

# Understanding ways to support local groups to strengthen citizens' involvement in Nature-Based Solutions: Evidence from Anstruther, Scotland



Photo: Section of the Dreel Burn in Anstruther taken by Alhassan Ibrahim, 2025

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For further information about this project please visit our project website <https://www.hutton.ac.uk/project/achieving-multi-purpose-nature-based-solutions/> or contact [esther.carmen@hutton.ac.uk](mailto:esther.carmen@hutton.ac.uk)

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## Executive Summary

Nature-based Solutions (NbS) are increasingly promoted as an approach capable of addressing climate change, biodiversity loss, and social wellbeing simultaneously. In Scotland, NbS forms part of wider commitments to place-based development, community empowerment, and climate adaptation. However, while policy frameworks emphasise community involvement and multi-purpose outcomes, less is understood about how NbS is interpreted, experienced, and delivered at local level. While community involvement and support are needed to promote NbS, there is limited evidence on how communities actually undertake NbS-related activities and what practical support they need to sustain and expand their role.

This study has been undertaken as part of the wider JHI-D2-2 Achieving multi-purpose Nature-based Solutions (AiM NbS) project, which examines ecological and socio-economic dimensions of NbS. Four main issues were explored: local people's awareness and understandings of NbS, current involvement of people in NbS and related initiatives; factors that limit or encourage involvement; and the kind of support required by local groups to better involve people in NbS and related initiatives.

The study adopted a two-stage approach combining a survey and a follow-up workshop in Anstruther, a small coastal town in Fife, Scotland. Firstly, an online survey, completed by 116 respondents, explored understandings of NbS, motivations for involvement, and perceived barriers and enablers to getting involved. The detailed survey findings were presented as a Milestone report in March 2025 (See Appendix A: List of outputs related to this report), hence, this report summarises the survey findings as opposed to presenting it in detail.

Secondly, a workshop with 10 survey respondents and other residents in and around Anstruther was used to validate the survey responses and identify practical ways to overcome barriers to involvement. This mixed method approach added value by placing the study in a specific local context and identifying the institutional support needed to shape community involvement in NbS.

In terms of results, both the survey and workshop discussions indicated that the term "nature-based solutions" was not widely understood, with several participants finding it technical or unfamiliar to non-experts. Nonetheless, people recognise the role of nature in their lives, including providing multiple benefits like flood mitigation and recreational opportunities, and societal responsibility to care for nature, which make many people strongly interested in seeing more of such activities as well as practically getting involved. However, there are practical barriers, such as time limitations, accessibility challenges and how NbS-related activities are communicated. An additional insight emerging from the survey and the workshop was the vibrancy of the local area, with numerous community groups actively running nature-related and non-nature-related initiatives simultaneously. This finding suggests that while the language of NbS may not resonate locally, there is already a strong organisational and social foundation upon which future initiatives can build.

The findings through the workshop discussions show that improving involvement in NbS and related initiatives depends on a combination of flexible participation approaches, clear and accessible communication, and adequate support for local groups. Participants emphasised that flexibility is primarily about structuring participation in ways that accommodate people's everyday constraints by providing early and reliable information and offering multiple ways to engage, including family-inclusive activities, remote options, and roles requiring different levels of time and physical commitment. Clear

communication was understood as describing NbS activities in plain language, linking them to visible and locally meaningful outcomes, clearly explaining benefits and time commitments through trusted and multiple local channels.

The study further indicates that overcoming the barriers to widen involvement depends on institutional support for local groups who lead NbS activities. Particularly, it appears these local groups are overstretched beyond their capacity. In this regard, there is strong emphasis on having dedicated volunteer coordinators, securing funding to support practical execution of engagement, and getting capacity-building in areas such as funding applications, administration, communication, and facilitation of hybrid events. Participants also highlighted the need for guidance to enable confident partnership between various groups to ensure NbS can be embedded into other local activities. Finally, clearer agreements with councils and other institutions regarding roles, expectations, and resource commitments were seen as necessary to prevent responsibility being transferred without adequate support.

The study generates recommendations for future research, practice, and policy. While all three dimensions are important for advancing effective and inclusive NbS, the policy implications are particularly critical for overcoming the barriers and enabling NbS in local context. These policy recommendations (summarised below) are informed by the study findings and reflect the researchers' views on how NbS can be more effectively mainstreamed. They will be further discussed in a related deliverable, which will involve transdisciplinary events with a wide range of stakeholders, including policy actors.

<b>Policy Area</b>	<b>What should be done</b>	<b>Intended effect</b>
Funding models	Allocate longer-term, flexible funding that explicitly covers coordination, facilitation, communication, and volunteer support.	Strengthens sustainability of community involvement and reduces burnout.
Institutional support	Provide accessible guidance on governance, legal responsibilities, and partnership between groups.	Reduces administrative burden and risk exposure for volunteer-led groups.
Role clarity & co-governance	Establish clear agreements between public bodies and community groups outlining responsibilities, risk-sharing, and decision-making authority.	Prevents informal transfer of responsibility and supports equitable partnership.
Integration with place-based policy	Embed NbS within community action plan, climate adaptation, health, and resilience strategies rather than treating it as a standalone programme.	Aligns NbS with locally meaningful priorities and increases cross-sector coherence.
Communication strategy	Frame NbS initiatives around visible, locally relevant benefits using trusted local channels.	Broadens participation and improves public understanding and acceptance.
Participation design	Support flexible, inclusive participation models (e.g. family-inclusive, varied commitment levels, non-physical roles).	Enables involvement across age groups and life circumstances.
Learning & evaluation	Invest in longitudinal evaluation and knowledge exchange focused on sustained participation and equity.	Builds an evidence base for durable, inclusive NbS governance.

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## 1 Introduction

The research presented in this report examines local people’s views and experiences of Nature-based Solutions (NbS) and identifies the various ways to support more involvement of people in such initiatives. This study has been undertaken as part of the wider ‘Achieving multi-purpose Nature-based Solutions’ project (JHI-D2-2 [AiM NbS](#)), which examines ecological and socio-economic dimensions of NbS and is funded by the Scottish Government Strategic Research Programme. This report builds on the earlier study that presented and analysed survey findings as a milestone report. To avoid duplication, this report does not reproduce the detailed survey findings. A detailed account of the survey design, data, and findings are referred to the milestone report authored by Ibrahim, Banks, et al. (2025) which is also summarised in Ibrahim, Dillon, et al. (2025b).

Nature-based Solutions (NbS) are *“actions to protect, sustainably manage, and restore natural or modified ecosystems, which address societal challenges effectively and adaptively, simultaneously providing human well-being and biodiversity benefits”* (IUCN, 2020). NbS can take many forms – as described by Ibrahim, Banks, et al. (2025), but all focus on working with nature to protect and enhance socio-economic benefits to society. The increasing societal challenges in Scotland and beyond, such as climate change impacts, flood and drought risks, and poor water quality has led to a wider understanding of the need to work more with nature across society (Bisaro & Meyer, 2022; Dick et al., 2019; Tonhauser et al.). Achieving widespread and meaningful benefits for society, however, hinges on understanding how to deliver NbS across places and scales (Cohen-Shacham et al., 2025; Odongo et al., 2022; Underwood et al., 2022).

One factor widely recognised as important in realising NbS is support from and involvement of people in shaping and delivering local NbS initiatives. Yet, ensuring sustained citizen participation remains challenging, particularly in moving beyond one-way information provision towards deeper forms of engagement that attract and retain individuals motivated by environmental stewardship (Kiss et al., 2022; Reed et al., 2018). NbS are continuing to gain attention across policy domains, such as Scotland’s National Adaptation Plan (SNAP3), Scottish Biodiversity Strategy (SBS), the River Basin Management Plan for Scotland 2021 – 2027 and National Planning Framework 4 for Scotland, which emphasise nature’s role in achieving their respective objectives and aims. However, a range of factors are known to influence community engagement in NbS from low levels of awareness and competing demands on residents’ time, to resource limitations and local governance arrangements (Loghmani-Khouzani et al., 2024; Pätzke et al., 2024). Other factors, such as regulatory hurdles and tensions between different priorities, also shape opportunities for participation (van Doornik et al., 2024; Venuti, 2025). However, much less is known about the circumstances under which local people become involved, or what enables that engagement to persist over time. These challenges are also well documented in Ibrahim, Banks, et al. (2025); Ibrahim, Dillon, et al. (2025b), where the study found that local involvement in NbS can be limited by unclear understanding of what NbS means, doubts about how it benefits local people, lack of time and capacity, and concerns about whether communities have a real say in decisions.

Given this context, this study aims to develop a better understanding of how citizens’ perceive NbS, the extent to which they are currently involved in NbS-related activities and ways citizens can be better supported to increase their involvement in NbS-related activities in and around their communities. Specifically, this study addresses the following research questions:

- a) What are local people’s awareness and understandings of Nature-based solutions (NbS)?
- b) What is the current involvement of local people in NbS and related initiatives?

- c) What factors limit or encourage involvement in NbS and related initiatives?
- d) What support do local groups need to better involve people in NbS and related initiatives?

Research Questions A–C were initially explored through a questionnaire survey distributed to local residents in Anstruther (Fife, Scotland), with the findings presented in the earlier milestone report see report in Ibrahim, Banks, et al. (2025). The survey identified key issues around local engagement, communication, and community capacity (Section 4). The second part of the study (Section 5) involved a community-based workshop. This workshop served two purposes: first, to reflect on and validate the findings related to Research Questions A–C and second, to address Research Question D by discussing with participants to identify practical ways to overcome barriers and strengthen wider and deeper local involvement in NbS. The sections below detail the key concepts used to inform this study (Section 2), the methods used (Section 3), the findings (Sections 4 and 5), implications for policy and practitioner groups (Section 6) and finally concludes with next steps.

## **2 Conceptual background: Supporting local groups as catalysts of local people's involvement in nature-based solutions**

Barriers and enablers to citizen participation in NbS are well documented by Ibrahim, Banks, et al. (2025), who highlight the central role of community-based groups and organisations in bridging involvement gaps and enabling wider engagement. These groups often operate at the interface between formal institutions (at national and local levels of government) and residents, translating ideas and wider objectives into locally meaningful practices, often involving participation from the wider community (Adams et al., 2024; Kiss et al., 2022; J. G. C. Martin et al., 2021). The role of community groups and organisations is varied. Often, this involves convening, mediating, and knowledge broking to better align activities with municipal strategies with local priorities (van der Jagt et al., 2017; Wilk et al., 2021). Furthermore, local organisations frequently take on coordination, technical design, monitoring, and volunteer management, often with limited staffing and unstable funding (Dinnie & Holstead, 2018; He et al., 2022). Beyond these operational roles, they may also contribute to participatory monitoring of outcomes, co-creating interventions to enhance ecological performance, helping to strengthen community cohesion and sense of ownership through a process of collective learning (Frantzeskaki et al., 2020; Latinopoulos et al., 2025). By coordinating involvement and fostering shared values, community organisations can help embed NbS practices within everyday life and sustain stewardship over time (Kiss et al., 2022). Why, when, who and how community groups seek to involve members of the wider community in achieving NbS in the long term is critical in guiding the type of interventions pursued, how they are perceived and what emerges (Ibrahim, Banks, et al., 2025).

Despite the central role of community-based groups and organisations in developing and delivering NbS, evidence from urban forest governance and green infrastructure management shows that volunteer-driven models remain vulnerable to burnout and unequal participation if not embedded within stable municipal support systems (Dell'Ovo et al., 2025; Scheuer et al., 2024). Participation is more inclusive and resilient when collaboration between municipalities and community actors is formalised through clear co-governance arrangements, transparent decision-making procedures, and dedicated facilitation roles (Mahmoud et al., 2023). Organisational clarity, intermediary support structures, and predictable funding streams enable local groups to engage wider and more diverse constituencies. Similarly, sustained mobilisation depends on clearly defined roles, structured coordination, and recognition of volunteer contributions, and where these conditions are weak, participation declines (Edwards et al., 2026). Poorly supported processes can also generate conflict, reinforce existing inequalities, or produce short-lived engagement cycles, undermining long-term NbS stewardship (Chapman et al., 2024; Wamsler et al., 2020).

Wider governance arrangements such as political commitment, policy coherence, and cross-sector collaboration (Ershad Sarabi et al., 2019; J. G. Martin et al., 2021), clear expectations and coordinating mechanisms (Mahmoud et al., 2023; van der Jagt et al., 2017; Wilk et al., 2021), are also important for guiding engagement practices and community-based groups' ability to deepen and widen participation and continue involvement in the long term. Where such arrangements are fragmented or lacking, the realisation of multiple benefits through NbS can often be hindered (Kiss et al., 2022; Venuti, 2025). Moreover, where roles are ambiguous and support structures are weak, participation becomes sporadic or tokenistic with limited substantive engagement (Ibrahim, Gray, et al., 2025; Ibrahim, Marshall, et al., 2025). Such weaknesses also constrain local groups' ability to mobilise diverse participants and sustain involvement over time (He et al., 2022; Mahmoud et al., 2023). Studies of collaborative governance further indicate that insufficient capacity and lack of conflict-resolution mechanisms can generate participation

fatigue and erode trust (Battisti et al., 2025). Reviews of EU-funded NbS projects highlight that unclear mandates, temporary funding schemes, and high administrative burdens constrain community actors' effectiveness (Mahmoud et al., 2023; Naumann et al., 2023). Conversely, stable resources, and supportive co-governance arrangements, including access to training and long-term advisory support can strengthen NbS planning and implementation. When adequately supported, local groups can more effectively lead deeper co-production and ensure long-term stewardship (He et al., 2022; Palomo et al., 2021). Comparative analysis shows that formal recognition of local groups within governance frameworks strengthens the meaningfulness of participation and increases accountability in decision-making (Chapman et al., 2024).

