

INFORMATION SHEET



What is The Missing Lynx Project?

The Missing Lynx Project is a partnership led by The Lifescape Project, with Northumberland Wildlife Trust and The Wildlife Trusts. The project is investigating the possibility of reintroducing Eurasian lynx to Britain. It is focusing on a habitat patch in Northumberland and bordering areas of Cumbria and southern Scotland.

What are lynx?

Eurasian lynx (usually referred to as lynx) are cats with short tails and distinctive tufted ears. They're about the size of a skinny labrador, with golden fur that is often speckled with black markings. Lynx live in woodlands, making dens beneath rocky outcrops and uprooted trees. They are solitary animals, only coming together to mate. They are elusive, mostly active between dusk and dawn and like to avoid people.

Lynx are found in forests across much of Europe, where populations are recovering after declines in the 18th and 19th centuries. In many places, their natural recovery is being boosted by reintroduction projects. Lynx are native to the UK. They were here for thousands of years, but were most likely lost during the medieval period, due to hunting and habitat loss.



Throughout most of Europe, lynx mainly prey on roe deer. They'll hunt about one deer a week, feeding on it for several days. They also sometimes eat medium-sized carnivores such as foxes, and occasionally small animals like rabbits. As top carnivores, they help maintain a natural balance in their woodland homes. Their presence regulates other animals and brings benefits that trickle down through the foodchain. By hunting deer and making them more wary, they can reduce browsing pressure and give woodlands more chance to grow. Their influence on fox populations can reduce pressure on ground nesting birds and other small animals. They can also help scavenging insects and birds, which feed on the prey remains left by lynx.

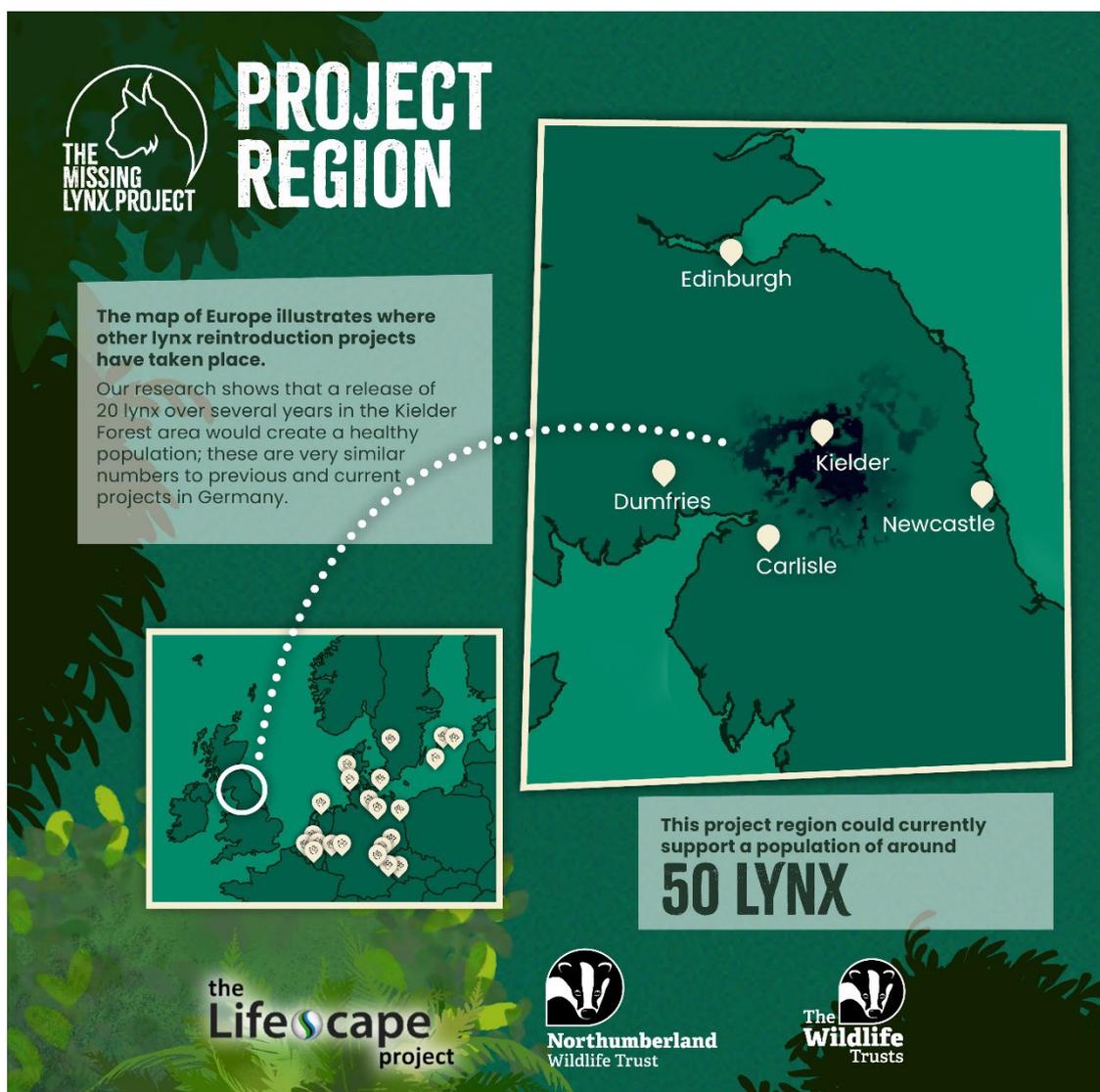
Britain is in a nature crisis. Only around 50% of our biodiversity is intact, which makes us one of the worst countries in the world for the quality of our nature. One in six species is at risk of extinction. We need healthy ecosystems to store carbon, for clean water, fresh air and food security. Bringing back lost wildlife and rebuilding our ecosystems is a vital part of tackling this nature crisis. Bringing back lynx could be part of this solution.

