

# Mystery Shoppers Limited



ENGLISH HERITAGE

## Grant-Aided Properties Anonymous Visits Programme 2014





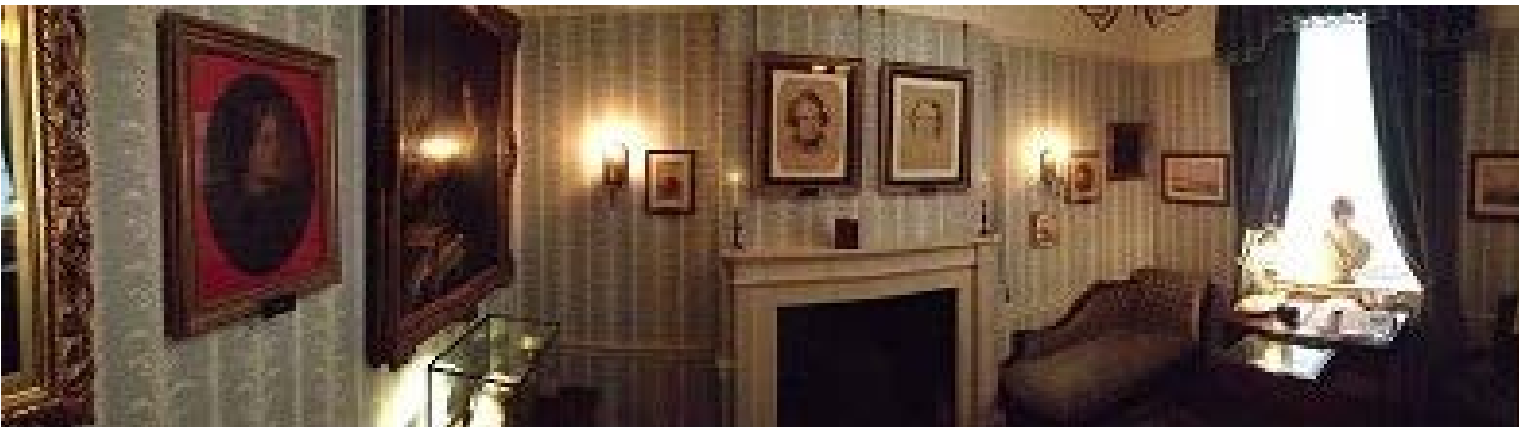
Programme Objectives

# Background and Objectives



English Heritage makes grants towards repairs on a wide range of properties, including buildings, gardens and places of worship. Contract conditions normally include a public access condition. There are two grant schemes which were covered in this anonymous visits exercise, namely The Historic Monuments and Designed Landscapes grant scheme (HBMDL) and the Repair Grants for Places of Worship grant scheme (RGPOW).

The programme was designed to check whether the property was actually open for public access as set out in the published opening arrangements (on the English Heritage website [www.english-heritage.org.uk/gap](http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/gap)), and that the details published that were relevant to the visit were set out correctly and were accurate. Additionally, visits to Places of Worship also gave the opportunity to confirm that the building continues to be in use as a place of worship.



# The programme



Sites included in the mystery shopping exercise comprised roughly 5% of those with a live public access condition. 81 properties were included in the programme, 9 visits in each of 9 English regions, which are:

- East of England
- East Midlands
- London
- North East
- North West
- South East
- South West
- West Midlands
- Yorkshire

27 visits were made to HBMDL sites and 54 to RGPOW sites.



# The programme



Visits were made according to the published arrangements at times when the property was stated to be open. Some of the visits were made at weekends, depending on the opening arrangements of the property. Some properties are open by written appointment only, and our shoppers followed the instructions as detailed on the EH website to arrange their visit. Any problems encountered with arranging a visit were noted on the Visitor Feedback Form.



