

Report to inform the creation of a
Local Nature Recovery Strategy for
Greater Lincolnshire

**Qualitative engagement with rural
landowners, land managers, farmers,
and their advisers**

by

TruemanChange

for



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Acknowledgements

Lincolnshire County Council:

John Clarkson, LNRS Project Lead

Partners:

Special thanks go to all participants in the events. In addition, we are grateful to the Nature Friendly Farming Network, NFU (Lincolnshire) and CLA (Lincolnshire) as well as Brown and Co for advice in shaping the agenda for these workshops. Thanks also to the three host venues, South Ormsby Estate, The Fenestra Conference Centre and Doddington Estate.

Brown and Co

CLA (Lincolnshire)

Doddington Estate

Environmental Farmers Group

Environment Agency

Farming in a Protected Landscape

Fenestra Conference Centre

Forestry Commission

Forestry England

Greater Lincolnshire Nature Partnership

Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust NFU (Lincolnshire)

Nature Friendly Farming Network

National Trust

Nattergal

Natural England

Pasture for Life

RSPB

South Ormsby Estate

1. Methodology

a. Background

Based on our experience in neighbouring Leicestershire, Trueman Change supported the Defra-appointed Responsible Authority, Lincolnshire County Council, in the design and delivery of qualitative engagement with rural land owners, land managers and farmers, to inform creation of the area's first ever statutory Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS).

b. Purpose of the work

The scope of the commission was informed by and designed to add value to other client-led activities – most specifically an online survey of landowners, land managers and food producers, that would provide quantitative view-gathering from this important sector.

The qualitative engagement was designed to add further depth and context to the quantitative findings, and provide the sector with an additional opportunity to share their views. Perhaps most importantly, it was for the council, as the responsible authority, to be visibly seen to engage with key groups at an early stage; gaining insight into their perspectives and priorities that can inform the new strategy and so, in time, aid its smooth adoption and eventual implementation. Consequently, promotion of the events as widely as possible was as much of a priority as creation of the events themselves.

Specifically, for Lincolnshire County Council, the value of the events was to:

- Increase awareness of the LNRS amongst key stakeholders / sector influencers – leading to potential advocacy and early adopters for implementation;
- Provide a visible opportunity to engage;
- Obtain further input from attendees to inform the draft strategy and so increase deliverability.

For attendees, we hoped to provide:

- Time to hear about the state of play currently and how nature-friendly farming incentives are being used in the area;
- An opportunity to hear more about the development of the LNRS and what it means for their land;
- Scope to share views on priorities, challenges, opportunities and barriers;
- The chance to represent peers and influence the strategy at an early stage.



c. Method statement

We arranged qualitative workshops with the farming and landowning community, backed up by a communications package to promote the events and secure attendance. It should be noted that qualitative events such as these are intended to provide two-way, discursive engagement opportunities, build relationships and understanding. They are not designed to provide statistically robust, representatively sound, data sources.

When designing the content, we sought to strike a balance between introducing and championing the benefits of the LNRS for those present (as well as, of course, for nature), with setting out useful updates and information that attendees would benefit from hearing. We also aimed for a good ratio of information sharing and listening to workshopping activities that would capture views.

Locations were chosen for their appeal to the target groups as well as a good mix of geographic locations.

2. Stakeholder engagement

We wanted to hear from land owners, farmers and land managers from the area, to delve deeper into their hopes and worries about the LNRS, share more information about it, and generate interest in participating in further engagement in the future.

a. Logistics and locations

We held two full workshops, and a third light-touch discussion, as follows:

Location	Date
South Ormsby Estate	1pm, 1 st October 2024
The Fenestra Conference Centre (light touch)	5.30pm, 3 rd October 2024
Doddington Hall	12.30pm, 30 th October 2024

Locations and venues were also chosen for their authenticity and credibility in terms of supporting and showcasing nature-friendly farming practices. We wanted attendees to learn from their peers as much as possible, and these venues presented an opportunity for a relevant and relatable case study, including lessons learned, as well as (at South Ormsby and Doddington) the offer of an optional tour to share the experience in a live environment.

b. Preparing the events

Based on previous experience, we knew that ‘the LNRS’ itself would not be sufficient to draw in enough participants to gain a mix of views and inputs. We worked with the local branches of the NFU, CLA and NFFN to discuss content and agree the best combination to attract a range of attendees – those with good stories to share, those who are seeking more

information on which to form a view, and also those who might be sceptical and want to share their concerns – as all views are relevant and need to be heard.

