

2016

Beer Tourism Survey



Analysis of results

Beer Coastal Communities Team

December 2016

Beer
Tourism Survey
for
Beer Coastal Communities Team

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December 2016

Contents

Introduction	4
Ten key points from the survey	4
 Section 1	
Survey methodology	5
Categories of survey participants	5
Participants' age groups	6
Participants' home areas	7
Frequency and duration of stay	9
Type of accommodation	10
How they heard of Beer	10
Why they came to Beer	11
Transport	13
Other places visited	13
Local attractions visited	14
 Section 2	
The overall experience of visiting Beer	15
The likelihood of return	15
Eating in Beer	16
Accommodation	17
Shops in Beer	17
Parking in Beer	18
The beach	21
Signage	23
Provision for people with disabilities	24
Tourist information	24
Facilities for children	25
Public toilets	25
Use of the internet	26
Events	27
Changes	28
 Conclusions	29
Acknowledgements	30

Introduction

This survey was commissioned by the Beer Coastal Communities Team, with the aim of providing evidence to support a possible future bid for funding to the Coastal Communities Fund.

The report is divided into two sections:

Section 1 contains information on the survey participants themselves, including their age groups, where they live, whether they were staying in Beer overnight or visiting for the day, and a range of other details.

Section 2 contains the participants' opinions on a range of aspects of the village and their experience of visiting it, together with their suggestions for changes or improvements.

10 Key Points from the Survey

- Of the 412 people questioned, 75 per cent rated the experience of visiting Beer as 'Excellent'
- 91 per cent said they would return
- 90 per cent of participants travelled to Beer by car
- 64 per cent said they would make use of a park and ride system in Beer
- 46 per cent said they would make use of a webcam showing the beach
- 49 per cent of those surveyed in the village had not visited either Beer Quarry Caves or Pecorama
- 35 per cent of participants did not want any changes which would affect the atmosphere or character of the village
- Half of participants rated the provision of tourist information as either 'Fair' or 'Poor'
- 52 per cent described the provision of facilities for people with disabilities as 'Fair' or 'Poor'
- 35 per cent rated signage in the village as 'Fair' or 'Poor'

Section 1 – The Survey and the Participants

Survey Methodology

In all, 412 visitors took part in the survey. The Tourism Intelligence Unit of the Office for National Statistics (ONS) recommends a minimum size of 400 for a survey of this kind.

The survey ran from late June to the end of October and was undertaken by a small group of volunteers, under the supervision of the survey analyst. Much of the work was carried out during organised sessions on a total of 20 days, but later in the survey period volunteers also worked individually. The organised sessions were scheduled so as to give an even spread of weekdays and weekends.

The organised sessions took place in Fore Street, Sea Hill, on the beach and near the Self Shelter and Jubilee Gardens. Individuals also worked at the entrance to the central car park, in Jean Bartlett Cottage Holidays and the Youth Hostel, while the proprietors of a self-catering holiday property also surveyed their guests.

Responses were gathered in face to face interviews, with the interviewees given a set of 'flash cards' which contained options for the answers to multiple choice questions. Several questions offered the opportunity for participants to express their opinions in their own words, while some questions were designed to produce a simple yes or no answer.

In other questions the participants were asked to rate aspects of the village on a four-point scale:

Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
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An odd number of points was avoided, as this would have given participants the opportunity to 'go for the middle', and thus effectively avoid actually expressing an opinion.

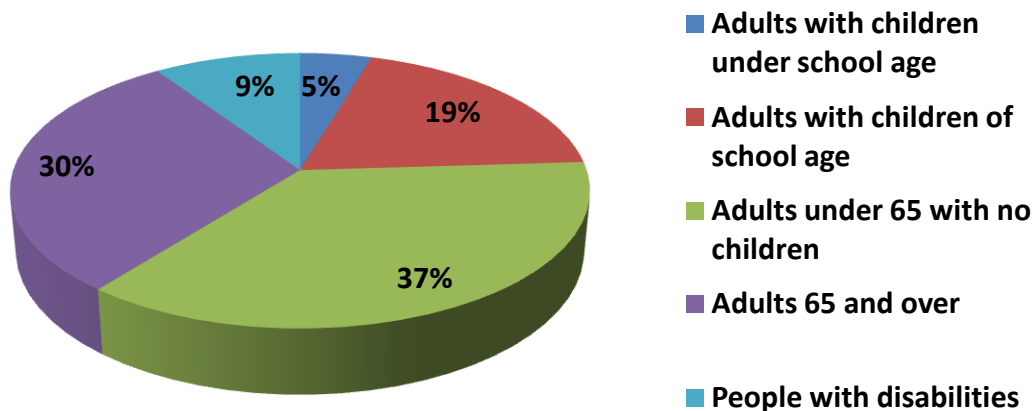
Categories of Participants

Entirely by accident we obtained a virtually even split between day and overnight visitors (205 staying overnight versus 207 who were day visitors).

The survey participants fell into five groups:

- Adults with children under school age
- Adults with children of school age
- Adults under 65 with no children
- Adults aged 65 and over
- People with disabilities

Categories of Participants

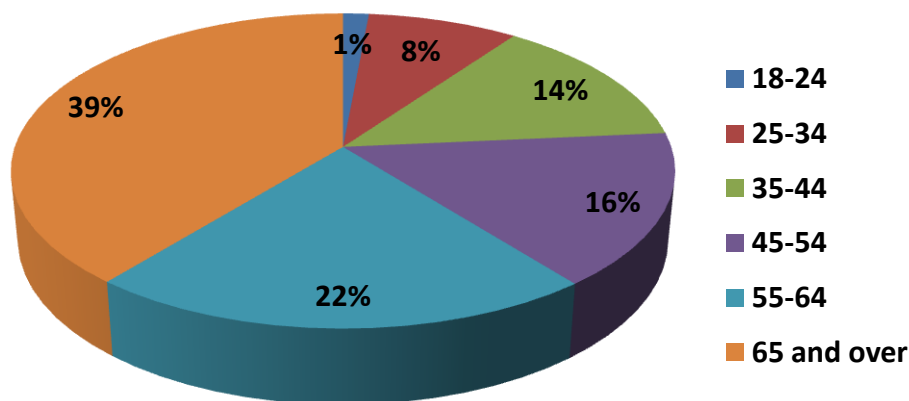


The original intention was to gather responses from an equal number of people (100) from each of these groups, to produce a total of 500 for the whole survey. It soon became clear that we would not be able to find a sufficient number of people with disabilities to reach the 100 total for that group, and that people with very young children were understandably more concerned with looking after them than with answering 10 to 15 minutes worth of questions from an interviewer. As a result, these two groups are represented by the smallest totals in the survey. We thus gathered responses from any group available, but continued to carefully record the group to which each respondent belonged.

Participants' Age Groups

Those surveyed were predominantly from the older age groups, with 61 per cent aged 55 or over.

