

Blackpool Public Space Protection Orders Consultation Report

Blackpool Council

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1 Executive Summary

1.1 Overview of Consultation

- A public consultation on proposals relating to protection orders in Blackpool Town Centre, the Promenade and the Borough's Parks ran from 11 June to 31 August 2015
- The approach included an open-access online survey, paper copies available in public areas such as libraries and children's centres, and face-to-face street interviews with residents in the town centre
- The consultation was supported by a programme of promotion and engagement including an article in the Your Blackpool newspaper, social media engagement and press releases
- A total of 1,062 responses to the consultation were received, comprising of 750 street interviews, 134 online submissions and 178 paper returns – this represents a high level of public interest and engagement in the consultation

1.2 Spaces in Blackpool Town Centre and the Promenade

- 73% of respondents to the consultation visit Blackpool town centre at least once a week and the majority of people (81%) go shopping when in the town
- The following three anti-social behaviours are considered to be a very or fairly big problem in Blackpool town centre and the Promenade by at least three in five respondents:
 - People loitering around cash machines and shop entrances (71%)
 - People drinking in the street (68%)
 - People selling joke books or magazines not for legitimate charities (63%)
- People selling 'lucky charms' or heather (56%), people engaging others in card scams and tricks (41%) and people using or smoking legal highs in public (40%) are, relatively, less of a problem
- Comments suggest people are fed up and in some cases intimidated by 'drunks' and 'beggars'
- There is a strong level of agreement for all protection orders proposed for Blackpool town centre and the Promenade – 87% strongly or tend to agree that the Council should prohibit drinking in the street and loitering around cash machines and shop entrances
- Indeed, there was general support in the subsequent comments for strong enforcement action to tackle these anti-social behaviour issues in Blackpool

town centre and the Promenade, supported by a general sense of dissatisfaction with the level of anti-social behaviour in these areas

- Although some were sceptical whether the Council has the resources to implement effectively and if it will even make any difference

1.3 Spaces in the Borough's Parks

- 61% of consultation respondents visit a local park at least once a week
- Of those who do visit a local park, four in five do so for recreational activities and 37% go to walk a dog
- The 'issues' relating to the Borough's parks are considered less of a problem (percentages refer to a very or fairly big problem) to respondents when compared to the problems in the town centre and the Promenade:
 - People causing harassment, alarm, distress or vandalism (44%)
 - Substance misuse, including alcohol (47%)
 - Vehicles driving or parked within parks and green open spaces (15%)
 - Commercial activities, such as group fitness training and commercial dog walking (8%)
 - Remote controlled water, air or land based vehicles (6%)
- Comments received suggest that dog-related issues are considered more of a problem in the Borough's parks, particularly dog fouling and dogs off leads
- The highest level of agreement for the proposals relating to parks is for taking action against people causing anti-social behaviour or vandalism and banning substances (78% strongly or tend to agree with both)
- The level of agreement is lower for the remaining proposals around commercial activities, vehicular access and remote controlled vehicles, but more people do agree with them than disagree
- Like earlier comments, respondents would also like to see proposals to tackle dog-related issues, such as enforcement of dog fouling and designated off lead areas

2 Background and Methodology

2.1 Background

On 20 October 2014, the government implemented the Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014. The purpose of this Act is to give local authorities and the police more effective powers to tackle anti-social behaviour, providing better protection for victims and communities.

Amongst these new tools and powers are Public Space Protection Orders (PSPOs), which are designed to stop individuals or groups committing certain types of anti-social behaviour in public spaces. It is for each individual local authority to determine what behaviours they want to make the subject of a PSPO.

Local authorities, when considering implementing a PSPO must consult with the Chief Officer of Police, the Police Crime Commissioner, whichever community representatives the local authority deems appropriate and, as far as is practicable, with the owner or occupier of the land in question.

Blackpool Council took responsibility for targeted engagement and consultation with the stakeholders including the Chief Officer of Police, Hounds Hill Shopping Centre, Visit Blackpool and Pubwatch.

Infusion Research, a local authority partnership, was commissioned to deliver a proactive programme of consultation with local residents, given the impact any proposed PSPOs would have on people visiting Blackpool town centre, the Promenade and the Borough's parks.

2.2 Methodology

The PSPO public consultation ran from 11 June to 31 August 2015. Residents and stakeholders could have their say in a number of ways:

1. An open-access online survey was developed and hosted on the Council's website. This was widely promoted through Council social media accounts, the Your Blackpool resident newspaper, the CVS e-newsletter and press releases.
2. Paper questionnaires were distributed to all libraries and children's centres in the Borough. This enabled those without access to the internet to have their say.

3. Pro-active engagement with residents was undertaken through face-to-face interviews in Blackpool town centre and a range of parks across the Borough.

A total of **1,062 responses** were received to the PSPO consultation, consisting of:

- 750 face-to-face interviews
- 134 online responses
- 178 paper returns, which included 16 completed surveys from local businesses after paper copies were distributed via the Blackpool BID partnership

A further 141 people were consulted during face-to-face interviewing but due to a technical issue with the survey application, which the software provider was unable to resolve, it has not been possible to capture the responses and thus analyse this data.

