

Agenda Item	8
Report No	CP/12/23

HIGHLAND COUNCIL

Committee: Communities and Place

Date: 24 May 2023

Report Title: Public Conveniences and Comfort Scheme Agreements 2023 – 2026

Report By: Executive Chief Officer Communities and Place

1. Purpose/Executive Summary

- 1.1 The Council's Public Convenience service is highly valued by the Highland's communities. It makes a significant contribution to the Highland's tourism economy, and provides an essential amenity for our residents, businesses, and visitors.
- 1.2 The Council provides Comfort Scheme agreements with businesses and community groups. These agreements are aimed at meeting demand in areas that are not served by Council run facilities and they are the most cost-effective way to increase provision. There are 4 levels of payment (£50, £100, £200, or £300 per month), and these are dependent on the quality of the facilities offered.
- 1.3 The previous three-year Agreements expired on 31 March 2023 and this paper details the actions taken to implement new three-year Agreements.

2. Recommendations

2.1 Members are invited to note:

- The number of Comfort Scheme providers to increase from 42 to 55;
- The expansion of the scheme to include sites that have been funded by the Visitor Management fund for the past 2 years;
- Three-year agreements to provide the Comfort Scheme have been issued to previous providers wishing to continue to participate in the scheme;
- The results of the survey undertaken with Comfort Scheme providers.

3. Implications

3.1 Resource implications;

The Council currently operates 76 Public Conveniences throughout the Highlands and had 42 Comfort Scheme agreements with local businesses and Community Groups. The budget for this service for this Financial Year is £920,000.

The cost of the 42 Agreements was £107,100 per annum. A small number of changes were introduced and the necessary consultation with providers took place.

A critical analysis of the Amenities budget, and minor amendments to some scheme providers has enabled us to expand the scheme to include additional sites that were previously funded through the Visitor Management Fund and enables us to provide a service to areas identified as 'hot spots' and are reported at section 5.2 at an overall cost of £19,800 per annum.

3.2 Legal implications;

The Council does not have a statutory responsibility to provide or operate Public Conveniences.

3.3 Community (Equality, Poverty and Rural) impact;

Comfort Scheme provision increases the offering of public toilet facilities available, making the Highlands a better place to live and visit. Comfort Schemes can bring additional footfall to businesses and increase their levels of income.

3.4 Climate Change/Carbon Clever impact;

There are no known Climate Change/Carbon Clever impacts at this time.

3.5 Risk implications;

There are no known Risk implications at this time.

3.6 Gaelic implications;

There are not considered to be any Gaelic implications.

4. Current Service Provision

4.1 The Council currently operates 72 Public Conveniences throughout the Highlands.

4.2 The Council also operated 42 Comfort Scheme Agreements with businesses and community groups. These Agreements assisted in meeting the demand for facilities in areas that are not served by Council run facilities. The total cost of the 42 Agreements was £107,100 per annum. There are four levels of payment (£50, £100, £200 or £300 per month), and these are dependent on the quality of the facilities offered. Details can be found at Appendix 2.

- 4.3 The Council also has 4 Service Level Agreements with community groups in Dornie, Kyle of Lochalsh, Invermoriston and with Transport Scotland to operate A9 South Bound at Kessock.
- 4.4 As part of the £1.5 million visitor management investment strategy the Highland Council committed £190,000 in 2022/23 for investment in public toilet provision. Of this funding £32,400 was used to provide an additional 17 temporary Comfort Schemes in the Highlands where there was no other local provision for public toilets.
- 4.5 The success of the Scheme is evidenced with results from a survey carried out with all Comfort Scheme providers at the end of the 2022 season. Full survey results are shown in Appendix 1. This showed 86% of providers have found the Scheme beneficial with 94% of them wishing to become providers again. 84% would recommend others to sign up to the Scheme and over 50% believe being involved in the Scheme attracts more custom to their business and/or local community.

5. Agreements 2023-2026

- 5.1 The following sites offered Comfort Scheme facilities over the last 3 years and have been offered new three-year Agreements. Sites still to return the signed new Agreements are Achiltibuie, Ardersier, Broadford, Keiss, and Wick, we expect these to be received in the next couple of weeks. Changes proposed are to bring payments in line with current pricing matrix based on provision offered. The proposed changes will generate a saving of £8,800 per annum which has part funded additional sites to the Scheme.

Location	Monthly Offer	Term (months)	Annual Value	Value over 3 Years	Notes
Achiltibuie	£200	12	£2400	£7200	No change
Applecross	£200	6	£1200	£3600	No change
Ardgour	£0	12	£0	£0	Remove scheme at providers request
Ardersier	£200	7	£1400	£4200	No change
Ardvasar	£200	7	£1400	£4200	No change
Arisaig	£200	12	£2400	£7200	No change
Aultbea	£200	12	£2400	£7200	No change
Avoch	£200	12	£2400	£7200	No change
Ballintore	£200	12	£2400	£7200	No change
Broadford	£200	12	£2400	£2400	No change
Cannich	£200	7	£1400	£4200	No change
Caol	£200	12	£2400	£7200	No change
Dores	£0	12	£0	0	Scheme removed and future provision under discussion.
Drumnadrochit	£300	12	£3600	£10800	No change
Eigg	£300	12	£3600	£10800	No change
Elgol	£200	12	£2400	£7200	No change
Fortrose	£200	12	£2400	£7200	No change
Foyers	£200	12	£2400	£7200	No change
Gairloch	£200	12	£2400	£7200	No change
Glenelg	£300	7	£2100	£6300	No change

