



PLANTING  
IMPROVING  
INSPIRING

**Attitudes & Perceptions Study:  
Random Individual Survey Report  
February 2008**

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# Executive Summary

The Central Scotland Forest is not a conventional forest. Instead, woodlands are spread in a mosaic throughout 620 square miles bounded by Edinburgh, Glasgow, Falkirk and Lanark. Since 1995, and by precursor bodies before that, the Forest has been developed by a partnership led by the Central Scotland Forest Trust. It is believed by the partnership that the Forest is dramatically improving the image, environment and landscape of a large part of Scotland and will play a key role in its future prosperity. It is seen to be providing a greener, cleaner and more versatile environment for the 750,000 people who live and work in the area, as well as for the many visitors to, and travellers through, the area.

As set out in the *Central Scotland Forest Strategy*, there are a large number of specific aims and objectives relating to social, environmental and economic benefits of the Forest. (For further information see Central Scotland Forest website – [www.csft.org.uk](http://www.csft.org.uk)). This report particularly relates to the social impact of the Forest upon people's lives.

This study is part of a wider research strategy which aims to find out more about how people who inhabit the Central Scotland Forest feel about their local environment and how they use the Forest as a resource. In some respects, the investigation is follow-up to a piece of baseline research undertaken in 2005 - the *Social Impact Study*. Although the *Attitudes & Perceptions* study surveyed different people and was based in different parts of the Forest, it did use the same methodology and the same survey scripts. In this way it is hoped that by periodically repeating the research, it will be possible to provide robust and useful data upon which to measure the success of the Forest in delivering one of the Trust's key goals – to make the Forest a better place for people to live in.

The *Random Individual Survey Report* is published in tandem with another piece of *Attitudes & Perceptions Study* research called the *On Site Survey Report*. The Onsite Survey specifically targeted the users of Central Scotland Forest sites and fieldwork was located purely in these greenspace locations, whereas urban environments provided the location for the *Random Individual Survey* fieldwork.

The findings included in this report provide useful information which can be used by Trust staff and partner agencies to help them in the task of delivering the Forest. It is also hoped that the report will be of interest to individuals and organisations outwith the Forest seeking to undertake similar social research.

The sample used in this research represents a fair reflection of the wider Forest population. Therefore, within standard statistical margins of error, the survey findings provide an accurate picture as to what local people think across a range of diverse issues.

The themes chosen in the research were very much set by our experience of engaging with local people on environmental projects. In particular, our Development Team, who have close contact with members of the public, were consulted in drafting of the survey. With their guidance, we did not shy away from challenging subject matter such as personal safety, physical and mental health problems and vandalism. We feel strongly that these themes affect quality of life and are a fundamental element in how people feel about their local environment.

One of the key findings from the research was that around one quarter of people interviewed had heard of the Central Scotland Forest Trust, the majority of people having seen either a sign or a leaflet. Although this is a relatively high proportion, it appears that few people have an accurate idea as to what the Trust actually does. In fact, most people thought that it was some form of greenspace maintenance organisation.

Seven out of ten people are interested in their local environment and nine out of ten feel that trees and woodland improve the landscape. The role the Forest plays in safeguarding the natural environment from development pressures, particularly from housing was of key importance to around one fifth of respondents.

Eight out ten people think that Forest sites (where environmental works projects have taken place) are important to them. Most people view these as important locations for recreational activity. We estimate that 355,000 people (or 56% of the adult population) visit CSF sites regularly and we believe that this figure is stable. The main reason behind this high figure appears to be that people now want to become fitter and healthier through physical activities such as cycling or walking.

A common theme which was evident in many responses was that Forest sites are seen as valuable spaces for people to visit as a family. These provide an environment for parents to relax in and informally teach their children about the natural world. Other responses indicate that this aspect of strengthening family bonds in a public spaces, increases social interaction and helps to sustain and develop local communities.

Although the survey was successful, as outlined in the Conclusions section of the report, it could be improved. One of the main recommendations is that when the survey is next undertaken, the sample size should be boosted in order to provide robust local authority data which can be analysed by person characteristics. Furthermore, as the survey focuses upon deep set ideas and behavioural patterns it is perhaps unrealistic to expect to even marginal changes in the results over a short period of time. Therefore, it is suggested that the next survey of this nature should be conducted in 2011 rather than in 2009 as originally proposed.

Although the study was able to shed light on many issues, due to its methodology (relatively brief interview time and the survey script nature) it was unable to explore at length certain interesting themes. For example, several topics raised in the *Forest Suggestions* section of this report may be worthy of more exploration. Therefore, it is recommended that in 2009, further research such as a series of focus group sessions, should be undertaken to explore these and other key findings in more depth.

Finally, this report represents further evidence of the Central Scotland Forest Trust's on-going commitment towards producing high quality research across a range of social, economic and physical themes.

### **Acknowledgements**

Central Scotland Forest Trust would like to thank all the people within the Forest who took part in this survey. We would also like to extend thanks to Ashbrook Research & Consultancy who undertook the fieldwork element of the research.

# 1. Introduction

## Introducing the Research

In the summer of 2007, Ashbrook Research & Consultancy was commissioned by the Central Scotland Forest Trust and its Partners, to provide perception and attitudinal data from residents of the Forest. This piece of research was similar to that undertaken in 2005 as it used the same methodology and survey scripts. However, unlike the previous survey, the 2007 data was presented to the Trust in its raw format. This enabled the Trust staff to explore and analyse the data with more freedom and facilitated series of revealing cross-tabulations to be undertaken.

The Random Individual Survey gathered the views of 750 random adult individuals throughout the Central Scotland Forest area. The survey sought to capture perceptions and opinions of adults, together with a measure of their behaviour within/and understanding and awareness, of the Central Scotland Forest.

It should be noted that although most of the surveys were undertaken in dry weather. 2007 had one of the wettest summers in many years and this may well have affected some respondents in terms of how positive/negative they were towards the local environment and outdoor activities in general.

## The Research Methodology

A number of experienced researchers were allocated to the survey. These researchers were briefed to systematically carry out fieldwork on a random basis throughout a number of villages and towns within the Forest, identified by CSFT staff. A structured and comprehensive five page questionnaire was used for the purpose of data collection. This incorporated both open and closed questions with attitude and behaviour statements. A copy of this questionnaire is attached as an Appendix to this report. In addition, there was a prize draw for £100 was additionally used as an incentive to participate.

## Presentation of findings

This report presents the findings of the survey and is divided into a number of sections to facilitate easy reading. The results are presented in a selection of graphs with interpretive comments.

Wherever possible in this report, the 2007 findings are presented alongside the collated 2005 results for comparative purposes.

For the 2005 survey, the sample was divided into high, medium and low usage areas. Results were also presented in this manner. In general, the findings revealed that although there were some differences between the three usage bands, there was little overall consistent pattern or trend. In order to explore the latest data from a different perspective, a decision was taken to try to analyse the 2007 results by visitor type rather than site usage characteristics. Despite the relatively small sample size, it is considered that this approach has been beneficial and worthy of further research in the future.

It is important to note that although the 2007 report does not analyse results using the site usage characteristics banding system, it is possible to group the sites together in this manner. Indeed, this may be something to re-examine in the future once more surveys have been undertaken and the sample becomes larger.

All percentages have been rounded to the nearest whole figure and may therefore not total 100. Percentages have also been calculated excluding 'missing' responses. All of the information is statistically valid. The statistics for the whole CSF area are within 4% either side of those that would have been obtained had everyone in the entire CSF area been interviewed. The profile statistics, i.e. age group, gender, employment status and illness/disability categories are all within 8%.

## 2. About the sample

### Who Was Interviewed?

The sites chosen for the 2007 survey were selected by the Trust's Monitoring & Evaluation Officer in order to reflect the Forest as a whole. Areas used in the 2005 baseline survey were avoided to give as wide a geographic spread as possible. Also it is anticipated that the original areas will be revisited a future survey. In the 2007 survey, particular emphasis was given to Falkirk due to the presence of several important projects in the area such as The HELIX.

A total of 750 people were interviewed:

- 189 in North Lanarkshire (Bellshill, Coatbridge and Cumbernauld)
- 63 in South Lanarkshire (Carluke)
- 63 in East Dunbartonshire (Kirkintilloch)
- 126 in West Lothian (Blackburn and Broxburn)
- 309 in Falkirk (Stenhousemuir, Glensburgh, Polmont, Westquarter, Grahamston, Laurieston and Bainsford)

All interviews were completed in July and August 2007. The average length of an interview was around ten minutes, with some completed in just five minutes, and others taking much longer. Similar to 2005, this was found to be closely related to the interest/enthusiasm of the interviewee with regards to the natural environment.

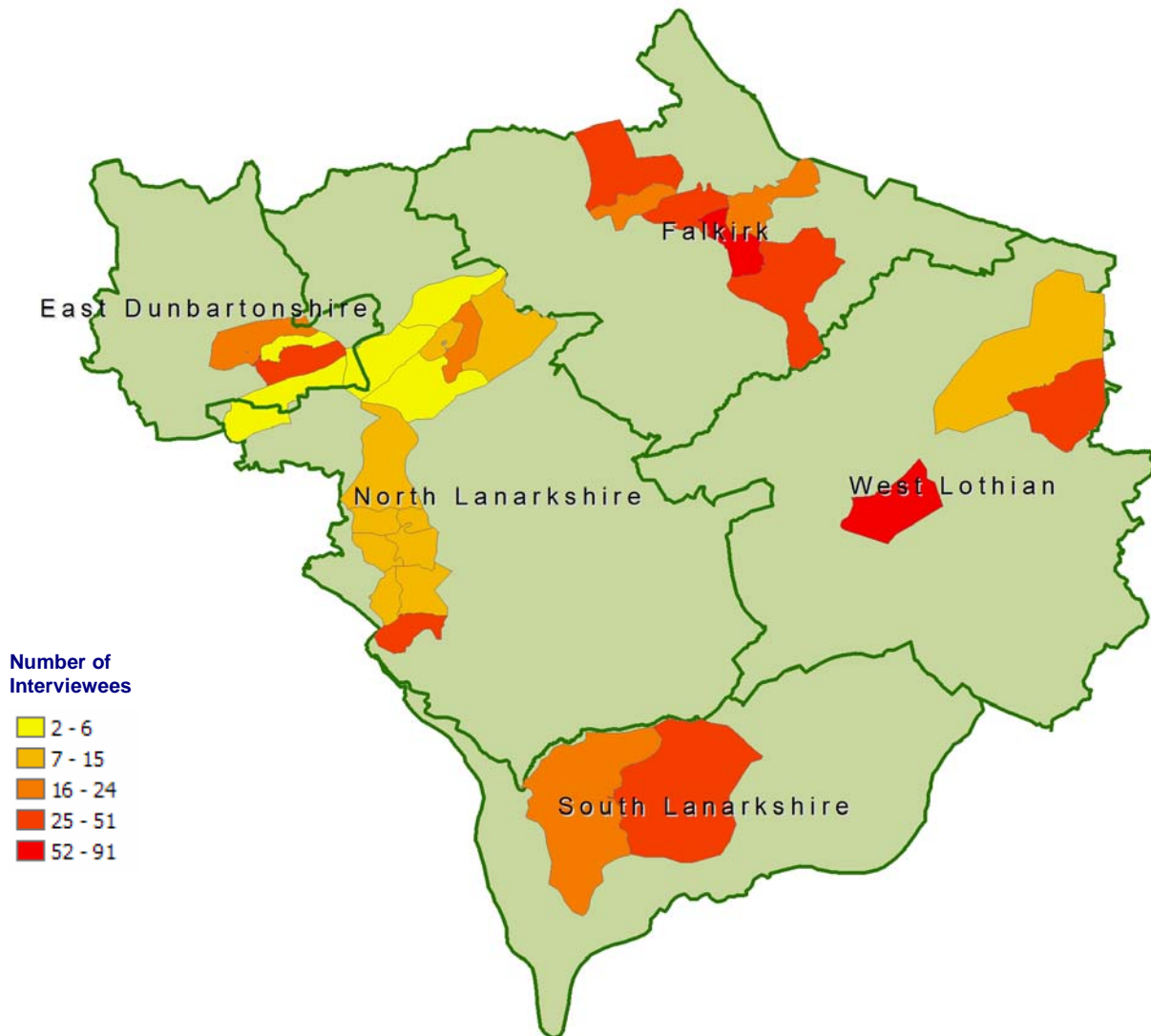
### Characteristics of Respondents

A full breakdown of respondent characteristics is presented in table 2.1. Some key findings to note from this table are:

- 39% of respondents were male; 61% were female. Although imbalanced, this follows a trend identified in the 2005 survey which found it is generally easier to engage females.
- The age of respondents ranged from 16 to 91. 57% of all respondents were under the age of fifty, and 43% were aged fifty and over.
- 45% of all respondents were in employment, three quarters of these had full-time jobs. Similar to 2005, three out of ten interviewees were retired. However, there was a higher proportion of unemployed people in the 2007 sample than the 2005 and fewer students.
- Two out of every ten interviewees said that they had a long-term limiting health problem, illness or disability, a lower proportion than in 2005
- Nearly all interviewees were White British – the vast majority of these people describing themselves as White Scottish.
- 91% of interviewees provided their post code details; the map below shows that all of these people lived locally within the Central Scotland Forest area. The majority of people were interviewed in close proximity to where they live.

Map 2.1

## Where the Interviewees Live



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**Table 2.1 Characteristics of Respondents**

	<b>2005</b>	<b>2007</b>	<b>CSF Average*</b>
<b>Sample size</b>	771	750	n/a
<b>Gender</b>			
Male	42%	39%	47%
Female	58%	61%	53%
<b>Age</b>			
16-29	24%	22%	21%
30-49	31%	35%	38%
50 plus	44%	43%	41%
<b>Employment status</b>			
Employed	49%	45%	59%
Unemployed	7%	17%	13%
Retired	27%	28%	13%
Full time education	11%	3%	1%
Full time home carer	7%	7%	5%
<b>Ethnic origin</b>			
White British	94%	99%	99%
Minority Ethnic	6%	1%	1%
<b>Long term illness, health problem or disability</b>			
Yes	33%	22%	21%
No	67%	78%	79%

\* Source: Census, 2001

### Comparisons with the CSF average

When comparing the 2007 sample with the average for the CSF area as a whole, a number of points are apparent:

- Although, the gender imbalance shown in the sample does not exactly mirror the proportions shown in the wider CSF population, it is similar in that there are more women in the Forest than men.
- The age group proportions of the sample closely reflects the age distribution shown across the Forest as a whole.
- The employment status of the survey sample was not consistent with the CSF average. In particular, the sample under-represents employed persons and over-represents retired people. This is considered to be a result of the survey sampling method used in both the 2005 and 2007 surveys. This method seems to favour people who are not in employment due to the time of day when the interviews were conducted. It may be beneficial to adopt a weighting or quota system in future surveys in order to overcome this issue.
- Although the 2007 minority ethnic figure of 1% may appear to be low, it does reflect the population characteristics of the Forest as a whole where just 1% reported their ethnic origin as being non white in the last Census.
- In 2007, the proportion of people with a long term illness, health problem or disability was consistent with the CSF average.

### **Summary of Sample Characteristics**

The vast majority of respondents live within the Forest and were interviewed near to locations close to their homes. In several respects such as age, ethnic origin and long term/illness, the sample closely mirrors results from the latest census.

However, the sample does appear to over-represent retired people and under-represent those people in employment. Therefore, it should be noted that the 2007 (and also 2005) results may be skewed slightly towards the thoughts and feelings of retired people.

In general, the methodology and techniques used in the 2007 survey were broadly successful in delivering the goal of accessing a fair and representative cross section of the wider Forest population.

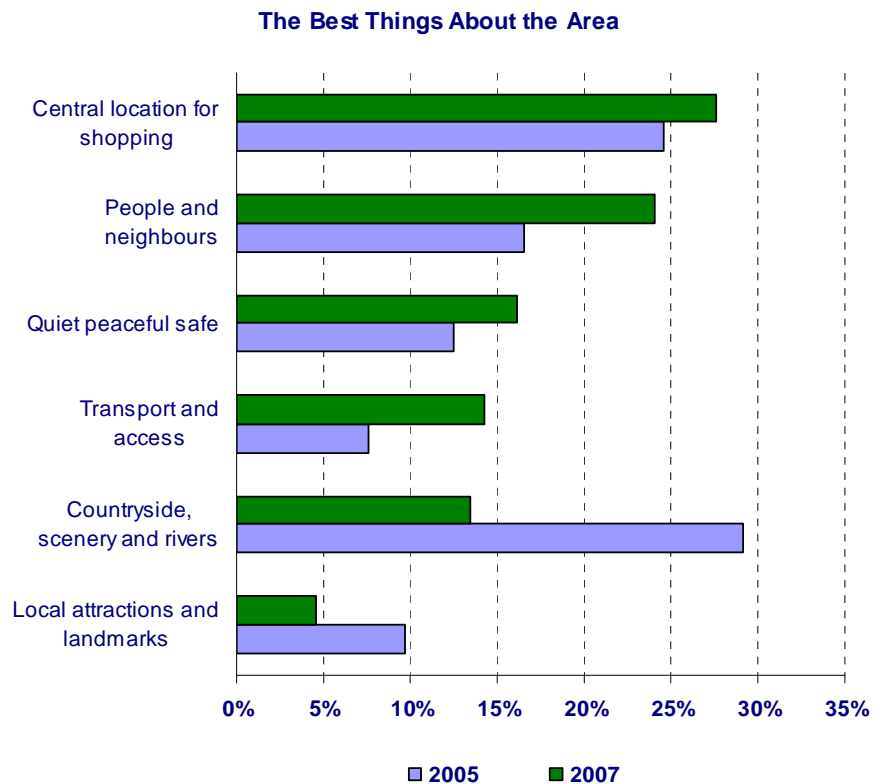
## 3. General Findings

The initial part of the survey explored a number of broad topics. Several of the questions were relatively open ended and structured to allow respondents to elaborate fully on the themes being discussed. To aid analysis and interpretation, these qualitative responses have been grouped together under several broad headings.

