QSWP Events Survey – Findings

In November 2018, a survey was undertaken within the QSWP asking members (both Active and Friends) about event attendance. We were trying to find out why people do and don’t turn up to events, and identify potential steps that could be taken to improve attendance at under supported events.

The survey received 59 responses (at the time of writing, QSWP membership is 211 members made up of 161 active members and 50 friends). 10 of the responses were anonymous.

The survey was split into 4 sections:

* Scout Adventures Events
* Non-Scout Adventures Events
* Top Awards and Formal Events
* General Questions

For the Event based sections, members were asked the following:

* Which events in this category have you attended in the past 12 months?
* Did you enjoy the events?
* Would you attend them again?
* Please provide any comments or clarifications

# Scout Adventures Events

There were 4 events that fell into this category (we intentionally omitted Gilwell Reunion):

* Winter Camp (4 respondents said they had attended, 8 members are recorded on the Portal as having attended)
* Cub and Beaver Fundays (6 respondents, 8 attendees across 2 events)
* Gilwell 24 (6 respondents, 11 attendees)
* Scarefest (2 respondents, 2 attendees)

In total 13 people responded in this category saying they had attended at least 1 Scout Adventures event.

Of the 13 respondents, 11 said they had enjoyed all the Scout Adventures events they attended, 1 said they had enjoyed some of the Scout Adventures events, and 1 said they hadn’t enjoyed the Scout Adventures event they attended (Cub and Beaver Fundays). Of those 13, 10 said they would attend again, 2 said they would maybe attend again, and 1 said they would not attend again.

A few common themes emerged from the comments in this section:

* The primary reason people gave for not attending was due to other commitments (e.g. work, local Scout events), dates clashing, or a lack of time. In some cases, people did state that this was just bad luck this year and that they would usually attend.
* Some people do attend the events but in some other capacity, such as with a different NSASU or as a leader.
* It was highlighted that the Scout Adventures events are still primarily Gilwell based (although many of the people who attended the Woodhouse Park Cub and Beaver Fundays left positive comments about this event). This can make travel difficult and/or expensive.
* A lack of clarity on our role at the events in advance dissuaded some people from attending
* The person who said that they hadn’t enjoyed the event and would not attend again stated that this wasn’t due to the event, but due to their own attitude going into the event.

## Recommendations

Many of the factors highlighted in the comments are outside of our control (i.e. event location and timing). However, the following recommendations should be considered:

1. Set up a system where people could choose to volunteer for part of the event if they are attending in another capacity and they have time.
2. Ensure that we provide clearer information about our role at each event (where possible) to help people make an informed choice about their attendance.

# Non-Scout Adventures Events

There were 9 events that fell into this category, of a range of different sizes and lengths:

* IST Selection Events (6 respondents, 10 attendees across 11 events)
* Ferny Crofts Fun Days (2 respondents, 4 attendees)
* Get In! Warwickshire County Camp (2 respondents, 3 attendees)
* Strategy (4 respondents, 6 attendees)
* North East Wiltshire Beaver Camp (2 respondents, 3 attendees)
* Jurassic International Jamboree (3 respondents, 6 attendees)
* Carfest South (2 respondents, 4 attendees)
* Insomnia (5 respondents, 7 attendees)
* Take It Easy (0 respondents, 1 attendee)

In total 14 people responded in this category saying they had attended at least 1 Non-Scout Adventures event.

Of the 14 respondents, all of them said they enjoyed all the events; and 13 said they would attend them again and 1 said they would maybe attend again.

Again, there were a few common themes that emerged from the comments:

* Lack of time means people can’t always commit to events, particularly the longer events such as Jurassic International Jamboree
* People said they were more willing and able to attend local events
* Some people struggle with transport to events
* A lack of information – both in terms of clarity on our role at the event, and from the organisers – made people reluctant to sign up to events or impacted their enjoyment/likelihood to sign up again

## Recommendations

The following recommendations should be considered to address the comments made in this section:

1. Chase up the organisers provide us with the information we need to tell people what they’re doing, or ensure the organisers communicate it directly to those involved
2. Identify more “local” (but still large) events to support, and provide a mix of event lengths (both short and long) to accommodate people with different availability
3. Encourage people to share lifts to events to help those who can’t get there themselves

# Top Awards and Formal Events

There were 7 events that fell into this category:

* DofE Gold Award Presentations (5 respondents, 5 attendees – although one respondent actually attended the event in the previous year)
* Windsor Parade (25 respondents, 44 attendees)
* Hereford and Worcester Top Awards Presentation (4 respondents, 6 attendees)
* Hampshire Top Awards Presentation (1 respondent, 2 attendees)
* Thanksgiving (5 respondents, 10 attendees)
* Festival of Remembrance (11 respondents, 13 attendees)
* Cenotaph Parade (22 respondents, 29 attendees)

In total 40 people responded in this category saying they had attended at least 1 Top Awards and Formal event.

Of the 40 respondents, 39 of them said they enjoyed all the events and 1 said they had enjoyed some of the events. 39 people said they would attend again, and 1 person said they might attend again (this was a different person to said they only enjoyed some of the events).

