

Monitoring the quality of experience in Hamsterley Forest

Final Report

February 2007



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Prepared by:

TNS Tourism & Leisure

19 Atholl Crescent
Edinburgh, EH3 8HQ

Telephone: 0131 656 4000
Facsimile: 0131 656 4001
e-mail: enquiries@tns-global.com

146077

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A. Background and introduction

Background

Forestry Commission (FC) forests and woodlands offer many recreation opportunities such as walking, cycling and picnicking, as well as more formalised activities such as mountain biking, horse riding, car rallies and orienteering. They also offer log cabins, camping and caravan accommodation, with a number of sites also equipped with a visitor centre. Printed material is produced in order to maximise the visitor experience and the FC is currently working alongside Ordnance Survey to incorporate information on land access into their maps.¹

In June 2002, TNS (then NFO) were commissioned to undertake a study which would investigate what constitutes quality of experience for visitors, addressing related concepts such as motivations, expectations and the needs of different groups. The output of this study was a survey method which could be used across Forestry Commission sites to effectively monitor quality of experiences.

Reflecting the increasing importance of community forests, TNS were commissioned in 2004 and 2005 to undertake surveys amongst residents of areas close to selected woodland sites in the Thames Chase and South Yorkshire areas. Research conducted at these sites employed a method developed from the on-site QOE approaches and investigated the profile of both users and non-users of the forests, the motivations and barriers to use, the benefits received from the forest and any improvements that could be made.

The *Forestry Commission Corporate Plan for England and Great Britain* identifies a need for further evidence to demonstrate the benefits that woodlands and forests bring to society and it is on this basis that FC continued the QOE survey programme in 2006 through a series of on-site and community surveys in England and Wales. These surveys had the following key objectives

¹ 'Forestry Commission Corporate Plan for England and Great Britain Activities 2005/06'
[http://www.forestry.gov.uk/pdf/gbengcorp2005.pdf/\\$FILE/gbengcorp2005.pdf](http://www.forestry.gov.uk/pdf/gbengcorp2005.pdf/$FILE/gbengcorp2005.pdf)

- to undertake on-site surveying of a around 300 visitors per site at 5 sites in England and Wales in 2006;
- to undertake community surveys at a minimum of 300 households surrounding 2 community woodland areas, one in England, one in Wales in 2006;
- to provide full reports and data to FC;

Method

A total of 276 visitors were interviewed at Hamsterley Forest between 26th July and 28th October during 20 days of interviewing. A further breakdown of when interviewing took place and numbers achieved are appended to this report.

Visitors who used the site at least once a month were interviewed and asked to rate both the levels of importance of different aspects of woodland and forest visits and their satisfaction with the same aspects at Hamsterley Forest. Visitors who came less often were interviewed for a shorter period before being given a questionnaire regarding their levels of satisfaction. This was completed and returned, using a reply-paid envelope. Copies of the questionnaires used are appended.

Report

This report provides the results of the survey undertaken at Hamsterley Forest. As mentioned previously, similar surveys have also been undertaken in nine other Forestry Commission sites to date, providing a total 'database' of over 3,800 interviews with forest users. The results of the surveys undertaken at other sites have been used within this report to help draw comparisons and to highlight the key variations at Hamsterley Forest. It should be noted that variations between the results obtained at Hamsterley Forest and at other locations may not always be statistically valid (i.e. are within margins of error) so should be treated with some caution.

A total of 276 visitors were interviewed and 62 self completion questionnaires were returned (32% of the 191 distributed). The following section provides the survey results across the total survey sample and, where appropriate, compares the responses provided by visitors in different demographic groups and those taking part in different activities.

Answers to open ended questions have been appended.

B. Main results

Summary

The largest proportions of visitors to Hamsterley Forest were in the Empty Nester (over 55, no children) and Family lifecycles and were taking part in walking while in the forest. A smaller, but significant proportion were Young Independents (under 35, no children), with members of this lifecycle group most likely to participate in cycling.

A high proportion of visitors to Hamsterley Forest were from the local area with the highest share from the Darlington area and around one in ten from each of the following areas – Durham, Newcastle-upon Tyne, Sunderland and Cleveland. This corresponds with the large proportion of trips that were less than a hour from the visitor's home.

Visitors to Hamsterley tended to be on a repeat visit to the forest, with these visitors typically coming to the site once a month or less. The high proportion of repeat visitors is reflected in the information sources used to plan a visit to the forest, with previous experience and/or knowledge the most frequently cited source. Word of mouth and road signs were the next most frequently used, with road signs particularly likely to be referred to by those visiting while on holiday.

Walking without a dog, picnics and barbeques and cycling were the most popular leisure activities undertaken at this forest. Visitors enjoyed the peace, quite and tranquillity of Hamsterley Forest, the open spaces, the scenery, beauty and views, the cycling facilities and freedom to cycle and the walks that are on offer.

On the whole, encounters with other users were generally positive. However, the encounters most likely to be negative were those with motorbikes and other vehicles driving in the forest. Improvements suggested included more litter bins, more or better cycle tracks, more or better dog bins and improved signposting. Notably, almost four-fifths of visitors could not think of anything that needs to be improved,

A summary of the results of the TRI*M analysis of visitor experience can be found at the end of Section C.

Visitor profile

To determine the types of people using the forest, visitors were asked to provide some information about their age, family situation and place of residence.

Demographics

Table B-1 – Age and lifecycle (%)

Base: All respondents (276)

	%
Age	
16 – 24	6
25 – 34	22
35 – 44	28
45 – 54	16
55 – 64	17
65+	11
Lifecycle	
Young Independents	14
Families	43
Empty Nesters	37
Other	6

Approximately a third of visitors to Hamsterley Forest were between the ages of 45 and 64 (33%). 28% were in the 35-44 age bracket, while an equal proportion were 34 or under (28%). 11% of visitors were over the age of 65.

In terms of lifecycle, approximately two-fifths of visitors were in the Family lifecycle (children in household, 43%), 37% could be classified as Empty Nesters (no children and aged 55 or over, 27%), while 14% were in the Young Independent lifecycle (aged under 35, no children).

It is also useful to compare these results with the averages obtained across all of the forests included in this programme of research to date². The profile of visitors at Hamsterley Forest was very similar to the average across all of the sites. In terms of the

² See Appendix 2 for full details of results obtained at other sites and overall benchmarking scores.

specific locations, the lifecycle profile at Hamsterley was fairly similar to those obtained at Sherwood Pines, Delamere Forest, Dalby and the Forest of Dean.

Table B-2 – Social class (%)

Base: All responses (276)

	Visitors	UK Population
AB – <i>‘upper middle class’ – higher/ intermediate managerial, administrative or professional</i>	34	17
C1 – <i>‘lower middle class’ – supervisory or clerical, junior managerial, administrative or professional</i>	28	26
C2 – <i>‘skilled working class’ – skilled manual workers</i>	18	25
DE – <i>‘working class’ and unemployed – semi and unskilled manual workers, state pensioners, unemployed</i>	21	32

Just under two-thirds of those visiting Hamsterley Forest were in the ABC1 socio-economic groupings, a higher proportion than amongst the UK population as a whole (62% and 42% respectively). Conversely, the proportions of visitors in the C2 and DE social classes were lower than amongst those resident in the UK overall (18% v 25% and 21% v 32% respectively).

The social class profile of visitors to Hamsterley Forest was broadly similar to the overall average recorded across the other sites included within this programme of research.

Origin

All visitors were asked to provide the postcode of their place of residence. The table below lists the areas mentioned by 1% or more of visitors.

Table B-3 – Area of residence (%)

Base: All respondents (276)

	%		%
Darlington area (DL)	43%	Durham area (DH)	12%
<i>Eldon (DL14)</i>	10%	Newcastle upon Tyne area	11%
<i>Bishop Auckland (DL13)</i>	5%	Sunderland area (SR)	9%
<i>West of Darlington (DL2)</i>	4%	Cleveland area (TS)	9%
<i>Crook (DL15)</i>	4%	Leeds area (LS)	2%
<i>Newton Aycliffe</i>	4%	Wakefield area (WF)	1%
<i>Spennymoor (DL16)</i>	3%	York area (YO)	1%
<i>Darlington (DL1)</i>	3%	Bradford area (BD)	1%
<i>Ferryhill (DL17)</i>	2%	Harrogate area (HG)	1%
<i>Richmond (DL10)</i>	1%	Leicester area (LE)	1%
<i>Shildon (DL4)</i>	1%	Swindon area (SW)	1%
<i>Northallerton (DL6/7)</i>	1%	Warrington area (WA)	1%

Approximately two-fifths of visitors to Hamsterley forest were from the Darlington area (43%), which includes 10% from Eldon. Around one in ten visitors came from the Durham, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, Sunderland and Cleveland areas (12%, 11%, 9% and 9% respectively).

Season Ticket ownership

A small proportion of visitors (8%) indicated that they had a season ticket for Hamsterley Forest. A higher proportion of visitors who came to the site once a month or more stated that they had a season ticket (22%) than amongst those who visited less often or were on their first visit (1%). Dog walkers were more likely than those taking part in other walking in the forest to own a permit (17% and 6% respectively).

Visitors to Hamsterley who stated that they had a season were also asked how they rated the value for money they obtained from the permit. Encouragingly, around four-fifths felt that this was 'very good' value (81%), with the remaining 19% describing the value for money offered as 'good'. Please bear in mind that the sample size for this question was small (21 respondents) therefore, the results should be treated with caution.

Trip profile

Visitors were also asked a number of questions about their current visit to Hamsterley Forest in terms of the length of time spent away from home, time spent in the wood and activities undertaken.

