

2019 Visitor Observation Study Results

ENVIRONMENTAL SURVEYING AND MONITORING

OF THE

WILD ATLANTIC WAY OPERATIONAL PROGRAMME

for:

Fáilte Ireland

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Section 1 Introduction

1.1 Background

This report is one of a suite of reports which comprise the 2019 Wild Atlantic Way (WAW) environmental surveying and monitoring program. This suite of reports includes the following:

- The macro monitoring results;
- The visitor observation study results; and
- The ecological study of visitor movement areas.

These assessments are being undertaken as part of the obligations set out in the SEA and AA reports of the WAW operational program. The data collected aims to characterise the interactions between tourism and key environmental metrics along the WAW. This includes characterisation of typical activities and effects from individual tourists to broad scale effects such as wastewater management.

These assessments are undertaken annually and the scope of works being undertaken is reviewed by the environmental working group which meets twice a year to discuss the monitoring program. The working group consists of stakeholders such as local authority representatives as well as representatives from agencies such as the EPA and the NPWS.

The monitoring is intended to be a high-level snapshot of the existing condition of sites along the WAW to inform the strategic planning of the WAW.

1.2 Introduction

This document details the results of the 2019 Visitor Observation Study carried out as part of the Environmental Surveying and Monitoring for the WAW Operational Programme. It has been undertaken by CAAS Ltd. on behalf of Fáilte Ireland.

The purpose of the monitoring strategy is to:

- Ensure that the effects of the implementation of the Operational Programme are understood and acted upon;
- To ensure that there will be no delays in identifying existing or emerging activities that could threaten the environment; and
- To ensure that any remedial actions or recommendations undertaken because of this monitoring report are to be completed in compliance with the Habitats Directive.

The Environmental Surveying and Monitoring of the WAW is intended to describe the existing conditions of sites with a view to:

- Contributing to Visitor Management Strategies;
- Contributing to future editions of Fáilte Ireland's WAW Operational Programmes and Guidelines;
- Identifying remedial action/works required;
- Assessing the capacity for future loadings; and
- Integrating site management with future European site Management Plans

There are three separate components to the Monitoring Strategy:

1. The **Macro Monitoring** examines the condition of the environment at gateway settlements on the Wild Atlantic Way looking at large scale regional and national indicators to help develop baseline data.
2. The **Visitor Observation Monitoring** (this report) forms the second stage, examining the types, spatial patterns and intensity of existing visitor activities at 15 Discovery Points. The site selection process varies each year and is informed by the members of the WAW Monitoring Committee (See Section 1.1); and
3. The **Ecological Surveys** are informed by the Visitor Monitoring results and examine the areas receiving maximum, moderate, minimum and no loading. A focus is placed on florae species, habitat features and overall system functionality. Regard is given to specific conservation objectives of relevant European sites.

1.3 Monitoring Site Selection Rationale

Each year the rationale for site selection is based on relevant input from members of the WAW Monitoring Committee:

- **2015**: 'Signature Discovery Points' were selected to be monitored as these were the flagship sites of the WAW brand. These sites were expected to receive the largest number of visitors per year;
- **2016**: Beaches and islands - a focus on sites with potential for dispersed impacts was required;
- **2017**: Avian species as indicator species for ecological integrity. Attention was placed on estuarine sites which have complex ecological processes, as well as sites within or adjacent to SPAs (SPAs);
- **2018**: Revisit 'Signature Discovery Points' which were previously monitored in 2015. The rationale for this was to identify if any changes had arisen from the original survey from the first year of monitoring and to present; and
- **2019**: Discovery Points located within or directly adjacent to Special Protection Areas (SPAs) and/or Special Areas of Conservation (SACs).

Table 1.1 Observation Study sites including Natura 2000 Data

Discovery Point Number	Name	County	GPS Coordinate	Survey Date (2019)	Relevant SAC	Distance (km)	Relevant SPA	Distance (km)
148	Sheep's Head	Cork	51.545875, -9.826387	30 th & 31 st May	Sheep's head SAC	Within	Sheep's Head to Toe Head SPA	Within
145	Seefin Viewpoint	Cork	51.595310, -9.710842	1 st & 2 nd June	Sheep's Head SAC	Within	Sheep's Head to Toe Head SPA	2.5
143	Dursey Sound (Control)	Cork	51.610163, -10.155192	6 th & 7 th June	Kenmare River SAC	Adjacent	Beara Peninsula SPA	Within
126	Inch Strand	Kerry	52.141897, -9.981500	13 th & 14 th June	Castlemaine Harbour SAC	Within	Castlemaine Harbour SPA	Within
118	Banna Strand	Kerry	52.338947, -9.834602	15 th & 16 th June	Akeragh, Banna and Barrow Harbour SAC	Adjacent	Tralee Bay Complex SPA	Adjacent
104	Spanish Point Viewpoint	Clare	52.843028, -9.433118	22 nd & 23 rd June	Carrarowmore Point to Spanish Point and Islands SAC	Adjacent	Mid-Clare Coast SPA	Adjacent
93	Flaggy Shore	Clare	53.156913, -9.087879	20 th & 21 st June	Galway Bay Complex SAC	Within	Inner Galway Bay SPA	Within
92	Traught Beach	Galway	53.170930, -8.986273	29 th & 20 th June	Galway Bay Complex SAC	Within	Inner Galway Bay SPA	Within
80	Derrigimlagh Bog	Galway	53.460631, -10.022976	24 th & 25 th June	Slyne Head Peninsula SAC Connemara Bog Complex SAC	0.63 0.2	Connemara Bog Complex SPA	0.6
73	An Fód Dubh (Blacksod Harbour)	Mayo	54.099140, -10.061838	04 th & 05 th July	Mullet/Blacksod Complex SAC	Adjacent	Blacksod/Broadhaven SPA	Adjacent
46	Lackan Strand	Mayo	54.274180, -9.256020	06 th & 07 th July	Lacken Saltmarsh and Kilcummin Head SAC	Within	Killala Bay/Moy Estuary SPA	Within
43	Inishcraone Pier	Sligo	54.220127, -9.095890	20 th & 21 st July	Killala Bay/Moy Estuary SAC	0.4	Killala Bay/ Moy Estuary SPA	Adjacent
39	Rosses Point	Sligo	54.306928, -8.574159	18 th & 19 th July	Cummen Strand/Drumcliff Bay (Sligo Bay) SAC	Within	Drumcliff Bay SPA	0.1
33	Mountcharles Pier	Donegal	54.630390, -8.206151	11 th & 12 th July	Donegal Bay SAC	Adjacent	Donegal Bay SPA	Adjacent
24	Carrick Finn Beach	Donegal	55.037827, -8.347060	13 th & 14 th July	Gweedore Bay and Islands SAC	Within	West Donegal Coast SPA	Adjacent

Section 2 Methodology

The Visitor Observation Survey methodology allows for the examination of patterns of visitor behaviour at sites along the WAW.

Visitor Observation Survey:

- A tool used to collect systematic data about visitor behaviour at a site of interest.

Methodology:

- Watching visitors and recording data on how they interacted with the site, the types of activities they engaged in and patterns of movement.

Aim:

- To collect data for stay duration, activities undertaken, locations and direction of excursions.

The methodology is supported using an evidence from the ecological assessments (conducted after the surveys) to identify the current state of the site and existing contributions before establishing the behaviour of visitors and the likely nature of impacts.

Effective methods for visitor observation were designed and tested using Pilot Visitor Observation Studies at the Burren and Cliffs of Moher Geopark in Co. Clare.

The study was carried out across a full spectrum of circumstances ranging from small spatially-concentrated areas to large diffuse sites. Management regimes at the study sites ranged from complex and highly-structured private enterprises to the simpler, smaller sites with little management.

Data was recorded on a tablet using Survey123 from ArcGIS which allowed easy identification and input of patterns of visitor activity, movement and visitor behaviours; categorising activities into low, moderate and high levels. The sites chosen for monitoring in 2019 were Discovery Points along the WAW that are situated within and directly adjacent to an SAC and/or an SPA.

2.1 Guidelines for Undertaking Visitor Observation Survey

The recommended time of year to undertake visitor observation surveys is from the beginning of tourist season to the end of July to allow enough time for undertaking of subsequent ecological surveys. Preparation of survey materials and site visits should be undertaken well in advance to increase efficiency of the monitoring programme during the tourist season.

A detailed outline of the methodology used can be found in Appendix I-III.

2.2 Development of Activities, Effects and their Categories¹

A list of general activities and effects was developed to assist in the categorisation of visitor behaviour. While generic to all sites, the list is non-exhaustive and can be expanded depending on the individual site or emerging trends. Activities and effects are categorised depending on their severity to guide accurate reporting in an effective, efficient and easily replicated manner (see **Appendix III**).

¹ This classification system is specific to the visitor monitoring programme and any reference to effects or impacts within this report does not relate to similar terms within the Habitats Directive but to general activities and associated environmental impacts as detailed in Appendix III of this report.

2.3 Visitor Movement Zones

The collation of the data including the tracking of onsite movement by visitors will result in the identification of core, secondary and tertiary movement zones. The sites chosen for monitoring are the fifteen Discovery Points along the Wild Atlantic Way that fall within or are directly adjacent to SACs and/or SPAs.

The Discovery Points range from having complex and highly structured existing management regimes to existing roadside laybys with little or no management.

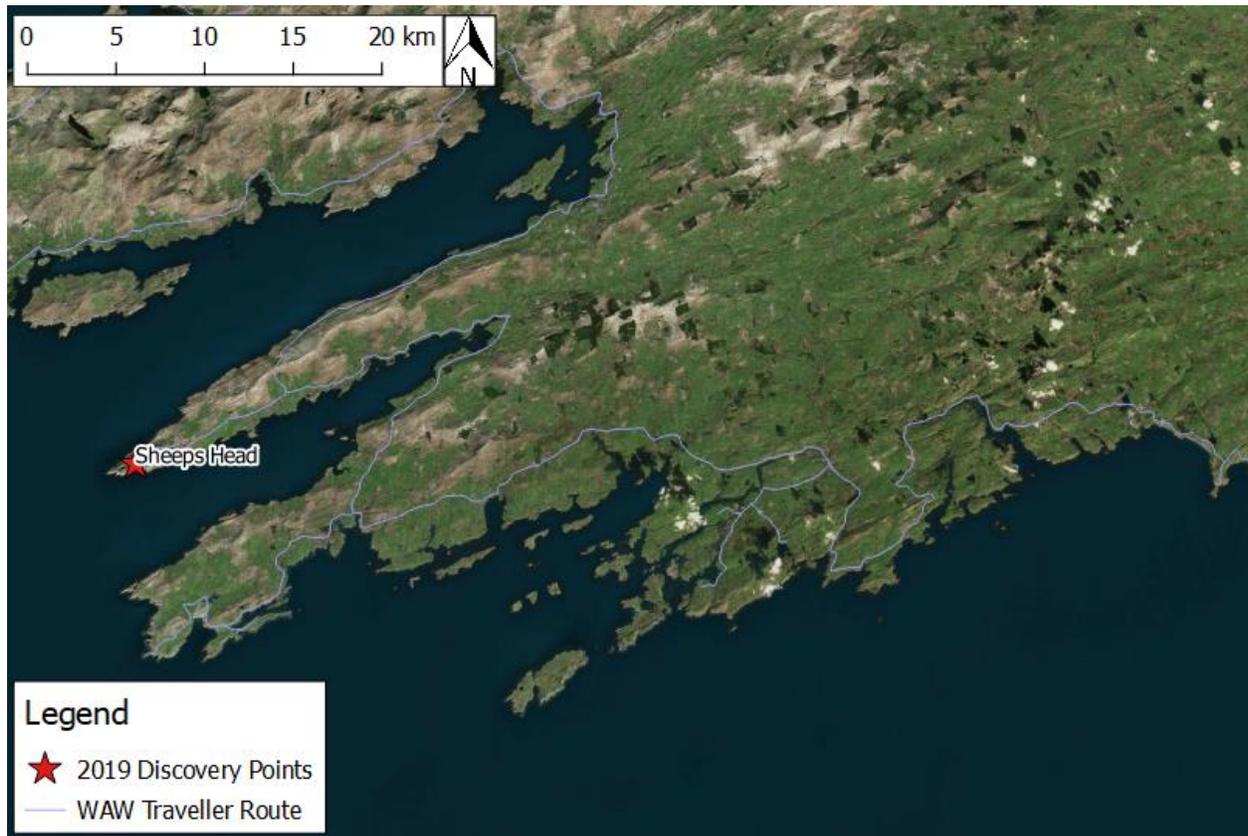
Core Zone	Existing car parks, paved areas, viewing platforms, marked pathways, trails, tracks and managed grassland and areas where pathways, trails or roads exist. The majority of visitors remain in these zones.
Secondary Zone	Areas outside of existing car park, paved areas, marked pathways, trails, tracks and managed grassland. visitors are likely to traffic areas of grassland (in some cases farmland grazed by sheep or cattle), heath or bare rock, usually to get a better view of site attractions or to access trails at the site.
Tertiary Zone	Areas where no car park, paved areas, marked pathways, trails, tracks and managed grassland are identifiable and beyond the immediate boundaries of the site.

Section 3 Presentation and Analysis of Results

This section of the report is an account of the site visits to each of the Discovery Points selected for 2019. The surveys were carried out from a period between the 29th of May and the 21st of July 2019. For optimum results each site was surveyed at the same time on each survey day, each site was surveyed over a two-day period. Surveyors were on site at 08.30 and concluded observations at 17.30, spending a duration of approximately 9 hours at each site. Appendix IV and Appendix V contains a breakdown of results from each site and photographs of each Discovery Points monitored.

Sheep's Head

ENVIRONMENTAL SURVEYING AND MONITORING RESULTS



3.1 Sheep's Head

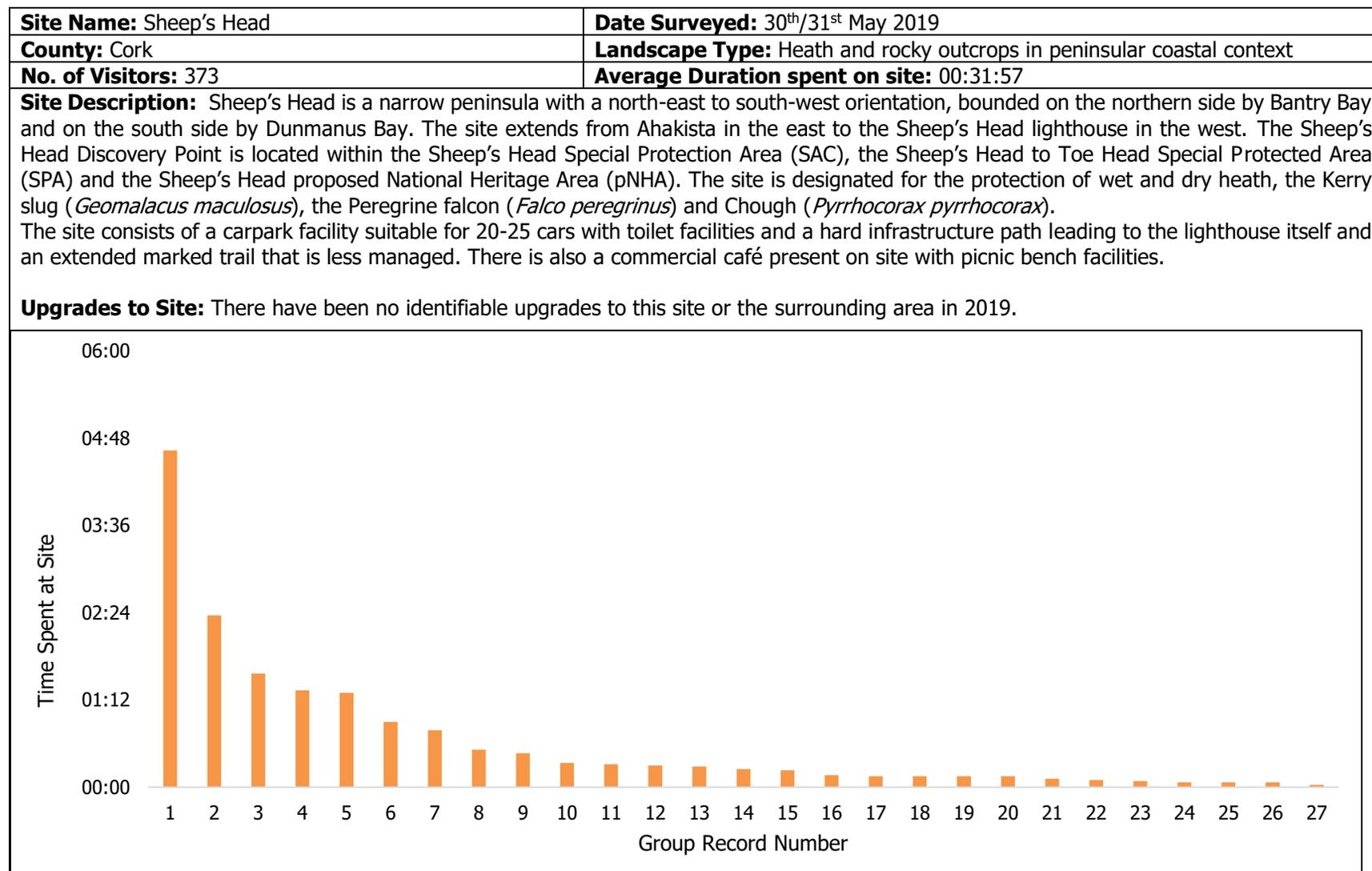


Figure 3.1 Duration of Time Spent at Sheep's Head ²

² The graph represents 27 groups of a total 130; 103 of the groups observed had no departure time recorded due to the nature of the site and restricted views.

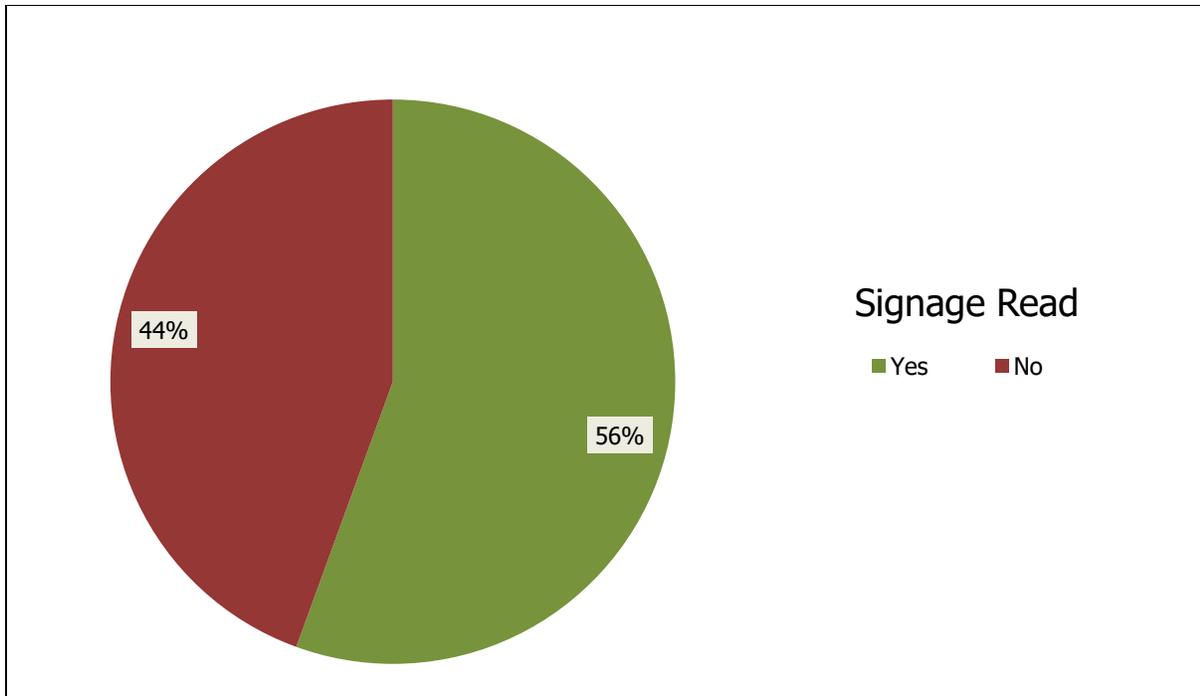


Figure 3.2 Use of Interpretive Material at Sheep's Head³

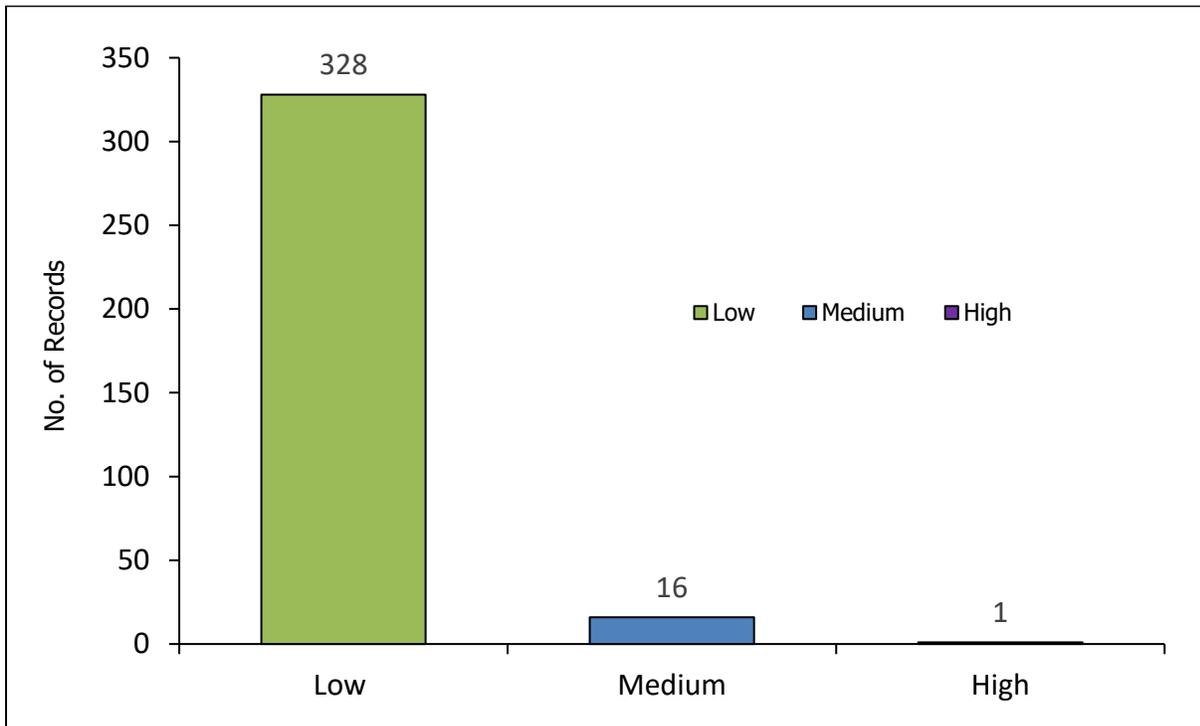


Figure 3.3 Categories of Activity Levels Observed at Sheep's Head

³ This chart represents 99 out of 138 records. There was no available data for 39 groups.

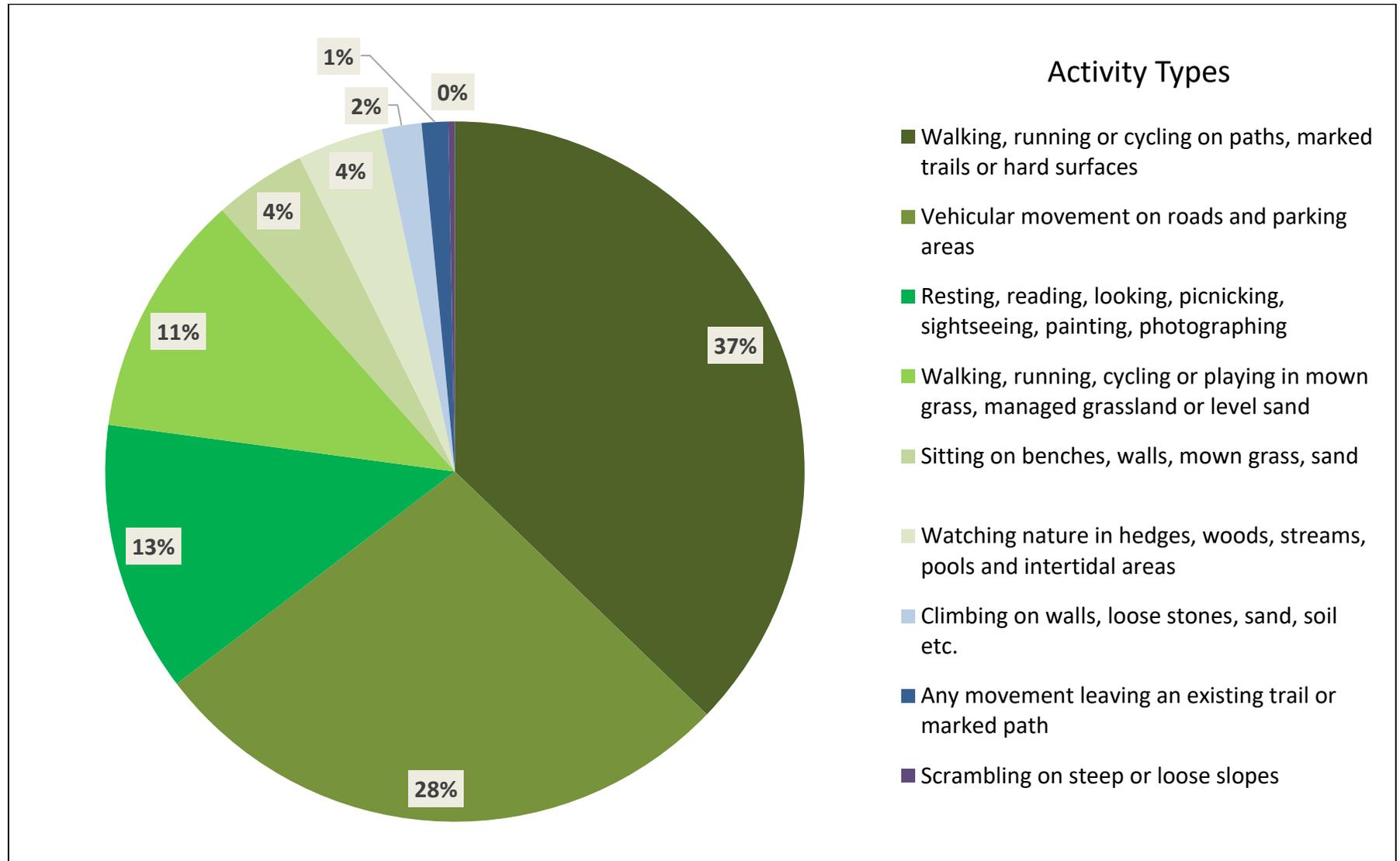


Figure 3.4 Range of Visitor Activities Observed at Sheep's Head⁴

⁴ One of the activities had an occurrence rate of one which equates to <1%. It is therefore recorded as 0% on the graph.

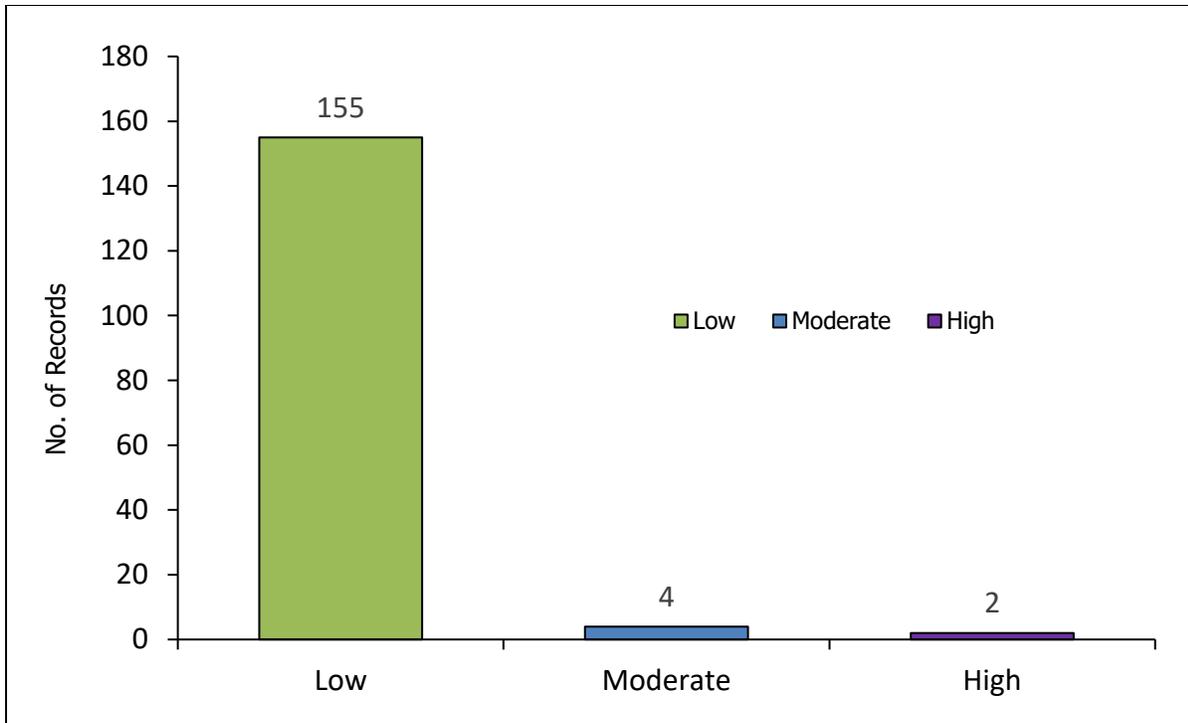


Figure 3.5 Categories of Environmental Impact Levels Observed at Sheep's Head as a result of Visitor Activities

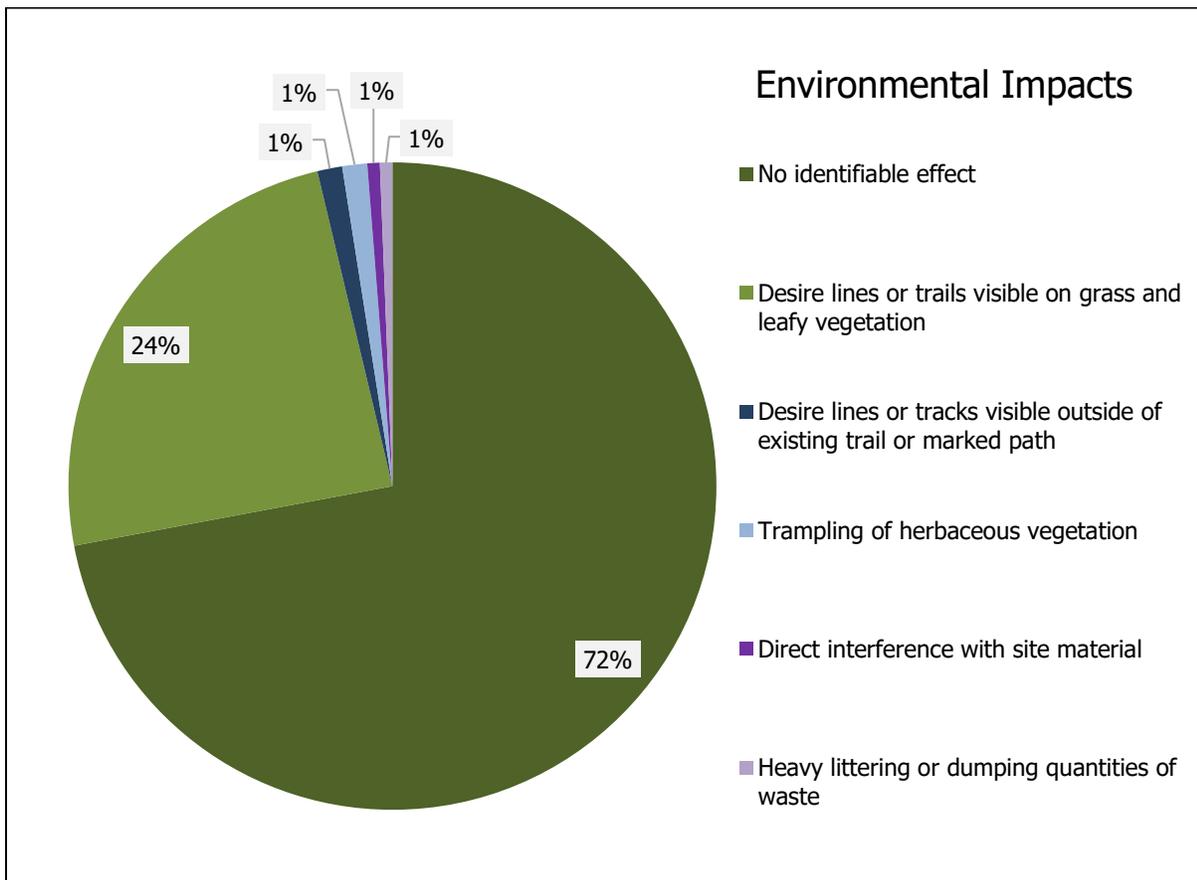
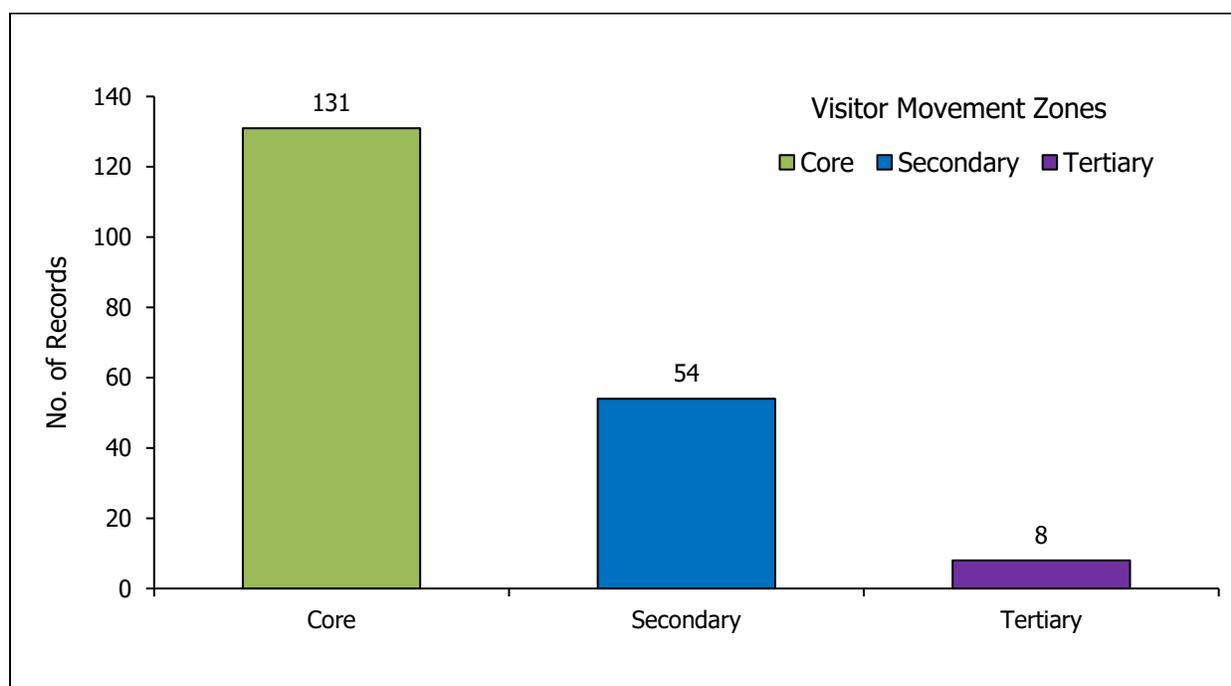


Figure 3.6 Range of Environmental Impacts Observed at Sheep's Head

Table 3.1 Visitor Movement Zones Descriptions

Core Zone	Existing car parks, paved areas, viewing platforms, marked pathways, trails, tracks and managed grassland and areas where pathways, trails or roads exist. The majority of visitors remain in these zones.
Secondary Zone	Areas outside of existing car park, paved areas, marked pathways, trails, tracks and managed grassland. visitors are likely to traffic areas of grassland (in some cases farmland grazed by sheep or cattle), heath or bare rock, usually to get a better view of site attractions or to access trails at the site.
Tertiary Zone	Areas where no car park, paved areas, marked pathways, trails, tracks and managed grassland are identifiable and beyond the immediate boundaries of the site.

**Figure 3.7 Zones Trafficked by Visitors at Sheep's Head****3.1.1 Analysis of Results and Visitor Movement Patterns**

Visitors to Sheep's Head trafficked the Core zone 131 times and the Secondary zone 54 times. 27.9% of all visitor movements observed were within the secondary zone and less than 10 individuals entered the tertiary zone.

72% of visitors took part in activities which resulted in no identifiable effect on the site.

2.5% of visitors took part in activities that had a medium level effect to the site. This resulted from visitors leaving existing trails and marked paths. There were a few incidences of high-level activities such as heavy littering (2 incidences).

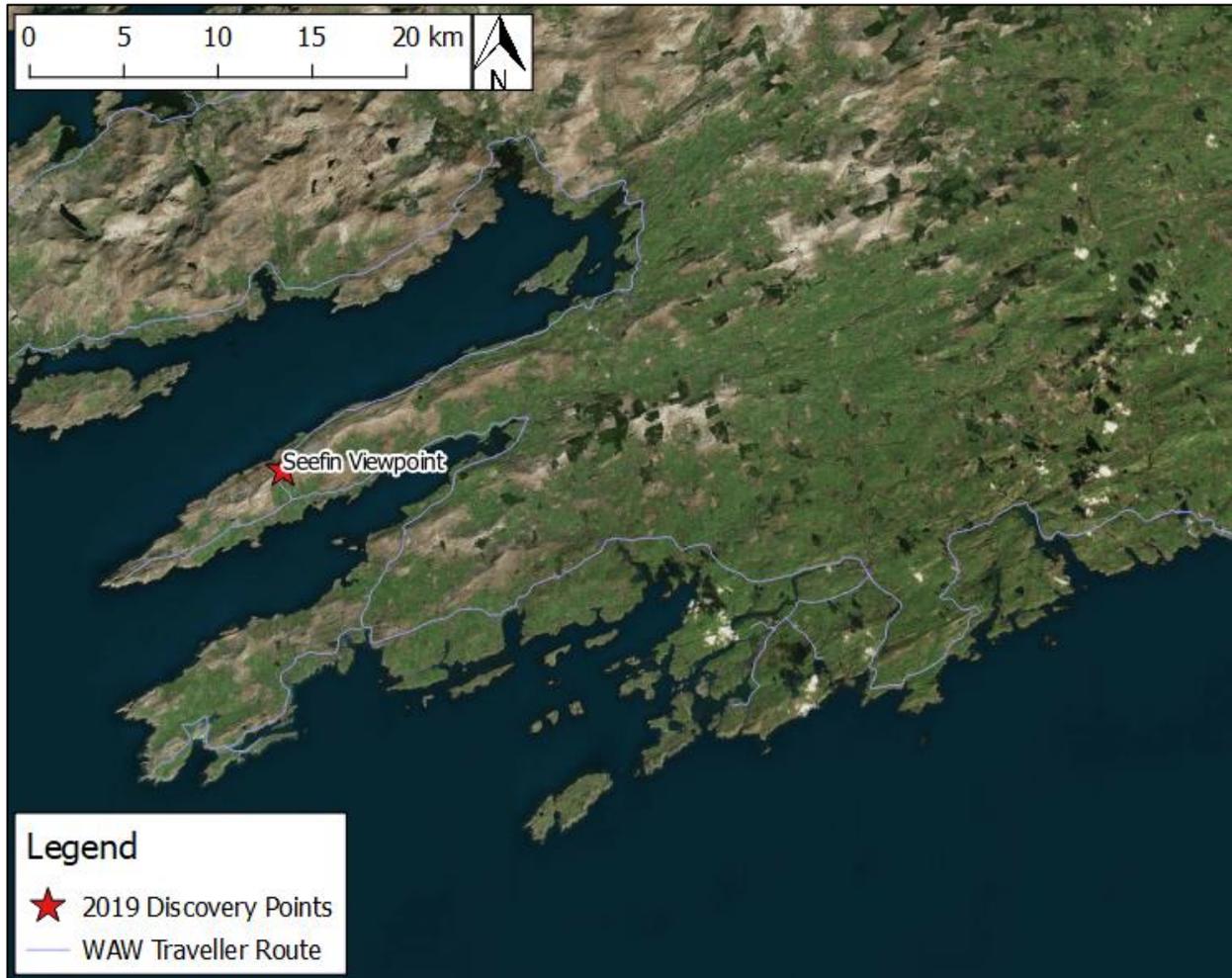
Visitors tended to depart from the official waymarked trail when visibility was good. There is damage to the vegetation evident through trampling causing erosion at key vantage points and adjacent to the waymarked trail where visitor movements are concentrated.



Figure 3.8 Location of Visitor Movement Zones at Sheep's Head

Seefin Viewpoint

ENVIRONMENTAL SURVEYING AND MONITORING RESULTS



3.2 Seefin Viewpoint

Site Name: Seefin Viewpoint	Date Surveyed: 01 st /02 nd June 2019
County: Cork	Landscape Type: Heath and rocky outcrops in peninsular coastal context
Total No. of People: 257	Average Duration of visitors on site: 0:08:02
<p>Site Description: Seefin Viewpoint is located on Sheep’s Head peninsula, Co. Cork. The Discovery Point car parks are located 2.3km north of Kilcrohan on opposite sides of the road to Bantry. The site is of interest to walkers, offering fantastic views and is an excellent starting point for walks on the Sheep’s Head way. The site consists of two unmarked carparks, a bike rack, a bench and informational signage. Seefin Viewpoint is located within the Sheep’s Head SAC and pNHA. The site is designated for the protection of wet and dry heath and the Kerry slug (<i>Geomalacus maculosus</i>).</p> <p>Upgrades to Site: There have been no identifiable upgrades to this site or the surrounding area in 2019.</p>	

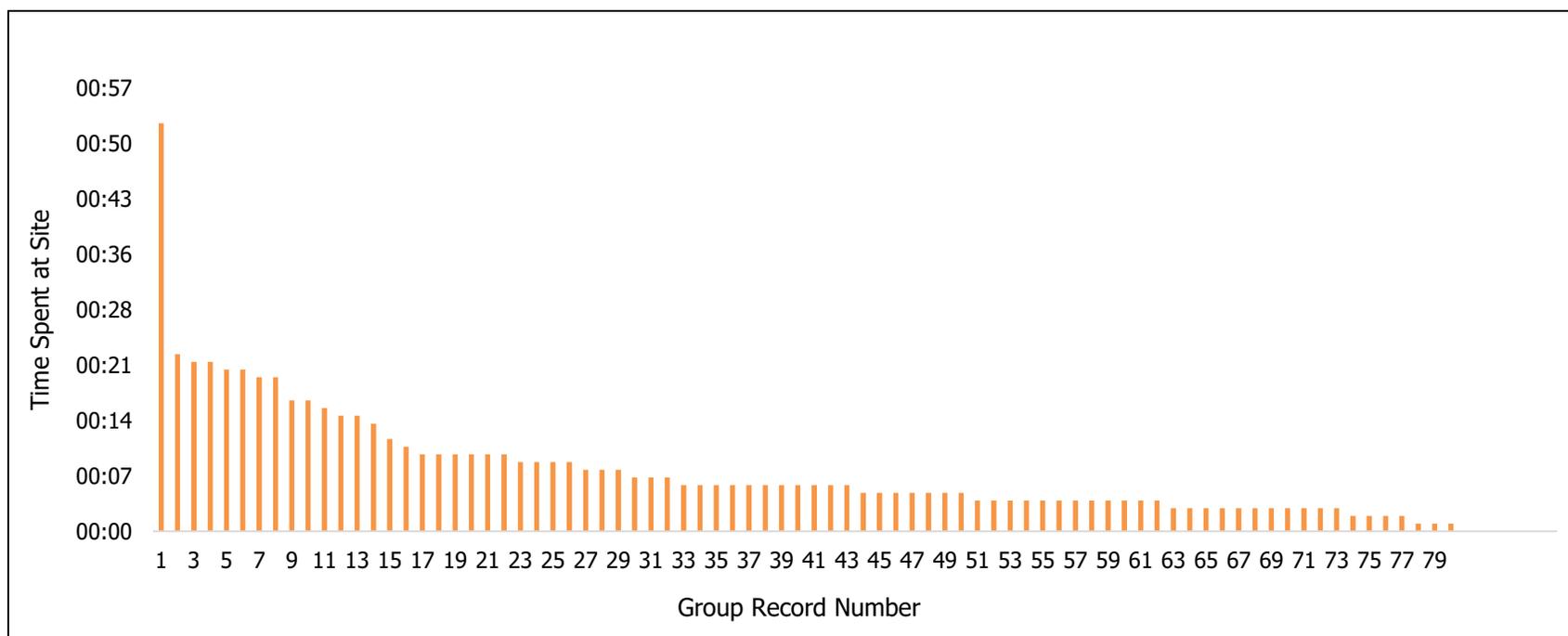


Figure 3.9 Duration of Time Spent at Seefin Viewpoint⁵

⁵ The graph represents 80 groups of a total 219; 139 of the groups observed had no departure time recorded due to the nature of the site and restricted views.

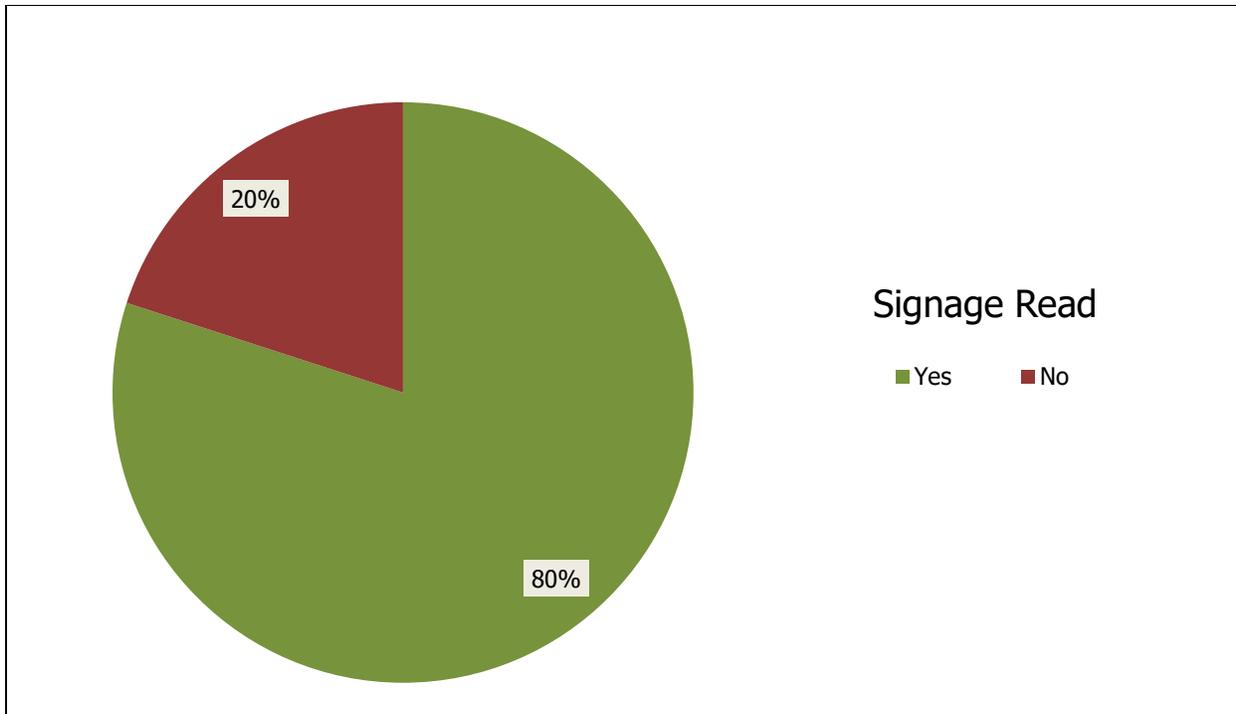


Figure 3.10 Use of Interpretive Material at Seefin Viewpoint⁶

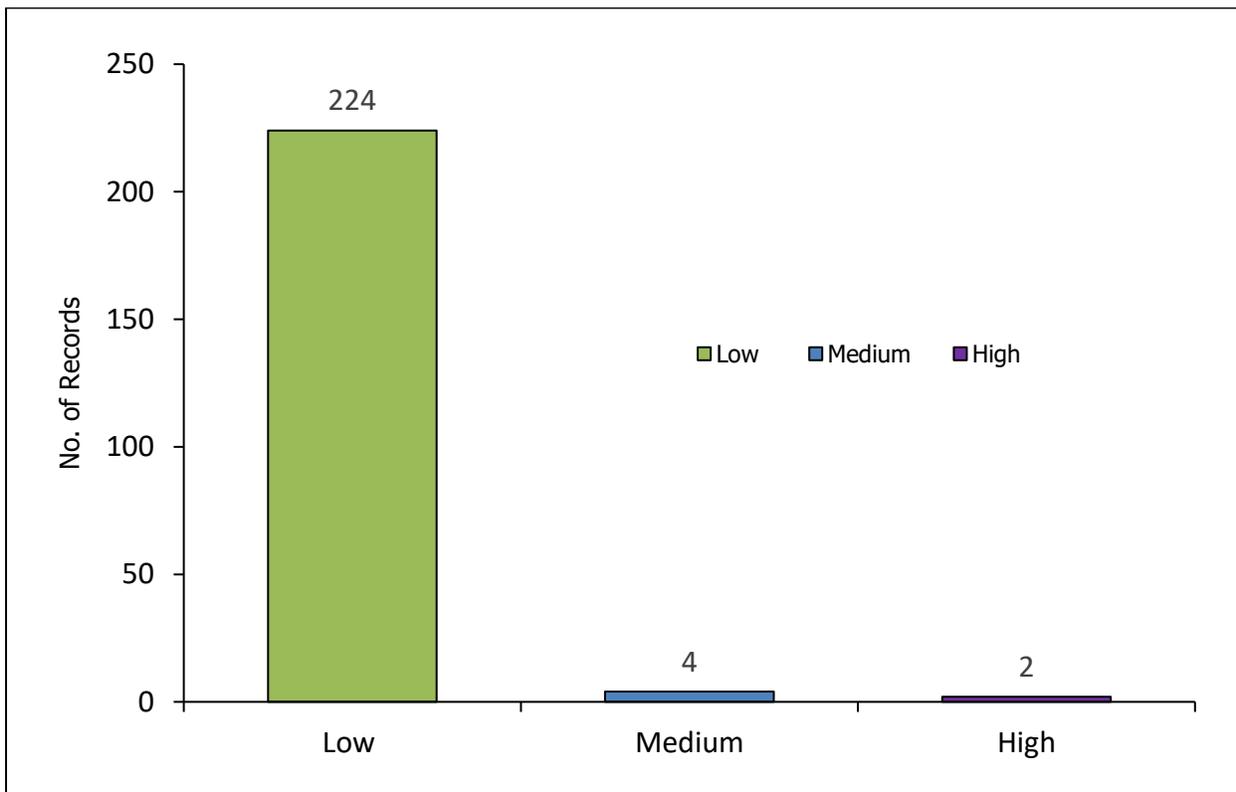


Figure 3.11 Categories of Activity Levels Observed at Seefin Viewpoint

⁶ This chart represents 80 out of 85 records. There was no available data for 5 groups.

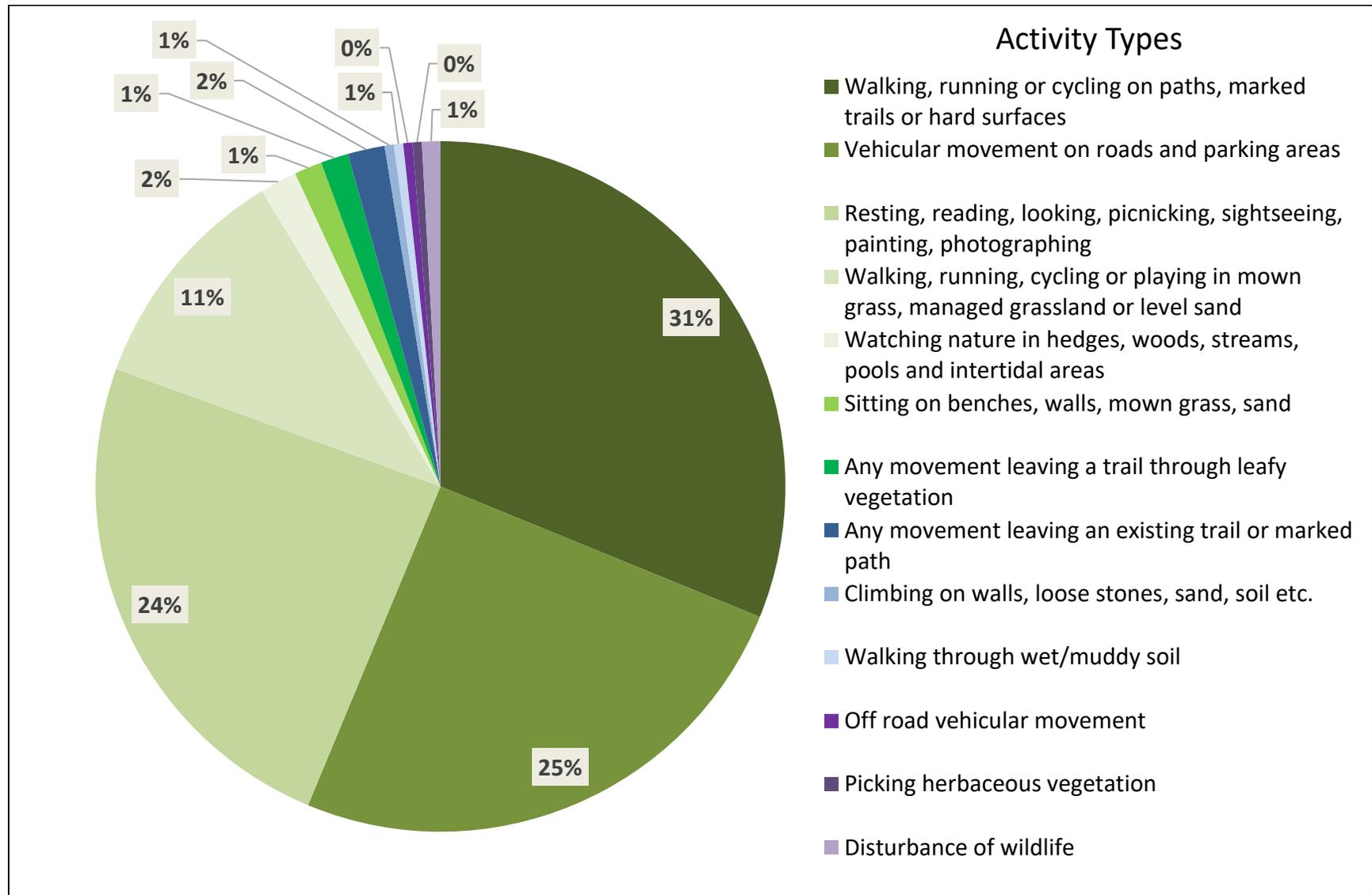


Figure 3.12 Range of Visitor Activities Observed at Seefin Viewpoint ⁷

⁷ Two of the activities had an occurrence rate of one which equates to <1%. They are therefore recorded as 0% on the graph.

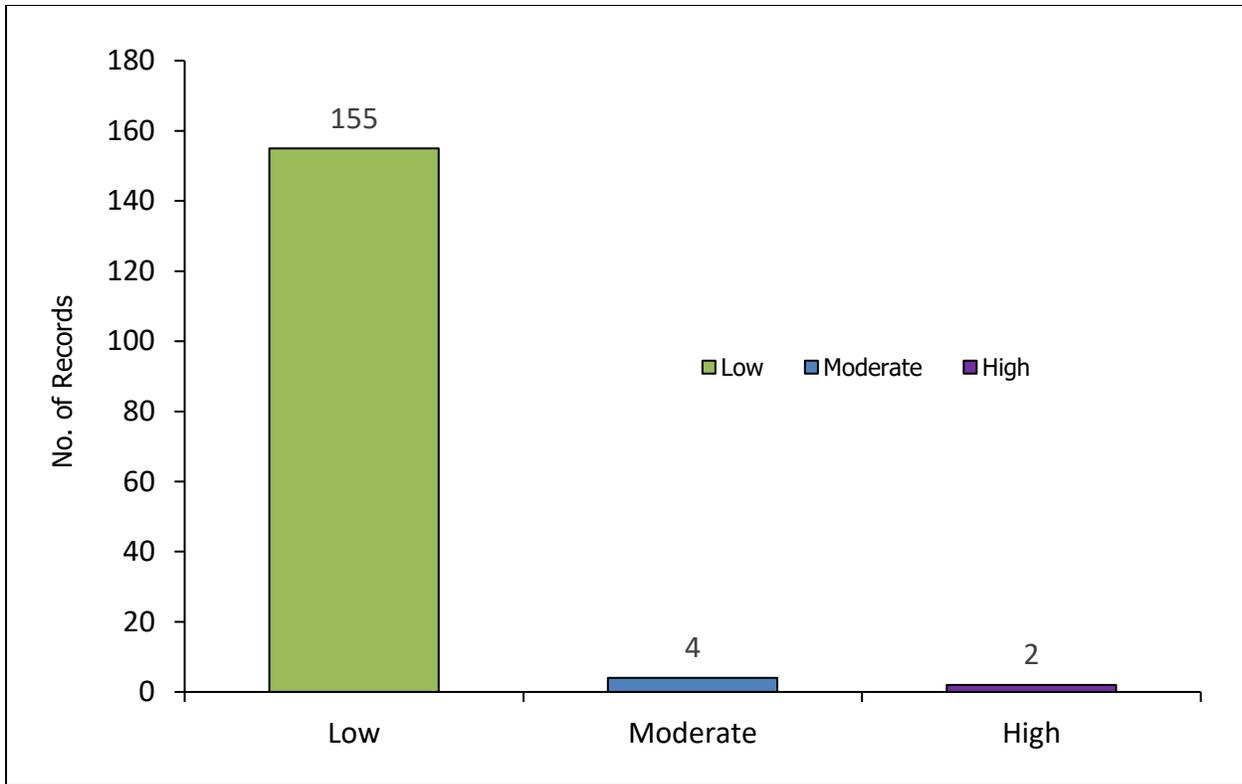


Figure 3.13 Categories of Environmental Impact Levels Observed at Seefin Viewpoint as a result of Visitor Activities

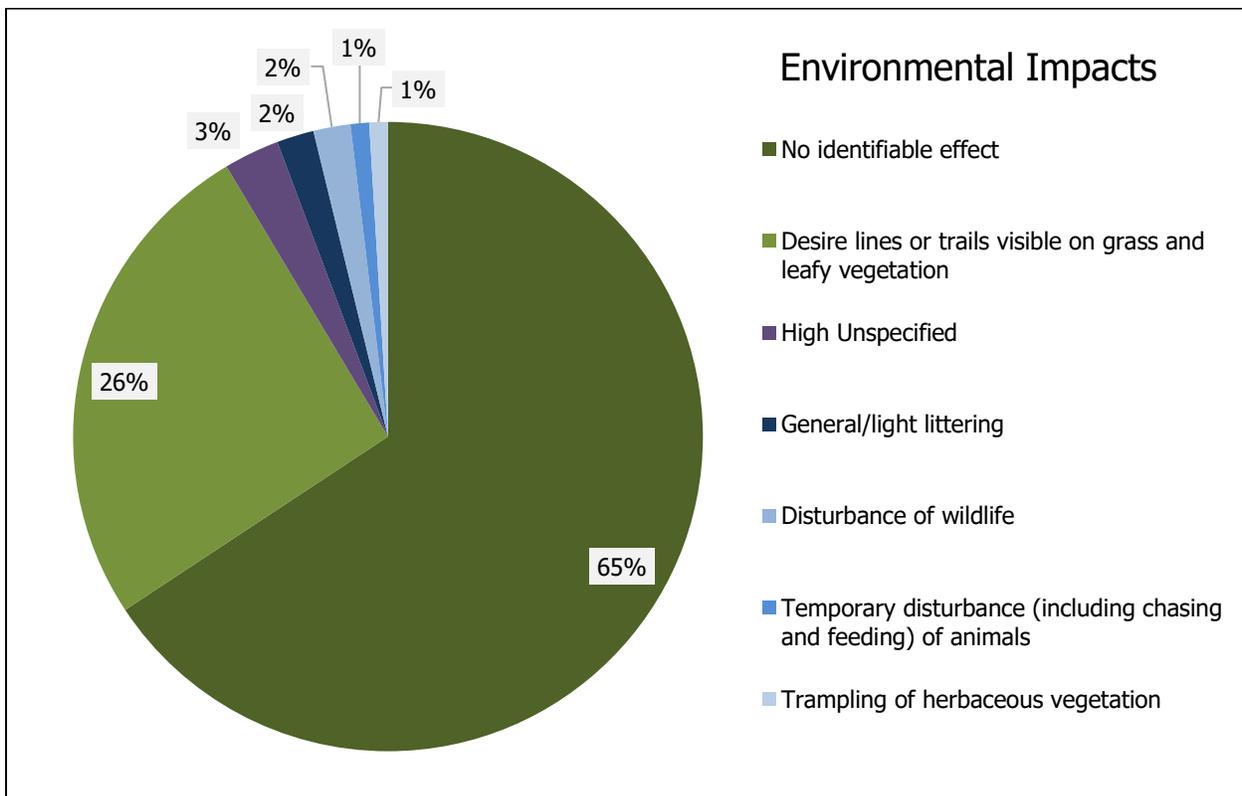


Figure 3.14 Range of Environmental Impacts Observed at Seefin Viewpoint

Table 3.2 Visitor Movement Zones Descriptions

Core Zone	Existing car parks, paved areas, viewing platforms, marked pathways, trails, tracks and managed grassland and areas where pathways, trails or roads exist. The majority of visitors remain in these zones.
Secondary Zone	Areas outside of existing car park, paved areas, marked pathways, trails, tracks and managed grassland. visitors are likely to traffic areas of grassland (in some cases farmland grazed by sheep or cattle), heath or bare rock, usually to get a better view of site attractions or to access trails at the site.
Tertiary Zone	Areas where no car park, paved areas, marked pathways, trails, tracks and managed grassland are identifiable and beyond the immediate boundaries of the site.

