

**CRIEFFCOMMUNITYTRUST**

# Findings from a survey about the Crieff to Comrie core path

## Final report

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# Executive Summary

1. This report presents the results of a survey, conducted between March and May 2014, among residents of and visitors to Strathearn. The purpose of the survey was to get the views of local people and visitors about the improvement of the core path between Crieff and Comrie, and in particular the section between Trowan and Comrie. This section of the path largely utilises the bed of the former railway line, but is in such a condition as to make passage along it possible only for fit and determined walkers.

## *Main findings*

2. Altogether, 1,316 people participated in the survey. A roughly equal number of males and females took part, and most respondents were over age 30. Two-thirds of respondents were from the local area and one-third were visitors.
3. Perhaps the most striking result from the survey was the answer to Question 1: "Are you in favour of improving access to, and the surface of the core path between Crieff and Comrie (along the old railway line)?" Altogether, 96% of respondents were in favour of path improvement, with just 3% against.
4. Most respondents (98%) said they would use the path for leisure and recreational purposes, while 28% said they would also use it to access shops, services, school or work. Forty-two percent (42%) of respondents would use an improved path several times a month or more, and further third (34%) would use it several times a year.
5. In terms of mode of travel, 84% of respondents would like to walk or run on the path, 54% would use a mountain bike, 35% a road bike, 11% would want to have access available to wheelchairs, prams, or mobility scooters, and 4% would use the path for horse riding.

## *Other comments*

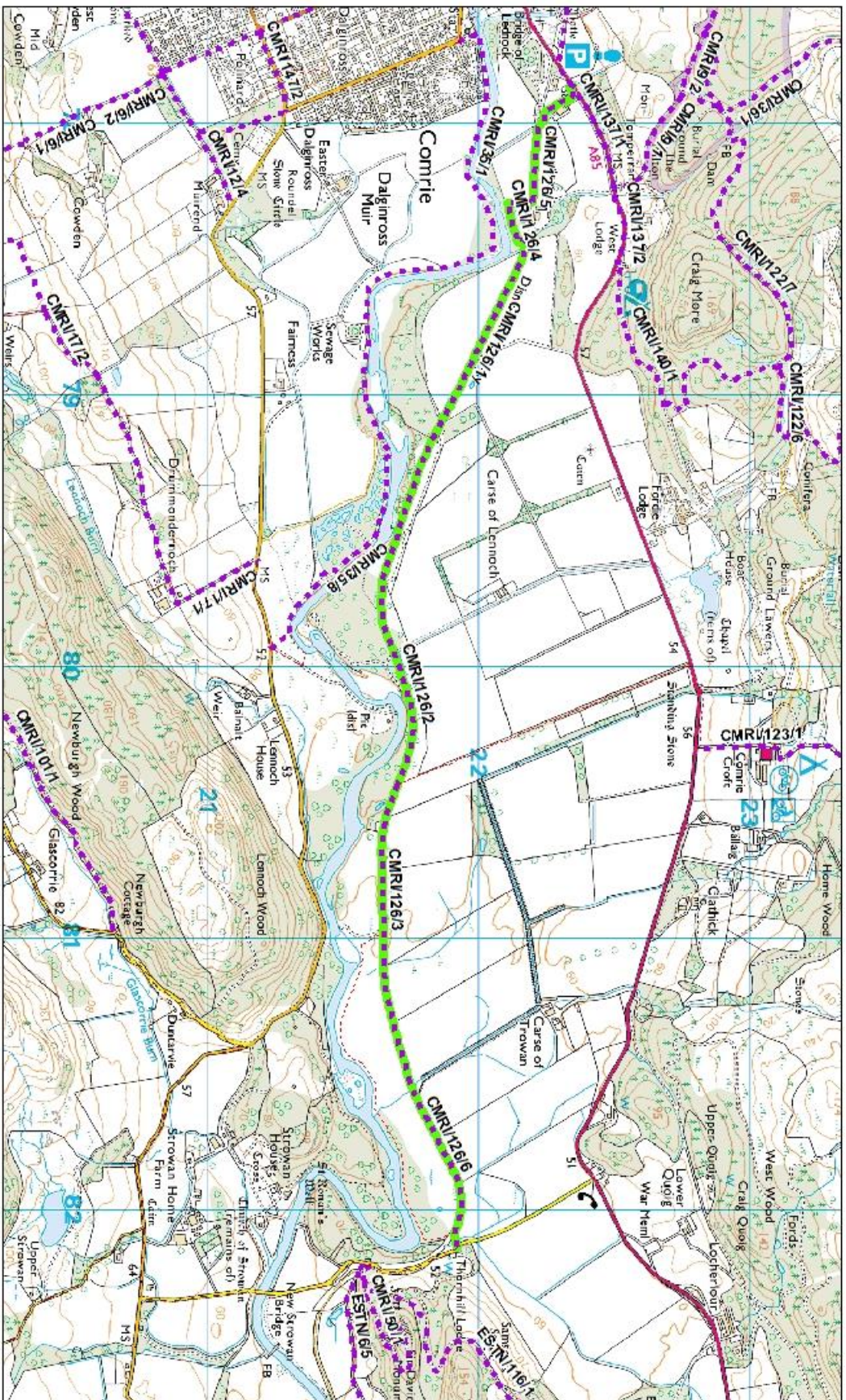
6. Those (96%) who were in favour of improving the core path between Crieff and Comrie identified one or more specific benefits that would arise as a result. In particular, respondents believed that the path would:
  - Improve safety for walkers and cyclists by providing an off-road route between Crieff and Comrie
  - Lead to increased tourism and benefits to the local economy
  - Promote closer links between the two communities
  - Result in improvements to individuals' health and well-being from increased exercise
  - Have environmental benefits resulting from reductions in carbon emissions
  - Provide an accessible resource to families and people of all abilities.
7. Those (3%) who were not in favour of improving the path generally gave one or more of the following reasons for their views:
  - Improvements to the path and greater access would cause problems to farmers.
  - There's no demand for the path and it would be a waste of public funds to improve it.

- It would be unsafe for walkers / cyclists to use the path.
  - Private land is private, and farmers should be compensated if the railway is developed and improved for walkers and cyclists.
  - The core path should not be developed because other alternatives are available.
8. Two percent (2%) of respondents said they were 'not sure' if they were in favour of improving the core path. Among this group, several expressed support for an improved path but had questions or concerns about:
- The potential cost of improving and / or maintaining it
  - The surface of the path - there was a preference for a 'natural', rather than a hard tarmacked path
  - Whether the proposed route was the best route, given concerns raised by landowners in the past.

