

# Our Shared Forest

## Forest of Dean Land Management Plan

### Consultation Report

Published June 2019



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## 1.0 Introduction

Our Shared Forest is a project to reshape and redirect the forest's land management plans to set a new direction for the public forest estate in the Forest of Dean. This report summarises the large scale consultation process that was conducted from Oct 2018 to Feb 2019, to ensure that the land management principles and commitments are based on an agreed, understood and supported direction. This will form the foundation that Forestry England will use to create the more detailed Forest Plans for the Forest of Dean that will direct operational activity in the decades ahead.

### 1.1 Background

The Forest of Dean is a historic forest which has long been used for its rich mineral resources of iron ore, sandstone and coal, as well as its timber. Freemining is a long standing cultural tradition in the Forest, which is consequently scattered with a rich legacy of built heritage, ranging from scheduled monument remains of iron works and furnaces through to hundreds of mine entry points and miles of disused tramways and railways. The Forest is also a stronghold for nature, with large areas of woodland and open space providing a mosaic of habitats for a range of species. The Commoning of sheep is also a long standing cultural tradition in the Forest that once maintained swathes of open grassland.

The Forest was the first National Forest Park in England, designated in 1938. Tourism in the area has developed slowly, but has now become economically important for the area, with significant growth in employment in the cycling and overnight accommodation sectors.

#### The Foresters' Forest Programme

Foresters' Forest is a National Lottery Heritage Fund Landscape Partnership Programme which has brought 32 organisations and individuals together to deliver 38 projects in a partnership led by Forestry England. These projects cover a wide range of natural, built and cultural heritage subjects, so the scope of the programme is much wider than land management and the public forest estate. However, the learning from Foresters' Forest projects will be embedded, where appropriate, in Our Shared Forest so that it becomes part of Foresters' Forest enduring legacy.

#### Our Shared Forest - Land Management Plan

At the heart of the Land Management Plan there is a vision, supported by eight 'Principles of Land Management' (Fig.1) covering:

- Trees and Woodlands
- Wildlife and Wild Spaces
- Geology and Soils
- Water
- Cultural Heritage
- Built Heritage and Archaeology
- Community
- Recreation

**Fig. 1: Principles of Land Management**



Each of the land management principles covers:

- Setting out the important characteristics of ‘where are we now?’
- Identifying the key targets for the future, ‘where do we want to get to?’
- Detailing the key commitments for ‘what we are going to do?’

Each commitment was then explained in further text, describing how that particular commitment would be implemented.

The creation of this Land Management Plan involved a number of key national principles and strategies which helped to set the context:

- Principles of the European Landscape Convention regarding local culture, quality of life, social well-being and transformation of landscapes.
- Sir John Lawton’s ‘Making Space for Nature’ report recommending ‘bigger, better and more joined up’.
- The DEFRA 25 Year plan which sets out a plan to ‘leave our environment in a better state than when we found it’.
- Forest Enterprise England’s strategy to ‘connect everyone everywhere with the Nation’s Forest’.
- Gloucestershire’s Local Nature Partnerships recognition of the Forest of Dean as a ‘Nature Improvement Area’
- Concerns identified in the Forest of Dean & Lower Wye Valley National Character Area Profile around climate change and reduction of open space habitat

## 1.2 Methodology

The overall purpose of the consultation process was to provide an opportunity for people in the Forest to be involved in the development of an ambitious long-term vision for the Forest's future and set out new approaches to forestry and land management.

This consultation process was organised in three phases with an external agency, Factor 3, working with Forestry England staff to manage each stage, incorporating both qualitative and quantitative methods.

- Phase 1 (October 2018)
  - 110 people took part in four qualitative workshops (Forestry England staff, local Councillors, Tourism Providers, Foresters' Forest project leaders and representatives of local community groups e.g. Dean Forest Voice) to gather information, opinion and insight to develop the land management principles and commitments.
  - There were presentations on climate change, resilience and natural processes to highlight the fact that Forest Plans have to take a long term view and think of 100 years ahead, not just ten years at a time.
  - Three exercises within these workshops were interactive in order to engage people with the process and encourage discussion:
    - Park bench exercise (Describe the Forest to someone sitting next to you on a park bench)
    - Your future vision for the Forest (What you do and don't want to see in the future)
    - What should we stop doing /continue doing /create? (Open suggestions under each principle)
  - There was also a guided walk through a section of the Forest, explaining the land management issues that arise when planning the practical implementation of operating a working Forest within a busy area, populated by local residents and visited by multitudes of tourists.
- Phase 2 (December 2018)
  - 100 people took part in four group meetings with a broader range of stakeholders to provide feedback on the results from the workshops and refine the ideas for the land management principles and commitments.

**Outputs from phase 1 and 2 were used to create the draft consultation plan.**

- Phase 3 (January to February 2019)
  - 1164 people completed a survey on the draft consultation plan (the proposed Land Management Plan vision, principles and commitments). When the survey was designed, it deliberately excluded demographic questions as it was felt that these questions could possibly deter respondents.

- Responses to the survey were generated using a multi-channel campaign across website, social media, local press, newsletters and emails sent to stakeholders.
  - Due to the structure of the survey, it was possible for respondents to skip sections, so there are a variable number of respondents on each particular land management principle (Table 1).
- Phase 4 (March to May 2019)
    - Analysis of the results of the survey including coding of the comments given on the commitments.
    - Modifications and clarifications made to the vision and land management commitments and/or supporting text, based on the results of the survey, to create a final agreed version of the Land Management Plan.

**Table 1: Number of respondents and comments made by each land management principle**

	Number respondents who answered each section	Number respondents who skipped each section	Number respondents who made comments on each section	Number respondents who answered 'If make a difference' question
Vision	1137	27	324	NA
Trees & Woodlands	971	193	248	955
Wildlife & Wild Spaces	913	251	299	898
Geology & Soils	880	284	177	856
Water	868	296	176	848
Cultural Heritage	861	303	288	834
Built Heritage & Archaeology	844	320	140	811
Community	838	326	299	812
Recreation	830	334	341	806
Overall Question on Commitments	819	345	307	NA
<b>Total Survey</b>	<b>1164</b>		<b>2599</b>	

As the number of respondents completing each section gradually declines (the order of principles in the table above is the same as in the survey), it is likely that this is a

symptom of respondents getting tired of completing each section with more people skipping parts as they went through.

Consequently it is interesting to note that the number of respondents providing comments does not follow the same pattern, as those elements attracting the highest numbers of comments were 'Recreation', 'Vision', 'Wildlife and Wild Spaces', 'Community', 'Cultural Heritage' and 'Trees and Woodlands' with 'Geology and Soils', 'Water' and 'Built Heritage and Archaeology' attracting fewer comments. The reasons for these varying levels of response are probably indicative of the issues that people feel most strongly about, which becomes apparent in the analysis of these comments in section **3.0 Results**.

Respondents could answer the 'Would you add or change anything in our commitments?' question by writing their comments in a 'free text' box so they could write whatever they liked and as much as they liked. This opportunity yielded 2,599 responses overall and the comments were specific to each section (vision or land management principle) but not sorted beyond that. Consequently, analysis was necessary to read each comment, then make a judgement which of the commitments under that principle it seemed most relevant to, and then within that commitment whether the comment was positive or negative. Whilst this was a subjective process, it does provide a means to explore which issues people feel strongly about, which of the commitments are the most contentious and therefore which commitments need clarification and/or modification.

## **2.0 Executive Summary, Conclusions and Recommendations**

### **2.1 Executive Summary**

The level of engagement with the initial stages of the consultation process was very good as just over 100 people took part in the qualitative workshops in Oct 2018 and a further 100 people took part in the group meetings in Dec 2018.

1164 people responded to the survey in Jan - Feb 2019 about the vision, land management principles and commitments, which included responses from organisations such as the Environment Agency, Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust, Natural England, Forest of Dean Local History Society and the Verderers.

The majority of respondents agreed with the commitments under each land management principle, although the size of the majority decreased from 89% of respondents agreeing with the Water commitments down to 66% agreeing with the Cultural Heritage commitments. Overall 78% respondents thought the plan identified the right commitments and focus for land management.

The total number of comments made about the plan and the commitments was 2,599 providing a wealth of information about the views and opinions of respondents about Our Shared Forest currently. Given the distribution of these comments, it is possible to infer that people feel more strongly about those principles with the greatest number of comments (Recreation, Community, Wildlife and Wild Spaces, Cultural Heritage and Trees and Woodlands).

Similarly, within each principle, the commitments that attract the most comments will be the issues that people feel strongly about:

- Water - the use of beavers (and the need to monitor their effectiveness before expanding the project elsewhere)
- Recreation - the network of trails (for all users not just mountain bikers) and the cost of car parking
- Trees and Woodlands - the diversity of trees and the planning of forestry operations (managing operations to reduce perceived damage to the Forest)
- Wildlife and Wild Spaces - invasive species (more effort needed to get the feral boar population under control)
- Geology and Soils - access and extraction routes for Forestry operations (managing operations to reduce perceived damage to the Forest)
- Community - mountain biking (polarised opinions from enthusiastic bikers and those against biking)
- Built Heritage and Archaeology - managing safety with fencing
- Cultural Heritage - supporting small scale mining and quarrying (not large scale mining and quarrying)

Many of the comments given in the survey can be answered within the explanatory text in the land management plan which underlies each commitment. However, it is unlikely that everyone who completed the survey would have read every section of the draft consultation document in detail.

Some of the comments have revealed a completely different interpretation of the written words than that intended. For example, within the vision statement the phrase ‘to be guided by the potential of the land’ was interpreted by some to mean that the Forest could be ‘sold off/used for building developments/exploited for mining and quarrying’. This was not the intention at all, so it has been amended to include the word ‘natural’ - ‘to be guided by the **natural** potential of the land’, which means that if the geology/geography of an area in the Forest shows a pre-disposition to be wet, then the natural processes would be facilitated to allow it to become wet (i.e. not planted with trees because the trees would not flourish in these conditions).

Where clarification or modification of a commitment and/or the underlying text was needed, this has been updated so that the ‘Consultation Draft of January 2019’ has now become the ‘Our Shared Forest - Forest of Dean Land Management Plan (Published June 2019)’.

Some of the comments expressed doubts whether Forestry England will be able to deliver what they are planning to do within the commitments. Consequently there will be a separate Monitoring and Evaluation Plan that runs alongside the implementation of the Land Management Plan to monitor and evaluate progress overall and within Forest Plans. As the Forest has been divided up into six Forest Plan areas, to be delivered over the next five years, there will be a Monitoring and Evaluation report published each year.



## 2.2 Conclusions

The consultation process has been extremely valuable in engaging local people with how the Forest of Dean will be managed in future. The majority of respondents agreed with the land management commitments but, where necessary, amendments have been made to the commitments according to the feedback received. The level of engagement and the depth of responses suggest that there is an appetite to be more actively engaged in future.

There is therefore an unprecedented opportunity to continue the conversation with local residents to ‘Tell Our Story’, to explain how and why Forestry England manages the Forest in the way that it does, given the various constraints, the competing demands of different users, and the threat of pests, diseases and climate change.

The next opportunity for consultation will be when the draft of the first Forest Plan has been created. This will be the first time that the land management principles and commitments are translated into a document detailing the works on the ground in that area for the next ten years. The consultation on this draft is planned to be more interactive and personal than previously, with Forestry England staff leading walks and talks around the area, so that local residents can understand the planning process and how it will be delivered on the area near them.

## 2.3 Recommendations and amendments to commitments

The results of this consultation process need to be widely communicated to the public so that people feel both that their responses have been heard, and that the commitments will be delivered in future.

Specific amendments to the vision statement and commitments following feedback from the survey were:

<b>Vision statement</b>	Wording of the phrase ‘guided by the potential of the land’ changed to ‘guided by the <b>natural</b> potential of the land.
<b>Trees and Woodlands</b>	Additional commitment (number 5) to:  <b>Improve our communication of forest operations</b> We will improve our communication to better advise woodland users, neighbours and other stakeholders of our operational plans during the planning and implementation of forestry works. We will explain the purpose of the operations, whilst being open to adapt and modify plans in light of new site knowledge. We will ensure we explain the role of the planned works in delivering to our commitments.
<b>Wildlife and Wild Spaces</b>	No changes
<b>Geology</b>	No changes
<b>Water</b>	The comments relating to the need to research the

	<p>effectiveness of the beavers before releasing more of them links to a theme mentioned under a number of principles, and will be addressed with the creation of a monitoring and evaluation report which will be published annually to measure performance over time.</p> <p>The detailed text beneath Commitment 3 about the ‘removal of artificial barriers’ will be amended to read ‘Some of those barriers no longer perform any useful function and could be removed. Others are still required, <b>or have a built heritage value</b>, and more careful assessment of options needs to be made.’</p>
<b>Cultural Heritage</b>	<p>Commitment 5 about mining and quarrying will be amended to include the phrase ‘small scale’ (Support and promote <b>small scale</b> mining and quarrying).</p> <p>Commitment 4 about the ‘feel of a Forest of trees’ will be amended to ‘Strengthen the feel of <b>being within</b> a forest of trees’.</p>
<b>Built Heritage and Archaeology</b>	No changes
<b>Community</b>	<p>Commitment 5 amended to:</p> <p><b>Promote responsible use of the Forest by all visitors, increasing their understanding and respect for other woodland users and local wildlife</b></p> <p>Many local people know the woods well enough to find their own way and create their own routes off the main forest roads. We accept and tolerate these desire lines and wild trails, as long as no construction takes place. A new wild trail policy will be developed in consultation with user groups. We will promote responsible use of the Forest, encouraging all visitors to better understand and respect both other woodland users as well as the needs of local wildlife, particularly in sensitive locations.</p>
<b>Recreation</b>	<p>Commitment 2 - There is a need to raise awareness of the ‘Membership Pass’ and explain that the funds from car parking fees are reinvested in local Forestry England sites. The detailed text to be added about the pass will be:</p> <p>Our Membership scheme provides discounted parking for a small annual membership fee. This scheme is designed to give significant savings on parking charges for regular, local users.</p>

### 3.0 Results

The survey was organised in sections for the vision statement and then each of the land management principles. Within each principle there were three questions:

- How much do you agree or disagree with the commitments?
- Would you add or change anything in our commitments?
- Do you think the action in the commitments will make a difference?

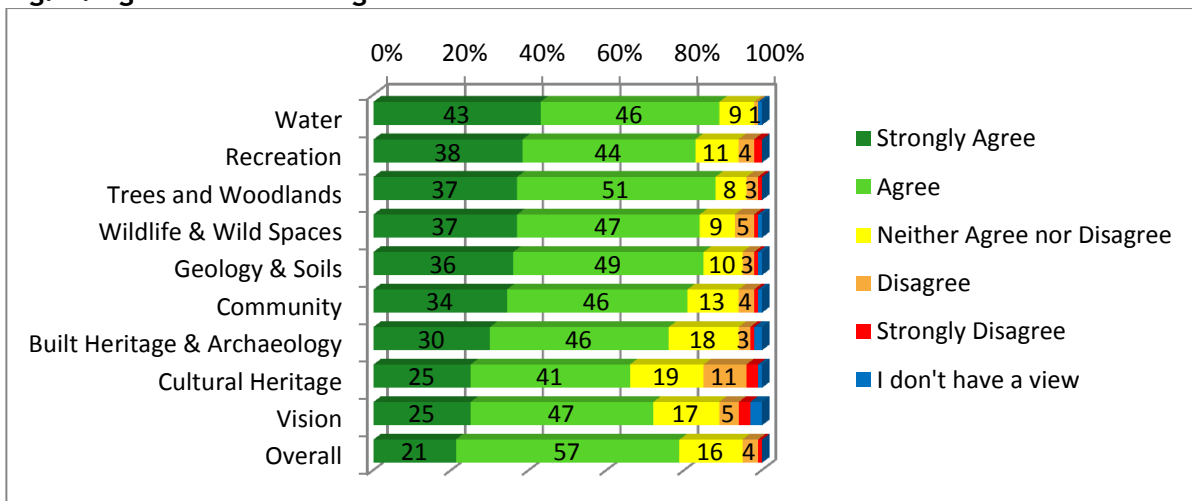
The questions relating to respondents’ opinion of the vision statement and the commitments overall were worded slightly differently (below), but the responses are included in Fig.1 for the purposes of comparison.

