

Agenda Item	10
Report No	CP/12/24

# The Highland Council

**Committee:** Communities and Place

**Date:** 22 May 2024

**Report Title:** Comfort Scheme Annual Survey Results

**Report By:** Assistant Chief Executive, Corporate

## 1. Purpose/Executive Summary

- 1.1 The Council's Public Convenience service is highly valued by the Highland 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 supplements this provision through 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.
- 1.3 The Service reported to Members at this Committee in May 2023 the sites within the scheme, the expansion of the scheme from 42 to 53 sites, and the results of our survey of Comfort Scheme providers. This report included the provision of 3-year agreements through to March 26. The sites are listed at **Appendix 1**.

This reports updates Members on the results of the 2023/24 survey, set out at **Appendix 2**.

- 1.4 There are 4 levels of payment (£50, £100, £200, or £300 per month), and these are dependent on the quality of the facilities offered. **Appendix 3** provides examples of the types of facilities and payments offered.

## 2. Recommendations

- 2.1 Members are asked to:
  - i. **Note** the results of the 2023/24 survey undertaken with Comfort Scheme providers; and
  - ii. **Note** that opportunities to promote the Comfort Scheme will continue to be explored.

### 3. Implications

- 3.1 Resource:  
The Council currently supports 53 Comfort Scheme Agreements with local business and community groups. The cost of this is £119,100.
- 3.2 Legal:  
The Council does not have a statutory responsibility to provide or operate Public Conveniences.
- 3.3 Community (Equality, Poverty, Rural and Island):  
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:  
There are no known Climate Change/Carbon Clever impacts arising from this report.
- 3.5 Risk:  
There are no known Risk implications arising from this report.
- 3.6 Health and Safety (risks arising from changes to plant, equipment, process, or people):  
There are no known implications arising from this report.
- 3.7 Gaelic:  
There are not considered to be any Gaelic implications.

### 4. Current Service Provision

- 4.1 The Council operates 53 Comfort Scheme Agreements with businesses and community groups. These Agreements assist in meeting the demand for facilities in areas that are not served by Council run facilities.

The cost of the 53 Agreements is £119,100 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 3**.

- 4.2 Research carried out by the team including discussions with other Scottish Local Authorities and an APSE network query done in February 2023 evidenced that the Comfort Scheme payments offered in Highland are the most generous in the UK. Many other Local Authorities do not offer any financial contribution towards their Comfort Schemes and where they do the maximum they offer is £2000 per annum.
- 4.3 Details about service provision is available from the following Council webpage:

[https://www.highland.gov.uk/info/283/community\\_life\\_and\\_leisure/814/highland\\_council\\_public\\_toilets/2www.highland.gov.uk/publictoilets](https://www.highland.gov.uk/info/283/community_life_and_leisure/814/highland_council_public_toilets/2www.highland.gov.uk/publictoilets)

The Council also has four Service Level Agreements with community groups in Dornie, Kyle of Lochalsh, Invermoriston and with Transport Scotland to operate A9 South Bound at Kessock.

## 5. 2023-24 Survey Results

5.1 The success of the Scheme is evidenced with results from a survey carried out with all Comfort Scheme providers at the end of the 2023 season. Appendix 2 sets out the results for each question. Some key results include:

- 45 providers responded to the 2023 survey, compared to 39 in 2022. 45 responses represents a 85% response rate.
- 89% found the Scheme beneficial, up from 82% the previous year.
- 89% of providers would become a scheme provider again compared to 97% prior year. The principal reason for this movement appears to be related to cost. Feedback included that “Being a Comfort Scheme provider has helped to go some way to covering costs such as cleaning, electricity, water rates and consumables, although not covering it all”. It is also important to note that the responses also include that 90% believe being involved in the Scheme attracts more custom to their business and/or local community, a significant increase on the 54% who agreed with this statement in 2022.
- 73% would recommend others to sign up to the Scheme. Although this is less than reported positively in 2022, nearly 3 out of 4 responders would recommend others to sign up to the scheme.
- 20% of respondents consider that advertising could be better. All providers are given signs to show they are part of the scheme, and the Council’s website also lists scheme providers. We will continue to work with all providers to help to promote our Comfort Scheme.

Designation: Assistant Chief Executive, Corporate

Date: 07 May 2024

Author: Caroline Campbell, Head of Community Operations  
Debbie Sutton, Amenities Manager

Background Papers:

[https://www.highland.gov.uk/download/meetings/id/81614/8\\_public\\_conveniences\\_and\\_comfort\\_scheme\\_agreements\\_2023%E2%80%932026](https://www.highland.gov.uk/download/meetings/id/81614/8_public_conveniences_and_comfort_scheme_agreements_2023%E2%80%932026)

Appendices: Appendix 1: List of Current Comfort Scheme Sites  
Appendix 2: Comfort Scheme Providers Survey 2023 Results  
Appendix 3: Visual Examples of Highland Comfort Scheme Criteria

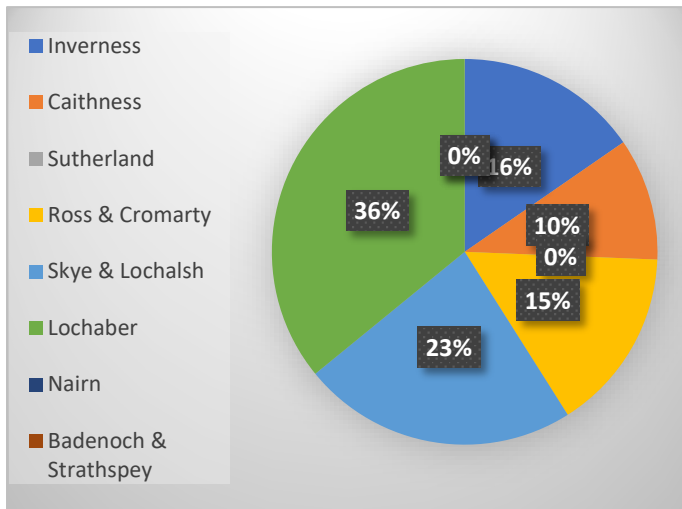
## Appendix 1 – List of Current Comfort Scheme Sites

