



Gunthwaite Spa. Credit: Barnsley Council

SYMCA LNRS Engagement Report

31st March 2025



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1. Executive summary

This report outlines the methodology, rationale, findings and insights gathered from engagement activities conducted to shape the Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) for South Yorkshire. This includes workshops, farmer engagement events and meetings, public engagement events, and an online survey in two parts. It was conducted following both statutory and non-statutory guidance.

We ran:

- fourteen **workshops** for: planners, environmental NGOs, organisations that operate at the landscape-scale, green space and partnership groups, parish councils and large landowners for a total of **229 people** (section 5).
- two **workshops** for: farmers for a total of **21 people** (section 6)
- a stand at **8 public events**: total **565 people** (section 7)
- an **online survey** on the Participtr platform which involved a series of questions (**963 respondents**) as well as a map-based element (**78 respondents**) (section 8)

So overall, **engagement with 1,845** people.

The engagement events were designed to be specific for different stakeholder groups, but with underlying similarities so that comparisons could be drawn across different groups, bearing in mind that we were working with everyone from specialist experts through to a general public audience. We designed the questions and prompts to achieve two things: firstly, to help inform the drawing up of a list of priorities and measures for nature recovery; and secondly, to explore the barriers and enablers for nature recovery in order to help shape the delivery stage of the LNRS. Although delivery is beyond the remit of this project, it is imperative to be able to draw up a strategy in such a way that it has the best chance of gaining broad support and being deliverable: enabling nature recovery while taking into account other societal priorities and competing demands on resources including finite land.

One of the elements deployed consistently across all groups and modes of engagement was a series of images to respond to (see section 4). These were used in two image groups:

- images of urban or semi-urban 'local' green spaces
- images of the wider landscape of the county

This is because urban green spaces and the wider landscape are thought about and used in quite different ways by different people. All of the images have positive elements but are different in character. Participants were asked to select four from each image group and then explain why they had chosen those four. This pictorial approach doesn't rely on understanding any particular terminology or having any ecological knowledge - just an opinion on what they would like spaces to look like in the future and to start a discussion, which helps to reveal what people value about these spaces.

Workshops were designed to target specific stakeholder groups, while the public events and online survey were open to anyone who wanted to contribute. Techniques and questions used endeavoured to encourage responses that focused on nature recovery, but in the context of many other issues and points of view.

1.1. Key findings from each engagement mode

1.1.1. Key points from workshops

Despite the range of groups involved, a core of commonly agreed themes emerged.

- a preference for urban green spaces with a more 'wild' and natural appearance;
- the importance of accessibility, such as well-maintained paths and benches, to bridge the connection between nature and people;
- a strong desire for wilder and more natural landscapes in the wider environment, with some support for reintroductions, even including of predators such as lynx;

- beavers being the most mentioned species for reintroduction, followed by water voles;
- importance of integration of renewable energy and food production within the landscape;
- Species groups featuring strongly for prioritisation were invertebrates, plants and trees, and birds. For habitats, woodland including wood pasture, wetlands, grasslands/ meadows and riparian habitats were the most frequently emphasised;
- Developers were perceived as not prioritising nature recovery, followed by farmers, governments, politicians and businesses, with the drive for profit as the primary theme;
- The perceived top barrier to nature recovery was financial resourcing: the amount, but also the security and longevity of funding. There was a perception that money was available for many other priorities, but that nature recovery was poorly funded, relying on NGOs and volunteers.
- Other barriers mentioned were land use and ownership, public and stakeholder support, political will and competing priorities.
- Participants believed there was a lack of knowledge and understanding in other members of society about the importance of nature.
- There are many existing plans and policies among the organisations represented that will already align with and support the roll out of a nature recovery strategy. The LNRS should be seen and used as a unifying framework to align and amplify these.
- LNRS roll-out will require collaboration, communication, and cross-sector working.
- It needs to be easy to use, accessible to a wide range of users, to be compatible with existing software, operate at an appropriate level of detail, and become part of the everyday processes that different stakeholders use, especially planners.
- The LNRS needs to be compatible and consistent with bordering counties' LNRSs.

1.1.2. Key points from farmer engagement

NB, it is important to note that many of those that took part were in farmer clusters, and already thinking about nature on their farms. They may not represent the breadth of views of farmers across South Yorkshire.

- These farmers agreed with others in preferring more natural and 'wilder' urban green spaces.
- They showed support for varied wider landscapes, including incorporating productive farming.
- They mentioned the need for less intensive agriculture, with integrated nature conservation.
- They want guidance on how they can maintain productivity while integrating nature.
- Farming is a business and as such there need to be clear, long-term financial incentives to make nature-friendly farming financially viable. They were sceptical about isolated conservation efforts and were looking for further information around DEFRA's approach to incentives.
- Farming is also a way of life, and farmers are wary of anything that will reduce their or future generations' opportunities for how they choose to manage their land.
- Dog walkers were raised numerous times as people who do not prioritise nature.
- There is still a way to go in framing the LNRS as an opportunity for farmers. However their participation is crucial in achieving landscape-scale nature recovery.

1.1.3. Key points from public events

- Citizens may not always be able to identify species, or distinguish between 'natural' or highly managed unfarmed landscapes, but they do want 'wild' and beautiful areas full of wildlife.
- Accessibility is crucial: safe and well-maintained pathways, cycle routes, and better public transport connections to nature-rich areas were frequently mentioned as priorities.
- Everyone had a thoughtful, balanced and well-informed view of what they would like, and how it relates to nature recovery for its own sake as well as for the benefit of people. Conversations often demonstrated an appreciation for diverse, functioning ecosystems.

- There was also a strong recognition of the need to balance different land uses, such as supporting food production and the generation of clean energy.
- People desire clean, safe, nature-rich areas close to their homes, as long as they are well-maintained and accessible for all, including those with mobility challenges.

1.1.4. Key points from the online surveys

- Survey respondents are citizens committed to wildlife and nature, and ought to be strong advocates for a Local Nature Recovery Strategy.
- They hold strong views, but generally take a balanced view of what is required of finite land.
- They already do a great deal for nature recovery, but don't feel listened to or supported.
- There is strong opposition to housing and industrial development destroying green spaces, and a general view that local green spaces are not looked after properly.

1.2. Overall synthesis and implications for the LNRS

There was much coherence of views across the whole of the engagement process. People's reasoning may vary, but the desired goal was remarkably similar across the board:

- strong preferences for 'wild', biodiverse landscapes across both urban and rural landscapes;
- water as an important feature in both;
- urban green spaces that are well-maintained, appear 'looked after' and feel safe;
- accessibility, both to and within nature-rich spaces;
- access to the landscape planned and managed so that people can access nature, but that it is not damaged by that access;
- a wider landscape balancing the needs of nature and wildlife, food production, renewable energy generation and recreational access.

1.2.1. Implications for Priorities and Measures

The detail drawn in particular from expert workshops has been fed into the parallel process to write the Statement of Priorities for the LNRS. This will also take into account the preferences of other stakeholder groups described in this report, and the Statement and subsequent mapping will be influenced by this and the map-based responses from the second part of the online survey. In essence, though, there is broad support for nature recovery as guided by expert knowledge for both urban and landscape spaces, as long as it is seen to be well-planned, well monitored and maintained, and is planned and delivered taking into account the other demands on land-use such as food production, clean energy generation and access for recreation and enjoyment.

1.2.2. Implications for policy

The activity of nature recovery is influenced by and will influence very many other policies and plans. The planning and integration of nature recovery in relation to housing and infrastructure development is a key area that needs to be focused on. BNG should be a major part of this, but the introduction of other local, regional and national initiatives and incentives are needed to ensure that, for example, new or existing housing developments or plans are created and managed in such a way that they provide for nature recovery *and* the access to green spaces that people so desire close to where they live.

Policies and plans that influence ongoing maintenance are also key. For example, the way that urban green spaces are maintained has a major impact on how they work and feel for people who use them – and whether they are viewed as beautiful or neglected. Likewise, opportunities for habitat connectivity via linear infrastructure such as road and rail verges or the waterway network

need to be integrated with the thinking on how those land areas are managed and maintained; providing nature linkages, but also taking into account visibility and other safety considerations.

While there are already some helpful plans and policies in place at all levels of governance, it will take time and collaboration to align them for mutual benefit. But if done well, such integration has the potential to be highly efficient both financially and in achieving multiple wins, and is likely to garner broad support.

The financial support structure is also crucial, making sure that funding opportunities and incentives are clear and accessible, as well as being stable and long-term. Much of nature recovery previously has been left to NGOs, volunteers, and sympathetic farmers and other landowners and managers. Going forward, the policy and finance frameworks need to be in place to make landscape-scale nature recovery financially viable and even profitable.

The LNRS will need to be part of the everyday work of local authorities and many other organisations. It should be user-friendly, widely accessible, and compatible with existing systems, especially mapping software.

1.2.3. Implications for communication, engagement and collaboration

People may have different ways of articulating what they want, and state different personal priorities and reasons for their choices, but what they want the future to look like is broadly similar, whoever you ask.

Throughout this engagement work, a recurring theme was that those involved in nature conservation often view other sections of society as ignorant, uncaring and greedy. There was a particularly negative view of developers, intensive farmers and both national and local government. And these groups and the 'general public' were also often described as needing to be educated on the importance of nature. Characterising entire sectors - who are delivering important projects and services, and who are operating within societally imposed frameworks of incentives and constraints - as ignorant and uncaring is not conducive to collaboration.

We would suggest that our engagement findings challenge those perceptions. Wider society seems to be remarkably thoughtful and knowledgeable about nature and wildlife. They may not know how to identify particular species, or describe in-depth ecological detail, but there is a general understanding of the importance of nature and other green spaces, and the need for this to be balanced by other demands on land use. It is not that nature engagement and education are not valuable - indeed they should continue to be championed - but to portray wider society as uncaring, greedy and ignorant of nature seems to be a false narrative and needs to be challenged to enable a well-funded, well designed and collaborative approach for nature recovery to happen.

To conclude, there is a great deal of agreement across the various modes of engagement and stakeholder groups, and a strong desire for nature recovery in South Yorkshire.

It appears that most people in South Yorkshire broadly agree on what is required and what they want. The focus now needs to be on communicating that shared vision to aid collaboration rather than division, and then co-developing and championing the legal, practical and financial frameworks to enable that shared nature-rich future to be realised.

2. Introduction

This report outlines the findings and insights gathered from engagement activities conducted as part of the Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS). This includes workshops, public engagement events and an online survey.

The LNRS aims to enhance biodiversity, support ecosystems, and encourage nature-rich land use by fostering a collaborative approach across the region. Engaging a wide variety of stakeholders, including the public is critical to understanding local priorities, identifying key areas for nature recovery, and securing broad support for conservation initiatives. This document provides an overview of the engagement process, highlights key themes, and offers recommendations to guide the development and implementation of the strategy. All data were gathered by Nature Positive, RSK Wilding and RSK ADAS from May through November 2024.

3. Following LNRS guidance

Defra guidance requires broad engagement in the development of LNRSs. They need to be informed by local knowledge, and ensure that key players in potential delivery are involved. Environmental organisations, landowners and managers, and community groups are key stakeholders. In addition to the statutory guidance, *'Local Nature Recovery Statutory Guidance'*, various advice and guidance documents were referred to including: *'Engaging the Land Management Sector in Local Nature Recovery Strategies - Advice for Responsible Authorities'*; *'Local Nature Recovery Strategies: Advice on governance and working with partners'*, and *'Inclusive Engagement with Communities: Non statutory guide for Responsible Authorities'*.

4. Methods

4.1. Consistency of approach to enable delivery

Engagement with a wide variety of stakeholders was conducted, and it was considered important to use this not only to inform the development of the LNRS, but to look beyond that to enable delivery. To that end, we designed a series of questions about the ecological insight needed to define and shortlist the priorities and measures for nature recovery, but also to understand what urban green spaces and the wider landscape could look like following the preferences and views of different stakeholders, both with and without ecological expertise. We also wanted to tease out the perceived barriers and enablers for nature recovery in the authority area.

These questions were then delivered in appropriate ways across the variety of engagement modes - workshops, public engagement events and an online survey - so that points of agreement across society would be revealed, but also the differing views and beliefs of different stakeholder groups. Where there is broad agreement, this would be an indication of a unified end-point to aim for that is likely to get broad support. Where there are points of difference, those would need to be considered not only in the drafted LNRS, but also in delivery towards a shared vision of a nature-rich future for South Yorkshire.

4.1.1. Engagement using images

One of the elements that was deployed consistently across all groups and modes of engagement was a series of images to respond to. These were used in two groups:

- images of urban or peri-urban 'local' green spaces (Figure 1);
- images of the wider landscape of the county (Figure 2).

This is because urban green spaces and the wider landscape are thought about and used in quite different ways by different people. All of the images were chosen to have positive elements, all looking pleasant, but different in character. Participants were asked to select four from each image group, and then explain why they had chosen those four. We were careful not to lead anyone, but to simply let them choose and then discuss their reasons. There are no right or wrong answers, just different views on what people might envision the future being like for them. This pictorial approach doesn't rely on understanding any particular terminology or having any ecological knowledge – just an opinion on what they would like spaces to look like in the future.

These are the images used. **(NB, Image O was not used for the first workshop** – it was added later as people pointed out the lack of a woodland image to choose. Likewise, it was not included at the first public event at RSPB Old Moor.)

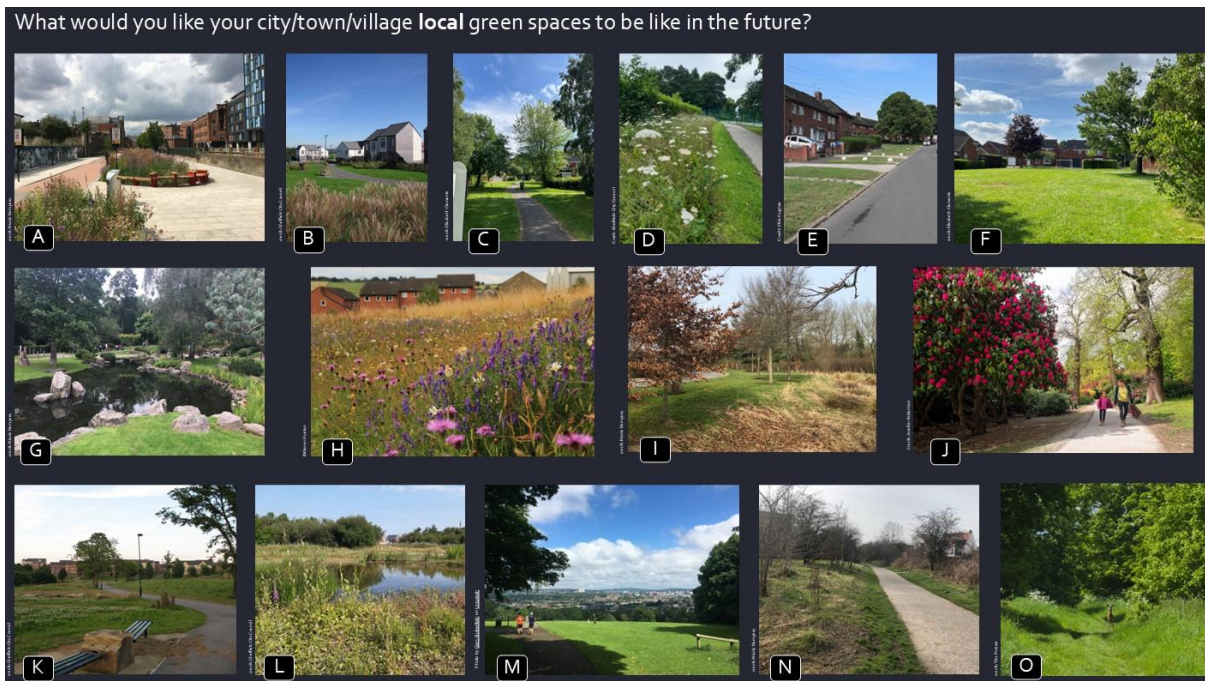


Figure 1. a selection of 15 images representing urban or peri-urban 'local' green spaces in South Yorkshire

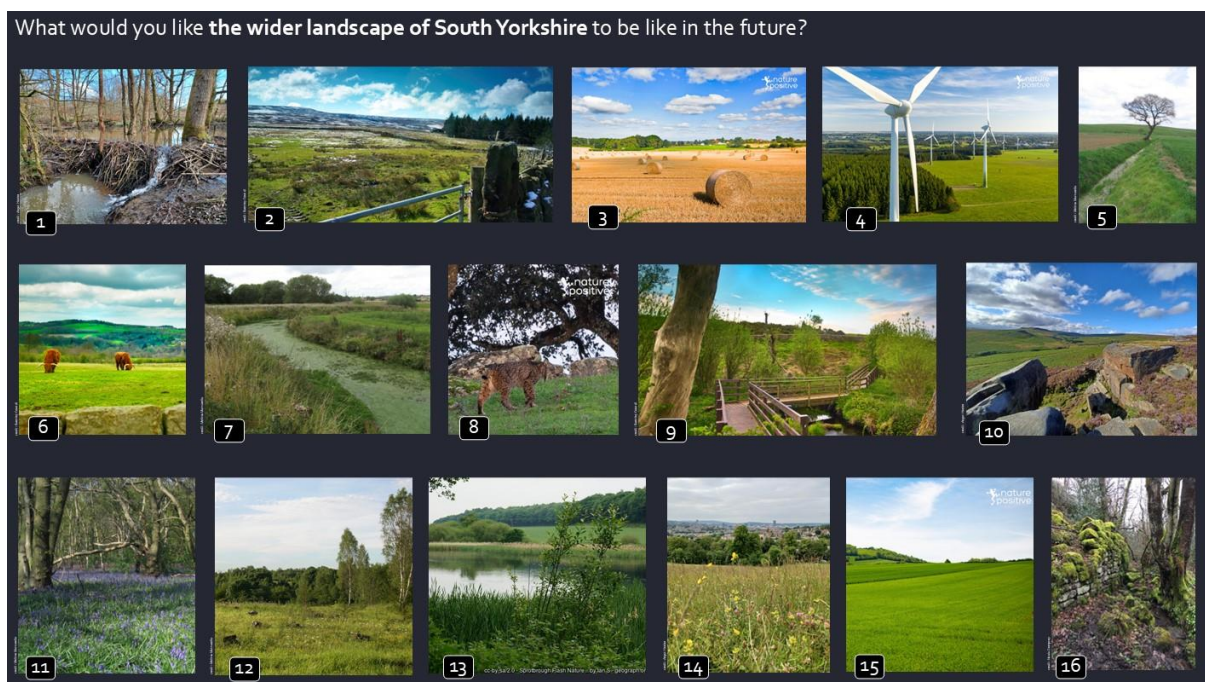


Figure 2. a selection of 16 images representing the wider landscape of South Yorkshire

5. Workshops

5.1. Design

Workshops were held either in-person or online using Teams. The basic structure was:

- an introduction to Local Nature Recovery Strategies and work done to date. This ensured that everyone understood the origin of LNRSs, the processes involved in creating it, and the opportunities to shape it;
- an interactive session using Mentimeter, with live discussion of the results. This tool allows people to respond to questions anonymously, and then displays amalgamated results in real time, initiating group discussion. A list of questions asked can be seen in Table 1. workshop questions for MentimeterTable 1;
- discussion in breakout groups around key questions relevant to each stakeholder group. Discussion points can be seen in Table 2;
- a mapping session to plot out key areas of relevance or importance - both opportunities and constraints;
- a final general discussion on any remaining points or questions.

Table 1. workshop questions for Mentimeter

1.	Please let me know who you are today (i.e. role/job, not name)
2.	What does the future look like?
2.1	Which four images represent your local 'urban' green space in the future?
2.1.1	Why did you choose those four?
2.2	Which four images best represent the 'wider landscape' in the future?
2.2.1	Why did you choose those four images?
3.	When might nature 'get in the way'?
4.	Who might not prioritise nature recovery?
4.1	Why?
5.	What are the barriers to nature recovery?
6.	Who would most enable nature recovery in South Yorkshire?
7.	Which species or species groups should be prioritised?
8.	Which habitats need to be prioritised in South Yorkshire?
9.	Any specific location opportunities to explore?

Table 2. workshop question prompts for breakout tables

Constraints	
1.	What group plans and policies would support LNRS and its future delivery?
2.	What group plans and policies would conflict with LNRS and its future deliver?
3.	What constraints are there when considering integrating LNRS into your future plans?
4.	What is needed to overcome the constraints?
Opportunities	
1.	What opportunities are there for nature recovery in South Yorkshire?
2.	What opportunities are there for nature recovery on your property or land holding?
3.	What opportunities for your organisation might come from the delivery of the LNRS?
Priorities	
1.	What are the priorities for nature recovery from your organisation's perspective?

*Questions were tailored to suit the type of stakeholder group we were speaking with

5.2. Participants

In collaboration with the SYMCA Engagement Working Group, the workshops were organised into stakeholder groups shown in Table 3. To facilitate participation registration, event pages were created on Eventbrite for each group, which outlined the structure of the workshops, the location, date and time of the sessions. The event pages also included unique booking links which were distributed to a targeted list of potential participants compiled by the SYMCA Engagement Working Group. Invitations were issued by SYMCA, and cascaded by Supporting Authorities and other contacts. Attendees were able to register via the provided links.

Table 3. overview of workshops, detailing the date, location, groups represented and attendee numbers

Date	'Title'	Location	Groups represented	No. of attendees
4 June	Sheffield Waterways Strategy Group (SWSG)	Town Hall, Sheffield	SCC Flood & Water, S&R Wildlife Trust, Rivelin CVG, Rivelin & Loxley River Rangers, River Stewardship Co, SY Industrial History Soc, Loxley Valley, City Centre Volunteers & Blackburn Brook, Sheaf & Porter Rivers Trust, Friends of Loxley Valley, Sheffield University, SCC Ecology, SCC Parks, Yorkshire Water, Upper Don Trail Trust, Don Catchment	18
13 June	South Yorkshire's Nature Recovery Strategy - what should the future look like?	South Yorkshire Sustainability Centre (SYSC) meeting, AESSEAL New York Stadium	Sheffield Halam University, Barnsley College The University of Sheffield, Sheffield City Council Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council, Sheffield Social Enterprise Network	10
4 July	Don, Dearne and Rother Network Day (organised by Don River Catchment Trust) (DRCT)	Niagara Centre	Burnet Heritage Trust, City of Doncaster Council, Coal Authority, Denby Dale Parish Council, Derbyshire County Council, Derbyshire Wildlife Trust, Don Catchment Rivers Trust, Environment Agency, Friends of blue loop, Friends of the Dearne, Kirklees Council, Moors for the Future Partnership, Opus Independent, Rivelin Valley Conservation Group, River Stewardship Company, Sheaf & Porter Rivers Trust, Sheffield & Rotherham Wildlife Trust, Sheffield City Council, Sheffield Hallam University, South Yorkshire Woodland Partnership, Steel Valley Project, The Conservation Volunteers, Trent Rivers Trust, Wild Trout Trust, Yorkshire Water, Yorkshire Wildlife Trust	68
10 Sept	Conservation Organisations (1)	AMP Technology Centre	Natural England, City of Doncaster Council, Environment Agency, Don Catchment River Trust, Barnsley Council, River Stewardship Company, Peak District NPA, Sheffield Area Geological Trust, Idle Catchment Partnership, South Yorkshire Econet, Rivelin Valley Conservation Group, Garganey Trust, Yorkshire Wildlife Trust, Forestry Commission, Sheffield Lakeland Partnership, TVC The Conservation Volunteers, Rotherham Council, Wild Moors, Sheffield and Rotherham Wildlife Trust, Dearne Valley Green Heart Partnership, Humberhead Levels Partnership, Sheffield Council, Thorne and Hatfield Moors Conservation Forum, Rotherham Local Records Centre, Burnet Heritage Trust, RSPB, Barnsley Biodiversity Trust, Woodland Trust	36
11 Sept	Conservation Organisations (2)	online	Sheffield City Council, Natural England, Sheffield and Rotherham Wildlife Trust, Peak District National Park, Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council, Amateur Naturalist	8
19 Sept	Large Landholders	online	Barnsley Council, Natural England, Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council, University of Sheffield, National Trust	8
19 Sept	Green and Other Environmental Groups	online	Barnsley Council, Bellway, University of Sheffield, GSC Grays, AquaSensor Ltd, The Yorkshire Wildlife Trust, Natural England	12
20 Sept	Council Planners (1)	online	Barnsley Council, Natural England, Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council	5
26 Sept	Landscape-Scale Landowners	online	Harworth Group, Forestry Commission, Natural England	4
26 Sept	Schools, Colleges and Universities	online	Royal Horticultural Society, Barnsley Council, Sunny Fields, Kind Edward VII School	8
27 Sept	Friends of and Local Groups	online	Open University, Sheffield Swift Network, Groundwork Yorkshire, Ecoloserve, Mannor and Castle Development Trust	9
4 Oct	Council Planners (2)	Dorothy Fox Education Centre, Sheffield Botanical Gardens	Natural England, Sheffield City Council, Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council, Doncaster Council, Barnsley Council	7
21 Oct	Testing the Prioritisation	Dorothy Fox Education Centre. Sheffield Botanical Gardens	Barnsley Council, Doncaster Council, Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council, Sheffield City Council, Peak District National Park Authority, Natural England, Forestry Commission, Sheffield and Rotherham Wildlife Trust, Environment Agency, The Yorkshire Wildlife Trust, Eastern Moors Partnership	16
7 Nov	Testing the Prioritisation	The Circle, Sheffield	Sheffield City Council, Barnsley MBC, Sheffield and Rotherham Wildlife Trust, Natural England, Yorkshire Wildlife Trust, Rotherham MBC, Don Catchment Rivers Trust, Eastern Moors Partnership	20
TOTAL				229

* The farmer and landowner sessions were run slightly differently, so are presented and discussed separately in section 6.