Overall, the NbS governance literature brings to the fore the bridging role of community-based groups for delivering NbS to help address community needs and diverse policy objectives. It highlights the need to better understand the support needs of community-based groups seeking to lead NbS interventions to expand and stabilise participation overtime. It is therefore important to expand beyond examining current practices and improvements within community-based groups to also identify how systemic conditions can better support decision-making, knowledge exchange, and adaptive learning at the community level to better enable NbS interventions (Iaione & Bertozzi, 2025; Mahmoud et al., 2023).

### 3 Methodology

#### 3.1 Study area

This study was conducted in Anstruther (Figure 1), a small coastal town in Fife, Scotland (56° 13' 23.34" N; -2° 42' 8.24" W). Anstruther had an estimated population of approximately 3,950<sup>1</sup> in 2020. Although its historical development and identity were closely tied to the fishing industry (Fife Council, 2022), the town's economy has gradually diversified. Today, tourism, hospitality, and small independent enterprises form the core of local economic activity.



Figure 1. Anstruther and surroundings with image showing the current state of sections Dreeel Burn towards the coastal end. Map from Google Earth. Photos: Alhassan Ibrahim, September 2025

The town provides a suitable setting for exploring local perspectives on NbS due to the range of environmental initiatives taking place in and around the area. The Dreeel Burn Project (Box 1), known prior to the survey, is presented as one example of ongoing NbS-related activity in Anstruther. It forms part of a broader landscape of locally led action, with several community groups working on green spaces, woodland development, children's play areas, and other environmental improvements (Ibrahim, Banks, et al., 2025).

Anstruther is characterised by strong civic and voluntary networks. While initial contact for the survey was facilitated through the Anstruther Improvements Association (AIA), environmental activity in the town extends beyond a single organisation. Groups such as the Anstruther and District Allotment Association

<sup>1</sup> [Scotland \(United Kingdom\): Localities in Council Areas - Population Statistics, Charts and Map](#)

and the East Neuk Centre Trust, among others, contribute to a vibrant culture of community-led stewardship. This active local context made Anstruther an appropriate site for examining how residents understand and engage with NbS-related initiatives.

Environmental considerations are not abstract for Anstruther: Parts of the town are identified as being at high risk of coastal flooding, while the Dreel Burn has experienced ongoing ecological pressures, including pollution and infrastructure impacts, and has been a focus of community concern and restoration efforts (Forth Rivers Trust, 2022; Mike & Laura, 2024). The community's use of the river is illustrated by the annual duck race, a public event that playfully, yet visibly, foregrounds the burn's condition. In addition, the urban sections of the Dreel Burn show noticeable variations in flow, with some stretches carrying more water than others, which may be influenced by the way buildings are positioned along the channel. At the coastal outlet, the burn can appear almost dry during the summer months.

### **3.2 Approach and process overview**

This study followed a sequential, mixed-method and participatory research design involving 2 stages of data collection and analysis between 2023 and 2026, including knowledge exchange and participant validation activities (Figure 2). Stage 1 involved a survey to explore local awareness, perceptions and experiences of NbS. The survey was distributed to people living within Anstruther with findings shared with and feedback gathered from participants (2024-2025). Stage 2 was informed by Stage 1 and involved a community workshop (summer 2025) with survey participants and other residents. This workshop brought together community members to explore potential solutions to issues highlighted in the survey. The process was therefore iterative, moving from descriptive accounts to the identification of conceptual insights grounded in the data.

### **3.3 Phase 1: Survey**

Research Questions A–C were addressed through a survey of residents in Anstruther conducted in July–August 2024. The survey examined local understandings of NbS, current involvement in related activities, and factors shaping motivation to engage. A mixed-mode approach (paper and online) was used to maximise accessibility, and responses were analysed using descriptive statistics and thematic coding of open-text answers. In total, 116 people participated in the survey.

Full details of the survey design, sampling approach, analytical procedures and findings are provided in the milestone report (can be accessed here: Ibrahim, Banks, et al., 2025) and subsequently summarised for wider dissemination (can be accessed here: Ibrahim, Dillon, et al., 2025b), so these are not reproduced here. However, in preparing this report, the survey dataset was revisited to ensure continuity between the earlier findings and the workshop analysis, and to allow more direct comparison between patterns identified in the survey and themes emerging from the subsequent community discussions.

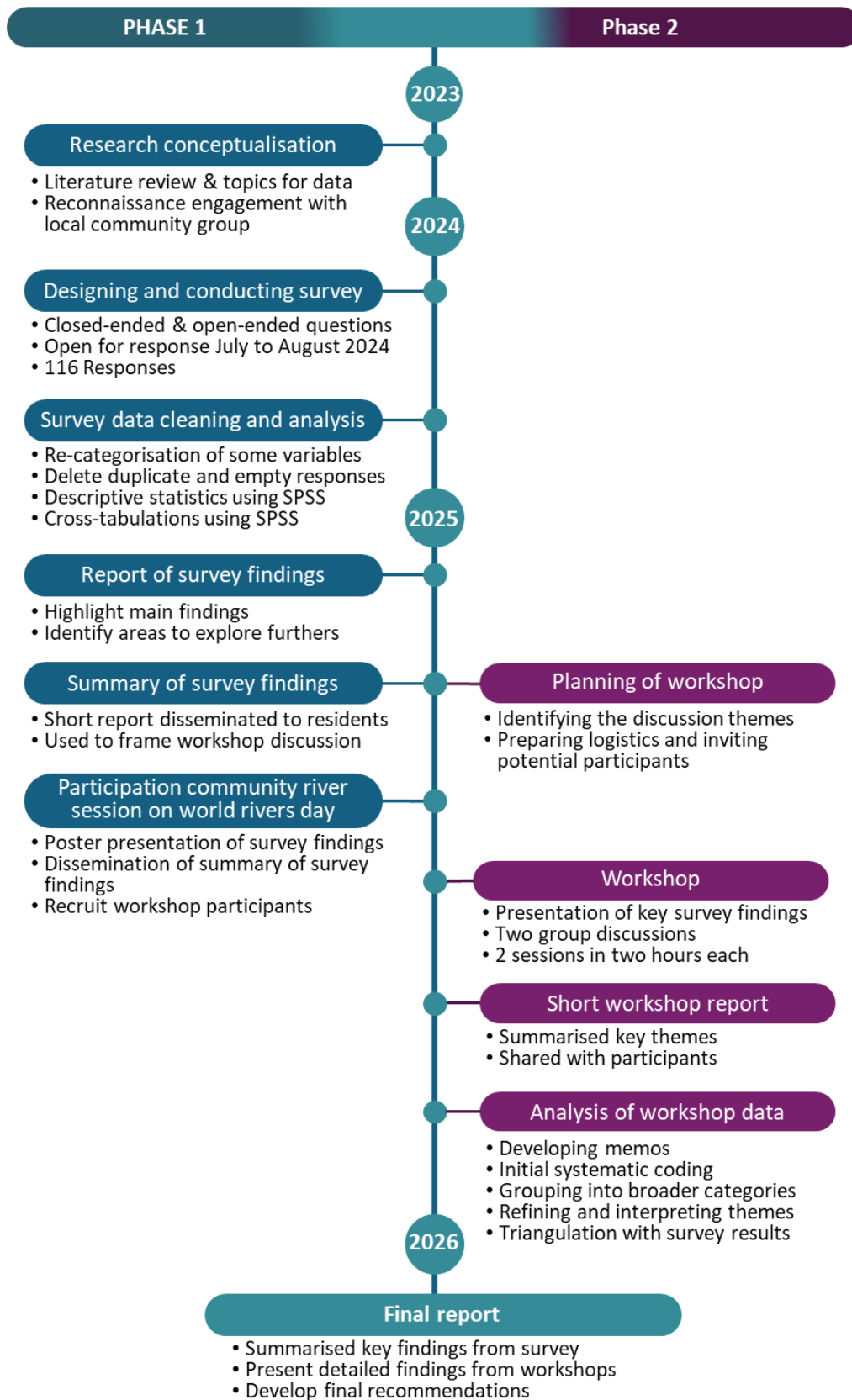


Figure 2. Research method and related activities from 2023 to 2026

### 3.4 Stage 2: Workshop method

The workshop method was selected to create focused, in-depth discussions relating to key issues identified from the survey. This method is widely recognised as effective for generating rich, inclusive discussion and for enabling all participants to contribute meaningfully, particularly within time-limited, facilitated settings (Creswell, 2009; O. Nyumba et al., 2018). The workshop was held in Anstruther on 29th September 2025 between 18:00-20:00.

Participants were recruited from the survey respondents who expressed interest in follow up activities at the end of the survey. These respondents (n = 53) were sent a written invite for the workshop. Furthermore, the study team participated in the World Rivers Day event in Anstruther on the 28<sup>th</sup> September 2025 (Figure 2) to share the written summary of the survey findings with community members and to invite people to attend the workshop. Ten local people participated in the workshop. The workshop began with a brief introduction outlining the purpose, followed by a presentation of key highlights from the 2024 survey to establish a shared point of reference. The structure of the workshop and expectations for participation were then explained. Participants were then randomly divided into two breakout groups with a facilitator from the study team. For each group, two breakout sessions were then conducted with discussions structured around questions informed by the survey findings (Figure 3).

- **Break out session 1:** How can community groups be flexible to better navigate people’s time and accessibility challenges, and how can the benefits of Nature-based Solutions (NbS) activities and associated roles be more effectively communicated to increase involvement?
- **Break out session 2:** What kinds of support do community groups need to better involve people, and who might help provide this support?

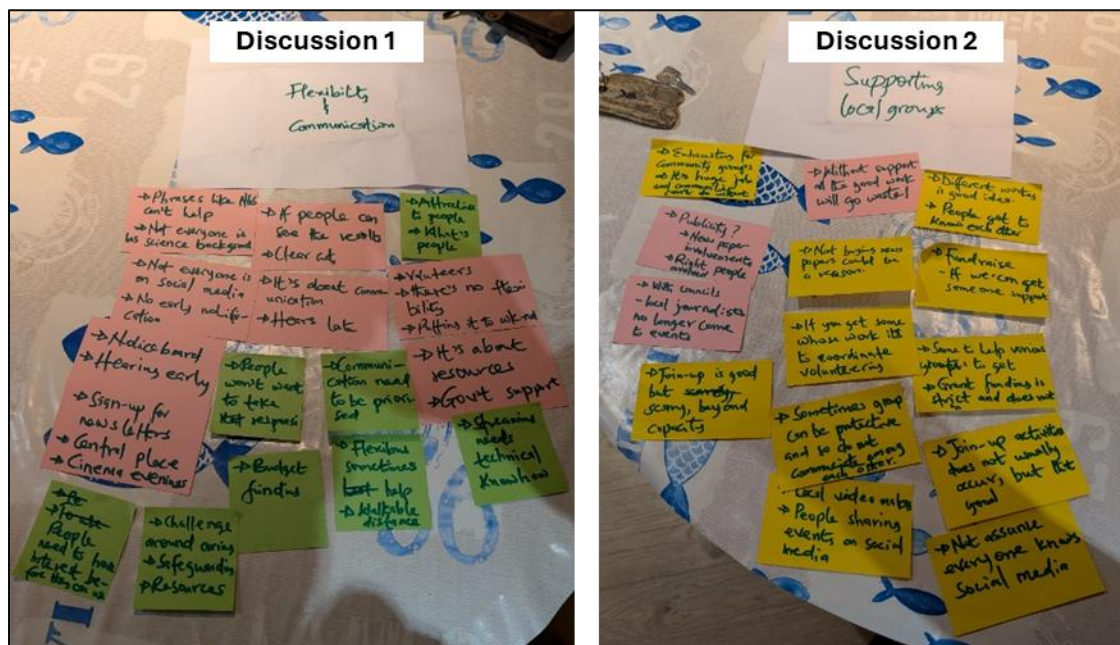


Figure 3. Sticky notes of discussions 1 & 2 in group 1 during Anstruther nature workshop. See Ibrahim, Dillon, et al. (2025a)

Facilitation involved encouraging all participants to contribute and build on ideas, experiences and local knowledge. Data was gathered through notetaking – using sticky notes (Figure 3) and individual facilitator notebooks – and audio-recording. Data gathered helped elaborate, contextualise and triangulate survey findings.

The audio-recording was transcribed and analysed through a structured and iterative coding process using Nvivo (a qualitative research software). First, an initial coding framework was developed using the summary of discussion topics that had been produced and shared with participants after the workshop, alongside the key themes identified in the survey and presented in the milestone report. This provided a starting structure and enabled direct comparison between survey and workshop findings, supporting triangulation and validation of earlier results.