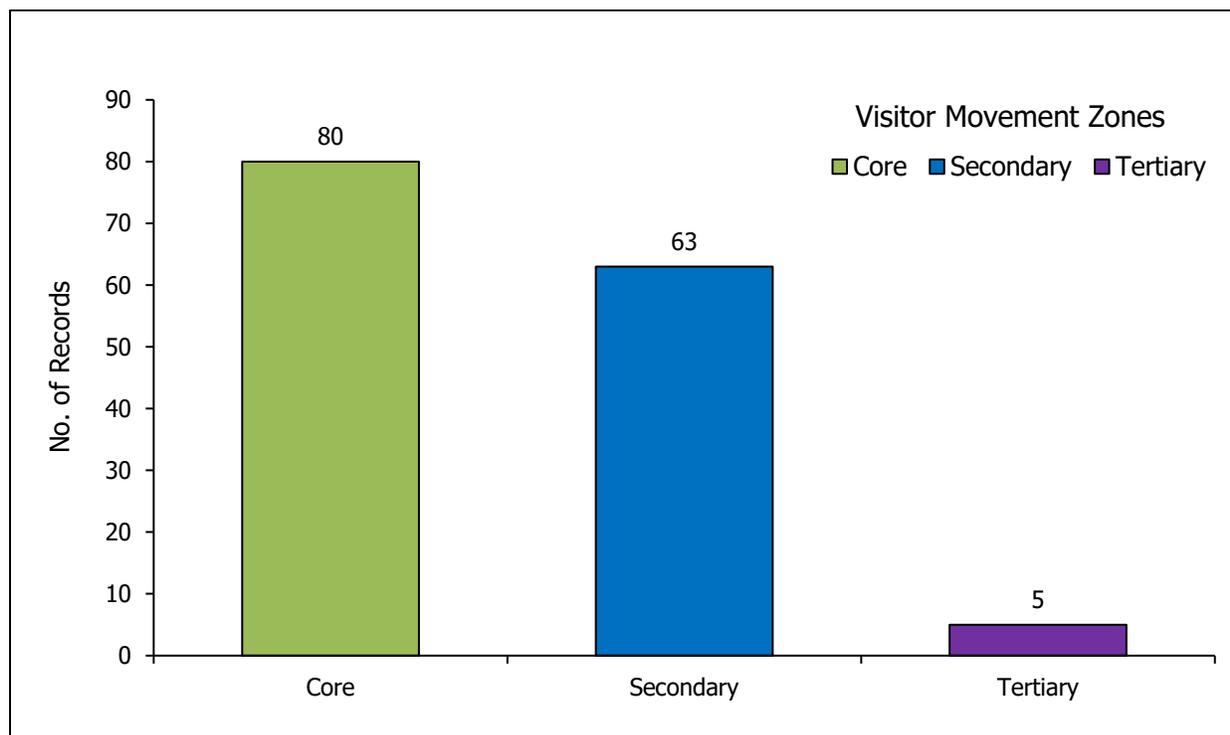


Figure 3.15 Zones Trafficked by Visitors at Seefin Viewpoint

3.2.1 Analysis of Results and Visitor Movement Patterns

Most visitors to Seefin Viewpoint trafficked both the Core (80 times) and Secondary Zones (63 times) and there were only 5 incidences where visitors entered the tertiary zone.

65% of visitors took part in activities that had no identifiable impacts to the site. 3.87% of visitors were observed to take part in activities that had a medium or high level effect to the site. This was a result of off-trail walking, disturbance of wildlife and littering. The nature of low level of activities observed may be as a result of the poor weather and visibility that was apparent on the day of surveying.

Trampling and erosion was evident at prominent observation points. The trail was indistinct in some places, while in other places multiple parallel desire lines existed. Two individuals were observed urinating in the carpark. Consideration should be given to providing portable toilets on site.

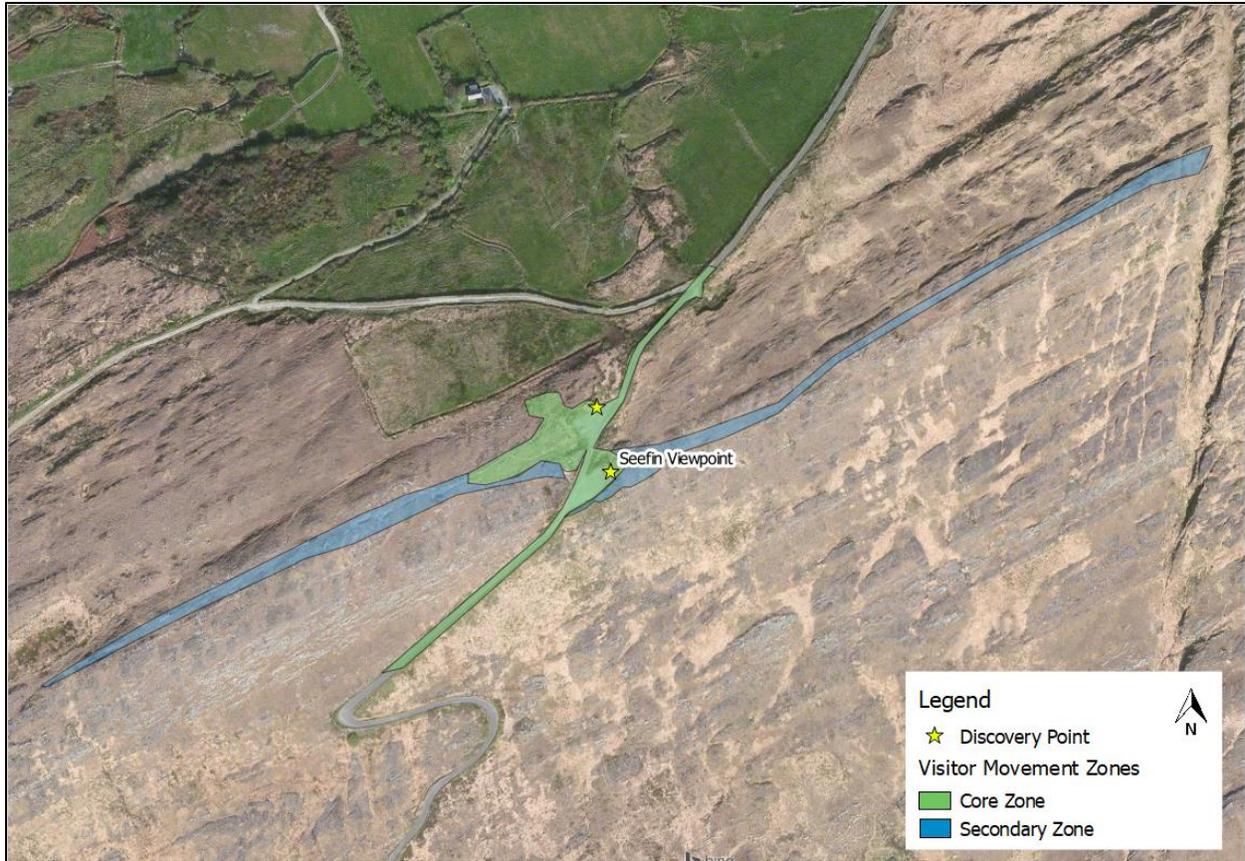
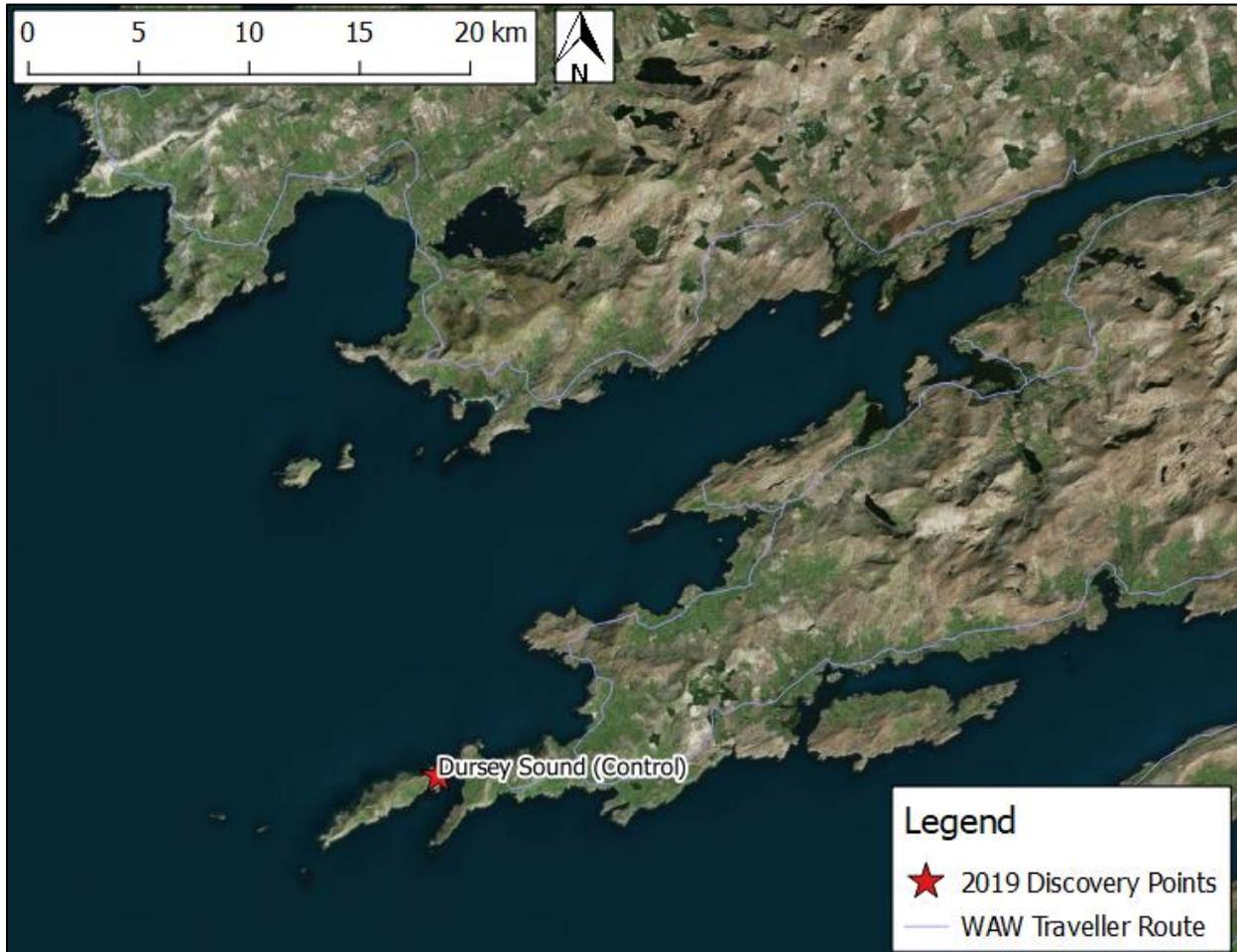


Figure 3.16 Location of Visitor Movement Zones at Seefin Viewpoint

Dursey Sound

ENVIRONMENTAL SURVEYING AND MONITORING RESULTS



3.3 Dursey Sound (Previously named Garnish Point)

Site Name: Dursey Sound (Control site)	Date Surveyed: 06 th /07 th June 2019
County: Cork	Landscape Type: Maritime grassland and heath in a peninsular context
Total No. of People: 611	Average Duration of visitors on site: 0:07:48
<p>Site Description: Dursey Sound Discovery Point is located opposite Dursey Island at the top of the Beara Peninsula. Dursey Island is separated from the mainland by a narrow sound known for its strong tides. Dursey Island is accessed by Ireland’s only cable car which runs about 250m above sea level. There is a large car park, seating area, ticket office and toilet facilities at this site, as well as interpretative signs. A looped walking trail passes through the site. Dursey Sound is directly adjacent to the Kenmare River SAC and occurs within the Beara Peninsula SPA. The site is designated for its dry heath and sea cliff habitats and for the Chough (<i>Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax</i>) and Fulmar (<i>Fulmarus glacialis</i>).</p> <p>Upgrades to Site: A concrete path has been installed from the carpark to the cable car station since the 2018 survey. The area behind the cable car station has also been concreted. A Planning application has been lodged with An Board Pleanala for the replacement of the existing cableway system, which is approaching the end of its operational life, with a modern cableway system including a cable car station, small sheltered waiting area and welfare facilities on the Island and a cable car station, visitor centre, shop, cafe and welfare facilities on the mainland together with improved car parking facilities.</p>	

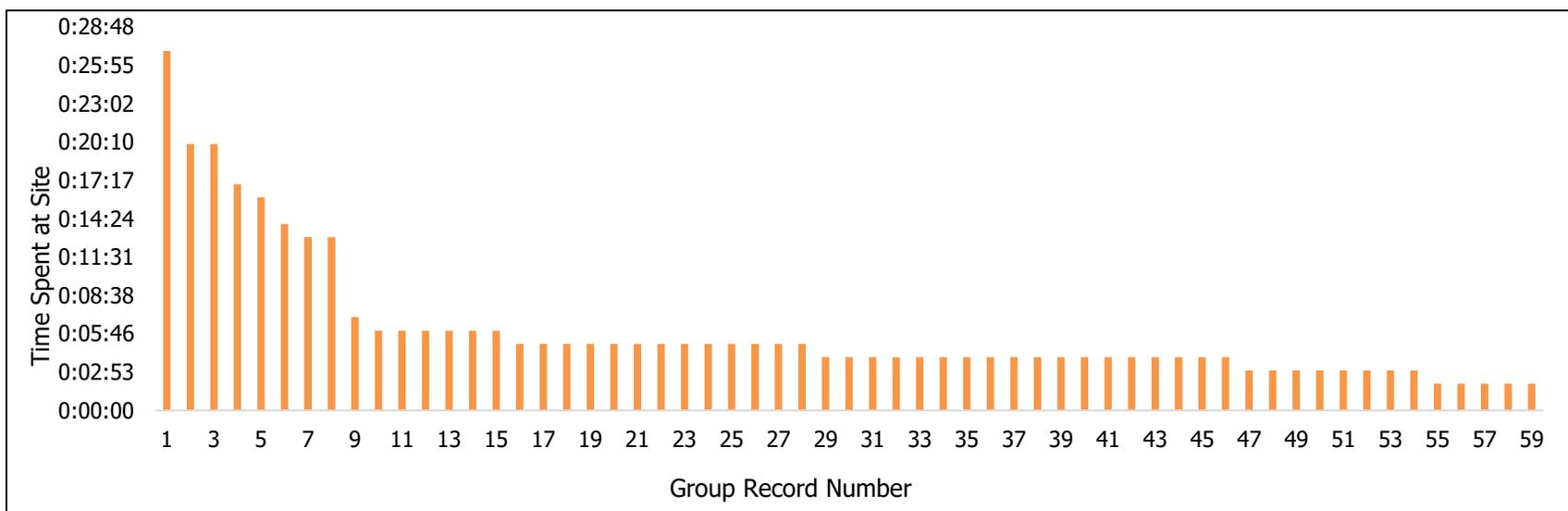


Figure 3.17 Duration of Time Spent at Dursey Sound⁸

⁸ The graph represents 59 of the of which 69 groups remained on site for less than 20 minutes; 45 of the groups observed had no departure time recorded.

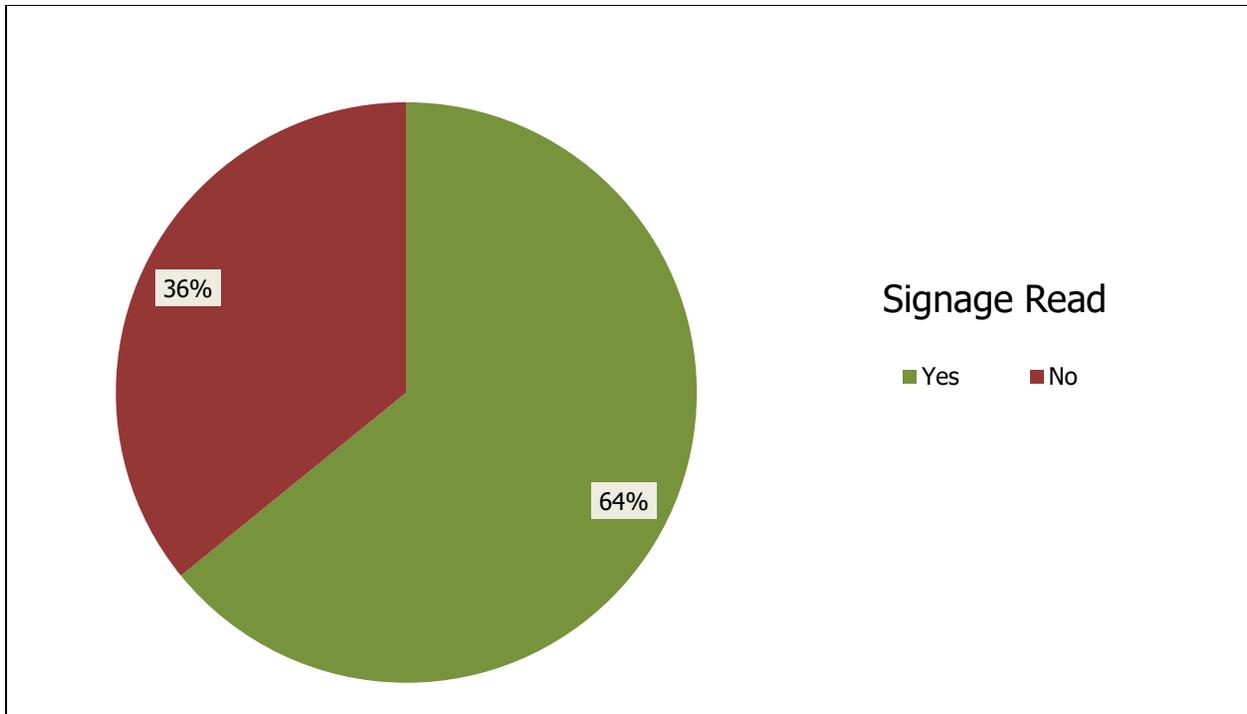


Figure 3.18 Use of Interpretive Material at Dursey Sound⁹

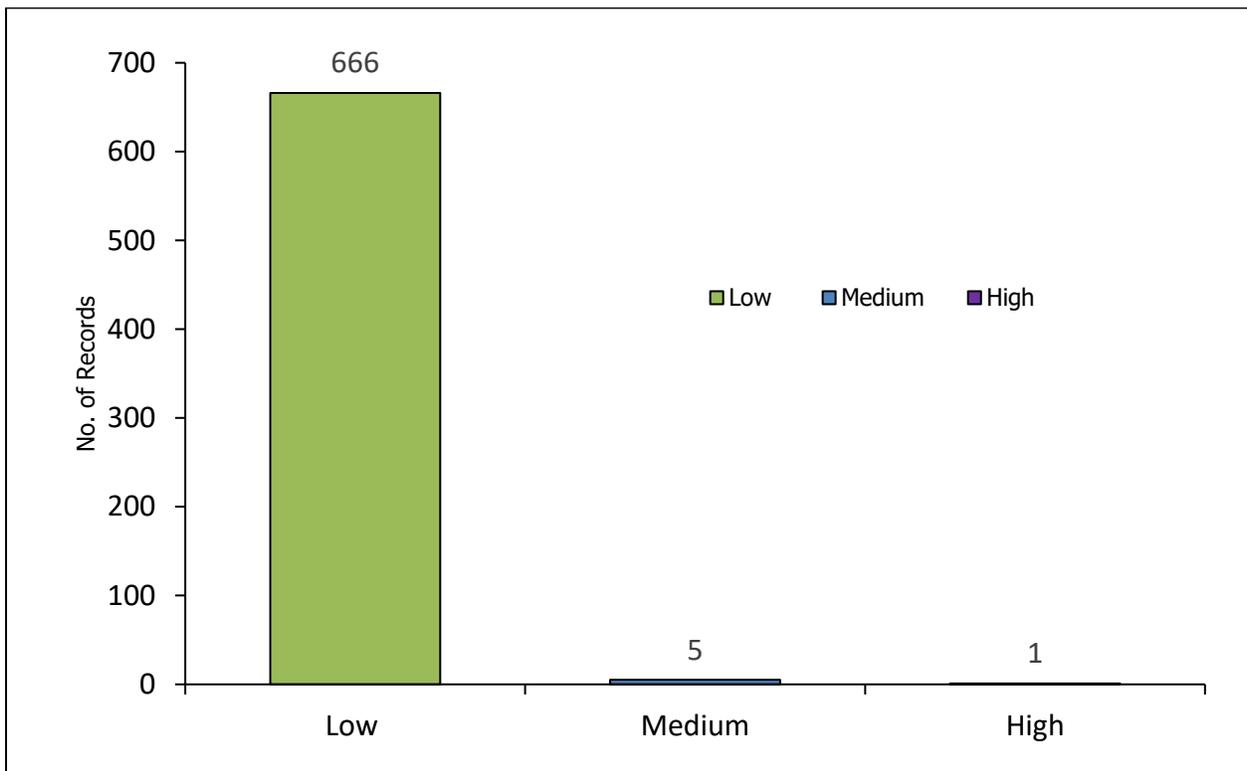


Figure 3.19 Category of Activity Levels Observed at Dursey Sound

⁹ This chart represents 237 out of 245 records. There was no data available for 8 groups.

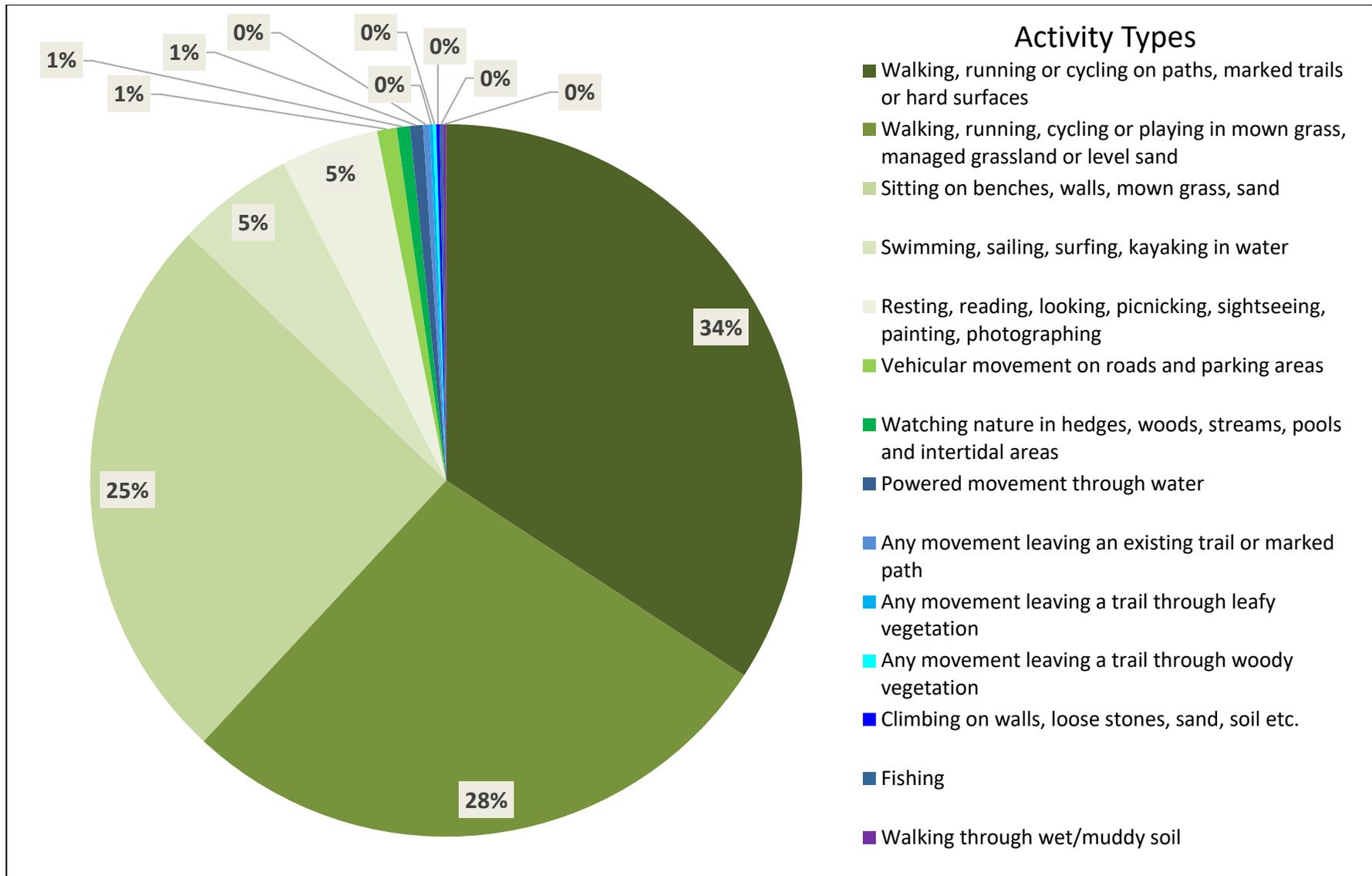


Figure 3.20 Range of Visitor Activities Observed at Dursey Sound¹⁰

¹⁰ Six of the activities had an occurrence rate of one which equates to <1%. They are therefore recorded as 0% on the graph.

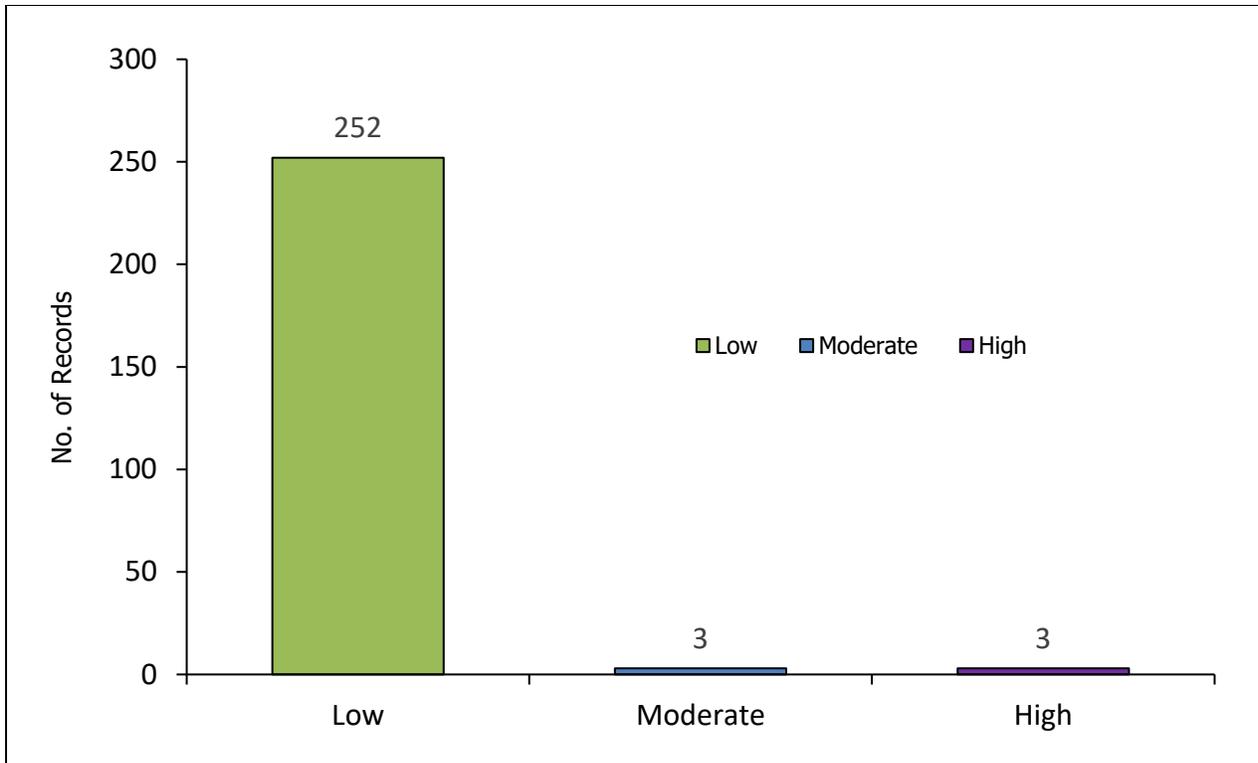


Figure 3.21 Categories of Environmental Impact Levels Observed at Dursey Sound as a Result of Visitor Activities

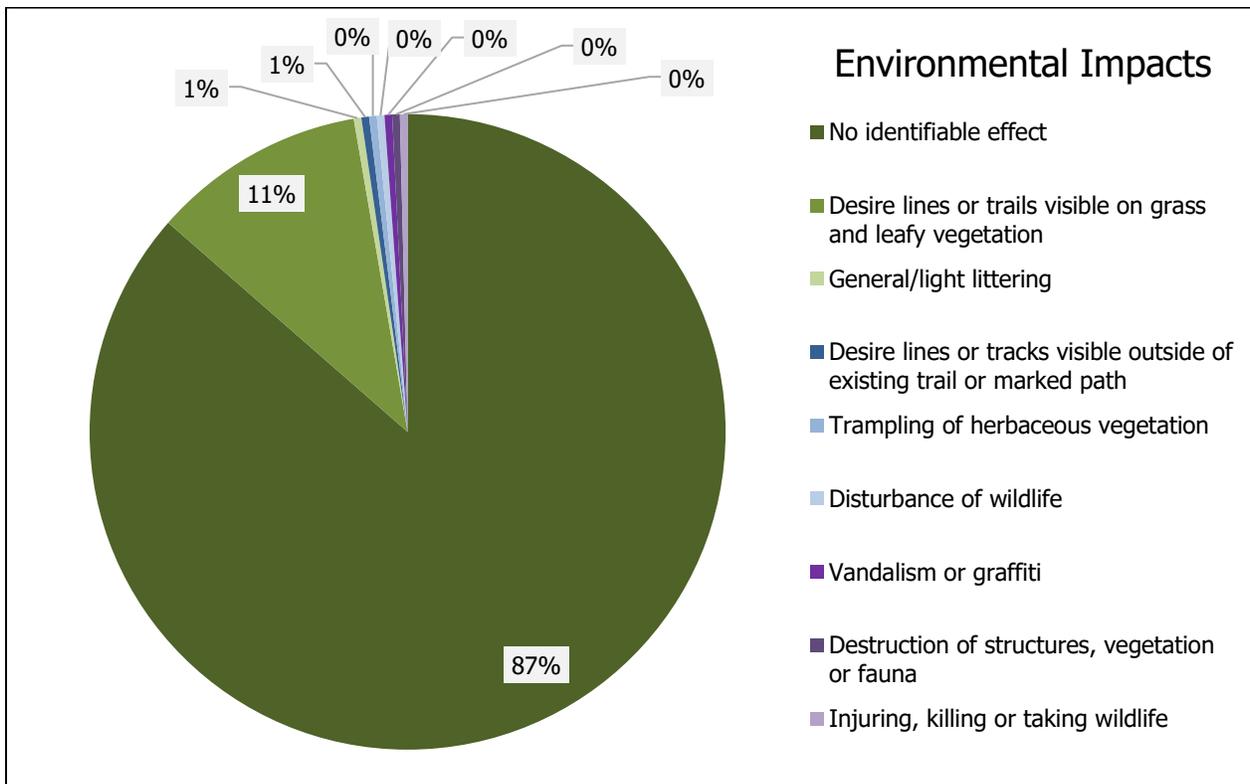


Figure 3.22 Range of Environmental Impacts Observed at Dursey Sound¹¹

¹¹ Five of the impacts had an occurrence rate of one which equates to <1%. They are therefore recorded as 0% on the graph.

Table 3.3 Visitor Movement Zones Descriptions

Core Zone	Existing car parks, paved areas, viewing platforms, marked pathways, trails, tracks and managed grassland and areas where pathways, trails or roads exist. The majority of visitors remain in these zones.
Secondary Zone	Areas outside of existing car park, paved areas, marked pathways, trails, tracks and managed grassland. visitors are likely to traffic areas of grassland (in some cases farmland grazed by sheep or cattle), heath or bare rock, usually to get a better view of site attractions or to access trails at the site.
Tertiary Zone	Areas where no car park, paved areas, marked pathways, trails, tracks and managed grassland are identifiable and beyond the immediate boundaries of the site.

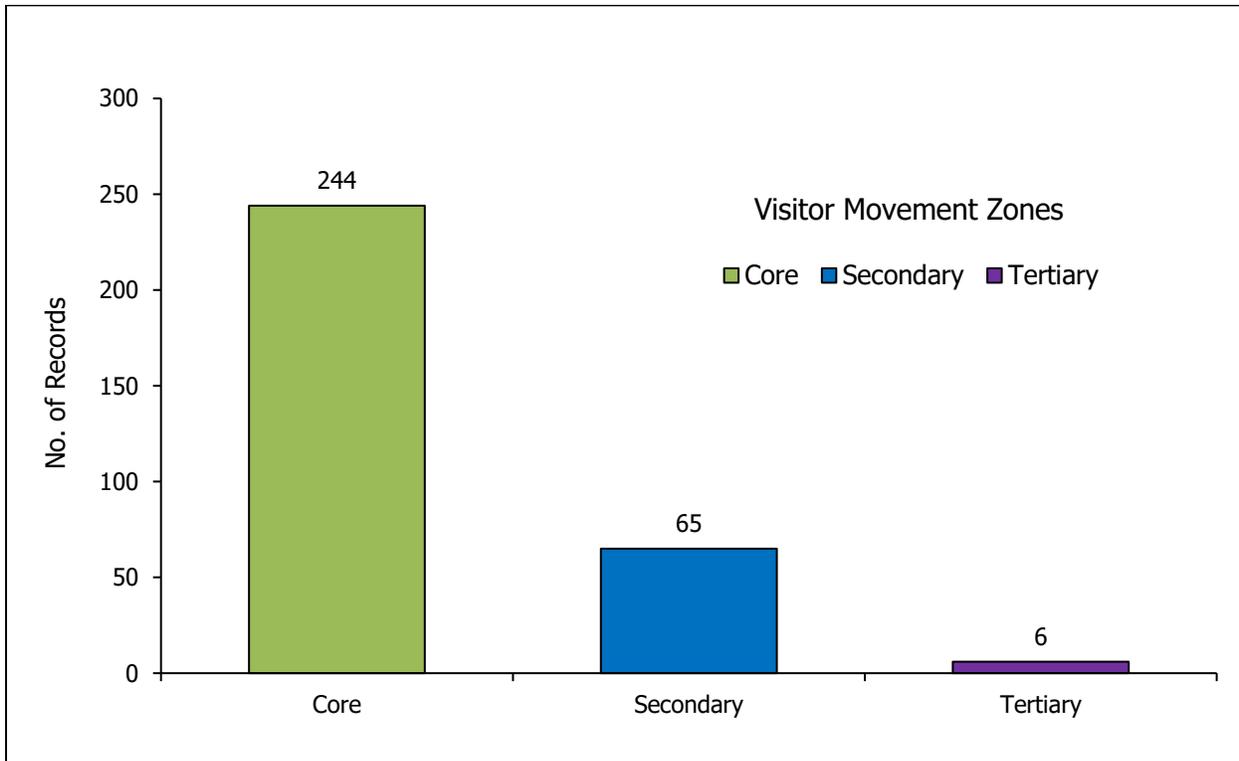


Figure 3.23 Zones Trafficked by Visitors at Dursey Sound

3.3.1 Analysis of Results and Visitor Movement Patterns

Visitor movements were recorded in the Core, Secondary and Tertiary zones at Dursey Sound. The core zone was trafficked 244 times, while the secondary zone was trafficked 65 times and the tertiary zone was trafficked 6 times. Most visitors that entered the secondary zone did so to get a better view across to Dursey Island and by going off-trail while walking the Garnish Head looped trail.

87% of visitors took part in activities that resulted in no effect to the site. 11% took part in low level activities. These visitors left the car park to walk through areas where desire lines were evident in the vegetation. Most visitors that left marked trails did so to go to the cliff edge.

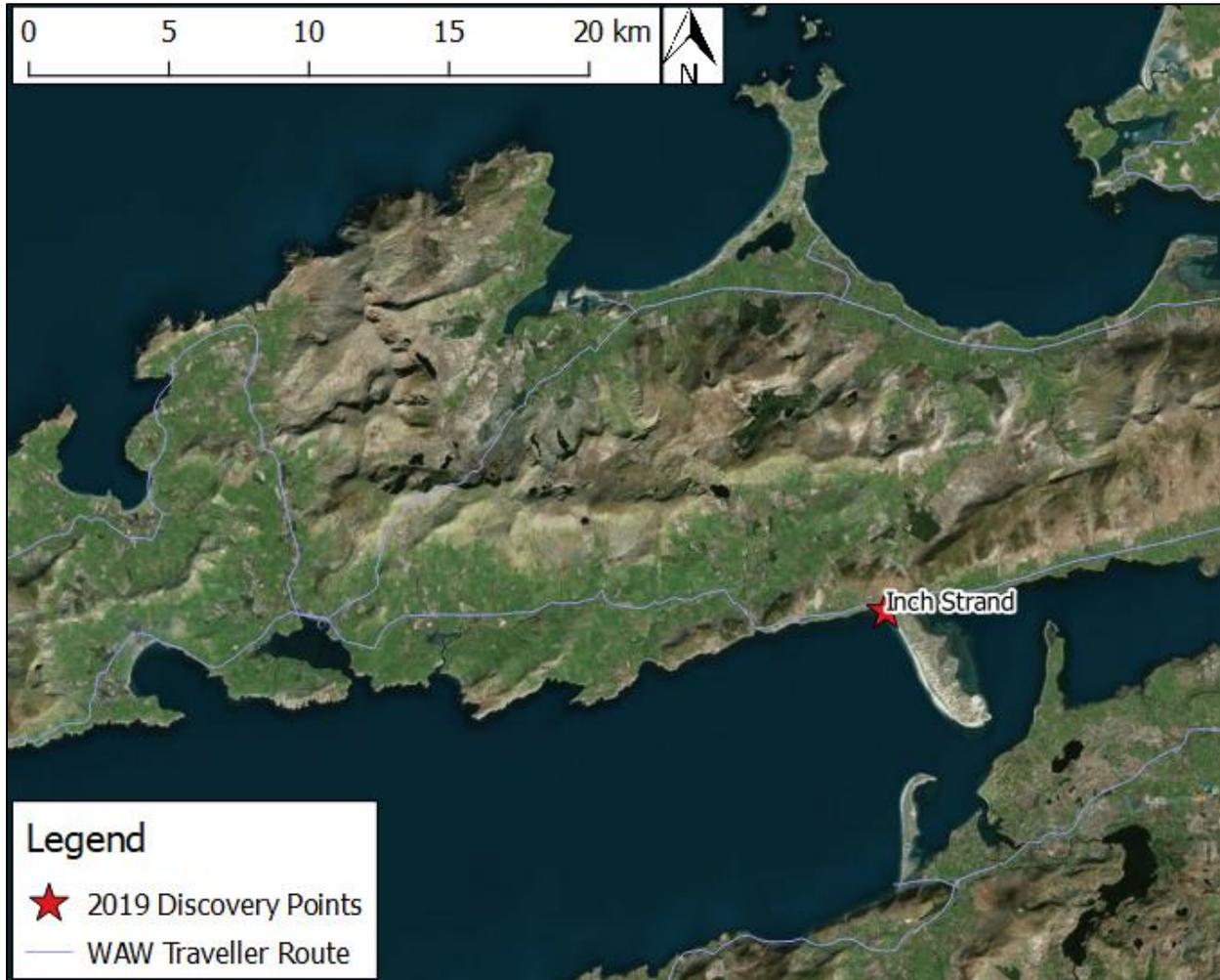
The site visit identified works in the vicinity of the stone seating area where a signage pole was being installed with active construction machinery. There was evidence of small-scale localised destruction of vegetation and improper disposal of building waste material on site.



Figure 3.24 Location of Visitor Movement Zones at Dursey Sound

Inch Strand

ENVIRONMENTAL SURVEYING AND MONITORING RESULTS



3.4 Inch Strand

Site Name: Inch Strand	Date Surveyed: 13 th /14 th June 2019
County: Kerry	Landscape Type: Sand shore and dunes in peninsular context
Total No. of People: 1054	Average Duration of visitors on site: 0:13:57
<p>Site Description: Inch Strand is located on the southern side of the Dingle peninsula, Co. Kerry between Dingle Bay and Castlemaine Harbour. It is a 5km long sand spit. The beach on the western edge is backed by extensive sand dunes. The site consists of a constructed carpark, a shop, a restaurant/bar with an adjoining picnic area and two surf schools. There is interpretive material at the site. Public toilets and recycling facilities are available. The surf schools are operated out of repurposed shipping containers during summer months. Inch Strand is located within the Castlemaine Harbour SAC and Castlemaine Harbour SPA. These are designated for the protection of the excellent sand dunes system at Inch Strand, and for the wealth of waterbirds and associated wetland habitats that the area contains.</p> <p>Upgrades to Site: There have been no upgrades to Inch Strand in 2019. However, Sammy’s Bar has been taken over by the Kilkenny Group and there may be plans to expand the current facilities on site. The N86 road between Annascaul and Dingle has been upgraded considerably over the past two years.</p>	

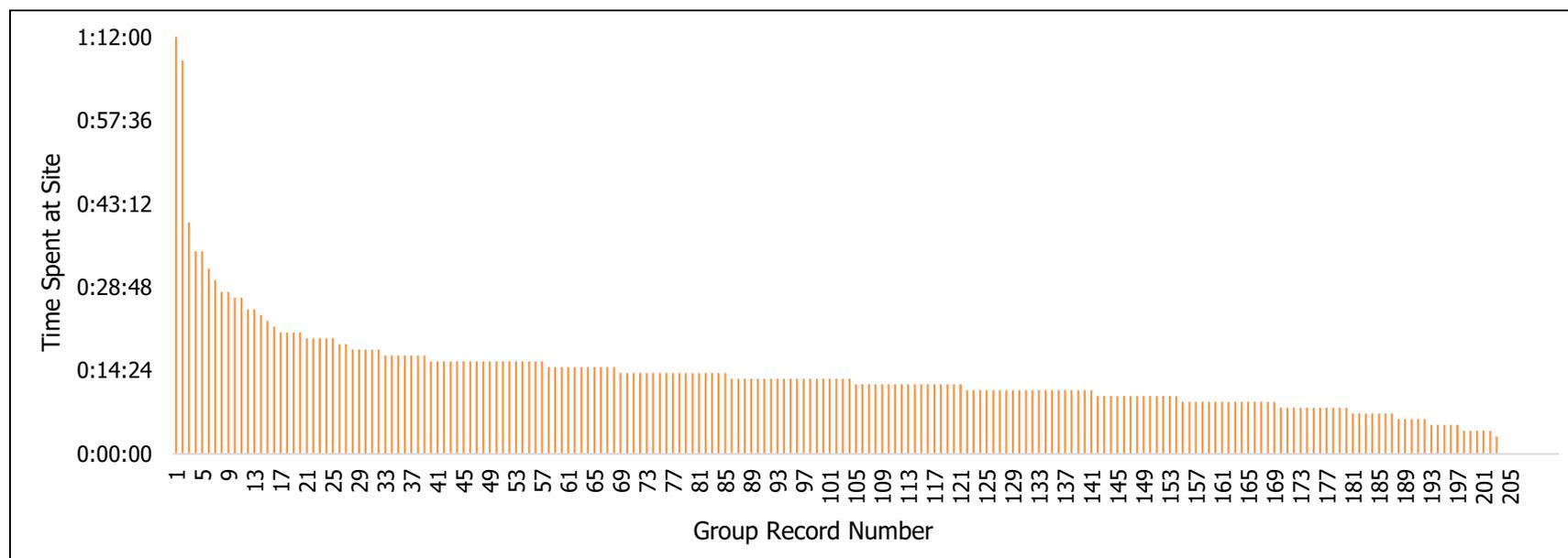


Figure 3.25 Duration Spent at Inch Strand¹²

¹² The graph represents 204 groups of a total 264; 60 of the groups observed had no departure time recorded due to the nature of the site and restricted views.

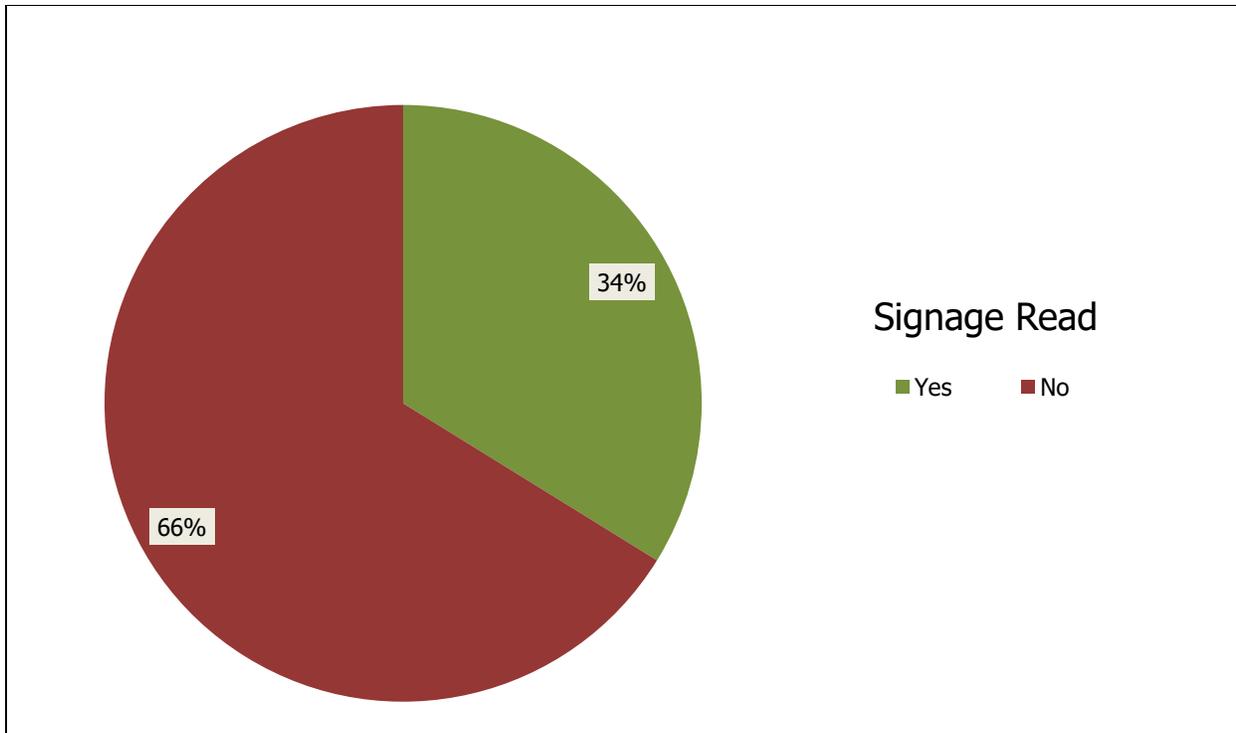


Figure 3.26 Use of Interpretation Material at Inch Strand¹³

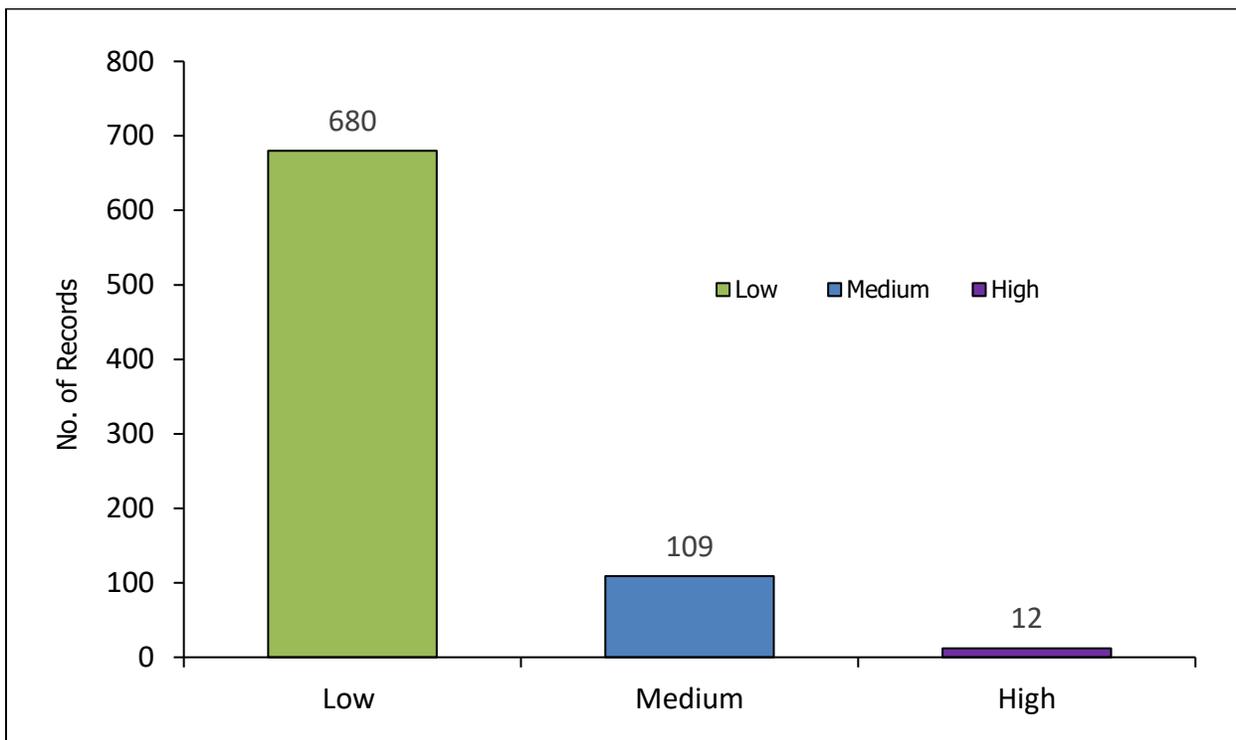


Figure 3.27 Categories of Activity Levels Observed at Inch Strand

¹³ This chart represents 204 out of 266 records. There was no data available for 62 groups.

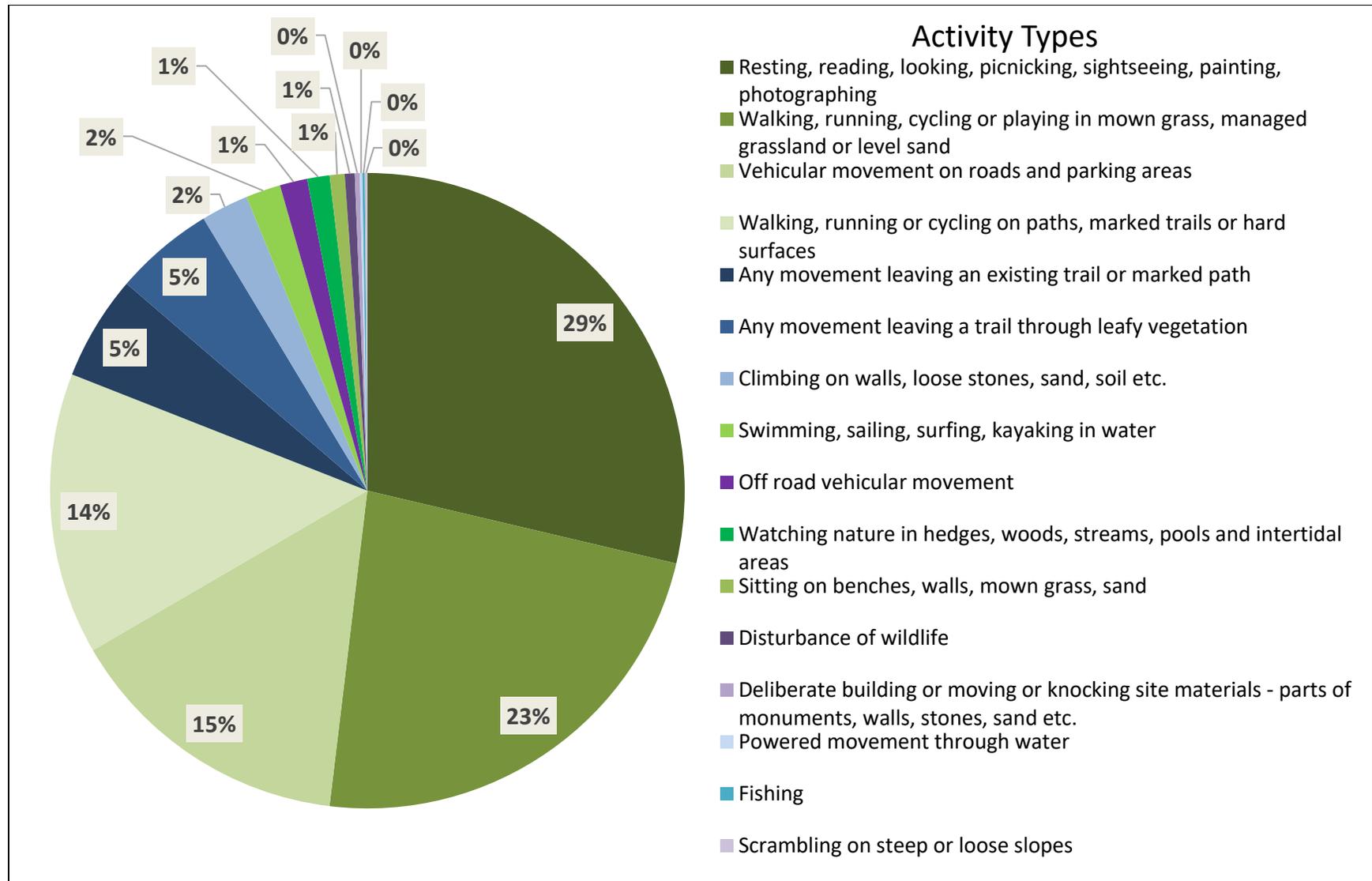


Figure 3.28 Range of Visitor Activities Observed at Inch Strand¹⁴

¹⁴ Four of the activities had an occurrence rate of one which equates to <1%. They are therefore recorded as 0% on the graph.

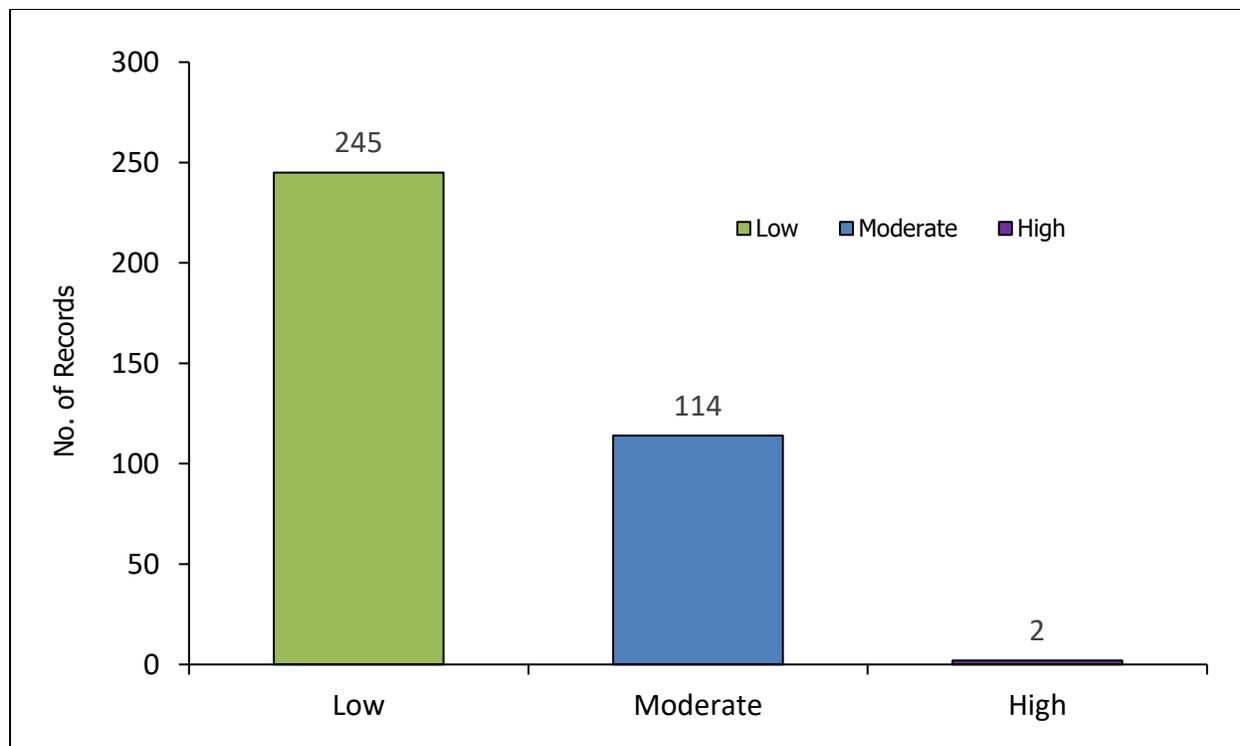


Figure 3.29 Categories of Environmental Impact Levels Observed at Inch Strand as a result of Visitor Activities

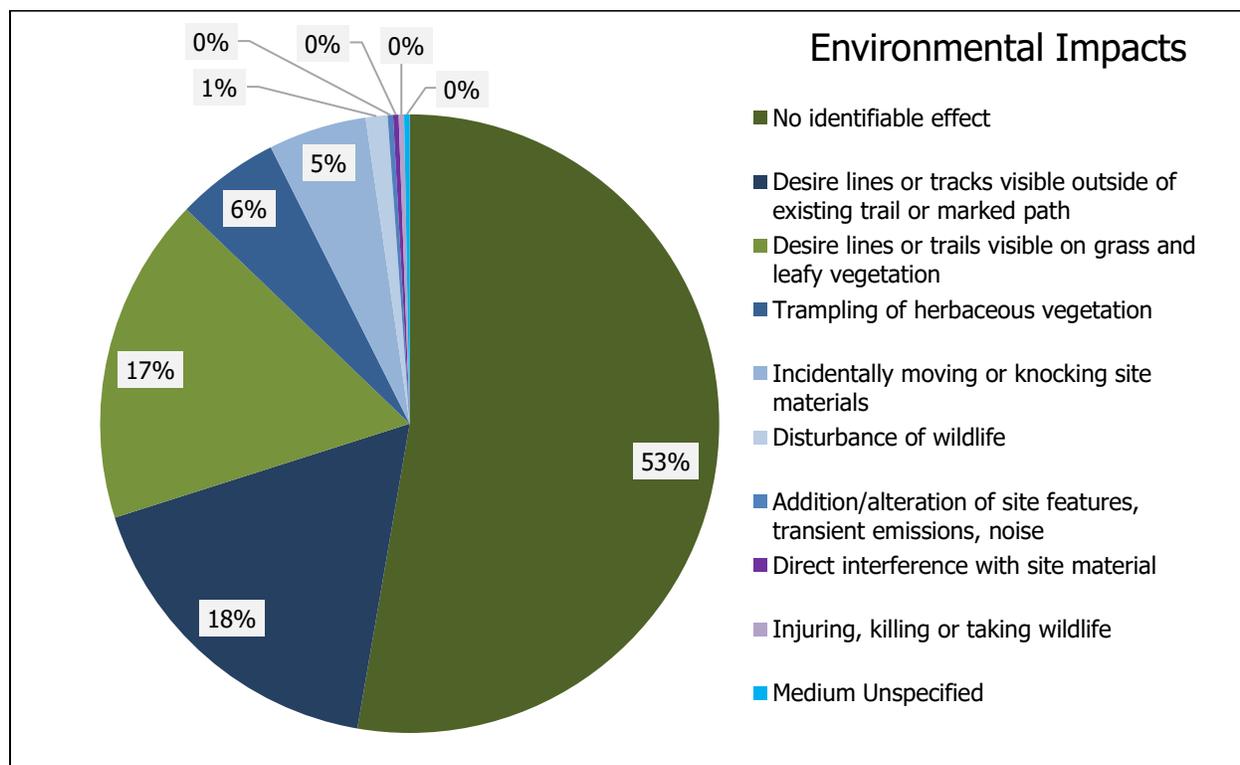
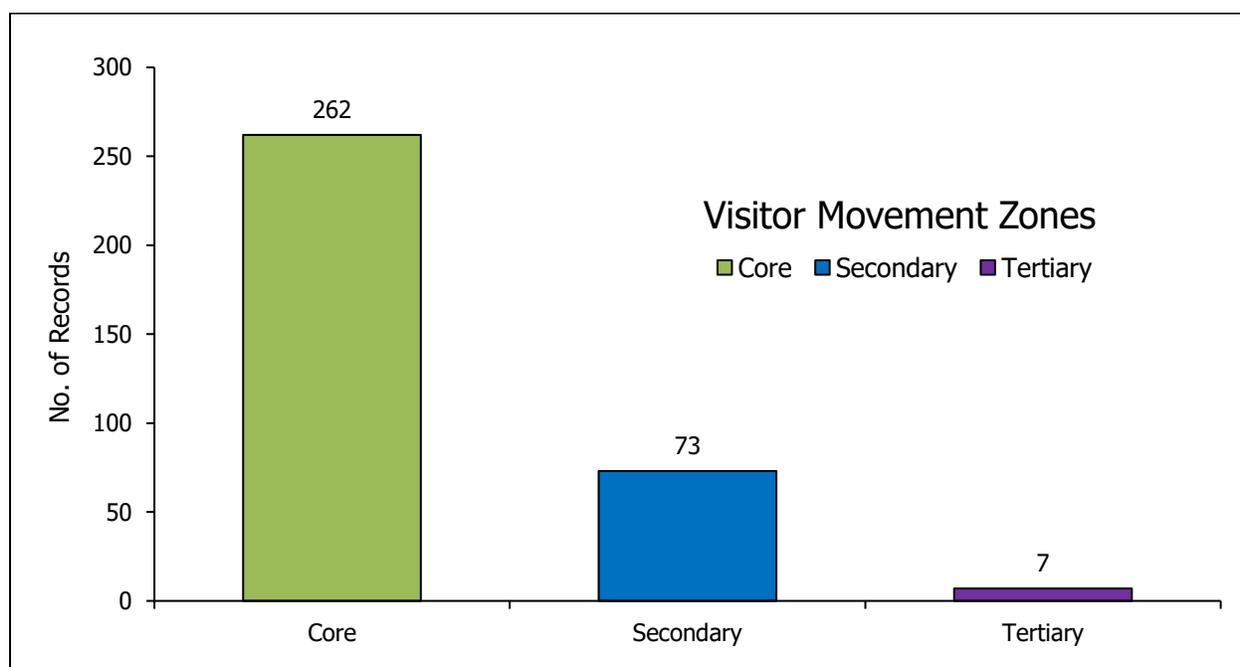


Figure 3.30 Range of Environmental Impacts Observed at Inch Strand¹⁵

¹⁵ Four of the impacts had an occurrence rate of one which equates to <1%. They are therefore recorded as 0% on the graph.

