

Enclosure of nesting site on St. Mary's Lands
during 2021 breeding season.

Findings and conclusions of FoSML survey

Image 1

green plastic netting.

Image 1 shows the fence running alongside Public Right of Way WB13a

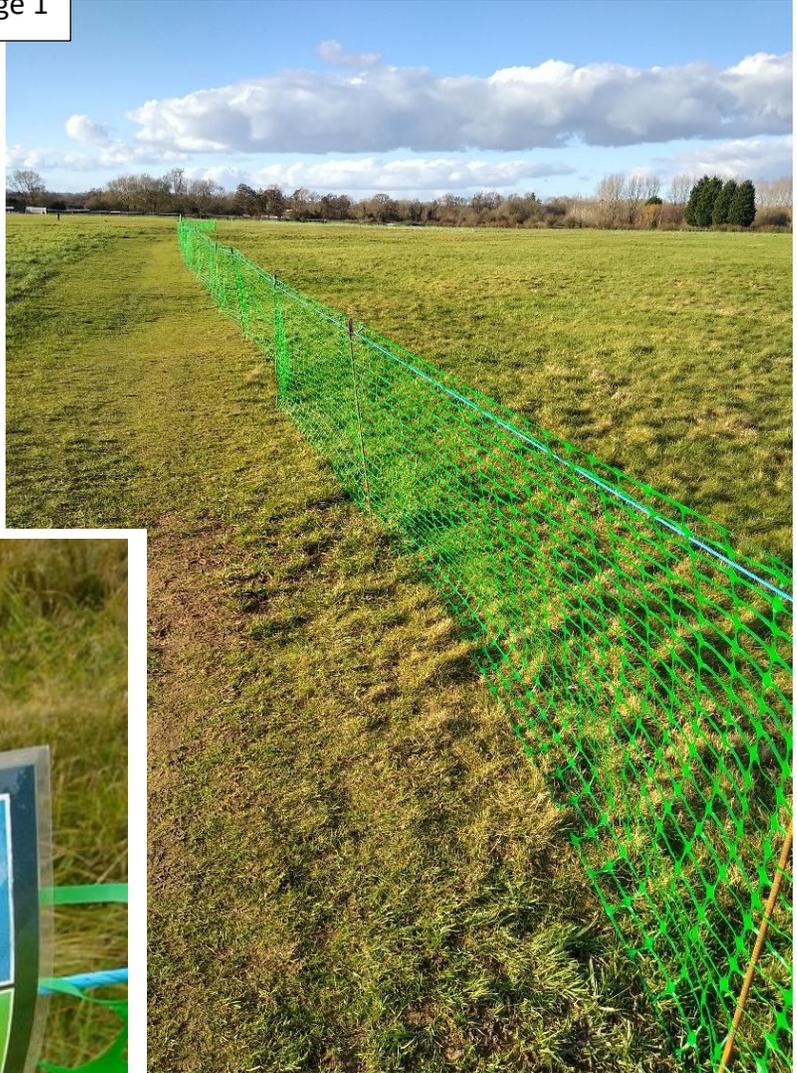


Image 2a



The explanation it transpired from this signage was to protect ground-nesting birds,

Background

This project was intended to protect two species of birds found ground-nesting on one particular area of St. Mary's Lands; the skylark and the meadow pipit.

Sky Lark - *Alauda arvensis*

Birds family: Larks

UK conservation status: Red

Protected by The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981

The skylark is a small brown bird, somewhat larger than a sparrow but smaller than a starling. It is renowned for its display flight, vertically up in the air. Its recent and dramatic population decline make it a Red List species.

They eat seeds and insects.

Image 3

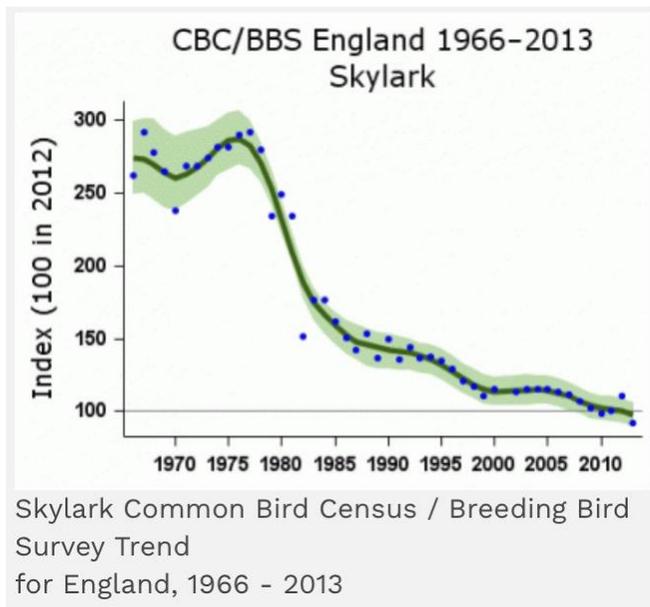


Nesting and breeding habits from RSPB

Skylarks nest on the ground, in vegetation which is 20–50 cm high, avoiding vegetation over 60 cm high. Vegetation must also be open enough to give the birds easy access to the ground. They need to make two or three nesting attempts between April and August to sustain the population. Spring temperatures trigger the start of the breeding season.

Nationally skylark numbers are falling and they have been placed on the Red List. Changes in farming practice from spring-sown crops to winter ones is a major factor in their decline.

Skylarks nesting in spring-sown crops nest for longer and can raise two or three broods, but in winter crops most stop nesting in late May, raising just one brood, as the crop becomes too tall and dense and stops the birds having easy access to the ground.



Information from the British Trust for Ornithology.

The Common Bird's Census (CBC) and British Bird Census (BBS) show the decline began in the late 1970s. This was partly due to a reduction in over-winter-seed availability from the loss of crop stubbles and partly due to vegetation growing too tall and too dense to allow skylarks to nest later in the season (June – August). They were unable to raise enough chicks to maintain stable populations

The Game & Wildlife Conservation Trust advice for farmers states that 'Skylarks nest on the ground in short grass or crops, avoiding vegetation over 60cm high.'

Therefore any strategy for maintaining skylarks numbers must of necessity take into account an understanding of these nesting preferences of these endangered ground-nesting birds.

meadow Pipit - *Anthus pratensis*

Birds family: Pipits and wagtails

UK conservation status: Amber

Protected by The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981

A small (14-15 cm) brown, streaky bird, the meadow pipit is most common in upland areas where its high, piping call is a familiar sound. In flight it shows white outer tail feathers and in the breeding season it has a fluttering 'parachute' display flight.

Meadow pipits, like skylarks are grassland birds. They mainly feed on invertebrates, especially flies, beetles, caterpillars, small worms and spiders. They will feed on some seeds in autumn and winter.

Image 4



Nesting and breeding habits

During the nesting season meadow pipits prefer moorland, heaths, rough grazing, unimproved grassland, salt marshes and dune systems. They will typically nest on the ground, concealed in vegetation. As with the skylark recent declines in population have been linked to changes in land and farm use, such as the loss of marginal land that formerly provided nesting sites. Meadow pipits are the most common 'foster parents' of young cuckoos.

In winter, they are quite gregarious and gather in small flocks, often invisible among the vegetation, suddenly flying up with typical jerky flight.

There was thought to be up to 8 pairs of nesting skylarks on this site and a possible 2-3 pairs of Meadow Pipit.

Although no public consultation was forthcoming an executive decision was taken to fence off an area of St. Mary's Lands (marked out as Zone 4 on Map1a) in an effort to protect the nesting sites of these two species. Green plastic fencing (Image 1) was erected around the area in late February 2021 and remained in place until late August of the same year.

Despite a report carried out on behalf of Warwick District Council in August 2019 and revised in February 2020, a full year before the decision was made to enclose the site, no survey of dog owners using St. Mary's Lands was ever carried out. Nor was any effort made to engage with local users.

While it was universally agreed that the protection of these birds was an admirable aim, whether this fencing was

- a) necessary
- b) the best solution
- c) in line with 'green' policies

was questioned. Thus in lieu of a public consultation by WDC the Friends of St Mary's Lands agreed to conduct their own short survey to gauge local opinion and to consider alternative solutions based on the conclusions reached.

The survey was conducted online using **SmartSurvey** and was open over seven months from February – August 2021. Only one response was allowed per device. It was well publicised via local newspapers, social media, neighbourhood forums and word of mouth. 117 replies were received mainly in the first five months.

2021 St. Mary's Lands Bird Protection Survey

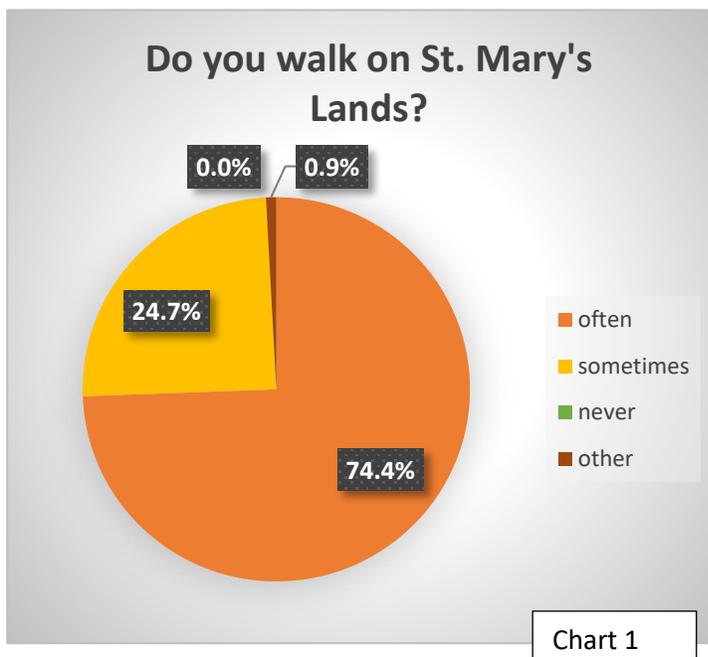
Question 1

I have read and understood the information above.

The opening paragraph clearly identified the source of survey as the Friends of St. Mary's Lands and that responses would be anonymous. Respondents were asked to confirm they had understood this before they progressed. The response was 100%

Question 2

Do you walk on St. Mary's Lands, Warwick?



