

The background of the entire page is a photograph of the Dunfermline Town Hall clock tower. The tower is a tall, ornate stone structure with a green copper roof and a weather vane on top. It has two large clock faces. The image is slightly faded and has a teal tint, serving as a backdrop for the text.

*The future of
Scotland's
newest city*

**DUNFERMLINE
CITY CENTRE
CONSULTATION**

Published by Graeme Downie MP

July 2026

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A LETTER FROM GRAEME

Since I was elected in 2024, one issue has been brought to my attention more than any other by constituents at surgeries, on the doorstep, and by email: **the need to protect Dunfermline High Street and make the most of our status as Scotland's newest city.**



People across our city, neighbouring towns and villages are right to feel that this potential has not been fully realised. In January, I met with our city centre's businesses, charities and local stakeholders to hear directly about the challenges they face, their concerns around our city centre and ideas on how we can improve and support Dunfermline.

Nearly 1000 residents from across Dunfermline and our surrounding towns and villages took part in the *Dunfermline City Centre Survey*. This was distributed across our constituency. **These results show deep pride in our city, but also real concern about its future. We have so much to offer** – our historical assets such as the Heritage Quarter, Andrew Carnegie's Birthplace; our fantastic independent businesses, restaurant, cafes and pubs; the beautiful Pittencrieff Park, the wonderful Carnegie Libraries & Galleries; or our local events such as the Artisan Market or Outwith Festival, and the Bruce Festival.

But pride alone is not enough. Residents want to see cleaner streets, a stronger retail offer, better promotion of our heritage, more events, improved access and greater support for the businesses that make our city centre an attractive place to visit.

I want to thank everyone who took part in this survey and I will be using these results to make the case for more support from governments of all levels to invest in the City of Dunfermline.

Graeme

RESULTS OVERVIEW

Nearly 1000 residents from across Dunfermline, our surrounding towns and villages took part in this study. The results highlight what is working well in our city, what needs improvement, and how we attract more visitors and investment to Dunfermline.

A snapshot of the key results:

Residents are proud of Dunfermline, but are worried it is declining

Despite visiting regularly — half of all respondents come into the city centre weekly — eight in ten believe it has got worse in recent years, with 55% describing it as significantly worse. Cleanliness was rated poorly by the vast majority, with just 3% rating it excellent, and 70% dissatisfied with the current range of shops and services available.

Business rates are limiting local business growth

A lack of desired shops was cited by 745 respondents as the biggest barrier to visiting more often — the highest response of any question in the survey. Residents and business owners alike identified excessive business rates as a key barrier. Respondents want more independent retailers in our city centre.

Dunfermline's assets are underused and underpromoted as a tourist destination

60% of respondents believe Dunfermline is less appealing for tourism than other Scottish cities, yet Pittencrieff Park, the Heritage Quarter, and the Abbey and Palace were enthusiastically recommended as world-class visitor attractions. 94% said developing more events was important or very important. This reflects that the community knows what this city is capable of.

CITY CENTRE STAKEHOLDER ROUNDTABLE



In January 2026, I brought together key stakeholders from our city centre to listen directly from those who serve our city centre every day. I heard many of the challenges they face, the barriers to greater success, and what is working well. Clear outcomes were identified as follows:

MORE SUPPORT FOR HIGH STREET AND CITY CENTRE BUSINESSES

Stakeholders proposed incentives and rates levies to pull and retain support for businesses to operate in Dunfermline.

MORE GOVERNMENT- BACKED TOURISM PULLS

A return for a physical tourist information centre in our city centre was cited by many stakeholders.

GREATER COORDINATION FOR LOCAL EVENT PROMOTION

A unified platform for events coordination was discussed to showcase the fantastic selection of events which currently take place in Dunfermline to attract new and wider audiences.

CONTINUE TO MAXIMISE DUNFERMLINE CITY STATUS

More focus by every level of government to use all levers possible to put the City of Dunfermline firmly on the map, attracting inward investment and funding.

**LOVE FOR OUR
FANTASTIC HOME
GROWN CREATIVE AND
HISTORICAL ARTS**

Businesses and charities all agreed on the quality of our home grown creative industries like Dunfermline Creative Network and Dunfermline Heritage Group as incredibly valuable parts of our city.

**SHIFTING FOOTFALL
PATTERNS AND THE
NIGHTTIME ECONOMY**

Participants noted a fundamental shift in how people use the city centre, driven by the rise of online shopping. Retail once drew people in, with food and drink as a secondary activity. The dynamic has reversed, with hospitality now the primary reason many visit. Alongside this, the lack of a nighttime economy was raised as a gap.

**COMMUNITY COHESION
AND CIVIC
RESPONSIBILITY**

Participants noted that, while business and skills development has its place, what is missing is a stronger sense of civic responsibility. There was emphasis on the need for Dunfermline to prioritise community cohesion. One participant put it: "we need a North Star".

**CITY CENTRE
AESTHETICS &
GENERAL CLEANLINESS**

There was a focus on the lack of awareness as a significant barrier, with even local residents reporting they "don't know where to go" or what the city centre has to offer. The visual condition of the High Street was raised as a concern, with neglected telephone boxes, graffiti, and chewing gum. There was also discussion about the removal of city centre industrial waste bins, cited as an example of poor maintenance that undermine the city centre's appearance.

CITY CENTRE TRENDS & USAGE



Consistent usage of our city centre and high street

Half of all respondents visit weekly, mainly for shopping, a bite to eat, or to visit family and friends.

High Street or Kingsgate remain most visited attractions

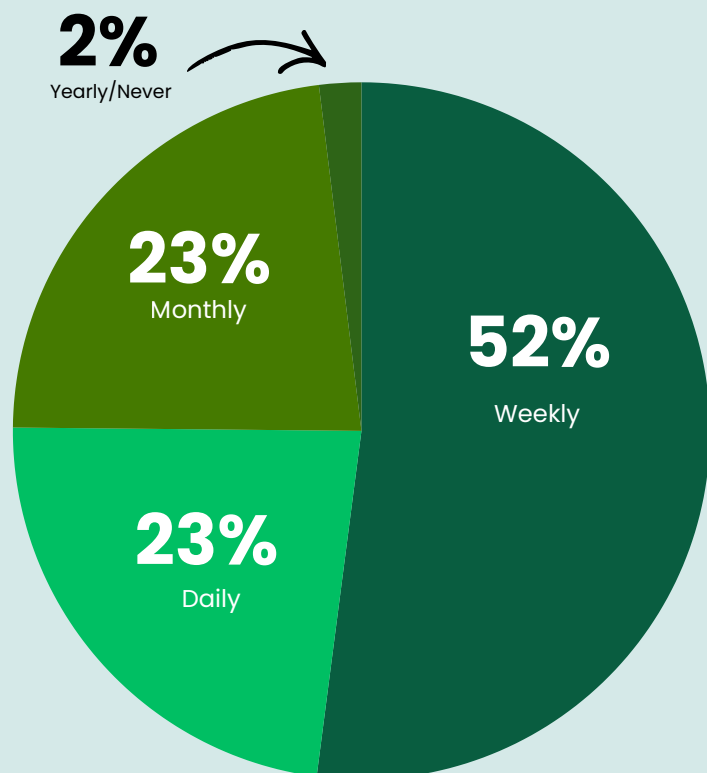
The majority of respondents visit the city centre to use the high street.

Most visit times range from 30- minutes to 2hrs

28% of visits last between 30 minutes to 1 hour, 42% of visits last between 1-2 hours.

- Lack of desired shops is the biggest barrier to visiting more often (745 responses).
- Overall, the cleanliness of the city centre was rated poorly — only 3% said excellent.
- Most people do feel safe within our city centre but there were notable concerns about anti-social behaviour in areas like the bus station, and in the Kingsgate Shopping Centre. Incidents of those with mobility needs unable to access our city centre were also noted.