### ***Conclusion***

9. Overall, this survey has demonstrated very strong support for the improvement of the designated core path between Crieff and Comrie. Although a few respondents have raised potential or perceived problems, many others have identified that improvement of the path would bring wide ranging and substantial benefits for residents and visitors alike.

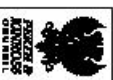




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Title: CMRI/126  
 Contact: PKC  
 Date: SEPTEMBER 2014

Scale: 1:18,000



# 1. Introduction and background

- 1.1 In 2012, a major consultation carried out among residents and business owners in Crieff found that there was a strong demand for an off-road footpath and cycle route between Crieff and Comrie. Following the publication of the Crieff Community Action Plan in February 2013, the Crieff Community Trust (CCT) committed itself to exploring the options for improving the designated core path between Crieff and Comrie.
- 1.2 The first section of this path runs from Mungall Park in Crieff to Trowan,<sup>1</sup> and the second section runs from Trowan to Comrie along the former railway line, as shown in the figure on the previous page.<sup>2</sup> The section of the path between Trowan and Comrie needs significant work to bring it up to a suitable standard.
- 1.3 CCT decided to undertake a further survey - this time, including residents and visitors across Strathearn. The aims of this survey were:
  - To ascertain the wider demand for an improved path between Crieff and Comrie, and
  - To ensure that any improvements carried out to the path in the future reflect the needs of local residents, visitors and land owners.
- 1.4 Thus, between March and May 2014, CCT carried out a further survey to get views about the future development of the Crieff to Comrie Core Path. This report presents the findings of this survey.

## How people found out about the survey

- 1.5 The survey was advertised widely at a local level through the following means:
  - All members of the Crieff Community Trust and Comrie Development Trust were contacted by email and invited to take part.
  - Members of the Crieff Community Council and Comrie Community Council were informed of the survey and were invited to circulate it among their networks.
  - A link to the survey was made available on the Crieff Community Trust website, and the Comrie community website, and via a number of relevant social media sites.
  - Articles about the survey were published in the local newspapers, *The Strathearn Herald* and *Strathallan Times*.
  - A copy of the survey questionnaire was printed in full in the May issue of *The Crieff & Comrie Quair*. (Readers could complete it and hand it in at one of several locations in Crieff or Comrie, or they could post it to an address provided.)
  - Various local accommodation providers invited their guests to participate in the survey.
  - Teachers at Comrie Primary School invited pupils to take part.
  - Hard copies were also available from some shops in Comrie and St Fillans.

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<sup>1</sup> See <http://www.pkc.gov.uk/CHttpHandler.ashx?id=10972&p=0> (routes CRIF/51, CRIF/113, ESTN/100, ESTN/6)

<sup>2</sup> Core path number: CMRI/126

- 1.6 In addition, advance copies of the survey were sent to the landowners between Trowan and Comrie as a courtesy to inform them about the survey and to seek their views.

#### **About the survey**

- 1.7 The survey contained 11 questions. The first question asked whether respondents were in favour of improving the path. Those who replied 'yes' to this question were then asked a further three questions about their potential use of the path. Those who replied 'no' to the first question were asked to say why they were not in favour of the path.
- 1.8 All respondents, irrespective of whether they were in favour improving the path, or not, were then invited to provide further comments, suggestions or questions about the Crieff-to-Comrie core path, or about the wider path network surrounding Crieff and Comrie.
- 1.9 All respondents were asked to state their sex, age, whether they were a local resident or a visitor to Strathearn, and their home postcode area.
- 1.10 Finally, to ensure that all responses were valid, and that no individual submitted more than one response, respondents were also asked to give their name and the first line of their home address. This information has been treated as confidential and is not reported here.
- 1.11 A copy of the survey questionnaire is included at Annex 1.



## 2. Description of the survey respondents

2.1 There were 1,316 respondents to the survey.

### Age and gender of respondents

2.2 A roughly equal number of males and females took part - 47% of respondents were male and 53% were female. The majority of respondents - around three-fifths (60%) - were aged 31-59, while a quarter (25%) were 60 and over. Sixteen percent were aged under 31. (See Table 2.1 below.)

**Table 2.1: Age and sex of respondents\***

	N	%
<b>Sex</b>		
Male	587	47%
Female	657	53%
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,244</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>Age**</b>		
Under 12	83	7%
12-17	35	3%
18-30	71	6%
31-59	772	60%
60 and over	319	25%
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,280</b>	<b>100%</b>

\* Not all respondents provided information about their sex and age.

\*\* Percentages do not total 100 due to rounding.

### Geographical distribution of respondents

2.3 The majority of respondents (65%) were Strathearn residents. The remainder were visitors to the area. See Table 2.2.

2.4 The largest proportion of respondents came from Crieff (34%) and Comrie (24%). However, substantial numbers of respondents also came from Edinburgh & Lothians (8%), England (5%), the greater Glasgow area (4%) and the wider Perthshire area (4%).



**Table 2.2: Geographical distribution of respondents\***

	N	%
<b>Location</b>		
Strathearn resident	827	65%
Day visitor to Strathearn	171	13%
Holidaying in the area	278	22%
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,276</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>Postcode of residence</b>		
<b>Strathearn postcodes</b>		
PH3 (Auchterarder)	12	1%
PH5 (Muthill, Madderty)	48	4%
PH6 (Comrie, St Fillans)	291	24%
PH7 (Crieff, Fowlis Wester, Gilmerton)	406	34%
<b>Other postcodes</b>		
Edinburgh & Lothians	95	8%
England	60	5%
Greater Glasgow area	53	4%
Perth & other Perthshire	44	4%
Fife	39	3%
Stirling & Stirlingshire	32	3%
Aberdeen, Aberdeenshire & Moray	26	2%
Dundee & Angus	24	2%
Other parts of Scotland**	59	5%
Other parts of the world***	11	1%
<b>Total****</b>	<b>1,200</b>	<b>100%</b>

\* Not all respondents provided information about where they lived.

\*\* Includes Falkirk, Clackmannanshire, Argyll & Bute, Ayrshire, Lanarkshire, Borders, Dumfries & Galloway and Highland.

\*\*\* Includes mainland Europe, USA, Canada, Australia

\*\*\*\* Does not include 79 pupils from Comrie Primary School, who did not provide information about their postcode area. Some of these children would have lived in Crieff and some in Comrie.

