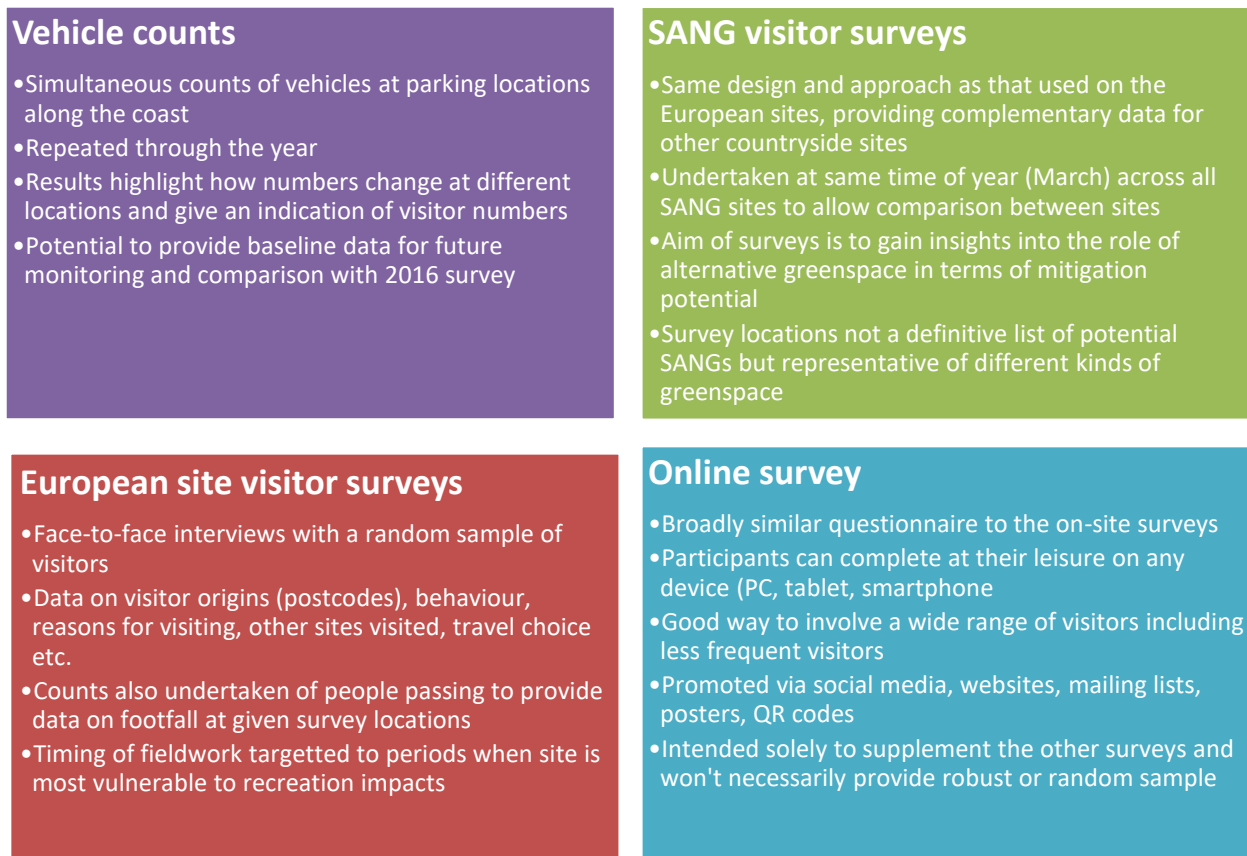


Figure 1: Summary of survey approaches

Vehicle counts

2.2 We used a combination of maps and site visits to identify parking locations along the 180 km of coastline between the Ribble Estuary and the Dee Estuary that were likely to be used by those visiting for informal outdoor recreation. We identified and mapped 145 locations, which included not only car parks but also laybys and on-street parking. The parking locations are shown in Map 2. We also estimated the capacity of each parking location, using aerial photos and websites, if available.

2.3 Vehicle counts were undertaken on 12 dates between November 2021 and August 2022 (see Table 1). On each occasion, a team of surveyors set off at the same time from different points along the coast, following set routes to count the number of parked vehicles at these pre-identified parking locations. The start times were varied to pick up usage at different times of the day, and the direction of travel was evenly split between north to south and south to north, to avoid any bias.

Table 1: Dates of the vehicle counts, with shading to reflect broad times of year.

Date	Broad time of year	Day	Start time
30 November 2021	Winter weekday	Tuesday	12:00
29 December 2021	Christmas week	Wednesday	12:00
16 January 2022	Winter weekend	Sunday	13:00
20 January 2022	Winter weekday	Thursday	09:00
30 January 2022	Winter weekend	Sunday	09:00
13 February 2022	Winter weekend	Sunday	11:30
16 February 2022	Winter weekday	Wednesday	11:30
13 April 2022	Easter school holidays	Wednesday	09:00
17 April 2022	Bank holiday weekend	Sunday	14:00
19 May 2022	Spring weekday, term time	Thursday	14:00
1 August 2022	School holiday period	Monday	11:30
29 August 2022	Bank holiday weekend	Monday	11:30

2.4 During the winter months we used 5 surveyors and then from April we used 6 surveyors so that the counts didn't take too long. Each route section took up to 4 hours to complete. Averaged route times are given below:

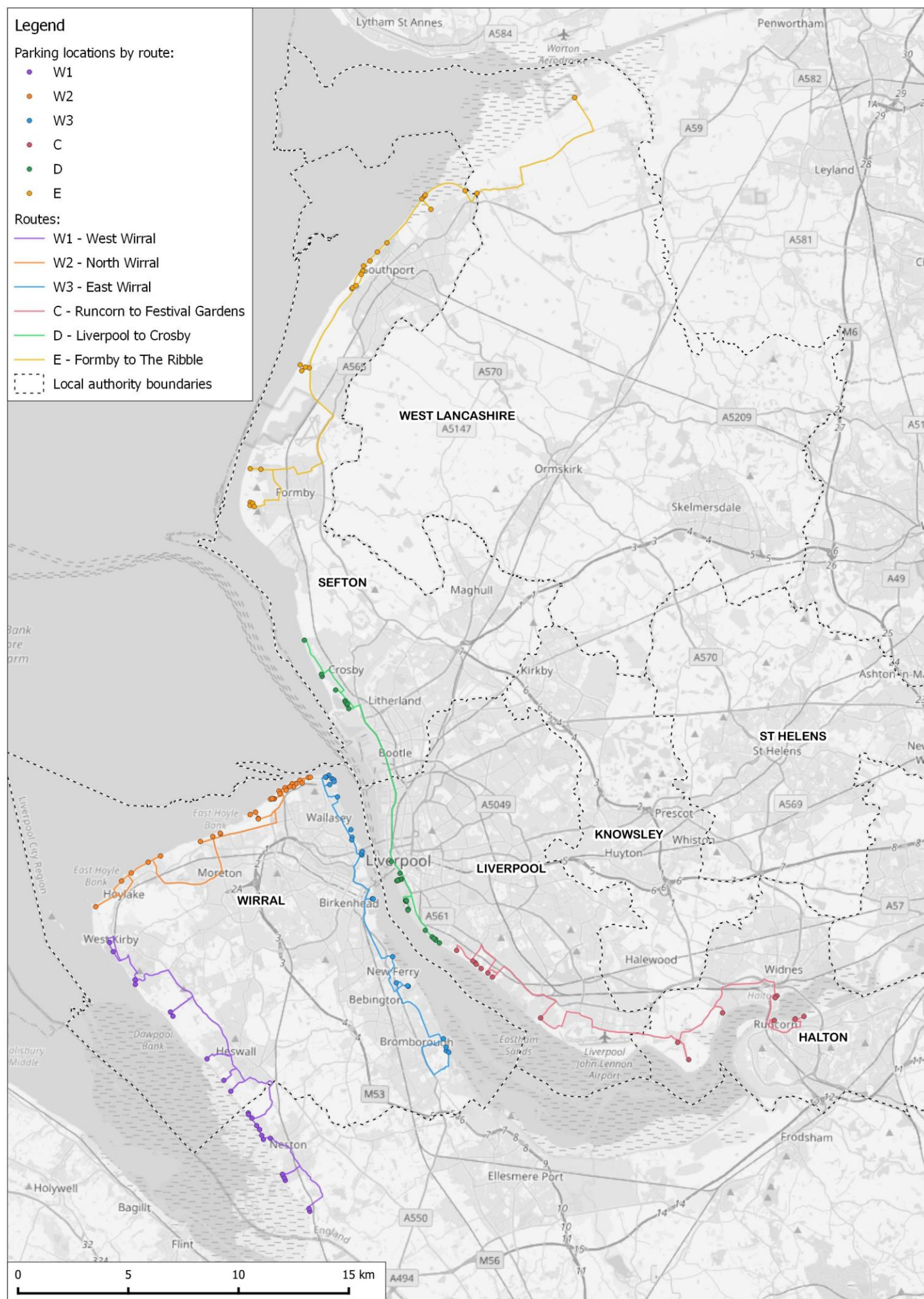
- Wirral 2 sections pre-April (7 counts)
 - A (Neston to Leasowe): 03:57
 - B (Leasowe to Eastham): 03:57
- Wirral 3 sections post-April (5 counts)
 - W1 (West Wirral): 02:21
 - W2 (North Wirral): 02:17
 - W3 (East Wirral): 02:17
- Remaining coastline:
 - C (Runcorn to Festival Gardens): 01:51
 - D (Liverpool to Crosby): 01:56
 - E (Fomby to the Ribble): 01:59

2.5 Surveyors were provided with both paper maps and GPS locations (via the Maps.me app and Google Maps) to aid navigation to each parking location. At each parking location the surveyor recorded the total number of parked

motor vehicles present (including motorbikes) and subtotals for the following vehicle types:

- Vehicles with boat trailers,
- Branded vehicles of commercial dog walkers,
- Other commercial vehicles,
- Unmarked vans,
- Cars with roof racks,
- Cars with rear-mounted bike racks,
- Campervans/caravans,
- Minibuses/coaches,
- Bicycles.

Map 2: Driving transect routes for counting parked vehicles (from April)



European site visitor survey

Survey locations

- 2.6 Surveys took place at 19 specific survey locations along the coast, as shown in Map 3 and summarised in Table 2. These survey locations were selected using recommendations from the RMS Steering Group and other stakeholders. They included 7 locations that were previously used in the 2016/17 survey.
- 2.7 The survey locations were chosen to include those that have public access (with or without parking), are known to be well used for recreation and/or have a particular ecological interest or sensitivities. They were also selected to give a good geographical spread across the area of interest and to be representative of the range of coastal access opportunities across the area.

Map 3: European site survey locations. Those marked with an asterisk (*) were previously surveyed in 2016/17.



Table 2: Details of the European site survey locations and the time of year that they were surveyed. Each tick represents 2 days of fieldwork (1 weekday and 1 weekend day).

ID	Name	Winter *	April	May	August	Grid reference	Description
1	Hesketh Out Marsh	✓				SD42152506	RSPB car park
2	Marshside	✓				SD35262050	RSPB car park
3	Ainsdale-on-Sea	✓	✓		✓	SD29731269	To south-west of Discovery Centre
4	Formby	✓	✓		✓	SD27370827	Victoria Road beach car park
5	Crosby north	✓	✓			SD29860062	Northerly car park, by HM Coastguard building
6	Crosby south	✓				SJ30589890	On prom near the leisure centre
7	Otterspool Park and Promenade	✓	✓			SJ38148529	On prom near end of Mersey Road
8	Speke and Garston Coastal Reserve	✓				SJ40628334	Small car park off roundabout
9	Oglet Bay	✓				SJ45218228	At path down to shoreline off Bailey's Lane
10	Hale Head	✓				SJ47188093	At end of Lighthouse Road, on shoreline path
11	Pickerings Pasture	✓				SJ48868353	At car park
12	Egremont Promenade	✓				SJ31979188	On slipway at end of Tobin Street
13	Leasowe Bay	✓				SJ27359247	Western end of Gunsite car park
14	Hoylake Sailing Club	✓				SJ21458939	On slipway opposite sailing club
15	Red Rocks	✓			✓	SJ20368832	On beach at end of Stanley Road
16	West Kirby	✓			✓	SJ21018678	Slipway opposite end of Dee Lane
17	Thurstaston	✓				SJ23618347	On beach at bottom of steps from Station Road
18	Lower Heswall	✓		✓		SJ26248049	Car park at end of Riverbank Road
19	Parkgate Old Baths	✓		✓		SJ27337906	On footpath at northern end of car park

* Winter = December to February, excluding Christmas

Timings

- 2.8 All 19 locations were surveyed during the winter, between the start of December and the end of February, but avoiding the weeks around Christmas since access patterns are likely to be atypical and daylight hours are limited at this time of year. In addition, selected locations had additional 'pulses' of fieldwork in spring and/or summer, reflecting particular site sensitivities or interest (see Appendix 1 for qualifying features of the European sites).
- 2.9 The April surveys at Formby, Ainsdale and Crosby took place during the Easter school holidays when visitor use would be high and trampling damage to dune habitats and potentially risks for Natterjack Toads would be of concern. This time of year also has passage waders. Otterspool was also included at this time of year to provide insight on how recreation use of estuaries in the spring might differ from the more open sandy coast.
- 2.10 Two locations on the Dee (Lower Heswall and Parkgate) had additional surveys in May to identify whether visitors venture out onto the saltmarsh habitats (an SAC feature) and again to coincide with the timing of wader passage.
- 2.11 Ainsdale, Formby, Red Rocks and West Kirby were also surveyed in August since these beach locations are likely to have high visitor numbers and different recreational use in the warm summer months. Risks at this time of year will relate to trampling of dune habitats, Natterjacks and passage waders.
- 2.12 Each pulse of fieldwork included one weekday and one weekend day at each location. Each day of fieldwork consisted of 8 hours, split into 2-hour sessions to give the surveyor breaks and to spread survey effort across daylight hours (Table 3).

Table 3: Timing of survey sessions at different times of the year.

Month(s)	Session 1	Session 2	Session 3	Session 4
December / January	07:00-09:00	09:30-11:30	12:30-14:30	15:00-17:00
February	07:00-09:00	09:30-11:30	12:30-14:30	15:00-17:00
March	07:00-09:00	10:00-12:00	13:00-15:00	16:00-18:00
April / May / August	07:00-09:00	10:30-12:30	14:00-16:00	17:00-19:00

- 2.13 There were several storms over the winter of 2021/22, including Storm Arwen in late November 2021 closely followed by Storm Barra in early December 2021. Some of the survey locations were severely affected including Formby (Victoria Road) which was closed to the public from 27th November 2021 to 5th February 2022. Therefore, some fieldwork dates had to be rescheduled, but all fieldwork took place within the planned time periods.

Interviews

- 2.14 Surveyors conducted face-to-face interviews with a random sample of visitors, by selecting the next person they saw after completing the previous interview. Only one person was interviewed per group and no minors (under 18s) were interviewed.
- 2.15 The surveyor kept a record of the number of visitors who were approached for interview but declined to take part or were unable to take part for whatever reason. They also recorded the number of people who were approached but had already been interviewed, so were not re-interviewed.
- 2.16 The questionnaire was designed using Snap Surveys software and was conducted using tablets running the Snap Mobile Anywhere app. The app enables interviews to be conducted offline and then uploaded when the device is next connected to the internet. A copy of the questionnaire is provided in Appendix 2.
- 2.17 It is important to note that some of the questions had pre-determined categories to facilitate recording of the interviewee's responses, however these were not shown to the interviewee or read out loud, in order to avoid any bias.
- 2.18 As part of the interview, visitors were asked to describe the route that they had taken during their visit (or were planning to take). This was captured by the surveyor on a paper map, using a unique reference number to match it to the corresponding interview data, and these routes were subsequently digitised using QGIS.
- 2.19 At the end of each interview, the surveyor recorded additional information about the number of people in the interviewed group, the number of minors (under 18s), the number of dogs with them and how many of their dogs were off lead (Q28).

Visitor counts

- 2.20 Alongside the interview data, surveyors maintained a tally of all people seen, recording the number of groups (of any size, including lone individuals), people (total headcount), minors (under 18s), dogs and cyclists. These counts allow a comparison across survey points in terms of footfall, and indicate the proportion of visitors that were interviewed at each location.
- 2.21 Separate tallies were maintained, as relevant, at each survey point for those 'entering' (i.e. starting their visit at the survey point), 'leaving' (i.e. someone finishing their visit) or 'passing through' (those clearly passing the surveyor mid-way through their visit).

SANG visitor survey

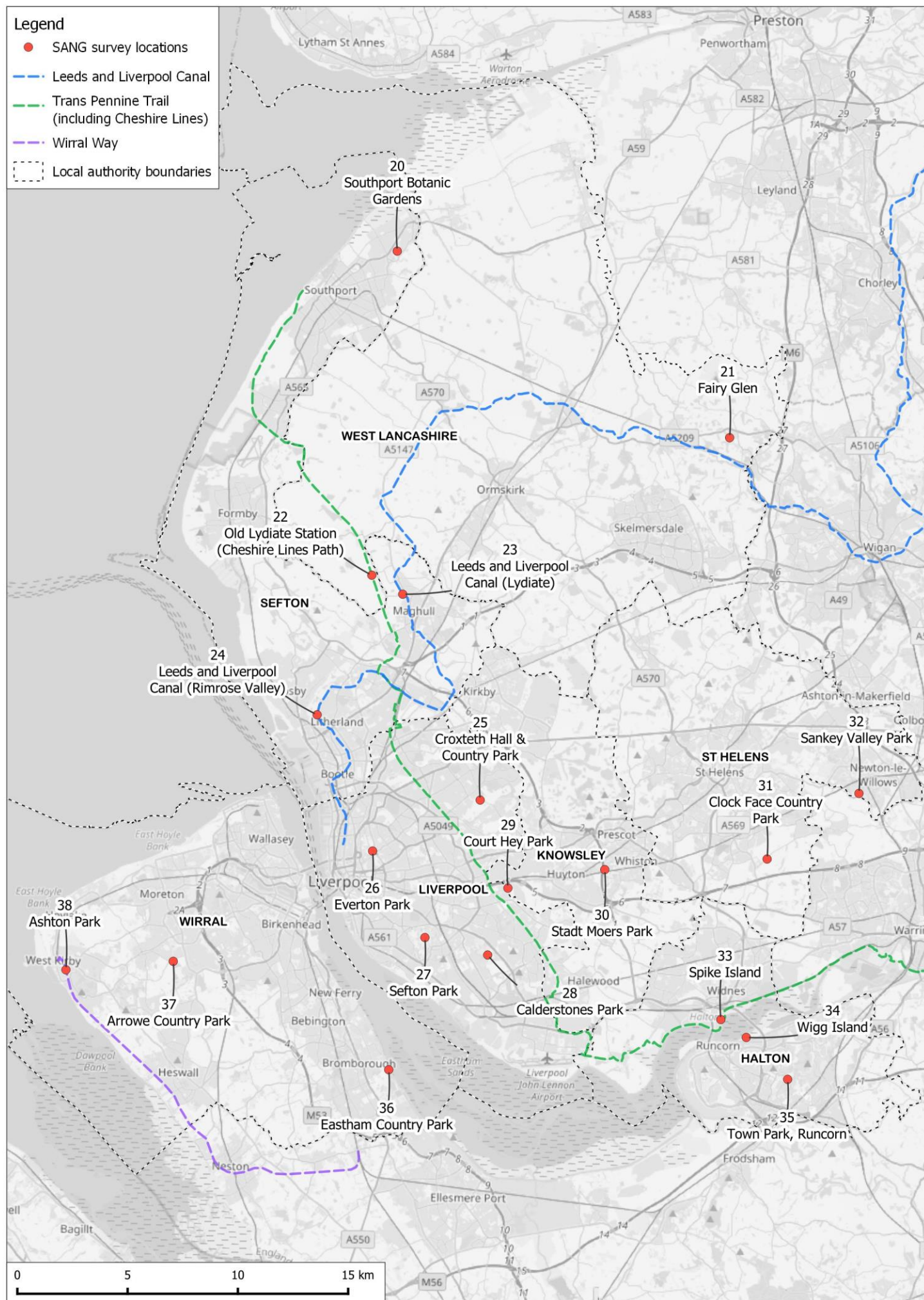
Survey locations

- 2.22 On-site surveys were also carried out at 19 potential SANGs. These were not intended to be an exhaustive list of potential SANGs or even a definitive list of those likely to be a focus for mitigation in the future. Rather they were selected to cover a range of different types of location and at a range of distances from the coast. They included urban parks, country parks, woodlands, canals and parts of the Trans Pennine Trail. Details of these survey locations are shown in Map 4 and Table 4. The aim of the survey was to ensure that there was an understanding of how visitors use these different kinds of site – away from the coast – and to gain insights into how alternative greenspace might have a role in mitigation.
- 2.23 Survey locations within the SANGs were selected as points that worked to intercept visitors and there was just one survey point at each site, typically the main entry point, car park or similar.

Table 4: SANG survey locations. Areas are not given for those sites that are linear routes.

ID	Name	Grid reference	Area (ha)	Description
20	Southport Botanic Gardens	SD36731900	8	Just inside the entrance from Verulam Road car park
21	Fairy Glen	SD51741057	10	Footpath leading into woodland from Stoneygate Lane, Appley Bridge
22	Old Lydiate Station (Cheshire Lines Path)	SD35570433		Small car park at end of Carr Lane, Lydiate on Cheshire Lines route
23	Leeds and Liverpool Canal (Lydiate)	SD36980347		On the tow path near the Running Horses pub
24	Leeds and Liverpool Canal (Rimrose Valley)	SJ33109801		Over the footbridge from car park opposite Appleton Road
25	Croxteth Hall & Country Park	SJ40489415	259	Main car park
26	Everton Park	SJ35619184	49	Rupert Lane car park
27	Sefton Park	SJ37988793	125	At start of path from the car park opposite Greenbank Lane
28	Calderstones Park	SJ40828713	52	Yew Tree Road car park
29	Court Hey Park	SJ41749016	15	Main car park
30	Stadt Moers Park	SJ46139100	37	On path between Pottery Lane car park and the railway bridge
31	Clock Face Country Park	SJ53499148	23	Clock Face Country Park car park, off Gorsey Lane. Part of Bold Forest Park.
32	Sankey Valley Park	SJ57659445	63	Footbridge and car park off Bradlegh Road, Newton-le-Willows
33	Spike Island	SJ51398421	60	On Spike Island, just over the footbridge from Catalyst
34	Wigg Island	SJ52548340	107	Main car park
35	Town Park, Runcorn	SJ54428151	80	On path east of Stockham Lane
36	Eastham Country Park	SJ36348194	41	Long car park by the shore
37	Arrowe Country Park	SJ26578685	153	Car park off Arrowe Brook Road
38	Ashton Park	SJ21718647	7	At southern end of the park, on the Wirral Way

Map 4: SANG survey locations



Timings

2.25 SANG visitor surveys were carried out in March and early April, before the Easter holidays. One weekday and one weekend day (16 hours) were spent at each survey location. Session times are shown in Table 5.

Table 5: Timing of survey sessions at SANG locations.

Month	Session 1	Session 2	Session 3	Session 4
March	07:00-09:00	10:00-12:00	13:00-15:00	16:00-18:00
April	07:00-09:00	10:30-12:30	14:00-16:00	17:00-19:00

Interviews and visitor counts

2.26 The survey approach for the interviews and visitor counts was the same as for the coastal locations. The questionnaire used was almost identical, the only difference being that Q22, which asked about the interviewee's awareness of sensitive habitats or species, was omitted in the SANG questionnaire. Using the same questions meant that responses could be compared across all survey locations.

Online questionnaire

- 2.27 Alongside the on-site surveys, an online questionnaire was set up to collect additional data on how people use the area for outdoor recreation. This was an opportunity to gather the views of people who may be less likely to be interviewed on site, for example those participating in watersports, cycling or running, those who visit less frequently (or not at all) and those who use sites other than those which were selected as survey locations.
- 2.28 A copy of the questionnaire is in Appendix 3. Some of the questions were similar to those in the on-site questionnaire but were adapted for completion by the respondents themselves rather than an interviewer. The questionnaire was designed to work on a range of devices (see Figure 2 for example screenshots). Cookies were used to prevent multiple responses from the same individual.

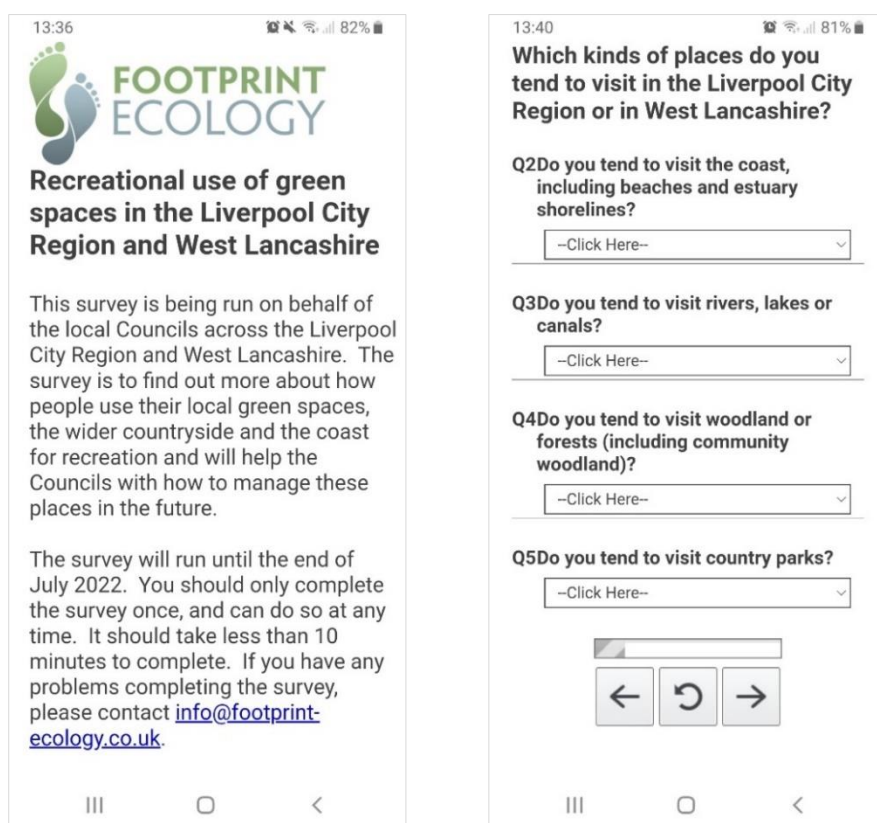


Figure 2: Screenshots of the first two pages of the online questionnaire on a smartphone.

- 2.29 MEAS supported the promotion of the online questionnaire through producing flyers and a briefing note for the local authorities and partner organisations. The survey was then advertised using flyers and social media (see Figure 3 for examples). The online survey was live from mid-November 2021 until the end of July 2022.



Figure 3: Screenshots showing examples of how the online survey was promoted using social media.

3. Results of the vehicle counts

- 3.1 This section provides the results from vehicle counts across the area on 12 separate dates (each day involving 6 simultaneously driven transects covering different sections of the coast). A total of 145 parking locations were included in the count.

Overall totals

- 3.1 In total, across the 12 transects 28,389 vehicles were counted, with counts on individual dates ranging from 1,147 on an overcast windy November weekday to 4,743 vehicles on the late August bank holiday (see Figure 4). The average number of vehicles recorded across the coast per count was 2,366 (mean) and 1,924 (median). The maximum count (4,743 vehicles) was 4.1 times greater than the minimum count (1,147 vehicles). The two highest counts were both on bank holiday weekends.
- 3.2 Of the 145 locations included in the counts, 15 were closed at least once during the transects⁵ with anywhere between 1 and 11 locations closed on any given date. If a car park was closed the number of vehicles was recorded as 0.
- 3.3 Totals are summarised in Figure 4, and Table 6 gives further detail including the % capacity (i.e. the percentage of the parking spaces that were occupied). Overall, the capacity along the whole coast ranged from 16% to 49%. The capacity for individual parking locations, averaged across the count, ranged from 22% to 62% (this reflects the typical % occupancy of a single car park on a given date).

⁵ Reasons for closure, where known were varied and includes closures due to heavy winds and fallen trees (Formby area) in the early part of the surveys.

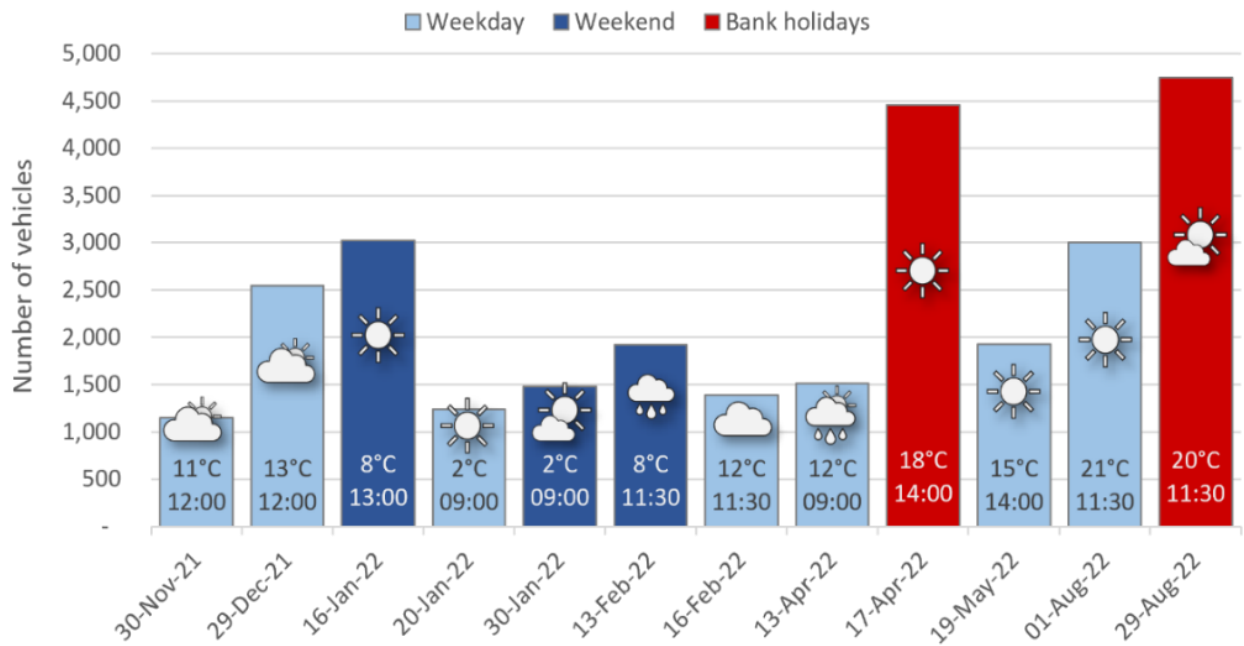


Figure 4: The total number of vehicles recorded on each transect date. Colours indicate the type of day, with the start time, temperature and weather conditions summarised for each transect.

Table 6: Transect summary data. The total estimated capacity varies as some car parks were closed on the given dates. 'Count' indicates the total number of parking locations counted on each date.