Table 3.4 Visitor Movement Zones Descriptions

Core Zone	Existing car parks, paved areas, viewing platforms, marked pathways, trails, tracks and managed grassland and areas where pathways, trails or roads exist. The majority of visitors remain in these zones.
Secondary Zone	Areas outside of existing car park, paved areas, marked pathways, trails, tracks and managed grassland. visitors are likely to traffic areas of grassland (in some cases farmland grazed by sheep or cattle), heath or bare rock, usually to get a better view of site attractions or to access trails at the site.
Tertiary Zone	Areas where no car park, paved areas, marked pathways, trails, tracks and managed grassland are identifiable and beyond the immediate boundaries of the site.

**Figure 3.31 Zones Trafficked by Visitors at Inch Strand****3.4.1 Analysis of Results and Visitor Movement Patterns**

The core zone at Inch Strand was trafficked 262 times, while the secondary zone was trafficked 73 times with only 7 incidences of movement in the tertiary zone.

62% of visitors to the site took part in activities that resulted in no identifiable impacts. Medium level impacts occurred due to visitors driving and parking on the sand and walking through dunes, this accounted for 18% of all impacts recorded. Many dogs were walked off-lead. Other impacts observed included:

- Incidentally moving or knocking site materials;
- Transient disturbance, emissions, noise;
- Disturbance of wildlife;
- Addition/alteration of site features, transient emissions, noise;
- Desire lines or tracks visible on grass and leafy vegetation; and
- Direct interference with site material.

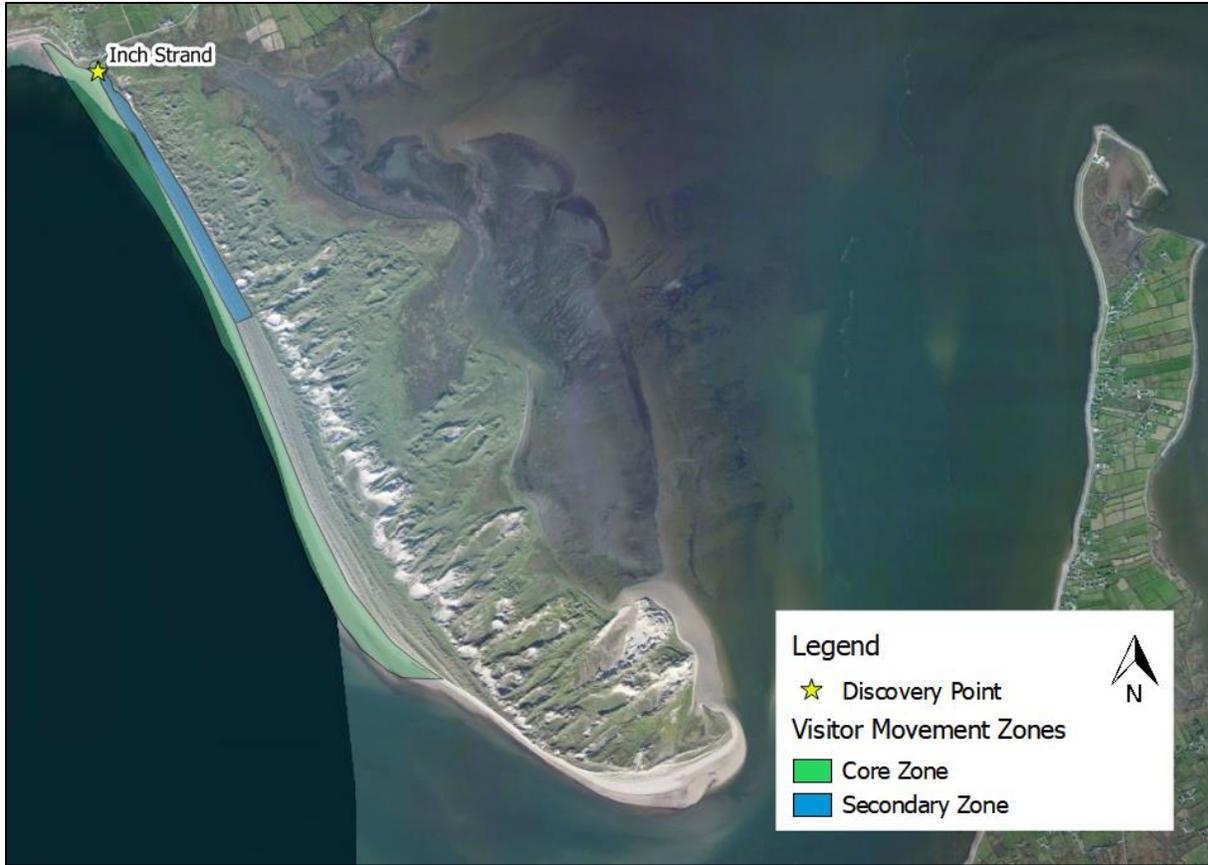
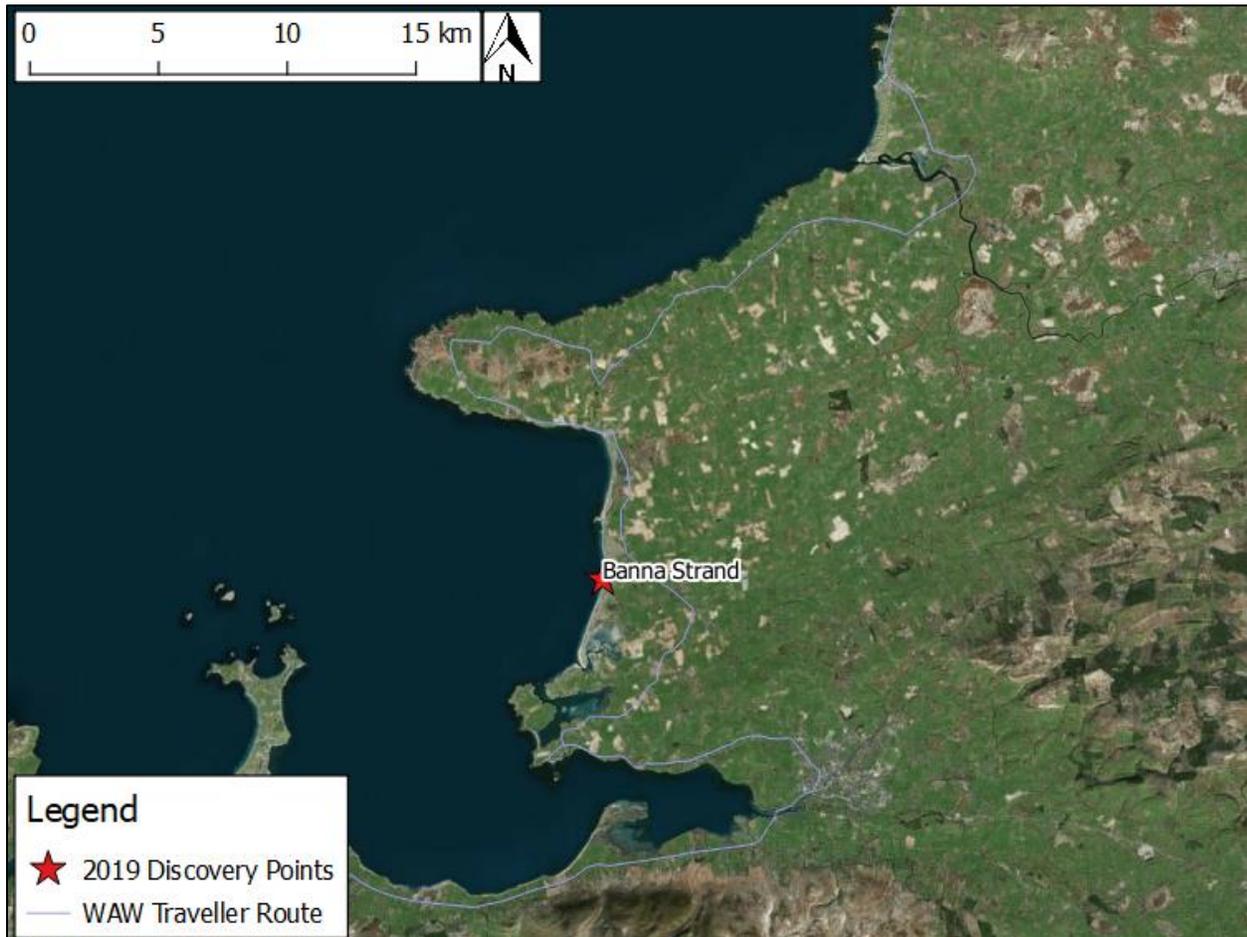


Figure 3.32 Location of Visitor Movement Zones at Inch Strand

Banna Strand

ENVIRONMENTAL SURVEYING AND MONITORING RESULTS



3.5 Banna Strand

Site Name: Banna Strand	Date Surveyed: 14 th /15 th June 2019
County: Kerry	Landscape Type: Sand shore and dunes in peninsular coastal context
Total No. of People: 593	Average Duration of visitors on site: 0:16:41
<p>Site Description: Banna Strand is situated 15km northwest of Tralee, Co. Kerry. It is a 5km stretch of beach backed by sand dunes. Banna Strand is of interest for recreational activities and offers fantastic views of the Dingle Peninsula and Mount Brandon to the south. The site includes a paved carpark, overflow carparks, public toilets, surf schools and interpretive material. The site is directly adjacent to the Akeragh, Banna and Barrow Harbour SAC and the Tralee Bay Harbour SPA. These are designated for the protection of the sand dunes system at Banna Strand, and for the wealth of waterbirds and associated wetland habitats that the area contains.</p> <p>Upgrades to Site: There have been no identifiable site upgrades to Banna Strand in 2019.</p>	

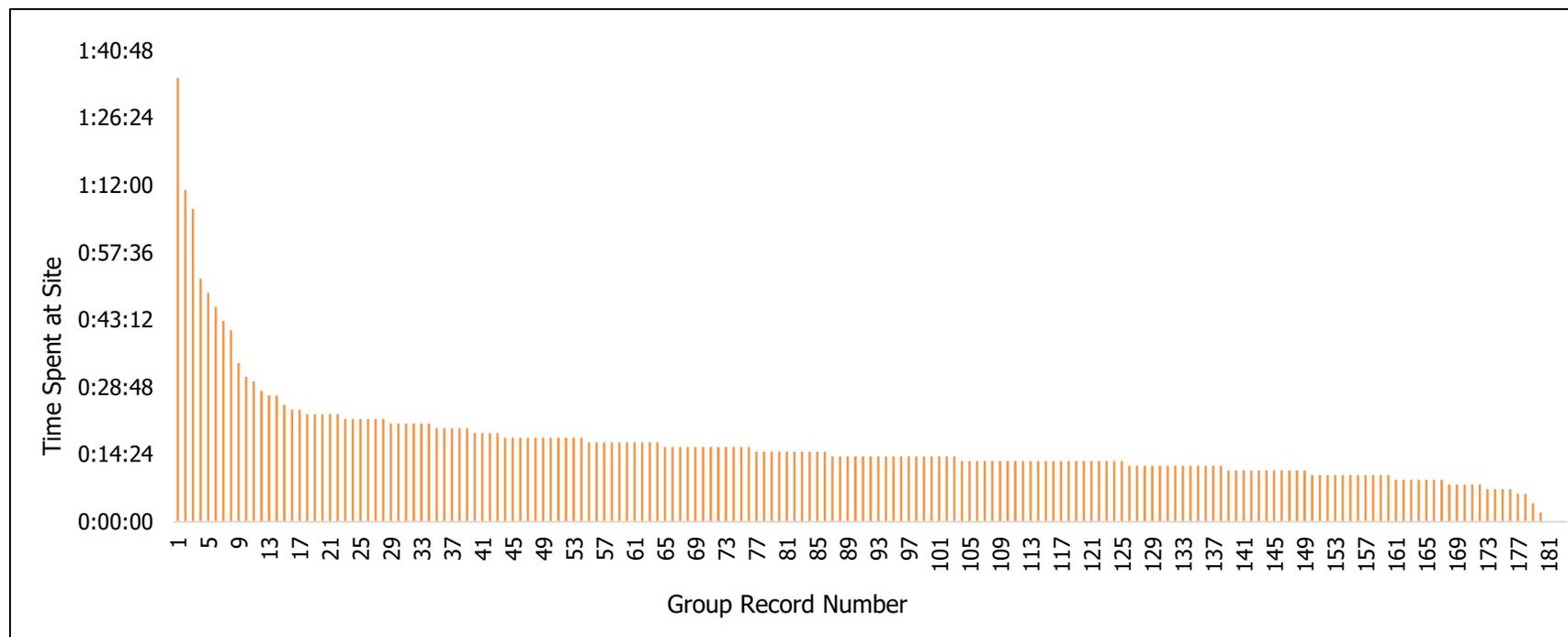


Figure 3.33 Duration of Time Spent at Banna Strand¹⁶

¹⁶ The graph represents 180 groups of a total 235; 55 of the groups observed had no departure time recorded due to the nature of the site and restricted views.

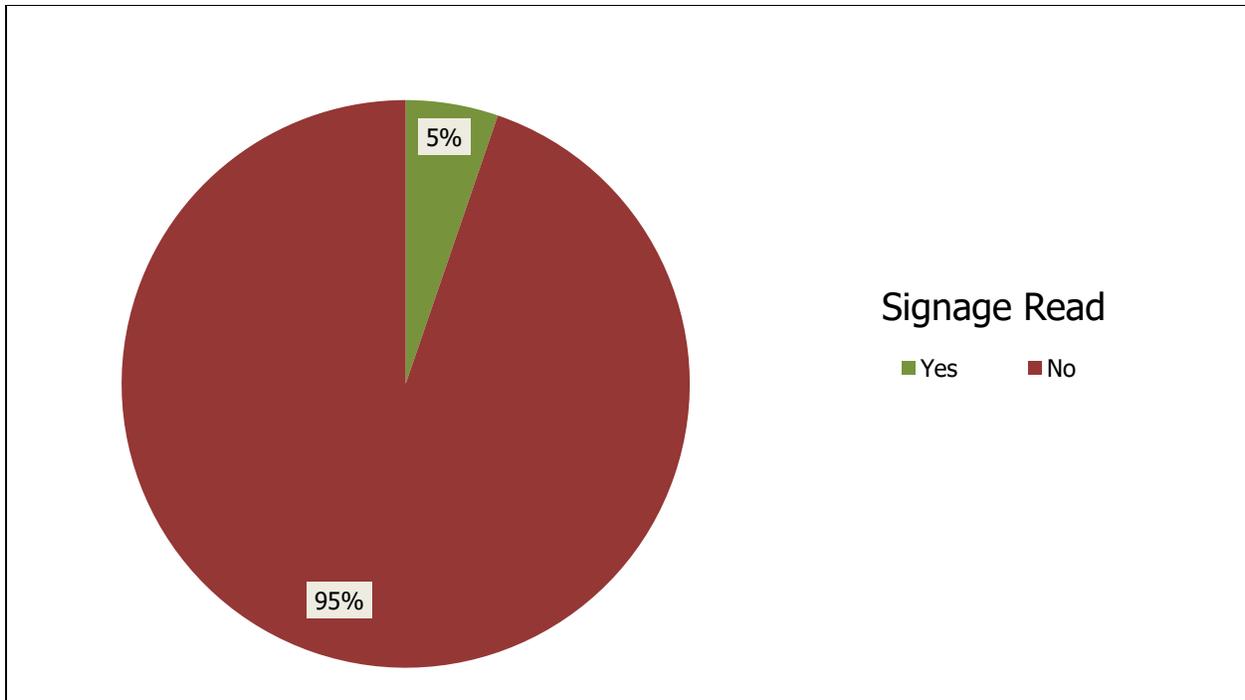


Figure 3.34 Use of Interpretive Material at Banna Strand¹⁷

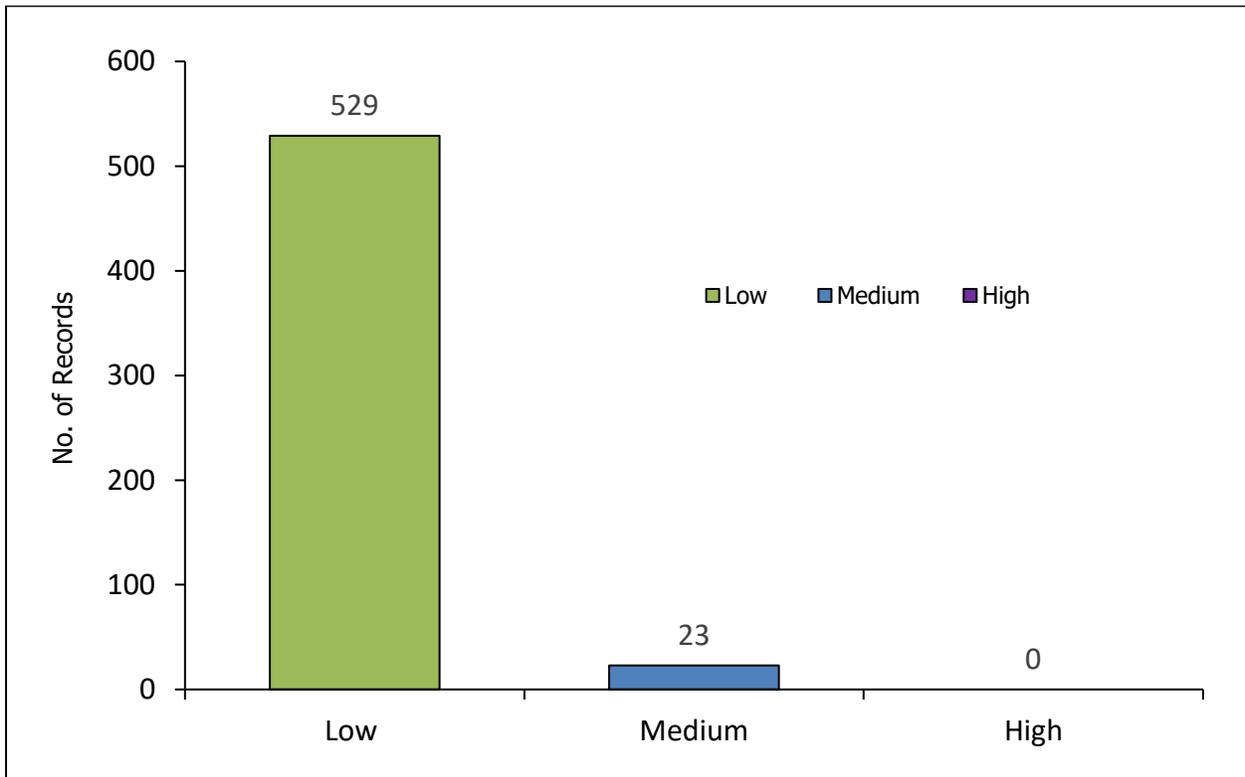


Figure 3.35 Categories of Activity Levels Observed at Banna Strand

¹⁷ This chart represents 228 out of 233 records. There was no data recorded for 5 groups.

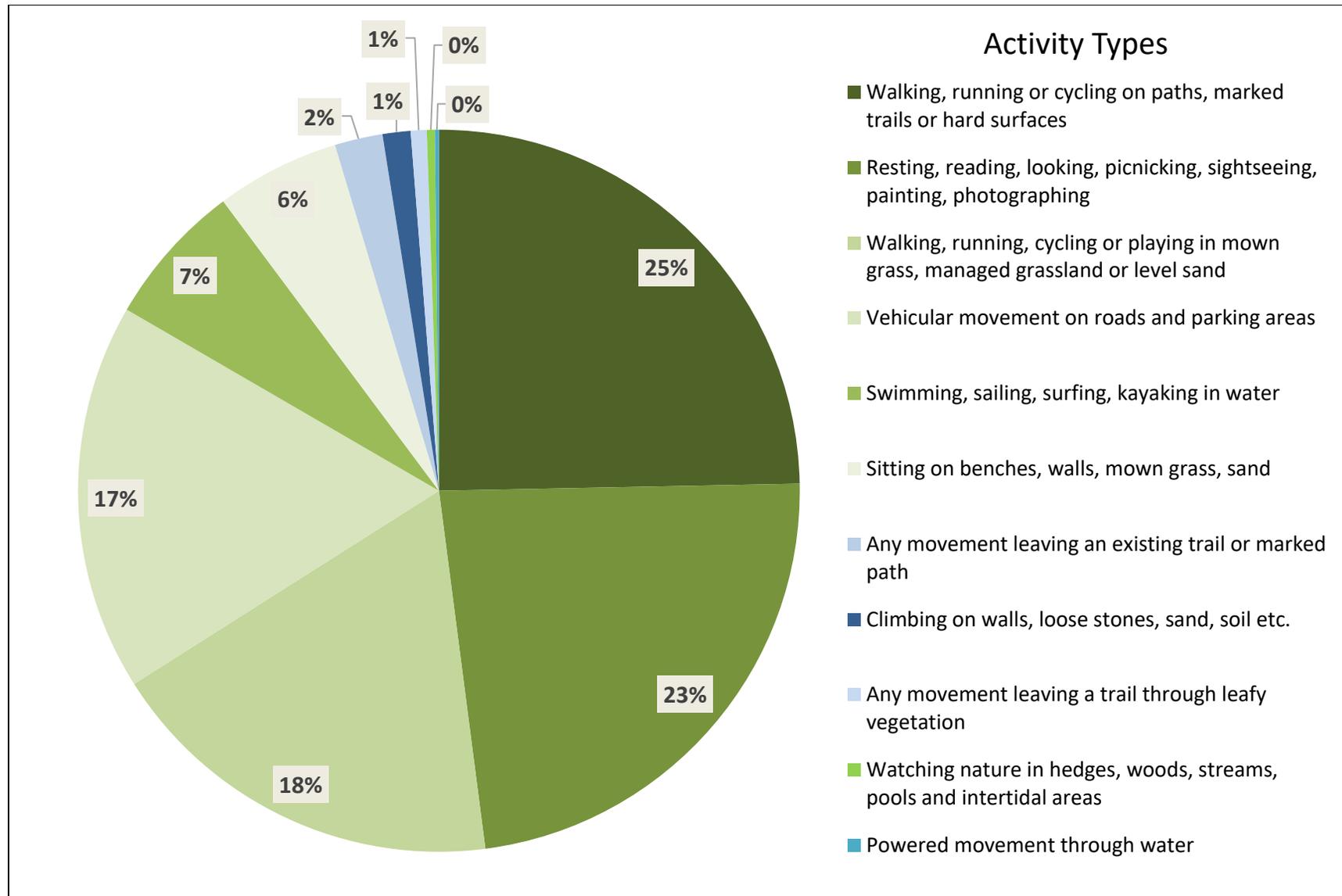


Figure 3.36 Range of Visitor Activities Observed at Banna Strand¹⁸

¹⁸ Two of the activities had an occurrence rate of one which equates to <1%. They are therefore recorded as 0% on the graph.

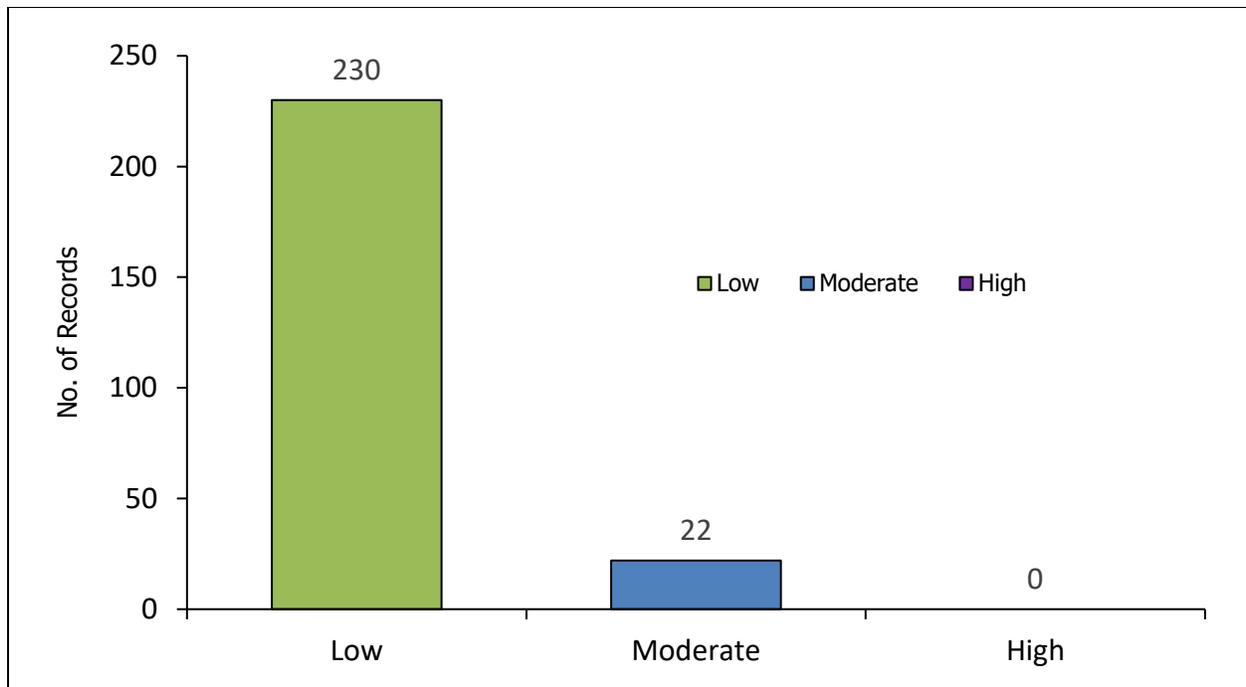


Figure 3.37 Categories of Environmental Impact Levels Observed at Banna Strand as a result of Visitor Activities

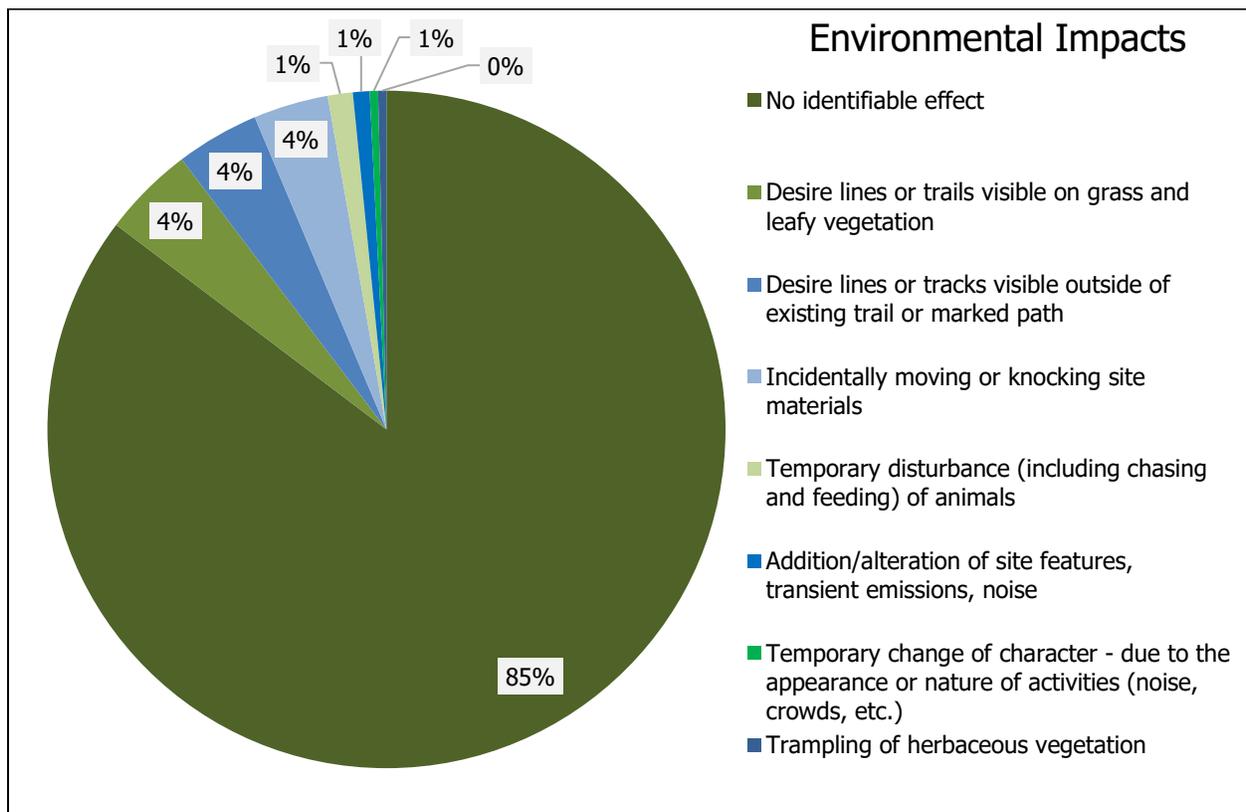
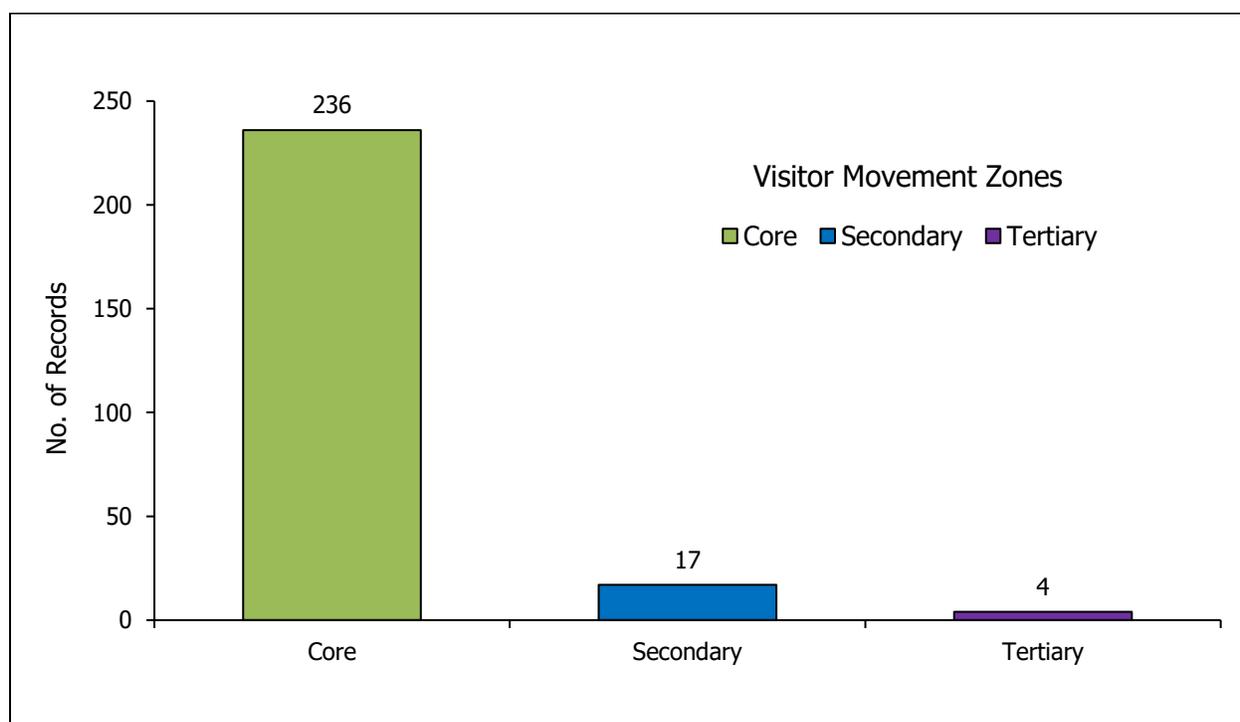


Figure 3.38 Range of Environmental Impacts Observed at Banna Strand¹⁹

¹⁹ One of the impacts had an occurrence rate of one which equates to <1%. It is therefore recorded as 0% on the graph.

Table 3.5 Visitor Movement Zones Descriptions

Core Zone	Existing car parks, paved areas, viewing platforms, marked pathways, trails, tracks and managed grassland and areas where pathways, trails or roads exist. The majority of visitors remain in these zones.
Secondary Zone	Areas outside of existing car park, paved areas, marked pathways, trails, tracks and managed grassland. visitors are likely to traffic areas of grassland (in some cases farmland grazed by sheep or cattle), heath or bare rock, usually to get a better view of site attractions or to access trails at the site.
Tertiary Zone	Areas where no car park, paved areas, marked pathways, trails, tracks and managed grassland are identifiable and beyond the immediate boundaries of the site.

**Figure 3.39 Zones Trafficked by Visitors at Banna Strand****3.5.1 Analysis of Results and Visitor Movement Patterns**

The core zone of Banna Strand was trafficked 236 times, while the secondary zone was trafficked 17 times, this is a result of several different groups of children running and playing on the dunes, along with several people choosing to sit in the dunes instead of on the beach. Only 4 individuals were observed leaving the core and secondary zones.

85% of visitors took part in activities that had no effect to the site. 4% of visitors took part in activities which resulted in visible desire lines on the dunes. There was evidence, *i.e.* well-worn desire lines, of regular visitor movement through the dune system.

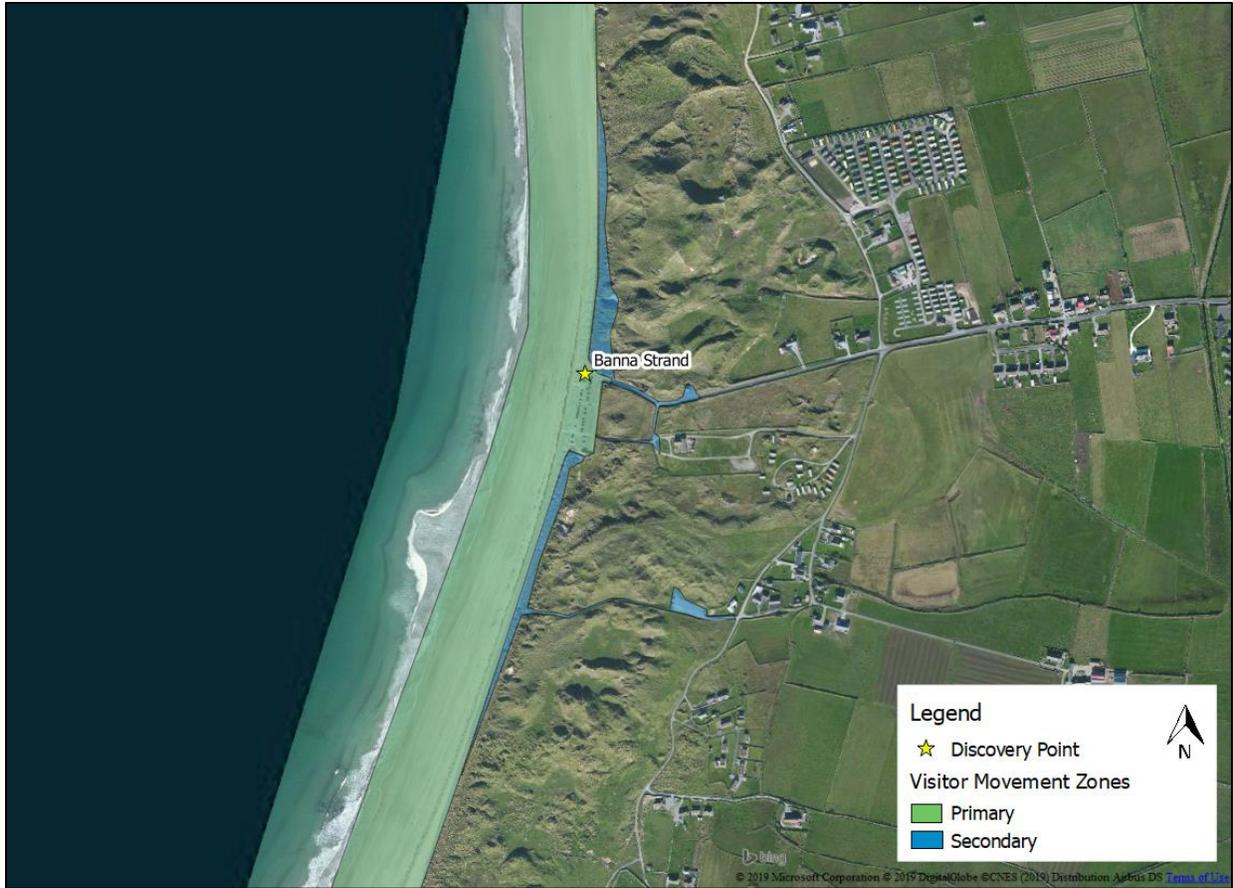
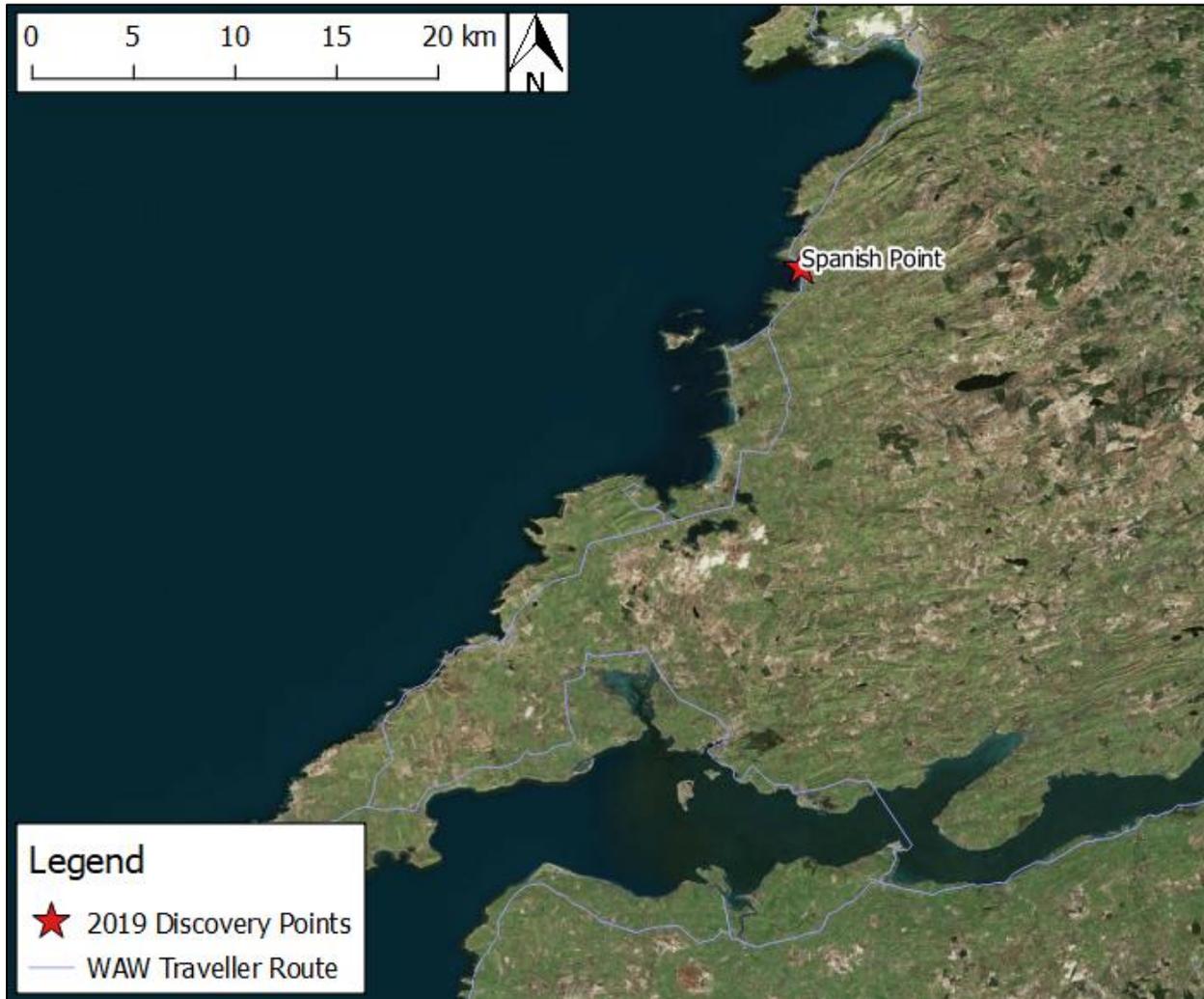


Figure 3.40 Location of Visitor Movement Zones at Banna Strand²⁰

²⁰ This map does not show the entire core movement zone, which extends the full length of the beach to the north and south of the Discovery Point. The map was cropped to make the secondary zone detail more visible.

Spanish Point

ENVIRONMENTAL SURVEYING AND MONITORING RESULTS



3.6 Spanish Point

Site Name: Spanish Point	Date Surveyed: 22 nd /23 rd June 2019
County: Clare	Landscape Type: Sand shore, dunes and sea cliffs in a large bay
Total No. of People: 470	Average Duration of visitors on site: 0:18:13
<p>Site Description: Spanish Point is located on the west coast of County Clare. It is a 500m long beach backed by sand dunes and low rocky sea cliffs. It is bounded by a rocky shoreline to the north and the Annagh river outflow to the south. It is of historical interest as the site where many soldiers of the Spanish Armada perished in 1588. It is a well-appointed site with many visitor facilities and informational signage. The Discovery Point is located directly adjacent to the Carrowmore to Spanish Point and Islands SAC and the Mid-Clare Coast SPA. The SAC is designated petrifying springs, which is a priority habitat that occurs in the cliffs at either side of the beach. The SPA is designated for the protection of waterbirds and their associated wetland habitats. Sand martins also nest in the clifftops at the site.</p> <p>Upgrades to Site: Upgrades to this site include extensive renovations to the toilet block which were carried out within the last year.</p>	

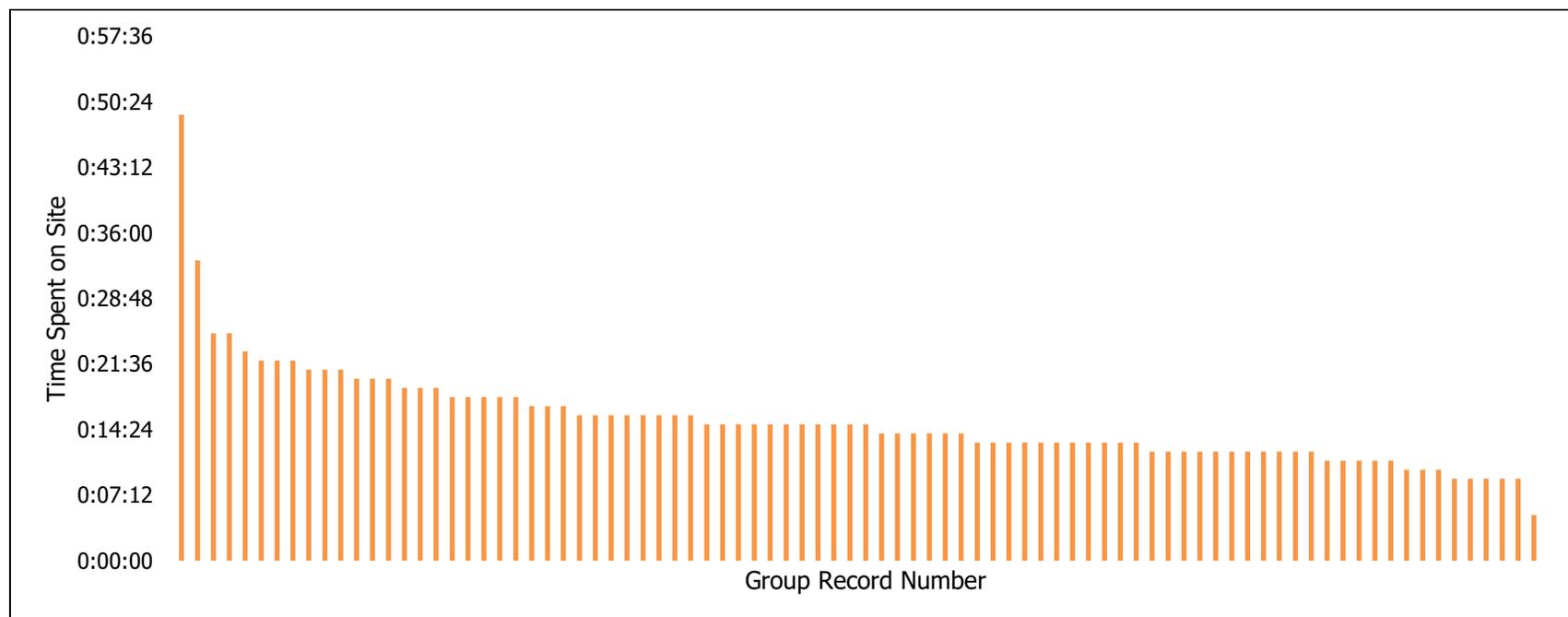


Figure 3.41 Duration of Time Spent at Spanish Point ²¹

²¹ The graph represents 86 groups of a total 264; 60 of the groups observed had no departure time recorded due to the nature of the site and restricted views.

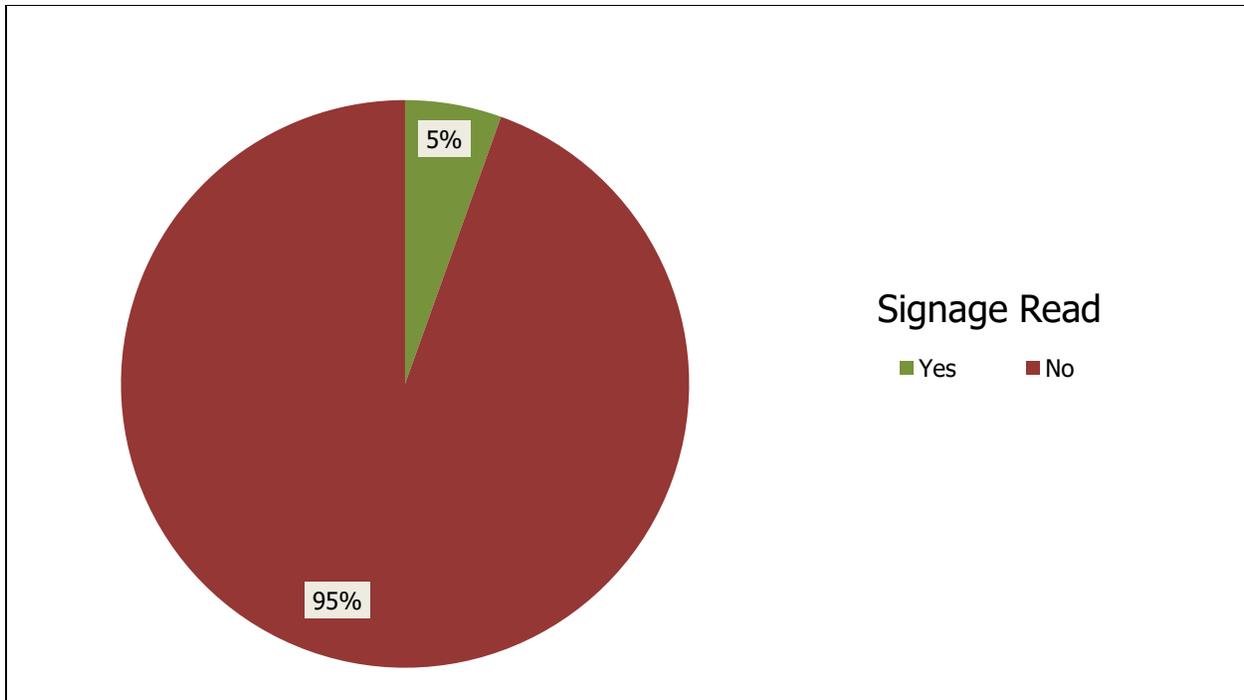


Figure 3.42 Use of Interpretive Material at Spanish Point²²

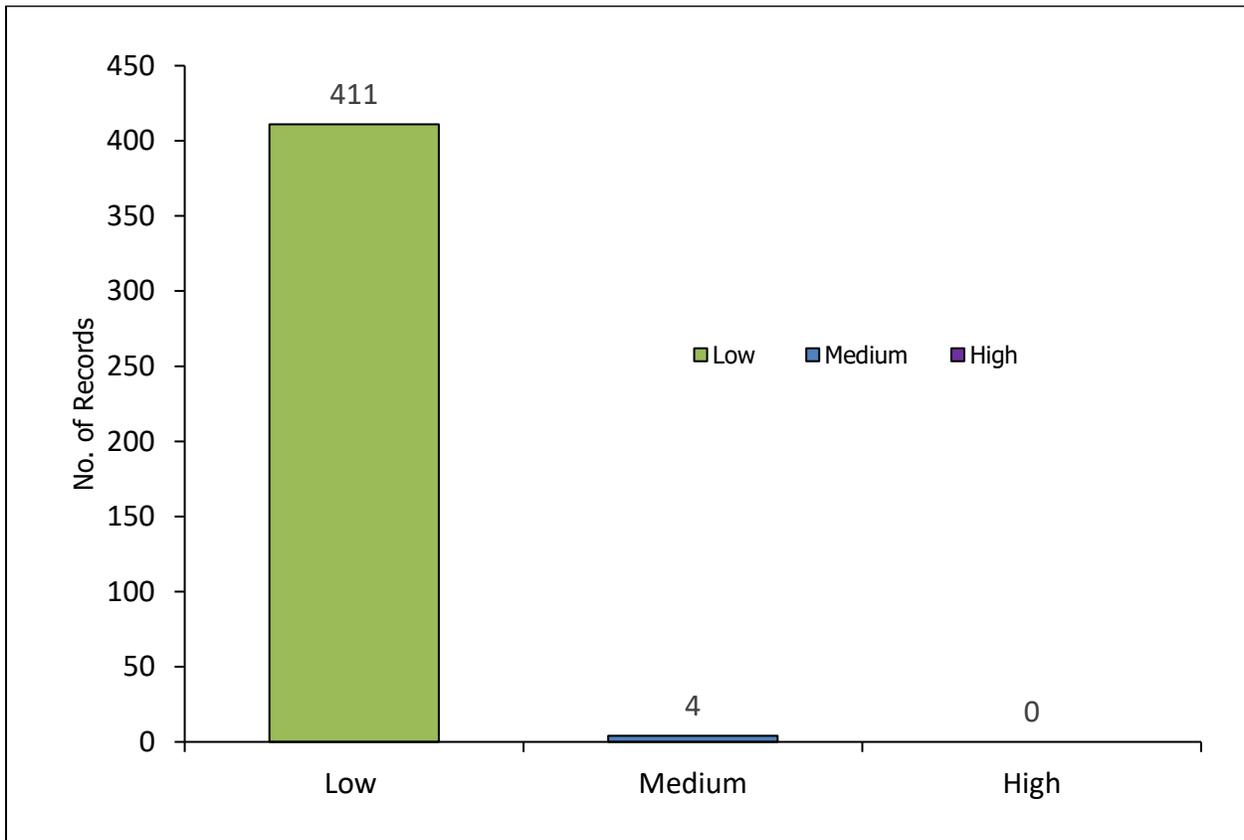


Figure 3.43 Categories of Activity Level Observed at Spanish Point

²² This chart represents 164 out of 165 records. There was no data recorded for 1 group.

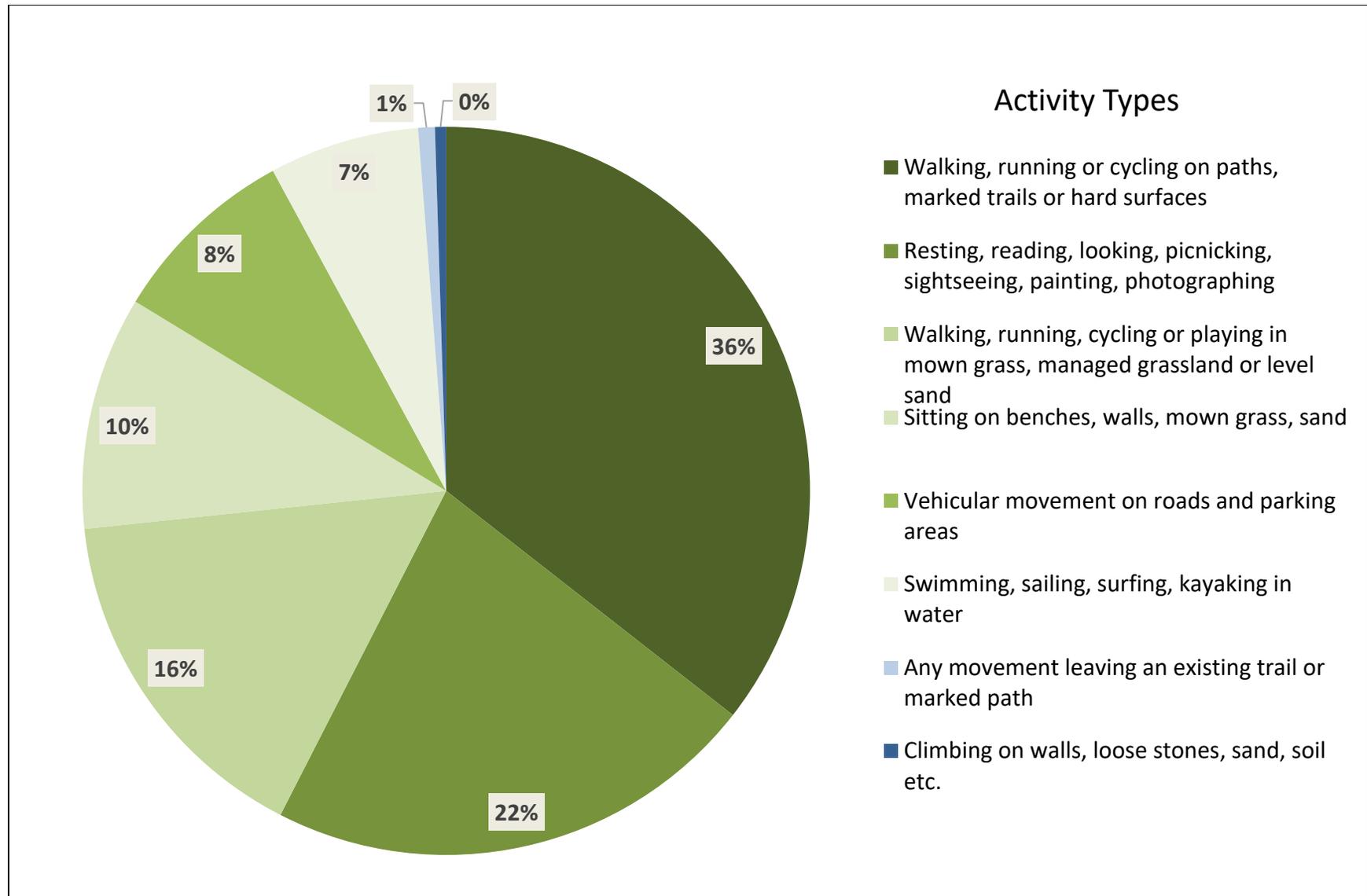


Figure 3.44 Range of Visitor Activities Observed at Spanish Point²³

²³ One of the activities had an occurrence rate of one which equates to <1%. It is therefore recorded as 0% on the graph.