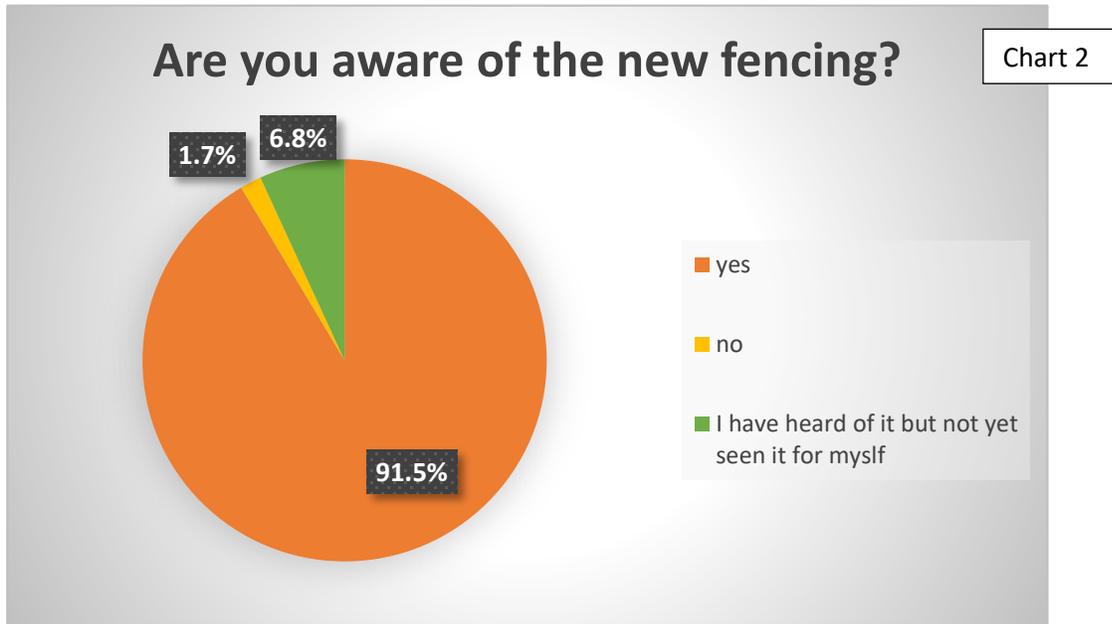
Almost three-quarters of the respondents identified as regular users of St. Mary's Lands so there was a good cross-sections of opinions.

The remaining 25% were 'sometimes' users.

There was no quantitative distinction placed between 'often' and 'sometimes' and respondents were free to make their own judgment on their use of the land.

Question 3

Are you aware of new fencing recently erected to prohibit access to a central area?



It would appear that many of the ‘sometimes’ users knew of the new fencing by the time they completed the survey. This is unsurprising as the green plastic fencing has been much discussed and pictures shared on social media.

A further 8% have only heard of it either by word of mouth, through social media or other sources.

Question 4

Who do you think has sanctioned the erection of this fencing?

This was an open-ended question and as such many respondents chose to speculate by giving more than one answer. Clearly the majority knew or suspected (question marks in replies) that Warwick District Council was the driving force behind this initiative. Some thought it was Warwick County Council, while a substantial number (22) referred to the more nebulous and unspecified ‘council’ which may reflect unfamiliarity with local political structure and/or responsibilities.

Likewise there was some confusion to the role played by users of the land such as the Racecourse and the Jockey Club.

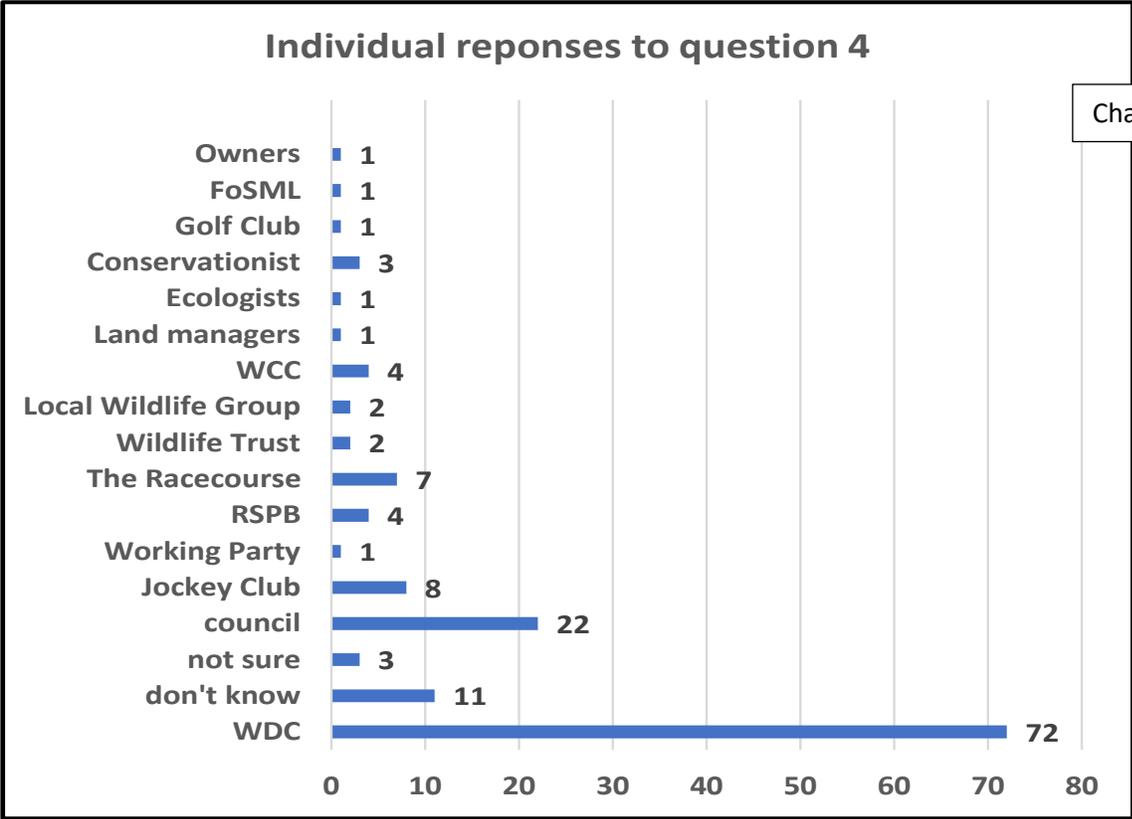


Chart 3

Several people suggested more than one agency was behind the fencing.

The most common expression of this opinion (8.5%) was a partnership between WDC and the 'Racecourse/Jockey Club'.

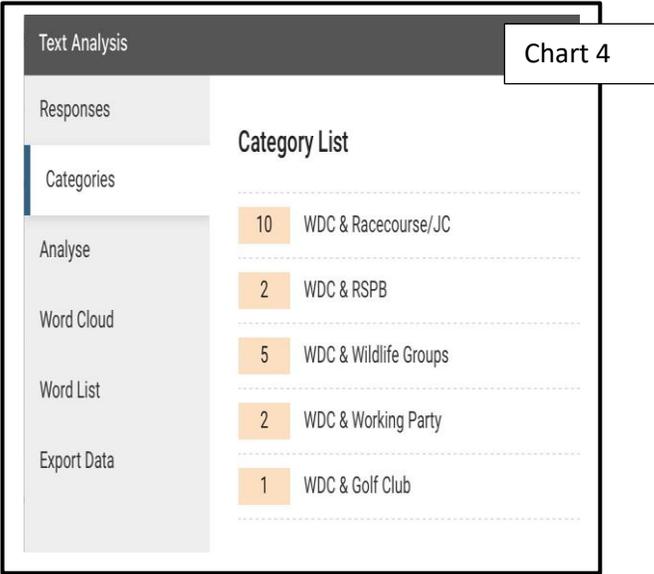


Chart 4

There appears to be a certain degree of hostility directed at the 'Racecourse' judging by some of the replies

- 'Local District & Town Councilors with the backing of the Jockey Club and finally the so-called Working Party.'

- “The council. But probably in collusion with the jockey club. An unholy alliance.

Observations regarding a possible partnership between the RSPB or other wildlife/environmental agencies were more positive.

- WDC after taking advice
- The council to protect breeding birds

However there is a clear consensus that Warwick District Council is the leader in this project.

Question 5

Public information . How did you first become aware of the restrictions?

At a meeting of Warwick District Council Executive on 17th November 2020

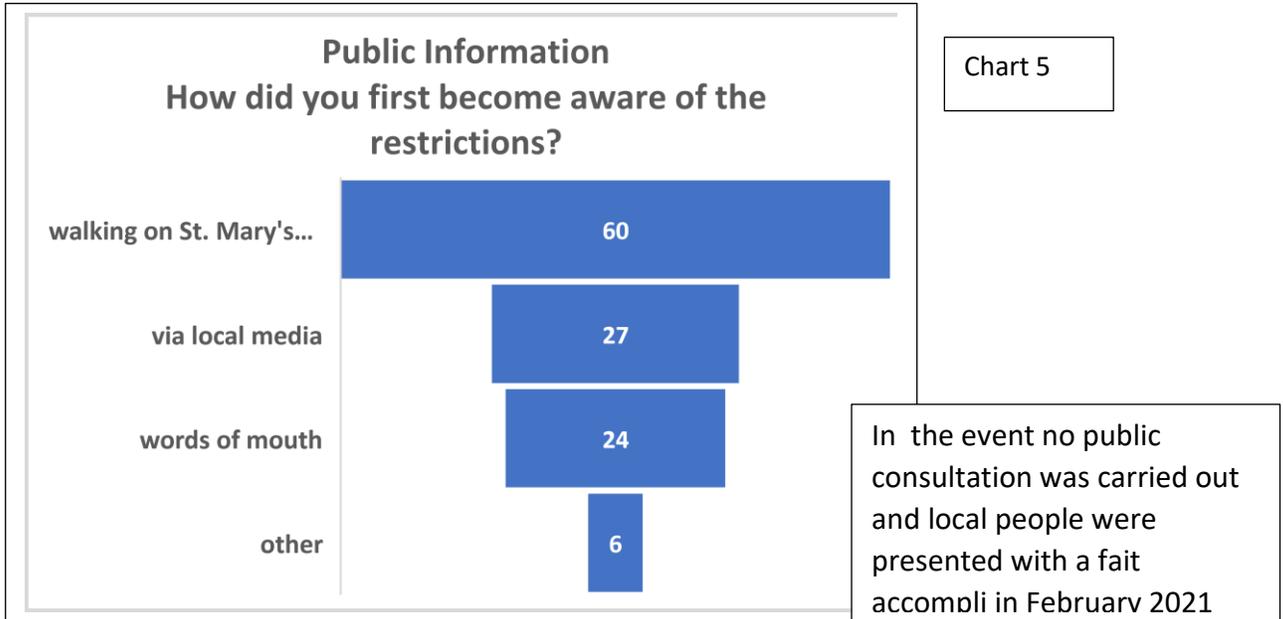
Agenda Item 8 minutes stated

- 3.10 ‘The current roping off of bird nesting sites offers little protection from dogs and the use of temporary physical barriers combined with site notices will assist in identifying and managing the nesting sites.’
- 3.11 ‘It is suggested that an assessment of the potential type and extension of barrier restrictions is undertaken and developed with the Working Party before the next breeding season starts in mid-February 2021. Once that information has been collected and it demonstrates no significant issues then a formal public consultation could be carried out based around site notices and information displays.’
- 3.12 ‘This approach would allow all the issues to be properly examined and considered and this is important given the potential risks that may arise.

