

# Cumbria Local Nature Recovery Strategy



## Nature in Cumbria Survey Response

The Nature in Cumbria Survey ran from 29<sup>th</sup> February to May 1<sup>st</sup> 2024. It received 786 responses from the public, which will be used to help develop the LNRS.

The aim of the survey was to find out what the public think about nature and wildlife in their local area, and what they think we should plan to do more of to create new habitats or look after existing ones.

### We asked

The LNRS team wanted to give the public a unique chance to think about nature in their area and to consider how it could be different or improved to support local wildlife and local people.

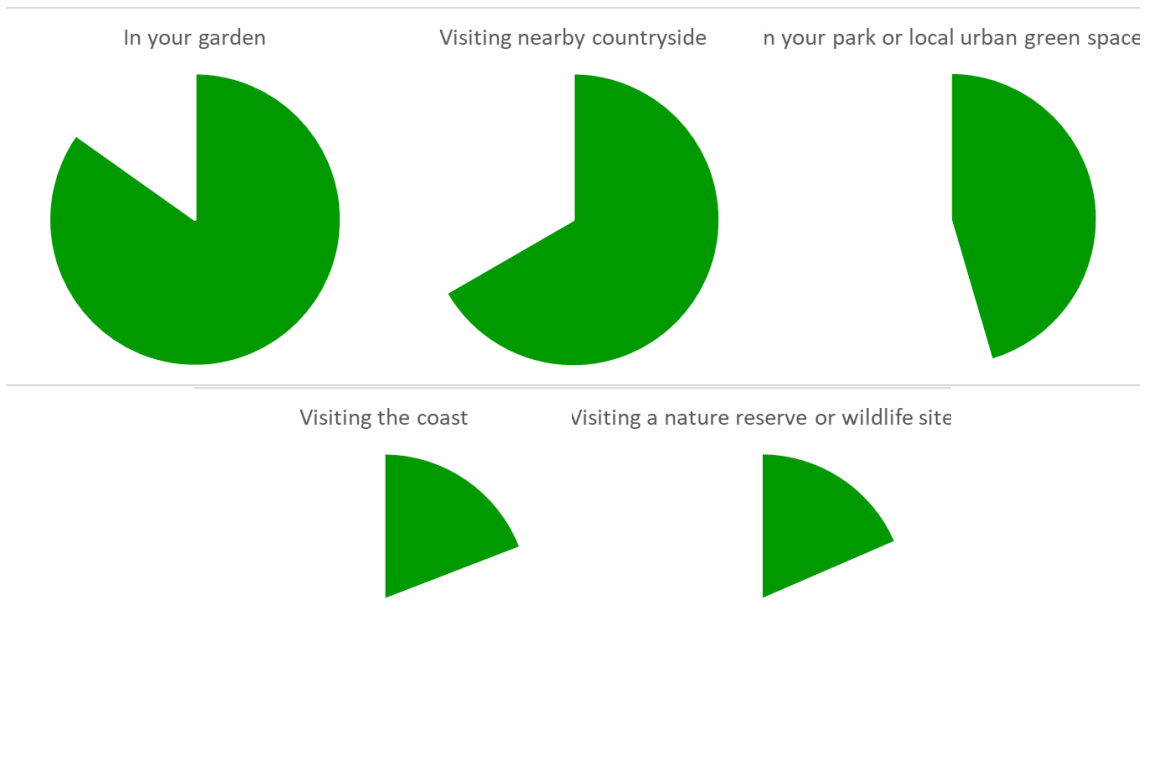
We asked 16 questions in total: 8 questions about the participant and 8 questions about each participant's views on nature. There were a variety of questions asked to explore how much time people like to spend in nature, where they like to do this and the reasons why. The questions also explored participant's attitudes towards the state of nature, what purpose they think it serves and whether participants think we need to do more at a strategic level to look after our habitats and species.

The survey acted as another method of engagement alongside other workshops that were ongoing at the same time, and the survey gave an opportunity for participants to share their views in their own time.

### You said

*How much time do you spend in nature, and where?*

The garden is the most popular outdoor space to visit with 85% of respondents visiting their garden either daily or a few times a week; this is closely followed by visiting nearby countryside with 67% of respondents responding with either daily or a few times a week. Nature reserves and/or wildlife sites, and the coast appear to be the least frequently visited with only 18% and 19% of people respectively choosing to go to these places more than once a week.



*Why do you like to spend time in nature?*

Participants chose their top three reasons why they like to spend time in nature. Zero people responded to say that they do not spend time in nature, suggesting nature has a particular level of importance in all respondents' lives. The top three reasons for spending time in nature were to enjoy natural beauty (81%), to see wildlife (61%) and to exercise (60%).



### *Why is nature important to you?*

Participants were next given the chance to agree or disagree with several statements. The key points gathered from this section include:

- 96% of respondents believing that nature is good for people and our society; and
- 97% of respondents agreeing to a certain degree that there are ways we can help nature in Cumbria.

