
CRANE PARK USAGE SURVEY COMMENTARY:

Initial analysis of survey undertaken 21 January 2024

VERSION CONTROL

Version	Date	Author
1.0	03 Feb 2024	Natalie Low
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Highlights of this report

This analysis is for the most recent Crane Park usage survey, undertaken by FORCE volunteers, on 21 January 2024, which has been running since 2012. The weather was generally clear and dry (around 11-12°C) for the survey count; the wind grew stronger in the last few hours as Storm Isha approached that evening.

Meadway

- This year, a total of 1265 visits were made using the Meadway entrance of Crane Park between 8am and 4pm. While lower than the levels observed during 2019-2022, it is similar to last year (1277) and higher than pre-coronavirus levels. This suggests that the increase in visits observed during the coronavirus period has largely been sustained.
- The number of women was slightly higher than men (580 compared to 535, a men:women ratio of 48:52), maintaining the same level as the past 3 survey years.
- The proportion of visits involving children and toddlers was 12%, which continues a downward trend over the last decade. The overall number of children and toddlers (150) was the lowest since 2019, and low compared to earlier pre-pandemic levels.
- There were 137 bicycles (11% of visits), compared to 157 (12%) in 2022, continuing a decline in such visits. This could reflect changes in bike ownership or usage, or in cyclists' propensity to use Crane Park.
- In 2024, there were 248 dogs, around 22% compared to adult visitors. Although the number of dogs continues to decrease, the proportion is within the range of previous years. While the data from 2022 and 2023 do support the hypothesis of more people getting a dog during lockdown, it looks like any effect could now be waning.
- In 2024, in common with previous years, most visits – a total of 940 (74%) – continued into or out of Kneller Gardens. This supports the hypothesis of a sustained usage of the corridor in connecting the wider network of green space journeys.
- This survey is the second winter one since the council installed a zebra crossing at this location in December 2022. The slight fall in the overall number and proportion of visits continuing to/from Kneller Gardens does not suggest the crossing has yet had a strong impact on whether visits connect Crane Park and Kneller Gardens.
- One interesting new phenomenon observed across all the locations this year were large early morning running and walking groups, which boosted the morning counts.

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Marsh Farm Lane/Twickenham Junction Rough

- In January 2024, 1102 visits were recorded to Marsh Farm Lane/Twickenham Junction Rough (of which 72% were to/from the Rough). This is a little higher (2%) than last year and confirms a sustained increase in numbers since the path opened in 2018.
- We now have two years of post-COVID data to examine what difference the opening of the Rough has made. The January 2024 survey confirms the enduring increase since 2018 in the overall number of visits, including by adults and children, cyclists and dog walkers. The profile of visitors has also shifted, with higher proportions of women, children, and cyclists, compared to 2018. One note of caution was an unwelcome fall in the proportion of children visits that used the Rough (60%, compared to 79% last year).

Moor Mead

- In total there were 770 visits on the Moor Mead path between the hours of 8am and 4pm, split evenly between people going east towards Moor Mead Park (382, 50%) and west towards Twickenham station (388, 50%). Although the survey does not allow these visits to be linked, the total of 770 through Moor Mead can be compared with a total of 790 involving Twickenham Junction Rough, on the opposite side of London Road, for the same time period.
- Around 19% of visits on the Moor Mead path involved children, while the ratio of men to women was 49:51. These figures compare with 10% of visits through the Rough involving children, and a gender balance of 48:52. Around 4% of visits on the Moor Mead path were on bike, compared with 9% through the Rough, while the number of dogs was 16% compared to adult visits (26% through the Rough).

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1. Introduction

This document provides an initial analysis of the Crane Park usage survey, undertaken by FORCE volunteers, on 21 January 2024. It also looks at some headline trends using previous survey results.

