



Nature Recovery Strategy Consultation Report

Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural
Affairs (DAERA)

Full Report with Appendices and Annexes (Excel-populated)



Department of
**Agriculture, Environment
and Rural Affairs**

An Roinn

**Talmhaíochta, Comhshaoil
agus Gnóthaí Tuaithe**

Depairtment o'

**Fairmin, Environment
an' Kintra Matthers**

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1. Introduction

In January 2026 DAERA published the draft Nature Recovery Strategy for an eight-week public consultation. The consultation was subsequently extended to 12 weeks and closed on 15 April 2026.

The Nature Recovery Strategy for Northern Ireland aims to halt and reverse biodiversity loss, and ensure that nature is bigger, better managed and better connected. Northern Ireland, as part of the UK, has committed to the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF) which was agreed by the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) at the Conference of the Parties (COP)15 in December 2022. The GBF sets out, in 23 targets and 4 goals, the urgent actions required to “bend the curve” of biodiversity loss by 2030 and move towards the 2050 vision. That is, by 2050, biodiversity is valued, conserved, restored and wisely used, maintaining ecosystem services, sustaining a healthy planet and delivering benefits essential for all people.

The Nature Recovery Strategy sets out how Northern Ireland intends to contribute to UK achievement of the GBF, including delivering 30x30 in Northern Ireland. This strategy also fulfils the legal requirement of the Wildlife and Natural Environment Act (Northern Ireland) 2011 to publish a biodiversity strategy to promote the conservation of biodiversity.

The draft Strategy sets out five strategic objectives:

- 1) Well Protected Nature and Accelerated Restoration
- 2) Reduction of the Pressures on Biodiversity
- 3) Sustainable Use of Biodiversity through Nature-Friendly Policies and Practice
- 4) Nature Valued and Mainstreamed across All of Government and Society
- 5) Building Strong, Integrated Evidence and Knowledge to Enable Action and Reporting for Nature.

2. Executive Summary

This report presents the findings of the public consultation on the draft Nature Recovery Strategy. Analysis is presented by Strategic Objective and by individual consultation question. In this fully merged statistical version, quantitative tables are derived from a combined dataset of 145 online survey responses and 50 email responses (195 responses in total). Qualitative responses are summarised thematically. Where comments in email responses have been received, officials have aligned these with the appropriate corresponding objective.

Across the merged dataset of 195 responses, respondents broadly supported the ambition of the Strategy. However, across all Strategic Objectives, confidence in delivery remained consistently lower than agreement with intent. Water quality, enforceability, funding certainty, legal targets and pace of delivery emerged as dominant concerns across all responses.

Respondents repeatedly called for legal or statutory targets, SMART and outcome-focused actions, stronger treatment of nutrient pollution and wastewater, long-term costed delivery plans, whole-government ownership and independent oversight.

Organisation-led email responses also added more detailed commentary on marine and freshwater recovery, protected sites and 30x30 delivery, farming and forestry policy, planning, species-specific measures, monitoring, open data and the role of public bodies in implementation.

3. Consultation Analysis

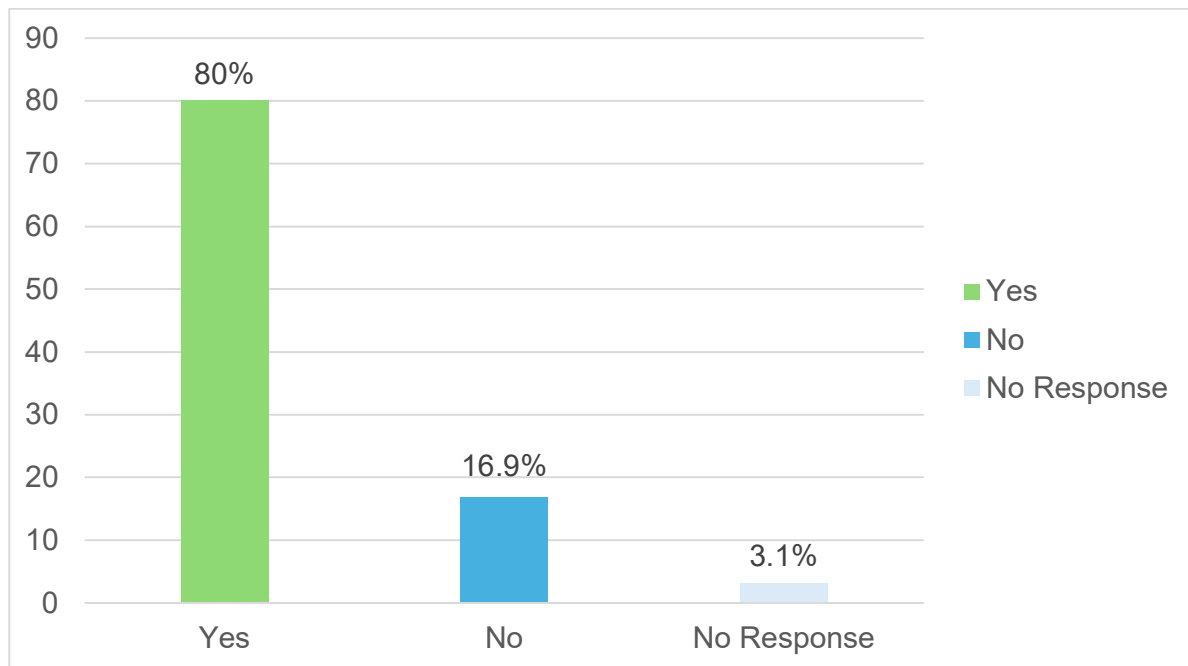
3.1 Strategic Objectives

Objective Overview

This section presents quantitative and qualitative responses relating to the Five Strategic Objectives. Consultation Questions (CQ) 6 & 6a relate to the five Strategic Objectives (overall).

Across the dataset, respondents showed strong overall agreement with the five strategic objectives, although qualitative responses indicate concerns regarding clarity, urgency and delivery. There were also calls for measurable, legally binding or enforceable targets, supported by stronger accountability arrangements.

Consultation Question (CQ) 6 – Do you agree with the five strategic objectives in the draft Nature Recovery Strategy?



Summary

Most respondents generally agreed with the five strategic outcomes in the Nature Recovery Strategy, with many recognising the importance of protecting and restoring nature, addressing biodiversity loss, embedding biodiversity considerations across

government and society, and improving the evidence base. However, many respondents felt that the objectives lack sufficient clarity and urgency. A dominant theme throughout the responses was the need for stronger accountability and more measurable outcomes, with some calling for statutory or legally binding targets and governance structures to ensure delivery.

Departmental Response

This section presents the Departmental response to key issues raised by respondents relating to the five Strategic Objectives (overall).

