

	<b>GLADHOUSE RESERVOIR VISITOR SURVEY SUMMARY REPORT 2021</b>	Version/Tag:
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## GLOSSARY

SOAC - Scottish Outdoor Access Code  
SSSI - Site of Special Scientific Interest

## **INTRODUCTION**

The purpose of this report is to provide an overview of responses provided during the Gladhouse reservoir visitor survey.

Open for a period of one month, from September 15<sup>th</sup> to October 15<sup>th</sup>, 2021, the survey sought feedback from reservoir users to help Scottish Water better understand visitor behaviour, what people value about the site and what they feel would improve their experience.

In February 2020, Scottish Water launched its Strategic Plan for the next 25 years. Within this we committed to connecting communities with their local environment and to support tourism by enabling access to our assets, where appropriate, for leisure purposes. We recognise our reservoirs provide important access to green space and Gladhouse reservoir is enjoyed and valued for many reasons by those who visit.

It is important to note that any potential enhancement or development at the reservoir must carefully balance the operational needs to provide clean, fresh drinking water to customers both now and in the future, with wildlife and environmental considerations (and SSSI status), community views and the overall cost implication on the public purse.

Feedback was gathered digitally via an online survey and received 1159 responses. The following report provides insight into the feedback. At this stage, the report does not draw any conclusions, with further work to be undertaken to develop medium and long-term strategies informed by data and feedback.

### Background

Gladhouse reservoir is located in the south of Midlothian, near the Scottish Borders. The reservoir is a raw water source for approximately 150,000 people in Midlothian and parts of Edinburgh. In the past two to three years, there has been a steady increase of visitors to the site and in 2020, Covid-19 restrictions led to a greater influx again.

These visitors participate in a wide range of activities, including picnics, walking, cycling, water sports (open water swimming, kayaking, Stand Up Paddle boarding, fishing), and wild camping. As a result of the increasing seasonal demand, there have been reports of tensions between the different groups of water users at the reservoir, and between local residents and those visiting from further afield.

A stakeholder group has been formed to discuss these and other issues, and to try to agree plans which will help manage the impact of visitors to the area. Members of the group include community representatives, local landowners, local residents, Police Scotland, local farmers, Midlothian Council, Scottish Fire & Rescue and NatureScot.

### SSSI

Gladhouse reservoir is a registered Site of Special Scientific interest (SSSI) and has international importance as a goose roost for the pink-footed goose *Anser*

*brachyrhynchus* and the greylag goose *Anser anser*.

The reservoir also supports breeding mallard *Anas platyrhynchos*, tufted duck *Aythya fuligula*, teal *Anas crecca*, coot *Fulica atra*, moorhen *Gallinula chloropus*, great crested grebe *Podiceps cristatus* and little grebe *Tachybaptus ruficollis*.

In addition to the pink-footed goose (the reason for the site's SSSI designation) and the other wildlife listed above, Gladhouse reservoir has also been a known breeding ground for ospreys, including in 2021.

#### Scottish Outdoor Access Code

The Scottish Outdoor Access Code (SOAC) details the rights people have in Scotland to access land and enjoy the outdoors, as well as containing information on how the natural environment can be accessed responsibly. As well as understanding visitor behaviour, the survey aimed to get a sense of levels of awareness around SOAC guidance. These questions are also being repeated in other similar surveys across the country with feedback helping to inform responsible access campaign activity.

#### Water Safety

The survey also sought to gauge understanding of water safety at Scottish Water reservoirs.

This was achieved by the inclusion of a section in the survey asking respondents to rank their awareness of topics such as: the lack of lifesaving equipment at reservoirs; the low temperature of the; and the infrastructure that may pose a danger to water users, including air curtains, one of which was installed at Gladhouse in 2019.

Air curtains benefit water quality by releasing pressurised air into the water to disperse potential impurities like manganese and algae. While this helps improve water quality, it also creates negative buoyancy in the water near the air curtain. As a result, the risk of drowning is significant as the lack of buoyance means anyone entering the water will struggle to stay above the water line. As such, it is important that water users at reservoirs are informed on the subject.

Again, these questions are also being repeated in other similar surveys across the country with feedback helping to inform water safety campaign activity.

## METHODOLOGY

### Promotion

The visitor survey was largely promoted digitally on the Scottish Water website and on Scottish Water social media channels. In addition, posters with QR codes were also created and displayed at Gladhouse reservoir.

The dedicated [Gladhouse reservoir webpage](#) was also updated to provide a base from which people could access the survey and find more information.

The survey was also sent out to a range of stakeholders and user groups identified by existing awareness and a desk-based analysis. A list of those contacted about the survey can be found in Appendix 1.

Social media posts were also created to advertise the survey, including a boosted post on Facebook which reached 36,568 people resulting in 1,236 link clicks. For those not on social media, provision was made to ensure the survey could be requested by post. There were no requests for this option.

### Water Bottles

To encourage participation, the survey offered respondents the opportunity to opt in to be entered into a prize draw to win a Scottish Water refillable water bottle. Winners were selected at random and contacted for an address to send their prize to. 20 bottles were distributed to winners.

### Gladhouse Mailing List

Respondent were invited to opt into joining a mailing list to receive future communication about the reservoir. 796 respondents opted in to be contacted by email.

### GDPR

As email addresses were requested for both the water bottle prize draw and/or to opt into future communication, a Privacy Statement was included to communicate Scottish Water's commitment to GDPR and data privacy. Any future communication sent will clearly state how respondents can opt out.

### Data Analysis Methods

The survey provided a combination of quantitative and qualitative data. Created on Microsoft Forms, feedback was logged in real time for every completed survey, with multiple choice responses displayed in chart form, and write-in answers stored. Analysis was conducted after the survey closed. The full list of survey questions can be found in Appendix 2.

Using Microsoft Excel, the qualitative feedback was first categorised into themes, establishing where a particular response was repeated. The frequency of the theme is illustrated in the form of a chart with a subsequent list which explores responses aligned to each theme in more detail.

### Limitations and Points of Note

As the survey was conducted online and not with an interviewer, respondents

were able to answer the write-in questions in any manner they desired, occasionally resulting in qualitative data not relevant to the question posed. Respondents were also able to provide multiple answers or points of feedback for various questions, which has resulted in the total number of responses in these sections being higher than the total surveys received.

While the overall response rate was high, the number of responses between the 16-24 age bracket was low, indicating the promoting of the survey did not manage to effectively engage this audience.