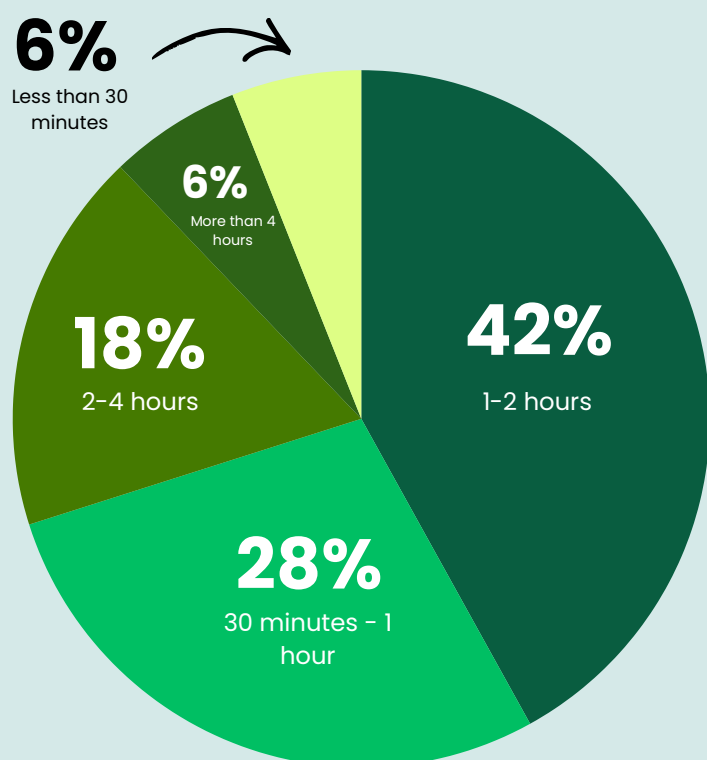
How often do you visit Dunfermline city centre?



"The city centre is good because lots of people can meet up at different locations and go for food and shopping"

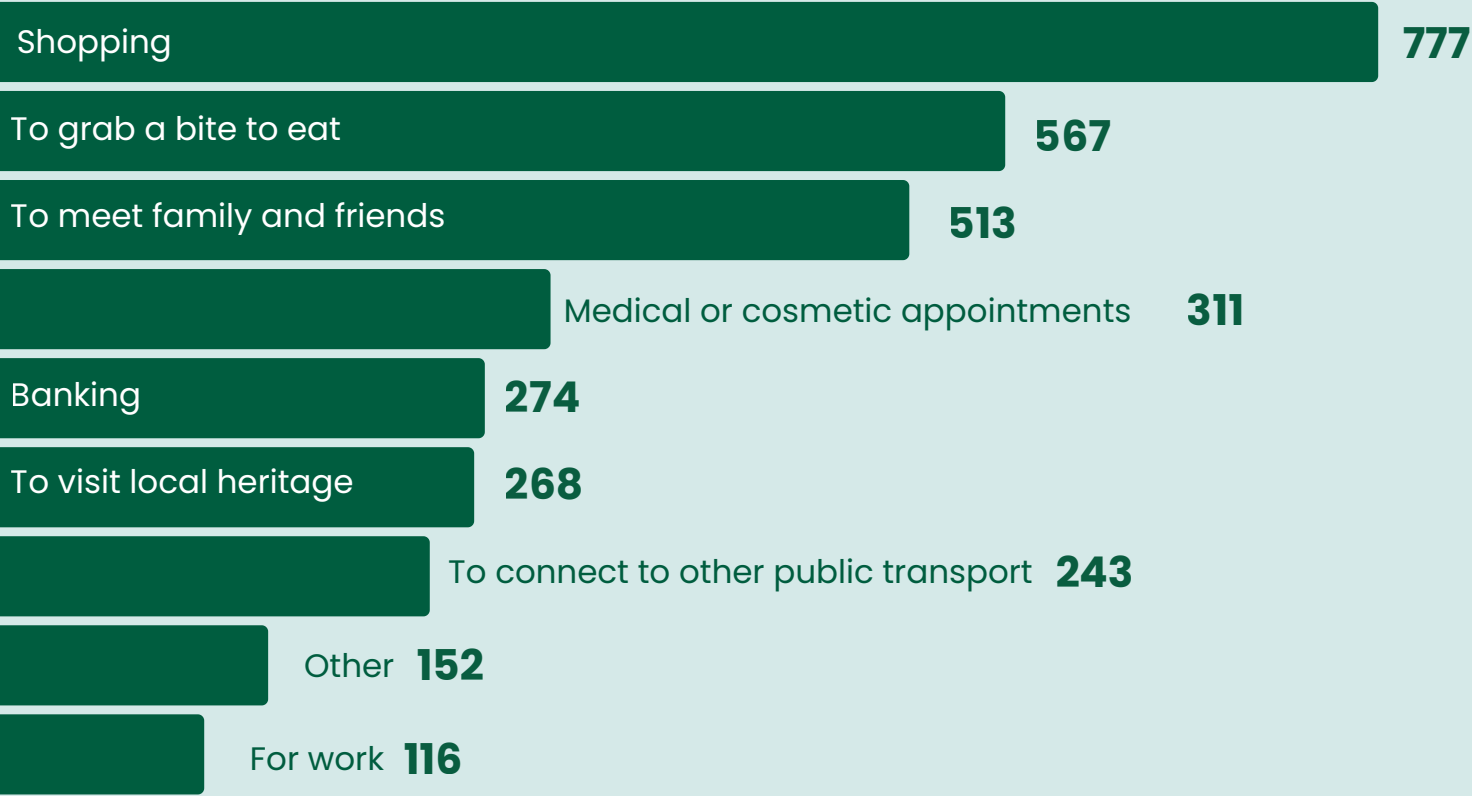
"I mostly go into the centre for beauty appointments, social events and sometimes the shops"

How long do you typically spend in Dunfermline city centre per visit?