- How much do you agree or disagree with the long-term vision for land management of the public forest estate in the Forest of Dean?
- Overall, do you think the plan identifies the right commitments and focus for land management of the public forest estate in the Forest of Dean?

#### 3.1 Extent of agreement or disagreement with commitments and vision.

The majority of respondents agreed with the commitments under each land management principle, although the size of the majority decreased from 89% of respondents agreeing with the Water commitments down to 66% agreeing with the Cultural heritage commitments (Fig.1). There were generally very low levels of disagreement (3-5% of respondents) apart from Cultural heritage where disagreement rose to 11% of respondents. This particular principle also had the greatest proportion of ‘Neither Agree nor Disagree’ responses (19% of respondents), although these ranged from 8-19% across all the principles.

**Fig. 1: Agreement or disagreement with commitments and vision**



Base: Respondents answering on each principle

The majority of respondents (72%) agreed with the vision statement, whilst slightly more (78%) agreed with the commitments overall. A small proportion (4-5% of respondents) disagreed with them and 16-17% of respondents neither agreed nor disagreed.

### 3.2 Vision statement

The vision statement contained in the consultation document was:

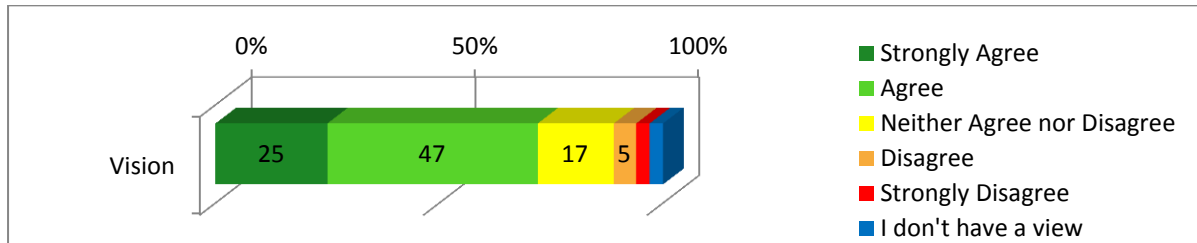


Although the majority of respondents (72%) agreed with this vision (Fig.2), there were 324 respondents who provided comments to the question ‘Is there anything you don’t like or would change?’ The range of comments provided here was large, but the most frequent are detailed in Fig.3 below.

The vision statement will need to be modified as 36 respondents commented that the meaning was unclear and, in particular, there were a variety of misunderstandings (31 respondents) about the phrase ‘the potential of the land’. This was intended to refer to the fact that if the geology/geography of a Forest area showed a pre-disposition to be wet, then the natural processes would be facilitated to allow it to become wet (ie. not planted with trees because the trees would not flourish in these conditions). However, this needs to be made more explicit as there were concerns that the ‘potential of the land’ could be interpreted to mean ‘sold off/used for building developments/exploited for mining & quarrying’. Consequently this phrase will be amended to ‘guided by the **natural** potential of the land’.

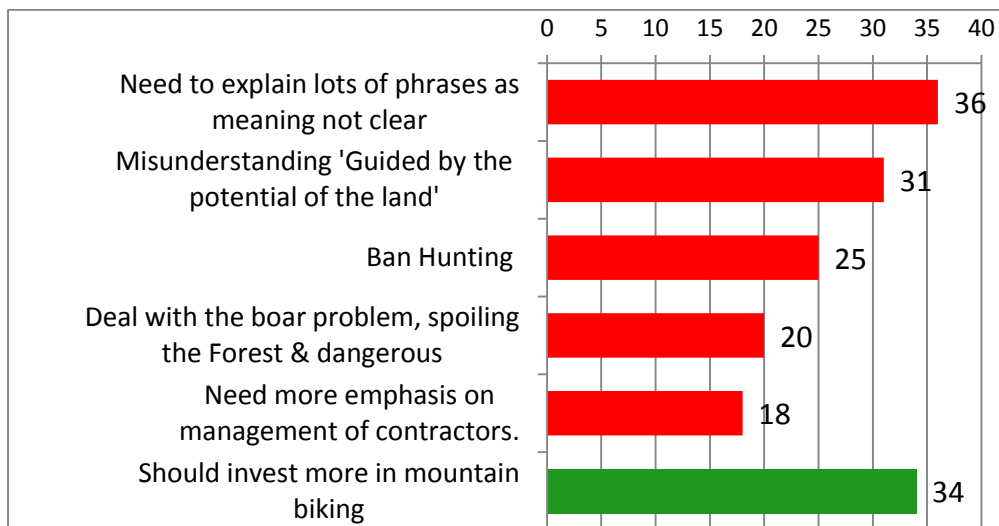
There were also frequent comments requesting the banning of hunting (25 respondents), the need to deal with the boar (20 respondents), the need to improve management of contractors (18 respondents) and a request that Forestry England invest more in mountain biking (34 respondents). Each of these issues appears again later in this report under the land management sections.

**Fig. 2: Agreement or disagreement for vision statement**



Base: 1137 respondents, 27 skipped question

**Fig. 3: Comments on vision statement**



Base: 324 respondents commented on the Vision statement (Numbers of respondents per comment in chart)



**WHAT ARE WE GOING TO DO?**

**Our commitments:**

<p><b>1</b> Increase the range and genetic diversity of our trees - aiming for the right tree in the right place for the right reason</p>	<p><b>3</b> Reduce the impact of pests and diseases on our existing and new trees</p>
<p><b>2</b> Make site by site decisions to develop and care for our woodlands</p>	<p><b>4</b> Improve our operational planning and implementation of Forestry Standards</p>

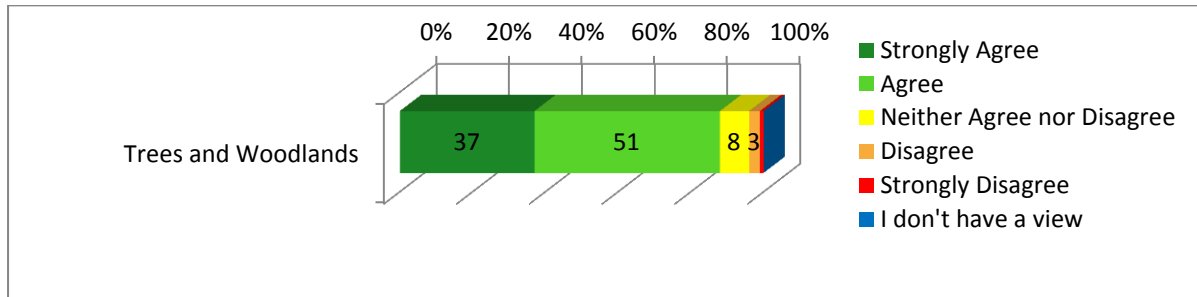
### 3.3 Trees and Woodlands

The vast majority of respondents (88%) agreed with the commitments for Trees and Woodlands (Fig.4).

Of the 248 respondents who provided comments, the commitments attracting most attention were those for ‘increasing the range and genetic diversity of our trees’ and ‘improving our operational planning and implementation of Forestry Standards’ (Fig.5a). Within these particular commitments, the most frequent comments related to a desire to see more broadleaf planting, using native species and to create more diversity (with less mono-culture coniferous planting and subsequent clear felling) (Fig.5b). However, the need to consider the implications of climate change to select those trees that will be ‘the right tree in the right place for the right reason’ may need to include non-native species as well as native species.

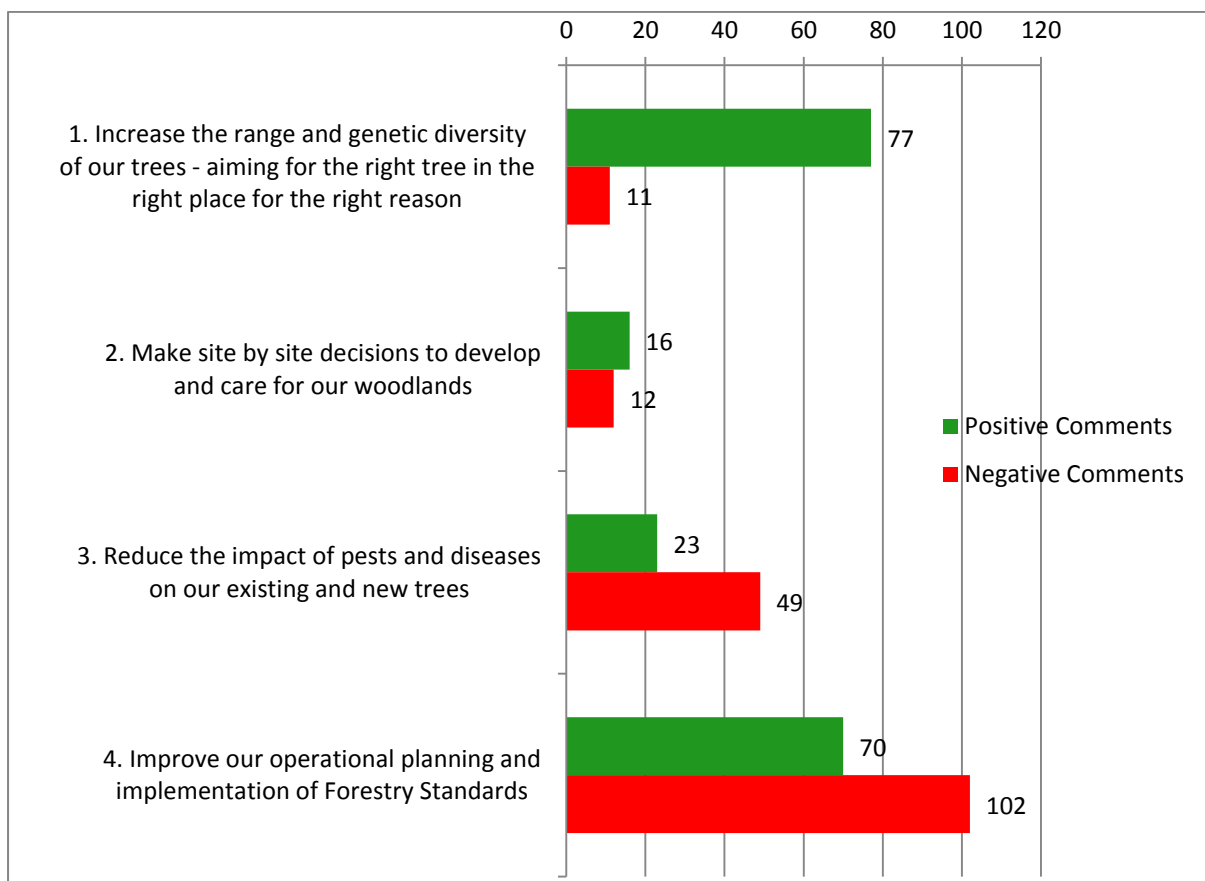
The way in which works are completed by contractors drew the most comments (26 respondents) regarding the ‘untidy’ way in which the Forest is left. The existing commitment regarding ‘improving our operational planning and implementation of Forestry Standards’ already explains the aim to set exemplary standards of woodland management and upskill all those working in the woods. However, there will also be an additional commitment (number 5) to ‘Improve our communication of forest operations. We will improve our communication to better advise woodland users, neighbours and other stakeholders of our operational plans during the planning and implementation of forestry works. We will explain the purpose of the operations, whilst being open to adapt and modify plans in light of new site knowledge. We will ensure we explain the role of the planned works in delivering to our commitments.’

**Fig. 4: Agreement or disagreement for Trees and Woodlands commitments**



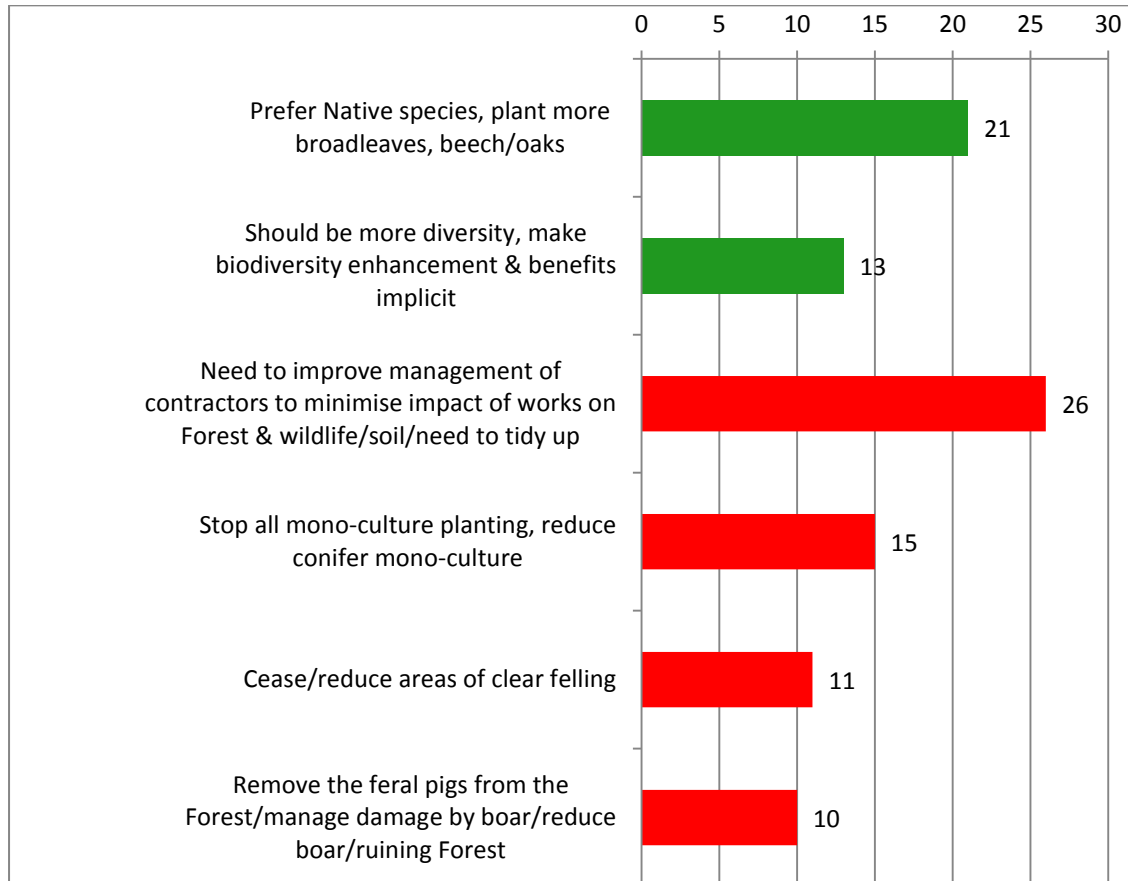
Base: 971 respondents, 193 skipped question

**Fig. 5a: Comments on Trees and Woodlands commitments**



Base: 248 respondents commented on Trees and Woodlands commitments (Numbers of respondents per comment in chart)

**Fig. 5b: Further detail for comments on Trees and Woodlands commitments**



Base: Numbers of respondents per comment in chart





**WHAT ARE WE GOING TO DO?**

**Our commitments:**

<p><b>1</b> Identify habitats of current and potential conservation importance, to ensure they are made bigger, better and more joined up</p> <p><b>2</b> Reduce the spread and impact of invasive species</p> <p><b>3</b> Improve habitats through the development and care of our woodlands</p>	<p><b>4</b> Utilise open spaces for nature conservation by developing grazing systems</p> <p><b>5</b> Use species reintroduction to deliver positive changes to the environment</p> <p><b>6</b> Manage and monitor Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)</p>
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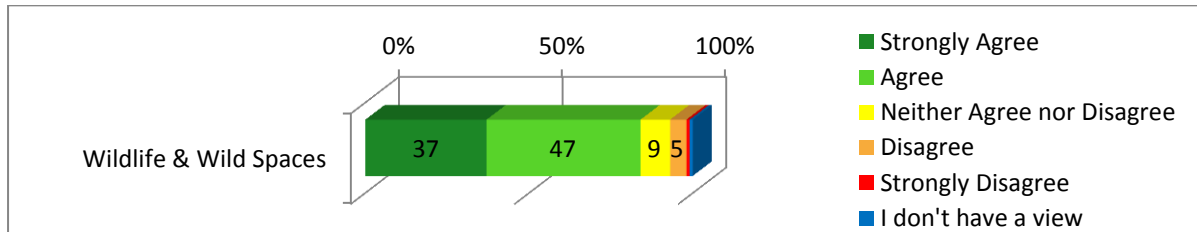
### 3.4 Wildlife and Wild Spaces

The vast majority of respondents (84%) agreed with the commitments for Wildlife and Wild Spaces (Fig.6).