Issue	Response
Need for legally binding or statutory targets to be included.	Language has been updated on additional actions seeking to introduce statutory targets – these will require primary legislation which cannot be progressed in the current mandate.
Strategy requires more urgency.	Since consultation, some of the actions have already been completed, many are already in progress, and new governance arrangements are currently being developed to take forward delivery of remaining actions. All additional actions are time-bound with a target date that balances the urgent need to progress with the need to be realistic and achievable.

Strategic Objective 1: Well Protected Nature and Accelerated Restoration

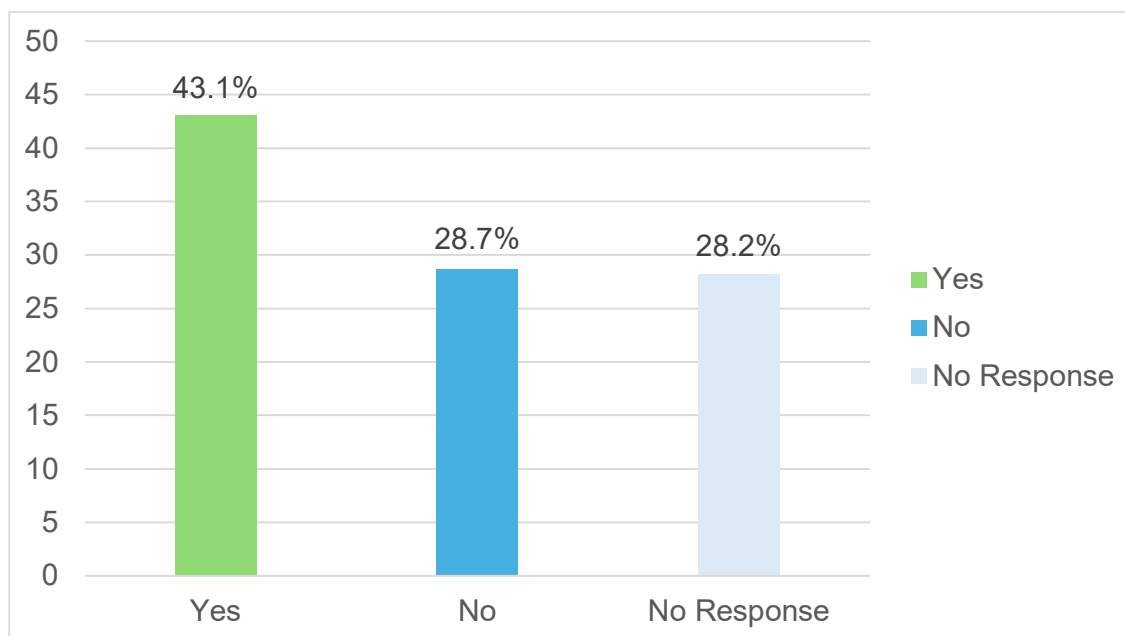
Objective Overview

This section presents quantitative and qualitative responses relating to Strategic Objective 1. Consultation Questions (CQ) 7 – 9 relate to Strategic Objective 1.

Overall, respondents expressed strong support for the aim of protecting and restoring nature. However, confidence in delivery was more mixed. Key concerns focused on pace,

clarity of actions, funding, and the need for stronger accountability and enforcement mechanisms.

CQ 7. Do you believe that the proposed new actions for Strategic Objective 1, when considered with existing targets, will deliver Well Protected Nature and Accelerated Restoration?



Summary

Some respondents expressed concern that current timescales may not allow sufficient progress before 2030 and others called for a stronger focus on practical delivery, including clear and measurable milestones and more on-the-ground action.

CQ 8. Are there any additional actions that you would like to be included with Strategic Objective 1?

Response	Count	Percentage
Yes	95	48.7%
No	37	19.0%
No response	63	32.3%

Summary

Respondents requested a number of additional actions, such as more funding for native broadleaf tree planting paid for at an appropriate rate, actions to assist recovery in the marine environment and actions to improve urban biodiversity.

CQ 9. Do you have any other comments about Strategic Objective 1?

Response	Count	Percentage
Yes	90	46.2%
No	86	44.1%
No response	19	9.7%

Summary

While a number of respondents welcomed the strategic direction provided, some suggestions were made to focus more on ecological connectivity, such as wildlife corridors. Respondents also stressed the importance of plans and targets being turned into successful delivery.

Strategic Objective 1 - Overall Summary

Strategic Objective 1 is widely supported, with respondents recognising that strong protection and restoration of nature are essential to reversing biodiversity decline. Many agreed that the objective provides important strategic direction and welcomed proposed actions on protected sites, habitat restoration, and tree planting. However, respondents sometimes questioned whether the proposed measures are sufficiently ambitious, well-resourced, or capable of being delivered within the required timescales. Respondents called for a more outcome-focused approach, including clear and measurable targets, stronger accountability and enforcement mechanisms, and greater certainty around funding and implementation. While protected-site measures were generally welcomed, many felt the objective needs a broader landscape-scale focus, including habitat connectivity, ecological corridors, urban biodiversity, marine recovery, and action to address wider pressures such as pollution and land-use change. Overall, feedback suggests that while the objective is regarded as necessary and directionally correct, greater urgency, stronger commitments, and clearer delivery pathways are needed if it is to achieve meaningful nature recovery.

Departmental Response

This section presents the Departmental response to key issues raised by respondents relating to Strategic Objective 1.

Issue	Response
Need for clearer delivery, accountability and measurable outcomes.	Where possible, consideration will be given to how outcome-based targets and indicators can be reflected in the delivery of the revised strategy.
Need for accelerated pace and greater urgency, ambition and resourcing.	This is a high-level strategy which includes both enabling and delivery actions. It is envisioned that the future direction of travel for biodiversity and nature restoration will be aligned with the five-year cycle of the EIP. Many actions referenced within the Strategy are drawn from existing policies and programmes already under implementation.
Need for broader landscape-scale nature recovery.	Detail added on 30x30 Framework in development.

