

# **Summary Of Public Consultation**

## **Alice Park Skate Park Proposal**

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## **Background To The Survey**

Following the receipt of a petition in 2013 of 572 signatories calling for a new skate park in the east of Bath, on 14<sup>th</sup> May 2014, B&NES cabinet approved an allocation of £100,000 to the costs of the scheme as part of a programme of wider capital works designed to improve the quality of parks and play provision in the district. In August 2014, the original petitioner of the scheme also offered to fundraise additional funds for the scheme to help deliver a higher specification facility and a target of an additional £50,000 was set.

The Council undertook preparatory research into suitable locations and after settling on Alice Park as a suitable venue, commissioned skate park designer, Canvas Spaces Ltd ('Canvas'), to produce designs for an area next to the existing playground in the park. This location is close to the other family facilities in the park and would complement the existing play area and junior cycle track.

The consultation was held in November 2014 to gather comments and feedback on the proposal. Two design options that could be built within the initial project budget of £100,000 were available to view online as options 1 and 2, and A3 images of these designs were displayed at three public drop-in sessions in Alice Park. Given the commitment from the London Road Partnership to fundraise an additional £50,000 to contribute to the scheme, a further design (based on a £150,000 budget) was produced by Canvas. This was added to the public displays at the final two public drop-in sessions (30<sup>th</sup> November and 6<sup>th</sup> December) – and presented as the preferred option in the event that additional funds could be raised by the London Road Partnership.

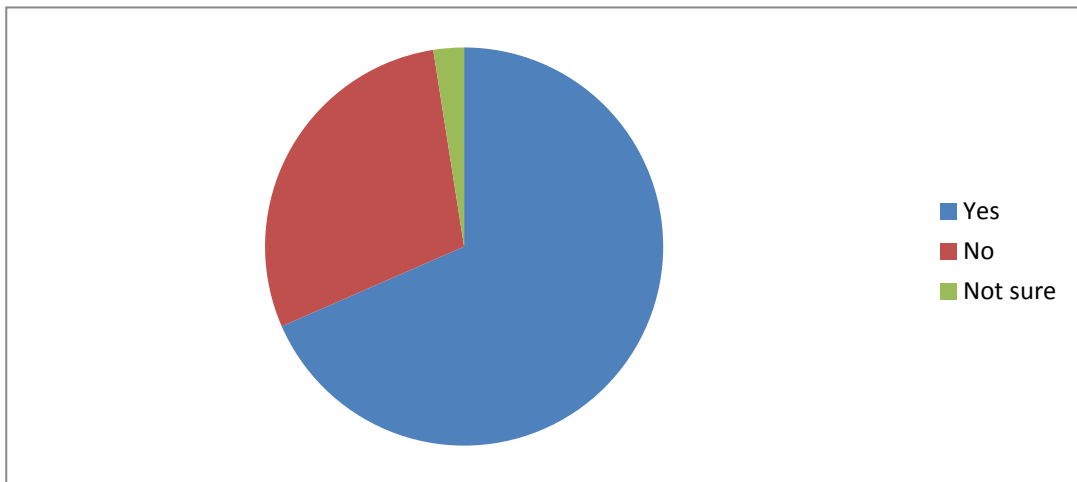
Respondents were given the option of giving feedback via an online survey, paper surveys, completing a feedback form posted to local houses or by sending an email or letter to council officers. This was designed to provide a wide range of means of communication to make the process as accessible as possible, but may have led to some duplication of responses where members of the public responded via more than one of these methods. However, this cannot be quantified due to some responders choosing to remain anonymous.

Responses by letter and email and completed online surveys which were received, and registered during the consultation period were counted into the survey results. However, because of their 'open' nature, letters and emails did not always address each individual question posed in the online survey, and so these were recorded as '*not knowns*' for some of the questions covered in the following pages. It was also noted that not every question in the online and paper survey was answered. Where relevant, these were also recorded as '*not knowns*'.

## Survey Results

There were a total of 282 responses to the public consultation with an overall majority of 2:1 responses in favour of the skate park.