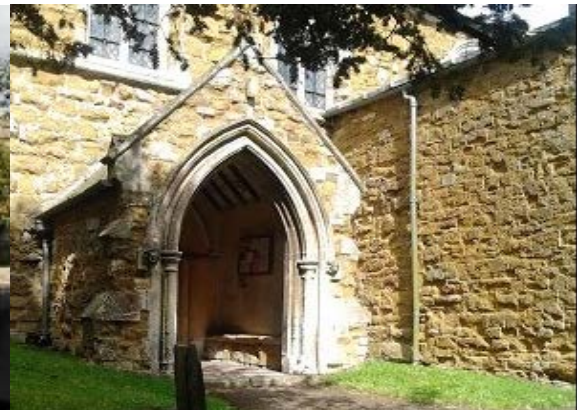
# The programme



Each mystery shopper was issued with a brief for the property they were visiting, which contained the following information, as issued by English Heritage:

1. Property description.
2. Property website.
3. Parking and directions.
4. Disabled/Wheelchair access – whether it is fully, partially or not at all accessible, plus any further information. This section also stated whether guide dogs are allowed and if there are disabled toilets at the property.
5. Opening arrangements.
6. Admission charges (adults, children and other).
7. Contact details (phone number, fax number and email address information).

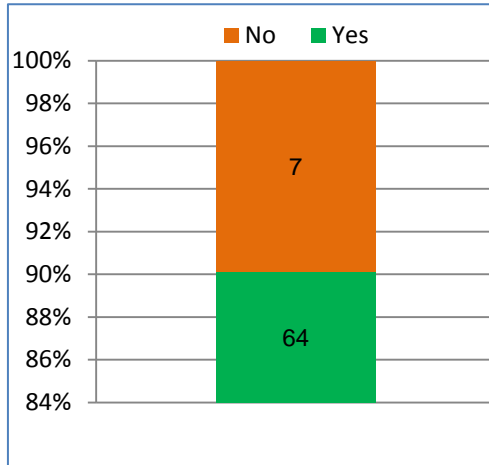
They were then asked to visit the property to see whether it was open in line with this information and to rate the accuracy of the published information.





The results – Primary Criteria:

# Visit with no prior arrangement: Was access consistent with the opening arrangements on the EH website?



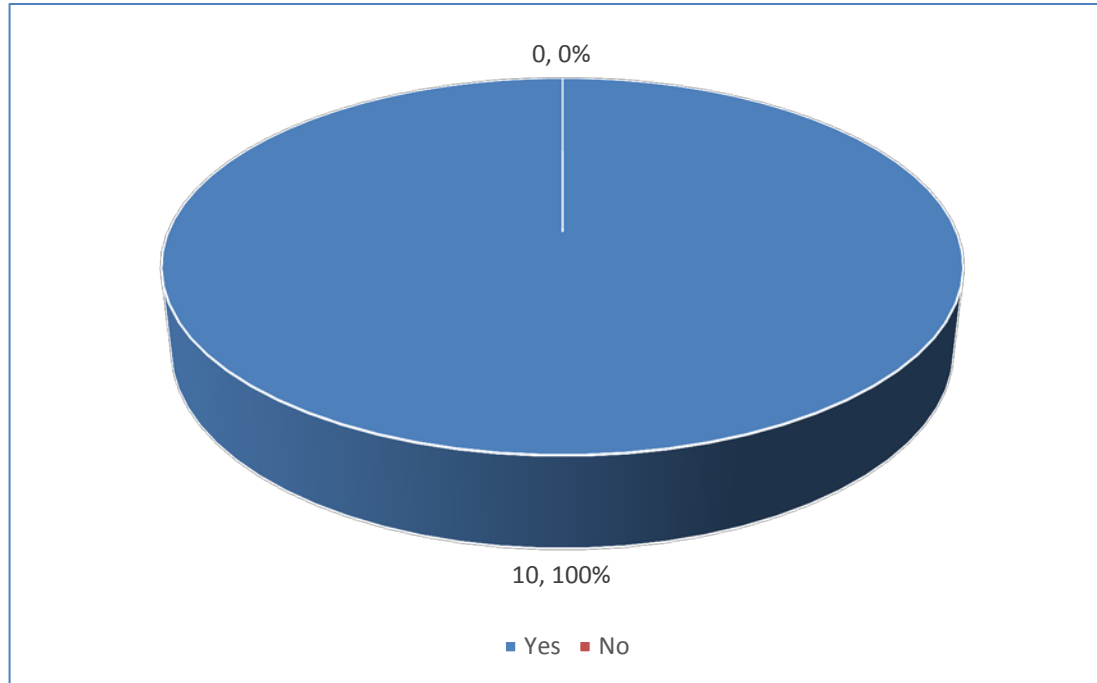
Property R02	The church was padlocked.
Property R04	The church was locked. I telephoned the contact as listed and was told to phone a second number. the second number went to answer phone.
Property R06	The church was closed due to building / decorating works.
Property R13	It stated that it was open from 9-5 and no prior arrangement needed but in fact its better if you do call because I was not able to gain access to inside the church- only to the outside of the church.
Property R19	Was closed and was unable to get through on the number on their door.
Property R26	The English Heritage website states that the property is open all year; Monday - Friday 8:45am - 3:30pm. I visited the property one Monday afternoon, however whilst I was able to walk round the outside of the church, the church itself was locked.
Property R27	No, not at present. Due to extensive roof work, both internally and externally, the site is not open during the week, however it is open for a short period on Sunday mornings due to worship.

