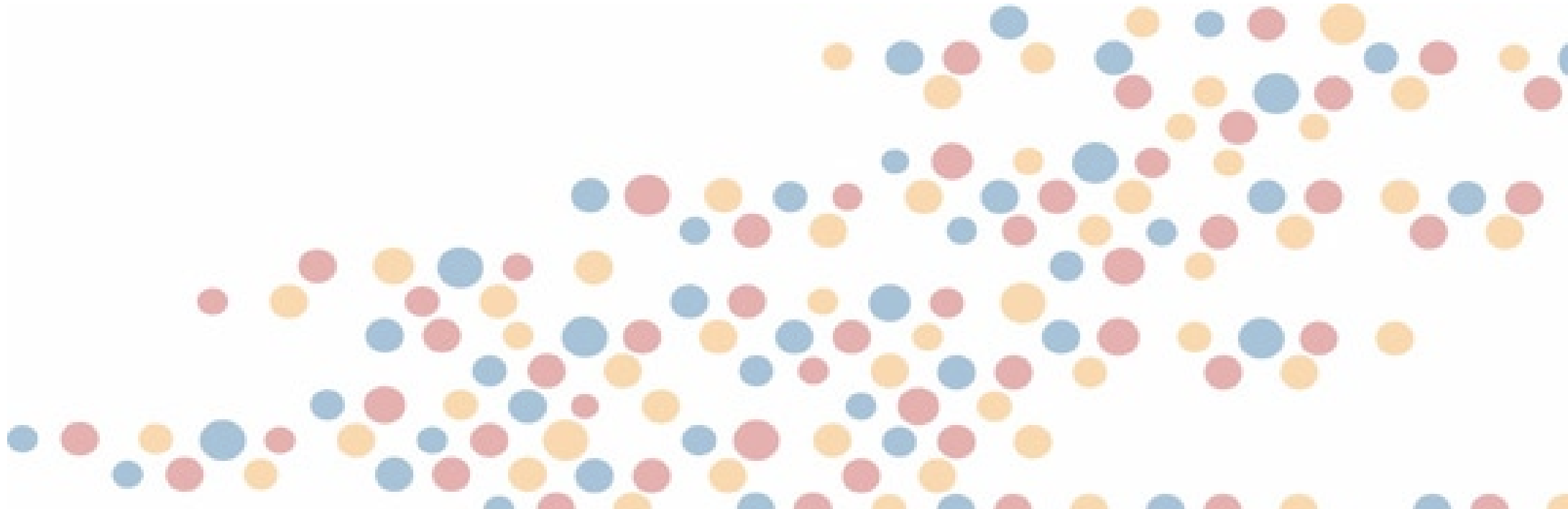




Historic Environment Scotland

Holyrood Park Consultation





# Background and Approach

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- Historic Environment Scotland (HES) undertook a public consultation seeking feedback on their draft strategic plan for Holyrood Park.
- Questions were drafted by CBA including a mix of closed and open questions.
- The main platform for public consultation responses was through an online Citizen Space survey.
- This was combined with face-to-face pop-up events in Meadowbank, Craigmillar and The Meadows and two public events in The Holyrood Park Education Centre 14.10.2023 and The Charteris Centre 02.12.2023.
- The survey and events were advertised widely through distribution of flyers, traditional media outlets, press and TV and HES social media channels and the HES website.
- Over the consultation period HES also consulted widely with stakeholders and interest groups, to encourage as wide a participation as possible.
- The consultation period ran from 25th September until 18th December 2023.
- A total of just under 5000 responses were received, including online and written/email responses.
- Data was securely transferred to JRS for analysis:
  - a download of all responses from Citizen Space containing quantitative data and qualitative comments,
  - and a transfer of the project email inbox with further written responses – this was thoroughly reviewed and substantive responses were identified and extracted for analysis.
- This report details the findings of the both Citizen Space and written responses.





# Data Preparation, Cleaning Checks & Analysis

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## Data Preparation & Cleaning

- Checked data for duplicates
  - Where duplicate IP addresses found, responses were examined to ensure they were different
- No responses were removed
- All questions checked for correct coding (e.g. where code selected and 'nothing/none' also selected)
- Others upcoded where relevant / possible
- Checked Q6 / 7 to ensure correct coding for residents
- Checked coding at ranking questions (Q10 & Q13)
  - NOTE: many respondents coded these incorrectly, giving several codes the same ranking – we could not correct for this

## Analysis – Quantitative Data

- Data imported to Snap Surveys
- Data tabulations created for analysis
- Analysis conducted at total level and identifying any significant differences by subgroups

## Analysis – Qualitative Data

- Qualitative questions / comments spell-checked, checked for completeness and sense
- Codeframe created for each question based on first 100 responses
- All responses coded, further codes added to codeframes where required
- Analysis of themes from responses.





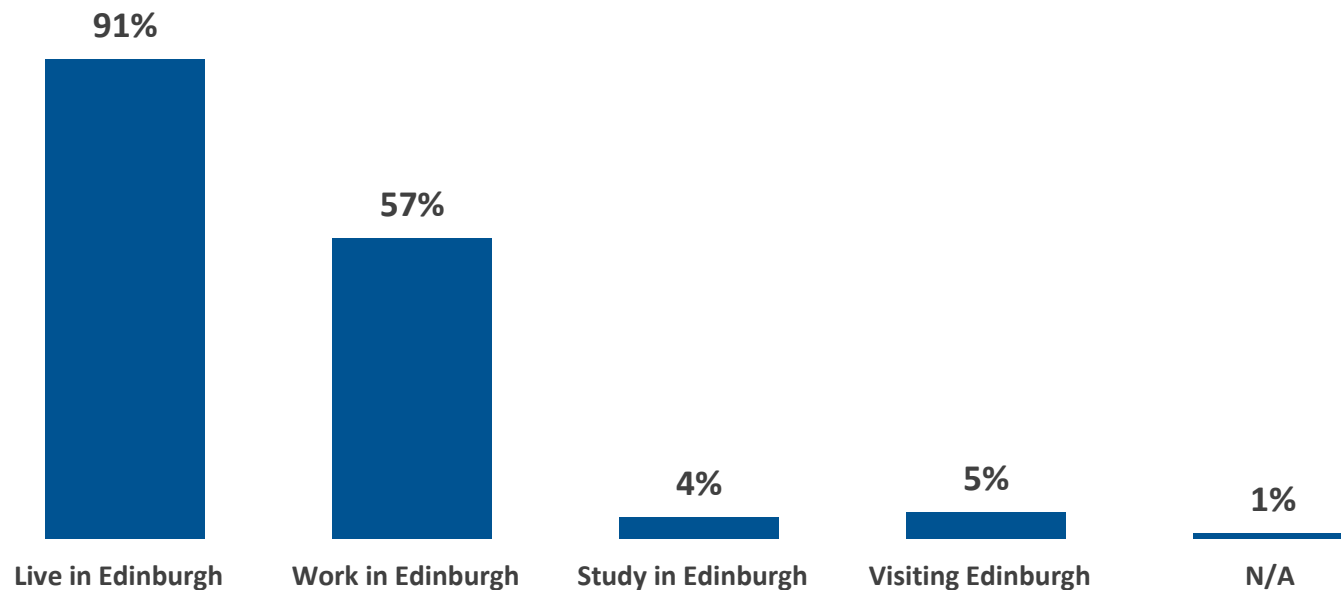
# A note on Terminology

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- The term 'Park Users' is used throughout this report
- This includes both those who are using Holyrood Park for leisure purposes and those who are driving through the Park, who might otherwise be described as 'Road Users'
- Within the dataset, although there is a cohort who say their usual transport method is the car and don't mention any other transport modes, data shows this group mention a range of reasons for visiting the Park including for recreation and dog walking with a very small number who only use the Park for commuting and no other purpose (2%)
- From the data perspective the vast majority of those using cars and travelling through the Park are also using it for other purposes.



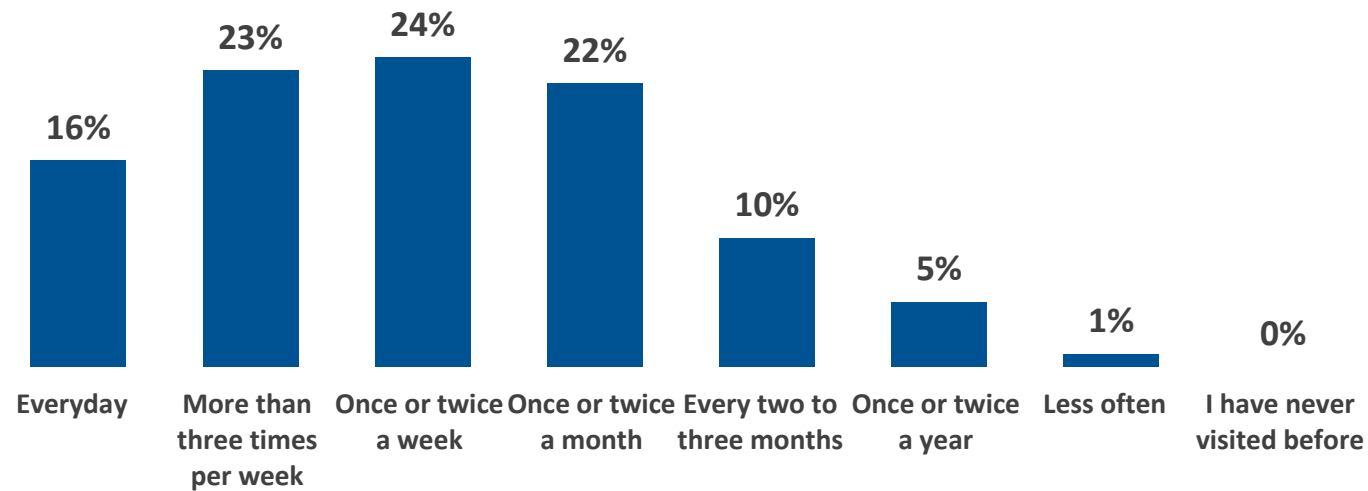
# Relationship with Edinburgh



- 9 in 10 respondents live in Edinburgh and 57% work in Edinburgh
- A small proportion of respondents were studying (4%) in Edinburgh
  - Perhaps indicating that this group is underrepresented in responses to the consultation
- 5% were visiting Edinburgh (5%)
- There is significant crossover between groups
  - 53% work AND live in Edinburgh; and 93% of those studying in Edinburgh also live in the city.