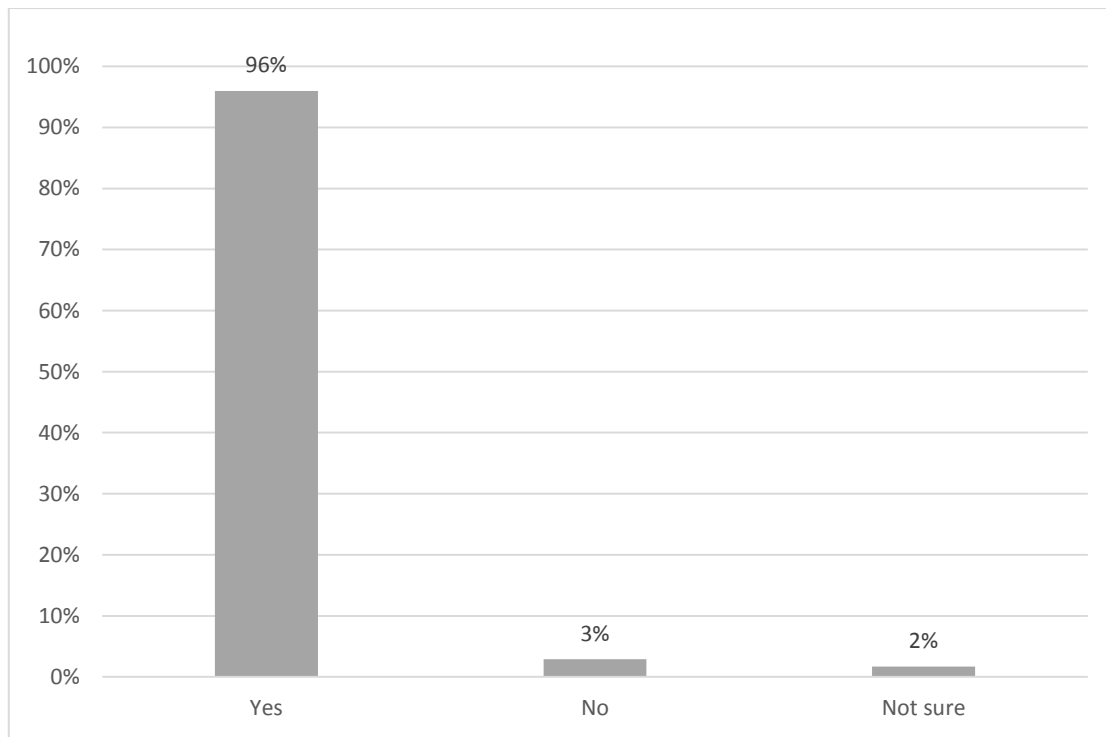
## 3. Findings

3.1 This section presents the main findings of the survey.

### Whether respondents are in favour of improving the core path

- 3.2 The first question in the survey asked: ‘Are you in favour of improving access to, or the surface of, the core path between Crieff and Comrie (along the old railway line)?’
- 3.3 Of the 1,316 respondents who took part, 1,256 (96%) answered ‘yes’ to this question, 38 (3%) said ‘no’, and 22 (2%) said they were ‘not sure’. (See Figure 3.1.)

**Figure 3.1: Are you in favour of improving access to, or the surface of, the core path between Crieff and Comrie? (All responses)**



Percentages do not total 100 due to rounding.

### Anonymous responses

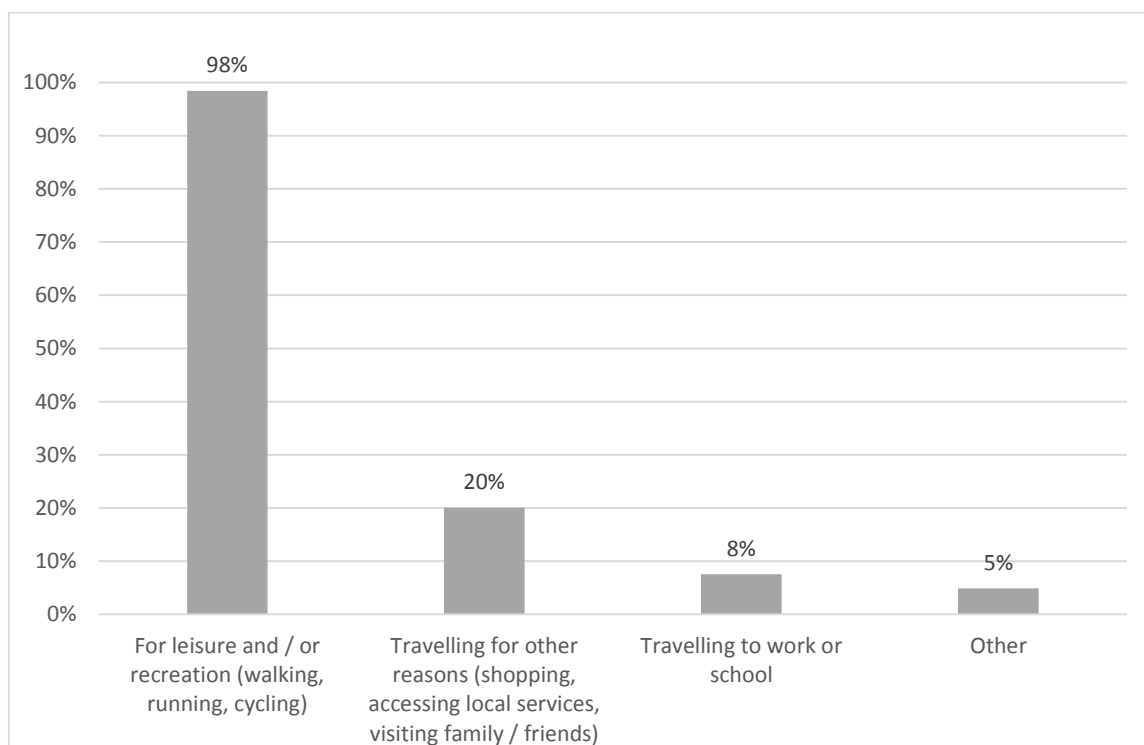
- 3.4 Respondents were asked for their names and the first line of their addresses to ensure that the responses submitted to the survey were all ‘valid’ and that no individual had submitted more than one response.
- 3.5 Of the total 1,316 respondents, 152 (12%) did not provide their name or the first line of their address. These responses were submitted anonymously. This figure includes 79 pupils from Comrie Primary School. About a quarter of the remaining anonymous responses (17/73) answered the first question only and did not answer any other questions in the survey. In addition, those who ticked ‘no’ or ‘not sure’ to the first question were more likely to submit anonymous responses than those who ticked ‘yes’. Further details about anonymous responses are given in Annex 2.

