



Canal & River Trust Rowley Regis Towpath Improvements

Results of user and potential
user research



5th December 2023

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Summary of key benefits resulting from towpath improvements



Increased usage

- 50% of current users have increased their frequency of use. 87% report visiting at least weekly compared with 67% before changes.
- 25% of local residents have increased their frequency of use. 45% report visiting at least weekly compared with 40% before changes.
- Just 38% of towpath users agree that they could have just as easily have gone elsewhere for activities done on towpath. This suggests that for the remaining 62%, the benefits gained from towpath usage would not be easily replaced if it was not available.



Physical health benefits

- 48% of users state that the activity they do on the towpath is of moderate or vigorous intensity and 51% agree that the activities they did made them feel out of breath. These levels are sufficient to provide physical health benefits.
- 68% of users are motivated to use the towpath by physical health reasons.
- 75% of users and 29% of local residents stated that the physical health benefits they feel they get from the towpath have increased since it re-opened.



Wellbeing benefits

- 55% of users are motivated to use the towpath by wellbeing reasons, most commonly to find peace and quiet (48%) and/or to relax and unwind (43%).
- 78% of users strongly agreed that they felt cheerful and in good spirits after visiting the towpath and 80% felt calm and relaxed.
- 75% of users and 34% of local residents stated that the wellbeing benefits they feel they get from towpath have increased since it re-opened.



Nature connection benefits

- 38% of users are motivated to use the towpath by the desire to enjoy scenery or wildlife.
- 76% of users strongly agreed that they felt closer to nature after visiting the towpath.
- 55% of users and 24% of local residents stated that the amount they notice nature and wildlife while walking on the towpath has increased since it re-opened.

Summary of key benefits resulting from towpath improvements



Education and learning benefits

- 51% of users agreed that they learned something while visiting the towpath



Active travel benefits

- 21% of users are on the towpath to get to or from somewhere.
- 90% of local people agreed that the canals in Rowley Regis provide a good traffic free route through the area.



Social and community benefits

- 20% of users were motivated to use the towpath by social reasons, most often spending time with family or friends (14%)
- 68% of users agreed that they felt closer to their community after visiting the towpath and 64% agreed that they enjoyed spending time with other people
- 59% of local people agreed that the canal in Rowley Regis provides an important connection to the area's history and 55% agreed that the canals are a good place to mix with different people from the local community



Tackling inequality

- The profile of those using the towpath is relatively diverse, especially in terms of age, social grade and ethnicity.
- Groups most likely to have increased their usage of the towpaths include members of black and ethnic minority groups and people with children under 18 in their household.
- However concerns over safety continue to be more of a barrier amongst women than men and people with long term illnesses or disabilities are less likely to use the improved towpaths due to concerns over their abilities.

Introduction



Background and approach

- Canal and River Trust and their partners received funding to make towpath improvements at a number of sites in England including Rowley Regis in Sandwell. Works were completed at Rowley Regis at the end of August 2023
- 56 Degree Insight were commissioned to undertake research to measure the impacts of this major investment with a focus on the social benefits such as increased usage and positive impacts on health, wellbeing, nature connection and community.
- Fieldwork was undertaken during September and October 2023 with a total of 513 towpath users, local residents and other interested stakeholders providing their feedback via a range of survey methods as described on the right.

The research involve three survey elements:

- **Towpath survey** - a programme of face-to-face interviews undertaken by professional interviews at agreed points along the improved towpath sections (see maps on next page). Interviews were undertaken from 15th September to 26th October 2023, scheduled to ensure a representative spread of user types. Over this period a total of 343 interviews were undertaken, providing results accurate to around +/-5% at the 95% levels of confidence.
- **Local residents survey** – a programme of door-to-door interviews undertaken by professional interviews with people living within 1km of the improved sections of towpath (see maps on next page). Interviews were undertaken from mid September to the end of October with sample quotas applied to ensure a representative sample of the local population. A total of 150 interviews were undertaken, providing results accurate to around +/- 8% at the 95% levels of confidence.
- **Online survey** – a shorter online version of the above surveys was promoted on social media (e.g. Facebook pages used by groups interested in canals in the area). 20 responses were obtained using this approach, largely from boaters. While the sample size from this element is too small to be statistically robust it provides a useful perspective into the views of this important user group.

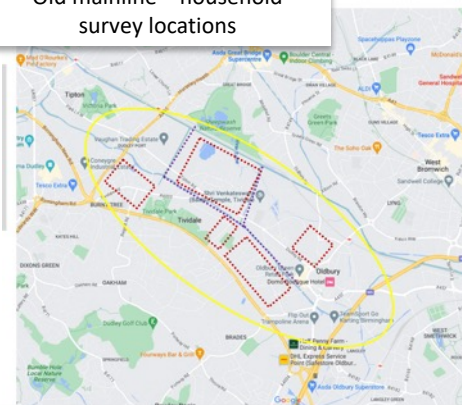


Fieldwork locations

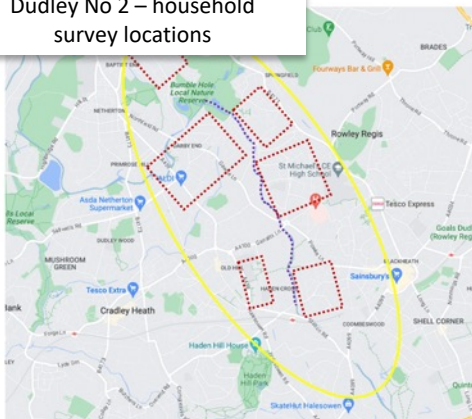
Old mainline – towpath survey locations



Old mainline – household survey locations



Dudley No 2 – household survey locations



Dudley No 2 – towpath survey locations



Towpath user survey



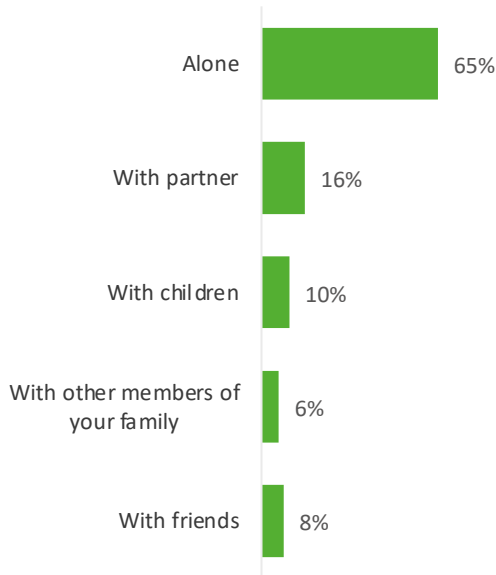
Towpath user profile

Around two-thirds of towpath users were alone (65%) while 16% were with their partner.

Men were more likely to visit alone than women (75% vs 49%) while larger percentages of women visited with their partner, friends or children.

Overall, 17% of users were in black or ethnic minority groups but this varied from 27% amongst those surveyed on the Old Mainline section to 7% at Dudley No.2.

Party composition

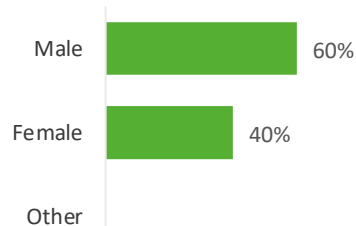


Who are you here with today?

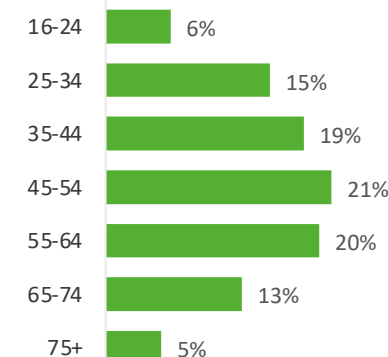
base n = 343

Key demographics

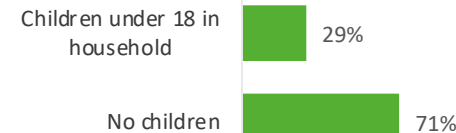
SEX



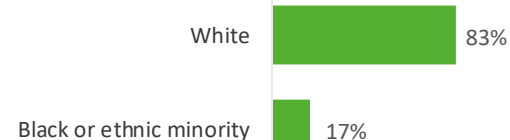
AGE



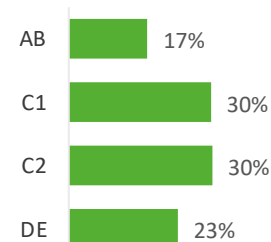
CHILDREN IN HOUSEHOLD



ETHNICITY



SOCIAL GRADE



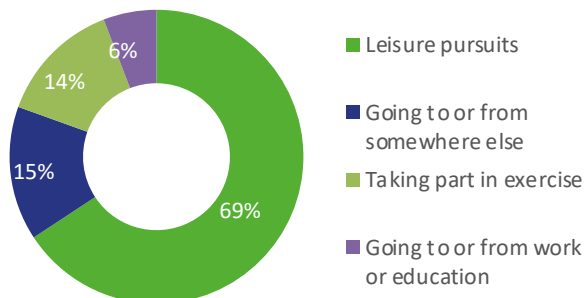
Reasons for using towpath and activities undertaken

While most usage is for leisure purposes (69%), many used the towpath to get to or from somewhere (21% overall).

Unsurprisingly the most common activity was walking, but almost a quarter also took part in wildlife watching (22%).

Those who visited the towpath every day and those visiting Dudley No.2 were more likely to be taking part in dog walking (45% and 39% respectively).

Purpose of trip



Other purposes (1% each):

- Visiting with organised group
- Undertaking volunteer work
- Undertaking paid for work

Which of the following best describes why you are here today?

base n = 343

Activities undertaken on towpath



Other activities:

- Taking a shortcut
- Collecting rubbish
- Feeding ducks
- Walking child to school
- Visiting café
- Guided tour

Which of the following activities have you taken part in today on this canal towpath?

base n = 343

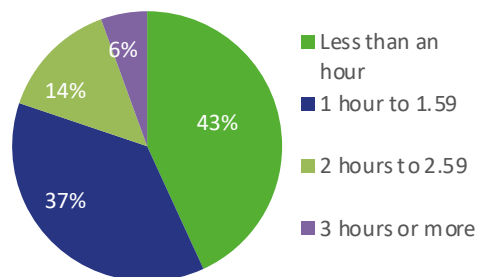
Duration and intensity of activity

While 2 in 5 users spent less than an hour on the towpath, some stated that their visit lasted much longer - over two hours for around 1 in 5.

Those using the towpath to get to or from somewhere were the most likely to spend less than an hour there (61%) while those who were taking a longer walk or cycling were most likely to be visiting for two hours or more (36% and 58% respectively).

