



# Have your say

## Budget 2023-24: Parks and Countryside

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### **PARKS & COUNTRYSIDE** Budget Options



Consultation: 8 December 2022 – 15 January 2023

Report: 19 January 2023

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# 1.0 Executive Summary

The budget proposals for Parks and Countryside Services will look to find savings through reductions in non-statutory parks services that are carried out across the borough, i.e., services that the Council does not have to deliver by law. This includes stopping maintenance for a selection of identified grassed areas in parks, including some football, rugby, and cricket pitches, bowling greens and grass tennis courts as well as ceasing maintenance for some flower beds and borders, lakes, ponds, and boating lakes. Children's playgrounds would still be maintained, as would litter picking.

Statutory duties would still be carried out in relation to maintenance of: Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs), closed and open churchyards, scheduled monuments, historic parks and gardens (such as Birkenhead Park and Hamilton Square), health and safety inspections, waste removal, allotments and roadside verges (limited to a 1.5metre cut from the road kerb).

Public consultation was held on the Parks and Countryside Budget Options from the 8 December 2022 to 15 January 2023 allowing people to provide their view of the options. The findings from the consultation are included in this report.

The findings will be considered at the Environment, Climate Emergency & Transport Committee on the 30 January 2023.



## 1.1 Key Findings

- The questionnaire was responded to by 977 people. 668 responses came through the online portal, 309 paper copies were completed.
- 81.0% of the respondents were in disagreement with the proposal to reduce the maintenance budget by 50%. 55.0% strongly disagreed. 11.0% were in agreement. Out of the 2 proposals put forward in this consultation this one garnered the highest levels of disagreement. (Question 1).
- 67.7% of the responses were in disagreement with the proposal to reduce the maintenance budget by 25%, 46.7% strongly disagreed. 21.1% were in agreement. (Question 2).
- Amongst the additional free text comments, the most prevalent themes were (Question 3):
  - Parks are important for physical and mental wellbeing (42.3%) and reducing the maintenance budget would affect the wellbeing of local communities.
  - Disagree with proposals (29.2%); respondents said they disagreed in general with the proposals.
  - Will affect sports clubs (22.9%); people mentioned that sports clubs, especially Bowls and Football would be affected by any reduction in maintenance.
- Demographic analysis allowed the responses to be categorised by ward. Hoylake and Meols (9.9%) and Wallasey (8.8%) were the most represented Wirral wards. Eastham (1.1%) and Bidston and St James (1.4%) were the least well represented.

## 2.0 Methodology

The consultation was carried out between 8 December 2022 to 15 January 2023. The approach used was an online public consultation through the 'Have your say' consultation portal at [www.haveyoursay.wirral.gov.uk](http://www.haveyoursay.wirral.gov.uk)

A budget consultation Hub was created within the platform which provided users with one single location through which to engage in individual service consultations and access a Budget Simulator tool <https://haveyoursay.wirral.gov.uk/hub-page/budget-2023-24> Within the Hub there was a page dedicated to the Parks and Countryside Budget Options consultation.

An online questionnaire was provided for residents to engage with. Respondents were also able to request paper copies or for help completing the questionnaire, or submit additional comments via a dedicated email address, which was published on the 'Have your say' website alongside the online tool.

Following the consultation, the feedback will be considered at the Environment, Climate Emergency & Transport Committee on the 30 January 2023.

### 2.1 Questionnaire

The consultation questionnaire was developed around understanding resident views on the options presented for reducing the cost of the parks and countryside services. The questions focused on the options to reduce the maintenance budget by 50% stopping non-statutory works at a selection of parks across the estate and by reducing the budget by 25% which would impact on a smaller selection of parks.

To enable further understanding, and in-depth analysis, respondents were invited to provide free-text comments to expand on their ideas or concerns. Following closure of the consultation, the responses to each of the direct questions were collated and the responses included in this report. For the free-text comment questions, a text coding approach was used based on the reoccurring themes. This data was then collated and summarised in the report.

### 2.2 Analysis of Respondents

Respondents to the online tools were provided with the option to provide demographic information about themselves. It must be noted that this is an option and that not all respondents included this information. This data allows the demographic results to be included in this report to enable analysis of the scope of responses and representation from different demographic groups.

## 2.3 Interpretation of Results

In terms of the results, it is important to note that:

- The public consultation is not representative of the overall population but provides information on the opinion of those residents who engaged.
- Free-text questions that offered respondents the option to provide written feedback could have covered multiple themes. Therefore, the free-text responses were categorised using a coding system. The percentages given reflect the percentage of respondents who made the comment and as they may have made more than one comment, the total percentage may exceed 100%.

## 2.4 Direct Representations

Contact details were provided to enable organisation, groups, or special interest groups to directly submit their responses to the budget proposals.

## 2.5 Communication

To ensure the consultations were as accessible as possible, a social and digital sub campaign was carried out, which included regular messaging, targeted demographical and geographical communications, resident e-newsletters, and regular theme specific stories, linking with the narrative, and urging residents and stakeholders to take part in the consultation. communication channels included (but not limited to):

- Social media messaging across a variety of platforms.
- Dedicated email address (for comments, ideas, request for paper copies etc).
- Paper copies in libraries and leisure centres.
- WirralView news channel – article and links.
- Links and details in weekly Resident E-Newsletter.
- Digital and social links to the 'Have Your Say' Hub.
- Online redirection through local news platforms.
- Council website notices.
- Internal / Staff communications.
- Local media briefing/ media management.
- Member briefing.
- Sharing of links and paper copy locations with CVF sector.

# 3.0 Results

## 3.1 The Questionnaire

The questionnaire was responded to by 977 people. 668 responses came through the online portal and 309 paper copies were completed. No questions were mandatory so respondents could choose which questions to respond to.

### 3.1.1 Question 1: A 50% reduction in the maintenance budget would mean stopping non-statutory works at a selection of parks across the parks and countryside services estate.

966 people answered this question. Respondents selected their corresponding level of agreement with the statement offered.

81.0% of the responses were in disagreement with the proposal (55.0% strongly disagreed and 26.0% disagreed), whilst 11.0% agreed with the proposal (3.6% strongly agreed and 7.3% agreed). 8.1% neither agreed nor disagreed.