Date	Broad time of year	Start time	Weather	Count	Total estimated capacity of locations counted	Total vehicles	Overall % capacity	Average individual location % capacity
30 Nov 2021	Weekday	12:00	mostly overcast, breezy, dry 11°C	136	7,246	1,147	16%	22%
29 Dec 2021	Christmas holiday weekday	12:00	mostly overcast, windy, dry 13°C	136	7,522	2,549	34%	44%
16 Jan 2022	Weekend	13:00	clear, sunny, no wind, dry 8°C	138	7,252	3,022	42%	51%
20 Jan 2022	Weekday	09:00	clear, very cold, bright, still, dry 2°C	139	7,360	1,239	17%	26%
30 Jan 2022	Weekend	09:00	mostly clear, cold, still, dry 2°C	134	7,167	1,477	21%	29%
13 Feb 2022	Weekend	11:30	cloudy, cold, windy, scattered showers 8°C	139	7,557	1,919	25%	35%
16 Feb 2022	Weekday	11:30	cloudy, mild, very windy, mostly dry 12°C	137	7,695	1,387	18%	26%
13 Apr 2022	Easter holiday weekday	09:00	mostly cloudy, cool, light winds, odd shower 12°C	142	7,978	1,516	19%	27%
17 Apr 2022	Bank holiday Sunday	14:00	hazy sunshine, warm, some breeze, dry 18°C	144	9,982	4,458	45%	62%
19 May 2022	Weekday	14:00	sunny, warm, no breeze, dry 15°C	142	9,447	1,928	20%	35%
1 Aug 2022	Summer holiday weekday	11:30	sunny, warm, no breeze, dry 21°C	141	9,650	3,004	31%	50%
29 Aug 2022	Bank holiday Monday	11:30	mostly clear, warm, slight breeze, dry 20°C	143	9,723	4,743	49%	62%

Spatial distribution

3.1 The average number of vehicles counted at each location is shown in Map 5. The busiest parking locations were spread across the whole coastline, but particularly concentrated close to urban areas (e.g. Liverpool, West Kirby, Wallasey, Southport, Widnes) or particularly scenic spots (e.g. Formby, Crosby, Thurstaston). The parking locations⁶ with the most vehicles on average were:

- 54: Perch Rock, Wallasey - 98.8;
- 139: Esplanade P&R, Southport - 97.4;
- 124: Crosby Beach, Blundellsands - 82.1;
- 21: South Parade, West Kirby - 80.3;
- 52: Marine Promenade (N), Wallasey - 79.4.

3.2 The average occupancy for each location is summarised in Map 6. Parking locations that were on average full or close to full were often similar, but not necessarily the same as those that were busiest. They were typically located in the more urban areas, but more obviously concentrated to Liverpool centre and Wallasey, but still scattered in West Kirby, Neston, Southport etc. Some of the least occupied locations were in Southport, and to the north of Southport, Litherland, Hoylake, and at parts of the Mersey, such as Birkenhead. The parking locations with the highest average occupancy were:

- 19: Caldy Beach, West Kirby 117%;
- 131: Ainsdale Discovery Centre 100%;
- 70: Dock Road North, New Ferry 92%;
- 9: Parkgate School Lane, Neston 92%;
- 60: Egremont Promenade, Wallasey 85%;
- 52: Marine Promenade (N), Wallasey 83%.

3.3 Map 7 shows the maximum count at any location and therefore reflects the peak level of use. We use a 1 km hexagonal grid to summarise the information with the shading reflecting the summed maximum counts for all parking locations within each hexagon. The highest counts (all over 300) refer to the following specific areas:

- Perch Rock and Marine Promenade, New Brighton– 430 summed maximum count [7 parking locations];
- The Dips, New Brighton – 423 summed maximum count [6 parking locations];

⁶ Note that some larger areas of continuous parking were divided up for ease of recording.

- Southport Beach (intertidal), Coach Park, Esplanade Car Park – 380 summed maximum count [3 locations];
- Southport Marine Drive and Sea Front Car Park – 319 summed maximum count [2 locations].

Types of vehicles

- 3.4 The vast majority of motor vehicles counted were cars with no other associated trailers, roof boxes etc. The highest count of other types of motor vehicles were unbranded vans, of which in total 754 were counted, roughly 2.7% of all motor vehicles recorded (28,389). The next highest counts were of cars with roof racks (699, 2.5%), followed by commercial vans (excluding dog walkers, 520, 1.8%), campervans and caravans (324, 1.1%), minibuses and coaches (91, 0.3%), cars with rear-mounted bike racks (67, 0.2%), branded commercial dog walking vans (18, 0.1%) and finally vehicles with boat trailers (2, <0.1%).
- 3.5 Some of the lower counts of these types of vehicles, occurred only at very specific points (e.g. where coach parking is available, slipways for access etc.). Map 8 shows heatmaps of the density of all vehicles and repeated maps for the specific vehicle types counted. The counts of minibuses and coaches was highest at the two specific coach parking locations (Riverside Drive, Dingle and Southport Coach Park), with only low and scattered numbers across the rest of the coastline. Cars with rear racks were most concentrated at Crosby and Wallasey, specifically Kings Parade/Coastal Drive car parks, and to a lesser extent West Kirby. These locations are some of the key ones for watersports. Another interesting observation is in relation to commercial dog walkers, which can be sometimes located away from busy locations. For example, few were seen at Wallasey and more were seen around Runcorn than would have been expected from overall vehicle numbers.

Variation on different types of day

- 3.6 Counts took place on bank holiday weekends, other weekends and weekdays. The two peak counts were on the bank holiday weekends, and then other weekends were on average higher than weekdays (Table 7). The overall capacity (total number of vehicles across the coast divided by the total number of spaces) was 18% on weekdays, a similar figure of 21% of weekends, but a much greater 46% on the bank holidays. At individual

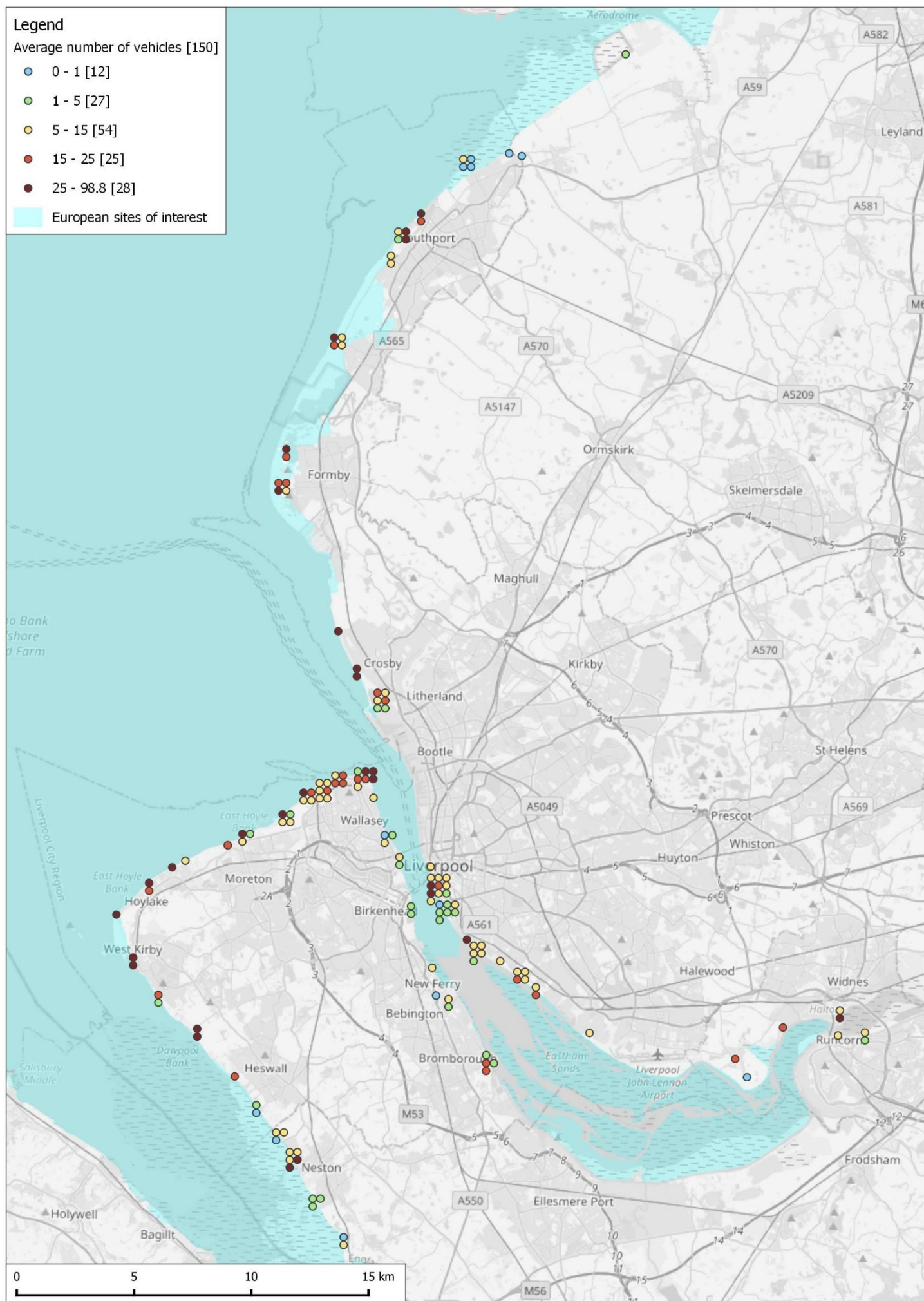
locations, the average occupancy across all locations ranged from roughly a third occupied on weekdays to two-thirds occupied on the bank holidays.

- 3.7 The types of vehicles also differed on different types of day. The largest difference was in the relative number of commercial vans, which was almost double in terms of relative abundance on weekdays compared to the weekend and bank holidays.

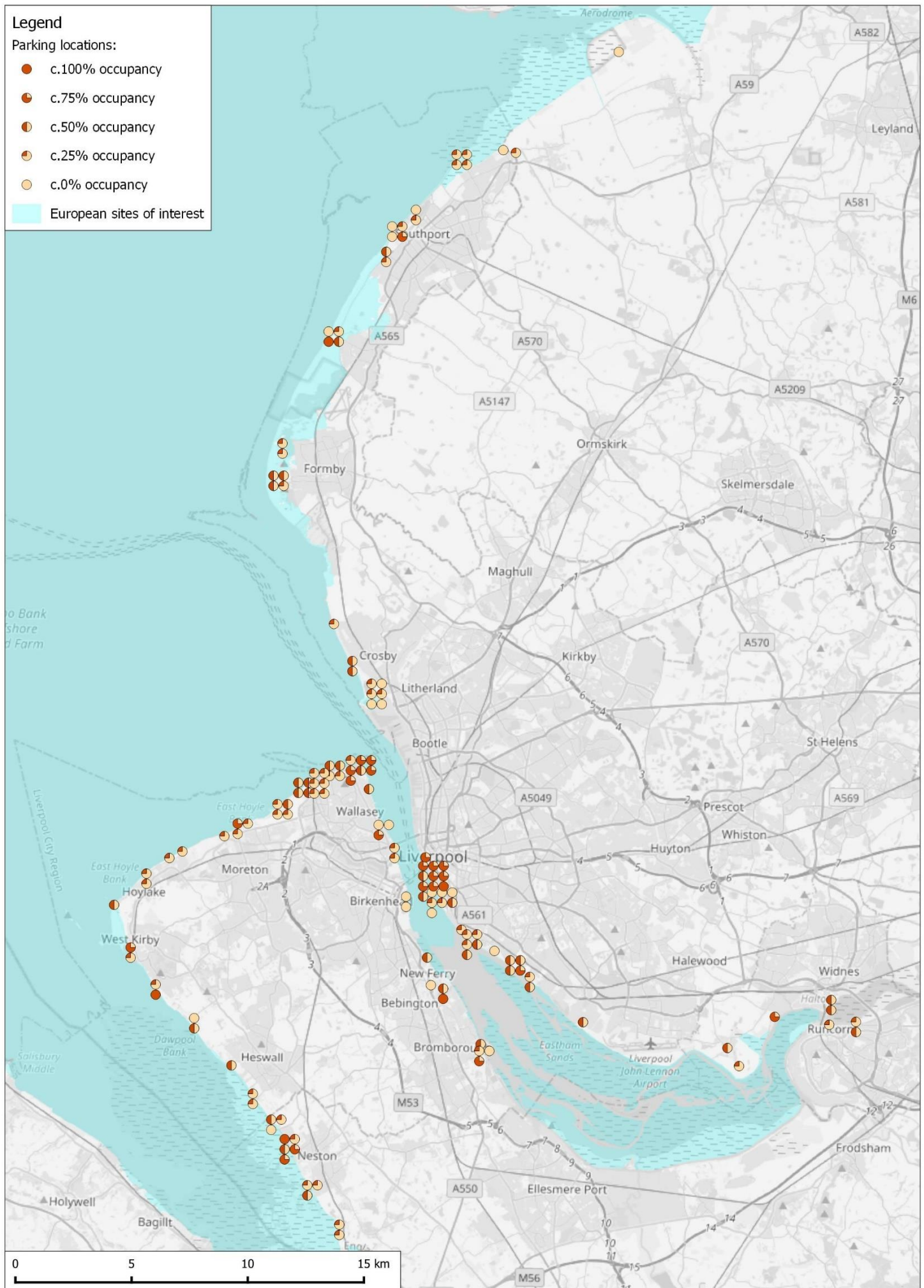
Table 7: Summary of the driving transect data on the three types of count days.

Metric	Bank holiday	Weekday	Weekend
Number of counts	2	7	3
Average total number of vehicles per count	4,601	1,824	2,139
Average individual location % capacity	62%	33%	38%
Average % capacity on a given type of day	46%	18%	21%
Average number (%) vehicles with boat trailers	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Average number (%) branded dog walking vans	3 (<1%)	1 (<1%)	1 (<1%)
Average number (%) commercial vans	50 (1%)	50 (3%)	24 (1%)
Average number (%) unbranded vans	88 (2%)	55 (3%)	64 (3%)
Average number (%) cars with roof rack	147 (3%)	38 (2%)	46 (2%)
Average number (%) cars with rear-mounted bike racks	18 (<1%)	3 (<1%)	2 (<1%)
Average number (%) campervans/ caravans	109 (2%)	39 (2%)	52 (2%)
Average number (%) minibus or coach	9 (<1%)	9 (<1%)	4 (<1%)

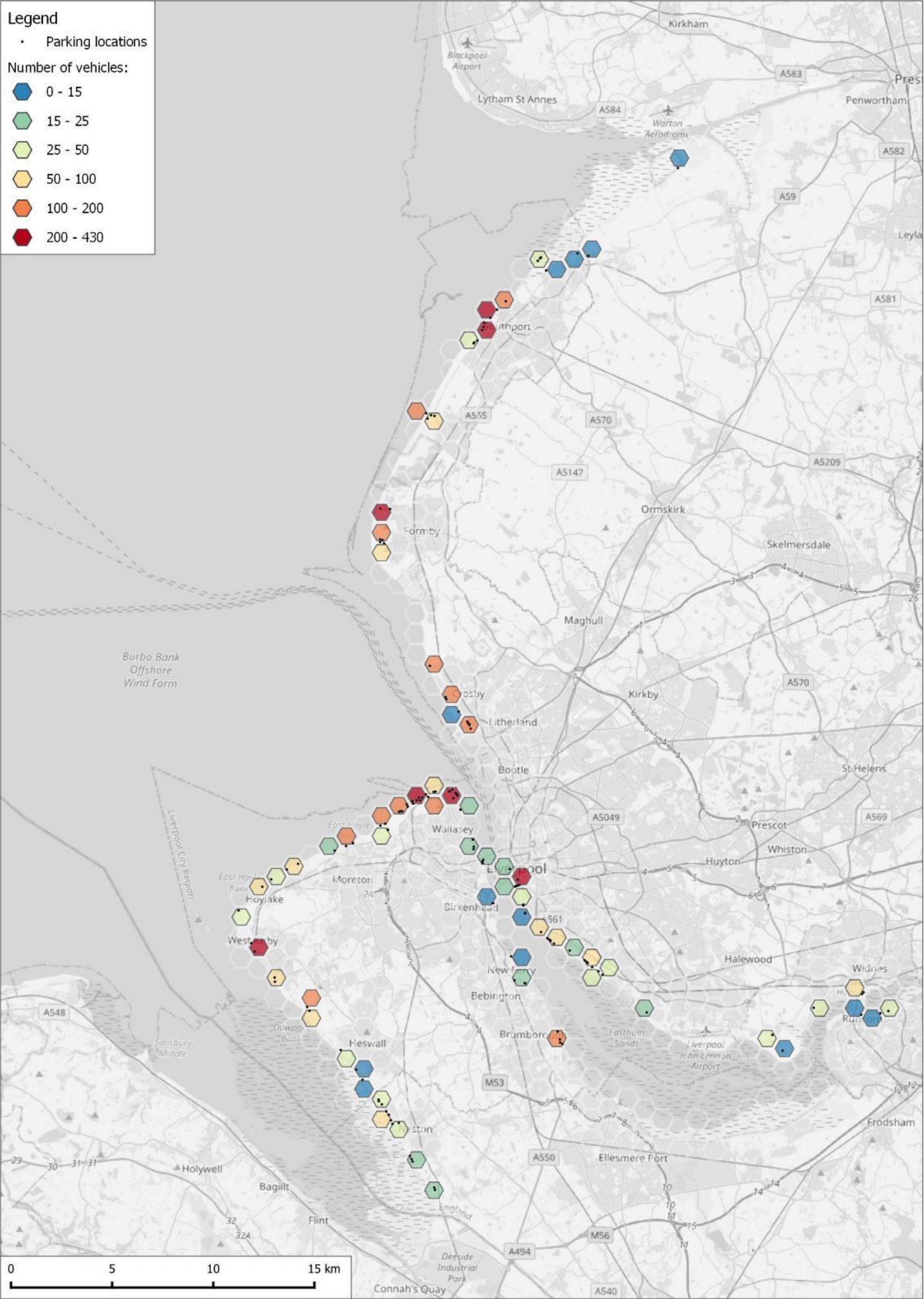
Map 5 : Averaged number of vehicles recorded at parking locations. Locations offset using a grid.



Map 6: Averaged occupancy of parking locations. Categoricalised using 5 classes and points offset in a grid.

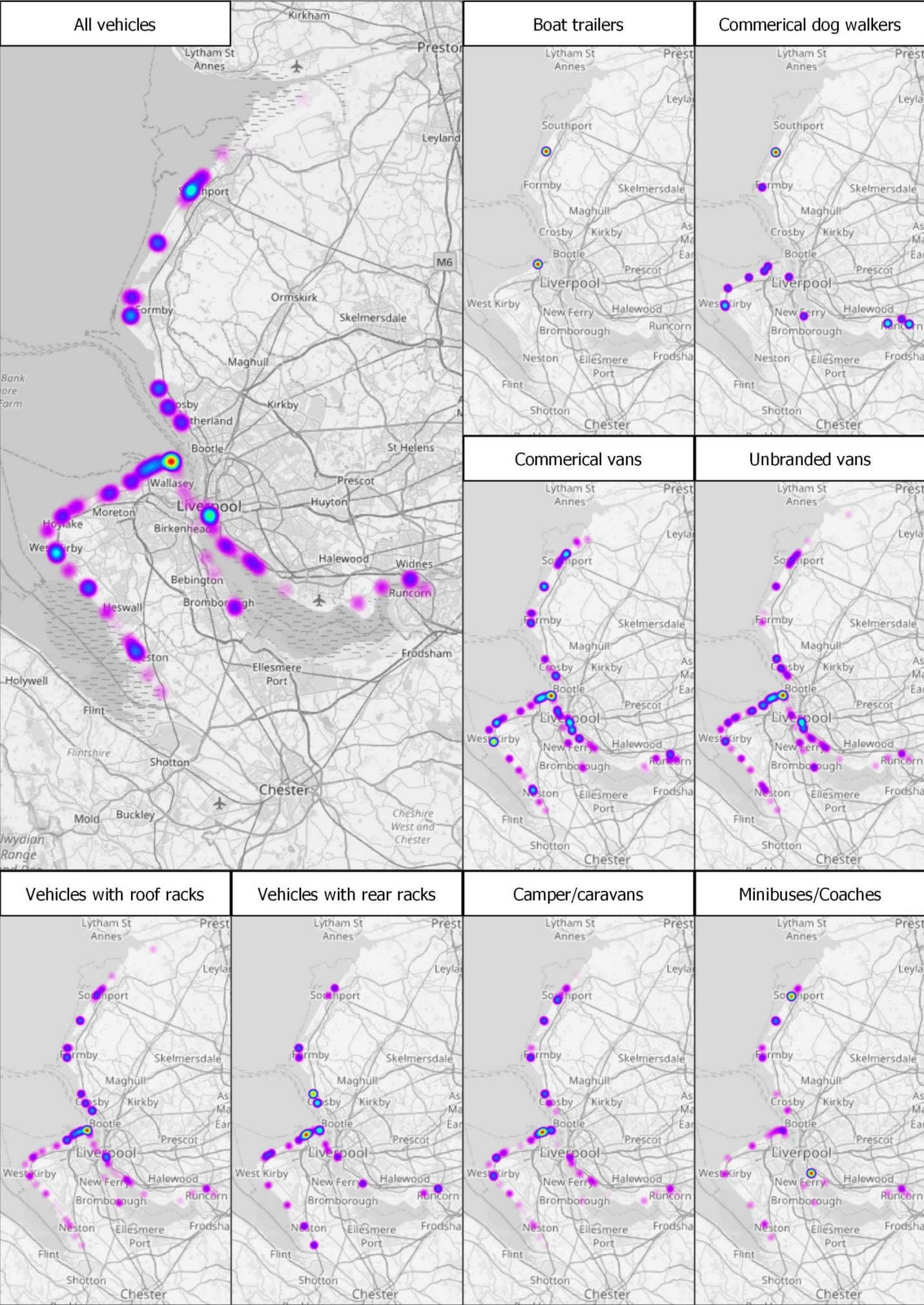


Map 7: Maximum number of vehicles at each location summarised using a 1 km hexagonal grid.



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Map 8: Heatmaps to indicate density of motor vehicles and the density of different types of vehicles.



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4. Results of the on-site visitor surveys

Tally counts

European sites

- 4.1 Tally data for the European site survey locations are summarised by each pulse of fieldwork in Table 8 (winter), Table 9 (April), Table 10 (May) and Table 11 (August). In total, 7,852 groups (of any size, including lone individuals) were noted entering, leaving or passing through at the survey point. These groups contained a total of 15,837 people (of which 2,882 were minors) and 4,901 dogs.
- 4.2 From these totals the mean group size was 2.0 people (of which 0.4 were minors) and 0.6 dogs. There was 1 dog for every 3.2 people. Minors made up 18% of the people counted and 10% of people were on bicycles.
- 4.3 During the winter surveys, when all 19 locations were surveyed, the busiest locations (in terms of the total number of people) were Crosby south, West Kirby and Leasowe Bay. The survey locations that had the highest proportion of minors were West Kirby (29%), Red Rocks (21%) and Thurstaston (20%). The survey locations that had the highest proportion of cyclists were Leasowe Bay (27%), Otterspool (21%) and Egremont (20%).
- 4.4 Figure 5 shows the proportion of adults and minors counted at each survey location during the winter surveys, split by weekdays/weekends and adults/minors. Most survey locations had higher numbers of visitors at weekends than weekdays, although there were some exceptions. However, at location 6 (Crosby south), which had far more people counted on the weekday than the weekend day, the surveyor noted that they were struggling to keep count on the weekend day as it was so busy, so the actual total could have been far higher than what was recorded. Minors generally made up a larger proportion of visitors at the weekends than on weekdays.
- 4.5 At some locations, such as Lower Heswall and Marshside, the surveyor noted that many vehicles entered the car park and then either immediately drove out or parked up but stayed in their vehicles. In instances like this, these people were not counted in the tally counts or approached for interview since they were only using the car park and not the site itself.

LCR and West Lancs Visitor Surveys

Table 8: Summary of tally data for the winter surveys (December 2021 to February 2022) at European sites. Includes all people passing the surveyor, whether entering, leaving or passing. 'Groups' can be any size, including single individuals. 'People' is a total headcount, including minors (under 18s). Two days (one weekday and one weekend day) were spent at each survey location. The highest three values in each column are highlighted in red.

Survey location	Groups	People	Dogs	Minors	Bicycles
1 - Hesketh Out Marsh	84	145	44	2	0
2 - Marshside	45	71	12	6	0
3 - Ainsdale-on-Sea	156	305	180	36	0
4 - Formby	182	399	146	38	5
5 - Crosby north	398	577	231	31	67
6 - Crosby south	575	937	221	55	74
7 - Otterspool Park and Promenade	390	543	103	23	114
8 - Speke and Garston Coastal Reserve	148	234	169	18	5
9 - Oglet Bay	69	101	55	20	5
10 - Hale Head	125	241	75	29	4
11 - Pickerings Pasture	227	367	174	29	13
12 - Egremont Promenade	234	445	140	20	88
13 - Leasowe Bay	293	860	517	145	230
14 - Hoylake Sailing Club	160	399	156	20	30
15 - Red Rocks	181	353	182	74	7
16 - West Kirby	408	881	416	259	52
17 - Thurstaston Beach	173	371	197	76	0
18 - Lower Heswall	46	66	47	0	0
19 - Parkgate Old Baths	273	553	274	68	0
Total	4,167	7,848	3,339	949	694

Table 9: Summary of tally data for the April 2022 surveys at European sites. Includes all people passing the surveyor, whether entering, leaving or passing. 'Groups' can be any size, including single individuals. 'People' is a total headcount, including minors (under 18s). Two days (one weekday and one weekend day) were spent at each survey location.

Survey location	Groups	People	Dogs	Minors	Bicycles
3 - Ainsdale-on-Sea	316	734	243	188	0
4 - Formby	265	716	151	261	5
5 - Crosby north	899	1,521	249	142	354
7 - Otterspool Park and Promenade	676	1,156	218	121	274
Total	2,156	4,127	861	712	633

Table 10: Summary of tally data for the May 2022 surveys at European sites. Includes all people passing the surveyor, whether entering, leaving or passing. 'Groups' can be any size, including single individuals. 'People' is a total headcount, including minors (under 18s). Two days (one weekday and one weekend day) were spent at each survey location.

Survey location	Groups	People	Dogs	Minors	Bicycles
18 - Lower Heswall	33	55	12	14	0
19 - Parkgate Old Baths	218	448	135	35	29
Total	251	503	147	49	29

Table 11: Summary of tally data for the August 2022 surveys at European sites. Includes all people passing the surveyor, whether entering, leaving or passing. 'Groups' can be any size, including single individuals. 'People' is a total headcount, including minors (under 18s). Two days (one weekday and one weekend day) were spent at each survey location.

Survey location	Groups	People	Dogs	Minors	Bicycles
3 - Ainsdale-on-Sea	180	452	140	145	0
4 - Formby	216	634	106	210	5
15 - Red Rocks	307	734	126	216	50
16 - West Kirby	575	1,539	182	601	98
Total	1,278	3,359	554	1,172	153

LCR and West Lincs Visitor Surveys

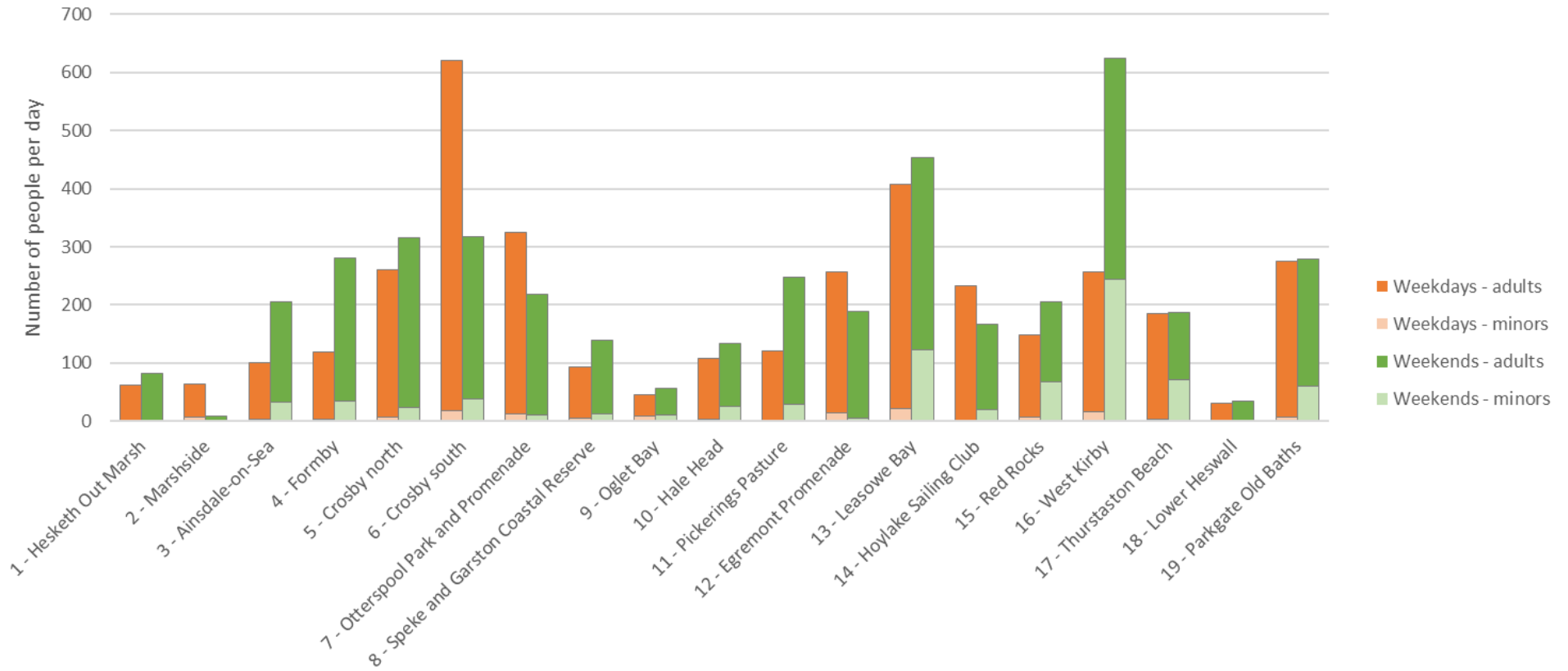


Figure 5: Bar chart showing the number of people counted at each of the European site survey locations during the winter surveys, split by weekdays/weekends and adults/minors.

SANGs

- 4.6 Tally data for the SANG survey locations are summarised in Table 12. In total, 5,892 groups (of any size, including lone individuals) were noted entering, leaving or passing through at the survey point. These groups contained a total of 10,440 people (of which 2,227 were minors) and 3,111 dogs.
- 4.7 From these totals the mean group size was 1.8 people (of which 0.4 were minors) and 0.5 dogs. There was 1 dog for every 3.4 people. Minors made up 21% of the people counted and 11% of people were on bicycles.
- 4.8 The busiest locations (in terms of the total number of people) were Spike Island, Southport Botanic Gardens and Croxteth Hall & Country Park. The survey locations that had the highest proportion of minors were Croxteth Hall & Country Park (38%), Everton Park (32%) and Southport Botanic Gardens (27%). The survey locations that had the highest proportion of cyclists were Old Lydiate Station (58%), Spike Island (21%) and Sankey Valley Park (19%).
- 4.9 Figure 6 shows the proportion of adults and minors counted at each survey location, split by weekdays/weekends and adults/minors. Most survey locations had higher numbers of visitors at weekends than weekdays, although there were a few exceptions. For example, at Southport Botanic Gardens, a large proportion of people seen during the first weekday session (07:00-09:00) appeared to be on the school run, cutting through from Verulam Road car park to Churchtown Primary School. Likewise, at Town Park in Runcorn, there were many commuters and school children using the site during the weekday survey. Most survey locations had a larger proportion of minors at weekends compared to weekdays.

