

Walsham le Willows Open Gardens 2024

Visitor Survey Analysis

Fifty -one surveys were completed and returned. Based on the total number of visitors it is quite a small representative sample, however any point raised is valid.

It should be noted that not all visitors completed every question on the survey. Some surveys were anonymous.

Information gathered from the completed survey questionnaires is as follows:

3. Geographical range of visitors

Oxfordshire	Bury St Edmunds	Cambridgeshire villages
Norwich	Walsham le Willows	Essex
Newmarket	Ely	London
Huntingdon	Suffolk villages	
North Yorkshire	Norfolk villages	

A number of surveys were completed anonymously

2. Effectiveness of publicity

East Anglian	1	National Press	0	Car Club	1
Eastern Evening News	0	Road Signs	5	Cams Evening News	0
Diss Express	0	Bury Free Press	3	Internet	15
Posters	7	Radio Suffolk	1	Other	11
Evening Star	0	Word of mouth	11	Twitter	0

- The 'other' box indicated 'The Suffolk Magazine' and 'National Open Gardens' but only when visitors chose to elaborate. Needs to be a space to specify what the source was.

3. How many times have you visited this event?

Number of visits	Responses
1	16
2	8
3	6
4	4
5	4
6	1
6+	5

- More first-time visitors this year.

4. About the event

- 19 visited on the Sunday
- 24 visited on the Monday
- 8 people visited on both days.
- Based on previous samples there seems to be an increase in the number of people visiting both days as the number of gardens and attractions increases.

	Good	Average	Poor
Priory Room	29	1	1
Memorial Village Hall	42		
BBQ and Pizza	21		
Art in the Church	21	6	
Flowers	23	5	
Music in the Church	19	1	1
Bell Ringing Demonstrations	6	1	1
Bands	20	4	
Walsham History Group	5	2	
Village Market	14	9	2
Bus Service	20	2	3

Reasons given for average and poor ratings:

- Priory Room – cake portions overpriced for size and water not hot enough for tea.
- Art in the church – no reasons given
- Flowers – no reasons given
- Music in the church – piano too loud and out of tune!!!!
- Bell Ringing demonstration – no reasons given
- Bands – no reasons given
- Walsham History Group – no reasons given
- Village Market – ‘Not a market?’
- Bus Service – hailed but didn’t stop, didn’t serve purpose very well, long waits, death would come earlier!!! Visitors missed visiting gardens because the bus didn’t come. Caused problems for one disabled visitor.

Possible changes to the form:

- Need to specify source of ‘Other ‘ for publicity purposes.
- The ‘About the event’ section needs to be reviewed annually to ensure it reflects what we are offering.
- Need to add parking and signage to form.
- Can we simplify it and make it shorter? We might get more responses.

About the gardens:

The four favourite gardens as follows:

- 1 Garden 6 Peter and Henny Fenwick- Causeway House (the tortoises)
- 2 Garden 22 Donna Jackson - 5 Palmer Street (Front garden)
- 3 Garden 1 Sheila and Ron O'Keefe - 2 Church View
- 4 Garden 35 Kevin Boardley and John Ward - Willow Cottage

Over time and comments show a swing from the popularity of larger gardens to the smaller garden plot. People being keen to get ideas for their own gardens.

27 had enough time to see everything.

24 did not have enough time to see everything.

Summary

Positive comments

Overall visitors who completed the survey were very generous with their comments and praise for the event and all those involved, quoting community spirit, exceptional organisation, friendliness and lovely atmosphere. (See survey forms). The comments identified the strengths of this event as follows:

- well organised, recognition of the effort involved.
- lovely atmosphere and village
- welcoming, everybody friendly and helpful
- great community spirit
- parking directions very good
- fantastic team effort
- superb gardens and stalls at village hall
- excellent refreshments and catering, very fairly priced
- friendly, helpful garden owners
- excellent bus service
- music in all forms enjoyed.
- very good programme with clear, easy to follow map.

Some general quotes

- 'So lovely and welcoming, will definitely come next year'.
- 'Lovely atmosphere in your beautiful village.'
- 'Great community spirit.'

- 'Clearly a remarkable effort by many people.'
- What a fantastic team effort. You can all be very proud of what you have achieved.'
- 'Looking forward to next year all ready.'
- 'So well organised, a marvellous event.'
- With the involvement of so many locals you have really excelled yourself this year.'

Specific quotes

- 'Morris dancers very good.'
- 'Birds of prey amazing.'
- 'Great gardens, owners very friendly and knowledgeable.'
- 'Parking directions very good'.
- 'All three eating venues were really well-run, super-efficient and tasty food'.
- 'Meringues were amazing'.
- 'Porta loos well positioned and clean'.
- 'Superb gardens and stalls at Village Hall'.
- 'Cakes are amazing.'
- 'Good map, very clear and easy to find gardens.'
- 'Top marks to the catering staff and volunteers.'
- 'Really enjoyed the music in all forms.'
- 'Wonderful car park attendants. Took account of low chassis cars.'
- 'Village market good, bought plenty.'
- 'The gardens were all wonderful. The owners putting so much love and hard work into maintaining them.'
- 'Bus service excellent, really helps aching legs.'
- 'Refreshments very fairly price.'
- 'Good to have accessible gardens marked in the programme for those who are disabled.'
- Programme excellent, very interesting and informative.'

Negative comments/suggestions

- The bus service (see comments above).
- Grass in the car park too long.
- Website says entry charge £7.25 non-gift aid. Visitor explained that they were a non- uk tax payer but was told they still had to pay £8.00.
- A few children's amusements in the gardens would be appreciated, like hook a duck.
- Gravel is difficult for wheelchairs to negotiate, prohibited access to the church.
- More gluten free available – **Response: this was factored in but the person who was to provide the gluten free was ill, so the range was limited, although plenty of gluten free cake.**
- No mention of allergy status. **Response: Allergen notices were posted at all three venues and printed at the bottom of the price lists for all three venues.**

- Would appreciate earlier signs to the car-park and better signage from the Bacton direction.
- 'Some of the gardens of previous visits now showing their age and of their owners. All gardens need to be redone every few years.'
- A portaloos at Townhouse.

Conclusion

From the sample of surveys completed:

- The most effective publicity remains the internet, road signs, word of mouth (reputation) and 'other', which needs a space to indicate what the other source was.
- The bus although praised also continues to attract negative comments about its reliability and the impact on the enjoyment of our visitors. Does the driver need more specific directives, such as how many circuits he should make an hour and what time he will take his break?
- The 'Village Market' continues to be problematic since its change of venue, but visitors did not say why. Most people don't realise that the stalls at the MVH are also part of the Village Market. Should we have more stalls around the village and publicise the whole thing as the 'Village Market'. Do we know which stalls did well?
- The survey should include directions and parking facility comments.
- The survey form needs to be reviewed annually to ensure it reflects opportunities for visitors to comment on what is actually offered at the event.
- The most popular gardens indicates a change to the popularity of the smaller garden, where people are looking to gain ideas for their own gardens (see survey comments).
- Should we look at how we cater for disabled people. Several comments from people with disabilities. We certainly have a growing number of people with disabilities visiting the event?
- Based on the sample of survey forms completed and the positive comments visitors had a really enjoyable day or two and many make return visits.
- Should we publicise the positive comments in the Observer/facebook so that helpers can see how much their hard work is appreciated?

FJ (September 2024)