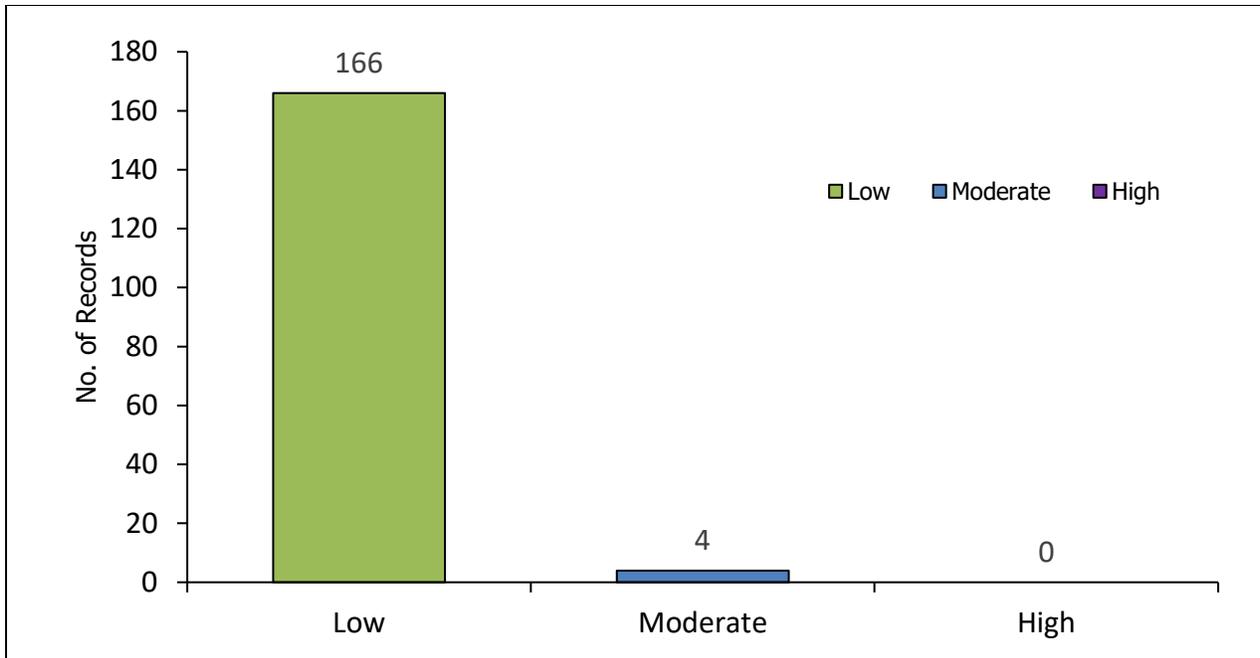


Figure 3.45 Categories of Environmental Impact Level Observed at Spanish Point as a result of Visitor Activities

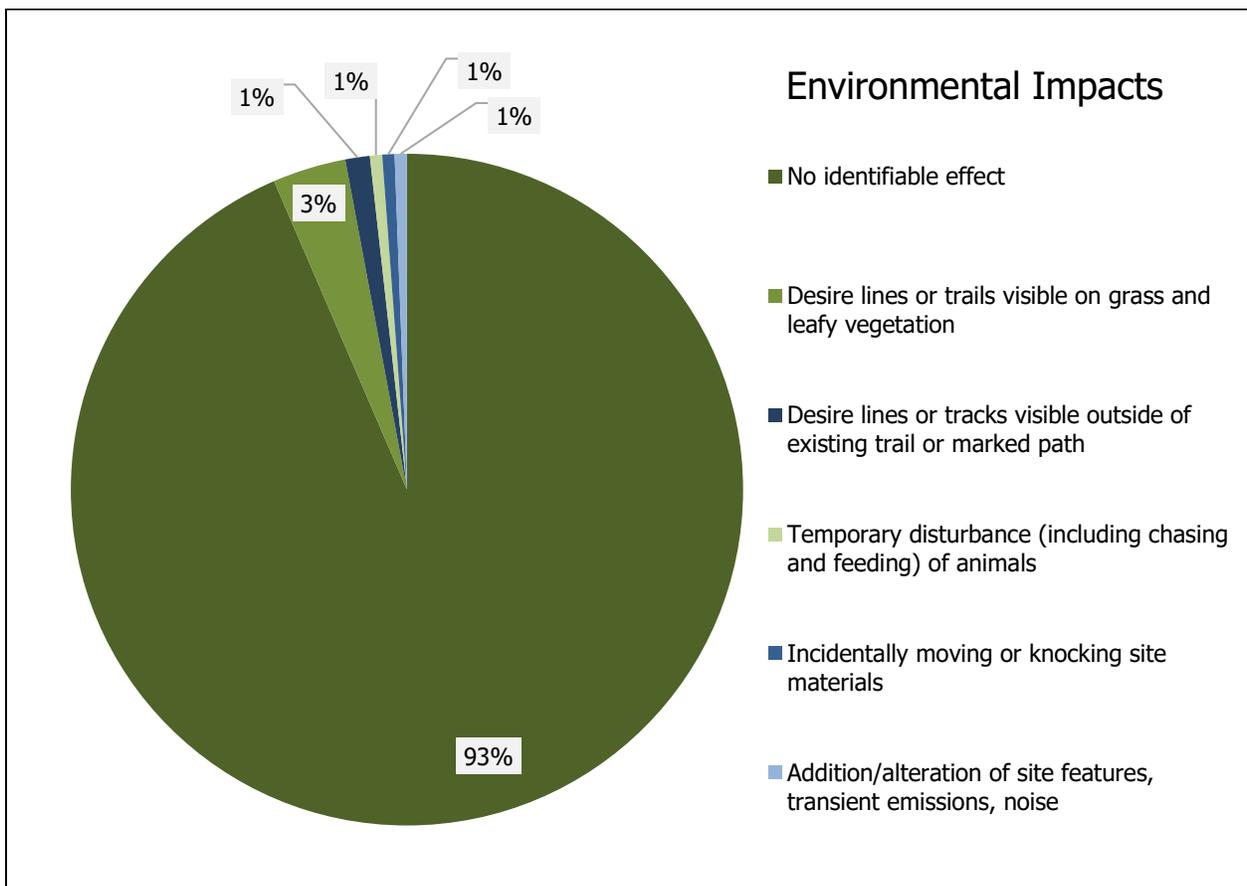


Figure 3.46 Impacts Observed at Spanish Point

Table 3.6 Visitor Movement Zones Descriptions

Core Zone	Existing car parks, paved areas, viewing platforms, marked pathways, trails, tracks and managed grassland and areas where pathways, trails or roads exist. The majority of visitors remain in these zones.
Secondary Zone	Areas outside of existing car park, paved areas, marked pathways, trails, tracks and managed grassland. visitors are likely to traffic areas of grassland (in some cases farmland grazed by sheep or cattle), heath or bare rock, usually to get a better view of site attractions or to access trails at the site.
Tertiary Zone	Areas where no car park, paved areas, marked pathways, trails, tracks and managed grassland are identifiable and beyond the immediate boundaries of the site.

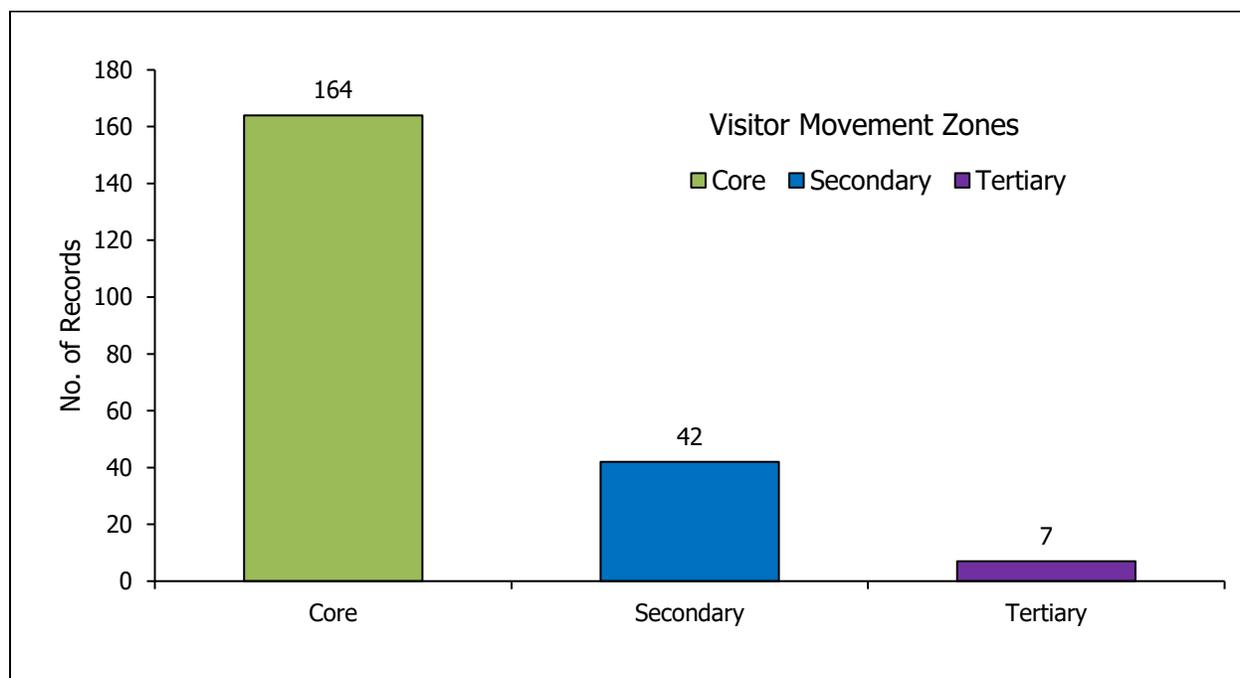


Figure 3.47 Zones Trafficked by Visitors at Spanish Point

3.6.1 Analysis of Results and Visitor Movement Patterns

Visitors to the site trafficked the core zone 164 times and the secondary zone 42 times and there were only 7 incidences of visitors leaving the core and secondary movement zones.

Most visitors to the site (90%) took part in activities that resulted in no identifiable effect.

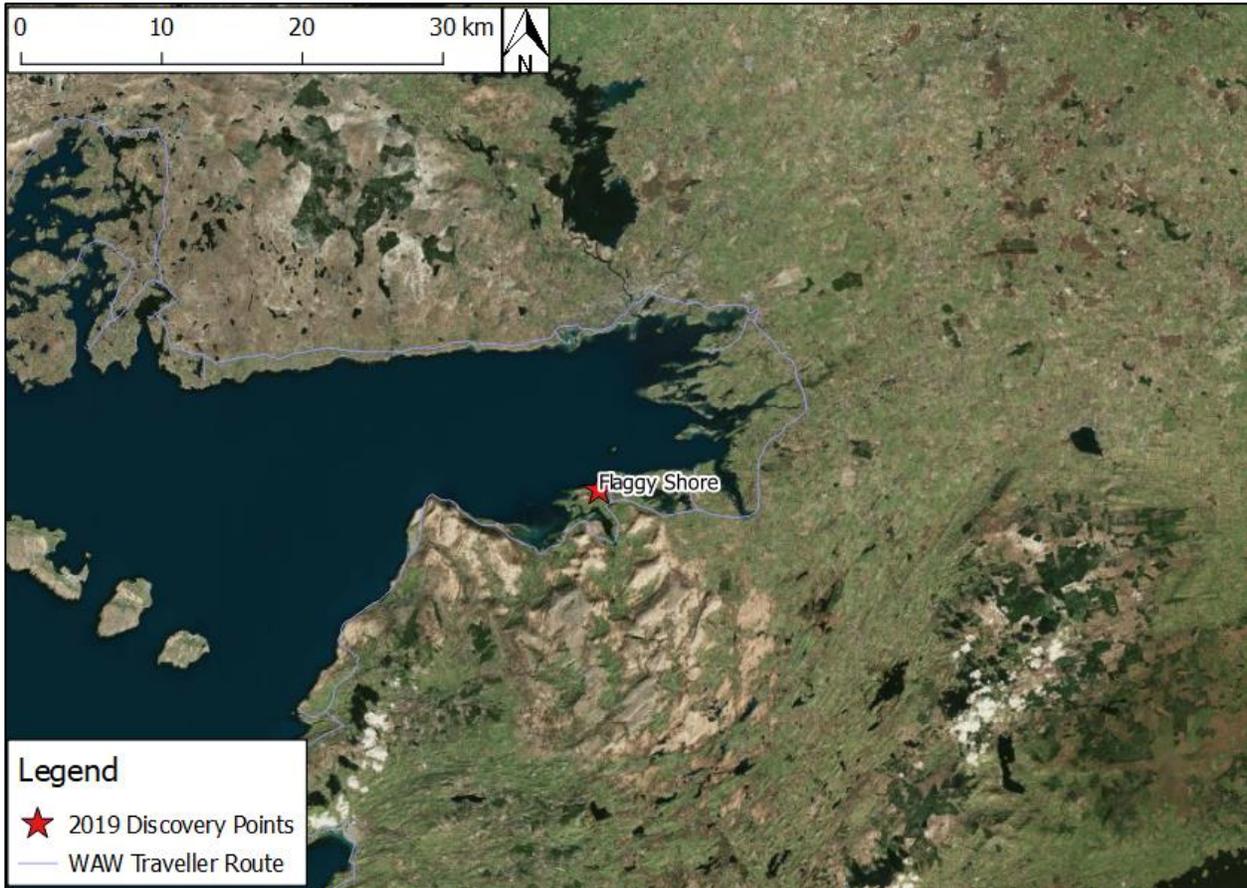
10% of visitors to the site took part in activities that had medium level impacts such as a group of children using a metal detector and digging up areas of the beach.



Figure 3.48 Location of Visitor Movement Zones at at Spanish Point

Flaggy Shore

ENVIRONMENTAL SURVEYING AND MONITORING RESULTS



3.7 Flaggy Shore

Site Name: Flaggy Shore	Date Surveyed: 20 th /21 st June 2019
County: Clare	Landscape Type: Rocky shoreline in karst landscape
Total No. of People: 392	Average Duration of visitors on site: 0:11:52
<p>Site Description: Flaggy Shore is one side of a small peninsula that stretches from the village of New Quay to Finvarra Point. It lies on the edge of The Burren and is one of the most northerly parts of County Clare. It is famous for its limestone pavements and fossils that are embedded in the rock, including sculptured rocks along the shore called 'biokarst'. The site is located within both the Galway Bay Complex SAC and the Inner Galway Bay SPA. It is designated as an SPA for the protection of endangered bird species listed on the Birds Directive (Council Directive 2009/47/EC) and as an SAC for several habitats and species which are listed on Annex I and Annex II of the Habitats Directive. The site includes areas of limestone pavement, which is a priority habitat.</p> <p>Upgrades to Site: There have been no identifiable upgrades to Flaggy Shore or the surrounding area in 2019.</p>	

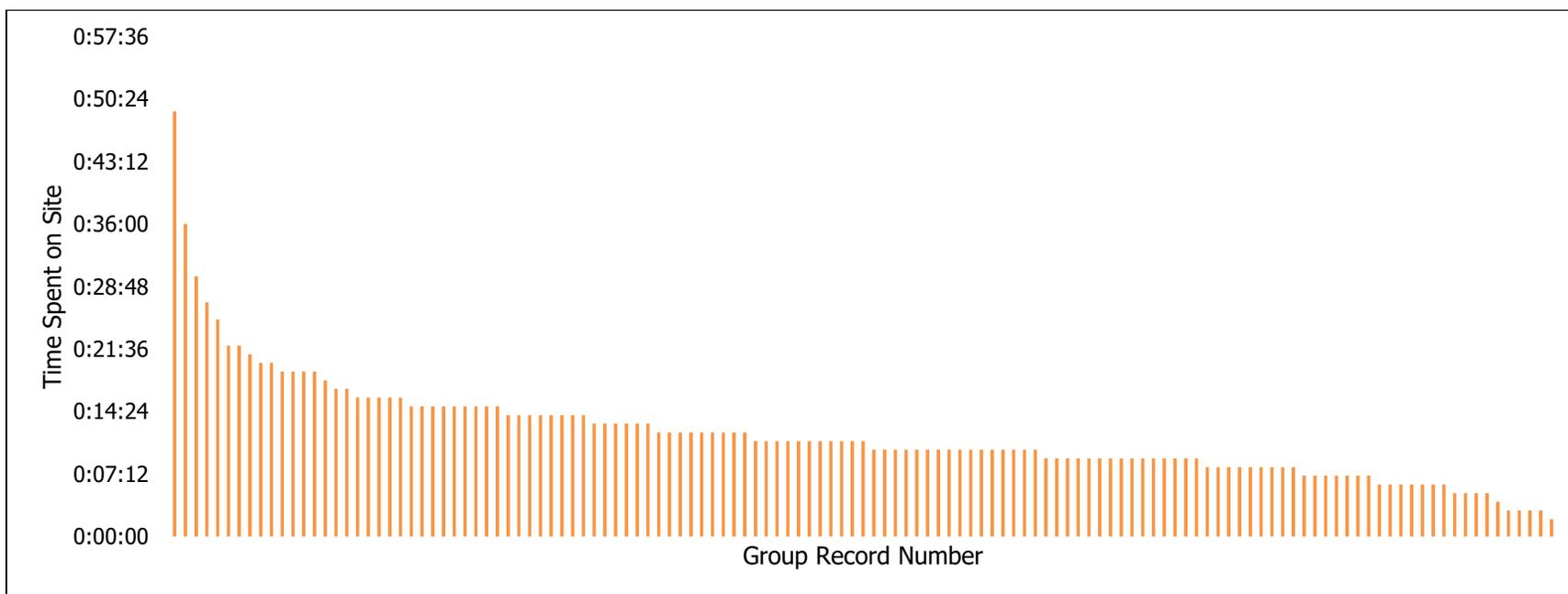


Figure 3.49 Duration Spent at Flaggy Shore²⁴

²⁴ The graph represents 129 groups of a total 198; 89 of the groups observed had no departure time recorded due to the nature of the site and restricted views.

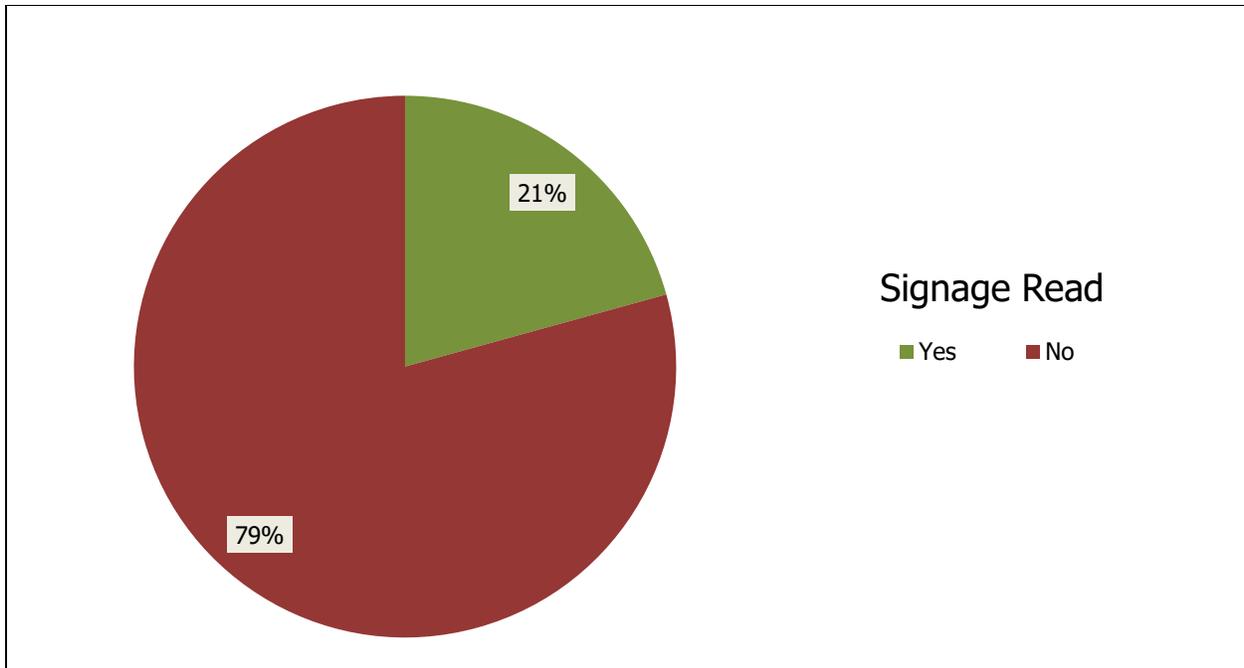


Figure 3.50 Use of Interpretive Material at Flaggy Shore²⁵

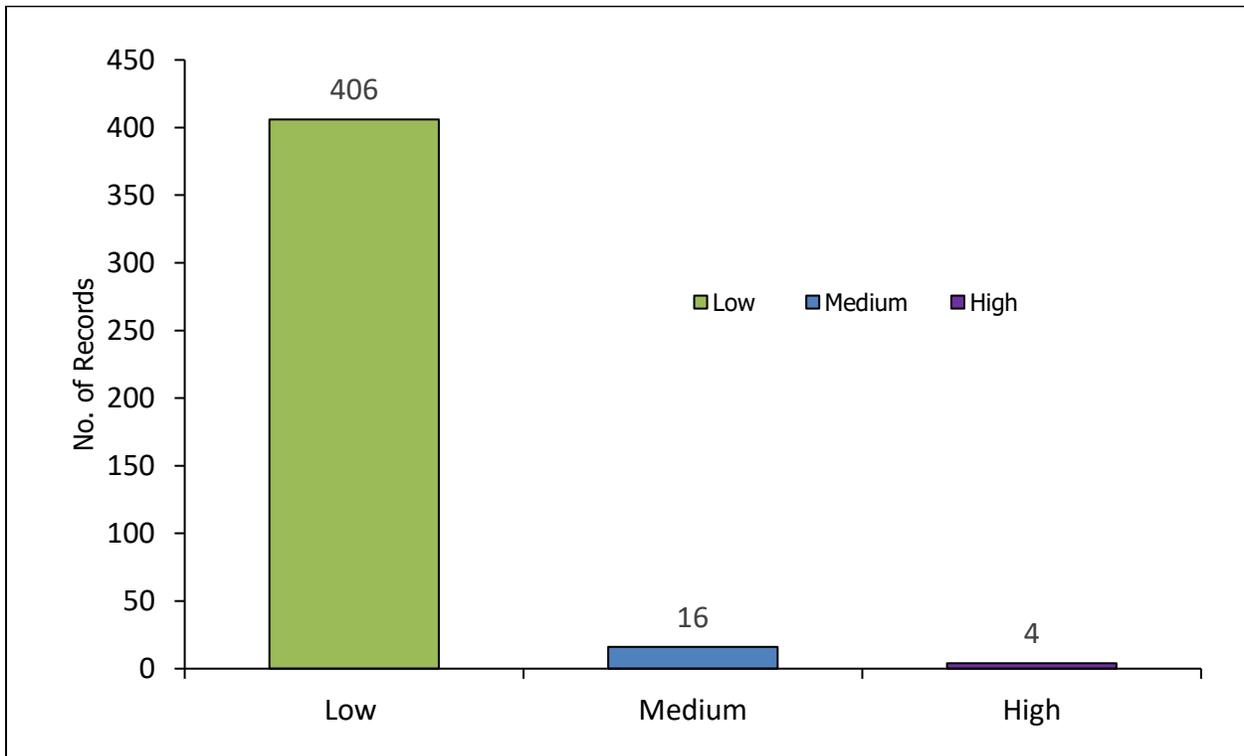


Figure 3.51 Categories of Activity Levels Observed at Flaggy Shore

²⁵ This chart represents 198 out of 198 records.

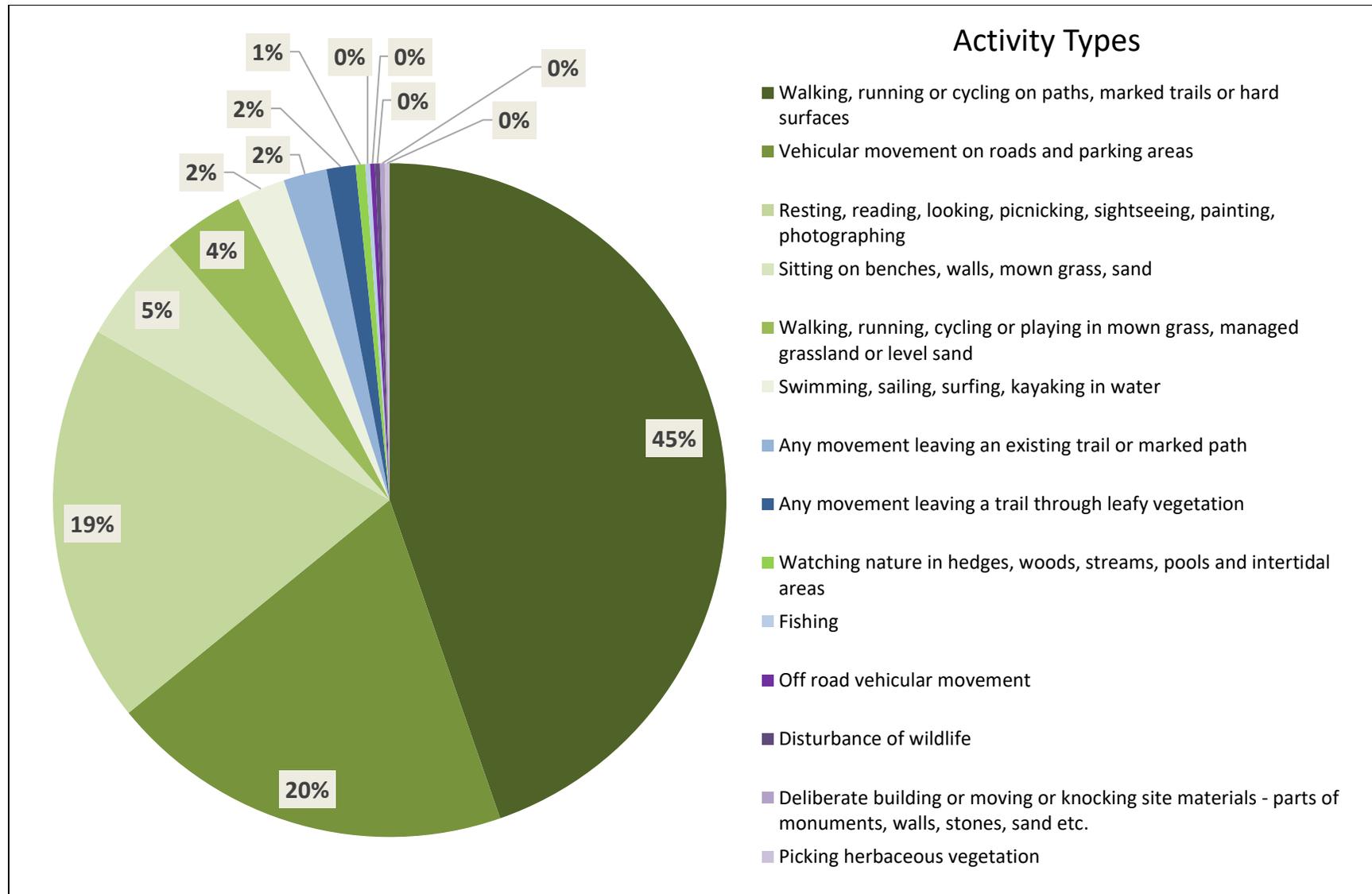


Figure 3.52 Range of Visitor Activities Observed at Flaggy Shore ²⁶

²⁶ Five of the activities had an occurrence rate of one which equates to <1%. They are therefore recorded as 0% on the graph.

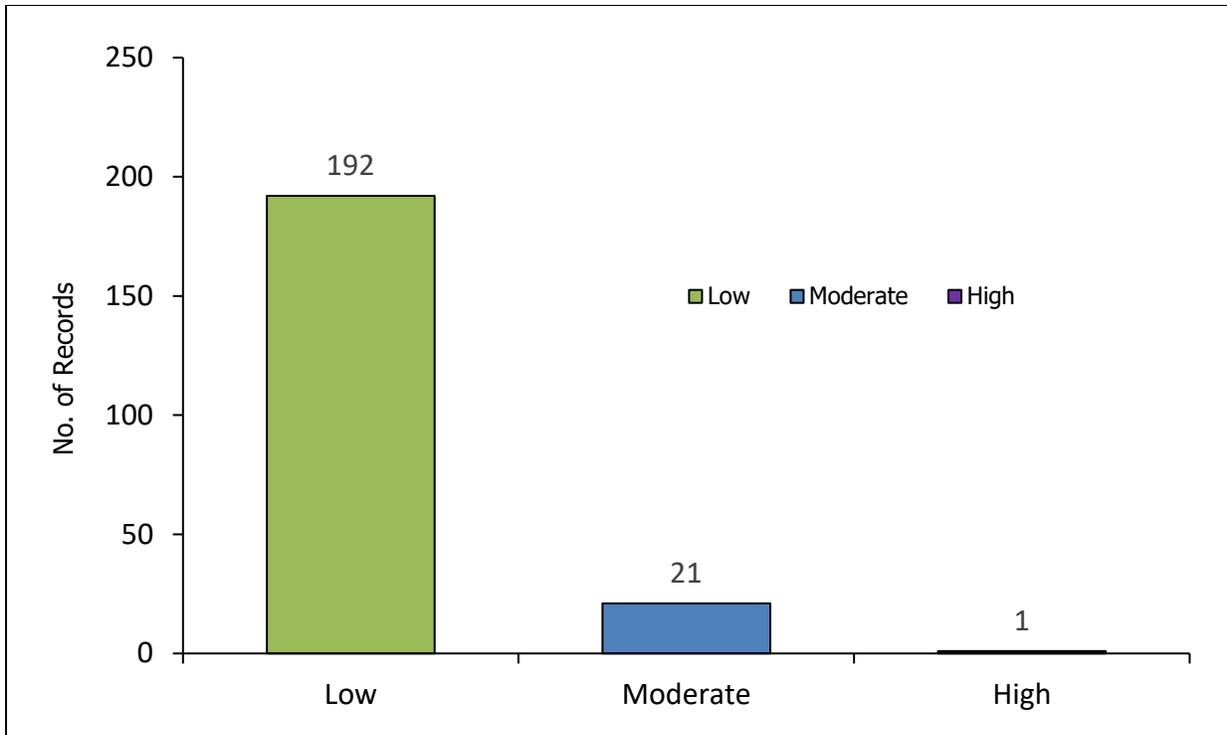


Figure 3.53 Category of Environmental Impact Levels Observed at Flaggy Shore as a result of Visitor Activities

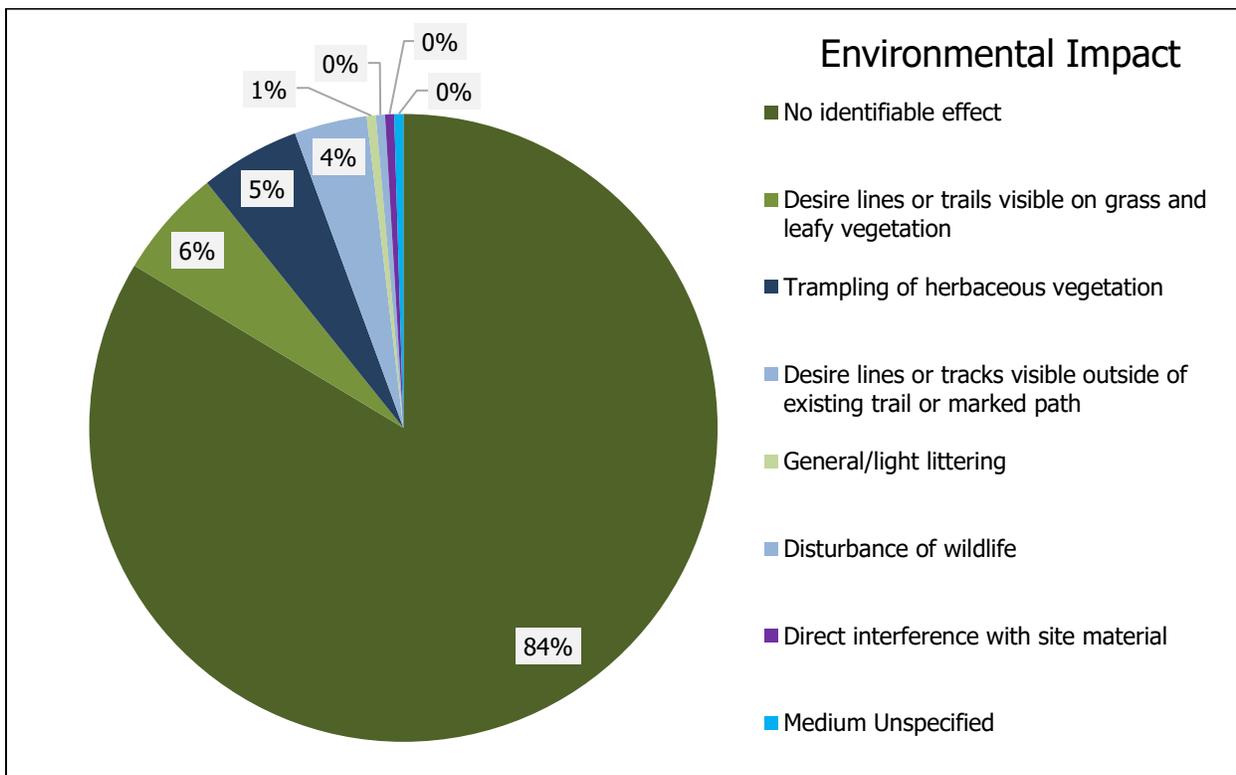


Figure 3.54 Range of Environmental Impacts Observed at Flaggy Shore²⁷

²⁷ Three of the impacts had an occurrence rate of one which equates to <1%. They are therefore recorded as 0% on the graph.

Table 3.7 Visitor Movement Zones Descriptions

Core Zone	Existing car parks, paved areas, viewing platforms, marked pathways, trails, tracks and managed grassland and areas where pathways, trails or roads exist. The majority of visitors remain in these zones.
Secondary Zone	Areas outside of existing car park, paved areas, marked pathways, trails, tracks and managed grassland. visitors are likely to traffic areas of grassland (in some cases farmland grazed by sheep or cattle), heath or bare rock, usually to get a better view of site attractions or to access trails at the site.
Tertiary Zone	Areas where no car park, paved areas, marked pathways, trails, tracks and managed grassland are identifiable and beyond the immediate boundaries of the site.

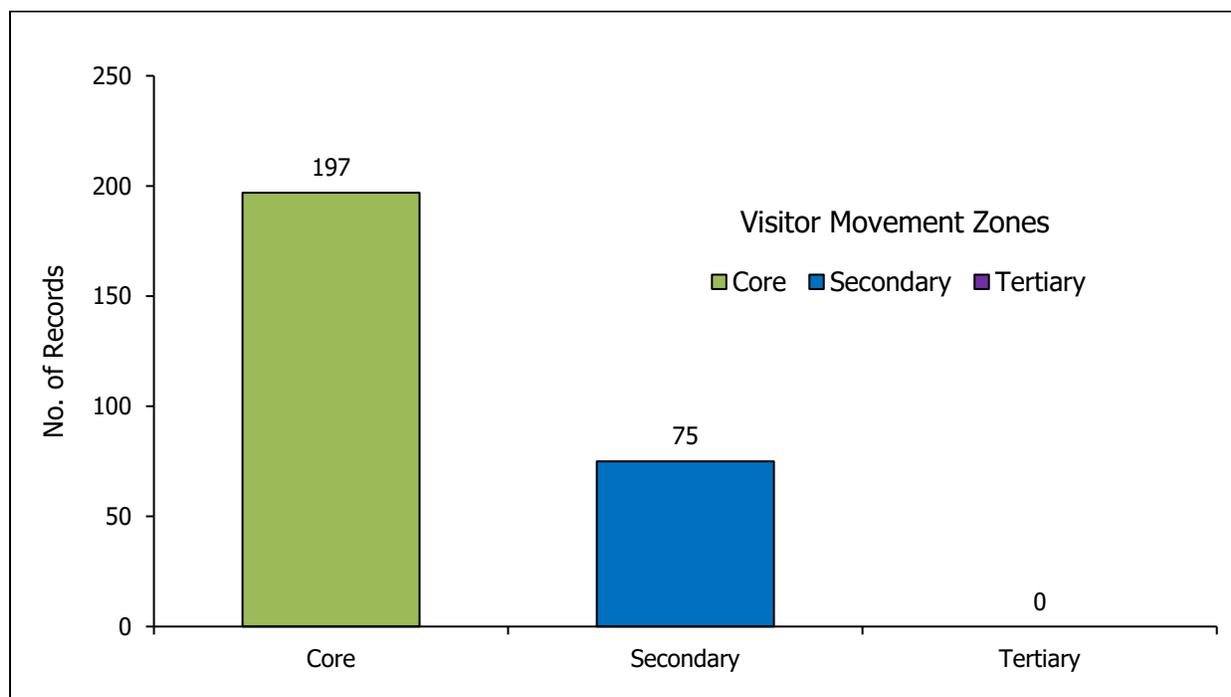


Figure 3.55 Zones Trafficked by Visitors at Flaggy Shore

3.7.1 Analysis of Results and Visitor Movement Patterns

All visitors to Flaggy Shore that were recorded stayed within the core or secondary zones.

91% of visitors took part in activities that resulted in no identifiable or low-level effects to the site.

9% of visitors took part in activities that had a medium or high-level effect to the site such as leaving marked paths which resulted in visible desire lines in surrounding vegetation. Other impacts included:

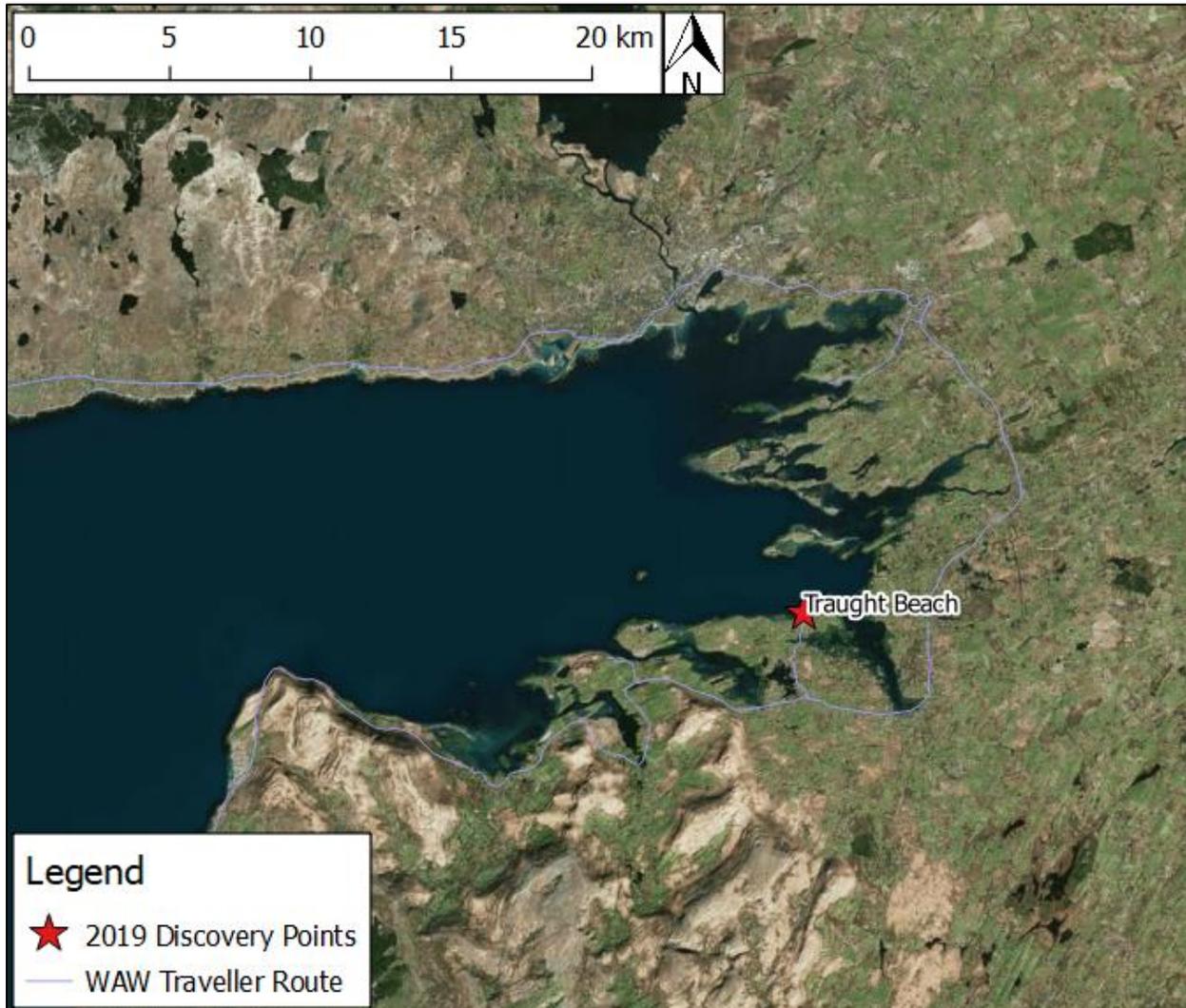
- Disturbance of wildlife;
- Trampling herbaceous vegetation;
- Desire lines or tracks visible outside existing trail or marked path; and
- Direct interference with site material.



Figure 3.56 Location of Visitor Movement Zones at Flaggy Shore

Traught Beach

ENVIRONMENTAL SURVEYING AND MONITORING RESULTS



3.8 Traught Beach

Site Name: Traught Beach	Date Surveyed: 29 th /30 th June
County: Galway	Landscape Type: Coarse sandy shoreline on the inner reaches of Galway Bay
Total No. of People: 591	Average Duration of visitors on site: 0:19:37
<p>Site Description: The Traught Beach Discovery Point is located approximately 7km northwest of Kinvarra on the south coast of Co. Galway. Traught Beach is backed by a rural, agricultural landscape. The beach and car park face northwest into Galway Bay. The car park sits immediately adjacent to the beach and a toilet block sits midway along the car park. Bench seating is provided by the beach as well as four picnic tables at the rear of the car park. The site is located within the Galway Bay Complex and the Inner Galway Bay SPA, it is designated as an SPA for the protection of endangered bird species listed on the Birds Directive (Council Directive 2009/74/EC) and as an SAC for several habitats and species which are listed on Annex I and Annex II of the Habitats Directive.</p> <p>Upgrades to Site: There have been no identifiable upgrades to this site or the surrounding area in 2019.</p>	

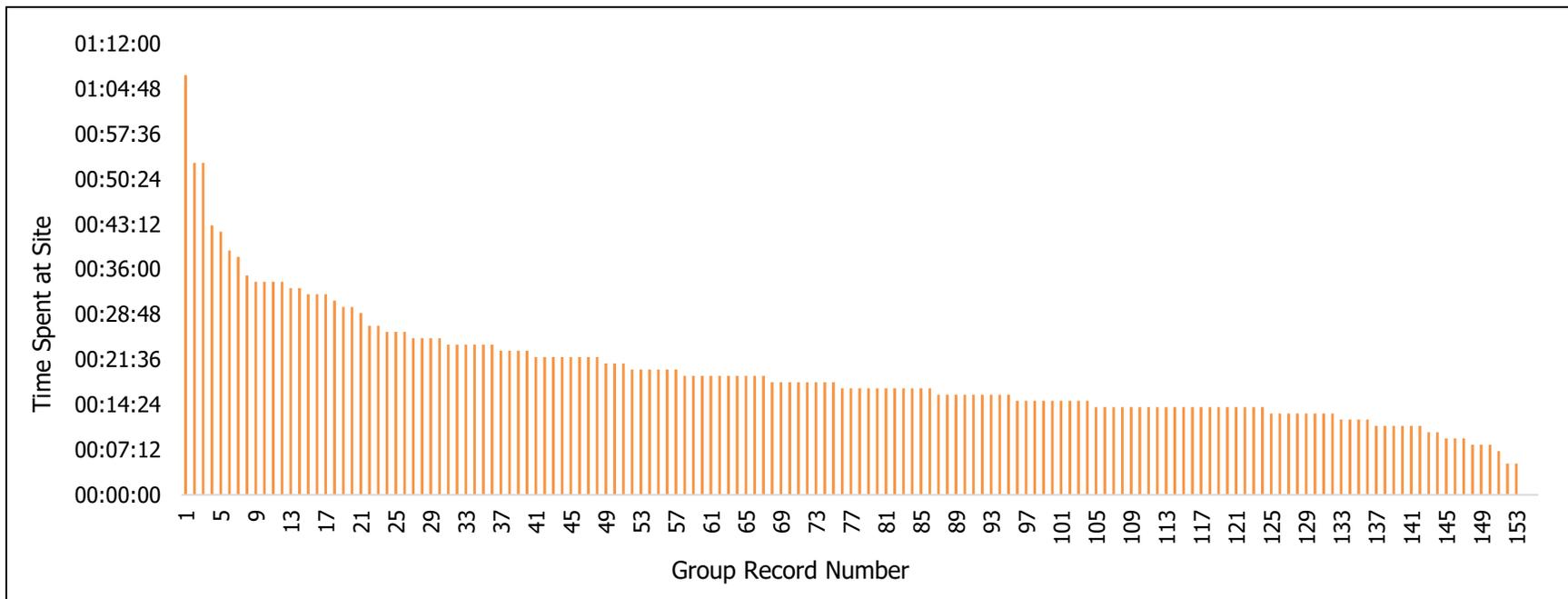


Figure 3.57 Duration of Time Spent at Traught Beach²⁸

²⁸ This chart represents 153/200 groups recorded. No data was recorded for 43 groups.

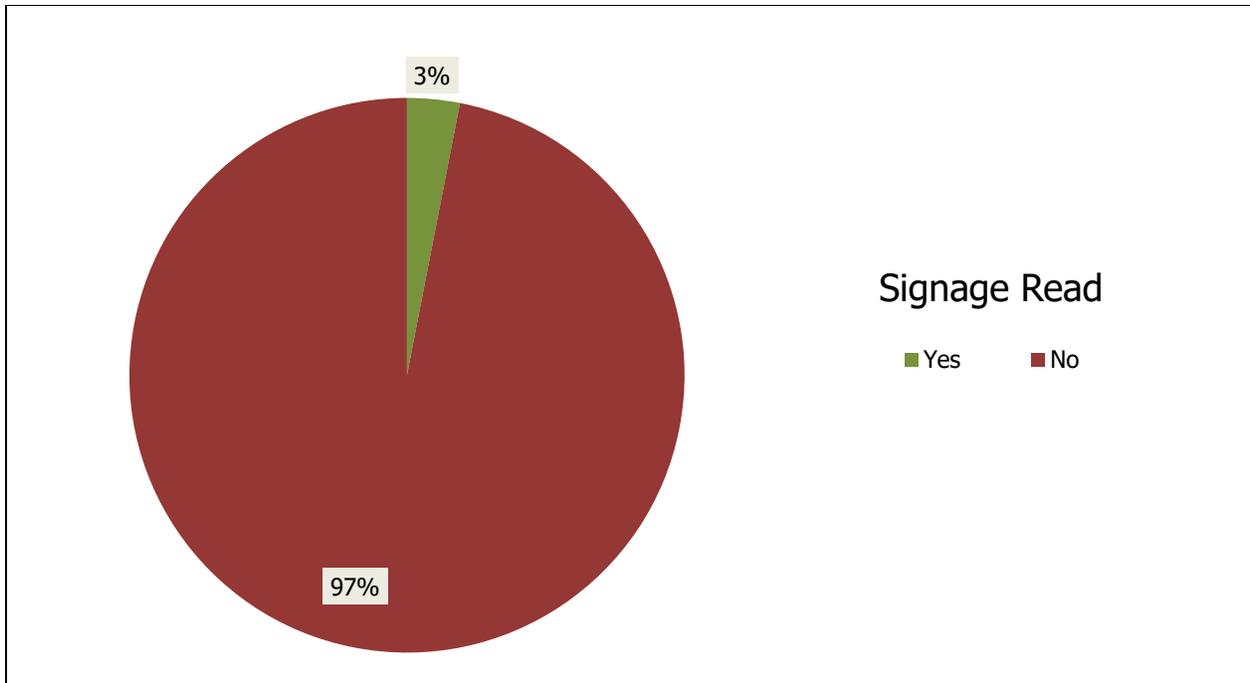


Figure 3.58 Use of Interpretive Material at Traught Beach²⁹

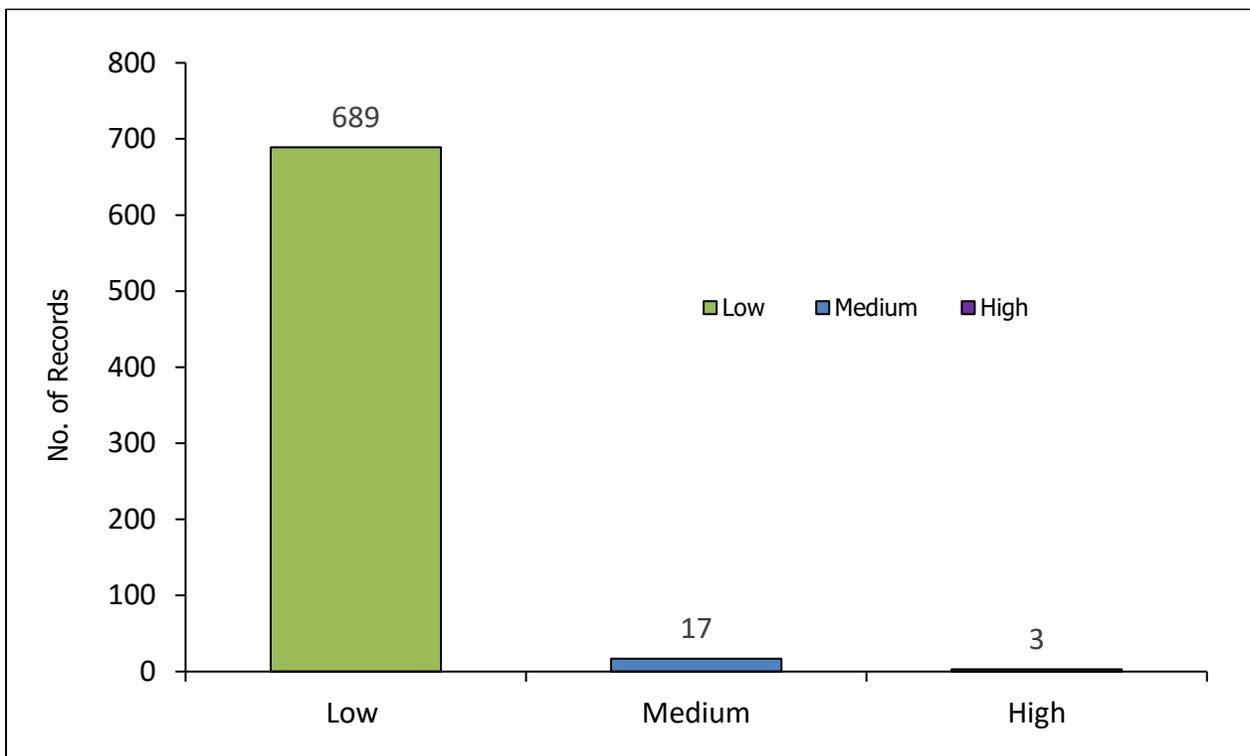


Figure 3.59 Categories of Activity Levels Observed at Traught Beach

²⁹ This chart represents 196/199 records. There was no data available for 3 groups.

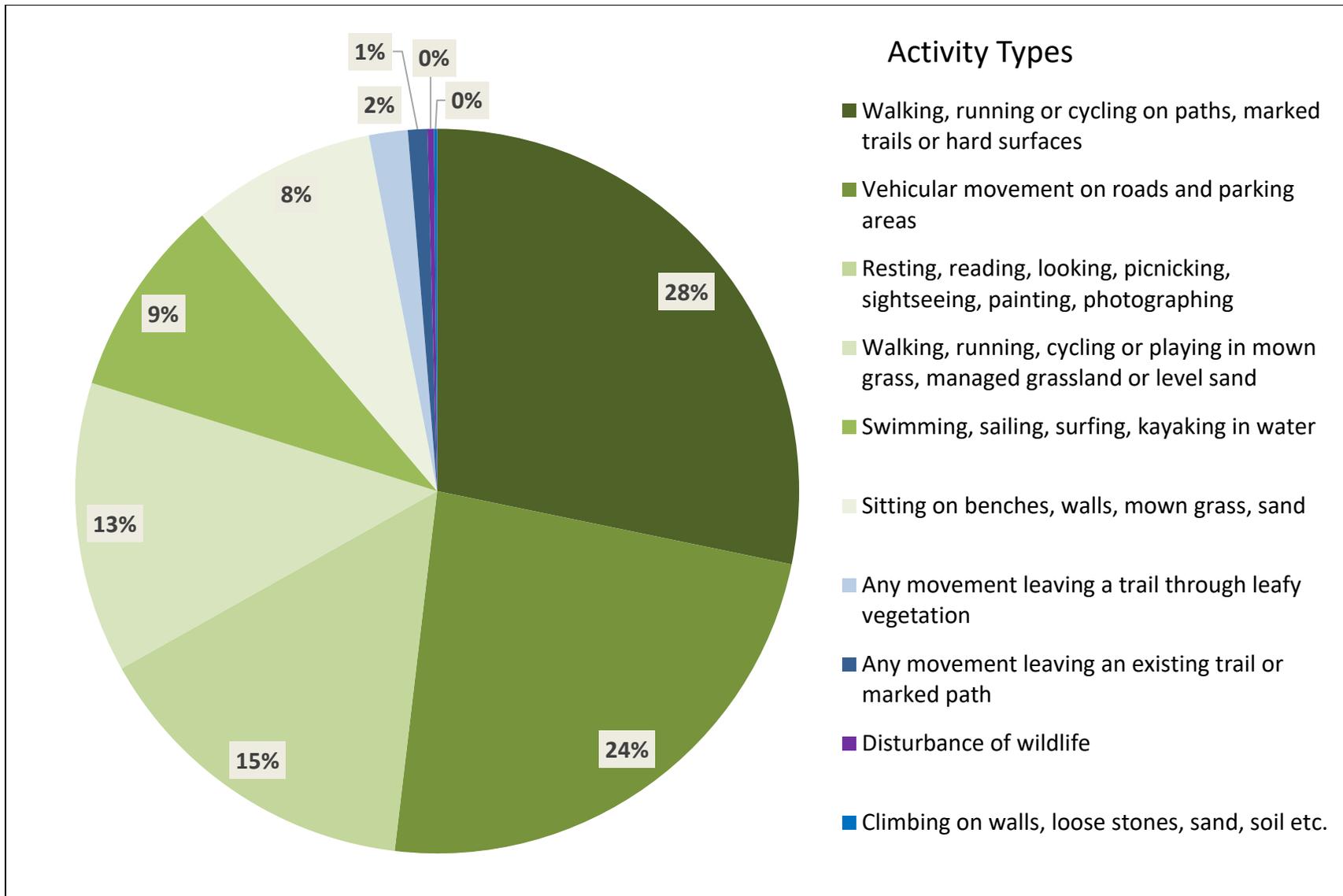


Figure 3.60 Range of Visitor Activities Observed at Traught Beach³⁰

³⁰ Two of the activities had an occurrence rate of one which equates to <1%. They are therefore recorded as 0% on the graph.

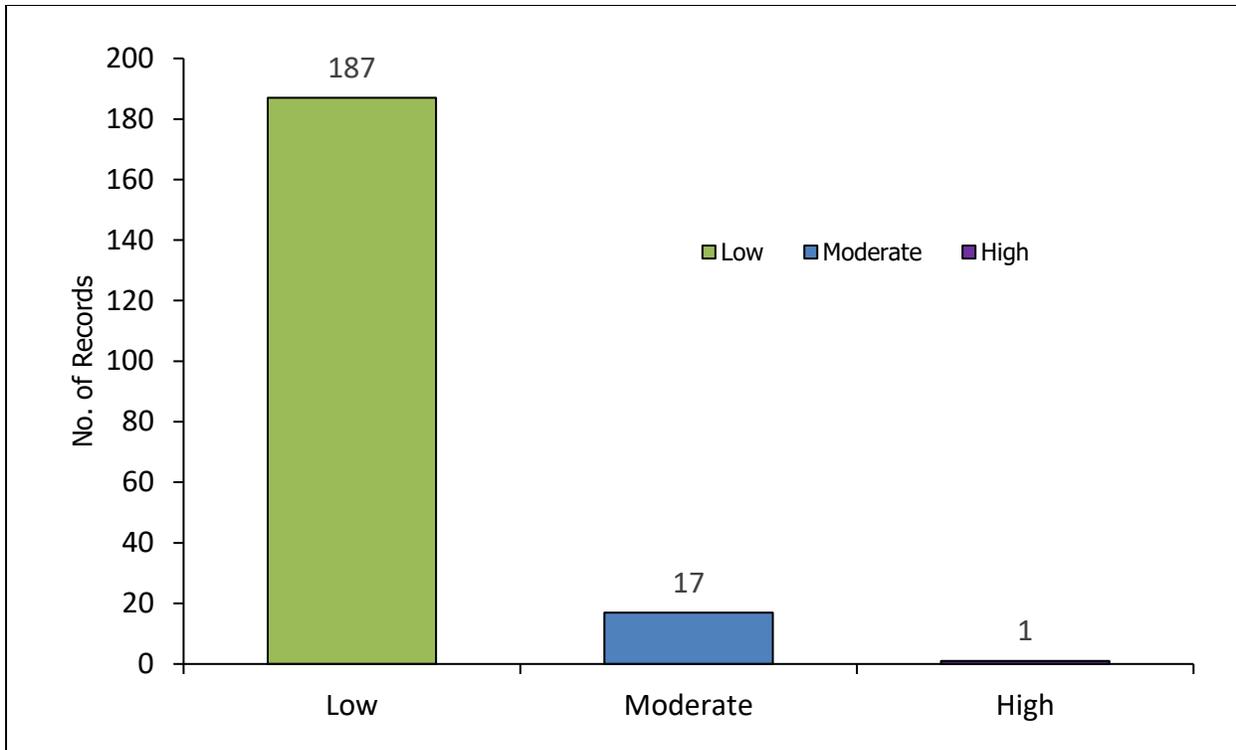


Figure 3.61 Categories of Environmental Impact Levels Observed at Traught Beach as a result of Visitor Activities

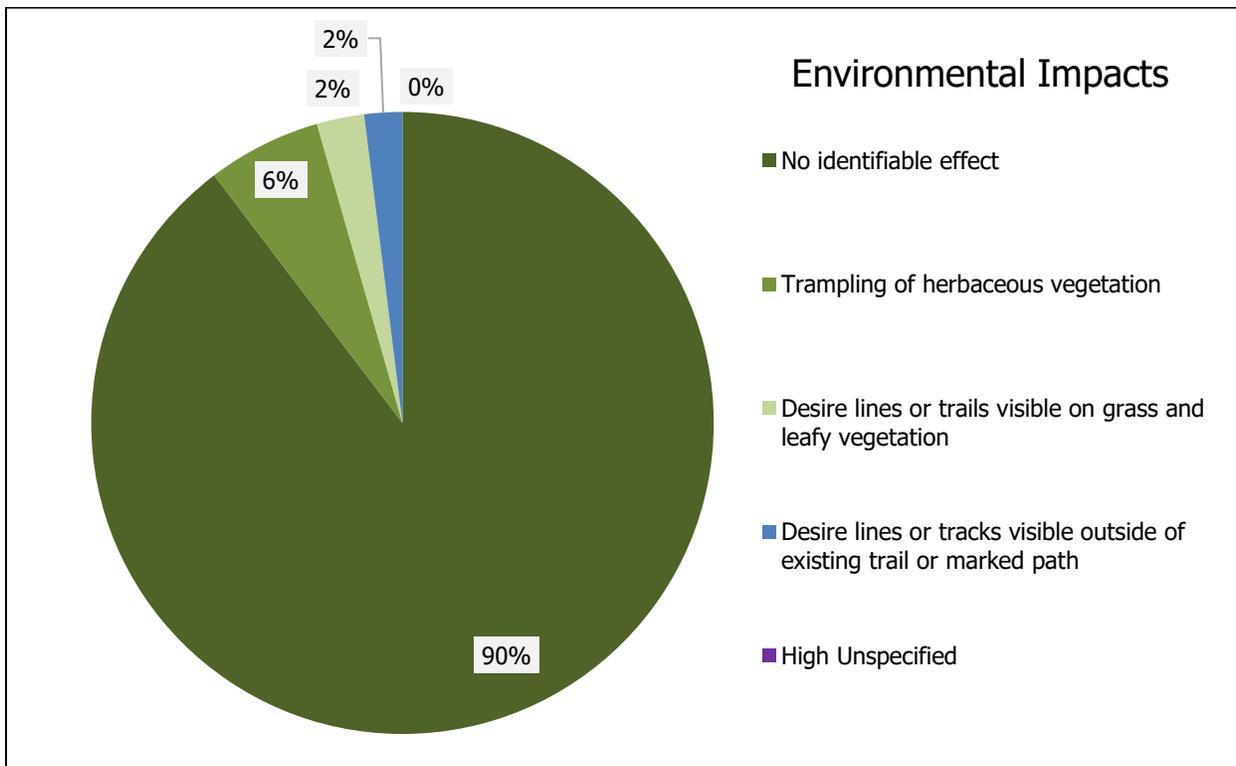


Figure 3.62 Environmental Impacts Observed at Traught Beach³¹

³¹ One of the impacts had an occurrence rate of one which equates to <1%. It is therefore recorded as 0% on the graph.

Table 3.8 Visitor Movement Zones Descriptions

Core Zone	Existing car parks, paved areas, viewing platforms, marked pathways, trails, tracks and managed grassland and areas where pathways, trails or roads exist. The majority of visitors remain in these zones.
Secondary Zone	Areas outside of existing car park, paved areas, marked pathways, trails, tracks and managed grassland. visitors are likely to traffic areas of grassland (in some cases farmland grazed by sheep or cattle), heath or bare rock, usually to get a better view of site attractions or to access trails at the site.
Tertiary Zone	Areas where no car park, paved areas, marked pathways, trails, tracks and managed grassland are identifiable and beyond the immediate boundaries of the site.

