

HARTSHOLME COUNTRY PARK

CAMP SITE REPORT 2017



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Overview

Staffing was once again an issue for the 2017 season, absence due to ill health resulted in casual staff cover for a large part of the season with remaining staff also taking on more hours during busy periods. The camp site will be looking to recruit one more permanent staff member in the New Year.

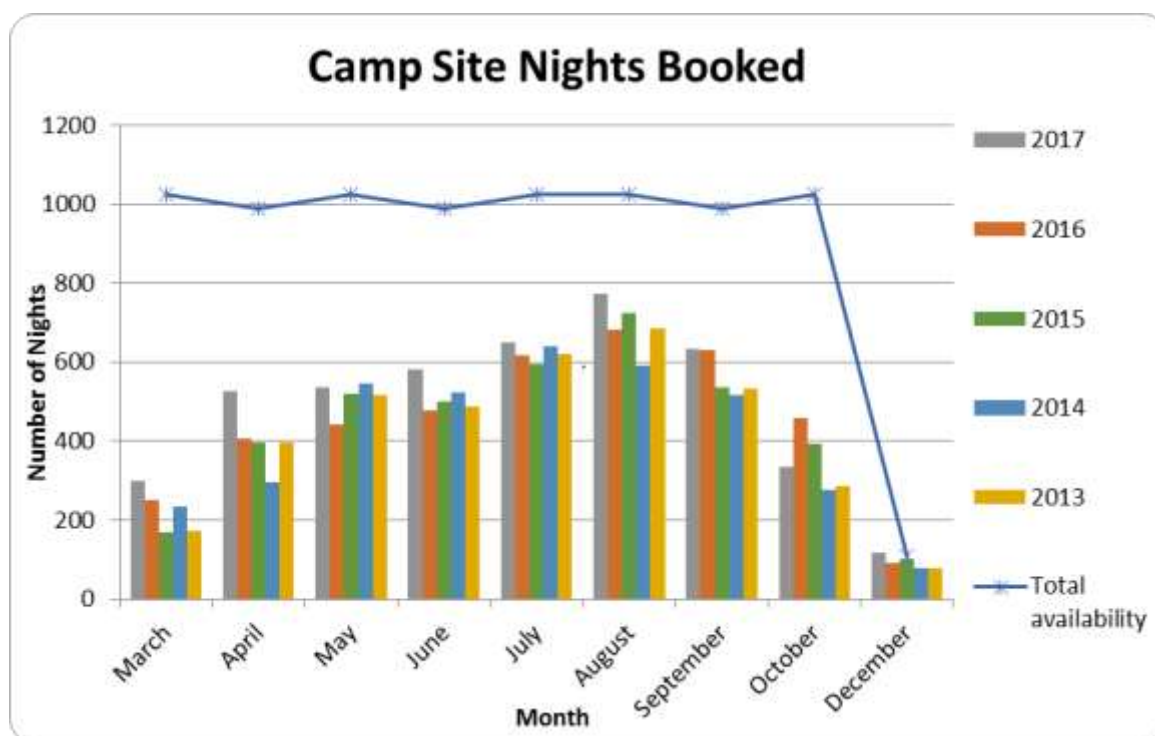
As with previous years many bookings were already in place for Easter and the early Bank holidays. For the second year running we are almost at capacity for the August Bank Holiday which coincides with the annual Lincoln Steam Punk event. Other popular weekends were the 'Discover Lincolnshire Weekend' and Lincolns' Christmas Market.

RAF Scampton hosted an Air Show in September and this was a popular weekend for us. However, as weekends are popular anyway it is hoped the cancellation of next year's Air Show will not have a significant effect overall.

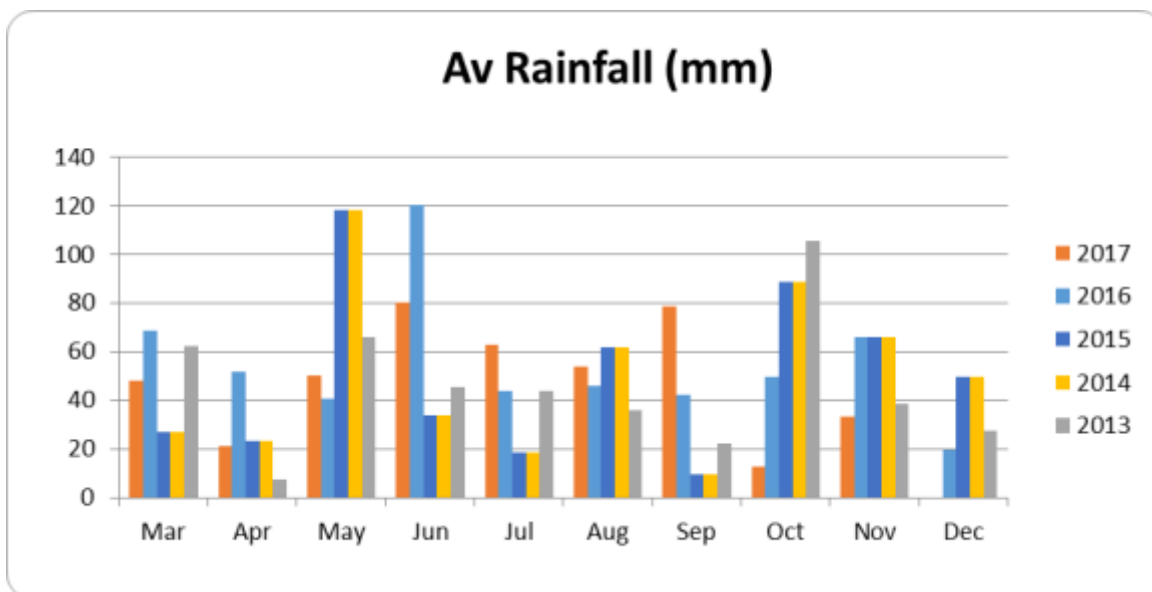
For these busier weekends we again asked a minimum of three nights, accepted as the norm by campers who appreciate that competition for space is high and a similar policy is in operation around the country. We also ask for non returnable deposits in advance, another accepted norm.

