

**FINDINGS FROM
CITY HALL PUBLIC CONSULTATION SURVEY**

April 2010

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND

Perth and Kinross Council takes a customer focussed and inclusive approach to decision making. To provide information to contribute to future planning of Perth City Centre and in particular Perth City Hall, an extensive consultation process was undertaken. Information from the public was gathered through an online questionnaire, paper copies of this questionnaire distributed to the general public through Council offices and schools and a special edition Perth City Centre Viewfinder questionnaire distributed to the Council's citizen's panel. A description of the Viewfinder citizen's panel is available at Appendix 1.

The consultation exercise ran during February and March 2010.

A total of 2502 questionnaires were received from the public, 1641 online or as paper copies returned by the general public and 861 questionnaires returned by the Viewfinder Panel.

1.2 FOCUS OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE

Perth City Centre is renowned as a retail centre in Scotland for its exceptional mix of quality speciality shops, well known High Street stores and its many fine cafes, bars and restaurants. It also regularly hosts specialist markets including the award winning Perth Farmers' Market. In addition to a quality shopping environment the City Centre is increasingly a place where people live and also provides a range of other services and entertainment opportunities including street events and promotions, Perth Theatre and Perth Concert Hall.

The local Development Plan for Perth City Centre provides a vision and planning framework which sets out the Council's wish for a vibrant and viable city centre with a high quality environment and wide range of uses to make it an attractive place to live, visit and work.

The Council has previously asked local people, visitors and businesses for information to help plan the future of the area. This has generally concluded that there are still opportunities for development of further shops and other businesses such as restaurants within the city centre.

Perth City Hall is located in the heart of the City Centre and was constructed at the beginning of the last century. It was listed by Historic Scotland in 1977 as a Category B Listed Building. It was built in a classical style at the beginning of the last century, partly on the site of a former city hall and partly on the site of a large public open space formerly used for markets. The building was previously used for concerts and conferences but closed for these uses when the new Perth Concert Hall opened in 2005.

Listed Buildings are protected and they cannot generally be demolished, unless it can be proven that it is not possible to repair or re-use them or their demolition would provide significant benefits to economic growth or the wider community.

The Council has attempted to find a new use for the City Hall but to date has been unsuccessful. In the past the Council has also said it would consider demolition if no use could be found or if evidence suggested that a public space or demolition and redevelopment would improve the use or setting of St John's Kirk and/or be of greater benefit to the economy and community.

The questionnaires asked for the public's views on several options for the site based on work already undertaken to consider future options for the City Hall. These options are:

Option 1 - Re-use the City Hall for another purpose

This would see the City Hall building re-used for other purposes. A review of potential new uses has identified that the building could possibly be used for either speciality shopping or cultural uses. However, neither of these options are likely to be self-funding in the current economic climate.

Option 2 - Partial demolition of the City Hall to create a public space

This would see part of the City Hall demolished and mean keeping part of the building, such as the entrance area. In the case of partial demolition the remaining part of the building would require to be marketed for re-use unless a public use could be found. This could also create a small public space. However, this is unlikely to be self-funding in the current economic climate.

Option 3 - Demolition of the City Hall to create a public space

This would see the demolition of the City Hall to create a public space for activities such as markets, outdoor music, civic events, etc. Currently there is no large public space in the city centre for large scale events and activities. Demolition would mean removing the building completely. The Council would be required to develop and fund any proposal to create a public space and then manage the use of the space for markets and events.

Option 4 - Demolition and redevelopment of the space

This would see the demolition of the City Hall and redevelopment of a replacement building on part of the site. The Council would need to decide on the size and appropriate use of such a replacement building and fund the marketing of the site for demolition, redevelopment and the improvement of the public space surrounding any new building.

Option 5 - Do nothing until economic climate improves

This would mean doing nothing at the moment. The current economic climate has meant that it is harder for new businesses to start up and for existing businesses to make money. This means that for the moment finding new uses for the City Hall is harder. The Council would need to continue to fund the maintenance of the City Hall and delay making any decision until the economic climate improves.