5.3. Workshop outputs and analysis

The following sections relate to the outputs from each part of the workshops:

From the Mentimeter session:

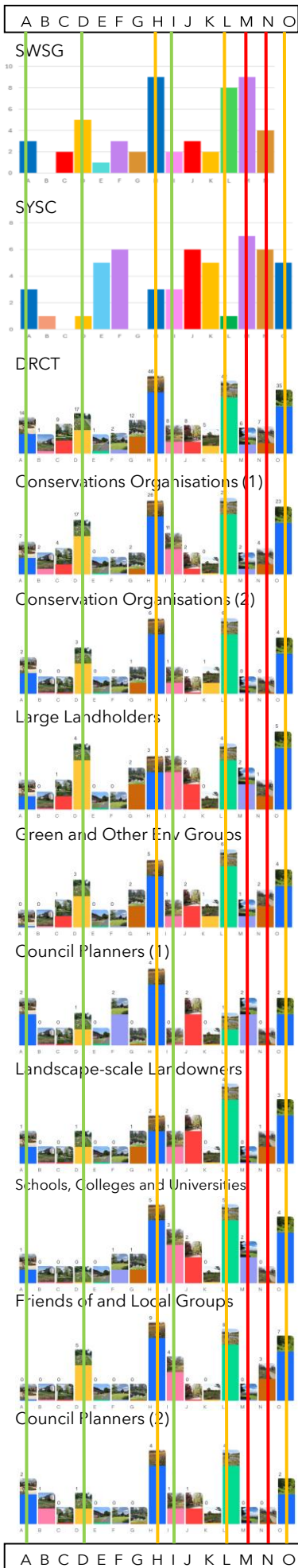
1. Choices of images of urban green spaces and 'why'?
2. Choices of images of the wider landscape and 'why'?
3. Responses to 'When might nature 'get in the way?'
4. Word clouds on who might not prioritise nature recovery, and responses to 'why?'
5. Word clouds on barriers to nature recovery, and responses to 'why?'
6. Responded to what would most enable nature recovery in South Yorkshire?
7. Word clouds on species to be prioritised
8. Word clouds on habitats to be prioritised

From the mapping exercise:

9. Mapping of spatial opportunities and constraints

From the breakout tables:

10. Notes from discussions on organisational plans, policies, opportunities and constraints, and potential format for the LNRS



5.3.1. Urban green space image choices

For the workshops, there was a core of general agreement about the future of urban green spaces: images **H**, **L** and **O** (highlighted by yellow lines in Figure 3) were frequently chosen. All of these represent natural 'wilder' landscapes (untidy, ecological richness).



Images **A**, **D** and **I** were also moderately selected by participants. These images have the combined elements of green nature, with clear accessibility - paths and benches.



There are some interesting differences: images **M** and **N** (more manicured/accessible areas) were deemed as popular by the Sheffield Waterways Strategy Group (SWSG) and South Yorkshire Sustainability Centre (SYSC), whereas these images remained unpopular by all other stakeholder groups who instead chose images A, D and I more often.



It should be noted that some workshops were bigger than others, and in the smaller ones a single choice one way or the other can make the graph appear quite different so one should be careful not to overanalyse small differences.

Pooled workshop results are shown in Figure 4. This masks the inter-workshop differences but highlights the combined overall preferences of those who attended these workshops.

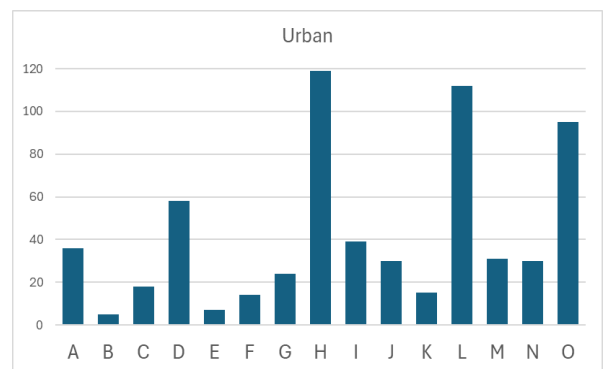


Figure 4. pooled workshop results for urban images

Figure 3. comparison of workshop choices for urban green space images

Reasons given

When asked why they had chosen those images, the comments fell into several broad themes. The following reflects the combined responses across all workshops, with selected illustrative quotes.

The top theme was about **wildness and naturalness**, with 51 quotes specifically mentioning that, such as:

"Variety of wild spaces currently missing from urban areas"
"These looked like the wildest spaces without evidence of humans"
"Want to re-wet, re-wild"

"Needs to be kept natural"
"Focus on nature, habitats, wildlife"
"Rewilding areas to shift the concept that only manicured green spaces are beautiful"

This was supported (50 quotes) by **biodiversity** being the second most popular theme:

"Need to tackle the biodiversity crisis by improving habitats for different creatures, Grey to green is great"
"Good for biodiversity"
"We need a mix of wetland, woodland and wildflowers to improve greens spaces for wildlife"

"Mosaic of habitats to support different species"
"Planting with native, near native and exotic plants will increase biodiversity and habitats"
"Botanical interest, wildlife, inverts, diversity"

Community engagement was also a top theme (26 quotes):

"For the LNRS to work it takes people and community engagement and co-design with local communities, ensuring good space within short walk for all including most vulnerable groups"
"Bringing nature to where people are"

Water features were often alluded to, with 25 quotes specifically mentioning this, such as:

"Water, diverse habitats,"
"Space where water or wetland is visible"
"Water in the landscape"

And the related concept of **accessibility** came up frequently (24 quotes):

"Public access to nature and greenspaces"
"Varied green spaces for people to access and enjoy"
"Accessible and joined up mosaics of habitats for nature and people to thrive"
"Open space for access but nature rich"

"Various typologies to provide for all the different needs and uses, especially women. Not just MUGAs and skate parks for teenagers - these are dominated by boys"
"Ponds, renaturalised rivers and wetlands important"
"Rivers and our water carry biodiversity through our region"

Diversity of spaces was also mentioned considerably (22 quotes):

"Variety of habitats"
"Multifunctional areas. Biodiverse habitat mosaics. Water in the landscape"

"Importance of both green and blue spaces"
"A mixture of spaces serving different functions"
"Mixture of areas - both urban and rural, natural and formal"

And finally, the importance of **recreation** also emerged (18 quotes):

"It's about getting the balance right between providing informal recreational spaces with the need for biodiversity"
"I walk the dogs there"

"Cycle /foot paths with diverse habitats and blue space"
"I picked high nature but need to include places for people / sport / fun"

Climate benefits was also a minor theme referred in 5 quotes.

All of this input shows a strong desire for wilder spaces, but well integrated into the needs of people and communities in urban settings. It illustrates the value of taking many views into consideration when planning urban green spaces which need to be, by their very nature, multipurpose, well maintained and respond to the needs and desires of those living in the vicinity. Nature recovery in urban settings, with the many added human benefits of improved air quality, physical and mental health, flood alleviation, etc will require very careful creation *and* curation.

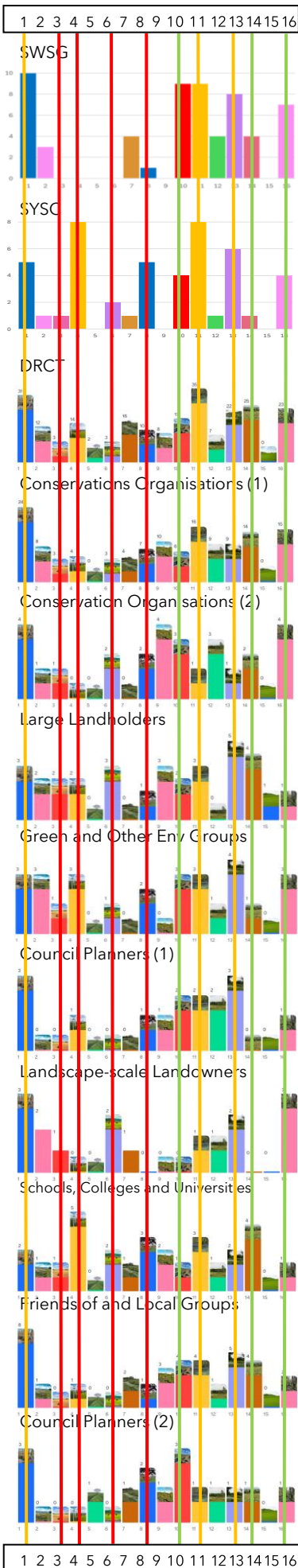


Figure 5. comparison of workshop preferences for wider landscape images

5.3.2. Wider landscape image choices

There was a degree of variation between workshop groups as to which images they chose to represent the wider landscape of South Yorkshire, but some images were generally more popular: **1**, **11** and **13**. These images represent the natural landscape, with water being a prominent feature.



Images **10**, **14** and **16** were moderately popular.



Despite **14** being a relatively popular selection among most stakeholder groups, landscape-scale landowners and schools, colleges and universities were the only groups that did not vote for this image. However, it should be noted that some workshops were bigger than others, and in the smaller ones a single choice one way or the other can make the graph appear quite different so one should be careful not to overanalyse small differences.



While not a top choice, there was broad agreement among the stakeholder groups on the reintroduction of predators and the inclusion of renewable energy within the landscape, with image **8** chosen in eleven workshops and image **4** in eight. Although to a lesser degree, images **3** and **6**, depicting traditional agricultural practices, were also selected by seven workshop groups each, emphasising the importance of the landscape supporting food production.

Pooled workshop results are shown in Figure 6. This masks the inter-workshop differences but highlights the combined overall preferences of those who attended these workshops.

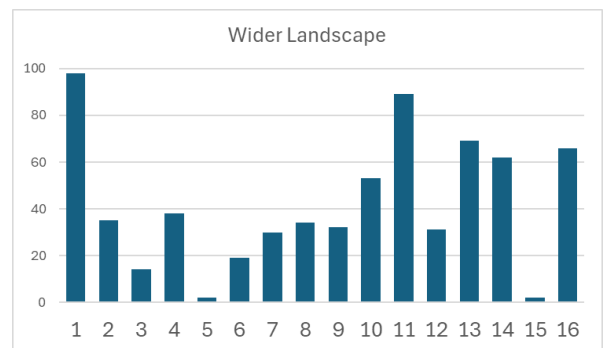


Figure 6. pooled workshop results for wider landscape images

Reasons given

When asked why they had chosen those images, the following themes emerged, with selected quotes illustrating each theme:

Biodiversity emerged as the top theme, with 75 quotes mentioning it, such as:

"Habitats of higher biodiversity value"

"Most diverse habitats, structure and species"

"Different habitats to support different species"

"Important habitats for indigenous species"

"Beavers (keystone species), have massive benefit to other wildlife and habitats"

"Britain is deprived of key species"

"Incorporation of a variety of species within the landscape"

This was supported by the second most popular theme, **variety and diversity** (48 quotes):

"Diverse semi natural landscapes"

"Variety of habitats and landscapes"

"Ecologically diverse and complex"

"respect the variety of geology, native plants which underpin all the possibilities"

"variety, not monoculture"

Natural preservation also received 32 mentions:

"They looked the most natural"

"Want to see natural areas preserved"

"Most untouched"

"Representing natural landscapes"

"Retain/Reinstate Natural Floodplains"

"Reinstate natural order of nature"

"Re-naturalisation of the landscape"

Rewilding was also popular, receiving 21 mentions:

"Reintroduction of keystone species to help restore naturally functioning ecosystems"

"Rewilding opportunities"

Water management was also a top scoring theme (20 mentions):

"Need more natural water bodies in the area"

"Flood management"

"Sheffield is built in steep valley with lot of fast flowing streams and rivers. Need to slow down flow re leaky dams etc"

"Our water systems need reeds, woodland, a variety of water side areas for biodiversity"

"Flood alleviation/need to re-wet land"

"Visited FC beaver colony project in N Yorks this summer - amazing improvements to biodiversity on site as well as wider flood risk reduction from releasing just 2 beavers a few years ago!"

"Restore our aquatic environments"

And finally, **accessibility**, with 19 mentions, such as:

"Multifunctional landscapes. Good public access to nature in some areas"

"Balancing habitat with accessibility"

"Opportunities for access to the natural areas"

Other themes that were mentioned, albeit less frequently were **ecosystem balance, renewable energy, sustainability, aesthetics, community and engagement, agriculture and food production** and **historical and geological engagement**.

All of this indicates again a desire for much wilder landscapes but always balancing other requirements including accessibility and water management.

5.3.3. When might nature 'get in the way'?

This question was posed to prompt realistic thinking about competing priorities rather than thinking only of nature. Responses can be grouped into themes as follows:

Development emerged as a key theme, with 29 attendees mentioning it. Below are some example quotes:

"When land is required for development"

"Infrastructure development"

"Urban development"

"Economic development, infrastructure, housing"

"Grey infrastructure"

"Flood defence building and maintenance"

"Short term greening of brownfield development sites"

"New roads & rail networks"

"Tension between development e.g. housing and keeping some green spaces"

"Developers consider nature as a hinderance"

Similarly, but more specifically, **housing** emerged as the second most popular theme (23 mentions):

"When people think the economy is about building and housing development"

"Short term political targets around building projects, housing schemes, etc."

"Addressing the issues with the housing crisis"

"Housing developments, Developers re Housing, highways"

"To meet housing need, to restrict development, obstructive to "progress""

Food production emerged as relatively frequent choices (11 mentions):

"If farmers needing land for food production"

"Conflicts with food production and economic development. Also may conflict with current land use"

"Conflicting demands on land use. Space for nature - space for food production"

Invasive species was also mentioned in 10 quotes:

"Invasive species dominating"

"Control of invasive species"

Other themes that received under 6 mentions were **accessibility, climate change, economic growth, conflicting land use, public opinion** and **human-wildlife conflict**.

Thus, there was a strong notion that nature might be seen to get in the way of housing development and infrastructure, as well as the need to produce food, and that nature is sometimes a nuisance if it overgrows paths or reduces visibility at road junctions, for example. Throughout the variety of groups that we engaged with, there was a common understanding of the competing demands on finite land. Thus, it is an important consideration in the production of the LNRS for it to be seen to be not only championing nature recovery, but doing it in a way that **integrates** with other land uses as far as possible.



When asked who might not prioritise nature recovery, the most common response was consistently developers followed by farmers as the second most frequent response. Governments, politicians and businesses were also frequently mentioned. It is extremely important to point out here that this is people's (anonymous) opinions, and the actions of these other groups are driven by many other factors - the need for housing, upgraded infrastructure and the force of financial incentives and externally-imposed targets. However, these are the major factors in people's minds, and this force of feeling needs to be considered in future delivery plans and the structuring of the frameworks (legislative, financial, societal) that drive decisions around land use. The trick will be to integrate these necessities where possible in a way that achieves what is required from multiple angles, and BNG legislation, for example, could be one driver that eases the integration of nature into new developments such that it achieves the housing that is required, but in a way that incorporates access to nature in its design, thus supporting biodiversity as well as creating the nature-rich spaces close by that people are saying that they most desire and benefit from. (NB, some of the longer quotes come from the first two workshops when handwritten comments were used rather than Mentimeter - the word clouds for those above only show partial responses)

When asked why, the responses were clustered as follows:

Money was by far the most mentioned theme, featuring in 79 comments, such as:

- | | |
|---|---|
| <i>"It doesn't make business sense and putting nature first is bad for profit, nature isn't profitable, you can't make money from nature"</i> | <i>"Money grabbing, Short-sighted"</i> |
| <i>"Everyone is too focused on financial gain"</i> | <i>"More interested in money and pleasing wealthy people"</i> |
| <i>"Economic drivers"</i> | <i>"Profit/shareholder driven, Government connected to big corp bosses"</i> |
| <i>"Money and ignorance"</i> | <i>"Nature doesn't make money"</i> |
| <i>"Profit is the primary driver for business"</i> | <i>"High upfront costs"</i> |
| <i>"Their business model inherently values a dead fish more than a live one. The costs to our lifestyle is externalised"</i> | <i>"Local authority's terrible lack of funding for ranger provision"</i> |
| | <i>"Cost of leaving land fallow"</i> |

Next was a wide perception that there is a **lack of awareness and understanding** in society (30 mentions):

- | | |
|---|--|
| <i>"Lack of understanding of how their lives are dependent on nature"</i> | <i>"Understanding of how it will actually have a difference"</i> |
| <i>"Ignorance"</i> | <i>"Lack of awareness"</i> |
| <i>"Lack of support and education."</i> | <i>"Lack of buy in from the majority of the population, either/or due to not understanding the issues or not caring"</i> |
| <i>"Lack of appreciation, Lack of Knowledge, Apathy"</i> | |

The notion that people have different **priorities** than nature recovery was also a relatively popular theme (20 mentions):

- | | |
|---|---|
| <i>"Other priorities based on need for popularity and profit"</i> | <i>"Personal priorities"</i> |
| <i>"Local authority priorities"</i> | <i>"Political priorities linked to finance/growth"</i> |
| <i>"Because they have different priorities"</i> | <i>"Having other concerns in their day-to-day life, feeling like nature is not "for them"</i> |
| <i>"Conflicting priorities"</i> | |

Conservation Organisations (2)



Large Landholders



Green and Other Env. Groups



Council Planners (1)



Landscape-scale Landowners



School, Colleges and Universities



Friends of and Local Groups



Council Planners (2)



When participants were asked 'what are the key barriers to nature recovery', the most common response across workshop groups was related to funding, cost or finance. This was followed by land use and ownership concerns as well as a general lack of understanding of nature and biodiversity which highlights a strong demand for education. While various other opinions were expressed in the word clouds, the ones mentioned below were the most dominant. (NB, as above some of the longer quotes come from the first two workshops when handwritten comments were used rather than Mentimeter).

Funding was by far and away the biggest category, featuring in 92 comments:

- "People like money"
- "Short term funding"
- "Funding and resource"
- "More capital grants, not enough revenue"
- "Cost of living"
- "Available funding"
- "Revenue, Funding"
- "Public and private funding"
- "It costs too much"
- "Strategy Costs"
- "Cuts to funding for charities and interest groups"

Next was **land use and ownership**, which was mentioned 44 times:

- "Land owner agreement"
- "Perceived lack of space"
- "Access to land"
- "Pressure on land use"

"Competing demands for land"
"High competition for land"
"Land control"
"Lack of landowner support"
"Landowner intentions"

"Ownership of land being too concentrated and private interests driving land use"
"Pressure on budgets and land"
"Why would a landowner use their land for nature? What is their business case?"

Public and stakeholder engagement was mentioned frequently by many respondents (41 times):

"Poor stakeholder engagement"
"Appetite to get involved"
"Personnel to do it, public engagement and support"
"Lack of connected working"
"Lack of public support. Lack of landowner support"
"Community involvement, local monitoring ability to flag problems, local training"

"Stakeholder buy in"
"Communication - still need to improve more joined-up approach between stakeholders"
"Apathy by a proportion of public. Careless disposal of rubbish, chemicals and plastics into natural environment"

Knowledge and education also featured in 41 comments:

"People not understanding the importance of the nature emergency"
"Lack of understanding about food supply and security"
"Policy understanding"

"Understanding of what nature recovery is and what interventions are beneficial - knowledge of current state of things"
"Lack of understanding of why need to change"
"Expertise, Training"

Another popular theme was **policy and political will** (34 mentions):

"Legislation"
"Wrong regulation"
"Weak legislation"
"Policy salience"
"Government priorities"
"Political inaction, disagreement"
"Local Plan Government changes"

"Local planning. The council and competing agendas"
"Political/power blocker for a more democratic or evidence led public process to progress"
"Lack of policy levers for support - lack of resources - systemic inertia"
"Lack of political and economic will"

Conflicting priorities and values was another main category identified, featuring in 23 comments:

"Competing priorities"
"Conflicts of interest, economic priorities"

"Government priorities"
"Competing priorities - for many people day to day survival comes first"

Other categories that were identified, but had below 20 mentions each include **short-termism and mindset, environmental challenges** and **bureaucracy and red tape**.

An understanding of these barriers, whether real or perceived, is crucial to creating a LNRS that is implementable. If they are not addressed, either practically, or through communication of the real context, then roll-out will always be a challenge.

5.3.6. What would most enable nature recovery in South Yorkshire?

Funding was the most common theme across all workshop participants, featuring in 49 comments:

"Political buy-in and funding to make sure not just another Strategy that sits on the shelf!"
"Commitment to support ongoing review of the LNRS through funding, staff resource at SYMCA (dependant on Defra funding)"
"Long term funding strategies"
"More funding for catchment partnerships"
"Funding for environmental charities"
"Funding for staff to enable project delivery"

"Funding for ecosystem services"
"Private finance"
"Local authority funding because our site is managed by the council but largely done by volunteers"
"Schemes and funding that allow farmers to diversify and work with nature"
"Better Funding and incentives"
"Funding mechanisms for long term site management that values nature"

Green and Other Env. Groups



Council Planners (1)



Landscape-scale Landowners



School, Colleges and Universities



Friends of and Local Groups



Council Planners (2)



Workshops at the SWSG and SYSC were shorter and therefore this question was not included. When participants from the other workshops were asked this question a range of different species and species groups were mentioned, with their frequency is displayed in broad taxonomic categories in Table 4 as well as their relative popularity visually displayed in Figure 7 below.

Table 45. frequency of species and/or species groups mentioned

Species category	Count
Invertebrates	51
Plants and trees	34
Birds	33
Other	20
Beavers	19
Fish	16
Wetland species	15
Woodland species	14
At risk species	13
Keystone species	12
Native species	10
Other mammals	9
Pollinators	8
River species	8
Ecosystem engineers	7
Water vole	6
Peatland species	6
Lower trophic level species	5
Amphibians	4
Invasive species	3

*Other includes species resilient species, aquatic species, apex predators, reptiles, moorland species, humans, fungi, heathland species, co-benefit species, freshwater species, lowland heath species, limestone species, key indicator species.

