



Farlington Marshes Project Survey:

A summary of questionnaire responses

Date: May 2024

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We are the Environment Agency (EA). We protect and improve the environment.

We help people and wildlife adapt to climate change and reduce its impacts, including flooding, drought, sea level rise and coastal erosion.

We improve the quality of our water, land, and air by tackling pollution. We work with businesses to help them comply with environmental regulations. A healthy and diverse environment enhances people's lives and contributes to economic growth.

We cannot do this alone. We work as part of the Defra group (Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs), with the rest of government, local councils, businesses, civil society groups and local communities to create a better place for people and wildlife.

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Introduction

The Environment Agency (EA) is working with Jeremy Benn Associates Limited (JBA) and Volker Stevin to develop a sustainable management solution to the flood risk management of Farlington Marshes. The Farlington Marshes Project Team is working alongside Portsmouth City Council, Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust and Natural England to implement a project that will help the site adapt and be fit for purpose with the pressures of climate change and sea level rise that are affecting the coastline.

Farlington Marshes is 125 ha Nature Reserve comprising several internationally, nationally and local protected marine, freshwater and terrestrial habitats. The site is known for its birdlife and is the top Special Protected Area (SPA) site in the country for the dark-bellied Brent Goose, third in the South for overall bird numbers and thirteenth highest in the UK. It is a unique natural habitat that offers a variety of experiences for visitors.

Portsmouth City Council own the site and it holds significant recreational value as the 'green lung' of the city, in an otherwise heavily urbanised area of the South Coast. It is also the number one visitor site for Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust, who lease the Marshes, as their flagship Nature Reserve, and it receives over 100,000 visitors each year.

Farlington Marshes is a complex site with many stakeholders who have different desires and needs from the site. The Farlington Marshes project team is striving to create a solution that meets the needs of many different groups whilst ensuring all legal obligations are met for the conservation and protection of habitats found in the marshes.

The purpose of this questionnaire was to understand how the community and key stakeholders use Farlington Marshes. This survey provided the opportunity to feed into the project team what Farlington Marshes means to local people and how they feel the marshes could be used or improved.

How we ran the consultation

We ran the survey for eleven weeks, from 1 December 2023 to 19 February 2024.

The consultation was launched on the Farlington Marshes Project online [information](#) page on 1 December 2023. Paper and large print copies were available on request. The Environment Agency's 'Working with Others' guidance and Governments [Consultation Principles](#) were followed in the production of the questionnaire.

Promotion

The questionnaire was promoted in several ways during the consultation period. The Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust displayed posters at the Marshes whilst the questionnaire was live. The link to the website was circulated through various social media channels by the Environment Agency and project partners.

The questionnaire link was sent directly to all those who had [signed](#) up for updates on the Farlington Marshes project as well as circulating to members of the Langstone Harbour Authority.

During the consultation period further interest was generated with the inclusion of a link to the questionnaire page at the end of a blog published by the Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust in February [Farlington Marshes – An Uncertain Future? | Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust \(hiwwt.org.uk\)](#), written by the Director of Nature Recovery, Wilder Wight, Solent and Seas from Hampshire & Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust, Jamie Marsh.

Portsmouth City Council had a small piece in their online magazine 'Climate Action- be the change'¹ with a link to the survey that was published at the start of February.



Fig 1: Article in Climate Action published in February 2024

The Environment Agency promoted on their 'X' account to promote the survey in the last two weeks, and this was viewed 1.2k times.

¹ [Climate action - be the change 2 February \(govdelivery.com\)](#)

