



## Summary of public engagement events in the Rhondda Summer 2015

Rhondda natural resource management trial  
September 2015

## 1 Introduction

To help us prepare and deliver a trial Area Statement for the natural resource management trial in the Rhondda, we continue to engage with partners and communities for their views.

In spring 2015, we held two formal stakeholder engagement workshops in the Rhondda for partners and community groups to attend. The aim of these events was to help identify potential priorities and opportunities for managing the area's natural resources that could deliver multiple benefits for the people, economy and environment. We also wanted to explore better ways of working between partners to help deliver the emerging priorities and opportunities.

In the summer of 2015, we shifted our focus to the people who live, work and play in the Rhondda to find out their views. The views of the public are critical to help us identify the social, economic and environmental needs of the area. To do this, we attended a variety of community events which helped us gather information relating to energy (past, present and future), skills / jobs, what people most like / love about their area, how they use the outdoors and what their aspirations for their communities are.

This document is a summary of the public events we attended, the methods and materials we used to engage, and the main findings.

Summary of public engagement events in the Rhondda, summer 2015



Residents completing the Rhondda A5 flyers

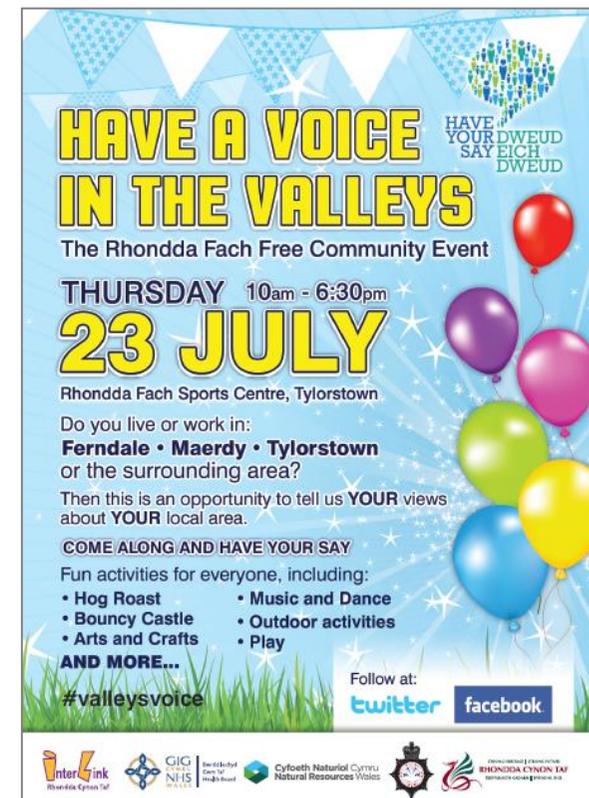
## 2 Community events: summer 2015

To complement our ongoing engagement work with professional organisations, we worked with the local authority and other partners to plan and attend a variety of community events held in the summer of 2015. We chose to take part in community events already planned for the area to avoid duplication, and help ourselves and partners save time / money. We attended the events highlighted below in July and August 2015 to help gather people's views on a healthy and vibrant Rhondda:

- **Youth Wellbeing Day at Ferndale Comprehensive, Rhondda (22 August)**  
Attended by children and teenagers from the 5 main comprehensive schools in the Rhondda.
- **'Have a voice in the Valleys' at Rhondda Fach Sports Centre, Rhondda (23 July)** *\*see below for further information*  
A co-organised community engagement event between ourselves (NRW) and Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough council, who are also trialling an area based approach to how they deliver their services.

Attended by children, parents and local users of the sports centre. Approximately 180 people attended with 65 people completing the Snap Survey.

The main themes discussed were jobs / training / skills, with information gathered via snap survey, post-it notes and our own A5 flyers.



Flyer for the NRW / RCT organised event, 'Have a voice in the Valleys'.

- **‘Stories of Change’ at Treherbert Library, Rhondda (28 July – 4 August)**

A unique, nostalgic and successful two week event held in the disused Treherbert Library. The event was led by Blaengad, Storyworks and Welcome to our Woods, with nearly 700 members of the community attending over the 2 weeks. The main themes at this event were energy (past, present and future), the upper Rhondda, recreation and anything else visitors wanted to chat about.