The full workshop transcript was then read carefully and repeatedly to ensure familiarity with the data. During this process, additional themes and sub-themes that were not captured in the initial framework were identified and incorporated into the coding structure. Where facilitators' contributions clarified, summarised, or shaped group discussions, these were included where they reflected and consolidated participants' views.

As coding progressed, related codes were grouped into broader descriptive categories to move from detailed statements to higher-level patterns. This involved revisiting earlier coding decisions, refining category boundaries, and merging overlapping themes. Through this iterative process, more comprehensive themes were developed that captured areas of convergence, divergence, and locally significant concerns. The analysis therefore moved from topic-based coding to thematic interpretation, while remaining grounded in participants' discussions.

### **3.5 Ethics**

The study was conducted in accordance with ethics review by the James Hutton Institute and Social Research Approval Arrangements for MRPs – 2022-27 under the Scottish Government's Strategic Research. Accordingly, all participants provided informed consent to voluntarily participate in the research and for the discussions to be audio-recorded and used in the research. Due to confidentiality, discussions have been anonymised.

#### 4 Results: understandings, experience, barriers to involvement and support needs

This Section synthesises the survey findings (Figure 4) based on Ibrahim, Banks, et al. (2025); Ibrahim, Dillon, et al. (2025b), highlighting the most salient patterns relevant to understanding local people's familiarity with NbS, their current involvement, and the factors shaping participation. Where necessary, the original survey data was revisited and interpreted in light of subsequent reflections, including insights from workshop discussions.

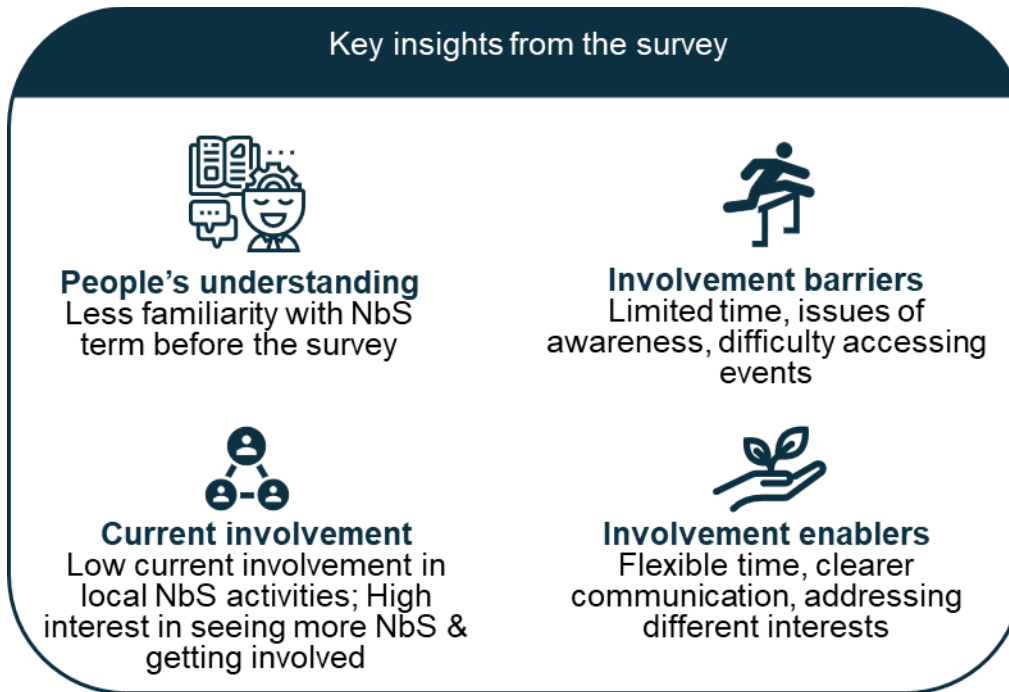


Figure 4. Summary of key survey findings

In terms of respondents' background (Figure 5), a considerable majority of the survey respondents are long-term local residents of Anstruther or the surrounding area having had more than ten years' association with the town. The sample was weighted towards older age groups, with the majority aged 45 and over, and included a slightly higher proportion of women than men. Although only a small proportion of respondents reported working in nature-related occupations, many indicated that they regularly visit natural spaces, with only a small minority stating that they rarely spend time in natural areas. While the survey looked for relationships between some responses to identify how factors like age, gender, involvement in local initiatives influence awareness and interest in getting involved and perceived barriers, very few significant relationships were detected, so only the most noteworthy relationships are highlighted when needed.

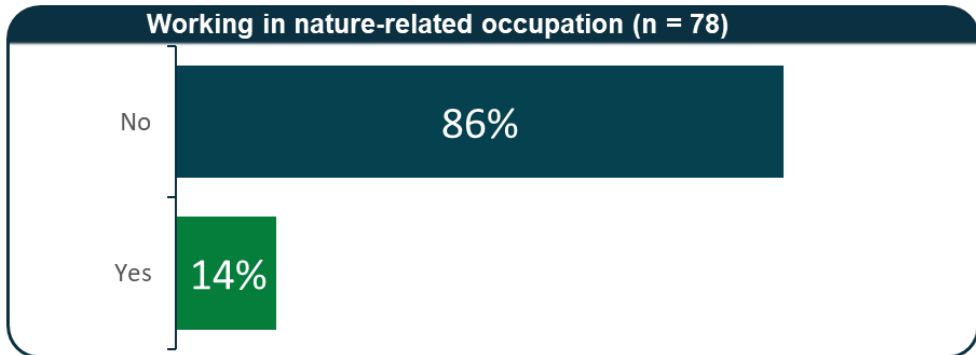
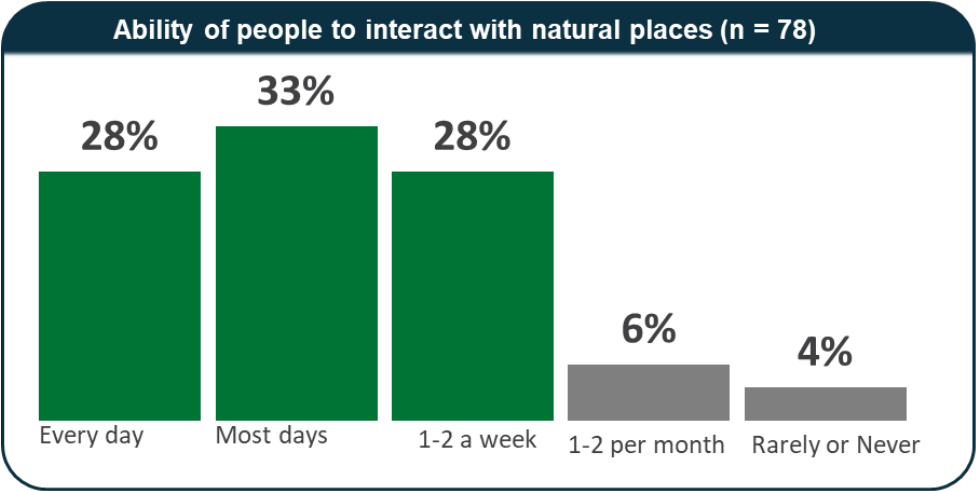
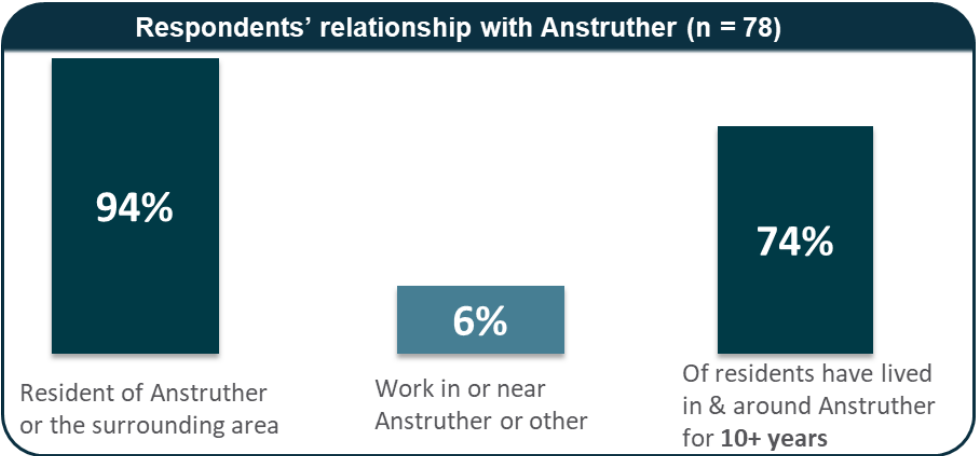
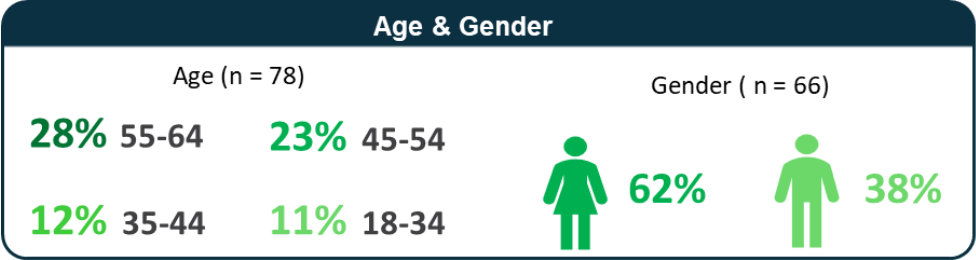


Figure 5. Background of respondents

#### 4.1 What are local people’s understandings of Nature-based solutions (NbS)?

In this section, we framed local people’s understanding of NbS based on their familiarity with the NbS term, awareness of related local initiatives and further look for possible explanatory factors.

##### 4.1.1 Familiarity with NbS terminology

Survey findings indicate that familiarity with the specific term “nature-based solutions” was limited among respondents. Just over half reported that they had not previously encountered the term, while a substantial minority described themselves as “somewhat familiar,” and only a small proportion as “very familiar” (Figure 6). However, limited familiarity with terminology did not equate to a lack of understanding of underlying concepts. Many respondents demonstrated awareness of the idea of working with nature to address environmental and societal challenges once it was described to them in the survey.

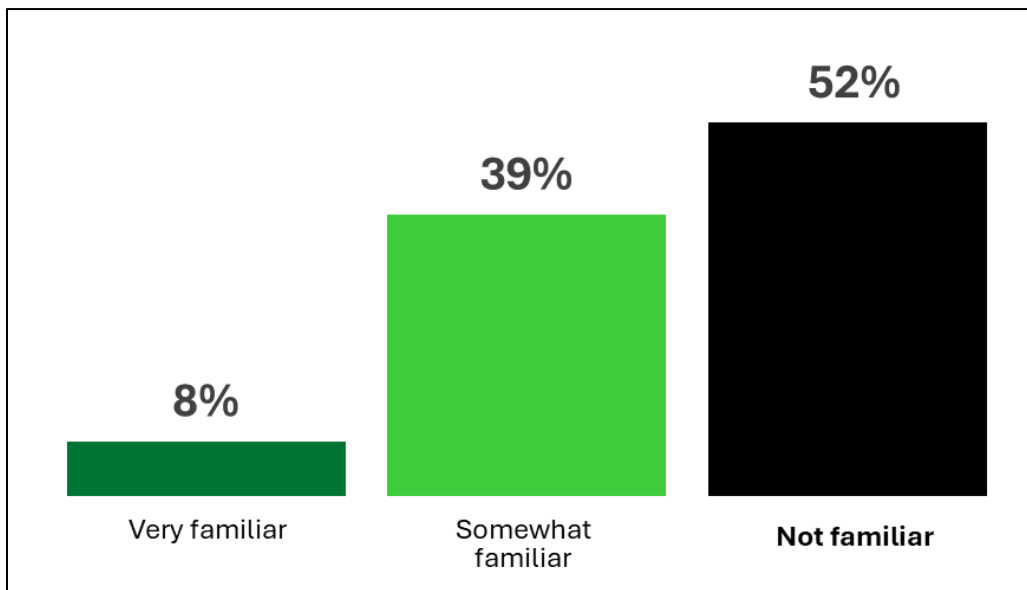


Figure 6. Response to the question: Were you familiar with the term ‘nature-based solutions’ before taking part in this survey? Reproduced from 2025 survey data.

Familiarity with the term ‘NbS’ was demonstrated among the workshop respondents, but this is highly influenced by their prior involvement in NbS related initiatives (Section 4.1.3). However, workshop respondents generally think the term is jargon, that is difficult to fully understand without being a scientist in the field or having practical involvement in the activity. It is also possible that people are engaged in activities that could be NbS, but the term is not commonly used. One workshop participant noted: “we don’t use the term nature-based solutions because it’s just another one of those terms”. Another respondent through the survey stated: “I have a nebulous understanding of what it means. I find it easier when I think of concrete examples”

##### 4.1.2 Awareness of local initiatives related to NbS

Despite low familiarity with formal terminology, there was high awareness (85%) of local initiatives that could align with the NbS idea following an introductory description of the term in the survey. Some (28)

of the respondents who indicated awareness identified a range of activities in and around which they perceive as relating to NbS. These were broadly clustered into two broad groups: those that are **nature-focused**, aiming to achieve ecological restoration and conservation goals, and those focused on **green wellbeing**, highlighting benefits for both communities and the natural environment (Figure 7).

