



THIRD WORKSHOP REPORT FARMERS AND GROWERS AND FORESTERS

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SURREY NATURE RECOVERY – WORKSHOP 3 FARMERS, GROWERS AND FORESTERS

Date: 6th June 2024

Venue: Albury Vineyard, Shere Road, Albury GU5 9BW

Time: 5.00 to 8.00pm

Facilitators: Resources for Change (R4C)

PURPOSE

To involve a group of farming and grower stakeholders in learning about, deliberating, and identifying priority outcomes related to local nature recovery in the county.

PRINCIPLES / OBJECTIVES

- Participants learn about local nature recovery and establish common understanding.
- Participants work together to develop draft outcomes.
- Participants finalise and prioritise outcomes.

PREPARATION/ HOMEWORK

Participants that have not been to the webinars were asked to watch these back (there was a short recap at the beginning of the event).

EVENT REPORT

Following the welcome and introductions, participants were asked:

WHAT'S SPECIAL ABOUT SURREY?

Responses were:

- Connecting people to nature
- Wildlife walks
- Diversity, landscape and importance of engagement.
- People come to nature for tranquillity and escape.
- Small blue butterfly for the first time.
- The undesignated areas have some great wildlife.
- There are very diverse habitats right next to each other.

SURREY NATURE RECOVERY – SEE PRESENTATION (APPENDIX)

Q&A

Following the presentations, there was the opportunity to ask questions. These will be used to generate a Frequently Asked Question (FAQ) page on the website:

Question	Answer
If we are in the plan, are we obliged to do anything? In 15 years' time could we build homes on it [the land]?	The guidance is that it's voluntary / non-statutory. Being on the SNR map isn't a designation.
Is this about solar panels, housing allocations etc?	No but there is an opportunity to join the dots.
Would being identified with one factor, preclude another?	No there will be lots of layers / connections.
If something is mapped - can people withdraw it [later]?	If they [the land manager] are not going to deliver it [Nature Recovery] there's no [little] point in mapping it.
Is there a list of species we are targeting?	Yes, there will be [a long and then] a short-list. On balance, it's more about [a focus on] habitat as that will also benefit species.
If we're not designated land, can we still benefit?	That is the aim. There is [also] help to assist with getting involved and benefitting.

NATURE RECOVERY IDEA GENERATION BY HABITAT (GROUP ACTIVITY).

Due to this being a condensed session compared to the 2/3 day events, the participants undertook a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) analysis for three combined themes:

- Heathland, woodland and forestry

- Waterways, wetlands and species rich grassland (watermeadows)
- Farmland including hedgerows, field margins and species rich grassland

In the last few minutes they were asked to underline the most important factor (particularly but not exclusively from “opportunities”). The results are set out below:

HEATHLAND, WOODLAND AND FORESTRY

SWOT	Output
Strengths	We've got a fair amount
	Quite well-connected woods
	Lots of rare heathland (vs other counties)
	Experience, expertise and skills
	Internationally significant
Weaknesses	Tax and land
	Too disconnected (people and habitat)
	Lack of knowledge
	Time and resources
	Complexity of schemes
	Staffing lack of labour
	Undervalued timber markets
	Fragmented land ownership
	Length of tenancies - long term planning
	<u>Long term planning</u>
Opportunities	Blended finance
	To reconnect
	No fence [GIS technology]
	<u>Engagement and education</u>
	<u>Venison and deer</u>
	Volunteering
	Overarching corridor for people
	Green social prescribing (create a workforce)
	<u>Technology - engagement and forestry</u>
	Existing 'dormant' groups that could be brought back - clusters
Better engagement 'Farmers of Surrey' Instagram	
Threats	Length of agreements [BNG, Carbon]
	Excessive road network breaking habitat
	Invasive species
	Deer
	Tree safety
	Existing 'dormant' groups that could be brought back - clusters
	Better engagement 'Farmers of Surrey' Instagram

WATERWAYS, WETLANDS AND SPECIES RICH GRASSLAND (WATERMEADOWS)

SWOT	Output
Strengths	Free of development
	Flood mitigation
	Already controlling water flows ie on the Wey
	Big landowners: SWT, MOD, SCC, NT
	Some meadows that have never been "improved" - Low level stocking, no fertilisers
Weaknesses	Water companies dumping [sewage]
	Lack of selective management
	How do you measure biodiversity / give yourself a biodiversity score?
	Small scattered landowners. We're missing the small farms.
	Risk of flooding
	Too many stakeholders involved
	Farmers undermined by water company behaviour
	A playground for people or is it for nature recovery?
	Lack of information - mapping and making it accessible
Opportunities	<u>Moving away from income foregone to value of benefits derived to society</u>
	Cold water swimming - needs to be resourced and managed
	Slowing water flows to alleviate flooding
	<u>Education</u>
	Getting farmers' attention to do something for nature.
	Needs a commercial incentive / compensated.
	Better engage the public
	Encourage and fund land managers already doing improvement works.
	Dialogue and engaging with landowners
	Lack of information - mapping and making it accessible
	<u>Water companies need to step up</u>
Threats	Threat to livestock farming
	Concerns that inclusion in LNRS might constrain us in future - valuation, asset security problems
	Tenant / landowner relationship [could cause friction]
	<u>Water companies need to step up</u>