Table 12: Summary of tally data for the SANG survey locations (March and April 2022). Includes all people passing the surveyor, whether entering, leaving or passing. 'Groups' can be any size, including single individuals. 'People' is a total headcount, including minors (under 18s). Two days (one weekday and one weekend day) were spent at each survey location. The highest three values in each column are highlighted in red.

Survey location	Groups	People	Dogs	Minors	Bicycles
20 - Southport Botanic Gardens	622	1,215	325	326	35
21 - Fairy Glen	145	285	110	52	3
22 - Old Lydiate Station (Cheshire Lines Path)	129	198	43	18	114
23 - Leeds and Liverpool Canal (Lydiate)	363	622	146	117	88
24 - Leeds and Liverpool Canal (Rimrose Valley)	223	298	116	37	55
25 - Croxteth Hall & Country Park	605	1,135	211	426	38
26 - Everton Park	125	197	58	63	19
27 - Sefton Park	342	643	97	56	94
28 - Calderstones Park	191	351	144	85	9
29 - Court Hey Park	245	450	166	97	10
30 - Stadt Moers Park	282	518	216	66	33
31 - Clock Face Country Park	167	294	175	46	27
32 - Sankey Valley Park	176	246	88	18	47
33 - Spike Island	744	1,463	235	390	314
34 - Wigg Island	359	585	333	67	38
35 - Town Park, Runcorn	307	453	172	95	66
36 - Eastham Country Park	147	319	97	50	25
37 - Arrowe Country Park	168	284	138	68	24
38 - Ashton Park	552	884	241	150	154
Total	5,892	10,440	3,111	2,227	1,193

LCR and West Lincs Visitor Surveys

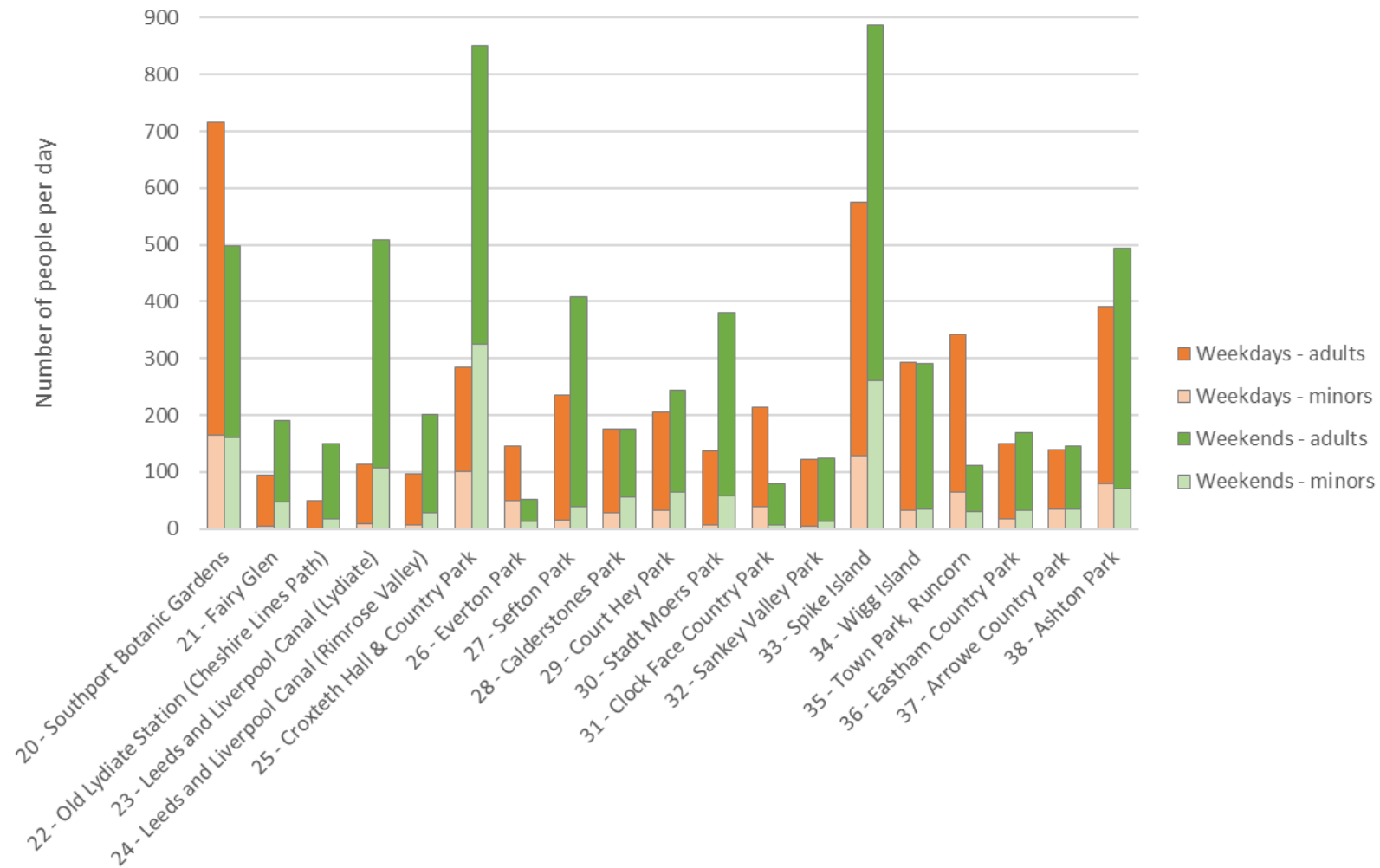


Figure 6: Bar chart showing the average number of people counted at each of the SANG survey locations per day, split by weekdays/weekends and adults/minors.

Interviews

Number of interviews

- 4.10 A total of 1,562 interviews were conducted at the European sites (locations 1-19) and 1,040 interviews were conducted at the potential SANGs (locations 20-38), giving a total of 2,602 interviews. The median interview duration was just under 6 minutes.
- 4.11 Appendix 4 summarises the number of people who were approached for interview at each survey location, including those who did not take part. The most common reasons for people not wanting to take part were due to either not having the time or because of the weather (too wet/cold/windy). At some survey locations (e.g. Otterspool, Crosby south) there were several runners and/or cyclists who did not want to stop mid-activity.
- 4.12 The survey locations which had the highest proportion of people who did not take part were Town Park and Croxteth Hall & Country Park. At Town Park this was due to a high proportion of commuters and runners, who weren't able to stop and also a large number of teenagers who were too young to be interviewed. At Croxteth, the most common reasons for not taking part were not having time, being too tired or because they had young children with them.
- 4.13 Appendix 5 gives a breakdown of the number of interviews per pulse of fieldwork at each European site. The European site survey locations where the most interviews were completed over the winter (when all locations were surveyed) were Crosby south (82 interviews), West Kirby (77 interviews) and Egremont Promenade (73 interviews). At the SANG locations, the highest number of interviews were at Southport Botanic Gardens (97 interviews), Sefton Park (83 interviews) and Ashton Park (81 interviews). Across all locations and seasons, an average of 27 interviews were completed each day.

Group composition

- 4.14 Almost half of all interviewees (1,227, 47%) were on their own and 971 (37%) were with one other person. The remaining 16% were in groups of between 3 and 16 people. Some of the larger groups were noted to be organised walking groups. The mean group size (including groups of just 1 person) amongst the interviewed groups was 1.8 people. Half of all interviewees (1,330 interviewees, 51%) had 1 or more dogs with them and 42% of these

dogs were noted by the surveyor as being off the lead at the time of interview.

- 4.15 There were some differences between the European site survey locations and the SANG survey locations, with, on average, larger groups at the European sites (2.0 people per group) compared to the SANGs (1.6 people per group). There was also a higher proportion of interviewees with dogs at the SANGs (58%) compared to the European sites (47%).

Visit type (Q1-2)

- 4.16 The vast majority (96%) of interviewees across both the European sites and potential SANGs were on a day trip or short visit from home. Only 2% of all interviewees were on holiday while a further 2% were away from home and staying with friends or family.
- 4.17 The majority of those staying away from home on holiday were interviewed at the European sites (3% of those interviewed at the European sites). These holiday makers accounted for 5% of the interviews on European sites in August, 4% in the spring and 2% in the winter. Of those who were on holiday in the area, almost half of them (48%) were staying in a hotel or motel, 16% were staying in a campervan or campsite, and the rest were staying in either a B&B, self-catering accommodation, a hostel or a retreat.

Main activity (Q3)

- 4.18 Dog walking was the most frequently given main activity (1,204 interviewees, 46%) with walking the next most commonly cited activity (973 interviewees, 37%). Together these two activities accounted for 84% of interviewees' main activities. A wide range of other activities were given, but each by less than 5% of all interviewees (Table 13).

Table 13: Main activity of interviewees by location type. Some activity types have been added to those listed in the questionnaire following an analysis of free text responses that were originally recorded as 'Other' e.g. 'Photography'.

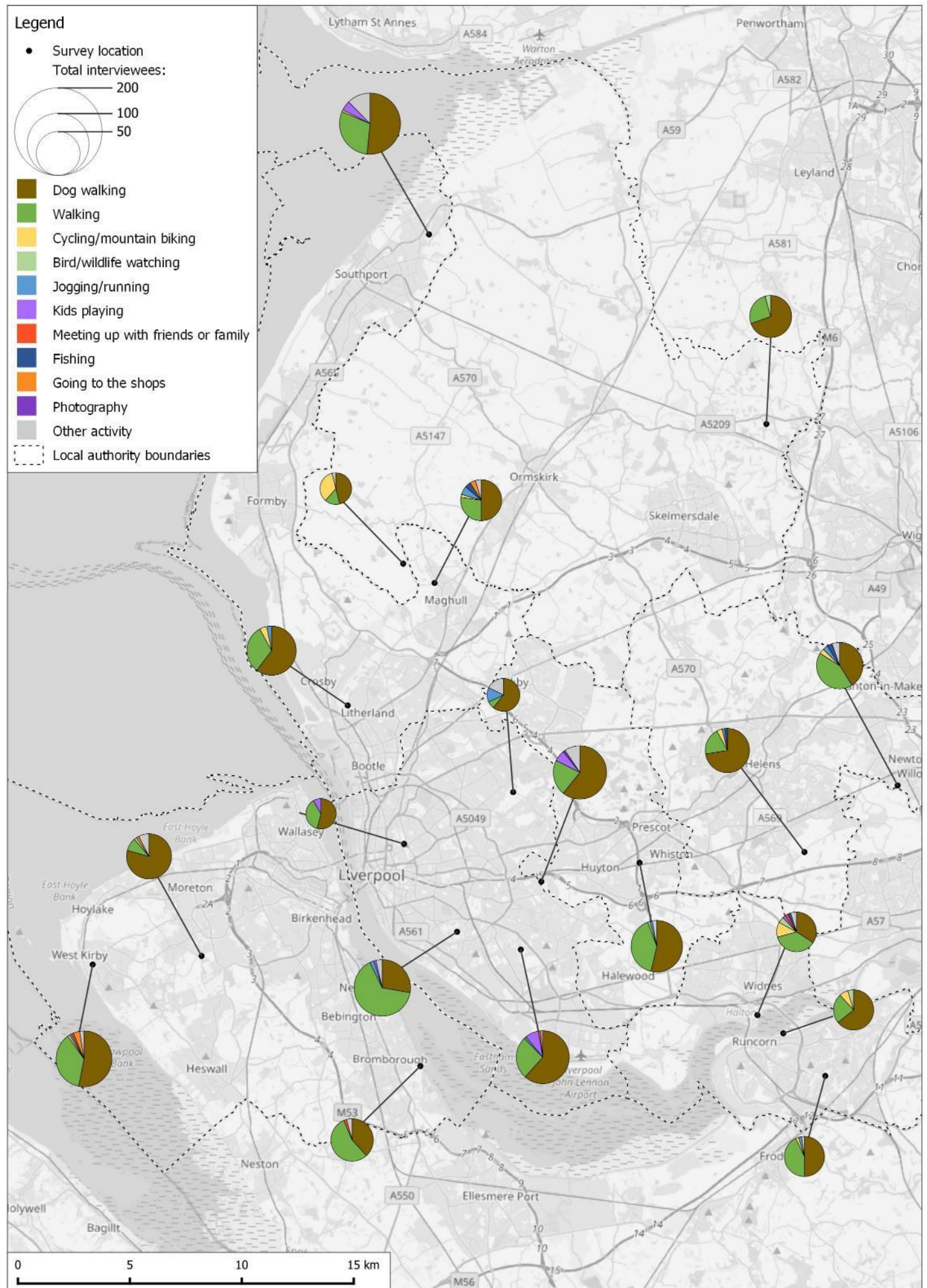
Activity type	European sites	SANGs	Total
Dog walking	645 (41%)	559 (54%)	1,204 (46%)
Walking	630 (40%)	343 (33%)	973 (37%)
Beach activity	107 (7%)	0 (0%)	107 (4%)
Cycling/mountain biking	35 (2%)	28 (3%)	63 (2%)
Bird/wildlife watching	38 (2%)	8 (1%)	46 (2%)
Jogging/running	26 (2%)	18 (2%)	44 (2%)
Kids playing	1 (<1%)	20 (2%)	21 (1%)
Meeting up with friends or family	9 (1%)	4 (<1%)	13 (<1%)
Swimming	12 (1%)	0 (0%)	12 (<1%)
Fishing	3 (<1%)	6 (1%)	9 (<1%)
Going to the shops	3 (<1%)	6 (1%)	9 (<1%)
Photography	6 (<1%)	1 (<1%)	7 (<1%)
Picnic	6 (<1%)	0 (0%)	6 (<1%)
Watersports	6 (<1%)	0 (0%)	6 (<1%)
Other activity	35 (2%)	47 (5%)	82 (3%)
Total	1,562 (100%)	1,040 (100%)	2,602 (100%)

- 4.19 The proportion of interviewees with each activity type is shown in Map 9 for the European site survey locations and in Map 10 for the SANG survey locations. These maps highlight some of the similarities and differences between interviewee activity types at the different survey locations. Generally, dog walking and walking were the most common activities for most survey locations, however there were a few exceptions. At Marshside and Hesketh Out Marsh, both of which are RSPB nature reserves, the most common activity amongst interviewees was bird/wildlife watching (50% and 46% respectively) and at Old Lydiate Station (Cheshire Lines Path) the second most common activity after dog walking (46%) was cycling/mountain biking (35%).
- 4.20 The survey locations which had the highest percentage of interviewees who gave their main activity as dog walking were Speke and Garston Coastal Reserve (81% dog walking), Arrowe Country Park (79%) and Clock Face Country Park (73%).

Legend

- Survey location
- Total interviewees:
 - 200
 - 100
 - 50
- Dog walking
- Walking
- Beach activity
- Cycling/mountain biking
- Bird/wildlife watching
- Jogging/running
- Kids playing
- Meeting up with friends or family
- Swimming
- Fishing
- Going to the shops
- Photography
- Picnic
- Watersports
- Other activity
- Local authority boundaries

Map 10: Main activity of interviewees at each of the SANG survey locations. Pie charts are sized to represent the total number of interviewees.



Visit duration (Q4)

- 4.21 Overall, 52% of interviewees were visiting the location where they were interviewed for less than 1 hour, 35% were visiting for 1 to 2 hours and 14% were visiting for longer than 2 hours (Figure 7). By assigning a single value to each duration category⁷, the typical visit duration was around 78 minutes.
- 4.22 Interviewees at the European sites tended to have slightly longer visits than those at the SANGs, with 58% visiting for more than 1 hour at the European sites compared to 34% at the SANGs.
- 4.23 Out of the 6 most commonly cited activity types, interviewees with a beach activity (e.g. sunbathing, bucket/spade) tended to have the longest visits (average of around 2.5 hours) and those who were jogging/running had the shortest (average of around 1 hour).

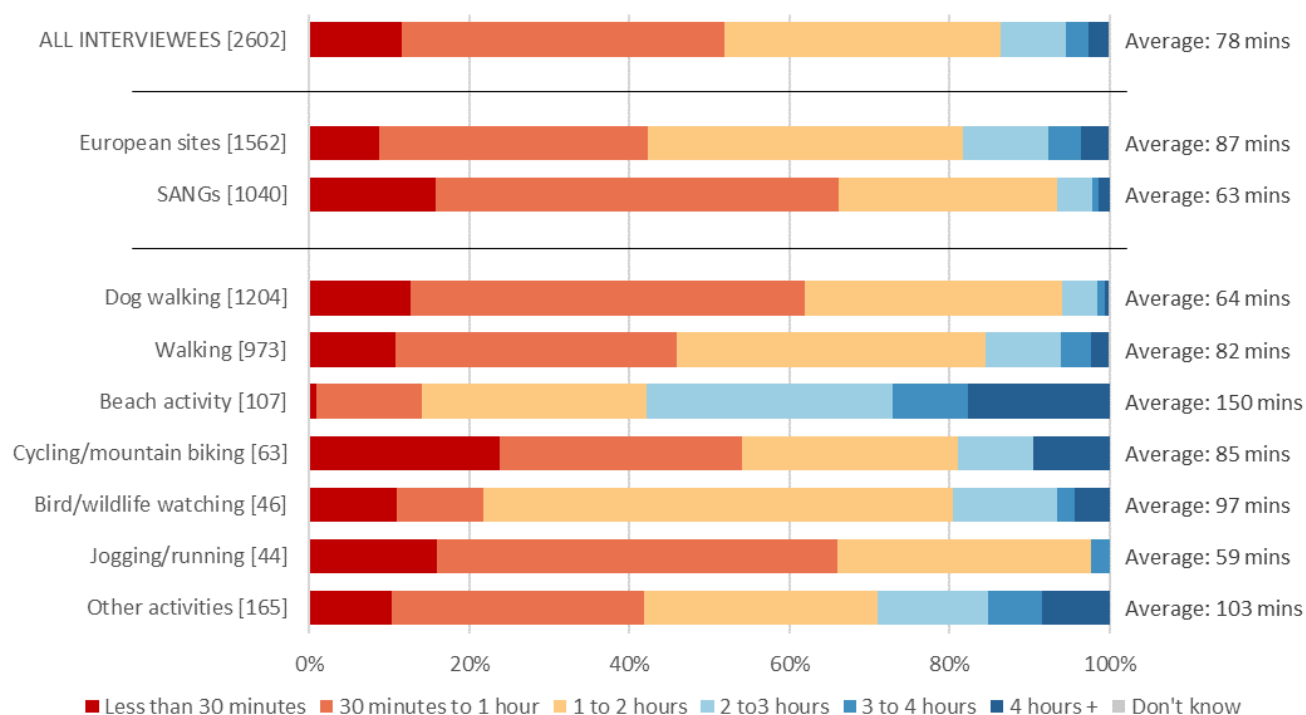


Figure 7: Visit duration of interviewees by the location where they were interviewed (Q4). Numbers in square brackets are the number of interviewees within that subset.

⁷ Less than 30 minutes = 20 mins; 30 minutes to 1 hour = 45 mins; 1 to 2 hours = 90 mins; 2 to 3 hours = 150 mins; 3 to 4 hours = 210 mins and more than 4 hours = 300 mins. Typical visit duration is then the average based on the total number of interviewees that gave each of the above categories.

Visit frequency and patterns (Q5-8)

- 4.24 Overall, 60% of interviewees said that they visit the location where they were interviewed at least once a week, including 23% who visit at least once a day. Interviewees at the SANGs were more frequent visitors, with 72% indicating that they visit at least once a week, compared to 52% at the European sites (Figure 8).
- 4.25 The visit frequency amongst interviewees with different activity types varied greatly, with dog walkers being the most frequent. Over a third (36%) of interviewees who were dog walking said that they visit the location where they were interviewed at least once a day. The highest proportion of interviewees who were on their first visit to the site were those who were bird/wildlife watching (37%) and those with a beach activity (36%).
- 4.26 By assigning an estimated annual number of visits to each category⁸, the average interviewee made 154 visits to the location where they were interviewed in the past year, equivalent to about 3 visits per week. At the European sites the average interviewee visited 128 times per year and at the SANGs the average interviewee visited 194 times per year.
- 4.27 When interviewees were asked what effect the Covid-19 pandemic had had on their visits to that location, 70% said that they were visiting just as much as before, although 20% said that they now visit more often. Only 6% said that they now visit less and the remaining 4% were unsure or were on their first visit. Although not specifically asked, 5 interviewees mentioned that they were visiting more frequently because they had got a dog during lockdown.

⁸ 'More than once a day' = 700 visits per year; 'Daily' = 350 visits; 'Most days' = 200 visits; '1 to 3 times a week' = 110 visits; '2 to 3 times per month' = 27.5 visits; 'Once a month' = 10.5 visits; 'Less than once a month' = 3 visits; 'First time' = 1 visit. Typical visit frequency is then the average based on the total number of interviewees that gave each of the above categories.

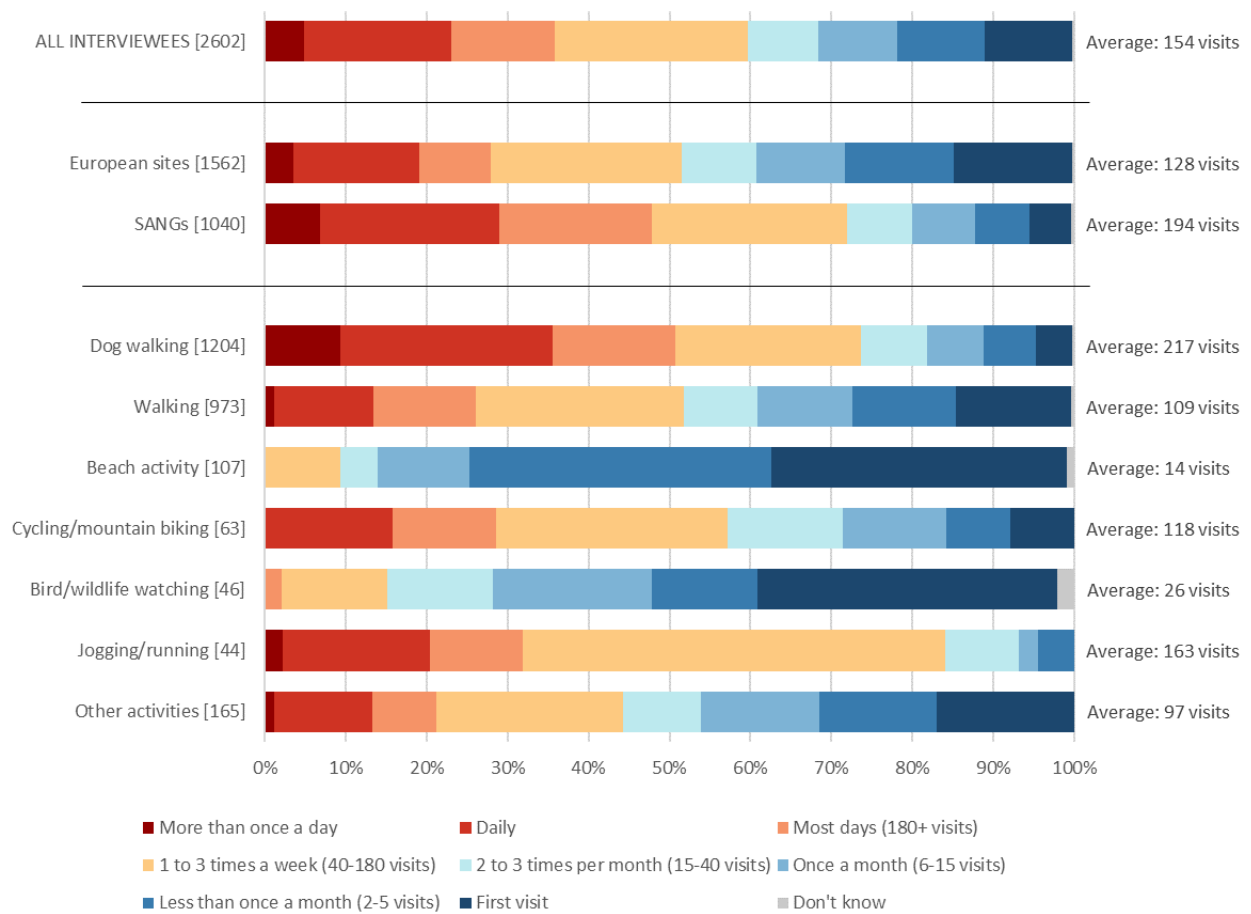


Figure 8: Visit frequency of interviewees by the location where they were interviewed (Q5). Numbers in square brackets are the number of interviewees within that subset.

- 4.28 Just over a third of interviewees (38%) said that the time of day that they visit the site varies and they don't have a particular time that they usually visit. The most common answer amongst specific time periods was 'late morning' (21%) followed by 'early morning' (17%) and 'evening' (13%).
- 4.29 The majority of interviewees (74%) indicated that they visit the site equally all year round. This was particularly the case at the SANGs, where 81% of interviewees said that they visit all year round, compared to 69% of interviewees at the European sites. Of those that named a particular season, summer was the most common (14%) followed by spring (8%).
- 4.30 Interviewees who were jogging/running or dog walking had the highest proportion of year-round visitors (86% and 85% of interviewees respectively). Indeed, visiting equally all year round was the most common response from

all activity types except those interviewees with a beach activity, whose most common response was instead 'summer' (Table 14).

Table 14: Number of interviewees (N) and the time of year that they tend to visit (Q7) by the most common activity types (Q3). This was a multiple choice question so percentages will not add up to 100%. The highest value in each row is highlighted in red.

Activity type	N	Spring (Mar-May)	Summer (Jun-Aug)	Autumn (Sep-Nov)	Winter (Dec-Feb)	Equally all year	Don't know/ first visit
All interviewees	2,602	212 (8%)	357 (14%)	86 (3%)	37 (1%)	1,918 (74%)	287 (11%)
Dog walking	1,204	66 (5%)	103 (9%)	26 (2%)	20 (2%)	1,023 (85%)	62 (5%)
Walking	973	98 (10%)	149 (15%)	35 (4%)	7 (1%)	668 (69%)	142 (15%)
Beach activity	107	12 (11%)	46 (43%)	4 (4%)	2 (2%)	28 (26%)	33 (31%)
Cycling/mountain biking	63	13 (21%)	18 (29%)	8 (13%)	3 (5%)	37 (59%)	4 (6%)
Bird/wildlife watching	46	3 (7%)	2 (4%)	1 (2%)	2 (4%)	24 (52%)	17 (37%)
Jogging/running	44	5 (11%)	6 (14%)	1 (2%)	0 (0%)	38 (86%)	0 (0%)

Mode of transport (Q9)

4.31 The most common mode of transport used by interviewees to get to the location where they were interviewed was car/van (1,651 interviewees, 63%), followed by arriving on foot (826, 32%). The other 5% of interviewees arrived by bicycle, train, bus, scooter or motorbike (Table 15). The proportion of interviewees arriving by car/van was higher at the European sites (69%) than at the SANGs (55%).

Table 15: Mode of transport used by interviewees to reach the site on the day of the interview, by location type (Q9).

Location type	Car/van	On foot	Bicycle	Public transport	Other	Total
European sites	1,084 (69%)	392 (25%)	35 (2%)	46 (3%)	5 (<1%)	1,562 (100%)
SANGs	567 (55%)	434 (42%)	26 (3%)	11 (1%)	2 (<1%)	1,040 (100%)
All interviewees	1,651 (63%)	826 (32%)	61 (2%)	57 (2%)	7 (<1%)	2,602 (100%)

4.32 At the European site survey locations (Map 11), car/van was the most common form of transport for almost all survey locations. However, at Hoylake, Oglet Bay and Egremont Promenade arriving on foot was more common (75%, 60% and 58% respectively). The European site survey location with the largest proportion of interviewees arriving by bicycle was Crosby north (13%) and for those arriving by public transport it was West Kirby (14%).

- 4.33 The SANG survey locations were far more varied (Map 12). For example, at Calderstones Park 93% of the interviewees arrived by car/van whereas at Town Park in Runcorn 93% of the interviewees arrived on foot. The SANG survey location with the largest proportion of interviewees arriving by bicycle was Old Lydiate Station (31%).
- 4.34 It should be noted that results may have been influenced by whether the survey location was situated in or close to a car park (see Table 2 and Table 4 for details of survey locations).
- 4.35 Across all types of site, the average group size (in the interviewed group) for those arriving by car was 2.0 people. The average for European sites only was 2.1 and for SANGs it was 1.8.

Map 11: Mode of transport of interviewees at each of the European site survey locations. Includes data from all seasons. Pie charts are sized to represent the total number of interviewees.



Map 12: Mode of transport of interviewees at each of the SANG survey locations. Pie charts are sized to represent the total number of interviewees.



Routes taken on site (Q10-11)

- 4.36 Almost all interviewees (2,575 interviewees, 99%) were able to describe to the surveyor the route that they had taken (or planned to take) during their visit. These routes have been digitised from the paper maps and are shown in Map 13 for all interviewees, and as heatmaps for individual survey locations in Appendix 6.
- 4.37 The median route length was 2.26 km and lengths ranged from 0.01 km to 47.31 km (the latter was cycling from Crosby to Southport and back).
- 4.38 Out of the most common activity types, those who were cycling/mountain biking or jogging/running tended to have the longest routes, with median route lengths of 5.53 km and 4.63 km respectively. Interviewees with a beach activity had the shortest route lengths, with a median of 0.75 km (Figure 9).

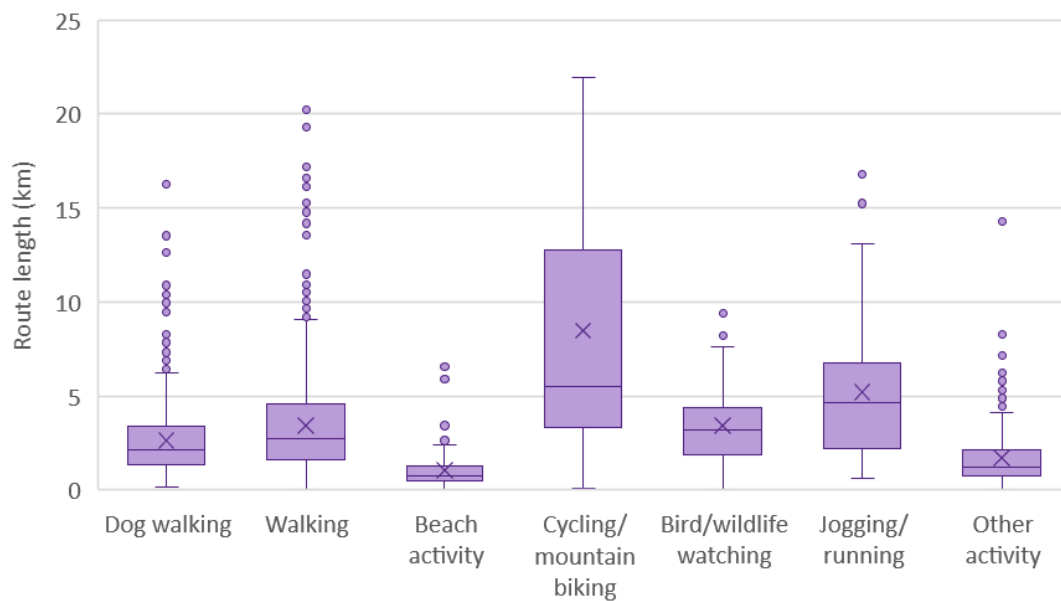


Figure 9: Lengths (km) of routes taken by interviewees by their main activity. Horizontal lines show the median, crosses indicate the mean, the boxes show the interquartile range, the whiskers are the maximum and minimum values, and the dots are outliers. The y-axis is truncated at 25 km, which excludes 2 outliers (both cyclists, with routes of 47 km and 39 km).