Intensity of activity also varied by activity, most likely to be easy for those taking a short walk but vigorous for those cycling or running.

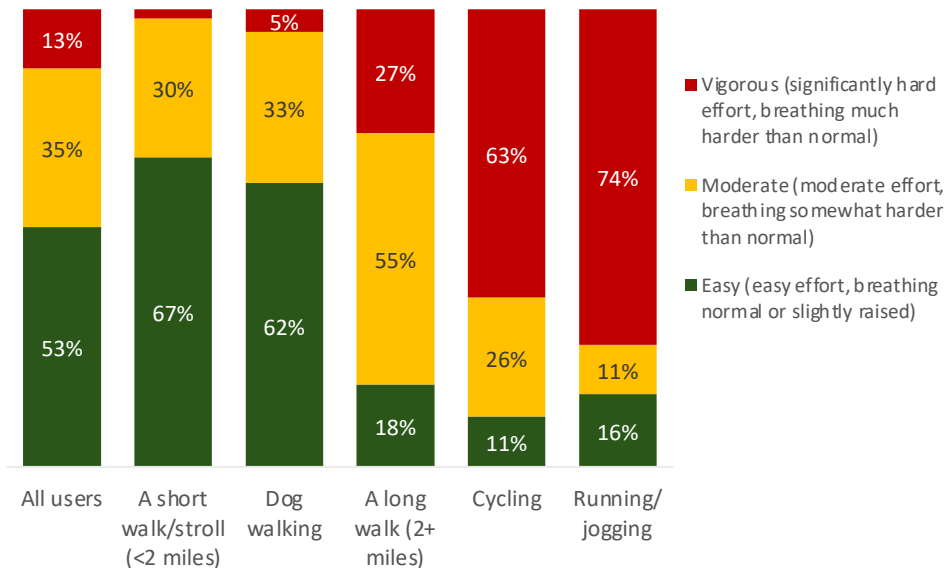
Time spent on towpath



How long will you spend on the canal towpath today?

base n = 343

Intensity of activity



How would you describe the intensity that you are undertaking these activities today?

base n = 324

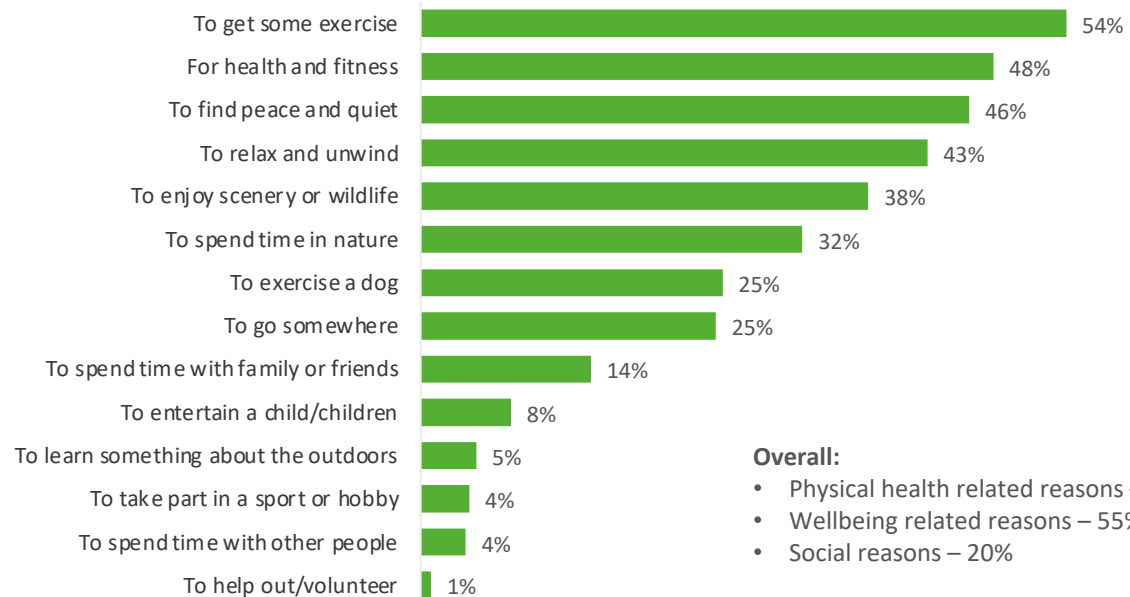
Motivations for using the towpath

The reasons provided for visiting the towpath illustrate the importance of health and wellbeing benefits with the majority seeking to get exercise or more generally visiting for health and fitness and large percentages appreciating the opportunities to relax and unwind and to enjoy scenery and wildlife.

Other motivations included spending time with other people, learning or taking part in a hobby.

Overall, 25% visited the towpath to go somewhere, ranging from 36% of those using the Old Mainline section to 15% at Dudley No.2.

Reasons for visiting the towpath



Overall:

- Physical health related reasons – 68%
- Wellbeing related reasons – 55%
- Social reasons – 20%

Which of the following reasons, if any, best describe why you visited the towpath today?

base n = 343

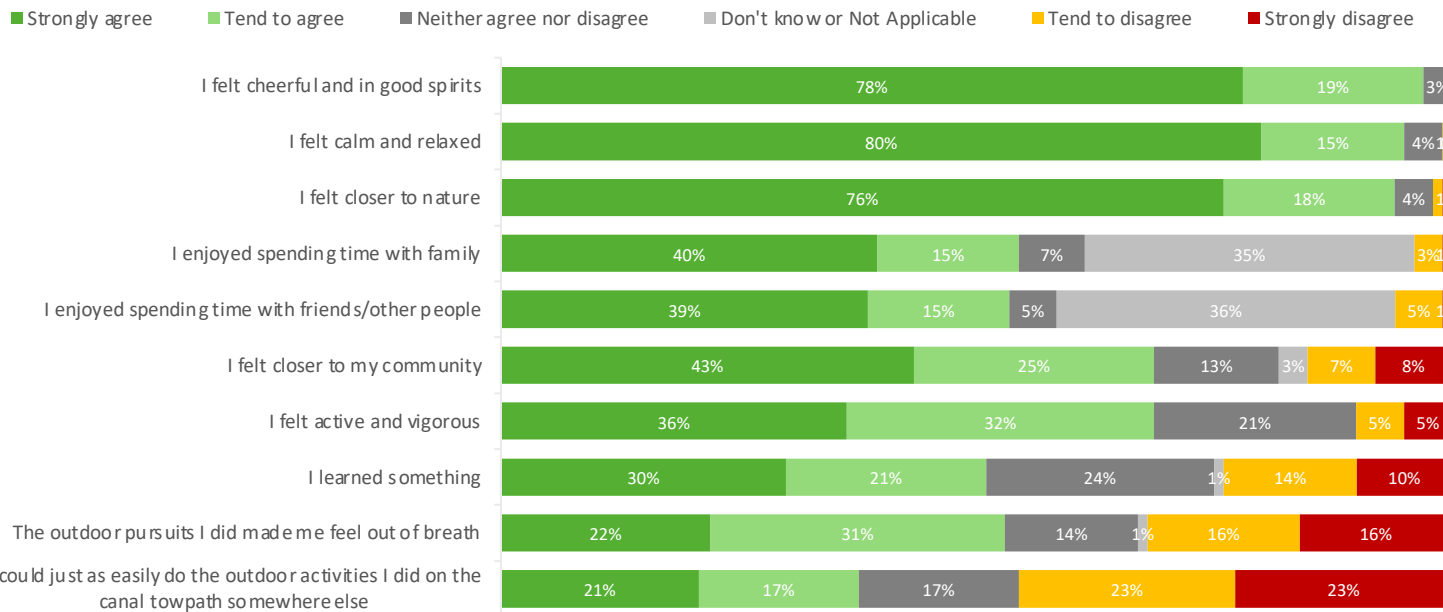
Benefits obtained from using the towpath

Respondents were asked to what extent they agreed or disagreed with a series of statements related to potential positive outcomes from visiting the towpath.

Most notably over three-quarters strongly agreed with the benefits relating to wellbeing included feeling cheerful and in good spirits, feeling calm and relaxed and feeling closer to nature.

Also, less than half (38%) agreed that they 'could just as easily do the outdoor activities I did on the canal towpath somewhere else' – this suggests that for most users the towpath facilitates benefits which they could not otherwise access easily.

Outcomes of time spent on improved towpath



Still thinking about your experiences on the canal towpath today and other recent visits you've taken in the last couple of months, to what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements relating to benefits you may or may not have gained during these visits?
base n = 343

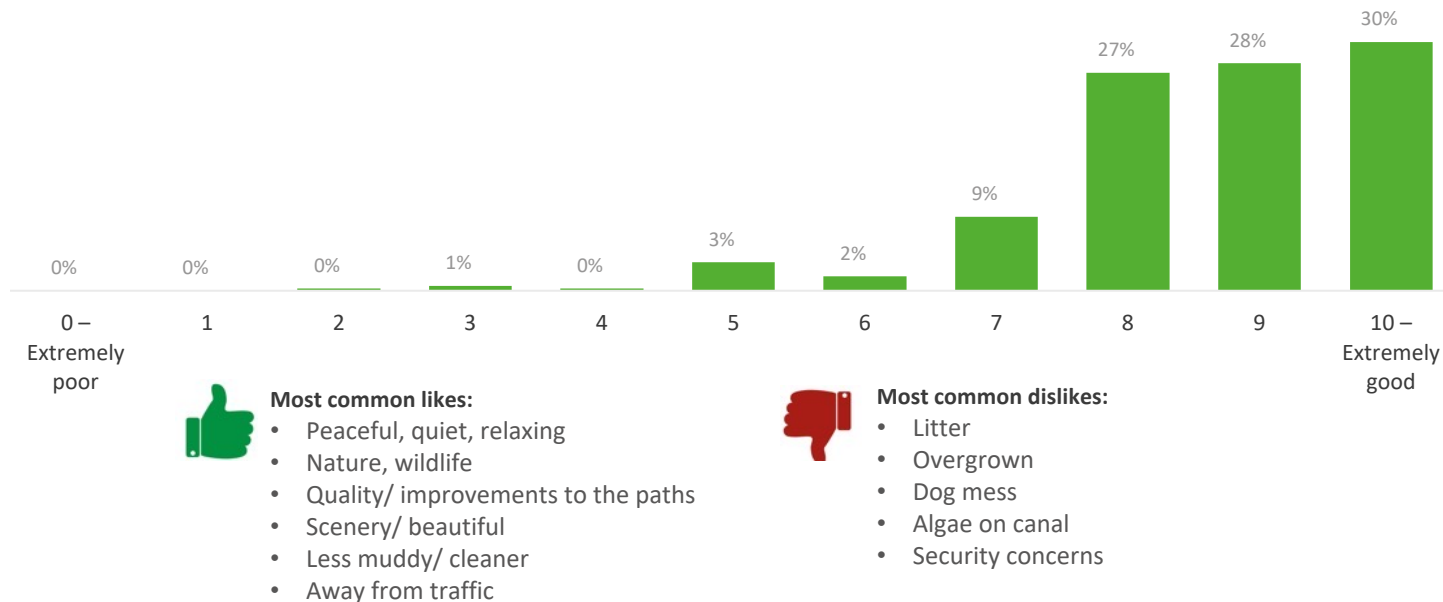
Quality of experience of using improved towpath sections

Asked to rate their experience using the improved towpath sections, the majority (85%) provided a rating of 8, 9 or 10 out of 10.

