

## Bike Counters

Bike counts are captured by Linetop ([www.linetop.co.uk](http://www.linetop.co.uk)) covert trail counters installed in each of the phase one trails. PVC pressure slab sensors are buried in a shallow trench in the trail formation and recovered. A separate logger, concealed on the trailside, captures the data on an hourly basis. The counters have been in place since mid-February 2006 and are set up to capture bike passes only - pedestrians and wildlife passing over the sensor are not counted.

The installations are extremely well disguised and almost impossible for trail users to discover. The equipment has proven to be accurate and robust - the sensor can be affected by very cold conditions, but thanks to a mild winter, we only appeared to lose a few days of data during a cold spell in early February.

The counter data is retrieved from the loggers at regular intervals by CVDG and extracted to the proprietary software off site before being exported to a spreadsheet for analysis and charting.

A total of **49,811** passes were captured by the four counters over the first year following the official launch event in late March 2006.

Obviously, users are not riding only one section of trail per visit, so we have averaged the counts (on a daily basis) across the four trails to give a more meaningful measure of use of **13,012** "circuits". This is broadly similar to the methodology employed in the recent evaluation of Laggan Wolftrax<sup>1</sup>.

Averaging across the four trails smooths out the higher levels of use of The Runway, which lies closest to the car park, and lower use of the furthest away trail, Eas Dubh. Note: The counter on The Runway is near to the start of the section and so is not affected by the small number of users who push back up and re-ride the final run.

During the first year of use the trail network was closed or subject to partial closures for 15 weeks due to harvesting operations, construction of new trails and storm damage. If the trail network had been fully available over the first year we estimate that the total number of circuits would have been **15,048**.

It is difficult to work back counter data to actual visitor numbers as users may ride more than one lap, due to relatively short length of trail, and can mix and match sections of trail easily, due to Carron Valley's unique stacked loop network. From observation and

anecdotal evidence we estimate that on each visit riders complete an average of 1.5 circuits of the trail network. This would suggest a total of **8,674** visitors over the first year of use. If the trail network had been fully available over that year, we estimate that visitor numbers would have been **10,032**.

A Forestry Commission Scotland vehicle counter is in place at the entrance to the main car park, but has been inoperative for a considerable period of time. Data from this counter would have provided valuable information on total visitor numbers.

Carron Valley Forest visitor numbers were surveyed during year two (June 2005 to May 2006) of the All Forests Visitor Monitoring project<sup>2</sup>. This estimated annual visitor numbers to the forest at 17,000. However, as fieldwork was undertaken "fairly evenly" across the period, the mountain bike trails were only officially open for two months of the survey period.

Chart 1 shows the averaged weekly trail counts from launch to the most recent full week of data available (27<sup>th</sup> March to 9<sup>th</sup> April 2007). It is clear from the chart that rider numbers slumped during the period of trail closures from late September to mid December. Numbers were very healthy again over the Christmas holiday period before the trails were once again closed following the Hogmanay storms. Since January rider numbers have been very healthy with the week commencing 9<sup>th</sup> April being the busiest since launch.

Chart 2 shows the relative mix of use over the four trails.