## SURVEY ANALYSIS

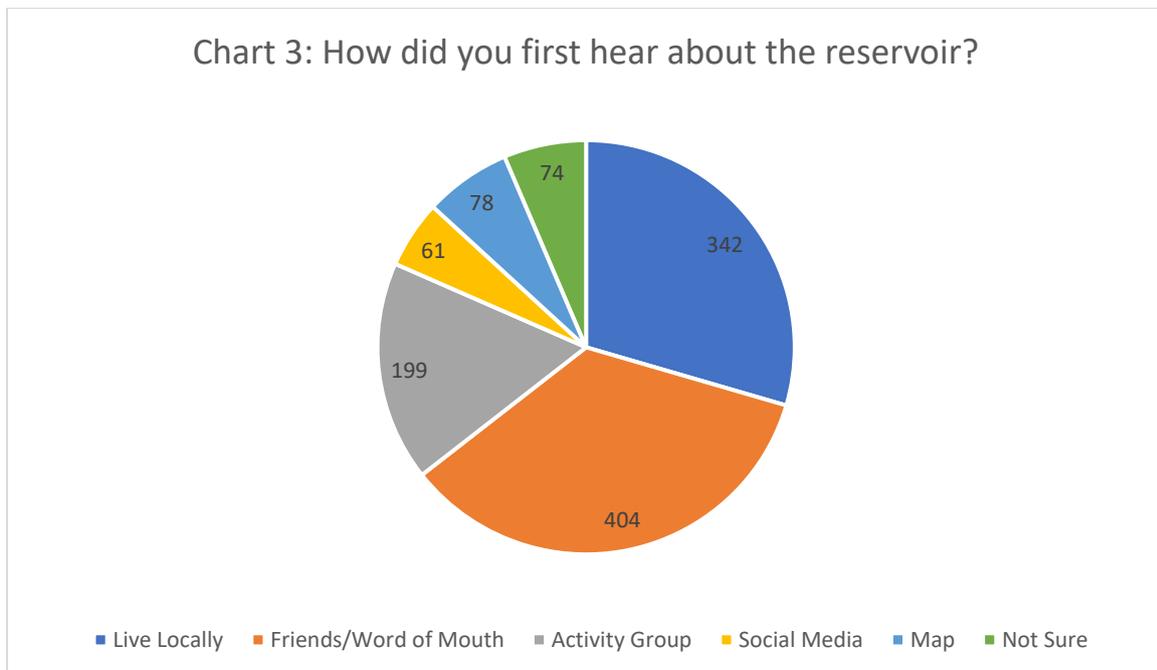
Please note, a selection of charts are presented within the analysis, all others can be viewed in Appendix 3.

### Respondent Information

The initial questions asked respondents which age bracket they fell under, how they had heard about the survey, and how they had first heard about Gladhouse reservoir. The age group with the most respondents was the 45-54 category, and a clear majority of respondents found out about the survey through Facebook. Further information on these questions can be found in Charts 1 and 2.

### Transport Preferences and Travel Times

It was important to establish how people found out about the reservoir. Chart 3 details answers to the first write-in question of the survey, with responses largely falling under six identified categories with Word of Mouth being the most popular response.



Although 342 respondents identify themselves as living locally (as seen in Chart 3), Chart 4 highlights that only eighteen people preferred to journey to the reservoir on foot. The vast majority (979) travel by car and the only other method of transport with any significant representation amongst respondents was bike, which accounted for 131 responses.

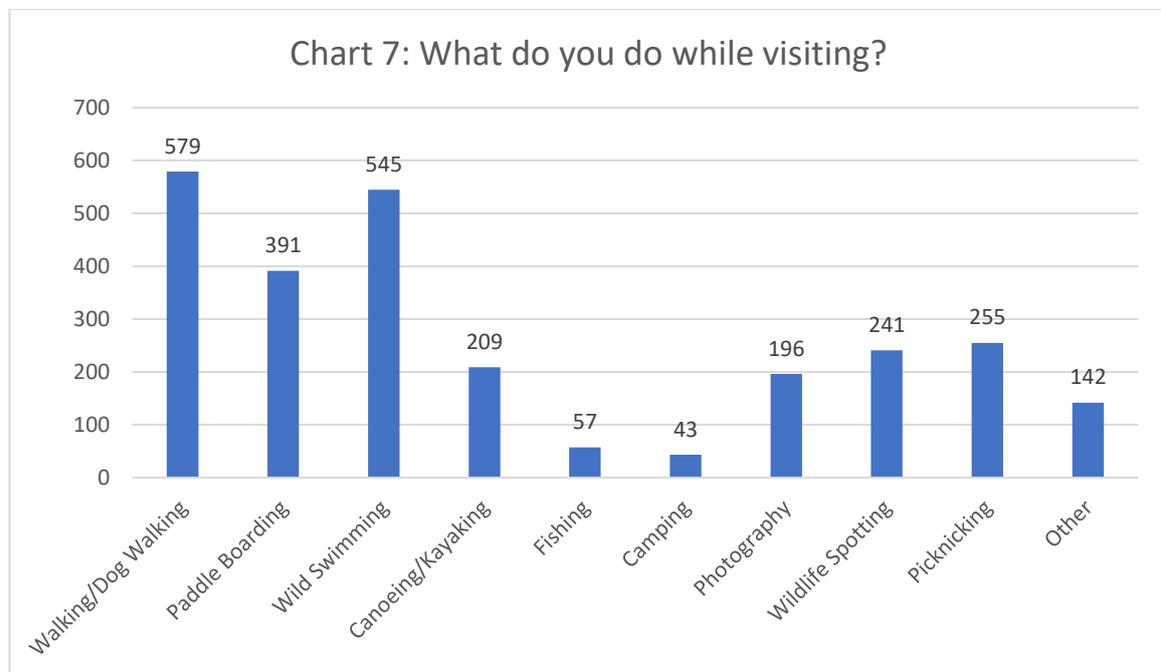
Of those travelling by car, Chart 5 outlines that 550 people, or around half the total number of respondents, are able to drive to the reservoir in less than twenty minutes. This shows that the reservoir has both local popularity, and appeals to those living further away. Twenty respondents reported that they took over an hour to travel to the site.

### Frequency of Visits

As shown in Chart 6, when asked how often they visit, the most popular responses were monthly (396) and seasonally (394). 270 people reported visiting on a weekly basis, while a much smaller number of respondents visited daily, yearly, or had never visited. The high number of seasonal visitors aligns with reports of the reservoir’s increasing popularity for water sports and camping, particularly during the Covid-19 travel restrictions in place in 2020.

