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# Sussex Nature Recovery

A collective blueprint for targeted action

## LNRS for Sussex

Selection of Priorities: explanation  
of process followed

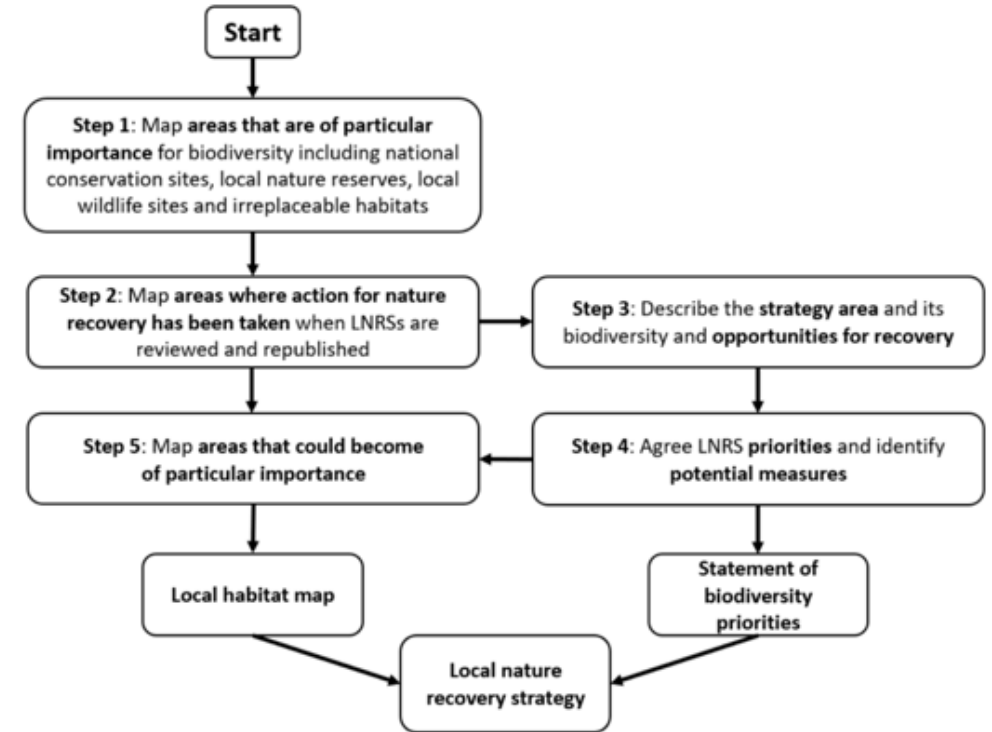
October 2024 v1

[SussexNatureRecovery.org.uk](https://SussexNatureRecovery.org.uk)



# Introduction to identifying priorities

- Step 4 of the LNRS process requires us to identify a set of **priorities for nature's recovery** for the Sussex LNRS areas.
- The government guidance suggested the production of a 'long list' of priorities first, which we could then whittle down to a shortlist.
- This shortlist was to be a "manageable number" of priorities and the guidance required us to explain how decisions were made on what remained on the short list, and what was excluded.
- This document sets out the process we followed and provides an explanation of key decisions made.



# How the long list of priorities was gathered

## Published plans and strategies

*e.g. Local Plans, Catchment Management Plans, Climate Plans, Tree strategies, Neighbourhood Plans*

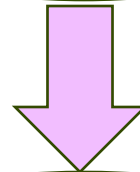


What people tell us is important to them (surveys and engagement)

From the ecological evidence



Priorities long list



Short list of priorities



Priorities of parish/community groups, farmers, landowners and key delivery organisations

# Developing a long list of priorities

The initial long list of priorities was prepared using information from a range of inputs, as illustrated on the previous slide. In more detail, these were:

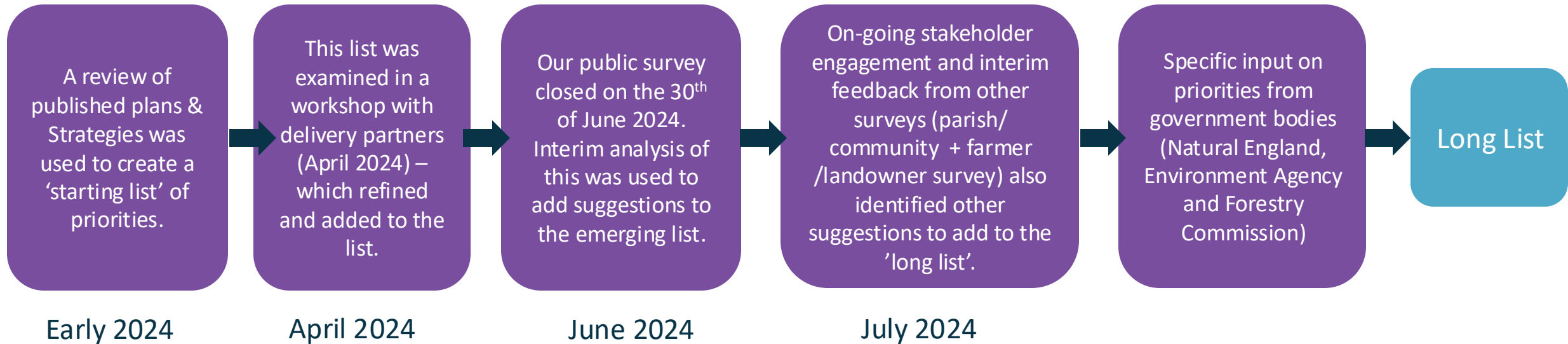
- **A review of relevant plans and strategies (desk top study).** This looked across >200 documents published by a range of organisations, to identify priorities highlighted within. These included Local Plans, Neighbourhood Plans, Catchment Management Plan, Protected Landscape Management plans, Water Company plans etc. This was completed in early 2024 with a summary document produced for each LNRS area.
- What people told us via the **public survey** (open February 2024 - July 2024). This gathered input from almost >1800 people across West Sussex, East Sussex and Brighton & Hove and provided us with an insight into what people in Sussex value about nature and identify as a priority for recovery. This was analysed and presented in a [summary document](#) which can be found on the Sussex Nature Recovery website.
- In addition, [community groups/parishes](#) and farmers/landowners also provided input via the **specific surveys** for these groups (February –October 2024)).
- Key delivery organisations in Sussex (i.e. those leading nature recovery projects and activities on the ground and working at scale across Sussex) provided input via **a specific workshop** in April 2024.
- The **evidence base** (information on what habitats we have in Sussex, their condition and the pressures they are under). This is in draft form and helped to flag key priorities for nature’s recovery over the period of the creation of the long list.

Note: this process was done together for the two Sussex LNRS areas (West Sussex; East Sussex including Brighton & Hove)



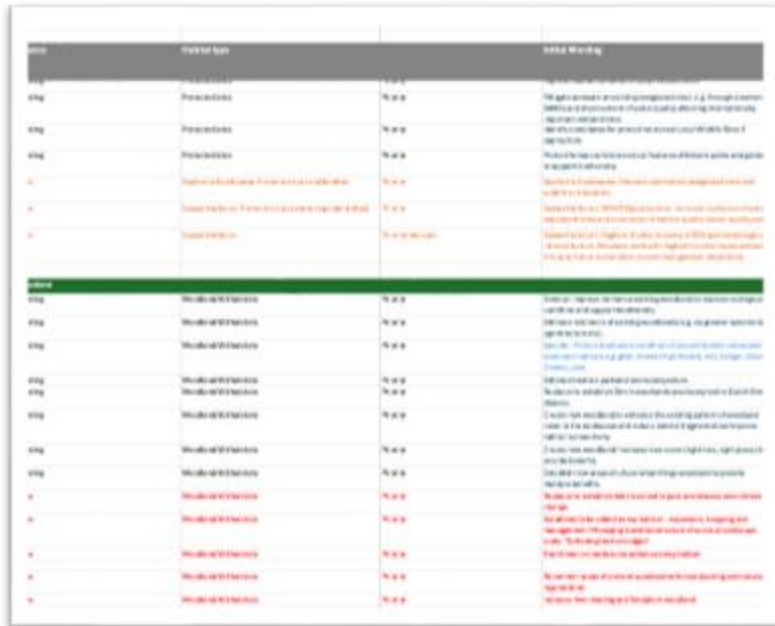
# Developing a long list of priorities

We used these inputs in the following sequence:



# The longlist....

This was made up of >150 entries, which were collated in a spreadsheet initially grouped under the following headings:



Thumbnail of spreadsheet

## 31 emerging priority groups/themes

Habitat connectivity and ecological functioning	Coastal	Resilient habitats species (in face of climate change)
Designated sites/ protected areas	Marine	Natural carbon sequestration & storage
Woodland	Routeways & verges	Reducing impact of climate change in urban areas
Trees	Urban nature	Control/management of invasive species
Hedgerows, shaws and field boundaries	Green & Blue Corridors	Landscape character and quality
Rivers, river systems and corridors	Species	Access to nature/ connecting people to nature
Chalk Streams	Sufficient/resilient water supply	Accessible countryside round towns
Wetland	Clean water supply (ground & surface)	Public rights of way
Standing water bodies	Clean water for people & environment	Nature in everyday life for health and wellbeing
Aquifers	Flood risk reduction	
Grassland	Coastal erosion/flooding management	

# Priorities: creating a short-list

This is what the government guidance and advice says....

The shortlist should be comprised of:

- *Criteria based priorities* i.e. those adhere to specific criteria agreed for short-listing
- *Preference-based priorities* i.e. those stated as preference by stakeholders

Do the agreed priorities:

- Contribute to a balanced range of national environmental objectives?
- Address the opportunities and pressures identified in the description?
- Sufficiently cover the variation of landscapes and ecosystems in the strategy area?
- Sufficiently balance the contributions from different types of stakeholders? i.e. national experts through to local residents?
- Are there a manageable number of agreed priorities (manageable enough for end-users to understand and to focus on delivery planning).

(Natural England/Defra 2023. Identifying and agreeing priorities and potential measures within Local Nature Recovery Strategies. Advice for Responsible Authorities. P10)

Essentially – what should we really be focusing our efforts on (but in a way that also reflects types of ecosystems, pressures/threats and what stakeholders have said...)



# How did we do it?

## 1. We developed a 'criteria-based' approach.

We developed a set of **criteria**  
– which reflected the  
government guidance.

We applied the 'core criteria'  
to the long list – to eliminate  
any which were obviously not  
relevant.

The results were recorded on  
the longlist spreadsheet

### Core criteria

- Is this within the scope of the LNRS to tackle?
- Does it contribute to national environmental objectives, targets and commitments?
- Does it respond to specific pressures or opportunities?
- Does it make a contribution to delivering bigger, better, more and joined priority habitats and protected sites?
- Does it help to reduce decline and/or support of priority and/or threatened species?
- Does it support recovery of a locally important/significant habitat or species?
- Does it contribute to enhancement/recovery of specific ecosystems and/or natural processes of importance?
- Does it provide an acknowledged/feasible nature-based solution?
- Can it actually be done?
- Is it likely to be successful into the future (e.g. in face of climate change)

This exercise identified the priorities that were compliant with the core priorities. It didn't eliminate many statements but was helpful in identifying those which were within the scope of the LNRS and those which were not.