# Frequency of Using Holyrood Park

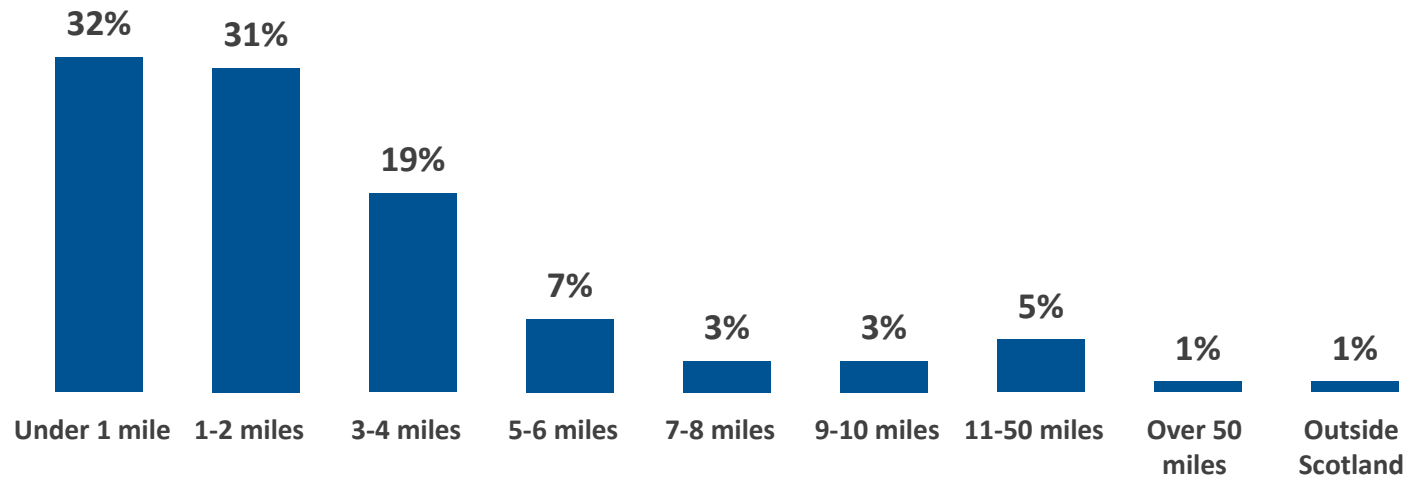


- All respondents to the consultation had visited Holyrood Park
- Most visit the Park frequently - 63% at least once a week
- Very few respondents visit less often than once or twice a year
- Those using the Park every day were more likely to be living under 1 mile from the Park and/or travelling to/through the Park in a motorised vehicle (taxi, motorcycle, car).





# Distance from Holyrood Park

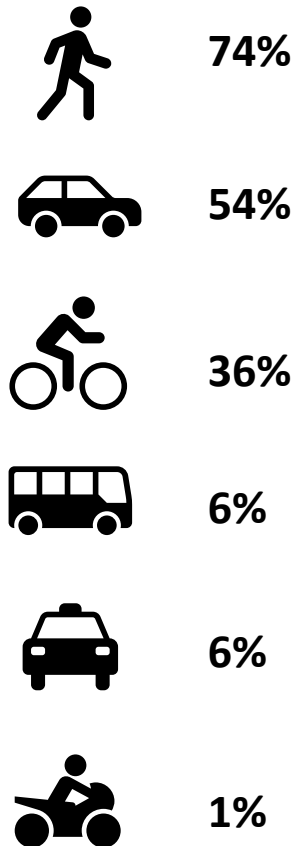


- 63% of respondents live within 2 miles of Holyrood Park
- And around a further quarter live between 3 and 6 miles from the Park



# Method of Transportation

## Total



3% other

- Walking was the most commonly mentioned transport method used in Holyrood Park, by almost three-quarters of respondents
- More than half said they usually use a car, while 36% tend to use a bicycle
- Buses and taxis were each mentioned by 6% of respondents.

- For those who selected the 'Other' option, running was most commonly mentioned
- Other methods of transport used to access the Park include skateboarding, using a van, using a wheelchair, or roller-skating.
- Public transport used includes taking a coach/mini-bus, train or tram, or bus.

- There is significant cross-over between transport methods used
- Amongst those who said they usually **walk** in the Park
  - 44% also use a car
  - 42% also use a bike
- Amongst those who said they usually use a **bike** in the Park
  - 88% also walk
- 75% of those who use a **bus** also walk
- Amongst those using a motorbike in the Park
  - 88% also use a car
  - 26% also use taxis

Q3 Which transport method do you usually use in Holyrood Park? Base: All (4604)





# Main Motivations For Visiting Holyrood Park



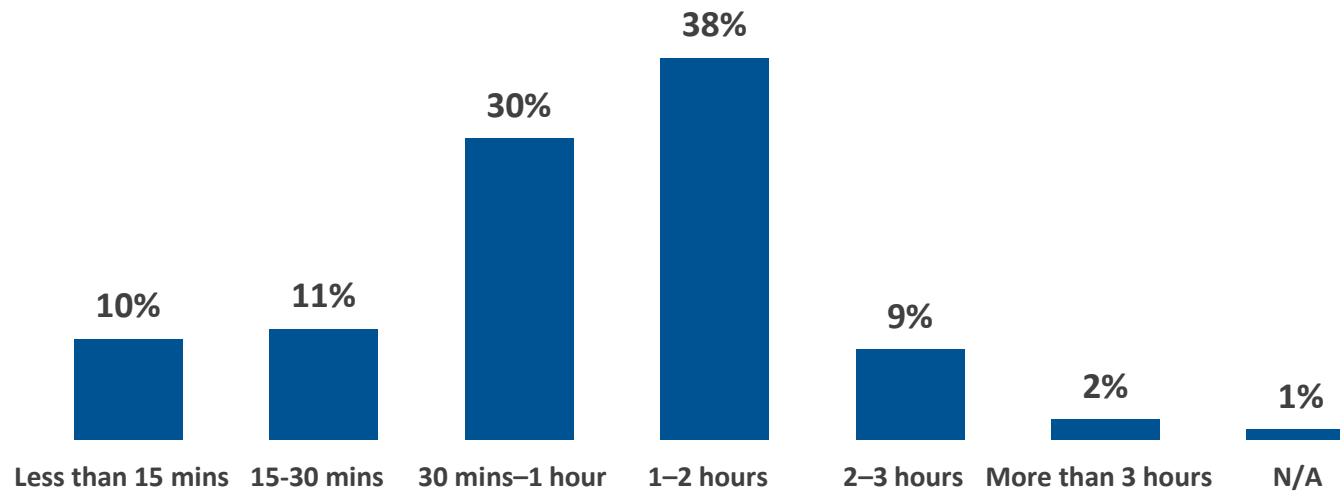
- More than 8 in 10 respondents cited recreation and leisure as a main motivation for visiting Holyrood Park
- Exercise was also a popular reason for visiting, mentioned by two-thirds, and nature and wildlife was important for half of respondents
- 4 in 10 said commuting was a key reason for visiting the Park
- Events, historical / archaeological / geological exploration and dog walking were each mentioned by around a fifth
- Those visiting the Park daily were more likely to cite commuting or dog walking as their main motivations
- People travelling by bike to the Park were more likely than others to say recreation/leisure, exercise and nature/wildlife were their motivations; as were those who study in Edinburgh.

- More than half of respondents who selected the 'Other' option use the Park to 'get from A to B'. Many clarified that though they usually travelled through the Park, this was not for commuting to work purposes, but for getting from one side of the city to another.
- A number of taxi drivers use the Park as the shortest route for passengers, in order to keep fare prices down.
- Others who drive through the Park do so to take people with mobility issues to the Park or to look at the scenic views.

Q1 What are your main motivations for visiting Holyrood Park? Base: All (4604)



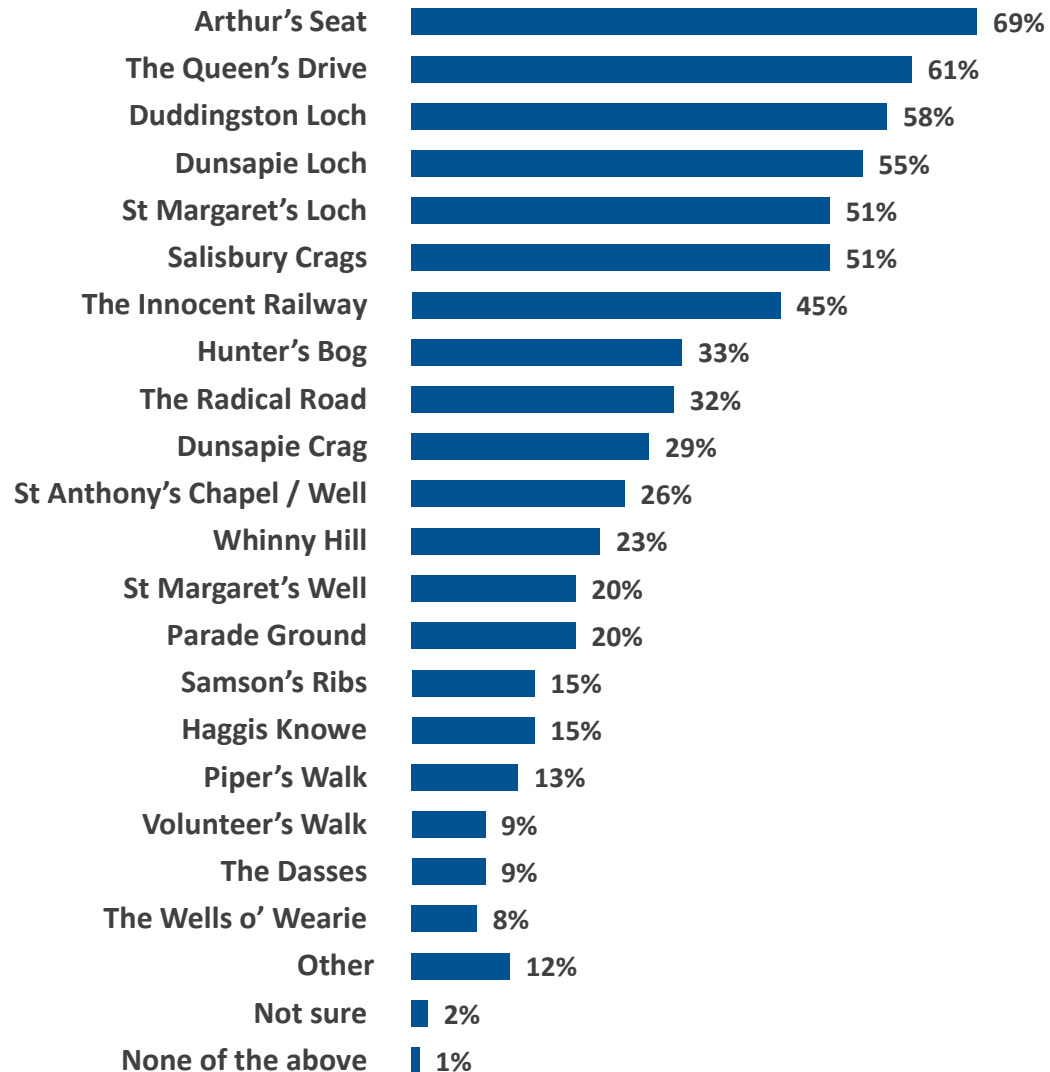
# Length of Time



- Respondents tend to spend between 30mins and 2 hours in Holyrood Park when they visit
- 1 in 10 spend less than 10 minutes
  - This is more prevalent for those travelling in motorised vehicles
- 11% said they tend to spend more than 2 hours on a visit
- Frequency of visiting the Park corresponds with time spent, with those visiting more frequently tending to spend less time on a visit; and those visiting less frequently spending more time.