Out of the 71 visits where no prior arrangement was made, the opening arrangements at 7 of the sites was not consistent with what was stated in on the EH website. All 7 sites were churches, and the problem with all 7 was that they were not open.



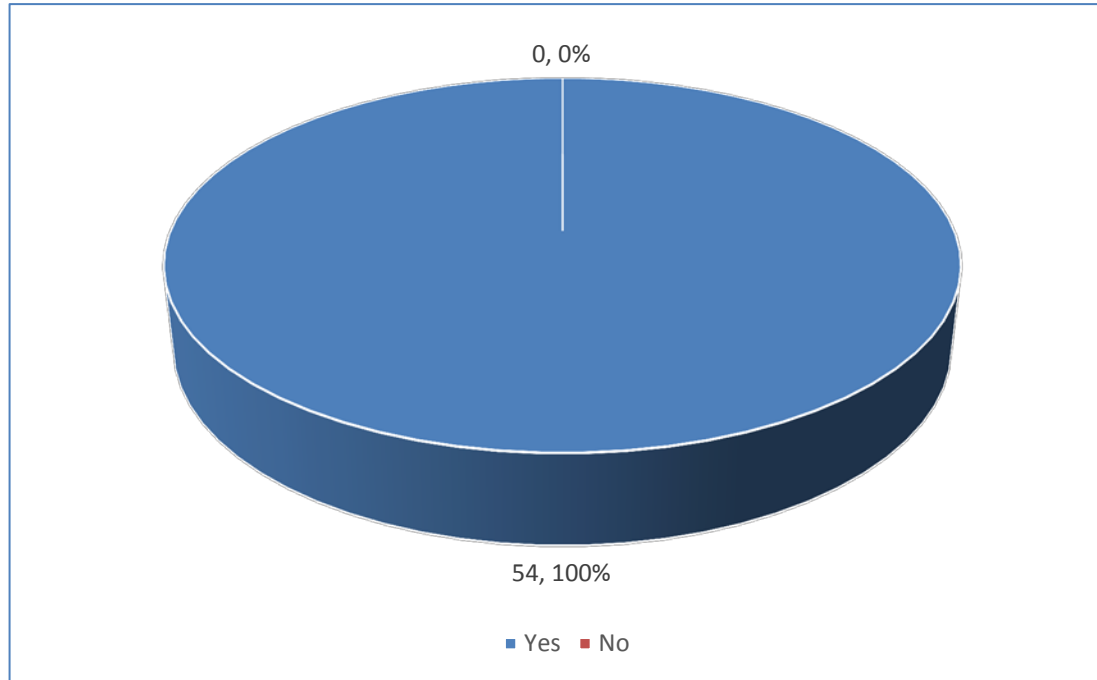
# Visit with prior arrangement

## Was access available at the agreed time?



On the 10 visits where a prior arrangement was made, access was available to all 10 sites at the agreed time.