- **Big Welsh Bite at Ynysangharad Park, Pontypridd (1-2 August)**

The Welsh food and agriculture show is a two day food festival featuring locally grown produce. Toolkit (see section 4) used by our colleagues in the Taff Natural Resource Management team. 44 flyers were completed by festival goers.



Pic 1) At the NRW / RCT co-organised Voice in the Valleys event; Pic 2) Visitor at the Big Welsh Bite Festival completing an A5 flyer; Pic 3) Chatting with Treherbert residents

### 3 Engagement materials

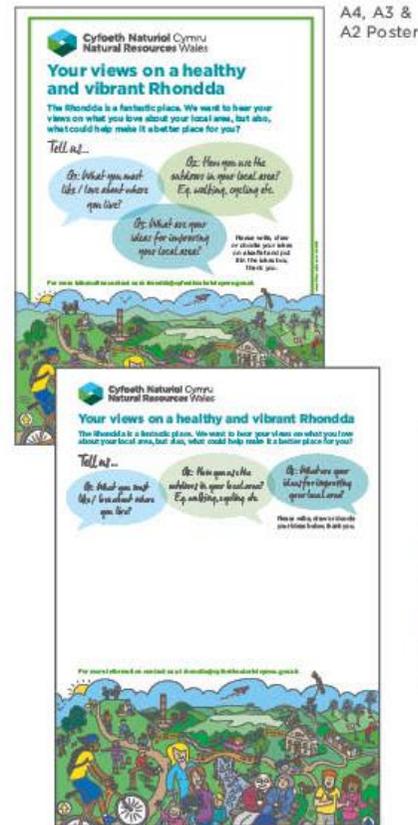
To meet and talk with the community, we worked with our facilitator to create a visually striking toolkit which we could take to a range of places. Our bilingual and modular community engagement toolkit shown below, is designed to be used either with a person present, or as a standalone poster / leaflet / ideas box. The Rhondda landscape visual shows some of the different ways people can use their local environment.



Pop-up Banner



A5 leaflet, with a space on the back for people to write, doodle or draw ideas and a profile capture area.



A4, A3 & A2 Poster

A2 Poster with space for people to put postits or to write on



Ideas Box

## 4 Methodology

### A5 flyer questionnaires

Our engagement with the public took place through informal conversations at the various events we attended. To capture the views of the public, we asked people to complete one of our A5 flyers (as shown in the toolkit in section 4).

The flyers have a tickbox for 'place / postcode' and age category to capture a simple demographic, and includes 3 questions for people to answer:

1. What do you most like / love about your area?
2. How do you use the outdoors in your local area?
3. What are your ideas for improving your local area?

Over 100 people completed the A5 flyers.

### Snap survey

For the co-organised 'Have a voice in the Valleys' event in the Rhondda Fach Sports Centre, snap survey questionnaires (tablet and paper) and community asset mapping techniques were used to record responses. A videographer was used to record the event, and carried out a series of on camera interviews with attendees. 65 people completed the Snap Survey.

### Maps

We took enlarged maps of local areas to two of the public events to enable people to write, draw and scribble any information they wanted. The maps work well and have provided us with a wide range of information including: crime and anti-social behaviour spots, common areas for walking, spots of nature interest, and other information relating to local flooding issues etc.

## 5 Summary of findings

We asked people in the Rhondda the following 3 questions:

### 1 What do you most like / love about your area?

- 46% love the Rhondda's countryside (mountains, woods, rivers)
- 15% love the community spirit of the Rhondda
- 14% love the scenery and views
- 12% love the parks and urban green space
- 5% love the wildlife, 2% the tranquillity, and 6% were other aspects.

### 2 How do you use the outdoors in your local area?

- 58% use the outdoors for walking
- 14% cycle and use bike trails
- 10% like to both walk and cycle
- 16% participate in other sports including climbing, golf, cricket, rugby and football, 2% use their local rivers to fish

### 3 What are your ideas for improving your local area?

- 26% of the community want crime and anti-social behaviour to be addressed
- 20% want more activities / things to do for children and teenagers
- 17% want improved access to recreation
- 16% want more jobs and skills training
- 6% want their local environment improved for wildlife
- 5% want traffic congestion reduced and 5% want empty buildings to be used
- 3% want greater promotion of the South Wales Valleys and 2% had other suggestions, including community food growing

Of the respondents, 22% were under 18 years of age, 30% were aged between 18-40, 32% were aged between 40-65 and 16% were over 65 years of age.