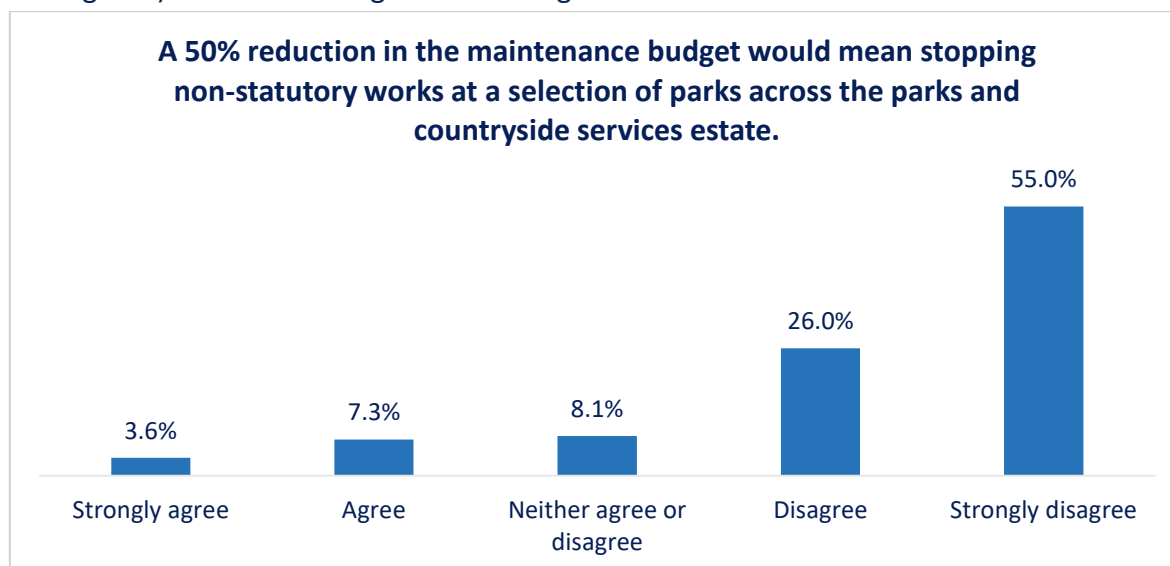


Figure 1: Chart displaying whether respondents agreed or disagreed with a 50% reduction in the maintenance budget.

A 50% reduction in the maintenance budget would mean stopping non-statutory works at a selection of parks across the parks and countryside services estate.	Total	%
Strongly agree	35	3.6%
Agree	71	7.3%
Neither agree or disagree	78	8.1%
Disagree	251	26.0%
Strongly disagree	531	55.0%
Total	966	100.0%

Table 1: Table displaying whether respondents agreed or disagreed with a 50% reduction in the maintenance budget.

### 3.1.2 Question 2: A 25% reduction in the maintenance budget would mean stopping non-statutory works at a smaller selection of parks across the parks and countryside services estate.

965 people answered this question. Respondents selected their corresponding level of agreement with the statement offered.

67.7% of the responses were in disagreement with the proposal (46.7% strongly disagreed and 21.0% disagreed), whilst 21.1% agreed with the proposal (4.2% strongly agreed and 16.9% agreed). 11.1% neither agreed nor disagreed.

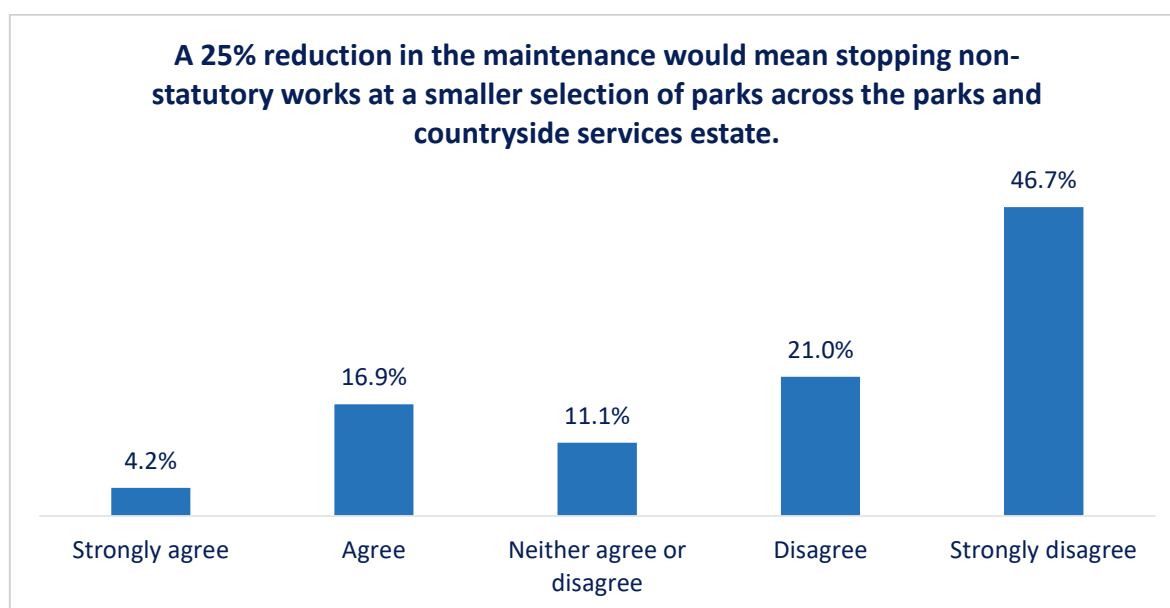


Figure 2: Chart displaying whether respondents agreed or disagreed with a 25% reduction in the maintenance budget.

A 25% reduction in the maintenance budget	Total	%
Strongly agree	41	4.2%
Agree	163	16.9%
Neither agree or disagree	107	11.1%
Disagree	203	21.0%
Strongly disagree	451	46.7%
Total	965	99.9%

Table 2: Table displaying whether respondents agreed or disagreed with a 25% reduction in the maintenance budget.



### 3.1.3 Question 3: If you have any comments to make regarding these options or any other suggestions on reducing cost in parks and countryside, please add them here.

Respondents were asked if they had any additional comments regarding the Parks and Countryside consultation. 489 people responded to this question. Each comment has been categorised into themes in order to identify the over-riding sentiments amongst the comments.