### Likes, Dislikes, and Visitor Activity

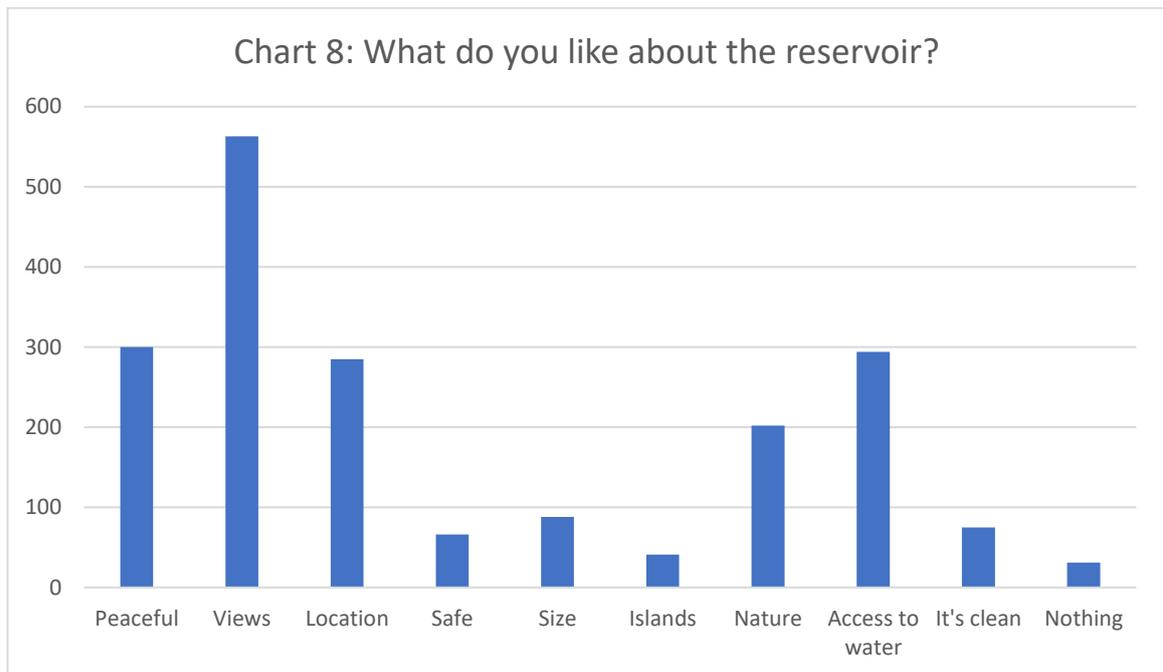
Respondents were asked what they did while visiting Gladhouse reservoir. Chart 7 confirms that the site is popular for water sports (wild swimming, paddle boarding, canoeing/kayaking) and fishing, as well as for on land exercise such as walking or dog walking, cycling (57 mentions in “other” category) and running (19 mentions in “other” category). A further breakdown of the “other” category response can be found in Appendix 4.



Despite the reservoir being known as a popular seasonal camping destination, only 43 respondents reported visiting for that reason. This may be linked to anecdotal evidence suggesting that many of the campers fall within the 16-24 age bracket, from which this survey only elicited 20 responses.

In line with the site’s SSSI status, 241 people reported wildlife spotting while visiting. Many of the responses to subsequent questions make specific mention of ospreys, the protection of which there appears to be a great strength of feeling about. Despite the SSSI designation being in place due to the reservoir being a roost for the pink-footed goose, no respondents mentioned the species at any point in their survey answers.

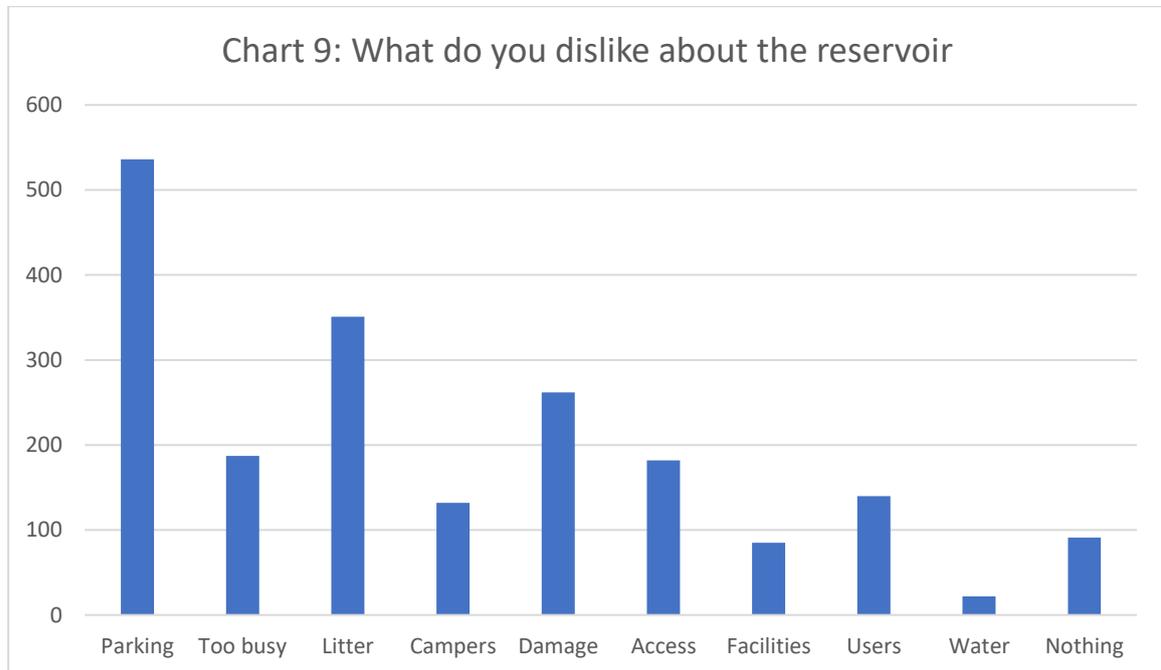
Respondents were then asked what they liked and disliked about the reservoir, the responses to which are detailed below in Chart 8 and Chart 9.



Category breakdown:

- **Peaceful:** Respondents reacted positively to the tranquility they felt while visiting.
- **Views:** Respondents mentioned the outlook at the reservoir, as well as the surrounding scenery of the Moorfoot Hills.
- **Location:** Most respondents in this category liked the location in terms of its accessible distance from their own homes, although some others were fond of the reservoir’s rural nature.
- **Safe:** Respondents felt safe at the reservoir, usually in relation to partaking in water sports or wild swimming. A number of respondents who go walking at the reservoir also mentioned safety in terms of being reassured that there were normally other people in the vicinity.
- **Size:** Respondents liked the size of the reservoir, particularly those who visited for water sports or wild swimming.
- **Islands:** Respondents enjoyed the islands as landmarks in the reservoir. However, several respondents specifically mentioned that they liked to visit the islands, despite signage being in place to discourage this.
- **Nature:** Respondents noted the benefit they felt from being able to be in a more natural setting and from spotting wildlife. In particular, people felt strongly about protecting the breeding grounds of the ospreys, with many of the responses worrying that increased usage – and in their view misuse – of the site had resulted in a failed breeding year for the birds and the possibility of further environmental damage.
- **Access to water:** Respondents who participate in water sports or wild swimming reported that they found the reservoir itself accessible to enter and to exit.
- **It’s clean:** Respondents were happy with the cleanliness of the reservoir and its surrounding area.

