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# **Estates Transformation Programme 2024**

## **Analysis of responses to the Whinhill Police Station consultation exercise**

**Report**

**February 2024**

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.

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 consultation 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](#).

### Opportunity for local engagement

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

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

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the changes proposed, a BSL version of this video for national and local dissemination, and social media materials promoting the consultation.



### Response

In total, **5 consultation responses\*** were received from **5 individuals** (including 2 Police Scotland employees).

### 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

All respondents perceived Whinhill station as being important in supporting the needs of the local area. This sentiment is also expressed by colleagues with previous experience working from the station.

### Factors influencing agreement with proposals

Respondents felt that the disposal of Whinhill Police Station would be detrimental to local policing. Many respondents cited the good condition the building was in, it's comparatively low running costs and strategic location for operational policing.

There is a sentiment that the proximity of the station gives a feeling of safety and police visibility in the local area, deterring crime. There is a sentiment that, beyond its functional role, Whinhill station symbolizes the partnership between the police and the community, serving as a physical reminder of the police's commitment to the local community.

## **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 owns over 320 buildings many of which are located less than 5 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 **Whinhill Police Station** was launched **14 December 2023** and concluded **18 February 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 Whinhill 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 Whinhill 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.

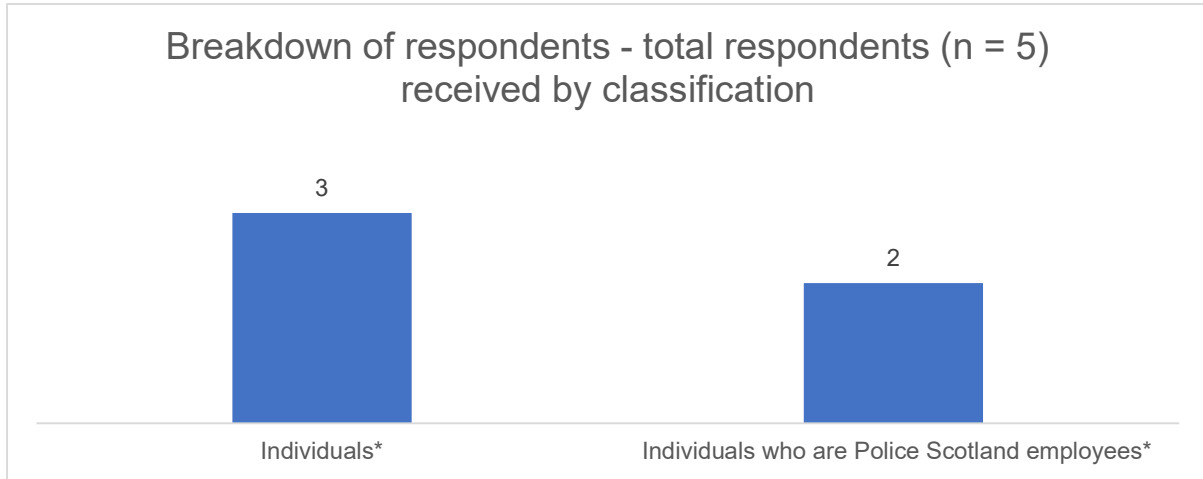
Accordingly, the extent of the analysis is proportionate to the volume of feedback in terms of comments made. An example of the data analysis process leading to the ‘Impressions of Whinhill Police Station’ results is attached (see appendix 2). The quotes that are provided through the report are intended 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 **5** consultation responses were received from **5** individuals.



Listed below are the **3** 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.

- Station inspires feelings of safety, confidence and community presence
- Highly visible and strategically located station.
- High-quality, purpose-built facility.

#### Individuals

Individual members of the public represented **100% (5/5)** of respondents, their views drive the prevalence of specific themes at a total sample level.

#### Local organisation representatives

There were no respondents answering as a representative of local organisations.

**Table 1: response classification**

	No. of respondents	% of all respondents
<b>All respondents</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>100%</b>
Answering as an individual	3	60%
Individual(s) who are Police Scotland employees	2	40%

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

## 2. Consultation Analysis

### 2.1. Impressions of Whinhill Police Station

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

There were 4 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 positive sentiment towards Whinhill Police Station in its capacity for public engagement. There is mention of the station enhancing local safety and trust.
- One respondent who was answering in their capacity as a Police Scotland employee, worked in the building. They described Whinhill Police Station not being well used for engaging with the public, as they rarely visited the station and when they did there were not good facilities for speaking to them.

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

There were 4 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:

- Whinhill Police Station was perceived to be utilised well to support operational policing, with some respondents pointing out the good condition of the building; low running costs; and strategic location (close to the local college and main road). There is a perception of the station serving as a base for everyday policing activities and also as a vital point of contact for the community.
- The Police Scotland employee who had experience working in the building described it as well located, with good facilities for officers. Good layout, good kitchen area and toilets etc.

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

There were 4 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 perceived Whinhill Police Station as a good place for people to access as a safe space, well located and well known in the local area.
- The officer with experience working in the station highlights that members of the public may *feel* safer knowing Whinhill Police Station is there, however if they were to attend they may not feel as though the station was particularly welcoming or had good facilities for them as a safe space.