Below are the top themes that emerged from the free-text comments as a percentage of the number of people who provided an answer to the question. As the percentage reflects the proportion of respondents who made the comment and that respondents may have made more than one comment in their answer, the total percentages may exceed 100%.

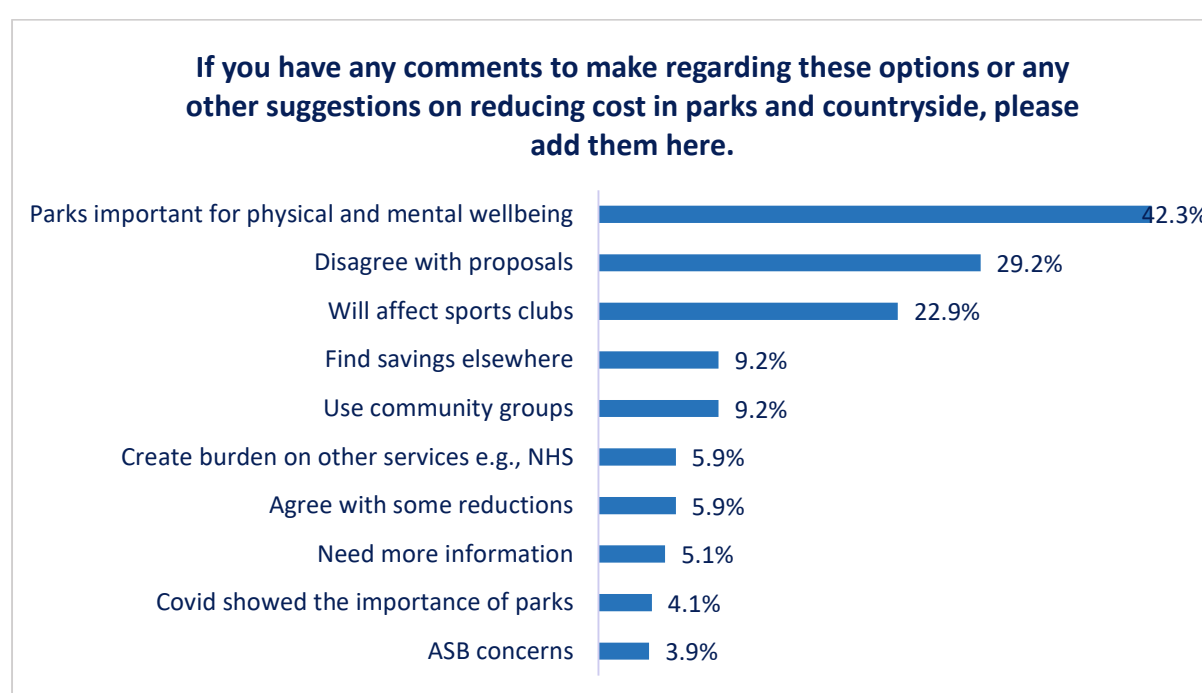


Figure 3: Chart displaying the top 10 themes from respondents' comments.

If you have any comments	Total	%
Parks important for physical and mental wellbeing	207	42.3%
Disagree with proposals	143	29.2%
Will affect sports clubs	112	22.9%
Find savings elsewhere	45	9.2%
Use community groups	45	9.2%
Create burden on other services e.g., NHS	29	5.9%
Agree with some reductions	29	5.9%
Need more information	25	5.1%
Covid showed the importance of parks	20	4.1%
ASB concerns	19	3.9%

Table 3: Table displaying the results to "if you have any comments"

- **Parks important for physical and mental wellbeing (42.3%).** Respondents said that communities need parks for exercise and for children to play, and therefore parks help to improve people's physical and mental wellbeing.
- **Disagree with proposals (29.2%).** Many people said that they disagreed in general with the proposals, without giving further detail.
- **Will affect sports clubs (22.9%).** Many respondents were concerned about how the proposal will affect sports clubs. Many people mentioned bowls clubs and how the bowling greens should continue to be maintained. Some people talked about football clubs, which use pitches for training and matches. Other sports mentioned are cricket, rugby and tennis.
- **Find savings elsewhere (9.2%).** Respondents said that the council should look elsewhere to make savings, some saying that the council should look to reduce middle management. Other suggestions for making savings elsewhere were to sell unused council buildings, divert money from highways spending, reduce the number of councillors and scrap final salary pensions.
- **Use community groups (9.2%).** Respondents commented that a solution could be to use community groups or individuals in the local community to do the maintenance.

## 3.2 Direct Representations

Four direct representations were received from:

- Wirral and District Crown Green Bowling Association.
- Wirral Ladies Bowling Association.
- Joint Representation from Bebington Park Bowling Club, Cammell Laird Bowling Club and Bebington Ladies Bowling Club.
- Birkenhead and Wirral Ladies Bowling League.

The representations are included in Appendix 1.

## 4.0 Demographics and Site Traffic

### 4.1 Demographics

Registration was required to engage in the online Parks and Countryside consultation. The registration form included questions regarding demographics including gender, age group, ethnicity, and sexual orientation, however not all questions in the registration form were compulsory and respondents could choose to select 'prefer not to say' or skip the question. The demographics results are summarised below. The same questions were included on the paper-copy questionnaires.

Most respondents (87.6%) of the respondents classed themselves as local residents.