At a meeting of Warwick District Council Executive on 18th March 2021

Agenda Item 10 minutes confirmed that draft proposals were not forthcoming; so this meant

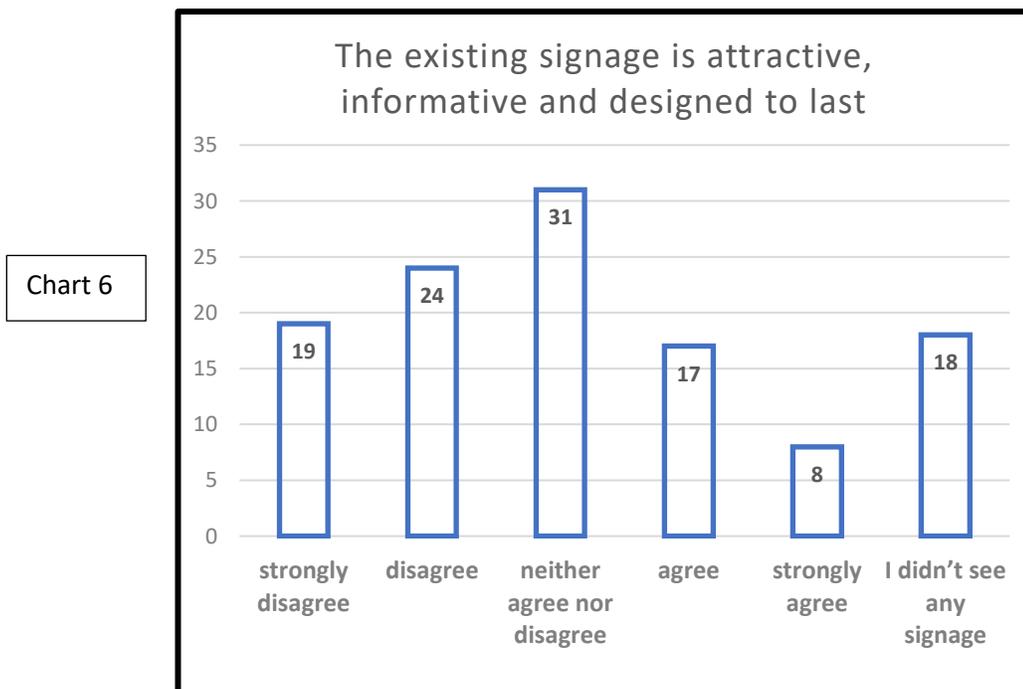
‘...**there was insufficient time** to undertake a formal public consultation prior to undertaking the works. Given the impending nesting season the Chief Executive authorised the operational works to be undertaken.



Question 6.

The existing signage is attractive, Informative and designed to last.

This question required the respondents to make a value judgement across three criteria. In many ways this tested the validity of the survey because as one person commented you 'can't lump attractive, informative & made to last together'.



It was interesting therefore that the most common response was neutral

Whether the signage was attractive in the sense that it attracted the attention of the public is debatable when 18 people (15%) failed to notice the signs.



Image 5

There are excellent notice boards already on St. Mary's Lands and across the district which are attractive, informative and designed to last such as the one recently erected at the Model Flying site

It is understood that the A4 laminated sheets were only of a temporary nature, but the way they were positioned, below eye level and folded around the stakes made them difficult to read.

About half the signs survived until the fending was removed in late August. Most noticeably it was the signage alongside footpath WB13a which was missing.

image 2b



For those were unable to read the signs, due to poor placing or colour choices for the visually impaired, the information contained within them explained that the purpose of the fencing reads:

To protect ground nesting birds we are asking all visitors and dogs to KEEP OUT of the restricted areas during bird nesting season (late February – Mid August) so the birds can rear their chicks **safely**.

The breeding season is a particularly vulnerable time for ground nesting birds. When disturbed birds may be prevented from settling, or if already nesting they will fly away from their nests, neglecting their eggs or chicks.

Disturbances may result in :

- birds failing to nest
- eggs failing to hatch
- birds abandoning their young
- chicks dying from the cold or lack of fuel

Please help is to
Protect our wildlife.

Signs finished with a reminder that 'it is a criminal offence to disturb nesting birds. This also includes disturbances caused by your dog and plea to keep to the footpaths during bird nesting season.

Also included on the signage was a photograph of a Skylark and a Meadow Pipit.

Question 7

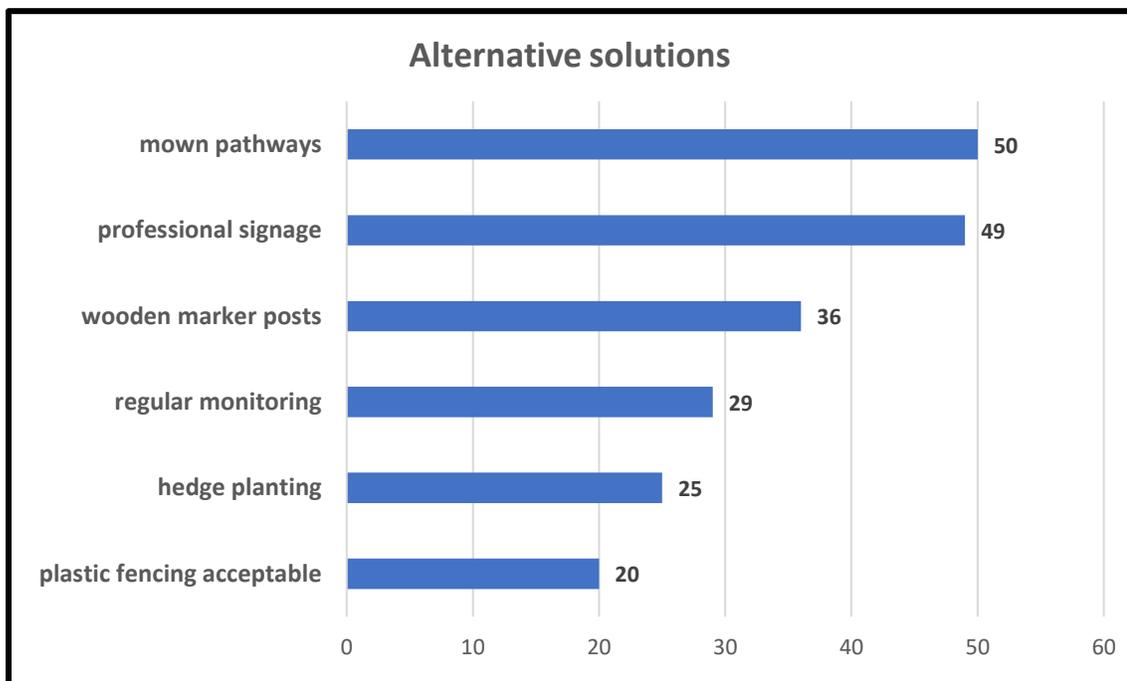
Alternative solutions

Which of the following would you find more acceptable?

Below are a few suggestions collected from local social media sites. Please choose ALL that you think are worthy of consideration to include in planning a more sustainable and viable alternative to plastic fencing.

In total there were 209 responses.

Chart 7

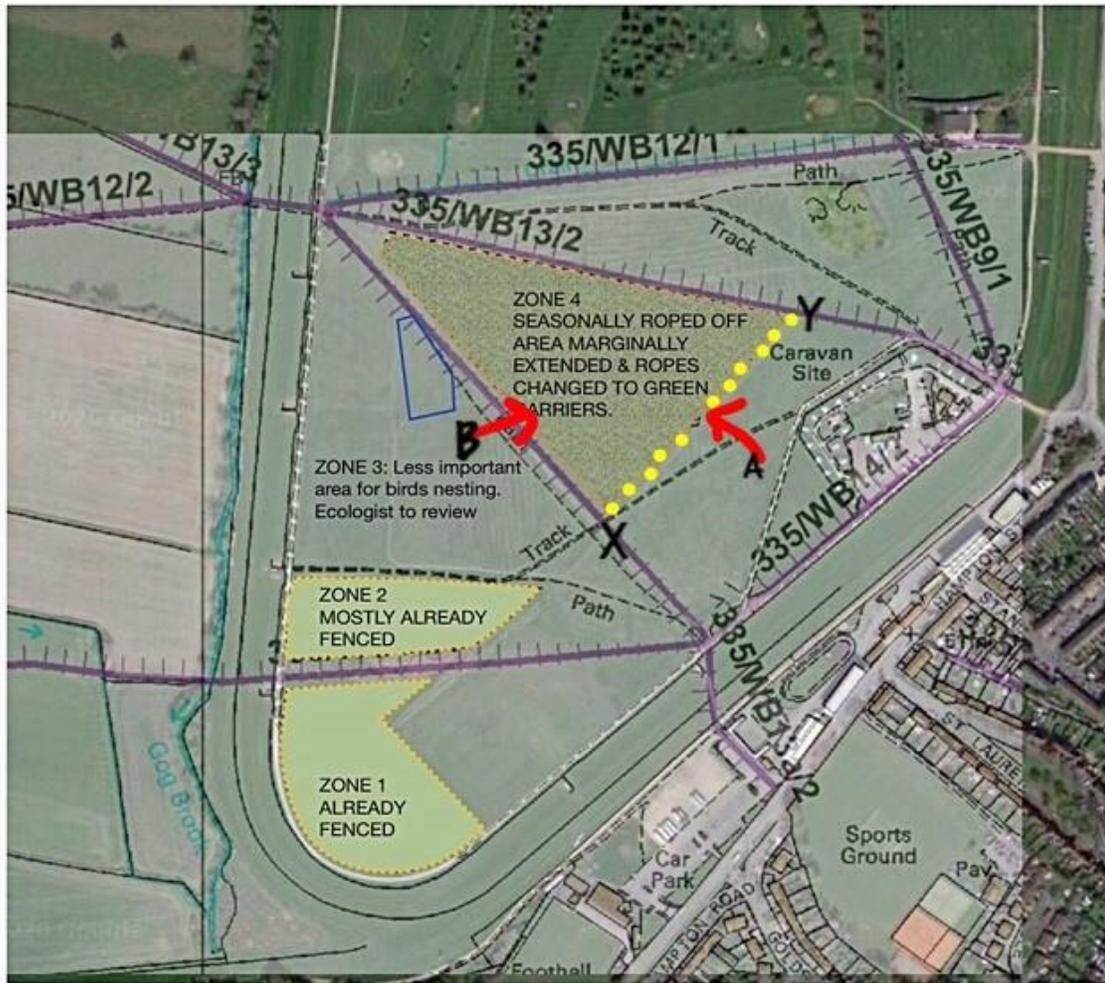


Previous to 2021 the only obstruction to walkers was a rope across one side of this roughly triangular area as seen marked out in yellow and extending from X-Y on map 1b. Attached to the ropes were basic A4 laminated signs warning people of nesting birds.