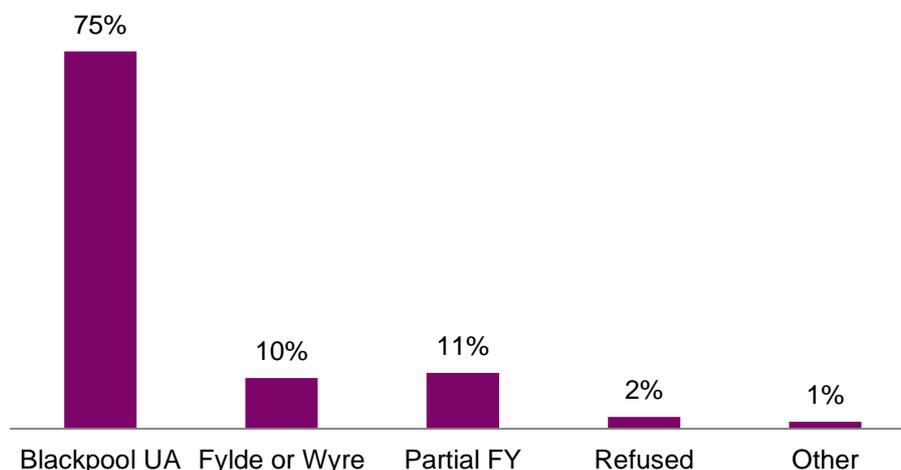
Analysis throughout this report is based on the overall sample of responses to the consultation. However, it is worth noting that the level of agreement and type of comments received tended to differ depending on the response method. Generally, residents interviewed face-to-face were more reserved and considered whereas some online responses were stronger and, in some cases, vitriolic.

Any example comments within this report are not necessarily representative of all consultation respondents.

2.3 Who responded?

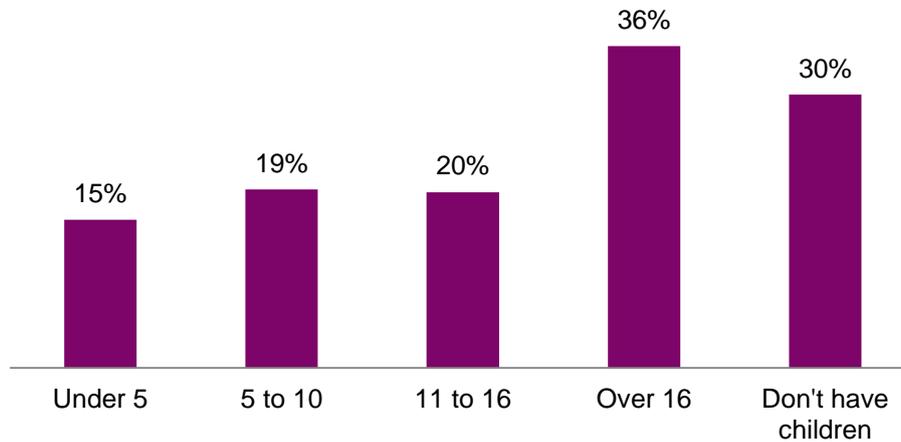
Three quarters of respondents to the consultation provided a full Blackpool Unitary Authority postcode. 13% gave either a partial FY postcode or refused to give it at all. Due to the open-access nature of consultation it was not possible to limit participation to local residents only.

Figure 2.1: What is your home postcode? (base – 1,062)



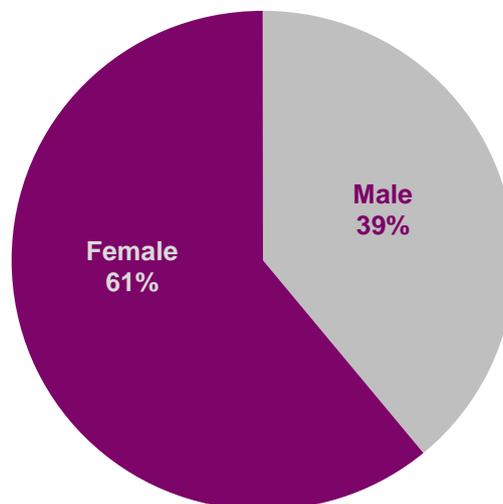
Respondents to the consultation were asked if they have any children across a range of age groups. Three in ten do not have any children. 54% have children aged 16 or under.

Figure 2.2: Do you have any children in the following age groups? (base – 1,045)



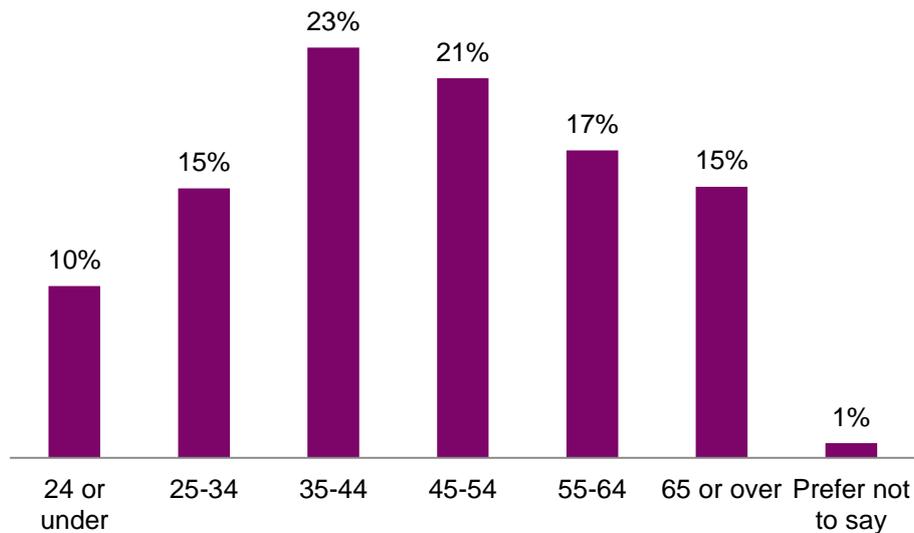
More females than males responded to the consultation. Comparatively, based on the 2011 Census the Blackpool population consists of 49% males and 51% females.

