

# Brecon Beacons National Park Web Site Questionnaire Survey: Analysis of Responses

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## **Executive Summary**

Of 142 responses to the web site survey conducted online over the period of a month, 130 were analysed. Nine questions were posed, regarding navigation to the site, information seeking, rating aspects of the web site and suggestions for improvement, and personal/demographic information (respondent's location, age group and gender). Not all respondents answered all questions. Access logs for the period were also studied. Respondents were located mainly in England (46%) and Wales (44%); 42% were female and 53% male. Respondents were mainly in the 26-55 year-old age groups.

60% of respondents navigated to the web site via a search engine; 75 % of these used Google. Bookmarks and links from other sites were each used by 15% of respondents.

Most respondents were looking for Outdoor Activities or Tourism/Visitor Information. Most "Other" information needs could be recategorised under these headings, giving a total of over 60% of respondents mainly interested in this type of information. Job Vacancies were the next most popular choice (15%), with Educational Materials (8%) and Planning Information (5%).

Respondents' comments indicate that they saw no obvious slant towards tourist information, that they perceived a lack of information for outdoor activities e.g. walking, biking, weather and maps, and that more photographs would enhance the site and encourage visitors to the park.

Only just over half of respondents indicated that they found the information they were looking for without much difficulty; this suggests that the content and organization of the site can be improved to better meet the needs of the general public. Most (82%) of respondents who said they could not find the information they wanted did not use the Search function. . This highlights the need to organize the site in ways that match users' requirements and expectations.

Replicating some of the searches conducted by respondents showed that results pages are often dominated by planning information, which was of no interest to the vast majority of respondents, and gave them a poor impression of the site. There is a case for excluding planning information from the Search function, except when the Search is initiated from the planning pages. The main web site needs to be focused on tourist/visitor/outdoor activities information, including easy access to accommodation information, which is what visitors to the web site expect to find there.

Searching the web site could be made more fruitful via controlled vocabulary indexing and pointing users towards Advanced Search, where they would choose from a list of keywords. Combination searches of two or three keywords would increase the accuracy of search results.

Only about half of the respondents rated the site overall as above average. About half the respondents were looking for Tourism/Visitor Information or information on Outdoor Activities, and most of them rated the web site as only average or poor.

Comments and suggestions made by respondents covered web site content, style and presentation, navigation and features. These point towards the need for an improved design, layout and content (including careful authoring and proof-reading), giving a sense of enthusiasm for the park, pointing the visitor to the main attractions and features of the park. A virtual tour and photograph galleries could be used to show off the park; visitors also want information on the weather, walks, camping, parking, and detailed maps. The new design should require less scrolling and fewer downloads, and eliminate broken links within the site. The new site should be bilingual.

## **1 Introduction**

During the survey period (mid-August to mid-September 2005) there were about 24,000 visitors to the web site; 142 responses to the questionnaire survey were logged, a response rate of about 1/2 %. The responses may not be representative of the total user population, but the answers and comments do offer indicators of and interesting insights into user behaviour and expectations. Of the response forms, 12 were discarded, leaving 130 responses for analysis (seven forms were mostly blank, two were duplicates, and three indicated that the questions had been answered before the respondent had looked at the web site).

Nine questions were posed, regarding navigation to the site, information seeking, rating aspects of the web site and suggestions for improvement, with the ninth and final question soliciting personal/demographic information in the form of the respondent's location, age group and gender.

Totals and percentages on table/charts do not always add up to 130/100% as some respondents did not answer every question, and some made suggestions/comments about several aspects of the site.

Access logs for the period were also studied, to identify search patterns of respondents who said they couldn't find the information they wanted.

## **2 Demographics**

Question 9: asked for the respondent's location (country), age group and gender.