Camp Site terms and conditions were updated and posted online making information more accessible to our customers. Our position on payments and refunds is much clearer, this should negate the need for wardens to process refunds and most will receive a credit note for a stay in the following season.

Occupancy Levels.



Across the year occupancy levels were much improved on last year with an increase in bookings every month except October. Overall there was a total of 4449 nights booked, an increase of 393 on the total from last year (4056). The correlation between bookings and the weather does not follow the usual pattern¹. However, it may be that poor weather in September resulted in fewer advance bookings for October. Staffing levels were also slightly lower for October, perhaps affecting telephone bookings.



We know bookings are also affected by the following factors.

- Current economic climate, less disposable income.
- Lack of a real time online booking facility, becoming more commonplace with competitors.
- Dedicated office time to reception/phone bookings (camp site wardens spend a great deal of time out of the office on the others tasks required).

In 2018 a planned new booking system should ensure that we reduce the impact of at least two of these factors.

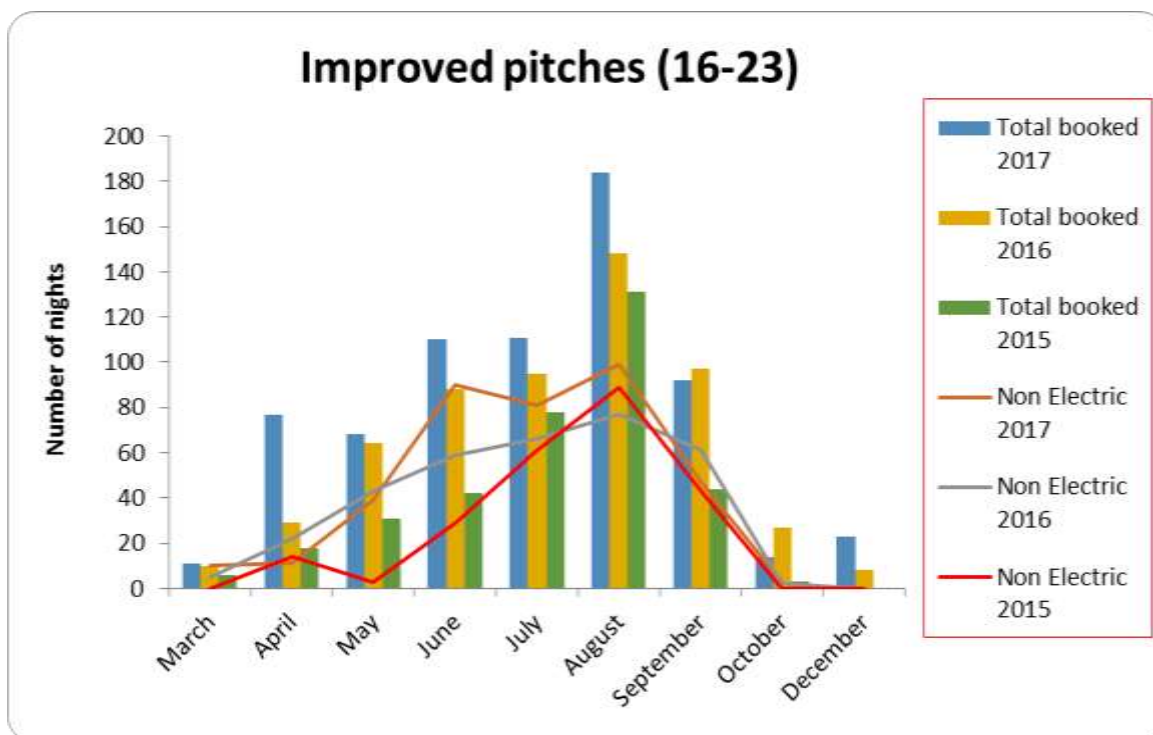
Pitch improvements.

In the past three seasons we have completed improvements to eight pitches which included the addition of electric hook ups (meaning the whole site can now offer electric) and an all-weather surface. This has further reduced the need to let out pitches at our lowest fee as the demand for non-electric (which we only allow in this area) is low compared to the demand for electric pitches. A graph showing the use of these pitches (16-23) is shown on page 3.