### Overview of question 1

46% of the people who responded stated that the hills, countryside and woodlands are what they most love about their area. 26% of people responded to say how much they love their local parks and green spaces (including sports pitches) and the scenery. Together, this represents **72%** of all responses where people refer to green spaces and the surrounding countryside as the reason they most love where they live. The other significant response was the sense of community spirit in the Rhondda.

*'I love the trails  
and countryside'*

*'We have some of the most  
beautiful scenery and love  
seeing the greenery change  
colour through the seasons'*

*'I love the people  
and community'*

### Overview of question 2

Walking and cycling are by far the most common uses of the outdoors in the Rhondda. **58%** of the people who responded use the outdoors for walking (including walking their dogs), 14% cycle and use bike trails, 10% like to both walk and cycle. Together, this means **82%** of respondents either like to walk or cycle in the Rhondda. The remainder includes participation in other sports including climbing, golf, cricket, rugby and football, and fishing.

*'I love walking, enjoying the  
scenery, picking winberries'*

*'I'm 14 and love  
walking up the  
mountain with my dad'*

*'I walk the mountains and  
often take my grandchildren  
on nature walks'*

### Overview of question 3

The largest response to what could help people's local area is to tackle crime and anti-social behaviour (**26%**). Other significant responses include more activities for children and teenagers (20%), improving access for recreation (17%), and bringing jobs / education and training to the Rhondda (16%). Other answers related to improving the local environment (6%), reducing traffic congestion (5%), using disused / empty buildings (5%), promoting the valleys (3%), as well as other comments including community food growing.

*'I'd like to see more recreation to make the most of the open spaces, e.g. horse riding, hiking clubs, and cycle tracks'*

*'Install proper cycle lanes on the roads and raise awareness of the benefits of cycling'*

*'We need dedicated green areas for adventure, and free to access'*

*'We need a crackdown on anti-social behaviour'*

*'Community ownership and better access to our natural resources'*

*'We need cleaner rivers and more ways for people to get involved'*

*'Getting the community to work together to tidy up their area'*

*'We need more things for kids to do to keep them busy'*

## **Snap Survey results**

The information above highlights people's responses to the 3 questions asked on our A5 flyers (further information about our engagement toolkit is in Section 4). In addition to this, 65 people completed a Snap Survey at the 'Have a voice in the Valleys' event organised by NRW and Rhondda Cynon Taf CBC in the Rhondda Fach Sports Centre on 23 July 2015.

From the Snap Survey questions, 63% of respondents highlighted their desire to see more jobs and learning opportunities to improve the area. After this, 30% of respondents wanted a nicer environment with 6.5% highlighting improved health services. With regard to who people perceive to be responsible for bringing improvements to the area, 28% of responses identified the government as being responsible, with another 28% identifying the Council as the lead authority for improvements. However, a reassuring number (28%) made specific reference to improvement being the combined responsibility of organisations, communities and individuals. Just 1.7% of responses put the onus on themselves to facilitate change in the area.

In response to being asked about what they most love about their area, the majority of respondents highlighted the people and community spirit, followed by the natural and outdoor environment. Attendees identified the Rhondda as a good place for outdoor activities such as walking, bike riding and walking their dogs, and the natural environment was commonly highlighted as something people love about their area.

There were both positive and negative feelings recorded about the future of the area. Negative responses were more focussed and highlighted people's concerns over the lack of funding in the area, a perceived lack of political interest, a lack of jobs / prospects, as well as concerns over the increase in crime and anti-social behaviour. Despite this, many attendees were positive about what they felt they could give to the area, e.g. skills, time and volunteering.

## 6 Summary of key messages

From all the responses we collected in the summer of 2015, several clear messages emerged which highlight that many people in the Rhondda:

- Love their surrounding countryside, local parks, and scenery and are proud of the strong sense of community spirit
- Enjoy using the outdoors for walking, dog walking, cycling etc but would like to see better provision for walkers and cyclists
- Don't venture into surrounding countryside, despite their relative close proximity to outdoors spaces
- Would like to see more jobs / opportunities in the area and address the constant threat of crime and anti-social behaviour
- Are concerned about a lack of activities / things to do for children and teenagers in the area.