Figure 2.2: What is your gender? (base – 1,022)



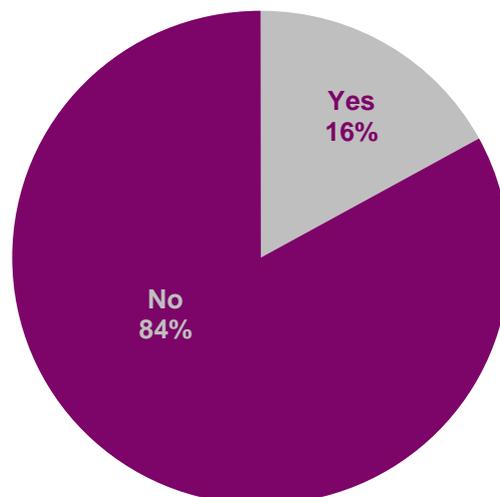
Respondents to the consultation sit within a range of age groups and this broadly reflects the population profile of Blackpool. One in four respondents are aged 34 or younger which represents a good response from the younger age groups who are usually more difficult to reach. Conversely, residents aged 65 or over are slightly underrepresented.

Figure 2.3: Of the following age groups, which do you fall into? (base – 1,054)



16% of respondents indicated that they have a long standing illness or disability. Of those, 58% consider this illness or disability to limit their daily activities.

Figure 2.4: Do you have a long standing illness or disability? (base – 913)



96% of people who responded to the consultation were of White British ethnicity.

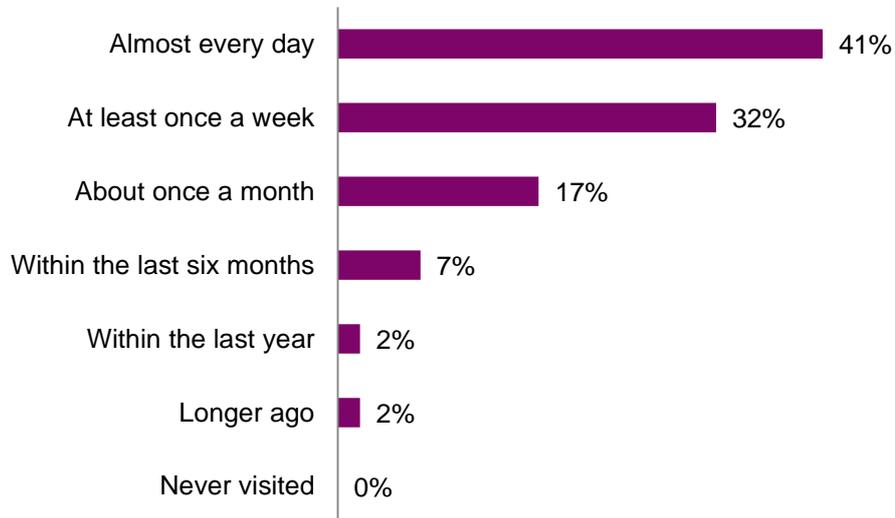
91% consider themselves to be heterosexual, with a further 3% indicating gay or lesbian and 5% preferring not to say.

69% indicated that they are Christian and 29% do not identify with any religion.

3 Spaces in Blackpool Town Centre and the Promenade

Around two in five of the consultation respondents visit Blackpool town centre almost every day. Cumulatively, 73% visit the town centre at least once a week.

Figure 3.1: How often do you visit Blackpool town centre? (base – 1,046)

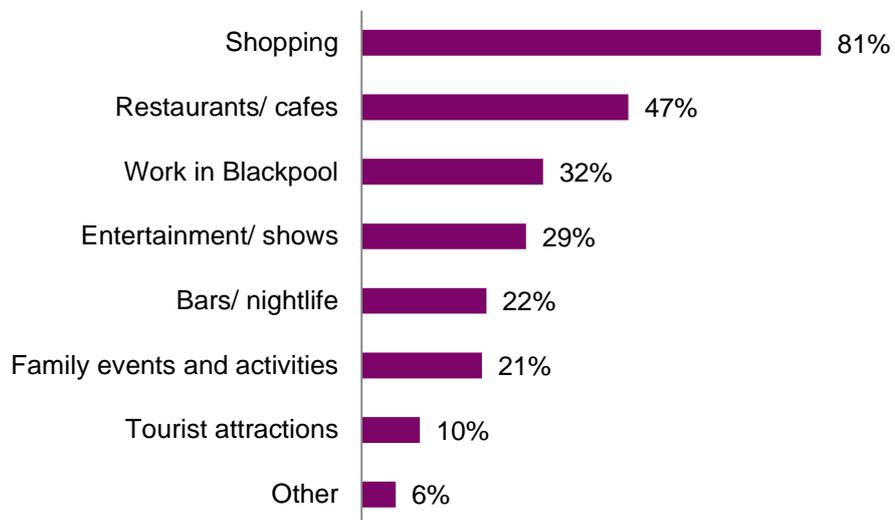


In terms of what people use in the town centre, the most common activity is shopping, followed by visiting restaurants or cafes.

The younger age groups are more likely to visit the town centre for the bars and nightlife (49% of 16 to 24 year olds).

