

Wrekin Visitor Survey 2005-2006

Findings of a survey conducted for Shropshire Wildlife Trust

Objective

The survey was designed to investigate awareness and opinion amongst visitors to the Wrekin.

Methodology

The sample was randomly selected from adults visiting the Wrekin. Face-to-face interviews were conducted from August 2005 to January 2006. Results are divided into those from August and September (the summer respondents =206), and those who participated in the period from October to January (the autumn-winter respondents = 186). Each sample has an estimated sampling error of between +/- 4% and +/- 7%.

Keystone findings

- 90% of respondents who visited the Wrekin during the months of August and September had travelled by car. 94% of respondents who visited the Wrekin in October - January arrived by car.
- 80% of respondents who visited the Wrekin during the autumn-winter lived in Shropshire. 68% of respondents who visited the Wrekin during the summer lived in Shropshire.
- 38% of summer visitors came to the Wrekin at least once a month or more frequently, 34% of autumn-winter visitors came to the Wrekin at least once a month or more.
- 54% of autumn-winter visitors and 46% of summer visitors said the views were the main attraction of the Wrekin.
- 25% of summer visitors and 32% of autumn-winter visitors found nothing to dislike and did not want to change anything - wanting it to be kept as natural as possible.
- 90% of summer visitors and 94% of autumn-winter visitors come to walk, others run (7% and 3%) or cycle (2%) or engage in an activity (1%).
- 24% of summer and 23% of autumn-winter visitors are walking one or more dogs.
- 80% of summer visitors and 86% of autumn-winter visitors would like to see toilets provided.
- 71% of summer and 76% of autumn-winter visitors were aware of the private ownership of the Wrekin.
- 59% of summer and 53% of autumn-winter visitors were aware that the Wrekin was part of the Shropshire Hills Area of Outstanding Beauty.

Summary of findings

Mode of Transport (Q.1)

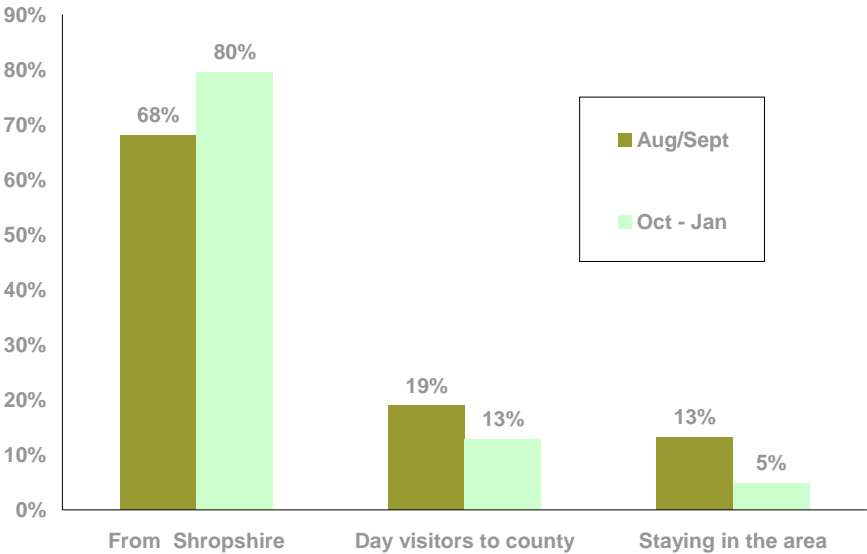
In the first part of the survey, carried out during the summer months of August and September, 90% of visitors travelled to the Wrekin by car. In the second part of the survey carried out in the autumn-winter months of October, November, December and January slightly more (94%) arrived by car.

Nearly all (95% / 97%) respondents who did not live in Shropshire travelled to the Wrekin by car.

Shropshire Residency (Q.2)

Four-fifths (80%) of respondents from the autumn-winter survey and 68% of respondents from the summer survey lived in Shropshire.

All the respondents from the summer survey who walked to the Wrekin lived in Shropshire.



Other places visited (Q.3 and Q.4.)

