



BELFAST CITY COUNCIL

Cavehill Community Engagement

January 2012

Job no: 4410 2916



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1. Executive Summary

1.1 Introduction

The specific aims of the study were to:

- Establish clear and robust data which will contribute toward making the park a more pleasurable and safer experience for park users and the local community.
- Enable the council to continually improve its services and enhance the visitor experience of the park and through a community engagement consultation, and to further improve local residents and park users' feelings of safety.

1.2 Methodology

The methodology consisted of the following elements:

- 11 depth interviews with residents, BCC staff and PSNI staff;
- 210 face-to-face household interviews with residents; and
- 53 face-to-face interviews with park users.

All fieldwork was carried out in October and November 2011.

1.3 Residents Survey

Issues in the local area

- More than three fifths (61%) of all residents stated that anti-social behaviour was a problem in the area.
- A third (33%) of all residents stated that they had been directly affected by anti-social behaviour in the area.
- Almost half (47%) of residents who knew of areas where anti-social behaviour was more likely to take place cited Belfast Castle and the Cavehill Country Park.
- More than a third (34%) of all residents felt unsafe walking near their home after dark.
- More than two thirds (70%) of residents felt unsafe walking through the park after dark.
- At least a quarter of all residents cited groups of youths drinking and/or taking drugs near their house (30%), people being drunk or rowdy (30%), theft of belongings (30%) and graffiti, vandalism and damage to property (25%) as problems in the Cavehill area.
- During the past 12 months, almost two fifths (37%) of all residents have witnessed incidences with groups of youths drinking and/or taking drugs near their house.
- Approximately two thirds of all residents stated that those who are typically involved in incidences of anti-social behaviour in the area tend to be between the ages of 11 and 20.

Reporting anti-social behaviour

- Almost 9 in 10 (87%) residents stated that they would be most likely to contact the police about any incidences of anti-social behaviour in the area.
- More than half (56%) of all residents who had witnessed incidences of anti-social behaviour in the past 12 months reported them to the police.
- A third (33%) did not report the incidences of anti-social behaviour they had witnessed.
- More than half (52%) of all residents who reported an incident were satisfied that it was dealt with in an adequate fashion.
- Two thirds (67%) of all residents were confident in the ability of the police to deal with their concerns about anti-social behaviour.
- Almost half (47%) of all residents stated that they were confident in the ability of Belfast City Council to deal with their concerns about anti-social behaviour.

Communication and engagement with the local community

- Almost four fifths (79%) believe that it is the responsibility of the police to stop and prevent anti-social behaviour in the Cavehill area.
- Two thirds (66%) believe the parents of the youths have a responsibility and just over a third (34%) stated that it was the responsibility of Belfast City Council.
- More than four fifths (86%) of all residents agreed that it was up to the police to tackle problems such as anti-social behaviour.
- More than four fifths (86%) were unaware of the visits to the park by mobile CCTV and three quarters (75%) were unaware of the joint alcohol operations.
- Almost half (46%) of all residents stated that the council's attempts to address anti-social behaviour had been effective.
- Almost half (49%) of all residents stated that they were satisfied with the council's efforts to tackle anti-social behaviour.
- Just over 1 in 10 (12%) expressed dissatisfaction with Belfast City Council's efforts to tackle anti-social behaviour.

Tackling anti-social behaviour moving forward

- An increased police presence scored highest (81%) amongst residents as a measure which may increase safety and help reduce incidents of anti-social behaviour.
- Locking the gates at Innisfayle Park (49%) scored fourth out of the four suggested methods amongst residents, scoring significantly lower than the other possible measures.
- Three fifths (60%) of all residents agreed that people in the area would be willing to get involved in groups to try and sort out the problems caused by anti-social behaviour.
- More than two fifths (43%) of all residents stated that an increased police presence would be of most benefit in reducing incidences of anti-social behaviour.
- Only 1 in 10 (10%) believed that locking the gates at Innisfayle Park would be most beneficial.

1.4 Park Users Survey

Issues in the local area

- Almost a quarter (23%) of all park users stated that they had been directly affected by anti-social behaviour in the park.
- 3 in 10 (30%) of all users stated that they only felt in certain parts of the park.
- More than half (56%) of all park users stated that they felt unsafe walking through the park after dark, with 3 in 10 (30%) stating that they felt very unsafe.
- Almost half (45%) of all park users cited groups of youths drinking and/or taking drugs as a problem in the Cavehill Country Park.
- In the past 12 months, more than two fifths of all park users have witnessed incidences with groups of youths drinking and/or taking drugs and people being drunk or rowdy.
- More than 9 in 10 (91%) park users stated that those who are typically involved in incidences of anti-social behaviour in the park tend to be between the ages of 16 and 20.

Reporting anti-social behaviour

- More than half (55%) of all park users stated that they would be most likely to contact the police about any incidences of anti-social behaviour.
- A quarter (25%) stated that they would contact Belfast City Council.
- More than half (57%) did not report the incidences of anti-social behaviour they had witnessed in the park.

Communication and engagement with the local community

- More than four fifths (83%) believe that it is the responsibility of the police to stop and prevent anti-social behaviour in the park.
- More than three fifths (62%) stated that it was the responsibility of Belfast City Council and almost half (49%) believe the parents of the youths have a responsibility.
- More than three quarters (77%) were unaware of the visits to the park by mobile CCTV and more than four fifths (81%) were unaware of the joint alcohol enforcement operations.

Steps already taken to tackle anti-social behaviour

- More than three fifths (63%) of all users stated that the council's attempts to address anti-social behaviour in the park had been effective.
- Two thirds (66%) of all park users stated that they were satisfied with the council's efforts to tackle anti-social behaviour.
- Only 1 in 10 (10%) expressed dissatisfaction with Belfast City Council's efforts to tackle anti-social behaviour in the park.

Tackling anti-social behaviour moving forward

- An increased BCC presence scored highest (94%) amongst users as a measure which may increase safety and help reduce incidents of anti-social behaviour in the park.

- Locking the gates at Innisfayle Park (36%) scored fourth out of the four suggested methods, scoring significantly lower than the three other possible measures.
- More than half (51%) of all park users stated that an increased Belfast City Council presence would be of most benefit in reducing incidences of anti-social behaviour.
- Less than 1 in 20 (4%) believed that locking the gates at Innisfayle Park would be the most beneficial option.

1.5 Stakeholder Depth Interviews

BCC and PSNI staff members are referred to as the 'stakeholders' in this section.

Issues in the local area

- Everyone acknowledged that anti-social behaviour is a problem in the area.
- There are certain times of the year when it gets particularly bad such as the end of school exams and the St Patricks Day and July holiday periods; however the problems can persist most weekends throughout the year.
- Although some incidents may be considered by the PSNI or Belfast City Council to be 'minor', they are a persistent and constant source of frustration for local residents.
- All parties agreed that the main problems in the park and surrounding area are:
 - Groups of youths drinking and/or taking drugs;
 - Public drunkenness and rowdiness; and
 - Theft, vandalism and damage to property.
- BCC and the PSNI have taken steps to address these issues, but it has not always been demonstrated to the residents what actions have been taken.

Reporting anti-social behaviour

- All residents and stakeholders stated that incidents of anti-social behaviour are reported to either the PSNI or Belfast Castle.
- Residents were clearly confused about what is the best line of contact to follow and cited that due to mixed responses from reporting incidents in the past that in many cases they will not report some cases of anti-social behaviour at all.
- There was broad recognition amongst stakeholders that the process of reporting incidents could be made clearer to residents.
- Stakeholders stressed that residents reported all incidents of anti-social behaviour otherwise they will be unaware of the problems and unable to tackle them adequately.
- Residents stated that when they had reported incidents of anti-social behaviour in the past, more often than not, there was no follow-up with them.
- Most stakeholders and residents agreed that a better reporting system is needed to log all incidents and ensure that they are followed up.

Communication and engagement with the local community

- The residents participating in the depth interviews did not feel included in the council's attempts to address the issues such as anti-social behaviour in the area.
- Stakeholders also acknowledged that more could be done to engage with local residents in tackling anti-social behaviour;
- Everyone agreed that more could be done to feedback to the local residents and park users about actions that have been taken to reduce levels of anti-social behaviour.

Steps already taken to tackle anti-social behaviour

- BCC and PSNI staff members were all aware of the initiatives introduced to tackle the anti-social behaviour issue; however, residents were not aware of many of the initiatives.
- Whilst a number of the residents had been aware of horticultural defensive planting and the lighting improvements the majority of residents were totally oblivious to the other steps taken by the council with regards to anti-social behaviour in the park.
- All the stakeholders but only half the residents had been aware of the improved CCTV at the Innisfayle Road gates.

Tackling anti social-behaviour moving forward

- Residents accepted that the PSNI and council only have limited resources, but also stated that they were prepared to engage with the council and other agencies to try and sort out the problems caused by anti-social behaviour.
- There was an acknowledgement by all stakeholders and residents that an increased PSNI and BCC presence in the area particularly at key times such as weekends and school holidays would be beneficial. However, there was also an acceptance that BCC staff and PSNI can't be there all the time.
- All stakeholders and half of the residents believed that locking the gates would have little or no impact due to the ability to access the park in numerous ways and in fact may result in youths cutting through the residents gardens. The risks if the police or rescue services could not get immediate access in an emergency situation were also pointed out.
- All respondents cited the need for a more joined up approach.

1.6 Conclusions

- It is clearly evident from the consultation exercise that anti-social behaviour is an issue in Cavehill Country Park and the surrounding area.

Issues in the local area

- The majority of all incidences focus around groups of youths drinking and/or taking drugs in the park or near to residents houses, general public drunkenness and rowdiness, and acts of vandalism.

- *The PSNI and council should target these types of anti-social behaviour. There are opportunities to target youths through schools, youth clubs and social media to educate and inform of the impacts and consequences associated with anti-social behaviour.*
- *There are also opportunities to target off-licences and taxi drivers to try and prevent the alcohol from getting into the hands of under-age drinkers.*
- *More BCC and police presence at key times such as late night weekends and school holidays would be welcome. There is also an opportunity to put strategies in place to combat the known peak times such as St Patricks, July holidays and end of school term.*

Reporting anti-social behaviour

- There are clear issues regarding the reporting of anti-social behaviour in the area. Residents and park users are utilising a number of different channels and there is often uncertainty about who to contact and who is responsible. Another issue is that in many cases residents and park users are not reporting instances of anti-social behaviour at all.
- *There is a clear opportunity for the council and PSNI to put in place clear processes and procedures regarding informing residents about how they should report incidences of anti-social behaviour and what they can expect in terms of follow up.*
- *There is an opportunity to promote a specialist ASB hotline or website for the area to ensure all reported incidents are logged, tracked and followed up.*
- *The council and PSNI need to ensure that all residents are informed about the importance of reporting all incidences of anti-social behaviour. Only incidents that are reported can be investigated and only if all incidences are reported can they be sure that sufficient resources are issued to deal with the problems.*

Communication and engagement with the local community

- Residents, park users and stakeholders all demonstrated a willingness to engage and work together going forward. The residents do not feel included in the council's attempts to address anti-social behaviour issues in the area. Stakeholders also acknowledge that more could be done to engage with local residents in tackling anti-social behaviour.
- *There is a clear opportunity to get input for residents and provide a forum for their suggestions on how to tackle anti-social behaviour. By making themselves more available and more accessible the council staff will reap the benefits of working even more closely with the residents to tackle the issues. One of the key gripes for residents is the lack of follow up; a quick phone call or face to face chat with a concerned resident can improve satisfaction.*
- *Another opportunity is to inform residents and park users about the processes and procedures in place to deal with under-age drinking or those caught committing anti-social acts. The stakeholders alluded to the complexities of the by-laws and the current*

policy on underage drinking (i.e. to confiscate and issue warnings) and the process of dealing with repeat offenders. Educating the residents improve their understanding as to why seemingly frivolous issues are not always clear cut.

Steps already taken to tackle anti-social behaviour

- There was a clear lack of awareness amongst both residents and park users regarding the entire range of steps and initiatives that have been introduced by BCC to tackle the anti-social behaviour issue.
- *There is an opportunity to educate and inform residents and park users as to all the measures that have already been taken and also of any future initiatives.*
- *There is also an opportunity for a bit of PR by informing residents and park users about the success of the initiatives and maybe provide them with some statistics about how much alcohol has been confiscated or inform them about educating the youths through schools or youth schemes etc.*

Tackling anti social-behaviour moving forward

- There was a clear understanding that resources are limited; however there remains a strong demand for an increased BCC and PSNI presence especially during late weekend hours when incidences are most likely to occur.
- *There may be an opportunity to reallocate some resources to ensure coverage at some of the key times over the problem times. A possibility could be to ensure some of the Park Rangers are on call over the weekend and holiday periods when anti-social behaviour tends to peak in the area.*
- Locking the gates at Innisfayle Park was clearly not a feasible solution for the clear majority of residents, park users or stakeholders.
- *In all likelihood locking the gates would create more trouble for residents as youths may begin to access the park through their property. The risks to public safety if the police or rescue services could not get immediate access in an emergency situation were also clearly highlighted. There was however an opportunity to demonstrate to residents the usefulness and effectiveness of the improved CCTV system which is now in place.*
- There is a clear willingness and need for a more joined up approach to tackle anti-social behaviour in the area, while it was also accepted that any one measure or initiative is likely to work on its own.
- *There is a clear opportunity for the council to engage with residents, park users, the police, local politicians, community leaders and relevant stakeholders such as the Cavehill Conservation Group to work together via meetings, forums and the sharing of knowledge and resources to try and sort out the problems caused by anti-social behaviour.*

2. Introduction

2.1 Background

Belfast City Council provides financial support for Parks and Leisure facilities through a programme entitled the Safer Neighbourhoods Antisocial Behaviour programme. The damage caused by antisocial behaviour (ASB) in parks and leisure facilities is costing the council between £500,000 and £1m annually. The council has shown its commitment to address the problem not just for monetary reasons but because of the nuisance to communities, the perceived safety of parks & leisure facilities and also the impact it has on council staff working around these sites.

Cavehill Country Park is approximately 750 acres in size and is located in North Belfast. It borders Antrim Road to the east, the Ballysillan Road to the south and the Hightown Road to the west.

Cavehill Country Park is now recognised as a Green Flag site having achieved this prestigious award in 2009. The park excelled in a range of criteria such as:

- A welcoming place,
- Conservation and heritage,
- Biodiversity,
- Children's play, and
- Good overall management practices.

The Council aims to continually improve its services and enhance the visitor experience of the park and through this community engagement consultation, and hopes to further improve local residents and park users' feelings of safety.

In October 2011 Millward Brown was commissioned to conduct a community engagement exercise on behalf of Belfast City Council. The purpose of this research is to establish clear and robust data which will contribute toward making the park a more pleasurable and safer experience for park users and the local community.

2.2 Terms of Reference

The specific scope of the Cavehill Country Park Community Engagement Consultation included:

- Pre-consultation with Belfast City Council and stakeholders to establish the key issues;
- Devising a questionnaire to establish a baseline against which to inform the Council's future development initiatives and measure the effectiveness of future interventions;

- To conduct a face-to-face survey with residents in the local community (involving no less than 174 homes);
- To conduct a face-to-face survey with users of the Cavehill Country Park;
- To conduct a in-depth interviews with key stakeholders including residents, Belfast City Council staff and PSNI staff;
- To analyse all research findings;
- To facilitate a public meeting; and
- To produce a final report of the research findings.

In the remainder of this report we detail our approach to meeting the terms of reference for the study and present the key findings from the research.

3. Methodology

A twin-track approach of qualitative and quantitative methodologies was adopted for the current programme of research. This approach was considered the most advantageous as it permitted the capture of in-depth information via qualitative discussions but also provided statistical robustness through the use of a quantitative survey.

Fieldwork was carried out between the 24 October and 29 November 2011. All fieldwork conducted amongst residents, park users and stakeholders on a face-to-face basis. The methodology consisted of the following elements:

- 11 depth interviews with residents, BCC staff and PSNI staff;
- 210 face-to-face household interviews with residents;
- 53 face-to-face interviews with park users.

Interviewing was conducted with households bordering Cavehill Country Park and within the immediate catchment area and at a number of pre-selected interviewing points in the park.

An interviewing schedule was developed to ensure the sample was not bias towards certain types of resident or park user. All interviews were also conducted across a range of different times and days. We employed a random sampling technique with interviewers being briefed to approach every 3rd park user or 3rd house for interview and only 1 person per party or household to yield a representative sample.

The views and opinions of all key stakeholders were sought and around 275 individuals in total were involved in the research. Millward Brown Ulster developed this multi-stage approach, which we believe successfully met the project needs within the stipulated budget.

All research complied fully with the Market Research Society ethical Code of Conduct and in accordance with MRQSA quality standards which were specifically designed for the Market Research sector. All interviewers were monitored throughout the project and given feedback on their performance.

The research was structured in the following manner:

Quantitative

- Resident Survey
- Park User Survey

Qualitative

- Stakeholder Depth Interviews

3.1 Quantitative Research – Resident Survey

Millward Brown conducted a quantitative face-to-face household survey to ensure that all residents within the boundaries had an equal opportunity of being approached for interview – this crucial sampling ingredient would have been lost if the survey were to be conducted via an on-line or telephone methodology. The resident survey was used to provide a comprehensive and robust dataset on the current levels and understanding of anti-social behaviour in the area. The quantitative findings also provide some hard data which is extremely powerful in terms of setting benchmarks on which to judge further improvements or changes in attitudes in the medium to long term.

