




Our Edinburgh Neighbourhood

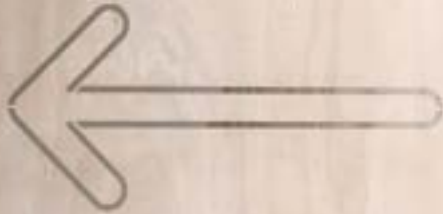
urban room pilot study stakeholder report



Proudly hosted by
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Come and see
our Edinburgh
neighbourhood



Preface

Edinburgh is one of the best cities in the world to live, work and study, offering a great quality of life and surrounded by a beautiful green environment and a world famous cultural and heritage scene.

But we need to make sure everyone benefits from all that Edinburgh offers, while responding to the global impacts of climate change, poverty, health inequalities and poor air quality, amongst other issues.

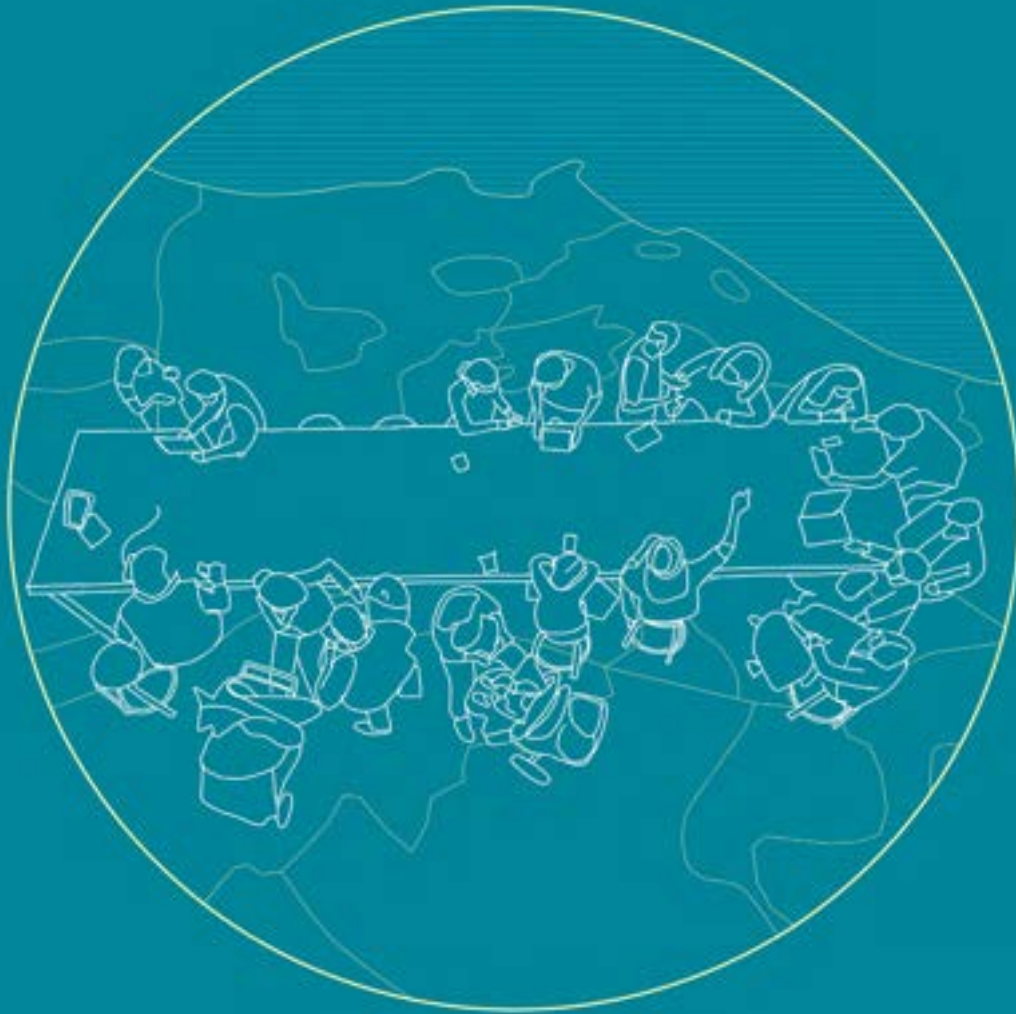
As we continue to develop the city, it's essential that we involve the people that live here to make sure changes work for them.

Through initiatives like the Urban Room and other engagement activities, Our Edinburgh Neighbourhood has helped to gather invaluable information and insight to guide better, sustainable planning for the future, in partnership with our communities.

Councillor Cammy Day
Leader of the City of Edinburgh Council

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Our Thanks

CCQoL Core Team



Scotland Steering Group



our CCQoL Partners



our Building Hosts



we are funded by



We would like to thank everyone who provided help and assistance for Our Edinburgh Neighbourhood. Our national Steering Group were so important in setting our priorities for the project. These were Tasha MacKenzie and Daisy Narayanan at the City of Edinburgh Council. At EVOC, thanks to Bridie Ashrowan and Charlie Wright and at the Scottish Government, to Ashley Mullan and Anne Grove.

We were supported by the University of Edinburgh; in the Research and Knowledge Exchange Office at Edinburgh College of Art by Eve Equi and Kacie Medevic-Horn, with Sarah Anderson and Stuart Tooley at Edinburgh Local.

We would thank Tim Vaughan and Darryl Bunce of Moorgarth and Jacquelyn Stewart at Waverley Market for enabling our urban room. Our local neighbourhood activity was made possible by John Young at Liberton Kirk and Tristan Green of the Ripple Project in Restalrig.

Our students at the University of Edinburgh helped make this project a success both in designing and building our exhibition and acting as hosts and ambassadors during the pilot period. Our thanks to Thomas Everett, Johanna Hedenskog, Ryan Lui, Caoilin O'Meara, Joseph Simms, Caelan Sutcliffe, Morven Torrance and Lei Zhang.

All our colleagues at CCQoL supported us throughout the project including our lead Professor Flora Samuel, Dr Ruchit Purohit who worked directly with us during the pilot and Stephanie Edwards of Urban Symbiotics. We thank Irina Tavera who as our Community Partnership Manager brought everyone together to make this project a success.

*John Brennan
Scotland Lead for Community Consultation and Quality of Life*



An Overview

Our Edinburgh Neighbourhood is a project that explores how communities can engage more effectively in the planning process. In summer 2022, we ran a pilot project trialling an urban room in Edinburgh along with exhibitions, events and surveys to understand how communities can participate, intervene and propose change in our city.

Our Edinburgh Neighbourhood is a Four Nations Project called Community Consultation and Quality of Life and is also based in Reading, Cardiff and Belfast.

We wanted to know about the places you value both in your neighbourhood and Edinburgh's city centre. We used an accessible online application featuring an immersive mapping tool to share what participants valued in their neighbourhood. In Central Edinburgh we opened an Urban Room, part meeting place, part exhibition; a resource to gather and share information. We also worked with neighbourhoods in Liberton and Restalrig to understand how our themes can work with local priorities.

This document describes the information and insight we've gathered to help us all understand neighbourhoods, engagement in the planning process and how urban rooms can work best to nurture and sustain community co-creation. We share good practice with our Four Nation partners and our findings will be available to anyone looking to plan for a sustainable future.

Project Headlines

Our Urban Room

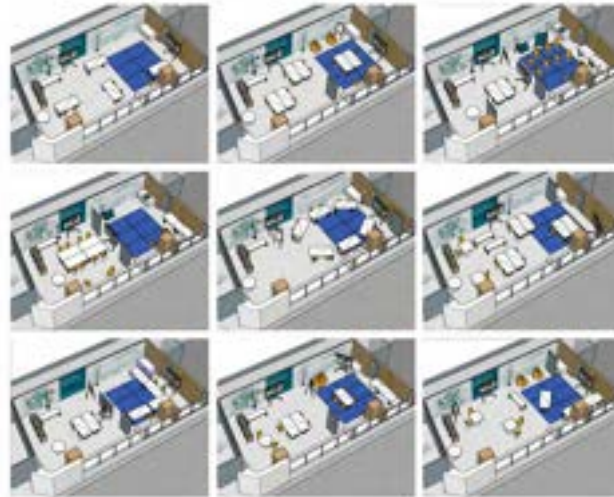
- Our urban room was valued in equal measure for its design, for the events we held and the support given by our staff.
- Urban Rooms should be used for meetings and co-creation workshops as well as exhibition and presentation. In recording room use, we found that 80m² accommodated 60 persons for networking events but was also comfortable for a meeting of 10.
- To be adaptable, an urban room must have storage for furniture, IT and generated work. In other words it shouldn't be a 'room for hire'.
- Urban Rooms benefit from good daylighting and familiar proportions for sustained working. A challenge we experienced was driving footfall without a shopfront or strong external presence.

Consultation and Engagement

- Nearly 4 out of 5 of our surveyed participants wanted the choice for of face-to-face interactions in planning consultation. Assistance was highly valued when undertaking digital surveys.
- Our neighbourhood pop-ups in Liberton and Restalrig enhanced inclusion with strong reciprocal relationships with our central room.
- 60% of our project participants have never been participated in a planning consultation, nearly always because they've never been asked.
- 4 out of 5 of our participants think that climate change, sustainability, well-being and healthy choices are not given enough attention in the planning process.

20 Minute Neighbourhoods

- 2 out of 3 people considered their neighbourhood to be within 15 or 20 minutes by foot or wheelchair.
- Participants defined value with the Quality of Life framework referencing greenspace and well-being. Edinburgh's parks and coastal areas were highly valued.
- The pins participants dropped were often not in the neighbourhoods they lived. Inner Edinburgh neighbourhoods were more likely to contain places and experiences that contributed to participants' quality of life.



Engagement Metrics across the Four Nations

Urban Room: adapting to different events during the pilot



Relationship to Quality of Life pins to respondents' own neighbourhoods



Our central and neighbourhood locations

About CCQoL

Community Consultation and Quality of Life is a Four Nations project that explores how individuals and communities can have a greater say and actively shape the communities they live in. Rather than a study of specific places or developments, it is an enquiry about the process of planning and how it can be made more inclusive.

The project is an academic collaboration lead by the University of Reading who have partnered with the University of Edinburgh, Cardiff University and Ulster University. Together they cover all of the four nations to ensure that devolved and distinctive practices are properly recorded.

CCQoL has a series of industry partners, who include the Quality of Life Foundation who through their quality of life framework seek to measure, identify and enhance the fundamental building blocks of what make for happy and resilient communities. Commonplace have provided the digital mapping tool and survey recording platform for our project whilst Urban Symbiotics have provided expert advice on best practice to ensure inclusion in community engagement activities.

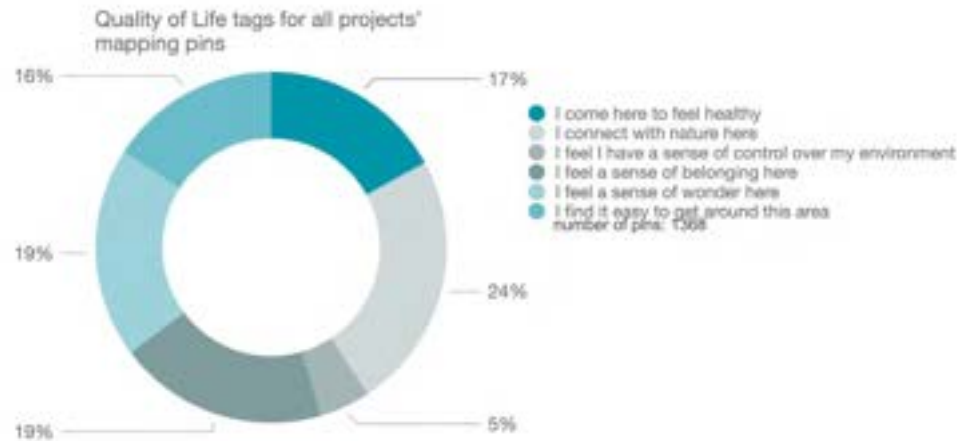
The project has already undertaken a review of the field that have included expert interview and a review of the available literature. Each of the four nation partners have run a pilot project in Reading, Cardiff, Belfast and Edinburgh. These have included hosting an urban room over a month, with a programme of events as well as collecting survey information about engagement in the planning process and testing quality of life indicators.

Our pilot project became Our Edinburgh Neighbourhood and this report explains how we planned, hosted and recorded activities in the summer of 2022.



