

Findings from a community survey on a revitalisation scheme for Crieff

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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Executive Summary

1. This report presents the findings of a survey carried out among people who live and work in the town of Crieff, in western Perthshire. The survey was commissioned by the Crieff and Upper Strathearn Partnership (CUSP), with funding provided by Perth & Kinross Council.
2. The survey sought to obtain the views of a representative sample of the town's population about a range of issues affecting the town. It comprised twenty-three questions, including five open-ended questions, covering the following topics:
 - Colour-theming of lamp posts, railings and street furniture in the town, and new welcome signs at the entrance to the town
 - Car parking in the town centre
 - Transportation and traffic-related issues
 - Social, cultural and leisure facilities
 - Land for sale between MacRosty Park and Lady Mary's Walk
 - Improving the appearance of Crieff town centre
 - Other aspirations.
3. The aim was to get local people's views about where improvements were needed and what the priorities for action should be.

Who participated in the survey?

4. The survey was open to people over 18 who lived in Crieff or in the surrounding PH7 postcode area, and people who worked in Crieff.
5. The findings reported here are based on an analysis of 654 responses. Of these: 555 (84.9%) were from Crieff residents — comprising 11.0% of the town's population of over-18s; 62 (9.5%) were from Crieff locals and 37 (5.7%) were from non-resident workers.
6. The demographic profile of the survey sample is broadly representative of the demographic profile of the wider population of Crieff. The sample was also geographically representative in that people living in all areas of Crieff took part.
7. The views of young people under 18 were obtained through separate discussion groups carried out with young people from Morrison's Academy, Logos and Crieff High School.

Colour-theming and new welcome signs

8. The majority of respondents (71.1%) would like to have the town's street lamps and street furniture painted a co-ordinated set of colours, rather than retaining the current, uncoordinated colour scheme. Of the colour options suggested in the survey, there were marginally more respondents who preferred burgundy with gold trim over green with gold trim.
9. There was support for the creation of new welcome signs for the town. The preferred choice for the wording of the sign was, "Welcome to Crieff — Heart of

Strathearn”, and the preferred image for the sign was the Coat of Arms of the Burgh of Crieff.

Car parking, traffic and transportation issues

10. Seven out of ten respondents (71.3%) agreed with a statement that more parking was needed in Crieff. However, nearly eight in ten (78.4%) felt that a multi-storey car park should not be built in the town centre. There was no clear support either for or against a park-and-ride scheme in Crieff.
11. Two-thirds of respondents (65.4%) stated that they would prefer a change in current arrangements for parking charges, so that there is *free* parking in the King Street and Leadenflower car parks and *paid* parking in the High Street and James Square.
12. In relation to traffic and transportation-related issues, 84.2% of respondents agreed with a statement that there should be better co-ordination between local and national public transportation services, and 61.7% agreed that there should be a by-pass in Crieff to take heavy traffic out of the town centre. Six out of ten (59.8%) agreed that there should be a bus service from Crieff to the park-and-ride service in Perth (to connect with national buses), and about half (53.7%) felt that a bus and coach station should be provided in Crieff. However, there was less support for moving the bus stops from the High Street, or restoring James Square to allow traffic flow on either side (as it did historically).
13. Issues to do with traffic, parking, transportation and pedestrianisation were among the major themes arising from the open-ended questions in the survey. In general, people wanted to see better enforcement of existing parking restrictions (i.e., a reduction in parking on double-yellow lines), more frequent buses to Dunblane and Stirling, and a more frequent and extended town bus service.

Social, cultural and leisure facilities

14. Survey respondents were asked their views about whether there was a need for new or additional social, cultural and leisure facilities in Crieff. A list of ten suggestions was given in the questionnaire, and respondents were asked to indicate which three would be their top priorities. Respondents were also given space to write in other suggestions. Of the 10 facilities listed in the questionnaire, those that were considered to be the top three priorities for the town were: (i) a community centre / community hall — in the town centre; (ii) a cinema / film club; and (iii) a place to hold small concerts and gigs.
15. In the open-ended question, there were a considerable number of comments to suggest that people would like to see the library (or a branch of the library) return to the centre of town. There was also a desire for additional sporting facilities. Those mentioned most frequently were public tennis courts (ideally in MacRosty Park) and improved provision for cycling — i.e., a more extensive cycle (and mountain bike) network, more bicycle racks (especially in James Square and at the supermarkets) and a BMX track.
16. Respondents also wanted to see additional social / cultural facilities in Crieff. Suggestions mentioned most frequently were for: a performing / visual arts

centre; a nightclub / venue for dances (tea dances, ceilidhs); more activities and a space for young people to socialise; and indoor play space for families with young children (a soft play area).