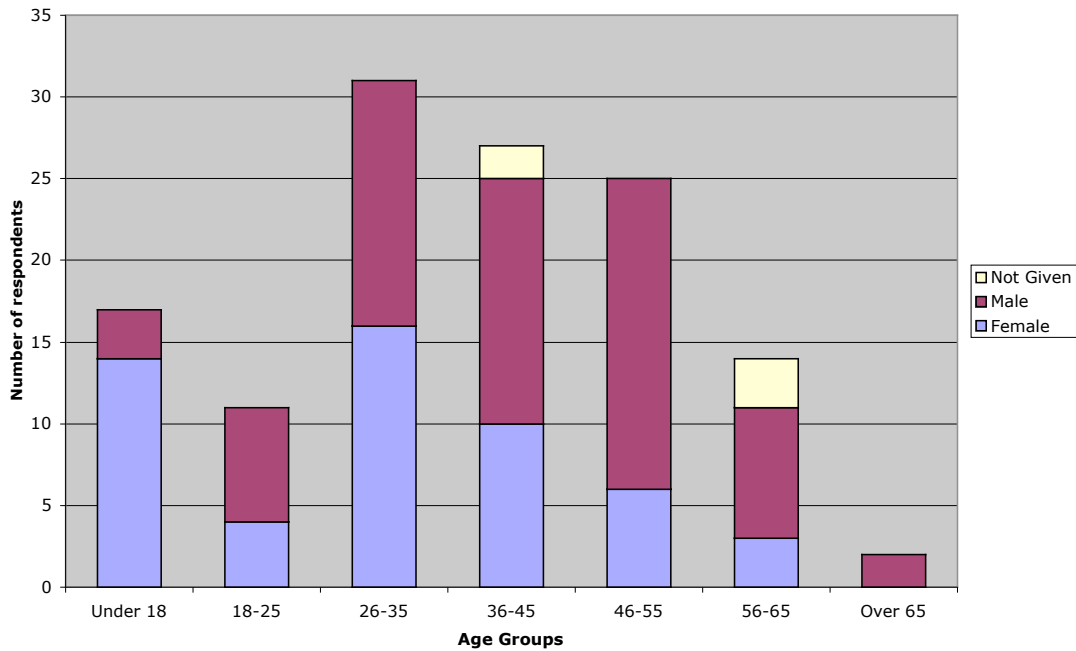
Location: England 46%, Wales 44%, Other 8%.

Nine "Other" countries were mentioned.

Gender: Female 42%, Male 53%, no answer 5%.

Chart 1 shows the age/gender distribution of the respondents.

**Chart 1: Age/Gender Distribution**



### 3 Analysis of Responses to Questions

#### Question 1: How did you find (navigate to) our web site?

**Table 1: How respondents navigated to the web site**

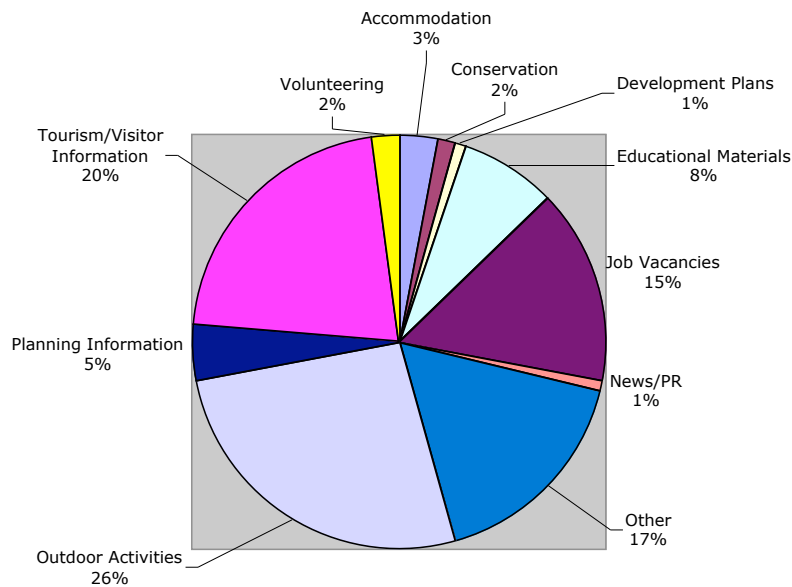
	Bookmarked from earlier visit	Search Engine	Link from another site	Other
<b>Totals</b>	<b>19 (15%)</b>	<b>77 (60%)</b>	<b>18 (15%)</b>	<b>13 (10%)</b>
Google		58		
Yahoo		4		
MSN		2		
AOL		2		
Ask Jeeves		1		
Not Specified		10		

The majority of respondents found the site via a search engine; 75% of these used Google. This underscores the importance of search engine optimization of the web site, especially in relation to Google.

#### Question 2: What information did you hope to find when visiting our website today?

Chart 2 shows the main area of information sought by respondents, chosen from a drop-down list,

**Chart 2: Information Sought**



The most popular types of information sought were Outdoor Activities and Tourism/Visitor Information. Indeed, the majority of “Other” designations could be recategorised under these headings, giving a total of over 60% of respondents mainly interested in this type of information. Job Vacancies were the next most popular choice (15%), with Educational Materials (8%) and Planning Information (5%) less so. Comparing comments made with the information need selected, it was not clear to respondents whether some topics would be included in Tourist information or under Outdoor Activities, e.g. walks, weather and maps appeared under both subject choices.

“Other” information sought (by more than one respondent) included maps, weather information, photos and the Food Festival.

Over 70% of those looking for information on Outdoor Activities were male; a third of those seeking Tourism/Visitor Information were in the 36-45 age group. Half those seeking job information were in the 26-35 age group. Overall, a surprisingly small number of respondents (less than 10%) were in the 18-25 age group.