1. Acharacle
2. Achiltibuie
3. Applecross
4. Ardnamurchan
5. Arisaig
6. Armadale
7. Aultbea
8. Avoch
9. Balintore
10. Broadford
11. Cannich
12. Caol
13. Dores
14. Drumnadrochit
15. Eigg
16. Elgol
17. Forsinard
18. Fortrose
19. Foyers
20. Gairloch
21. Glendale
22. Glenshiel
23. Glenelg
24. Glenuig
25. Helmsdale
26. Invercassley
27. Invergarry
28. Inverness
29. John O’Groats
30. Keiss
31. Kilmallie
32. Kinlochewe
33. Kinlochleven
34. Kyleakin
35. Laggan
36. Lybster
37. Mallaig
38. Minginish
39. Muck
40. Nethybridge
41. North Kessock
42. Plockton
43. Portree Pier
44. Poolewe
45. Rosemarkie
46. Rum
47. Shieldaig
48. Strontian
49. Thurso Harbour
50. Tomatin
51. Tougal Morar
52. Traigh
53. Wick

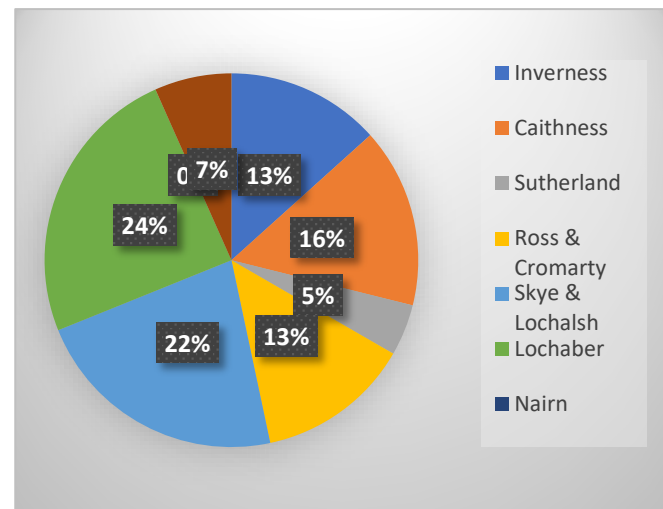
## Appendix 2 – Comfort Scheme Providers Survey 2023 Results