All interviewing was conducted by Millward Brown executive interviewers using Millward Brown's specialist Handheld Assisted Personal Interviewing (HAPI) devices. The HAPI system ensures that data is collected in a much more effective and precise fashion. The fieldwork took place in the last week of October and the first two weeks of November 2011. All respondents were assured that their opinions could be given anonymously and confidentially to Millward Brown.

The target for the survey was 200 interviews (we achieved 210), and all interviews were successfully completed during the fieldwork period. In some cases, of single response answers, results will add to marginally less or more than 100%. This is simply due to rounding.

Sample Structure

To ensure the achieved sample was as representative as possible of the overall adult population within the catchment area, we applied a random sampling technique whereby we approached every 3rd household for an interview (conducting only 1 interview per household) to help ensure that all demographic groups by age, sex, and socio-economic background were represented.

In order to achieve the 200 interviews Millward Brown were provided with a map of the catchment area which included approximately 1744 households. The survey was totally confidential so members of the Belfast City Council project team are unaware which residents participated in the research.

3.2 Quantitative Research – Park Users Survey

In order to capture information from one of the key stakeholder groups Millward Brown also conducted a quantitative face-to-face survey with park users. An exit survey was conducted on location in the park over three different days and times (including a Friday evening) to ensure all users and types of users (walkers, runners, dog walkers etc) had an equal opportunity of being approached for interview.

As with the resident survey all interviewing was conducted by fully trained Millward Brown executive interviewers using Millward Brown's specialist Handheld Assisted Personal Interviewing (HAPI) devices. The fieldwork took place in the first week of November 2011. All respondents were assured that their opinions could be given anonymously and confidentially to Millward Brown.

The target for the survey was 50 interviews (we achieved 53), and all interviews were successfully completed during the fieldwork period. In some cases, of single response answers, results will add to marginally less or more than 100%. This is simply due to rounding.

Sample Structure

To ensure the achieved sample was as representative as possible we applied a random sampling technique whereby we approached every 3rd park user for an interview to help ensure that all demographic groups by age, sex, and socio-economic background were represented. If the park users visited the park as part of a couple, family or group of friends we only conducted 1 interview per group.

3.3 Qualitative Research – Depth Interviews

Qualitative depth interviews were utilised to explore the opinions and attitudes of key stakeholders. Millward Brown recommended the depth interviews because it was the most effective and efficient way possible to facilitate the stakeholders. The depth interview is a confidential forum and enables the respondent to discuss, potentially sensitive issues, more openly. A senior member of the Millward Brown project team conducted all the interviews at times and locations convenient for the stakeholder.

Depth interviews were conducted with a number of residents, Belfast City Council staff and PSNI staff. Each interview lasted approximately 45 minutes. The discussion guide used to steer the interview was designed by Millward Brown in conjunction with the Belfast City Council project team.

The target for the project was 10 depth interviews (we achieved 11 interviews speaking with 12 stakeholders in total), and all interviews were successfully completed during the fieldwork period.

Sample Structure

All potential respondents were recruited from a database provided by the Council. Millward Brown contacted potential respondents by telephone to gain co-operation and arrange a convenient time and location for interview.

The key stakeholder groups interviewed included:

- Residents directly affected by anti-social behaviour in the area;
- Members of the Cavehill Conservation Group;
- Belfast Castle Staff
- Belfast City Council staff; and
- PSNI staff.

With the exception of the residents directly affected by anti-social behaviour in the area (needed to ensure adequate representation of this stakeholder group) Millward Brown selected individuals from the stakeholder database at random.

4. Residents Survey

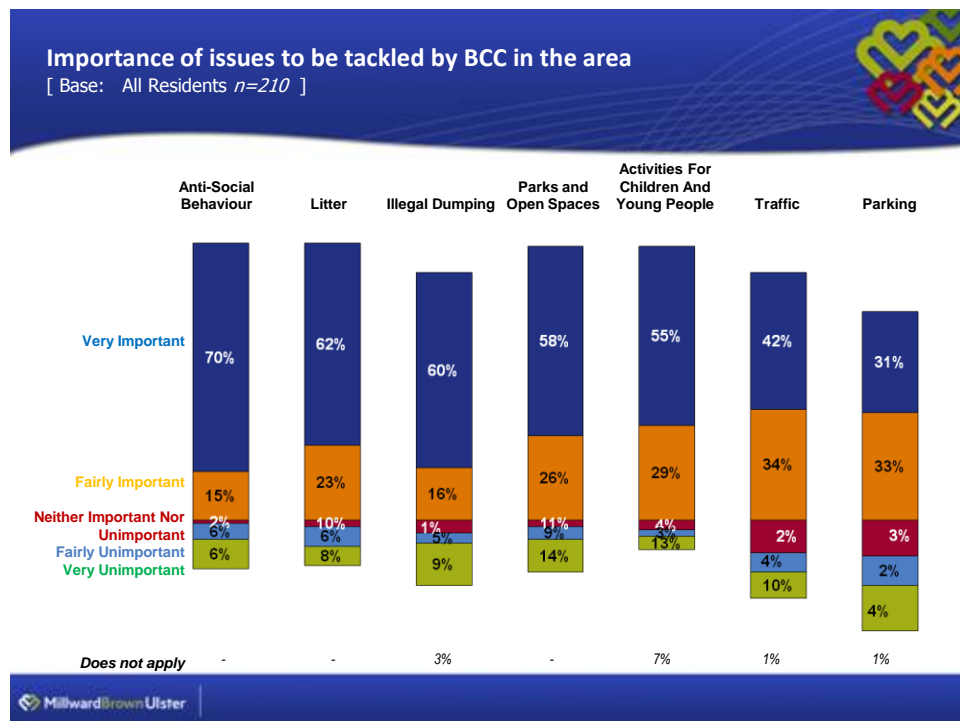
In this section we provide an overview of the findings from the face-to-face survey of residents from the Cavehill community.

4.1 Issues affecting local residents

Participants were asked a number of questions about the importance of certain issues which affect residents in the local area.

Figure 4.1 illustrates the relative importance of a number of key issues to be addressed by the council in the Cavehill catchment area. More than four fifths (85%) of residents stated that anti-social behaviour and litter were important (either very important or important) issues that need to be tackled. However, if we look solely at the issues which residents to be considered very important then anti-social behaviour is most frequently cited. Essentially, more than two thirds (70%) of all residents stated that it was very important that Belfast City Council tackle this issue in the local area.

Figure 4.1: Importance of issues to be addressed by BCC in the area



4.2 Anti-social behaviour in the area

More than three fifths (61%) of all residents stated that anti-social behaviour was a problem (either a lot or a little) in the area. More than 1 in 10 (14%) residents cited the problem as being quite serious. However, more than a third (36%) of residents did not consider anti-social behaviour to a problem in the area.

Figure 4.2: Extent to which ASB is a problem in the area

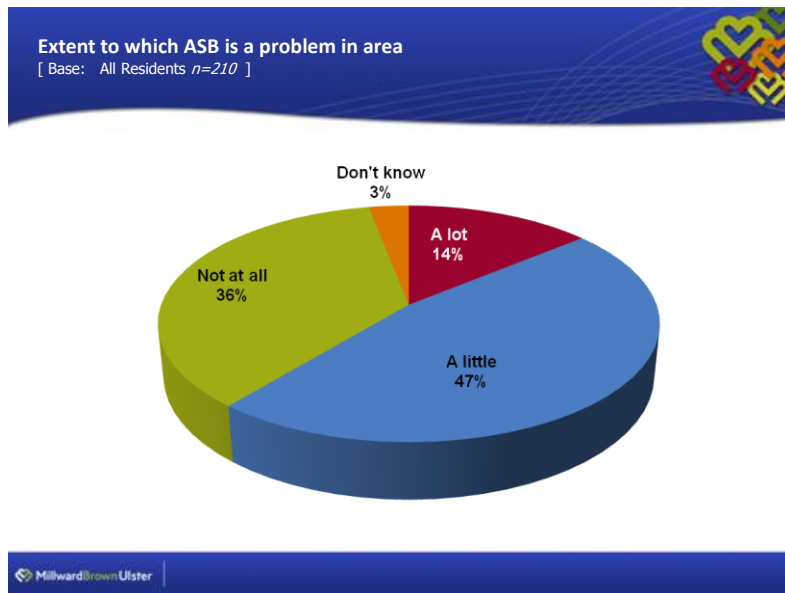
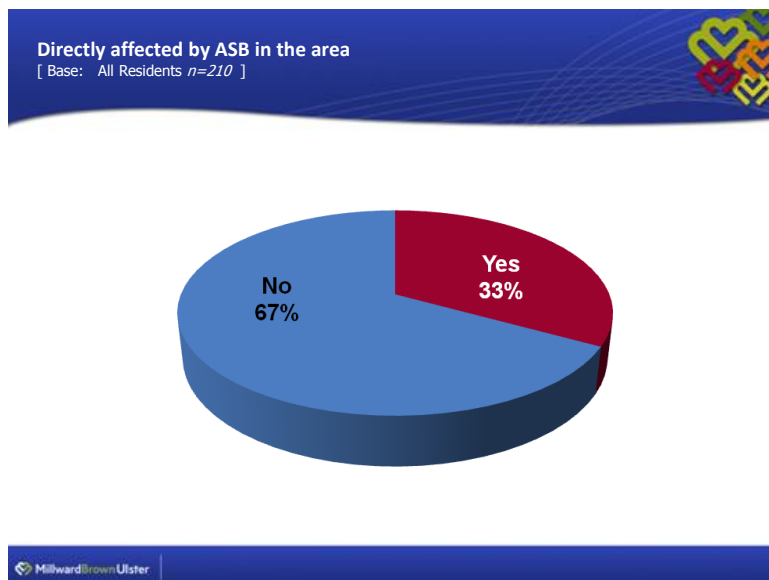


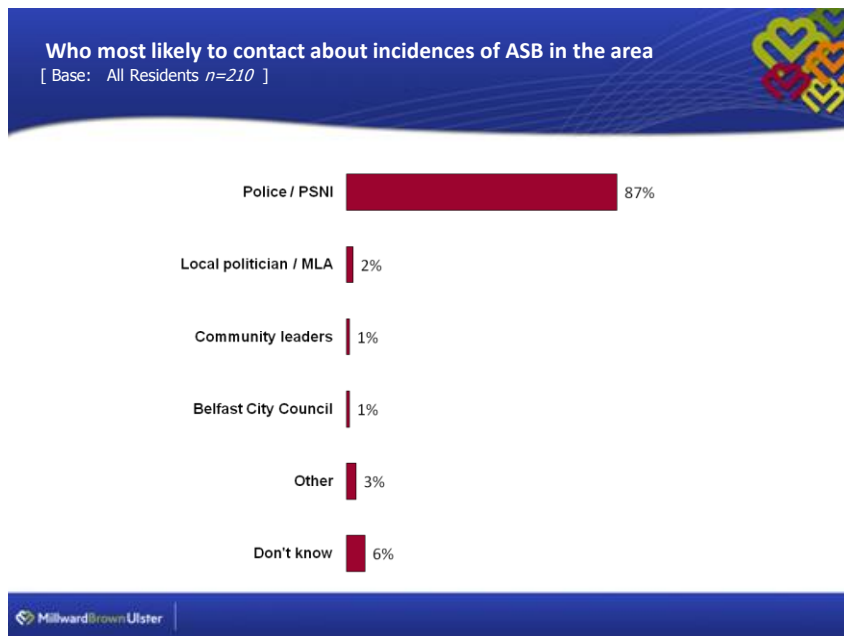
Figure 4.3 below shows that a third (33%) of all residents stated that they had been directly affected by anti-social behaviour in the area.

Figure 4.3: Been directly affected by anti-social behaviour in the area



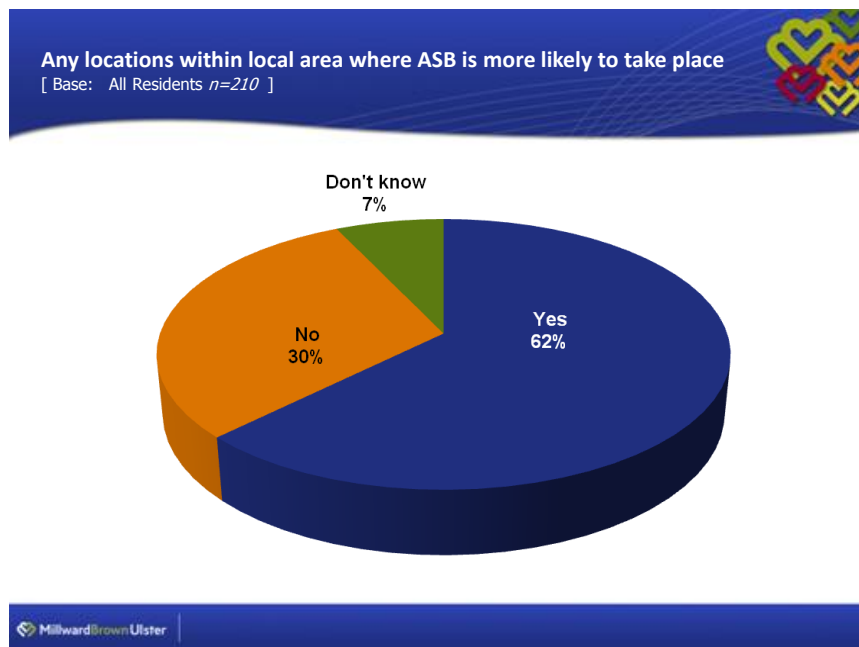
Almost 9 in 10 (87%) residents stated that they would be most likely to contact the police about any incidences of anti-social behaviour. Only a tiny minority (1%) stated that they would contact Belfast City Council.

Figure 4.4: Who residents are most likely to contact about incidences of ASB in the area



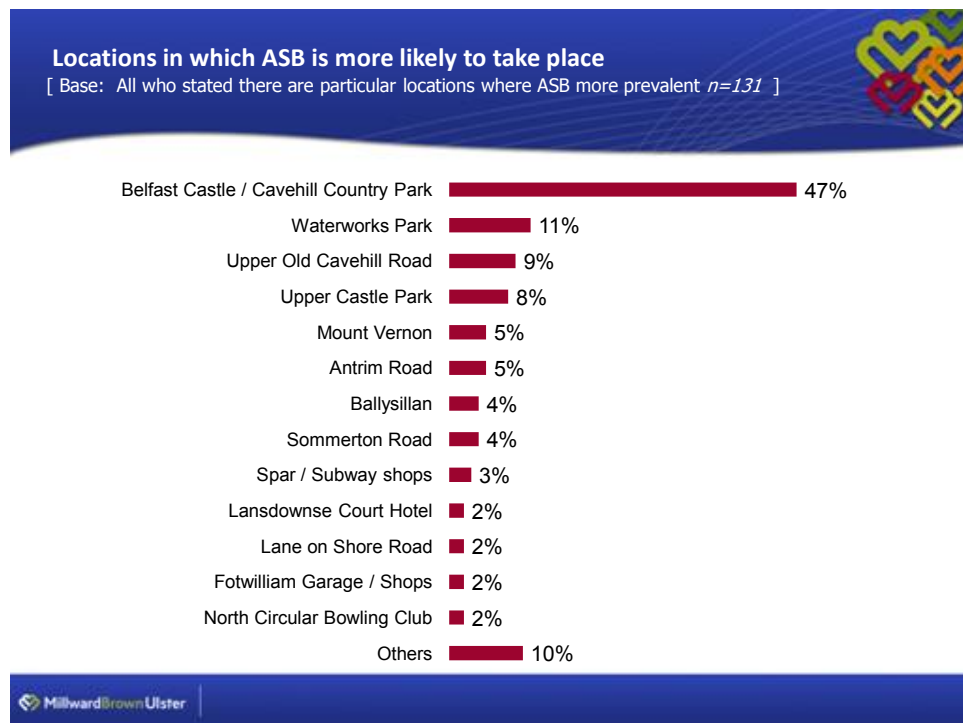
More than three fifths (62%) of all residents stated that there were particular locations or places within the local area where anti-social behaviour is more likely to take place.

Figure 4.5: Any locations within local area where ASB is more likely to take place



Almost half (47%) of residents who knew of areas where anti-social behaviour is more likely to take place cited Belfast Castle and the Cavehill Country Park.

