THE MISSING LYNX PROJECT

Social Engagement and Consultation

Interim Report

August 2025

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Eurasian lynx *(Lynx lynx)* (hereafter 'lynx') have likely been absent from Britain for at least 800 years, and by the middle of the 20th century, lynx were also extinct in many areas of Western and Central Europe. Contemporary reintroductions in Europe started in the 1970s and have since reinstated many subpopulations. These reintroductions provide a blueprint for a potential reintroduction of lynx to Britain.

A reintroduced population in Britain would act as an additional remote European lynx population and could result in ecological, economic and social benefits locally. Our research has shown that lynx released into Northumberland could grow into a healthy population. The habitat patch where lynx are predicted to live covers north-west Northumberland, the edge of Cumbria and into the bordering areas of southern Scotland (the 'project area').

Under national and international guidelines[1][2][3] the ecological impact together with the practical and social feasibility must be thoroughly examined for any proposed reintroduction. An in-depth social consultation was therefore undertaken by The Missing Lynx Project to fully understand the socioeconomic circumstances, community attitudes and values, motivations and expectations, human behaviours and behavioural change, and the anticipated costs and benefits of a lynx reintroduction.

The Missing Lynx Project is a partnership between The Lifescape Project, Northumberland Wildlife Trust and the Royal Society of Wildlife Trusts. The engagement and consultation work of the project has provided a range of opportunities to listen to and explore people's thoughts and opinions around bringing lynx back. The partnership would support a reintroduction if the conditions are right – if there is an area in Britain where lynx can live, if it's practically possible, and if local people are accepting of the animal back in the landscape.

Over a 14-month period, the project shared the results of the ecological research with stakeholder groups and communities local to this area and listened to people's opinions through a range of approaches, including via questionnaires and through participatory processes such as deployment of a touring 'Missing Lynx exhibition', interviews, workshops and focus groups.

Nearly 10,000 visitors attended the Missing Lynx exhibition and 1,700 people completed the individual questionnaire, with 1,075 of these respondents living in the project region. Our results show that overall, there is a high level of support

[1] IUCN/SSC. (2013). Guidelines for Reintroductions and Other Conservation Translocations. Version 1.0. Gland, Switzerland: IUCN Species Survival Commission, viiii + 57 pp.

[2] Defra (2021). Reintroductions and other conservation translocations: code and guidance for England. Version 1.2 (updated July 2024). GOV.UK.

[3] National Species Reintroduction Forum (2014). The Scottish Code for Conservation Translocations: Best Practice Guidelines for Conservation Translocations in Scotland Version 1.1. Scottish Natural Heritage.

(72%) and positive attitudes towards a lynx reintroduction amongst individuals within the project region.

Regional respondents identified the risk to farming activities as the greatest potential cost of returning lynx and ecological restoration as the greatest potential benefit, although more human-centred and economic reasons were also well supported. The results show that several groups, corresponding to those potentially most affected were overrepresented in the sample, including rural respondents and those working in farming and landowning, environment and conservation, forestry and hunting, shooting and game. Meetings with key stakeholder focus groups, such as farming, forestry, business and the community, were held to listen to, acknowledge and respect both enthusiasm and concerns towards a lynx reintroduction. The output of these focus groups will be incorporated into future planning to ensure that identified opportunities and risk management solutions are co-developed with the local community. This Social Engagement and Consultation Interim Report presents the initial findings and will be followed by a comprehensive peer-reviewed document.

Our 'bottom-up' approach, where people in the project area had the opportunity to be listened to first, indicates a high level of support towards a lynx reintroduction. **The project will continue to work with local communities to consider how a reintroduction project could be managed to maximise benefits and reduce risks.** The project hopes to apply for a licence but only once the project has a plan which has been collaboratively designed with local people and sets out measures that are acceptable, feasible and can be implemented.

CONTENTS

1. DEFINITIONS

Community: refers to both a community of place (a community of people who are bound together because of where they reside, work, and visit), and community of interest (a community of people who share a common interest or passion).

Ecological research: explores the relationship between living organisms and the environment.

Interquartile range (IQR): a measure of numerical dispersion, which describes the spread of the central 50% of values within a dataset. It typically accompanies the median value.

IUCN: International Union for the Conservation of Nature.

Median: the middle value in a range of values.

Mitigation measures: within this document, this term refers to methods used to prevent livestock loss.

Mode: the value that appears most often in a dataset. It can be expressed within text as 'mode=, f=' where the mode is the most frequent value, and f is the number of times the mode appears within the dataset.

n: number of responses in a dataset.

Project area: north-west Northumberland, the edge of Cumbria and into the bordering areas of southern Scotland.

Social consultation: process of seeking and considering the views of stakeholders, including individuals, groups, or organisations, on a specific issue or proposal to inform decision-making.

Representative sample: a subset of a larger group that accurately reflects the selected characteristics of that entire group.

Respondent: a person who supplied information for a questionnaire.

Social engagement: methods the project used to provide information about lynx and The Missing Lynx Project.

Social engagement strategy (SES): a range of methods to engage and collect opinions from individuals. The strategy adhered to both national and international reintroduction guidelines. Our SES encompassed the social engagement, the social consultation, a communication plan, and ongoing engagement with stakeholders during the post-consultation period.

Stakeholders: Person or group with an interest in lynx reintroduction.

2. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Lynx are cats, similar to the size of a slim Labrador dog, with distinctive tufted ears and a short tail. They are native to Britain and lived here for thousands of years. As human impacts increased, many animals and plants began to decline and along with many other species we lost lynx from our landscapes. By the middle of the 20th century lynx had also been lost from much of Europe. Contemporary lynx reintroductions in Europe began in Germany and Switzerland in the 1970s. During the subsequent 50 years, reintroduction projects helped re-establish populations of lynx in most European countries. The success of these reintroductions offers a blueprint for a potential reintroduction of lynx in Britain.

Overarching public support for lynx reintroductions is essential. Listening to and cooperatively designing plans with stakeholder groups to mitigate negative impacts and boost positive impacts is crucial for fostering long term coexistence. There are a range of actual and perceived risks and benefits of a lynx reintroduction. For example, one benefit of lynx reintroduction is the potential environmental benefits within a region, such as improving the overall level of biodiversity. Britain is one of the most nature depleted countries in the world[4], with only half of our biodiversity left, and one in six species are at risk of extinction. Reintroducing missing native species, especially a top carnivore, assists in improving overall biodiversity. Mammalian apex predators are missing from the British landscape[5] and have been for hundreds of years, leaving only meso-predators such as foxes, badgers, pine martens and Scottish wildcats.

Lynx reintroduction can also bring economic benefits such as through tourism. A recent study in Spain[6] found that tourism related to the restoration of Iberian lynx generated €1.04 million a year of direct economic benefit and also a further €0.51 million of indirect benefit for the businesses supporting tourism.

One of the main potential risks of reintroducing lynx is the predation of sheep. Across different European countries, the level of lynx-related livestock losses varies significantly, though in most countries, it remains low. A recent report provides typical figures[7] and shows no direct correlation between the number of lynx and the number of predation incidents. Predation rates depend heavily on national and local contexts, including farming husbandry practices. For instance, in Norway—where sheep often graze in forested areas, the lynx's preferred habitat—an average of 330 lynx is associated with around 5,296 reported predation cases annually, although few are professionally verified. In contrast,

[4] Burns, F, Mordue, S, al Fulaij, N, Boersch-Supan, PH, Boswell, J, Boyd, RJ, Bradfer-Lawrence, T, de Ornellas, P, de Palma, A, de Zylva, P, Dennis, EB, Foster, S, Gilbert, G, Halliwell, L, Hawkins, K, Haysom, KA, Holland, MM, Hughes, J, Jackson, AC, Mancini, F, Mathews, F, McQuatters-Gollop, A, Noble, DG, O'Brien, D, Pescott, OL, Purvis, A, Simkin, J, Smith, A, Stanbury, AJ, Villemot, J, Walker, KJ, Walton, P, Webb, TJ, Williams, J, Wilson, R, Gregory, RD. (2023). State of Nature 2023. The State of Nature partnership. Available at: www.stateofnature.org.uk

[5] Premier, J., Brady, D., Cartwright, S., Robinson, H., Weckworth, B., Oeser, J., Eagle, A., Kramer-Schadt, S. & Heurich, M. (2025). Exploring the ecological feasibility of restoring Eurasian lynx to Great Britain using spatially explicit individual-based modelling. *Journal of Environmental Management, 389*, p.125646.

[6] Ministerio de Agricultura y Pesca, Alimentación y Medio Ambiente. (2017). El Turismo de Naturaleza en España, - Serie AyP_serie Medio Ambiente nº 9. NIPO: 013-17-154-8.

[7] Rigg, R. (2024). Lynx and livestock: Measures to prevent damage and mitigate conflict. Carnivore Damage Prevention News, 28, 45-59.

Sweden, which borders Norway, has a much larger lynx population (1,080 individuals) but far fewer reported predation incidents (145 per year). Despite this, Sweden typically records the second-highest sheep losses in Europe. Elsewhere, losses range from negligible (e.g., in Croatia, Latvia, and Germany) to around 100 annually in countries like France. Various preventative measures and compensation schemes are already in use across Europe to reduce the risk of livestock predation. The project team is currently engaging with farmers to explore how such strategies could be applied locally.

The Missing Lynx Project is working with a range of stakeholders to cooperatively design plans to mitigate risks and boost benefits, for example, through a co-designed lynx community business plan. **The Missing Lynx Project is a partnership between The Lifescape Project, Northumberland Wildlife Trust and the Royal Society of Wildlife Trusts.** The partnership would support a reintroduction if the conditions are right – if there is an area in Britain where lynx can live, if it's practically possible, and if local people are accepting of the animal returning to the landscape.

Our research, recently published in the Journal of Environmental Management (August 2025)[8], has shown that lynx released into Northumberland could grow into a healthy population. The habitat patch (hereafter 'project area') where lynx would be predicted to live covers north-west Northumberland, the edge of Cumbria and into the bordering areas of southern Scotland. The project has shared these results with interest groups and communities local to this area and listened to people's opinions. To explore whether local people are accepting of lynx back in the landscape, an in-depth social engagement and consultation was completed.

[8] Premier, J., Brady, D., Cartwright, S., Robinson, H., Weckworth, B., Oeser, J., Eagle, A., Kramer-Schadt, S. & Heurich, M. (2025). Exploring the ecological feasibility of restoring Eurasian lynx to Great Britain using spatially explicit individual-based modelling. *Journal of Environmental Management, 389*, p.125646.

3. OBJECTIVES

The overall objective of The Missing Lynx Project's social engagement and consultation was to undertake an assessment of socioeconomic factors that influence the likelihood of achieving social acceptance. To achieve this objective, a range of opportunities to listen to and explore people's thoughts and opinions around bringing lynx back were offered. People were able to engage through different ways, including via questionnaires and through visiting a touring 'Missing Lynx exhibition,' interviews, workshops and focus groups.