Strategic Objective 2: Reduction of the Pressures on Biodiversity

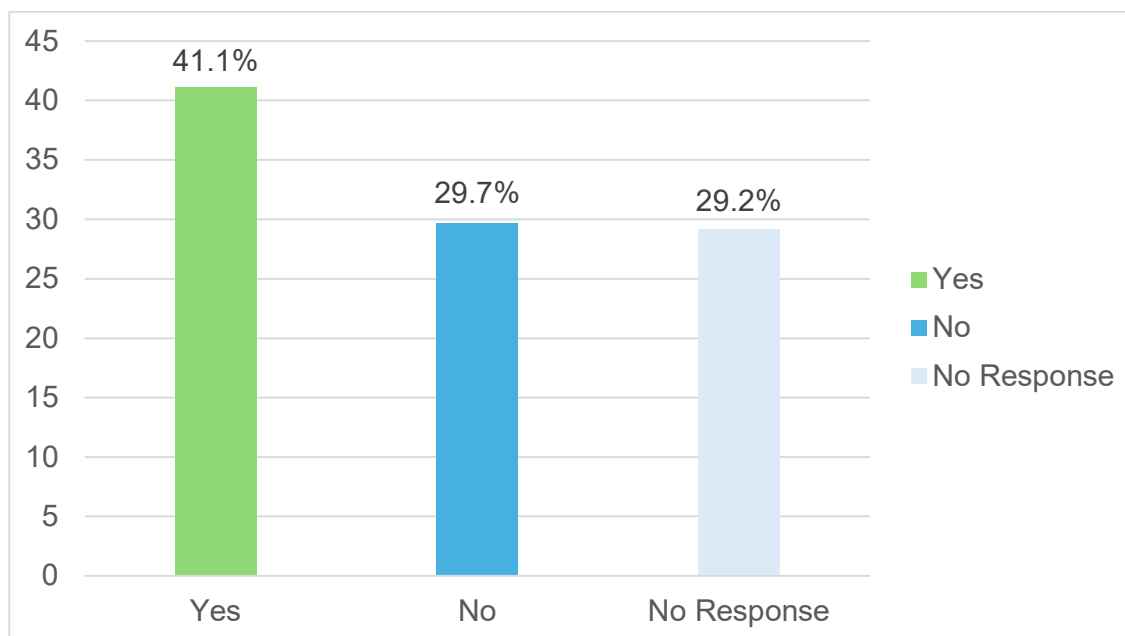
Objective Overview

This section presents quantitative and qualitative responses relating to Strategic Objective 2. Consultation Questions (CQ) 10 – 12 relate to Strategic Objective 2.

Overall, respondents emphasised the importance of addressing key pressures on biodiversity, particularly water pollution, wastewater management, agricultural impacts, and wider environmental degradation. There were strong and repeated concerns regarding declining water quality—particularly in relation to Lough Neagh, river systems, and nutrient pollution—and calls for more integrated catchment and source to sea approaches. While there was broad agreement on the need for action, confidence in the

proposed measures was more limited. Responses frequently highlighted concerns regarding the adequacy of proposed actions, pace of delivery, and lack of enforcement.

CQ 10. Do you believe that the proposed new actions for Strategic Objective 2, when considered with existing targets, will deliver Reduction of the Pressures on Biodiversity?



Summary

Respondents generally viewed the proposed actions as a positive step but questioned whether they would be sufficient to achieve meaningful biodiversity recovery on their own. Comments highlighted the need for a more comprehensive approach to tackle key pressures contributing to biodiversity decline as well as other challenges such as invasive species, where they extend beyond individual landholdings.

CQ 11. Are there any additional actions that you would like to be included with Strategic Objective 2?

Response	Count	Percentage
Yes	71	36.4%
No	54	27.7%
No response	70	35.9%

Summary

Some respondents emphasised the need dedicated funding, strong baseline data and clear mechanisms for implementation. Respondents also called for more ambitious and measurable targets and commented that legal accountability would help towards successful delivery.

CQ 12. Do you have any other comments about Strategic Objective 2?

Response	Count	Percentage
Yes	74	37.9%
No	93	47.7%
No response	28	14.4%

Summary

Respondents emphasised the need for nature recovery to be treated as a cross-government priority and also called for more specific and tangible detail on how certain actions will be delivered. There were also some raised concerns about the proposed approach to particular issues, such as reducing plastic pollution.

Strategic Objective 2 – Overall Summary

Strategic Objective 2 is broadly supported, with respondents recognising the importance of reducing the pressures driving biodiversity. However, confidence in delivery is mixed. While some respondents believe the proposed actions could make a positive contribution if implemented effectively, many feel that the current approach does not sufficiently address all pressures on biodiversity. Feedback emphasised the importance of collaborative approaches, particularly for issues such as invasive species management. Many respondents considered the proposed actions to be positive but insufficient on their

own to deliver the scale of environmental improvement required by 2030. Overall, respondents emphasised that reducing pressures on biodiversity will require a more ambitious, coordinated, and system-wide approach that tackles the underlying causes of environmental decline while ensuring accountability for delivery.

Departmental Response

This section presents the Departmental response to key issues raised by respondents relating to Strategic Objective 2.

Issue	Response
Need to more comprehensively address key pressures driving biodiversity decline.	The Strategy already includes existing policy instruments such as the River Basin Management Plan, draft Climate Action Plan, draft Ammonia Strategy and Nutrients Action Programme, and the revised Strategy now includes detail and recognition of the emerging threat from chemical pollutants.
Concerns around invasive species management.	It is recognised that a cohesive plan, with the buy-in of all relevant landowners, has a much better chance of long-term success in dealing with complex issues such as invasive species. Target within the strategy to develop a new Invasive Species Strategy.
Need for stronger delivery mechanisms.	The Strategy provides the overarching framework for nature recovery, and it now contains detail on new governance arrangements that are currently being developed.

Strategic Objective 3: Sustainable Use of Biodiversity through Nature Friendly Policies and Practice

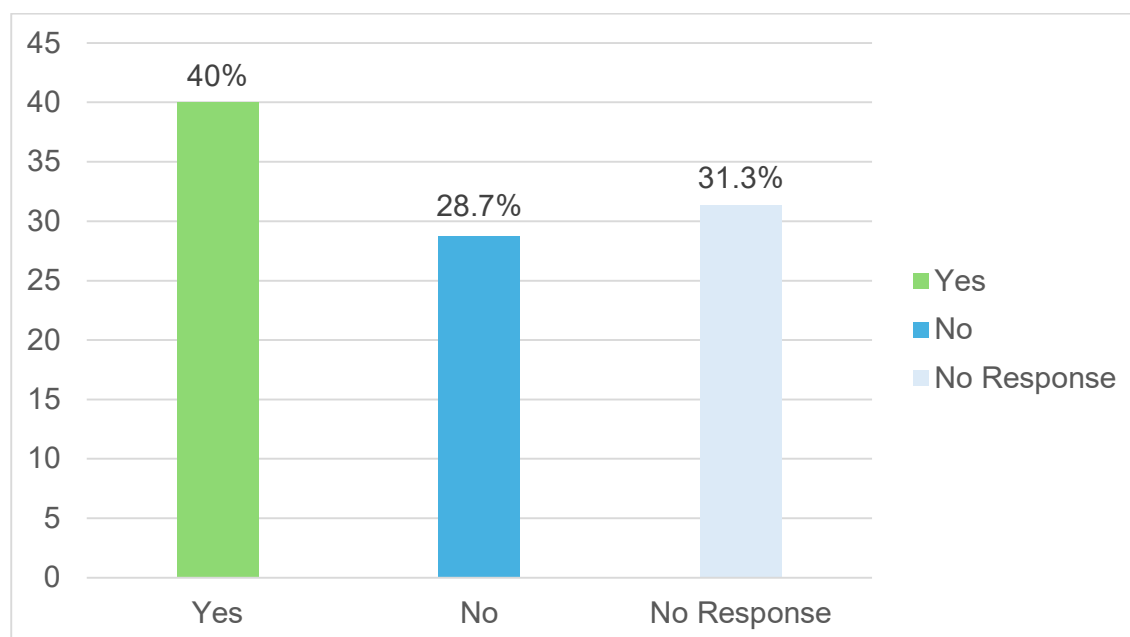
Objective Overview

This section presents quantitative and qualitative responses relating to Strategic Objective 3.