Timeline for CCQoL [use the links to access documents]

About CCQoL Key Information



CCQoL Pilot Projects: Key Activities

Create themes for local engagement pilot projects that reflect the context and culture of each of the four nations cities.

Scoping

Design the fitout for an urban room with exhibition materials and scope for a range of activities

Designing

Reach out to community organisations. Schedule a series of events based on the Urban Room themes for each city

Organising

Test both digital and physical maps to share opinion on a topics impacting their quality of life.

Mapping

Host conversations about what local communities value and need in their area

Listening

Gather data to identify areas important to community health and wellbeing to define social value.

Gathering

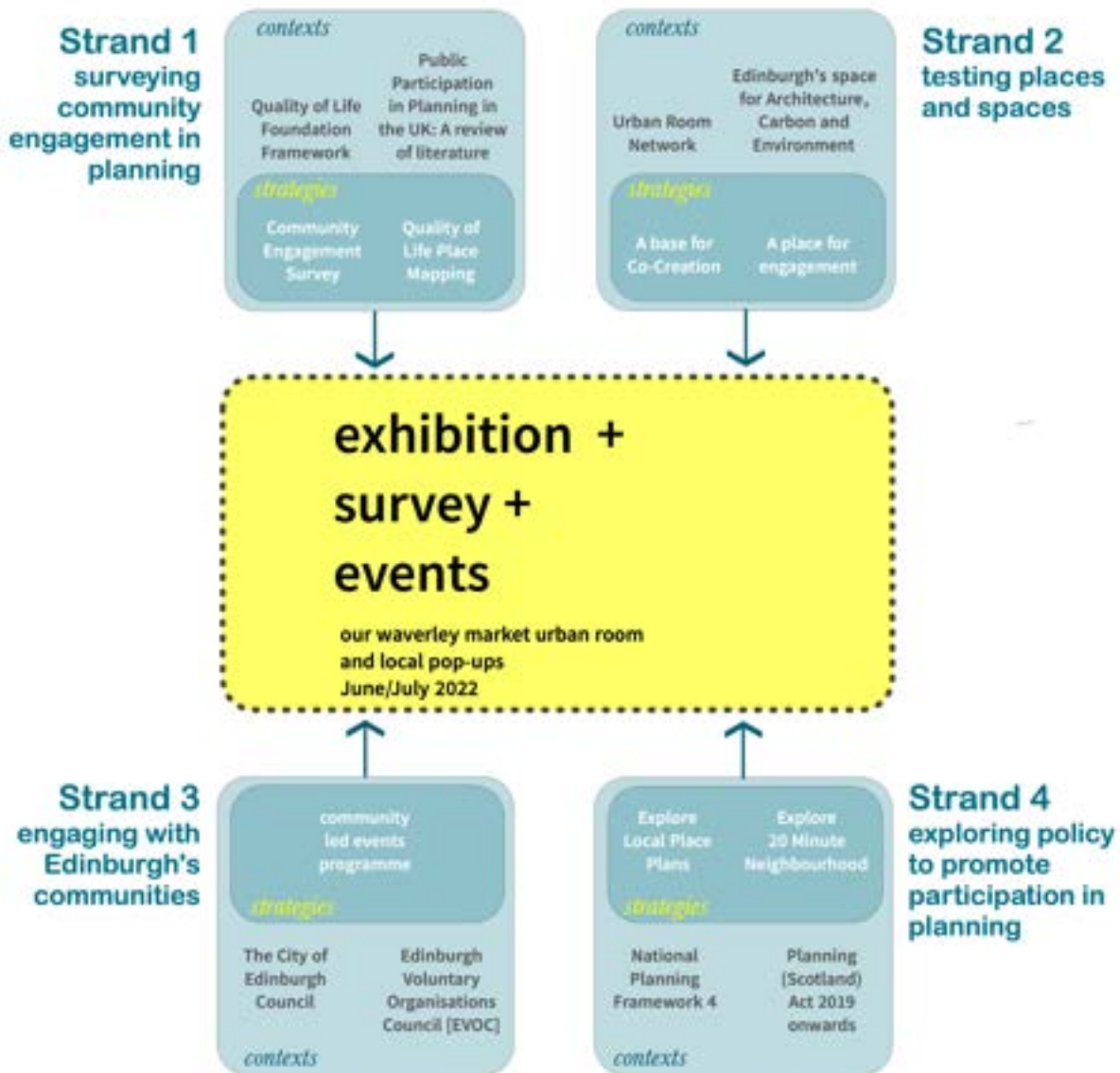


Belfast
September 2022



[link to our CCQoL website](#)

Our Project Structure



How our project is structured

Our Edinburgh Neighbourhood is a project within Community Consultation and Quality of Life to test in the field, our desktop research and interviews to understand the theory and practice of engagement. It explores both physical and digital methods of participatory practice using a wide variety of survey techniques including digital mapping, interview, and recording of the use of places and spaces. We worked in both Edinburgh's city centre and local neighbourhoods.

The outputs of this intensive research period will inform toolkits and codes of practice for engagement as well as comprehensive national reports that reflect on research and policy contexts in relation to what we discovered during our pilot project.

All four nation projects explore participation and engagement with an urban room. Each of our rooms are distinctive in their own ways, their place in the city, their design, procurement path, staffing and the activities they hosted. Our Urban Rooms act as both a physical hub and a central organising idea that shaped the way we engaged with people and organisations.

A challenge lay in how to connect meaningfully with communities about a project that was about planning processes rather than a recognisable project or development. We addressed this in two ways. We used the Commonplace platform to ask about places our participants value using the Quality of Life Framework. We also designed an exhibition that contextualises participation and engagement with the future direction of planning and development in Scotland.

Our Edinburgh Neighbourhood is organised across 4 thematic strands that together informed the exhibition, survey and events we hosted in summer 2022.



digital mapping using Quality of Life Framework themes

Strand 1: surveying community engagement in planning

In the first phase of Community Consultation and Quality of Life, we surveyed the effectiveness of participation and engagement in the planning process. This included a review of recent research and a series of interviews with people closely involved in the field. From this, With the UK Collaborative Centre for Housing Evidence we published [Public Participation in Planning in the UK: A Review of the Literature.](#)

We looked to gauge current perceptions of engagement in planning with a comprehensive survey asking participants about their experiences and expectations for more responsive planning. Key to this was using the Quality of Life Foundation’s Framework for communities that explores ideas of nature, health, belonging, control, mobility and wonder. Critically, people were able to precisely map places in Edinburgh, they valued using a platform provided by Commonplace.

We wanted to create maps with communities to learn what’s valued and whether it is to be found in their neighbourhood. We were conscious of the iconic nature of Edinburgh’s Old and New Towns and the extent to which this dominates perceptions of value in the city.

We wanted to test how this mapping can be used with other kinds of data such as biodiversity or public transport to give a holistic picture of a particular place.

Commonplace platform accessed by phone, tablet or computer +Access online



331 responses



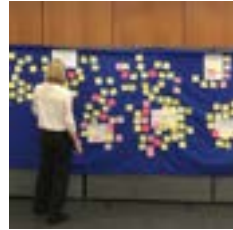
Participation Survey
Tell us what you think will work well to effectively engage in the planning process

engaging in the online planning survey about participation and inclusion

All of this works to develop best practice guidelines for enabling community consultation in planning to take place in an inclusive and engaging way.

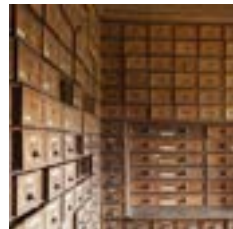
Strand 2: testing places and spaces

MEET



COLLABORATE

CO-CREATE



CURATE

EXHIBIT



PRESENT

SOCIALISE



ENTERPRISE

Effective public participation in the planning process will come from a combination of digital and physical engagement. The quality of places where people can meet and work together is critical to building capacity in communities to shape their neighbourhoods.

In the present day, the Urban Rooms Network neatly describe an Urban Room as a ‘..space where people can come together to help create a future for their local area.’ Following from this, our Urban Rooms share a focus on the built environment, with an open door, supporting creative practice and being embedded in the communities they serve. A real draw of our pilot projects is celebrating the diverse practices that comes from the distinct places from which we operated our Urban rooms . This didn’t only apply to the neighbourhoods and contexts in which we worked but also the diverse social and political landscapes of the four nations.

We can credit Edinburgh as a birthplace for the urban room. It would be no exaggeration to describe Patrick Geddes as a polymath who, at the turn of the nineteenth century was a sociologist, conservationist, educationalist and town planner. Geddes’ Outlook Tower in the shadow of the castle was realised in 1892 as an ‘urban observatory for the modern age’ and ‘world’s first sociological laboratory’. To understand urban development, Geddes deliberately decamped to live in the urban slums of Edinburgh’s Old Town, with the express intention of inspiring and mobilising his community to action. His Edinburgh Social Union was designed to enable residents to understand, represent and transform their own neighbourhoods and the Outlook Tower was the dedicated urban room where this activity could be nurtured and developed.

WHAT SHOULD AN URBAN ROOM DO?

Strand 3: engaging with Edinburgh's communities

Collecting individual surveys is valuable to understand how effective consultation might be, but understanding how interest groups and organisations work and how they can thrive is equally important. For our project, we wanted to know how organisations use spaces effectively and how face-to-face dialogue and co-creation activities can be properly supported.

Edinburgh has a distinctive city centre, a world heritage site, a commercial, finance and services centre with a residential population that is mostly affluent and healthy. Edinburgh also has neighbourhoods with high levels of social exclusion, lower incomes, less economic opportunities and poorer health.

A key theme of this project is how and where communities should engage in the planning process for greatest effect. We realised early on in our preliminary consultations that a city centre location as a place to bring communities together has the advantage of being at the core of a centralised public transport network. At the same time we need to be mindful that it reinforces the gravitational pull of central Edinburgh on the rest of the city.

We worked with our partners at City of Edinburgh Council and EVOC to identify a model that brings engagement to local centres. We were particularly keen that we reached areas that had not been over-consulted, over-promised and subject to 'consultation fatigue'. What we wanted to discover were techniques to promote engagement as well as understand what respondents embedded in local neighbourhoods thought about inclusion and the ability to engage effectively in local development.



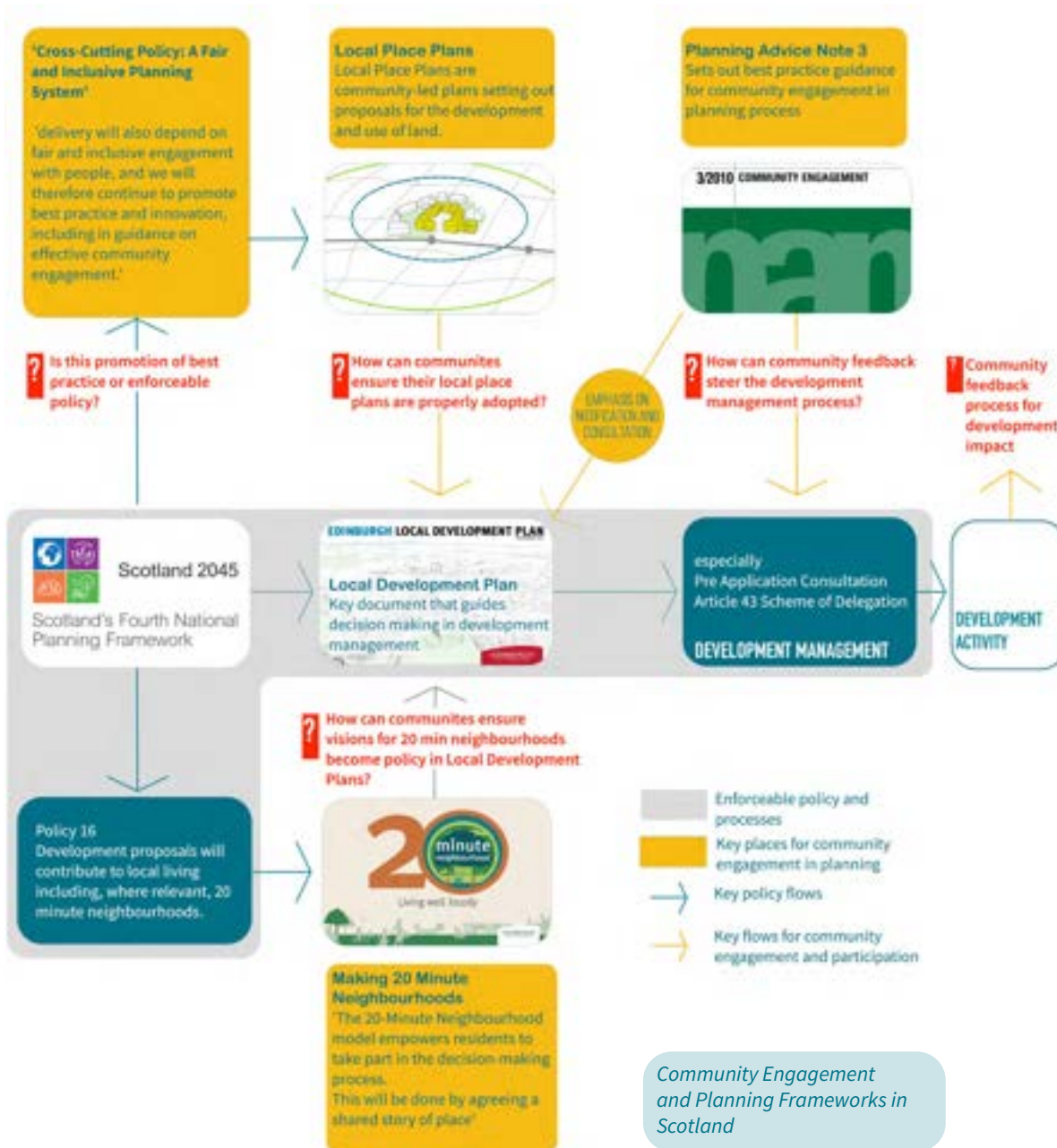
20 Minute Neighbourhood Locations as identified by the City of Edinburgh Council with our project locations in the City Centre, Restalrig and Liberton