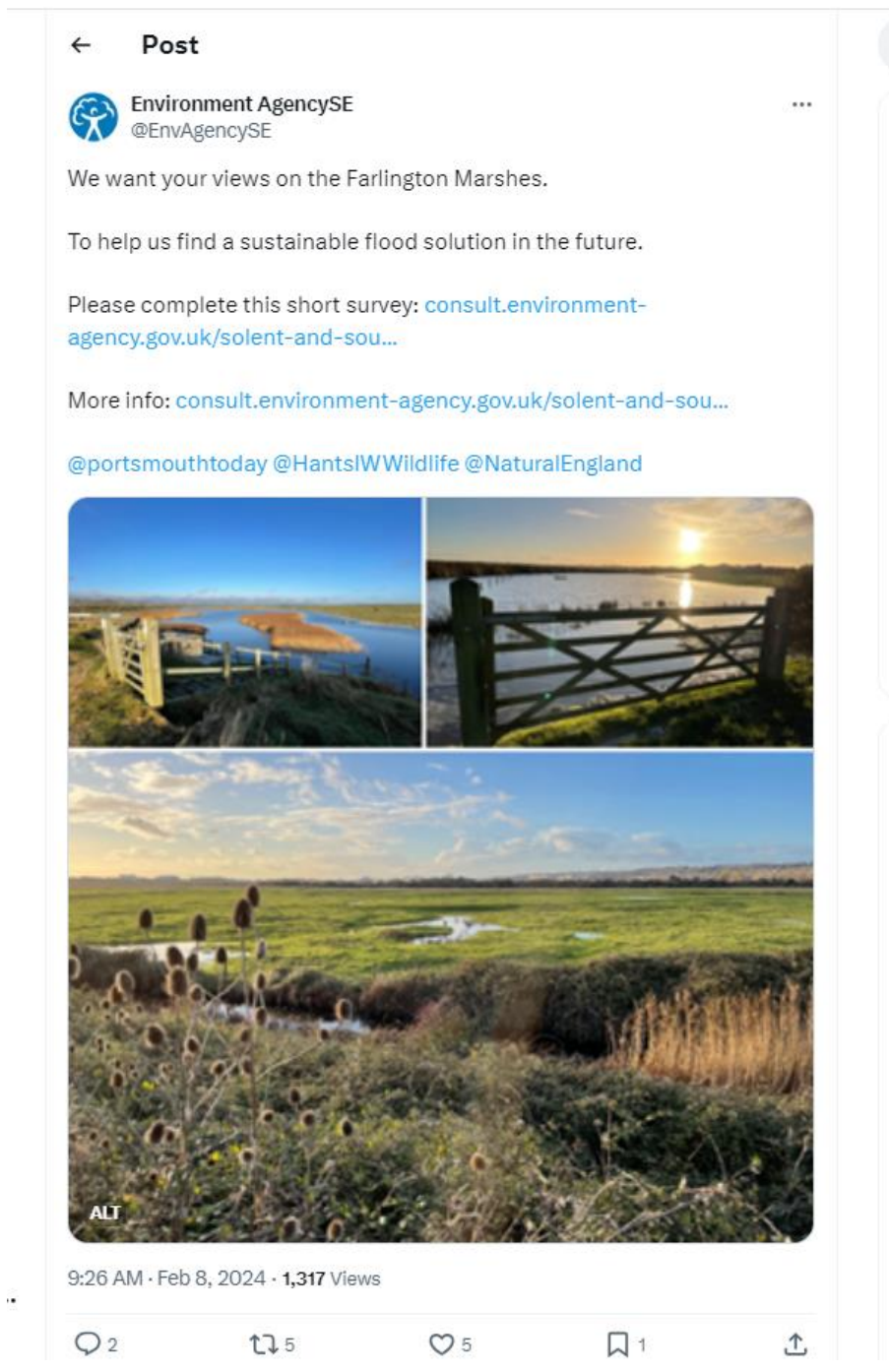


Fig 2: Environment Agency South East's (@EnvAgencySE) post on 'X' account

Summary of key findings

The following key themes emerged from the responses to the questionnaire.

1. **Biodiversity:** The diversity of wildlife at Farlington Marshes is truly remarkable. From the birdwatching opportunities to the chance encounters with other marshland creatures, visitors appreciate the chance to connect with nature and observe the rich ecosystem in action.

2. **Scenic Beauty:** The marshlands provide a picturesque backdrop for exploration and relaxation. The expansive views of the marshes, the sea, and the surrounding landscape offer a sense of tranquillity and escape from the hustle and bustle of daily life.
3. **Educational Value:** Many visitors appreciate the educational opportunities available at Farlington Marshes. Interpretive signage, some guided tours, and the Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust hut information boards provide some valuable information about the local ecology, conservation efforts, and the importance of protecting natural habitats.
4. **Access and Amenities:** improvements to the accessibility and amenities could greatly enhance the visitor experience. Providing well-maintained trails, viewing platforms, and facilities such as restrooms and picnic areas could make Farlington Marshes more welcoming and enjoyable for an increased number of visitors of all ages and abilities. Although, these may not be welcomed by all existing users who enjoy visiting Farlington Marshes in their existing state.
5. **Conservation Efforts:** Recognizing the importance of preserving and protecting this unique environment is crucial. Visitors value initiatives aimed at habitat restoration, wildlife conservation, and sustainable management practices that ensure Farlington Marshes can be enjoyed for generations to come.

Overall, Farlington Marshes is a cherished natural resource that offers a range of benefits for both visitors and the environment. Continued support for conservation efforts and thoughtful management will help to maintain the beauty and integrity of this special place.

Summary of consultation responses question one to three

A summary of responses to each consultation question and the EA's response to these is provided below. Respondents who wish to remain anonymous have not been recorded in this report. **Question 1: When we come to analyse the results of this consultation, it would help us to know if you are responding as an individual or on behalf of an organisation or group.**

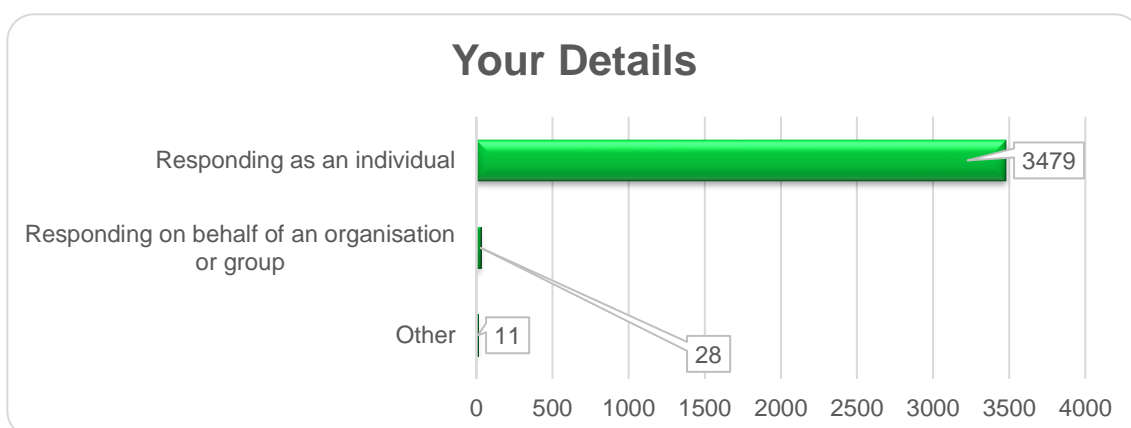


Figure 3 - Response to Question 1

We received 3518 responses in total. Of the 3518 responses, 28 people were responding on behalf of an organisation or group. Local wildlife groups have been represented, especially those focusing on birds along with national organisations such as the RSPB (Royal Society for the Protection of Birds) and the Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust who manage the site. The remaining 11 responses used the 'other' option and were responding on behalf of their family and/or a partner.

All parts of Question 2 recorded personal information such as names and email addresses. These questions have therefore been omitted from this report.

Question 3: How did you find out about this consultation?



Figure 4 - Response to Question 3

Generating the most responses, with 58.75%, was social media. Increased awareness about the questionnaire, with 18.05% was through an organisation they were a member of. The third highest selected was 'Other' (11.88%), many of these were through word of mouth, being volunteers at the marshes and through family. 67 of the responses were generated from footfall at the site and people scanning the QR code displayed on posters at the entrance and in the Wildlife Trust building.

Our response to question 3

There was a steady number of responses received throughout the consultation period and 100 responses were received within the first ten days of the questionnaire going live.

Even though the questionnaire ran over the winter period, responses show clearly there is a continuous footfall of visitors to the site with participants directly scanning the QR code on the notice boards at the location throughout the duration of the questionnaire.

Initial responses were received from those directly contacted by the project team and word of mouth from those regular users and volunteers at the marshes.

A clear increase in participants occurred after the publication of the Wildlife Trusts blog highlighting the issues and pressures the marshes is facing now and into the future with sea level rise and climate change. After the blog was posted numbers increased regularly by a few hundred each day, it was also clear that links to the blog and the questionnaire were being reposted through several accounts on social media.