Age of Participants



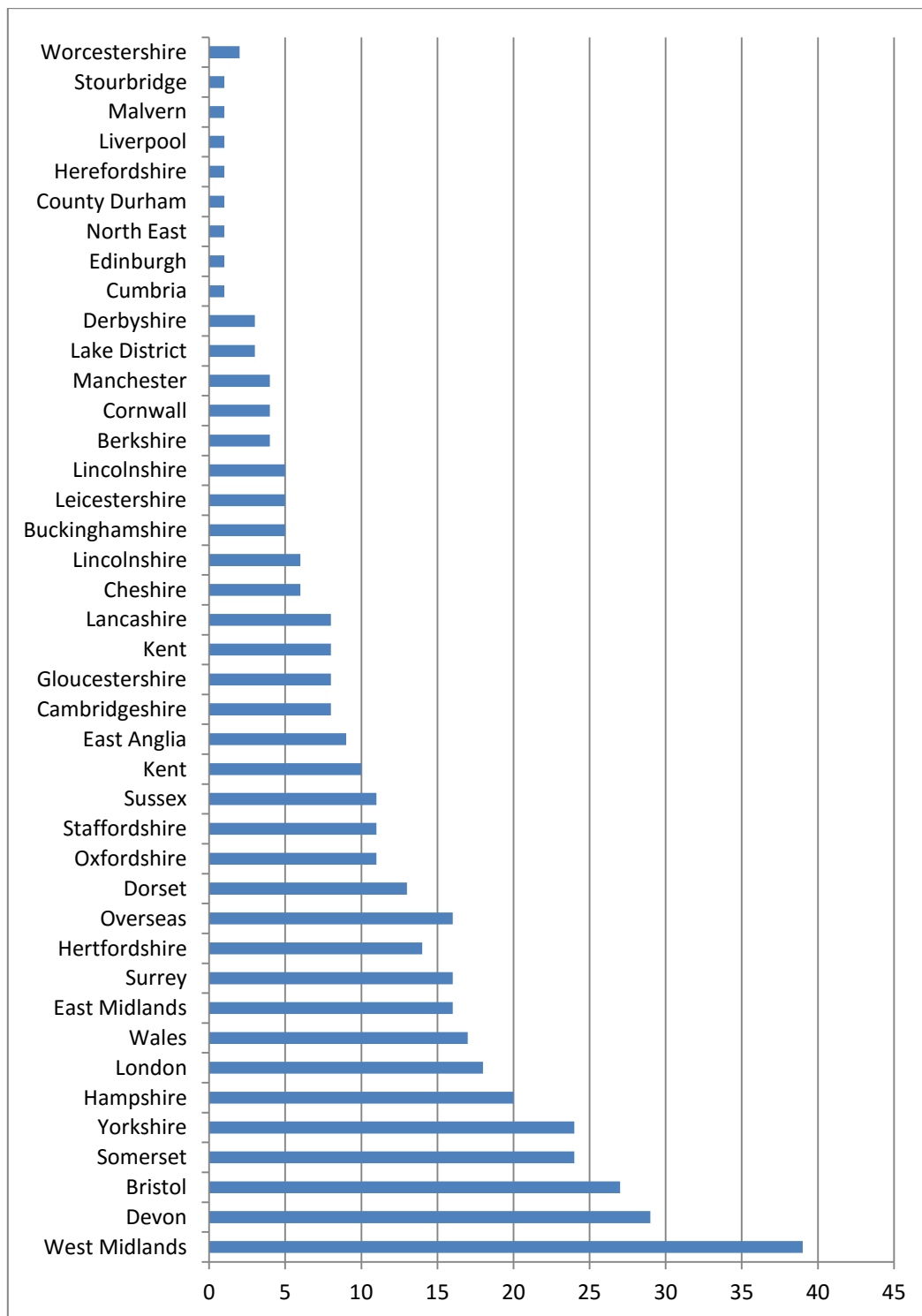
Based on 412 respondents

Participants' Home Areas

The West Midlands was the home area of almost 10 percent (39) of the 412 survey participants, followed by Devon (29) and Bristol (27). The table below shows the six areas which were the homes of the largest numbers of visitors.

West Midlands	39	9.5%
Devon	29	7%
Bristol	27	6.6%
Somerset	24	5.8%
Yorkshire	24	5.8%
Hampshire	20	4.9%

The participants from the West Midlands included two from Wolverhampton who explained that they visited Beer solely because of the many complimentary references to the village made by Peter Rhodes in his column in their local paper, the Wolverhampton Express and Star. Mr. Rhodes is apparently a regular visitor to Beer.



The home areas of survey participants

Overseas visitors were in fairly short supply, with only sixteen in all. Their countries of origin are shown below:

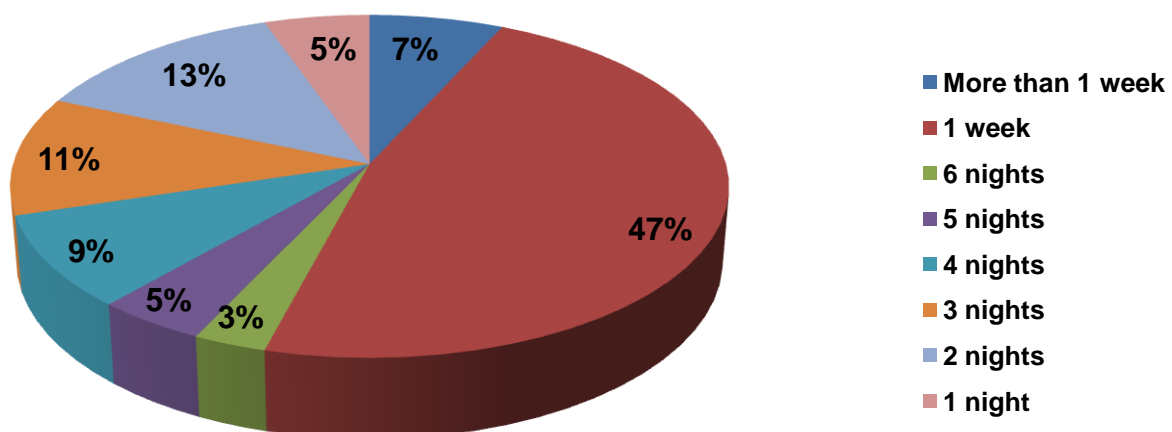
Australia	5
Germany	4
France	2
New Zealand	2
Netherlands	1
Greece	1
Dubai	1
TOTAL	16

Frequency and Duration of Stay

Well over a third (39 per cent) of those surveyed were on their first visit to Beer. Of those who had visited before, the great majority had paid multiple visits, with one elderly lady from Birmingham claiming to have visited Beer every year for 60 years. In all, 18 people (out of 244 who had visited before) said they had been visiting Beer at least once a year for 20 years or more.

Of the 205 people who were staying in Beer overnight, 47 per cent (97 people in total) were staying for a week. All of this group were staying in self-catering accommodation, whether rented properties or their own holiday homes.

Length of Stay*

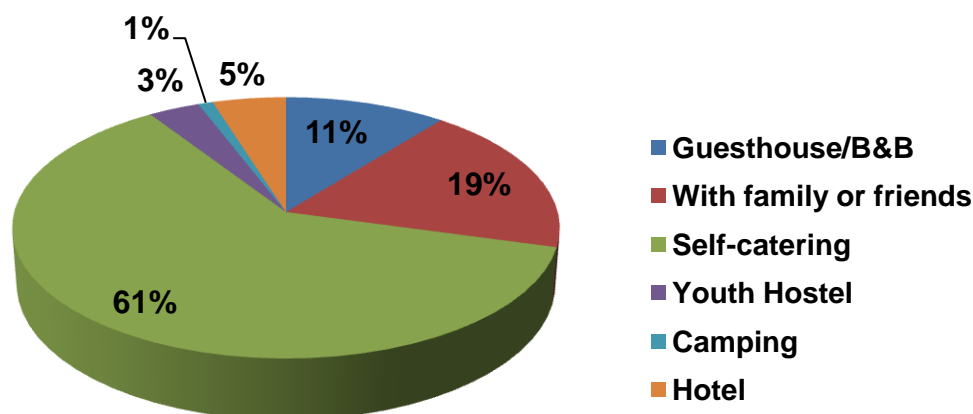


*Percentages are based on the 205 visitors who stayed overnight

Type of Accommodation

In all, 61 per cent of the survey participants who were staying overnight were in self-catering accommodation. As the chart below shows, the next most popular accommodation type was staying with family or friends.