Of the 299 respondents who provided comments on this section, by far the most outstanding commitment was the one relating to ‘reduce the spread and impact of invasive species’ (Fig.7a). Not surprisingly, the biggest single item within this topic area was about the need to reduce the numbers of feral boar (84 comments), although there were 13 comments to ‘leave the boar alone’(Fig.7b). Forestry England’s aim is to stop the upward growth of the population of feral wild boar on land we manage in the Forest of Dean. Once that population growth has been stopped we will work to bring numbers down towards the target figure of 400 boar. To support the delivery of this objective we have recently increased the number of professional, experienced Wildlife Rangers in the Forest of Dean.

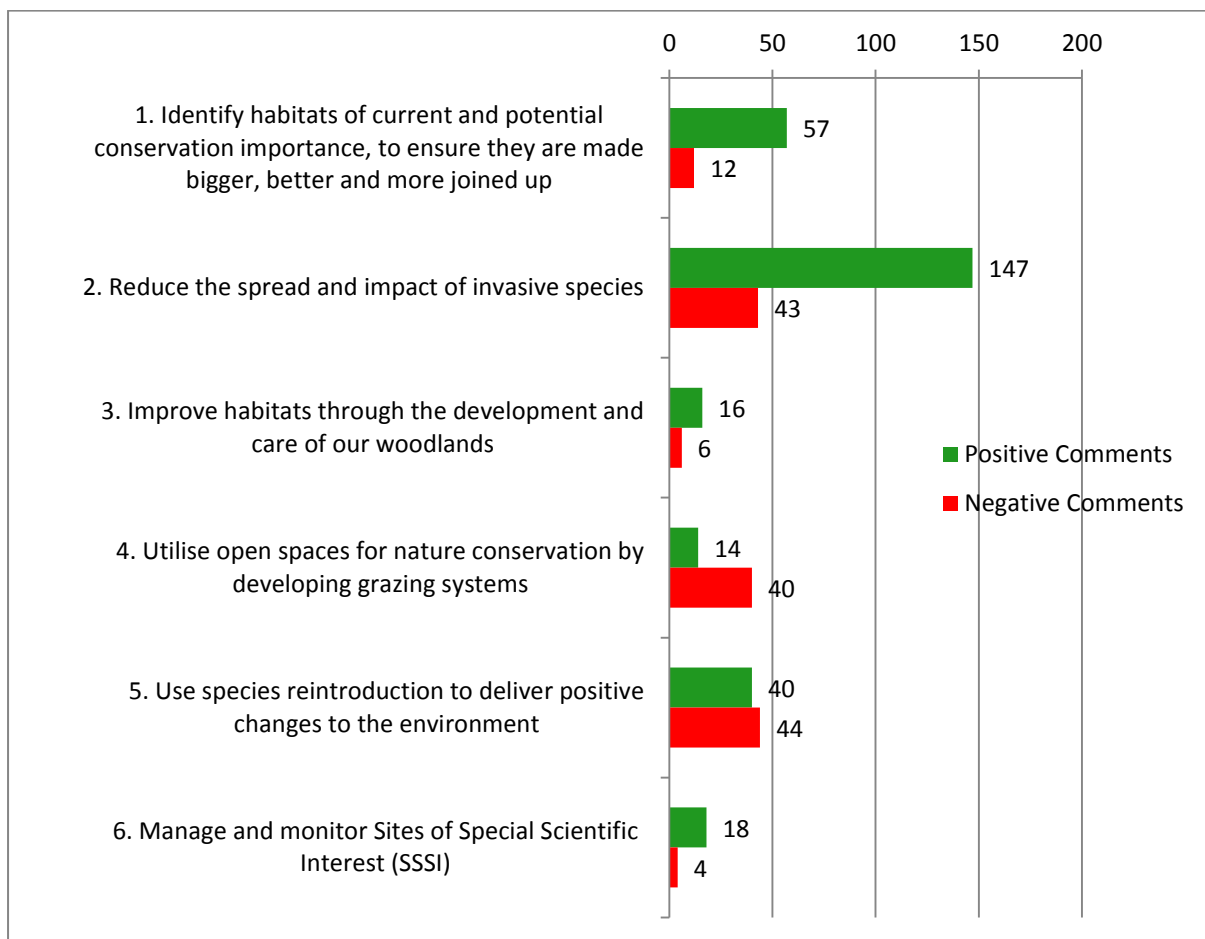
There were 22 comments about the need to ban hunting. Trail hunting is only allowed in one area in the Forest currently and this is reviewed each year. Hunting wild animal using dogs is already illegal under the Hunting Act 2004. Trail hunting is permitted as it involves laying a scent across the countryside which a pack of hounds then searches for and follows using their noses. The rest of the hunt follows on horseback. The hunt must stick to permitted areas and must do everything they can to prevent the hounds from entering land that does not fall under the agreement. Breaches to the licence are investigated when supported by credible evidence and facts.

**Fig.6: Agreement or disagreement for Wildlife and Wild Spaces commitments**



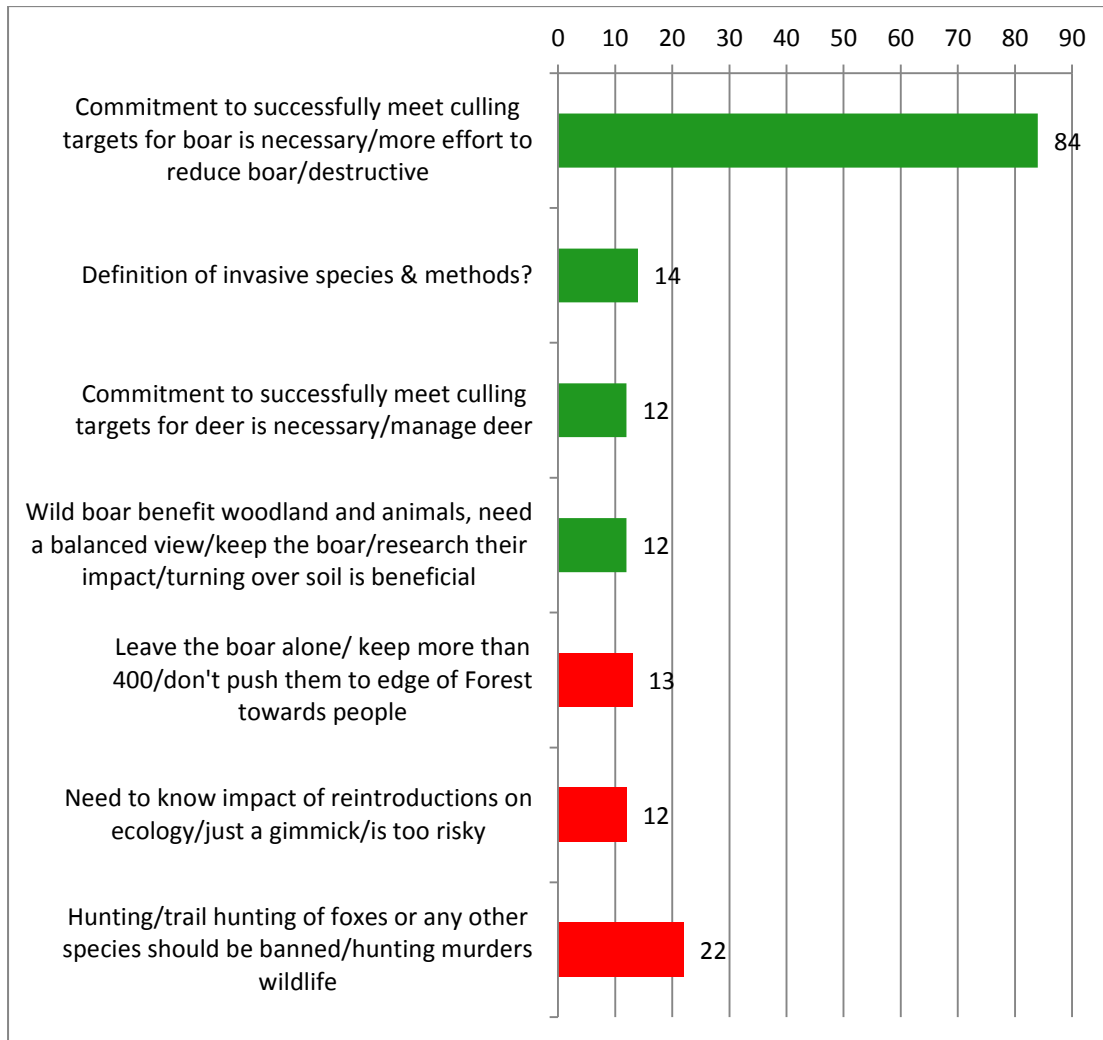
Base: 913 respondents, 251 skipped question

**Fig.7a: Comments on Wildlife and Wild Spaces commitments**

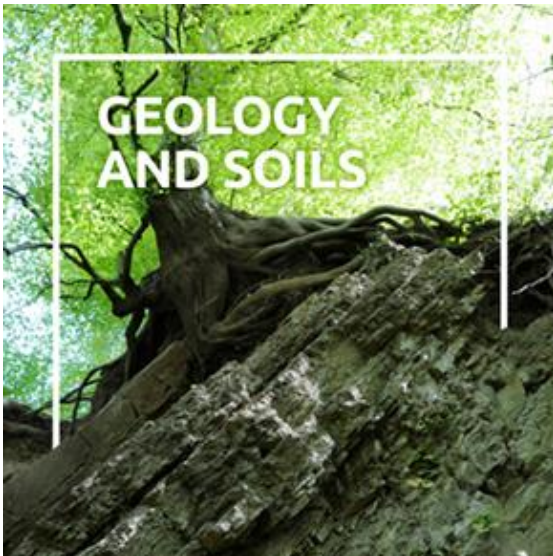


Base: 299 respondents commented on Wildlife & Wild Spaces (Numbers of respondents per comment in chart)

**Fig.7b: Further detail for comments on Wildlife and Wild Spaces commitments**



Base: Numbers of respondents per comment in chart



## WHAT ARE WE GOING TO DO?

Our commitments:

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <p><b>1</b> Identify optimum sites for lowland heath, mire and other wetlands and link these to open spaces</p> | <p><b>3</b> Improve extraction and access routes for forest operations to reduce soil compaction by machines</p> |
| <p><b>2</b> Move away from felling blocks of trees to reduce the impact on soil qualities</p>                   | <p><b>4</b> Promote the story of our geological sites of interest</p>  |

### 3.5 Geology and Soils

The vast majority of respondents (85%) agreed with the commitments for Geology and Soils (Fig.8).

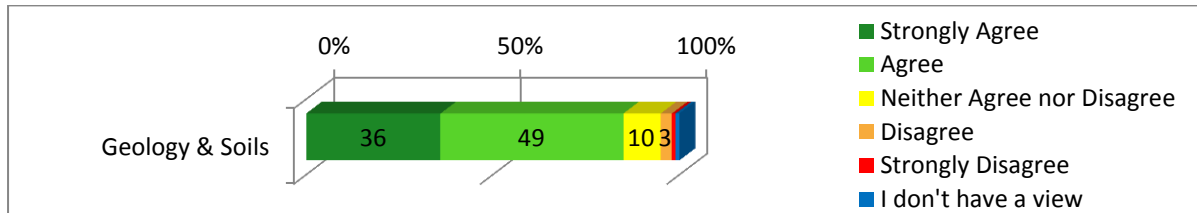
Of the 177 comments received about the Geology and Soils commitments, the commitment which received the most comments was ‘improve extraction and access routes for Forest operations to reduce soil compaction by machines’ (32 positive comments and 88 negative comments) (Fig.9a). Many of the negative comments related to the need for contractors to be sensitive to the Forest environment and to be more closely monitored by Forestry England so that ruts would be repaired and brash cleared up, for example (Fig.9b).

Within the detail of this commitment, Forestry England plan ‘to strengthen the link between operational plans and the execution of those plans, with more robust monitoring post-operation to assess whether the objectives were met. We will steadily raise the standard we expect in the Forest, surpassing the application of the existing Forestry Standards, as we set our ambitions to reach exemplary standards of woodland management.’

As the Forest will continue to be a working Forest, there will always be a significant amount of deadwood and brash on the Forest floor and this is both good habitat for some species and returns some nutrients to the soil. The suggestions to move away from heavy machinery and use manual labour/heavy horses will not be practical. The more modern large scale forestry machines are designed to spread the weight of the vehicle more evenly to reduce damage to the soil.

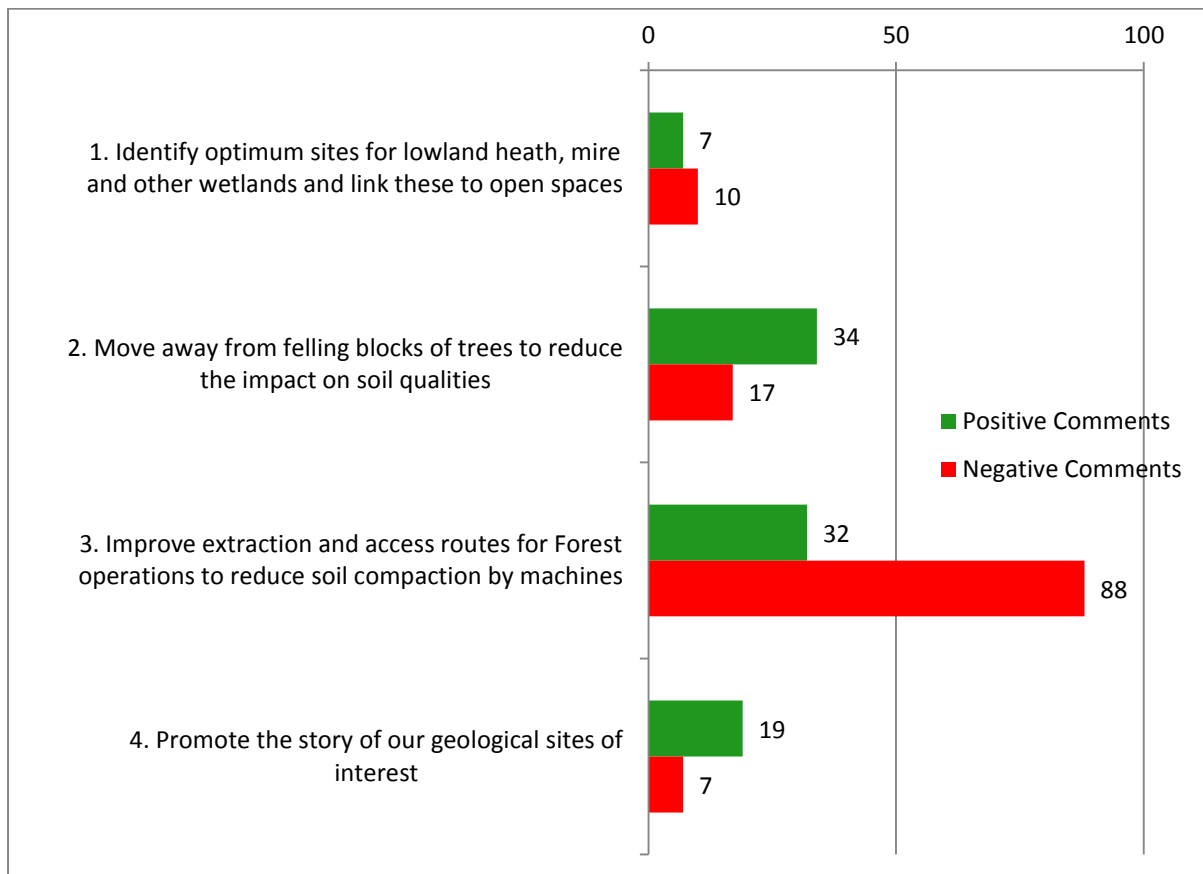
One of the suggestions in the comments was to create an educational programme for local residents (and schools in particular) so this links in to the commitment under the Community principle to ‘Tell the Story’ of the Forest, celebrating what is special and improving communication regarding what Forestry England does and why they do it.