Consultation Questions (CQ) 13 – 15 relate to Strategic Objective 3.

Respondents broadly acknowledged the importance of encouraging more sustainable and nature-friendly use of biodiversity. However, compared to other objectives, engagement was more limited, with a noticeably higher proportion of respondents not providing a response, suggesting some uncertainty or lack of familiarity with the proposed measures. Where feedback was provided, respondents emphasised the need for more clearly defined policies, stronger incentives, and practical mechanisms to support delivery, particularly across different sectors. There were also concerns that the proposed actions lack sufficient detail and may not be ambitious enough to drive meaningful change, with several respondents questioning the pace and effectiveness of implementation.

CQ 13. Do you believe that the proposed new actions for Strategic Objective 3, when considered with existing targets, will deliver Sustainable Use of Biodiversity through Nature Friendly Policies and Practice?



Summary

Some respondents called for the inclusion of additional sectors beyond those currently identified, while others called for stronger legislation, enforcement and independent oversight to support delivery. Comments emphasised the need for more decisive action and a faster pace of implementation to achieve meaningful outcomes.

CQ 14. Are there any additional actions that you would like to be included with Strategic Objective 3?

Response	Count	Percentage
Yes	63	32.3%
No	56	28.7%
No response	76	39.0%

Summary

Again, some respondents highlighted the need to expand nature-friendly practices beyond the sectors currently identified, with particular emphasis on industries such as construction, transport and energy. Respondents also stressed the importance of providing farmers with practical, financial and scientific support to help deliver sustainable land management. Many comments reflected a sense of urgency, calling for actions to be implemented more quickly.

CQ 15. Do you have any other comments about Strategic Objective 3?

Response	Count	Percentage
Yes	28	14.4%
No	87	44.6%
No response	80	41.0%

Summary

A number of respondents emphasised the need for clearer targets, deadlines and accountability while others highlighted the importance of providing dedicated funding and focusing on measurable outcomes rather than processes. Some respondents advocated an approach that rewards successful biodiversity improvements.

Strategic Objective 3 – Overall Summary

Strategic Objective 3 received broad support in principle, but confidence in its delivery was only moderate. Many respondents felt that success will depend on significantly stronger governance, accountability, enforcement, and implementation arrangements than are currently set out in the Strategy. Respondents also called for a more ambitious and comprehensive approach that extends beyond agriculture, planning, and fisheries to include sectors such as construction, transport, energy, tourism, recreation, forestry, and aggregate extraction. There was strong support for providing financial, technical, and educational support to farmers and land managers to encourage nature-friendly practices, while allowing flexibility to achieve biodiversity outcomes through locally appropriate approaches. Overall, respondents sought greater urgency, stronger enforcement, clearer implementation pathways and a stronger focus on measurable outcomes rather than processes if the objective is to deliver meaningful change.

Departmental Response

This section presents the Departmental response to significant and/or substantive issues raised by respondents relating to Strategic Objective 3.

Issue	Response
Need for broader application across economic sectors such as agriculture, fisheries, forestry, land management and tourism.	The Strategy promotes the mainstreaming of biodiversity considerations into decision-making processes across government, business, and society. The Strategy also includes detail of other policies and strategies that promote Sustainable Use of Biodiversity through Nature Friendly Policies and Practice across other sectors such as; Forestry - Increasing Woodland Cover (Environmental Improvement Plan), and the recently published Tree Planting Action Plan, Fisheries (Fisheries Management Plans) and Agriculture (Farming with

	Nature). Tourism falls outside the remit of the Strategy.
Need for more detail and ambition to be included in the actions.	This is a high level strategy which links strategic objectives with supporting actions. Delivery will be informed by future monitoring and governance arrangements.

Strategic Objective 4: Nature Valued and Mainstreamed Across All of Government and Society

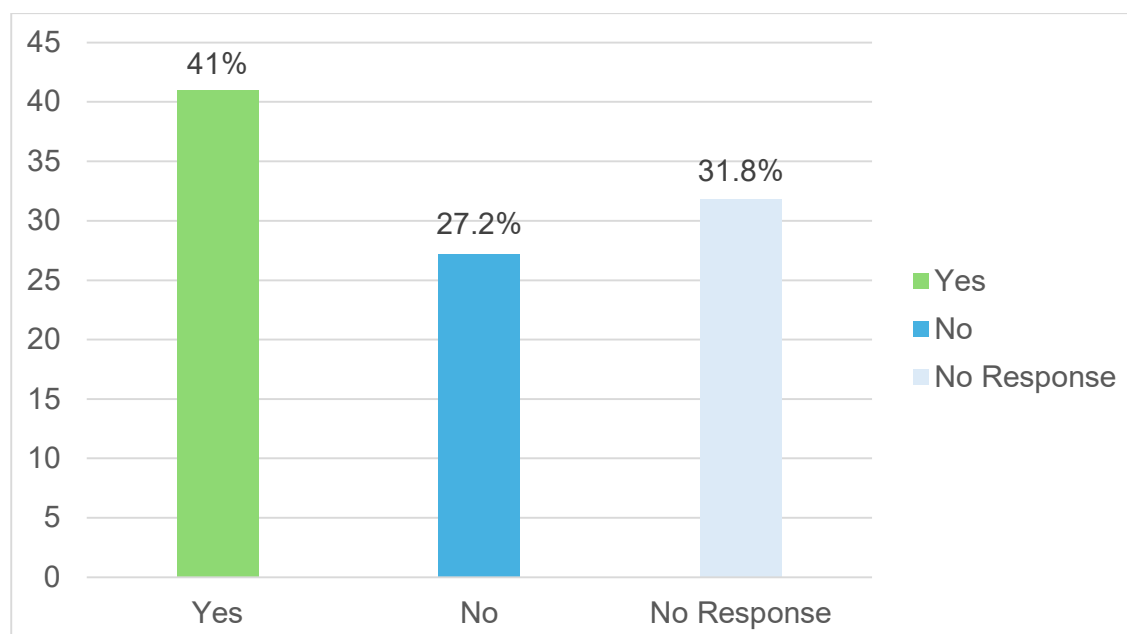
Objective Overview

This section presents quantitative and qualitative responses relating to Strategic Objective 4.

Consultation Questions (CQ) 16 – 18 relate to Strategic Objective 4.