Type of Accommodation*

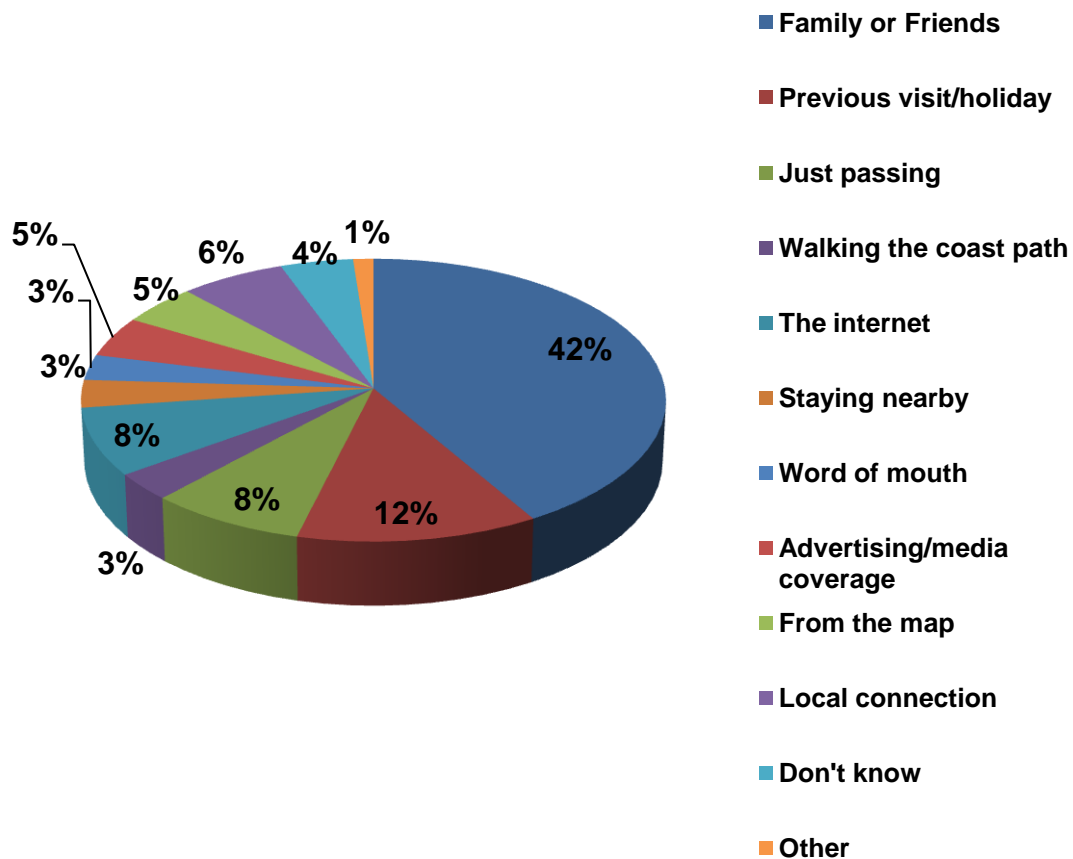


*Percentages are based on the 205 visitors who stayed overnight

How they heard of Beer

Personal recommendation from a family member or friend or actually visiting them was the most common method by which participants originally heard of Beer. This was true for 42 per cent of those surveyed. The next most common method was as a result of a previous visit to Beer or a holiday here, often in childhood. This was the case for 12 per cent of survey participants.

How they heard of Beer



Why they came to Beer

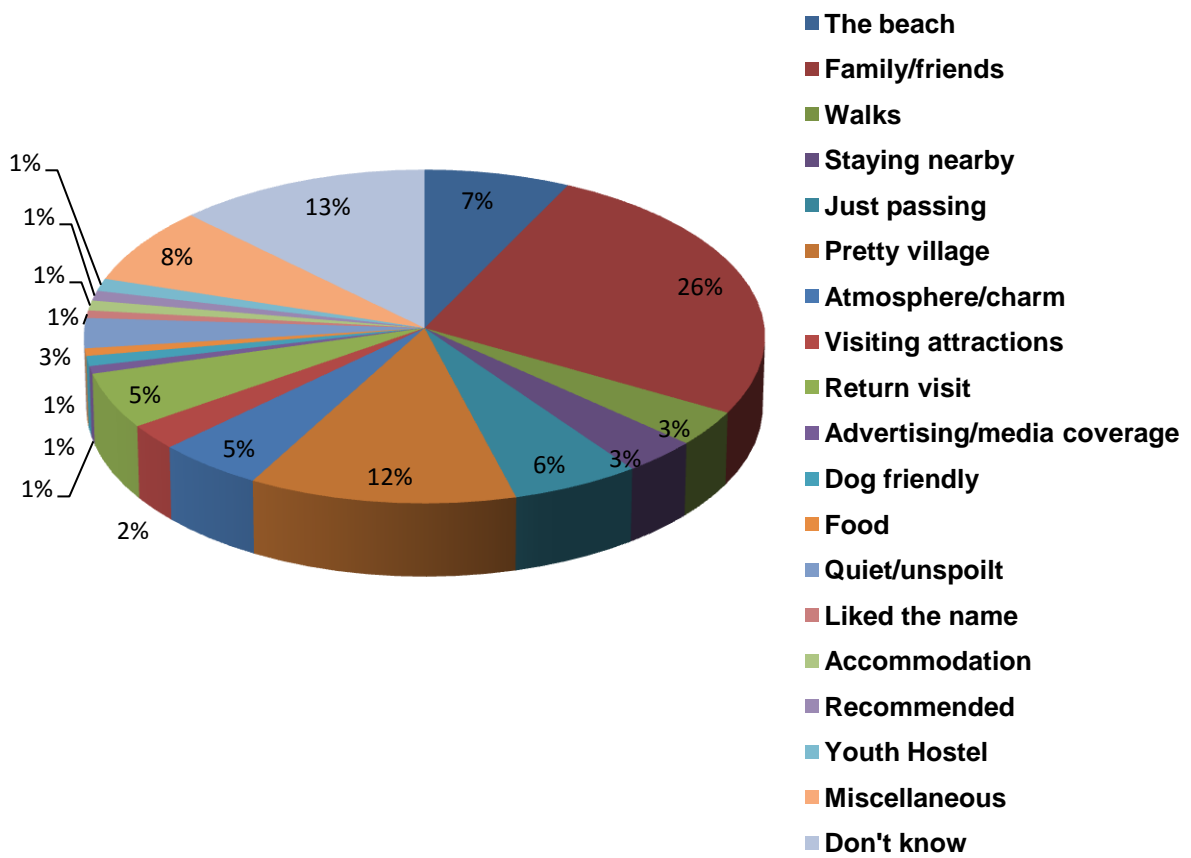
Participants had a wide range of reasons for coming to Beer, with the largest group visiting family or friends in Beer or the surrounding area, accompanying them on holiday, or in some cases visiting Beer on their recommendation.

A large number were drawn by the attractiveness of the village itself and its atmosphere, while the beach was obviously a major attraction for many. An appreciable number knew nothing of Beer prior to their visit, and came to the village because they were 'just passing' or happened to be on holiday nearby. The comments of this group emphasise the importance of having good signage for the village.

Walking and visits to Beer Quarry Caves or Pecorama were the reasons for some visits to Beer, and a small number commented favourably on the 'dog-friendly' attitude of the village.

