

Appendix 2: Grove Playing Fields Dog Enclosure user survey analysis report.

Introduction

For a period of 6 months (June – December 2013) a pilot was undertaken in Grove Playing Fields in north Belfast to test an innovative intervention to encourage improvements to dog usage, control and management in our parks. A large fenced dog enclosure was built for all dogs to use off-lead under the supervision of their owners. The pilot has now come to an end and this report aims to outline the findings generated from two robust methodologies namely; a survey observation technique called a System for observing play and recreation in communities (SOPARC) and a user survey conducted by the park wardens which gathered both quantitative usage data and qualitative feedback to assist in improving and evaluating the pilot and any future interventions.

Method 1: Survey observation technique (SOPARC)

It is evident from Table 1 that over a 7 month period an estimated 4724.5 dogs used Grove Playing Fields. Of this total, an estimated 399.5 used the dog enclosure. The estimated total number of people who used the park is 22594.5 and of this total 518 used the dog enclosure.

Table 1: Estimated total dog and people usage.

Parameter	1 week Observation Summer (July 2013)	3 Month Estimated Total (June – Aug 2013)	1 week Observation Winter (Sept 2013)	4 Month Estimated Total (Sept – Dec 2013)	7 Month Estimated Total
<i>Total dogs using grove playing fields</i>	138.5	1800.5	172	2924	4724.5
<i>Total dogs using the enclosure</i>	17	221	10.5	178.5	399.5
<i>Total people using grove playing fields</i>	805	10465	713.5	12129.5	22594.5
<i>Total people using the enclosure</i>	23.5	305.5	12.5	212.5	518

Method 2: User survey

In total 92 questionnaires were completed face to face with dog owners throughout the pilot (June – December 2014). The headline statistics are outlined on Table 2 on the following page.

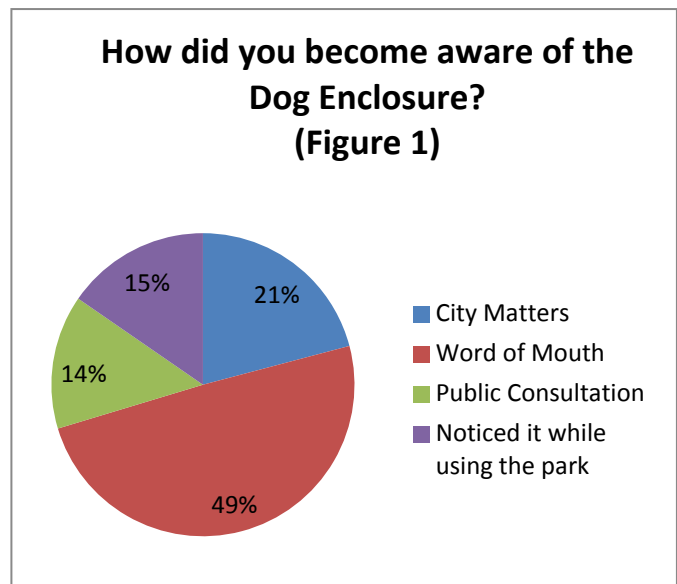
Table 2: Headline statistics

*Figures subject to rounding

Awareness	City Matters (21%)	Word of Mouth (49%)	Public Consultation (14%)	Noticed while using Park (15%)	Other (1%)
User Experience	Positive (51%)		Indifferent (7%)		Negative (43%)
Correct Location	Yes (62%)			No (38%)	
Suggested Improvements	Design (34%)	Infrastructure (56%)	None (4%)	Remove (4%)	Don't Know (1%)

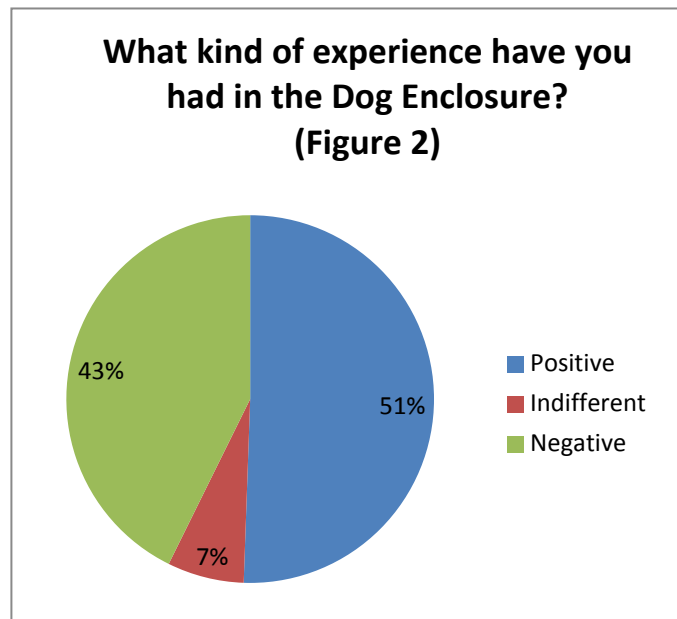
Enclosure awareness

Dog owners were asked about how they knew about the dog enclosure. Figure 1 shows the responses to this question. The most popular answer with 49% of responses was by Word of Mouth. 21% of dog owners had heard about it though the City Matters magazine. Public Consultation accounted for 14% and 15% noticed the enclosure while using the park.



