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Estates Transformation Programme 2024

Analysis of responses to the Forfar Police Station consultation exercise

Report

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Research and Insight

Strategy, Insight and Engagement



**Estates Delivery
Group**

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Executive Summary

Following SPA approval, Police Scotland announced on Thursday 14 December 2023 proposals to close a number of police buildings across the country and invite members of the public, stakeholders and staff to give their views. In addition to the proposals outlined in December, we are pro-actively consulting on additional police buildings, such as Forfar Police Station, which have challenges impacting on operational policing and service delivery to understand public and community views. This will inform and shape the decisions we make about future buildings.

Our objective is to listen to communities, colleagues and stakeholders and respond to their needs through an open and inclusive consultation on the proposed Police Scotland estates transformation. Strategic outcome three within our [Joint Strategy for Policing \(2023\)](#) sets out our commitment to **keep public, communities and partners engaged and involved so they have confidence and trust in policing**.

Maintaining public confidence and trust involves keeping communities involved and engaged in what and how we do things, ensuring our policing model is effective that we can adapt how we connect with communities to enhance safety and protection.

Consultation and engagement approach

Launch of a national conversation

The national conversation about the future of our estate began on 14 December 2023 to support an open continuous conversation at a national level on our strategic approach to transforming our estate, hosted on our [Engagement Hub](#).

Local consultations about individual buildings

At a local level, each site for consultation had its own dedicated area on our engagement hub with information about the site and proposed changes. Co-designed with colleagues, the level and scope of engagement is determined by the potential impact of proposed changes to local communities and stakeholders. This assessment takes into consideration the drivers of public confidence, user experience and accessibility of local policing.

Risk-based assessment

The level and scope of engagement was based on the impact of estate closures on communities and stakeholders and within the drivers of public confidence (i.e., visible, engaging and proactive local policing teams) – as summarised in appendix 1.

Engagement themes

The consultation includes qualitative and quantitative questions to capture agreement with the proposals and people's understanding, perceptions, and use of their local police buildings. The information was used to inform local communications and engagement, address areas of concern and impacts for informing decision-making and local scrutiny.

Communications

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A co-ordinated, consistent, approach in efforts to raise awareness with at national and local level, public and stakeholders was designed by colleagues in communications. A toolkit was designed for use by divisional colleagues to support the national conversation on estates and the local engagement at divisional level of individual building closure proposals. Assets included a video of ACC Steve Johnson outlining the changes proposed, a BSL version of this video for national and local dissemination, and social media materials promoting the consultation.



Forfar Consultation Summary Findings

Response

In total, **117 consultation responses*** were received from **113 individuals** (including 5 Police Scotland employees); **2 local Elected Members (Councillors)**; **1 answering on behalf of an educational establishment** and **1 local organisation**.

Key findings

Overall, the findings show the importance of maintaining visible, accessible and proactive policing in local areas and keeping communities engaged and informed on next steps.

Agreement with proposals

Most respondents reflected the Forfar station was outdated and in a state of disrepair. Respondents are inclined to agree with the proposal to dispose of Forfar station's current building and relocate to the proposed site of William Wallace House.

Factors influencing agreement with proposals

When reflecting on the site, some concerns were raised about the disposal of Forfar Police Station as the building was perceived to be strategically placed in a well-known location. Respondents appreciate the visible presence of the police and police vehicles accessing the estate, deterring crime and giving a feeling of safety. However, there is an understanding from respondents that the estate is in a state of poor repair, with high running costs. Many respondents have a positive perception of the proposal to co-locate with public sector partners, providing a continued police presence in the local area is continued.

1. Introduction

Police Scotland inherited a very large and ageing estate, much of which was not fit for purpose, with high maintenance costs, environmental inefficiencies, and in locations that no longer meet the requirements of local communities. Police Scotland currently occupies over 320 buildings many of which are located less than five miles from the next nearest Police Scotland building.

Following SPA approval, Police Scotland announced on Thursday 14 December 2023 proposals to close a number of police buildings across the country and invite members of the public, stakeholders and staff to give their views.