Table 5.5 additional points mentioned on species preferences

Other comments
All
All creatures great and small
All need to be protected
All of them
Biodiversity
Everything
Flagship species
Go with the evidence data
Habitats should be prioritised
No one species
None - diversity priority
Non-human actants
non-replaceable habitats
NOT beavers
Removal of invasives
Something newsworthy
Species in peatland areas
Species-rich grassland (x2)
The most appropriate ones
Those we can't see
Umbrella species
Whatever helps biodiversity

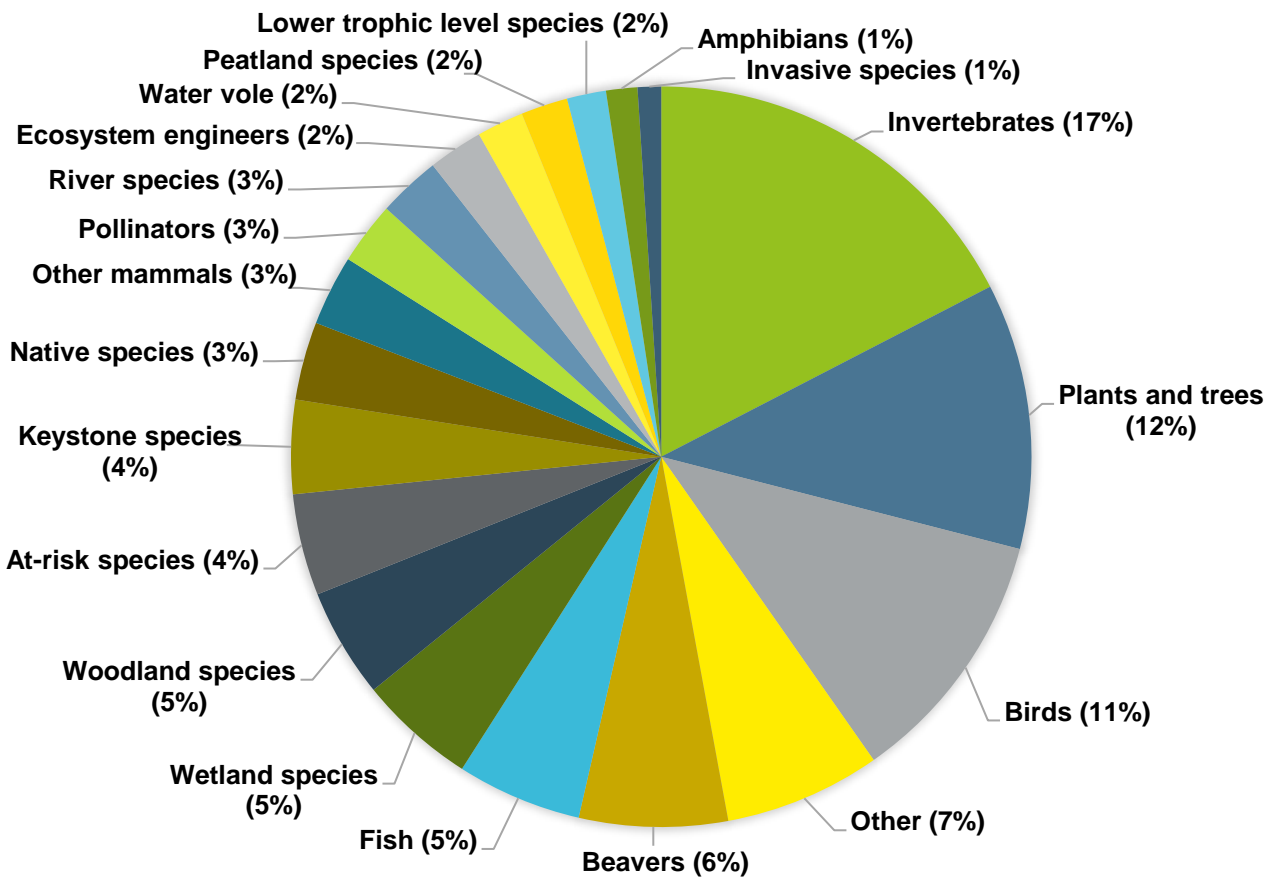


Figure 7. pie chart displaying the relative mentions of species and/or species groups

The species data highlights that invertebrates (51) were the most commonly cited category making up 17% of the share, followed by plants and trees (34) and birds (33), which also had high counts and made up 12% and 11%, respectively. Notably, out of the total mammals mentioned (34), 19 of the responses specifically mentioned beavers and 6 mentioned water voles. Similar to these species groups, species critical for ecosystem stability were also mentioned with keystone species and ecosystem engineers specifically being mentioned 12 and 7 times respectively. Attention to species at risk (13) as well as invasive species (3) also got mentioned relatively frequently.

Although less scientific in their nature, comments in Table 5 also revealed some interesting findings. Many participants thought that all species should be prioritised, and although this lacks specificity, it highlighted that there was a general want for conservation and biodiversity preservation (“whatever helps biodiversity”). Despite one comment emphasising the discouragement towards beaver reintroduction, this was outweighed by 19 comments favouring beavers in Table 4. Interestingly, there was one mention towards species that were “newsworthy” highlighting perhaps not a focus on biodiversity as such, but more something that would grab people’s attention and perhaps spark their interest in the topic. There were also some mentions towards species in certain habitat types, however this is more relevant for section 5.3.8 below.

Table 6. frequency of habitats mentioned

Species category	Count
Woodlands inc. wood pasture	83
Wetlands	71
Grasslands/meadows	65
Rivers inc. riparian habitats	64
Peatland	38
Moorland	20
Urban	17
Heathland/upland	15
Agricultural/farmland	13
Freshwater	10
Other	8
Hedgerows	6
Scrub	6
Mosaic habitat	6
Depleted/exploited	3

*Other included brownfield sites/reclaimed land, wildlife habitat, bare sand, benthic, irreplaceable, limestone.

Table 7.6 additional points mentioned on habitat preferences

Extra comments
Accessible
All need to be protected
Building_dependent_species
Community_habitats
Corridors (x2)
Dynamic habitats
Ecotones
Green_corridors
Peak_District
Public green space
Rocky
Soil diverse
Soils
Variety
Whatever helps biodiversity

The recorded habitat data highlights that woodlands including wood pasture (83) was the most commonly mentioned category, making up 20% of the share, followed by wetlands (71), grasslands/meadows (65), and rivers including riparian habitats (64), which also had high counts and made up 17%, 15% and 15%, respectively. The remaining habitat groups mentioned made up a smaller proportion of the chart, but this included peatlands, moorlands and urban areas, for example.

Although less scientific in their nature, comments in Table 7 also revealed some interesting findings. There was a real mix of extra comments, with no general themes being drawn. However, there was a mention around all habitats needing to be prioritised which, similarly to the species data, reveals a general desire for nature recovery, even if people aren't able to break it down to habitat level. Perhaps expectedly, accessibility came up when considering habitat priorities, which has been a common theme across our findings for our different modes of engagement. Other mentions included for the landscape and habitats to align to those of the Peak District. Although not directly linked to habitat type, but more the flow between habitats, habitat "connectivity" was mentioned twice revealing how participants would like for the council and the LNRS to not only consider the habitat type, but also the flow and connections between them.

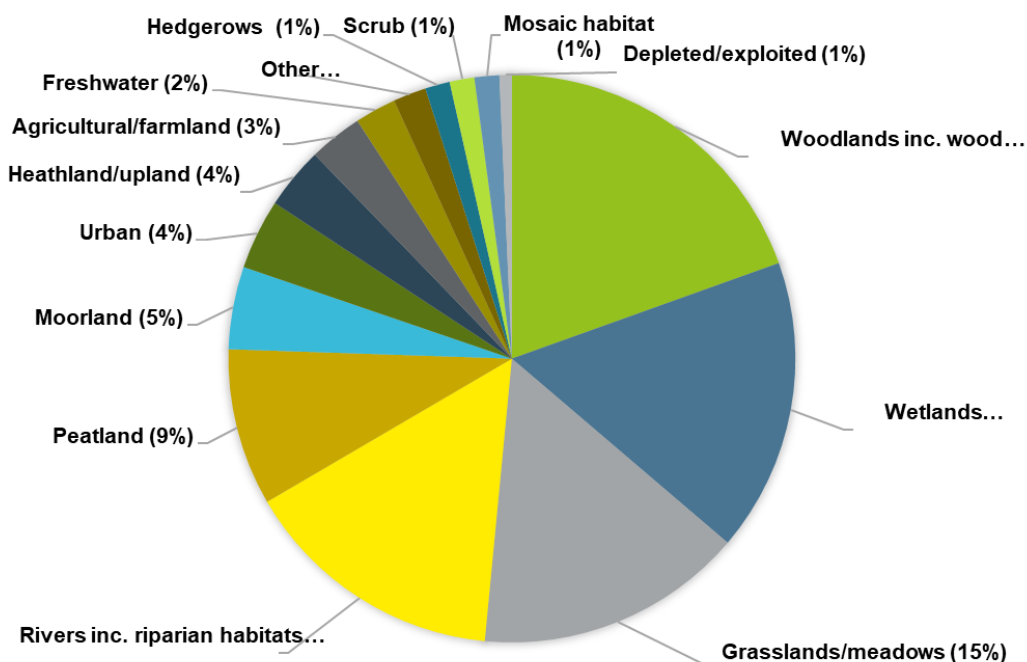


Figure 8. pie chart displaying the relative mentions of habitats

5.3.9. Mapping of spatial opportunities and constraints

Conservation organisations’ workshops also included a part where participants were asked to draw on printed maps to gather spatial insight, both enablers and constraints, that may influence the LNRS priorities and in particular the priorities that will be mapped.

The outputs were fed in to inform the prioritisation and mapping process, so are not discussed further in this report.

5.3.10. Other workshop discussion points

In many of the workshops, there was time to have a discussion around the following prompts:

Constraints	What group plans and policies would support LNRS and its future delivery?
	What group plans and policies would conflict with LNRS and its future delivery?
	What constraints are there when considering integrating LNRS into your future plans?
	What is needed to overcome the constraints?
Opportunities	What opportunities are there for nature recovery in South Yorkshire/on your property or land holding/for your organisation?
Priorities	List the priorities for nature recovery from your/your organisation’s perspective (Think about these themes: woodland, wetland, uplands, grasslands and agriculture, urban and species)
LNRS format	How does the LNRS need to be produced to make it both useful and usable?

Responses:

What group plans and policies would support LNRS and its future delivery?

It is clear that all organisations have existing plans and documents that the LNRS needs to build on rather than starting from scratch. But since many would have been drawn up in isolation, they may not necessarily support the shaping and then delivery of the LNRS. The relevant policies and plans mentioned were:

- 0% glyphosate use policies
- Green Belt
- Green infrastructure strategies
- Woodland management schemes
- Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG)
- Biodiversity Duty
- NHS and ambulance estates policies (Yorkshire Ambulance services)

What group plans and policies would conflict with LNRS and its future delivery?

- Plans relating to housing developments
- National development policies

What constraints or challenges are there when considering integrating LNRS into your future plans?

Financial limitations and funding barriers were mentioned as significant obstacles to implementing new strategies and services by participants. Many emphasised the significant costs and resource constraints involved, calling for government support through funding or grants to ease the financial burden on councils. Concerns were also raised about the accessibility of funds for specific habitat creation, with some noting for example that existing funding streams aren’t tied to farmland birds.

Capacity and resource constraints were also frequently highlighted as key challenges. Participants noted that educational settings often lack time and mental space to take on additional issues like nature recovery. Councils also face significant resource pressures, and creating and maintaining habitats requires both funding and personnel for tasks such as fencing, hay cutting and ditch clearing. Additionally, the high financial cost of ending tenancies early on low-value farmland was raised by a participant and this poses further obstacles to effective land management. The ability to access support was also raised in the context of habitat banks as they are often inaccessible to small developers due to minimum thresholds, with local authorities lacking the resources to step in.

A **lack of joined-up thinking** was mentioned many times. The idea of local authorities working collaboratively was a strong theme across all workshop groups. However, there was uncertainty as to how coordinated planning and collaboration would be achieved in practice. It was mentioned that effective nature recovery relies on cross-county connections, ensuring opportunities are well-linked and efforts are not duplicated, as it is often the case that many groups are working independently. Additionally, participants emphasised the need for local plans to align with various policies, strategies and other authorities to create a more cohesive.

Competing priorities were occasionally mentioned, particularly in relation to developers and farmers. Some participants expressed concern that nature and wildlife considerations are often low on developers' agendas, with infrastructure projects taking precedence. Farmers were also seen as struggling to balance conservation with financial pressures, as making a living has become more difficult due to food prices. Additionally, the demand for affordable housing was highlighted as another competing priority in land use decisions.

A range of other challenges were mentioned briefly including, but not limited to:

- **Regulatory barriers:** Red tape hindering management changes and self-build/retrospective planning bypassing BNG requirements.
- **Public engagement barriers:** Difficulty engaging local people, as nature often isn't a priority.
- **Scale and implementation issues:** Challenges in large-scale implementation and the complexity of other new requirements like the enhanced Biodiversity Duty as well as grasping LNRS on top of this.
- **Habitat banking difficulties:** Issues with the habitat banking process and registering sites.
- **Land use conflicts:** Challenges restoring peatlands near land used for farming, leading to dry zones on edges.
- **Knowledge and awareness gaps:** Need for education on alternative land management methods, such as reducing herbicide and pesticide use.

What is needed to overcome the constraints?

A variety of ideas were put forward to smooth the integration of the LNRS; these have been grouped into the five themes below:

Participants highlighted a strong need for **governance and policy support** emphasising the importance of local government buy-in and necessary policy changes. Some suggested that having conservation officers in every local authority to collaborate with community groups would be beneficial. However, a key challenge remains the perceived attitude of local councils, which are often seen as more responsive to developers than to community groups.

Community engagement and collaboration were seen as vital, with participants stressing the importance of involving local residents in decisions about their areas, as they are the end users. It was recognised that good networks and easy information sharing are essential to avoid siloed working and to achieve effective engagement. Accessibility of land, along with public facilities like toilets, was also highlighted as crucial for attracting and engaging local communities.

Participants emphasised the need for **sustainable, long-term planning**, with a focus on ensuring that changes are enduring. The need for resilient landscapes was brought to attention, particularly in response to climate change and the rise in tree health issues. However, it was also acknowledged that these tree health issues also offer opportunities to restructure woodlands, such as by removing trees affected by diseases.

Participants stressed the need for increased **education and awareness** to help make more informed choices that benefit biodiversity, particularly regarding knowledge gaps on specific species. They also suggested that the LNRS should work alongside programs that are already in place that are aiming to improve biodiversity in certain areas. Additionally, there was a call for broader education

on the importance of certain species, as some have been labeled as vermin, stressing the need for awareness across all age groups.

Although participants mentioned funding was a key barrier to implementation of LNRS into their future plans (section 5.3.5), they also pointed out that **financial and resource allocation** as a key enabler to LNRS, with many challenges ultimately coming down to a lack of money and resources.

What opportunities are there for nature recovery in South Yorkshire/on your property or land holding/for your organisation?

Although many constraints and challenges were voiced, a huge variety of opportunities that could be derived from this process were suggested:

Participants highlighted the role of LNRSs in **increasing awareness of biodiversity and nature** recovery, aligning with its core objectives. They noted that it could encourage people to spend more time outdoors, promoting active travel, reducing air pollution, and improving well-being. LNRSs, if implemented well, may also help make green spaces feel safer and more inclusive for people from different cultural backgrounds. However, the potential cascading impacts from the LNRS putting more pressure on local authorities was also mentioned.

Participants highlighted the opportunity for **habitat connectivity and landscape-scale recovery** as a result of the LNRS. They emphasised the need to link habitats across county boundaries and for LNRSs to connect up with adjacent LNRSs. Beyond simply expanding green spaces, the LNRS was also viewed as a way to promote a more coordinated, council-wide approach to nature recovery.

Governance, policy and strategic planning was another key theme that emerged from the workshop discussions. Participants saw the LNRS as a way to create a more consistent and coordinated approach to nature recovery, helping to harmonise efforts across different areas. They highlighted opportunities for collaboration between various departments within local authorities and emphasised the importance of LNRS in guiding where to prioritise efforts. Participants mentioned that the LNRS would also provide further insight in relation to Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) as it would help identify suitable sites and inform local planning.

Participants highlighted the opportunities within **land management, agriculture, and ecosystem services** through the LNRS. They emphasised the need for a balanced approach that integrates food security, soil health and habitat conservation. Upland areas were seen as particularly important due to their role in reducing flooding through well-maintained blanket bogs. Additionally, they noted that opportunities can depend on the incentives and new markets for different crops and alternative land uses, such as solar farms. For example, it was suggested that revisiting sustainable drainage systems could also support farmland with higher water levels, helping to reduce peat shrinkage and carbon emissions.

Biodiversity net gain (BNG) and habitat banking opportunities were mentioned by participants. Many highlighted the connection between BNG and the LNRS and noted BNG as a good opportunity that encourages landowners to make their land available. Similarly, a participant noted that opportunities for habitat banking have already been identified.

The opportunity of **species reintroductions and wildlife conservation** was discussed in some workshops. Some participants mentioned the opportunity of introducing beavers and noted that the council had been working on potential sites for their reintroduction. However, while this was seen as an opportunity, some also acknowledged the potential challenges, particularly the impact beavers can have on farmland.

Practical initiatives for community-based nature recovery were drawn out as an opportunity from workshops. Participants noted the opportunity of utilising underused land on council estates. Similarly, one suggestion was a scheme allowing residents to purchase subsidised fruit trees for

planting in council gardens, with minimal red tape barriers. Additionally, efforts to develop a community orchard were also discussed.

List the priorities for nature recovery from your/your organisation's perspective:

The outputs from this section in particular were fed into the Priorities and Measures process.

The priorities suggested for nature recovery were split into two categories: general themes and specific themes related to habitats and species.

General themes:

Participants emphasised the importance of focusing on **urban spaces** for nature recovery. They highlighted the potential of green spaces within and around cities to support biodiversity while also serving as valuable educational resources. In particular, in the schools, colleges and universities' workshop, the proximity to schools was seen as a key advantage, helping raise awareness with nature among pupils and students.

Participants stressed the importance of **restoring and effectively managing existing areas** rather than solely focusing on creating new ones. They highlighted the need to improve reclaimed land, which is common in South Yorkshire, but often lacks proper management and planning. Protecting and maintaining veteran features, managing current habitats for biodiversity, and identifying irreplaceable habitats in need of restoration were seen as key priorities. Collaboration was emphasized as essential to ensuring these areas are preserved and enhanced for the future.

Accessibility was a key theme when discussing priorities. Participants highlighted the need to balance access with the protection of natural areas. It was mentioned that the people are the most important thing in South Yorkshire, so making nature accessible to all groups was seen as really important. Suggestions included incorporating metrics to measure public access to nature.

The need to **alter people's perceptions** toward nature recovery was mentioned by participants. Raising awareness was seen as important. Projects like 'Grey to Green' were highlighted as examples of how transforming urban areas can positively influence public attitudes.

Following on from this, **education, guidance and information** was also another strong priority theme. Participants noted that many areas lack clear management guidelines, unlike designated SSSIs, and called for updated surveys, particularly on water level management plans, which are often outdated. Similarly, the idea of increased guidance was a key priority from the LNRS as it will provide more insight into where to prioritise efforts. Additionally, there was a suggestion for biodiversity and nature recovery topics to be integrated into the school curriculums or extra-curricular activities, such as gardening clubs. The LNRS will also serve to improve public awareness and more accessible information was viewed as essential for guiding conservation efforts.

Another priority drawn out from the workshops, was for **stronger communication and collaboration** between different stakeholders, particularly bridging the disconnect between the mayoral office and local councils. Bringing like-minded people together was seen as essential for effective nature recovery efforts. Additionally, participants stressed the importance of aligning competing priorities across departments to ensure wider support for the LNRS. They also suggested incorporating small, low-cost actions that everyone can participate in to encourage broader involvement.

Another priority was the idea of introducing a **rewards-based system** for individuals that are already doing great work for nature recovery. Participants noted that many areas and landowners are already positively contributing towards nature recovery, but their efforts can sometimes go unnoticed.

Participants emphasised the need for **long-term resources and funding** to ensure the sustained maintenance and success of nature recovery efforts.

It has also been recognised through the workshops that there are likely to be commonalities for priorities across stakeholder groups, with an example being the reduction in fertiliser and pesticide pollution.

Specific themes that were reiterated, related to habitats and species:

- Priority species with a large reach
- Focus on species that are only found in South Yorkshire
- Species that excite people - would increase interest in the LNRS
- Farmland birds
- Ground nesting birds
- Wildflower meadows
- Calcareous grasses
- Arable margins
- Upland heathland
- Magnesian limestone
- Woodland (all types)
- Hedgerows and field margins for connectivity to fit actions taken within one landowner's boundary sites within the wider landscape and ensure wider connectivity
- River Don - invasive species management
- Focus on SSSI sites
- Reducing area of low-land peatland that is dry and oxidising away
- Meadow creation on concrete areas
- Former colliery sites being restored

How does the LNRS need to be produced to make it both useful and usable?

This discussion was to help shape the format in which the LNRS is produced. To make the LNRS both useful and useable, many workshop participants have stated their preference for it to include a really well-designed **interactive mapping tool** that allows direct comparison with local plans. Clear visual elements, including **colour gradients** indicating site favourability would enhance accessibility. It has been suggested that the LNRS should use **concise, engaging and visually appealing** summaries alongside clear recommendations to ensure it's easily understood. Therefore, the challenge lies in making it simple and accessible for the general public, while also powerful and detailed enough to become, for example, a normal part of planning processes. Finally, it has been proposed that demonstrating the strategy **in action** would help stakeholders see its practical application and benefits.

5.4. Key findings and relevance for the LNRS

Despite the range of groups involved, a core of commonly agreed themes emerged.

The vision for the future, revealed through the choice of images, and rationale for those choices, highlighted a preference for urban green spaces with a more 'wild' and natural appearance - 'untamed' landscapes that emphasise ecological richness. At the same time, there was also broad agreement on the importance of ensuring accessibility, such as well-maintained paths and benches, to bridge the connection between nature and people. Similar to urban green spaces, participants expressed a strong desire for wilder and more natural landscapes in the wider environment. However, there was slightly more diversity in responses, as the reintroduction some species including predators, integration of renewable energy and supporting food production within the broader landscape also garnered moderate support. This indicates that aesthetics and nature recovery are not the sole considerations; energy generation and farming were also in the mix. However, across both urban and wider landscapes, the reasonings for image selections were consistently driven by an ecological focus, followed by accessibility.

When asked who might not prioritise nature recovery, developers were most cited, followed by farmers, governments, politicians and businesses. These responses are perhaps understandable, but the reasoning behind them was particularly revealing: the drive for profit and financial motives emerged as the primary theme, with terms such as '*ignorance*' and '*short-sighted*' being used. Additionally, participants pointed to a general lack of understanding about the importance of nature and acknowledged that differing priorities mean that nature may not always be a focus for everyone. The differing perspectives and values across society pose perhaps the greatest challenge to delivering a successful nature recovery strategy. For those focused on nature recovery, dismissing entire sectors - who are delivering important projects and services, and who are operating within

societally imposed frameworks of incentives and constraints - as ignorant and short-sighted is not conducive to collaboration!

Moreover, as discussed below in section 7, we would suggest that wider society seems also to be remarkably thoughtful and knowledgeable about nature and wildlife. They may not know how to identify particular species, or discuss in-depth ecological detail, but there appears to be a general understanding of the importance of nature and other green spaces, but also the need for this to be balanced by other demands on land use. We are not saying that nature engagement and education are not valuable - indeed it should continue to be championed - but to portray wider society as uncaring, greedy and ignorant of nature may be a false narrative and needs to be challenged to enable a well-funded, well designed and collaborative approach for nature recovery to happen.

When considering the barriers and enablers of nature recovery in South Yorkshire, the enablers are often the counterparts to the barriers, with funding being a prime example. While funding was both the top barrier and enabler, the focus was not merely on the availability of capital and revenue funding, but more so the importance of its longevity and sustainability. Another overlapping theme for barriers and enablers was the need for improved societal knowledge and education around nature and biodiversity. Notably, there appeared to be more barriers than enablers, reflecting a predominantly negative outlook. Other key barriers include land use and ownership, public and stakeholder support, political will and competing priorities.

Certain species and habitat categories stood out, particularly invertebrates, plants and trees and birds which were the most frequently mentioned species. For habitats, woodland including wood pasture, wetlands, grasslands/meadows and riparian habitats were the most popular. Across both the species and habitat data collection, less scientific suggestions were also captured. While these lacked specificity, they indicated a broad desire for nature recovery. The results of this part in particular were fed into the parallel process writing the Statement of Priorities and Measures for nature recovery in South Yorkshire.