# If an RGPOW site, is the building in use as a place of worship?

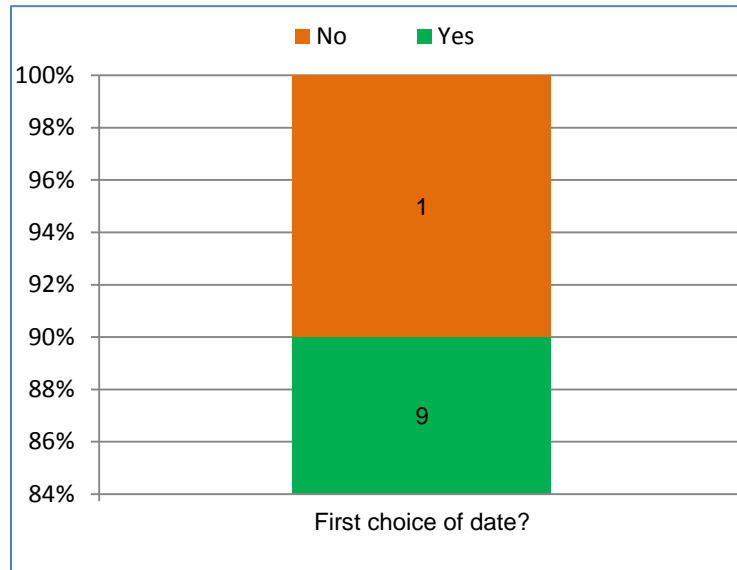
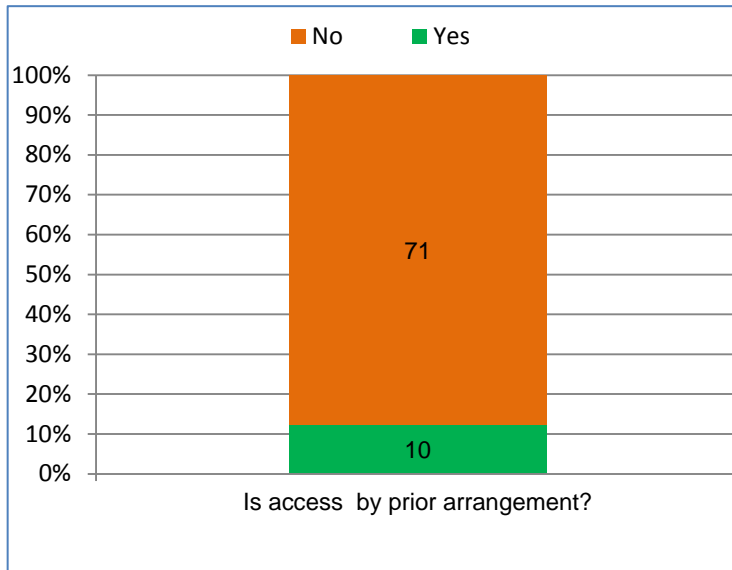


All of the 54 Repair Grants for Places of Worship grant scheme sites were in use as a place of worship. In addition to these, 3 of the Historic Monuments and Designed Landscapes grant scheme sites were also used as a place of worship.



The results – Additional information:

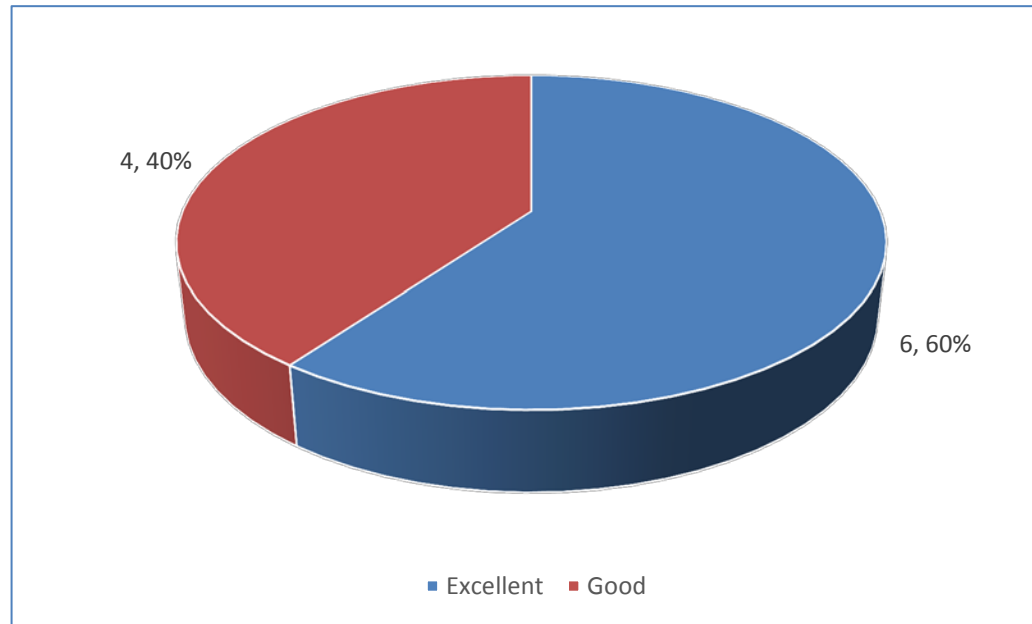
# Was access by prior arrangement?