Could lynx live in Britain?

The project's first step was to establish whether there was an area in which lynx could survive. We used a similar approach to that taken in Germany, where lynx have already been successfully reintroduced. This involved advanced computer modelling, drawing on the most recent and detailed data on Britain's landscapes and lynx ecology.

The project's research showed that if lynx were to be released in Northumberland, they could grow into a healthy population covering north-west Northumberland, the edge of Cumbria and bordering areas of southern Scotland. This is currently the only area of England with the extensive forest habitats that lynx need.

Alongside this work, we began looking into the practical aspect of a potential lynx reintroduction. This includes elements such as where we could source lynx for a reintroduction, how they would be transported and how we would monitor the population after release. We are working with European experts and learning from experiences of successful reintroduction projects across Europe.

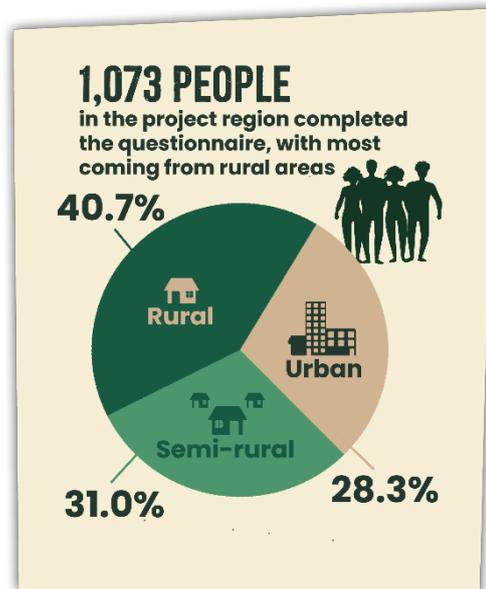


How do people feel about lynx?

Knowing that lynx could live in this area, the next step was to find out what people think about bringing them back. We created a travelling Missing Lynx exhibition and toured 15 venues around the project area, welcoming almost 10,000 visitors. The exhibition highlighted the nature crisis in the UK and introduced the lynx – its history here, the role it plays in woodlands and learnings from decades of reintroduction projects across Europe. The exhibition also provided opportunities for people to share their views.

Alongside this, we held community workshops, led stakeholder meetings and conducted interviews with local community members, including more than 30 farmers. We also established a lynx community group, as well as focus groups for farmers and those wishing to explore business opportunities that lynx might create. Additionally, 32 local farmers were invited to join a study visit to Germany and Switzerland to learn from people living alongside lynx; seven were able to take part.

We distributed an individual questionnaire as widely as possible, with 1,000 people in the project region responding. Most responses came from people living in rural or semi-rural communities. The results show that **72% of respondents support a potential lynx reintroduction.**



What's next for The Missing Lynx Project?

The Missing Lynx Project has demonstrated that lynx could live in an area of northern England and southern Scotland, and that there is support in the region for a lynx reintroduction. Now the project is continuing to work with local communities to consider how a reintroduction project could be managed to maximise benefits and reduce risks.

We have also launched a national questionnaire, to get a better understanding of how the UK feels about lynx and their reintroduction.

The partnership hopes to apply for a licence to reintroduce lynx to north-west Northumberland once we have a plan that's collaboratively designed with local people, which sets out measures that are acceptable, feasible and can be implemented.

Find out more and share your views at
www.missinglynxproject.co.uk