

## Talkin Tarn Country Park

### Public Attitude Survey 2005

*A self-completion questionnaire, carried out by East Cumbria Countryside Project on 28 - 29 June, 2005. Groups of people were surveyed at Talkin Tarn Country Park (users) and in Carlisle city centre (non-users). 50 responses were received from users, and 31 from non-users. These numbers are considered to be acceptable for statistical purposes.*

Summary of findings, (user group):

#### **Where do Talkin Tarn visitors come from?**

36% of the users were from the Brampton area, and 22% from Carlisle city. A significant minority of visitors (24%) were from outside the Carlisle district.

#### **How often do they visit the Tarn?**

2 or 3 times a year was the most frequent response (34% of visitors) while 22% said they came once a week, and the same number said they visited once per month.

#### **Why do they visit the Tarn?**

Fresh air (32%) and exercise (27%) were the most popular reasons for visiting, while walking the dog (14%) and visiting the tea-room (14%) were also significant.

#### **How long do they stay?**

The majority of visitors stay from 2 hours or less (70%), with the remainder saying longer than 2 hours.

#### **Which facilities do they use?**

Clearly the car park and the footpath network are used by nearly all visitors, but the tea room (64%) and toilets (58%) also score highly.

#### **What do they like about Talkin Tarn?**

This was an unprompted question, so respondents could answer entirely in their own words. The 3 most often quoted responses were 'peace & quiet' (56%), 'scenery' (40%) and 'nice walk' (18%). Many other features were mentioned, including cleanliness, boating, tea-room, wildlife and safety for children.

#### **What do they dislike?**

Reassuringly, the most common response to this question was 'nothing' (56%), but the list of individual bugbears included: dogs off leads; bicycles on paths; noisy children; blue-green algae; lack of seats; prices in tea-room and litter. The poor provision for disabled people also featured in a small number of responses.

**What improvements could they suggest?**

Again, the survey invited people to respond in their own words. There was a wide range of opinions expressed with no single, outstanding issue. Of those ideas that were mentioned by more than one person, the following list emerged:

- More seats around the tea-room
- Extended opening hours for tea-room
- Better public transport links
- Control blue-green algae
- Improve facilities for disabled people
- Upgrade the public toilets

**Would they be prepared to pay for car parking, and how much?**

A clear majority (81%) of visitors said they would be prepared to pay for car-parking in order to help cover maintenance costs at the Tarn. The commonest suggested fee was £1 (34%), and averaged out across all respondents the suggested fee was very close to this figure (£1.02).

**Would they like an annual pass option, and what should it cost?**

58% of respondents favoured an annual pass option, with 42% against. The most favoured cost was 'less than £10' (32%), but 10% were prepared to pay 'more than £20' for a pass. Averaged out, the suggested figure was £12.25.

Summary of findings (non-users):

**Where were non-users from?**

Of our non-user group, 58% were from Carlisle, with the remainder coming from across north and east Cumbria (in other words, a fairly typical sample of people found in Carlisle city centre on a weekday)

**Age profile?**

The age profile again reflected the time of the survey - only 6% of respondents were 15yrs or under as it was a school day. The rest gave their ages as:

16 - 34	39%
35 - 59	23%
60 and over	32%

**What stops them from visiting the Tarn?**

A wide range of factors were quoted, including: Not interested (32%); Don't know what's there (25%); Lack of transport (12%); Not enough time (12%); Not enough to do there (8%)

**What would encourage them to make a visit?**

Not surprisingly the commonest responses to this question were the converse of the previous one: More information about the Tarn (38%); More facilities (20%); Better transport (10 %); More activities for families (10%).

### Conclusions

- We are confident that our findings fairly represent the opinions of the Carlisle public as a whole, as the sample groups were sufficient to represent the population.
- The idea of a car-park charge has been accepted by the clear majority of visitors, and a fee of £1.00 per visit would be the suggestion. An annual pass option is also favoured, and a charge of £15 would be suggested.
- People do not want to see wholesale changes at Talkin Tarn, but proposals to improve disabled access, upgrade the public toilets, improve the tea-room 'offer', upgrade facilities for children and provide better public transport links would find favour. All these improvements should then be included in better provision of information to allow more people the opportunity to visit the Tarn.
- By improving the tea-room's attractiveness it should be possible to provide better services for new and existing visitors, and increase the revenue stream.
- Better provision for disabled visitors needs to be a priority in the work programme.

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