¹ Weather data is taken from Met office data for Waddington Station.

In addition to allowing people to book electric these are now more likely to be used by a motorhome or campervan, our most frequent pitch requests. Previously we had to turn down business as suitable pitches were at capacity.

In total the electric pitches booked on the new area was 690, which is three times the amount booked in the 2016 season, generating a revenue of just over £12,000. Along with these improvements we have reconfigured all pitches making maximum use of space and allowing easier allocation at time of booking.



The Discover Lincolnshire Weekend 17th, 18th & 19th March 2017: This was a relatively busy weekend for us considering the temperature and the time of year with 47% occupancy Fri-Sunday. Take up of the offer for this period was lower with only 7 of the 22 customers taking advantage. The offer will be extended for the 2018 season.

Easter Weekend Friday 14th March to Monday 17th April: The site was 97% occupied with only 3% of those pitches being used on our lowest fee for non-electric. With low rainfall and relatively high temperatures not surprisingly this a successful weekend for us and the busiest weekend in April.

Bank Holidays (BH) (May and August): Although not as successful as the Easter weekend we were almost at capacity for take up of electric pitches for all Bank Holiday stays and again there was a good take up of the recently improved pitches. For the early BH in May 77% of pitches were occupied over three nights, and for the late BH this figure was 90%.

For the bank holiday in August the site was 93% occupied over the three nights with all electric pitches booked. We were expecting a high occupancy rate due to the fact that the Lincoln Steam Punk weekend falls on this BH, however we had a few late cancellations. Disappointingly the Pod was only booked for one

night over this weekend. For 2018 the site is already 96% booked and we will ensure full payment is taken in good time allowing re-booking of pitches after a late cancellation.

December Christmas Market opening. Wednesday 6th December to Monday 11th December:

The site was open for five nights to coincide with Lincolns’ Christmas market, which ran for three nights from Thursday 1st to Saturday 4th December. The last night of the Market was cancelled due to poor weather, however this did not appear to have a negative effect on camp site stays.

Our three night booking minimum was reinstated to try and maximize occupancy. Prices were as per the table below, including a reduction in price for the least popular nights, Wednesday and Sunday.

	6 th Dec	7 th Dec	8 th Dec	9 th Dec	10 th Dec
	Weds	Thurs	Fri	Sat	Sun
Single with Electric Hook up	£25.50	£30.00	£30.00	£30.00	£25.50
5 night with Electric Hook up	£134 total stay				

Must be booked together as minimum.

Must be booked together, 2 night minimum.

The most popular nights remain the, Friday and Saturday with 94 and 91% % of pitches occupied. Wednesday night was the least popular with only 24% occupancy (lower than in 2016) and Sunday night had 46% occupancy (higher than 2016). A three night minimum seems to make little difference but Thursday night bookings were up on last year as we ensured customers were fully aware of the benefits of visiting the market on this quieter day. We had some cancellations but no refunds were issued nor requested, therefore the occupancy figures will include these bookings.

We offer our pitches on a first come first serve basis and only 2 trader pitches (5 night package rate) were sold in 2017. If we are to continue to open for the full 5 nights in 2017 it may be that we can maximise the income by offering camp site pitches that are advertised alongside market trade pitches as traders will usually require the full five nights. If this isn’t successful then perhaps we should consider not opening on the Wednesday, depending on how this is to be staffed.

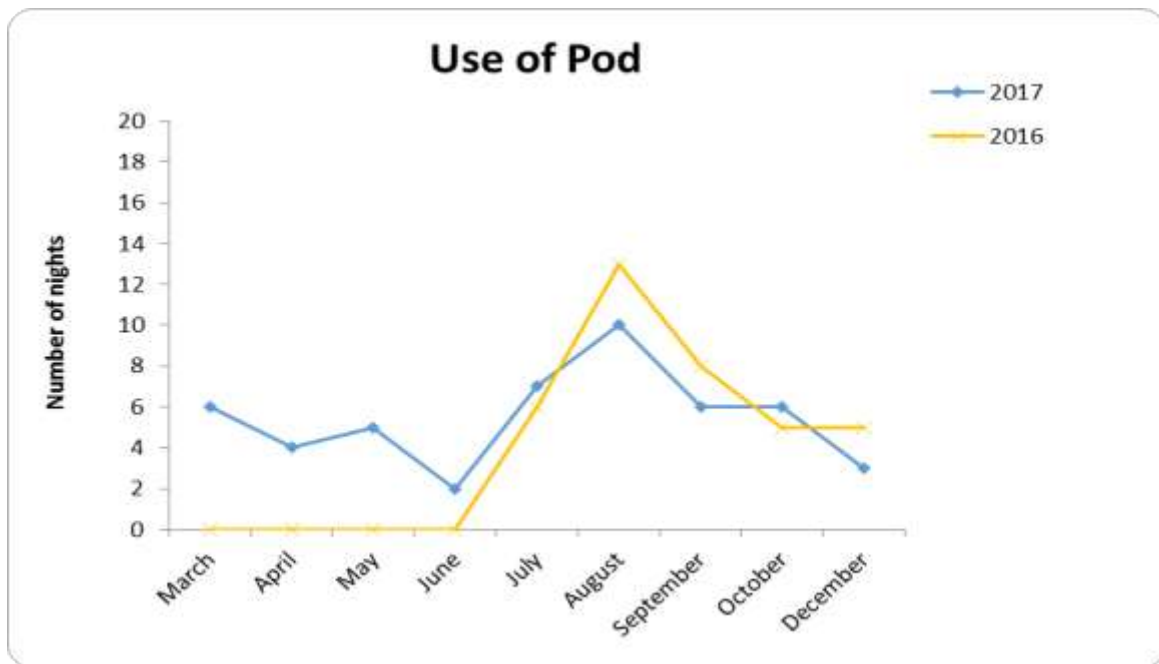
The market was not without issues and again the electric hook ups and freezing water pipes were a problem out of hours. Thankfully, due to many improvements this year to the electrical supply, the scale of the problem was not as widespread as in previous years and there were no complaints. Problems most likely occurred due to a fault with a campers unit rather than our supply. For 2018 there will also be improvements to the water supply.

