

DERBYSHIRE LOCAL NATURE RECOVERY STRATEGY

RESULTS OF THE PUBLIC CONSULTATION SURVEY 2025 REPORT

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1** This report analyses results of the *public consultation survey for the draft Derbyshire Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS)* which took place between 14th of February and 20th of March 2025. The report examines the public opinion about the content, process, impact and implementation of Derbyshire LNRS.
- 1.2** A total of **786** individuals accessed the public consultation survey and **87%** of them or **683** individuals consented to survey participation and data use for LNRS development and research.
- 1.3** Over **60%** of the respondents agreed that the draft LNRS created a helpful set of priorities and actions for nature recovery in Derbyshire. Three quarters or **76%** of survey respondents agreed with the proposed Derbyshire LNRS vision.
- 1.4** The highest level of importance was assigned to the *Rivers, River Corridors and Waterways* LNRS priority theme at **93%** of importance scoring. This is followed by *Woodlands and Trees* at **92%**; *Upland Moorland and Lowland Heath*, and *Grassland* priority themes attracting importance scoring of **85%** each.
- 1.5** *Capacity building for LNRS implementation* is one of the main challenges identified by the public; this includes resourcing of LNRS delivery teams at various council levels, securing grant support and dedicated budgets for LNRS initiatives, region-wide awareness raising campaign, LNRS-targeted learning, knowledge and skills development.
- 1.6** *Establishing consensus and fostering collaboration* were key features in developing Derbyshire LNRS which generated invaluable insights about stakeholder attitudes to nature, connection with nature, and willingness to engage with nature recovery and conservation.
- 1.7** *A stronger policy coherence at national and regional levels* is one of the enablers for successful LNRS implementation.
- 1.8** *Evidence-based insights* are key to securing multi-stakeholder buy-in and credibility of the LNRS process.
- 1.9** The LNRS process was praised by the public for a *much-needed attention to nature recovery in Derbyshire*. It is deemed to be well-timed, thorough and impactful work which is expected to deliver tangible environmental and societal benefits over the next 5 years.
- 1.10** The report recommends securing *dedicated funding and resourcing* for LNRS delivery; *use of digital technology* to support LNRS implementation and impact; and *application of a place-based approach* to LNRS implementation where policy, business and public stakeholders are empowered to collaborate for the enrichment of Derby and Derbyshire's natural capital.

INTRODUCTION

Derbyshire Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) sets a long-term plan for nature recovery and is specific to the county of Derbyshire and the city of Derby (Derbyshire County Council, 2024).

Local Nature Recovery Strategies are a new system of plans for nature and environmental improvement across England. The purpose of these plans is to establish priorities and proposals to help nature to thrive and provide wider environmental benefits in the future (Defra, 2023). Derbyshire LNRS is formed and delivered in partnership with a range of organisations as well as local people.

The purpose of this report is to present analysis of the LNRS public consultation survey and to develop findings and recommendations to support finalisation of the Derbyshire LNRS. The report informs the implementation phase of the LNRS including identification of challenges and enablers for successful LNRS delivery in Derby and Derbyshire over the next five years.

The report is structured into the following five sections:

- SECTION 1: SURVEY RESPONSES, METHODOLOGY AND RESPONDENTS
- SECTION 2: OVERALL QUALITY OF THE DRAFT LNRS
- SECTION 3: PUBLIC RESPONSES ON LNRS PRIORITY THEMES AND MEASURES
- SECTION 4: THEMATIC ANALYSIS OF THE OVERALL LNRS COMMENTS
- SECTION 5: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

SECTION 1: SURVEY RESPONSES, METHODOLOGY AND RESPONDENTS

The Derbyshire LNRS public consultation survey ran for 5 weeks between 14th February and 20th March 2025. The consultation was part of the legal requirement for LNRS development where public was asked to comment on the draft strategy, supporting documents and habitat mapping (Defra, 2023).

During that time a total of 786 individuals accessed the survey to participate. Out of them, 683 individuals comprising 87% of survey respondents consented to use of information they provided for reporting and research purposes. Different survey sections attracted different numbers of responses fluctuating between 683 and 108 responses per given question.

1.1 Research process and data analysis methodology

Survey design: The survey design was informed by the earlier Nature survey conducted in August-September 2024 as part of the Derbyshire LNRS development process. Over 1000 responses to the Nature survey provided a baseline of public attitudes on connection with nature, concerns over nature depletion, attitudes to nature restoration and priority areas for LNRS. Alongside the insights from the Nature survey, the Public Consultation survey drawn on the latest Derbyshire LNRS draft particularly in relation to LNRS priority areas and measures. The survey design team recognised that knowledge on LNRS varied greatly across the population, thus the decision was made to have four parts in the survey design:

- **Part 1:** Information about LNRS and survey, and seeking informed consent
- **Part 2:** High level responses on the quality of the draft LNRS and the supporting documents.
- **Part 3:** In depth questioning per LNRS priority area and associated measures.
- **Part 4:** Socio-demographic characteristics

Such survey design allowed for greater engagement from the public depending on level of understanding and willingness to contribute to the LNRS process. This design yielded a final sample of 680 participants after removing responses of respondents under 18 years of age (Table1).

Sampling and Distribution: The study deployed simple random sampling design targeting adults (18 years of age and older) residing in Derby and Derbyshire. The survey was made accessible to public on Derbyshire LNRS website and promoted through council and university press releases as well as social media communication channels such as Twitter, LinkedIn and Facebook. A total of 683 consenting responses were achieved and after removal of three under 18 years of age responses, the final response rate achieved was 680 responses.

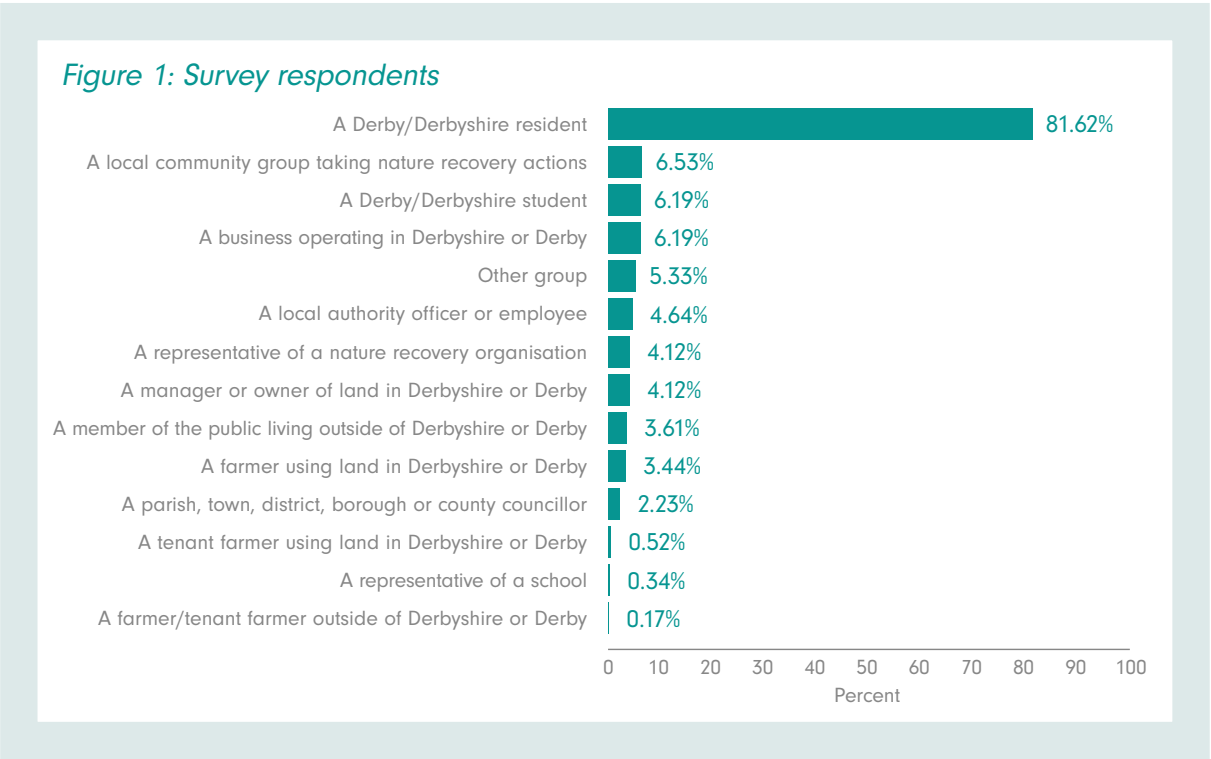
Table 1: Technical summary

Population	Population aged 18 years and older residing in Derby and Derbyshire. Population size is 863,363 ¹
Sampling frame	All adult population in Derby and Derbyshire
Response rate achieved	680, if excluding under 18 years of age responses
Mode of Application	Survey design and distribution was supported by the Qualtrics XM platform.
Application Period	14th February and 20th March 2025

Data analysis: Data quality was ensured through checks for out-of-range values, nonsensical or inconsistent responses, and other typical data cleaning procedures. Open-ended responses, where applicable, were analysed thematically by three team members to categorize them into broader themes for reporting (Section 4 of this report). Descriptive statistics were computed on the quality-checked dataset without imputation. For categorical variables, frequency tables, percentages, and bar charts were generated, such as Twitter, LinkedIn and Facebook. A total of 683 consenting responses were achieved and after removal of three under 18 years of age responses, the final response rate achieved was 680 responses.

1.2 Location of survey respondents

Over 80% of the survey respondents were residents of Derby and Derbyshire. Additionally, there were 38 (7%) representatives from the local community groups taking nature recovery actions, 36 (6%) responses were from students and another 36 (6%) respondents declared they were from businesses operating in Derby and Derbyshire. The lowest level of representation in the survey responses was from schools and farming community in Derby and Derbyshire.