### The Best Things About the Area

There was a rich variety of responses to this question. However, as in the 2005 benchmark survey, most comments in 2007 could be grouped into one of six categories. Top of the list in 2007 was the *central location of the area* for facilities such as shops. Also highly valued were several positive aspects relating to the local community such as *people and neighbours* and the area being *quiet, peaceful & safe*.

Chart 3.1



The main difference between these responses and the previous survey was that in 2005 the most frequently cited response (29%) was an appreciation of the *countryside, scenery and rivers*. However, in 2007 only 13% of replies were within this category.

It is difficult to say why there was such a marked variation in this particular response between the two surveys. It could be, for example, that the areas surveyed in 2007 were less endowed with attractive *countryside, scenery and rivers* than the 2005 sample sites. However, a cursory comparison of the survey areas using maps does not support this idea. It is also possible that, due to a random coincidence, the respondents in 2005 were generally more interested in their natural environment than in 2007. However, maybe a more likely explanation is that the respondents in 2005 were affected by interviewer bias. For example, perhaps the interviewers from 2005 presented a more glowing introduction of the aims and ambitions of the Trust in their introductory pitch to the potential respondent; therefore affecting later answers.

Unfortunately, such ideas regarding the reasons behind the different responses remain conjecture. Clarity over the issue will best be gained from building up a more comprehensive body of attitude and perception research. This will help to iron out the effects of interviewer bias and the role of specific interview sites.

It was apparent that there were differences by age group, with older residents generally more appreciative of the local environment for being *quiet* and having *good facilities and shops* than younger people. In marked contrast, young people tended to be more negative. In fact, the top answer for young people was that they liked *nothing* about the area. Despite these variations, all age groups placed *local people & neighbours* as important positive aspects of their local area.

**The Worst Things About the Area**

The most frequently cited worst thing about the area in both 2005 and 2007 was considered to be the *lack of suitable facilities*; in particular the respondents mentioned the *lack of things for people to do*, especially for younger people. Furthermore, several respondents indicated that there was a direct link between this aspect of their local area and anti-social activity:

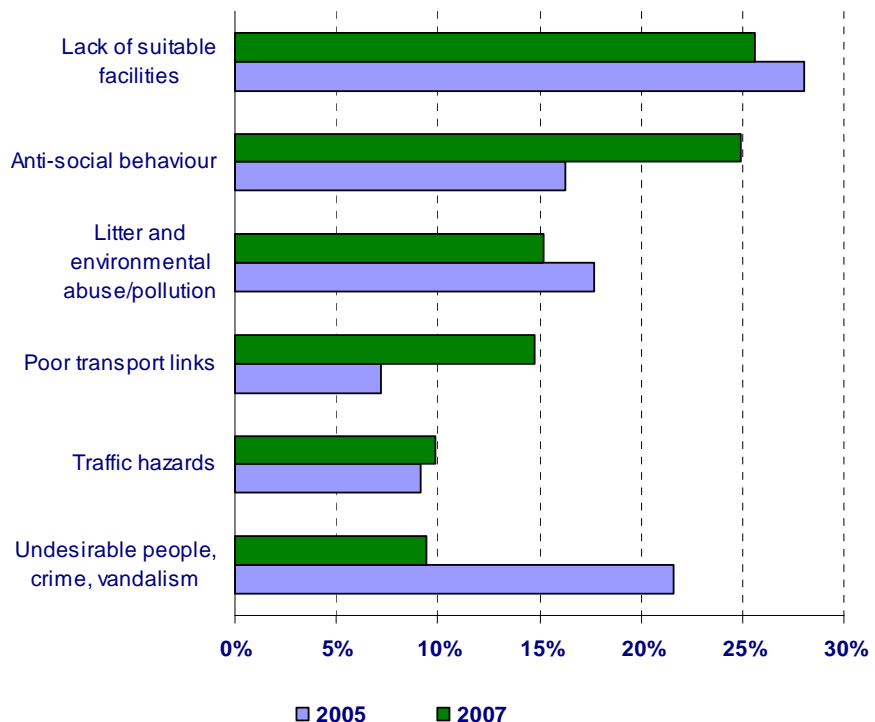
*There's nothing for them to do but get into mischief and trouble.*

Other facilities lacking locally were considered to be *health care centres* and *schools*.

The presence of *anti-social behaviour* was mentioned by around one quarter of the sample. This was a higher proportion than recorded in 2005. Other concerns mentioned included *litter and environmental abuse* (particularly *graffiti*) and also *poor transport links*.

**Chart 3.2**

**The Worst Things About the Area**



There was little marked difference between the sample areas although there was some evidence that North Lanarkshire residents were most upset by *drug taking* and *drinking behaviour*. Falkirk residents were most concerned about *graffiti* and West Lothian respondents were concerned that there was *not enough 'stuff' for young people to do* locally.

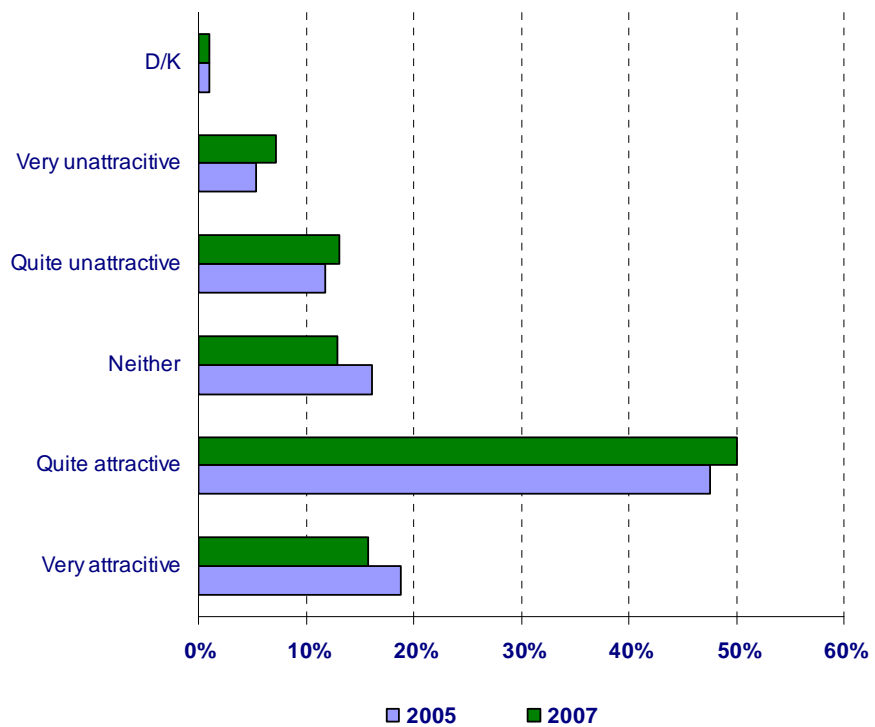
In terms of difference by gender, it is firstly interesting to note that this question was answered in greater depth by women than men. Whereas men most often provided just one example of things they did not like about the area, women were able to provide several. However, with the exception of more concerns being expressed for *lack of shops, schools and health centres* by women, there was little difference between the sexes in the variety of responses to this question.

In other respects, results showed little or no difference by age band and health.

**Perceived Attractiveness of the Area**

Across the Central Scotland Forest area in 2007, two thirds of respondents considered the area in which they were interviewed to be attractive – this was exactly the same as in 2005. Around one in ten people held a neutral opinion, whilst the remaining fifth considered the area to be unattractive.

**Chart 3.3** Perceived Attractiveness of the Area



Again, younger people tended to be more negative than older ones and were less likely to consider their local area as attractive. Only 5 out of 10 people aged between 16 and 29 years thought their area attractive, compared to 7 out of 10 for both the other age groups.

There is also evidence to indicate that perceptions varied across the Forest’s Local Authorities. For example, in North Lanarkshire only 56% of the people said their local area was attractive, compared to 71% of the respondents from Falkirk.

### **The Best and Worst Things Summary**

The majority of people feel their area is an attractive place. However, there were variations within the sample. For example, younger people and North Lanarkshire residents tended to be more negative about this idea than older people and those in Falkirk.

Although the top of the list in terms of what people like about the area was shopping facilities the next two things mentioned were much more community related themes. Respondents identified that it's not just infrastructure and service provision which makes somewhere a good place to live; people and their behaviour also play a key role. Neighbourhoods in which residents are friendly, quiet and respectful are highly valued.

When considering the worst things about their area, residents focused on a number of things. In some respects this was an inverse copy of the 'best things' responses. For example, the most frequently cited answer was a lack of facilities. However, this time it was not so much shopping but lack of local amenities for people (especially younger ones) which was the focus.

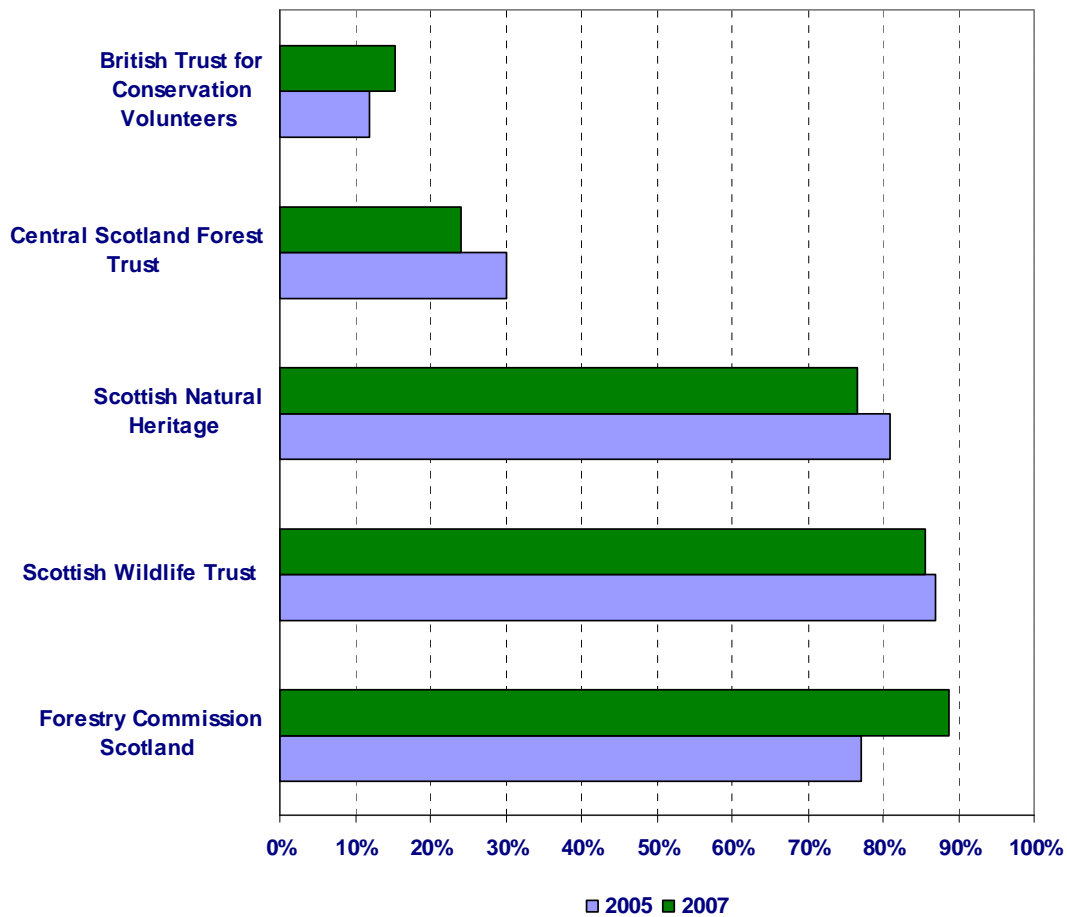
Furthermore, it was the perception of many residents that the apparent scarcity of suitable facilities was one of the contributing causes behind some of the worse aspects about the area such as anti-social behaviour and environmental abuse.

### Awareness of Organisations

As shown in the chart below, in 2007 the majority of respondents had heard of *Forestry Commission Scotland*, *Scottish Wildlife Trust* and *Scottish Natural Heritage*. A much lower proportion had heard of *Central Scotland Forest Trust* (24%) but this figure was higher than the *British Trust Conservation Volunteers* (15%). These results are very similar to those recorded in 2005.

If extrapolated onto the wider population, these results indicate that around 144,000 Forest residents have heard about the Trust. However, such figures should be used with caution as the survey question could easily be mis-interpreted by the respondent. It is recommended that more in depth qualitative research is undertaken to specifically address the effectiveness of CSFT marketing activity in raising the profile of the Trust amongst the local population.

Chart 3.4 Awareness of Organisations

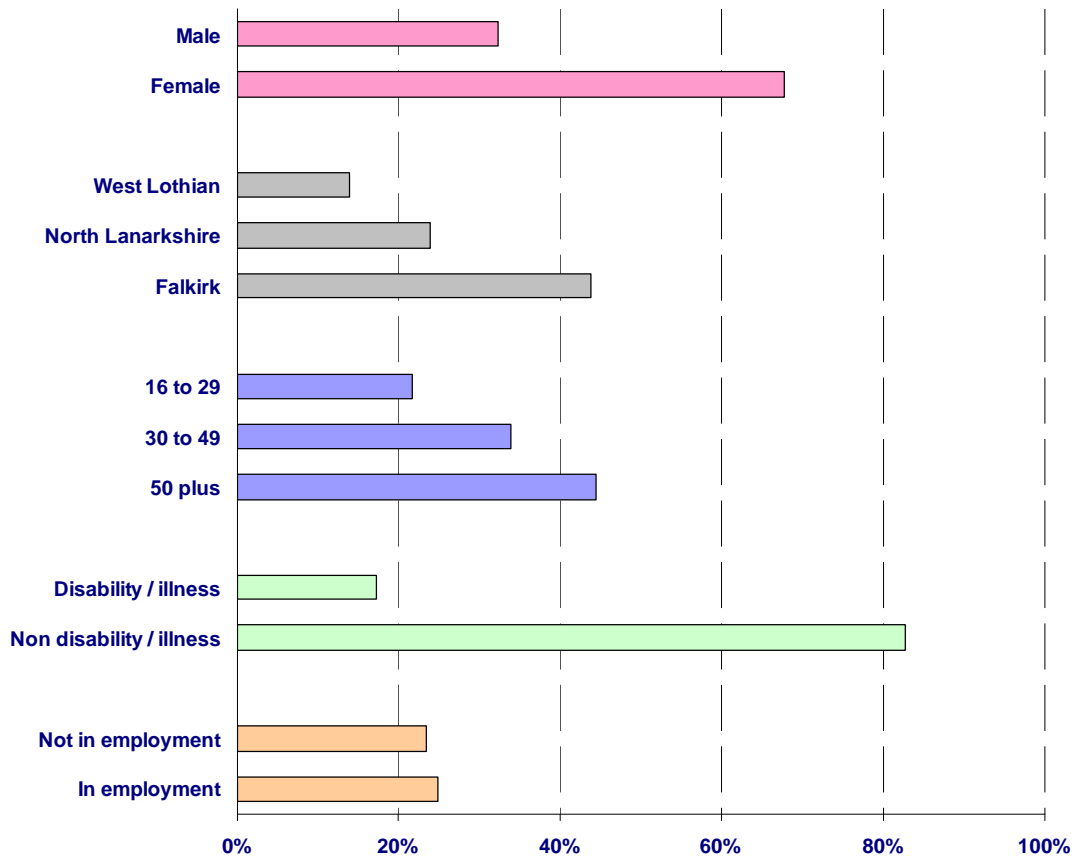


As shown in Chart 3.5 below, there were some variations to these figures across the different geographies and person types. It was interesting that these results were consistent across the different organisations listed. For example, a much greater proportion of females had heard of *Forestry Commission Scotland*, *Scottish Wildlife Trust*, *Scottish Natural Heritage*, *British Trust Conservation Volunteers* and the *Central Scotland Forest Trust*.

Results were not available for all geographic local authorities due to statistical reliability thresholds. However, it does appear that a higher proportion of Falkirk respondents had heard of the Trust than West Lothian residents. This may well, in part, be due to the effect of HELIX promotional activity carried out during the survey period.

