

# Ground maintenance consultation: review of grass cutting and weed spraying.

Survey results October 2021

This report sets out the results of a survey among Menheniot residents taken in September 2021 to examine attitudes towards ground maintenance across the parish. Results from the survey will be used to inform a new specification.

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## Background

At its July 2021 meeting, councillors committed to reviewing the specification for its ground maintenance contract. The current contract expires on 31 March 2022 and is carried out by an independent business who work to a specification that the council lays down

The council has now consulted with residents as to how the work should be carried out and this report summarises the findings from that survey. In previous years, the contract had come in three parts: grasscutting, strimming and weed spraying and the survey questions matched those parts. All the comments received in the survey are summarised and answered in Appendix 1. Residents have also been asked to identify unadopted areas of the parish that the council might include in its maintenance work. These are presented in Appendix 2.

## Headlines

At the close of the second survey on 30 September 2021, the council had received replies from 139 people. The main findings were that:

- Over three-quarters (77%) of people think that the playing fields should be maintained throughout the year.
- Over half (57%) of people would like to see a border around the playing field that is left uncut all the time.
- Over three-quarters (79%) of people would like some areas set aside for wilding on Mine Hill.
- Almost three-quarters (73%) of people want to see weeds controlled in public spaces.
- Two-thirds (63%) of people would like some areas at Fourgates set aside for wilding.
- Just over half (53%) of people would support whatever method works best to remove weeds.
- Just over three-quarters (76%) of people think the council should use alternative methods of controlling weeds (that is, should not be using glyphosate).

## Next steps

The parish council will discuss this report at its next meeting on 21 October 2021 and decide how the findings will shape the specification for its new ground maintenance contract that will begin on 1 April 2022.

Survey results published – comments invited	8 October 2021
Parish council public meeting	21 October 2021
Draft new specifications published	29 October 2021
Agreement to specification at council public meeting	18 November 2021
Start of new tender process	1 January 2022

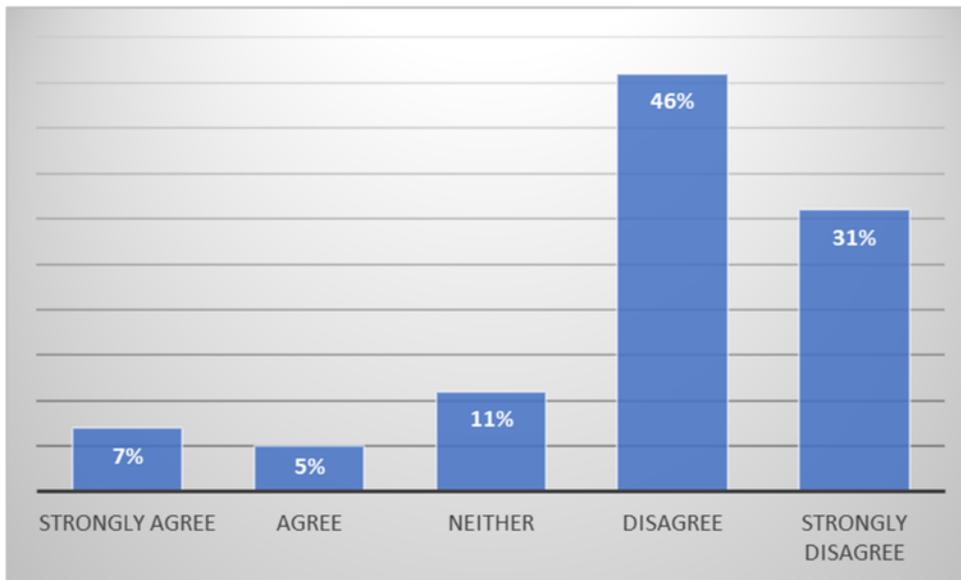
## Stay connected

The Parish Council makes regular postings on its Facebook, Twitter and NextDoor feeds to keep residents informed of news in the parish. The website is the main resource for information on all the council's work. Parish notice boards at Menheniot, Pengover Green, Merrymeet, Dodycross, Lower Clicker and Island Shop also display current topical items.

# 1.0 Grass cutting

The council owns and maintains the playing fields at East Road in Menheniot. The fields are open to all residents throughout the year, and are used by people taking personal exercise, dog-walking and the annual Cherry Fayre. Each will have different needs, but the overriding aim is to have a grassed area that is managed to accommodate all users. This means that the grass must be cut at regular intervals, but frequency can vary through the year. There are also other smaller public areas in Merrymeet that volunteers maintain, and some patches of ground in Menheniot that no-one looks after. Residents were asked how much they agreed with these statements:

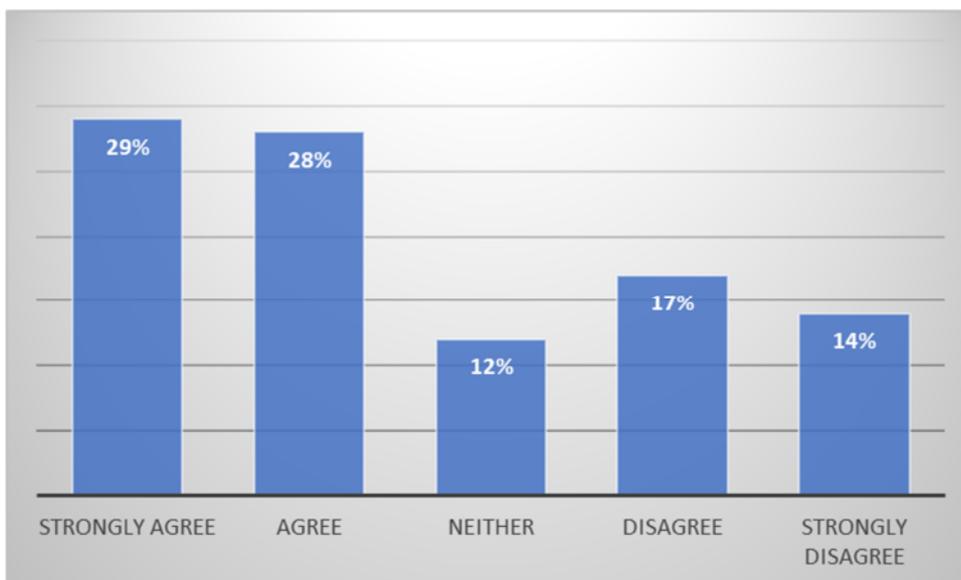
## 1.1 We should only cut the grass when there are organised events taking place on the playing field.