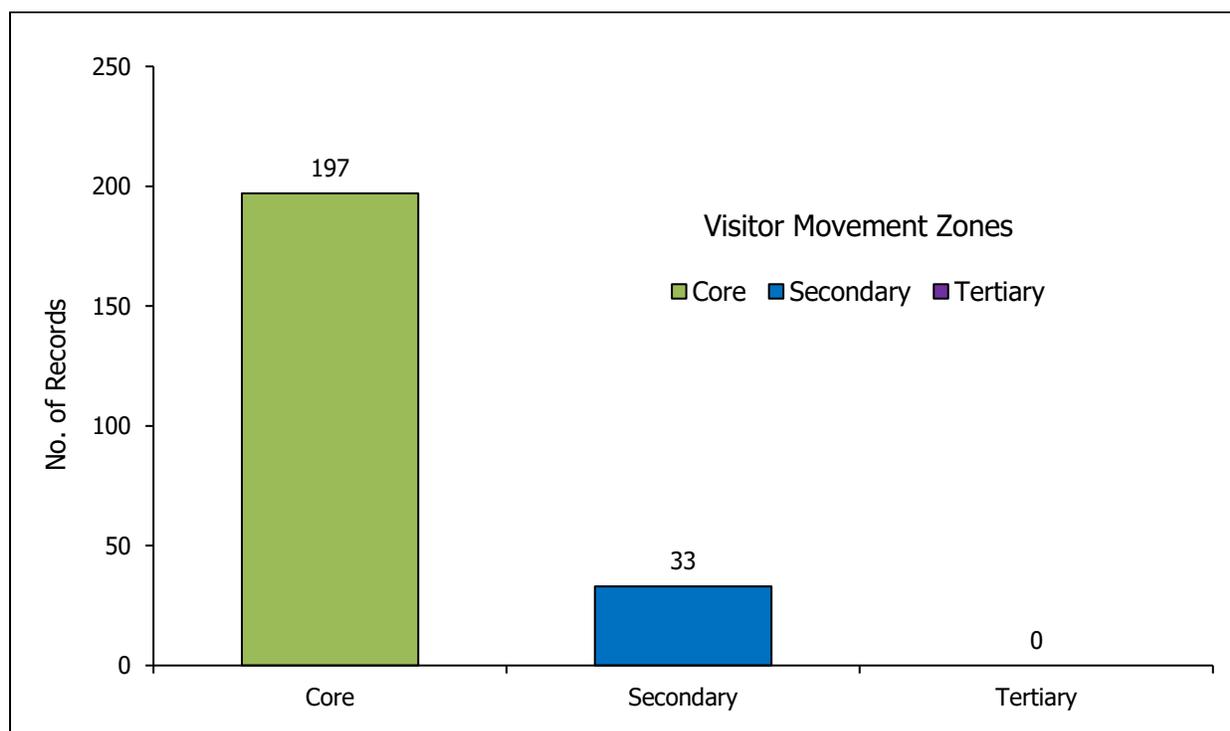


Figure 3.63 Zones Trafficked by Visitors at Traught Beach

3.8.1 Analysis of Results and visitor Movement patterns

The majority of visitors to the site stayed within the core zone of the beach car park and the beach itself.

90% of all visitors to the site took part in activities that resulted in no identifiable impacts to the site.

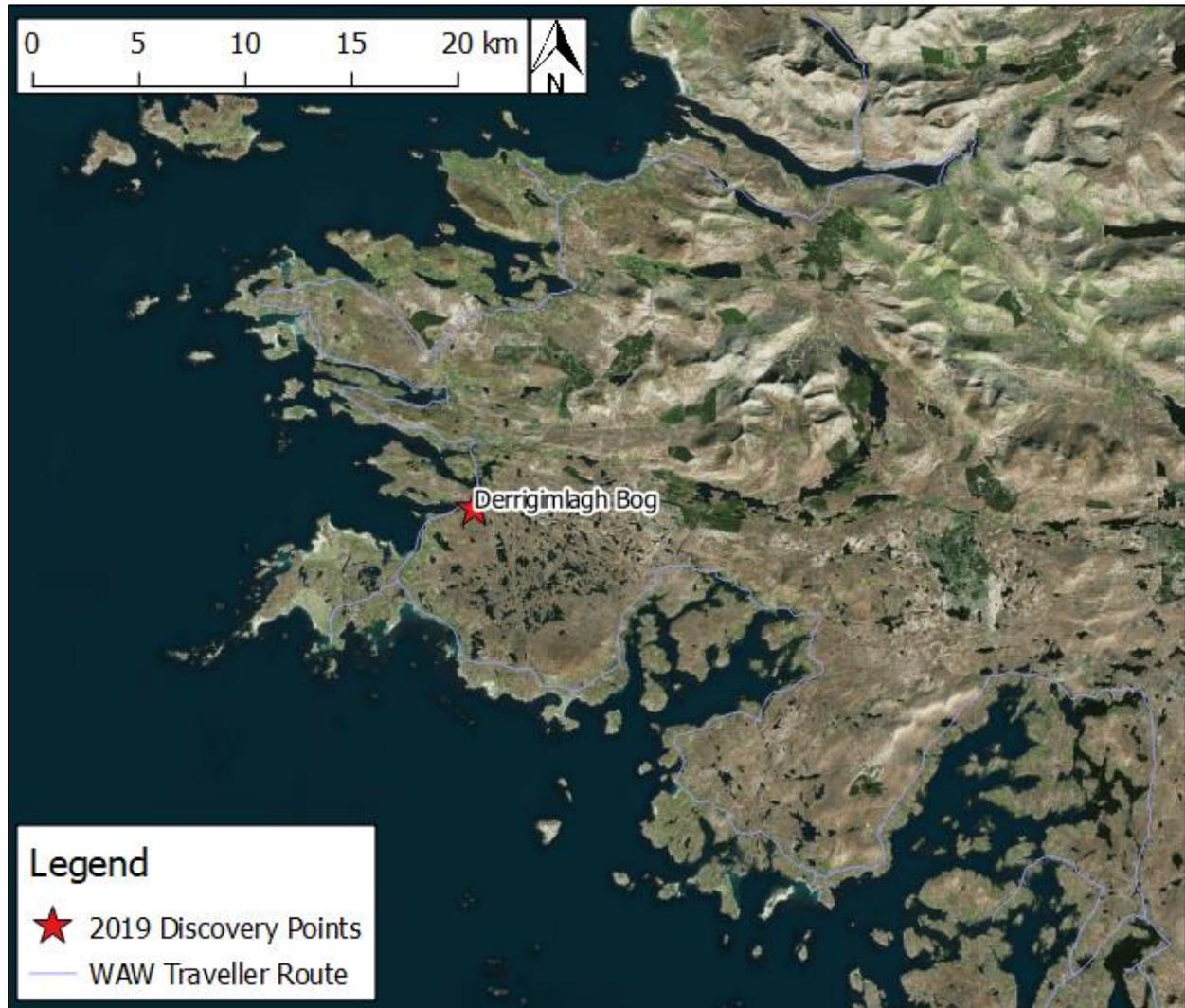
10% of visitors took part in activities that had effects on the environment including walking on or creating desire lines, trampling vegetation. One group was recorded operating a drone over the beach.



Figure 3.64 Location of Visitor Movement Zones at Traught Beach

Derrigimlagh Bog

ENVIRONMENTAL SURVEYING AND MONITORING RESULTS



3.9 Derrigimlagh Bog

Site Name: Derrigimlagh Bog	Date Surveyed: 27 th /28 th June 2019
County: Galway	Landscape Type: Atlantic blanket bog, heath and lakes
Total No. of People: 391	Average Duration of visitors on site: 00:13:52
<p>Site Description: Derrigimlagh Bog is located 4km south of Clifden in Connemara, Co. Galway. It comprises a 5km looped walking trail which takes visitors to various points of interest along the route. The site as a recently developed carpark area which has mobile vendors that utilise the space and a raised boardwalk facility weaving over the bog habitats on site. There are seven interactive interpretive stations that provide information on the rich history and ecology of the area. The site is the location of Marconi’s wireless radio station, from which the first commercial transmission of Morse code across the Atlantic originated in 1907. It is also the landing site for the first non-stop transatlantic flight between the USA and Europe, made by Alcock and Brown in 1919. The site is surrounded by Atlantic blanket bog and offers superb views of the Twelve Bens. The site is adjacent to the Connemara Bog Complex SAC and is approximately 0.6km from the Connemara Bog Complex SPA and the Slyne Head Peninsula SAC. These areas are designated for the protection of Atlantic heath, blanket bog, marsh fritillary butterfly (<i>Eurphydryas aurinia</i>), otter (<i>Lutra lutra</i>) and merlin (<i>Palco colubarius</i>).</p> <p>Upgrades to Site: The site underwent a €1.2 million upgrade in 2016. There are roadworks between the site and Clifden and various private residences under construction along the same route.</p>	

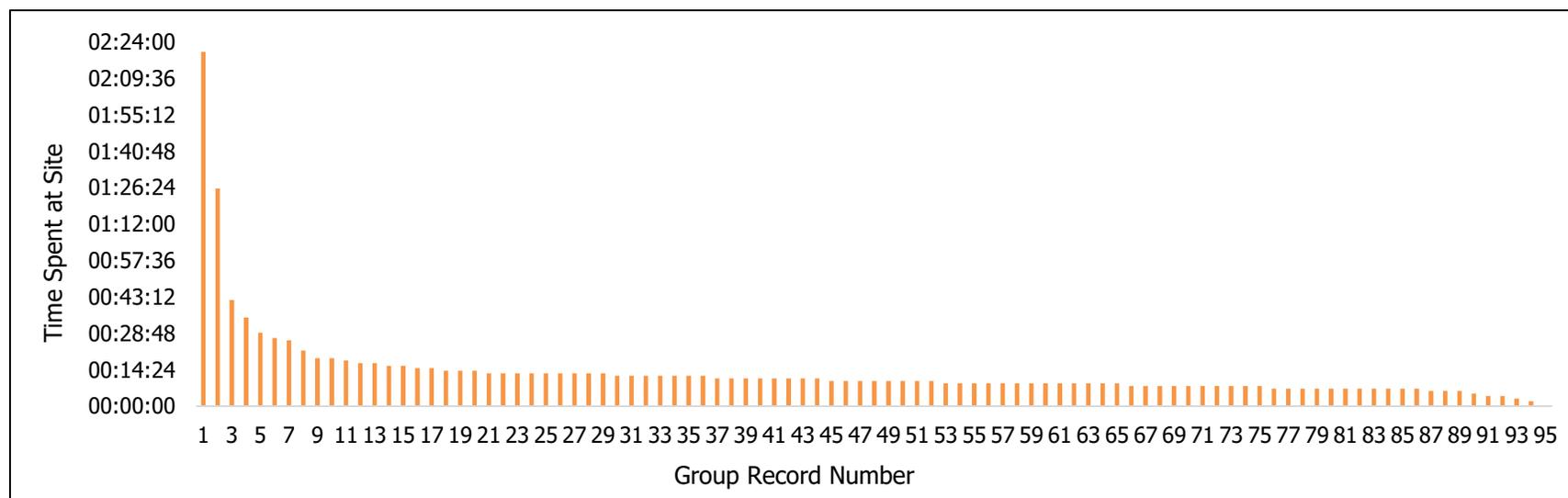


Figure 3.65 Duration of Time Spent at Derrigimlagh Bog³²

³² This chart represents 95/152 groups recorded, there was no data recorded for 58 groups.

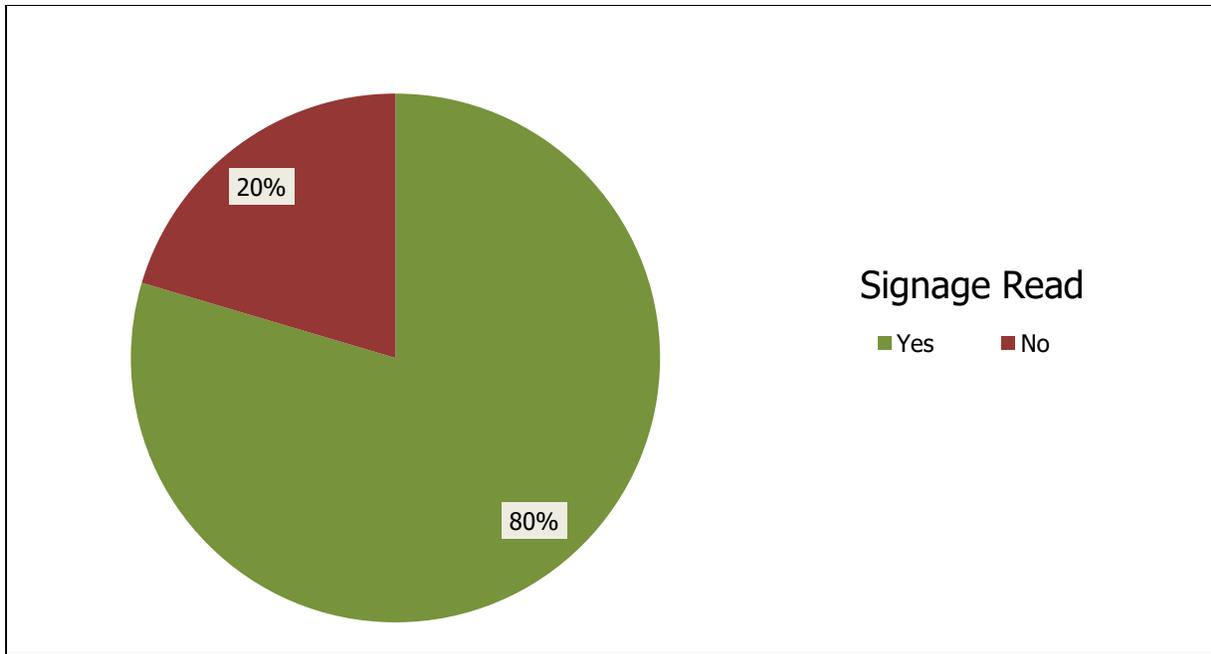


Figure 3.66 Use of Interpretive Material at Derrigimlagh Bog³³

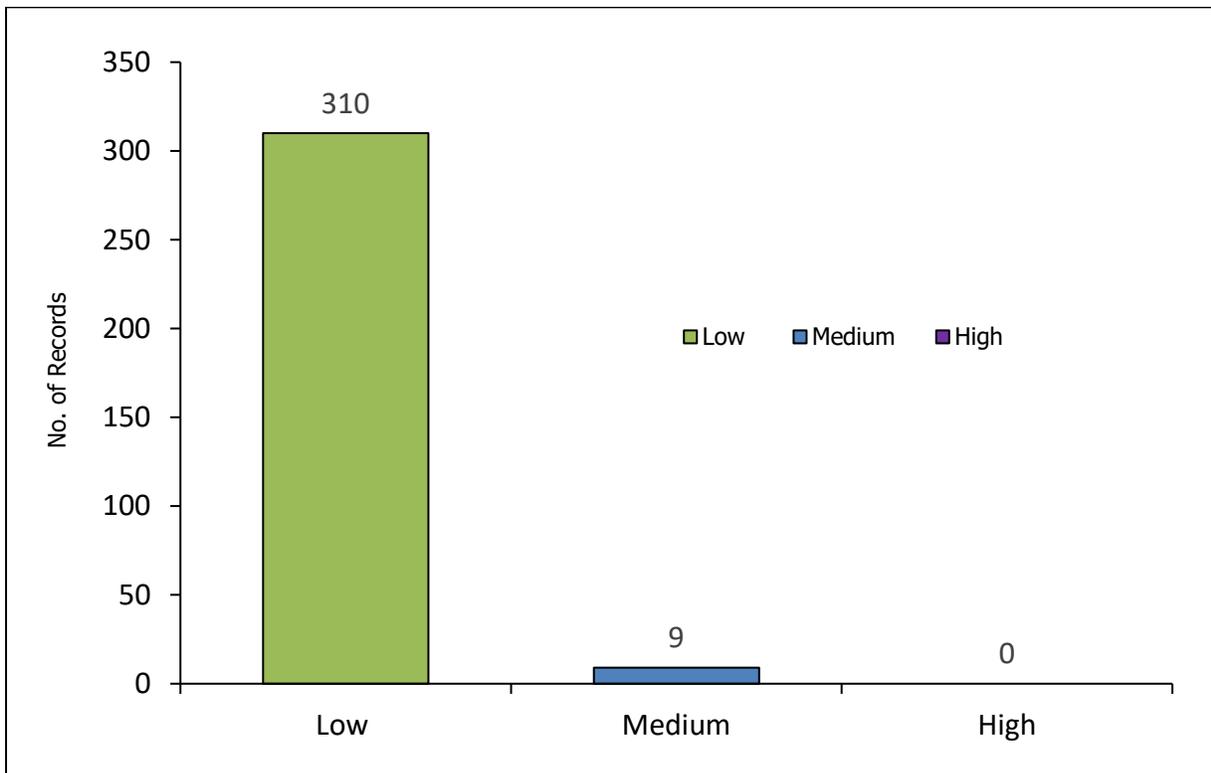


Figure 3.67 Categories of Activity Levels Observed at Derrigimlagh Bog

³³ This chart represents 147 out of 153 records. There was no data available for 6 groups.

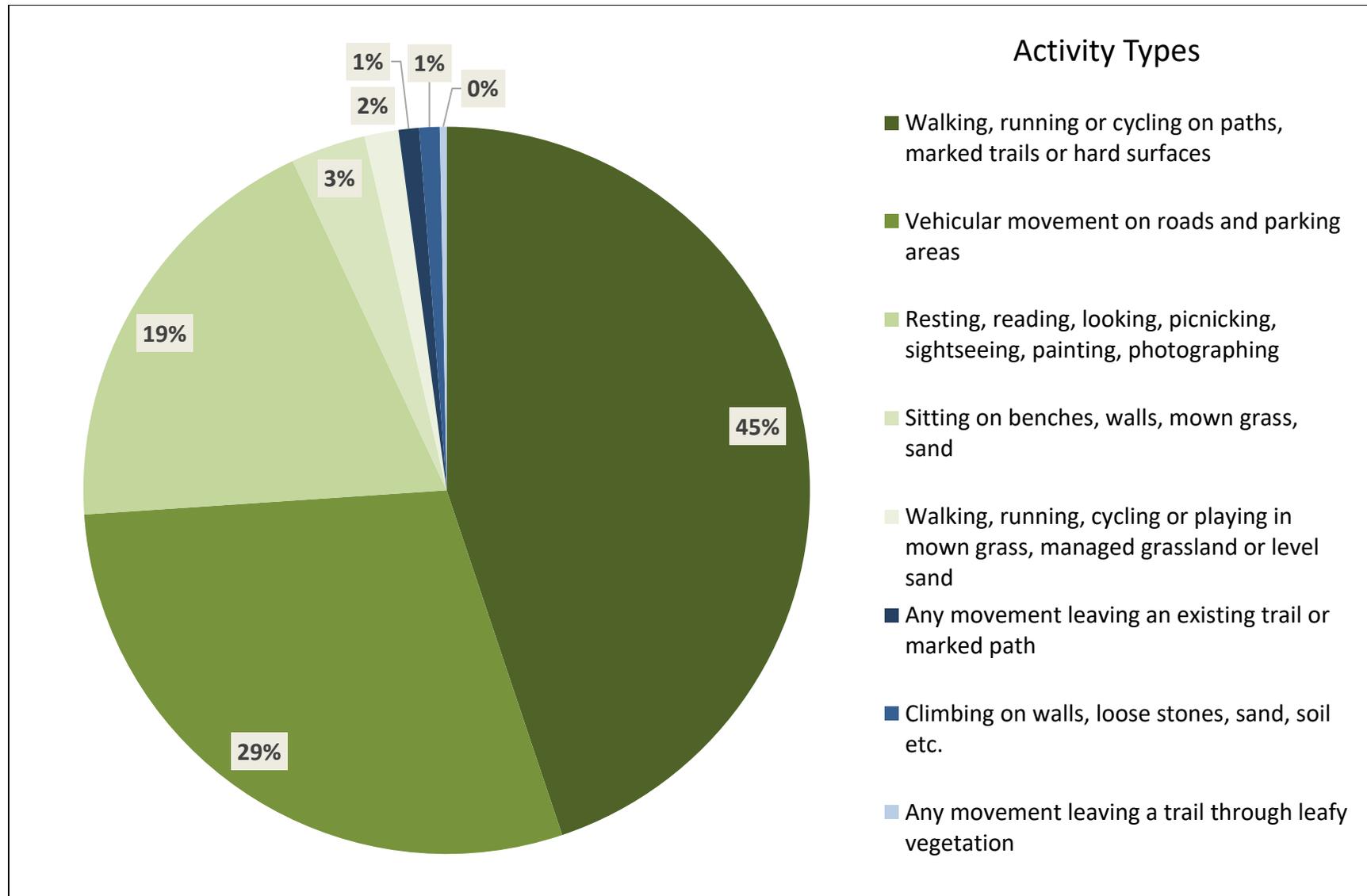


Figure 3.68 Range of Visitor Activities Observed at Derrigimlagh Bog³⁴

³⁴ One of the activities had an occurrence rate of one which equates to <1%. It is therefore recorded as 0% on the graph.

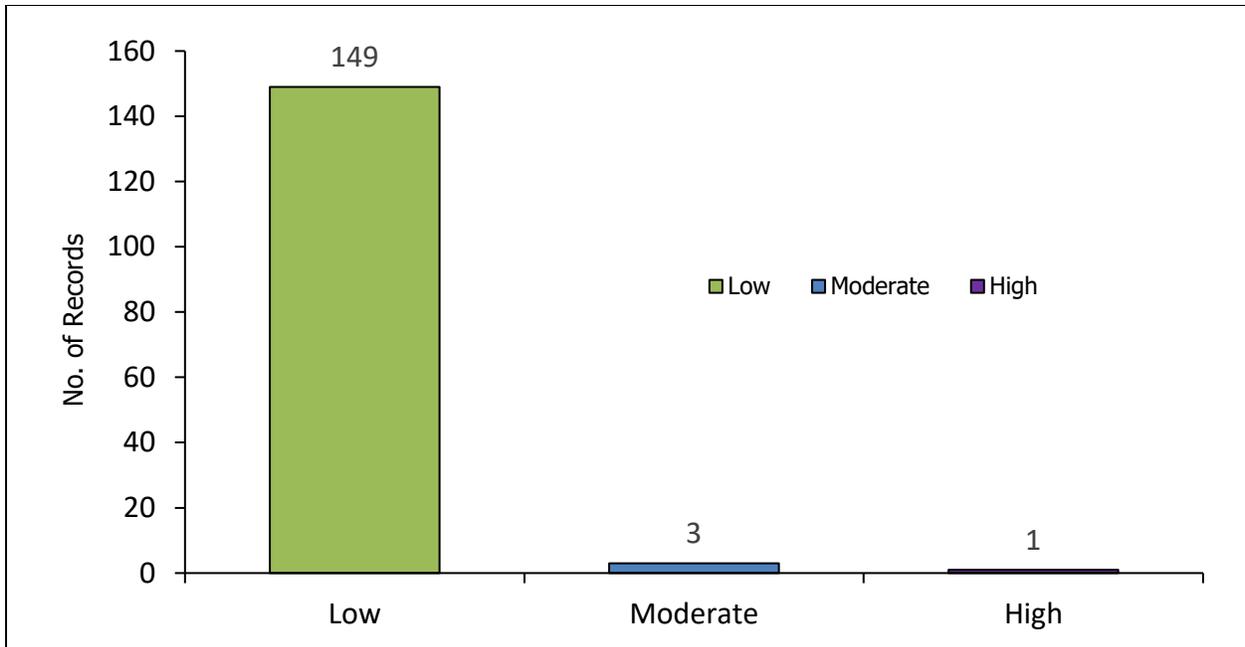


Figure 3.69 Categories of Environmental Impact Levels Observed at Derrigimlagh Bog as a result of Visitor Activities

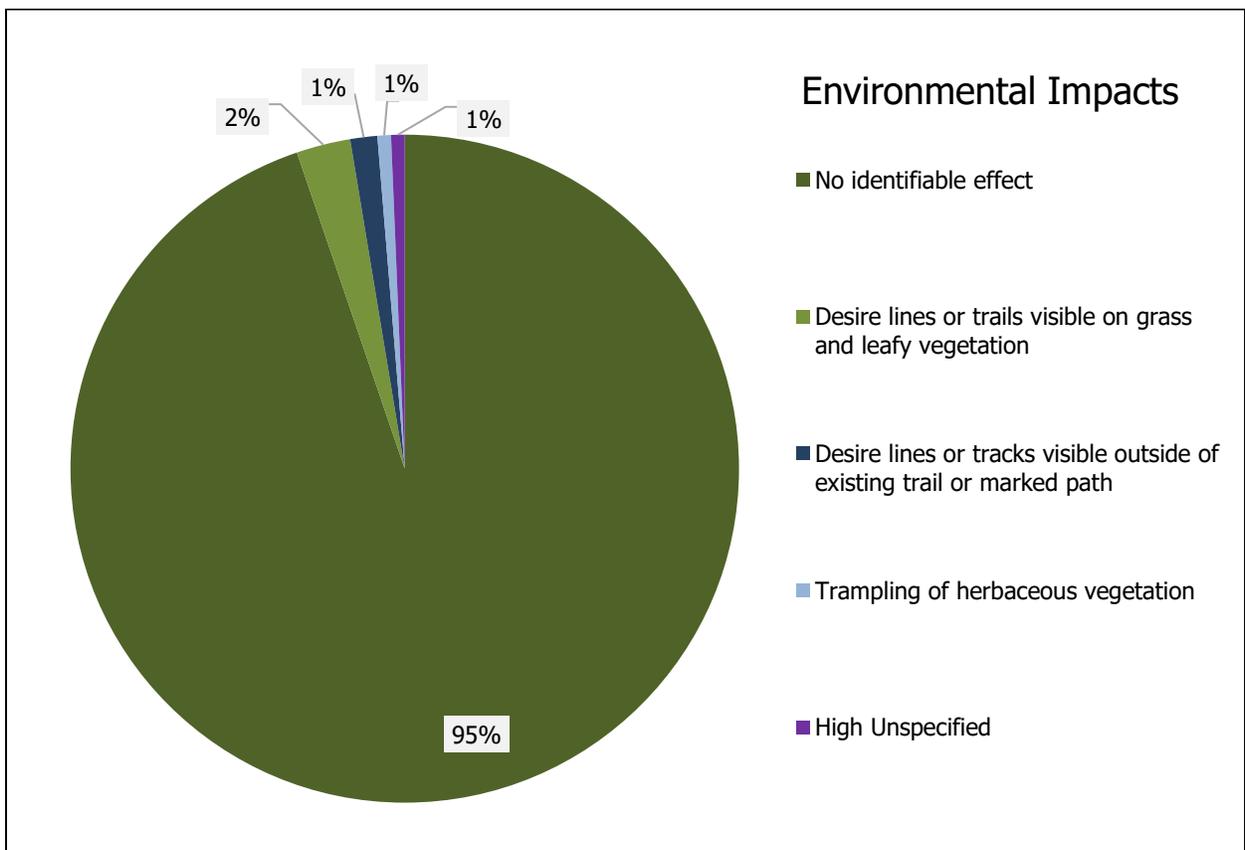


Figure 3.70 Range of Environmental Impacts Observed at Derrigimlagh Bog

Table 3.9 Visitor Movement Zones Descriptions

Core Zone	Existing car parks, paved areas, viewing platforms, marked pathways, trails, tracks and managed grassland and areas where pathways, trails or roads exist. The majority of visitors remain in these zones.
Secondary Zone	Areas outside of existing car park, paved areas, marked pathways, trails, tracks and managed grassland. visitors are likely to traffic areas of grassland (in some cases farmland grazed by sheep or cattle), heath or bare rock, usually to get a better view of site attractions or to access trails at the site.
Tertiary Zone	Areas where no car park, paved areas, marked pathways, trails, tracks and managed grassland are identifiable and beyond the immediate boundaries of the site.

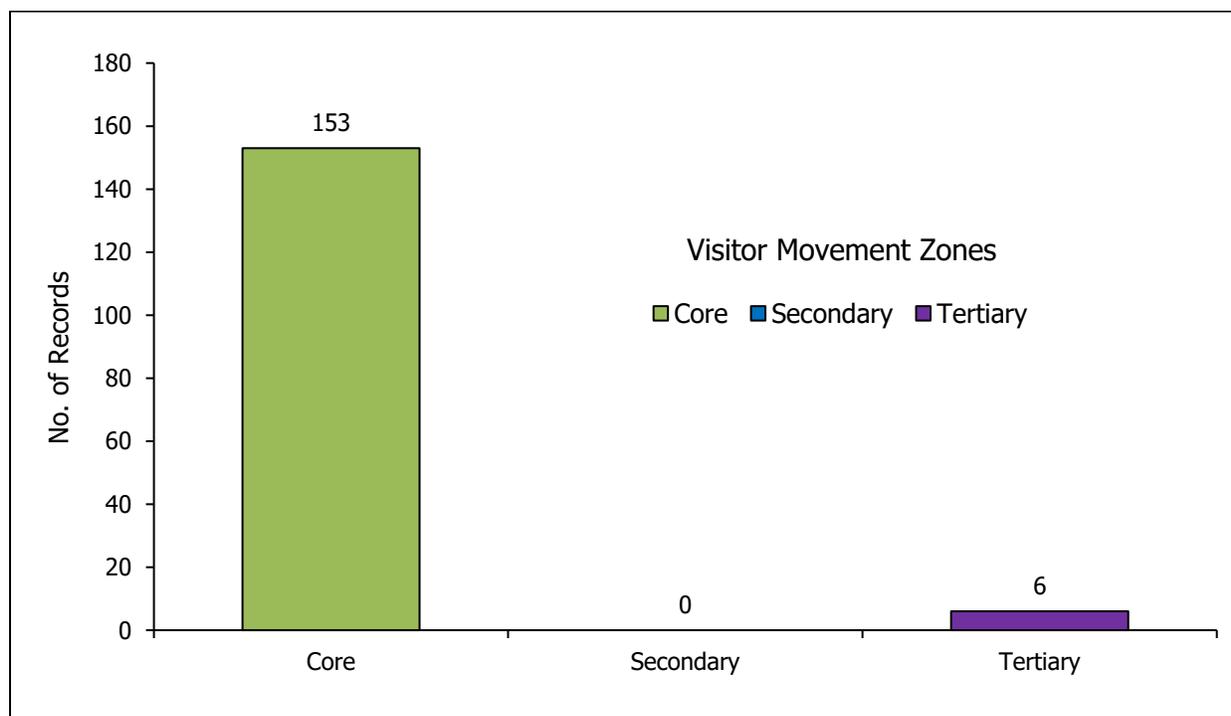


Figure 3.71 Zones Trafficked by Visitors at Derrigimlagh Bog

3.9.1 Analysis of Results and Visitor Movement Patterns

The core zone at Derrigimlagh Bog was trafficked 153 times. There were no visitor movements in the secondary zone but there were 6 incidences of visitors leaving the path to better explore the site in the tertiary zone.

95% of all visitors took part in activities that had no identifiable effect to the site. Low-level effects occurred when people used existing desire lines. Medium-level impacts were observed when visitors went outside of designated areas, creating new desire lines and trampling some herbaceous vegetation. In one case a group of visitors drove along the walking trail.

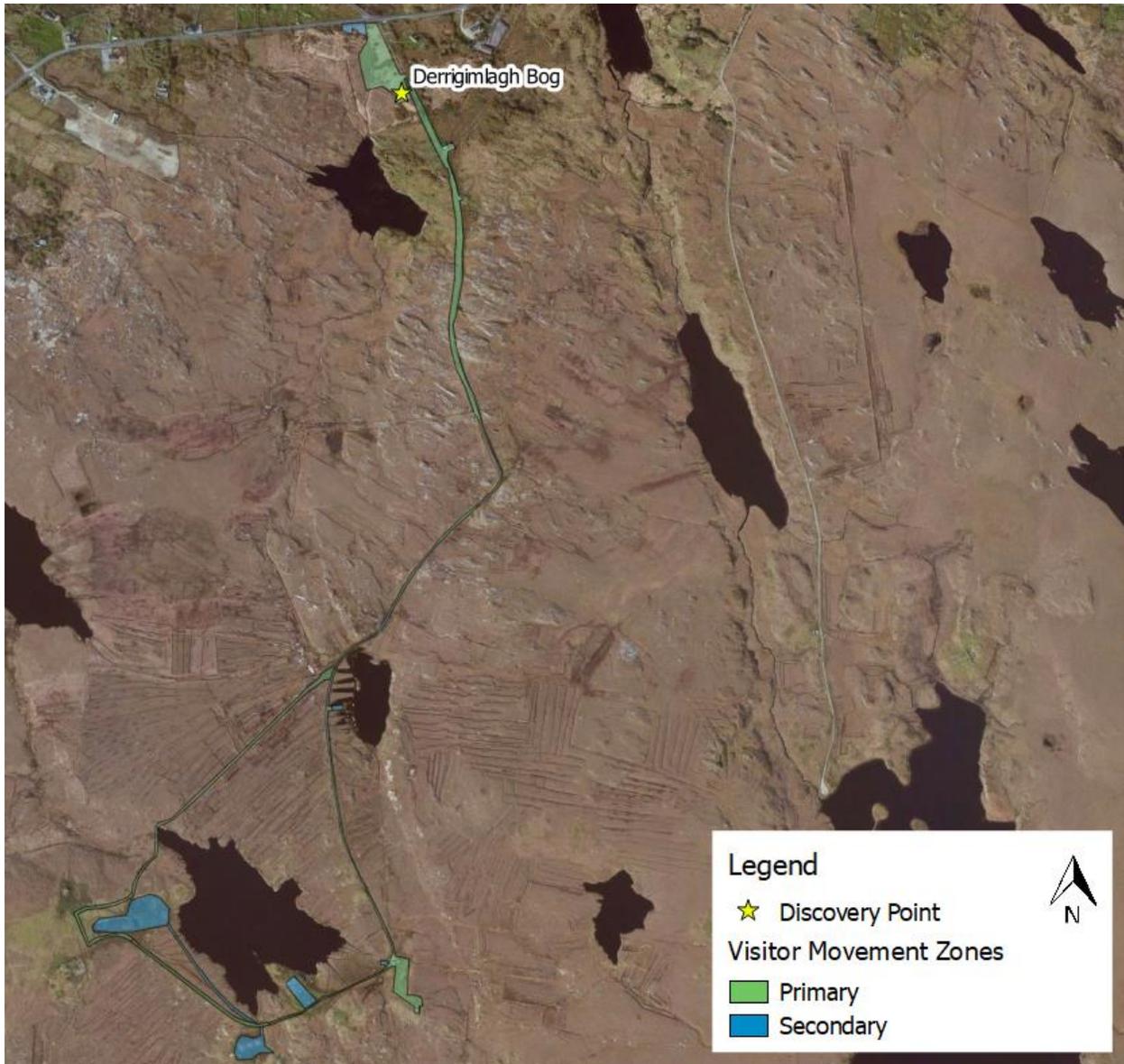


Figure 3.72 Location of Visitor Movement Zones at Derrigimlagh Bog

Blacksod Harbour

ENVIRONMENTAL SURVEYING AND MONITORING RESULTS



3.10 Blacksod Harbour

Site Name: Blacksod Harbour	Date Surveyed: 4 th /5 th June 2019
County: Mayo	Landscape Type: Highly modified built environment on coastline
Total No. of People: 90	Average Duration of visitors on site: 0:21:39
<p>Site Description: Blacksod Harbour is located approximately 20km south of Belmullet at the tip of the Mullet Peninsula, Co. Mayo. The Discovery Point lies adjacent to Blacksod Lighthouse, Blacksod Pier and a memorial garden for 3350 local people that emigrated to America and Canada in 1883 and 1884 on 15 voyages. The site comprises a gravel carpark, a picnic table, and interpretive signage. Blacksod Lighthouse has a rich history, including a key role in the D-Day landings of 6 June 1944. This site offers impressive views towards Achill Island, particularly from the pier. The Discovery Point lies directly adjacent to the Mullet/Blacksod Bay Complex SAC and the Blacksod Bay/Broadhaven SPA</p> <p>Upgrades to Site: There have been no identifiable upgrades to the site or the surrounding area in 2019. Public tours of the lighthouse are a possibility soon.</p>	

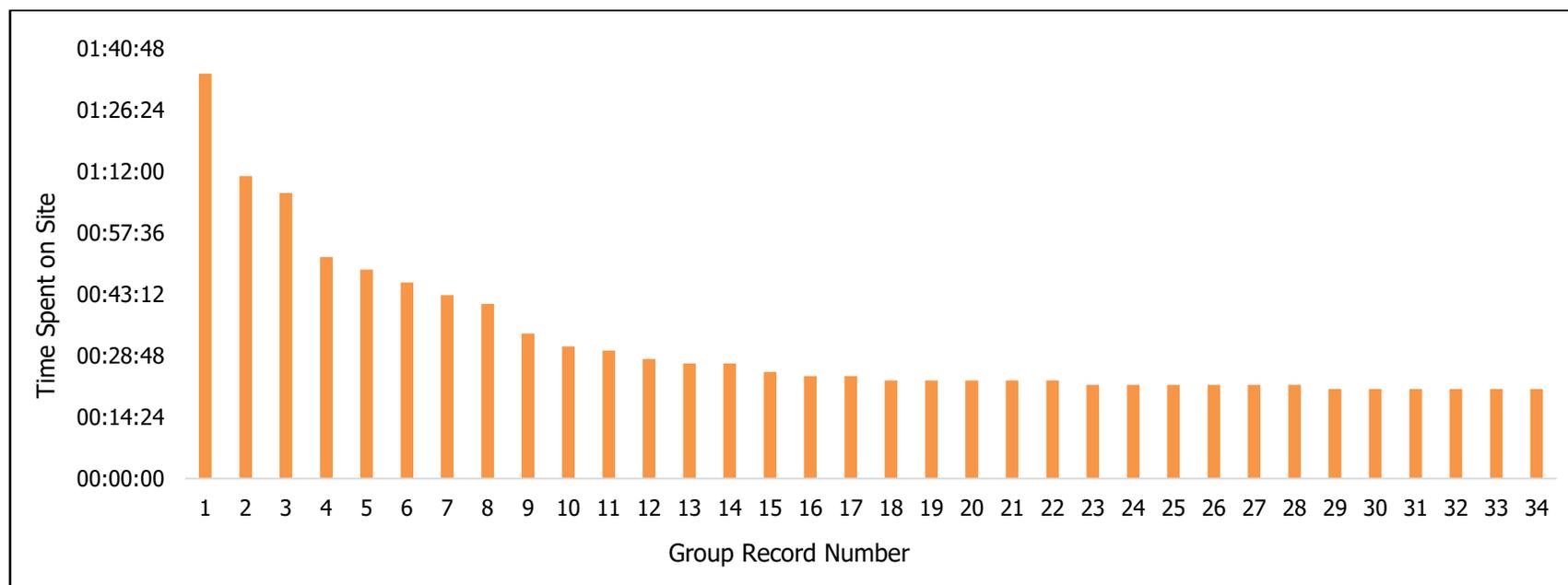


Figure 3.73 Duration of Time Spent at Blacksod Harbour³⁵

³⁵ This chart represents 34/152 groups recorded, there was no data recorded for 58 groups.

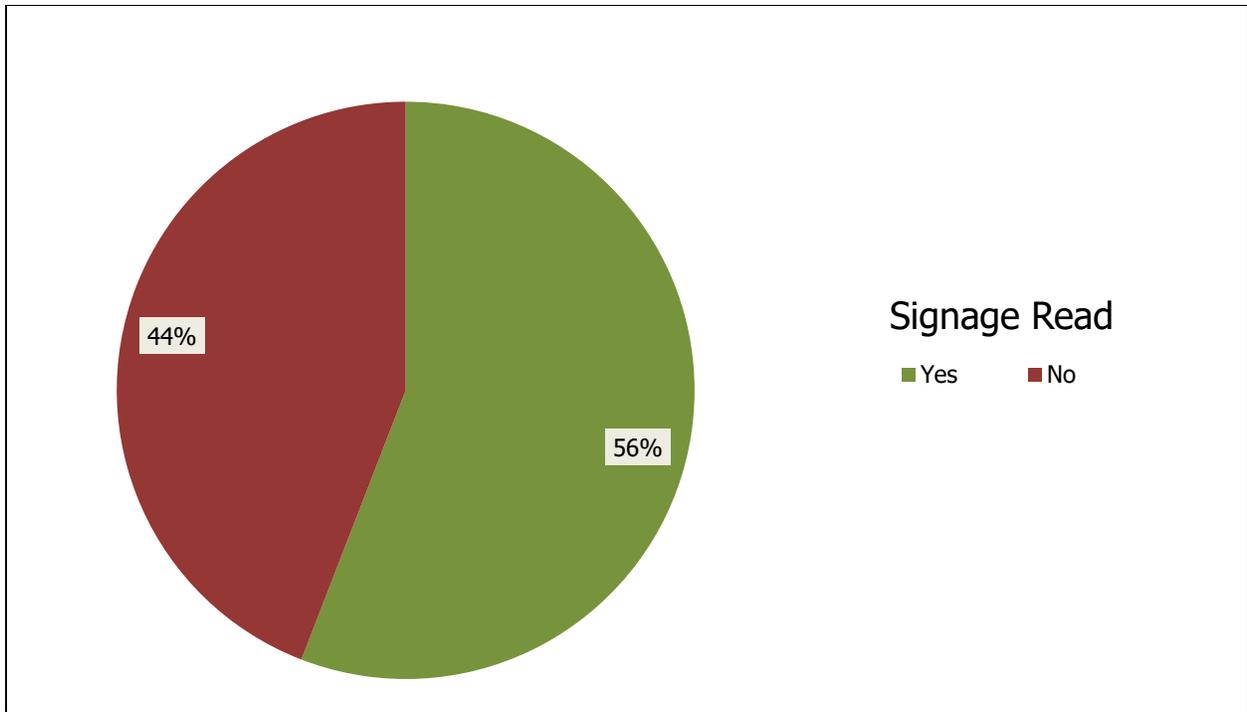


Figure 3.74 Use of Interpretive signs at Blacksod Harbour³⁶

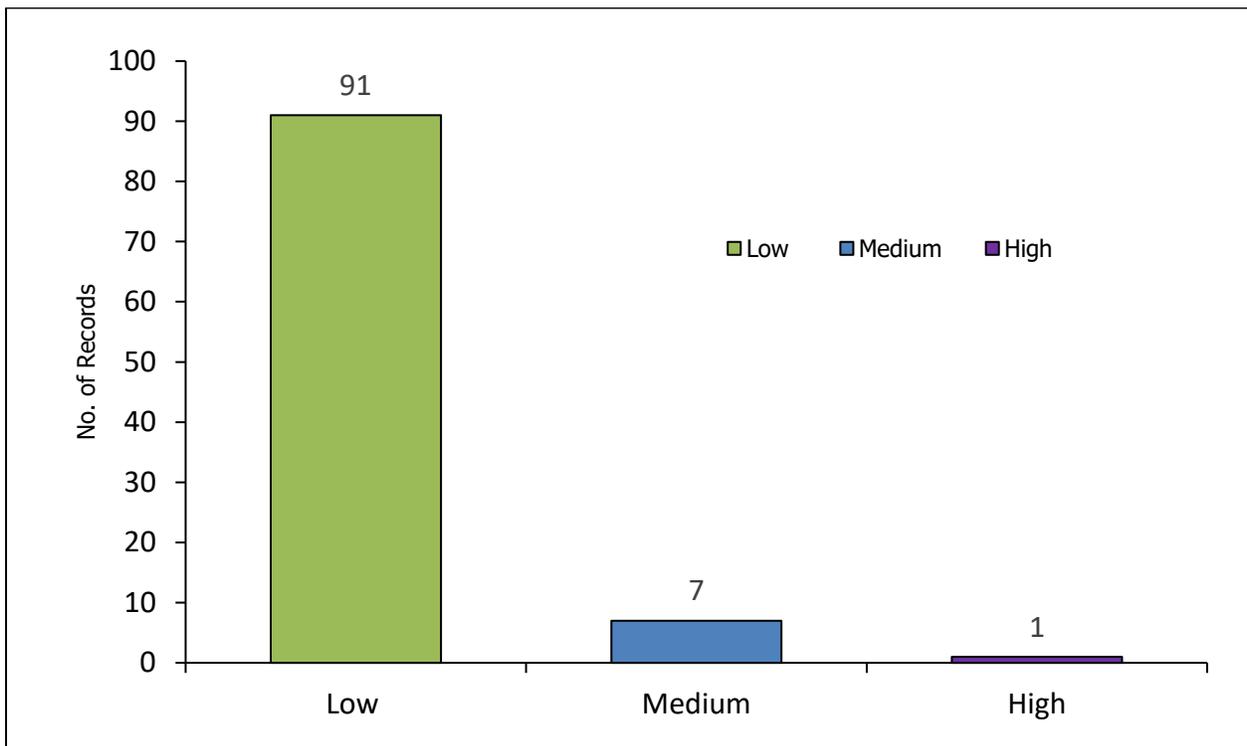


Figure 3.75 Categories of Activity Levels Observed at Blacksod Harbour

³⁶ This chart represents 34/35 records. There was no data available for 1 group.

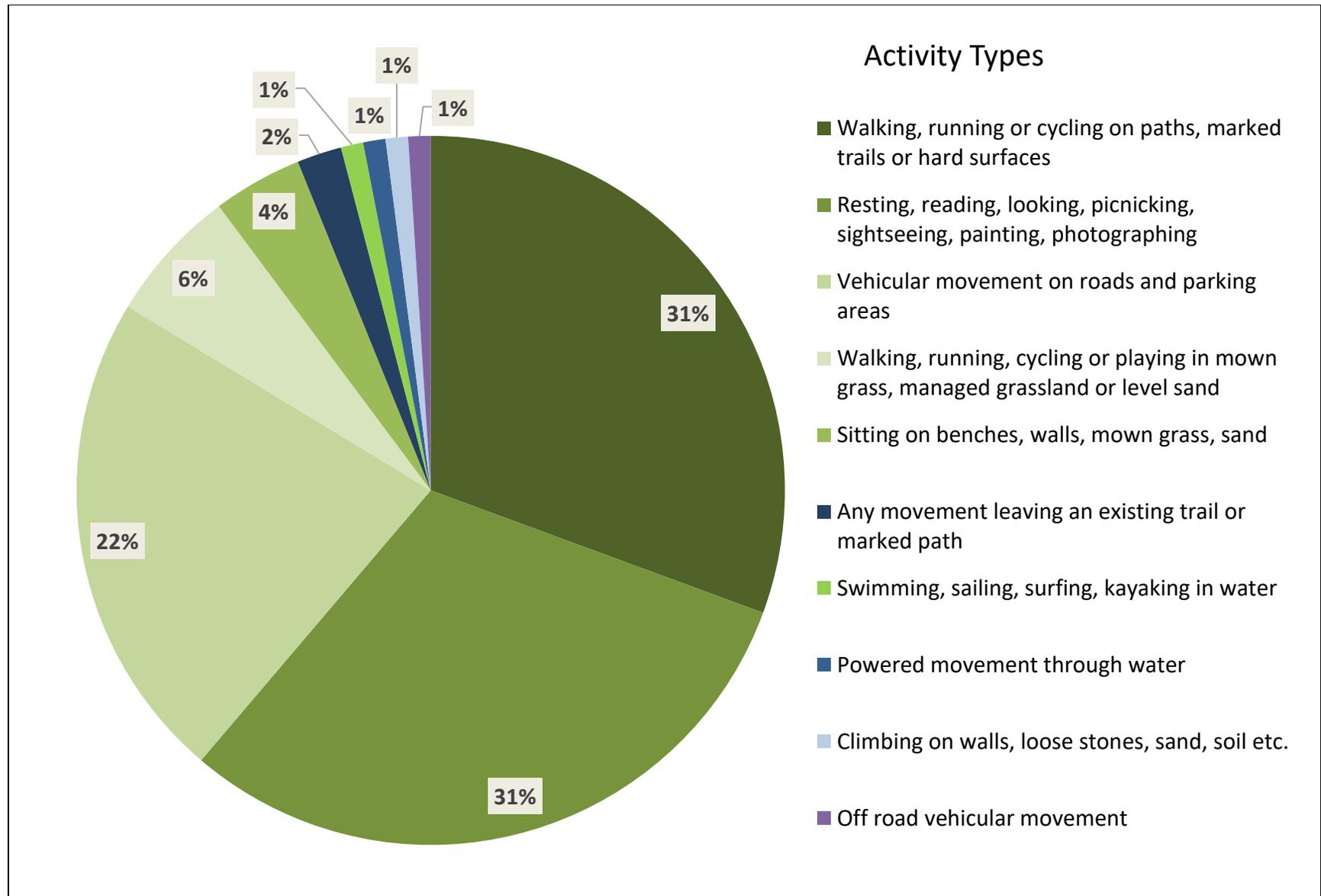


Figure 3.76 Range of Visitor Activities Observed at Blacksod Harbour

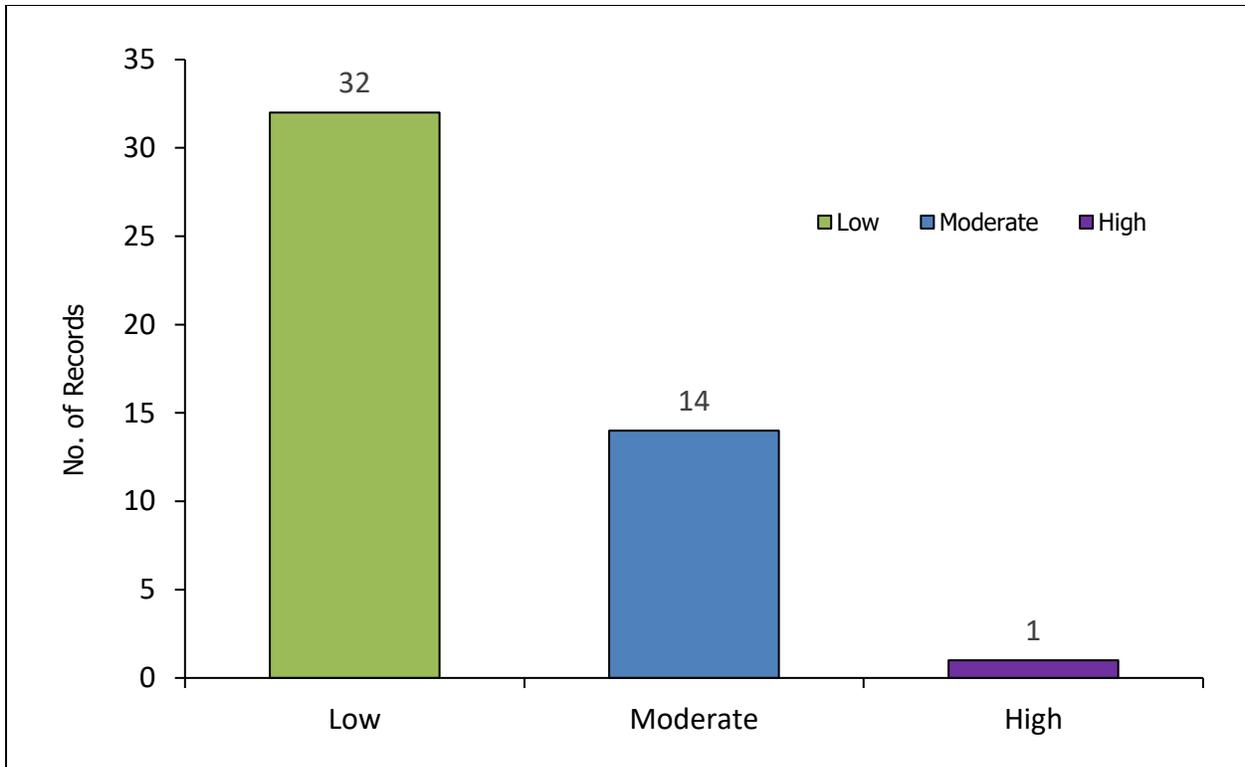


Figure 3.77 Categories of Environmental Impact Levels Observed at Blacksod Harbour as a result of Visitor Activities

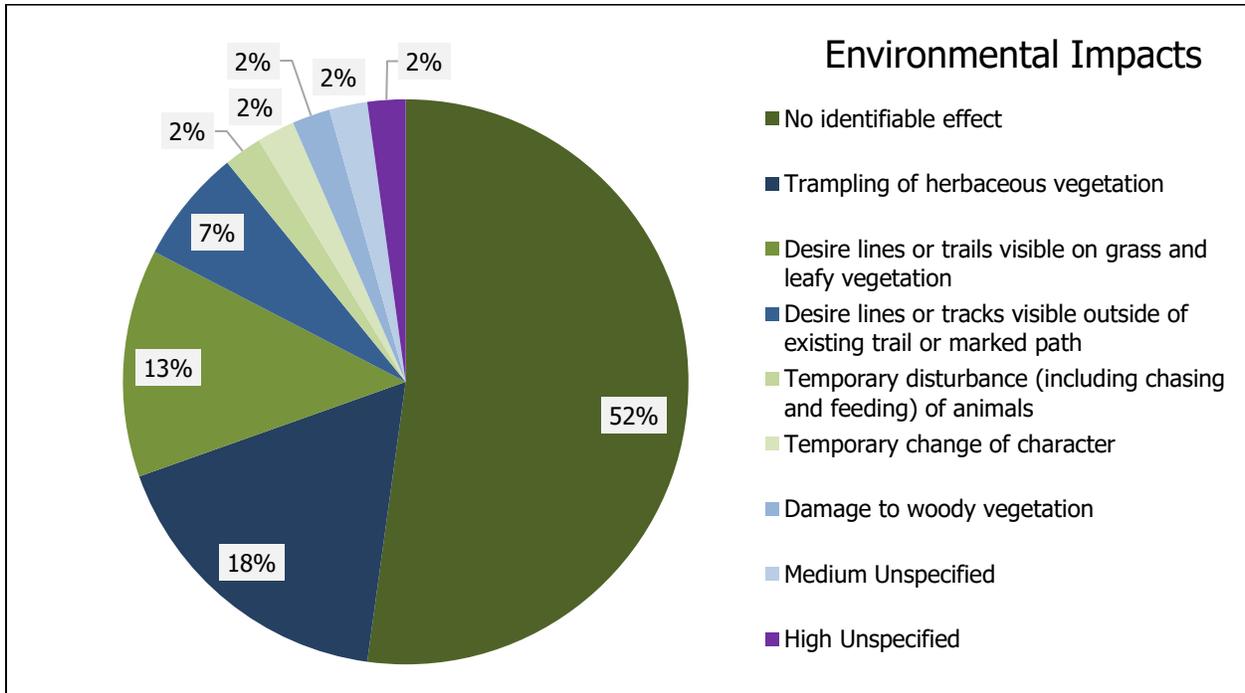
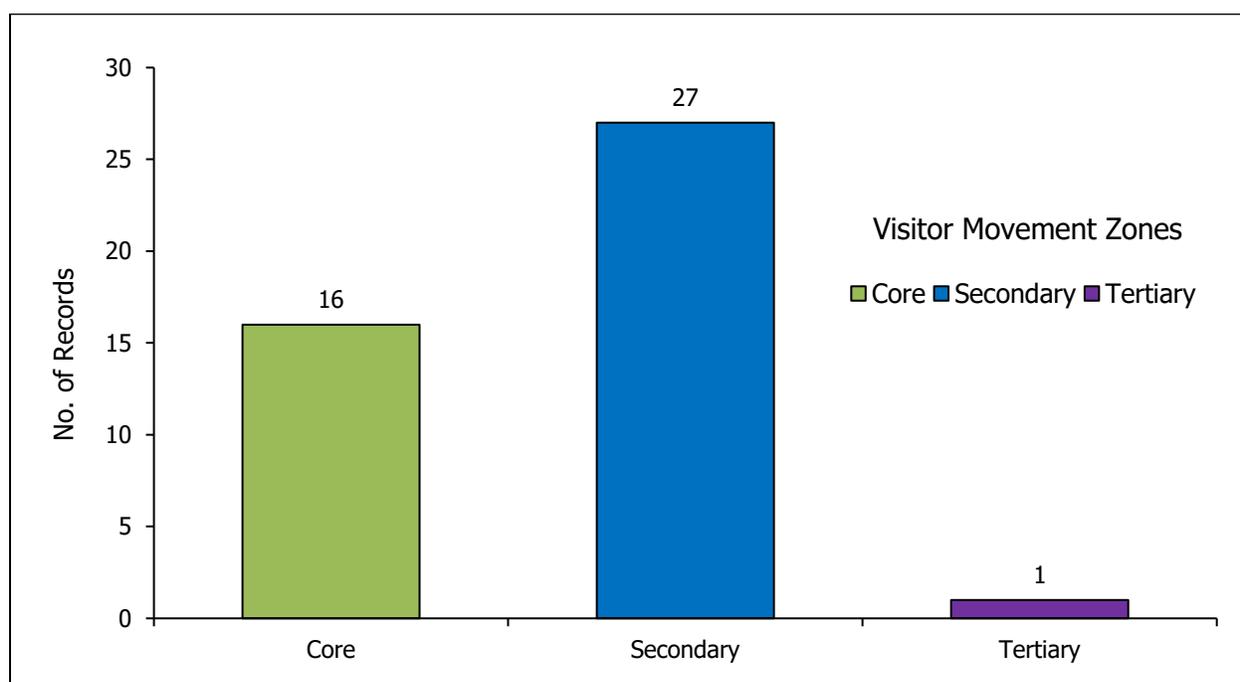


Figure 3.78 Range of Environmental Impacts Observed at Blacksod Harbour

Table 3.10 Visitor Movement Zones Descriptions

Core Zone	Existing car parks, paved areas, viewing platforms, marked pathways, trails, tracks and managed grassland and areas where pathways, trails or roads exist. The majority of visitors remain in these zones.
Secondary Zone	Areas outside of existing car park, paved areas, marked pathways, trails, tracks and managed grassland. visitors are likely to traffic areas of grassland (in some cases farmland grazed by sheep or cattle), heath or bare rock, usually to get a better view of site attractions or to access trails at the site.
Tertiary Zone	Areas where no car park, paved areas, marked pathways, trails, tracks and managed grassland are identifiable and beyond the immediate boundaries of the site.

**Figure 3.79 Zones Trafficked by Visitors at Blacksod Harbour****3.10.1 Analysis of Results and Visitor Movement Patterns**

The core zone was trafficked 16 times while the secondary zone was trafficked 27 times and only 1 incidence of visitor movements was recorded in the tertiary zone.

52% of visitors took part in activities that had no identifiable impacts to the site. 17% took part in activities that had a low-level effect to the site. 29% took part in activities that had a medium level effect to the site such as climbing on monuments near the Discovery Point and 8 groups were recorded trampling vegetation in order to get a better view. There was one incidence of public urination at the site.