Camping Pod.

A camping pod was ordered in February 2016 at a cost of £5142 and was eventually delivered and installed ready for use by mid-July of the same year. Since that time a total of 86 nights have been sold, generating a revenue of £3105. This equates to 35.5% take up of available nights in 2016² and 19.5% in 2017, roughly corresponding to weekends.

² Total available nights was lower in 2016 as the Pod was delivered mid July.

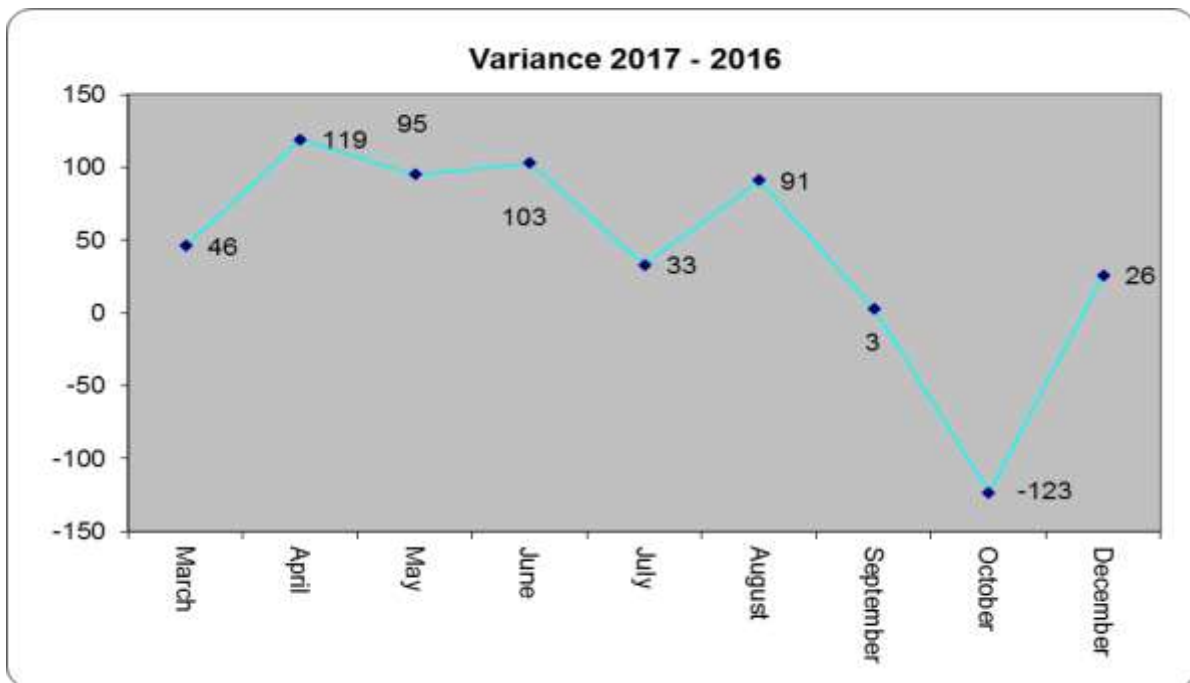
Prices for 2017 were set at £40 per night for single night bookings and £35 per night when booking two or more nights. For the Christmas market the price was set at £50 per night and the pod was occupied for 3 nights.



It has been suggested that for the target market a second pod may be necessary as young families can then book together, another suggestion is that we implement a weekly rate. In 2017 our main focus will be re-marketing and advertising of the pod.

Occupancy comparison between seasons.

The graph below shows that for 2017 there was an increase in nights booked across the season apart from October. As discussed in previous reports our business improves at peak times, when there is more competition for space, such as the Bank holidays, however, other sites would seem to take most of the school holiday business. For next season it is suggested that we do not charge high season prices for the half term in October and focus on attracting families to the park to attend one of the many popular events that we are running over this period.