The social engagement and consultation had three main aims:

(1) to provide information on, and to reconnect local communities with, a lost native species that may have been unknown to them,

(2) to provide opportunities for everyone's voices to be heard, and gain an in-depth understanding of community attitudes and values, motivations, and expectations of a lynx reintroduction, and

(3) to engage with people who have concerns about a lynx reintroduction proposal through collaborative development of aspects of a reintroduction plan.

A 'Social Engagement Strategy' (SES) document was developed and included a range of methods to engage with and collect opinions from individuals. The strategy adhered to both national and international reintroduction guidelines. Our SES encompassed the social engagement, the social consultation (delivered within a 14-month period from March 2024 to May 2025), a communication plan, and ongoing engagement with stakeholders during the post-consultation period (**see figure 1**).

Figure 1. Visual summary of the social engagement strategy for The Missing Lynx Project (* activities that will be used in ongoing social engagement).

The project worked with the identified stakeholders (**see below – 5. Who was involved?**) in a collaborative manner and aspects of the SES were community driven, such as the Lynx Community Group.

This document outlines where the social engagement and consultation was located, what it involved, who was involved and how the data was explored. This is followed by the key findings from the social engagement and consultation, and the project's next steps.

4. WHERE WAS IT LOCATED?

The results of the ecological research guided the planning of the social engagement and consultation. Seven potential lynx release sites were identified and tested in England and Wales. Only one of the sites in England and Wales was found to be viable: an area that centred on Kielder Forest in northern England. The modelling predicted that if lynx were to be released in north-west Northumberland they could grow into a sustainable population. The habitat patch where lynx are predicted to live from such a release covers north-west Northumberland, the edge of Cumbria and into the bordering areas of southern Scotland (**see figure 2**).

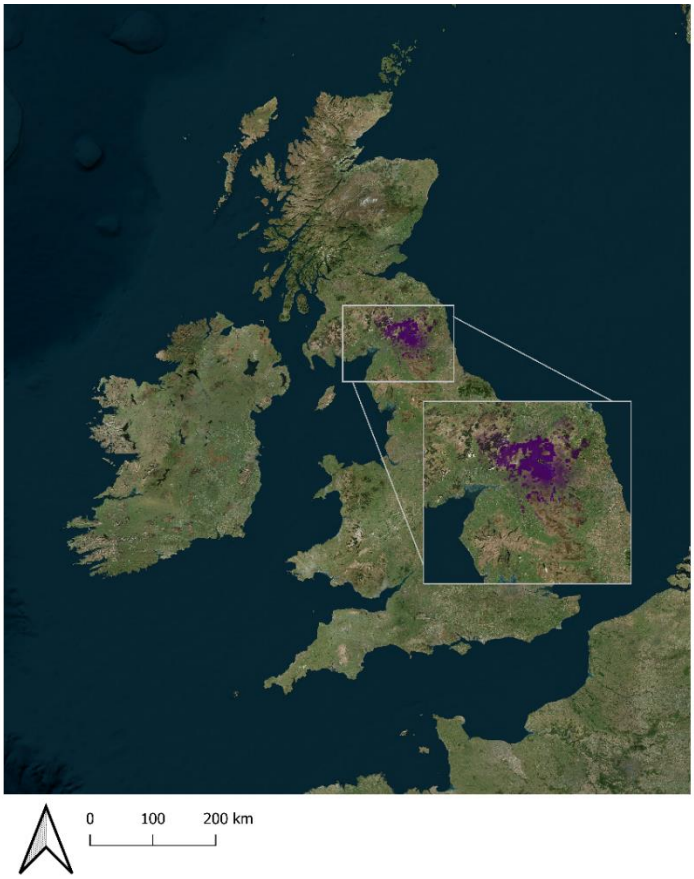


Figure 2. The predicted growth of a lynx population 5 years after release (purple shading), used to plan the location and extent of The Missing Lynx Project's social engagement and consultation.

The predicted use of the habitat by lynx in this area defined the spatial scope of the social engagement and consultation. The SES has both a local/regional and a national focus. Within the IUCN/SSC (2013) reintroduction guidelines[9] there is a requirement to focus engagement and consultation with individuals and groups who are likely to be more affected by any proposal. However, given the national

[9] IUCN/SSC. (2013). Guidelines for Reintroductions and Other Conservation Translocations. Version 1.0. Gland, Switzerland: IUCN Species Survival Commission, viii + 57 pp.

significance and likely interest in this species, there will also be national engagement and an opportunity for the contribution of ideas and opinions from the general public following the extensive local consultation.

This ecological modelling work produced maps that show the predicted use of an area by lynx for defined periods of time following release. To understand the likelihood of a lynx population surviving, a modelling period of 100 years was used. Looking far into the future is critical in understanding the eventual success and size of a population of lynx in Britain. However, to give a more relevant timescale in terms of impact on communities and livelihoods, lynx population growth maps for 5, 10, 20 and 50 years were also produced.

The social engagement and consultation was designed to support the consideration of a potential release of lynx in the project area. A release of lynx in north-west Northumberland is likely to result in lynx moving over into the bordering areas of Cumbria and into southern Scotland, as illustrated in figure 2 where the purple shading shows the predicted growth of a population across a wider habitat patch area. The primary focus of the engagement and consultation is therefore in north-west Northumberland, the edge of Cumbria and into the bordering areas of southern Scotland.

5. WHO WAS INVOLVED?

Stakeholders were identified through a method called 'stakeholder analysis.' Peer-reviewed literature, grey literature (research that is not formally published through an academic process), and a workshop for species reintroduction experts were used to design the mapping process and identify stakeholders.

Ten stakeholder groups were defined:

1. Local communities
2. Farming and landowning
3. Forestry
4. Hunting / shooting / game
5. Parents / pet owners
6. Environment and conservation
7. Underrepresented groups
8. Heritage, tourism, and recreation
9. The scientific community
10. Regulatory bodies

The potential positive and negative impacts of a lynx reintroduction were identified and assessed for each stakeholder group. Stakeholders were then ranked on impact level (positive and negative) and prioritised to plan the order and depth of consultation.

The first stakeholder group (local communities) was identified and ranked using the ecological model predictions (**see figure 2**), which show where lynx are likely to go following a release. Three levels of potential impact or interest were defined:

- High: Most likely to have lynx present in the area following reintroduction and this is highly likely to generate significant interest within the local population.
- Medium: This geographical area may have lynx passing through (or a low likelihood of lynx establishing home ranges) following a reintroduction, particularly in the short term (<10 years post release). The areas are close enough for a level of interest to be expressed by communities.

- General: It is expected that there will be public interest from wider geographical areas. Proposals are less likely to affect their everyday lives and/or livelihoods but there is likely to still be interest.

Parish council boundaries were used to identify the high and medium level stakeholder community groups in northern England, and community councils to identify community groups in southern Scotland.

Over 550 individual stakeholders and groups were originally identified within these broad categories. A snowball sampling approach (a recruitment technique where identified stakeholders recommend other people to contact) was implemented to reach groups initially unidentified. This led to an overall engagement with approximately 1,000 stakeholders.

6. WHAT DID IT INVOLVE?

A 'bottom-up approach' was used for the social engagement and consultation, which means people living in the area where lynx could be potentially reintroduced had the opportunity to be listened to first. If the project were to progress to the next stage, local knowledge and management preferences will be integrated into comprehensive protocols.

The SES methods were reviewed by an ethics committee (Reference LPREC25/03/24). The documentation for this review included detailed methods for data collation and planned analytical approaches. The research outputs of the SES could include submission of manuscripts for peer-reviewed publication in scientific journals. Informed consent was gained prior to any activities collecting data delivered by the SES. Data storage complied with the *Data Protection Act 2018.*

Before the full-scale method was implemented, each method was subjected to a pilot study process, where a smaller, preliminary study was conducted to highlight any adjustments needed within the technique. Methods were planned to be as accessible as possible to a range of individuals, for example, questionnaires could be completed online or in paper form, and interviews were held at a time and location most suitable for the interviewee. Where data was collected, all participants were provided with an information sheet and were asked to complete a consent form. Debrief sheets were provided at the end of the social engagement activity or in a follow-up email. All data was anonymised.

6.1 Stakeholder engagement

6.1.1 Missing Lynx Exhibition

The core of the social engagement was the Missing Lynx exhibition, a walk-through video[10] (1.5 minutes long) shows the exhibition at The Sill, Northumberland National Park's National Landscape Discovery Centre. The exhibition was a free, mobile audiovisual immersion experience that set the context of the biodiversity crisis and provided evidence-based information about lynx as a species, its history in Britain and reintroductions across Europe. Between April 2024 and May 2025, this travelling 'Missing Lynx exhibition' was hosted at 15 different locations across the project area. This included town and village halls, agricultural colleges and visitor centres.

[10] The Missing Lynx Project. (2024). The Missing Lynx exhibition. Vimeo. https://vimeo.com/973904489?share=copy [Date accessed: 24 June 2025].

6.1.2 Farmer visit to Europe

There is a risk of lynx predating livestock and experiences across Europe have been shared and discussed throughout the social consultation. To provide an opportunity for direct experience and peer-to-peer learning, a trip for farmers to visit lynx projects and livestock farmers already living with lynx in Europe was arranged. In February 2025, farmers living in the project area, both in Scotland and England, and who had been engaged with the project were invited on the trip. The following invitations were made:

- Sheep farmers/organisations in Northumberland and bordering areas of Cumbria: 18
- Sheep farmers/organisations in southern Scotland: 14

In total, seven local farmers, with varying opinions on lynx reintroduction, attended the trip. Due to the busy schedule of farmers, the trip was condensed to four days. All expenses of the trip were covered by the project.

The group visited two countries (Switzerland and Germany), which had lived with reintroduced lynx for differing periods of time. Between 1971 and 1976, lynx were reintroduced in Switzerland and the population now stands at approximately 300 lynx. Between 2016 and 2020, 20 lynx were released in the Palatinate Forest, Germany and by 2021, a further 18 young lynx were recorded in the Palatinate Forest and Vosges region across Germany and France. Visiting both countries provided attendees with a broader understanding of what it is like living with lynx.

In Switzerland, attendees had a talk from KORA Foundation[11] (carnivore management centre), AGRIDEA[12] (livestock protection agency), and visited a sheep and livestock guardian dog breeder. In Germany, attendees had a talk from the Lynx and Wolf Coordination Centre (KLUWO)[13] and visited two deer farmers who had experienced livestock loss to lynx. A short film of this trip has been produced.

6.1.3 Stakeholder meetings

Stakeholder meetings were offered to identified interest groups as part of the social engagement and consultation process. This provided an opportunity for organisations to learn about the project before making an informed decision on lynx reintroduction. These meetings were typically 60 minutes and included introductions, a presentation about The Missing Lynx Project and time for questions about the project. No data was collected in these meetings so time could be focussed on questions from attendees. Individuals from these organisations were informed of a stakeholder questionnaire, which is planned for distribution in the second half of 2025. Stakeholder meetings were offered from the initial launch date of The Missing Lynx Project (March 2024) and are ongoing.