An average rating of 8.6 was obtained overall but this varied from 8.3 amongst Old Mainline section users to 8.9 amongst those using Dudley No.2.

While aspects relating to peace and quiet, nature and the improved paths were referenced most often as likes, those who mentioned any issues most often referenced litter and some foliage being overgrown.

Overall rating of quality of experience when visiting improved towpath



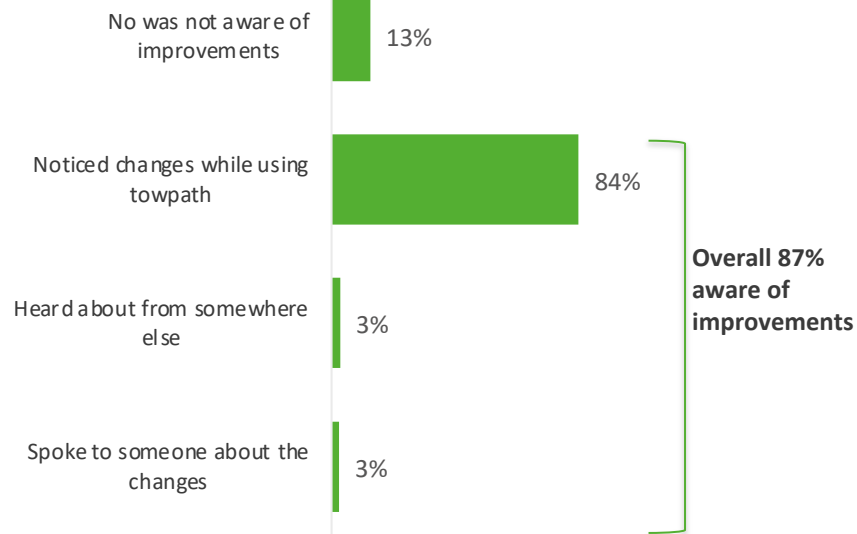
Thinking about your experiences today and on other recent occasions when you've used this towpath (in the last month or two), how would you rate the quality of your experience?
base n = 343

Awareness of towpath improvements

The vast majority of towpath users were aware of the improvements made to the towpaths with the majority noticing these while using the path.

As might be expected, while 98% of those who used the towpath daily had noticed the changes, this percentage was much lower amongst those who used it less than once a week (50%).

Awareness of towpath improvements



Prior to taking part in this interview were you aware of these improvements to this and other local towpaths?

base n = 343

Changes in usage of towpath following improvements

Half of those surveyed on the towpath indicated that their usage had increased since the improvements were made (50%) while none had decreased their usage.

Groups most likely to state that their usage had increased included those in black and ethnic minority groups (63%) and people with children in their household (58%).

Changes in usage of towpath following improvements



Used for first time after improvements were made

5%

Increased a lot

23%

Increased a little

22%

No change

49%

Decreased a little

0%

Decreased a lot

0%

Overall 50% increased usage

To what extent, if any, has the amount that you use the towpath changed since these improvements were made?

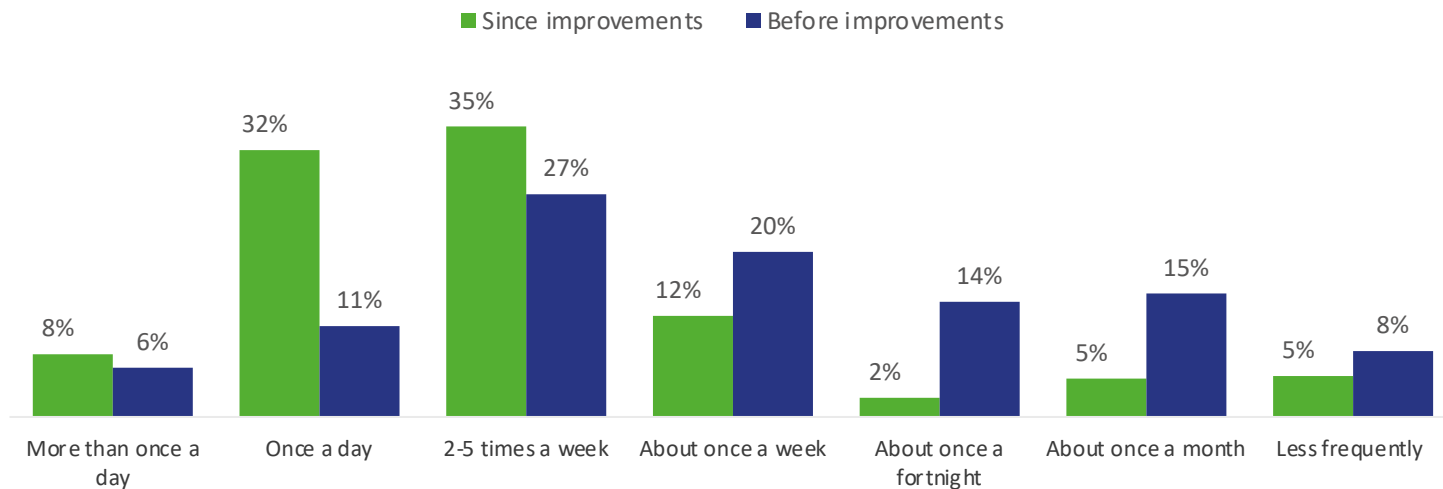
base n = 343

Changing frequency of use of towpath since re-opening

Towpath users were asked to estimate how often they used the towpath before and after improvements were made.

While 64% stated that they used the towpath at least once a week before the path closed for improvements, this increased to 87% since improvements were completed.

Frequency use towpath – before and after improvements



*In the last month or two how often have you tended to use this canal towpath for any purpose?
How often did you tend to visit the canal towpath for any purpose before it closed for improvements?*

base n = 343

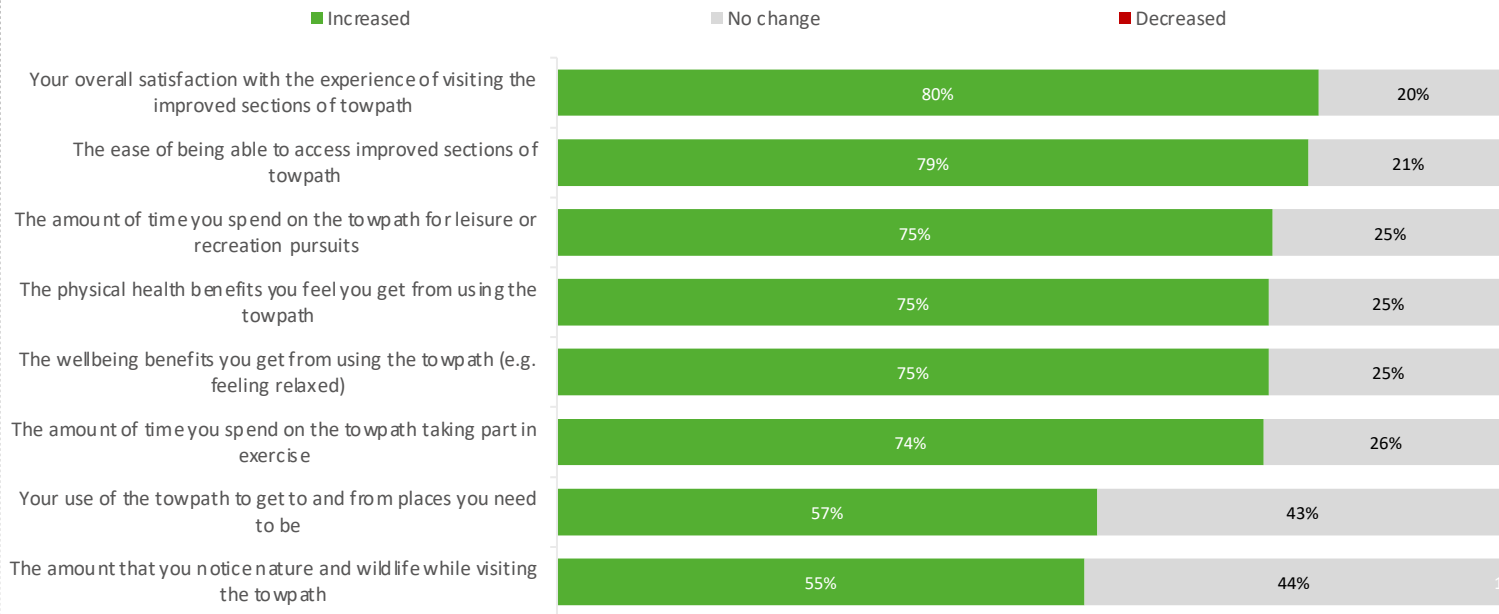
Other benefits noticed by towpath users since improvements were made

Towpath users were also asked to rate to what extent a number of other aspects of their towpath usage had increased or decreased since improvements were made.

Around three quarters or more provided positive feedback on most of the areas, most notably their overall satisfaction, the ease of being able to access the towpath and the amount of time they spent on the towpath for leisure purposes.

All of these areas received the most positive feedback amongst those using the Old Mainline section and amongst those who used the towpath on a daily basis.

Changes in towpath usage/ experience since improvements were made



Thinking about how you use the towpath now compared to before the improvements were made, to what extent have each of the following increased or decreased?

base n = 343

Other feedback from towpath users

A final open ended question invited towpath users to provide further feedback.

While the majority of comments were positive and reflected some of the areas covered in previous sections, some suggestions for improvements or issues were also raised, as listed on the right.

Other comments and feedback on experiences of towpath since improvements

"Everything looks much cleaner and welcoming."

"It's not as muddy. We don't worry about having an accident anymore. It's safer to walk on."

"It's so much easier for say prams or wheelchairs."

"Less muddy and safer with less mess on paths."

"It's a great oasis of calm in a busy area."

"The gravel gets everywhere. It gets stuck in my dog's paws. I slip on it."

"The gravel has made it easier for some people but it's not good for wheelchairs."