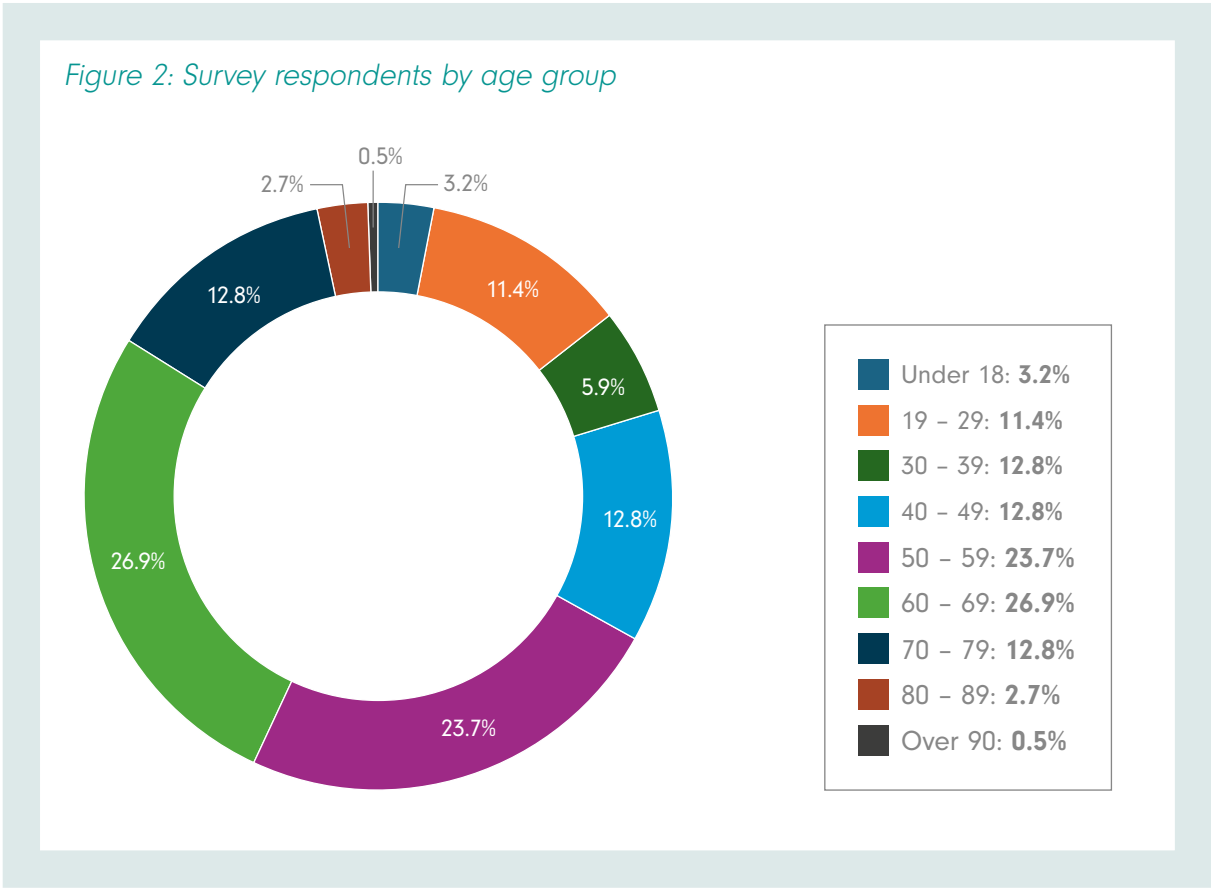
The respondents who chose ‘other’ category stated they were representing various national nature conservation bodies including British Horse Society, Butterfly Conservation, National Trails UK and Floodplain Meadows Partnership. There were representatives from Derbyshire Ornithological Society, Derbyshire Wildlife Trust and Derbyshire CPRE - the Countryside Charity. Local nature conservation groups and communities including Chesterfield Canal Trust, Chesterfield Climate Alliance and Save Matlock Forest Campaign were also among the survey respondents.

1.3 Socio-demographic characteristics

The age breakdown of survey respondents shows that the largest proportion of the respondents at 27% were in their 60s which was closely followed by the 50s age group representing 24% of the survey responses (Figure 2). These two age groups accounted for over half of survey responses. The respondents from 70s and 30s age group have equal contribution of 13% of survey responses.

In terms of gender, over a half of survey respondents or 57% were female, 34% were male and 9% of respondents preferred not to disclose their gender. Regarding sexual orientation, 75% of respondents declared their sexuality as straight or heterosexual and 13% preferred not to disclose their sexual orientation. Only 4% of respondents declared to be gay or lesbian and 3% identified as bisexual.

When it comes to disability disclosure, 73% of survey respondents said they have no disability and 19% declared some form of disability whilst only 8% preferred not to say.

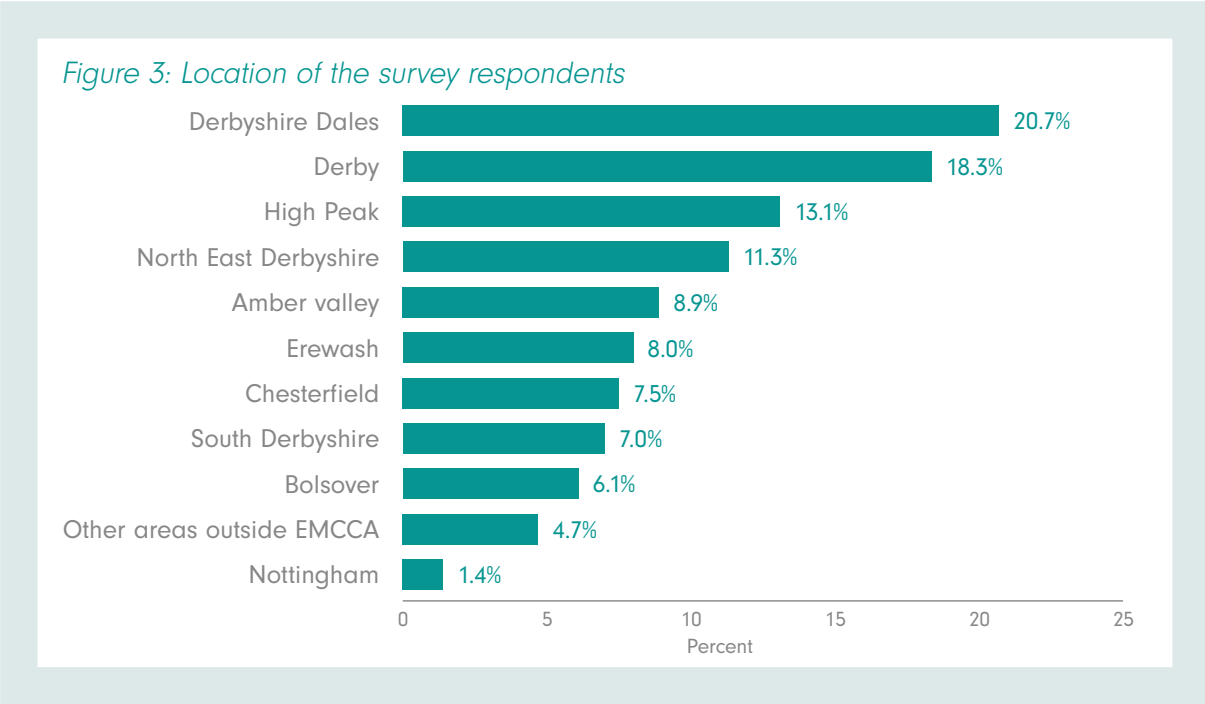


¹ 2023 Mid-Year Population Estimates, [Population and Households - Derbyshire Observatory](#) Derbyshire Observatory 2025.

Regarding ethnicity of survey respondents: 88% of respondents were identified as White; 10% of respondents preferred not to say; 1% stated they were Asian or Asian British, and 1% choose ‘other’ category to state their ethnicity or ethnic background. The sample is representative of the of the Derbyshire population where the gender balance was reported as 51% of females and 49% of males in 2023 (Derbyshire observatory, 2025). People in White ethnic groups make up most of the population in both Derby (73.8%) and Derbyshire (96.3%). The 2021 census estimated there were 52,574 Asian or Asian British people in Derby and Derbyshire comprising 5.1% of the population. There were 14,567 Black or Black British people in Derby and Derbyshire representing 1.4% of the population in 2021 (ONS, 2022).

In terms of religion belonging, only a third of the survey respondents or 228 individuals decided to state their religion. Of them, 47% of respondents stated as having no religion, 32% stated they were Christian, 15% preferred not to say, 3% said they were Buddhists, and the remaining 3% of survey respondents stated ‘any other religion’.

The public engaged with the survey across Derbyshire accounted for 93% of survey responses, the remaining 7% of the responses came from Nottinghamshire and other counties. Figure 3 outlines the breakdown of survey response by postcode. Residents of Derbyshire Dales has the largest proportion in survey response accounting for 20.7%. City of Derby residents account for 18.3%, other Derbyshire boroughs are represented with High Peak at 13.1% and North East Derbyshire at 11.2% leading boroughs representation. 6.1% of respondents came from outside Derbyshire.



