



# **Buckinghamshire Local Nature Recovery Strategy Pilot – Stakeholder Engagement Summary Report**

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## Executive Summary

During February 2021, the Buckinghamshire Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) Pilot Area Team (PAT), with the support of independent facilitators 3QK, ran a stakeholder engagement process to allow a wide range of stakeholders to have an opportunity to input into the Buckinghamshire LNRS Pilot.

The aim of the stakeholder engagement process was two-fold:

1. To inform stakeholders about the Buckinghamshire LNRS Pilot.
2. To gain stakeholder input on three key elements of nature's recovery to be incorporated into the Buckinghamshire LNRS Pilot (outcomes for nature, environmental benefits, and activities to deliver outcomes or benefits).

We engaged with a total of 358 stakeholders representing a variety of sectors: agriculture and land managers, parish and town councils, central government/agencies, conservation organisations, and individuals with a passion for nature in Buckinghamshire.

In this report we summarise the approach to each stage of the engagement process (webinar, surveys and workshops), and provide a preliminary summary of the outcomes of the workshops and surveys.

Stakeholders have big ambitions for Buckinghamshire, and want to see the following outcomes for nature and environmental benefits achieved in the long-term, and specific activities delivered through the Local Nature Recovery Strategy:

*Outcomes for nature:* the protection and enhancement of key habitats such as woodland, hedges, chalk streams and chalk grassland were mentioned by many stakeholders; larger species such as farmland birds were also mentioned as a high priority; healthy soils were a dominant topic of conversation with the farmer and landowner workshops; and, water was another common theme, with stakeholders keen to see healthy watercourses and water bodies. There was frequent mention of elements of the "Lawton" conservation principles – creating a coherent and resilient ecological network, guided by four key principles, "more, bigger, better and joined".

*Environmental benefits:* many stakeholders view water as highly important (e.g., water quality, flood risk management, and drought resilience); carbon sequestration, air quality and soil health were identified by many stakeholders as being important benefits of nature recovery; health and wellbeing, and ease of public access to nature were also raised, with some emphasis given to access for those living in urban areas and people from less affluent households; farmers and landowners were asked to rank their preferences for delivering public goods on their land, and they showed a strong preference for delivering benefits for thriving plants wildlife first, followed by water, clean air, climate change, mitigation of environmental hazards, and beauty heritage and engagement.

*Activities to help achieve outcomes and benefits:* the restoration or planting of woodland, hedgerows and trees was mentioned by many stakeholders, with participants keen to see appropriate planting across Buckinghamshire, including in urban areas; Several species were highlighted as being important (e.g., black poplar and water vole), and farmers repeatedly referenced the need to monitor these species and habitats to assess current stocks and to evaluate success; Farmers described the need for more effective soil management to create a better organic matter profile to support water and carbon absorption, as well as improved flood management; Engagement, especially with the farming community and youth groups, was viewed as an important activity to help support outcomes and benefits; environmental land management of agricultural land was a recurring theme, with stakeholders supportive of programmes that were accessible for farmers and effective for nature recovery.

This report shares an initial summary of the stakeholder engagement only. Currently the PAT are processing all stakeholder data, along with baseline environmental data and existing policies and plans, to generate a Statement of Biodiversity Priorities, which will inform the design of a Local Habitat Map (two key LNRS Pilot outputs). The draft outputs will be presented to stakeholders for their feedback on mid-May, in a final Bucks LNRS Pilot workshop before the PAT report back the outcomes of the LNRS pilot to Defra.

This report only outlines the stakeholder engagement associated with the LNRS Pilot, for more information about the Buckinghamshire LNRS Pilot itself, please visit our website (<https://bucksmknep.co.uk/nature-strategy/>) or download the [Buckinghamshire Local Nature Recovery Strategy Pilot Overview](#).

We thank everyone for their enthusiasm to engage with the Buckinghamshire LNRS Pilot. Your views are helping us plan a better Buckinghamshire for wildlife and people.

## Introduction

The Buckinghamshire Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) Pilot, is one of five pilots running in England, which has been designed to give a wide range of stakeholders an opportunity to help plan for a better Buckinghamshire for wildlife and people. Ultimately, these local strategies will form part of a national Nature Recovery Network – creating improved, joined-up, wildlife-rich places which will benefit people and wildlife.

During February 2021, the Pilot Area Team (PAT)<sup>1</sup> with the support of independent facilitators 3QK ran a stakeholder engagement process to allow a wide range of stakeholders to have an opportunity to have their say and input into the LNRS Pilot.

The aim of the stakeholder engagement process was two-fold:

1. To inform stakeholders about the Buckinghamshire LNRS Pilot.
2. To gain stakeholder input on three key elements of nature's recovery to be incorporated into the Buckinghamshire LNRS Pilot (outcomes for nature, environmental benefits, and activities to deliver outcomes or benefits).

Over a four-week period in February the PAT hosted:

1. Introductory webinar, open to all stakeholders.
2. Buckinghamshire wide online survey, open to all stakeholders.
3. Farmer, land manager, and forester online survey.
4. Workshops for representatives of Buckinghamshire organisations.
5. Workshops for farmers, land managers and foresters.