- 3.6 The original plan for the analysis was to exclude all anonymous responses. However, given the relatively small number of anonymous responses received, and since the inclusion or exclusion of these responses does not affect the overall results, a decision was subsequently taken to include all responses, irrespective of whether they were submitted anonymously or not.
- 3.7 The remainder of this section presents the findings of the survey, based on the total 1,316 respondents. Note, however, that the total number of respondents varies between questions because not all questions were answered by all respondents.

**How people would use an improved core path**

- 3.8 Question 2 in the survey asked people about how they might use an improved path between Crieff and Comrie. Respondents were given several choices, and could select as many as they wanted.
- 3.9 Altogether, 1,271 respondents answered this question. (Note that this question was skipped automatically if, at Question 1, respondents said they were not in favour of improving the path.)
- 3.10 Figure 3.2 below shows that most respondents (98%) said they would use the path for leisure or recreational purposes. However, a substantial proportion (20%) also said they would use the path for shopping, accessing local services and visiting friends and family. Eight percent (8%) said they would use the path for commuting, and 5% said they would use the path for a range of other purposes. These included: horse riding, education / training (for example, Duke of Edinburgh expeditions), leading guided walks for visitors or tourists, and dog walking.

**Figure 3.2: How would you describe the way in which you might use an improved path between Crieff and Comrie? (n=1,271)**

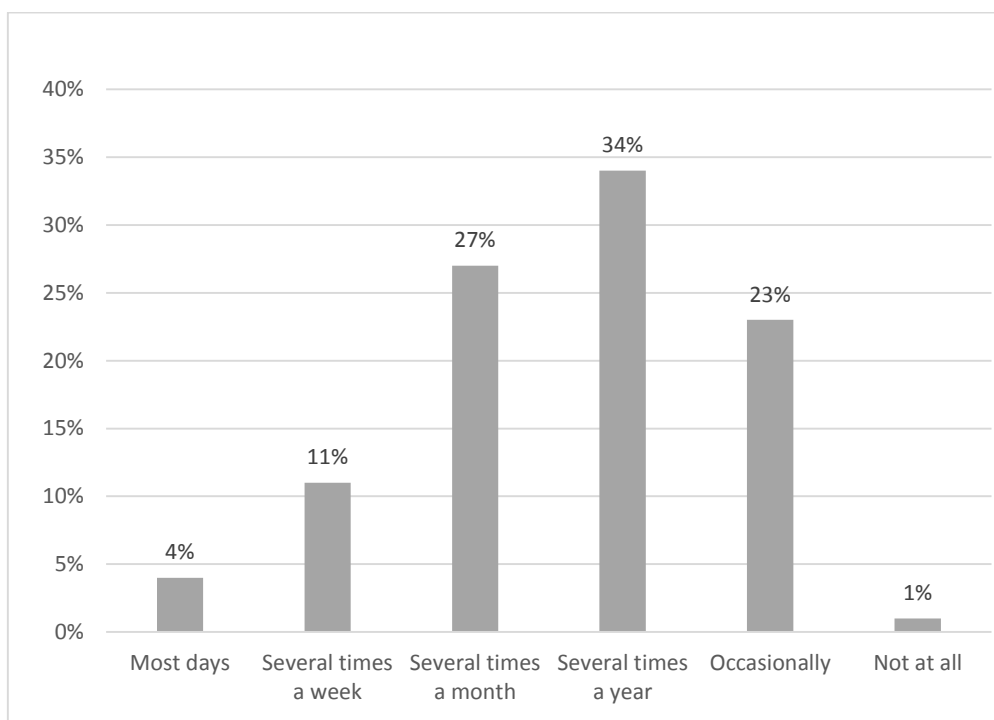


Note that percentages total more than 100 because respondents could tick more than one option.

### How often people would use the path

- 3.11 To get an indication of the likely volume of traffic on the path, respondents were asked how often they were likely to use it. For this question, respondents were offered a number of options ranging from 'Not at all' to 'Most days', and were asked to pick just one.
- 3.12 Altogether, 1,258 people replied to this question. (This question was automatically skipped if respondents said at Question 1 they were not in favour of improving the path.) Just over two-fifths (42%) said they would use the path at least several times a month, while a third (34%) said they would use it several times a year. See Figure 3.3.

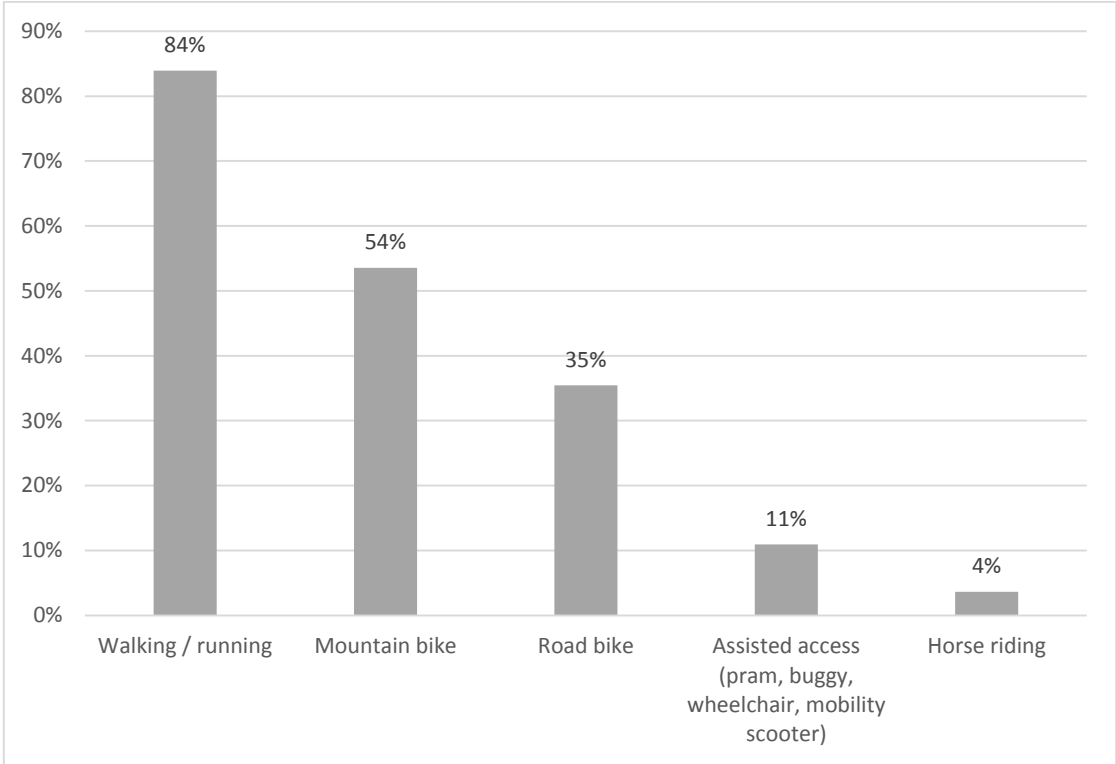
**Figure 3.3: How often do you think you would use the path? (n=1,258)**