# Parts of Holyrood Park Visited Most Regularly



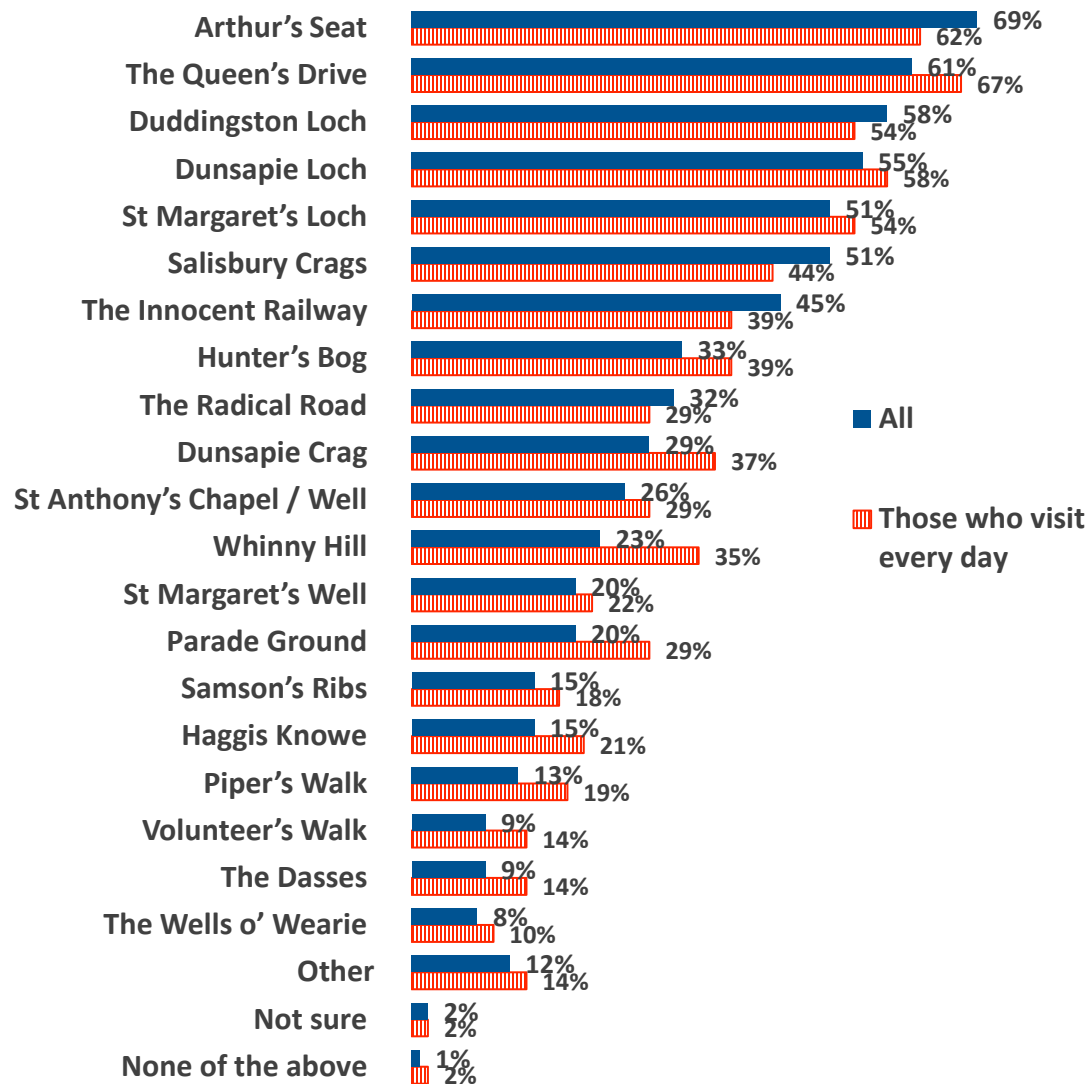
- Almost 7 in 10 cited Arthur's Seat as the part of Holyrood Park they visit most regularly
- Queen's Drive, the three lochs and Salisbury Crags were also mentioned by more than half of respondents as areas they visit most regularly
- While 45% of the total sample said the Innocent Railway was one of their most regularly visited areas, this was much higher amongst those travelling to the Park by bike (75% of whom mentioned this area)
- Areas in the middle of the Park (including Piper's Walk, Volunteer's Walk and The Dasses) were less visited in general.

- For those who selected 'Other', a large proportion were not about where they visited most regularly, or stated they visited 'all over the Park'
- Crow Hill and Nether Hill were also frequently mentioned as areas most visited, as were the meadows around Lilyhill Gate and Meadowbank Lodge
- More people would like to visit the Radical Road path if it was reopened
- Some respondents commented that they were unfamiliar with the names of different parts of the Park.





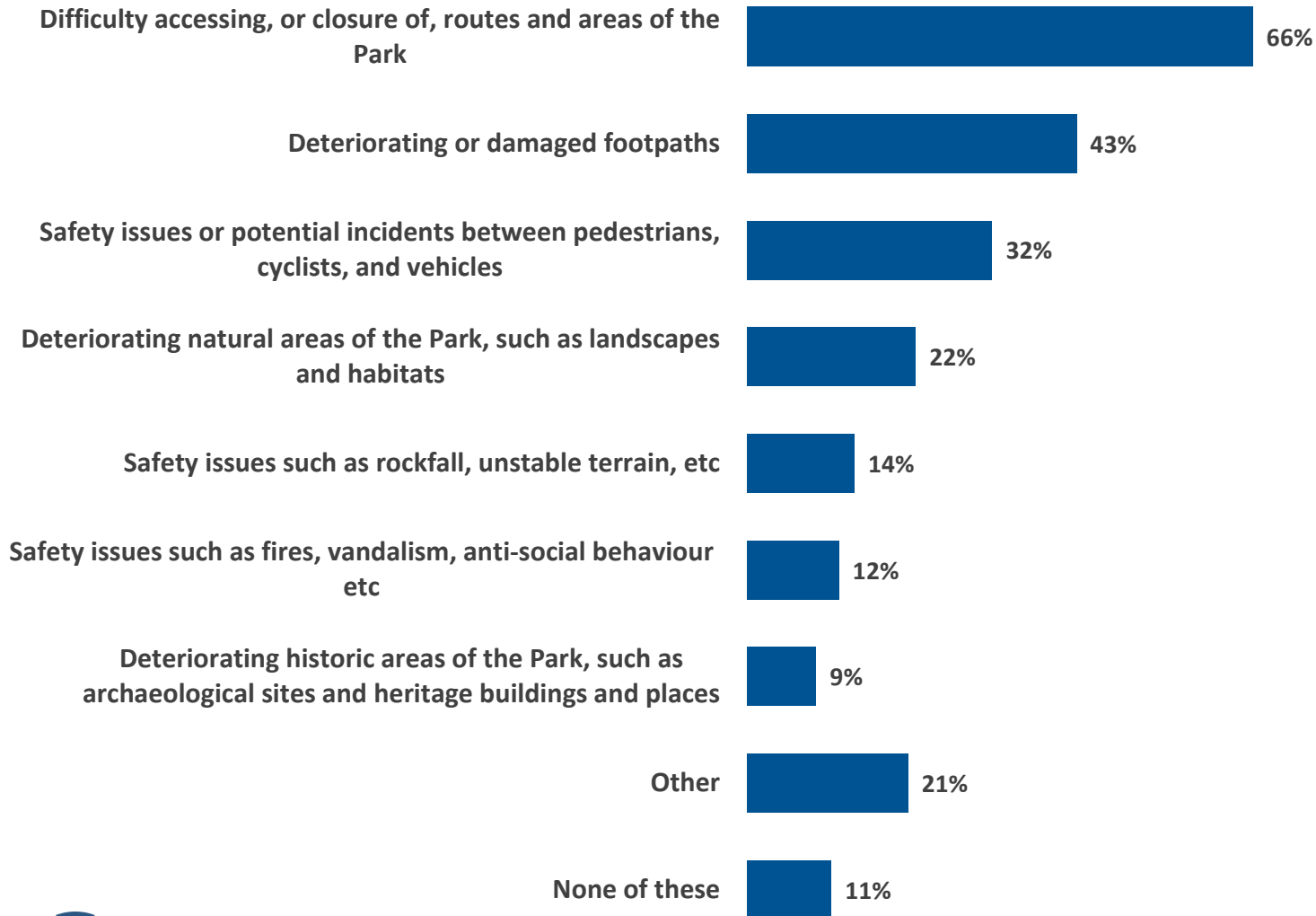
# Parts of Holyrood Park Visited Most Regularly by Those Visiting Everyday



- Some differences are evident in the parts of the Park visited most regularly by those who are in Holyrood Park everyday
- They are significantly more likely to mention the following areas than those visiting the Park less regularly:
  - The Queen's Drive
  - Hunter's Bog
  - Dunsapie Crag
  - Whinny Hill
  - Parade Ground
  - Haggis Knowe
  - Piper's Walk
  - The Dasses



# Issues Encountered in Holyrood Park



- More than 9 in 10 had experienced one or more of the listed issues when using the Park
- The most commonly experienced issue, mentioned by almost two-thirds of respondents, was difficulty accessing or closure of routes / areas in the Park
- Just over 4 in 10 had experienced damaged or deteriorating footpaths and 22% mentioned deteriorating natural areas of the Park
- A third had encountered safety issues between different Park user groups
  - Almost half (49%) of those travelling to the Park by bike mentioned this issue; and people living closest to Holyrood were also more likely to mention this
- Those using the Park every day, and people living nearby, were more likely than others to have witnessed safety issues like fires / vandalism / anti-social behaviour.





# Issues Encountered in Holyrood Park – Road & Path Closures

## Respondents were invited to provide additional comments or feedback on issues encountered in Holyrood Park. A total of 980 respondents left further feedback

- The most common theme responses relates to issues associated with road closures around the Park more specifically closure at the weekend to vehicles.
- Respondents expressed both positive and negative views on this theme.
- Those who had an issue with the road closures commonly said that roads surrounding the Park become more congested and difficult to navigate - causing more pollution in these areas and/or adding significant time to their journey.
  - An important aspect for many is the impact that closing the roads has on disabled, elderly and vulnerable groups – whose access to the Park is felt to be impacted without open roads. For many respondents, this is an unacceptable drawback of closing the roads, and felt to be discriminatory towards the population groups who are not fit and healthy enough to access the Park on foot.
  - There is a strong belief that disabled access should be provided in some way when roads are closed.
- Conversely, a large proportion see road traffic as a major safety issue within the Park. Dangerous driving, exceeding the speed limit, a lack of concern for other road users, and a lack of enforcing the commercial vehicle ban were among some of the main concerns of having car access to the Park.
- The closure of the Radical Road path was also mentioned frequently, mostly unrelated to road or path closures elsewhere. Respondents generally view the closure as an “overreaction” to rockfall – with many highlighting rockfall as a common risk within the Scottish outdoors. The widely expressed view was that people should be able to assess their own risk of using the path.
  - It was also noted that the closure of the Radical Road path has prevented climbers from using the Salisbury Crags for recreational purposes.

“Ever since the high road to Dunsapie Loch closed most of the time, been unable to take elderly and disabled relatives to enjoy the beautiful views from that road. We are now elderly and unable to climb up there. So sad we cannot enjoy this now. This is discrimination against elderly and disabled!”

“I regularly encounter aggression from drivers while cycling through the Park. Holyrood Park is a site of such historical and natural benefit to the city; it should not be used as a rat-run for drivers. Please close the road.”

“The only issue I have with the Park is that I currently can't access the Radical Road...Whilst there is a risk of rock falls, it's a natural environment and therefore risks cannot be eliminated completely.”





# Other Issues Encountered in Holyrood Park

## Safety

- A **lack of pedestrian crossings** was commonly mentioned as a safety concern for those on foot, and something that hinders their easy use of the Park.
- Some respondents feel that motor traffic is prioritised above pedestrians, and the lack of safe places to cross is compounded by drivers not adhering to the speed limit.
- **Unsafe cycling** was raised as an issue – some feel that cyclists are a danger to pedestrians and other road users by not abiding by the speed limit and not using the cycle path provided.
- On the other hand, those who cycle feel unsafe cycling due to car drivers speeding and the poor condition of the cycle path which they often share with pedestrians.

“Pedestrians on a designated green cycle path caused me to have an accident on my bike when having to evade them. There is a lot of erosion on the most popular routes.”

## Erosion, Landscape & Habitat Decline

- Landscape and habitat decline was also cited as a common concern which was linked to the increase in visitors to the Park – many commented on the lack of wildlife in the Park compared to previous years
- Erosion on many of the key paths, such as those up to Arthur’s Seat, is also blamed on an increase in tourism and general use of the Park.
- As is a notable increase in littering, BBQs in the summer, and dog fouling.

“Footpaths are overused and deteriorating. Hordes of tourists climbing Arthurs Seat. Very limited access to disabled and elderly visitors.”