Ironbridge was somewhat more likely to be a joint destination in the summer than in the autumn-winter with nearly a quarter (24%) of respondents who did not live in Shropshire also going there in the summer and 11% in the winter.

Other places of interest for non-Shropshire residents, responding to the summer survey included Much Wenlock (8%), Bridgnorth (5%) and Wroxeter (5%).

Nearly two thirds (63%) of non-Shropshire residents who came to visit the Wrekin during the autumn-winter came for the day. The average length of stay in the area for all non-Shropshire residents during the autumn-winter was less than a day.

A slightly lower proportion (59%) of non-Shropshire residents who visited during the summer came as a day visitor and the average length of stay in the area during the autumn-winter was one and a half days.

No single location was the base for a high proportion of out-of-county visitors in either part of the survey.

Length of visit to the Wrekin (Q.6.)

The estimated average length of time spent during the visit to the Wrekin was marginally longer during the summer (1.9 hours or one hour 54 minutes) than during the autumn-winter (1.7 hours or one hour 42 minutes).

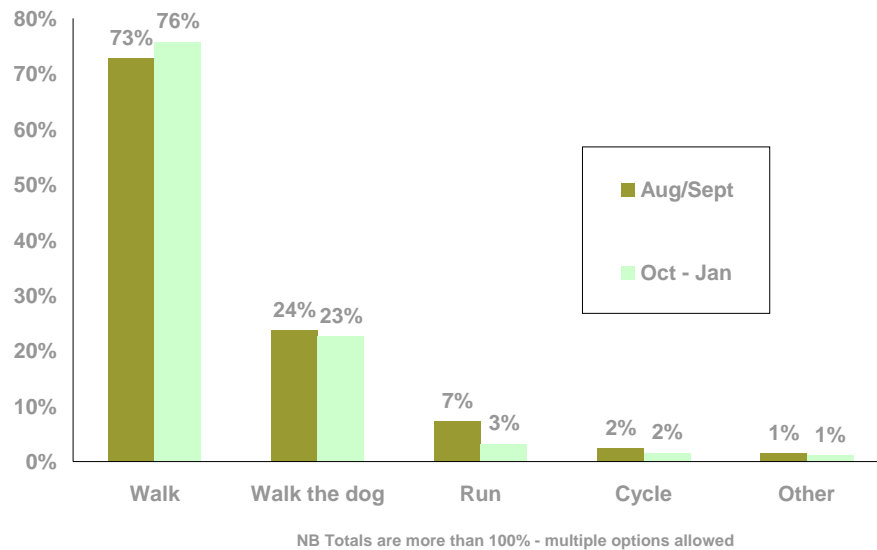
On average, residents who lived in Shropshire spent less time (1.7 hours in the summer & 1.6 hours in the winter) on their visit than non-Shropshire residents (2.2 hours in the summer & 2.0 hours in the winter).

Both parts of the survey showed a positive correlation between the size of the party and the length of their visit:

Size of Party	Average length of visit during summer	Average length of visit during winter
One	1.4 hours	1.5 hours
Two	1.7 hours	1.6 hours
Three	2.1 hours	1.7 hours
Four to ten	2.4 hours	2.0 hours
Over ten	3.2 hours	2.3 hours
Base: All		

Activities carried out during visit (Q.7)

Most respondents were walking either without, or with one or more dogs (24% of summer visitors and 23% of autumn-winter visitors).



As multiple responses were allowed the responses do not total 100%, using the reasonable assumption that all dog-walkers stated that they were walking the dog, it may be inferred that 66% of summer visitors and 71% of autumn-winter visitors were walkers without a dog and also that 90% of all summer visits and 94% of all autumn-winter visits involve walking.

7% of the summer visitors stated they would run during their visit, 2% cycle and 1% other (which included bird watching and art activity). 3% of the autumn-winter visitors stated they would run during their visit, 2% cycle and 1% other (which included bird watching and photography).