### Which Highland Area is the Comfort Scheme in?

2022

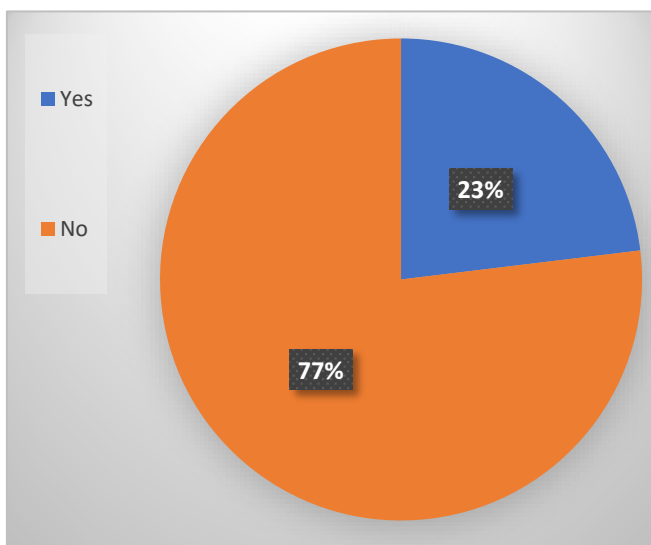


2023

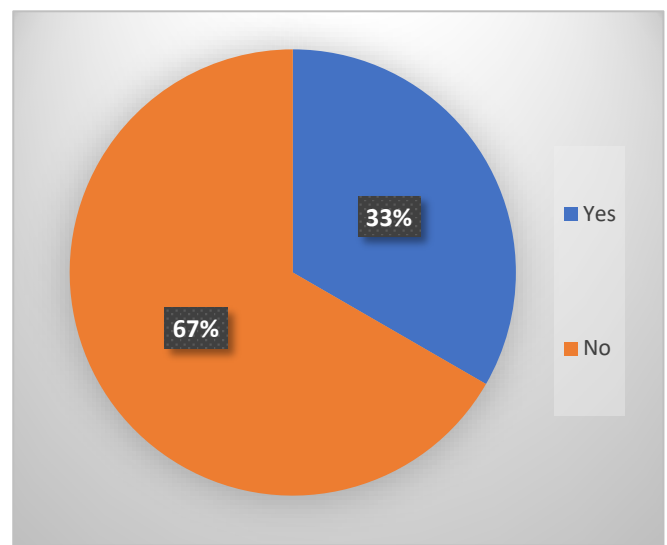


### Is the Comfort Scheme on the NC500?

2022

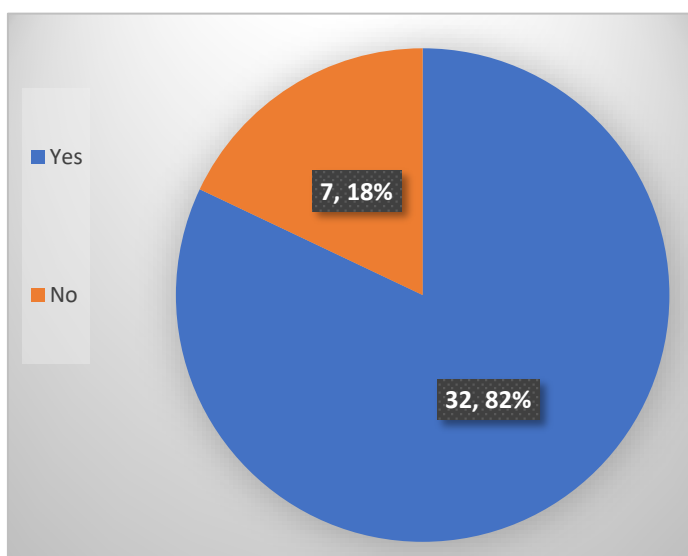


2023

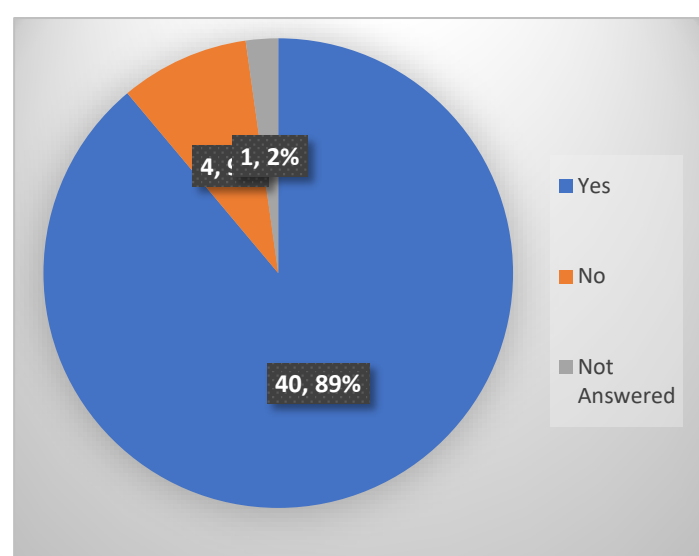


### Has being a Comfort Scheme provider been beneficial?

2022



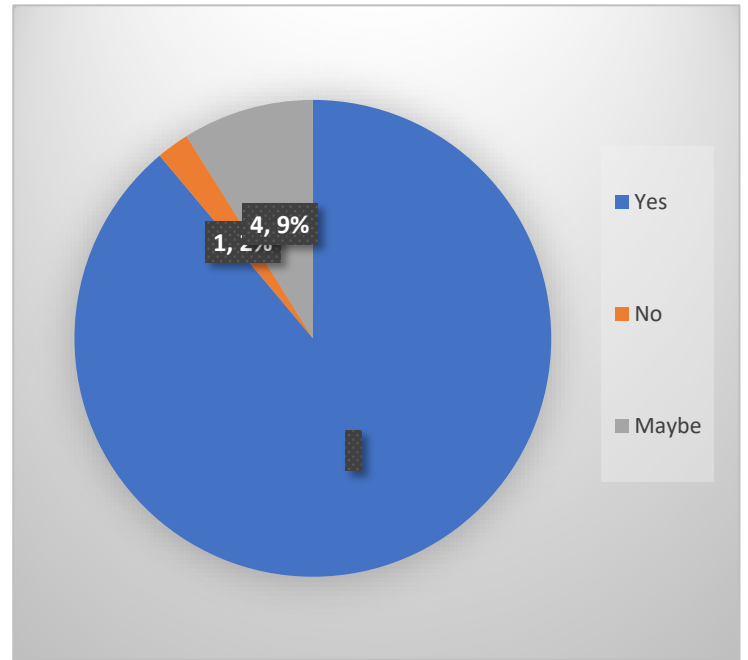
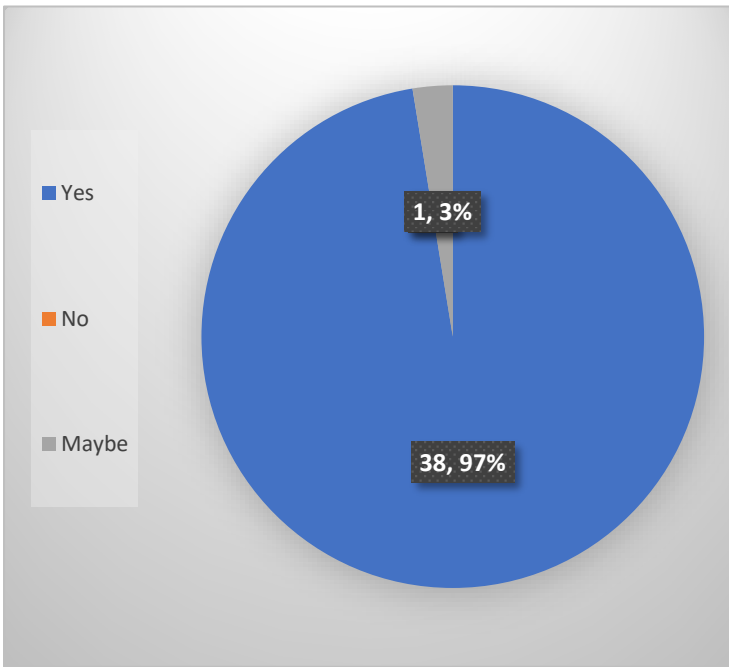
2023