Social media is by far the most efficient way to get to as many people as possible, but it is important to remember that all the methods of publication are used to reach as diverse a group as we can. All methods for promotion used were electronic apart from the notices at the Marshes themselves. To ensure audiences without access to social media were reached fliers could have been produced and left in public areas in and around Farlington itself. However, it was not felt necessary as during the Equality Analysis screening completed in 2023, the population of Drayton and Farlington (with a comparatively high proportion of elderly residents) are classified as internet users [CDRC Mapmaker: Internet User Classification](#).

Visiting Farlington Marshes

Question 4: How often do you visit Farlington?

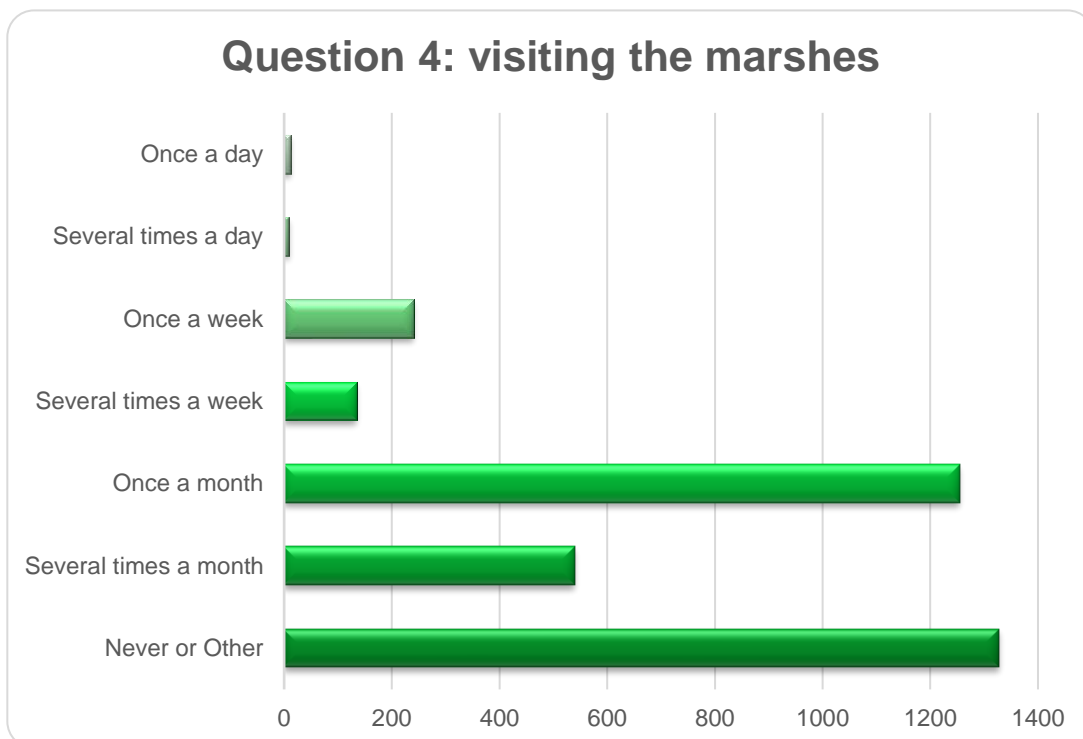


Figure 5 - Response to Question 4

All respondents answered this part of the question with 36% stating they visited at least once a month. The highest number answered 'never or other' with 37%. This was further broken down with 1250 given specific answers.

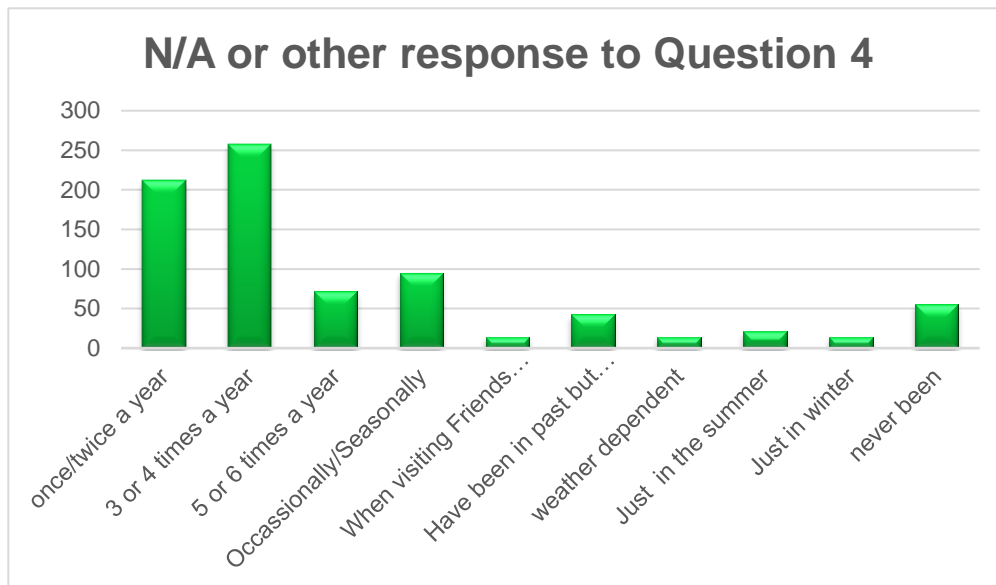


Figure 6 – N/A or other response to Question 4

The most popular response to 'N/A or other' was either three or four times a year with 257 followed by once or twice with 212 responses. Of those who come seasonally it was due to certain bird behaviours as they came specifically to witness an event. 1% of respondents report they used to be regular visitors but no longer come to the marshes for reasons such as moving away or deterioration in health. Some are occasional and come when they are in the area visiting friends and family.

Our response to question 4

The most common frequency of visiting Farlington Marshes is 'once a month' with 35.65% of respondents. A small number go weekly or daily and this is likely to be those who work or volunteer on the Marshes and need to visit as part of their job for the Wildlife Trust. Regular users are explored in later questions, but the seasonality of visits can be positively linked with the site being a nature reserve and its appeal to certain groups is dependent on bird and wildlife patterns of migration and nesting or roosting seasons, some internal paths are closed at specific times of the year to prevent the public disturbing the bird populations. Visitations are also weather dependent as the marshes can be exposed when the wind and tides are in certain states.

