

Charmouth Visitor Questionnaire

Summary of results

Background

Questionnaires were placed in holiday parks, shops, cafes, pubs, the library and the Charmouth Heritage Coast Centre over the period Easter to August Bank Holiday 2014. The aim of the exercise is to help the Tourism Committee to better understand the views of visitors to Charmouth so that improvements to facilities can be targeted effectively.

Summary of findings

The questionnaire worked well, with most respondents filling in most sections and the results can be viewed with confidence.

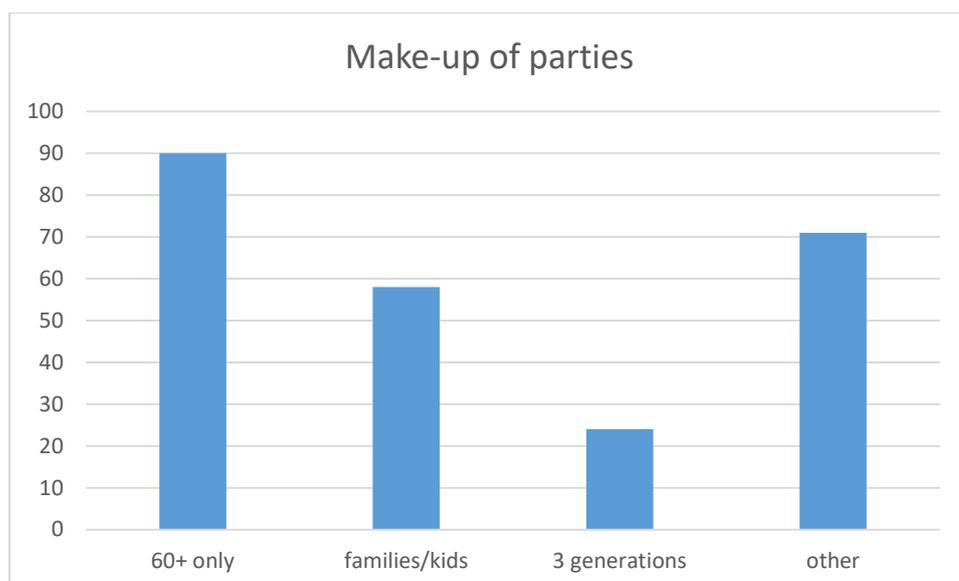
253 completed questionnaires were returned, representing 810 people, a healthy sample.

The sample is well spread across age groups, with a good mix of families, family groups spanning three generations and the over 60 age group.

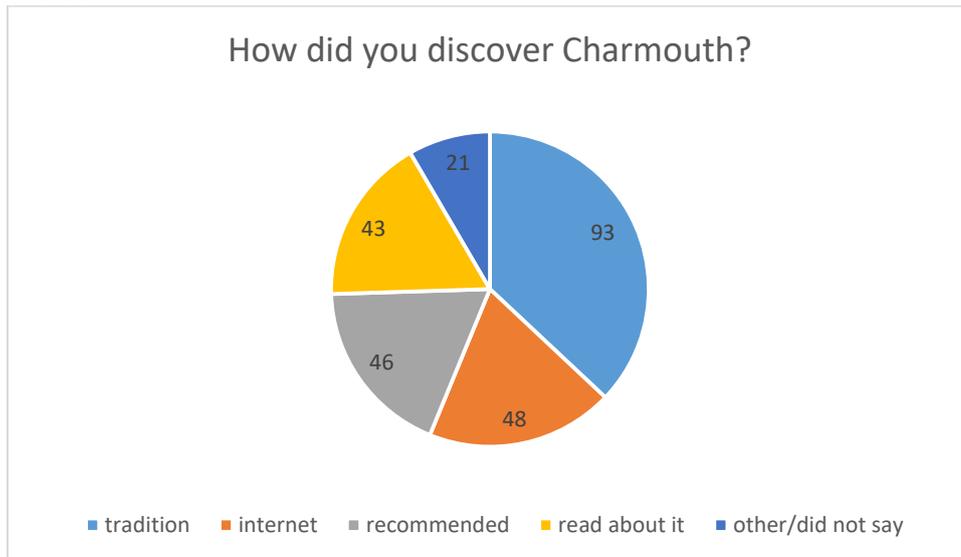
Most respondents were happy with their visit to Charmouth, with the 'likes' outnumbering the 'dislikes' by more than 4 to 1 (658 vs 140). Many do not want Charmouth to change and there is a strong feeling across all respondents that Charmouth must remain 'unspoilt' and 'uncommercial'