We engaged with a total of 358 stakeholders to have their say throughout our stakeholder engagement process, representing: agriculture and land managers, parish and town councils, central government/agencies, conservation organisations, and individuals with a passion for nature in Buckinghamshire.

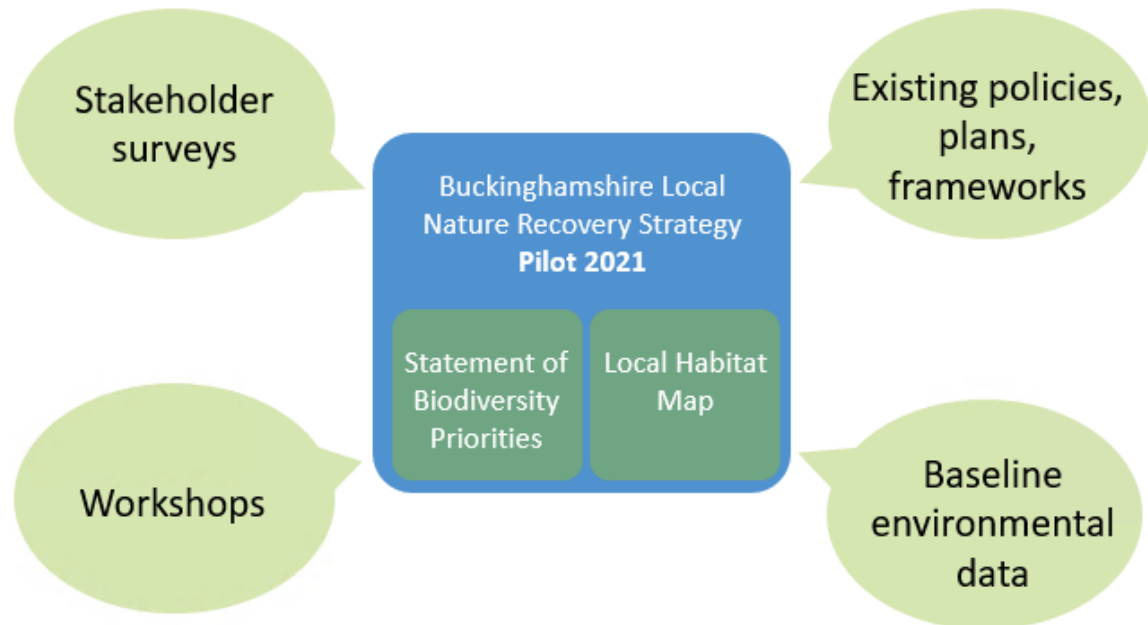
In this report we summarise the approach to each stage of the engagement process, and provide a brief summary of the outcomes of the workshops and surveys.

During April we are working to combining the outcomes of the workshops and surveys, along with baseline environmental data and existing policies and plans, to generate a Statement of Biodiversity Priorities, which will inform the design of a Local Habitat Map (two key LNRS Pilot outputs; Figure 1). These will be produced and presented back to

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<sup>1</sup> The Pilot Area Team is comprised of representatives from the Buckinghamshire Council, Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes Natural Environment Partnership, Natural England, Environment Agency, Forestry Commission, Chilterns Conservation Board, and the Berks, Bucks and Oxon Wildlife Trust.

stakeholders for their feedback on mid-May, in a final Bucks LNRS Pilot workshop before the PAT report back the outcomes of the LNRS pilot to Defra.



*Figure 1. An outline of how stakeholder input from the surveys and workshops are being used in conjunction with existing policies, plans and frameworks, and baseline environmental data to inform the Buckinghamshire LNRS Pilot - Statement of Biodiversity Priorities, and Local Habitat Map.*

Following the pilot, the Buckinghamshire PAT are anticipating to host further consultation with stakeholders in the autumn of 2021, to feed into the implementation of the finalised LNRS in 2022. In the meantime, the information provided by stakeholders presented in this report will help inform significant local activity in Buckinghamshire, such as the design of the Biodiversity Net Gain accounting system, the design of the Environmental Land Management scheme, and the Buckinghamshire Local Plan.

We thank everyone for their enthusiasm to engage with the Buckinghamshire LNRS Pilot. Your views are helping us plan a better Buckinghamshire for wildlife and people!

## Overview of the stakeholder engagement process

The PAT collated a list of stakeholders who represented organisations or people who have an interest or role in the LNRS pilot, or could be impacted by the LNRS pilot. The full list of stakeholders included: landowners and farmers, local interest groups and community organisations, local authorities, town and parish councils, environmental NGOs, Defra agencies and the Chilterns Conservation Board, the Local Nature Partnership, the Local Enterprise Partnership, business support organisations, higher education and research institutions, ecological consultants, water companies and catchment partnerships, together with organisations concerned with recreation and access, health, sustainable tourism and historic environment. Relevant organisations from neighbouring counties were also invited to attend. All identified stakeholders were initially emailed and invited to attend the introductory webinar. Bucks Council social media channels (Twitter, Facebook, and the 'Your Voice Bucks' announcement page) were used to reach a wider network of stakeholders to advertise the introductory webinar. The event was also promoted through PAT members' organisational networks.

Those who registered for the introductory webinar, who were not already on the PAT stakeholder list were added to the main stakeholder list.

