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“WE LOVE OUR COMMON – MAKE IT BETTER”, SAY CITY RESIDENTS



Southampton Common Forum has today (14th December 2017) published the largest ever survey of users of Southampton Common. There were over 2,100 responses, fully representative of the city's adult (18+) population, from across the whole city (there were responses from every ward), and from every ethnic group.

The main findings are:

- The Common is a valued amenity accessible to the great majority of Southampton residents
- The Common is especially valued as open, natural green space primarily for walking and recreation
- The Common significantly supports green travel in the city
- The top priorities for improvement wanted by respondents are children's play facilities (the survey was conducted as the new play area was being built), provision of public toilets, litter and waste management, street lighting and personal safety, and footpaths
- There is concern about inadequate maintenance and resources. Other concerns relate to conflicts between users (e.g., between cyclists and pedestrians), the impact of organised events, and eating and drinking facilities.

The Survey outcomes will inform the new plan for the Common which the City Council is preparing in consultation with the Forum and other local and community groups.

The Forum Chair, Adam Wheeler, said:

"The Survey shows how much the citizens of Southampton value their Common. But there is also a clear need for greater resourcing and better and more transparent management. We are looking forward to working with the City Council on a new plan that will restore the Common as one of the brightest jewels in the City's crown"

The Cabinet Member for Communities, Culture and Leisure, Councillor Satvir Kaur, said:

"Southampton Common is the green lungs of Southampton. It is a place that is enjoyed and used by many of our communities from all ages and backgrounds, for a variety of reasons. It is an asset to our great City and the new play area is an example of our commitment to this amazing space and its users. I am pleased that Southampton City Council is working with Southampton Common Forum and other stakeholders to recognise its potential. I congratulate the Forum on their extensive consultation and look forward to working with them and others on an improved management plan to ensure Southampton Common

remains a place that can be enjoyed and used by all local residents and visitors alike."

NOTES FOR EDITORS

1. Southampton Community Forum is a voluntary body established to be a focal point for everyone who uses, enjoys or appreciates the Common. Its principal objectives are:

- To see that all those with an interest are informed of any issues that may affect the Common
- To give all those with an interest a means of influencing and contributing to those issues
- To work alongside Southampton City Council, to contribute towards the positive management of the Common
- To raise awareness of the Common and its benefits to the City.

The Chair of the Forum, Adam Wheeler, is the former Provost of the University of Southampton. There is an elected Management Committee. The Forum itself meets three to four times a year. The Forum has nearly 900 'friends' across the City. The Forum's website is at www.southamptoncommonforum.org.

2. The Survey was launched in May 2017 and closed at the end of October. It was an online survey which sought to understand the views of a wide range of citizens about the Common and how they use it. There were three main sections: information about the respondent, views (likes, dislikes, things they would like to see) about the Common requiring free form responses, and information about how they use the Common. The last section was multiple-choice and optional. For those respondents who indicated that they use the Common less than once a year, a section asked them why this was so and what would enable them to use the Common more often. The Survey was disseminated on the SCF website and Facebook pages and intensively promoted on social media and by a number of organisations highlighting it on their web pages or mail shots. The last survey was carried out in 1977.

3. The Common is owned and operated by Southampton City Council. The current Management Plan was originally drawn up in 1992. Although there have been some updates since, there is general agreement that a comprehensive new plan is needed. The aim is to produce a draft for consultation by Easter 2018.