

Young People & Their Local Urban Areas



#YSObservatory 



SCOTTISH LAND COMMISSION
COIMISEAN FEARAINN NA H-ALBA



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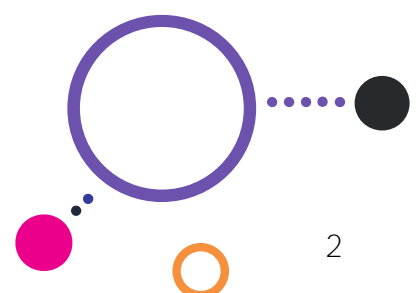
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Introduction

Young Scot and Scottish Land Commission established a partnership to explore how young people understand, perceive and have a connection with their local urban areas. This partnership used a co-design approach to explore insights from a broad range of young people about land and buildings in cities and towns.

As well as exploring young people's connection to the urban environment, the partnership also explored their understandings of how decisions about land use are made and how they could be better involved in these processes. Two key pieces of work were delivered through the partnership, an Insight Survey to collect a broad range of views from young people across Scotland, and My Toon Jam which was a face to face one day jam event exploring the key themes in more depth with a group of young people.



Methodology

Co-design

Young Scot's co-design approach was used throughout the project to involve young people in exploring key themes and designing solutions to the issues they identified. Young Scot has extensive experience in engaging with Scotland's young people to seek their views and input in the development of the services they use. Young people have a significant role to play in encouraging organisations and communities to adopt a more collaborative culture, focusing resources to effectively meet the needs of individuals and communities.

Our co-design service involves young people systematically creating, designing and delivering solutions in collaboration with organisations. Young people are involved much earlier in the decision-making process through a highly participative approach developing informed insights, ideas, recommendations and solutions for policy and practice.

Supporting people to co-design ideas has been shown to have a radical impact on service innovation. We know using a co-design approach enables a more distributed, decentralised approach to innovation that supports Scotland's ambitions to cede power and responsibility directly to young people.



Insights Survey

In order to understand young people's perspectives and awareness, a national survey was hosted on Young Scot Rewards. This provided baseline information about young people's understandings and perceptions of the urban built environment that they live in, and whether they felt they could have an impact on land use decision making. The quantitative and qualitative survey questions were jointly developed by Young Scot and Scottish Land Commission to ensure they were relevant and engaging for both young people and Scottish Land Commission.

The survey provided an opportunity for young people from across Scotland to share their views, experiences and understandings and for key themes to be identified and set out. This enabled the My Toon Jam to be tailored to reflect these key themes and dig deeper into the views and experiences of young people from across Scotland.

My Toon Jam

The My Toon Jam provided the space for young people to explore priority themes in more detail and to begin developing and co-designing solutions. A jam is an interactive session which utilises a design-based approach to creativity and problem solving to encourage blue-sky thinking, experimentation and visionary innovation. With this ethos, My Toon Jam was a vibrant, engaging and fun event for all participants, with facilitators and staff from Scottish Land Commission on hand to help mould and shape the ideas and provide expert knowledge. The jam followed the co-design process, providing space for young people to explore and increase their understanding of the key issues before creating key ideas and solutions in a collaborative and dynamic way.