The 'other' reasons include walks along the Promenade, visiting the library and as a meeting point with friends and family.

Figure 3.2: What do you use Blackpool town centre for? (base – 1,041)

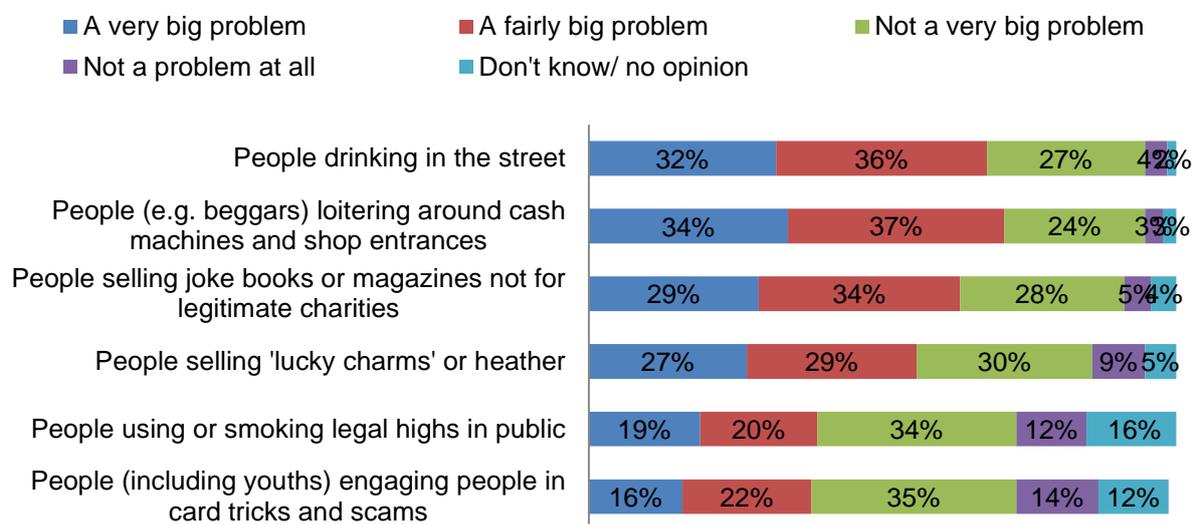


The consultation asked how much of a problem a range of anti-social behaviour issues are in Blackpool town centre and the Promenade.

The biggest issue appears to be people loitering around cash machine and shop entrances. 71% consider it to be a very or fairly big problem and this rises to 76% for those who visit the town centre almost every day.

This was closely followed by people drinking in the street, people selling joke books or magazines not for legitimate charities and people selling 'lucky charms' or heather.

Figure 3.3: How much of a problem, if at all, do you think each of the following are in Blackpool town centre and the Promenade? (base – 1,053)



Respondents were then asked if they had any comments to make on the issues and any impact on them.

The word cloud in figure 3.4 summarises the main topics emerging from these, with beggars and drinking dominating the comments. The comments below exemplify the impact these are having on some people.

I am fed up of beggars on the streets around the town centre and also the drunks in the shelter next to the north pier

I find some of the drinkers/beggars quite intimidating at times, their appearance can be off putting when in the street

Figure 3.4: Do you have any comments to make on these issues and any impact on you? (base – 297)



Following this, the consultation asked if there is anything else which people consider to be a problem in Blackpool town centre and the Promenade. A range of views were expressed, some elaborating on problems listed in the consultation, some identifying other anti-social behaviour problems whilst others took the opportunity to comment on other issues in the town centre.

What is clear through many of the comments is the level of dissatisfaction with the various anti-social behaviours they observe in Blackpool town centre and along the Promenade.

The main comments were around:

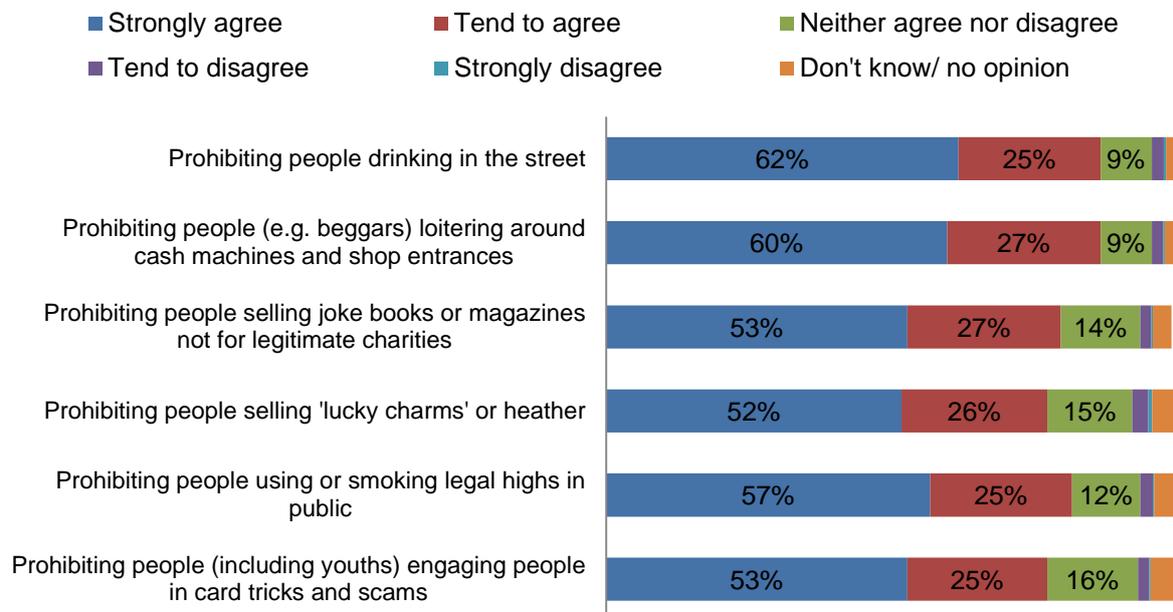
- Reiterating the problems caused by beggars and charity collectors in the street
- A number of dog-related issues such as dog fouling and dogs off leads or out of control
- A range of comments referring to the cleanliness of the town, in particular the level of litter, presence of graffiti and a lack of bins
- Various problems relating to roads and the use of them in the town centre and long the Promenade, in particular the amount of traffic and speeding vehicles and cyclists
- Several references to the problems caused by drug addicts and drug dealing in the town