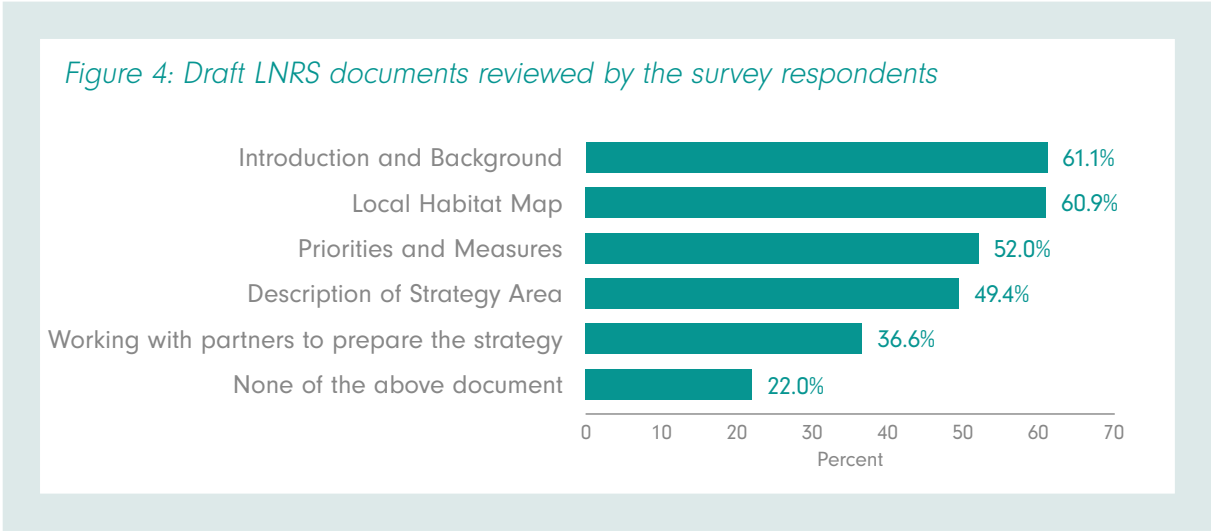
This distribution is broadly representative of the population structure in Derby and Derbyshire where 25% of the residents live in Derby, and 75% in Derbyshire. Derbyshire Dales response level is higher than expected at 20.7% whilst the district accounts only for 7% of the Derbyshire population. Some areas returned lower than expected responses when compared with population representation for examples Amber Valley returned 9% response rate whilst accounting for 12% of the county population (ONS, 2023).

SECTION 2: OVERALL QUALITY OF THE DRAFT LNRS

The first five questions of the survey asked respondents to comment on the overall quality of the Draft of the Derbyshire Local Nature Recovery Strategy put forward for public consultation. The mean response number for these questions was 346. The detailed analysis per these questions is presented below.

2.1 LNRS documents reviewed

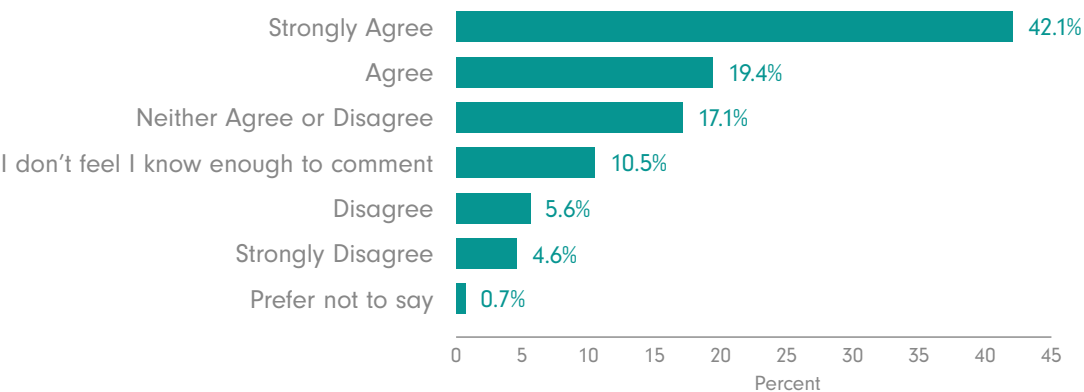
One of the first survey questions asked about which draft LNRS documents were reviewed by respondents as a part of the public consultation. The most reviewed LNRS documents were Introduction and Background and Local Habitat Map which were accessed by more than 60% of respondents. The Priorities and Measures section was reviewed by over half of respondents. “Description of Strategy Area” was reviewed by just under half of survey respondents and “Working with Partners to Prepare the Strategy” was reviewed by the least number of survey respondents at 37%. 22% of survey respondents did not review any of the draft LNRS documents (Figure 4).



2.2 Quality of the draft LNRS

Question 3 related to the quality of the draft LNRS. The responses are presented in Figure 5. Over 60% of respondents agreed (42% agreed and 19% strongly agreed) that the draft LNRS created a helpful set of priorities and actions for nature recovery in Derbyshire. About 17% of respondents stated they did not know enough to comment on the draft LNRS whereas 11% were undecided. Only 6% of respondents disagreed and 5% strongly disagreed that the draft Derbyshire LNRS documents were helpful for nature recovery.

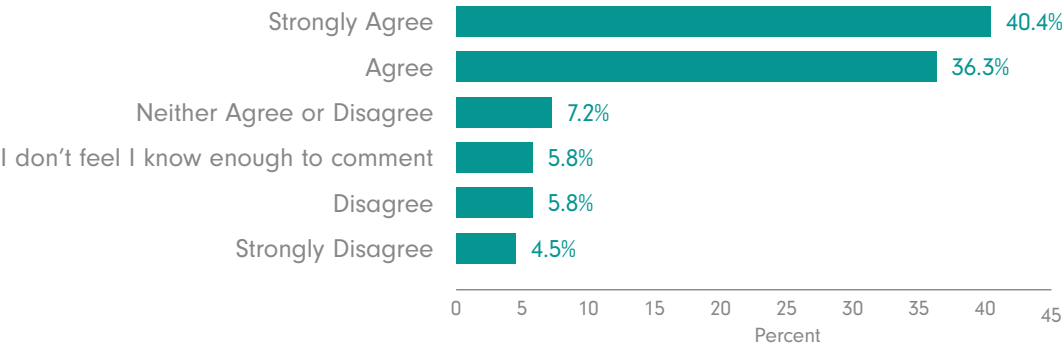
Figure 5: Quality of LNRS documentation



2.3 Derbyshire LNRS vision

The draft LNRS put forward a vision statement that represents the aspiration and ambition of the nature recovery strategy. Derbyshire LNRS vision is *to work together to deliver a thriving natural environment for Derbyshire and Derby, with bigger, better, more joined up wildlife sites for the benefit of all.*

Figure 6: Level of agreement on draft LNRS vision

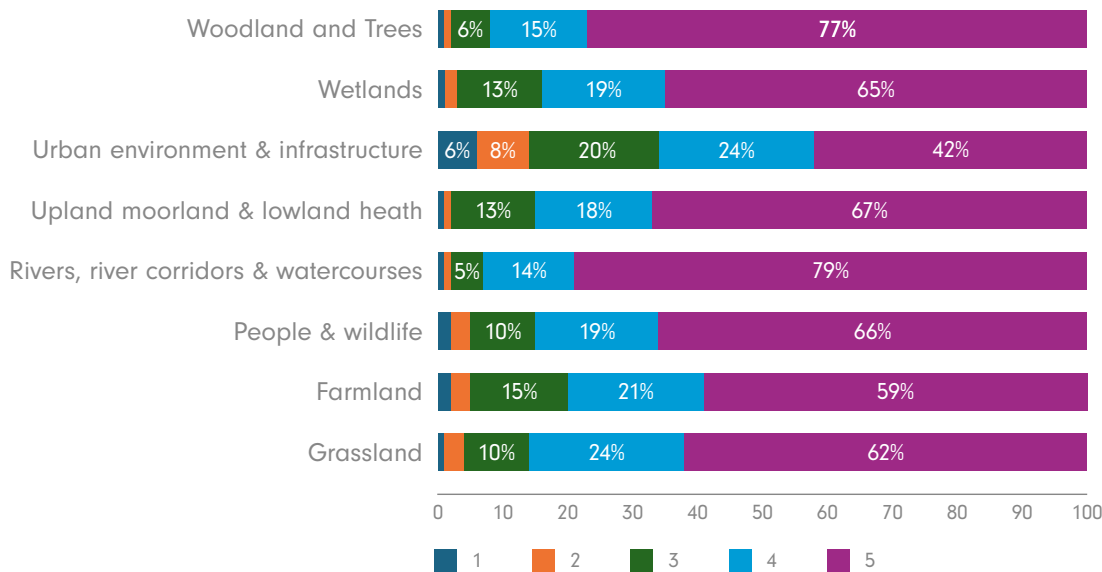


About 40% of respondents strongly agreed and 36% agreed with the proposed Derbyshire LNRS vision comprising an aggregate agreement of 76%. Only 7% of respondents were undecided, 6% did not know enough to comment on the vision statement and 6% disagreed and just 4% strongly disagreed with the draft LNRS vision statement.

2.4 LNRS priority themes

Respondents were asked to state the level of importance of the eight priority themes for nature recovery in Derbyshire. The results suggest that the highest priority assigned by the public for nature recovery in Derbyshire is *Rivers, river corridors and waterways* attracting a combined 93% with 4- and 5-star scoring (Figure 7). This is followed by the *Woodlands and Trees* priority area attracting 92% across 4- and 5-star scoring.

Figure 7: Level of importance of LNRS priority themes



The third place is shared by two priority themes - *Upland moorland and lowland heath* and *Grassland* at 85% each. These are closely followed by *People and Wildlife* and *Wetlands* priority themes which attracted 84% of responses in top two scoring categories. The 80% of respondents assigned a high level of importance to *Farmland* as priority for nature recovery in Derbyshire. The priority theme that attracted the least scoring for importance to nature recovery is *Urban environment and infrastructure* at 66% in the 4- and 5-star scoring categories. Although, this is unsurprising as over 75% of survey respondents were from rural areas (Figure 3), there is a growing recognition of convergence of urban-rural approaches in forests restoration (Romanelli et al., 2024) and watercourses (Sarvilinna et al., 2018).

2.5 Providing detailed feedback on LNRS priority themes

The last question in the overarching feedback section was asking if survey respondents wanted to comment on LNRS documents in more detail or finalise the feedback and exit the survey. Among the total respondents, 52% chose to finalise the overall feedback and finish the survey, and 48% chose to provide more detailed feedback on the draft LNRS documentation who then progressed onto a survey section that looked at each of the draft LNRS priorities and measures. The analysis of the public responses for each of the draft LNRS priorities and measures is provided in Section 3 of this report.

