

SIXTH WORKSHOP REPORT FARMERS AND GROWERS (2)

Resources
FOR CHANGE

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RESOURCES FOR CHANGE LTD

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CONTENTS

SURREY NATURE RECOVERY – WORKSHOP 6 FARMERS AND GROWERS (2)	3
INTRODUCTION	3
<i>Purpose</i>	3
<i>Principles / objectives</i>	3
<i>Preparation/ homework</i>	3
EVENT REPORT	3
<i>What's Special about surrey</i>	3
<i>Surrey Nature Recovery – see Presentation (appendix)</i>	3
<i>Q&A</i>	4
NATURE RECOVERY IDEA GENERATION BY HABITAT (GROUP ACTIVITY)	4
<i>Heathland, Woodland and Forestry</i>	4
<i>Waterways, wetland and species rich grassland (water meadows)</i>	6
<i>Farmland including hedgerows, field margins and species rich grassland</i>	7
DEVELOPING NATURE RECOVERY OUTCOMES (GROUP ACTIVITY)	8
<i>Farm clusters focussed on nature restoration</i>	8
<i>Development creation of new waterways and Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG)</i>	8
<i>Countryside Steward and Sustainable Farming Initiative (SFI)</i>	8
<i>Education / Forest Schools Training</i>	9
EVALUATION	9
JARGON	10

SURREY NATURE RECOVERY – WORKSHOP 6 FARMERS AND GROWERS (2)

Date: 2nd July 2024

Venue: Lingfield and Dormansland Community Centre

Time: 5pm to 7pm

Facilitators: Jim Boot and Neil Smith, Resources for Change

INTRODUCTION

PURPOSE

To involve a group of local 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

WHAT'S SPECIAL ABOUT SURREY

Participants were asked to say what was special to them about Surrey in respect of nature recovery.

Responses were:

- Most wooded county
- Extraordinary variety
- Mosaic / mixed habitats
- Heathland
- Downland
- Diverse farms / farmers / activities - lots of small farms
- Rivers! Varied, natural BOAs! [Biodiversity Opportunity Areas]

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:

Questions	Answers
Is the role to focus on the areas outside non-protected areas?	Outside of protected areas / irreplaceable habitats - 1000 hectares [additionally] to be protected by 2042.
Are the workshops the only way for people to contribute?	There are individual surveys to be completed on Commonplace [online] https://surreynaturerecovery.commonplace.is/
How will Local Authorities [contribute] to this when they are already very stretched?	Communities will provide much of [the contribution to nature recovery] but also local authority Biodiversity Plans.
Will LNRS hinder diversification - what are the planning limits / effects?	<i>The LNRS may be a material consideration in planning applications and Local Plans will have to take account of the LNRS in their development, but the LNRS itself won't include planning policies.</i>

NATURE RECOVERY IDEA GENERATION BY HABITAT (GROUP ACTIVITY)

The participants undertook a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) analysis for the following themes. Due to the constraints of room size and time, the themes were combined:

- Heathland, Woodland and Forestry
- Waterways, wetland and species rich grassland (water meadows)
- Farmland including hedgerows, field margins and species rich grassland

After completing one SWOT, the groups moved onto the next theme so they were able to spend time analysing each theme. During the last few minutes of each session, the participants were asked to agree and underline one or two opportunities (threats, weaknesses or strengths) that they felt were most important to address in the LNRS. The results were as follows:

HEATHLAND, WOODLAND AND FORESTRY

Strengths	Electricity companies carbon offsetting
	Nature is adaptive
	Heathland rare species
	Natural beauty
	Carbon capture
	Cooling effect
	Reparably wildlife rich areas
	Ancient woodland
	Variety of species - trees and heathland
	Ancient trees
	Network Rail has got much better - an example [replicable by others]
	Historical aspect of woodland
	Blindley Heath SSSI
	Health and wellbeing [contributing to]