More women than men were aware of the Trust and those who were disabled or long term sick were much less aware of CSFT than those without health problems. Also the younger the respondent was, the less likely that he or she was to have heard of the Trust, this is consistent with the benchmark 2005 survey. There was no difference by employment status.

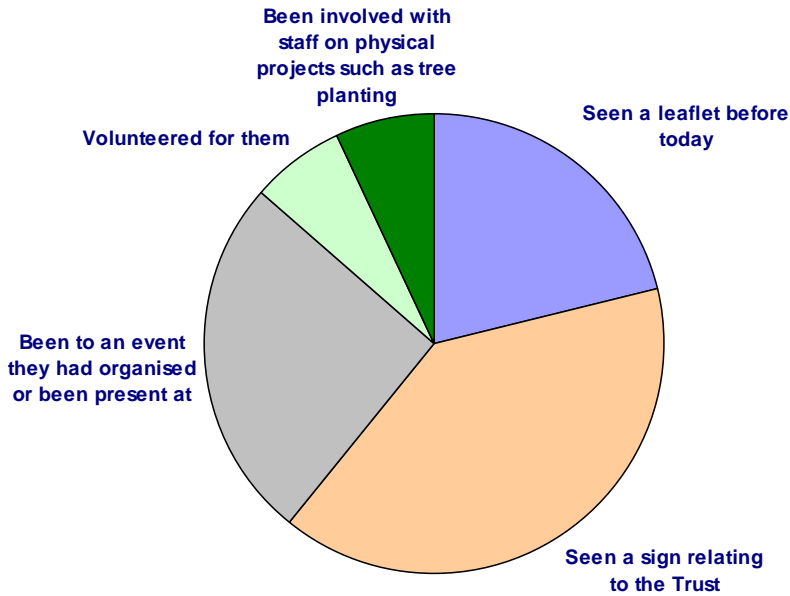
**Chart 3.5 Awareness of CSFT by Geography & Person Type in 2007**



As shown in Chart 3.6 below, for the relatively small proportion of people who had heard of the Trust, the majority (two fifths) of them had *seen a sign* adjacent to an area of land. The second most popular response (just over one quarter) was that they had *been to* an event. This was closely followed by those who had *seen a leaflet*.

Chart 3.6

### Method of CSFT Awareness



#### Awareness Summary

A quarter of people had heard of CSFT, this was much lower than that for the other environmental organisations listed, in fact, over three quarters of people had heard of FCS, SWT and SNH.

It appears that CSFT is more widely known amongst some people than others. For example, as a rough generalisation, those most aware of the Forest are physically fit females who are over 50 years old and resident within Falkirk. Whereas, young males suffering from a disability/long term illness living in West Lothian are least likely to be aware of the Trust.

Visual methods, particularly signs and leaflets were the main methods that people have become aware of CSFT, also attendance at CSFT events was also important in this respect.

However, it should be noted that due to the subtle complexity and importance of this issue, the results should be used with caution. It is recommended that further research should be undertaken to explore the subject in greater depth.

### Perceptions of the Concept of the Central Scotland Forest Trust

By far the most commonly expressed opinion of the Central Scotland Forest Trust, was the idea that the organisation *maintains gardens, forests and parks*. This is consistent across age groups, gender, geographic locality and health.

Common ideas expressed included:

*They look after the forests and parks in this area and try to attract families to them.*

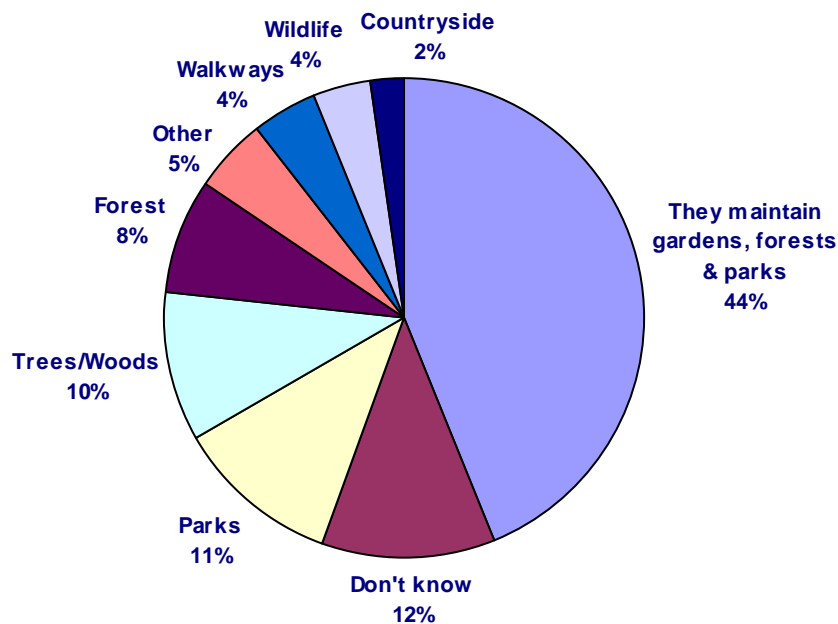
Also,

*They look after and maintain woods, parks in this area.*

And even,

*It looks after green forest places, gardens, parks. It's like the National Trust maintenance division.*

**Chart 3.7 Perceptions of the Central Scotland Forest Trust**



However, it should be noted that many people had no real concept of what the Central Scotland Forest Trust is about and the second most popular answer was *don't know*.

A perception held by many was that the Central Scotland Forest Trust was exclusively related to trees. Several respondents thought it was part of The Forestry Commission. The comment, *'it's a branch of Forestry Commission'* was even used. However, a small proportion of other respondents had a much more accurate idea about CSFT, particularly its role in providing habitats for wildlife.

*It means a lot for Scotland; it keeps its heritage since there used to be lots of forests and trees. They look after the trees and bird species nesting in the trees.*

Several people focussed upon the role of the Trust in facilitating the Forest and proving a place for physical activity. For example:

*... an organisation that provides open spaces for people to enjoy.*

And

*They do a great job... encourages people to get out and about in parks and forests more.*

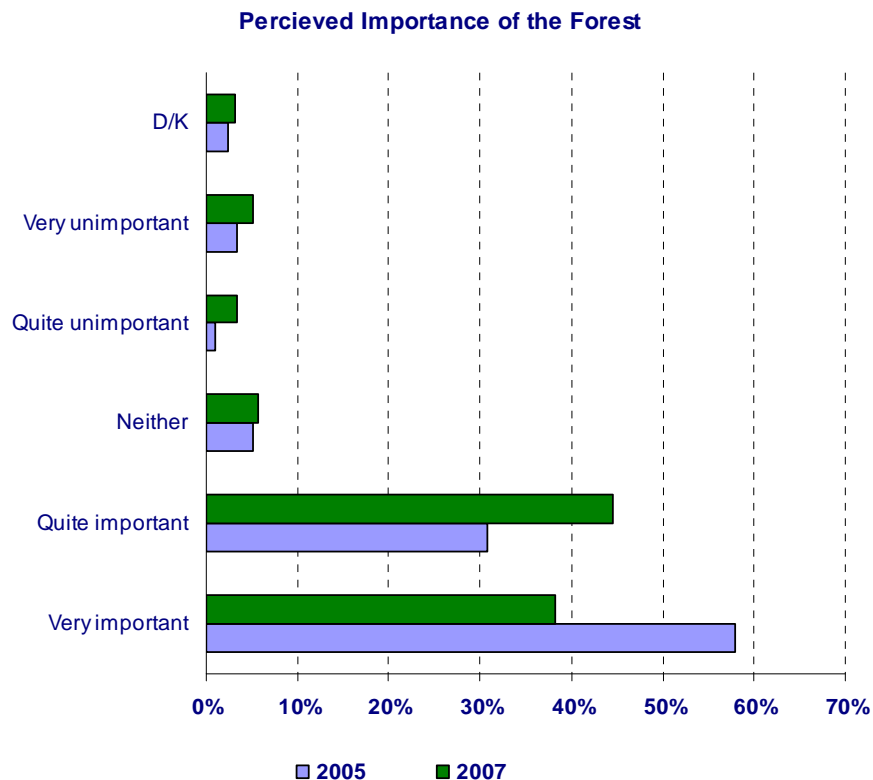
It is also recognised that responses to this question were not all positive, and many people used the question to focus on other issues for example:

*We need more things than just a forest. More police and jobs.*

### The Perceived Importance of the Central Scotland Forest

Eight out of ten people, when given a description of the Central Scotland Forest, described it as important to them and their family. This was similar to findings from 2005, although a larger proportion of people classed it as being *very important* in the previous survey.

Chart 3.8



Although this perceived importance peaks among older age groups, it is interesting to note that one in eight young people think that the Forest is important to them. Several respondents were able to articulate as to exactly why they feel the Forest is important.

*I don't know what we would do without these forests and parks and beautiful scenery and nice and peaceful places.*

Similar to the 2005 findings, considerations of the importance of the Central Scotland Forest are clustered around both personal opportunities for recreation:

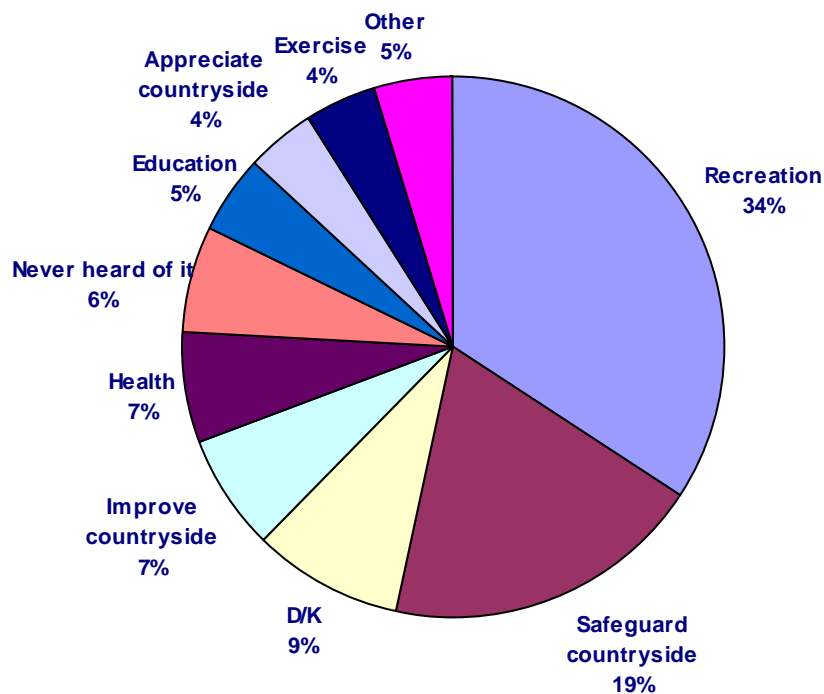
*To provide somewhere for the public to go and enjoy themselves without spending a lot of money.*

and also environmental preservation:

*Imperative to keep green areas. Seems a lot of house building is taking over green areas.*

These reasons are grouped together in Chart 3.9 below.

**Chart 3.9** **Reasons for Importance**



Within this broad picture the role that the CSFT plays was clearly recognised by several respondents:

*We need organisations to take an interest in making people aware of it and let you know you can use it.*

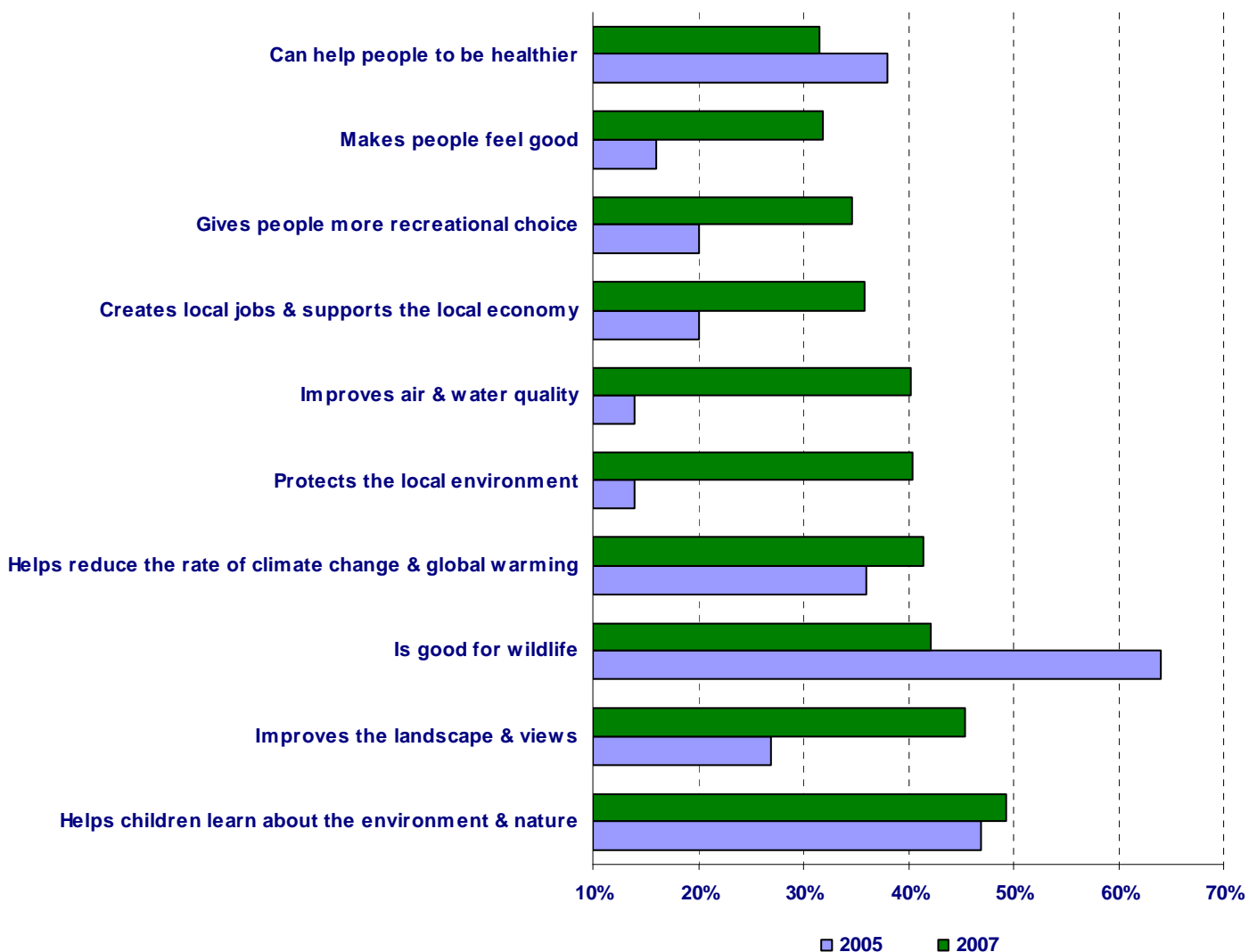
*It's important for our community that we have nice parks and forests to enjoy. People should appreciate what's in their backyard more and utilise parks, forests etc. as much as they can.*

### The Most Important Benefits Of The Forest To Respondents

A list of ten predefined statements was read out to the respondents detailing potential CSF benefits. All statements were seen as being an important by at least one third of people. However in 2007, the most important aspect of the Forest was considered to be its role in *helping children to learn about the environment & nature*. This was closely followed by *improving the landscape & views* and also being *good for wildlife*.

Around two fifths of respondents also cited the strong environmental aspects of the Forest as being key factors, especially its role in *reducing the rate of climate change, protection of the environment and improving air & water quality*.

**Chart 3.10 The Most Important Benefits of The Forest**



Although the question was asked slightly differently in 2005, the results are comparable. For example, two of the top three 2007 characteristics (*good for wildlife* and *helps children to learn about the environment & nature*) were also seen as the two most important roles in the 2005 survey.

However, there were also some differences between the two surveys. A higher proportion of respondents in 2007 considered the *protection of the local environment, improvement of air & water quality* and *making people feel good* to be of key importance than in 2005.

### **Perceptions About The Forest and It's Importance Summary**

Although one quarter of people were aware of the Trust, there was little evidence that these people had an accurate idea as to what CSFT is and does. Most people thought that the Trust is some form of grounds maintenance organisation, possibly working for another body such as *'The Council'* or *'National Trust'*. The second most popular answer was that people didn't know what the Trust was and a common misconception was that the Trust was purely concerned with trees.

When presented a description of the Trust and its remit to deliver the Forest, the overwhelming majority of people said it was important to them. The main reason behind this positive view was as a location where recreational activity (such as walking and cycling) could take place. The second most popular reason for importance was considered to be the Trust's role in safeguarding the existing countryside from developments such as housing.