**Question: Are you in favour of a skate / BMX / scooter facility in Alice Park?**



Yes	193	68%
No	82	29%
Not sure	7	3%

In summary:

From the survey results, the main reasons cited for favouring the development of the Skatepark were:

- A Skatepark would promote healthy lifestyles and physical challenges
- It would promote a sense of community – through the social side of skate parks
- There are not enough facilities for young people in the east of Bath
- A Skatepark would keep young people occupied and out of trouble
- It would create a safe place for children to develop a sense of independence

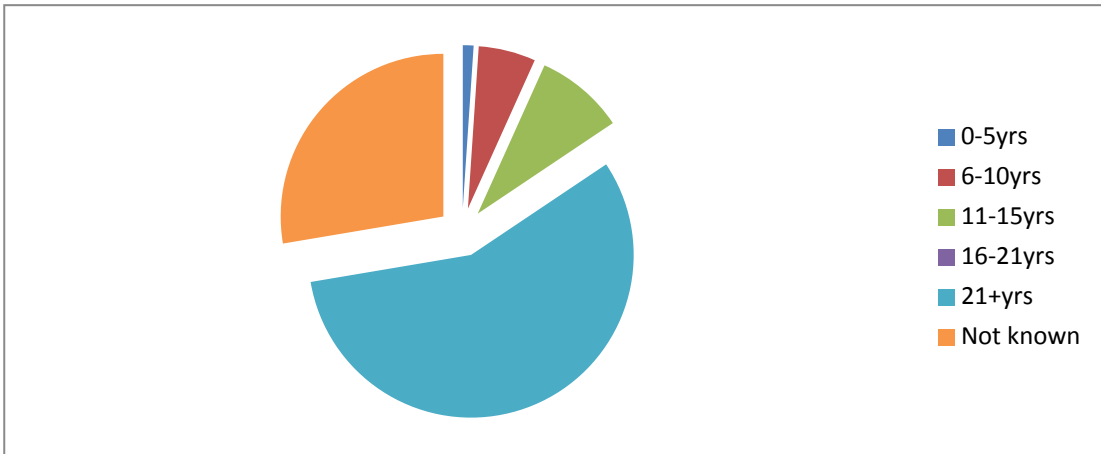
From a minority of responses (those not in favour of the skate park), the main objections to the scheme were that a new skate park would:

- Cause increased parking problems in the vicinity of the park
- Lead to a change to the landscape and loss of tranquil aspects of the park
- Contribute to more people urinating publically in bushes and against trees rather than paying the recently introduced toilet charge of 20p
- Bring increased anti-social behaviour

- Create an increase in noise

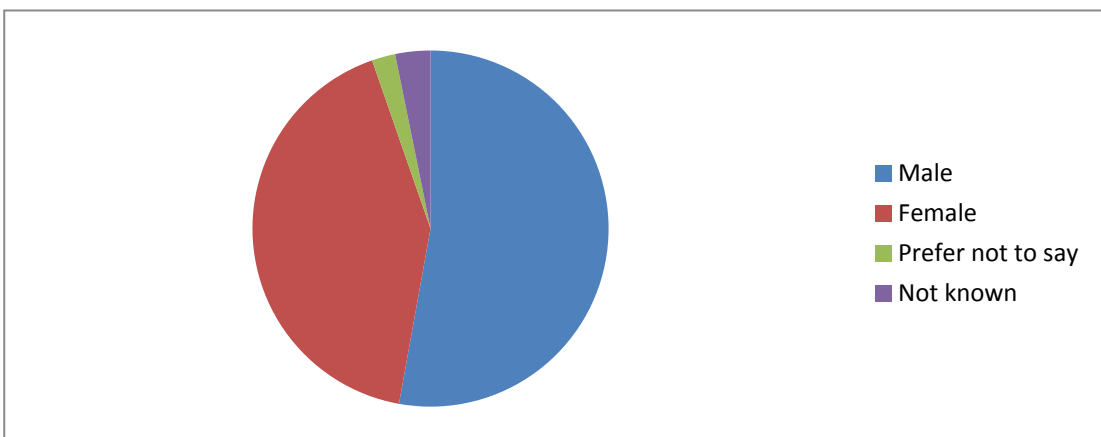
In order to understand the demographics of those surveyed, data was collected on age and gender:

**Question: What is your age band?**



0-5yrs	3
6-10yrs	16
11-15yrs	25
16-21yrs	0
21+yrs	160
Not known	78

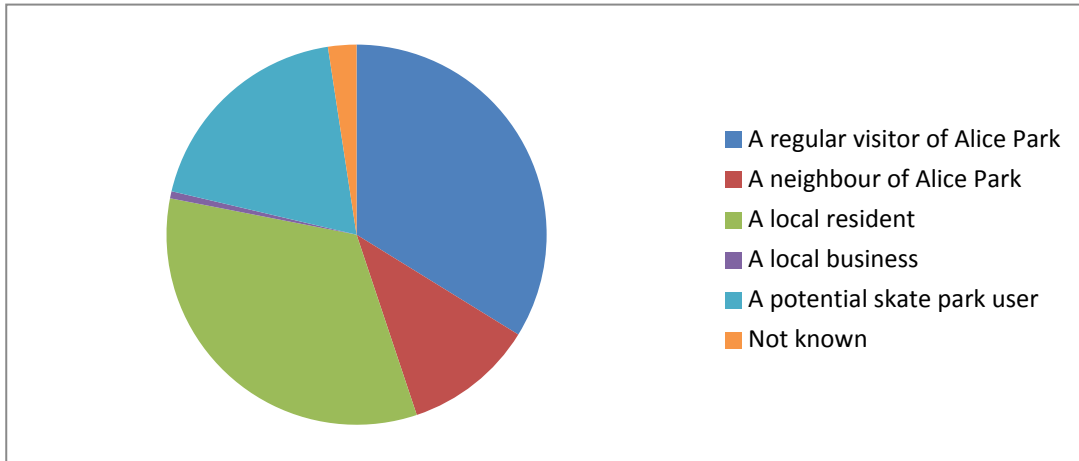
**Question: What is your gender?**



Male	149
Female	118
Prefer not to say	6
Not known	9

Further questions sought to identify respondents existing relationship with the park:

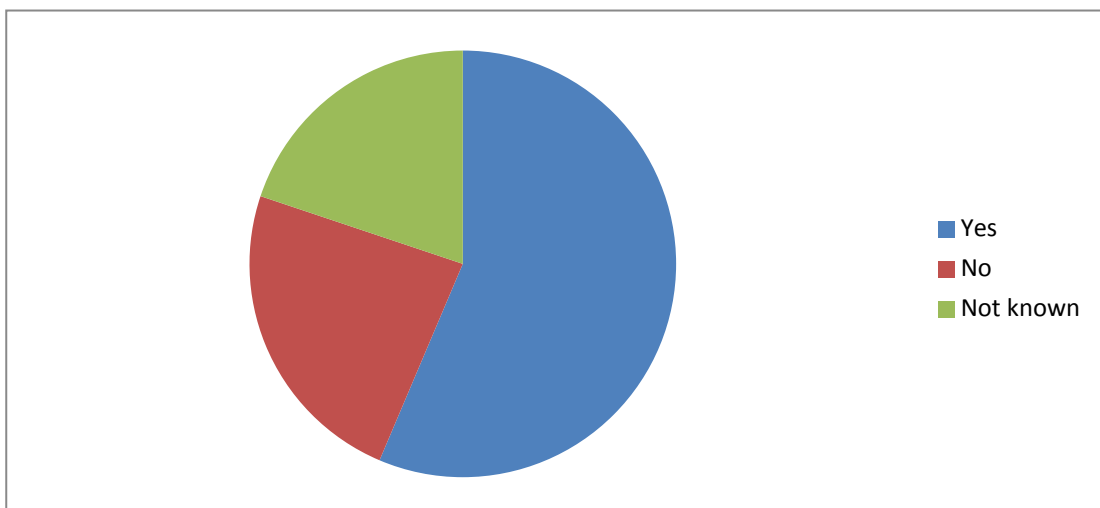
**Question: Please tell us which of the following you are (select all that apply):**