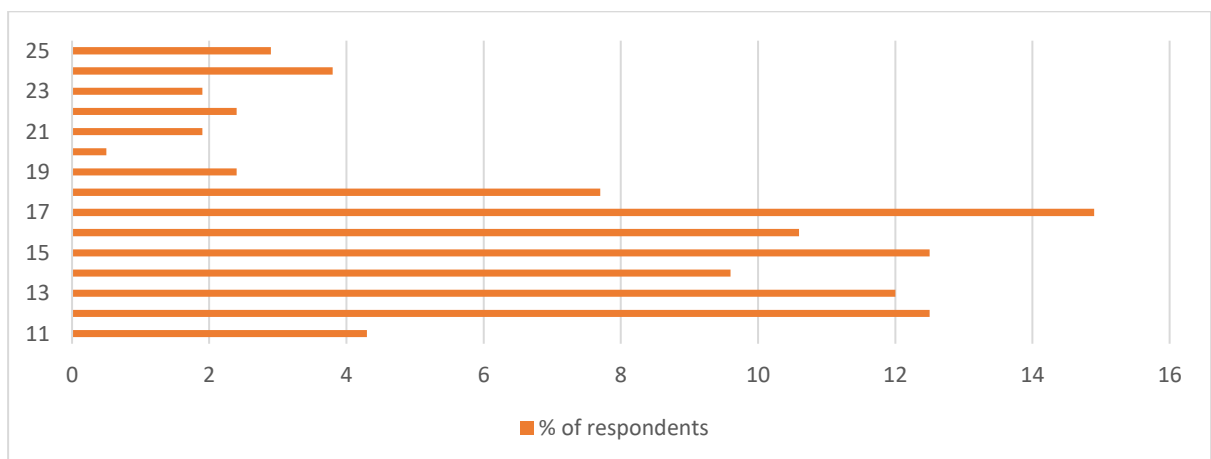


Who We Engaged With

Insights Survey

The survey was hosted on Survey Gizmo between October 2018 and January 2019 and was promoted through Young Scot Rewards (<http://rewards.youngscot.org>). It was also promoted through Young Scot’s social media platforms, Get Involved page (www.young.scot/get-involved) and existing networks and volunteers. Scottish Land Commission also promoted the survey through their platforms. Despite the wide promotion of the survey, we received 197 responses, slightly lower than the expected. The response rate may however reflect lower levels of interest and engagement with this topic area in general amongst young people.

Age



Young people between the ages of 11 and 25 responded to the survey. The responses were weighted more towards the ages of 12 – 17.

Local Authority

	% of respondents		% of respondents
Aberdeen City Council	2.6	Inverclyde Council	2.1
Aberdeenshire Council	4.7	Midlothian Council	1.6
Angus Council	2.1	Moray Council	2.1
Argyll and Bute Council	1.6	North Ayrshire Council	2.6
Clackmannanshire Council	0.5	North Lanarkshire Council	3.7
Dumfries & Galloway Council	1.6	Orkney Islands Council	0.5
Dundee City Council	1.1	Perth and Kinross Council	7.4
East Ayrshire Council	2.6	Renfrewshire Council	2.6
East Dunbartonshire Council	1.6	Scottish Borders Council	2.1
East Lothian Council	0.5	Shetland Islands Council	1.1
East Renfrewshire Council	3.2	South Ayrshire Council	1.1
Edinburgh City Council	14.3	South Lanarkshire Council	4.2
Falkirk Council	2.6	Stirling Council	2.6
Fife Council	9	West Dunbartonshire Council	0
Glasgow City Council	6.9	Western Isles Council (Comhairle nan Eilean Siar)	0
Highland Council	6.4	West Lothian Council	1.6

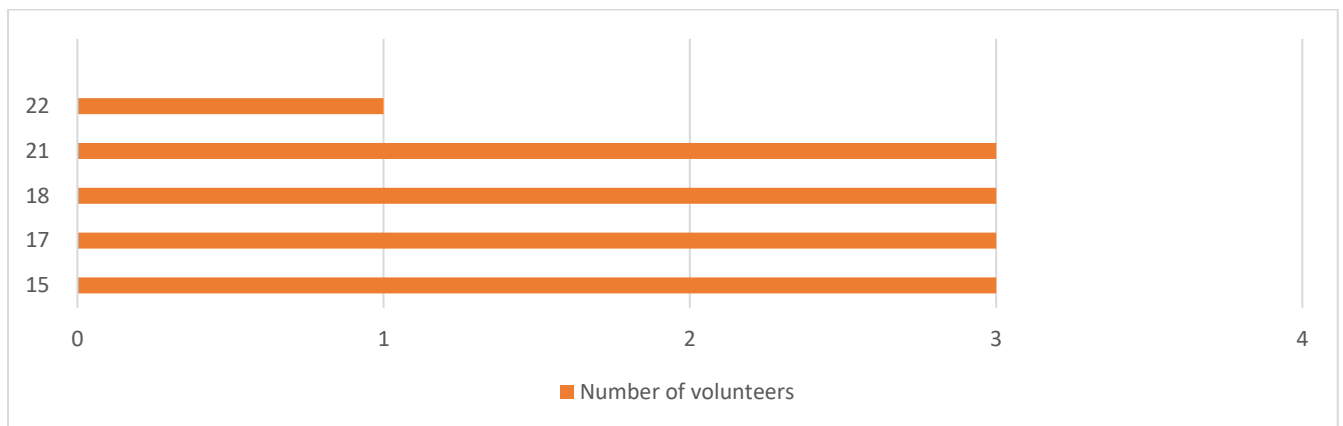


My Toon Jam

The My Toon Jam was promoted as a volunteering opportunity for young people across Young Scot's platforms and networks. Young people who completed the insight survey were invited to explore the topic in more details at the My Toon Jam.