1.3 DEFINITIONS

The following definitions have been used throughout this report:

- Where responses do not sum to the total (100%), this may be due to multiple responses or computer rounding.
- Percentages are based on the total number of respondents who answered the question and expressed an opinion.
- Responses completed by the general public through the online and the paper questionnaires are referred to as 'online survey'.
- Where responses provided by the general public through the online and the paper questionnaires and through the Viewfinder have been analysed collectively these are referred to as 'combined'.

2. RESULTS OF QUESTIONNAIRE

2.1 KEY FINDINGS

- Thirty eight per cent of participants were either very satisfied or satisfied with Perth City Centre. Thirty four per cent were either dissatisfied or very dissatisfied.
- Sixty three per cent of participants stated that events would encourage people to come to Perth City centre more often.
- Thirty six percent of participants said the City Hall should be re-used. The main reason participants gave supporting re-use was that the 'City Hall adds to the history of Perth'.
- Fifty seven per cent of participants supported one of the demolition options for the City Hall. The most frequent reason for supporting demolition in any form was that it 'will improve the setting of St John's Kirk'.
- The majority (32%) of participants thought that if the City Hall is re-used it should be used for cultural activity.
- The two most common uses selected by participants for the space created should the City Hall be demolished were 'attractive space' and 'markets'.

2.2 RESULTS

2.2.1 How often do you visit Perth City Centre?

Participants were asked how often they visited Perth City Centre. Fig 2.2.1 below details the results.

Fig 2.2.1

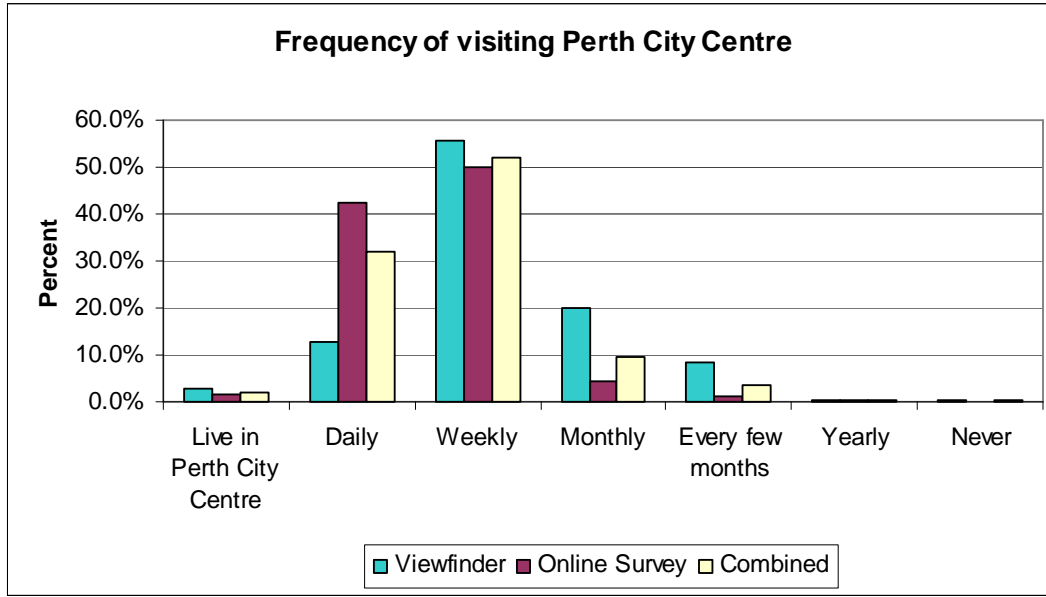


Fig 2.2.1 shows that the majority of participants (52%) visited Perth City Centre on a weekly basis and 32% visited on daily basis. Two per cent of participants stated they lived within Perth City Centre.

2.2.2 When you visit Perth City Centre how satisfied are you with your experience?

Participants were asked how satisfied they were with their experience when they visited Perth City Centre. Fig 2.2.2 below details the results.