SECTION 3: PUBLIC RESPONSES ON LNRS PRIORITY THEMES AND MEASURES

Derbyshire LNRS identified eight priority themes for nature recovery including:

1. Upland Moorland and Lowland Heath

2. Woodland and Trees

3. Grasslands

4. Rivers, river corridors and watercourses

5. Farmland

6. Wetlands

7. Urban Environment

8. People and Wildlife (Draft Derbyshire LNRS, 2025)

An overall assessment of each of the priority themes and measures is presented in Table 1. Four of LNRS priority areas – *Wetlands*, *Upland Moors and Lowland Heath*, *Grasslands*, and *People and Wildlife* – attracted an agreement level of over 70% each to the statement that priority and measures are well developed, and no additional comments and/or necessary amendments required.

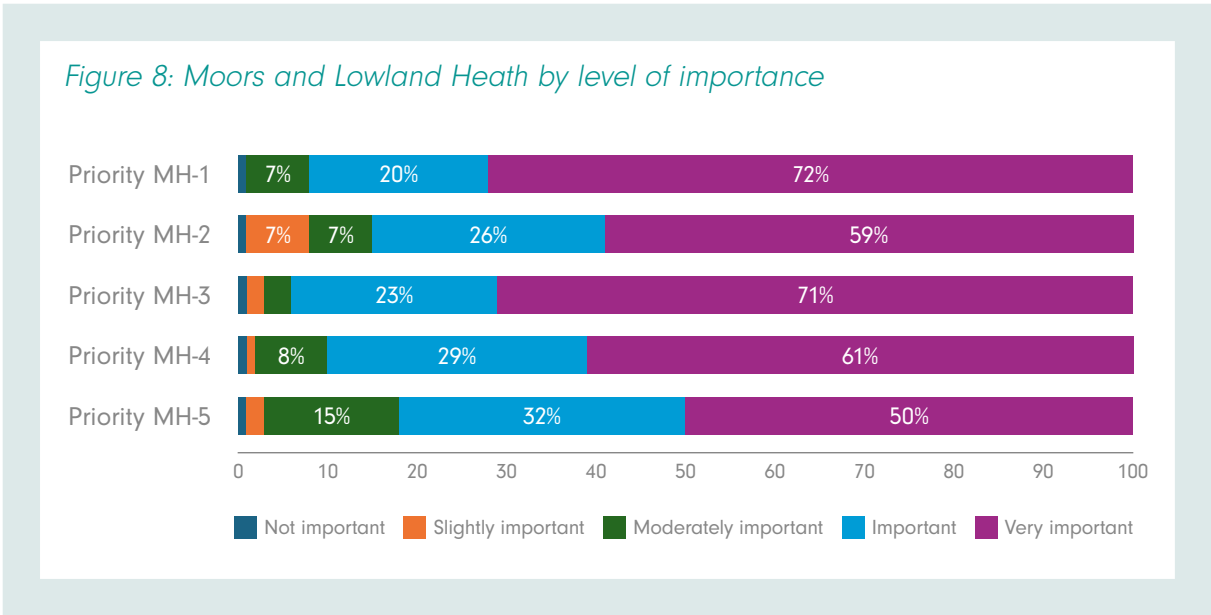
Table 2: An overall assessment of draft LNRS priority themes

LNRS Priority Theme	Priorities and measures are well developed	Something should be added, taken away or I have another comment about the priorities and measures
Wetlands	76.6%	23.4%
Moors and lowland heath	74.4%	25.6%
Grassland	70.8%	29.2%
People and wildlife	70.3%	29.7%
Farmland	67.3%	32.7%
Rivers, river corridors and watercourses	64.9%	35.1%
Urban environment and infrastructure	58.6%	41.4%
Woodland and Trees	54.7%	45.3%

Farmland and Rivers, River corridors and Watercourses were considered well developed by 67% and 65% of respondents respectively. The least well developed but still supported by over a half of respondents are Urban Environment and Infrastructure (59%) and Woodlands and Trees (55%). Details of these priority themes are provided in the forthcoming sections.

3.1 Moors and Lowland Heath

The top two priorities for nature recovery in Moors and Lowland Heath are **Priority MH3** (Improve the condition of upland peatland in the strategy area to support ecological functionality and increase carbon sequestration and natural flood management) and **Priority MH1** (Safeguard and improve the condition of upland moorland habitats and its transitional fringe, including for the benefit of associated breeding birds and other dependent species). Both priorities scored 94% and 92% respectively in ‘Important’ and ‘Very important’ response categories (Figure 8).



Priority MH-4 (Improve abundance of breeding bird species in upland peatland) occupies the third place closely followed by **Priority MH-2** (Expand the upland moorland habitats and its transitional fringe, into appropriate areas where conditions allow, providing expanded habitat for breeding birds and other dependent species). Although the lowest importance was assigned to **Priority MH-5** (Lowland heathland in Derbyshire is safeguarded and well managed, and the resource is expanded wherever appropriate), still over half the respondents thought it was very important for nature recovery in Derbyshire.

Table 3: Public response to Moors and Lowland Heath LNRS theme

Priority number and description	Priorities and measures are well developed
Priority MH-1: Safeguard and improve the condition of upland moorland habitats and its transitional fringe	92%
Priority MH-2: Expand the upland moorland habitats and its transitional fringe	85%
Priority MH-3: Improve the condition of upland peatland in the strategy area	94%
Priority MH-4: Improve abundance of breeding bird species in upland peatland	90%
Priority MH-5: Lowland heathland in Derbyshire is safeguarded and well managed, and the resource is expanded	85%

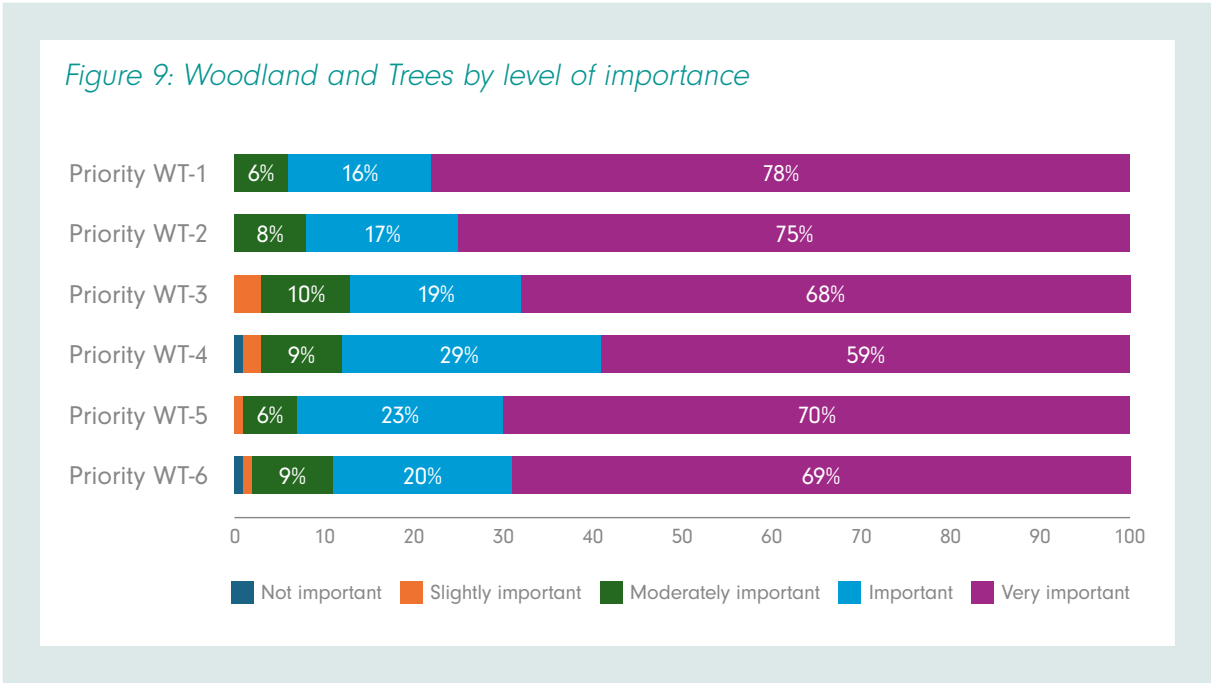
In the survey, 74% of respondents thought that Moorlands and Heath priority theme was well developed; 26% stated that something needed adding, removing or had another comment about the priority theme. There were 50 additional comments provided about this priority theme.

BOX 1: OPEN COMMENTS SUMMARY ON MOORS AND LOWLAND HEATH

Respondents stated a need for predator management, game conservation and management of breeding for long-eared owls and hen harriers. More visibility of nature recovery efforts is needed from the Forestry Commission, their buy-in and active support of Derbyshire LNRS. More consideration to walkways ‘to preserve and to ensure respect of the areas’ was needed. Concerns over the impact of increasing overtourism and impact on nature conservation efforts were raised. Working with public to raise the awareness of this LNRS priority area was required and specifically use of various media such as public information films and social media platforms. Development of responsible attitude and values for nature restoration and conservation through education in local schools, colleges and universities was important to many of the respondents.

3.2 Woodland and Trees

For the Woodlands and Trees LNRS priority theme, **Priority WT-1** (Ancient woodland, historic wood pasture parkland and veteran trees are safeguarded, managed and in good ecological condition) registered the highest level of importance from respondents. **Priority WT-2** (Existing woodland is well managed and better for wildlife) registered a second highest level of importance. **Priorities WT-5, WT-6** and **WT-3** attracted similar level of importance with over 90% of respondents indicating that these priorities are important and very important. **Priority WT-4** (Increase trees in the wider landscape) attracted the least importance from survey respondents scoring 86% in the important and very important response categories.



When it comes to the overall feedback, over a half (55%) of the respondents said that the priorities and measures for Woodland and Trees are well developed. Whist 45% said that something should be added, removed or have another comment. A total of 87 comments were provided by the public against this priority theme and measures.