Detailed results

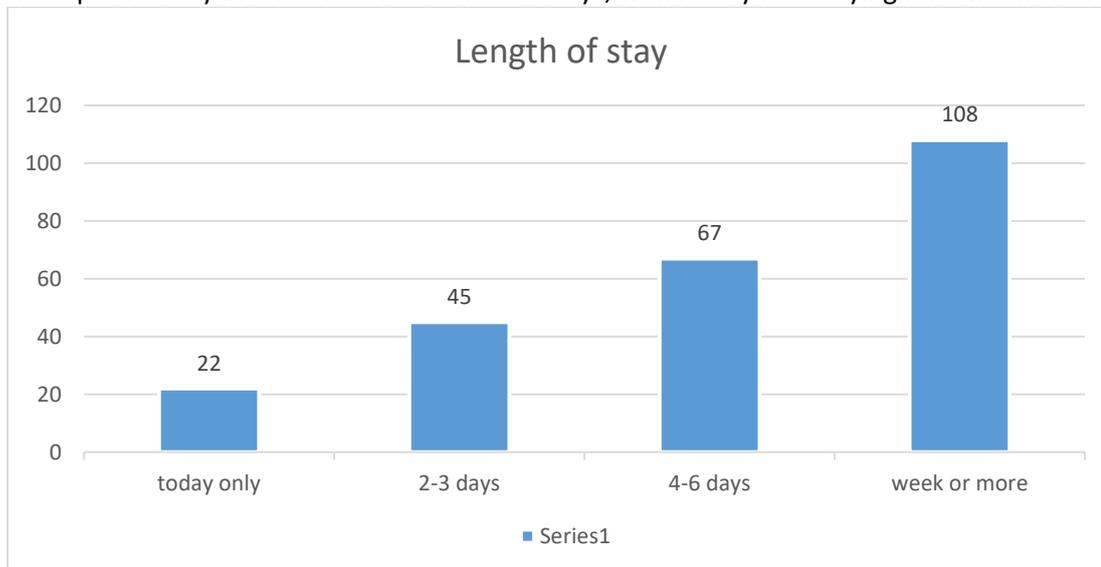
The spread of respondents was good, with the over 60s returning questionnaires during the spring and autumn and families with children completing them over July/August.



There is a strong traditional element of people coming back to Charmouth many times but there are also many visitors who came this year because they had read about Charmouth, used the internet or were recommended by friends.