Fig 2.2.2

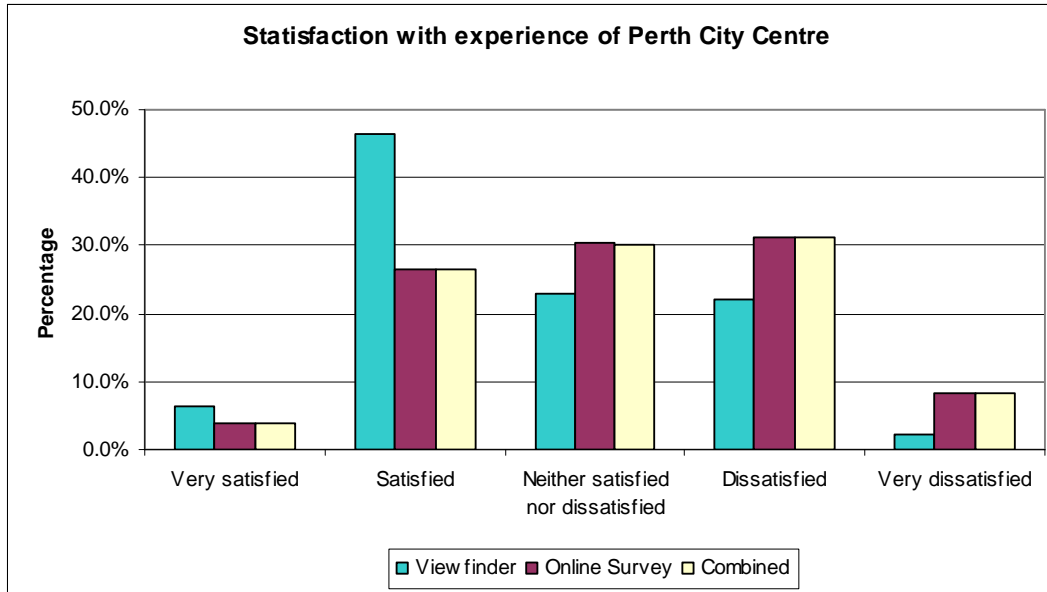


Fig 2.2.2 shows that 38% of participants were either very satisfied or satisfied with their experience of Perth City Centre, 28% were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied and 34% were dissatisfied or very dissatisfied.

2.2.4 Which of the following would encourage people to come to Perth City Centre more often?

Participants were asked to choose from a series of options what would encourage them to visit Perth City Centre more often. They were also given the opportunity to provide their own comments in the 'other' category.

Table 2.2.1

Reason	Viewfinder	Online Survey	Combined
Additional Shops	56%	51%	53%
Cultural activities	52%	54%	53%
Events	61%	64%	63%
Outdoor public meeting/activity space	30%	50%	43%
Better transport links	19%	19%	19%
Additional places to eat	17%	15%	16%
Other	10%	23%	19%

Collectively, "Events" is the most prevalent suggestion for encouraging more people to come to Perth City Centre. Additional reasons provided by participants in the 'other' category included "car parking" and "better public toilets".

2.2.5 Which of the following options for the City Hall do you support most?

Participants were asked to state which option for the City Hall they supported the most.

Table 2.2.2

Preferred Option	Viewfinder	Online Survey	Combined
Option 1 - Re-use the City Hall Building	44%	32%	36%
Option 2 - Demolish the City Hall	34%	49%	43%
Option 3 - Partially demolish the City Hall	8%	11%	10%
Option 4 - Demolish the City Hall and build on part of the space	4%	5%	4%
Option 5 - Do nothing until economic climate improves	11%	4%	6%

Table 2.2.2 shows that 36% of participants supported re-use of the City Hall building. Cumulatively, 57% of participants supported an option for some form of demolition. Six per cent of participants thought that the Council should do nothing until the economic climate improves.

2.2.6 Please state the reason for why you support that option most?

Participants were asked to state the reason why they supported their chosen option for the City Hall. They were given the opportunity to choose from a specified list or provide their own reasons.

