

Supporting people's involvement in nature-based solutions (NbS)



The James
Hutton
Institute

Insights from a workshop held in Anstruther

Introduction

This report summarises the key points discussed during a community workshop held in Anstruther on 29th September 2025. This workshop was a follow-up activity to a survey that was carried out in 2024 to understand Anstruther people's perceptions and experiences of getting involved in nature-based solutions (NbS) and the motivations to support such initiatives in future. A short summary of the survey findings was shared with the survey participants. **The aim of the workshop was to share the survey findings further and explore issues and ideas to make it easier for people to contribute to NbS in the future.**



Dreel Burn in Anstruther 1. 29/09/2025, Alhassan Ibrahim

What did the workshop entail?

The workshop was a 2hr event held on the 29th Sept 2025 from 6-8pm. Ten people from the local area participated of whom also completed the survey. Once the survey findings had been shared (see Annex 1 for presentation slides), participants were randomly divided into 2 groups to explore, in parallel, the following questions:

- **Discussion 1:** How can community groups better navigate people's time and accessibility challenges, and how to better convey the advantages of NbS activities and the roles involved to increase involvement?
- **Discussion 2:** What kind of support do community groups need to help them better involve people, and who can help with this?

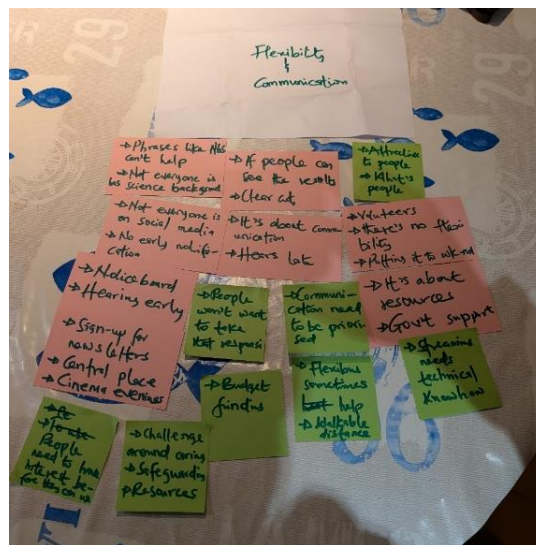
Each discussion was facilitated by a member of the research team, adopting a semi structured style that encouraged all to contribute, share and explore within the group issues and ideas that could enable more people and groups within the community to get involved in NbS activities in and around Anstruther. Informed consent was obtained to record these discussions which are now being transcribed for analysis alongside the survey findings.

What were the key issues and ideas discussed during the workshop?

1. Creating different ways to involve people with time and accessibility challenges

Flexibility can be achieved by offering activities at different times and formats, earlier notification of events, making locations easier to access, providing resources (e.g. transport, etc) to support participation, and encouraging more volunteers to help plan and lead activities.

- **Timing of events.** Most community events take place during the working day, when many people are not available. Evening and weekend sessions would give opportunities for those with jobs or caring responsibilities to attend. Others suggested shorter, drop-in sessions that allow people to contribute without needing to commit a full day.
- **Consistent and timely information through multiple channels.** Sharing information about events early and regularly can help reach more people in advance of events and help people set a side time to get involved. Social media alone does not reach everyone, particularly older people or those less comfortable online. Some prefer using noticeboards in busy spots, posters, local papers, and direct emails and newsletters. Using trusted local places and events to share information was seen as more personal and reliable than digital posts alone. For example, a shared mechanism/ place for posters and inter/ intra community newsletters could help raise awareness about activities and aims.
- **Accessibility from a practical and social perspective.** Activities should be held in places that are easy to reach, ideally within walking distance or on public transport routes. Some noted that accessibility also means feeling comfortable and confident to join in, for example through clear information about what's involved and a welcoming atmosphere for newcomers.
- **Accommodating the needs of children and families are vital.** Participants recognised that parents often find it hard to join activities because of childcare needs. While providing childcare at events seems helpful, most felt it isn't practical due to safeguarding and responsibility issues. A better option suggested was to set up a children's area close to the main activity, so parents can stay involved while their children play safely nearby.
- **Offering remote ways to take part.** Livestreaming events could offer options for particularly people who aren't physically able to attend and the tech savvy younger generation who frequently use social media platforms like Facebook. However, not everyone is comfortable using online tools or is active on social media platforms, either for privacy or technical reasons. Technological ways of engaging should



Flexibility and communication workshop discussion notes.

therefore supplement not replace in-person engagement events. Event organisers however may need tech-savvy personnel to enable this.