### What mode of travel people would use on the path

- 3.13 Finally, to get an idea of what type of surface may be needed for the path, people were asked what 'mode of travel' they would use. Again, respondents were given a range of choices, and were invited to select as many as they wanted.
- 3.14 Altogether, 1,262 people replied to this question. (This question was automatically skipped if respondents said at Question 1 they were not in favour of improving the path.) Most respondents (84%) said they would walk or run on the path. In addition, more than half (54%) said they would use a mountain bike, and over a third (35%) said they would use a road bike. One in ten respondents (11%) said they would use a pram, buggy, wheelchair or mobility scooter, and 4% said they would ride a horse. See Figure 3.4.

**Figure 3.4: Which of the following modes of travel are you likely to adopt when using the Crieff to Comrie path? (n=1,262)**



Note that percentages total more than 100 because respondents could tick more than one option.

## 4. Respondents' comments

- 4.1 This section presents a summary of the findings of the final two questions in the survey. If respondents said they were in favour of improving the core path, or if they said they were unsure (i.e. they answered 'Yes' or 'Not sure' to Question 1), they were asked: 'Do you have any other comments, suggestions or questions relating to this path or the wider core path network serving Crieff and Comrie?' This was an open question inviting free text responses.
- 4.2 If respondents said they were **not** in favour of improving the core path (i.e. they answered 'No' to Question 1), they were then asked: 'Please tell us why you are not in favour of improving access to, and / or the surface of the core path between Crieff and Comrie.' This group was also given an opportunity, in a subsequent question, to make further comments or suggestions, or to ask questions about the core path or the wider path network in the area.

### Comments from those in favour of improving the core path

- 4.3 Of those who said they were in favour of (or not sure about) improving the core path, altogether, 459 respondents provided further comments or suggestions at the end of the survey. Many simply expressed their endorsement of the idea of improving the path. For example:
- “Strongly in favour of this!”
- “Great idea!”
- “Would be a huge benefit.”
- “I think this would be a great asset to the area.”
- 4.4 However, others identified one or more specific benefits that would arise as a result of developing the core path between Crieff and Comrie. There were six benefits in all:
- The core path will improve safety for walkers and cyclists.
  - The path will attract visitors to the area, thus boosting the local economy.
  - The path will promote closer links between Crieff and Comrie.
  - The path will result in improvements to people's health and wellbeing.
  - The path will have environmental benefits and lead to reduced carbon emissions.
  - The path will be accessible to people of all abilities and will be a particular asset for families.
- 4.5 Each of these is described in further detail below.

### ***The core path will improve safety***

- 4.6 Respondents frequently highlighted safety for walkers and cyclists as a key benefit of an improved path between Crieff and Comrie. The main A85 route was seen to be entirely unsuitable for walkers and cyclists, and although some respondents reported that they had experience of cycling and / or walking on the South Comrie Road, in



general, this road was also thought to be dangerous because of the blind bends and the speed of traffic.

- 4.7 Respondents particularly commented that an off-road route between Crieff and Comrie would allow families with young children to go cycling together. At the same time, the proposal to improve the core path was also welcomed by older people.

“Both the A85 and the back road between Crieff and Comrie present real and significant dangers for even experienced cyclists. I have used both frequently to cycle to work and have had near misses on both, and I know of several folk who have not been so lucky.”

“Cycling the main road between Crieff and Comrie is really scary and dangerous. Developing a safe footpath would definitely be a good idea.”

“...As a cyclist I have recently come very close to being knocked off my road bike on two occasions. I would therefore welcome the proposed path. Families who live locally and who visit the area would have a safe environment in which to take their children cycling and walking. The proposed path would allow easier and safe access to other paths in the area....”

“I would simply wish to say that the planning of a path for walkers and cyclists is long overdue. I would just love to be able to cycle to Crieff from Comrie. But at my age and stage I do not have the nerve to attempt it using the main road. Even the back road to Crieff is not the safest.”

“It would make cycling much safer for visitors using Comrie Croft, especially families with young children on bikes who have to use the A85 to start any trip.”

#### ***The path will attract visitors to the area***

- 4.8 Respondents also frequently commented that an off-road route between Crieff and Comrie would be a benefit for tourism - and thus also for the local economy.
- 4.9 Respondents particularly highlighted the positive aspects of linking Crieff with the cycle route between St Fillans and Lochearnhead, where the path would then join up with several other national cycle routes.

“There is enormous potential to the community and to tourism - and compares to work done in many other locations, for instance the old railway routes in the Peak District National Park - but without the crowds of people. We should encourage such enterprise, the benefits cannot be overstated.”

“Long distance cycling is becoming more and more popular and east / west routes are difficult to find.”

“This is an excellent opportunity for tourism and to boost local businesses / economy.”

“I am a business owner (hotel, self-catering) in Crieff. Having a path to Comrie would be a key driver of growth for our business and other businesses in the area.”

“... If it is linked up, as I am sure it will be, to other national core paths, it will generate tourism in the Strathearn area in the same way as the West Highland Way, Great Glen Way and others have already done for their regions and for the country.”

“This section would become a part of a new planned long distance walking route between Iona and St Andrews which the Scottish Pilgrim Route Forum and others are trying to develop. Also a part of the Three Saints Way.”

### ***The path will promote closer links between Crieff and Comrie***

4.10 Respondents suggested that an improved, off-road path between Comrie and Crieff would encourage more interaction between the two communities, lead to increased opportunities for work, and enable local residents and visitors to more easily use the facilities / shops available in both towns.

“I believe it would be a great development, increasing opportunities for work between Crieff and Comrie.”

“Great idea. Core paths need to LINK communities together not keep them going round in circles in isolation.”

“This would be fantastic to have to connect the two communities - having an off road route would really enhance the quality of life and improve access to leisure facilities / shops / amenities in Crieff.”

“The path would bring Comrie and Crieff together and bring tourists / walkers / cyclists through each town and help improve tourism.”

“It will also increase the opportunity for residents of Crieff and Comrie to use each other’s facilities more often to the benefit of both communities.”

### ***The path would result in benefits to people’s health and wellbeing***

4.11 Respondents frequently made the point that having a good, off-road track between Comrie and Crieff would enable more people to get out and exercise, thus resulting in less isolation, and improved physical and mental health for local people and visitors alike.