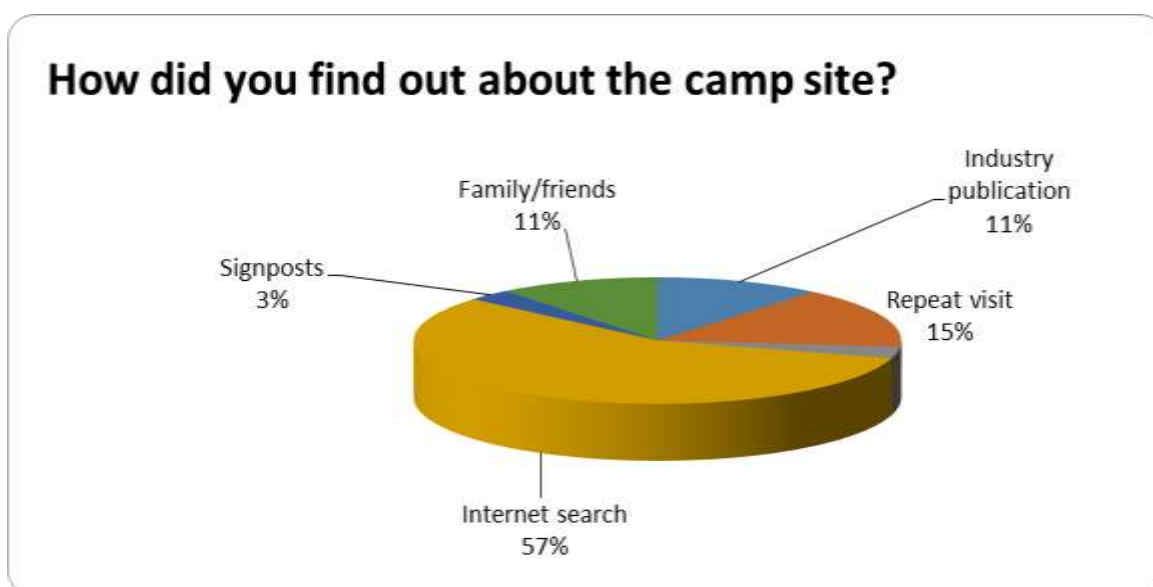


Offers in the last season.

Due to poor take up of offers in the past for 2017 we only used the free night offer to support the Discover Lincolnshire weekend in March and the Christmas Market in December. As discussed for 2018 we hope to implement an offer for extended stays in the Camping Pod.

Annual survey questions.

Perhaps the most satisfying result for staff is that 99% of respondents said they would stay again, this figure was 100% for those staying for the Christmas market period.



Once again the internet is the most popular means of finding out about the camp site with an increase on the figure last year. The camp site is very easy to locate online and we feature highly after a Google search of camp sites in Lincon. Most other categories have remained relatively stable.

Advertising

Advertising spend in the last season was **£907**

This is spread across the following providers:-

- The publication of an annual brochure. Cost **£200**
- Annual membership of the Visit England National Quality Assessment Scheme (for which the camp site holds three stars). Cost **£280**
- A standard entry in the above schemes official brochure. Cost **£120**
- Discover Lincolnshire 2018 brochure. Cost **£151**
- Camping and Caravanning Club (2 year advert). Cost **£108**
- Warner Group Publications: Camp Site Finder Guide. Cost **£48**

This guide is distributed with the following

MMM March edition (NEC show issue)

Caravan March edition (NEC show issue)

Camping magazine May edition

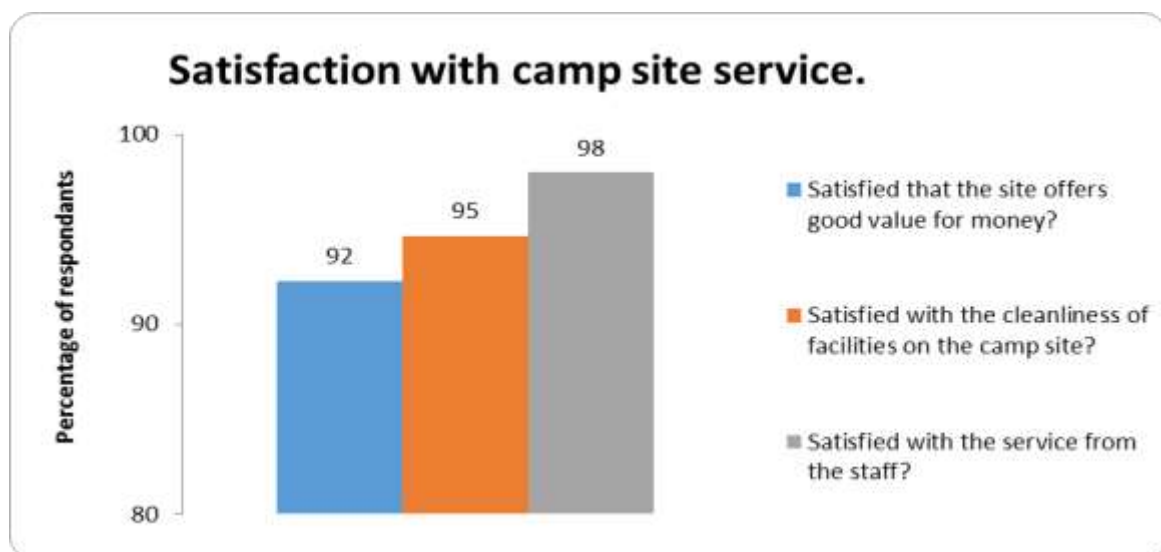
Campervan magazine spring edition

Park & Holiday home inspiration spring edition

Advertising spend varies from season to season due to some publications being biennial. Other prominent industry publications offer free listings and these are utilised when possible.