Respondents’ comments indicate that they felt no obvious slant towards tourist information, that they perceived a lack of information for outdoor activities e.g. walking, biking, weather and maps, and that more photographs would enhance the site and encourage visitors to the park.

Comments included:

*“it doesn’t seem to be aimed at tourists at all” (54)*

*“Where are the various parts/attractions/hills? The assumption seems to be that everyone visiting the site knows all this, I don’t, and I still don’t” (96)*

*“website gives no sense of enthusiasm for [the Beacons]. Tell us why they are special, why they are protected” (68)*

*“more info for walkers, weather, more on parking” (123)*

*“you have a separate site for the 16 mountain bike routes but there is little info on the routes there other than some very small maps. You should have proper size route maps” (122)*

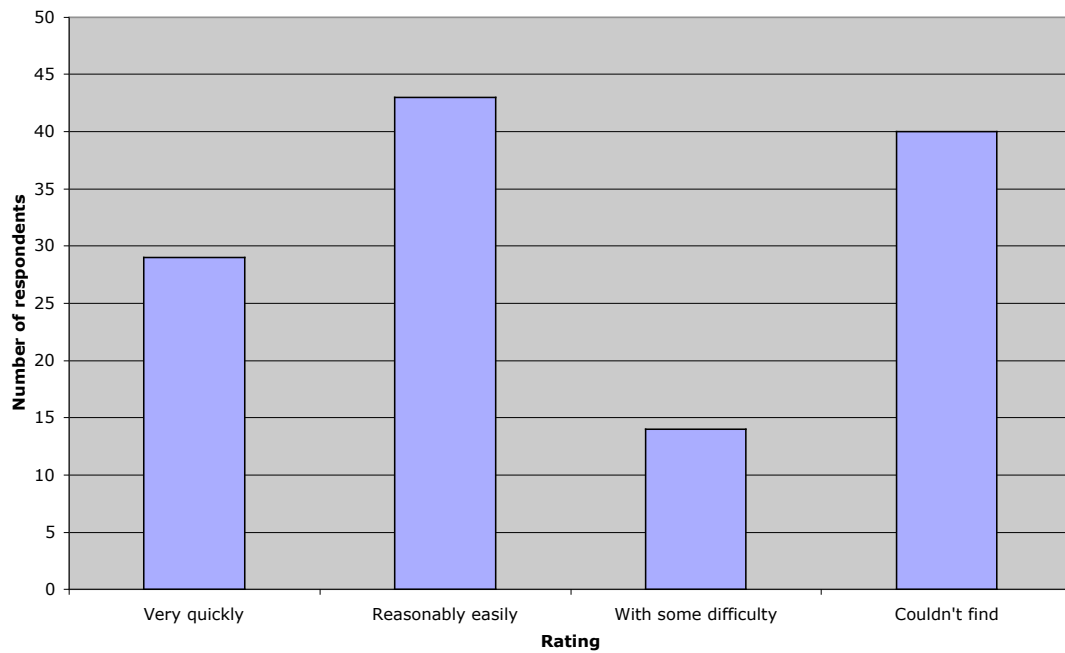
*“better site maps with locations and access routes” (53)*

