



Nature and Us Citizens' Assembly Feedback on vision statements and staying involved

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To make this happen, all levels of government need to invest in public transport, renewable energy technologies and waste management as well as reducing the impact of inequalities between people and their communities. This will give more equal access to greener lifestyle choices to people across Wales.

6. Sustainable land management helps communities buy local food and feel connected to the Welsh land.

To make this happen, all levels of government need to help make farming more sustainable and local food cheaper. This will help people buy more local, sustainable food, and restore nature.

The survey asked the extent to which participants agreed that these statements captured the priorities discussed during the Assembly. The survey also asked participants about their willingness to take action to protect nature, and any barriers they face to taking action. Then in the group discussions, participants were given the opportunity to discuss their survey responses in more detail. This involved understanding why participants agreed or disagreed with the statements, and where necessary, suggesting amendments to wording. Participants were also given more time to discuss their appetite for taking action to protect and restore nature, as well as the barriers they may face.

This report presents the findings from the survey and discussion groups. Chapter two provides participants' reflections on the vision statements, and notes the minor changes that resulted from their suggestions. Chapter three provides an analysis of the actions that participants plan to take to protect and restore nature, and the main barriers they face in taking action.

1.2 Key findings

Participants agreed that all six vision statements captured the discussions from the Citizens' Assembly. However, participant feedback did highlight a few areas where wording of statements could be made clearer. NatCen reviewed this feedback with NRW, and agreed to make the following three minor amends to the statements to ensure the meaning of the statements is clearly communicated to a wider audience:

- 'Other vested interests' was added to vision statement two, to capture Assembly members' concerns that decision-making on nature is not driven by all types of political or financial interest. The draft statement focussed only on political interests.
- In vision statement four, 'Welsh society needs to be more equal' was amended to 'Welsh society needs more equal access to nature' to better communicate the importance of reducing the impact of health inequalities, and avoid any confusion of what 'equal' means in the statement.



2. Final vision statements

The pre-discussion survey asked the extent to which participants agreed or disagreed that the draft statements captured the priorities identified by Assembly members in the initial Citizens' Assembly. Then during the online group, participants were given the opportunity to review the statements in more detail and suggest any amendments. This chapter reports findings from the survey and discussion groups.

2.1 Survey results show overall agreement

As figure 1 below illustrates, all but one participant agreed to some extent that the vision statements captured the priorities that participants identified during the Assembly; with a majority of 14 agreeing strongly. One participant selected 'neither agree nor disagree' but did not provide a clear reason in the free text box as to why they responded this way.

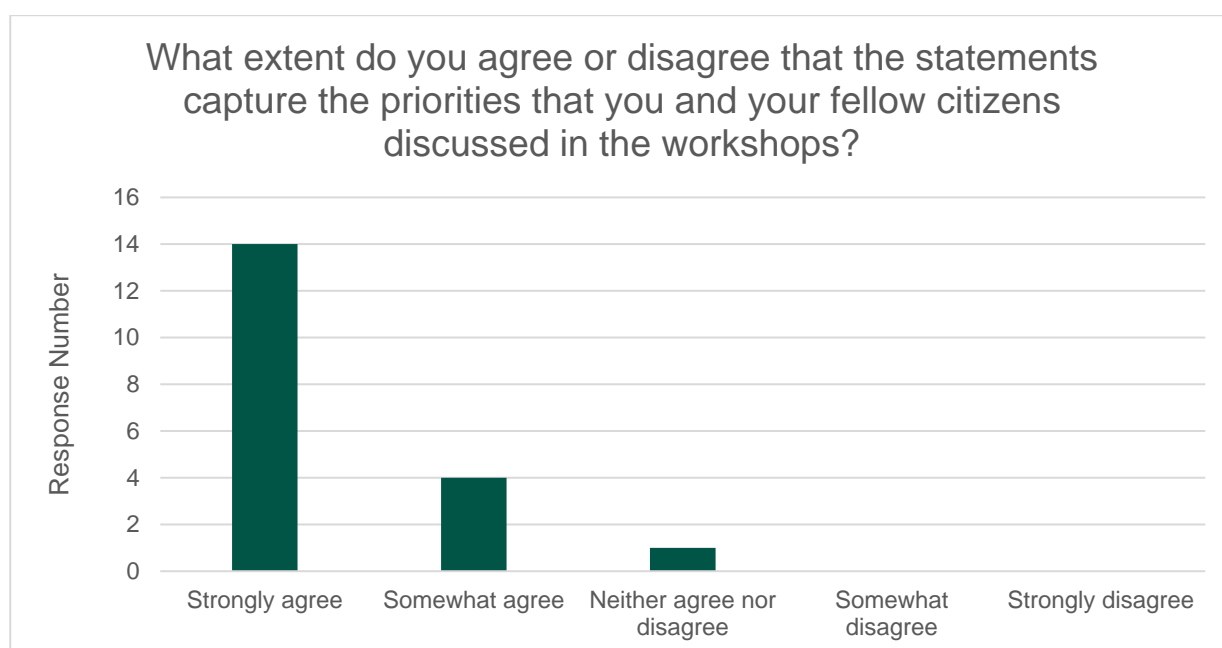


Figure 1: Extent of agreement with vision statements.