“Crossing road is terrifying - vehicles speeding, no crossing points. The pavement & cycle path along Queens Drive are too narrow for the no. of users forced onto them by traffic. It's much nicer at weekend. Cars on the High road is unpleasant & dangerous, you can't relax, especially as some speed.”

“My kid can't play freely. He can't cross any of the roads by himself as there are no pedestrian crossings and the drivers take precedence. He's too young to understand that the roads are closed sometimes but not others so we have to have a hard and fast rule that he can't move around freely.”

“I do not go there as often as I would like due to the ignorant attitude of some of the cyclists by speeding on the road and paths also some have a total disregard to pedestrians, plus you never hear them coming.”



# Impact of Issues Encountered in Holyrood Park

**Respondents were asked if any of the issues previously identified prevented them from visiting Holyrood Park or certain areas within the Park. A total of 1,408 people responded.**

- The issue with the largest number of comments was in relation to road closures/access restrictions. General road closures to vehicles, as well as temporary road / path closures such as the Radical Road path were cited as key reasons why some people no longer visit Holyrood Park or areas within the Park.
  - A large number of respondents stated that they do not visit the Park as often as they used to or would like due to the Radical Road path closure. The inability to climb on Salisbury Crags was also frequently mentioned.
  - Lack of vehicle access at certain times also prevents people from visiting as often as they would like.
  - Many no longer visit at the weekend when the Park is closed to cars. For some with a disability or mobility issues, road closures, such as the High Road section of Queen's Drive, can impact their ability to access certain areas of the Park.
- On the other hand, the volume of traffic travelling through the Park puts off many cyclists and pedestrians from using the certain parts of the Park or going to the Park altogether when cars are permitted – often citing safety concerns of drivers speeding as a major concern.
  - Additionally, it was common for respondents to prefer the peacefulness of the Park when vehicular traffic is not permitted.

“When you closed the high road, I stopped. I've hardly been since with shorter hours. As a blue badge holder, I enjoyed being able to drive up to Dunsapie Loch to watch birds and enjoy some peace. Two elderly relatives haven't been in years because of road restrictions.”

“Since my husband's stroke, we don't visit as much of the Park as we did in the past as we can't access as much with the roads being closed to drivers. no freedom of choice in a Park that was for everyone regardless how they got around.”

“I regularly avoid walking the Galloping Glen when the Park is open to cars. I also avoid cycling in the Park when the road is open to cars because I've had a number of bad experiences with intimidating and dangerous driving in the Park.”

“I will avoid certain areas of the Park during peak traffic. It ruins the natural atmosphere and ambience, and I like to walk there for the serenity.”





# Impact of Issues Encountered in Holyrood Park

- Many cyclists said they only use the Park at weekends when it is closed to vehicular traffic citing safety concerns of motorists speeding and the perceived unsuitability of the cycle path.
- Fewer respondents cited habitat/environmental degradation as their main reason for avoiding areas of the Park.
- However, the number of tourists walking up to Arthur's Seat and the subsequent erosion puts many off using these popular routes now, with some feeling it is too dangerous.
- Other safety concerns which prevent people using certain areas of the Park, particularly at night, relate to poor lighting, or lack of lighting. Specific mention was given to parts of Queen's Drive, Duddingston Low Road and the Innocent Railway path.

"Cycling through the Park on way to and from Waverley station to get to work every day now that the winter evenings are drawing in is very hazardous. The lack of lighting along Queen's Drive and Duddingston Low Road make it very hazardous for cyclists and vehicles drive far above the 20mph limit"

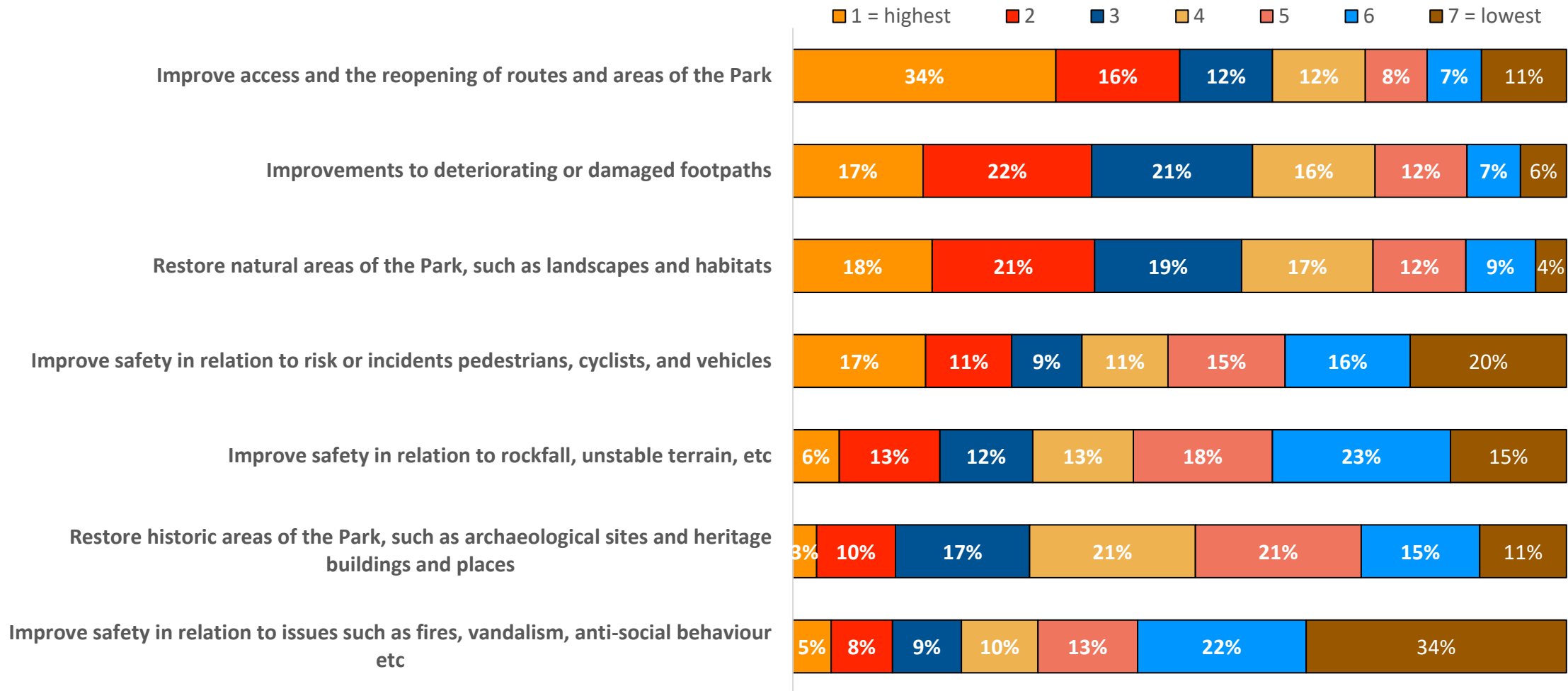
"Too many tourists. I avoid Arthur's Seat/central area of Park during summer months as a result. Paths are severely over-used and poorly maintained, especially the route up to Arthur's Seat. Paths which aren't big enough, resulting in expanding area of degradation around key path junctions etc."

"I'm put off cycling through the Park due to the harassment and danger posed by cars. The 'cycle lane' which I consider a pavement for walkers and not at all suitable for cycles. There is not enough room for cyclists and walkers, so I leave it for the walkers and take my chances on the road with the cars. Also, you should fix the radical road and open it up again."

"The vehicular traffic through the Park means I generally avoid going through it on my bike, and my use of the Park increased substantially when roads were closed off in 2020."