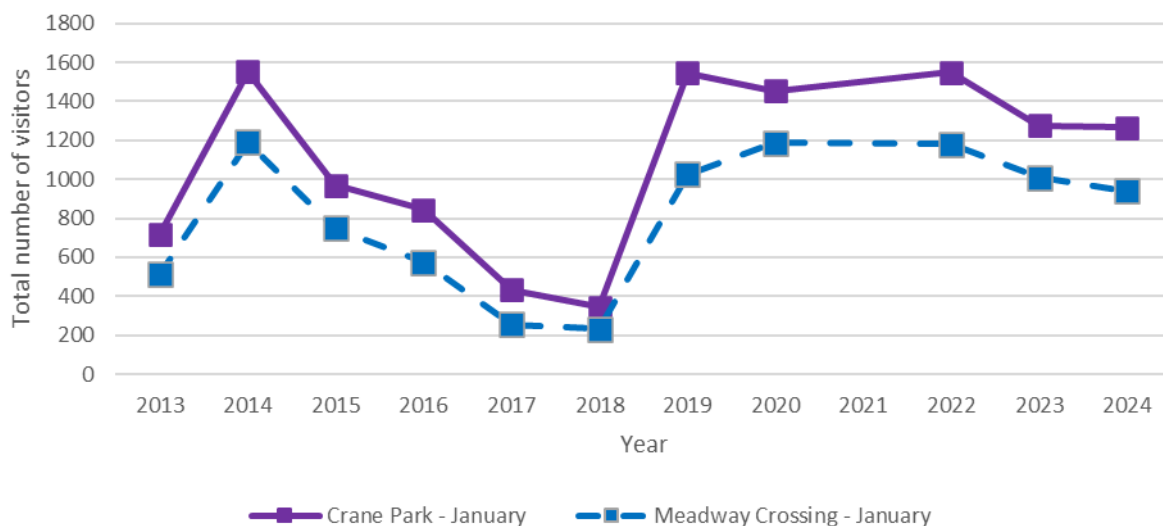
The weather was generally clear and dry (around 11-12°C) for the survey count; the wind grew stronger in the last few hours as part of Storm Isha. It followed a particularly cold snap earlier in the week.

2. Meadway

The summary findings for Meadway are as follows:

- (Figure 1) A total of 1265 people used the Meadway entrance of Crane Park (in or out) between 8am and 4pm. While lower than the levels observed during 2019-2022, it is only slightly lower than the number from last year (1277) and higher in general than pre-coronavirus levels. This suggests that the increase in visits observed during the coronavirus period has largely been sustained.

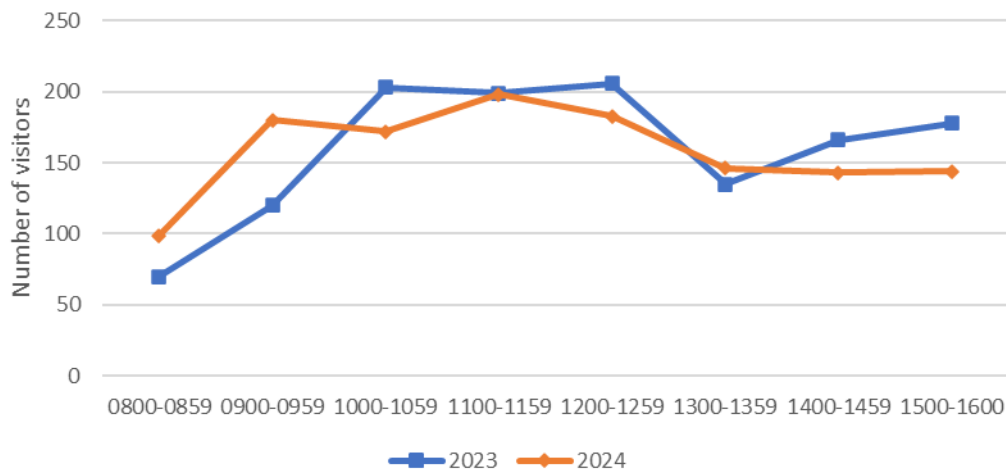
Fig 1 Crane Park and Meadway Crossing, all visitors, January 2013-20 and 2022-24



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- (Figure 2) Numbers were lowest in the first hour (99), increasing to a peak of 198 people between 11 and 12am, and then falling back down to just under 150 people an hour from 1pm onwards. This pattern was similar to the previous year. One interesting new phenomenon observed across all the locations this year between 8-10am were large running and walking groups, which boosted the morning counts. The survey day coincided with an event organised by the Bear Cat Running Club, which had a number of groups on the Crane Park route. Surveyors at both Crane Park and Marsh Farm Lane noted a large group, while three groups were seen at Moor Mead, together totalling around 57 runners.