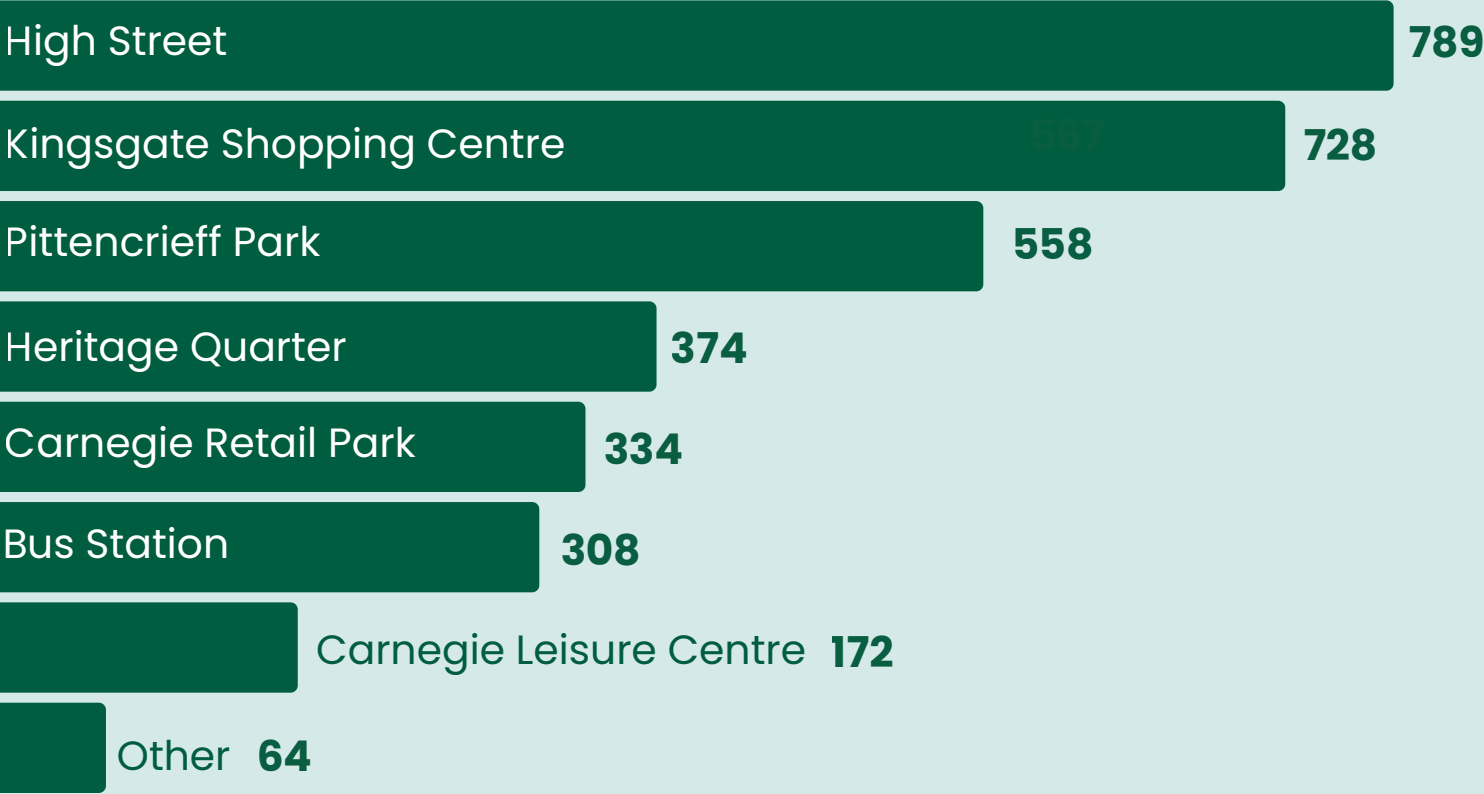


"Better shops will encourage more visitors. Better maintained lifts and escalators will ensure a better/easier life for those visiting that have disabilities or are attending with prams"

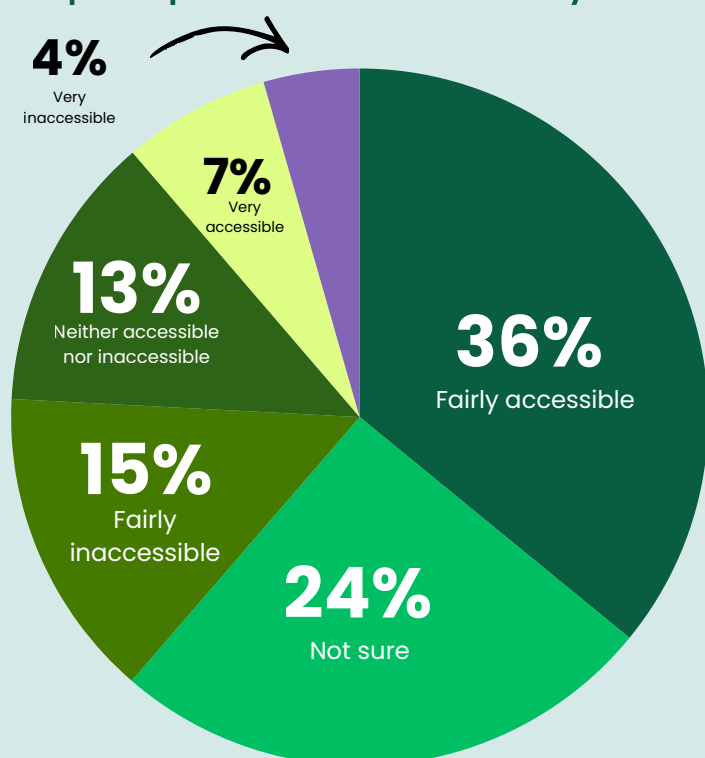
Why do you visit Dunfermline City Centre?



Which areas of Dunfermline city centre do you visit most often?



How would you rate the accessibility of the city centre for people with mobility needs?



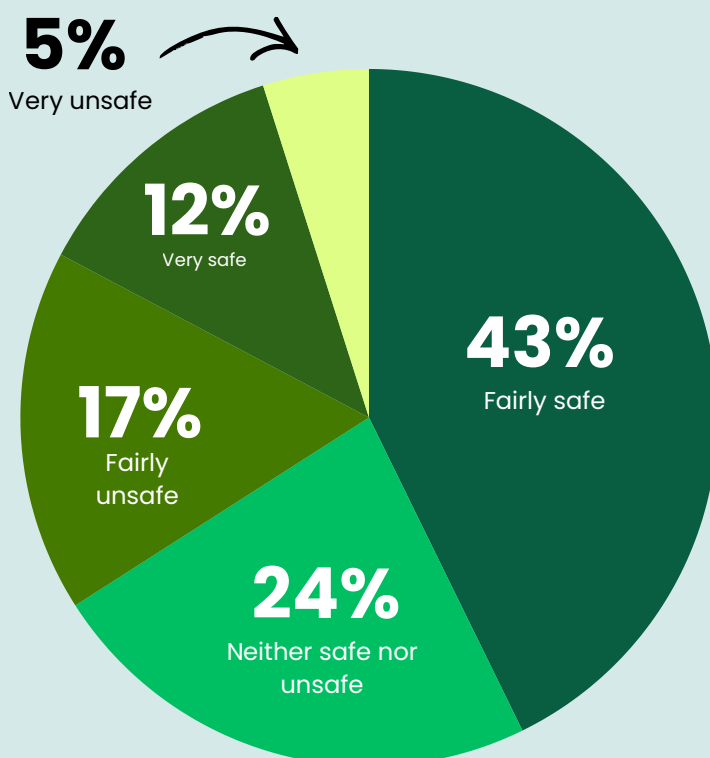
“Disabled access is so poor with poor footpaths lack of dropped kerbs pushing a wheelchair is like a marathon”

“I have been stuck in the lift in the Kingsgate, I have also fallen on uneven slabs on pavement on Eastport”

“Improve the look & quality of street paving. Current paving & road surfaces in city centre & pedestrianised areas are sub-standard, in disrepair & potentially hazardous.”

“I avoid getting the bus due to the rising number of youths causing disruption not only at the bus station but also on the bus”

How safe do you feel Dunfermline city centre is?



ATTRACTING MORE VISITORS & EVENTS



Use events to attract visitors to Dunfermline

89% of respondents backed more events to pull visitors to Dunfermline.

Dunfermline needs more of an appeal

60% believe that Dunfermline is either slightly or much less appealing for tourism compared to other Scottish cities.

More local infrastructure to drive tourism

Residents overwhelmingly backed more independent shops, better promotion of local history to pull visitors.

Dunfermline has so much to offer not just to visitors from across Fife or Scotland, but the world.

“Why is more not made of the heritage quarter as other European cities manage to do?”

Local resident

- 83% feel that it is important that Dunfermline city centre hosts more cultural or community events
- A majority believe that more events and festivals alongside cleaner, better maintained public spaces would improve Dunfermline’s reputation as a tourist destination.

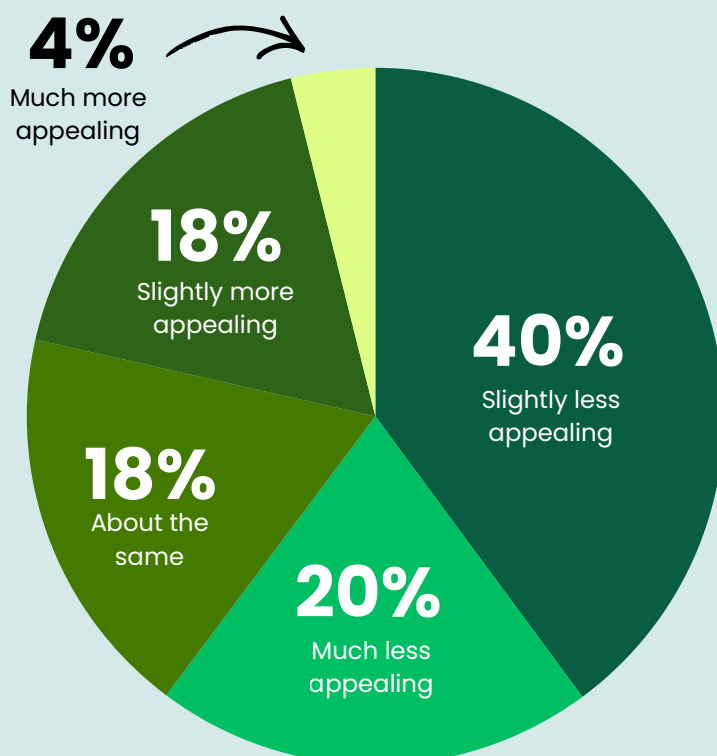
What would make Dunfermline more attractive to tourists?



