



# **Havant Borough Natural Environment Survey**

## **Results & Report**

**Results Collected from 663 Participants**

## **Environment Survey Background**

In 2016 Havant Borough Council announced a new Local Plan to replace the one it had approved just two years earlier. The council had then recently lost an appeal on a planning application for a development in Purbrook, on the grounds that Havant's existing Local Plan was non-compliant with the Objectively Assessed Needs (OAN) which was set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). The council swiftly followed up with a Housing Statement publication, setting out a revised number of houses and allocations to specific sites based on OAN forecasts up to 2036. The council's business case was that unless it took immediate control, developers, inspired by McCarthy & Stone's successful appeal, would move in rapidly to submit speculative bids on various prospective sites in the borough, over which without the Statement the council would have less control. The new plan was effectively an update of the 2014 version (which expires in 2026) with approximately 4000 additional houses.

## **Urban Development Pressures**

Havant Council's administrative area is already one of the most highly developed among Hampshire's Local Authorities outside of the cities. It has boundaries with the sea to the South and to East with Chichester, North with East Hampshire and westwards with Portsmouth and Winchester. There is insufficient 'brown' land so Havant's only real options for further expansion is to meet the 2016 Housing Statement numbers which are urban extensions built right up to its borders with neighbouring LA's. Hence to the West, large estates bordering on Portsmouth and Winchester's Major Development Area, and large estates planned for 40 Acres and Campdown. To the East, sites up to the Sussex border have been earmarked for development (Long Copse Lane and Westwood Close). The northern boundary with East Hants is more or less protected against development by a proposed winter storage reservoir located near Havant Thicket. This leaves the former Emsworth/Havant strategic gap which includes approximately 48 areas of potential and mostly green field sites located throughout the borough. Hayling Island sites have been held back from early release until infrastructure issues particularly transport access, have been resolved in 2019. Within the PUSH sub-regional area, local authorities and excluding the cities, Havant with 46% has the second highest built up area. Three of the five adjoining authorities, East Hants, Winchester, and Chichester, have built-up areas of 5%, 4% and 4% respectively. The OAN methodology for forecasting housing needs is mostly based on numbers with little account taken of an area's capacity to absorb them. The so-called Sustainability Appraisal process aims to optimise social, economic and environmental factors, but as land pressures mount, decisions on sites often become a trade off between socio-economic factors, leaving the environment as the poor relation. By 2036 the Borough of Havant is more than likely to have the same amount of developed land as Portsmouth has now (70%)

## **Havant Borough Biodiversity Action Plan (HBAP)**

Havant Borough has biodiversity assets of significant importance that include a variety of protected species, internationally recognised habitats including an AONB, and SSSI, five Local Nature Reserves (LNRs) and over 100 Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINCs). In 2011 Havant Borough Council published a Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP), prepared by Hampshire & Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust, covering the whole borough. In summary the BAP provided *‘a vision and a framework for future action to conserve biodiversity in Havant Borough, it acts as a mechanism for meeting Green Infrastructure to mitigate for the impacts of development and reduce the effects of climate change.’*

The 102-page BAP consists of five sections, introduction, biodiversity audit, action plans, monitoring and review, bibliography plus appendices.

The first two sections are an audit of the natural characteristics of the area in terms of species, habitats, sites and green spaces. These provide an evidence base for the actions proposed in later sections of the Plan.

## **Updating the BAP**

The BAP was designed for a shelf life of 10 years but it pre-dates the National Planning & Policy Framework (NPPF) which was released in 2012, and refers to policies and other documents the NPPF effectively supersedes. In April 2017 Havant Friends of the Earth (HFOE) contacted HBC asking for the BAP to be updated in tandem with the work in progress on the new 2036 Local Plan. HFOE's interest was triggered when it became apparent that BAP was not listed as part of the council's evidence base. In its contacts with Havant Borough Council, HFOE stressed the importance of public engagement as part of the updating process. A vital ingredient of the 2011 BAP was the active involvement in its preparation of highly motivated local community and friends' groups, as well as local representatives of national organisations. As part of its dialogue with Havant Borough Council officers, HFOE offered to organise and fund a workshop, facilitated by Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust for local groups to contribute their ideas and aspirations for an updated BAP. Initially the offer was thought by Planning Policy Officers to have some merit. Months went by without feedback and it eventually emerged in October 2018 that the council had decided to update the BAP using its own resources. This was without any public input because the council said there wasn't time for such engagement.