**Would you become a Comfort Scheme provider again?**

2022

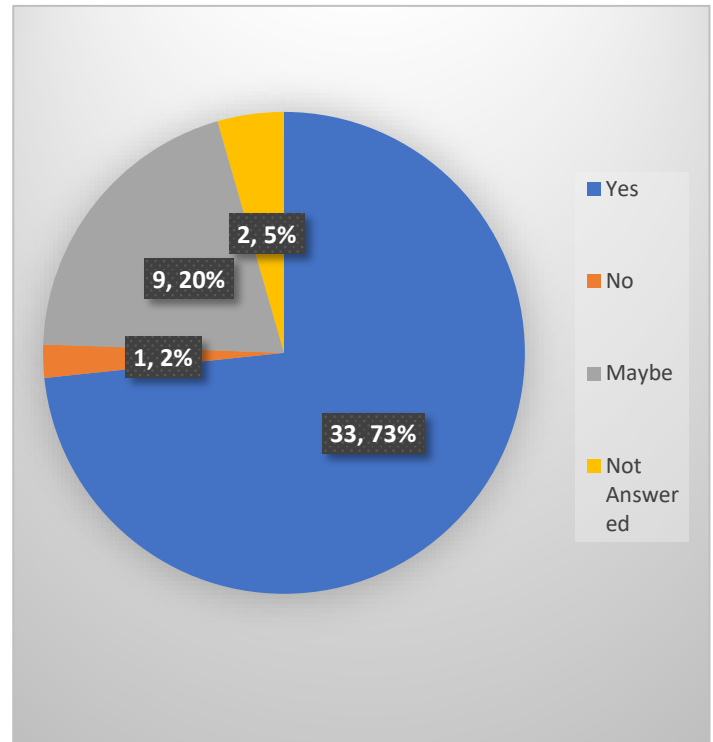
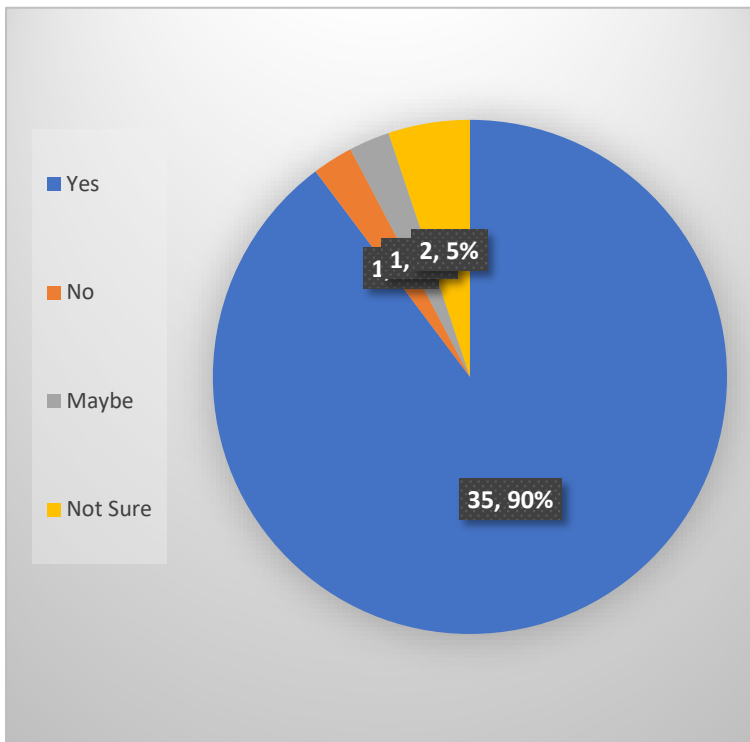
2023