On 10 of the 81 visits, access for the visit was by prior arrangement.

The mystery shopper got their first choice of date on 9 of the visits.

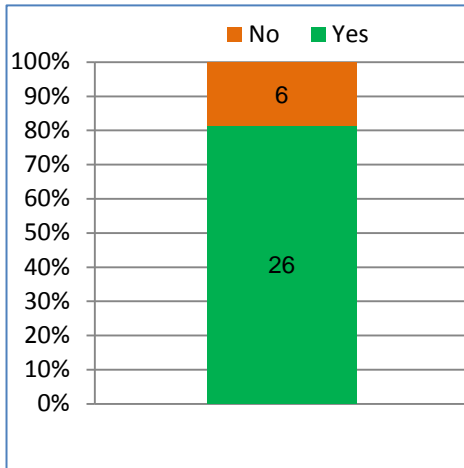
# If access for the visit was by prior arrangement, how would you rate the ease of arranging the visit?



Of the 14 visits where prior arrangement was required, when asked to rate the ease of arranging the proposed visit, 6 mystery shoppers rated it as Excellent and 4 as Good. Some of the comments were:

- *The contact details were clear, and after establishing contact, it was just a case of co-ordinating a mutually agreed time and date.*
- *Booking by website required. Easy process but the link to book was hard to find at the bottom of the site.*
- *Contact details were accurate and the owner responded immediately. It took less than 5 minutes to arrange from start to finish.*

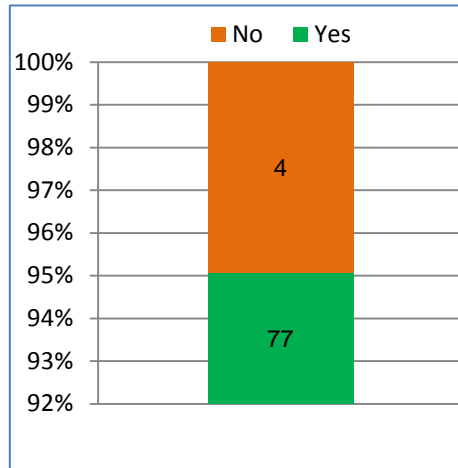
# Where applicable, are the access contact details on the EH website correct?



- *The contact telephone number on the website (which is the one I called) is different from the one listed above.*
- *Contact phone number is missing the leading 0*
- *Contact details given are for the Trust to book a stay in the property. Details to book a visit are on [http://www.\\*\\*\\*\\*\\*.com/](http://www.*****.com/)*
- *There is a new warden on a different number.*
- *The contact phone number, which is a mobile is no longer in service and therefore needs to be updated.*
- *There were six key holders listed inside the porch, but none were the person as named on the website.*

On the 32 occasions where it was applicable, 6 (19%) of the mystery shoppers felt that the access contact details on the EH website were not correct.

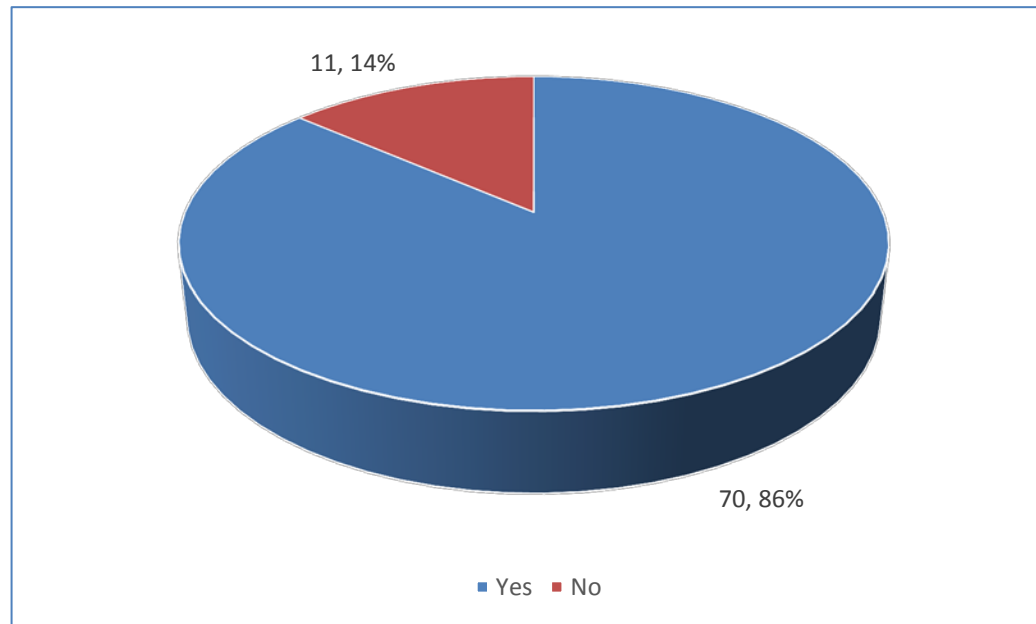
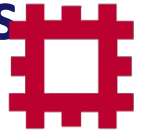
# Is the property location described on the EH website accurate?