### Narrative

- Over three-quarters (77%) of people think that the playing fields should be maintained throughout the year.

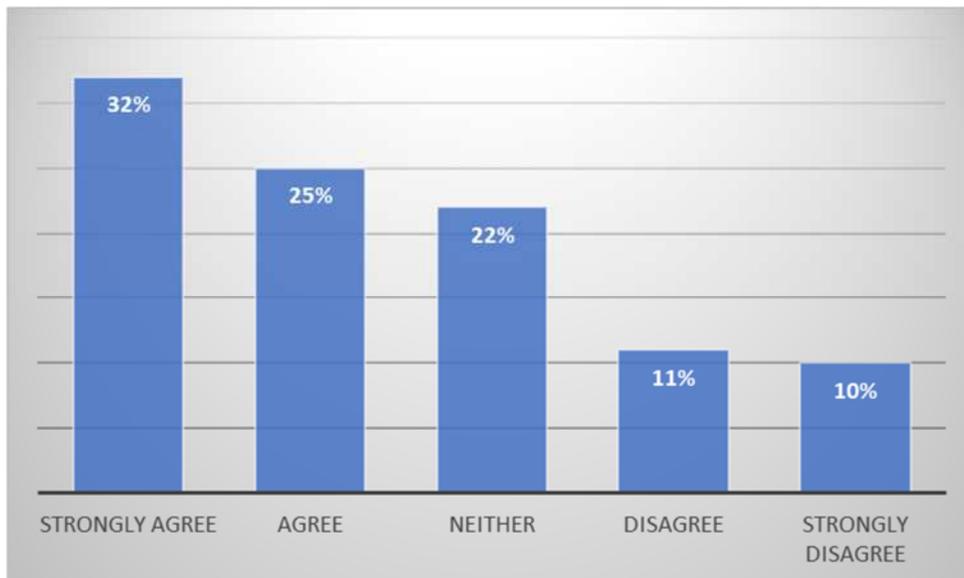
## 1.2 We should leave a border around the playing field that should be left uncut all the time.



### Narrative

- Over half (57%) of people would like to see a border around the playing field that is left uncut all the time.
- Less than one-third (31%) want to see all the playing fields cut to the same length throughout.

### 1.3 All public grassed areas in the parish should be kept cut to a reasonable length all the time.



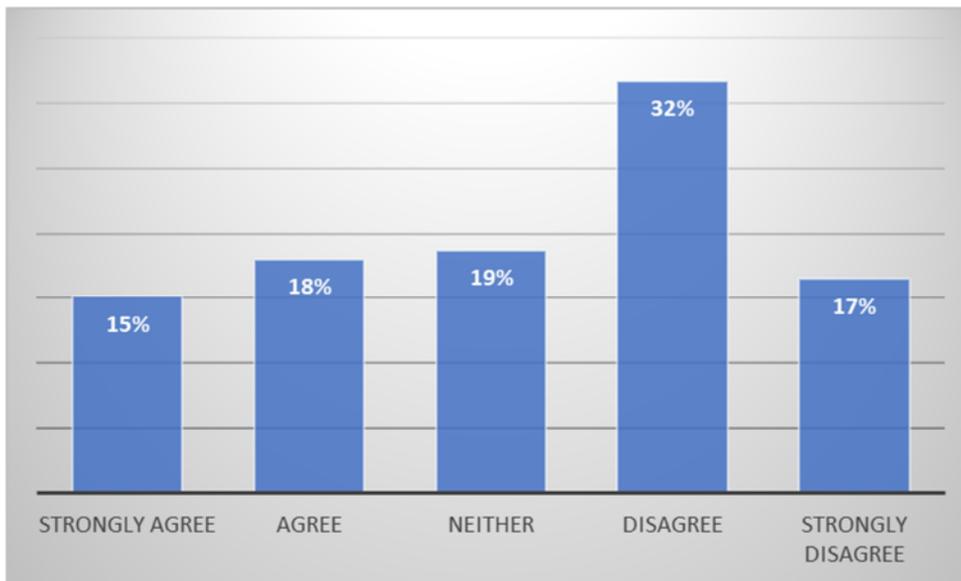
#### Narrative

- Over half (57%) of people want to see public grassed areas across the parish maintained.
- Almost one quarter (22%) have no opinion.

## 2.0 Strimming and hedge-cutting

Strimming is a quick and easy way to cut down overgrown shrubs and plants in hard-to-reach areas, such as steep banks and rough terrain. It's usually done every 7-8 weeks between March and October. Residents were asked how much they agreed with these statements:

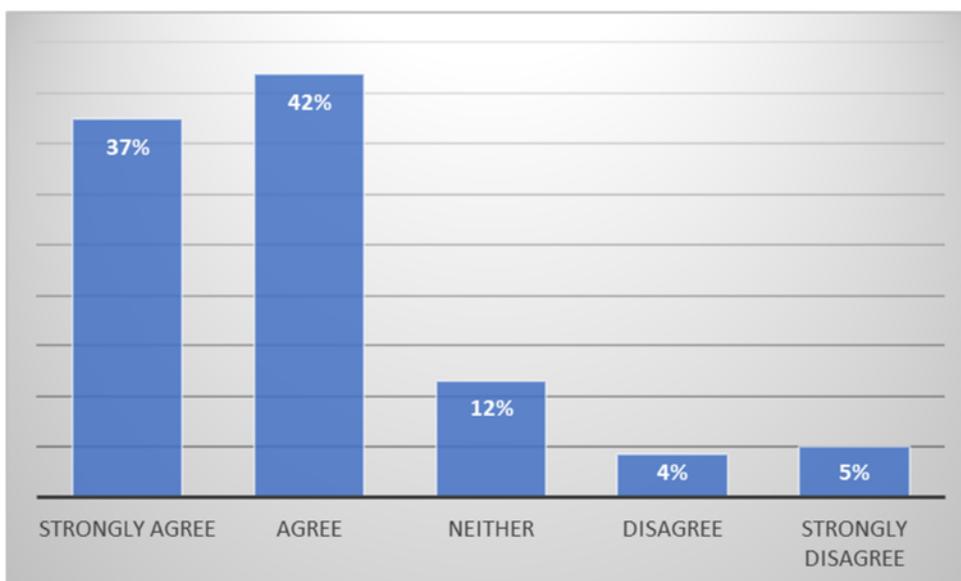
### 2.1 Mine Hill should be strimmed and made tidy all through the year.