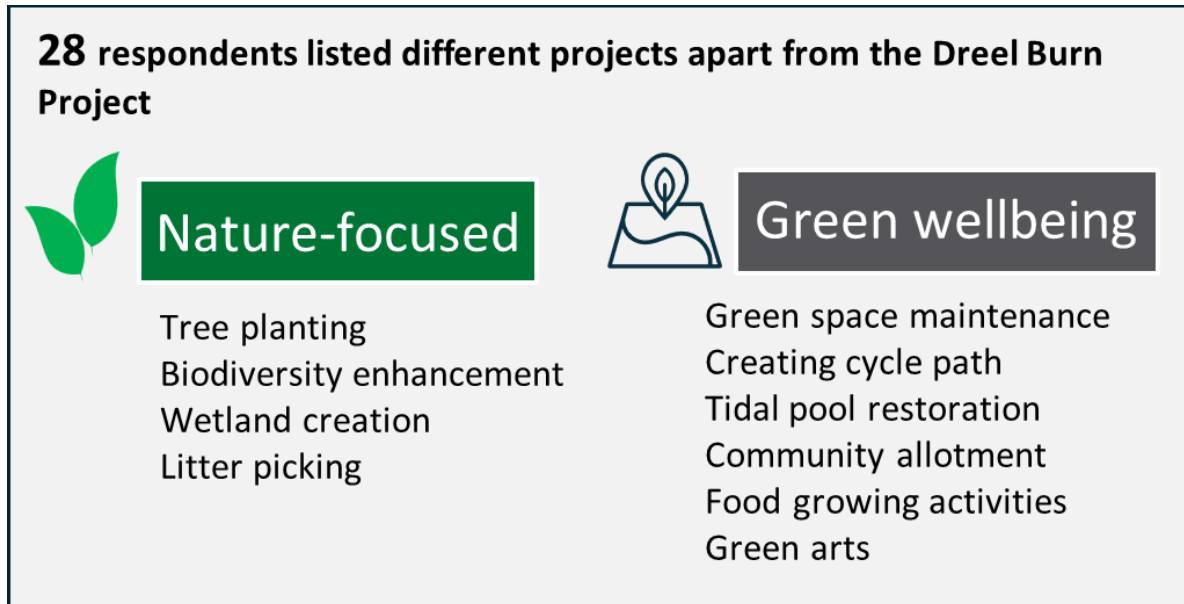


Figure 7. Respondents' description of activities in Anstruther that might link to the NbS idea apart from the Dreel Burn

Despite the range of examples suggested by the respondents, the survey did not verify if these projects could be actually considered NbS based on the IUCN or other scientific definitions (See Section 1). For these projects to be NbS, they should be implemented at appropriate scale and purposefully help address a defined societal challenge while simultaneously enhancing biodiversity, irrespective of the names of the projects. But the suggestions show that respondents have different ways of understanding what NbS are, and what, in their opinions, these activities could include, like creating cycle paths and litter picking. The Dreel Burn (Box 1) project was particularly well recognised, with most respondents aware of it, though depth of understanding varied. Descriptions of the project's aims by respondents reflected a mixture of ecological restoration (e.g., biodiversity improvement, water quality enhancement), human benefits (e.g., recreation, accessibility), and aesthetic or community improvement (e.g., "cleaning up" neglected areas).

#### 4.1.3 Factors potentially affecting familiarity with NbS

There was limited statistically significant relationships between familiarity and demographic characteristics, as awareness of the terms was relatively even between different age groups and genders. Also, awareness of local initiatives alone did not predict recognition of the NbS term, which is because the term is not usually used in the various local initiatives. However, one respondent who initially said they were 'somewhat familiar' with the NbS terminology before the survey noted via open text that 'Knowledge [of NbS] based on reports in Countryfile, Landward, Coast and such like.' This shows that engagement of NbS-related media, like television programmes, could help raise awareness of the concept.

*Box 1. Dreel Burn Project as a possible example of a local NbS-like project.*

The Dreel Burn Project is a nature restoration project local to Anstruther. While not explicitly framed within the NbS terminology, it can be seen as an example of NbS in that it is working to achieve a “clean, biodiverse and vibrant river” with community involvement. For more information about the work in the Dreel Burn visit <https://forthriverstrust.org/project/dreel-burn-project/>

We expected that this project might be familiar to some in the Anstruther area, so we specifically asked about it. Firstly, we posed the question: *The Dreel Burn project is an example of a local NbS project. Have you heard of it?* The majority of respondents (82% out of 115 respondents) indicated awareness of the project, a lot of these (62%) said they do not know much about the project, showing limited knowledge.

Those familiar with the Dreel Burn project were asked to describe its goals. There were 66 written responses to this question, with respondents often listing multiple objectives.

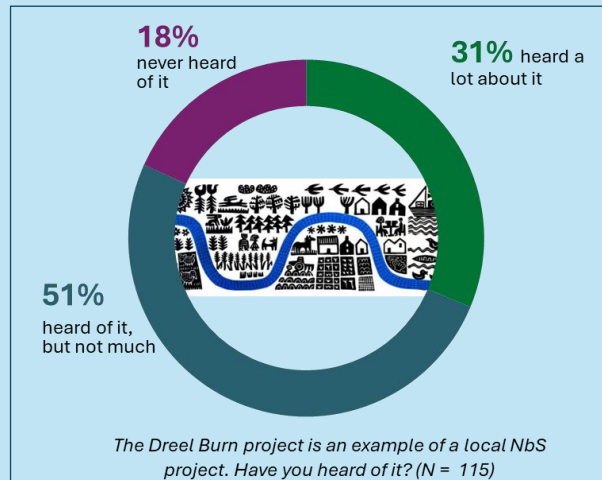
Overall, the most common response to this question (41 responses) related to outcomes and actions for nature, whether framed in terms of restoration or improvement of the Dreel Burn as a habitat/catchment, encouraging wildlife, improving biodiversity, or specific management actions such as invasive species removal or tree planting. In an additional 2 cases, tree planting was referred

to as an end in itself and it was not clear what the respondents believed the purpose of the tree planting was – whether it was, for example, a biodiversity or an aesthetic measure. Of the 41 responses, 13 referred to outcomes for both nature and humans.

In terms of responses relating to human benefits, around 19 responses included improving the area so that it is more useable and has accessible greenspace that offered opportunities for recreation and enabling people to engage with nature. 2 responses highlighted other human benefits, comprising food provisioning and business support: *“To restore biodiversity and good health to the waterway, while ensuring human needs are met (food from the land and sea...)”* and *“restoration of the Dreel for nature, community, agri and aqua communities...”*. Around 17 responses mentioned ideas of improving water quality and/or reducing pollution in the Dreel Burn. Often, it was not specified what improving water quality aims for – e.g. whether for nature or human benefit, or both. 3 responses touched on flooding risk reduction, 1 on soil erosion reduction, 1 on the monitoring aspect of the project, and 1 on the private finance aspect of the project: *“...exploration of private finance to support projects elsewhere”*.

Notably, a number of responses (15) referred to ideas of “clearing up”, “cleaning up”, and “tidying up”, a previously neglected space. One respondent specifically mentioned perceived anti-social behaviour in the area, stating that the project was to “repair the damage” caused. The purpose of “clearing up” was not always specified; but in some cases, this was linked to an outcome for people/nature.

9 responses referred to an educational or outreach aspect of the project, such as awareness raising around the Dreel Burn specifically, or around nature more generally. An additional 5 responses indicated uncertainty or did not specify concrete project goals.



Source: Adopted from Ibrahim, Banks, et al. (2025)

Working in a nature-related occupation could influence familiarity, as 36% said they were ‘very familiar’ with the term, compared to only (3%) of those whose professional affiliation was not related to nature. Even among those in a nature-related occupation, a notable proportion (27%) were not familiar with the term. This finding highlights the importance of clear and accessible communication if NbS terminology is to be adopted more widely at community level.

Although the factors influencing familiarity were not discussed in detail during the workshops, three key factors determining the understanding of NbS emerged in the discussions: having a scientific background in a NbS-related field, working in a NbS-related project, and how projects linked to nature are communicated. In terms of involvement in nature-related projects, those involved in the Dreel Burn project indicated their familiarity was based on this project:

*It's [NbS terminology] an issue that we've encountered with the Dreel Burn project the whole way through is that this jargon is so off putting to lay people. I mean, I now can speak that language because I've been doing it for that project for three years and I understand what nature-based solutions are and I understand what investment readiness is, and I understand what nature capital is and all of this stuff. But I can remember at the beginning thinking, I don't understand any of this. I don't know what I'm involved in, and so if the, the terminology is just. (Speaker 5, Group 1, Anstruther Nature Workshop, 2025)*

The NbS terminology being vague or too technical was stressed as among the reasons people do not understand the concept, which corroborates the earlier views expressed in the survey that NbS is “just another one of those terms” contributing to “nebulous” understanding. Another respondent suggested such technical language could only be understood by scientists within nature-related field:

*I think that's [involvement in projects] an absolutely crucial point, because I personally, I think people without science backgrounds think they won't be able to do this because I'm not a scientist and as soon as people start using technical terminology, you know, even as you say nature-based solutions, you start thinking. (Speaker 9, Group 1, Anstruther Nature Workshop, 2025)*

What is clear from these responses is that merely getting involved in nature-related project will not increase awareness of NbS, unless that is clearly used in the project framing and well communicated to people involved.

#### **4.2 What is local people’s current involvement in and support for NbS and related initiatives?**

Survey findings show that while awareness of NbS-related initiatives was relatively high, direct involvement in such projects was more limited. Among those aware of local NbS-like activities, a minority (28%) reported involvement. Where involvement did occur, it often took the form of hands-on volunteering, though some respondents held organising, membership or monitoring roles (Figure 8). The Dreel Burn Project was explicitly named in the survey, meaning respondents were directly prompted to report their involvement. By contrast, “other NbS-like projects” were identified through open-text responses, relying on respondents to recall and define these activities themselves. As a result, the levels of involvement shown are not strictly comparable.

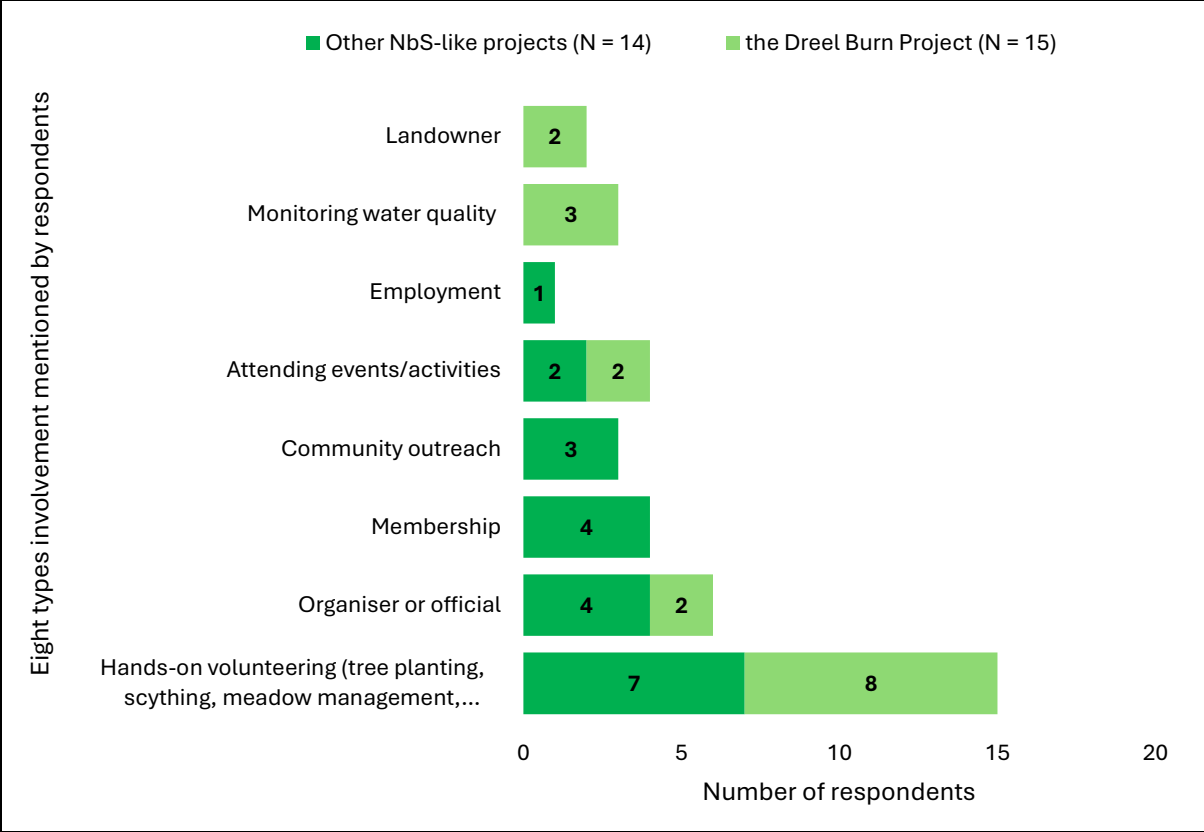


Figure 8. Types of involvement when asked to briefly describe “...how you have been involved in the projects you have mentioned”, and “...how you have been involved in the Dreel Burn project” Based on coded categorisation from survey data, but the responses could encompass more.

