

**TONBRIDGE CASTLE GROUNDS – 2008 MARKET SURVEY RESULTS**

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

- This document contains the findings of the 2008 market survey of Tonbridge Castle and Grounds.
- This study was undertaken to profile the users and meet the need to consult them on issues related to Tonbridge Castle, the grounds and events; to ascertain users' satisfaction with aspects of the service and contribute to the forthcoming Management Plan for the site.

**THE RESULTS OF THIS SURVEY SHOW THAT:**

- Three groups of users were represented; people coming alone were in the majority, couples comprised one third of the visitors and groups with children/young people formed a quarter.
- Users were both male and female though more likely to be female, with ages ranging from toddlers to the elderly (over 75 years of age). The single most numerous age group was Under 16, but as the survey coincided with the school summer holidays this could be expected.
- Respondents were drawn from a wide catchment area with 45% from within 5 miles of Tonbridge, and 55% living 5 miles or more away, of which 23% lived 20 miles or more.
- With one in five users making a return journey of at least 40 miles Tonbridge Castle and Grounds is confirmed as a tourist attraction.
- One in three (34%) of the users visited once a week or more often, this appears to have decreased from 48% in 2004.
- The four main reasons given for visiting the Castle Grounds and gardens were to use it as a short cut, to walk by the river, to sit and relax, and to enjoy the grounds and gardens.
- Just over one in ten of the respondents said they had an illness, disability or infirmity that troubled them. This was a slightly larger group than in 2004 or in 1999 and the number who commented on difficulties of access increased.
- The majority were aware of the Castle Grounds and gardens because they lived in or close to Tonbridge. Word of mouth was the most popular 'advertising' medium.
- The single most important feature about the grounds and facilities within them rated as of highest importance were the paths for walking. The river was the second most important feature. Six other features were rated very highly and of equal importance, these were the overall attractiveness of the grounds, a sense of safety and security on site, the cleanliness of the area, the number of seats, the number of litter bins, and the Castle with its sense of history.

- 74% of the respondents were aware of events held in the Castle Grounds with 23% saying they had attended an event this year. Bands/concerts were the most popular. The main reason for not attending an event was lack of interest.
- For those interested, increasing the number of events would be popular.
- Overall, 13% of the respondents included a visit to the Castle Gatehouse, 94% of these visitors were very (60%)/fairly satisfied (34%).
- Overall 98% were satisfied with the Information Centre, 53% very/45% fairly satisfied.
- Levels of satisfaction were expressed with all aspects of the area. The attractiveness of the grounds and the gardens/flowers were lowest rated, apart from the boats, in terms of satisfaction.
- From the higher number of users, overall, 74% were satisfied with the grounds, very satisfied (36%)/fairly satisfied (38%); down from 94% in 2004.
- Taking everything into account 86% were satisfied with their visit overall, very satisfied (53%)/fairly satisfied (33%), and only 4% recorded dissatisfaction. The main reasons for dissatisfaction were the perceived lack of attractiveness of the grounds, the lack of refreshments on site, the lack of boats on the river and there being insufficient to do.

#### **THE MOST IMPORTANT ISSUES COMING OUT OF THIS SURVEY ARE:**

- A high 86% were satisfied with their visit overall. Suggestions were made for further/future improvements.
- The presentation of the Castle Grounds remains a high priority and satisfaction levels have decreased since 2004. Some possible suggestions included maintaining the path surfaces in terms of safety, cleanliness and wheeled access, improving the attractiveness of the grounds, and especially the gardens and flower displays.
- Older and disabled users would welcome improved access to the grounds and gardens.
- Providing refreshments on site remains the popular addition that would add to the enjoyment of their visit for many of the users. This desire has increased exponentially in popularity since the 1999 and 2004 surveys.
- Although the local community and other users value and appreciate the way the Castle, grounds and gardens are maintained the opportunity is there to attain an even higher standard and to introduce additions that would make visits more enjoyable.