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

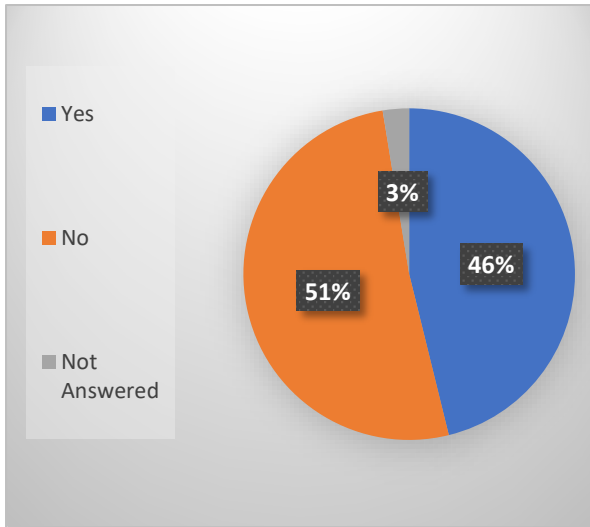
2022

2023

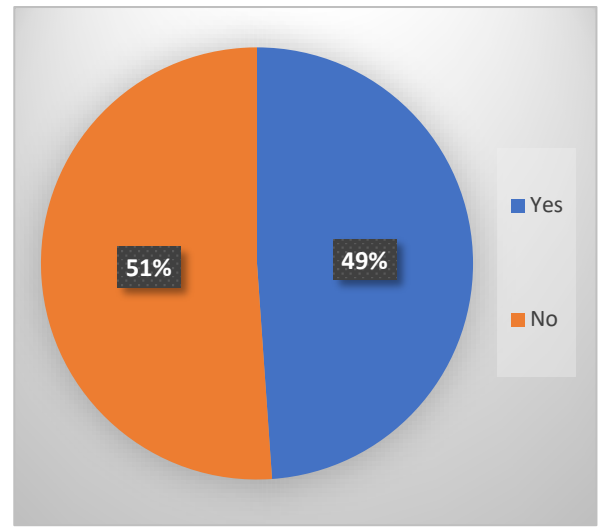


**Does the Comfort Scheme have an honesty box installed?**

**2022**

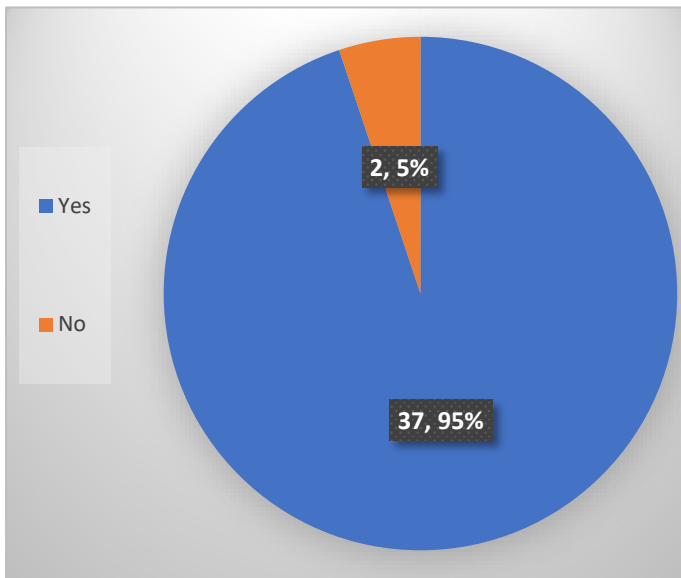


**2023**

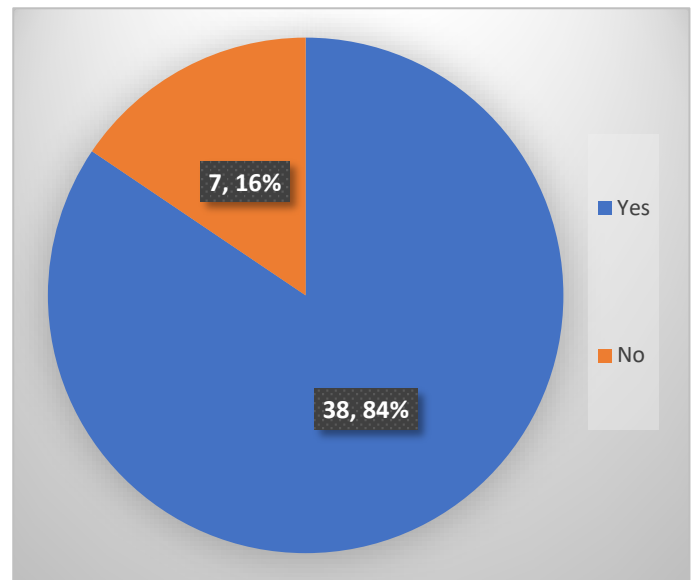


**Do you have Disabled facilities?**

**2022**

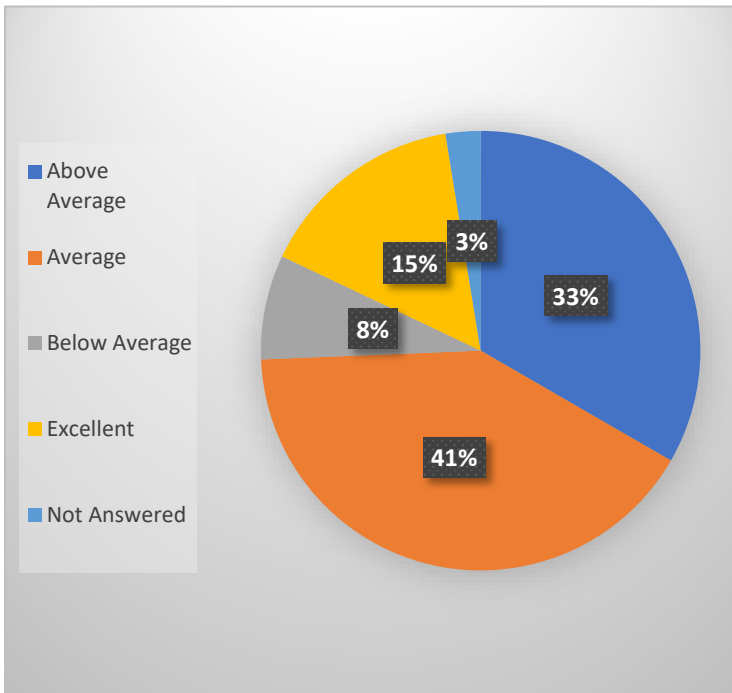


**2023**

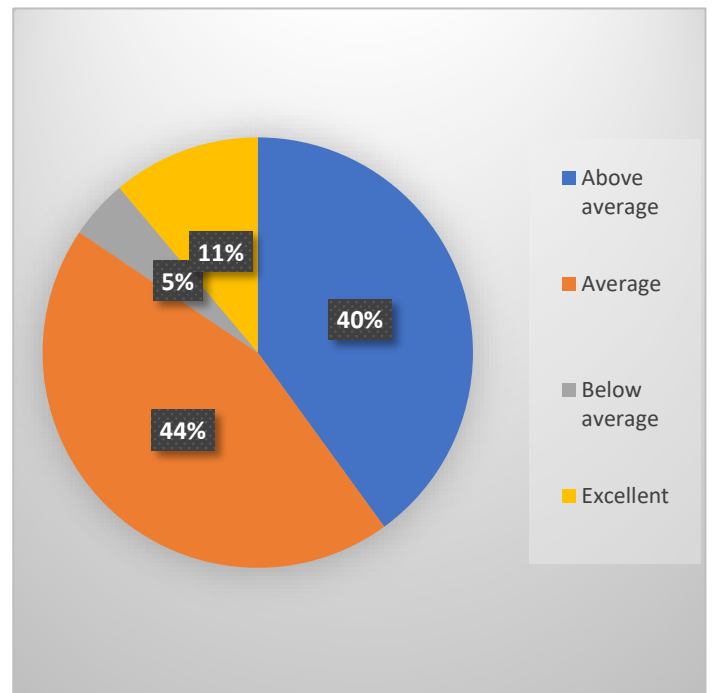