**Fig. 8: Agreement or disagreement for Geology and Soils commitments**



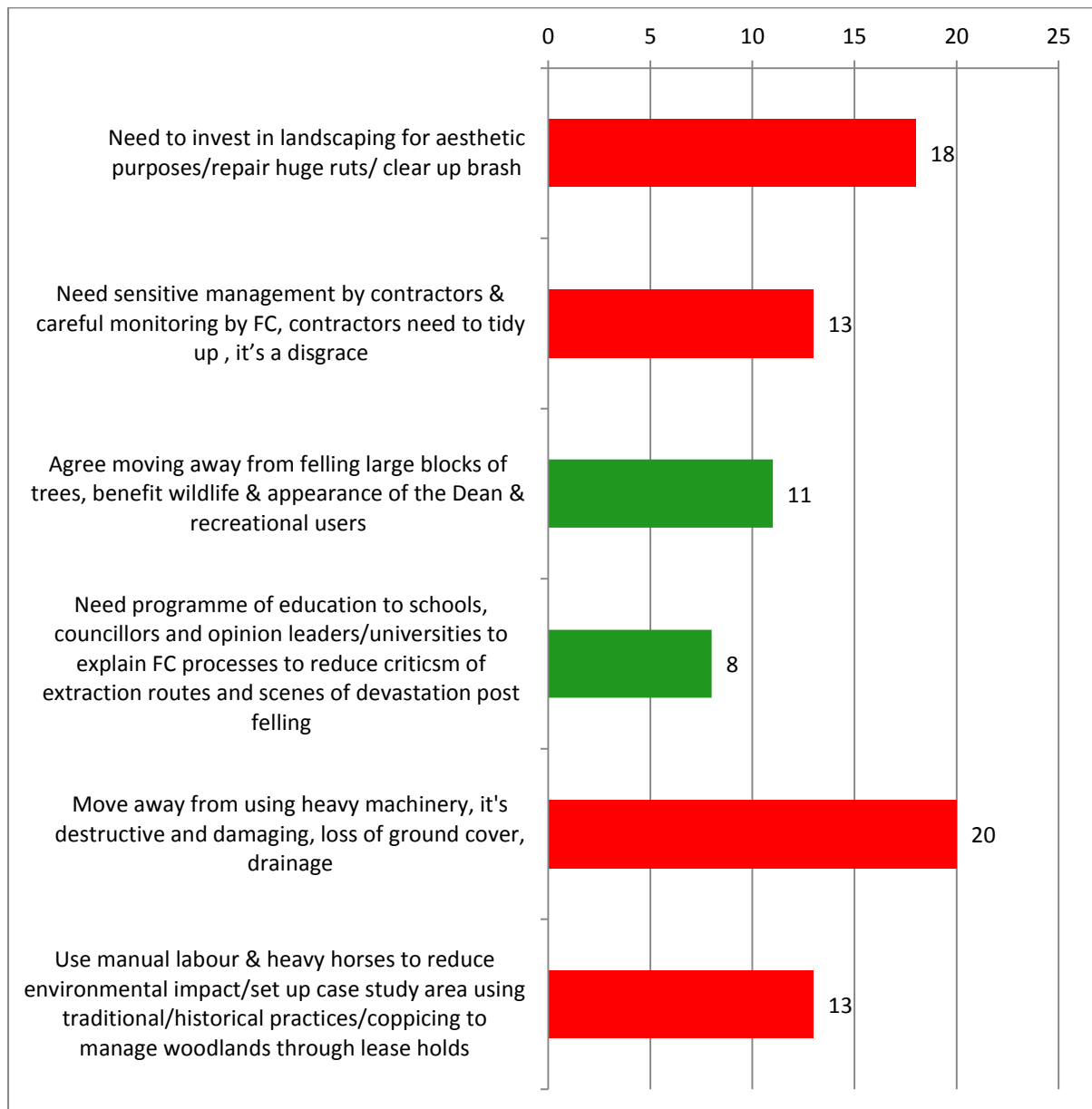
Base: 880 respondents, 284 skipped question

**Fig. 9a: Comments on Geology and Soils commitments**



Base: 177 respondents commented on Geology and Soils (Numbers of respondents per comment in chart)

**Fig. 9b: Further detail for comments on Geology and Soils commitments**



Base: Numbers of respondents per comment in chart



## WHAT ARE WE GOING TO DO?

### Our commitments:

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <p><b>1</b> Identify and develop riparian zones to enhance connectivity and functionality of watercourses</p> <p><b>2</b> Naturalise water channels by creating natural structures to build habitat diversity and slow the flow of water</p> <p><b>3</b> Remove non-functional artificial barriers that restrict the movement of water and fish</p> <p><b>4</b> Restore active mires and bogs to create habitat</p> | <p>and reduce volumes of water flowing down and out of the Forest in storm conditions</p> <p><b>5</b> Create and maintain ponds to support ecology</p> <p><b>6</b> Manage water flow on operational sites to reduce soil erosion and excessive sedimentation, and modify our approaches to woodland drainage to allow them to function more naturally</p> <p><b>7</b> Use beavers for engineering watery landscapes</p> |
|---|---|

## 3.6 Water

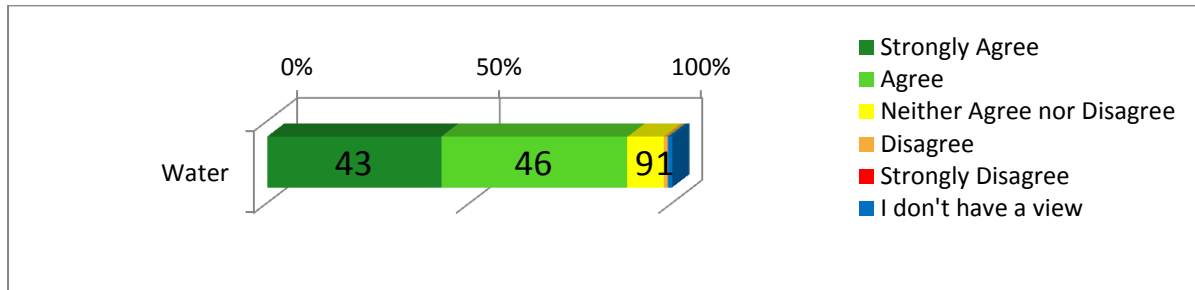
The vast majority of respondents (89%) agreed with the commitments for the Water land management principle (Fig.10).

Of the 176 respondents who provided comments, the single commitment that drew most attention was that relating to the beavers: ‘Use beavers for engineering watery landscapes’ (Fig.11a). Here, the 46 positive comments (mostly ‘would like more beavers/need to research effectiveness of beavers before releasing them more widely’) slightly outweighed the 37 negative comments (mostly ‘don’t introduce beavers/may do more harm than good’). The comment relating to the need to research the effectiveness of the beavers before releasing more of them links to a theme mentioned under a number of principles, and will be addressed with a monitoring and evaluation report which will be published annually to measure performance over time.

Amongst the other commitments, one of the areas of concern was whether the ‘removal of artificial barriers’ would become the removal of built heritage features (Fig.11b). Consequently, the detailed text beneath that commitment will be amended to read ‘Some of those barriers no longer perform any useful function and could be removed. Others are still required, or have a built heritage value and more careful assessment of options needs to be made.’

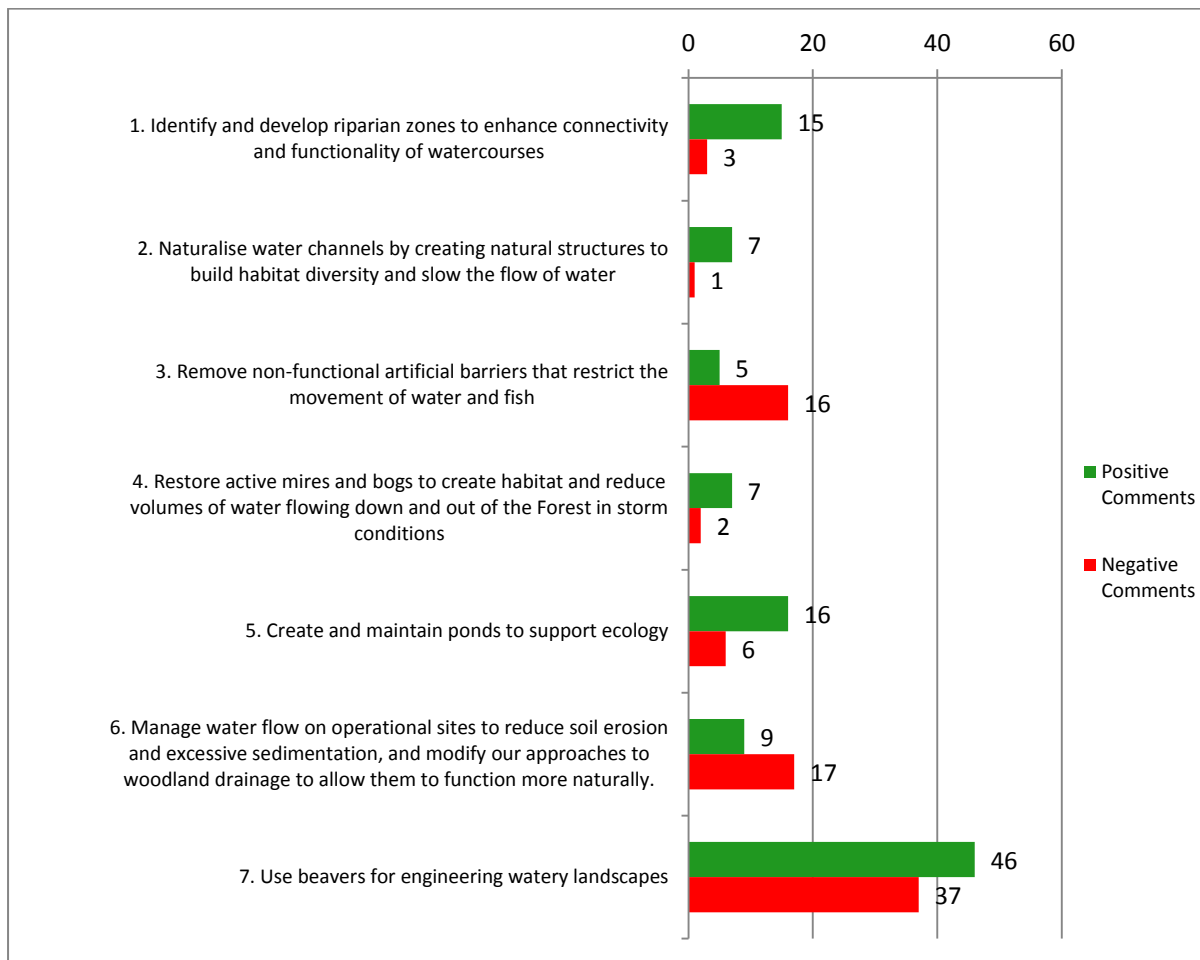
Some other comments related to the need to improve water quality, but because each of the commitments addresses different elements of water quality overall, no specific amendment is needed.

**Fig. 10: Agreement or disagreement for Water commitments**



Base: 868 respondents, 296 skipped question

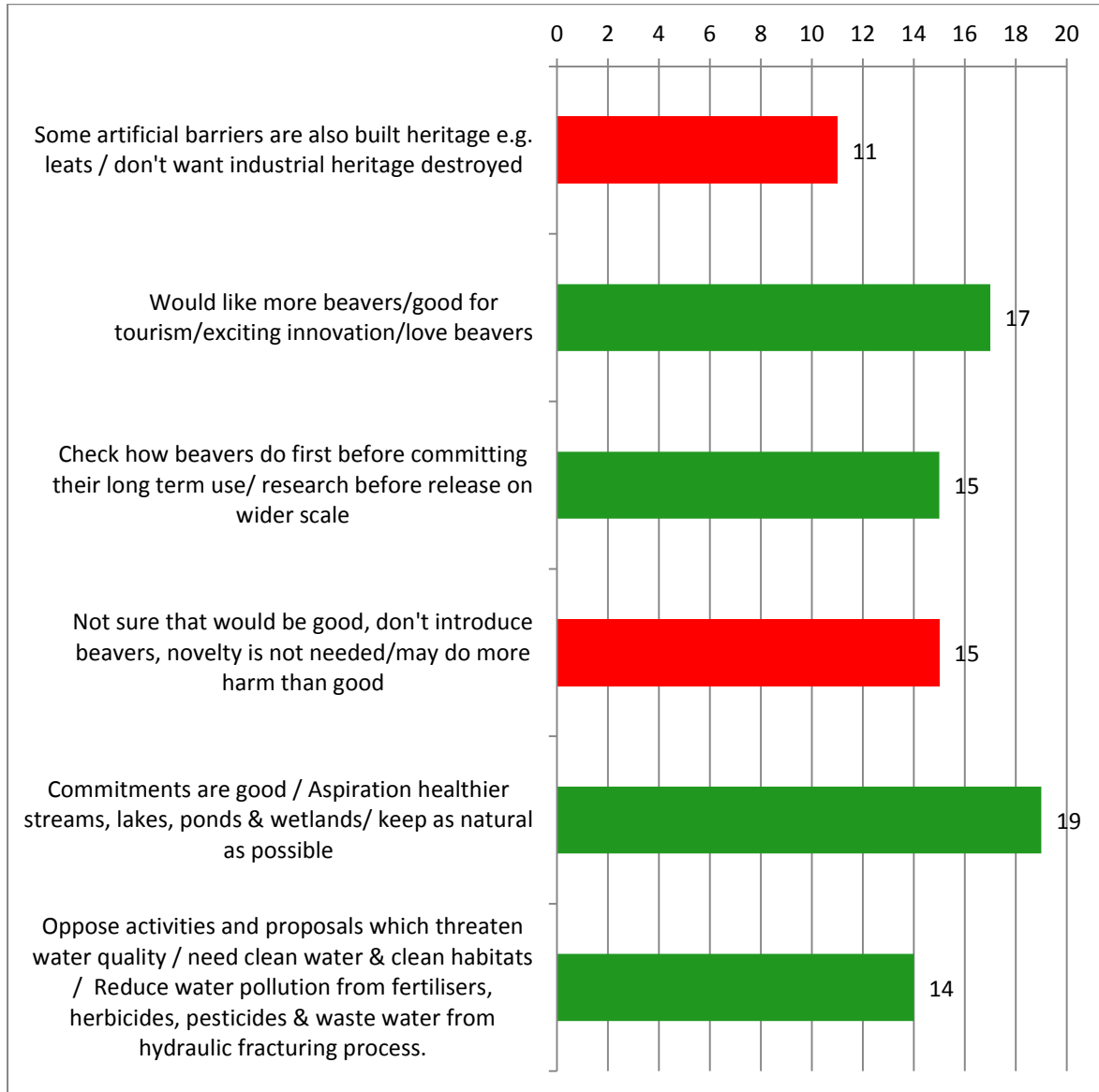
**Fig. 11a: Comments on Water commitments**



Base: 176 respondents commented on Water commitments (Numbers of respondents per comment in chart)



**Fig. 11b: Further detail for comments on Water commitments**



Base: Numbers of respondents per comment in chart



## WHAT ARE WE GOING TO DO?

### Our commitments:

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <p><b>1</b> Respect and support the HM Verderers</p> <p><b>2</b> Respect and support HM Inclosures Commissioners</p> <p><b>3</b> Support and encourage the traditional privilege of sheep grazing</p> | <p><b>4</b> Strengthen the feel of a Forest of trees</p> <p><b>5</b> Support and promote mining and quarrying</p> |
|---|---|

### 3.7 Cultural Heritage

The majority of respondents (66%) agreed with the commitments for Cultural Heritage, whilst 19% ‘neither agreed nor disagreed’ and 14% disagreed (Fig.12).