Figure 4.6: Locations where ASB is more likely to take place



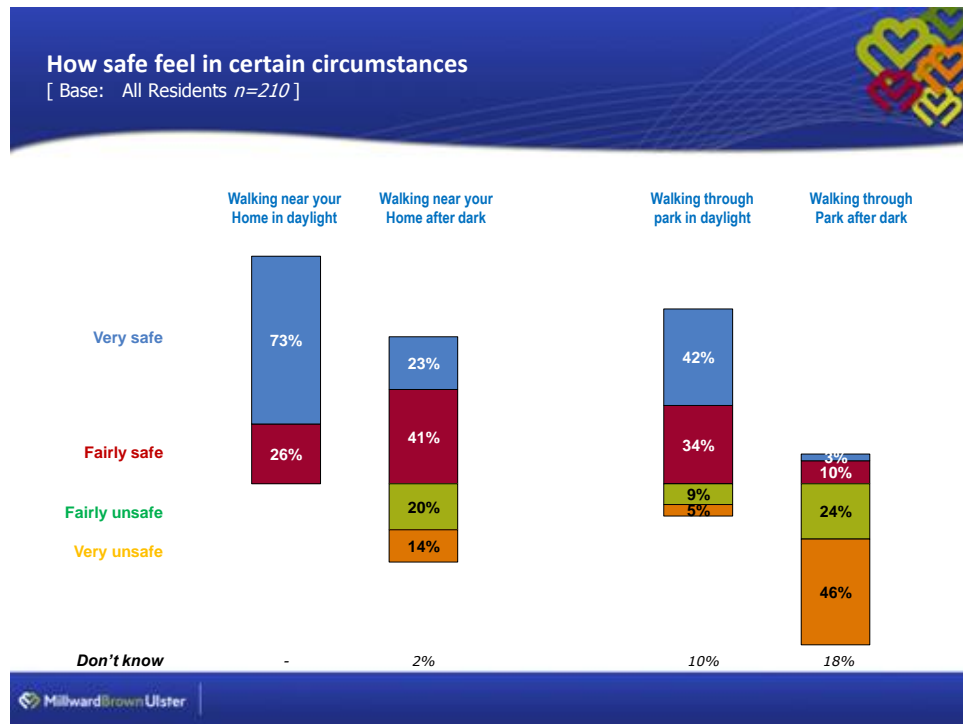
4.3 Residents safety

Participants were asked a number of questions about their personal safety in a number of different circumstances.

Figure 4.7 overleaf illustrates how safe residents generally feel in a number of different scenarios. All residents stated that they felt safe walking near their home in the daytime. However, more than a third (34%) of all residents that they felt unsafe walking near their home after dark. More than 1 in 10 (14%) of all residents stated that the felt very unsafe.

More than three quarters (76%) of all residents stated that they felt safe walking through the park in the daytime. Just over 1 in 10 (14%) felt unsafe in the park in daytime. More than two thirds (70%) of all residents stated that they felt unsafe walking through the park after dark. Almost half (46%) of all residents stated that the felt very unsafe.

Figure 4.7: How safe feel in certain circumstances



4.4 Types of anti-social behaviour problems

Participants were asked a number of questions about the types of anti-social behaviour they consider to be a problem in the area and then about types of anti-social behaviour they have actually witnessed in the past 12 months.

Figures 4.8 and 4.9 overleaf show the types of anti-social behaviour residents consider to be a problem in the area. At least a quarter of all residents cited groups of youths drinking and/or taking drugs near their house (30%), people being drunk or rowdy in public places (30%), theft of belongings (30%) and graffiti, vandalism and damage to property (25%) as a problem in the Cavehill area. More than 1 in 10 (14%) residents highlighted groups of youths drinking and/or taking drugs near their house as a very big problem.

Less than 1 in 10 residents cited physical attacks (9%), pestering or intimation (9%) and sectarian or racial attacks or abuse (4%) as a problem in the Cavehill area.

Figure 4.8: Type of ASB considered a problem in the area

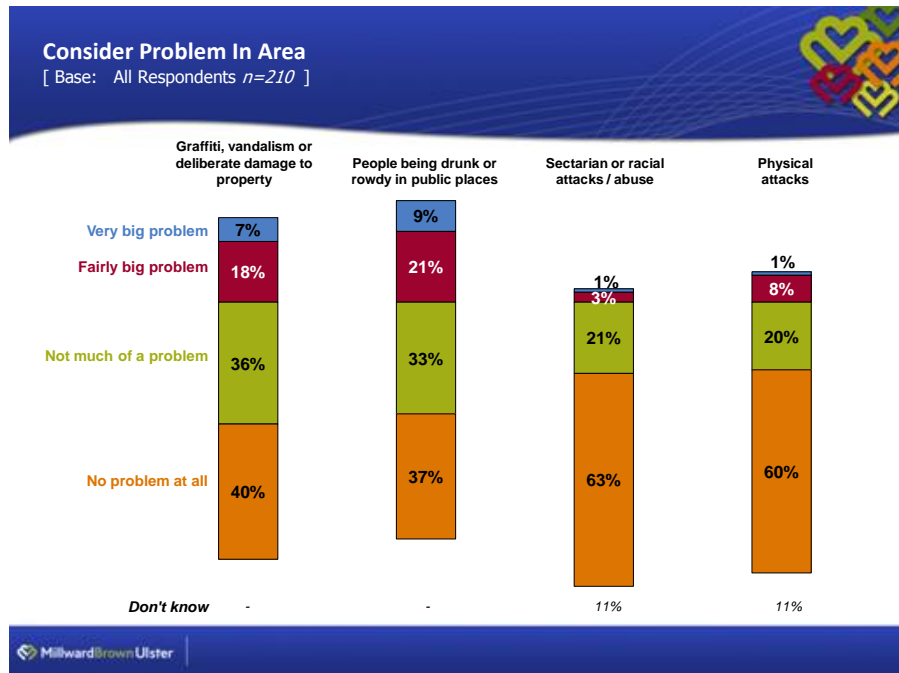


Figure 4.9: Type of ASB considered a problem in the area

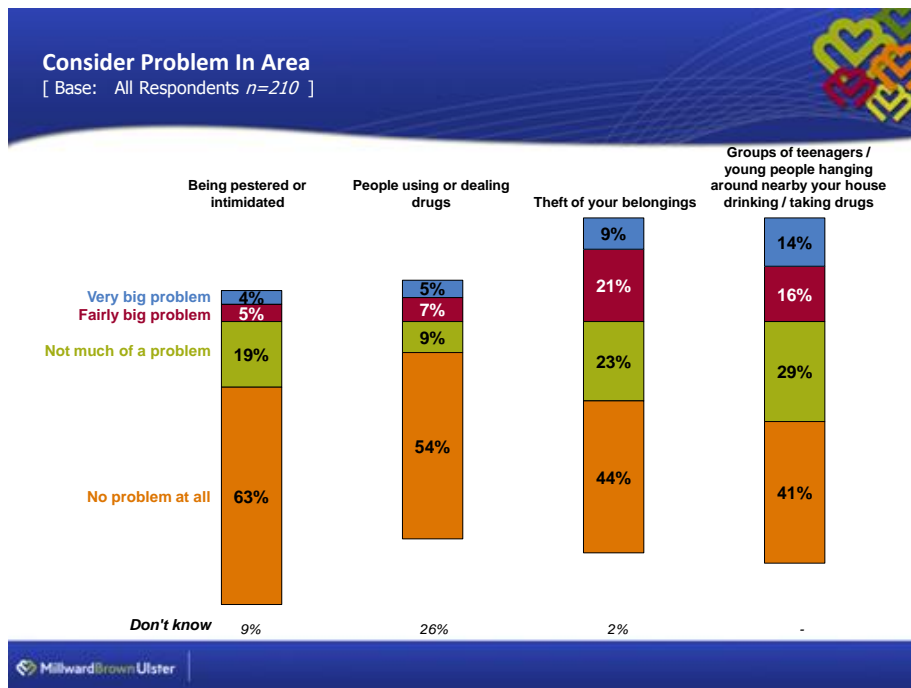
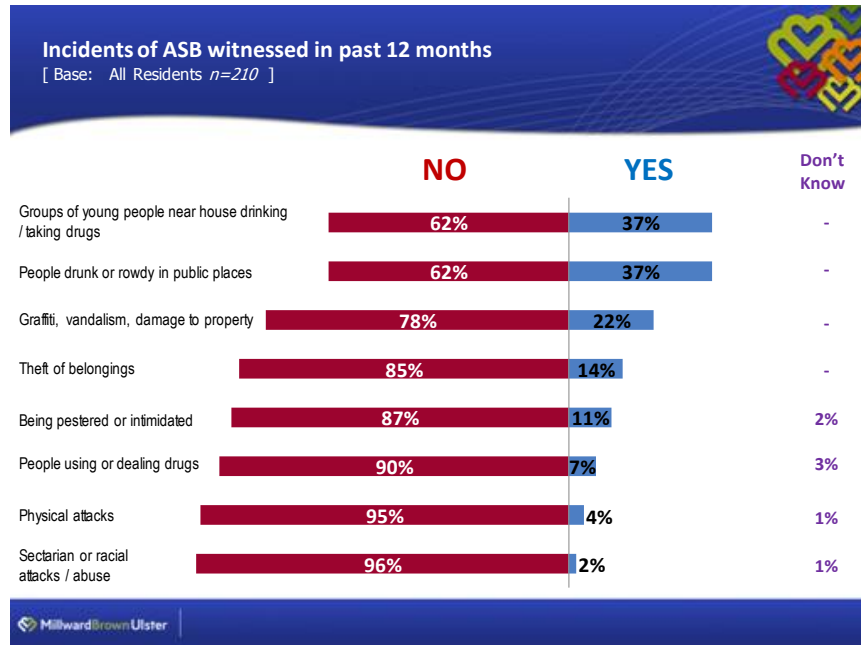


Figure 4.10 overleaf shows the types of anti-social behaviour residents have actually witnessed in the past 12 months. During the past 12 months, almost two fifths (37%) of all residents have witnessed incidences with groups of youths drinking and/or taking drugs near their house and people being drunk or rowdy in public places. More than a fifth had also witnessed incidences of graffiti, vandalism and damage to property (22%).

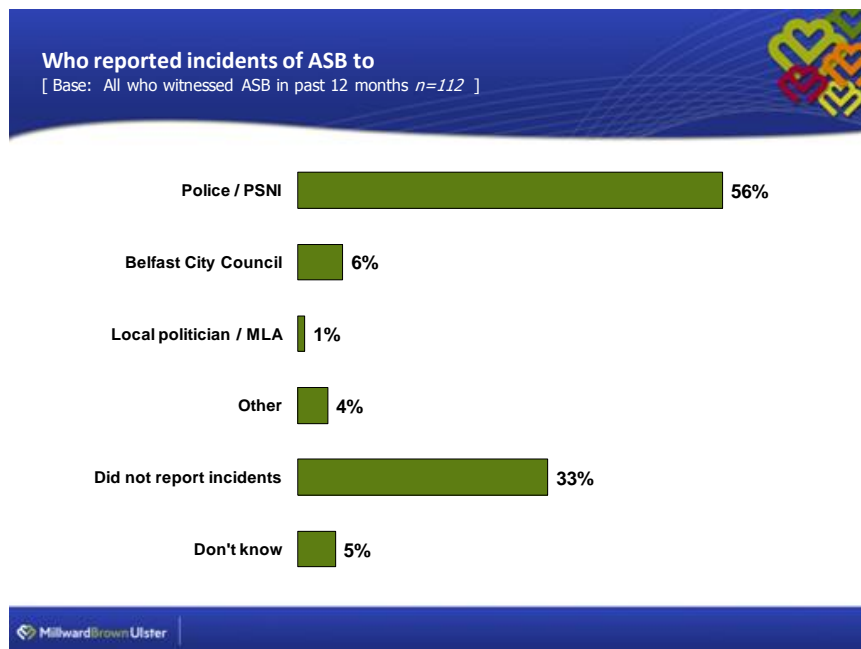
Figure 4.10: Incidents of ASB witnessed in the past 12 months



4.5 Reporting of anti-social behaviour

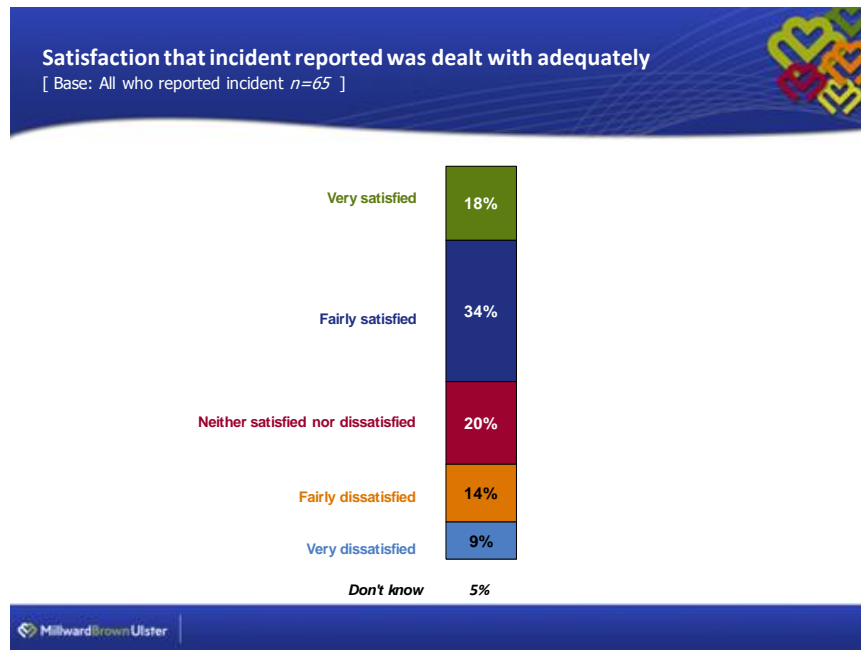
More than half (56%) of all residents who had witnessed incidences of anti-social behaviour in the past 12 months reported them to the police. However, a third (33%) did not report the incidences of anti-social behaviour they had witnessed.

Figure 4.11: Who reported incidents of ASB to



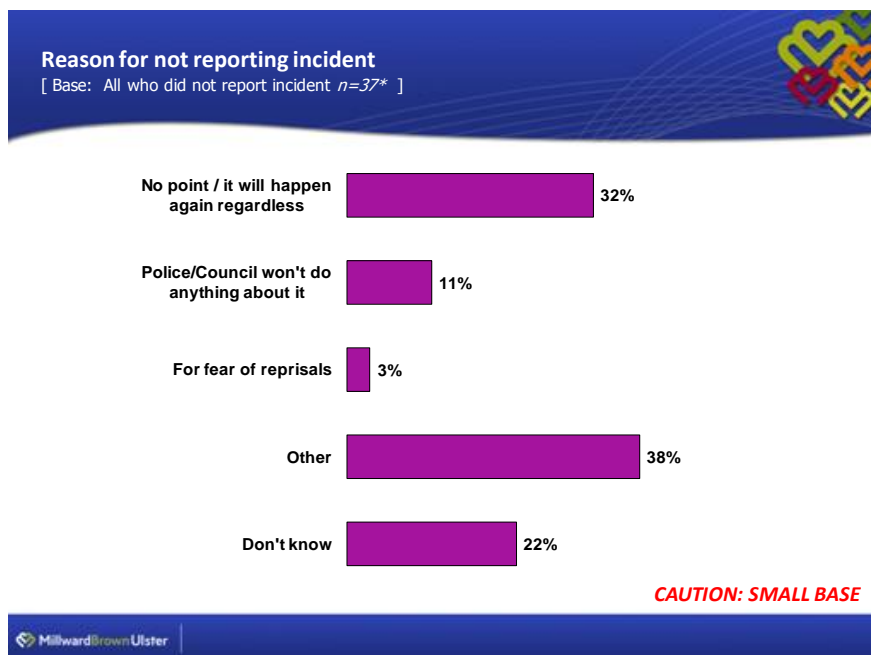
More than half (52%) of all residents who reported an incident were satisfied that it was dealt with in an adequate fashion. A fifth (20%) stated that they were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied.

Figure 4.12: Satisfaction that incident reported was dealt with adequately



Almost a third (32%) of those residents, who had witnessed incidences of anti-social behaviour but did not report them, stated that there was no point as it would just happen again regardless. (NB caution should be used with these figures due to the low base)

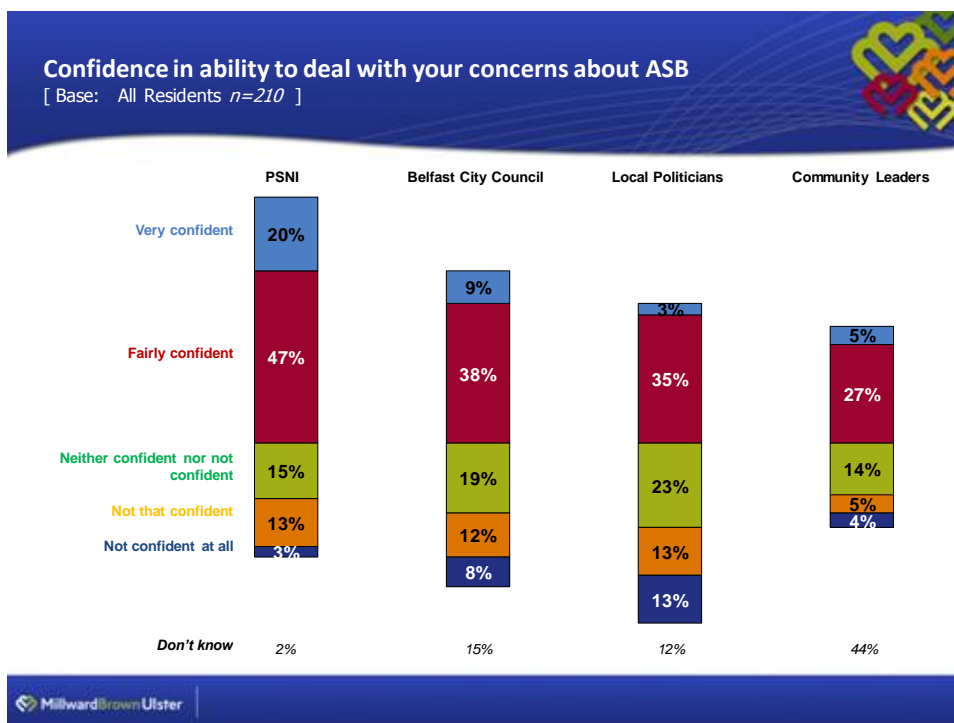
Figure 4.13: Reason for not reporting incident



4.6 Confidence in organisations or groups ability to deal with concerns about ASB

Two thirds (67%) of all residents were confident in the ability of the police to deal with their concerns about anti-social behaviour. Almost half (47%) of all residents stated that they were confident in the ability of Belfast City Council to deal with their concerns about anti-social behaviour. However, a fifth (20%) stated that they were not confident in the ability of Belfast City Council to deal with their concerns about anti-social behaviour. A similar proportion (16%) also cited a lack of confidence in the PSNI.