## **Survey Management**

After what turned out to be the end of the dialogue with the council which started in the spring of 2017, HFOE in October 2018 decided to join with other Emsworth environmentalists to launch an online survey of public opinions on Havant Borough's present environment. The aim of the survey was to gain an understanding of how the borough's residents perceive their local environment, and the issues arising at a time when communities face 18 years of housing development in the borough. The survey responses are a random sample so the participants are self-selecting, questions were adapted from those in used for 2011 BAP. The online format was designed using Google Forms and networked to various websites around the borough as well as via social media such as Facebook and Twitter. 663 responses were submitted from all parts of the borough, many from members of 21 local groups involved with wildlife, nature sites and related activities.

## **Survey Results**

These are shown as graphs below with the question and a summary under each one.

Pages 6-10 include the survey results.

## **Comments received on making Havant Borough greener**

As part of the survey, respondents were asked what steps would make Havant Borough greener.

Below is a representative list selected from over 200 comments received.

### **ABOUT GREEN SPACE & PLANNING:**

- Have more open spaces available to the public
- Reduce amount of new development and where it does take place, ensure that green spaces and trees are part of the planning permission
- Planning permission should include compulsory green spaces and native trees
- The borough should preserve areas of green between communities to allow the residents provide access and flight paths through them for wildlife, green, furry, flying or bewhiskered creatures
- Stop granting planning permission for building on green sites
- Reduce the amount of proposed development on green belt and encourage development on existing brown field sites
- More blue - green infrastructure in the urban environment
- Listen to the local community and help us to protect the green spaces that make our community what it is, from development by greedy organisations
- Stop the development and erection of building(s) on a scale that will eventually wipe out our fields and woods. Some development is obviously necessary, but NOT in every nook of pasture that was once a feature of our surroundings
- Utilise existing buildings and brown sites for future housing needs. Determine with professional assistance, the correct balance between urbanisation and green spaces to ensure the IMPROVEMENT of physical and mental health of all residents currently living in the borough. Recognise the importance of the well-being of its existing population before looking at reaching government targets on housing
- Stop building houses with insufficient infrastructure in place
- Protect our environment before it is too late, loss of green space can never be replaced
- Stop building more and more houses in green areas with flood plain issues.
- For every house built there should be a bird nesting box or bat box on the side of each house, and a pond in at least one in five gardens. We will not stop houses from being built, so let's remember to help wildlife with each house built. In large new housing areas keep an area free for wildlife, a copse with wild flowers, trees and a pond. Fences or walls around each house should have built in holes for hedgehogs and small animals to pass through

## **ABOUT TRAFFIC & ROADS:**

- Develop proper cycle tracks (Not white lines)
- Urgent actions are needed to address traffic levels and pollution caused by traffic
- Improve the bus services from the Westbourne area, Emsworth & District bus services are appalling and very expensive. A good reliable bus would encourage people to leave the car for short journeys
- Prevent people from building in a way that relies on cars, modern housing estates make people get in their cars, so do the of edge town retail parks
- Improve the bus service around the area. Stop building more houses not only for our local environment, but local infrastructure simply cannot cope as it stands
- More electric vehicle (EV) charging points throughout Havant and use electric service vehicles
- Embark on a major build program for new cycle lanes that are protected from traffic The spending per head in the Havant borough needs to be increased to £15 per person per annum so that everywhere there is a cycle hazard point (as marked on the HBC latest map) a protected cycle lane or bridge /underpass is installed to make it safe HBC needs to change the measure by which cycling strategy is assessed from number of miles of cycle lanes to percentage of journeys taken by bike. The aim should be to match the percentage in the Netherlands
- Install electric car charge points, not just a couple per car park, but aim to have every on-street parking space, and every space in every car park with its own charge point by 2040, by which time sales of new diesel and petrol cars will be banned in the UK
- Make Havant safer for disabled people who use a mobility scooter to get around
- Create green 'corridors' along all main roads. This will help absorb much of the vehicle pollution, and noise generated by the ever-increasing development
- Slow the traffic and prioritise the needs of pedestrians, establish safe walking routes into the town centre
- Reduce speed limits and have low emission limit zones
- Better networked cycle routes, more long-distance rights of way, better sign posting