- A mix of other anti-social behaviour issues considered a problem in Blackpool, including fighting, rowdy and inappropriate stag and hen parties and people urinating in the street
- Relating to a number of these problems, some people feel there is a lack of CCTV and police control in Blackpool
- Whilst not an anti-social behaviour issue, there were a range of comments relating to parking problems in Blackpool town centre
- Moreover, the feeding of pigeons and seagulls is considered a problem in the town and particularly along the Promenade for some people

Respondents to the consultation were then asked to what extent they agree or disagree with a range of protection order proposals. Strong levels of agreement can be seen for all proposals, with the highest being for prohibiting people drinking in the street and prohibiting people loitering around cash machines and shop entrances (87% strongly or tend to agree with both after rounding).

Older respondents were more likely to agree with the proposals. For example, 93% of people aged 65 or over strongly or tend to agree with the proposal to prohibit people drinking in the street.

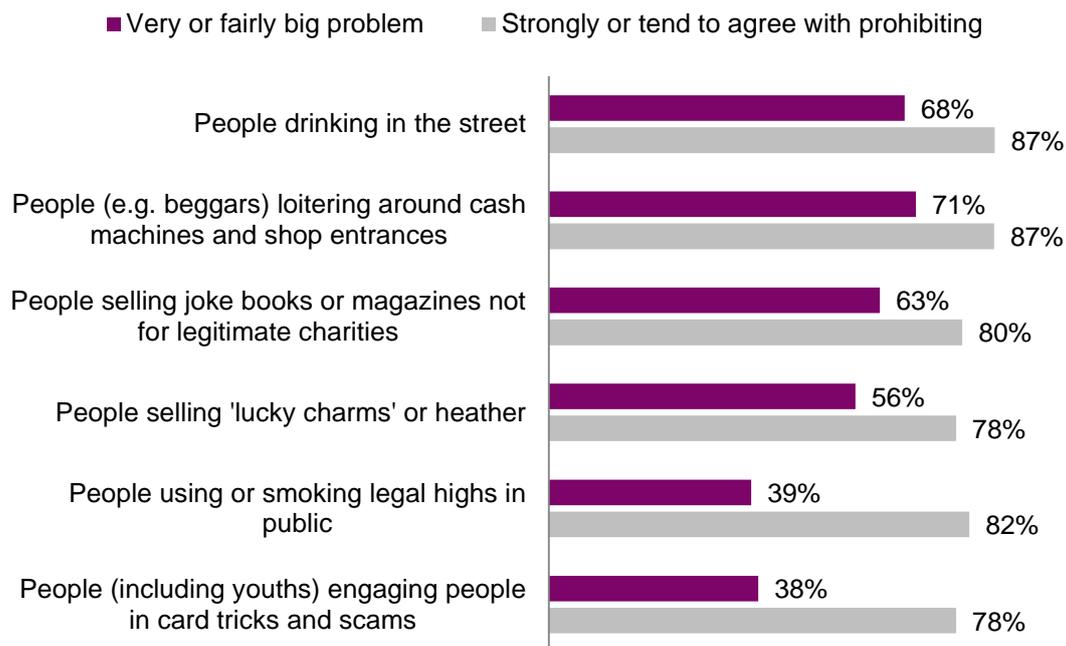
Figure 3.5: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following proposals relating to protection orders in the town centre and the Promenade? (base – 1,055)



**Note that percentages from 'tend to disagree' to 'don't know/ no opinion' were below 5% and have not been displayed in figure 3.5*

Figure 3.6 compares the proportion of people who think the various behaviours are a problem with the proportion who agree with prohibiting them. For all proposals the level of agreement is higher than the percentage of people who consider them to be a problem. For example, 39% feel that people smoking legal highs is a problem in Blackpool town centre but 82% agree that it should be prohibited.