Respondents supported the principle of embedding biodiversity across government and society. However, there were clear concerns regarding delivery, particularly around coordination between departments, funding constraints, and accountability. Many responses questioned whether a whole government approach could be achieved in practice.

CQ 16. Do you believe that the proposed new actions for Strategic Objective 4, when considered with existing targets, will deliver Nature Valued and Mainstreamed Across All of Government and Society?



Summary

Many number of respondents welcomed proposals to improve coordination, communication and legal protections for biodiversity. However, comments highlighted concerns that greater recognition of existing legal duties and a faster approach to developing legislation are needed.

CQ 17. Are there any additional actions that you would like to be included with Strategic Objective 4?

Response	Count	Percentage
Yes	41	21.0%
No	80	41.0%
No response	74	37.9%

Summary

Respondents highlighted the need to incorporate nature learning into education and called for support and practical incentives be provided to help people contribute to

biodiversity recovery. Comments asked for accessible support for farmers and landowners, and targets that are SMART and more focused.

CQ 18. Do you have any other comments about Strategic Objective 4?

Response	Count	Percentage
Yes	63	32.3%
No	94	48.2%
No response	38	19.5%

Summary

A number of respondents highlighted the importance of ensuring that the Strategy is supported by clear plans for implementation and long-term funding. Comments also emphasised the value of strengthening protected site management and increasing public engagement with nature.

Strategic Objective 4 – Overall Summary

Strategic Objective 4 is broadly supported, with respondents recognising the importance of embedding biodiversity considerations across government, public policy, and wider society. Among those who commented, support was frequently qualified by concerns that the proposed actions remain too focused on frameworks, consultations, and enabling measures, without sufficient clarity on how these will translate into tangible outcomes within the timeframe of the Strategy. Respondents consistently emphasised the need for stronger accountability, clearer ownership of actions, SMART targets, and a credible long-term funding model to underpin delivery. Overall, respondents viewed the objective as having significant potential but stressed that success will depend on moving from aspiration to implementation through stronger governance, adequate resourcing, meaningful cross-sector collaboration, and binding mechanisms that ensure biodiversity becomes a genuine whole-society priority.

Departmental Response

This section presents the Departmental response to significant and/or substantive issues raised by respondents relating to Strategic Objective 4.

Issue	Response
Need for clearer long-term funding.	The Strategy includes a proposed Biodiversity Finance Plan. Detail is also included to point to potential sources of funding.
Need for stronger governance, accountability and legal underpinning.	Clearer language has been added to the Strategy on setting targets in law. Any future legislative proposals would be informed by consultation outcomes, policy development and Executive consideration before decisions are taken.
Public bodies should be made explicitly aware of their duties under the Wildlife and Natural Environment Act (Northern Ireland) 2011, including the requirement to have regard to the Strategy.	The revised Strategy strengthens reference to existing biodiversity duties and signposts public bodies to relevant guidance supporting implementation of these obligations

Strategic Objective 5: Building Strong, Integrated Evidence and Knowledge to Enable Action and Reporting for Nature

Objective Overview

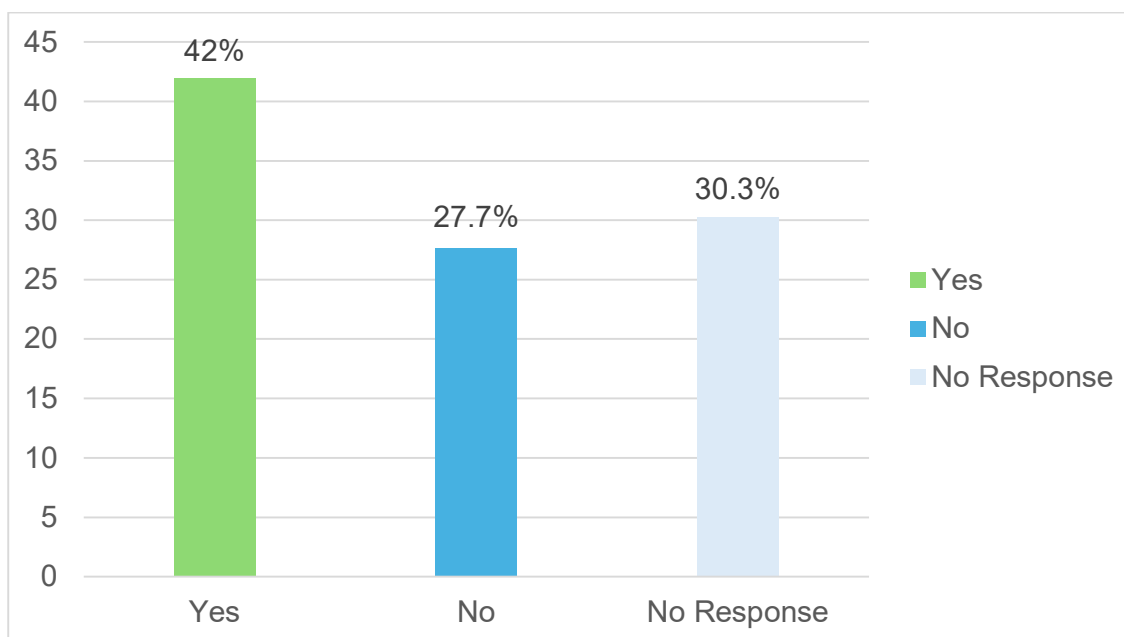
This section presents quantitative and qualitative responses relating to Strategic Objective 5.

Consultation Questions (CQ) 19 – 21 relate to Strategic Objective 5.

Respondents supported strengthening monitoring, research and evidence systems.

However, there were consistent concerns that evidence and reporting may not translate into meaningful action without stronger governance, funding, and accountability.

CQ 19. Do you believe that the proposed new actions for Strategic Objective 5, when considered with existing targets, will deliver in Building Strong, Integrated Evidence and Knowledge to Enable Action and Reporting for Nature?



Summary

Some respondents emphasised the importance of strong evidence, research and monitoring to support biodiversity recovery and assess progress and highlighted the need for reliable data and effective measurement of outcomes. Comments called for assurances that the right evidence will be used to inform decision-making and guide action.

CQ 20. Are there any additional actions that you would like to be included with Strategic Objective 5?

Response	Count	Percentage
Yes	56	28.7%
No	64	32.8%
No response	75	38.5%

Summary

Many number of respondents highlighted the importance of supporting greater public participation in biodiversity recovery through community initiatives, training and accessible funding. Comments again emphasised the need for the Strategy to focus on specific outcomes, with actions and milestones to measure progress over the short, medium and long term.

CQ 21. Do you have any other comments about Strategic Objective 5?

Response	Count	Percentage
Yes	75	38.5%
No	80	41.0%
No response	40	20.5%

Summary

A number of respondents welcomed proposals for a Nature Recovery Forum, and many highlighted the importance of including relevant biodiversity organisations. Comments also emphasised the value of clear and accessible reporting on progress.