The consultation included qualitative and quantitative questions to capture agreement with the proposals and people's understanding, perceptions, and use of their local police buildings.

An Engagement Hub went live on 14 December which allowed our staff, stakeholders and the public to take part in a national conversation as well as local consultations that will help us shape our estate for the future.

1.1. The Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015

The Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 asserts to empower community bodies through the ownership or control of land and buildings, and by strengthening their voices in decisions about public services. A significant part of this act refers to participation in public decision-making whereby Scottish public authorities must promote and facilitate the participation of members of the public in the decisions and activities of the authority, including in the allocation of its resources.

The level and scope of engagement should be based on the impact of estate closures on communities and stakeholders, with consideration of the drivers of public confidence (i.e., visible, engaging and proactive local policing teams). The relative risk necessitates a proportionate response, meaning if 'high risk high participation', all preceding methods will be used (see appendix 1).

For determining risk, we sought information to understand:

- How the buildings are being used by colleagues, communities and stakeholders and the alternative options for continuing to meet needs.
- How is local policing maintaining and/or enhancing visible, engaging and accessible services as part of the future policing model.
- Viability of the estate for community asset transfer.

The risk assessment will be undertaken with each affected local policing division which will determine the level of engagement. The approach and methods of engagement are based on Police Scotland's Public Engagement and Participation Framework.

The local consultation for **Forfar Police Station** was launched **29 July 2024** and concluded **26 August 2024**.

1.2. Analysis and reporting

This report presents a question-by-question analysis of the responses and comments made to the local consultation for Forfar Police Station. All responses were gathered via our online Engagement Hub; no submissions were received via any other means.

The qualitative feedback is presented according to the balance and nuance of opinion relating to the impressions and perceptions of the site, in this instance of Forfar Police Station.

Respondents to any public consultation or engagement are self-selecting, and the responses may not be representative of the population.

For each of the consultation questions the issues or common themes frequently raised by respondents are presented. Please also note that often respondents answer “None” or “No idea” or singular word responses without providing additional information to explain their response further.

The open questions did not have a fixed response, or a limit to the length of the response, allowing the respondents to answer in their own words and in as much or as little detail as they liked. Consequently, thematic analysis was used to analyse the open question survey responses. This meant that each response was read by a member of the research team and the codes (main points) were identified. The next step was then to read across the responses to systematically identify any common ideas or patterns of meaning. Themes were discussed across the research team to allow for comparisons and contrasts until consensus was reached among the team on the final structure.

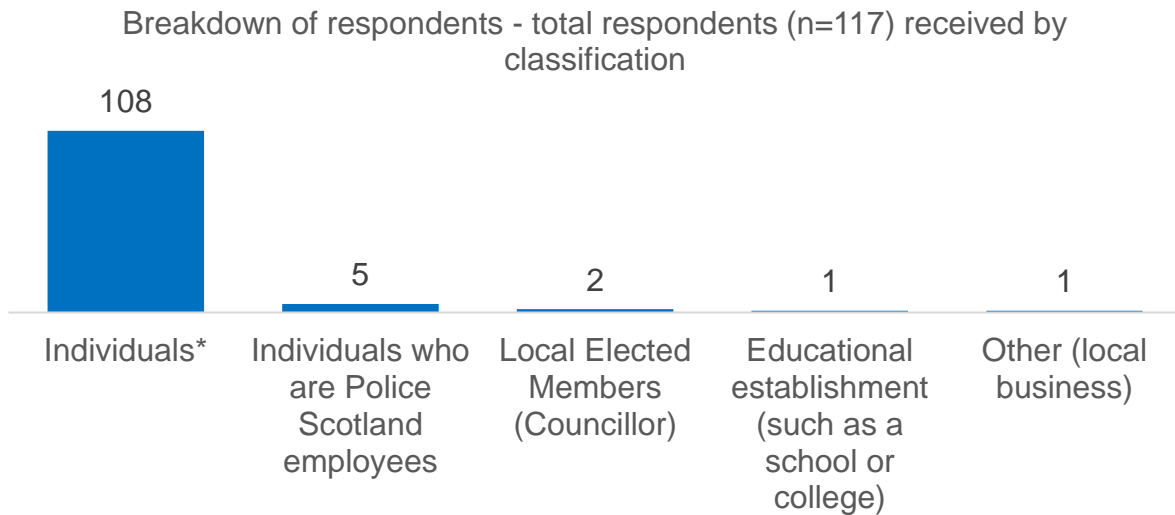
Accordingly, the extent of the analysis is proportionate to the volume of feedback in terms of comments made. An example of the data analysis process leading to the ‘Impressions of Forfar Police Station’ results is attached (see appendix 2). The quotes that are provided through the report are intended to illustrate some of the points in respondents’ own words and to capture some of the themes as they were written.