The chart below shows the full range of reasons given for visiting Beer. The 'Miscellaneous' category includes a range of largely one-off explanations, such as 'attending a 70th birthday party', 'a friend's wedding', 'researching my family tree' and 'to do my own Grizzly'.

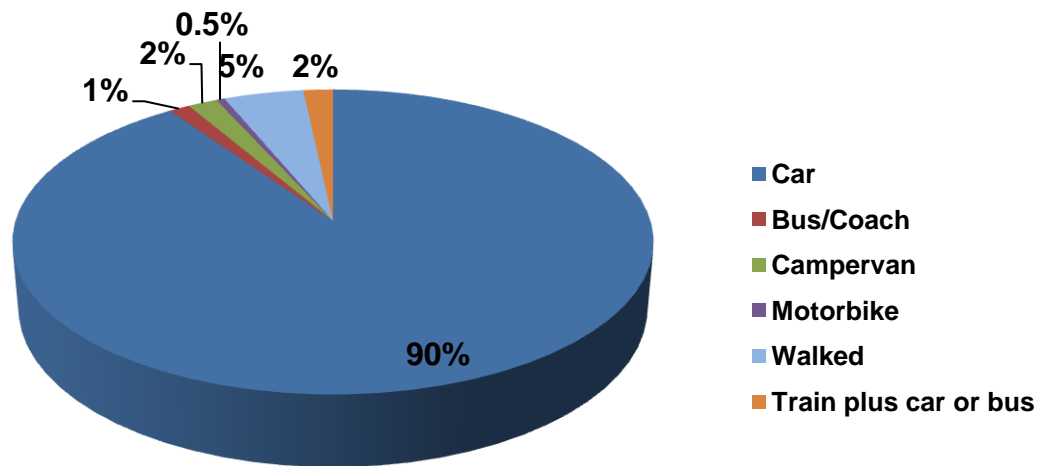
Why they came to Beer



Transport

As would have been expected, the overwhelming majority of participants travelled to Beer by car, making the visitors' views on parking particularly important (see below). The importance of the coast path is shown by the fact that walking was the second most popular method of travelling to Beer, albeit used by just 5% of the visitors.

Transport Methods



Other places visited

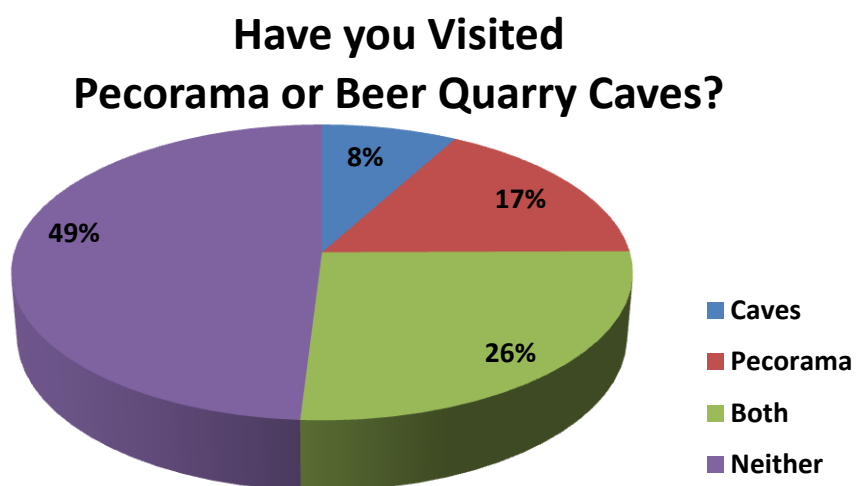
Participants were asked to name other places in Devon or Dorset which they had visited. The aim of this was to identify places in which advertising could serve to attract more visitors to Beer. Lyme Regis, Sidmouth and Seaton were by far the most popular places to visit.

Lyme Regis	176
Sidmouth	149
Seaton	126
Branscombe	92
Exmouth	54
Colyton	29
Donkey Sanctuary	28
Charmouth	16
Weymouth	16
Budleigh Salterton	14
West Bay	12
Axminster	9
Bournemouth	7
Axmouth	7
Dartmouth	6
Dartmoor	2
Taunton	1

NB Most of those surveyed identified more than one place

Local attractions visited

Forty nine per cent of the participants questioned in the village had not visited either Beer Quarry Caves or Pecorama, but 26 per cent had visited both. Two per cent of those questioned (see above under 'Why they came to Beer') said they had come to Beer in order to visit one of the attractions.

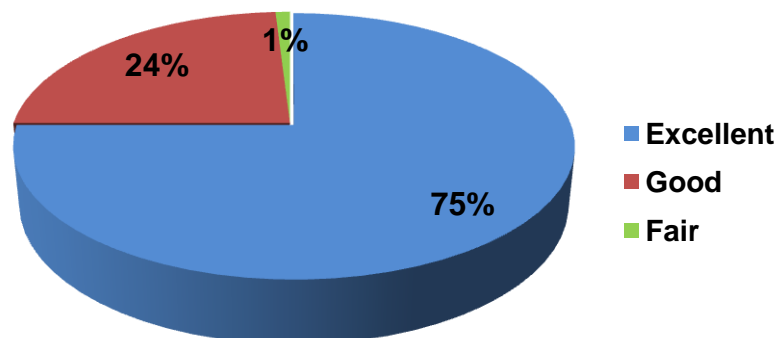


Section 2 – Opinions of Beer

Overall Experience

A remarkable 75 per cent of participants rated the overall experience of visiting Beer as 'Excellent', while another 24 per cent viewed it as 'Good'. This 99 per cent approval rating is obviously very encouraging.

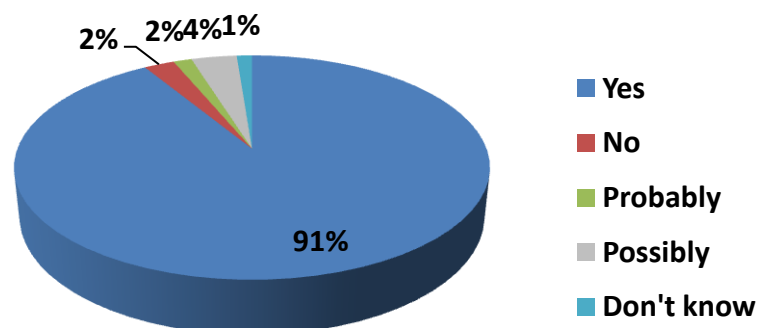
Overall Experience of Visiting Beer



Likelihood of Returning

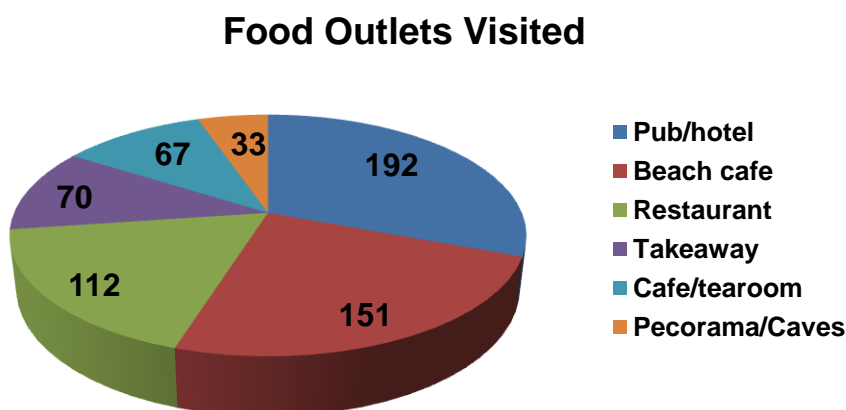
The overwhelming majority (91%) of those surveyed said they would return to Beer in the future. Only 2 per cent said they would not be back.