Two pathways or 'desire' lines crossed this nesting site their entrances marked by two red arrows. The entrance marked A was widely used by walkers B less so. Both these pathways have now disappeared, having been overwhelmed by grasses and through lack of trampling.

It has been suggested that the nesting area is subject to severe disturbance by walkers and in particular dog walkers. No empirical evidence has ever been offered to support this supposition. Indeed observations and anecdotal evidence suggests that most dog walkers respect the notices and keep their animals under control despite the poor quality of previous signage.

Map 1b



A compromise between between a piece of rope strung along one side with poor signage as in previous years and enclosing the whole area would be worth considering for the 2022 breeding season. This is especially true as the height of the grass sward inside the enclosure had grown to such a height that birds such as the skylark would be deterred from future nesting attempts. Their choice of nesting site is influenced by the height and density of the vegetation – the ideal height being 20-50cm. By May the grasses were over 1 metre high.

Question 8

Finally any thoughts on this survey or the future of St. Mary's Lands please leave your comments on here , or go to our website friendsofstmaryslands.com

A deliberately open-ended question design to gather all opinions and options. The 71 responses can be read in the Appendix; Raw Data.

Conclusion

Short term solutions to long term issues rarely work. At best they are ineffective at worst they are counterproductive. And good intentions do not always translate into good outcomes if insufficient research is carried out.

Inadvertently the erection of this fencing has mimicked the conditions which led to the decline of skylarks on farming land viz. crops such as winter wheat generally grow too tall and thick to enable more than a single brood. By the same token the grasses inside the enclosed area grew too high and too dense to allow the skylarks to attempt more than one brood of chicks.

RSPB website notes that:

Skylarks nest on the ground, in vegetation which is 20–50 cm high, avoiding vegetation over 60 cm high. Vegetation must also be open enough to give the birds easy access to the ground.

Skylarks generally make 2-3 nesting attempts during a long breeding season. They will stop nesting if the vegetation becomes too tall or dense to allow them easy access.

While tall, grass stems are much less substantial than cereal stems they can present a barrier to access to the ground surface. In previous years while the ground coverage at this site was almost complete the sward was tussocky in many patches making access to ground level easy for Skylarks.

Schlapfer (1988) found that dense vegetation exceeding 30-35cm high was avoided, and suggested that the reason for this was hindrance of movement at ground level.

There is sound evidence that skylarks will not breed in particularly tall or dense vegetation, the optimum height range for nesting in being 20–60cm. The greatest rate of occupancy occurs where vegetation was present at heights of under 30cm. ***Wilson et al. (1997)***

The relative density of skylarks is often measured by counting singling males during a 10-minute observation period. This method can be flawed as it doesn't take into consideration the number of birds on the ground (Bibby et al 2005). Other recognised methods for territory mapping such as line transects, which make nests easier to find, were impossible due to the area being enclosed and inaccessible. We had to fall back on the less accurate evidence of singing males. During March and April 2 – 3 skylarks were regularly observed by users of the land at different times high above this site. Only the occasional male in flight was noted during May and none after the end of May. . These observations strongly support the findings of ***Wilson et al. (1997)***, that where there is little or no suitable alternative nesting habitat, skylarks may curtail their breeding attempts relatively early.

In late August the fencing was removed.

By September 13th when the sward had started to die back a flock of 10 skylarks were noted feeding in the area. They all flew off in a south-westerly direction. **Anecdotal evidence gathered from several local walkers supported the contention that no skylarks had been observed over the restricted area since May but that ‘they’ve moved over there’, indicating a south-westerly direction.**

Several singing males were observed at this alternative site throughout June and into late July indicating nesting was continuing but whether these were birds dislocated from the fenced site or simply part of the population which are known to breed already is unknown.

After contacting the RSPB in June 2021 re the lack of skylark activity at the site they confirmed that *‘skylarks do need some availability of short vegetation,’* and suggested that consideration be given in the future to mow *‘skylark plots’* but with the warning that *‘skylarks are known to use the same area of the farmland for their second and third nesting attempts’*. They added that *‘if the only patchier/shorter areas of grass are near the hedgerow edges, the skylarks will more likely nest there. The issues with this is that near the hedgerow is where skylark nests are at the highest risk of predation’*.

The height of the sward within the fenced off area has had a detrimental impact on the ability of the skylark population to raise a second or third brood.

The grasses inside the fenced-off area have grown noticeably higher and denser than the grasses outside.

Image 5



Looking north to south along footpath WB13a in later February 2021

Image 6



Looking south to north along the same footpath 6 months later, after the removal of the fencing .

Image 7



Looking north west across the site after the removal of the fencing in late August 2021

Image 8

Image 5. February 2021 The grass inside the newly fenced-off area indicated by the red arrow is short and tussocky. Ideal condition a month hence for skylark nesting.

Image 6 July 2021 6 months later the grasses are higher than the fencing

Images 7 the difference between the two areas a few days after the removal of the fencing. Red arrow fenced area. Yellow unfenced - natural tussocks.

Image 8 shows a different angle, In the foreground is grass which is regularly cut . Indicated by the yellow arrow is naturally tussocky grass outside the fencing. The red arrow shows the clear demarcation which was the fence line.

The reasons behind this unequal growth are many and complicated but it **could have been anticipated**.

Trampling; Plants growing on trampled areas have to be tolerant of soil compaction. There are many studies on the effects of trampling but there is general agreement that trampling affects both the height and the diversity of plants species **Liddle (1997)**. Outside the fenced-off area the public continued to wander at will across St Mary's Lands while inside the fenced-off site the grasses grew without hindrance.

It is not just human activity that needs to be considered. We can rule out 'climate change' as no micro-climate exists within the fenced off area that would explain the difference. But the land supports a population of foxes, rabbits and other mammals which track across the area creating pathways and, in the case of rabbits, grazing.



Image 9

Grazing by rabbits is a major problems in some areas of the UK, and can have a significant impact on grasslands.

St. Mary's Lands supports a population of rabbits as seen by the burrow in image 9. Evidence of predation by foxes and possibly corvids can sometimes be spotted in the early morning.

Overall grazing reduces flowering and increases the spread of low-lying species able to spread vegetatively.

A study on rabbit grazing in grassland communities **R.Bhadresa (1987)** compared the composition and abundance of plant species in grazed and ungrazed (fenced) areas. The changes in vegetation within the enclosures indicated the rapid increase of tall grasses (Dactylis, Holcus and especially Arrhenatherum) which were kept in abeyance in the grazed area.

Dactylis – Cock's-foot; a perennial grass growing up to 140cm in height.

Holcus – Yorkshire Fog Grass; grows up to 100 cm tall

Arrhenatherum; a course grass reaching 150 cm in height.

Lack of grazing by rabbits would allow the proliferation of these tall grasses within the enclosed area.

It is probable that the proliferation of tall grasses within the enclosed area can largely be accounted for by lack of trampling and absence of grazing by rabbits.

The survey revealed that many of the respondents feel that a **'KEEP OFF OUR LAND'** culture exists from both the Jockey Club/Racecourse Management and Warwick District Council. Several events in the past have fostered this belief.



Image 10



Image 11

Local walkers found their way across a popular and much used pathway barred with no warning or consultation. This was later resolved after a meeting between FoSML and an Officer of WCC Ecology Team but not before it was realised that the habitat of a rare crocus was under threat.

More recently the gate to a much-vaunted cycle track was habitually left locked after race days and a public right of way closed without permission.

The sign bears the logo of WDC. The footpath was later reopened after protests to Warwickshire County Council, and the WDC logo replaced with the Jockey Club name.

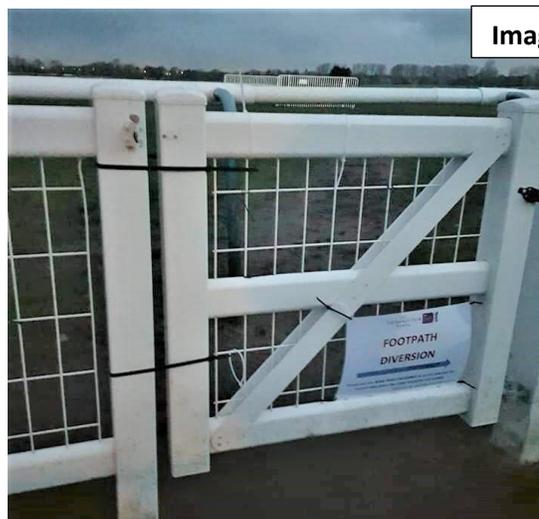


Image 12

So the fencing off of part of St. Mary's Land was seen as yet another attempt to restrict their access to land that many still refer to as 'The Common' and decisions are being taken by the few which affect the many. Despite these feelings support was expressed for this measure if it provided a means to protect nesting birds.

The survey clearly showed a good degree of support for mown pathways across the site, possibly reinstating the two that did exist previously, indicating a willingness to use these. Research has shown that 95% of walkers, including dog walkers, generally prefer to keep to a clear pathway where one exists *Picozzi (1971)* and most of owners are aware of the dangers posed to their animals by the seeds from long grasses.

There was also support for some kind of sympathetic and environmentally friendly demarcation to indicate the sensitive zones and good quality public display boards.

Management practices on St Mary's Lands are seen by many as restrictive and unwelcoming. Despite this, and lack of public consultation, 90% of respondents (Chart 7) have shown a willingness to consider some sort of measures to protect the ground-nesting birds.

The challenge is for WDC to harness that goodwill and take it forward in the 2022 breeding season – quickly.

Those managing the site might be well advised to look at the height of the grasses remaining within the previously enclosed area with a view to possible breeding impact on the 2022 nesting season should the larks return to this area.

The main reason behind the enclosure was the theory that out-of-control dogs roaming over this nesting site on St. Mary's lands during the breeding season posed risk to skylark and meadow pipit eggs and chicks.

This is the issue that needs to be addressed.