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Weaknesses	Bad condition
	Lack of funding
	Disease
	Fragmentation of woodland and heathland
	East Surrey has few protected areas
	Over population of deer due to no natural predators
	Invasive species
	Utilities need to be involved / engaged
	Deer population
	Seen as a low priority by planners
	Recreational pressure - dogs, litter, erosion, disturbance
Opportunities	Better management
	Better access management
	Improve wet heathland
	Deer management
	Grey squirrel management
	Training for contractors
	Funding for management
	Enhanced biodiversity duty for public bodies
	Carbon capture
	Employment / education
	Pigs in small numbers / well managed
	Hedgerows to link woodlands (dormice)
	Ash dieback creating opportunities for glades - nightingales
	Food - nuts
	Forest schools
	Rare breed animals
	Working better with utilities - better co-ordination / joined up thinking / sticking to their licence
	BNG permitted development
Increasing agro forestry - grazing, cereals - claim CFI and CS	
Threats / Barriers	UK Power Networks cutting everything back
	Fires
	Diseases
	Development
	Are they assessing the ecological impact first? No!
	Will we run out of land suitable for BNG?
	Ash dieback
	Knowledge - people don't know about ie agro forestry

WATERWAYS, WETLAND AND SPECIES RICH GRASSLAND (WATER MEADOWS)

Strengths	Absorb the water
	Good corridors for nature
	Very biodiverse - particularly bank riparian zone
	Recreational value - fishing, paddle boarding, walking
	Carbon storage
	A lot of passion around water: citizen science, water testing, river fly monitoring
	River Eden BOA
	Blindley Heath SSSI
	Wetlands being created
	Natural flood plain
Weaknesses	Quality of water affects biodiversity
	Some are degraded
	Barriers - weirs
	Easily poached
	Much of area / water courses are on private land - need to be incentivised to manage in a particular way
	Infrastructure for water
	Rubbish washes up in wetlands
Opportunities	Poaching [by large herbivores] can create new habitats
	For recreation ie birdwatching
	Development - creating new waterways (BNG)
	Flood storage
	Countryside Stewardship / Sustainable Farming Incentive
	Education, mental health and well-being
	Biodiversity Opportunity Areas
	Slow the flow
	Catchment management partnerships - Eden for Nature and Lower Eden
Threats / Barriers	Fleas and tick treatment
	Pollution, run off, dogs, boats, nitrate pollution
	Invasive species - floating pennywort
	American Crayfish
	Carp - eat everything
	Development - not enough water
	Development - over abstracting
	Water companies - over abstracting
	Water companies - sewage works
	Food production could be threatened
	Abstract constraints / need a balance
	Climate change - water scarcity
	Climate change - rivers dry up
Climate change - severe flooding	

	Funding for beaver fencing / wetland creation
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FARMLAND INCLUDING HEDGEROWS, FIELD MARGINS AND SPECIES RICH GRASSLAND

Strengths	Plenty of hedgerows, small fields
	Low intensity farmland locally
	Diversity of woodland
	Lots of grassland = low chemical inputs
	Small-scale efficiency - fewer food miles
	Wildlife rich
	Carbon capture - improving soil health, tree / hedgerow planting, wetland
	Funding opportunities
	Volunteer networks
	Pollinators
	What about tenant farmers?
Weaknesses	Monoculture
	Intensive farming
	Excessive ploughing
	Poor hedgerow management
	Low profitability
	Too many "cooks" - complex and overlapping
	Agencies not aligned
Lack of incentives	
Opportunities	<u>Farm cluster focussed on nature restoration - 10+ members and lots of interest</u>
	Small landholdings provide opportunities for corridors, more pockets for nature without gap in between
	<u>Show casing farming with nature not against it</u>
	Pooling expertise / experience to share knowledge across the county
	Sharing knowledge / experience
	Diversification
	Social prescribing
	Education mental health and well-being
	Coop[erative] selling / marketing
	ELMS / SFI (but complex)
Green hay sharing of cuttings to boost other localities	
Threats / Barriers	How to engage other landowners / managers
	Development
	<u>Funding</u>
	Lack of knowledge
	Taxation especially for potential loss of Agricultural Property Relief
	Invasive species
	Disease
Paperwork	

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. They were also asked to underline the most important outcomes and actions for their topic. The following are the results:

FARM CLUSTERS FOCUSED ON NATURE RESTORATION

Outcome	Actions
Understanding of link between species and habitats. Web of life and where are we now?	Education, curation - local / parish based.
	Communication: telling and showing (takes time) visits, open-days, door-knocking, connecting to other networks / clusters
	Shared resources: equipment / time and skills - practical support. Knowledge
	Funded role(s): grow sustain the network - funding
	Building on what's already there: survey - geology, soil, species, habitats, flora and fauna
	Get people enthused
	The potential of hedgerows
	This is what we want to create - ponds, species rich grassland
	Open to opportunity: eg roadside verges, areas around parks, pitches, playing fields, schools, public land, local authority land