Figure 4.14: Confidence in ability to deal with concerns about ASB

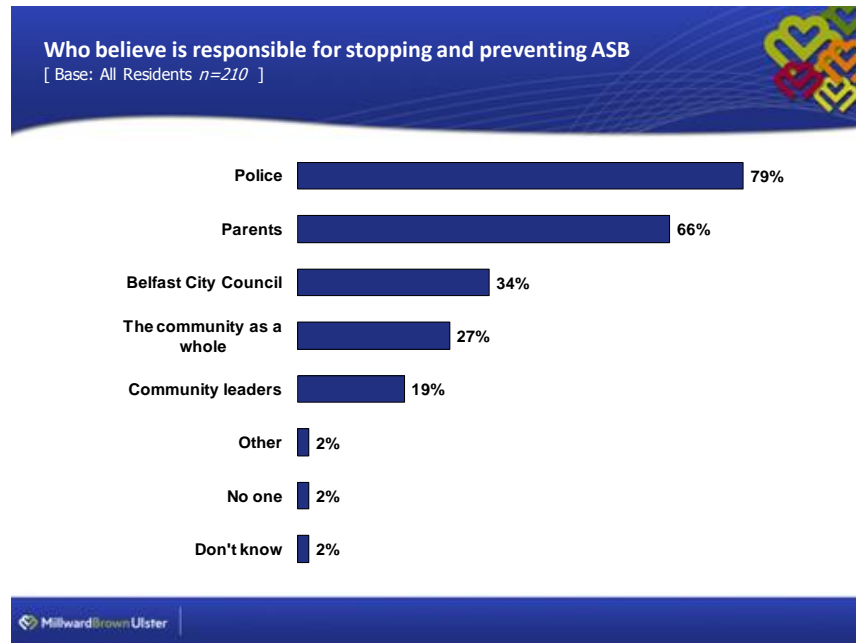


4.7 Responsibility for stopping and preventing ASB

Participants were asked about who they believe is responsible for stopping and preventing anti-social behaviour in the Cavehill area.

Figure 4.15 overleaf shows that almost four fifths (79%) believe that it is the responsibility of the police to stop and prevent anti-social behaviour in the Cavehill area. Two thirds (66%) believe the parents of the youths have a responsibility and just over a third (34%) stated that it was the responsibility of Belfast City Council. More than a quarter (27%) stated that the community as a whole had a role to play in stopping and preventing anti-social behaviour in the area.

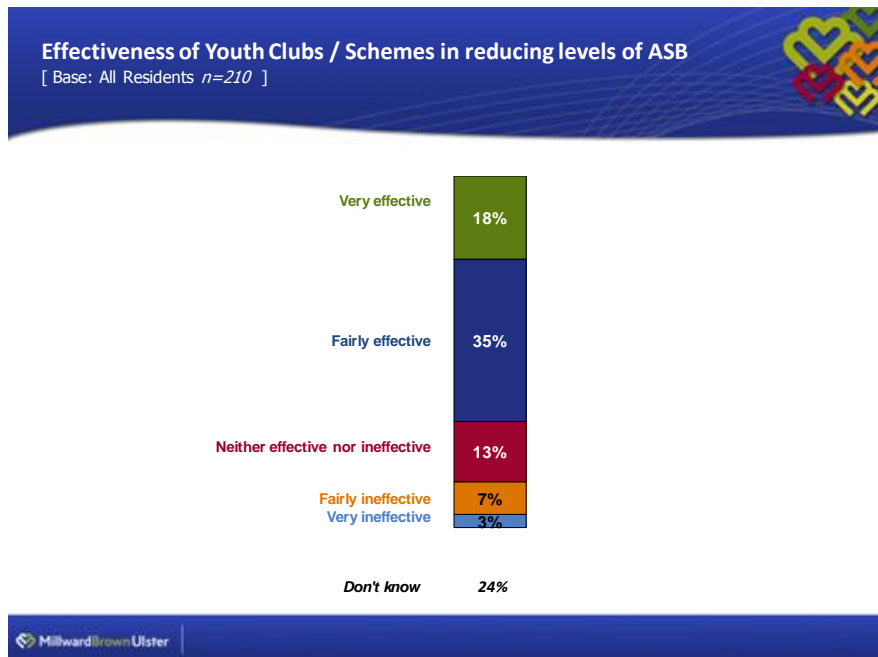
Figure 4.15: Who believe is responsible for stopping and preventing ASB



4.8 Effectiveness of Youth Clubs and Youth Schemes

More than half (53%) of all residents stated that youth clubs and youth schemes were effective methods in reducing levels of anti-social behaviour in the area. However, almost a quarter (24%) were unsure how effective youth clubs and youth schemes are in reducing anti-social behaviour.

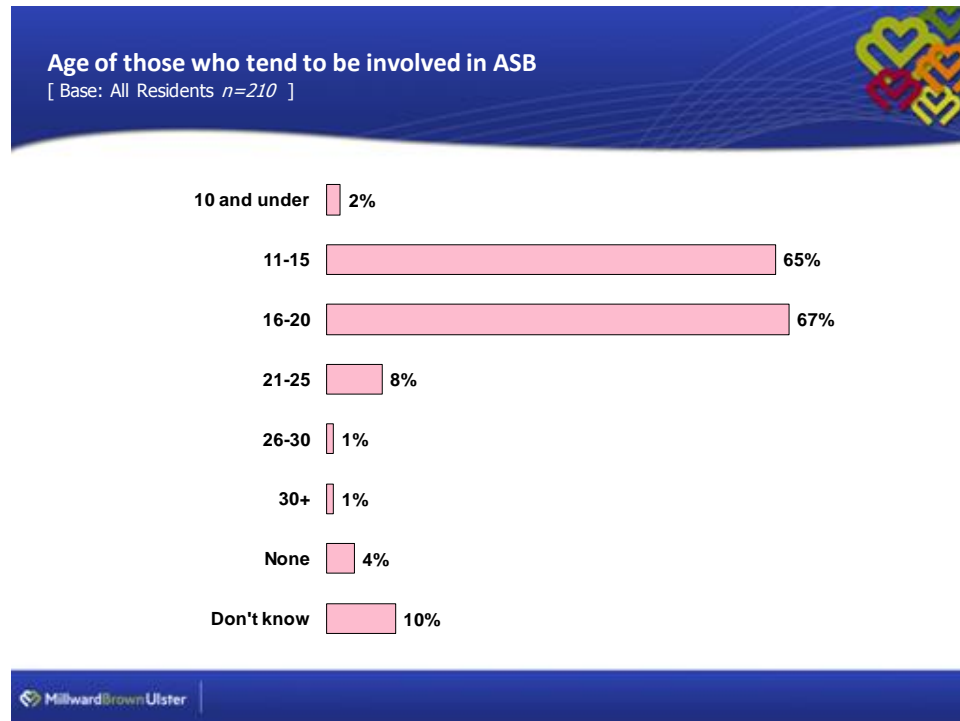
Figure 4.16: Effectiveness of Youth Clubs & Youth Schemes in reducing levels of ASB



4.9 Age of those typically involved in incidences of anti-social behaviour

Approximately two thirds of all residents stated that those who are typically involved in incidences of anti-social behaviour in the Cavehill area tend to be between the ages of 11 and 20.

Figure 4.17: Age of those who tend to be involved in ASB



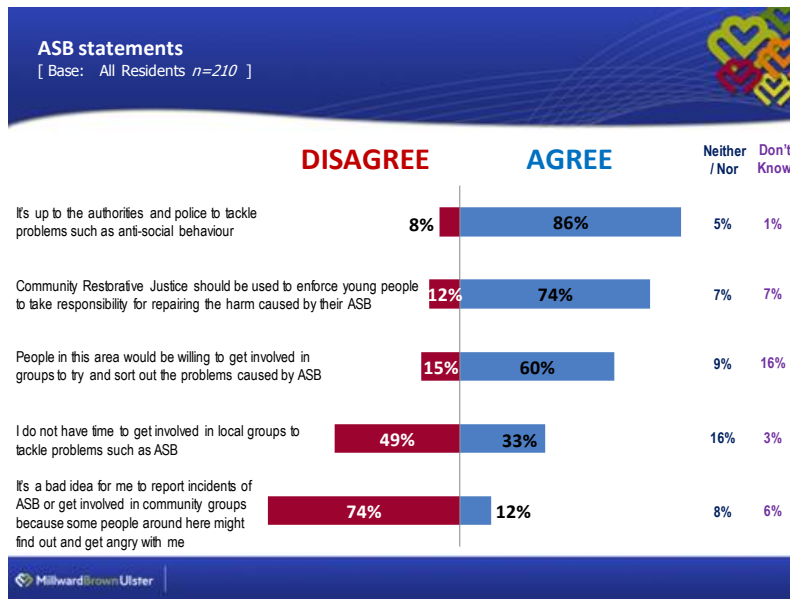
4.10 Anti-social behaviour statements

Participants were asked a series of statements on the topic of anti-social behaviour and asked if they agreed or disagreed with the statement. (See figure 4.18 overleaf)

More than four fifths (86%) of all residents agreed that it was up to the police to tackle problems such as anti-social behaviour. Almost three quarters (74%) agreed that Community Restorative Justice should be used to enforce young people to take active responsibility for repairing the harm caused by their anti-social behaviour.

Positively, three fifths (60%) of all residents agreed that people in the area would be willing to get involved in groups to try and sort out the problems caused by anti-social behaviour. It was up to the police to tackle problems such as anti-social behaviour. However, a third (33%) of all residents stated that they did not have time to get involved in such groups.

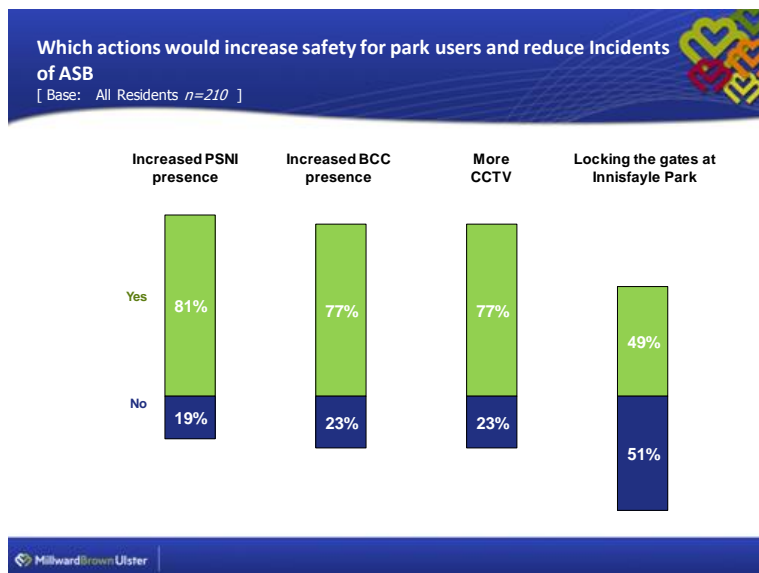
Figure 4.18: ASB statements



4.11 Actions to increase safety for park users and reduce incidents of ASB

During the survey respondents were presented with four options which may help increase safety and reduce incidents of anti-social behaviour in Cavehill Country Park and the surrounding area. An increased police presence scored highest (81%) amongst residents as a measure which may increase safety and help reduce incidents of anti-social behaviour. An increased Belfast City Council presence (77%) and more CCTV (77%) scored second and third highest. Locking the gates at Innisfayle Park (49%) scored fourth out of the four suggested methods amongst residents, scoring significantly lower than the three other possible measures.

Figure 4.19: Actions to increase safety for park users and reduce incidents of ASB



4.12 Awareness of the measures implemented by BCC to reduce ASB since 2008

Residents were presented with a number of measures and initiatives introduced by Belfast City Council since 2008 to help reduce anti-social behaviour in the Cavehill Country Park and the surrounding area.

More than four fifths (86%) were unaware of the visits to the park by mobile CCTV and three quarters (75%) were unaware of the joint alcohol operations carried out by the council in partnership with the PSNI, the Park Rangers and the Get Home Safe Officers. More than three fifths were also unaware of the horticultural defensive plantings (64%), the upgraded CCTV at the gates and the fence installations (61%).

Figure 4.20: Awareness of BCC measures implemented since 2008 to reduce ASB

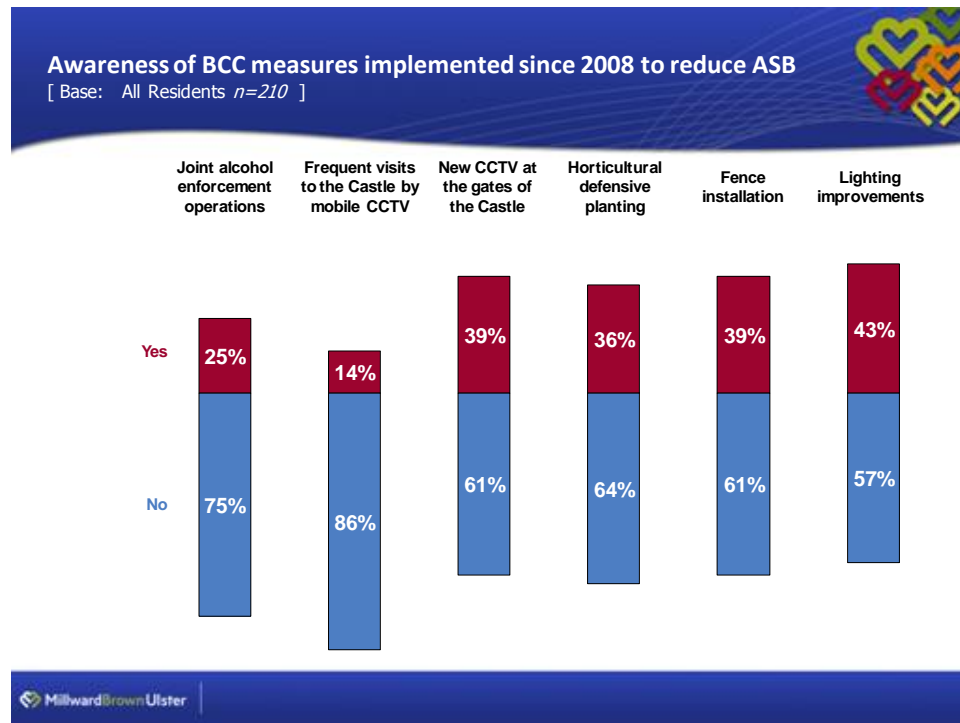
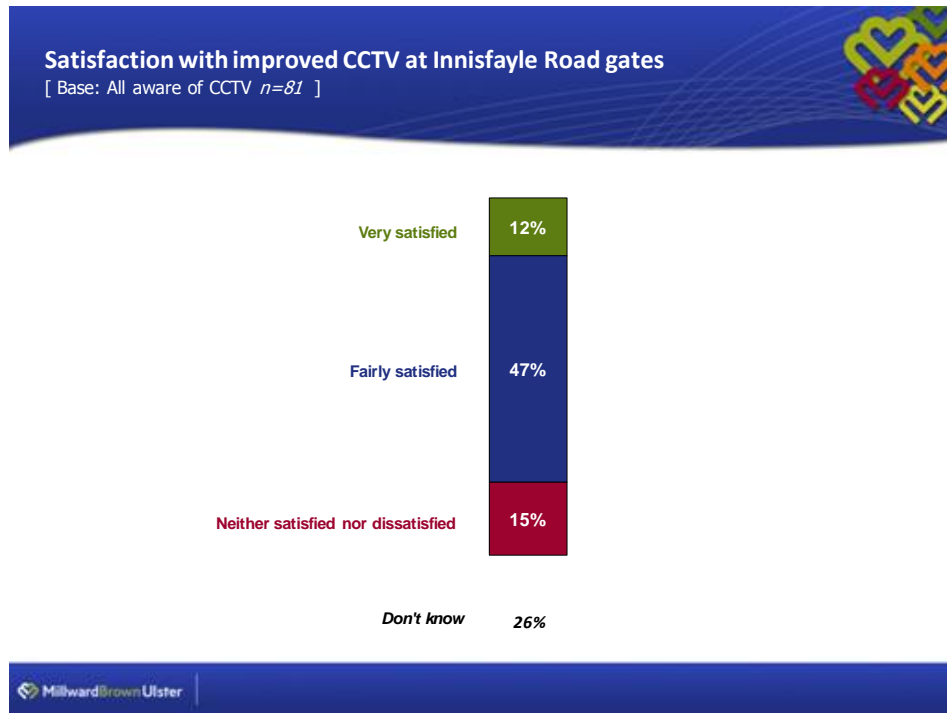


Figure 4.21 overleaf shows that almost three fifths (59%) of those residents who were aware of the upgraded CCTV installed at the gates in Innsfayle Park were satisfied with this measure. However, just over a quarter (26%) were unsure with many of these residents stating that they did not know how effective it was or how often it was used as evidence to try and deal with incidents of anti-social behaviour.