Glenuig	£200	7	£1400	£4200	No change
Helmsdale	£300	12	£3600	£10800	No change
Invergarry	£200	12	£2400	£7200	No change
Keiss	£200	12	£2400	£7200	Move from Hotel to Community
Kilmallie	£200	12	£2400	£7200	No change
Kinlochewe	£200	12	£2400	£7200	No change
Kinlochleven	£200	7	£1400	£4200	Moved from Ice Factor to Community
Kyleakin	£200	7	£1400	£4200	No change
Laggan	£100	12	£1200	£3600	No change
Lybster	£200	12	£2400	£7200	Move from Hotel to Community
Mallaig	£300	12	£3600	£10800	No change
Minginish	£300	7	£2100	£6300	No change
Muck	£200	12	£2400	£7200	No change
Nethybridge	£100	12	£1200	£3600	Reduced from £200 per month in line with scoring matrix and provision offered
Plockton	£200	7	£1400	£4200	No change
Poolewe	£200	12	£2400	£7200	No change
Rosemarkie	£200	12	£2400	£7200	No change
Shieldaig	£200	12	£2400	£7200	No change
Staffin	£200	12	£2400	£7200	No change
Strontian	£200	12	£2400	£7200	No change
Thurso Harbour	£300	7	£2100	£6300	No change
Tomatin	£300	12	£3600	£10800	No change
Tougal	£200	12	£2400	£7200	No change
Traigh Beach	£50	12	£600	£1800	No change
Wick	£300	12	£3600	£10800	No change
TOTAL	£9,250		£98,300	£294,900	

5.2 The following sites were previously funded by Visitor Management Funds during 2021/22 and 2022/23. The Service has been able to allocate budget from within current budget to fund these sites and the following locations have been offered three-year Agreements. The only site yet to return a new Agreement is John O'Groats and we expect this to be received in the next couple of weeks.

Location	Ward	Monthly Offer	Term (months)	Annual Value	Value over 3 years
Glendale	10	£200	12	£2400	£7200
John O' Groats	3	£200	12	£2400	£7200
Glenshiel	5	£200	12	£2400	£7200
Invercassley	1	£100	12	£1200	£3600
Rum	11	£100	7	£700	£2100
Salen Jetty	21	£300	12	£3600	£10800
Eden Court	13	£300	12	£3600	£10800

Ardnamurchan	21	£200	7	£1400	£4200
Forsinard Flows	1	£100	7	£700	£2100
Portree Pier	10	£200	7	£1400	£4200
TOTAL		£1,900		£19,800	£59,400

- 5.3 Updated visual examples of Comfort Schemes are included as Appendix 2.
- 5.4 All participating sites are issued with Highland Council standard signage to advertise that they are part of the Comfort Scheme. These can be found at Appendix 3.

Designation: Executive Chief Officer Communities and Place

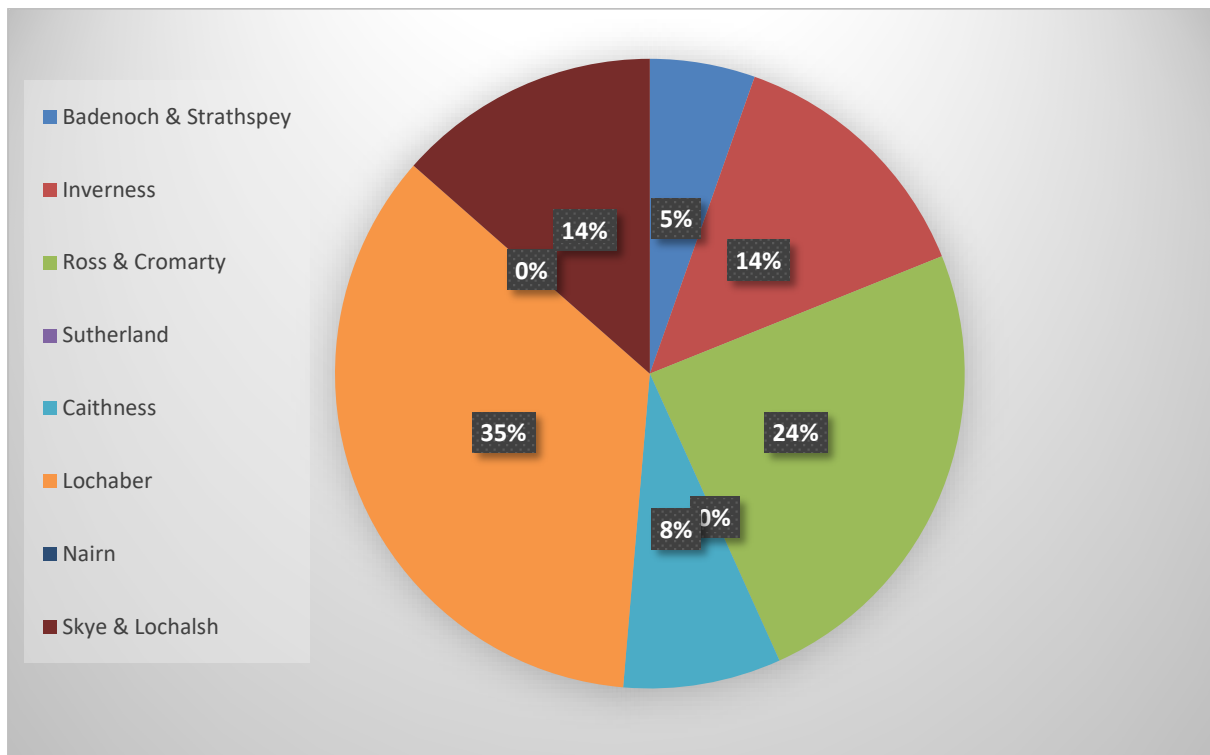
Date: 4 May 23

Author: Debbie Sutton, Amenities Manager (South)