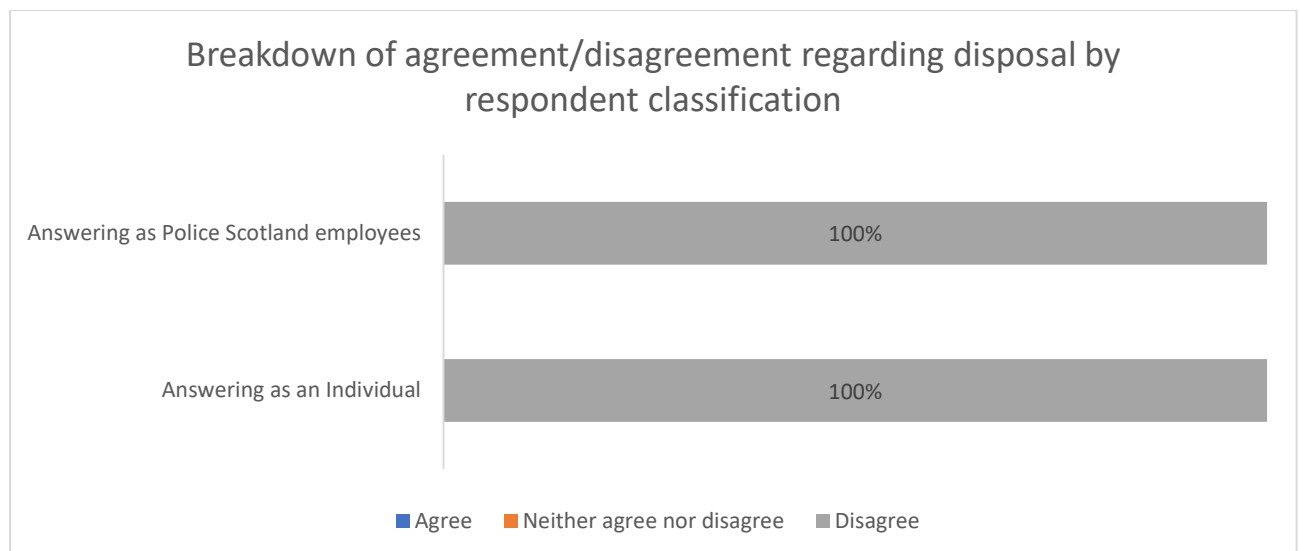
## 2.2. Perceptions of the proposal to dispose Whinhill Police Station

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=	%
<b>All respondents</b>	<b>5</b>	--	--	<b>5</b>	<b>100%</b>	--	--
Individuals	3	--	--	3	100%	--	--
Individual(s) who are Police Scotland employees	2	--	--	2	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 Whinhill Police Station by classification**



### 3. Conclusions

The consultation for Whinhill Police Station provided the opportunity for the public, stakeholders, and colleagues to provide their feedback and perceptions of Whinhill 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.

#### 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 with 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

<b>Impressions of Whinhill Police Station</b>	<b>Theme</b>	<b>Coding</b>	<b>Response Quotes</b>
	Whinhill Police Station used for the public engaging with Police	Positive sentiment	<p>“the Whinhill police station is more than just a building; it’s a vital community asset that facilitates direct engagement with the police, enhancing local safety and trust. The station’s good condition and efficient operation, along with its reasonable annual running cost, make it a practical choice for maintaining local police presence. Situated 1.8 miles from Marischal College, it’s conveniently located for residents. The station is especially important as it hosts 28 dedicated police officers, strengthening the community-policing bond.”</p> <p>“Very good”</p> <p>“good”</p>
		Police Scotland colleague experience	<p>“During the time I worked there it was not well used for engaging with the public. The public rarely visited the station and when they did there were not good facilities for speaking to them”</p>
	Whinhill Police Station used by police officers and staff for operational policing	Well utilised use for policing	<p>“good”</p> <p>“From the perspective of the police officers and staff, the Whinhill station stands as a crucial operational asset, significantly contributing to the efficacy of local policing efforts. The station, in good condition both inside and out, provides a conducive environment for the officers to perform their duties effectively. With its annual running cost at £16,735 and its strategic location just 1.8 miles from Marischal College, it offers both economic and logistical advantages. The presence of 28 police officers, without additional staff, indicates a focused operational approach, allowing for specialized and streamlined policing services. Despite the overarching strategy of Police Scotland aiming towards centralization for broader efficiency, the importance of this local station from an operational standpoint cannot be understated. It serves not only as a base for everyday policing activities but also as a vital point of contact for the community, enhancing the effectiveness of community-based policing and fostering stronger, trust-based relationships with local residents. The potential disposal of Whinhill, therefore, poses a challenge, possibly impacting the operational capabilities and the close community ties that have been established.”</p>
		Police Scotland colleague experience	<p>“ It was a good station to work from, well located and had good facilities for officers. Good layout, good kitchen area and toilets etc”</p>

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	Whinhill Police Station used by members of the public as a safe space	Positive sentiment to act as a safe space	“the Whinhill station is much more than a police facility; it’s seen as a beacon of safety and a tangible representation of security within the community. Its good condition and operational effectiveness make it a reliable and inviting place for those seeking assistance or guidance. The annual running cost of £16,735, viewed against the backdrop of its value to the community, seems a worthwhile investment in public safety and well-being.”
		“ Good to have a place recognised by the public as a safe place”	
		Police Scotland colleague experience	“Most likely not good in this regard. Members of the public may feel safer knowing there is a police station there, however if they ever attended they probably didn't feel as though the station was particularly welcoming or had good facilities for them.”