- 4.39 Interviewees at the European sites covered significantly longer routes (median of 2.64 km) compared to those at the SANGs (median of 1.86 km; Mann-Whitney $W=1137017$, $p<0.001$). There were some differences between individual survey locations, as shown in Figure 10 and Figure 11. Interviewees at Old Lydiate Station (which is on the Cheshire Lines Path) had the highest median route length of 6.88 km.

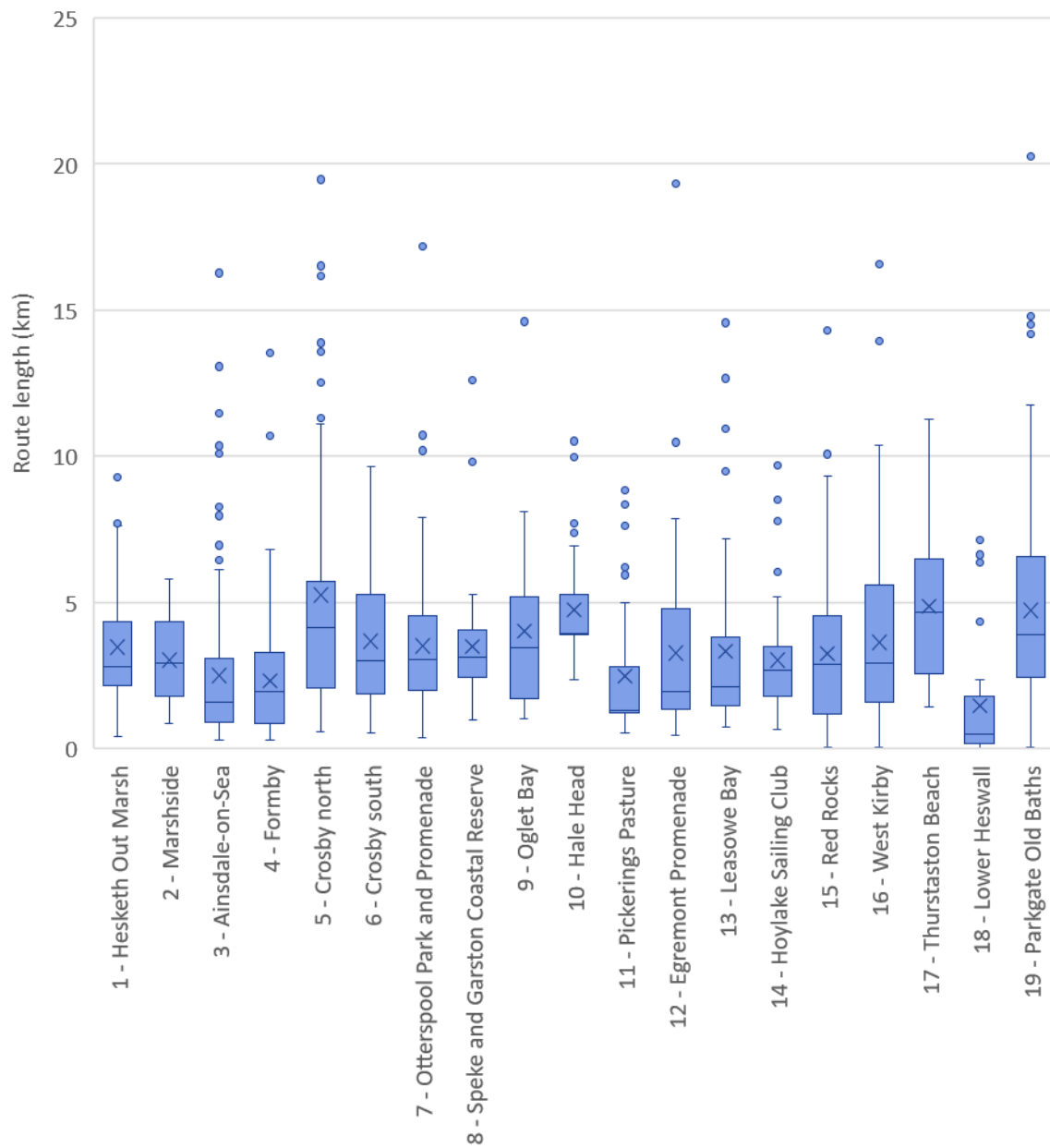


Figure 10: Lengths (km) of routes taken by interviewees at European sites by survey location. Horizontal lines show the median, crosses indicate the mean, the boxes show the interquartile range, the whiskers are the maximum and minimum values, and the dots are outliers. The y-axis is truncated at 25 km, which excludes 1 outlier (at Crosby north with route length 47 km).

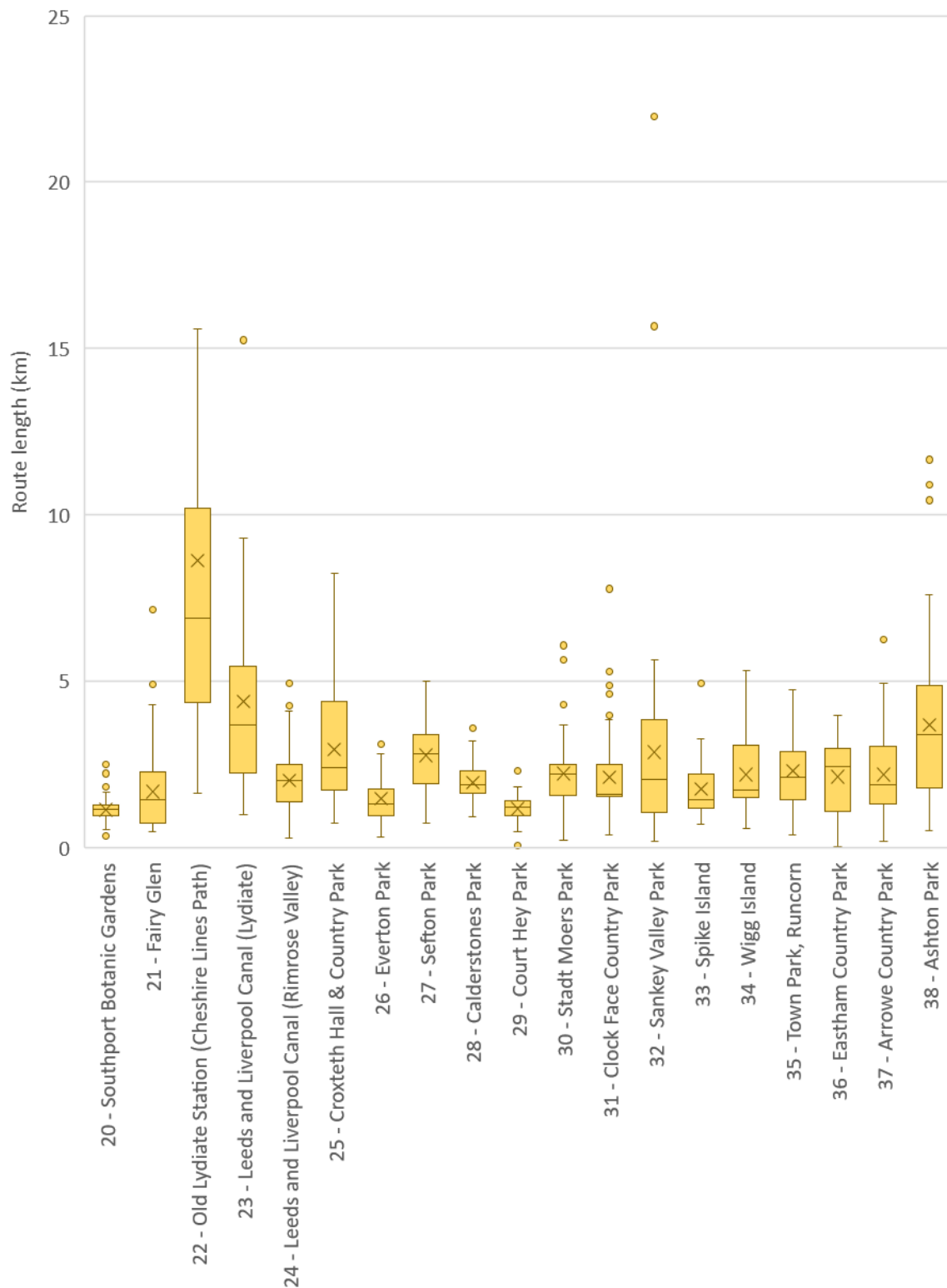


Figure 11: Lengths (km) of routes taken by interviewees at SANGs by survey location. Horizontal lines show the median, crosses indicate the mean, the boxes show the interquartile range, the whiskers are the maximum and minimum values, and the dots are outliers. The y-axis is truncated at 25 km, which excludes 1 outlier (interviewed at Old Lydiate Station with route length 39 km).

- 4.40 Two thirds of interviewees (67%) stated that the route they had followed or intended to follow that day was a similar length to their usual route (Table 16). Only 9% said that their route was much shorter than usual and 1% said it was much longer than usual. The remaining 22% of interviewees were unsure, did not have a typical visit, or were visiting that location for the first time.
- 4.41 At the SANGs, a greater proportion of interviewees were doing their normal route length (75%) whereas at the European sites there was a greater proportion of interviewees who did not have a typical route length or were on their first visit (27%).

Table 16: Responses to Q10 regarding how the interviewee's route length compared to their typical visit to the location where they were interviewed.

Location type	Normal length	Longer than usual	Shorter than usual	Not sure / first visit	Total
European sites	972 (62%)	24 (2%)	142 (9%)	424 (27%)	1,562 (100%)
SANGs	777 (75%)	15 (1%)	96 (9%)	152 (15%)	1,040 (100%)
Total	1,749 (67%)	39 (1%)	238 (9%)	576 (22%)	2,602 (100%)

- 4.42 Factors influencing choice of route are summarised in Figure 12. The most common factor was habit or their previous knowledge of the area (e.g. 'my usual route'), cited by 31% of all interviewees. This was particularly the case for interviewees at the SANGs, with 39% citing this influence, compared to 25% of interviewees at the European sites. Other common factors were to do with the particular activity that was being undertaken (15% of all interviewees) and the weather (14% of all interviewees). Factors grouped as 'Other' included taking the most direct route (e.g. to the shops), avoiding livestock, aiming for a set distance and looking for specific birds.

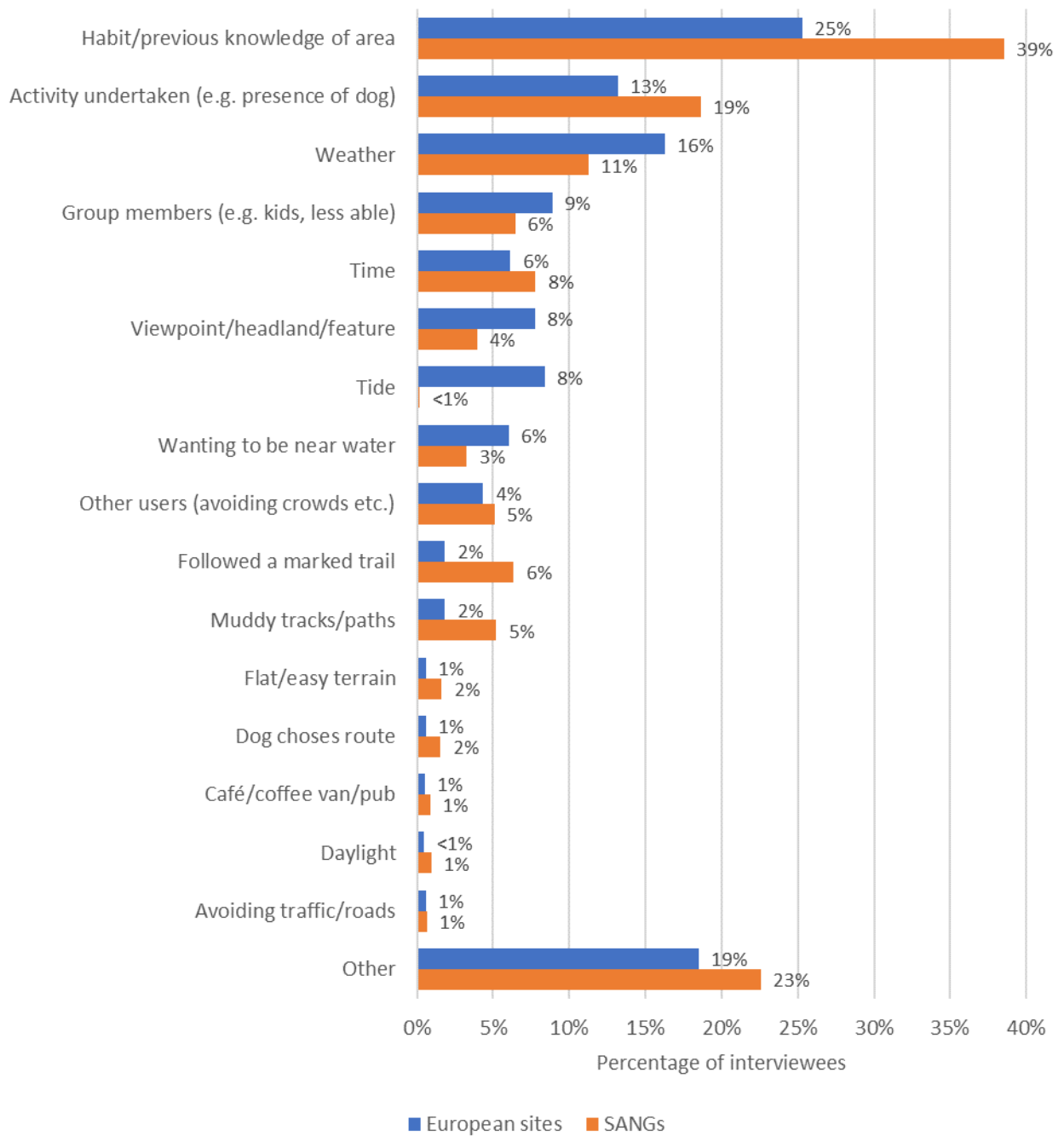
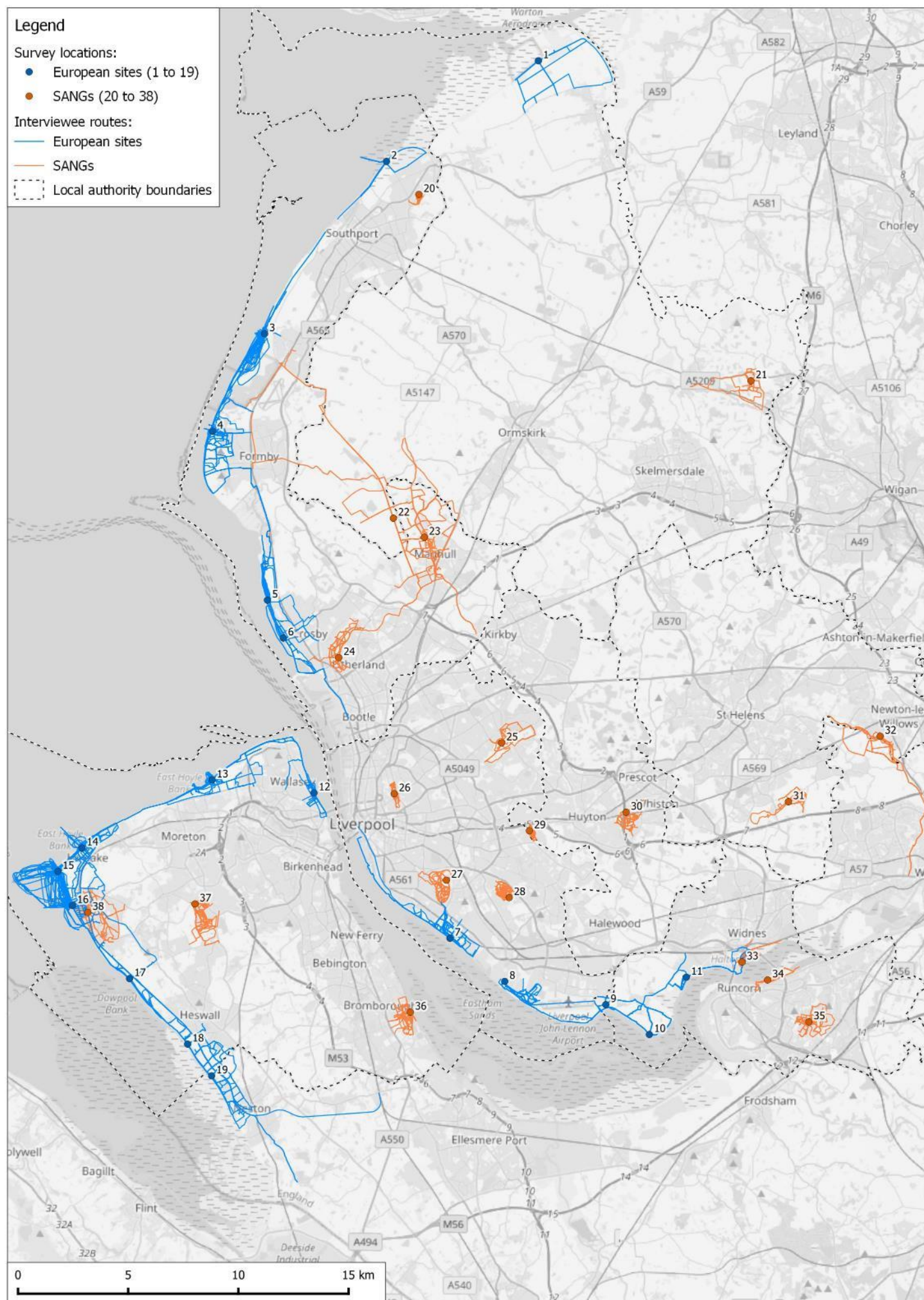


Figure 12: Factors that influenced interviewees' choice of route (Q11) by location type. Interviewees were not prompted or shown any options. Categories are based on a pre-determined list with additional categories added to include commonly cited 'other' responses which were recorded as free text. Interviewees could cite more than one factor so percentages will not add up to 100.

Map 13: Routes taken by interviewees during their visit, as described to the surveyor.



4.43 Route lengths within different SANGs are shown in Figure 13 against the area of the site. It might be expected that larger greenspaces will be able to accommodate longer routes and this appears to be the case, at least for those sites below 50 ha. Only one site (Sefton Park, point 27) has a median value above the 2.64 km which was the value from the European sites. We have excluded linear sites such as Sankey Valley from the plot as the area figures are not meaningful. Clock Face Country Park is also not shown as this is part of the Bold Forest which encompasses a much larger area than the other sites shown.

4.44 Survey point 35, Town Park, Runcorn is an outlier in that the median route for the site seems particularly low given the size of the site. The bounding area for this site, as mapped, excludes some of the paths meaning that some of the routes mapped are outside the boundary line and therefore the median appears lower than if the boundary had been mapped differently.

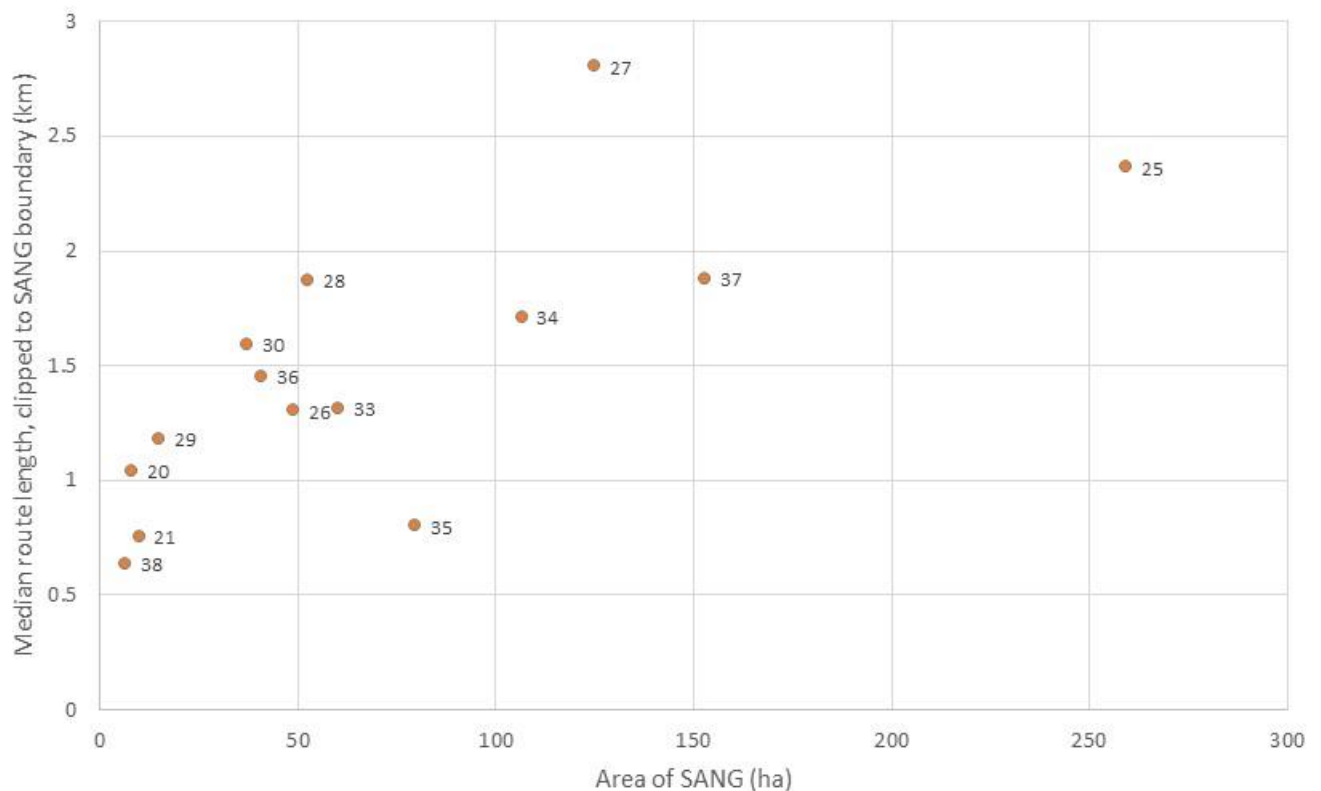


Figure 13: Median route length within SANG sites (clipped to the site boundary) and size of site. Route data for linear sites (such as Sankey Valley) are excluded. Areas derived from boundaries as provided by local authorities. Labels reflect survey locations (see Map 13).

Reasons for site choice (Q12)

- 4.45 Reasons that interviewees gave for choosing to visit the location where they were interviewed are summarised in Figure 14. At the European sites, the reasons most commonly given were the scenery/views (38%), being close to home (36%) and being near to the coast/water (25%). At the SANGs, the most common reasons were being close to home (57%), the scenery/views (27%) and being good for the dog (17%). The most common reason given at individual survey locations is summarised in Table 17.
- 4.46 Amongst interviewees who were dog walking, walking or jogging/running, being close to home was the most commonly given reason for choosing that location. For interviewees who had a beach activity or were cycling, the scenery/views came out top, and for those who were bird/wildlife watching, a particular wildlife interest of the site was the most common reason for site choice.
- 4.47 When interviewees were asked which of the reasons they had given had the most influence over their choice of site to visit, being close to home was the most important reason.

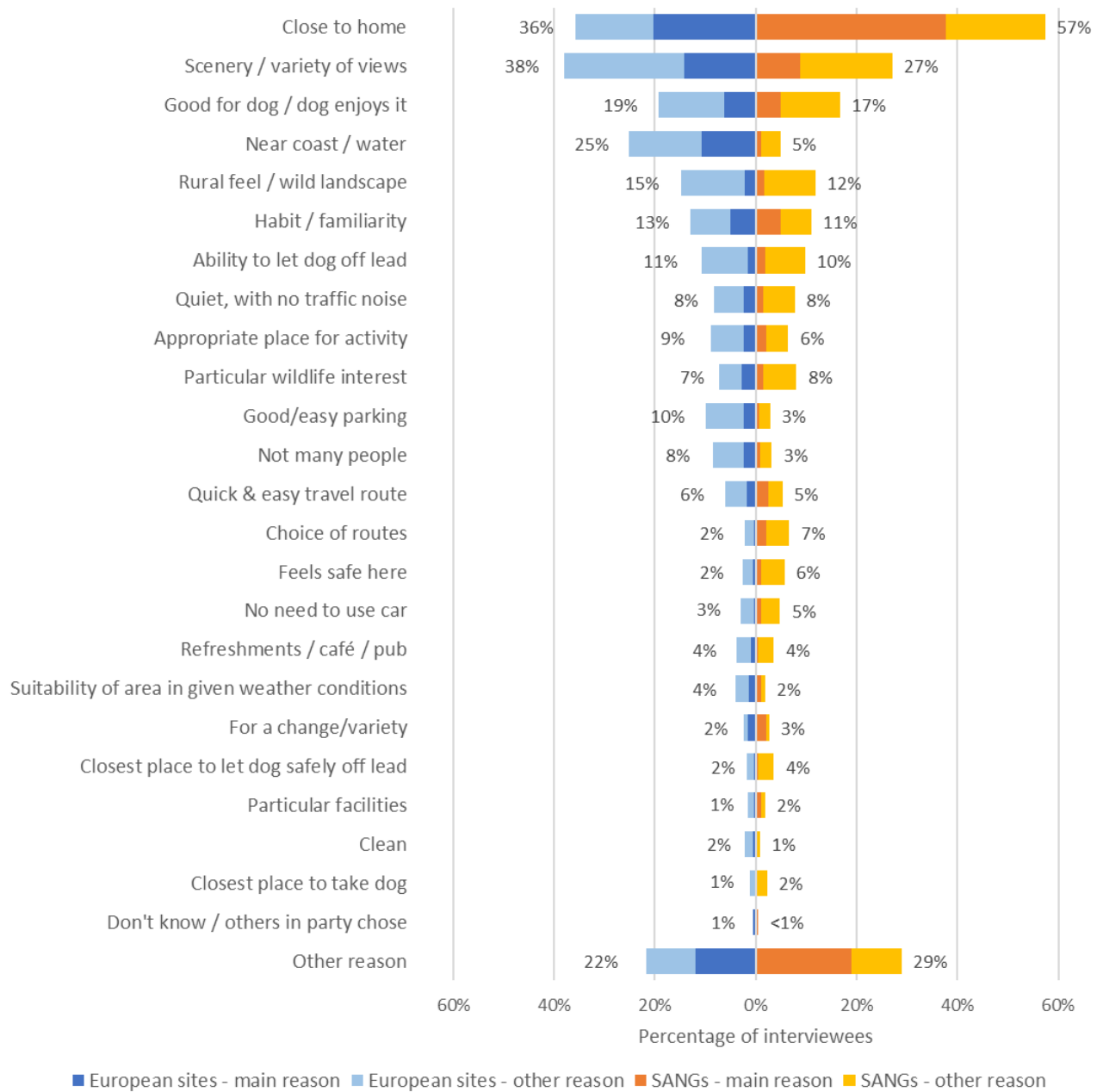


Figure 14: Reasons for visiting the specific location where interviewed that day rather than somewhere else (Q12). Interviewees were asked for one main reason and could give multiple other reasons. They were not prompted or shown any options. Responses were categorised by the surveyor and some additional categories were added following a review of free text responses. Labels indicate the percentage of interviewees who cited each reason (whether as a 'main' or 'other' reason).

Table 17: Most common reason given by interviewees for choosing to visit the location where they were interviewed, by survey location. Includes all responses. Percentages are calculated as the number of responses out of the total number of interviewees at each survey location.

Survey location	Most common reason for site choice
1 - Hesketh Out Marsh	Particular wildlife interest (46%)
2 - Marshside	Particular wildlife interest (27%)
3 - Ainsdale-on-Sea	Close to home (37%)
4 - Formby	Scenery / variety of views (47%)
5 - Crosby north	Scenery / variety of views (46%)
6 - Crosby south	Close to home (43%)
7 - Otterspool Park and Promenade	Near coast / water (59%)
8 - Speke and Garston Coastal Reserve	Good for dog / dog enjoys it (60%)
9 - Oglet Bay	Close to home (53%)
10 - Hale Head	Habit / familiarity (28%)
11 - Pickerings Pasture	Scenery / variety of views (63%)
12 - Egremont Promenade	Close to home (42%)
13 - Leasowe Bay	Scenery / variety of views (39%)
14 - Hoylake Sailing Club	Close to home (48%)
15 - Red Rocks	Scenery / variety of views (49%)
16 - West Kirby	Close to home (29%)
17 - Thurstaston Beach	Close to home (36%)
18 - Lower Heswall	Scenery / variety of views (64%)
19 - Parkgate Old Baths	Scenery / variety of views (57%)
20 - Southport Botanic Gardens	Close to home (55%)
21 - Fairy Glen	Close to home (74%)
22 - Old Lydiat Station (Cheshire Lines Path)	Close to home (31%)
23 - Leeds and Liverpool Canal (Lydiat)	Close to home (64%)
24 - Leeds and Liverpool Canal (Rimrose Valley)	Close to home (89%)
25 - Croxteth Hall & Country Park	Close to home (64%)
26 - Everton Park	Close to home (88%)
27 - Sefton Park	Scenery / variety of views (67%)
28 - Calderstones Park	Close to home (52%)
29 - Court Hey Park	Close to home (66%)
30 - Stadt Moers Park	Close to home (64%)
31 - Clock Face Country Park	Close to home (25%)
32 - Sankey Valley Park	Close to home (63%)
33 - Spike Island	Scenery / variety of views (49%)
34 - Wigg Island	Close to home (31%)
35 - Town Park, Runcorn	Close to home (71%)
36 - Eastham Country Park	Close to home (45%)
37 - Arrowe Country Park	Close to home (34%)
38 - Ashton Park	Close to home (54%)

Information or recommendations used to plan visit (Q13-18)

4.48 Relatively few interviewees (297 interviewees, 11%) gave details of any information sources or recommendations that they had used to plan their visit on the day they were interviewed (Table 18). The most common information source was websites, used by 5% of interviewees. Most of these websites were associated with navigation, weather forecasts or tide times rather than for specific geographic locations, although some interviewees named local websites such as Hilbre Island, Sefton Council, Visit Wirral and Hoylake Vision.