2.2 General feedback about the vision statements

The following three overarching themes emerged from the groups discussions about the statements.



ensure clarity of messages. These amendments do not indicate disagreement with the initial draft. They have been highlighted in yellow.

Vision statement 1: People and Government have a shared commitment to protecting the natural environment.

To make this happen, the government needs to communicate their plan to protect and restore the natural environment. This will explain how people and government can help protect endangered animals and plants, and restore where they live.

All groups agreed with this statement with no suggested amendments.

Across all groups, participants agreed that the Citizens' Assembly had identified a role for government and people in protecting and restoring the natural environment. Discussions in these follow-up groups focussed on how a plan should be developed and trade-offs negotiated. For example, one group illustrated an example of possible trade-offs by querying how protecting endangered animals, which would include predators and species that are often seen as pests such as snakes, rats or mice, would affect human safety and how this would be resolved.

Vision statement 2: Clear leadership from the Welsh Government helps the public to be more involved in decisions about nature.

To make this happen, all levels of government need to involve people and make decisions based on clear information and evidence, rather than party political and other vested interests. This will give the public more power, and make sure government takes the best approach to nature.

All groups agreed with this statement, but one group suggested adding 'other vested interests' and this suggestion was accepted by NatCen and NRW.

Some participants suggested the statement should be broadened to include "vociferous vested interests". During the initial Assembly discussions, participants didn't just focus on the impact of political parties, but also wider challenges of current democratic decision-making such as business or Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO) lobbying. NatCen discussed this suggestion with NRW, and it was agreed that adding 'other vested interests' does communicate the broader challenges to democratic decision-making, highlighted in the findings report¹. Therefore the statement was amended.

Participants saw the combined focus on the importance of evidence and moving beyond party political interests as accurate and an essential element of this vision statement. Involving people was seen to depend on reliable and credible information being shared,

¹ See Assembly findings report – page 19



and decisions opened up to people down to the local level. Some participants thought that Welsh Government leadership would also need to be strong so that decisions can actually deliver results for nature. One participant used the term “some bite” to describe that the Welsh Government needs to make sure its decisions are enacted.

Vision statement 3: Sharing knowledge helps people understand how nature impacts their lives, and the actions they can take to help protect and restore the natural environment.

To make this happen, clear and accessible information will highlight the different ways citizens can act. This will help citizens know what steps they can take to help nature and society thrive.

All groups agreed with this statement with no suggested amendments.

Participants across all four groups confirmed that clear actionable information was key in enabling people to play their part in protecting and restoring nature. The important role of evidence was highlighted again, and the NHS was used as an example of where people thought relevant evidence was routinely included in communicating decisions and advice.

Suggesting that “some people may not actively seek out the information”, participants called for effective use of different communication channels (e.g. social media was seen as not being used enough) and to “get the balance right, including sharing positive messages about what's working” as well as messages to highlight the challenge.

Vision statement 4: Widespread access to nature helps people across Wales live happy and healthy lives.

To make this happen, Welsh society needs more equal access to nature and to make its environment less polluted, so that everyone is able to benefit from nature. This will improve the mental and physical health of people in Wales.

All groups agreed with this statement but some participants were unsure what was meant by ‘equal’. To communicate the relationship between health inequalities, access to nature and the impact of pollution, NatCen and NRW therefore agreed to amend the statement to ‘more equal access to nature’ to ensure the idea of equality of access to nature is clearly communicated.

Described by one participant as “bang on”, there was wide agreement across all groups that the role of access to nature in supporting mental and physical health had emerged as a key theme from the Assembly discussions.



Vision statement 5: Greener transport and energy options enable more people to make environmentally friendly choices in their day-to-day lives.

To make this happen, the Welsh Government needs to invest in public transport, renewable energy technologies, and waste management; as well as reducing the impact of inequalities between people and their communities. This will give more equal access to greener lifestyle choices to people across Wales.

All groups agreed with this statement with no suggested amendments.

This statement was widely seen as clear, tangible and suitably reflecting Assembly discussions. Comments focused on the difficulties involved in choosing appropriate technologies, both at government and individual level, and the importance of considering a range of solutions. For example, one participant expressed concern that adopting electric vehicles could curtail further research, for instance, around green hydrogen, and so they highlighted the importance of the Welsh Government making the right choices at different points in time.

Vision statement 6: Sustainable land management helps communities buy local food and feel connected to the Welsh land.

To make this happen, all levels of government need to help make farming more sustainable and local food affordable. This will help people buy more local, sustainable food, and restore nature.

All groups agreed with this statement, however one group challenged the use of the term 'cheaper food'. Therefore, following discussion with NRW, the word 'cheaper' was replaced with 'affordable' to more accurately capture how local food can be made financially sustainable.