Will you be Back?



Eating in Beer

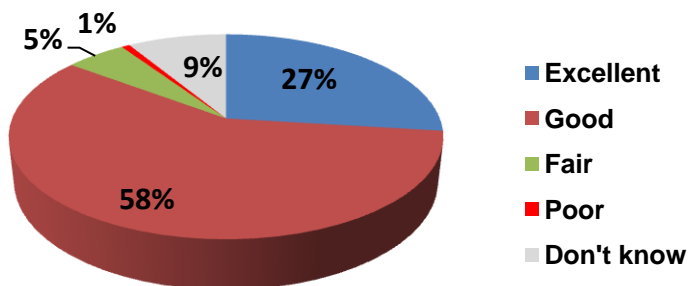
The great majority (83 per cent) of those surveyed had eaten in Beer, with pubs and the beach cafes proving the most popular. The chart below shows the number of participants who reported visiting each type of food outlet. (The total is more than 412 because many had visited more than type of outlet).



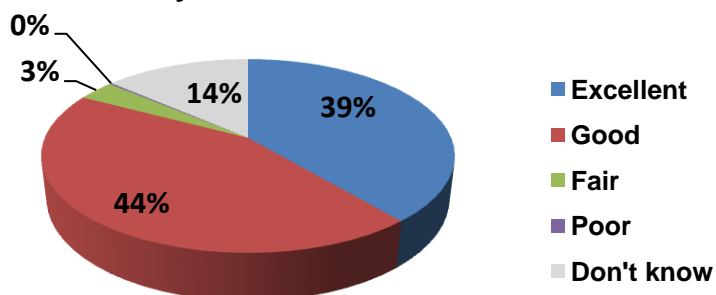
The Range and Quality of Food Served

The range of food served was rated 'Excellent' or 'Good' by 85 per cent of those surveyed, while an almost identical number (83%) gave the same ratings to its quality (see the tables below).

Range of Food in Restaurants etc.

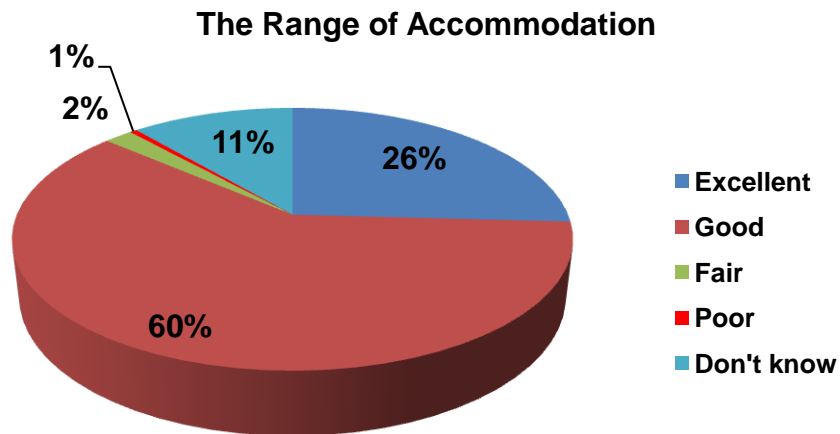


Quality of Food in Restaurants etc.



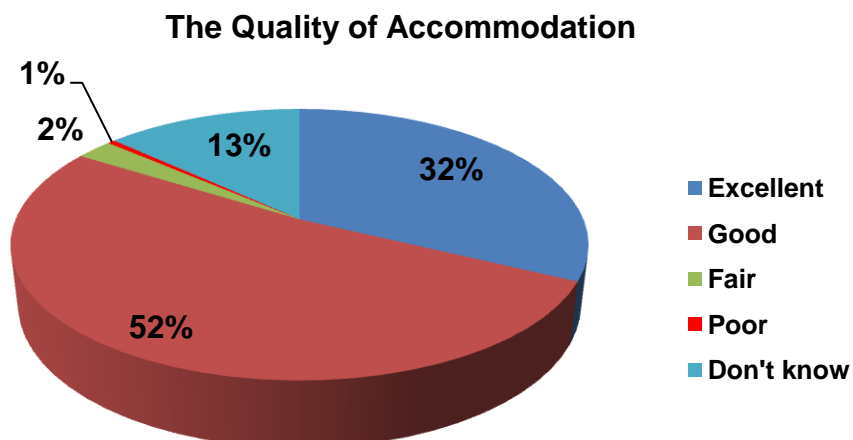
Accommodation in Beer

Of the 205 survey participants who stayed overnight in the village, 86 per cent rated the range of accommodation available as either 'Excellent' or 'Good', with only one per cent describing it as 'Poor'.



Percentages are based on the 205 respondents who stayed overnight

The quality of accommodation was similarly highly rated.

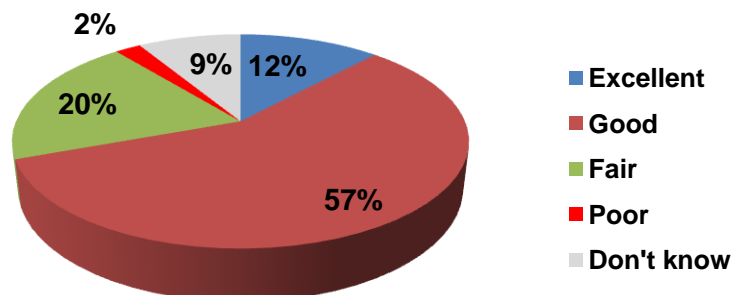


Percentages are based on the 205 respondents who stayed overnight

Shops in Beer

Eighty three per cent of participants said they had visited one or more shops in the village, and a total of 57 per cent rated the range of shops in Beer as 'Good', but 20 per cent described the range as merely 'Fair'.

Range of Shops



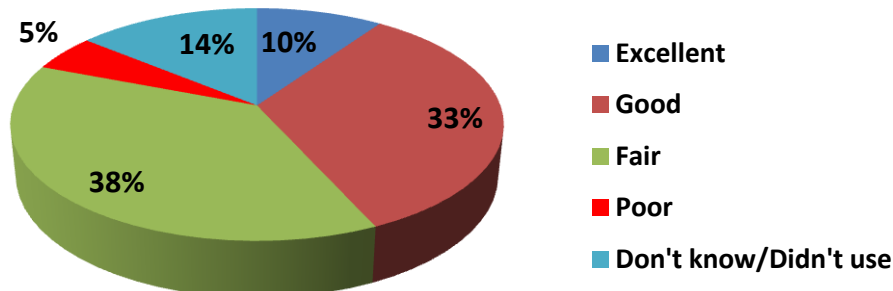
Parking in Beer

The fact that 90 per cent of the survey participants had arrived in Beer by car (see above) emphasises the importance of parking in the village.

Cost

The cost of parking divided opinion more than any other issue raised in the entire survey. Forty three per cent rated the cost 'Fair' or 'Poor', with the same proportion describing it as 'Good' or 'Excellent'.