**Chart 1: Trail use since launch**

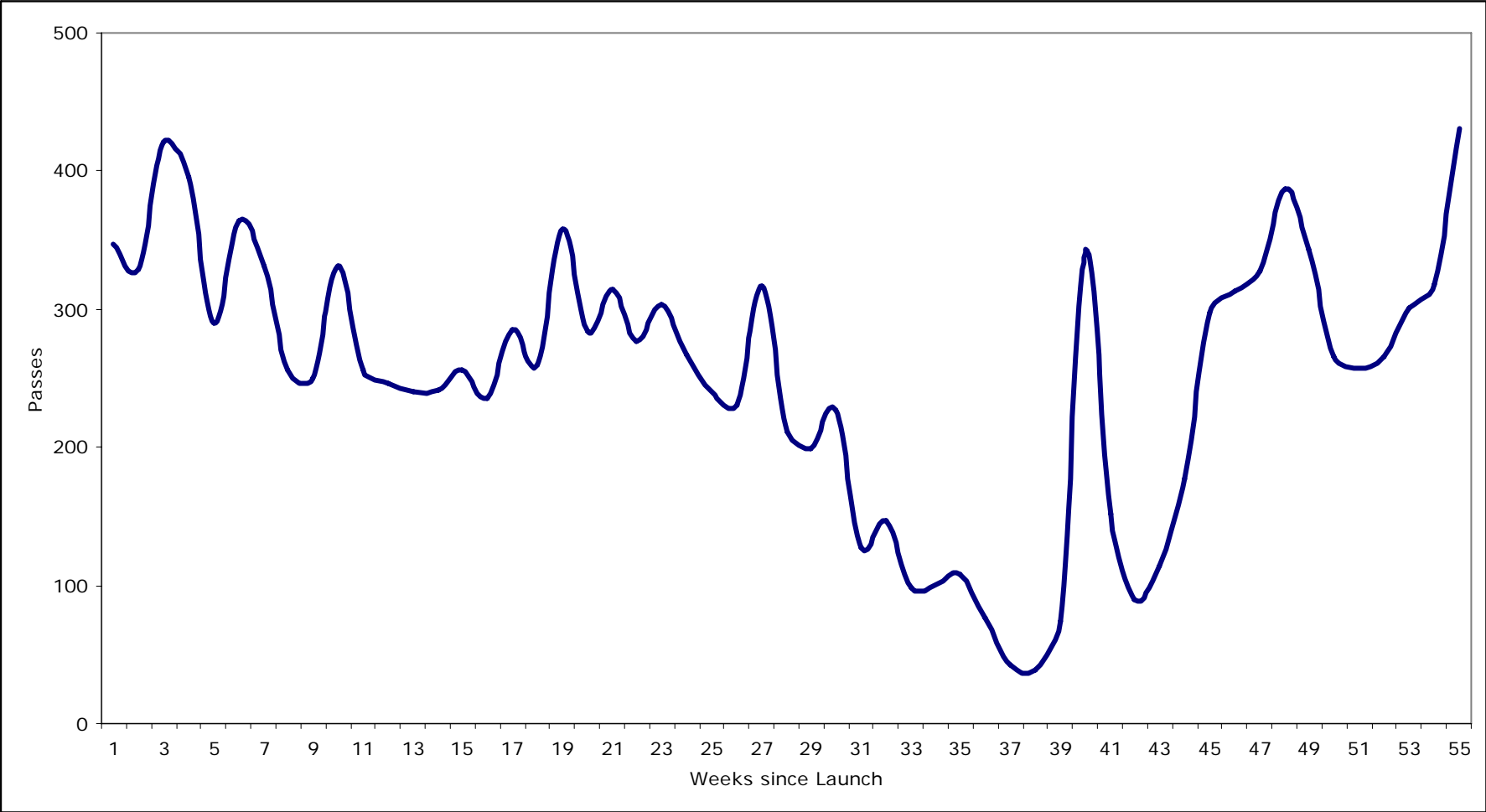
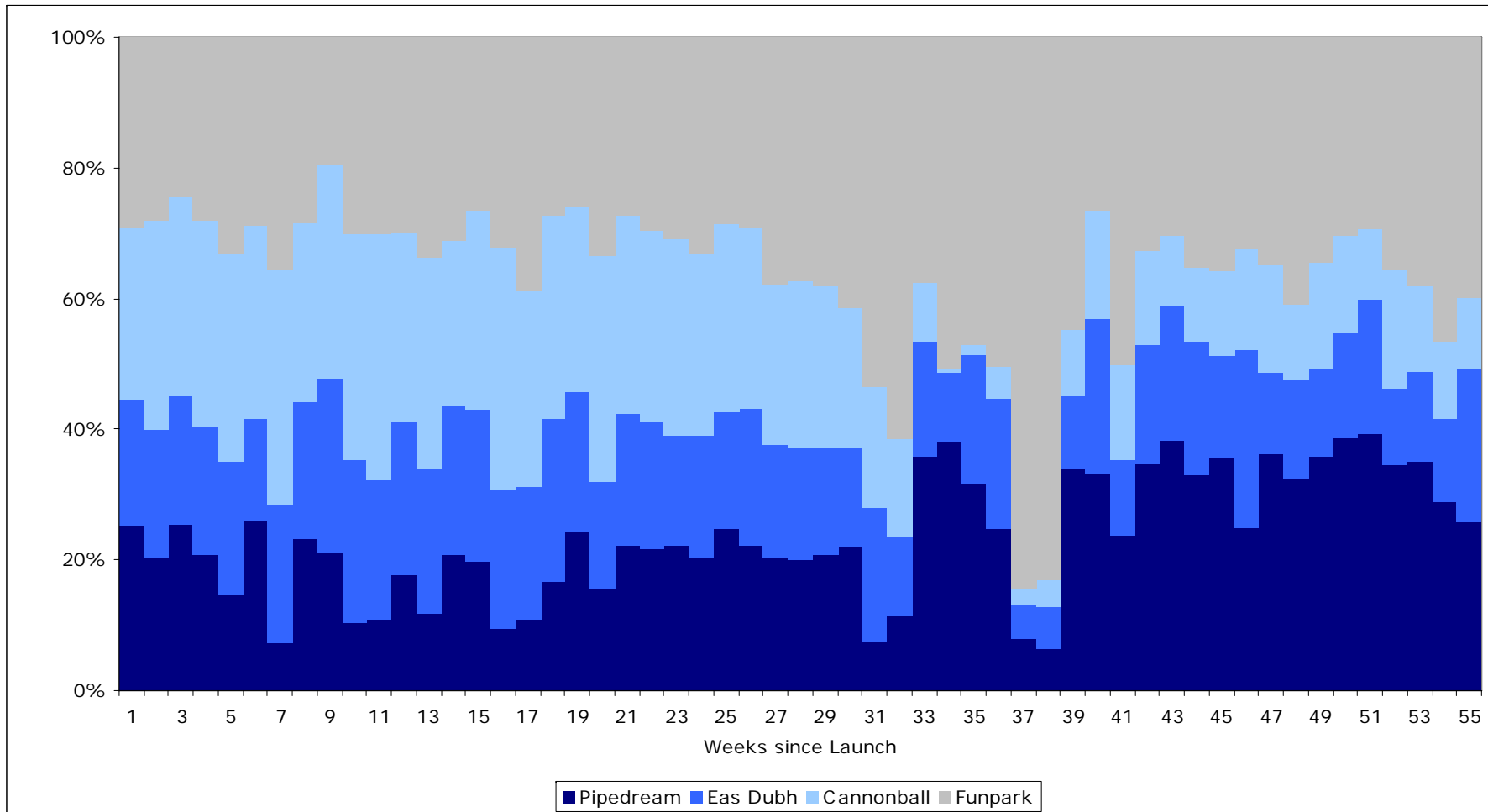