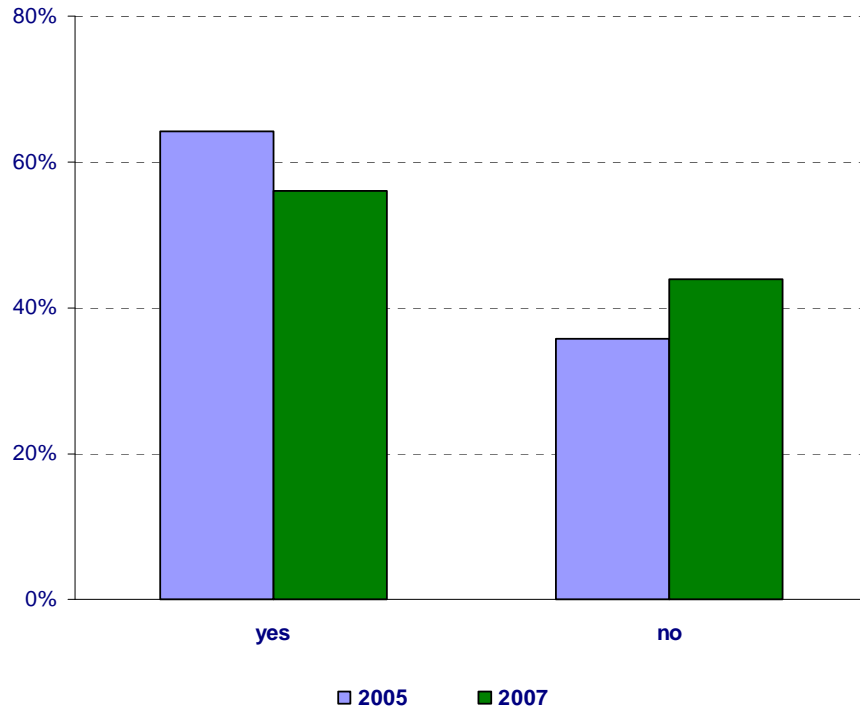
In a predefined list of benefits, the educational opportunities that the Forest provides was considered to be of greatest importance. This was closely followed by the improvement of the landscape and the provision of a suitable habitat for wildlife. However, it should be noted that all ten benefits were considered to be important by over one third of the sample. This underlines the fact that respondents recognised that the Forest provides a wide variety of benefits covering a number of diverse themes.

### The Incidence of Walking and Cycling in the Central Scotland Forest

Respondents were asked if they walked or cycled in Central Scotland Forest sites. Chart 3.10 below shows that for both 2005 and 2007, the majority of respondents use the sites for either walking or cycling.

If we extrapolate the 2007 results (56% of sample) onto the wider population,<sup>1</sup> it is possible to estimate that there are around 355,000 people<sup>2</sup> using the CSF sites for either walking or cycling.

**Chart 3.11** Incidence of Walking & Cycling in the Forest



Whilst there was little difference in the incidence of walking/cycling according to gender and geographic location, there *were* differences relating to age. Whereas 58% of those 16 to 29 year olds and 66% of those aged 30 to 49 indicated that they went walking and/or cycling in Central Scotland Forest sites, this percentage dropped to 47% for those aged 50 plus.

It is also interesting to note that two fifths (41%) of the people who describe themselves as having a long term disability, health problem or illness take exercise in CSF sites in this manner. This is opposed to 60% for those without such problems.

A higher proportion of employed people (64%) walk or cycle in the CSF sites than those not in formal employment (48%). However, there was little difference by gender and Local Authority.

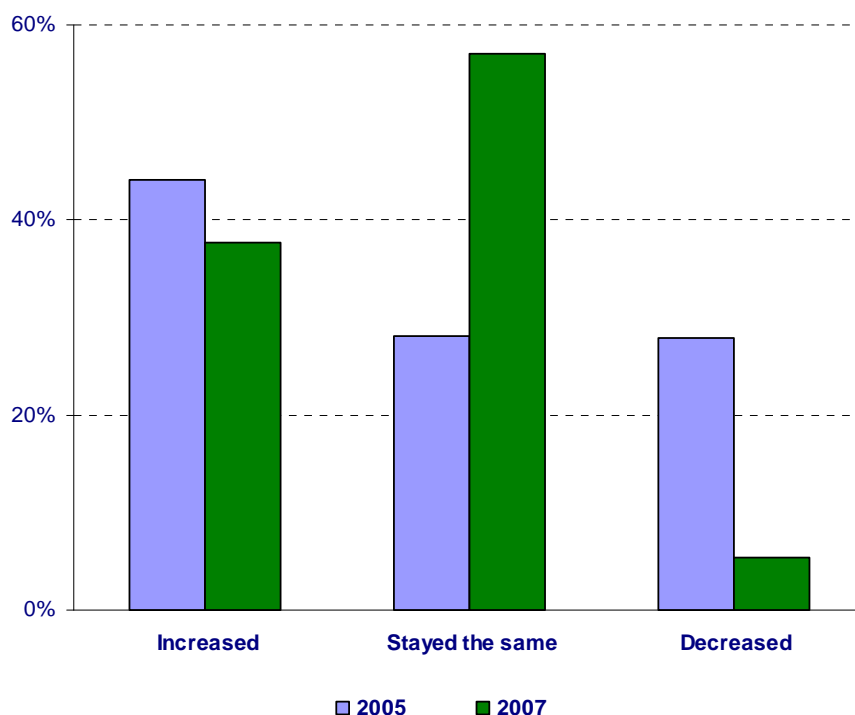
<sup>1</sup> Based on 2006 adult population of 598,000 for those people resident within the Central Scotland Forest Boundary.

<sup>2</sup> As this figure has a margin of error of +/- 4%, the value is estimated to be between 311,000 and 359,000 people.

### The Frequency of Walking and Cycling in the Central Scotland Forest

Using 2007 results, over the last five years the frequency of walking/cycling had increased for around two fifths of respondents, decreased for just 5% and stayed the same for three fifths. This situation compares favourably with the 2005 data which showed a marked decrease in the frequency of people walking and cycling in the CSF sites.

**Chart 3.12** Frequency of Walking & Cycling in the Forest



Although there is little variance of results as regards gender and disability, it appears that younger people have become much more active over the last 5 years. Well over half of 16 to 29 year olds have increased their amount of cycling and walking in CSF sites, compared to just one third of people in the other two age groups.

It also appears there is some geographic variation in this data, with nearly half of North Lanarkshire respondents reporting an increase in their frequency of walking compared to less than a third in Falkirk. There was also a slightly higher increase amongst employed people in comparison to those not in formal employment.

#### Reasons for Change

For those respondents who said that they had decreased the amount of walking and cycling, the main reasons appears to be that they felt *too old* and or suffered from an increase in physical *health* problems. The *weather* (or more accurately a perceived lack of dry weather) was also a factor for several residents in this respect.

For the larger proportion who had increased their amount of physical activity, the most frequently cited reason was for fitness and health reasons. In fact three out of ten people said they hoped to gain an improvement in their physical well being from walking or cycling in the CSF sites.

Other answers hinted at a change in personal circumstances within the household such as the addition of a pet or child. For example: *I need to exercise the dog, and it's more for the kids benefit than anything else.*

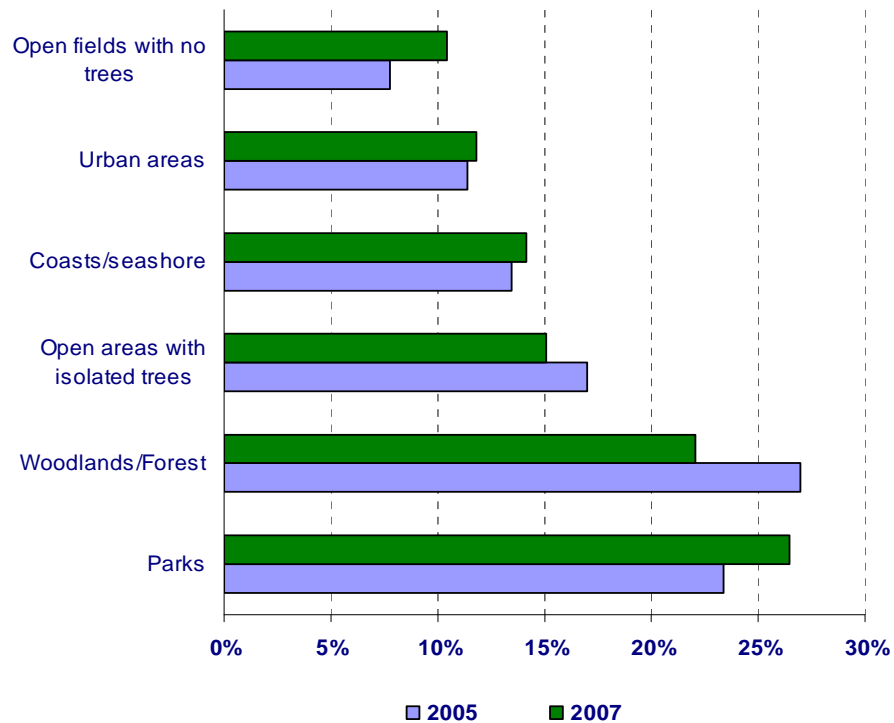
Therefore, as in the 2005 survey, actual changes in the environment itself would appear *not* to have consciously influenced the frequency of cycling/walking.

**The Most Popular Environments for Walking & Cycling**

As shown in Chart 3.12 below, *Parks* and *Woodlands/forest* environments were the most popular places within the Central Scotland Forest for walking and cycling. (More than one location could be specified). This was very similar with the results from the 2005 survey. As there are few parks without trees, it can be concluded that nearly half of all people surveyed like to walk and cycle in places that have trees.

It is also apparent from these results that all the environments mentioned are valued by local residents and there is little difference between the proportions who like to visit *open fields with no trees*, *urban areas*, *coasts* and *open areas with isolated trees*.

**Chart 3.13 The Most Popular Forest Environments For Walking & Cycling**



Apart from a slightly higher proportion of people with disability/limiting long term illness favouring parks, there was very little difference in responses by person characteristics and geographic location.

### **Activity Within the Forest Summary**

Central Scotland Forest sites appear to be a well used resource. Well over half of the sample either walk or cycle within these areas. This means that there are around 355,000 people using CSF sites. This represents a slight decrease of the data recorded for 2005. However, considering just the people within the 2007 sample, it appears that the level of usage has been relatively stable over the last five years. Places which contain trees (Parks and Woodlands/Forest environments) were the most popular locations for walking and cycling within the CSF boundary.

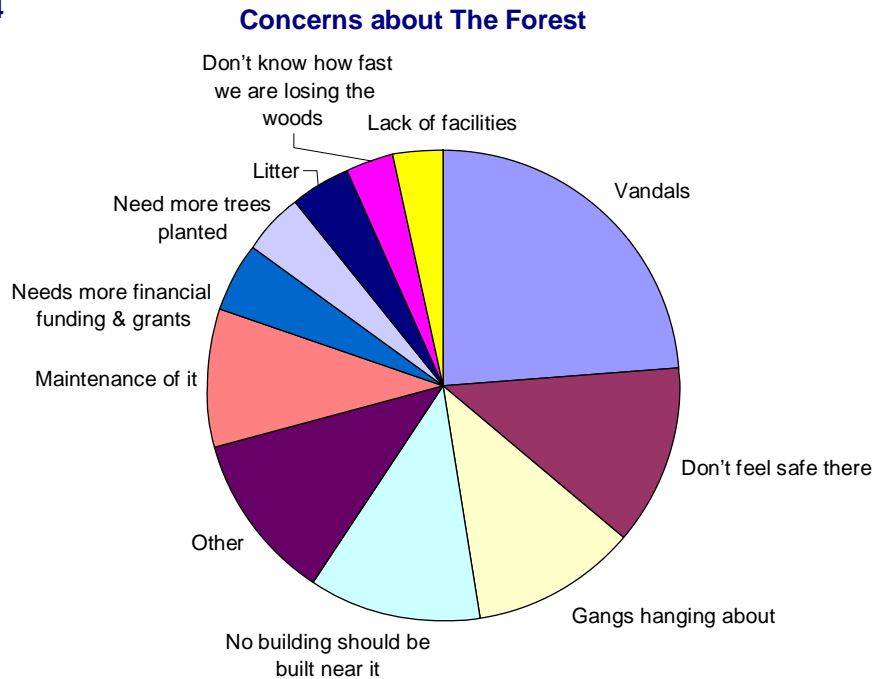
Disabled/long term sick, older residents and unemployed people appear to be less likely to walk and cycle in the Forest than younger ones. However, there appears to be little difference by geographic area and gender.

For those respondents whose level of Forest use had decreased over the last five years, the main reasons tended to be related to deteriorating physical health, age and a perception that the weather has been getting 'worse'. For the larger proportion that had increased their usage, the main reasons cited were related to a desire to get fitter and healthier. So it appears that changes in the local environment itself would appear not to have consciously influenced the frequency of cycling/walking within the Forest.

## Concerns About The Central Scotland Forest

Whilst around one third of respondents had no concerns about the Central Scotland Forest, a number of issues did emerge. These focused largely on activities of other people for example *vandalism, intimidation* and *safety* concerns.

Chart 3.14



There was little variation within the sample regarding employment status, gender, geographic location and disability/illness. However, a higher proportion of older respondents cited concerns over the *loss of The Forest due to housing developments* than younger ones.

## Forest Suggestions

Throughout the survey, respondents were encouraged to comment on how they would like the CSF to develop in the future. In addition, they were specifically asked to suggest future improvements. These have been grouped below under general themes.

### A) Marketing and Events

Several people, especially those who had not heard of it, thought that the Forest could be advertised more and that promotions should be targeted towards children. Other people found the leaflets printed to be too complicated and would prefer a simpler pamphlet than the 'Get Into It' leaflet provided.

*There should be more advertising about it specifically aimed at children.*

*I found their leaflets too complicated with too much details.*

*There should be more advertising of what's on in your area.*

*Advertise it more and encourage people to go out to it.*

On a linked subject, some residents were keen to see more local events promoting the Forest directed towards different sections of the community.

*Plenty of outdoor events in the Summer especially during school holidays.*

*Perhaps try to attract more elderly people in for events in parks with special events for them. Lay on transport or volunteers to take them out, it would be good for community bonding.*

## **B) Including Young People**

Many of the respondents (both young and old) focused upon young people and the provision of spaces and activities in the Forest for them. Older residents tended to present a negative view.

*Too many young kids not interested and lazy. Getting them healthier would be good. Going to these venues would cut out crime and give them an interest.*

*Making more links into schools may encourage young folk to get involved.*

*Maybe any approach promoting wildlife and plants would appeal to a younger audience and they'd get interested more.*

## **C) Opportunities for Voluntary Work**

It was clear that many respondents saw the Forest as an environment where people could volunteer for work and that such activities might well be beneficial for participants. Typical suggestions included:

*More teenagers and unemployed should be made to do voluntary work for these types of organisations in my view and keep them out of trouble.*

*Maybe young people should do something positive with their lives and stop causing bother for both their parents and the community.*

However, it wasn't just young people; some respondents suggested that *elderly* and *unemployed* people could benefit from undertaking voluntary work for the Forest. Other people would like to see the development of clubs in the Forest through volunteering activity.

*Would like to see more local volunteering organisations to run clubs and that.*

## **D) Actions to Stop Vandalism**

As noted elsewhere in the survey, vandalism is a key issue for many respondents. Several people were obviously appalled by the behaviour of vandals and forwarded some challenging solutions to the problem touching upon issues of accountability and retribution.

*Make those responsible for vandalism & graffiti in parks pay for their trouble making*

*Vandals spoil things for other people, make them pay for the damage*

*Crack down heavier on vandalism, they get off far too lightly when caught*

Other respondents were maybe more pragmatic in the solutions suggested:

*Helpline telephone numbers where people could report areas of vandalism, graffiti and crime in parks would help.*

*More security. Have them [Forest sites] patrolled more to stop vandalism*

## E) Family Use

Several respondents were keen to see an increase in park usage by traditional family groups. In some respects, it appears that this was in response to the activities of other users of the Forest (such as teenagers and gangs) which older respondents view less positively.

*Parks should be used more by families.*

*I'd like to see more people using these facilities, especially as a full family out together.*

*Why don't they get people involved with more community and family things?*

## F) Safeguard Against Housing

There appears to be a perception amongst Forest residents that areas of recreational greenspace are being 'lost' due to housing developments. Furthermore, many people feel that one of the roles of the Forest is to keep such developments in check.

*Hold onto green belt, stop selling land and have more picnic areas.*

*Protect it [the Forest] from builders. I'd like to see more of them trees instead of houses.*

*It needs more trees locally in this housing area.*

Other comments collected in the survey included:

*Just keep it full of animals and plants. Bring different animals here like bears.*

*More access for wheel chairs.*

*Have more cycle paths and keep them well repaired.*

*Encourage farmers to be more environmental friendly.*

*More control of smoke pollution from Grangemouth chemical plants.*

*Just like to say how good a job they do, under the financial constraints they have.*

## Concerns & Suggestions Summary

Around one third of respondents had no concerns about the Forest. However, those who did express a concern, focused largely upon anti-social activities of other people. In particular, vandalism, intimidation and safety concerns.