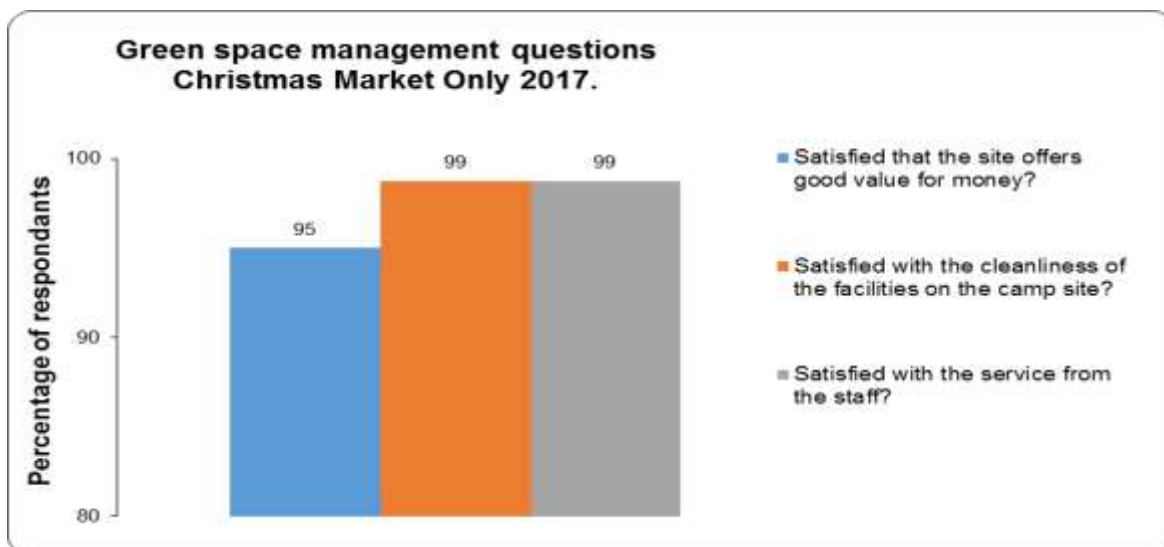
Customer feedback³.

Overall satisfaction figures have remained stable over the last year. Once again there are numerous positive and pleasing references for the service our customers receive from staff. Also of note are the positive acknowledgements for the site as a whole, we are congratulated several times for having a site that is under the management of a local authority, something campers would like to see more of.

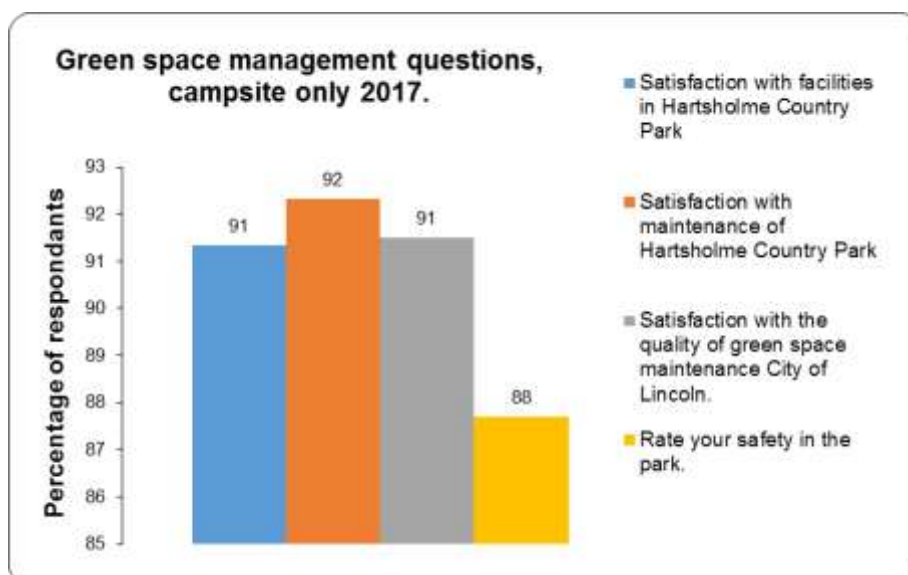


³ Comments are included at the end of the document

It is worth noting the below customer feedback for the Christmas market which, despite higher charges than our usual rates, electrical supply issues and the cancellation of the last day of the market, remain very positive. Our customers accept that a higher rate is charged in order to open for such a short period and higher charges are in-line with many other accommodation providers in the area.