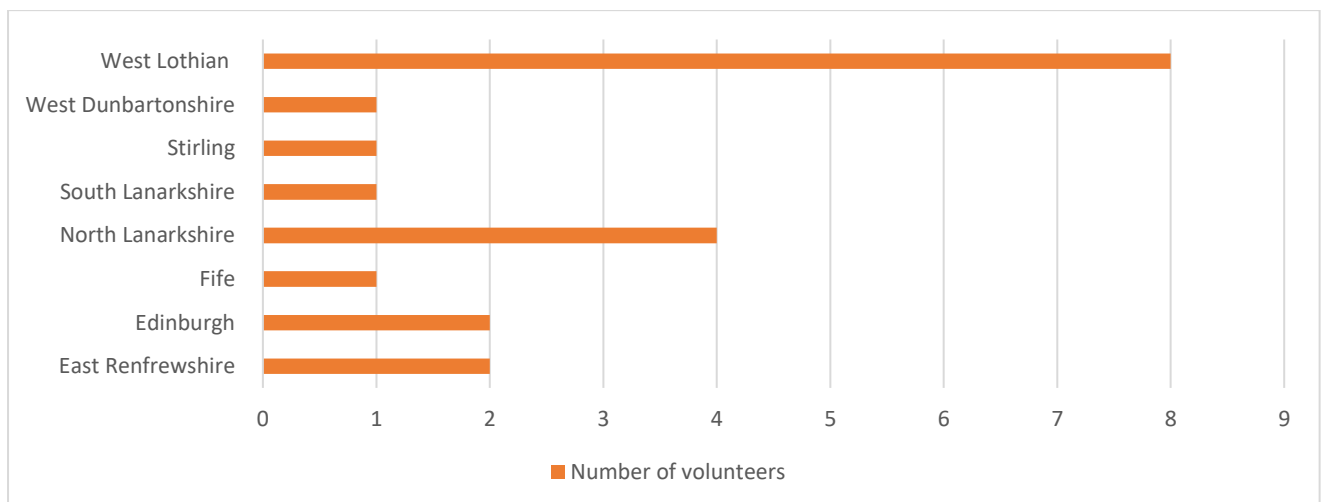
33 young volunteers signed up to attend the My Toon Jam, and thirteen attended. The lower number of attendees was due to a variety of reasons – illness, changed circumstances or simply did not attend. The volunteers who attended represented a broad range of views, backgrounds and experiences.

Age



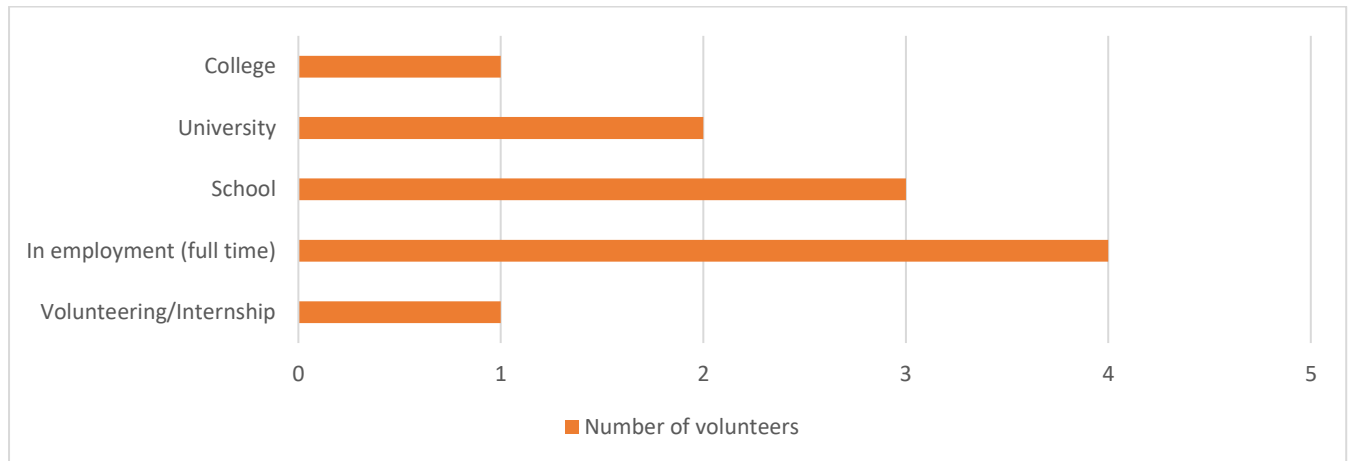
The volunteers who attended the My Toon Jam were aged between 15 and 22.

Location



The volunteers who attended the jam were predominantly from urban areas in the central belt.