#### Narrative

- Almost half of people (49%) of people do not want to see Mine Hill managed and tidy all year.
- One third (33%) want to see the bank strimmed and tidy.
- Almost one fifth (19%) have no opinion.

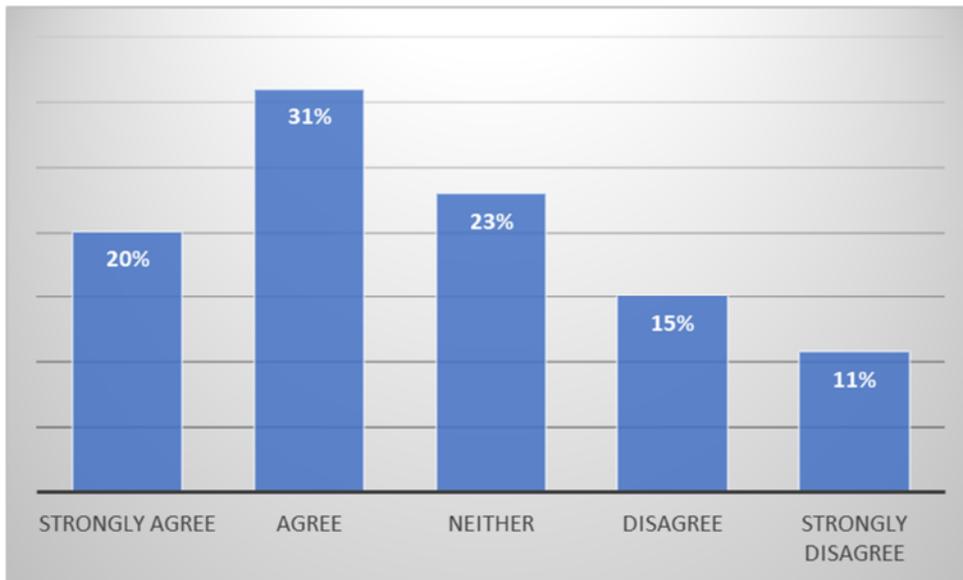
### 2.2 Mine Hill is where some spaces should be set aside for natural growth and not cut.



#### Narrative

- Over three-quarters (79%) of people would like some areas set aside for wilding.
- Less than one-tenth (9%) want to see the area cut.

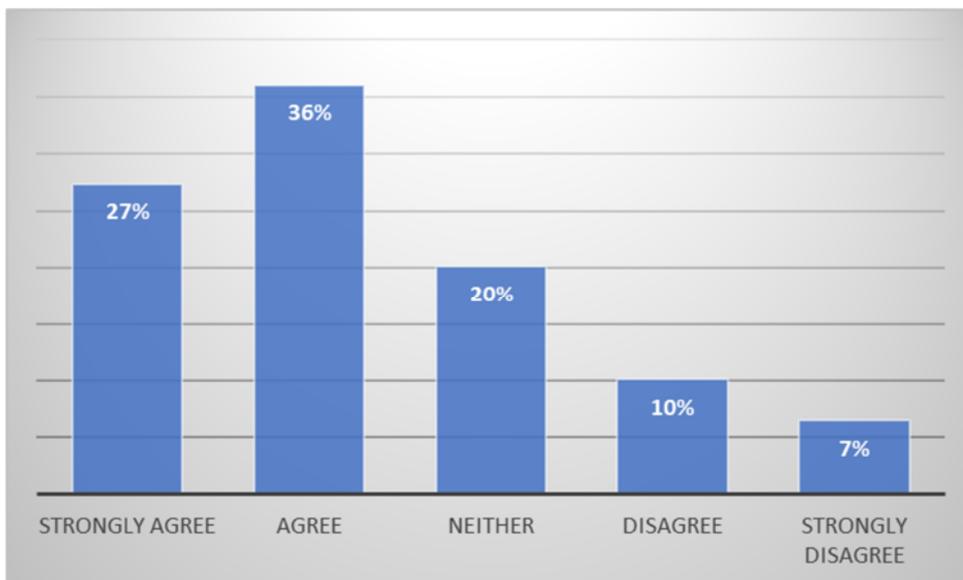
### 2.3 Fourgates should be strimmed and made tidy all through the year.



#### Narrative

- Just over half (51%) of people would like the area around Fourgates maintained.
- Just over one-quarter (26%) want the area to be wilded.
- Just under one-quarter (23%) have no opinion.

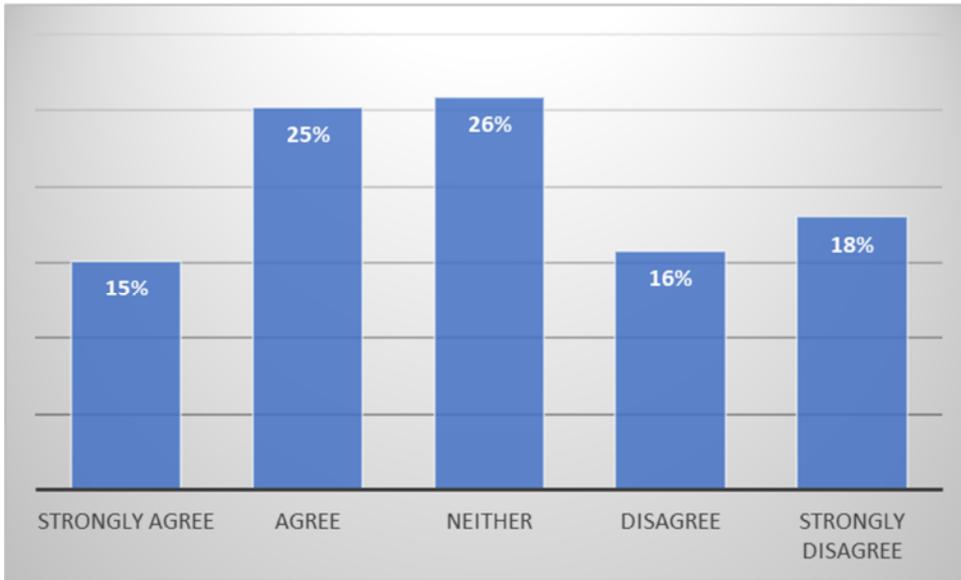
### 2.4 Fourgates is where some spaces should be set aside for natural growth and not cut.