User experience

This question was open ended, therefore the answers were classified into categories which included Positive, Indifferent and Negative. From Figure 2 it can be seen that 51% of users had a positive experience in the dog enclosure. However 43% expressed a degree of dissatisfaction with their experience. The remaining 7% were indifferent to their experience in the enclosure. When given the chance to elaborate, positive responses were generally limited to short statements such as 'good' or 'no problem'. However if the user had an overall negative experience they often described features or situations which led them to feel this way. Typically negative experiences focused around the use of the enclosure between larger and small dogs. Many of the users who reported a bad experience felt intimidated by the larger dogs and were put off by their presence.

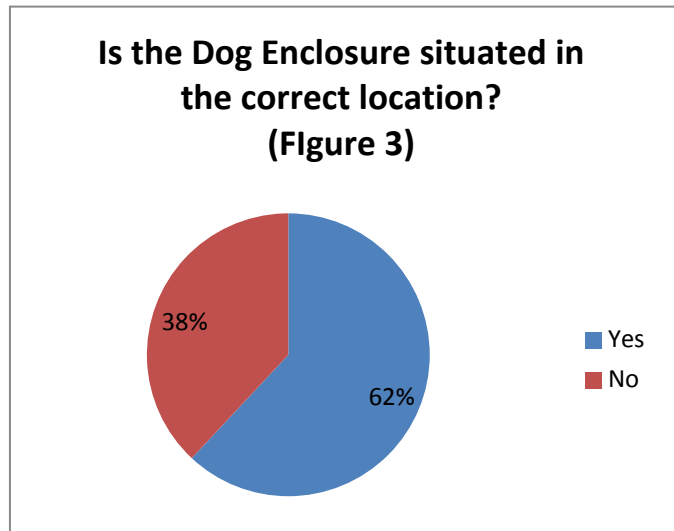


Location of the enclosure

Much of the park open space is already being utilised therefore the choice of location was limited. Users were given the opportunity to comment on the location of the dog enclosure. However the response to this question and the subsequent opportunity to elaborate, gave some insight as to the placement of the enclosure as well as pertinent points to be considered in future designs.

Figure 3 highlights that the majority of users surveyed (62%) thought that the enclosure was situated in the correct location. However 38% people thought that it was not. When asked to explain

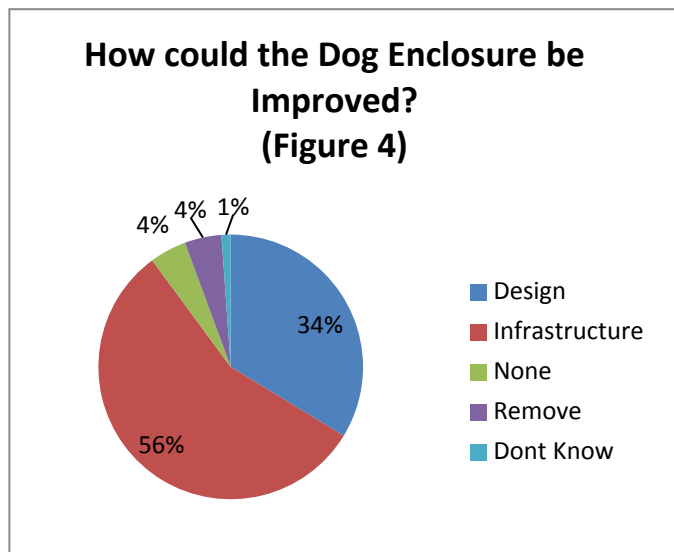
why they felt the dog enclosure was in the wrong location, 53% of the comments relate to the ground underfoot. Many commented that the ground was soft and poorly drained. Other comments include the need for a more open location while others outlined that the enclosure was too small.



Improving the enclosure

Dog owners were asked to comment on how the enclosure could be improved. A number of common themes were identified and thus responses were collated into 4 categories. Figure 4 shows that 56% of improvements related to the infrastructure within the enclosure. A large number of these infrastructure related responses focused on the need for more and better paths within the enclosure as the ground was wet and muddy. A number of dog owners also commented upon the need for better seating. Comments relating to the overall design of the enclosure account for 34%. The design related issues

identified focused on the need for increasing the size of the enclosure as well as the low height of the fencing which allowed larger dogs to escape. A number of respondents suggested that larger/smaller dogs should be segregated. 4% of comments received suggested that no improvements were needed or could be made. 1% suggested that they didn't know how to improve the enclosure. 4% of responses said that dog enclosure should be removed completely.



Summary

Dog walking is a popular activity in Grove Playing Fields and appears to be an emotive issue to those groups of users. Over the 7 month pilot an estimated 4724.5 dogs used Grove Playing Fields. Of this total, an estimated 399.5 used the dog enclosure. The estimated total number of people who used the park is 22594.5 and of this total 518 used the dog enclosure.

Within this user group there also seems to be two sub-groups i.e. those with large dogs and those with smaller dogs. In general most users accept that the current location is the correct one, however drainage appears to be an issue. Most users found out about the dog enclosure through word of mouth though the City Matters magazine and public consultations appear to have also been effective in promoting its existence. The nature of the users experience appears to be tied to the split between those with larger and those with smaller dogs. Many of those who have smaller dogs feel intimidated by the larger animals with some reports of smaller dogs being attacked. Finally, most dog owners suggested improvements to the enclosure. The most frequent suggestion was the improvement of the paths in the dog enclosure along with upgrading the seating provision. Other notable improvements suggested include building obstacles or providing toys for the dogs to engage with.