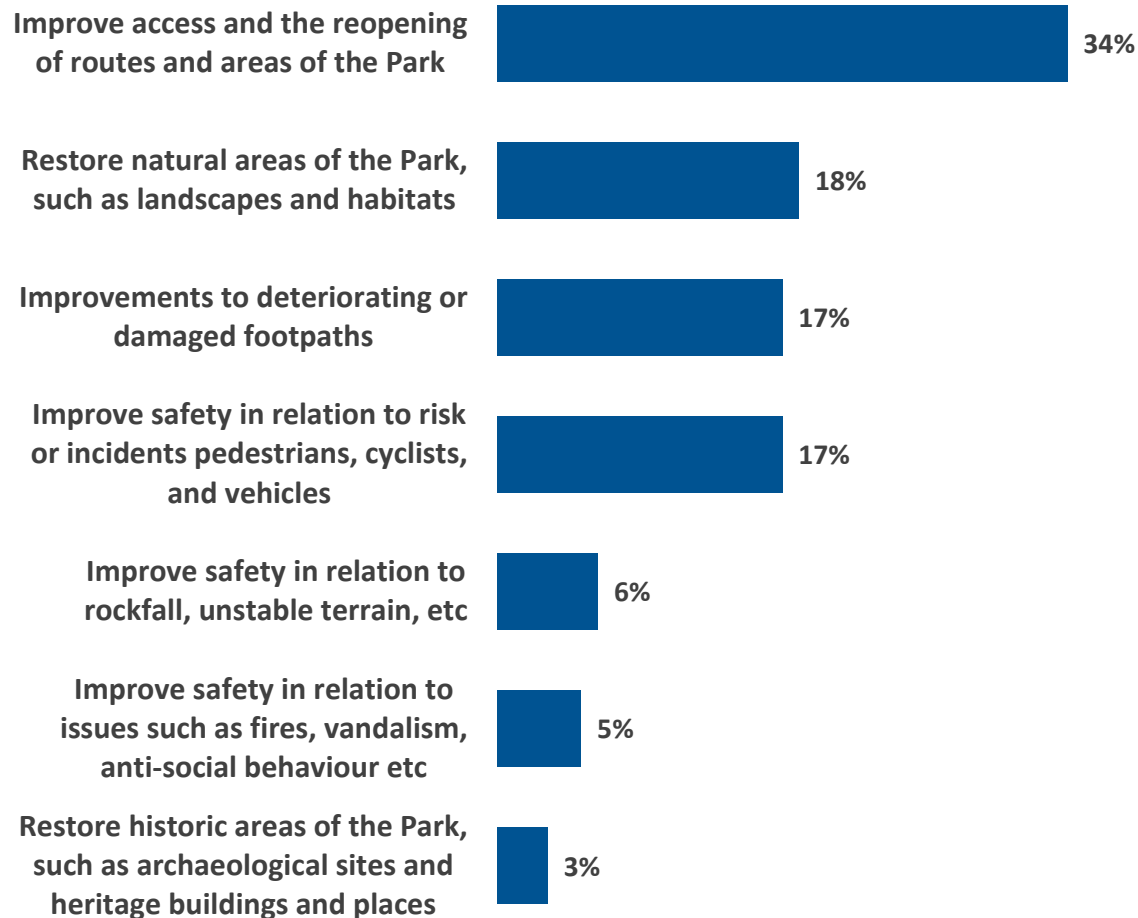
# Aspects Which Should Be Prioritised





# Aspects Which Should Be Prioritised

Proportion Selecting Each Aspect as 1<sup>st</sup> Priority



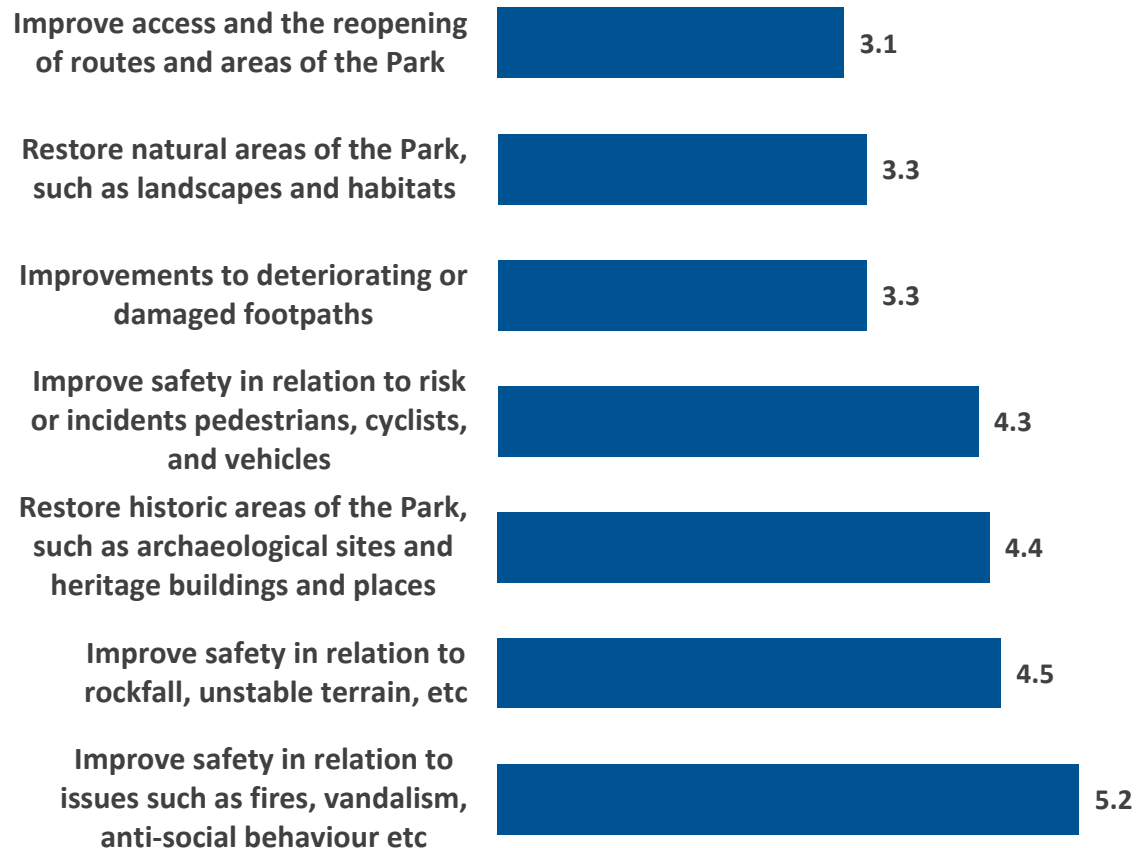
- A third of respondents said their top priority was improving access and reopening routes / areas of the Park
  - This was more prevalent amongst those travelling to the Park using motorised vehicles
- Restoring natural areas of the Park; improvements to deteriorating footpaths and improving safety / reducing risk of incidents for pedestrians/cyclists and vehicles were each considered the top priority for just under a fifth of respondents
  - The latter a particular priority for those cycling in the Park
- Improving safety in respect of rockfall / unstable terrain; or in relation to anti-social behaviour / vandalism / fires was selected by fewer as a top priority
- And just 3% said restoring historic areas of the Park was a key priority.





# Aspects Which Should Be Prioritised

**Mean Score (out of 7)**  
1=highest priority; 7=lowest priority



- Looking at the data by mean score, the top priorities remain consistent; however restoring historic areas of the Park is higher up the list, ahead of improving safety from rockfall / unstable terrain; or vandalism / antisocial behaviour.





# Aspects Which Should Be Prioritised

**Respondents were asked to provide any additional comments based on their opinion about which parts of the Park should be prioritised – 2,173 comments were left.**

**In line with the quantitative data, improving access and continuing to allow vehicle traffic to travel through the Park was the dominant theme within the comments.**

- Those who supported continued access to vehicular traffic commonly expressed that their view was related to problems of access for disabled or low mobility groups - the closure of roads to cars is felt, by many, to be restricting access and inclusion for those most vulnerable.
  - Those who would like to see the road network remain open to cars or opened further often focus on the increased inconvenience to drivers, who feel their journey time would increase, as well as increasing congestion and pollution in other areas of Edinburgh.
  - Providing an alternative route for cars is thought to be needed if roads are to be further closed.
- However, a large number of respondents expressed the view that access for pedestrians and cyclists should be prioritised over drivers, and closing the roads is their preferred way to do this safely, although this was less dominant in responses to this question. Those who cycle through the Park were most likely to call for a reduction or ban in traffic.
  - Climate benefits, improved safety for other road users, and prioritising nature and wildlife were cited as key reasons for reducing vehicular traffic through the Park.
  - Within the group of respondents who view reducing vehicles in the Park as their top priority, a smaller proportion feel that more of a balance could be struck by enforcing the ban on commercial vehicles.

“The Park road is a VITAL route to many areas of the city. When the Park is closed it can add up to 30mins extra time which is not only unsustainable but also creates congestion in other parts of the city. The road through the Park is essential for getting to the royal infirmary - if this route was closed permanently, it could cost lives.”

“Please restore full access to using the road through the Park and road up to top of Park. This is vital for access by less able bodied and elderly people. Otherwise, you are discriminating against them by not enabling access.”

“Road closures make the Park a safer place to visit, and more pleasant with less traffic noise; I can hear the birds sing! It would make the Park more accessible for pedestrians if roads were permanently closed, with exceptions for disabled access.”





# Aspects Which Should Be Prioritised

- Others who feel access and the reopening of routes should be prioritised, focussed on reopening of the Radical Road path to facilitate access to the Salisbury Crags, with a particular focus on climbing. This was the second most prevalent theme throughout responses for this question.
- Improving infrastructure for pedestrians and cyclists in relation to safety was also frequently mentioned as a priority, although by fewer respondents.
  - Suggestions include improving the cycle paths, providing more pedestrian crossings, maintaining pedestrian routes, and adding speed control measures for motorists.
- Further additional improvements were mentioned by a number of respondents including better signage along footpaths and cycle paths, public toilets in various points of the Park, general signage around the Park for different areas, and an increase in litter bins.
- Keeping a natural and 'wild' feel to the Park when making improvements was important to respondents with many wanting the paths to continue feeling natural and rugged and not paved.
  - A focus on rewilding and planting more trees was also mentioned frequently. Along with restricting access to certain areas to allow nature to takeover and maintain the wide variety of wildlife within the Park

“Better cycle infrastructure is badly needed. More footpaths. Beacon crossings where paths cross the road would improve safety especially at night. Street lighting at night. Improved accessibility - wheel-friendly footpaths and benches. Better signage on main roads when the Park road is closed.”

“The Park is generally good, the issues are with mixing pedestrians, cyclists and vehicles. Also, the speed motor vehicles travel through parts of the Park. Need some speed controls.”

“Keep the wilder parts of the Park 'wild' - with a focus on the habitat and wildlife elements. Provide decent pathways to encourage people to stay on the paths and not intrude into habitats.”

“The Park already has natural regrowth of vegetation, but I think a strong focus on rewilding the Park (excluding the parade ground) would be important for wildlife and people”

“Don't preserve grasslands that only existed due to grazing. Focus on rewilding. More trees would help drainage”



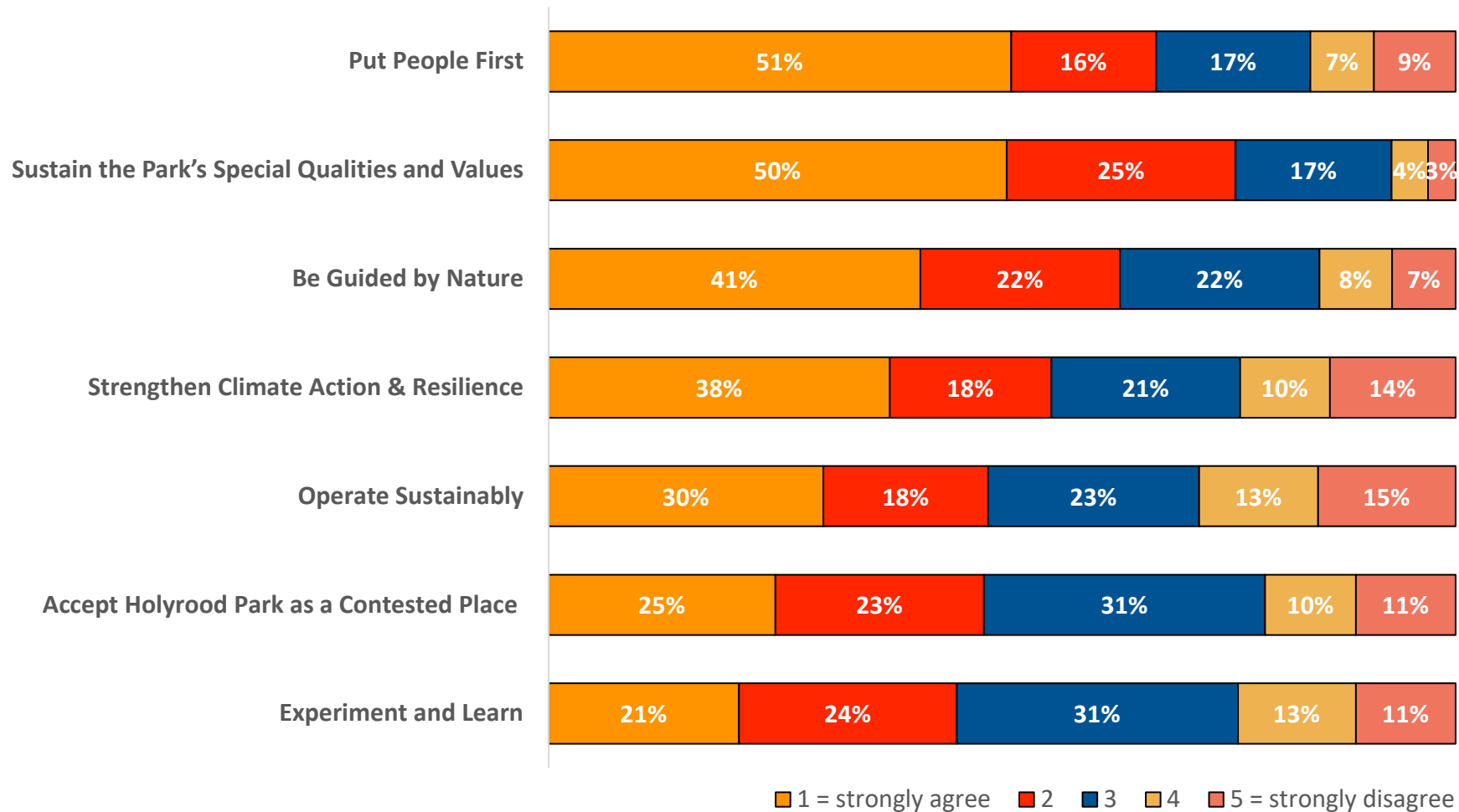
# Detailed Explanation of Guiding Principles Shown

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- **Experiment and Learn** - To ensure that future management embraces the potential for the Park to become a place for developing, testing, and sharing innovative ideas around the role of urban green space, urban living, climate change, biodiversity, health, and wellbeing
- **Accept Holyrood Park as a Contested Place** - To create a space for open and transparent communication and discussion, even in situations when not all parties will accept or welcome certain decisions relating to the Park
- **Operate Sustainably** - To ensure that all decisions contribute to moving towards a Net Zero operational model, increase revenue to support investment, and to reduce subsidy funding requirements
- **Strengthen Climate Action & Resilience** - To ensure that all future decisions relating to the Park seek to make a positive contribution to climate change mitigation
- **Be Guided by Nature** - To ensure all future decisions are founded on letting natural processes lead the way, leading to a changed, but more sustainable landscape
- **Sustain the Park's Special Qualities and Values** - To sustain, safeguard, and enhance the unique character and special qualities of the Park including its built heritage, nature, and landscape
- **Put People First** - To serve people by providing accessible greenspace, access to nature, and providing benefits in the face of climate change