Figure 4.21: Satisfaction with improved CCTV at Innisfayle Road gates

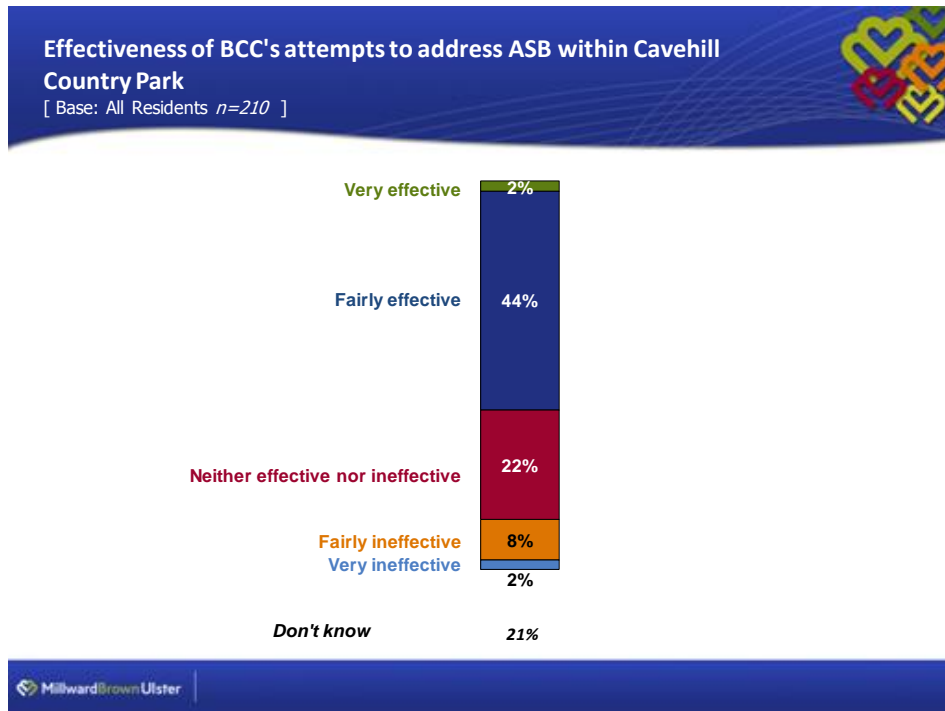


4.13 Effectiveness and satisfaction ratings of BBC efforts to tackle ASB

Participants were asked to rate the effectiveness of the council’s attempts to address anti-social behaviour and also their overall satisfaction with their efforts.

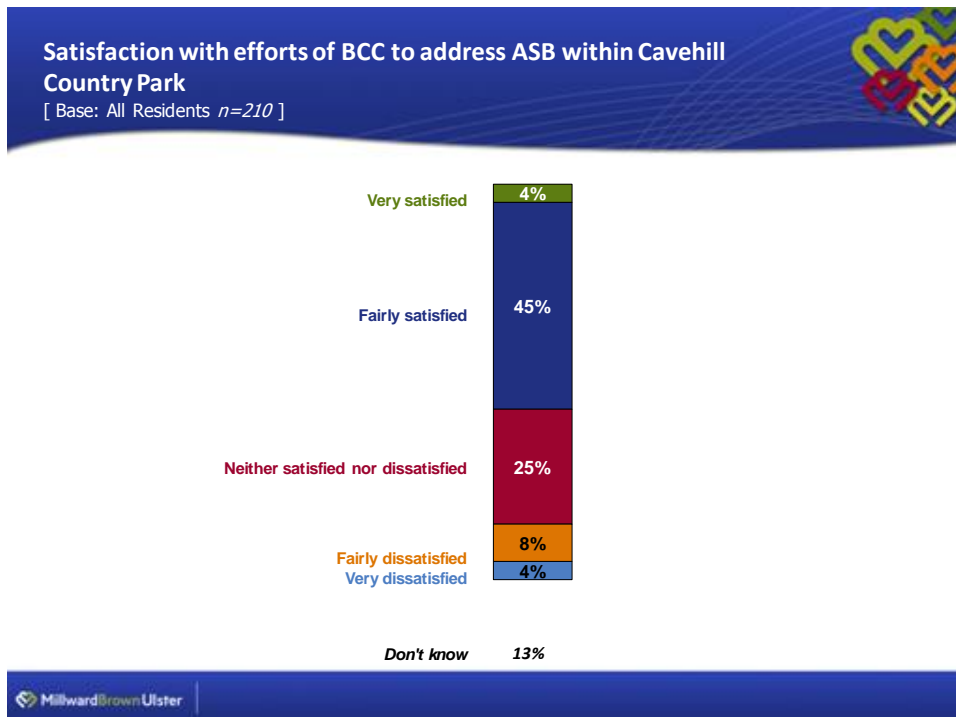
Almost half (46%) of all residents stated that the council’s attempts to address anti-social behaviour had been effective. However, more than a fifth (21%) were unsure how effective the initiatives had been. (See figure 4.22 overleaf)

Figure 4.22: Effectiveness of BCC's attempts to address ASB within Cavehill Country Park



Almost half (49%) of all residents stated that they were satisfied with the council's efforts to tackle anti-social behaviour. A further quarter (25%) stated that they were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied. Just over 1 in 10 (12%) expressed dissatisfaction with Belfast City Council's efforts.

Figure 4.23: Satisfaction with efforts of BCC to address ASB within Cavehill Country Park

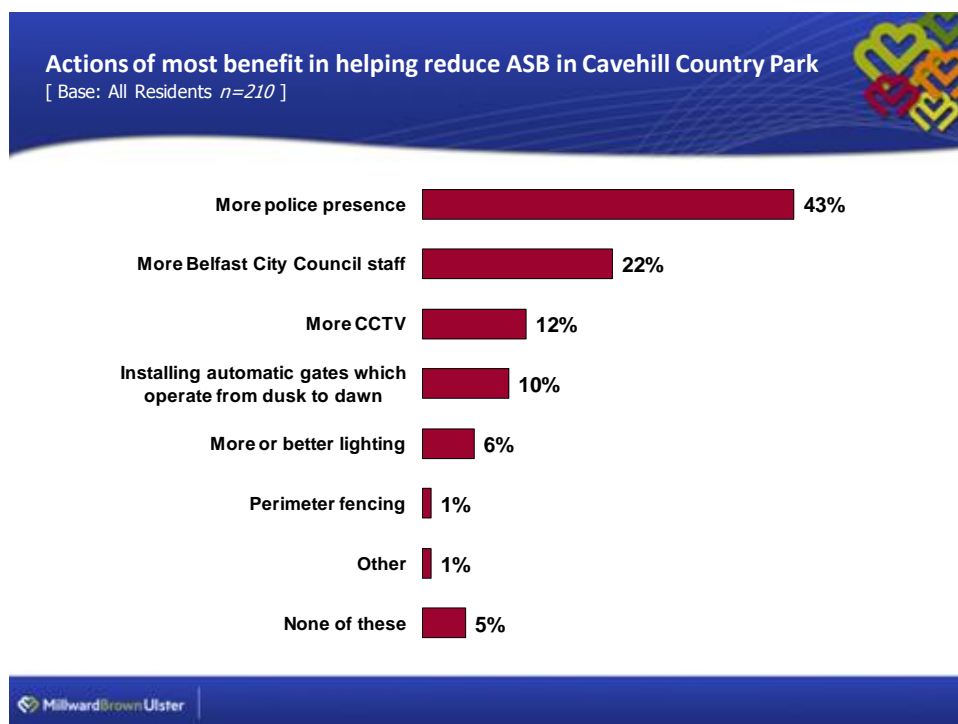


4.14 Action of most benefit in helping reduce ASB in Cavehill Country Park

Finally, participants were presented with a list of options and asked to select which one they thought would be of most benefit in helping to reduce anti-social behaviour in Cavehill Country Park.

More than two fifths (43%) of all residents stated that an increased police presence would be of most benefit in reducing incidences of anti-social behaviour. Just over a fifth (22%) thought an increased Belfast City Council presence would be of most benefit, while only 1 in 10 (10%) believed that locking the gates at Innisfayle Park would be most beneficial.

Figure 4.24: Action of most benefit in helping reduce ASB in Cavehill Country Park



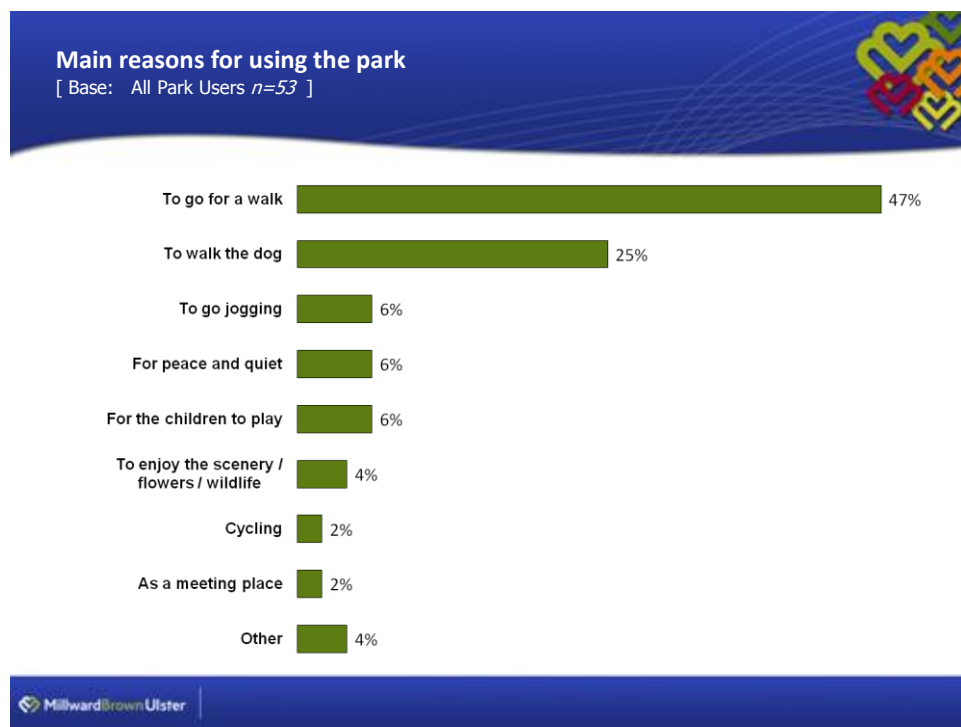
5. Park Users Survey

In this section we provide an overview of the findings from the face-to-face survey of users of the Cavehill Country Park. Four fifths (80%) of all respondents frequented the park at least once a week and the remaining fifth (20%) visited the park at least once every two months.

5.1 Main reason for using the park

As is evident in figure 5.1, almost three quarters of all park users visited the park to go for a walk (47%) or to walk their dog (25%).

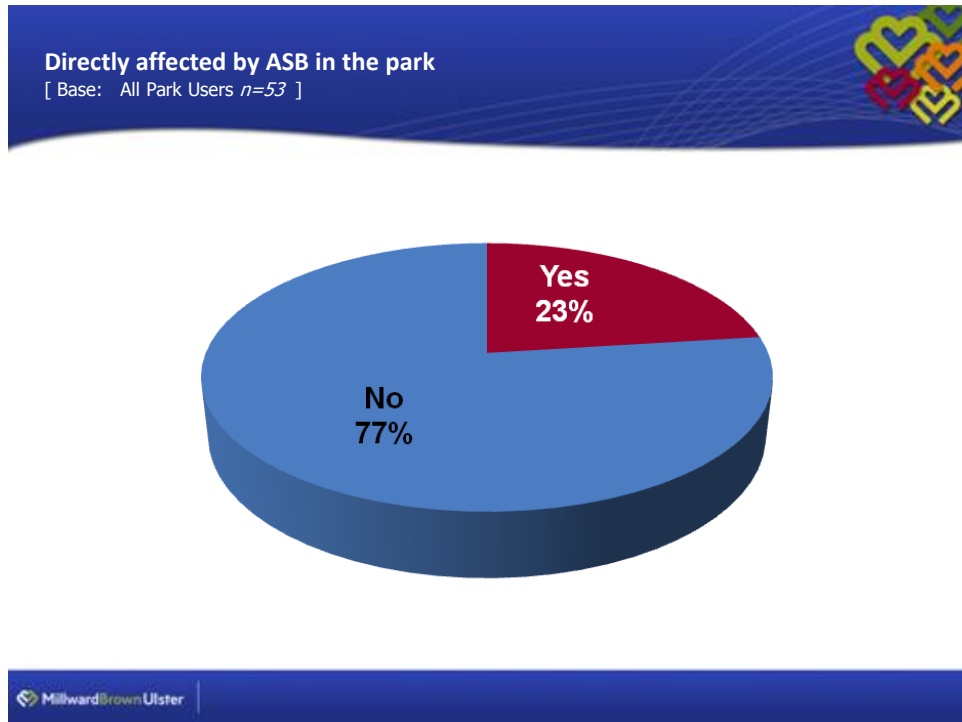
Figure 5.1: Main reason for using the park



5.2 Park users directly affected by anti-social behaviour in the park

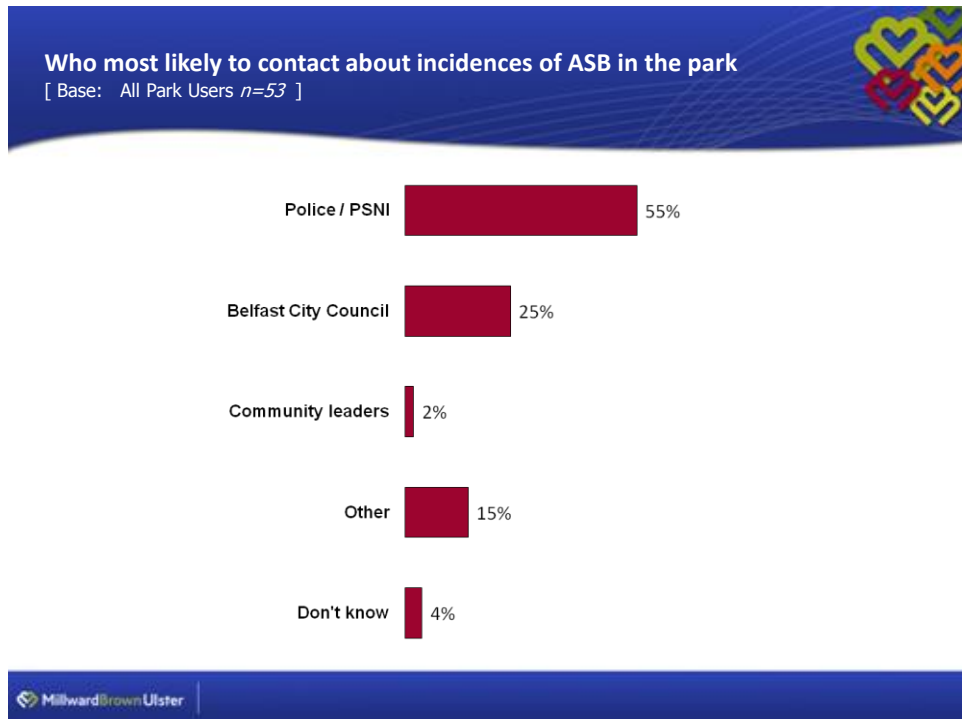
Figure 5.2 overleaf shows that almost a quarter (23%) of all park users stated that they had been directly affected by anti-social behaviour in the park.

Figure 5.2: Been directly affected by anti-social behaviour in the park



More than half (55%) of all park users stated that they would be most likely to contact the police about any incidences of anti-social behaviour. A quarter (25%) stated that they would contact Belfast City Council.

Figure 5.3: Who park users are most likely to contact about incidences of ASB in the park



5.3 Park users safety

Participants were asked a number of questions about their personal safety in a number of different circumstances.

Figure 5.4 below illustrates how safe park users generally feel in the park. More than two thirds (70%) of all park users stated that they felt safe in all areas of the park. However, 3 in 10 (30%) of all users stated that they only felt in certain parts of the park.

Those who stated that they only felt safe in certain parts of the park, highlighted areas such as off the main path, near the caves and the top of the Cavehill trail where they felt less safe. Reasons given for why they felt less safe in certain areas included; areas where they felt isolated, areas where groups of youths drink and/or take drugs and areas where the lighting is poor.