Strategic Objective 5 – Overall Summary

Strategic Objective 5 is widely recognised as an essential component of nature recovery, with respondents strongly supporting the need for improved research, monitoring, data collection, and knowledge sharing. However, confidence in delivery is limited. Many respondents expressed concern that the proposed actions focus too heavily on evidence gathering without providing sufficient clarity on how evidence will be used to inform decision-making, policy development, and practical action on the ground. While respondents welcomed commitments to monitoring, surveys, research funding, and the establishment of collaborative structures such as a Nature Recovery Forum, concerns remained about funding, governance, accountability, and the long-term sustainability of these initiatives. Respondents also highlighted the importance of a more coordinated and inclusive approach to evidence gathering and knowledge sharing. Many commented that existing monitoring efforts have been fragmented and under-resourced, stressing that evidence should serve as an enabler of delivery rather than an end in itself. Overall, feedback indicates that successful implementation will require a well-resourced, long-term evidence framework that supports decision-making, promotes collaboration and improves transparency.

Departmental Response

This section presents the Departmental response to significant and/or substantive issues raised by respondents relating to Strategic Objective 5.

Issue	Response
Repeated comments emphasising the importance of accessible, shared data systems and improved transparency	Existing commitments relating to biodiversity indicators, monitoring programmes and natural capital assessments provide a basis for enhancing transparency and public accessibility of biodiversity information. There is also an existing EIP action – “By 2027: Review our terrestrial biodiversity monitoring and evidence needs and devise and implement a comprehensive mapping, monitoring and evidence programme and platform to support conservation action, and biodiversity reporting and natural capital accounting”.
Need for evidence to be linked directly to decision-making and action, rather than remaining an academic exercise	The purpose of Strategic Objective 5 is to support delivery of all other objectives. Monitoring, research and evidence activities will therefore be used to inform future policy development, implementation priorities and reporting across the Strategy.

3.2 Existing Targets

CQ 22. Are you aware of any other existing targets for nature recovery that may help deliver for SO1 – SO5 that you feel have been omitted from this draft strategy?

Response	Count	Percentage
Yes	57	29.2%
No	92	47.2%
No response	46	23.6%

Summary

Responses indicate that stakeholders are aware of a wide range of existing targets, policies, and frameworks relevant to Strategic Objectives 1–5 but feel these are not fully integrated or referenced within the draft Strategy. Key omissions highlighted include targets from the Environmental Improvement Plan, Climate Action Plan, River Basin Management Plan, Peatland Strategy, Marine Strategy, Nutrients Action Programme, and the Global Biodiversity Framework (including 30x30). Respondents emphasise that the strategy should act as a coherent “umbrella framework”, aligning these existing commitments, avoiding duplication, and clearly identifying gaps. There are also calls for stronger planning-related requirements (e.g. biodiversity net gain, urban greening), education targets, and enhanced designation commitments (e.g. SPAs). Overall, feedback suggests that better integration, clarity, and alignment of existing targets—supported by resourcing and SMART delivery plans—are essential to ensure a joined-up and effective approach to nature recovery.

3.3 Supporting Documentation

CQ 23. Do you agree with the conclusions of the Equality and Disability Screening Assessment of the draft Nature Recovery Strategy?

Response	Count	Percentage
Yes	105	53.8%
No	16	8.2%
No response	74	38%

Summary

Responses to the Equality and Disability Screening Assessment reveal low awareness and uneven engagement, with many respondents indicating that they did not understand the purpose of the assessment or felt unable to comment meaningfully. A number of responses explicitly stated a lack of knowledge, while others questioned the relevance of equality and disability considerations within the context of the Nature Recovery Strategy.

Among those who did engage, views were mixed. Some respondents expressed general agreement or acceptance at a high level, particularly where the assessment was seen as proportionate to a strategic document, while others raised substantive concerns about gaps in the analysis. These included the need for greater attention to rural communities, clearer consideration of specific groups such as disabled individuals and young people.

A recurring theme was the importance of ensuring that implementation is inclusive in practice, particularly for rural populations and those with accessibility needs. Several respondents highlighted the need for clear, non-technical communication, better integration of equality considerations into delivery, and stronger recognition of real-world barriers to accessing nature and participating in related initiatives.

Overall, responses suggest that while some accept the screening conclusions at a broad level, there is a clear need for improved clarity, stronger engagement, and more explicit consideration of how equality and disability issues will be addressed in practice.

CQ24. Do you agree with the conclusions of the Rural Needs Impact Assessment of the draft Nature Recovery Strategy?

Response	Count	Percentage
Yes	94	48.2%
No	22	11.3%
No response	79	40.5%

Summary

Responses to the Rural Needs Impact Assessment show mixed levels of awareness and agreement, with many respondents either unable to comment or not engaging with the question. Among those who did respond, views were divided. Some respondents support the conclusions, emphasising that rural communities will be central to delivery and that continued engagement is needed to ensure practical outcomes. However, others raised concerns that the assessment focuses too heavily on agriculture, overlooking the diversity of rural communities and other sectors such as tourism and community groups. There are also calls for greater recognition of the potential economic impacts of environmental policies on rural businesses, alongside the need for clearer support mechanisms, balanced regulation, and meaningful stakeholder engagement. Overall, responses suggest that while the assessment is broadly acceptable to some, it would benefit from a broader scope, deeper engagement across rural sectors, and clearer consideration of both impacts and opportunities for rural communities.

4. Summary

Overall assessment

Consultation respondents broadly support the ambition and direction of the Draft Nature Recovery Strategy. However, delivery confidence is consistently lower than agreement with intent. Respondents called for stronger legal footing, faster implementation, clearer accountability and more decisive action on water quality.

Key issues raised across all Strategic Objectives

- Absence of Clear legal / statutory targets
- Lack of SMART, outcome focused actions
- Stronger actions needed on water quality, wastewater and nutrient pollution
- Limited assurance on long-term and costed funding
- Need for stronger whole-of-government accountability and independent oversight

Conclusion

Consultation evidence strongly supports strengthening the Strategy from a guiding framework into a binding delivery plan, particularly through legal targets, accelerated action and clearer accountability. However legally binding targets require primary legislation to be made, which is not possible in the current mandate. This will therefore be an action in the post 2027 mandate. As highlighted in the revised strategy, many actions and targets are already in place or under development in other policies and will be delivered through their own delivery plans.

Summary

The consultation demonstrates strong overall support for the ambition and direction of the draft Strategy, with approximately 80% agreement with the strategic objectives. However, there is consistently lower confidence in delivery, with only around 40–43% of respondents believing the proposed actions will achieve outcomes.

The consultation responses highlight the gap between ambition and deliverability. The strategy is deliberately ambitious and is designed to identify the gaps in our existing suite of policies to ensure all aspects of the GBF are addressed. DAERA has committed to

continuously working towards ensuring NI contribution to delivery of nature recovery outcomes.