"They need some benches along the route for people. The improvements are fantastic and have enticed me to come here more often."

"We like as it's a shortcut and good for exercise."

"The pathways are much better but they have left a lot of brambles which is a trip hazard."

"The cafe staff are a marvel at Bumblehole."

"Some idiots using motorcycles on the towpath."

"I don't like the new gravel, it's really unlevel. I preferred the tarmac."

Positives mentioned:

- Less muddy/ fewer puddles
- Easier/ nicer to walk on
- Beautiful scenery
- Cleaner
- Can use in all weather/ all year round
- Good for cycling
- Good for pushchairs
- Like the cafe

Negatives/ potential improvements mentioned:

- Dislike gravel (prefer tarmac/ hard to walk on)
- Need to extend improvements further
- Overgrown/ foliage needs cut back
- Cyclists are nuisance
- Motorbikes are dangerous
- Too much litter
- Bridge needs repairing
- Add benches

Thinking about how you use the towpath now compared to before the improvements were made, to what extent have each of the following increased or decreased?

base n = 343

Local residents survey

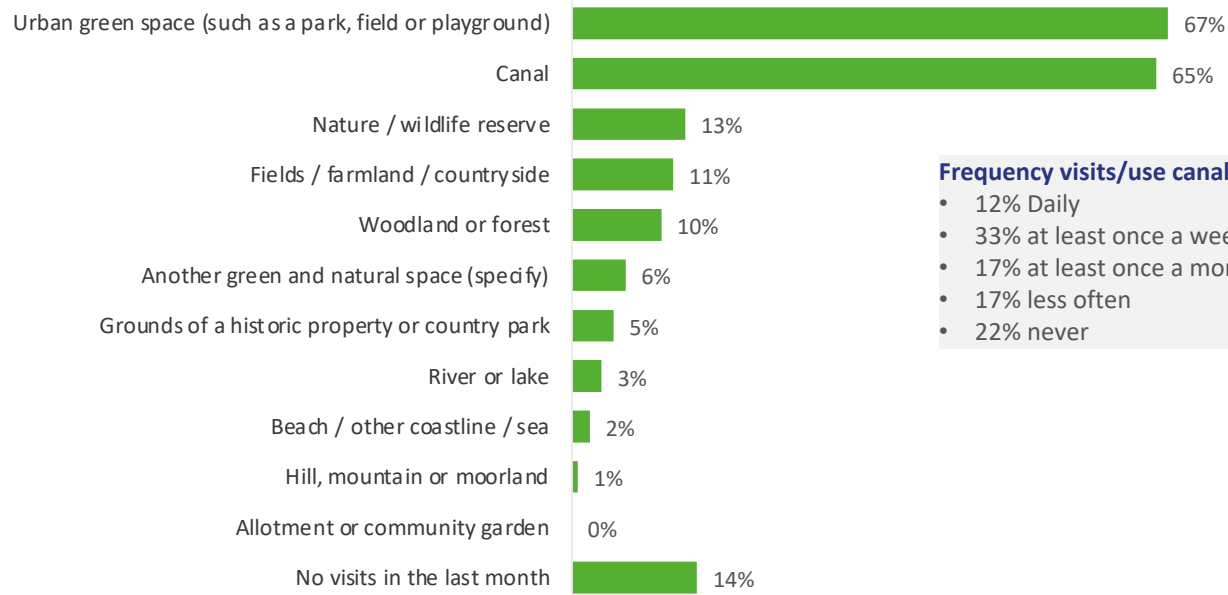


Green and natural spaces visited by local residents

Two-thirds of residents of the areas within 1km of the improved towpath sections had visited a canal at least once during the previous month (65%), narrowly the second most commonly visited type of greenspace after urban spaces such as parks.

Also 45% stated that they typically visited canals in their local area daily or at least once a week.

Green and natural spaces visited during last month



Frequency visits/use canals in local area:

- 12% Daily
- 33% at least once a week
- 17% at least once a month
- 17% less often
- 22% never

Which of the following type(s) of green and natural spaces have you visited during the last month?

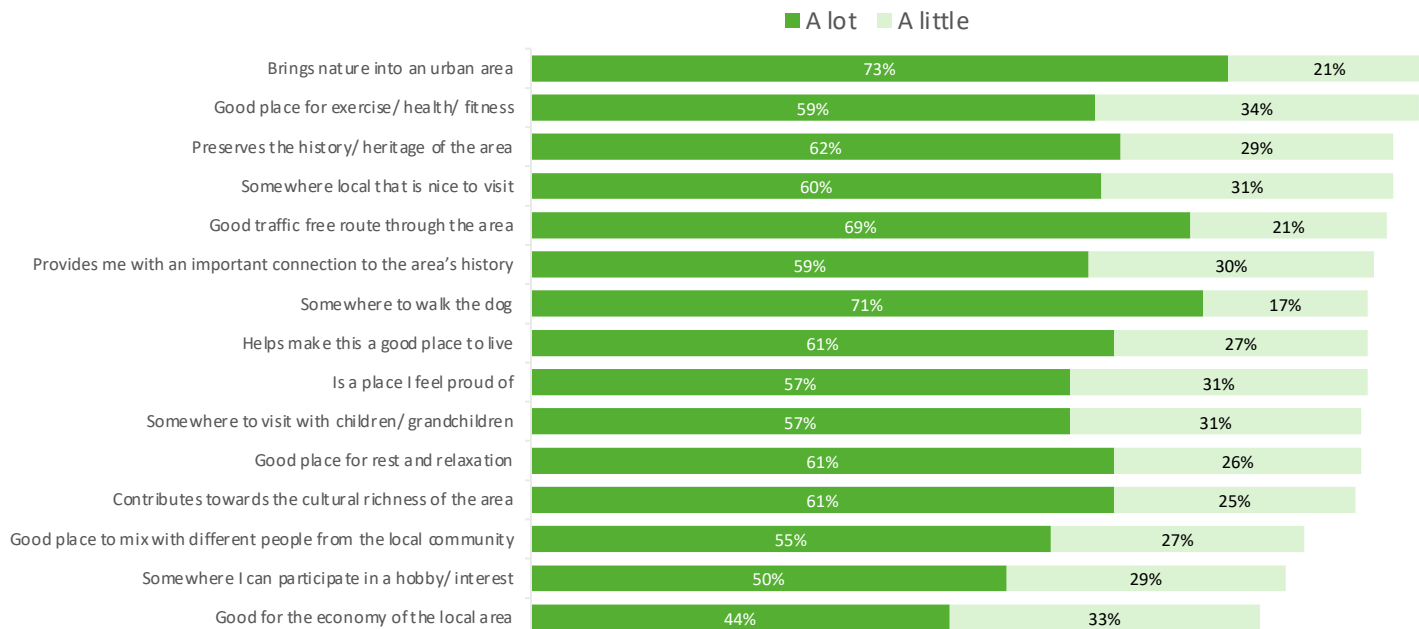
base n = 150

Perceived benefits of canals amongst local residents

Local residents were asked whether they felt that canals in their area brought a number of potential benefits.

The majority agreed that their local canals brought all of the benefits listed to some extent, most notably the largest percentages felt that the canal nature into an urban area, canals were good places for exercise, preserved history, provided somewhere nice to visit and were good traffic free routes.

Benefits of canals in Rowley Regis area



To what extent, if at all, do you think each of these are benefits of the canals which are in Rowley Regis?

base n = 150

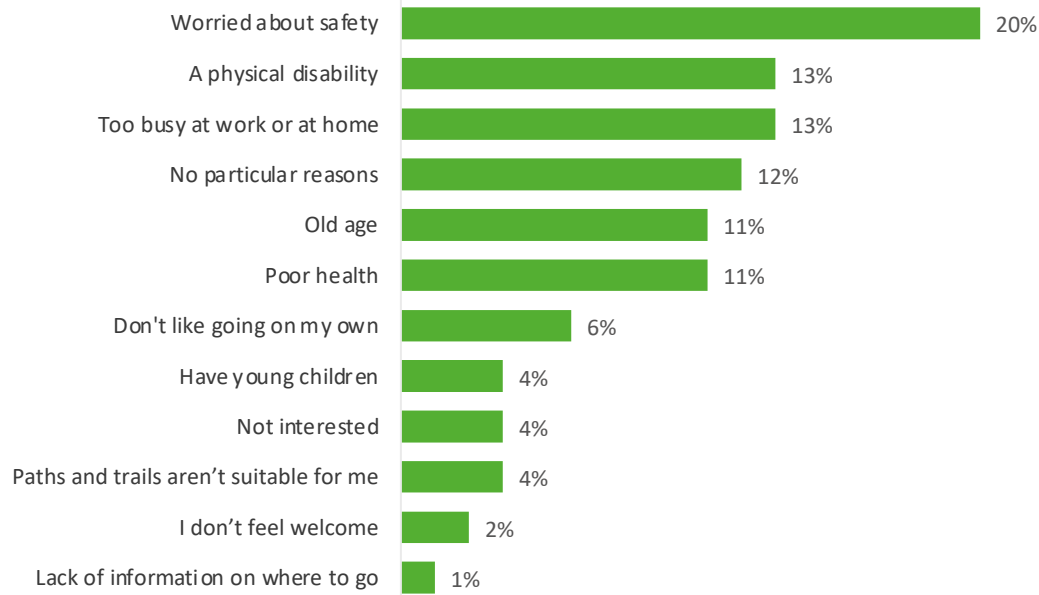
Barriers to using local canals more often

Local residents who used their local canals less than once a week were asked to indicate why they did not use them more often.

The most common barrier related to worries over safety, referenced by 20%. Notably this issue was mentioned by 30% of women compared with 8% of men.

A physical disability was given as the reason by 13% overall, increasing to 22% of those aged 55+ and 21% in the less affluent C2DE social grades.

Reasons for not using canals and canal towpaths in local area more often



Which of the following reasons, if any, describe why you don't use the canals and canal towpaths in your local area more often?