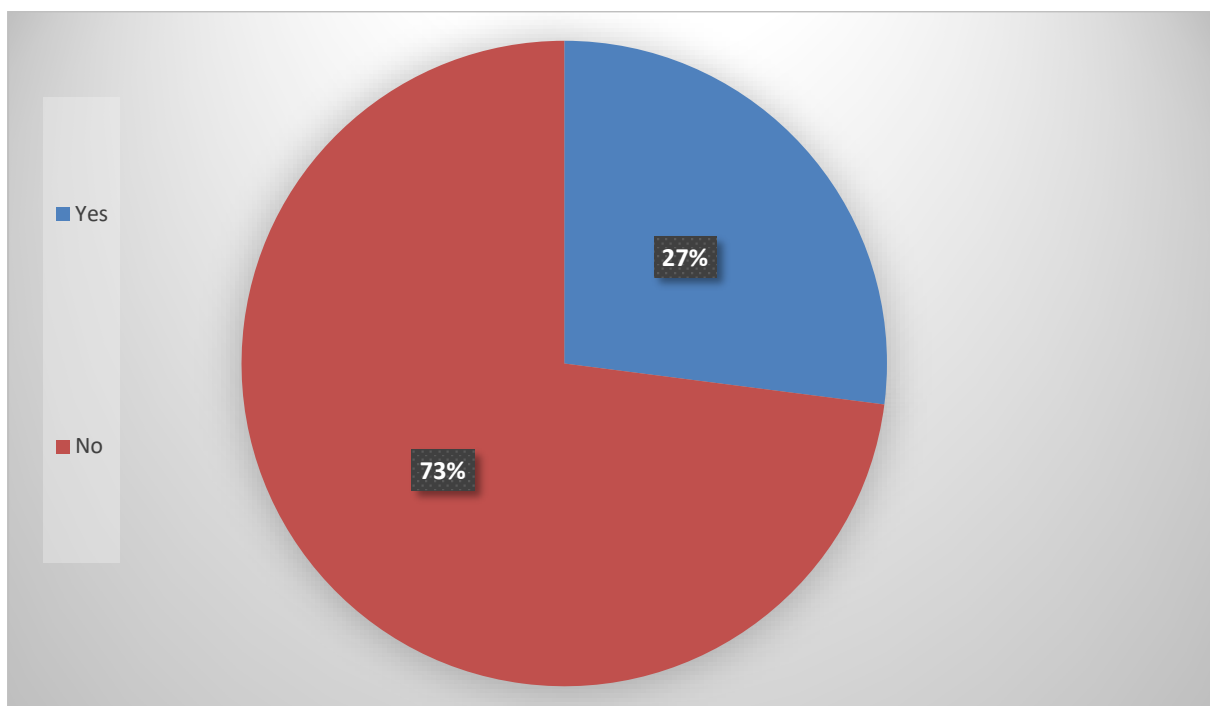
Background Papers: None

Appendix 1 – Comfort Scheme Providers Survey 2022 Results

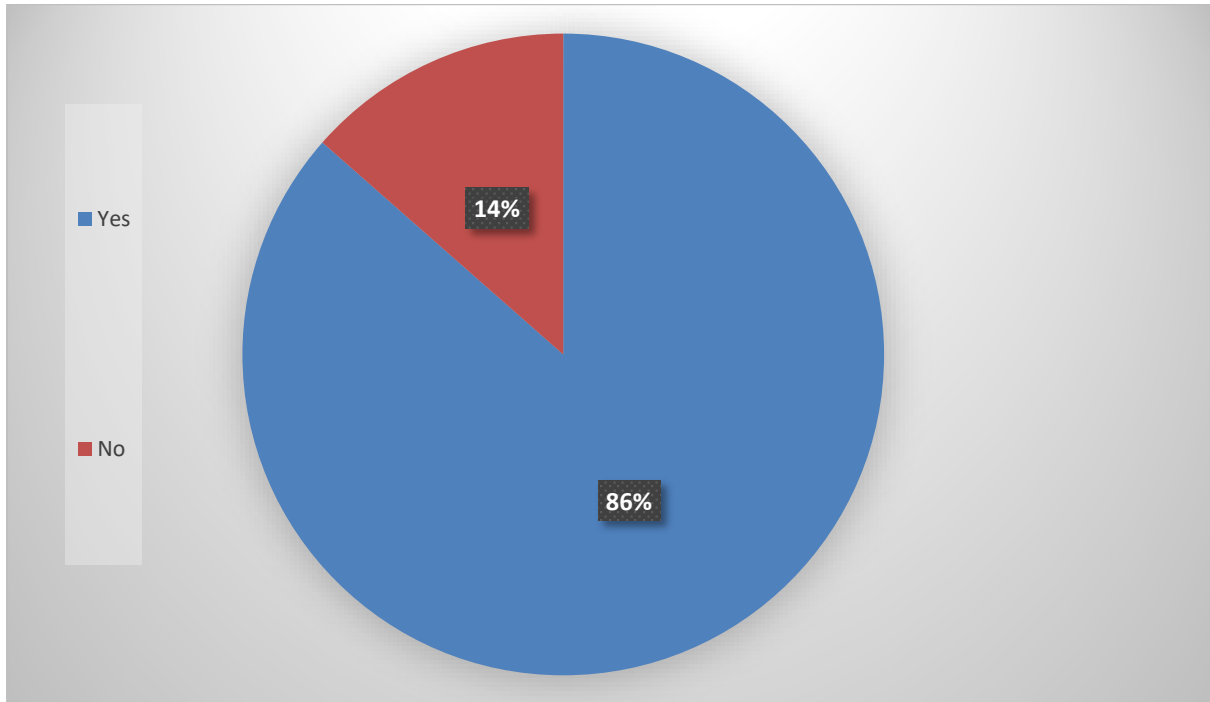
Which Highland Area is the Comfort Scheme in?