Frequency of Wrekin visits (Q.8)

Nearly two fifths (38%) of respondents who took part in the summer survey came to visit the Wrekin once a month or more. Over half (52%) of summer visitors who were Shropshire residents came to the Wrekin at least once a month or more. For 15% (32% of non-Shropshire residents) the visit to the Wrekin was their first time.

Over a third (34%) of autumn-winter visitors came to visit the Wrekin once a month or more. For 29% of respondents who did not live in Shropshire visiting the Wrekin during the autumn-winter months, it was their first visit.

Walking in other local areas (Q.9 and Q.10)

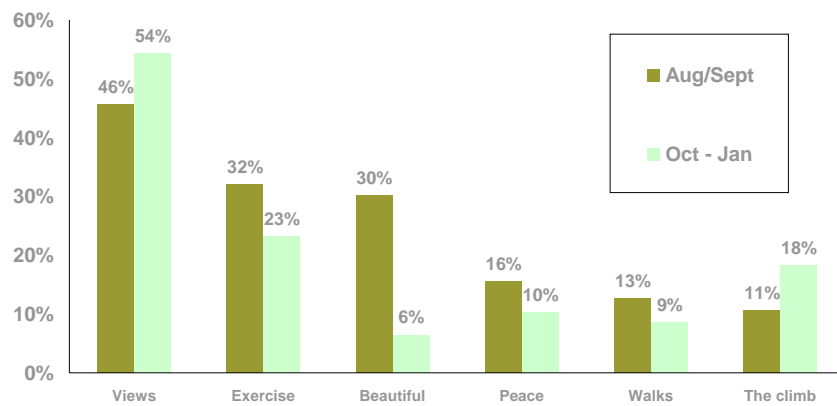
The Stretton Hills were stated as the most popular location other than the Wrekin, to go for a walk by respondents from both surveys (24% of summer respondents and 35% of autumn-winter respondents). 12% of summer visitors and 6% of autumn-winter visitors favoured the Ironbridge gorge.

Some of the other popular locations respondents liked to visit in both the summer and autumn-winter months included: Ercall (7% during the summer, 9% during the winter), Haughmond Hill (7% during the summer, 9% during the winter) and Wenlock Edge (3% during the summer, 6% during the winter).

Respondents varied in how often they walked in other areas of interest apart from the Wrekin during both the summer and autumn-winter months. These areas were visited more frequently by respondents who lived in Shropshire than those who did not – 40% of summer Shropshire residents and 32% of autumn-winter Shropshire residents walked in other areas every week or more frequently. In comparison 29% of summer non-Shropshire residents and 39% of autumn-winter non-Shropshire walked in other areas once a month or less frequently.

Attraction of the Wrekin (Q.11)

When respondents were asked what they especially liked about the Wrekin, more than half (54%) of the autumn-winter visitors and 46% of the summer visitors cited the views as the best thing about the Wrekin. Nearly a third (32%) of the summer visitors and over a fifth (23%) of the autumn-winter visitors came for healthy exercise and fresh air. 18% of the autumn-winter visitors and 11% of the summer visitors were attracted by the challenge of the climb the hill provided.



NB Totals more than 100% - multiple options allowed

Nearly a third (30%) of summer visitors and 6% of autumn-winter visitors liked the beauty of the Wrekin and its surrounding area. The peace and quite/solitude attracted 16% of summer visitors and 10% of autumn-winter visitors.

Simply being local and thus close to home attracted 13% of summer visitors and 14% of autumn-winter visitors who resided in Shropshire.

Facilities in Wellington (Q.12)

85% of all respondents taking part in the autumn-winter survey and over three quarters of respondents taking part in the summer survey were aware of the Shopping centre (77%) and the Railway station (78%) in Wellington.

Respondents were slightly less likely to be aware of the free car parking (60% of summer visitor and 67% of autumn-winter visitors) and Sunnycroft, the National Trust property (37% of summer visitors and 43% of autumn-winter visitors).