Table 18: Information sources used by interviewees to plan their visit, either before or during their visit (Q13-18).

Information source	Number (%) of all interviewees	Examples (number of interviewees)
Websites	137 (5%)	Google Maps (45); Tide Times (18); National Trust (10)
Word of mouth	99 (4%)	Friend (49); Family (36); Colleague (4)
Maps (online or paper)	57 (2%)	N/A
Smartphone apps	57 (2%)	Google Maps (18); Facebook (4); OS Maps (4);
Social media	31 (1%)	Facebook (21); Twitter (4); Instagram (2)
Leaflets	6 (<1%)	AA Walks (1); RSPB (1); Wirral Tourism (1);

Alternative sites (Q19-21)

4.49 When asked where they would have visited if they could not visit the location where they were interviewed, the majority of interviewees (2,122 interviewees, 82%) were able to name an alternative location, 12% said that they would not have visited anywhere else and 7% were unsure.

4.50 Interviewees were also asked to name up to two other locations that they visit for their activity. The full list of alternative locations was reviewed and standardised to give a specific site name where possible. For example, site names may have been misspelt, or there could be multiple names relating to

the same place. Locations named by at least 10 interviewees are summarised in Figure 15 for those who were interviewed at European sites, and in Figure 16 for those who were interviewed at SANGs.

- 4.51 Interviewees at the European sites tended to name other parts of the coast or estuaries, and the locations which were most commonly named were Formby (152 interviewees, 10%), West Kirby (138 interviewees, 9%) and Thurstaston (118 interviewees, 8%). At the SANGs, the locations most commonly cited were Sefton Park (80 interviewees, 8%), Calderstones Park (54 interviewees, 5%) and Crosby Coastal Park (53 interviewees, 5%) and there was a mix of urban parks as well as coastal/estuary locations named.

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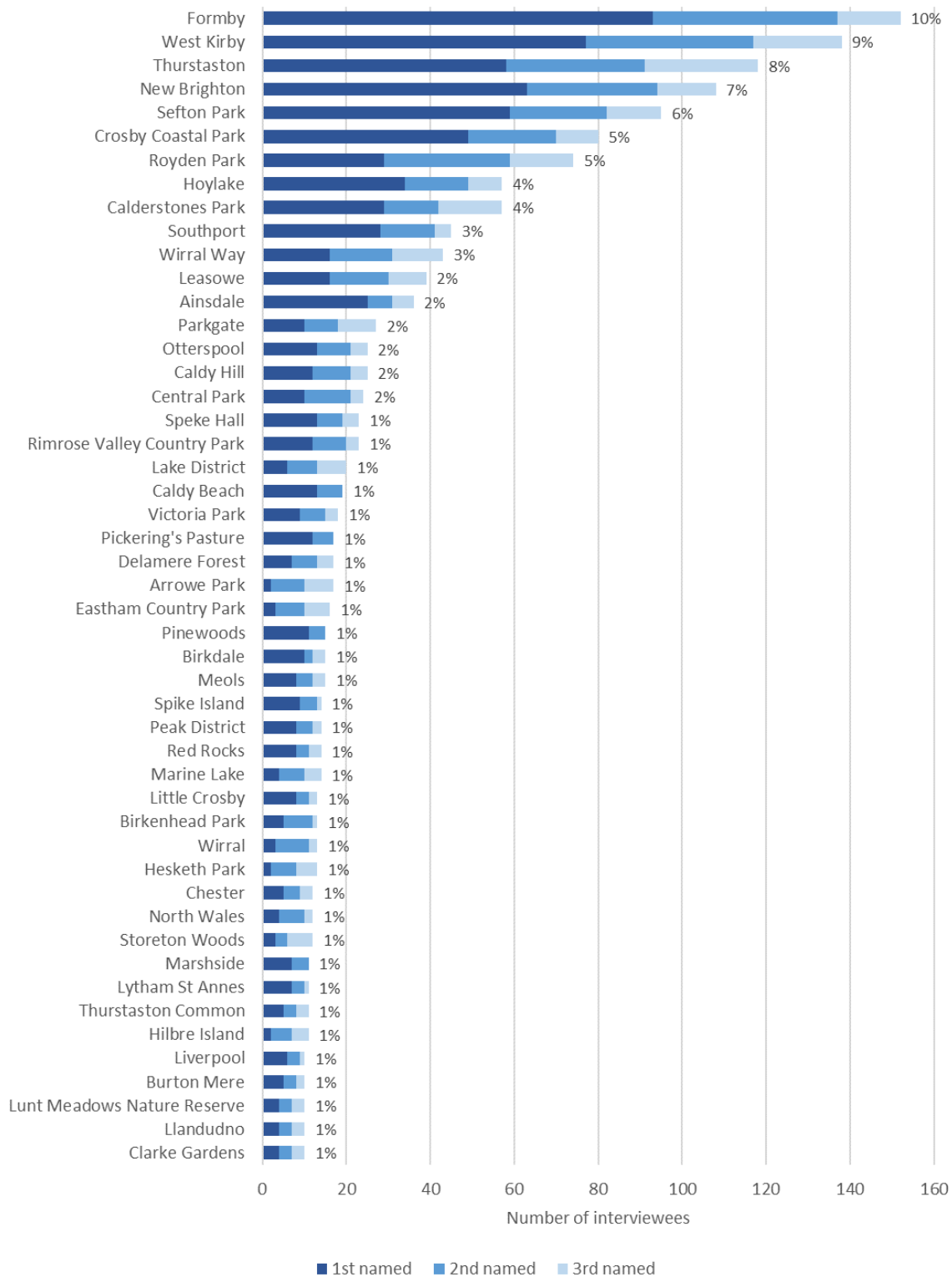


Figure 15: Other sites visited by those who were interviewed at European sites. Interviewees could name up to 3 locations each and were asked to list them in order, starting with the one they visit the most. Only locations that were named by at least 10 interviewees are included. Non-specific locations such as 'local footpaths' or 'beach' are not included. The labels next to each bar indicate the percentage of interviewees at European sites who named each location, regardless of whether it was named first, second or third.

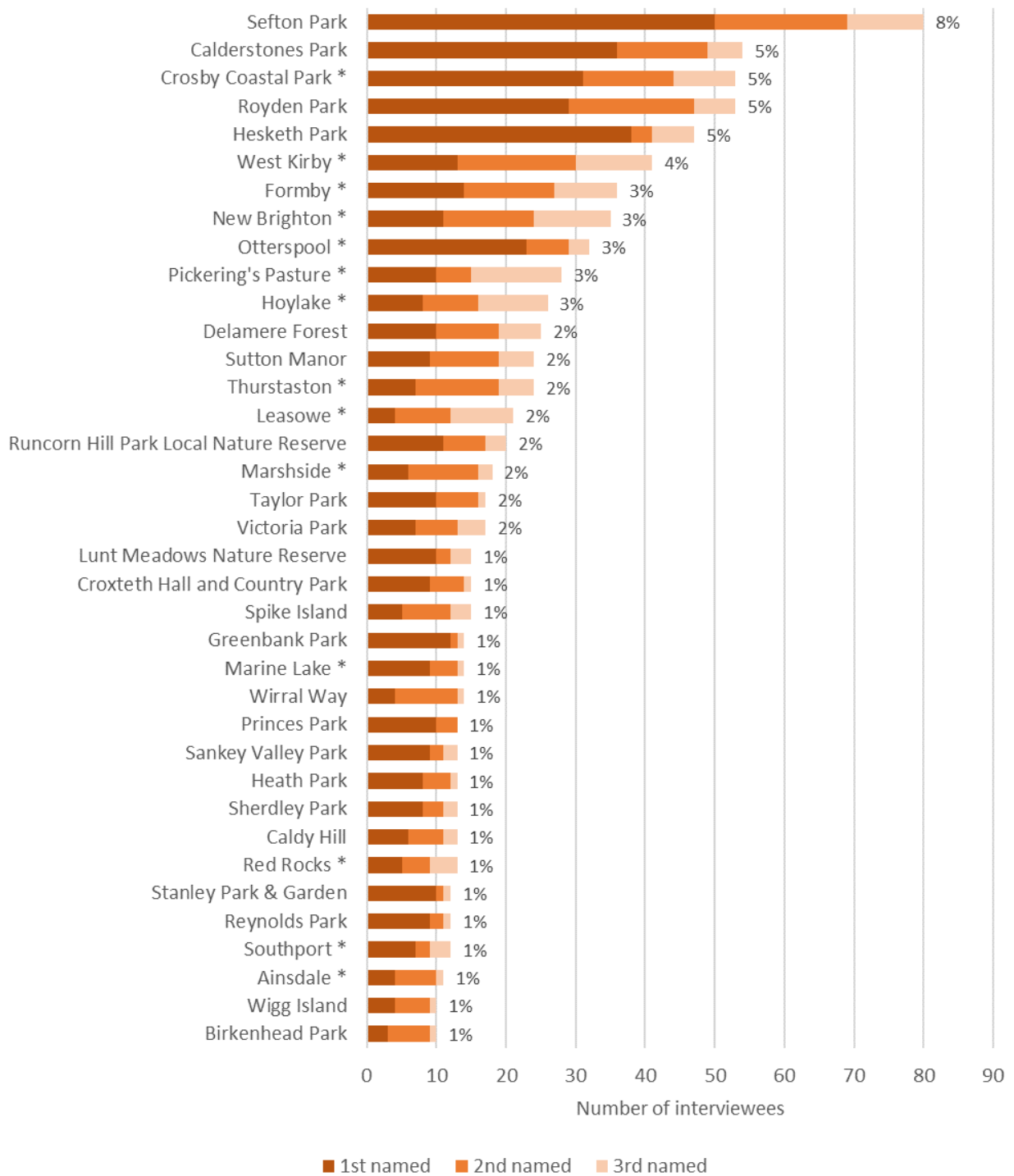


Figure 16: Other sites visited by those who were interviewed at SANGs. Interviewees could name up to 3 locations each and were asked to list them in order, starting with the one they visit the most. Only locations that were named by at least 10 interviewees are included. Non-specific locations such as 'local footpaths' or 'beach' are not included. The labels next to each bar indicate the percentage of interviewees at SANGs who named each location, regardless of whether it was named first, second or third. Locations marked with an asterisk (*) potentially refer to European sites.

Awareness of habitats and species (Q22, European sites only)

4.52 Interviewees at the European sites were asked if they could name any habitats or species that might be affected by people visiting the site (Q22). Overall, almost half of interviewees (723 interviewees, 46%) were either unaware of any such habitats or species, or were unable to name any (Figure 17). However, there was a reasonably good awareness of Natterjack Toads (named by 21% of interviewees), wintering waterbirds (18%) and breeding terns and waders (15%). The responses grouped under 'Other habitat or species' included birds (in general), owls, foxes, newts, rabbits and badgers.

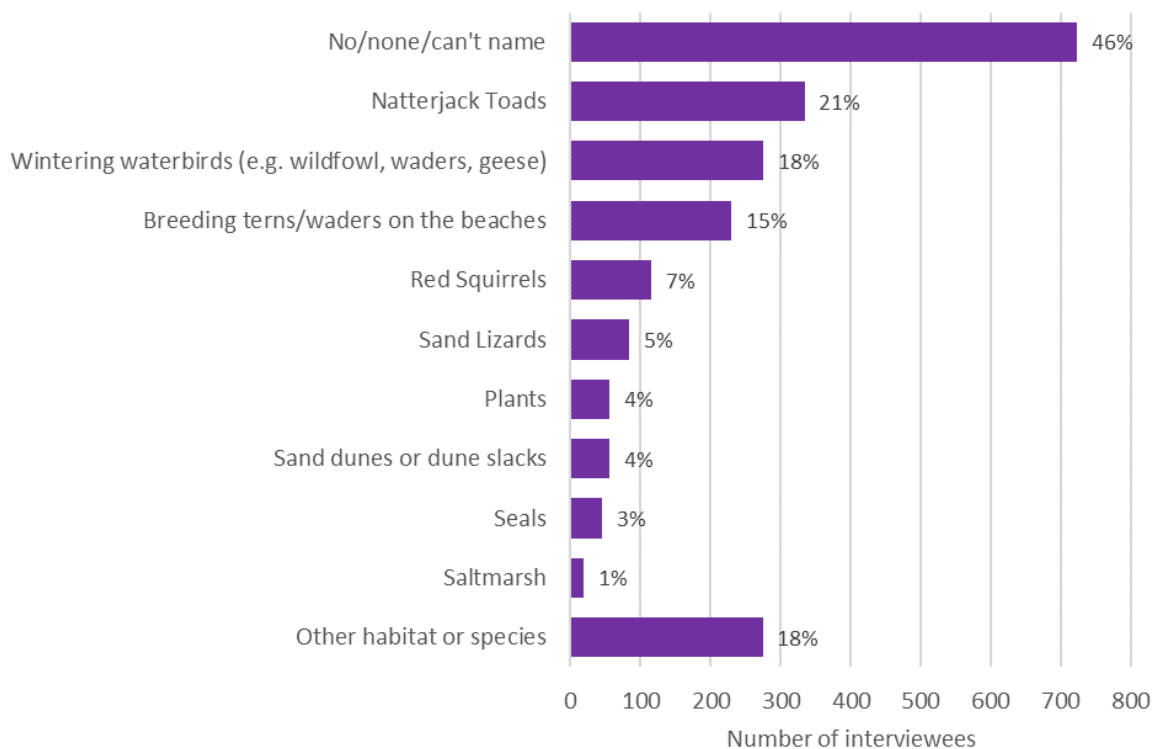


Figure 17: Number of interviewees who named each habitat or species in Q22. Interviewees were not prompted at all and could give multiple answers. Percentages are given out of the total number of interviewees at the European sites.

4.53 Responses from individual survey locations are summarised in Table 19. In most cases, the interviewees' awareness of species or habitats was linked to those that are present at the location that they were visiting. For example, at Formby, over half of the interviewees (56%) named Red Squirrels, and at Red Rocks 48% of interviewees named Natterjacks.

4.54 Interviewees whose main activity was bird/wildlife watching had a better awareness of breeding terns/waders (named by 47%) and wintering waterbirds (named by 45%) compared to interviewees with other activity types (Table 20).

Table 19: Responses to Q22 (habitats or species which are vulnerable to the impacts of recreation) by survey location. N is the number of interviewees. Interviewees were not prompted at all and could give multiple answers. Habitats or species named by 30% or more of the interviewees at a particular location are highlighted in red.

Survey location	N	No/none/can't name	Natterjack Toads	Wintering waterbirds (e.g. wildfowl, waders, geese)	Breeding terns/waders on the beaches	Red Squirrels	Sand Lizards	Plants	Sand dunes or dune slacks	Seals	Saltmarsh	Other habitat or species
1 - Hesketh Out Marsh	35	25 (71%)	1 (3%)	7 (20%)	7 (20%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	1 (3%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	1 (3%)
2 - Marshside	22	12 (55%)	0 (0%)	7 (32%)	9 (41%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	1 (5%)	0 (0%)	1 (5%)	0 (0%)
3 - Ainsdale-on-Sea	196	79 (40%)	95 (48%)	5 (3%)	12 (6%)	7 (4%)	33 (17%)	10 (5%)	13 (7%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	23 (12%)
4 - Formby	185	51 (28%)	66 (36%)	10 (5%)	6 (3%)	104 (56%)	29 (16%)	11 (6%)	18 (10%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	8 (4%)
5 - Crosby north	119	44 (37%)	38 (32%)	12 (10%)	11 (9%)	3 (3%)	7 (6%)	7 (6%)	6 (5%)	1 (1%)	0 (0%)	35 (29%)
6 - Crosby south	82	62 (76%)	13 (16%)	2 (2%)	1 (1%)	1 (1%)	5 (6%)	1 (1%)	2 (2%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	2 (2%)
7 - Otterspool Park and Promenade	126	88 (70%)	0 (0%)	19 (15%)	10 (8%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	5 (4%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	18 (14%)
8 - Speke and Garston Coastal Reserve	43	24 (56%)	0 (0%)	14 (33%)	14 (33%)	0 (0%)	1 (2%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	1 (2%)	0 (0%)	11 (26%)
9 - Oglet Bay	30	21 (70%)	0 (0%)	1 (3%)	1 (3%)	0 (0%)	1 (3%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	5 (17%)
10 - Hale Head	46	30 (65%)	0 (0%)	4 (9%)	4 (9%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	9 (20%)
11 - Pickerings Pasture	59	40 (68%)	0 (0%)	9 (15%)	7 (12%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	3 (5%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	11 (19%)
12 - Egremont Promenade	73	44 (60%)	2 (3%)	13 (18%)	10 (14%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	3 (4%)	1 (1%)	14 (19%)

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Survey location	N	No/none/can't name	Natterjack Toads	Wintering waterbirds (e.g. wildfowl, waders, geese)	Breeding terns/waders on the beaches	Red Squirrels	Sand Lizards	Plants	Sand dunes or dune slacks	Seals	Saltmarsh	Other habitat or species
13 - Leasowe Bay	56	19 (34%)	1 (2%)	14 (25%)	16 (29%)	0 (0%)	2 (4%)	4 (7%)	7 (13%)	4 (7%)	0 (0%)	18 (32%)
14 - Hoylake Sailing Club	56	29 (52%)	5 (9%)	15 (27%)	17 (30%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	2 (4%)	1 (2%)	2 (4%)	0 (0%)	8 (14%)
15 - Red Rocks	124	34 (27%)	59 (48%)	54 (44%)	50 (40%)	0 (0%)	4 (3%)	5 (4%)	3 (2%)	12 (10%)	4 (3%)	26 (21%)
16 - West Kirby	139	52 (37%)	44 (32%)	42 (30%)	35 (25%)	0 (0%)	2 (1%)	4 (3%)	3 (2%)	22 (16%)	1 (1%)	27 (19%)
17 - Thurstaston Beach	25	13 (52%)	3 (12%)	4 (16%)	2 (8%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	6 (24%)
18 - Lower Heswall	28	12 (43%)	2 (7%)	9 (32%)	4 (14%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	1 (4%)	6 (21%)
19 - Parkgate Old Baths	118	44 (37%)	5 (4%)	34 (29%)	14 (12%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	4 (3%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	11 (9%)	46 (39%)
All interviewees	1,562	723 (46%)	334 (21%)	275 (18%)	230 (15%)	115 (7%)	84 (5%)	56 (4%)	55 (4%)	45 (3%)	19 (1%)	274 (18%)

Table 20: Responses to Q22 (habitats or species which are vulnerable to the impacts of recreation) by activity type. N is the number of interviewees. Interviewees were not prompted at all and could give multiple answers. The highest percentage in each column is highlighted in red.

Activity type	N	No/none/can't name	Natterjack Toads	Wintering waterbirds (e.g. wildfowl, waders, geese)	Breeding terns/waders on the beaches	Red Squirrels	Sand Lizards	Plants	Sand dunes or dune slacks	Seals	Saltmarsh	Other habitat or species
Dog walking	645	281 (44%)	164 (25%)	124 (19%)	104 (16%)	26 (4%)	46 (7%)	21 (3%)	25 (4%)	19 (3%)	6 (1%)	129 (20%)
Walking	630	312 (50%)	111 (18%)	109 (17%)	84 (13%)	57 (9%)	25 (4%)	31 (5%)	18 (3%)	17 (3%)	11 (2%)	98 (16%)
Beach activity	107	51 (48%)	25 (23%)	5 (5%)	6 (6%)	24 (22%)	8 (7%)	1 (1%)	3 (3%)	2 (2%)	0 (0%)	9 (8%)
Bird/wildlife watching	38	16 (42%)	2 (5%)	17 (45%)	18 (47%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	2 (5%)	0 (0%)	1 (3%)	7 (18%)
Cycling/mountain biking	35	13 (37%)	10 (29%)	5 (14%)	4 (11%)	0 (0%)	1 (3%)	2 (6%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	11 (31%)
Jogging/running	26	10 (38%)	7 (27%)	5 (19%)	6 (23%)	2 (8%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	2 (8%)	2 (8%)	0 (0%)	7 (27%)
Other activity	81	40 (49%)	15 (19%)	10 (12%)	8 (10%)	6 (7%)	4 (5%)	1 (1%)	5 (6%)	5 (6%)	1 (1%)	13 (16%)
All interviewees	1,562	723 (46%)	334 (21%)	275 (18%)	230 (15%)	115 (7%)	84 (5%)	56 (4%)	55 (4%)	45 (3%)	19 (1%)	274 (18%)

Site improvements (Q23)

- 4.55 Suggestions made by interviewees as to how the location where the interview took place could be improved for access are summarised in Figure 18. Interviewees were not given any options or prompts, and responses were recorded by the surveyor using pre-determined categories with additional categories identified following a review of the free text responses.
- 4.56 Overall, 1,102 interviewees (42%) did not want to see any changes to the site that they were visiting. This included some interviewees who were concerned about potential development (for example the Port of Liverpool access road at Rimrose Valley).
- 4.57 The improvements most commonly suggested were on the themes of litter (9% of interviewees), toilet facilities (6%), dog waste bins (5%) and footpath improvements (5%).

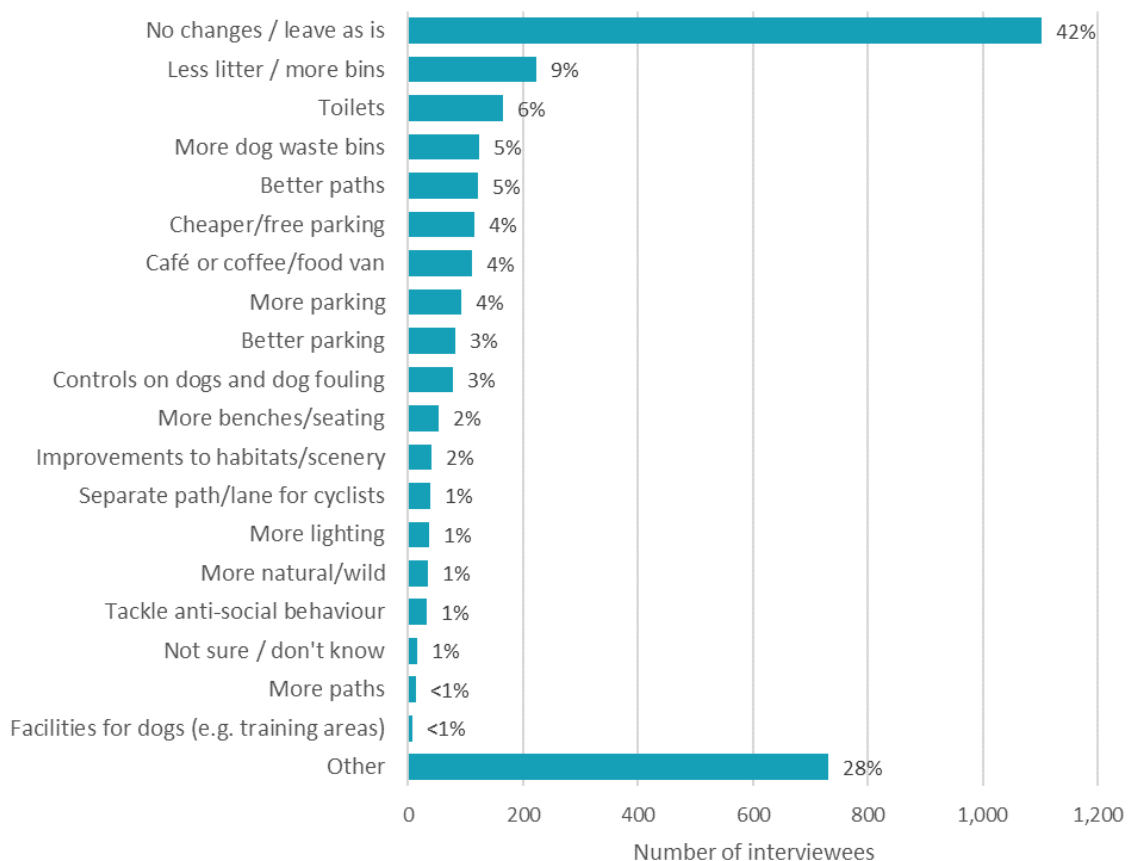


Figure 18: Changes that interviewees would like to see regarding how the site they were visiting is managed for access (Q23). Interviewees were not prompted or shown any options, and could give multiple responses. Responses were categorised by the surveyor with additional categories added following a review of free text responses. Labels indicate the percentage of interviewees who gave each response.

4.58 Location 2 (Marshside) was the survey location with the highest proportion of interviewees who were happy with the site as it is and did not suggest any changes (73%). However, at other locations there were particular issues which were frequently mentioned by interviewees, for example:

- At location 1 (Hesketh Out Marsh) 69% of interviewees said that the potholes in the access lane need repairing.
- At location 14 (Hoylake) 59% of interviewees wanted the beach vegetation to be reduced or removed altogether, although the surveyor noted that some of these interviewees had heard that there was a survey taking place and had come specifically to voice their opinions on this issue.
- At location 23 (Leeds and Liverpool Canal at Lydiate) over half of the interviewees (53%) said that the canal path needed improving, particularly between Bells Lane and Pilling Lane as it gets very muddy there.
- At location 33 (Spike Island) 51% of interviewees asked for the second bridge at the north end of the site to be reinstated for both public and emergency access.
- At location 10 (Hale Head) 41% of interviewees mentioned problems with litter.

Visitor postcodes (Q24-26)

4.59 A total of 2,481 interviewees (95%) gave full valid postcodes that could be plotted in GIS. The interviewees came from a wide area, covering 93 local authority areas (Table 21), with the most from Wirral (22%), Sefton (19%) and Liverpool (17%).

4.60 All interviewee postcodes are shown in Map 14, and it can be seen that visitors to the coast were drawn from a much broader area than those who were visiting the SANGs. Maps showing the postcodes of interviewees at the European sites and SANGs separately are in Appendix 7.

4.61 Map 15 presents just the interviewee postcodes from the coastal survey locations, split into sections. From this it is clear that many of the more inland interviewees were visiting locations along the Sefton Coast and Ribble Estuary. The Dee Estuary survey locations attracted visitors from across the Wirral peninsula as well as from the north side of the Mersey Estuary. Interviewees at the North Wirral/Mersey Narrows survey locations and the Mersey Estuary survey locations were comparatively more local.

Table 21: Number of interviewees by local authority area. Only local authorities with more than 10 interviewees are shown.

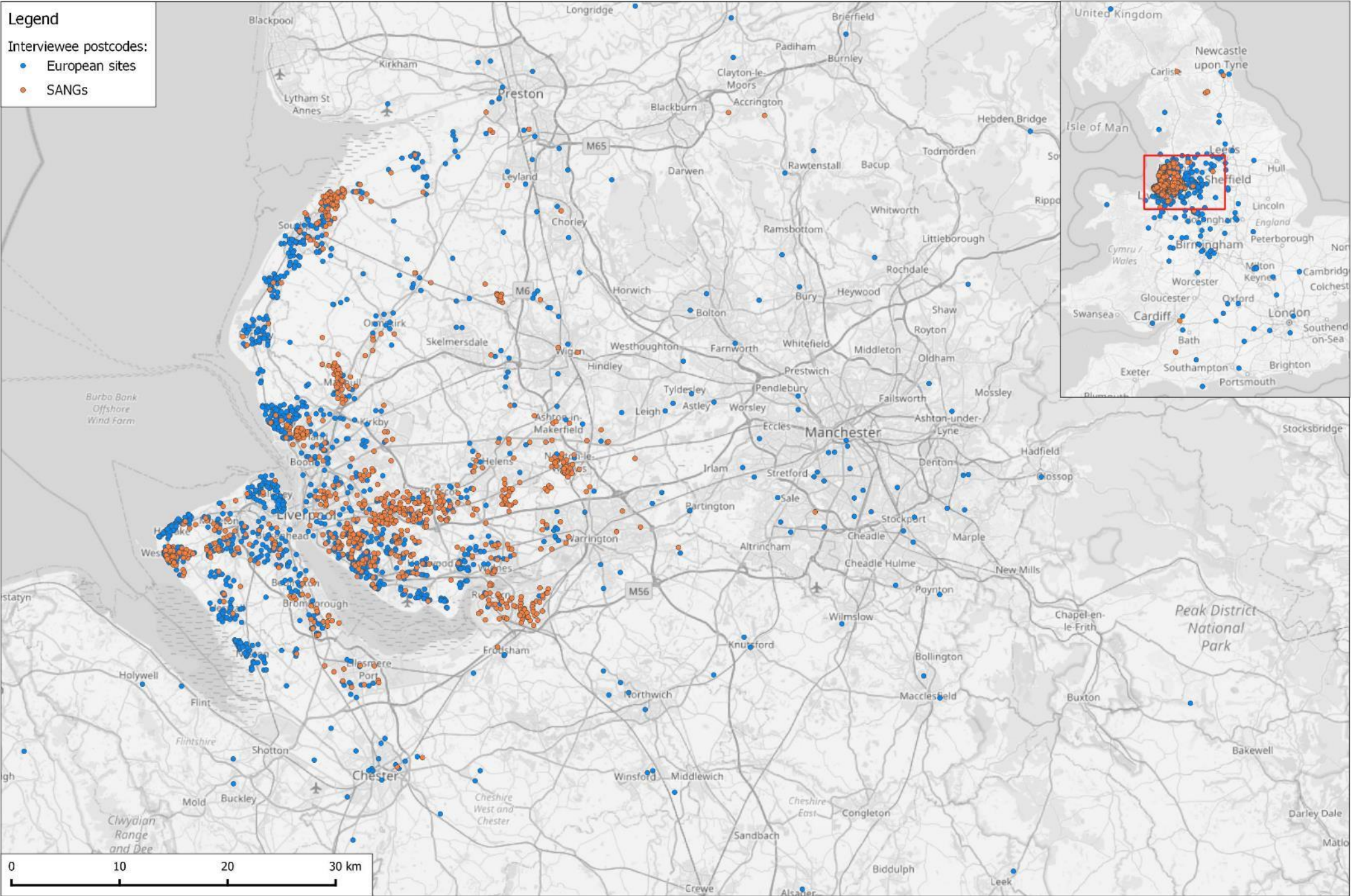
Local authority name	European sites	SANGs	Total
Wirral	403 (26%)	160 (15%)	563 (22%)
Sefton	301 (19%)	202 (19%)	503 (19%)
Liverpool	248 (16%)	200 (19%)	448 (17%)
Halton	72 (5%)	109 (10%)	181 (7%)
Knowsley	46 (3%)	126 (12%)	172 (7%)
St Helens	23 (1%)	93 (9%)	116 (4%)
Cheshire West and Chester	98 (6%)	14 (1%)	112 (4%)
West Lancashire	57 (4%)	54 (5%)	111 (4%)
Warrington	19 (1%)	19 (2%)	38 (1%)
Wigan	21 (1%)	10 (1%)	31 (1%)
South Ribble	16 (1%)	5 (<1%)	21 (1%)
Manchester	11 (1%)	1 (<1%)	12 (<1%)
Cheshire East	10 (1%)	0 (0%)	10 (<1%)
Chorley	9 (1%)	1 (<1%)	10 (<1%)

- 4.62 Maps 16 and 17 present the interviewee postcodes by their visit frequency, for the European sites and SANGs respectively. Generally, the most frequent visitors were those living closest to the survey locations. There were no daily visitors to the coast from more inland towns such as Ormskirk, Skelmersdale and St Helens, although there were some who visited weekly.
- 4.63 For each interviewee postcode the linear distance was calculated in GIS, measuring from the home postcode to the survey point at which the interview took place. Data are summarised for different groups of visitors in Table 22 and for individual survey locations in Appendix 8. Note that because these are straight-line distances they may cut across estuaries.
- 4.64 At the European site survey locations, the distances ranged from just 30m to 344 km, with half of the interviewees giving home postcodes within 5.3 km of the survey location and three quarters originating within 14.6 km. The differences between the four different sections of the coast were significant (Kruskal-Wallis $H=202.31$, $DF=3$, $p<0.001$).
- 4.65 At the SANG survey locations, the distances ranged from 660 m to 260 km, with half of the interviewees within 1.3 km and three quarters of interviewees within 3.2 km.