Those considered to have a particular contribution to make to the consultation or who showed a particular interest were subsequently included in the Collaborative Development Group stakeholder list and were invited to attend one of the workshops. Following the introductory webinar, stakeholders were predominantly engaged using email, and the Buckinghamshire Council social media channels were used throughout February to remind all stakeholders to fill out the online survey open to all.

The Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes Natural Environment Partnership website was also used to host summary pages and documents about the Buckinghamshire LNRS pilot for all stakeholders to access: <https://bucksmknep.co.uk/nature-strategy/>.

### 1. Introductory webinar

The introductory webinar was held on Friday 5<sup>th</sup> February, and was designed and facilitated by 3KQ, and included presentations by the PAT. During the webinar we provided an overview of the LNRS Pilot, background to Buckinghamshire's natural environment, and an introduction to the stakeholder engagement process. For those who could not attend the [slides from the introductory webinar](#) and [webinar recording](#) were made available after the event.

213 people (including 40 parish council representatives) attended the webinar, following an email invite to 397 people (including 117 parish council representatives), and alerts via the NFU and CLA Buckinghamshire membership and promotion through the Buckinghamshire Council social media channels.

The attendees represented conservation organisations (30%), unitary authorities (16%), parish or town councils (20%), agriculture/land management representatives (11%), central government/agencies (e.g. NE, FC, DEFRA) (7%), and independents /other (15%; Figure 2).

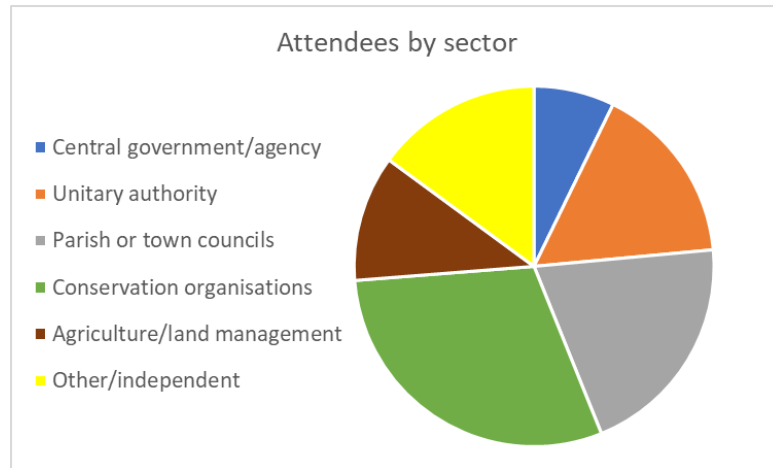


Figure 2. Webinar attendees divided by sector

Following the webinar all stakeholders were provided with background information to the LNRS pilot, Buckinghamshire’s nature, and the stakeholder engagement process including:

- [Buckinghamshire Local Nature Recovery Strategy Pilot Overview](#)
- [A Summary of Buckinghamshire's Nature](#)
- [Stakeholder Discussion Pack](#)

Feedback from webinar participants was very positive, with 88% of participants clear on how they could be further involved, and 85% said they found the meeting useful.

A quote from a participant after the webinar *“Great presentations and to see such enthusiasm, expertise and willingness to get involved from so many people and organisations. I think DEFRA choose well when it decided to focus on Bucks as one of its five pilots!”*

## 2. Buckinghamshire wide online survey

All stakeholders were invited to take part in the online survey during February, which closed on 26<sup>th</sup> February. The weblink to the survey was first publicised on the 5<sup>th</sup> February, and ran until the 26<sup>th</sup> February 2021. 89 individuals responded to the survey – 9 of these also attended a workshop.

The survey questions asked participants:

1. What do you like about nature in Buckinghamshire?
2. Why is nature in Buckinghamshire important to you?



3. What parts of nature would you like to see recovered or improved over the next 25 years?
4. To achieve this recovery, what are the actions that need to happen over the next 2-5 years?
5. Do you want to tell us anything else?

### **3. Farmer, land manager, and forester online survey**

A survey was set up specifically for farmers, land managers or those who work in the agricultural sector. The weblink to the survey was first publicised on the 5<sup>th</sup> February, and ran until the 26<sup>th</sup> February 2021. 42 individuals responded to the survey.

The survey link was also circulated via the CLA and NFU to their Buckinghamshire membership, and also through the main Bucks social media channels and email to all stakeholders.

The survey questions asked participants:

1. What nature is on your farm or in the local area that you value most highly?
2. What elements of nature on your farm or in the local area would you like to see recovered over the next 25 years?
3. Why are these important to you?
4. To achieve this recovery what are the actions that need to happen over the next 2-5 years?
5. E.L.M (Environmental Land Management) will be providing public money for the provision of a range of public goods. These are listed below. We'd like to know how important you think they are for your farm and your local area. Please rank according to importance.
6. The E.L.M Local Nature Recovery Component is focussed on the delivery of locally-targeted environmental goals. In your view how is the identification of these goals best achieved?
7. How would it be possible to deliver these goals?
8. What are the biggest influences on your capacity to deliver these elements of nature or public goods?
9. What type of farm do you work on?
10. Are you a landowner, tenant, contract farmer or other?
11. What size of land holding does your farm occupy?