# Importance / Relevance of Guiding Principles to the Park's Future

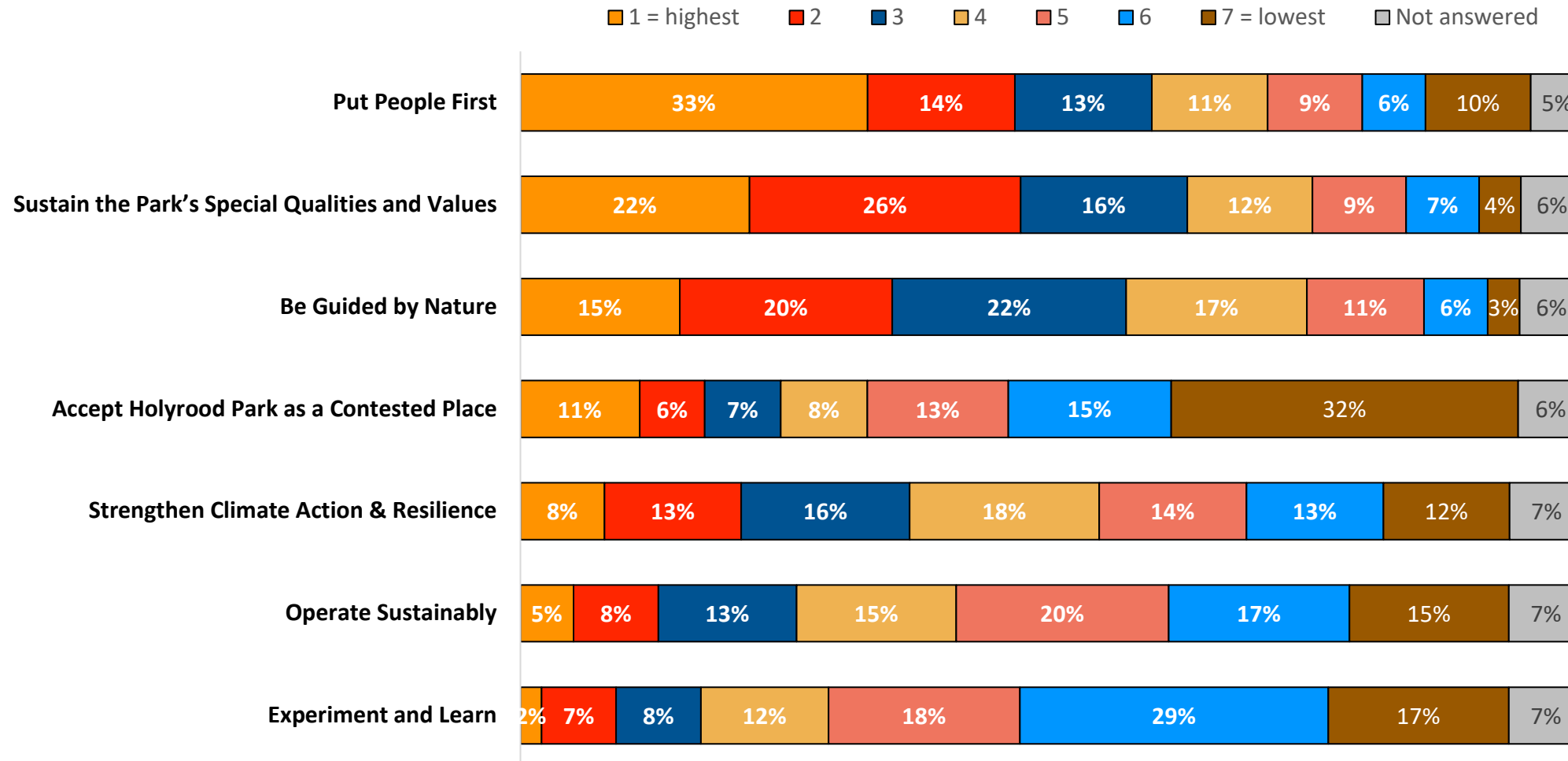


- Around half of respondents strongly agreed that putting people first and sustaining the Park's special qualities and values were important and relevant to the Park's future
- Being guided by nature and strengthening climate action / resilience were also considered important with a majority agreeing
- Just under half felt that accepting Holyrood Park as a contested place, and experiment and learn were important guiding principles for the future.



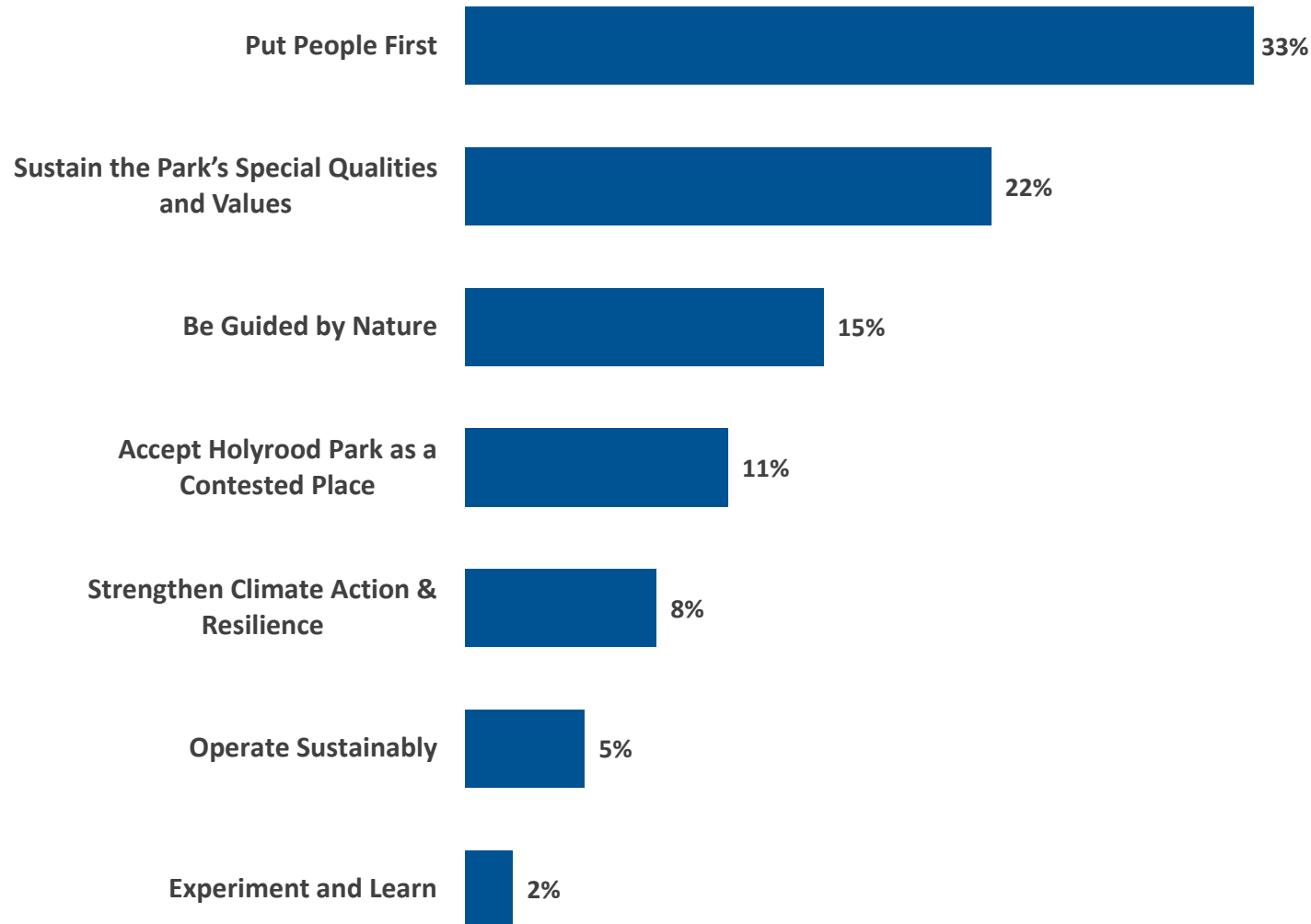


# Which Guiding Principles Should Be Prioritised





# Which Guiding Principles Should Be Prioritised – 1<sup>st</sup> Priority



- When asked to prioritise the Guiding Principles Put People First was the first choice for a third of respondents and Sustain the Park's Special Qualities and Values was first choice for just under a quarter





# Which Guiding Principles Should Be Prioritised

**Respondents were asked to provide a reason for choosing their top priority. A total of 3062 people provided feedback.**

**Issues of road closures and car access continued to dominate responses. The Guiding Principles were interpreted in a number of ways in relation to vehicle access.**

- Access for all was commonly mentioned in relation to ‘putting people first’. This includes continuing to allow car access through the Park to ensure everyone, particularly those less mobile, can use the Park.
- In line with previous responses, a number of respondents interpreted ‘putting people first’ as prioritising the safety and general wellbeing of pedestrians and cyclists, and therefore reducing traffic in the Park in favour of recreational activities. However, fewer expressed this view than felt putting people first was about continued car access.
  - Many who selected this as their top priority had the view that the Park is for people – therefore, putting people first has to be the priority as there is no point in having the Park if it is not for people to use and enjoy.
- On the other hand, prioritising nature and maintaining the wild feel of the Park (the other main theme within responses) was also flagged as important by a large proportion – some expressed concern that putting people first would be at the cost of conserving nature and wildlife in the Park.
  - Some felt that being guided by nature would incorporate many of the Guiding Principles i.e. Strengthening Climate Action and Resilience.
  - Many would like the Park to be led by nature without significant human interference – and suggested nothing should be done with the Park (i.e. ‘leave it as is and allow nature to flourish’).
  - However, others felt that deliberate interference in order to increase the biodiversity and wildlife in the Park was critical in relation to climate change, along with maintaining an important greenspace at the heart of Edinburgh.

“A Park or open space is nothing if not for people, but that means all people - including those who cannot walk or cycle or climb hills, because they are too old or too young, i.e. motorised transport is also necessary, and not only with a blue badge..”

“The Park is already hugely accessible, but it has a real problem with motorised traffic passing through it. We should realise that it is first and foremost a Park, of beauty and nature, and a rare example of green landscape in a busy city, capable of being an oasis of wildlife and peaceful calm to be treasured for generations.”

“Strengthening climate resilience allows the other goals to be pursued sustainably into the future. This central iconic space can be an example and lead a culture of sustainability as part of Edinburgh’s identity.”

“The Park should be respected and let nature and wildlife take its course. If the Park needs to be closed to cars or certain areas to walkers to maintain its natural beauty then that should be a priority. Not just a rat run into town.”



# Which Guiding Principles Should Be Prioritised

- The issue of Climate Change was commented on in relation to a number of the Guiding Principles. For the respondents who see ‘Strengthen Climate Action and Resilience’ as their main priority, immediate climate action is essential in order to preserve the Park – it was suggested that the Park could be used as an example to lead a culture of sustainability in Edinburgh.
  - Again, the debate of car access to the Park was widely commented on in relation to climate change.
  - Removing vehicle access from the Park is seen as a step towards tackling the climate crisis, as removing the option for private vehicles to travel in the Park is thought likely to motivate people to travel in more sustainable ways.
- However, the Park’s role in reducing pollution was contested:
  - Many feel that banning vehicular access is important for climate action in order to improve air quality in the Park for other Park users and ensure the space continues to provide a natural escape from a busy, urban environment.
  - On the other hand, a large proportion of respondents feel that removing traffic from the Park is simply moving the pollution to other areas of Edinburgh, leading to more congestion and pollution elsewhere and affecting the local communities.
- Amongst those that support further road closures, there is a strong belief that disabled access should be provided in some way – by allowing private vehicles of disabled people through, or alternatives such as electric scooters/bikes or a mini-bus service. There was a general sentiment among many of the respondents that access for ‘all’ people is important.