Chart 2: Trail use by section



## User Feedback

User feedback on the mountain bike trails is gathered using a questionnaire on the Carron Valley Development Group website (see appendix). The questionnaire captures basic information on the users as well as allowing them to comment on their overall experience, on individual trail sections and to give us their suggestions for future development at Carron Valley.

By asking for the respondent's home postcode we are able to estimate the travel times (for those arriving by car or van/minibus) between home and Carron Valley. We are also able to identify the local authority areas of respondents.

The questionnaire has been available since early April 2006 and has been fully completed **256** times. We have also received **132** partially completed forms. A small number of duplicates have been removed from the analysis.

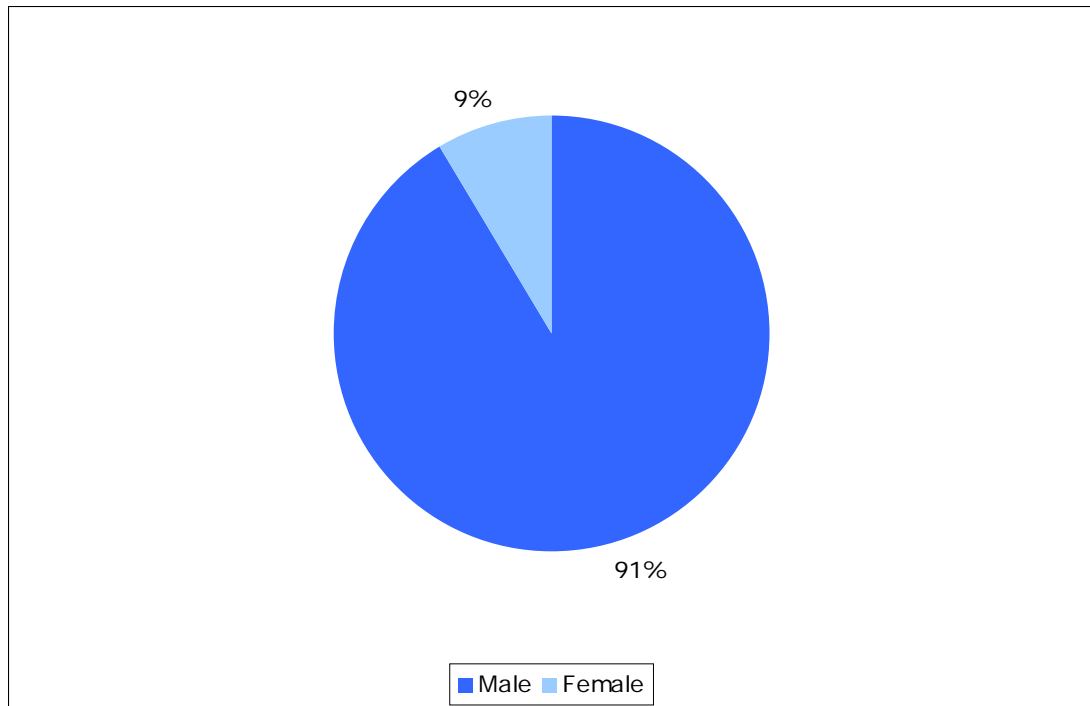
Feedback (as well as information captured using the "Contact Us" link and the forum) is monitored frequently for any issues which need immediate attention. User feedback will be reported to the Carron Valley Partnership on a regular basis.