"We need hotels if we want to bring more people and not just a few bedrooms here and there"

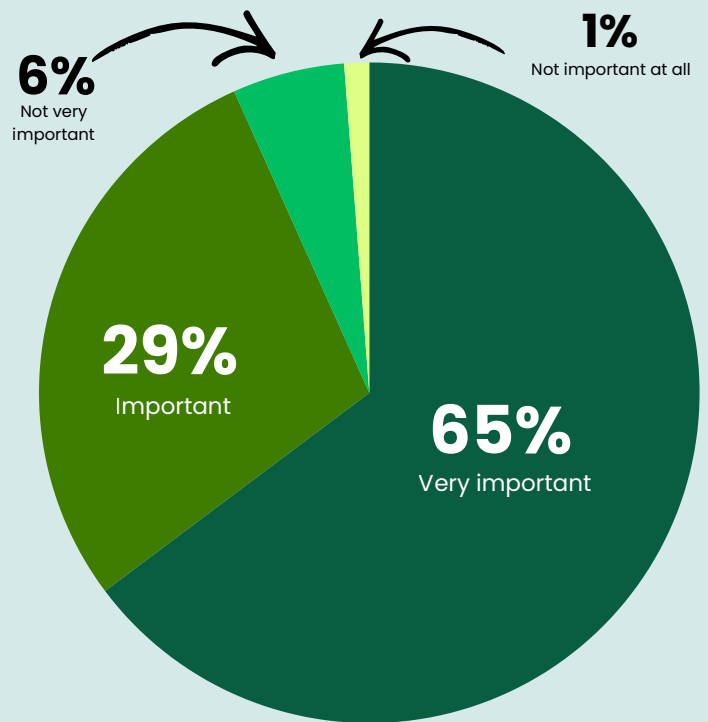
"We have plenty of outdoor areas which need improved. If it wasn't for the volunteers in the Glen then it would need desperate attention"

How appealing do you think Dunfermline is compared to other Scottish cities or towns for tourism?

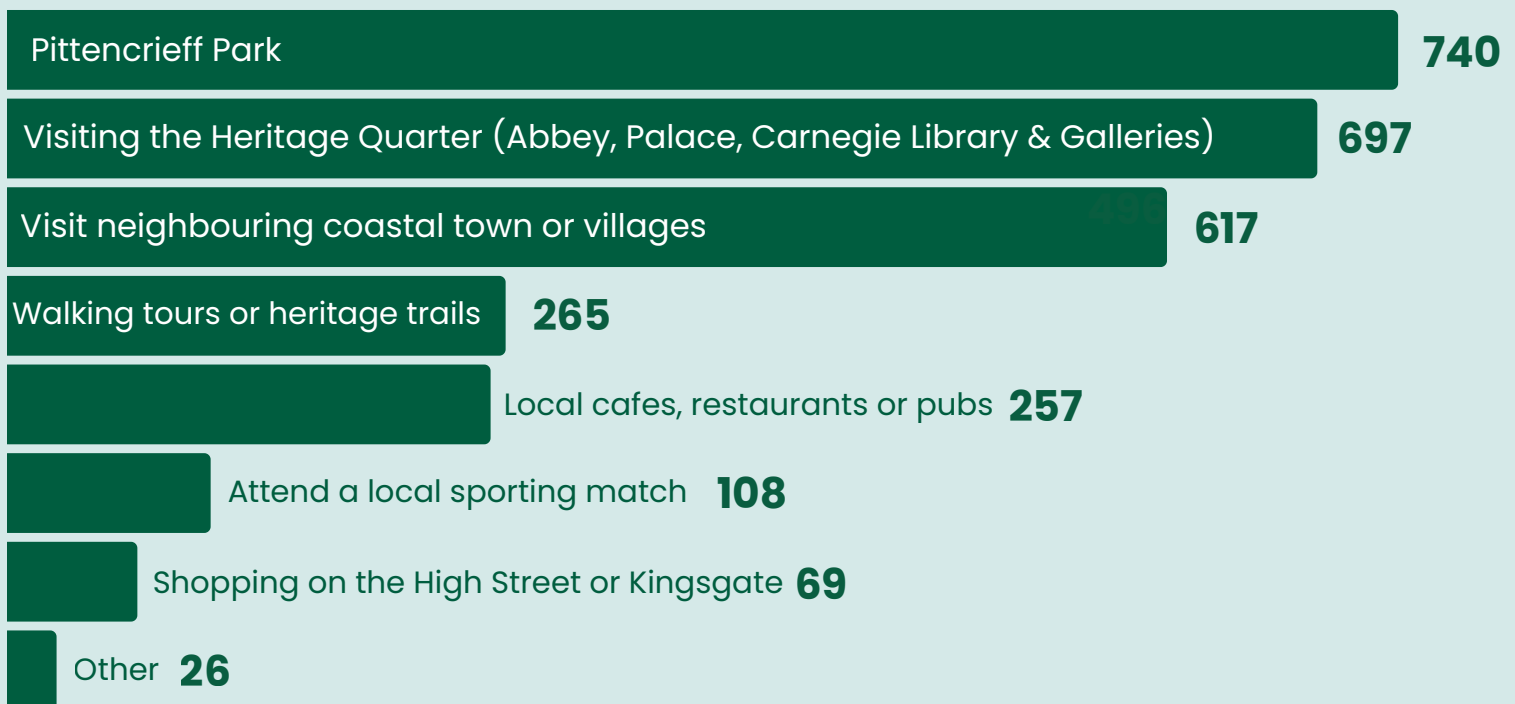


How important is it to develop more events that attract visitors to Dunfermline?

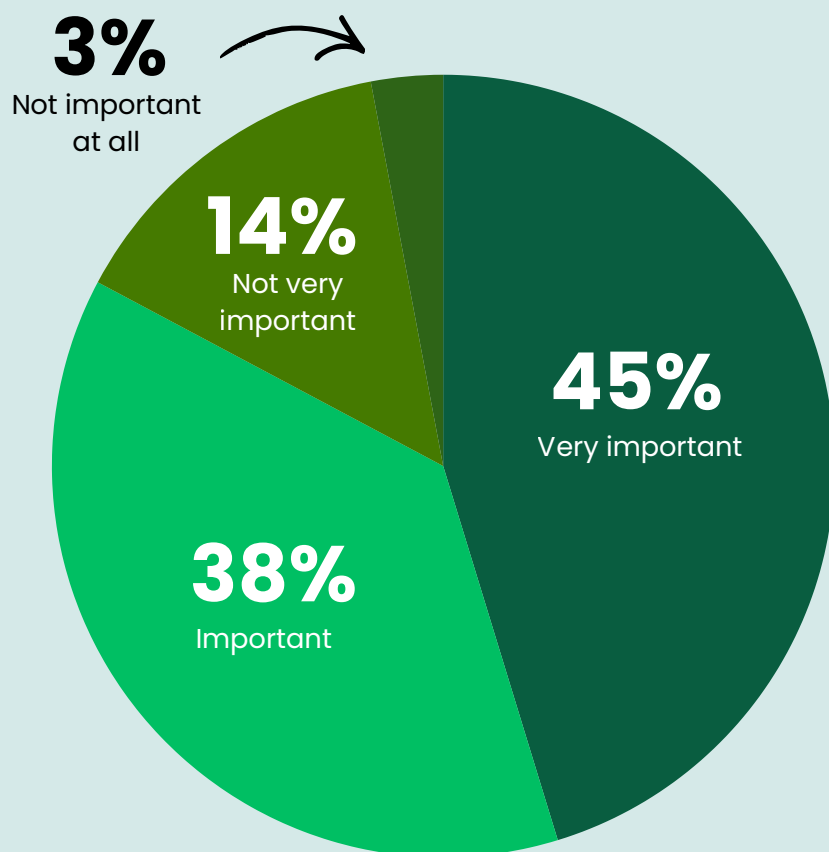
**NEARLY 1000
RESPONSES
FROM ACROSS
DUNFERMLINE**



What activities or attraction would you recommend to tourists visiting Dunfermline?