- **Flexibility depends on resources, not just goodwill or scheduling.** Many community groups operate with limited budgets and rely heavily on volunteers. Without some funding for coordination, transport, or childcare, it can be difficult to offer multiple time slots or venues. Participants felt that local or government support would make flexibility more achievable.
- **Supporting people to help organise and lead activities.** When a small number of people carry most of the responsibility, it limits how adaptable the group can be. Encouraging new volunteers, sharing roles, and offering guidance or training could reduce the workload and encourage more people to get involved in the long term.

2. Communicating nature activities and involving different people with varying interests

Communication is an important consideration which needs to go beyond simply announcing activities. It should clearly show why projects matter, use local and trusted channels, targeting groups that could benefit from and help galvanise activities to create a greater sense of ownership. Showing visible outcomes and explaining roles in plain, practical terms can help better attract and sustain involvement.

- **Clear language and framing nature activities around benefits.** Technical terms, such as NbS could be hindering involvement. People connect better when projects described in everyday language that highlights real benefits, such as improving local spaces, protecting wildlife, and/or creating green places for children to enjoy. This makes the purpose and value of taking part clearer to everyone.
- **Show clear results.** People are more likely to stay interested when they can see what is being achieved. Short updates with before-and-after photos, local stories, or brief “show-and-tell” sessions can make progress visible and real. It was noted that when children are involved in creating something, it tends to be cared for better afterwards, showing how participation builds ownership and pride.
- **Clear roles and expectations.** Describing roles in simple, time-limited terms, such as helping for half an hour or doing one small task, removes uncertainty and makes it easier to say yes. Recognising and thanking volunteers publicly also encourages others to take part.
- **Focus on involving young people.** Participants noted that most local volunteers are older, and there is a need to involve younger people in NbS activities. Programmes that link with schools or youth groups could help spark interest and create a sense of ownership among the next generation. Schools could be useful to help share information about nature-related activities and galvanise support.

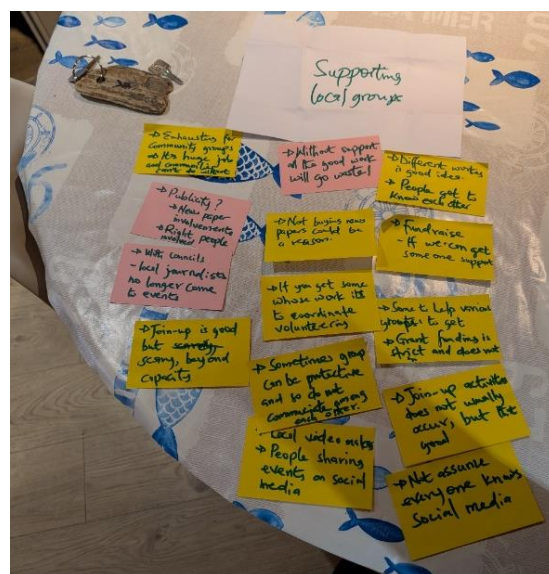


Dreel Burn in Anstruther 2. 29/09/2025, Alhassan Ibrahim

3. Support needs of community groups to better involve people

Support from the government, local businesses and local groups working together could improve involvement. Many groups are run by a small number of dedicated but overstretched volunteers. Practical help, such as funding, coordination staff, communication support, and skills training is needed to sustain and build in flexibility into activities to reach more people.