#### Narrative

- Almost two-thirds (63%) of people would like some areas at Fourgates set aside for wilding.
- 17% want to see the area cut.
- One-fifth (20%) have no opinion.

### 2.5 All hedges should be cut back to 4' (1.2m) in height



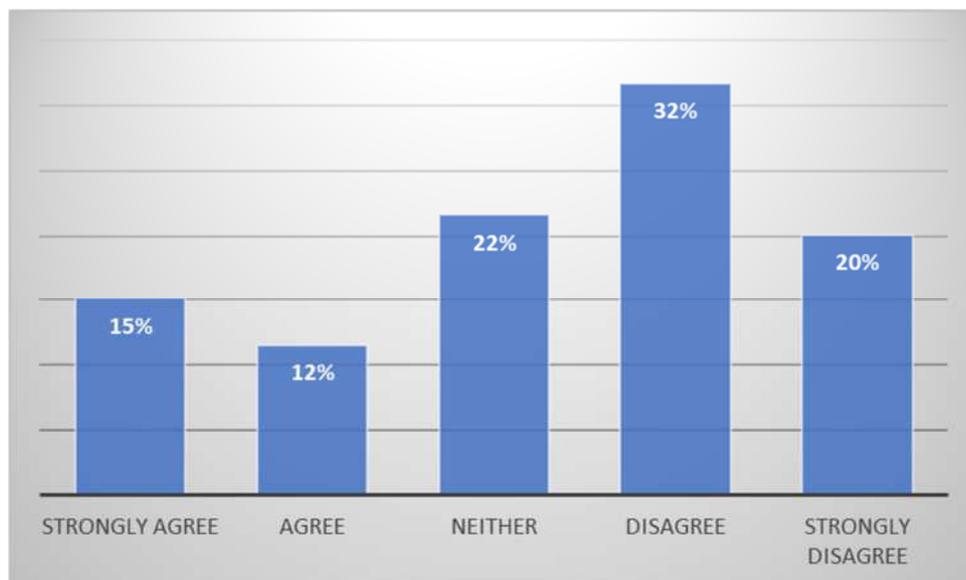
**Narrative**

- The greatest number of people (40%) would prefer to see all hedges cut back and maintained to 4'.
- Almost as many (34%) do not want to see hedges cut to this height.
- Over one quarter (26%) have no opinion.

### 3.0 Weed management

Opinions are divided on what a 'weed' is, but currently, the council sprays in four areas that are prone to have weeds growing. This happens twice each year in Spring and Autumn. In this section, we ask you to tell us about your attitude towards wild plants growing and how we could manage them. Residents were asked how much they agreed with these statements:

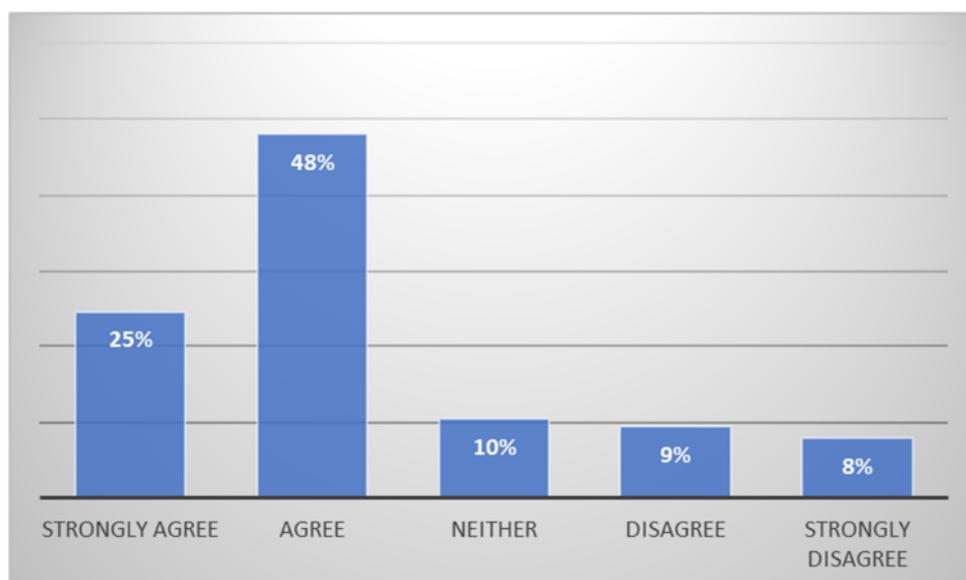
#### 3.1 We should accept all plants as growing naturally where they are and leave them alone



#### Narrative

- Over half of people (52%) want to see weeds removed.
- Just over one-quarter (27%) want weeds and wild plants left as they are.
- Almost one-quarter (22%) have no opinion.

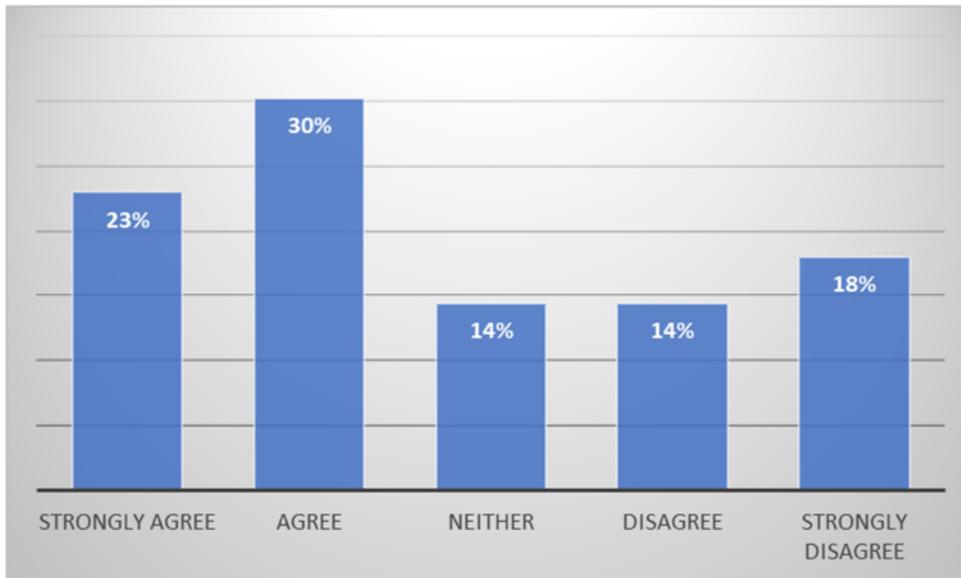
#### 3.2 We need to control the growth of weeds in public spaces



#### Narrative

- Almost three-quarters (73%) of people want to see weeds controlled in public spaces.
- Less than one-fifth (17%) of people want to see weeds left to grow.
- A small proportion of people (10%) have no opinion.