- **Nothing:** Most respondents who said there was nothing to like about the reservoir did so because they believed their visiting experience had become negative over a period of time due to the increased visiting numbers in recent months.



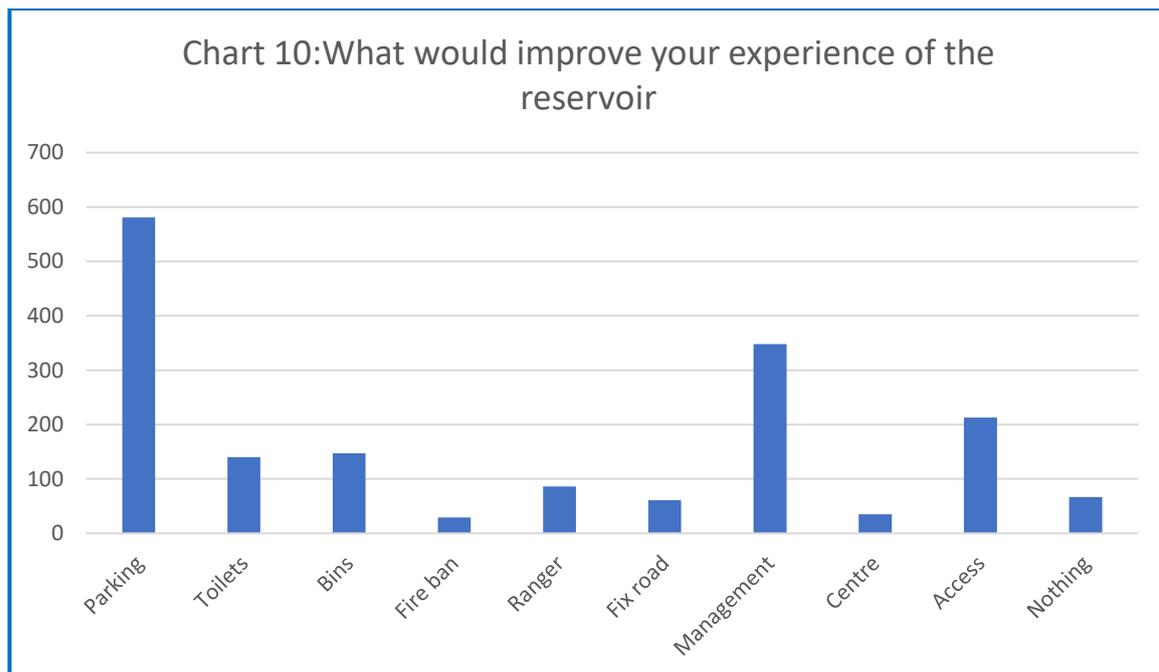
#### Category breakdown:

- **Parking:** Respondents felt that there were inadequate parking places, that visitors parking on the roadside as a result had damaged the road and the verge to the side of it, and that the road was less safe as a result. Other responses queried why some parking spaces had been blocked off.
- **Too busy:** Respondents held the opinion that the reservoir was overcrowded, particularly since the Covid-19 lockdowns.
- **Litter:** Respondents were unhappy with the amount of litter at the reservoir. This includes day trippers not removing their rubbish after they left, dog walkers not cleaning up after their pets, and campers who left human waste and toilet tissue at the site in a manner which was not in any way within the ethos or guidelines of wild camping. Respondents were also worried about what this might mean for the water quality.
- **Campers:** Campers received considerable ire from the respondents. As with the litter feedback, many responses were unhappy with the visible human excrement and toilet paper at the reservoir, which they feared may impact the safety of the site. Respondents were also displeased with the noise generated by campers, how many campers were permitted on site at any one time, and how visitors had camped on the islands.
- **Damage:** There were two main areas of concern among the respondents relating to damage. The first was damage to the physical site including the aforementioned damage to the road and verge, as well as damage to the new fence and access points at the reservoir. The second area of concern was damage to the local environment and wildlife populations. This includes damage caused by campers around the reservoir and on the islands,

damage caused by increased footfall resulting in widened paths with less space for wildlife, damage caused by people lighting fires and people chopping down trees at the reservoir to use as firewood.

- **Access:** Respondents mentioned the new fence around the reservoir and felt there were not enough access points as a result. Others raised concerns that the use of stiles made it hard for people with disabilities, as well as older and younger people, to access.
- **Facilities:** Respondents felt there were a lack of facilities at the reservoir, most notably toilets and bins.
- **Users:** Unfortunately, many respondents reported feelings of ill will between various users of the reservoir. In addition to the issues around camping, visitors were unhappy with local residents who they believed were blocking access to the reservoir and to parking spaces. Local residents were unhappy with visitors who they believed were not considerate in their visiting practices. Those using the reservoir for fishing reported resentment of other water users given that they pay for permits to use the water and wild swimmers, and those doing water sports, do not. Those doing water sports and wild swimming reported confrontations with fishers who they felt acted with entitlement on the water. There were also concerns raised about businesses operating at the reservoir, whether or not they had adequate insurance, and whether or not they were encouraging responsible usage or contributing to keeping the reservoir clean. Finally, a number of respondents pointed out that there have been instances of motorised watercraft, activity which is prohibited on reservoirs.
- **Water:** Respondents noted that water levels on the reservoir had been lower than usual, while some others raised concern over occasional blooms of blue green algae.
- **Nothing:** A number of respondents indicated they were happy with their current visiting experiences to the reservoir, some of whom expressed a desire for the reservoir to remain as they are.

In the following question, respondents were asked what might improve their experience. Chart 10 shows that, perhaps not surprisingly, many of the suggestions made were thematically linked to the dislikes people had when visiting.