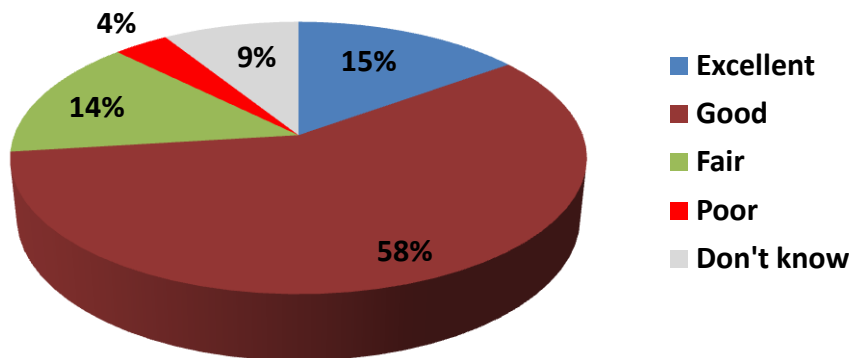
Cost of Parking



Availability

Eighteen per cent of survey participants (74 people out of 412) rated the availability of parking in Beer as either 'Fair' or 'Poor'. At first glance this might not appear to be an especially high figure. However, we must bear in mind that a large proportion of those staying overnight (amounting to a total of 126 people) were in self-catering accommodation, almost all of which has its own private parking. Therefore this group of 74 represents just over a quarter of the 286 remaining participants who needed to find parking in the village. Only eight per cent of participants reported being unable to find a parking space when visiting Beer.

The Availability of Parking



Signage

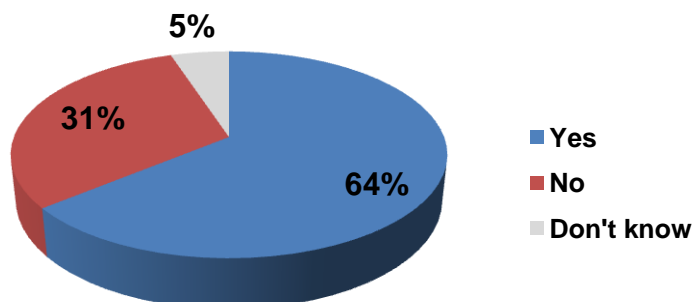
One of the main complaints raised in the comments section on parking concerned parking-related signage. The most frequently raised point was the need for more signs directing drivers to the clifftop car park. Several people said they were quite unaware of this car park because of the lack of signs. Others found it difficult to understand the distinction between short- and long-term spaces in the central car park, and so called for improved signs explaining this.

Park and Ride

This issue was addressed in the survey in two ways. Firstly, the survey asked for a simple Yes/No answer as to whether participants would make use of a park and ride system serving the clifftop car park. Secondly, some participants raised this matter themselves in a separate section devoted to their general comments on parking. A small number added that any park and ride system would need to be able to accommodate wheelchairs and also be dog-friendly.

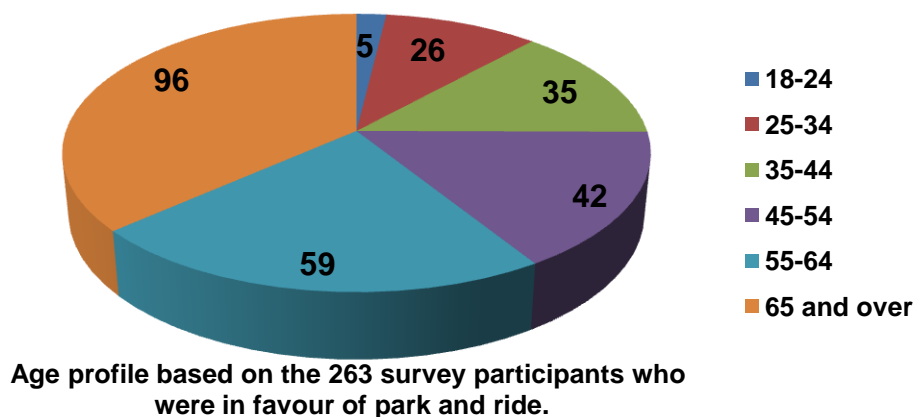
When asked to say whether they would use park and ride, almost two thirds (64 per cent) said they would do so.

Would you use Park and Ride?



Survey participants who said they would use a park and ride system in the village might have been expected to be from the older age groups, but in fact they came from all age groups, with 41 per cent of them (108 people) aged under 55.

Age Profile of those in favour of Park and Ride

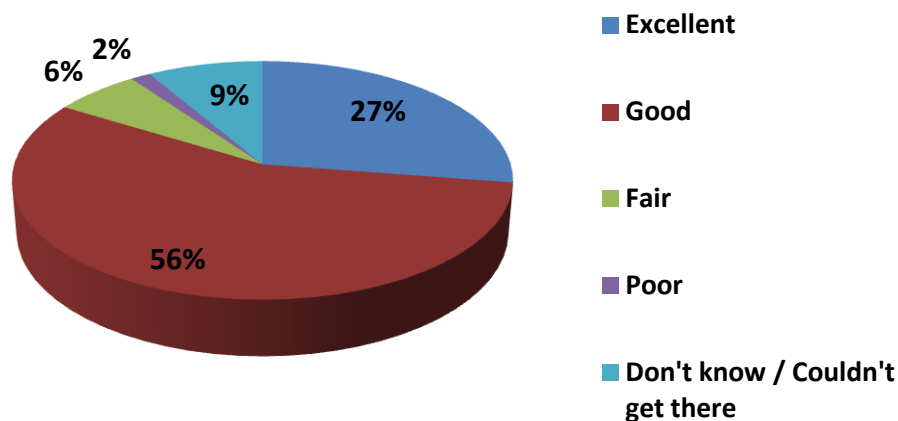


A number of participants asked for reserved car park spaces for holders of pre-paid permits, and also for campervans, plus more spaces for disabled people, especially near the beach. The size of parking spaces was criticised as too small by a few, particularly in the car park between the Anchor and Beach Court.

The Beach

Facilities on the beach were rated 'Good' or 'Excellent' by 83% of those interviewed.

Beach Facilities



A few people made additional comments, and those of three among the small number who rated the facilities as only 'Fair' illustrate the main aspects of the beach which drew any criticism:

'Fair (can't get down there)'
'Fair (cafes good but no loos)'
'Fair (more rubber matting please)'

As these comments illustrate, difficulties with access to the beach, the absence of toilets, and movement once on the beach all drew comments when visitors were asked for suggestions for improvements.

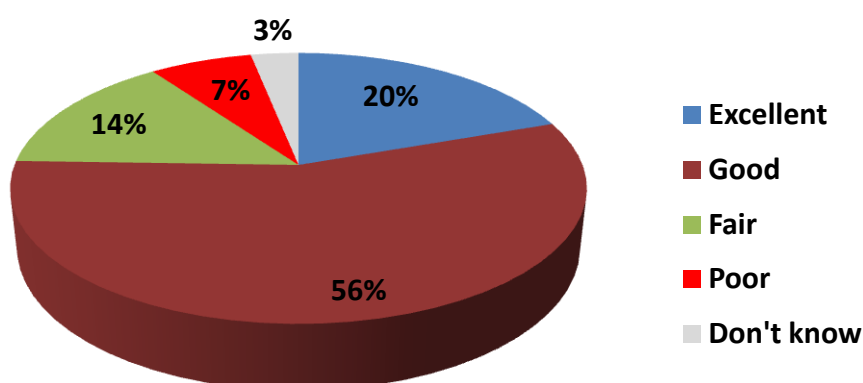
Access to the beach

Many people who would like to visit the beach are unable to do so because of the steep slopes involved. Comments on this problem included:

'Handrails on Sea Hill/path to beach'
'Rope railing up Sea Hill'
'Buggies for Sea Hill,'
'Lift from beach'