A regular visitor to Alice Park	168
A neighbour of Alice Park	55
A local resident	165
A local business	3
A potential skate park user	94
Not known	12

And the likelihood of their using a new skate park facility:

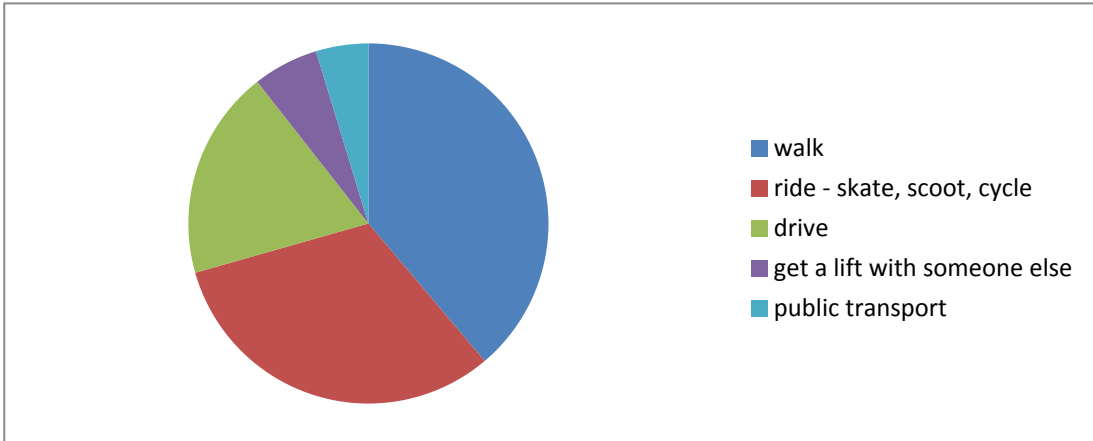
**Question: Are you likely to use the skate park?**



Yes	159
No	67
Not Known	56

Next, council officers wanted to understand potential travel patterns associated with the development of a new facility:

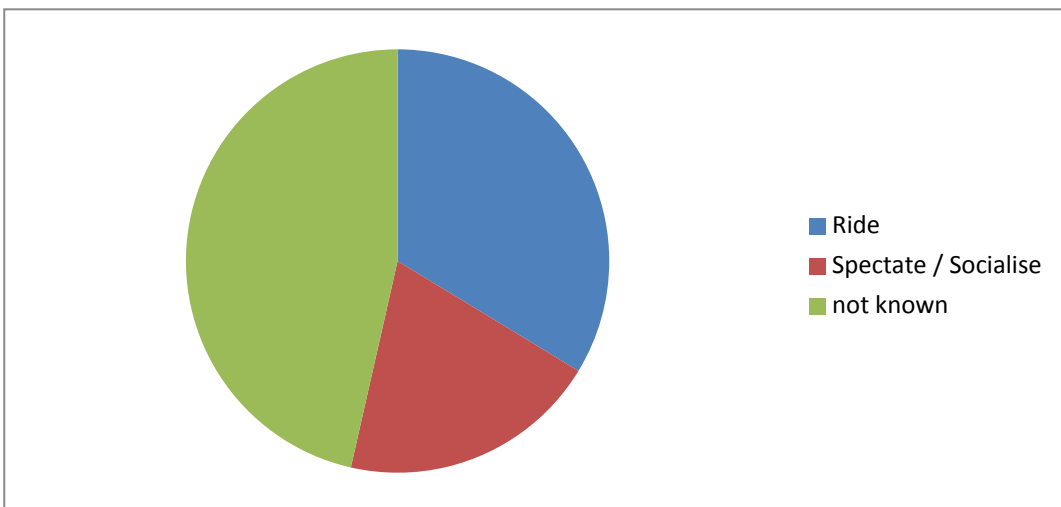
**Question: If you are likely to use the skate park, how would you usually travel there?**



Walk	33
Ride - skate, scooter, cycle	27
Drive	16
Get a lift with someone else	5
Public transport	4