In addition to a case study at the two main sessions of South Ormsby and Doddington, we also ensured an inspiring opening speaker, as well as an update on schemes and funding available to financially incentivise nature-friendly farming. The latter was provided by local trusted agricultural advisors, Brown and Co. Individual briefing notes were prepared for each speaker to ensure they were clear on the objectives of their session.

The table-top exercises needed to add value to the quantitative data that was already collected via the quantitative survey. These therefore focused in two sessions on:

Session 1: Our Lincolnshire Landscapes	Session 2: Farming and Nature
<p>What:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • species and habitats should we prioritise in Lincs? • have we lost from the Lincolnshire landscape since previous generations managed the same land? • would we most like to see back in our fens, coastal areas and lowlands? <p>Where:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • are the areas of importance for biodiversity? • in the farmed landscape can we create the corridors and connections critical for wildlife? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What benefits could nature friendly farming and nature recovery bring to your land? What could it help you tackle? <p>Collaboration:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where are the opportunities to work across boundaries and organisations to deliver nature recovery? <p>Barriers and support needs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is stopping land managers from engaging with nature recovery? What support is needed? • What funding streams and potential schemes are most attractive?

c. Promotion

The CLA, NFU and NFFN all promoted the events directly to their members, as did Brown & Co to their customer base and each venue to their contact lists. To help do this, a flyer was produced.

A stakeholder list of 79 land agents, farmers, land owners and land managers was created, with all invited, along with key partners. In addition, the Trueman Change team joined an active Facebook group – “Lincolnshire Farming”, with almost 25,000 members. The flyer was posted to the group several times, with members invited to contact Trueman Change to register for the events.

BBC Radio Lincolnshire’s Farmwatch programme was contacted and invited to run a feature, but did not respond.



d. Event format

Both main events were well attended, with 12 people at South Ormsby, 37 at Doddington and just three at the Fenestra Centre. The split was around 50/50 partners / presenters to farmers / landowners / managers/ advisers. Fenestra was only attended by three people; however, we decided to proceed with a light-touch event, comprising informal discussion with those who joined us.

South Ormsby and Doddington followed the same format, as follows:

DURATION	ACTIVITY	DETAIL
30mins	Arrival of partners	Pop-up exhibition from partners
30 mins	ARRIVAL AND LUNCH	
5 mins	Welcome	John Clarkson (South Ormsby and Fenestra) Emily Todd, Greater Lincolnshire Nature Partnership (Doddington)
10 mins	Sustainable, collaborative, productive landscapes	Jon Thornes (South Ormsby) Claire Birch (Doddington Estate)

15 mins	Funding and incentives	Chris Sheldon, Brown & Co.
20 mins	Nature-friendly farming in action case study	Paul Barnes (South Ormsby) Isobel Wright (Doddington)
15 mins	DISCUSSION 1– Our Lincolnshire Landscapes	John Clarkson (South Ormsby and Fenestra) Emily Todd, Greater Lincolnshire Nature Partnership (Doddington)
15 mins	Role of the LNRS	John Clarkson (South Ormsby and Fenestra) Emily Todd, Greater Lincolnshire Nature Partnership (Doddington)
25 mins	DISCUSSION 2 – Farming and Nature	John Clarkson (South Ormsby and Fenestra) Emily Todd, Greater Lincolnshire Nature Partnership (Doddington)
15 mins	Final thoughts	John Clarkson (South Ormsby and Fenestra) Emily Todd, Greater Lincolnshire Nature Partnership (Doddington)
1 hour	Optional best practice tour	Paul Barnes (South Ormsby) Isobel Wright (Doddington)



3. What participants told us

The full capture of participants views is set out as an appendix.

a. Discussion 1: our Lincolnshire Landscapes

Species that were most likely to be reported as increased are badgers, brown hare and grey partridge. Roe deer, buzzards, red kites, barn owls, egrets (and other waders), finches and yellowhammers were all thought to have increased in numbers. **Hedgehogs** were the most notably decreased, along with bats and insects.