Overall this statement attracted less discussion than other statements. However, one group strongly criticised the reference to making 'local food cheaper'. They challenged whether this was possible to do whilst still protecting and restoring nature. Participants suggested that "if it was possible to make local food cheaper, farmers would be doing it", and that "the only way to achieve this is more intensive farming which is less eco-friendly". After reviewing this comment with NRW, it was decided that 'affordable' better captured the idea of widening access to local produce to restore nature, and avoided potentially misleading associations with intensive farming that the word 'cheaper' may communicate.



3. Taking action

Building on pre-session survey responses, the second part of the group discussions explored participants' thoughts about taking action to protect and restore nature. This chapter outlines the impact participants' involvement in the Citizens' Assembly had on them, and the steps they have or plan to take to help protect and restore nature following the Assembly.

3.1 Citizens' Assembly experience and impact

Survey responses suggest that the Citizens' Assembly was a positive experience for almost all participants who took part in these additional workshops, most of whom found it very or quite enjoyable (See figure 2).

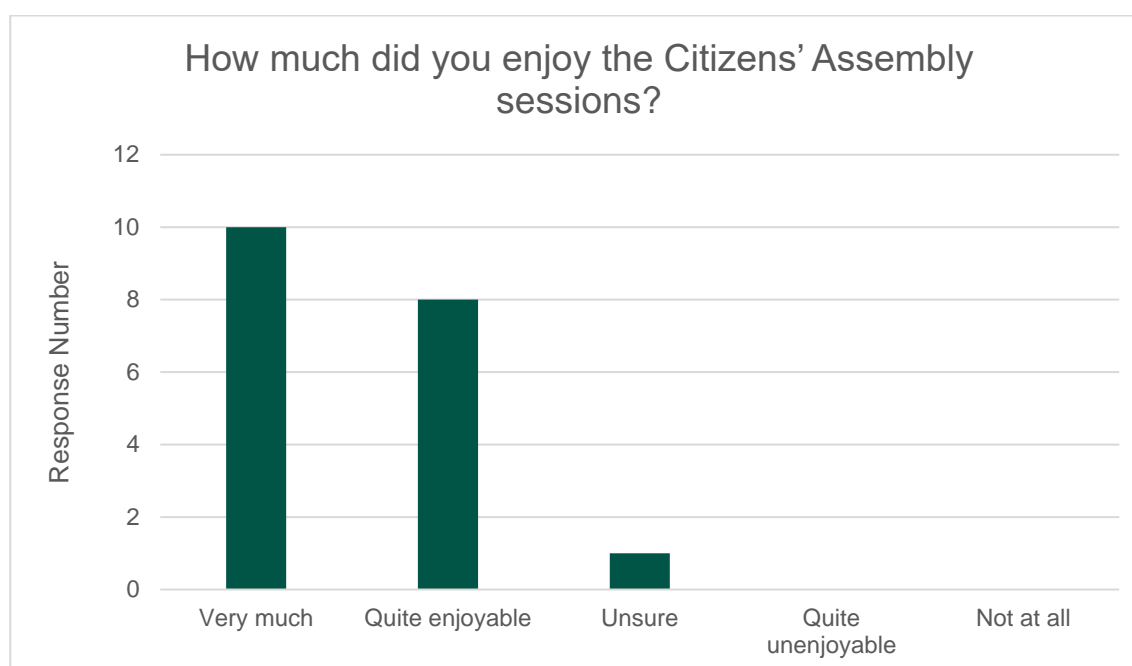


Figure 2: Enjoyment of the Citizens' Assembly.

When asked in the survey what the most valuable outcome of the Assembly was, many participants reported that they had been inspired to take action. Seeing at first-hand how many people cared about nature and what practical steps, large and small, different people were taking or planning to take, prompted participants to do something themselves. Examples of action included taking an interest in issues related to nature, recycling more, or creating a space for different species of birds in the garden. One person reported that having their voice heard in an official setting had changed their perspective on the issue, countering a sense of “coming up against a brick wall trying to live in a greener way”.



As well as being inspired to act, the majority also gained knowledge through the Assembly with all but one participant feeling well or quite informed about the state of nature in Wales afterwards (see figure 3). A very similar trend was observed when Assembly members were asked the same question after the very first Assembly session in February 2023. On that occasion, 21 participants responded and an almost identical proportion reported feeling very well or quite informed.

Open text survey responses show that people felt more informed through factual information about the severity of the issues, as well as learning about Welsh Government plans, “the big picture of what the Welsh Government are doing”.