Table 4: Public response to Woodland and Trees LNRS theme

Priority number and description	Priorities and measures are well developed
Priority WT-1: Ancient woodland, historic wood pasture parkland and veteran trees are safeguarded, managed and in good ecological condition.	94%
Priority WT-2: Existing woodland is well managed and better for wildlife	92%
Priority WT-3: New woodland creation delivers more, bigger and better-connected woodland, maximising ecosystem service benefits	87%
Priority WT-4: Increase trees in the wider landscape, including field trees, fruit trees, hedgerow trees and watercourse trees, and agroforestry especially where they can reinforce the local character as well as contributing to biodiversity	88%
Priority WT-5: Trees in the wider landscape are positively managed, and ancient and veteran trees are safeguarded	93%
Priority WT-6: Urban trees become more common throughout towns and cities, for amenity, urban shading, and air quality benefits as well as biodiversity	89%

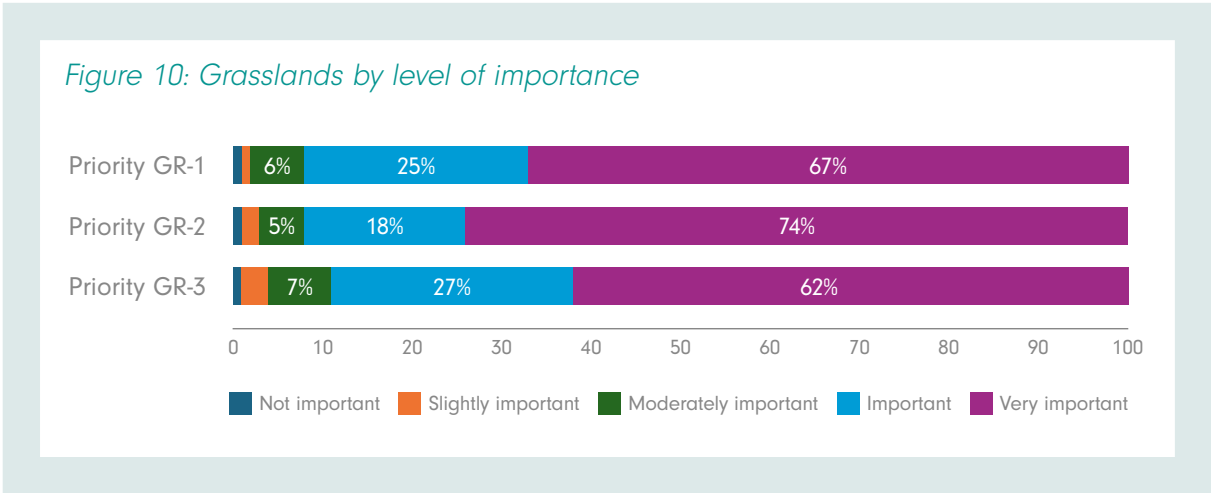
BOX 2: OPEN COMMENTS SUMMARY ON WOODLAND AND TREES

Respondents asked for more tree planting to address low tree coverage particularly in the White and Dark Peak. There is a need to ‘ensure developers are not tearing out ancient hedgerow and trees for housing but incorporating into the development and the gardens of the developments’. It was felt that hedgerows management needs to be better represented due to vital connectivity role provided by hedgerows. As priority habitats they are critical and the legislation around their protection ‘is confusing for those outside the countryside.

Many concerns were raised about resourcing of LNRS plans including availability of council staff to support LNRS implementation, resourcing of the project and availability of the specialised skills in nature conservation but also in managing nature-based solution (NBS) projects. A stronger engagement with the Forestry Commission, parish councils and green volunteering groups is proposed to strengthen the implementation of measures for Woodland and Trees LNRS theme.

3.3 Grassland

The highest importance level was attributed to **Priority GR-2** focusing on management, restoration and enhancement of existing grasslands to increase biodiversity. This was followed by **Priority GR-1** regarding safeguarding and enhancing high quality and species rich grassland habitats, and **Priority GR-3** on the increasing of grassland resource and better connected to the existing sites.



Just over 70% of survey respondents felt this area of LNRS was well developed and 29% wanted to provide further comments where 48 comments were left on this priority theme.

Table 5: Public response to Grasslands LNRS theme

Priority number and description	Priorities and measures are well developed
Priority GL-1: Safeguard and enhance high quality and species rich grassland habitats including unimproved grassland, species rich grassland and meadows, and calaminarian grassland (grassland on lead spoil)	92%
Priority GL-2: Existing grasslands are managed, restored, and enhanced to increase biodiversity (including pollinators and other invertebrates), improve resilience to climate change, and maximise wider environmental benefits such as natural flood management or carbon sequestration	92%
Priority GL-3: The grassland resource is increased, connected and existing sites are extended through the restoration and creation of new semi-natural and species-rich grasslands	90%

BOX 3: OPEN COMMENTS SUMMARY ON GRASSLANDS

Most comments were related to the role of farmers and landowners in managing grasslands and meadows. There are calls to encourage and compensate landowners ‘to reduce overgrazing and promote wildlife rich meadows instead of high yielding sugar rich grassland monoculture’. There is a need for knowledge dissemination and training to be available to the public about the role and value of farming community for nature restoration:

‘It should be recognised, particularly in the Peak District, that it is through the work of farmers that the grasslands and surrounding landscapes have evolved into what we see now. People and society see the grasslands and value them but don’t necessarily associate them with farming and land management’.

A need to specifically support floodplains meadows in this priority themes was brought to attention. The role of councils at various levels and developers in supporting healthy meadows and grasslands was mentioned throughout comments on this LNRS priority area specifically in relation to allowing meadows to develop and encouraging diversity and connectivity between meadows in rural and urban areas.

3.4 Rivers, river corridors and waterways

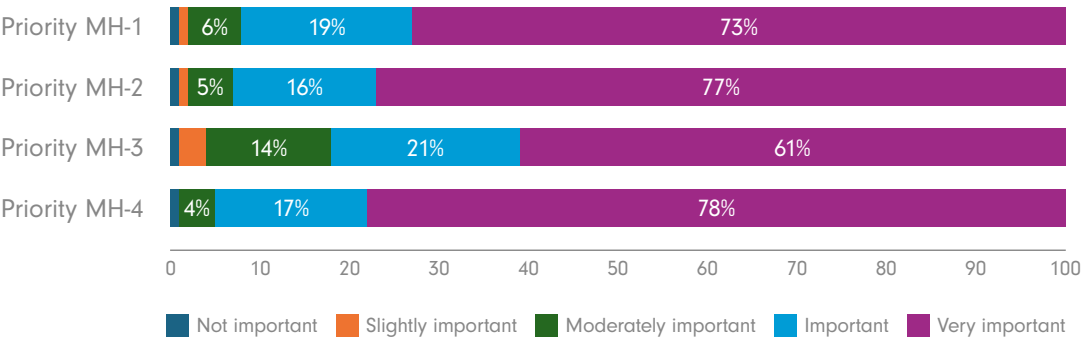
Priority RW-4: Improve the water quality of rivers and watercourses has attracted the highest importance rating from the public. **Priority RW-2** that aims to improve connectivity between watercourses and their floodplains was the second priority area by importance. This was followed by **Priority RW-1** which is concerned with improvement and restoration of connectivity of river corridors. Although **Priority RW-4** attracted the least importance compared to other priorities in this theme, it still gained 82% of votes across ‘important’ and ‘very important categories.

Our earlier analysis showed that this priority theme has gained the highest importance rating when compared with other Derbyshire LNRS priority themes (Section 2, Figure 7). 65% of survey respondents said that this LNRS priority theme was well developed and 35% had further suggestions and provided a total of 67 comments on this theme.

Table 6: Public response to Rivers, river corridors, and waterways LNRS theme

Priority number and description	Priorities and measures are well developed
Priority RW-1: Improve and restore connectivity of river corridors to restore natural processes and support the free movement of in-channel and riparian species	92%
Priority RW-2: Improve connectivity between watercourses and their floodplains to restore dynamic natural processes, reduce flood risk and create high quality semi-natural riparian habitats	93%
Priority RW-3: Improve and increase the biodiversity value and public enjoyment of reservoirs, associated habitats and surrounding land whilst safeguarding their vital role in water supply.	82%
Priority RW-4: Improve the water quality of rivers and watercourses	95%

Figure 11: Rivers, river corridors and waterways by level of importance



BOX 4: OPEN COMMENTS SUMMARY ON
RIVERS, RIVER CORRIDORS, AND WATERWAYS

There are calls from the public to measure and to reduce sewage storm overflows across the county. Attention to floodplain meadows needed to be strengthened due to the link between floodplain meadows and their sustainable use for farming/food production. Canals must be better represented in this theme – *‘the importance of canals for connection should be recognised, noting the general stability of water levels and the consequent resilience to flood/drought events’*. Canal restoration is to be supported as a significant opportunity for watercourse habitat enhancement/creation

Public called for stronger measures to manage sewage spills and to regulate utility companies to stop waste disposals and environmentally harmful discharges into rivers and watercourses. There is a recognition that Severn Trent Water needs to be ‘on board’ with LNRS development and delivery if the strategy aims to deliver tangible and lasting results. There were calls for more partnership working to ensure ‘rapid removal of debris clogging up waterways’ and to co-ordinate activities across fishing and angling clubs. Priority RW-3 attracted several comments on necessity of striking a fine balance between biodiversity value and public enjoyment of rivers, and a proposed inclusion of a statement that *‘public enjoyment would not affect biodiversity value’*.