Those cited as needing the greatest priority within the strategy were **'bugs', bats and birds.**

Habitats were most often reported as impacted by increased flooding and a perceived rise in tree diseases. Attendees also noted a rise in more active flood management, improved soil porosity, soil biome health and crop rotation as well as more controlled spraying.

In terms of the factors of importance for biodiversity and features in the farmed landscape that could be used for wildlife, **woodland, grassland, arable land, wetlands and hedgerows** were all cited as priority habitats for consideration within the strategy. Attendees also mentioned generally **controlling non-native species**, more **countryside stewardship** and **incorporating biodiversity into farming management**; and specifically suggested growing clover for legume leys, taller hedges, using pollen & nectar mixed, and maximising the opportunities around field margins and other economically unproductive areas of land.

b. Discussion 2: Farming and Nature

Barriers to nature recovery cited by participants included poor past experiences of **complex bureaucracy** when accessing **limited funding**, both playing a part in reducing stakeholder confidence in 'the system'. Some attendees also cited a lack of clear direction or objectives around nature recovery alongside resistance to change among some land managers.

A combination of **collaboration and incentives** were thought to have the most likelihood of encouraging nature-friendly practices. The most frequently cited way to bring this about was through the support of **well-informed, well-briefed advisers**, mentioned by several participants, as was more **updated (nature-friendly) education** for future generations. Improving adviser knowledge and ability to facilitate collaborations as well as share information on schemes and funding was raised on a number of tables.

A number of **specific incentive schemes** were mentioned (SFI, BNG), as was the opportunity to work with initiatives such as Pasture for Life and the Environmental Farmers Group. The scope for supported and facilitated collaboration opportunities raised included various landscape recovery initiatives, such as rewilding, and the chance to access volunteers via organisations such as Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust.

Overall, the single biggest message to emerge from these discussions was the need for **co-ordination, support and facilitation** to assist farmers, landowners and land managers in adopting nature-friendly practices, in particular when looking to **work across boundaries and to increase partnership working at landscape scale**.

From those participating in the engagement, the will to do more to increase biodiversity and support nature was evident; it is access to the means, the skills and the advice that was cited as the greatest barrier, along with an understanding that there is a fine balance to be struck between economic viability and activities to improve things for nature.

4. Lessons and outcomes

a. Lessons learned

Each event was slightly different from the other, based on participant numbers and location. As we progressed the engagement, and specifically after the South Ormsby event, we learnt that:

- Having inspirational speakers was an important element
- Ensure those speakers are well-briefed and understand their remit (we were much more comprehensive with this for Doddington)
- Having a back-up / co-host is sensible
- Focus on the small details too (e.g. tech and kit)
- Build in enough time for questions and especially difficult conversations
- Pull in subject matter experts from amongst partners to participate in Q&As

b. Did we meet our objectives?

This is a wholly subjective assessment, since we have not been able to quantify with participants whether the objectives of the events have been met.

However, it is reasonable to conclude that, given the numbers attending and the involvement of the CLA, NFU and posting to an audience-specific Facebook group, there has certainly been visibility to the creation of the LNRS, the events themselves and therefore the opportunity for the target stakeholder group to engage – the three key objectives for the responsible authority.

We know from the content of the events, that there was time for attendees to hear about the the development of the LNRS, its possible impacts, experiences of their peers, and, from the exercises, the opportunity to share their views and speak up for their sector. We would need to ask attendees whether they feel this was the case to truly judge, but the content of the events was deliberately structured to meet the objectives set.