“It’s not simply for leisure but for the possibilities that these paths allow. Whether one would like to walk from the lowlands to the highlands, or vice versa, or ride, or do them section by section, area by area, it opens up the world and helps make the land and the outdoors accessible to so many people. They encourage healthful exercise, and it’s exercise that’s good for the mind and spirit too.”

“Any venture which gets more people out in the countryside, exercising and enjoying the fantastic scenery is beneficial to health and wellbeing of the country. Great idea.”

“Since we are trying to encourage exercise to combat obesity, surely projects to make cycling safe for all should become priority. It is a relatively cheap option as opposed to building sports arenas, etc, and has long term health benefits.”

“Any route that enables cyclists and walkers to enjoy the pleasure of exercise safe from the danger of passing cars would be a very welcome addition to the amenities of the area.”

“Delighted to see walking paths being opened up to increase the opportunity to take exercise safely.”

***An improved path will result in environmental benefits and lead to reduced carbon emissions***

4.12 Respondents often highlighted the environmental benefits of an improved path between Crieff and Comrie, particularly in relation to reducing car use, but also in helping to encourage people to understand and enjoy the countryside.

“I think this would greatly encourage residents of all ages to walk more and use the particular route. There are great walks around Crieff, but this would be a wonderful addition as it would not necessarily require using the car before walking.”

“Scotland has a responsibility to connect young people to the countryside, as it is a tangible way to understand our responsibility to nature, the environment and our needs to live sustainably into the future specifically as climate change is becoming a significant and irrefutable reality.”

“As a nation, Scotland needs to create far more walkways and cycleways. Residents could use them for commuting (thus reducing carbon emissions and improving their health).”

“We holiday at Comrie Croft regularly and would love to be able to ditch the car and cycle (safely) between Comrie and Crieff.”

***The path will be accessible to people of all abilities and will be an important resource for families in particular.***

4.13 As already noted above, many respondents commented that a safe off-road path between Crieff and Comrie would be of particular benefit to families with young children. However, in respondents’ comments, the subject of ‘families’ was also often raised as part of a more general point about the accessibility of the path for people of all ages and abilities.

“Flattish walks like this one, [are] specially good for the old and the very young.”

“I would like to see a nice path that my grandchildren could cycle on.”

“A traffic free route would enable us to make the journey by bicycle as a family with young children on a regular basis for leisure and errands too.”

“It would make this area much more feasible to visit as I have a family of four children of varying ages and if we could all use this path to cycle safely and easily we would visit much more often.”

“I think this would be a fantastic resource! I love to cycle, but the road from Crieff to Comrie is too twisty and dangerous for me to feel safe riding along it. I

think the area needs an off road cycle path route that is flat, for those who are less able and for families to use. I sincerely hope this project is well supported.”

### Specific suggestions in relation to the path

4.14 Respondents who were in favour of improving the core path between Comrie and Crieff made a wide range of specific suggestions in relation to the path. For example:

- 29 respondents requested that the core path should have a link to the hostel / campsite and mountain bike trails at Comrie Croft.
- 24 respondents raised the issue of dog-walking on the path. Most of these (including one respondent with a guide dog) clearly wished to use the path for dog-walking. Among this group, there were calls for dog bins to be made available at either end of the path, dogs to be kept on leads around livestock, and requests for the path to be well-fenced (so that dogs could be kept separate from livestock). However, there were also two respondents who suggested that path should be dog-free, because of the problem of owners who do not pick up after their dogs.
- 12 respondents made suggestions about signage: that the path should be well sign-posted; that signs should encourage walkers and cyclists to obey the Outdoor Access Code; that signs along the route could provide information about local history, natural history, etc.
- 9 respondents made comments about the surface of the path. In particular, there were requests that the surface should enable access for adult tricycles, all-terrain wheelchairs, roller skaters and horses. More often, however, respondents called for the surface of the path to be “sympathetic” and in keeping with the surrounding countryside. There were particular requests **not** to have a tarmac path, as this was felt to be hard on the joints and feet of walkers.
- 6 respondents requested benches or other seating along the route.

### Suggestions for improvements in the wider path network

4.15 In addition to the numerous requests that the Crieff-to-Comrie core path should link up to the core path at St Fillans, a small number of respondents also highlighted other paths in the area where they felt improvements were needed, or where links could be made. These included:

- A request to deal with overgrown vegetation along the River Earn Path between Crieff and Muthill:

“Clear the Crieff --> Muthill river path - very overgrown in places.”

“This used to be a good walk but last year was very overgrown and a group of us had to climb over a fence into a farmer’s field to get back onto the path.”

- Suggested improvements to the Crieff to Auchingarrich path:

“My ... usual route is via Bridgend in Crieff (Alichmore Lane) and then up through Balloch and over Turleum Hill and down into Comrie via Auchingarrich. This route needs to be made more walker-friendly by (a) a straight path across the field at end of Alichmore Lane into the forest at the top of the hill; (b) having traversed the forest and entered the next forest stage, the ground is always extremely boggy - some sort of duck boarding would be helpful and (c) once on Turleum Hill,

some better signage would be beneficial for newcomers to the area - especially given the ubiquitous 'forest operations'."

- A request for an off-road link between Bishop's Bridge (on the A822) and the eastward route to Culdees Estate:  
"I walked from Mill of Drummond via Lurg Farm and Bishops Bridge to Culdees Estate / Castle, but had to walk a section on the A822 and it would be good if a proper footpath linking could be made."
- There were also numerous requests to extend the Crieff-to-Comrie path eastwards to Perth (in one direction) and Auchterarder via Muthill (in another):  
"I would love to see this [Crieff-to-Comrie] path go all the way to Perth along the old railway line."  
"If this goes ahead the council should also consider a path from Perth to Crieff and beyond it would bring a lot of business to the area with tourism."  
"...and a cycle route from Crieff to Perth while we're at it!"  
"Good luck, a link up to Perth next!!"  
"Looking at the bigger picture it would be great to get a high quality off-road cycle/walking route all the way westwards from Crieff to Lochearnhead via Comrie & St Fillans and southwards from Crieff to Auchterarder via Muthill."  
"Please also connect to Auchterarder :-)"

#### **Comments from those not in favour of improving the path**

Thirty-eight respondents to the survey said that they were not in favour of improving the core path between Crieff and Comrie. Of these, 26 gave one or more reasons for their opposition. These reasons can be grouped into five main themes:

- Improvements to the path and greater access would cause problems to farmers.
- There's no demand for the path and it would be a waste of public funds to improve it.
- It would be unsafe for walkers / cyclists to use the path.
- Private land is private, and farmers should be compensated if the railway is developed and improved for walkers and cyclists.
- The core path should not be developed because other alternatives are available.