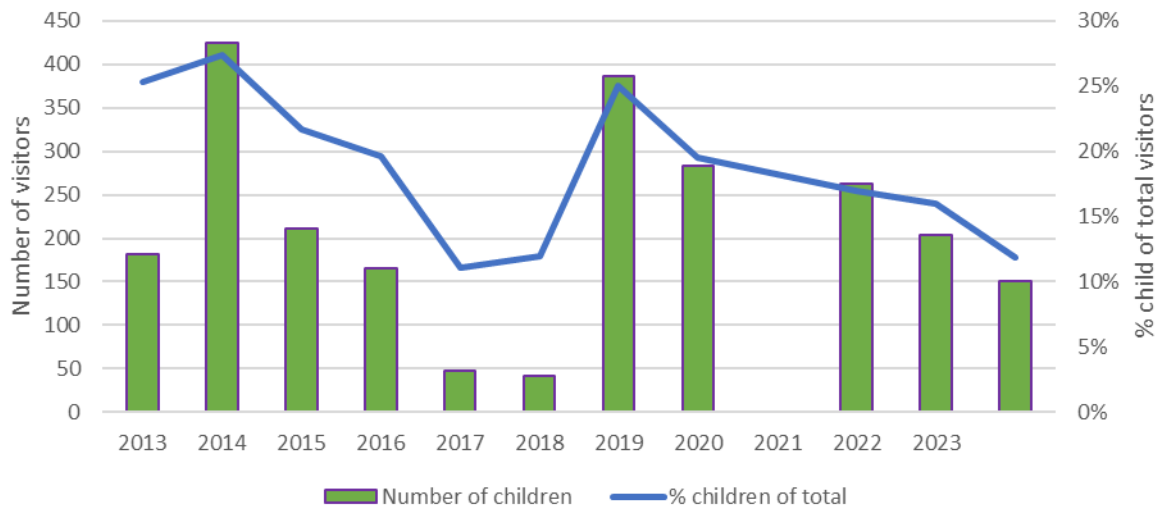
Fig 2 Total visitors by time of day, Crane Park, January 2023 and 2024



- The number of women was slightly higher than men (580 compared to 535, a men:women ratio of 48:52) and exactly the same percentage as the last 3 survey years. (By contrast, in summer women seldom outnumber men, according to our surveys in July.)
- (Figure 3) The proportion of children and toddlers was 12%, compared to 16% in 2022, which continues a now sustained downward trend over the last 10 years. (The very low proportions of children in 2017 and 2018 are likely to be due to the fact those counts were rain-affected.) The overall number of children and toddlers (150) was the lowest number recorded, with the exception of the 2017 and 2018 counts.

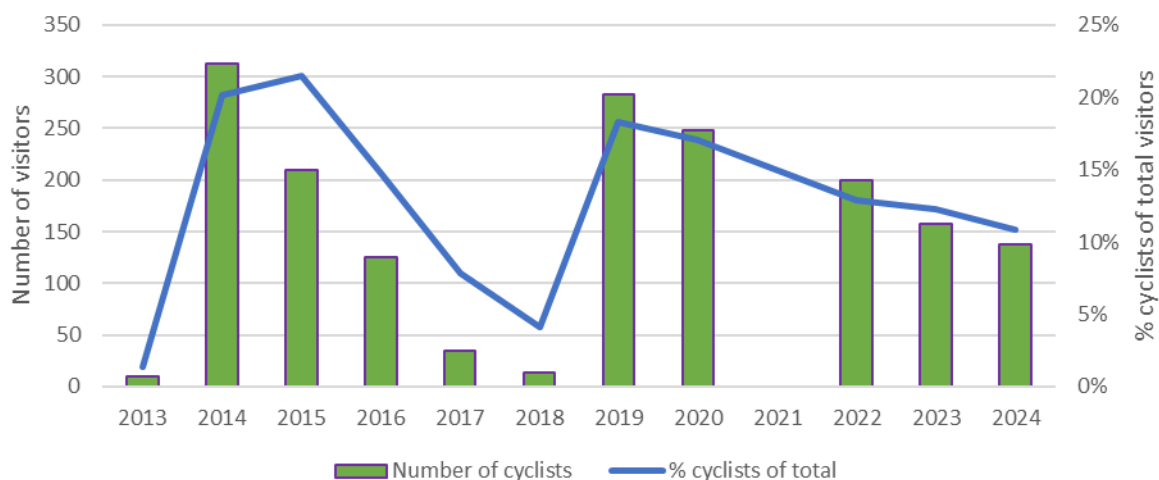
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Fig 3 Number and % of child visitors, Crane Park, January, 2013-20 and 2022-24