There are many existing plans and policies among the organisations represented in the workshops that will already align with and support the roll out of a nature recovery strategy, and indeed the LNRS should be seen and used as a unifying framework to align and amplify all of the existing great work going on. It will take time for lots of disparate strategies, policies and plans to be influenced by the LNRS, but time and effort spent on building a large-scale collaborative approach with a clear

Key points from workshops

- A preference for urban green spaces with a more 'wild' and natural appearance;
- The importance of accessibility, such as well-maintained paths and benches, to bridge the connection between nature and people;
- A strong desire for wilder and more natural landscapes in the wider environment, with some support for reintroductions, even including of predators such as lynx;
- Beavers being the most mentioned species for reintroduction, followed by water voles;
- Importance of integration of renewable energy and food production within the landscape;
- Species groups featuring strongly for prioritisation were invertebrates, plants and trees, and birds. For habitats, woodland including wood pasture, wetlands, grasslands/ meadows and riparian habitats were the most frequently emphasised;
- Developers were perceived as not prioritising nature recovery, followed by farmers, governments, politicians and businesses, with the drive for profit as the primary theme;
- The perceived main barrier to nature recovery was financial resourcing: the amount, but also the security and longevity of funding. There was a perception that money was available for many other priorities, but that nature recovery was poorly funded, relying on NGOs and volunteers.
- Other barriers mentioned were land use and ownership, public and stakeholder support, political will and competing priorities.
- Participants believed there was a lack of knowledge and understanding in other members of society about the importance of nature.
- There are many existing plans and policies among the organisations represented that will already align with and support the roll out of a nature recovery strategy. The LNRS should be seen and used as a unifying framework to align and amplify these.
- LNRS roll-out will require collaboration, communication, and cross-sector working.
- It needs to be easy to use, accessible to a wide range of users, to be compatible with existing software, operate at an appropriate level of detail, and become part of the everyday processes that different stakeholders use, especially planners.
- The LNRS needs to be compatible and consistent with bordering counties' LNRSs.

vision of the future should be well worth it. And it is clear from the workshop outputs that the LNRS needs to be seen to be not *just* about nature recovery in isolation, but be used to inform the design of, for example, housing developments. BNG could and perhaps should be a major part of this, but the introduction of other local, regional and national initiatives and incentives are needed to ensure that, for example, new or existing housing developments or plans are created and managed in such a way that they provide for nature recovery *and* the access to green spaces that people so desire close to where they live. All of this will require collaboration, communication, cross-sector working, and, crucially, an LNRS that is designed in such a way that it becomes part of the everyday work of local authorities across the board, and especially for planners. It needs to be easy to use, accessible to a wide range of users, to be compatible with existing software, particularly for mapping, to operate at an appropriate level of detail, and to become part of the everyday processes that different stakeholders use. Alongside this, the LNRS needs to be compatible with bordering counties' LNRSs which may prove challenging given the complexities and specifics of each LNRS to a given area as well as the varying formats (or lack of a standardised format across England). Nevertheless, it is clear from these workshops that there are huge opportunities in the production of a well-used LNRS that informs many aspects of how the county looks and operates to support the sustainable recovery of nature for decades to come.

6. Farmer engagement events

6.1. Design

To gather farmers' opinions on the LNRS, two in-person workshops were held on 17 October 2024 at Billingley Village Hall and 11 November 2024 at The Shoulder of Mutton, Worrall. The workshops were informal in nature and included pie and peas as a way to encourage attendance and participation. Two other events were planned but were cancelled due to poor or no take-up. This is a key audience to engage further with during future consultation and delivery stages.

Table 87. overview of farmer workshops, detailing the date, location, groups represented and attendee numbers

Date	'Title'	Location	Groups represented	No. of attendees
17 Oct	Farmer's Workshop	Billingley Village Hall	Farmers, conservation adviser, land manager	12
11 Nov	Farmer's Workshop	The Shoulder of Mutton, Worrall	Farmers	9
TOTAL				21

Billingley Village Hall (17/10)

The first workshop that took place followed the same structure as those described in Section 5 (Mentimeter activity) however it did not include the mapping exercise and breakout rooms, instead an open conversation was encouraged.

The Shoulder of Mutton (11/11)

The second farmer workshop did not include the Mentimeter images. However, the remainder of the Mentimeter activity was carried out (questions on barriers, enablers, species and habitat groups).

The following outlines the structure of the workshops:

6.3.1	Which 4 images represent your local 'urban' green space in the future?	Billingley Village Hall
6.3.2	Which 4 images represent the wider landscape in the future?	Billingley Village Hall
6.3.3	When might nature get in the way?	Billingley Village Hall The Shoulder of Mutton
6.3.4	Who might not prioritise nature recovery and why?	Billingley Village Hall
6.3.5	What are the barriers to nature recovery?	Billingley Village Hall The Shoulder of Mutton
6.3.6	What would most enable nature recovery in South Yorkshire?	ditto
6.3.7	Which species or species groups should be prioritised?	ditto
6.3.8	What habitats need to be prioritised in South Yorkshire?	ditto
6.3.9	Other discussion points	ditto

6.2. Participants

A total of 21 farmers attended the workshops. At Billingley Village Hall attendees consisted mostly of farmers, but there was also presence from a conservation adviser and a land manager. Attendees at The Shoulder of Mutton remained anonymous but were predominantly farmers.

6.3. Outputs and analysis

Below are the farmer workshop results from the interactive Mentimeter session.

6.3.1. Urban green space image choices

Billingley Village Hall

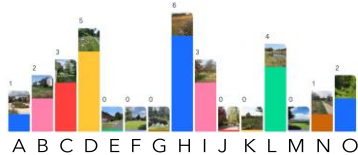


Figure 9. workshop choices for urban green space images

When considering urban green spaces, it was clear that from the first farmer workshop, there was a sway towards images **H**, **D** and **L** which was similar to the results from the workshops discussed in section 5.3.1. These images had a focus on natural and wilder green spaces.



Images **B**, **C**, **I** and **O** also got some moderate support



6.3.2. Wider landscape image choices

Billingley Village Hall

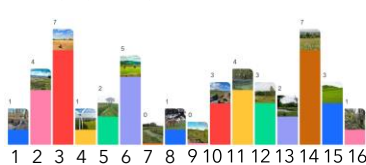
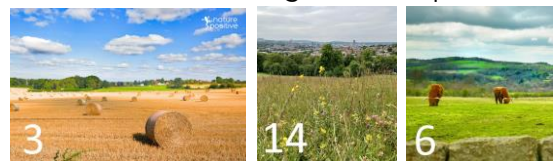


Figure 10. workshop choices for landscape images

In previous workshops (section 5.3.1) there was moderate appetite for selecting images which focused on traditional agricultural practices and food production. However, as is to be expected, the images that farmers selected were closely aligned with their industry (images **3**, **6** and **14** were the highest choices). But a variety of other images chosen show a broad support for a diverse landscape:



Reasons why?

Participants noted that image 3 was “achievable and appropriate” for South Yorkshire’s landscape as “food production is missing on a wider scale [in this set of images]”. The idea of incorporating nature recovery was woven into some of the responses as farmers noted that “you can grow crops and have conservation”.

6.3.3. When might nature ‘get in the way’?

Farmers frequently mentioned food production as a key area when nature could pose challenges, which is unsurprising from their perspective. There was also evidence of bigger-picture thinking, with recognition that reducing food production, and thus country-wide food security, could lead to conflict, ultimately hindering nature conservation efforts further. Additionally, nature was noted as a potential obstacle to large infrastructure projects and development schemes. Conflicting priorities among different groups were highlighted using the example of ground-nesting birds vs. ragwort.

6.3.4. Who might not prioritise nature recovery and why?

As in Section 5.3.4, developers were the most frequently mentioned group, with participants attributing this to profit-driven motives. Farmers also noted that intensive farmers may not always prioritise nature recovery due to a lack of financial incentives. An additional group, not mentioned in any other workshop discussions, was dog walkers, who were criticised for not always keeping to footpaths, allowing dogs to roam freely across land and potentially disrupt nature.

6.3.5. What are the barriers to nature recovery?

The farmer workshops identified funding and a lack of incentives as key barriers to nature recovery. Conflicting priorities and insufficient public and landowner engagement were also mentioned. Additional challenges include siloed thinking, resistance to change and a general lack of public understanding about nature and biodiversity. Notably, food production was highlighted as a barrier, a point not raised in other workshop discussions, highlighting the value of engaging farmers further in the LNRS process.

6.3.6. What would most enable nature recovery in South Yorkshire?

Funding and financial incentives for farmers were identified as key enablers in both workshops, with an emphasis on the need for long-term, stable funding. Farmers highlighted the importance of guidance and support, particularly in understanding what actions to take and how to maintain farm profitability. Improved partnerships and better communication between stakeholders also emerged as strong themes. Once again, the idea of increasing public knowledge about nature was seen as critical to enabling nature recovery, highlighting the synergy between farmer workshops and wider stakeholder workshops. However, unique to these workshops, farmers also noted that less intensive agricultural practices are needed and advocated for encouraging local and sustainable food production practices as a pathway to support nature recovery.

6.3.7. Which species or species groups should be prioritised?

A range of species were identified in the farmer workshops and are displayed in Table 9 below. These data have been passed through to the prioritisation process to ensure their inclusion.

Table 9. list of species and species groups mentioned

Any endangered/red list animals	Ground-nesting birds	Lapwing	Pollinators
Barn owls	Hedgehogs	Little owls	Songbirds
Bats	Insects	Mammals	Species declining locally
Curlew	Invertebrates	None	What we already have
Grey partridge	Kestrels	Owls	

6.3.8. Which habitats need to be prioritised in South Yorkshire?

A range of species were identified in the farmer workshops and are displayed in Table below. This data has been passed through to the prioritisation process to ensure their inclusion.

Table 10. terms used for habitat priority suggestions

Coppice	Hedgerows	Moorlands/hay meadows (Penistone)	Unimproved grassland
Existing woodland	Hedges	Something that enhances the local area/landscape	
Grassland	Moorland	Species-rich grassland	

6.3.9. Other discussion comments:

Billingley Village Hall (17/10)

In open discussions in the workshop, farmers raised several relevant points. Questions arose about how DEFRA would incentivise farmers, along with scepticism about isolated actions making a difference, emphasising the need for broader efforts. An important consideration when implementing the LNRS, highlighted in discussions, is that farming is not just a job, but instead a way

of life. This led to some resistance towards the idea of prioritising nature conservation. It is therefore important to ensure that nature recovery initiatives align with the realities of agricultural life. Farmers also noted that previous environmental efforts by them have often been unnoticed.

Participants also identified two spatial opportunities to explore: connective areas and unused farmland.

The Shoulder of Mutton (11/11)

Farmers were asked to rank their level of agreement with various statements on land use, productivity and the LNRS. The responses highlighted a diverse range of perspectives on key issues related to integrating nature and farming. The majority of farmers strongly disagreed with the idea of completely separating land for food production and nature, indicating a preference for integrated approaches. Opinions were more divided on whether encouraging nature onto farmland reduces productivity, reflecting a mix of concerns and openness to the idea. There was mostly broad agreement on the need for nature and farming to be fully integrated across the landscape (confirming the result from the first statement). A few viewed their land falling within the LNRS mapped areas as a possible opportunity, while most were unsure and two disagreed somewhat.

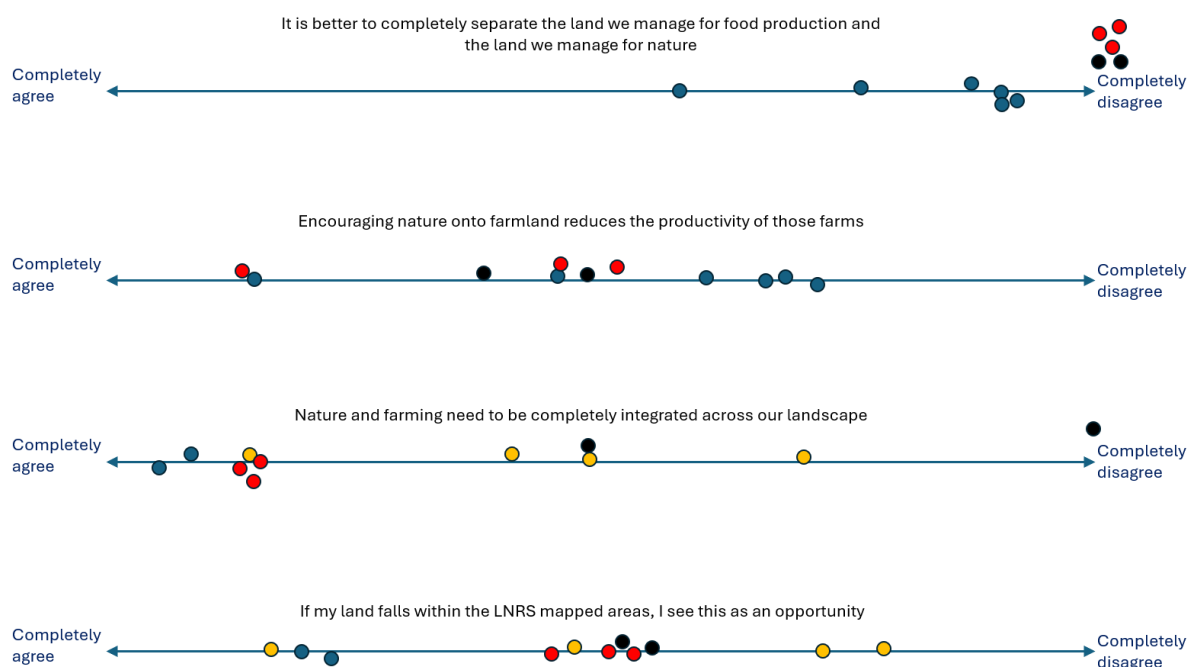


Figure 11. farmers responses to statements on land use, productivity and the LNRS

6.4. Key findings and relevance for the LNRS

It should be noted that the first workshop was promoted through an existing farmer cluster, already interested in and working on nature-related projects, therefore the results from these two events, while informative, should not be taken as representative all farmers and landowners. There was significant overlap between the farmer workshops and the wide stakeholder outputs discussed in Section 5.3. For example, all workshop groups have expressed a preference towards natural and wilder urban green spaces, including the farmers. However, the farmer workshops have offered an additional layer of detail to inform the LNRS, uncovering extra insights that had not previously been highlighted. This was evident in the fact that a larger proportion of their image selections represented traditional agricultural and food production, reflecting their industry ties, compared to the wider stakeholder groups. However, what was interesting is that farmers did not disregard the diverse needs of the landscape and also showed support for more varied landscapes too. Furthermore, there was also evidence of bigger-picture thinking, with farmers recognising that

reducing food production could lead to conflict, potentially hindering conservation efforts in the long term.

Farmers have identified food production as a primary area where nature may pose challenges. Interestingly, farmers also recognised themselves as a group who may not prioritise nature recovery, particularly intensive farmers, as there is a lack of financial incentives to support it. However, similarly to the wider stakeholder workshops, developers were the most commonly cited stakeholders to be regarded as not likely to prioritise nature recovery. Dog walkers were raised numerous times by farmers as people who do not prioritise nature.

Similar to the wider stakeholder groups, funding and a lack of financial incentives were recognised as major obstacles to nature recovery, but here it was within the context of farming. Food production was also uniquely recognised as a barrier, reinforcing the importance of engaging farmers in the LNRS discussions. As with Section 5.3.5 and 5.3.6, the enablers are often counterparts to the barriers. This was evident in the farmer discussions as long-term financial incentives and funding for farmers were considered essential in enabling nature recovery across the county. Further guidance and better communication amongst stakeholders were also seen as key to a successful LNRS. Further guidance on how farmers can maintain productivity while integrating nature, along with improved communication amongst stakeholders, were also seen as key to a successful LNRS. These farmers also mentioned the need for less intensive agriculture and support for local food production.

In wider discussions during the workshops, farmers expressed scepticism about isolated conservation efforts and were looking for further information around DEFRA's approach to incentives. A key point raised in discussions about implementing the LNRS was that farming is more than just a job – it is a way of life. This perspective contributed towards some resistance towards prioritising nature conservation, not least because it may put additional constraints on the options that future generations may have in managing their land. Therefore, it is crucial that nature recovery initiatives are designed to fit with the practical realities of farming. Farmers favoured an integrated approach to land use, rather than separating food production and conservation. This reflected a positive outlook towards the LNRS, indicating a willingness to adapt and embrace some level of change, albeit with caveats to do with finance and maintaining land-use choices. However, there is still a way to go in framing the LNRS as an opportunity for farmers. As such, the LNRS must be designed to appeal to and accommodate a diverse range of stakeholders, with a particular focus on farmers, as they own and/or manage huge areas of land in South Yorkshire. Their participation is crucial to the success of nature recovery efforts.

It is important to note that engaging farmers in the process proved challenging as many are wary due to the many uncertainties surrounding the LNRS process, leaving many of their concerns unanswered. Additionally, the lack of recognised incentives for participation further discouraged their involvement at this stage.

Key points from farmers

- These farmers agreed with others in preferring more natural and 'wilder' urban green spaces.
- They showed support for varied wider landscapes, including incorporating productive farming.
- They mentioned the need for less intensive agriculture, with integrated nature conservation.
- They want guidance on how they can maintain productivity while integrating nature.
- Farming is a business and as such there need to be clear, long-term financial incentives to make nature-friendly farming financially viable. They were sceptical about isolated conservation efforts and were looking for further information around DEFRA's approach to incentives.
- Farming is also a way of life, and farmers are wary of anything that will reduce their or future generations' opportunities for how they choose to manage their land.
- Dog walkers were raised numerous times as people who do not prioritise nature.
- There is still a way to go in framing the LNRS as an opportunity for farmers. However their participation is crucial in achieving landscape-scale nature recovery.

7. Public engagement events

7.1. Event design

Many methods of engagement require participants to be proactive in taking part, whether responding to an invitation to a workshop or spending time responding to a survey. This results in a self-selected cohort often with a particular stake or position, either positive or negative, in an issue. Therefore, it is important to do the opposite: go to where people already are and give them an opportunity to engage when perhaps they were least expecting it, to gather wider views from a broader cross-section of society. In consultation with the Engagement Working Group, we chose a variety of locations and opportunities to capture a wide range of people from suburban and rural populations, including shopping centres such as Meadowhall to catch a much more urban population. Of course, in those situations, the people that take part are also to a certain extent self-selecting as there are plenty that won't want to stop and engage, but the likelihood of going 'beyond the usual suspects' is much greater.

In such engagement opportunities it is important to use methods that are attractive to potential participants (e.g. not surveys on clipboards), that people feel comfortable engaging in and not feeling that they are being tested on any particular knowledge or skills. The process also needs to have some consistency with the engagement through other means with other stakeholder groups.



Figure 13. set-up at the Rotherham Show



Figure 14. set-up in Fox Valley Shopping Centre car park



Figure 15. set-up in Frenchgate Shopping Centre, Doncaster



Figure 12. general stall set-up example

For the reasons explained above, the 'picture opinion quiz' is a great way of gathering data and starting conversations, as everyone has an opinion on what they like (and don't like) about the green spaces in their local area and surroundings, so this was the element that featured across all modes of engagement, and formed the major part of the public events (see Figures 17 and 18 below for a reminder of the images used - the same ones that were used throughout the engagement modes). By fostering organic, face-to-face interactions in spaces that are culturally or socially relevant, these engagements are more effective at involving underrepresented groups such as youth, minorities, and economically disadvantaged individuals, ensuring a more inclusive and representative civic process.

Therefore, a stall was set up with large, printed images, a set of counters, and numbered and lettered jars as 'voting pots'. We spoke to people passing that we were interested in people's opinions on nature and their local green spaces, and that we had a quick game to play let us know their preferences. People often approached voluntarily to see what was going on and wanted to take part. We also displayed a LNRS banner and a large banner satellite map of South Yorkshire to refer to.



Figure 16. set-up at Rother Valley Country Park



Figure 17. set-up in Meadowhall, Sheffield



Figure 18. set-up at Penistone Agricultural Show

We gave people four counters and asked them to use them to choose the four images that represented what they would like their local green spaces to look like. We then asked them why they had chosen those four, and noted down on a tally sheet the key themes that emerged from the discussions that followed. We then asked them to do the same for the images of the wider landscape. Occasionally people would do it in the opposite order so that we could get two people or groups doing it simultaneously and swapping over. Most people placed the counters on the images, some chose to put them straight in the corresponding jars - but after each person or family had participated, the counters were moved to the correct jars to keep a tally of the choices made throughout the day.

The activity generally came first, and then some people wanted to know more about the LNRS and the process - but this was secondary; we didn't want to put people off with a long LNRS explanation at the beginning; gathering their views was the most important part. But if people were interested then we would talk about the LNRS in as much detail as was appropriate. We also had postcards available with a QR code to direct people to the online survey and answer a much broader set of questions should they so wish.

Finally, in Frenchgate Shopping Centre, we used a tally sheet with basic demographic headings in a table on a clipboard and we asked people if they wouldn't mind ticking the relevant headings on the sheet. We handed them the board and pen so they could tick the appropriate rows anonymously.

Some individuals took part, but most were couples, groups of friends or families. The group and family participation sparked some interesting conversations around what each person was choosing (we gave each group member their own set of counters).