While the workshops discussion does not provide contrary views in terms of how people are generally involved, children’s event and water quality testing emerged as the additional activities in which people may be involved. However, these activities were not discussed in detail. Moreover, workshop participants were commonly in the organiser or official roles who appear to be pioneers for better environmental management using measures like NbS.

4.2.1 Involvement in other kinds of local activities and voluntary initiatives

The survey findings show that respondents (72%) were aware of a broad range of voluntary and community activities in and around Anstruther, with examples including cultural events like duck racing and Annual Harbour Festival (Figure 9). The workshop discussions reaffirmed a wide range of additional non-NbS activities, such as a Mothers and Toddlers’ group, Fish in the Classroom, Book Bug Day, Tennis Club, food fridge, and lunch clubs, which all potentially related to the specific activities already identified in the survey. Importantly, some of these activities are run by the same groups that spearhead some of the NbS-related initiatives. For example, as a respondent mentioned, the AIA, which is a key actor in the Dreel Burn Project, runs a Mothers and Toddlers’ group, engaging this group with NbS could be a way of getting a different demographic of people involved in initiatives locally.

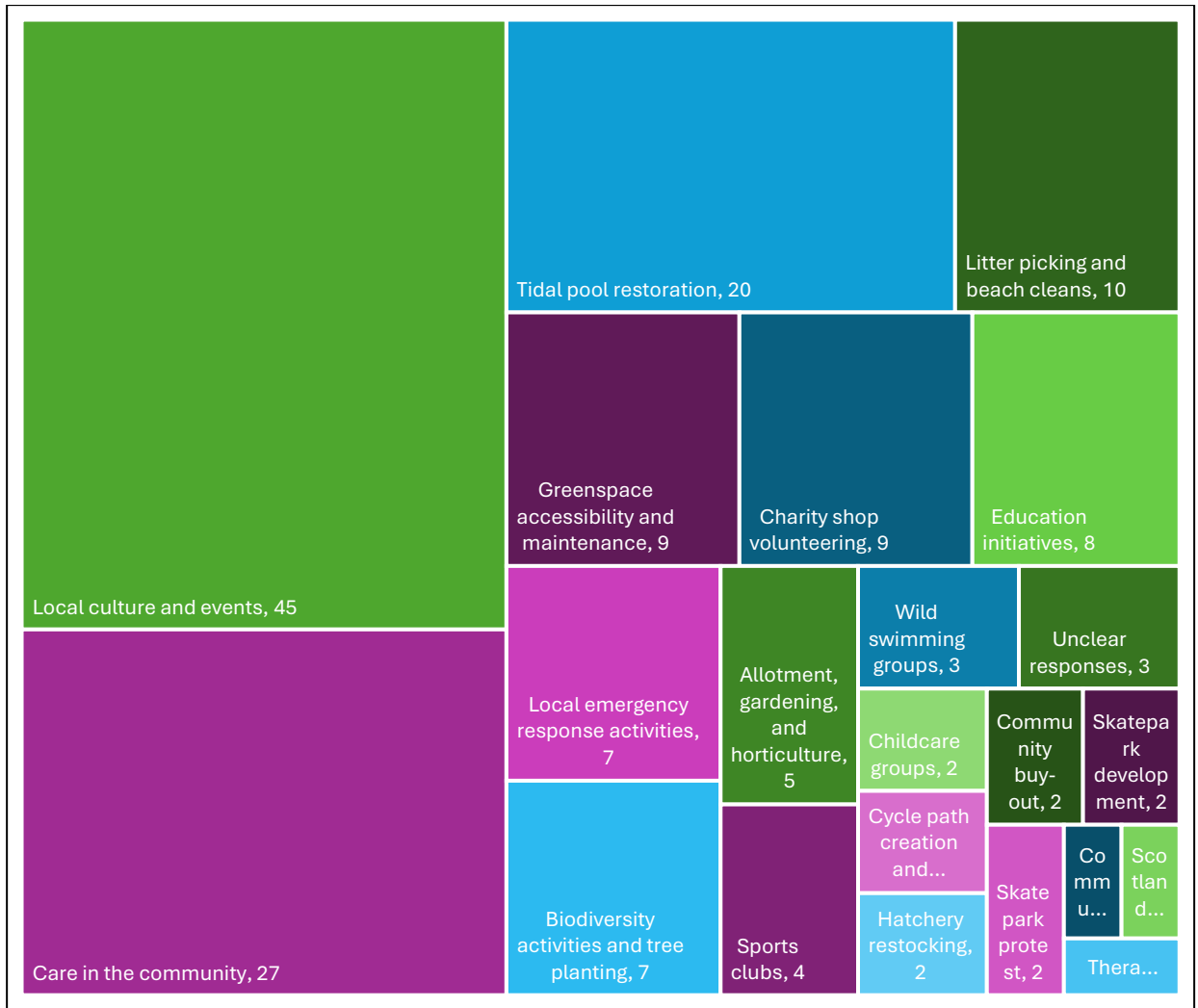


Figure 9. Our summary of themes in open text responses to the question “Are you aware of other local voluntary projects or activities carried out to help people in Anstruther – beyond anything you might have mentioned earlier? If you can, please name and give brief descriptions of any ongoing or past local voluntary projects or activities that you can recall. “. N=55. Total number of activities is mentioned is greater than 55 as many respondents mentioned multiple activities

In terms of involvement, many (56%) of the respondents reporting awareness of local non-NbS activities indicated that they were involved in those initiatives, which is double those involved in nature-related activities. 34 survey respondents described how they are involved, highlighting a mix of roles similar to those mentioned for NbS projects (Figure 10), except that 3 activities – fundraising, advising, attending meetings – did not appear in the NbS like projects, but was replaced with water quality monitoring, community outreach, and landowner.

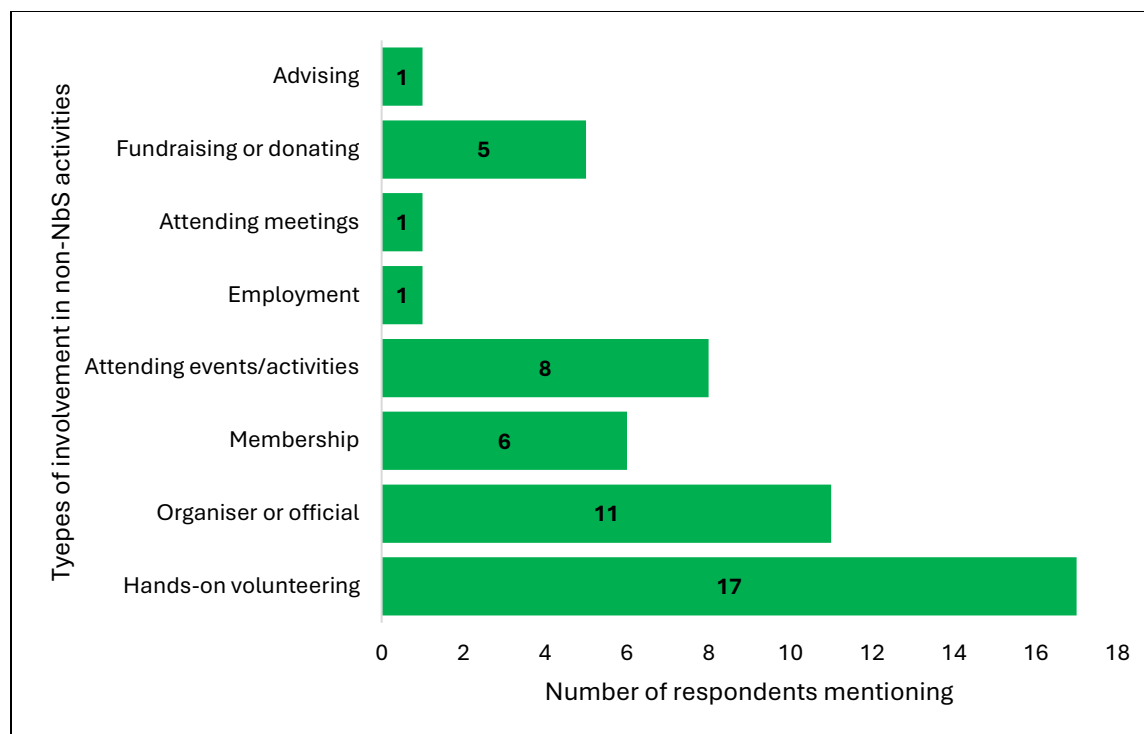


Figure 10. Types of involvement when asked to briefly describe “...how you have been involved in the non-NbS projects you have mentioned”, and “... Based on coded categorisation”, but the responses could encompass more

The wider involvement in local non-NbS activities reflects the strength of local civic networks and suggests that NbS represents only one component of a much larger landscape of community action. While some respondents were involved in clearly nature-focused or NbS-related activities, these formed part of a broader pattern of volunteering rather than a distinct or dominant category of engagement. In this context, NbS initiatives seem to be embedded within – and competing for attention alongside – numerous other community priorities and voluntary commitments. This helps explain why participation in NbS-specific projects may appear comparatively limited, not necessarily due to lack of interest, but because residents are already active across multiple areas of local life. The workshop participants noted that these non-NbS groups could be used as medium to gain more support and involvement for NbS (See Section 5).

#### 4.2.2 Levels of support for local activities related to NbS and interest in being directly involved

A majority of respondents (57%) indicated that they would be interested in personally supporting or participating in NbS projects if circumstances allowed, while a smaller proportion (15%) reported that they were already involved. Importantly, this expressed willingness was mostly not dependent on prior familiarity with the term “nature-based solutions,” suggesting that participation is shaped more by the substance of the activities described than by recognition of the terminology.

Beyond personal involvement, a slightly higher proportion of respondents indicated that they would like to see more NbS-related initiatives (Figure 11) compared to those who would like to be personally involved. This distinction is important, as it suggests that while there is a broad acceptance of developing new NbS, translating that endorsement into active involvement may not be the same possibly due to some

barriers (see Section 5), particularly among the 28% respondents who said they are not interested in being involved in any local activity whether NbS or not (21%), or may be interested in other local activity but not NbS specifically (7%).

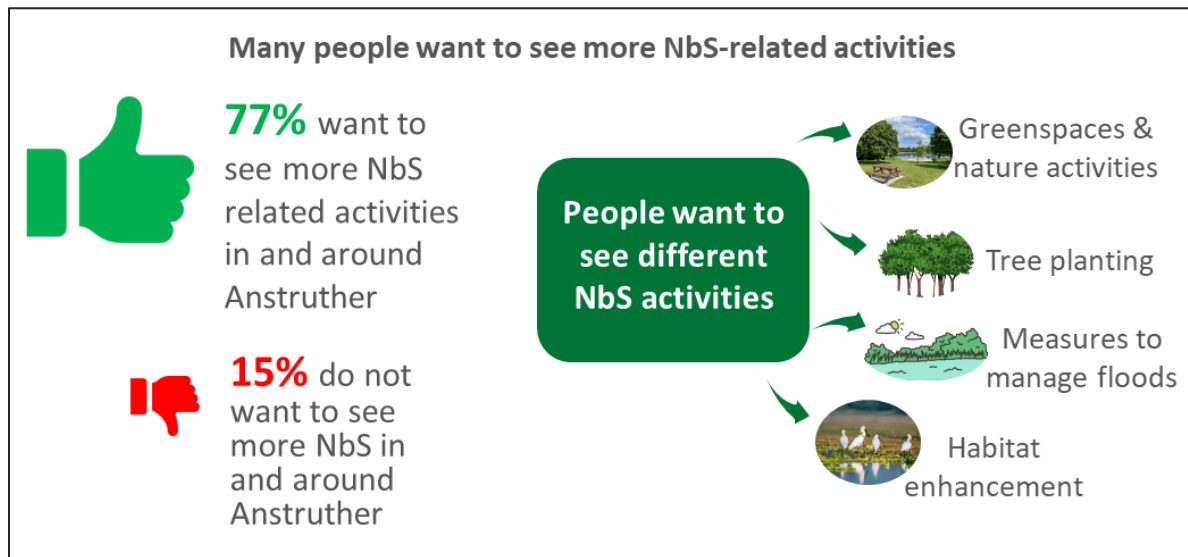


Figure 11. Summary of people's preference in seeing more of NbS and four most common types of activities people want to see more.