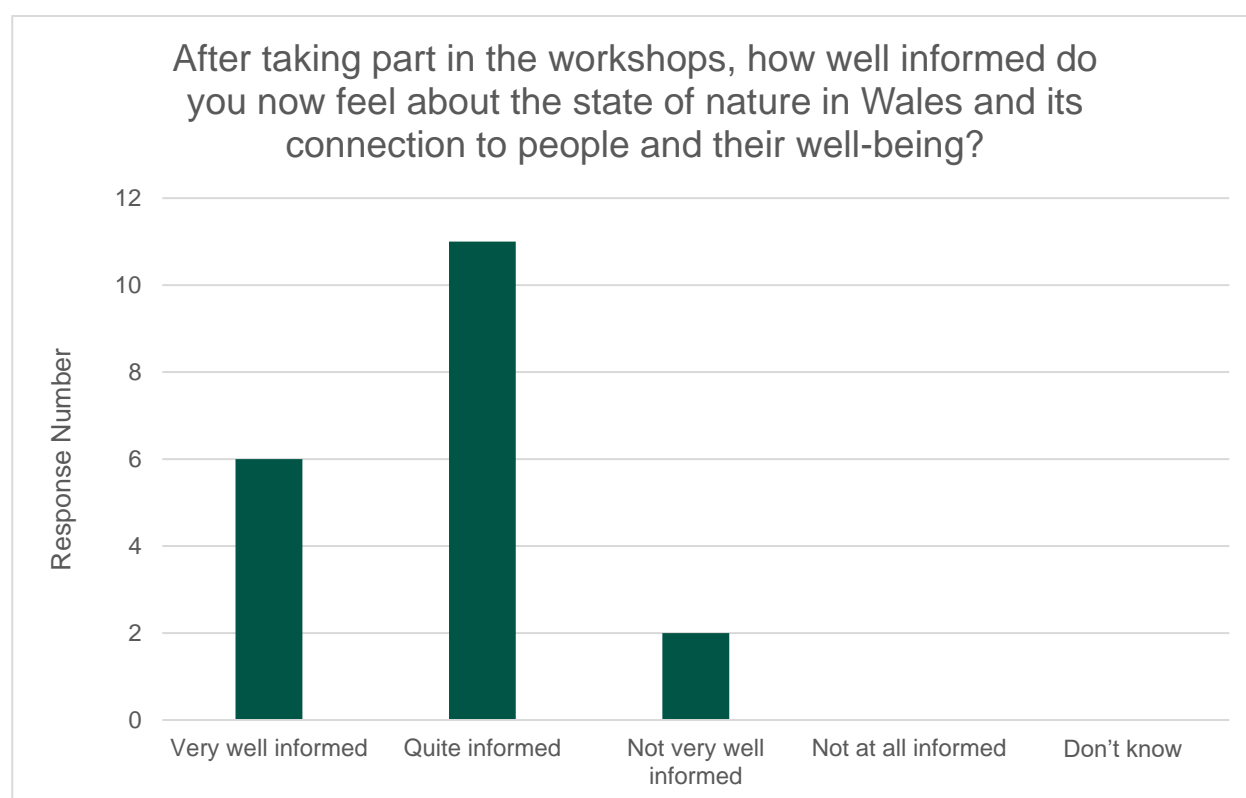


Figure 3: How well informed participants felt after the Citizens' Assembly workshops.

The value of the Citizens' Assembly in helping participants understand other people's perspectives was also mentioned repeatedly in open text responses. A “frank exchange of ideas from varied backgrounds” without any “politicising” was seen as a welcome antidote to “often very biased media”.

Some comments suggested that the additional knowledge gained made them feel more empowered, with one respondent, for instance, suggesting that “I feel more empowered to challenge now, e.g. the local MP regarding what's gone on, I have more background knowledge to challenge and bring up things that aren't right” and another reporting feeling “more confident in expressing my opinion to others on the changes needed”.