*“a virtual tour showing us round the park” (38)*

*“a gallery of photographs. to give people an idea why they should visit” (104)*

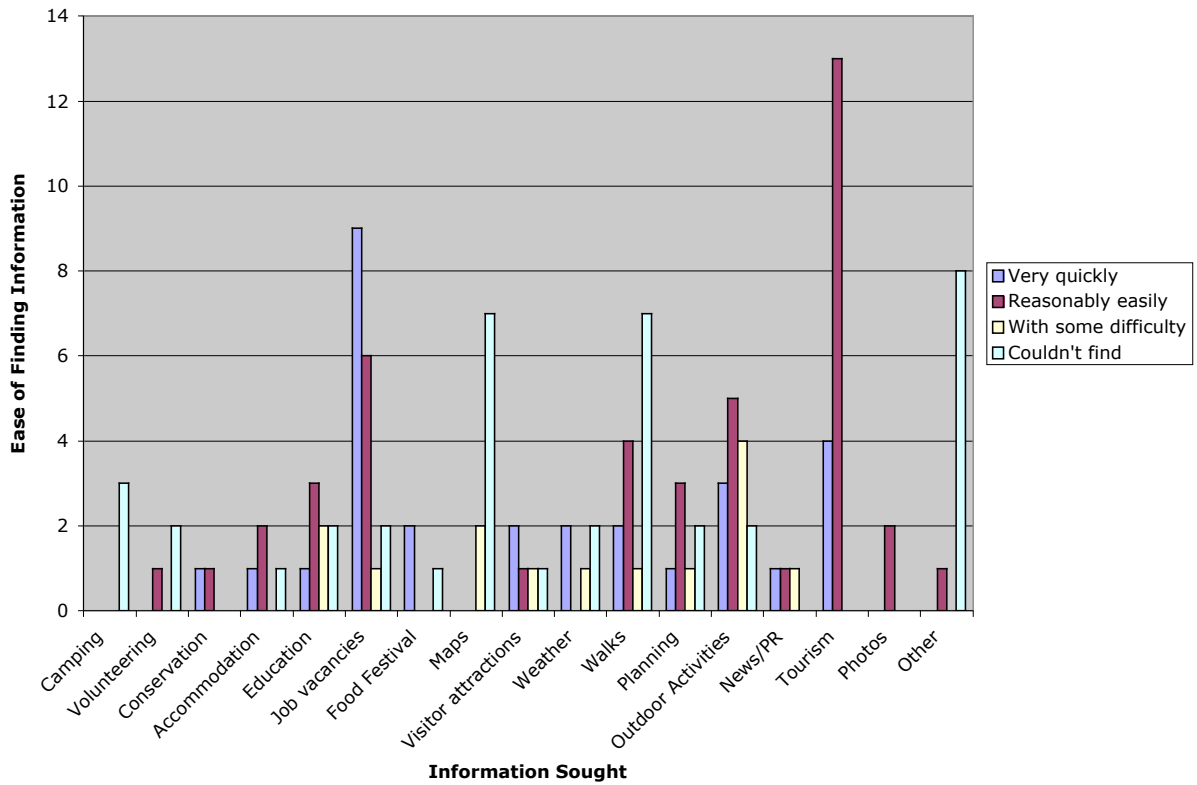
**Question 3: Did you find the information you were looking for?**

**Chart 3: Ease of Finding Information**

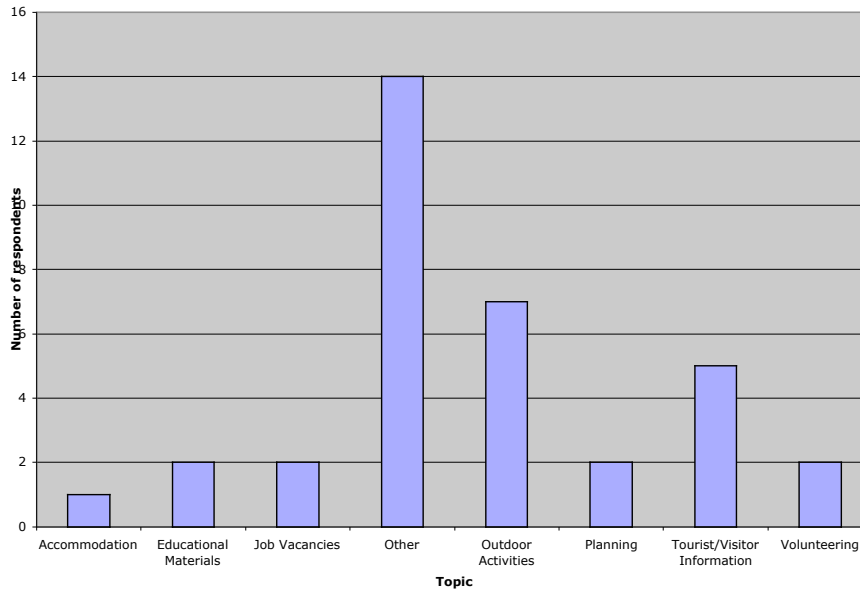


Only just over half of respondents indicated that they found the information they were looking for without much difficulty (see Chart 3); this suggests that the content and organization of the site can be improved to better meet the needs of the general public.

**Chart 4: Ease of Finding Information by Subject**



**Chart 5: Information Not Found**



Charts 4 & 5 show responses about the ease (or otherwise) with which respondents found the information they were looking for. Most of the “Other” information which respondents could not find can be recategorised under Outdoor Activities, e.g. walks, weather, or Tourist information e.g. maps, camp sites.

Respondents had particular difficulty in finding maps and information about walks and other outdoor activities.

Comments included:

*"I couldn't find walking info" (95)*

*"when you do a search of your site, many of the links don't work. It is very frustrating" (60)*

*"it's not the easiest to navigate" (54)*

Of the 38 respondents who indicated that they couldn't find the information they were looking for, 82% did not use the Search function. This highlights the need to organize the site in ways that match users' requirements and expectations. Of the seven (18%) who had used the search function, five entered a single word or phrase; one tried five different words (all seemingly unrelated to their chosen topic of "Volunteering" in Q2), and the other tried a total of 13 different words/phrases (again, none appears to be directly related to the need for a "map of local reservoirs" indicated under "Please give details" in Q2).