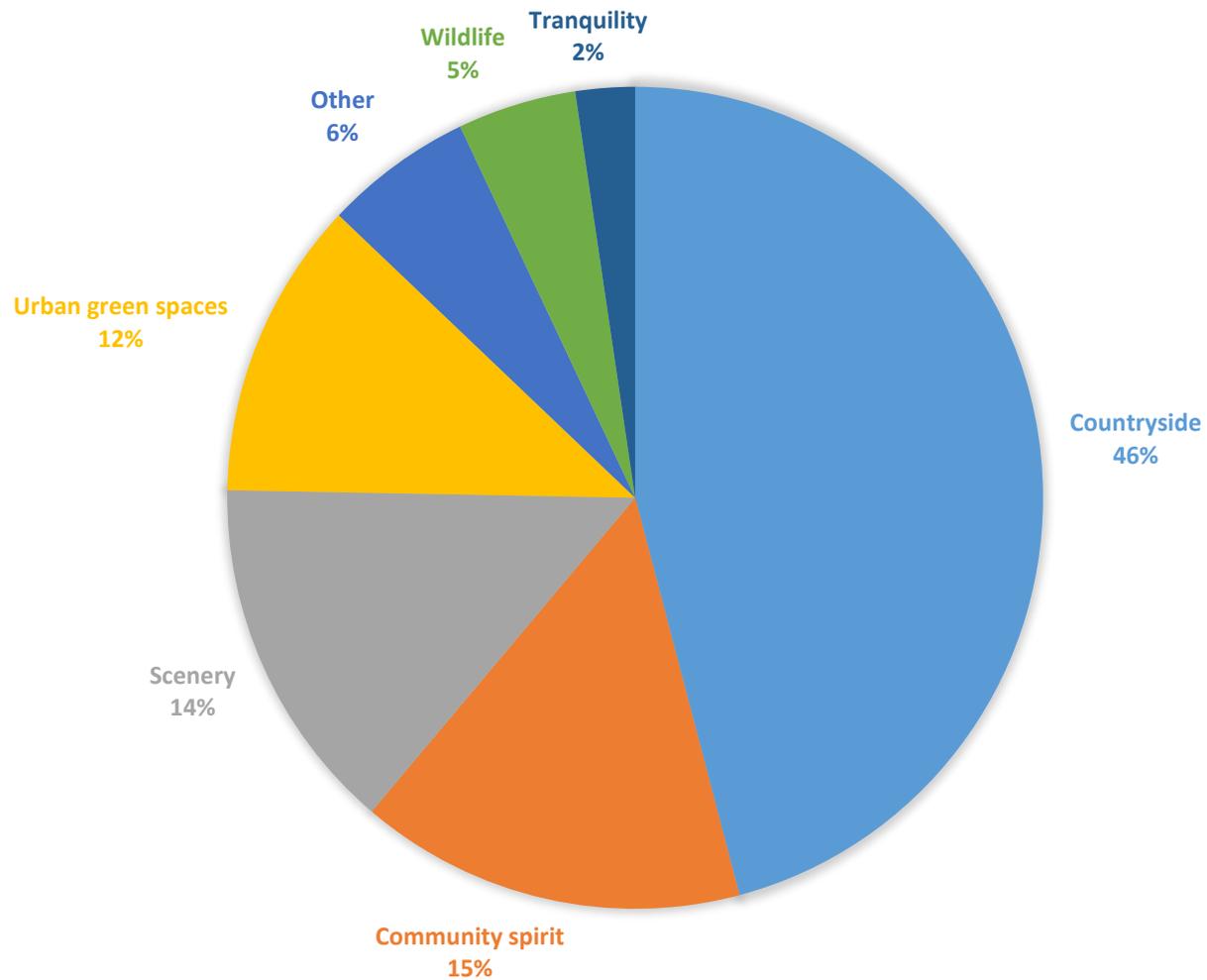
The results of the 3 questions are illustrated in charts below.