## **ABOUT TREES AND HEDGES:**

- Stipulate large parks in the new developments and/or larger gardens
- More planting of wild flowers areas
- Protect young trees from vandalism and carefully monitor the work carried out by NORSE
- Wild flower planting on the roundabouts and grass verges
- Protect the wooded areas we currently have and create less unnecessary housing
- Plant trees in grass verges across the borough
- Stop loss of prime farm land and green spaces etc to new housing
- Maintain woodland areas, plant more wild flowers rather than allow brambles and nettles to completely take over this will encourage people to enjoy and care for the area
- Plant more hedges, bushes, shrubs and flowers and replace broken fences and also to feed wildlife especially our endangered Bees
- Create lots of small garden size no go areas in parks etc. with feeders that are viewed from behind a blind/hide to encourage wildlife and to educate the public
- Stop cutting hedgerows back unnecessarily and also cutting verges
- Adopt best practices for bylaws, building regs for new builds
- Reduce trawling in Langstone Harbour
- Improve the Warblington Cemetery "Woodland" Burial Ground
- Plant more amenity trees to soften urban developments with mixed species not just Oaks
- Avoid using weed killers (Glyphosate) and don't spray road verges etc

## **GENERAL COMMENTS:**

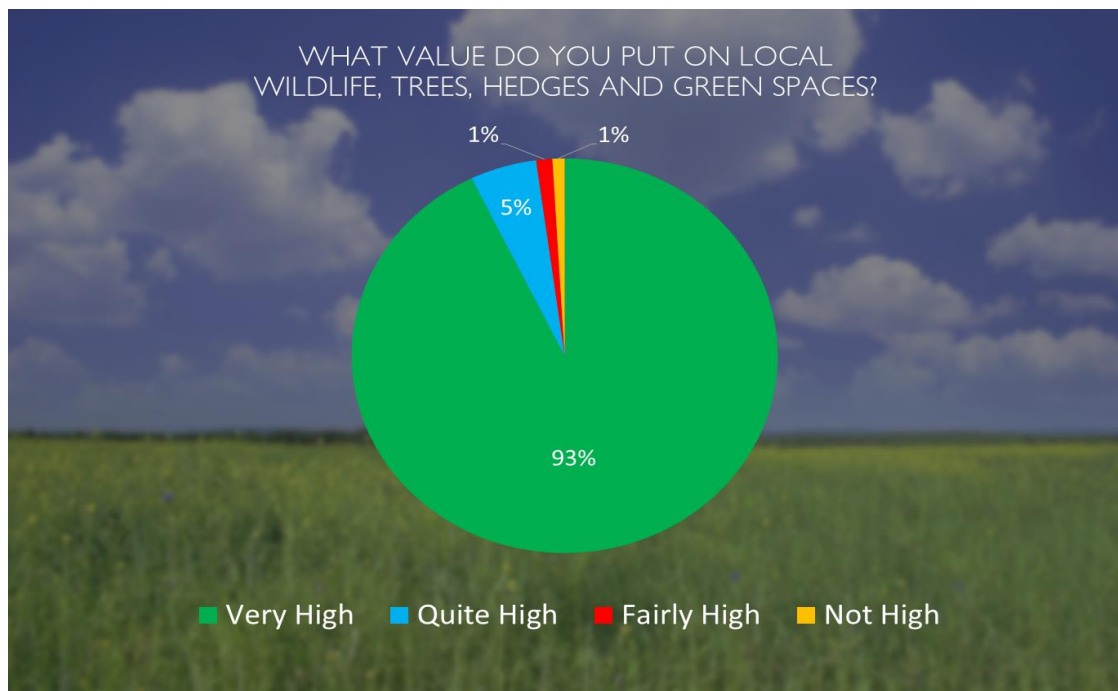
- Encourage takeaways restaurants to ask their customers not to litter the streets
- Increase the type of things that can be recycled on the doorstep. It is ridiculous that so few types of items can put in the green bins, for example even food waste can be composted
- Better recycling of plastics
- Sustainability issues must be clearly identified and addressed positively
- Overcrowding in residential areas and congestion on our roads create and encourage stressful situations, personal rage and dissatisfaction
- So far HBC have decided to build as much as they are able on precious areas where wild life exists. Prime example is the possible destruction of wildlife areas in Long Copse Lane
- protect our environment before it is too late. Lost green space can never be replaced.
- Stop people concreting over front gardens and drives or restrict it
- Listen to local people and their reasonable needs, don't just pay lip service with spurious 'consultations', having already decided on a course of action
- Protect and enhance what little green space we have
- Allow volunteer groups to flourish with advice from the council

