

# **USER SURVEY OF THE PORTER VALLEY**

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**Friends of the Porter Valley**

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

FoPV wanted to find out about people's attitudes to the Valley to inform our future policies and any bids for funding that we might make. Between Autumn 2000 and Summer 2001, we counted the people using the Porter Valley at regular intervals, and conducted a survey of 1000 people using the Valley

### 1.1 Counts of people using the Valley

The counts were made by a volunteer walking or cycling along the main route from Endcliffe Park to Porter Clough. These counts were done on one weekday and one weekend day during each month over the year

### 1.2 The questionnaires

We asked questions in four subject areas

- Who uses the Valley? (where do they live, how old are they, who do they come with?)
- How do they use the Valley? (what do they do, where, for how long?)
- What do they like or dislike about the Valley?
- Specific questions on aspects we thought important, e.g. maintaining the industrial heritage, maintaining the wildlife habitats and maintaining footpaths.

The questionnaires were conducted approximately to the following plan

- 250 each season. Of these 250 ...
  - 50 in each of 5 sections of the Valley (Endcliffe Park, Bingham Park, Whiteley Woods, Forge Dam and Porter Clough). Of these 50 ...
    - 30 at the weekend, 20 during the week

The practicalities of undertaking the survey have led to some anomalies. For example, people running, cycling or playing sports were unwilling to stop to be interviewed, and so they are underrepresented.

The interviews were carried out by a group of our members along the main paths between Hunters Bar and Porter Clough.

The survey form is shown in Appendix B

The analysis has been carried out by Ros Hancock.

### 1.3 Acknowledgements

We would like to thank Sheffield City Council's Parks, Woodlands and Countryside section for licensing our volunteers to interview people.

Thanks are also due to the volunteers who put in so many hours, in all weathers, to carry out interviews and the counts: Stephen Allan, Tim Birkhead, Oliver Gilbert, Ann and Mike Granville, Les Greenwood, Malcolm Jones, Janet Hartley, Nigel Hopkins, Flora Owen, Ann le Sage and Roger Ward.

## 2. SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS BY SECTION

### Section 3.3.1

- Given the high numbers of young children (aged up to 10) already visiting the Valley, some educational events, information boards, leaflets, etc. should be aimed at this age group to encourage an interest in nature and history.

### Section 3.5

- Certain paths should be improved to provide an easier surface for people using wheelchairs or with mobility problems.
- More seats, appropriate to the surroundings, should be provided, especially along these improved paths.
- Some disabled-only parking spaces should be provided at various points along the Valley.

### Section 5

- Improvements to the path signs into The Roughs, and guided walks through the Roughs could open this area up more to visitors.
- Signs and maps showing paths other than the main 'Round Walk' route should be provided, encouraging people to explore the wider Valley area.

### Section 6

- Advertising the bus routes may encourage people to use the bus rather than the car.
- Providing places to lock bikes may encourage people to cycle to the Valley and then walk, use the playgrounds, etc.

### Section 55

- The playgrounds need regular maintenance and improvement to whatever the current 'best' facilities are.
- The cafés are very popular and should be supported if, in future, they need it.
- No more sports facilities need be provided, but proper maintenance of the tennis courts would be one measure against the accusation of 'neglect'.

### Section 7.1

- The natural aspects of the Valley must be retained. The wilder areas should not be made more park-like. Maintenance should be to improve the area for wildlife.

### Section 7.2.3

- More and better bins are needed where people congregate – Endcliffe and Bingham Parks, and Forge and Wire Mill Dams.
- These bins need to be emptied as often as necessary.
- Dropped litter should be collected regularly.

### Section 7.3.2

- More dog bins need to be provided in Endcliffe Park and at Forge Dam.
- The bins must be emptied as often as necessary.
- Perhaps there should be sections within these two areas, e.g. around playgrounds, cafés and the 'recreation field' part of Endcliffe, where dogs must be kept on leads – people may be less inclined to allow their dogs to defecate if on a lead or may be more likely to 'scoop'.

### Section 7.3.3

- The dams are vital to the character of the Valley. People love them and want them cared for, and are unhappy with the current situation. Major funding must be sought to desilt the dams and carry out any other necessary maintenance.
- Shepherd Wheel, the only surviving wheel in the Valley, needs to be repaired and should then be open more frequently.

### Section 7.3.4

- The toilets need refurbishing or replacing to provide wash-basins, toilet paper, lighting and baby-changing facilities.
- Cleaning should include the entire cubicle.

**Section 7.3.5**

- Installation of information boards explaining who may use which paths (e.g. at the park entrances, Brookhouse Hill, top and bottom of Porter Clough)
- Barriers of some sort on Porter Clough to discourage cycling on the footpath
- Leaflets with maps showing the bridlepath and byway network

**Section 7.3.6**

- Better maintenance of paths, particularly those categorised as 'Easy Going'
- Some improvements have already been made to the road crossings, but further and more effective measures should also be provided on Quiet Lane and Hangingwater Road.
- The 'hut' in Bingham Park, if it cannot be demolished, should be made more vandal-proof.

**Section 7.4**

- There is a need for some sort of official presence in the parks, e.g. park keepers or rangers, and for these people to have the authority to enforce the park regulations.
- More seats, appropriate to each area, are needed, especially on 'Easy Going' routes.
- A cycle route is needed through Endcliffe Park
- Some information boards should be installed at strategic sites to explain the history and natural history of the area
- Leaflets on the history and natural history should be provided, available at the cafés.