#### Category breakdown:

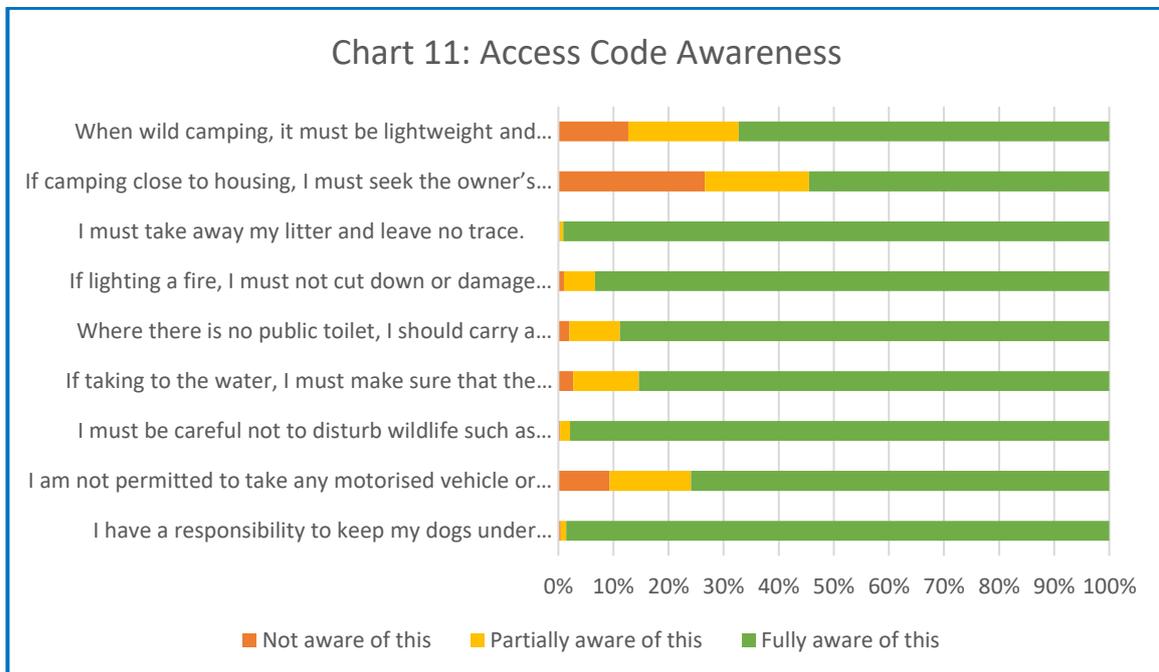
- **Parking:** Respondents asked for a parking solution, with many indicating they would be happy to pay for parking in a car park.
- **Toilets:** Respondents felt toilets would improve their visit, especially those that mentioned they visited with younger children. A number of others also hoped that a toilet facility may help tackle the problem of human excrement and toilet paper on site.
- **Bins:** Respondents suggested that regularly collected bins at the reservoir may help tackle the current volumes of litter in the busier seasons. Many of the requests for bins came from respondents who stated that they themselves would continue to take their rubbish home with them in an effort to reduce waste levels at the reservoir.
- **Fire ban:** Respondents recommended banning fires at the reservoir, largely in response to fire damage they had witnessed beside the reservoir, in the wooded areas, and damage to trees that had been cut down for firewood.
- **Ranger:** Respondents felt that a ranger on site may be able to educate visitors about water safety, manage campers, maintain or monitor wildlife. Some of the requests for a ranger were centered around a lifeguard style role.
- **Fix roads:** Respondents felt that repairs to the road system and potentially a new layout surrounding the reservoir would improve their experience. In particular, requests were made to widen the road, to stop cars from parking on the road, and to create spaces to turn cars around.
- **Management:** Respondents had several suggestions for the management of the reservoir and how that could improve their experience. Firstly, many stated that both the number of people on the water at any given time and the number of people camping at the reservoir should be controlled. Secondly, several respondents suggested zoning the water so that different users do not disturb each other and so that all users do not

disturb wildlife. Related to this were suggestions to ensure nobody visited the islands on the reservoir so that nesting birds would not be put in danger. Another common area for feedback was signage, as many felt that signage could be far clearer and far more consistent throughout the site.

- **Centre:** Some respondents felt a visitor centre would improve their experience. This category includes water users who requested a changing facility, visitors who would like a wildlife centre, and others who would be happy to see a café at the reservoir.
- **Access:** As in the previous question, a number of respondents are not happy with the current access to site and felt this could be improved by more access points, as well as entrance gates so that visitors did not have to use stiles.
- **Nothing:** Some respondents felt happy with their current experience and did not believe it could be improved.

### SOAC Awareness

Question 11 aimed to gauge respondents' awareness of different elements of the SOAC. The majority of respondents reported that they were fully aware of all the highlighted points, but it is notable that a higher percentage of people were either not aware, or only partially aware, of SOAC practices for wild camping. Another area of concern for Scottish Water may also be that 24.1% of respondents were not aware, or only partially aware, that the code does not permit the usage of a motorised vehicle or craft on a reservoir. The full percentage breakdown of responses on SOAC awareness can be found in Appendix 5.

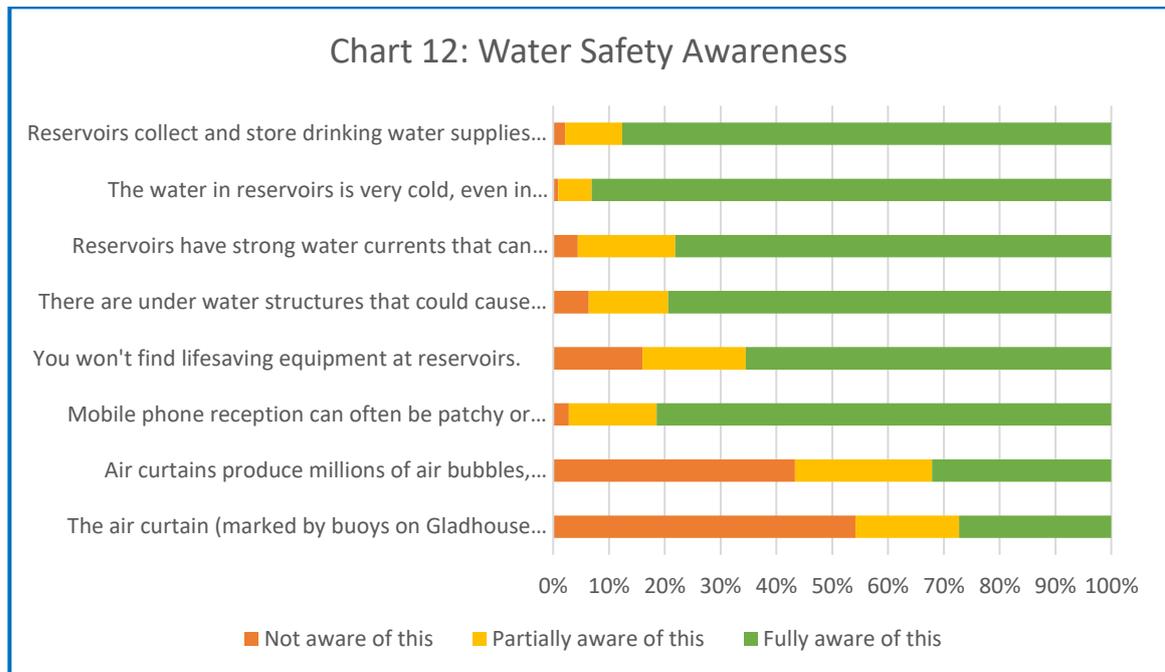


### Water Safety

The same approach for gauging visitor awareness of the SOAC was used in relation to water safety awareness. Although a majority of respondents reported being fully aware of general water safety at reservoirs, such as awareness of underwater structures and strong currents, there was less awareness on more specific information, with 34.5% of respondents either unaware or only partially

aware of the fact that life saving equipment is not provided at reservoirs.