4.16 Each of these is explained further below.

#### ***Improvements to the path and greater access would cause problems to farmers***

4.17 The main reason given by those opposed to the improvement of the path was that it would cause difficulties for the landowners and those who farm the land. These difficulties related to the need by farmers to use the railway line as a refuge for livestock during times of flood; and the perceived dangers that could result to livestock as a result of increased access by walkers and cyclists. A few respondents were concerned that the railway line would be damaged if vegetation were removed to improve the core path.

“Essential escape haven for low lying pasture land during times of flooding. Having this fenced off would remove the ability of cattle to gain safety from rising flood waters.”

“There is a worry that if the path is used by walkers and cyclists, there could be problems for the livestock. There is no guarantee that all walkers are sensible with cattle and horses. There is also the worry about what will happen to flood defences when the railway track is covered in hard material and vegetation is removed.”

“Several health and safety risks to the public and animals residing on the land would arise if easier access to the path was obtained. An improved surface which allows cyclists, horses or motorised bikes, vehicles would increase likelihood of disturbance to animals. When sheep with newborn lambs are disturbed by people, people with dogs, cyclists, etc., it results in lambs being separated from their mothers which can ultimately result in the death of vulnerable lambs.... People would be drawn to the path during times of flooding and would potentially scare / force animals into the water and result in drowned animals.”

***There is no demand for the path and it would be a waste of public funds to improve it***

4.18 The second main reason given by those opposed to the improvement of the path was that there is no need or demand for it. This group of respondents tended to believe that the current access arrangements were adequate, and felt it would be a waste of public funds to develop and improve the path.

“Access is fine at the moment. Totally unnecessary.”

“There is no current problem with the railway line being used under customary historic Scottish access arrangements, subject to respect for other users, and any more than minor scrub clearance will result in a “rights” culture rather than a “use with respect” culture.”

“It will require money which will be far better spent on amenities such as doctors surgeries, improving road services and is money that should be invested within communities. There is no real demand as it stands for this improvement and any expenditure will be a waste of taxpayers’ money.”

“Waste of money, perfectly good road already they can use.”

***It would be unsafe for walkers and cyclists to use the path***

4.19 The third main reason given for opposing the development of the core path between Crieff and Comrie was that it would be unsafe for walkers and cyclists to use the path. Respondents who put forward this argument tended to focus on the dangers to people from close contact with livestock. However, there were also concerns that people might be at risk from land management activities.

“Danger of passing infections from sheep to pregnant women i.e. chlamydiosis, toxoplasmosis, listeriosis and/or Q fever. Danger to public when game shooting takes place - who is liable if someone gets shot? Danger to public from stallions on path - who is liable if someone gets hurt by a rearing stallion?”



“It is unsafe, the banks are high and steep. It runs through a pony stud farm. There are far safer areas can be used.”

“Not ideally safe, runs through a farm used for ponies and livestock, area is at risk of flooding, railway line too close, machinery operated nearby, etc etc etc.”

### ***Private land is private and farmers should be compensated***

4.20 The fourth reason given by those who were opposed to the development of the core path is that landowners should have the right to enjoy their land and use it as they see fit. In general, those who expressed this view believed that the interests of cyclists and walkers would be in conflict with those who owned and farmed the land.

“Core Paths” which have been designated by self-appointed individuals that cross private land without consultation, consideration or communication with land owners and the impact they have on rural land use should not be encouraged. Private land is just that. Private.”

“Too many people using the route at the moment show no consideration to those who have to work on the land and to the people who own the land and work it. So improving it would make their job near impossible and there is no reasoning with that type of person.”

“Why should you take over ground with no compensation for land owners.”

“All land owners have a right to quiet enjoyment of their property in a way which they seem fit and by carrying out the improvements proposed we would see that right being disregarded.”

“Will council compensate? No.”

### ***Other alternatives are available***

4.21 Finally, the fifth main reason that respondents gave for opposing an improved path was that there were already alternative routes available. Those who expressed this view thought that cyclists and walkers should use one of the two main roads between Crieff and Comrie, or a new paved path should be developed along one of the two roads.

“Why do they HAVE to wander through people’s land when there is two perfectly good roads between Crieff and Comrie they could use.”

“The urgent priority is to re-instate the former path alongside the main A85 Crieff/Comrie road, which the various road authorities have allowed to become barely usable over the last 30 years. Someone will be killed or injured soon, stumbling along amidst the traffic!”

### **Comments from those who were “unsure” about improving the path**

4.22 As noted in Section 3 above, 22 respondents said they were “not sure” if they were in favour of improving the core path between Crieff and Comrie along the former railway line. Among this group, nine made further comments to explain the reasons for their uncertainty about the proposal to develop the path. Some of these respondents expressed support for an improved path, but had questions or concerns about:

- The potential cost of improving and / or maintaining it
- The surface of the path - there was a preference for a 'natural', rather than a hard tarmacked path
- Whether the proposed route was the best route, given concerns raised by landowners in the past - there was a suggestion that a route located closer to the river might be preferable.

4.23 The quotes below are indicative of these questions / concerns:

“As a regular walker & Ramblers member, I support path creation wherever practicable. I would not however be in favour of a hard tarmac-ed path. This may be attractive for accessibility purposes but for walkers, tarmac surfaces are tiring and can be damaging for feet and joints.”

“The path is a good idea. I'm not sure that huge amounts of money should be spent on it.”

“This would be great for the area, locals and visitors alike. Wonder if proposed route is not entirely sensitive to current land use and route might also gain further amenity if followed river more closely from Comrie to Trowan.”

## 5. Conclusion

- 5.1 Overall, this survey has demonstrated very strong support for the improvement of the designated core path between Crieff and Comrie. Although a small number of respondents have raised potential or perceived problems, the following quote summarises the general view of most respondents, and suggests that these problems are not insurmountable:

"I cycle a lot in the surrounding area and the road links between Comrie and Crieff are from long experience very dangerous. The A85 in particular is a total death trap even for experienced cyclists, you could never seriously consider taking children cycling down this road. A cycle link along the railway will save lives and provide a great recreational asset for Strathearn that will benefit residents, visitors and many local businesses. The difficulties mentioned by a very small number of landowners should be considered, but have been overcome in other areas by simple measures, goodwill and compromise. A cycle link between Comrie and Crieff is an essential bit of infrastructure for the area that is long overdue, well done for taking this forward."

# Annex 1: Survey questionnaire

1. Are you in favour of improving access to, and the surface of the core path between Crieff and Comrie (along the old railway line)? (Tick one.)