#### 4. Workshops for representatives of Buckinghamshire organisations

With our facilitators, 3KQ, we ran a series of three online workshops during February (12<sup>th</sup>, 17<sup>th</sup>, and 22<sup>nd</sup>). The workshops were by invite only, and invited stakeholders represented the following groups: agriculture and land managers, parish and town councils, central government/agencies, conservation organisations, and other individuals (e.g. involved in recorder groups).

275 people were invited to the workshops by email and were asked to register via a Zoom link for one of three dates. The invitees comprised all attendees of the webinar, plus any members identified as being priority invitees who had not attended the webinar.

76 people attended the workshops (Workshop 1: 17 people; Workshop 2: 26 people, Workshop 3: 33 people). The first two workshops took place in the morning (10.00-12.30) but a decision was made to vary the timing of the third workshop to a late afternoon slot (15.00-17.30) to allow for those, particularly in the farming and student communities, who might prefer this. The third workshop did attract the most participants, but it is not clear whether this was due to the timing or the fact that invitees had the longest notice period for this workshop.

The participants could broadly be divided into conservation organisation (27%) central government/agency (e.g. NE, FC, DEFRA) (15%), parish or town council (14%), unitary authority (10%), commercial (4%), agriculture/land management representatives (2%) and other (10%; Figure 3). 19% of the participants did not identify which sector they belonged to.

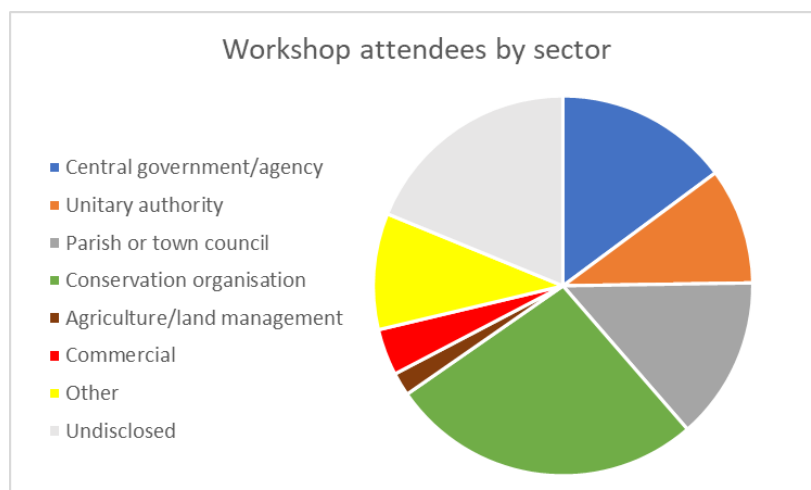


Figure 3. Total workshop attendees divided by sector

The largest discrepancy in representatives attending the workshops compared with the webinar was in the lower representation of people in the farmer/landowner/agricultural

category. However, this can be explained by the fact that a separate series of workshops specifically aimed for this group (see section 5 below).

Each workshop was identical in format, ran for duration of 2.5 hours, and was run on Zoom with break out rooms. All participants also used a Concept Board during the breakout groups to answer the three questions posed to them ([Workshop 1](#), [Workshop 2](#), [Workshop 3](#); these can all be viewed by readers by logging in through the 'Guest access'). At the workshops we sought representatives and their organisations perspectives on nature's recovery.

To frame the workshop discussion with participants we introduced the proposed overarching ambition of the strategy:

*The Buckinghamshire LNRS aims to support nature's recovery by creating more, bigger, better and joined-up habitats across Buckinghamshire and deliver wider nature-based environmental benefits over the next 25 years*

We also explained that duration of the strategy is 25 years, and this will be reviewed or updated every 5 years, focusing on priority activities that can begin to support the recovery or improvement of the agreed environmental priorities.

Participants were asked three questions:

1. What outcomes for nature do you want to see achieved in Buckinghamshire over the next 25 years?
2. What environmental benefits (like carbon sequestration, and flood mitigation) you want to see delivered over the next 25 years?
3. What activities do you think need to take place over the next 2 – 5 years to begin to achieve these outcomes or benefits?

During the workshop introduction, the facilitators provided some examples to help start participants begin to answer these questions.

1. Examples of outcomes for nature:
  - More lowland mixed deciduous woodland
  - Greater connectivity between chalk grassland
  - Increased abundance of dormice
  - Increased condition and extent of hedgerows
  - Increase insect abundance and diversity
2. Examples of environmental benefits:
  - More carbon sequestration
  - Improved natural flood mitigation
  - Greater pollination of crops
  - Greater access to nature
  - Improved wellbeing of community X through greater access to nature

3. Examples of activities to achieve the outcomes and benefits:

- Plant trees
- Restore chalk grassland
- Create wet grassland
- Create new hedgerows
- Enhance wildflower road verges
- Species re-introduction programme for species X

During the breakout groups, participants worked their way around the Concept Board with a facilitator and note taker, answering the three questions for four regions across Buckinghamshire: Aylesbury Vale, North Buckinghamshire, Thames Valley, and Chilterns (see Figure 4).