Annex A – Methodology

A mixed-methods approach was used, combining quantitative analysis of closed questions with thematic analysis of free-text responses. For this fully merged version, the closed-question tables were recalculated using the 145 online consultation responses plus a cleaned supplementary set of 50 imported email responses. The imported email dataset was checked for duplicated Response IDs and likely duplicate submissions before the merged counts were produced. Analyst-only fields and personal identifiers were excluded.

Annex B – Consultation Questions

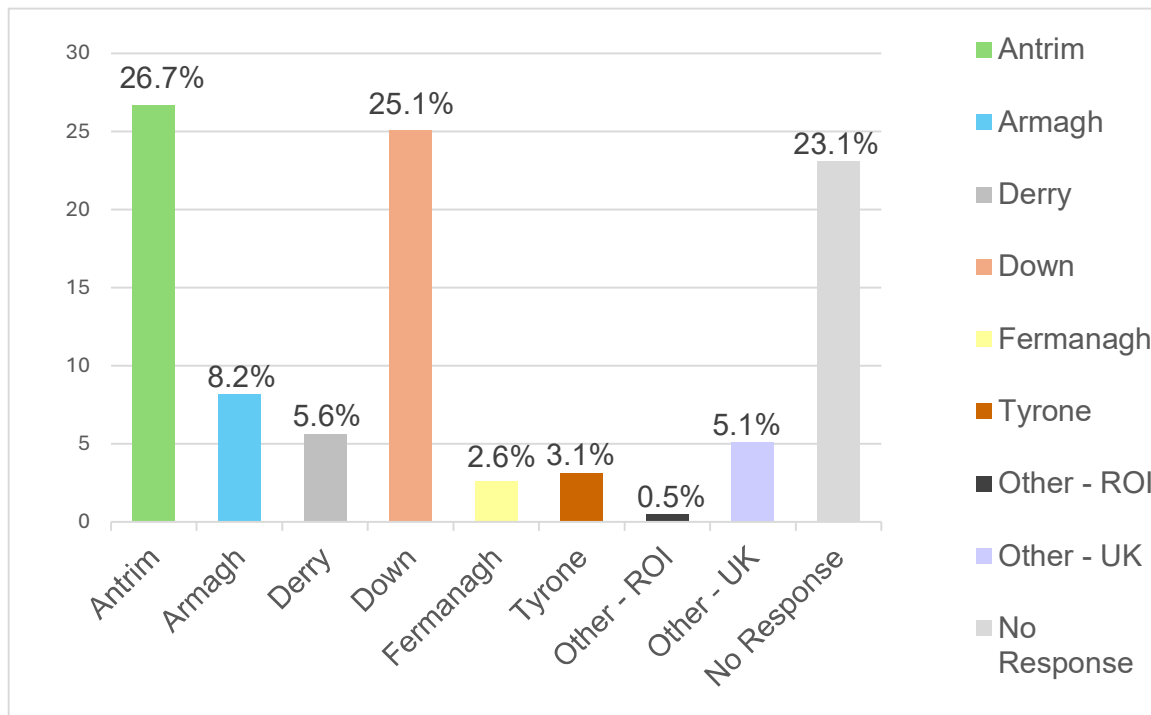
Consultation Question (CQ) No.	Question Detail
Part 1 – Introduction	
1	What is your name?
2	What is your email address?
3	What County do you live in?
4	Are you responding on behalf of an organisation?
4a	If yes, please provide the name of your organisation:
5	Which background category best represents you from the list below?
5a	Other, please specify:
Part 2 – Strategic Objectives	
6	Do you agree with the five strategic objectives in the draft Nature Recovery Strategy?
6a	If no, please provide your comments about alternative or additional Strategic Objectives:
7	Do you believe that the proposed new actions for Strategic Objective 1, when considered with existing targets, will deliver Well Protected Nature and Accelerated Restoration?
7a	Please provide further detail to support your answer:
8	Are there any additional actions that you would like to be included with Strategic Objective 1?
8a	Please provide further detail to support your answer:
9	Do you have any other comments about Strategic Objective 1?
9a	Please provide further detail to support your answer:
10	Do you believe that the proposed new actions for Strategic Objective 2, when considered with existing targets, will deliver Reduction of the Pressures on Biodiversity?
10a	Please provide further detail to support your answer:
11	Are there any additional actions that you would like to be included with Strategic Objective 2?
11a	Please provide further detail to support your answer:
12	Do you have any other comments about Strategic Objective 2?
12a	Please provide further detail to support your answer:
13	Do you believe that the proposed new actions for Strategic Objective 3, when considered with existing targets, will deliver Sustainable Use of Biodiversity through Nature-friendly Policies and Practice?
13a	Please provide further detail to support your answer:
14	Are there any additional actions that you would like to be included with Strategic Objective 3?
14a	Please provide further detail to support your answer:
15	Do you have any other comments about Strategic Objective 3?
15a	Please provide further detail to support your answer:
16	Do you believe that the proposed new actions for Strategic Objective 4, when considered with existing targets, will deliver

	Nature Valued and Mainstreamed Across All of Government and Society?
16a	Please provide further detail to support your answer:
17	Are there any additional actions that you would like to be included with Strategic Objective 4?
17a	Please provide further detail to support your answer:
18	Do you have any other comments about Strategic Objective 4?
18a	Please provide further detail to support your answer:
19	Do you believe that the proposed new actions for Strategic Objective 5, when considered with existing targets, will deliver in Building Strong, Integrated Evidence and Knowledge to Enable Action and Reporting for Nature?
19a	Please provide further detail to support your answer:
20	Are there any additional actions that you would like to be included with Strategic Objective 5?
20a	Please provide further detail to support your answer:
21	Do you have any other comments about Strategic Objective 5?
21a	Please provide further detail to support your answer:
Part 3 – Existing Targets	
22	Are you aware of any other existing targets for nature recovery that may help deliver for SO1 – SO5 that you feel have been omitted from this draft strategy?
22a	Please provide further detail to support your answer:
Part 4 – Supporting Documentation	
23	Do you agree with the conclusions of the Equality and Disability Screening Assessment of the draft Nature Recovery Strategy?
23a	Please provide further detail to support your answer:
24	Do you agree with the conclusions of the Rural Needs Impact Assessment of the draft Nature Recovery Strategy?
24a	Please provide further detail to support your answer:

Annex C – Quantitative Response Tables

CQ 3. What County do you live in?

Category	Responses	Percentage
Antrim	52	26.7%
Armagh	16	8.2%
Derry	11	5.6%
Down	49	25.1%
Fermanagh	5	2.6%
Tyrone	6	3.1%
Other - Republic of Ireland (ROI)	1	0.5%
Other - UK	10	5.1%
No response	45	23.1%



CQ 4. Are you responding on behalf of an organisation?