**How would you describe the Comfort Scheme initiative?**

**2022**

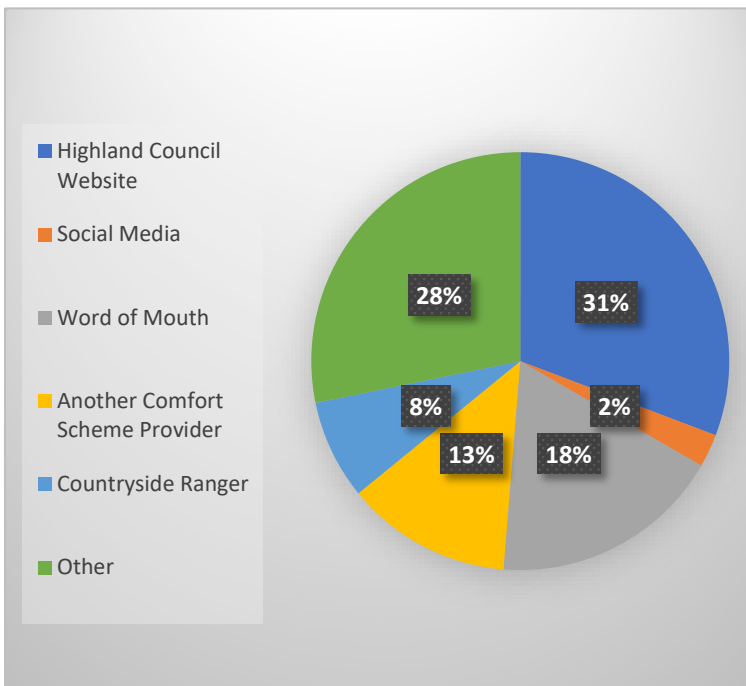


**2023**

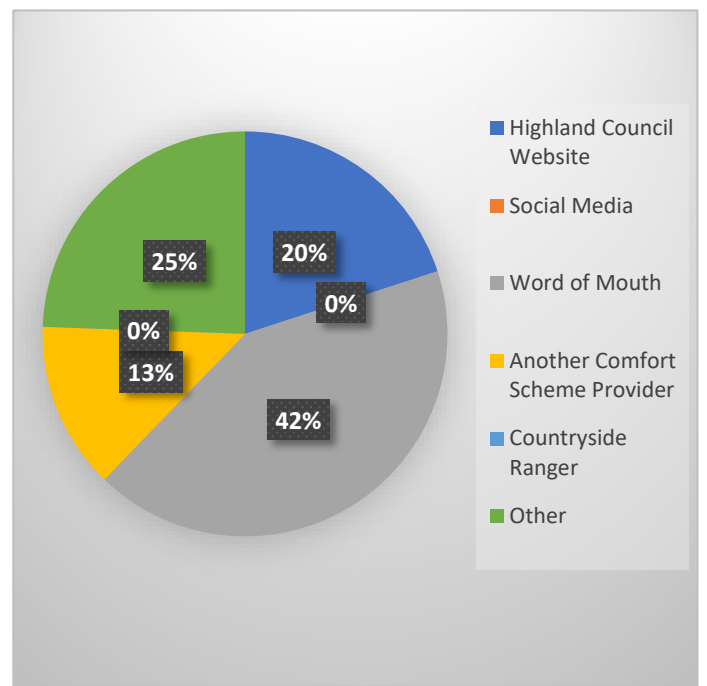


**How did you hear about the Highland Comfort Scheme?**

**2022**



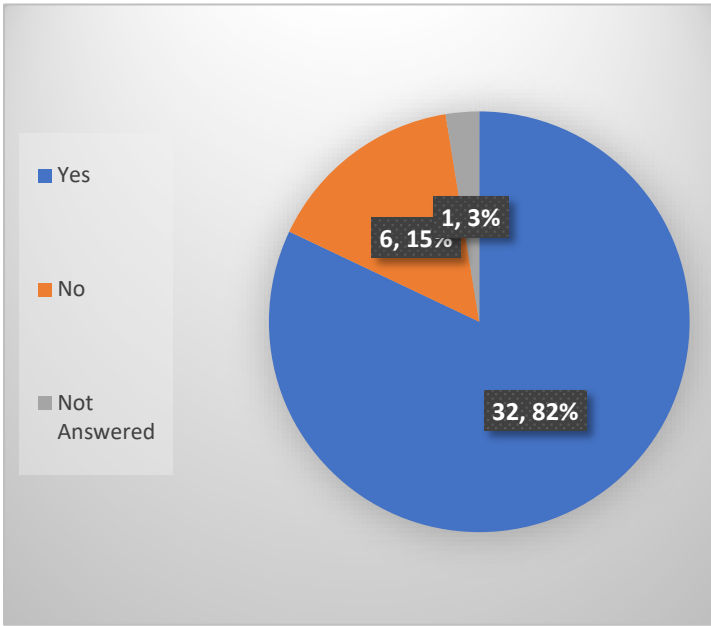
**2023**



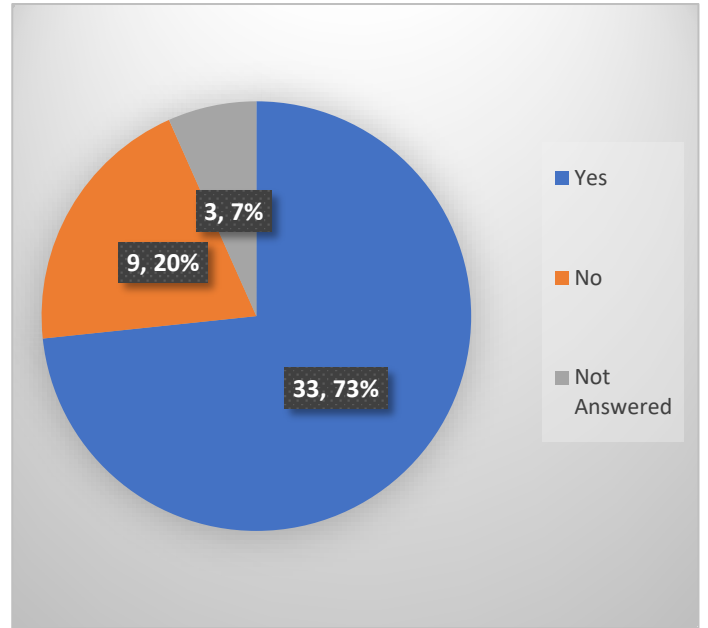


**Are Comfort Scheme providers adequately advertised?**

**2022**

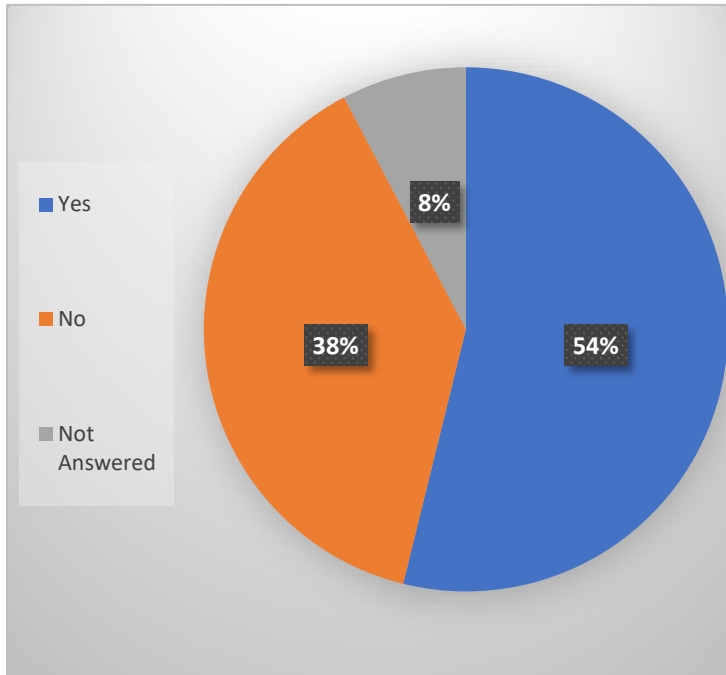