The public comments showed that this LNRS priority theme is of high public interest. Some respondents felt there is more work on water quality needs to be done across Derbyshire:

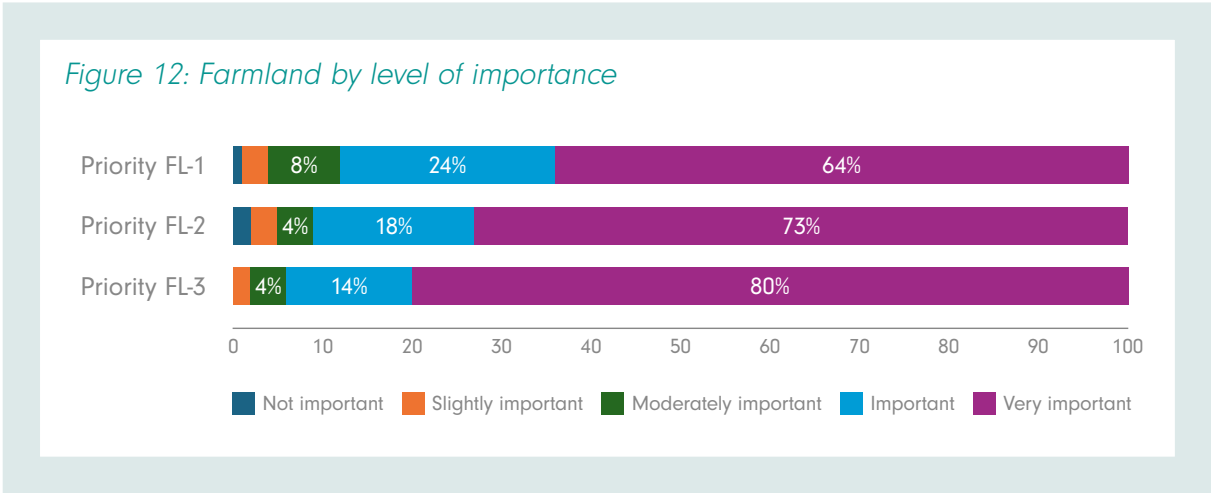
‘I feel that the water courses in Derbyshire needs to be mapped, and the water quality mapped as well to produce a well-documented recovery map. It’s great having the means to do these things but we need live information to show improvements’.

A complexity of work for this priority group was recognised due to connectivity of river systems where support from water companies and other stakeholders is not easily channelled: *‘How will Derbyshire link with neighbouring counties to manage the health and NFM of the entire catchment basin (e.g. Mersey). Will there be squabbles about funding and promoting measures which benefit residents outside Derbyshire?’*

Finally, it is important to balance work on supporting waterways and floodplains with *‘the impact of taking away farmland and grassland and building dense housing developments with tokenistic green spaces.’* The respondents said that the strategy should encourage building schemes that deliver *‘creation of less dense housing with more green spaces and focusing on brownfield sites’*.

3.5 Farmland

The highest level of importance, 92% of votes across ‘important’ and ‘very important’ categories, is attributed to **Priority FL-3** that encourages land use practices are modified to avoid adverse impacts on the wider environment, including freshwater habitats.



Priority FL-2 ensures farmed landscape is more favourable and permeable to wildlife, particularly pollinators and farmland birds attracted 90% of votes across top two importance categories. Priority FL-1, which is concerned with improvement of the ecological connectivity through the farmed landscape, attracted the least importance from the public. The priority was still rated as ‘important’ and ‘very important’ by 87% of the survey respondents.

Table 7: Public Response to Farmland LNRS theme

Priority number and description	Priorities and measures are well developed
Priority FL-1: Improve ecological connectivity through the farmed landscape	88%
Priority FL-2: The farmed landscape is more favourable and permeable to wildlife, particularly pollinators and farmland birds	91%
Priority FL-3: Land use practices are modified to avoid adverse impacts on the wider environment, including freshwater habitats	94%

This priority theme was considered well developed by 67% of respondents and 33% provided further suggestions. A total of 66 comments were provided on this LNRS priority theme.

BOX 5: OPEN COMMENTS SUMMARY ON FARMLAND

Most comments were related to the importance of farmers and landowner engagement for LNRS success *‘in most National Character Areas (NCA) farming is likely to be the single largest land use type, working out how to engage farmers will be key to the success of the LNRS’*.

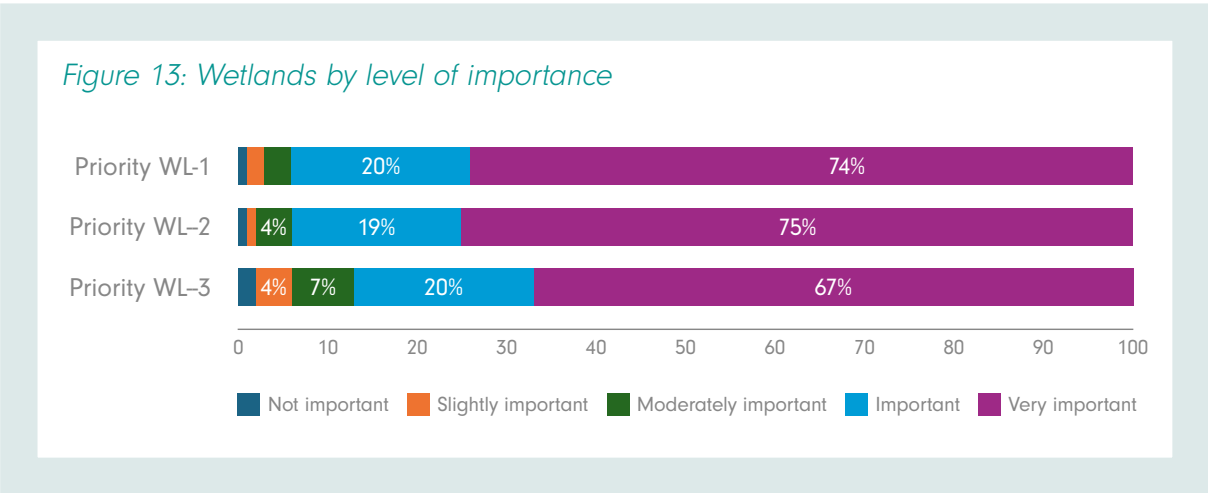
Survey respondents called for government at various levels to develop support mechanisms and coherent strategy for the sector *‘so that food production is not pitched against nature in some kind of culture war’*. The respondents suggested subsidising farmers and landowners *‘to re-plant hedges and to cut less frequently to allow berries to remain for overwintering birds’*. Other suggestions included identifying opportunities for connectivity between habitats, and supporting farmers to erect nest boxes for owls and other birds including swifts/swallows on and in farm buildings.

Some comments were related to strengthening the opportunities for sustainable farming in the context of regenerative agriculture. It is important *‘to make clear that maintaining existing high biodiversity value farmlands is a high priority’* and for LNRS to reflect such urgency.

3.6 Wetlands

Priority WL-2 which ensures existing wetlands are managed and enhanced to support greater levels of biodiversity attracted the highest level of importance from survey respondents. This was followed by the **Priority WL-1** that is concerned with protection and enhancement of the wetland habitats including ponds, lowland fen, swamp, marsh, reedbed.

Although **Priority WL-3** - the wetland resources are increased, connected, and extended; attracted the least importance in this priority theme, 87% of respondents deemed this priority as important and very important for nature recovery.



The wetlands priority theme had the highest number of responses stating that the theme is well developed and requires no changes (77% of respondents). 23% of respondents provided 49 additional comments on the theme.

Table 8: Public response to Wetlands LNRS theme

Priority number and description	Priorities and measures are well developed
Priority WL-1: Protect and enhance wetland habitats including ponds, lowland fen, swamp, marsh, reedbed etc.	94%
Priority WL-2: Existing wetlands are managed and enhanced to support greater levels of biodiversity, for example for amphibians and invertebrates	94%
Priority WL-3: The wetland resource is increased, connected, and existing sites are extended and buffered through the creation of new semi-natural wetlands	87%

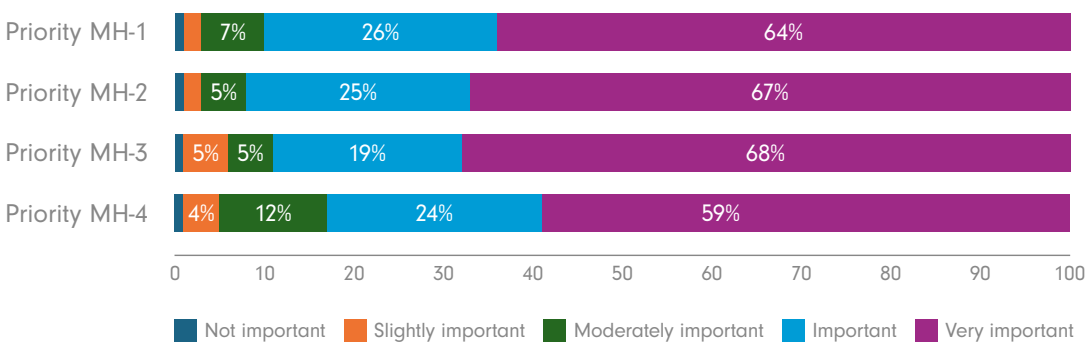
BOX 6: OPEN COMMENTS SUMMARY ON WETLANDS

Survey respondents recognised the importance of clean ponds for maintaining rare plants, stoneworts and invertebrates. Although introduction of new wetlands is welcomed, the enrichment of existing is emphasised *‘fix what we have before taking on new sites and spreading resources even more thinly’*. Some comments called for collaborative working with stakeholders such as Network Rail and National Farmers Union to deliver on this LNRS priority theme.

3.7 Urban Environment and Infrastructure

This LNRS priority theme has the lowest overall importance rating when compared to other LNRS themes (Figure 7). **Priority UE-2**, that seeks support of wildlife species in urban settings particularly with high conservation risks, had the highest level of importance scoring with a total of 92% in ‘important’ and ‘very important’ response categories. This was closely followed by **Priority UE-3** which calls for habitat creation and enhancement in urban areas.

Figure 14: Urban Environment and Infrastructure by level of importance



Priority UE-1, that bring about the interventions for urban environments to become more biodiverse and permeable to wildlife, is third by importance according to public responses. The least important area for this LNRS priority is **Priority UE-4** focusing on roads and other transport networks to contribute positively to biodiversity. This priority was considered important and very important by 83% of survey respondents.