Although no empirical evidence was offered to support this hypothesis it cannot be taken lightly. While studies into ground-nesting birds have targeted, as examples, curlew, golden plover, lapwing, nightjar, grouse and woodlark, other birds species e.g. the skylark have received little attention in relation to disturbances. However one survey undertaken during the foot and mouth closures in 2001 found that more skylarks nested where none had nested before on three sites *Small et al (2002)* when restrictions were in force.

Although there is evidence from this and other studies that out-of-control dogs do impact on waders and ground-nesting birds in particular, there are key gaps in the literature. These include: (*English Nature report number 649*)

- studies into effects of dog management measures, with dogs as key variables
- detailed studies of the attitudes of different cohorts of dog owners and their reaction to different methods used to influence their behaviour

There exists no statistical evidence to support the supposition that dog owners using this land are irresponsible, allowing their dogs to defecate without cleaning up after them or wander unchecked through sensitive areas. Indeed the (too often) overflowing dog waste bins at various points supports the views that most are responsible owners, at least in this respect.

However there will always be the few in any given situation who behave irresponsibly and those, new to dog ownership, who may not be aware of the responsibilities it brings. As dog ownership has increased significantly during the pandemic there are many who are new to the experience and may benefit from interaction with, and observation of, experienced responsible owners.

Dog walking is an important activity, when owners often meet and chat to people they may not otherwise know. For those isolated in the community this can be an important interactive time. To some it might be their only contact with others. For others it is their main source of exercise. The presence of other dog walkers is also reassuring for the vulnerable.

In planning a local approach it is important to take into consideration what most dog walkers are looking for in an area like St. Mary's Lands; close to home, away from traffic and off lead access.

Guiding principles on developing local approaches to encourage responsible dog walking (based on recommendations from Scottish Natural Heritage; ***Taking the Lead***)

People respond best to land managers who show that they welcome responsible public access therefore:

- Raiser awareness of issues through appropriate signage , direct communication with dog walkers , local groups, and local media.
- Clearly communicate the behavior that is requested, why, where and when
- Focus on encouraging access in less sensitive areas rather than trying to stop people elsewhere
- Identifying and clearly signing areas where dogs are welcome off lead as well as areas where dogs should be kept under close control or on-lead
- Enlist the support of responsible dog walkers to lead by example and apply pressure to those failing to behave responsibly.

Lack of direct communication was, and remains, a major issue. If dogs and their owners, rather than other users, are perceived as the problem then has any attempt been made to connect directly with local dog walkers to enlist their help in identifying problems and working together towards solutions?

Identify the issues

- What exactly is the issue?
- Who is causing the problem – local dog walkers or visitors? Individuals or commercial dog walkers?
- Is there an issue with other users, such as walkers, families, etc. who may not welcome the advances of over boisterous pets?
- Are certain times or certain areas more sensitive than others?
-

Is signage used in a way that makes responsible dog walkers feel welcome?

Does it clearly indict that dogs are welcome off the lead in certain areas as well as kept under close control in others? Would this be clear to visitors?



Sample welcoming signs that clearly communicate expected behaviour.

Also communicating where dogs are welcome **off-lead** can encourage dogs to be kept on-lead or under close control where it really matters.



The survey indicated that regular monitoring would be one way forward yet there is no evidence that any such monitoring takes place, regular or otherwise. In the absence of visits by the Dog Warden or any other official of WDC it falls to the regular users to 'lead by example' or even 'apply pressure'. This may be controversial but has been observed in the past when responsible dog walkers have requested to 'pick up' after their dogs or pointed out the sign re birds nesting.

Serious consideration could perhaps be given to 'encouraging access to less sensitive areas'.

At one time it was possible to walk around much of the exterior of the race track, outside the white plastic barriers. Either shrubs and other vegetation have since encroached on this pathway making it inaccessible in most parts or the post and railing have been moved outwards. With a little imagination and co-operation a circular dog trail could be established. This would send a powerful message to dog walkers that they are welcome as so often messages are negative.

Once good lines of communications have been established with the dog walking fraternity then other issues can be addressed over time such as dog fouling and the rights of walkers and families without dogs.

Throughout the district there exist excellent examples of good practice and areas where dogs, walkers, families and wildlife co-exist in harmony. Examples of these include;

- Chase Meadows
- Priory Park
- St Nicolas Park
- Kingfisher Pools

Image 14



Image 13



Image 13 notice at Kingfisher Pools

Image 14 heron at Kingfisher pools

Image 15 mother swan with cygnets at Chase Meadows

Image 15



This female swan successfully reared 4 out of 5 cygnets despite losing her mate while she was incubating her eggs.

This is a popular dog walking area too.

Granted these are very different environments /ecosystems to St. Mary's Lands, but expertise must surely exist within the paid officers of the District Council to overcome the very specific challenges presented by the ground-nesting bird population. Failure to come up with a coherent plan in the 12 months between an advisory report and erection of the fencing, resulted in no transparent public consultation. Cherry-picking parts of the report has ignored some excellent advice, especially regarding effective communication with dog owners within that report, and this has resulted in them feeling disengaged and unwelcome.

However our survey found support for these unpopular measure **if it was to protect the nesting sites** and help maintain the skylark and meadow pipet population.

A policy to enclose further areas of St. Mary's Lands would not only be counter-productive in terms of skylark numbers but runs the real risk of further alienating the users of this land.

Addendum

While not within the remit of this report it is worth mentioning the observations of local walkers, dog walkers and others.

Many reports of skylarks nesting on another site were noted. The reports were consistent and all indicated an area of St. Mary's Lands away from the enclosed site. In September 2021 flocks of skylark, some with an estimated 50+ birds, others smaller with perhaps 10 birds, were observed on several occasions rising from this area, then heading to vital nearby feeding grounds.

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Reports

Scottish Natural Heritage . 'Taking the Lead' 'Managing access with dogs to reduce impact on land management'

English Nature: Dogs, access and nature conservation, Report no. 649

RSPB Advice and support for farmers to help promote and practice wildlife-friendly farming

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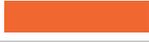
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RAW DATA

2021 St. Mary's Lands Bird Protection Survey

1. I have read and understood the information above			
Answer Choices		Response Percent	Response Total
1	Yes		100.00%
		answered	114
		skipped	3

2. Do you walk on St Mary's Lands, Warwick?			
Answer Choices		Response Percent	Response Total
1	Often		72.65%
2	Sometimes		24.79%
3	Never		0.00%
4	Other (please specify):		2.56%
		answered	117
		skipped	0
Other (please specify): (3)			
1	Age is beating us but still take an interest.		
2	Daily		
3	Virtually every day		

3. Are you aware of new fencing recently erected to prohibit access to a central area?			
Answer Choices		Response Percent	Response Total
1	Yes		91.45%
2	No		1.71%

3. Are you aware of new fencing recently erected to prohibit access to a central area?

3	I have heard of this but not yet seen it myself		6.84%	8
			answered	117
			skipped	0

4. Who do you think has sanctioned the erection of this fencing?

Answer Choices		Response Percent	Response Total
1	Open-Ended Question	100.00%	117
1	Not sure		
2	W d c		
3	W d c		
4	WDC		
5	WdC		
6	WdC		
7	Warwick District Council		
8	Not sure		
9	District council		
10	The council		
11	Warwick district council		
12	District Council		
13	The council.		
14	Jockey Club with WDC		
15	Warwick District Council?		
16	WDC		
17	Local District & Town Councillors with the backing of probably the Jockey Club and finally the so called Working Party.		
18	Warwick District Council		
19	Wdc		
20	I don't know.		
21	No idea, but hope it might have been RSPB		
22	Council		
23	WDC. An elected body.		
24	Warwick District Council		

4. Who do you think has sanctioned the erection of this fencing?

25	Council
26	WDC
27	Wcc and the racecourse
28	The council. But probably in collusion with the jockey club. An unholy alliance.
29	The protection of a species of bird that is becoming more endangered
30	WDC
31	Warwick District Council
32	WDC
33	WDC
34	WDC
35	The Council
36	Warwick District Council
37	Warwick District Council
38	No idea.
39	Allegedly the protection of the bird population, though there is no available evidence that this was necessary and no obvious study being carried out to track whether this intervention is effective
40	Warwick District Council, Warwickshire Wildlife Trust, Local Wildlife Groups
41	The District Council
42	Probably Warwick District Council
43	Warwick District Council
44	Warwick District Council after taking advice
45	The district council
46	good idea, not new fenced off to protect lark nesting for years.
47	Warwick Town Council
48	Warwick District Council
49	Don't know but I'm glad it's been done
50	Assume the council as I understand the land is only leased by the racecourse?
51	Council?
52	The council
53	Jockey Club
54	Wdc
55	District Council
56	Warwickshire county council
57	Wdc
58	WDC

4. Who do you think has sanctioned the erection of this fencing?

59	The land managers
60	RSPB, Council & racecourse ?
61	Warwick District Council
62	Warwick District Council
63	Warwick District Council
64	Warwickshire District Council
65	The council
66	Warwick District Council
67	WDC
68	District council
69	Warwick district council
70	Racecourse organisers
71	Whoever is responsible for the overall management of the race-course
72	I have no idea
73	Wildlife group and ecologists
74	Warwick council
75	The local council
76	Don't know.
77	Council
78	Don't know
79	Presumably wdc as per the notices
80	Warwick DC
81	WDC
82	District Council
83	WDC and the St Mary's Working party
84	WARWICK DISTRICT COUNCIL
85	District Council
86	Warwickshire County Council or the District Council
87	District Council?
88	St Mary's Lands(friends group)
89	The council and golf club ?
90	WDC
91	WDC
92	No idea

4. Who do you think has sanctioned the erection of this fencing?

93	The council and the Jockey Club presumably.
94	Owners / council
95	Wcc
96	I do not know - council, jockey club or conservasionists
97	Warwick District Council
98	Warwick Council
99	Local authorities.
100	Warwick County council I would guess
101	Warwick council
102	Warwick District Council
103	District Council I have presumed
104	Someone with animal welfare in mind
105	Warwick district council
106	Council
107	?
108	Council/race course.
109	Warwick District Council
110	The council to protect breeding birds
111	No idea
112	Warwick council
113	The racecourse and/or WCC
114	The council !
115	I assume this was the council and environmental protection agency.
116	Don't know
117	WDC and Wildlife Trust

answered	117
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skipped	0
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5. Public Information. How did you FIRST become aware of the restrictions.