Whilst face-to-face research would be the preferred method of carrying out visitor surveys, Carron Valley Development Group do not have the resources to commission such a survey at this time.

A face-to-face survey of visitors to Carron Valley Forest was carried out during year two (June 2005 to May 2006) of the All Forests Visitor Monitoring project<sup>2</sup>. FCS and TNS kindly shared the data gathered during the survey, but due to the small sample size (45 interviews carried out over 36 hours of fieldwork) the results cannot be sensibly analysed.

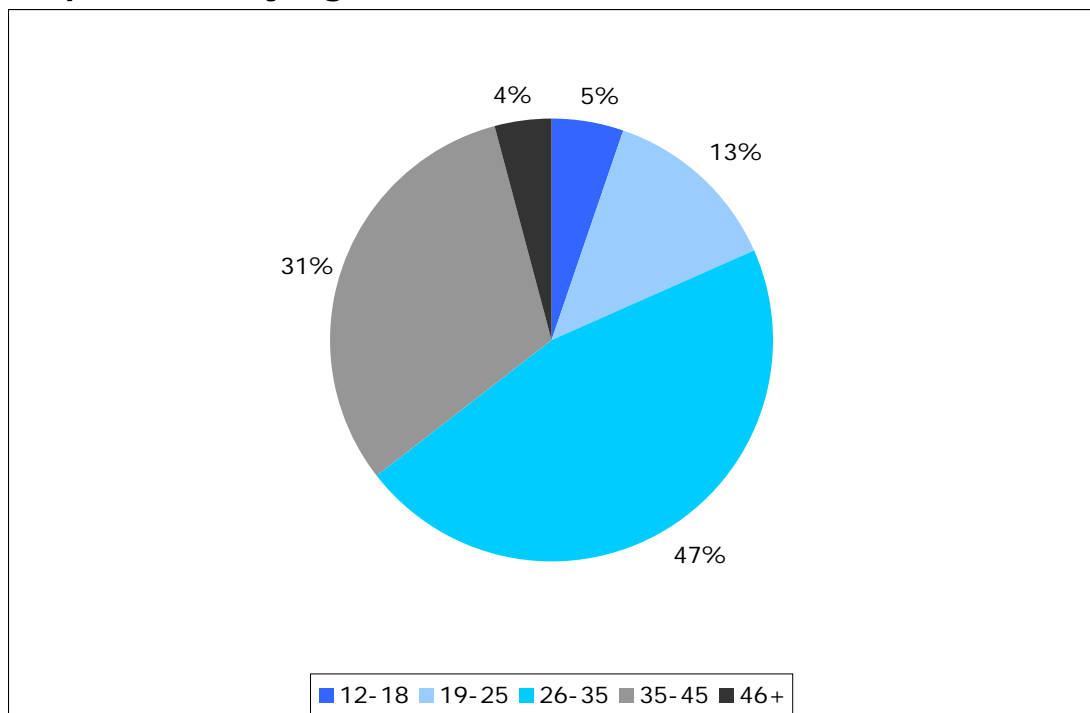
## Results

### Respondents by Sex



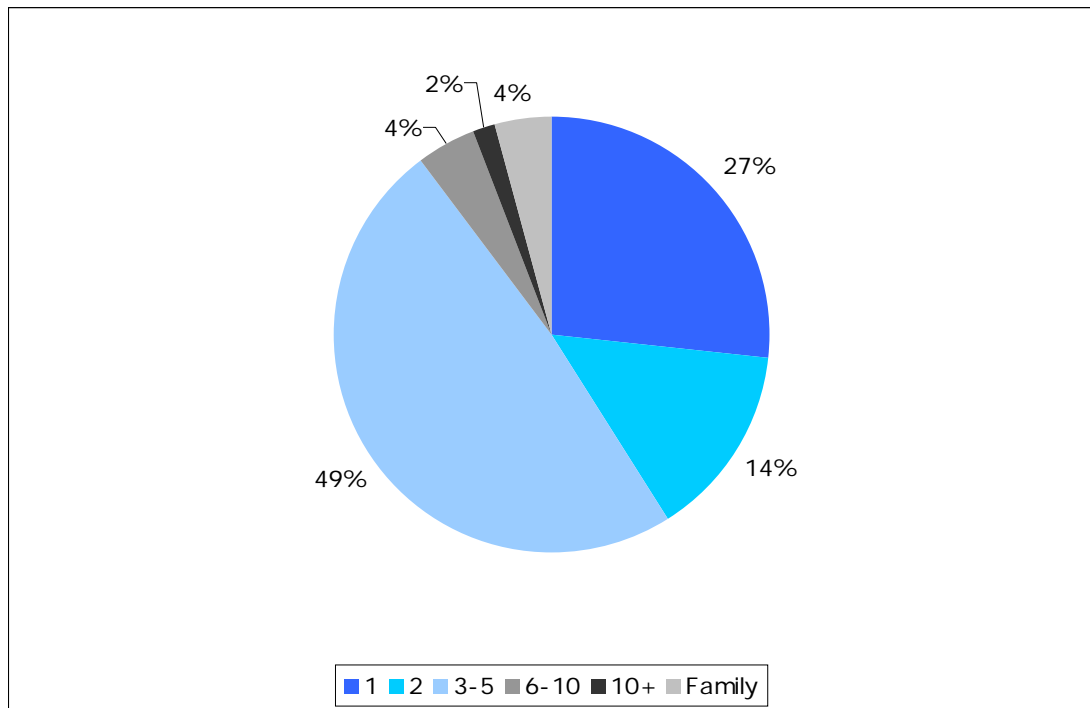
- Respondents are overwhelmingly male. The methodology may be skewing this – observation of users suggests a much higher proportion of females using the trails.

### Respondents by Age



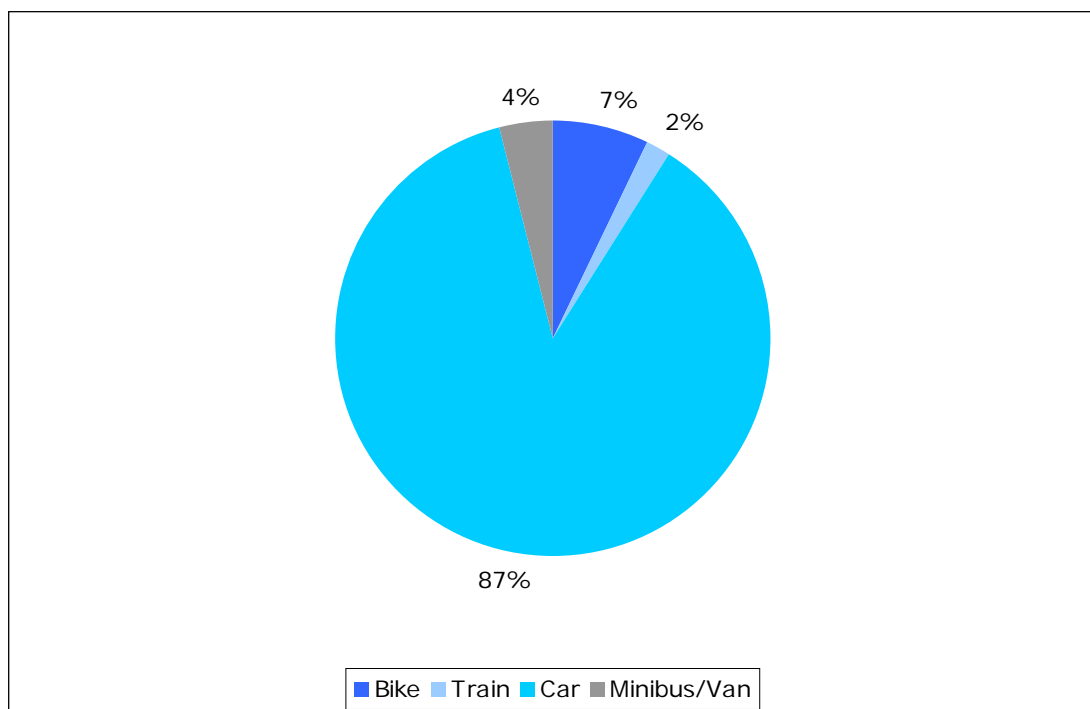
- Nearly half of respondents are in the 26-35 age group.