**2023**

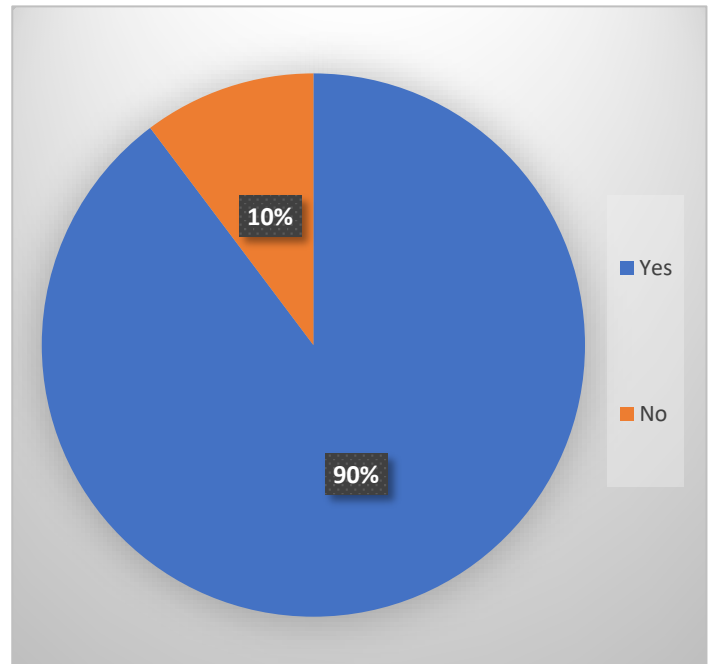


**Does providing a Comfort Scheme attract more custom to your business and/or community?**

**2022**

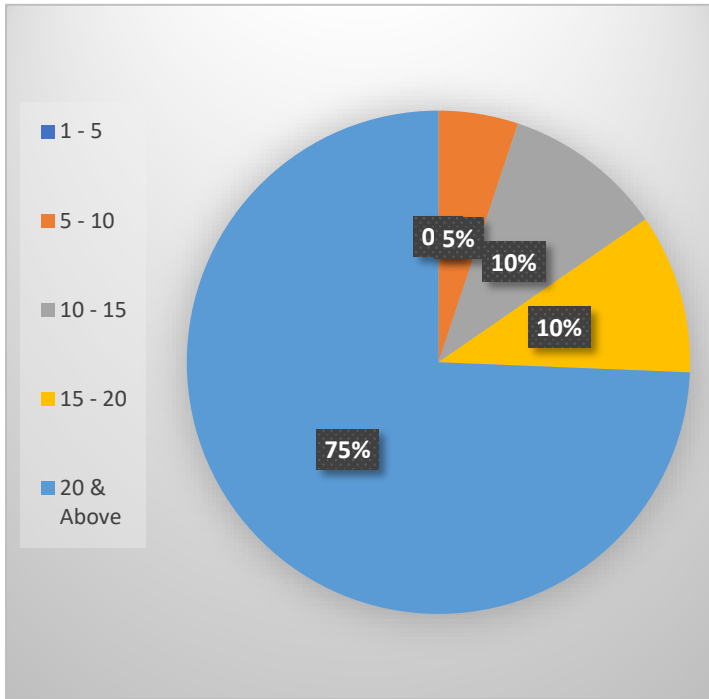


**2023**

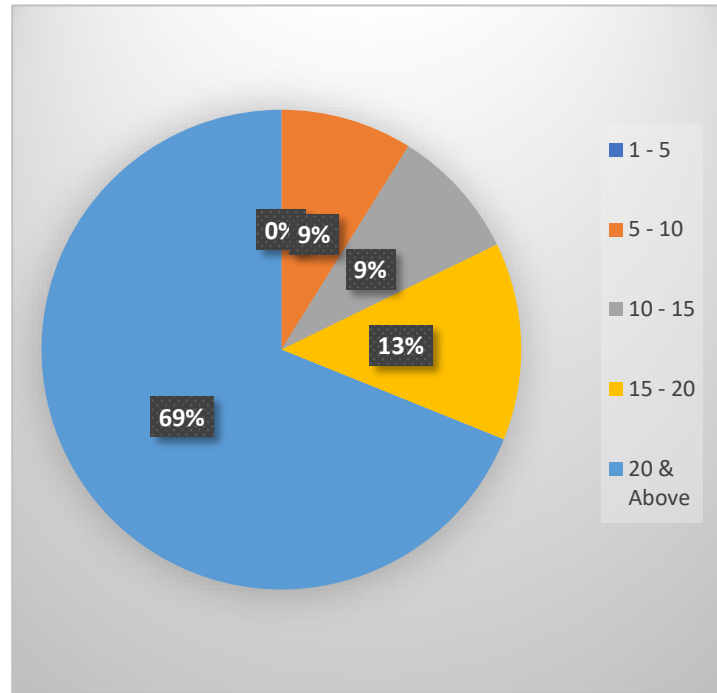


**On average how many people use the facility daily?**

**2022**

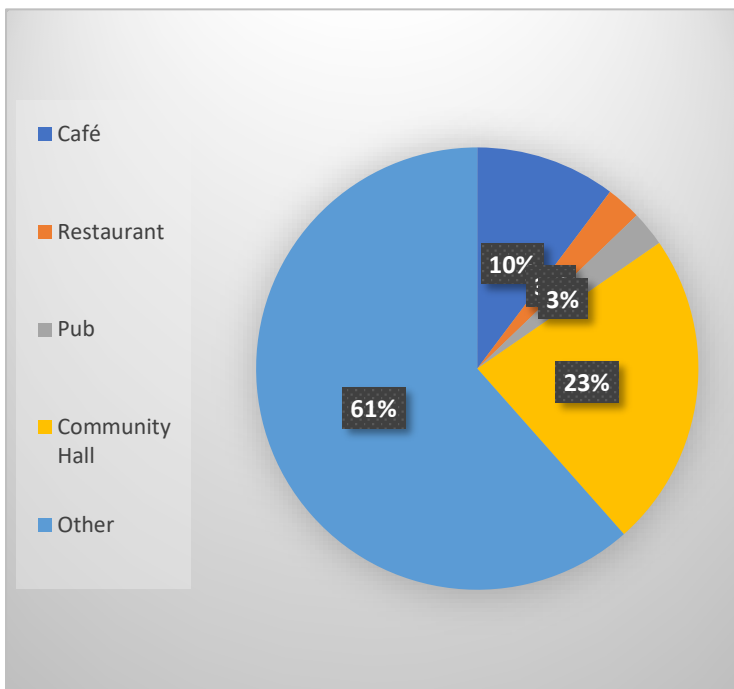


**2023**

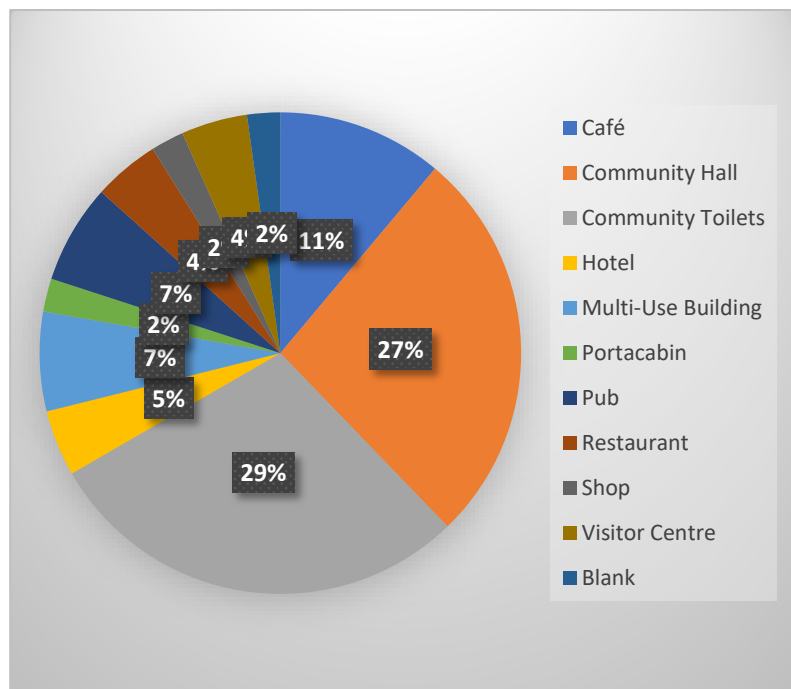