Current Activity



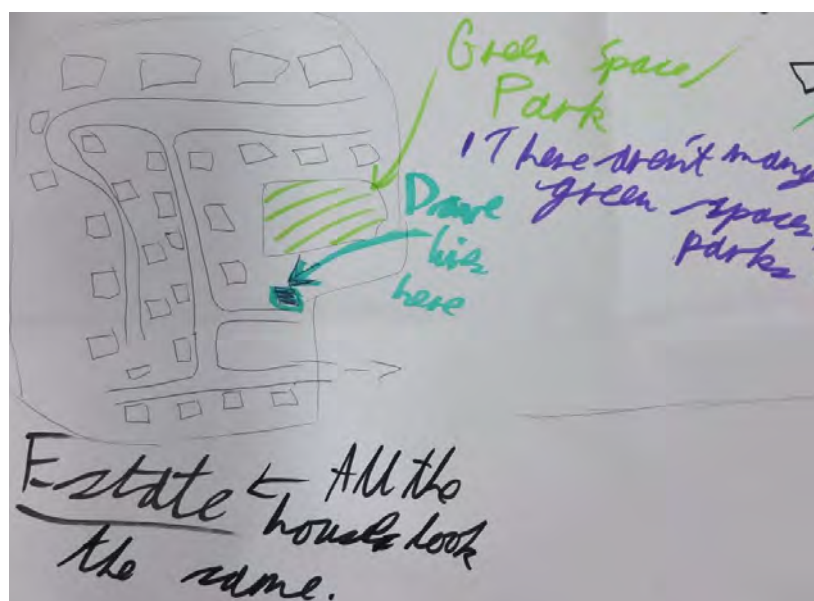
Insights & Key Themes

Young people's connection to the urban environment

The survey and My Toon Jam explored young people's connection to urban built environments around them. This was done by asking young people what opportunities they felt their local towns and cities currently offered them and what opportunities they think these spaces should offer them. This was also explored through the urban landscapes that young people created during the My Toon Jam, and the narratives they created of how young people would interact with these landscapes. The key themes on connection to urban areas that young people identified are outlined below.

Home & housing

For many young people their home was a significant part of the urban landscape and a strong way in which they connected to their town or city. When talking about homes, they would often describe built up residential areas with many other people around them, for example tenement buildings or council flats. 73.1% of the survey respondents felt that access to housing was currently offered in their urban area. Young people's perceptions of housing in urban areas was often negative, highlighting poor quality and unaffordable housing, a sense of disempowerment amongst residents and the loss of green spaces to new developments.



"The area around me is used horribly. The grass land is packed full with shabby council houses that those living there don't even want...because they're that bad"

51.8% of the survey respondents felt that access to housing was something that their urban area should offer them. This suggests that access to housing in urban areas is still important but is less of a priority for young people. This may reflect their dissatisfaction with the quality of housing offered, and a sense of disempowerment when decisions regarding the location and quality of new housing are made. Additionally, young people expressed concerns about housing being affordable in urban areas.

"I would say that my housing is overpriced, families struggle as the rent is too high like mine"

Place of work/place of study

Young people's place of work or education (for example school or college) were important aspects of urban landscapes. Young people fostered a sense of connection to the local area as many travelled through their urban landscapes to get to their place of work or education on a daily basis.

64.8% of young people felt that the land and buildings in their urban areas offered access to employment and workspace, whereas only 54.4% of young people felt that this was something that the land and buildings in their urban areas should offer. 53.4% of young people felt their urban areas offered them access to further education, learning and skills development and this raised slightly to 54.9% for young people who felt this should be offered by their local buildings and land.



Shops

Access to shops was the opportunity that the largest amount of young people (78.8%) felt their urban areas currently offered. This was further explored in the My Toon Jam, with shops or supermarkets being frequent aspects of landscapes. The narrative around these shops was varied. Many acknowledged the necessity for easy access to shops, in particular for food and groceries. However they also highlighted the lack of diversity and range of shops available. There was a clear frustration over the narrow choice of shops for young people to shop in.

"Better businesses and different ones as well as better shops...it's just the same (shops) ... and businesses are just shutting down because of it"

While 78.8% of respondents think their urban area currently offered access to shops, only 47.2% of young people felt that this was something that the use of land and buildings in urban environments should offer. Young people clearly felt there is a need for shops in urban areas for day to day living but felt that the variety and choice of businesses did not suit their needs.