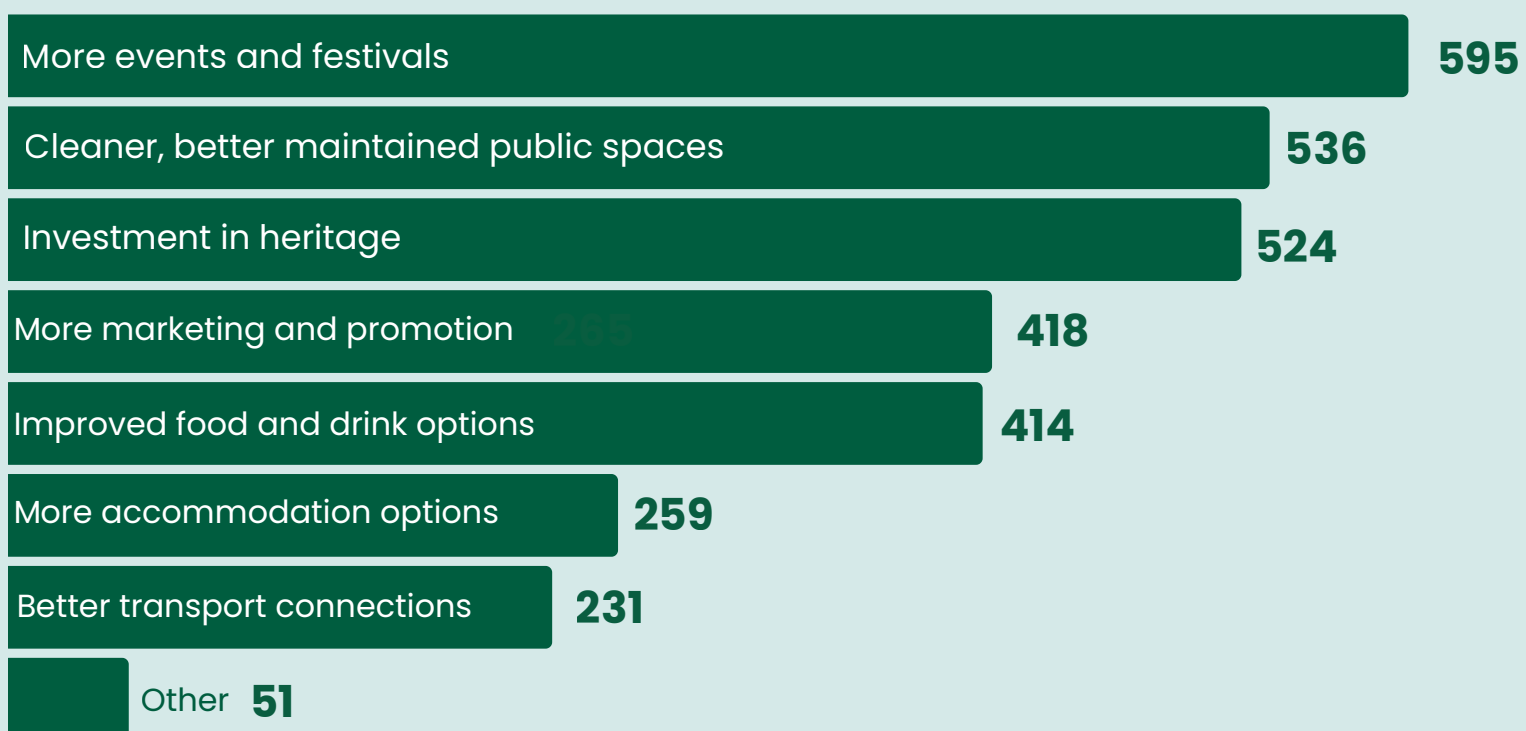
How important is it to you that Dunfermline city centre hosts more cultural or community events?



“Bring back the tourist information centre”

“Public displays of art and music, heritage. Social places which will encourage others to visit”

What do you think would most improve Dunfermline’s reputation as a tourist destination?



CONCERNS AND THE FUTURE



Concerns of deterioration in the city centre

80% of respondents believe the look and feel of the city centre is worse now than years past

The need for more appealing retail

70% of people are disappointed with the range of shops available in the city centre, with more independent shops needed.

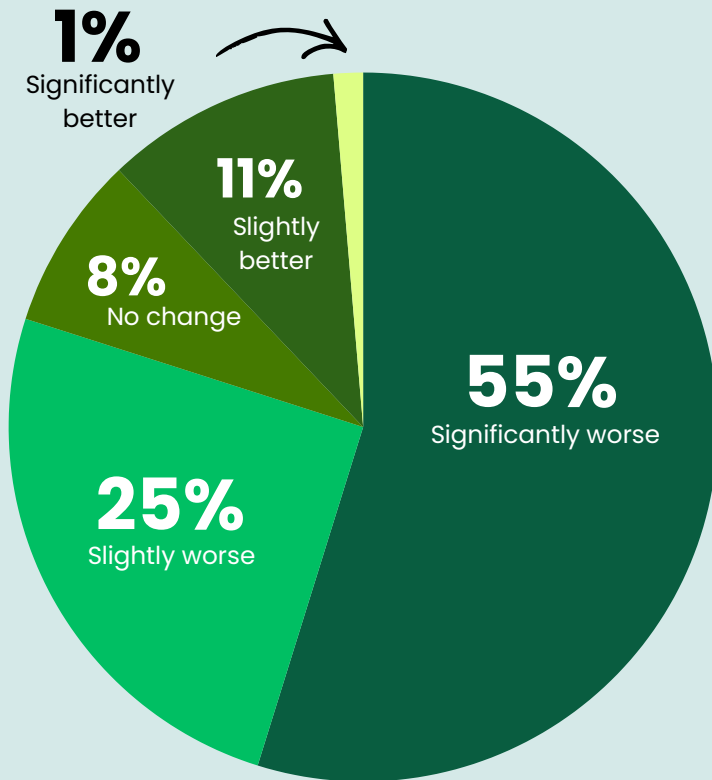
A deep clean and more incentivised parking

The majority of people supported a deep clean and incentivised parking in the city centre

There was a range of views and concerns on the current state of Dunfermline City Centre, with many ideas on how to improve and protect it.