Unsurprisingly, respondents who lived in Shropshire were more aware of the facilities than respondents who did not:

Facility	Shropshire Residents		Non-Shropshire Resident	
	Summer Survey	Winter Survey	Summer Survey	Winter Survey
Shopping centre	94%	94%	39%	53%
Railway station	95%	94%	41%	50%
Regular market	92%	92%	30%	42%
Bus station	94%	91%	32%	37%
Leisure and fitness centre	85%	86%	20%	26%
Accommodation	77%	78%	29%	34%
Free car parking	81%	77%	17%	26%
Sunnycroft - National Trust property	49%	50%	12%	16%

Base: All

Attraction of the Wrekin – prompted (Q.13)

The Wrekin being 'a good place to get some exercise' was given the highest score, with an average of 9.6 in the summer survey and 9.7 in the autumn-winter survey. The feature with the lowest score was the provision of facilities - scoring an average of 4.5 in the summer survey and 4.1 in the autumn-winter survey.

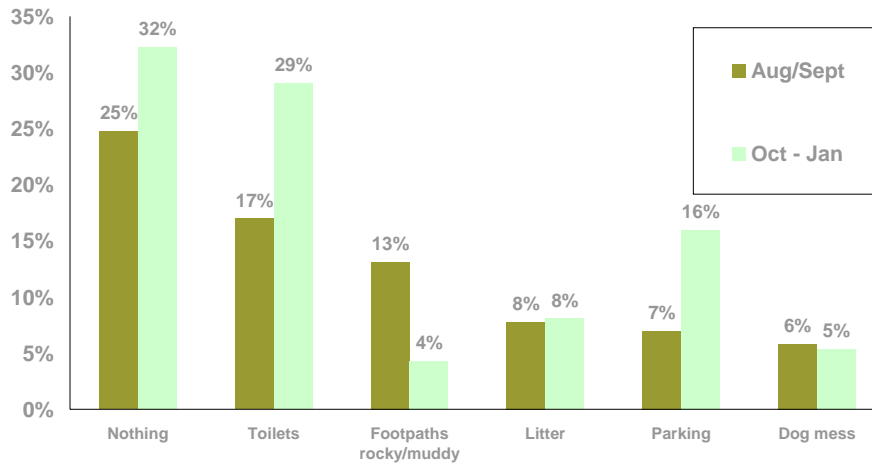
Feature	Summer Survey	Winter Survey
Being a good place to get some exercise	9.6	9.7
The view	8.4	9.5
The woodlands	8.6	8.8
Peace and quiet	8.3	8.2
A chance to meet other walkers	7.7	8.1
Nature	7.7	7.7
The footpaths	7.5	7.8
Parking	6.5	6.0
Provision of facilities	4.5	4.1

Base: All

Dislikes/Suggestions for changes (Q.14)

A quarter (25%) of the summer visitors and nearly a third (32%) of the autumn-winter visitors found nothing they disliked about the Wrekin and indeed did not want to change anything and would like it to be kept as natural as possible.

29% of autumn-winter visitors and 17% of summer visitors had concerns about the toilet facilities in that, the ones that were there, were closed or derelict and more should be provided at the top and bottom.



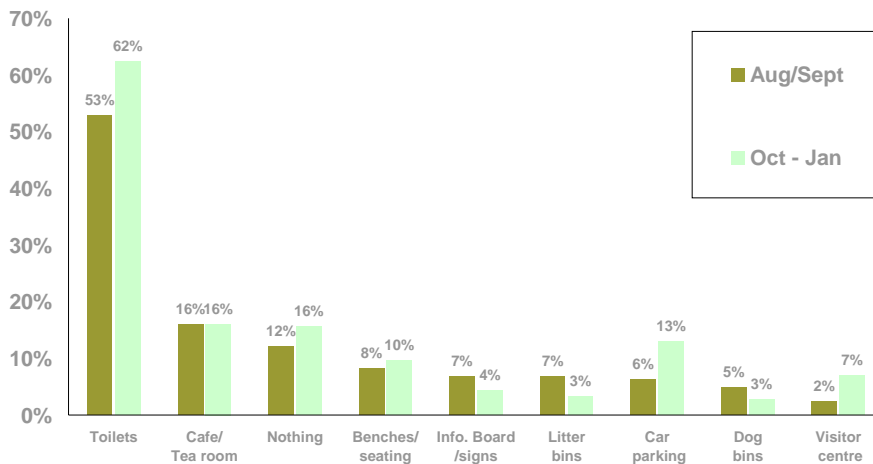
NB Totals more than 100% - multiple options allowed

Dangerous, rocky, poor, muddy footpaths were mentioned as a problem for 13% of summer visitors and 4% of autumn-winter visitors. Lack of parking, car security, litter and dog fouling were also concerns for respondents from both surveys.