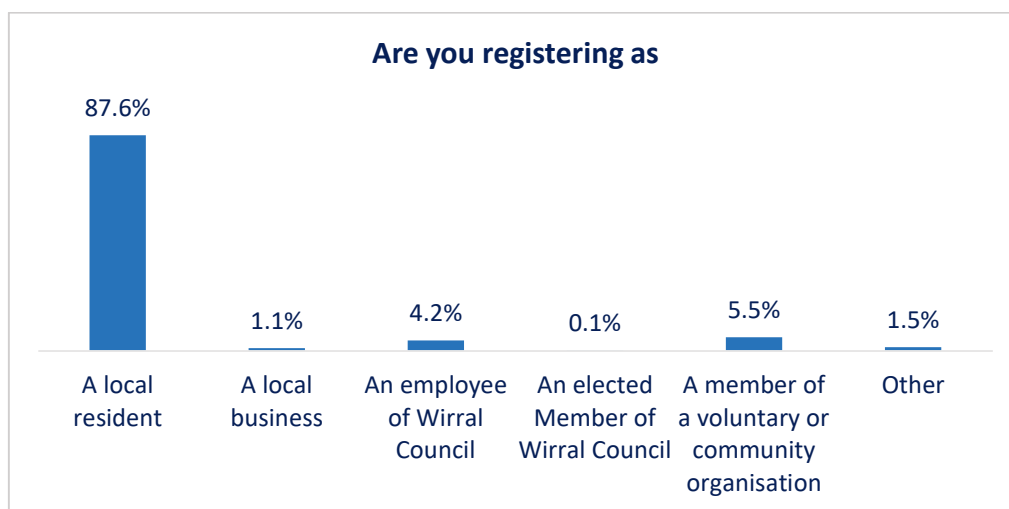


Figure 4: Chart displaying who respondents are registering as

The age group profile is illustrated below with the most common age groups being 65-74 years (26.8%), followed by 55-64 years (21.6%) and 45-54 years (16.6%). Under 24 years only made up 1.6% of respondents.

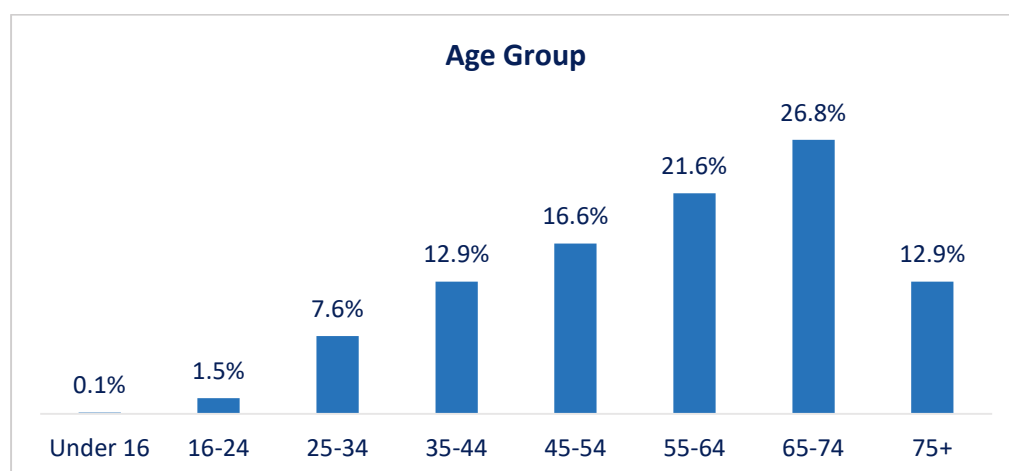
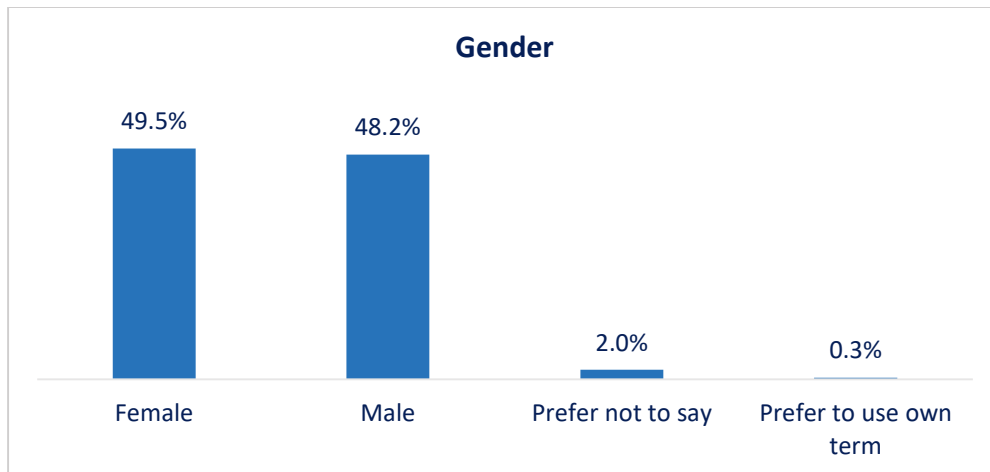


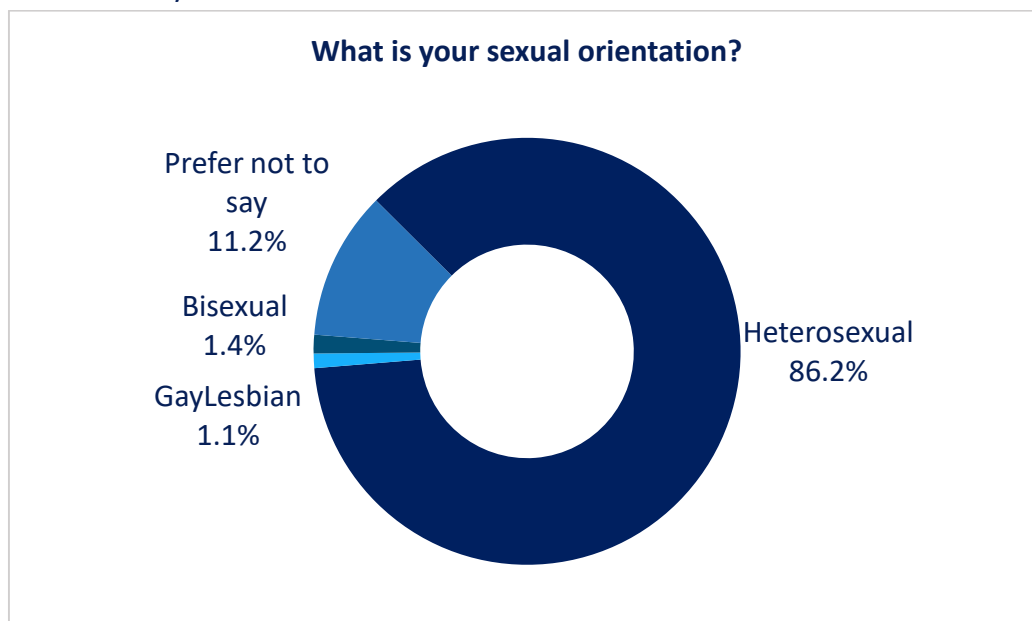
Figure 5: Chart displaying age groups

49.5% of respondents identified as female and, 48.2% male. 2.0% preferring not to say and 0.3% preferring to use their own term.