Figure 3.6: Problems in the town centre and the Promenade compared with the level of agreement for prohibiting them (base – 1,053)



People were then asked if they had any comments to make about any of the proposals relating to protection orders in the town centre and the Promenade. The main themes within the comments expressed are:

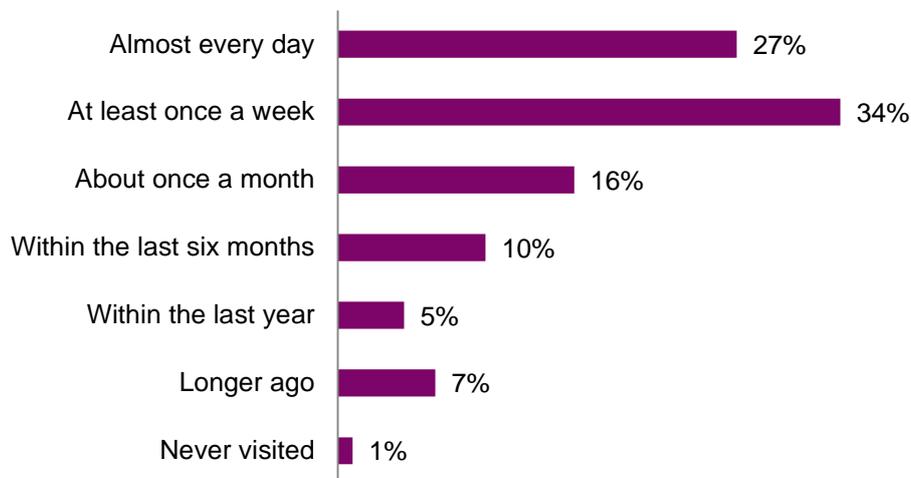
- A general backing from many respondents to implement the proposals and take a strong enforcement stance to tackle anti-social behaviour issues
- Some queried why these proposals are not already in place and what the difference is with existing measures such as alcohol-free zones
- A number of respondents were keen to remind the Council that measures should be in place to protect and help vulnerable people through this process, such as homeless people
- There was some scepticism around whether the protection orders will work and really make a difference, with a concern being that the Council might not have the resources to implement effectively
- Some respondents suggested that the police should play a key role in the implementation and enforcement of any protection orders

4 Spaces in the Borough's Parks

Over a quarter of the respondents (27%) who responded to this section visit a local park almost every day (note that some people did not feel able to contribute to this section, hence the lower base rate compared to the town centre section). A further 34% visit a park at least once a week. Just 1% have never visited a local park.

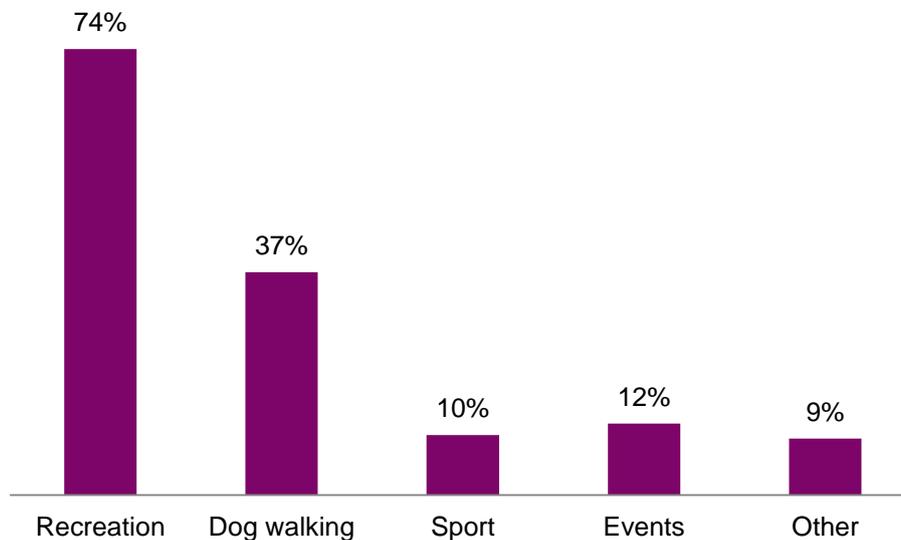
71% of people with children aged 10 or under visit a local park at least once a week compared to 49% of people who do not have any children.

Figure 4.1: How often do you visit a local park? (base – 943)



Those people who do visit a local park were then asked what they use it for. Around three quarters use a park for general recreation, and this is higher amongst those with children aged 16 or younger. 37% of people who visit a local park do so to walk a dog, rising to 51% amongst the 45 to 54 age group.

Figure 4.2: What do you use your local park for? (base – 900)

