

THE MISSING LYNX PROJECT

SOCIAL ENGAGEMENT AND CONSULTATION



A Social Engagement Strategy outlines the social consultation process to assess the social factors that influence the likelihood of achieving stakeholder acceptance of a lynx reintroduction in Northumberland, with expansion to the bordering areas of Cumbria and southern Scotland. The social consultation was developed in line with international and national guidelines e.g., IUCN Guidelines for Reintroductions and Other Conservation Translocations. For the social engagement and consultation, The Missing Lynx Project adopts the definition of a consultation as that of the Oxford learner's Dictionaries:

"the act of discussing something with someone or with a group of people before making a decision about it."

There are various ways stakeholder or interest groups and members of the public can be involved in the social engagement and consultation for The Missing Lynx Project (Fig. 1).

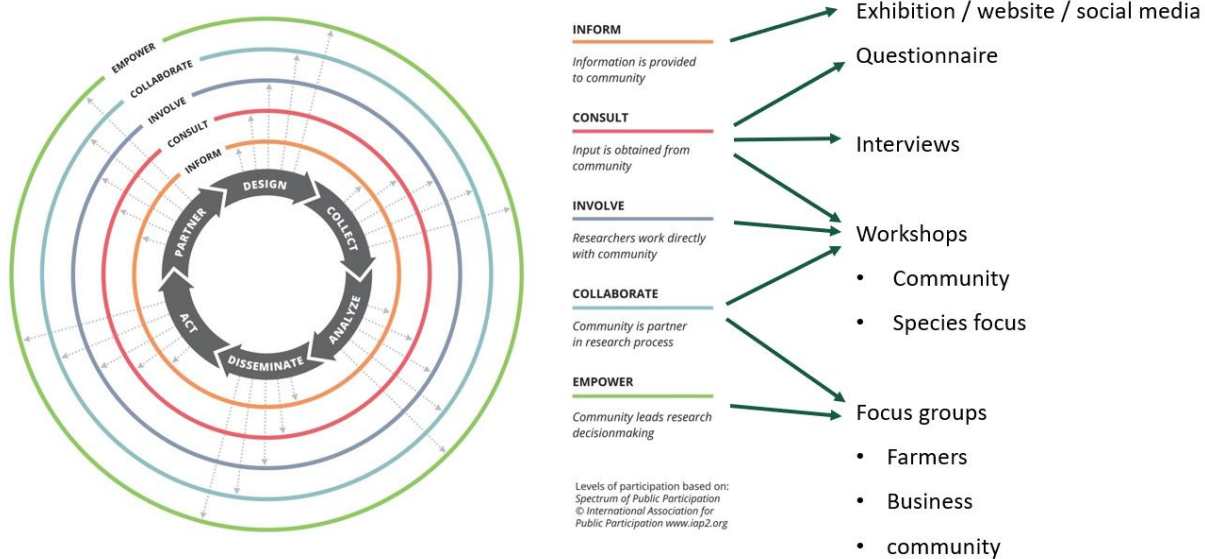


Figure 1. A diagram to show that at each step of the process, there is a choice in the level of participation.

Missing lynx exhibition

The core of the social engagement is the Missing lynx exhibition, which is a fee-free, ticketed mobile audiovisual immersion experience set in the biodiversity crisis context and providing evidence-based information from Europe about lynx as a species.

Interviews

Semi-structured interviews will be offered to local community members to gain an in-depth understanding of stakeholder opinions, attitudes, values, and motivations around lynx reintroduction.

Stakeholder meetings

National and regional stakeholders who have been identified as being potentially impacted and/or having a particular interest in a proposed lynx reintroduction will be offered a meeting to discuss the project further.

Community workshops

Community workshops give participants (6 – 8 per session) the opportunity to express and listen to views and opinions on the topic of lynx reintroduction. Participants listen to a short presentation about lynx as a species and the project in more detail. This is followed by a focus group discussion and a creative participatory task.

Questionnaire

Two standardised questionnaires have been developed: the individual and the stakeholder questionnaire. For the individual questionnaire both the passive and active voice will be captured through the consultation. Active voices are likely to be captured through attendance at the exhibition and promotion of the questionnaire through media platforms such as social media or the project's website. A market research company will be used to target the passive voices to ensure a proportional representation of opinion of the British public, reduce selection bias and with consideration of research objectivity.

Farming focus groups

These sessions will provide a platform to discuss lynx and different aspects of a lynx reintroduction. Evidence based information on lynx, sheep predation risk, mitigation measures and compensation from Europe will be presented to the groups, followed by discussion of the benefits and challenges of these measures in the British landscape.

Business focus groups

The focus groups will identify how to capture opportunity and manage any risk to local businesses. This group will be invited to develop a business plan capturing any perceived financial benefit of lynx reintroduction in their area.

European exchange visits

A European exchange visit will be offered for the key stakeholder groups to have the opportunity to learn first-hand from people living alongside lynx.

Lynx community group

The structure and focus of Lynx community group will be community led. This group will capture any ideas that might bring wider benefit for the community such as opportunities for young people. This group will be offered the opportunity to be involved in the project and complete tasks such as the scrutiny of the ecological assessments using the benefit of local knowledge.

Review process

The social consultation plan has been reviewed at different stages; by Natural England and by The Wildlife Trusts in the developmental phase of the social consultation. The social science methods were reviewed and approved by The Lifescape Research Ethics Committee (Reference LPREC25/03/24). Prior to commencing the work external expert review of the social science methods was sought:

"The Lifescape Lynx Reintroduction Feasibility Stakeholder Engagement Strategy is a very well thought through and well-conceived document. It is based on established guidance and principles concerning social feasibility, and these are communicated in a clear and transparent manner. The social dimensions of the reintroduction of this iconic carnivore are treated with the necessary relevance. The approach proposed should promote a two way stream of communication between the reintroduction team and the groups of interest, allowing for the development of long term relationships where all voices are heard, which is paramount in wildlife restoration."

Dr Adriana Consorte-McCrea

Chair of the IUCN/SSC CTSG Human-Wildlife Interactions Working Group (January 2024)



IUCN/SSC Conservation Translocations SG

If you would like any additional information, please contact info@missinglynxproject.org.uk