Type of visit³

64% of visitors to Hamsterley were on a short trip to the forest of an hour or less from home, while slightly more than a fifth of visitors were on a short trip of between 1 and 2 hours (22%). A smaller proportion of visitors were on trips of 2-3 hours or more than 3 hours from home (3% and 2% respectively), while 9% were on holiday.

Compared to the average for all of the sites included in this programme of research, visitors to Hamsterley Forest were less likely than the average to be on holiday (9% v 17%) but more likely to be on a short trip of less than 3 hours from home (89% v 73%). High proportions of visitors on a trip of less than 3 hours from home were also recorded at Whiston (100%), Delamere (96%) and Sherwood Pines (91%), while higher proportions of visitors at Grizedale and Nant Yr Arian were on holiday (63% and 48% respectively).

Table B-4 – Type of visit (%)

Base: All respondents (276)

	%
On a short trip of less than 1 hour from home	64
On a short trip of 1-2 hours from home	22
On a short trip of 2 to 3 hours from home	3
On a day out for more than 3 hours from home	2
On holiday away from home	9

Almost all of those who visited Hamsterley Forest at least once a month were on a short trip of less than an hour from home, 99% compared to 82% of those who visited less often. Conversely, 13% of infrequent or first time visitors were on holiday compared to 1% of frequent visitors. Those in the family lifecycle were also more likely to spend less than an hour travelling to the forest (73%) than those in the Empty Nester lifecycle (57%).

³ Please note that this question refers to the type of trip respondents were taking (short trip, day trip or holiday), with short and day trips further broken down by distance travelled from home. Times mentioned do not relate to time spent in the forest.

The profile of visitors varied over the survey period with the highest proportions of visitors on holiday during August (12%) and October (20%), coinciding with school holiday periods. In contrast, the proportion of visitors on short trips of less than an hour was highest in July (76%).

Frequency of visits

78% of all visitors had been to Hamsterley Forest previously. 27% of those who had visited before had been between 1 and 3 times a year, with a further 12% stating that they visited less often than once a year. 21% visited 4 to 6 times a year, while 28% visited 1 to 3 times a month. 11% visited 3 times a week or more.

Table B-5 – Frequency of visits to forest (%)

Base: Respondents who have been to Hamsterley Forest before (214)

	%
Every day	1
4 to 6 times per week	1
1 to 3 times a week	9
1 to 3 times a month	28
4 to 6 times a year	21
1 to 3 times a year	27
Less often	12

Compared to the averages recorded across all of the sites included in this programme of research, the frequency of visits to Hamsterley Forest was fairly similar to the average across all of the sites surveyed to date.

Length of visits

On average, visitors to Hamsterley spent 2 hours and 53 minutes visiting the forest. 34% of visitors spend 2 to 3 hours on site, with a similar proportion having spent between 3 and 5 hours in the forest. 22% of visitors spend between 1 and 2 hours at the forest.

The average length of time spent varied between visitor groups with those who cycled spending longer on average in the forest than those participating in any type of walking (3 hrs 14 minutes v 2 hrs 46 minutes).

Table B-6 – Length of visit (%)

Base: All respondents (276); All who walked (165); All who cycled (94)

	Total time on site %	Time spent on any walking %	Time spent cycling %
Up to 15 minutes	-	1	1
15 – 30 minutes	*	8	2
30 minutes – 1 hour	4	28	6
1 hour – 2 hours	22	39	31
2 hours – 3 hours	34	19	36
3 hours – 5 hours	33	4	18
More than 5 hours	7	1	5
<i>Average</i>	<i>2 hrs 53 mins</i>	<i>1 hr 32 mins</i>	<i>2 hrs 26 mins</i>
<i>Proportion of time on site</i>	<i>100%</i>	<i>55%</i>	<i>75%</i>

- No responses * Less than 0.5%

Table B-6 also illustrates the amount of time spent walking or cycling by those visitors who took part in such activities. Overall, visitors who took part in walking spent an average of 1 hour and 32 minutes undertaking this activity, just over half of their time on site (55%). Visitors who took part in cycling spent an average of 2 hours and 26 minutes undertaking this activity, around three-quarters of their total time on site (75%).

Activities undertaken

When asked what they did during their visit, the most frequently mentioned activities were walking without a dog (46%) and a picnic or barbeque (26%). Cycling was another frequently mentioned activity, with 25% having cycled off-road, 24% on un-surfaced roads, tracks or trails and 22% on surfaced roads which corresponds with the facilities on offer at this site.

Table B-7 – Activities undertaken during visit to forest (%)

Base: All respondents (276)

	%
Walking without a dog	46
Picnic or barbecue	26
Off-road cycling	25
Cycling on un-surfaced roads/tracks/trails	24
Cycling on surfaced roads	22
Visiting the café	17
Visiting the forest shop	16
Dog walking	15
Hill walking/ rambling	13
Other wildlife watching	12
MTB Skills/Downhill	10
Children's play area	7
Birdwatching	5
Drive Forest Drive	5
Photography	3
Seeing something in the forest (e.g. sculpture/ ancient tree)	3
Nature/ natural history visit	3
Horse riding/pony trekking	1
Educational visit	1
Orienteering	1

When asked, 80% of visitors who had taken part in walking or cycling during their visit to Hamsterley Forest indicated that they had followed waymarked trails. There was no significant difference in the use of waymarked trails between the visitor groups surveyed.

Compared to the average across all of the sites included in this programme of research, visitors to Hamsterley Forest were significantly more likely to take part in cycling on any type of surface but were less likely to have visited the children's playground (7% compared to 14%).

It is useful to compare levels of participation in the main activities amongst different user groups:

- *Walking without a dog (46% overall)* – female visitors were more likely than males to have taken part in this activity (54% and 37% respectively). Variations were also recorded by lifecycle with 50% of those in the Family and Empty Nester lifecycles having undertaken this activity compared to 21% of Young Independents.
- *Picnic/barbeque (26% overall)* – 31% of those who visited Hamsterley at least once a month stated that they had undertaken this activity compared to 16% of infrequent or first time visitors. Those who took part in any walking were more likely than those who cycled to have a picnic or barbeque on site (31% v 17%).
- *Off-road cycling (25% overall)* – visitors more likely than the average to take part in this activity included males (36%) and Young Independents (62%). Frequent visitors were also more likely than infrequent or first time visitors to have cycled off-road (33% v 21%).
- *Cycling - un-surfaced roads etc. (24% overall)* – as with off-road cycling, male visitors (37%), 16-24 year olds (50%) and Young Independents (50%) were particularly likely to take part in this activity. Frequent visitors were also more likely than infrequent and first time visitors to take part in this activity (32% v 20%).
- *Cycling – surfaced roads (22% overall)* - more likely than the average to be undertaken by those in the Young Independent lifecycle (44%) and male visitors (31%).

Children's play area

As well as asking about their own participation in different activities, visitors were asked whether they were accompanied by any children who would use the play area during their current visit.

Overall, 44% of respondents indicated that they were with children who would use the play area, a figure which rose to 57% amongst female respondents. As might be expected, this proportion was considerably higher amongst those in the Family lifecycle group (68%) than amongst Empty Nesters (38%).

Favourite aspects of forest

When visitors were asked what they liked most about Hamsterley Forest (Table B-10, below), the most frequently provided responses were peace, quiet and tranquillity (29%), open spaces (16%), the scenery (14%), the cycling or freedom to cycle (14%) and the nice walks (12%). The table below lists those mentioned by 2% or more of visitors.

Table B-10 – Most liked aspects of Hamsterley Forest (%)
Base: All frequent respondents and self completion respondents (147)

	%
Peace/quiet/ tranquil	29
Open spaces	16
Scenery/ beautiful/ views	14
Cycling facilities/freedom to cycle	14
Nice walks	12
Variety of activities/lots of things to do and see	9
Wildlife	8
Good/well maintained pathways/trails	7
Safe environment	7
Convenient/ easy to get to	5
Fresh air	5
Easy access/more accessible	5
Activities for children	5
Variety of the trees	3
Good for walking dog	3
Restaurants/catering/café/coffee shop	2
Don't know/ not stated	8

Other responses related to the facilities available, the variety of things to do, the staff and the weather. Some of the specific answers provided were:

“Freedom to do your own thing.”

“It can be crowded but you can always find peace and quiet.”

“The whole ambience of the place. Can get away from crowds. Fresh air.”

A full list of the responses provided is appended.

Use of café/restaurant

17% of visitors to Hamsterley forest used or planned to use the café or restaurant. Those who did use these facilities (48 respondents) were asked to rate these on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 = poor and 5 = excellent. Overall, 25% of visitors to Hamsterley Forest rated the value for money of the catering facilities as 'good', while a further 17% described them as 'very good' and 13% as 'excellent'. One in ten visitors who used these facilities felt that they were 'fair' or 'poor' (10%). Overall, the value for money of catering facilities at Hamsterley Forest received a 'good' average satisfaction score of 3.45.

Table B-11 – Value for money (%)

Base: All who used/plan to use Café/Restaurant/other catering (48)

	%
Excellent	13
Very good	17
Good	25
Fair	8
Poor	2
Don't know/not stated	35
<i>Average score</i>	<i>3.45</i>

The reasons given by those who rated the catering facilities as 'fair' or 'poor' were as follows (5 respondents):

- *“Limited choice”* – 2 respondents
- *“Too expensive/could be cheaper”* - 1 respondent
- *Don't know* - 2 respondents

Respondents who used the café or restaurant were also asked to rate the quality of the food and drink served using the same scale as applied to value for money (Table B-12 overleaf). 13% of those who used these facilities rated the quality as 'excellent', while 25% rated it as 'very good' and 23% as 'good'. A small proportion of café or restaurant users rated the food and drink supplied as 'fair' (4%), while none rated it as 'poor'. The average satisfaction score given for quality was 3.71.