c. Next steps

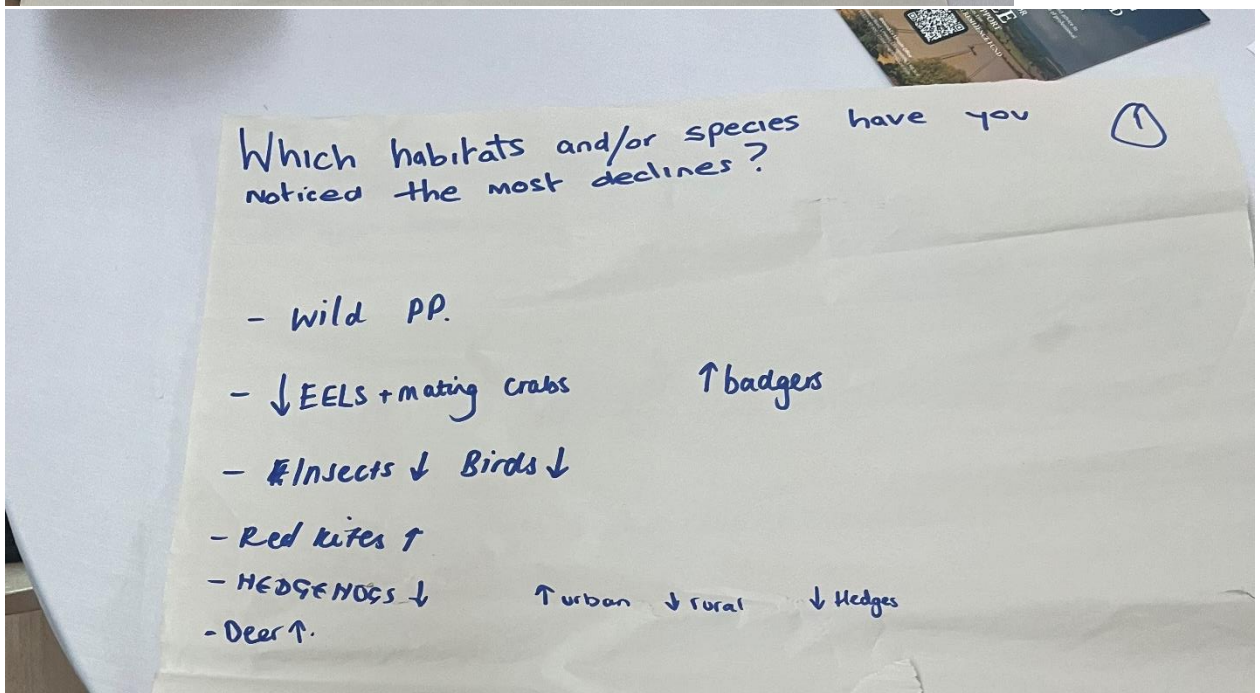
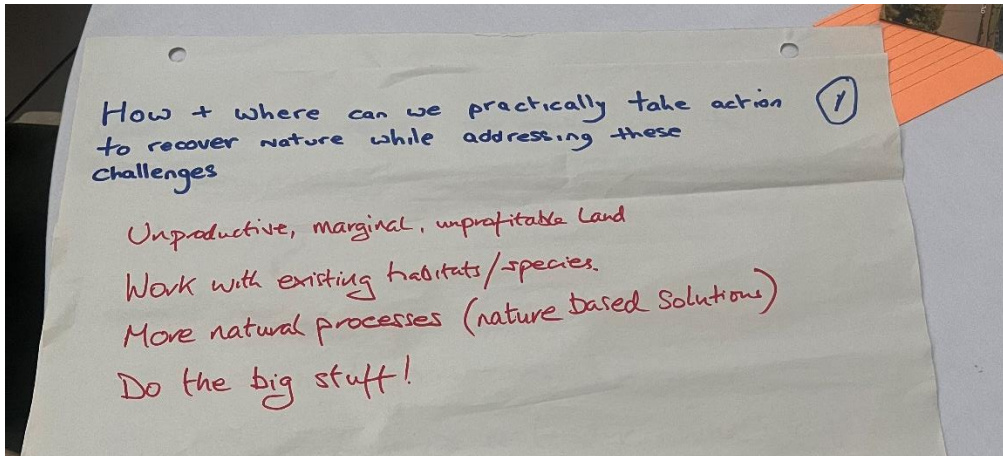
Some suggested next steps might be:

- Follow-up with attendees (partners and stakeholders) to maintain momentum and keep them informed about how their views have been used.
- Continue to post updates to the Facebook group (Farming in Lincolnshire) to maintain awareness.
- Involve the council's comms team to follow-up with BBC Lincolnshire's Farmwatch and seek to secure coverage there.

5. Appendices:

a. Images of outputs from workshops

Doddington:



Which habitats and/or species have you ^① noticed the most declines?