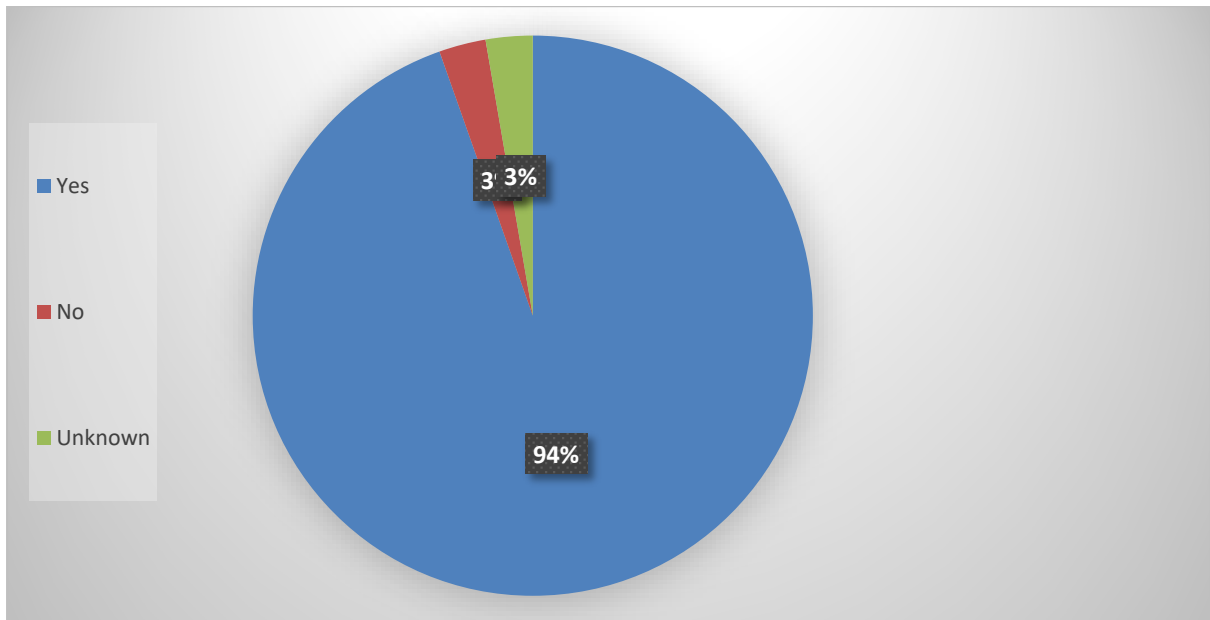
Is the Comfort Scheme on the NC500?



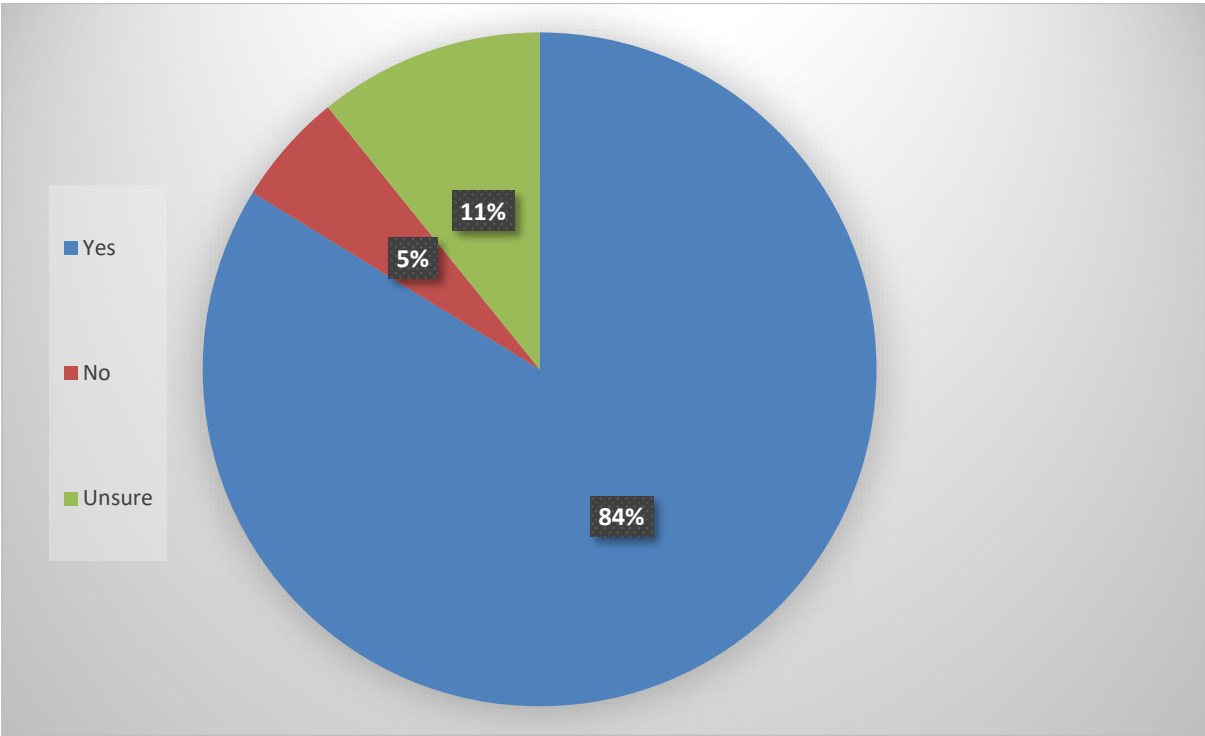
Has the Comfort Scheme been beneficial?