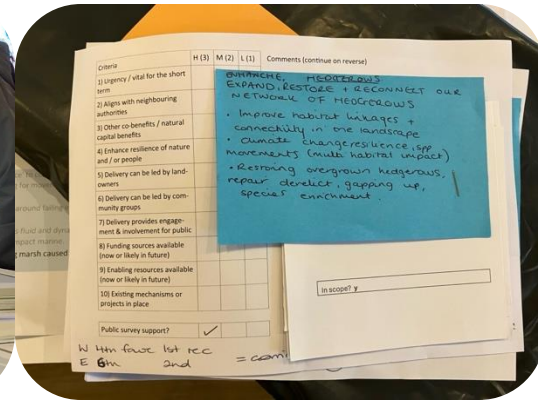
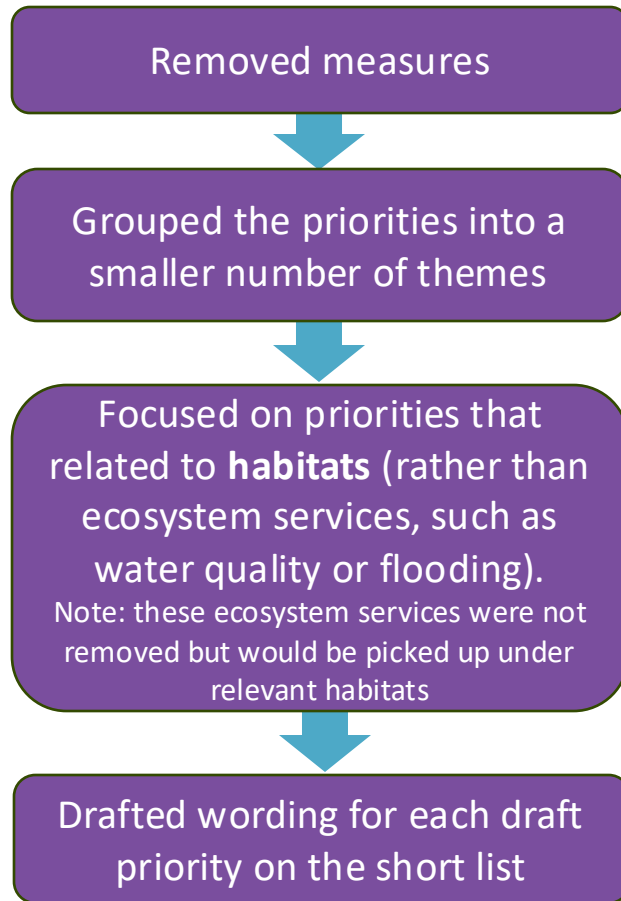
The secondary criteria were not used at this time as it was felt that they might help to weight priorities (if we were to rank them) rather than eliminate any. We reserved these secondary criteria for use at a later stage if needed.





# How did we do it?

2. We eliminated any statements that were actually **measures** (i.e. actions rather than priorities) and then consolidated statements into broader, overarching statements of priority



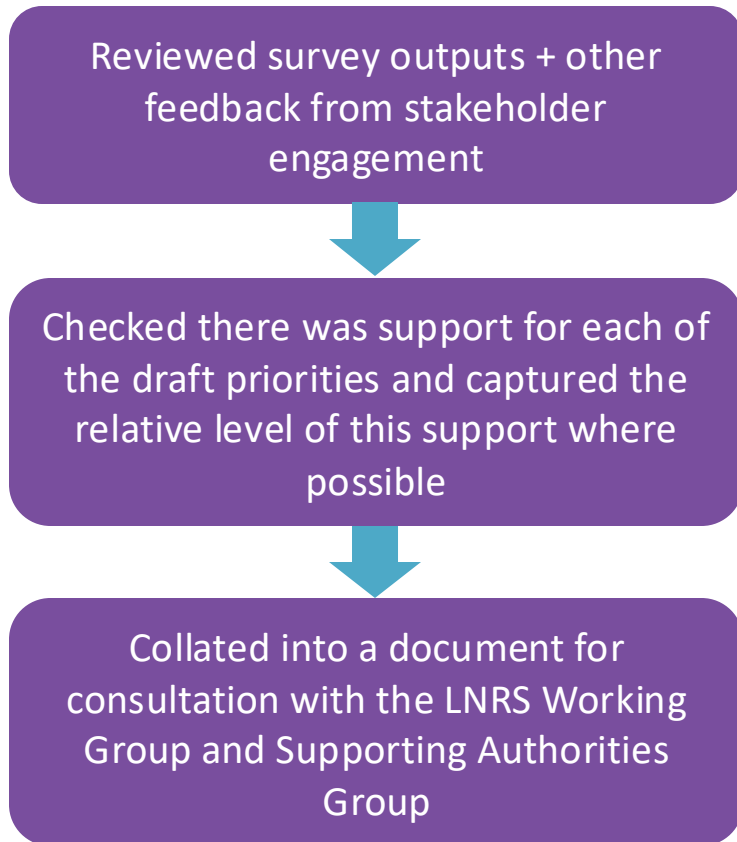
This exercise was carried out in a day-long small workshop involving the Sussex LNRS team and Natural England Senior LNRS Advisors.