Table B-12 – Quality of food and drink (%)

Base: All who used/plan to use Café/Restaurant/other catering (48)

	%
Excellent	13
Very good	25
Good	23
Fair	4
Poor	-
Don't know/not stated	35
<i>Average score</i>	<i>3.71</i>

Again, those who rated the quality as 'fair' or 'poor' were asked to give a reason why they felt this was the case (2 respondents), as follows:

- *“Limited choice”* – 1 respondent
- *“Nothing special/mediocre”* - 1 respondent

Table B-13, overleaf, lists the types of food and drink that those using the catering facilities would like to see on offer and includes those mentioned by 5% of these respondents or more. The most frequently mentioned refreshments that visitors using the café or restaurant would like to see on sale included tea or coffee (75%), cakes or pastries (52%), sandwiches (46%), and light snacks (25%).

Table B-13 – Food and drink would like on sale (%)

Base: All who used/plan to use Café/Restaurant/other catering (48)

	%
Tea/coffee	75
Cakes/pastries	52
Sandwiches	46
Light snacks (unspecified)	25
Soup	21
Cold drinks	19
Ice-cream	15
Drinks (unspecified)	10
Hot drinks (unspecified)	10
Good range already/fine as it is	8
Scones	8
Toasties/toast/paninis	6
Healthier options	6
Jacket potatoes	6
Hot food (unspecified)	6

Due to the small sample sizes, these results should be treated with caution.

Importance of Hamsterley Forest

To help determine the influence of Hamsterley Forest in the decision to visit the local area, visitors who did not live in the area were asked to indicate how important the site had been in their decision to visit:

Table B-14 – Importance of site and its facilities in decision to visit area (%)

Base: All respondents living outside of Hamsterley Forest area (67)

	%
The only reason for coming	46
Very important	19
Quite important	12
Neither important nor unimportant	16
Not very important	3
Not at all important	1

Just under half of visitors who lived outside of the area stated that Hamsterley Forest was their ‘only reason’ for coming to the area (46%) while a further 31% indicated that it was ‘very’ or ‘quite important’ . In contrast, only 4% stated that the site was ‘not very’ or ‘not at all’ important.

Information sources used to plan visit

When visitors were asked about the sources of information they had used to plan their visit to Hamsterley Forest, approximately two-thirds had relied upon previous experience (63%), which reflects the high proportion on a repeat visit. Equal proportions of respondents used word of mouth recommendations and/or road signs to the site (16% each), while 13% had picked up a leaflet.

Table B-15 – Information used to plan visit to Hamsterley Forest (%)

Base: All respondents (276)

	%
Previous experience/ knowledge	63
Word of mouth recommendations	16
Road signs to the site	16
Leaflets picked up	13
Information on the Internet	9
Tourist board or other brochures	5
Newspaper advertisements	2
Leaflets or other information received in post	2
Maps	1
Magazines	1
None of these sources of information	7

As might be expected, visitors who went to the site at least once a month were the most likely to rely upon previous experience (89%), as were those who spent less than an hour travelling to the site (74%). 35% of those on holiday mentioned using road signs.

Other visitors

When asked which of a list of other users had been encountered during recent visits to Hamsterley Forest, the vast majority had seen walkers (98%), cyclists (95%) and/or children (94%). 68% of visitors had encountered vehicles driving in the forest, while 48% encountered horse riders and 17% had encountered other users riding motorbikes.

Respondents who encountered other users were asked to indicate the level of impact this had on their overall enjoyment. Mean scores were applied to results from +2 if a user group 'increased enjoyment a lot' to -2 if they 'decreased enjoyment a lot'.

Table B-16 – Other visitors encountered (%) and impact on enjoyment (row %)

Base: All frequent visitors and self completion respondents (147)*

	%	Increased enjoyment a lot +2	Increased enjoyment a little +1	Made no difference 0	Decreased a little -1	Decreased a lot -2	Score
Walkers	98	3	6	85	4	1	0.06
Cyclists	95	6	11	71	6	2	0.14
Children	94	4	11	80	4	-	0.15
Vehicles driving in the forest	68	-	2	76	15	5	-0.24
Horse riders	48	1	7	86	1	1	0.06
Motorbikers/ moto cross	17	-	4	56	12	12	-0.38

* Base for responses regarding impact of encounters with visitors is smaller and varies by user type.

As the table above illustrates, while encounters with other walkers, children, cyclists and horse riders usually had no impact or were positive, encounters with vehicles driving in the forest and motorbikers or moto cross users were more likely to be negative.

Overall, 9 respondents stated that vehicles in the forest disturbed their enjoyment. These respondents stated that vehicles were a safety hazard, noisy and that there were too many vehicles. 3 respondents felt that motorbikers and/or moto cross disturbed their enjoyment, with comments again relating to noise and safety.

Further negative comments regarding other users included comments relating to a lack of awareness of others amongst walkers, inconsiderate behaviour amongst cyclists and horse riders and the speed and impact on the forest of cyclists. These comments were given by a small proportion of visitors.

Disturbances to visit

Respondents were also presented with a list of potential negative disruptions and asked what impact, if any, each had on recent visits to Hamsterley Forest. As the table below illustrates, the majority of respondents indicated that each of the potential impacts either 'didn't reduce their enjoyment' or that they did not know (suggesting the impact had not been encountered).

However, the disruptions most likely to have a more negative effect were dogs or dog dirt (decreased enjoyment amongst 25% of visitors), litter or fly tipping (16%), vandalised, missing or damaged signposts and noise from other users and/or motorised sports (10% each).

Table B-17 –Impact of potential disruptions on enjoyment (row %)

Base: All frequent visitors and self completion respondents (147)

	Didn't reduce enjoyment	Decreased a little	Decreased a lot	Don't know	Score
	0	-1	-2		
Muddy tracks	86	7	1	6	-0.09
Forest operations such as felling	82	3	1	14	-0.07
Noise from other users or motorised sports	79	7	3	12	-0.14
Vandalised, missing or damaged signposts	74	8	2	16	-0.14
Litter or fly tipping	69	11	5	15	-0.26
Dogs and dog dirt	65	16	9	10	-0.38

Visitors to Hamsterley Forest were asked to indicate what else, if anything had decreased their enjoyment. Encouragingly, three-quarters of visitors could not think of anything or did not specify any other issues (75%). However, areas which were mentioned by small numbers of respondents included flies or midges, a lack of dog bins and picnic seats or tables, separating cyclists and horse riders, overcrowding and litter.

Expectations vs. Reality

Respondents to the self completion questionnaire (62 visitors), who were either on their first ever visit to the site or visited less than once a month, were asked to indicate how their overall visit had compared with expectations.

Overall, 50% of visitors stated that their visit to Hamsterley Forest was 'as expected'. 23% felt it was 'a little better', with an equal proportion stating that it was 'much better' than expected. A small proportion felt that it was 'a little' or 'much' worse than expected.

Table B-18 – Overall rating of visit to forest compared to expectations (%)

Base: All self-completion respondents (62)

	%
Much better (+2)	23
A little better (+1)	23
As expected (0)	50
A little worse (-1)	3
Much worse (-2)	2
Don't know/not stated	-

- No responses; Percentages equal more than 100% due to rounding

When scores were applied to responses from +2 ('much better') to -2 ('much worse'), an overall score of 0.61 was obtained. This is the lowest score recorded across all of the sites surveyed to date (overall average 0.83). This suggests that visits to the Hamsterley Forest were less likely than the 'norm' to rate the site as better than expected – possibly a reflection of the high proportion of repeat visitors who knew what to expect.

When asked to state why they found the forest better than expected, responses mainly related to the scenery, better facilities than expected, a good children's play area and good or cheap parking.

Those who found the forest to be worse than expected were also asked to state why with poor signposting, not enough dog bins and overcrowding given as reasons.

Improvements

When asked what, if anything, needed to be improved at Hamsterley Forest, just under four-fifths of visitors either stated that nothing should be improved or that they ‘didn’t know’ what should be improved (38%).

The suggestions that were made by 2% or more of visitors are listed below. The most frequent suggestions related to providing more litter bins (13%), more or better cycle tracks (10%), providing or improving dog bins and improved signposting (9% each).

Table B-19 – Suggested improvements (%)

Base: All frequent visitors and self completion respondents (147)

	%
(More) litter bins	13
More/ better cycle tracks	10
Provide/improve dog bins	9
Improved signposting	9
Improve/better paths	7
Provide/improve café	6
More/better toilets	5
More better/seats/picnic tables	3
Keep facilities open longer/opening hours	3
Improve children’s play area	2
More staff/security staff	2
Keep facilities open longer	2
Ban/reduce use of motorbikes/cyclists/horses	2
Nothing/fine as it is/don’t know	38

Some of the specific suggestions provided are listed below. Full listings of the responses to this question are appended.

“More dog fouling and litter bins. A bigger cafe and more choice in the shop.”

“More purpose built mountain bike tracks. More changing washing and catering facilities.”

“More technical section on the cycle tracks but this is being done.”

Expenditure

To obtain an indication of the value of visitors to Hamsterley, respondents were asked to specify the amount they had personally spent during the day of their visit to the forest. 4% of all respondents stated that they did not spend anything during their visit. The table below presents the average expenditure per person for different elements of their visit based upon those who spent anything in each category (for example the average accommodation spend amongst those who stayed in commercial accommodation only, excluding day trippers and others who spent nothing on this area).

Table B-20 - Average expenditure per person per day (incl. day trip and overnight stay)

Base: All frequent visitors and self completion respondents (147)

	Average spend (Based on those who spent anything on each category)
Accommodation (incl. food and drink)*	£65
Food and drink (excl. at accommodation)	£8
Admission fees*	£3
Shopping (non-routine, souvenirs)*	£7
Transport (incl. petrol, taxis, public transport)	£8
Equipment (e.g. hire of boat, horse-riding)*	£28
Miscellaneous*	£7
Overall average spend	£23

*Small sample size

Overall, visitors to Hamsterley Forestry spent an average of £23 per person per day, which is based on those who spent anything. Excluding accommodation, equipment hire was the aspect with the highest average expenditure amongst those who spent anything.