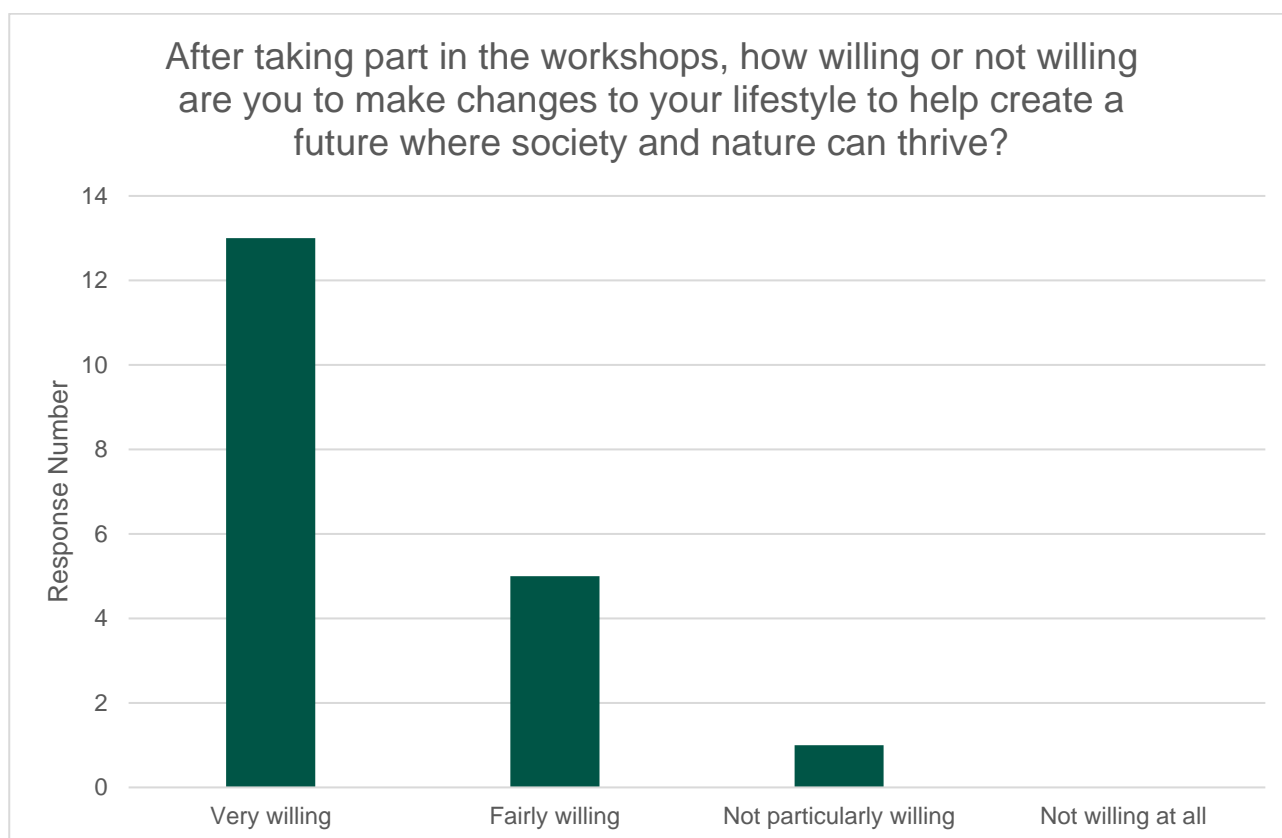


Figure 4: Willingness to make changes to lifestyle after attending the Citizens' Assembly workshops.

When asked about the steps participants thought they could take in the next few months to make environmentally friendly changes to their lifestyles, time spent in nature, attending workshops like a Citizens' Assembly, and increasing their knowledge, all featured strongly (figure 5). This suggests that participants felt able to take a range of different actions.

In the group discussions, many mentioned raising awareness amongst their own family and friends as an additional step they had taken. After having taken part in the Assembly, they felt they'd had "more informed conversations with others", family, friends and work colleagues about the state of nature.

Volunteering was also explored in more detail in discussion groups. They saw this as a key way "to understand more about nature and positive actions that [they] can take". Depending on people's circumstances, this ranged from joining organisations looking after nature, and participating in litter picks, to regularly looking after local green spaces, or learning outdoor skills in a supportive group setting. Some reported active campaigning and outreach work, such as tree and flower planting with children in schools, monitoring bird populations as part of a wildlife group, or actively contributing to thermal surveys undertaken by Friends of the Earth.