- *It is located behind Charing cross station, however the address should be included.*
- *The lane is on the B4260, not the A40, which is the dual carriageway on the other side of the castle. The entrance is just past the hotel on the right hand side.*
- *I found the property easily however I am not sure that the postcode is correct.*
- *Confusing directions. should say: Head into Westbury (from Trowbridge), turn left into Market Place. OR turn right into Market Place, if heading towards Trowbridge.*

Just 4 (5%) of the mystery shoppers felt that the property location description, as per the EH website, could be improved upon. Their comments are shown above.

# Are the public transport and car parking arrangements described on the EH website accurate?

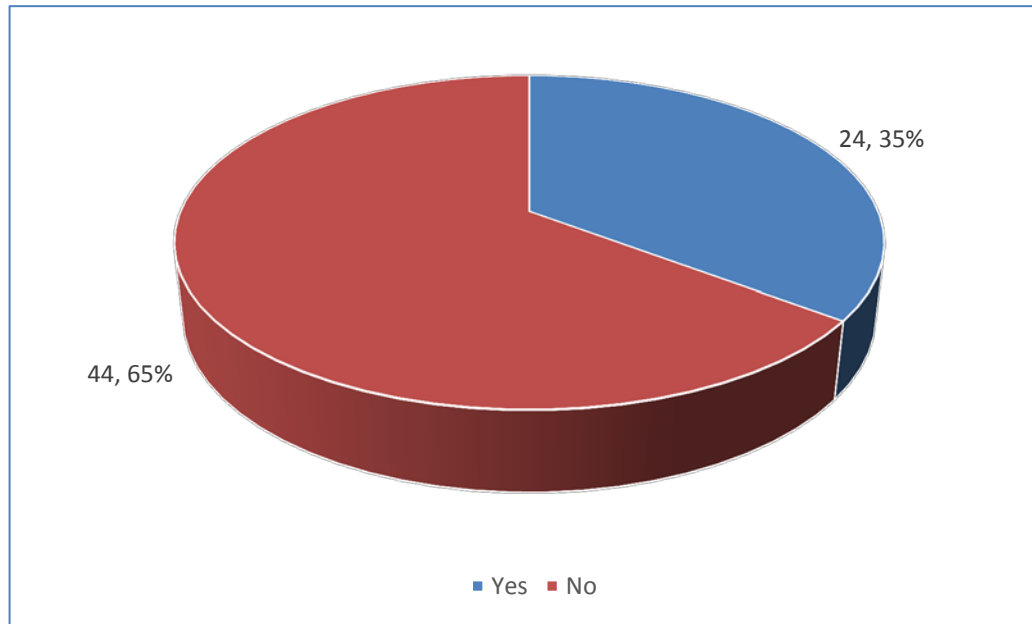


There were problems with the accuracy of either the public transport or car parking arrangements at 11 (14%) of the sites. A number of the discrepancies were to do with bus route information, where the route numbers have changed. Some of the comments were:

- *On Sundays: Bus no 36 - every 30 minutes from Harrogate to Ripon. There is no 36A bus.*
- *There were no allocated parking spaces. Parking was possible on the grass verge opposite the church.*
- *The bus numbers were incorrect. They were 88 and 80, not 588 and 580.*
- *The station mentioned is not a viable option unless a very keen walker.*



# Did you notice any details in the opening arrangements which need updating?



On the 68 occasions where it was felt to be applicable, 24 (35%) of the mystery shoppers stated that they noticed details in the opening arrangements which needed updating.