Average spend varied with the highest amounts spent by those who were on holiday (£64 per person per day) and those who lived outside of the local area (£28 per person per day) while those who were on a short trip of less than three hours duration (£16) and those who lived in the local area (£10) spent less on average.

C. TRI*M Results

A key objective of this survey was to identify issues relating to the quality of visitor experiences at Hamsterley Forest and priorities for improvements. In addition to the standard analysis of the responses to questions regarding satisfaction, the information collected from visitors to Hamsterley Forest has also been analysed using TRI*M.

The TRI*M system has been developed by TNS to measure, manage and monitor customer relationships with products and services and, for the purposes of this study, it has been possible to adapt it to the 'product' offered by Forestry Commission sites.

The following sections provide details of the responses provided to the questions asked regarding the claimed importance of different aspects of the forest in decisions to visit, levels of satisfaction with these same elements and the results of the TRI*M analysis.

Claimed importance of different aspects of visit

To identify the drivers of quality, visitors were asked to rate how important different aspects were in their decision to visit the site. Visitors could rate each of a list of aspects as 'extremely important' (5), 'very important' (4), 'fairly important' (3), 'fairly unimportant' (2) or 'not at all important' (1). Scores were then applied to responses, allowing averages to be obtained across the whole sample - the higher the average score, the more important the aspect is across the sample as a whole.

It is important to note that these ratings are levels of *claimed* importance. The TRI*M analysis has also allowed the identification of which of these aspects have the greatest impact on overall levels of satisfaction, their real relevance to the overall quality of experience, as described later in this chapter.

Table C-1 – Claimed importance of different aspects in decision to visit (mean score)

Base: All respondents (276)

	Importance score
Feeling happy to leave your car in the car park	4.24
Clean toilets	4.18
Being able to enjoy scenery and views	4.14
Feeling safe in the forest	4.13
Enough car parking	4.09
Being able to spend time with family and friends	4.02
Value for money of your whole trip or day out	3.95
Clear signposting on footpaths	3.87
Litter bins	3.86
Being able to get fit and healthy	3.85
Being able to enjoy the wildlife	3.83
Friendliness of staff	3.67
Solitude, peace and quiet	3.66
Choice of paths for walking	3.50
Dog waste bins	3.47
Leaflets and maps to help you find your way around	3.31
Picnic areas	3.31
Choice of trails for cycling	3.19
Printed information about the forest	3.18
Open grassy areas for ball games, sunbathing, etc.	3.15
Children's play equipment	3.09
Information provided by staff	3.01
Availability of staff at the site	3.00
A café	2.99
A shop	2.86
Choice of trails for other activities	2.64
A forest drive	2.64
Availability of cycle hire on site	2.43
Baby changing	2.35

This analysis suggests that the aspects claimed to be of most importance amongst most visitors were feeling happy to leave your car in the car park, clean toilets, being able to enjoy scenery and views, feeling safe in the forest and enough car parking.

On the other hand, facilities claimed to be of less importance overall or only of importance to specific groups of visitors included the choice of trails for activities other

than walking and cycling, a forest drive, availability of cycle hire and baby changing facilities.

Respondents were also asked to specify in their own words what else, if anything, had influenced their decision to visit. The most frequently provided responses related to the good weather (17%), that it was good/ safe place for children to play (16%), close/convenient to home (14%), that they wanted fresh air or a day out (14%) and that the site was good for cycling/ had a cycle hire facilities (11%).

Table C-2 – Other influences on decision to visit (%)

Base: All respondents (276)

	%
The weather	17
Good/safe place for children playing	16
Close to home/convenient	14
Fresh air/just out for the day	14
Good for cycling/bike hire	11
Spend time with friends/family	8
Scenery	7
Walk the dog	6
Peace and tranquillity	5
To relax	5
Go for picnic	4
Exercise/keeping fit	3
Activities for children	3
Been before	3
Good facilities – open-air concerts/café/toilets etc.	3
Nice place for walking	3
To see the wildlife	3
Safe place to be/friendly environment	2
Recommended by family/friends	2
Cost/good value for money	2
Saw advert on TV/Internet/in press	2
Stopped to eat and drink	1
Open spaces	1
Passing en route to somewhere else	1
Curiosity/to see what it was like	1
Nothing	6

Some of the specific responses provided are listed below. The full verbatim comments provided to all of the open ended questions are appended.

“Because the sun was out. I knew we could have an ice cream with my children.”

“Got a 13 year old son who is very active and gets bored easily.”

“Just because it is a beautiful day - just to walk and relax.”

Performance of different aspects of visit

Visitors were next provided with the same list of elements of the site and asked to rate how satisfied they had been with each during their visit. Respondents could rate each of the elements on a five point scale which included 'excellent' (5), 'very good' (4), 'good' (3), 'fair' (2) and 'poor' (1). Also, if visitors had no experience of a specific element they were asked to indicate that they did not know.

Scores were then applied to responses, allowing averages to be obtained across the whole sample - the higher the average score, the more satisfied visitors were with this aspect. This analysis suggests that, overall, visitors were most likely to be satisfied with the value for money of their trip, the amount of car parking provided, being able to spend time with family and friends, being able to get fit and healthy, being able to enjoy scenery and views and feeling safe in the forest. Elements ranked lowest on average include litter and dog waste bins and the availability of staff at the site.

Table C-3 – Satisfaction with different aspects at forest (mean score)

Base: All frequent respondents and self completion respondents (147)

	Satisfaction score
Value for money of your whole trip or day out	4.20
Enough car parking	4.20
Being able to spend time with family and friends	4.19
Being able to get fit and healthy	4.08
Being able to enjoy scenery and views	4.06
Feeling safe in the forest	4.01
Being able to enjoy the wildlife	3.92
Feeling happy to leave your car in the car park	3.92
Choice of trails for cycling	3.86
Solitude, peace and quiet	3.84
Information provided by staff	3.75
Choice of paths for walking	3.74
Open grassy areas for ball games, sunbathing, etc.	3.74
Children's play equipment	3.73
Picnic areas	3.72
Friendliness of staff	3.71
Choice of trails for other activities	3.61
Clear signposting on footpaths	3.57
A café	3.45
A shop	3.38
A forest drive	3.38
Printed information about the forest	3.34
Leaflets and maps to help you find your way around	3.28
Clean toilets	3.21
Baby changing	3.14
Availability of staff at the site	2.89
Litter bins	2.14
Dog waste bins	1.84

When comparing these scores it is important to bear in mind that not all variations are statistically significant. This ranking should therefore be treated as providing an indication of what visitors are most and least satisfied with.

Compared to the average scores obtained across the other sites included in this programme of research, visitors to the Hamsterley Forest were generally more likely to be satisfied with the value for money of their visit, open grassy areas and picnic areas but were less satisfied with the cleanliness of toilets, café facilities and the provision of dog waste and litter bins.

Visitors who stated that they were dissatisfied with any aspects of their visit were asked to indicate why. Key reasons provided and the numbers of respondents providing each comment were as follows:

- Lack of litter bins (43 respondents)
- Lack of dog waste bins (40 respondents)
- Not seen any staff on site (11 respondents)

- Toilets should be cleaner (6 respondents)
- Not enough signposts on footpaths (3 respondents)

TRI*M Index

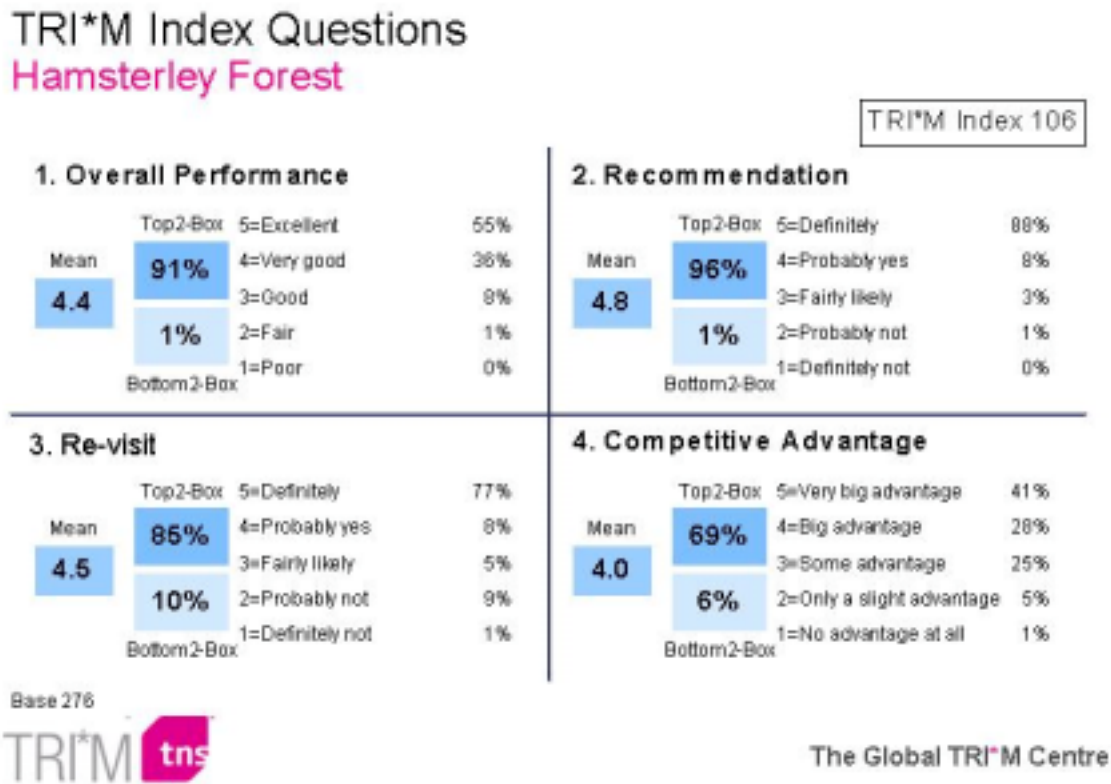
The TRI*M Index is a weighted calculation based on responses to the following four questions:

- How would you rate your visit to Hamsterley Forest overall? (*Overall performance*)
- Based on your experience, would you recommend Hamsterley Forest as a place to visit to a friend or relative? (*Recommendation*)
- Based on your experiences on this trip, would how likely are you to visit Hamsterley Forest again in the next few months? (*Repurchase*)
- How would you rate Hamsterley Forest as a place to visit compared to the other forests, parks or outdoor recreation sites you could have gone to today instead? (*Competitive advantage*)

These four questions provide the TRI*M index score for overall visitor satisfaction with Hamsterley Forest (and the context within which all of the detailed satisfaction ratings are placed). It has been used in this report to benchmark Hamsterley Forest against other forest sites included in the 2006 survey programme and could also be used as a benchmark score for future comparison.