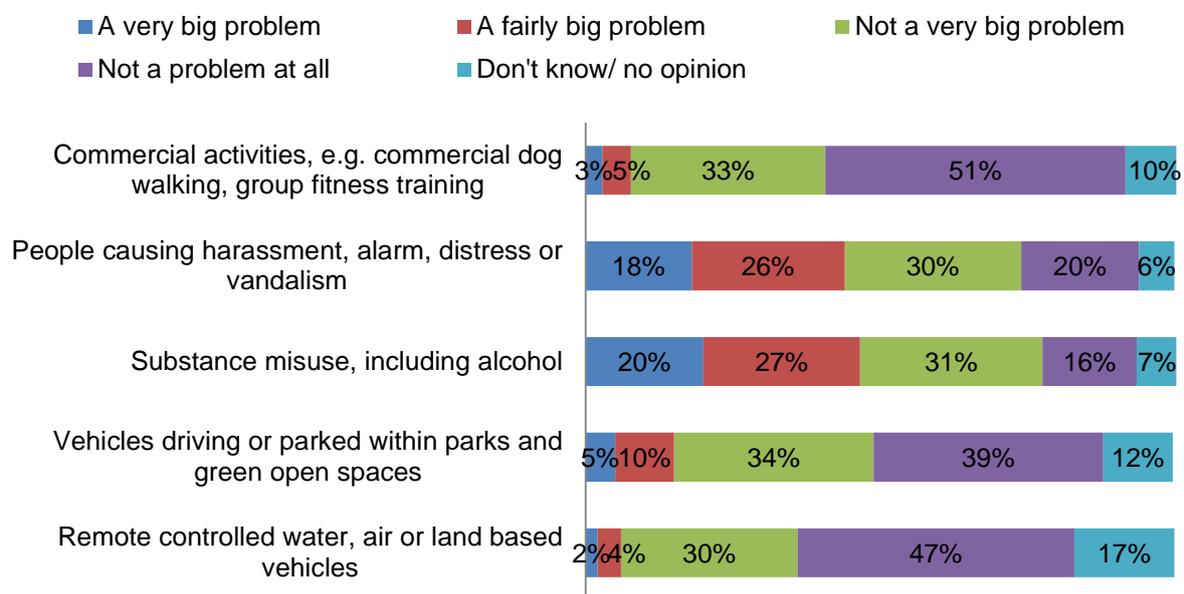


The consultation asked how much of a problem a range of issues are in Blackpool’s parks.

The biggest problems in local parks appear to be substance misuse, including alcohol, and people causing harassment, alarm, distress or vandalism.

Only 8% and 6% respectively consider commercial activities (such as dog walking and group fitness training) and the use of remote controlled water, air or land based vehicles to be a very or fairly big problem in Blackpool’s parks.

Figure 4.3: How much of a problem, if at all, do you think each of the following are in the Borough’s parks? (base – 933)



Respondents were then asked if they had any comments to make on the issues and any impact on them. Dogs were a common subject within many of the comments, particularly in relation to dog fouling, being off leads and behaving dangerously. Some people suggest that dogs around parks are scaring children.

There were a number of comments referring to the behaviour of younger people, particularly teenagers, with some feeling that there is too much swearing, shouting and intimidating behaviour in parks. However, this view is not representative of all the comments expressed.

Figure 4.4 overleaf is a word cloud which highlights the main topics and words within the comments. The bigger the word, the more often it was referred to by respondents.

Figure 4.4: Do you have any comments to make on these issues and any impact on you? (base – 142)



The consultation also gave people the opportunity to suggest anything else which they consider to be a problem in the Borough's parks. Like the previous question, dog fouling and dogs off leads dominated many of the comments.

Other issues raised included littering and broken glass, inappropriate use of facilities (for example, playing football on bowling greens), inconsiderate cyclists and skateboarders, limited toilet and changing facilities, people smoking around young children and a lack of lighting.

Respondents to the consultation were then asked to what extent they agree or disagree with a range of protection order proposals in the Borough's parks.

The highest level of agreement for the proposals relating to parks is for taking action against people causing anti-social behaviour or vandalism and banning substances (78% strongly or tend to agree with both).

The level of agreement is lower for the remaining proposals but more do agree than disagree:

- 48% strongly or tend to agree that commercial activities should be regulated and licensed, 15% strongly or tend to disagree

- 48% strongly or tend to agree that vehicular access in parks and green open spaces should be licensed, 13% strongly or tend to disagree
- 39% strongly or tend to agree that the use of remote controlled vehicles should be restricted to designated areas, 14% strongly or tend to disagree

Respondents in older age groups were generally more likely to agree with the proposals.

For example, 86% of people aged 65 or over strongly or tend to agree with the proposal to take action against people causing anti-social behaviour or vandalism, compared to 73% of those aged 16 to 34.

Figure 4.5: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following proposals relating to protection orders in the Borough’s parks? (base – 937)

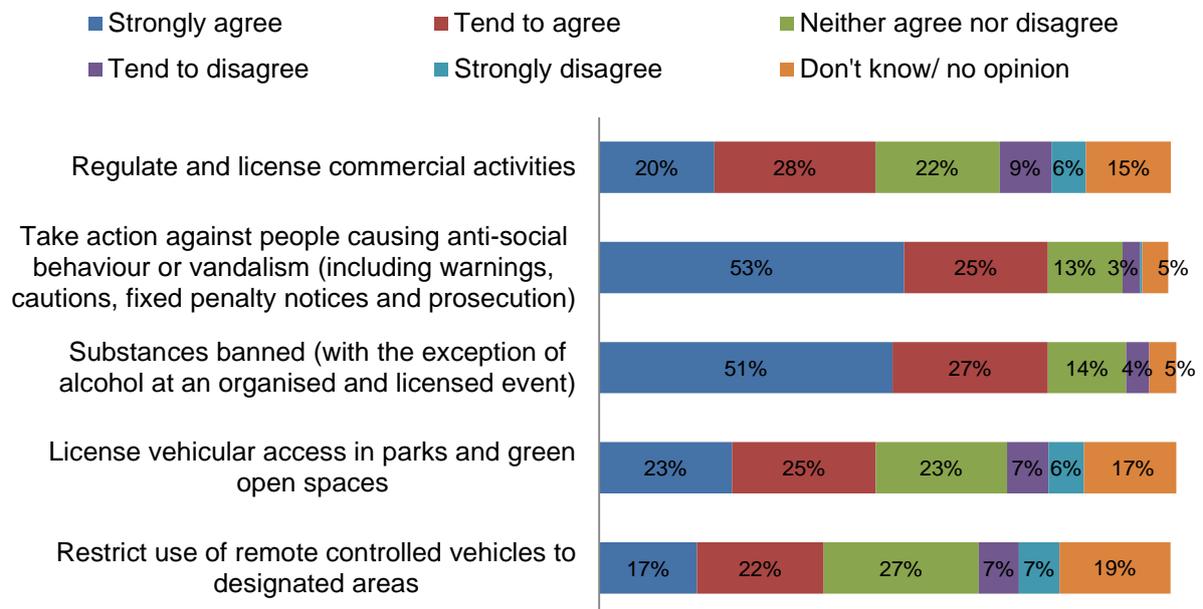
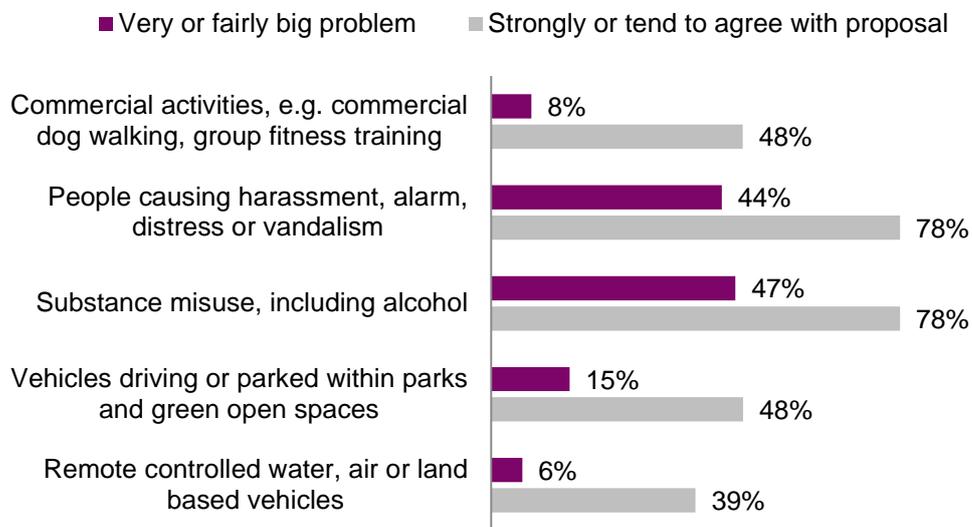