Answer Choices			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Via the media eg. newspapers, local radio, online forums, etc,		23.08%	27
2	Through word of mouth locally		20.51%	24
3	When walking on St Mary's Lands		51.28%	60
4	Other		5.13%	6
			answered	117
			skipped	0

Comments: (35)

1	From dog walkers who walk there and were concerned that the restrictions would affect all members of the public, yet hadn't gone to a public consultation.
2	My friend (a dog walker) told me
3	No consultation
4	from FoSML
5	Certainly not though any Official Notices or communications from our supposed Elected Members/Coucillors.
6	COVID 19 restrictions have kept me away since last October. I only know there was concern to protect ground nesting birds
7	I have no objection to protecting the birds by fencing off their nesting area, but I understood they nested in the long grass which is only partly fenced and much of the fenced area is cut grass.
8	It's yet another thinner end of a v thin wedge. Its a relentless pincer movement by the aforementioned protagonists.
9	I believe similar markets were set up in previous years, so was not surprised at the decision
10	Editorial coverage in both the Leamington Courier and Leamington Observer
11	Such a shame that there was no consultation on this. The constantly changing master plan shouldn't give the council free reign to do whatever they want.
12	i understand these restrictions are temporary during the bird nesting season and are needed to prevent the ground/being trampled by dogs. It's a very small area, so there is plenty of space for everyone.
13	I don't see these as restrictions. They don't effect any of the footpaths I use on an almost daily basis.
14	Doesn't seem to be in the right place - compared to previous years ie where the birds are known by regulars to nest
15	Who are your group? Appears to be anti wildlife?
16	I would have preferred to have been asked directly for my views as a walker who has visited this site most days for 13 years. That would have required a canvasser to have been present on the site to interview regular

5. Public Information. How did you FIRST become aware of the restrictions.

	users. Or for notices to have been posted on site advising users of proposals. And giving us an opportunity to respond in a timely manner. It is unreasonable to rely on users visiting the WTC/WDC website to check minutes of meetings to see what is being discussed.
17	Was shocked at the amount of land fenced off It inhibits the walking of my dog and I have visited less since the fence was erected
18	Social media
19	Friends of St Mary's land group and also let dogs play on fb
20	There was no advance notice. They just arrived and put it up.
21	Understand why but it's ugly and is not really going to stop a determined or accidental violator.
22	I love the sound of skylarks and am very keen to have ground-nesting birds protected. if dogs roam around the nesting area the birds will abandon their nests. There is plenty of room for dog-walkers outside the nesting area.
23	Via our residents association on Chase Meadow
24	Online forum
25	Restrictions have always been in place in certain areas during nesting. The ropes are now replaced with green plastic netting
26	Facebook group
27	Via Facebook. I was surprised to hear it was being done but no prior consultation.
28	UNWANTED , RETROGRADE PRECEDENT !
29	Seemed to be erected over a public right of way.
30	There is a restricted area every year for nesting birds but this is the first time that an area has been enclosed by a fence.
31	I think it is a good job.
32	This is needed to protect the skylarks nesting so many ignorant folk just take their dogs thro the nesting sites
33	They are hardly restrictions are they. Nature should be valued.
34	Nothing to add
35	If by restrictions you mean the fencing, that was when walking through St.Marys Land. However I knew there were restrictions for dogs on the nesting area during a section of the year, and honestly the fencing really helps with that. Makes dog walks more enjoyable because you are not constantly guessing where the nesting area is, and trying to keep your dog from it.

6. The existing signage is attractive, informative and designed to last.

Answer Choices			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Strongly disagree		16.24%	19
2	Disagree		20.51%	24
3	Neither agree nor disagree		26.50%	31
4	Agree		14.53%	17
5	Strongly agree		6.84%	8
6	I didn't see any signage		15.38%	18
			answered	117
			skipped	0

Comments: (41)

1	What and where?
2	Other than a couple of sign boards identifying the different areas and Public Footpaths around St Mary's Lands, no Attractive Signage has been displayed when the bird nesting season is happening at least in the 30 years of walking on the Common.
3	It is only designed as short term fix to stop walkers and dogs from trampling on the nesting site. It will be removed when nesting has finished
4	I worry about its eco friendliness and that it could trap animals
5	I have not been able to visit since last October.
6	The signage is not very visible.
7	Leading question. As we all know, the fencing & signage is not permanent & does not need to last. It does inform, & the signage alone is not attractive or unattractive
8	I agree that it is informative but disagree that it will last
9	The plastic fencing looks dreadful and will most likely be damaged by weather. Other options should have been considered.
10	A permanent wooden board needs to be erected.
11	I would have preferred to see signs of a more permanent nature giving more information about the life habits of the species involved.
12	The signage is temporary so does not therefore need to be designed to last. However further signage about measures needed to protect wildlife particularly endangered birds might be helpful. There are similar problems in other parks which are heavily used due to increased dog ownership.
13	It doesnt look as if it will survive long. In the long term better interpretation boarding and directive signs would be beneficial.
14	This question is confusing - what signage does this relate to? There is informative temporary signage attached to the temporary fencing, I don't think its designed to last. A more useful question would be to ask if the signs were informative or not?

6. The existing signage is attractive, informative and designed to last.

15	Could have explained which birds Why area needs to be protected
16	There was a small a4 price of paper attached to the fencing - you don't see it unless you are stood by it and with any harsh weather it will detach and be lost.
17	I am happy that the fencing is robust so it can be dismantled after the end of the breeding season and used again in following years.
18	I was not aware of any signage sarong why the fencing was erected but noted that paths opposite the stands had been closed.
19	So many signs stating where you can cross the racetrack, where dogs cannot go and now the fenced area It doesn't feel like common land any longer more like a restrictive park
20	But then I've not walked close enough to the fencing to see any.
21	I haven't yet seen the signage
22	Paper laminated in plastic. Straight to the landfill!
23	Plastic does more harm to the environment and wildlife than anything. It makes a beautiful wide open space look like a temporary roadworks site. It's not even in the right place, taking up a huge space where the birds don't even nest.
24	Again, not sturdy enough.
25	I'm not sure that it needs to be attractive and built to last. I understood the fencing is temporary for the nesting season. The question needs splitting up. If opinions about how informative the signs are results in a negative this could more easily be acted upon to make them clearer this year.
26	How can a sign be attractive? However, it is informative.
27	This is an important ground nesting site for British bird species that are in decline. This should be explained more clearly and in a more engaging way
28	A laminated bit of card hanging from a temp fence, in my opinion is not attractive. It is also poorly displayed.
29	It feels appropriate for upto maybe 6 months
30	Probably not the most ideal but they don't need to be permanent as they only apply for half the year anyway
31	Attractive;It is neither designed to attract your attention nor to appeal aesthetically Informative; yes Designed to last; short term it might or might not survive the summer sun and rain, time will tell. But a piece of laminated A4 is hardly a long-term solution. Surely the council could have done better thayn this?
32	It is a bit vague but gives a reason why it is there. Lots of info now through FB
33	Didn't see any signage on first coming across.
34	Disagree but it is only for breeding season isn't it .?so presumably will be taken down later
35	Falling off
36	The wooden signboards are good, but the signs attached to the green fencing may not last long!
37	Temporary until birds flown
38	Can't lump attractive,informative & made to last together it's fit for purpose & easily removable and reusable and does the job of protecting the breeding ground.
39	The signage should inform local people about what is taking place there. A very good idea.

6. The existing signage is attractive, informative and designed to last.

40	I think its reusable. Have seen this type before.
41	The current signage is far better the the usual blue rope and laminated paper which was used in previous years.

7. Alternative solutions Which of the following would you find more acceptable? Below are a few suggestions collected from local social media sites. Please choose ALL that you think are worthy of consideration to include in planning a more sustainable and viable alternative to plastic fencing.

Answer Choices		Response Percent	Response Total
1	Wooden posts at intervals marking the boundaries of the nesting area		30.77% 36
2	Sturdy, professional signage strategically placed to raise public awareness and bring them 'onside'.		41.88% 49
3	Existing paths across the site to be marked and mown to encourage walkers to keep to them.		42.74% 50
4	Regular monitoring of the site to encourage correct usage		24.79% 29
5	Planting of hedging		21.37% 25
6	None of the above. I think the plastic fencing is acceptable		17.09% 20
7	Or have you suggestions you would like to put forward?		42.74% 50
		answered	117
		skipped	0

Or have you suggestions you would like to put forward? (50)

1	Educating the public would be useful and indeed necessary so that everyone can use and enjoy the land sensibly. I have concerns about how the Working Party is made up and reaches decisions. I've communicated these concerns to Chris Elliott already but I feel a public consultation about the temporary fencing should have taken place. While we all agree that conservation is important, it's would be good if WDC didn't overplay the importance of protecting skylarks when their numbers haven't fallen since 2016.
2	It seems that the majority of users of this space were not consulted in good time before decisions on action were taken. It would seem a public consultation would have been more appropriate in these circumstances.
3	Just leave the lands alone. The birds have thrived for many years. The boundaries are move to meet "requirements " and tick boxes and are not a good use of any public money.
4	Hazel hurdles
5	The fencing is a good idea, but I reiterate that the long grass where the birds nest is not the area fenced in.
6	The fencing is an effective solution to deliver the obligations presented to the council. Unfortunately signage alone doesn't work as is clear in the past & plenty of other areas of the common
7	Hedgerow would be the ideal long term solution, that would take time to mature. For now the fences will prevent dogs from disturbing these declining nesting birds. Quite simply we should all do our bit to live alongside wildlife. Yes it's not the most attractive solution but it will help to maintain and hopefully increase the numbers of Skylarks and pipits.

7. Alternative solutions Which of the following would you find more acceptable? Below are a few suggestions collected from local social media sites. Please choose ALL that you think are worthy of consideration to include in planning a more sustainable and viable alternative to plastic fencing.