*Figure 6: Chart displaying gender*

86.2% of respondents were heterosexual, 1.1% were gay/ lesbian, 1.4% bisexual and 11.2% preferred not to say.



*Figure 7: Chart displaying sexual orientation*

86.1% said they did not have a disability whilst 9.0% of respondents said that they had a disability, 4.9% preferred not to say.

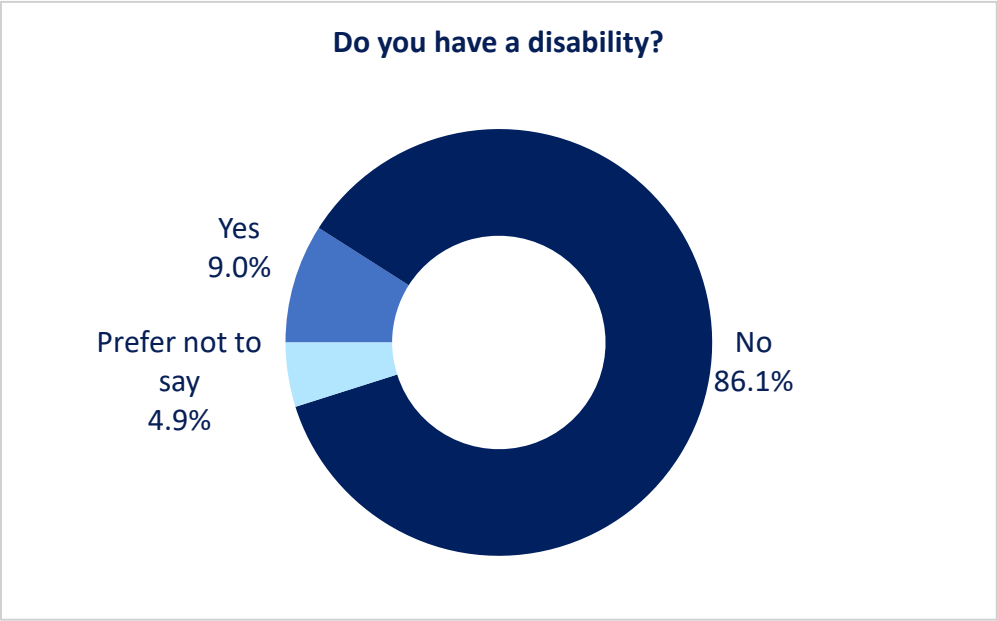


Figure 8: Chart displaying disability

The majority (95.5%) of respondents identified as White – English, Welsh, Scottish, Northern Irish, British. Only 2.4% of respondents were of a non-white ethnicity.