Table 2.2.3

Reasons	Viewfinder	Online survey	Combined
Re-use will not benefit the local economy	14%	38%	44%
Re-use will benefit the local economy	51%	23%	22%
Demolition will improve the setting of St John's Kirk	42%	32%	37%
Demolition will not improve the setting of St John's Kirk	27%	37%	33%
Demolition will benefit the local economy	29%	35%	41%
Demolition will not benefit the local economy	30%	14%	14%
City Hall is an attractive building	47%	38%	35%
City Hall is not an attractive building	27%	21%	24%
City Hall has sentimental value to you	19%	17%	18%
City Hall has no sentimental value to you	40%	36%	37%
City Hall adds to the history of Perth	55%	52%	48%
City Hall does not add to the history of Perth	19%	18%	21%
Other	12%	27%	22%

Further analysis of the responses was carried out to compare the preferred City Hall option chosen by participants with the reasons they chose the option. The percentage results of this comparison are detailed on the following page.

The five main reasons chosen by the participants who supported Re-use of the City Hall (option 1) were:

- City Hall adds to the history of Perth - 90%
- Re-use will benefit the local economy - 82%
- City Hall is an attractive building - 77%
- Demolition will not benefit the local economy - 54%
- Demolition will not improve the setting of St John's Kirk - 48%

The five main reasons chosen by the participants who supported Demolition of the City Hall (option 2) were:

- Demolition will improve the setting of St John's Kirk - 89%
- Demolition will benefit the local economy - 69%
- City Hall has no sentimental value to you - 65%
- City Hall is not an attractive building - 65%
- City Hall does not add to the history of Perth - 43%

The five main reasons chosen by the participants who supported Partial Demolition the City Hall (option 3) were:

- City Hall adds to the history of Perth - 63%
- Demolition will improve the setting of St John's Kirk - 48%
- Re-use will benefit the local economy - 47%
- City Hall is an attractive building - 46%
- City Hall has no sentimental value to you - 27%

The five main reasons chosen by the participants who supported Demolishing the City Hall and building on part of the space (option 4) were:

- Demolition will improve the setting of St John's Kirk - 64%
- Demolition will benefit the local economy - 59%
- City Hall is not an attractive building - 56%
- City Hall has no sentimental value to you - 55%
- City Hall does not add to the history of Perth - 32%

The five main reasons chosen by the participants who supported doing nothing until the economic climate improves (option 5) were:

- City Hall adds to the history of Perth - 71%
- City Hall is an attractive building - 58%
- Re-use will benefit the local economy - 52%
- Demolition will not benefit the local economy - 45%
- City Hall has no sentimental value to you - 25%
- Demolition will not improve the setting of St John's Kirk - 31%

2.2.7 If the City Hall is to be re-used what should it be used for?

Participants were asked to state what they thought the City Hall should be re-used for if it was re-used. They were given the opportunity to choose from a specified list or provide their own reasons. The responses received are identified in Table 2.2.4.

Table 2.2.4

Possible uses	Viewfinder	Online Survey	Combined
Retail	16%	11%	13%
Cultural activity	40%	28%	32%
Don't know	19%	19%	19%
Other	10%	29%	23%
No answer	15%	13%	14%

2.2.8 If the City Hall is to be demolished or partially demolished, what should the space be used for?

Participants were asked to state what they thought the resulting space should be used for if the City Hall was demolished. They were given the opportunity to choose from a specified list or provide their own reasons. The responses received are identified in Table 2.2.5.

Table 2.2.5

Possible uses	Viewfinder	Online Survey	Combined
Attractive space	18%	17%	17%
Pavement cafes	5%	4%	4%
Markets	20%	13%	15%
Events	9%	8%	9%
Outdoor public meeting / activity space	9%	11%	10%
Don't know	8%	4%	6%
Other	8%	36%	26%
No answer	23%	7%	12%

2.2.9 If the City Hall is to be demolished and part of the space re-developed, what should the new building be used for?

Participants were asked to state what they thought a new building on the City Hall site should be used for if it was demolished. They were given the opportunity to choose from a specified list or provide their own reasons. The responses received are identified in Table 2.2.6.