Figure C-1 shows the overall results for each of these questions, as illustrated by the 4 quadrants in the diagram.

Figure C-1 – Overall satisfaction with Hamsterley Forest



The overall TRI*M index figure for Hamsterley Forest was **106**, a very high index that suggests overall satisfaction with visits to the forest was very high. By comparison, the TRI*M index figures obtained at the other sites included in the 2006 survey were as follows:

- Delamere Forest Park – 104
- Sherwood Pines Forest Park - 108
- Nant yr Arian – 107
- Garwnant - 104

The overall satisfaction data shows that the majority of visitors rated their trip very highly, with over one half (54%) claiming it was 'excellent' and 36% claiming that it was 'very good'. In addition to this high satisfaction with their trip, the vast majority of visitors (88%) would 'definitely' recommend a visit to Hamsterley Forest. This is a very good indicator of the enjoyment of a visit and friends and family are one of the most cited sources of information when visitors are planning to visit this location.

Most of the respondents would return to Hamsterley Forest for a repeat trip – over three quarters (77%) would 'definitely' return for a repeat visit. When asked how the forest compared to other outdoor recreation sites, most of the sample stated that Hamsterley Forest does have an advantage over alternative sites, with two-fifths (41%) claiming the site had a 'very big' advantage and 28% claiming that it had a 'big' advantage. A further quarter of the sample (25%) saw Hamsterley Forest as having only 'some' advantage over other sites which could have been visited.

All of the scores are very high which is encouraging and suggests that most people enjoy their visits to Hamsterley Forest, they would highly recommend it as a place to visit to friends and family, would return for another visit and are likely to perceive it as a better place to visit than other, alternative outdoor recreation sites.

TRI*M Typology

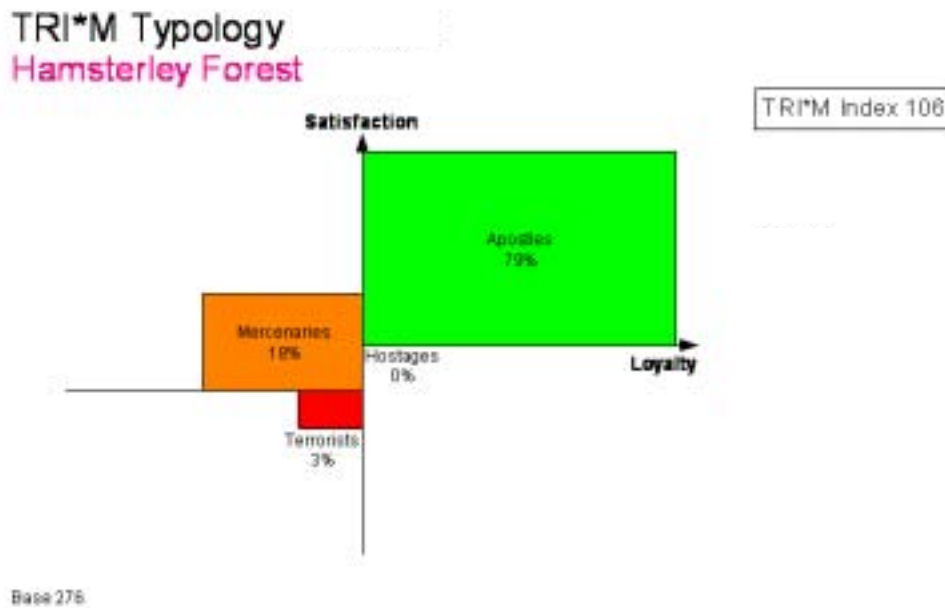
The next stage of the TRI*M analysis involved the categorisation of all respondents into four different groups. This categorisation is based upon responses to the four key questions described previously with respondents classified by level of satisfaction, based upon their overall performance and recommendation responses, and levels of loyalty, based upon their repeat visit and competitive advantage responses.

The four groups are as follows:

- *Apostles* – visitors with high levels of satisfaction and loyalty. Visitors essential to the long term success of the site. The focus should be on how to retain these visitors.
- *Hostages* – visitors with low levels of satisfaction but high levels of loyalty. These visitors may be visiting the site due to a lack of alternatives or barriers to travel elsewhere. The focus should be on how to satisfy these visitors, to ‘move’ them to the Apostles group.
- *Mercenaries* – visitors with high levels of satisfaction but low levels of loyalty. Typically these types of visitors are always looking for better options and are likely to visit a range of different locations to take part in outdoor recreation. The focus for this type of visitors should be to identify what will engender loyalty.
- *Terrorists* – visitors with low levels of satisfaction and low levels of loyalty. These types of visitors are actively disruptive via negative word of mouth.

As Figure C-2 overleaf illustrates, the majority of visitors to Hamsterley Forest (79%) were categorised into the Apostles grouping i.e. both satisfied and loyal. Most of the remainder (18%) were classified as Mercenaries (satisfied but not loyal), 3% were classified as Terrorists (neither satisfied nor loyal) and none were classified as Hostages (not satisfied but loyal).

Figure C-2 – Visitors to Hamsterley Forest by TRI*M Typology



It is notable that visitors classified as having lower levels of loyalty (the Mercenaries and Terrorists) were much more likely than the Apostles to be on holiday (31% and 3% respectively). This variation in profile is likely to be one of the reasons for the relatively large proportion classified as Mercenaries – visitors with high levels of satisfaction but a lower likelihood of repeat visit as they do not live within the local area.

TRI*M Grid

The third stage of the TRI*M analysis combined responses to the series of importance and satisfaction ratings (as detailed in Tables C-1 and C3) with the TRI*M index which was derived for each respondent on the basis of the four key questions described previously.

To produce each TRI*M grid each of the aspects of Hamsterley Forest was given a relative value in terms of the following three dimensions:

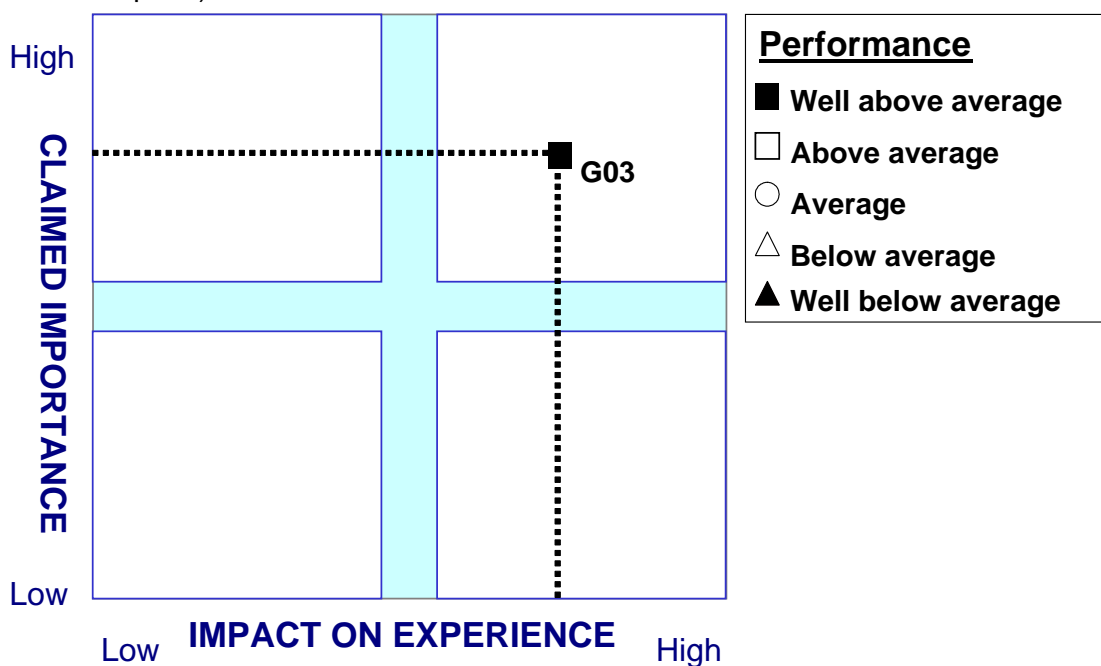
- *Levels of claimed importance* – as reported in Table C-1. This measurement provides an indication of the aspects that visitors believe to most important in their decision to visit Hamsterley Forest, those which should be reinforced in marketing communications.
- *Impact on experience* – this measurement is statistically derived from an analysis of the correlation of each aspect's performance (i.e. levels of satisfaction reported) with the TRI*M index. If there is positive correlation between the TRI*M index and the performance of a particular aspect it is rated as having a high impact on quality of experience. Conversely if there is no correlation between the TRI*M index and the performance of an aspect, it is rated as having a low of impact on quality of experience.
- *Levels of satisfaction* – as reported in Table C-3. This measurement provides an indication of the relative performance of each of the aspects which were rated. This measurement provides an indication of areas which require improvement.