Table 9: Public response to Urban environment and infrastructure LNRS theme

Priority number and description	Priorities and measures are well developed
Priority UE-1: Urban environments become more biodiverse and permeable to wildlife	90%
Priority UE-2: Urban wildlife species are supported, particularly where those species need conservation action	92%
Priority UE-3: Habitat creation and enhancement seeks to deliver an improved network of locally appropriate, accessible, multifunctional green spaces, for the benefit of people and wildlife	87%
Priority UE-4: Roads and other transport networks contribute positively to biodiversity	83%

Under 60% of survey respondents felt that LNRS theme is well developed and around 40% wanted to see further improvements in the development. A total of 82 additional comments were provided against this LNRS priority theme.

BOX 7: OPEN COMMENTS SUMMARY ON URBAN ENVIRONMENT AND INFRASTRUCTURE

Several comments were about urban parks and gardens that are ‘far too manicured and not good for local wildlife’.

One of the recommendations was for Priority UE-1 ‘to including a measure in this priority that looks to incentivise or compel developers to retain existing trees on new developments alongside planting new trees so that new developments have high levels of tree canopy cover’. There was an interesting comment about nature as design approach which ensures protection of species and habitats in building developments and improvements. It is important that ‘nature is designed into new buildings and upgrades. Creating safe highway/railways etc crossings for species. Including other urban areas in the detail of opportunities, not just Derby’.

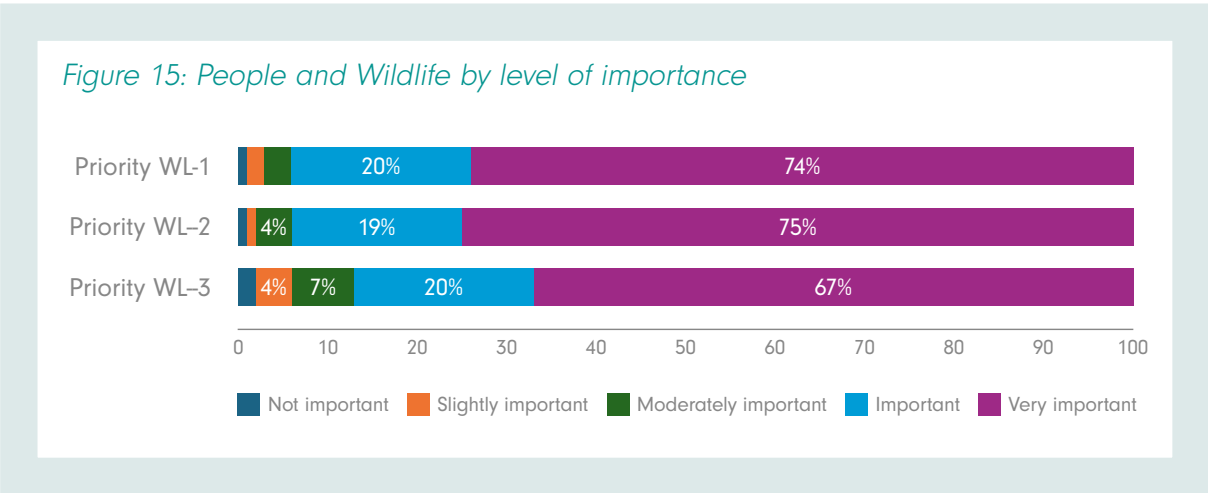
Canals and rivers ought to be better recognised in Priority UE-3 particularly bringing to attention the potential for canal restoration to create/enhance accessible green/blue corridors. A lot of people commented on the importance of urban birds and the need to protect and encourage nesting, for example installing swift bricks in new developments including extensions. Some respondents were concerned about swifts not being included in the species priority list and thought it was an oversight.

There is a clear recognition of the role of local planning regulations and building and development practices for nature recovery strategy implementation ‘urban environment, development and infrastructure is determined by the local plan and government demands on new housing stock, the latter of which can decimate wildlife habitat and trees. Priorities and measures are pointless unless local planners are on board’. It was indicated that highways needed to be more carefully considered in LNRS due to their significant environmental impact. There were positive comments about inclusion of urban area in the LNRS. However, a greater recognition of attitudes to nature and nature conservation initiatives in the urban areas of high socio-economic disadvantage was needed. It is important for nature recovery implementation to be inclusive and not only for ‘wealthier, predominantly white and rural communities’.

There is a recurring theme that encouraging collaboration between the local authorities in monitoring the nature depletion, ‘Local authorities are to work together to develop green corridors along roads, highways, and within urban zones by partaking in No Mow May and other such initiatives’. Another theme that was brought up in other LNRS priority areas was about the role of learning and education in local nature recovery strategy; ranging from changes to school curriculum to reflect priorities for nature restoration to public awareness raising campaign emphasizing availability of ‘readily accessible information about gardening and wildlife’. It was suggested that garden centres could be important supporters of LNRS; ‘by offering plants suitable for pollinators and not stocking really harmful chemicals. They could mention not keeping gardens too tidy, having a corner for wildlife, pollinators need a place to live, etc. ‘Gardening for Wildlife’ days’.

3.8 People and Wildlife

This LNRS priority theme was well received by respondents casting the highest importance level of 92% for **Priority PW-3** which is concerned with promoting the sharing of knowledge, information, and best practice to enable better stewardship and effective nature recovery. **Priority PW-2**, which looks at more opportunities for people to actively engage with the natural environment and supporting and delivering nature recovery in their area, occupies the second place by importance according to public response to the survey.



Finally, Priority PW-1 which promotes the role of education and awareness raising activities for the benefit of nature across Derbyshire and Derby has attracted 87% importance level across ‘important’ and ‘very important’ response categories.

Table 10: Public response to People and Wildlife LNRS theme

Priority number and description	Priorities and measures are well developed
Priority PW-1: People across Derbyshire and Derby are better informed about and more engaged with the natural environment, through education and awareness raising activities for the benefit of nature	87%
Priority PW-2: People have more opportunities to actively engage with the natural environment, supporting and delivering nature recovery in their area	88%
Priority PW-3: Promote the sharing of knowledge, information, and best practice to enable better stewardship and effective nature recovery	92%

70% of survey respondents said this LNRS priority was well developed and 30% said they wanted something to add/remove or provide a comment. A total of 57 comments were provided against this LNRS priority theme.

BOX 8: OPEN COMMENTS SUMMARY ON PEOPLE AND WILDLIFE

There were many comments in support of raising the level of awareness and education for various societal groups, for example at schools, local communities, businesses and universities to promote nature restoration and conservation activities. *‘Education needs to be a high priority for nature recovery’* and *‘expanding people’s knowledge on nature and biodiversity could really help and promoting and encouraging a plant-based diet’* were among some of the comments put forward. School education was brought into focus where development of more outdoor pursuits for younger people could encourage better connection with nature from an early age. Making such education and information accessible was another important observation from the respondents i.e. *‘more information about how people with learning and physical disabilities can get more involved’*.

The role of local communities in nature recovery was brought up by many comments on this LNRS priority theme. Respondents said there should be more opportunities created *‘for connecting to and caring for nature through creation of more community orchards, allotments and community farms’*. Also, *‘local communities need to be introduced to farming and understand their contribution’*. Place-based initiatives to support LNRS are much preferred by *‘people being enabled and empowered to deliver nature recovery themselves’*. Support for community-based, collective and collaborative initiatives is required to encourage grass-roots nature conservation initiatives such as *‘community owned and cared for spaces’* and *‘community organising and rewilding’* initiatives. Working collaboratively across boundaries, both organisational and geographical, was an important part of LNRS approach many comments emphasised.

‘There should be something in this section that refers to people working together across county boundaries. INNS (invasive and non-native species) for example will have to be tackled strategically, especially on water courses and this will require more than just a county strategy but a catchment strategy that may cross administrative boundaries’.

The role of local government that support these initiatives was highlighted. This is to ensure that *‘eco-system services need to be maintained and fully functioning in terms of keeping landscapes litter free, for example’*. Multi-stakeholder engagement and collaborative ethos and actions were emphasised *‘this sounds good but will achieve nothing if paid staff are not employed to actively engage landowners and other interested parties to take appropriate actions’*.

SECTION 4: THEMATIC ANALYSIS OF THE OVERALL LNRS COMMENTS

Question 18 of the public consultation survey asked for additional comments on the Derbyshire LNRS. There were over 190 responses provided to this question alone. The responses contained valuable insights into public perception about the LNRS process, content and implementation challenges. The research team analysed the responses according to the themes that follow.

4.1 Skills, Capacity and Resources

Many respondents raised concerns over *a lack of central and local funding* to resource proposed LNRS measures: *'We are really supportive of what is being developed, but funding will be the real test of whether it becomes a living, implemented document or if it stays sitting on the shelf.'* Budgeting pressures and lack of dedicated staff overseeing the LNRS implementation are seen as one of the major barriers to LNRS success *'Budgets are undoubtedly stretched, and staff is limited'*. Addressing resourcing challenges is one of the main enablers of LNRS success *'I sincerely hope that adequate resources are provided to employ sufficient staff to put the strategy into action'*.

Capacity building for LNRS implementation through education and awareness-raising campaigns and events with public is an important approach to ensure public support with LNRS initiatives. Public buy-in is integral to LNRS success and to ensure the sustainability of the regional nature recovery efforts over the coming years.

'Wonderful work. Just fear it will not be funded properly and will not be integrated adequately into education or promoted heavily enough to make it reach public consciousness. It needs public backing and not to be seen as too academic or bureaucratic or elitist/niche interest'.

Another avenue for LNRS capacity building is strengthening of the engagement with parish councillors and widening participation from friends of parks groups, and small local community garden and nature groups. Whilst the draft Derbyshire LNRS was thought to be an ambitious strategy for nature recovery, resourcing and implementation mechanisms need considerable development and *'creative thinking'*.