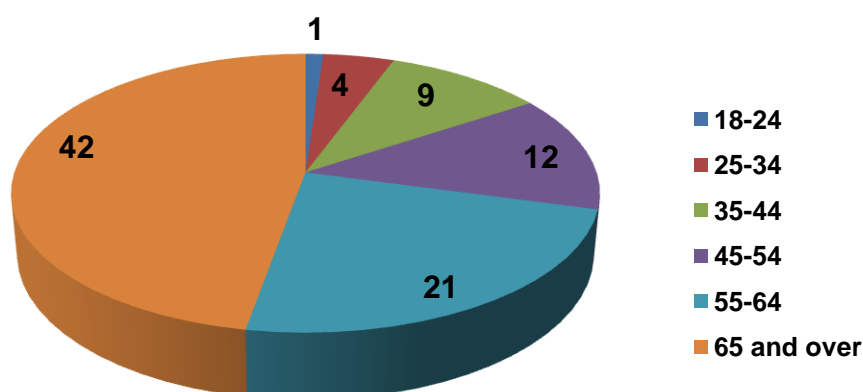
'Chair lift from beach'
'Ride / buggy down Sea Hill to beach',
'Buggy rides like at Killerton'
'Vertical access to beach'

Access to the Beach



Access to the beach was rated 'Fair' or 'Poor' by 89 of those surveyed (21 per cent of the total). Not surprisingly, a majority of these were from the older age groups, but nevertheless more than a quarter of people in this group were aged under 55, as shown in the chart below.

Access to the Beach - Age Profile



Figures show the age groups of the 89 respondents who rated access to the beach as 'Fair' or 'Poor'

Toilets

Thirty five people, eight per cent of the total surveyed, identified the provision of toilets on the beach as one of the changes they would like to see in the village.

Movement on the Beach

Several people called for improvements to the matting in order to improve the ability to move around on the beach. This included adding further matting, and making it wider, to help the movement of disability scooters.

Other aspects of the beach

Safety concerns were raised by a few people who called for lifeguards, and others who asked for a first aid post, or at least a first aid kit, to be provided on the beach.

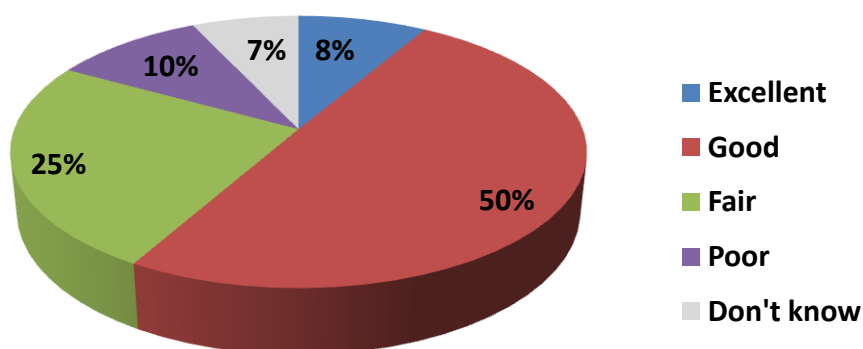
One person asked for another shower to be installed, a development which is already planned.

Signage

Half of those interviewed rated signage in the village as 'Good', and 8 per cent as 'Excellent', but some interesting points were raised by those who were more critical. The need for more signs to the clifftop car park has already been mentioned, but the absence of any signs for the Heritage Centre was also raised, as was the fact that, although events (e.g. during the Regatta) are advertised as taking place in Charlie's Yard, there are no signs for it, and not even a sign to tell you when you have got there.

A number of people said that they came to Beer as a result of either seeing the brown tourist signs for the village, or simply being intrigued by the name, illustrating the importance of signs which those of us who live in the village take for granted.

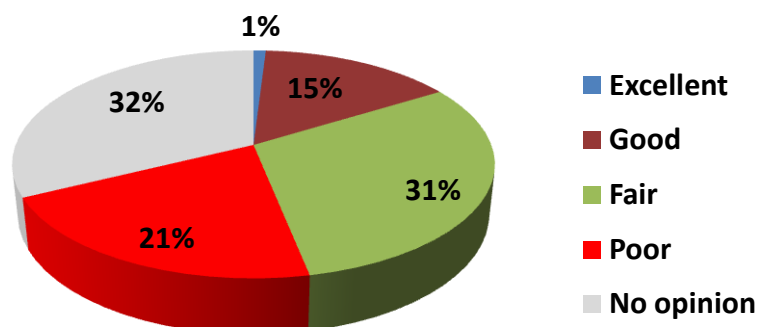
Quality of Signage



Provision for People with Disabilities

This was the topic which drew lower ratings than anything else in the survey. More than half of those questioned (52 per cent) rated provision for people with disabilities as 'Fair' or 'Poor', and only 16 per cent described it as 'Good' or 'Excellent'.

Provision for People with Disabilities

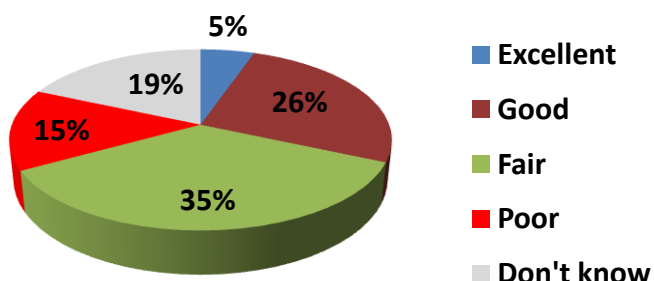


There were very few additional comments or suggestions, however those on the need for better access to the beach are important here, as are the comments on the need for any park and ride system to accommodate wheelchairs. In addition, more parking spaces for disabled people were requested, especially near the beach, as well as the hire of a mobility scooter.

Provision of Tourist Information

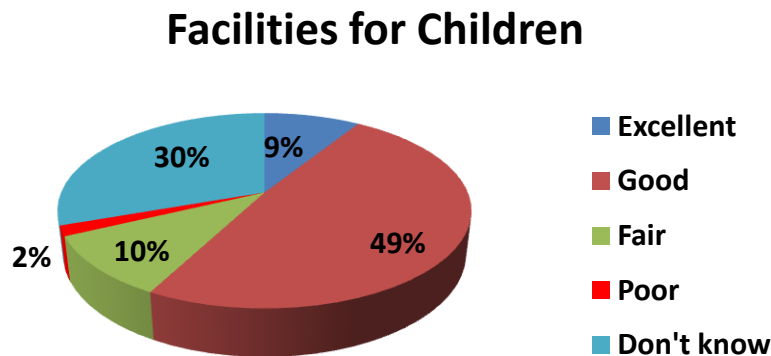
Exactly half of those questioned rated the provision of tourist information in Beer as only 'Fair' or 'Poor'. However, very few made any detailed suggestions as to how to resolve this situation, and comments simply requested more information.

Provision of Tourist Information



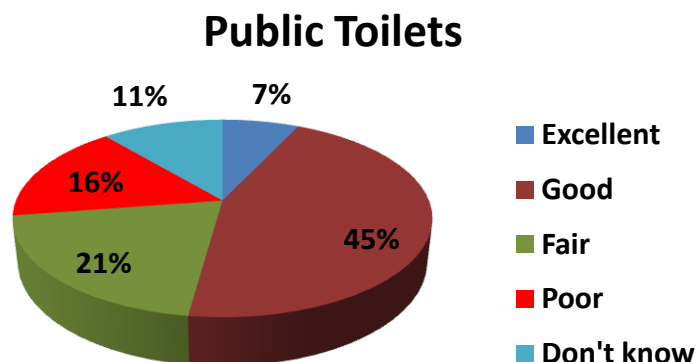
Facilities for Children

A large group (30 per cent) did not have an opinion on facilities for children in the village (reflecting the fact that many of the participants were from the older age groups), but 58 per cent rated them 'Good' or 'Excellent'.