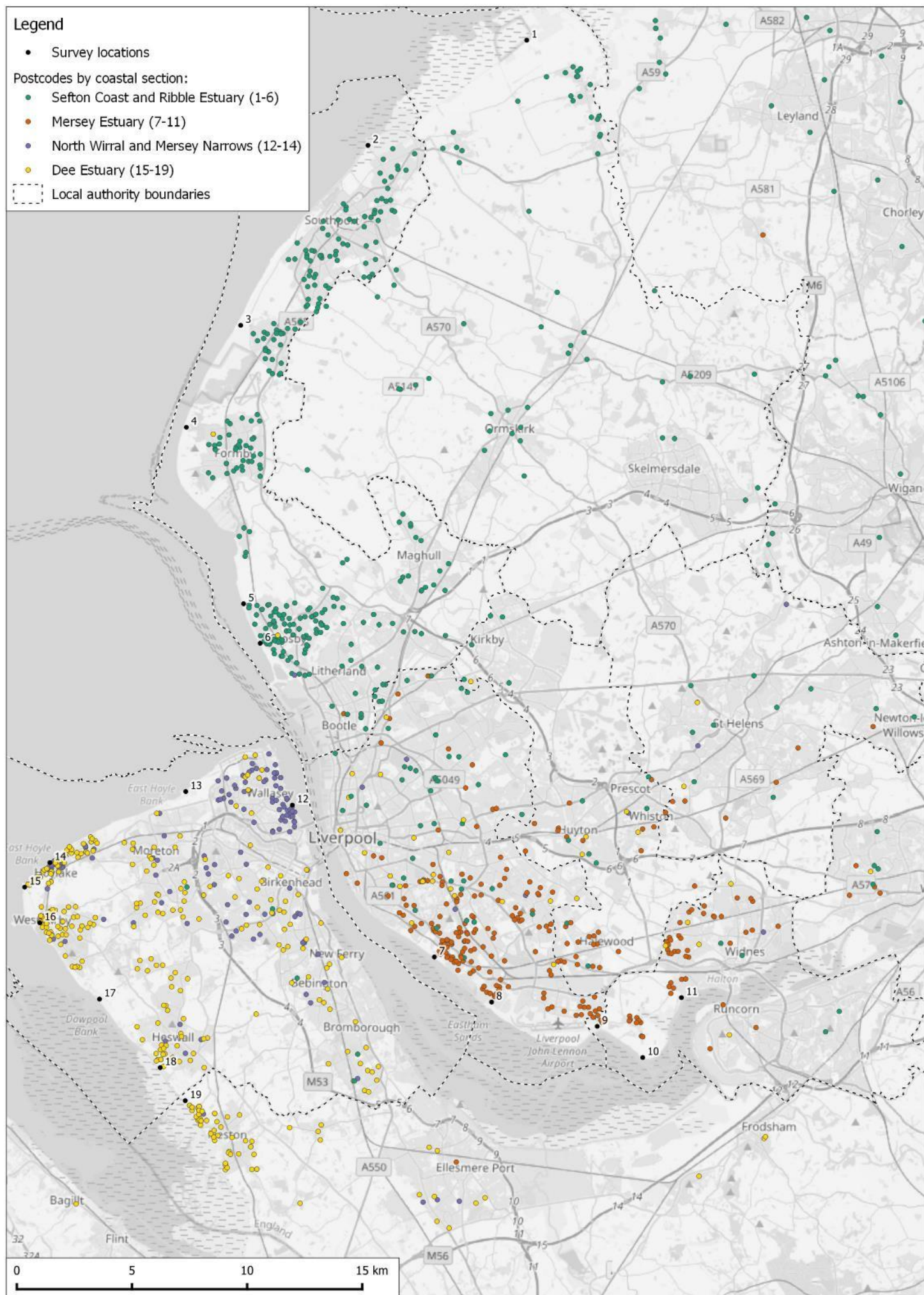
Table 22: Summary statistics for different groups of interviewees and the straight-line distance between the survey point and their home postcode (km). N is the number of interviewees within each group who gave full, valid postcodes. Q3 reflects the 75th percentile.

Survey locations	Category	N	Mean ($\pm$ SE)	Range	Median	Q3
All locations	All interviewees	2,481	12.4 $\pm$ 0.6	0.0 - 344.4	3.0	8.6
European sites	All interviewees	1,476	18.1 $\pm$ 1.0	0.0 - 344.4	5.3	14.6
European sites	Day visit from home	1,414	12.6 $\pm$ 0.6	0.0 - 289.6	5.0	12.4
European sites	Visiting at least once a month	1,068	7.1 $\pm$ 0.5	0.0 - 284.3	3.2	7.4
Locations 1-6	Sefton Coast and Ribble Estuary	596	26.5 $\pm$ 1.8	0.2 - 344.4	8.9	27.1
Locations 7-11	Mersey Estuary	287	5.8 $\pm$ 1.0	0.3 - 268.6	3.2	6.1
Locations 12-14	North Wirral and Mersey Narrows	180	7.8 $\pm$ 1.7	0.0 - 274.6	2.1	6.3
Locations 15-19	Dee Estuary	413	19.0 $\pm$ 2.1	0.1 - 306.7	5.6	15.3
European sites	Winter	874	14.3 $\pm$ 1.2	0.0 - 344.4	4.3	10.9
European sites	April	269	19.5 $\pm$ 2.2	0.2 - 289.6	6.0	19.1
European sites	May	80	12.2 $\pm$ 2.9	0.2 - 193.0	4.5	11.1
European sites	August	253	31.7 $\pm$ 3.1	0.1 - 284.3	11.5	35.8
European sites	Dog walking	621	10.1 $\pm$ 1.0	0.0 - 284.3	3.5	8.9
European sites	Walking	587	19.9 $\pm$ 1.7	0.1 - 308.7	5.7	16.1
European sites	Beach activity	103	48.3 $\pm$ 5.3	0.3 - 289.6	30.5	68.3
European sites	Bird/wildlife watching	36	37.8 $\pm$ 10.5	0.2 - 344.4	12.8	47.3
European sites	Cycling/mountain biking	29	9.2 $\pm$ 2.2	1.1 - 60.9	6.0	12.6
European sites	Jogging/running	25	3.2 $\pm$ 1.0	0.3 - 25.8	1.9	3.8
SANGs	All interviewees	1,005	4.1 $\pm$ 0.5	0.1 - 260.0	1.3	3.2
SANGs	Day visit from home	989	2.9 $\pm$ 0.2	0.1 - 75.7	1.3	3.2
SANGs	Visiting at least once a month	891	2.3 $\pm$ 0.2	0.1 - 182.7	1.2	2.6
SANGs	Dog walking	543	2.9 $\pm$ 0.6	0.1 - 260.0	1.2	2.7
SANGs	Walking	331	5.3 $\pm$ 1.0	0.1 - 199.0	1.3	3.5
SANGs	Cycling/mountain biking	24	11.9 $\pm$ 7.5	0.4 - 182.7	3.9	5.9
SANGs	Jogging/running	18	2.0 $\pm$ 0.5	0.1 - 8.7	1.5	2.4

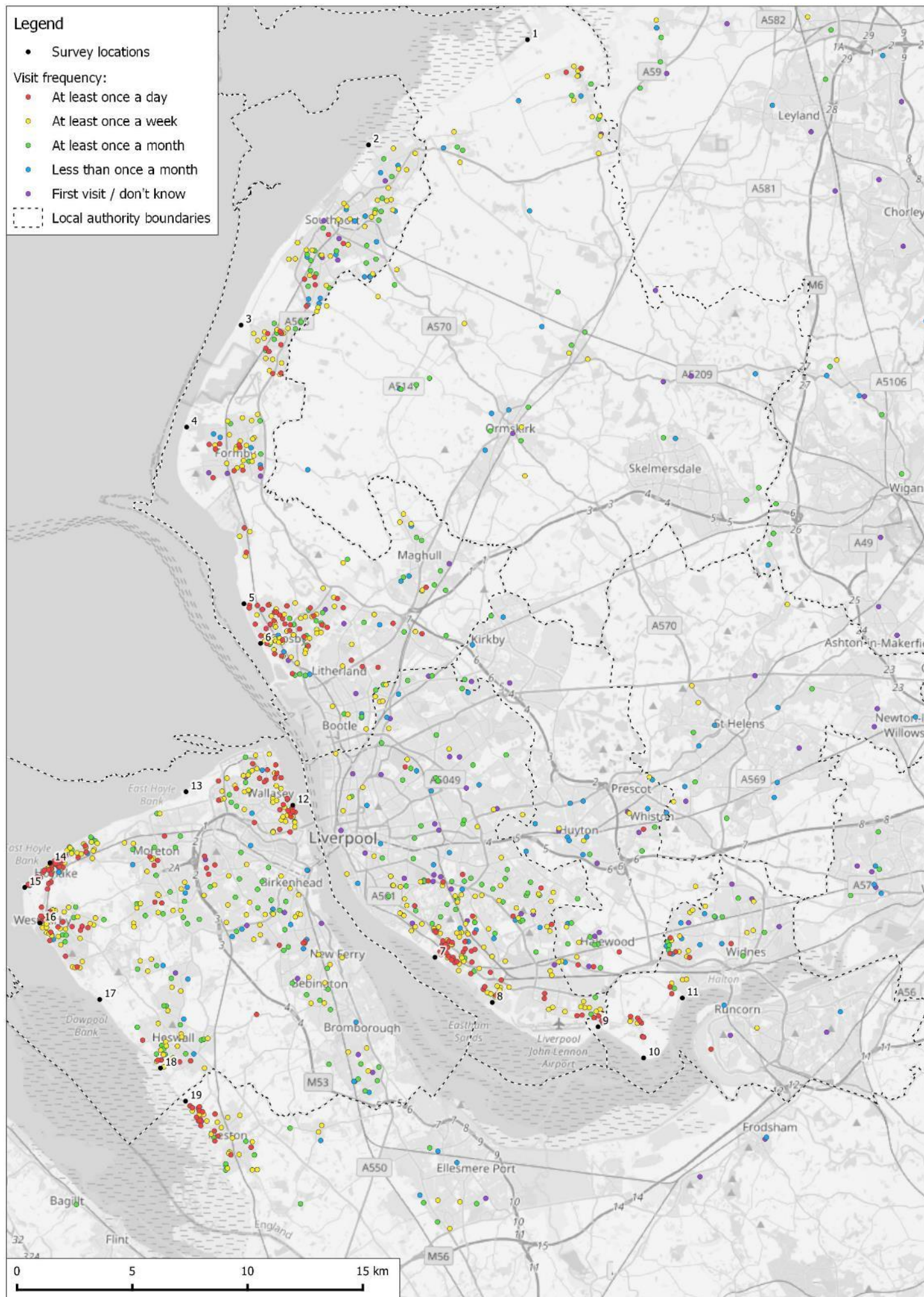
Map 14: Home postcodes of interviewees by survey location type.



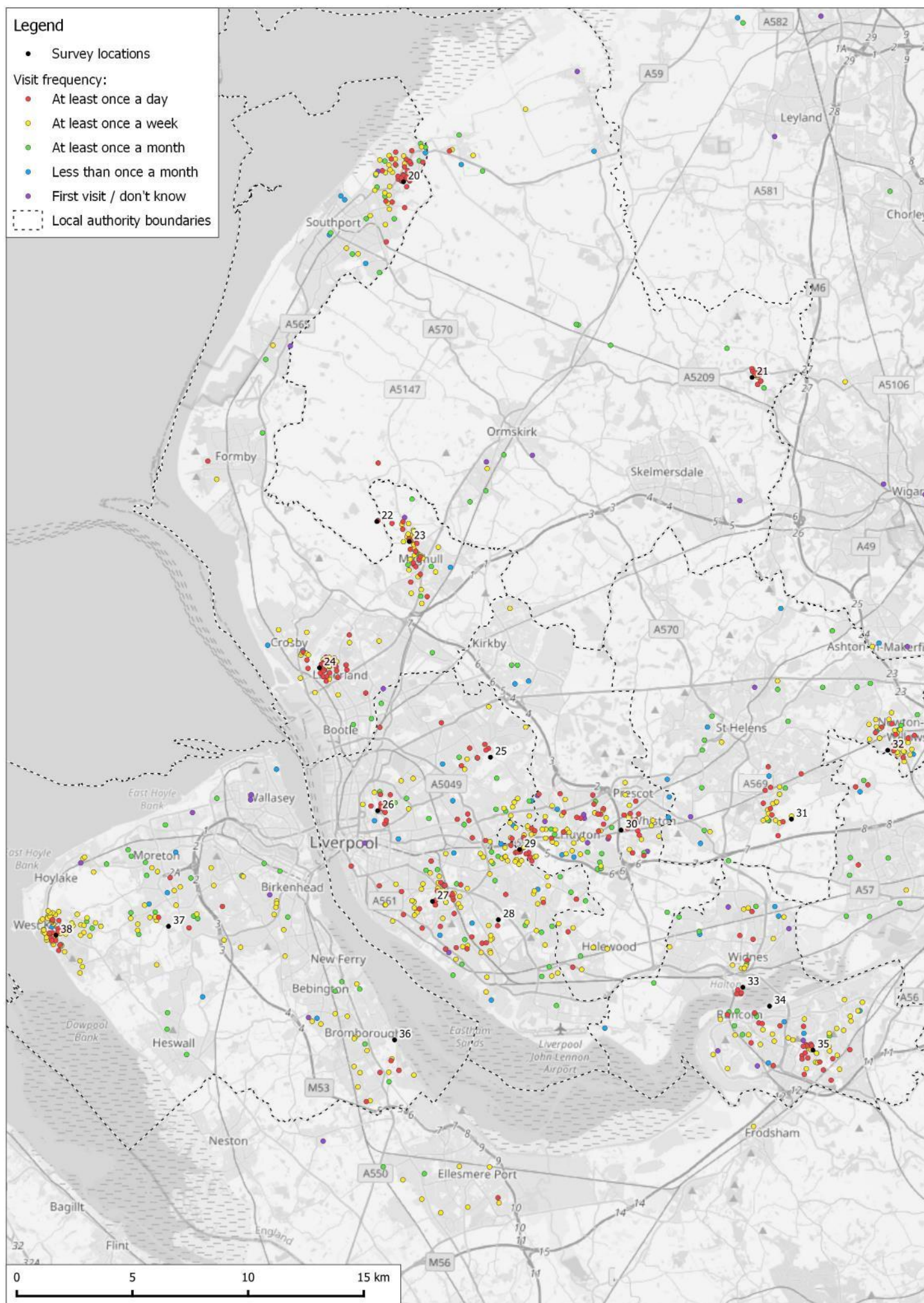
Map 15: Home postcodes of visitors interviewed at the European sites, by section of coast.



Map 16: Home postcodes of visitors interviewed at the European sites, by visit frequency.



Map 17: Home postcodes of visitors interviewed at the SANGs, by visit frequency.



Further comments or feedback (Q27)

- 4.66 Finally, interviewees were asked if they had any further comments or general feedback about their visit and access to the area. These free text responses have been shared with the local authorities.

5. Results of the online questionnaire

Overview

- 5.1 In total, 1,060 people completed the online questionnaire. The structure of the survey involved some general questions about visits to greenspaces at the beginning and then specific questions about the last visit made to a greenspace. Respondents were able to skip this section if they could not recall a recent visit (60 respondents chose to skip the section). The final section (answered by all) involved some general questions relating to improvements to greenspaces and information on the home postcode of respondents.
- 5.2 The most common way that respondents had found out about the survey was through a local authority social media account (566 respondents, 53%), followed by another social media account or group (280 respondents, 25%) or via an email from their local council (104 respondents, 10%). Around two thirds (68%) of respondents had completed it on a smartphone.
- 5.3 Figure 19 shows the cumulative number of respondents over time. The survey ran from February 2022 and the initial number of responses was low, with a marked increase in May (coinciding with further promotion from local authorities), when the majority of responses came in. There was a further pulse in late June 2022.

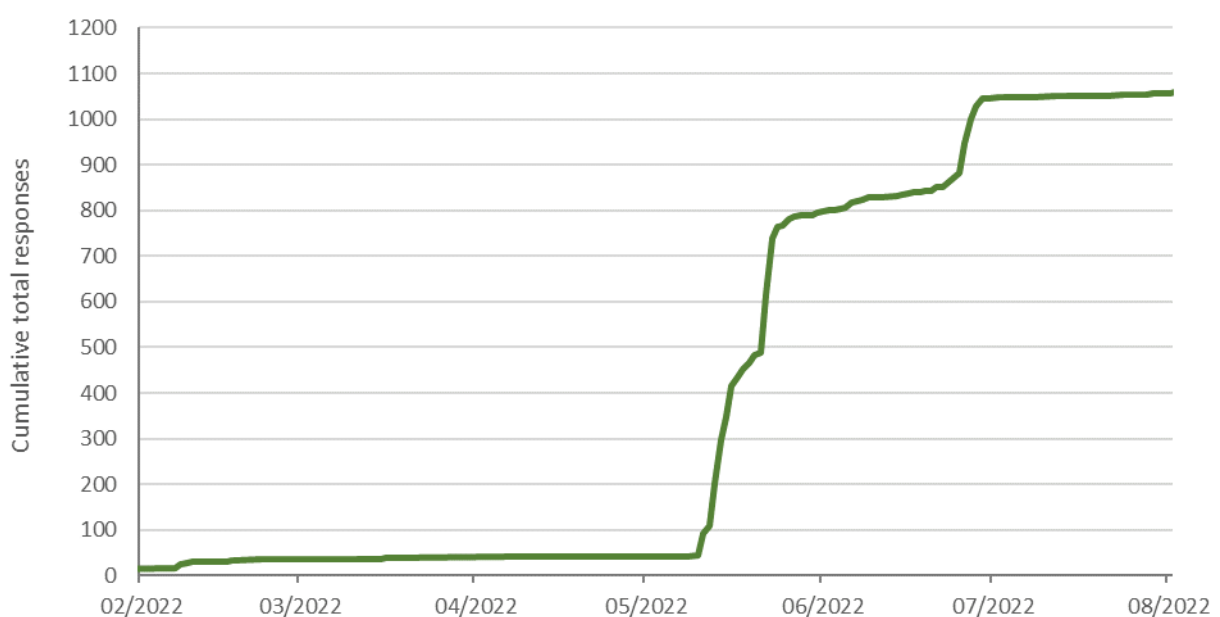


Figure 19: Cumulative number of responses to the online survey over time.

- 5.4 A total of 998 respondents gave a complete, valid home postcode that could be plotted in GIS. Home postcodes of respondents are broken down by local authority in Table 23. Of the respondents, 926 of these (93%) were within the Liverpool City Region and a further 36 (4%) were from West Lancashire.

Table 23: Total number of respondents from each authority. Italicised rows reflect those outside the Liverpool City Region and those in bold reflect the commissioning authorities that promoted the survey.

Local authority	Number	%
St Helens	388	39
Halton	298	30
Liverpool	121	12
Sefton	58	6
<i>West Lancashire</i>	36	4
Knowsley	32	3
Wirral	29	3
<i>Warrington</i>	16	2
<i>Wigan</i>	11	1
<i>Cheshire West and Chester</i>	4	<1
<i>South Ribble District</i>	3	<1
<i>Cheshire East</i>	1	<1
<i>Chorley</i>	1	<1
Total	998	100
(respondents without valid postcode)	62	

Number of visits to greenspaces over previous week (Q1)

- 5.5 Respondents had undertaken a mean of 5.6 (median=5) visits to greenspaces over the previous week (averages derived from 1,057 responses; 3 respondents had given values above 100 and these were discounted on the assumption that the question had been mis-read).
- 5.6 Data are summarised by authority (i.e. where the respondent lived) in Figure 20. The median for most authorities was 5 visits per week, the exceptions were Sefton (median 4 visits per week) and West Lancashire (median 2.5 visits per week), however the sample size for West Lancashire was relatively low.

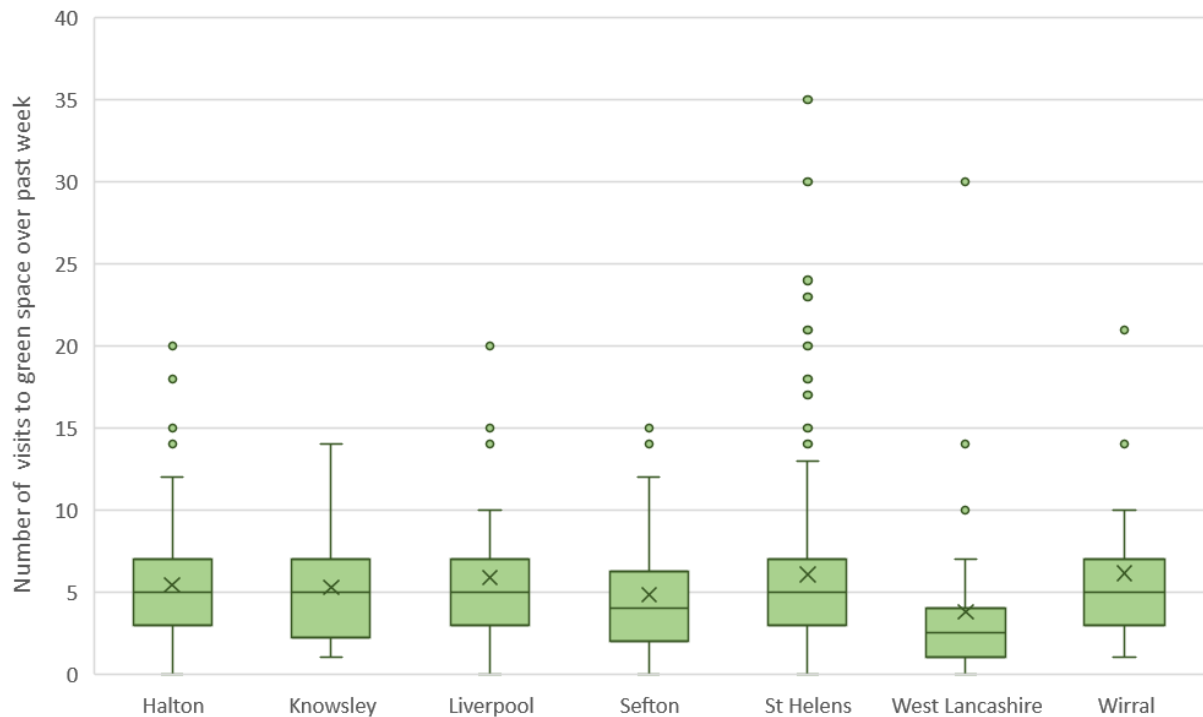
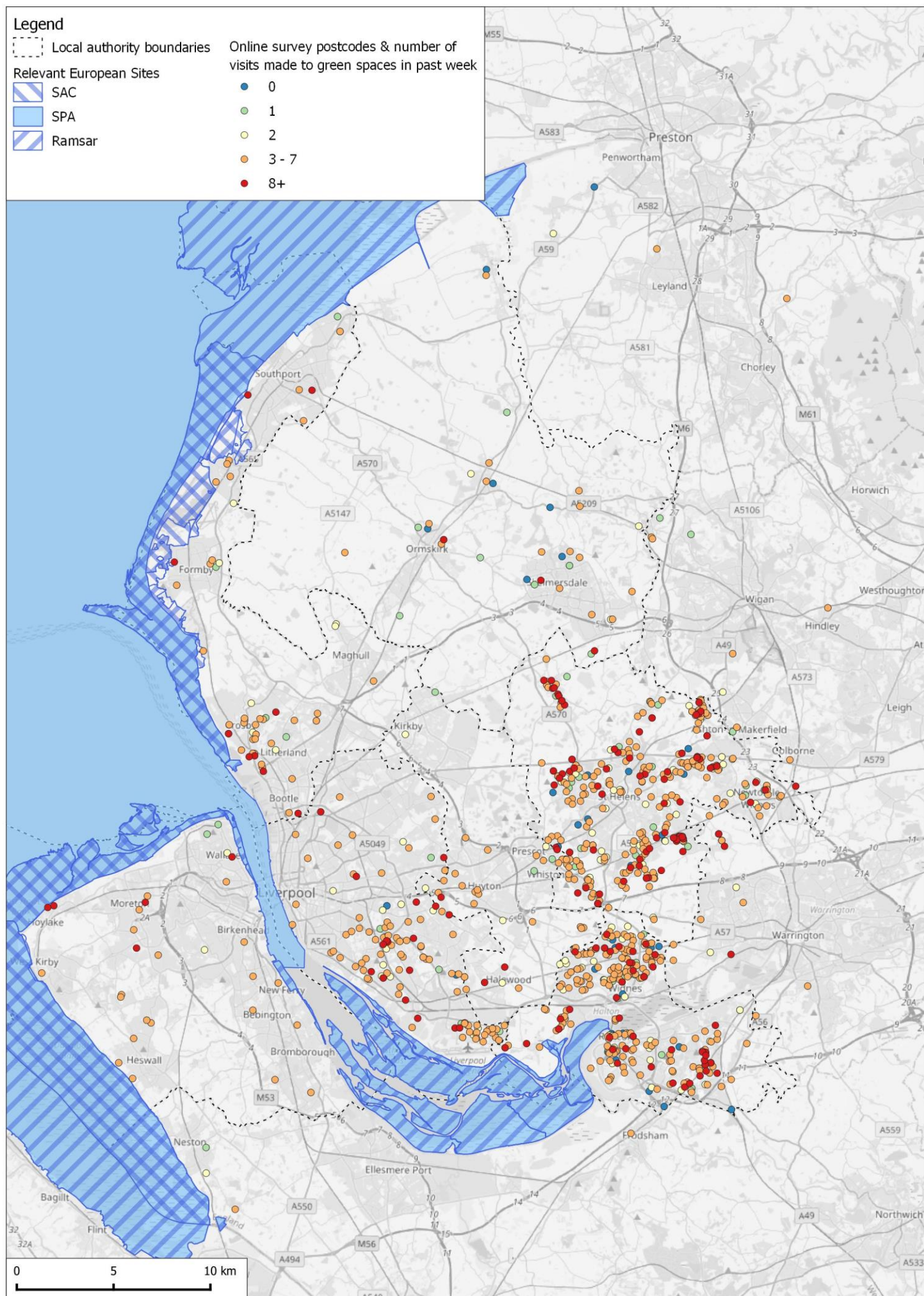


Figure 20: Number of visits to greenspaces during the previous week, by local authority (from Q1). Data for LCR and West Lancashire only, y axis truncated at 40 visits per week. Horizontal lines show the median, crosses indicate the mean, the boxes show the interquartile range and the whiskers the maximum and minimum values. Points are outliers.

5.7 In Map 18 the postcodes are shaded to reflect the number of visits made to any greenspace within the past week (Q1), with the darker red shading reflecting those that made the most visits and the darker blue shading reflecting those that had made no visits. No particular clustering in the colours is evident, indicating that there are no particular 'hotspots' where respondents clearly made more visits.

Map 18: Postcodes of online survey respondents & visits to green spaces



Types of greenspaces visited (Q2-5)

- 5.8 Woodlands and forests (including community woodlands) were the type of site the most respondents visited 'regularly' (583 respondents, 55%) while coasts (including beaches and estuary shorelines) were the type of site the most respondents visited 'occasionally' (421 respondents, 40%) (Figure 21). Data are broken down by authority in Appendix 9 and summarised for coastal sites in Figure 22.
- 5.9 The authorities with the highest percentage of respondents that regularly visited the coast were Wirral (72% visiting regularly) and Sefton (53%); by contrast only 6% of respondents in West Lancashire and 7% of respondents in St Helens regularly visited the coast. The percentage of respondents that never visit the coast was broadly similar across authorities, accounting for 6% or less of respondents.

Coastal sites visited (Q6-11)

- 5.10 There were 1,015 respondents that indicated they visited the coast (i.e. a positive response to Q2). For this subset of respondents only, questions 6-11 probed which parts of the coast in the Liverpool City Region they visited and the results are summarised in Figure 23. The north shore of the Mersey (between Liverpool and Widnes) and the Sefton Coast were the two areas that were visited by the most respondents (over 700 in each case, see Figure 23) while the north shore of the Mersey was the stretch with the most respondents visiting regularly (17%).
- 5.11 The postcodes of those that indicated they tended to visit the coast are shown in Map 19, with the shading reflecting the frequency of visits to the coast. It can be seen that the respondents living closer to the coast tend to visit more frequently (darker red shading) and there are more blue and yellow dots (reflecting those that never visit or visit rarely) in Knowsley and Halton (but note there are also more respondents from these authorities).

LCR and West Lincs Visitor Surveys

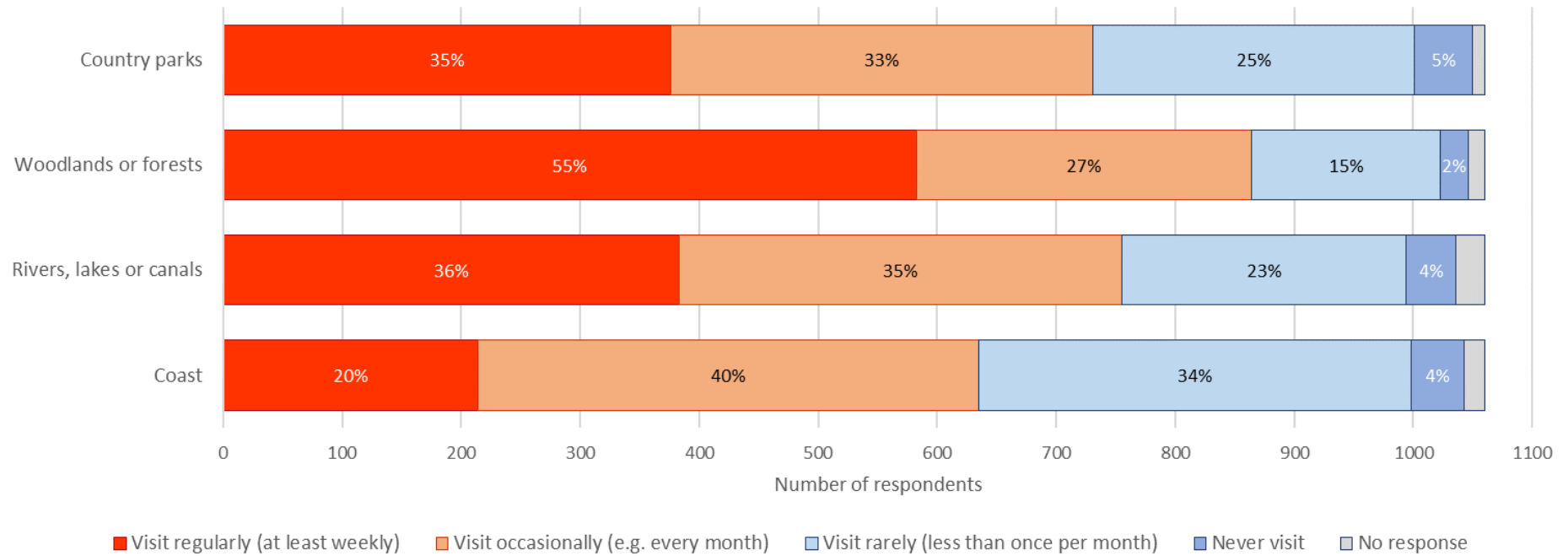


Figure 21: Numbers of respondents visiting different types of sites (Q2-5). Data from 1,060 responses.