Hedge hogs

Butterflies Wasps skylarks? Bats (habitat) Lapwings?

increases in Hares, Buzzards, Kites, Grey Partridge Badgers

Less wetlands, better drainage

What environmental changes have you noticed on your land/land you manage? (1)

Since when? - timeline.

last 5 years - drier, flood events.
- less birds, tree disease.

last 20-30 years - more flood resistant. ^{where positive.} - management.
biome, porosity improved.

is much more fm management outside schemes.
actions have developed integrated methods themselves.

reduced / more controlled spray + nutrition.
+ rotation improvement.

are we looking at - species
- habitat } whole ecosystems?
- water
- soil.
- insects.

diversity in farm structure / management

created: local changes - rabbits - bats
- insects
- hedgehogs: Badger wirenets!

increase in disease, exclusion zones

change in planting to accommodate.

non-native species. - uncontrolled ^{inputs} input.
- increase disease.

What environmental changes have you noticed on your land/land you manage? ①

- * grey partridge, ^{Egrets.} Barn Owls, Hares, ^{Roe Deer} Yellow Hammers, Finches
- changes happened since Countryside Stewardship (Better for nature)
- field margins, pollen & nectar mixes, ~~and~~ winter bird seed
- Taller hedges
- Flooding has been an issue (Heavy land)
- Increase in wading birds on flooded land
- Growing of clover (legume leys)
- 4 years MT
- SFI Pilot (just finished)

How + where can we practically take action to recover nature whilst also addressing these challenges? ①

- JOINED UP PLANNING FOR HABITAT CREATION - HABITAT STRIPS BESIDE DRAINS - WILDLIFE + WATER QUALITY.
- ↳ THIS NEEDS FARM ADVISER/FACILITATOR SUPPORT + ORGANISATION BEHIND THEM.
- MORE ^{FARM} CLUSTER GROUPS.
- BETTER INFORMED FARMER DECISIONS. BASED ON SHARED KNOWLEDGE.

And Adviser training.

Opportunities to work together (2)

Cluster group | Facilitation groups



Joining together for events

Pasture for life + similar.

Rebuilding Britain

BASE

Co-operatives

Partnerships with food | retailers | N.W.

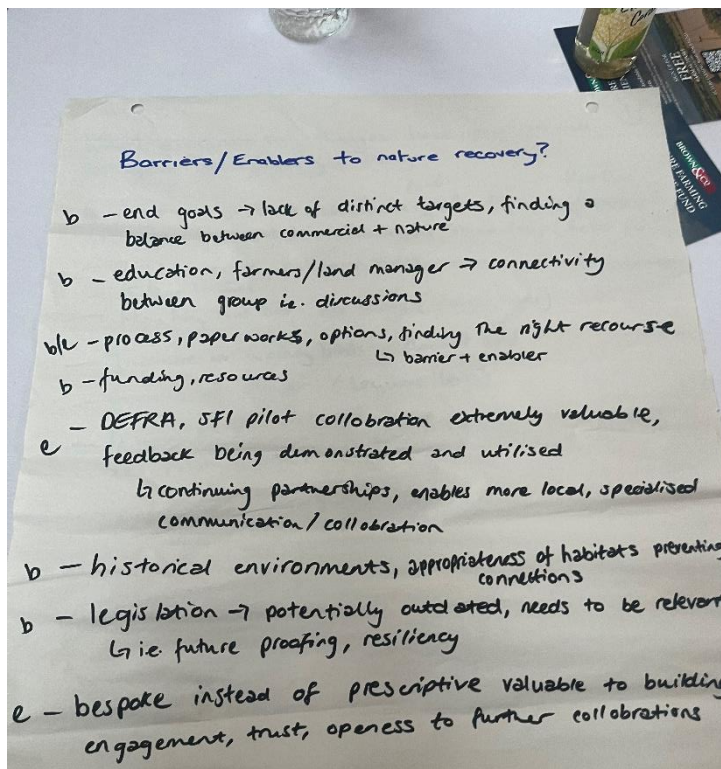
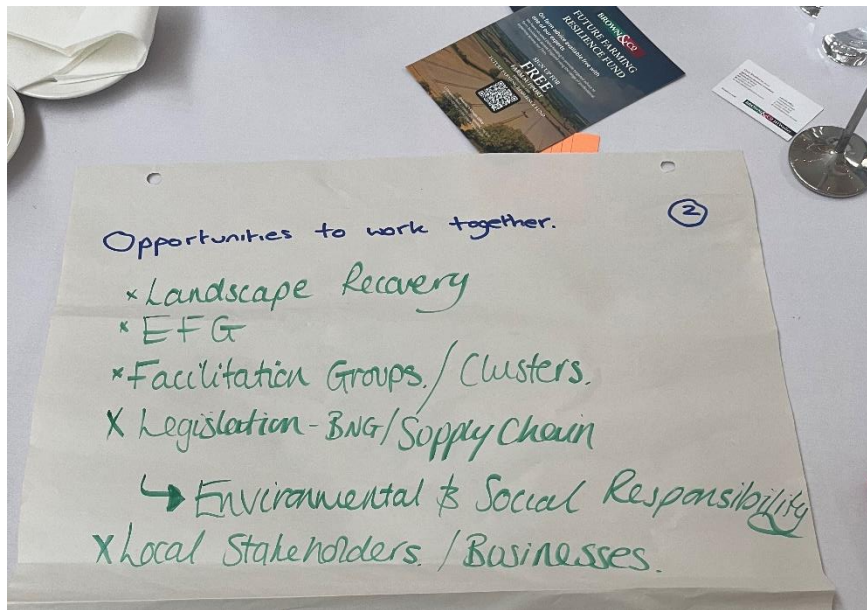
LWT | RSPB