In the following TRI*M grids, each of these three dimensions is plotted as follows:

Levels of claimed importance - this score is displayed on the vertical axis which runs along the left hand side of the grid. The closer to the top of the grid the higher the claimed importance and the closer to the bottom of the grid the lower the claimed importance.

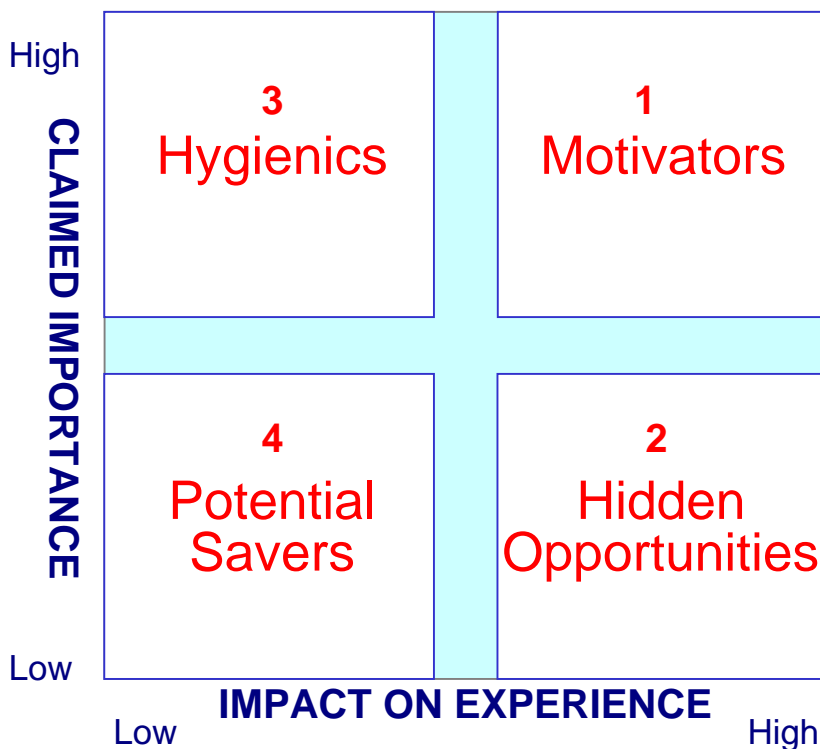
Impact on experience - this measurement is displayed on the horizontal axis which runs along the bottom of the grid (see below). The further to the right of the grid the higher the impact on the quality of experience, the further to the left of the grid the lower the impact on quality of experience.

Levels of satisfaction – the previous two dimensions (claimed importance and impact on experience) tell us where on the grid each attribute falls. On the example below these are represented by the dotted lines. Where the two dotted lines cross is where on the grid the aspect of the forest is located. The third dimension is levels of satisfaction, the measurement of performance. The average satisfaction score respondents gave to each aspect is displayed by the shape plotted on the grid, for example the filled in square on the grid below. This tells us how well the forest is performing on each attribute. In the hypothetical example below the attribute **G03** has fairly high claimed importance (because it is near the top of the grid), a fairly high impact on experience (as it is to the right of the grid) and its performance is well above average (because it has a filled in square).



As illustrated in Tables C-1 and C-3 a total of 28 aspects of Hamsterley Forest have been rated by respondents. The results of the TRI*M Grid analysis can provide an insight into which ones should be priorities for improvement or marketing. Each aspect's impact on experience rating should be considered to be a higher priority than the claimed importance rating as this measure has a direct relationship to overall levels of satisfaction. As such, aspects that are further to the right on the grid should be considered as higher priorities. However, claimed importance also has some bearing so things that are towards the top of the grid also have some priority. To help identify which aspects to prioritise each of the four quadrants has been given a name indicating its relative priority.

The top priorities should be those that fall into the Motivators quadrant (top right hand corner of the grid) because these have both a high impact on experience and high claimed importance. Second priority should be any aspects in the Hidden Opportunities quadrant (bottom right hand corner) because these also have a high impact on experience. Third priority is aspects in the Hygienics quadrant (top left hand corner) because although these have high claimed importance they are less motivating and therefore have less influence on the quality of experience. The last priority is the Potential Savers quadrant (bottom left hand corner) where aspects have both a low impact on experience and low claimed importance.



*TRI*M Grids for Hamsterley Forest*

Over the following pages the strengths and priorities for Hamsterley Forest have been identified. Strengths and priorities are defined as those aspects which fall in or on the boundaries of the Motivators quadrant. The crossbars on the grid are there to remind us that there are no hard and fast dividing lines between quadrants. Each aspect must be interpreted in relation to the position of the other aspects in order to determine its relative priority in the overall assessment of quality of experience.

The TRI*M grids illustrating the results obtain across all visitors to Hamsterley Forest are presented on page 40. For clarity the results are presented across 4 grids but all of these findings should be considered together.

Strengths - strengths are classified as attributes in or on the boundaries of the Motivators quadrant, in the top right hand corner of the grids, that are represented by squares. An unfilled square denotes above average performance and a filled square means well above average performance.

At this overall level, 7 of the 28 attributes were considered as strengths for Hamsterley Forest. Of these those with the greatest impact on experience (i.e. furthest to the right of the grids) were being able to enjoy the wildlife (G04), being able to enjoy scenery and views (G03), being able to get fit and healthy (G06), the value for money of the whole trip or day out (G05) and solitude, peace and quiet (G01). Other aspects which should be considered as secondary strengths as they have less impact on overall experience were being able to spend time with family and friends (G02) and feeling safe in the forest (A01).

Priorities - priorities, like strengths, are also found in or on the boundaries of the Motivators quadrant. They are indicated by triangles (below average performance) and circles (average performance). Only one aspect was identified as priority for Hamsterley Forest at the overall market level – clear signposting on footpaths (F02). While this element is considered to be of high claimed importance and has an impact on experience, its performance is only rated as average.

Hidden Opportunities - hidden opportunities are indicated by any aspect that appears in or on the borders of the quadrant in the bottom right of the grid. These attributes have a high impact on quality of experience but have lower claimed importance than attributes

in the Motivators quadrant. 6 of the 28 aspects are in this quadrant – the availability of staff at the site, the choice of trails for cycling, information provided by staff, leaflets, maps and interpretation panels, children’s play equipment and printed information about the forest. Of these aspects only one (choice of trails for cycling) is performing above average. Improving the quality of the other aspects in this quadrant could be the driver for further improving overall levels of quality of experience at Hamsterley Forest.

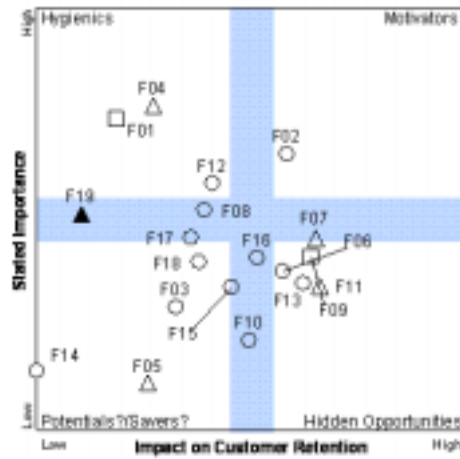
Hygenics – while the performance of aspects in this quadrant are important to the viability of the site, high levels of satisfaction will not improve retention in themselves. Aspects included in this quadrant or close to boundaries are enough car parking (F01), clean toilets (F04), the friendliness of staff (F12), dog waste bins (F19), litter bins (F20), feeling happy to leave your car in the car park (A02) and choice of paths for walking (F08). Notably three of these aspects are performing below average – the cleanliness of toilets, dog waste bins and litter bins.

Potential savers - aspects in this quadrant receive lower than average levels of claimed importance and have a lower than average impact upon the quality of experience. These aspects may be considered as lower priorities at the ‘all visitors’ level, although they may be of more importance to smaller groups of visitors. Aspects included in this quadrant are the availability of cycle hire on site (F14), baby changing facilities (F05), a shop (F03), open grassy areas for ball games, etc. (F18) and a forest drive (F22).

FACILITIES IN DECISION TO VISIT SITE

- F01 Enough car parking
- F02 Clear signposting on footpaths
- F03 A Shop
- F04 Clean toilets
- F05 Baby changing facilities
- F06 Children's play equipment
- F07 Leaflets, maps and interpretation panels to help you find your way around
- F08 Choice of paths for walking
- F09 Choice of trails for cycling
- F10 Choice of trails for other activities (e.g. horse riding)
- F11 Availability of staff at the site (e.g. rangers)
- F12 Friendliness of staff
- F13 Information provided by staff
- F14 Availability of cycle hire on-site
- F15 Cafe or restaurant
- F16 Printed information about the forest
- F17 Picnic areas
- F18 Open grassy areas for ball games, sunbathing, etc
- F19 Dog waste bins

Base 276



FACILITIES IN DECISION TO VISIT SITE

- F20 Litter bins
- F21 Go Ape course *
- F22 A forest drive
- F23 Bike wash *
- F24 Showers *
- F25 Red kite hide *

*Not available at this site

Base 276



GENERAL ASPECTS IN DECISION TO VISIT

- G01 Solitude, peace and quiet
- G02 Being able to spend time with family and friends
- G03 Being able to enjoy scenery and views
- G04 Being able to enjoy the wildlife
- G05 Value for money of your whole trip or day out
- G06 Being able to get fit and healthy

Base 276



ASPECTS OF PERSONAL SAFETY AND SECURITY IN DECISION TO VISIT

- A01 Feeling safe in the forest
- A02 Feeling happy to leave your car in the car park

Base 276



Summary of key TRI*M Grid findings

The TRI*M Grid analysis for Hamsterley Forest has highlighted the following key drivers of quality of experience and potential areas for improvement:

Strengths – these are the attributes of the site which are considered as important amongst most visitors, are proven to have a high impact on overall levels of satisfaction and are currently performing well. At Hamsterley Forest the main strengths are being able to enjoy the wildlife, being able to enjoy scenery and views, being able to get fit and healthy, the value for money of the whole trip or day out and solitude, peace and quiet.