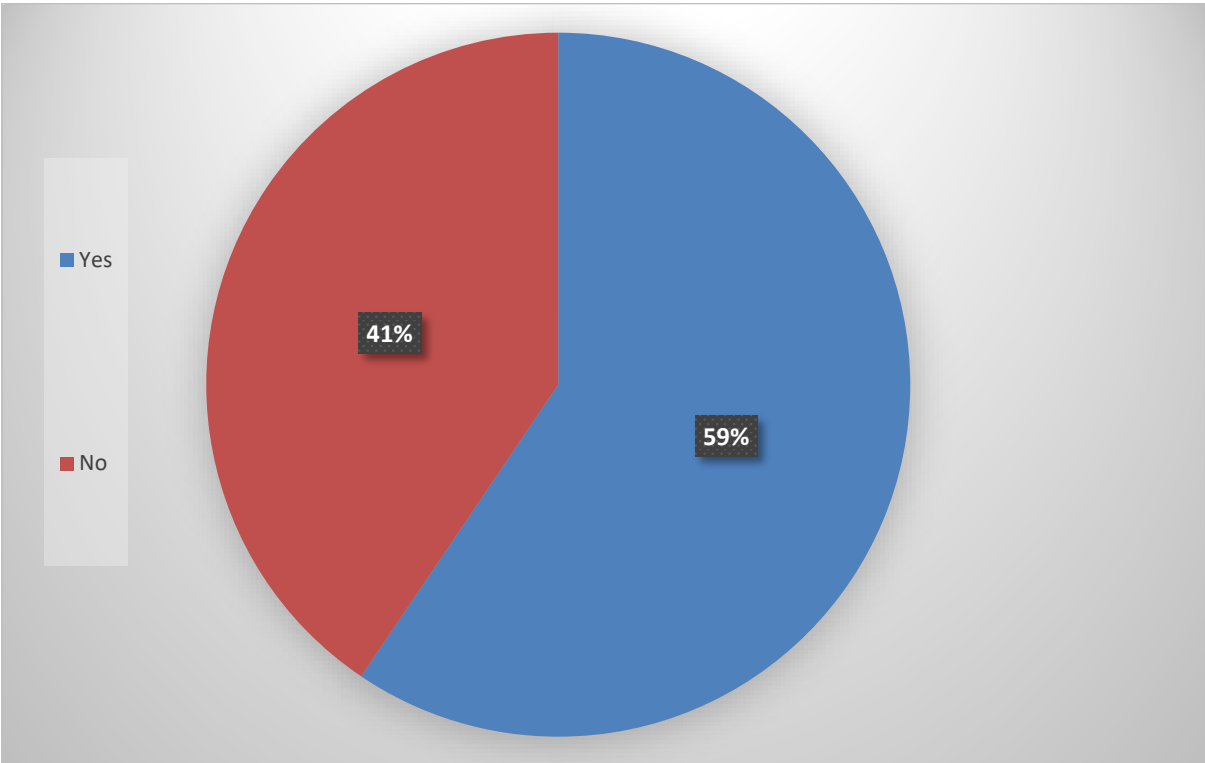
Would you become a Comfort Scheme Provider again?



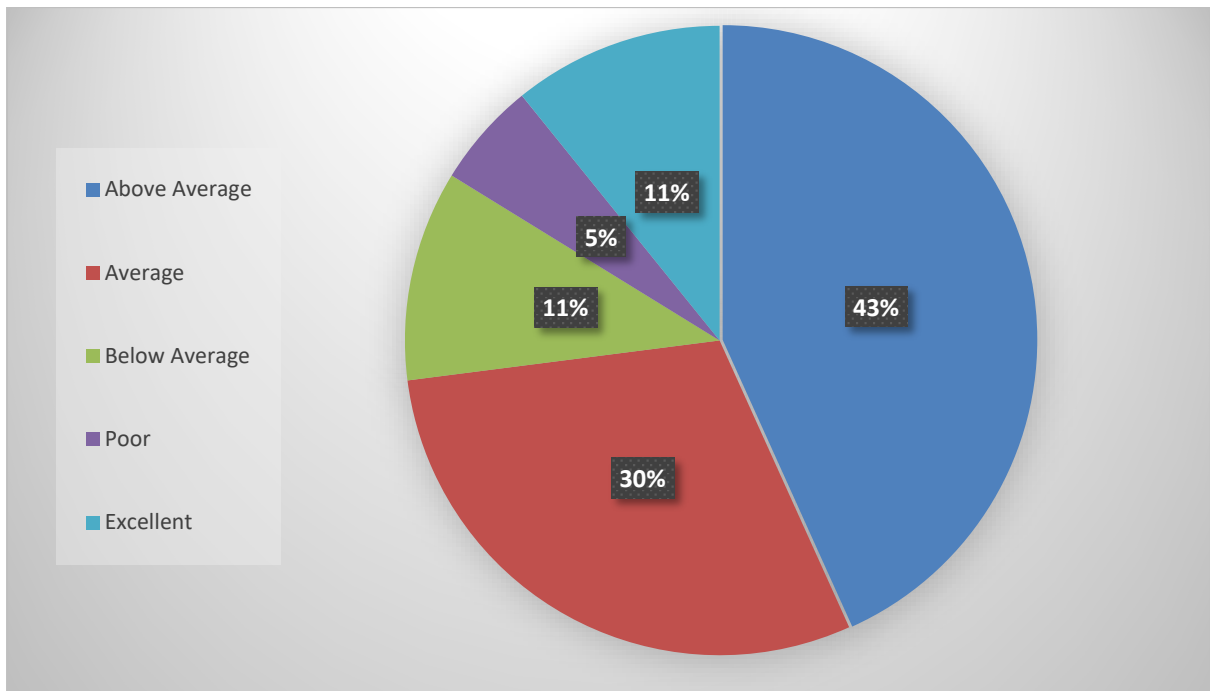
Would you recommend others to sign up to the Comfort Scheme?