Water companies

Nieif

ET Landscape recovery

CLA | NFU



Barriers/Enablers to nature recovery.

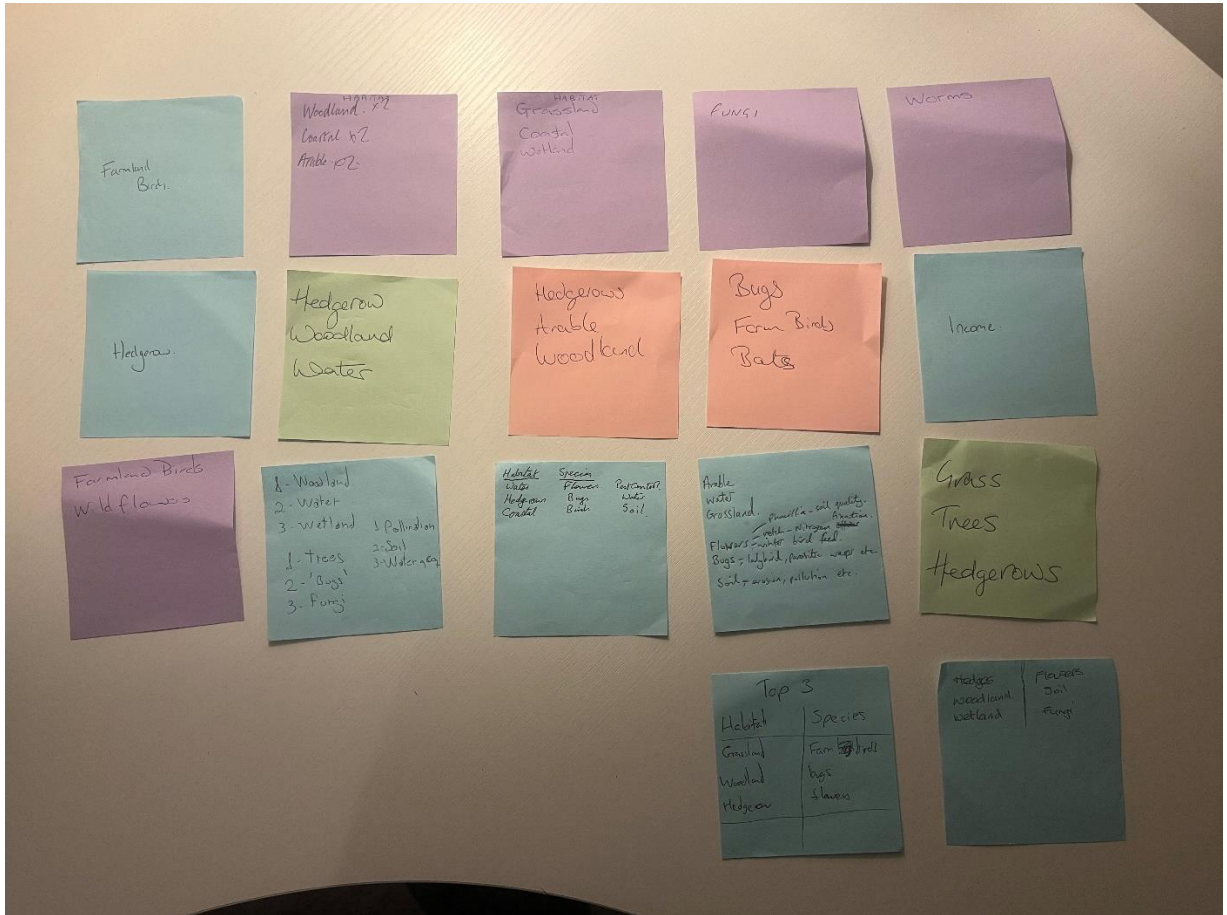
- grade 1 (and not part of conversation,
- once there is a map with a boundary it will become a barrier (whether intended or not)
 - ↓
 - " Stakeholder confidence in schemes.
- still licking wounds after previous unsatisfactory schemes.
- concerns of individual - too busy / stressed etc.
- silo thinking - thinking of land as either prod. or natural.
- ~~payor~~ $\frac{f}{}$ - planning developments.
- tax
- enablers - collaborations
- drainage channels - ecosystem approach.
- payments - confidence.
- $\frac{f}{}$