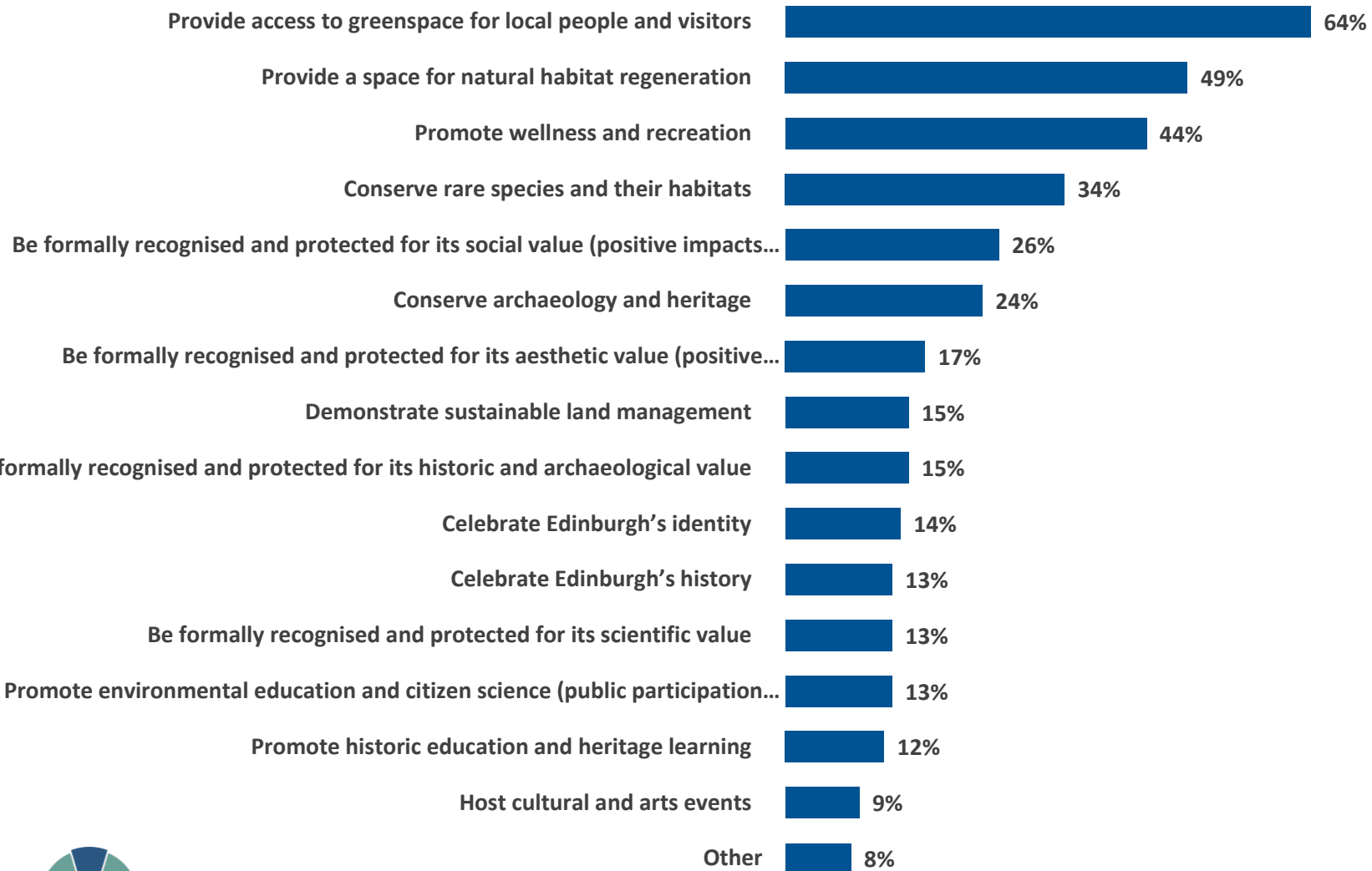
“The climate emergency is the most severe and horrifying event to be dealt with immediately otherwise all other plans will be worthless. It is vital to support people to make lifestyle changes by adapting infrastructure such as roads in cities that are well served by public transport. All actions of public bodies, commercial enterprises, governments should be made in the light of the radical changes that are required to address the climate emergency”.

“Edinburgh has huge potential to become a uniquely biodiverse and sustainable city. Holyrood Park plays a key role as a central hub for habitat corridors. This potential needs to be fully realised and realised at the expense of some of our outdated views on lawns and open grass monocultures. This is vital not just for species that depend on the Park, but for climate resilience, education and health benefits.”.

“It needs to be an inclusive place for all, it’s such an important space for so many”



# Future Role and Benefits of Holyrood Park



- Almost two-thirds felt Holyrood Park should provide access to greenspace for locals and visitors in future
- Just under half felt providing space for natural habitat regeneration was important and a third mentioned conservation of rare species and their habitats
- Promoting wellness and recreation was an important factor for 44% of respondents and just over a quarter want formal recognition for the social value of the Park
- Many other potential roles for Holyrood Park were recognised by smaller numbers of respondents.



# Future Role and Benefits of Holyrood Park

## A total of 385 people left an additional comment on the future of Holyrood Park.

- The majority of the additional comments related to maintaining vehicle access to the Park. The Park plays a vital role in the local transport ecosystem of Edinburgh for a large proportion of respondents and ensuring this remains the case in the future is of great importance to many.
- Enforcing the ban on commercial vehicles was also mentioned as a way of removing additional traffic for those who do not want to see further road closures
  - Enforcing the speed limit and introducing traffic calming measures such as speed bumps were ideas mentioned by a number of people as a solution for allowing private cars in the Park while reducing the volume of traffic and improving the safety of the roads.
- Others think the correct balance has currently been struck with having roads closed at weekends but open during the week to allow those with mobility issues to continue accessing the Park – keeping the Park as it is was a commonly expressed view
- While a number of people would rather the Park was completely closed to vehicular traffic, there is a general understanding that concession should be made to those with mobility issues, such as public transport within the Park or blue badge access only.
- Many respondents see the role of the Park as a place to escape to, citing a range of health benefits to being in the Park. Ensuring the Park remains a wild and natural habitat is important for many users, providing a peaceful setting within an urban environment.

“The Park is an important route for people getting around Edinburgh. Given its position in the middle of the city, it will never be an ideal wildlife habitat. Scotland has wilderness better able to support that. I think it's very important that a balanced approach is taken that accepts its role as a city thoroughfare as well a recreation area and nature reserve.”

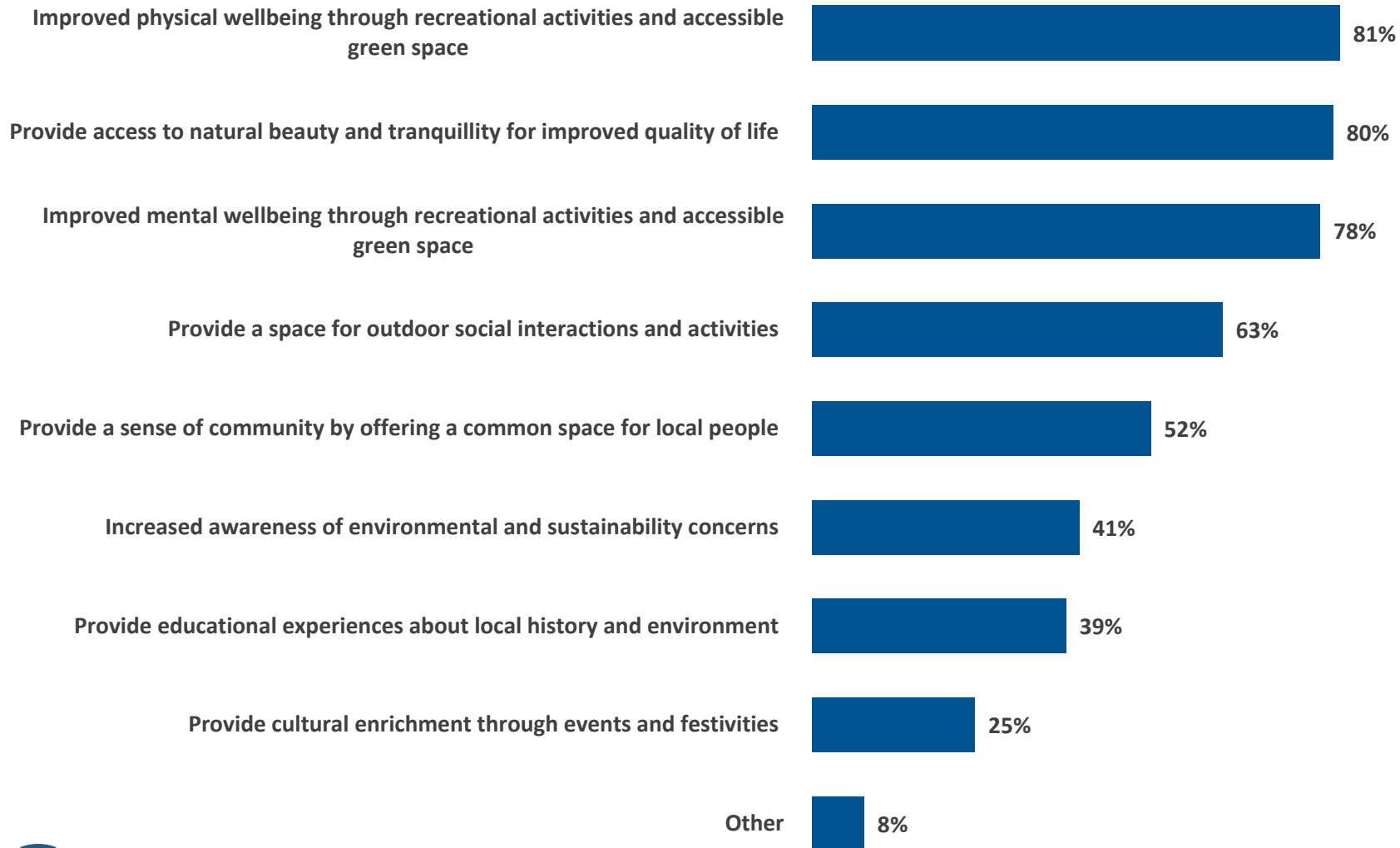
“Just leave the Park as it is, reopen Radical Road and allow all current users to keep using it.”

“Access to greenspace promotes wellness and recreation. Sustainable land management by its very definition should be conserving rare species and providing space for natural habitat regeneration. Both these promote the continuing relevance of Edinburgh's historic and cultural identity as an enlightened city and its visual identity tied to its iconic landscape context.”





# Benefits Park Should Bring to People's Lives





# Benefits Park Should Bring to People's Lives

## A small number of respondents (125) left an additional comment relating to the benefits of Holyrood Park.

- Most comments were in favour of maintaining vehicle access to the Park and the benefits this has on the surrounding areas of Edinburgh with regards to congestion and pollution.
  - This is thought to particularly benefit more vulnerable and less able groups, allowing them to continue accessing and enjoying the Park as they have done.
- A number of comments suggested that the Park currently strikes the right balance of maintaining the Park as a natural greenspace for recreational activities and wildlife while continuing to allow car access at certain times. Retaining this balance is thought to benefit everyone.
- The provision and access to a wild, natural greenspace in the middle of the city was widely commented on as a major benefit of Holyrood Park. Allowing locals and tourists to escape the city and partake in various exercise and recreation activities.