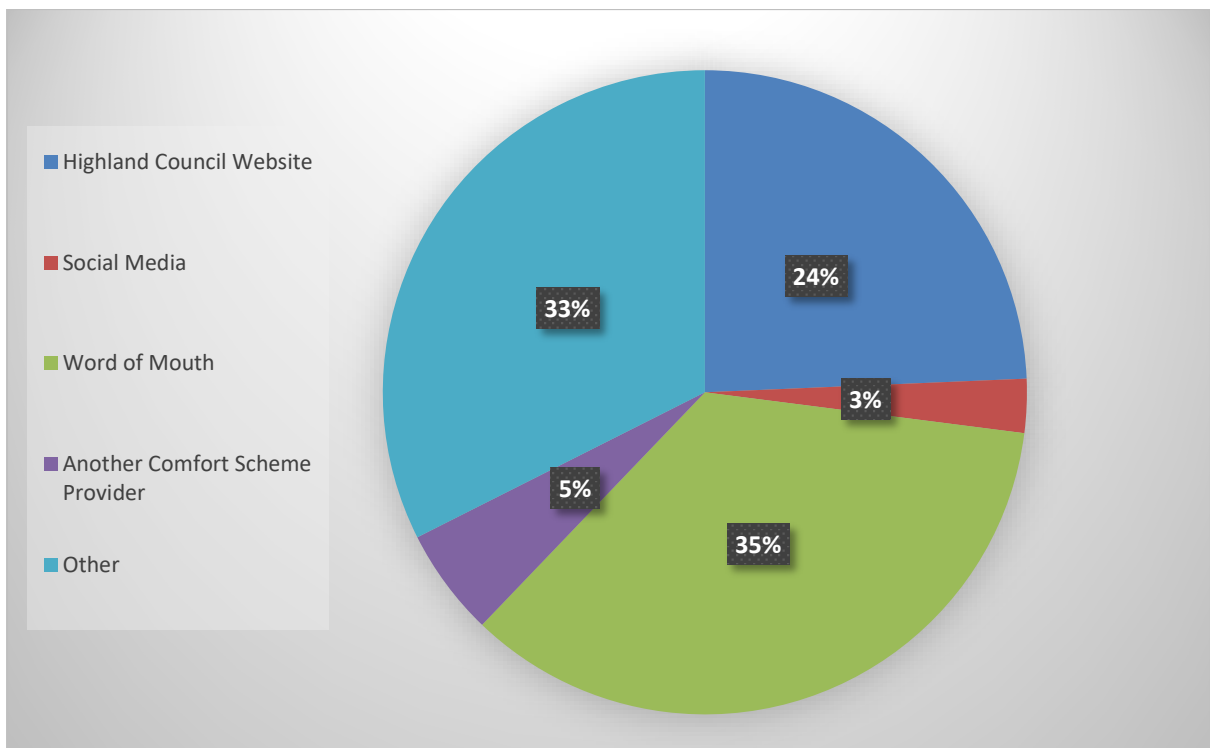
Does the Comfort Scheme have an honesty box installed?



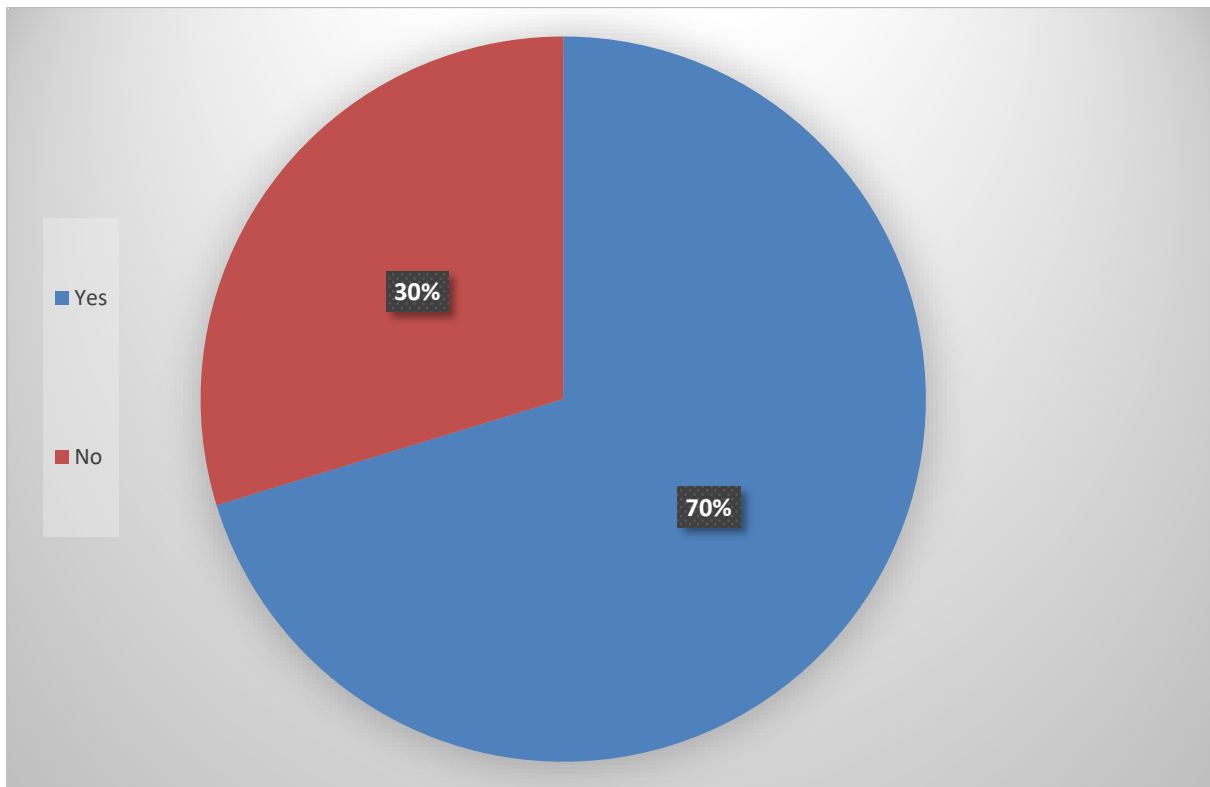
How would you describe the Comfort Scheme Initiative?