In this workshop, we worked through each statement on the long-list and observed overlap and repetition which could be removed through consolidation into broader statements.

This consolidation exercise reduced the list to just over 20 draft priorities which was felt to be a manageable number.

# How did we do it?

3. We identified **stakeholder preferences** – and matched these to the shortlisted priorities. We did this by matching results from our surveys with each priority statement.



This process allowed us to check if there was public and stakeholder support for the draft priorities and to indicate the relative level of support for each. We also checked for gaps (were there any public preferences not reflected in the draft priorities?) But given the very broad nature of each priority, it was concluded that the set of priority statements together matched well to the preferences collated through the survey processes.

# Matching preferences to the draft priority list (examples)

Priority	Preference (survey)	What this tell us
Enhance and better connect our <b>woodland</b> habitats whilst creating new woodland where this supports landscape character, biodiversity and ecosystem services	<p><b>High/very high</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>West Sussex:</b> 1<sup>st</sup> favourite habitat (24%); Ranked 2<sup>nd</sup> 'want to see recovered' (17%).</li> <li><b>East Sussex:</b> 1<sup>st</sup> Favourite habitat (22%); Ranked 1<sup>st</sup> in terms of wanting to see it recovered (18%)</li> </ul>	<p>This illustrates that woodland is highly valued by people in Sussex which is expected given that Sussex is a very wooded county. But pressures on woodland are also understood, with 18% of respondents concerned and wanting to see it recovered.</p>
Expand, enhance and better connect <b>heathland</b> (and its associated habitats)	<p><b>Low</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>West Sussex:</b> Heathland and scrub 8<sup>th</sup> favourite (4%); Ranked 10<sup>th</sup> 'want to see recovered' (3%)</li> <li><b>East Sussex:</b> Heathland and scrub 9<sup>th</sup> favourite (4%); Ranked 9<sup>th</sup> 'want to see recovered' (4%)</li> </ul>	<p>Heathland appears to be less valued than woodland, despite the national importance of Sussex for its lowland heath. Perhaps this is because our heathland is concentrated in smaller areas of Sussex and not as well understood and visited as woodland.</p>