Question 5: How do you travel to Farlington Marshes?

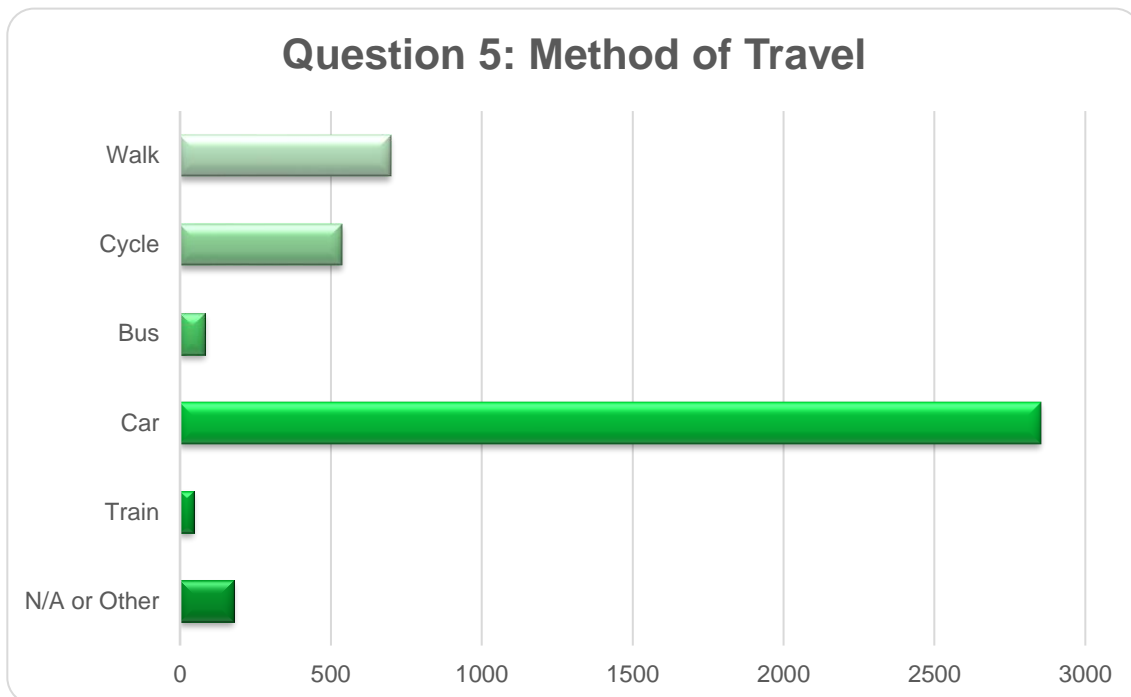


Figure 7 – Response to question 5

The majority of respondents (81.05%) travel to the marshes by car. The second most popular method of reaching Farlington Marshes was walking (19.84%) and third was cycling (15.26%). Travelling to the marshes by train was selected by only 1.31% and this is likely because the nearest railway station is in Hilsea at 1.5 miles away and the Cosham station is 2.1 miles away. 2.36% stated they travelled to visit the marshes by Bus, this would be using the Stagecoach bus service route 21 which has a bus stop along the Eastern Road 0.8 miles from the entrance to the Marshes and a closer one, by the Farlington Services, under the A27 0.6 miles away. 178 respondents selected 'N/A or Other' of which 96 did not specify a method of travelling to the site. Of the remaining 82 respondents the most common method of travel was running with 32 people and 1 respondent travelled by motor home. The 96 people that did not give any method of travel are likely to be those that do not visit the marshes.

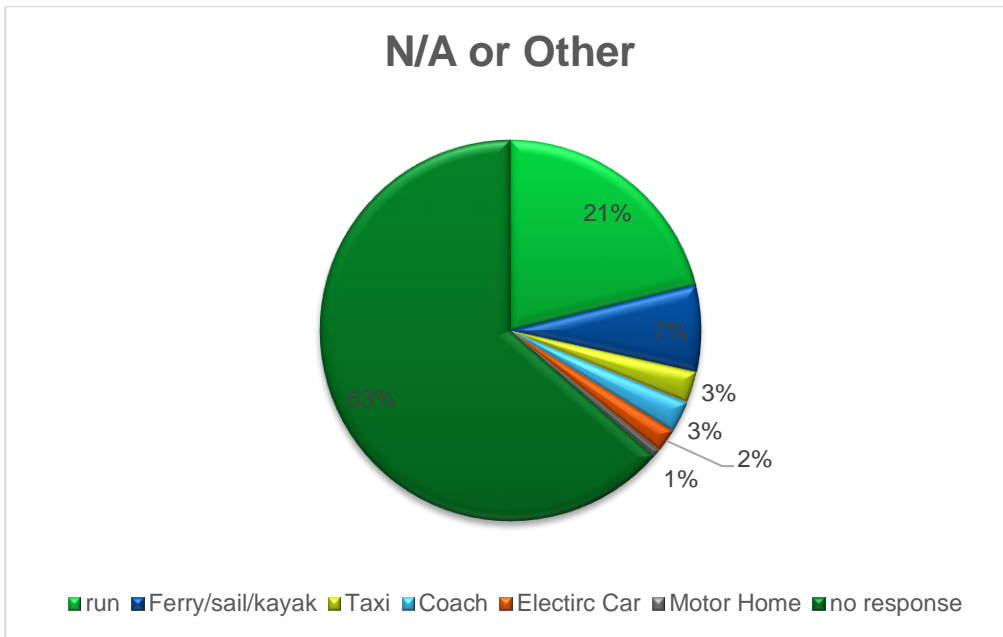


Figure 8 – Breakdown of N/A or Other to Question 5

Our response to question 5

Farlington Marshes is located within the boundaries of the city of Portsmouth and is easiest to access from the Farlington roundabout which joins the A27 with the A2030 (Eastern Road), this is evident as the most used method of travel is via car. Without vehicular access it can be quite difficult to access. This is an extremely busy junction and the exit from the marshes can be difficult with the timed lights that control the roundabout but there is no time to allow those leaving the car park at the marshes to rejoin the carriageway. A great appeal to travel to the marshes by car is there are ample spaces for users, and these have no time restrictions and are free. The height restriction barrier of 1.9m prevents vehicles over this using the car parks but this does make the location appealing as a stop that all can enjoy without additional costs.