Additional facilities – unprompted (Q.15)

Unprompted, over three fifths (62%) of autumn-winter visitors and over half (53%) of summer visitors would like to see toilets (at the top, bottom or halfway).

16% of respondents who took part in the autumn-winter survey and 12% of respondents who took part in the summer survey would not like to see any new facilities on the Wrekin stating “the less that was there the better”.

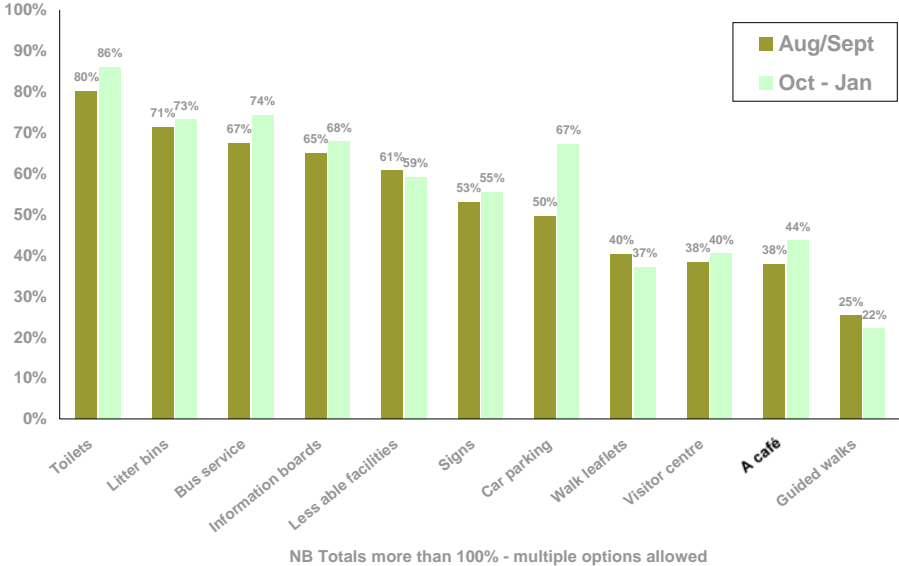


NB Totals more than 100% - multiple options allowed

Benches or seating at the summit was cited as another helpful additional facility for 8% of the summer visitors and 10% of the autumn-winter visitors. Generally, older respondents were more likely to be in favour of this than younger respondents.

Provision of facilities – prompted (Q.16)

When prompted, over four fifths (86%) of autumn-winter visitors and 80% of summer visitors stated that they would very much like or quite a lot like to see toilets provided on the Wrekin.



Guided walks were the least favoured suggestion, with 78% of autumn-winter visitors and 72% of summer visitors stating that they would only like to see them a little bit or not at all.

Provision	Would like to see “very much” or “Quite a lot”		Would like to see “A little bit” or “Not at all”	
	Summer Survey	Winter Survey	Summer Survey	Winter Survey
Toilets	80%	86%	18%	14%
Litter bins	71%	73%	25%	27%
Information boards	65%	68%	32%	32%
Walk leaflets	62%	65%	35%	35%
Facilities for less able e.g. an occasional 'bus' to summit	61%	59%	34%	41%
Signs	53%	55%	45%	44%
Car parking	50%	67%	46%	32%
Visitor centre	38%	40%	58%	60%
A café	38%	44%	57%	56%
Bus service	29%	26%	67%	74%
Guided walks	25%	22%	72%	78%
Base: All				

Most interesting aspect of the Wrekin (Q.17)

Over half (53%) of the respondents from both surveys thought that the most interesting thing about the Wrekin was the view at the summit. 12% of the autumn-winter visitors and 10% of the summer visitors were fascinated with the history of the site, including the Iron Age Hill Fort.