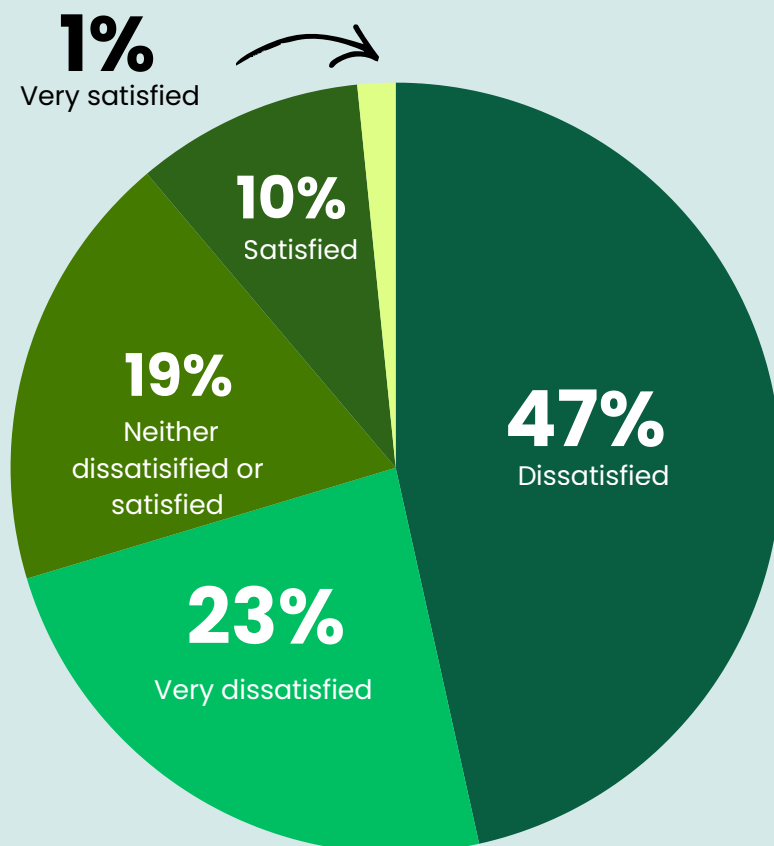
- Lack of desired shops is the biggest barrier to visiting more often (745 responses)
- Cleanliness rated poorly — only 3% said excellent
- Many residents highlighted that business rates remain a barrier for new business success in Dunfermline city centre.

How do you feel that the look and feel of Dunfermline city centre has changed over recent years?



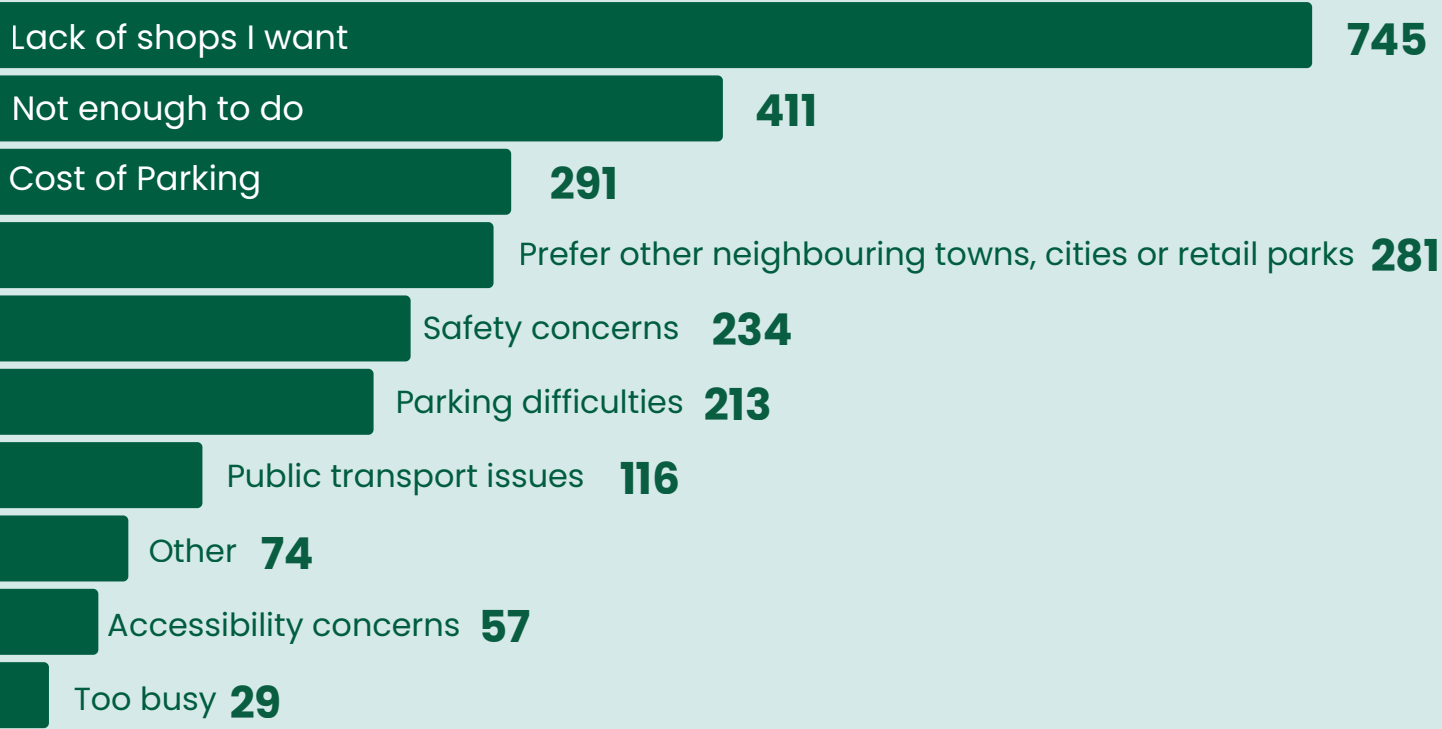
"I understand the Kingsgate centre is under private ownership. I want to say the state of the shopping centre is appalling. The lift is always broken and the escalator needs to be updated. Too many accidents are happening"

How satisfied are you with the current range of shops and services in Dunfermline city centre?



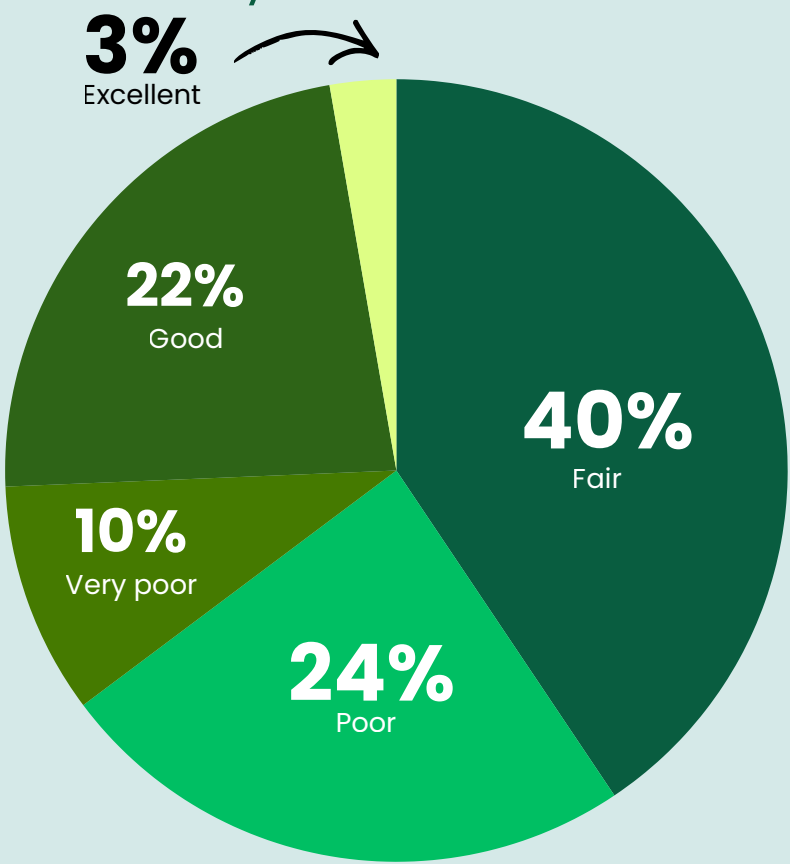
"Improve shopping options, would rather shop closer to home rather than traveling to Edinburgh or Livingston all the time. Make it more attractive for shops to open here, especially for young people"

What prevents you from visiting Dunfermline city centre more often?