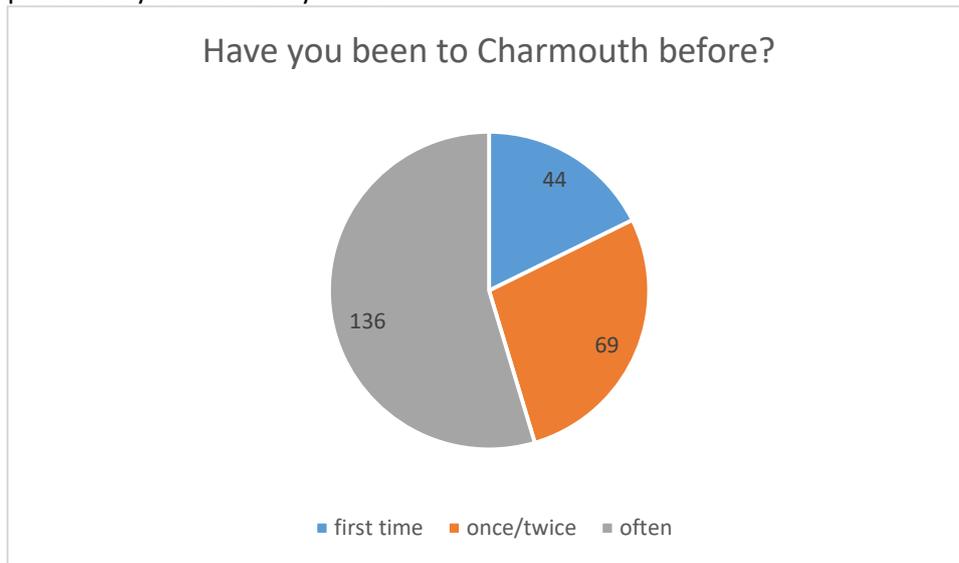


Most parties stay in Charmouth for at least 4 days, with nearly half staying for a week or more.

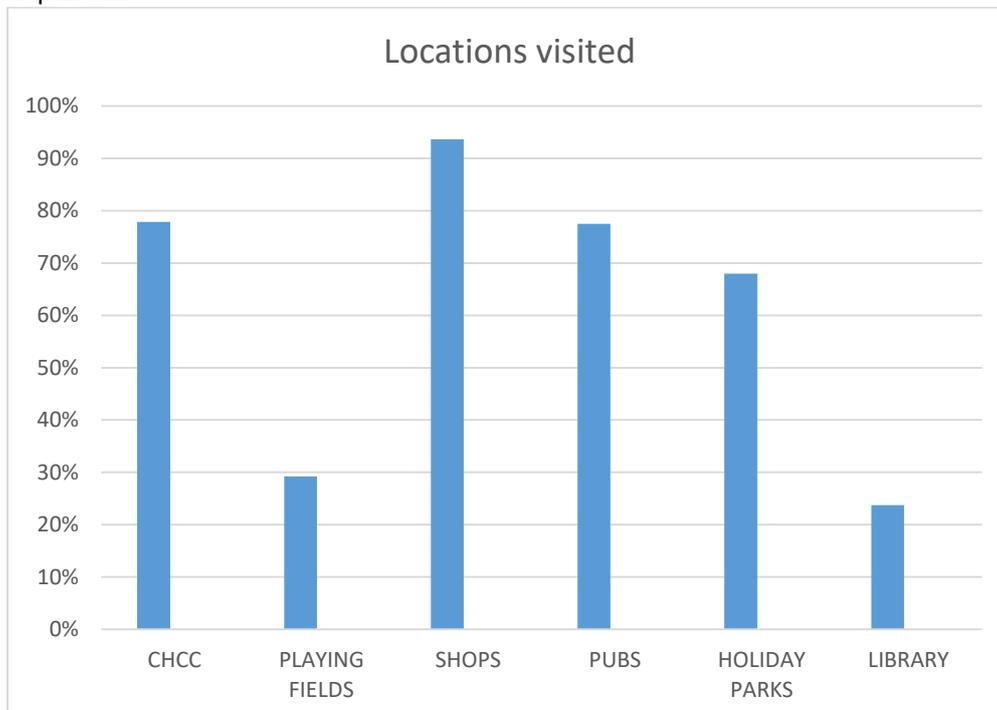


Two thirds of our sample stayed in one of the four holiday parks in the village.