It is vital that these strengths are maintained and communicated in promotional materials.

Immediate, top priority issues – these are attributes of the site which are considered to be important amongst most visitors, have an impact on overall levels of satisfaction but are currently performing below average. At Hamsterley Forest clear signposting on footpaths should be considered a priority in the site's management and maintaining current levels of satisfaction.

Second priority issues – there are a number of attributes at this site which, although most visitors rated them as important, were found to have less impact on overall levels of satisfaction. Of these attributes, three were found to be performing below average – clean toilets, dog waste bins and litter bins. These should be considered as second priorities in maintaining levels of satisfaction at Hamsterley Forest.

Future opportunities – these are attributes which, although most visitors do not perceive them as important in their decision to visit, have been proven to have an impact on the overall quality of experience of those who rated them. At Hamsterley Forest the aspects included in this category are the availability of staff at the site, the choice of trails for cycling, information provided by staff, leaflets, maps and interpretation panels, children's play equipment and printed information about the forest.

Investing and improving these facilities in the future will provide opportunities to develop levels of satisfaction beyond those currently achieved.

D. Appendices

Questionnaires

Results obtained at other Forestry Commission sites

Responses to open-ended questions

What else influenced your decision to visit today?

10km runner so scouting it out.
A change for walking areas.
A change of scenery.
A change. Curiosity.
A church outing, spending time with friends.
A day out. Nice scenery.
A decent day, nice day, good weather.
A get together with friends and keeping fit at the same time.
A walk with the dog.
Accessibility for bike riding (for grandchild).
Accessibility. Entertainment for kids.
Adrenaline rush - good place to cycle.
Article in a magazine. Exercise. Reasonable day (weather).
Away from it all. Tranquil. Fresh air. A point of exercise.
Bad head.
Bank holiday - activity - didn't know where to go.
Basically the proximity - things to see - David Bellamy.
Because I am on holiday so I came here to use the motorbike trail.
Because I enjoy the area and I like to take the dogs to walk with.
Because I like the fresh air, the trees.
Because it is a nice day, we just enjoyed the setting and relaxed.
Because the sun was out. I knew we could have an ice cream with my children.
Because the weather today is really good. Very sunny.
Because we enjoyed seeing outside and the facility is well.
Because we wanted to come cycling and somebody told us that it was a nice place to be. Also we are on holiday.
Being able to spend quality time with friends and family.
Being local and something we enjoy doing, a nice, cheap day out.
Bike riding, its good for families as well.
Birthday party. Nice weather. Nice to get out in open spaces.
Break.
Break from work.
Brought grandson to see wildlife.
Came to play with my daughter in the water.
Change of scenery.
Change of scenery.
Children.
Children activities.
Children on holiday. Workshop was a factor.
Choice for the kids.
Close by not too many other places to go like this.
Close by. River for the kids.
Close from work choice of walks and toilets next to the car park. Overall just a nice place.
Close to home.
Close to where we were staying, however would have travelled further.
Closest for us.
Convenience.
Convenience.
Convenient to where we are on holiday.
Convenient break in the journey with dog. Could have been helpful; how far to travel e.g. 10 miles.
Curiosity really.
Day of fun and relaxation.
Day out in countryside and bike riding and spend time with kids.
Dog needs a long walk. I feel safe.
Dog walk - good facilities.
Don't like going on the roads with the horses. Riding safer.
Duke of Edinburgh expedition.
Easy access.
Easy access. Clean open spaces.
Easy access. The beautiful scenery. The amenities.
Easy to get here. It's 3 miles away.
Exercise and fresh air.
Exercise and the bike routes. They are fun and you watch other people come off.
Familiarity, I know where I am going, I know what to expect, cycled to here, far enough for the kids, know there is a picnic area, know what time the car park closes, dog did his first swim in Hamsterley forest – weather, it wasn't raining.
For a change, we go to Dalby forest a lot.
For biking trails.

For the kids.
For the specialist facilities i.e. downhill cycling.
For what the forest has to offer, mainly for bike riding.
Fresh air, just relax for the day.
Fresh air. Walk. Wildlife.
Friend.
Friend offers to take me out for day trip. Not been to many forests.
Friendly staff local to where we are/ right size of accommodation.
Good for the kids.
Good mountain bike trails more needed.
Good reviews in magazine.
Good weather.
Good weather.
Good weather. Get the kids away from their normal environment. To play. Bring the dog. Exercise. Play in water.
Got a 13 year old son who is very active and gets bored easily.
Had time available - the weather was fine - good exercise.
Have a look around.
Have to visit every 5 years.
Haven't been for a while, wanted a picnic and play area.
Having a picnic with grandchildren. Just relaxing day.
Having quality time with family. Nice weather.
Healthy. For the child.
I am enjoying some walks and also beautiful site.
I have been coming for years, good facilities.
I just enjoyed staying here because it is relaxing and it is a nice place.
It was easy to get to. Dry and sunny otherwise we would have stayed at home.
It wasn't going to rain.
It wasn't raining yet! Being so local not spending loads to get here.
It's a lovely place to come.
Its a nice area to come, quite and peaceful - I do think you need more dog bins else people will chuck it - nice scenery.
Its a nice place to come - open spaces- plenty children's activities- nice place to picnic.
It's an ideal place to come in the bad weather or good weather. Bad weather you are looking for place to go. Ideal for kids they don't get enough exercise.
Its cheap and comfortable and the kids can do what they want.
It's just a lovely place. We did our courting in this area years ago.
It's just a nice place.
It's just one of our favourite places - the area. Autumn colour.
Its local.
It's near home. I knew we could go on the bikes and there was no traffic, especially with children.
It's peaceful.
Just a interest in the outdoors and wildlife.
Just a look out.
Just a social day out.
Just a walk out with the dog - came here through word of mouth.
Just always come on a Saturday.
Just because it is a beautiful day - just to walk and relax.
Just enjoy the day. I like the open air.
Just enjoy spending time with my family.
Just for a change and nice facilities.
Just for the day out with my children.
Just got some free time and children are off school (holiday).
Just have a walk on relaxing day.
Just having a day out.
Just like it- likes forest wanted a family day out.
Just like it- likes forest wanted a family day out.
Just location, where it is.
Just out with the dog and like to walk through the forest and the peace and quiet.
Just recommendation of friends.
Just saw the sign.
Just short trip out - just relaxation.
Just time today to visit, and it is so near to home.
Just the amount of variety and activities for children.
Just the cycle tracks which are here, you just cannot go wrong.
Just the fact it is a really nice place to cycle with the children and safe.
Just the information, how good it is for cycling especially.
Just the new cycling black grades.
Just the open air and facilities.
Just the peace and quiet, with the family.
Just the weather is very good - walking the dog.
Just to do some motorcycling.
Just to get out/enjoying the weather.

Just to have a good time with family, good time and picnic.
Just to relax and have fun and have nice picnic with the grand children.
Just to spend time with my family and get some exercise.
Just to walk the dog.
Just walk and look for the wildlife - and have a picnic.
Just wanted to be with friends.
Just we enjoy the scenery of the countryside.
Kids.
Kids holidays, something for kids to do.
Lack of fuel; in the car/to get away from wife and family. Variety of tracks and getting away from it all.
Last weekend for light before winter.
Little boy's friend never been before-quite close to home.
Local. Handy. Cheap.
Local. Easy to get to good reviews on internet.
Locality of it being as close as it is. Rural.
Locality to Darlington.
Locality. Found it on the internet. Internet shows lot of choice here for cycling.
Meeting up with friends-exercise, cycling for son, I can dog walk.
Mountain biking and the trail - closest place to come to get away from cars.
Mountain biking trails. Knowing they had good trails. Having fun. Trees providing shade on a hot sunny day.
My child.
My daughter.
My daughter insisted we went as she had started her holidays yesterday - the weather was not good at home, but it is fine here.
My son asked to come to go cycling.
My wife used to come here before we got married.
My wife's day off work.
Near to home/good bike trails.
Near to where our son lives and the weather is good.
New area to visit, suitable for children.
New biking area.
Nice area.
Nice area. Easy to get to.
Nice day, partner's decision.
Nice to be in open space, to stroll around.
Nice weather.
Nice weather. No change in machine.
Not far from home.
Nothing else for miles around, everything is laid on, you don't have to think.
On holiday and will go somewhere everyday. We will be back.
One of the nicest places we have round here. No hassle.
Organised trip - organised by NHS, we have no influence.
Our grandchild wanted to come.
Our son using the skills today with his bike.
Past experience, wanted to get out.
Past experience. Nice walks. Kids love it. Easy access. Relaxing.
Peace of mind, knowing children are safe.
Planned with friends and like the wildlife.
Proximity first day of football season.
Proximity to Newcastle.
Proximity to our location.
Safety and off road cycling.
Saw on the way from Stanhope show.
Seen brochure with squirrel graphics and children wanted to visit - better than old park.
Somewhere different to go.
Somewhere open, walk the dog.
Somewhere to bring kids. They've just learned to ride their bikes.
Somewhere where the children can run around freely.
Specially to accompany the children.
Spend time with my children on my day off. Also the weather is very good for relaxation.
Spur of the moment.
Sunny - great fun here.
The ability to hire a bike. Before we used to walk.
The children to run energy off.
The cost. It's safe for everyone.
The cycling really - looked yesterday for a cycle shop and came across it here at the forest.
The fact that they put the river in. It is very important and it is very safe and quiet.
The fact we have two dogs to exercise and we live close by.
The general area - just wanted to come to Bishop Auckland and Barnaso castle.
The holiday season. The fine weather.
The kids - to get them out.