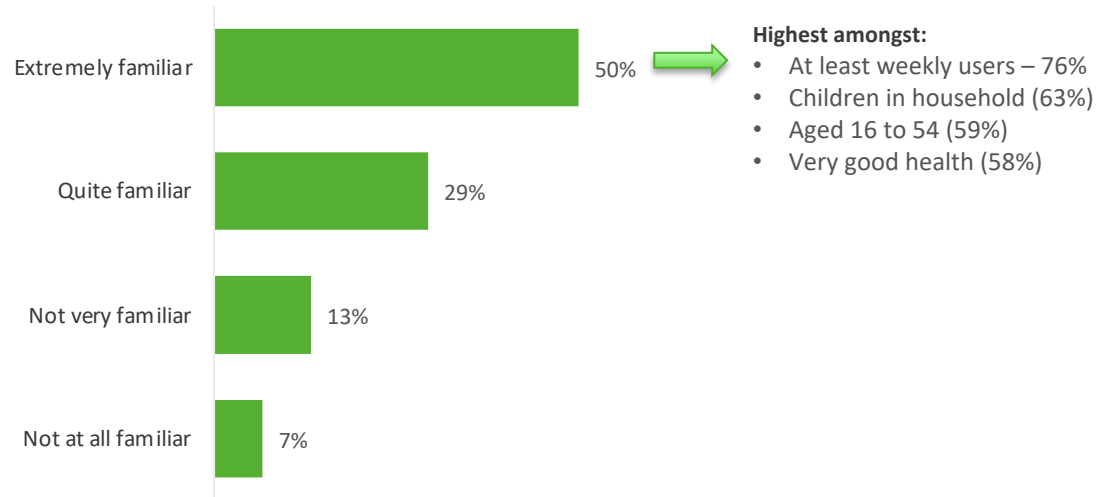
base n = 84 (respondents who visited canals less than once a week)

Familiarity with canals in local area

Half of local residents (50%) stated that they were 'extremely familiar' with their local canals while a further 29% were 'quite familiar'.

There are a number of canals in Rowley Regis and the surrounding areas. These are used for a range of purposes including dog walking, leisure, exercise and by people getting from A to B.

How familiar are you with the canals in your local area?



base n = 150

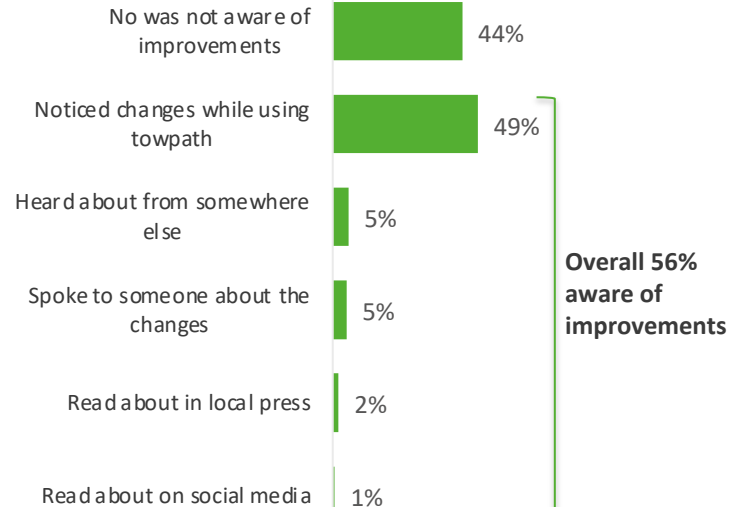
Awareness of towpath improvements

Just over half (56%) of local residents were aware of the improvements made to their local towpaths with the vast majority becoming aware when using the paths.

Residents most likely to be aware of the improvements included:

- ABC1 social grades (63% vs 51% of C2DEs)
- People with no long term illness or disabilities (61% vs 34% with any).
- People aged 35-54 (65% vs 54% aged 16-34 and 51% aged 55+).

Awareness of towpath improvements



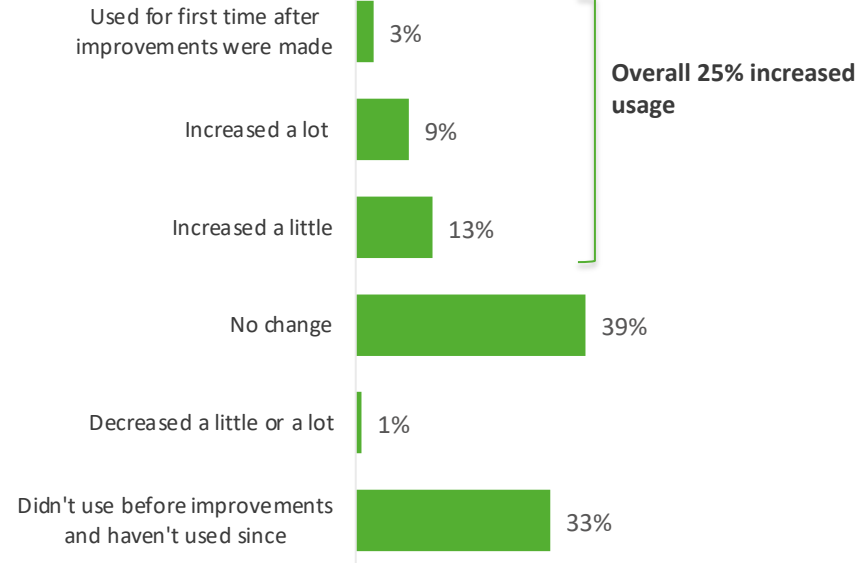
Earlier this year the Canal and River Trust obtained funding to make improvements to 7km of canal towpath in Rowley Regis, including sections close to you live as shown in the map. This work has included improvements to the towpath surface and access points onto the canal from surrounding areas. The work was completed a few weeks ago Prior to taking part in this interview were you aware of these improvements to this and other local towpaths? base n = 150

Changes in usage of towpaths following improvements

A quarter of local residents (25%) stated that they had used the towpaths for the first time or increased how often they used them since they re-opened.

Groups most likely to state that this was the case included ABC1s (30%) and those people who tended to visit outdoor green spaces 2 to 5 times per week.

Changes in usage of towpath following improvements



"To what extent, if any, has the amount that you use the towpath changed since these improvements were made?"

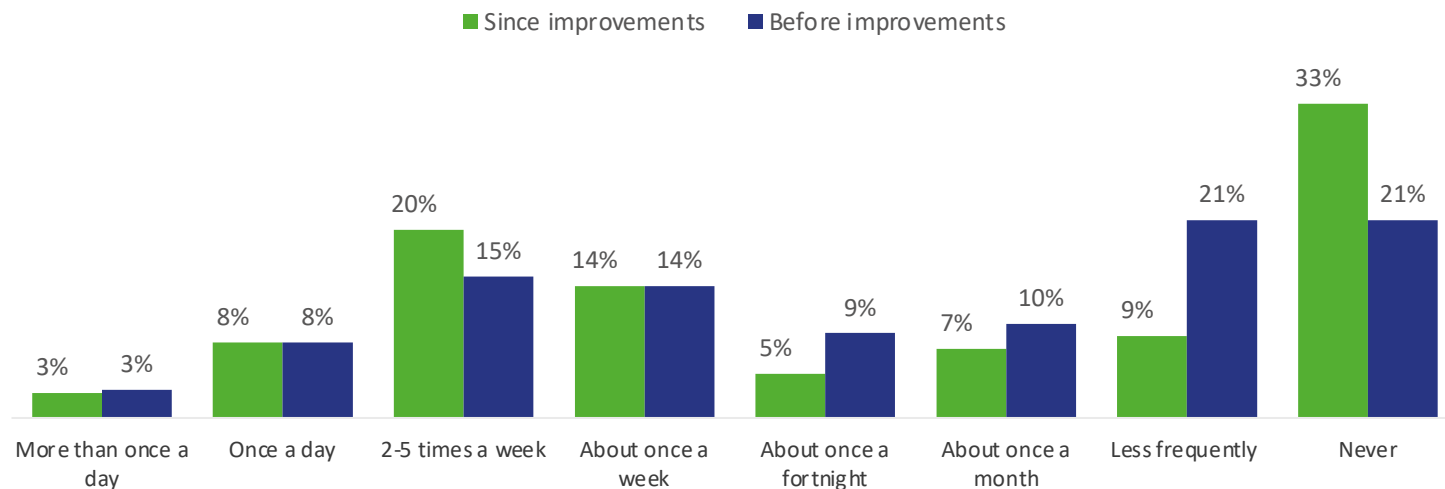
base n = 150

Frequency of towpath use before and after improvements

Before the towpath closed for improvements 40% of local residents normally visited the towpath at least once a week but this increased to 45% since reopening.

Overall two in three (67%) had visited at least once since the improved towpaths had re-opened.

Frequency use towpath – before and after improvements



How often, if ever did you tend to visit the canal towpath for any purpose in the year before it closed for improvements?
And how often, if at all, have you visited either of the improved sections of towpath for any purposes since they re-opened?

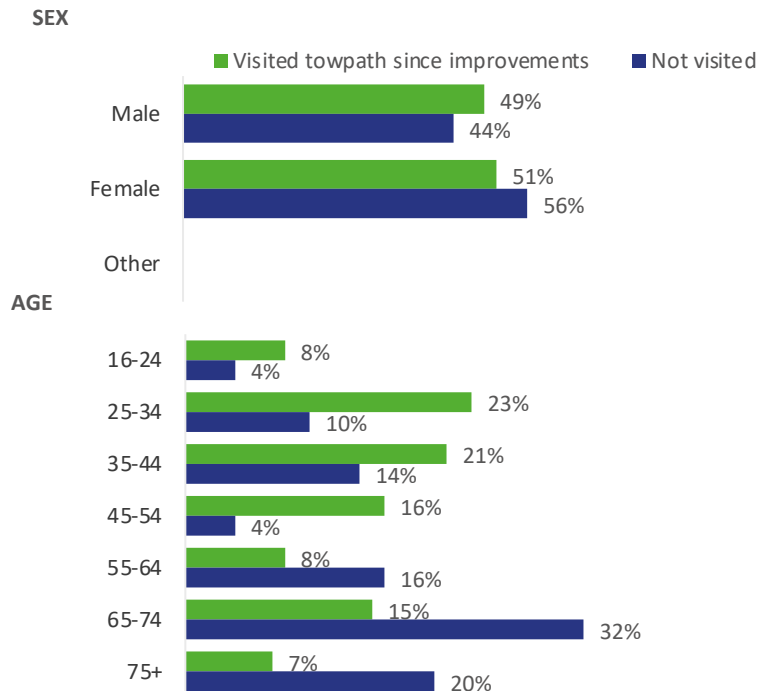
base n = 150

Comparing the profile of users and non users

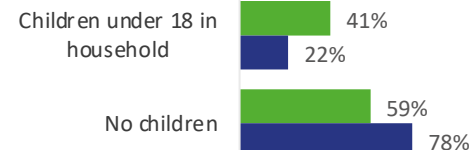
Comparing the demographics of those local residents who had used the towpath at least once since it re-opened with those who had not used it, illustrates a higher percentage of the following groups within the users:

- Men
- People aged under 55
- People with children in their household
- Black and ethnic minorities
- C1s and C2s.