Purchase of land near Lady Mary's Walk

17. Over two years ago, it came to the attention of CUSP that an area of land between the bridge at Turretbank Road and Lady Mary's Walk (along the Turret Burn) was available for sale.
18. CUSP has explored the possibility of purchasing the land (for approximately £20,000) on behalf of the town of Crieff, and having it held in trust for the town by a local community body. Therefore, CUSP included a question on this issue in the community questionnaire, first to gauge the interest of the community in purchasing the land, and to ascertain whether it might be possible to obtain the purchase price through a fundraising campaign within the town.
19. A substantial majority of respondents (79.0%) were in favour of the land being purchased and held in trust for the community, and nearly three-fifths (59.9%) indicated they would be willing to contribute to a fundraising campaign to purchase the land.

Possible uses for unoccupied buildings in the town centre

20. There are a number of large buildings in the centre of Crieff which are currently unoccupied and which are being allowed to fall into disrepair. The survey asked the people of Crieff for their views about what could be done with four of these properties: the former Drummond Arms Hotel, the former Crown Hotel, the former South Church and Old St Michael's Church Hall.
21. Regarding the Drummond Arms Hotel, respondents were asked to indicate from a list of eight suggestions, whether they would like to see the hotel used for that purpose. The preferred use for the building was as a hotel – 82.5% of respondents agreed with a statement saying the building should be used for this purpose, and over half (55.8%) agreed strongly. However, the second and third preferred uses for the hotel were as a community centre or as a museum, with just over 60% of respondents agreeing with these two suggestions.
22. Because of its historic significance, there was a suggestion that the Drummond Arms could be purchased for the town through a community buy-out scheme. This suggestion was put to the people of Crieff in the community survey. It was explained that if this happened, it would put the responsibility of maintaining the building onto the town. However, it would also ensure that the building was used for the benefit of the town. Respondents were asked whether they would be in favour of the building being purchased in this way. Forty-seven percent of respondents (46.6%) thought the hotel should be purchased for the town, but nearly a quarter (23.2%) felt it should not, and nearly a third of respondents (30.2%) were not sure.
23. In an open-ended question, respondents were asked to write in their views about possible uses for the former Crown Hotel, Old St Michael's Church Hall and the former South Church. The most common suggestions were: a community

centre / community hall; flats / housing for local residents; a youth centre / soft play space for children; space for sport (climbing wall / ice rink), games (snooker, bingo) and exercise (yoga, pilates); an arts & crafts venue with workshops, exhibition and retail space; tourist accommodation; and a museum.

24. A number of respondents referred to the unoccupied buildings in the town centre as “eyesores”, and some called for the demolition of one or more of the buildings.

Improving the appearance of the town centre

25. The survey included three further questions about possible ways of improving the town centre. These questions asked for respondents’ views about: (i) whether a façade improvement scheme was needed for selected shops in the High Street; (ii) whether trees should be planted in Commissioner Street; and (iii) whether Perth & Kinross Council should take stronger measures to compel property owners to maintain their properties to a good standard.
26. The majority of respondents (87.7%) agreed that Perth & Kinross Council should take stronger measures to compel property owners to maintain their properties to a good standard. In addition, 86.5% felt that a façade improvement scheme was needed for selected shops in the High Street. However, views were mixed (51.8% agreed) about whether trees should be planted in Commissioner Street.
27. In an open-ended question at the end of the questionnaire, respondents were asked if they had other suggestions for how the town centre could be improved. The main themes in the responses focused on: the physical appearance of shops and other properties in the town; the poor state of pavements; the range of businesses in the town; the opening hours of High Street shops; a need for better signage and public information for visitors and locals alike; concerns about the appearance of James Square; a request for more trees, flowers and greenery in the town centre; concerns about the trend towards moving services to the outskirts of town; and issues to do with anti-social behaviour.

Needs for additional services or businesses

28. In another open-ended question at the end of the questionnaire, respondents were asked about what other types of businesses or services they would like to see in Crieff. The largest proportion of comments focused on the perceived needs for: (i) a supermarket; (ii) a petrol station; (iii) shops that sold affordable clothing – particularly for children / young people; and (iv) good-quality restaurants, cafés or pubs.

Views from young people under 18

29. In the discussions with young people, the groups were asked for their views about what was needed to make Crieff a better place for them. Three things were named by all three groups: (i) a cinema; (ii) a shopping centre / better provision for clothes shopping; and (iii) a McDonalds.

Conclusions

30. The final chapter of the report summarises the findings and draws conclusions about areas for priority action.