Table 2.2.6

Possible uses	Viewfinder	Online Survey	Combined
Retail	17%	11%	13%
Cultural activity	36%	30%	32%
Don't know	21%	19%	20%
Other	5%	22%	17%
No answer	21%	17%	19%

2.2.10 If we do nothing at the moment, how long do you think we should wait for the economy to change?

Participants were asked to state how long they thought the Council should wait if it does nothing with the City Hall at the moment. They were given the opportunity to choose from a specified list or provide their own reasons. The responses received are identified in Table 2.2.7.

Table 2.2.7

Length of waiting period	Viewfinder	Online Survey	Combined
2 years	38%	27%	31%
5 years	13%	8%	10%
Indefinitely	8%	5%	6%
Don't know	17%	19%	18%
Other	12%	29%	23%
No answer	11%	12%	12%

2.2.11 Do you think the Council should carry out further marketing of the City Hall to find out whether there are other possible uses for the building?

Participants were asked if they thought the Council should carry out further marketing of the City Hall to find out whether there are other uses for the building.

Fig 2.2.3

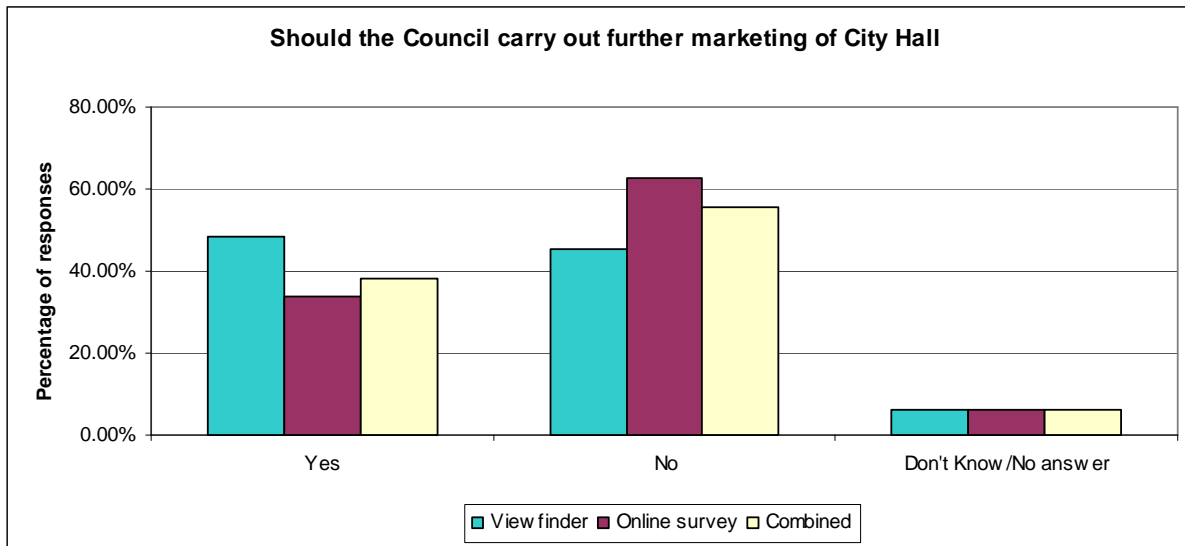


Fig 2.2.3 shows that 38% of participants said the Council should carry out further marketing of the City Hall and 55% of participants said the Council should not. Six per cent of participants said they did not know or left the question blank.

2.2.12 Should the Council subsidise the re-use of the City Hall?

Participants were asked if they thought the Council should subsidise the re-use of the City Hall.