LCR and West Lancs Visitor Surveys

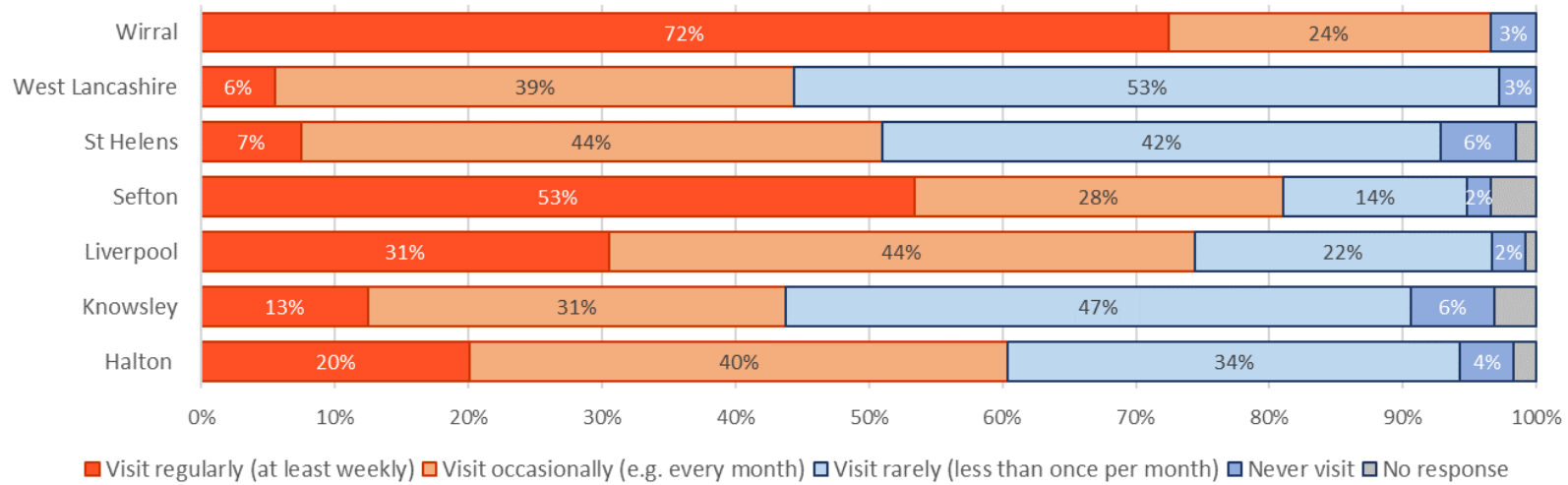


Figure 22: Percentage of respondents from each authority and how often they tend to visit the coast (Q2). Data for LCR authorities and West Lancashire only. See Table 23 for sample sizes.

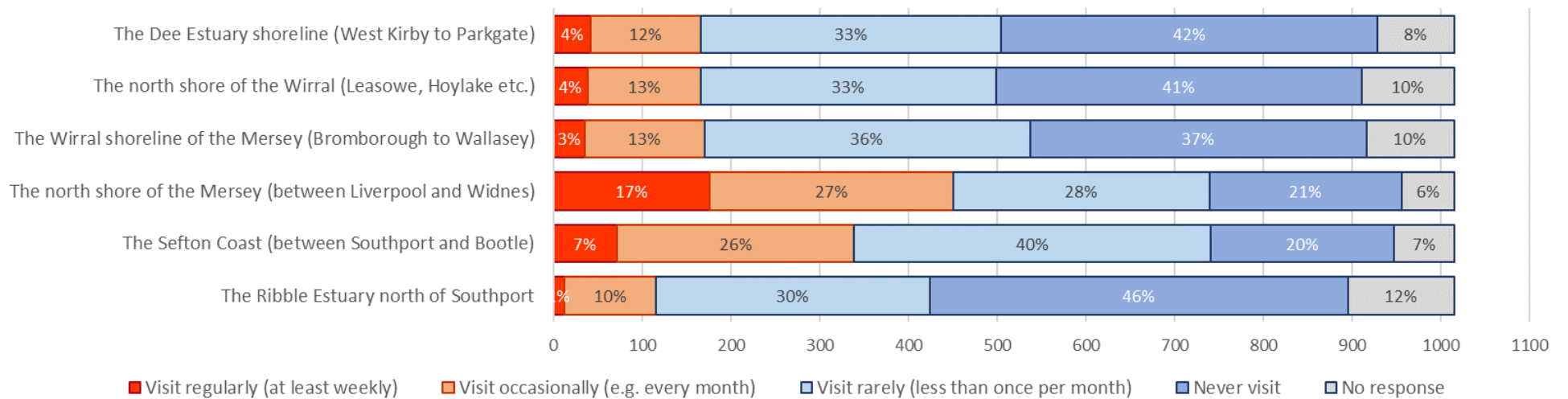
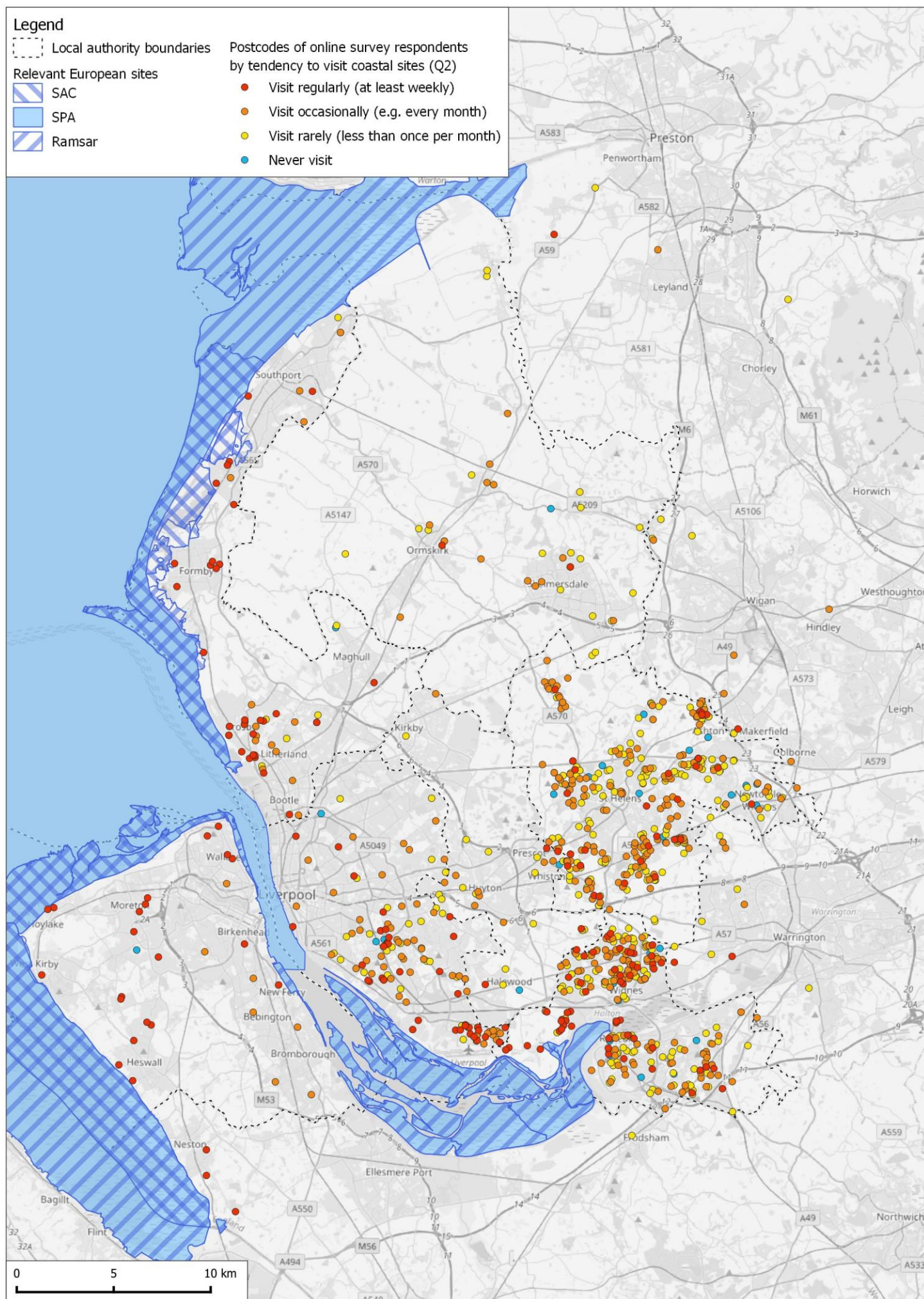


Figure 23: Numbers of respondents visiting different coastal areas (from Q6-11).

Map 19: Postcodes of online survey respondents and tendency to visit the coast



Details on a specific recent visit (Q13-29)

- 5.12 A total of 1,000 respondents were able to think back to the last time they had visited a greenspace and were able to ask questions about it (while 60 interviewees chose to skip questions Q13-Q29 as they could not recall a recent visit).

Named sites recently visited (Q13)

- 5.13 Q13 asked interviewees to name the site most recently visited. A total of 982 respondents named a location and these were reviewed to generate a list of 220 locations. There was inevitably some difficulty in assigning the responses to particular sites as some responses were quite vague (e.g. 'local fields' while others would be very specific 'such as 'Mill Dam Park, Kirby'. Where different names were given for the same place we rationalised the names, for example 'the Dream', 'Sutton Manor Woodland' and 'Sutton Manor Dream' are all likely to refer to the same location. However, where there was some uncertainty or variation in scale we did not assume the same location (for example 'the Mersey Estuary', 'Pickerings Pasture', 'Hale' and 'Hale Lighthouse' were treated as separate locations). There were some locations with similar names, for example there are multiple Victoria Parks in the area, and where necessary the correct location was identified using Q14 (the name of the nearest town or village) to ensure accuracy.
- 5.14 Locations named by at least two respondents are shown in Figure 24, with the size of the text reflecting the frequency with which they were cited. The most popular recently visited locations were Spike Island and Oglet Shore (Table 24). 36 of the named locations were within or provide access to European sites. Of the 982 interviewees who could recall a visit and had named a location, 252 (26%) had potentially visited a European site in the Liverpool City Region as their most recent visit to a greenspace. The total naming any coastal site (i.e. including those outside the European sites in the Liverpool City Region, for example Wigg Island or the Great Orme) was 265 (27%). 36 respondents (4%) named a canal and 681 (69%) named a greenspace that was neither on the coast or a canal. Eccleston Park Golf Course was named by 17 respondents as the site that they had most recently visited, however on the advice of the steering group it is not included in Table 24 or any further analysis due to it being in private ownership and having no formal public access.

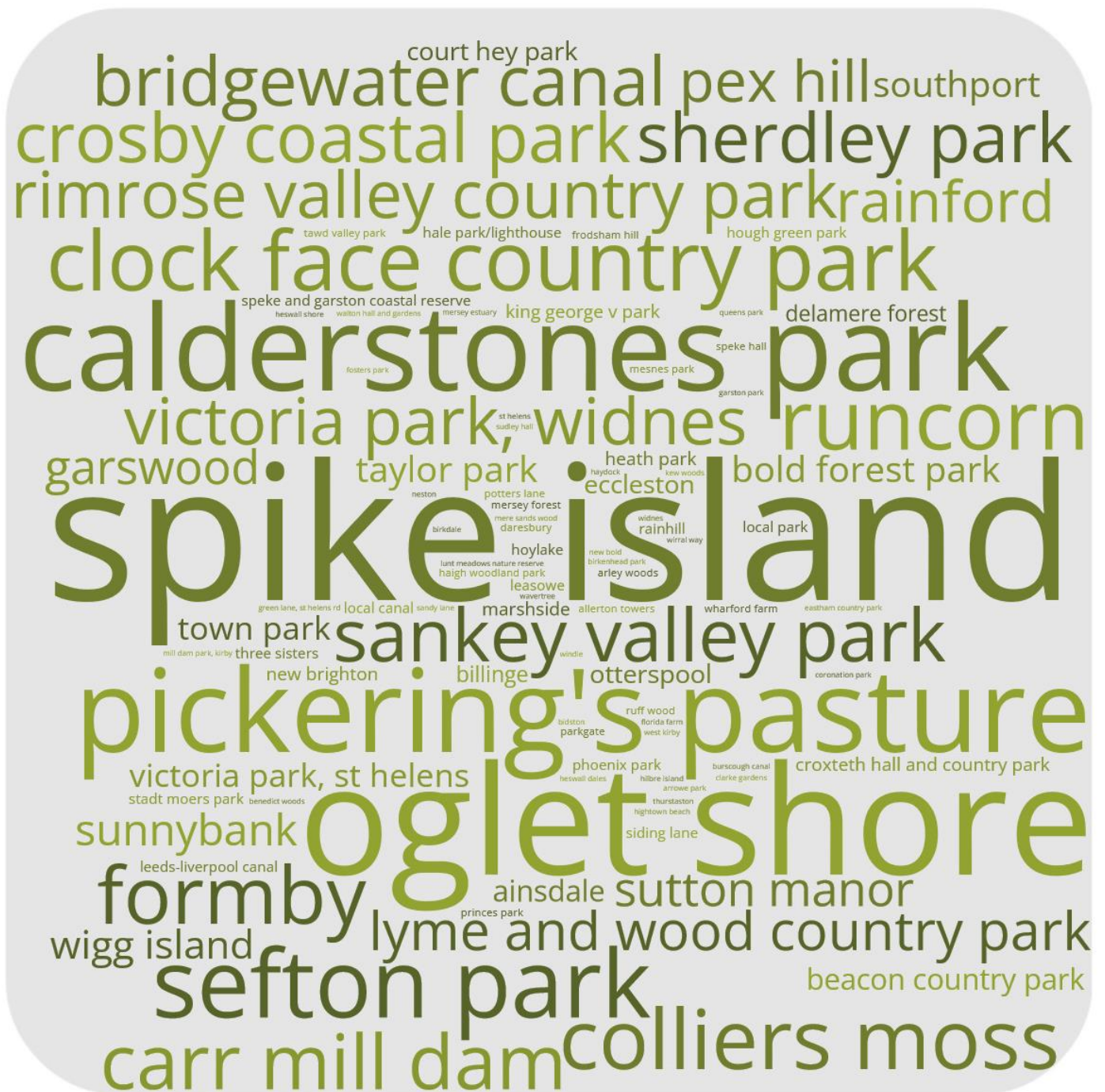


Figure 24: Word cloud depicting sites named by two or more respondents as recently visited (Q13). Size of lettering reflects the frequency with which cited.

Table 24: Specific sites mentioned as recently visited (Q13). Only those sites named by at least 10 respondents are included. Sites in bold are ones that potentially involve visiting one of the relevant European sites within the Liverpool City Region.

Location	Type of site	Number (%)
Spike Island	Coast	56 (5%)
Oglet Shore	Coast	43 (4%)
Sankey Valley Park	Other	41 (4%)
Victoria Park, Widnes	Other	36 (3%)
Calderstones Park	Other	34 (3%)
Pickerings Pasture	Coast	33 (3%)
Sefton Park	Other	27 (3%)
Runcorn	Other	24 (2%)
Clock Face Country Park	Other	24 (2%)
Colliers Moss	Other	24 (2%)
Formby	Coast	23 (2%)
Carr Mill Dam	Other	22 (2%)
Crosby Coastal Park	Coast	20 (2%)
Sherdley Park	Other	20 (2%)
Bridgewater Canal	Canal	20 (2%)
Rimrose Valley Country Park	Other	19 (2%)
Rainford	Other	17 (2%)
Pex Hill	Other	17 (2%)
Lyme and Wood Country Park	Other	16 (2%)
Garswood	Other	14 (1%)
Sutton Manor	Other	14 (1%)
Sunnybank	Other	13 (1%)
Wigg Island	Other	12 (1%)
Victoria Park, St Helens	Other	11 (1%)
Bold Forest Park	Other	11 (1%)
Southport	Coast	11 (1%)
Taylor Park	Other	11 (1%)

- 5.15 Home postcodes of those who named particular inland greenspace sites and that also visited the coast regularly are shown in Map 20. Only those inland sites with at least 10 respondents (that visited the coast) are shown. Given that the respondents do not represent a random sample of visitors to each site we have made no attempt to summarise distances in any way, however the map does provide a useful overview of the kind of catchments for these inland sites and the areas within which each might deflect visitors from the coast.

Legend

- Local authority boundaries
- Inland sites named by at least 10 respondents (Q13) (with matching coloured dots the home postcodes)
- Bridgewater Canal
- Calderstones Park
- Carr Mill Dam
- Clock Face Country Park
- Colliers Moss
- Pex Hill Country Park
- Rimrose Valley Country Park
- Runcorn (Runcorn Hill/Heath)
- Sankey Valley Park
- Sherdley Park
- Sutton Manor
- Victoria Park

0 5 10 km

Activities undertaken on recent visit (Q15)

5.16 A range of activities were undertaken during the recent visit, with many respondents undertaking multiple activities (such as walking and wildlife watching). Activities are summarised in Figure 25. The most common activity was walking without a dog (536 respondents, 55%). A very wide range of 'other' activities were noted (113 respondents, 12%), falling outside the pre-determined categories in the questionnaire. These included voluntary work or similar (11 interviewees); photography (9 interviewees); looking after mental health – including yoga and meditation (8 respondents); watching or taking part in formal sports (6 interviewees); taking children to the playground (5 interviewees) and undertaking surveys (2 interviewees).

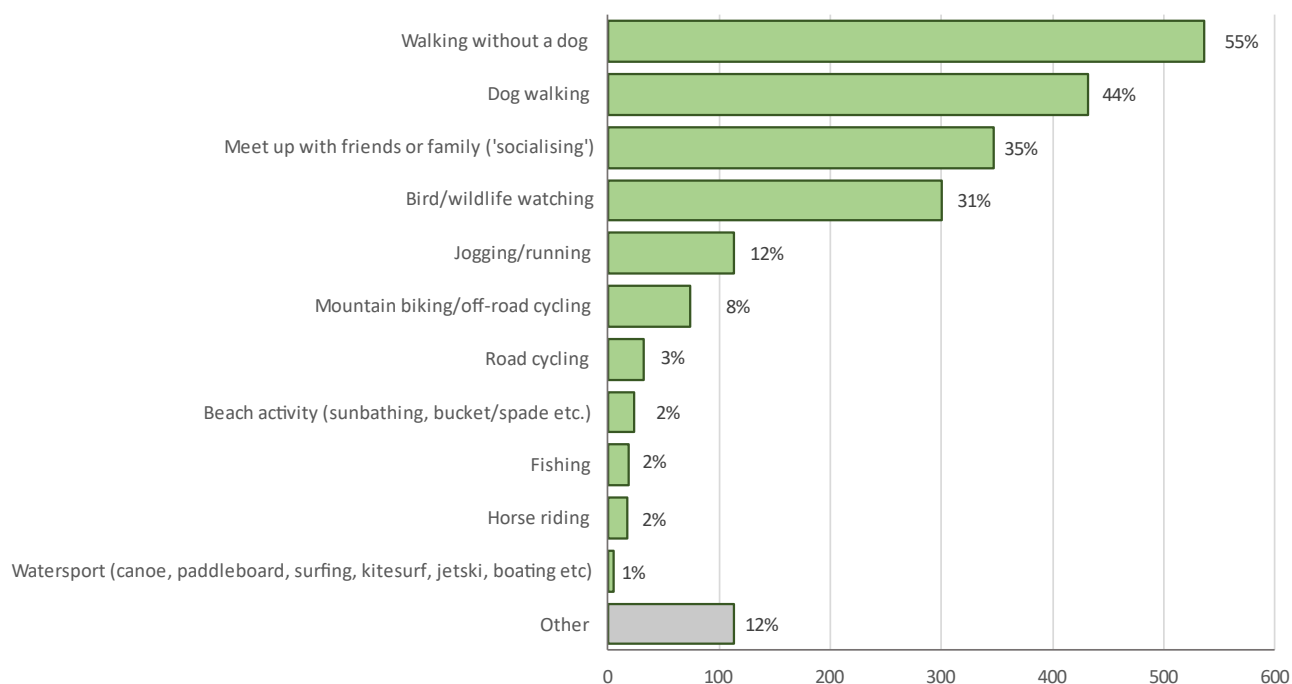


Figure 25: Activities undertaken during recent visits to greenspaces (Q15). Respondents could tick multiple activities; value labels give overall percentage of respondents (all sites combined). Categories as used in the questionnaire.

5.17 Responses are summarised by the broad type of site in Figure 26. It can be seen that the mix of activities is relatively similar at each kind of site, however dog walkers comprise a slightly lower percentage of those visiting the coast compared to other sites and activities such as beach activities and watersports feature more strongly at the coast.

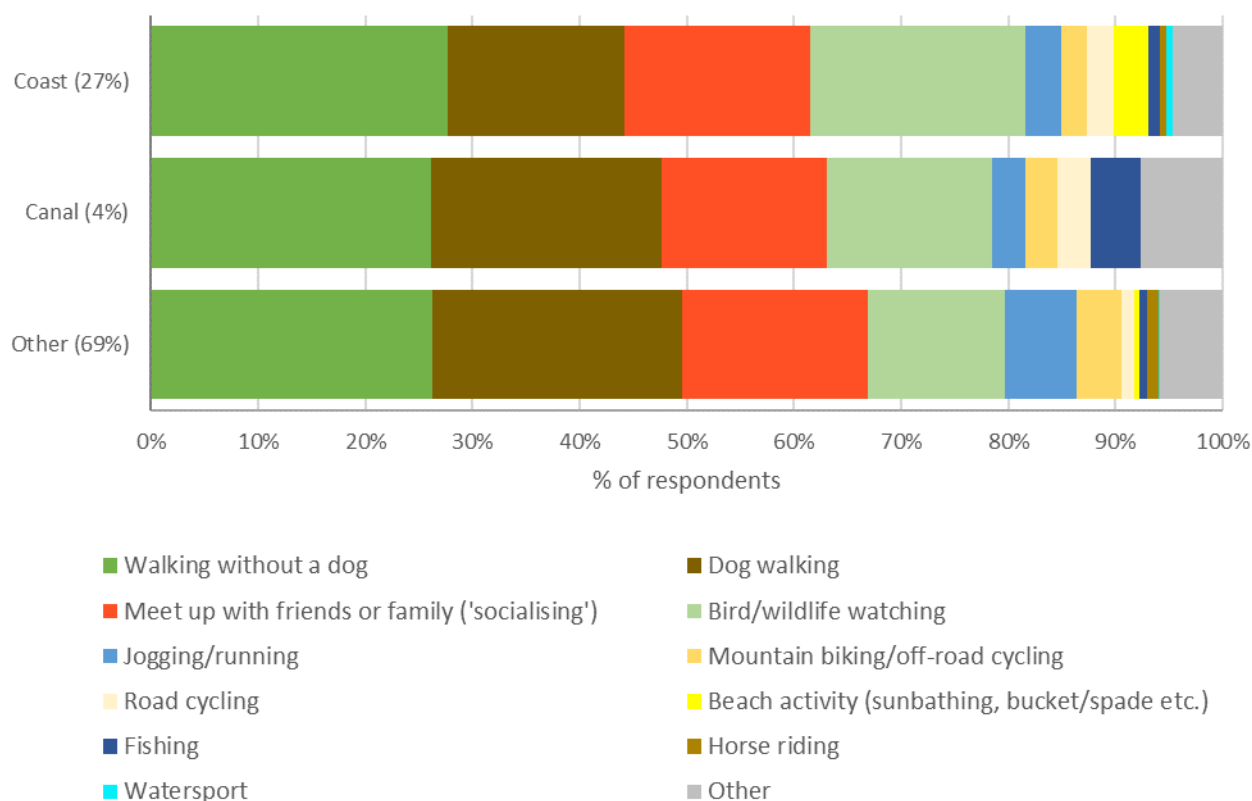


Figure 26: Percentage of respondents undertaking different types of activities at different kinds of site. Value labels on y axis give the overall percentage visiting each kind of site.

5.18 The ten sites with the most respondents undertaking a given activity are listed in Table 25. Spike Island (the most commonly cited site overall) was also the most frequently named site for walking (without a dog), dog walking, meeting up with friends/family, bird/wildlife watching and fishing.

Table 25: Locations where particular activities undertaken – top 10 sites for each activity listed.
Percentages calculated based on overall number of interviewees undertaking that activity.

Walking without a dog	Dog walking	Meet up with friends or family ('socialising')	Bird/wildlife watching	Jogging/running	Mountain biking/off-road cycling
Spike Island (6%)	Spike Island (4%)	Spike Island (8%)	Spike Island (10%)	Colliers Moss (7%)	Sankey Valley Park (9%)
Oglet Shore (4%)	Clock Face Country Park (4%)	Victoria Park, Widnes (6%)	Oglet Shore (8%)	Pickerings Pasture (5%)	Colliers Moss (9%)
Victoria Park, Widnes (4%)	Oglet Shore (4%)	Calderstones Park (6%)	Sankey Valley Park (6%)	Sankey Valley Park (4%)	Spike Island (7%)
Calderstones Park (4%)	Sankey Valley Park (4%)	Sefton Park (3%)	Pickerings Pasture (3%)	Sutton Manor (4%)	Rimrose Valley Country Park (4%)
Sankey Valley Park (4%)	Colliers Moss (3%)	Oglet Shore (3%)	Bridgewater Canal (3%)	Sefton Park (4%)	Calderstones Park (4%)
Pickerings Pasture (4%)	Rainford (3%)	Sankey Valley Park (3%)	Calderstones Park (3%)	Formby (4%)	Garswood (4%)
Sefton Park (3%)	Runcorn (3%)	Runcorn (3%)	Formby (2%)	Garswood (3%)	Siding Lane (3%)
Rimrose Valley Country Park (3%)	Pickerings Pasture (3%)	Crosby Coastal Park (3%)	Colliers Moss (2%)	Spike Island (3%)	Carr Mill Dam (3%)
Colliers Moss (3%)	Crosby Coastal Park (3%)	Clock Face Country Park (3%)	Runcorn (2%)	Bold Forest Park (3%)	Sutton Manor (3%)
Runcorn (2%)	Carr Mill Dam (2%)	Bridgewater Canal (3%)	Victoria Park, Widnes (2%)	Carr Mill Dam (3%)	Delamere Forest (3%)
Road cycling	Beach activity inc. sunbathing	Fishing	Horse riding	Watersports	Other
Pickerings Pasture (12%)	Formby (33%)	Spike Island (32%)	Rainford (11%)	Formby (40%)	Calderstones Park (7%)
Sefton Park (9%)	Crosby Coastal Park (13%)	Bridgewater Canal (11%)	Sunnybank (11%)	Sefton Park (20%)	Pickerings Pasture (5%)
Spike Island (9%)	Clock Face Country Park (8%)	Bold Forest Park (11%)	Colliers Moss (11%)	Birkdale (20%)	Runcorn (4%)
Oglet Shore (9%)	Ainsdale (8%)	Siding Lane (11%)	Sutton Manor (11%)		Victoria Park, Widnes (4%)
Rimrose Valley Country Park (6%)	Rimrose Valley Country Park (4%)	Sankey Valley Park (5%)	Oglet Shore (6%)		Spike Island (4%)
Sankey Valley Park (6%)	Pickerings Pasture (4%)	Sandy Canal (5%)	Sankey Valley Park (6%)		Rimrose Valley Country Park (3%)
Southport (6%)	Southport (4%)	Daresbury (5%)	Runcorn (6%)		Carr Mill Dam (3%)
Garston Park (3%)	Spike Island (4%)	Wharford Farm (5%)	Carr Mill Dam (6%)		Sankey Valley Park (3%)
Formby (3%)	New Brighton (4%)	Local park, unspecified (5%)	Southport (6%)		Sherdley Park (3%)
Garswood (3%)	Hightown Beach (4%)	Rainford (5%)	Viridor Woods (6%)		Formby (3%)

Transport to greenspace sites (Q16)

5.19 The mode of transport used in the recently recalled visit to a greenspace is summarised in Table 26. Overall, around half of all visits (502, 51%) were made on foot. There was however a clear split in that visits to the coast were predominantly car based (66% by car) whereas those to other types of sites, including canals were more often on foot.

Table 26: Number (%) of respondents and mode of transport to greenspace site (for last recalled visit to a named site). Highest value in each column highlighted in bold, red text.

Mode of transport	All visits	Visits to the coast	Visits to canals	Visits to sites excluding coast and canals
On foot	502 (51%)	59 (22%)	23 (64%)	420 (62%)
Car / van ⁹	397 (40%)	175 (66%)	8 (22%)	214 (31%)
Bicycle	49 (5%)	19 (7%)	4 (11%)	26 (4%)
Public transport	18 (2%)	9 (3%)	1 (3%)	8 (1%)
Horse	7 (1%)	1 (<1%)	0 (0%)	6 (1%)
Mobility scooter	1 (<1%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	1 (<1%)
No response	8 (0 %)	2 (0%)	0 (0%)	6 (1%)
Total	982 (100%)	265 (100%)	36 (100%)	681 (100%)

Group size (Q17-18)

5.20 Of the 1,000 respondents that indicated they could recall a recent visit, 996 gave information on the group size. The mean group size was 2.8 people (median = 2) and ranged from 0 to 50, the latter involving a group who were jogging/running. The mean number of dogs per group was 0.8 (median = 0) and ranged from 0 to 14. There was no significant difference in the number of people per group for those visiting the coast compared to non-coastal locations (median number of people for both types of location = 2, Mann-Whitney W=338586, p=0.49). There were however significant differences in the number of dogs, with those visiting the coast tending to have slightly fewer dogs with them (median number of dogs for both types of location = 0, Mann-Whitney W=347809, p=0.003). The mean for coastal sites was 0.6 dogs per group and for non-coastal sites it was 0.8.

⁹ We have included minibuses, motorbikes and horse trailers in this category.

Time of day (Q19)

5.21 Respondents mostly tended to visit sites in the late morning (32%), with early afternoon and evening (both 28%) also popular (see Figure 27). There was little difference between different types of sites, with those who had visited a coastal site, a canal or another type of site giving broadly similar responses. Those visiting canals tended to vary their visit more (19 of the respondents – 53% of those who had named a canal indicated the time of day they visited varied).