6.2 Stakeholder consultation

6.2.1 Interviews

Semi-structured interviews were offered to people living in the project area from March 2024 to March 2025. The purpose of the interviews was to gain an in-depth understanding of opinions, attitudes, values, and motivations relating to a potential lynx reintroduction. An interview topic guide was developed, which aimed to ask interviewees how they felt about the condition of nature in Britain, lynx as a species, a reintroduction of lynx into the area, impacts of a lynx reintroduction, main priorities that need addressing if lynx reintroduction were to happen in the

[11] KORA, Raubtierökologie und Wildtiermanagement (2025). KORA – CARNIVORE ECOLOGY AND WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT. KORA. https://www.kora.ch/en [Date accessed: 24 June 2025].

[12] AGRIDEA. (2018). Protection of herds. AGRIDEA. https://agridea.abacuscity.ch/en/3~515000~Shop/Publication/Development-of-rural-areas/Protection-of-herds?session.alleSprachen=false&setvar=true [Date accessed: 24 June 2025].

[13] RheinlandPfalz. (2016). Lynx and Wolf Coordination Centre. FAWF. https://fawf.wald.rlp.de/forschung-und-monitoring-unsere-aufgaben/koordinationszentrum-luchs-und-wolf/ [Date accessed: 24 June 2025].

future and if there were other native species they would like to see reintroduced. The interviews were held at a time, date and location most suitable for the interviewee, and lasted between 60 - 280 minutes. All interviews were audio recorded. All data was anonymised.

6.2.2 Individual questionnaire

As people in Britain have lived without lynx for hundreds of years, there is a widespread lack of knowledge on the species. People were encouraged to engage with lynx information materials before completing the questionnaire. The purpose of the individual questionnaire was to understand attitudes, values, motivations and expectations, and the anticipated negative impacts and benefits of a potential lynx reintroduction into Britain. The individual questionnaire included 22 questions split into three sections: information about the respondent, knowledge on lynx, and attitudes towards lynx and lynx reintroduction in Britain. Questions were both structured as open-ended and closed-ended questions.

Over a 14-month period, the individual questionnaire was distributed and available to complete (March 2024 – May 2025). The questionnaire was open for anyone to complete and was proactively advertised at the regional level. The questionnaire was hosted on the project website and promoted on project and partner's social media pages, through leaflets, at the exhibition, at interviews, at community workshops, and at focus group sessions. In addition to this, a postal leaflet drop to advertise the exhibition and questionnaire was organised. Leaflets were delivered to 8,348 addresses in the Northumberland / Cumbria region of the project area and 9,631 addresses in the southern Scotland region of the project area. It was possible to complete the questionnaire either online or in paper form. The first half of the respondent's postcode was collected to allow for data from those living in the project area to be analysed separately.

The consultation was designed to capture both the active and the passive voice. The questionnaire collected information from the 'active voice,' which was generally people who had an existing interest in the topic or have engaged with the project. Active voices were also 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 voice, which is people who do not have an active relationship with the topic, in the second half of 2025.

6.2.3 Community workshops

Community workshops gave participants (6 – 8 individuals per session) the opportunity to express and listen to views and opinions on the topic of lynx reintroduction. Participants listened to a short presentation, followed by a group discussion and a creative participatory task. The presentation provided

information about lynx as a species and explored the project in more depth. The focus group discussion topic guide included:

- How do you feel about the condition of nature?
- What do you think of lynx as a species?
- How would you feel if lynx were reintroduced?
- Which native species would you like to see reintroduced?

The focus group discussions were audio recorded. Following the discussion, attendees engaged in a creative participatory task to explore '*What do you think the potential impacts of a lynx reintroduction could be?*'. Attendees used a diagramming method to record their perceived impacts of a lynx reintroduction, why they thought it would be an impact, how to manage it and further information that was required on that particular topic.

Between April and August 2024, 12 community workshops were undertaken at six different locations across northern England and southern Scotland and lasted between 90 – 120 minutes.

6.2.4 Focus groups

Before starting the social engagement and consultation process, three focus groups were identified: business management, community and farming. All focus groups were for people from both northern England and southern Scotland. Attendees were recruited through the exhibition, on social media and through the monthly newsletter. The project took a flexible and adaptable approach to our social consultation, and reserved capacity for other focus groups to form. During the consultation process, interest was expressed for a forestry and a game management focus group. For focus group sessions held in-person, food was provided and fuel expenses were covered by the project.

6.2.4.1 Business management group

The purpose of the business management focus group sessions was to explore potential benefits for businesses and communities of a lynx reintroduction, opportunities that may arise for young people, potential barriers to delivering those benefits and opportunities, and to identify risks associated with business development and how to overcome these. Two independent contractors, experienced in community business planning, were commissioned by the project to facilitate the co-development of a regional business management plan through a community-led approach. 23 business owners engaged through focus group sessions and individual interviews.

6.2.4.2 Lynx Community Group

The purpose of the Lynx Community Group was to ensure local community members had an opportunity to participate in ongoing discussions, share their concerns and give ideas. This platform was designed for those holding a spectrum of views on lynx reintroduction to discuss aspects of a reintroduction project. The group is largely directed by the local community, for the local community. Sessions have been held online and in-person, both in northern England and in southern Scotland, and lasted approximately 90 – 120 minutes. The sessions started in October 2024 and are ongoing. At the time of writing this document, there were 117 Lynx Community Group members and 45 members had attended sessions.

6.2.4.3 Farming group

There is a risk of lynx predating livestock and the risk as experienced across Europe has been shared and discussed in the social consultation through farming focus groups. Livestock owners were recruited through the exhibition and through a snowball sampling approach (a recruitment technique where identified stakeholders recommend other people to contact). Following standardised qualitative research practice, each farming focus group had a maximum of eight attendees. Three farming focus groups (one in each region of the project area) were organised and designed to provide a platform to listen to and record opinions of livestock owners, living and working in the project area. Three sessions were held for each farming focus group and included:

- Information on lynx behaviour and ecology and risk of predation
- Information and discussion on mitigation measures and project support
- Information and discussion about payment schemes

Each session included a presentation and a focus group discussion. Sessions two and three were attended by European experts, who delivered presentations on mitigation measures and compensatory payment schemes, and directly answered questions from attendees. Sessions were audio recorded and lasted approximately 120 minutes. All attendees received a 59-page booklet, which provided information on the mitigation measures and payment schemes offered across Europe. If the project progresses to a reintroduction, local knowledge and output from these focus group sessions will be integrated into comprehensive management protocols. The farming focus group had 66 signups from local farmers and, overall, 19 individuals attended the sessions.

6.2.4.4 Forestry group

As the consultation progressed, an interest for a forestry focus group emerged from individuals working in the forestry sector. Online sessions were planned to explore the behaviour and ecology of lynx, collate practical questions relating to forestry and lynx, and provide opportunities to ask questions of those working in the forestry sector in Europe where lynx lives. The forestry focus group had 41 individuals, from 11 different forestry organisations, sign up to attend the sessions. Overall, there were 24 individuals who attended these sessions. These

meetings are ongoing and outputs will be incorporated into management proposals.

6.2.4.5 Game management group

More recently, an interest for a game management focus group emerged. During the writing of this document (July 2025), the group was being developed.

6.3 Consultation and engagement activity summary

Almost **10,000** visitors to the exhibition over 103 days and across 15 venues located across the project area

1,700 completed individual questionnaires, with **1,075** of the respondents living in the project region. Of these, **1,073** answered the question: 'How do you feel about a lynx reintroduction in Northumberland (where the population could expand into bordering areas)?'

>80 stakeholder meetings

50 one-to-one interviews, equalling **55** hours

12 community workshops

556 monthly email newsletter subscribers

117 Lynx Community Group members and **45** session attendees

66 farming focus group signups and **19** attendees

42 business focus group signups and **23** attendees

41 forestry focus group signups and **24** attendees

32 local farmers and farming organisations invited to the Europe trip and **7** attendees

7. HOW WERE THE DATA EXPLORED?

Qualitative (verbal and written) data collected from semi-structured interviews, community workshops and focus groups were analysed using a six-phased method called thematic analysis. This is where the results are identified from within the data and are not restricted by pre-determined questions. This analysis shows meaningful patterns or themes and offers insights into interviewees' perspectives and experiences.

Quantitative (numerical) data collected from the questionnaires were analysed using methods known as descriptive and inferential statistics. These tests summarise the data, compare data from demographic groups and draw conclusions from the data. They support the creation of graphs to visualise the data collected.

This initial report presents the key findings of these analyses and will be followed by a peer-reviewed document, including a comprehensive methods and results section.

8. KEY FINDINGS

8.1 Demographics of questionnaire respondents

The individual questionnaire collected data on the demographics of the respondent including age, gender, ethnicity, rurality, and education (**see table 1**).

Table 1. Demographics of regional questionnaire respondents (n= 1073). Respondents had a 'Prefer not to say' option and answers to this response are removed from the table (mode = most frequent value in dataset, f = frequency of mode in dataset). Differences in sample sizes ('n') per demographic category can be observed where respondents did not share data.

Demographic	Demographic level	Respondents (%)*	Demographic	Demographic level	Respondents (%)*
Age (mode=3 (46 – 65 years old), f=384, n=1057)	25 years of age or younger	17.5	**Gender** (mode=1 (woman) f=530, n=1056)	Woman	50.2
	26 – 45 years old	25.0		Man	48.7
	46 – 65 years old	36.3		Trans-gender	0.0
	66 – 85 years old	21.0		Non-binary	1.1
	86 years of age and older	0.2		Describe in another way	0.0
Ethnicity (mode =4 (white), f=1005, n=1041)	Asian, or Asian British	1.6	**Rurality** (mode = 1 (Rural), f =435, n=1069)	Rural	40.7
	Black, Black British, Caribbean or African	0.1		Semi-rural	31.0
	Mixed or multiple	1.7		Urban	28.3
	White	96.4	**Education** (mode = 3 (Qualifications at and above degree level), f =687, n=1026)	No qualifications	3.8
	Other	0.1		Qualifications below degree level	29.2
				Qualifications at and above degree level	67.0

*Results may not equate to 100% exactly due to value rounded to 1 decimal place.

Demographic data of respondents can be compared to typical regional and national data to investigate biases in respondent groups. As an example, if more women answer the questionnaire than men this would make the results biased towards the 'female voice.' However, typical regional demographic data is not always available and could not be obtained for all the criteria here, so national comparative data were used throughout to standardise approach. Typical regional data, where available, will be used for more in-depth investigation of the data in subsequent analyses following this interim report.

Most respondents were aged between 46–65 years old (36.3%) and both age groups of 46–65 and 66-85 years old were overrepresented. Respondents aged 25 years of age or younger (17.5%) were underrepresented when compared to national statistics (30.2%). However, gender was proportionally represented with half of respondents identifying as women (50.2%) and half as men (48.7%), which reflects national statistics.

The ethnicity of most respondents was white (96.4%), which is an overrepresentation when compared to the data in the 2021 – 2022 UK census (76%).