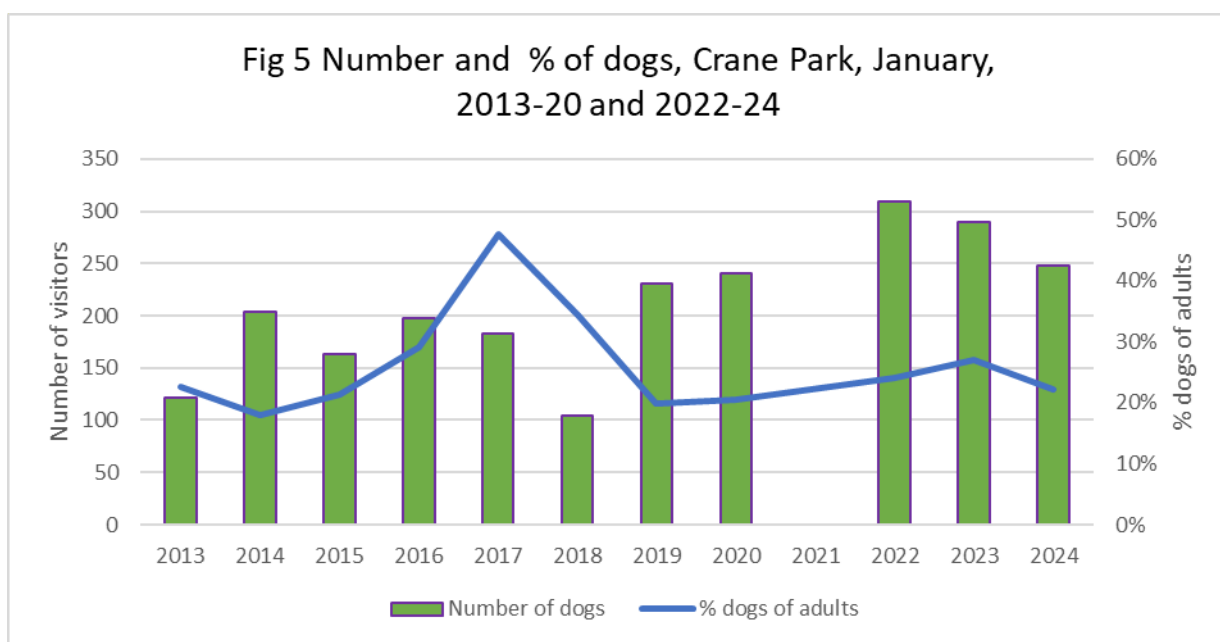
- (Figure 4) There were 137 bicycles (11% of visits), compared to 157 (12%) in 2022. This confirms a sustained decline in such visits, particularly since 2019. This could reflect changes in bike ownership or usage, or in cyclists' propensity to use Crane Park.

Fig 4 Number and % of cyclists, Crane Park, January, 2013-20 and 2022-24



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- (Figure 5) In 2024, there were 248 dogs, around 22% compared to adult visitors. The data this year suggest a continuing decrease in the number of dogs since 2022. However, the proportion is in line with the range of 18%-29% from previous years (excepting the rain-affected counts of 2017 and 2018: rain generally reduces overall numbers but increases dog walker visits as a proportion). While the data from 2022 and 2023 do support the hypothesis of more people getting a dog during lockdown, it looks like any effect could now be waning; other factors such as dog owners' propensity to use Crane Park could also still be at play.

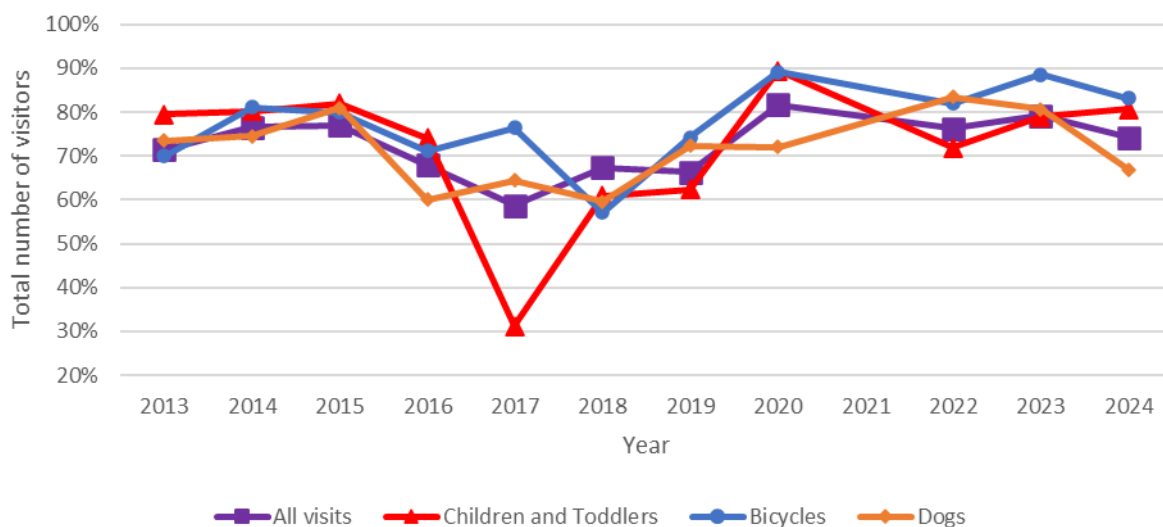


- Low numbers of visits on mobility scooters or wheelchairs persist, with three visits recorded over the course of the day (compared with 1 in 2023).