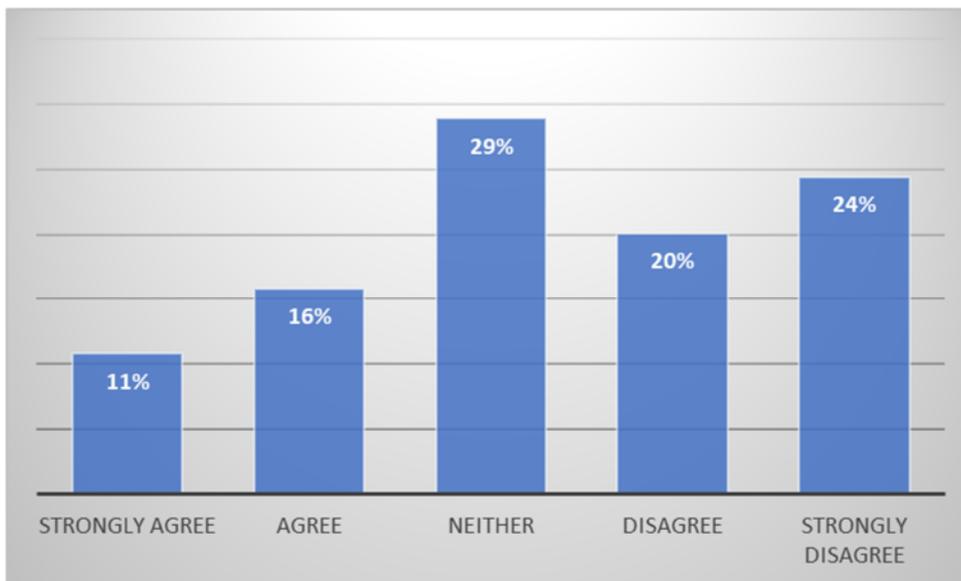
### 3.3 We should use whatever works best to remove weeds



#### Narrative

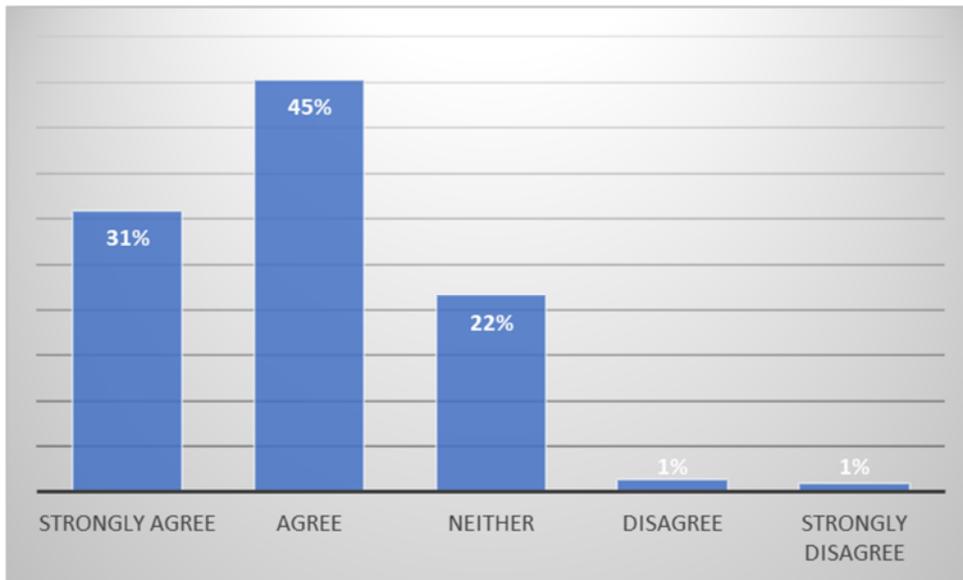
- Just over half (53%) of people would support whatever method works best to remove weeds.
- Under one-third (32%) would not support 'anything goes' approaches to weed control.
- A small proportion of people (14%) have no opinion.

### 3.4 We should use herbicide to remove weeds



- Just over one-quarter (27%) people think we should use herbicides to control weeds.
- Almost one half of people (44%) think we should not be using herbicides.
- 29% of people have no opinion.

### 3.5 We should use natural/mechanical methods to manage weeds



- Just over three-quarters (76%) of people think the council should use alternative methods of controlling weeds (that is, should not be using glyphosate).
- Almost one-fifth (22%) have no opinion.

## Appendix 1

Your comments from the survey are listed here

1.0 Grass cutting		
Item	Comment	Response
1.1	The playing field is huge and definitely scope to allow a large border or corner to grow long for wildlife and even to plant some more trees. I have seen in other areas this has been done with many wildflowers and a windy path cut through the middle which makes it look more inviting and intentional and allows people to get closer to the wild flowers: butterflies etc without trampling them. Great that you are consulting thank you.	If councillors agree to create a border by the playing field, they will take every opportunity to involve schools and the parish's own resident experts to design and plant it out. The same approach can be used in other parts of the parish.
1.2	I agree with the ideas of leaving a strip around edge of sports field but these areas cannot be left without some maintenance, cut and cleared at least once per year the same with the rest of the areas around the district.	Please see Item 1.1 above. We need to take specialist advice so that wilding an area does not impact adversely on neighbouring land – this may mean that all areas have to be 'managed' to some degree.
1.3	Great to be able to give my thoughts. Be great if we could create more wildlife friendly areas throughout the parish by re-seeding as wildflower meadows	Please see Item 1.1 above
1.4	Regarding areas of grass such as by Fourgates, the Well, Mine Hill and by William Laundry. Can this be seeded with traditional meadow wild flower/grass mix? With the aim of reducing maintenance, increasing insect wildlife and being visually appealing?	Please see Item 1.1 above
1.5	Would like to see grass cutting removed from football field and play area	This would involve an additional cost (and we will get a price for this) but the council has not so far received any complaints about grass cuttings being left on the field.
1.6	The playing field is the main useable space for children to play sports/run/ride bikes please keep the grass short.	Thank you.
1.7	Keeping grass areas open to the public short will aid local dog owners to pick up as longer grass inhibits those foulers not to .....there will obviously always be an issue with dog poo as there are irresponsible dog owners out there all we can do is keep an eye out and report when necessary.	Please see Item 1.6 above