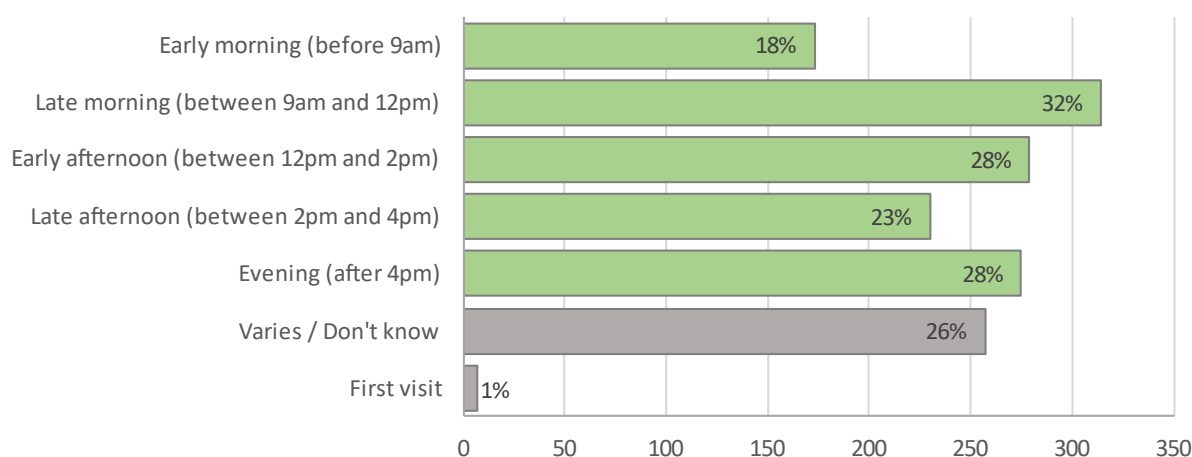


Figure 27: Time of day respondents tended to visit given location (from Q19). Data for those that could recall a recent visit and named a site. Note respondents could give more than one response and therefore percentages do not add up to 100.

Length of visit (Q20)

5.22 Most respondents (395, 40%) indicated their visit lasted 1 to 2 hours. The typical visit duration (across all respondents and all types of site) was around 98 minutes¹⁰, with 67% of visits lasting more than an hour. Visits to the coast were typically longer, with the typical visit duration being closer to 2 hours (118 minutes), and 79% of visits lasted more than an hour.

¹⁰ The question involved categorical responses and these have been converted to a single value (see Table 27) to allow an approximate estimate of typical visit duration.

Table 27: Number (%) of respondents and duration of visit (from Q20). Data for those that could recall a recent visit and named a site.

Visit duration	Approximate single value (mins)	All visits	Visits to the coast	Visits to canals	Visits to sites excluding coast and canals
Less than 30 mins	25	35 (4%)	3 (1%)	1 (3%)	31 (5%)
30 minutes to 1 hour	45	288 (29%)	54 (20%)	15 (42%)	219 (32%)
1 to 2 hours	90	395 (40%)	94 (35%)	11 (31%)	290 (43%)
2 to 3 hours	150	171 (17%)	72 (27%)	5 (14%)	94 (14%)
3 to 4 hours	210	48 (5%)	20 (8%)	0 (0%)	28 (4%)
4 hours +	270	40 (4%)	20 (8%)	4 (11%)	16 (2%)
Don't know/unsure	0	5 (1%)	2 (1%)	0 (0%)	3 (<1%)
Total		982 (100%)	265 (100%)	36 (100%)	681 (100%)
Typical visit duration (mins)		98	118	98	91

Reasons for site choice (Q21)

5.23 The main reason respondents gave for their choice of site was close to home, overall given by 704 respondents (70%). Other common reasons included scenery/variety of views (574 respondents, 57%) and rural feel/wild landscape (454 respondents, 45%). Responses are summarised by type of site in Figure 28. Close to home was particularly important for those visiting the sites away from the coast and canals while scenery/variety of views and near coast/water were particularly important reasons for those visiting the coast.

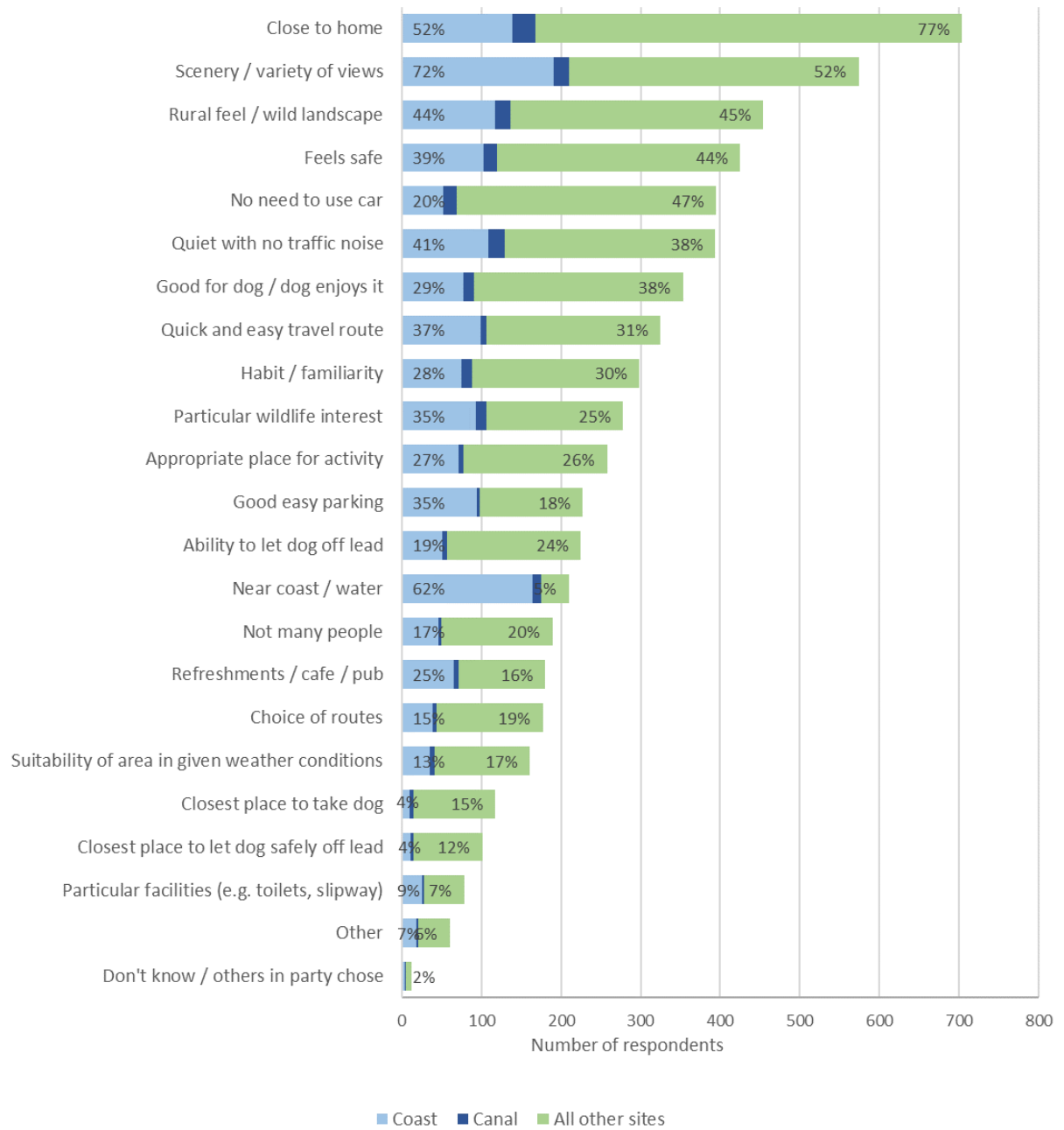


Figure 28: Number of respondents and reasons for site choice, from Q21, split by type of site. Bars correspond to the pre-determined categories in the survey. Data for those that could recall a recent visit and named a site. Value labels give the percentage of respondents for those visiting coast (left) and other sites excluding coast and canals (right).

Information or recommendations used to help plan visit (Q22)

5.24 Relatively few respondents indicated that any information had informed their recent visit to a greenspace, in terms of where they went and what they did (Figure 29). Word of mouth was the most common information source used (mentioned by 254 respondents that named a site they had visited, 26%). There was relatively little difference between the information sources used by those who had named different kinds of site – word of mouth was the most commonly cited information source in all cases (cited by 27% of those who named a coastal site, 33% of those who named a canal and 25% of those visiting other kinds of site).

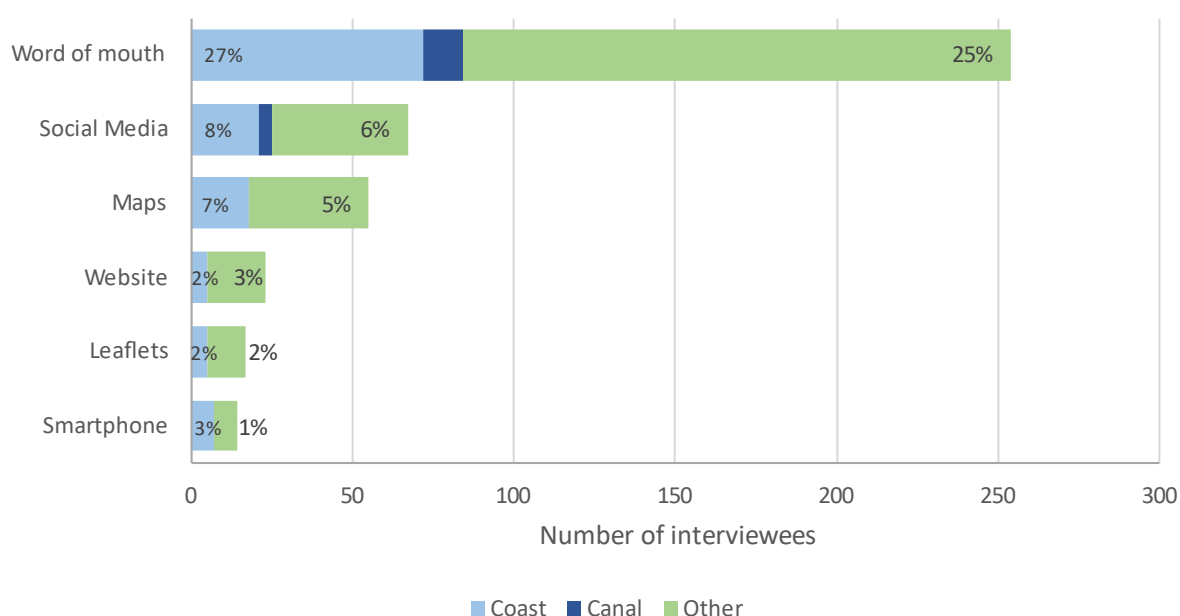


Figure 29: Number of interviewees that indicated different types of information source influenced where they chose to go and what they did during their recent visit (from Q22). Data for those that could recall a recent visit and named a site. Value labels give the percentage of respondents for those visiting coast (left) and other sites excluding coast and canals (right).

5.25 Of those 254 respondents whose visit had been influenced by word of mouth, friends were the main influence (cited by 193 respondents, 76%), with family also important (100 respondents, 39%). Other sources (24 respondents, 9%) were varied and included neighbours, work colleagues, birders and other visitors). 67 respondents cited social media as influencing their visit, with the key source overwhelmingly being Facebook (62 respondents, 93%). Other social media cited included Instagram (15 respondents, 22%) and Twitter (10 respondents, 15%). Of those 23

respondents who had been influenced by a website, 6 respondents (26%) referred to a site-specific website such as the 'Bold Forest Community Group' or 'Calderstones Forever', 3 (13%) referred to a Google search while 2 (9%) had used a local authority site. Smartphone apps were used by 14 respondents in total and specific apps cited included Strava, OS Maps and AllTrails (each cited by 2 respondents, 14%) and Komoot and the National Trust app (each cited by 1 respondent).

Impact of Covid (Q28)

- 5.26 Across all respondents, around half (523, 53%) indicated that there had been no change in their visit patterns, and they visit the named site as much as they did before the pandemic. 307 respondents (31%) answered that they now visit more and 43 (4%) indicated they now visit less. There was no meaningful difference in the responses given for those visiting different kinds of site.

Improvements to sites (Q29)

- 5.27 In Q29 respondents were asked to identify any changes in how the named sites that they had last visited could be better managed for access, responses are summarised in Figure 30. The most common change – across all types of site – related to more bins/less litter (325 respondents, 33%), the other common response was more dog bins (313 respondents, 32%).
- 5.28 Improvements that were identified for the 10 most frequently named sites are given in Appendix 10. Spike Island, Runcorn and Colliers Moss were all locations where a relatively small percentage of interviewees thought no changes were necessary. There were some strong themes for certain sites, for example particular changes at specific sites, identified by at least 50% of the respondents that had visited those sites were: Colliers Moss (more bins/less litter, more dog bins), Clock Face Country Park (more dog bins) and Spike Island (improvements to habitat/scenery).

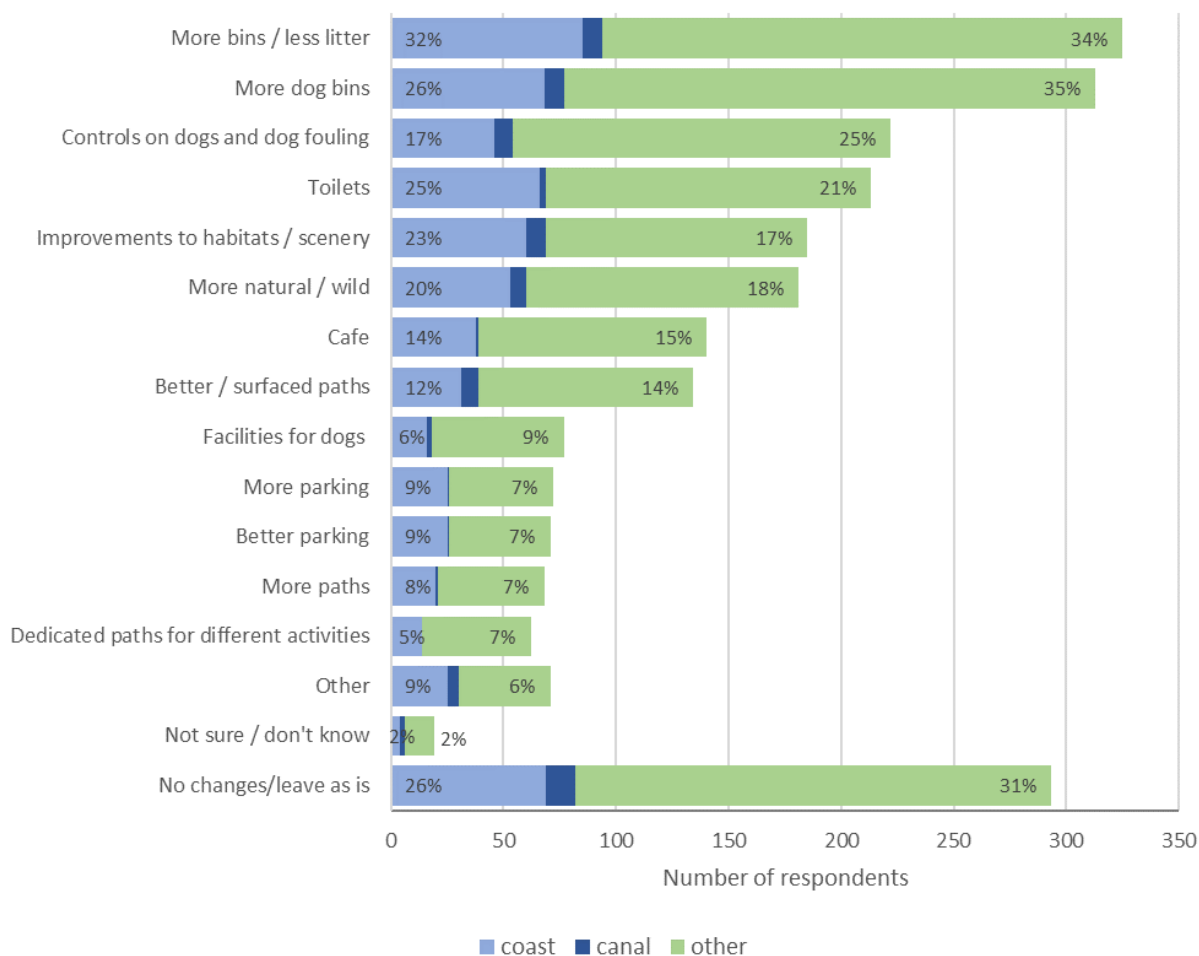


Figure 30: Changes in how named sites could be managed for access, split between coastal sites, canal sites and other types of site. Data for those that could recall a recent visit and named a site. Value labels give the percentage of respondents for those visiting coast (left) and other sites excluding coast and canals (right).

General changes and improvements to greenspaces (Q30-31)

5.29 In Q30, respondents could provide details of another greenspace site they felt could be improved for access so that they would use it more – these sites and improvements were in addition to the responses already made regarding the named greenspace visit recalled in Q13.

5.30 22 sites were mentioned that had not featured in the most recent greenspace visit recalled by interviewees, and therefore potentially relating to sites not recently visited by any respondents. In most cases these were mentioned by just one individual. Fairy Glen (mentioned by 4 respondents), the Halewood Triangle (3 respondents), Moore Nature Reserve (2

respondents) and Chequer Lane Fields (2 respondents) were the only sites mentioned by more than one individual.

- 5.31 Data from questions 29 and 30 were combined to give a table of named sites where respondents had suggested improvements. These data were then filtered to identify improvements suggested to sites away from the coast where the respondent had indicated they tended to visit the coast at least occasionally (i.e. once a month or more frequently, from Q2). These sites and suggested improvements are summarised in Table 28, which essentially highlights improvements to sites that might work to draw people away from the coast. However, not all sites will necessarily be appropriate as SANGs or public open spaces, and not all suggestions made by respondents will be feasible or practical. Sankey Valley Park, Sutton Manor and Runcorn are the sites mentioned the most times. More bins/less litter and more dog bins are a consistent theme across most sites. Improvements to parking were highlighted for Carr Mill Dam and Sutton Manor.

Table 28: Suggested improvements to specific sites away from the coast, identified by those who tend visit the coast (including beaches and estuaries) at least occasionally. Sites named in Q13 or Q30 and suggested improvements in Q29 and Q31. Those who visit the coast at least occasionally filtered using responses in Q2. Only sites named at least 10 times included. Percentages drawn from the number of times site named. The most common improvements are listed to the left of the table. Red values reflect those of 25% or more.

Site name	Number of times named	% suggesting more bins / less litter	% suggesting more dog bins	% suggesting toilets	% suggesting improvements to habitats / scenery	% suggesting a café	% suggesting more natural / wild	% suggesting controls on dogs and dog fouling	% suggesting better / surfaced paths	% suggesting more parking	% suggesting better parking	% suggesting more paths	% suggesting dedicated paths for different activities	% suggesting facilities for dogs	% suggesting other improvements
Sankey Valley Park	25	40	32	24	32	20	24	28	28	0	4	12	8	4	4
Sutton Manor	20	65	55	75	15	75	5	40	15	70	60	10	15	10	10
Runcorn	18	33	33	11	22	0	33	17	17	6	11	0	0	17	22
Clock Face Country Park	15	27	53	33	7	27	13	7	27	0	13	0	0	7	0
Calderstones Park	14	36	29	14	21	0	21	21	7	0	7	0	0	14	7
Pex Hill	14	43	43	14	14	14	21	21	0	0	0	14	0	7	21
Sherdley Park	14	36	29	64	43	57	7	7	7	0	0	7	14	7	7
Victoria Park, Widnes	14	14	14	21	0	0	7	7	0	7	7	0	7	0	7
Bridgewater Canal	13	31	23	23	38	23	23	31	15	15	15	15	15	8	15
Carr Mill Dam	13	23	54	54	8	15	15	23	23	54	31	23	23	8	8
Colliers Moss	12	58	50	0	33	0	33	25	33	0	8	0	0	0	8
Rimrose Valley Country Park	11	55	55	36	18	9	36	18	18	0	0	0	0	9	9

6. Discussion

Key findings

- 6.1 The results provide a snapshot of visitor use of the coast and inland greenspaces across the Liverpool City Region. The results are particularly valuable in that they provide comparable data for different parts of the coast, different types of sites and encompass a wide geographic area.
- 6.2 The vehicle counts show the marked variation in the numbers of visitors throughout the year (more than a four-fold increase between the lowest and highest counts) and highlight the concentration of vehicles at Southport, the Formby area of the Sefton coast, Liverpool, Wallasey and West Kirby. It is noteworthy that even on the busy bank holiday days, only around a half of all the estimated car park spaces were in use at the time of the count, suggesting that the number of parking spaces is not – at least at present – necessarily putting a ceiling on visitor numbers.
- 6.3 The median count of 1,924 vehicles and the average number of people per vehicle of 2.1 (based on the average number of people in the interviewed groups that had travelled to the coast by car) would suggest that at any one time there are typically around 4,040 people on the coast (that had travelled by car). Given a typical dwell time to the coast of 87 minutes (and assuming there are 12 hours in a day within which people visit) would suggest that there are potentially around 33,500 people on average visiting the coast per day (by car). Clearly these extrapolations are very basic, but they indicate the potential scale of current use of the coast.
- 6.4 The visitor counts undertaken as part of the interviews provide metrics on visitor numbers at the specific count times/locations and provide the potential for any of the visitor interview data to be scaled up to account for all visitors using the site. On average, 26 people per hour were counted by the surveyors during the winter, at the 19 survey points on the coast. The data from the potential SANGs reflect a higher level of use, with an average of around 34 people counted per hour across the 19 survey points. These totals reflect a high level of use and some potential SANG sites such as Spike Island, Southport Botanic Gardens and Croxteth Hall and Country Park are already clearly quite busy.

- 6.5 The interview data provide results from a random sample of people at each location. The comparison between the European sites and the potential SANG sites show that people tend to visit the European sites for longer, visits tend to be a little less frequent and a higher proportion of visitors arrive by car. Visitors undertake longer walks at the European sites and the scenery/views are particularly important factors influencing the choice of site.
- 6.6 The postcode data reflect a wide spread of use for the coast and the Sefton Coast clearly has a strong and particular draw that is different to the Mersey. The SANGs postcodes typically reflect clusters of postcodes around each of the potential SANG sites where the surveys took place. The results show the often very local use of these greenspaces in comparison to the coast.
- 6.7 The online survey provides different data in that it includes people that potentially do not frequently visit greenspaces or visit them very infrequently. The survey also supplements the on-site data, bringing more information on popular greenspaces and the potential improvements that might be relevant. It is noteworthy that for over a quarter of respondents (27%), the last visit they had made (and could recall) to a greenspace site involved a visit to the coast.
- 6.8 Key metrics from the on-site surveys are summarised in Table 29.

Table 29: Summary of key metrics from the on-site surveys.

Metric	European sites	SANGs	All
Number of survey points	19	19	38
Total hours of fieldwork	464	304	768
Tally data: mean number of people per group	2.0	1.8	1.9
Tally data: mean number of dogs per group	0.6	0.5	0.6
Tally data: mean number of people per hour	34.1	34.3	34.3
Tally data: mean number of dogs per hour	10.6	10.2	10.2
Number of interviews	1,562	1,040	2,602
% interviewees on day visit from home	95%	98%	96%
% interviewees with main activity dog walking	41%	54%	46%
% interviewees with main activity walking	40%	33%	37%
% interviewees visiting at least once a day	19%	29%	23%
% interviewees arriving by car	69%	55%	63%
Median route length of interviewees	2.6 km	1.9 km	2.3 km
Median distance from postcode to survey location	5.3 km	1.3 km	3.0 km
75 th percentile distance from postcode to survey location	14.6 km	3.2 km	8.6 km

Limitations

- 6.9 The visitor surveys have been carefully planned to allow comparable and systematic data that can provide a comprehensive evidence base to inform the RMS and a robust baseline for future surveys and monitoring. The sample sizes provide a large dataset and are directly comparable (or more comprehensive) than visitor surveys used to inform recreation mitigation approaches at other European sites around the country (e.g. Liley et al., 2020; Liley and Panter, 2022). The combination of surveys at alternative greenspace sites undertaken simultaneously with data from European sites at the scale undertaken here is unique compared to the evidence base gathered for other mitigation schemes. The only limitations to flag relate to the weather and the distribution of the online survey.
- 6.10 With the survey work carefully planned within specific time windows, survey effort was adjusted where possible to avoid particularly bad weather conditions, such as storms or heavy, continuous rain. As a result, no visitor surveys were attempted on days with continuous rain. At the European sites there was no rain at all during the survey work at 4 sites and for many other sites there was some slight rain or showers during a small part of the survey work, mostly during the winter surveys. 10 different 2-hour sessions (out of 232 sessions in total at the European sites) took place during continuous rain, these related to sessions during the winter at Marshside, Crosby North, Otterspool Park and Promenade, Speke and Garston Coastal Reserve, Oglet Bay and Pickerings Pasture. At the SANG sites, there was no rain during any of the survey work at 10 locations, and at all locations more than half the fieldwork took place without any rain. There was heavy continuous rain for 2 of the 2-hour survey sessions (152 sessions in total at the SANGs), these were at Sankey Valley Park and at Croxteth Hall & Country Park.
- 6.11 The online survey clearly had a varied level of response between authorities (see Table 23) and this potentially reflects variations across the area in how the survey was promoted. The number of responses from Wirral, Knowsley and West Lancashire were particularly low. It is inevitable that coverage would be patchy. For this reason, the results should not be treated as representative of a random sample of local residents nor allow direct comparison between residents of different authorities. Instead, the results are most useful in supplementing the data from the on-site interviews, for example in highlighting potential improvements to greenspaces.

Implications

- 6.12 The survey results will feed into the RMS, which will set out an approach to mitigation so local authorities can rule out adverse effects on integrity as a result of the cumulative, in-combination effects of housing growth and recreation impacts on European sites.

- 6.13 One of the key considerations relates to where housing growth will have an impact and trigger likely significant effects in terms of recreation use. The postcode data from the on-site surveys provide the necessary data and these will allow a zone of influence to be determined in the RMS.

- 6.14 The use of the 75th percentile from postcode data (i.e. distance between home postcode and interview location) applied to the European site boundary has become the standard basis by which to define a zone of influence from postcode data (see Liley, et al., 2021 for discussion). The use of the 75th percentile means the zone encompasses the area where the majority of people originate yet does not extend to include outliers and those coming from particularly far afield (which are often infrequent visitors).

- 6.15 Table 22 gives the summary statistics for the postcode data and the 75th percentile for the postcode data, including for a range of subsets of the data. Overall, for those visiting the European sites, the 75th percentile was 14.6 km (all interviewees) and 12.6 km (those on a short visit directly from home). Taking a more nuanced approach there were significant differences for different parts of the coast, for example the 75th percentile was 27.1 km for those interviewed at the Sefton Coast/Ribble Estuary, 15.3 km for the Dee Estuary, 6.3 km for the North Wirral and Mersey Narrows and 6.1 km for the Mersey.

- 6.16 The survey results also provide a range of data useful to inform design and implementation of mitigation measures. These could include measures on the European sites themselves. For example, the results from Q22 in the on-site survey show that almost half of interviewees (46%) were either unaware of any habitats or species that might be affected by people visiting the site, or were unable to name any. Measures that raise awareness and influence behaviour (e.g. putting dogs on leads where there is a risk of disturbance to birds) may therefore be relevant. Particular locations where there were low levels of awareness (70% or more of interviewees unaware of any habitats or species that might be affected by people visiting the site, or were unable to

name any) were: Hesketh Out Marsh, Crosby south, Otterspool Park and Promenade and Oglet Bay. The route data also provide useful information to support mitigation measures. These data can be filtered by activity and used to identify locations to target interventions such as ranger time or new signage.

- 6.17 Another key potential element of mitigation relates to the role and provision of alternative sites that might work to provide opportunities for recreation away from the coast. It is clear that the coast has a particular draw, especially the Sefton Coast area and that people are prepared to travel to reach sites that offer a particular experience, with scenery/views particularly important for those visiting the coast (main reason for site choice for 38% of interviewees at coastal sites). It is perhaps telling that many interviewees at the coast, when asked which location they would have visited instead (if they could not visit the location where the interview took place), gave other coastal locations. Furthermore, some activities only take place on the coast¹¹. The experience that people get from visiting the coast may therefore be hard to replicate.
- 6.18 Nonetheless, the survey results from potential SANG sites do highlight the role these sites play in recreation provision and suggest there is a role for alternative sites in the RMS. For example, Figure 15 and Figure 16 clearly show some cross-over between use of the coast and inland sites. In total, 6% of those interviewed at European sites indicated they also visit Sefton Park, and sites such as Crosby Coastal Park, Formby and West Kirby feature in the list of other locations used by those interviewed on the potential SANG sites.
- 6.19 The route data (e.g. Map 13) show how visitor use spreads from the survey points and there is some overlap between the coast and inland sites in some areas – such as the two survey points at Lydiate (points 22 and 23) and West Kirby. Routes tend to be longer at the coast and the plot of route lengths against size of site (Figure 13) suggests that larger sites are necessary to accommodate the scale of walk that visitors are undertaking at the coast.
- 6.20 Many of the potential SANG sites are already well visited and it will be important to assess the extent to which such sites can draw additional visitors, prior to any inclusion in the RMS. The on-site survey and online survey both generate a range of responses around improvements to sites

¹¹ Nearly 10% of interviewees at the coast were undertaking activities such as beach activities, swimming, watersports etc. that were not recorded at potential SANGs, see Table 13.

that might work to increase use or draw visitors. Measures that address litter and dog fouling and make the sites feel welcoming and appealing places to visit will clearly play a role. Scenery and proximity to water are likely to be important in drawing people away from the coast and larger sites or those where longer walks are possible are also likely to work best.

- 6.21 The survey data highlights how passionate many people are about these greenspaces in and around the Liverpool City Region. The coast and potential SANG sites provide for a wide range of recreation use that has important benefits for health, well-being and the local economy. The postcode maps and route maps reflect the complex overlaps between where people live, where they go and what they do. Ultimately these maps reflect a network of multi-functional greenspaces that fulfil a range of roles including nature conservation and recreation. It will be for the RMS to ensure that the necessary protection is afforded to the nature conservation sites while providing for, and enhancing access provision for local residents.

- 6.22 Ongoing monitoring is recommended in order to identify any changes in visitor patterns over time, for example due to mitigation measures that have been implemented, the cost-of-living crisis, climate change or any lasting changes in recreation habits that have emerged due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

- 6.23 The vehicle counts would be quick and easy to repeat and the method works well in capturing total visitor numbers (at least arriving by car) simultaneously across a wide area. As such there is merit in this survey being used as a baseline and the survey repeated in the future, perhaps every 1 or 2 years to give trends in access and highlight which areas of the coast are seeing changes in visitor use. The vehicle counts could be supplemented with observations of activities at a selection of vantage points along the route, for example, counting the number of people and the number of dogs on/off lead at particularly sensitive locations. Such vantage point counts can easily be made from some car parks or count locations where there is a view of an extensive stretch of coast, and such data can provide information on types of access and visitor behaviour.

- 6.24 The on-site interviews with visitors could be conducted using the same questionnaire at selected sites as needed in the future – repeating the survey at key intervals (e.g. every 5 or 10 years) provides a means of checking visitor origins, travel patterns, awareness and gathering views about management of the coast.

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