4.2 Establishing consensus and fostering collaboration

The survey respondents recognised *collaboration across multiple regional stakeholders* is important for nature recovery initiatives. Often with reference to nature-based solutions (NBS), the respondents illustrated examples of successful and less successful collaborative NBS projects. Many emphases were put on collaboration across similar habitats such as canals and forests to create a better habitat connectivity:

'I think the work done to date has made good progress and I aid strong foundations for nature recovery across Derbyshire'.

The respondents urged for an *improved collaboration with landowners and farmers* for LNRS delivery. There were calls to *'spell out more clearly how to engage with landowners'* and reach out to those groups who had not engaged with nature conservation thus far. Availability of funding for farmers and landowners to *incentivise the conservation efforts* was mentioned as an important enabler of nature recovery. There is a difference in the way large estates and small farmers approach conservation due to availability of resources and flexibility in resources allocation which allows *'to be a bit more experimental and eco-centric'*. Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) was recognised as important approach which is likely to support funding allocation for nature recovery projects. Working with a diverse range of stakeholders for BNG was recognised to be challenging but necessary for the engagement with the nature-based solutions.

4.3 Underrepresented habitats and species

In addition to the comments provided for LNRS priority themes, a detailed analysis of which is presented in the Section 3 of the report, further comments on underrepresented species and habitats were provided in the overall comments section of the survey. Canals were said to be *'under-appreciated'* despite having high benefits to *'nature and the wider ecosystem services of further restoring and/or enhancing the canal network in Derbyshire'*. A wider inclusion of the canal network is necessary alongside brief mentions of Cromford, Chesterfield & Erewash canal restoration projects. Local nature reserves needed a stronger representation in the LNRS including explicit considerations for the significance of the local nature reserves and the right level of resourcing and support required.

Swifts were one of the species mentioned in many open public comments on Derbyshire LNRS. The respondents acknowledged the inclusion of swifts in the UE-2 priority measure (Urban wildlife species are supported, particularly where those species need conservation action) and urged inclusion of swifts on the LNRS Priority List of Species. Insects and other invertebrates were urged not to be overlooked by the strategy due to the role in any ecosystem. Broadening of the conservation efforts for this category is also important as *'pollinators are vitally important, but it should be emphasised that this category includes very many species of fly, beetle, solitary bee, wasp, true bug and more, not just bees and butterflies'*.

4.4 LNRS process, content and impact

The LNRS was considered a timely and necessary work to generate a momentum for nature recovery in the Derby and Derbyshire as *'It is about time that plans are laid down to preserve our beautiful Derbyshire. ... We need to create more wetland areas to prevent*

flooding to protect houses and provide a home for migrating birds, so much to do, but this strategy is a start. The respondents commented that the proposed draft LNRS is ‘very comprehensive’ and ‘an excellent draft strategy’ they look forward to being implemented. Many felt that it was a positive milestone in marking intensifying nature restoration efforts in Derby and Derbyshire and stated as:

‘Really positive to see this work being undertaken. Thank you!’

Many respondents commented on various aspects of Derbyshire LNRS process including stakeholder consultation, mapping of the local habitats and LNRS priority and measures, public consultation survey and field work. Respondents welcomed a ‘joined-up thinking’ approach to collaborate with multiple stakeholders for the development of LNRS. The habitat mapping work has been commented on as a very helpful resource which could be enhanced further by inclusion of ‘verges of the road, rail, PRowS, National Trails and cycle network’. Some respondents felt a set of draft LNRS documents put for public consultation was complex and time-consuming to access *‘I found there were so many documents that I got lost trying to find the information. It was all a lot to take in. I do believe this is important but I didn’t have time to read pages and pages of text or try to find it online so I could then comment on it.’* Similar comments were made about the public consultation survey which was found to be ‘too complex’ and ‘a simpler survey would have been welcome’. To balance these comments, there were many comments that wanted inclusion of additional information and deeper considerations for LNRS priority area as highlighted in the analysis presented in Section 3 of the report.

There were many responses that complemented the LNRS team on the quality of work undertaken and appreciation for the wide-reaching strategy development and consultation process: *‘Thank you for giving everyone in Derbyshire an opportunity to comment on the LNRS. I believe the whole plan is vitally important if we are to prevent further deterioration of our natural environment, on which we all rely.’*

The anticipated impact of LNRS is positive and far-reaching *‘Great work and I look forward to seeing the positive impact it has on Derbyshire’*. Overall, the survey comments resonated the *public anticipation and enthusiasm* for the next stage of LNRS work – nature recovery strategy implementation:

‘Keep up the good work! It is an exciting, and certainly challenging project. It gives cause for optimism, and I look forward to being able to see it develop for the benefit of Derbyshire’s unique natural resources, as well as all who live, work or visit.’

4.5 Local policy coherence

There were many comments about the impact of policy of building new houses and planning regulations on nature recovery. Challenges of housing pressure and preference for redevelopment of the brown field sites as opposed to building on the green belt came through in many responses. Trade-offs between housing / road networks and nature recovery were emphasized and it was suggested that *‘the plan needs to work hand in hand with housing to ensure that where we lose green space to housing, the plans are for less dense developments enriched by woodland and green space’*.

Much improvement needed to link the priorities for nature recovery and city and county planning practices: *‘Nowhere near enough priority is given in planning departments to delivering nature-based solutions to all manner of issues and problems’*. Calls to include permaculture design principles in planning regulation and to improve knowledge existing planners and advisers about these principles were voiced. Concerns about how to balance nature recovery and food production by the farmers were raised. A policy and regulations that carefully integrates and support both activities is yet to be developed and implemented. There were calls for joint-up thinking to protect the farmland from building of solar farms and housing estates.

Many comments were made about *pro-nature conservation land use practices*. Suggestions ranged from abolishment of the glyphosate weedkiller pesticides and protection of the rural footpaths to calls to stop flail cutting of hedges, protecting and encouraging growth of the wild meadows, wildflowers and fruit trees in residential areas. Overall, a more integrated and coherent approach to regional and local policymaking is required to support the successful implementation of the LNRS.

4.6 Place-based approach to LNRS implementation

Communication and engagement of the local population was deemed to be important for the success of the LNRS and *‘the strategy needs to be communicated to the people of Derbyshire in a comprehensive and inspirational way. People also need to feel some level of ownership and engagement with the strategy through community level events and incentives for people to change their own behaviours at home or in their own lifestyles’*. Some elements of the place-based approach to LNRS implementation include:

- Strong buy-in from the local communities which are tied to the management of the local areas.
- Awareness raising and open dialogue on *‘how farmers and landowners can make use of LNRS’*.
- Recognition of rural vs urban specifics of socio-demographic groupings and attitudes to nature and nature recovery.
- Understanding impact of increasing visitor numbers and risks of overtourism on county’s natural capital.
- *‘The strategy needs to engage local people and organisations across the county and complement other strategies, such as those related to economic development and achieving net zero, if it is to be fully successful’*.

In summary, understanding the role of local communities and businesses in LNRS implementation and creation of the effective engagement pathways for contribution to nature recovery is critical to ensure Derbyshire LNRS’s success. Creation of opportunities and effective mechanisms that encourage place-based stakeholder participation at a scale and pace is an integral part of LNRS implementation approach.

SECTION 5: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Development of the first Derbyshire LNRS is an important milestone in regional and local nature recovery and conservation policy and practice. One of the main outcomes of the LNRS process is better understanding about Derby and Derbyshire residents' relationship with nature, value of nature and connection with nature. Another significant outcome is strengthened and energised community of regional stakeholders that are keen to engage and to deliver the LNRS.

The report offers several recommendations to ensure successful implementation of Derbyshire LNRS and lasting positive impact of this policy initiative:

1. Dedicated resourcing and funding for Derbyshire LNRS delivery

- a. Introduce a wider range of grant categories, such as demonstrator/innovation grants, to cater for different levels of engagement/maturity with the nature recovery projects.
- b. Increase funding to support initiatives against each of the LNRS priorities identified.

2. Invest in schemes that encourage people from diverse communities to build a relationship with nature

- a. Develop projects that increase connectedness with nature and support proactive nature restoration behaviour. Such projects need to engage diverse communities across Derbyshire to support nature conservation.
- b. Enhance access to volunteering opportunities for nature restoration and recovery across urban and rural communities.

3. Support capacity building of local businesses to engage in nature restoration

- a. Support projects that raise awareness, knowledge and skills of local businesses for uptake of nature-based solutions.
- b. Enhance accessibility and visibility of nature-based solution projects across the county and the city.

4. Targeted and effective multi-stakeholder collaboration

- a. Continue to build on a strong collaborative foundation of Derbyshire LNRS to support strategy implementation and monitoring.
- b. Establish and grow a network of regional stakeholders to lead, promote and pivot nature recovery in Derbyshire.

5. Transparency, visibility and monitoring of LNRS progress

- a. Use of digital platforms to support LNRS implementation and monitoring.
- b. Use of online mapping to showcase the LNRS progress.
- c. Awareness raising about LNRS and involvement with projects through online platforms.

6. Continuous and constructive dialogue with farmers and landowners

- a. Build on increased engagement of farmers and landowners achieved in the LNRS development phase into strategy delivery phase.

7. LNRS governance and ownership

- a. Continue strengthening effective governance for LNRS delivery.
- b. Continue building and disseminate evidence-based data for effective LNRS governance and decision-making.

8. Local policy coherence and strategy alignment

- a. Raise awareness of finalised Derbyshire LNRS across the responsible authorities.
- b. Map the LNRS priority and measures against other regional strategies to harness co-delivery value and benefits.

9. Communicate effectively with local, regional and national stakeholders on LNRS delivery, impact and outcomes.

- a. Develop communication strategy and action plan to support LNRS delivery.
- b. Harness power of collaborative partnerships to extend communication scope and reach.

10. Place-based approach including community empowerment and placemaking

- a. Identify and showcase the existing best practice community initiatives and projects for nature restoration.
- b. Support local placemaking and connection of local communities with nature and encourage nature restoration through grants, knowledge exchange and research.

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