

Appendix 1: SOPARC Phase 1 Evaluation Report

Phase 1 Pilot Headline Statistics

Total Users Users/Per Hour	805 29			
Gender	75% Male		25% Female	
Age	Child (12%)	Teen (14%)	Adult (70%)	Senior (3%)
Dogs	139			
Dog Control	62% Off Lead		38% On Lead	
Time of Day	Morning Least Busy (7%)		Evening Most Busy (54%)	
Day of Week	Friday Least Busy (6%)		Saturday Most Busy (21%)	
Activity Level	Sedentary (25%)		Walking (55%)	Vigorous (21%)
Facility Usage	Pitches (52%)	Paths (29%)	Outdoor Gyms & Open Space (6%)	Playground (10%) Dog Enclosure (3%)
Cleanliness	97% Litter Free		98% Dog Foul Free	

**All figures have been subject to rounding*

Background

The System for Observing Play and Recreation in Communities (SOPARC) is a robust scientific methodology used to record park and open space usage. SOPARC observations record the gender, age and physical activity characteristics of users in various areas/facilities of a park or open space. This methodology has been used by Queens University Belfast (QUB) to measure the impact of the Connswater Community Greenway (CCG) on various public parks and open spaces in East Belfast. This methodology has been further adapted by the Council to record dog control in these spaces.

Training Summary

Training for the survey was undertaken over two half days on the 23rd and 24th July 2013. The training was carried out by QUB with attendance from four park wardens who would be recording the observations. A team of 3 Council Officers who would be acting as quality control through the duration of the survey were also present for the training

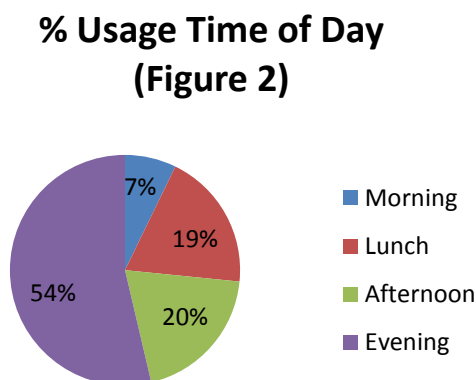
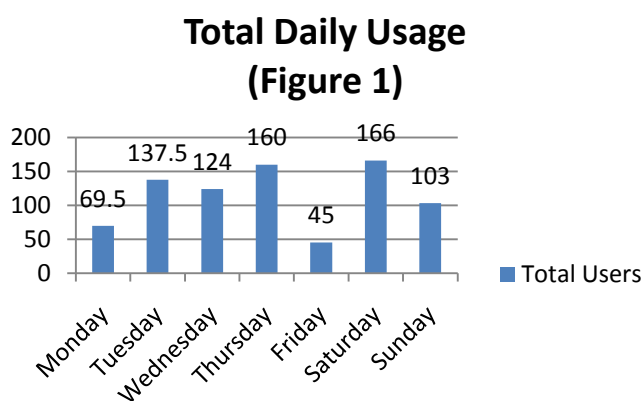
sessions. The training sessions consisted of two presentations, outlining the theory and practical intricacies behind the SOPARC methodology. In addition to this, the training incorporated practical exercises which demonstrated undertaking the observations in Grove itself.

Survey Summary

Phase 1 of the SOPARC pilot began week commencing 29th July 2013 and ran for 7 days. Observations were undertaken 4 times per day at 7.30am, 12.30pm, 3.30pm, 7.30pm during the observation week. This gave a total of 28 observational periods across the week. Each observation period lasted for one hour. During this one hour period areas of potential physical activity, called target areas, were observed and the characteristics of those people using the space and their activity levels were recorded. Where possible, two laps of the park were completed within the one hour observational period.

Survey Results

Daily Usage



In total 805 people were observed using Grove Park. The mean number of daily users was 115 people. As can be seen from Figure 1, the total number of users varied over the course of the week. Greatest usage was observed on Saturday when 166 (21%) people were observed using the park. Friday was the day in which the least people were observed using the park, with 45 people observed (5.6%).

From Figure 2, it can be seen that there is not only variation in park usage across the day of the week, but also in time of day. Evening usage accounted for 54% of total park usage. Morning usage accounted for just 7% of the total. Lunch time and Afternoon usage were similar being 19% and 20% respectively.

Target Area/ Facility usage

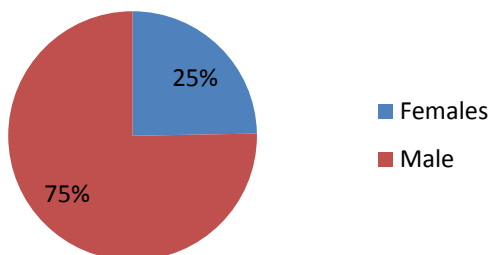
From *Figure 7* it can be seen that the observed users in the park are not distributed evenly across the target areas. 150.5 of the 805 observed users were concentrated on one pitch (T5). T4 which is a path scan seen the second greatest usage. In T4 92 people were observed. The Playground (T8) was also a target area which seen high levels of use with 77.5 people being observed. A number of target areas seen less than expected use. For example T12 and T13 had only 8.5 and 15 people observed on them across the whole of the survey week.