Strand 4: exploring policy to promote participation in planning

Our Edinburgh Neighbourhood is a project taking place as the landscape of regulation and policy in Scotland is changing. There is a desire for planning to rebalance to empower; as a way of delivering well-being, net zero carbon and resilient communities. In the interviews we held before our Urban Room, many respondents talked about streamlining the management of the planning process to free up resources to devote to proactive planning all about empowerment and inclusivity.

The Planning (Scotland) Act of 2019 provides for Local Place Plans as vehicles for communities to become active participants in the future development of their settlements. The forthcoming National Planning Framework 4 focuses on community engagement delivered through the idea of 20 minute neighbourhoods.

Whether we talk about 20 minute neighbourhoods or fifteen minute cities, precise times and distances are irrelevant to a principle that most life necessities and some of life's pleasures should be easily accessible on foot. 20 Minute Neighbourhoods is more a way of thinking about how we make our settlements more sustainable through reducing car use, increasing well being, and building community cohesion. As planning policy in Scotland orients towards these goals, the role of grass roots organisations and citizens will be critical in turning such aspirations into reality.



In Our Edinburgh Neighbourhood, we have used these developments as a way to spark conversations and debate about local place plans and 20 minute neighbourhoods. Our surveys have captured data about the places people value and critically, where they are found. How communities value their own localities is a critical starting point to building 20 minute neighbourhoods in Scotland.



Participation

Participation Survey Results

Table 1
Reasons for non participation: nearly always because of a lack of communication

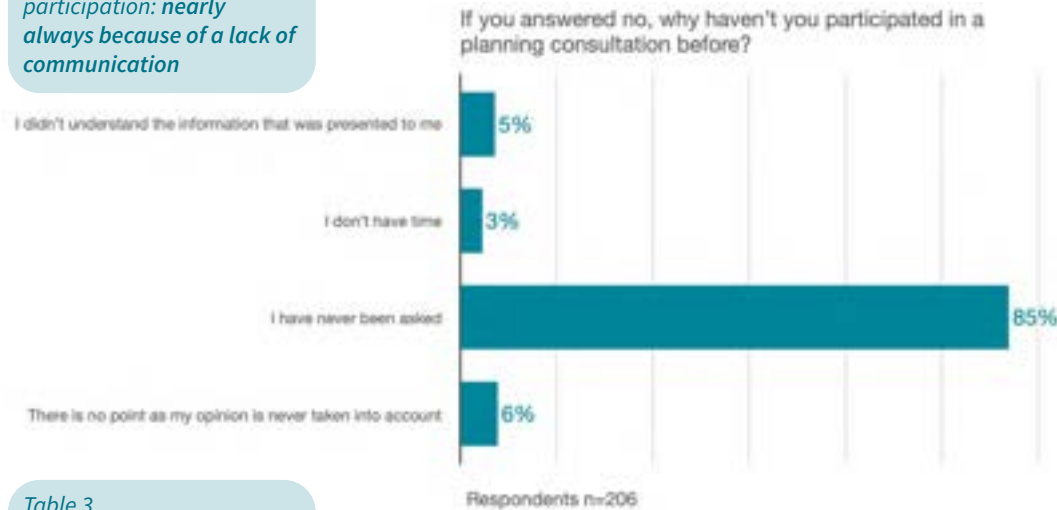


Table 3
Benefits of participation; ownership and a sense of control are thought important

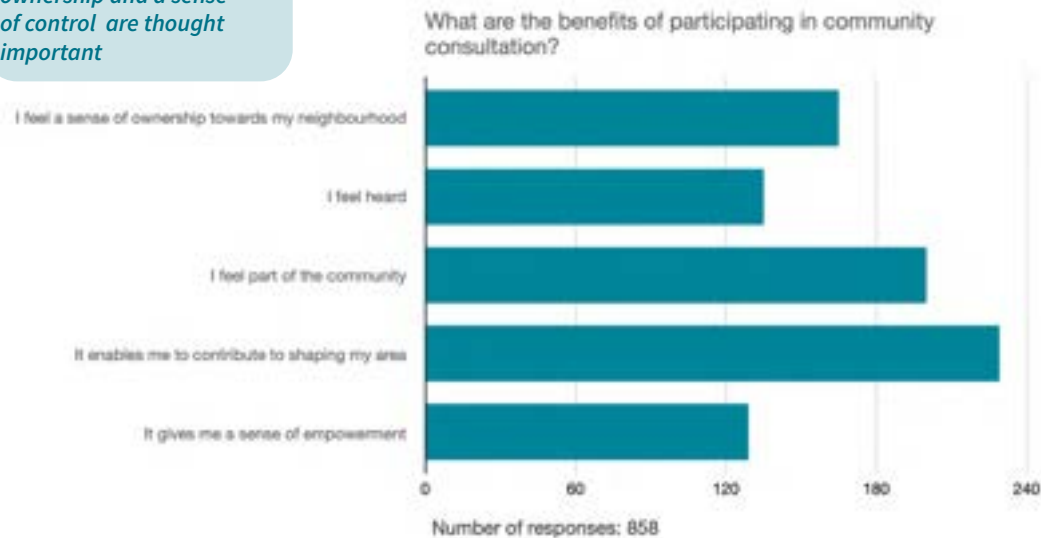


Table 2
Most people have not participated in a planning consultation

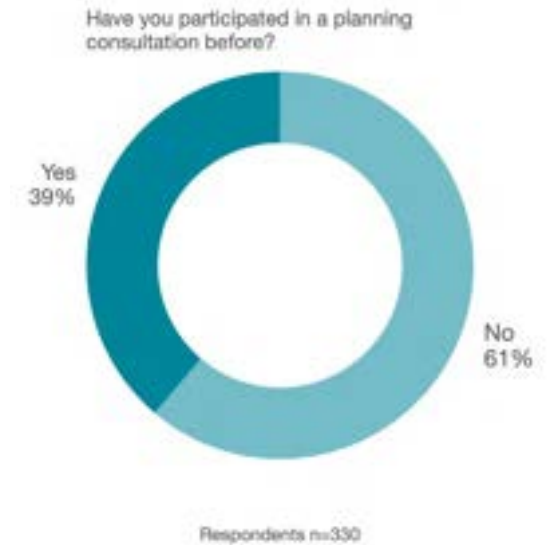
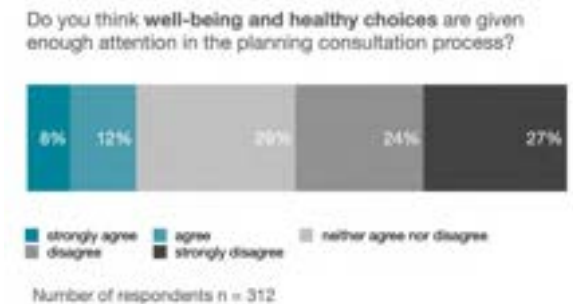
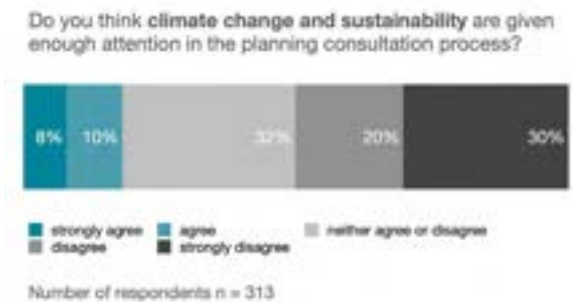


Table 4
Nearly all respondents agree that climate change, sustainability, well-being and health are poorly represented in the planning consultation process in equal measure.



Urban Room

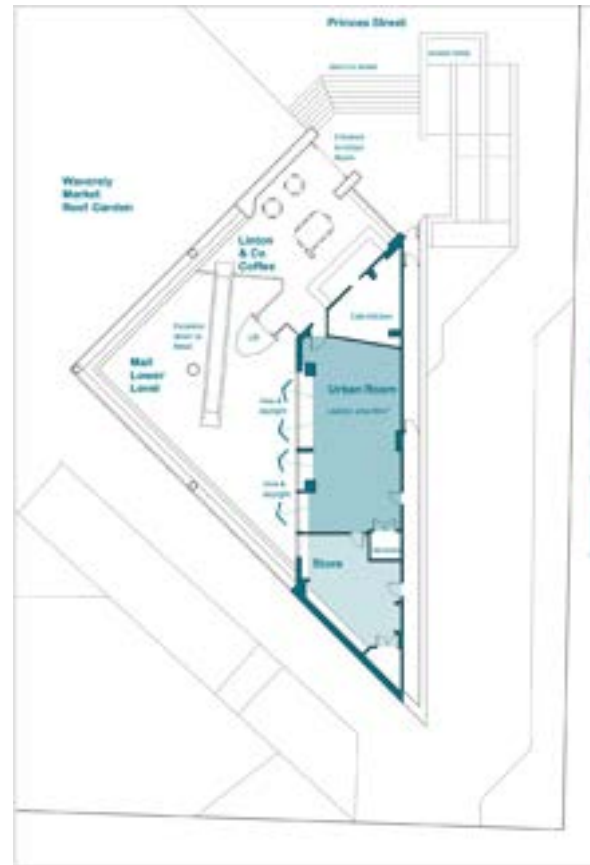


Our Urban Room

We were offered space by Moorgarth Properties Ltd at Waverley Market. This is a shopping mall adjacent to Edinburgh's main railway station. This allowed us all to explore how retail centres can be re-purposed as city centres orient away from retail and more to services, food and entertainment in the wake of Covid-19 and the continued rise of e-commerce.



Location map showing urban room in the context of Edinburgh City Centre. Where multiple urban rooms in a city is not possible, a central location works well with public transport networks to allow easy access from many neighbourhoods.



Plan of our Urban Room within Waverley Market. It has easy access from Princes Street. There is no shop front that means impulse visitors are uncommon. Whether this is important relates to the nature of activities we want to see in an Urban Room.