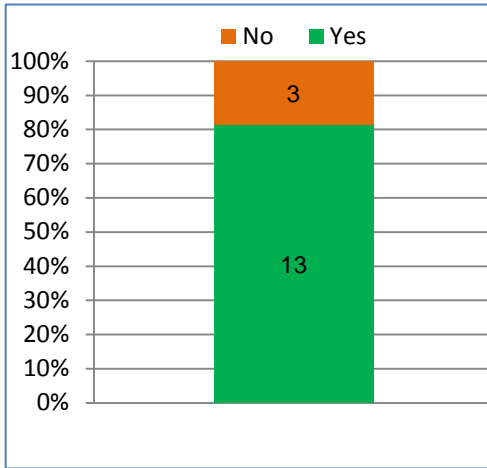
The next slide shows a selection of comments from the above sites:

# Did you notice any details in the opening arrangements which need updating?



- *An admission fee is charged and it could be stated that access is through the cafe.*
- *Opening times in August should be separated for clarity. It should be made clearer that the gardens can be visited separately.*
- *Yes, the site is only available for guided-visits. This should be updated. Indeed, I tried accessing the site 15 minutes before the tour started, and I was told to come back later.*
- *The sign on the noticeboard outside says 10am-4pm every Tuesday. It did not say times were different during school holidays. It also had the additional time on a Sunday advertised 9.30-11.30am. And said that other times can be arranged by appointment by contacting the Revd.*

# If an admission is charged, are the details on the EH website correct?



- *Admission was charged.*
- *There are no admission details given on the EH website. Prices are as follows:*
  - *Adults £7*
  - *Concessions and children £4*
  - *Family ticket (2 adults 3 children) £22*
  - *Family ticket (2 adults 2 children) £18*
  - *Groups over 20 £5 each*
- *Adult entrance fee for castle and gardens: 10.50. Gardens only: 7:00. Concession fee for castle and gardens: 9:00 Gardens only: 6:00. Children between 5-16 years old: 7:00. Gardens only: 4.50. Free entrance for children under 5. Groups (20+) castle and gardens 9:00, gardens only 6:00. RHS members (primary cardholder only): castle and gardens: 4:00, gardens only: free. RHS members card not valid on events day. HHA members: free.*

Out of the 16 sites where an admission fee was charged, it was felt that the details on the EH website were not correct at 3 (19%) of the sites, the comments for which are shown above.

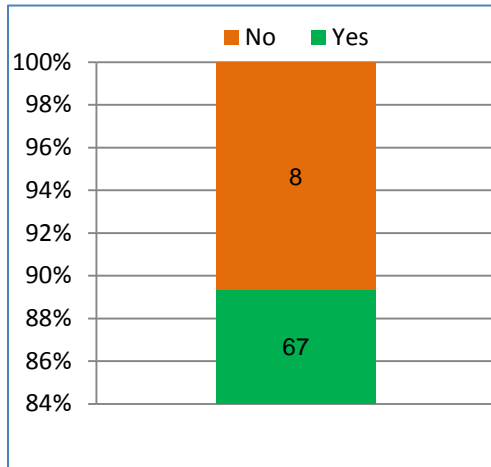
# Was there anything else you were expecting to see from the details, to which there was no access?



- *The website suggested that the cafe would be open, but it is now closed Mondays. There was a small art exhibition on, which we accessed.*
- *The Belfry, which is one of the main attractions of the church, had no access, but this may have been due to health and safety.*
- *There appeared to be little reference to the clock and the clock tower was not accessible to visitors. The historical importance of this item is referred to in the Property Description and so more information might have been expected.*
- *There was a description of the tower, but they didn't say it was accessible. The door was locked, I assume for health and safety mainly.*

In the majority of visits, the mystery shopper felt that they saw everything there was to see. Above is a selection of comments where the mystery shopper felt that they would have expected to see areas that they didn't.