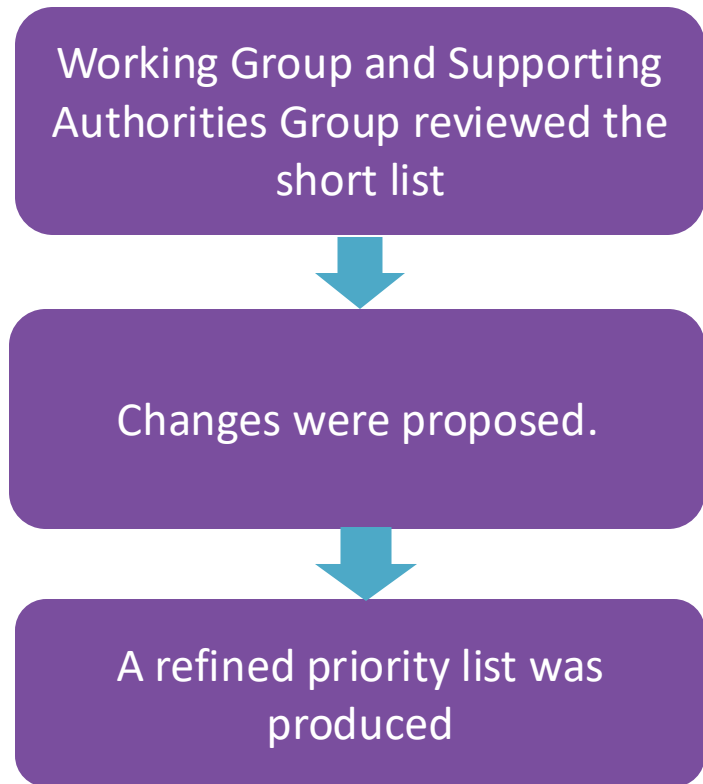
The role of public preferences in selecting priorities is valuable but care was taken to ensure that this information didn't drive selection or elimination of a priority from the list as it depends very much on the profile and understanding of a habitat type and what the particular interests of respondents were.

The final priority short list is provided at the end of this document – with the preference information shown for each.



# How did we do it?

4. Feedback on the short list from the LNRS Working Group and Supporting Authorities Group – led to amendments to wording and grouping of the draft priority statements.



This part of the process helped us to refine the wording of the priority short list and to produce a final list which was taken forward into the next stage of the LNRS

# Final shortlist of Priorities with public preference information from survey



Code	Priority	Public preference insights
PS1. Protected Sites	PS1. Support the expansion and enhancement of a network <b>designated and protected sites</b>	<b>Low.</b> No specific question was asked about protected sites. However, when people were asked where their favourite <a href="#">places to visit</a> were, many of these are our iconic designated sites, nature reserves etc.
C1. Coastal Habitats	C1. Support the expansion, restoration, enhancement and creation of <b>coastal and intertidal habitats.</b>	<p><b>High.</b> After woodland, coastal habitats held the greatest level of support and appreciation by respondents. This may reflect the importance of access to the coast for a large proportion of residents in Sussex, along its densely populated coastal urban conurbations.</p> <p><b>West Sussex:</b> 2<sup>nd</sup> favourite habitat (17%) and 5<sup>th</sup> want to see recovered (9%).</p> <p><b>East Sussex:</b> 2<sup>nd</sup> favourite (16%), 3<sup>rd</sup> for recovery (15%).</p> <p>Specific mentions of sand, shingle, saltmarsh, rockpools, coastal grazing marsh. Species: kelp (out of scope), yellow horned poppy, sea kale, seabirds and waders, sand martins, viper's bugloss.</p>
FL1. Farmed Landscapes and Soils	FL1. Create and enhance opportunities for wildlife within the <b>farmed landscape.</b>	<p><b>High</b> The farmed landscape is particularly valued by residents of Sussex; there is an appreciation of its vital role in supporting nature but also concern about the negative impact of intensive agriculture on nature and water quality.</p> <p><b>West Sussex:</b> ranked 4<sup>th</sup> favourite habitat (farmland and hedgerows) 11%; Ranked 1<sup>st</sup> 'want to see it recovered' (21%)</p> <p><b>East Sussex:</b> ranked 10<sup>th</sup> favourite habitat (farmland and hedgerows) (10%); Ranked 2<sup>nd</sup> 'want to see it recovered' (14%)</p>
	S1. Enhance <b>soil habitats</b> and their health to support biodiversity and improve ecosystem services.	<p>Low</p> <p>No specific questions around soils but several comments.</p>