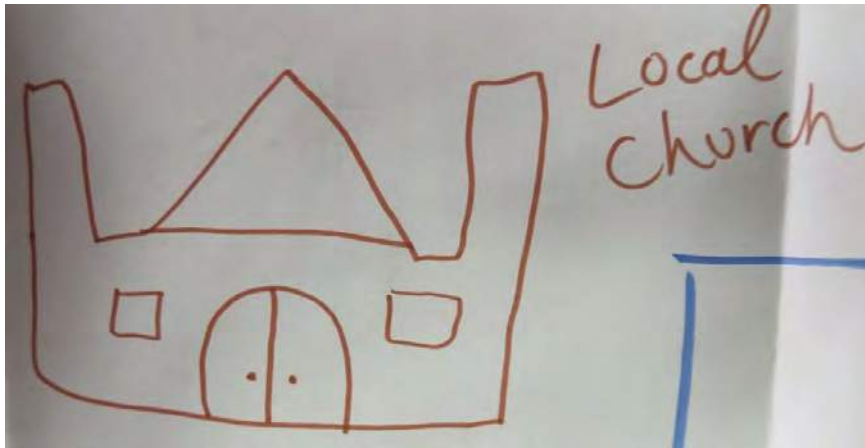
+ **"I feel that there should be more shops and businesses in my town centre. Although small, I think that there is definitely enough space...and there is nowhere that I can shop"**

Community hubs and safe spaces

Community spaces were an important use of land and buildings in urban areas for young people. These were understood as a variety of buildings from a dedicated community centre to places of worship and music halls. Only 48% of the survey respondents felt that their town or city currently offered access to community spaces and yet 60% of young people felt that this should be offered by the land and buildings in their urban areas.

"I believe there should be more places that are created where the community and society can come together and many places to have the freedom to be accepted"

Significantly young people identified the need for 'safe spaces' which were specific areas for young people to enjoy and feel safe and protected in. For some young people, this would provide a sense of empowerment and recognition.



"I think there should be particular plots of land that are dedicated to the needs and desires of young people"

Other young people expressed concern about anti-social behaviours, peer pressure and bullying. For example, derelict land was sometimes perceived as places for 'underage drinking' or 'gang activities' and not somewhere that young people felt comfortable being. Therefore dedicated spaces would provide them with a safe place for relaxing and socialising in urban areas.

"There's nothing for young people aged 16+ or only one option and many young people are finding building pressure in groups from bullying etc"



Spaces for leisure

Young people acknowledged the importance of land and buildings being used for leisure activities. Access to active space was the fourth most popular element that young people (54.9%) felt urban areas currently offered them, and it was the third most popular element (57.5%) for what they felt these spaces should offer. Spaces such as a swimming pool, playparks and athletic tracks were all highlighted as examples of active spaces in urban landscapes.

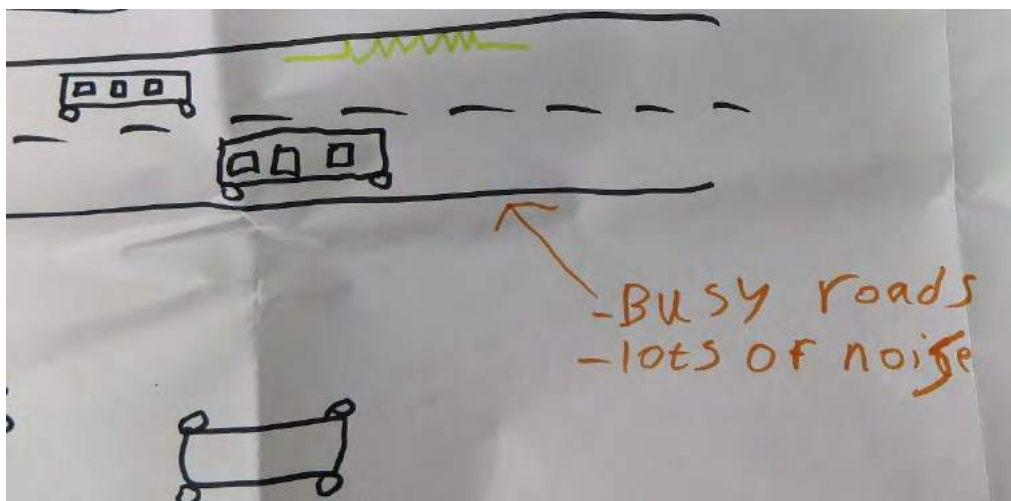


Whilst buildings such as swimming pools and music halls were discussed as examples used for leisure, young people mainly recognised leisure spaces as land. Young people perceived that land for active and leisure use was not prioritised enough in urban areas and that there was a sense of loss and disappointment in how much greenspace was being built on.

"No space for kids to play. Have to walk ages to get to the nearest decent park. The football pitches are poorly up kept."