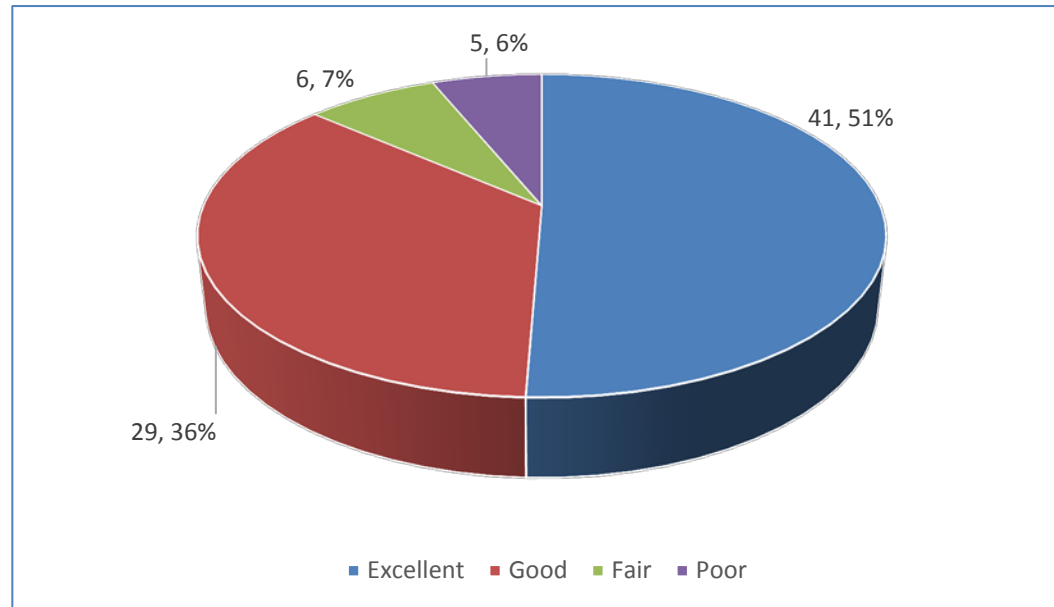
# Are the details on the EH website correct about the availability of a toilet?



- *There is a visitor toilet at ground floor level which appears suitable for the disabled.*
- *There was only one single men's toilet that I found and that was not accessible if in a wheelchair. I didn't notice any baby changing facilities either.*
- *Despite the EH website saying not, there was a toilet available which was marked as suitable for people with disabilities and there was a support arm that could be lowered in it.*
- *The accessible toilet has been installed.*
- *There were no toilets (disabled or otherwise) in the church. There were signs for toilets located in the church office and hall which was adjacent. It was closed, locked and unattended, therefore no toilet.*
- *No toilet. Village Hall has a toilet but is often locked as it was at the time of my visit.*
- *No toilets visible or signposted. Perhaps disabled toilet access available on request - no one available to ask.*

On the 75 visits where it was stated that toilets were available, this was the case at 67 of the sites. The comments above are where the details were not correct.

# How would you rate the overall process?



When asked to rate the overall process, 41 sites were rated as being Excellent (51%), 29 as being Good (36%), 6 as Fair (7%) and 5 as Poor (6%). For the 5 Poor ratings, 4 were due to the property being closed and 1 was that a fee was charged when it was meant to be free access. A selection of comments where the overall process was rated as either Excellent or Good are shown on the next slide:

# How would you rate the overall process?



- *I felt the process was efficient. Staff were useful and friendly. The tour overran and I was taken through to a short cut to maximise my time in the gardens.*
- *Very helpful and friendly family. A very interesting piece of history that I had no idea was on our doorstep.*
- *The whole experience was pleasurable and the property and surroundings worth a visit.*
- *The castle was easy to find, I was very impressed by the welcoming nature of the owners throughout my visit and the initial greeting which provided an introduction of the castle and its history.*
- *Opening was as stated, visit itself was very enjoyable and fascinating. Very nice and picturesque location and property, seeing the old ruins were a particular favourite.*
- *This is a delightful property to visit, it is situated just outside, but within easy walking distance of the village.*
- *Excellent maintained property, beautifully clean and tidy.*
- *Everything we read prior to visiting was just as we found it to be. We were pleasantly surprised as to how helpful the people were and they took time out to show us around and give us more information about the place despite being busy. They also made us feel welcome to return again.*
- *It is a stunning building hidden from the streets, it is spacious, elegant in its symmetry, with beautiful stained glass windows.*
- *All of the details on the English Heritage website for the location, arrangements and opening times were correct. I was made very welcome at the church.*



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