A Sustrans route does run along the north of the Marshes adjacent to the A27 and this is a popular route. 537 people responded saying this is how they access the site. This does not account for the full use of this cycle path that is part of the National Cycle Network Route 22. Cycling is prohibited on the marshes themselves, but it is a popular way to get to them and some bike racks are available to users at the footpath entrances. The 698 respondents who said they access the site by walking are likely to be from the local vicinity and the most regular users, a popular route for dog walkers from the city and surrounding suburbs.**Question 6: How far do you live from Farlington?**

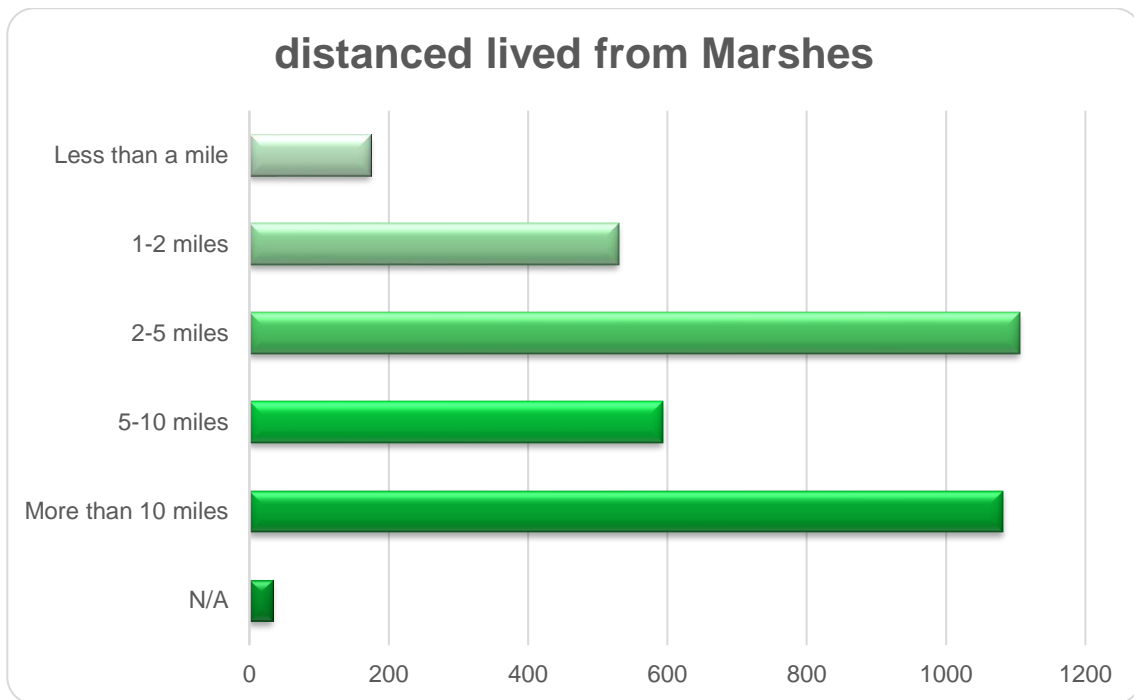


Figure 9 - Response to Question 6

The number of respondents living within each distance range generally decreases as the distance from Farlington increases. Many respondents (68.37%) live within a 2–10 mile radius or closer to Farlington. There is a gradual decline in the percentage of respondents as the distance ranges increase, apart from the "More than 10 miles" category, which has a relatively high percentage compared to the "5-10 miles" category. The "More than 10 miles" category has the highest percentage of respondents among the categories representing distances farther away from Farlington.

All respondents provided an answer but 33 did not disclose the distance they lived from the marshes.

Our response to question 6

Overall, the pattern suggests that a sizeable portion of the respondents live close to Farlington, more than 50% within 5 miles and 63% within 10 miles, with fewer respondents residing at greater distances from it.

Most participants live close to the Marshes and may therefore, be aware of the uniqueness of the site in a heavily urbanised area. Farlington Marshes provides a rare opportunity to be in open space along the Solent coastline.

With over 30% of the respondents living further than ten miles away shows that Farlington Marshes does have a wide-reaching appeal. Some visitors may travel great distances to enjoy the uniqueness of the site and understand the importance that the marshes have along the Solent coastline. It is a renowned site for the variety of bird species that can be viewed throughout the year, so people are willing to travel wide and far for the opportunity of sightings in different seasons.

Question 7: When do you usually visit Farlington?

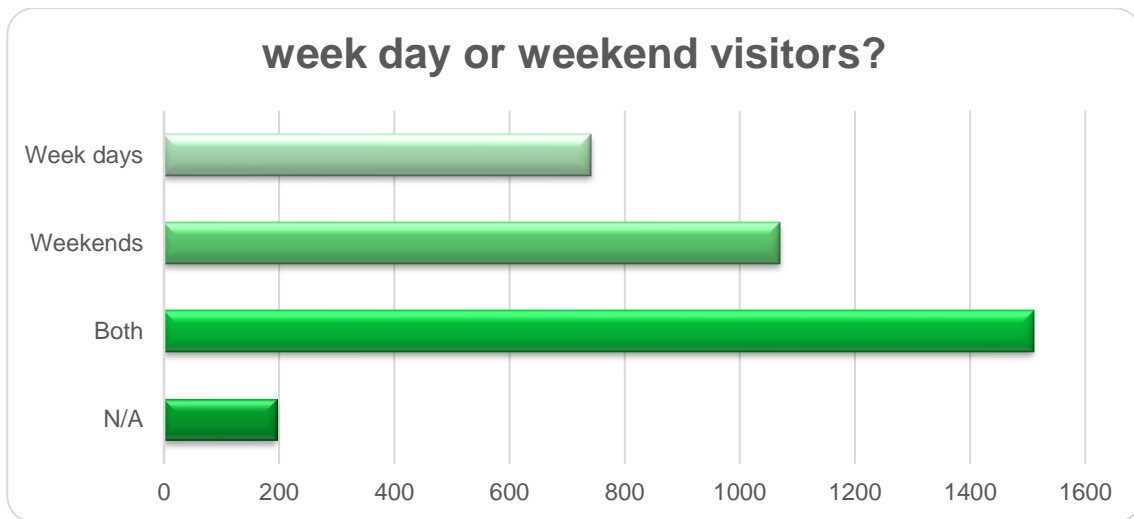


Figure 10: Response to question 7

All respondents provided an answer. 5.57% selected 'N/A' which would suggest they do not visit the marshes or have no set time if they do. Many respondents (42.92%) indicated that they visit Farlington both on weekdays and weekends, followed by those who visit primarily on weekends (30.42%), and then on weekdays (21.09%).