## **Conclusions & Follow-Up**

The survey shows that Havant's natural environment is highly valued, and that it is also under considerable development pressures in a relatively small borough, whose unique geography limits its choices of building land. There has been much national emphasis in the recently revised NPPF, and Defra's new 25-year plan for improving the environment on net ecological gain, and mitigation to offset the impact of development. In other words, leaving building sites more nature friendly after development than before. Some leading developers are working on producing new professional guidance on making their products more conducive to supporting wildlife, as well as creating safe and connected habitats for new estate residents, and volunteers to protect and maintain. Havant's planning policy makers also need to take a more imaginative view of the borough's biodiversity, and think of it as an essential quality of life issue to be enjoyed by future generations. Mitigation appears to have become the only tool available to offset the impact of new development. But its implementation leaves much to be desired, with very little oversight and weak enforcement of planning conditions. Biodiversity is much more interactive than making passive developer contributions to Bird Aware Solent. As the Survey shows, the right public policies, engagement and implementation and above all, leadership by example are vital. Clearly the conservation community has a vital part to play, and the council's refusal of its early offer to participate is very disappointing. The next step is to read and review Havant Borough Council's update to the Biodiversity Plan or Strategy or whenever it is published, as part of the pre-submission version of the Local Plan in January prior to its approval by Havant Borough Council. The process precludes making any changes to the text, but there will be opportunities to make observations that can be submitted for consideration to the Independent Inspector, at the Examination at the Public consultation scheduled for Summer 2019. As a separate venture with the cooperation of Havant's Borough's conservation and nature groups a Manifesto for Wildlife will be developed and published.