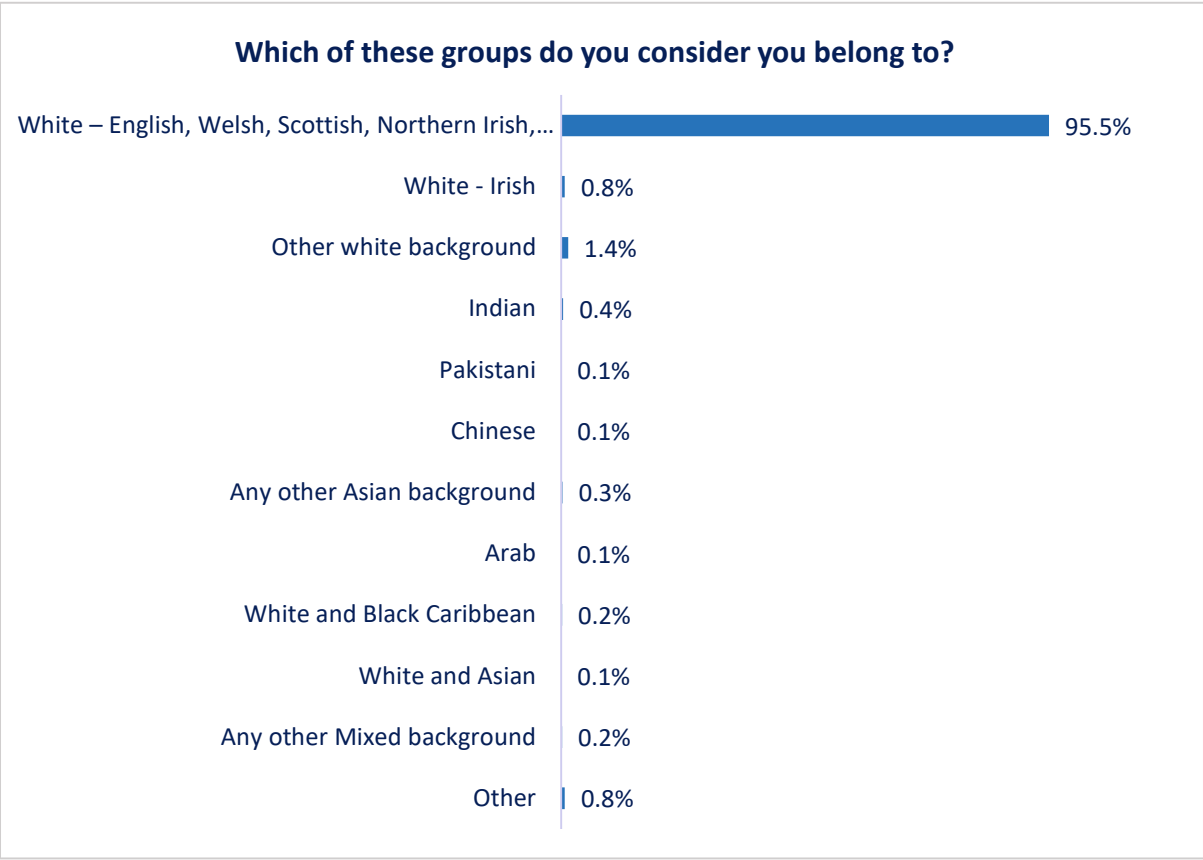
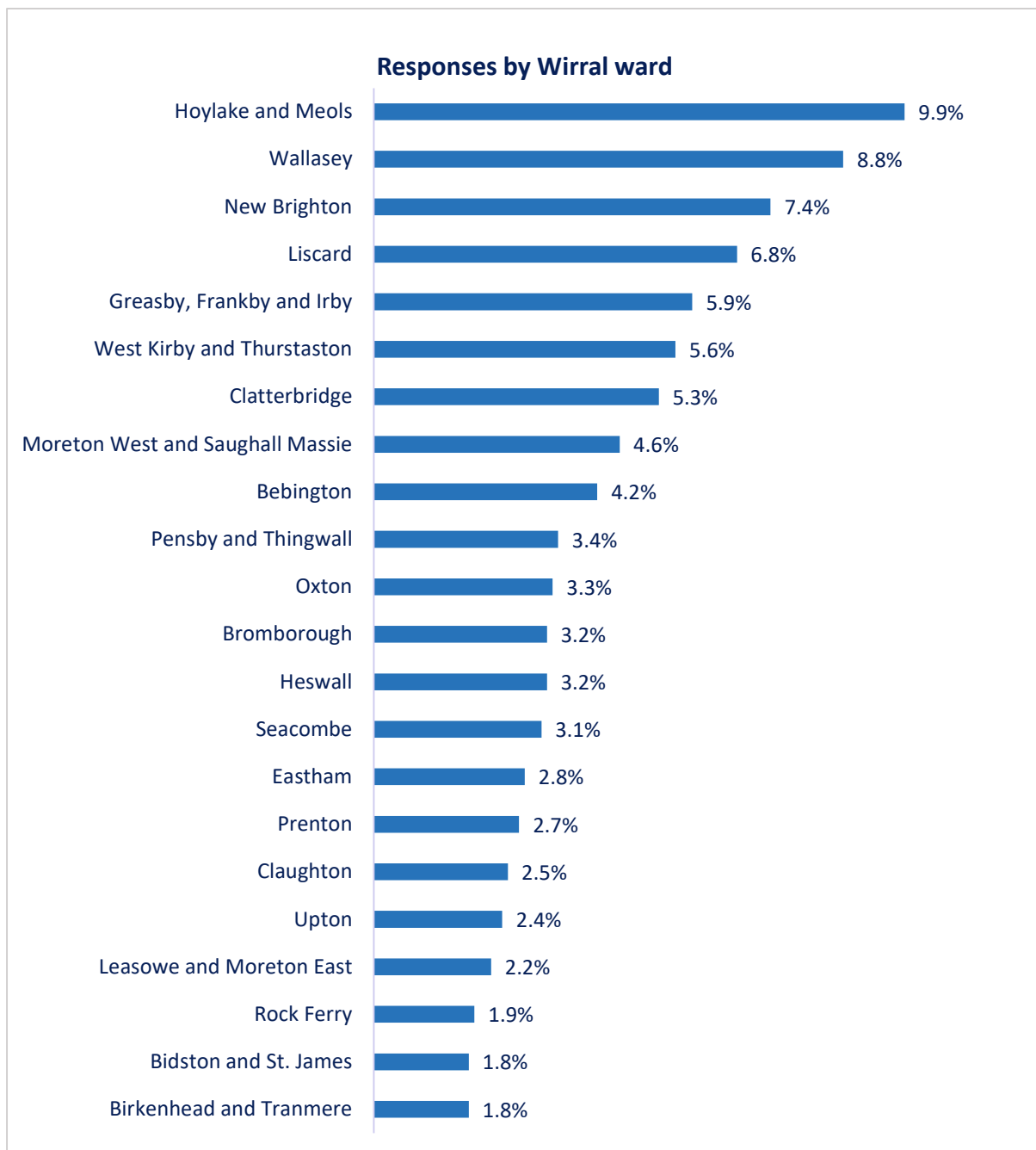


Figure 9: Chart displaying ethnicity of respondents

The most represented ward was Hoylake and Meols (9.9%) followed by Wallasey (8.8%) and New Brighton (7.4%). Birkenhead and Tranmere (1.8%) and Bidston and St James (1.8%) were the least well represented.



*Figure 10: Chart displaying Wirral Ward representation*

## 4.2 Have Your Say - Site Traffic

Reviewing the site activity, visits, and how people visit the site can be useful to evaluate if people are aware of the site, as well as to ensure engagement activities are deployed effectively, and to a wide range of different people – enhancing public engagement in the future. 2038 unique visitors viewed the Parks and Countryside consultation of the Have Your Say site. Of these, 554 visited multiple project pages and 49 viewed a photo. 668 people in total completed the questionnaire.

These figures cannot be viewed as definitive as they are based on site tracking through ‘cookies’ and there are a number of factors that can impact on this. These include that cookies may be disabled or deleted, individuals may access the site multiple times through different devices or different browsers. However, the figures can be used to gauge how much interest has been generated in individual projects through the rate of engaged participants.

The route that people access the site is known as the traffic source. The ‘Have your say’ portal allows analysis to be carried out on traffic source, and if they lead to engagement in the site tools such as the questionnaire. This analysis allows a greater understanding of which communication and promotional tools to use to optimise engagement.

For this project a range of traffic sources have been reviewed and summarised in the table below. Most visits to the site were either direct visits where people typed the internet address into their web browser (1527), or links clicked from social media sites (487). It should be noted that Direct visits generated a higher rate of engagement of 29.0%, meaning 29.0% of these visits resulted in completion of the survey, whereas Social Media visits had an engagement rate of 17.7%.

Traffic Source	Aware Visits	Informed Visits (%)	Engaged Visits (%)
DIRECT	1527	868 (56.8%)	443 (29%)
SOCIAL	487	240 (49.3%)	86 (17.7%)
EMAIL	127	83 (65.4%)	40 (31.5%)
SEARCH ENGINE	131	83 (63.4%)	49 (37.4%)
.GOV SITES	18	15 (83.3%)	7 (38.9%)
REFERRALS	123	94 (76.4%)	43 (35%)

*Table 4: Site traffic sources*

# Appendix 1: Direct Representations

## WIRRAL & DISTRICT CROWN GREEN BOWLING ASSOCIATION

Wirral Borough Council  
Leisure Services  
Department  
10<sup>th</sup> January 2023

Dear

We write to you in regard to the current 2023/2024 Wirral Council Budget Consultation Survey, Leisure Services. We write collectively as secretaries of the various committees who manage, govern, and oversee the various and many crown green bowling activities across Wirral.