8	I think we need to do all we can to encourage these birds to breed. I would like to see a permanent hedge / fence for these birds. It's not as if it is a very big area in comparison to the rest of the land.
9	That's not the point, none of the above apply as the fencing is to stop dogs disturbing the nests.
10	Hedging is a nice idea but dogs can quite easily crawl through gaps so I'd imagine some sort of fencing behind the hedge would be needed as well
11	Move the nesting area to a more appropriate site. The birds could be encouraged to nest on the unused part of the golf course.
12	I feel the plastic fencing is probably the best short term solution mainly to stop loose dogs running through the area but a longer term solution such as hedges and wooden fences would be preferable. I find it amazing that no long term solution has been arranged before now, but cannot see any of the above alternatives working in the short term. As a local resident I feel it is very sad that the "powers that be" cannot get their heads together and agree on a sensible long term solution. I for one love to hear the skylarks singing over the fields but the numbers are less each year.
13	Better signage informing people and if are going to put up temporary barriers, actually only where the birds are nesting not whole large area. I've been to other areas where ground birds nest and they just put up small areas around the actual nest site and also have well placed signage on entrances and before the nesting sites informing the public.
14	I would like to see more of the central area set aside and left un-mown during the bird breeding season. This includes that part of the common currently used as a race day car park. Over the longer term, would it be possible for the model flying club to be accommodated elsewhere - perhaps through the re-design of the golf course . This would offer the potential to further expand the central bird nesting zone.
15	The fencing is not particularly attractive but I believe it will be the most effective means of protecting the birds. People and their dogs simply do not follow advice, signage and requests - as I see every day.
16	Although I don't necessarily agree with the use of plastic, a robust boundary fence needs to be temporarily in place to prevent dogs from going into this sensitive area. These measures are temporary not permanent, so the fencing can be easily removed and stored.
17	Hedging is the best long term policy but in the short term plastic fencing is the best option.
18	Signage to explain how precious this area is for birds during nesting period When this period is exactly Less anti dog owner wordage (we do not have a dog but note that most dog owners are very sensible, friendly , caring and treat their dogs very well so why wouldn't they be sympathetic to the birds?)
19	As the fencing is to be there more time of the year than it is not, a permanent fence should be put in place (post and rail/stock fencing) with a locked gate when the area is not to be used and open gate when it can be used. The plastic tape that has been used unsuccessfully to try and secure the golf course has failed and it all looks unsightly - proper fencing or hedges need to be used throughout the site to keep consistency and percent long lasting security.
20	More protection for wildlife keep dogs on leads
21	As a temporary structure, the plastic fence is fit for purpose, as I presume it is to keep predators like foxes out, and reduce disruption to nesting birds by humans and dogs walking near nests. It is temporary isn't it?
22	Since it's to protect ground nesting birds the plastic fencing is only going to be temporary so surely it's not a problem. So many dogs all over the place they could be a real threat to the birds. I'm very glad that something is being done.

7. Alternative solutions Which of the following would you find more acceptable? Below are a few suggestions collected from local social media sites. Please choose ALL that you think are worthy of consideration to include in planning a more sustainable and viable alternative to plastic fencing.

23	Something more aesthetically compatible with the surroundings Natural wood rather than a plastic looking synthetic horror
24	The main threat to nesting birds is the number of dogs that are allowed to roam free not the walkers.
25	Would have preferred the fencing to be anything other than plastic. Very non eco friendly. The area does seem to large. Also, who was there no consultation regarding the fencing. If dogs are an issue, I feel no initial steps were taken to minimise this even though I don't beleive they are an issue.
26	Wooden posts seems to me to be the best suggestion as the area would retain its natural look. Posts such as those used on the model airplane posts, with professional signage and perhaps a fact about the local wildlife on each one. Existing paths have always been mown and the vast majority of people that walk on the land stick to them.
27	In the short term I have no objection to the current fencing. If it is decided that a more permanent solution is needed then something more aesthetically pleasing would be better.
28	I would have thought metal link fencing would look better and be more durable, but it is probably much more expensive. There must be fences to prevent dogs disturbing the birds. I guess they will come down at the end of the breeding season.
29	It's a shame to see plastic being used. Could large metal chicken were type fencing not have been used. Haven't got an issue with the area being blocked of if it means the birds are protected then its fine. There's is plenty of land for the public and our dog to walk on and if it means the birds are safe then that's good.
30	Think that the plastic fencing is acceptable, but could be enhanced by more informative signage. The other alternative is, as happens in several other areas where endangered wild-life is under threat, for dogs to only be allowed to walk on the area on leads. On one occasion I have seen a dog Walker with 9 dogs running loose on the area and on another, 4 dog owners talking on the model plane area whilst their dogs ran wild on the meadow.
31	I think it's a great idea to protect the ground breeding birds like skylarks. It's a shame the fencing isn't more permanent or attractive (would have been nice not to be plastic) but something has to be done to stop dogs running riot on areas important for protected species. I'm all for it.
32	If it is only for a few months then I think the plastic fencing is ok. However dogs can easily get under the current plastic fence.
33	Don't spend a fortune. The public purse is always stretched. Just make it reusable and kind to the environment. People will always ask for something nice and expensive because it feels like they don't have to pay for it. My only plea is be realistic.
34	Personally I think as the barriers are just temporary then there is no issue. People don't tend to walk in that area when the grass is long anyway so what's the issue?
35	I don't mind the plastic fencing but more permanent hedges might be a good and natural long term solution
36	There needs to be a long-term solution and some long-term thinking. Does the council intend that this ugly plastic fencing will become a yearly addition to the Common? I favour the idea of low hedging. Native species will encourage other birdlife too. Of necessity, this would have to be managed and kept reasonable low or it would alter the look of the area. Local schools could be encouraged to investigate the best kinds of shrubs to attract wildlife and even raise funds and help in the playing. This would give future generations some investment in the future of this land. #I also favour a couple of wide paths across the nesting grounds complete with quality display broads explaining the nesting habits and birds, 1982 Countryside Act and penalties and encouraging the public to comply and even police the area.
37	TO HAVE THE FIGURES DOUBLE CHECKED ON THE VALIDITY OF NUMBERS , VIS A VIS THE DECREASE OF SKYLARKS AND MEADOW PIPITS !
38	Better marking of public rights of way across site would help.

7. Alternative solutions Which of the following would you find more acceptable? Below are a few suggestions collected from local social media sites. Please choose ALL that you think are worthy of consideration to include in planning a more sustainable and viable alternative to plastic fencing.

39	You should not be able to enclose common land. In the past nothing was ever done to highlight the nesting area.
40	Sturdy attractive permanent signage needs to be installed.I am in favour of the current fencing as it is temporary for the breeding season. The nesting birds need protecting.
41	Without this fencing people will walk wherever they like even if paths hedges etc are put in place !!
42	Hedging is a good idea for at least some of the boundary as this would also benefit the other birds and wildlife too
43	Why has the grass kept being cut it used to be long and different wild grasses used to grow. The skylarks are ground nesting birds and they like long grass. When the grass was not cut at all except August September time there were always plenty of skylarks nesting and no fencing. Also how do you tell the skylarks to nest inside the fencing!!!! There also used to be lovely wild flowers over there. I have walked over there since I was a teenager the common has changed over the years and not for the better. Almost forgot the gog brook used to have fish in it and was clear water.
44	More permanent style fencing
45	Reason as above comment
46	Its the only way to stop people letting their dogs run on the ground & disturb the birds
47	Monitoring is a waste of time. Dog walkers are ruining our green space.
48	Why can't residents just respect one area that is supporting the local birds. The Friends of St Marys should be supporting this idea rather than poison minds of local people. Those on the committee appear to be very selfish and offer very little to the land.
49	Its temporary isnt it ?
50	If we are serious about looking after our wild life the area has to prevent dogs from accessing site. I love dogs but there is plenty of room for them in the fields without disturbing nesting areas.

8. Finally any thoughts on this survey or the future of St Mary's Lands please leave your comments here, or go to our website friendsofstmaryslands.com

Answer Choices		Response Percent	Response Total
1	Open-Ended Question	100.00%	71
1	Worried that walkers and the public are trying to be excluded from more and more areas.		
2	It is very ugly and plastic is not environmentally friendly		
3	<p>I do think the Working Party needs to face greater scrutiny and be very careful about making decisions unilaterally. The public has a great interest in this land and that needs to be balanced with other concerns.</p> <p>On a wider level, the sheer amount of development that WDC has allowed to go through in this area has infringed on the places we can walk and the natural habitat of many wildlife. Maybe they'd like to reconsider their planning policies rather than encroach further into the few public spaces we have left to enjoy.</p>		
4	This beautiful area is not being maintained and access to the public is being restricted		
5	No more development of the lands please. Just leave it alone and maintain the paths and everyone will be ok.		
6	We are just pleased that people are just as committed to keep the Common the Common		
7	<p>Far more communications from the Managers of the Common to the People of Warwick District about their views on the future of their Public Open Space. Include onsite Pop Up meetings.</p> <p>I would also want to know how these Managers are going to manage the other wildlife (ie. Foxes and Hawks) that are more likely to cause more issue in this large area with these Nesting Birds. Were is the money coming from to erect the fencing and to removed after the Beeding Season each year, suspect it will never be removed.</p>		
8	How do the birds know where to nest?		
9	I am a recent user of St Mary's land (2017), but it is very obvious how well used this land is by many people of differing interests.		
10	The powers that be complain when paths are overworn, but before they restricted walkers to these paths people walked more widely on mown pathways of which there were many more and which didn't seem to suffer. It seems to be the restrictions which lead to hard wearing.		
11	It's clear you have an agenda here. A shame as survey results would be much more valuable with some neutrality in the phrasing of questions etc.		
12	<p>It honk we need to do all we can to encourage theses birds to breed.</p> <p>I would like to see a permanent hedge / fence for these birds.</p> <p>It's not as if it is a very big area in comparison to the rest of the land</p> <p>I feel that there are way to many voices shouting at each other about what Warwick wants from this piece of land.</p> <p>Just keep it mowed and maintained as is, don't fix what's not broken...</p> <p>And when is the hotel being built, I have friends and relatives that want to come and stay. 😊</p>		
13	This space is vital for our family's health. More and more restrictions, chains locking pathways etc are appearing. It seems walkers are being pushed out strategically, one change at a time.		
14	We need to oppose, what is nothing less than, the vilification and harassment of the indigenous people who use this common land. Esp. the benighted dog walkers and their dogs, Esp. at THIS restrictive dangerous time countrywide. The council has no legal right to stewardship of the common, so far as I can deduce. Well, you did ask!		
15	<p>For me, this land is about wildlife and providing an area for locals to walk. If a species of bird needs protecting then I am extremely for doing whatever needs to be done to help protect them.</p> <p>From the article I read, it wasn't clear whether you work against the idea completely or just against the type of</p>		

8. Finally any thoughts on this survey or the future of St Mary's Lands please leave your comments here, or go to our website friendsofstmaryslands.com