The majority of questionnaire respondents lived in rural areas (40.7%), followed by those living in semi-rural areas (31.0%), and urban areas (28.3%). The rural population within the UK is approximately 15.0%, and therefore suggests that there is an overrepresentation of this demographic within the respondent group.

Most respondents had qualifications at and above degree level (67.0%), while 29.2% of respondents had qualifications below degree level and 3.8% of respondents had no qualifications. The average percentage of working adults within the UK with qualifications at and above degree level is 37.0% and therefore, there was an overrepresentation of this demographic group within the data. The national average percentage of working adults in the UK with qualifications below degree level is 59.0% and those with no qualifications are approximately 13.0% and therefore, there was an underrepresentation of these demographic groups.

Biases within employment sector were explored using respondent stated 'area of interest' or employment sector (**see table 2**).

Table 2. Representation of 'areas of interest' or employment sector best describing respondents living in Northumberland, bordering areas of Cumbria and southern Scotland compared to national average statistics (n=1,075).

Employment sector	Proportion of questionnaire respondents within each employment sector (%) *	Typical proportion of employment sector nationally (%)	Under (-) or over (+) representation of respondent group compared to typical national proportions (given as sample % / national %)
Environment and conservation	42.9	5.5	+7.8
Farming and landowning	14.4	1.4	+10.3
Forestry	1.9	0.2	+9.5
Heritage, tourism, and recreation	5.5	4.9	+1.1
Hunting, shooting and game	1.9	0.2	+9.5
Other	23.8	67.8	-0.4
The scientific community	9.6	20	-0.5

*Results may not equate to 100% exactly due to value rounded to 1 decimal place.

There is an overrepresentation of respondents from the environment and conservation; farming and landowning; forestry; and hunting, shooting and game sectors. There is an underrepresentation of those working in 'other' sectors than those specifically described, and also in the scientific community. Respondents that best described their employment sector as heritage, tourism and recreation were similar to the national average.

In summary, respondents aged 46 - 65, of white ethnicity, from a rural background and those working in the environment and conservation; farming and landowning; forestry; and hunting, shooting and game sectors were overrepresented within the regional questionnaire responses. Stratified subsampling of respondent data is a method that allows voices to be heard proportionately. The data were therefore subsampled in different ways to ensure fair representation of demographic groups when investigating the level of support.

8.2 Level of support

The level of support for a lynx reintroduction into the project area was investigated through respondent answer to the question: '*How do you feel about a lynx reintroduction in Northumberland (where the population could expand into bordering areas)?*'. The first half of the respondent's postcode was collected to allow for data from those living in the project area to be analysed separately.

As the questionnaire collected data from the 'active voice,' people who are interested in the topic or that have engaged with the project, the respondents that answered the questionnaire may not reflect the results at a regional or national population level. To overcome this, levels of support towards a lynx reintroduction in the project area were explored using all the questionnaire data and then also representative subsets of the data (**see table 3**).

Table 3. Levels of support (%) within sample or sub samples of questionnaire data, number of responses, % (Strongly oppose, oppose, neither support or oppose, support or strongly support) and overall % level of support.

			Level of support for lynx reintroduction to project region (%)*					
	Type of respondent sample	Number of responses	Strongly oppose	Oppose	Neither support or oppose	Support	Strongly support	Overall level of support
1	All questionnaire respondents	1,696	14.5	3.8	6.5	21.5	53.7	75.2
2	Project region respondents	1,073	17.5	3.6	7	22.4	49.5	71.9
3	Representative subsample of project region respondents (based on gender and age)	613	15.3	3.4	8.1	23.1	50	73.1
4	Representative subsample of project region respondents (by employment sector)	380	13	3.3	7.8	31.4	44.3	75.7

*Results may not equate to 100% exactly due to value rounded to 1 decimal place.

75.2% of all questionnaire respondents support a lynx reintroduction into the project area (n=1,696, median=5 (IQR 1)). This sample included respondents living outside of the project region.

71.9% of respondents from the project region support a lynx reintroduction (table 3 and figure 3, n=1,073, median=4 (IQR 2)).

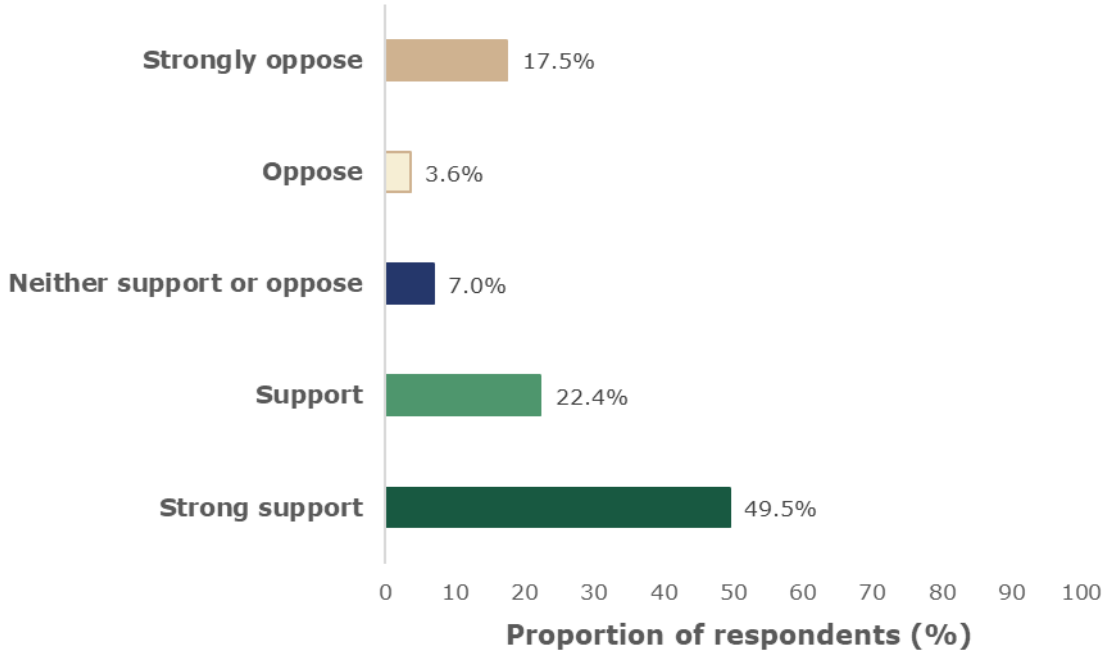


Figure 3. Levels of support (%) of respondents from the project area to lynx reintroduction into Northumberland, the edge of Cumbria and the bordering areas of southern Scotland (n = 1,073).

The 'project region respondents' (sub sample 2, table 3) was representative of gender at a national level but not of age or of area of interest/employment sector. The age group 46-65 was over-represented as were respondents with areas of interest in; environment and conservation, farming and landowning and forestry (see table 2). Therefore, two further sub samples were taken to ensure representative samples of these factors (table 3, sub sample 3 – for age and gender and sub sample 4 – for employment sector).

The representative sub sample for both gender and age showed that most respondents (**73.1%**, median=4 (IQR 2)) support a lynx reintroduction into the project area. When the data was sub sampled to be representative of employment sector the level of support amongst respondents increased to **75.7%** of respondents (n=380, median=4 (IQR 1)).

In summary, **the results from the individual questionnaire suggest that there are high levels of support (71.9 – 75.7%)** of a lynx reintroduction into the project area (**see table 3**).

As the purpose of the questionnaire was to explore the attitudes towards lynx and level of support of individuals living in the project region, the project is adopting a conservative approach and using the rounded sub sample 2 result as the accepted level indicating **72% of respondents living in the project region support a lynx reintroduction** (n=1,073). This is the value that most comprehensively captures views from the project region. It also provides an over-representation of some of the stakeholder groups most likely to experience the perceived benefits and risks of a lynx reintroduction.

8.3 Knowledge levels

Respondents were asked in the questionnaire about their experience of having seen a lynx. Over half of the respondents had seen lynx in captivity (53.2%) but, unsurprisingly, few respondents had observed lynx in the wild (2.0%) or both in the wild and in captivity (1.6%). This is likely due to the elusive nature of lynx, their low population densities, their tendency to avoid humans, and the fact that they can currently only be observed in the wild outside of Britain. However, nearly half of the respondents (43.2%) had not seen a lynx in captivity or in the wild (**see figure 4**).

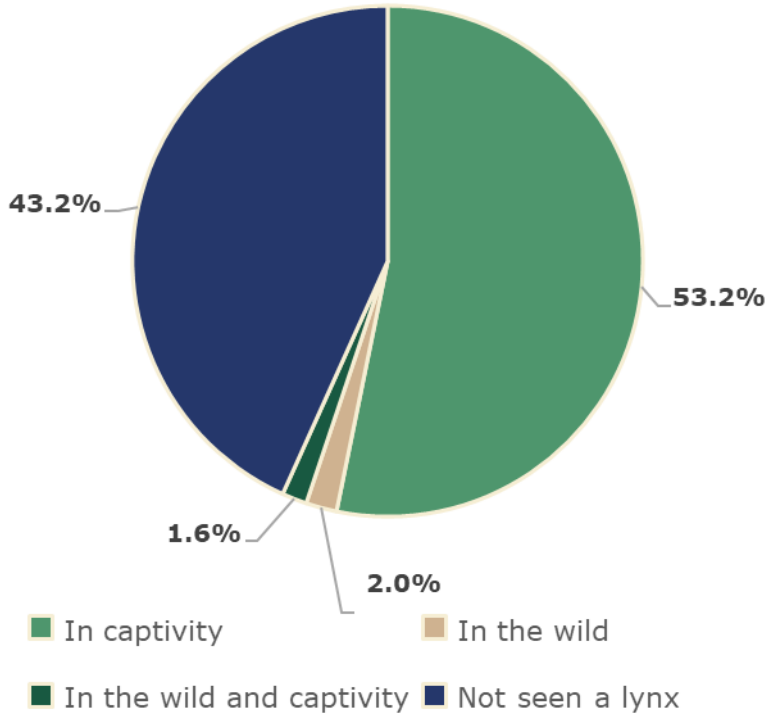


Figure 4. Percentage (%) of all questionnaire respondents (n = 1,075) that have seen lynx in the wild, in captivity, in the wild and captivity or neither in captivity and/or in the wild (mode = 1 (in captivity), f = 571).

To investigate general knowledge levels of lynx, people were asked six multiple choice questions about lynx in the questionnaire. These questions related to where lynx live, their diet, the average number of kittens per litter, when they were lost from Britain, the size of lynx and how they live (e.g., their social structure). 92.5% of people correctly chose that lynx lived in woodlands, whilst less than half (45.8%) of people knew that lynx have on average two kittens per litter.

The majority of respondents correctly identified that it is thought lynx went extinct in Britain in the medieval period (69.7%), that lynx mostly eat hoofed mammals such as deer (72.3%), that lynx lived on their own (80.6%), and that the size of an adult lynx is similar to that of a slim Labrador dog (84.5%).

Author: Berndt Fischer.