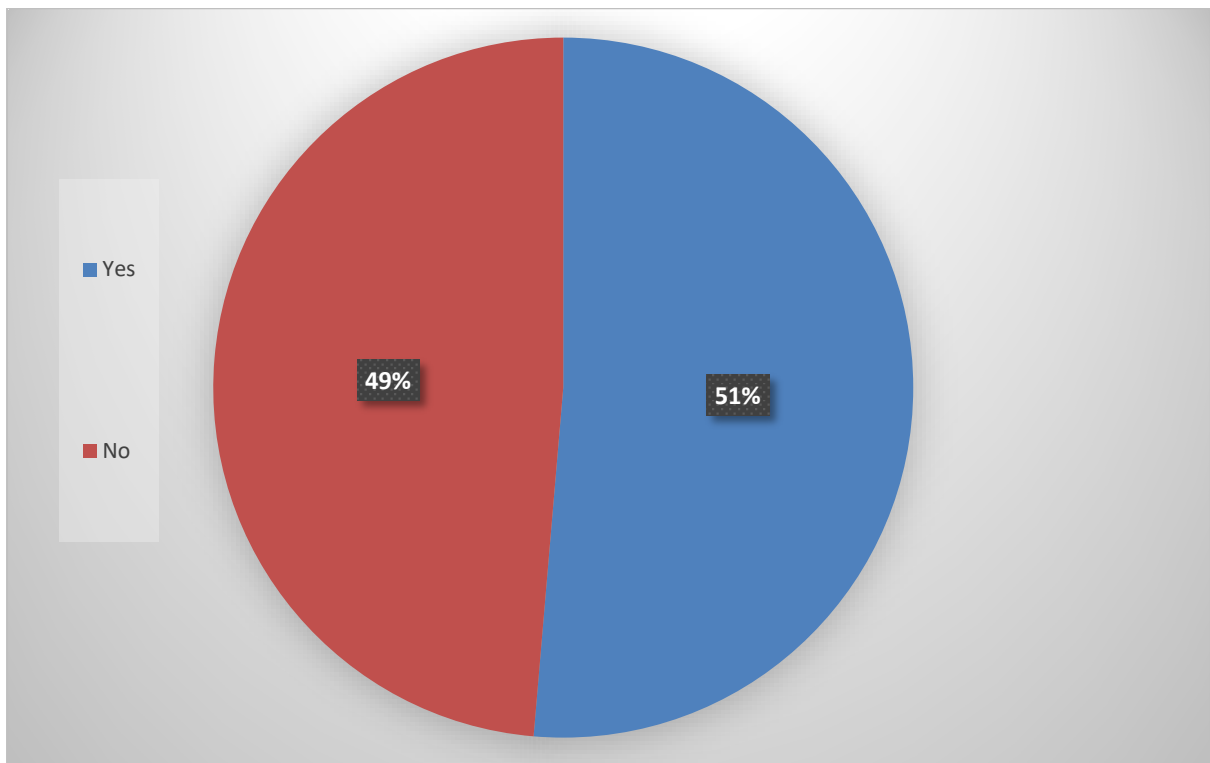
How did you hear about the Highland Comfort Scheme?



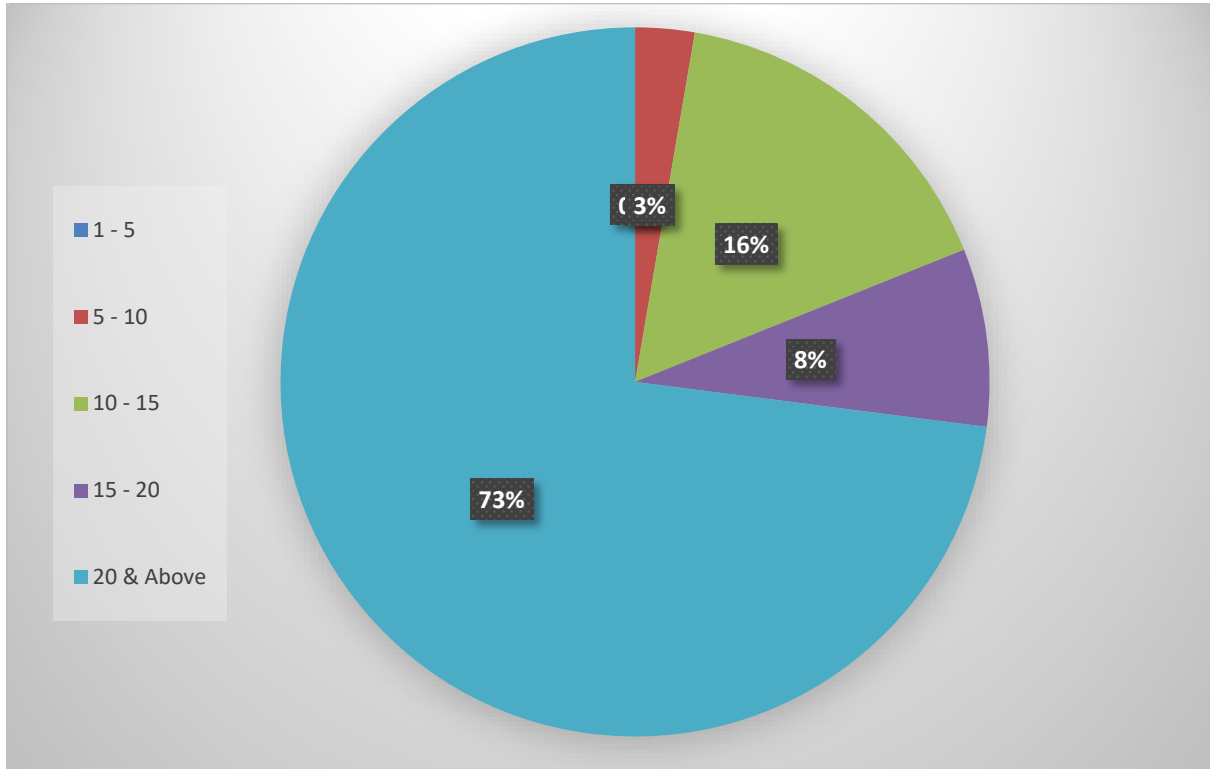
Are Comfort Scheme Providers adequately advertised?