	<p>fencing used... I would hope just the latter.</p> <p>If something more attractive can be done then that would be great but the priority has to be to put something in place to start protecting these birds. There is plenty of space there for people to still walk around and we must prioritise sharing that space with wildlife.</p>
16	<p>It is good to have an opportunity to discuss the plans. More local people should be included in discussions. Public land should be managed with public debate not by councillors and officials who don't walk on the lands.</p>
17	<p>I think it is important that we discuss our local open areas and protect them for future generations. There is always a balance on use but I feel the protection of our dwindling wildlife is worth a few modest restrictions on where we walk and allow dogs off leads, which seems to be the main sticking point.</p>
18	<p>St Mary's is a special bit of land which is very important to the local community. It needs to be protected in the strongest possible form.</p>
19	<p>I feel if you have a dog, we are being pushed out more and more and soon everywhere will want dogs on leads and all the outside spaces that dogs can run freely will be gone.</p>
20	<p>Be more constructive with WDC rather than confrontational for sake of it</p>
21	<p>WDC needs to expand how it consults with the public beyond the confines of the St Mary's Lands Working Group.</p> <p>If the current bird protection measures are "a trial", then we need to know how that trial will be monitored and assessed by WDC and how it proposes to share that information in public.</p>
22	<p>It is disappointing that the Friends don't seem to have been fully consulted, but action had to be taken quickly. The larks are just too disturbed.</p>
23	<p>Clarity over where you can walk / exercise dogs as there is nothing I've seen that tells you this.</p>
24	<p>I'm very pleased with the work that's been carried out over the past few years, which has greatly improved access. The conservation work is great too as is the new football pitch.</p>
25	<p>Skylarks are in national decline and in trouble locally. St Marys Lands is one of the few areas in Warwick and the surroundings where the birds can raise more than one brood in a season and could provide a valuable source population for improving the state of this bird in the county. Fencing has always been used on the common in the breeding season, it used to be just a rope, allowing dogs to run beneath. Data now suggests that even this is having an impact. I regularly saw people ignoring the roped areas and also allowing their dogs to roam across nest site areas.</p> <p>The logical thing to do is to try the new technique. If Skylark numbers continue to decline then something else is responsible and the fence can be removed in totality. If numbers do recover then perhaps a hedge could be planted around these areas to replace the green netting. Hedging would be great for biodiversity but may have some opposition as it would change the character of the site and restrict view lines.</p> <p>St Marys land is big enough for all to coexist in this matter and to risk losing Skylarks on the site would be a great folly. Its is a mark of the country town that their song can be heard in the town centre.</p> <p>I have worked on LBAP plans for Skylarks in the county and this site really is vital to the local population, I think the Friends of St Marys lands should be championing this species not fighting potentially effective measures to protect them.</p>
26	<p>I welcome the opportunity to comment but think the survey needs to be clearer and more objective to be of use. I strongly support that the Council has made attempts to protect the Skylarks and don't see any problem at all sharing our wonderful Common with the birds!</p>
27	<p>We love St Mary's Lands and have use£ it for over 40 years but particularly in the last 15. Many improvements recently. Mostly good.</p>
28	<p>Considering the golf course has not been made secure from the vernal public (whole in hedges, broken fencing etc and the plastic tape that have used to attempt to secure this area has not survived the weather the focus should be on properly re securing Thai site with either full hedges or full fencing - the plastic temporary taping does not work and is not a long term solution.</p>
29	<p>Be good if your group was properly constituted and less aggressive</p>

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30	It's good to be able to express an opinion.
31	Wish there weren't so many dogs!
32	Please keep up your pressure to maintain the land for the benefit of local residents rather than horse racing visitors
33	As a dog owner myself it used to frustrate me seeing other dog owners allowing their dogs to run freely in the 'fenced' area, disturbing the birds as there was only a flimsy bit of string and laminate notices (that didn't last) marking the boundary on one side of the nesting area. Whilst it's not the prettiest thing to look at, a solid boundary such as the plastic netting is the only way to ensure the birds are left in peace whilst nesting.
34	Before carrying out abominations like this first consult the people who make use of it.
35	I'd like to see some restriction on the numbers and behaviours of dog walkers. The recent increase in dog ownership has resulted in almost all our green spaces being converted into dog toilets, with other users being considerably disadvantaged. It's not much fun retrieving a frisbee or a football to find it covered in excrement.
36	Whilst I accept the racecourse is a business and wants walkers to be considerate they don't help themselves by not making easy access where they would prefer users to cross! They want people to use specific crossing points but leave barriers across. Blocking and locking the main crossing point without consideration for users of the other entrance/exits forcing people to find a way through or directing people via a long diversion - not everyone is capable of the distance! Don't just restrict without giving considered alternatives. Then they may find not as much "damage"!
37	lasts week I counted no fewer than 8 singing skylarks on St. Mary's Lands - the birds are claiming territory and attracting mates. They simply will not breed here if dogs and walkers disturb the nesting area.
38	It is a fantastic area. A big thank you for caring for it. It is a great opportunity to create more habitat for nature. It is hard to balance human development with the natural world but you have a chance to play your part. We need to reduce our footprint. ...literally! I look forward to enjoying the larks ascending. They are truly extraordinary and need to be treasured. Agree more good info boards encouraging education on biodiversity.
39	The survey isn't worded neutrally so I would suggest more thought is given to how questions are asked in future surveys.
40	The area seems to be rather large. I noticed yesterday that the Birds were nesting outside this area. Two flew up into the air from the ground as I passed them. So the fence seems pointless. I have lived here 47 years, my home is across the road from the Common and I have never seen fencing off until recent years. The birds nested quite happily for all those years. Why fence now?
41	Friends of St Mary's land are doing a good job. For that they need a round of applause!
42	I'm a dog walker that has a dog off lead when walking around the racecourse, I walk here daily, and have no issue with segregated areas for wildlife/conservation/biodiversity protection/enhancement as there is plenty of routes and areas to walk my dog. I believe it is really important for any landowner/leaseholder/stakeholder to support wildlife initiatives such as these.
43	Open the area more for local use. There is no need or demand for a racecourse.
44	Who has published this survey and who has asked for it to be carried out. I think that the survey should have included an explanation as to why the area has been fenced off. As a local resident I am very concerned that St Mary's Lands has become a dog walkers area rather than a resource for everyone and a haven for wild-life. I would like to see a survey of dog-walking on St Mary's Lands
45	I love the new scrapes too, hopefully we will get more wildlife in the area
46	St Mary's lands is a beautiful area and I think clearer signage and demarcation of the area of nesting birds would bring more awareness to protect the birds whilst still allowing people access this wonderful green space.

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47	I recently bought a house which looks onto these lands. It was a large reason for making this purchase. Since moving here with my family I walk on St Mary's Lands every day. I appreciate and enjoy it as a calm place to walk and think that it is a great asset to the town. Whilst I appreciate that the golf clubhouse is currently underdeveloped, the rest of the land (including the racecourse) is a very good example of private and public space working together well.
48	As above, dogs can easily get under the existing fence, maybe there needs some tent pegs to hold the fence down in between the posts.
49	I am grateful for the the facility and would like this appreciation to be convey before there are any demands and griping. Be kind and be grateful.
50	Full access to the results on smart survey should be allowed for transparency. There has been much disagreement between the Friends of St Mary's lands and WDC in the local press that the feeling is who to believe? A completely independent witness chosen and agreed by both to vet the results may put more confidence in the results when revealed.
51	there is much bad feeling locally that the 'council; and the 'racecourse are in cahoots (or worse) to limit public access to what used to be common land. I totally support the protection of ground-nesting birds and the land being given more nature reserve status. But the council is supposed to represent the people it serves and who pay their wages. This eyesore fencing is ecologically unsound and is simply not the answer.
52	St Mary's lands need to be allowed to be used in the historical manner it has been used for over decades now. Proportionate segregation of areas is fine but it must be discussed with regular users.
53	To oppose all incongruous developments , particularly ones that are damaging to the aesthetic , historic character of Warwick Common . With equal attention and dedication to preserving the uninhibited open space . With a survey to see what previously uninhibited open space can be reclaimed for the public !
54	It should be left as it is ,only decent outdoor space in the area !,
55	To raise awareness bird viewing areas with informative boards with pictures of the local birds. Feeding stations the public can donate too with healthy bird food that would benefit the observation of the birds and maybe also raise awareness and get people interested. The telescopes similar to those found at beaches could add interest and get younger people involved and interested. Sculptures and nature gardens to add interest? Would probably be a nightmare with privacy laws etc but Night cams and live feeds of wildlife activity or maybe one off videos of the 'night life' could be posted on public social media sites?
56	Would rather it was left as open as possible instead of pushing people into smaller and smaller areas all the time
57	It would be great to extend the gravel paths (from edge of jubilee woods down to race track, and from the marsh area to the crossing point on the back straight.... and have proper fibre sand crossings at all footpath crossing points) In terms of nesting bird area, there is still more than enough space to walk around
58	I just wanted to say that I think the council have done a good job with the green netting, which is hardly obtrusive on the eye as it blends in with the grass and it contains a big enough area for the meadow pipits and skylarks to nest while also leaving plenty of room for dog walkers. It is certainly an improvement on the bits of rope and posts that were put up in previous years, and something needed to be done as there are so many more dogs and dog walkers this year. This way, I think everyone is served well. I think it is great what the council in partnership with the racecourse are doing to promote wildlife on the common.
59	The common should be as it was long grass for the ground nesting birds. There are rights of way going across the racecourse and golf course. Less grass cutting for cars to park on race days as they are taking up more and more of the common. The common should be used for local peoples enjoyment.
60	We need to do everything we can to protect our wildlife and help increase the declining numbers.
61	With the increase of Dog ownership during the pandemic, its become increasingly apparent that a lot of dog owners are unaware of the impact their dogs running free and out of control is having. Nature is under constant threat and more needs to be done to educate the public.

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62	Anything that can be done to help nature flourish is a positive in this day and age
63	Dog walkers should have set paths to follow & be on leads.
64	Well done to Warwick DC for this great idea.
65	If dog owners were more responsible none of this would be necessary
66	It is vital to give our wildlife protection. Time and time again people with their dogs running off lead cause disturbance and bird breeding failure. I am sorry but dog owners aren't to be trusted!!!! Last year we witnessed a dog at another local site swim out to an island and gobble up some Great crested Grebe eggs. Surely we can give our wildlife a little breathing space during the nesting season by fencing a small area to keep people out.
67	We need to preserve nest sights in Warks, especially because of the damage hs2 is doing to the county.
68	There is no better time to support the natural environment and if that means a little inconvenience for us it's well worth it as we are all part of nature.
69	It is vital these areas are protected to ensure the decline in the breeding bird populations are halted
70	St.Marys Land is a fantastic place to allow our dog some off lead freedom. The dog walking community there are amazing, and we always feel safe there. I hope that can continue. As mentioned above, I do like the fencing at the moment. It makes our walks feel more relaxed as our dog has a visual clue of where he cannot go, without us having to call him back and forth all the time. I do understand that it isn't the most sustainable, and hope the plastic will be recycled after use.
71	There are many more people now using this area. Dog owners need somewhere to walk their dog but it is acknowledged that The birds need protecting. Whilst plastic is not ideal, it is the most viable solution at the moment. If it wasn't the Wildlife Trust would not have agreed it.

answered	21
skipped	96