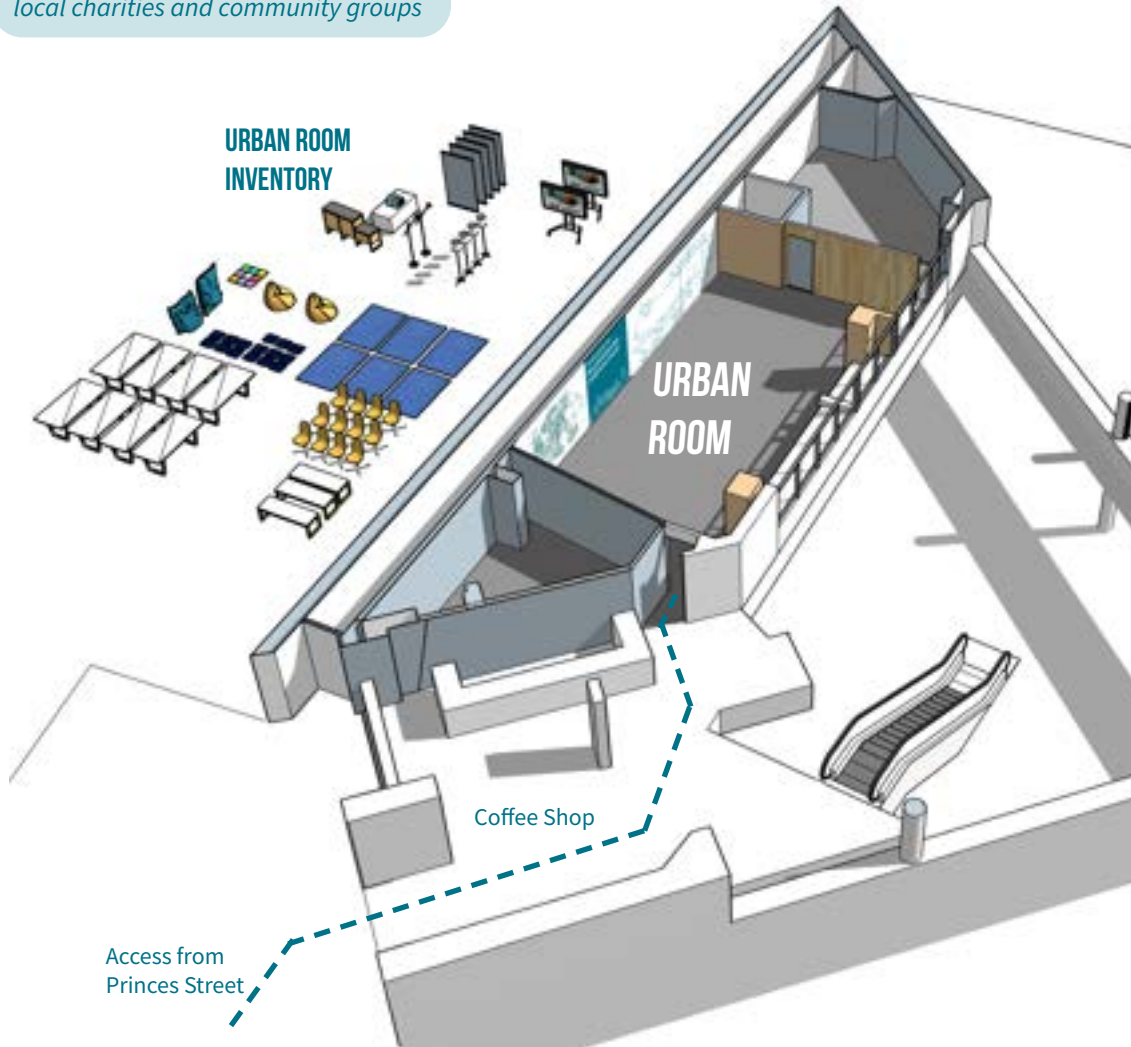


Our Waverley Market Urban Room ready for use. To the right, windows with good daylight and outlook. The ceiling height and room proportions have a comfortable scale for use throughout the day. The room is set up for a meeting, part of the programme of events and activities held over the pilot period.

Urban Room Fit Out



When our project ended, all the furniture and fitout were donated to local charities and community groups



Our Edinburgh Neighbourhood's Urban Room lies somewhere between a room for hire and a community hall. To work, it needs to host people working together over sustained periods of time. If it remains mostly as a venue for exhibition and talks, then it might become a place where audiences are talked at, rather than helping people talk with each other.

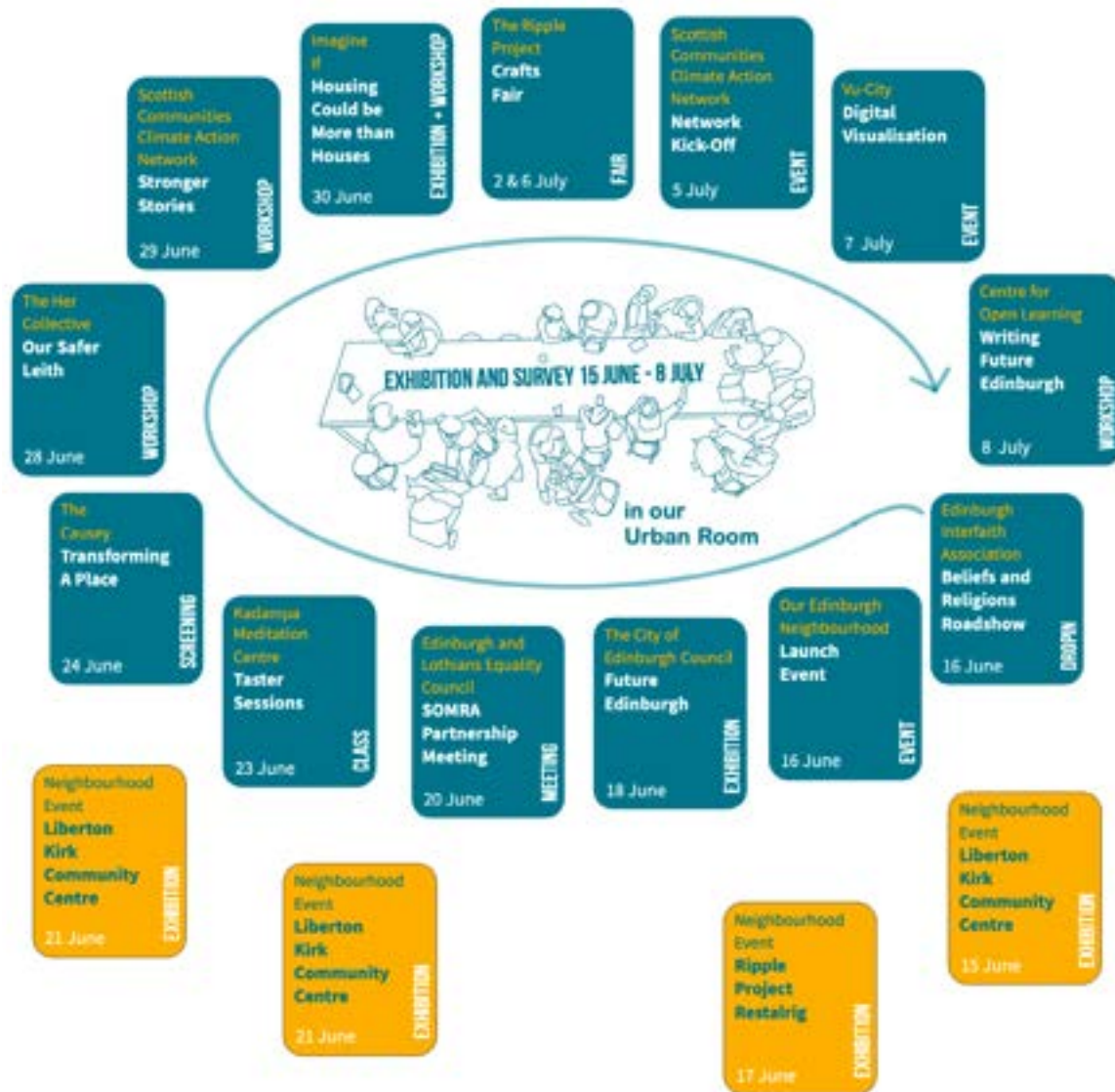
Our proposal was a light touch fit out. We wanted to support a range of activities that included our core exhibition and a place for visitors to participate in our project. Being next to a cafe meant that we would engage and complete surveys in a relaxed environment often over a cup of coffee. Along with this, we wanted to support talks, meetings, co-creation events, workshops, drop-in events, fairs, and well-being sessions.

We looked to provide a space to be as adaptable as possible and so we established an inventory of furniture and fittings to accommodate a range of activities. This includes soft floor coverings, furnishings and accent lighting to adjust how the space feels; to make it accessible for those not usually engaged with workspaces. Along with a set of tables and seating, we included digital displays for projection and exhibition screens.

Critical to this is generous storage closed off but adjacent to the main space. During the pilot project, we were able to set up the urban room to suit the requirements of each event organiser with as much or as few fixtures and fittings as desired. For an urban room to work as a place to create Local Place Plans, often material both digital and physical are built up over time and need safe storage. The store should be no less than 25% of the area of the urban room.

For our project we were able to record and document how the urban room was used for a broad range of contrasting activities and we have modelled these compare across different activities.

Using the Urban Room



Our Edinburgh Neighbourhood is about understanding how effective participation works so it can be harnessed to make planning more inclusive and representative of communities. Our urban room was therefore less about a particular project or development but more about discovering how community spaces are used and what's needed to support effective dialogue.

We approached community groups throughout Edinburgh offering use of the room, with no stipulation on any particular activity. Our community partnership manager made contact either directly or with the help of The City of Edinburgh Council and EVOC who were members of our local steering group. From this we put together a programme for the pilot period, with our visiting organisations being primarily responsible for preparing and publicising their events.

We hosted a wide range of activities in the room, that included meetings, workshops, craft fairs, drop-in sessions, classes and launch events. We were able to configure the room in diverse ways to meet the requirements of our guests. We were able to offer the room for closed sessions as well as open-door events. The room lacked a shop front presence but benefited from good daylight and a relaxed, familiar scale to the room proportions.

Over the month, it became clear that passive attractors such as city centre location or adjacency to retail and leisure facilities counted less than sustained publicity and social networking to drive interest and attendance for the activities on offer.

The events reflect many of the issues facing cities, that of carbon reduction and climate action, well-being and how to create dialogue across communities that include faith, sustainable development and the creation of resilient and sustainable neighbourhoods.

event highlights



16th June
Edinburgh Interfaith
Association
Beliefs and Religion
Roadshow



18th June
The City of Edinburgh
Council
Future Edinburgh



23rd June
Kadampa Meditation Centre
Taster Sessions

event highlights



24 June
The Causey
Transforming a Place



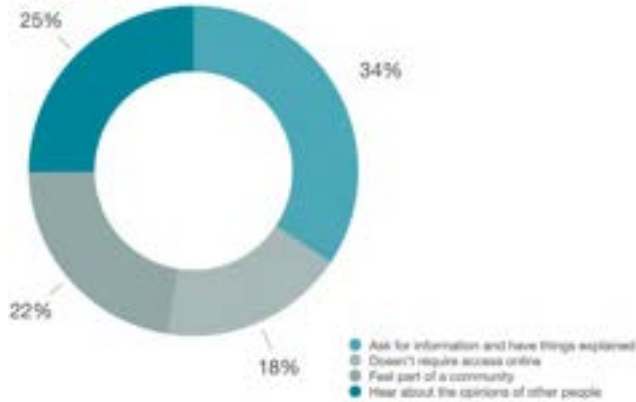
29 June
Scottish Communities
Climate Action Network
Stronger Stories Workshop



30 June
Imagine If
Housing could be more
than houses

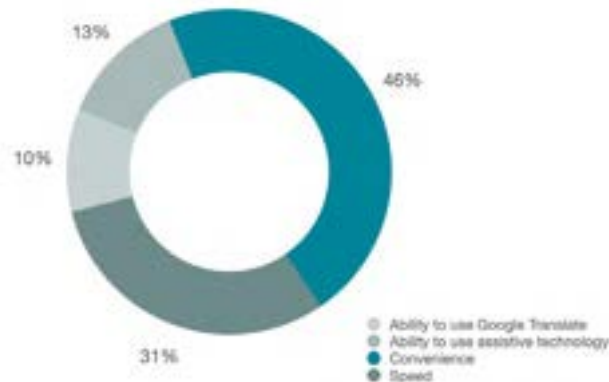
Using our Urban Room Survey Results

What do you think are the benefits of doing community consultation face to face?



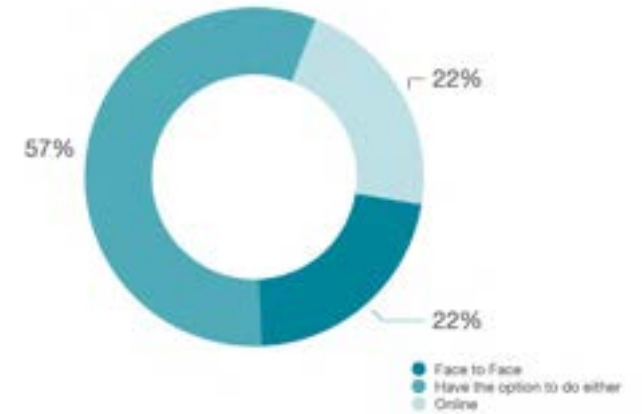
Responses n = 708

What do you think are the benefits of doing community consultation online?