Code	Priority	Public preference insights
Species rich grassland	G1. Restore, expand, connect and enhance <b>species-rich grassland</b>	<p><b>All grassland. Medium (West Sussex) and High (East Sussex)</b></p> <p><b>West Sussex:</b> Ranked 6<sup>th</sup> favourite habitat (10%) (meadows 7%); Ranked 4<sup>th</sup> 'want to see recovered' (14%) (meadows 11%)</p> <p><b>East Sussex:</b> Ranked 3<sup>rd</sup> favourite habitat (15%); Ranked 5<sup>th</sup> 'want to see recovered' (12%)</p> <p><b>Chalk grassland in particular: Medium</b></p> <p><b>West Sussex</b> Ranked 7<sup>th</sup> favourite (9%); Ranked 8<sup>th</sup> (4%) 'want to see recovered'</p> <p><b>East Sussex:</b> Ranked 4<sup>th</sup> favourite (11%); Ranked 8<sup>th</sup> 'want to see recovered' (6%)</p> <p>Note: respondents noted strong association with downland landscape (where this habitat is located) which is much loved by residents and visitors</p>
Woodland Hedgerow & Scrub	W1. Enhance, expand and better connect our <b>existing woodland</b> habitats, improving quality and diversity of habitats, structural diversity and resilience	<p><b>High/ very high.</b> Woodland was the most mentioned habitat and the specific favourite of 20-25% of respondents. Many value the experience they have when visiting this habitat type and the role it plays in the landscape of Sussex.</p>
	W2. Create <b>new woodland</b> where this supports connectivity, biodiversity, ecosystem services and landscape character	<p><b>West Sussex:</b> 1<sup>st</sup> favourite habitat (24%); Ranked 2<sup>nd</sup> 'want to see recovered' (17%).</p> <p><b>East Sussex:</b> 1<sup>st</sup> Favourite habitat (22%); Ranked 1<sup>st</sup> in terms of wanting to see it recovered (18%)</p>
	W3. Enhance and expand our <b>urban treescapes/urban forest</b> in Sussex, taking opportunities to establish new urban/urban fringe woodland and street trees where this will support biodiversity and deliver multiple benefits.	



Code	Priority	Public preference insights
Woodland Hedgerow & Scrub	Hdg1. Enhance, expand, restore and reconnect our network of <b>hedgerows</b>	<p><b>High/ v high</b>            People particularly notice hedgerows, particularly when lost/damaged            Role of hedgerows as wildlife corridors in the landscape is well understood</p> <p><b>West Sussex</b> – With farmland, is ranked 4<sup>th</sup> favourite habitat (11%) with hedgerows alone at 8%            Ranked 1<sup>st</sup> ‘want to see recovered’ (21%); hedgerows (14%)</p> <p><b>East Sussex</b> – With farmland ranked 6<sup>th</sup> favourite habitat (10%); Ranked 2<sup>nd</sup> ‘want to see recovered’ (14%).</p>
Woodland Hedgerow & Scrub	Scr1. Create and enhance <b>scrub</b> habitats, as edge habitats, as part of habitat mosaics, and as a habitat in its own right.	<p><b>Low.</b> This habitat is often incorporated with heathland and not seen as separate. Breeding birds found in scrub and heathland were identified as important in Sussex.</p>
Heathland and sandstone outcrops	H1. Expand, enhance and better connect heathland habitats	<p><b>Low.</b> This is despite Sussex containing areas of internationally important heathland. Its low profile may be due to these areas of habitat being confined to certain areas of the counties.</p> <p><b>West Sussex:</b> Heathland and scrub 8<sup>th</sup> favourite (4%); Ranked 10<sup>th</sup> ‘want to see recovered’ (3%)</p> <p><b>East Sussex:</b> Heathland and scrub 9<sup>th</sup> favourite (4%); Ranked 9<sup>th</sup> ‘want to see recovered’ (4%)</p>
	SO1. Enhance the unique biodiversity of sandstone outcrops	Not specifically mentioned in the survey questions or answers