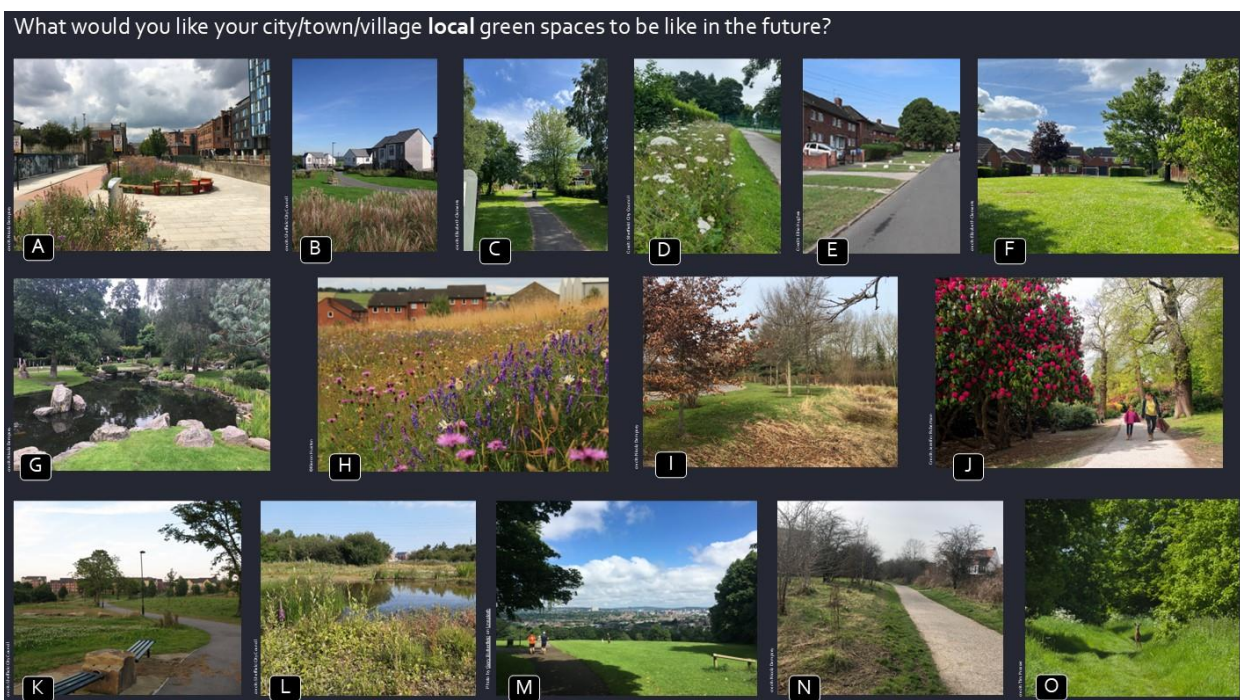


Figure 19. reminder of the 15 images used to represent urban or peri-urban 'local' green spaces in South Yorkshire

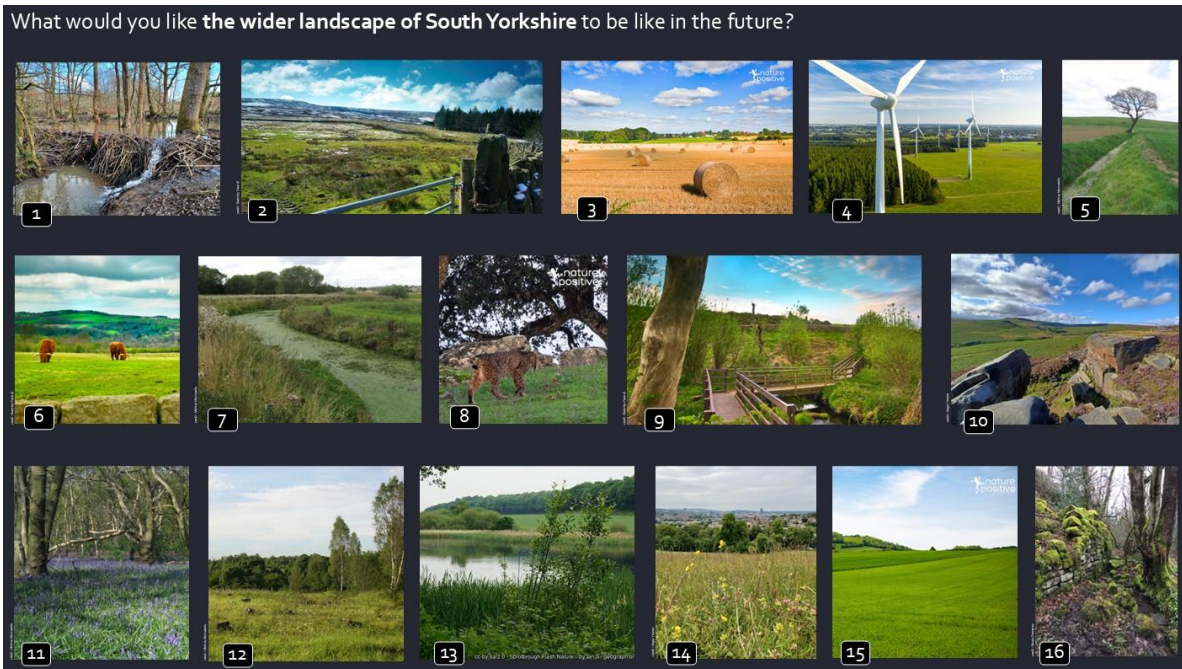


Figure 20. reminder of the 16 images used to represent the wider landscape of South Yorkshire

7.2. Events and locations attended

Engagement activities were conducted in high-traffic areas where people from diverse demographics gather. Suitable locations including shopping centres, fairs and festivals, wildlife conservation areas and transport hubs were chosen with guidance from the Engagement Working Group, and taking into account suitable dates and days of the week for maximum footfall.

Table 8: public events

date	location	description	No. of participants
21 Aug	RSPB Old Moor	Main courtyard by the toilets, restaurant, shop and entrance	22
22 Aug	Yorkshire Wildlife Park	A picnic area beside the sea lion enclosure	19
7 Sept	Rotherham Show	A busy show, positioned with environmental organisations	127
14 Sept	Penistone Show	Busy agricultural show - on one of the main thoroughfares	149
15 Sept	Fox Valley Shopping	In the car park on a direct route between major shops	50
5 Oct	Meadowhall Shopping Centre	Outside M&S by the transport hub	92
6 Oct	Rother Valley Country Park	Outdoors next to the cafe	58
13 Oct	Frenchgate Shopping Centre	Ground floor outside Poundland and TK Maxx	48
TOTAL			565

7.3. Outputs and analysis

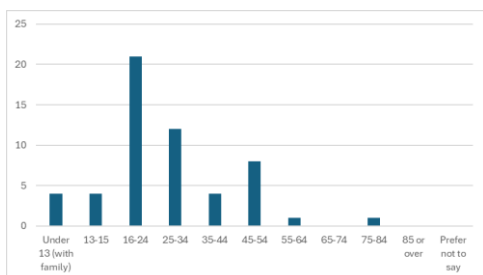


Figure 21. age group of participants at Frenchgate

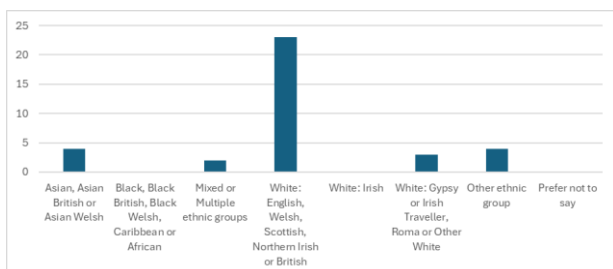


Figure 22. ethnicity of participants at Frenchgate

In contrast with the people who took part in the online survey, the demographic questions at Frenchgate indicated that this activity engaged with a wider range of people than the survey and workshops. They were younger and more ethnically diverse than individuals in other modes. It is not a statistically representative sample of the people in South Yorkshire, but it does show the value of going to places where a wider cross-section of people is likely to be, in order to get the views and opinions of people not necessarily already engaged in and attracted to places and events explicitly or implicitly about nature.

At Meadowhall, for example, we engaged with a large number of older teenagers who were largely at the shopping centre as a social activity.

7.3.1. Urban image choices

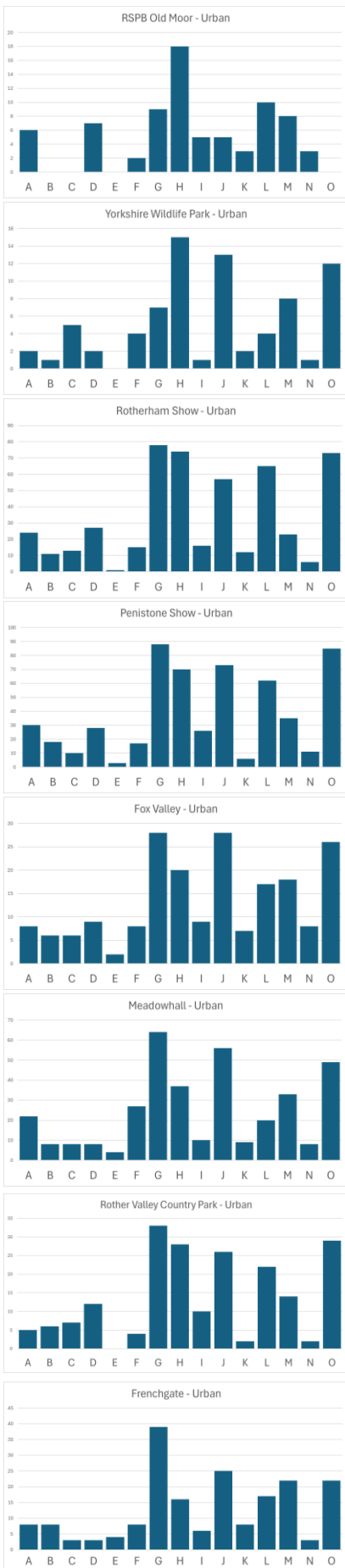


Figure 23. comparison of public engagement choices for urban images

Across the public engagement events, it was evident that there were a select few images that stood out across all events. Images **G**, **O**, **J** and **H** received significant attention, in that order. Images H and O represent wilder spaces, whilst G and J depict more manicured spaces which are more accessible. (Image O was added after the Old Moor event).



Also popular were images **L** and **M**, which also depicted natural 'wilder' landscapes as well as manicured accessible areas, respectively.

There were some interesting small differences. Image **E** was a very low voted image across all public events but got some votes at Frenchgate. For people living in very urban areas who said they had little or no access to greenery this was considered an aspirational image as a step-up for some people's experience of somewhere nice to live. Also, image **D** got more traction, particularly at Rother Valley Country Park; perhaps it suggests the similar aesthetic to a country park - a close juxtaposition of wild and managed.



All of this illustrates the value of taking many views into consideration when planning urban green spaces which need to be, by their very nature, multipurpose, well maintained and respond to the needs and desires of those living in the vicinity. Nature recovery in urban settings, with the many added human benefits of improved air quality, physical and mental health, flood alleviation, etc will require very careful creation *and* curation.

Pooled public engagement results are shown in Figure 24. While this obscures variations between individual events, it highlights the overall preferences of those who participated at public events. Further discussion of the conversations had about reasons for the choices is given after the data on the wider landscape images is presented.

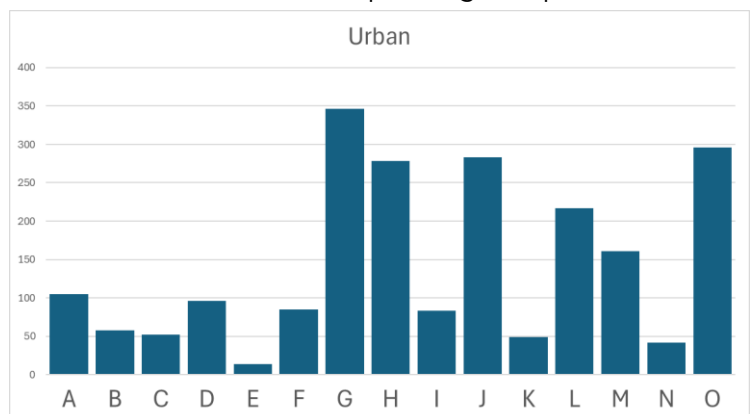


Figure 24. pooled public engagement results for urban images

7.3.2. Wider landscape image choices

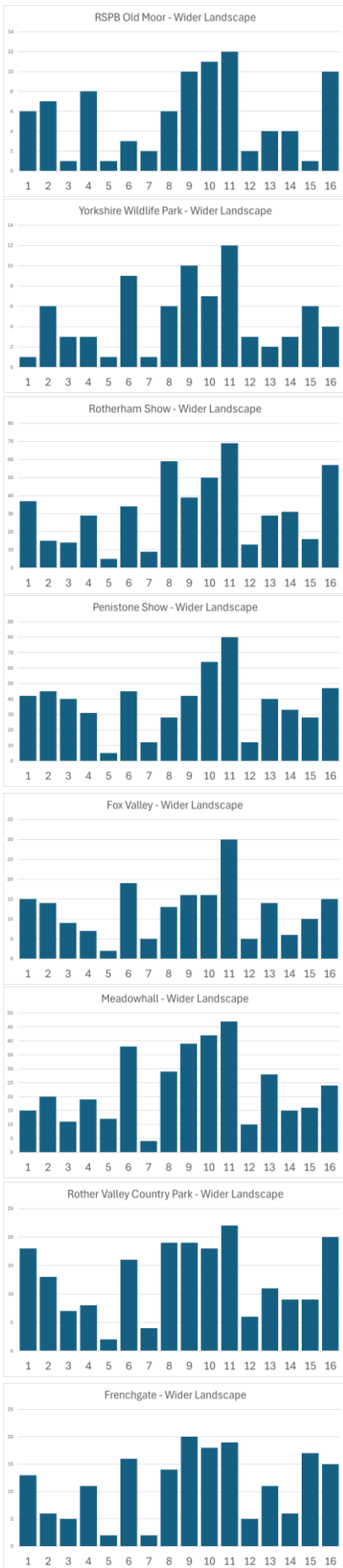


Figure 25. comparison of public engagement choices for wider landscape images

In contrast to the urban landscape results, the wider landscape results elicited a significantly more diverse range of responses. Nevertheless, image **11** stood out to be the most popular selection amongst participants.



This image of a bluebell wood elicited universally positive responses. Following this, there was a real variety of choices, with images **10**, **9**, **16** and **6** also being very popular. These images each represent different aspects of the wider landscape - image **6**, reflects a traditional British farming scene,

image **9** emphasises accessibility to green spaces while images **10** and **16** depict perceived more 'natural' environments. Indeed, image 9 was often described as having the best combination of greenery, water and accessibility.

Images **5**, **7** and **12** consistently received the fewest votes by far. 7 was sometimes avoided as people said it was too 'scummy'.



The results highlight some interesting variations among participants. For instance, image 6 was a popular choice at all public events except RSPB Old Moor, where it was selected only a handful of times. However, it is important to note that participant responses varied across public events, with some, like at the Rotherham and Penistone shows, seeing significantly higher engagement than others. There were only 22 participants at Old Moor, so the shape of the graph should be interpreted cautiously.

Pooled public engagement results are shown in Figure 26. While this obscures variations between individual events, it highlights the overall preferences of those who participated at public events.

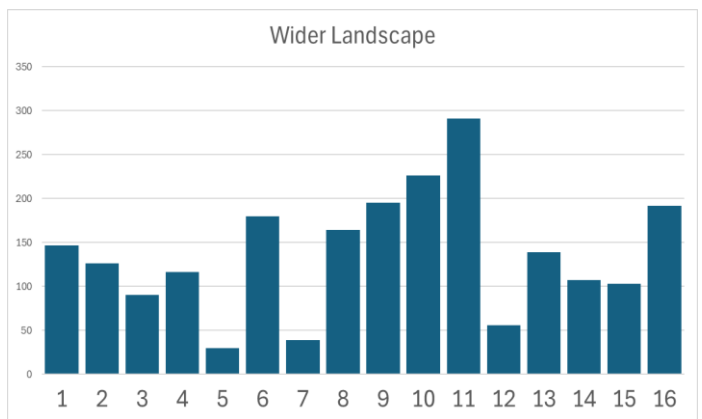


Figure 26. pooled public engagement results for wider landscape images

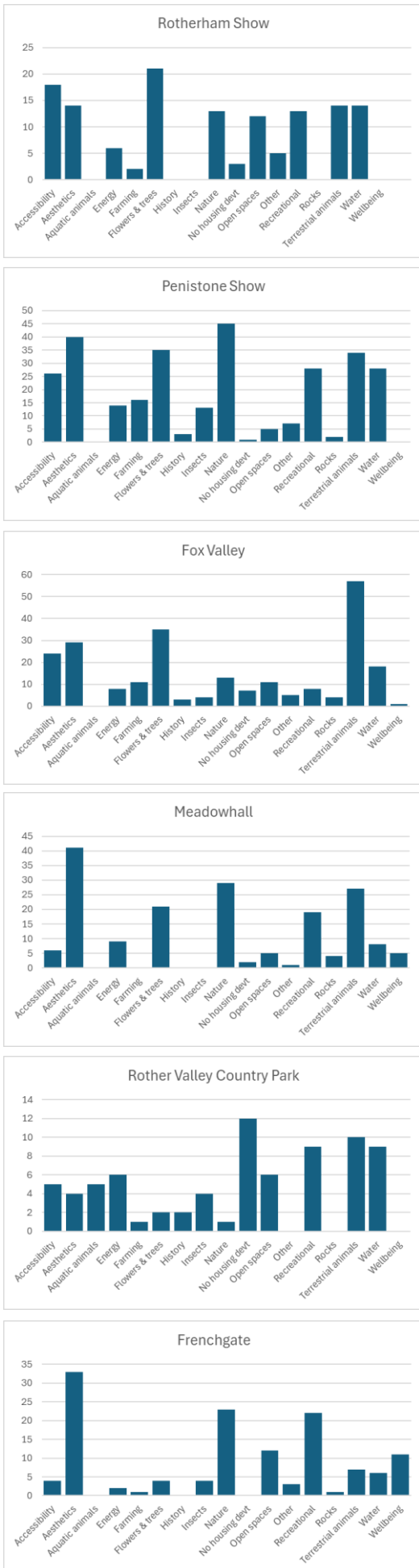


Figure 27. comparison of themes identified across each public engagement event

Reasons given

Key points from conversations with the participants regarding their image selections were recorded as a tally count and categorised into 17 different themes.

There is significant variation in the reasons people selected certain images at public events. Interestingly, while top images chosen were similar across events, the reasons behind these choices differed. This highlights the diverse interpretations and values people assign to the images.

Interestingly the multiple competing priorities and land-use demands discussed in Section 5.3.5, are also reflected here, although the dominant reasons were **aesthetics, animals, water, nature, recreational opportunities and access**.

Preference for images like **G** and **J** represent the many conversations that we had about places that looked well-maintained. Image G was often described as a lovely place for fish and other wildlife, but where it was also **easily accessible**. When contrasted with image **L**, which is also a water feature close to housing (in fact a SUDS installation), G was preferred as it was seen as easier to get to and look in.



4Nature and **terrestrial animals** were the second and third most popular themes. While many participants may have lacked technical knowledge of nature recovery, aside from those at RSPB Old Moor who expressed a good level of ecological knowledge, their selections - such as the popularity of the bluebell woods in image **11** - show they still value its importance. This is supported by a participant's quote highlighting their desire for the landscapes to be "wild but not too wild", underscoring the need to strike a balance between natural preservation, visual appeal and accessibility.



Some interesting similarities and differences can be drawn out from the results. **Terrestrial animals** ranked among the top three themes across all public engagement events except at Frenchgate shopping centre, where reasons behind image selections were more focused on aesthetics, nature and recreational use. Notice also the higher prevalence of **wellbeing** mentioned at Frenchgate. Many people we spoke to were living in very urban areas and valued green spaces (particularly local ones) very highly for their mental and physical wellbeing and also wanted those spaces to be well-maintained to keep them safe and beautiful. Phrases such as "no potholes", "no pollution", "chill/relaxing", "hills to roll down", "no houses", "peaceful" were used at Frenchgate.

Returning the animals theme, it should be noted that people did not usually distinguish between wild and domestic animals – they said they just liked images with animals in them. In conversations that followed when either the beaver dam or lynx images were chosen, we pointed out to people that the lynx was suggested to be a wild, not zoo animal. Even with that clarification, many people were quite happy with the idea of lynx reintroduction. They mostly drew the line at wolves and bears, though, except for one Polish lady who was relaxed about the full range (as exists in Poland).

Accessibility has been a recurring theme throughout this report and has again been reinforced through these data, particularly from the Rotherham show, the Penistone agricultural show and Fox Valley shopping centre, where it was mentioned 18-26 times. Discussions at the Penistone agricultural show highlighted a desire not just for access to green spaces but for them to be equipped with amenities like benches, shelters and with good public transport to these spaces so they can be useable.

Farming was not a dominant theme, except in the Penistone agricultural show, where it was moderately popular. Participants highlighted a “*need for agriculture*” with one expressing support for “*intensive agriculture*” – unsurprising given the event’s rural, agricultural focus. Despite this, the results suggest that even farmers (and those interested in attending farming focused events) recognise the multiple demands on land use given that **nature** was the leading reason for image selections, which is perhaps surprising given the often-perceived tension between farming and nature conservation. However, as there were families with children that attended the show, these results are reflective of all participants, not exclusively farmers. The lack of farming as a dominant explicit conversation theme is surprising, especially given the popularity of image **6** in Section 7.3.1. However, participants were drawn to the image primarily because they liked the highland cows rather than mentioning farming explicitly. Discussions reinforced this, with many expressing a preference for seeing animals roam freely rather than conversations focusing on agriculture *per se*.



Also at Penistone, there were some detailed conversations: about importing wheat from Russia because of the UK’s worst harvest year, “*how much rewilding can we afford – we need a balance*”, and frequent worries about too much house-building. Also, some who were understandably absolutely against beaver and lynx reintroduction. But again, accessibility came through strongly in many conversations for both the urban and landscape images.

The Rotherham show, held in a residential area park, presented a different demographic audience which represented a wide cross-section of society, including many from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic backgrounds. There was a strong desire for **open spaces** at this event, mainly for children, with one participant stating, “*we just need somewhere to play*”. But here, too, there was a great deal of ecological literacy. A group of men in their 20s talked loudly to their mother about the importance of predators and functioning food chains. It was clear that almost everyone we spoke to over all of the events has a very good understanding of ecological integrity, even if not using scientific terms.

It is clear across these outputs that there are many commonalities across different public events, but interestingly some stark differences can also be seen highlighting the benefits of engaging with diverse groups of individuals all with different positionalities in society.

7.4. Key findings and relevance for the LNRS

The overall findings from the public events show that wherever we went, and whoever we spoke to, almost without exception everyone had a thoughtful, balanced and well-informed view of what they would like, and how it relates to nature recovery for its own sake as well as for their own benefit. These findings contrast with the view emerging elsewhere in this report, where many involved in nature conservation believe that everyone else doesn’t care or needs educating, as the majority of people we spoke to seem to already be on board. They may not be able to identify and name

species, or even always distinguish between which rural landscapes are 'natural' (as much as any are in the UK) and which are highly managed for whatever reason, but similar to the workshop outputs, they do want 'wild' and beautiful areas full of wildlife (that they can also access), and they desire clean, safe, nature-rich areas close to their homes as well, as long as they are clean, safe and well-maintained.

A central theme that emerged across all demographics and locations is the importance of access and inclusivity, with participants highlighting the need for green spaces that are easily reachable for everyone, including those with mobility challenges or limited transport options. Safe and well-maintained pathways, cycle routes, and better public transport connections to nature-rich areas were frequently mentioned as priorities.

In some senses, images G, H and D (even though D wasn't always a top image choice) sum up many of



the frequent conversation topics for 'local' green spaces: wild (but not too wild), pretty, good for bees and butterflies and other wildlife, obviously well-managed and looked after, with water, and accessible.

Key points from public events

- Citizens may not always be able to identify species, or distinguish between 'natural' or highly managed unfarmed landscapes, but they do want 'wild' and beautiful areas full of wildlife.
- Accessibility is crucial: safe and well-maintained pathways, cycle routes, and better public transport connections to nature-rich areas were frequently mentioned as priorities.
- Everyone had a thoughtful, balanced and well-informed view of what they would like, and how it relates to nature recovery for its own sake as well as for the benefit of people. Conversations often demonstrated an appreciation for diverse, functioning ecosystems.
- There was also a strong recognition of the need to balance different land uses, such as supporting food production and the generation of clean energy.
- People desire clean, safe, nature-rich areas close to their homes, as long as they are well-maintained and accessible for all, including those with mobility challenges.

The wider landscape results, were much more varied between and across the public events. However, there was still a desire for 'natural, untouched' landscapes but also with the concept of those areas being accessible for recreation, whether walking, climbing on rocks or "rolling down hills". However, there was also a strong recognition of the need to balance different land uses, such as supporting food production and the generation of clean energy. Interestingly, people often took much longer deliberating over their landscape image choices than the urban ones, declaring that it was much harder to choose, and they wished they had more than four counters.

When considering the reasons behind participants' image selections, there was significant variation, which is somewhat unsurprising given the different demographic backgrounds we engaged with as well as the competing priorities and land-use demands that exist. Aesthetics was the primary factor influencing choices, with nature and terrestrial animals also ranking highly. While many lacked technical knowledge of nature recovery, their image selections and subsequent conversations often demonstrated an appreciation for diverse, functioning ecosystems. Accessibility has been a recurring theme throughout this report and emerged again in this analysis.

These data are important for understanding public values and priorities, and it is important for the LNRS to be designed in a way that strikes a balance between aesthetic appeal, accessibility and ecological benefits.

What this also illustrates is the level of broad general agreement. People may have different ways of articulating what they want, and state different personal priorities and reasons for their choices, but what people want the future to look like is broadly similar, whoever you ask.

Online survey

7.5. Survey design

7.5.1. Survey questions

The online survey aimed to gather comprehensive insights into public perceptions, usage patterns, and preferences regarding 'local' green spaces and the wider landscape. The survey combined both closed and open-ended questions to allow for quantitative analysis and qualitative feedback. The closed-ended questions, such as the image choice questions, were designed to provide easily comparable quantitative data, while open-ended questions provided respondents with the opportunity to elaborate on their choices and opinions. The survey questions closely aligned with those used in workshops to allow comparisons between different stakeholder groups.