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- (Figure 6) Most visits - a total of 940, or 74% this year – continued into or out of Kneller Gardens (see also Figure 1). While this is slightly lower than the percentage in 2023 (79%), it is comparable to 2022 (76%), and relatively high compared to the range of rates in the pre-COVID years (59%-77%). This supports the hypothesis of a sustained usage of the corridor in connecting the wider network of green space journeys since the pandemic.

Fig 6 Percent of Crane Park visits crossing to/from Kneller Gardens, for selected groups, January 2013-20 and 2022-24



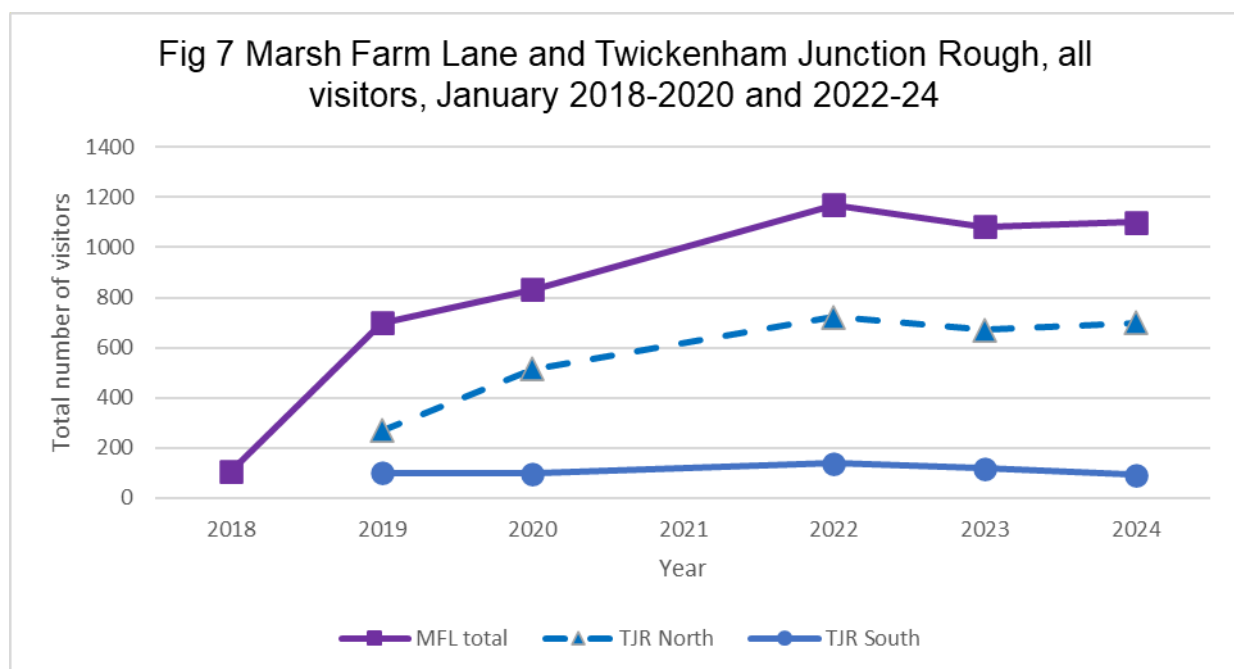
- This survey is the second winter one since the council installed a zebra crossing at this location in December 2022. The trend for overall visits since 2022 does not suggest the crossing has yet had a strong impact on whether visits connect Crane Park and Kneller Gardens. There was a very similar pattern for cycle visits (83% of Crane Park visits involved crossing to/from Kneller Gardens in 2024, compared to 89% in 2023 and 82% in 2022.) Interestingly, the proportion of visits involving children/toddlers that crossed to/from Kneller Gardens was very slightly higher this year (81% in 2024, compared to 79% in 2023, and 72% in 2022). But by contrast, the proportion of dog visits crossing to/from Kneller Gardens fell sharply (67% this year, compared to 81% in 2023). There is therefore no sign yet that the crossing has had any noticeable effect on winter visits.

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2. Marsh Farm Lane/Twickenham Junction Rough