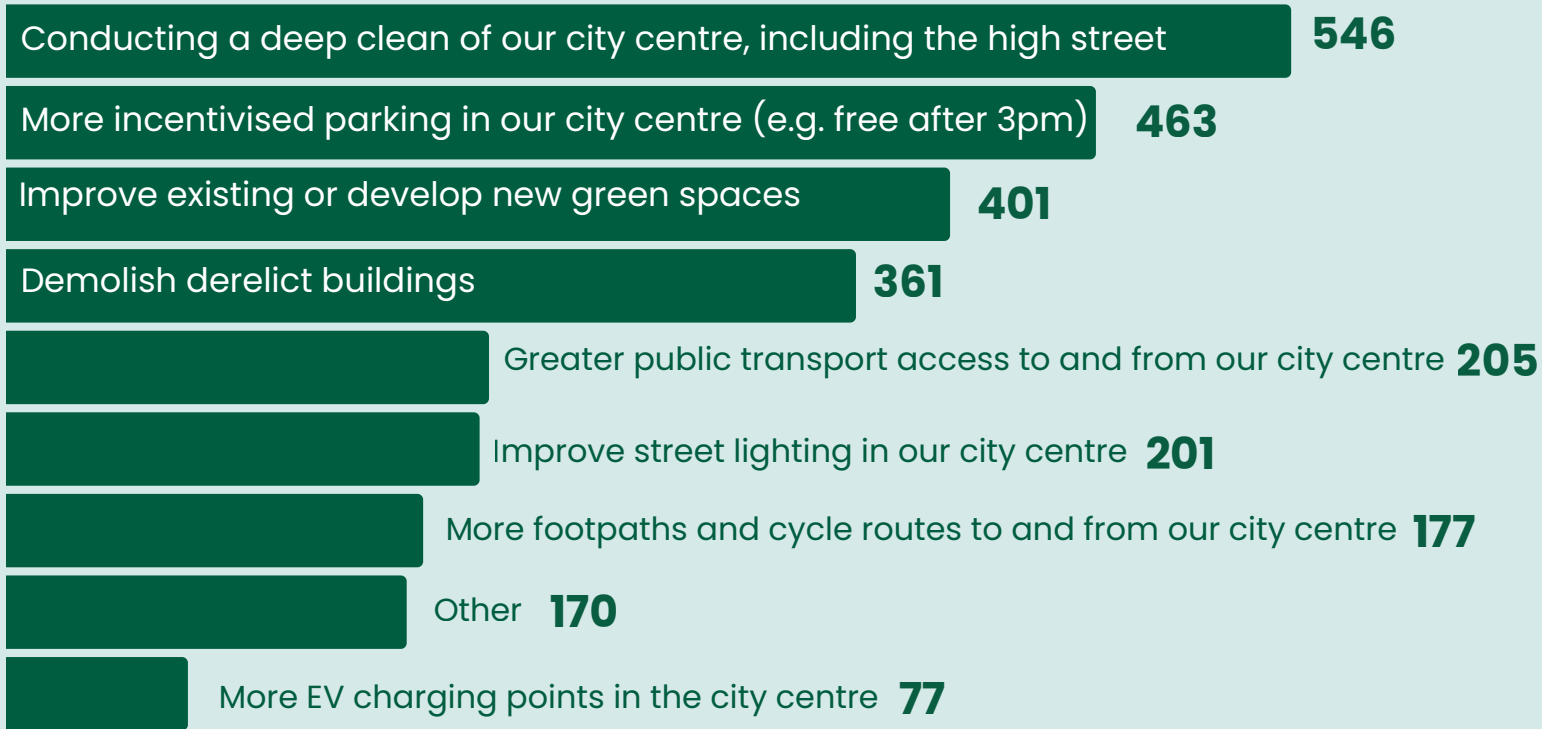


“Get the community involved in a deep clean, in Portobello groups are always taking their turn and adds to the community feel. Also local businesses do a CSR volunteering, e.g. I’m at a local business and we do beach cleans and tree planting etc, so businesses could also be approached”

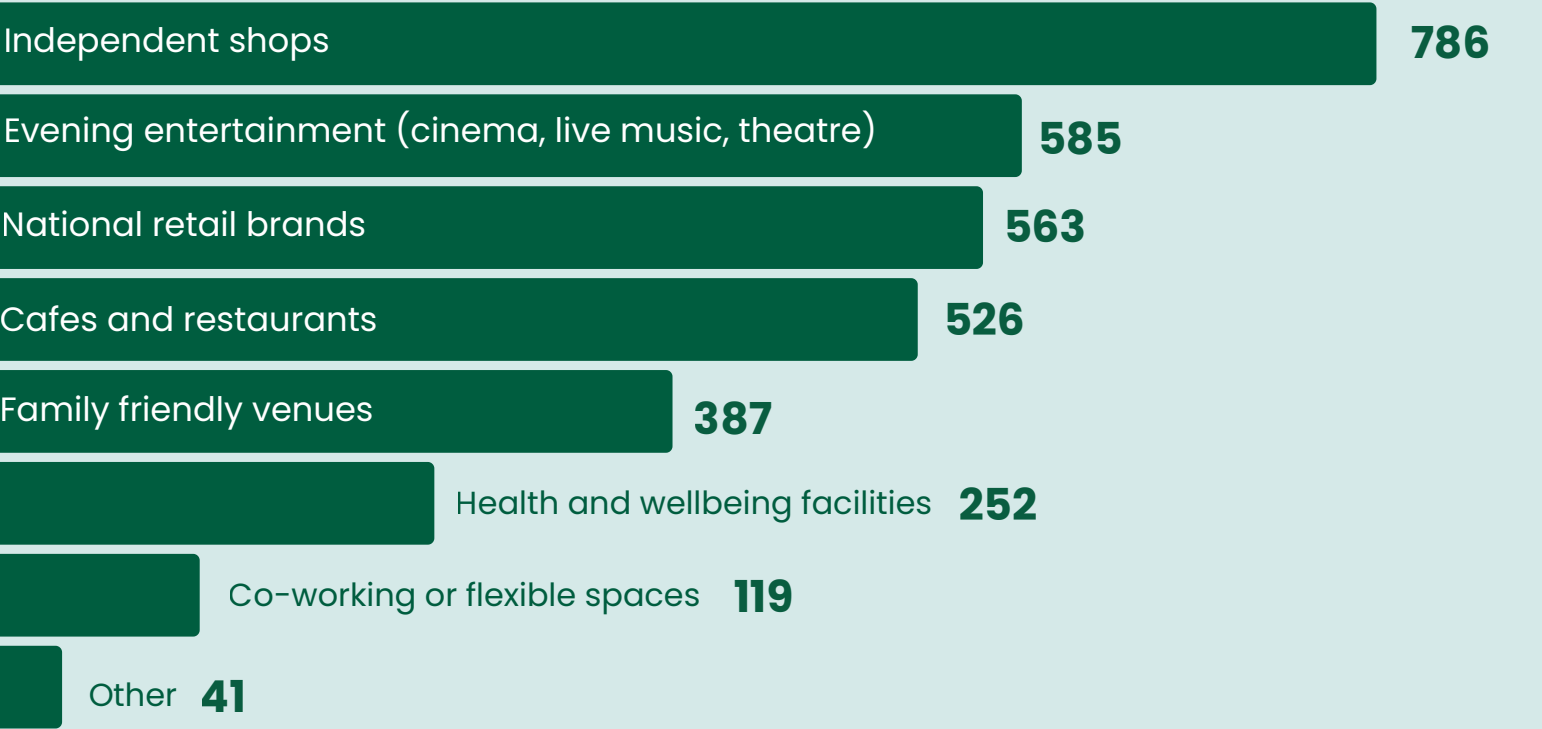
How would you rate the cleanliness and maintenance of the city centre?



What are your top priorities for improving Dunfermline city centre?



What type of businesses or facilities would you most like to see in the city centre?



BUSINESS RATES

Throughout this consultation on Dunfermline city centre, one of the most prevalent issues raised more than any other from both residents and business owners was excessive business rates.

Here is a snapshot of some responses from businesses and residents on this topic:

"Reduce rates to get more traditional independent shops into the centre"

"Improving shop rates so more shops will open in the city centre"

"Low rates, rents or whatever council taxes prevent shops from moving in. If Burntisland and Cupar can be more shopper friendly than us we have to ask why."

"Reducing rents so smaller local businesses can open"

"It's difficult as we need to compete with Edinburgh but have more independent stores. Events to keep the population in Dunfermline. Reduced rates."