In particular, there was a lack of knowledge about air curtains and the danger they pose to water users. 43.3% of respondents reported they were not aware of the function of an air curtain, and 54.2% did not know about the risk to water users that air curtains can pose by their creation of negative buoyancy. The full percentage breakdown of responses on water safety awareness can be found in Appendix 5.



## **CONCLUSION**

The level of feedback received from the community of reservoir users provides Scottish Water with an important insight into how Gladhouse reservoir is used and valued.

The feedback evidences a community who are highly appreciative of this green space and care deeply about how it is looked after and maintained. The strength of feeling among Gladhouse visitors on the importance of wildlife and the preservation of the environment is also notable. Through these insights Scottish Water has gained a clear view of visitor priorities which will help inform and shape medium to long term developments for the reservoir.

While it is important to ensure improvements carefully balance operational needs to provide clean, fresh drinking water to customers with community views, the overall implication on the public purse, and the SSSI status, Scottish Water are committed to supporting access, enabling communities to connect to the natural environment in support of both physical and mental wellbeing.

# APPENDICES

## Appendix 1: Stakeholders Contacted

Community Council - Moorfoot

Community Council - Peebles

Community Council - Penicuik

Driftwood Adventure

Esk Valley Trust

Fishery

Gladhouse Twitter

Local farmers

Local residents

Media

- Edinburgh Evening News
- Forth 1 Radio
- Midlothian Advertiser
- Peebleshire News
- Radio Borders

Midlothian Council

Midlothian South, Ward 6

- Councillor Catherine Johnstone
- Councillor Jim Muirhead
- Councillor Kieran Munro

MSP: Christine Grahame

NatureScot

NFU Scotland

Paddle boarding companies

Peebles Triathlon Club

Police Scotland

Scottish Fire and Rescue

## Appendix 2: Survey Questions

1. How did you hear about this survey?
2. What age are you?
3. How did you first hear about the reservoir?
4. What's your preferred mode of transport to get to Gladhouse reservoir?
5. If travelling by car, how long does it take to get to the reservoir from your home?
6. How often do you visit?
7. What do you do while visiting?
8. What do you like about the reservoir?
9. What do you dislike about the reservoir?
10. What do you feel would improve your experience?
11. In Scotland, you can access most land to enjoy the outdoors – as long as you behave responsibly. This is known as Scottish access rights. The Scottish Outdoor Access Code details these rights and how to access the natural environment responsibly. Please rate how aware you are of the following statements:
12. How much do you know about Water Safety at Gladhouse reservoir?
13. Future Communication. Would like to opt in to receive updates regarding Gladhouse reservoir? On receipt of any update, you will have the option to unsubscribe to future communications. How to do this will be clearly described in any communication received. Please tick the relevant box below. If you would like to opt in, please also enter your email address below.
14. To opt in to future communication, please enter your email address below.
15. If you would like to be entered into a prize draw to win a refillable water bottle, please enter your email address below.,
16. Privacy. Scottish Water is committed to protecting your data and information. Our privacy notice explains how Scottish Water uses personal data collected by Scottish Water. It also sets out our commitment to safeguarding personal information held about individuals - it does not apply to information we hold about companies and other organisations. Any personal data you give to Scottish Water will be processed in accordance with current UK Data Protection laws. You can read our Personal Data Policy via the following link: <https://www.scottishwater.co.uk/help-and-resources/document-hub/key-publications/data-privacy>. Please confirm below that you have read the statement above.

### Appendix 3: Additional Charts

Chart 1: How did you hear about this survey?

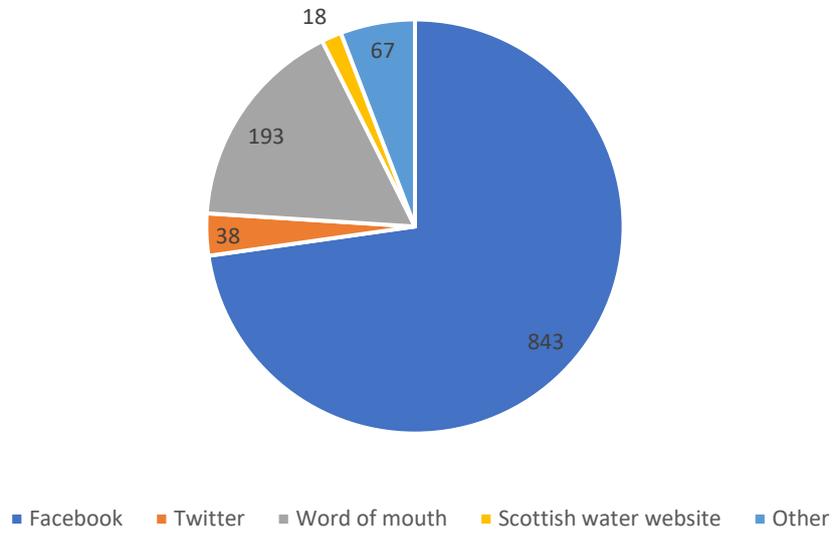
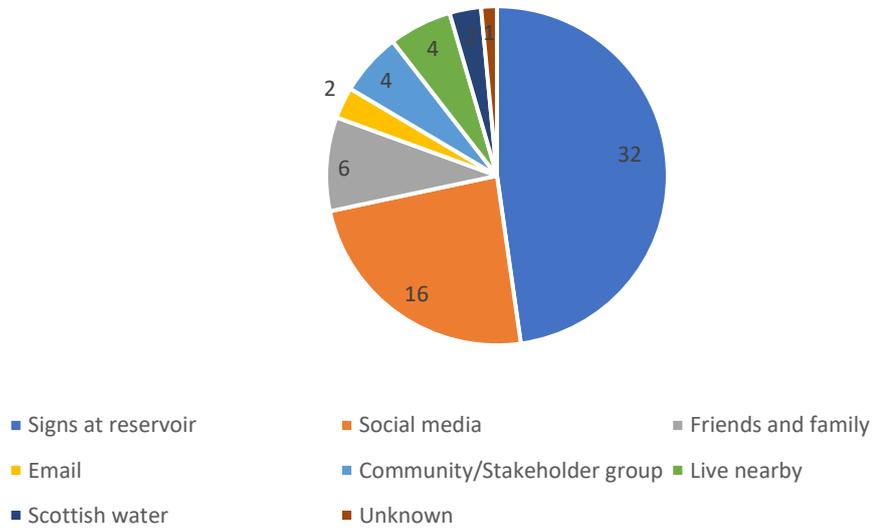


Chart 1.5: How did you hear about this survey (Other)