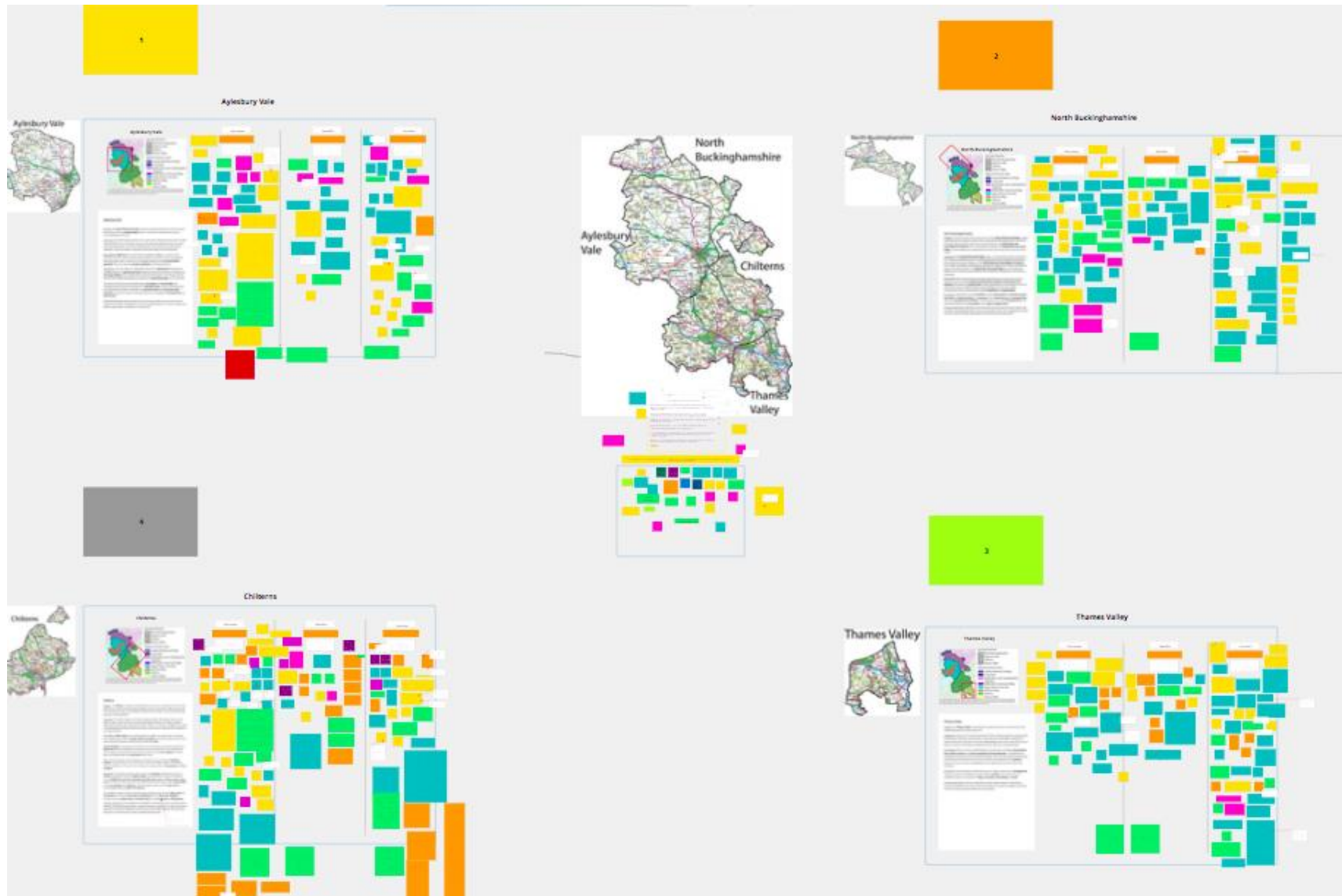


Figure 4. An overview of the Concept Board used during each workshop, showing coloured post-it notes filled out by participants answering the 3 questions for each of the four regions in Buckinghamshire. This concept board can be viewed here: [Workshop 3 Concept Board](#).

The majority of stakeholders got to grips with this technology very well, and the feedback on how they experienced Zoom and Concept Board was mostly excellent. It worked well as a way of capturing live thoughts, and providing a platform to view them after the event. A small number of people found it hard to participate with the technology, and assistance was offered to them during the workshop to help overcome any technical issues. There were no more than 6 people who experienced technical issues across all three workshops. Most of them were still able to participate because facilitators took notes for them; and some took advantage of the training sessions offered by 3KQ, or came to the practice boards. The fact that the boards were left open for 5 working days afterwards also enabled people to participate.

At the completion of the workshop all participants joined a full group discussion, where they were asked:

- LNRS ambition - do you think this is ambitious enough?
- What common themes did you see emerging from your breakout group discussions?
- How useful did you find the workshop?

These questions were used to gauge participants thoughts on the workshop and the content provided, and to help evaluate the workshop.

Feedback from the workshops was very positive with between 96 – 100% of participants saying they found each workshop useful, and 95 – 100% of participants agreeing that they were able to contribute to each workshop.