“Disabled people love to visit the Park. Many use their car and blue badge (or a taxi) to visit the Top Road on days when it's open. They Park there, look at the scenery, and perhaps wheel along the footway. Access for them by car and taxi must be maintained. It's not fair to exclude them.”

“Help ease the congestion of city centre roads!”

“As a local resident of over 34 years I can say the Holyrood Park currently strikes a good balance of achieving the above, while also serving to provide functional access routes to many parts of the city that would otherwise incur an environmental penalty to access by vehicle.”

“Provide access to a wild natural space within a city accessible by foot or public transport.”







# Areas to Focus on For the Park's Future

**Respondents were asked if there was anything else that they feel should be included as an area of focus for the Park's future. There was a total of 1,828 responses.**

**Areas to focus on in the future remained in line with the key themes throughout the feedback: maintain vehicular access, reducing traffic, reopening routes, and improving infrastructure**

- The two main contested issues were related to vehicular access – continuing to allow access or banning them from the Park. Overall, more comments were made about continuing to allow vehicle access than reducing or banning vehicles altogether.
  - A general reduction in traffic is felt to be important to many, if roads are to remain open. Enforcing the ban on commercial vehicles and only allowing vehicle access to those with mobility issues have been suggested alternatives to a complete vehicle ban.
- Reopening the Radical Road path and allowing people to accept the risks associated with rockfall was also commonly mentioned, particularly by those who wish to use the Salisbury Crags to climb.
- Additionally, generally improving the infrastructure of the Park was highlighted by many –adding in more public toilets, signage, traffic calming measures, proper cycle paths, and lighting.
  - If vehicular access is to remain, many would like to see the 20mph speed limit being enforced and proper cycle paths separate from traffic and pedestrians to improve safety.
- Leaving the Park as it currently is and just maintaining it was also mentioned relatively often throughout responses – there is some concern that making too many changes would ruin the nature of the Park.

“Vital that road access is continued to be provided as at present as a minimum, this allows access to the elderly etc (my parents loved Dunsapie but need a car to get there now), and also to balance traffic in the city”

“Please provide a segregated cycle path along Queen’s drive! This is my favourite part of my commute, but the shared path is too narrow. Also, I would love to visit by bike, but I am not aware of any secure bike parking”

“Just because there is a managing team, don't let this get in the way of just maintaining what we already have. Don't build stuff, don't organise stuff. We need the Park to be the best wild landscape in Edinburgh. Maintain it, love it and leave it alone for people to enjoy.”

“Radical Road should be reopened with warnings of falling rocks to let people decide if they want to walk along it at their own risk.”



# Additional Comments / Concerns on Outline Strategic Plan

**When asked if they had any additional comments/concerns about the Outline Strategic Plan for the Park, 1,696 people left a response. The additional comments generally reflect the key areas of concerns already seen in previous responses – i.e. road closures and traffic concerns.**

- The most common theme by far related to road closures and lack of access for cars and other vehicles. Concerns continue to be around access for the less able, pollution on other roads as a result of more congestion, and increased travel time.
- Again, in line with previous comments, a large proportion have the opposite view and are concerned about the volume of traffic, citing issues with safety and air pollution in the Park
  - Various speed calming measures were suggested in order to improve safety whilst continuing to allow cars into the Park.
  - Banning vehicles altogether, however, was still favoured by many. Although notably fewer additional comments were made here around banning cars than maintaining them.
  - For those who would like the Park to maintain its wild and natural feel, there is acknowledgement that maintenance work must continue but request that the Park not be ‘overmanaged’ or developed.

“I am concerned that development often means damage. I would like to see the nature and greenspace that is already there protected, nurtured and expanded.”

“I’m concerned that the Park will be crossed with formal made footpaths which detract from the rugged and naturalistic nature of the Park.

“Not all people use computers or know about this communication. Put your questionnaire in shops, libraries, where residents go. Some older residents of Edinburgh don't do online or have smartphones. Think of everyone in Edinburgh not just a few.”



# Additional Comments / Concerns on Outline Strategic Plan

- An additional key theme highlighted throughout these comments was about the consultation itself. It was felt that the consultation was not accessible to many, both in terms of methods of access, and in the language used throughout the consultation.
  - Some who live within close proximity to the Park were surprised not to have received formal communication about the consultation and would expect neighbours of the Park to be prioritised and formally notified. Those who could be directly impacted by changes to the Park would like to be more involved in the consultation process.
  - One response suggests establishing a group of relevant stakeholders to be involved in the consultation process who represent the views of local residents and businesses.
  - Some found the language used throughout the consultation survey to be difficult to understand or easily interpreted in different ways. The survey was felt to be too long and complicated, and the plan itself too extensive and detailed to engage the majority of people.
- Some comments were also made about the consultation feeling biased towards climate change or geared towards a particular agenda, i.e. further road closures
  - These respondents felt that questions were framed in a specific way to produce a particular outcome in favour of banning vehicle access to the Park.
- However, reflecting previous responses, there were conflicting views, and a number of the comments were also positive in regard to the consultation.
  - The 'scope and openness' of the consultation was commended, as well as plans in the Outline Strategic Plan to reduce vehicular traffic and increase active travel opportunities.
  - Some are calling for faster action to be taken on certain measures, primarily on road closures. Largely, this is in reference to urgent climate action.

"An agenda is being pushed here, mainly aimed at closing Holyrood Park to cars. Most car owners would strongly disagree with this suggestion. There has been very little advertising about this consultation, so if there is a low response rate to it, it's not because residents of Edinburgh have no opinion about it or do not care. It's because the issue has not been widely publicised. I would suggest that most Edinburgh residents are more than happy with the way Holyrood Park has operated forever."

"I am delighted to see that you have included "Vehicular traffic will largely cease, and active travel will become the primary mode of transport across the Park; reflecting wider societal trends away from a car dominated urban environment" in the outline strategic plan. As a resident who lives on the border of the Park, swift and decisive action to ensure this happens is necessary.."

"I would like to see more proactive consultation with local residents who live around the Park. We are directly impacted by plans for the Park, more so than Edinburgh residents more generally. I welcome the plans for the Park, but there needs to be close consultation with people who are directly affected. As part of plans going forward, at the very least, signage at the exit from the Park to our street reminding people to be mindful and respectful of local residents."

"I feel the questions are narrow in scope and very leading to restrict the use of the Park and the freedom of choice for the residents of Edinburgh to limit transportation options for disabled.."

"The questions are biased towards environmental and nothing with the functional use of the space as a valuable transit route for vehicles around a congested Edinburgh."



# Additional Comments from Groups / Organisations

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**HES also received written responses to this consultation, where organisations and individuals had opted not to fill in the survey and instead send their feedback directly. A total of 77 responses were received by email.**

- **64 of these were individuals, and as such their responses were included in the analysis of the survey responses.**
- **13 were organisations, which have been analysed separately to identify issues of particular importance to this type of respondent.**
- Many organisations used their responses to highlight that the overall objectives and priorities are in keeping with their vision for the Park, and they approve of HES's efforts to improve management of the Park.
- However, within these objectives there are specific elements which may impact organisations, businesses and groups more acutely, and mitigation actions should be considered within any plans.
- The two key themes that emerged within the responses as particularly important to organisations were:
  - **nature and habitat concerns**
  - **road closures and access issues.**



# Organisations: Nature / Habitation Concerns

- Organisations with more environmental leanings focussed on the preservation of Holyrood's habitat. As such, they are pleased to see strategic priorities around being 'led by nature' present.
- However, they highlight that to preserve the habitat, intervention may also be required, and HES / rangers should be actively maintaining the environment – not just leaving nature to develop on its own.
- They highlight that increased use and footfall – as well as traffic – does have an impact on the natural environment that requires active combatting.
- Linked to the natural habitat are also comments about the safety of the Park, and HES's restrictions to increase safety.
- Some organisations highlighted that natural wildlife will always carry a risk of danger and it is unfair to close parts of the Park – like the Radical Road path – because of this, as active groups (e.g. climbers, ramblers) should be allowed to assess their own risk.
  - It was felt that as long as proper signposting is in place to warn others, allowing access to these parts of the Park is in keeping with ensuring that this natural resource in Edinburgh can be used and enjoyed by active groups.

““Therefore, retaining interconnectivity of grassland habitats both within the Park and to habitats on adjoining land is vitally important. This will require regular intervention, particularly where gorse growth encroaches on species-rich grassland or into grassland habitat corridors. The first objective of the strategic plan could be strengthened to include the desire to enhance or improve the existing habitats where possible. For example, our own work has shown that removal of newly encroaching scrub can protect species-rich grassland.”

“Overall, we believe that whilst changes may be necessary to maintain the Park's environmental quality, it is crucial to align management practices in accordance with the current Park usage, rather than fundamentally altering how individuals interact with the area and we hope our priorities can be taken into consideration as you design the plan for the future.”



# Organisations: Road Closures / Access Issues

- Closure of roads is clearly a contentious issue, and organisations and groups reflect the population with their conflicting views on the matter.
  - Some groups dedicated to removing vehicle traffic from the Park focussed their response on this, and highlighted that closing Park roads is an important element for Edinburgh to reach their Net Zero target for 2030.
  - They also suggest that further traffic restrictions need to be established ahead of Edinburgh's LEZ to stop motorists using Holyrood Park as a throughway.
  - On the other hand, organisations that oppose the closure of roads highlight the impact this has on the surrounding area. Their view is that altered traffic flow makes surrounding areas overly congested and hazardous, and potentially undoes any positive environmental impacts anticipated by the road closures.
  - Businesses also highlighted that the economic impacts of road closures must be considered, including the increase to maintenance costs of roads where traffic is being diverted.
  - Responses suggest that plans must be in place if road closures are to remain in place (or increase) to ensure that diverted traffic is not having a negative impact.

“We know from experience that every single weekday Park road closure event causes much increased traffic congestion for everyone in the area. This situation was brought into sharp focus when the Low Road was closed for an extensive period because of rockfall. The potential closures deliberately congest vital routes to Edinburgh Royal Infirmary A&E from the Cavalry Park playing fields.”

“The current traffic restrictions on motor vehicles using the Park's roads for journeys to east, south, west and north Edinburgh may be to the benefit to some users of the Park, however they are not a benefit to everyone as closure displaces traffic onto the streets of the urban centre, creating bottlenecks and pollution to our area. We need a sensible strategy that is mindful of the needs of all to access and benefit from the Park. Could the vehicle routes not become tree lined avenues helping to disperse pollution (like Paris), creating a safe buffer for different Park users?”



# Key Takeouts

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- Respondents to the consultation were a largely local audience of frequent Park users, accessing the Park for a range of different purposes, including leisure and recreation, nature and wildlife and commuting; and visiting a wide range of areas within the Park.
- Key issues identified with the Park currently, related to road closures, erosion and safety (between motorists, cyclists and pedestrians)
- Priorities for the future management of the Park mirrored these issues with a particular focus on improving access and reopening routes
- It was also clear from the comments that strong views are held relating to vehicle access
  - A large proportion of respondents were keen to see vehicular access maintained
  - Some wanted existing closures removed and roads reopened
  - Some wanted existing closures to remain, believing the right balance was currently being struck
  - Some wanted vehicles banned altogether
- Although these differing views were held, one common concern across groups was ensuring that access is maintained for those with mobility issues
- Respondents were also concerned with climate change, erosion and maintaining the natural habitat and wildlife of the Park, feeling that this could bring positive impacts to the Park and the city as a whole
- It was clear that consultation respondents felt the strategic plan should place people at the heart of any future plans for the Park – however that meant quite different things to different groups
- All this highlights the difficult balance required in meeting the various needs of different Park user groups.