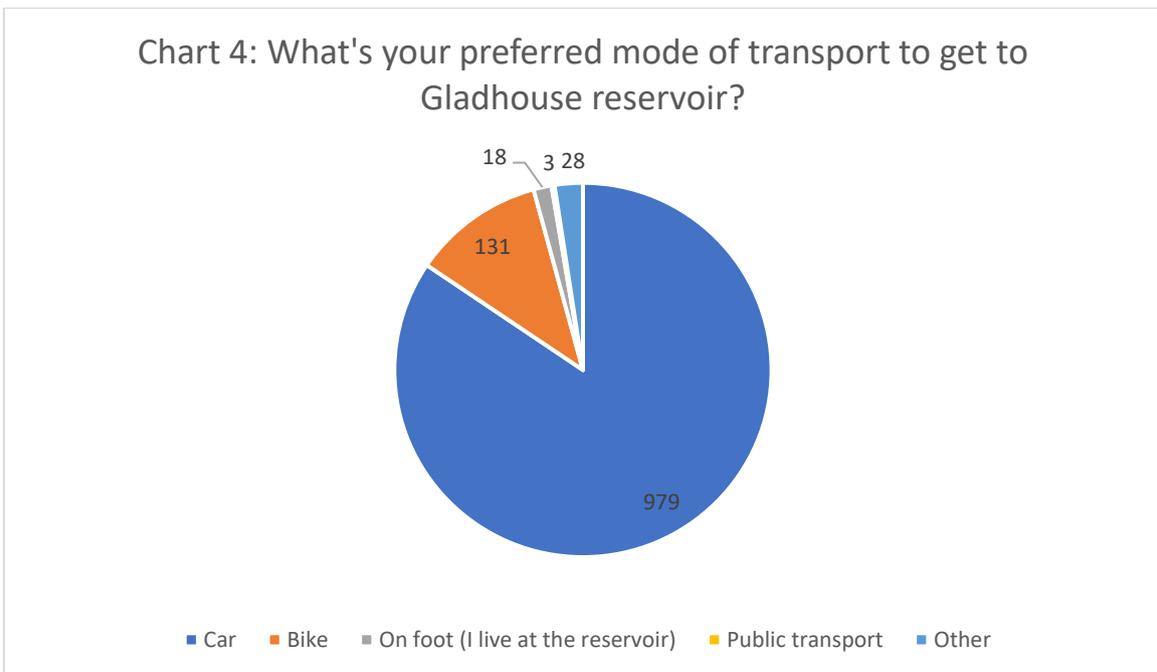
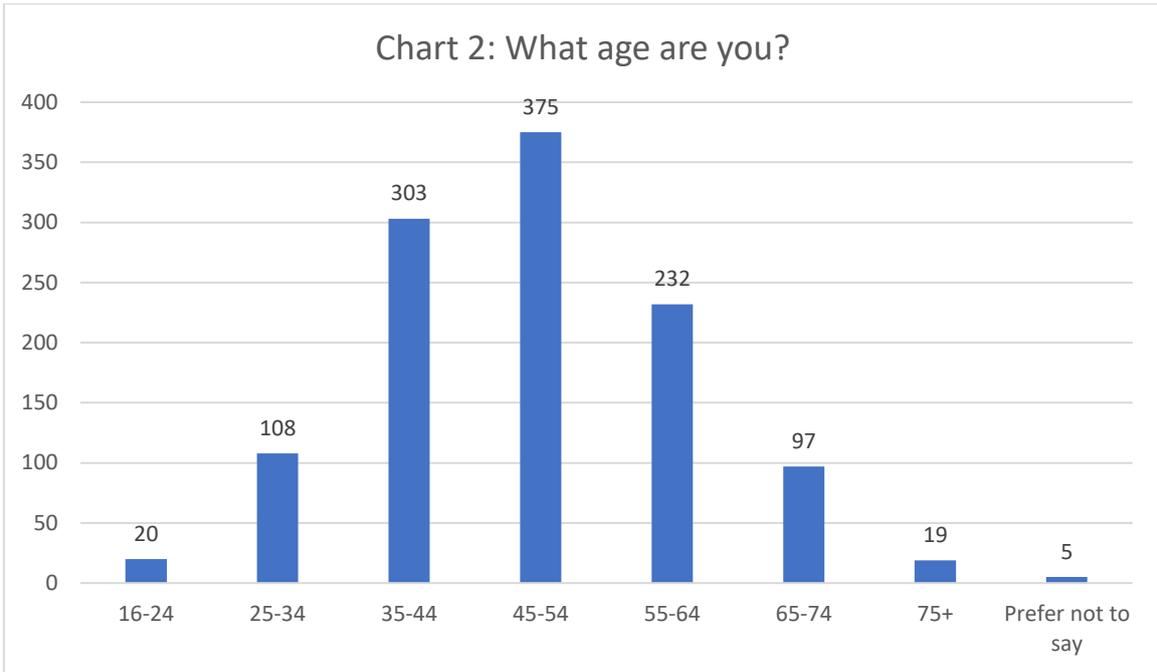


Chart 4.5: What's your preferred mode of transport to get to Gladhouse reservoir (Other)?