1.8	I feel that any grassed areas at ground level (ie where dogs may mess) should be kept well trimmed at all times. It makes it easier for dog walkers to clean up. Also some dog walkers feel that uncut grass means they don't have to pick up at all!. In particular this would be very unpleasant around	Please see Item 1.7 above
1.9	The Bowling Green borders are trimmed right against their properties. Why not Fourgates?	Councillors will consider your comment when agreeing the contract terms.
1.10	Good of you to consider public opinion.	Thank you.

<b>2.0 Strimming &amp; Hedges</b>		
<b>Item</b>	<b>Comment</b>	<b>Response</b>
2.1	I wish to continue looking after Mine Hill bank making it an environmentally positive area of beauty.	Thank you from all the councillors and residents who appreciate your hard work. If we can be of any further help – and if more volunteers are needed – let us know.
2.2	Although I understand the reason Mine Hill is being left to rewild I think it's unfair of the Parish Council to leave this job to one very willing individual. The job is far to big for her and at times the bank has looked unsightly, and some features are questionable. If this is to be rewilded it's needs to be done by more than one person.	Mine Hill is in the process of being replanted with wildflowers and native bulbs (most notably, English bluebells). The process will not happen overnight and needs patience and dedication from everyone involved. Would you like to volunteer to help her?
2.3	Wildflowers don't do as well in grass heavy areas, they need to be managed. The areas that have been left to go wild this year have looked beautiful and have been a great area for insects and bees. It would be great if more wild flower seeds could be spread and then maybe everyone would be more accepting of these areas being left. Use wildflowers in areas that are not well used.	Can we talk to you about how to manage any wilded areas? You sound like an expert!
2.4	I feel Mine Hill bank needs to be properly maintained, nature can only go so far as a need for a tidy approach to our village is required.	Please see Item 2.1 above.
2.5	Shrubs & trees should be trimmed sympathetically & not hacked down by chainsaws	Councillors will consider your comment when agreeing the contract terms.
2.6	Also the verges at Trelawny Road need to be cut regularly by your contractor and not left to the lady looking after Mine Hill Bank, this is a visibility issue.	The verges on Trelawney Road have been left uncut following representations from local residents. Where safety (in this example, road

		safety) is an issue, we will always intervene and maintain visibility. Please Item 2.1 above.
2.7	The parish needs to be managed but balanced. I believe the verges should be left as they presently are and then cut once the seeds have formed and likewise there should be wild areas for the flora and fauna but there should also be neat areas. If it is all left to go wild and no spraying is done it will soon look a mess.	Please see Item 2.3 above. The council will take specialist advice before deciding on the timing of any verge cutting and strimming. Agree we need to find a balance between 'wilding' and 'neglected'
2.8	Hedge cutting in autumn. Help from residents on boundary walls.	The hedges that border the playing fields will be cut back to 4' in October, and we thank residents who have volunteered to maintain them afterwards.
2.9	Strim: except entrances to fields. Hedges: only cut once a year.	Councillors will consider your comment when agreeing the contract terms.
2.10	Hedges once a year or where safety is an issue.	Councillors will consider your comment when agreeing the contract terms.
2.11	Hedges: ask local people before cutting.	Residents who live in the houses adjacent to the playing fields have been involved in deciding what height the hedges will be cut to and will be given a date for when the work will be taking place.
2.12	Some hedges are centuries old - their diversity must be preserved. Some weeds (especially in hedges) are wild flowers.	Councillors will consider your comment when agreeing the contract terms.
2.13	Hedges should be cut back regularly for better visibility around bends.	Safety is the most important issue when deciding whether or not to cut shrubs and bushes. If you have a concern about a particular area, please contact the Clerk's Office.
2.14	I support the planting of wildflowers in the banks. with regard to the height of hedges some need to be trimmed and some don't. In my own garden my hedge is trimmed (by the PC) because it is on top of a bank. I don't think you can have a blanket policy for this aspect.	Please see Item 2.6 above. Councillors will consider your comment when agreeing the contract terms.
2.15	I am a resident of Vicarage Close and my garden backs on to the Village playing field. If the hedge that forms this boundary were to be cut to 4' in height from the ground on the field side I would no longer have a hedge on my side of the boundary. For the past 14 years we have	Our question about hedges is a general question that will help councillors understand attitudes towards maintenance (and hedges). The area you describe is not currently part of this review.

	<p>maintained the boundary hedge across our garden, cutting it annually and planting new saplings to try and fill a gap. When the hedge cutting contract is discussed please can the Council consider not cutting the hedge height at the boundary to my property enabling us to continue maintaining the hedge at a height that provides the privacy we currently have.</p>	
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3.0	<b>Weed management</b>	
Item	Comment	Response
3.1	<p>I especially would not like to see herbicides being used around the playing field and children's park (having been there with the kids whilst the park edges were being sprayed this was quite concerning).</p>	<p>Herbicide spraying usually takes place in the early morning so that it has time to dry before people and pets are around. In Spring this year, the new contractors were hampered by staff shortages (because of the Covid lockdown) and so the spraying was delayed. Councillors will take on board any requests for alternative methods of weed control to be properly assessed before making their decision.</p>
3.2	<p>Residents should have advance warning if harmful chemicals are going to be used in public places</p>	<p>The council will only allow the use of chemicals if they are legal and safely applied. We will be posting notices around Menheniot and Merrymeet centres to alert residents when weed spraying operations will be taking place.</p>
3.3	<p>If you care about the environment, you must allow natural ecosystems to flourish. On no account must you use chemical pesticides. That's simple common sense.</p>	<p>Please see Item 3.2 above.</p>
3.4	<p>Current weedkiller used seems not to be dog friendly</p>	<p>Please see Item 3.2 above.</p>
3.5	<p>I agree that invasive alien species eg knotweed needs strong control.</p>	<p>The council is aware that certain species and poisonous weeds (for example, ragwort) need the most immediate and effective treatments which might mean using certain herbicides in specific areas.</p>
3.6	<p>The use of herbicides is a very emotive subject but has it's uses in areas as stated in this survey.</p>	<p>Councillors will consider your comment when agreeing the contract terms.</p>
3.7	<p>Please do not use herbicides, we should never use poison.</p>	<p>Please see Item 3.2 above.</p>