Simple one or two word searches currently retrieve several pages of results. Users who are accustomed to searching Google tend to expect the pages they are looking for to appear at the top of the list and this is not the case at the moment. Searching the web site could be made more fruitful by tagging pages with relevant controlled vocabulary and pointing users towards Advanced Search, where they would choose from a list of keywords, which should enable them to identify the pages they want more easily. Combination searches of two or three keywords would increase the accuracy of search results.

Several search attempts failed owing to misspellings and/or the use of erroneous compound words, e.g. bylaws, horseriding, campsites.

Four respondents were looking for information about camping or camp sites; some information is available on the separate Accommodation web site, but this cannot be identified by searching the main web site. This needs to be made more accessible from the main web site, e.g. via the Search function.

One respondent searched for "weekly planning applications"; this form of words is a link under Planning, two clicks away from the Home Page. However, a search for these words does not bring up any heading using this form of words. The link can be found some way down the page on the first item retrieved.

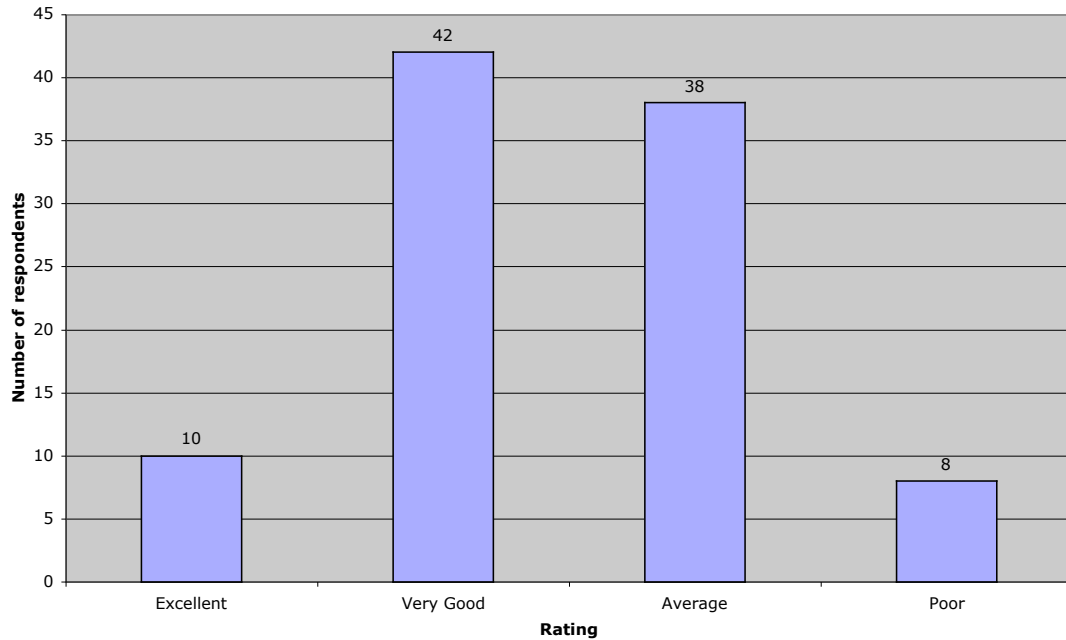
One respondent searching for "map" would have retrieved a long list of (irrelevant to them) planning information, with some possibly interesting maps not listed until the second page of results; few searchers browse beyond the first page of results these days.

On replicating some of the searches conducted by respondents, it became clear that results pages are often dominated by planning information, which was of no interest to the vast majority of respondents, and gave them a poor impression of the site. There is a case for excluding planning information in the Search function, except when the search is initiated from the planning pages. The main web site needs to be

focused on tourist/visitor/outdoor activities information the inclusion of accommodation, which is what visitors to the web site expect to find there.