10% of the respondents who took part in the summer survey and 7% of respondents who took part in the autumn-winter survey, were intrigued with the geology aspect particularly its volcanic origin. Other features found to be interesting in both surveys was the Wrekin's geographical position (as a solitary hill) and the variety of wildlife present.

Interesting aspects found on the Wrekin (Q.18)

80% of summer visitors and 81% of autumn-winter visitors found the birds and other wildlife on the Wrekin "Very interesting" or "Quite interesting". Respondents were less enthusiastic about the folklore (legend of the giant) with 38% of summer visitors and 34% of autumn-winter visitors stating either "Not interesting" or "Wasn't aware/don't know".

Feature	Found to be "Very interesting" or Quite interest"		Found to be "Not interesting" or "Wasn't aware/don't know"	
	Summer Survey	Winter Survey	Summer Survey	Winter Survey
Birds and other wildlife on the Wrekin	80%	81%	17%	19%
The geology and prehistory of the Wrekin (volcano)	70%	75%	28%	25%
The history and archaeology (hill fort/WWII)	66%	70%	32%	29%
The folklore (legend of the giant)	60%	66%	38%	34%

Base: All

Reasons for walking on the Wrekin (Q.19)

Nearly a third (29%) of the respondents who took part in the summer survey and 23% of respondents who took part in the autumn-winter survey choose the Wrekin to go for a walk for the health benefits of exercise and fresh air.

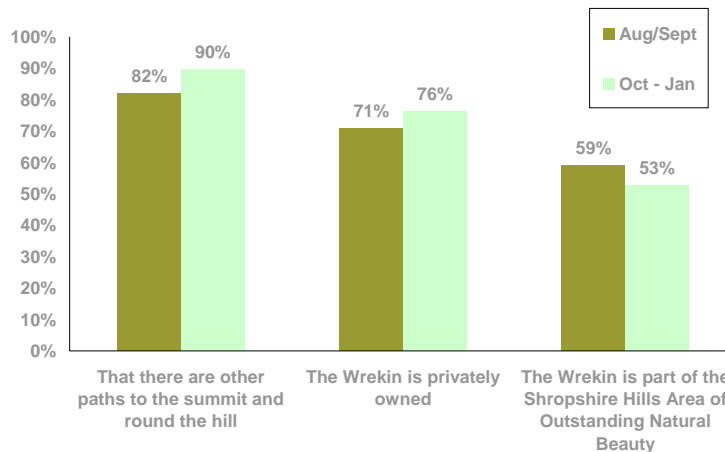
Nearly two fifths (39%) of the autumn-winter visitors and 27% of the summer visitors choose the Wrekin because of the convenience and proximity to home. 7% of the summer visitors and 9% of the autumn-winter visitors walked on the Wrekin as part of a regular routine.

The good weather was a more prominent reason for autumn-winter visitors (23%) when compared to summer visitors (3%).

Awareness of status (Q.20)

When the respondents were asked if they were aware of the private ownership of the Wrekin, 71% of the summer visitors and 76% of the autumn-winter visitors stated that they were previously aware.

Nearly three fifths (59%) of summer visitors and 53% of autumn-winter visitors were aware that the Wrekin was part of the Shropshire Hills Area of Outstanding Beauty.



Over four fifths (82%) of respondents who took part in the summer survey and 90% of respondents who took part in the autumn-winter survey were aware that there were other paths to the summit and round the hill.

Any further comments (Q.21)

Some respondents to both parts of the survey volunteered that any changes to the Wrekin would be detrimental – 15% of summer visitors said that it should be kept as it was without development. One in ten of the autumn-winter respondents gave similar responses in a similar vein. 7% of summer visitors and 5% of autumn-winter visitors also thought the Wrekin should be under public ownership with free and open access.