3.8	Whilst I'm all for making an area far more beneficial for our wildlife and increasing biodiversity it is also very important to maintain an equilibrium. It doesn't take long for weeds (e.g dandelions and rosebay willow herb) to take over at a considerable rate and then a balance is lost. The introduction of wildflowers and meadow planting would be far more beneficial than just leaving patches uncut. If that is unobtainable then honestly, I would far rather see things neat and tidy. There's so many ways biodiversity could be encouraged yet, time and finances play too much of a part; unless it can be done properly then in my opinion it wouldn't be worth doing and would make our village look untidy for a minimum benefit to nature.	Councillors will consider your comment when agreeing the contract terms.
3.9	Somehow a balance needs to be established between managing the environment for nature and leaving safe and clear spaces for children and residents to play safely. And while I disagree with the use of herbicides, I accept that some pernicious and notifiable weeds may need special treatment - there's was no option for commenting on the management of these in the 'weed' section.	Please see Item 3.6 above.
3.10	Natural methods are more time consuming.	Councillors will be assessing the options for alternative methods and making their decisions based on survey opinions, efficacy, and cost.
3.11	Please keep things as natural as possible for the insects especially bees and butterflies	Thank you.
3.12	Definitely ragwort (dangerous to horses) and weeds harmful to pets and people.	Please see Item 3.5 above.
3.13	Except hogweed.	Please see Item 3.5 above.
3.14	Use herbicides in areas where other methods are not suitable.	Please see Item 3.5 above.

4.0	<b>General comments</b>	
	<b>Comment</b>	<b>Response</b>
4.1	I think it is difficult to please everyone, things will need time to change, it would be good that the critics didn't criticise so	Over the past 12 months, parish councillors have set up three separate working groups to encourage residents

	quickly but encouraged. I don't think there is an emergency.	to involve themselves in the way that these changes are being made and has run this survey to get the broadest range of opinion. The council thanks everyone who has taken part in the consultation and offered help.
4.2	Every week there are complaints on the Menheniot site re dog mess and litter, any areas left unattended will soon become an eyesore, we must all remember that we live as Community but to try and cater for everyone would be nigh on impossible. Remember that life is a compromise so the best of luck.	Back in the early part of the year, the council did receive a number of complaints about dog mess and has responded to residents' concerns by installing one new dog-mess bin (and two more will follow when they are delivered) and asking Menheniot Primary School to create warning notices that we have posted around the village centre. If you see someone not picking up or want to report mess, please contact the Clerk's Office and we can send you a Dog Poo Diary. We have not received any complaints about dog mess since April.
4.3	Well used places need to be cut and maintained, unused areas not so much.	Thank you.
4.4	Person to examine work before contractor paid.	It is always the council's practice to check the work of our contractors before agreeing payment. If you feel that some work is not up to standard, please contact the Clerk's Office with details.
4.5	Also be aware that these surveys can lead to unbalanced results in that those with an agenda will be more likely to participate whilst those happy with the status quo don't.	The council has encouraged residents to complete the survey face to face at the Cherry Fayre, at the monthly Farmers Market and online by Facebook, Twitter and NextDoor. Results will depend completely on people with any views taking part. Councillors will use the survey to guide their decision making, and not make a decision based on a majority view.
4.6	We are fortunate to live in such a wonderful community and appreciate all the Parish Council does to improve and maintain our surroundings.	Thank you – but also please also thank the people who volunteer to maintain other parts of the parish. We know of residents who cut the grass and remove weeds in public areas at Merrymeet and at St Lalluwys; we have a volunteer who is in process of creating a wildflower haven along the bank at Mine Hill; councillors regularly cut back overhanging shrubs and bushes where road signs have become obscured, and we have received many

		offers of volunteering help though this survey.
4.7	Only visit Mine Hill and Fourgates occasionally. My comments are not important. Willing to contribute funds	Every comment that we receive is included in this survey report. If you would like to make a donation to support the work of Menheniot Green, please contact the Clerk's Office.

## Appendix 2

### Any other areas?

Respondents were asked to identify any other small, grassy areas across the parish that are not maintained by either the parish council or Cornwall Council. This question was asked to give people the opportunity to locate additional areas that could be included in the ground maintenance contract.

Map 1 shows these areas around Menheniot Village:

Space number	Location	Ownership
1	Trelawny Road Community Garden	Menheniot Parish Council
2	Junction East Road/Hartmeade	Cornwall Council
3	Junction East Road/William Laundry Close	Cornwall Council
4	Holy Well/Bowling Green	Menheniot Parish Council
5	Bowling Green	Cornwall Council
6	Rear of Tennis Court	Menheniot Parish Council*
7	Fourgates	Cornwall Council