The common themes emerging from the comments from this section were:

* Lots of people really enjoy attending the big formal events and representing Scouting at a national level, particularly Windsor and Remembrance. It was commented though that it was hard to get to know people at these big events, and that the smaller events allow you to build a good team relationship.
* Some people intentionally don’t sign up to popular events to give others the chance to do them.
* Transport is often easier for these big events (or people are more likely to make an effort) as they tend to be in central places.

## Recommendations

The following recommendation should be considered to address the comments made in this section:

1. Try to identify more local Top Awards events that people can attend

# General Questions

As well as questions about specific events, we asked several more open questions to allow people to provide additional feedback.

## We are considering asking members to attend one of our less popular (undersubscribed) events before being allocated to a more popular (oversubscribed) event. Do you have any thoughts about this?

This suggestion received a very mixed response, although the majority of respondents supported the idea. 27 respondents thought that this was a fair way of doing things and/or a good idea, whereas 15 respondents thought that this was an unfair way of doing things or a bad idea. 10 respondents didn’t present a clear preference.

It is worth noting that not all of those who thought it was a good idea were people who attend undersubscribed events already, and similarly not everyone who thought it was a bad idea only attends oversubscribed events.

A few common concerns or thoughts were raised:

* Availability of local events might limit some people’s ability to attend an undersubscribed event.
* Many people commented on how the smaller (undersubscribed) events made it easier to get to know people within the QSWP, which is often difficult at the bigger events.
* Some people asked about the frequency of this resetting – i.e. would you be expected to regularly attend undersubscribed events
* It was suggested that changing the weightings for the existing allocation system might be a better way of achieving something similar to this, without entirely ruling out those who struggle to get to events.

## If you do not attend specific events, or events in general, can you tell us why? What could be done to encourage you to attend more events?

The following common themes came up as barriers to attending events:

* The distance and/or cost of attending
* The availability of transport to site
* Information and dates being sent out too late and people not being able to plan ahead, or information not being sent out at all/being incomplete
* Being able to attend events for shorter periods of time, or having shorter (e.g. 1 day) events

## Do you have any comments or things you would like to add about QSWP events in general?

The vast majority of the comments in this section had been previously covered. The following are the only new things to consider:

* Socials are a good idea, but need to make sure they move around the country so everyone gets the opportunity to attend
* Information sent out to new members needs to be clearer to explain to them how the process works

## Recommendations

Based on the comments from this section, the following recommendations are made:

1. Before introducing a blanket requirement that you must attend an undersubscribed event, try changing the weightings with the current allocation system and see if this has the desired effect
2. Ensure that everyone is aware of the event allocation process and the QSWP’s position on attending events, particularly new members.
3. Continue with regular socials, ensuring that they are held in a variety of locations that accurately reflect our membership.

# Manager’s Comments

The QSWP has relatively recently (in the past 5 years or so) undergone a transition from having a primary focus on representing The Scout Association to having a primary focus on acting as ambassadors for the Top Awards. This has moved our focus away from the bigger, more formal events we have previously attended, to attending smaller less formal events such as camps. I personally believe this is the right thing to be doing and in line with the current vision of Scouting nationally.

For a number of members, attending these smaller events isn’t what they want to do. That’s entirely their choice, and there’s nothing wrong with preferring the more formal events. However, I don’t feel they should expect to only be able to attend the larger more formal events. Attending these bigger, national events as a representative of The Scout Association is, and should be, a privilege – earnt not just by being a member of the QSWP, but by actively supporting the aims of the QSWP and attending our whole spectrum of events. Those that do this should get priority on attending the popular events.

There is clearly more we can do to support people in attending the smaller events though, and the recommendations made above will hopefully help us do that. I think the big three priorities for doing this are:

* Identifying new events that are more geographically spread across the UK. I think regional and county Top Award events are a good place to start here, as that fits closely with our remit and also bridges the gap between formal and less formal events.
* Making sure we send clearer information out earlier, and making sure we’re not assuming knowledge of the event; even if it’s your very first QSWP event, you should know what to expect, what your role will be, what you need to take with you, etc
* Help people get to events by encouraging people to share transport, making sure people know what options are available (e.g. how to get to Gilwell by train), and being as flexible as we can be (within the scope of the event) as to when people arrive.

I realise that these steps won’t solve all the problems, and neither will they fix things overnight – but I do believe they will help us move in the right direction, and enable more QSWP members to attend events, and subsequently inspire and encourage more young people to gain their Top Awards.

Reading through everyone’s comments, there was a very clear differentiation between those older members who have been around a long time, and those newer members. I think this is down to our changing remit, and perhaps more needs to be done to ensure that older members also understand the new focus of the QSWP, and why that’s happened.

One or two people mentioned that we should perhaps reduce the number of events if we’re struggling to staff them. Whilst this is an option, I actually think it’s good that we have lots of events (even if some of them are quite small) as it makes it more likely that everyone has the opportunity to attend some. I would rather we sent a small team of 5 or 6 people to 5 events, than a large team of 30 to 1 event – so long as we properly set the expectation of both the events and the people attending, and so long as the events are in line with what we’re trying to achieve. Of course, sending a large team to 5 events would be even better!

Whilst it wasn’t really the focus of the survey, it was nice to be reading some of the positive comments people made about the events too – and how attending events with the QSWP has meant they’ve made new friends and learnt new skills. Almost everyone who responded and had attended an event with the QSWP said they’d enjoyed it and would do it again – so whilst we might not have everything right just yet, we’re certainly getting some things right!