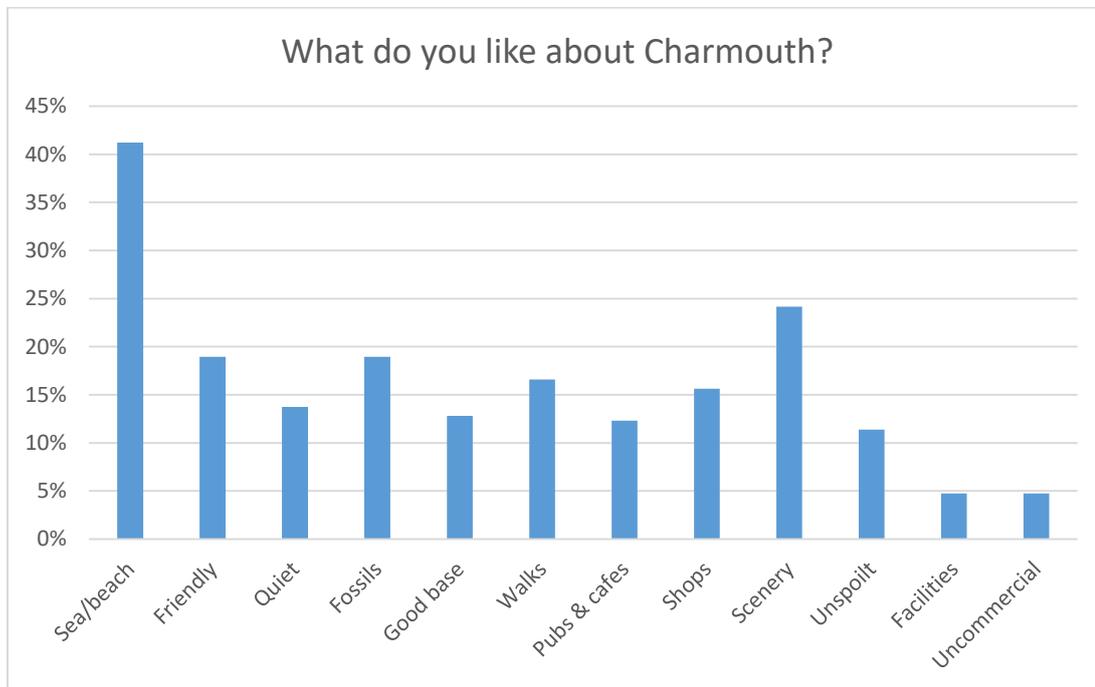
Although more than half of our visitors are frequent visitors to Charmouth, there is a healthy number of people who were here for the first time this year and even more who have returned to Charmouth for a second or third time, presumably because they like it!



More than 90% of respondents visited the village shops, followed by the Charmouth Heritage Coast Centre and the pubs, which both scored nearly 80%. Less than 30% visited the playing fields while the library was visited by less than a quarter.