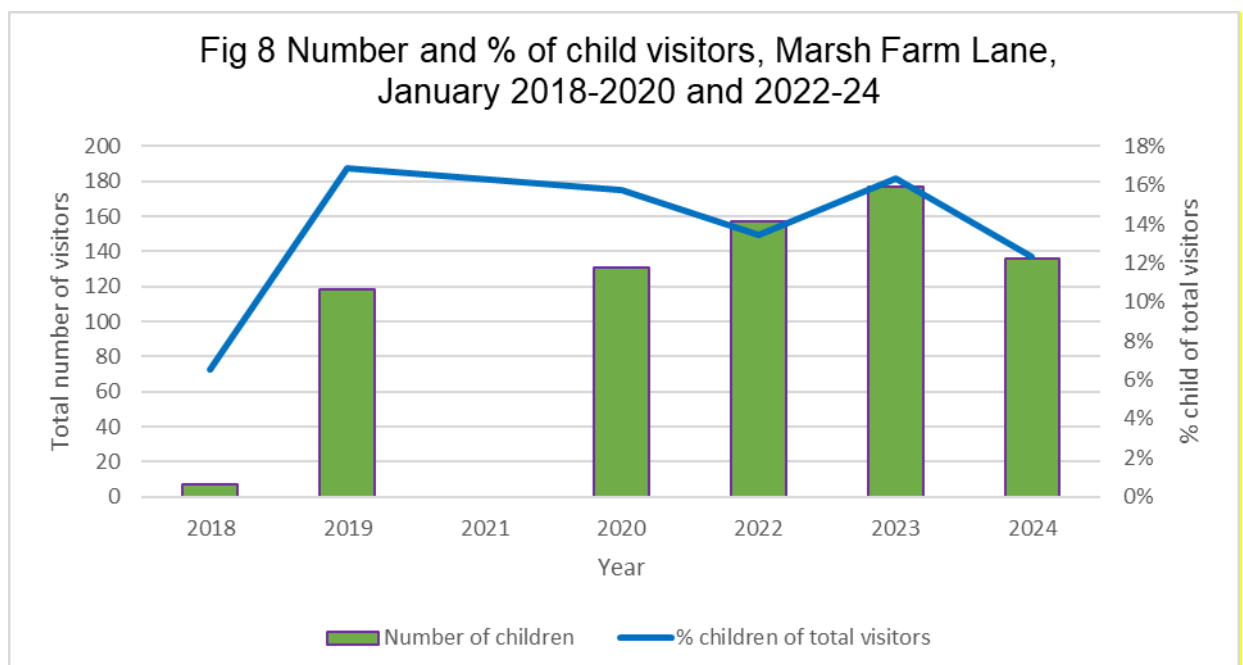
Here we record users of the Twickenham Junction Rough (and whether they turn north across the river or south across the railway) plus those who walk straight along Marsh Farm Lane without using the Rough. The summary findings are as follows:

- a) (Figure 7) A total of 1102 people used Marsh Farm Lane. This is a little higher than last year (1083, 2% up), and confirms a sustained increase in numbers since the path opened in 2018. In January 2018, before the path through the Rough opened, a much lower figure of 107 visits was recorded.



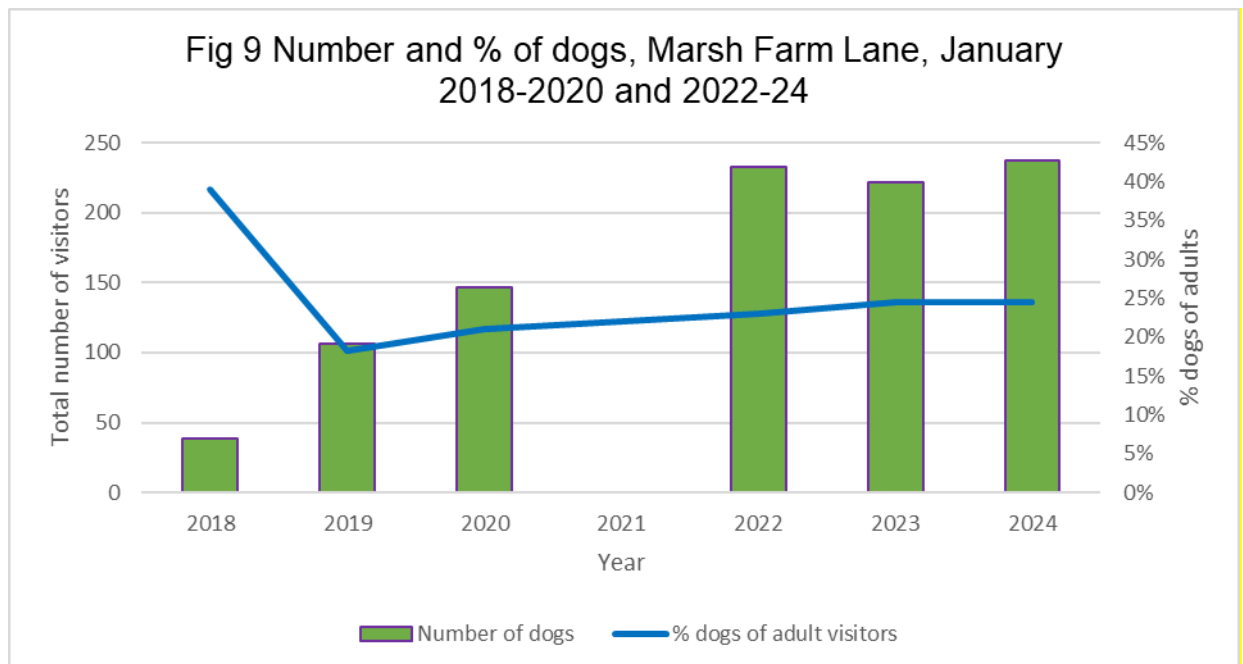
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- b) Of the 1102 visits, 790 (or 72%) also included Twickenham Rough. This is similar to the proportions seen since 2020 (range of 73-74%) and maintains the increase from January 2019 (53%).
- c) As with previous years, most of the Rough visits (698 out of 790, or 88%) went north and across the river. The proportion is very slightly higher than the levels seen since 2020 (range of 83-84%), and again maintains the increase from January 2019 (73%).
- d) Taken together, these indicate a consolidated increase in visitors following the opening of the Rough in 2018, particularly in terms of people continuing their journey along the Crane valley.
- e) The ratio of men to women was 49:51 this year, very similar to the 50:50 ratio recorded in 2022 and 2023. This confirms a sustained increase in female visitors since the opening of the Rough (the ratio in 2018 was 58:42.)
- f) (Figure 8) In contrast to the overall number of visits, the number of child visits fell in January 2024 (136 compared to 177 in 2023, a 23% decrease), taking the number back down to 2020 levels. The proportion that child visits made up of the total, 12%, was the lowest recorded since the opening of the Rough. It is too early to say whether this is the start of a longer-term decline in child visits, as has been seen at Meadway over the last decade. However, the proportion and number remain much higher than the levels observed in 2018 before the Rough opened (7 and 7% respectively).