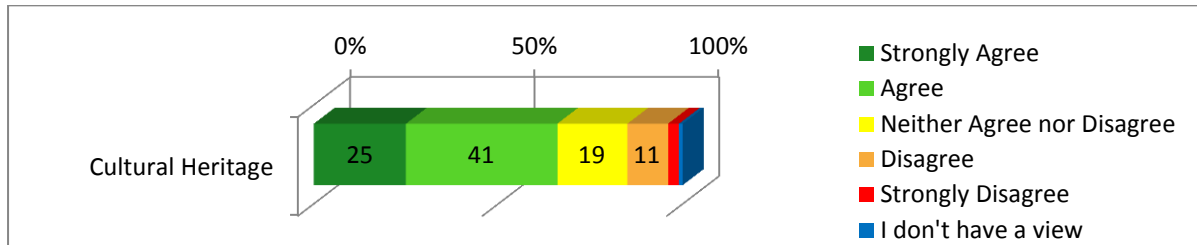
Of the 288 comments received about the Cultural Heritage commitments, by far and away the commitment attracting the most comments was that to ‘Support and promote mining and quarrying’ (41 positive comments and 172 negative comments) (Fig.13a). Upon more detailed examination of these comments, it was apparent that there was support for small scale mining (Freemining) and quarrying but the vast majority of negative comments were against large scale mining and/or quarrying (Fig.13b) Consequently this commitment will be amended to include the phrase ‘small scale’ (Support and promote small scale mining and quarrying).

The other issue that attracted multiple comments was the commitment to ‘Support and encourage the traditional privilege of sheep grazing’ (43 positive comments and 62 negative comments). Some of the negative comments were about the sheep coming into towns and them being a traffic hazard on the road, whilst other comments criticised sheep badgers on animal welfare issues and not providing sufficient care for their sheep (Fig. 13c). As Forestry England has no control over the sheep, which are managed by sheep badgers exercising their traditional privilege, the welfare issues would be addressed by national legislation and implemented by the relevant organisations.

Comparatively few comments (either positive or negative) were made about the Verderers but the most frequent response was that they were ‘seriously out of date and out of touch’.

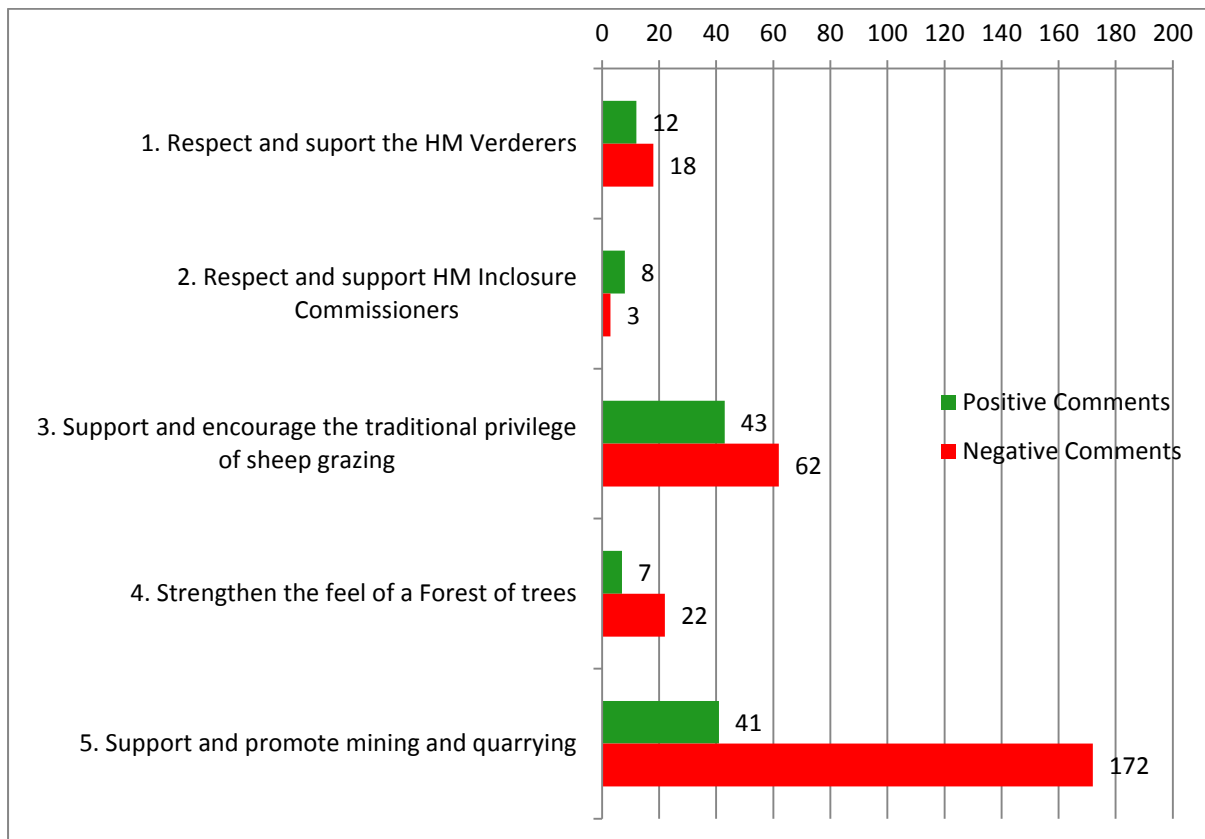
As many of the comments about the commitment to ‘Strengthen the feel of a Forest of trees’ reported that the phrase was ‘meaningless’, this commitment will be amended to ‘Strengthen the feel of being within a forest of trees’.

**Fig. 12: Agreement or disagreement for Cultural Heritage commitments**



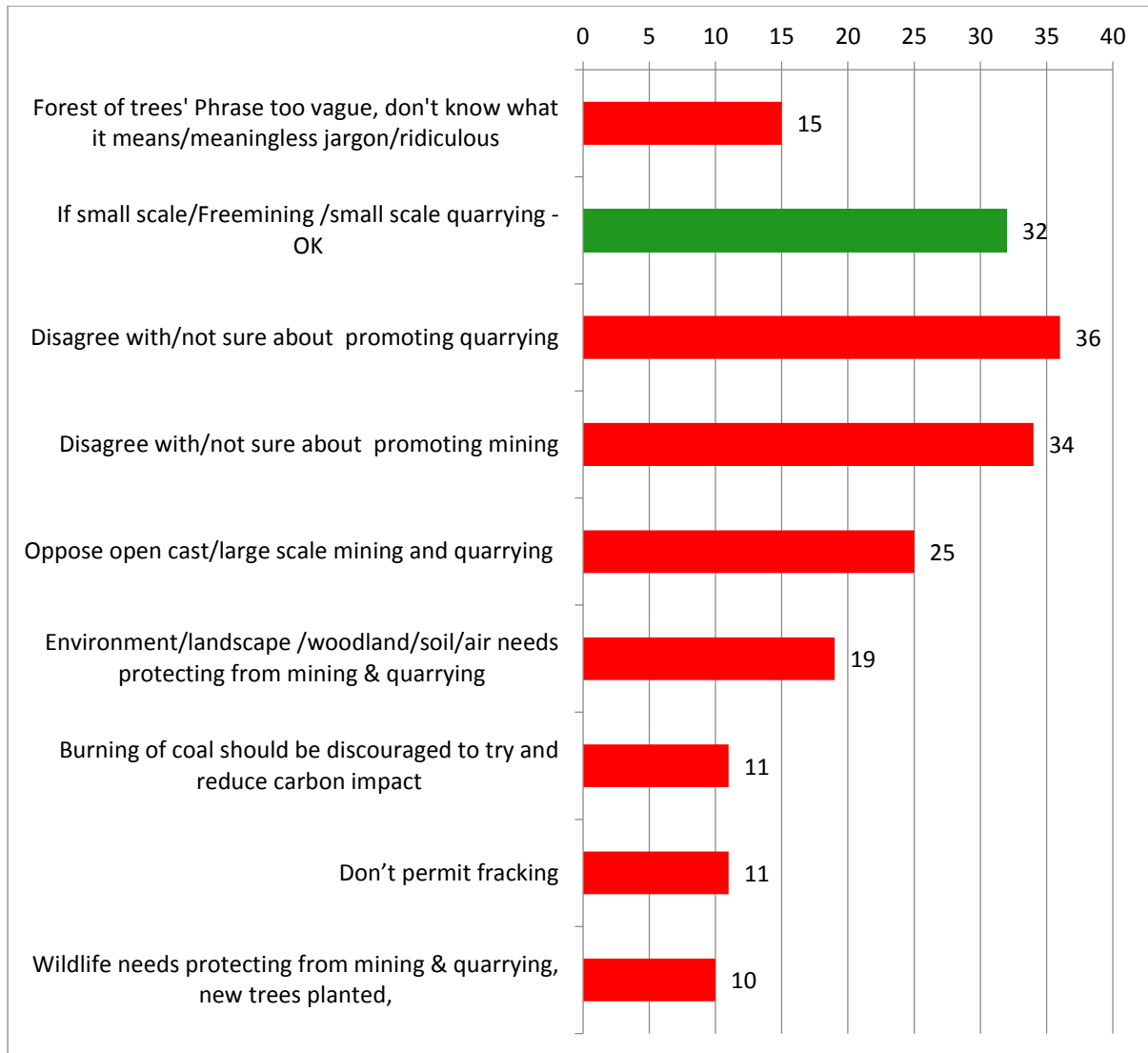
Base: 1137 respondents, 27 skipped question

**Fig. 13a: Comments on Cultural Heritage commitments**



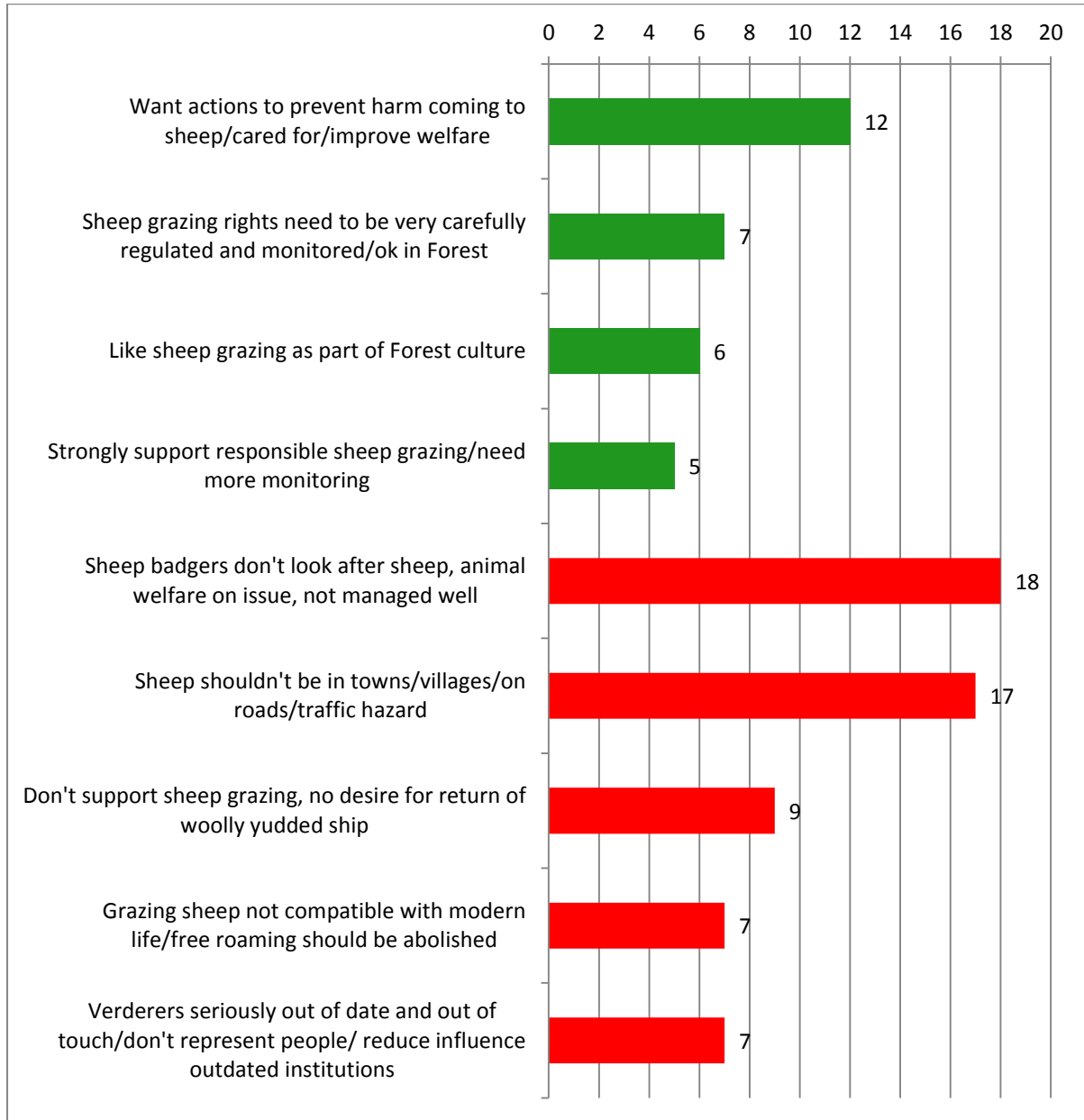
Base: 288 respondents commented on Cultural Heritage commitments (Numbers of respondents per comment in chart)

**Fig.13b: Further detail for comments on Cultural Heritage commitments**

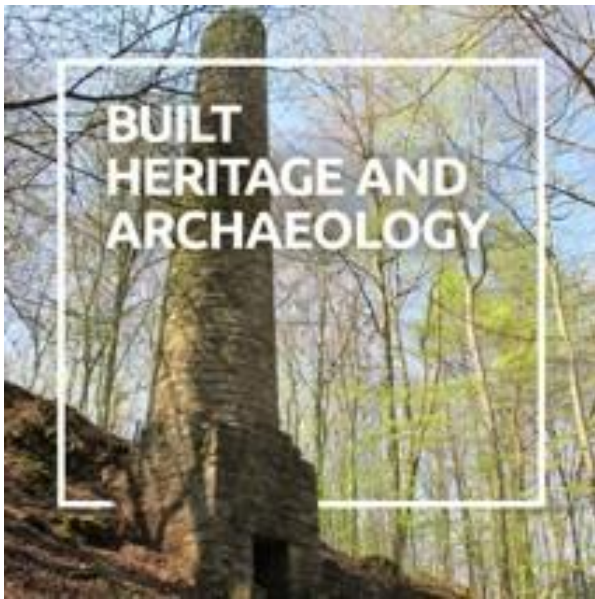


Base: Numbers of respondents per comment in chart

**Fig.13c: Further detail for comments on Cultural Heritage commitments**



Base: Numbers of respondents per comment in chart



**WHAT ARE WE GOING TO DO?**  
Our commitments:

- 1** Categorise our built heritage and archaeological features
- 2** Involve members of the local community to help monitor and maintain our built heritage and archaeological features
- 3** Continue investigation and research into our built heritage and archaeological features
- 4** Pragmatically manage public safety through inspection and fencing
- 5** Establish a new advisory group, to be known as the 'Built Heritage and Archaeology Advisory Panel for the Forest of Dean', to assist with decision making

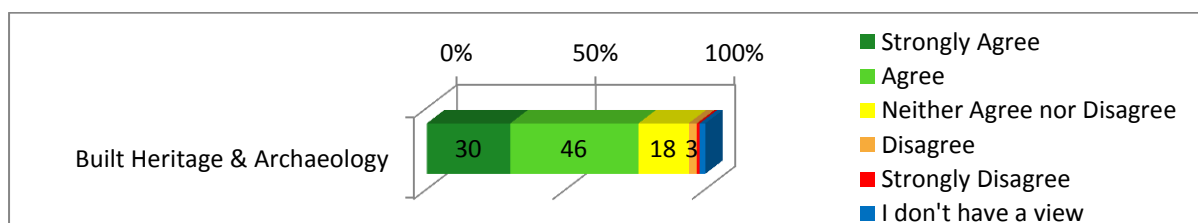
### 3.8 Built Heritage and Archaeology

The majority of respondents (76%) agreed with the commitments for Built Heritage and Archaeology (Fig.14).