Figure 4.6 compares the proportion of people who think the various behaviours/ activities are a problem in the Borough’s parks with the proportion who agree with prohibiting them.

Like in the town centre, for all proposals the level of agreement is higher than the percentage of people who consider them to be a problem.

Whilst only 8% of respondents consider commercial activities to be a very or fairly big problem in local parks, 48% strongly or tend to agree that they should be regulated and licensed.

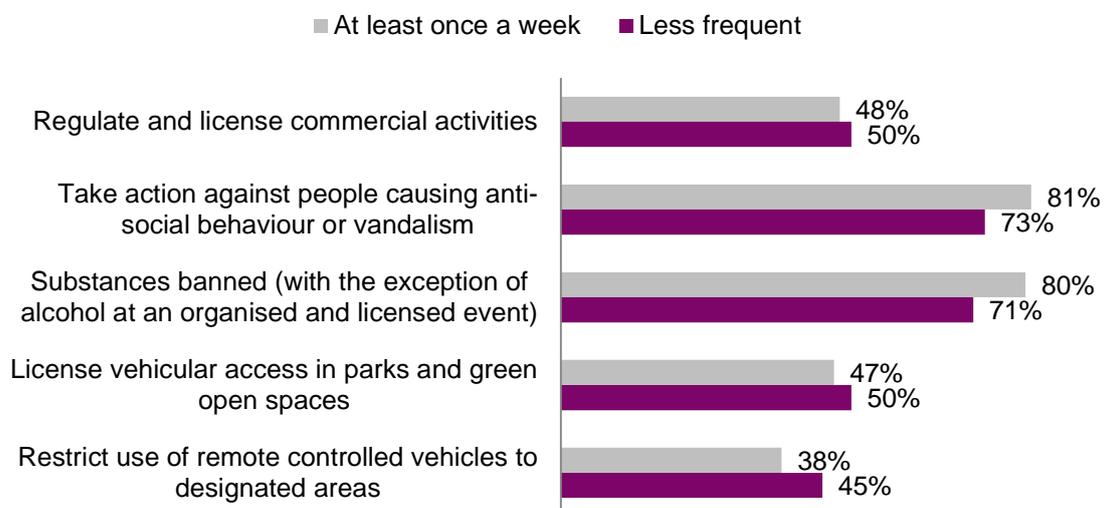
Figure 4.6: Problems in the Borough’s parks compared with the level of agreement for prohibiting them (base – 933)



To unpick the level of agreement further, figure 3.7 highlights the difference in opinion between those people who visit a local park at least once a week and those who visit less frequently.

Regular visitors are more likely to agree to take action against people causing anti-social behaviour or vandalism and with the proposal to ban substances. However, they are less likely to agree with restricting the use of remote controlled vehicles when compared with those who occasionally visit a local park.

Figure 4.7: % who strongly or tend to agree with proposed parks protection orders, by frequency of visit to a local park (base – 647 for at least once a week, 275 for less frequent)



People were then asked if they had any comments to make about any of the proposals relating to protection orders in the Borough's parks. The main themes within the comments expressed are:

- Like for the town centre proposals, some respondents suggested that it is important that the resources are available to the Council to implement and enforce effectively
- A number of people feel alcohol should be banned 'full stop', arguing that parks should be places families can go
- A range of comments were received, reiterating previous themes, that issues relating to dogs should be focused on and resourced – this includes controlling dogs off leads or providing a designated area, better enforcement of dog fouling
- Some general comments were made about encouraging a considerate and respectful attitude when using remote controlled vehicles or bringing alcohol with a picnic, rather than taking action and enforcing