Quote from a participant after Workshop 1 *“Thanks for a very interesting workshop, I thought it worked very well despite a few technological issues initially. I might add that it was the first time I had used Concept board and, apart from a few teething problems I thought it worked really well.”* HR

Quote from a participant after Workshop 2 *“Concept board good. Looking forward to seeing this all progress :-)”* ED

Quote from a participant after Workshop 3 *“Very good use of the two tools together, and appreciated the strong facilitation.”* LC

## **5. Workshops for farmers, land managers and foresters**

The Natural England Environmental Land Management (E.L.M.) Convener for the Buckinghamshire Pilot ran a series of eight workshops with farmers and farm advisers, which were delivered between 16<sup>th</sup> February and 5<sup>th</sup> March. A total of 68 farmers, farm advisers and agents attended these workshops. Four of the workshops were with farmer groups, one with land managers, two with different groups of farm advisers and one with a

focus on access, education and recreation. The farmer groups were split evenly between clusters in the area and tenant farmer groups.

Each workshop lasted an hour and a half and a note taker from the convener or LNRS pilot team provided support. They were run with smaller groups between 5 and 20 and involved a thorough introduction to LNRS and the Local Nature Recovery Scheme providing environmental land management.

The workshops were delivered using a focussed conversation method for which questions were developed to help the conversation flow organically. Though the discussions reaped similar responses, the questions and the sequence they were asked altered according to the focus of the conversations. However, they were broken down into four segments:

1. Objective questions – such as What nature important to you is on your farm or the local area? What do you understand the LNRS to be? What would you like to see recovered on your farm or in your local area and why is it important to you?
2. Reflective questions – such as Can the LNRS process serve to capture and reflect farmer priorities and integrate them into E.L.M? What public goods are your top priority?
3. Interpretive questions – such as How best can priorities be decided and delivered at a landscape scale? How can LNRS be adapted to help enshrine your priorities and ensure E.L.M is successful?
4. Decisional questions – such as What actions do you need to take over the next 2-5 years to help deliver your priorities? What do you need to help achieve this? What do the LNRS team need to do to ensure Local Nature Recovery component is successful?

The sessions were delivered using Zoom and PowerPoint to avoid technical issues that farmers often face with broadband issues. There were minor elements of interaction such as using the Zoom annotation tool (Figures 5 and 6). As can be seen in the Figure 5, the benefits were categorised according to those detailed in the 25 Year Environment Plan (YEP) and the Agricultural Transition Plan (ATP).

What environmental benefits do you want to see delivered over the next 25 years?

NATURAL ENGLAND



Figure 5. Annotated slide from the Chilterns Cluster Workshop where farmers identified which public goods they rated then highest.

All participants rated the workshops highly with 100% of responders saying they were ‘very satisfied’ or ‘satisfied’ (across a 5-point scale). An example of this rating can be seen in figure 6 below.

How have you found the workshop?

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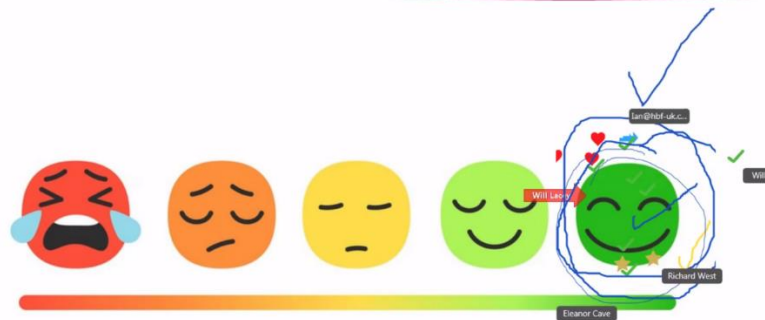


Figure 6. Annotated slide from the Chilterns Cluster Workshop showing responses when the attendees were asked to rate the session.



## Summary of the outcomes from the stakeholder engagement process

The outcomes of the stakeholder workshops and surveys are summarised below.

We have collated stakeholder responses to the following three key questions:

1. Outcomes for nature: What outcomes for nature do you want to see achieved in Buckinghamshire over the next 25 years?
2. Environmental Benefits: What environmental benefits (like carbon sequestration, and flood mitigation) you want to see delivered over the next 25 years?
3. Activities: What activities do you think need to take place over the next 2 – 5 years to begin to achieve these outcomes or benefits?

Please remember that this report is only outlining a brief summary of the outcomes of the workshops and surveys. During April we are working to combining the outcomes of the workshops and surveys, along with baseline environmental data and existing policies and plans, to generate a Statement of Biodiversity Priorities, which will inform the design of a Local Habitat Map (two key LNRS Pilot outputs). The draft outputs will be presented to stakeholders for their feedback on mid-May, in a final Bucks LNRS Pilot workshop before the PAT report back the outcomes of the LNRS pilot to Defra.

### Outcomes for nature

During the workshops for Buckinghamshire organisations, a total of 600 separate outcomes were written by participants as sticky notes on the online Concept boards (Figure 7). An additional 92 responses were obtained from the online survey in response to questions 1 – 3 (Figure 8). The farmer survey and workshops produced a similarly large array of responses (Figure 9).

Many stakeholders wanted to see an increase in biodiversity, and the protection and enhancement of key habitats in Buckinghamshire, including woodland, hedgerows, chalk streams, and chalk grassland (Figures 7 and 8). One farmer identified ‘smaller bits of nature’ as being key to recovery and many echoed this by identifying invertebrates, bacteria, fungi, pollinators all being a high priority. Many also identified larger species (especially birds) as being a high priority (Figure 9). Hedgerows were often mentioned by farmers as being fundamental to nature and landscape, whilst ponds were also seen as a key outcome for biodiversity.