Responses n=566

How would you prefer to be consulted on planning decisions?



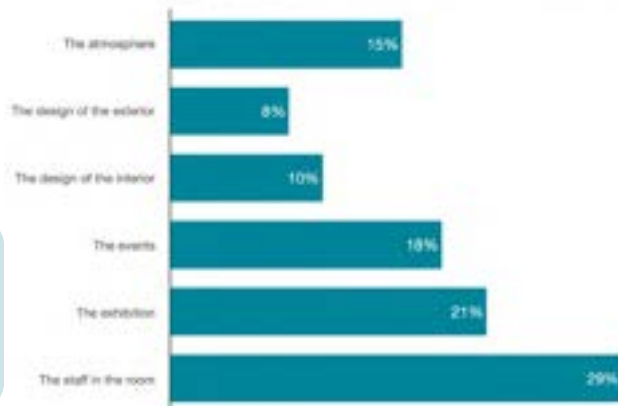
Respondents n=323

Table 5
Main benefits of face to face was accessible support and information with 18% not wishing to use digital tools

Table 6
Main benefits here are convenience and speed

Table 7
A strong preference for include the option of both face to face and online.

If you visited our central Edinburgh Urban Room, what made you want to come and participate in our Quality-of-Life consultation?

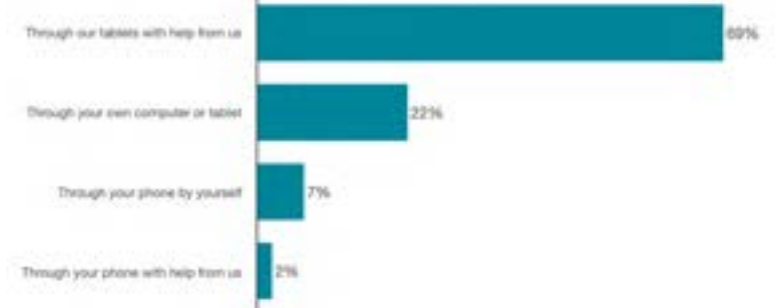


Number of responses n = 273

Table 8
Important feedback on our urban room. Split between design (33%), events and exhibition (39%) and our staff (29%)

Table 9
Shows the need for assistance with tables and digital entry of survey and mapping preferences by participants

How did you access the digital platform?



Number of responses n = 275

Working in Neighbourhoods



..it's about diversity in the community, making sure everyone has the chance to have their say..



..doing this is fine but you don't get the opportunity to interact with other people, community workshops get people together to interact..



To promote inclusion, along with our city centre urban room, we ran a series of pop-up exhibitions to take our project out to local neighbourhoods. We know that the residential demographic in central Edinburgh is overwhelmingly middle-class, young to middle-aged adults who are well-educated and healthy. We wanted to reach out to areas of Edinburgh that are currently under-served with less easy access to retail, essential services, employment opportunities and recreation.

We used the insight of our existing partnerships, and steering group members. We identified Liberton as undergoing sustained development plans, including a new high school and a stream of new housing developments. We wanted to reach out to affected residents; especially as the area has twice as many retirees and is considered in most measures 20% more deprived than the City Centre.

For our second pop-up, we worked in Restalrig in north-west Edinburgh. Here, 20% of the area's households live on an annual income lower than £15k. We connected with the Ripple project, one of the few community centres in the area, made this a good target to continue our research.

Having hosted two remote pop-ups in Liberton and Restalrig with positive results. We saw a deeper sense of engagement; people felt comfortable sitting down and taking their time to give their insights in a familiar environment. Our presence in local neighbourhoods encouraged visits to central Edinburgh to our urban room and we hosted local groups in a central location, which included the Ripple Project running a craft fair at Waverley Market.

We suggest that a static urban room is useful as a consistent community space. We also believe that remote pop-up exhibitions diversified our engagements and yielded deeper, more honest conversations that enriched our findings.

Team Building for our Urban Room

Our project needed to engage in two ways with Edinburgh's communities. The first, to approach groups and organisations across the city to gauge interest in the project and whether they wished to use our urban room. Then during the pilot project, we wanted to reach out both in the city centre and local neighbourhoods to find out attitudes to engagement in planning and understanding the places people value in and around Edinburgh.

Irina Tavera was appointed as our community partnership manager and Irina networked effectively across Edinburgh using our local steering group to help make contacts and establish Our Edinburgh Neighbourhood. In the second, active stage of the project, Irina used her professional experience in community organisation to produce a volunteer plan for our five student ambassadors. It includes a clear statement of intent, volunteer profile, role descriptor, training plan and management framework. Our ambassadors helped host our urban room, recorded events, conducted surveys and assisted people with our digital platforms. We paid particular attention to building canvassing skills to drive interest in the room and surveys to compensate for the lack of shopfront.

Learning points from building our team were:

1. Volunteers and support staff need to have good training in public facing roles, both to engage effectively with people and to cope with a variety of sometimes challenging situations. It's not something 'just to go out and do'.
2. Even with digital platforms, easily accessible and supportive people on the ground can make surveys and information gathering a rewarding experience both for the public and for project staff.
3. Effective feedback from colleagues working on the ground can allow for changes, corrections and enhancement of the survey and engagement process.
4. Survey projects properly set up can provide training and experience that increases skills and confidence in our colleagues especially for those early in their working lives.



..Speaking to the director of the Ripple Project and seeing how much she cares about her community.. very friendly people in the Ripple event, I really enjoyed interact with people there. And the staffs there also help us to complete the surveys..

.. Probably speaking to a lady who had just lost her husband. She was a carer for him for years. I passed on some resources I thought would help her as I volunteer at a community project and we had a lovely chat.. Playing the Imagine If game..

.. It was really nice to see all the crafts and speak to the people who visited the room as they were very interested in chatting..... It's really useful to approach groups as I think people are less shy about taking the survey when they're able to discuss it with one another.

.. The urban room is beginning to pick up the pace in foot traffic. It's great to see.. People approached us to ask about the survey!. Speaking to a couple of young women who'd lived here a long time but never participated on a community survey..

feedback from our ambassadors

Outreach training – Best practices

- Check your vibe – perception and situation
- KISS vs. KISS
- Check your own unconscious biases -
- Utilising plain language
- Respect requests for disengagement
- Be truthful, if you do not know the answer to a question, it is okay to say you do not know.
 - Members of the public are welcome to email our generic email for follow ups - support@urbanroom.ed.ac.uk
- Do not tolerate abusive behaviour, immediately remove yourself from the situation and report if necessary
- Data tracking - bit.ly/2Lkz1m3
 - How many people spoken to?
 - How many surveys completed?
 - How many pins dropped?
 - How many people enter the Urban room?

Outreach training – ASKS

Urban Room Management –

- **Opening checklist**
 - ✓ Arrive between 9:00 - 9:30AM (depends on events that day)
 - ✓ Check calendar of events, emails and team chat for any recent updates- Irina will contact one of you to the event organizer if not present in the Urban room.
 - ✓ Put up banners and place signs
 - ✓ Add event of the day to sandwich board
 - ✓ Canvas Waverley Market interior and perimeter to let people know of Urban room and event.
 - ✓ Support event if relevant
 - ✓ Ensure those in attendance drop a pin and complete a survey
- **Closing checklist**
 - ✓ 8:45 PM – Warn anyone in space that we will be shutting soon.
 - ✓ Put away signs and tidy up space.
 - ✓ Complete daily data report
 - ✓ 9:00 - 9:30pm – Go home!

Our Edinburgh Neighbourhood Goals

In 4 weeks, we collect will aim to:

- 10 Social media testimonials
- 180 Surveys
- 500 Pins dropped

And each of you will aim to complete:

- 2 Social media testimonials
- 30 Surveys
- 80 pins dropped

#OurEdinburgh neighbourhood

Put down some digital pins about places you love in Edinburgh. Tell us about how well your voice is heard.

Welcome to our Edinburgh neighbourhood
This project is to find out what you think will make your voice more effective in steering development in your Edinburgh neighbourhood. We're exploring how both digital and online platforms can reach more people especially those who've been excluded.

Tell us about Your Edinburgh Neighbourhood
We need your help not just telling us what's important in your neighbourhood, but where and why. So in our Quality of Life map, show us what's nice and a real reason to love your neighbourhood. Tell us how well you think the consultation process works.

What was on?...What activities did we hold?
Our Exhibition in our Urban Room at Waverley, started to wrap closed. We hosted a range of events and activities not only in central Edinburgh but in local neighbourhoods too. Thanks to everyone who participated.

ouredinburghneighbourhood

42 posts 79 followers 16 following

our edinburgh neighbourhood
Community Center
00000, Edinburgh - We want to know what you think will make your voice more effective in steering development in your neighbourhood.
ouredinburghneighbourhood.org

Our Edinburgh Neighbourhood

57 Tweets

GET YOUR VOICE HEARD

Our Edinburgh Neighbourhood
@edinburgh_our

We want to know how to make your voice more effective in steering development in your neighbourhood. Urban room in Waverley Mall to launch on June 14th.

Our Edinburgh Neighbourhood: Tell us what's important to you

Tell us how well you think the consultation process works to make a better ongoing resolution of local knowledge. We need your help to develop the Quality of Life map of Edinburgh. Show us what's nice and a real reason to love your neighbourhood.

What's on?...What activities did we hold?
Our Exhibition in our Urban Room at Waverley, started to wrap closed. We hosted a range of events and activities not only in central Edinburgh but in local neighbourhoods too. Thanks to everyone who participated.

How do I Participate?
1. Comment on the map of your neighbourhood before it ends.
2. Tell us a bit about yourself before it ends.
3. Answer a few questions about your experience of living in Edinburgh before it ends.

Our Edinburgh Neighbourhood
What do you love about your neighbourhood? Pin your favourite location that improves your quality of life.

Participation survey
Tell us what you think about work used to effectively engage in the planning process.

Weekly Newsletter
July 9, 2020

Two days left!

Last chance to check out the space before we close our doors on Friday - See our final events below -

- Thursday 7/7 - WuCity 3-D digital visualisation platform - Demo and Discussion (20:00-20:30) - 4:30 PM
- Friday 8/7 - Creative Writing Workshop - Writing Future Edinburgh Centre for Open Learning (9:00-10:00) - 9:00 AM - 11:00 AM

Want the Urban Room furnishings?
We have laser bags, high white chairs, lamps, and pillows and blankets to give away if you interested in any of these furnishings - come pick them up anytime Friday afternoon. For any questions regarding this, feel free to reach out to the Community Partnership Manager.

One last push...
We have heard from so many of you during these past events, you've expressed how you wish this could be a space that is available regularly. The more engagement we can demonstrate through this research, the more compelling the argument will be for it becoming a reality. We need your help to make this happen, use the email templates below for a final push to your networks.

Our Communications

Our Edinburgh Neighbourhood had a relatively short time to establish a communications strategy to publicise the project. We had a presence on the central CCQOL site but we also built our own. Its main purpose was to act as a central port of call for our key stakeholders, to explain the project fully and to act as a launch pad to social media resources. For visitors accessing through social media or linked sites, our central website acted as a comprehensive resource as Our Edinburgh Neighbourhood Developed. Also critical to our project was the Commonplace platform that was used for our survey and mapping activity,

We had a close relationship with Edinburgh Local and Communications and Marketing at the University of Edinburgh and used twitter and instagram as our main social media platforms linking and reposting through our partners.

We also produced traditional posters and flyers to hand out that were effective at reaching different sections of Edinburgh's population along with our exhibition banners. We also gained print coverage in local publications such as [the Broughton Spurtle](#), and a national TV news slot to explain the project. During the pilot period we produced a regular newsletter distributed by email to our contact list of partners and stakeholders that was useful in generating and sustaining interest in the project.

Key Learning Points:

1. Social media takes time to build a substantial presence, projects of short duration have a challenge to build a broad online presence.
2. Maintaining a central website as a resource to link to and link from, that contains the core information for the project.
3. As with many other aspects of Our Edinburgh Neighbourhood, combining digital, print and people reached wider audiences and worked well for inclusivity.
4. Mailing regular email updates maintained interest and engagement in the project.



Reflecting on our Urban Room: Imagine If

Imagine If are a team of three working in the field of architecture, urban design and community engagement driven by the desire to improve the standard of housing and make it more sustainable. They ask the question *'How can we make a generation driven by convenience more sustainable?'* Chiara Finland and Ellie Burroughs hosted a workshop in our urban room to demonstrate their Imagine If Game. It challenges us to think about the private places in our home and the spaces we're willing to share. We spoke with them afterwards to talk about community, engagement and our urban room. Imagine If thought it important that concepts such as 20 minute neighbourhoods should not only be physically mapped but also to find ways to collect and represent how people feel about a place.