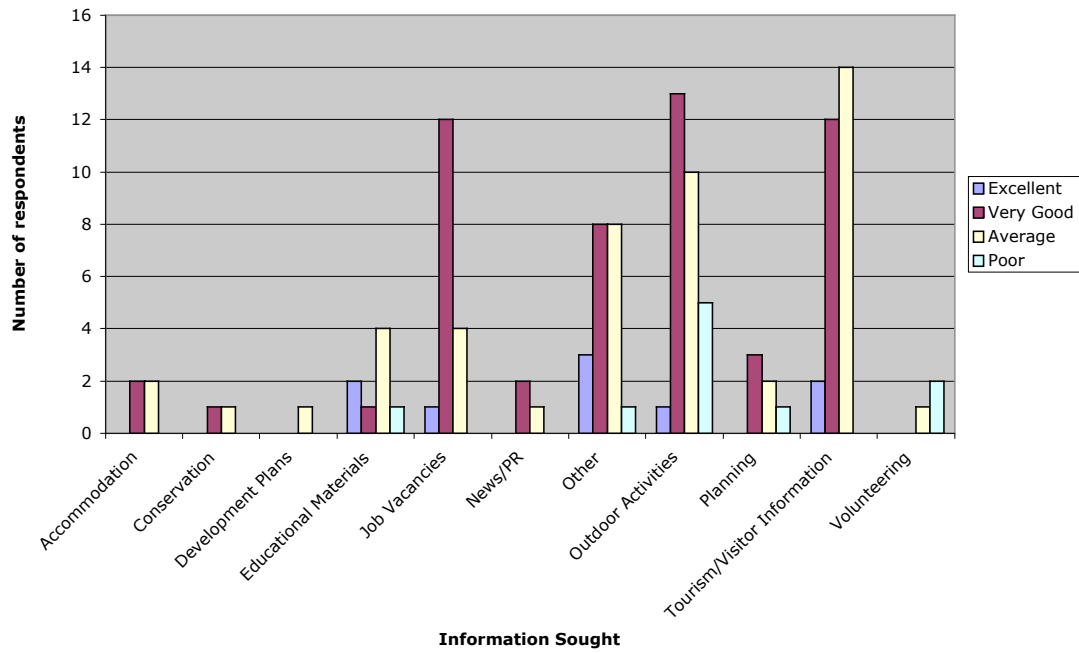
**Question 4: How do you rate the Brecon Beacons National Park website overall?**

**Chart 6: Rating website overall**



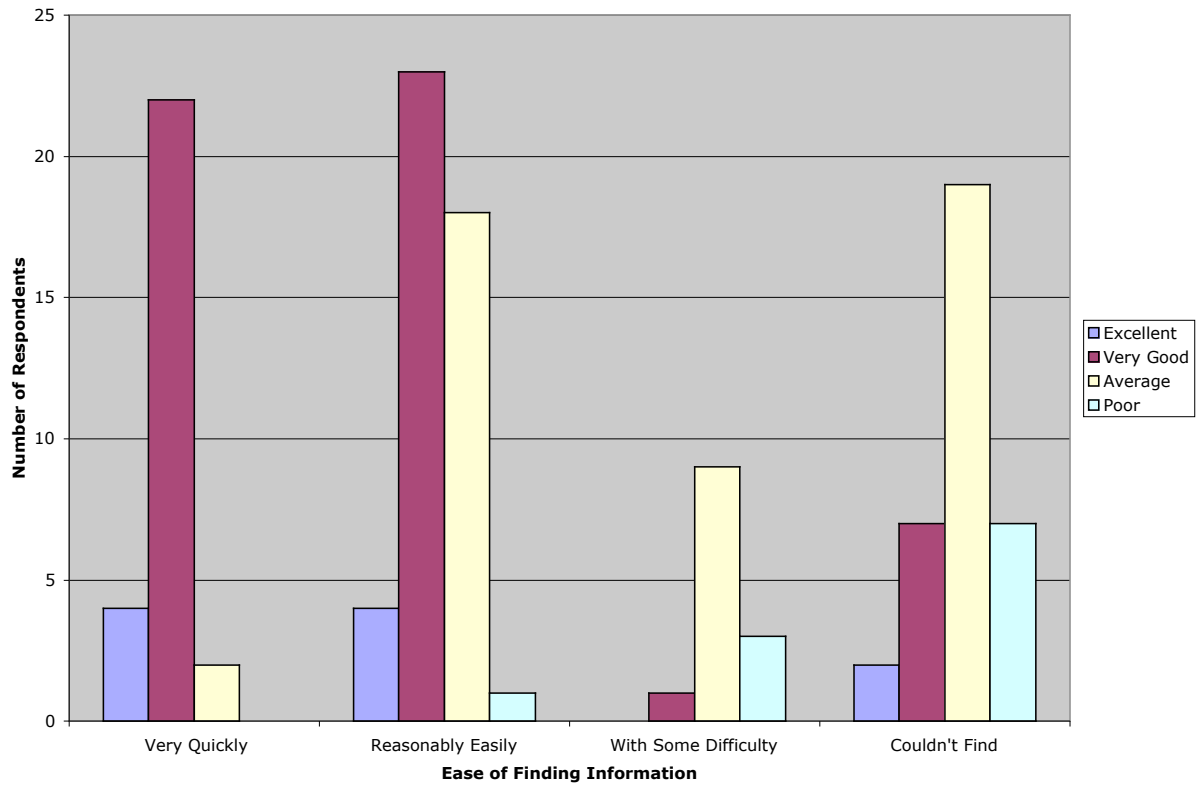
Only about half of the respondents rated the site overall as above average (see Chart 6).

**Chart 7: Site Rating vs Information Sought**



About half the respondents were looking for Tourism/Visitor Information or information on Outdoor Activities, and most of them rated the web site as only average or poor (see Chart 7).