Key demographics – comparing those using and not using canal



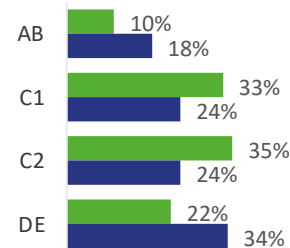
CHILDREN IN HOUSEHOLD



ETHNICITY



SOCIAL GRADE

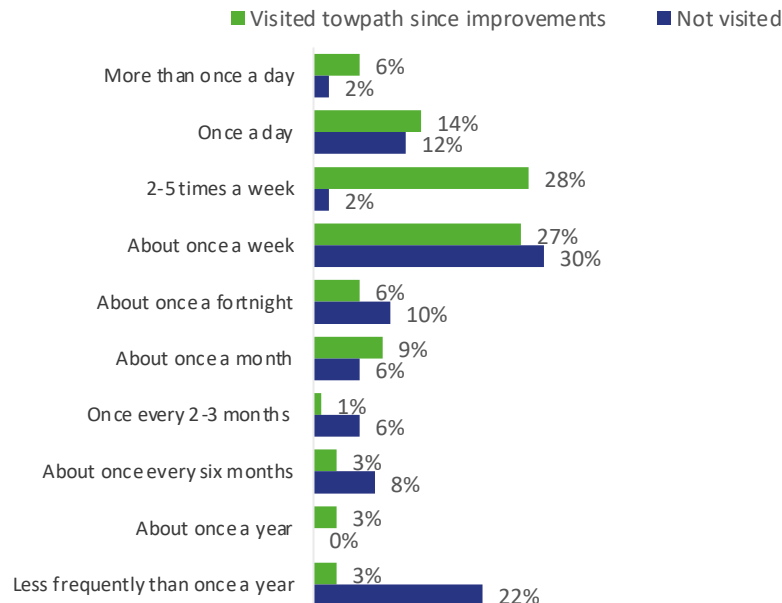


Comparing the profile of users and non users

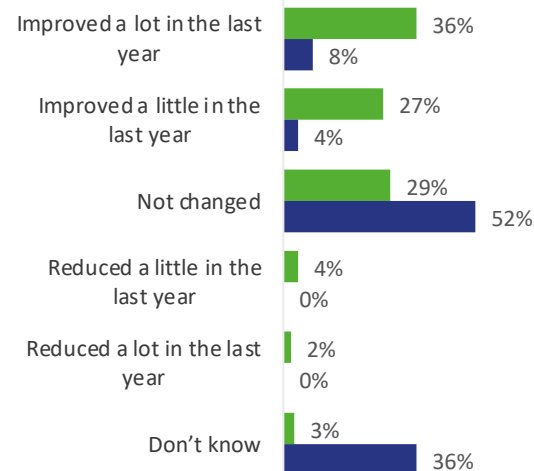
Local residents who had used the towpath at least once since it re-opened were also more likely than those who had not used it to visit the outdoors several times a week and to believe that the quality of the green and natural spaces in their local area had improved in the last year.

Frequency of outdoor visits and views on local green spaces – comparing those using and not using canal

FREQUENCY SPEND TIME OUTDOORS IN GREEN AND NATURAL SPACES



PERCEIVED CHANGES TO LOCAL GREEN AND NATURAL SPACES



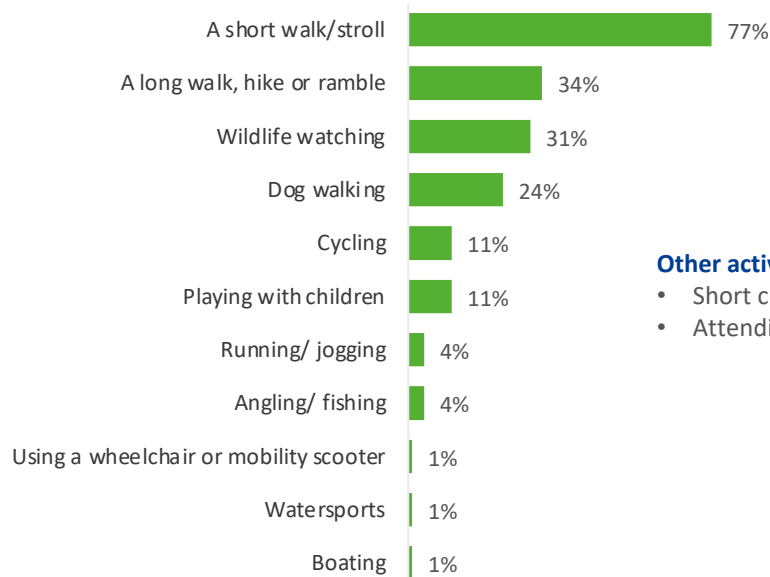
Activities undertaken when using the towpath

Local residents who had used the towpath at least once were asked to specify the activities they had undertaken.

By far the largest percentage had taken a short walk (77%) while almost a third had watched wildlife (31%) and 1 in 10 had cycled (11%).

Men were more likely to have cycled (16% vs 6% of women) while women were more likely to have played with children (20% vs 2% of men).

Activities undertaken on towpath since it re-opened



Other activities:

- Short cut
- Attending annual boat show

Which of the following activities have you taken part in on the canal since the towpath re-opened?

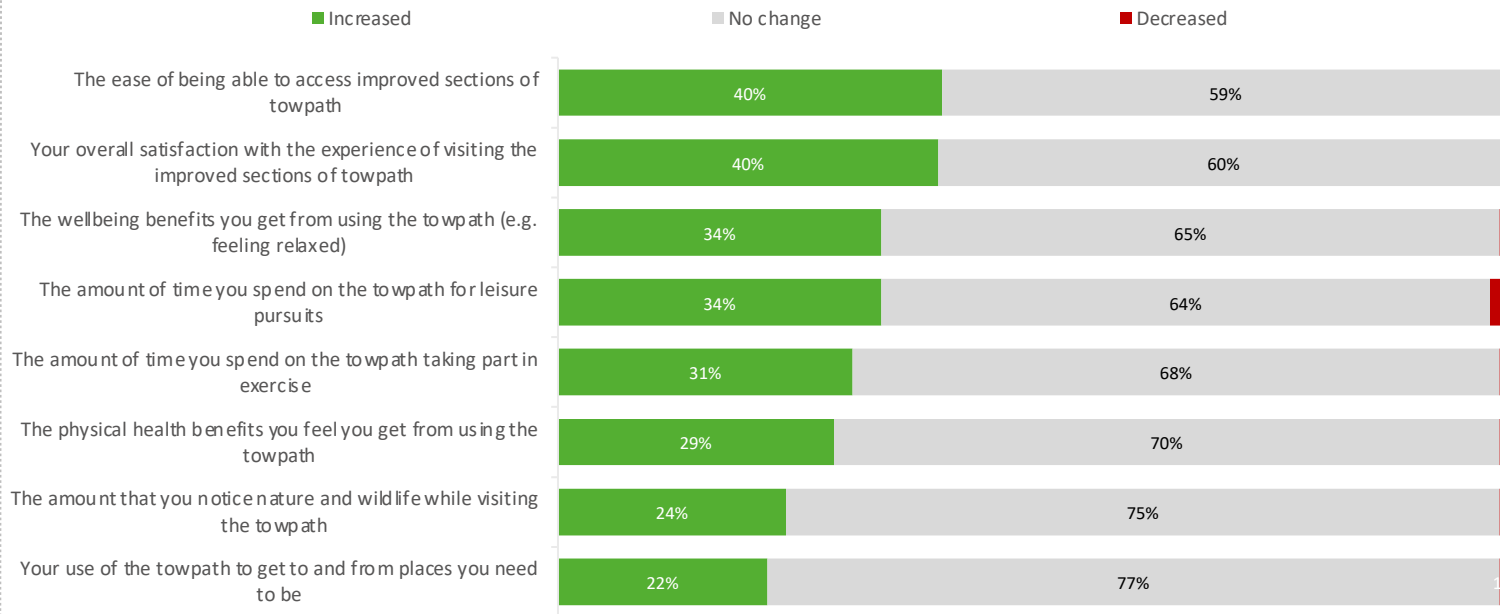
base n = 100 (those using the canal towpath since it re-opened)

Other benefits noticed by locals since improvements were made

Local residents were also asked to rate to what extent a number of other aspects of their towpath usage had increased or decreased since improvements were made.

While in all of the areas the majority stated that there had been 'no change', a third or more reported increases in their ease of access to the towpath, their overall satisfaction using the towpath, the wellbeing benefits they get from using the towpath and the amount of time they spend on the towpath for leisure.

Changes in towpath usage/ experience since improvements were made



Thinking about how you use the towpath now compared to before the improvements were made, to what extent have each of the following increased or decreased?

base n = 150

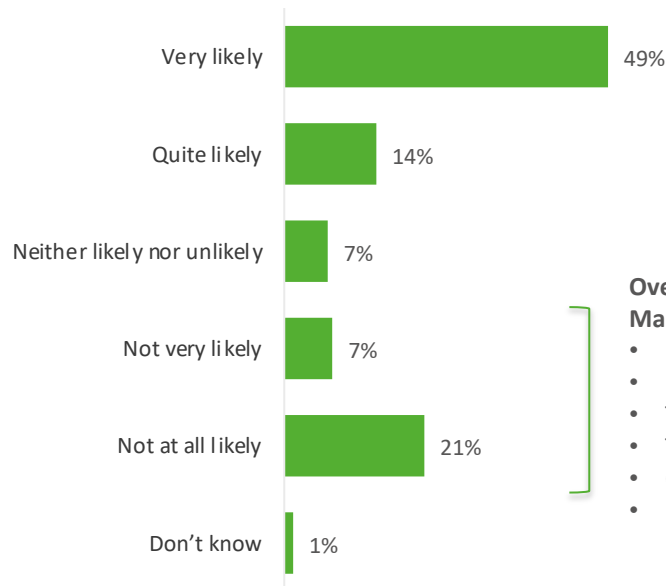
Likelihood of using improved towpath sections in the future

Around half of local residents (49%) stated that they were 'very likely' to use the improved towpath in the next month or two while a further 14% were quite likely to do so.

However, 28% were either not very or not at all likely to use the towpath during this period.

Groups most likely to stated that this was the case included those aged 65+ (43%), those who reported their health status as bad or very bad (71%) and those with a long term illness or disability (66%). Correspondingly the most common barriers to future use were factors relating to poor health or limited mobility.