"Rates for shops is way too high – that is causing them to close."

"Lower the business rates and rent so more shops want to stay here"

"Reduce business rate to attract and keep new shops, cafes etc"

"Business rates way too high driving new businesses away"

Hospitality sector pressures: Respondents from the hospitality sector highlighted that already-tight profit margins make high business rates a particularly acute challenge. The 20% VAT rate compounds this further, with participants noting that the cumulative tax environment makes sustaining viable hospitality businesses in the city centre increasingly difficult.

International comparisons: incentives for new businesses. Participants pointed to international examples as potential models for reform. The Netherlands operates a scheme offering reduced rates for new businesses during their first five years of trading, lowering financial risk for entrepreneurs testing new ideas. Attendees suggested similar incentive structures – potentially including pop-up retail concepts – could encourage commercial experimentation and help fill vacant units.

WHAT HAVE I ALREADY DONE AS YOUR MP?

I have already used the findings of this report to begin to develop the foundations for channelling investment and visitors into our city...



✓ Presented the UK Government Culture Minister & Scotland Office Minister with a copy of this report

Ensuring that the relevant government ministers are aware of what residents here in Dunfermline think, and know that we are ready for investment.



✓ Flying the flag for Dunfermline in the House of Commons

Speaking up about the fantastic assets in our city, making the case that any investment should be coming to Dunfermline.



✓ Called for greater motorway signage to pull visitors to our city

Establishing a roundtable with the Transport Lead within Fife Council and Transport Scotland with my recommendations on what should be implemented on some of Scotland's busiest motorways.

✓ Met with Fife Council and relevant tourism bodies

Discussing the potential of Scotland's newest city, just 18 miles outside of Edinburgh, to attract more investment in our city centre, as well as more domestic and international visitors to Scotland's newest city.

POTENTIAL OF THE REINSTATED ROSYTH – EU FERRY SERVICE



I am delighted that after years of campaigning, the UK Government has backed my plans to provide the investment required for infrastructure upgrades at the Port of Rosyth, signalling the return of the Rosyth–Europe ferry service.

This service has the potential to see 80,000 passengers per year using the service, bringing an additional £11.5 million to the Scottish economy, taking 8.2 million kilometres of freight traffic off UK roads each year.

This is great for Fife, and particularly Dunfermline, with the potential for thousands of visitors every year to visit Scotland's newest city. I will work day and night to make sure that we maximise this opportunity as best we can.

MY RECOMMENDATIONS



Cuts to business rates from 27/28 financial year

There must be an attraction to operating in Dunfermline city centre. Businesses and residents have told me that rates are a barrier to this.

More focus on attracting appealing retailers

70% of people are disappointed with the range of shops available in the city centre, with more independent shops needed.

A deep clean and more incentivised parking

No increase to parking charges, more incentivised parking times, and a deep clean of our streets; all backed by a majority of respondents.

Scotland's newest city has so much to offer, yet our new status has not fully been maximised, or even properly attempted yet. We must see the transformational changes needed, delivered by Fife Council, the Scottish Government, and with investment from the UK Government.

I will keep fighting hard to ensure that the changes and investment needed in Dunfermline city centre are not just a priority for government, but are actually delivered.

MY NEXT STEPS

Encourage Fife Council to spend money on the priorities that this report has highlighted.

This report makes clear what residents want to see improved, implemented and supported in Dunfermline. Fife Council must do everything in their power to channel investment into Scotland's newest city — and residents are telling us that, so far, that has not happened.

What we need from Fife Council:

- Work with local businesses to ensure they get the support they need, and actively encourage new businesses to open in Dunfermline.
- Carry out a thorough deep clean of Dunfermline High Street and city centre.
- Reverse increases to parking charges in Dunfermline city centre and introduce incentivised alternatives — such as free parking after 3pm and on Sundays.
- Back the development of new local, homegrown events in Dunfermline.
- Prioritise not just the city centre, but the wider City of Dunfermline — so that visitors from across Fife, Scotland and the world choose to come here.

Fife Council must now act on the priorities this report has identified. I will be keeping the pressure on to make sure they do.



Encourage the Scottish Government to cut business rates, attract visitors, and deliver the investment that Dunfermline needs.

Business rates are placing businesses under intense financial pressure, and the absence of the retail offer residents want remains the single biggest barrier to more people choosing Dunfermline city centre. The Scottish Government has a fundamental role to play in the success of our city centre and the survival of our local businesses — and we need them to act now.

What we need from the Scottish Government:

- Implement immediate business rates reductions, effective from the start of the next financial year.
- Use every available tool to connect European visitors arriving on the new Rosyth-EU ferry directly with Dunfermline city centre.
- Commit the investment needed, alongside VisitScotland, to restore a Tourist Information Office to Dunfermline.

The Scottish Government must deliver on all three of these asks. Dunfermline's businesses and residents cannot afford to wait.



Encourage all UK Government funding and support to be channelled into Dunfermline city centre.

Since being elected, I have been fighting hard to bring every possible investment to the Dunfermline and Dollar constituency — and that work is already delivering. Over £370 million of investment has come to this area since July 2024, and I will keep pushing for more to be directed into our high street and city centre.

What I will keep doing as your MP, with the UK Government:

- Speaking up in the House of Commons for the potential of Dunfermline city centre.
- Meeting with the Scottish Office and relevant UK Government departments to identify every available funding stream.
- Hosting a House of Commons debate on tourism in the UK's newest cities, sharing experience and expertise from Dunfermline.

The UK Government has already invested over £500 million into Fife since the last General Election — but there is more to come, and I intend to make sure Dunfermline is at the front of the queue for it.



CONCLUSION

The results of this consultation are clear: Dunfermline's residents are proud of our city but are frustrated that our potential is not being fulfilled. Nearly 1000 people took part in this consultation and the message they have sent to me, to Fife Council, to the Scottish Government, and to the UK Government is that the City of Dunfermline deserves better.

Our city has extraordinary assets. The Heritage Quarter, the Peacocks in Pittencrieff Park, Andrew Carnegie's Birthplace, the Palace and Abbey, Carnegie Library & Galleries and a growing calendar of events such as the Bruce Festival, the Dunfermline City Artisan Market, and Outwith Festival to name a few. And yet 60% of respondents believe that Dunfermline is less appealing for tourists compared to other Scottish cities, 80% feel the look and feel of the city centre has deteriorated, and 70% are disappointed with the range of shops and services available noting this is the single biggest barrier to visiting more often, cited by 745 respondents. We cannot ignore these statistics, this must be a mandate for action.

At the same time, the survey reflects genuine pride and consistent engagement with our city centre. Half of all respondents visit weekly, primarily for shopping, food, and to meet family and friends. The High Street and Kingsgate Shopping Centre remain the most visited areas, and Pittencrieff Park — recommended by 740 respondents as a destination for tourists — is clearly cherished. Residents are not giving up on Dunfermline. They are demanding that it lives up to what they know it can be.



Perhaps the most consistent theme running through every section of this survey, however, is business rates. From residents wanting more independent shops to business owners struggling to stay open, the message was the same: rates are too high, and they are driving businesses away.

This issue must be reviewed by the Scottish Government as too many businesses are not just being priced out, but are limited in their ability to grow and expand. More locally, I firmly believe there must be support mechanisms in place to grow the potential of our local vendors. I will continue to push for the Scottish Government to reduce business rates here in Dunfermline.

This report is a starting point, not a conclusion. I will use these findings to hold governments at every level to account, to make the case for investment, and to work with residents, businesses, and local partners to build the city that the people of Dunfermline know is possible.



CONTACT ME

Constituency Office Phone
01383 332841

Email Address
graeme.downie.mp@parliament.uk

Facebook/X
[@GraemeDownieMP](#)

Website
graemedownie.co.uk

Constituency Office Address
31 Chapel Street, Dunfermline,
KY12 7AW

Dunfermline City Centre Consultation

July 2026

Graeme Downie MP
Dunfermline and Dollar