Once again the majority of our campers are satisfied with the service and facilities supplied. Whilst ratings are high our customers are providing us with valuable feedback in order that we might improve our service. The majority of comments, as with previous years, are directed towards to the standard of the shower block. For the 2018 season we hope to address some of these concerns with an upgrade to the shower areas. Along with re-decoration the refurbishment will include new floors, improved drainage and better ventilation.



Another common issues for our campers, perhaps to be expected, is an increase in comments regarding the lack of WIFI, something that we may address in the next season as the council is currently investigating a solution to make Wi-Fi more available in its premises.

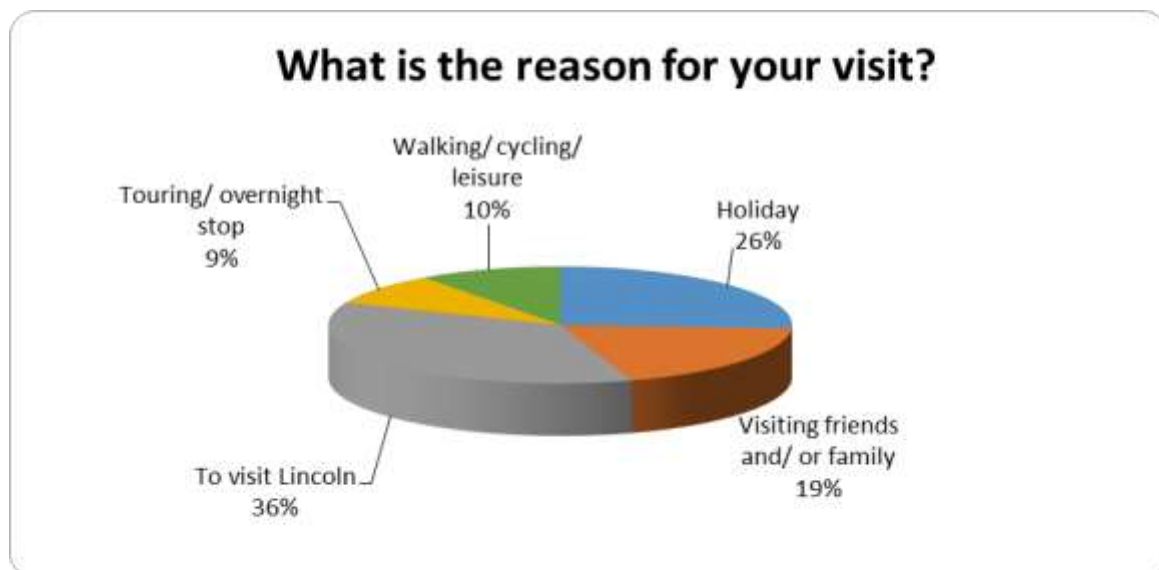
Other comments are more diverse with no common patterns, however many of them are achievable and we can certainly work towards improvements.

As with previous years we chose to take part in the AA Visit England Assessment Scheme for which we maintained a three star rating. Our category scores remain stable and the assessor is pleased with the planned programme of improvements. Our final quality rating is 73%, comfortably sitting at the top end of a three star rated site which needs to score between 60-74%.

Reviews of the camp site on the web site of one of our main advertisers is currently running at a score of 9/10⁴. There are also very positive reviews for the whole site including the camp site on Trip Advisor, where it is listed as the #09⁵ of the top things to do in Lincoln. This is up one point from the previous year with 60% of visitors rating the site as excellent.

The majority of our campers are staying to visit Lincoln, significantly contributing to revenue in the wider city. This figure is up 7% on last year's total, perhaps testament to an increase in promotion of the city as a tourist destination and attributable to the fantastic events that have taken place over the last couple of years.

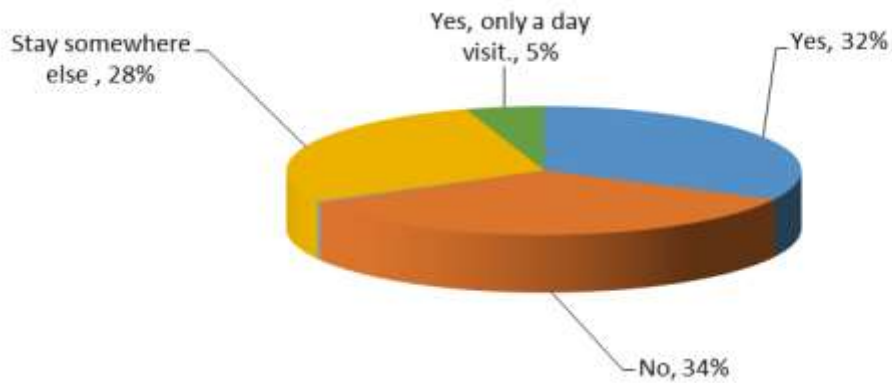
The last two graphs taken from our feedback indicate that a high proportion of customers would not choose to visit Lincoln if a camp site was not available, and that for many of those who would still visit a camp site nearby would be their preferred accommodation option.