The majority of our members have completed the survey individually, however, such is the concern and strength of feeling about the possible outcome from that survey we believe it important to write to collectively and outline some of the issues the survey does not give opportunity to raise.

From the outset we acknowledge the funding crisis Wirral Council finds itself in and appreciate that cuts are reductions in service are necessary if not inevitable. We also understand how given the bigger financial picture; bowling greens may be seen by the Council as easy targets.

The benefits of bowling are too numerous to list here but we have identified the more important, if not salient benefits for you to consider as to why council greens should largely remain open and maintained and which may not present in your survey.

There are approximately 2000 bowlers currently actively and regularly taking part in crown green bowling across Wirral. That number does not include the large number of male and female bowlers who are no longer able to play but attend greens in a supportive/social role.

### **Financial and Greens**

Crown Green Bowls is a relatively cheap sport compared to many other sports and as such appeals to those of all ages and who may have less disposable income than others. Bowls on Wirral is played at both private and council venues. However, council green clubs are particularly affordable no matter how often played.



Council bowling greens across the Wirral can be found in both deprived and more affluent areas and are usually very accessible. Private greens tend to be tucked away whereas council greens are open to view and as such can encourage people to have a go!

Without the option of council bowling greens many of the bowling community will be unable to continue playing. Removing bowling greens may well see fewer people visiting parks and open spaces.

As the financial pressures continue to affect all households and families bowling greens can offer an affordable and healthy release for all ages.

## **Wellbeing**

To ensure personal wellbeing is a phrase to be applied to everyone and not just for those who suffer mental health issues, have problems or are alone. The issue in this day and age is where and how to achieve that wellbeing safely, positively and within budget.

Bowls clubs provide opportunity to do just that. There is a feel-good factor in being a part of something, being with others who are likeminded and feeling included.

Many bowlers “get through” the Winter, with little to do and few places to go. What gets many through is the thought of the bowls season and all it has to offer.

Many of the bowling community are above state pension age. Many are adjusting to life alone, some for the first time after losing lifelong partners.

A bowls club offers so much more than physical exercise, regardless of physical restrictions, and mental stimulation, they are a community group, a support group, a distraction.

Removing council bowling greens will see a decline in the wellbeing of some of the bowling community and who may well then have to access other services such as NHS, counselling, and support groups. Surely a more costly drain on resources than funding council greens?

## **Health and the Pandemic**

Bowls provides both physical and mental exercise. The game provides exercise and activity as often as you want to play. The game keeps limbs moving and is a healthy way of keeping fit and is very much more affordable than going to the gym!

Clearly bowls, like many other sports suffered during the pandemic but once the signals were given which allowed mixing again, many bowlers were more comfortable mixing outdoors rather than inside. That is still true some months on. There are still concerns that covid has not gone away and given the average age of bowlers on Wirral they do not want to put

themselves at any more risk than they are. Being outdoors is much the preferred option and is where bowlers feel more at ease, safe and comfortable.

We would urge Wirral Council to consider the overall effect of removing the maintenance for council bowling greens against the long-term health and well-being effects for local residents.

We would also ask that you forward a copy of this email to others in the Leisure Services Department and any other departments concerned.

Regards

Secretary

Wirral & District CGBA



## WIRRAL LADIES BOWLING ASSOCIATION

13 January 2023

Dear Sir or Madam

I am writing to you with regard to the current 2023/2024 Wirral Council Budget Consultation Survey, Leisure Services. I am Secretary of the Wirral Ladies Bowling Association (formerly West Wirral Ladies Bowling Association) and am also Secretary of Merseyside County Crown Green Bowling Association which includes the Wirral. I have listened to the views of many Clubs, Leagues and Associations on the Wirral and hope that this letter will convey their many concerns.

I understand that many bowlers have completed the survey individually, but such is the concern and strength of feeling about possible outcomes from that survey I believe it is important to outline some of the issues the survey does not give the opportunity to raise.

There are over 500 lady bowlers currently actively and regularly taking part in crown green bowling across Wirral. The game keeps limbs moving and is a healthy way of keeping fit. That number does not include the large number of ladies who are no longer able to play but attend greens in a supportive/social role. Of the 500 plus lady bowlers, over half are well above state pension age. Many of them are adjusting to life alone, some for the first time after losing lifelong partners.

Membership of a bowling club is beneficial for both mental and physical wellbeing, with many clubs taking part in activities throughout the winter months and, also undertaking maintenance of the surrounding areas during the summer. This is an area which was highlighted in the Council Parks and Open Space Strategy 2014-2024. There is compelling evidence from the last survey how highly local people and visitors value Wirral Parks and Open Spaces, and they are one of the main reasons why visitors stay in the borough. It also highlights the physical benefits as there are public health issues and health hotspots throughout the borough and with the help of a public health team, voluntary groups and other organisations we can help combat the rising numbers of coronary heart disease, diabetes, obesity and mental health as well as encouraging regular exercise for all ages. If we take away these facilities it would surely lead to the need for long term care thus costing considerably more.

Crown Green Bowls is a relatively cheap sport compared to many other sports and as such appeals to those of all ages and who may have less disposable income than others. Bowls on Wirral is played at both private and council venues. However, council green clubs are particularly affordable. Council bowling greens across the Wirral can be found in both deprived and more affluent areas and are usually very accessible. Cost and accessibility both figure highly when someone is considering which club to play for. Without the option of council bowling greens many of the bowling community will be unable to continue playing.

As the financial pressures continue to affect all households and families, bowling greens can offer an affordable and healthy release for all ages.

A bowls club offers so much more than physical exercise, regardless of physical restrictions, and mental stimulation, they are a community group, a support group, a distraction. Removing council bowling greens will see a decline in the wellbeing of some of the bowling community and they may well then have to access other services such as NHS, counselling and support groups. Surely a more costly drain on resources than funding council greens?