The survey was successful in gathering a range of suggestions for the future development of the Forest. These included an expansion of marketing and events activity, and increased inclusion of young people in Forest projects. The potential of the Forest for voluntary work was also suggested as a possible area for growth.

People were also keen to see more families using the Forest sites and less anti-social behaviour and evidence of misuse such as vandalism. Lastly, the role of the Forest as a protector and champion of green space was focussed upon. In particular, people would like to see it continue to safeguard natural recreational areas for present and future generations.

## 4. Attitude & Behaviour Statements

A series of questions were asked to provide a succinct understanding as to how each respondent felt about a number of themes and issues. A scale was used to assess the level of agreement/disagreement with each statement. In this report, collated answers to each statement have been grouped together under one of six broad sub-headings. A brief summary of findings is presented under each sub-heading.

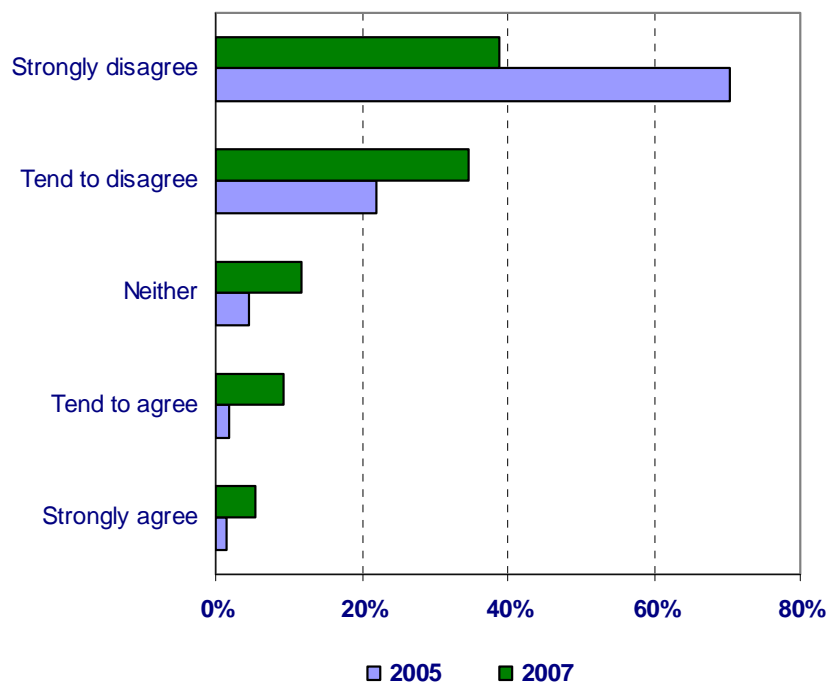
### Environment and Forest residents

#### I Have No Interest In The Environment

Seven out of ten respondents disagreed with this statement. This was less than that recorded in 2005 when nine out of ten respondents disagreed.

Chart 4.1

#### I Have No Interest In The Environment



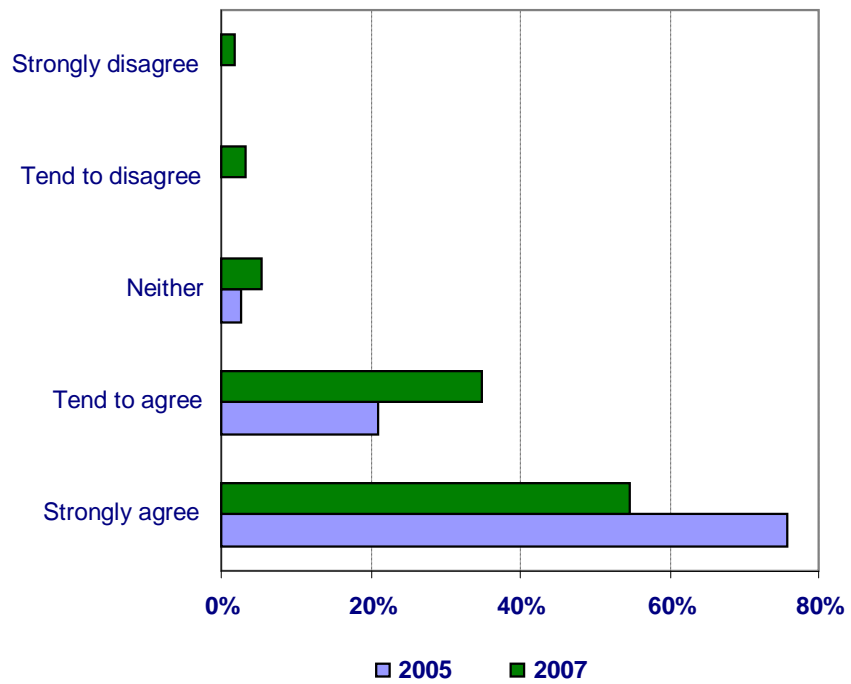
The results were similar across all the person types in the Forest.

### I Think Trees And Woodlands Improve The Landscape

Nine out of ten people agree with this statement. This is similar to results from 2005. However, in 2005 a greater proportion of people *strongly agreed* with the statement than in 2007.

Chart 4.2

### I Think Trees & Woodland Improve The Landscape



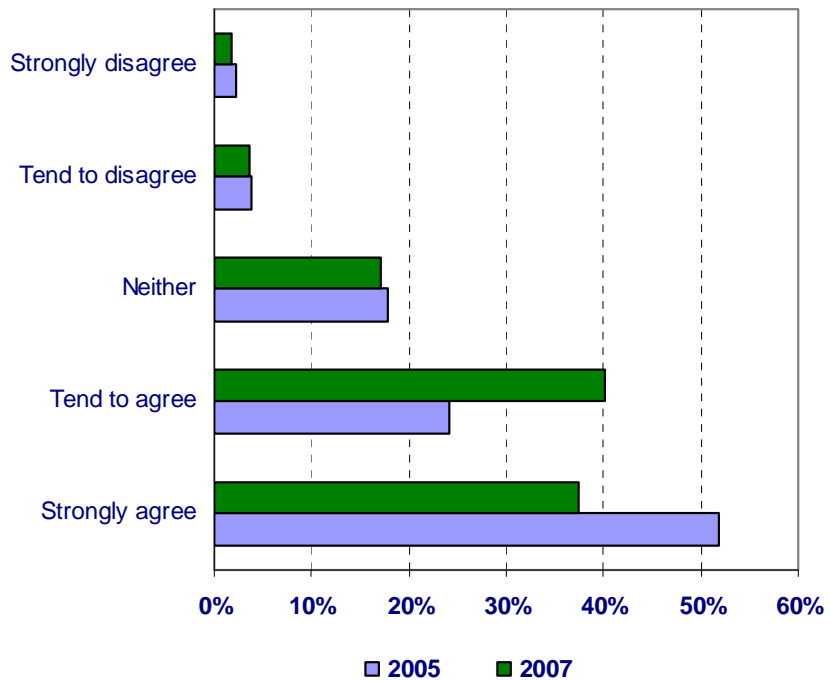
The results were similar across all the person types in the Forest.

### I Think It Is More Important To Plant Broadleaf/Deciduous Trees Than Conifers

Eight out of ten people agreed with this statement. This is similar to that recorded in 2005.

Chart 4.3

#### I Think It Is More Important To Plant Broadleaf/Deciduous Trees Than Conifers

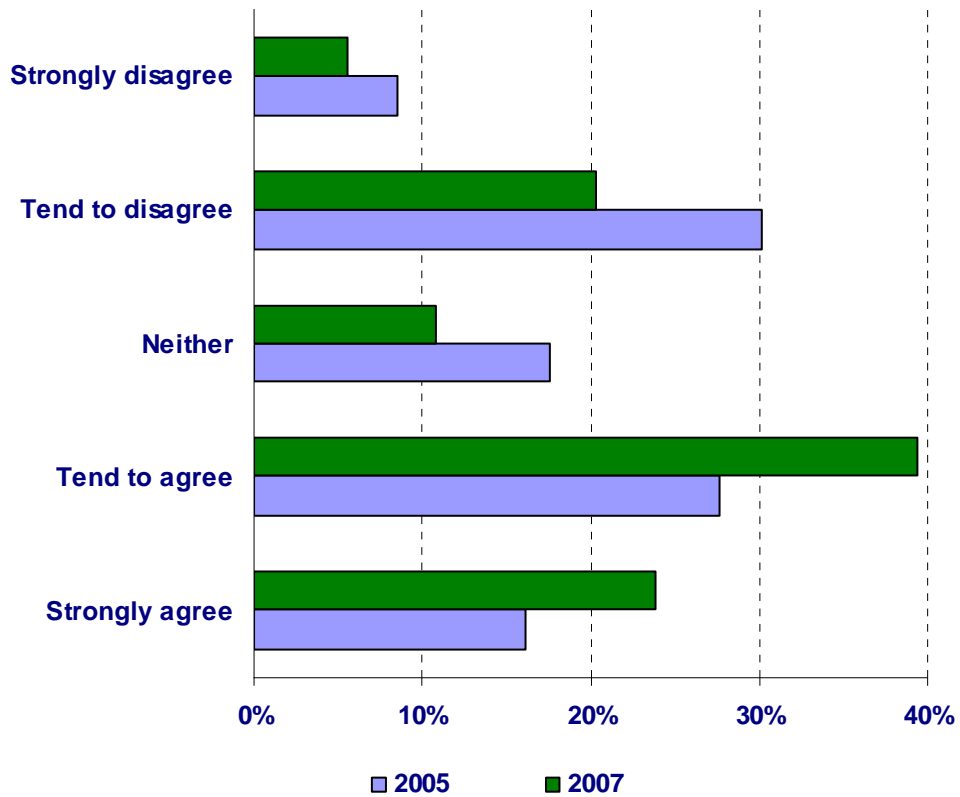


The results were similar across all the person types in the Forest.

### The Environment In This Area Is Of Poor Quality And In Need Of Improvement

As seen in the chart overleaf, in 2007, 63% agreed with this statement and 31% disagreed. These results were similar to the previous survey except a lower percentage of people agreed in 2005 – 44%.

**Chart 4.4**                      **The Environment In This Area Is Of Poor Quality  
And In Need Of Improvement**



Answers were generally similar across all areas and person types.

**The Environment and Forest Residents Summary**

It is clear that the majority of Forest residents are interested in the local environment and it is important to them. Furthermore, an overwhelming proportion of people think that trees and woodlands are valuable assets in the improvement and enhancement of the local landscape. In this respect, local people think that broadleaf trees are of higher value and importance than coniferous varieties.

For each of these statements there was little or no difference in answers by person type. This shows that views regarding the environment and local forests are relatively homogenous between peoples of different gender, health, age, employment status and location.

There was a mixed reaction to the statement: *the environment in this area is of poor quality and in need of improvement*. Almost equal proportions agreed and disagreed with the comment. The cross-tabulations by age group, employment status and illness/disability also revealed no variations in answer type. Furthermore, there was very little variation in the responses by geographic area. It is therefore likely that there is another reason(s) as to why different people feel differently about this statement.

This is a key finding from the study and possibly worthy of more in depth research. If attitudes towards the local environment are not related to variables such as age or geographic location, what are they related to and what role can the CSFT play in influencing these attitudes?

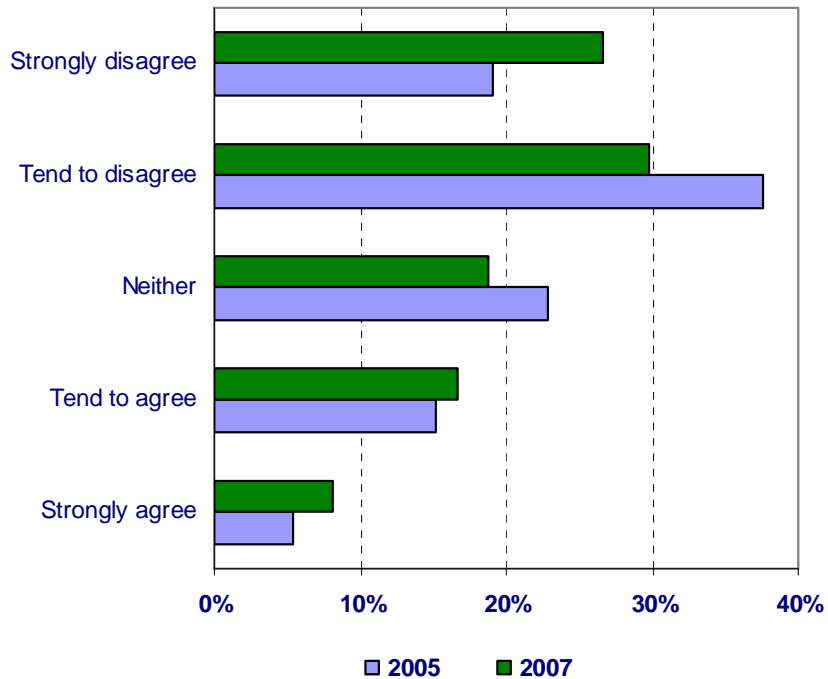
## Safety in The Forest

### I Don't Feel Safe Being In The Forest

The majority of people (56%) disagreed with this statement and a further 19% were neutral. However, one quarter of people did agree and this was a higher figure than that (17%) recorded in 2007.

Chart 4.5

### I Feel Unsafe Being In The Forest



Disaggregated by person type and geographic location the following was revealed:

- A higher proportion of people in West Lothian disagreed
- There was little difference by age band and disability
- A higher proportion of women agreed

Although there were no marked variations by age band, employment status or long term disability/ill health, it appears that views differ across the Forest. 63% of West Lothian's respondents disagreed with the statement, compared with 45% in North Lanarkshire 55% in Falkirk. Also three out of ten females agreed with the statement compared with two out of ten males.

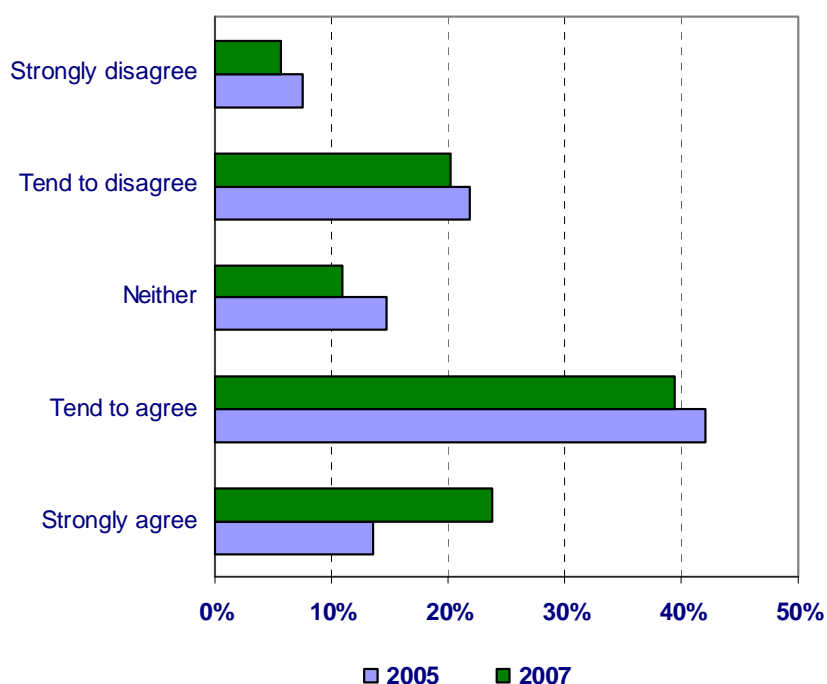
### I Feel Safe Going Out In This Area/Neighbourhood

More people agreed with this statement in 2007 (63%) than in 2005 (56%). Furthermore, nearly one quarter of people strongly agreed with the statement in 2007, compared with just 14% in 2005.

Despite this, in both 2005 and 2007 over one quarter of the sample disagreed with the statement.