Although most respondents answered these six questions about lynx correctly, there are two key considerations. Firstly, these questions asked the respondent for facts to be recalled. They did not test a depth of understanding about lynx behaviour and ecology. As demonstrated by responses in the open-ended questions (**see below – 8.5 Costs and benefits**), the understanding of a top carnivore's role in the ecosystem is an area that can be improved. The project will continue with regional engagement activities to provide information about lynx as an animal and what it is like to live with them.

Secondly, the questionnaire collected information from the 'active voice,' which is generally people who had an interest in the topic or have engaged with the project. Therefore, the project will progress to also examining the knowledge levels from the 'passive voice,' who do not have an active relationship with the topic. A market research company will be used to collect responses from the passive voice in the second half of 2025.

8.4 Attitudes towards lynx and lynx reintroduction

In the questionnaire, respondents were asked questions about their attitudes towards lynx and lynx reintroduction. Attitudes are formed of three main components: emotion, behaviour and beliefs. Statements posed to respondents in the questionnaire reflected these components. Respondents were asked how much they agreed with each attitude statement (**see table 4**).

Table 4. Percentage (%) of all questionnaire respondents (n = 1,075) who agreed with each attitude statement towards lynx and lynx reintroduction (Strongly disagree =1, disagree = 2, neither agree or disagree = 3, agree = 4, strongly agree=5).

Attitude statement	Percentage of respondents who*:				
	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree or disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
It is important to me that lynx are reintroduced into Britain so that future generations can enjoy them. *median = 4 (IQR 2)*	16.4	5.5	12.4	26.8	39.0
Whether or not I see a lynx, it is important to me that they exist in Britain. *median = 4 (IQR 2)*	15.7	5.1	9.1	23.6	46.4
To me there are more benefits to having lynx back in Britain than disadvantages. *median = 4 (IQR 2)*	16.1	5.4	9.0	24.8	44.6
I believe that lynx will attack livestock in Britain often. *median = 2 (IQR 1)*	21.8	37.0	16.9	12.4	11.9
I believe that lynx will attack pets in Britain often. *median = 2 (IQR 2)*	35.9	34.1	16.4	7.3	6.3
I believe that lynx are important to help balance nature in Britain. *median = 4 (IQR 2)*	13.2	6.7	8.5	28.0	43.6
I believe lynx are dangerous to people. *median = 2 (IQR 2)*	42.4	31.2	14.2	7.0	5.2
I would support lynx becoming a protected species in Britain. *median = 4 (IQR 2)*	17.4	6.7	8.4	18.5	49.0
I would support killing lynx selectively if attacks to livestock occur in Britain. *median = 3 (IQR 2)*	19.1	18.2	21.3	17.9	23.5
A reintroduction of lynx to Britain would bring joy to the people that matter to me. *median = 4 (IQR 2)*	16.0	5.5	21.7	25.4	31.4
Communities living locally to a potential reintroduction of lynx will disapprove of the animals being back in the landscape. *median = 3 (IQR 1)*	4.9	15.2	42.1	21.8	16.0

*Results may not equate to 100% exactly due to value rounded to 1 decimal place.

When exploring the regional data from respondents, few agreed that lynx are dangerous to people (12.2%), that lynx will attack pets in Britain often (13.6%) or that lynx will often attack livestock in Britain (24.3%). Overall, the questionnaire revealed that attitudes are positive towards lynx and lynx reintroduction (**see table 4**) with the majority of respondents agreeing that; it is important that lynx are reintroduced into Britain so that future generations can enjoy them (65.8%), they support lynx becoming a protected species in Britain (67.5%), there are more benefits to having lynx back in Britain than disadvantages (69.4%), whether or not they see a lynx, it is important that they exist in Britain (70.0%) and that lynx are important to help balance nature in Britain (71.6%).

8.5 Costs and benefits

Questionnaire respondents were asked how much they agreed with statements relating to perceived costs and benefits of a lynx reintroduction **(see figure 5 (costs) and 6 (benefits))**.

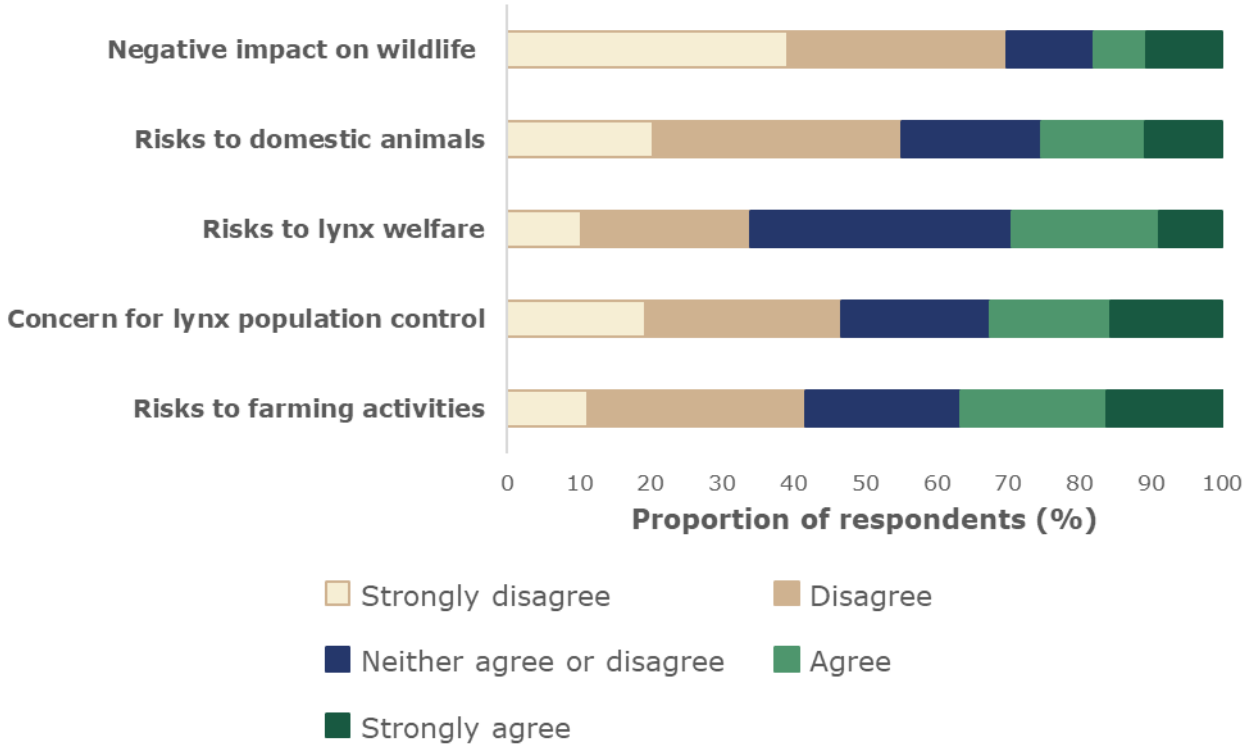


Figure 5. Levels of perceived costs of lynx reintroduction (% agreement to statement), n=1075.

When exploring the regional data from respondents, few respondents felt that lynx would have a negative impact on wildlife (17.9%, median= 2 (IQR2)). A quarter of respondents agreed a lynx reintroduction would pose risks to domestic animals (25.3%, median= 2 (IQR 2)) and 29.4% of respondents thought that there would be a risk to the welfare of the lynx (median= 3 (IQR 2)). Approximately a third of

respondents agreed they would be concerned about how lynx populations will be controlled (32.6%, median= 3 (IQR 2)) and over a third of respondents agreed that there would be a risk to farming activities by lynx (36.8%, median=3 (IQR 2)).

Open-ended questions in the questionnaire provided an opportunity for all respondents to add any additional comments. **Please note that the following points raised by respondents may be correct, incorrect or not scientifically evidenced. The purpose of the section of this report is to present and enable an understanding of the views that were identified in the data, based on the respondent's knowledge.**

Through qualitative (written) data, insight was gained into the perceived negative impacts of a lynx reintroduction. For example, some respondents thought that there could be negative impacts on vulnerable wildlife in Britain through the presence of *'too many apex predators already'* (Respondent 1,021) in the environment. Respondent 1,064 expanded further,

> *The UK's current wildlife population is already under enough threat without introducing another apex predator. Numbers of other apex predators are already too high and put too much pressure on red-listed species.*

Furthermore, there was clear concern about the impacts on farmers through livestock predation on sheep by lynx and that this could cause negative economic impacts on their business. Some respondents explained, *'I am sure those with the greatest concerns will be sheep farmers'* (Respondent 479) and *'they won't control deer, they will decimate sheep'* (Respondent 1,063). Some respondents, who were in support of a lynx reintroduction, acknowledged the risks to farming activities and showed sympathy towards livestock farmers, as Respondent 356 stated,

> *I want lynx to be reintroduced, but farmers are already struggling and if they are not compensated (without a lot of proof/paperwork) for lynx attacks on flocks then they will do even worse.*

If a lynx reintroduction is pursued, plans must be put in place to regularly communicate with livestock farmers in the area and minimise any potential negative impacts lynx may cause.

There are a range of opinions within the farming community as to whether lynx should be reintroduced. Whilst there is overall support from the general community for reintroduction there is also agreement that the biggest potential risk is to livestock farming. The project has been working with farmers to examine the evidence and to consider how a project should be managed if it were to go ahead. It is vital that potential negative impacts are reduced and that, if lynx are restored, there are satisfactory co-developed plans for the management of any predation events.

Respondents were asked how much they agreed with statements relating to potential benefits of a lynx reintroduction, including both tourism and local non-

tourism benefits, raising conservation awareness, assist in controlling deer numbers, and environmental benefits.

The majority of regional questionnaire respondents agreed that a lynx reintroduction would: bring non-tourism related benefits to the local area (62.8%, median= 4(IQR 2)), provide tourism opportunities and related benefits (64.6%, median= 4 (IQR 2)), provide environmental benefits (71.1%, median= 4 (IQR 2)), raise conservation awareness (74.1%, median= 4 (IQR 2)) and assist in controlling deer numbers (75.7%, median= 4 (IQR 1)); **see figure 6**).