## Group Sizes



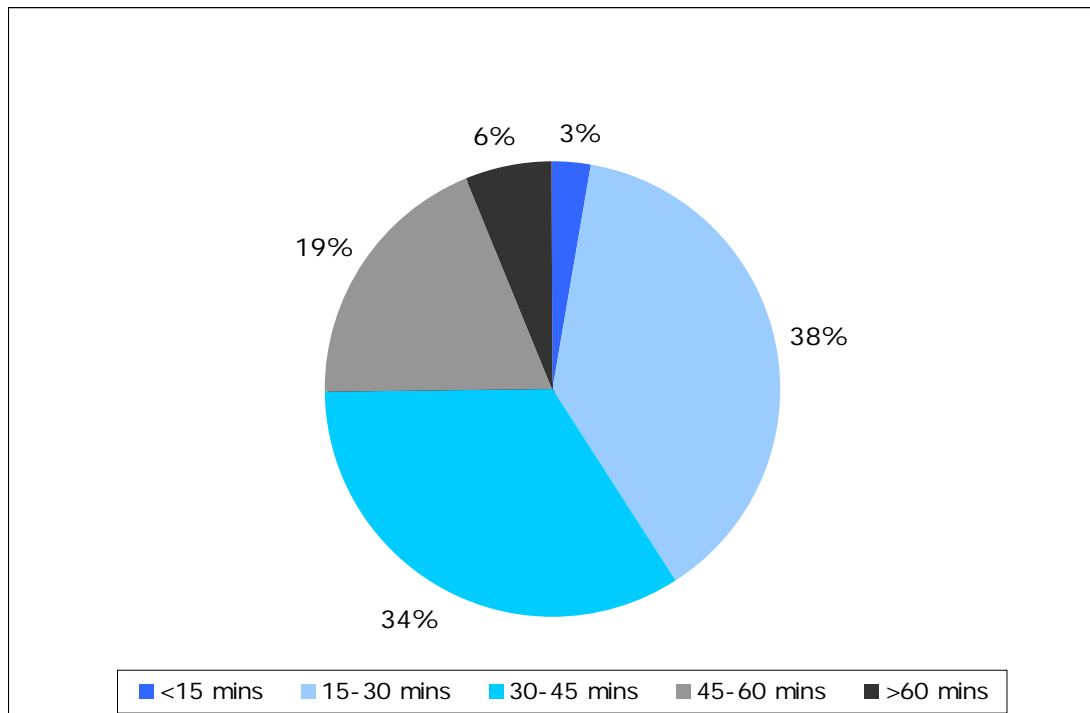
- Nearly half of respondents visit in small groups of between three and five riders.

## Method of Transport



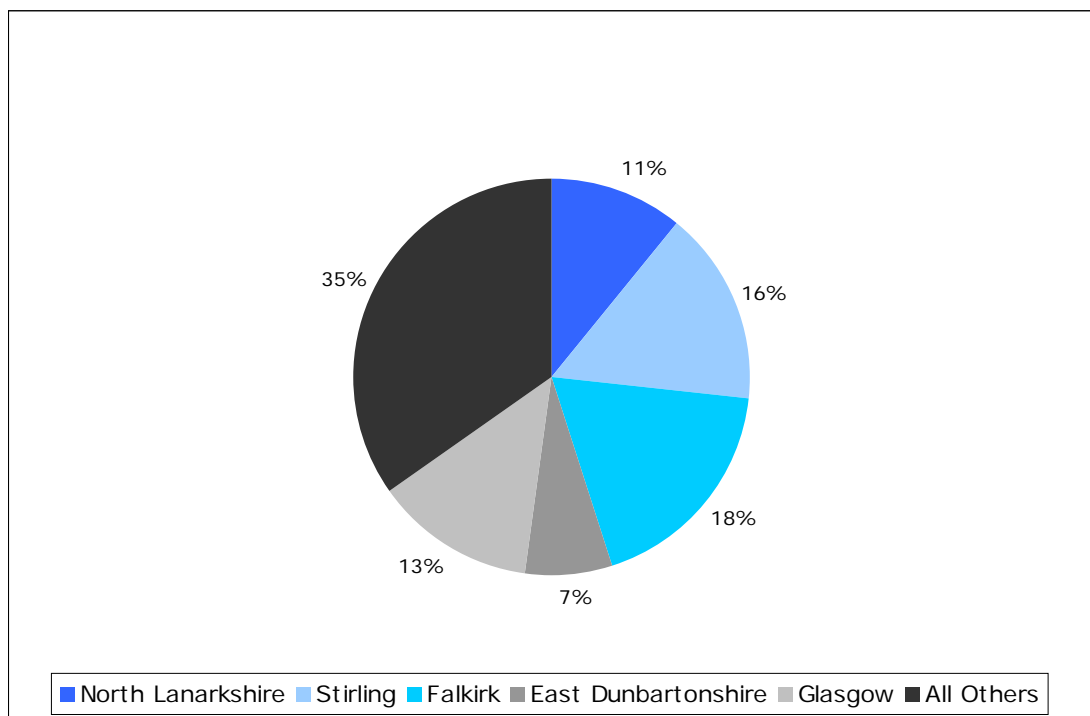
- Vast majority of users arrive by car. Proximity to local populations mean that 7% of respondents are cycling to trails from home.