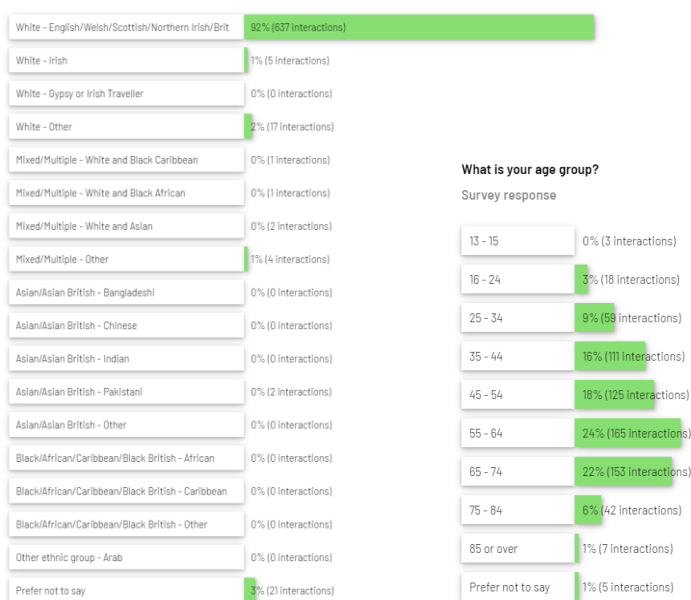
As the survey was online, access was available by the SYMCA website and via QR codes on postcards that were distributed at public engagement events in both urban and rural settings. Data analysis involved both descriptive statistics to summarize quantitative data and thematic analysis for qualitative responses, facilitating a well-rounded understanding of public views on the management and design of green spaces and the countryside. With the large number (and length) of text responses, we have presented analysis by emerging themes with quotes selected to represent the range of responses within each theme.

7.5.2. Mapped responses

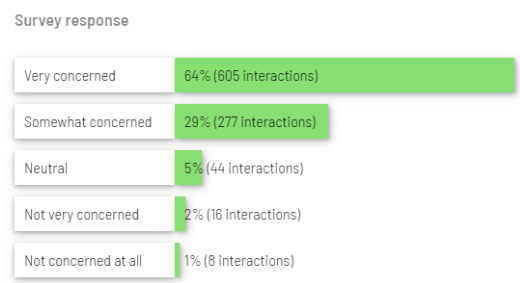
The Participatr platform used allows for map-based inputs. This allowed respondents to mark a point on a map and then write some notes on why they have 'dropped their pin' at that location, and to upload images. This information is more difficult to summarise as it is by definition very site-specific and often elicited quite long text responses. However, the main points will be described below and the full responses are in appendices.

7.6. Outputs and analysis – survey questions

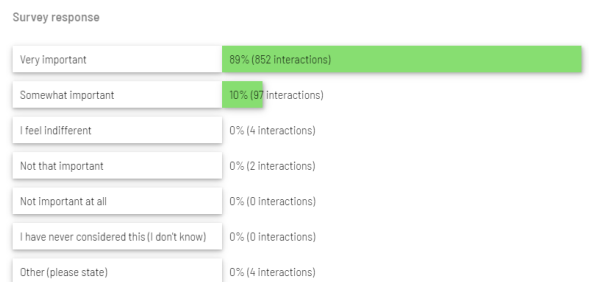
963 responses were received. Firstly, it is important for context to understand the cohort of respondents, as this will influence the responses given. Respondents are predominantly white, middle-aged or older and are concerned or very concerned about the decline of nature in South Yorkshire. They also consider themselves to have a very important relationship with nature. The vast majority of respondents described themselves as 'individuals', with 11 responding as farmers, 6 as community groups, 3 elected officials, 2 as town or parish councils and 3 as NGOs. 60% (420) were women, 36% (254) men, 8 non binary and 13 preferring not to say.

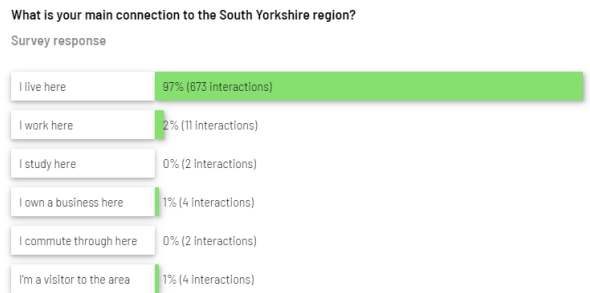
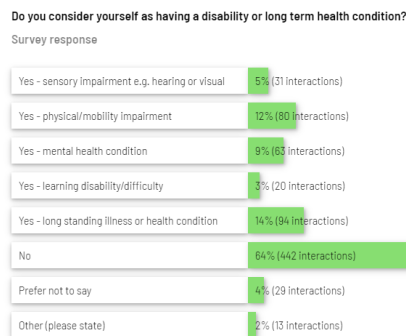
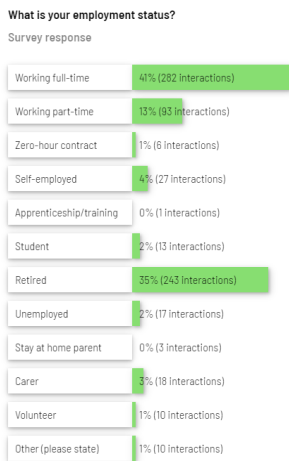


How concerned are you about the decline in nature in South Yorkshire?



How important do you consider your relationship with nature?





Several key themes emerged from the text responses to the 'other' category on 'relationship with nature':

Mental and physical wellbeing was mentioned over 230 times:

- "It is crucial to my wellbeing and health."
- "Fresh air and open spaces are vital to wellbeing and mental health."
- "I rely on it for my physical and mental health and well-being. I cannot exist without it."
- "We are all part of one ecosystem which is essential to our physical (financial), emotional and social wellbeing"
- "Mental health suffers without open spaces and greenery."

Related to that, connection with nature was mentioned explicitly 19 times, with many people seeing nature as an intrinsic part of their lives and identities.

- "We are all part of nature whether we realise it or not. Disconnection from nature results in many problems for us and the world."
- "we are part of nature, we have a symbiotic relationship with it."
- "I feel I am part of nature and notice I feel and perform much better when I can get outside."
- "I am part of nature and I feel content when I am amongst nature, like I'm safe and at home."

Survival and existence was mentioned over 180 times:

- "We need to look after the earth for the survival of the human race."
- "Our existence depends upon living in harmony with nature."
- "Nature and the environment are an important part of our lives. Without us all co-existing we have nothing."
- "We cannot survive without a healthy natural world."

Enjoyment and recreation was mentioned over 80 times:

- "I love watching and learning about nature and spend a good deal of time in it."
- "I walk in the local area with 2 different groups and very much appreciate the areas around Sheffield for this activity."
- "Walking in natural places is the thing I choose to do most when I am not working."

Biodiversity and conservation was mentioned over 45 times:

- "Extremely important for biodiversity"
- "Without nature and biodiversity, our world is poorer and in danger"
- "Because without green spaces, bees and insects our biodiversity will suffer"
- "because a positive relationship with nature is important for protecting our planet its diversity"
- "Without nature we would have no biodiversity and no food"

Aesthetic and spiritual value, the concept of **environmental responsibility** and the **impact of urbanisation** were each also mentioned more than ten times.

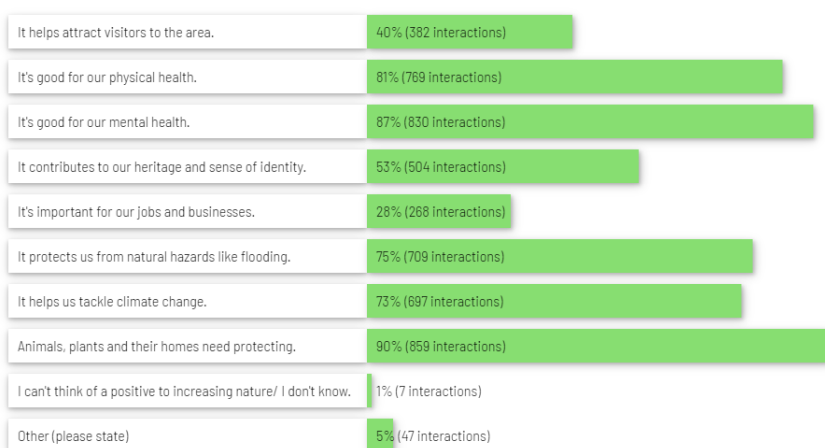
Respondents report visiting green spaces very frequently: 70% visit local parks at least weekly (23% almost every day); with frequent visits to woodland (57% at least weekly) and water bodies (52% at least weekly). National Parks, Nature Reserves and Country Parks are more occasional visits, with peak responses at 'a few times a year'. This highlights the importance of locally accessible quality green spaces.

All of these responses indicate that the majority of survey respondents are already extremely well-connected to nature and probably deeply involved. So, they are not a representative sample of the population of South Yorkshire, but are probably committed advocates for nature recovery.

7.6.1. What are the main reasons to protect and restore nature in South Yorkshire?

What do you think are the main reasons to protect and restore nature in South Yorkshire?

Survey response



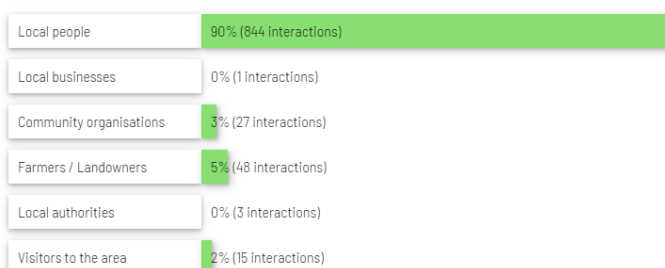
The responses to this question corroborate the extra thoughts above - there are many reasons to protect and restore nature, but biodiversity conservation and mental and physical health benefits come out top, closely followed by the co-benefits of mitigating flooding and climate change.

In the 'other' category people mostly expanded on these themes, but **food security** a **moral responsibility** and **economic benefits** were also added.

7.6.2. "Who do you think would most appreciate an increase in nature in South Yorkshire?"

Most appreciate

Survey response



It was considered that local people would most appreciate an increase in nature. This was followed by community organisations, farmers and visitors. With six options, people could assign groups from 'most appreciate' all the way to '6th most appreciate' (i.e. least appreciate).

'Sixth most appreciate' highlighted local authorities and local businesses, which indicates that the respondents perceived a lack of interest or focus on nature restoration from these actors.

Second most appreciate

Survey response



When asked why they chose in this order, the overwhelming majority of respondents (over 320 comments) said that local people would benefit the most, and the same themes emerged strongly:

"Because nature on our doorstep is what we see and experience everyday, so any improvement to it will directly impact the quality of our lives and our sense of place and connection to where we live and what surrounds us."

"More wildlife & biodiversity makes an area better to live, take leisure & work in & so local people would be the greatest beneficiaries of it."

"It is important for local people to invest in our areas and feel proud of them. It creates a sense of worth and pride. It's a good example to our younger population and helps schools help children to understand the significance of nature and green spaces."

Biodiversity, community engagement, aesthetics, quality of life, climate change and environmental protection, mental and physical wellbeing were all discussed at length, as were the economic and tourism benefits.

7.6.3. When might nature conflict with other priorities, or even be a nuisance, in South Yorkshire?

62 responses simply stated '**never**'. There is a strong feeling among at least part of this cohort that nature should always take precedence, and that people and development are the problem.

"We need to work with nature not against it."

"Never!! Our natural environment and nature is something we have to nurture and learn to live and love. Neat, highly cultivated areas are a disaster for nature and our wellbeing."

"Never. Restoring nature is a necessity and obligation, not an option."

Nevertheless, people wrote a length about other potential conflicts. **Housing and urban development** was the top one, mentioned over 250 times:

"Building of much needed homes. House building should not be allowed on green spaces, allotments etc. there should be a way to build on brown field sites, which are often closer to amenities that people need."

"Building housing is probably a challenge when rare flora or fauna are discovered on the land in question."

"The housing crisis especially in west Sheffield: we need to build far more homes for the city to grow and succeed economically, while maintaining and improving access to green space."

"There is a conflict between nature and building affordable housing."

Maintenance and management was also a common theme with over 100 mentions such as:

"When grass verges, trees and bushes are not cared for properly, ie pruning and trimming so the view of road users is not obstructed."

"Overhanging branches on pavements can be a problem. Wildflower meadows need to be managed to avoid becoming traps for litter."

"When plants are overgrown and block paths and views and signposts."

"Nature is not a nuisance if managed correctly. When the councils do not mow the grass and it dries there have been instances where this dried grass has been set on fire and spread. This is not nature's fault but bad management and lack of punishment/deterrent."

"I can see that overgrown hedges can affect pavements, and nettles and brambles, which are great for wildlife can be very annoying, and trees can shred.. so yes, some aspects of nature need to be controlled in certain areas."

"Footways being made narrower by vegetation not being cut back (narrow pavements made even narrower). Sight lines at road junctions being obstructed. Damage to drystone walls by rampaging weeds. Overgrown footways are a danger to the blind or partially sighted, to parents with double buggies, and toddlers, wheelchairs etc."

"Adjacent to footpaths and road junctions. If hedges and verges are to be left uncut, there needs to be signage to explain why to avoid the constant moaning of council cutbacks."

"When wild flower planting areas on footpaths are left to become a muddy mess. Gives the impression that the wild flower meadow is just a cost cutting exercise rather than a true environmental scheme. Also when nature protection is used as an excuse not to properly clear waterways of silt and weeds which causes mass flooding of farmers fields, roads and homes."

And '**economic priorities vs nature**' also came up over 120 times:

"We need to balance the costs incurred by maintaining these spaces. For small businesses it is already hard to keep the business running."

"Financial choices and pressures Eg looking after parks as opposed to funding social services."

"When short-term profit or political gain are prioritised over nature."

"If the money was needed for other priorities and could not be spent on making Doncaster more nature and wildlife friendly."

"Planning when 'money talks', because in general butterflies don't make a profit!!!"

Policy decisions and competing priorities for both local and national authorities was a further theme:

"The problems will come when the Government starts to concrete over every green space we have. The conflict will be with the Council/MPs/Government not nature. This is when the electorate will see whether the Council/MPs/Local Authorities really care about this area or not."

"I believe the only conflict is due to costs and budgets of Councils and local authorities. I appreciate that for this reason people may not see nature as a priority. Money is tight and improvements or changes in nature are not always viewed favourably when people need other services on a day to day basis to exist."

As was **Agricultural and other land use**:

"For some kinds of farming, some wildlife can be destructive."

"Intensive agriculture, which eliminates nature as far as possible to maximise yields."

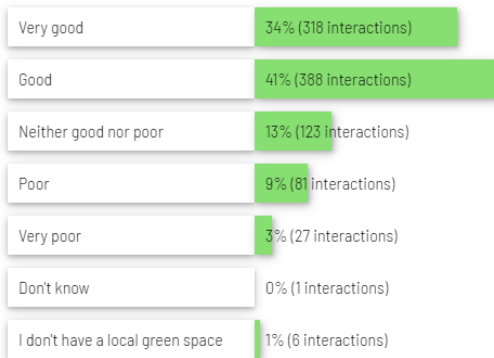
"When arable or grazing land is rewilded."

In summary, people do realise that there are many, possibly competing priorities on how finite resources and land are used – but often feel that plans are not integrated enough, that priorities are 'wrong' and that management and maintenance can be perceived to be neglected.

7.6.4. Overall, how would you rate the quality of your local green spaces?

Overall, how would you rate the quality of your local green spaces?

Survey response

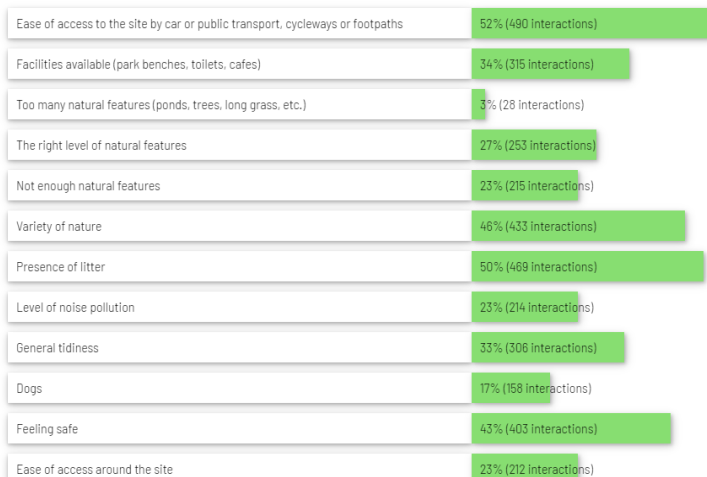


Even though respondents have written at length in previous questions, often negatively, overall they rate the quality of their local green spaces as good or very good.

However, when asked to clarify or expand on their response, they mostly wrote about the negatives. Respondents expressed deep frustration about litter, fly-tipping, and insufficient maintenance. Specifically raised was a lack of bins, inadequate enforcement, and poor upkeep, making green spaces less inviting and damaging their natural beauty. This could also impact fauna.

Which factors influenced your rating of your local green space the most?

Survey response



Litter and fly tipping got 36 mentions

"Litter, broken glass and unruly teenagers. This puts me off visiting my local park which was beautiful when I was a kid."

"Flytipping on the Roman Ridge pathway is a problem. I live next to the Roman Ridge and am disheartened when I see rubbish strewn about, and worse yet is the quantity of flytipping."

"I'm doing the litter picking with others, but some places are left to rot. They are not visited at all by the council so we have broken glass, fly-tipping, food waste. Some has been ignored for over a year now."

"In the last few years I have noticed a reduction in the maintenance work from local authorities in our local green spaces. There's also been an increase in fly tipping and litter in these areas."

Dog fouling was close behind with 30 comments:

"People don't respect the nature, leave litter and dog poop behind. Everything smells like dog urine on a hot day." dog owners leaving poo bags."
"Dogs off their leads can be scary and disturb wildlife and sadly there's always a lot of dog poo in my local wood."
"Dog fouling is horrific and this habit of leaving dog poo bags hanging from trees."

Access and facilities was mentioned around 30 times: sometimes positively:

"Ease of access is good but the upkeep and maintenance needs to be done daily to keep open spaces safe."
"I am lucky to have Loxley and Wadsley Common just around the corner from me. There is also a small park for children to play and outdoor space for the sports center. When travelling to other nature sites things like facilities and ease of access around the site are top considerations for me and my family."
"Somewhere my kids can explore and feel safe. Also toilets are a must!! They are not good at wild wees!!"
"I am fortunate to live near a park which I can access."
The lake near my home has free access to all."

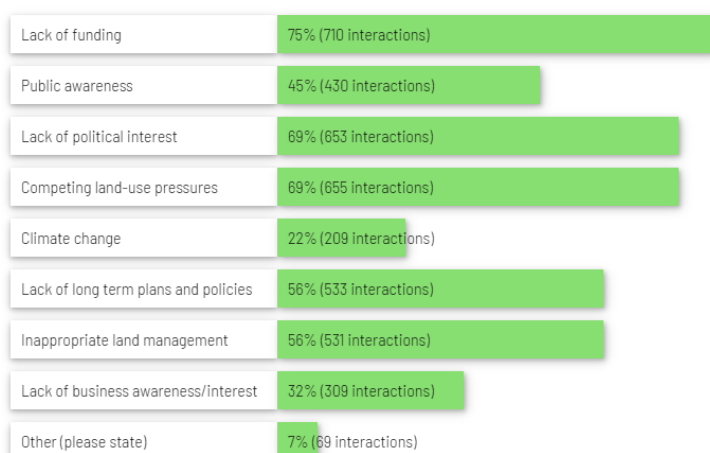
And some more critically:

"Needs a safer crossing / access between wharncliffe and Greno woods."
"We live two minutes from football field/park...footpath is too overgrown to see, impossible access for disabled like me."
"My nearest green space is an old pit site - it feels unloved and very little information about the site - it could be so much more."
"Paths need to be usable all year round and upgraded to better quality so all can walk and cycle (or mobility scooter) all year round."
"Some parks lack toilets and cafes, which are essential for family visits."
"A toilet in Meersbrook park would be great!"
"No benches make it hard for seniors to rest while walking."
"Facilities like Wharncliffe and Grenoside woods need parking and better infrastructure."

Antisocial behaviour and safety concerns also had over 30 comments, including mentions of drug use, vandalism, and off-road biking. These activities make some green spaces feel unsafe, particularly for women, children, and vulnerable groups:

"Some people even do drugs and weed on parks on broad daylight."
"We travel to nature reserves as our local green spaces are not clean or patrolled by police so are a hotspot for drug use and vandalism."
"Anti social behaviour unfortunately. Lots of shooting in our local woodlands, as well as off road bikes and quads active in the area."
"I don't feel safe visiting green spaces alone."

7.6.5. What do you think are the main barriers to increasing nature in South Yorkshire?



People could select multiple options to answer this question, and many used the 'other' category to expand on the given themes or just make a general complaint about their perceived state of things. However, a few barriers stood out:

Housing and other development was mentioned 23 times:

"The need for additional housing is putting increasing pressures on maintaining green spaces. Developers are choosing to purchase green sites"

instead of brownfield sites as it is cheaper to develop on untouched land than to potentially deal with contaminants on brownfield sites."

"The significant development and building on green space and removal of natural habitats under the Local Plan."

"New housing been built ...that is one main concern for me where I live...new houses are taking up crop fields, green land etc and this is totally not right! I live on a flood plain and with increase building of houses and the huge plans on the A635 in this area will only make it flood more and more ..nothing is taken into consideration. only the £ signs! no thoughts to nature, wildlife or residents already living in a built up area."

"Building projects that promise enhancements in local facilities in later stages and then once houses done they run out of money for the promised improvements. ie they get the houses and profits but community is left under pressure with no improved infrastructure eg drs/ schools or enhanced green spaces etc."

Level with **policy and political will** (also 23 mentions). Respondents cited government policies, lack of enforcement, and insufficient funding at both local and national levels as hindering efforts to protect nature. Responses also expressed that political will often prioritises economic interests, sidelining environmental concerns:

"Insufficient national policy to support it and insufficient resources to enact locally (not just money but trained people too)."

"Given the Labour Party dominates the South Yorkshire political landscape, I think lack of political interest is a concern but I think lack of interest among the electorate is also a concern."

"Fundamentally it is a lack of political will and capitulation to short-sighted special interest lobbies with investments in the status quo, as well as rank mismanagement like the shameful tree cutting debacle."

"We need the political will to preserve the environment, stop selling of green spaces, stop cutting flowering plants in the summer to aid pollinators and deal with people who fly-tip or drop litter."

"Council. Only taking note as and when it suits them."

"Local authorities being more concerned about financial gain. No matter how hard conservation groups battle, when money is involved they don't stand a chance. Everyone who cares is fighting a losing battle against local authorities and the central government."

A perceived **lack of awareness, understanding and interest** also came through again (14 comments):

"Total disinterest from local people to get involved."

"Public Ignorance, small mindedness and self interest."

"Public ignorance about how serious the threats of climate change and loss of nature (eg. loss of pollinators) is."

"I think sometimes, people's ignorance of how important nature is and their lack of willingness to look after it is a major hurdle (e.g. people not taking their litter home with them when visiting these places (or picking up their dog's mess) and people who fly tip in fields/woodlands)."

"lack of volunteers interested."

"Lack of education."

"People in charge making the decisions with little information or education of the countryside or how it works."

"Skills gap - less and less people have the knowledge that conservation groups have."

Farming and land management was explicitly mentioned 7 times, often combined with the general theme of **pollution and environmental damage** (8 mentions). These are not strictly barriers to nature recovery, but are nonetheless issues which respondents feel strongly about in this context, and are at least competing priorities or ways of doing things:

"National policy, particularly in relation to agriculture, pesticides, peat use and game shooting."

"I think regionally for me the biggest barrier/issue is retaining a predominant monoculture of heathland with annual peatland burning by landowners for a tiny wealthy minority to practice bloodsports e.g. driven grouse shooting."

"Farming practices have seriously reduced the number of insects and small animals and reduced the amount of hedgerows and trees, and used chemicals which have affected water quality. all of which have which have a had a knock on effect."

"Government, landowners and farmers prioritising blood sports, industrial farming and pastureland over nature restoration, climate change and biodiversity."

"Poor farming practices e.g. cutting grass for silage before ground nesting birds can raise a brood. Hedge flailing instead of traditional laying. etc."