Greenspace & space for food growing

Young people felt that their urban environment offered them less access to space for nature and greenspace. They highlighted how these were usually isolated areas surrounded by buildings and traffic. However, they also recognised green 'corridors' and routes for active travel which would have trees, plants and wildlife. Young people stressed the importance of having green spaces to relax, unwind and be active in towns and cities. They also recognised national nature parks that overlap with urban environments and understood the complexities of management, ownership and use of this land. A key theme that emerged in relation to greenspace in urban environments was concern about the greenspace being lost to new developments.



"I think the local community I am (in) should be notified when they are building houses because we have no space or green land to do fun activities now"

Only 28.5% of survey respondents felt that their city or town currently offered access to space for food growing and yet 54.9% thought that there should be access to this type of space. This was further reflected in discussions about rising levels of awareness and use of allotments by young people.



"I feel that there should be more nature places which I would love a community garden or nature related"

Creative spaces

Whilst only 26.4% of the survey respondents felt their urban environment currently offered them access to creative space, 66.8% of respondents felt their towns and cities should offer this. Current creative spaces were identified as other aspects of urban areas that young people applied their own creativity to – for example taking photographs of a derelict building. Young people felt there was very little access to dedicated creative spaces, yet this was the highest priority for what young people felt the land and buildings in urban areas should offer.



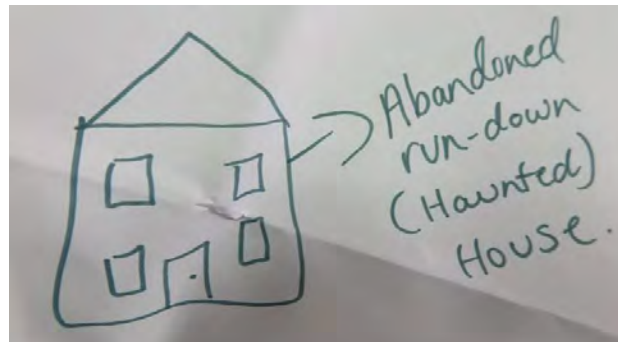
Sites of heritage

Young people also identified that sites of heritage and cultural significance were often present in urban environments. They felt that things such as a local historical landmark were important to the community and urban landscape. There was an assumption that historical sites would not be destroyed or changed yet there was little awareness of Common Good Property and official processes involved in maintaining sites of heritage. Young people wanted access to more cultural and historic information (such as that provided by Visit Scotland) for their local area.

Derelict land & buildings

Derelict land and buildings were perceived to be wasted spaces which could be used more productively. There was often a negative association with these spaces – they were unsafe and inaccessible due to 'Keep Out' or 'Danger' signs, they were perceived as 'haunted' or anti-social behaviour was common on these sites. Young people expressed confusion over

who is responsible for derelict sites and why they remained unused for longer periods. However they did see the potential for derelict land and buildings to become positive sites for their communities. For example, during the My Toon Jam, a group discussed how they thought a derelict building in their urban landscape should become a youth club.



Transport networks

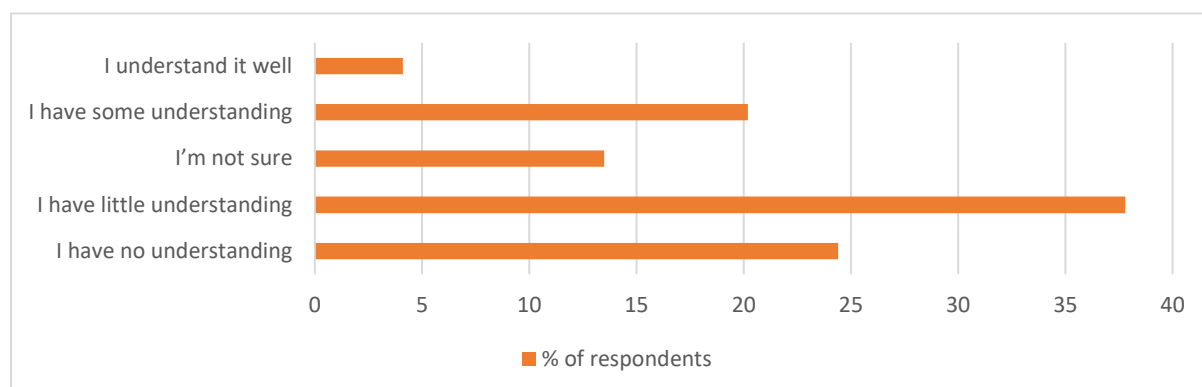
Transport networks were a key aspect of urban landscapes for young people. Public transport routes and road networks intersect different land and spaces in urban areas, making them more accessible and easier to travel through. However, air and noise pollution were both highlighted as negative qualities of urban land being used for transport. Active travel networks were discussed as healthier, cheaper and more environmentally friendly options to access different types of spaces that were nearby – for example walking from home to a local park.