Figure 5.4: Areas where feel safe in the park

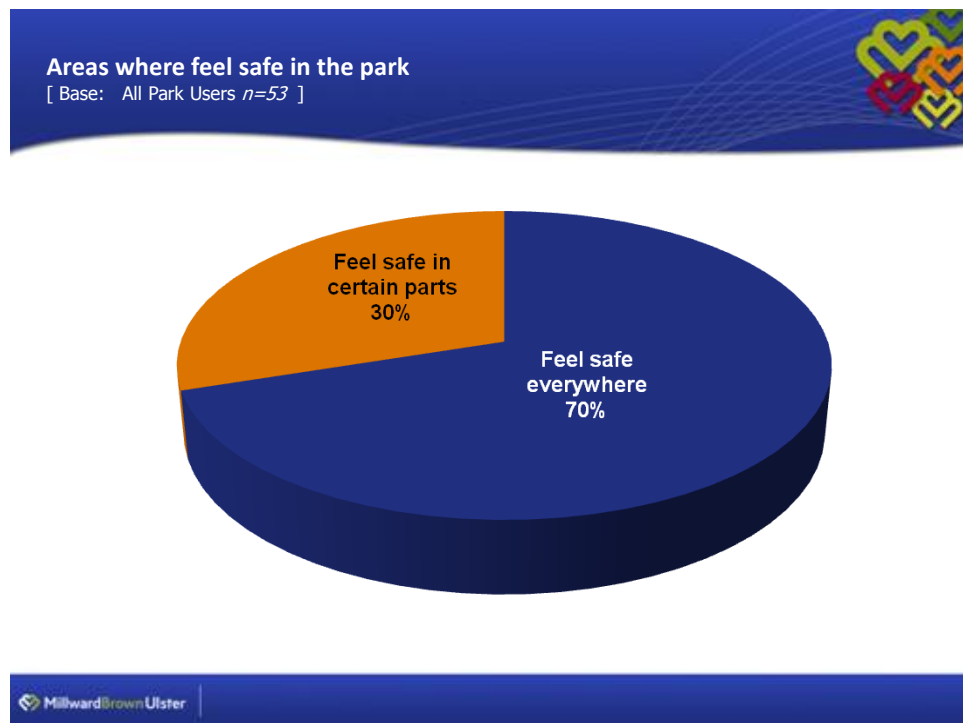
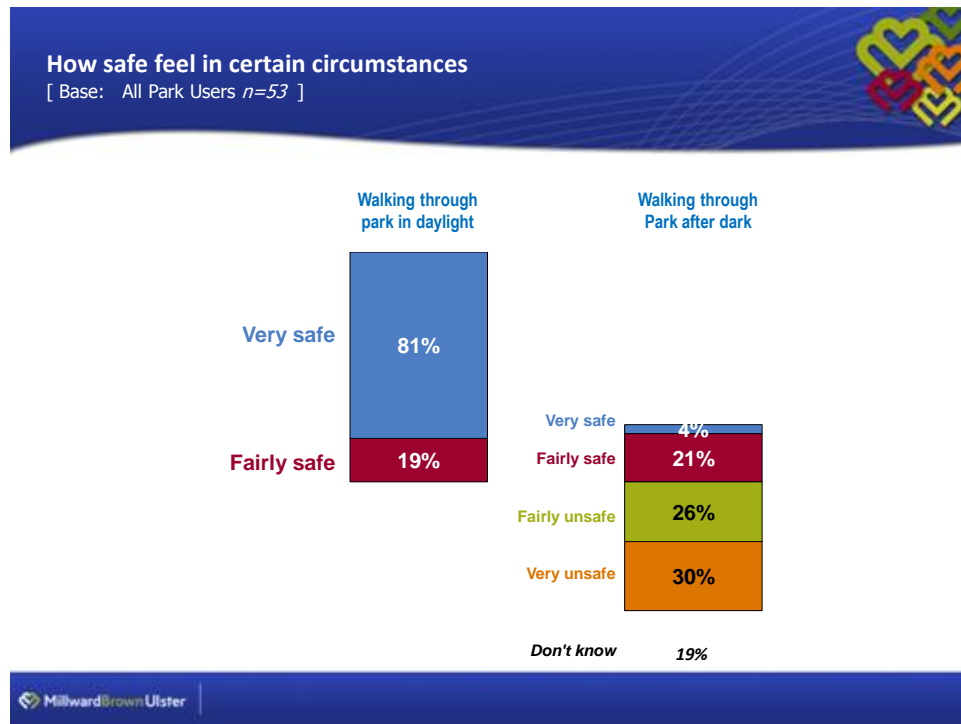


Figure 5.5 overleaf illustrates how safe park users generally feel in a number of different scenarios. All park users stated that they felt safe walking through the park in daytime. Positively, more than four fifths (81%) stated that they felt very safe during daylight. However, more than half (56%) of all park users stated that they felt unsafe walking through the park after dark, with 3 in 10 (30%) stating that they felt very unsafe.

Figure 5.5: How safe feel in certain circumstances



5.4 Types of anti-social behaviour problems in the park

Participants were asked a number of questions about the types of anti-social behaviour they consider to be a problem in the park and then about types of anti-social behaviour they have actually witnessed in the past 12 months.

Figures 5.6 and 5.7 overleaf show the types of anti-social behaviour users consider to be a problem in the park. Almost half (45%) of all park users cited groups of youths drinking and/or taking drugs as a problem in the Cavehill Country Park. Nearly two fifths (37%) cited people being drunk or rowdy and 3 in 10 cited graffiti, vandalism and damage to property (25%) as a problem in the park.

Less than 1 in 10 residents cited theft of belongings (8%) and sectarian or racial attacks and abuse (4%) as a problem in the Cavehill Country Park.

Figure 5.6: Type of ASB considered a problem in the park

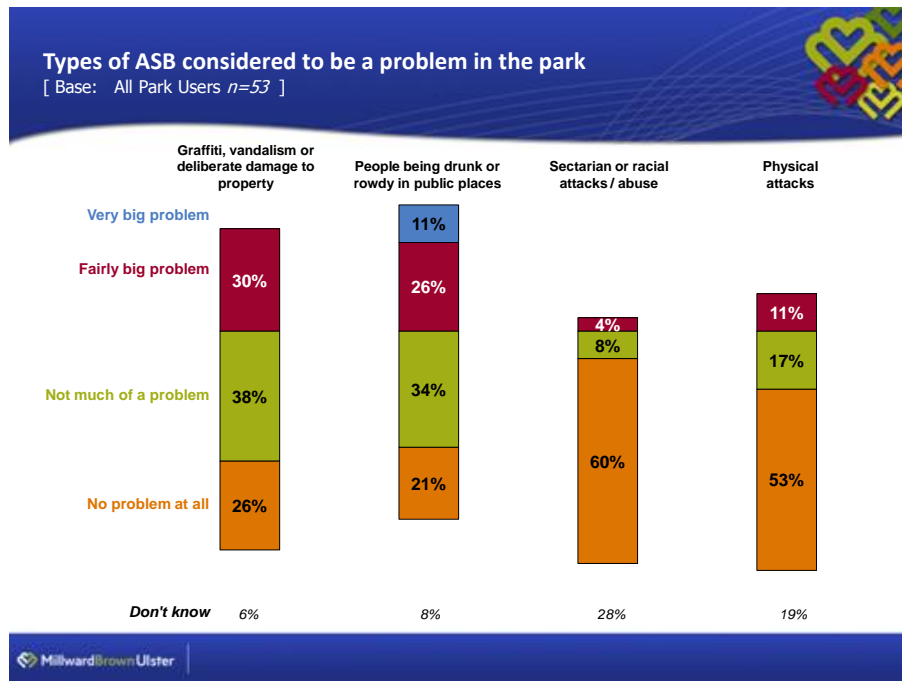


Figure 5.7: Type of ASB considered a problem in the area in the park

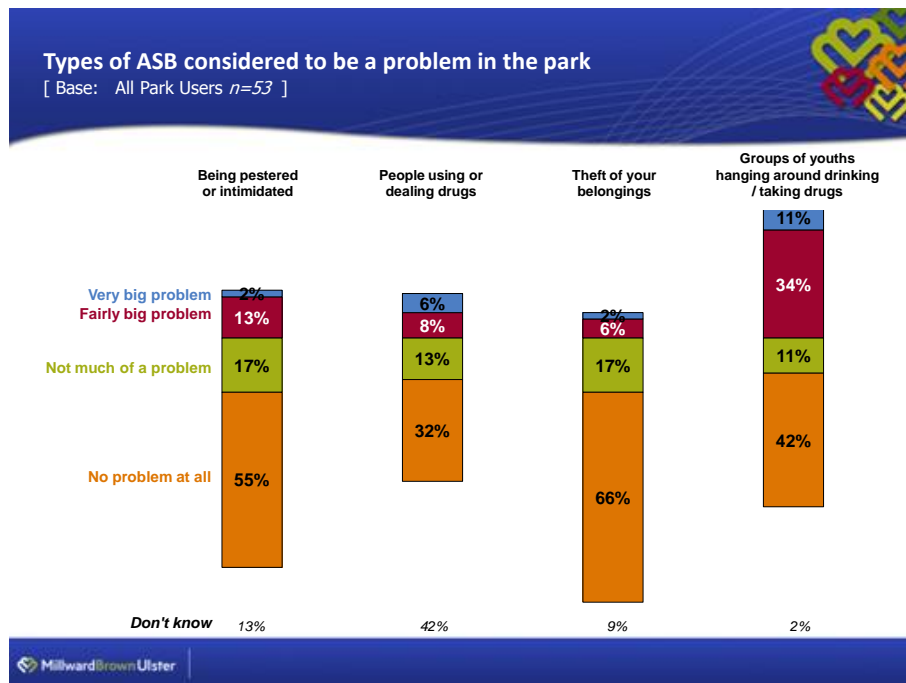
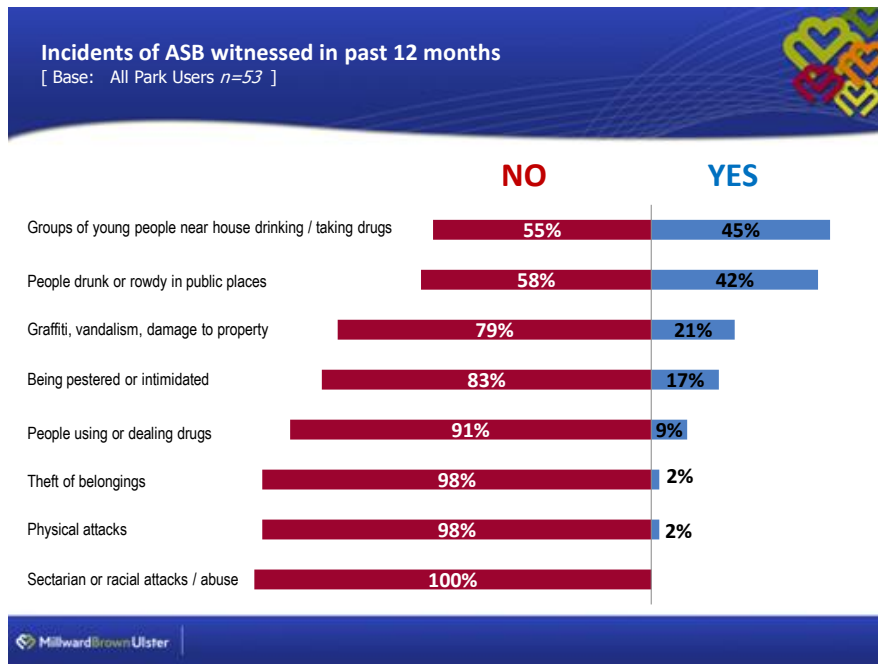


Figure 5.8 overleaf shows the types of anti-social behaviour park users have actually witnessed in the past 12 months. During the past 12 months, more than two fifths (45%) of all park users have witnessed incidences with groups of youths drinking and/or taking drugs in the park and people being drunk or rowdy (42%). More than a fifth had also witnessed incidences of graffiti, vandalism and damage to property (21%).

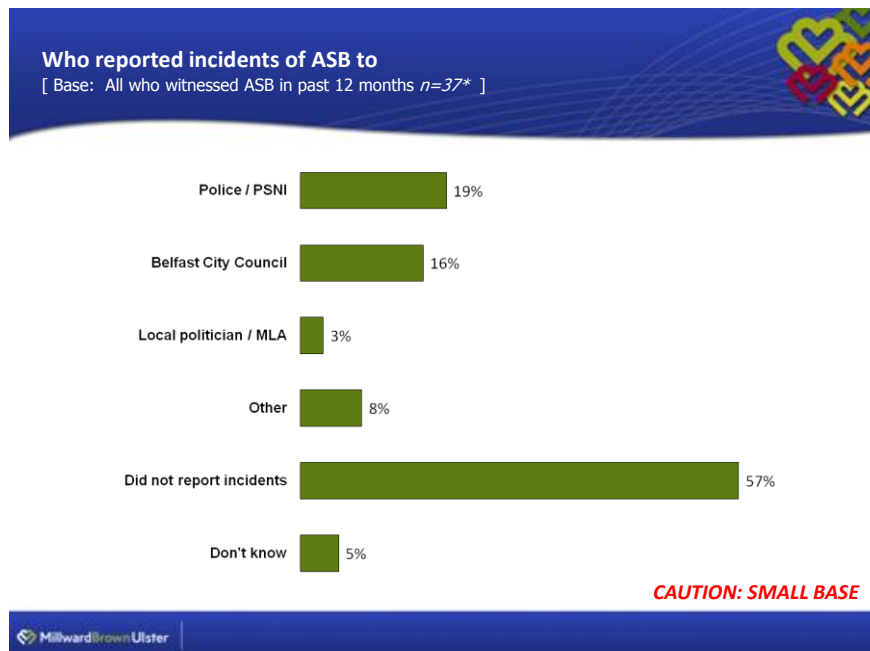
Figure 5.8: Incidents of ASB witnessed in the park in past 12 months



5.5 Reporting of anti-social behaviour

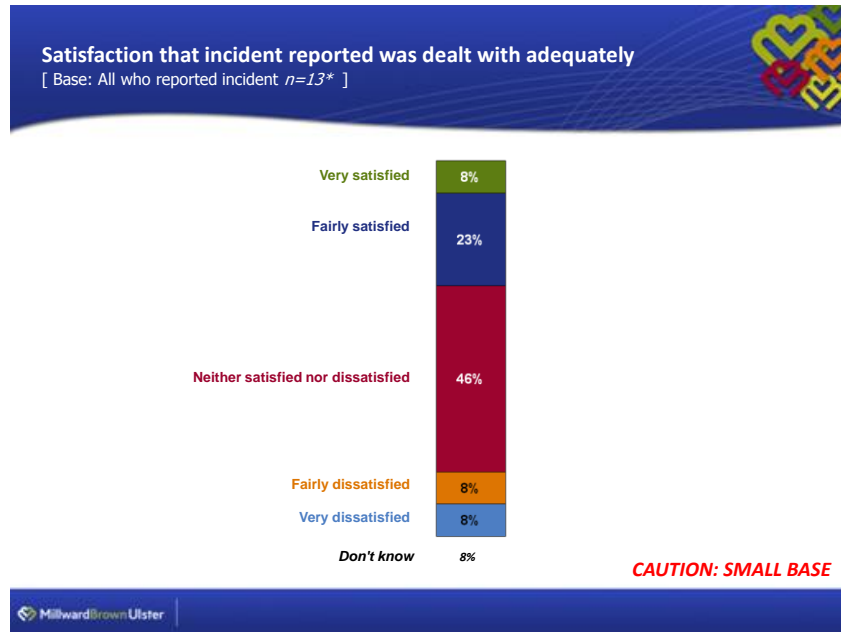
More than half (57%) did not report the incidences of anti-social behaviour they had witnessed in the park. Less than a fifth of park users who had witnessed incidences of anti-social behaviour in the past 12 months reported them to the police (19%) or Belfast City Council (16%).