Clearly, bowls, like many other sports, suffered during the pandemic but once the signals were given which allowed mixing again, many bowlers were more comfortable mixing outdoors rather than inside. That is still true some months on. There are still concerns that covid has not gone away and given the average age of lady bowlers on Wirral they do not want to put themselves at any more risk than they are. Being outdoors is much the preferred option and is where bowlers feel more at ease, safe and comfortable.

Although this letter is mainly speaking for the ladies represented by the Wirral Ladies Bowling Association, in my County role I know that there are hundreds of men on Wirral who play the game and use council greens and their issues will not be too far removed from those of the ladies.

The bowlers do not underestimate the impact on health, wellbeing and finances that cutting council greens will have and would ask that Wirral Council do not either.

On behalf of all the bowlers I would urge Wirral Council to consider the overall effect of removing council bowling greens against the long-term health and wellbeing effects for local residents.

Regards

Secretary/Treasurer

Wirral Ladies Bowling Association

## **JOINT REPRESENTATION FROM BEBINGTON PARK BOWLING CLUB, CAMMELL LAIRD BOWLING CLUB AND BEBINGTON LADIES BOWLING CLUB**

As tenants and therefore stakeholders in the bowling green in Higher Bebington Park, I would like to submit a joint objection to any proposal that would see the end of council maintenance of the green. The objection is lodged jointly by Bebington Park Bowling Club, Cammell Laird Bowling Club and Bebington Ladies Bowling Club, all of whom are based at the green.

Bebington Park bowling green has been a feature of Higher Bebington Park for over 70 years. I can say this without reference to documents as I played on it as a child, 70 years ago. The green, I'm sure, is much older than that - and any user alive - yet it remains one of the finest council-run greens in Wirral. It must be preserved and continue to serve the community as it has done throughout its own lifetime.

One of the current tenants of the green, Bebington Park Bowling Club, has used it as their home green for the last 45 years and have been joined by fellow tenants, Cammell Laird Bowling Club and Bebington Ladies Bowling Club, in more recent years Cammell Laird being the most recent club to join us after losing their own 'historical' green to developers.

Between them, the three clubs sharing the green had a total of 95 members who use the green regularly for the six months from April to September each year. Each club has an active program of fixtures each season that they must complete to maintain their attraction to both their current members and to attract new members.

**Bebington Park Bowling Club** have teams in The Ellesmere Port League, The Bebington League, The Birkenhead Evening League and the Birkenhead Afternoon League.

**Cammell Laird Bowling Club** have teams in The Bebington League, The Birkenhead Evening League and the Birkenhead Afternoon League.

**Bebington Ladies Bowling Club** do not play in registered leagues but invite a number of other local ladies teams to the green throughout the season for 'friendly' fixtures.

Although the total membership of the three clubs is not especially large, what is impressive is the usage that the clubs make of the green each week. Bebington Park and Cammell Laird share the evening bookings from Monday to Friday and the Wednesday afternoon booking in order to fulfil the fixtures of the three Leagues they both belong to. Bebington Park also book Monday afternoon for their Ellesmere Port fixtures and the Bebington Ladies book both Tuesday and Thursday afternoons for their activities and friendlies. This means that during the 'working week' only Friday afternoon sees the green unused by the three existing tenants. This full and multiple usage of the green means that it is an important venue for all of our local leagues who are able to make use of the excellent green for playing cup matches, the green is a popular venue for many of our local teams.

The footfall on the green is impressive considering the modest number of our combined membership. The total number of players (home + visitors) using the green throughout the 2022 season for each club are estimated as follows.....

**Bebington Park** 43 league games (18 -24 players per game) = 844 40 'in-house' competitions (ave 10 players) = 400

**Cammell Laird** 36 league games (20-24 players per game) = 764

4 'in-house' competitions (ave 16 players) = 64

**Cup games** 9 games (20-24) = 188

**Bebington Ladies** 50 sessions (10 players each) = 500

5 friendlies (16 players) = 80

**Total footfall 2840 per season**

**This represents an average of over 120 users per week. (This does not include casual users practicing individually). This may put it ahead in footfall terms of any football pitch or outdoor tennis court in the borough.**

The Wirral Bowling scene is enjoyed by people of all ages but is incredibly important to those in the 55+ age bracket. It is one of the very last outdoor sports that the elderly can still enjoy and be competitive in later years. Some of our players play beyond the age of 90. To rob them of a major social and health promoting activity such as bowls would be seen as callous if not considered with great care.

Teams that play on council greens account for about 30% of all the teams competing in the numerous leagues of mixed or single-sex leagues throughout Wirral. Great efforts are being made at national level to support clubs who may be struggling with membership numbers following the Covid-affected years that have interrupted our sport. It would be a real set-back to the regeneration initiatives of Bowls England if clubs were forced to close not through lack of membership but because of the disappearance of their greens. Any closures will be harmful not only to those who use the greens regularly but would undermine the infrastructure of the sport locally.

## **BIRKENHEAD AND WIRRAL LADIES BOWLING LEAGUE**

As Secretary of the above league (Birkenhead and Wirral Ladies Bowling League) I am extremely concerned over the proposed reduction in budget to the maintenance of council bowling greens. We are a league with approximately 500 members many of whom are retired and over the age of 60 with a large proportion who live on their own – some with little contact with the outside world. Membership of a bowling club is beneficial for both the mental and physical wellbeing, with many clubs taking part in activities throughout the winter months and also undertaking maintenance of the surrounding areas during the summer. This is an area which was highlighted in the Council Parks and Open Space Strategy 2014-2024." There is compelling evidence from the last survey how highly local people and visitors value Wirral parks and open spaces, and they are one of the main reasons why visitors stay in the borough. "It also highlights the physical benefits as there are public health issues and health hotspots throughout the borough and with the help of a public health team, voluntary groups and other organisations we can help combat the rising numbers of coronary heart disease, diabetes, obesity and mental health as well as encouraging regular exercise for all ages. I believe that if we take away these facilities it will lead to the need for long term care thus costing considerably more.

We as an area have been fortunate to host County matches, local bowling competitions and charity competitions and this has given us the opportunity to showcase the facilities we have in Wirral please don't let us lose them. We have already lost some bowling greens and swimming pools. I sincerely hope you will take these points into consideration when you allocated your resources.