## Estimated Travel Times (car and van/minibus only)



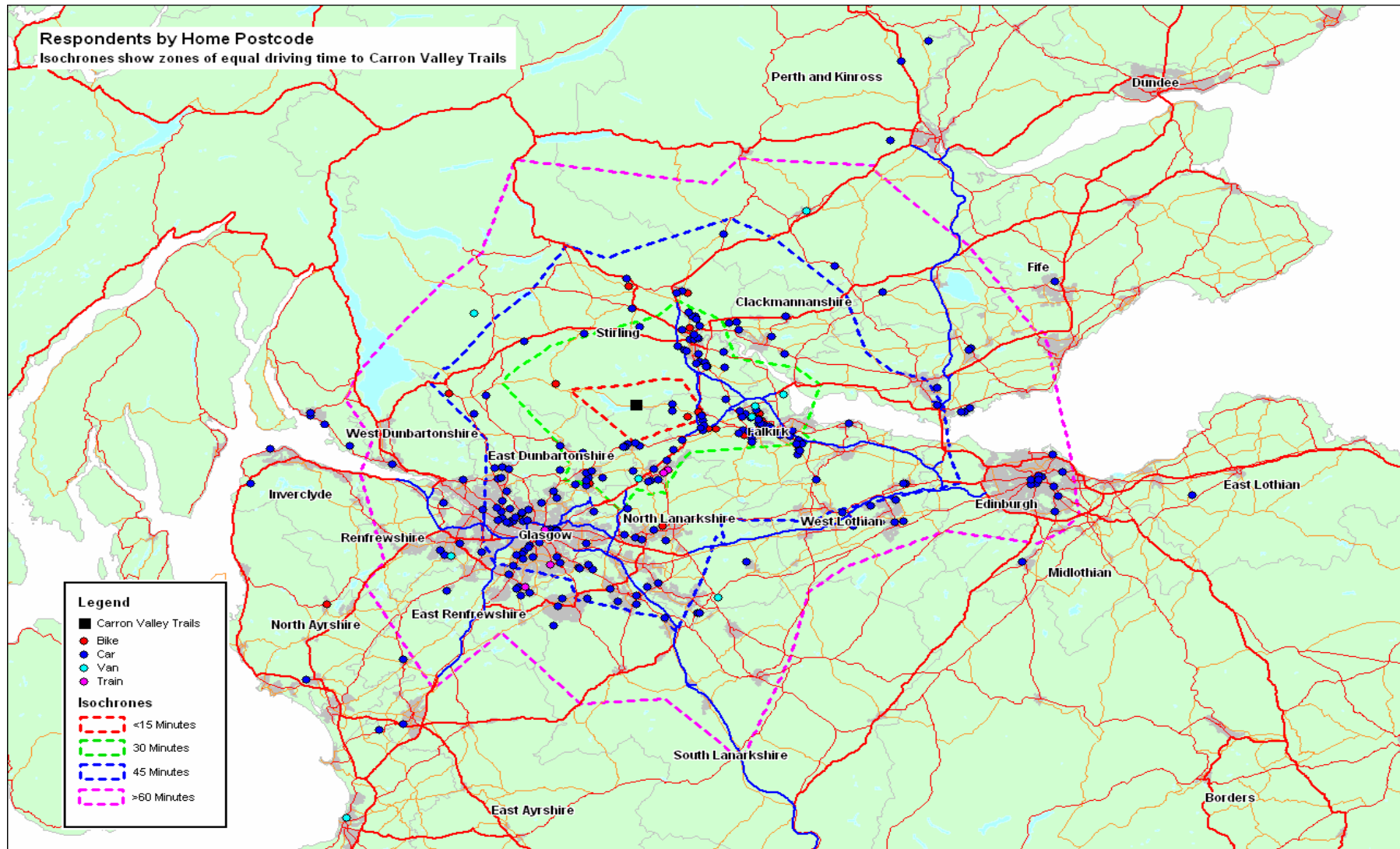
- Mainly attracting people living very close to Carron Valley, nearly 75% of respondents live within a 45 minute drive of the trailhead.