- **Dedicated personnel to coordinate involvement.** A volunteer coordinator within groups or drawing on council community education and development officers could ease the pressure on local groups that lead NbS activities. Many already actively involved contribute to multiple activities and initiatives. Having a funded volunteer coordinator (even if part-time) could support more focus on communication, event planning, applying for funding, and connecting different local groups to support nature-related activities.
- **Secure funding.** Groups rely on multiple sources of funding, including micro-grants, to cover essentials like materials, venue hire, and small payments for coordination time. Without funding security there is a risk that successful projects and the momentum they create will fade away once their main funding periods ends. The Scottish Government and local authorities could provide ongoing funds for communities rather than one-off funding opportunities.
- **Build knowledge and skills of community groups.** Community groups often lack confidence in administrative and technical areas (e.g. organising hybrid events and diversifying communication channels). Participants suggested short, local training sessions in topics such as safeguarding, event organisation, fundraising, use of online tools and marketing skills (it was noted that local media coverage of activities and outcomes has declined). This could help groups work more efficiently and feel less dependent on a few individuals with specialist knowledge.
- **Partnerships.** Partnering could help share the load and bring new energy for taking forward activities. Many groups and organisations tend to work independently, however, partnering with the local council, local businesses and/ or other community groups could help reach and involve more people. However, to reduce tensions and avoid conflict, clear mechanisms are needed for developing and sustaining more joined up approaches.



Supporting local groups workshop discussion notes.

Next steps

We are undertaking further analysis to develop these workshop insights and integrate them into a report covering all activities (including the survey findings) involved in this study with clear recommendations for policy and community groups. This report will be shared with those who have participated in this study and more widely.

Authors

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Further information

For more information about this study, contact Alhassan.Ibrahim@hutton.ac.uk or visit <https://www.hutton.ac.uk/project/achieving-multi-purpose-nature-based-solutions/>

The short summary of the survey findings is also available at: [Working-with-Nature-in-and-around-Anstruther-Summary-report.pdf](#)

The full report of the survey findings can be found at https://www.hutton.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/2025-02-28-JHI-D2-2_community_NbS_views_M2f.pdf

Annex 1 Workshop slides (below)

Hello and welcome – thanks for coming

The team: Esther Carmen, Alhassan Ibrahim, Eilidh Dillon



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Purpose for this evening



To share with you what we learnt from our study examining motivations, perceptions and experiences of Nature-based Solutions (NbS)

Discuss and expand on ideas on how to enable more people to get involved in NbS

2

Background – the wider project



Funded by the Scottish Government: Achieving multi-purpose nature-based solutions (AiMNbS)

Examine the role and effectiveness of Nature-based Solutions **AND how we might enable this in practice**

- Local peoples' involvement? (Hassan)
- Support by local businesses? (Esther)

All findings will be shared with relevant policy teams

<https://www.hutton.ac.uk/project/achieving-multi-purpose-nature-based-solutions/>



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What is the plan?



Share findings of the survey (and Q&A)

Discussions

Next steps

Community groups navigating barriers (experiences and ideas for improvement)?

Support for community groups?

Finish by 8pm

4

House keeping



- Facilities (comfort breaks and refreshments)
- Further information
- Recording views
- Photos to illustrate report and for social media (Please let us know if you wish not to be visible)
- Please tell us if we speak too fast or anything is unclear

Contacts

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People's perceptions, motivations and experiences of working with nature – A case study of Anstruther and surroundings



Alhassan Ibrahim; Eilidh Dillon; Esther Carmen

Anstruther nature workshop, 29-09-2025



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Key insights



Less familiarity with NbS term before the survey



Issues of time, health, awareness can get in people's way



Lower involvement in current local NbS activities



Flexibility, improved accessibility & clear communication can encourage involvement



People want to get involved in NbS activities

Next Steps

How to better involve people in NbS activities



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Nature-based solutions (NbS)



Activities that work with the **natural environment** to address **different societal challenges** to deliver benefits to both **people** and **nature**.

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What we did?



Survey open from mid-July to the end of August 2024

116 people responded

94 online

22 paper

Not everyone completed



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Main Findings



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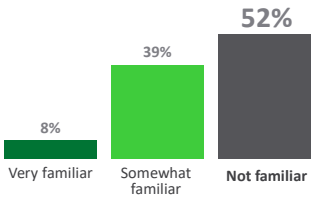
Familiarity with NbS



People's familiarity with NbS



Were you familiar with the term 'nature-based solutions' before taking part of this survey?