Chart 4.6

### I Feel Safe Going Out In This Area/Neighbourhood



Disaggregated by person type and geographic location the following was revealed:

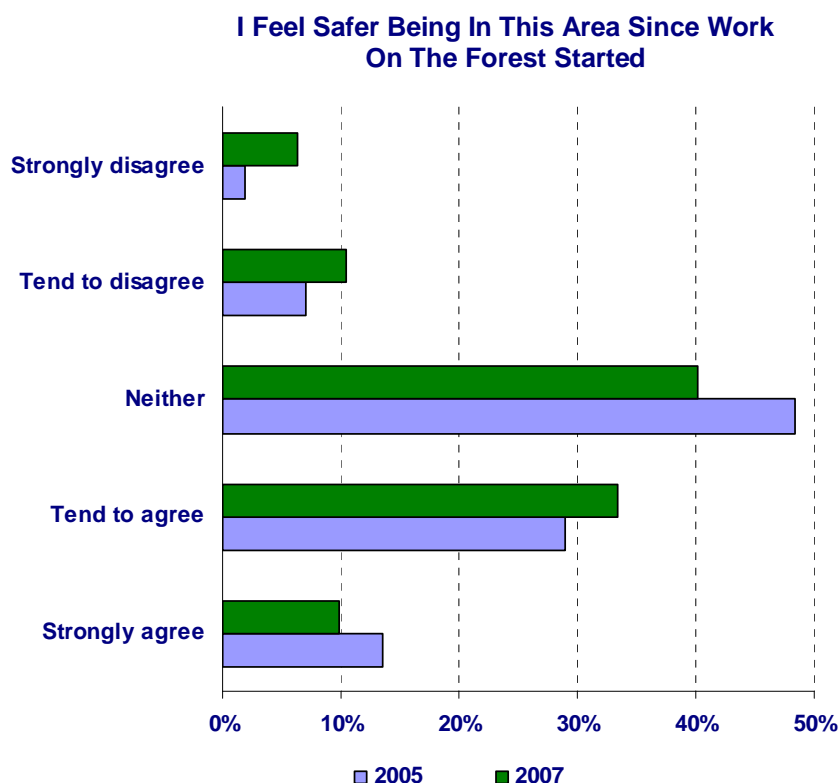
- little difference by age group and employment status
- fewer people with a disability/limiting long term illness agreed
- a lower proportion of females agreed than males
- a lower proportion of North Lanarkshire residents agreed

Although there was little difference in the responses to this statement by age group and employment status, there were some notable variations by geography. The proportion of people who agreed with the statement in North Lanarkshire (57%) was lower than that recorded in other areas such as Falkirk (68%). Similarly, only 60% of females agreed with the statement as opposed to 68% of men and a much lower proportion (23%) of people with a disability/limiting long term illness agreed than others (46%).

### I Feel Safer Being In This Area Since Work On The Forest Started<sup>3</sup>

Four out of ten people agreed with this statement. This is similar to that recorded in the previous survey.

Chart 4.7



Disaggregated by person type and geographic location the following was revealed:

- more employed people agreed
- fewer disabled people agreed
- similar views across age bands and gender
- there were some geographic variations across the Forest

A higher proportion of those people in employment (53%) and those who said they did not have a disability/limiting long term illness (46%) agreed with this statement. There is also an indication that people feel safer in some areas of the Forest than others. For example only 23% of North Lanarkshire respondents agreed with this statement in comparison to 41% of those from Falkirk.

<sup>3</sup> For the purpose of this question the date 1985 was selected as the start date for the Forest due to the establishment of the Central Scotland Countryside Trust in this year.

### **Safety in the Forest Summary**

Although over half of the people interviewed feel safe in the Forest and feel safe going out in their neighbourhood, one quarter of the local residents do not. Despite this, the Forest does seem to be having a positive impact on how local people feel in this respect, with two-fifths of people saying that they feel safer in this area since work on the Forest started.

There is a clear pattern which emerges regarding people who feel unsafe and vulnerable in the Forest. In particular, women tended to give a less positive response than men. Similarly, there is evidence to indicate that residents of Falkirk and West Lothian feel safer than those living in other areas such as North Lanarkshire. However, there was comparatively little variation in responses by age group and illness/disability.

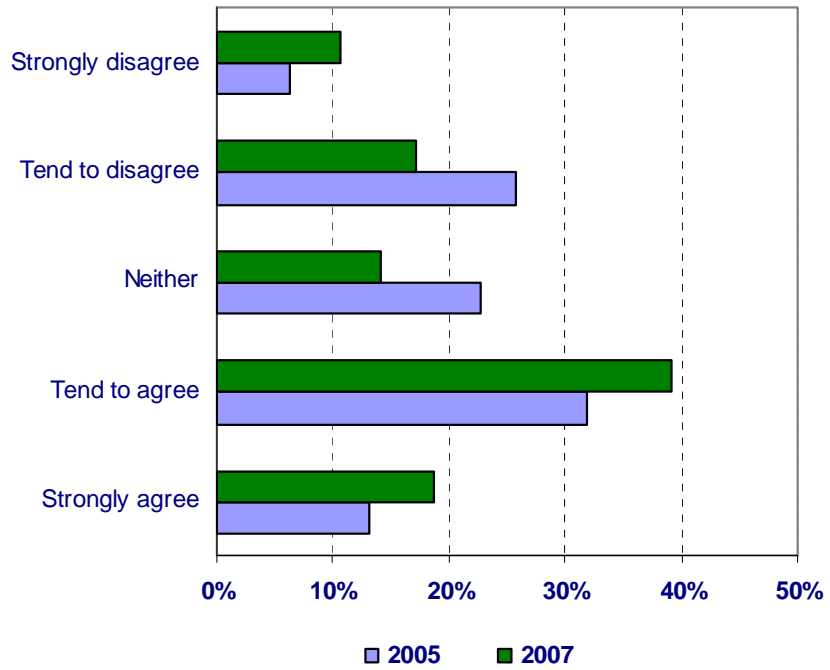
This is obviously an emotive and complex issue and it is recognised that there are many personal reasons as to why one person agrees and another person disagrees with certain statements. However, it is clear that safety is a concern for many residents and people are aware that the local environment plays a key role within this theme.

## The Image of The Forest

### In Overall Terms, This Area Is Not As Good As It Used To Be

A higher percentage (59%) of respondents agreed with this statement in 2007 than in 2005 (45%).

**Chart 4.8** In Overall Terms This Area Is Not As Good As It Used To Be

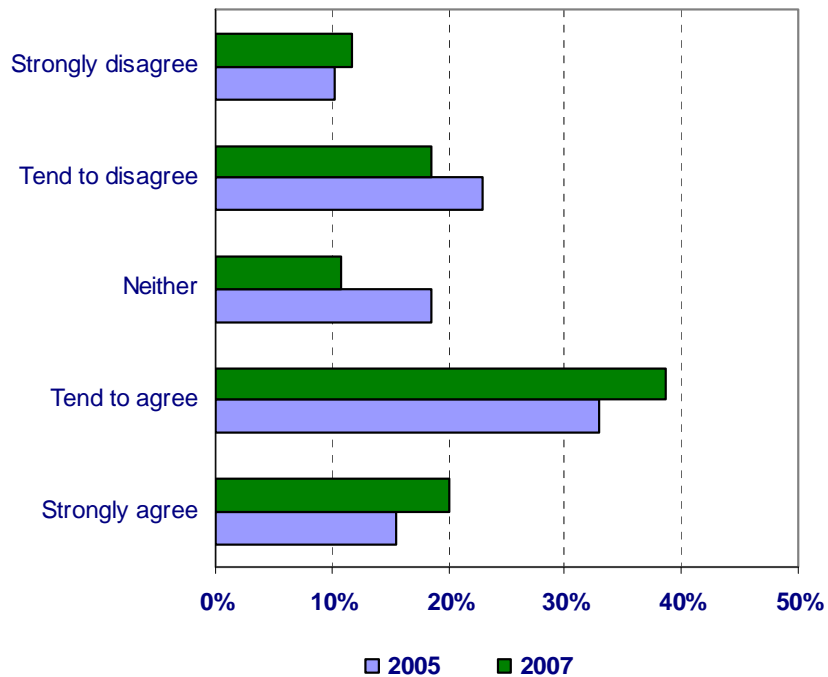


Answers were generally similar across all areas and person types.

### I Feel That The Image Of This Area Has Gone Down In Recent Years

The findings to this question were generally similar to those recorded in 2005. Again, there was a wide spread in responses, and it was notable that more people agreed with the statement than disagreed.

**Chart 4.9** I Feel The Image Of The Area Has Gone Down In Recent Years



Disaggregated by person type and geographic location the following was revealed:

- little difference by gender or employment status
- little difference by disability/limiting long term illness
- fewer younger people agree with this statement than older respondents
- more West Lothian residents disagreed than other areas

Whilst there was little in the way of variations in answers by employment status, gender and disability, there were some marked differences between age groups. Only half of 16 to 29 year olds agreed with the statement, compared to 59% in both the other two age groups.

Again, respondents from West Lothian differed slightly from the rest of the sample. Only half of them agreed with the statement, compared to 59% in North Lanarkshire and 64% in Falkirk.

### **The Image of the Forest Summary**

In terms of the image of The Forest, results are relatively pessimistic in that a higher proportion of respondents agreed with both statements. However, these findings were similar to those from the 2005 survey.

In the analysis of this data it is important to bear in mind two factors: Firstly, the statements are worded negatively, therefore the higher the proportion of respondents who agree with them, the worse they think the image of the area is. Secondly, the statements ask the respondent to think about the past in comparison with the present. Research shows that such questions may well encourage some people (particularly older people) to view the past situation as more favourable.

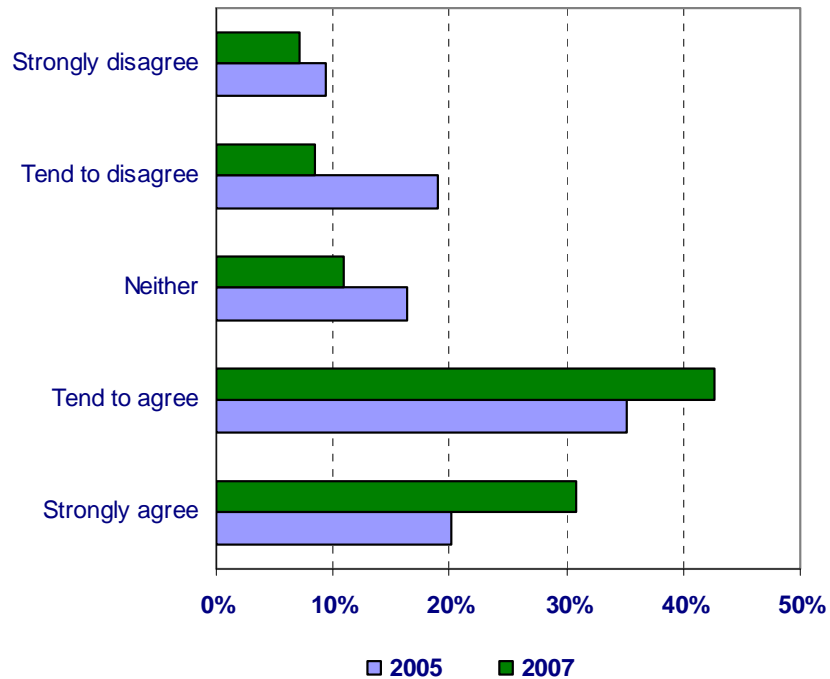
In light of these factors, it is important to treat these findings with caution. A full exploration of this theme would benefit from additional research such as focus groups as well as increasing the dataset with more attitude and perception survey work.

## The Community Forest

### The Area/Neighbourhood Has A Lot Of Community Spirit

Seven out of ten people agreed with this statement. This was much higher than that recorded in 2005 (57%).

**Chart 4.10** The Area/Neighbourhood Has A Lot Of Community Spirit



Disaggregated by person type and geographic location the following was revealed:

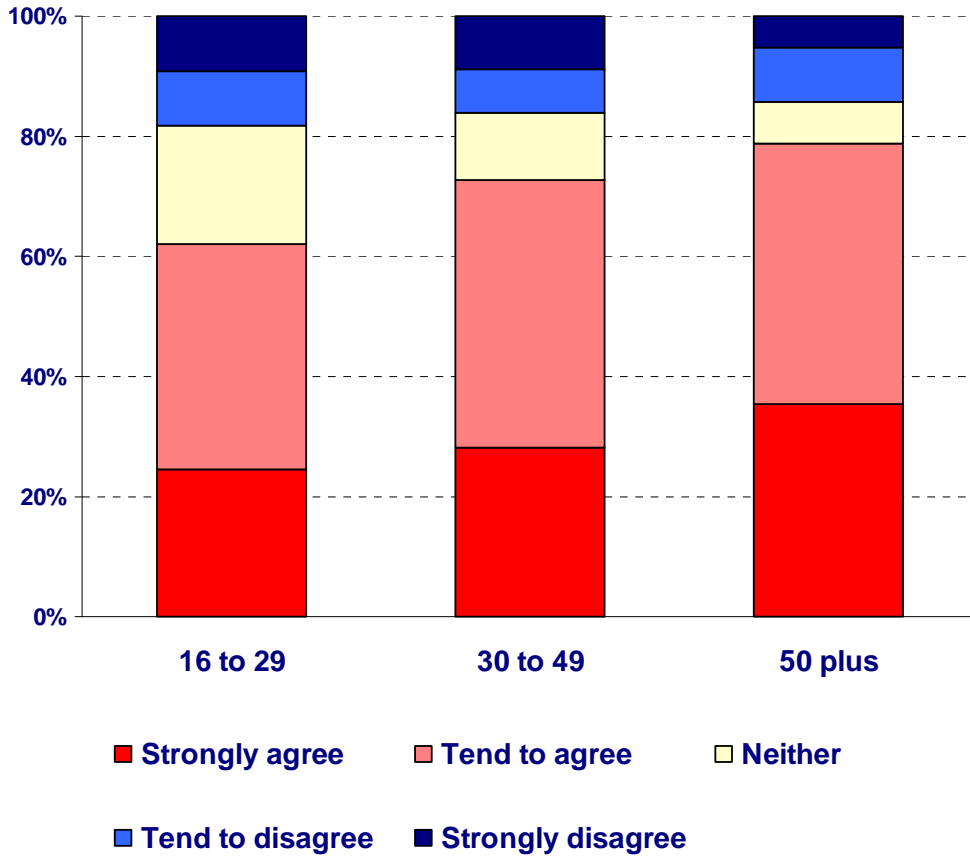
- There were no variations by employment status
- A higher proportion of people in North Lanarkshire agreed
- A higher proportion of disabled/long term sick agreed
- The older the respondent the more likely they were to agree
- A higher proportion of women agreed

There were some variations in responses from these questions. Over 70% of North Lanarkshire respondents agreed, whereas this figure was less than 64% in both West Lothian and Falkirk. Three quarters of those with disabilities agreed and a higher proportion of women (71%) agreed than men (66%).

One of the most interesting aspects regarding answers to this question was a clear relationship between age and agreement with the statement. This is shown clearly in Chart 4.11 below. The basic conclusion from this analysis is: the older the person is, then the more likely they are to think that the local area has a lot of community spirit. Inversely, younger people are less positive in this respect.

Chart 4.11

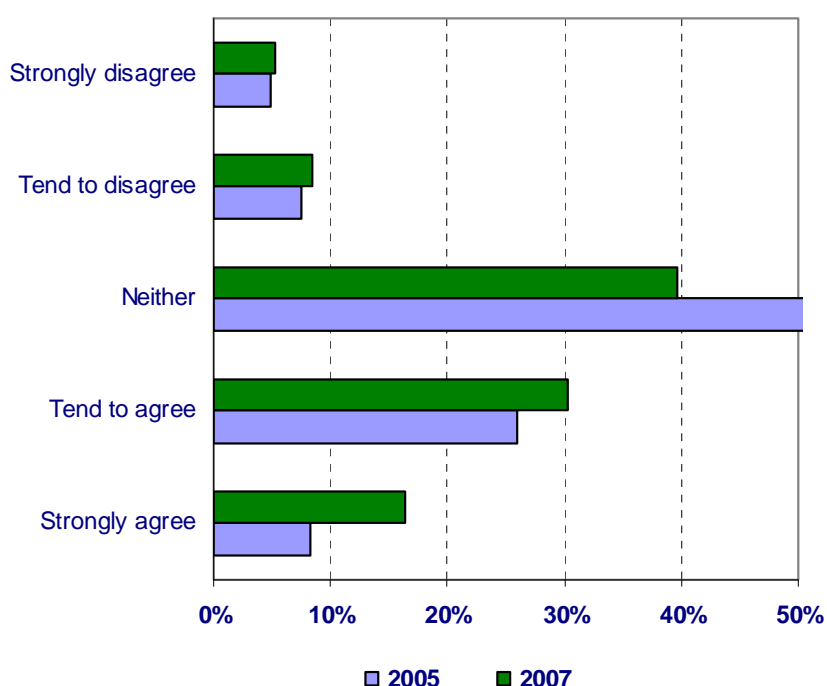
**Age Breakdown of Response in 2007 to  
'The Area/Neighbourhood Has A Lot Of Community Spirit'**



### I Meet People More Frequently Now Since Work On The Forest Began<sup>4</sup>

The majority of people gave a neutral response to this statement in both 2005 and 2007. Despite this rather ambivalent response, of the remaining people more agreed with the statement than disagreed.

**Chart 4.12 I Meet People More Frequently Since Work On The Forest Began**



- Fewer people agreed in West Lothian
- Fewer people with a disability / long term illness agreed with the statement
- A slightly higher proportion of 30 to 49 year olds agreed
- A higher proportion of those in employment agreed

In both 2005 and 2007, respondents found this question extremely difficult to answer. However, based on those people who did provide a response, fewer residents of West Lothian agreed with the statement (33%) compared with other areas such as Falkirk where nearly half of the sample agreed. Similarly, only one third of respondents with a disability/long term illness agreed, compared to over half for those without a health problem.

More than half of those people in the 30 – 49 age group agreed with this statement, compared to 43% and 44% in the other two age groups. Around six out of ten people in employment agreed with the statement in comparison with just four out of ten for those without paid employment.

<sup>4</sup> For the purpose of this question the date 1985 was selected as the start date for the Forest due to the establishment of the Central Scotland Countryside Trust in this year.