Likelihood of using improved towpath sections in next month or two



Overall 28% are unlikely Main barriers mentioned:

- Poor health/mobility – 50%
- Do not feel comfortable/ safe – 23%
- Too busy – 17%
- Too overgrown – 17%
- Old age – 7%
- Boring – 5%

How likely are you to visit the improved sections of towpath during the next month or two?

base n = 150

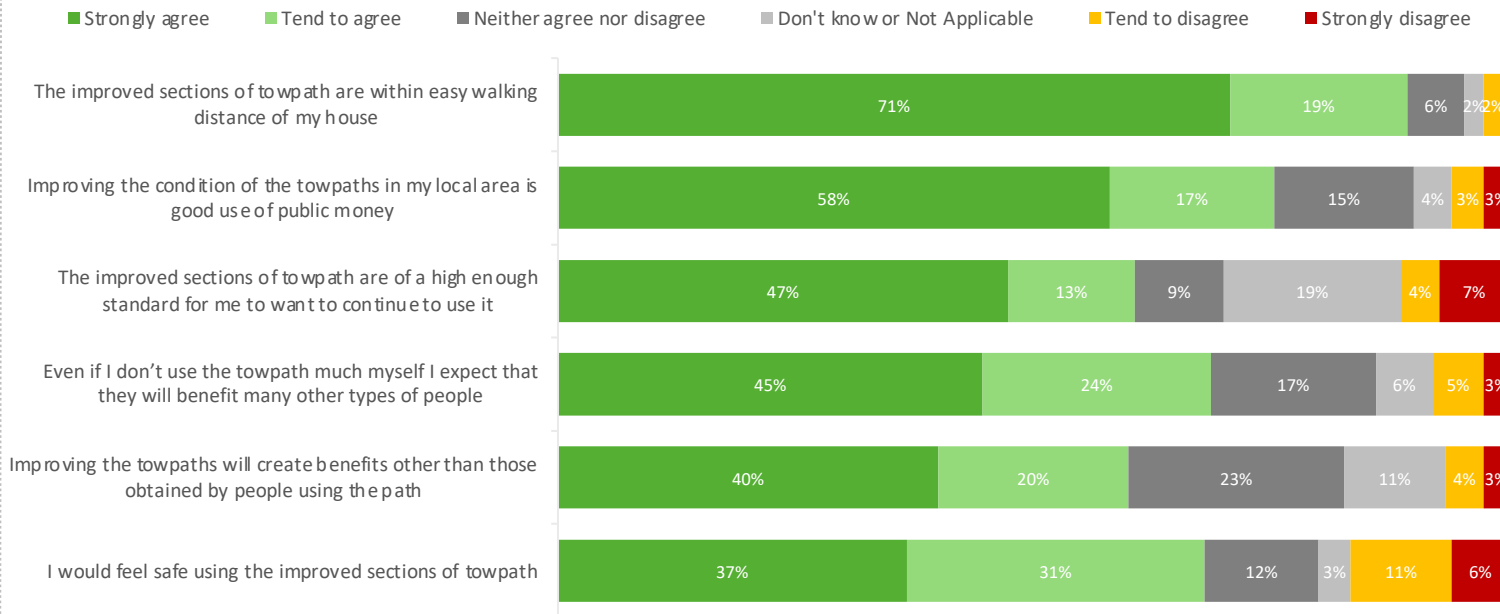
Other attitudes towards towpath improvements

Asked to rate to what extent they agreed or disagreed with a series of statements relating to the improved towpaths, responses were largely positive.

Most notably over half strongly agreed that the improved sections of towpath were within easy walking distance of their house and that improving the condition of the towpaths was good use of public money.

Opinions were most varied for the statement related to feeling safe on the improved sections of towpath. Overall, 17% disagreed with this statement but this increased to 22% of women, 21% of C2DEs and 38% of those with a long term illness or disability.

Agreement with statements relating to improved sections



How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements about the improved sections of canal towpath in Rowley Regis?
base n = 150

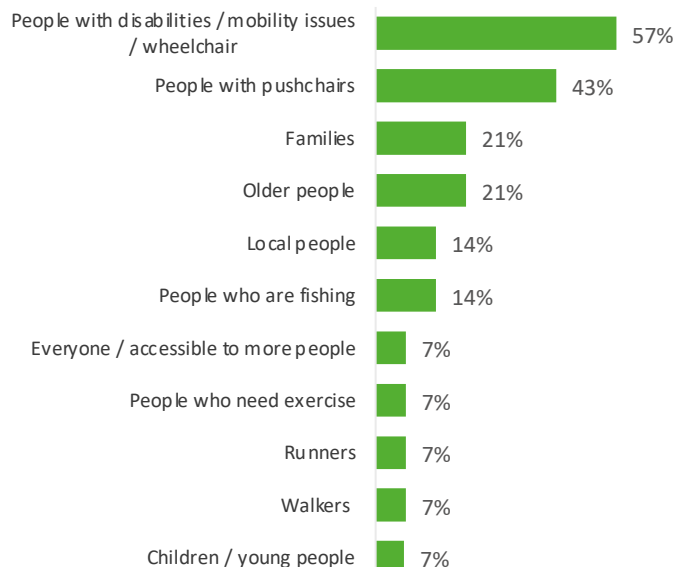
Other groups expected to benefit and wider benefits

69% agreed that the improvements would benefit people other than themselves.

Asked to specify any particular groups likely to benefit, the largest percentages mentioned people with disabilities and people with pushchairs.

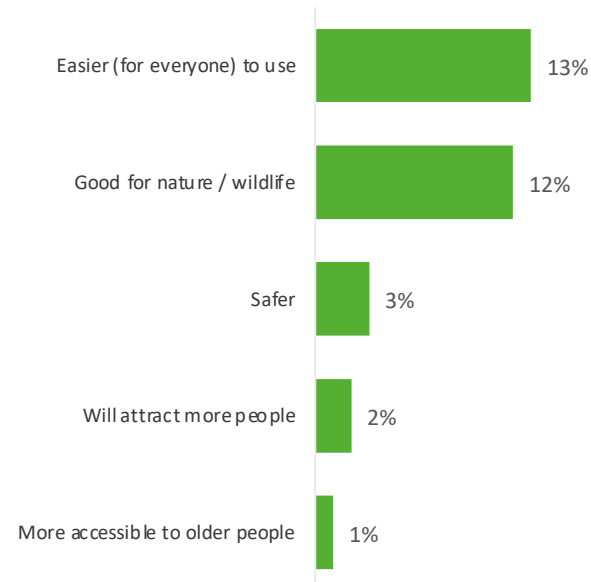
60% agreed that the improvements would create benefits other than those obtained by path users. When asked to provide more details, responses provided included a recognition of the wider benefits of improved access and benefits for nature and wildlife.

Other people towpath improvements will benefit:



You agreed that you expect the towpath improvement to benefit other people. Are you able to specify any of the groups who you expect to benefit
base n = 103

Benefits beyond those for towpath users



You agreed that improving the towpaths creates benefits other than it being a better place for towpath users. Are you able to specify any of the other benefits created

base n = 90

Other feedback from local residents

A final open-ended question invited local residents to provide further feedback.

While the majority of comments were positive and reflected some of the areas covered in previous sections, some suggestions for improvements or issues were also raised as listed on the right.

Other comments and feedback on experiences of towpath since improvements

"Could do with more benches or a rest area."

"I think they should put a newsletter or some communication about what the improvements are."

"I can hear people shooting a gun on the canal."

"More security needed to stop undesirables."

"The canal has been covered in a thick green algae for months which is killing off the wildlife."

"More signs about nature and distance from where you are."

"It will make people walk more."

"There are a lot of motorbikes going up and down and they really dangerous."

"The new gravel is messy and a bit difficult to walk on at times"

"They definitely need rubbish bins as there's a lot of litter."

Positives mentioned:

- General positive feedback on quality of paths
- Feeling that changes have made it more accessible to wider range of local people
- Less muddy and fewer puddles
- Positive impacts for wildlife

Negatives/ potential improvements mentioned:

- Concerns over some users e.g. motorbikes and other 'undesirables'
- Concerns over litter
- Concerns over green algae
- Suggestion that more communications are needed to tell locals about improvements made

Do you have any further feedback on your local canal towpaths and the improvements that have been made recently?

base n = 150

Other stakeholders survey

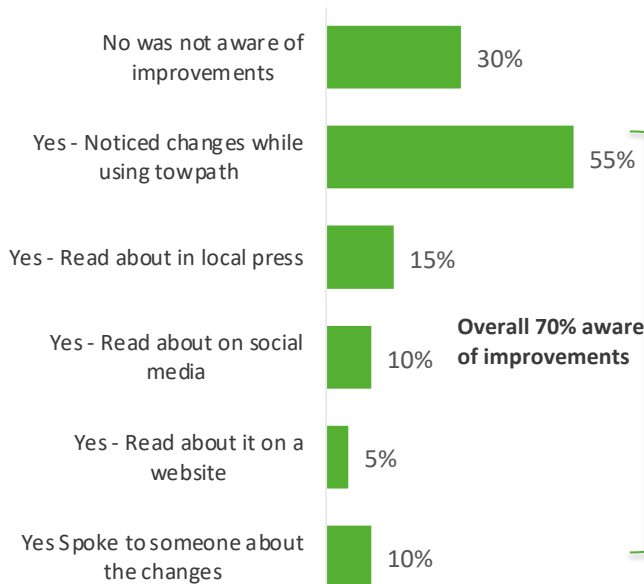


Awareness and usage of Rowley Regis towpaths

Most of the small sample of other stakeholders taking part in the online survey were aware of the improvements but their frequency of usage was lower than amongst the other survey participants, most often as they did not live locally.

The most common activity amongst these respondents was boating.

Awareness of towpath improvements



Prior to taking part in this interview were you aware of these improvements to this and other local towpaths?

base n = 20

Lower frequency of use than other groups in research:

	Percentage of respondents
At least once a week	20%
At least once a month	30%
At least once a year	35%
Less often/never	15%

Most common activities:

- Boating
- Walking
- Wildlife watching

Most common reasons for not using more often included:

- Distance from home (i.e. not local)
- Suitability of canal for boating

"I cruise the canals and usually would pass through the area a couple of times a year."