### Next steps

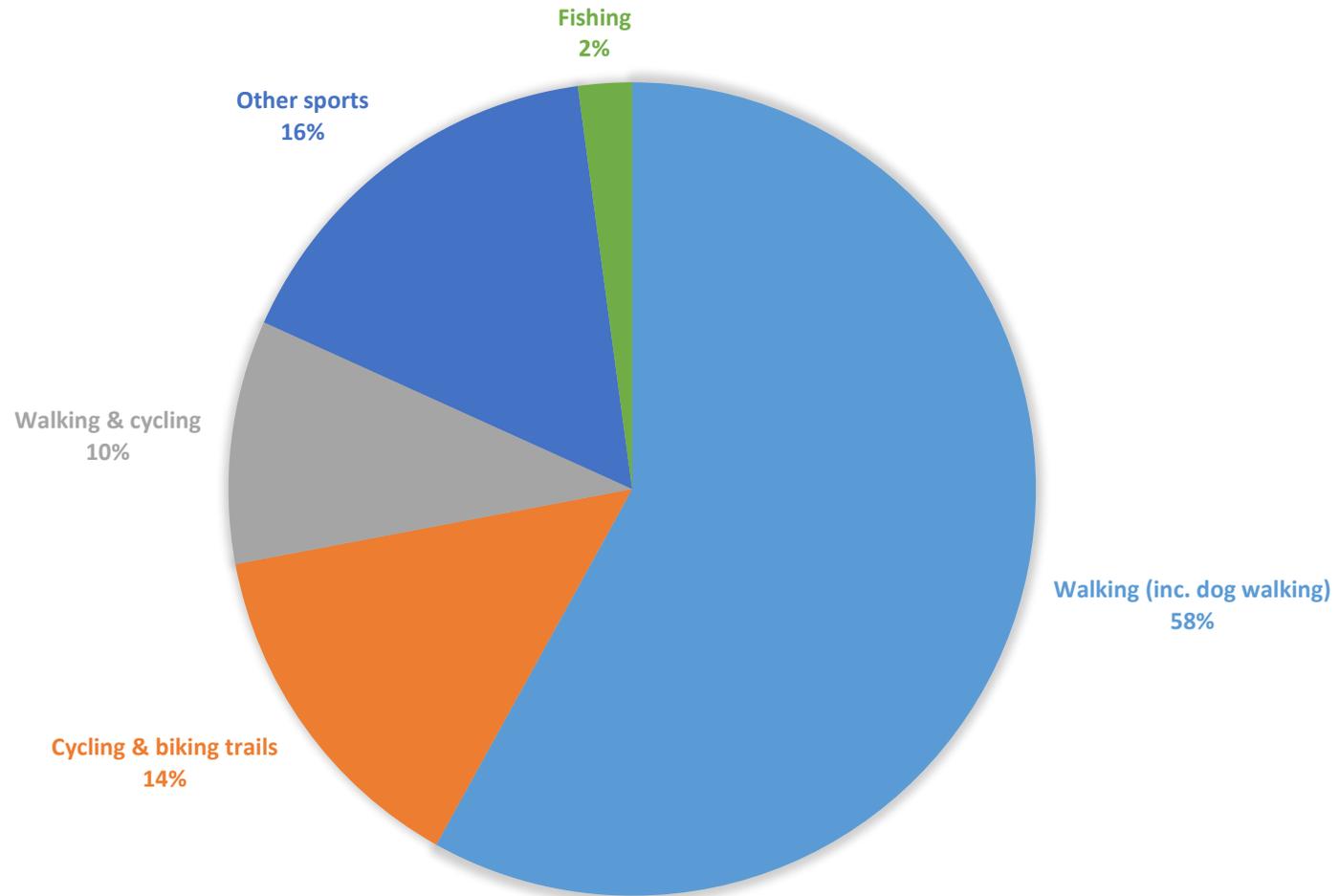
The information we've gathered from the public so far will form part of our supporting information to help us prepare and deliver a trial Area Statement for the Rhondda. Combined with the views of our partners, this evidence will help us to identify the priorities and opportunities for how we manage the Rhondda's natural resources.

In the coming months, we will continue to seek the views of the public. Adopting the same approach we used in the summer of 2015, we will work together with partners to focus on participating at community events that are already planned for the area.