Figure 5.9: Who reported incidents of ASB to



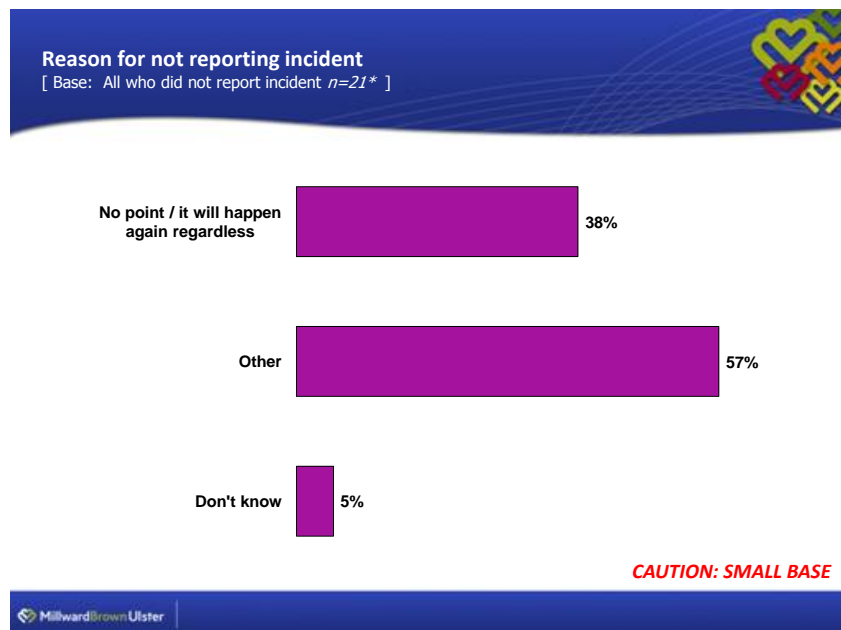
Less than a third (31%) of all users who reported an incident were satisfied that it was dealt with in an adequate fashion. Almost half (46%) stated that they were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied. *(NB caution should be used with these figures due to the very low base)*

Figure 5.10: Satisfaction that incident reported was dealt with adequately



Almost a two fifths (37%) of those park users, who had witnessed incidences of anti-social behaviour but did not report them, stated that there was no point as it would just happen again regardless. *(NB caution should be used with these figures due to the low base)*

Figure 5.11: Reason for not reporting incident

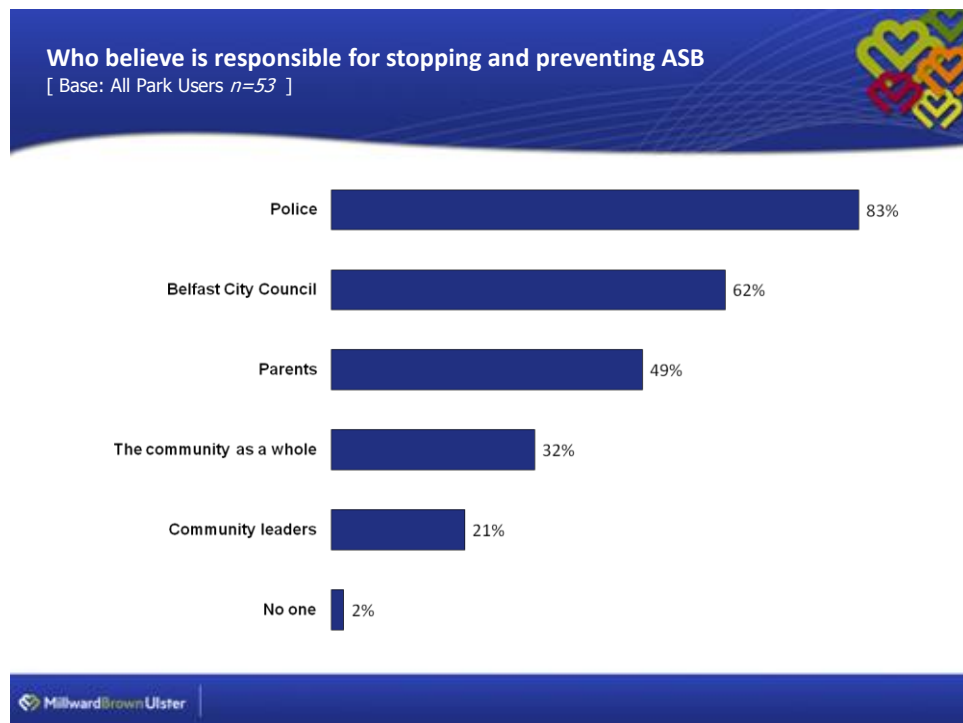


5.6 Responsibility for stopping and preventing ASB in the park

Park users were asked about who they believe is responsible for stopping and preventing anti-social behaviour in Cavehill Country Park.

Figure 5.12 shows that more than four fifths (83%) believe that it is the responsibility of the police to stop and prevent anti-social behaviour in the park. More than three fifths (62%) stated that it was the responsibility of Belfast City Council and almost half (49%) believe the parents of the youths have a responsibility. Almost a third (32%) stated that the community as a whole had a role to play in stopping and preventing anti-social behaviour in the park.

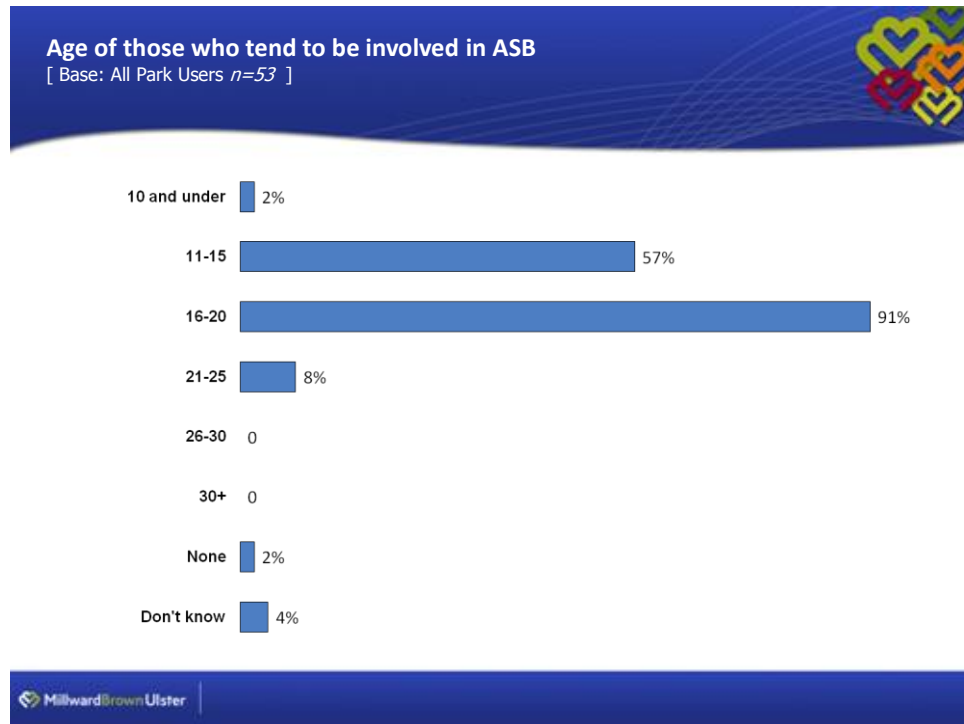
Figure 5.12: Who believe is responsible for stopping and preventing ASB



5.7 Age of those typically involved in incidences of anti-social behaviour

More than 9 in 10 (91%) park users stated that those who are typically involved in incidences of anti-social behaviour in the park tend to be between the ages of 16 and 20. Almost three fifths (57%) stated that those who are typically involved in incidences tend to be between the ages of 11 and 15. (See figure 5.13 overleaf)

Figure 5.13: Age of those who tend to be involved in ASB



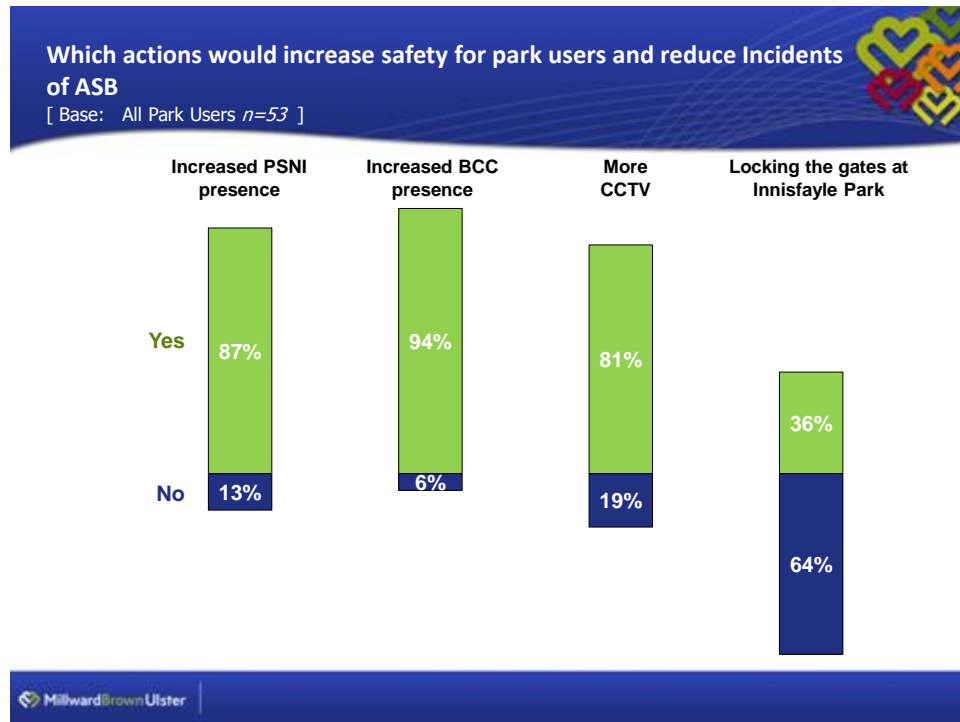
5.8 Actions to increase safety for park users and reduce incidents of ASB

During the survey park users were presented with four options which may help increase safety and reduce incidents of anti-social behaviour in Cavehill Country Park.

An increased Belfast City Council presence scored highest (94%) amongst users as a measure which may increase safety and help reduce incidents of anti-social behaviour in the park. An increased police presence (87%) and more CCTV (81%) scored second and third highest respectively.

Locking the gates at Innisfayle Park (36%) scored fourth out of the four suggested methods amongst park users, scoring significantly lower than the three other possible measures. (See figure 5.14 overleaf)

Figure 5.14: Actions to increase safety for park users and reduce incidents of ASB



5.9 Awareness of the measures implemented by BCC to reduce ASB since 2008

Residents were presented with a number of measures and initiatives introduced by Belfast City Council since 2008 to help reduce anti-social behaviour in the park and the surrounding area.

More than three quarters (77%) were unaware of the visits to the park by mobile CCTV and more than four fifths (81%) were unaware of the joint alcohol operations carried out by the council in partnership with the PSNI, the Park Rangers and the Get Home Safe Officers.

More than half of all park users were also unaware of the lighting improvements (55%), the horticultural defensive plantings (53%), the upgraded CCTV at the gates (53%) and the fence installations (53%). (See figure 5.15 overleaf)

Figure 5.15: Awareness of BCC measures implemented since 2008 to reduce ASB

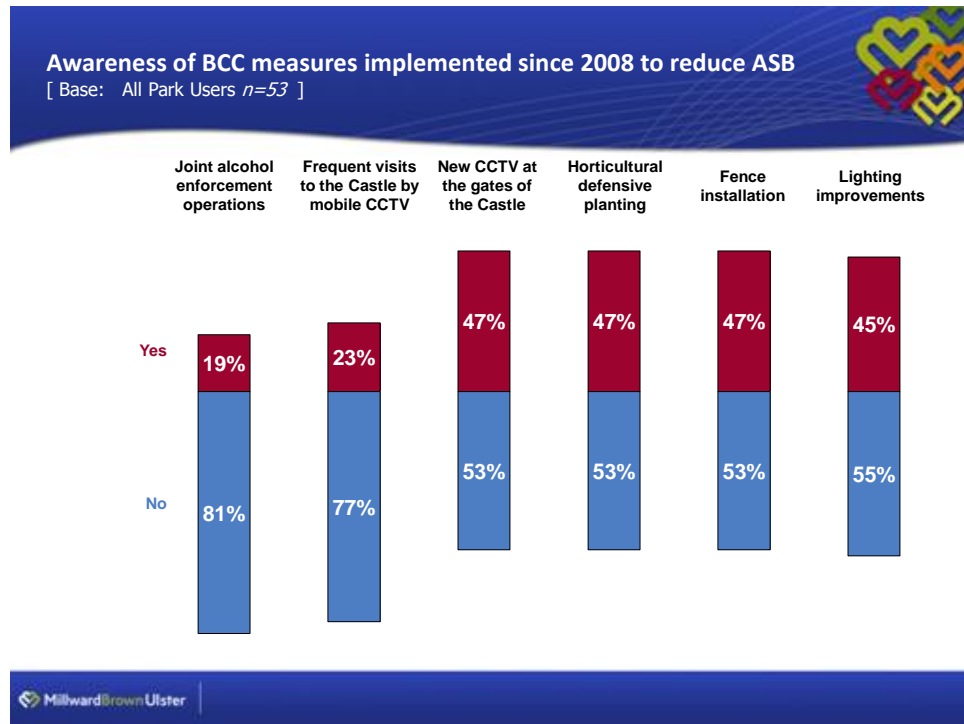
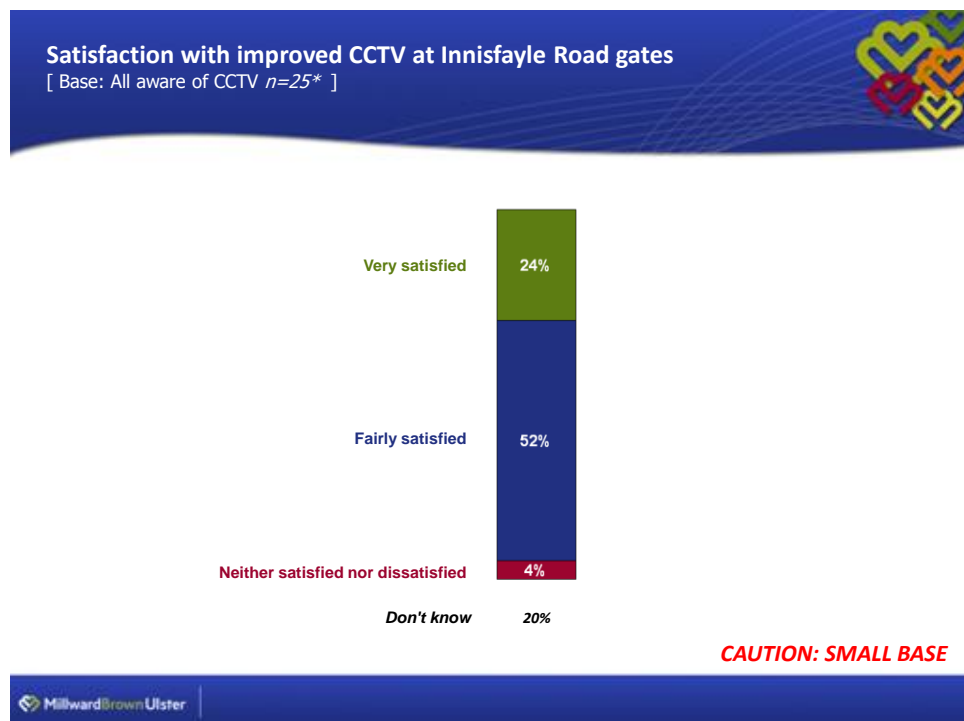


Figure 5.16 shows that more than three quarters (76%) of those residents who were aware of the upgraded CCTV installed at the gates in Innisfayle Park were satisfied with this measure. *(NB caution should be used with these figures due to the low base)*

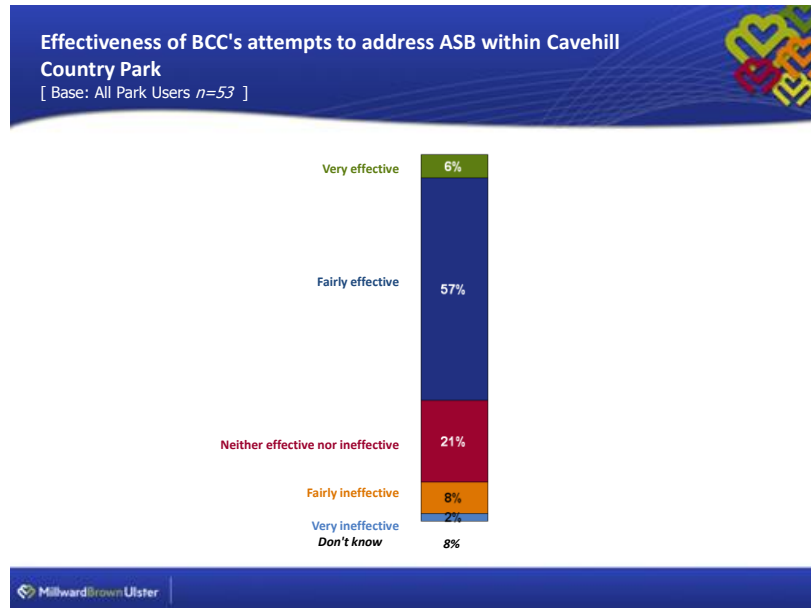
Figure 5.16: Satisfaction with improved CCTV at Innisfayle Road gates



5.10 Effectiveness and satisfaction ratings of BBC efforts to tackle ASB in the park

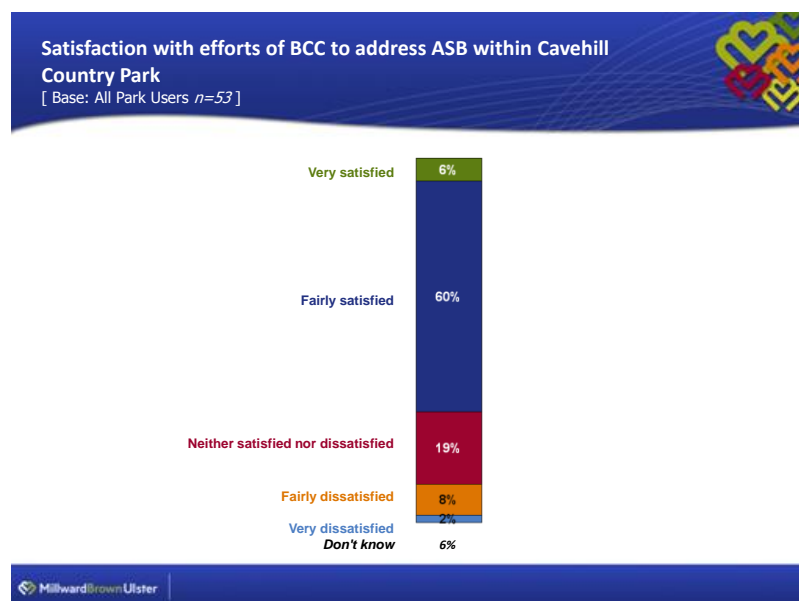
More than three fifths (63%) of all users stated that the council’s attempts to address anti-social behaviour in the park had been effective.