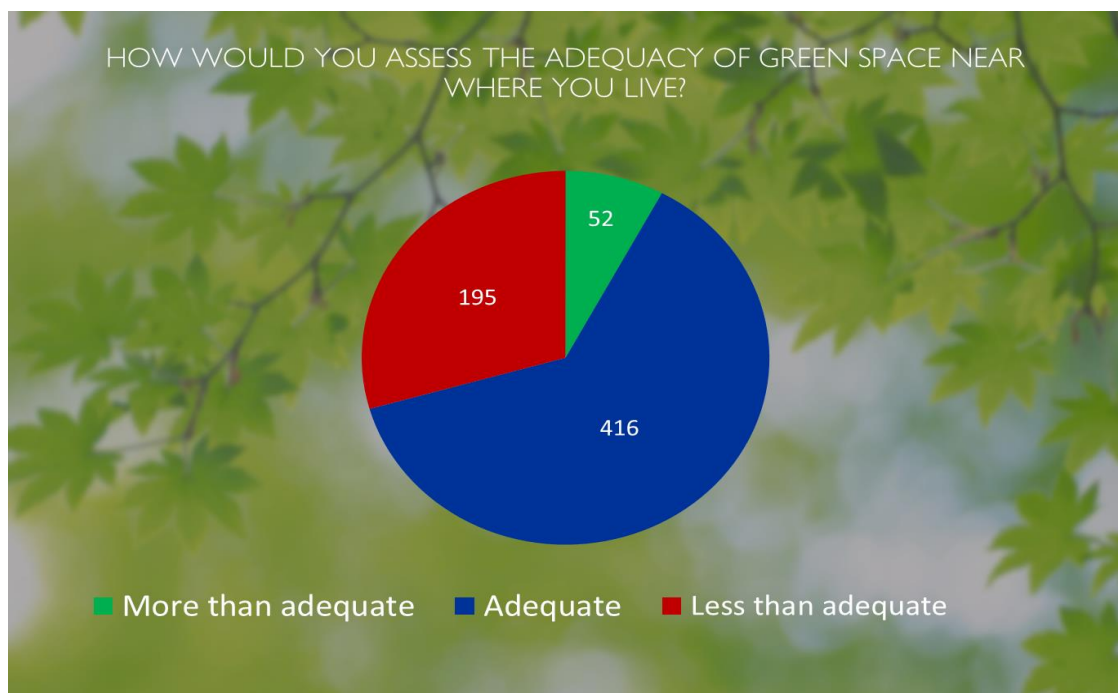
### Question 1

Illustrates the tremendous value most people put on green space not only where they live but throughout the district



### Question 2

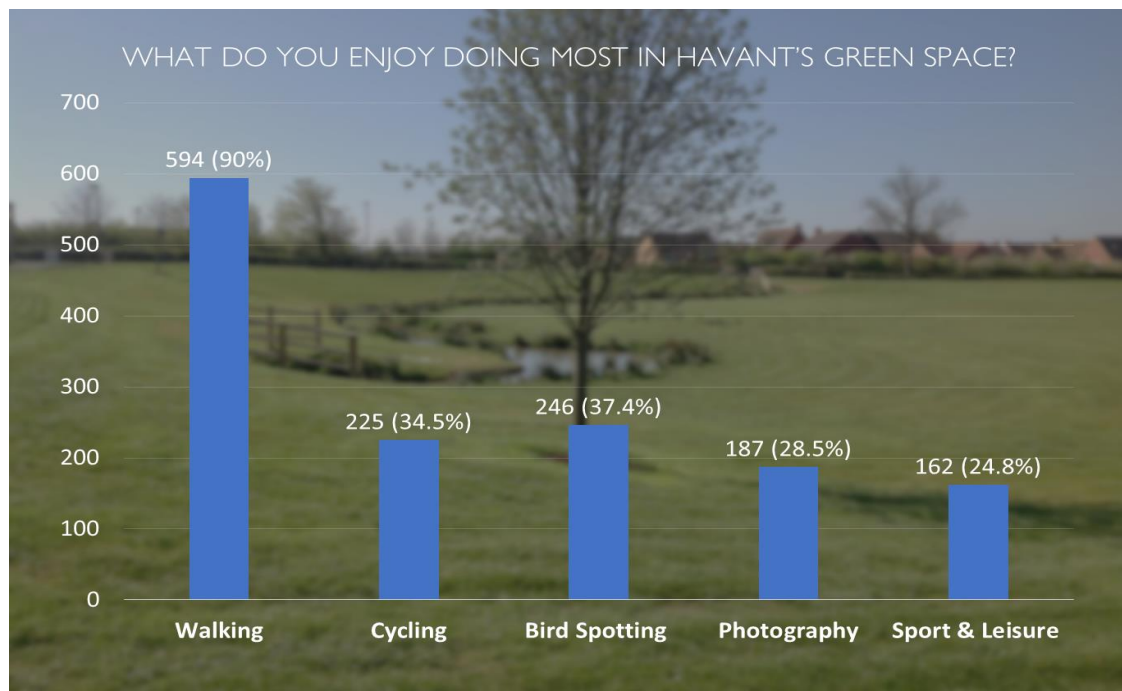
The majority perceive that green space where they live is adequate although a third say it is less than inadequate which is a significant minority undertaken in Havant Borough





### Question 3

Walking, bird watching and cycling top the list of what people most like to do in Havant's open spaces



### Question 4

Respondents include residents as well as members of the 21 local groups listed here who play a vital role in protecting and enhancing our local environments