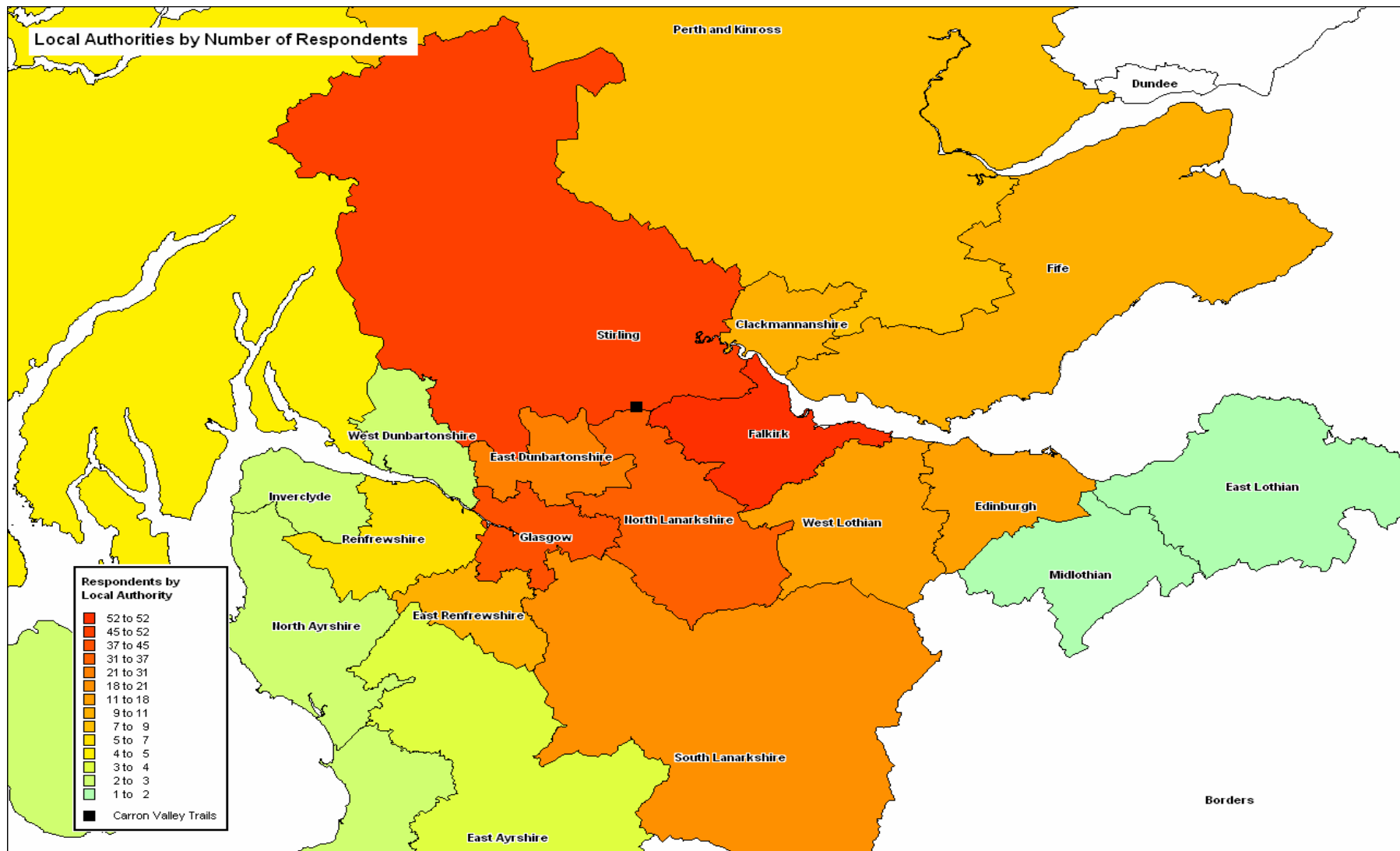
## Respondents by Local Authority Area



- Over 1/3<sup>rd</sup> of respondent live in North Lanarkshire and Stirling council areas.







## **Notes**

1. Laggan Wolftrax Evaluation, EKOS Limited and Tourism Resources Company, December 2006
2. All Forests Visitor Monitoring, Survey of visitors to FCS forests, Year 2, TNS Travel and Tourism, December 2006.

## **Appendix – Feedback Questionnaire**

1. Sex?

Options: Female/Male

2. Which age group do you belong to?

Options: 5-11/12-18/19-25/26-35/36-45/46+

3. How many were in your party?

Options: Myself/Myself and Partner/Small Group (Family)/Small Group - less than 5/Medium Group - 5-10 people/Large Group - more than 10

4. How did you get here?

Options – Bike/Car/Van or Minibus/Train

5. Where did you travel from today (home postcode)?

6. Please let us know what you thought of the signage?

Options – Unclear/Unsuitable/Insufficient/Amount/Satisfactory  
Understandable/Clearly/Visible/Obstructed/Excellent

7. What were your overall thoughts on the trails at Carron Valley?

8. What did you think of the ascent (Pipedream)?

9. What did you think of the top descent (Eas Dubh)?

10. What did you think of the middle descent (Cannonball Run)?

11. What did you think of the bottom trail (The Runway)?

12. What would you like to see developed at Carron Valley?