Figure 5.17: Effectiveness of BCC’s attempts to address ASB within Cavehill Country Park



Two thirds (66%) of all park users stated that they were satisfied with the council’s efforts to tackle anti-social behaviour. Only 1 in 10 (10%) expressed dissatisfaction with Belfast City Council’s efforts to tackle anti-social behaviour in the park. (See figure 5.18 overleaf)

Figure 5.18: Satisfaction with efforts of BCC to address ASB within Cavehill Country Park

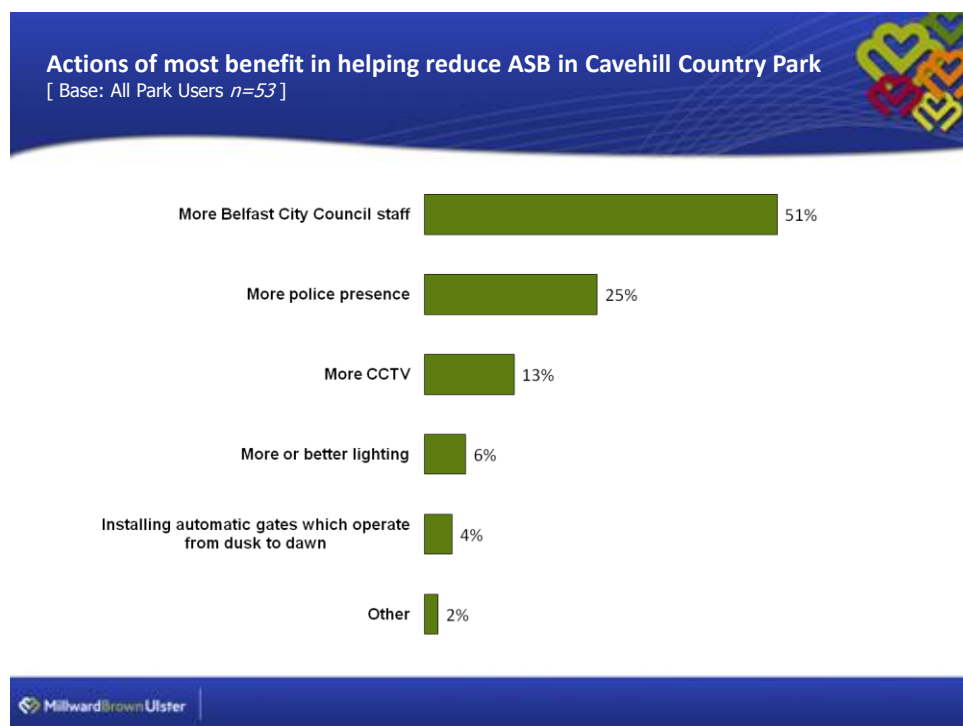


5.11 Action of most benefit in helping reduce ASB in Cavehill Country Park

Finally, users were presented with a list of options and asked to select which one they thought would be of most benefit in helping to reduce anti-social behaviour in Cavehill Country Park.

More than half (51%) of all park users stated that an increased Belfast City Council presence would be of most benefit in reducing incidences of anti-social behaviour. A quarter (25%) of all park users stated that an increased police presence would be of most benefit, while just over 1 in 10 (13%) believed that more CCTV would be most beneficial. Less than 1 in 20 (4%) believed that locking the gates at Innisfayle Park would be most beneficial.

Figure 5.19: Action of most benefit in helping reduce ASB in Cavehill Country Park



6. Stakeholder Depth Interviews

This section of the report outlines the key findings from the stakeholder depth interviews. The discussion guide was split into five key sections:

- Issues in the local area;
- Reporting anti-social behaviour;
- Communication and engagement with the local community;
- Steps already taken to tackle anti-social behaviour;
- Tackling anti-social behaviour moving forward

It was evident from the analysis of the depth interviews that in some areas the residents had quite different views of the key issues from the BCC and PSNI staff, so for the purposes of analysis in this section they will be referred to as the 'stakeholders'.

6.1 Issues in the local area

All stakeholders and residents acknowledged that anti-social behaviour is a problem in the area. All the residents we talked to had experienced varying degrees of anti-social behaviour ranging for very minor offences such as kids making noise late in the evening to more serious offences such as broken windows and a stolen motorbike. However, it was recognised by both stakeholders and residents that they are going through a relative period of calm at the moment.

"When we first moved in it was quiet, around March time. Six weeks later we got rapped up at 4.50am, I came down stairs and it was the police. They had caught two kids who had stole Patrick's motorbike from outside the house. They were in the Castle pushing it up the hill."
Resident

Everyone agreed that the anti-social behaviour is not constant but it does tend to be cyclical. There are certain times of the year when it gets particularly bad such as the end of school exams and the St Patricks Day and July holiday periods; however the problems can persist most weekends throughout the year. During the particularly bad times such as the end of school exams and the St Patricks Day and July holiday periods much larger crowds tend to congregate in the park and often the anti-social behaviour can escalate.

"The difficulty we find with The Castle and Country Park is that it comes in peaks and troughs. Occasionally through the year on events like exam results, end of exams, St Patrick's Day, you'll get peaks and troughs there." Stakeholder

“Problems come in fits and starts, particularly bad in the summer. It’s particularly bad at the end of each school term. Everything from drinking to full-on raves. On one night we had hundreds there, someone said it was posted on facebook. I think about seven police land rover had to escort them away.” Resident

It was also stated that a number of problem ‘groups’ or ‘gangs’ made up of three or four individuals can be responsible for a significant proportion of the anti-social behaviour in the area at any one time, but the problem is that these groups can be problematic for a number of years (typically aged 14 through to 18) and then will be replaced by another problem group or gang so the cycle is never broken.

Although some incidents may be considered by the PSNI or Belfast City Council to be ‘minor’, they are a persistent and constant source of frustration for local residents.

All parties agreed that the main problems in the park and surrounding area are:

- Groups of youths drinking and/or taking drugs;
- Public drunkenness and rowdiness; and
- Theft, vandalism and damage to property.

“Usually alcohol related. Kids gather at front gate or coming in the front gate with alcohol. It could be being noisy then when they are leaving the park. There have been some instances of vandalism.” Stakeholder

Belfast City Council and the PSNI have taken steps to address these issues. However, it has not always been demonstrated to the residents what actions Belfast City Council or the PSNI have taken to combat anti-social behaviour in the area. Essentially, local residents want these problems to not only be tackled by Belfast City Council and the PSNI but they want to see evidence that these problems are being adequately addressed and actions taken against offenders.

6.2 Reporting anti-social behaviour

The stakeholders agreed that the council and the PSNI have joint responsibility for dealing with incidences of anti-social behaviour in the park and the surrounding area. Residents were more of the opinion that the park was primarily the council’s responsibility but that the police also had a key role to play especially as much of the anti-social activity was illegal (drugs, under-age drinking etc). Both stakeholders and residents also raised concerns about the ability of the

council staff to tackle youths who are drinking or involved in anti-social activity. It is clear that council staff including park rangers are often powerless and can only advise the youths to 'move on', but the problem is that the youths are often very savvy and being fully aware of what the council staff can and can't do they can be quite brazen and refuse to take heed.

"We have to take with a pinch of salt people who live in the area that are complaining that there are young people in the park. Our own opinion and we are on record as saying this is that 'it's a public park; it's there for young people to use'. It's when behaviour crosses the line between boisterous at 9pm in the summer, to criminal at 2am. That anti-social behaviour is there, and that is what we have to concentrate on." Stakeholder

All residents and stakeholders stated that incidents of anti-social behaviour are reported to either the PSNI or Belfast Castle; incidences tend only to be reported to local politicians or directly to the council as a last resort. However, residents were clearly confused about what is the best line of contact to follow and cited that due to mixed responses from reporting incidents in the past that in many cases they will not report some cases of anti-social behaviour at all. Some residents also stated that a number of their elderly neighbours would be afraid to report incidences of anti-social behaviour for fear of reprisals.

"I don't know if there is a direct point of contact between the residents and the Park Wardens." Stakeholder

There was broad recognition amongst stakeholders that the process of reporting incidents could be made clearer to residents, especially regarding confidentiality, however all the stakeholders were keen to stress that residents need to report all incidents of anti-social behaviour otherwise they will be unaware of the problems and unable to tackle them adequately. The stakeholders categorically stated that only if all incidents of anti-social behaviour in the Cavehill area are logged in the proper fashion then will they be able to follow them up and make resources available.

"We can't do anything if the ASB isn't reported. If we don't know about it how can we do anything about it? It's quite simple, if all the calls were logged and we can see a spike of ASB in that area then we can make a case for more resources and feet on the street." Stakeholder

Residents stated that when they had reported incidents of anti-social behaviour in the past, more often than not, there was no follow-up with them as to how or if it had been dealt with. The residents were unsure if their calls were being dealt with adequately and were therefore unsure if any action was taken on their calls at all. All the residents stated that any form of acknowledgement or update would be welcome.

“We contacted the Castle and the Police saying ‘you’ll have to do something; it’s got beyond a joke, first the bike and now the bins.’ There was nothing really done about it.” Resident

I rang police to report it and the guy laughed at us down the phone. He said “do you understand all our resources are being taken up with more serious trouble in North Belfast”. All he said was that he would file a report, he was so obnoxious.” Resident

All residents accepted that they would have to report all incidences of anti-social behaviour in order for them to be addressed but they felt that having reported cases in the past without any evidence that the problems were being tackled had led to apathy about reporting. Positively, most stakeholders and residents agreed that a better reporting system is needed to log all incidents and ensure that they are followed up.

“You get to the stage were you say to yourself, ‘why bother reporting that, they won’t do anything about it anyway’.” Resident

6.3 Communication and engagement with the local community

The residents participating in the depth interviews did not feel included in the council’s attempts to address the issues such as anti-social behaviour in the area. Stakeholders also acknowledged that more could be done to engage with local residents in tackling anti-social behaviour; however they stated that the onus would be on residents to fully embrace any new joint up initiatives and take an active role especially with regards to reporting incidents.

“We have chaired a meeting in the area already, we have had councillors and MLA’s getting involved. Nigel Dodds has chaired a meeting in Belfast Castle.” Stakeholder

Residents also felt that given the age of most of the offenders more could be done by the PSNI and/or Belfast City Council such as visiting schools to educate and inform the children and youths about the consequences and ramifications of engaging in anti-social behaviour, not only for themselves but for the residents and also the environmental consequences of lighting fires and bins etc.

Off-licences and taxi depots were cited as other targets for the PSNI and BCC staff in trying to combat anti-social behaviour. A significant proportion of the anti-social behaviour was directly attributable to under-age drinking. At least some of the under-age youths must still be getting served in off-licences and many of the residents and stakeholders recalled incidences of taxi drivers dropping off alcohol to youths at the gates of the park.

“I’ve even seen taxis come up there and hand over blue bags of alcohol to them and been paid. There are many incidences of police being there with drinking and noise. I’ve had the detritus from it in my garden stuck in my hedge, bottles cans you name it stuck in there.”

Resident

There was also a strong belief amongst residents that more should be done than simply removing the alcohol, they wanted to know if anyone had been charged or fined. The stakeholders alluded to the complexities of the by-laws and the current policy on underage drinking (i.e. to confiscate and issue warnings) and the process of dealing with repeat offenders. However, the stakeholders did acknowledge that more could be done to inform the residents about these processes and the success of the alcohol enforcement operations they do carry out in the area.

“I’ve had my bin stolen on three separate occasions and burned at the castle. I rang the council and they wanted £50, even though it was burnt due to their negligence in terms of controlling what goes on in the grounds of the castle.” Resident

All stakeholders and residents agreed that more could be done regarding feedback to the local residents and park users about actions that have been taken to reduce levels of anti-social behaviour in the area.

“Belfast Castle, the council, the PSNI and the residents all need to work together and pull in the same direction if we want to tackle this problem properly.” Stakeholder

6.4 Steps already taken to tackle anti-social behaviour

The majority of stakeholders and residents acknowledged that youth clubs and youth schemes can be somewhat effective in reducing anti-social behaviour in the area, but a number of both stakeholders and residents pointed out that these schemes or clubs tend to run during evening hours (maybe up to 10 or 11 o’clock at the latest) and often the more serious incidents of anti-social behaviour tend to take place much later than this. However, both groups stated that more could be done to educate the kids through the youth clubs, informing them about the dangers of anti-social behaviour and the detrimental impact it can have on residents and the wider community.

“The real problems don’t really start until the early hours of the morning. It is all very well having Park Rangers working during the day, but where are they when you need them at three in the morning at the weekend.” Resident

There was a clear and distinct difference between the stakeholders and the residents in the levels of awareness about the steps that have already been taken by the council to address anti-social behaviour in the park. As might be expected the council staff and the PSNI staff were all aware of the entire range of steps and initiatives introduced to tackle the anti-social behaviour issue. However, the residents were not aware of the full range of initiatives.

Whilst a number of the residents had been aware of horticultural defensive planting and the lighting improvements the majority of residents were totally oblivious to the other steps taken by the council with regards to anti-social behaviour in the park. Most of the residents taking part in the depth interviews had never even heard of the joint alcohol enforcement operations the council have carried out in conjunction with the PSNI Park Ranger Service and the Get Home Safe Officers. In fact a number of the residents were unaware that the Park Rangers were still operating in the park.

“We have helped an awful lot of the residents over the years, in conjunction with the council in fairness. It took a while for the council to step up to the mark on this one, but they eventually have, and we have worked with some very good people, both from the ASSB aspect and from Belfast Castle themselves.” Stakeholder

All the stakeholders, but only half the residents, had been aware of the improved CCTV at the Innisfayle Road gates. Opinion was mixed between both stakeholders and residents as to the effectiveness of the CCTV. Stakeholders and residents believed that the improved CCTV had some impact as a minor deterrent but were not sure if it had been used as evidence or to prosecute. Residents were also fairly sceptical about how closely CCTV is monitored.

6.5 Tackling anti social-behaviour moving forward

It was widely accepted that the council is having to do more with less in delivering modernised services and that one of the main challenges they face when tackling anti-social behaviour is a lack of resources. Residents accepted this and also stated that they were prepared to engage with the council and other agencies to try and sort out the problems caused by anti-social behaviour.

A number of key actions were cited by both stakeholders and residents which they believe would help improve safety for park users and residents and reduce incidents of anti-social behaviour:

Increased PSNI presence

All stakeholders and residents recognised that a PSNI presence in the area does have a significant impact on reducing incidents of anti-social behaviour. However, both groups recognised that the PSNI have limited resources and that priority will be given to more serious incidents particularly around busy times and dates.

Increased BCC presence

All stakeholders and residents recognised that a BCC presence in the area at key times (late night weekends, end of school term etc) would have an impact on reducing anti-social behaviour. As before both stakeholders and residents recognised that BCC have limited resources and that often BCC staff can be powerless to remove alcohol or to persuade groups of youths to 'move on'.

"I understand that times are hard and resources are tight, but surely more could be done to move some resources from during the day to late nights at the weekends when the anti-social behaviour is actually taking place." Resident

More CCTV

Stakeholders and residents recognised that more CCTV will have some impact but will not necessarily deter anti-social behaviour if offenders are drunk or under the influence of drugs. Residents were also fairly sceptical about how closely CCTV is monitored and if it was ever used to prosecute. BCC and PSNI highlighted that given their limited resources it is impossible to monitor CCTV around the clock.

Locking the gates at Innisfayle Park

All stakeholders and half of the residents believed that locking the gates would have little or no impact due to the ability to access the park in numerous ways and in fact may result in youths cutting through the residents gardens. The risks if the police or rescue services could not get immediate access in an emergency situation were also pointed out.

"Even if you close that physical interface, young people will still get in to the park there. But what I would be worried about is that they will then be going through resident's garden, which they don't really do at the moment. If they need or want access to the park, they will get it. I would worry that the couple of houses either side will get people traipsing through their property." Stakeholder

"I know some of the neighbours would be in favour of closing the gates but personally I don't think it would have any real effect. They will get in anyway." Resident

There was an acknowledgement by all stakeholders and residents that an increased PSNI and BCC presence in the area particularly at key times such as weekends and school holidays would be beneficial. However, there was also an acceptance that BCC staff and PSNI can't be there all the time.

On a more positive note, all respondents cited the need for a more joined up approach, while it was also accepted by all stakeholders and residents that any one of the above measures or those already introduced such as the joint alcohol enforcement operations are unlikely to work on their own.

In essence, it takes a number of initiatives and measures such as those already introduced and a more joined-up communication and approach between BCC, PSNI, residents and park users to help tackle the issue.

“I don't think it's any one thing on its own that will be the solution. It will take a number of different initiatives. When different bodies work for the one common good then you get a result, whereas if the council and residents don't work together and view it as 'them and us' scenario then it is likely to fail.” Stakeholder

“The vast majority of resident are very supportive, very receptive, and quite thankful I think, of what we do to tackle anti-social behaviour.” Stakeholder