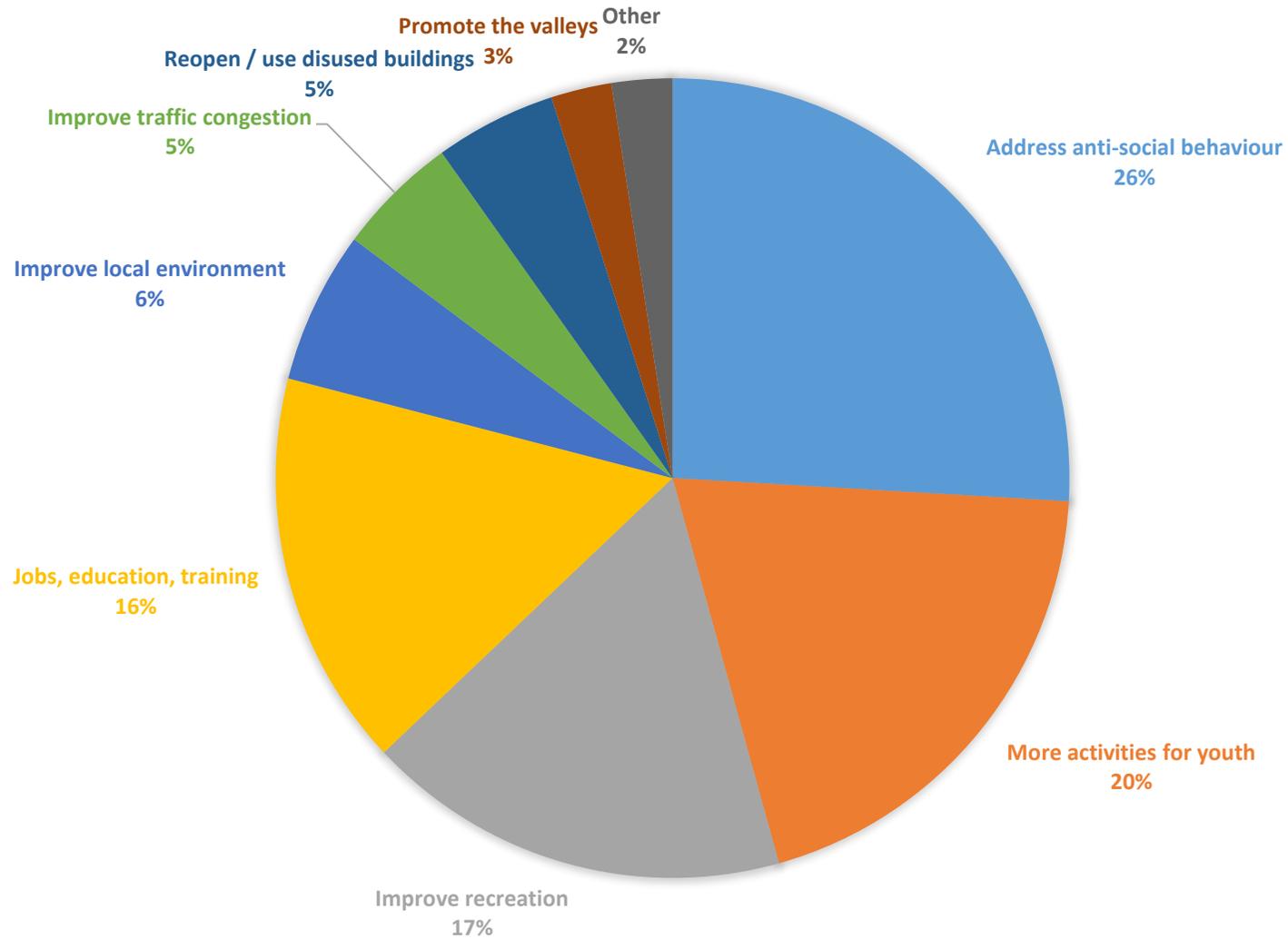
Question 1: What do you most like / love about your area?



Question 2: How do you use the outdoors in your local area?



Question 3: What are your ideas for improving your local area?



Thank you to everyone who has filled out a flyer so far! We'll continue to gather the views of partners and the public over the coming months.



If you would like to find out more, please email us on: [rhondda@cyfoethnaturiolcymru.gov.uk](mailto:rhondda@cyfoethnaturiolcymru.gov.uk)

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