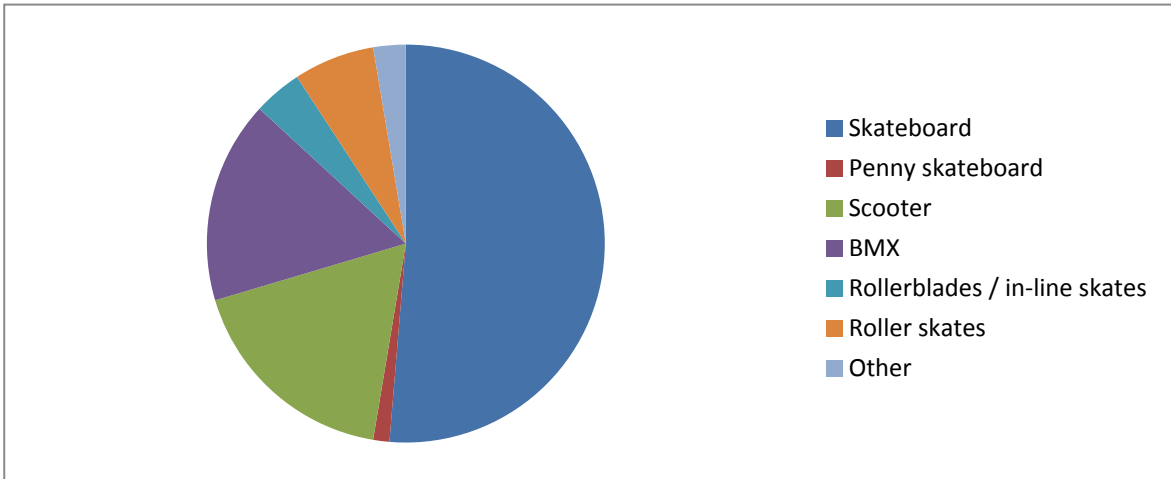
And then to understand how people might use the space, to better inform its design:

**Question: If you are likely to use the skate park, what will you do there?**



Ride	95
Spectate / Socialise	56

**Question: If you are likely to use the skate park, what do you ride?**



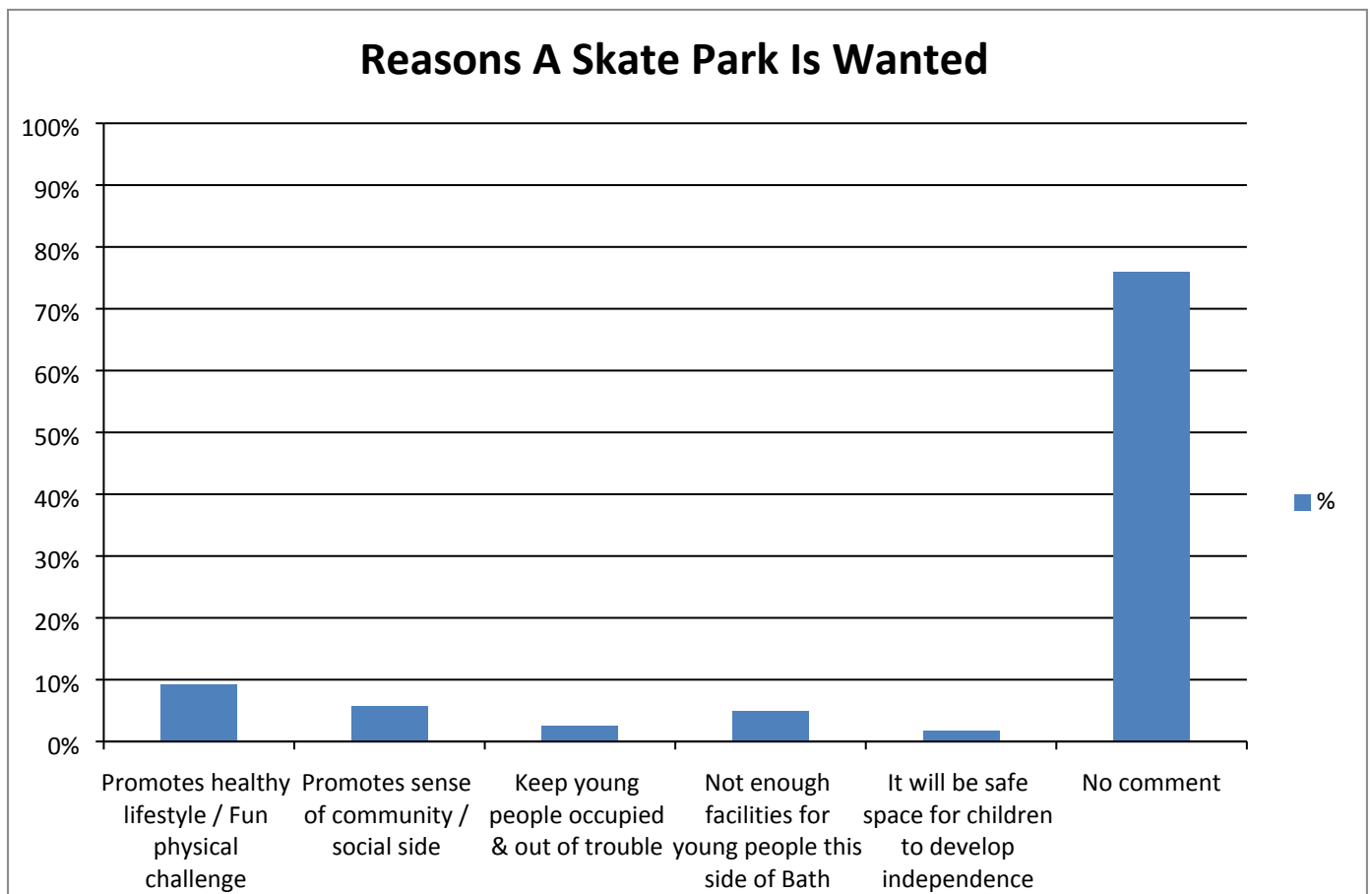
Skateboard	78
Penny skateboard	2
Scooter	27
BMX	25
Rollerblades / in-line skates	6
Roller skates	10
Other	4