What support is needed to enable you to take action?

- KNOWLEDGE OF ADVICE + ADVISERS AVAILABLE
- CONFUSION OVER GRANT SCHEMES E.G. WOODLAND CREATION.
- LACK OF CERTAINTY OVER REVENUE
- IMPLICATIONS OF ENVIRONMENTAL CHOICES.
- SUPPORT FOR NEW SKILLS NEEDED FOR LAND MANAGEMENT. CHOICES - STOCK, WOODLAND.
- KNOWLEDGE OF NEW AGRI-ENVIRONMENT SCHEMES - OPTIONS / IMPLICATIONS.
- CONTINUITY OF AGRI-ENVIRONMENT SCHEMES - EXISTENCE, REGULATIONS, + CASH.
- EASIER BREAK CLAUSES.

Emily is very good.

Habitats and species to prioritise (South Ormsby)



b. Typed up notes of workshop outputs

Doddington:

What environmental changes have you noticed on your land / land you manage?

Last 5 years: Drier, More flood events, Less birds, More tree disease

Last 20-30 years: more positive management for flood resistance; biome, porosity improved; Much more from outside management schemes; actions have developed integrated methods themselves

Reduced / more controlled spray and nutrition and rotation improvements

Should be looking at whole ecosystems – species, habitats, water, soil, insects

Diversity in farm structure and management created local changes – rabbits, insects, hedgehogs, bats;

Flooding

Soil

Trees and hedges – increase in disease; exclusion zones – change in planting to accommodate .

Non-native species uncontrolled in parts

Changes happened since countryside stewardship (better for nature)

Field margins, pollen and nectar mixes, winter bird seed

Taller hedges

Flooding has been an issue (heavy land)

Increase in wading birds on flooded land

Growing of clover (legume leys)

4 years MT

SFI pilot (just finished)

Fenestra:

Livestock disease e.g. bird flu, swine fever

Red band needle blight

Spruce bark beetle - *Ips typographus*

Phytophthora

Weather is changing / weather extremes changing. Loads of different factors coming in.

Black grass is a problem

South Ormsby:

Pollination

Soil

Water quality

Which habitats and / or species have noticed the greatest decline?

Doddington:

Hedgehogs

Butterflies

Wasps
Skylarks
Bats (including habitat)
Few wetlands, because of better drainage
Wild PP
Eels and mating crabs
Insects
Birds
Hedgehogs
Lapwings
Hedges
Wetlands, Fens, salt marsh, hedgerows

Fenestra:

Barn owl – want to see more

South Ormsby: **focused on priority species and habitats**

Woodland x 8
Hedgerow x 7
'Bugs' x 5 (1x ladybird, parasitic wasp)
Coastal X 5
Grassland X 4
Waterways x 4
Farmland birds x 4
Fungi X 3
Arable X 3
Wetlands x 2
Wildflowers x 2
Bats x1
Worms X1

INCREASED

Doddington:

Deer, and badgers
Hares, buzzards, kites, grey partridge, badgers
increase in badgers
Grey partridge, Barn owls, hares, egrets, yellow hammers, roe deer, finches

Fenestra:

Magpies – want to see less
Badgers – want to see less
Grey squirrel – want to see less
Buzzards
Swans
Marsh harriers

How and where can we practically take action to recover nature whilst addressing challenges?