Yes (Skip to Q3)

Not sure (Skip to Q3)

No (Go to Q2)

2. If you are not in favour of improving access to, and/or the surface of the core path between Crieff and Comrie, please tell us why. (Please print clearly.) Then please skip to Q6.

3. How would you describe the way in which you might use an improved path between Crieff and Comrie? (Tick all that apply.)

For leisure and / or recreation (walking, running, cycling, etc.)

Travelling to work or school

Travelling for other reasons (shopping, accessing local services, visiting friends or family, etc.)

Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

4. How often do you think you would use the path? (Tick one.)

Most days

Several times a year

Several times a week

Occasionally

Several times a month

Not at all

5. Which of the following modes of travel are you likely to adopt when using the Crieff to Comrie path? (Tick all that apply.)

Walking / running

Assisted access (pram, buggy, wheelchair, mobility scooter)

Mountain bike

Horse-riding

Road bike

6. Do you have any other comments, suggestions or questions about this path, or the wider core path network serving Crieff and Comrie? (Please print clearly.)

7. Are you: (Tick one.)

Male

Female

8. Which age group do you fall into? (Tick one.)

Under 12

12 – 17

18 – 30

31 – 59

60+

9. Are you: (Tick one.)

A resident of Strathearn

A day visitor to Strathearn

Holidaying in the area

10. What is your home postcode area: (Tick one.)

PH5

PH6

PH7

Other, please specify: \_\_\_\_\_

11. Please help us to validate your response by providing your name and the first line of your home address. (Reminder: This information will be treated confidentially.)

Name & first line of address: \_\_\_\_\_

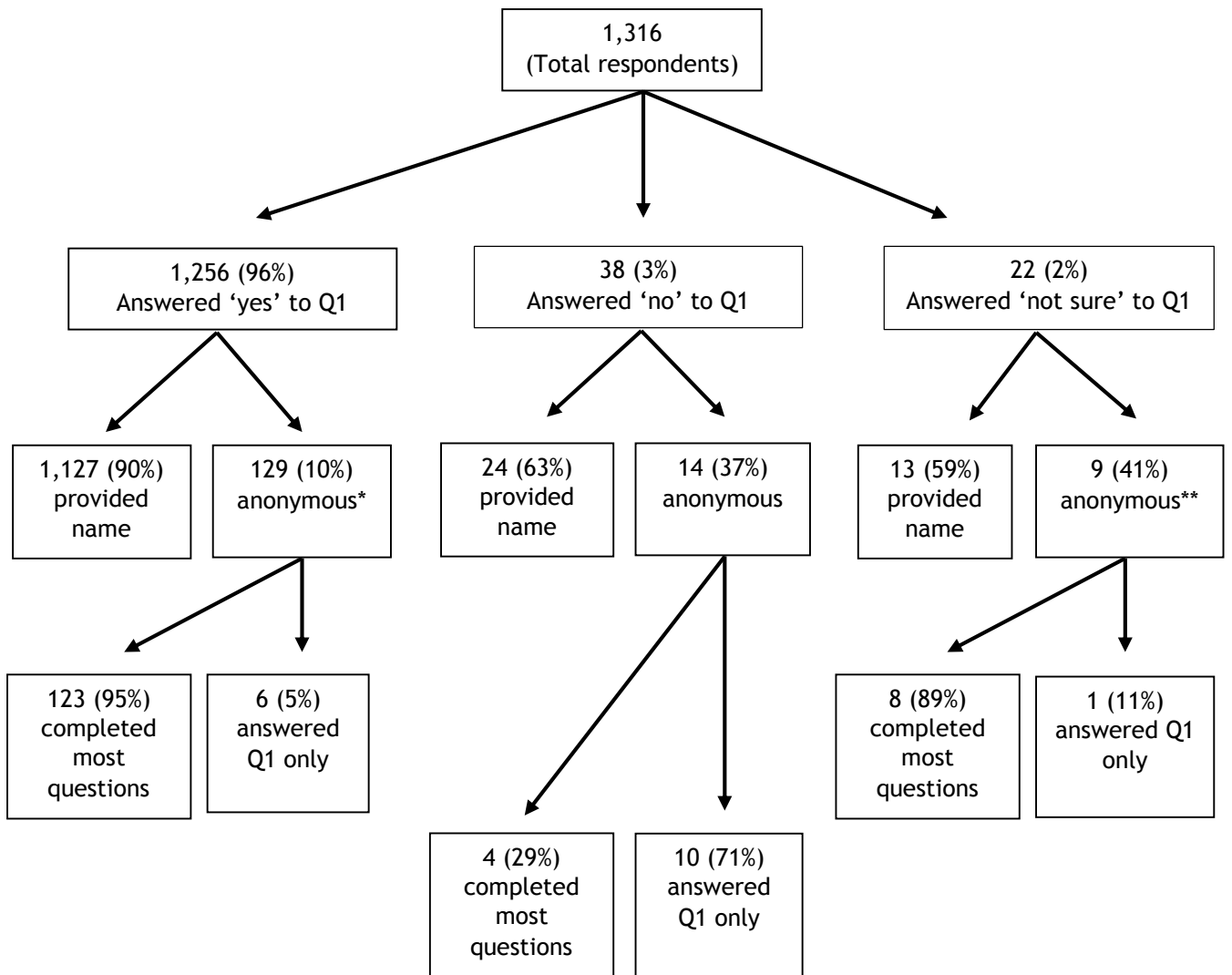
## Annex 2: Anonymous responses

Of the total 1,316 respondents who took part in the survey, 152 (12%) did not provide their name or the first line of their address. This figure includes 79 pupils from Comrie Primary School. Of the remaining 73, seventeen (1% of all respondents) answered the first question only, and did not answer any other questions in the survey.

Figure A2.1 on the following page shows that those who answered 'no' and 'not sure' to the first question were more likely to submit anonymous responses. Nearly two out of every five (37%) of those who answered 'no' and a similar proportion (41%) of those who answered 'not sure' to the first question submitted their response anonymously. By contrast, just 10% of those who answered 'yes' to the first question submitted their response anonymously. (The latter group includes 75 of the 79 pupils from Comrie Primary School who took part in the survey.)

Among the anonymous respondents who answered 'no' to the first question, the majority answered the first question only and did not answer any other question in the survey, whereas most of the anonymous respondents who answered 'yes' or 'not sure' to the first question went on to complete most of the questionnaire.

**Figure A2.1: Breakdown of anonymous and incomplete responses**



\* Includes 75 pupils from Comrie Primary School

\*\* Includes 4 pupils from Comrie Primary School