When asked why the species and habitats identified as key outcomes were important farmers responded variously but the two following quotes summarise the views: *“They should be important to everyone”*; *“Lots of birds mean you’re doing something right”*.

Soils were a prominent feature of the vast majority of farmer outcomes (Figure 9). Soil underpins everything that farmers are doing to produce food and to help support nature.







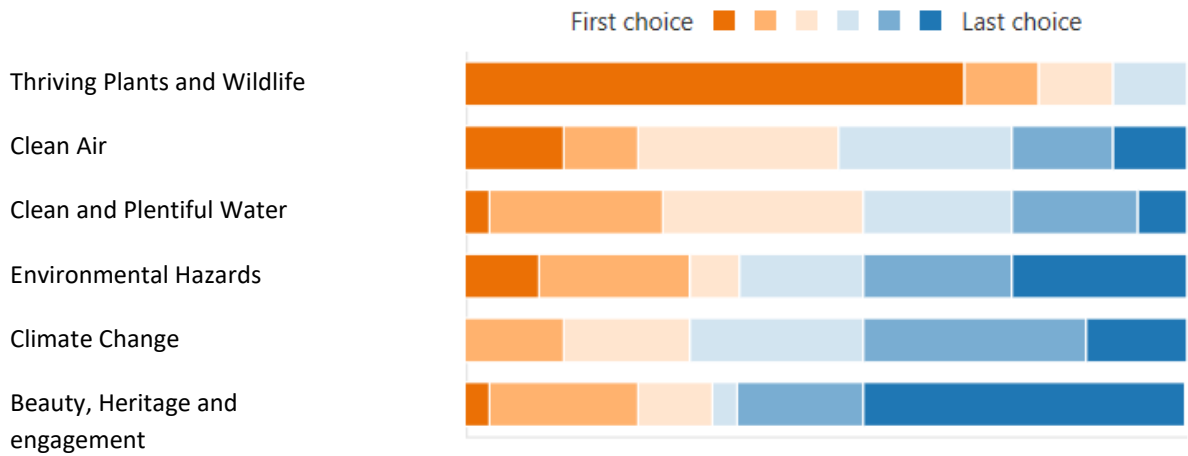


Figure 11. A chart showing the ranking by respondents to the farmer survey for benefits in the categories of “public goods” detailed in the Agricultural Transition Plan and the 25YEP.

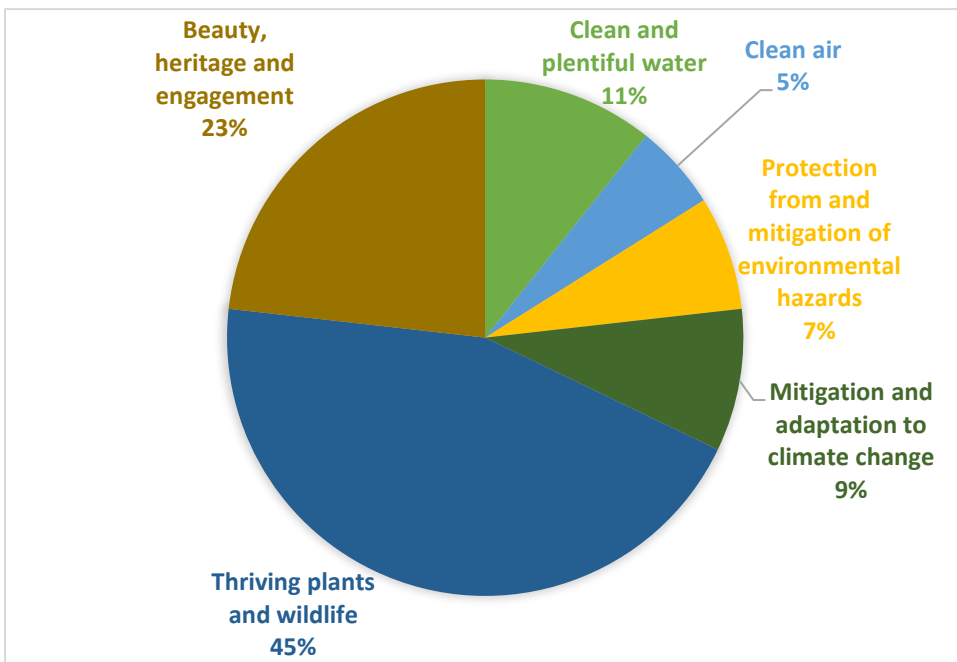


Figure 12. The preferences farmers expressed in workshops regarding the public goods they would like to see on their farms or in the local area.

## Activities

During the workshops for Buckinghamshire organisations, a total of 492 activities were suggested by stakeholders (Figure 13), and the online survey an additional 90 responses to the question about activities were provided (Figure 14). The farmer workshops and surveys

produced a similar collection of responses regarding measures for recovery. With 'Manage' being central in both word clouds (Figure 15) it shows that we need to be proactive and take land under improved management.