Moreover, the high interest in seeing more NbS-related activities is possibly supported by workshop data, which gave the impression that people getting to know more about NbS related activities – in this case the prior description of what NbS entails in the survey – can increase their interest. While the tidal pool may not necessarily be a NbS, one participant highlighted that publicity around tidal pool activities in newspapers and films increased people's interest, including wanting to be involved:

*I was just thinking the tidal pools. They're getting so many inquiries at the moment when newspapers want to come and chat and do a bit of filming and stuff like that, that gets people involved in the tidal pools.*

*People are coming from all over because they've seen it, they've seen it in articles of wild swimmers talking about it. So it's the publicity and word of mouth. (Speaker 5, Group 1, Anstruther Nature Workshop, 2025)*

Survey respondents who expressed interest in seeing more NbS were given the opportunity to provide examples of activities they would like to see. Responses varied in how people described their interest. Some respondents state a wide range of activities, some were generic, such as on-the-ground concrete activities or outcomes like tree planting, flood management, habitat restoration, biodiversity recovery and greenspace enhancement (Figure 12). Others emphasised broad more in practical terms, focusing on the types of activities they would feel comfortable undertaking, regardless of the specific environmental objective (Figure 13). Overall, some activities like litter picking or beach combing may not necessarily be NbS, add further perspectives on people's understanding of what NbS entails or how such activities could contribute broadly towards realising the benefits provided by NbS.



Figure 12. Types of activities related to NbS that respondents would like (based on open text responses, N=49)



Figure 13. Specific activities respondents expressed interest in seeing more. These are mentioned to show the kind of specific roles survey respondents would like to play

### 4.3 What factors limit or encourage involvement in NbS and related initiatives?

Although many respondents expressed support for NbS, participation is shaped by a combination of enabling and constraining factors. This section summarises the main influences identified in the survey, focusing on the conditions that affect whether and how local people engage with NbS-related initiatives.

#### 4.3.1 Factors or barriers that may deter involvement

Survey respondents in both open-ended (Figure 14) and close-ended responses highlighted a range of practical issues that could deter their involvement in NbS activities. Time constraints emerged as the most commonly cited limitation being frequently highlighted in open text responses and emphasised by 54% of the respondents. Many respondents linked the time factor to their work commitments, caring responsibilities and competing priorities.

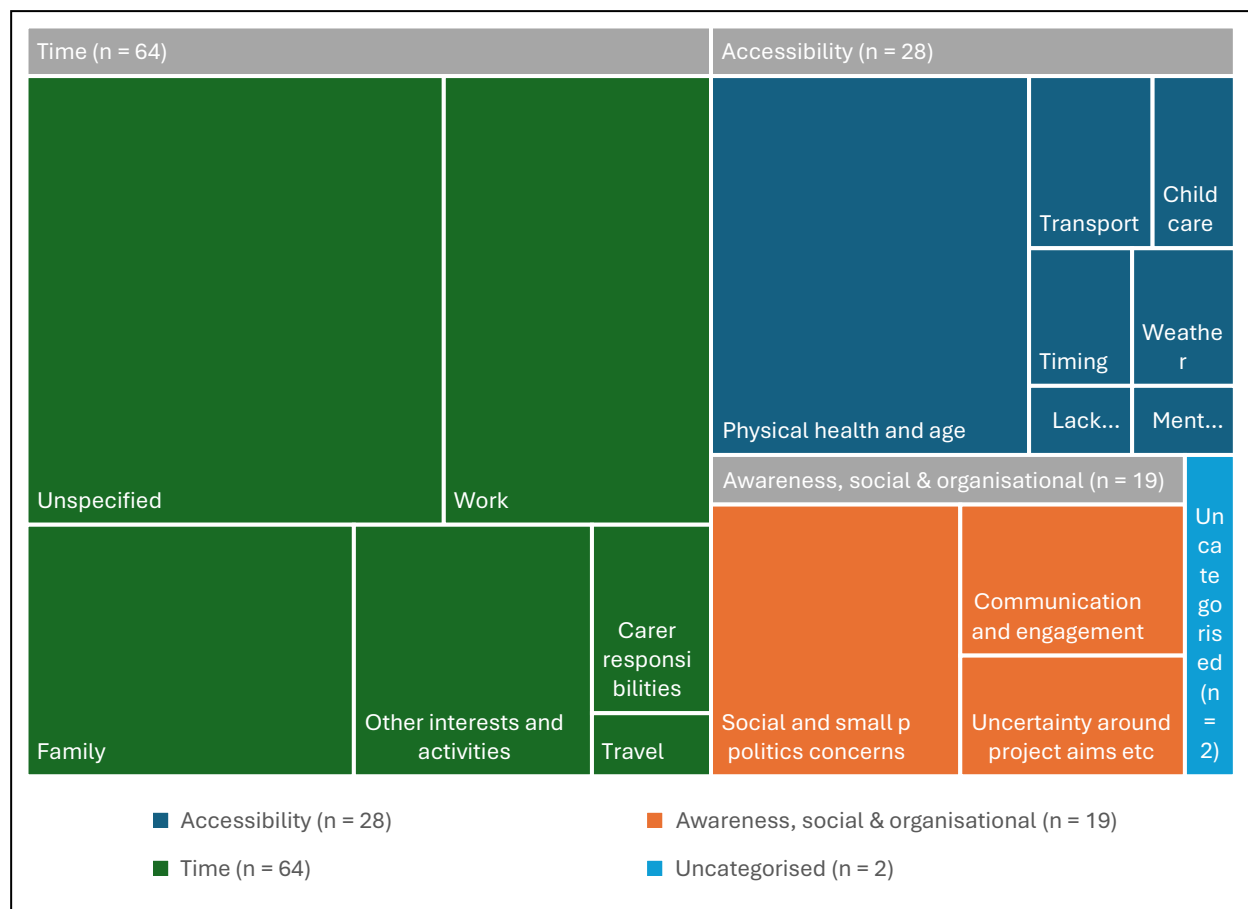


Figure 14. Thematic grouping of key issues that might constrain getting involved in NbS related activities mentioned by 76 respondents in open-text responses.

Beyond practical constraints (including accessibility), several responses pointed to social and organisational factors. Concerns about local dynamics, perceived “small-p” politics, lack of inclusivity, and previous negative experiences were mentioned as deterrents. In some cases, respondents highlighted limited communication about opportunities or uncertainty about project aims and tangible outcomes. A minority also questioned whether their contribution would make a meaningful difference.

These aspects of local dynamics emerged in the workshop discussion, which related to people disagreeing on whether particular initiatives are good or not. A participant cited a situation where people understood certain initiatives and raised their concerns. An example, while not being a NbS, was cited in the case of using a “glut of lemons” for lemonade or storing them in a community fridge, which was sometimes misunderstood as a foodbank. As it is a community norm not to have a foodbank, there was a disagreement with storing food in the community fridge. A participant noted:

*So ... because people equated it [lemons in community fridge] with the food bank and therefore it [sic] was all sorts of perceptions that came out that were problematic and people disagreed. And that's a natural thing in a community of getting things off the ground, like the local dynamics. (Speaker 1, Group 2, Anstruther Nature Workshop, 2025)*

Another area about local dynamics came in relation to different community groups joining up to support NbS-related activities. While participants agreed that this is a good idea and has sometimes occurred for raising funds, the concern was how to manage such collaboration between different groups and address any fallouts. A participants highlighted:

*We've done it with the Dreel Burn project, we're in partnership. But it is really scary. I mean, we had to sign a memorandum of understanding. We had to get advice from our insurance company about whether we were taking on more responsibility than we're capable of dealing with and were covered for anything that we were signing up to. ... we possibly should have got a lawyer to read the memorandum of understanding, but we didn't. It's quite scary to do that and I think, I mean definitely, sort of, 10 years ago I, we wouldn't have been doing that because it would've been beyond [us]. (Speaker 1, Group 1, Anstruther Nature Workshop, 2025)*

Limited awareness of opportunities and inconsistent communication were identified as factors that could discourage involvement. Some respondents noted that clearer information about project aims, tangible outcomes, and practical ways to participate would make engagement more accessible and worthwhile. A workshop participant who only became aware of the workshop on the day it was held and seems to be keen in getting involved in NbS-related activities added a detailed view about lack of awareness:

*I do hear things, but I generally get it a week after the event happened. Sometimes I find that quite frustrating... (Speaker 9, Group 1, Anstruther Nature Workshop, 2025)*

This view was echoed by other workshop participants, with another noting that “*I actually just tend not to know about things and part of that is the time factor. I'm busy.*” The other aspect of communication has to do with the NbS term not being clear to laypersons – as noted in Sections 4.1 & 4.2 – as a possible deterrent. In both the survey and the workshop, better education or engagement around the purpose of such activities and communication were noted as needed to help increase awareness and address negative perceptions. These combined results emphasise the need for transparent, inclusive approaches to project management, as well as clear and consistent communication around opportunities for participation, and open and ongoing dialogue about project goals and outcomes.

The survey did not identify statistically significant differences across gender or age groups in reported barriers, except that women appeared somewhat more likely to express concerns about lacking relevant skills or facing transport constraints. Also, older respondents (45 years and above) more frequently referred to health-related limitations compared to the younger respondents.

#### 4.3.2 Factors that may encourage involvement

In the survey responses, factors for encouraging involvement were mostly expressed as the inverse of the barriers, and often appeared to depend less on changing attitudes and more on creating supportive conditions for people to get involved (Figure 15). Responses broadly centred on enhancing event accessibility and project management. Adopting more flexible means to engagement, including offering opportunities for people to contribute at different levels and in ways that align with individual interests and capacities, appeared as the main way to ensure projects are more accessible. A key aspect of this was some respondents highlighting that making events child-friendly would encourage them to get involved. A diversity of participation formats, ranging from hands-on activities to more technical or supportive roles, was viewed as important in accommodating different skills and circumstances.

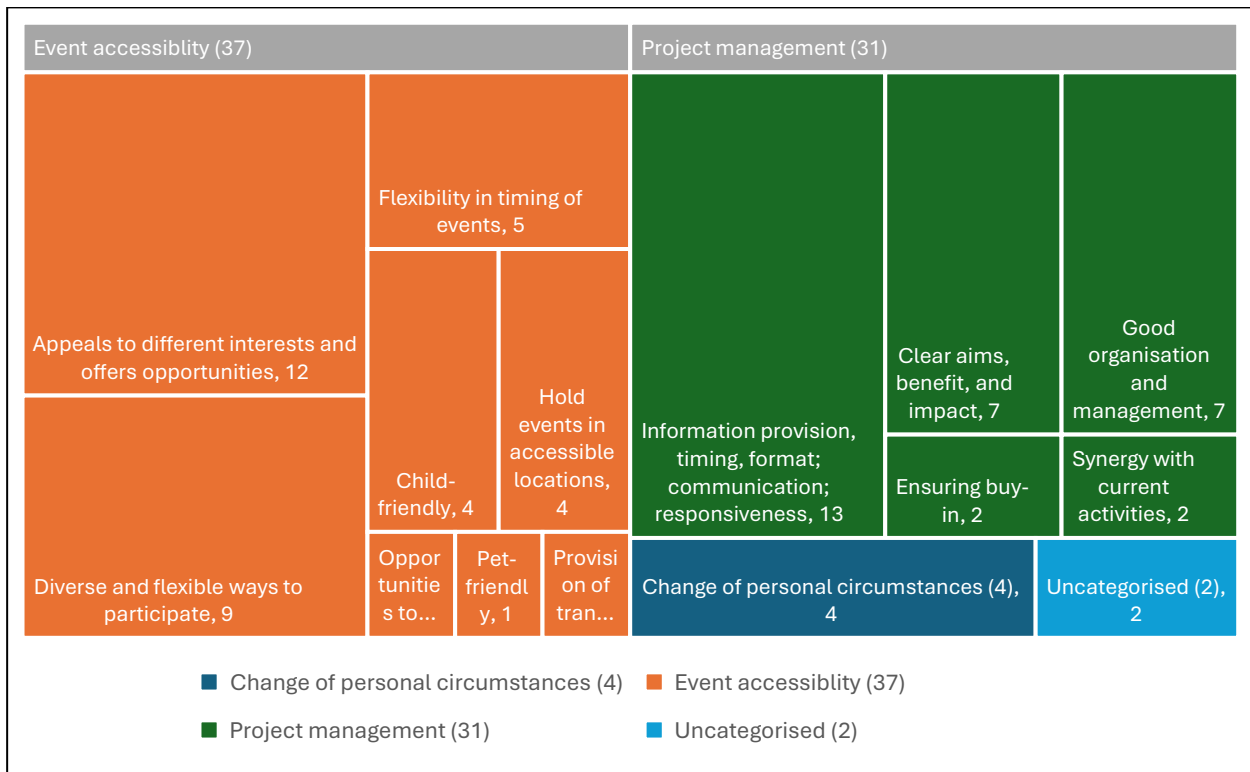


Figure 15. Thematic grouping of key issues that might enable respondents to get involved in NbS related activities mentioned by 65 survey respondents.