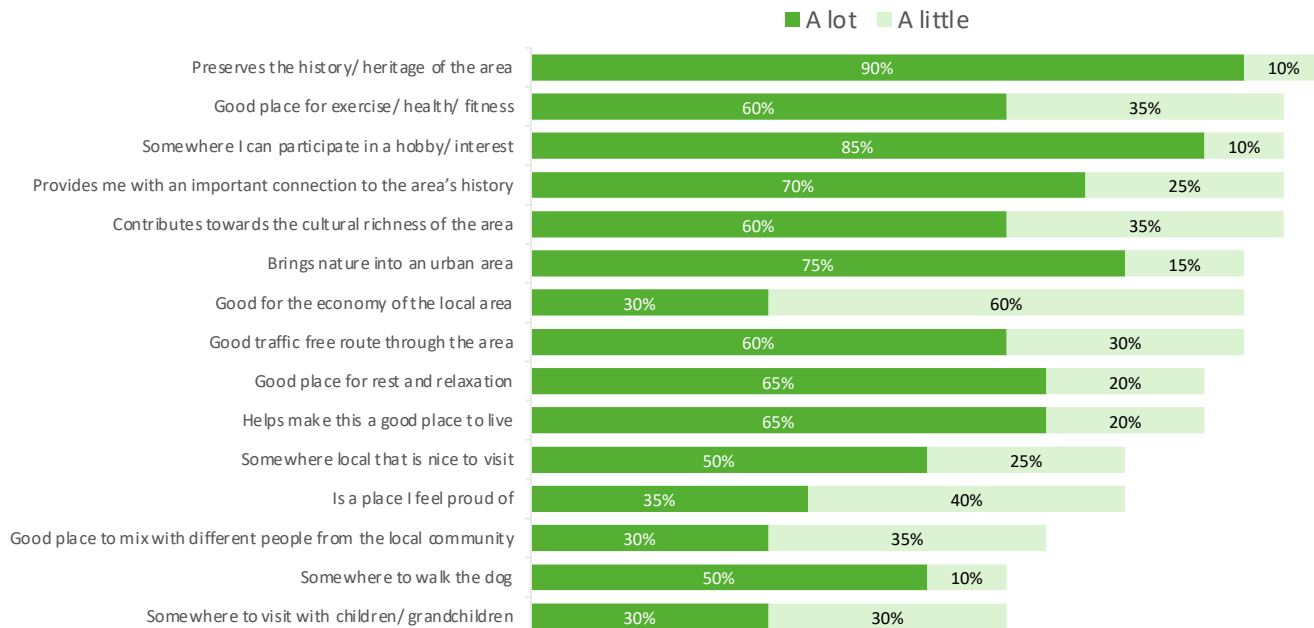
"Because of the state of the canal, full of rubbish and too shallow. Also anti-social youths."

"I live on a boat and every couple of months when in Birmingham / black country have reason to spend time around Netherton / Rowley."

Perceived benefits of the canals in Rowley Regis

Most were positive regarding the benefits of canals in the Rowley Regis area, especially in relation to the preservation of history, providing a good place for health and exercise and providing a place to participate in a hobby.

Benefits of canals in Rowley Regis area



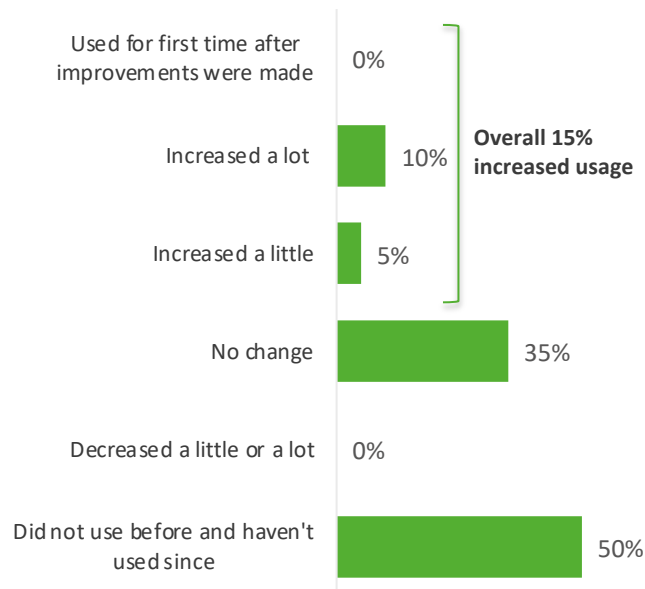
To what extent, if at all, do you think each of these are benefits of the canals which are in Rowley Regis?
base n = 20

Changes in usage since towpath improvements were completed

Overall 15% had increased their usage of the towpath since the improvements were completed and 45% were likely to use the towpath in the next month or two.

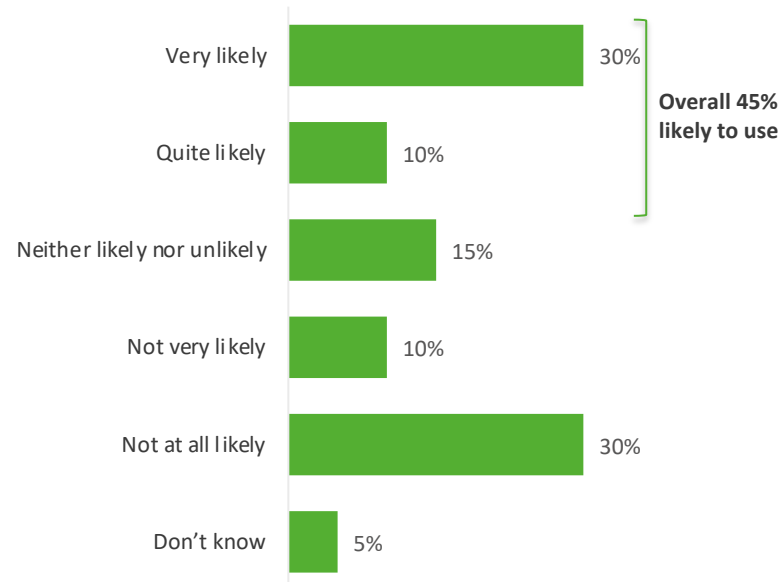
Reflecting the non-local profile, half had not used the towpath before and had not since.

Changes in usage of towpath following improvements



To what extent, if any, has the amount that you use the towpath changed since these improvements were made?
base n = 20

Likelihood of using improved towpath sections in next month or two



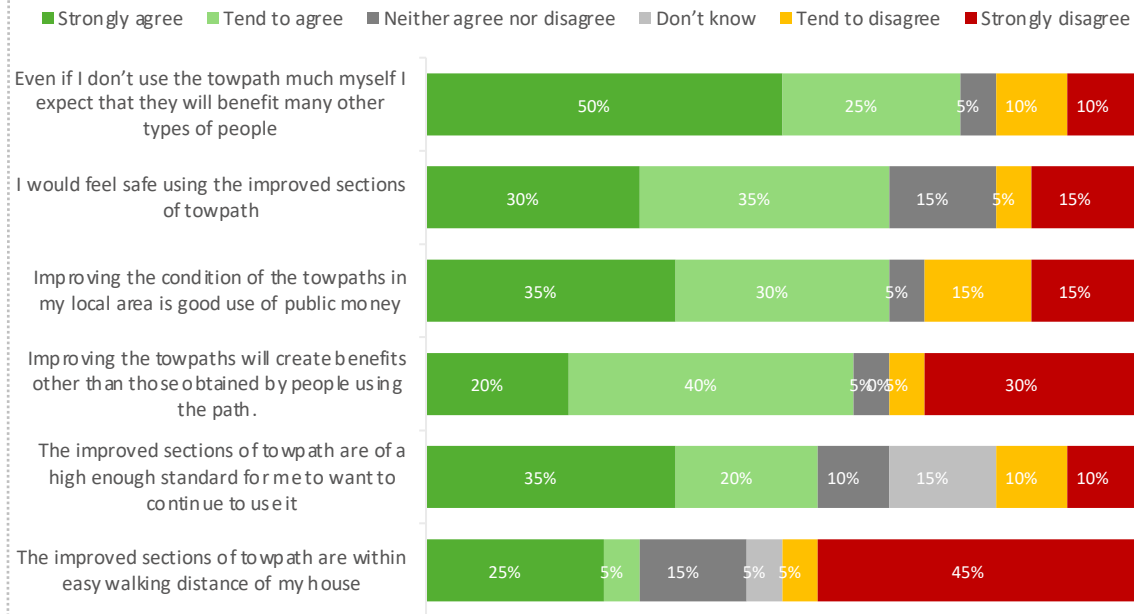
How likely are you to visit the improved sections of towpath during the next month or two?

Perceived benefits of towpath improvements

Respondents were largely positive in relation to the statements shown.

Three quarters agreed that even if they didn't use the towpath much themselves, they expected the improvements to benefit many other people.

Agreement with statements relating to improved sections



"The new surfaces and widened paths mean you can concentrate on looking around you and enjoying nature rather than watching your next step and avoiding muddy puddles or overhanging vegetation."

"It creates a better sense of a facility that's being cared for, that's important, that matters."

"Creates a feeling of the area being cared for."

"Boaters still need to use the towpath and see it - so they're benefiting."

"It creates a sense of pride in our local environment."

How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements about the improved sections of canal towpath in Rowley Regis?
base n = 20

Other feedback provided in the self completion survey

Some detailed feedback was provided in the final open ended question including some specific concerns that improvements for towpath user may sometimes create new issues for boaters or that boater's needs may have been overlooked.

Other comments and feedback on experiences of towpath since improvements

"Looks really good, only downside would be if it becomes a route for inconsiderate lycra clad cycle users!"

"As usual these improvements seem to benefit the bullies on bicycles, electric cycles, motor cycles and scooters. No matter how much signage stating that pedestrians have priority are displayed they are all ignored. Also, as a boater it is now much more difficult to moor a boat along these sections and also dangerous getting off the boat with said speeding cyclists etc."

"Need to stop improving for non-boaters these improvements are not good for boaters as it makes it more difficult to moor up."

"Improving towpaths does little for boaters who actually contribute to CRT. How do cyclists and walkers?"

"Great start, but cutback hedges when they start to encroaching on path."

"It's a pity the Old Main Line improvements stop short of the section under the M5, which is in a very poor state and feels quite unsafe currently. Better surfacing and lighting would help there. There was also a missed opportunity to address plant growth damaging the canal walls during the works. I do think the work that's been done is a huge improvement, particularly for cyclists and other wheeled users."

"When improving the path for walkers, cyclists anglers etc. please consider boaters and install mooring rings / bollards at suitable locations to encourage moorings and avoid bank damage through use of mooring pins"

"Re-surfacing the towing paths only enables cyclists to travel faster and become a danger to everyone else. There no point doing all work and not re-pairing the wash walls, the surface will just crumble into the canal. A nice tarmac surface is only a benefit to graffiti gangs on electric scooters.."

"The towpaths are great but I'm getting a bit worried that there seems to be a habit of absolutely destroying all the plant life on the towpath side without doing anything on other- its like you think that it cancels it out? It just makes it dangerous to boats, it doesn't help nature and it makes it look messy and like you don't care."

"I think the renaturing of the area behind the towpath should have been more proactive, rather than just leave it to grow back - active planting / de-weeding would have created a brighter environment for users and nature.."

"The newly surfaced towpaths are really good but already some sections are overhung by brambles or nettles; it is vital that there is regular maintenance, including cutting back vegetation, or people will be put off using the towpaths."

Do you have any further feedback on your local canal towpaths and the improvements that have been made recently?

base n = 20



Any questions? A follow-up discussion?

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