

Friends of Eaton Park Park User Research, 2009

Background

During the summer of 2009, Friends of Eaton Park conducted a survey with park users. Our questionnaire drew inspiration from the 'Spaceshaper' questionnaire designed by Centre for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE). We also sought advice from Parks and Green Spaces staff at Norwich City Council.

We plan to use the information obtained to influence FOEP planning and fundraising. We will also make it available to key partner organisations including Norwich City Council, in the hope that it may have a wider influence on developments in the park.

Questionnaires were left in the café for self completion and others were completed through interviews conducted by members of the Friends. 63 questionnaires were completed.

Key findings

Opinions about the park

19% agreed and 76% agreed strongly that Eaton Park is an important place for local people. **(95%)**

20% agreed and 75% agreed strongly that Eaton Park should have a park keeper. **(95%)**

29% agreed and 63% agreed strongly that Eaton Park is popular with many different people. **(92%)**

37% agreed and 48% agreed strongly that Eaton Park is well looked after. **(85%)**

17% disagreed and 29% disagreed strongly that 'I know about events and activities in Eaton Park. **(46%)**. Only 16% agreed strongly and 3% agreed that they knew about events and activities in Eaton Park.

This feedback shows the immense affection people feel for the park. It shows how highly people value park keepers and it highlights a major communications gap, with people feeling that they don't know about events and activities in the park.

Transport to the park

46% travelled on foot, 41% by car, 11% by bike and 1% by bus.

This feedback shows a high level of car usage and suggests the need for further research to find out the distances that people are travelling. Whilst some may be travelling some distance, it is possible that others are travelling relatively short distances by car. If this proves to be the case, the Friends may wish to consider ways in which people could be encouraged to travel by bike, bus or on foot instead.

Pattern of park usage

17% of users come to Eaton Park every day, 38% once a week, 30% once a month and 16% less often.

Future plans

We asked people to give us their preferences for future plans.

21% agreed and 63% agreed strongly that they would like to see more *environmental activities* in the park. **(84%)**

29% agreed and 52% agreed strongly that they would like to see *more notice boards* in the park. **(81%)**.

22% agreed and 57% agreed strongly that they would like to see *more arts, music and events* in the park. **(79%)**

37% agreed and 38% agreed strongly that they would like to see *more historical information* in the park. **(75%)**

21% agreed and 40% agreed strongly that they would like to see *adult exercise and play equipment* in the park. **(61%)**

Strongest support was voiced for more environmental activities, followed by more notice boards, which ties in with the finding that people feel they don't know about events and activities in the park. Arts, music and events also attracted a high level of support followed by more historical information and adult exercise and play equipment. It is possible that the relatively low interest in adult exercise and play equipment is down to lack of awareness of this kind of facility.

The respondents

58% of respondents were women and 42% men.

15% of respondents considered themselves to be disabled.

Their ages...

10%	under 15 years old
9%	16-19 years old
14%	20 to 34 years old
9%	35 to 44 years old
18%	45 to 54 years old
15%	55 to 64 years old
26%	65+

Open questions

We asked people to volunteer their own feedback and ideas about three specific questions.

Asked to identify three things that they liked about the park, the following items were mentioned with most regularity;

Green open spaces (22)
Café (20)
Play area (19)
Rose gardens (15)
Boating pond (15)
Sports and games facilities (9)
Clean and well looked after (8)
Variety of things to do (8)
Bandstand / pavilions (7)

Asked to identify three things that they didn't like about the park, the following items were mentioned with most regularity;

Dog mess (21)
Litter (11)
Toilets (10) *
Lack of seats (5)
Parking on busy days (3)
Facilities seem under-used (band stands, pavilion) (2)
Bike riders (2)

* Toilets attracted the following specific comments. 'Close too early', 'none near play area', 'bad hygiene', 'disabled toilet – no radar key', 'disabled toilet bowl not cleaned' (3), 'didn't know where they were', 'not enough', 'could be nicer', 'no running water'.

*19 people left this section blank or commented; 'There's nothing I dislike about the park', 'Not really', 'Nothing at all', 'not applicable', 'no complaints'. Therefore **one third of respondents couldn't list anything that they disliked about the park.** Also, the number of subjects brought up for praise greatly out-numbers those brought up for criticism.*

Asked about improvements that people would like to see made, the following items are the only ones that had more than one mention.

More bands, events, entertainment (8)
Better upkeep of toilets (7)
More seats and benches (6)
A park keeper (4)
More publicity (3)
More trains running (in the school holidays) (2), and one mention of more obvious train timetable,
Swimming / paddling pool for children (2).

Conclusion

This questionnaire reveals massive affection for and interest in Eaton Park. Largely, people are very satisfied by the experience they have of the park. They love its open green spaces, its play area, rose garden, ponds, and café. They would like to see more environmental activities and more arts, music and events. They would very much like to have better information about what is happening in the park.

The few gripes major on dog dirt, litter and the toilets. Many people have no complaints at all.

The park is used by a good spread of ages including a large number of seniors. It attracts a relatively high number of disabled visitors.

Only 16% of people interviewed use the park less than once a month. With 17% visiting daily, 38% once a week and 30% once a month, the park attracts a loyal and regular attendance.

Friends of Eaton Park
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