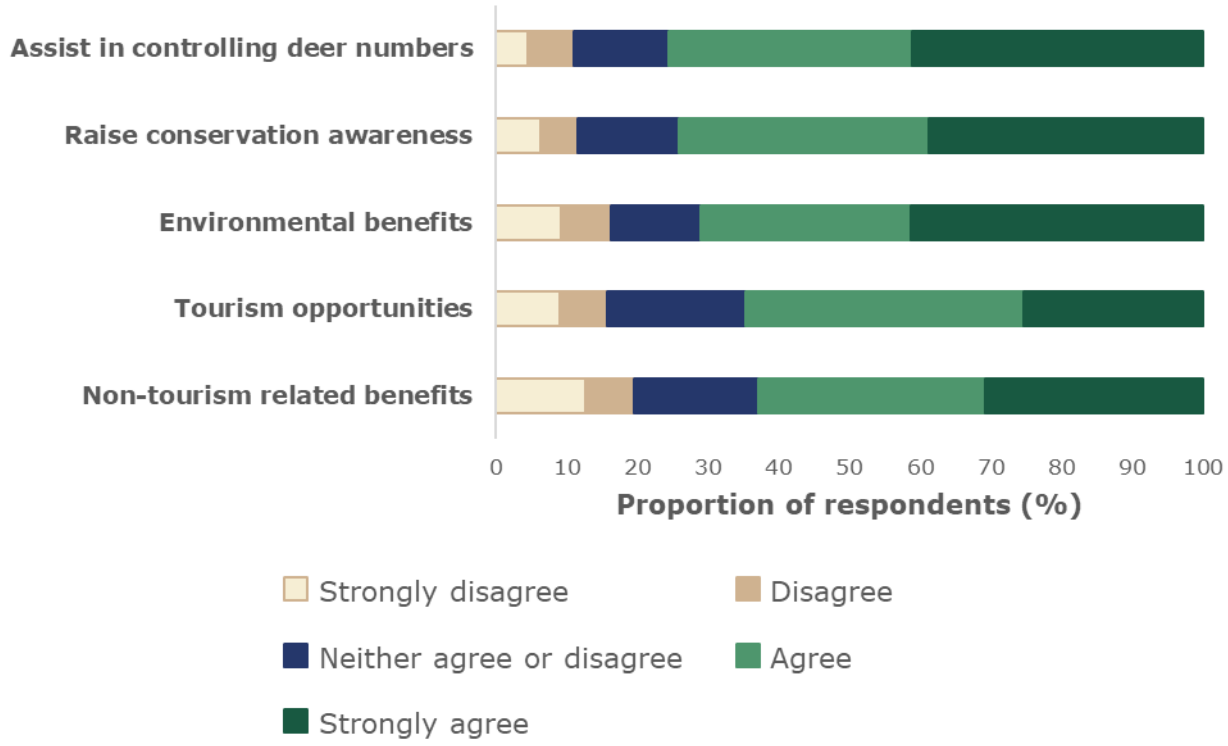


Figure 6. Levels of perceived benefits of lynx reintroduction (% agreement to statement), n=1,075.

Open-ended questions in the questionnaire provided an opportunity for respondents to add any additional comments and gave us information on the perceived benefits of a lynx reintroduction. **Please note that the following points raised by respondents may be correct, incorrect or not scientifically evidenced. The purpose of the section of this report is to present and enable an understanding of the views that were identified in the data, based on the respondent's knowledge.**

Some respondents felt that lynx could bring non-tourism benefits such as a sense of pride to those living in the region. They believed pride was felt by those in areas of the UK that have experienced reintroductions of animals, and it would be the same for the area where lynx are reintroduced, as Respondent 758 stated,

The local pride in other reintroduction areas is very evident – ospreys in Speyside, red kites in Derwent Valley, white-tailed eagles in Rum etc. The local community very much identify with the reintroduced species and take pride in it.

Furthermore, some individuals held a 'non-use value' of lynx, where it is important for them that lynx is in Britain even though they may not observe them in the landscape, as described by Respondent 596, *'I don't need to see lynx in the wild but it would make me happy to know they are there.'* Respondents stated that a benefit from lynx reintroduction could be through both non-tourism (e.g., sense of pride) and through tourism opportunities, boosting the local economy and providing employment opportunities. In contrast to this, there was disagreement that lynx would bring tourism opportunities due to its elusive behaviour. As Respondent 978 stated, '*If the lynx is as elusive as stated, it would have zero pull for tourism as they would quite simply never be seen*.' This suggests that there was a lack of confidence in a lynx reintroduction resulting in benefits from tourism.

Respondents felt that lynx reintroduction may bring environmental benefits and it would also demonstrate to the British public that the Government was taking action to address the poor current level of biodiversity in Britain. Some people felt that lynx reintroduction would raise awareness of the biodiversity crisis in the UK and, therefore, the reintroduction would bring indirect effects to the overall state of biodiversity in the UK. '*A reintroduction could also form the focal point/spearhead for a wider movement promoting awareness of the current state of biodiversity in the UK,'* as Respondent 276 explained.

It is important that any project pursuing a lynx reintroduction acknowledges the perceived costs and benefits of a lynx reintroduction and puts mechanisms in place to boost benefits and minimise costs.

8.6 Why lynx?

According to DEFRA's Reintroductions and other conservation translocations: code and guidance for England[14] and NatureScot's Scottish Code for Conservation Translocations[15], any reintroduction project must clearly state the reasons for pursuing the reintroduction of a given species. In line with these requirements, the project also sought to understand the motivations behind local community support for a potential lynx reintroduction. In order to gain this understanding, it was necessary to explore the community's reasons through social engagement and consultation.

To understand the reasons for returning lynx to Britain, a questionnaire was distributed amongst the project staff, partner organisation staff, and the Lynx

[14] Defra (2021). Reintroductions and other conservation translocations: code and guidance for England. Version 1.2 (updated July 2024). GOV.UK.

[15] National Species Reintroduction Forum (2014). The Scottish Code for Conservation Translocations: Best Practice Guidelines for Conservation Translocations in Scotland Version 1.1. Scottish Natural Heritage.

Community Group members (n=77). The results suggested that the three key motivations for investigating the reintroduction of lynx were to:

1. Restore missing ecological processes during a biodiversity emergency.
2. Return a species that became extinct under human influences.
3. Assist in the ecological recovery of one of the most nature depleted countries during a biodiversity and climate emergency.

The combined motivations for reintroducing lynx were heavily based on environmental reasons (**see figure 7**) and highlighted the concern of individuals about the biodiversity emergency that Britain is experiencing.

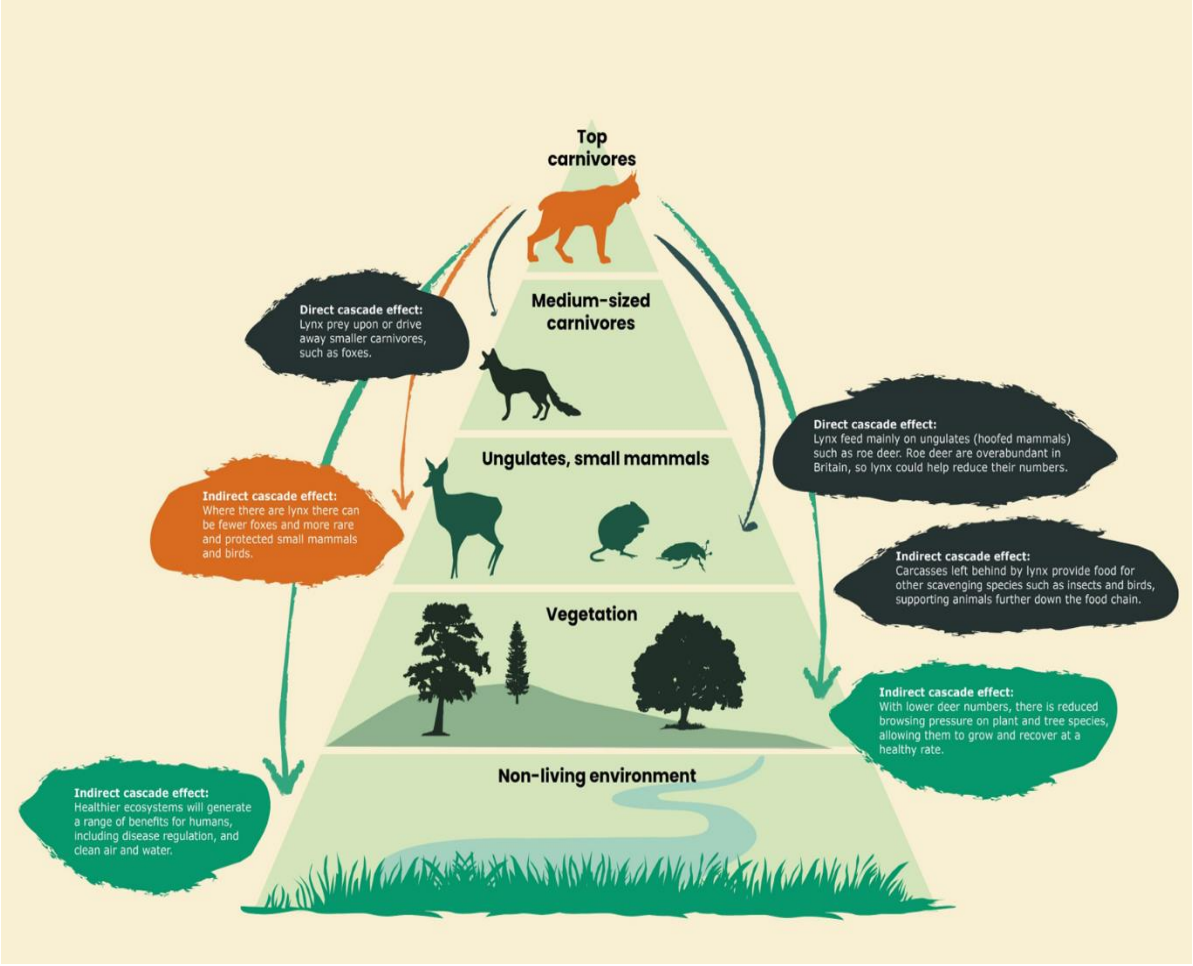


Figure 7. Top carnivores like lynx can cause many positive ripple effects through food chains.

8.7 Lynx reintroduction management

Stakeholders and individuals involved in the social engagement and consultation were asked their opinions on how different aspects of a lynx reintroduction should be managed, if the project were to progress. As described earlier, there is a risk of lynx predating livestock and this risk as experienced across Europe has been shared and discussed in the social consultation through farming focus groups. **There is a range of opinions as to whether lynx should be reintroduced and the project worked with farmers to discuss how, if a reintroduction does happen, it should be managed.** Engagement with the project did ***not*** indicate that the livestock farmers were necessarily in support of lynx reintroduction.

If the project progresses to reintroduction, the project will continue to involve farmers closely in the planning and management of; mitigation (reducing risk), compensation (payment for loss) and incentive payment (promoting co-existence). **Please note the following results are preliminary** and any subsequent management plans would be developed through ongoing regional engagement with livestock farmers living in the project area.

In the farming focus group discussions, five key themes were identified from the qualitative (verbal) data:

(i) local and public support

(ii) stakeholder engagement

(iii) lynx predation on livestock

(iv) mitigation measures and project support and

(v) compensation and payment schemes.