Of the 140 comments about the commitments, the element attracting most comments was 'pragmatically manage public safety through inspection and fencing' (11 positive comments, 37 negative comments) (Fig.15a). The mixed responses here reflected the fact that some people understood that dangerous sites (e.g. quarries & mines) or specific habitats would need to be fenced off, others disliked fencing (particularly with its potential repercussions to harm wildlife) and wanted to retain open space (Fig.15b). Forestry England is intending to keep fencing to a minimum whilst still meeting safety requirements.

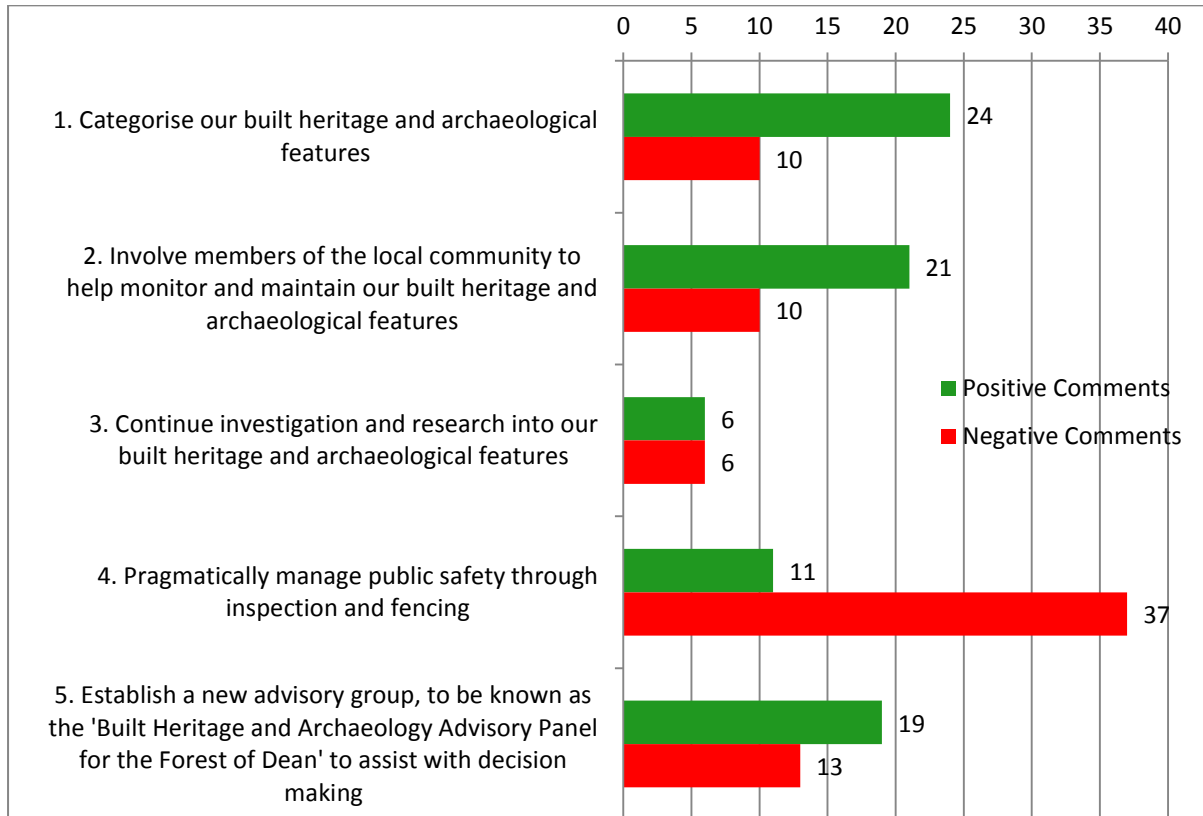
Amongst the other commitments, the most numerous responses were about embedding heritage sites in local schools' curriculum and about having local independent people on the 'Built Heritage and Archaeology Advisory Panel'. Both of these suggestions are in progress as Lydbrook school have re-written their school curriculum to focus on our Forest heritage, (whilst still ticking all the right boxes in terms of the National Curriculum) and local independent people are represented on the Panel.

**Fig. 14: Agreement or disagreement for Built Heritage and Archaeology commitments**



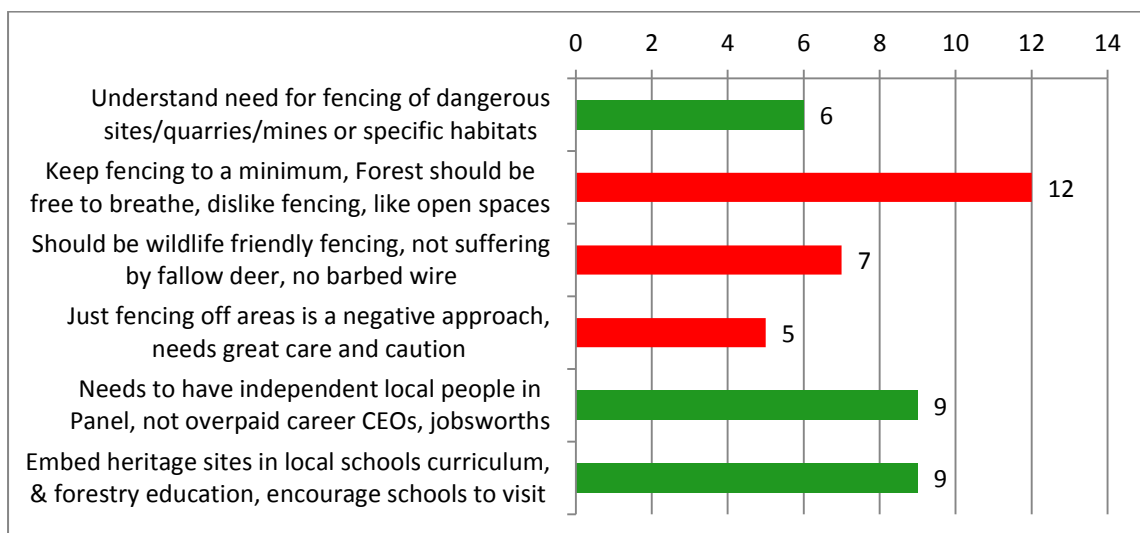
Base: 1137 respondents, 27 skipped question

**Fig. 15a: Comments on Built Heritage and Archaeology commitments**



Base: 140 respondents commented on Built Heritage and Archaeology Commitments (Numbers of respondents per comment in chart)

**Fig. 15b: Comments on Built Heritage and Archaeology Commitments**



Base: Numbers of respondents per comment in chart



#### WHAT ARE WE GOING TO DO?

##### Our commitments:

- 1** Maintain, and enhance community access points
- 2** Encourage community groups to work with us on meaningful and sustainable projects
- 3** Provide structured opportunities for volunteering across the Forest, both directly for the Forestry Commission and through partner organisations
- 4** Identify quiet zones, and respect those zones through the routing of waymarked trails and management of permitted events
- 5** Promote adherence to our Wild Trail Policy for mountain biking, encouraging local riders to increase their understanding and respect for other users and local wildlife
- 6** Mitigate the impacts of climate change and severe weather on the community
- 7** Tell our story – celebrate what is special about our Forest, and improve communication of what we do and why we do it

### 3.9 Community

The vast majority of respondents (80%) agreed with the commitments for the Community principle (Fig.16).

Of the 299 comments very large numbers were received relating to the commitment ‘Promote adherence to our Wild Trail Policy for mountain biking, encouraging local riders to increase their understanding and respect for other users and local wildlife’ (150 positive comments, 134 negative comments) (Fig. 17a). Further detailed comments are provided in Fig.17b, when it can be seen that the strength of feeling about mountain biking runs high, with polarised opinions ranging from enthusiastic bikers who love riding in the Forest and want more trails to other users of the Forest who would rather have no bikers at all. The latter group feel that the Forest is becoming over run with cyclists who do not show appropriate consideration for other people, the Forest or wildlife, whilst some of those same cyclists who do not want to be ‘tarred with the same brush’, point out that they bring income and want to continue cycling here because it is the best location in the South West region.

It will obviously be a challenge to please all of the people all of the time, but this particular commitment has been re-written because the essence of ‘Our Shared Forest’ is that there should be mutual respect amongst all users and respect for the Forest and its wildlife.

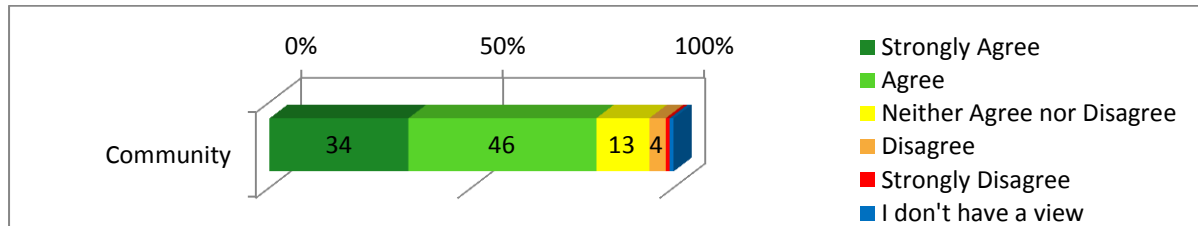
The new commitment is: **‘Promote responsible use of the Forest by all visitors, increasing their understanding and respect for other woodland users and local wildlife’** and the text to explain what that means is: ‘Many local people know the woods well enough to find their own way and create their own routes off the main forest roads. We accept and tolerate these desire lines and wild trails, as long as no construction takes place. A new wild trail policy will be developed in consultation with user groups. We will promote responsible use of the Forest, encouraging all visitors to better understand and



respect both other woodland users as well as the needs of local wildlife, particularly in sensitive locations.

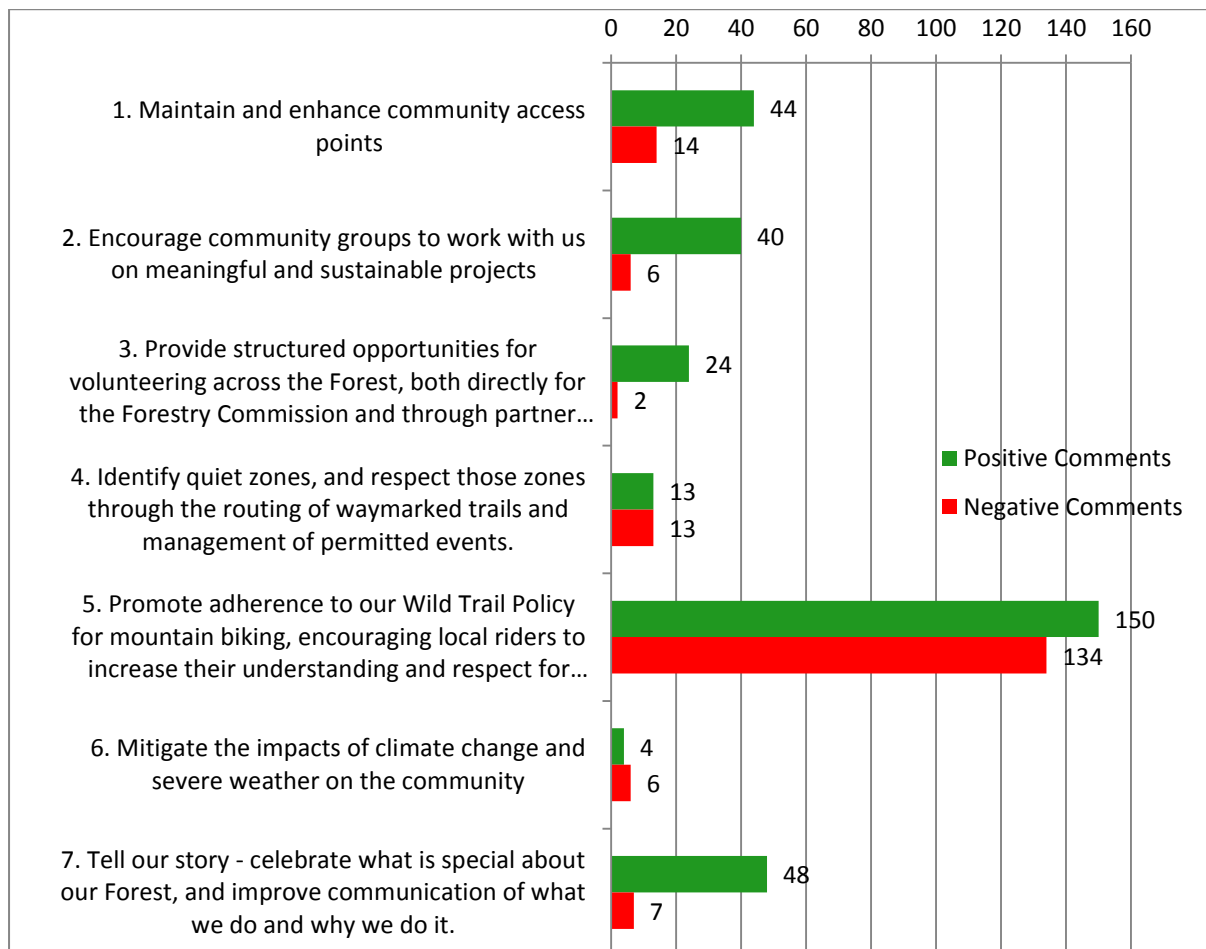
In regard to the specific comments about the use of motorbikes in the Forest, these are illegal and Forestry England does try to address this problem.

**Fig. 16: Agreement or disagreement for Community commitments**



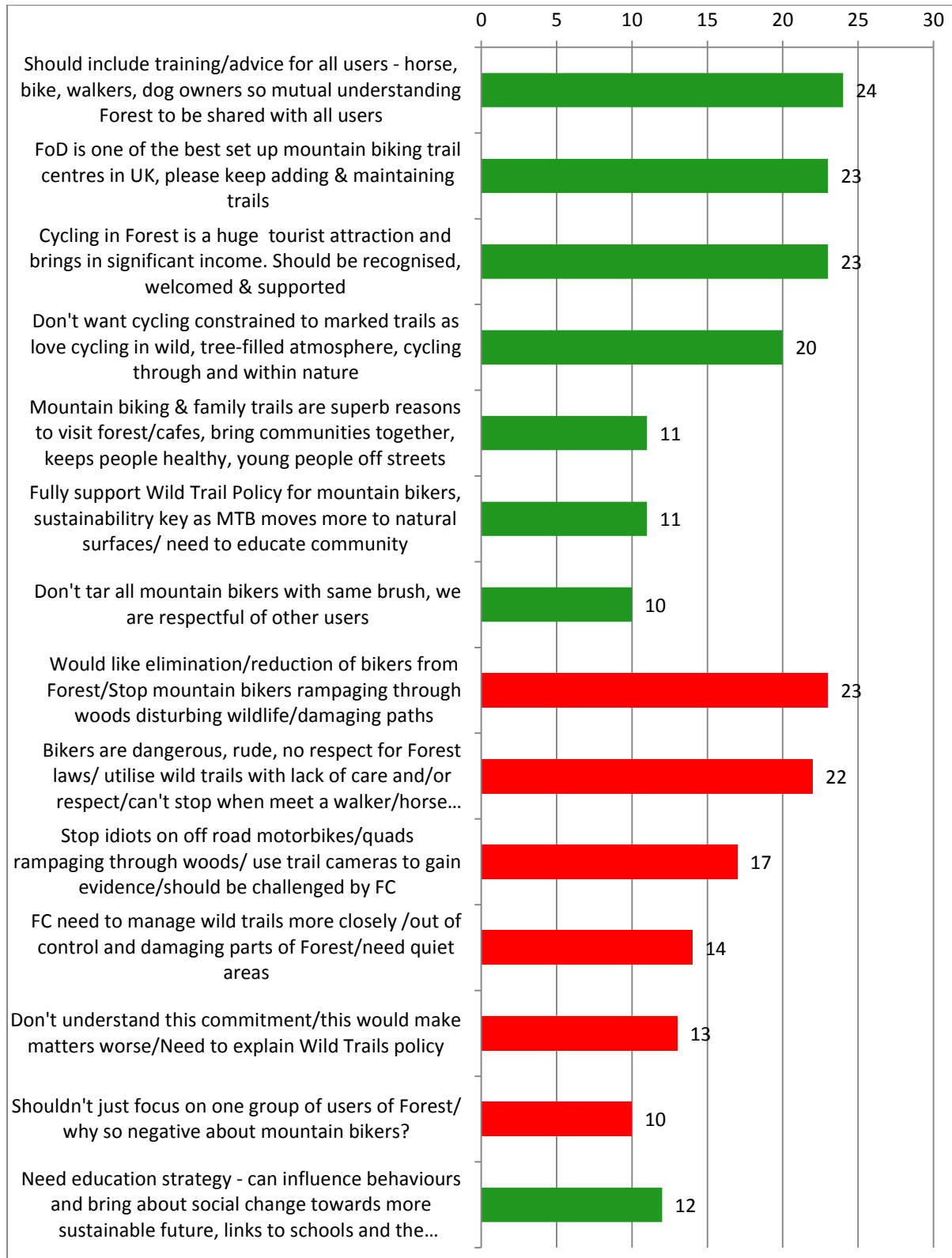
Base: 1137 respondents, 27 skipped question