FARMLAND INCLUDING HEDGEROWS, FIELD MARGINS AND SPECIES RICH GRASSLAND

Strengths	Collaborative and engaged farming community
	Variety of farms and farming styles
	Variety of landscapes
	Environmental work already being done
Weaknesses	People / access issues / managing the public
	Inflexibility of schemes
	Lack mechanism for farm tenants [to participate / benefit]
	Short term tenancies

	Clusters will need funding and guidance
	Fragmented land ownership
	Lack of skills / countryside skills eg hedgelaying
	Lack of time - while running a business
Opportunities	Opportunity to increase biodiversity etc at scale
	For using hedgerows etc to manage people
	To make contacting farmer easier via phones
	<u>Educating the public and kids QR codes, tone of information, profiling and sharing farm story</u>
	Link more with community
	People can equal more £ [monetarising] opportunities
	Opportunity to connect different habitats up
	<u>For overarching clusters at a county scale</u>
	Use nature friendly farming as marketing
	Better use of the countryside code - publicise better
	Prove business model of more biodiverse farms to government to get better investment
	Incentivise farmers to focus on biodiversity
Barriers / threats	Resources
	Funding
	Reduce ISPs etc
	Advice needed
	More people, more damage
	Land use pressures
	Risk to tenants from Nalvel [?] Capital
	Job losses
	Some farmers will never engage
	Climate change - changing the plants that can survive

DEVELOPING NATURE RECOVERY OUTCOMES (GROUP ACTIVITY)

Following a break for food and networking, participants were asked to select a high priority from the earlier SWOT activity to explore in more depth and to identify priority outcomes and actions that could be taken forward into the strategy. The following are the results:

TOPIC: COMPENSATE / INCENTIVISE (FOR WATER MANAGEMENT)

Outcome	Actions
Nature recovery is a viable economic alternative (flood prevention)	Link the economic payback to the intervention & compensation (flood management)
	Protecting landowners from liability
	<u>LNRS could link access to local markets ie carbon off setting Credits, nature markets ie Pinewood</u>

	Local authorities need to be better resourced to make Biodiversity Net Gain happen [planning departments / S106 officers]
	Minimum standards for waterway protection ie Countryside Stewardship

TOPIC: COMPENSATE / INCENTIVISE (FOR HEDGEROWS)

Outcome	Actions
Hedgerows - maintain and restore	Educate land managers about grants - farm clusters, land agents, mapping
	Advice / coordinated
	Basic qualified, sustainable SFI (Sustainable Farming Incentive)
	Volunteering community

TOPIC: COMPENSATE / INCENTIVISE (GENERAL)

Viable economic alternative	Educate farmers and land managers about funding
	Stimulate a local nature market

TOPIC: ROLE OF FARM CLUSTERS

Outcomes	Actions
Landscape scale biodiversity improvement and / or nature recovery	Sustained funding for administration of group (s) of clusters
Sustainable Farming Incentives (SFI) higher if in collaborative group.	County-wide co-ordinator but landscape type based on smaller groups
If successful, farmers likely to contribute to cost of running?	Farmers and all land managers - include all
Long term outcomes, not based on 3 year farming cycles	Need all connected landowners to be involved eg National Trust, SWT etc
	Role for Surrey Hills National Landscape
All landscapes	Long term sustained funding countywide Umbrella groups based on landscape types

TOPIC: ENGAGE AND EDUCATE

Outcomes	Actions
Public understanding of active rural environment eg need for woodland management	Countryside code [promoted] ie dogs and keeping to footpaths
Environment preserved and enhanced - green and pleasant land	Focus on things people care about eg red squirrels and bluebells
Mental health and well-being benefits (raised awareness during Covid)	Find hooks eg sweet chestnut, tell stories, beer
Benefit of volunteering to people and nature	Better maintained footpaths including signage
	Increased regular volunteers need to be managed
More opportunities for the public to get involved outside the 'rural bubble'	Social media
	Training / supervision
	How to engage and organise - intermediaries

Outcomes	Actions
	Need to know how
Awareness / understanding of children	Create opportunities for hands on [experiences for children]. Address access issues for school [visits]
A generation growing up appreciating nature and countryside	More information accessible areas / woodlands open to the public
Education on how [one] should treat different kind[s] of environment[s]	[Unreadable] do this and you'll learn about that eg Open Farm Sunday
Better understanding of the seasonality of food - so no demanding out of season	More people support and buy from local farms / growers / woodlands (charcoal)
	Sell the sizzle, not the steak' experiences
	QR Codes / data. How to get funding to build that platform
<u>Increase public understanding of an active rural environment</u>	<u>Actively supporting "Buy Local"</u>

REFLECTIONS

Participants were asked to comment on what had struck them during their discussions on outcomes and actions:

- We are currently working with Land App to join up [mapping, grants]
- Farmers need flexibility and need to be in control of their land.
- LNRS is hard to navigate and government departments need to join it up.
- There is an opportunity to join things up strategically ie a river corridor.
- Too many people out and about affecting nature ie margins and ground nesting birds. [The SNRS] needs to manage access.
- Our wide margins and fences do channel the public. They like it.
- Have multiplied species rich grassland exponentially.

Jim Boot, Senior Consultant, R4C 21st June 2024