When common facilities are aggregated together it can be seen that 52% of observed park usage is on the 8 playing pitches. 29% of observed users are on the paths which circulate

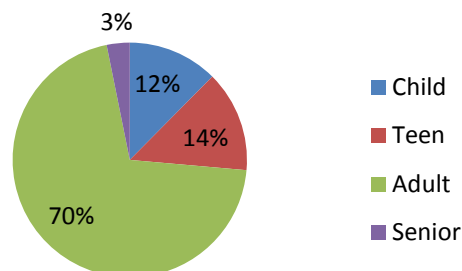
the park. The outdoor gym and open space were observed to be used by 6% of users. The dog enclosure had the least activity with 3% of observed users.

User Characteristics

**% User Gender
(Figure 3)**



**% User Age Group
(Figure 4)**

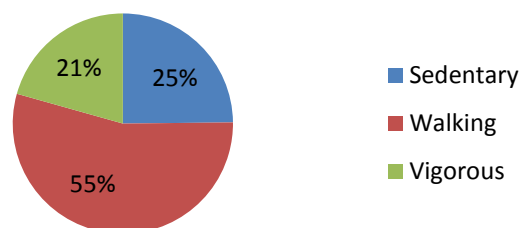


From Figure 3, it is evident that 75% of observed users in Grove Park were male with the remaining 25% female. The largest user group (Figure 4) of the park were adults who accounted for 70% of the total observations. The smallest user group were seniors who totalled 3% of park usage. The number of children and teens were similar accounting for 12% and 14% respectively.

User Physical Activity Levels

From Figure 5 it can be seen that the largest observed activity level was walking which accounted for 55% of total activity. Sedentary activity which includes sitting, standing and lying down accounted for 25% of all observed activity while 21% of activity was observed to be vigorous.

**% Users Activity Levels
(Figure 5)**



Dog Control

It can be seen from Figure 6 that over the course of the survey week 139 dogs were observed in Grove Park. 62% of these were off lead while 38% were on their lead.

(Figure 6)

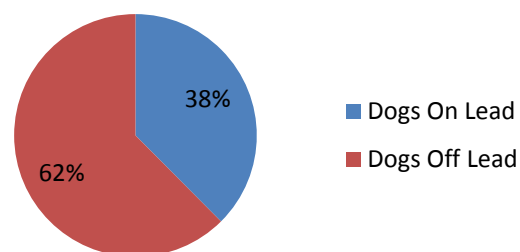


Figure 8 shows the distribution of dogs observed in Grove Park. The greatest numbers of dogs were observed at T4 where 47 were recorded. 26 dogs were observed at T1 (front gate) upon entering the park. 17 dogs were observed in the new dog enclosure (T11). Small numbers of dogs were observed on the football pitches. No dogs were observed in the children’s playground.

Cleanliness

Incidents of Litter and Dog Fouling were recorded as part of the Target Area condition boxes completed at the outset of each observation period. Both of these were recorded on a 0-4 scale where 0 is no mess, 4 is heavy mess. The score was totalled over the course of the week giving a minimum of 0 and a maximum of 1680, 0 being 100% clean for the duration of all the observations, 1680 being heavily fouled for the duration of all observations. During the observations the Park was 97% clean in terms of litter. With respect to Dog Foul, Grove Park was 98% clean.

Issues

As with most intensive observational surveys there were some errors in recording. In some cases check boxes were missed when observing the condition of the target area. However, in a few cases if a second lap was conducted the check boxes were subsequently completed as the likelihood of the condition of a target area changing significantly in 30 minutes was remote. In some cases either the age profile or the physical activity level were not recorded. As a result these were omitted from the analysis. The main cause of this appears to be rapidly changing user numbers in the playground area (Section B, T8) of the park.

The SOPARC methodology suggests that where possible, two sweeps of each target area should be completed in one observational period. At Grove due to the size of the park itself, two wardens were needed to cover the entire park twice in one hour. However, due to the number of available staff, the morning and lunchtime observational periods were staffed by one warden only. This resulted in one sweep only being conducted for these periods for the whole week. Staffing patterns also meant that the observations on Friday, Saturday and Sunday were only undertaken by one warden resulting in only one sweep on these days.

In general, the Wardens reported that the observations took place unhindered and to a successful level. However, it was reported that on Day 3 (Wednesday) that the evening surveys had to be abandoned after one lap following discussions and agreement with Council Officers due to inclement weather conditions.

Figure 7

Weekly Total of No. People in Target Areas - Grove Park



Figure 8

Weekly Total of No. Dogs in Target Areas - Grove Park