**What type of facility is the Comfort Scheme?**

**2022**




**2023**



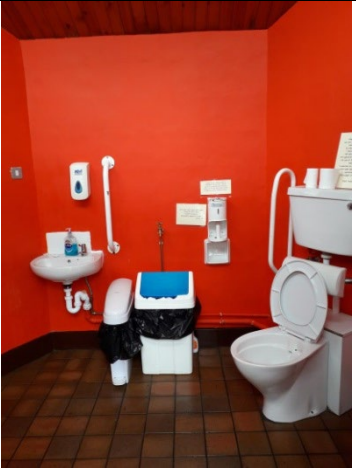
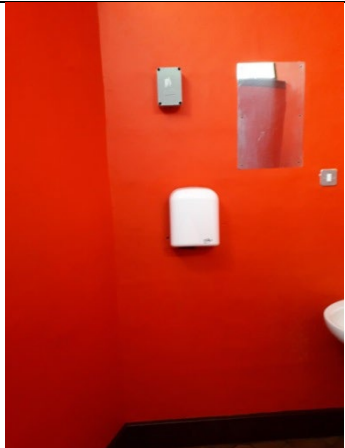
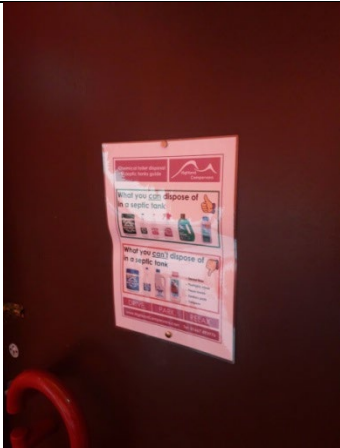



## Appendix 3 – Visual Examples of Highland Comfort Scheme Criteria


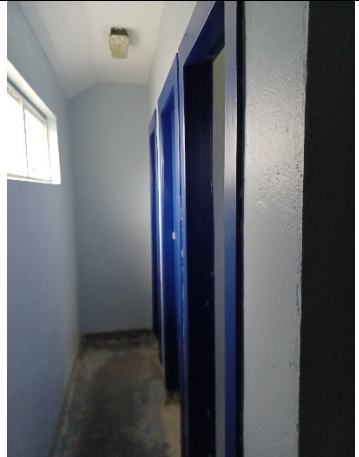
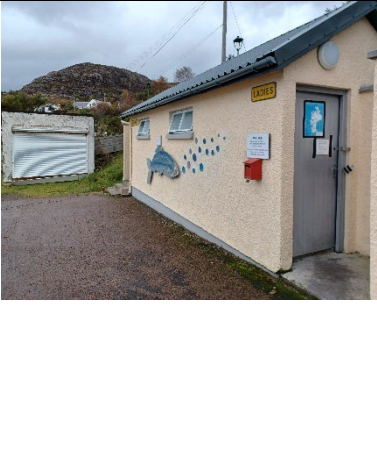
### £50.00 a month – Traigh Beach, Composting Toilets

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
		