Decision Making

Young people’s awareness about decision making

Young people had lower levels of understanding of how decisions are made about their local land and buildings. The survey reflected that 62.2% of respondents had little or no understanding of these decision-making processes. This was further explored in discussions at the My Toon Jam around who owns derelict land and buildings and confusion about why these sites remain stagnant for so long. When mapping out which key stakeholders are involved in the decision-making process, the young people did not have a consistent view of who could be involved and how much power each stakeholder had in these processes.



Young people’s awareness of communities’ rights

The survey demonstrated that half of the respondents (49%) were aware of communities right to buy and own land and buildings in towns and cities. Slightly fewer young people (46%) were aware that communities can request to lease, own or have other rights over publicly owned buildings and land. These levels of awareness may be due to high profile cases of communities exercising their right to buy across Scotland, for example the community buyout of the Isle of Eigg. However, discussions with young people at the My Toon Jam suggested that young people were less aware of examples in urban areas, and communities’ ability to request lease or ownership of publicly owned buildings and land.

Only 14% of survey respondents understood what Common Good Property is, suggesting that specific terminology and vocabulary is less familiar and accessible for young people.

"I was concerned to see that the councils have more say than the people that live in these areas and that the people in these areas don't get much say"

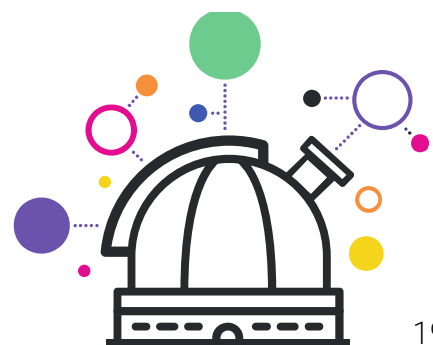
Young people's role in decision making

The insight survey and My Toon Jam indicated that young people did not feel empowered and involved in decisions about the use of land and buildings in their town or city. Only 9.4% of survey respondents felt they had some or a significant say in how land and buildings in their town or city are used, with 68.5% feeling they have little or no say. When volunteers at the My Toon Jam mapped out key stakeholders in the relevant decision making processes, they consistently identified that young people had little to no power. This was further reflected in comments from young people which suggested a sense of powerlessness and disengagement from decisions about how land and buildings are used.



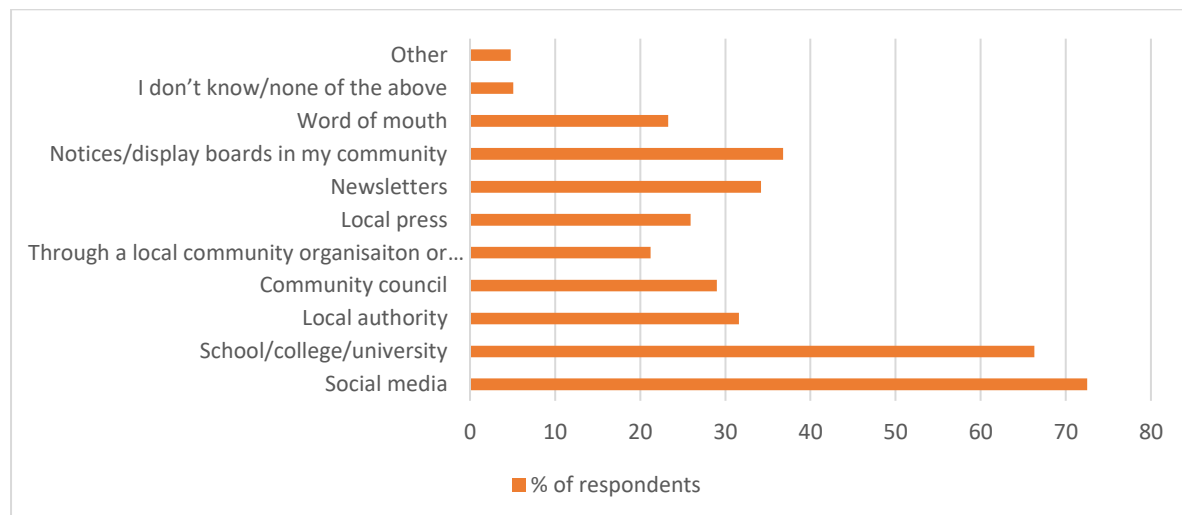
If young people are not aware of their communities' rights and role in decision-making processes in urban areas are, they are less likely to be involved and feel empowered to share their views and opinions. There is clearly a desire from young people to participate in these decisions, but more can be done to engage these young people.

