

Washington Area Committee (WAC)

Parks – Access Control Measures: Consultation summary

Background

Following the WAC meeting on 1 July, and a subsequent discussion at Washington Area Board (WAB) on 28 July, a consultation exercise was launched in early August asking for views on the proposed access control measures at 3 parks.

Letters were initially sent to residencies on 10/11 August, as well as notifying wider groups of the consultation via the Council's website and the Washington Area Committee Facebook page. The deadline for responses was set as 10 September, but following some clarification as to the initial sample size, further letters were sent on 1 September, with the deadline for submissions extended until 17 September.

This note summarises the responses received.

Demographic data

- 415 responses were received
- 405 respondents provided information on age

Row Labels	Count of What age are you?
16 - 25	1
26 - 35	33
36 - 45	50
46 - 55	74
56 - 65	98
66 - 75	129
Over 75	29
(blank)	
Grand Total	405

- 404 responses were provided on the sex of respondents

Row Labels	Count of What is your sex?
Female	174
Male	226
Non-binary	1
Prefer not to say	1
Prefer to identify another way	2
(blank)	
Grand Total	404

- 397 responses were provided on disabilities

Row Labels	Count of Do you have any physical or mental health conditions or illnesses lasting or expecting to last 12 months or more?
No	297
Prefer not to say	28
Yes	72
(blank)	
Grand Total	397

- 407 responses were provided on ethnicity

Row Labels	Count of What is your ethnic group?
Asian or Asian British (includes Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Chinese or any other Asian background)	5
Black, Black British Caribbean or African (includes Black British, Caribbean, African or any other Black background)	1
How are Q 6 and 7 relevant?	1
Prefer not to say	21
White (includes British, Northern Irish, Gypsy, Irish Traveller, Roma or any other white background) – [broken down by category below]	377
English British	1
English, Welsh, Scottish, Northern Irish or British	371
Irish	2
Roma	1
(blank)	2
White uk citizen (Tax payer)	1
WHY? this question is irrelevant so no need to reply	1
(blank)	
Grand Total	407

Responses to the 3 access control measure survey questions

Have you experienced any anti-social behaviour in the park in the last 2 years? If so, what sort of activities

Of the 415 responses, 251 respondents (60.5%) confirmed that they had experienced anti-social behaviour (ASB).

Of these, further analysis was undertaken as to the types of ASB they had experienced. Respondents were asked to provide details in a free text format, resulting in a range of responses. This information has been analysed by categorising the responses into the following headings, with many respondents providing multiple different types of ASB (so the totals below are greater than the 251 respondents who said they had experienced ASB). In collating this information, judgement was applied to categorise responses, but this gives a picture of the types of issues being raised:

Type of ASB	Count of responses/mentions
ASB not involving vehicles (note 1)	116
Motorbikes/quad bikes/cars accessing park (note 2)	113
Flytipping (note 3)	57
Encampments (note 4)	101
Lorries/HGVs waiting	6

Note 1: this included a range of activities, such as drinking or drug use, but which did not involve a vehicle (ie which would not be prevented by the access control measures)

Note 2: within this group, motorbikes and quad bikes were more common comments than car access

Note 3: this includes specific mention of flytipping/use of vehicles rather than general littering (which was often associated with general ASB as set out in note 1).

Note 4: comments in relation to encampments often included details of associated ASB arising, such as littering, fires, damage to the environment.

Are you in agreement with the proposed access control measures at the 11 specified sites?

Of the 415 responses, 374 were in agreement (90.1%).

Do you have any further comments?

A range of responses were received. A summary of these is provided below which, whilst not a comprehensive list of all comments made, gives an indication of the types of issues raised. As not all people provided further comments, it is not considered appropriate to try to quantify the responses, but instead to give an idea of the themes raised.

- There were multiple positive comments about the approach being appreciated and that the Council/Area Committee was attempting to resolve matters.
- Various concerns were raised about whether the access control measures would address the wider ASB activity. This included comments around where vehicles were not included (for example groups of youths gathering in parks drinking alcohol etc) but also around whether the access control measures would prevent access, especially in relation to motorbike access.
 - A few respondents highlighted that the access control measures could limit access into the park for both some larger vehicles into the car parks (eg for wheelchair transport, dog walkers) or for prams and wheelchair access into the parks themselves
- Several respondents highlighted opinions that CCTV usage would be a better deterrent to address ASB.
- Several comments were made about whether the £120,000, whilst welcome investment, could be spend on different initiatives to improve the parks (cleanliness, planting, grass cutting etc) rather than to address ASB specifically. The value for money aspect of the proposals was highlighted in some instance – both in favour and questioning the proposals.
- Several comments raised concerns about whether the measures would result in ASB activity moving to other parts of Washington and/or the city.

- Several comments were made about the visual appearance of the measures, for example the bright colour of barriers, and/or the on-going maintenance of the measures if they become subject to vandalism.

Conclusion

The consultation exercise was undertaken to support the WAC in reaching a decision on its investment, especially in relation to the equalities impact assessment (EIA) that was undertaken. The EIA is being updated to reflect the outcome of the consultation exercise. The initial reports to WAC and WAB highlighted the access control measures were in relation to unauthorised encampments, which raised EIA concerns as travellers are a group with protected characteristics.

Further discussions at WAC and WAB confirmed the proposed measures were to address wider ASB rather than solely unauthorised encampments. The focus of the consultation reflected this ASB aspect, with the vast majority of respondents (90.1%) being supportive of the proposed measures.

On that basis, it is concluded that the EIA can be completed to confirm that the measures intended to address ASB are supported by residents. Whilst the measures will have a negative impact on travellers, on balance the wider benefit for ASB are such that the EIA can be completed to agree to the proposals put forward by WAC. As discussed with Members previously, there is a risk of challenge from the travelling community, but on balance the EIA can confirm the justification to undertake the works.

However, in reaching its final decision, WAC should consider the wider points made in this summary report before confirming its intention to proceed with the investment of £120,000.