**Fig.17a: Comments on Community commitments**



Base: 299 respondents commented on Community commitments (Numbers of respondents per comment in chart)

**Fig.17b: Further detail for comments on Community commitments**



Base: Numbers of respondents per comment in chart



**WHAT ARE WE GOING TO DO?**

**Our commitments:**

<p><b>1</b> Maintain and enhance our main hub sites as the focus for day visitors to the Forest</p> <p><b>2</b> Maintain and enhance our second tier car parks</p> <p><b>3</b> Review and extend our network of waymarked trails for people of all abilities to walk, run or ride</p>	<p><b>4</b> Focus our visitor interpretation on our hub sites and core network of waymarked trails using digital technologies</p> <p><b>5</b> Publish a framework for managing public events</p> <p><b>6</b> Identify recreation zones around each main hub site</p> <p><b>7</b> Establish a Visitor Advisory Group for the Forest of Dean</p>
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### 3.10 Recreation

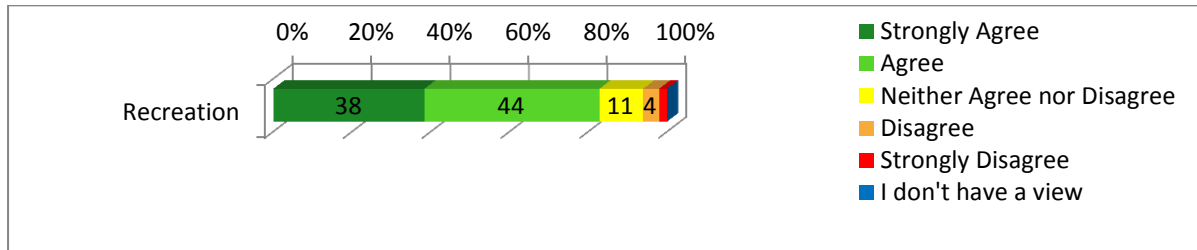
The vast majority of respondents (82%) agreed with the Recreation commitments (Fig.18).

Of the 341 respondents who provided comments, the commitment drawing most interest was that relating to ‘the network of waymarked trails for people of all abilities to walk, run or ride’, although there were also a substantial number of responses concerning the commitment about car parks (Fig.19a).

Within these two commitments the most frequent comments are summarised in Fig 19b, which illustrates the strength of opinion about the use of the Forest for recreational purposes. On the one hand there are enthusiastic cyclists who value the unique properties of cycling in the Forest and think it has the best trails in the region and on the other hand there is criticism of those same cyclists as other users think that they are ‘taking over’ the Forest and not respecting the needs of others. This will obviously be a challenge to balance the requirements of the wide range of people who use our Forest and to encourage an attitude that it is a Shared Forest for us all to use.

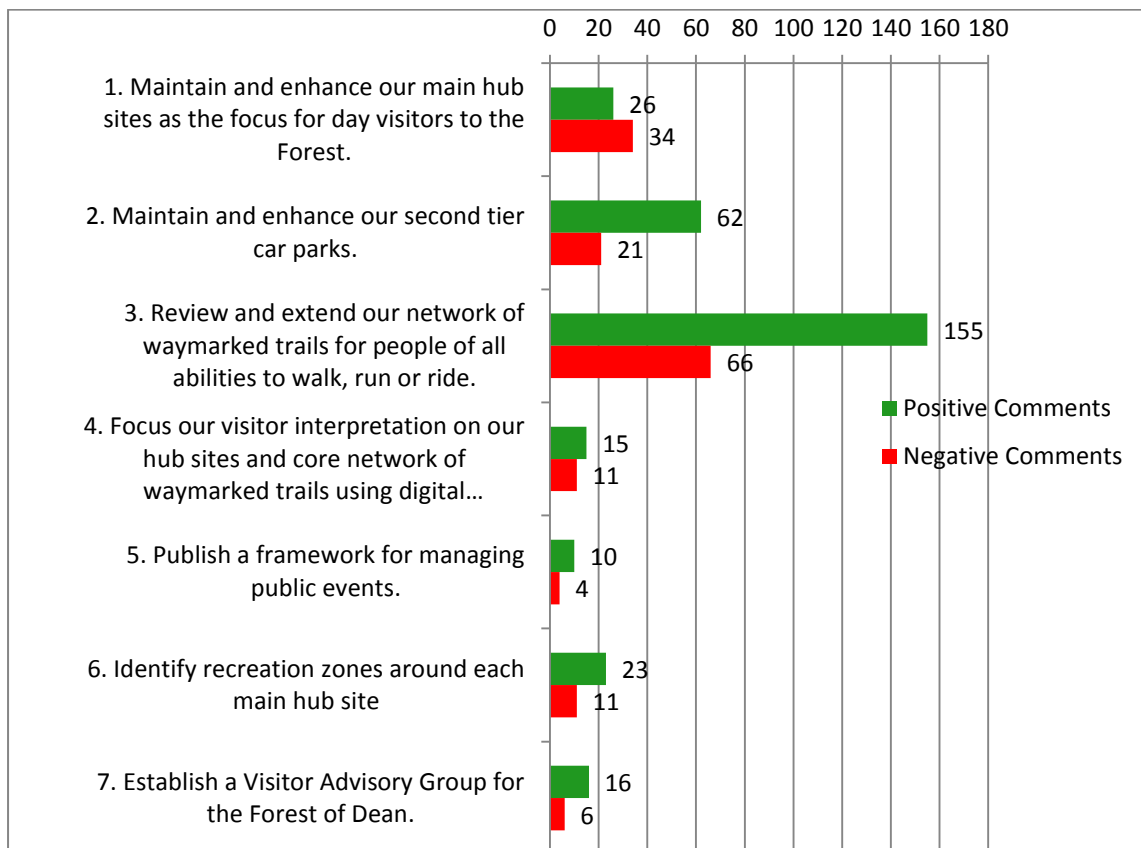
Some of the comments about car parking suggest that some local people may be unaware of the ‘Membership Pass’, so there is a need to raise awareness and explain that the funds from car parking fees are reinvested in local Forestry England sites. The detailed text to be added to commitment 2 about the pass will be: ‘Our Membership scheme provides discounted parking for a small annual membership fee. This scheme is designed to give significant savings on parking charges for regular, local users.’

**Fig. 18: Agreement or disagreement for Recreation commitments**



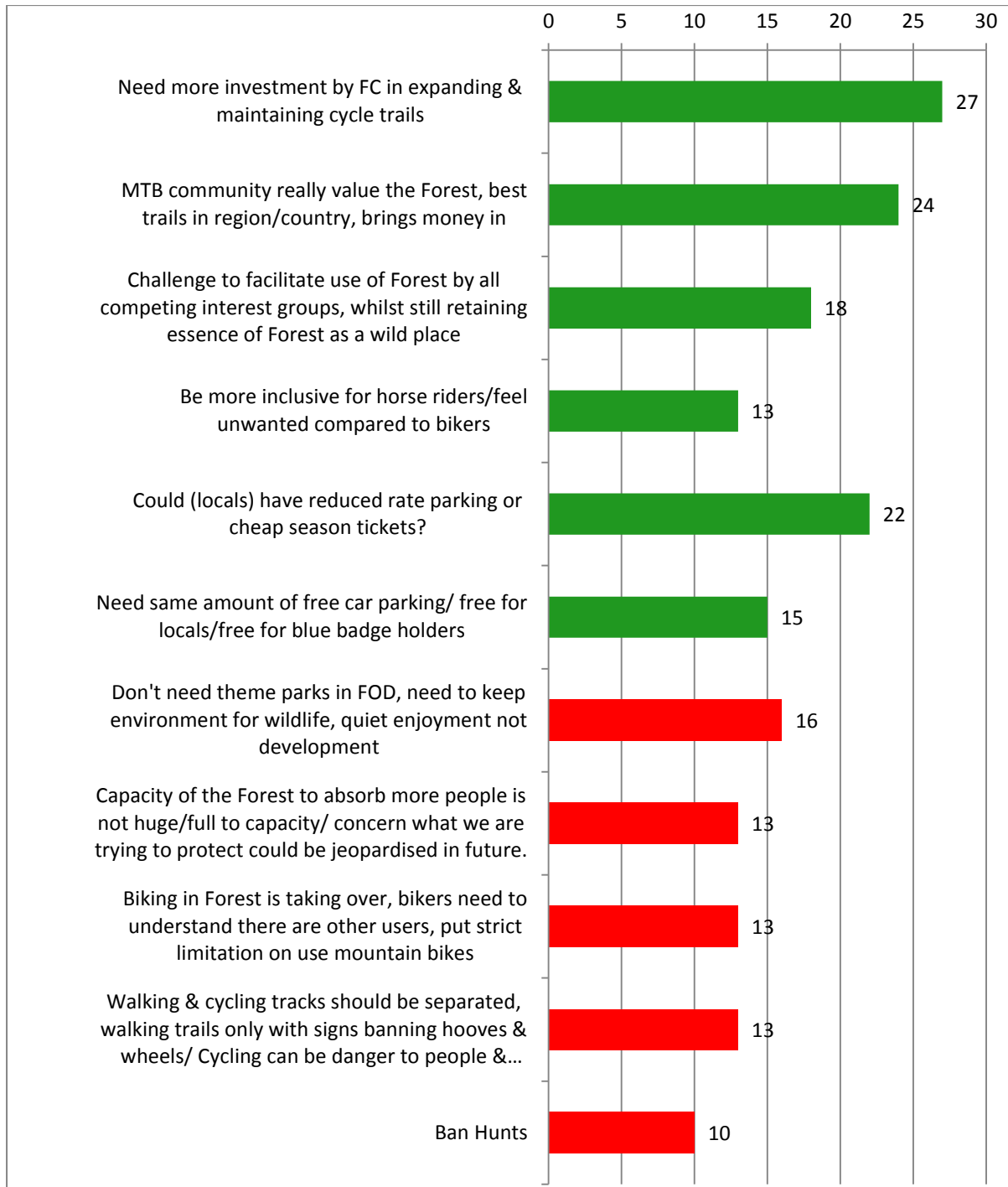
Base: 830 respondents, 334 skipped question

**Fig. 19a: Comments on Recreation commitments**



Base: 341 respondents commented on Recreation Commitments (Numbers of respondents per comment in chart)

**Fig. 19b: Further detail for comments on Recreation commitments**

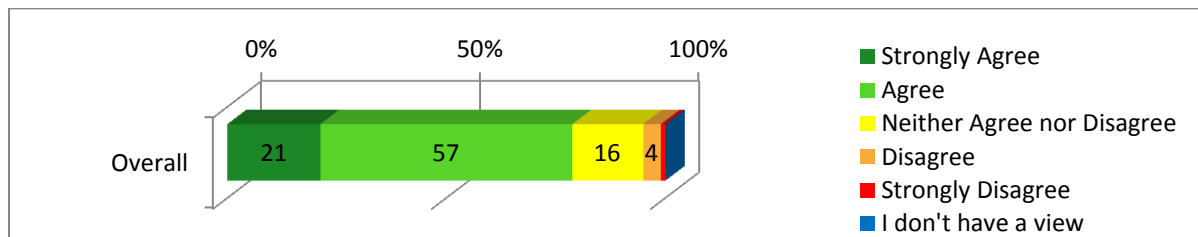


Base: Numbers of respondents per comment in chart

## 4.0 Overall opinion of commitments

At the end of the survey, respondents were asked ‘Overall, do you think the plan identifies the right commitments and focus for land management of the public forest estate in the Forest of Dean?’ The majority (78%) agreed with this question (Fig.20).

**Fig.20: Agreement or disagreement for Commitments overall**



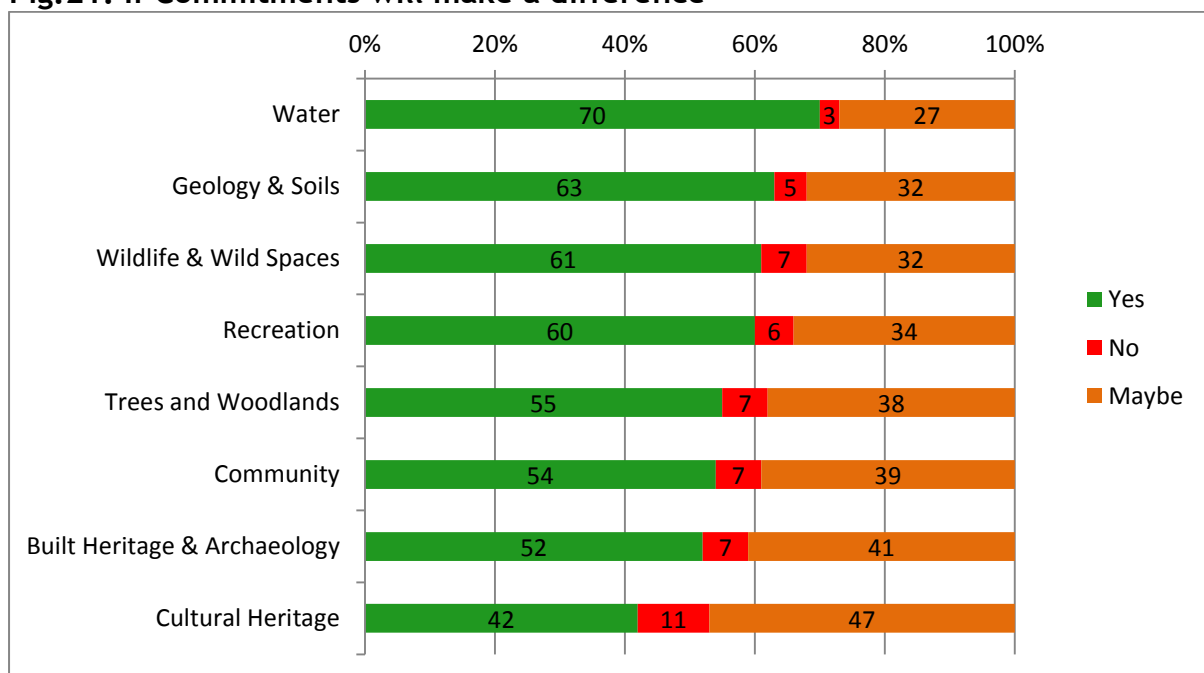
Base: 1137 respondents, 27 skipped question

## 4.1 Will the commitments make a difference?

At the end of each land management principle section, respondents were asked the question, ‘Do you think the action in the commitments will make a difference?’ and the results are shown below (Fig.21).

For almost all of the principles, the majority (52 -70% of respondents) agreed that the commitments would make a difference. For Cultural Heritage, this proportion fell to 42% agreeing (with 11% disagreeing and 47% responding ‘maybe’).

**Fig.21: If Commitments will make a difference**



Whether or not the principles and commitments will actually make a difference will be addressed by the creation of a Monitoring and Evaluation Plan that will track the implementation of commitments being delivered over time.

## 5.0 Conclusions and recommendations for amendments to commitments

### 5.1 Conclusions

This consultation process has been extremely valuable in engaging local people with how the Forest of Dean will be managed in future. The majority of respondents agreed with the land management commitments but, where necessary, amendments have been made to the commitments according to the feedback received. The level of engagement and the depth of responses suggest that there is an appetite to be more actively engaged in future.

There is therefore an unprecedented opportunity to continue the conversation with local residents to ‘Tell Our Story’, to explain how and why Forestry England manages the Forest in the way that it does, given the various constraints, the competing demands of different users, and the threat of pests, diseases and climate change.