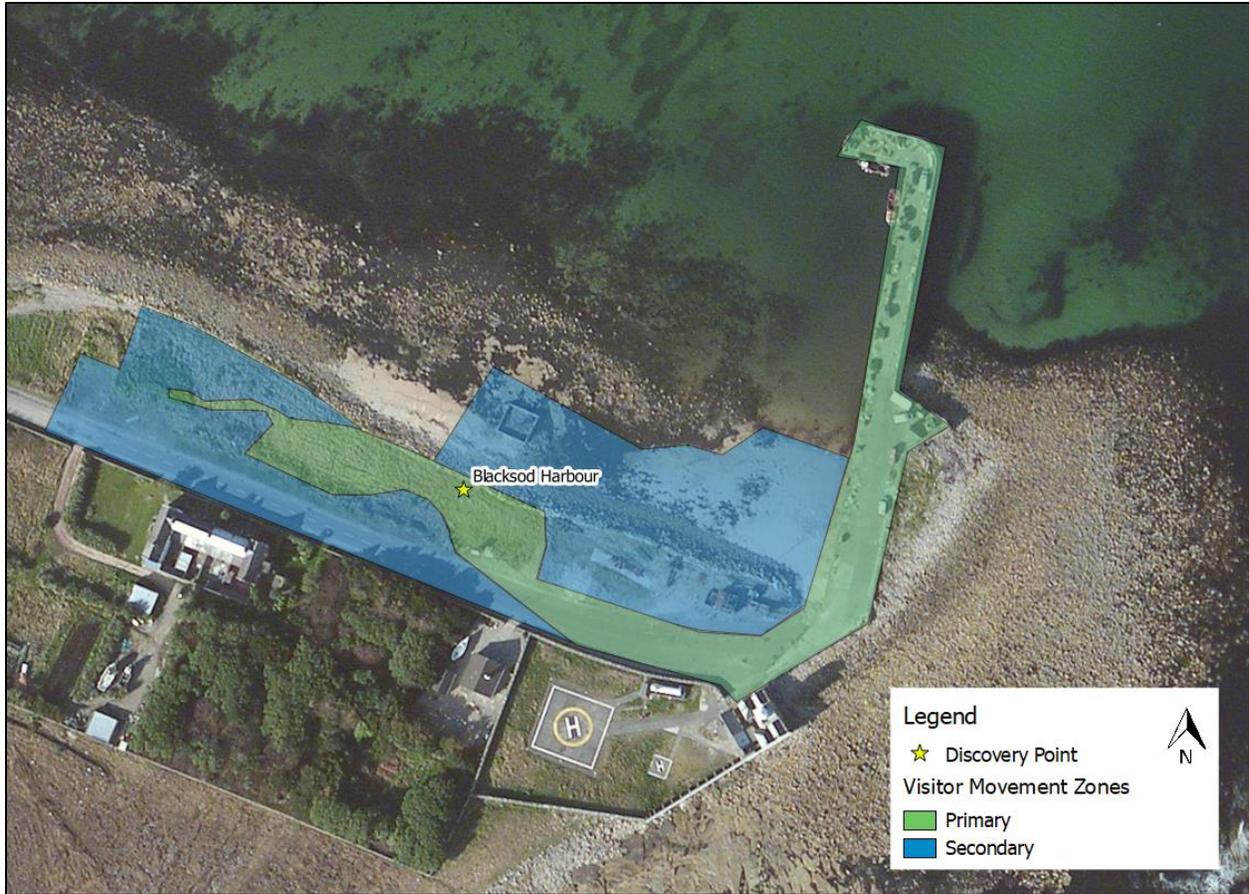
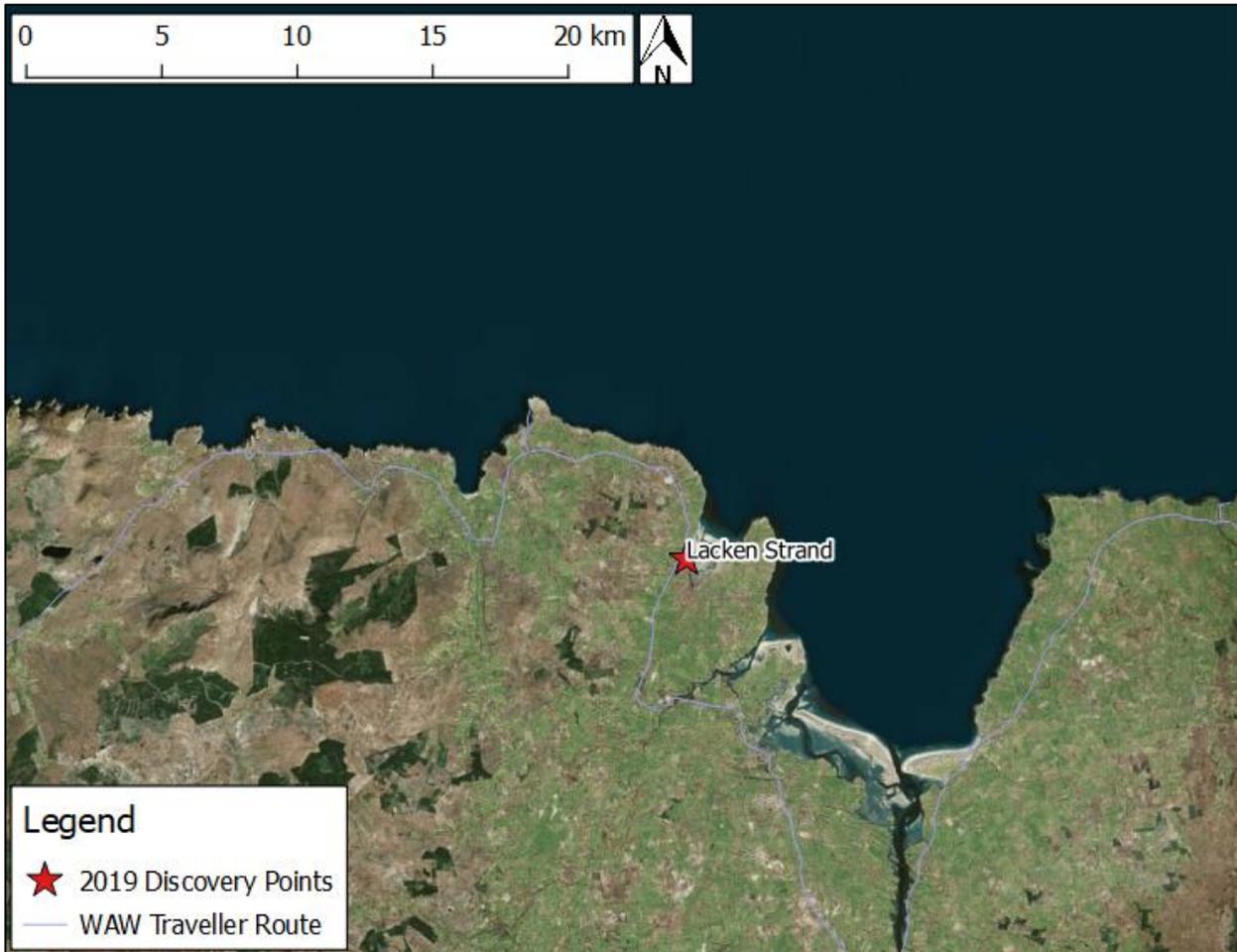


Figure 3.80 Location of Visitor Movement Zones at Blacksod Harbour

Lacken Strand

ENVIRONMENTAL SURVEYING AND MONITORING RESULTS



3.11 Lacken Strand

Site Name: Lacken Strand	Date Surveyed: 06 th /07 th July
County: Mayo	Landscape Type: Saltmarsh and extensive sandy shore
Total No. of People: 83	Average Duration of visitors on site: 0:21:17
<p>Site Description: Lacken Strand Discovery Point is located 8km northeast of Killala, Co. Mayo. Lacken Strand is a shallow estuary that is approximately 1.5km long and 1km wide, where the Cloonalaghan river meets the sea. The rear of the strand and river mouth are fringed by saltmarsh, and the front of the strand is protected by large, well-established dune systems. Saltmarsh occurs in the inner reaches of the estuary. The Discovery Point has very limited visitor facilities, with an access road used for parking and limited informational signage. It is located within the Lacken Saltmarsh and Kilcummin Head SAC/pNHA and Killala Bay/Moy Estuary SPA. These are designated for the protection of salt marsh habitats and waterbirds and their association wetland habitats.</p>	
<p>Upgrades to Site: There have been no identifiable upgrades to this site or the surrounding area in 2019.</p>	

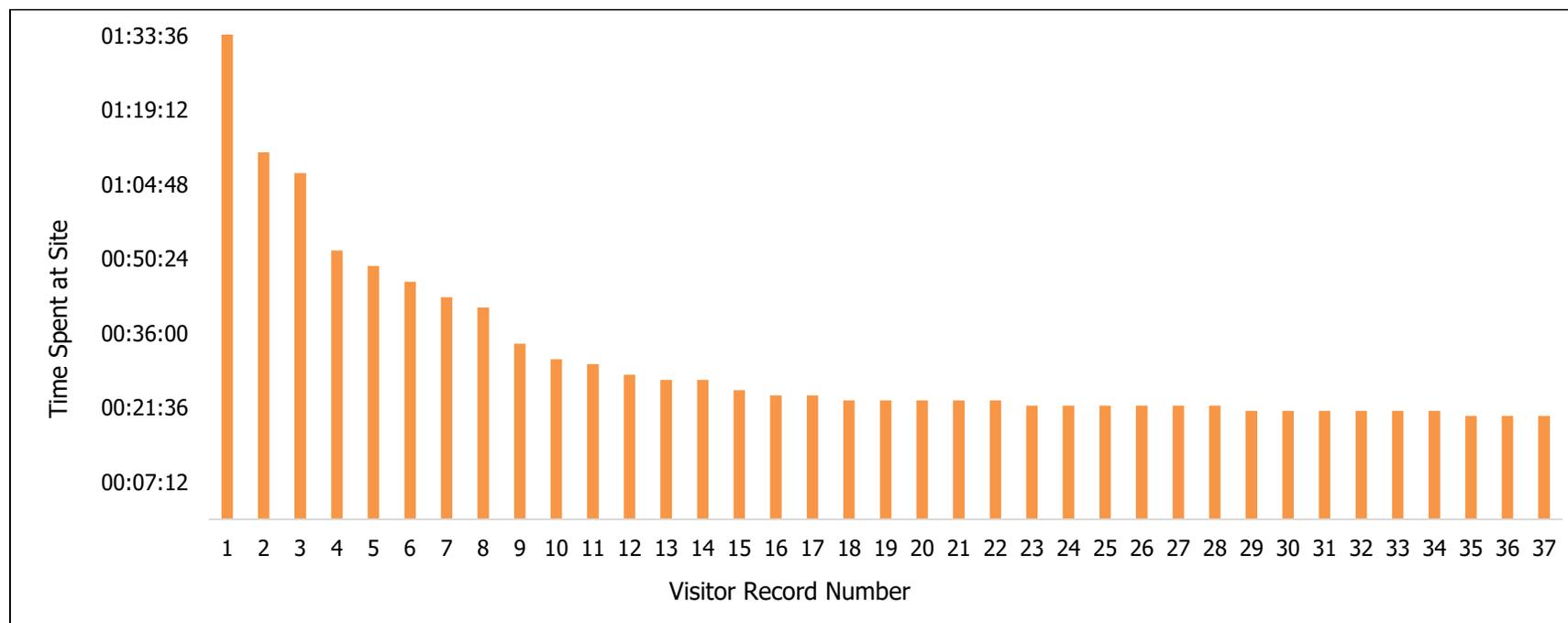


Figure 3.81 Duration of Time Spent at Lacken Strand³⁷

³⁷ This chart represents 37/37 groups recorded.

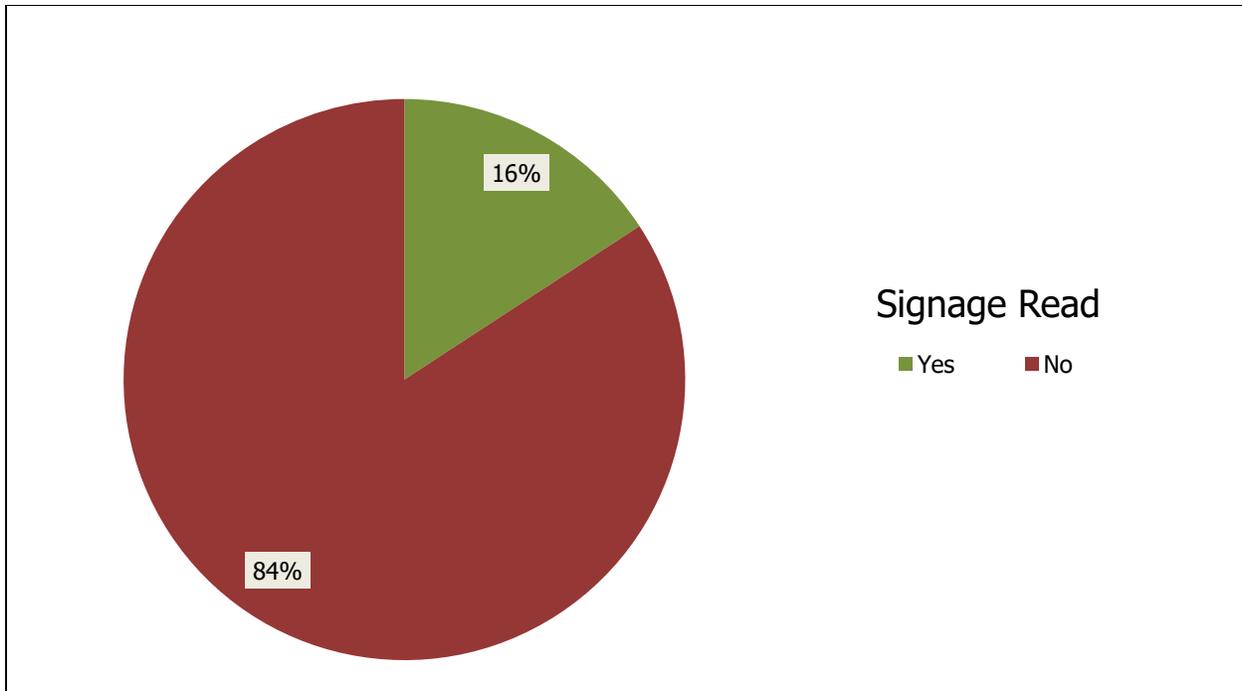


Figure 3.82 Use of Interpretive Material at Lacken Strand

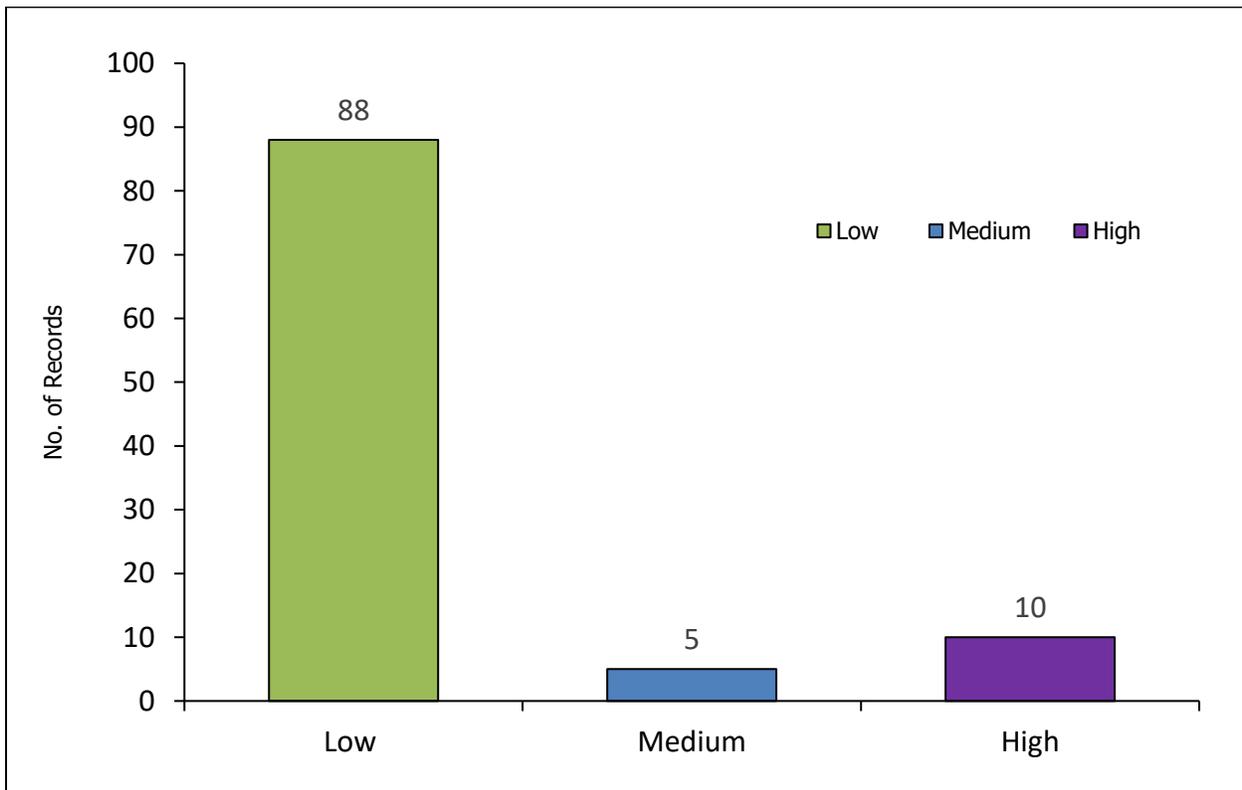


Figure 3.83 Categories of Activity Levels Observed at Lackan Strand

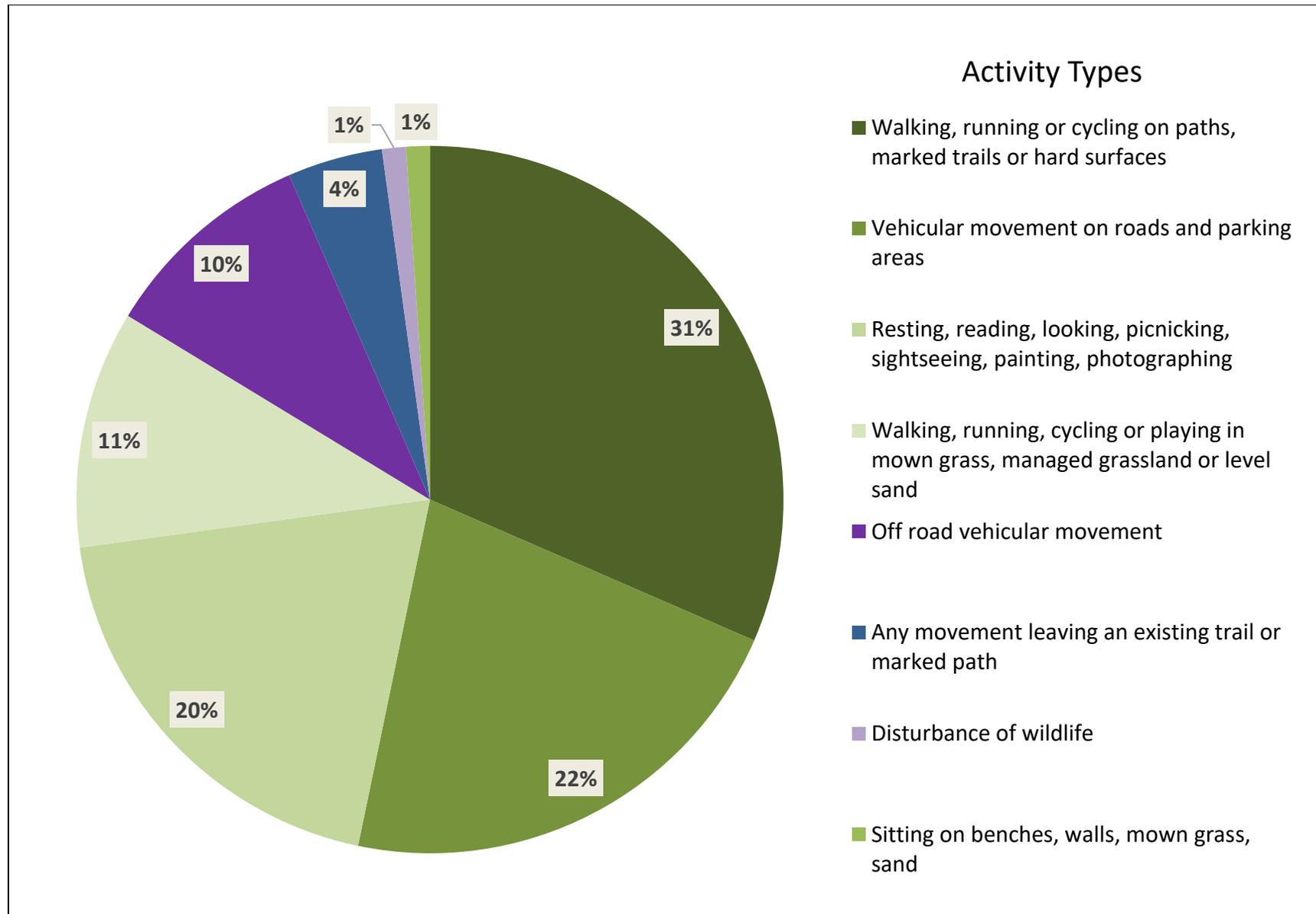


Figure 3.84 Range of Visitor Activities Observed at Lackan Strand

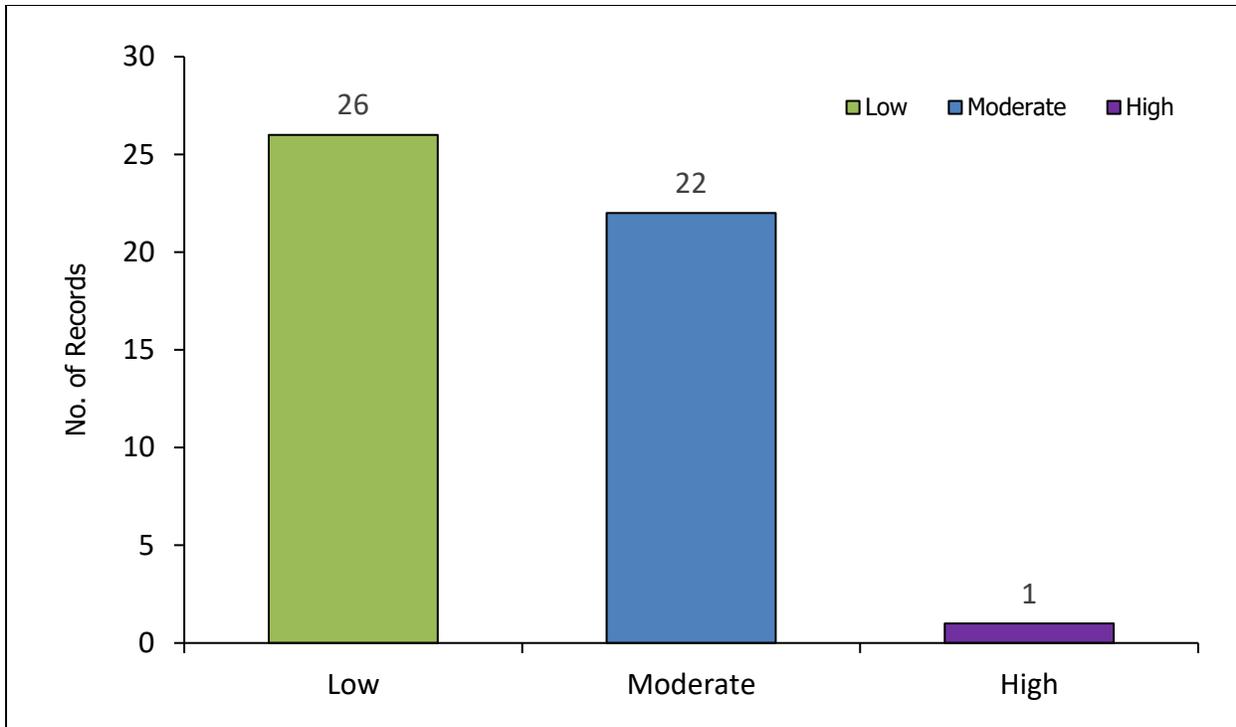


Figure 3.85 Categories of Environmental Impact Levels Observed at Lacken Strand as a result of Visitor Activities

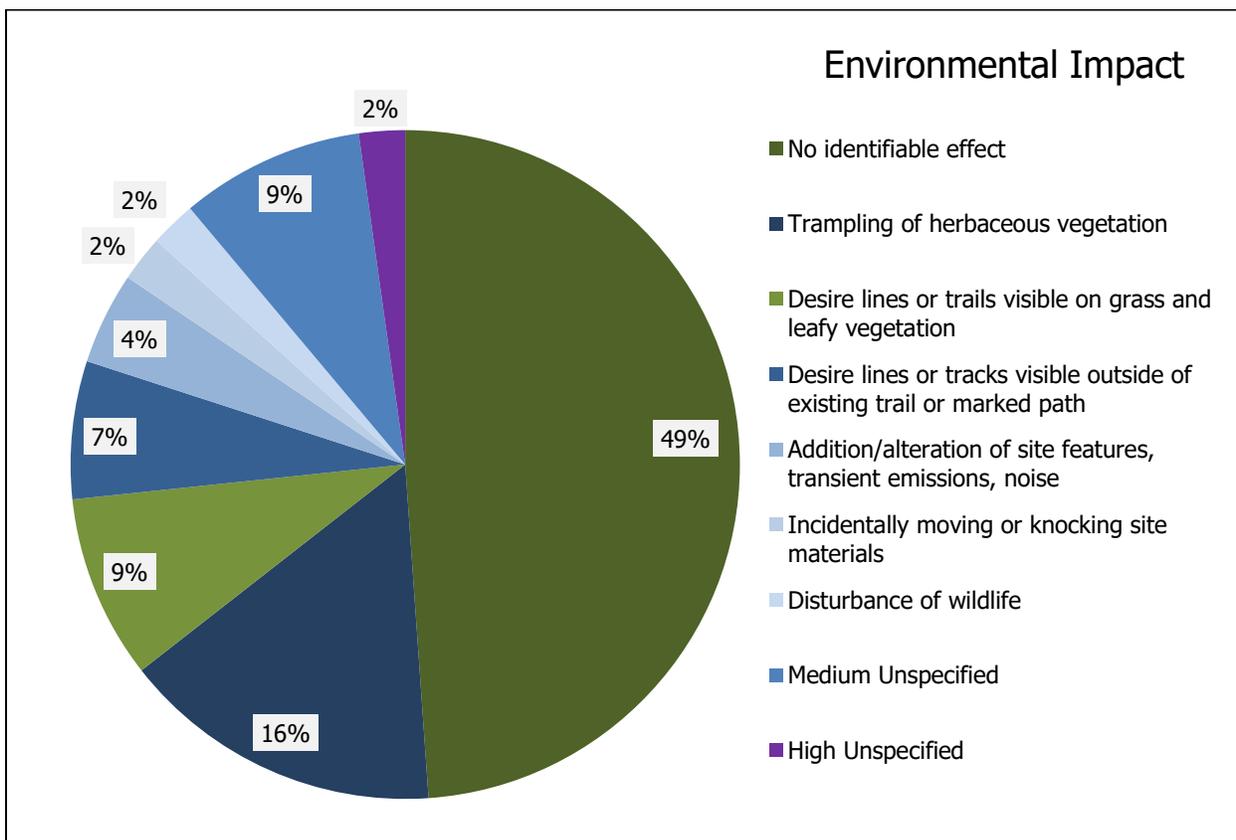
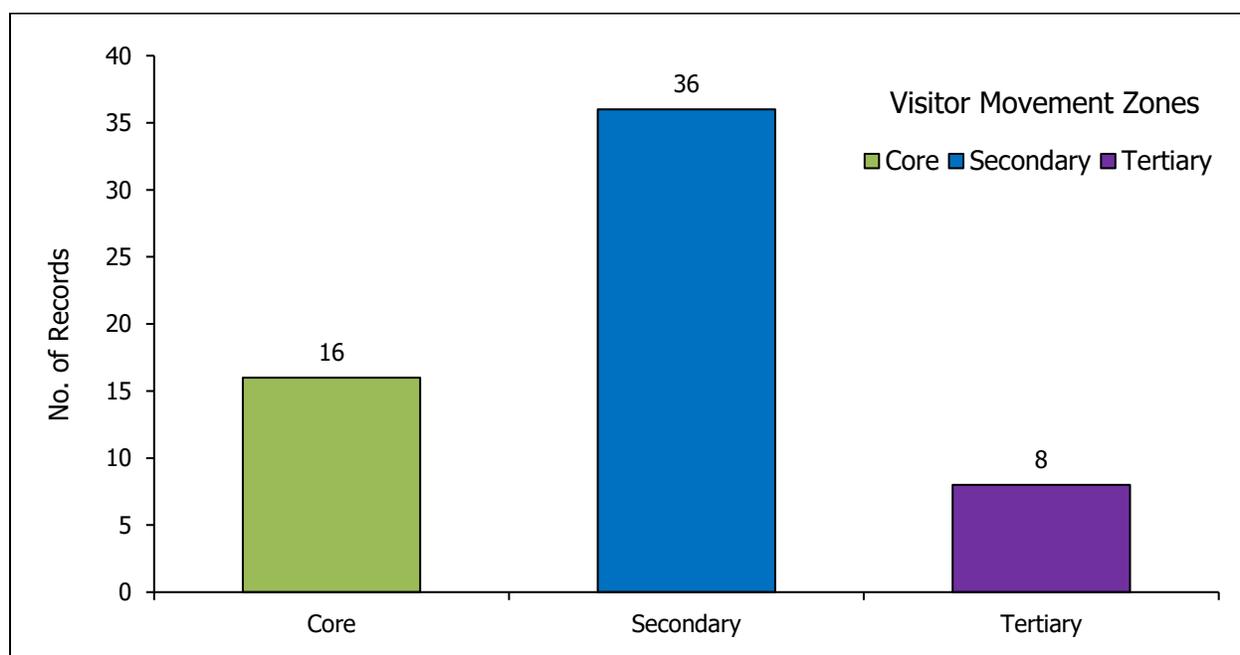


Figure 3.86 Range of Environmental Impacts Observed at Lacken Strand

Table 3.11 Visitor Movement Zones Descriptions

Core Zone	Existing car parks, paved areas, viewing platforms, marked pathways, trails, tracks and managed grassland and areas where pathways, trails or roads exist. The majority of visitors remain in these zones.
Secondary Zone	Areas outside of existing car park, paved areas, marked pathways, trails, tracks and managed grassland. visitors are likely to traffic areas of grassland (in some cases farmland grazed by sheep or cattle), heath or bare rock, usually to get a better view of site attractions or to access trails at the site.
Tertiary Zone	Areas where no car park, paved areas, marked pathways, trails, tracks and managed grassland are identifiable and beyond the immediate boundaries of the site.

**Figure 3.87 Zones Trafficked by Visitors at Lacken Strand****3.11.1 Analysis of Results and Visitor Movement Patterns**

Most of the movements recorded on site (60%) occurred in the secondary zone. The core zone was only trafficked 16 times at Lacken strand. This is because the beach itself is used as an unstructured carpark by tourists. There were also 8 incidences of visitor movements in the tertiary zone, *i.e.* the saltmarsh.

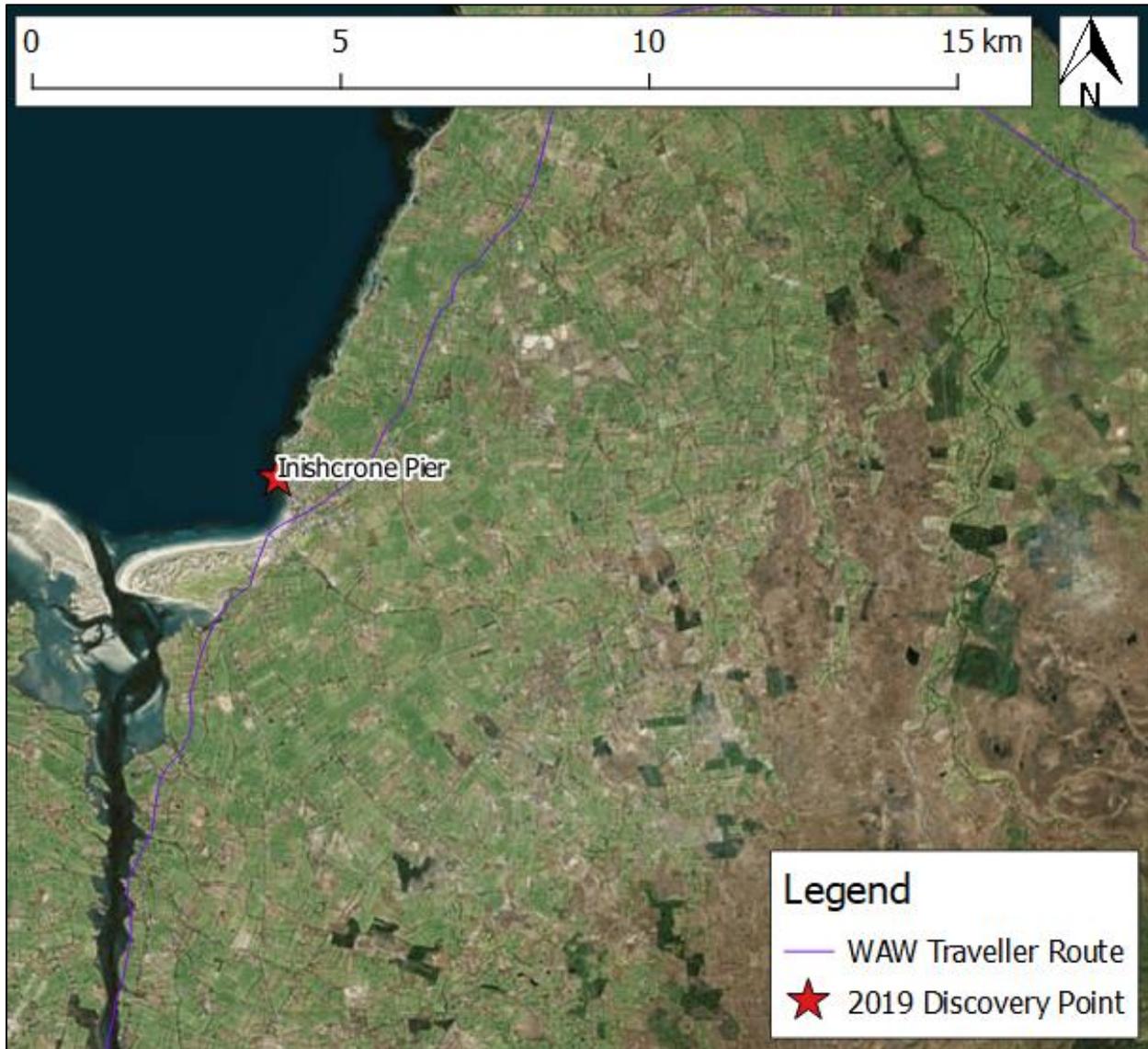
49% of visitors to the site took part in activities that resulted in no identifiable impacts to the site. 9% of the visitors monitored took part in activities which had a low-level effect to the site. 40% of the visitors monitored took part in activities which had a medium-level effect to the site, activities included visitors parking on and driving and walking through the saltmarsh. A group of individuals engaged in powered paragliding using the saltmarsh for taking off and landing. These activities are having negative effects on the saltmarsh habitat present around the Discovery Point and have the potential to disturb bird species on Lacken Strand.



Figure 3.88 Location of Visitor Movement Zones at Lackan Strand

Inishcrone Pier

ENVIRONMENTAL SURVEYING AND MONITORING RESULTS



3.12 Inishcrone Pier

Site Name: Inishcrone Pier	Date Surveyed: 18 th /19 th July 2019
County: Sligo	Landscape Type: Highly modified built environment and amenity grassland along rocky shoreline
Total No. of People: 419	Average Duration of visitors on site: 00:12:43
<p>Site Description: Enniscrone, Co. Sligo sits on Killala Bay and is approximately 50km west of Sligo town. Inniscrone (Enniscrone) Pier is located to the north of the town centre, perpendicular to the sizable beach. The beach, which has blue flag status, stretches for 5km and is a very popular surfing and stand-up-paddle (SUP) destination. The Discovery Point is located at the top of the pier which gives excellent views back towards the beach. A coastal walk begins at the top of the pier and extends north for 1km along the coastline before returning towards town. There is street parking, public toilets, benches and a SUP school at the site. The Discovery Point sits just at the boundary of Killala Bay/Moy Estuary SPA. The beach and associated sand dunes fall within the Killala Bay/Moy Estuary SAC. The SPA is designated for waterbirds, many of which occur in the vicinity of the Discovery Point, and their wetland habitats. The SAC is designated for ten habitats including the sand dune habitats at occur in Enniscrone.</p> <p>Upgrades to Site: There have been no identifiable upgrades to this site or the surrounding area in 2019. Planning permission is being sought for the development of a three-storey commercial and residential building directly adjacent to the site.</p>	

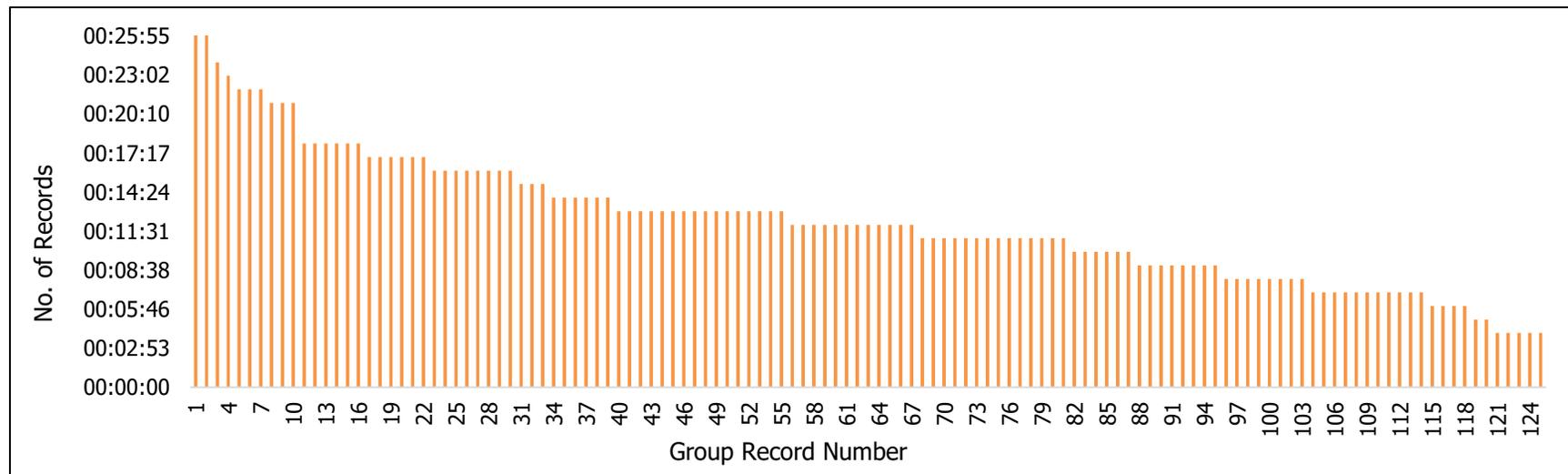


Figure 3.89 Duration Spent at Inishcrone Pier ³⁸

³⁸ This chart represents 125/211 groups recorded, there was no data recorded for 89 groups.

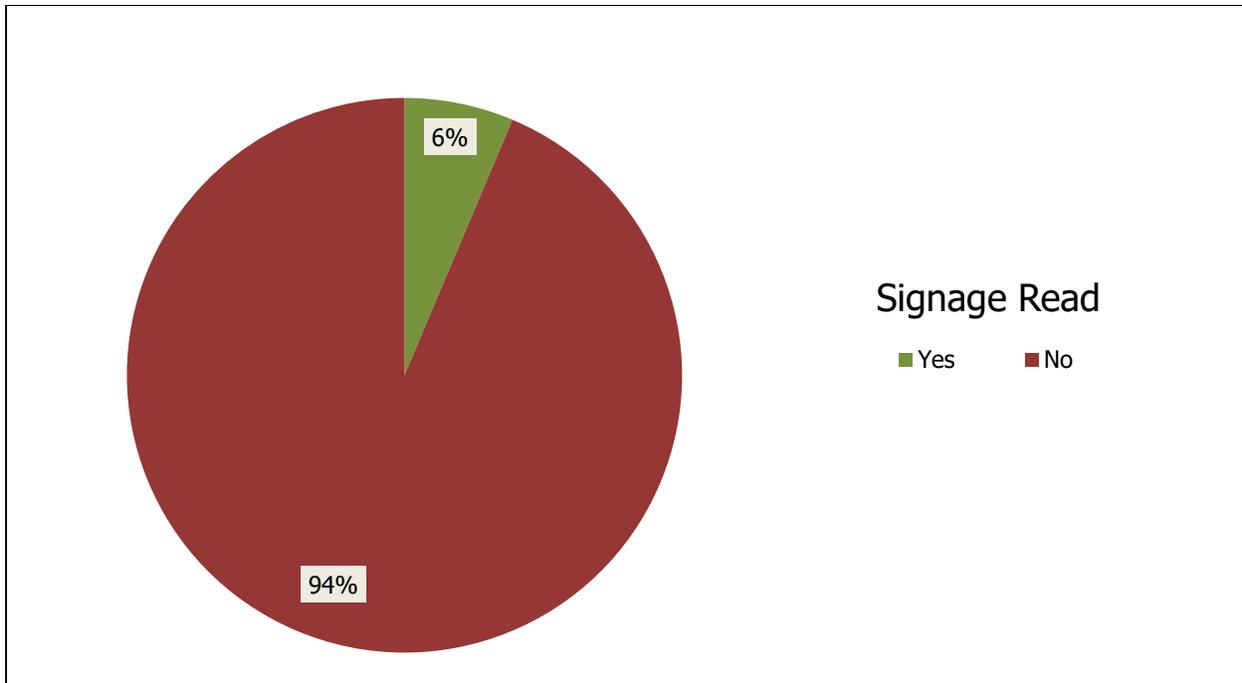


Figure 3.90 Use if Interpretive Materials at Inishcrone Pier³⁹

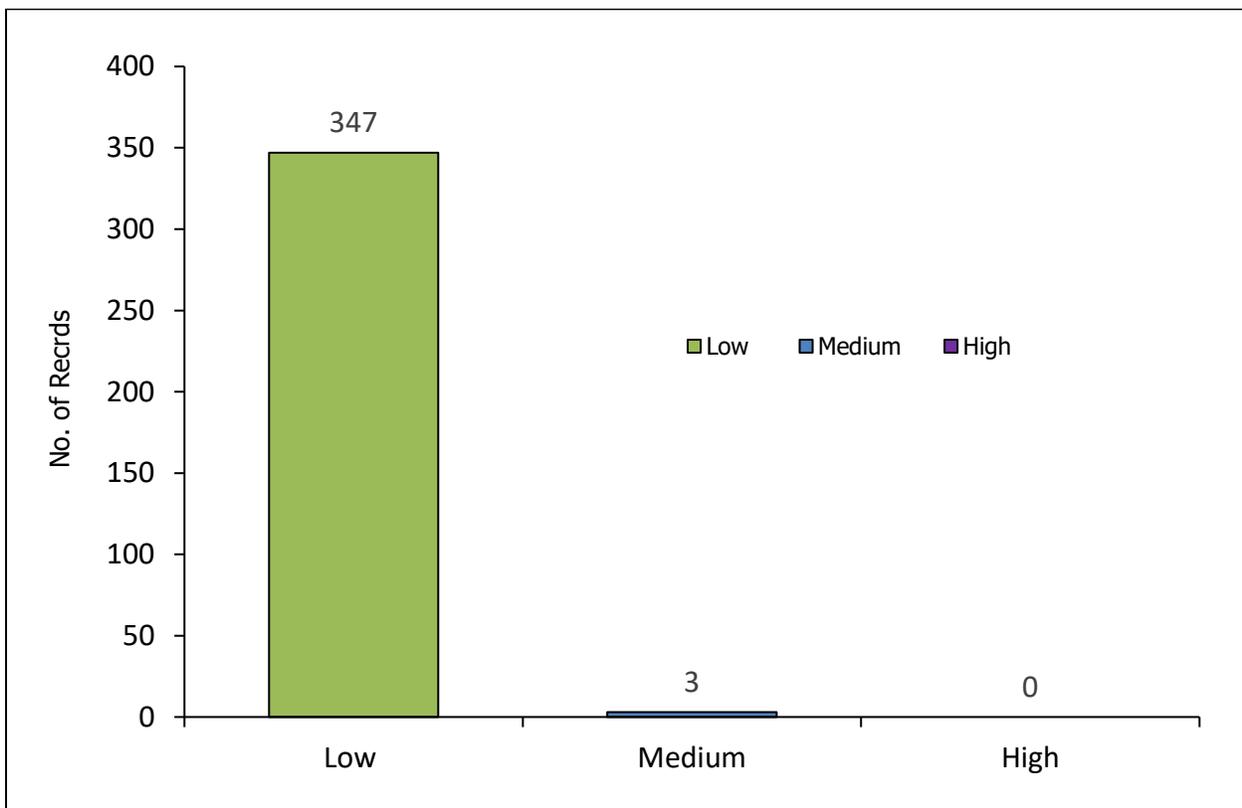


Figure 3.91 Categories of Activity Levels Observed at Inishcrone Pier

³⁹ This chart represents 173 out of 175 records. There was no data available for 2 groups.

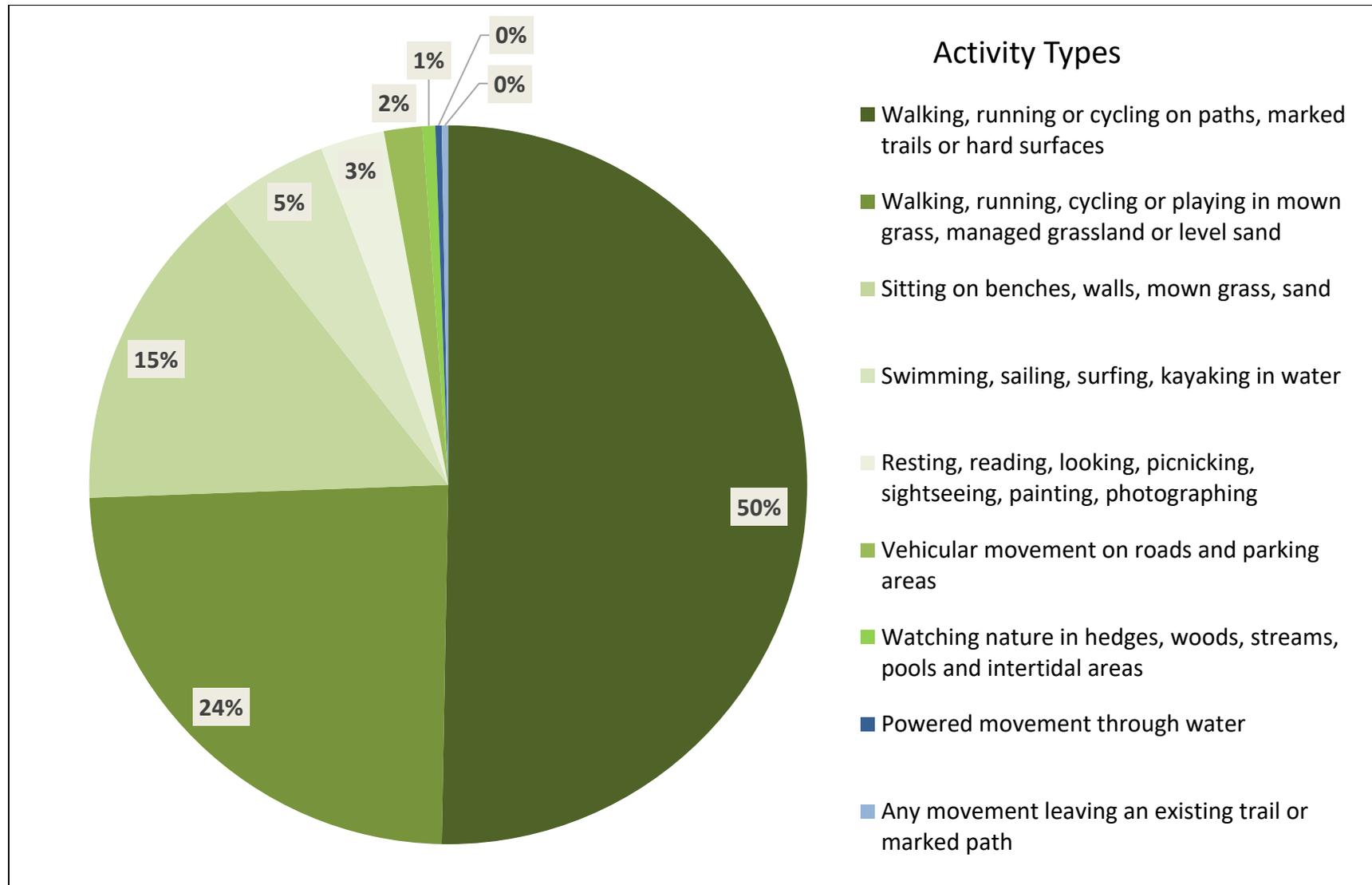


Figure 3.92 Range of Visitor Activities Observed at Inishcrone Pier⁴⁰

⁴⁰ Two of the activities had an occurrence rate of one which equates to <1%. They are therefore recorded as 0% on the graph.

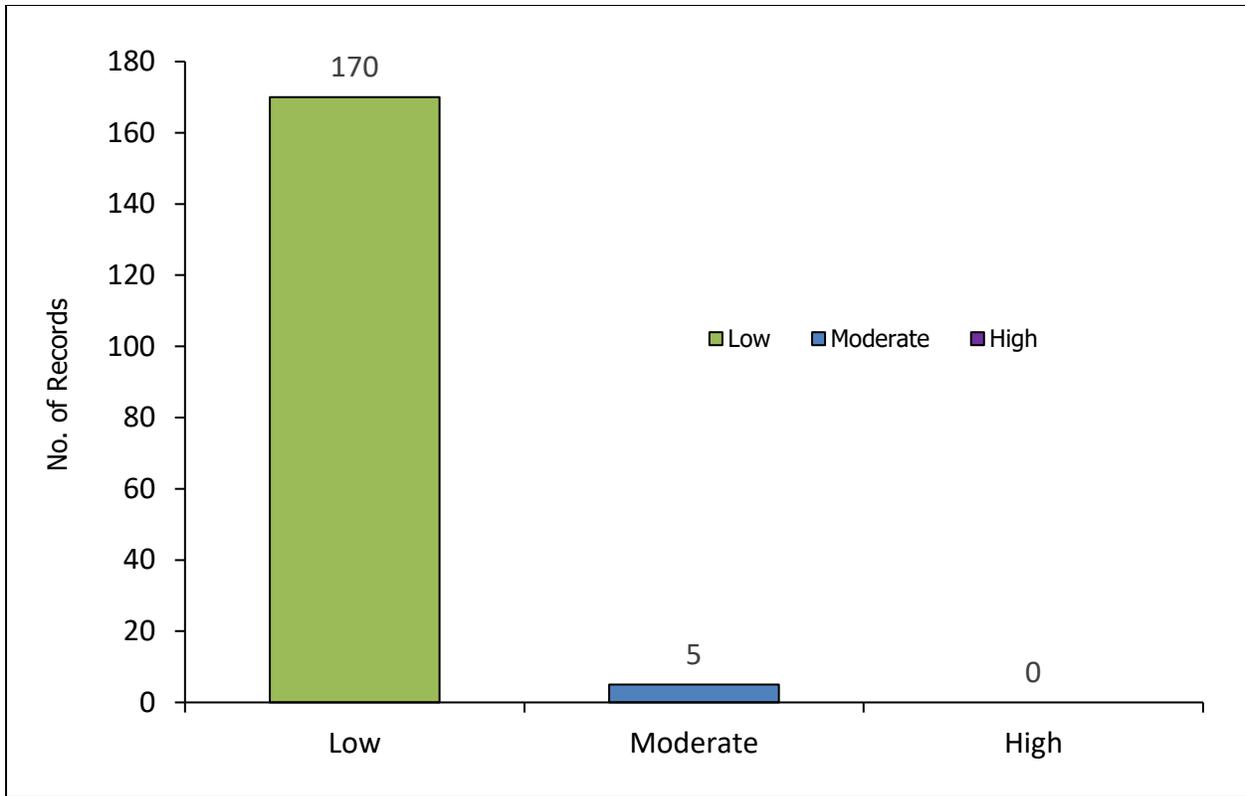


Figure 3.93 Categories of Environmental Impact Levels Observed at Inishcrone Pier as a result of Visitor Activities

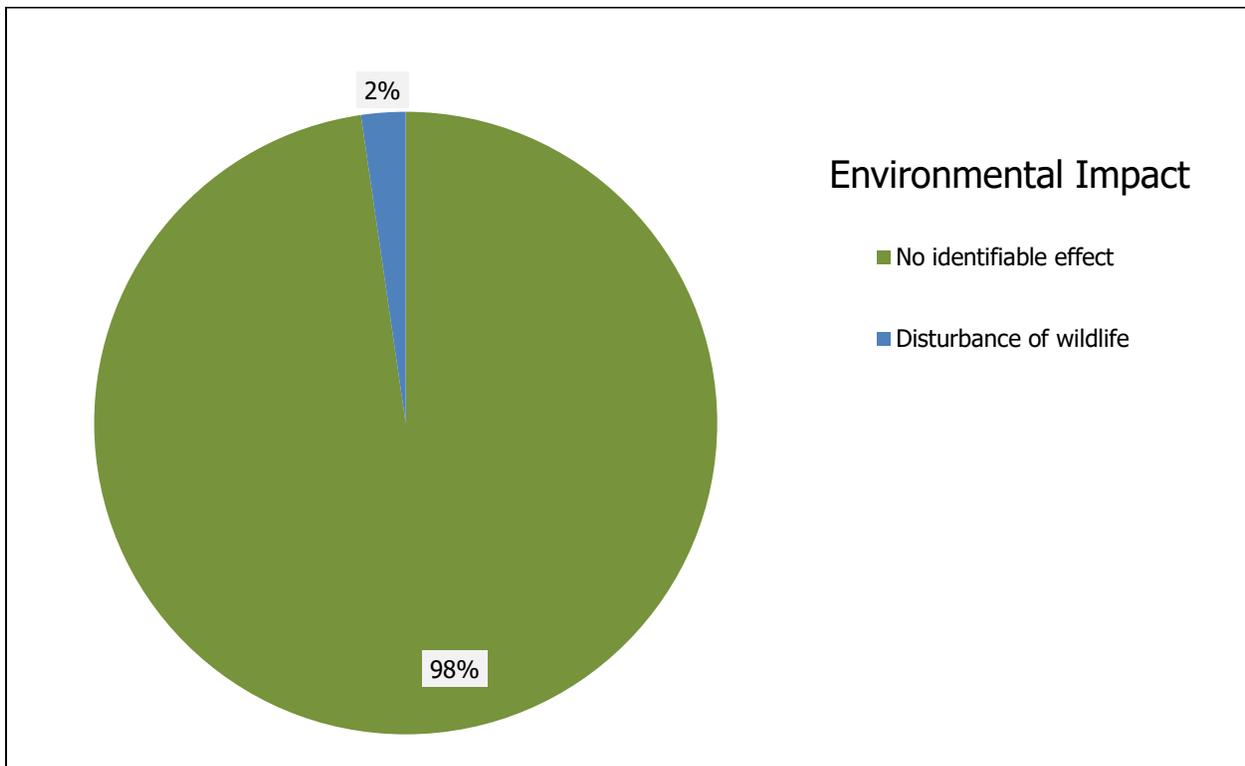


Figure 3.94 Range of Environmental Impacts Observed at Inishcrone Pier

Table 3.12 Visitor Movement Zones Descriptions

Core Zone	Existing car parks, paved areas, viewing platforms, marked pathways, trails, tracks and managed grassland and areas where pathways, trails or roads exist. The majority of visitors remain in these zones.
Secondary Zone	Areas outside of existing car park, paved areas, marked pathways, trails, tracks and managed grassland. visitors are likely to traffic areas of grassland (in some cases farmland grazed by sheep or cattle), heath or bare rock, usually to get a better view of site attractions or to access trails at the site.
Tertiary Zone	Areas where no car park, paved areas, marked pathways, trails, tracks and managed grassland are identifiable and beyond the immediate boundaries of the site.

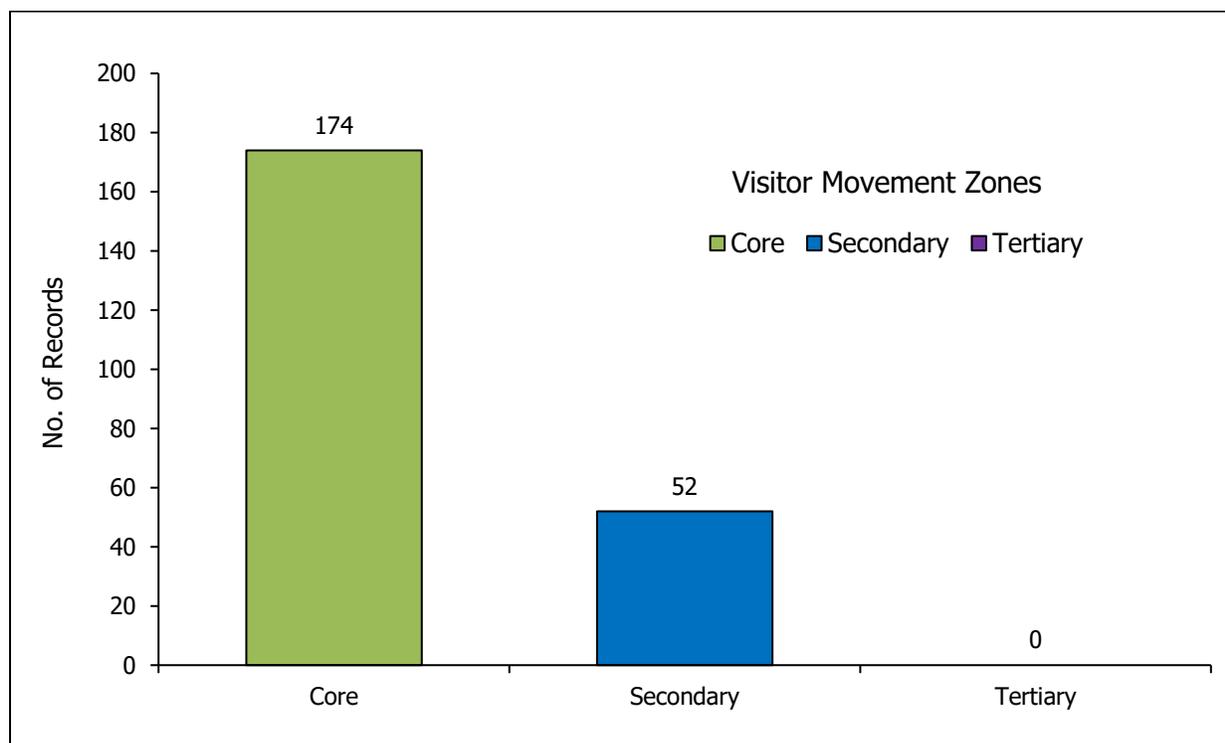


Figure 3.95 Zones Trafficked by visitors at Inishcrone Pier

3.12.1 Analysis of Results and Visitor Movement Patterns

The core zone was trafficked 174 times while the secondary zone was trafficked 52 times. There was no trafficking of tertiary zones.

Most visitors (98%) took part in activities that had no identifiable impacts to the site. Only 2% took part in activities that had a medium level effect introducing disturbance effects to wildlife.

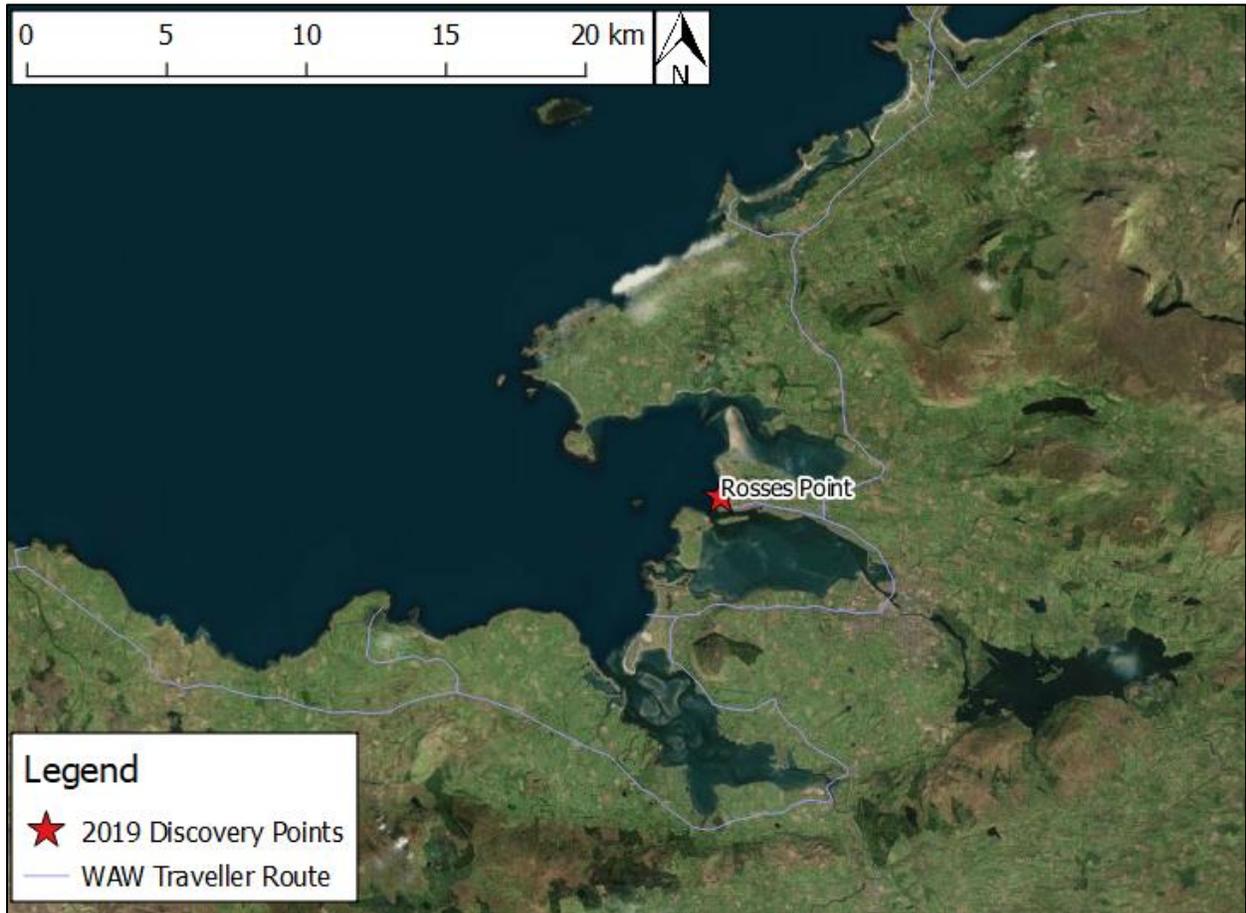
Overall the activities and effects observed during the study had low levels of localised effects for the fauna at the Discovery Point.