## Support for the Scheme

Besides posing a series of questions, the survey and feedback form provided opportunities for the public to submit their own comments and thoughts with sections within the forms for ‘any other comments’.

Please note that not all returned surveys included comments on all subjects, so where appropriate, in these cases, a ‘No Comment’ statement was recorded.

A number of respondents used these sections to express their support for the scheme, as below:



9% of respondents suggested that a new Skatepark would help promote healthy lifestyles; just under 6% indicated that a skate park would help to promote a sense of community; 5% of responses expressed the view that there is not enough for young people to do and just under 2% felt that it would provide a safe space for children to develop a sense of independence.

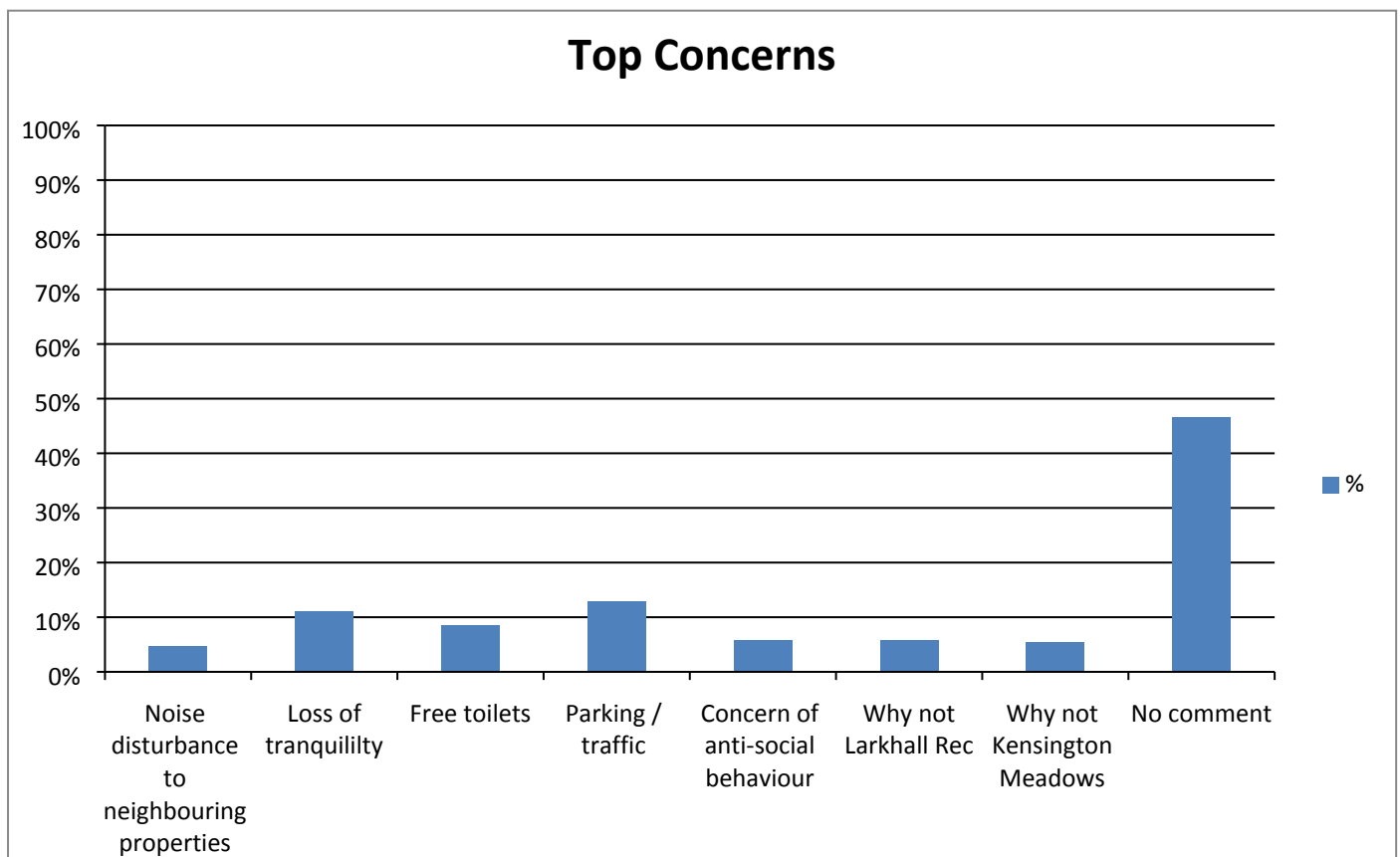
One of the prime reasons for building a skate park is to encourage families with a range of children to visit the park and to keep young people playing outside for as long as possible. Bath has a higher than average level of childhood obesity, and every opportunity is being sought to



encourage a pattern of healthy lifestyles. Such lifestyles will carry them into adulthood with physical activity and social interaction at its core. It has been shown that children will play outdoors until the age of 11 with little encouragement needed, but after that age, it is the family involvement that will set a pattern for life. With parents asking for more for their older children to do in the park, the new skate park would assist parents by encouraging their children to go outdoors and stay active.

## Concerns About The Scheme And Recommended Actions

As anticipated, the surveys and feedback forms provided a good opportunity to record, and quantify, concerns about the scheme. A wide range of differing comments were recorded, but they have been grouped into categories, which are shown in the chart below:



As the chart shows, many of these concerns relate specifically to the development of a skate park in Alice Park, but a number of respondents also used the survey, and the public consultations, to comment upon pre-existing issues affecting the site.

## **Noise disturbance to neighbouring properties and Loss of tranquillity**

Around 5% of respondents expressed a concern about noise disturbance to neighbouring properties and a further 11% were concerned about a 'loss of tranquillity' associated with the proposed Skatepark.

In response to early concerns about potential noise, officers from B&NES have commissioned an independent acoustic consultant to undertake a noise survey in the park. The results predict no significant increase in noise if the skate park were to be built.

The proposed new skate park would be designed in concrete, with ramps and street features, and then landscaped around the edge to soften the vista across the park. Given Canvas' specialism in Skate park design, surrounding landscaping was not included in their brief for designing the space (and was therefore not included in the public designs). However, it is clear from sentiments expressed by users of the park that a sensitive design for additional landscaping works (around the skate park) would need be developed; and this would form part of a final scheme.