Data collected from the focus group sessions were then used to create a questionnaire. This was distributed to the focus group attendees, to address the question:

'*What should a lynx reintroduction look like five years after a lynx release?*'

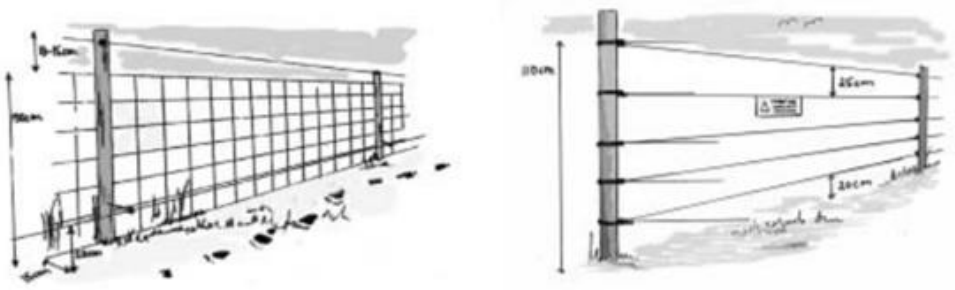
The results showed that the key lynx reintroduction management actions in the opinion of these stakeholders included:

- Regular and ongoing communication with key stakeholders.
- A management plan has been developed with stakeholders to deal with any incidents of unexpectedly high predation.
- Compensation for livestock loss to lynx is in place.
- The project is working towards developing long-term funding solutions for livestock loss.
- A variety of mitigation measures are available to livestock farmers.

Responding to and implementing actions co-designed with stakeholders can support the long-term acceptance of a species' return to the landscape. Any project proposing the reintroduction of lynx should embed collaboratively developed plans as a core part of its approach.

Livestock farmers that engaged with the project were asked how much they agreed each mitigation measure would be suitable for potential use on their farms and other farms if the project was to progress to a reintroduction. **Please note the following results are preliminary** and will be developed through ongoing regional engagement with livestock farmers living in the project area. The top three mitigation methods most agreed with by farming focus group attendees included:

1. **Electric fencing**: *to be installed and maintained by the project and acts as a barrier between lynx and livestock.*
2. **Volunteer shepherding**: *a volunteer shepherding scheme created by the project, where volunteers receive training on sheep husbandry and lynx behaviour and ecology. Lynx are deterred by extra human presence.*
3. **Visual/acoustic deterrents**: *Visual and acoustic deterrents could be placed around the farm/forest edge to deter lynx e.g., fox lights. These deterrents should be changed frequently and maintained by project staff.*



Fences used in Europe to act as a barrier between lynx and livestock.

Author: Marian Levin, Carnivore Damage Prevention News.

In addition to this, livestock farmers that engaged with the project were asked how much they agreed potential project support methods would be suitable for use on their farms and on other farms if the project were to progress to a reintroduction.

The top three project support methods most agreed with by farming focus group attendees included:

1. **Response team**: *Project staff to respond immediately to lynx presence or suspected cases of livestock predation. Project staff monitor lynx movements.*
2. **24/7 phoneline**: *A telephone number that is available to phone 24/7 with any questions, sightings and report any suspected cases of livestock predation.*
3. **Volunteer programmes**: *A volunteer programme created by the project, where volunteers receive training on how to install and maintain mitigation measures.*

Further engagement with livestock farmers at a regional level will build on these preliminary results. This 'bottom-up approach' adopted by the project means livestock farmers living and working in the project area had the opportunity to share their local knowledge and management preferences which can inform comprehensive protocols for a lynx reintroduction.

The farming focus group questionnaire included an open-ended question on whether respondents would like to add further information. The answers provided important insights on mitigation measures, project support methods and payment schemes, if the project were to progress to a reintroduction. It was felt that administration tasks associated with livestock predation by lynx would need to be kept to a minimum and undertaken promptly by project staff, as Respondent 7 stated that, *'All paperwork to be kept simple and all correspondence with farmers and landowners to be dealt with without delay*.' It was felt that for lynx to be returned to the landscape, mitigation measures would need to be handled by the

project to avoid livestock farmers assigning time and resources towards preventing livestock loss to lynx, as Respondent 10 stated, '*If the lynx were to be reintroduced, farmers would have to take minimal to no precautions to coexist harmoniously with them*.' To mitigate livestock loss, comprehensive protocols on mitigation measures, project support methods and payment schemes integrating local knowledge and output from the farming focus group discussions should be designed to prevent an increase in workload to livestock farmers.

9. DISCUSSION

The overall support for lynx reintroduction across all respondents was high (75%) and the results have also revealed a clear overall level of support (72%) amongst respondents in the region. This represents an interesting counter to respondent perception, as when asked in the survey whether they believed local people would support a reintroduction of lynx they were unsure (38% thought communities would disapprove, 20% thought they would approve and 42% were unsure).

Engagement levels were very high with over ten thousand face to face conversations and despite most people not having seen a lynx either in the wild or captivity, regional respondents demonstrated a high level of knowledge about lynx before sharing their views. Key facts such as lynx not being a danger to people (74%) or pets (70%) were well understood. The regional respondents are those that have self selected to engage with the project (active voice) and part of the next steps will be to investigate the opinions of the passive (non-engaged) voice.

Best practice guidelines for reintroductions encourage specific consideration of people potentially more impacted, both positively and negatively, by an action. Regional respondents identified the risk to farming activities as the greatest potential cost of returning lynx and ecological restoration as the greatest potential benefit. The results showed that several groups, corresponding to those potentially most affected, were overrepresented in the sample, including rural respondents and those working in farming and landowning, environment and conservation, forestry and hunting, shooting and game.

When voices were subsampled to be representative of employment sectors across society nationally, the level of support increased to 76%. The project is using 72% as the defined level of support as it includes an appropriately higher representation of most impacted voices. The relative role of these impacted voices will be explored in further analysis.

Reintroduction guidelines also advise the exploration of the reasons for a reintroduction being considered. The project is separately exploring the empirical evidence of benefit but community perceived benefits and motivations are highly relevant in considering why a reintroduction should be considered. Ecological benefits were identified by regional respondents as the highest rated potential benefit. A desire to restore nature was also strongly reflected with regional respondents expressing that the return of lynx would balance nature (72%) and that even if people don't see lynx, it's important to have them here (70%). Furthermore, when a sub-group of self-identifying supporters of lynx reintroduction were asked their motivations for supporting a lynx reintroduction, the ecological argument of 'restoring missing ecological processes during a biodiversity emergency' was given.

The second most highly rated reason as identified by this sub-group was the moral reason to 'return a species that became extinct under human influences'. Human-

centred reasons were also strongly agreed with by the wider set of regional respondents with agreement that lynx should be returned for future generations (66%) and restoring lynx would bring joy (57%).

While ecological benefit was rated more highly than economic benefit by the regional respondents, over 60% of respondents felt that there would be both tourism and non-tourism related economic benefits. The potential economic benefits of reintroduction could arguably benefit younger people more through increased local employment opportunities in the future from development of visitor and tourism-based activities. This younger voice was underrepresented, despite this being recognised during the delivery of the consultation and efforts being taken to engage more young people, including hosting the exhibition in agricultural/rural colleges and regional universities. Regional respondents had identified that lynx should be brought back for future generations to enjoy and the younger voice will be explored further and steps taken to engage this demographic. The independent community business plan commissioned by the project has identified a range of economic and training benefits which can be applied widely but can also be specifically targeted towards the benefit of younger people.

Overall, regional respondents felt that there were more benefits than disbenefits to lynx returning (69%) with the highest identified risk being to farming. Most respondents felt that lynx should become a protected species if returned (68%) and that livestock predation would not be often (59%). However, reintroduction guidelines also advise the consideration of potential negative impacts and their mitigation.

The likelihood of livestock predation as a perceived and real risk had been pre-identified by the project. Extensive engagement was built into the consultation, including in-depth interviews, focus groups and a visit to Europe. These all allowed for extensive discussions and sharing of ideas between farmers and the project. Themes that arose from these discussions included: i) local and public support (ii) stakeholder engagement (iii) lynx predation on livestock (iv) mitigation measures and project support and (v) compensation and payment schemes.

An understanding is starting to emerge about what farmers think might be practical if lynx were to be reintroduced. These include fencing, volunteer shepherding, visual and acoustic deterrents together with a 24/7 fast response team and conservation volunteer programmes that support farmers. Initial results are also emerging from the discussions as to what could be put in place for effective management of a lynx reintroduction project. This includes:

- Regular and ongoing communication with key stakeholders.
- A management plan developed with stakeholders that sets out how incidents of unexpectedly high predation are dealt with.
- A variety of mitigation measures made available that would reduce the risk of predation.

- Compensation for livestock loss to lynx, with the project working towards developing long-term funding solutions for livestock loss.

The next step is to continue working with farmers and local community to develop plans that are acceptable, feasible and practical to implement.

10. NEXT STEPS

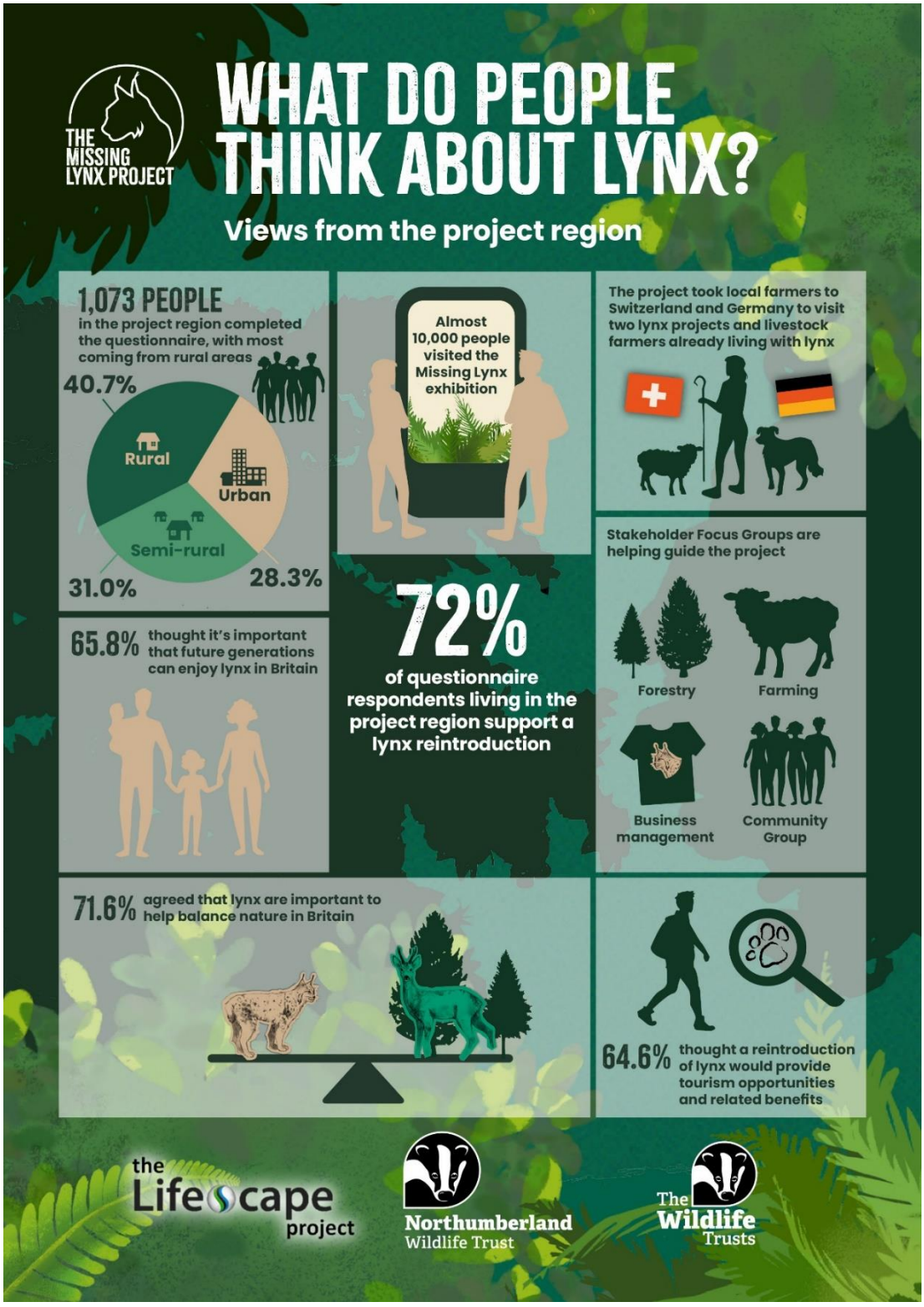
Overall, the level of support and attitudes toward lynx and lynx reintroduction are positive. The project will continue to work with local communities to consider how a reintroduction project could be managed to maximise benefits and reduce risks.