This analysis did not seek to provide a comparative or quantitative account of the issues that were raised but sought to summarise the range of topics and responses that were provided. However, descriptive terminology is used to add clarity on the views. For example, ‘some’ or ‘many’. It was not the intention to quantify the views, but it should be noted that in general, ‘many’ or ‘most’ refers to views that were shared across a large section of the responses. Use of the term ‘some’ is used to reflect an idea or viewpoint that came up less frequently than ‘many/most’.

Finally, the singular quantitative question on agreement relating to the proposed disposal of the site should not be taken independently from the qualitative context and narrative with which we thank respondents for providing.

1.3. Overview of respondent profile and responses

A total of **117** consultation responses were received from **108** individuals; 5 people who reported they work for Police Scotland; **2** Local elected members; **1** on behalf of an educational establishment and **1** local business.



Listed below are the **6** most prevalent themes at a total sample level. This is to provide an understanding of the issues reported across the total sample. Themes are not presented in an order of magnitude.

- Central, well-known and visible location
- Estate frequented by police and police vehicles, giving a sense of police presence
- Estate is in a poor state of repair
- Perceived lack of public access
- Limited use of facilities
- Not used as a safe space frequently.

Individuals

Individual members of the public represented **92% (108/117)** of respondents, their views drive the prevalence of specific themes at a total sample level.

Local organisation representatives

There were 2 responses on behalf of local organisations. These included an educational establishment and a local business.

*NB: The total "Individuals" number includes deducting the total number of individuals who work for Police Scotland

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Table 1: response classification

	No. of respondents	% of all respondents
All respondents	117	100%
Individuals*	108	92%
Individuals who are Police Scotland employees*	5	4%
Local elected members	2	2%
Answering on behalf of an educational establishment	1	1%
Other (local business)	1	1%

*NB: The total "Individuals" number includes deducting the total number of individuals who work for Police Scotland

2. Consultation Analysis

2.1. Impressions of Forfar Police Station

Impressions of how Forfar Police Station is currently being used by the public for engaging with the police.

There were 96 responses to this open-ended question. Please note that this question did not capture quantitative data and accordingly only substantive themes/points raised by respondents are presented. The most frequently made points were that:

- A large majority of respondents perceived the location of the station as a positive aspect of the building, supporting engagement with the public. There is a perception that the visible sight of police and vehicles accessing the station acts as a deterrent.
- A large number of comments relayed negative perceptions of the building's appearance and condition.

Impressions of how Forfar Police Station is currently being used by police officers and staff for operational policing.

There were 91 responses to this open-ended question. Please note that this question did not capture quantitative data and accordingly only substantive themes/points raised by respondents are presented. The most frequently made points were that:

- Respondents have a perception that the station is used regularly due to the frequency of police and vehicles accessing the station.
- Some comments expressed negative perceptions of the building's appearance, lack of parking and general condition, suggesting it is not suitable or pleasant to work from.

Impressions of how Forfar Police Station is currently being used by members of the public as a safe space.