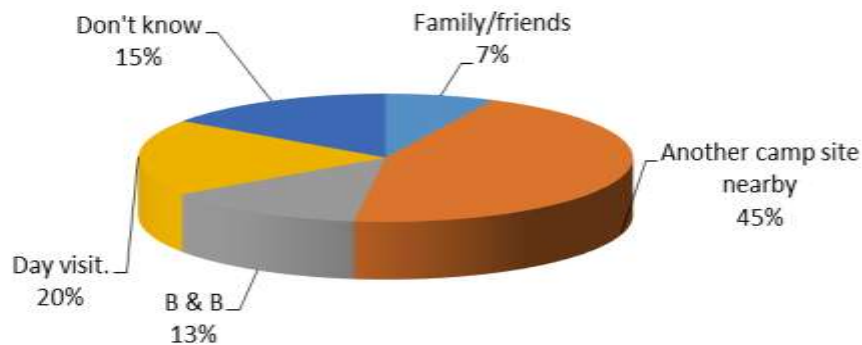
⁴ Use this link to view UK Camp Site feedback.

⁵ Use this link to view Trip Advisor feedback.

If there wasn't a camp site in Lincoln would you still visit the city?



If there wasn't a camp site here where would you stay?



Customer comments

Improvements

- Upgrade to shower block – 53
- Wi-Fi – 44
- Hardstanding (more) – 9
- Motorhome service area – 6
- Security – 5
- Keypad for camp gate – 4
- Water at bottom of site – 4
- More lighting (especially entrance) – 4
- Cycle stand/Cage – 3
- Disabled shower – 2
- Onsite showers – 2
- Washing machine /Dryer – 2
- Pot holes – 2
- Pegs (hard to push in due to rubble) – 2
- Slabs to pod – 1
- Bench in tent area – 1
- Closer toilet to bottom of site – 1
- Trees obscure lights
- Upgrade chemical toilet area – 1

Staff

Park and wardens make this a little oasis in a built up area.

The staff are very welcoming and helpful.

Very nice site, Country Park and facilities. All 3 members of staff were genuinely interested in us, our stay and our lives and went beyond the call of duty – very polite well done.

Wardens fantastic! So helpful when tent got wet – thanks for the support.

Wardens give 100% helpful service.

Staff very helpful and friendly, best campsite we have stayed on so far. We can't wait to come back.

Warden was great when I had van problems.

Staff superb – asset to the council.

Wardens are first class.

Campsite wardens very helpful with information about Lincoln and surrounding area.

Friendliest wardens ever. Excellent service, friendly staff, beautiful place to stay.

A very pleasant site and atmosphere. Warden accommodated our late booking without drama.

The camp site wardens were excellent, very helpful with lots of information about the site and surrounding area. Very impressed.

Always enjoy stay – staff very friendly.

Excellent service, friendly staff, beautiful place to stay.

Fabulous few days, the warden is amazing especially friendly knowledgeable and helpful.

We were particularly pleased with the kindness and helpfulness of the staff to us all.

A lovely site with very friendly staff and good facilities. We will come back at different times to look at the changes in woodland.

Excellent site, there should be more municipal sites like this throughout UK. Excellent friendly and helpful staff.

General

Top class site, this is our 8th year.

Brilliant site, especially pleasing to know its run by council.

The excellent bus service would make me camp here again.

Please don't change anything we love it as it is.

Wi-Fi would be helpful and more signs around the park.

We love this campsite it's so relaxing here one of the nicest we have stayed at.

We had a lovely stay for 2 nights, very impressed with park and facilities and easy access to Lincoln.

Thankyou.

Wish more councils would take notice of what you've achieved at Hartsholme.

Beautiful site, we walked around the lakes and are very happy with facilities. Well done LCC amazing.

Thankyou.

Better bike routes highlighted.

Only concern is that some people let dogs off leads.

Really enjoyed our stay will come next year and recommend it to our friends.

What a lovely site a haven in a fast moving world. Staff welcoming and informative, facilities and cleanliness first class. The fact the site is used by so many locals means LCC you must have got it right.

A lovely site and very clean but needs an upgrade to facilities and could be a little scary at night being off the main site.

One of the best sites I've visited.

Surprised and delighted with open space for dog owners.

Good sized pitches well marked out.

Loved every minute and returning soon. Thank you for making my birthday stay so memorable.

Only one water tap for whole site, very tired needs more thought and investment.

Nice site but didn't like the noise from the kids on the estate and motorbikes.

Worried about the spread of rhododendrons in the park.

Our stay here has been ideal for visiting Lincoln and lovely lakeside walks (peaceful) the café was an added bonus – thankyou.

A very pleasant site with access to a country park – hope to stay here again.

Dog bins could be emptied more often.

Camping and Caravan club could learn a lot from this site.

Christmas Market comments

Lovely thank you

On arrival welcome an information was excellent. Brilliant warden-should be full time career.

Information from staff excellent. Area beautiful.

Wi-Fi?

Improvement to road into campsite between main entrance and campsite not lit at night and I tripped in one of the potholes and have hurt my leg/foot is very painful now.

Very satisfied with staff and site. Jon very helpful, café great.

Would like Wi-Fi.

Pitch 19.