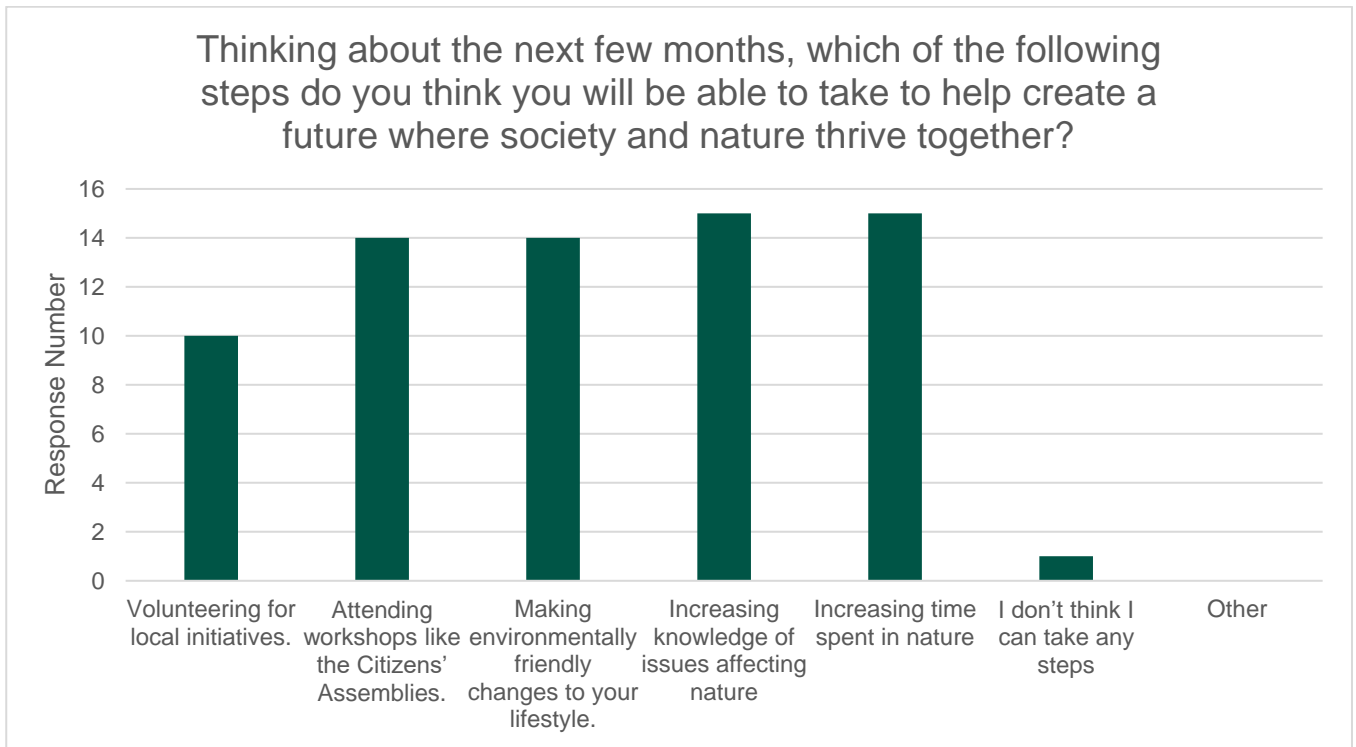


Figure 5: Reported ability to take steps.

However, there were barriers to taking action for many participants. Survey responses suggest that financial reasons and not enough time (figure 6) were the primary barriers to lifestyle changes, followed by a lack of information. Limited accessibility and not wanting to take steps on one's own were barriers for some.

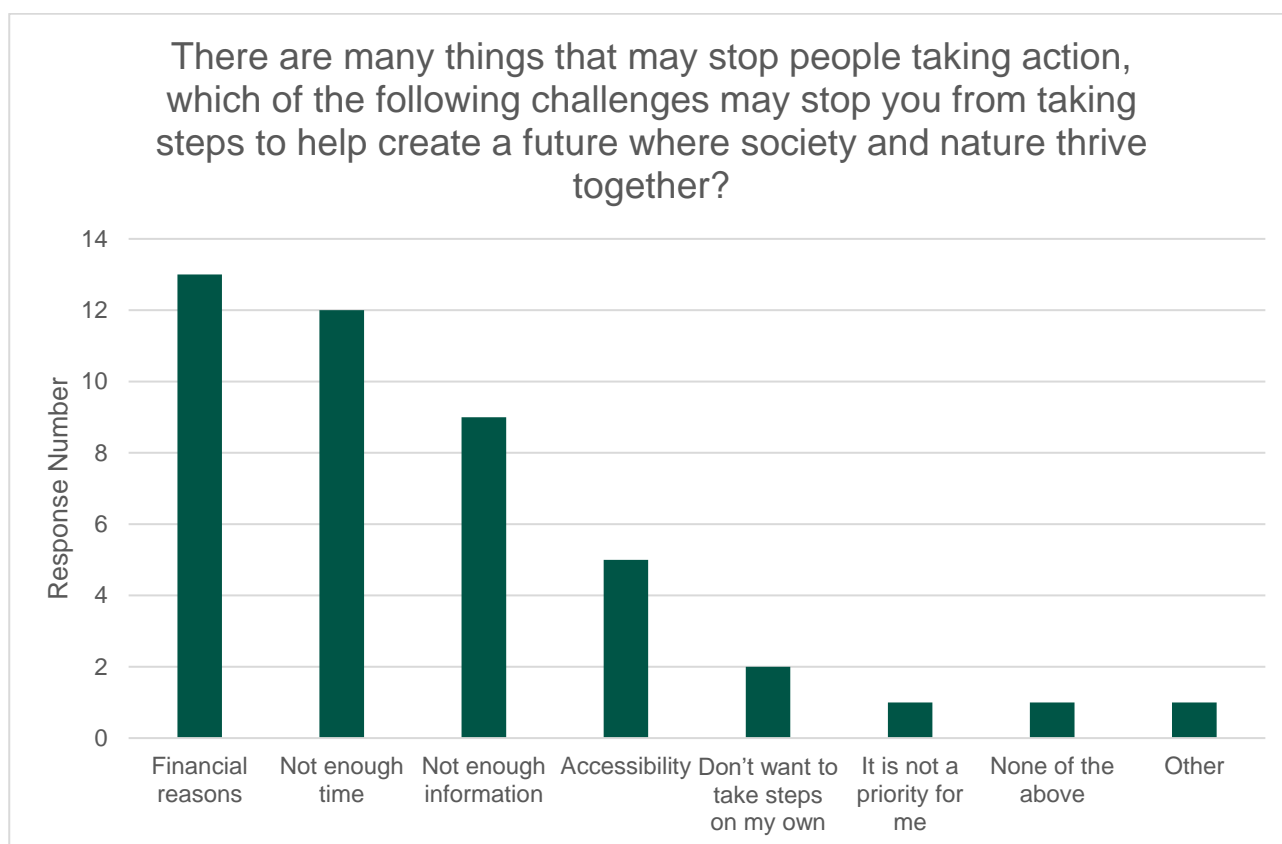


Figure 6: Barriers to taking steps to help create a future where society and nature thrive together.