There were 87 responses to this open-ended question. Please note that this question did not capture quantitative data and accordingly only substantive themes/points raised by respondents are presented. The most frequently made points were that:

- There were mixed perceptions of Forfar Police Station providing utility as a safe space for members of the public.
- Some respondents felt the station was well placed to act as a safe space due to its central, well-known location. However, many respondents suggested the station is not always accessible, or has the correct facilities to serve as a safe space.

2.2. Perceptions of the proposal to dispose current Forfar Police Station and relocate within Forfar area

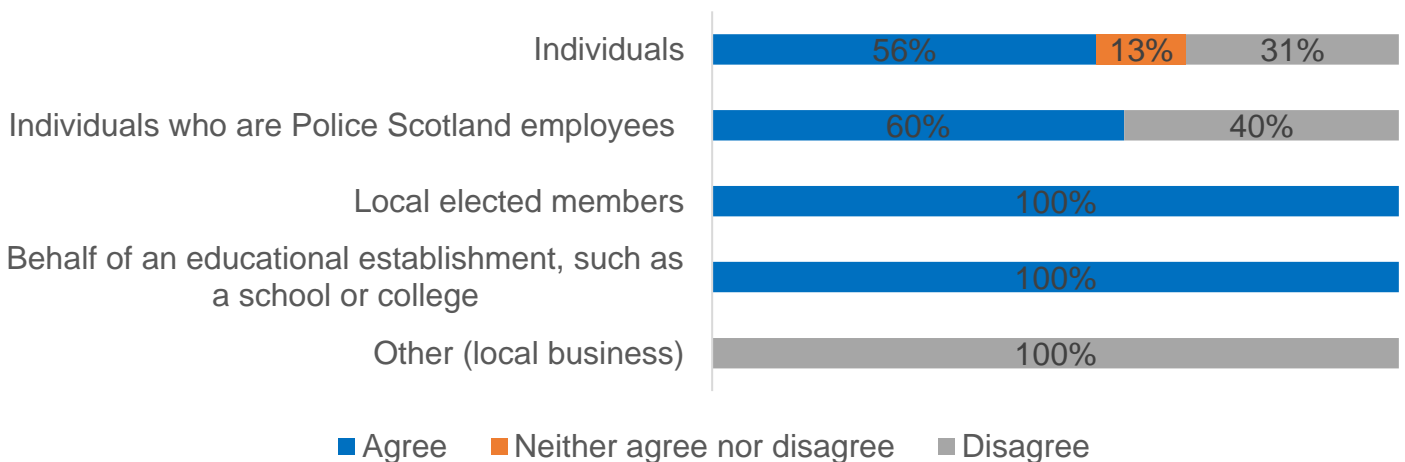
To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposal to dispose of this building for the reasons stated at the start of this section?

	Total	Agree*		Disagree*		Neither agree nor disagree	
	N =	N=	%	N=	%	N=	%
All respondents	116	66	57%	36	31%	14	14%
Individuals	107	60	56%	33	31%	14	13%
Individuals who are Police Scotland employees	5	3	60%	2	40%	--	--
Local elected members	2	2	100%	--	--	--	--
Behalf of an educational establishment, such as a school or college	1	1	100%	--	--	--	--
Other (local business)	1	--	--	1	100%	--	--

“Strongly agree” and “Agree” have been combined into “Agree” as well as “Strongly disagree” and “Disagree” being combined into “Disagree”. “Don’t know/No Opinion” and blank responses have been omitted.

Graph 1: Agreement and disagreement on disposal of Forfar Police Station by classification

Breakdown of agreement/disagreement regarding disposal by respondent classification



3. Conclusions

The consultation for Forfar Police Station provided the opportunity for the public, stakeholders, and colleagues to provide their feedback and perceptions of Forfar Police Station in response to the proposed estate transformation programme.

Although this approach provided a way for people to submit their views, given the relatively small number of responses, it cannot offer a complete or representative view that reflects the concerns and insights of all individuals and organisations.

Findings indicate the poor state of repair and lack of access to Forfar Police Station is a driving influence on the impressions of its function in community policing in the local area.