## **Free Toilets**

The survey found that a number of those opposed to the scheme are concerned that users of the skate park would shun the pay-to-use toilets provided in the park, in favour of urinating in the bushes and other public areas.

Investigating this potential impact was beyond the scope of this consultation, but as with all other incidences of anti-social behaviour, there are measures in place to prevent them. As elsewhere, incidences of such anti-social behaviour need to be reported to the Police and B&NES Council Connect contact centre, to enable the collecting of statistics and to inform an appropriate response. Were such issues to occur, they would then need to be addressed appropriately.

However, discussions held during the public consultation also suggested that the presence of more people overall in the park would help to deter inappropriate activity.

## **Parking and traffic**

Currently there is pressure on local streets for parking during events and on busy weekends and 13% of respondents expressed concerns about traffic and parking around Alice Park – either as a result of existing events or as an anticipated increase associated with a new facility. The results of the survey suggest that just under 1 in 5 of respondents who would use the skate park would drive there. What is unclear is the total number of extra cars this would be at any one time..

The level of concern about existing, and anticipated increases in traffic would suggest that a further, specialist, traffic and parking study is needed to identify measures to reduce traffic and parking issues associated with the site.

## **Concern about anti-social behaviour**

10% of respondents expressed concerns about the impact of the proposal on toddlers, the elderly and dogs or concerns about the area being a popular place for young people to congregate in at night.

However, it is important to consider these concerns in the light of the following factors:

- There is no evidence that the presence of a skate park would lead to significant risk for the elderly or toddlers and, as a well-used site with a mix of ages, bad behaviour is likely to be naturally limited due the feeling of being observed.
- The proposed location for the skate park is separated from the play area by a fence and screen of trees – creating a very limited risk to toddlers.
- Dogs are expected to be under control at all times (even when let off the lead) when using Alice Park. The proposed skate area would occupy a small footprint within the park- allowing adequate space for dog walking elsewhere.
- At night the park is locked so cars cannot access the car park, which already happens.

## **Other improvements needed in the park**

Only around 2% of survey respondents called for the tennis courts and other facilities in the park to be better maintained, but this was a frequent topic of discussion at public consultations. Some regular users of the tennis courts used the public drop-in sessions to express concern about the quality of the court surfaces and some suggested that these facilities would be a better recipient of a capital investment than a skate park.

The results of the public consultation would suggest that there is a clear appetite for improving tennis, and other, facilities in the park and the Alice Park Trust might want to consider investing in improving facilities in the future.

## **Alternative sites for an east of Bath skate park**

5.3% and 5.7% of survey responses, respectively questioned why the facility could not be located in Kensington Meadows or Larkhall Recreation Ground. Both locations have been considered and rejected for the following reasons:

*Larkhall Recreation Ground* – was rejected on the basis that the desired skate park would attract visitors with a wide range of skills and abilities and that families would want facilities such as toilets and a café.

*Kensington Meadows* – was rejected on the basis of the limited publically available facilities and the possibility of the site becoming waterlogged. The Six Acre Standard produced by the Fields in Trust charity (and widely used in local policy) also recommends a buffer zone of 30m between any skate facility and the boundary of the nearest property- making Kensington Meadows unsuitable for such a facility.

## **Conclusion**

In summary:

- There was a good response to the consultation (282 recorded responses), with a clear majority in favour of the development of a skate park in Alice Park (68%: Yes; 29%: No).
- There are existing concerns about parking and road safety along Gloucester Road and the commissioning of a specialist parking and traffic survey would be advisable as part of a project to build a skate park in Alice Park.
- Those opposed to the scheme have concerns that a new Skatepark would increase the number of incidences of anti-social behaviour and these would need to be addressed through improved surveillance by a partnership of police, council officers and the community. There would also need to be a clearly publicised reporting system for those who witness incidents of this kind.
- An appetite for improving other facilities in the park suggests that an investment in improving the tennis courts would be welcomed by park users.