+ **"I, as a young person, would like to be more involved about the land I live on and I would very much like to understand it also"**



Engaging Young People in Decision Making

Young people discussed how they could be more involved in decision making processes and have more of an influence over how land and buildings in urban environments are used. Two key methods of engagement emerged from both the insight survey and the jam; online engagement and face-to-face engagement.



Online Engagement

Social media was the most popular method for engagement in the insight survey with 72.5% of respondents saying this is how they would like to be involved in decision making about their local land and buildings. This was also reflected in the My Toon Jam – two of the three solutions developed during the session were online methods of engaging young people. Young people felt it was important that online engagement provided relevant and understandable information about how decisions regarding land and buildings in urban areas are made. This would help increase young people's awareness and capacity. Online information can also be updated regularly with reliable information. Young people stressed the need for clear and reliable information that was accessed in a central place.

It would also provide a platform for local authorities and organisations such as Scottish Land Commission to share what current decisions are ongoing in specific local areas. Having local and specific information with relevant contacts, links and calendar events would help young people have better access to decisions in their area.

Online engagement and social media platforms are also beneficial because they enable a diverse range of young people to engage with the topic at any time and from any location with internet access. As online engagement can be done remotely, it also requires less time commitment from young people whose busy schedules may not always enable them to attend meetings or events.

Face to Face Engagement

Whilst online engagement offers many benefits, young people also identified a need for face to face engagement. Reflecting young people's need for safe and protected spaces in urban areas, young people wanted to be able to meet with experts and involved stakeholders in a local and known venue. Face to face engagement can be more interactive and therefore allow for fuller discussions to explore, develop and share young people's views.

Places of learning such as school/college/universities were the second most popular way that young people wanted to be involved in decision making (66.3%). These places can support young people to increase their knowledge and awareness of how decisions on how land and buildings in their local area are made, but they are also hubs for local activity and engagement.

"I think it's extremely important to get the message across to people in a different way as events come and go and sometimes there is no other opportunity to get your own thoughts or ideas across. Schools and workplaces should really be at the forefront of this as the people in these buildings should see the importance of having a say that really does get brought into action"

Making use of local notice boards and displays was the third most popular way for young people to be involved in decision making (36.8%) and this reflects the need for young people to have access to the relevant information in an understandable and engaging format.

"If you could give out more information in sensible places, that'd be great"

Conclusion

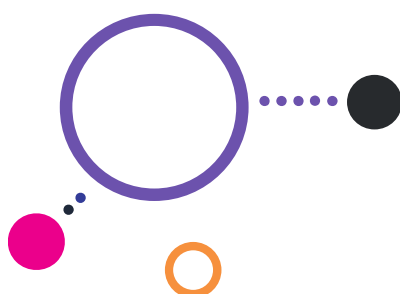
Young Scot has been delighted to work with Scottish Land Commission to explore young people's views on their urban environment and decision making on land and buildings. The insight survey and My Toon Jam were delivered using a co-design approach and engaged a total of over 200 young people from a diverse range of backgrounds.

From this engagement with young people key themes emerged regarding how they connect to and perceive the urban environment. Specifically, young people strongly felt that the land and buildings in cities and towns should offer access to creative spaces and felt that they currently did not provide this. Young people also wanted to see an increase in diversity and choice of shops and local businesses, and to be involved in the decision-making process around this. Young people stressed the need for safe space and community spaces where they could relax and engage with their peers and the wider community. They also highlighted concerns around the loss of greenspace and highlighted a desire for more food growing space. Access to active space was also prioritised by young people for what their urban environment should offer.

Young people had a lack of awareness about how decisions are made for the land and buildings in their urban areas. Whilst there were higher levels of awareness about a community's rights and role in decision making, this was often associated with communities in rural areas rather than in cities and towns. It was clear that young people do not feel empowered or involved in these decision-making processes yet they expressed an interest and desire to participate and help shape their communities and local landscapes.



Two clear methods of engaging young people were identified and developed – online communications and face to face engagement. Young people felt it was important to have clear and reliable information on a centralised platform. This would enable them to develop their awareness and understanding of how decisions about land and buildings in their local area are made. It would also provide relevant details and information on local opportunities and how young people can get involved in these specific decisions. Face to face engagement was also an important element as young people wanted the opportunity to further explore and discuss opportunities with involved stakeholders in a safe, mutual space in their local area.



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We are happy to consider requests for this document in other languages

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