Child-friendly participation particularly emerged in the workshops, with participants stressing that parents and the wider public are more likely to get involved in such initiatives if events can accommodate their children. A participant noted that integrating child-related activities can simultaneously be an opportunity to get kids to participate in healthy outdoor activities:

*I would say that one of the things that would get more local people involved is if their children are involved, like if you actually get kids involved, and then that brings along local people and the whole business of getting kids outside, and that's healthy, and that's getting them more involved in the environment round and about as well. (Speaker 7, Group 2, Anstruther Nature Workshop, 2025)*

In terms of project management, respondents stressed clear, accessible communication, particularly clear articulation of project aims, practical roles, and visible outcomes. Respondents indicated that timely information around these aspects of involvement, and regular updates on progress would increase their likelihood of getting involved. Seeing tangible results and understanding how their contribution would make a difference were motivating factors. A workshop participant noted that providing examples to show what NbS entails and the benefits to people can help increase participation, explaining that:

*You need to make it attractive to people. They've got to see how it benefits them as an individual rather than the community, because if you can't benefit the individual, they're not gonna want to get involved. (Speaker 6, Group 1, Anstruther Nature Workshop, 2025)*

#### 4.3.3 Views and experiences of local projects that could influence involvement

In addition to identifying practical barriers and enablers, the survey specifically explored experiences of local projects, perceptions of society-nature relationships, and prioritisation of local needs, which the literature had indicated as factors which influence interest and involvement in NbS related activities. **The first concerned views about participation in nature-related projects**, which received generally positive perceptions as most respondents disagreed (ranging from 40% - 65%) with statements suggesting that they had experienced negative past involvement; projects are never led by the community; or that their views would not be taken into account. Nonetheless, a notable proportion of respondents (30% - 36%) chose to be indifferent, suggesting a degree of uncertainty. There was a minority of respondents who tended to have negative experiences, with communication issues being raised more than other aspects. Here, a sizeable minority (28%) agreed that communities are not regularly updated, which underlines some of the earlier concerns that how projects are communicated can be a deterrent to involvement.

The second aspect concerns **views on prioritisation between NbS and other needs, effectiveness of NbS, responsibility for undertaking NbS, and whether there are better ways to address societal challenges**. For this, respondents (49% - 73%) generally disagreed with the statements, indicating that they favour working with nature. For instance, most respondents disagreed with the suggestion that other local challenges should take precedence over NbS initiatives. There was also strong confidence in the effectiveness of working with nature, with a significant proportion of respondents rejecting the claim that working with nature is too uncertain or likely to fail. A notable proportion (49%) of respondents agreed or remained neutral on the idea that NbS should primarily be a public sector responsibility given that they pay taxes. This suggests that while NbS is widely endorsed in principle, expectations about who should take practical responsibility for delivering them lies in public institutions as opposed to communities. Nevertheless, many respondents were neutral, with a small proportion (14%) feeling this should not be the case, which was much stronger among people already involved in NbS or interested in being involved.

Finally, regarding **views on the relationship between society and nature**, which consistently received stronger support compared to the previous statements. Between 90% to 95% of respondents agreed with statements that nature can help to support personal wellbeing, (e.g., by reducing stress); nature can help to address different societal challenges, (e.g., reducing flood risk); people have a responsibility to respect and care for nature; and nature can help people in local communities to connect with each other.

Overall, these positive views were expressed regardless of respondents stated willingness to become personally involved in NbS projects. This indicates that limited participation cannot be attributed to negative attitudes toward nature itself but is likely shaped by other practical or contextual factors.

## 5 Results: What support do local groups need to better involve people in NbS & related initiatives?

The previous section drew primarily on findings presented in the milestone, with limited reference to relevant workshop insights. The following section presents additional analysis derived exclusively from the workshop discussions, representing new empirical material generated beyond the milestone report. The workshop was explicitly structured to focus on identifying practical ways to address barriers and strengthen enablers to local involvement in and support of NbS. Drawing directly on the survey findings and the recommendations in the milestone report (Ibrahim, Banks, et al., 2025) and further deliberation by the study team, the discussion topics concentrated on three priority areas:

- a) Flexible ways to better navigate people’s time and accessibility constraints.
- b) How to more effectively communicate the benefits of NbS activities and associated roles to increase involvement.
- c) Kinds of support community groups need to better involve people, and who might help provide this support.

This section examines the solutions proposed through the workshop discussions, drawing directly on the intentionally selected discussion topics as well as other issues that emerged. The focus is on areas where participants identified practical changes that could most effectively help overcome barriers to involvement and strengthen existing enablers, with particular attention to the support needs of community groups. Therefore, the section highlights solution-oriented insights from the workshop rather than revisiting the issues identified in Section 4. The results in this Section carry weight because the workshop participants were experienced local practitioners, many of whom lead or are closely involved in community groups, and therefore bring direct, practical knowledge of the barriers affecting local involvement.

### 5.1 More flexible local engagement: navigating people’s time and accessibility constraints

The workshop discussions show that flexibility is central to enabling greater involvement in local NbS activities (Table 1). Participants consistently highlighted that people’s ability to take part is shaped by how well activities fit around everyday commitments, physical access, and levels of responsibility. According to the participants, 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.

*Table 1. Main suggestions for being flexible to navigate people's times and accessibility constraints*

<b>Key theme</b>	<b>Description</b>
Timing of events	The need to offer activities at different times to fit around work, caring, and other commitments.
Consistent and timely information through multiple channels	Flexibility depends on people receiving information early and in ways that suit different preferences.
Accessibility (practical and social)	Activities should be easy to reach physically and designed so people feel comfortable taking part.
Accommodating children and families	Family-friendly approaches are needed to enable parents and carers to participate.
Offering remote ways to take part	Alternative, non-in-person options are important, particularly for those with limited mobility.

In terms of **timing of events**, participants noted that many community events (including NbS-related ones) 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. Moreover, timing was viewed most effective when it is combined with early and predictable communication. Participants did not frame flexibility simply as offering more dates, but as enabling people to plan their involvement in advance. When people know what is happening and when, they are better able to fit activities around work, caring responsibilities, or travel. A participant explained that having the time to take part was not the issue; knowing about activities early enough was:

*... if I had known there was a beach clean-up on the 12th of May or whatever, I could have come through that weekend... I don't have any brilliant ideas of how to do this. But I would like more information about what's happening and when so that I could be more prepared. (Speaker 9, Group 1, Anstruther Nature Workshop, 2025)*

While there was the concern that not everyone can be accommodated, the findings indicate that adjusting event timing, such as moving activities from weekdays to weekends, can widen participation when decisions are made in response to volunteers' availability. This was illustrated by an example where monitoring activities were rescheduled specifically to enable continued involvement:

*So actually, a really good example of that is the water quality testing that we do once a month, when we started off doing that on a weekday. But we had a really keen volunteer who works at The Wade who then couldn't come on a day and we ended up, we now do it at weekends to be able to, for her to be able to participate, but undoubtedly that means there are other people who can't participate because, you know. (Speaker 5 Group 1, Anstruther nature workshop)*

**Consistent and timely information through multiple, familiar channels** was viewed as needed to ensure information is widespread and enables people with different routines, access needs, and levels of digital confidence to stay informed. Participants consistently highlighted how information travels through the community, not only on digital platforms. Physical noticeboards, libraries, and printed materials were described as particularly effective, even in a digital age:

*The notice board on Shore Street is, you know, there's, you know, there's - so many people stop and look at it and there's always someone there. I think the community council are responsible for that? (Speaker 4, Group 2, Anstruther Nature workshop)*

However, another respondent noted that using noticeboards aren't always effective, saying "You can have things on there for years and people won't see them, so it's certain people that stop and look at it" (Speaker 2, Group 2). Another participant emphasised that the use of the noticeboard is maybe outdated saying:

*I mean, I'm actually looking at - there's a wee noticeboard on the main street you know, on Shore Street and I, I think that it's hilarious that in the 21st century it's actually the most valid. (Speaker 9 Group 1, Anstruther Nature Workshop)*

These contrasting views show why using multiple channels of communication (physical and digital) that address different needs are important for sharing information to a variety of groups. Other examples included library notifications and locally distributed papers, which were seen as reliable ways to reach people who might otherwise miss information. Using social media, e-mails, and newsletters emerged as plausible alternatives to the physical media. For instance, participants noted they're aware of other

community groups that use these mediums of communication. Stressing why this is important, a participant cited the case of Pittenweem, which is a nearby town to Anstruther:

*I know more about what goes on in Pittenweem because I joined the library and so I get a notification and stuff and it's usually quite interesting, good talks that go on in the local community and so I hear lots more about Pittenweem... (Speaker 6, Group 2, Anstruther Nature workshop)*

**Accessibility** was understood as both physical abilities to attend and social comfort in taking part. Flexible involvement means recognising that people's capacity varies over time and that not everyone is able, or willing, to participate in physically demanding or highly social activities.

Participants highlighted the importance of offering a range of activities so that people can engage at different levels, without feeling excluded. This includes recognising mobility limitations, health issues, or confidence barriers, and designing involvement that does not rely on a single type of participation.

**Designing activities in a way that can accommodate families** with children was also seen as an important way to ensure parents can equally attend. This was considered a critical enabler of flexible local involvement, rather than a peripheral issue. Participants stressed that caring responsibilities shape when, how, and whether people can take part in local activities. Flexible involvement therefore depends on recognising family life as a normal and legitimate context for participation.

Participants made a clear distinction between family-inclusive design and formal childcare provision. While supporting parents and carers was seen as essential, there was strong agreement that asking volunteers or organisers to take responsibility for other people's children was neither realistic nor appropriate, due to safeguarding, liability, and regulatory concerns. Instead, flexibility was understood as creating activities where adults remain responsible for their own children, but where children are welcomed, visible, and meaningfully included. As one participant explained:

*It's not about, like, you leave your child. There always has to be a responsible adult who's responsible for their own children. But that you offer things for both, for everyone. (Speaker 5, Group 2, Anstruther Nature workshop)*

Participants also highlighted that excluding children, even unintentionally, can significantly reduce adult participation. This was illustrated by the observation that people with childcare responsibilities were not present at the workshop itself. The findings indicate that when activities are designed to allow children to be present, whether through parallel activities, informal play, or age-appropriate involvement, parents and carers are far more able to participate. Flexibility for families was seen as not achieved through childcare provision alone, but through thoughtful activity design that integrates children into local involvement in safe, informal, and age-appropriate ways. Accommodating children and families was therefore identified as a foundational condition for inclusive and sustainable participation in local nature-based activities.

**The final aspect of flexibility was offering remote means of involvement**, which participants agreed that this could meaningfully extend involvement, particularly for people who are not physically able to attend activities or who face mobility, health, or travel constraints. Participants emphasised that remote participation should be understood as one option within a wider mix, rather than a replacement for in-person involvement. Remote participation was seen as most valuable where it allows people to remain connected to local activities despite physical limitations. Some participants explained that while remote options would not appeal to everyone, they could be a valid alternative for others who want to contribute

but cannot easily leave home. A participant who would not want to personally use a remote form of involvement agreed that such forms might be needed for others:

*I mean, that might work for people who aren't physically able to do, to go out and to do things and that still want to be part of it. Yeah, that would be very valid. I would prefer to stick pins in my eyes than log on to a Zoom chat about anything ever again so, you know, for somebody like me? No. But I think your points perfectly valid for somebody who wants to be involved but isn't physically able, maybe? To get out and about. (Speaker 9, Group 1, Anstruther Nature workshop)*

This view shows that preferences vary, as some expressed strong resistance to online meetings or digital engagement, highlighting that remote means to involvement depends on choice, not standardisation. While participants are open to the various flexible means, they are concerned about capacity to do this, including resources, skills in operating social media, and coordination. These are presented in Section 3.3.

## 5.2 Communicating nature-based solutions more effectively

Participants also acknowledged communication is an important consideration which needs to go beyond simply announcing activities, to clearly showing visible outcomes to demonstrating why projects matter. Communication was linked with information dissemination, where some participants stated that flexibility was not the only factor when it came to clearly communicating information. Overall, the key suggestions (Table 2) that emerged were around a combination of social and physical media; clear communication about awareness of benefits and roles; and involving more young people.

Table 2. Main suggestions on ways to better communicate NbS and involvement activities to enhance participation

Key theme	Description
Clear language and framing around benefits	Nature activities need to be described in plain terms that highlight local relevance and benefits.
Showing clear results	Visible outcomes help people understand the value of involvement.
Clear roles and expectations	People are more likely to engage when what is involved is clearly explained.
Focusing on young people	Involving younger people was seen as important for long-term engagement and ownership.
Ensuring further outreach through targeted approaches	Using social media (Facebook, newsletters, etc.), and physical media (noticeboards, newspapers) to ensure more people can be reached.