Next steps

This report provides a summary of the consultation analysis in support of a consistent, co-ordinated, and open dialogue between Police Scotland and the public, stakeholders, and colleagues regarding the proposed estate transformation programme.

These results will be shared to the appropriate governance mechanisms within Police Scotland and will be shared with the public via the Engagement Hub in due course.

The next steps are summarised below as:

- A report will be prepared (which will include this consultation report) to Corporate Finance and Investment Board with evidence to inform decision-making.
- If approved to progress, a paper will be prepared for the Scottish Police Authority Resources Committee summarising a proposal.
- Police Scotland will progress the activities within the proposal to either dispose of a building (which may include selling), support a community asset transfer of a building, or invest in a building.
- Feedback to the public, communities and stakeholders will be shared and published in the form of 'you asked, you said, we listened' on our [Engagement Hub](#) where the consultation was hosted. Copies of the consultation findings will also be published.

Scottish Police Authority meetings are public and they [can be viewed online](#) via the SPA's website.

Appendix 1: Risk based assessment approach

Citizen Participation	Local Risk		
	Low	Medium	High
Low	<p>Inform (by distributing or making information accessible on policies, decisions, services and legislation).</p> <p>Inform Method: Website, Social media, Bulletins, Reports, Media releases.</p>		
Medium		<p>Discover and Review (by consultation); identifying local needs, concerns and feedback with the proposed estate changes, perceptions of modernisation and estate strategy. Understanding local reactions to and reflections of the proposal and using these to inform decision on disposal.</p> <p>Review 1: National Conversation (online feedback)</p> <p>Review 2: Local Estate Survey (online feedback, localised)</p>	
High			<p>Community Empowerment: Community meetings, workshops, focus groups to promote two-way communication and proactive, visible, participation</p> <p>Consensus building: deliberative forums to promote deeper engagement via public assemblies.</p>

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Appendix 2: Example qualitative coding matrix

Impressions of Forfar Police Station	Theme	Coding	Response Quotes		
	Forfar Police Station used for the public engaging with Police	Positive locality of Forfar Station	<p>“Accessible and central”</p> <p>“It is a great location for the public to be able to engage with the public. People should be able to have easy access which would be lost further out of town. Perhaps a small town centre hub could be retained.”</p> <p>“Immediately accessible at the current location, serving the town centre and accessible by foot”</p> <p>“Good location for this, in the middle of the town”</p>		
		Negative perceptions of Forfar Station	<p>“Old and tired looking”</p> <p>“Out dated and rarely used.”</p> <p>“Needs modernisation”</p>		
		Forfar Police Station used by police officers and staff for operational policing	The station supports operational policing	<p>“Always seems to be plenty of staff using the building.”</p> <p>“Good to see police staff and vehicles coming to and fro the station. Is reassuring for public and means police staff vigilant even in absence of a reported call from support staff.”</p>	
			Conflicting perceptions of Forfar supporting operational policing	<p>“Old and outdated for today's police.”</p> <p>“It is common knowledge that the building costs Police Scotland an absolute fortune in rates, mainly because it's so large. Running it down because of lack of investment since the formation of Police Scotland was unnecessary. Relocation of assets could have been done years earlier.”</p> <p>“It's an old building, unaware of how many officers staff use it but I'm sore it's not up to standard”</p> <p>“Although I agree that the current building is no longer probably fit for purpose, I strongly feel that a police presence of some description must remain in the town centre. Whether that is in the existing office or in a small 'sub police office' that would only be manned Monday- Friday 9-5 then that would be a visible sign.”</p>	
			Forfar Police Station used by members of the public as a safe space	Building not used for this purpose.	“I'm unsure again about this but it never looks open or welcoming.”
					“not welcoming at all, not always manned”
“You have to press a button with no guarantee of getting someone”					
“Limited access due to front counter manning, not reflective of a safe space”					
“The building is not fit for purpose in so many different ways and it is basically spending good money after bad if you were to stay there.”					