The kids made bows and arrows and wanted to try them out.
 The proximity to home.
 The quietness. So peaceful. Nice views. Good facilities.
 The size and variation of the cycling and the place.
 The suitability of the play area and having toilets and café.
 The walk.
 The weather - because it is nice. With it being an hour or so away.
 The weather – it's good and specially on Friday it is very important to visit the forest for relaxing.
 The weather - it's fine. Holiday taken. The amount of variety.
 The weather is good and the trails.
 The weather is lovely and I enjoy the views.
 The weather makes a lot of difference. No weather no money. Do come every Sunday.
 The weather was fine and it does not cost you much and the kids get some fresh air.
 The weather was good today and it is good event.
 They wanted a picnic. Me and kids. Nice place to come. Weather - hot. No shows – quiet.
 Time spent with children and friends.
 To come with and meet friends.
 To enjoy the wildlife and spend time with friends.
 To get out on my bike during the bank holiday.
 To go to the children's area and the river with my granddaughter.
 To keep fit, exercise, somewhere different from the beach.
 To survey the scenery.
 Tranquility, silence and something different to show the grandchildren.
 Very enjoyable. All the facilities we need. We have been here a few years now. It is handy.
 Very good first impression 3 weeks ago. Clean and tidy. Safe for the kids. If you want peace and quiet you can go and find it.
 Visited tourist info centre in Newcastle - picked up brochure and decided to come. Weather good.
 Visiting my father-in-law. Dog waking.
 Visiting my father-in-law. Dog walking.
 Walk the dog.
 Warm weather inland. Came here instead of seaside.
 We are having a picnic with grandchildren.
 We are here for a week so we planned our visit - weather not too warm, so we came today.
 We have a bike business and that's why we come here.
 We haven't been for a while, we wanted a bar-b-que, its close to home, its never overcrowded.
 Weather.
 Weather - knew it was cloudy but not raining - fresh air - to get out - something different.
 Weather, did not want too much rain.
 Weather forecast.
 Weather, it was nice and warm, sunny and relaxing.
 Weather, just a day out in fresh air.
 Weather more sheltered here - weather forecast less wind here.
 Weather not too hot fine and dry its not an expensive day out - children enjoy it come with a picnic.
 Weather was nice, warm and sunny, to get out and get some walking done, exercise in nice surroundings.
 Weather. Somewhere to bring the children. Healthy environment.
 Weather. We like coming.
 Weather. Wildlife.
 Were going to barbecue. Decided to come here instead.
 Weather, it is easier to ride in the forest. The wind is not so strong. Easy to meet up with friends here.
 Wife going horse riding in local areas.
 Wife's got the car all day.
 Word of mouth. I've heard also of motor sports.
 You come here because it is very warm and relaxing.

Suggestions for improvements

A bigger biking course.
 A campsite. Make your own bind boxes and walking sticks.
 Ban cars no cars motorbikes. Young children on motorbikes.
 Better signs for the walkers around the cycle tracks.
 Better signs needed.
 Black route improved.
 Central cafe - little and dog bins.
 Designated areas for the horses to ride and vice versa.
 Dog waste bins - little bins.
 Everything fine.
 Get rid of horses mountain bikers and tree fellers.
 I like it as it is.
 I want a reduction in price in the afternoon - particularly for pensioners.
 If they had nice proper built barbecues with water beside.
 Increase playing facilities for kids. More cycle tracks. Family orientated.
 I know they are putting more cycle trails in and I'm all for that. People would use it more in the winter.

Introduction of litter bins. Improvement with the cleanliness of the toilets.
 It's good as it is.
 It's ok but the cafe should have more variety. Less expensive.
 Just more dog bins.
 Litter bins - dog waste bins.
 Litter bins and dog bins.
 Litter bins are prob only thing they are lacking. Would be better if there were more toilets in other places.
 Litter bins. They should state the times they are open not just 'sundown' etc. We don't want to get locked in. We can plan when we are coming.
 Litter bins - dog dirt bins-to stay open longer especially in the summer.
 Make litter bins.
 More bike trails.
 More bike trails.
 More bins for litter and dog waste.
 More bins. Bigger cafe. Couple of shops. Cafe at other end of forest.
 More bins-staff and play area facilities.
 More choice of trails.
 More cycle trails specialist cycle trails.
 More cycle trails - better marking of the trails - more variety in the cycle trails graded on length and severity.
 More dog fouling and litter bins. A bigger cafe and more choice in the shop.
 More dog litter bins.
 More just walking tracks.
 More litter bins.
 More litter bins.
 More litter bins and more leaflet activities to explore the forest.
 More picnic areas, more toilets, more wardens, rangers, bigger cafe and shop different range of food rather than cakes and sandwiches.
 More purpose built mountain bike tracks. More changing washing and catering facilities.
 More signs for walkers giving distances.
 More technical section on the cycle tracks but this is being done.
 More toilet facilities.
 More tracks for cycling/walking.
 More trees planted.
 Needs shower block and covered changing area.
 No mobile reception but don't want to see masts here.
 Nothing. Quite happy with the way things are.
 Perfect as it is.
 Picnic tables. More walking trails. Litter bins. Do more orienteering, more often for children and adults. Trees marked and flowers e.g. Oak.
 Play area more useable for smaller children. Swings.
 Reduce cyclists and tree felling.
 Repair on some of the trails.
 Slight improvement of the cycle tracks - sign posts - the size not too big but sometimes you miss them.
 Some tracks a bit softer. Horse friendly.
 Somewhere for the dinghy.
 Stop people to park on the roadbecause they don't want to paid 2 pound.
 To increase the number of walks or length of walks.
 Toilet at other sites. No toilets further away from visitors centre.
 Warning given by cyclists coming behind you.
 We like it as it is.

What do you like most about the forest?

Accessibility, range of activities on offer, it combines lots of things my family want in one place, the maintenance of it, upkeep is good
 Availability and everything laid on here, you don't have to think, just come along and enjoy.
 Being outside. Feeling safe. Showing my son animals.
 Bike trails.
 Bike trails. How local it is to where I live. Quality of trails.
 Close by - nice walks - easy access.
 Cycle paths.
 Cycle riding.
 Cycling trails.
 Easy to get to and well set up for trails.
 Enough space. Walks and views. Children's play area.
 Everything - walking and peace.
 Everything is enjoyable.
 Everything. Wildlife. Views etc.
 Freedom to do your own thing.
 Freedom to roam.
 Freedom to roam. Colours of the trees.

General peace and quiet, away from the car park area.
Getting out and about.
Good make of cycling and walking. Provided a lot of things to everybody.
How it is kept as natural as possible -managed well. Different car parking areas-you can vary your walking routes.
I like the walk and fishing.
It is beautiful and peace and quiet it just lovely.
It is nice - the children can play. The children can go on because not so many cars.
It's a healthy safe environment.
It's close to home accessibility - safe cycling.
It's easy access. Plenty to do. Peaceful.
It's not commercialised. Variety of walks. Degrees of difficulty. Open all year round. Whatever the weather.
Just being out in the open air.
Just cycle track layouts, excellent.
Location of trails.
Location. Easy to get to. Variety of trails.
Location. Facilities for cycling. Free access. Big enough to be on your own.
Location/familiarity with the forest.
Mountain biking.
Nice to get away from urban areas.
Peace and a place for the kids to play.
Peace and quiet.
Peace and quiet.
Peace and quiet and see the wild life.
Peace and quiet location. It can be crowded but you can always find peace and quiet.
Peace and quiet. Open space.
Peace and tranquility.
Peaceful. Green. Pleasant.
Peacefulness and scenery - choice of footpaths.
Perfect as it is.
Proximity, convenient. Scotland is better for facilities they have it sorted out.
Riding (off road). Easy to get to.
Scenery. Good combination. Woods. Water and views.
Scenery. Solitude.
Scenery. Wildlife.
Solitude, able to walk, kids are safe playing.
Space- the greenery.
Streams (water).
The amount of walks you can do. Never seems really busy.
The beauty of the forest.
The bike trails, easy to use all the year round.
The cycling trails.
The downhill mountain track.
The downhill track.
The natural environment.
The natural surroundings.
The peace and quiet & scenery.
The peace and quiet and lovely scenes.
The peace and the walks. The changing scenery.
The peace of being in the countryside.
The peace. It's beautiful.
The release of getting out of the house.
The scenery and the peace and tranquility.
The scenery. The variety of things to do. It's not overpriced or overcrowded.
The space. Variety of activities.
The surroundings and peaceful walks.
The trails.
The tranquility - encourages appreciation of outdoors and respect of nature by my children.
The trees and tranquility.
The whole ambience of the place. Can get away from crowds. Fresh air.
The wild life squirrels and pheasants - I like the tranquility of the forest and the people that come here.
Tranquility. Being amongst the environment.
Varieties of facility, cycling and dog walking.
Very quiet. Wildlife.
Walking.
Walks. Trails. Running. Wildlife.
Wide open space - choice of activities.
Wildlife.
You can go all over and not bump into many people.

Interview breakdown