### **The Community Forest Summary**

The research shows that Forest residents do have a strong sense of community and that the Forest performs an important function in these communities.

As might be expected, some areas appear to have stronger community spirit than others, and some people appear to enjoy a stronger community bond than others. For example, the research indicates that community bonds are stronger in the North Lanarkshire areas than those in West Lothian. Also, age appears to influence the responses to this issue with older people much more likely to say that they were aware of a strong community spirit than younger ones.

An interesting finding to the statement, *I meet people more frequently now since work on the Forest began*, was that a much higher proportion of employed people and also people in the highest employment age group (30 to 49yrs) agreed. This may well be a reflection of the role that the Forest plays in providing busy individuals with an opportunity and environs in which to meet with other local people.

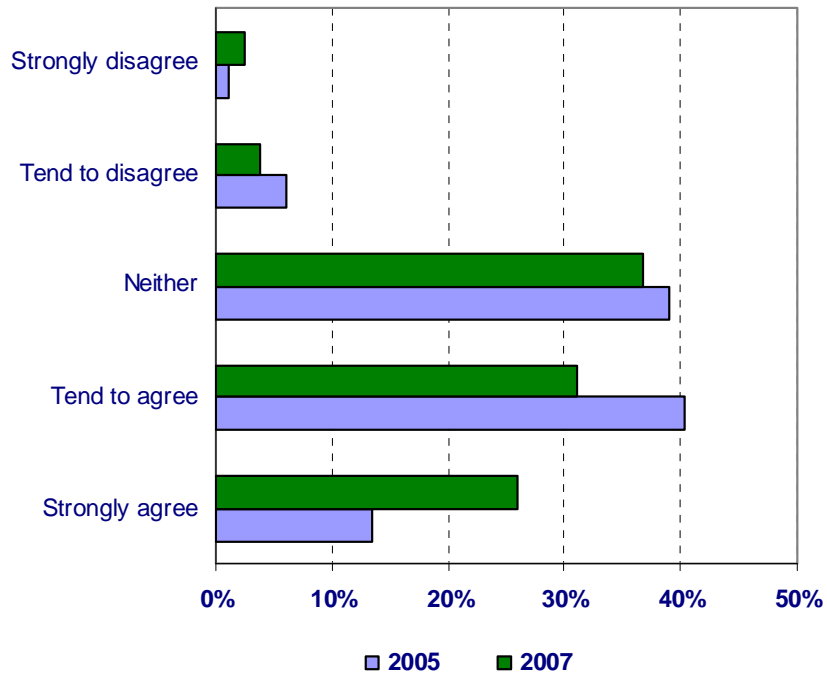
## Health, Happiness & Enjoyment in The Forest

### I Like Being In This Area More Since Work On The Forest Started<sup>5</sup>

Similar to 2005, many respondents were unsure about this question, with well over one third giving a neutral response. In fact, this was the most popular answer. Despite this, over half of the respondents did agree with the statement and less than one in ten people disagreed.

Chart 4.13

### I Like Being In This Area More Since Work On The Forest Started



Disaggregated by person type and geographic location the following was revealed:

- slightly more women than men agreed
- fewer young people agreed
- fewer disabled people agreed
- more West Lothian people disagreed
- a much higher proportion of employed people agreed

There were some variations in the sample, with lower proportions of people who are long term sick/disabled, females and young people agreeing with the statement than average. There were also some interesting geographic variations; a much lower proportion of West Lothian respondents who agreed with the statement (35%) than other areas such as Falkirk (52%) and North Lanarkshire (59%)

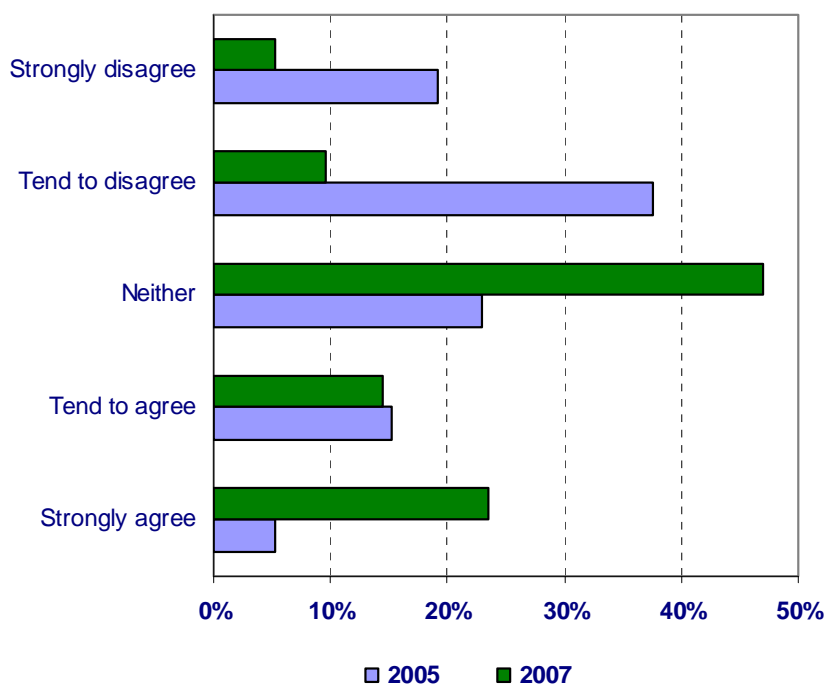
Nearly two thirds of employed people agreed with this statement, compared with just over half for people not in paid employment.

<sup>5</sup> For the purpose of this question the date 1985 was selected as the start date for the Forest due to the establishment of the Central Scotland Countryside Trust in this year.

### My Health Has Improved Since Work On The Forest Began<sup>6</sup>

Similar to 2005, people found this question difficult to answer with nearly half of them holding a neutral view. However, it was notable that two fifths of the sample did agree with the statement and this was twice as high as the proportion recorded in 2005 when over half disagreed with the statement.

**Chart 4.14** My Health Has Improved Since Work On The Forest Began



- A lower proportion of West Lothian residents agreed
- Fewer people with long term illness / disability agreed
- Little variation by age group or gender
- A higher proportion of employed people agreed

In West Lothian, just 16% of people agreed with this statement in comparison to over 35% in the other areas. Correspondingly, a higher percentage of the West Lothian residents disagreed with the statement. Although, there was little variation by age group or gender it was apparent that a lower proportion of people with a disability/limiting long term illness agreed with the statement (22%) than those without such problems (44%).

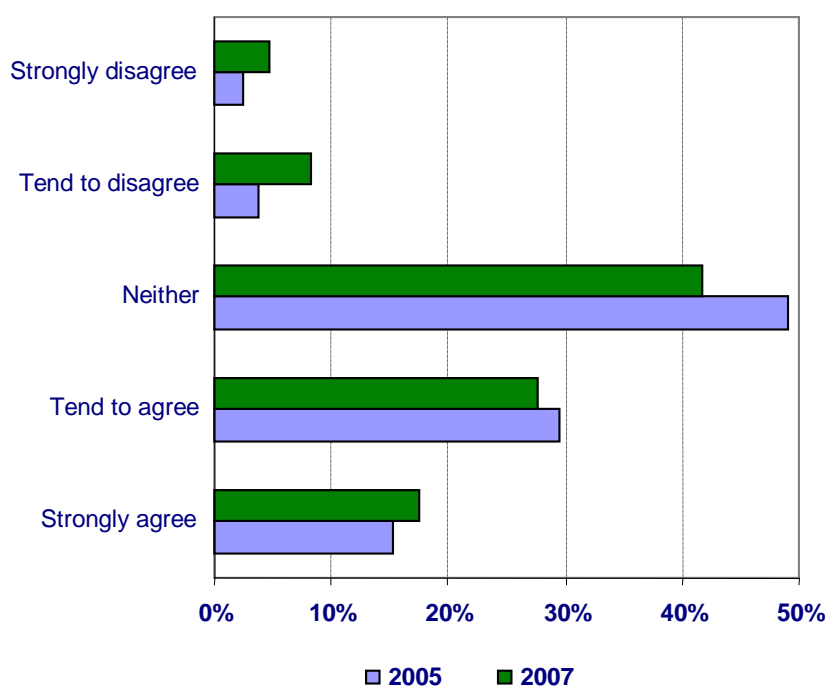
Nearly half of employed people agreed with this statement, compared with just under one third of people not in paid employment. In fact, the majority of employed people who were positive regarding this statement *strongly agreed*.

<sup>6</sup> For the purpose of this question the date 1985 was selected as the start date for the Forest due to the establishment of the Central Scotland Countryside Trust in this year.

### I Am Happier As A Person Since Work On The Forest Began<sup>7</sup>

Although the most popular response to this statement was neutral, 45% of people did agree with this statement – this was the same as in 2005. A slightly higher proportion of people disagreed with the statement in 2007 (13%) than in 2005 (6%).

**Chart 4.15 I Am Happier As A Person Since Work On The Forest Began**



- Fewer West Lothian respondents agreed
- More residents with health problems disagreed
- No marked variations by age or gender
- A higher proportion of employed people agreed

There appears to be slight variation in responses by location with just 38% of those from West Lothian agreeing with the statement compared to around 44% in other areas. Much more marked was the variation in responses from disabled/long term illness residents 28% agreed and those people in better health 50%.

Nearly three fifths of people in employment agreed with the statement in comparison with just one third for the rest of the sample.

<sup>7</sup> For the purpose of this question the date 1985 was selected as the start date for the Forest due to the establishment of the Central Scotland Countryside Trust in this year.

### **Health, Happiness & Enjoyment in The Forest Summary**

These questions were difficult to answer and many interviewees elected to provide a neutral response. Despite this, there is evidence to show that people do recognise changes in themselves and a marked appreciation of the local area since the work on the Forest started. In particular, they like being in the area more and feel they have experienced better health since work on the Forest began. Furthermore, a large proportion of residents said they are happier since work on the Forest commenced.

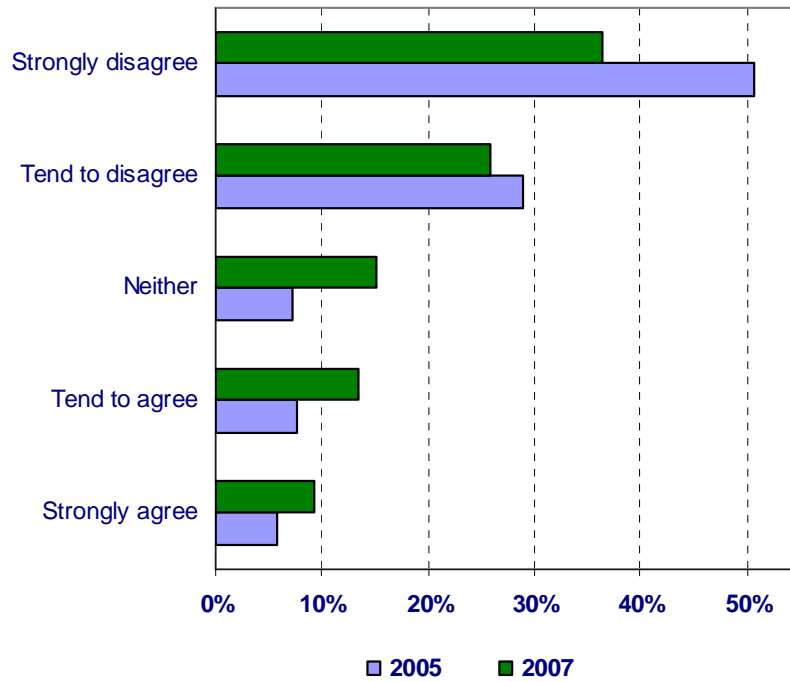
Within the sample there were some interesting variations by person type and little overall consistency with which to indicate a defined pattern. The exception to this was that employed people tended to be more positive across all of the responses and that people suffering from long-term illness/sickness were less positive.

## The Family Forest

### The Forest Is Not Important To Me & My Family

Six out of ten people disagreed with this statement. This was a lower proportion than in 2005 when 8 out of ten people disagreed. Correspondingly, 23% of the sample agreed with the statement, much higher than the 12% recorded in 2005.

**Chart 4.16**                      **The Forest Is Not Important To Me & My Family**



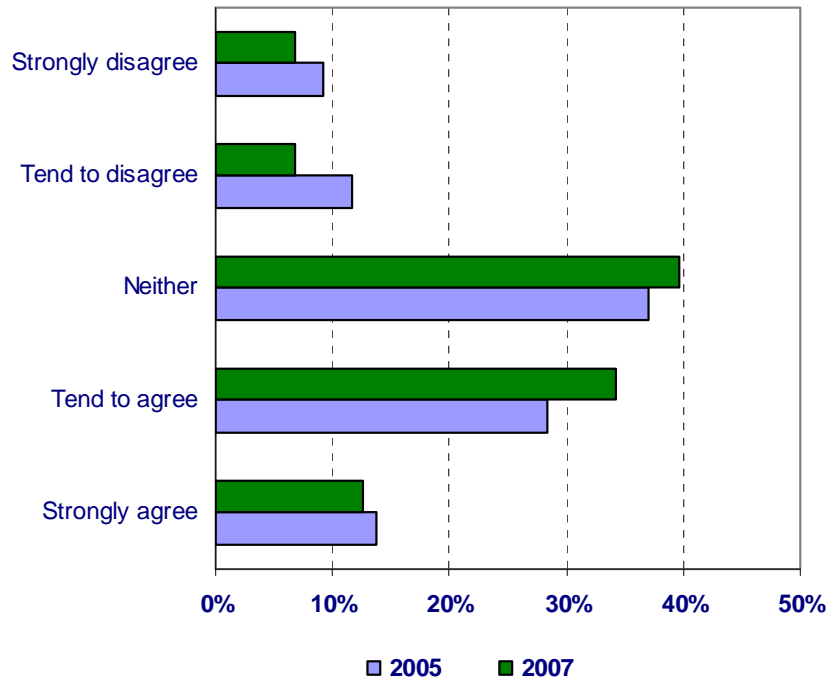
There was little variance in the results by person type and geography.

### I Am More Likely To Stay Round Here Now Since Work On The Forest Began<sup>8</sup>

Although over one third of respondents had a neutral opinion, nearly half of them agreed with the statement. These results were broadly similar to those recorded in 2005.

Chart 4.17

#### I Am More Likely To Stay Around Here Since Work On The Forest Began



- No difference by gender or age
- Difference according to physical well being
- Fewer people from West Lothian agreed
- A higher proportion of people in paid employment agreed

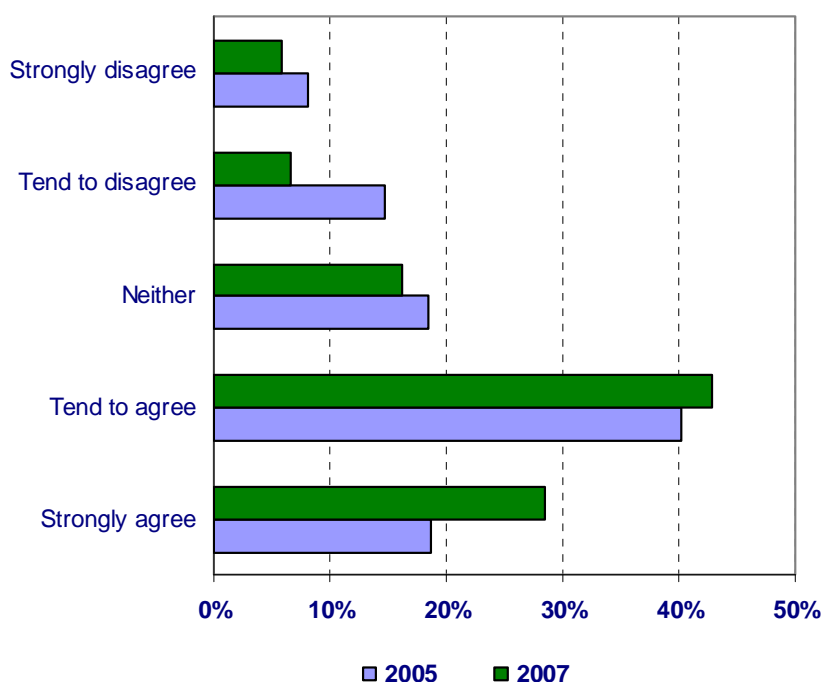
Although there were few differences in the results when cross-tabulated by age and gender, it was apparent that fewer people with disabilities/long term sickness (31%) agreed with this statement than people without health problems (51%). Also, a lower proportion of West Lothian people (24%) indicated that they were more likely to stay in the area than residents of other areas such as Falkirk (52%). Six out of ten employed people agreed with this statement, in comparison with just four out of ten for those not in employment.

<sup>8</sup> For the purpose of this question the date 1985 was selected as the start date for the Forest due to the establishment of the Central Scotland Countryside Trust in this year.

### I Feel Confident In My And My Family's Future Here

Over seven out of ten respondents agreed with this statement in 2007. This was much higher than the 51% recorded in 2005. However, in most other respects the results were quite similar.