"I am particularly concerned about the river and lake pollution and the impact on wildlife and humans."

"Agricultural and industrial exploitation of nature leaves it in a poor state in the area. Our rivers and countryside are polluted from current and especially historical dumping (legal and illegal). See recent reports on toxic forever chemicals in waterways and soil across the country."

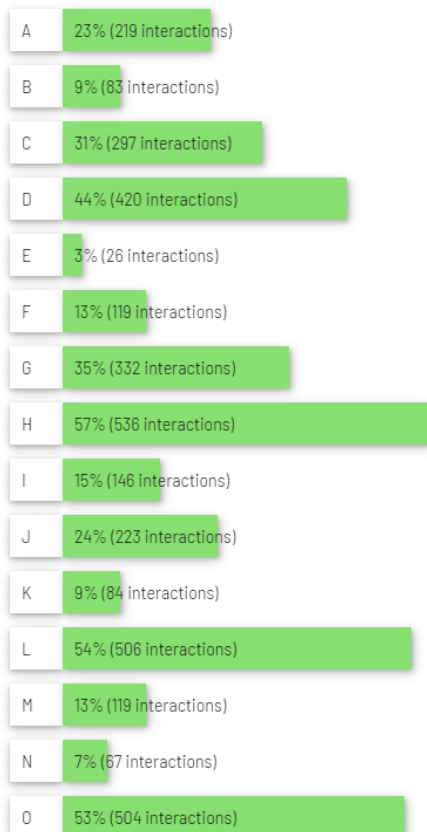
7.6.6. Who do you think is responsible for increasing nature in South Yorkshire?

	level of perceived responsibility				
	not at all	not very	neutral	somewhat	very
local people	13	51	124	510	264
local businesses	24	82	147	472	237
community organisations	8	38	153	536	228
farmers/landowners	11	31	82	333	507
local authorities	11	25	35	150	742
visitors to the area	83	163	354	260	103
conservation organisations	4	11	84	352	514
central government	21	26	71	188	660
National Park Authorities	8	12	68	257	620
statutory bodies (e.g. EA, FC, NE)	4	11	56	192	703

Summing the last two columns shows really that everyone is felt to have responsibility for increasing nature except visitors to the area, but it suggests that most people feel that local and national government and other authorities bear the

most responsibility, followed by farmers and conservation organisations. Local people, businesses and community organisations are willing actors, but this suggests that they look to the authorities to take the lead.

7.6.7. Choose four images that represent what you feel the future of your city/town/village local green space should be.



Images **H, L, O** and **D** were the most frequently chosen, definitely favouring the wilder images.



G, C, J and **A** were the next most frequently chosen:



which feature more managed 'nature' images in an urban context.

When asked why they had chosen those images, some strong themes emerged, which corroborate that, although in most cases the responses were integrated, i.e. a response mentioning a balance between all of these themes, such as: "A balance of green and blue features alongside modern builds and infrastructure, easily accessible, clean and good for wildlife" and "Urban green spaces should contain as many natural features and different habitats as possible to create biodiversity and opportunities for people to connect with nature (H, L), while still having accessible

pathways (N) for those with mobility issues and to make it less muddy. There should still be lawned areas (F) for people to play football and rougher open spaces (N) for people to safely walk their dogs without disturbing nature too much."

"Green spaces need to be part of the living environment. Not separate to it. Tree lined streets, places for kids to play sports, ponds for birds, insects and amphibians to thrive. Flowers for bees and butterflies."

However, some themes were more frequently referred to in these responses than others:

Natural, less managed spaces received over 280 references:

"They're the closest to wild nature and seem more biodiverse"

"They are more natural, they look nicer, they provide a better habitat for nature."

"The more natural/ wilder ones are more appealing to me."

"They are the most natural and not man made or manufactured. This brings wildlife together over time."

"I would like as much natural - looking greenery in the local environment as is possible."

Closely followed by mentions of **biodiversity and wildlife** (over 260 mentions):

"I chose the images with highest levels of biodiversity and range of habitats."

"Because they look the most natural and appear to have the best habitat for wildlife."

"Naturalisation is good, native wildflowers and wildlife."

"Wildflowers for insects and bees and look beautiful."

"Wildflower and space for insects and animals to feed / live."

Integration of nature into an urban setting, or 'urban greening' got 140 comments:

"Nature should dovetail with housing and business. There should be green spaces available for children to play close to their homes."

"Bringing green spaces to urban areas."

"I like A because in the very heart of a city it's important to have some greenery and planting that makes people happy and in a small area available like this it's not going to be popular to put a few wild flowers, it needs to look attractive too."

"We are almost certainly going to always create more urban developments than nature reserves, so the inclusion of nature friendly measures in these developments is crucial.."

"I chose two that illustrate housing and nature integrated in harmony."

Water was also a strong theme, with over 100 comments, most of them mention water being calming:

"Ponds will help produce pond life and help with flooding."

"water is always calming."

"G. Water features to attract wildlife as well as beautifying the area."

"Water is usually restful and attracts wildlife."

"water in the form of rivers or streams already present and creating ponds and scrapes in parks."

"Parks with relaxing water features."

And **trees and vegetation** were another key feature of comments (over 90 mentions):

"We need more trees, green lungs."

"Trees are an important part of improving the environment. They can reduce heat by up to 4% in urban areas."

"Trees improve air quality and provide homes for many species."

"Trees for urban cooling and green island effects to help us survive a bit better as we continue to heat the climate."

"Having trees and indigenous wild flowers on the doorstep."

"There needs to be more trees, verges left to flower for insects, areas need to look semi wild and not pristine."

"Trees improve the air quality but there needs to be sufficient daylight and sun both of which are good for our mental health."

"Too many trees have been allowed to become too large on council land. The council just does not care about the loss of light to homes or impact on houses. It is time for the council to manage trees and not let them become too big."

Accessibility and recreational use was commented on over 90 times:

"Key is for areas with access to walk, run, cycle and play, especially where the pathways are an integral part of the transport/movement through a community. I.e. Routes with a purpose."

"Attractive spaces with a good balance of wildflowers and smartly designed and accessible walking/cycling spaces suitable for a city and for locals and visitors to enjoy."

"Maintained walkways with wild flowers to attract wildlife and natural marsh lands where you can enjoy the landscape and wildlife."

"Some well maintained areas with paths that cater for pushchairs and wheelchairs."

"Being able to take grandchildren walking and talk/ show them plants, insects, birds, animals."

"Accessible paths with green spaces away from busy roads and housing."

"nature allowed to flourish but still accessible to humans of all abilities."

"Safe, flat areas with seating for older people and those with disabilities."

"Parks should be inclusive for wheelchair users, pushchairs, and families."

"Spaces with good lighting and clear pathways feel safe and inviting."

62 comments specifically called for a **managed, balanced approach**:

"Green spaces need a balance of careful management/restoration and the ability for them to just be... Native plant species are crucial."

"Natural but not too wild in urban spaces."

"A balance between useable space for people living in the area, and for wildlife to grow and flourish."

"We need a balance of wild areas and water for wildlife and insects but also safe, well paved walking areas to take us through green areas."

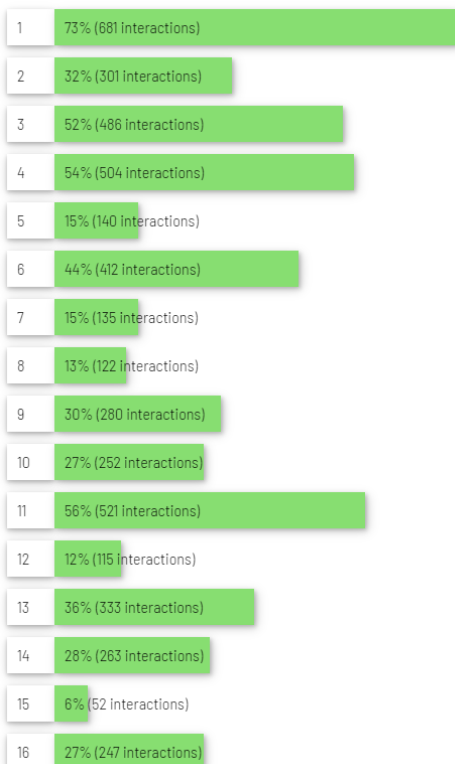
"Because they provide a balance to connecting with nature and providing communities with outdoor spaces to do outdoor activities. Large grasses areas with lots of trees where you can walk or play and enjoy a picnic in the shade. Parks with relaxing water features, maintained walkways with wild flowers to attract wildlife and natural marsh lands where you can enjoy the landscape and wildlife."

"Need to balance accessibility whilst giving nature space to flourish. Mix of managed areas and wild. In the last year I feel the move towards this has been very visible in certain areas such as Manor Fields Park and Wincobank Hillfort area."

"A balance between protecting nature and providing affordable housing."

"They all appear natural - strike a balance between natural and urban environment."

7.6.8. Choose four images that represent what you feel the future of the wider landscape of South Yorkshire should be.



Images **1**, **11**, **4** and **3** were top choices showing an understanding of balancing land use for wildlife (including beavers), with green energy generation and farming.



These were closely followed by **6**, **13** and **2**.



then **16**, **14** and **9**.



As with much of this engagement work, this shows a very thoughtful and balanced approach, even from a cohort of people who otherwise have been expressing quite strong views about wild nature taking priority.

Many responses were, as above, sentences integrating many themes, such as:

"Mixture of uplifting attractive spaces with different types of natural wildlife without being harshly managed grazing land or bleak lifeless moorland. Lots of woodland. Good use of pylons and landscaping to enhance the use of the land and its accessibility to visitors."

"More ponds and leaky dams help protect against floods and offers water and homes for wildlife in a natural way. Ancient temperate rainforest woodland is unique and should be retained and allowed to spread I chose the lynx as a symbol of species reintroduction though it needs to be the right species in the right landscape with the right protections And controversially perhaps i chose wind farms. We need energy. It has to be somewhere but should not impact migration routes for birds and not destroy the land itself. But its a balance and we need green energy."

"To keep nature accessible to those wishing to visit it. Use it where possible to create energy that is better for the climate. To keep our rivers and waterways clean and unpolluted and allow wild flowers and natural habitat for wild animals to flourish."

"Because I think allowing sites to regenerate by taking away grazing pressure, slowing the flow of rivers, planting trees and reducing moor burning will allow nature to do its thing and create good habitats and growth. Also green energy harvesting and allowing people access to the outdoors are equally important."

However, seven major themes emerged:

240 respondents stressed the need for **rewilding and natural landscapes**. The responses showed a desire for a clear partition between agricultural land and natural areas. Reintroduction of species like beavers and lynx (even though the lynx image (8) wasn't so frequently chosen), and the restoration of wetlands and forests were seen as a step towards ecological balance.

"Lots of lovely images to choose from. I picked those that represent rewilding, bringing back previously extinct creatures to help manage habitats and flood defences."

"Nature should be allowed to recover as it would have been without human intervention in order to halt and reverse the accelerating decline of nature (which will only impact us in future). We need to stop pretending that our present countryside is at all natural, and move away from celebrating 'natural areas' which are managed for sheep and pheasant shooting, rather than nature. Given, these areas need to be managed for several communities/ activities- but right now nature is being exploited and the balance is severely off."

"Natural habitats for local wildlife and nice to look at too!"

"I would love native species like beavers to be reintroduced and nature to be able to thrive with less human interference."

"Having Lynx in South Yorkshire would be a dream but who knows? Pine marten, beaver and wild boar could and should be here already."

Over 180 respondents emphasised the importance of **biodiversity and wildlife**. Key priorities detailed preserving and enhancing the natural beauty and biodiversity of South Yorkshire including ancient woodlands, wildflower meadows, and wildlife habitats.

"Wild native bluebell woods, peaks that encourage biodiversity, no persecution of birds of prey and badgers and foxes."

"Diversity of plants and landscape including lots of green to capture carbon and reduce flooding."

"Preserved but not manicured nature."

"we need wildflower areas for the insects and wildlife."

"Ancient woodlands and wet woodland/rainforest are precious habitats and need protection."

"Water is always relaxing and brings in wildlife from frogs and toads to dragonflies, damselflies and all other kinds of life."

Water management and flood prevention featured 178 times:

"Wild flowers, sympathetic pathways, natural water management."

"I felt that the managed water drainage was something we would need to consider for increased rainfall in the future. These are already in place in lady cannings plantation I also selected pictures with natural woodlands, which also ensure water is absorbed and prevents flooding."

"The natural rivers spoke to me of good ideas to avoid flooding."

"beaver reintroduction would help with flood management."

"Allowing nature to help with climate change - flooding risk."

119 respondents emphasised **accessibility and public enjoyment**. People valued footpaths, boardwalks, and initiatives that help the public engage with and learn about biodiversity and conservation.

"Ensuring access for anyone, regardless of ability, to nature in open spaces."

"Nature should be enjoyable but work for the locals too."

"Access and purpose are key reasons."

"The natural scene with a wooden boardwalk spoke to me about ensuring access for anyone, regardless of ability, to nature in open spaces."

"landscaping to enhance the use of the land and its accessibility to visitors."

"Accessible footpaths to allow everyone to use the outdoors Access to natural waterways, safely managed."

The Preservation of **Woodlands and Green Spaces** occurred over 110 times. Respondents expressed a desire to see more natural woodlands, not just forestry.

"Woodlands should be protected and moorlands should be left to re-wild"

"Woodland and waterways"

"Ancient woodlands need to be protected as we have lost too many."

90 mentions were made of **Renewable energy and climate change** as a key theme:

"coexisting priorities (renewables and nature)."

"Using the landscape in a way that addresses the impact of climate change."

"Wind farms necessary, confined walking areas to protect certain landscapes."

"farmers need to still be able to make a living from the land but we need to create more renewable energy on the land."

"Would be nice to see wind turbines as it is more ecological."

"think we need more wind turbines locally to help with sustainable energy production."

"The biggest eyesore is from climate change driven by fossil fuels, so we have to act to protect nature (and ourselves in it) by ensuring we have a clean, secure, inclusive generation capacity. This means wind, solar, hydro. Nuclear can get in the bin."

"Have not chosen the wind turbines as they do not look attractive but think they are better than pylons and we may have to accept these in terms of measures to combat climate change."

67 responses included the theme of **Farming and food production**. Respondents emphasised the need for sustainable, local food production and a more resilient food system in their local area.

"Farming is essential to local people's well being. Local people should have easy access to locally produced produce through local farmers, and local privately owned greengrocers, butchers, fishmongers. The prevalence of supermarkets sprawling across our local communities, facilitated by local authorities, meanings our consumption is mainly imported foods, to the detriment of local producers."

"A farmed landscape - continuing to grow some food for our densely populated island, but using farming practices which allow wildlife to thrive and soil health to be the main priority. This will require a more holistic mindset from everyone involved, a shift in consumer and retailer behaviour, and local authority leadership. Grazing livestock used as a land management tool where possible - less focus on methane and cows, which is part of the biogenic cycle, and more focus on reduction of fossil fuel usage, which is meant to stay underground and is the real driver of climate change. An abundant, rich, diverse landscape with growing plants, just edges and paths mown in parks, then hay making at the end of the summer, so that floral diversity increases over time. This is starting to happen in some local authorities, e.g. Stockport."

"return to previous higher standards including more land returned to farming as we need to be more self-sufficient."

"A hard choice, but these four show diverse areas and a link to farming which is where a real balance is needed."

"we should be supporting local farmers and enabling them to continue growing food while minimising their environmental impact. Likely to need funding to help them transition to greener farming practices."

In summary, people's responses were generally very balanced and well-informed, understanding the various pressures on the landscape and the choices to be made.

7.6.9. Do you currently do anything to help nature?

As would be expected from this cohort of people who have answered an online survey about nature, they are already extremely active.

450 responses talked about **wildlife gardening** with great enthusiasm:

"I have created a wildlife garden with multiple ponds. This year, I put a tank on my front wall with some frogspawn in it in a properly created ecosystem so passers by could watch the tadpoles develop and then local children who engaged helped me release the froglets back into my wildlife garden once they had all four legs. Not only did I get to know lots of neighbours, a number have now added container ponds and bog areas to their own gardens."

"I have planted bee and butterfly-friendly plants in our garden and left wild spaces for pollinators."

"My garden has areas of wildflowers, a pond, and insect hotels."

"We've created a hedgehog highway and bird feeders."

"No mow May and native hedges have transformed my garden into a haven for wildlife."

"My garden won a nature award last year due to my pond, native hedging, fruit trees, and completely wild areas."

"Provide nest boxes, feed the birds, installed a wildlife pond, have wildflowers and patches of overgrown grass in the garden, lots of native, pollinator friendly plants and flowers."

With appropriate support, this is a cohort of very willing nature advocates to support the awareness of and rollout of a Local Nature Recovery Strategy.

Over 110 talked about **supporting environmental organisations**, through membership, donating and volunteering:

"I'm a member of the RSPB & YWT"

"Member of a Bird club, RSPB volunteer, member of the BTO, bird survey organiser for the BTO"

"Member of Councils Climate Change group"

"Record Nature for several nature databases. Donate a bit of money, sometimes, to appeals to conserve the natural world"

"I am a member of (and donor to) Sheffield and Rotherham Wildlife Trust, and occasionally do visits or volunteering with them"

"Am a member of the RSPB, Woodland Trust, WWF, Â Sheffield and Rotherham Wildlife Trust, Rivelin Valley Conservation Group and Friends of Loxley Valley"

"Member RSPB and Butterfly Conservation and monitoring local nature spotting to be reported back too"

In fact, **volunteering** was mentioned 100 times:

"I volunteer in my local woodland twice a week, doing physical work and promoting the benefits of working within natural settings with natural materials"

"Volunteer for the Yorkshire wildlife trust"

"Volunteer for Don Gorge Community Group and YWT at Sprotborough Flash and associated woodland and meadows. Work includes tree planting, hedge laying, path clearing using brush-cutters, clearing of non-native invasive species, installation of benches, and some restoration of stone walls as well as litter picking"

"Volunteer at Potteric Carr Nature Reserve and at Flourish Walled Garden, Balby"

"Volunteer at local nature reserve"

More than 100 people mentioned **litter picking**, more than 80 **reducing their carbon footprint**, around 50 each of **reducing waste** and other aspects of **sustainable living**, and around 20 mentioning advocacy and activism. All in all, this is a very committed group of individuals.

7.6.10. If you would like to do more for nature, what support would help you?

Given the answers to the question above, it's interesting that most people still want to do even more. The responses are less easy to categorise but there was a general request for **funding** to support efforts by community groups and farmers that are currently voluntary:

"As a tenant farmer every acre needs to return a rent, although a lot of my wildlife management is self funded the majority is funded by Higher Tier schemes etc so funding is my priority, whether per hectare or access to items such as free hedge plants, wild flower seeds etc"

"Funding for farmer cluster groups which is easy to access, flexible and not too much administrative burden"

"Financial support from local authorities and businesses, and listening to stakeholders needs"

"More environment focused jobs. Funding for local communities"

"More funding for green spaces"

There is also a plea for **more awareness about groups and schemes to join**

"Knowing what schemes and opportunities there are to get involved. Perhaps a dedicated south Yorkshire social media account highlighting opportunities and creating educational content. Information on any citizen science projects (butterfly counts etc) and groups doing seasonal wildlife support like toads across the road etc."

"Knowing what organisations do to be able to tap in for support & inspiration."

"Greater awareness on small things I can do to help."

"More clearly advertised opportunities on the council website."

People would also like to be supported by **local authority action aligned with nature recovery:**

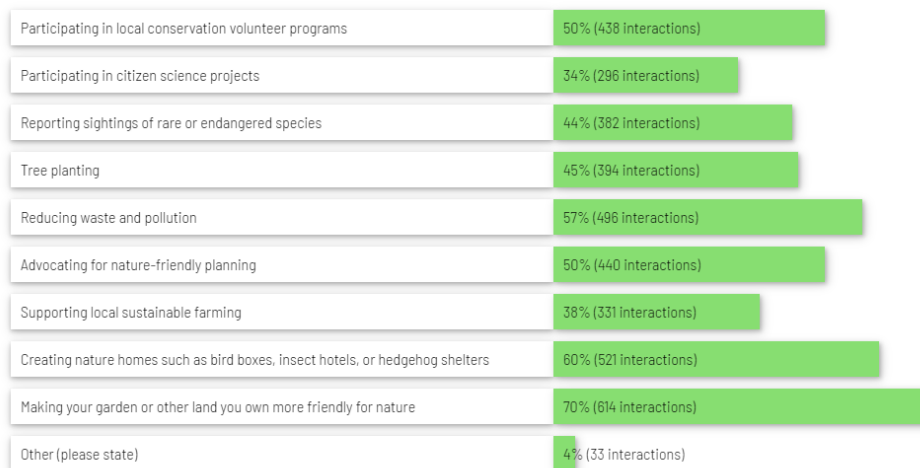
"I think there are plenty of opportunities within the wider South Yorkshire region but I'm not sure about any council led initiatives within the city."

"Hearing the government and LA stand up for nature and prioritise it in policies. Better recycling provision. Pressure on businesses to reduce their negative environmental impact. Better public transport (less vehicles and pollution) improving access to nature for all."

"Dog fouling enforced. Littering laws enforced."

"Be receptive - 2-3 years ago I put together a proposal to replace non-native housing estate planting with native species which would have required less maintenance, and was told that couldn't be done because the council couldn't commit to maintaining it. I rather gave up trying to engage at that point, apart from to report a new stand of Japanese knotweed on council land which was also ignored. Then I really did give up."

7.6.11. Which of the following might you be interested in taking part in to help nature in South Yorkshire?



And it's to be expected that this group of people have said that they'd generally like to take part in everything! Responses to 'other' were mostly clustered around people saying that they already do all of those things. Additional suggestions, however, included:

- "Contributing to local consultations on environmental projects & management schemes"
- "Delivering training"
- "We would be happy to have more public engagement with environmental projects on the farm"
- "Persuading local and national government to provide more resources, stop relying on local community groups where there is no funding"
- "Introducing the concept of Agrovoltatics to the council as a planning condition for solar farms"

7.6.12. Is there anything preventing you helping with nature recovery activities within your community/area?

Over 230 people simply said **time constraints**: volunteering activities often clash with their schedules, particularly when they occur during working hours. Single parents, caregivers, and individuals with multiple responsibilities felt especially stretched for time, making it hard to participate in community-led nature recovery activities.

A further 88 mentioned **limited physical capacity** due to health, age, disability or mobility issues.

A **lack of awareness** of local programmes of activities to join in with was mentioned by 60 people.

"I'm not aware of what is happening locally."

"Lack of awareness of any such activities in our area."

"No idea what is happening and when; no one seems to consider reaching people who aren't on social media."

"Not knowing who to go to or how to get involved."

Lack of funding (and local authority support) was an issue for 45 people:

"Lack of support or funding from local council."

"Supporting staff in council. Jon Dallow and rangers are tremendous help but deserve more resources. So much for volunteers to do to manage big areas of green spaces."

"Competition for funding (whether from grants or membership) is a barrier to collaboration."

"Council help, their resources are too thinly spread."

Also a **lack of community engagement** (and support) was an issue for 27 respondents:

"[The] Council will not work with community groups to manage land better for nature."

"I have worked with residents groups and local authorities for many years but find that there's a lack of interest from other residents and local councillors."

"I will continue to do my best in isolation. There is a general community apathy towards actually doing anything positive, all talk no action."

"Apathy and inaction generally from local government departments."

"Lack of defined community groups with a focus on nature action in my area."

Finally, over 30 people just expressed general **disillusionment with their local authority**:

"Yes, the council. They are intent on building on every green space we have till there isn't any left. No one is listened to. When the planning permission documents were displayed it was in the middle of Covid 19 and it was the first lockdown so no one could view the notices as we were all stuck in our houses. We have written to tell them about owls and bats and deers, we have squirrels, badgers and foxes and hedgehogs. We have kestrels as well. But we are not listened to. At all."

"Lack of genuine interest from the Council."

"I was part of a friends of park group, but this became political and although I have recommended improvements to the local council which would improve the park for all and reduce ASB, the council are not interested."

"Not personally, just a wider battle against local authorities and central government who place nature at the bottom of their priorities."