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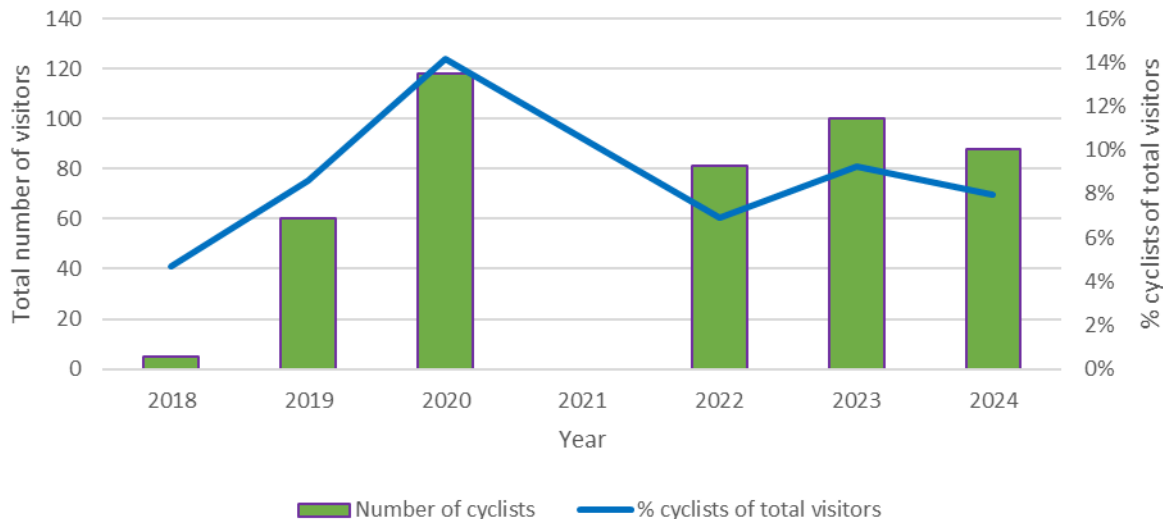
- g) (Figure 9) The number of dogs counted in January 2024 was 237. Since 2022, the numbers have been consistently over 220, and much higher than before the Rough opened in 2018, or its first two years of opening. The proportion of dogs compared to adult visits was 25%, the same as last year, its joint highest since the Rough opened. (Prior to the opening, the proportion was higher at 39%, reflecting a higher concentration of dogwalkers in the much smaller number of visitors.)



- h) (Figure 10) In contrast to the overall number of visits, the number of cycle visits in January 2024 dipped slightly compared to 2023 (88 in 2024 vs 100 in 2023 and a high of 118 in 2020). The proportion that cycle visits made up of all visits was 8%, in line with levels since the Rough opened (with the exception of the 14% peak in 2020). The data do confirm a sustained increase in the number and proportion of cycle visits compared to the very low levels seen in 2018 before the Rough opened.