The next opportunity for consultation will be when the draft of the first Forest Plan has been created. This will be the first time that the land management principles and commitments are translated into a document detailing the works on the ground in that area for the next ten years. The consultation on this draft is planned to be more interactive and personal than previously, with Forestry England staff leading walks and talks around the area, so that local residents can understand the planning process and how it will be delivered on the area near them.

### 5.2 Recommendations for amendments to commitments

The results of this consultation process need to be widely communicated to the public so that people feel both that their responses have been heard, and that the commitments will be delivered in future.

Specific amendments to the vision statement and commitments following feedback from the survey were:

<b>Vision statement</b>	Wording of the phrase ‘guided by the potential of the land’ changed to ‘guided by the <b>natural</b> potential of the land.
<b>Trees and Woodlands</b>	Additional commitment (number 5) to:  <b>Improve our communication of forest operations</b> We will improve our communication to better advise woodland users, neighbours and other stakeholders of our operational plans during the planning and implementation of forestry works. We will explain the purpose of the operations, whilst being open to adapt and modify plans in

	light of new site knowledge. We will ensure we explain the role of the planned works in delivering to our commitments.
<b>Wildlife and Wild Spaces</b>	No changes
<b>Geology</b>	No changes
<b>Water</b>	<p>The comments relating to the need to research the effectiveness of the beavers before releasing more of them links to a theme mentioned under a number of principles, and will be addressed with the creation of a monitoring and evaluation report which will be published annually to measure performance over time.</p> <p>The detailed text beneath Commitment 3 about the ‘removal of artificial barriers’ will be amended to read ‘Some of those barriers no longer perform any useful function and could be removed. Others are still required, <b>or have a built heritage value</b>, and more careful assessment of options needs to be made.’</p>
<b>Cultural Heritage</b>	<p>Commitment 5 about mining and quarrying will be amended to include the phrase ‘small scale’ (Support and promote <b>small scale</b> mining and quarrying).</p> <p>Commitment 4 about the ‘feel of a Forest of trees’ will be amended to ‘Strengthen the feel of <b>being within</b> a forest of trees’.</p>
<b>Built Heritage and Archaeology</b>	No changes
<b>Community</b>	<p>Commitment 5 amended to:</p> <p><b>Promote responsible use of the Forest by all visitors, increasing their understanding and respect for other woodland users and local wildlife</b></p> <p>Many local people know the woods well enough to find their own way and create their own routes off the main forest roads. We accept and tolerate these desire lines and wild trails, as long as no construction takes place. A new wild trail policy will be developed in consultation with user groups. We will promote responsible use of the Forest, encouraging all visitors to better understand and respect both other woodland users as well as the needs of local wildlife, particularly in sensitive locations.</p>
<b>Recreation</b>	<p>Commitment 2 - There is a need to raise awareness of the ‘Membership Pass’ and explain that the funds from car parking fees are reinvested in local Forestry England sites. The detailed text to be added about the pass will be:</p>



	<p>Our Membership scheme provides discounted parking for a small annual membership fee. This scheme is designed to give significant savings on parking charges for regular, local users.</p>
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## 6.0 Appendices

### APPENDIX 1: Survey Form

Our Shared Forest is a project to reshape, redirect our land management - to set a new direction – for the public forest estate here in the Forest of Dean.

The world is changing, it always has. The climate is changing, it always has. Society is changing, it always has. But the pace of change is speeding up, and the impacts on our Forest over the next generation of trees and people will be profound.

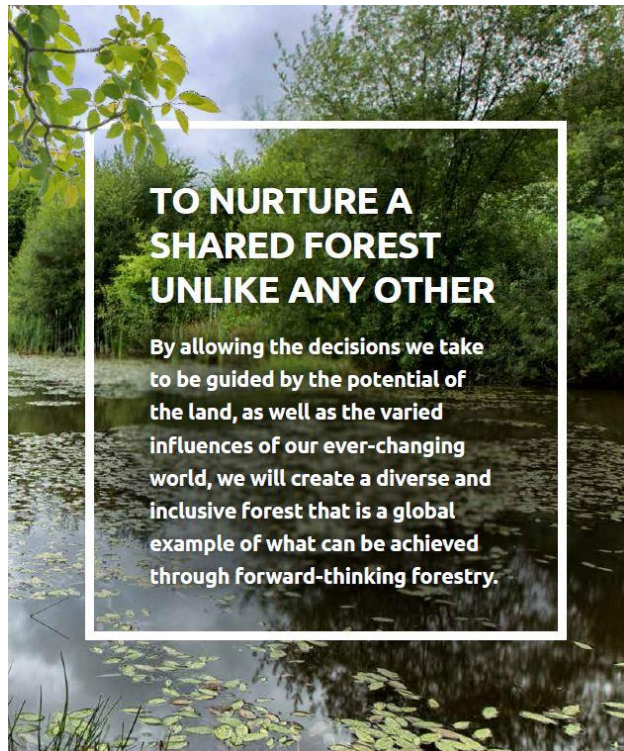
We want to seize the opportunity to shape our future Forest together. We have, you have, the opportunity to think about what we want the Forest to look like, feel like, be like in a 100-years’ time.

We are searching for an agreed, an understood, and supported direction from which we, the Forestry Commission, will distil the more detailed Forest Plans that will direct the operational activity in the decades ahead.

In order to answer this survey fully it is recommended you have a copy of the Forest of Dean land management plan - consultation draft for reference.



## The Vision



**How much do you agree or disagree with the long-term vision for land management of the public forest estate in the Forest of Dean?**

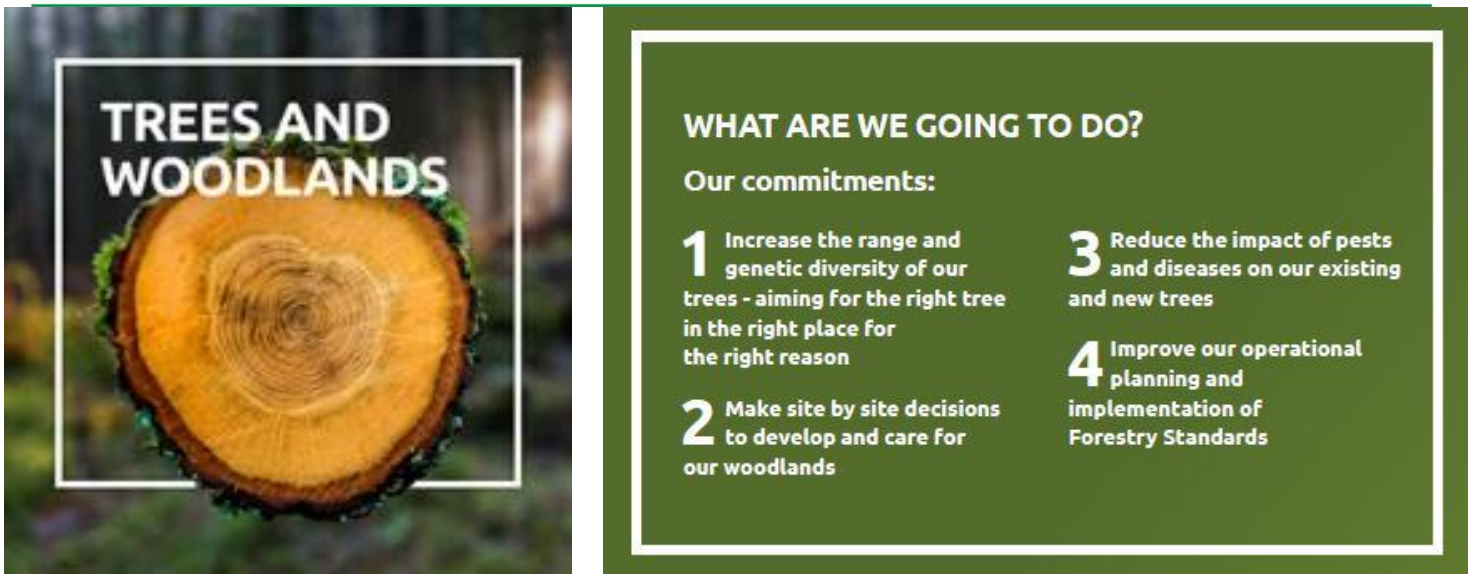
- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- I don't have a view

**Is there anything you don't like or would change?**

## Principles of land management and commitments

Think now about the eight principles of land management set out in the Forest of Dean land management plan - consultation draft and answer the following questions.





**How much do you agree or disagree with the commitments?**

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- I don't have a view

**Would you add or change anything in our commitments?**

**Do you think the action in the commitments will make a difference?**

- Yes
- No
- Maybe



**WHAT ARE WE GOING TO DO?**

Our commitments:

<p><b>1</b> Identify habitats of current and potential conservation importance, to ensure they are made bigger, better and more joined up</p> <p><b>2</b> Reduce the spread and impact of invasive species</p> <p><b>3</b> Improve habitats through the development and care of our woodlands</p>	<p><b>4</b> Utilise open spaces for nature conservation by developing grazing systems</p> <p><b>5</b> Use species reintroduction to deliver positive changes to the environment</p> <p><b>6</b> Manage and monitor Sites of Specific Scientific Interest (SSSI)</p>
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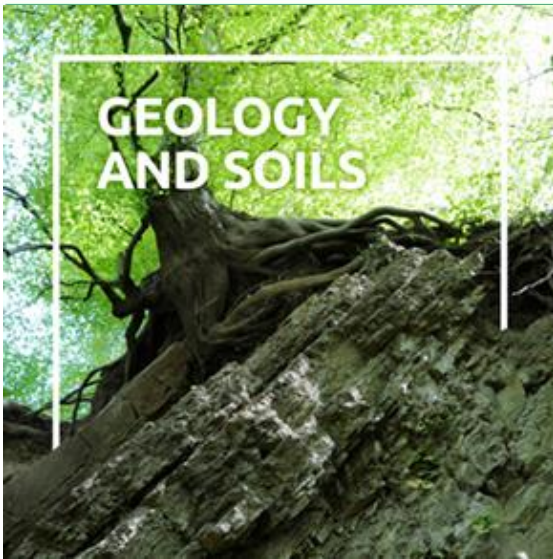
**How much do you agree or disagree with the commitments?**

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- I don't have a view

**Would you add or change anything in our commitments?**

**Do you think the action in the commitments will make a difference?**

- Yes
- No
- Maybe



## WHAT ARE WE GOING TO DO?

Our commitments:

**1** Identify optimum sites for lowland heath, mire and other wetlands and link these to open spaces

**2** Move away from felling blocks of trees to reduce the impact on soil qualities

**3** Improve extraction and access routes for forest operations to reduce soil compaction by machines

**4** Promote the story of our geological sites of interest

### How much do you agree or disagree with the commitments?

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- I don't have a view

### Would you add or change anything in our commitments?

### Do you think the action in the commitments will make a difference?

- Yes
- No
- Maybe



## WHAT ARE WE GOING TO DO?

### Our commitments:

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <p><b>1</b> Identify and develop riparian zones to enhance connectivity and functionality of watercourses</p> <p><b>2</b> Naturalise water channels by creating natural structures to build habitat diversity and slow the flow of water</p> <p><b>3</b> Remove non-functional artificial barriers that restrict the movement of water and fish</p> <p><b>4</b> Restore active mires and bogs to create habitat</p> | <p>and reduce volumes of water flowing down and out of the Forest in storm conditions</p> <p><b>5</b> Create and maintain ponds to support ecology</p> <p><b>6</b> Manage water flow on operational sites to reduce soil erosion and excessive sedimentation, and modify our approaches to woodland drainage to allow them to function more naturally</p> <p><b>7</b> Use beavers for engineering watery landscapes</p> |
|---|---|

### How much do you agree or disagree with the commitments?

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- I don't have a view

### Would you add or change anything in our commitments?

### Do you think the action in the commitments will make a difference?

- Yes
- No
- Maybe



## WHAT ARE WE GOING TO DO?

### Our commitments:

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <b>1</b> Respect and support the HM Verderers                             | <b>4</b> Strengthen the feel of a Forest of trees |
| <b>2</b> Respect and support HM Inclosures Commissioners                  | <b>5</b> Support and promote mining and quarrying |
| <b>3</b> Support and encourage the traditional privilege of sheep grazing |   |

### How much do you agree or disagree with the commitments?

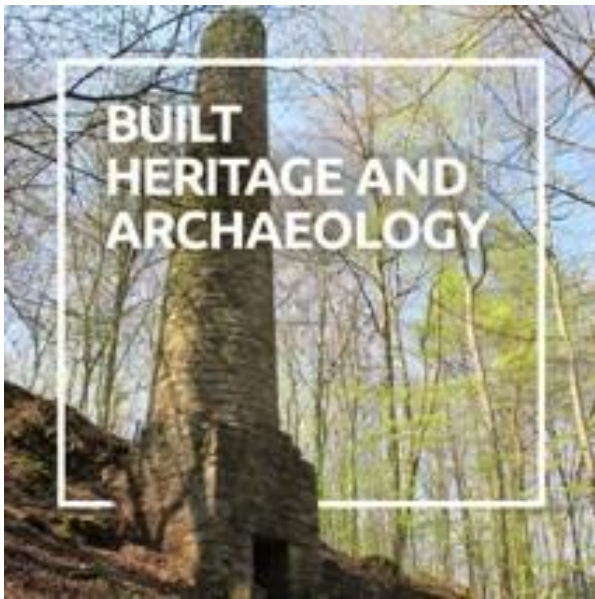
- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- I don't have a view

### Would you add or change anything in our commitments?

### Do you think the action in the commitments will make a difference?

- Yes
- No
- Maybe





**WHAT ARE WE GOING TO DO?**  
Our commitments:

<p><b>1</b> Categorise our built heritage and archaeological features</p> <p><b>2</b> Involve members of the local community to help monitor and maintain our built heritage and archaeological features</p> <p><b>3</b> Continue investigation and research into our built heritage and archaeological features</p>	<p><b>4</b> Pragmatically manage public safety through inspection and fencing</p> <p><b>5</b> Establish a new advisory group, to be known as the 'Built Heritage and Archaeology Advisory Panel for the Forest of Dean', to assist with decision making</p>
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**How much do you agree or disagree with the commitments?**

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- I don't have a view

**Would you add or change anything in our commitments?**

**Do you think the action in the commitments will make a difference?**

- Yes
- No
- Maybe



### WHAT ARE WE GOING TO DO?

Our commitments:

- 1** Maintain, and enhance community access points
- 2** Encourage community groups to work with us on meaningful and sustainable projects
- 3** Provide structured opportunities for volunteering across the Forest, both directly for the Forestry Commission and through partner organisations
- 4** Identify quiet zones, and respect those zones through the routing of waymarked trails and management of permitted events
- 5** Promote adherence to our Wild Trail Policy for mountain biking, encouraging local riders to increase their understanding and respect for other users and local wildlife
- 6** Mitigate the impacts of climate change and severe weather on the community
- 7** Tell our story – celebrate what is special about our Forest, and improve communication of what we do and why we do it

### How much do you agree or disagree with the commitments?

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- I don't have a view

### Would you add or change anything in our commitments?

### Do you think the action in the commitments will make a difference?

- Yes
- No
- Maybe



**WHAT ARE WE GOING TO DO?**

Our commitments:

<p><b>1</b> Maintain and enhance our main hub sites as the focus for day visitors to the Forest</p> <p><b>2</b> Maintain and enhance our second tier car parks</p> <p><b>3</b> Review and extend our network of waymarked trails for people of all abilities to walk, run or ride</p>	<p><b>4</b> Focus our visitor interpretation on our hub sites and core network of waymarked trails using digital technologies</p> <p><b>5</b> Publish a framework for managing public events</p> <p><b>6</b> Identify recreation zones around each main hub site</p> <p><b>7</b> Establish a Visitor Advisory Group for the Forest of Dean</p>
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**How much do you agree or disagree with the commitments?**

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- I don't have a view

**Would you add or change anything in our commitments?**

**Do you think the action in the commitments will make a difference?**

- Yes
- No
- Maybe

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**Closing questions**

**Overall, do you think the plan identifies the right commitments and focus for land management of the public forest estate in the Forest of Dean?**

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- I don't have a view

**Do you have any other comments you would like to make on the Forest of Dean land management plan - consultation draft?**