When barriers were explored further in discussion groups, participants talked about financial challenges in more detail by highlighting that it is often, for example, more expensive to take public transport such as trains than driving.

When discussing energy choices, participants in one group were unsure of the cost and feasibility of different domestic green energy options such as installing heat pumps, or installing renewable energy sources like solar panels.

Some thought that the current recycling options also presented a barrier. Participants thought that more would need to be demanded from businesses so that packaging could be reduced in the first place and recycling supported, (e.g. through take-back schemes).

When discussing spending more time in nature, awareness of where to go and how to get there was another barrier highlighted by participants. Whilst some felt “inspired and informed to go to more places” and wanted “to get more immersed in nature”, some were unsure of where to go and felt that there was a lack of public transport options to get there.

Awareness of local volunteering opportunities, a lack of time or inconvenient timing of activities, a lack of inclusive and accessible opportunities, and a lack of funding emerged as the key obstacles for people to volunteer regularly. Making information more readily



available, and supporting community action were seen as part of the solution. A specific suggestion was for more employers in Wales to promote and support volunteering.

3.3 Key need for knowledge and information

As reported in section 3.1, feeling well informed was one of the main benefits participants experienced from taking part in the Assembly. In the group discussions, participants emphasised that lack of information might stop other people in Wales from ‘taking steps to help create a future where society and nature thrive together’.

Participants broadly agreed that knowledge and an awareness that “what I’m doing is important” held the key to creating a sense of responsibility. A range of different types of knowledge and information were mentioned as being required to enable people to play their part in helping nature thrive in Wales. This included:

- Regular **updates about steps taken by government** and information that would allow people to understand how the measures taken make a difference.
- **Factual information that raises awareness of the important challenges to the state of nature.** For example, issues around sewage in rivers and the ocean, or pressing ecological issues (e.g. endangered species), including associated trade-offs between nature and other economic and social policy objectives.
- **Practical information about steps people can take**, including both specific and simple steps such as reducing contamination with microplastics or recycling, and more complex choices, such as how green technologies can be adopted in different circumstances (e.g. new heating systems in old properties).
- **Local information about how to get involved in taking action in their local area**, for example, “how to start community projects”, and advertising of opportunities to get involved.

Participants thought it would be important to get this knowledge and information to all, even to those who are not actively looking for it.



Appendix 1: Achieved sample

The table below shows a breakdown of the demographics of the 19 participants who took part in the online discussion groups compared to the original Assembly target sample, and those who attended the first Assembly session.

	Population %	Original target		Invited	Session 1	Online discussion
Gender						
Male	49.30%	26	50.00%	25	23	11
Female	50.70%	26	50.00%	27	22	8
Ethnicity						
White, White Welsh or White British	93.70%	45	86.50%	44	40	16
Asian, Asian Welsh or Asian British	2.90%	3	5.80%	3	2	2
Black, Black Welsh, Black British, Caribbean or African	0.90%	1	1.90%	2	1	0
Mixed or multiple ethnic group	1.60%	2	3.80%	2	1	1
Other ethnic group	0.90%	1	1.90%	1	1	0
Age						
16-24	13.07%	7	13.10%	6	4	1
25-34	15.30%	8	15.30%	8	7	3
35-44	15.00%	8	15.00%	8	8	4
45-64	31.35%	16	31.40%	16	15	7
65+	25.28%	13	25.30%	14	11	4
Disability						
Yes	22.70%	12	22.70%	11	8	4
No	77.30%	40	77.30%	41	37	15
Geography						
Rural	38.00%	20	38.00%	19	16	8
Urban	62.00%	32	62.00%	33	28	11
Occupation						
Not in the labour force (other)	17.00%	9	17.00%	9	6	5
Manager/ director/ professional	26.00%	14	26.00%	14	13	6
Caring/ leisure/ service/ sales	9.60%	5	9.60%	9	8	3
Not in the labour force (retired)	25.90%	13	25.90%	13	10	4
Administrative/ secretarial/ skilled trade	11.70%	6	11.70%	6	7	1
Plant or machine operative/ elementary	9.80%	5	9.80%	1	1	0
Geography						
LL/CH	34%	18	34.0%	17	15	6
SY	6%	3	6.0%	4	4	3



LD/HR	6%	3	6.0%	3	3	1
SA	18%	9	18.0%	8	8	1
CF	24%	12	24.0%	13	11	6
NP/GL	12%	6	12.0%	7	4	2



Appendix 2: Survey

The following survey was completed by participants prior to attending the group discussions.

The following questions will help us understand a bit about how taking part in the Assembly affected your attitude towards nature and the steps you might take to help create a future where society and nature can thrive together.