"Local parish Council not open to public suggestion."

"People in charge pushing the council/governments agenda rather than actually understanding nature and the countryside."

"The attitude of my local authority, Barnsley. Plenty of virtue signalling but little action. Facing a brick wall of self-serving cabinet members."

"Feeling disillusioned that our local authority wants farmers to support nature recovery, but the local authority won't support farmers by buying the food they produce. Asking what they can purchase from farmers for the city's School meals would be a good relationship starting point."

7.6.13. What would help you engage with nature more?

The vast majority of answers to this question were along the lines of already being very engaged with nature or mentioning things outside of our control ("*more hours in the day*", "*Not working as much*", "*Curing arthritis!*")

But there were some coherent themes too:

Nearly 60 people wanted **better access**:

"Better (more bus services) & more affordable public transport (especially rail fares - I have stopped using trains for anything other than a small number of short journeys because rail fares are too high)."

"Better linked paths. Ease of access."

"Improved public transport to access sites."

"More access at times to help clean nature sites up."

"Improved public transport for example limited stop bus services that go into the peak district."

"Increased public transport access to local sites."

Increased and better publicised **community/volunteering schemes** to join in with (over 50):

"Better information on what is going on locally, with the environment, if volunteers are needed for example. We need a central information site where people can look to see if they can help in anyway."

"Link with employers to do volunteer days."

"Knowledge of local nature groups."

42 comments about more and better (and better cared for) **public green spaces**:

"Having more green spaces in the area. Town centre is sorely lacking in this."

"More open spaces but green spaces, not all needs to be woodland, or left to wild, local fields in the community I enjoy as I'm still in the community but it's open land so cut and maintained but encouraged designated spaces for wildflowers, small woodland, cameras and lighting so we can enjoy it as a women as winter is a lonely time as we work in the day light so cannot enjoy an autumn winter walk before/ after work through fear of it being dark."

"To feel safe in the green spaces and the area to be clean and well maintained."

"I engage with nature all the time, but it would be nicer if it wasn't reducing around us and if the green spaces we have were preserved, protected and looked after better than they are."

More **local authority support** (38 responses):

"More funding and signposting from local authorities and others to local conservation charities and groups."

"System change and support, help to be effective and collective, policy and legal changes to convert individual willing into a movement."

"The Council needs to listen to the local community and sort out the existing problems before work and improvements can be made and implemented to the benefit of all."

"I feel that groups and local councils don't do enough to help with nature, some turn a blind eye to such things as INNS issues in the UK."

"Support from local authority but they just can't. no money no staff."

"A point I'd like to make about Sheffield - The people that the council use to manage the green spaces apparently have NO training in horticulture or anything even close. Contractors or whoever come in and just hack at things. Trees are massacred, not pruned. Planted, then never watered. Local park 'maintenance' of shrub beds means running a chainsaw over the top of everything, then leaving. No weeding, no attempt to prune individual shrubs to help them do their best, no aesthetic consideration. Just roll up, butcher everything, then go. There is NO CARE!"

"A present local authority who view nature restoration as a priority. Theres a feeling that if you improve areas, a week later its trashed anyway."

"Support from our local MPs and Councillors, businesses and schools - I think a lot of people can feel disheartened when they don't see action being taken more broadly."

"That the Authorities responsible are making this a priority. Instil some confidence in our communities about this. Seems to be a lack of understanding by policy makers of what local communities need and more importantly need. Imposing their ideas on Communities without no awareness."

Personal safety was mentioned 14 times:

"As a female solo walker in the Doncaster area, I no longer feel safe, and this has severely impacted on me engaging with nature in the local area."

"To feel safe in the green spaces and the area to be clean and well maintained."

"If I felt I could go out more on my own, feeling safe."

"Designated spaces for wildflowers, small woodland, cameras and lighting so we can enjoy it as a woman as winter is a lonely time as we work in the day light so cannot enjoy an autumn winter walk before/ after work through fear of it being dark."

"Feeling safer in more lonely places."

"If the green spaces were safer - less off-road bikers in our parks/woodland."

7.6.14. Finally, is there anything else you would like to add?

Many responses are making a point personal to them, or reiterating other things that they would have said earlier:

"Please introduce a policy banning use of glyphosate, and petrol mowers. Do not chop down any more mature trees."

"Please help me find a job locally to help with nature, We have a big green area full of litter and junk/scrap (big job) no one cares for it, has a pond with ducks, waterlogged grass and trees just covered in litter."

"Having been involved with nature conservation for nearly 40 years and seen money wasted on schemes like biodiversity Action Plans achieve virtually nothing I remain very sceptical about this project. Planting trees and dodgy wildflower meadows will not restore the nature I remember in the past."

"Please ask the SY Mayor to ensure he is sighted on large-scale projects that impact directly on nature, and residents, such as the huge solar farm proposed for Cudworth / Grimethorpe."

"Please do all you possibly can to address Nature Decline before it's too late. Humans need nature to survive. I want my grandchildren to experience nature at its finest and themselves understand how to care and protect it."

22 mentioned **the survey** in particular:

Some positively:

"Cracking survey, SYMCA!"

"Thank you for creating this survey, I look forward to seeing some positive results from this work."

"Detailed survey, thank you!"

"Encouraging to see SYCMA doing this. More public engagement on this and other topics please!"

"I'm pleased to see the existence of a survey like this suggesting more care and attention will be paid to nature and climate change initiatives in South Yorkshire going forward it's a critically important issue! Thank you."

"Thank you for this survey. please do the work well so it makes a real difference."

"I'm grateful that you are carrying out a survey such as this and really hope you can make a positive impact on nature in South Yorkshire."

"Thanks for doing this survey."

"I am encouraged that you are consulting please make the most of opportunities Do not neglect the most deprived areas. Do work with schools and offenders to engage the disaffected and provide opportunities."

Others less so:

"Your questionnaire is not the easiest to navigate!"

"Think this questionnaire is too long/ complex for the 'casual' nature lover."

"I'd like to know what this survey has cost and what value the council perceives it has."

"Don't use this survey as an excuse for the council to neglect their duty to maintain open areas under guise of re wilding. Our parks have been in decline for decades."

"I feel this survey is merely a box ticking exercise and nothing will genuinely be done to help nature and increase i.t"

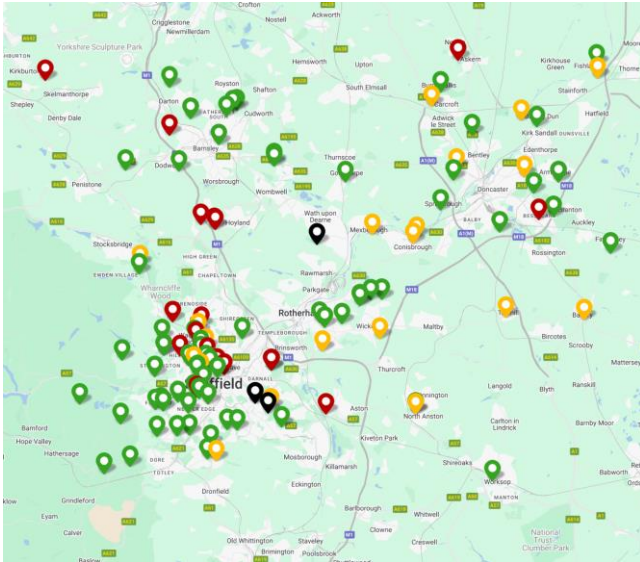
"The way this questionnaire reads comes across as a total lack of understanding of the farmed environment, and it's potential to support biodiversity, we would be happy to host a farm walk for you to illustrate the potential. Not all environmental gain needs to be on nature reserves, which although excellent, don't have a great deal of potential for increasing habitat, because they are managed to provide to their maximum potential.... I am concerned that this questionnaire does not address the need for Nature Recovery so much as asking what compromises people might be prepared to accept."

"I feel that I am a lone voice. I have more time to reply to surveys such as this since retiring. Few others have such a privilege. These surveys are an indulgence and should be recognised as such. Most mere mortals are too busy trying to

“...eke out an existence and have a family life to engage with such. Plenty of words, plenty of questions, we did a survey and we engaged. Pah! Recognise what you are doing. Engaging for engaging's sake. We did a survey. Tick the box. The system is broken and needs to change. Please, when you publish the results of this survey, recognise that you are doing something that won't engage with the vast majority of South Yorkshire residents' views.”

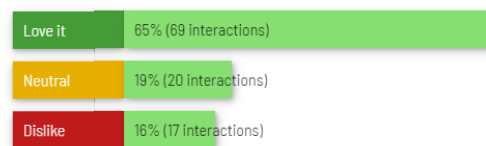
And there were reiterated views on **litter and waste management**, and **concerns about urban development**.

7.7. Map-based inputs



The other online engagement opportunity was to drop a pin on a map and then describe something about it. This gathered 106 interactions from 74 unique participants.

Most said that they loved the location, 19% were neutral, 16% disliked the location.



The fact that these are specific location-based comments means that they are less readily summarised, and these need to be dealt with individually by each authority and considered at the

mapping stage. In most cases people were pinpointing areas local to them, or with which they are involved, and many of them saying that they were worried about the location. The results are available as appendices to this report.

7.8. Key findings and relevance for the LNRS

The overwhelming message from this group of people is that they are citizens committed to wildlife and nature, and ought to be strong advocates for a Local Nature Recovery Strategy. They hold strong views, but also (like other groups engaged through this process) generally take a balanced view of what is required of finite land resources. They already do a great deal for nature recovery, but don't feel listened to or supported.

There is strong opposition to housing and industrial development destroying green spaces, and a general view that local green spaces are not looked after properly.

There is huge opportunity here; this is a cohort of potential supporters and advocates and there will be many more like them across South Yorkshire. A well publicised Local Nature Recovery Strategy, linked and dovetailed with other plans for accommodating housing, infrastructure and food production, has the potential to harness this energy and help to bring about meaningful nature recovery across South Yorkshire.

Key points from online surveys

- These citizens are committed to wildlife and nature, and ought to be strong advocates for a Local Nature Recovery Strategy.
- They hold strong views, but generally take a balanced view of what is required of finite land.
- They already do a great deal for nature recovery, but don't feel listened to or supported.
- There is strong opposition to housing and industrial development destroying green spaces, and a general view that local green spaces are not looked after.

8. Similarities and differences across stakeholder groups

Across the three modes of engagement - workshops (including with farmers), public events and the online survey - we collected a diverse set of data that will help inform the final LNRS for South Yorkshire. The workshops targeted specific stakeholder groups, while public events and the online survey were open to anyone who wanted to contribute. When people are focusing on one issue, in this case nature recovery, there is a tendency not to think about the wider consequences and other potentially competing priorities. Therefore, the techniques and questions used encouraged responses that did focus on nature recovery, but in the context of many other issues and points of view. Despite the range of groups involved, summarised above, a core of commonly agreed themes emerged.

It was clear to see that people across the region, regardless of different intersectionalities, want to see nature recovery. Image selection showed strong overall preferences for wild, biodiverse landscapes across both urban and rural landscapes. This was often closely followed by images that support accessibility and recreational opportunities. The public engagement events in particular emphasised that areas need to appear 'tidy' and looked after. Images that appeared too wild were less desirable and therefore striking the balance between natural, manicured and accessible landscapes really clearly came through from this group of people. Unlike other groups, farmers have a very large influence how they manage large areas of land, coupled with their work also being a lifestyle. It was not unsurprising to find that farmers had shown much greater support for images that strongly supported traditional agricultural practices across the wider landscape. However, they also showed an appreciation of broader land-use needs. This is not to say that other groups overlooked these, as workshop and online survey results revealed moderate support for reintroductions of predators, renewable energy, food production and beaver dams, for example.

Despite broad agreement in image selections, the reasonings behind these choices varied across the engagement modes. From workshops (not including farmers) and the online survey, selections were primarily driven by an ecological focus on wildlife, nature, biodiversity and water. Following this there was some acknowledgement of accessibility and recreational use. Many comments from the online survey alluded to the idea of a balance between the themes, recognising that they are all important and need to be considered together. In contrast, public engagement image selections were heavily influenced by aesthetics, though other high-scoring themes - such as terrestrial animals, nature and water - also played a role. As expected, farmer choices were typically centred around the need for the landscape to accommodate food production.

Key points overall

A core of common themes emerged throughout:

- strong preferences for 'wild', biodiverse landscapes across both urban and rural landscapes;
- water as an important feature in both;
- urban green spaces that are well-maintained, appear 'looked after' and feel safe;
- accessibility, both to and within nature-rich spaces;
- access to the wider landscape planned and managed so that people can access nature, but that it is not damaged by that access;
- a wider landscape balancing the needs of nature and wildlife, food production, renewable energy generation and recreational access.
- broad support for nature recovery as guided by expert knowledge for both urban and landscape spaces, as long as it takes into account those other demands on land-use.
- Many helpful plans and policies already in place at all levels of governance and across organisations, but it will take time and collaboration to align them for mutual benefit, using the LNRS as an organising framework.
- A recurring theme was that those involved in nature conservation often view other sections of society as needing to be educated on the importance of nature.
- These engagement findings challenge that perception. Wider society seems to be remarkably thoughtful and knowledgeable about nature and wildlife in broad terms; there is a general understanding of the importance of nature and other green spaces, and the need for this to be balanced by other demands.
- It appears that most people we heard from in South Yorkshire broadly agree on what is required and what they want. The focus now needs to be on communicating that shared vision to aid collaboration, and then co-developing and championing the legal, practical and financial frameworks to enable that shared nature-rich future to be realised.

When considering who might not prioritise nature recovery, developers were the most cited group across all engagement modes and stakeholder groups. This was followed by farmers, who even voted for themselves with particular emphasis on 'intensive farmers', as well as governments, politicians and businesses. The drive for profit and financial motive was the leading reason followed by a general lack of awareness around the importance of nature. However, as stated above, this report suggests that it is incorrect and counterproductive to dismiss entire sectors as ignorant and short-sighted is less likely to support effective collaboration.

In exploring the barriers and enablers for nature recovery in South Yorkshire, there was a great deal of synergy between the workshops and online survey outputs. Funding was the leading example of both a barrier and enabler – and if it to be an enabler it needs to be secure long-term, sustainable funding. The other barrier and enabler was the perceived need for improved societal knowledge and education around nature and biodiversity. This was a recurring theme throughout the report and needs to be paid attention to; our findings indicate that while people may not have the technical knowledge around nature recovery, most individuals do have a good level of understanding around what is good for nature and what is bad. Other barriers mentioned include: public and stakeholder support, political will, farming, land ownership and management and pollution and environmental damage. A main enabler mentioned was the need for partnership, collaboration and a joined-up approach.

To conclude, there is a great deal of broad agreement across the various modes of engagement and stakeholder groups, and a strong desire for nature recovery in South Yorkshire. While there are already some helpful plans and policies in place and there is a lot of great work happening in the region, it is clear that there are many other considerations that will need to be integrated into the LNRS and as such, it'll need to be a well thought out process taking in account the needs of those that are living and working there. Successful implementation will depend on strong collaboration, effective communication, and cross-sector coordination. Although this report has primarily focused on gathering insights into people's perceptions, needs and aspirations for nature recovery across the region to help inform the LNRS, our engagement also provided opportunity to understand how the LNRS could be designed for optimal usability across diverse user groups. It was clear that the LNRS will need to be designed so that it becomes part of the everyday work of local authorities across the board, particularly for planners. It should be user-friendly, widely accessible, and compatible with existing systems, especially mapping software. Additionally, it must provide the right level of detail to be practical for various stakeholders and fit naturally into their workflows. Not only is the design itself important, but considerations of how it will align with LNRSs in neighbouring counties to support a coherent regional approach. There are a lot of moving parts to consider when devising and designing the LNRS, but there are plenty of individuals and groups that are supportive.

9. Next steps

The appropriate outputs from this engagement work have been fed into the parallel process focused on writing the statement of Priorities and Measures for the LNRS. Some aspects will also inform the mapping of those Priorities and Measures. When these have been done, a draft LNRS and set of supporting documents will go through statutory public consultation. Feedback from that process will inform the final version which will be published.

Some of the content of this engagement report should be helpful in both shaping the format of the published LNRS and may help to influence the way that it is communicated and rolled out. We believe that it is important to raise awareness that there is general understanding and agreement on what is required for nature recovery, a high degree of alignment on what the future might look like (even if people have different frames of reference for articulating that), and that what is required is a unifying strategy to harnesses and enable that shared vision to be brought about.

10. Appendices

10.1. Map-based submissions

When people placed a pin on the online map, they were asked to rate it as: 'love it', 'neutral' or 'dislike it'. The following locations were identified in those categories. Further comments and even images were submitted about each of these locations, and that detail will be taken into account for both the LNRS mapping process and to understand if any authorities need to take action or to understand the thoughts and opinions of people for whom these locations are important.

10.1.1. Map-based responses to 'love it'

Brecks Community Orchard	It's my local green space; I am concerned about this area;
On a lovely area of flora and fauna	I am concerned about this area;
Rivelin Valley	It's my local green space;
Herringthorpe Playing Fields	It's my local green space; I travel to this place to access nature; I am concerned about this area;
The woodland and marsh area where Carlton beck flows.	Other (please state);
Black Carr Plantation	It's my local green space;
Rose Hill	I travel to this place to access nature; I am concerned about this area;
Rossington	It's my local green space;
On the farm land to the rear of my property	Other
Whirlow Brook Park	It's my local green space; I travel to this place to access nature; We are already doing nature recovery work here; I work/volunteer here;
Ecclesall Woods	It's my local green space; I travel to this place to access nature; We are already doing nature recovery work here;
Blacka Moor Nature reserve	It's my local green space; I travel to this place to access nature; We are already doing nature recovery work here; I work/volunteer here;
Mount Pleasant Park	It's my local green space;
Millhouses Park	I travel to this place to access nature;
Loxley Valley	It's my local green space; I travel to this place to access nature; I am concerned about this area; We are already doing nature recovery work here; I work/volunteer here;
Gell Street Park	It's my local green space;
Porter Valley	I travel to this place to access nature;
Love Square	It's my local green space;
fishlake Wetlands	It's my local green space; I travel to this place to access nature; I am concerned about this area;
Chelsea Park	It's my local green space; We are already doing nature recovery work here;
Wincobank Hill Fort	I travel to this place to access nature;
The Wantley Dragon	I travel to this place to access nature;
Sheffield General Center	It's my local green space; We are already doing nature recovery work here; I work/volunteer here; Other (please state);
Longshaw	I travel to this place to access nature;
Ringinglow	I travel to this place to access nature;
Ball Streer	I travel to this place to access nature;
Lees Hall Wood	It's my local green space;
Rollestone Woods	It's my local green space;
A pond off barkston road. There is also another pond at the end of St Helens way monk bretton, and in monk bretton park.	I travel to this place to access nature; I am concerned about this area;
flood plain between Smithies and Mapplewell. Lowest point of runoff for river Dearne and Redbrook link for canal .	It's my local green space; I travel to this place to access nature; I am concerned about this area; Other (please state);
Darfield quarry and farmers field	It's my local green space;
This is a vital wildlife corridor for the estate and there are plans to develop on this land	I am concerned about this area;
Near blackergreen lane	Other (please state);
Carlton/Monk Bretton fields	It's my local green space;
Birley Spa Wood and adjacent wood/fields	I am concerned about this area;
In a field	It's my local green space;
This is a general pin for all the places that have annual plants planted	I am concerned about this area;
On the grouse moors	I travel to this place to access nature; I am concerned about this area;
Graves Park Sheffield	It's my local green space;
Kirk Sandall Glass Park	It's my local green space; I travel to this place to access nature; I am concerned about this area; I work/volunteer here;
Wadsley and Loxley Commons	It's my local green space; I travel to this place to access nature; We are already doing nature recovery work here; I work/volunteer here;
Potteric Carr nature reserve	I travel to this place to access nature; I work/volunteer here;
Linden Walk Woodland	We are already doing nature recovery work here;
Crossfield Lane	We are already doing nature recovery work here;
Husband Wood, Woolley Colliery Village. Public footpaths in this vicinity lead to Windhill Lane, Staincross.	I travel to this place to access nature;
Loxley Valley	It's my local green space; I am concerned about this area; I work/volunteer here;
Nursery Lane, Sprotbrough	Flood risk
Ponderosa Orchard	It's my local green space; I travel to this place to access nature; We are already doing nature recovery work here; I work/volunteer here;
Ponderosa pond	It's my local green space; We are already doing nature recovery work here; I work/volunteer here;
Silverwood lake, Rotherham	It's my local green space; I travel to this place to access nature; I am concerned about this area;

Ravenfield woods	It's my local green space;
Green space off Moor Lane North ravenfield	I am concerned about this area;
Cusworth Hall Country Park	It's my local green space;
Next to the mighty Porter.	It's my local green space; I am concerned about this area;
Greenlands Park	I travel to this place to access nature;
Finningley	It's my local green space;
The Groves	We are already doing nature recovery work here; Other (please state);
Endcliffe Park	I travel to this place to access nature;
Silverwood Colliery Woodland	It's my local green space;
Dearne Valley Country Park	It's my local green space;
Farmers field's	I am concerned about this area;
Old Darfield quarry	I travel to this place to access nature; I am concerned about this area;
Nature pond built by Our Cow Molly & Sheffield Wildlife Trust	I am a farmer/own this land; We are already doing nature recovery work here;
South Road Green Space	It's my local green space;
River Don bank and adjoining brownfield site between Steel Bank Weir and Rutland Road	I am concerned about this area; I work/volunteer here;
Former Old Park Silver Mill, Club Mill Road	I am concerned about this area; We are already doing nature recovery work here; I work/volunteer here;
Former Neepsend Power Station, Club Mill Road	I travel to this place to access nature; I am concerned about this area; I work/volunteer here; Other (please state);
Toad Hole Dyke and adjoining woodland	I am concerned about this area; We are already doing nature recovery work here; I work/volunteer here; Other (please state);

10.1.2. Map-based responses to 'neutral'

Whiston Meadows	I am concerned about this area;
Ruskin Park	It's my local green space;
Playing fields Scawsby	It's my local green space;
Cookson Park	It's my local green space;
The old landfill site	It's my local green space;
Old Coal spoil hills	I travel to this place to access nature;
Richmond area	I am concerned about this area;
Bitholmes Wood	I travel to this place to access nature;
Greenland Park and the green corridor that should run from Little Mester Pub (back of Dinnington Woodland)	I am concerned about this area;
Dyche Lane Jordanthorpe	It's my local green space;
Wickersley Woods	It's my local green space; I travel to this place to access nature; I am concerned about this area;
Gainsborough Road, Bawtry	Flood risk
Ferry Boat Lane, Old Denaby	Flood risk
Low Road, Conisbrough	Flood risk
Intake	Flood risk
Tickhill	Flood risk
Fordstead Lane	Flood risk
Ponderosa park	It's my local green space; I am concerned about this area; We are already doing nature recovery work here; I work/volunteer here;
Duftons Close	Flood risk
Bentley Mill Stream Catchment	Flood risk
Richmond hill rd	I am concerned about this area;
Nature reserve near tinsley golf club	It's my local green space; I travel to this place to access nature; I am concerned about this area;
Green Street/Alma Street	I work/volunteer here;

10.1.3. Map-based responses to 'dislike'

Campsall Country Park	It's my local green space;
Bottom of rock street where there are woods leading down to Derek Dooley highway	I am concerned about this area;
Potterholes Plantation	I am concerned about this area;
Rose Hill	I am concerned about this area;
Where there once was 17 agricultural fields.	I am concerned about this area;
The Maggie Field	It's my local green space; I am concerned about this area;
Green space adjacent to B6200 - RB2023/1323 Battery Storage Site	It's my local green space; I am concerned about this area; I work/volunteer here; Other (please state);
Malin bridge one way system and Holme lane	I am concerned about this area
Southern edge of Beeley Woods	I travel to this place to access nature; I am concerned about this area;
The massive blue EVRi depot at Hoyland Common	Other (please state);
Sheffield Ski Slopes	I am concerned about this area;
Upper Don Trail - Toad Hole Dyke	I travel to this place to access nature; I am concerned about this area;
higham barugh green	I am concerned about this area;
Ecclesall Road	I am concerned about this area;

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