'There is a desire for people to become more involved in the places that they live, and everyone who walked through the door and came into the open room had something to say about the place that they lived, good or bad; and that's really important for a platform to express that.'

They thought that both digital and physical mapping had a place but is removed from 'the social layer of place'.

'I liked the virtual map. And I liked the drawn map. And I think both were great tools in themselves. And, yeah, I really liked them both as a record.'

They thought our marker map was a powerful tool.

'You know, a lamppost which may seem meaningless to a designer who is not from that place. It could be an actual really important point, for kids in the local area'

In Edinburgh, what was notable and was borne out by our broader survey data was an idea of Edinburgh as a series of smaller communities,





+ link to Imagine If



Reflecting on our Urban Room: Imagine If

'It's like a city made up of small villages...I think it's the greenness that really shone through and the fact that people are really appreciating having green patches on their doorsteps.'

Chiara talked about the importance of 'investing in people again' and the importance of a neutral physical place as not everything can be achieved online.

'Communities don't often get the opportunity to have that sort of sleek thinking space' that many venues and events had set agendas and there was a need for places to encourage free thinking and an organic development of ideas. For our urban room....one of the things I loved most about it was a sort of spontaneity of not knowing what you're going to get from it, the level of discussions, the range of discussions and the diversity of discussions. Either you're never going to come away empty handed, do it always do something.'

However, Image If were quite right to say it would be to 'find a space that's maybe got a slightly higher footfall and prominence. However overall in thinking about an Urban Room for Edinburgh they said;

'Well, why can't this happen?' as 'there is ambition and vision that from a strategic point of view needs to be addressed. But mechanisms for delivery always fall flat. So if this research can help kind of realize some of those ambitions and vision or put some sort of meat in the bones, so to speak, then that would be amazing.'

Reflecting on our Urban Room: Future Edinburgh

Catriona McKenna and Rachel Howe are communications officers at the City of Edinburgh Council. They organised a Future Edinburgh event at our urban room in June. This was an opportunity to talk about a series of projects taking place in Edinburgh and linking them together.

“It gave us a really good platform to start talking about the bigger picture of what’s happening in the city. It acted like a catalyst for us in terms of taking forward a good engagement toolkit and a narrative about what we’re trying to achieve in the city.”

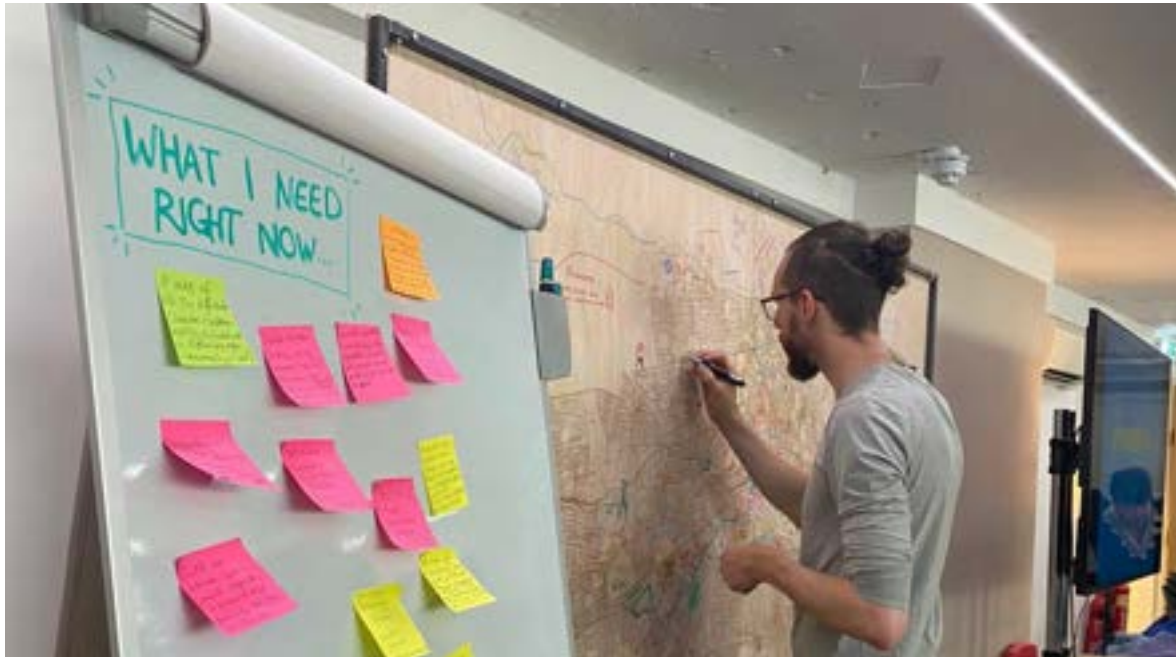
Our urban room worked well to allow time for visitors to talk and discover the many initiatives the Council is taking forward, especially in active travel. Rachel and Catriona thought the urban room was useful because of its importance as a collaborative space. In particular, many voices advocating similar paths to development helps to move beyond any issues taken with an individual organisation.

‘we’re just one organisation within a big city. Everybody has something to bring to the table. And if we all work together, then we can change things.’

Edinburgh was thought to be a city serving many communities, one of which was certainly tourists and short-term visitors who make an increasing contribution to the local and regional economy. The location of the room and Our Edinburgh Neighbourhood’s survey activities picked up on this. It was thought that the central location was important as was driving footfall into the room so it could generate good attendance for outreach events. Nevertheless, it also reflects Edinburgh’s position as a regional centre where visitors have a legitimate interest in how the city develops. Allied to this it was thought important that consultation processes also take place both in central and satellite locations.



[+ link to Future Edinburgh](#)



Reflecting on our Urban Room: SSCAN

The Scottish Communities Climate Action Network and Transition Scotland hub supports community-led action in Scotland to address the climate and nature emergency working for a just, thriving and resilient Scotland. They held two events, the first a Stronger Stories Workshop and then, a networking event. We spoke with Rachel Caplan about our urban room. She experienced our projects both as an Edinburgh resident and representing her organisation. She enjoyed the exhibition explaining the Edinburgh Tradition of Urban Rooms and some tangible examples of how a 20 minute neighbourhood might work.

'So it was just such a great space to hold an event, the location was really good. Central. And it was just beyond the event that we were doing, it gave people something to do and to interact with and engage with.'



Key to this was our physical marker map of Edinburgh

'I could see particularly that big wooden map you had with the chalk markers, like everybody was all over that. People loved that. And they just like being asked to do things and sort of participate, rather than just being in a plain room, which we would have been anywhere else.'

We asked if Edinburgh should have a permanent urban room. Rachel thought it a good idea but observed that there was a network of community buildings that are 'quite fragile' so any new initiative should not detract from existing facilities.

'People are hungry for opportunities to participate and to jump in. Like the way everyone was all over the map, because it's like they've never been asked to do anything like that before... you ask people to participate and contribute something like that in a way they've not been asked before, and that they really want to do it.'

+ [link to SSCAN](#)

Reflecting on our Urban Room: Centre for Open Learning

The University of Edinburgh's Centre for Open Learning held a creative writing workshop called Writing Future Edinburgh; how can our city be transformed and described in stories? The Centre for Open Learning runs a comprehensive programme of events that includes subjects in art and design, languages and creative writing. We spoke with Anthea Coleman-Chang, the Centre's Head of Humanities. The Urban Room fitted well with the strategic outreach work of the University and that a centrally located space was a great opportunity to host a free event. As with other feedback, no shopfront meant finding the venue was a challenge and perhaps deterred walk-ins but that was the only negative point made about the space.

"Oh, maybe I'll just drop in and try this class. But, you know, I don't think there would have been much kind of footfall on the day because it was, it wasn't like in a place that was easy to find. But the space was great once we got there."

Anthea thought the urban room worked well as a place for public deliberation about how cities should be and for whom cities should be for.

"I guess thinking about it from a more proactive and positive way, rather than just being unhappy when something's being built. So seeing it more as a place for the people who lived there, rather than you know, a place for tourists or a way to generate income, but a place for people to have meaningful lives live well."

In talking about future possibilities, a flexible space such as ours was a goal and shared maybe with other institutions such as Napier University and Queen Margaret University;

"..there's this idea of, democratic deliberation, and having people collaborating with universities to have more choice in the sort of lives that they lead.. I think it [the urban room] feels more, like it's on neutral ground.. then people feel like it's a meeting of minds, rather than coming into this quite intimidating looking building. Instead, why not come to this friendly looking shop from where you can do these like fun things? And, you know, tell us about your lives and we'll try and offer you something, too."



+ link to Centre for Open Learning



Our Urban Room in a Retail Environment

Our Edinburgh Neighbourhood's urban room was established in Waverley Mall. Like our sibling project in Reading, this shopping centre is owned by Moorgarth Properties. Our urban room is a city centre which like many is in a state of flux, as traditional retail migrates online exacerbated by the disruption wrought by Covid-19. Shopping malls and retail centres are undergoing structural change, and to Tim Vaughan, Chief Executive Officer of Moorgarth, location will always be paramount. According to him, there has been some substitution of retail for social and non-profit enterprises but they will nearly always need to pay market rent.

So why an Urban Room in a location like Waverley Mall? A prime justification would be that of location; that no matter whether our towns and cities de-densify for more greenspace [as we see in Stockton on Tees], or migrate from retail to tourism as we experience in Edinburgh. An Urban Room as a place to mediate and co-create in a physical space seems vital. An Urban Room such as ours served both the central and outer neighbourhoods so mobility and ease of access remained vital. It may be paradoxical that Urban Rooms in a future 20 minute Scotland might be often found in city centres but as current public transport networks are organised around a hub and spoke models, a central location democratizes access irrespective of neighbourhood.

Tim says that a challenge to shopping centres is that

"the architects that delivered inward looking centres with limited connection to the original high street not only damaged the high street at the time they opened, but become horrendous things to re-purpose, no natural light, deep boxes, expensive service charges"

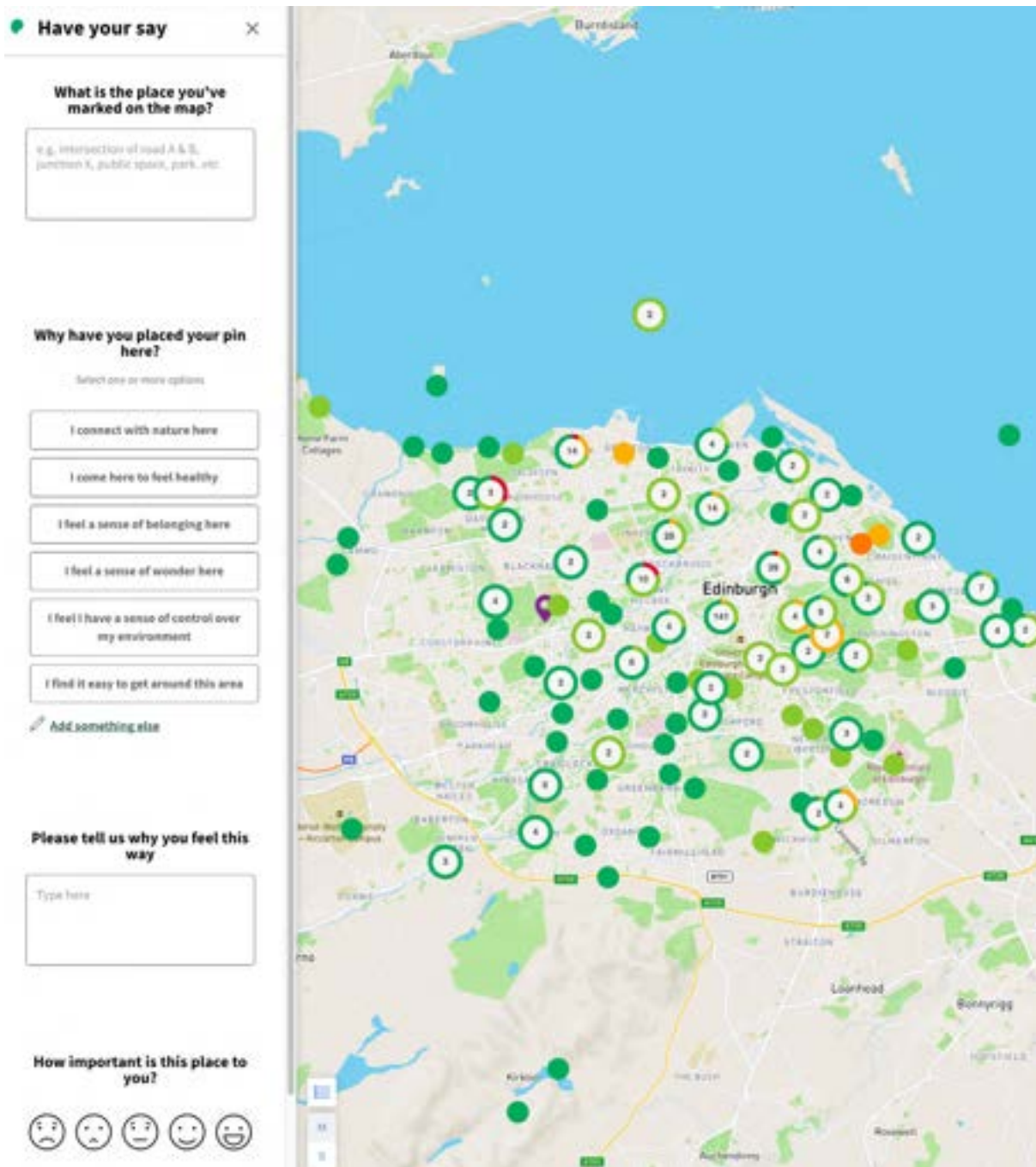
Our urban room at Waverley Market was atypical; it had good proportions and great natural light but for a shopping centre, had no frontage to attract passing custom. Our experience of operating the room poses some fundamental questions about the scope of activities and facilities an urban room should have set against location and visibility.