Our response to question 7

The largest percentage of respondents indicated that they visit on both weekends and weekdays (1510). This suggests that visitors have flexibility in their schedules or visit for a variety of reasons that may include leisure activities and working or volunteering on the site.

The results show that Farlington attracts visitors throughout the week, with a considerable proportion visiting on both weekdays and weekends, followed by those who specifically visit on weekends and then on weekdays. It is a well-used site serving a varied cross section of the population.

Question 8: what time of day do you visit Farlington Marshes?



Figure 11: Response to question 8

Many respondents visit Farlington Marshes in the morning (65.24%), followed closely by the afternoon (60.72%). The evening sees fewer visitors compared to earlier parts of the day. 278 respondents did not specify their preferred time of the visit, or they did not feel this question was applicable to them. No one omitted this question.

Our response to question 8

Overall, mornings and afternoons are the most popular times for people to visit Farlington Marshes. Many nature enthusiasts, birdwatchers and photographers may visit the Marshes in the early morning to observe the wildlife when it is most active. Birdwatchers, in particular, often prefer the morning hours for optimal bird sightings and photography. Visitors may also come during the daytime for activities such as walking and volunteering as well as simply enjoying the scenery. Some visitors may enjoy the evening for sunset views or to observe nocturnal wildlife. However, the unlit car parks and remote location of the Marshes does not make it an obvious nighttime destination. People may choose not to visit at nighttime for various reasons, but no artificial lighting is best for the wildlife, reducing disturbance of nocturnal animals and overnight parking is prohibited in the free car parks. These factors will contribute to the smaller number of visitor at this time and there is an element of safety walking in a location with uneven paths in the dark.

Question 9: What activities do you do at the Marshes?



Figure 12: responses to question 9

This question allowed for multiple responses for participants to include all the activities they go to Farlington Marshes for. The most popular activity with 77.77% was birdwatching followed closely by wildlife watching with 76.89%. Walking (73.28%) and walking the dog (20.15%) were split with a higher proportion not having a dog when they visit the marshes. Enjoying the views (72.6%) and being in open space (72.23%) were extremely high on

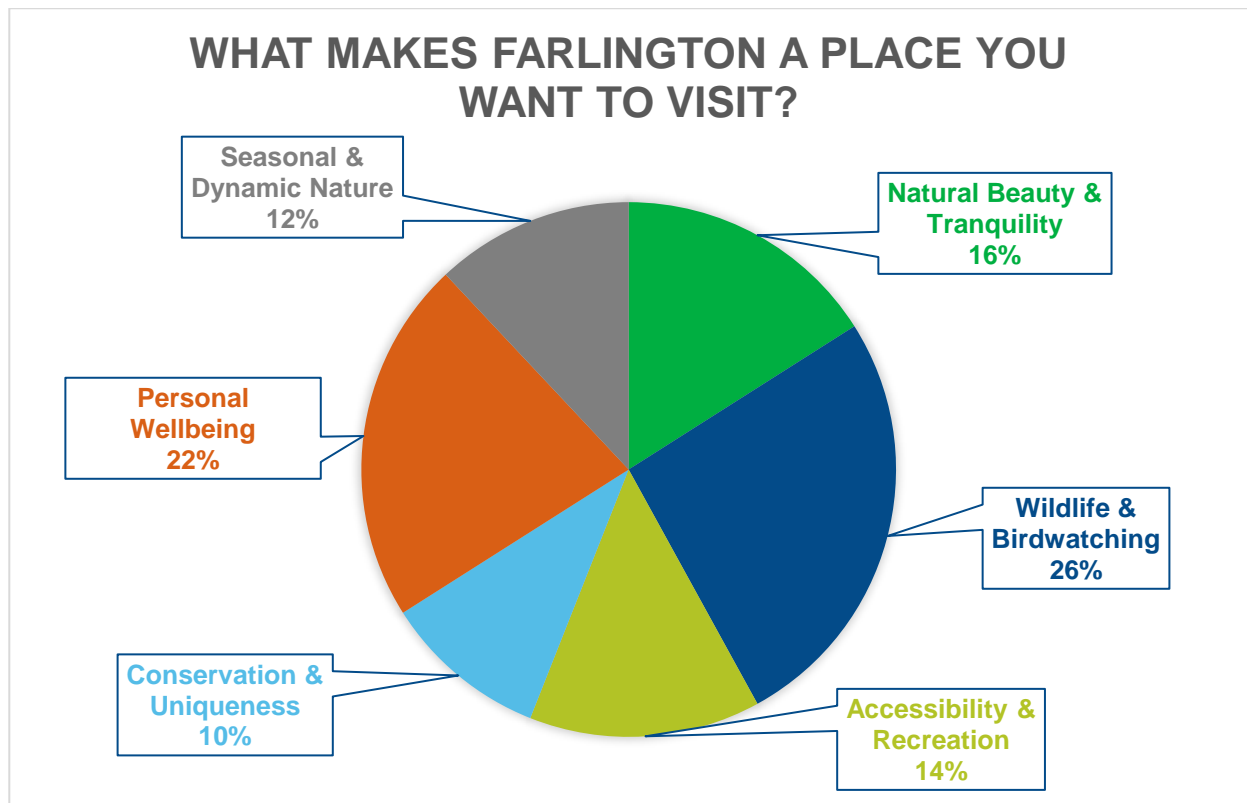


Figure 14: Graph to show responses for Question 10 in 6 Key Themes

The responses were grouped into six key themes, consisting of:

1. Natural Beauty and Tranquility

- **Peace and Quiet:** Many responses emphasize the peace, quiet, and tranquility of Farlington, highlighting it as an escape from the hustle and bustle of city life.
- **Beautiful Scenery:** Visitors are drawn to the beautiful and picturesque landscapes, including views of the Solent, the marshes, and the open spaces that offer a sense of being close to nature.