DEVELOPMENT CREATION OF NEW WATERWAYS AND BIODIVERSITY NET GAIN (BNG)

Outcome	Actions
Naturally functioning rivers with beavers and water voles	Stop development in flood plains
	Include in wetland creation
	Sustainable Urban Drainage (SUDS) and enforcement
	Re-naturalise rivers
	Reconnect flood plains - meandering
	Get policies into local plans - no development in flood zone 2 & 3 or has to be also a wetland creation project
	Remove barriers on rivers to fish migration
	Control / manage invasive species including eating signal crayfish
	[Reintroduce] beavers and voles
	Use no fence technology - allow cattle / livestock to access some parts

COUNTRYSIDE STEWARD AND SUSTAINABLE FARMING INITIATIVE (SFI)

Outcomes	Actions
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<u>LNRS needs to take into account landscape recovery</u>	<u>Coordinated thinking from DEFRA to align ELMS and LNRS</u>
Above and beyond what was available (BPS)	Targeted funding in relation to LNRS / management plans LNRS to be fitted into CS & SFI rather than stand-alone (don't recreate the wheel)
ELMS to be a simple one stop shop for farmers (without the punishments)	
LNRS to take into account landscape recovery that has already been done by other funding pots	Coordinated thinking from DEFRA to align ELMS and LNRS
	Needs to be advertised as a means of funding to help achieve LNRS
	LNRS leads must be aware of application process and the issues farmers face
Don't just prioritise the environment over food production	Times scales of funding options must align with LNRS
	Potential for farmers to upload their SFI options to LandApp to then be able to see where LNRS overlaps

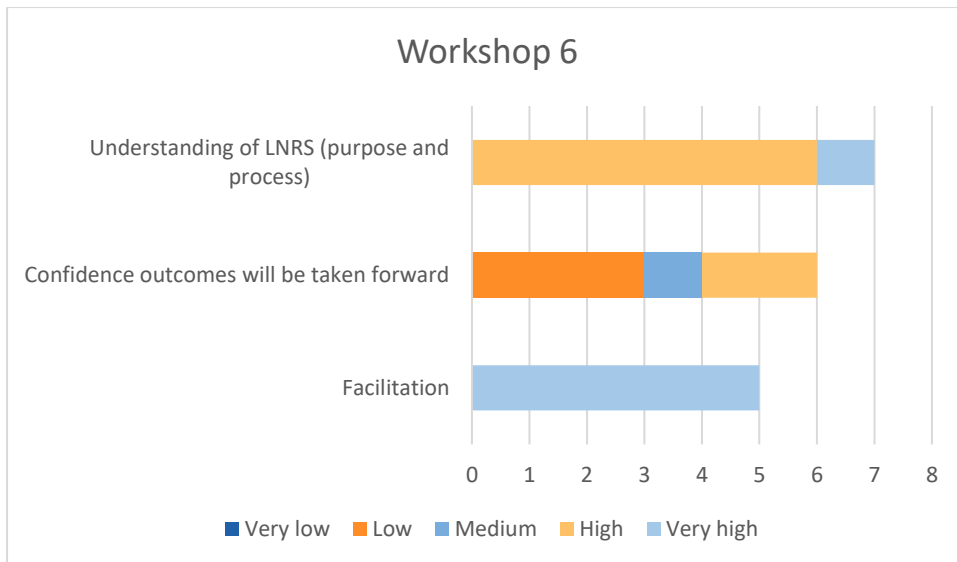
EDUCATION / FOREST SCHOOLS TRAINING

Outcomes	Actions
Universal rural education	<u>Forest or Farm Schools</u>
	<u>Outdoor learning as part of curriculum</u>
Improved mental health	Connecting kids with nature
Enabling talent and creativity by connecting with land and farms - promoting a sustainable community	Include Forest School / Outdoor <u>learning as part of the curriculum</u>
	Farm buddies with 10-15 year olds - needs proper funding

EVALUATION

Participants were asked to evaluate the workshop:

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JARGON

The following terms were used during the discussions:

BOAs	Biodiversity Opportunity Areas
CS	Countryside Stewardship
SFI	Sustainable Farming Incentive grants from government reward and support sustainable food production while protecting and enhancing nature
BPS	Basic Payments Scheme (from 2024, delinked payments are replacing payments under the Basic Payment Scheme)