Mapping



*participants' pins in Edinburgh
as a heatmap*

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Commonplace platform for Our Edinburgh Neighbourhood.
+ Access online. Illustration © Commonplace 2023

Quality of Life Digital Mapping Overview

We wanted to test how digital mapping as deployed on the Commonplace platform can be used to understand more about the places communities value and why. Our project partners the Quality of Life Foundation have created a Framework around six themes that together help define what they describe as lives that should be 'happy, active, sociable, interesting and meaningful'. The six themes of Control, Health, Nature, Wonder, Movement and Belonging are translated into tags for the pins that are:

- 'I have a sense of control over my environment'
- 'I come here to feel healthy'
- 'I connect with nature here'
- 'I feel a sense of wonder here'
- 'I find it easy to get around this area'
- 'I feel a sense of belonging here'

For each pin, through the prompt 'how important is this place to you' participants can rate their choice and also add text to describe a tagged location. We gathered 475 pins that give a good overview of the places people value and the reasons for their selection. From this we tabulate participants' preference for the Quality of Life [table 10] themes and map each theme separately with a selection of free text comments relevant to each theme. Most respondents were positive about the selection they made [table 11] but we also gathered more critical comments for analysis [table 13]. We extracted free text comments from the mapping survey and coded them, by key words and sentiments generated by text [table 12].

Key Learning Points

1. Greenspace, nature and parks were consistently strong both in the pins and their free text tags across a series of Quality of Life themes.
2. The least selected theme was 'I have a sense of control over my environment' a significant indicator in relation to our project's aims and objectives to understand and enhance engagement in the planning process.
3. Heritage and nostalgia featured in most of those free text comments that did not mention greenspace.

Quality of Life Digital Mapping Survey Results



1 Control

"Before the road was closed it was dangerous living in Brunstane Road. The rat run encouraged speeding and led to countless incidents of road rage with threats of violence to residents and damage to our cars! Things are so much calmer now and the street is being used by cyclists and joggers ! A much healthier environment entirely!"

"Sitting overlooking the loch at the Figgate Park is a quiet, tranquil haven away from the busy beach and streets. Here I can tune into nature with all its drama and cycles of life."

"An amazing place to connect with nature and get around the city away from cars." (Water of Leith)

"A great way to cycle through the city away from any vehicles" (Railway Cycle Route)



2 Health

It's fantastic that the entire Esplanade is open to people to get around safely, actively, and healthily. It's a well used and fantastic place to get around by walking or cycling. It's popular with families and people who want some peace away from the traffic of the city. (Portobello)

"I love the cycle paths in this area to do my jogging. Its a lovely relaxing place." (Union Canal)

"A lot of my touch rugby training and games take place at Inverleith" (Inverleith Park)

"I live near here. When I walk up the hill from my house to the Queen's Park helped get good exercise and a view of the city and the Firth of Forth."

Quality of Life Digital Mapping Survey Results



3 Nature

"I come here to get out of my flat and see other human beings as I am isolated due to self-employment (Lochend Park)"

"There is something about the sea that is restorative, calming and brings me in tune with what really matters in life." (Portobello Beach)

"I feel so excluded from green spaces here, because this is for private residents only and I cannot afford the cost, even though I live near by and have no other access to a communal or shared green space. It creates a widening gap between SMID and negative connection to my community."

"This area is very close by to my house and it's a great place to go and connect with nature, particularly the pond with ducks, swan, and birds. It's also a great walking and cycling route down to the Silverknowes Esplanade." (Forthquarter Park)

4 Wonder

"Feel the historical connection too how people use to live" Mary King's Close)

"Big skies and space" (Newhaven Harbour)

"There is something about the sea that is restorative, calming and brings me in tune with what really matters in life. " (Portobello Beach)

"Beautiful green space with a great walking routes. Looks different to the rest of Edinburgh and always relatively peaceful." (Roseburn Park)

I am inspired by Sophia Jex-Blake's plaque as one of the Edinburgh Seven first women doctors (Bruntsfield and Whitehouse Loan)

Beautiful castle view behind the fountain (Ross Bandstand)

Quality of Life Digital Mapping Survey Results



5 | Movement

"It is amazing to have the cycle path so near to home, it is peaceful, beautiful and also so useful." (Blackhall Cycle Path)

"It is very close to my home but in minutes takes you from a busy suburban area to a countryside haven." (Kirkgate, Leith)

"Community feel in summer, great views of Edinburgh skyline and over the Meadows below. Connects to many directions for walks." (Bruntsfield Links)

"At the moment this junction is dangerous and traffic heavy. A lot of nursery-school children actively travel through this junction, but it is unsafe for them to do so in it's present condition." (McDonald Road/Broughton Road)

"A beautiful stand of Scots Pines that protects you from the worst of the wind but still gives you an open view of the Pentlands. It's one of my favourite walks."



6 | Belonging

"I trained to be a teacher here and it gave a job I loved for 36 years" (Moray House Teacher Training College)

"I enjoy chatting to the friendly shop owner and is a good place to buy groceries that's near my house" (Shaukat's Shop)

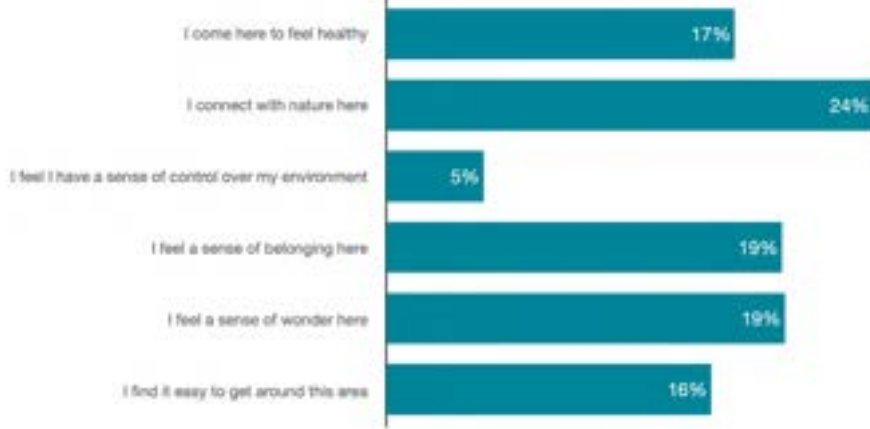
"As an Irish person away from home this is a place where I meet other Irish people and feel a part of an Irish community abroad." (Kitty O'Shea's Pub)

"I am 72 years old. My parents both lived in this area before they met and married. Growing up we had many trips that started here then we walked along Silverknowes and onto the waterfall at Cramond."

"I volunteer at the community project and its a very non judgemental, kind space." (Grassmarket Community Centre)

Digital Mapping Results

Reasons for placing digital map pin: 'Why have you placed your pin here?'



Number of responses: n = 695

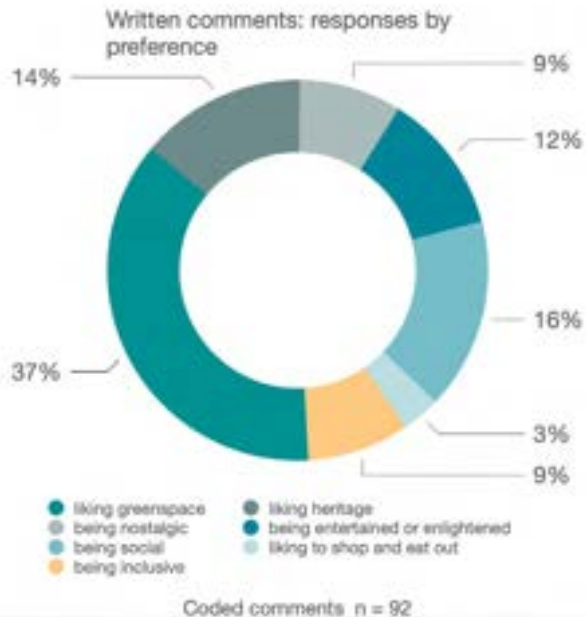
Table 10
most respondents choosing nature also chose health. 'Sense of belonging' was an indicator that corresponded more to the built environment

How important is this tagged place to you?



Number of respondents n = 470

Table 11
The vast majority of written comments on tagged places were positive.



Coded comments n = 92

Table 12
We coded written responses attached to the tagged pins; with an emphasis seen elsewhere about greenspace. Heritage and nostalgia strongly featured too.

Critical Responses to tagged pins [in unhappy/neutral responses]

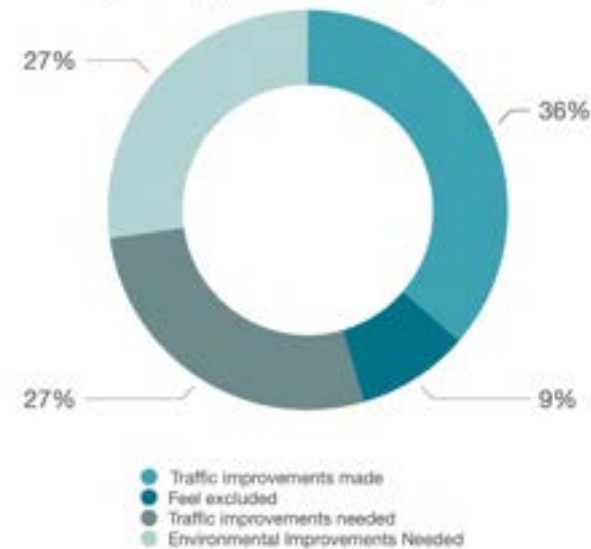


Table 13
The vast majority of written comments on tagged places were positive. Those comments that were critical concerned streets and mobility balanced between the need for change and criticism of change.