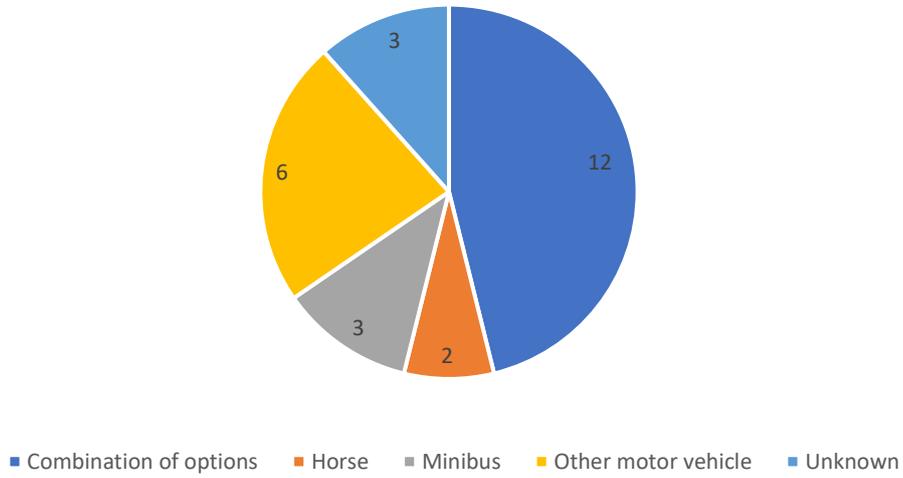
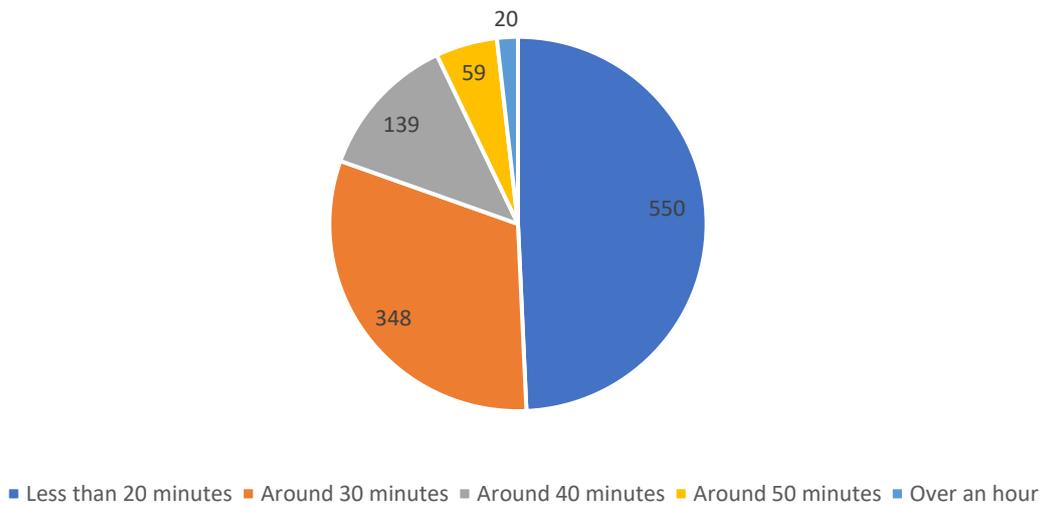
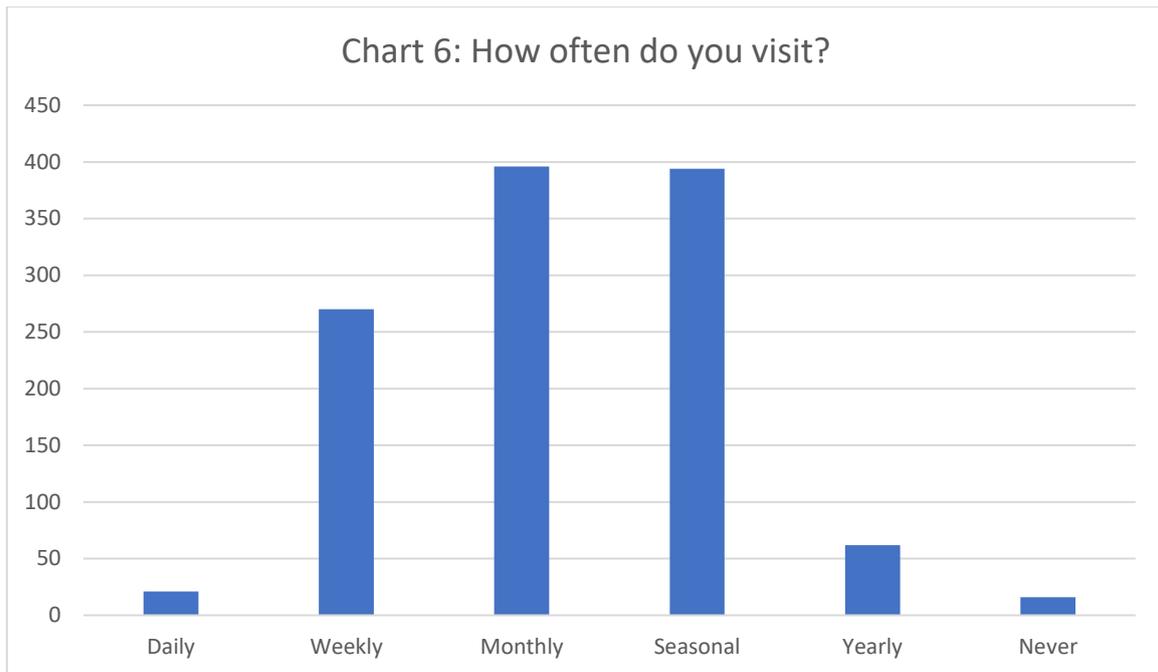


Chart 5: If travelling by car, how long does it take to get to Gladhouse reservoir from your home?





#### Appendix 4: What do you do while visiting

##### What do you do while visiting: "Other"

Breakdown:

- Cycling (57)
- Running (19)
- Passing Time (19)
- Nothing/Not Visited (7)
- Water sports (6)
- Family time (5)
- Birdwatching (3)
- Horse riding (2)
- Foraging (2)
- Work/live nearby (2)
- Geocaching (1)

## Appendix 5: SOAC and Water Safety Awareness

### SOAC Awareness

In Scotland, you can access most land to enjoy the outdoors – as long as you behave responsibly. This is known as Scottish access rights. The Scottish Outdoor Access Code details these rights and how to access the natural environment responsibly. Please rate how aware you are of the following statements:

	<u>NOT AWARE</u>	<u>PARTIALLY AWARE</u>	<u>FULLY AWARE</u>
When wild camping, it must be lightweight and done in small numbers for only two or three nights in any one place.	12.7%	20%	67.3%
If camping close to housing, I must seek the owner's permission first.	26.6%	18.9%	54.4%
I must take away my litter and leave no trace.	0.2%	0.7%	99.1%
If lighting a fire, I must not cut down or damage trees and use a stove where possible. Open fires must be kept small and under control with all traces removed before leaving.	1%	5.7%	93.3%
Where there is no public toilet, I should carry a trowel and bury your own waste and urinate well away from open water, like reservoirs, rivers and burns.	2%	9.2%	88.8%
If taking to the water, I must make sure that the river, loch or reservoir is appropriate for my activity and the numbers involved, take care not to interfere unreasonably with other interests and avoid going close to water intakes, abstraction points or spillways.	2.7%	11.9%	85.4%
I must be careful not to disturb wildlife such as nesting birds.	0.3%	1.8%	97.8%
I am not permitted to take any motorised vehicle or craft onto a reservoir, including electric or petrol/diesel vehicles.	9.3%	14.8%	75.9%
I have a responsibility to keep my dogs under proper control and remove dog feces.	0.4%	1%	98.5%

### Water Safety Awareness

How much do you know about water safety at Gladhouse reservoir?

	<u>NOT AWARE</u>	<u>PARTIALLY AWARE</u>	<u>FULLY AWARE</u>
Reservoirs collect and store drinking water supplies prior to treatment.	2.2%	10.2%	87.7%
The water in reservoirs is very cold, even in summer, and could send your body into shock in seconds.	0.9%	6%	93.1%
Reservoirs have strong water currents that can challenge even strong swimmers.	4.4%	17.5%	78.1%
There are underwater structures that could cause injury if jumping in.	6.4%	14.2%	79.4%

You won't find lifesaving equipment at reservoirs.	16%	18.5%	65.5%
Mobile phone reception can often be patchy or non-existent so, if necessary, calling for help may not be quick or easy.	2.8%	15.7%	81.4%
Air curtains produce millions of air bubbles, aerating the surface of the water to disperse potential water impurities like algae.	43.3%	24.6%	32.1%
The air curtain (marked by buoys on Gladhouse reservoir) create an area of negative buoyancy meaning you would struggle to stay afloat, be that swimming or in a boat.	54.2%	18.6%	27.3%