Question 1: Overall, what was the most valuable thing that came out of the workshops for you?

.....

Tab title: Question2

Question 2: How much did you enjoy the Citizens' Assembly sessions?

- Very much
- Quite enjoyable
- In the middle
- Quite unenjoyable
- Not at all

.....

Tab title: Question3a

Question 3a: After taking part in the workshops, how well informed do you now feel about the state of nature in Wales and its connection to people and their well-being?

- Very well informed
- Quite informed



- Not very well informed
- Not at all informed
- Don't know

.....

Tab title: Question3b

Question 3b: What additional information would you like to have to help you develop your views on the links between nature and people in Wales.

.....

Tab title: Question4

Question 4: Since completing the workshops, what (if anything) do you feel has changed about your thoughts on the state of nature in Wales and its connection to people and their well-being?

.....

Tab title: Question5

Question 5a: After taking part in the workshop, how willing or not willing are you to make changes to your lifestyle to help create a future where society and nature can thrive?

- Very willing
- Fairly willing
- Not particularly willing



Not willing at all

.....

Tab title: Question6b

Question 5b: What would support you to make changes in your life?

.....

Tab title: Question6

Question 6: After taking part in the workshop, have you taken any steps to help create a future where society and nature can thrive together?

.....

Tab title: Question7

Question 7a: Thinking about the next few months, which of the following steps do you think **you will be able** to take to help create a future where society and nature thrive together?

(select as many as apply)

- Volunteering for local initiatives.
- Attending workshops like the Citizens' Assemblies.
- Making environmentally friendly changes to your lifestyle.
- Increasing knowledge of issues affecting nature



- Increasing time spent in nature
- I don't think I can take any steps
- Other

.....

Tab title: Question7b

Question 7b: Please tell us more detail on the steps you plan to take

.....

Tab title: Question7c

Question 7c: If you indicated 'Other', please specify your preference below.

If you had not selected 'Other', please go onto the next page.

.....

Tab title: Question8a

The following questions will help us understand the challenges that you may face in taking the steps necessary to help create a future where society and nature can thrive.

Question 8a: There are many things that may stop people taking action, which of the following challenges may stop you from taking steps to help create a future where society and nature thrive together?

(Select as many as apply)



Or if you selected 'Other', please explain below.

.....

Tab title: Question8d

Question 8d: If you have further thoughts or reflections on the challenges to you taking steps to help protect and improve the state of nature in Wales, please insert this in the textbox below.

If you do not have further comment, please move on to the next question.

.....

Tab title: Question9a

After the Assembly workshops the National Centre for Social Research (NatCen), reviewed participants' discussions and drafted six vision statements. These visions statements are meant to summarise participants' priorities for a future Wales where people and nature thrive together.

In the next section of the survey we'd like you to look at these statements and tell us if you think they capture what you heard in the Citizens' Assembly workshops. **It is important that you read these statements as you'll discuss them further in the group discussions.**

Click next to read the vision statements

1. People and Government have a shared commitment to protecting the natural environment.

To make this happen the government needs to communicate their plan to protect and restore the natural environment. This will explain how people and government can help protect endangered animals and plants, and restore where they live.



2. Clear leadership from the Welsh Government helps the public to be more involved in decisions about nature.

To make this happen, all levels of government need to involve people and make decisions based on clear information and evidence rather than party political interests. This will give the public more power and make sure government takes the best approach to nature.

3. Sharing knowledge helps people understand how nature impacts their lives, and the actions they can take to help protect and restore the natural environment.

To make this happen, clear and accessible information will highlight the different ways citizens can act. This will help citizens know what steps they can take to help nature and society thrive.

4. Widespread access to nature helps people across Wales live happy and healthy lives.

To make this happen, Welsh society needs to be more equal and to make its environment less polluted so that everyone is able to benefit from nature. This will improve the mental and physical health of people in Wales.

5. Greener transport and energy options enable more people to make environmentally friendly choices in their day to day lives.

To make this happen, all levels of government need to invest in public transport, renewable energy technologies and waste management as well as reducing the impact of inequalities between people and their communities. This will give more equal access to greener lifestyle choices to people across Wales.

6. Sustainable land management helps communities buy local food and feel connected to the Welsh land.

To make this happen, all levels of government need to help make farming more sustainable and local food cheaper. This will help people buy more local, sustainable food and restore nature.

.....
Tab title: Question9a



Question 9a: Now that you have read all six statements, to what extent **you agree or disagree** that the statements capture the priorities that you and your fellow citizens discussed in the workshops.

- Strongly agree
- Somewhat agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Strongly disagree

.....

Tab title: Question9b

(If they select anything other than ‘Strongly Agree’ for any or all of the vision statements they are routed to this question 9c.)

Question 9b: What, if anything, did you feel was missing or needs changing about these vision statements?

.....

Tab title: Question9c

Question 9c: If you have further thoughts and comments about the vision statements please detail them below in the textbox.

If not, please move on to the next question.

