

PRESS RELEASE: Friends of Bewl Water (FoBW)

Wadhurst and Ticehurst Parish Councils Publish Landmark Bewl Water Survey Results: Community Calls for Nature -First Future at Bewl Water

Date: 26th January 2026

FoBW's Position

Claire Moore, Chair of Friends of Bewl Water, said:

“These results confirm what we have long believed: Bewl Water is a sanctuary for wildlife and a vital community resource. The public has spoken clearly—nature must come first. We will use this evidence to press for a planning framework that protects Bewl’s unique character and ensures any improvements are low-impact and environmentally sensitive.”

The Friends of Bewl Water (FoBW) are delighted to see announced the results of the most comprehensive public consultation ever undertaken on the future of Bewl Water. The independent survey, commissioned by Wadhurst and Ticehurst Parish Councils, reflects the views of **over 1,000 participants**, with **896 completing the survey in full**. The findings send a clear message: the overwhelming priority for Bewl Water must be the protection of its natural environment and its role as a tranquil, community-focused recreational amenity.

Why This Matters

Bewl Water is one of the South East’s most cherished landscapes, valued for its wildlife, dark skies, and unique opportunities for water-based recreation. Recent development proposals—including converting the former Sailing and Water Sports clubhouse into holiday lets—sparked widespread concern. Previous consultations were poorly publicised, and no detailed results were shared. This survey ensures the community’s voice is known.

Key Findings

- **88.7%** agree the top priority should be to preserve Bewl Water as a nature reserve.
- **92.4%** reject the idea that overnight accommodation is more important than protecting wildlife.
- **81.4%** oppose converting the former Sailing and Water Sports clubhouse into holiday lets.
- **90.1%** want the Outdoor Centre to remain an educational facility for young people, not a hotel.
- **89.7%** want Bewl’s dark skies protected from light pollution; **90.9%** want tranquillity safeguarded from noise.
- **87.7%** believe sailing, rowing, canoeing and fishing clubs should be prioritised over tourist accommodation.

- Parking charges were identified as a barrier to visits by **59.4%** of respondents.

Respondents also expressed strong support for modest improvements—such as better paths, access, and a café—rather than large-scale commercial development.

Community Engagement

The survey was conducted by **Survey Mechanics**, an accredited market research company, and promoted online, via social media, and at eight local events. The margin of error is **3.12% at a 95% confidence level**, confirming the robustness of the findings. **90% of respondents live within 10 miles of Bewl Water**, and **two-thirds live in nearby parishes**, ensuring strong local representation.

FoBW will now seek to:

- Share the full report with local authorities, planning bodies, and stakeholders.
 - Advocate for a site-specific planning policy that prioritises wildlife, dark skies, and community recreation.
 - Work with partners to improve access and facilities without compromising the environment.
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Acknowledgements

FoBW extends sincere thanks to **Survey Mechanics**, who generously provided their services free of charge, and to all residents and participants who contributed their views.

For more information and the full report, visit:

- Friends of Bewl Water Website
- [Wadhurst Parish Council Website](#)
- Ticehurst Parish Council Website

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