Very few people made separate comments regarding children's facilities, and the few who did simply called for (unspecified) improvements to the children's play area above the beach.

Public Toilets



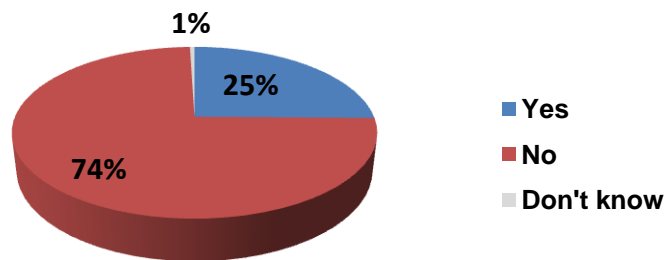
More than a third of participants (37%) rated the public toilets as only 'Fair' or 'Poor'. As mentioned above in the section on the beach, 36 of the 412 participants called for toilets on the beach, while almost all the others who made any comment on the toilets simply wanted more of them, mainly without suggesting where they should be sited. Apart from the beach, the only suggestions as to the location of new toilets were in the central car park, or by creating external access to the toilets in the Mariners Hall.

A handful of people called for refurbishment of the toilets, one person calling them 'very tired and old'.

Use of the Internet

Relatively few of the participants had made use of the internet when planning their holidays. Only 25 per cent had visited the Beer website, while 30 per cent had visited either the Pecorama or Beer Quarry Caves sites, and 37 per cent had visited an accommodation provider's site.

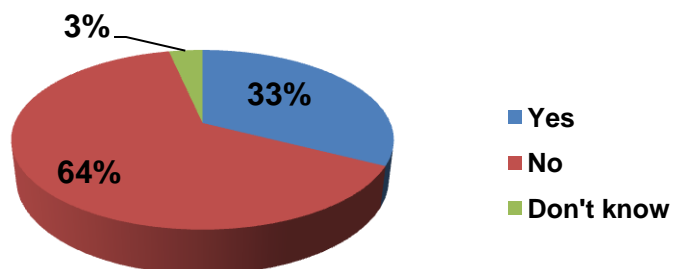
Have you visited the Beer website?



Social Media

Only half of the participants used social media, and only 25 per cent would follow Beer on Twitter or Facebook.

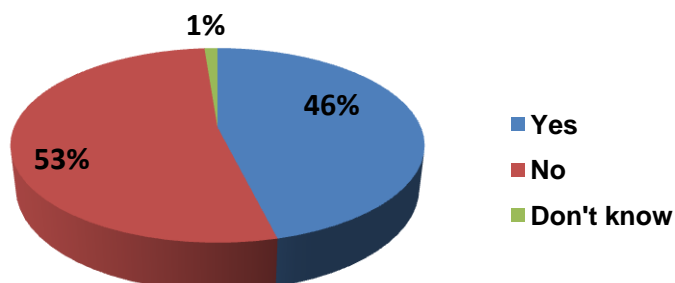
Would you follow Beer on Social Media?



Webcam

There was more enthusiasm for the idea of a webcam showing a view of the beach. As shown below, nearly half (46 per cent) said they would make use of this.

Would you use a Beer Webcam?

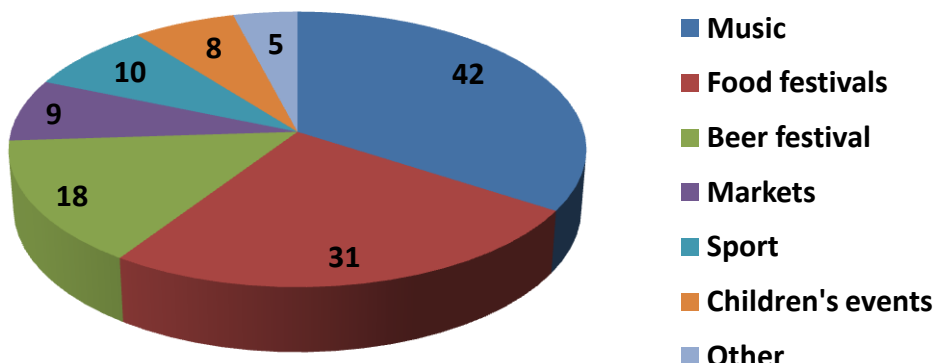


Events in Beer

Many people were opposed to developments which might change the character of the village, but a significant number said that they would like to see more events staged in Beer. Just over a quarter of those surveyed (27 per cent) had attended a village event such as the Regatta or the R&B Festival, and 40 per cent said they would like to see more events.

Suggestions for new events included live music, food festivals, a beer festival and street markets, as shown in the chart below.

What Type of Events?



Note: Figures are based on the 123 respondents who provided examples of the events they wanted to see staged in Beer

Changes

Survey participants were asked to identify any changes or improvements they would like to see in Beer. Some of their comments have already been incorporated into the report in sections on features such as the beach and parking, but the table below shows the main topics addressed by their comments.

While the sheer weight of opinion on some subjects should not be ignored, neither should the fact that a comment made by only one person may nevertheless be worthy of consideration.

Topic	No.	%
Beach facilities	15	4
Beach access	21	5
Toilets on the beach	36	9
Toilets generally	26	6
'Don't change anything'	133	32
Shops	17	4
Food and drink	11	3
Signage	5	1
Events	6	1
Miscellaneous	8	2
Tourist information	5	1
Signage	5	1
Park and ride	5	1
Pedestrianisation	4	1
Transport	4	1
Parking	2	0.5
Facilities for children	2	0.5
Provision for the disabled	3	1
Street furniture	3	1
Don't know	101	25
TOTAL	412	

N.B. Percentages total more than 100 due to rounding

This table shows the large body of opinion which was against any change which might alter the charm and atmosphere of the village. Comments such as: 'Keep it as it is', 'Don't change things' and 'Keep Beer's charm, don't lose it' abounded.

Shops

A number of people commented unfavourably on the opening times of shops and restaurants. 'Shops should stay open longer (afternoon and later in the evening)', 'Beach cafes to open longer' and 'Why do ice cream shops and tea shops close at 4.30 on a Saturday?' are examples of this.

Street furniture

Praise for the flowers in Fore Street was joined by requests for more seating, or 'Seats by the brook to watch the water and the world go by', as one person put it.

Pedestrianisation

Several people called for the pedestrianisation of the lower part of Fore Street.

Transport

Requests for the reinstatement of the land train between Beer and Seaton joined a plea for the return of the X53 bus service.

Conclusions

The results of this survey show that visitors to Beer have a very high opinion of the village as a holiday destination, and a genuine affection for it. They are also very loyal, with many of them returning year after year.

When offered the opportunity to make their own comments, rather than merely answering questions on specific aspects of the village, just over a third of participants emphasised that they did not want to see any changes in Beer which might alter its character or atmosphere, often adding that it was the lack of major change over the last few decades which drew them back to the village.

Significant changes to the fabric of the village would therefore not be welcomed by a substantial number of those who took part in the survey, but other initiatives gained the approval of large numbers of those questioned:

- A park and ride system serving the clifftop car park (which was backed by almost two thirds of those surveyed);
- More toilets, whether on the beach or elsewhere;
- Better access to the beach, particularly for people with disabilities;
- A webcam showing a view of the beach;
- Better facilities generally for people with disabilities;
- Better signage, particularly for the clifftop car park, the Heritage Centre and Charlie's Yard;
- More tourist information;
- A range of events, especially live music, food festivals and a beer festival.

The survey results provide the Beer Coastal Communities Team with solid evidence, never previously available, of the views and preferences of visitors to the village.

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