Participants were then asked to identify the main reasons why nature is important to them. The top five most popular reasons were:

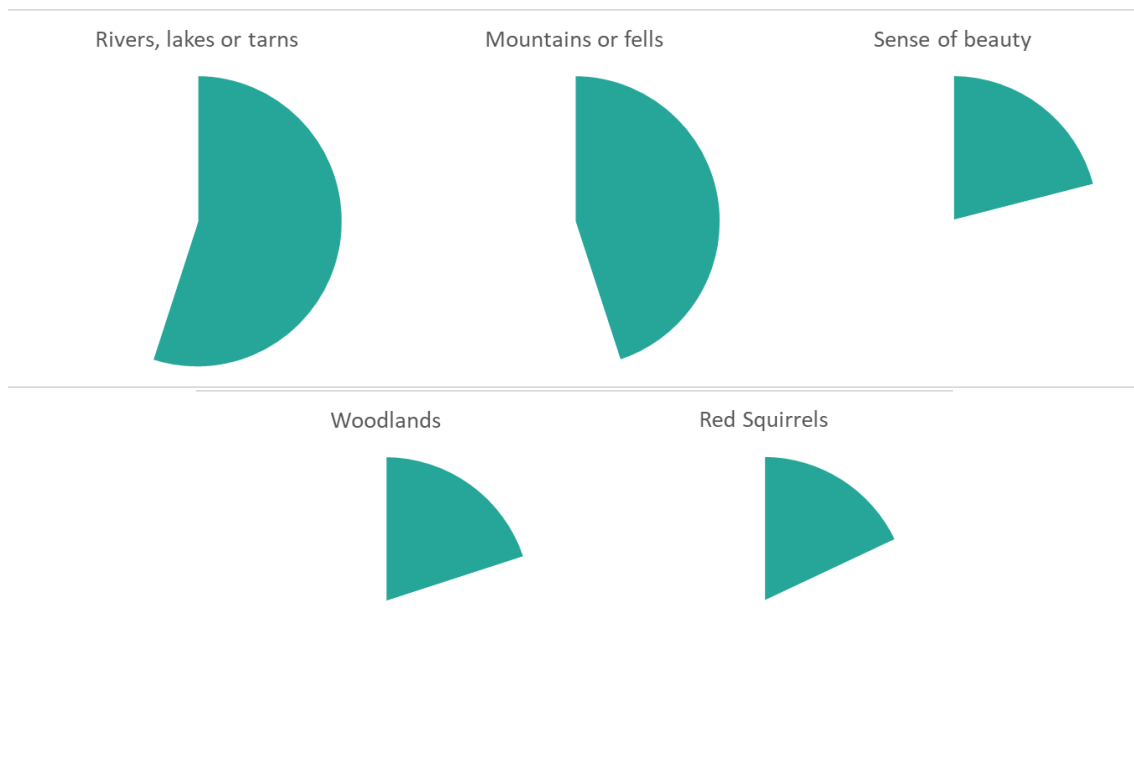
- because they like to spend time in nature (87% of respondents);
- it makes them feel happier and healthier (86% of respondents);
- they like to watch wildlife (77% of respondents);
- it is beautiful (72% of respondents); and,
- it helps to tackle climate change (68% of respondents).

Other reasons identified by the majority of respondents were: it creating a nice environment to live, work or visit; protection from hazards such as flooding and pollution; and that it is part of our culture and heritage.

### *What are the things that make Cumbria's nature special?*

When participants were asked 'When I think of wildlife and nature in Cumbria, I think of...', there was a wide range of responses provided. Emerging themes were: rivers, lakes or tarns (55% of responses); mountains or fells (45%); sense of beauty (21%); woodlands (20%); and red squirrels (18%).

Negative emotive language such as worry or concern, or mention of pollution, businesses and overcrowding was mentioned in around 10% of responses.



### *What could we be doing to recover nature?*

Finally, participants were asked to rank the things we can do to help nature from 'not important' to 'very important'. The statement most frequently identified as 'very important' was 'improve water quality and the areas around rivers, lakes and tarns'. The second most frequently identified statement was "create or look after habitats that help all of Cumbria's local wildlife [...]". Third was 'help threatened and well-known animals and plants such as the red squirrel, otter, and hedgehog'.

### **We did**

The data from the survey has been collated and analysed by the Local Nature Recovery Strategy team to make sure that the issues that people think are most important are captured in the strategy.

As the majority of respondents most frequently spend time in nature in their **gardens**, nearby **countryside**, or **urban green spaces**, we have made sure that

**the Local Nature Recovery Strategy includes priorities and measures for these spaces.** This will not only mean that the wider benefits from nature recovery can reach as many people as possible, but it also means that anyone can play their part in recovering nature by making small changes in their homes, gardens, and workplaces.

With most people spending time in nature to enjoy **natural beauty** and see **wildlife**, it is critical that the Local Nature Recovery Strategy protects and enhances both our most important natural habitats and the species they support. The Local Nature Recovery Strategy proposes measures not only to **create more wildlife rich habitat**, but to **enhance our existing wildlife-rich habitats** and **restore degraded habitats**, as well as **bespoke measures for species**. Sometimes, protecting our natural beauty and our most sensitive habitats and species can mean taking action to limit the impact of human disturbance, including limiting access to particular locations at certain times of year, or encouraging responsible recreation.

It is clear from the survey results that the majority of people in Cumbria feel that **nature is important**, and that **recovering nature will provide many benefits to people** as well as the habitats and species that are the focus of the Local Nature Recovery Strategy. Each chapter of **the Local Nature Recovery Strategy will contain a section on the opportunities for nature recovery and the wider benefits** that these opportunities could bring, including those identified in the survey.

We have structured the Local Nature Recovery Strategy so that it **captures to the habitats and species that people feel make Cumbria special**. There will be chapters on:

- Woodlands, trees and scrub;
- Grasslands and limestone pavements;
- Moorland, heathland and montane habitats;
- Wetlands and freshwater;
- Coastal and estuarine;
- Built environment; and,
- Species.

The survey results showed that people in Cumbria feel it is important that nature recovery considers the whole **ecosystem**, including not just the habitats but the species they support. The results of the survey also show that people think the **condition** of these habitats is important, and that the priorities and measures should also address things such as water quality. **We have a drafted a series of overarching priorities** that address the more universal pressures such as invasive non-native species, data, skills and funding. We also have specific priorities and measures for improving **water quality**.

We would like to thank all those who responded to the survey for their input.