**Chart 4.18 I Feel Confident In My & My Family's Future Here**



Disaggregated by person type and geographic location the following was revealed:

- geographic variations
- fewer people with poor health agree
- fewer young people
- little difference by gender
- higher proportion of employed people agreed

Although there was no marked variation by gender, lower proportions of 16 to 29 yr olds and those suffering from long term disability/ill health agreed with this statement. It also appears that views differ markedly across the Forest. Less than half of West Lothian's respondents agreed with the statement compared with 61% in North Lanarkshire 77% in Falkirk.

Three quarters of employed people agreed with the statement, in comparison with just 68% of people not in paid employment.

### **The Family Forest Summary**

Whilst the results do not claim a direct one-to-one correlation, it does appear that the Forest is important to local residents and their families. People are more likely to stay in the area since the work on the Forest started, and generally feel confident in their own and their family's future in the Forest.

Within this broad picture there are some variations, for example fewer young people and people with ill health see their future within the Forest.

Employed people were generally much more positive in response regarding the Forest than those not in paid employment. A higher proportion of them said they were more likely to stay in the area and felt confident in their and their family's future there.

## 5. Conclusions

### Conclusions from the Survey

The study was successful in supplementing the findings from the 2005 baseline data. This in itself is a useful finding and confirms that the survey, as a tool for social research in the Central Scotland Forest, is working well and delivering the desired information.

It was noted that, in many respects, there was little change between the 2005 and 2007 data. Therefore, the results did not show, for example, a marked change in the quality of life for local residents due to the continued existence of the Forest and the work of the Trust. This is not unexpected and in no way reflects of the effectiveness or otherwise of the Trust's activities. There are two main reasons why results should not be used in this manner.

Firstly, the two surveys were located in a different suite of geographic sites. As a consequence, it is impossible to directly compare the samples over time with any robust degree of accuracy. However, this will be possible in future years when the original benchmark areas are revisited.

Secondly, it should be recognised that two years is a relatively short period of time for deeply set opinions and ideas to change. Although the actual landscape may alter relatively quickly once a Forest project is embarked upon, the transformation of the local communities, which the Trust hopes to influence takes much longer. This is one of the reasons why it is suggested that a proper update of the Social Impact Study will not take place before 2011.

Moving on to the specific findings of the work, it was clear that although infrastructure and service provision are considered to be important in making a location a good place to live, Forest residents also consider people and their behaviour towards one another to be of very high importance. Neighbourhoods in which residents are friendly, quiet and respectful are valued. Within this picture, the local environment is recognised as playing a significant role. When presented with a description of the Trust and its remit to deliver the Forest, the overwhelming majority of people said this was important to them. Most people think that trees and woodlands are valuable assets in the improvement and enhancement of the local landscape.

Residents particularly value CSF sites as a locations where recreational activity (such as walking and cycling) can take place and stressed the important role of the Forest in safeguarding existing countryside from developments such as housing, industry and farming. Respondents also recognise that the Forest provides educational opportunities, has improved the local landscape and provides a suitable habitat for a rich variety of wildlife.

A quarter of people have heard of the Forest, and it appears that it is more widely known amongst some people than others. People tend to find out about the Forest through visual methods, particularly signs and leaflets, although attendance at CSFT events was also recognised as being important in this respect.

Forest sites are a well used resource and we estimate that there are currently around 355,000 adult Forest users, with most people seeking parks and woodlands environments for walking and cycling activities. Although there is little variation in this usage by gender and geographic area, it appears that disabled/long term sick, older residents and unemployed people are less likely to use the Forest than others. Indeed, employed people were generally much more positive in responses regarding the Forest usage than those not in paid employment.

The majority of people have increased their usage of CSF sites in recent years. The main reasons cited are related to a desire to get fitter and healthier. It appears, therefore, that changes in the local environment itself have not consciously influenced the frequency of people using the Forest.

The research shows that Forest residents have a strong sense of community and that the Forest performs an important function in these communities. In particular, it is clearly of relevance and importance to local families. Results indicate that people generally feel confident in their own and their family's future in the Forest. They like the area more and are more likely to stay in it since the work on the Forest started. Also, many residents notice that they have experienced improvements in their health and general happiness since work on the Forest began.

When asked to think about the worst things about living in the area generally and the Forest sites specifically, people largely focussed upon anti-social activities of other people particularly vandalism, intimidation and safety concerns. Regarding the latter theme, over half of people do feel safe in the Forest sites and local neighbourhood. However, women were more concerned about safety issues than men. The Forest does seem to be having a positive impact on how local people feel in this respect, with two fifths of people saying that they feel safer in this area since work on the Forest started.

### **Recommendations**

One of the main recommendations from this research is for the *Attitudes & Perceptions* research to be continued. The suite of surveys developed in the *2005 Social Impact Study* work well and produce information which is useable and of immediate value to the Trust at strategic, organisational and project specific levels.

By repeating the survey in its present format, it will allow a large and robust dataset to be created which can be used to effectively monitor change over time within the Forest area and facilitate a thorough evaluation of the social impact of the work of the Trust in delivering the Central Scotland Forest.

However, it may be beneficial to undertake a much larger survey in the future in order for regional variations to be commented upon with more confidence. Increasing the sample size would be more costly; however it is considered that this is outweighed by the depth of useful information which could be made available. In particular, it is envisioned that Trust staff such as Sustainable Development Officers (who work mainly on a local authority basis) would find data specific to their area very relevant to their core activities such as competing for funding resources to finance projects.

To offset the additional cost implications of undertaking a larger survey, it might be appropriate to run the next Social Impact Study in 2011 rather than in 2009. This is considered acceptable as one of the findings of the 2007 study was that for many issues, the thoughts and opinions of CSF site users have not changed a great deal over the last two years. Instead of undertaking a questionnaire type survey, it is suggested that in 2009, a series of focus groups are held as outlined below.

Both the 2005 and 2007 surveys were successful in accessing a statistically representative sample of Central Scotland Forest population and these respondents were able to express their thoughts and opinions across a wide range of subject matter. However, there is a concern that certain sections of the community, specifically unemployed may be over-represented in the sample. To discover if this has affected the results, it may be beneficial to adopt a weighting or quota system in future surveys.

Despite the fact that most residents value and use the Forest, it does appear that relatively few have an accurate idea as to what the Forest is and what the Trust does. Most people tended to think that the Trust is some form of grounds maintenance organisation, possibly working for another body such as 'The Council' or 'National Trust'. A commonly held misconception was that the Central Scotland Forest is purely concerned with trees. Therefore,

it is recommended that more qualitative research such as focus groups should be undertaken to explore this issue in more depth. Through such additional research it may be possible to provide information which could assist in marketing strategy formation and more relevant promotional activities.

Another finding from the study which appears to be worthy of more research is that relates to the results of several cross-tabulations which indicate that local attitudes towards the environment are not related to variables such as age or geographic location. It may be interesting to find out more regarding the reasons behind these findings – contrasting results directly with other sections of the community.

It is suggested, therefore that, in 2009, an experienced consultant is commissioned to undertake a series of focus group sessions. These sessions will target different sections of the community who may possess different views, for example older people, women, teenagers, young parents etc. Key findings from CSF social research will be used as the catalyst to initiate these explorative sessions. In this manner, the focus groups will provide deep insight and usable knowledge regarding the perceptions and feelings of the participants across a range of relevant themes. By adopting such a targeted and explorative approach, it is hoped that findings will inform Trust employees to work more effectively and help define the role that CSFT can play in accommodating the aspirations and needs of different sections of the Forest population.

Many people feel that scarcity of suitable facilities and activities for young people are some of the main causes behind the worse aspects of certain areas. In short, people felt that anti-social behaviour and environmental abuse were a direct reflection of the lack of constructive things for young people to do. Some of the solutions proposed by residents may be worthy of further attention. For example, several people recognised the potential of the Forest for activities which could divert some troublesome young people away from anti-social behaviour towards more positive outcomes. For example, voluntary activity which seeks to improve the local physical environment. It is also possible that such activity would have additional benefits which people value highly such as increasing neighbourhood cohesion.

The survey was also successful in gathering a range of other suggestions for the future development of the Forest. These included an expansion of marketing and events activity and increased inclusion of young people in Forest projects. People were keen to see more families using the Forest and the role of the Forest as a protector and champion of green space was also focussed upon. Regarding the latter point, in particular people would like to see CSFT continue to safeguard natural recreational areas for present and future generations.

### **Further Information**

If you would like to discuss this report or comment on its findings, please contact CSFT's Monitoring & Evaluation Officer, by emailing [info@csft.org.uk](mailto:info@csft.org.uk).

# Appendix: Survey Script

**RESEARCHER - READ OUT:**

*Good Morning/Afternoon. My name is \_\_\_\_\_ Ashbrook Research & Consultancy Ltd. We have been commissioned by the Central Scotland Forest Trust (Researcher, show Letter of Authority) to undertake a survey amongst people living in this area. I wonder if you could spare 5 or 6 minutes to answer some questions. Your answers will, of course, be treated with the strictest confidentiality. In particular, your identity and views will not be made known to any third party.*

*I will ask you a number of questions about this area over the next few minutes. By this area, what I mean is this local neighbourhood.*

1. What are the three best things about this area? **(Probe fully. Do not prompt)**

Route

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Q2
  
2. What are the three worst things about this area? **(Probe fully. Do not prompt)**

Route

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Q3
  
3. Do you think this area is...
 

		<u>Route</u>
Very attractive	1	Q4
Quite attractive	2	Q4
Neither attractive nor unattractive	3	Q4
Quite unattractive	4	Q4
Very unattractive	5	Q4
Don't know	6	Q4
  
4. Had you heard of the Central Scotland Forest Trust before today?
 

		<u>Route</u>
Yes	1	Q5
No	2	Q6
  
5. What does the Central Scotland Forest mean to you? **(Probe fully. Do not prompt)**

Route

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Q6

6. **Read Out Statement.** Here is a leaflet which tells you more about the Central Scotland Forest. **(Researcher, give leaflet to respondent)** How important or unimportant is the Central Scotland Forest area to you and your family?

		<u>Route</u>
Very important	1	Q7
Quite important	2	Q7
Neither important not unimportant	3	Q7
Quite unimportant	4	Q7
Not important at all	5	Q7
Don't know	6	Q7

7. Why do you say that? **(Probe fully. Do not prompt)**

Route

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Q8

8. [SHOW MAP]  
Do you go walking or cycling in the Central Scotland Forest area? **(Researcher, show map)**

		<u>Route</u>
Yes	1	Q9
No	2	Q12

9. Over the past five years, has your amount of walking or cycling in the Central Scotland Forest area....

		<u>Route</u>
Increased	1	Q10
Stayed about the same	2	Q11
Decreased	3	Q10

10. Why is that? **(Probe fully. Do not prompt)**

Route

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Q11

11. [SHOWCARD 1]  
Which parts of the Forest area do you like to walk or cycle in? **(Code all that apply)**

		<u>Route</u>
Woodlands/Forest	1	Q12
Open areas with isolated trees	1	Q12
Urban areas	1	Q12
Parks	1	Q12
Open fields with no trees	1	Q12
Coats/seashore	1	Q12

12. Do you have any particular concerns about the Central Scotland Forest?

		<u>Route</u>
Yes	1	Q13
No	2	Q14

13. What particular concerns do you have about the Central Scotland Forest? **(Probe fully. Do not prompt)**

Route

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Q14

[SHOWCARD 2]

14. I am now going to read out a number of statements and would like you to tell me how strongly you agree or disagree with them. (Strongly Agree [SA], Tend To Agree [TTA], Neither [N], Tend To Disagree [TTD], Strongly Disagree [SD], Don't Know [DK])

	SA	TTA	N	TTD	SD	DK	Route
In overall terms, this area is not as good as it used to be	1	2	3	4	5	6	
I like being in this area since the Forest began	1	2	3	4	5	6	
I feel that the image of the area has gone down in recent years	1	2	3	4	5	6	
I feel safe going out in this area	1	2	3	4	5	6	
The environment in this area is of poor quality and is in need of improvement	1	2	3	4	5	6	
I feel confident in my family's future here	1	2	3	4	5	6	
The area or neighbourhood has a lot of community spirit	1	2	3	4	5	6	
The Forest is not important to me and my family	1	2	3	4	5	6	
I feel unsafe being in the Forest	1	2	3	4	5	6	
I think trees and woodlands improve the landscape	1	2	3	4	5	6	
I have no interest in the environment	1	2	3	4	5	6	
I think it is important to plant broad leaf trees like oaks rather than evergreen conifers such as pine	1	2	3	4	5	6	Q15

[SHOWCARD 3]

15. I am now going to read out a number of other statements and, again, would like you to tell me how strongly you agree or disagree with them. Since work on the Forest began... (Strongly Agree [SA], Tend To Agree [TTA], Neither [N], Tend To Disagree [TTD], Strongly Disagree [SD], Don't Know [DK])

	SA	TTA	N	TTD	SD	DK	Route
I feel safer being in this area	1	2	3	4	5	6	
My health has improved	1	2	3	4	5	6	
I am happier as a person	1	2	3	4	5	6	
I meet people more frequently	1	2	3	4	5	6	
I am now more likely to stay in this area	1	2	3	4	5	6	Q16

[SHOWCARD 4]

16. Can you tell me how important some of the possible benefits of the Forest are to you? (Key Factor [KF], Very Important [VI], Quite Important [QI], Neither [N], Quite Unimportant [QU], Not Important At All [NIAA], Don't Know [DK])

	KF	VI	QI	N	QU	NIA	DK	Route
Can help people to be healthier	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Is good for wildlife	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Helps reduce the rate of climate change and global warming	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Improves the landscape and views	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Helps children learn about the environment and nature	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Creates local jobs and supports the local economy	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Gives people more recreational choice	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Makes people feel good	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Improves air and water quality	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Protects the local environment	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Q17

17. Have you heard of any of the following organisations?

	Yes	No	Route
The Forestry Commission	1	2	CHECK INSTRUCTION BELOW
Scottish National Heritage	1	2	
Scottish Wildlife Trust	1	2	
British Trust for Conservation Volunteers	1	2	
Central Scotland Forest Trust (CSFT)	1	2	

**Researcher: If respondent has heard of Central Scotland Forest Trust, go to Q18. If not, go to Q19**

18. Regarding the Central Scotland Forest Trust, have you....

	Yes	No	Route
Seen a leaflet before today	1	2	
Seen a sign relating to the Trust	1	2	
Been to an event they had organised or been present at	1	2	
Volunteered for them	1	2	
Been involved with staff on physical projects such as tree planting	1	2	Q19

19. Are there any other comments, ideas or suggestions you would like to make about the Central Scotland Forest that benefits you or could be improved? **(Probe fully. Do not prompt)**

Route

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Q20

None 1

20. Finally, I would like to ask you a few questions about yourself to help us analyse the data we gather. What age are you? **(Researcher, if refused, code best estimate)**

Route  
Q21

\_\_\_\_\_

- [SHOWCARD 5]  
 21. Can you tell me what your employment status is?

		<u>Route</u>
Working full time	1	
Working part time	2	
Unemployed/looking for work	3	
Unemployed/unable to work	4	
Retired	5	
Student or at school	6	
Full time home carer	7	
On a training scheme	8	
Other (specify)	9	Q22

22. Do you have a long term disability, health problem or illness?

		<u>Route</u>
Yes	1	Q23
No	2	Q23

- [SHOWCARD 6]  
 23. How would you describe your cultural or ethnic background?

		<u>Route</u>
White - Scottish	1	Q24
White - Irish	2	Q24
White - Other British	3	Q24
Any other White background	4	Q24
Mixed	5	Q24
Asian, Asian Scottish or Asian British	6	Q24
Indian	7	Q24
Bangladeshi	8	Q24
Pakistani	9	Q24
Chinese	10	Q24
Any other Asian background	11	Q24
Black, Black Scottish or Black British	12	Q24
Caribbean	13	Q24
African	14	Q24
Any other Black background	15	Q24
Any other background	16	Q24

24. What is your postcode? (**Researcher, probe for at least first four digits e.g. FK1 9. This is a critical piece of information. )**

Route  
Close

**Researcher, enter respondent details on Respondent Detail Sheet, inform them that they will be entered into a prize draw to win £100 worth of shopping vouchers, code gender and area, then close interview**

Gender

Male 1  
Female 2

Area

Bellshill	1
Coatbridge	2
Cumbernauld	3
Kirkintilloch	4
Blackburn	5
Broxburn	6
Carluke	7
Stenhousemuir	8
Glensburgh	9
Polmont	10
Westquarter	11
Grahamston	12
Laurieston	13
Bainsford	14

**CLOSE INTERVIEW BY READING OUT STATEMENT:**

*Thank you very much for your help. Can I remind you that this was a bona fide market research interview conducted within the Market Research Society code of practice by Ashbrook Research & Consultancy Limited. If you would like to check that we are a bona fide market research agency then you can call Freephone Market Research on 0500 369999.*

**RESEARCHER DECLARATION:**

*I declare that this interview was carried out accordingly to instructions, within the Market Research Society's Code of Conduct and that the respondent was not previously known to me.*