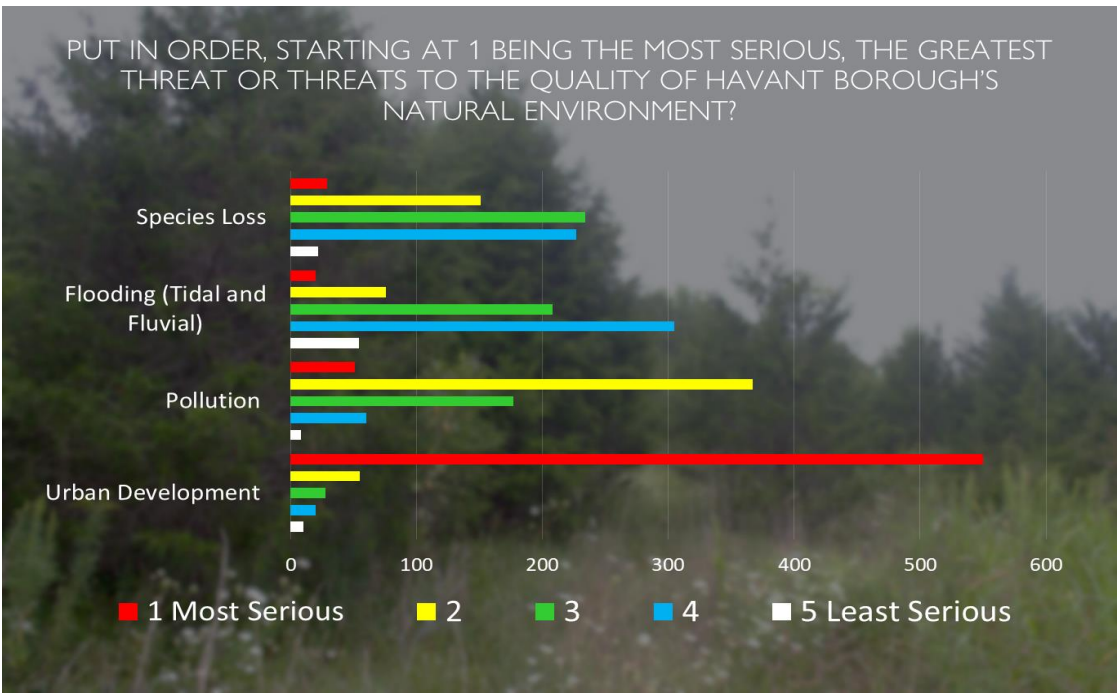
**Question 5**

More local evidence that Havant, like other areas, is losing its wildlife



**Question 6**

Urban development is placed above pollution and flooding as the greatest threats to Havant’s natural environment