**Chart 8: Site Rating vs Ease of Finding Information**



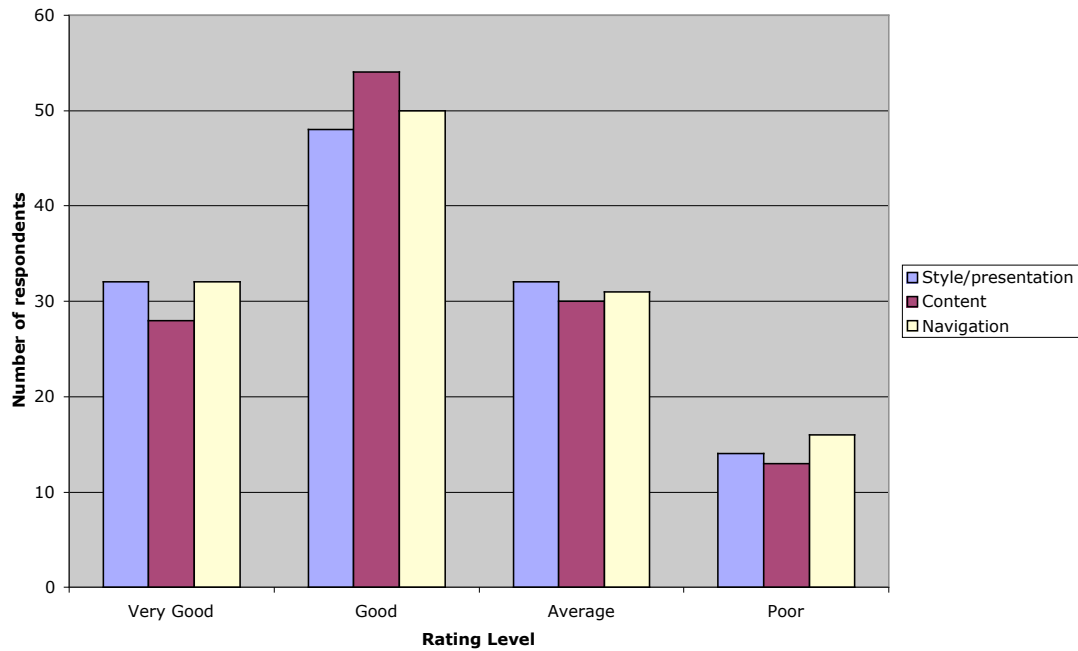
As expected, Chart 8 shows that there appears to be a correlation between how easily (or not) respondents found the information they were looking for, and their overall rating for the website.

**Question 5: How do you rate the style and presentation?**

**Question 6: How do you rate the content?**

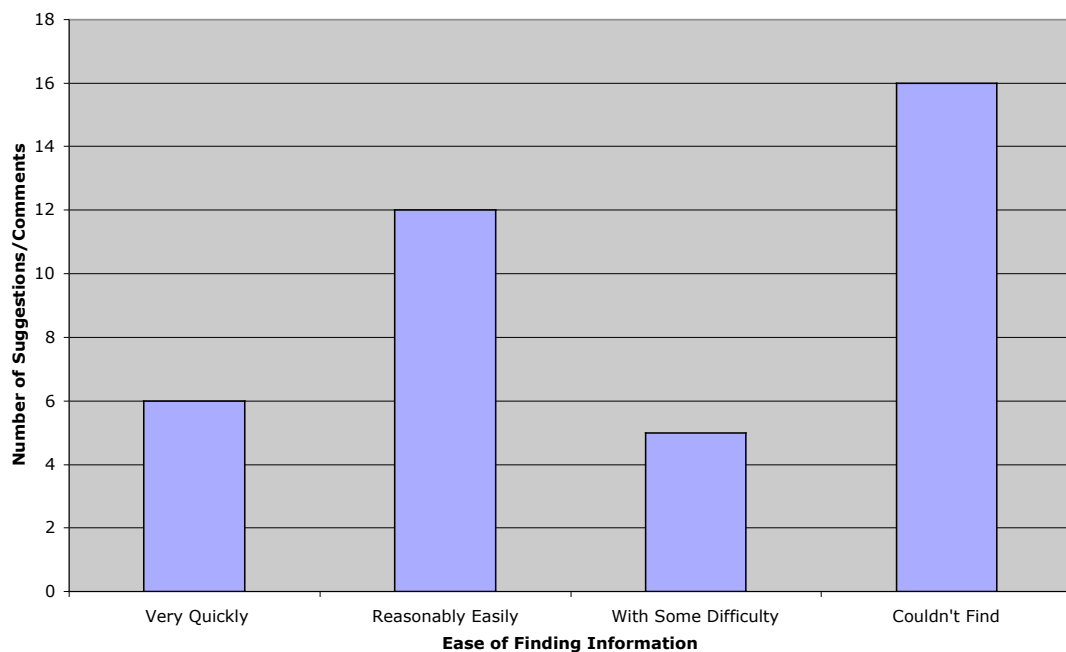
**Question 7: How do you rate the navigation – finding your way around the site?**

**Chart 9: Ratings for Style/Presentation, Content, Navigation**



**Question 8: asked for suggestions to improve the website.**

**Chart 10: Numbers of Suggestions/Comments Made**



Suggestions and comments made ranged over content, style and presentation, navigation and features.