Working in **nature** occupation helps with familiarity

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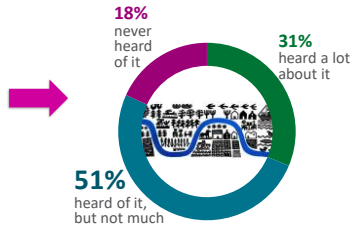
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Familiarity with local NbS related activities



The Dreel Burn project is an example of a local NbS project. Have you heard of it?



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Familiarity with local activities linked with NbS



28 respondents listed different projects

Besides the Dreel Burn Project **85%** stated awareness of other activities might relate to the idea of NbS



Nature-focused

Tree planting
Biodiversity enhancement
Wetland creation
Litter picking



Green wellbeing

Green space maintenance
Creating cycle path
Tidal pool restoration
Community allotment
Food growing activities
Green arts

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Involvement in NbS activities



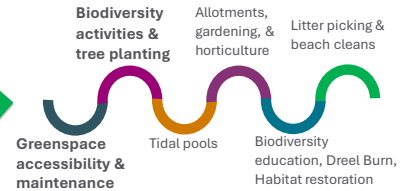
Involvement in local activities linked with NbS



72%
Not involved

28%
Involved

People identified different types of activities



16

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Involvement in local activities linked with NbS



Different types roles are played



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Interests in getting involved in NbS-related activities



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Many people want to see more NbS-related activities

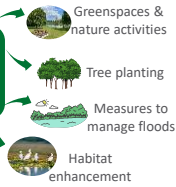


77% want to see more NbS related activities in and around Anstruther



15% do not want to see more NbS in and around Anstruther

People want to see different NbS activities



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Interest in getting involved in NbS-related activities



If circumstances permitted, **would you be interested in somehow supporting or getting involved in NbS, in and around Anstruther?**



57% interested in supporting or getting involved



15% already involved or support



7% may support or get involved in other things, but not NbS



21% not interested in any activity

Lack of interest is not necessarily because people don't want nature. **Many expressed the need to protect nature**

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Factors that may encourage or get in people's way



Top factors that might discourage people from getting involved



Time is the big factor



53% don't have enough time



24% I don't have the right sort of skills



23% have health or physical restrictions

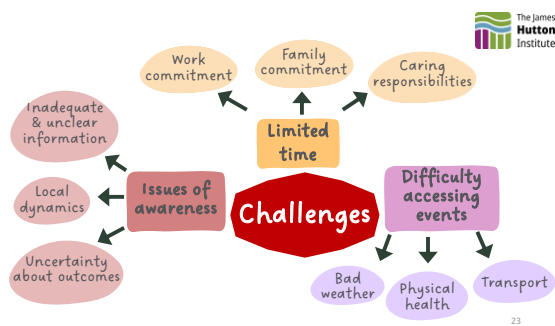


17% Transport can be tricky

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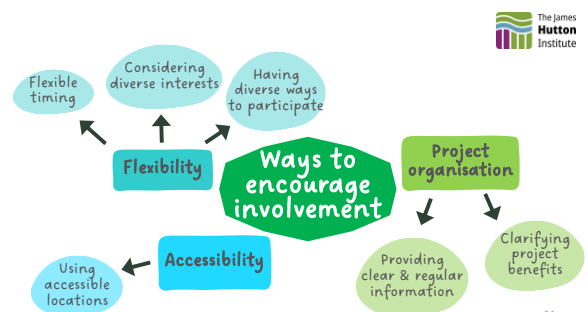
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Next to discussions



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Community groups navigating the barriers



Flexibility

- How to be more **flexible** to navigate around the people's time & accessibility challenges?

Communication

- How to **better convey** the advantages to people and communities, and activities and roles involved?

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TEA BREAK



27

Support for community groups



Support needed

- What do community groups need to better involve people and who can help with this?

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WRAP-UP & NEXT STEPS



1



2

Write summary of this discussion and share

Integrate into survey report for the Scottish Government & share with you

Read full survey report: https://www.hutton.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/2025-02-28-JHI-D2-2_community_views_M21.pdf

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Thank you for coming



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