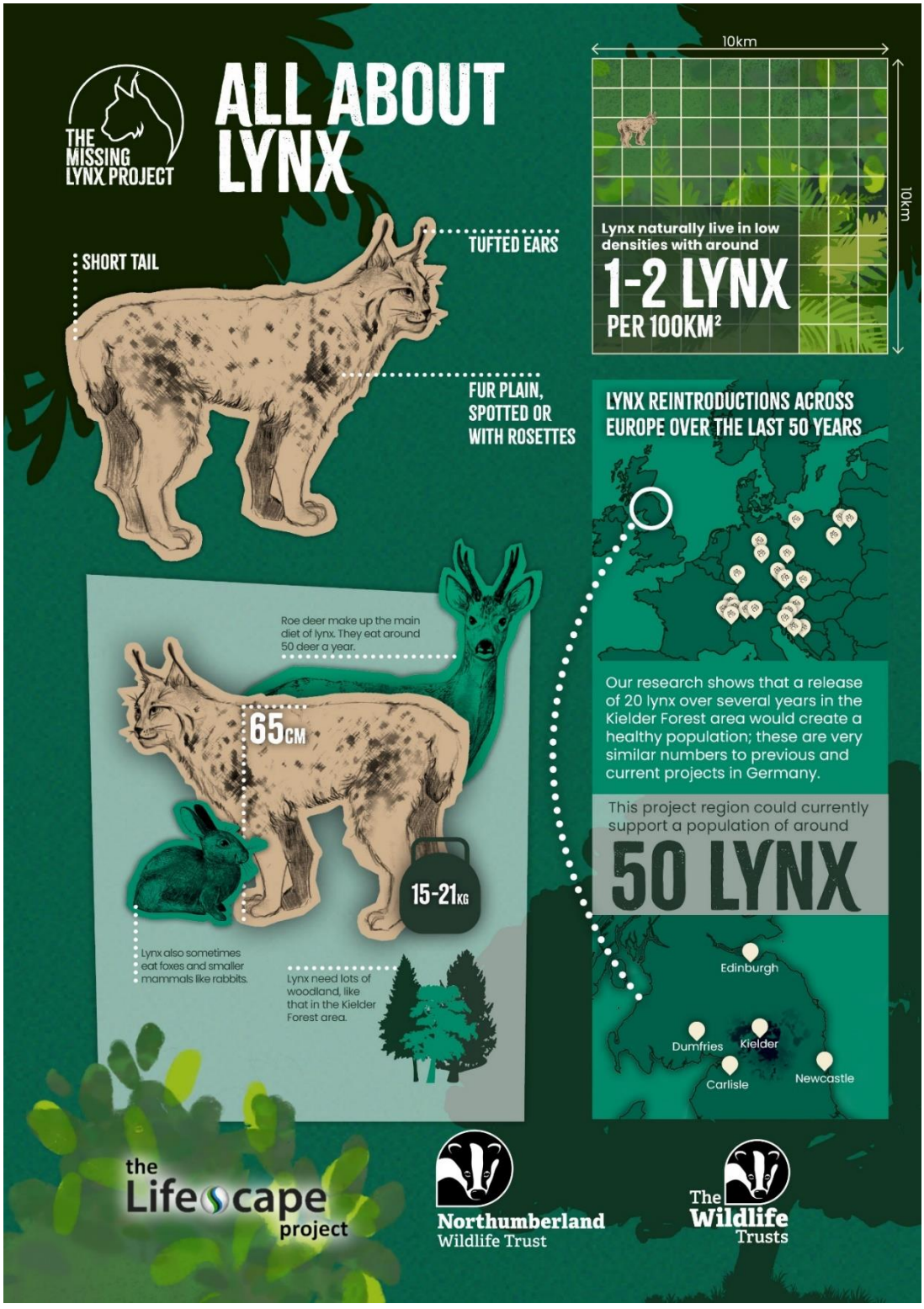
We hope to apply for a licence but only once we have a plan that's collaboratively designed with local people which sets out measures that are acceptable, feasible and can be implemented. Therefore, the next stage for the project is to continue with regional engagement and conversations, with a focus on sharing information about lynx, whilst having conversations with national stakeholder groups.

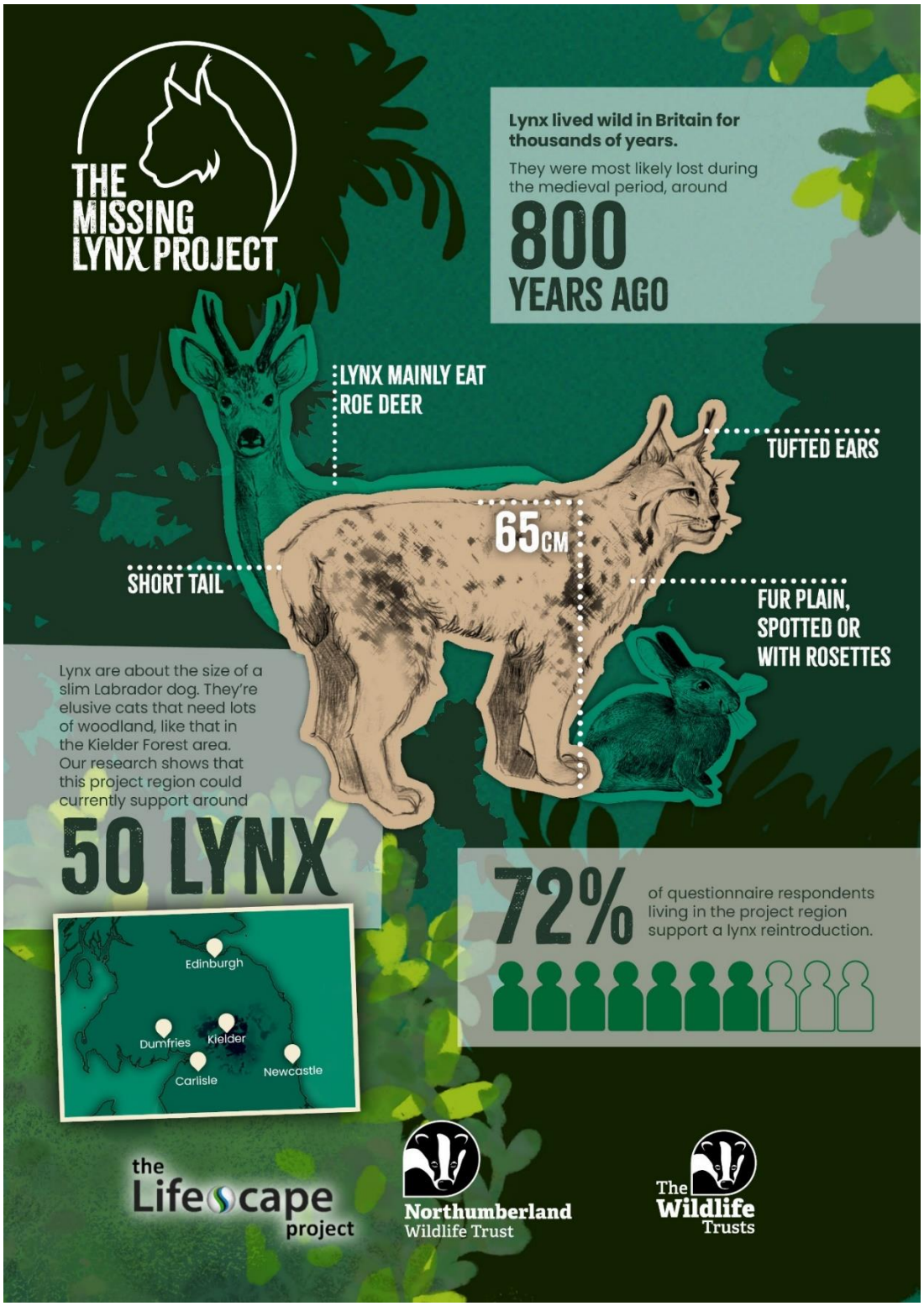
The project would like to thank all of the individuals and stakeholder groups who have engaged with the project so far.

For further general or scientific detail on the information provided in this document, please contact info@missinglynxproject.org.uk

11. INFOGRAPHICS




THE MISSING LYNX PROJECT
ALL ABOUT LYNX
SHORT TAIL
TUFTED EARS
FUR PLAIN, SPOTTED OR WITH ROSETTES
10km
10km
Lynx naturally live in low densities with around
1-2 LYNX PER 100KM²
LYNX REINTRODUCTIONS ACROSS EUROPE OVER THE LAST 50 YEARS
Roe deer make up the main diet of lynx. They eat around 50 deer a year.
65CM
15-21KG
Lynx also sometimes eat foxes and smaller mammals like rabbits.
Lynx need lots of woodland, like that in the Kielder Forest area.
Our research shows that a release of 20 lynx over several years in the Kielder Forest area would create a healthy population; these are very similar numbers to previous and current projects in Germany.
This project region could currently support a population of around
50 LYNX
Edinburgh
Dumfries
Kielder
Carlisle
Newcastle
the Lifescape project
Northumberland Wildlife Trust
The Wildlife Trusts


THE MISSING LYNX PROJECT
Lynx lived wild in Britain for thousands of years.
They were most likely lost during the medieval period, around
800 YEARS AGO
LYNX MAINLY EAT ROE DEER
TUFTED EARS
65CM
SHORT TAIL
FUR PLAIN, SPOTTED OR WITH ROSETTES
Lynx are about the size of a slim Labrador dog. They're elusive cats that need lots of woodland, like that in the Kielder Forest area. Our research shows that this project region could currently support around
50 LYNX
Edinburgh
Dumfries
Kielder
Carlisle
Newcastle
72% of questionnaire respondents living in the project region support a lynx reintroduction.
the Lifescape project
Northumberland Wildlife Trust
The Wildlife Trusts