

Leicestershire, Leicester & Rutland Local Nature Recovery Strategy



Local Nature Recovery Strategy Engagement Report Summary

Leicestershire, Leicester, and Rutland

FINAL REPORT – July 2024

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1. Executive Summary

1a. Our Brief

Trueman Change was commissioned by Leicestershire County Council (LCC), the responsible authority for developing the Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS), to design and implement a comprehensive engagement process. The goal was to gather meaningful input from residents, stakeholders, and other key groups to inform the draft strategy. This was a preparatory step before the full public consultation required by statutory guidelines

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1b. Our Methodology

Our approach followed a two-phased structure, engaging stakeholders and residents via:

- Quantitative Surveys: Open online surveys to capture broad opinions from stakeholders and residents.
- Qualitative Workshops: In-depth discussions with farmers, landowners, and residents to understand perspectives and barriers.
- Spatial Data Capture: Using Social PinPoint, an interactive mapping tool, to gather site-specific feedback from participants.
- Focused Youth Engagement: Workshops with young farmers and urban youth to ensure their views were incorporated.
- Communications Support: A structured communication plan created awareness and facilitated participation through media, social media, and partner networks.

1c. Total Engagements

- Quantitative Engagements:
 - 1,077 residents participated in the survey, 97% of whom were from the LLR area.
 - 96 stakeholders responded to the targeted stakeholder survey.
 - 516 spatial pins were added via Social PinPoint.
- Qualitative Engagements:
 - Four workshops for farmers, landowners, and land managers, attended by 31 participants.

- Nine workshops for residents, attracting 62 attendees.
- Specialised workshops for young farmers (5 participants) and young Leicester residents (7 participants).

1d. High-Level Findings

1. Public Love for Nature:

- 98% of residents agreed that nature should be protected for its own sake.
- Stakeholders unanimously agreed on the beauty and necessity of nature for balance and well-being.

2. Concerns Over Declining Nature:

- Declining biodiversity, loss of habitats, and environmental degradation were significant concerns for both residents and stakeholders.

3. Action for Nature Recovery:

- Residents prioritised habitat restoration and creation while emphasising the integration of nature into urban and industrial developments.

4. Stakeholder Readiness:

- Farmers and landowners expressed willingness to contribute but identified affordability, resource access, and better incentives as key needs.

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2. Key Thematic Findings

1. Council Leadership is Key:

Stakeholders and residents emphasised that local authorities must lead by example. Policies, land use decisions, and management of council-owned land must visibly prioritise nature recovery.

2. Joined-Up Action:

A need for coordinated, incremental actions that connect local efforts to broader environmental outcomes, such as flood mitigation and increased green space access, was highlighted.

3. Support for Land Custodians:

Farmers, landowners, and land managers are central to delivering nature recovery. Providing advice, knowledge-sharing platforms, and practical resources is essential.

4. Public Education and Advocacy:

Public awareness campaigns and education programs, especially for younger generations, are critical to building long-term advocacy for LNRS goals.

3. Methodology and Engagement Rates

3a. Early Engagement

Six online briefings were held in March 2024 for stakeholder groups, including farmers, public sector officers, and environmental NGOs. These sessions introduced the LNRS process and encouraged further participation. Despite targeted invitations, attendance was moderate, particularly among farmers.

3b. Stakeholder Engagement

A targeted survey was designed in partnership with LCC, focusing on stakeholders' concerns, actions, and barriers related to nature recovery. Workshops explored these themes in greater depth, yielding qualitative insights into the motivations and challenges faced by key groups.

3c. Resident Engagement

Residents were engaged through an open survey and nine workshops held across council areas. While participation was strong overall, respondents were predominantly older and white, indicating the need for more inclusive approaches in future consultations.

4. Analysis and Results: Stakeholder Engagement

4a. Quantitative Survey

- Stakeholders' top concerns included soil degradation, habitat loss, and climate change.
- 85% reported taking action to protect nature, with common activities including habitat restoration and sustainable farming practices.
- Financial incentives and better collaboration were identified as critical enablers for further action.

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4b. Qualitative Engagement with Farmers

Farmers highlighted the importance of:

- Sustainable practices like agroforestry and minimal tillage.
- Cross-farm collaboration to achieve landscape-scale outcomes.
- Addressing barriers such as complex grant applications and limited access to expert advice.

5. Analysis and Results: Public Engagement

5a. Quantitative Research

- 86% of residents reported accessing nature several times a week.
- Barriers included time constraints, safety concerns, and lack of accessible spaces.
- The most valued benefits were mental well-being and personal enjoyment.

5b. Qualitative Analysis of Residents' Engagement

Workshop discussions emphasised:

- Protecting and enhancing local green spaces.
- Ensuring planning policies prioritise biodiversity.
- Educating communities about sustainable practices.

5c. Crowd-Sourced Contributions

516 pins on Social PinPoint highlighted:

- Current conservation efforts (188 pins).
- Potential opportunities for habitat restoration (169 pins).
- Concerns about pressures such as urban development and pollution (136 pins).

6. Communications

6a. Strategy

A communications strategy was developed to support engagement, featuring a narrative aligned with LNRS goals and tailored outreach to different groups.

6b. Outputs

Key deliverables included branded social media assets, press articles, and workshop presentations.

6c. Measurement

The engagement reached diverse audiences through media coverage, social media analytics, and direct outreach.

7. Lessons Learned and Recommendations

7a. Areas for Improvement – Stakeholder Engagement

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- Regular Updates: Sustained communication is needed to build awareness.
- Targeted Outreach: Efforts should focus on underrepresented groups, such as tenant farmers.

7b. What Went Well – Stakeholder Engagement

- Collaborative Approach: Partner involvement enhanced credibility and engagement.
- Effective Incentives: Offering meals and local venues increased participation.

7c. Areas for Improvement – Residents' Engagement

- Diverse Representation: Future consultations must engage younger and more diverse demographics.
- Focused Communications: Targeted campaigns can boost engagement among underrepresented groups.

7d. What Went Well – Residents' Engagement

- High Participation: The survey received over 1,000 responses.
- Localised Engagement: Workshops allowed for meaningful discussions tailored to specific communities.