Figure 3.96 Location of Visitor Movement Zones at Inishcrone Pier

Rosses Point

ENVIRONMENTAL SURVEYING AND MONITORING RESULTS



3.13 Rosses Point

Site Name: Rosses Point	Date Surveyed: 20 th /21 st July 2019
County: Sligo	Landscape Type: Beaches and dunes surrounded by maritime grassland
Total No. of People: 541	Average Duration of visitors on site: 00:12:23
<p>Site Description: Rosses Point lies at the end of a peninsula, approximately 8km northwest of Sligo town, Co. Sligo. It is an undulating site, with two beaches sitting below low cliffs and sand dunes, separated by a small headland. There are two car parks on site which are paved; however, there are a number of cars overflowing onto a grassland area to accommodate additional cars. One of the car parks has associated toilets which are serviced daily. The Discovery Point sits on a high point overlooking the first beach in an area of orchid-rich grassland, giving views over the first beach and the headland. The Rosses Point Coastal Way passes the Discovery Point. The Discovery Point lies within the Cummeen Strand/Drumcliff Bay SAC/pNHA and is adjacent to Cummeen Strand SPA. Seven for the eight habitats for which the SAC is designated occur in close proximity to the Discovery Point. Three of these are priority habitats. The SPA is designated for the protection of overwintering waterbirds and their associated wetland habitats.</p> <p>Upgrades to Site: The Rosses Point Coastal Way was relaunched in June 2018 and is waymarked with a series of interpretive panels.</p>	

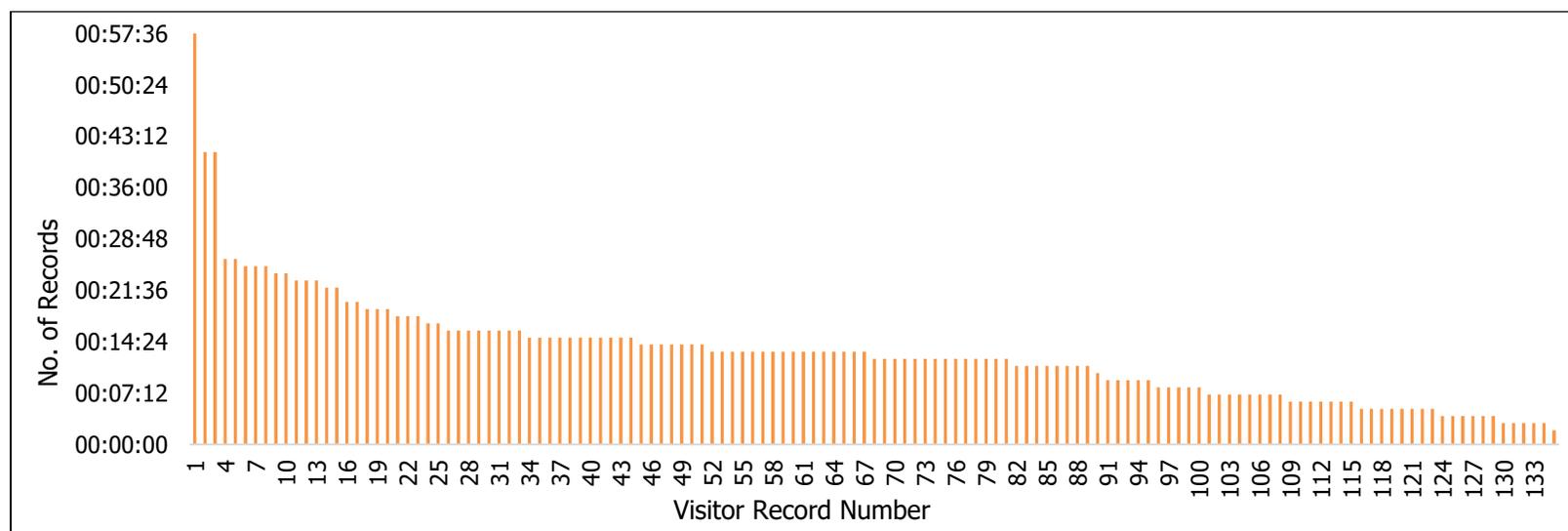


Figure 3.97 Duration Spent at Rosses Point⁴¹

⁴¹ This chart represents 135/207 groups recorded, there was no data recorded for 72 groups.

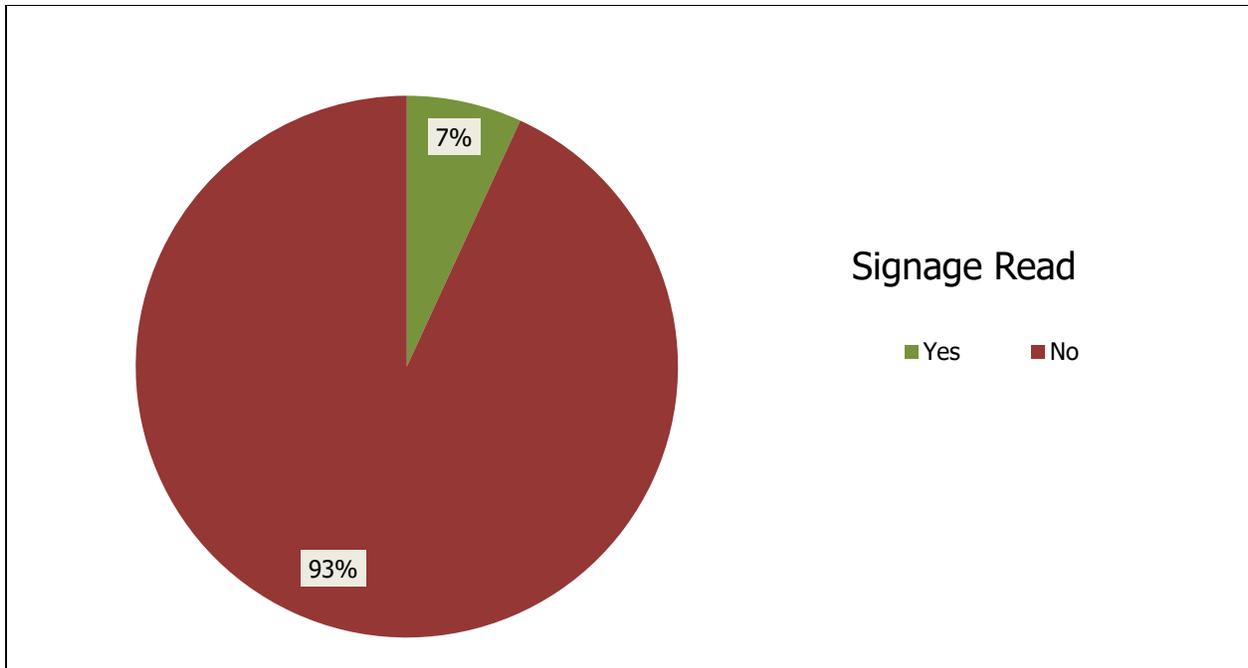


Figure 3.98 Use of Interpretive Materials at Rosses Point⁴²

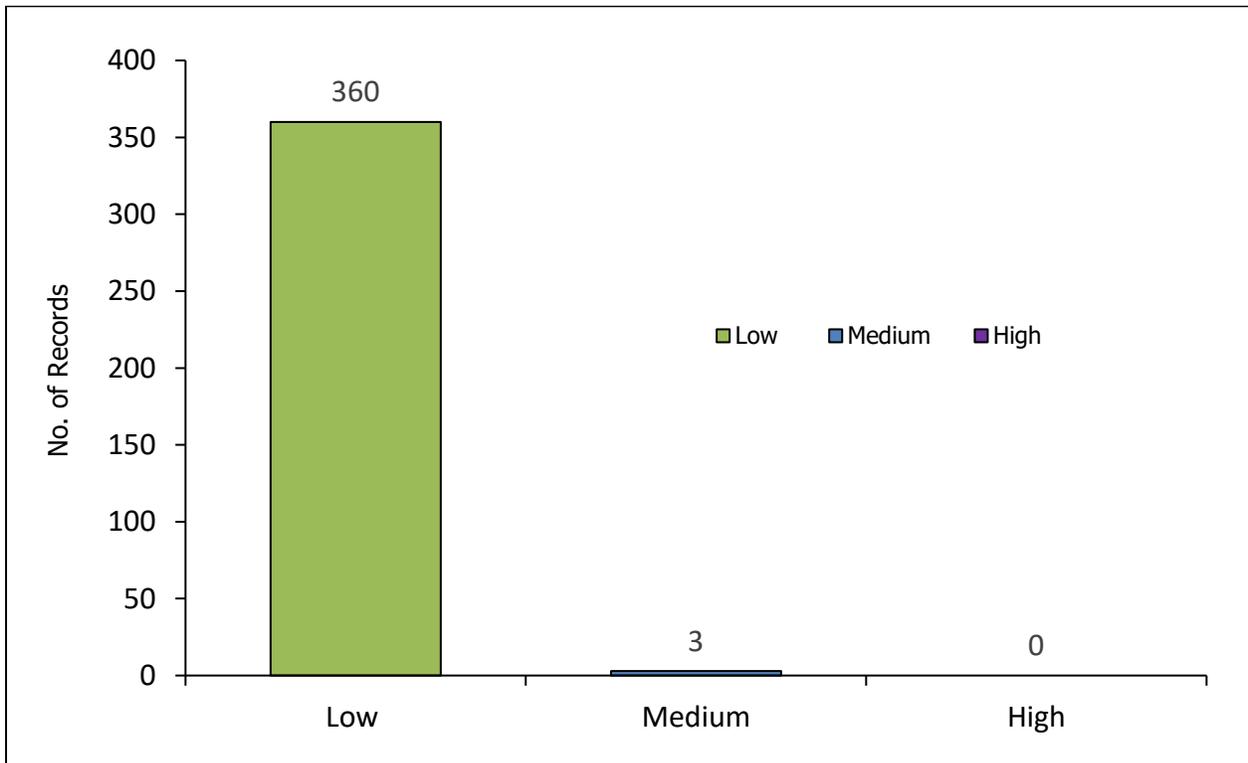


Figure 3.99 Categories of Activity Levels Observed at Rosses Point

⁴² This chart represents 160/166 groups recorded, there was no data recorded for 6 groups.

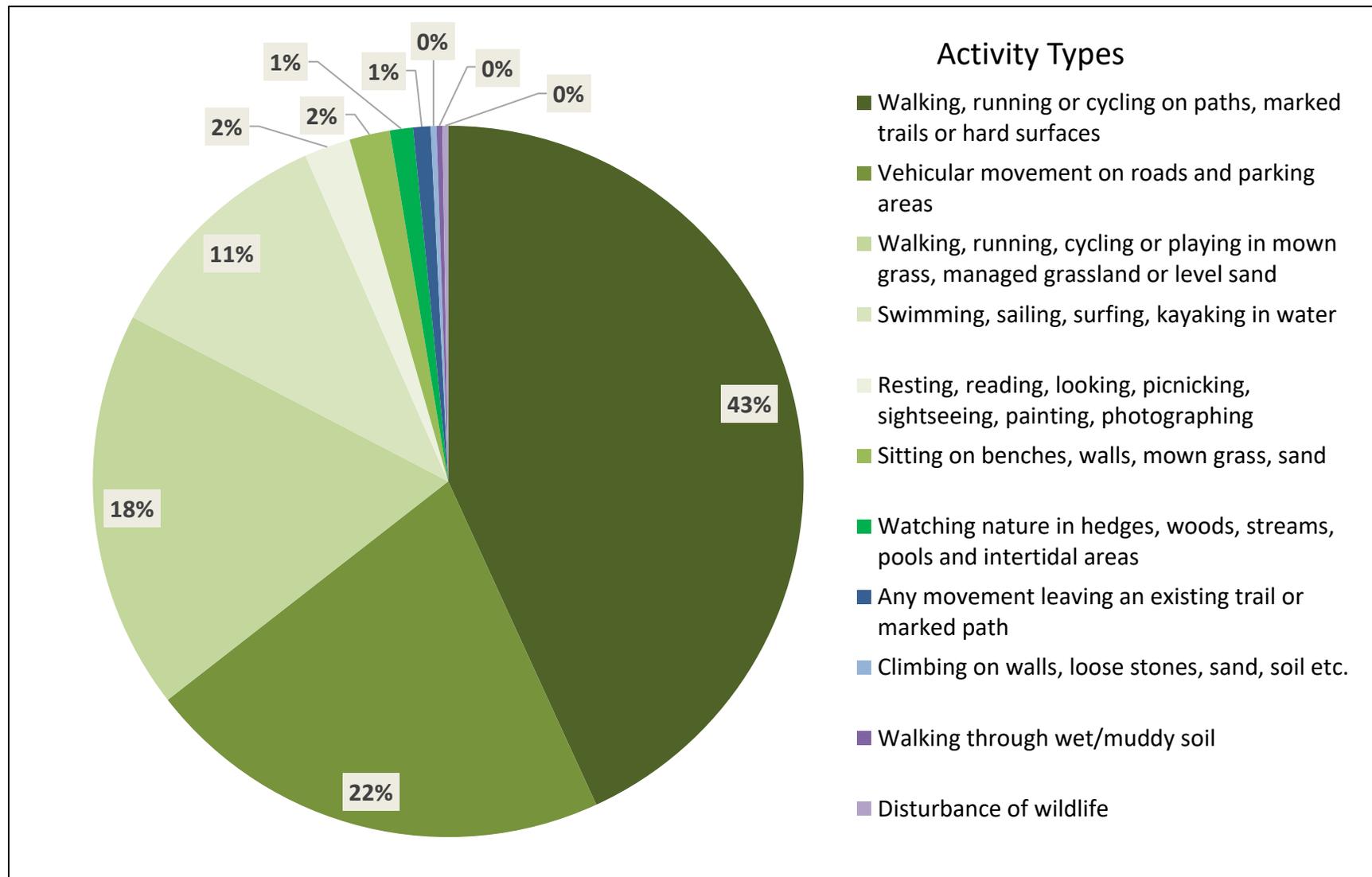


Figure 3.100 Range of Visitor Activities Observed at Rosses Point⁴³

⁴³ Three of the activities had an occurrence rate of one which equates to <1%. They are therefore recorded as 0% on the graph.

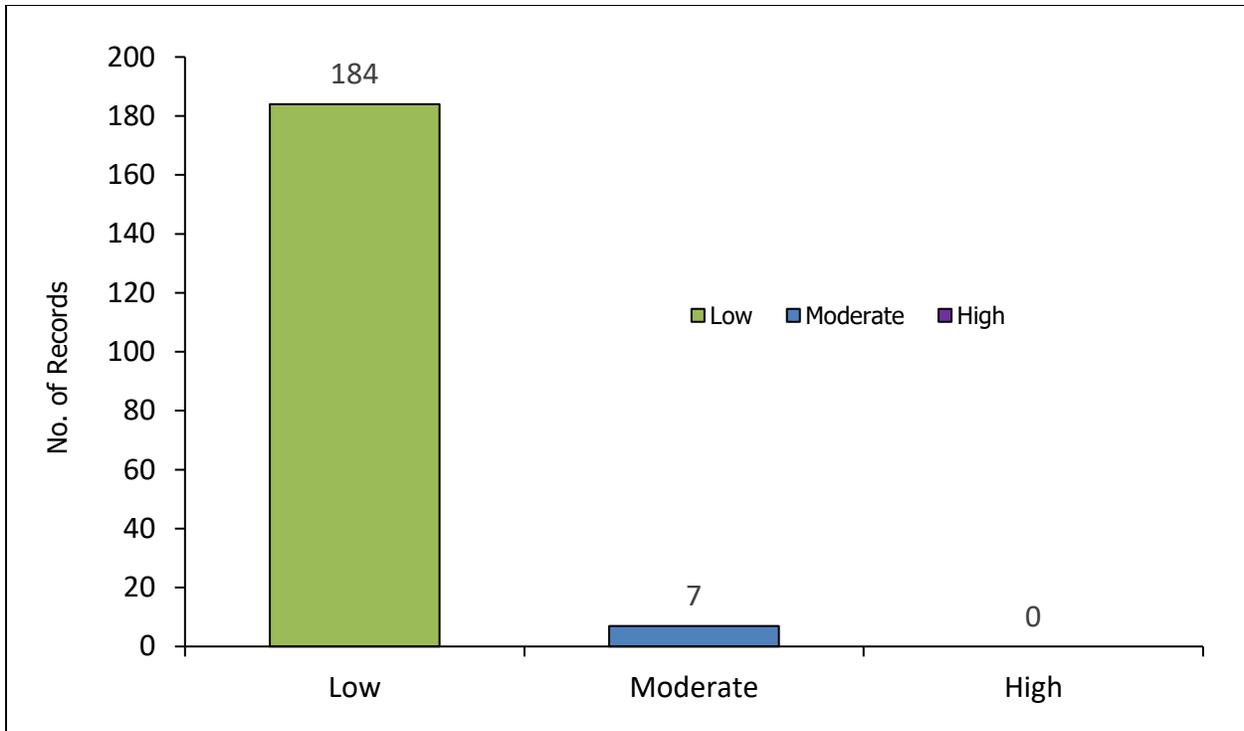


Figure 3.101 Categories of Environmental Impact Levels Observed at Rosses Point as a result of Visitor Activities

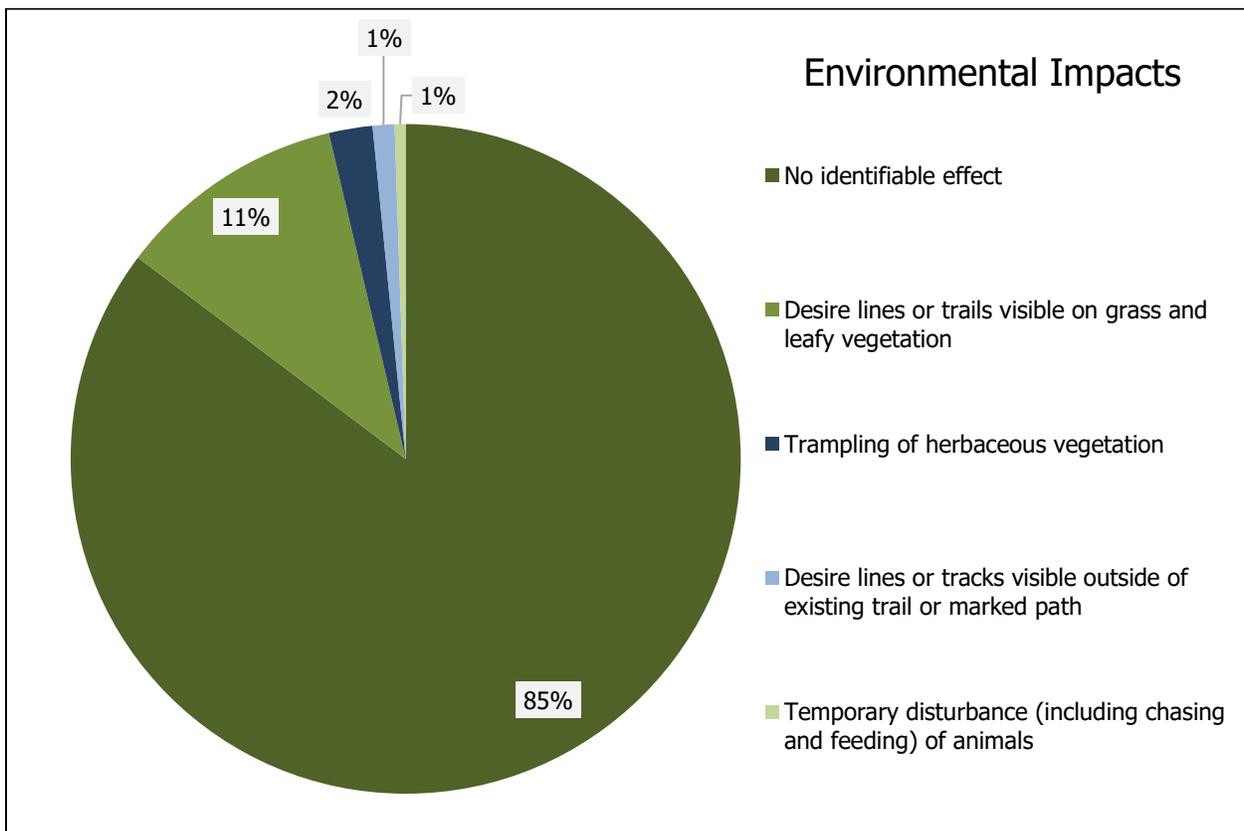


Figure 3.102 Range of Environmental Impacts Observed at Rosses Point

Table 3.13 Visitor Movement Zones Descriptions

Core Zone	Existing car parks, paved areas, viewing platforms, marked pathways, trails, tracks and managed grassland and areas where pathways, trails or roads exist. The majority of visitors remain in these zones.
Secondary Zone	Areas outside of existing car park, paved areas, marked pathways, trails, tracks and managed grassland. visitors are likely to traffic areas of grassland (in some cases farmland grazed by sheep or cattle), heath or bare rock, usually to get a better view of site attractions or to access trails at the site.
Tertiary Zone	Areas where no car park, paved areas, marked pathways, trails, tracks and managed grassland are identifiable and beyond the immediate boundaries of the site.

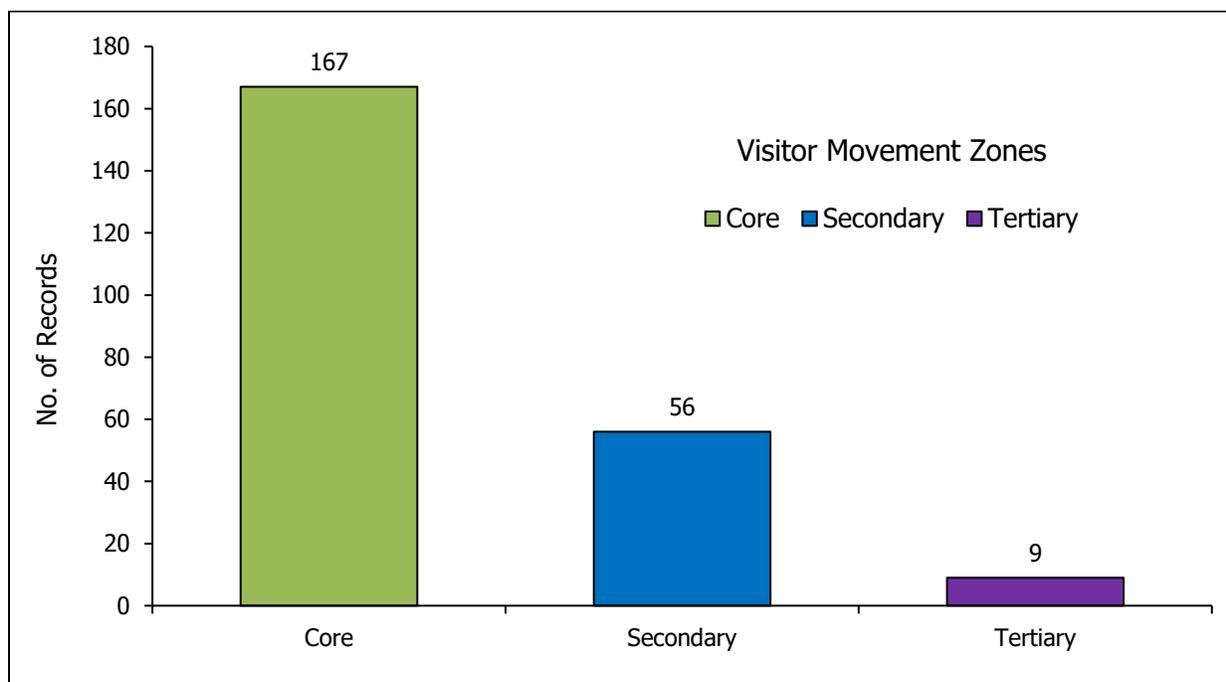


Figure 3.103 Zones Trafficked by Visitors at Rosses Point

3.13.1 Analysis of Results and Visitor Movement Patterns

The core zone was trafficked 167 times while the secondary zone was trafficked 56 times. There were 9 incidences of visitors moving beyond the secondary zone.

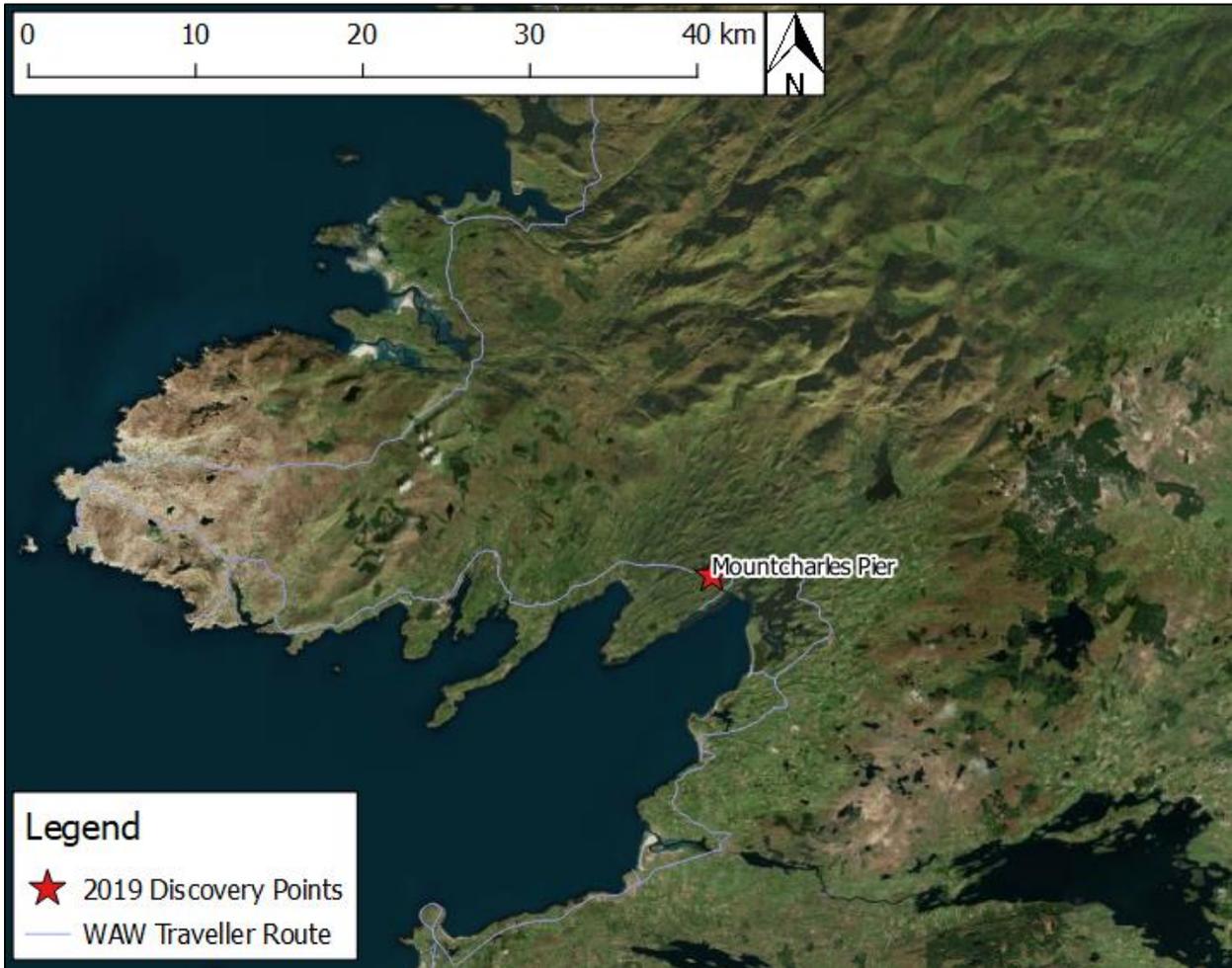
85% of visitors took part in activities that had no identifiable impacts to the site. 11% of the impacts observed pertained to the use of existing desire lines and the remaining 4% of the impacts observed relate to creation of new desire lines, trampling of vegetation and transient effects.



Figure 3.104 Location of Visitor Movement Zones at Rosses Point

Mountcharles Pier

ENVIRONMENTAL SURVEYING AND MONITORING RESULTS



3.14 Mountcharles Pier

Site Name: Mountcharles Pier	Date Surveyed: 13 th /14 th July 2019
County: Donegal	Landscape Type: Highly modified built environment between agricultural land and rocky shore
Total No. of People: 571	Average Duration of visitors on site: 00:20:13
<p>Site Description: Mountcharles Pier is located approximately 7.5km south west of Donegal down, Co. Donegal. The site comprises a pier with an extensive sea wall running along the road, an unsurfaced carpark beside the pier and a private café with a small animal farm. There are two portable toilets on site but no bins, bike parking and limited informational signage. The Discovery Point is directly adjacent to the Donegal Bay (Murvagh) SAC and the Donegal Bay SAC which are designated for maritime and wetland habitats, various waterbirds and the harbour seal.</p> <p>Upgrades to Site: There have been no identifiable upgrades to this site or the surrounding area in 2019.</p>	

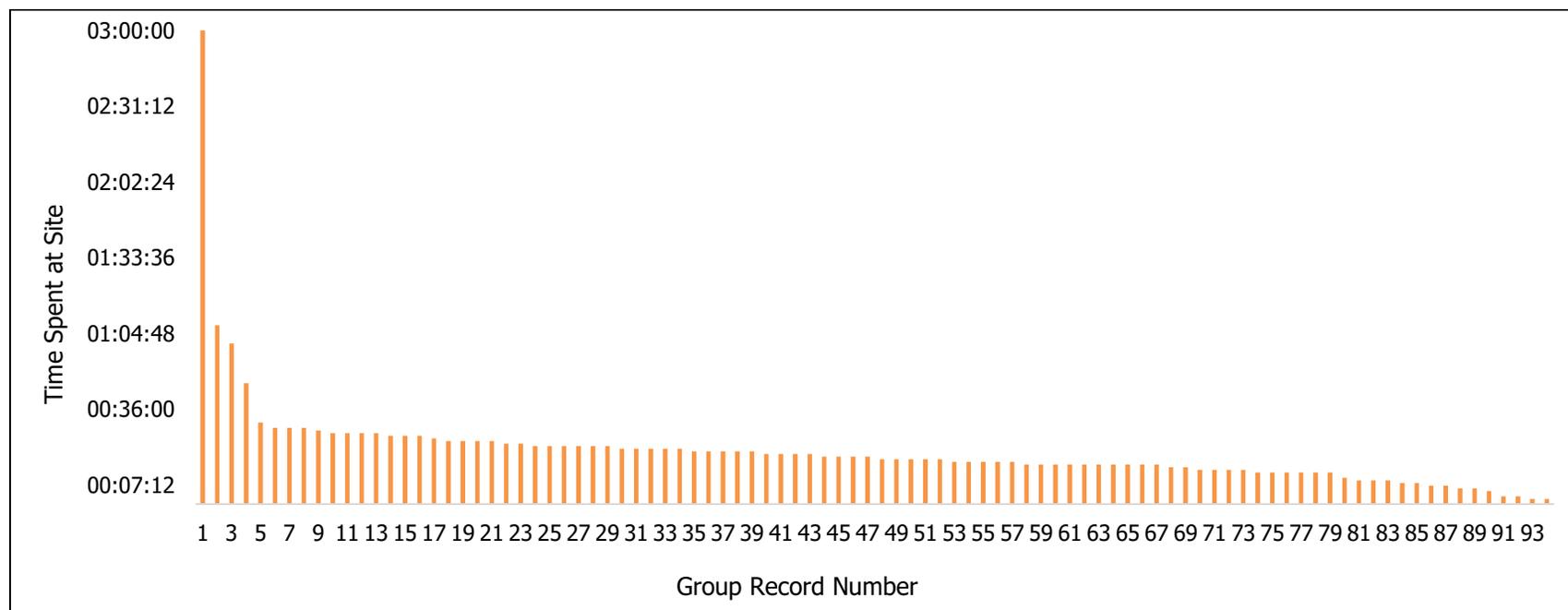


Figure 3.105 Duration of Time Spent at Mountcharles Pier⁴⁴

⁴⁴ This chart represents 94/118 groups recorded, there was no data recorded for 24 groups.

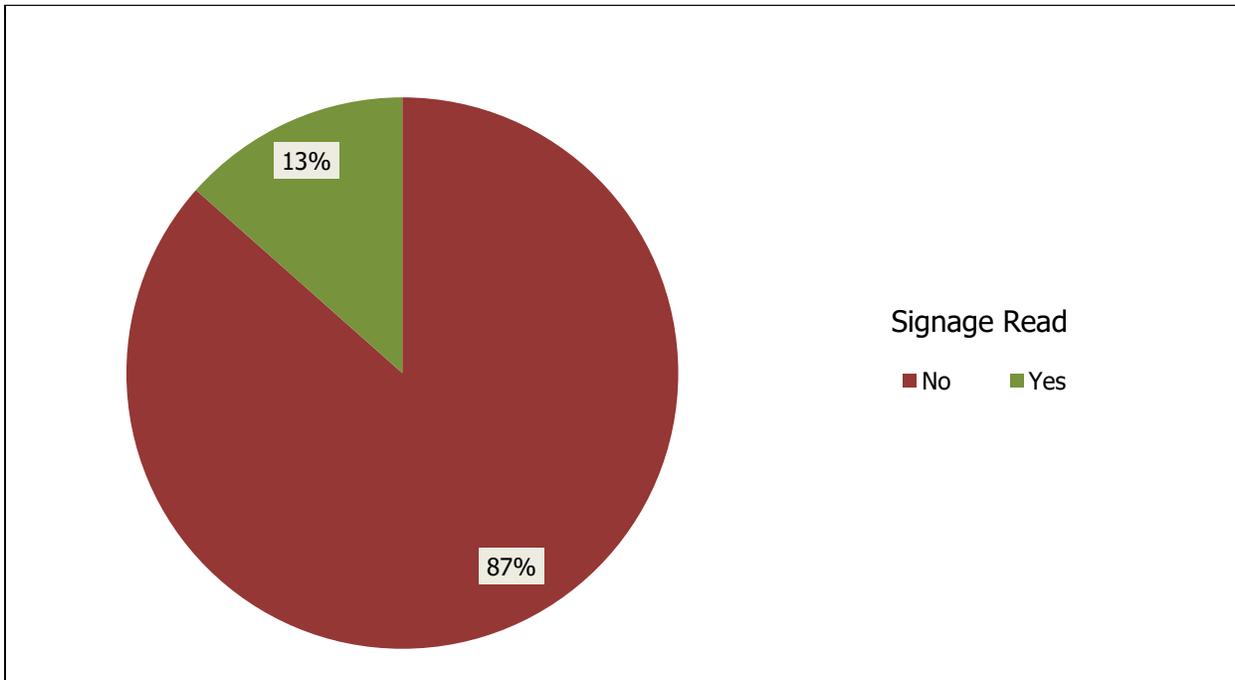


Figure 3.106 Use of Interpretive Material at Mountcharles Pier⁴⁵

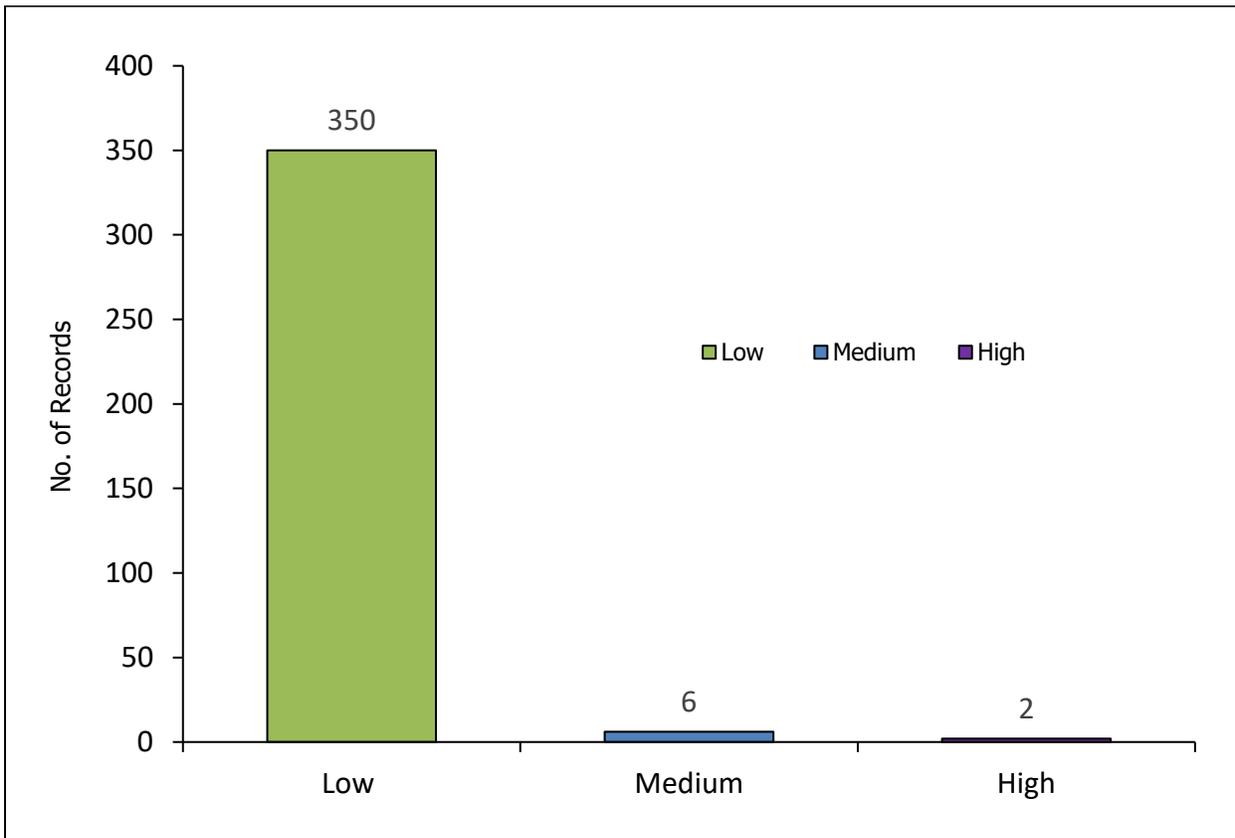


Figure 3.107 Categories of Activity Levels Observed at Mountcharles Pier

⁴⁵ This chart represents 119 out of 120 records. There was no data available for 1 group.

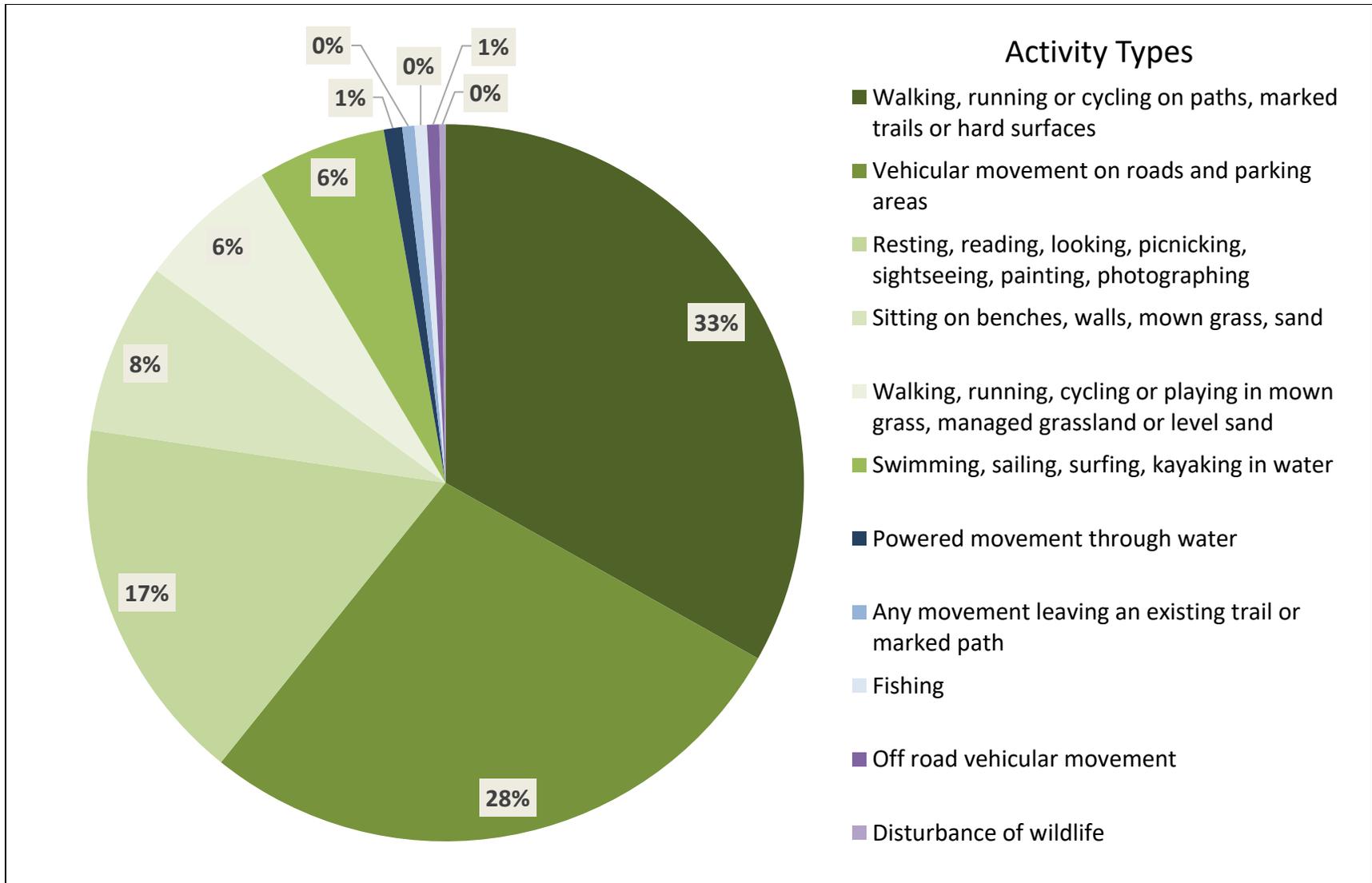


Figure 3.108 Range of Visitor Activities Observed at Mountcharles Pier⁴⁶

⁴⁶ Three of the activities had an occurrence rate of one which equates to <1%. They are therefore recorded as 0% on the graph.

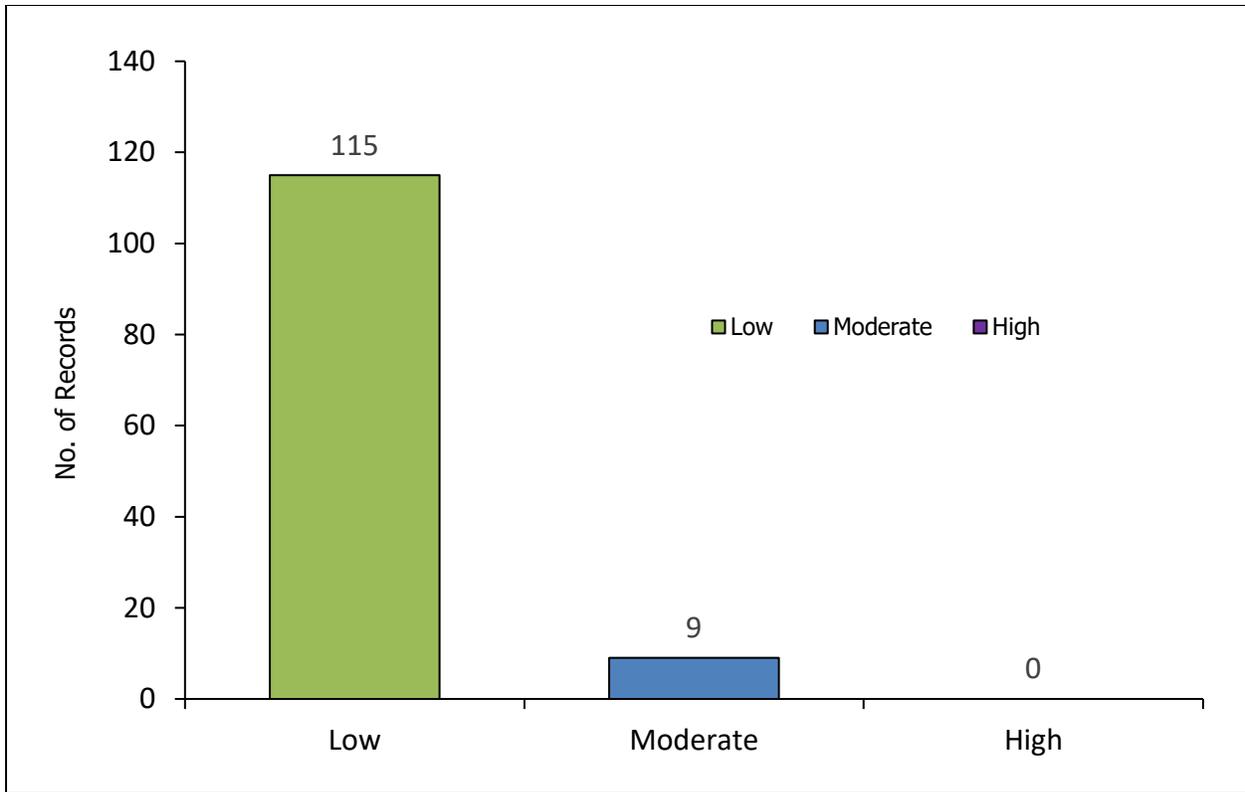


Figure 3.109 Categories of Environmental Impact Levels Observed at Mountcharles Pier as a result of Visitor Activities

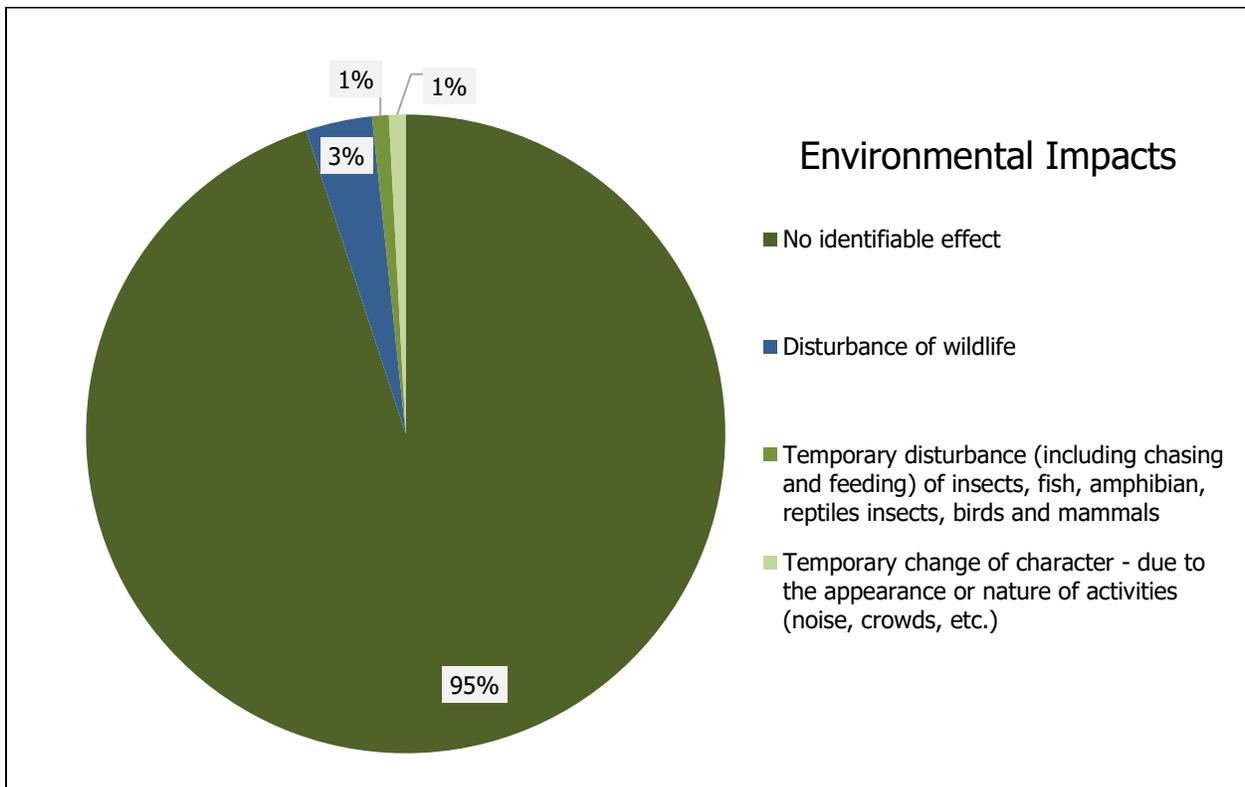


Figure 3.110 Range of Environmental Impacts Observed at Mountcharles Pier

Table 3.14 Visitor Movement Zones Descriptions

Core Zone	Existing car parks, paved areas, viewing platforms, marked pathways, trails, tracks and managed grassland and areas where pathways, trails or roads exist. The majority of visitors remain in these zones.
Secondary Zone	Areas outside of existing car park, paved areas, marked pathways, trails, tracks and managed grassland. visitors are likely to traffic areas of grassland (in some cases farmland grazed by sheep or cattle), heath or bare rock, usually to get a better view of site attractions or to access trails at the site.
Tertiary Zone	Areas where no car park, paved areas, marked pathways, trails, tracks and managed grassland are identifiable and beyond the immediate boundaries of the site.

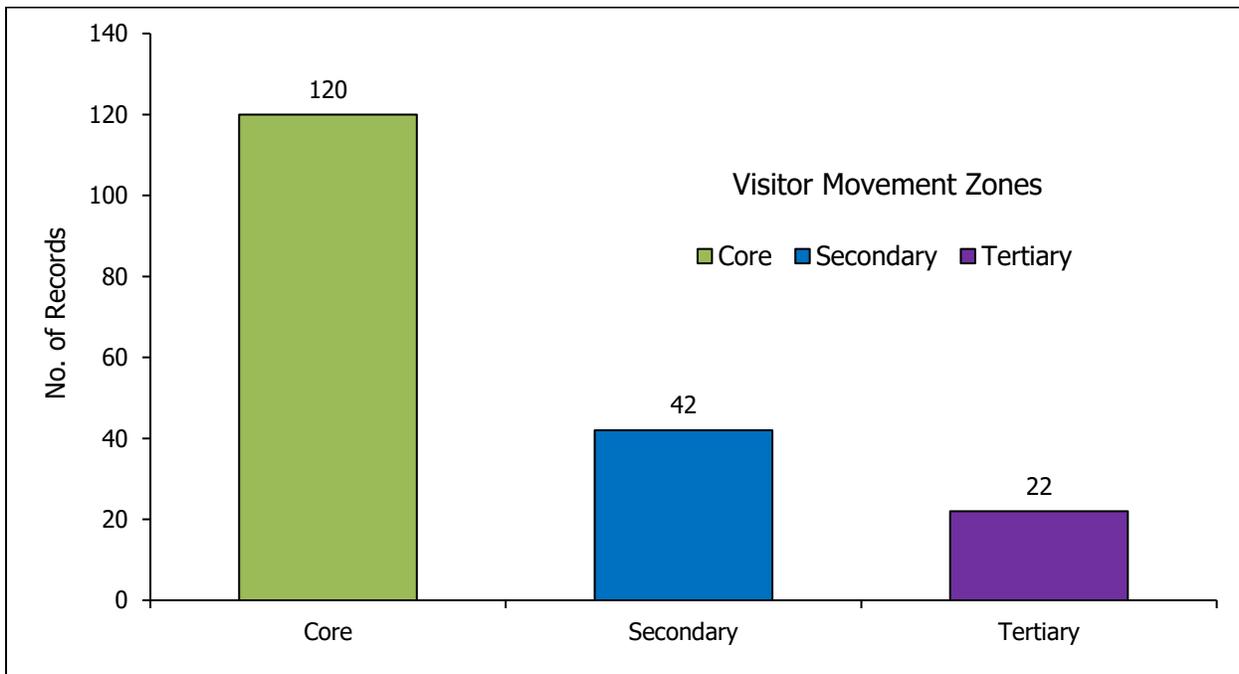


Figure 3.111 Zones Trafficked by Visitors at Mountcharles Pier

3.14.1 Analysis of Results and Visitor Movement Patterns

34.7% of the visitor movements observed were recorded outside of the core movement zone. Visitors moved within the core zone 120 times with the secondary zones being trafficked only 42 times and the tertiary zone was trafficked 22 times. All tertiary movements were long distance sea swimmers and boat activity.

97% of visitors to the site engaged in activities that resulted in low or no effects to the site. 3% recorded medium level effects with disturbance to wildlife.

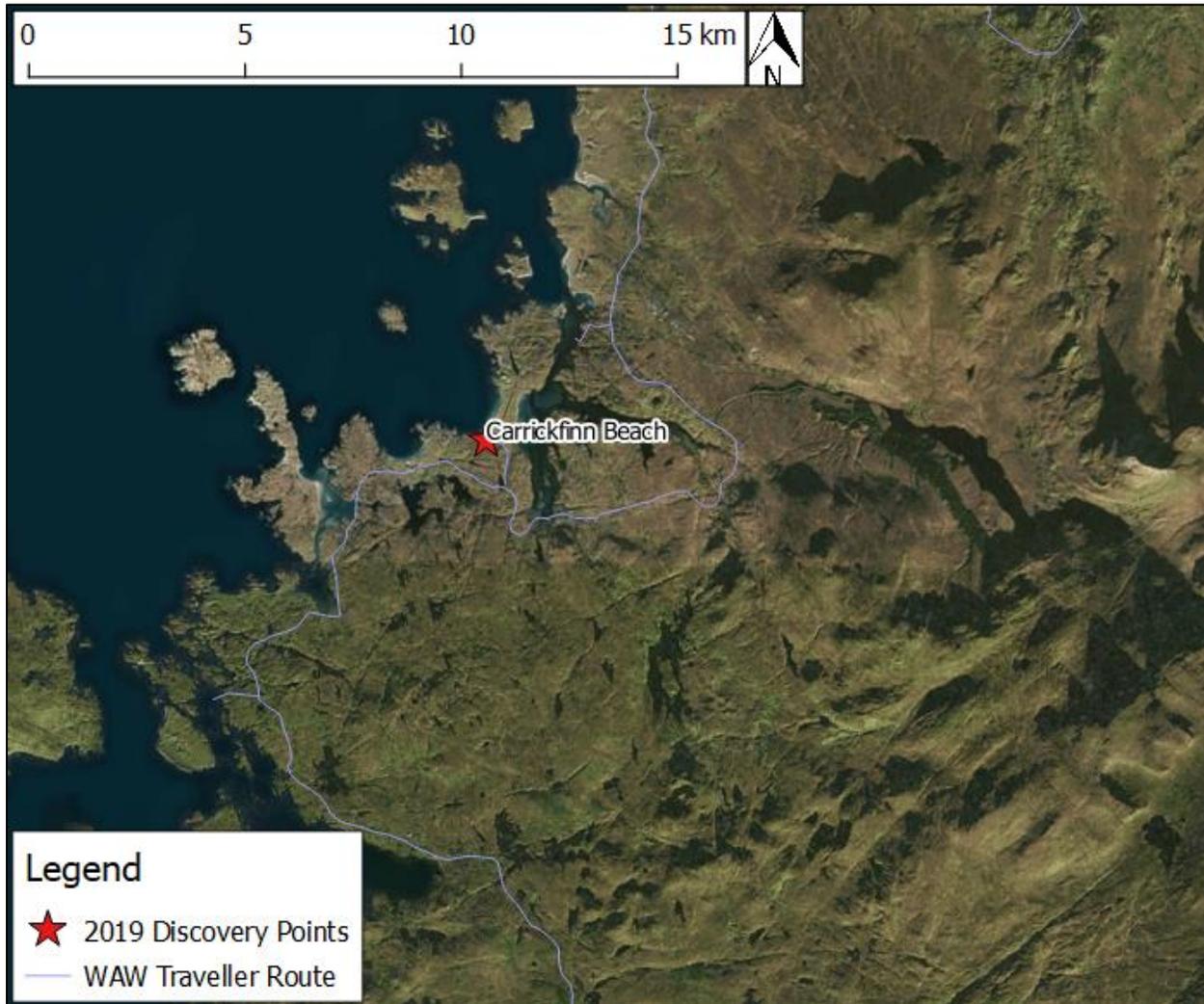
Overall the activities and effects observed during the study were not reported to result in any significant, long-term adverse effects to the site.



Figure 3.112 Location of Visitor Movement Zones at Mountcharles Pier

Carrickfinn Beach

ENVIRONMENTAL SURVEYING AND MONITORING RESULTS



3.15 Carrickfinn Beach

Site Name: Carrickfinn Beach	Date Surveyed: 11th/12 th July 2019
County: Donegal	Landscape Type: Coastal system with beach, dunes and machair
Total No. of People: 591	Average Duration of visitors on site: 00:16:01
<p>Site Description: This beach has a small carpark with two portalos available. Cars were recorded parking on the adjacent habitat which is a machaire. The beach has a lifeguard hut which is manned part time. The site has an abundance of signage available. Carrickfinn Beach is a blue-flag beach located approximately 15km west of Gweedore, Co. Donegal. It is directly adjacent to Donegal airport. The beach itself is approximately 1km long and is backed by extensive sand dune and machair habitats. The Discovery Point is located within the Gweedore Bay and Islands SAC and pNHA and is surrounded by the West Donegal Coast SPA. The area is of high conservation value due to the relatively unspoilt coastal habitats and the range of plant and animal species that these habitats support. The SAC is designated for 17 habitats, five of which occur in proximity to the Discovery Point. The SPA is designated for internationally and nationally important populations of several bird species including the Annex I listed Chough (<i>Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax</i>) and Peregrine (<i>Falco peregrinus</i>).</p>	
<p>Upgrades to Site: There have been no identifiable upgrades to this site or the surrounding area in 2019.</p>	

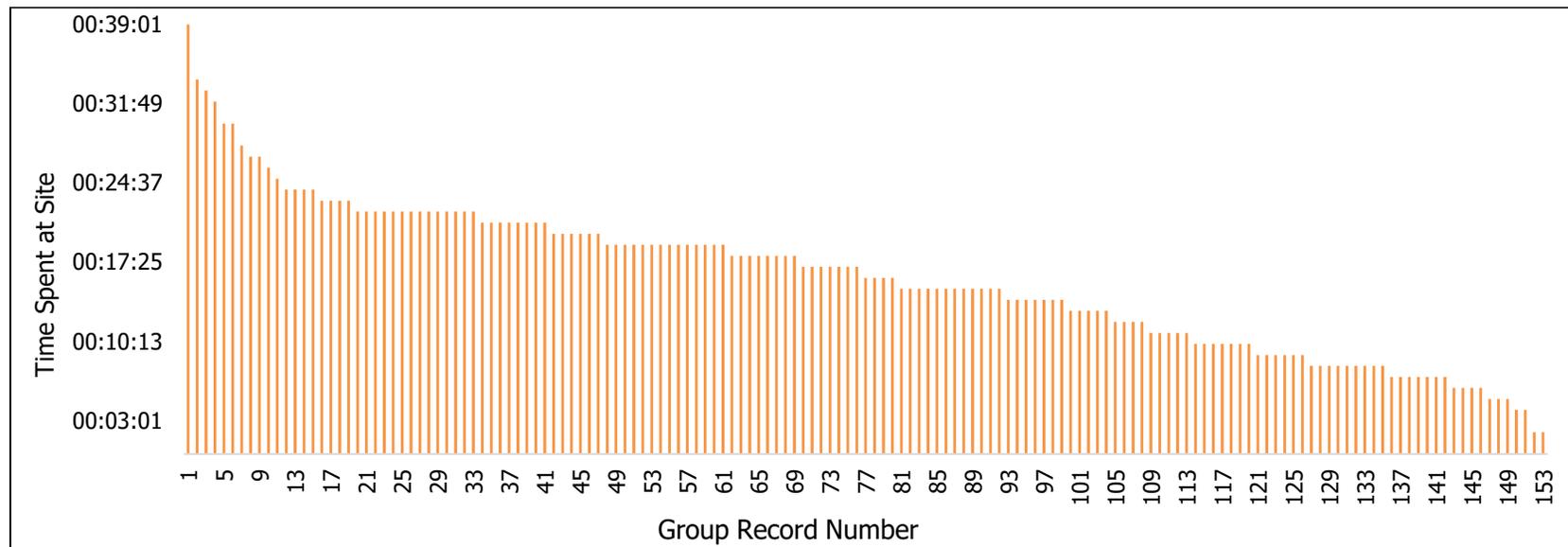


Figure 3.113 Duration of Time Spent at Carrickfinn Beach⁴⁷

⁴⁷ This chart represents 153/238 groups recorded, there was no data recorded for 85 groups.