## 4 Comments and Suggestions from Respondents

### Content

*“a useful description of the area and what you will regret not seeing/visiting” (79)*

*“Where are the various parts/attractions/hills? The assumption seems to be that everyone visiting the site knows all this, I don’t, and I still don’t” (96)*

*“it doesn’t seem to be aimed at tourists at all” (54)*

*“more info for walkers, weather, more on parking” (123)*

*“more information about wild camps” (49)*

*“you have a separate site for the 16 mountain bike routes but there is little info on the routes there other than some very small maps. You should have proper size route maps” (122)*

*“better site maps with locations and access routes” (53)*

*“a virtual tour showing us round the park” (38)*

*“a gallery of photographs. to give people an idea why they should visit” (104)*

*“a photographs page” (34)*

*“rolling photography of the beautiful countryside” (132)*

*“add more aerial pictures” (99)*

*“not enough links to other sites” (11)*

*“planning information is poor” (11)*

*Food Festival – times and exhibitors (107)*

*“you should update your newsdesk, you are still advertising activities / events from august” (133)*

*“needs to be kept more up to date” (56)*

*“a link for interesting facts on Brecon Beacons for schools, and a schools link where there are activities to do and help with a project on the National Park” (22)*

*“it doesn’t contain as much information, colour and appeal as the Snowdonia National Park website” (54)*

*“it doesn’t have any Welsh in it at all” (54)*

*“is it available in Welsh?” (20)*

*“more recruitment pages” (142)*

### Style

*“too much emphasis on business... emphasis is more commercial, not what I want from a national park, you don’t seem to concentrate on the most important aspect of the area. very disappointing” (87)*

*“look of site is quite plain” (95)*

*“big blue box at the top of the page is a little tacky!” (139)*

*“too much white space, not enough content or anything to make it stand out” (32)*

*“it feels like the world has left it behind” (56)*

*“very uninspiring visually” (68)*

### Presentation

*“poor design and content”, “should be more user-friendly, using terms and organization names that mean something to the public” (11)*

*“this is your shop window to the whole world and does not do justice to the wonderful scenery and communities of the Brecon Beacons” (11)*

*“to be able to look at information without having to download... which takes forever and you’re not sure if it’s what you need anyway. Why not have a brief description of relevant documents” (109)*

*“Reduce white space on pages so more content is visible without scrolling” (89)*  
*“on screen display does not show enough information. I don’t want to scroll every time I need to find something” (16)*  
*“in previous years the walking programme has been a web page not a pdf file. It’s been really annoying this year to have a pdf file!” (23)*  
*“break up long PDF files in shorter indexed links” (54)*  
*“have a new layout, change photos” (2)*  
*“more care needed in authoring and laying out pages” (128)*  
*“more proofreading needed, and seeing the information from the public’s point of view rather than a corporate agenda” (128)*

### **Navigation**

*“I couldn’t find walking info” (95)*  
*“when you do a search of your site, many of the links don’t work. It is very frustrating” (60)*  
*“a list of options of the home page eg different areas, things to do, places to visit etc” (26)*  
*“it’s not the easiest to navigate” (54)*

### **Features**

*“web links to sign up for newsletters etc” (141)*

### **General**

*“website gives no sense of enthusiasm for [the Beacons]. Tell us why they are special, why they are protected” (68)*

## **5 Conclusions and Recommendations**

From the results of this survey, it appears that most “visitors” to the web site find the site via a search engine, usually Google, are located in either England or Wales, mainly in the 26-55 year-old age groups, fairly equally likely to be male or female, are looking for tourist/visitor information or information about Outdoor Activities, and rate the site overall as average or poor.

Job Vacancies are wanted by a small but significant number of users, with Educational Materials also sought; Planning Information is important to the smallest segment of users.

Respondents saw no obvious slant towards tourist information on the web site, and perceived a lack of information for outdoor activities e.g. walking, biking, weather and maps. They suggested that more photographs would enhance the site and encourage visitors to the park.

Only just over half of respondents indicated that they found the information they were looking for without much difficulty; the content and organization of the site can be improved to better meet the needs of the general public. Most (82%) of respondents who said they could not find the information they wanted did not use the Search function, and so the site must be organized in ways that match users’ requirements and expectations.

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