\*Leased to Menheniot Sports Association

Map 2 shows the area at Lower Clicker

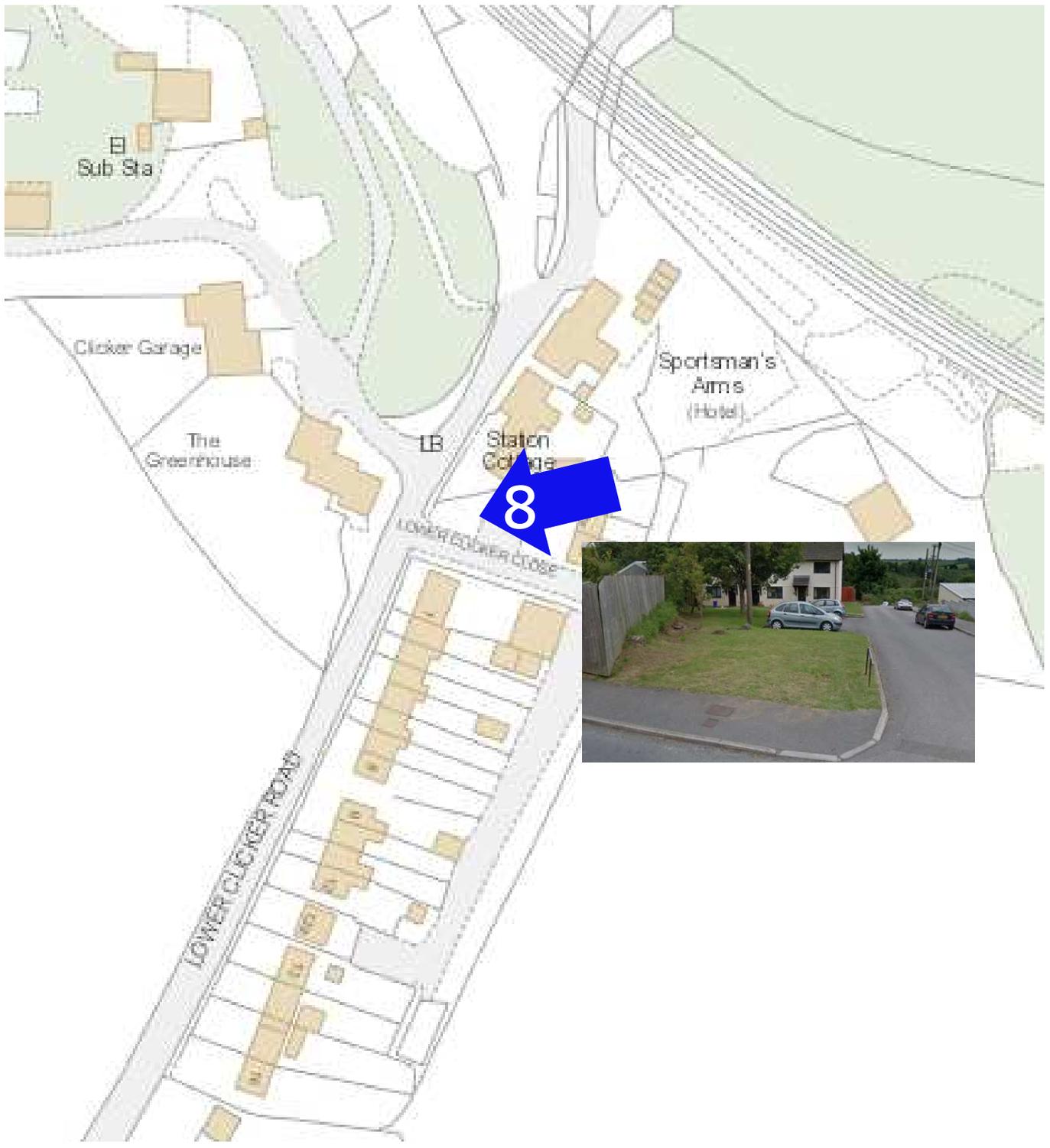
Space number	Location	Ownership
8	Lower Clicker Close	Cornwall Housing

# Map 1 Menheniot Village



# Map 2

## Lower Clicker



## Appendix 3 Any volunteers?

We know that sometimes, residents will mow or weed spaces to keep them looking neat and tidy. Councillors would like to encourage more people to take part in maintaining some of the public areas where contractors do not have the skills to. For example, the flower beds on the village green in Menheniot or spaces adjacent to the playground in Merrymeet. The survey asked for volunteers to leave their contact details. We received offers from 9 people and the Residents Association at Merrymeet: we are talking to them about how the council can support them in their work.

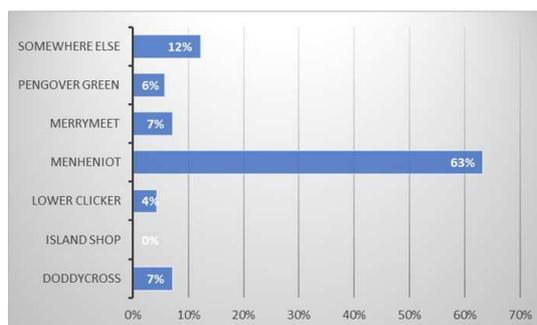
## Appendix 4 Technical

Survey was open from 1 September 2021 until 30 September 2021. 139 responses were received so that means 8% of residents<sup>1</sup> took part. The survey was promoted on six noticeboards across the parish, on the council's website and across its social media platforms (Facebook, Twitter, NextDoor). Councillors also attended the annual Cherry Fayre on 4 September to meet residents and take surveys face to face. All parents of children attending Menheniot Primary School received invitation to participate. Residents who currently rent an allotment plot and those who have made enquiries in the past 12 months were also invited to complete the survey.

The following tables show the reach of the survey:

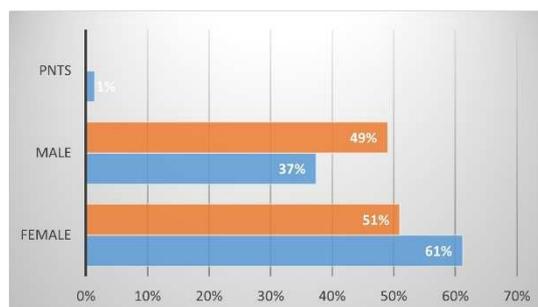
Where respondents live:

Doddycross	7.2%
Island Shop	0%
Lower Clicker	4.3%
Menheniot Village	63.3%
Merrymeet	7.2%
Pengover Green	5.8%
Somewhere else	12.2%



Sex

Gender	Survey	Population
Female	61.2%	52%
Male	37.4%	48%
Prefer not to say	1.4%	



<sup>1</sup> Based on 2014 population estimate of 1726

## Age

Group	Survey	Population
Up to 17	0%	17%
18-24	1.4%	8%
25-44	24.5%	28%
45-64	38.1%	20%
65+	33.8%	27%
Prefer not to say	2.2%	

Key
Census 2011
Survey