Response	Responses	Percentage
Yes	55	28.2%
No	135	69.2%
No Response	5	2.6%

Organisations Responding to the Consultation

Responses were received from, or on behalf of, the following organisations. Some organisations submitted more than one response but have only been listed below once. Other responses received were either from members of the public or named no organisation.

No.	Organisation Name
1	Antrim and District Angling Association
2	Bat Conservation Ireland
3	Belfast City Council
4	BH Estates
5	British Association for Shooting and Conservation (BASC)
6	Buglife
7	Business in the Community NI
8	Butterfly Conservation
9	Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM)
10	Climate+ Co-Centre collaborative research group
11	Confor
12	Countryside Alliance Ireland
13	Derry City and Strabane District Council
14	EAUC
15	Garrison Ely estate trust
16	Hedgehog Conservation Ireland
17	Holiday and Residential Parks Association
18	P7 Hedgerows (a tree planting project involving six County Armagh Primary Schools)
19	Institute of Fisheries Management
20	Keep Northern Ireland Beautiful
21	Landscape Institute
22	Landscapes Northern Ireland
23	National Biodiversity Data Centre
24	National Museums NI
25	National Trust
26	Natural Living Assets
27	Newry, Mourne and Down District Council
28	NI Freshwater Task Force and Northern Ireland Marine Taskforce
29	NIEL Sustainable Agriculture Policy (SAP) Working Group
30	Northern Ireland Electricity Networks Ltd
31	Northern Ireland Environment Link (NIEL) working group response
32	Northern Ireland Fishermen's Federation
33	Northern Ireland Housing Executive
34	Northstone Materials Limited
35	Novinka Buzz Limited

36	Office for Environmental Protection
37	Queen's University Belfast, Marine Restoration Group
38	Renewable NI
39	Royal Society of Ulster Architects (RSUA)
40	RSPB
41	Sandycove Holiday Homes Ltd
42	Southern Health and Social Care Trust
43	Swifts Local Network: Swifts & Planning Group
44	The Crown Estate
45	The Rivers Trust
46	Ulster Farmers' Union (UFU)
47	Ulster University
48	Ulster Wildlife
49	University of Bristol / Policy Bristol
50	Woodland Trust Northern Ireland
51	Woven Housing Association.

CQ 5. Which background category best represents you from the list below?

Category	Responses	Percentage
Environmental Interest	77	39.7%
Citizen / Resident (from "Other")	12	6.2%
Business / Industry / Trade (from "Other")	3	1.5%
Environmental / NGO (from "Other")	3	1.5%
Land-related (non-farming) (from "Other")	3	1.5%
Professional / Technical (from "Other")	2	1.0%
Other (unclear / mixed responses)	13	6.7%
Landowner	15	7.7%
Farming / Agriculture	13	6.7%
No response	54	27.8%

CQ 6. Do you agree with the five strategic objectives in the draft Nature Recovery Strategy?

Response	Responses	Percentage
Yes	156	80%
No	33	16.9%
No Response	6	3.1%

CQ 7. Do you believe that the proposed new actions for Strategic Objective 1, when considered with existing targets, will deliver Well Protected Nature and Accelerated Restoration?

Response	Responses	Percentage
Yes	84	43.1%
No	56	28.7%
No Response	55	28.2%

CQ 8. Are there any additional actions that you would like to be included with Strategic Objective 1?

Response	Responses	Percentage
Yes	95	48.7%
No	37	19.0%
No Response	63	32.3%

CQ 9. Do you have any other comments about Strategic Objective 1?

Response	Responses	Percentage
Yes	86	46.2%
No	90	44.1%
No Response	19	9.7%

CQ 10. Do you believe that the proposed new actions for Strategic Objective 2, when considered with existing targets, will deliver Reduction of the Pressures on Biodiversity?

Response	Responses	Percentage
Yes	80	41.0%
No	58	29.7%
No Response	57	29.2%

CQ 11. Are there any additional actions that you would like to be included with Strategic Objective 2?

Response	Responses	Percentage
Yes	71	36.4%
No	54	27.7%
No Response	70	35.9%

CQ 12. Do you have any other comments about Strategic Objective 2?

Response	Responses	Percentage
Yes	74	37.9%
No	93	47.7%
No Response	28	14.4%

CQ 13. Do you believe that the proposed new actions for Strategic Objective 3, when considered with existing targets, will deliver Sustainable Use of Biodiversity through Nature-friendly Policies and Practice?

Response	Responses	Percentage
Yes	78	40.0%
No	56	28.7%
No Response	61	31.3%

CQ 14. Are there any additional actions that you would like to be included with Strategic Objective 3?

Response	Responses	Percentage
Yes	63	32.3%
No	56	28.7%
No Response	76	39.0%

CQ 15. Do you have any other comments about Strategic Objective 3?

Response	Responses	Percentage
Yes	28	14.4%
No	87	44.6%
No Response	80	41.0%

CQ 16. Do you believe that the proposed new actions for Strategic Objective 4, when considered with existing targets, will deliver Nature Valued and Mainstreamed Across All of Government and Society?

Response	Responses	Percentage
Yes	80	41.0%
No	53	27.2%
No Response	62	31.8%

CQ 17. Are there any additional actions that you would like to be included with Strategic Objective 4?

Response	Responses	Percentage
Yes	41	21.0%
No	80	41.0%
No Response	74	37.9%

CQ 18. Do you have any other comments about Strategic Objective 4?

Response	Responses	Percentage
Yes	63	32.3%
No	94	48.2%
No Response	38	19.5%

CQ 19. Do you believe that the proposed new actions for Strategic Objective 5, when considered with existing targets, will deliver in Building Strong, Integrated Evidence and Knowledge to Enable Action and Reporting for Nature?

Response	Responses	Percentage
Yes	82	42.05%
No	54	27.69%
No Response	59	30.26%

CQ 20. Are there any additional actions that you would like to be included with Strategic Objective 5?

Response	Responses	Percentage
Yes	56	28.7%
No	64	32.8%
No Response	75	38.5%

CQ 21. Do you have any other comments about Strategic Objective 5?

Response	Responses	Percentage
Yes	75	38.5%
No	80	41.0%
No Response	40	20.5%

CQ 22. Are you aware of any other existing targets for nature recovery that may help deliver for SO1 – SO5 that you feel have been omitted from this draft strategy?

Response	Responses	Percentage
Yes	57	29.2%
No	92	47.2%
No Response	46	23.6%

CQ 23. Do you agree with the conclusions of the Equality and Disability Screening Assessment of the draft Nature Recovery Strategy?

Response	Responses	Percentage
Yes	105	53.8%
No	16	8.2%
No Response	74	37.9%

CQ 24. Do you agree with the conclusions of the Rural Needs Impact Assessment of the draft Nature Recovery Strategy?

Response	Responses	Percentage
Yes	94	48.2%
No	22	11.3%
No Response	79	40.5%

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