Question 7

And a list of other negative factors that impact environmental quality



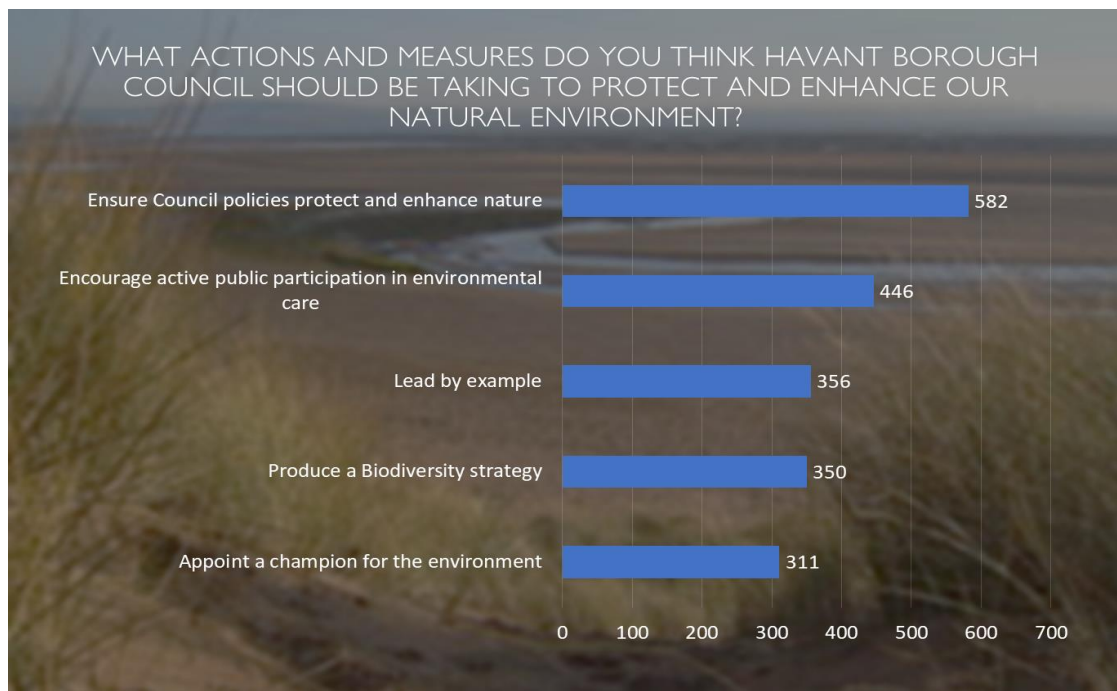
Question 8

Langstone & Chichester Harbour and the Hayling Billy line together with local parks are among the most visited and is in need of the greatest protection



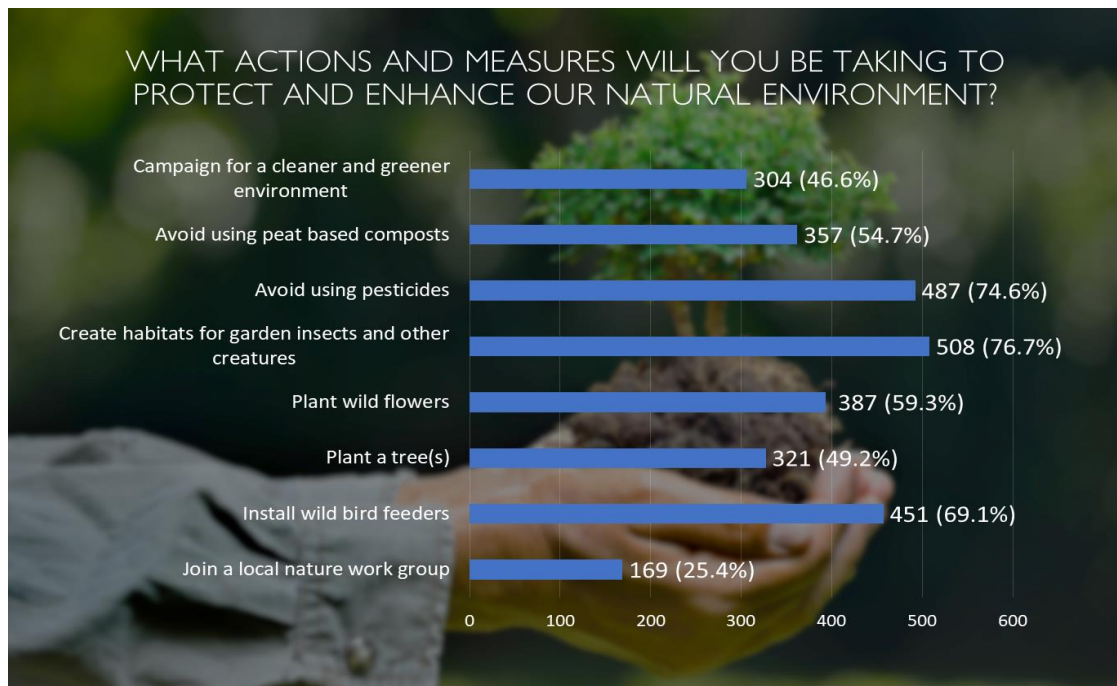
### Question 9

This underlines the crucial role Local Planning Authorities have in setting policies that protect our environment such as a robust Biodiversity Plan



### Question 10

And what we as individuals can do to play our part in giving nature a home





**Survey Distribution**

The survey included responses from across the borough, and despite very limited resources it is the largest survey of its type to be ever undertaken in the borough