The restoration or planting of woodland, hedgerows and trees again featured highly in this section, with participants keen to see appropriate planting, including in urban areas (Figures 13 – 15). Hedge planting and management was a hot topic for farmers and they view the successful restoration of nature in England as being intrinsically linked with well-managed, species rich hedgerows (Figure 15). Several individual species were highlighted as being important in Buckinghamshire, including black poplar and water vole. Farmers repeatedly referenced the need to monitor these species and habitats to assess current stocks and to evaluate success.

Although habitat creation, maintenance and restoration featured strongly in the list of measures for nature recovery, there was an emphasis too on engagement, especially with the farming community and youth groups (Figure 15). Farmers heavily favour actions around engagement with farmers and the general public. They saw a significant need to educate the public in farming activities, wildlife and the Countryside Code. They also identified collaborative working and advice as being fundamental to the success of recovery across the landscape.

On more holistic features, farmers described the need for more effective soil management to create a better organic matter profile to support water and carbon absorption, as well as improved flood management. The views around how to solve it varied and farmers variously sought more 'space for water' payments, better in channel management, NFM and more traditional management to encourage naturalized flood plains along with wetland restoration.

Environmental land management schemes were a recurring theme, with stakeholders supportive of programmes that were accessible for farmers and effective for nature recovery. Farmers also emphasised the need for pest management to ensure the preservation of habitats and species, which is a unique focus for farmers who experience the business end of land management on a daily basis.







## **Other common themes or questions arising from the stakeholder engagement process**

### Heritage and beauty

Farmers, despite ranking it in the lowest benefit category did repeatedly reference the historic environment. Historic buildings, parkland and floodplain meadows were all discussed as significant elements of the natural environment. Furthermore, other features of landscape significance were outlined as of priority for farmers from across the spectrum of discussions. Hedgerows were most often associated with landscape character as was woodland and chalk down land in the Chilterns. They were viewed as significant for their offering to biodiversity but also for their cultural value.

### Education

Education of young people and the general public was viewed by farmers as a significant area for improvements and opportunities. By ensuring children have stronger connections and an understanding of nature through curriculum and extra-curricular education, the likelihood of them protecting and enhancing them is seen as higher. They will also help educate their parents in the countryside which is viewed as the most prominent issue facing Buckinghamshire, especially over the last year. The damage done by those without an understanding of the countryside has been both disheartening to the farming community as well as costly. More should be done to connect and educate people to nature and land management.

### County boundary concerns

Several stakeholders raised the issue of nature not respecting county boundaries, and questioned whether the Buckinghamshire pilot was going to address this, especially as it is a long, thin county with a lot of county boundary habitats.

PAT members explained that this was a key part of the pilot process, and that two of the northern county pilots (Cumbria and Northumberland) were adjacent to each other, in the hope that lessons could be learnt. The LNRSs will all feed into a national Nature Recovery Network, to ensure that boundaries do not disadvantage nature recovery.

### Existing threats from development

Another recurring theme was the negative impact of development on nature, including HS2 and large-scale house building. Before there could be any form of recovery, it was felt that present threats should be addressed, and developers engaged more proactively in the process.

Members of the PAT explained that there is a mandate for biodiversity net gain (BNG) in the new Environment Bill so all development will have to deliver a minimum of 10% BNG. The LNRS will guide the investment of biodiversity net gain payments. Buckinghamshire is consulting on this ahead of the Environment Bill, so hopefully will see benefits even sooner than the legislation dictates. The PAT agreed to engage with developers more in the next phase of the LNRS.

#### Lack of data

It was felt that some less-studied habitats and species might be disadvantaged in the LNRS process due to insufficient survey data. Novel technologies such as LIDAR and other satellite surveys were mentioned as possible ways of addressing this, but it was felt that some species would still be overlooked using these methods. Further to this, farmers felt that there was a general lack of data even with more well studied species and habitats. Improving the network of surveyors as well as training farmers and others closely related to their land to undertake surveys could offer significant opportunity.

#### Engagement with landowners

Several stakeholders felt that the success of the LNRS would be dependent on whether landowners and managers were motivated to engage with it. It was thought that including inspirational farmer engagement programmes was vital for the success of the strategy. Farmers felt strongly that this was the case and that the strategic planning and implementation of nature recovery needs to be done with farmers. Furthermore, they felt that collaboration across the landscape had declined and that the tensions that now exist between those conservation NGOs and farmers is a remnant of the lack of advisers and facilitators filling that space. Local collaboration is essential for success. The mode and language of communication was discussed as being integral to successful engagement for farmers. There needs to be an understanding that farmers are the end users for many of these strategies and adapt out communication accordingly.

#### Access and respect for nature

The importance of allowing people easy access to nature, whilst protecting it from negative impacts of human disturbance, was a recurring theme in the workshops. This highlights the importance of careful planning of access areas, and education campaigns. Some farmers felt that land closer to urban areas should be adapted more heavily to offer nature recovery and access to nature. These areas would be less productive and more targeted for LNRS and future and management schemes. On the flip side they also showed preference for those farms outside of those areas to be encouraged to focus on production.

## Re-wilding

Allowing areas to return to a more natural state, without antagonising farmers and land managers, was considered by several stakeholders as a key role for the LNRS. Several farmers viewed rewilding as having real potential, but many others saw the threats that exist for tenant farmers especially in extensive recovery programmes.