Group	Priority	Public preference insights
Freshwater: rivers and river systems	R1. Support the recovery of our <b>Sussex rivers and river systems</b> , their health, biodiversity and natural functions.	<b>High.</b> Rivers and their recovery was mentioned frequently in the survey results. <b>West Sussex:</b> ranked 3 <sup>rd</sup> favourite habitat (13%); ranked 3 <sup>rd</sup> 'want to see it recovered' (15%) <b>East Sussex:</b> ranked 5 <sup>th</sup> favourite habitat (11%); ranked 4 <sup>th</sup> 'want to see it recovered' (12%)
	R2. Support recovery and resilience of <b>chalk streams</b> and <b>greensand streams</b> and their unique biodiversity.	Not specifically mentioned but can assume that this may be because they are grouped under 'rivers' by respondents.
Freshwater: wetland habitats	Wt1. Create, restore, expand and enhance the condition of our <b>wetland habitats</b> .	<b>Medium</b> <b>West Sussex:</b> Wetlands and water bodies ranked 5 <sup>th</sup> favourite habitat (10%) with wetlands 7%; ranked 6 <sup>th</sup> for want to see it recovered (7%) with wetlands 5%. <b>East Sussex:</b> Ranked 7 <sup>th</sup> favourite habitat (8%); ranked 6 <sup>th</sup> 'want to see recovered) (8%).
Freshwater: standing water bodies (ponds, lakes and ditches)	SB1. Support the enhancement and restoration of existing <b>standing water bodies</b> and creation of new standing water bodies for biodiversity and other benefits.	<b>Medium</b> <b>West Sussex:</b> 5 <sup>th</sup> favourite habitat (10%), 3 <sup>rd</sup> for 'want to see recovered' (7%). <b>East Sussex:</b> 7 <sup>th</sup> favourite (8%) and 6 <sup>th</sup> for 'want to see it recovered'(8%).  Valued for carbon store, wildlife sanctuary, Migratory birds, amphibians & reptiles, dragonflies.
Freshwater: aquifers	A1. Support the health and function of our <b>aquifers</b> .	Although there may be more support for ecosystem services it provides such as water supply (the survey didn't ask any questions about aquifers)

Group	Priority	Public preference insights
Urban Nature	U1. Create and connect new nature-rich areas within the <b>urban environment</b> , for wildlife and people.	<p><b>Medium</b></p> <p><b>West Sussex:</b> 9<sup>th</sup> favourite (3%), 7<sup>th</sup> for recovery (7%).  <b>East Sussex:</b> 8<sup>th</sup> favourite (4%), 7<sup>th</sup> for recovery (9%).</p> <p>The survey reflected the importance of gardens, allotments, parks, street trees and verges for wildlife. Species mentioned as noticed in urban areas include wildflowers, butterflies, birds, bats, fox, amphibians and reptiles, badgers, hedgehog, bees.</p>
	U2. Enhance the value for nature of <b>existing parks, buildings and other blue/green spaces</b> in urban areas.	
Nature, health and wellbeing	NHW1. Create new opportunities for access to nature in urban, per-urban and rural areas to support health and wellbeing.	<p><b>High.</b> The survey reflected the significant value that Sussex residents place on visiting nature for health and wellbeing benefits. Of particular importance in the survey were opportunities to spend time in 'nature nearby'.</p>

Group	Priority	Public preference insights
Wildlife Corridors: landscape scale	Cor1. Enable <b>nature recovery at scale</b> across landscapes and large-scale nature corridors where this supports biodiversity, ecosystem services and landscape character	<b>High:</b> No stats but lots of support and understanding of value of large wildlife corridors in the survey.
Wildlife Corridors: green and blue corridors	Safeguard and enhance the value of <b>existing green and blue corridors</b> for nature and create new corridors where this will improve connectivity between habitats/designated sites and between rural and urban green spaces.	<b>High:</b> No stats but lots of acknowledgement of importance of corridors for wildlife e.g. Mentions of verges, treelines, hedgerows, pollinators, hedgehog highways etc.
Wildlife Corridors: transport corridors & verges	Cor3. Enhance <b>transport corridors, verges, historic routeways and footpath</b> networks for wildlife.	<b>High:</b> verges in particular were mentioned with great frequency in the survey as important green corridors for wildlife in local areas.



# Sussex Nature Recovery

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