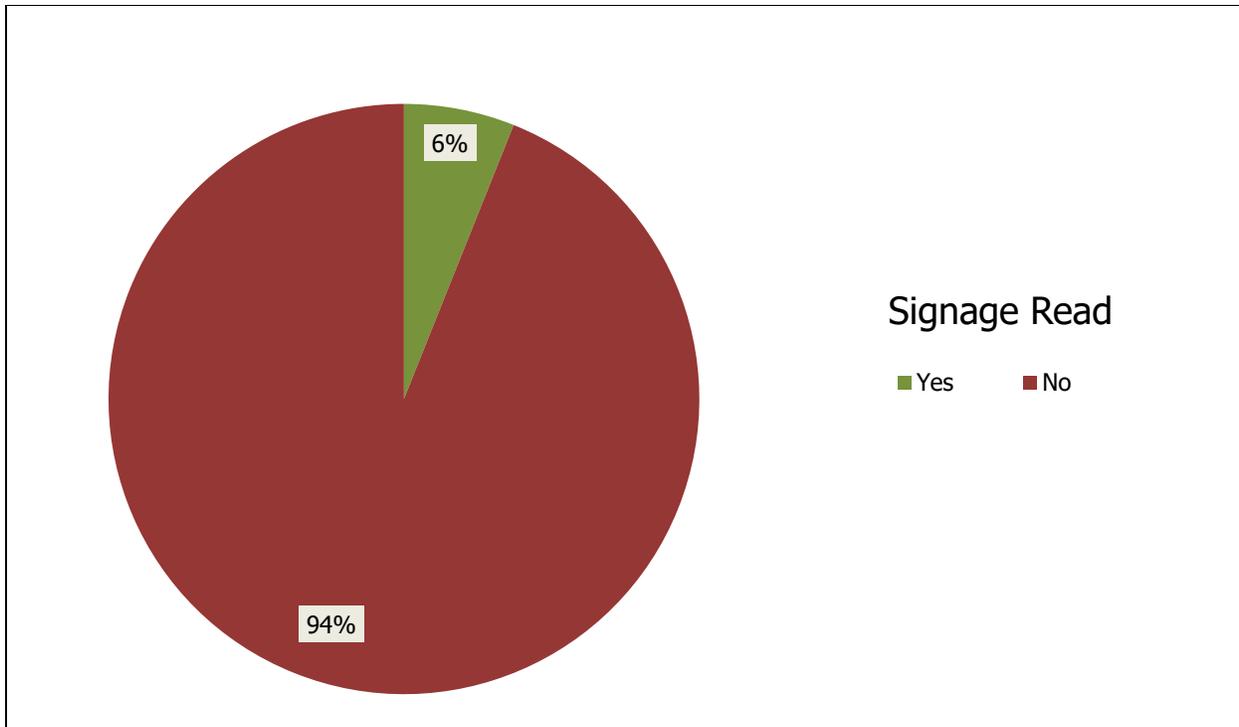


Figure 3.114 Use of Interpretive Material at Carrickfinn Beach⁴⁸

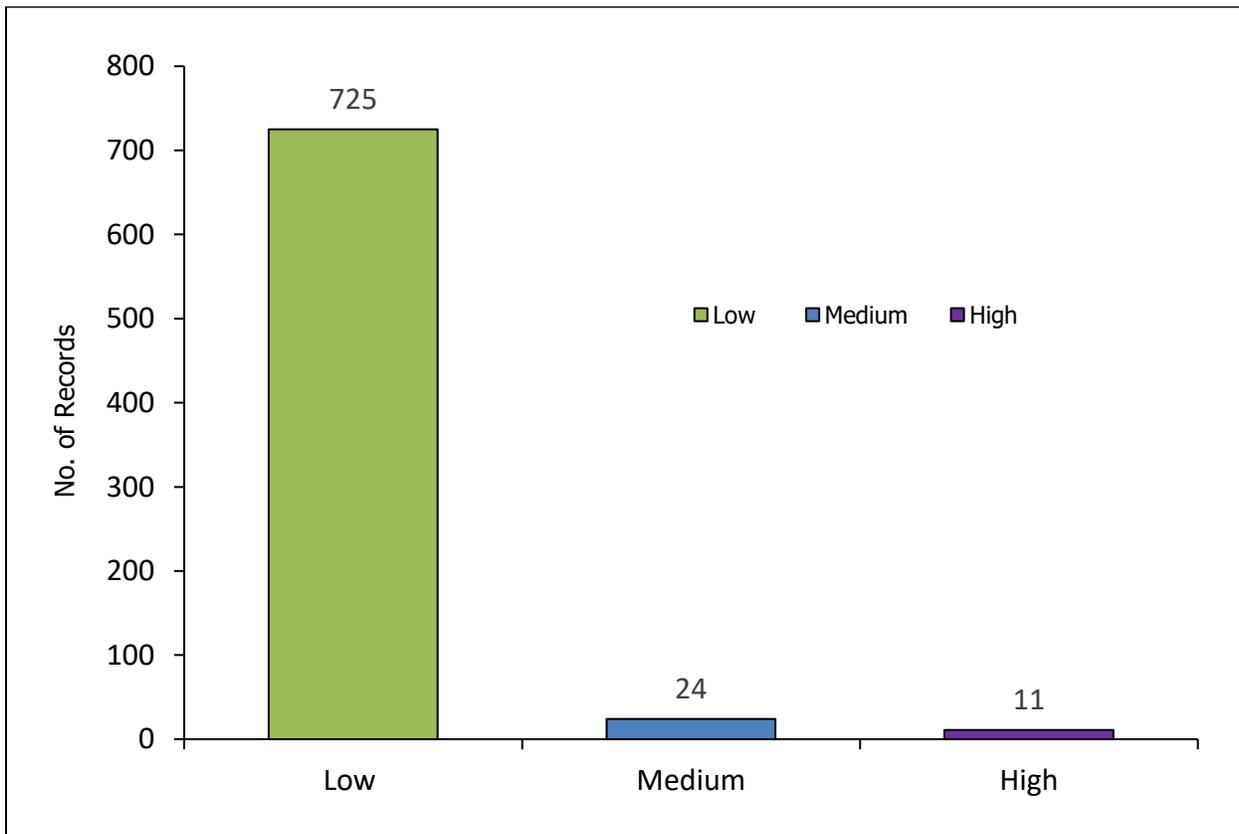


Figure 3.115 Categories of Activity Levels Observed at Carrickfinn Beach

⁴⁸ This chart represents 165 out of 240 records. There was no data available for 75 group.

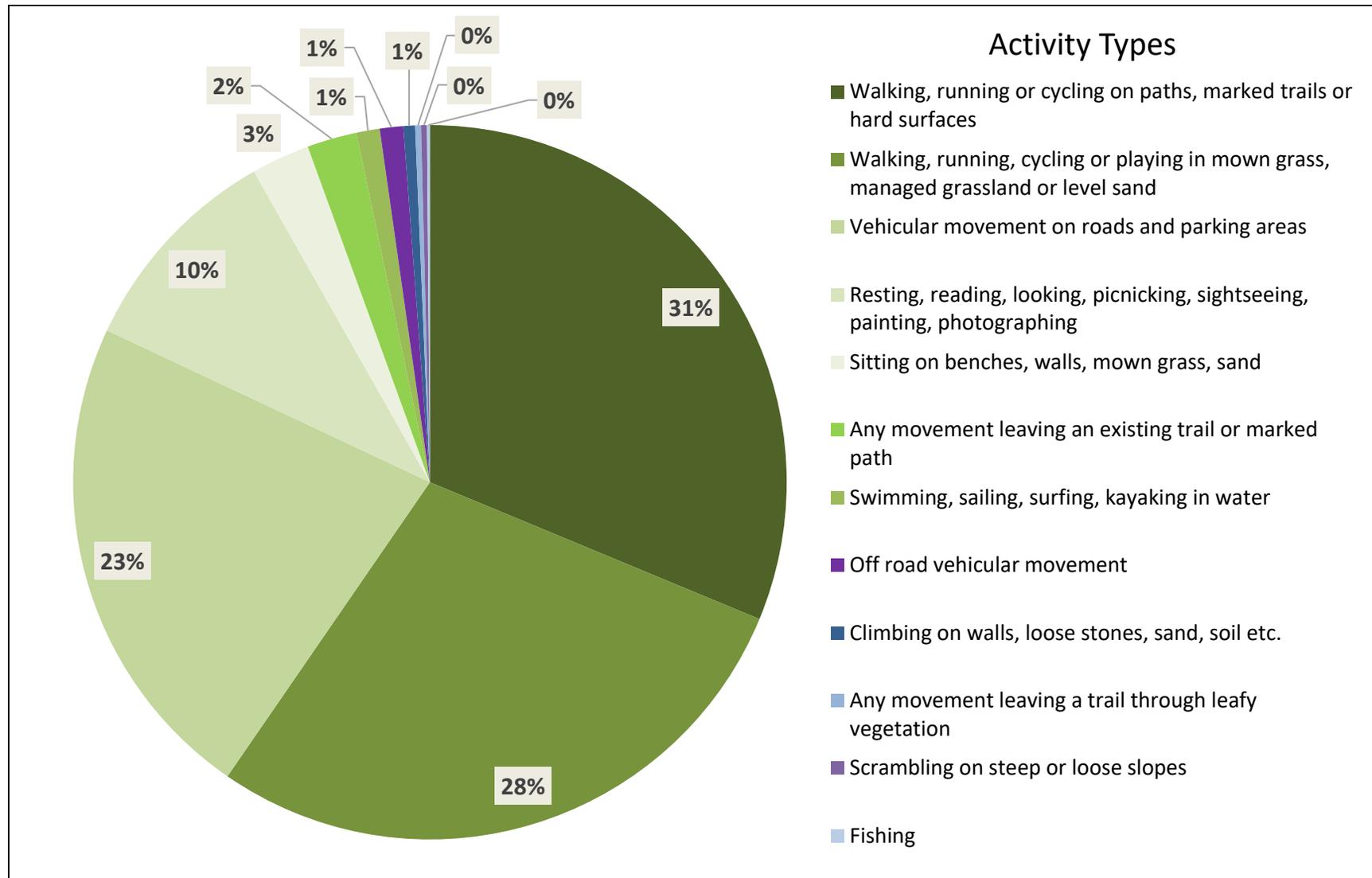


Figure 3.116 Range of Visitor Activities Observed at Carrickfinn Beach⁴⁹

⁴⁹ Three of the activities had an occurrence rate of one which equates to <1%. They are therefore recorded as 0% on the graph.

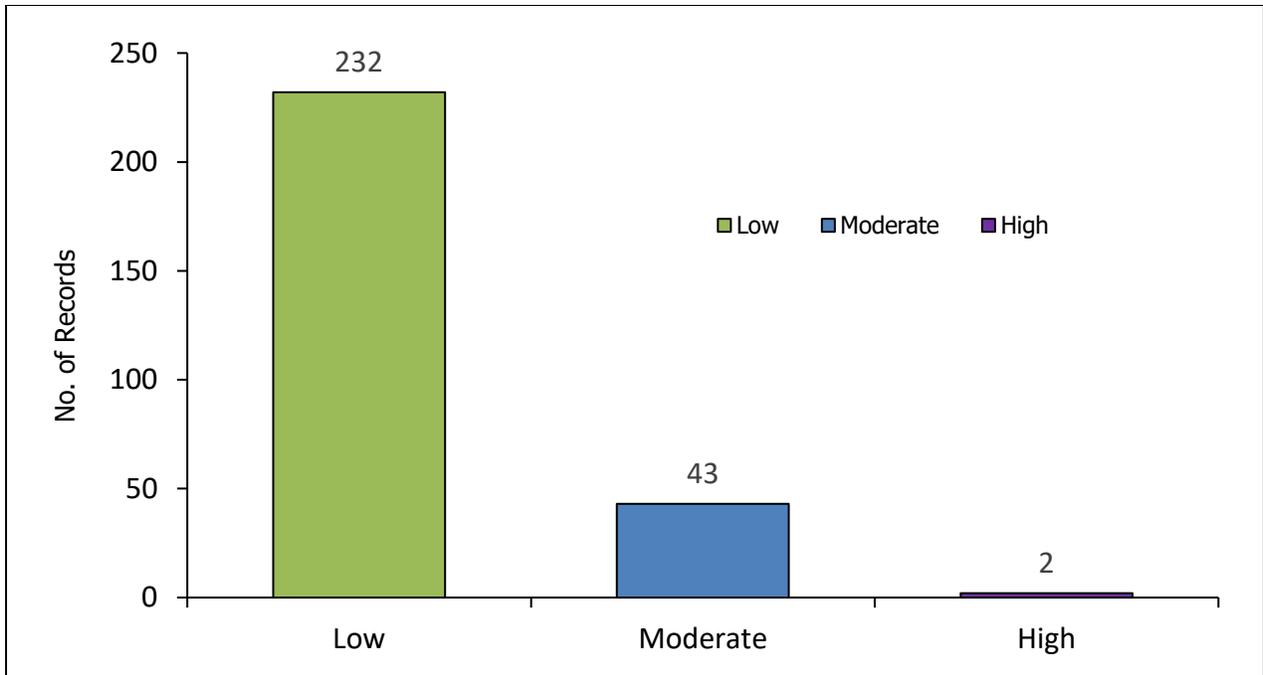


Figure 3.117 Categories of Environmental Impact Levels Observed at Carrickfinn Beach as a result of Visitor Activities

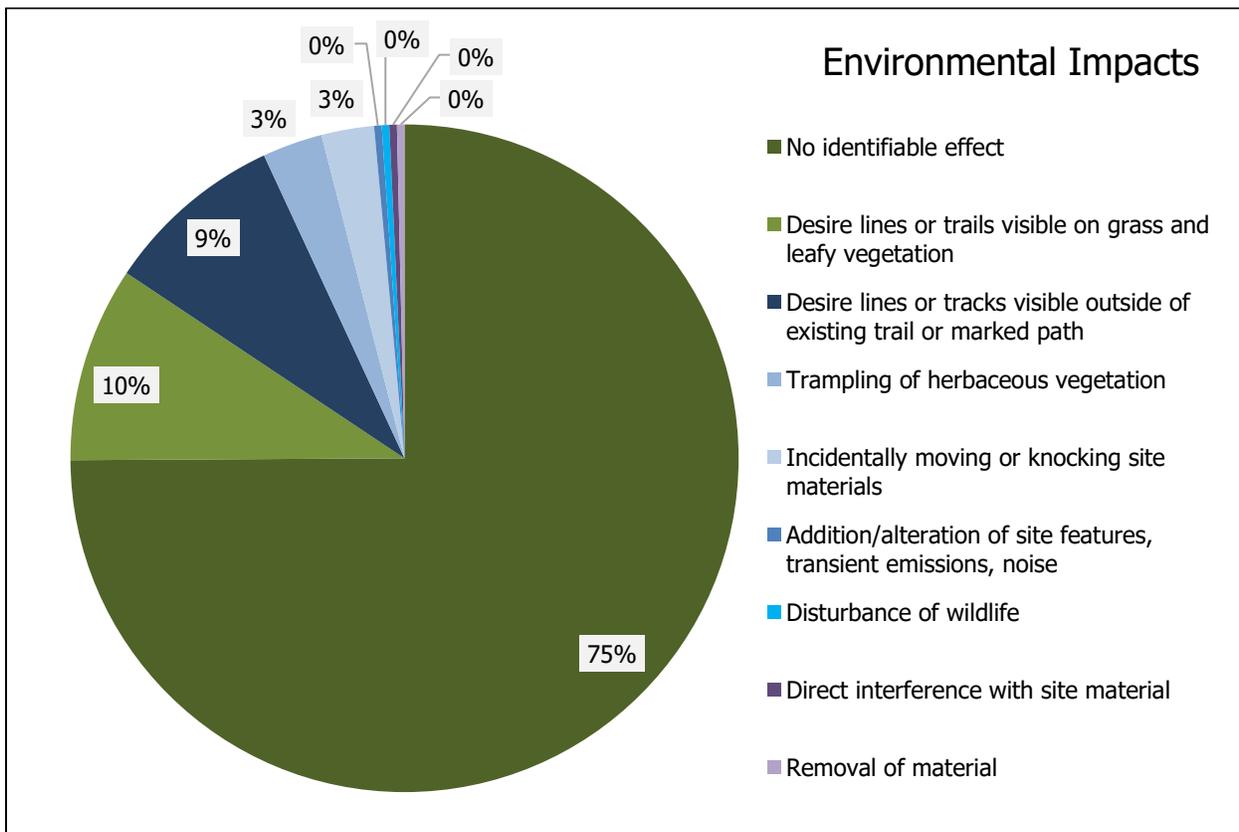
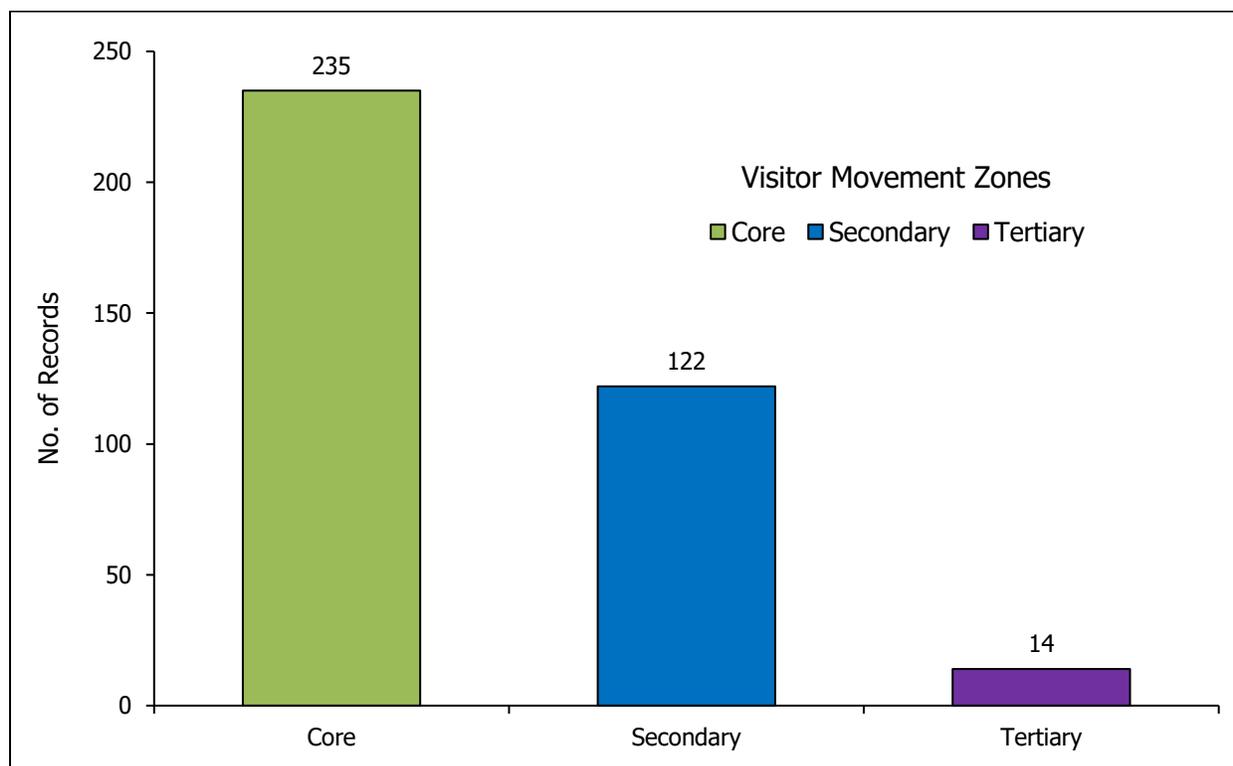


Figure 3.118 Range of Environmental Impacts Observed at Carrickfinn Beach⁵⁰

⁵⁰ Four of the impacts had an occurrence rate of one which equates to <1%. They are therefore recorded as 0% on the graph.

Table 3.15 Visitor Movement Zones Descriptions

Core Zone	Existing car parks, paved areas, viewing platforms, marked pathways, trails, tracks and managed grassland and areas where pathways, trails or roads exist. The majority of visitors remain in these zones.
Secondary Zone	Areas outside of existing car park, paved areas, marked pathways, trails, tracks and managed grassland. visitors are likely to traffic areas of grassland (in some cases farmland grazed by sheep or cattle), heath or bare rock, usually to get a better view of site attractions or to access trails at the site.
Tertiary Zone	Areas where no car park, paved areas, marked pathways, trails, tracks and managed grassland are identifiable and beyond the immediate boundaries of the site.

**Figure 3.119 Zones Trafficked by Visitors at Carrickfinn Beach****3.15.1 Analysis of Results and Visitor Movement Patterns**

Visitors were recorded in the core zone 235 times; 33% of visitor movements observed were in the secondary zone (trafficked 122 times) when visitors left the core zone to walk along the sand dunes/machair and 14 groups went into the tertiary zone.

75% of visitors had no identifiable effect to the site and a further 10% had low levels of effects observed walking along existing desire lines. 9% of visitors observed moved along unmarked tracks creating desire lines. Further evidence of the trampling of herbaceous vegetation was apparent where visitors trafficked secondary zones (3% of all effects observed; 8 incidences). The remaining impacts observed were due to noise pollution and physical interactions with site materials.



Figure 3.120 Location of Visitor Movement Zones at Carrickfinn Beach

Section 4 Collective Analysis of All Sites

This section reviews all 15 monitoring sites collectively in terms of time spent on site, modes of transport, level of activity and impacts.

Of the 5,524 visitors observed during the 2019 survey:

- 89.9% were reported to have a low impact on sites i.e. walking on marked paths, resting, reading, photographing and sightseeing;
- 9.6% were reported to have a medium impact on sites, primarily caused by visitors leaving an existing marked trail or path;
- Less than 1% of all visitors were recorded to have a high impact on any of the sites;
- Cars were the most common mode of transport recorded across all sites during the survey;
- The Core zones were recorded to receive the most visitor traffic (73.7% of all movement recorded)
- The average duration of time spent across all sites was 00:15:03.
- Of the 2707 effects recorded, only 11 were determined to be high-level impacts (less than 0.1%)
- 80.1% of visitor effects were recorded to have no impact to the sites;
- Inishcrone Pier (98%), Mountcharles Pier (95%) and Banna Strand (94%) recorded the least number of effects, these three sites are examples of good site management which in turn results in visitors having minimum effects to a site; and
- A direct link between sites with dunes present increased the likelihood of environmental impacts arising; this is due to the direct interaction between visitor movements and obvious damage to the herbaceous vegetation. This is explored further in the associated ecological report.

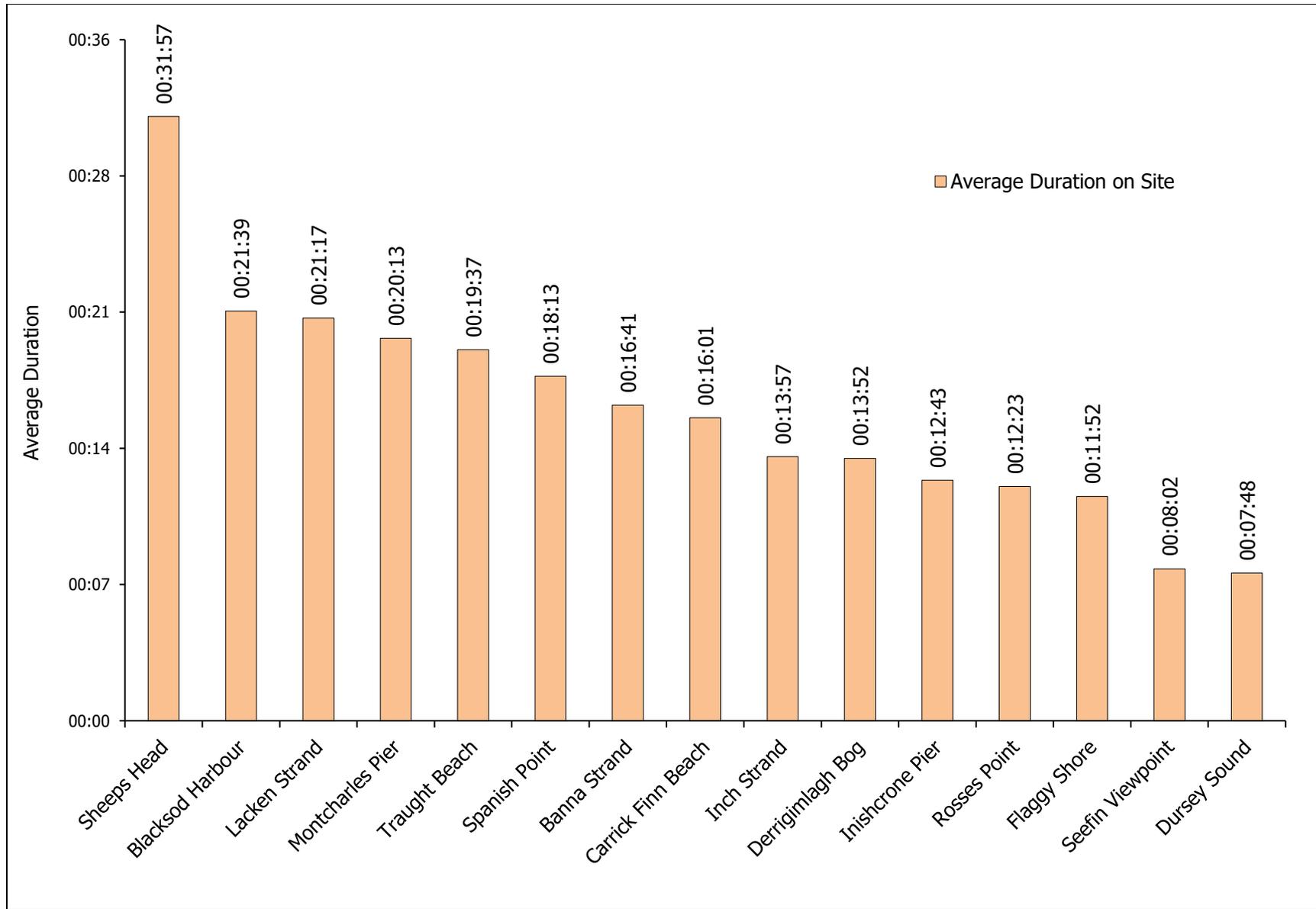


Figure 4.1 Average Duration Spent at Each Site

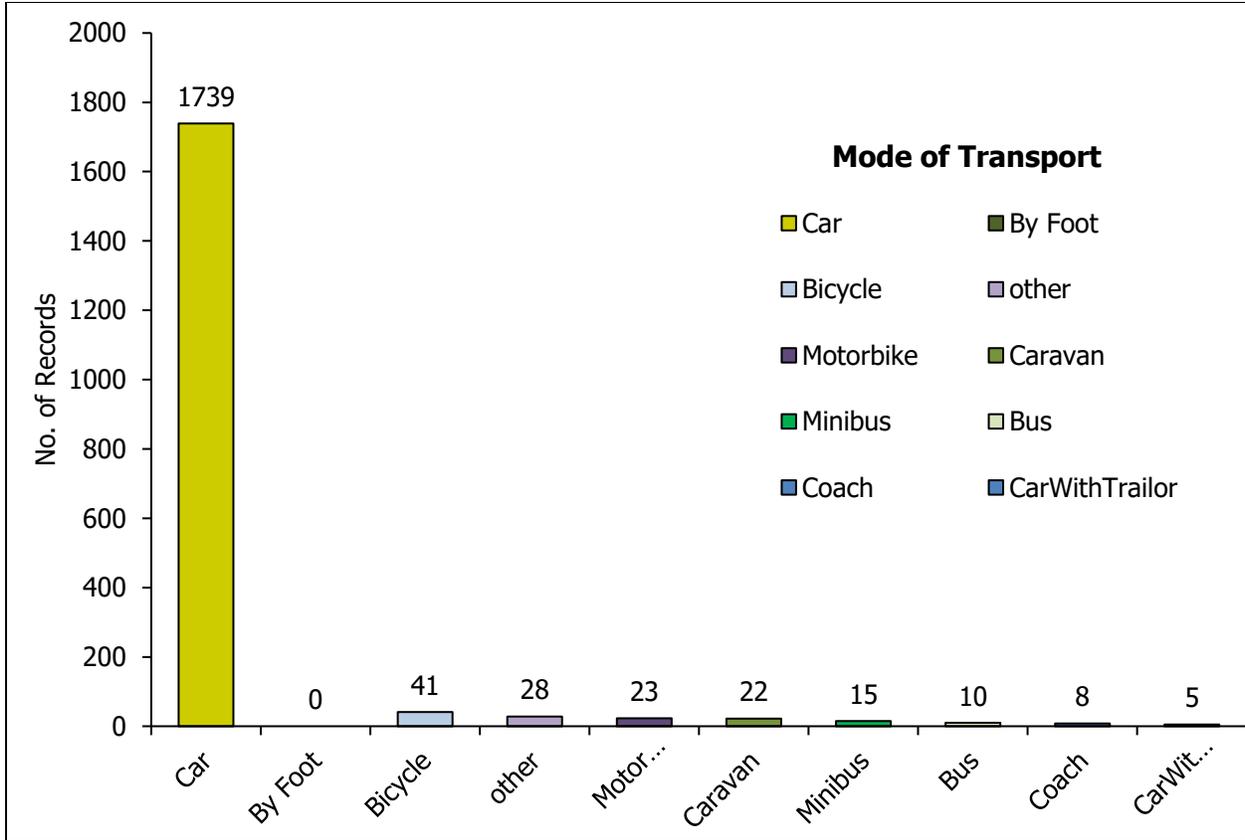


Figure 4.2 Mode of Transport used to reach Discovery Points

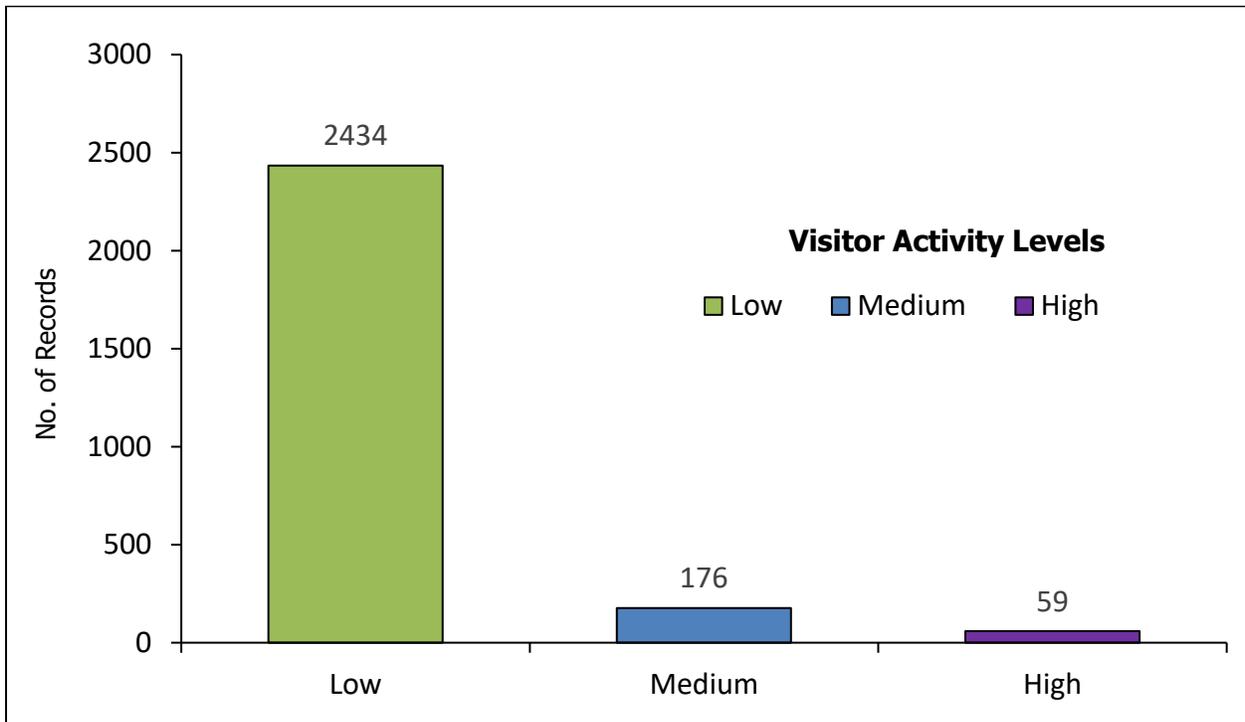


Figure 4.3 Overall Levels of Visitor Activity Recorded Across All Sites

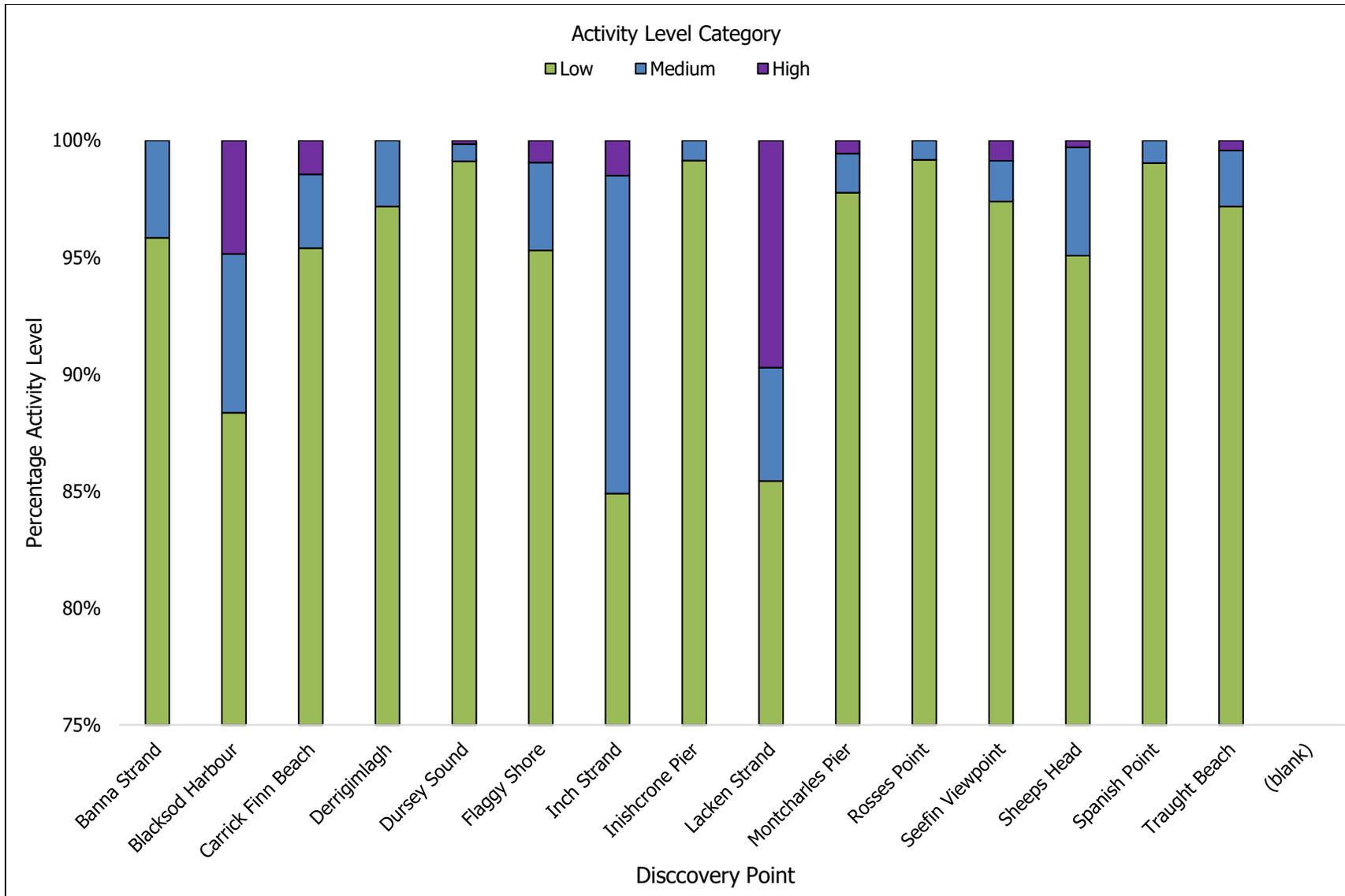


Figure 4.4 Percentage of Visitor Activity Levels Observed Across All Sites ⁵¹

⁵¹ Note that these are percentages of observed activities to give a relative scale for comparison. Details on the actual numbers at each site can be found in the relevant chapter

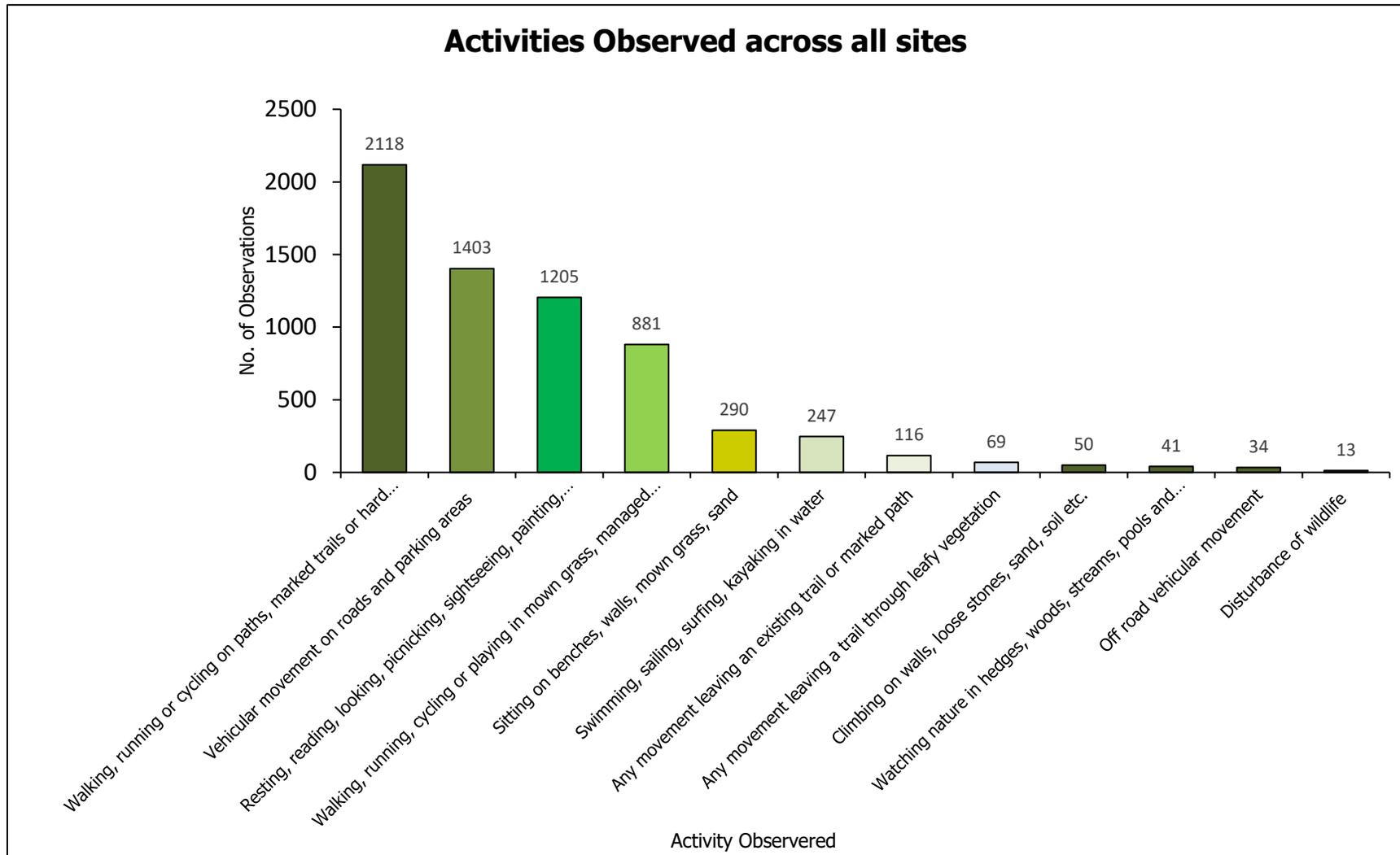


Figure 4.5 Range of Activities Recorded across all site⁵²

⁵² Fishing, walking through wet/muddy soil, scrambling on steep or loose slopes, off road vehicular movement, Disturbance of wildlife, Deliberate building or moving or knocking site materials - parts of monuments, walls, stones, sand etc., Picking herbaceous vegetation; all these activities accounted for less than 1% of the overall total.

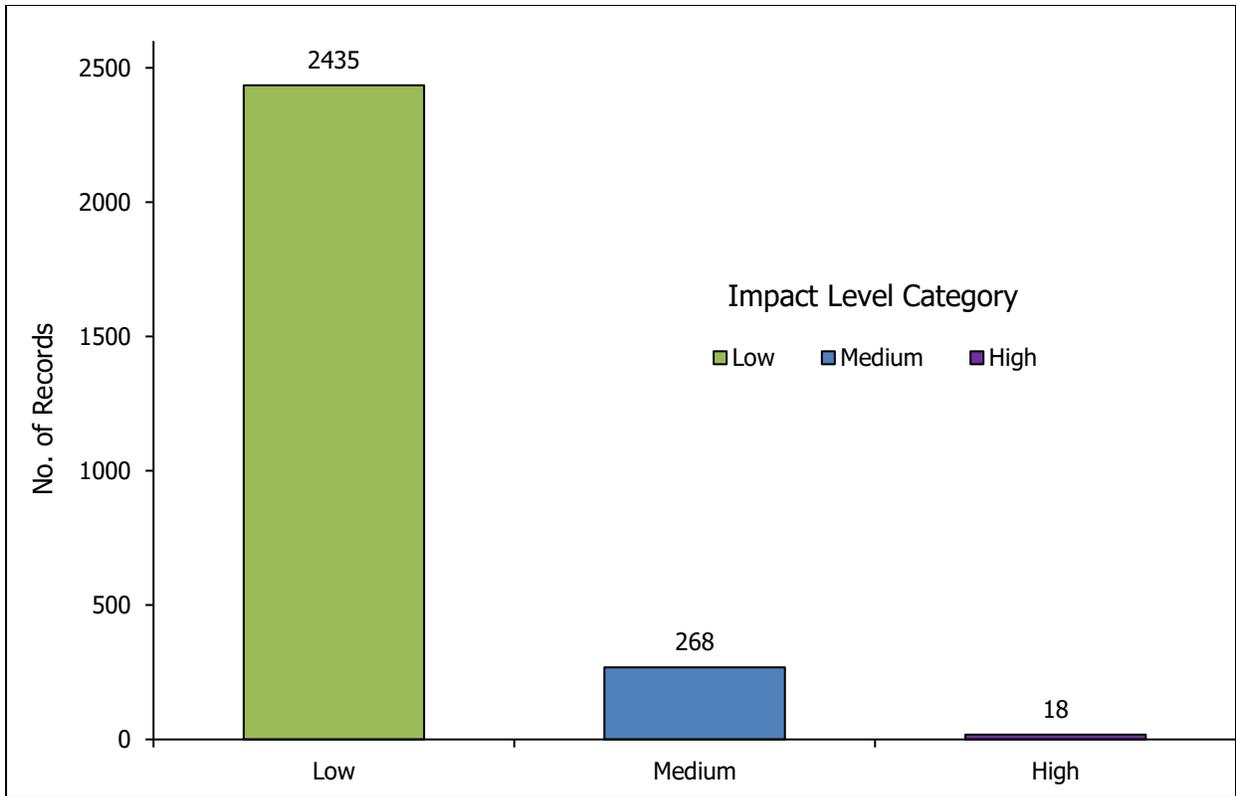


Figure 4.6 Overall Level of Environmental Impacts Observed Across All Sites

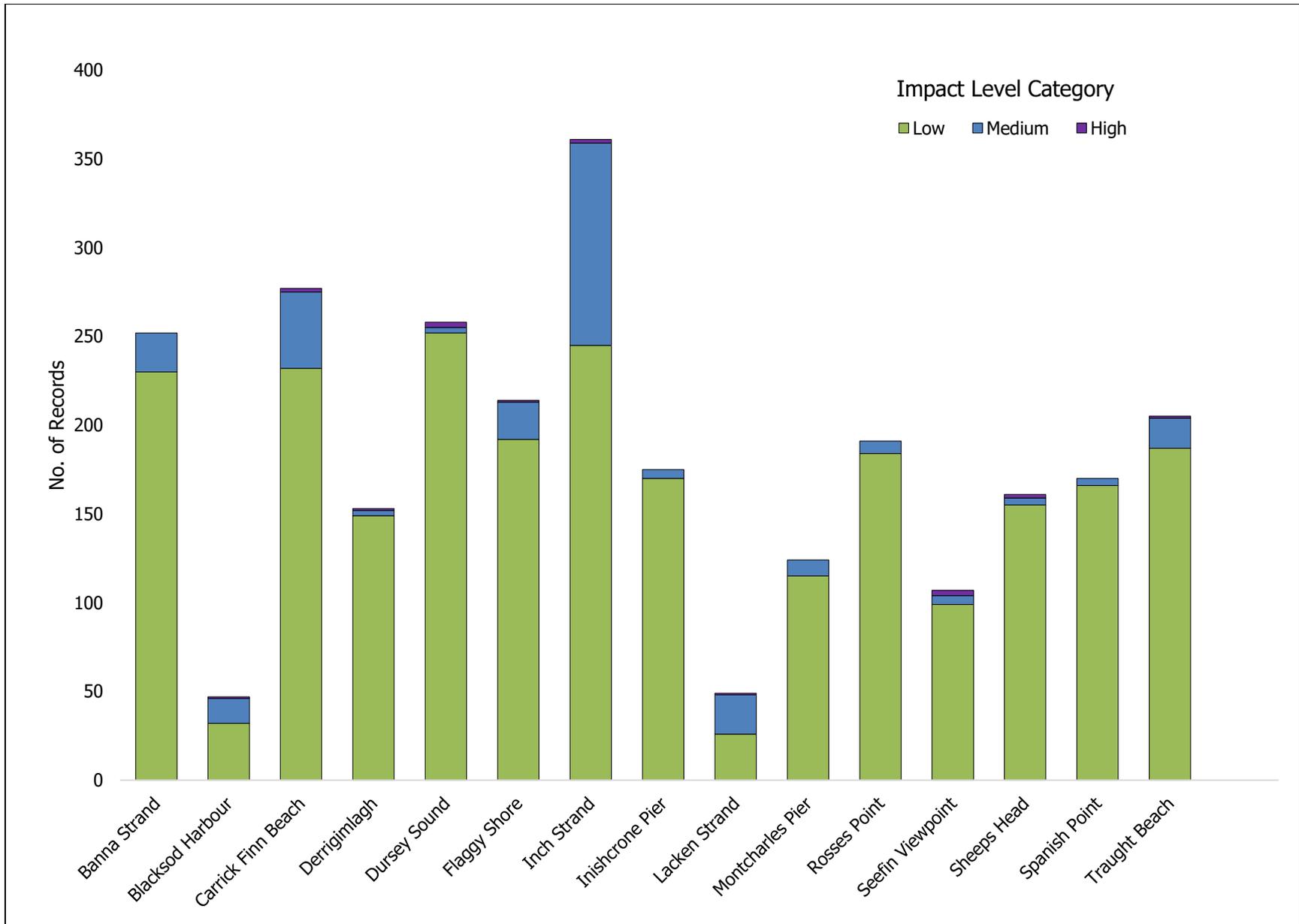


Figure 4.7 Overall Level of Environmental Impacts Observed Across All Sites

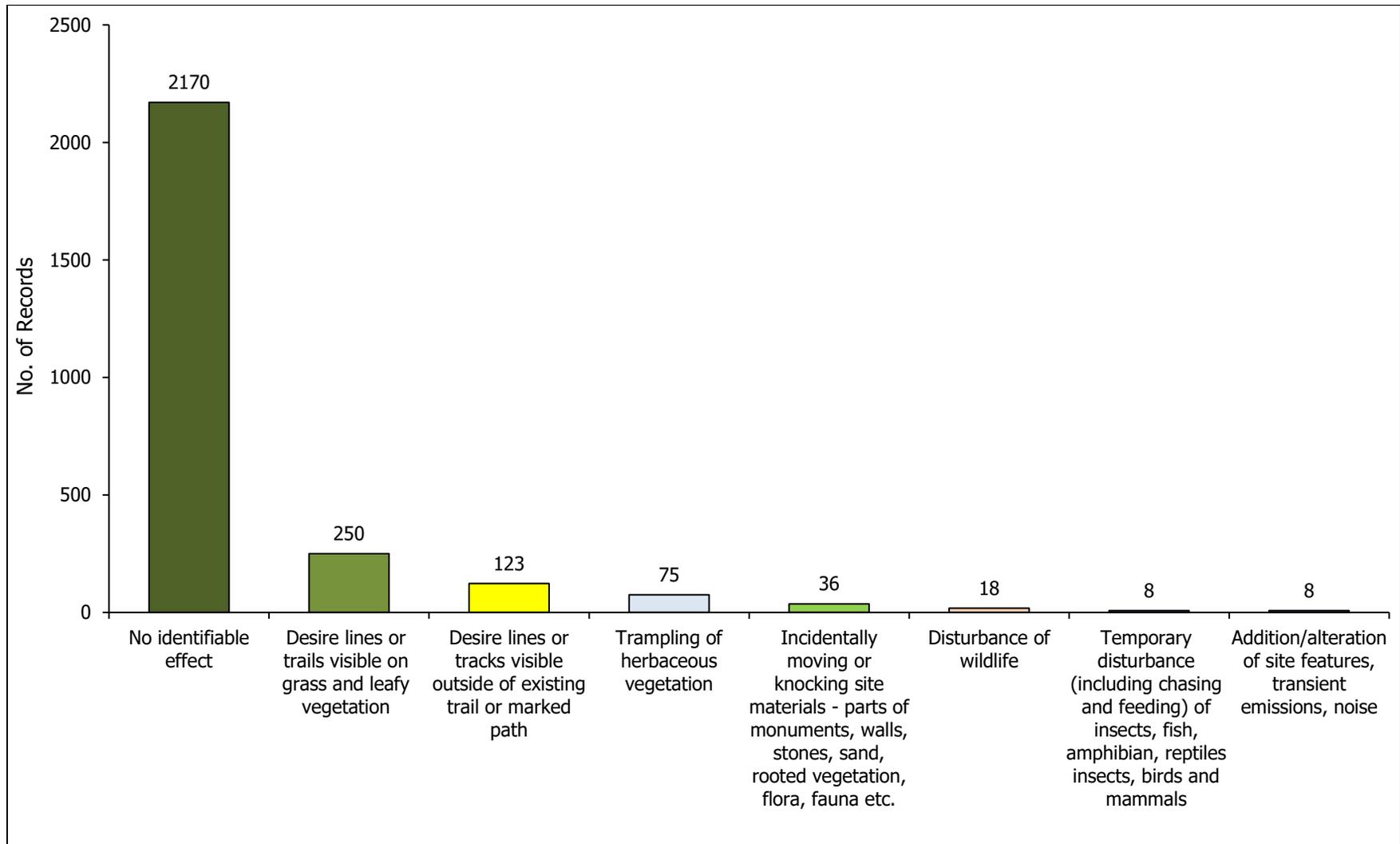


Figure 4.8 Range of Impacts Observed across all sites⁵³

⁵³ There were 4 or less incidences of each of the following effects: General/light littering, Direct interference with site material - parts of monuments, walls, stones, sand, rooted vegetation, flora, fauna etc., Temporary change of character - due to the appearance or nature of activities (noise, crowds, etc.), Injuring, killing or taking wildlife, Damage to woody vegetation, Removal of material - parts of monuments, walls, stones, sand, rooted vegetation, flora, fauna etc., Vandalism or graffiti, Destruction of structures, vegetation or fauna, Heavy littering or dumping quantities of waste, Transient disturbance, emissions, noise, Burning materials or lighting a fire.

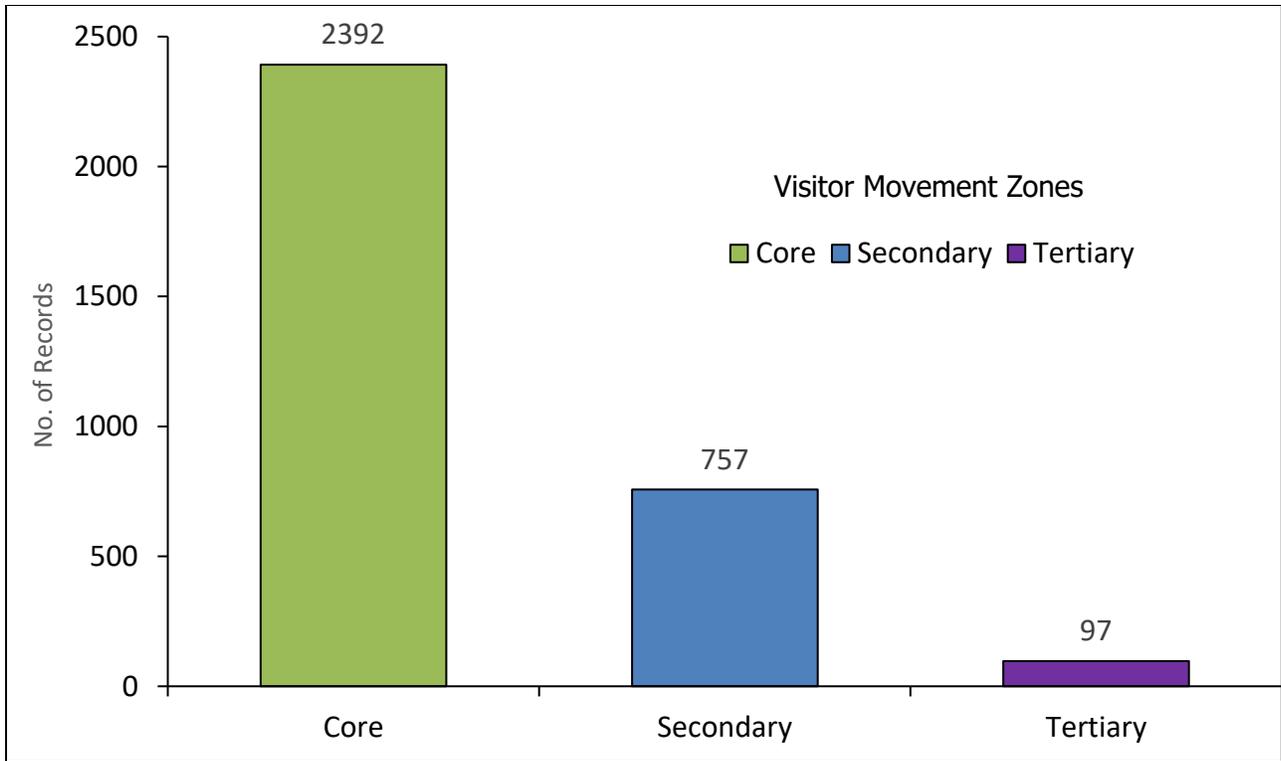


Figure 4.9 Movement Zones Trafficked by Visitors Across All Sites

Section 5 Conclusions, Recommendations and Trends Observed

5.1 Conclusion

Over the 5-year monitoring program the 2019 data represents the lower effect levels observed to date (Figure 5.1).

Over the last five years of visitor observation surveys that have been carried out along the Wild Atlantic Way; evidence has shown that the smaller less disperse sites have more refined visitor movement pattern which in turn results in fewer impacts observed.

Well managed sites have low levels of effects and in most cases over 95% of visitors have no identifiable effect if managed appropriately.

The 2019 survey recorded the highest proportion of low-level impacts, and 'no identifiable effect' (79.7% of all records) to the 15 chosen sites. There were few high-level impacts observed in the 2019 data; however, the lowest proportion of high-level impacts observed were recorded in 2018 due to the effective management strategies employed at the sites. The sites monitored in 2016 had the highest level of impacts recorded overall.



Figure 5.1 Comparison of Environmental Impact Levels Observed Annually (2015-2019)

Table 6.5.1 Visitor Observation Analysis Summary (per site; 2019)

Site Name	County	Site Summary
Sheep's Head	Cork	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 72% - No identifiable effect 2.5% - Medium level - leaving paved areas. Heavy littering occurred twice
Seefin Viewpoint	Cork	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 65% - No identifiable effect 2.5% - Medium level environmental effects 1.37% - High Level environmental effects
Dursey Sound (Control)	Cork	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 87% - No identifiable effect 11% - Low level effects – leaving the paths 1.1% - Medium environmental effects 1.1% - High-level
Inch Strand	Kerry	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 62% - No identifiable effect 18% - Medium effect- leaving desire lines Diverse range of impacts observed
Banna Strand	Kerry	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 85% no identifiable effects Core zone was trafficked 236 times 8.1% - Of visitors were observed leaving desire lines in the dunes
Spanish Armada Viewpoint	Clare	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 90% - No identifiable effect 10% - Medium environmental effect Zones Trafficked by visitors - Core (164 times), Secondary (42 times) and Tertiary (7 times)
Flaggy Shore	Clare	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 91% - No identifiable effect 9% - Medium or high-level environmental effects Diverse range of impacts observed
Traught Beach	Galway	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 90% - No identifiable effect 10% - Medium level environmental effect
Derrigimlagh Bog	Galway	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 95% - No identifiable effect 1.9% - Medium level environmental effect Core Zone received most movement (153 times) Tertiary Zone (6 times) - visitors left path to access diverse area
An Fód Dubh (Blacksod Harbour)	Mayo	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 52% - No identifiable effect to the site 17% - Low level environmental effects 29% - Medium level environmental effect 2% High level environmental effects Numbers observed at this site were very low
Lackan Strand	Mayo	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 49% - No identifiable effect 40% - Medium level impact - cars driving and access to salt marshes 8 incidences of visitor movements in the tertiary zone There was a low data yield for this site
Inishcrone Pier	Sligo	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 98% - No identifiable effects to the site 2% - Medium level
Rosses Point	Sligo	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 85% - No identifiable effect to the site 11% - recorded creation of desire lines 4% of the impacts observed relate to littering and other localised effects.
Mountcharles Pier	Donegal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 34.7% of the visitor movements observed were recorded outside of the Core movement zone 97% - No identifiable effect to the site 3% recorded medium level effects with disturbance to wildlife.
Carrick Finn Beach	Donegal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 75% - No identifiable effect to the site 9% - recorded creation of desire lines 3% of the impacts observed relate to trampling of herbaceous vegetation

5.2 Recommendations

Site management is recommended where visitors spend more than 15-20 minutes at a site. When considering the level of management warranted, several factors should be considered:

- Site size and dispersal throughout the site;
- Visitor activity levels recorded;
- Environmental impact levels recorded; and
- Average duration of time spent at site.

All sites should be evaluated and developed to ensure the correct facilities are put in place to deal with the level of footfall each site receives. Interventions can include the removal of infrastructure and the management of visitor movements through a remote visitor centre with shuttle services provided. If sites are left without any intervention, effects that are currently not causing significant impacts, may in the long-term cause effects to worsen. Visitor loadings and carrying capacities should be monitored regularly at any tourist destination. The following are some general suggestions for some of the Discovery Points for their future management:

- At sites with little or no or inappropriate signage, it is suggested to erect new signage at access points and car parks to make visitors aware of the sensitivities associated with the site (**Spanish Point**);
- Sites where visitors frequently take part in recreational activities could be facilitated by a warden during months in which sites have the highest visitor numbers to ensure activities don't have any adverse effects to the site (**Lacken Strand and Rosses Point**);
- Improve/review interpretive materials to inform visitors of any sensitive areas at all sites and how to behave in said areas;
- Information notices at sites with upland heathland systems, orchid-rich grassland and machair should be erected to inform visitors of the highly sensitive nature of the habitats present and to be aware of sticking to marked trails and paths (**Sheep's Head, Seefin Viewpoint, Dursey Sound, Rosses Point and Carrickfinn Beach**).
- Access tracks for dunnes should be managed, where tracks exceed 1m wide access should be restricted and alternative routes should be provided for. Where excessive damage occurs, then dune restoration works should be implemented such as reinforcement.

Further analysis and subsequent recommendations can be found in the associated Ecological Monitoring Report.