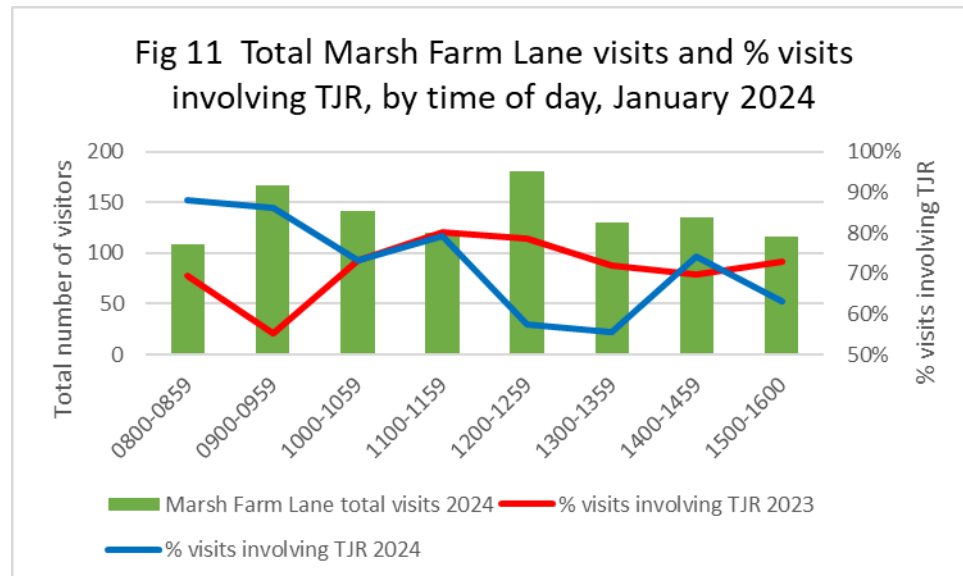
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Fig 10 Number and % of cyclists, Marsh Farm Lane, January 2018-2020 and 2022-24



- i) We now have two years of post-COVID data to examine what difference the opening of the Rough has made. The January 2024 survey confirms the enduring increase in the overall number of visits: there are far more adults and children, as well as cyclists and dog walkers than in 2018. The new data also show the profile of visitors has shifted, with higher proportions of women, children, and cyclists, compared to 2018. The fall in the proportion of dog walkers is more an indication of the broader appeal of the new pathway to different types of visitors: the overall number of dogwalkers has still increased substantially.
- j) Overall, 72% of visits involved Twickenham Junction Rough in January 2024, but this varies by type of visitor. The proportion is higher for visits by cyclists (78%) and dogwalkers (76%). The reduction in children has coincided with a much lower proportion of their visits using the Rough (60%, compared to 79% last year).
- k) Disappointingly, there were no visits involving wheelchairs or mobility scooters recorded this year for the Marsh Farm Lane survey.
- l) (Figure 11) Per hour, the number of visitors bounced up and down throughout the day, peaking at 181 between 12am-1pm. The proportion of visits involving Twickenham Junction Rough was highest in the morning before 10am, and lowest from 12am-2pm. This was somewhat different to the pattern observed last year when the proportion of visits involving the Rough was low before 10am and highest in the late morning. As mentioned above, a large running group was recorded in the 8-10am slots, which boosted morning numbers.

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3. Moor Mead Path

In February 2023, a new path was opened linking Moor Mead Recreation Ground with Twickenham station, as part of the station redevelopment. The July 2023 survey included Moor Mead for the first time, and this round was the first winter survey of the site. Although the survey does not allow these visits to be linked, we can compare the number and type of Moor Mead visits with those involving Twickenham Junction Rough, on the opposite side of London Road. The summary findings are as follows:

- In total there were 770 visits on the Moor Mead path, split evenly between people going east towards Moor Mead Park (382, 50%) and west towards Twickenham station (388, 50%). In comparison, a total of 790 visits were recorded through Twickenham Junction Rough between 8am – 4pm.
- Around 19% of visits on the Moor Mead path involved children, while the ratio of men to women was 49:51. These figures compare with 10% of visits through the Rough involving children, and a gender balance of 48:52.
- Around 4% of visits on the Moor Mead path were on bike, compared with 9% through the Rough, while the number of dogs was 16% compared to adult visits (26% through the Rough). The relatively low levels of bike use along the Moor Mead path may be due to the narrowness of the path and the availability of Cole Park Road as a nearby, parallel, quiet and safe alternative.
- Similarly to the other two locations, two large groups of runners and one of walkers were recorded on Moor Mead between 8-10am.

(Please note some of the figures for Twickenham Junction Rough differ slightly from those quoted in Section 2, as they exclude visits using Marsh Farm Lane only.)