Digital Mapping 20 Minute Neighbourhood

Table 14
survey pins placed by
postcode

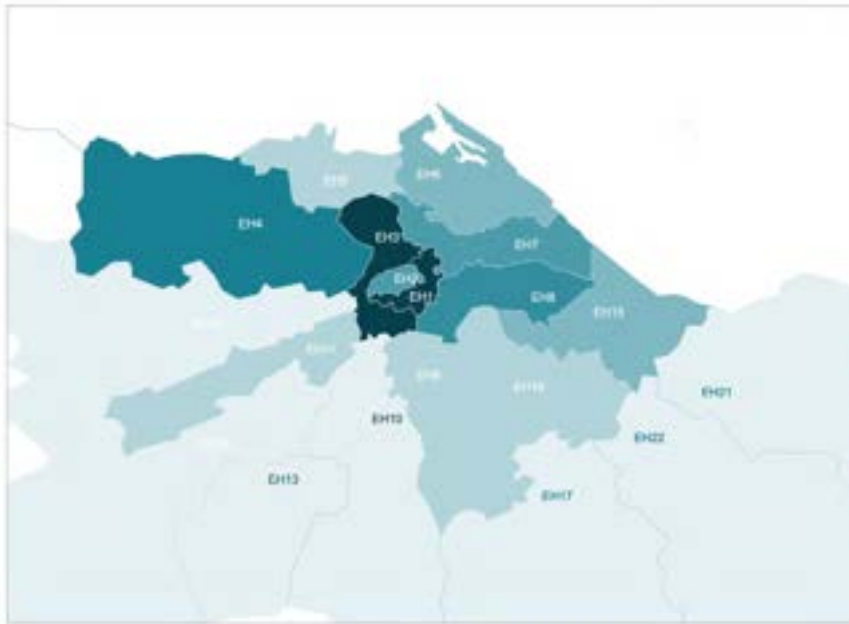


Table 15
survey participants'
home neighbourhood

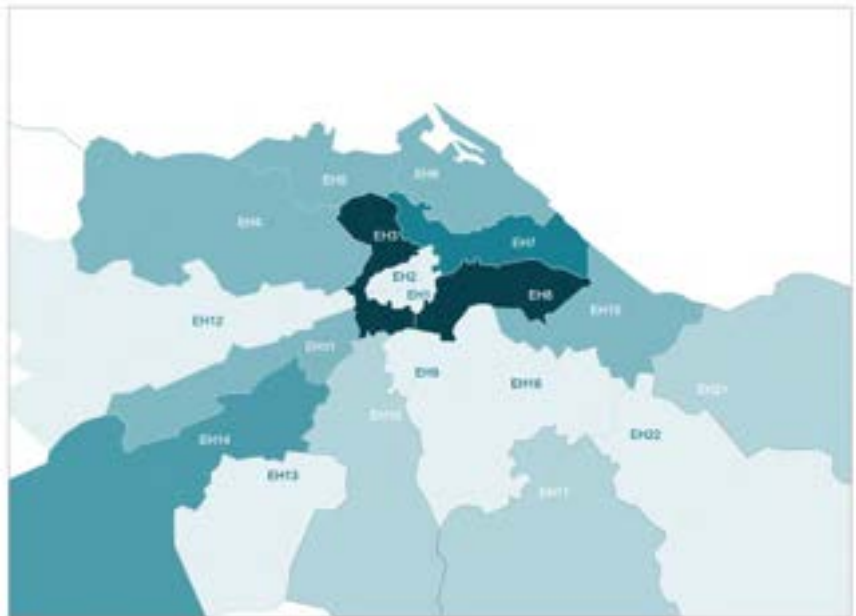
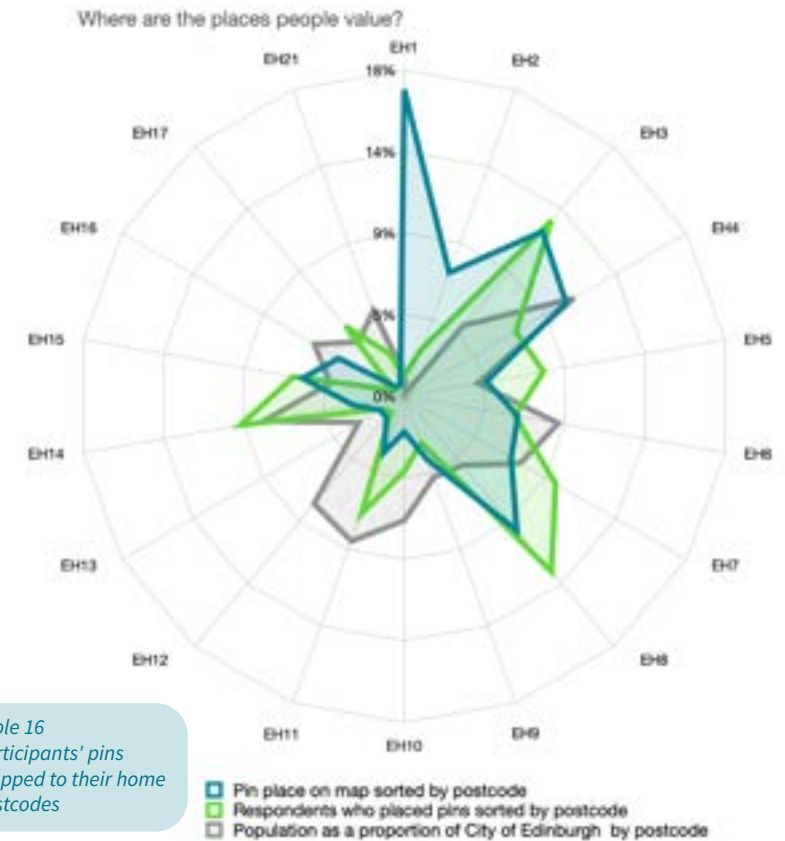


Table 16
participants' pins
mapped to their home
postcodes



20 Minute Neighbourhoods are places where people can meet their day-to-day needs within a 20 minute walk of their home. Key features of a 20 Minute Neighbourhood in a Scottish context map to many of the Quality of Life themes such as 'identity and belonging', 'moving around' and influence and sense of control'. For 20 minute neighbourhoods to be successful, then an indicator of potential would be places people choose to value close by. Our survey allows for precise mapping of tagged places that are married to participant's home postcode.

Our survey shows that participants tend to value places outside their own neighbourhood in the outer neighbourhoods of EH10 - EH17.

Our Marker Map



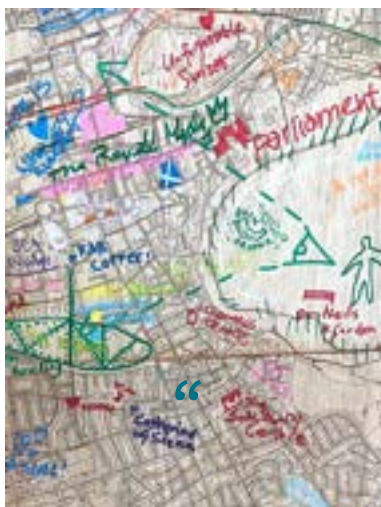
Our Marker Map



We wanted to combine digital and physical methods for gathering information about how people value place. The Commonplace platform offered a facility to precisely geolocate Quality of Life markers to an online map. To complement this we made a 'marker map'.

We made a map made from ply panels for durability with the streets of Edinburgh laser etched to the surface. In use we wanted to hold to the following principles.

- [1] Anyone can mark anything they wish on the map, there are no rules about what people can write or draw on the map.
- [2] The map marks all the streets, squares, crescents and roads in Edinburgh but is otherwise blank to avoid giving even unconscious direction about what to add to the map.
- [3] The map is robust and the marks, writing and drawings are permanently recorded.



After that, it's down to everyone else. At first there was a reticence to add to the map, but after a few contributions, people added to it with enthusiasm, insight, creativity, criticism and wit. The Edinburgh Marker Map at the end of Our Edinburgh Neighbourhood was gifted to Waverley Market.

Many of the contributions to the marker map mirror that from the digital survey; that parkland and greenspace in particular were valued. The city centre was most heavily drawn on, again with a preference for parks, but local neighbourhoods were identified especially near to the sea. Neighbourhood contributions often mention 'happiness' or recount fond memories. Without prompting participants not only marked places but identified routes in the city important to them. To the edges of the map, people look beyond Edinburgh; the city as starting point and its broader relationship with the central belt of Scotland.

By the Botanics - 'my happy place'
Liberton: New high school - hurray
Blackford Hill - for the views
Portobello - Love the New High School
Baberton - 'Is missing'

Blackford Hill: for the sunrise
Rose Street - for the pints
Leith Community Croft: Opens Autumn 2022
Liberton - create a community park.
Seafield - rolling eggs at Easter

Sunsets - Corstophine Hill and Calton Hill and the Forth
Ferry Road 'My Inverness cycle started here'
Portobello: watch the waves & swim swim swim
Union Canal: A route to relax

Appendix 1

Participation survey profiles

Respondents' Age

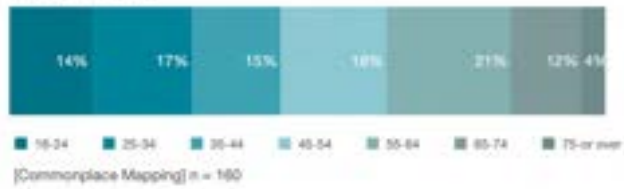


Table 17
Age

What is your gender?

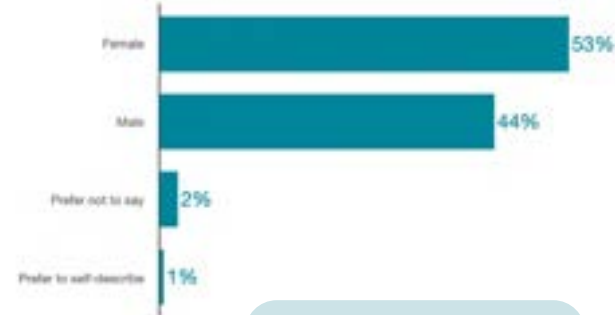


Table 18
Gender

Respondents' connection to Edinburgh

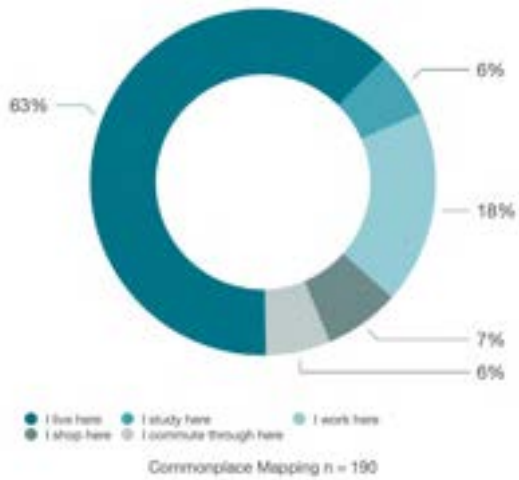


Table 19
Relationship to Edinburgh

Respondents' usual travel modes

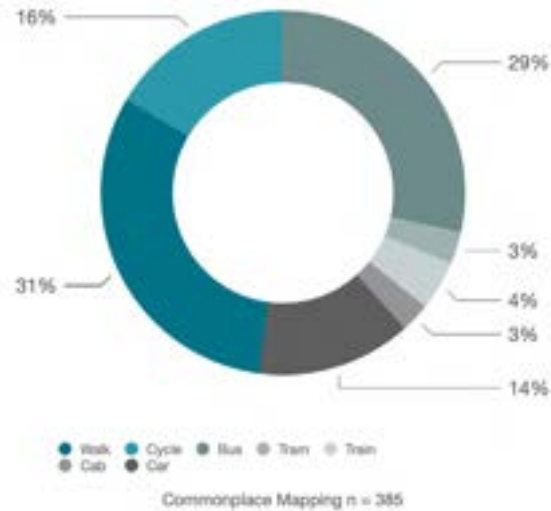


Table 20
Usual travel modes

Respondents' Employment Status

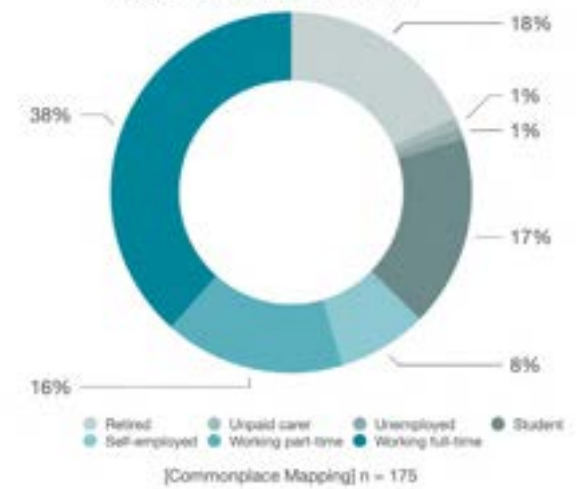


Table 21
Employment status



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THE UNIVERSITY
of **EDINBURGH**

Report Author
 John Brennan
For Our Edinburgh Neighbourhood
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 Irene Tavera: Community Partnership Manager
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Photographs by:
 Ruchit Purohit, Irina Tavera, John Brennan, Caoilin O'Meara, Caelan Sutcliffe, Morven Torrance, Lei Zhang, Lauren McLeron.
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Our Edinburgh Neighbourhood is a part of the Four Nations Community Consultation and Quality of Life Project, funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council. For more information about CCQOL please go to <https://ccqol.org/>

To contact us please go to <https://www.oureidinburghneighbourhood.org>