2. Wildlife and Birdwatching

- **Diverse Birdlife:** A significant attraction is the variety of birdlife, including rare and migratory species, which makes Farlington a hotspot for birdwatchers.
- **Rich Biodiversity:** The presence of a wide range of wildlife, beyond just birds, including cows, owls, and seals, is frequently mentioned, underscoring the area's rich biodiversity.

3. Accessibility and Recreation

- **Proximity to Urban Areas:** Many appreciate the quick and easy access from Portsmouth and surrounding areas, making Farlington an accessible escape to nature.
- **Outdoor Activities:** Responses indicate that Farlington offers ideal conditions for walking, running, and other recreational activities in a natural setting.

4. Conservation and Uniqueness

- **Protected Natural Space:** Visitors value the conservation efforts in Farlington and its status as a nature reserve, recognizing its role in protecting habitats and wildlife.
- **Unique Environment:** The unique combination of coastal and marshland environments is frequently noted, making Farlington a distinct and special place to visit.

5. Personal Wellbeing

need for some conservation or preservation of the site for future generations and the wildlife. 'Better' is the largest word as this was used to prefix many of the respondent's observations, for example 'better footpaths,' 'better' access, 'better' protection, 'better' security, 'better' for wildlife.

From the extensive list of improvements several common themes stand out of how people feel the marshes could be improved. A representation of these is shown in the chart below.

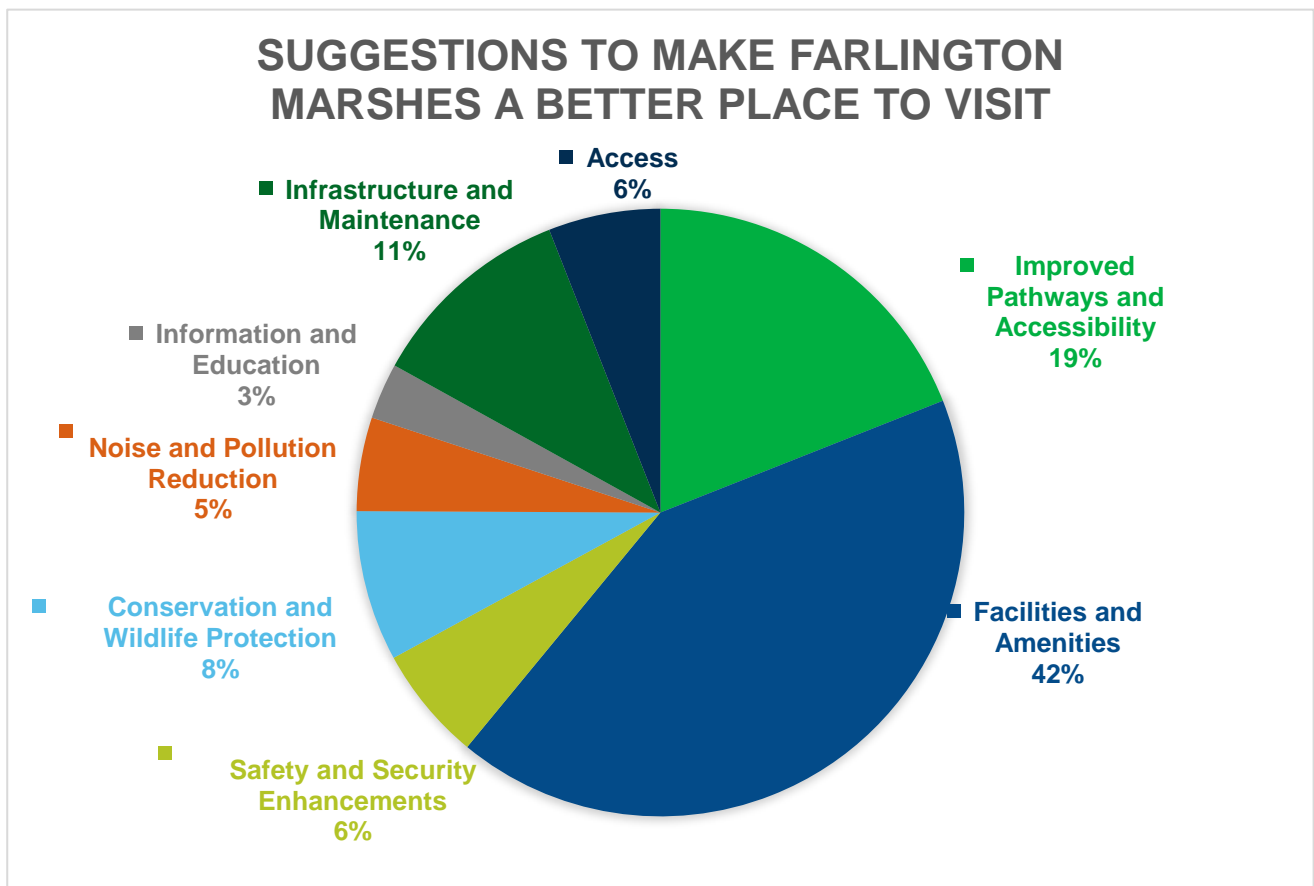


Figure 16 - Response to Question 11

Our response to question 11

Many respondents suggest the need for better-maintained paths, especially around the sea wall, to accommodate not just walkers but also individuals with disabilities. This included requests for smoother surfaces and more level ground to make the area accessible to wheelchair and pushchair users which would improve the comfort of all visitors.

A substantial number of responses point to a lack of basic amenities such as public toilets, litter bins and dog waste bins. The addition of further seating/benches along the walking paths and bird hides for wildlife observation are also mentioned. Some mention the benefit of having a café or refreshment concession for visitors would be welcomed. It should be noted here that a similar number of responses make a specific request for no café or

People used this section to consolidate their views of Farlington Marshes, there are several themes that concern the respondents which are as follows:

- **Importance of wildlife and birdlife** that the marshes support. These were mentioned above all other factors. 30% of responses acknowledged the highly valued role of Farlington marshes providing critical habitat for wildlife that is unique in the area.
- **Public Access and Enjoyment.** 15% of respondents appreciate the marshes as a place for recreational activities and enjoyment of nature.
- **Opposition to Development.** There is opposition for any form of development that would alter the current usage and state of Farlington marshes with 66 respondents highlighting this as a concern.
- **Parking Issues.** Concerns about parking were raised by a small number (19 mentions) with the main issue reported being the misuse by non-visitors who are taking advantage of the free spaces available at the entrance to the site.
- **Maintenance of Natural Space.** People do recognise there is a need for ongoing maintenance and preservation of the marshes as a natural, unspoilt space was highlighted in 131 of the responses.
- **Educational Value.** The educational potential of the marshes for both learning about nature and as an educational resource was mentioned 22 times in the responses.
- **Safety and Accessibility.** There is a desire for enhancements to the safety and accessibility of the marshes. 45 different responses mention this, including improvements to signage both within and leading to the site and better pathways around the marshes.
- **Support for Conservation Efforts.** 16% show staunch support for the conservation efforts that currently occur and voice appreciation for the protection of the habitats on the site.
- **Appreciation for Current Management,** this is acknowledged by 12 respondents.