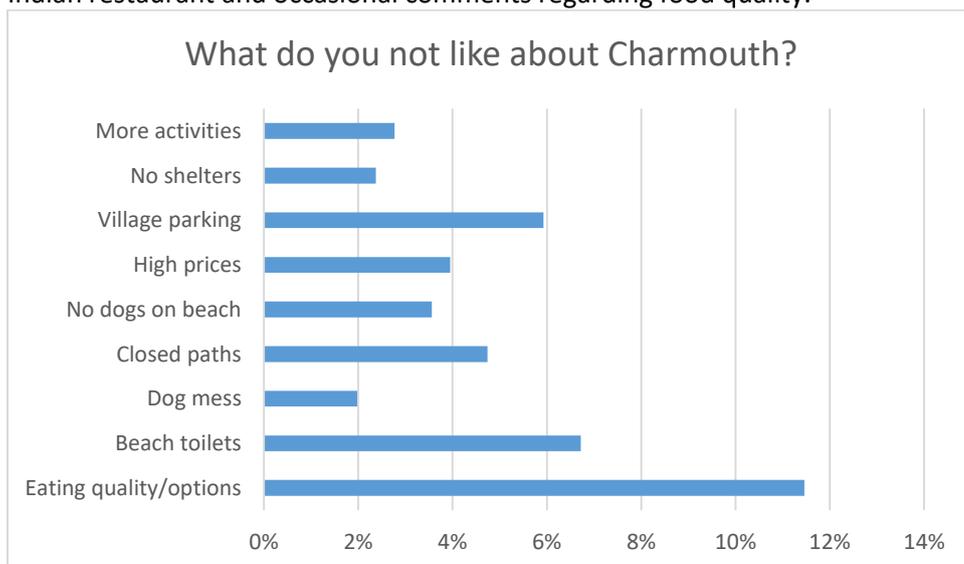


When asked what they liked about Charmouth, most respondents filled in three or more suggestions. The beach lead the way, mentioned by over 40%, followed by the scenery, the friendliness of Charmouth people and fossils. It was clear that all the likes shown are important – what visitors like is the combination of Charmouth’s location, its facilities and its situation as a good base to visit nearby attractions.



Other 'likes' were cream teas, the market, local produce and Charmouth’s heritage.

There are far fewer dislikes. Nearly one in seven complain about the eating options in the village, followed by the poor beach toilets, difficulty of parking in the village centre, and the closed coast paths. The eating quality/options covers a wide range of issues, including wanting more eating options, a drink at the beach during the evening, an Indian restaurant and occasional comments regarding food quality.



Poor disabled access was mentioned a few times.

What would visitors like to see in Charmouth that would make their visit more enjoyable?
Not everyone had a suggestion, but these were the ones most frequently mentioned :

- 4 would like to see the dog ban better enforced
- 3 would like organised children's activities/workshops
- 3 would like an Indian restaurant
- 2 would like music/concerts at the beach
- 3 pointed out that there is no public drinking water at the foreshore

Other interesting suggestions were:

- Better baby changing facilities
- Free wi-fi
- Cheaper evening parking
- More disabled facilities

What have we learned?

Charmouth is the perfect holiday destination for many visitors and is near-perfect for the majority. There is a healthy spread of age groups and both young and old enjoy Charmouth. Although many visitors have been to Charmouth many times, there is an encouraging number who are new visitors, encouraged by reading about Charmouth or hearing about it from friends. The internet is also important. The holiday parks accommodate the majority of visitors and most stay for four days or more. Charmouth's is 'unspoilt' and 'uncommercial' which appeals to many. The beach is the main attraction for visitors, who also enjoy the views along the coast and the surrounding countryside. The Charmouth Heritage Coast Centre is clearly very popular and the availability of shops, pubs, cafes and holiday park facilities is much appreciated. The lack of eating options is highlighted and this could be an opportunity for someone. There may also be an opening for organised children's activities. More visitors would be attracted to Charmouth if the coast paths were open. The Parish Council should review the dog rules. The beach toilets continue to attract complaints. The playing fields and library should attract more visitors once the Parish Council's signpost project is implemented. We must also look at how we can improve disabled access and facilities.

Overall, a very encouraging survey which has thrown up a number of suggestions for making Charmouth an even better holiday destination.

Next steps

Below is a summary of what steps Charmouth Parish Council is taking or investigating in regard to these findings :

- Low visitor numbers for the playing fields and the library* – finger posts and foreshore map already approved and targeted for implementation by next Easter
- General visitor approval for the unspoilt nature of Charmouth* – The 'Foreshore Vision' specifically aims to preserve the ethos of the foreshore
- Eating quality/options* – CPC will alert Charmouth Traders to this opportunity
- Beach toilets* – Ongoing discussions with WDDC
- Dog mess* – New dog bins being erected around the village shortly
- Closed paths* – pursuing DCC to get a high priority for Charmouth's paths
- No dogs on beach/enforcement* – Dog rules being reviewed
- Village parking* – check that the 1 hour parking in the village is being regularly enforced.
- No shelters* – to be considered by the Foreshore Committee
- More activities* - CPC will alert Charmouth Traders to this opportunity
- Baby changing facilities* – WDDC to be informed
- Free wi-fi* – included in the Foreshore Vision for consideration by the Foreshore Committee
- Cheaper evening parking* – Parking charges to be reviewed once the new system is operational
- No drinking water at the beach* - to be considered by the Foreshore Committee