Doddington:

Unproductive, marginal, unprofitable land
Work with existing habitats / species
More natural processes (nature-based solutions)
Do the big stuff!

Joined up planning for habitat creation – e.g. habitat strips beside drains / wildlife and water quality
This needs farm adviser / facilitator support and organisations behind them
More farm cluster groups
Better informed farmer decisions, based on shared knowledge
Advisor training
Join local conservation efforts through groups like the Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust
Access volunteers for habitat restoration, species monitoring, and tree planting.
Encourage / facilitate citizen science projects, such as bird and butterfly counts to provide critical data to track biodiversity health.
Create a small wildlife refuge with native plants and features like ponds or log piles to support local pollinators, amphibians, and birds.
Tree and hedgerow planting initiatives to restore essential habitats and improve biodiversity resilience across the county.

Fenestra:

“Grassland more important than woodland to me”
Different types of woodland.
“Pollination is important to me”.

“Local wildlife sites are not evenly distributed. Been created because landowners consulted. Tied hands in regards to planning. You are going to see distortions in the picture.”

“Still not sure if going to be an intermediate consultation when landowners can check if its workable before going to the wider public. Concerns around practicality.”

“Priority on heathland.”

“Limewood.”

Conflict about the floodplain. As a society spend a lot of time and money creating marsh difficult. Floodplain interest. Spend a lot of time thinking how can keep that land productive. A lot of people that is their entire livelihood. No closer to working out how can reconcile production and livelihood in a floodplain.

South Ormsby:

Soil, pollination, water quality

Opportunities to work together

Doddington

Landscape recovery
EFG

Facilitation groups / clusters
Legislation
BNG
Supply chain
Make use of ESG responsibilities of local stakeholders and businesses

Cluster group / facilitation groups – joining together for events
Pasture for Life and similar
Rewilding Britain
BASE
Co-operatives
Partnerships with food / retailers / milk
LWT / RSPB
Water companies
Landscape recovery
CLA / NFU

Groups joining together
National organisations
Legislation
ESG responsibility

Barriers to nature recovery

Doddington:

Grade of land not part of conversation
Once there is a map with a boundary it will become a barrier – whether intended or not; it will influence stakeholder confidence in schemes
People are still licking their wounds after previous unsatisfactory schemes
Concerns of individuals being too busy or stressed
Silo-thinking – think of land as either productive OR natural
Tax
Planning developments
End goals – lack of distinct targets, finding a balance between commercial; and nature
Education, farmers and land managers – connectivity between groups i.e. discussions
Process, paperwork, options, finding the right recourse
Funding and resources
Historical environments, appropriateness of habitats preventing connections
Legislation – potentially outdated, needs to be relevant, future-proofed and resilience
Historical destruction of habitats

Fenestra:

Can graze the grass with the sheep, but can't graze too much. Got in trouble previously with butterfly groups.

South Ormsby:

Income

Enablers to nature recovery

Doddington:

Collaborations

Drainage channels- an ecosystems approach

Payments and £ add confidence

Process, paperwork, options, finding the right recourse

Defra SFI pilot collaboration extremely valuable, feedback being demonstrated and utilised

Continuing partnerships enables more local, specialised communication and collaboration

Bespoke approach to building engagement, trust and openness to further collaborations

Fenestra:

Got an agreement in place. Heathland and 600 int SFI. Trying to get BNG project off the ground. Doing it jointly with a tenant. Got alpacas.

What support is needed to enable you to take action?

Doddington:

Educating people (inc. Advisors) to understand best practice

Build collaborative partnerships

Helping the next generation

Education needs to be a leader – what's taught needs updating

Local procurement – connect farmers to local markets etc.

Availability of advice and knowledge of advisors who are available

Reduce the confusion over grant schemes e.g. woodland creation

Eliminate the certainty over revenue implications of environmental choices

Support for new skills needed for land management choices – stock, woodland

Knowledge of new agri-environmental schemes – options and implications

Continuity of agri-environmental schemes – existence, regulation, case

Easier break clauses

Other:

“Emily is very good”