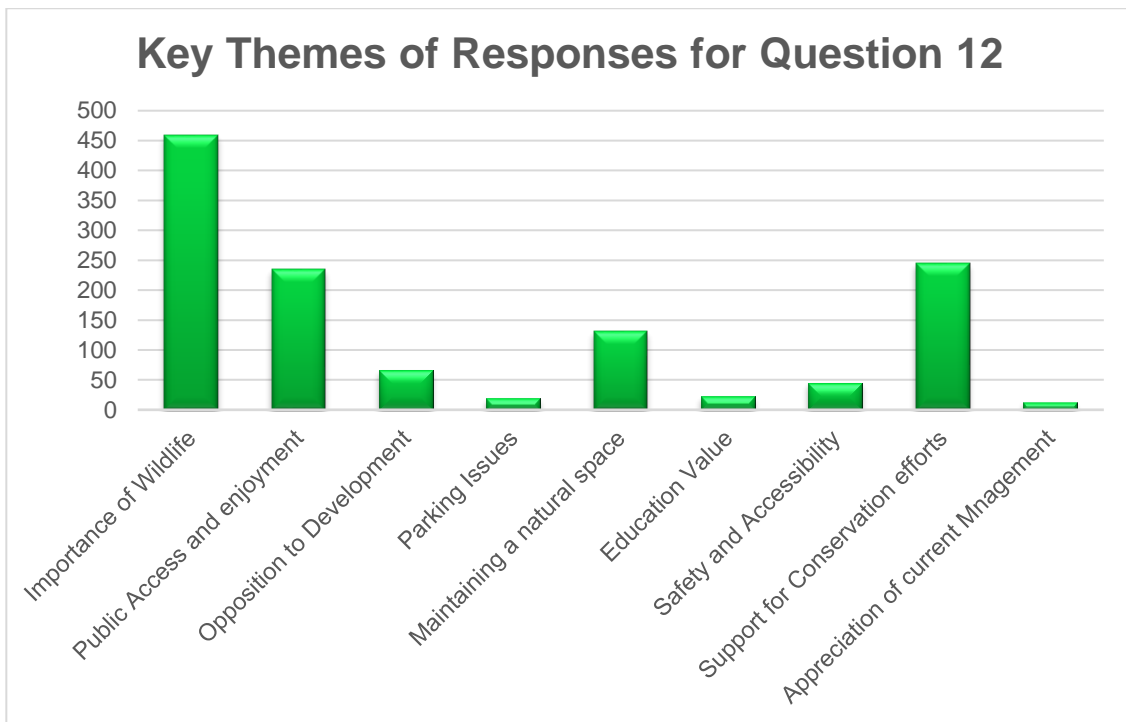


Figure 18 Summary of Responses to Question 12

Our response to questions 12

It is clear from the responses to question 12 that many are passionate about Farlington Marshes and understand the type of habitat that is currently protected inside the embankment that surrounds the site. People wanted to take the opportunity to highlight why the area is so valued by them, one response stated, *'It is such an important site for birds in the area and so different to any other green space in Portsmouth.'*

There are many concerns raised about the future of the marshes, whether this is to do with how it is managed, maintained, or protected. The following statements show just how much Farlington means not only to people but to the bird and wildlife:

'The site is obviously such a vital area for local and migratory bird and wildlife, and it is truly unthinkable that it could disappear at some point in future. In an age where wildlife habitat is constantly reduced, under threat, polluted etc, it is vital that sites such as Farlington Marshes are protected at all costs.'

'Please protect it for the future.'

'This area is simply beautiful and should be preserved for future generations (both human and animal) and their well-being.'

One of the main aims of the Farlington Project is to maintain the existing recreation and amenity value of the site along with protecting and enhancing the functionality and condition of the designated areas within the marshes for the birds. This needs to be done whilst considering the adaptive transition up to the year 2060. The embankment that currently surrounds the marshes is in very poor condition and it is not possible to maintain

it indefinitely. Work is needed to help the coastline adjust to the ongoing pressures it is currently facing along with becoming more resilient in the future.

The project team are considering solutions that need to factor in immediate economic constraints and the ever-increasing pressures of climate change, for example rising sea levels which are already impacting on the embankment around the marshes. Further work with partners is needed to determine how the marshes will be managed and how the plan for the future transition will be implemented. Knowing what is valued about the site through these responses can help the team incorporate key characteristics in the detailed design where appropriate.

Next Steps

We thank everyone who took the time to respond formally.

We have contacted those who asked to be signed up to our mailing list. If you would like to be added to our mailing list to receive updates on this project, please [email us](#) and let us know. Our email address is: FarlingtonMarshes@environment-agency.gov.uk

The Farlington Marshes Project team are using the results of this questionnaire, asset inspection currently taking place, along with the groundwork investigation results from the works carried out in 2022 and the asset inspection reports from 2019, 2021 and 2023, to develop the detailed design for the embankment that surrounds Farlington Marshes. The project team are working closely with key stakeholders to try and develop a sustainable solution to the challenges that are facing the site.

The complexity of climate change, rising sea levels, and preservation of a nature reserve with both local and international designations along with economic and social pressures are being considered to reach a solution for Farlington Marshes that is appropriate for the future. It is important to keep in mind that a solution that will create a habitat that is resilient to the climate pressures of the future can be a benefit to Langstone Harbour and the wider Solent. This may look different from the marshes that are currently loved and enjoyed today but could provide an opportunity for wildlife and nature to continue to thrive.

Individuals who wish to follow up their responses, or points made within this document, in more detail are welcome to contact us FarlingtonMarshes@environment-agency.gov.uk

Would you like to find out more about us or your environment?

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