Fig 2.2.4

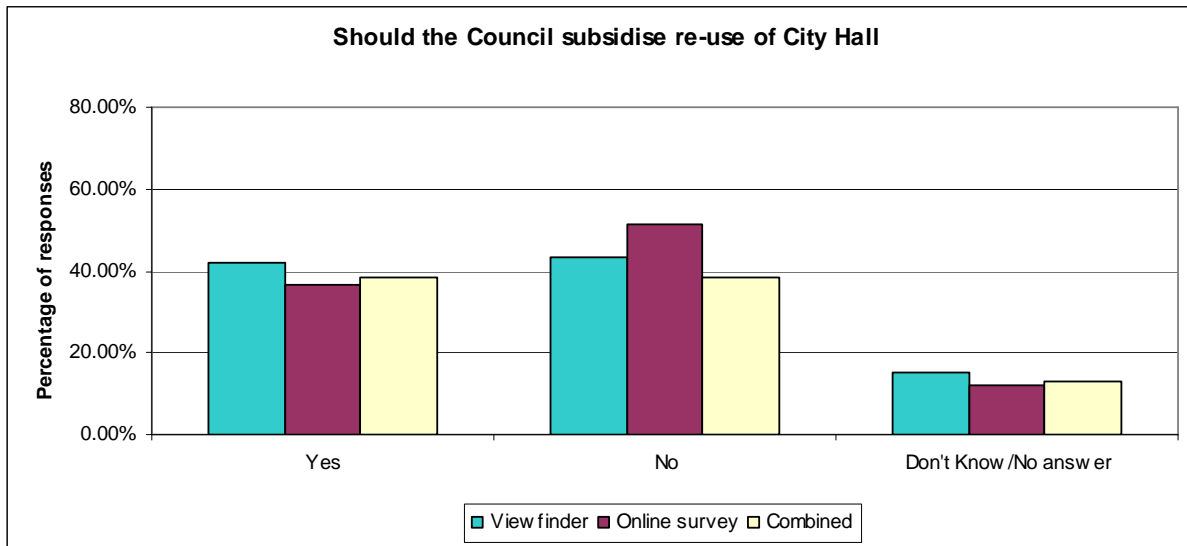


Fig 2.2.4 shows that 38% of participants said the Council should subsidise the re-use of the City Hall and 38% of participants said the Council should not. Thirteen per cent of participants said they did not know or left the question blank.

2.2.13 Do you have your own suggestions for what should be done with the City Hall?

Participants were asked if they had their own suggestions for what should be done with the City Hall. Over half (56%) of respondents to the consultation did not answer this question or said “no comment”. The responses that were received were group based on theme and the five main responses are detailed below:

- “Demolish it”
- “Create parks/garden/open space”
- “Cultural activities/ festivals/ arts and crafts”
- “Use as a space for markets”
- “Provide community facilities/ for community use”

APPENDIX 1

THE PANEL

Viewfinder is a sample of 1375 Perth and Kinross residents, which is broadly representative of the demographic characteristics of the population of Perth and Kinross. All panel members have agreed to participate in up to four postal surveys per annum.

Using the electoral register, a random sample of 10,000 Perth and Kinross residents was identified and sent a recruitment questionnaire following the launch of the panel in January 1999. From this initial sample 2,255 (23%) returns were received. A process to check the profile of the participants by local electoral boundaries against key demographic factors - age, sex, employment, ethnic origin, housing tenure - was then undertaken to ensure a broadly representative 'best fit' panel of residents was selected. Although the response to the initial recruitment questionnaire was high, as expected, a shortfall in the numbers of 17-24 year olds was identified. Face to face recruitment was conducted to ensure that this group was represented on the panel.

The panel has undergone four large-scale refreshments between 1999 and 2007. The same methodology outlined above was used for these refreshment exercises.

Within the current panel, shortfalls of males aged 18-34 and females aged 25-34 have been identified. In order to address these shortfalls we will be carrying out targeted recruitment within these categories during 2010. To ensure that the panel remains representative, panel members who drop out are replaced on an on-going basis by equivalent volunteers who are held on a reserve list.

The Special Edition Viewfinder questionnaire obtained a response rate of 63% (861) people, therefore accurately reflecting the population of Perth and Kinross as a whole, with 95% confidence, to within $\pm 3.3\%$.

Copies of the findings of previous Viewfinder questionnaires can be obtained from the [Viewfinder pages of the Council's website](#). Alternatively you can contact the Strategic Planning and Improvement Team on 01738 475505 or email: research@pkc.gov.uk.