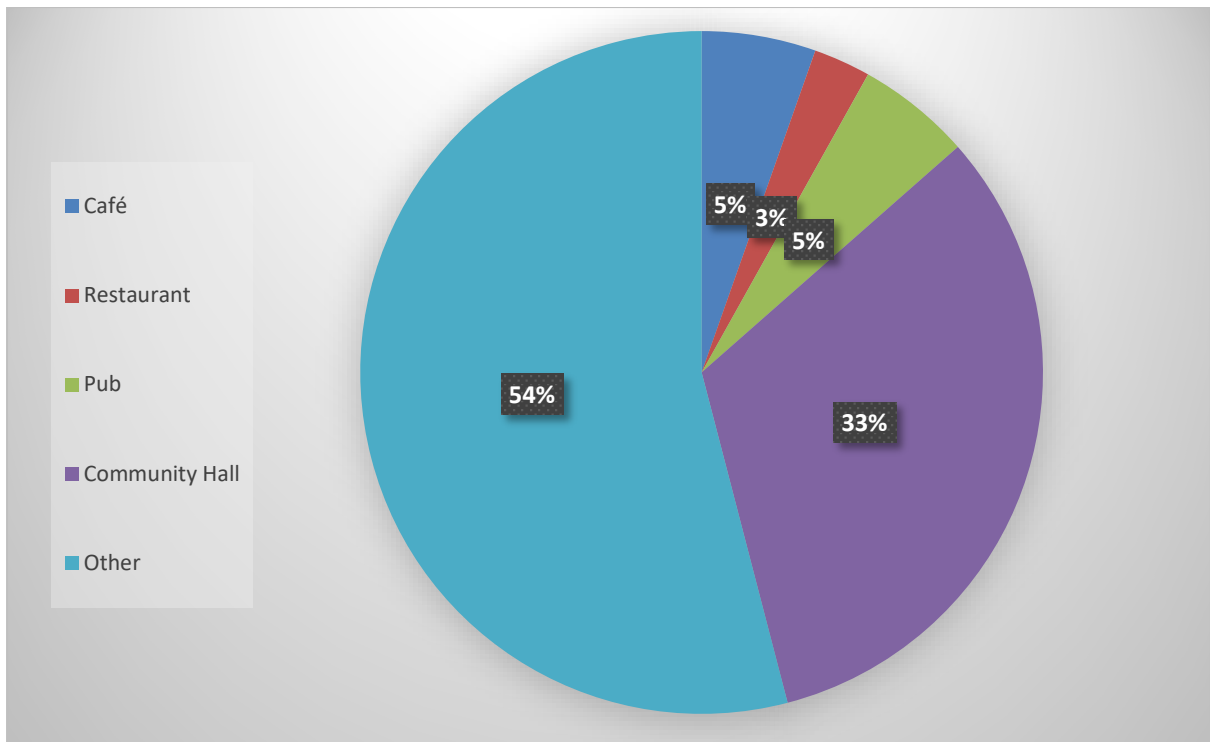
Does providing a Comfort Scheme attract more custom to your business and/or Community?



On average how many people use the facility daily?




What type of facility is the Comfort Scheme?



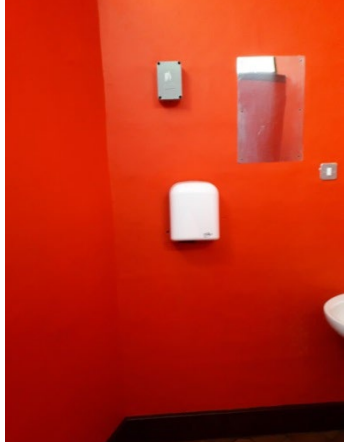
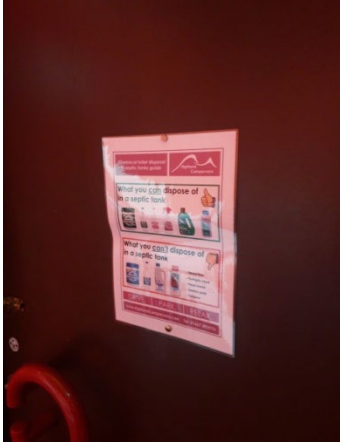



Appendix 2 – Visual Examples of Highland Comfort Scheme Criteria


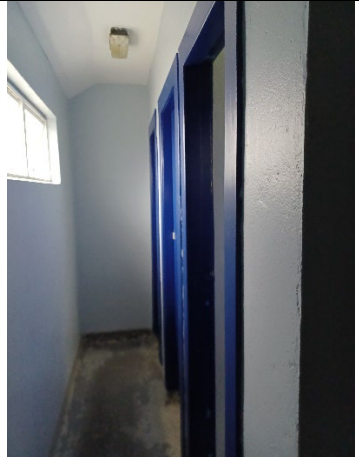
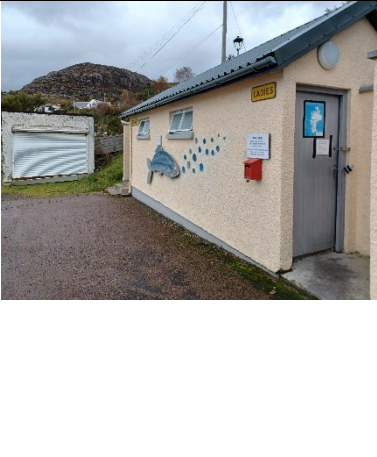
£50.00 a month – Traigh Beach, Composting Toilets

Exterior of Building	Exterior of Building	Funding through payment
		

£100 a month – Laggan, Ex Council Facility

Exterior of Building	Directional Signage	Clean Facility
		
Hand Dryer	Good internal information	Disabled toilet provision
		

£200 a month – Shieldag, Ex Council Facility

Signs in place	Clean & maintained	Community Initiative to paint & decorate building
		

£300 a month – Glenelg Comfort Scheme, Glenelg Community Hall

Community Hall	Large room with several stalls	Private shower facilities
		
Several Sinks with hot water/soap	Clean welcoming environment	Displaying CS Logo
		

Appendix 3 Comfort Scheme Signage