In terms of awareness of benefits, participants were of the view that people need to know what is happening, timings of events, and activities involved in such events. This is particularly important for people who have flexible times and only need the information. A respondent noted:

*I don't have any brilliant ideas how to do this. But I would like more information about what's happening and when so that I could be more prepared. I mean, I can be flexible because I've, I've now retired, yes, this year, so I have more time and I want to be more involved in the local community, in this local community. And so, I, I would, for me, communication is crucial... (Speaker 9 Group 1, Anstruther Nature Workshop)*

Some respondents emphasised that using technical terms like NbS may hinder involvement. Therefore, clearer communication focused on the benefits was viewed as a better way to address miscommunication. Example of such miscommunication by a participant, which other participants seem to agree with:

*I know there was a lot of, when, people I've talked to, about miscommunication, about the beach of dreams project and they're like, 'oh, I didn't know. I didn't realise that's what it was I would have gone to that, like that, if I'd known'. (Speaker 6 Group 1, Anstruther Nature Workshop)*

**Participants expressed that communication of NbS needs both conceptual clarity and practical support.**

It was emphasised that without shared understanding of what NbS is, and what it is not, communication risks becoming diluted, inconsistent, or driven by funding language rather than purpose. One participant, while highlighting the need for clearer communication, also stressed the need for restraint and honesty in how NbS is framed:

*"Yeah, but I think, what it points to is a really clear need for, I suppose, restraint in public policy and public communication about what is a nature-based solution. And rather than just saying, 'oh, this is a buzzword, we can put anything into this because we can get budget funding and everyone will love it and actually it isn't really about nature-based solution. We just suddenly call it that now, because that's what's going on. And I think if we don't have that restraint then suddenly you find stuff will happen in this, which isn't, nothing to do with nature, nothing to do with solutions and then it'll give it a bad- (Speaker 9, Group 2, Anstruther Nature workshop)"*

A better way to address this miscommunication was having clearer examples to demonstrate the activities and the benefits involved. Participants noted that awareness can focus on the aim of the events, and should be accompanied by clear examples, because when people can see results, it can increase their interest. This example was commonly referenced as illustrating how communication works best when people can connect actions to outcomes. Participants noted that many NbS activities do not have a clear beginning or end, which makes it harder for people to understand their value unless results are actively communicated. Highly visible projects, such as the tidal pools, were cited as examples of how awareness builds through publicity, word of mouth, and shared stories rather than formal messaging: *"People are coming from all over because they've seen it, they've seen it in articles of wild swimmers talking about it. So, it's the publicity and word of mouth."* Short updates with before-and-after photos, local stories, or brief "show-and-tell" sessions can make progress visible and real. An example was cited in the case of school children's involvement in Trout in the Classroom:

*It's understanding what the aim is and that's quite hard if you, for instance, when we have school children with Trout in the Classroom and when they go into the Burn, they can see the results. That was the purpose of what they did and not all activities have a beginning and an end and something physical, ...that was a wonderful example. We need to explain why we're doing [it], what will be the advantage? (Speaker 3 Group 1, Anstruther Nature Workshop)*

**A focus on involving young people** was highlighted as central to how NbS are communicated and understood locally. Participants emphasised that NbS messages often fail to reach younger audiences because they are framed in ways that do not reflect how young people experience, value or use local spaces. Communication that focusses on technical language or adult priorities risks excluding young people and limiting the long-term relevance of NbS initiatives. Participants highlighted that effective communication with young people begins by meeting them where they already are rather than relying on formal consultation methods. Youth clubs and informal settings were identified as more appropriate spaces for dialogue than meetings or written consultations. A participant noted:

*If it was young people that were using it.., why can't you just go to a youth club, where young people are and ask them 'were you the ones that were using that because we're really worried now because you're not using it anymore. What could we do that would help you use it?' (Speaker 6 Group 2, Anstruther Nature Workshop)*

The findings indicate that communication about NbS is more effective when it is grounded in everyday experiences rather than abstract concepts. Participants stressed that young people respond to messages about social spaces, safety, and shared activities, rather than environmental terminology. Suggestions such as safe barbecue areas, lighting, and opportunities for creative or social activities were discussed as ways of communicating care, ownership, and relevance through design rather than words.

**Participants also emphasised that showing NbS benefits** is more powerful than explaining them. Practical, visible activities that combine nature with play or creativity were seen as effective communication tools, particularly for younger audiences and families. Similar approaches elsewhere successfully engage children without relying on technical explanations:

*That's really nice getting kids involved in nature. What was it they did, one time they were making pancakes, we made with, it was like, old paper towels and we're putting seeds in that and telling them to go back and plant it in their garden. You know, it's ticking all your boxes of nature and all the rest of it. So it's not really difficult to do stuff like that and if parents know where to go on a Sunday morning with their kids. (Speaker 6 Group 2, Anstruther Nature Workshop)*

The workshop also highlighted that communication about NbS needs to address intergenerational dynamics. Participants observed that older residents are often better equipped to articulate their views through existing community channels, while young people may struggle to express their needs in ways that are considered acceptable. This can lead to misunderstandings, particularly when young people's priorities differ from those of older community members. Skilled facilitation was identified as important in supporting dialogue and helping communities communicate NbS in ways that recognise different perspectives.

*What I would say is I think that older people are able to articulate what they want, and I think young people are perfectly able to articulate what they want, but they don't always know. Quite often young people want things that the older people in the community don't want. The skate park is a good example of that. And there's a bit there where sometimes the community workers could have mediation between the two and can help mediate and also point out that it's not just about the skate park, it's about empowering these young people. (Speaker 6 Group 2, Anstruther Nature Workshop)*

Importantly, participants framed engagement with young people as a long-term communication strategy rather than a one-off exercise. Young people were described as future residents, parents, and decision-makers whose early involvement could help build lasting understanding, respect, and care for nature:

*But older folk in the community will always be able to articulate and say what they want, and know how to go about getting it an awful lot better than young people are, and that's why you need to engage the young people because they are going to be the mums and the dads and the future in the village, and stuff like that. (Speaker 6 Group 2, Anstruther Nature Workshop)*

### **5.3 Supporting community groups to better involve people in NbS activities**

The workshop discussions show that the ability of local groups to adopt more flexible approaches, communicate NbS clearly, and how to better address the engagement barriers are all closely linked to the level of support they receive, particularly from the government. Participants emphasised that flexibility

and effective communication do not happen automatically, but depend on having sufficient resources, capacity, and skills within groups. Support was seen as necessary both internally – through coordination, shared responsibility, and skills within groups, and partnership – particularly externally, through funding, partnerships, and backing from government, including the local council. The support needs identified from the workshop are summarised in Table 3. For clarification, aspects of these suggestions are not necessarily exclusive to NbS, but show broader support needed by local groups to undertake local activities, which are also applicable to NbS.

*Table 3. Summary of support needed by local groups to navigate around the barriers to involvement*

<b>Key themes</b>	<b>Description</b>
Dedicated volunteer organising and community education personnel	Coordination roles are needed to support communication, organisation, and engagement.
Secure and appropriate funding	Funding that supports small-scale, practical activity and continuity is essential.
Building knowledge and skills	Training and support in areas such as administration, communication, and safeguarding were identified as important.
Partnerships between local groups	Collaboration with councils, local organisations, schools, and businesses can extend capacity and reach.
Local empowerment	The local people having meaningful control over decisions, resources, and priorities while simultaneously supporting them to deliver their activities to expand nature initiatives.

### *5.3.1 Secure and appropriate funding and resource support, including from the Scottish Government*

Funding – and more broadly resources – emerged as a foundational support need that shapes what local groups can realistically deliver. Importantly, participants linked funding directly to flexibility, indicating that without funding to support coordination, advertising, or engagement, groups are forced to work around volunteer availability rather than community need. Participants expressed concern that increasing expectations of volunteers, without corresponding support, will lead to exhaustion and disengagement over time. This was framed not as a lack of willingness to help, but as a structural issue that limits what communities can sustain. For instance, in relation to running engagement activities on multiple occasions to offer people multiple options for participation, a participant noted:

*And you know that - that's a resource thing. I mean, if you want to run two then you need to have double the volunteers. And, and you probably need to have a member of staff that can organise it as well. So you're doubling up the staff time and that's sort of, I mean, people have limited time available, as you know, so it's tricky. (Speaker 5, Group 1, Anstruther Nature workshop)*

Another participant in the Group 1 discussion mentioned that they “*need to have funding to do certain things as well*”. Short-term or highly restricted funding was seen as limiting groups’ ability to plan ahead, respond flexibly, or invest in capacity-building. Participants described funding systems as difficult to navigate without prior experience, with groups often discovering requirements for funding applications too late in the process because of a lack of dedicated personnel to lead such initiatives. This created challenges for smaller or less-established groups and reinforced reliance on a small number of experienced individuals. A participant highlighted how being able to secure funding could help in various ways:

*But I think sometimes, if you can get, if you can unlock funding you can get, for example, a volunteer coordinator. Or, or, you know, or funding to advertise your, to create a video to advertise your project or whatever. So it does speak to that bit. (Speaker 5, Group 1, Anstruther Nature workshop)*

There was another respondent who agreed that being able to accommodate child-care in NbS and related activities can help increase participation, but was quick to add that this will need resources:

*I do think that as someone who has had small children and the opportunity for some free childcare while I'm walking up the Burn on my own, great. So yeah, that would be very appealing, but not necessarily to organise. And it's about resources as well, isn't it. But maybe offering, being able to offer like, you were saying, events that you bring your children. (Speaker 5, Group 1, Anstruther Nature workshop)*

There was also a strong sense that funding decisions are increasingly disconnected from the withdrawal of public services. It was suggested that the capacity issues are more about having the right people to lead initiatives, with the Scottish Government and the Local Council being identified as potential sources of funding. Participants described situations where councils stepped back from certain activities, leaving communities to fill gaps without clear communication or resources. This was seen as placing additional pressure on voluntary groups and reinforcing uncertainty about long-term responsibility. For instance, there was the suggestion that having “an annual grant from the Council” would provide greater assurance of continuity for community workers, in contrast to short-term funding that may last only “six months.” One suggested approach was for the Council to allocate a portion of Council Tax through participatory budgeting, allowing communities to directly influence how funds are spent and ensuring investments reflect local priorities. A group lead who was very frustrated about the limited support from the Scottish Government stressed:

*There is something I do want to say, actually, because I was talking about this ... yesterday, and so I would like it recorded and passed on to the Scottish Government. We've spoken a bit about all these ideas about things that you can do, but, and we've spoken about resource and I've spoken about the importance of having a member of staff and what difference, that's made a huge difference for us as an organisation. But it is often, as we've said, one person wears many hats and is involved in lots of different organisations and projects locally, and it's exhausting and, you know, talking about having someone who could coordinate communication, or whatever, that's - we were talking about a newsletter, in the break, weren't we? We talked about the community newsletter, but that requires a volunteer to do that and that's a huge job, I mean, I don't know how that guy does that, that newsletter it's a massive, it's a full [time job]. (Speaker 1, Group 1, Anstruther Nature Workshop)*

While public funding, particularly from the Council, was seen as a primary source of support, participants also highlighted the potential role of private businesses. They suggested that where businesses benefit from local environmental or nature-based initiatives, there is an opportunity to engage them to support such initiatives. For example, activities that attract visitors, such as cycling routes or coastal amenities, like saunas, were seen as generating economic value. In such cases, community groups could encourage such businesses to offer their support. Speaker 6 cited saunas as an example:

*With all these saunas, you know, and so maybe that's when you should be getting in touch with local businesses and saying, okay, you've got this now, what can you give us for our local community? (Speaker 6, Group 2, Anstruther Nature Workshop)*

The findings generally highlight that without long-term funding; there is a significant risk that effective NbS activities and the engagement and momentum they generate cannot be sustained beyond their initial funding period. Beyond funding and resources, there was the belief that the Government can also play a

broader and indirect role. For example, when asked about support needs, Speaker 9 in Group 2 noted, “*But there's also a sort of role for central government, isn't it?*” This was linked to the view that government can act indirectly through policy, such as reducing plastic packaging, to “*stop the problem occurring rather than fixing it down the line*”.

### 5.3.2 *Dedicated volunteer organising and community education personnel*

A central finding from the workshop – which is a key component funding support – is the importance of having dedicated people who can coordinate activities, maintain communication, and help with education around NbS. Participants described how participatory activities often depended on individuals who had the time, confidence, and knowledge to navigate funding systems, organise volunteers, and liaise with external bodies. Where such individuals were present, groups were able to move from ideas to action. A community group lead shared the possible role played by a dedicated community development worker:

*And I just think there needs to be more, you know, if you look at us, we have had this great funding, we've had, we're in four and a half years of the Community development worker, who has massively transformed what we can do and what we can offer. We've got 1 and a half more years and at the end of that, if somebody's not prepared to finance this, that, all of that will just disappear. (Speaker 1, Group 1, Anstruther Nature workshop)*

However, where funded personnel are absent, activities often stalled, with a participant citing the Dreele Burn project as an example of an activity that is mostly “*dependent on the time of the people who organise things and so much of what happens*”, and they cannot double their efforts for flexibility. Participants were clear that relying on informal or unpaid coordination is fragile. Several examples highlighted that successful projects often depended on chance encounters or individuals going beyond their formal roles.

While the use of voluntary workers to organise activities led to strong outcomes, it was widely recognised as unsustainable. Participants stressed that when these roles end, much of the progress made risks disappearing, revealing a structural dependency on dedicated personnel rather than a lack of local motivation. Therefore, funded community development or coordination roles were described as vital, which could enable consistent communication, better planning, and wider participation.

*Another thing that I think is actually having someone whose job it is to support, and engage with, and encourage, and actually volunteer. So we've talked quite a lot about a **volunteer coordinator role, and to some degree that's what a community development worker does**. But she doesn't have enough time (Speaker 1, Group 1, Anstruther Nature workshop)*

Similar sentiments were raised in the Group 2 discussion, with participants emphasising that a community education worker would be necessary in helping communicate activities. It was indicated that one of the local groups had a community education worker employed by the Council who seemed to have been withdrawn or did not work regularly. Although their work was not specifically for NbS, this was used as an example of the impact that not having a dedicated personnel can have in stalling progress, with a respondent highlighting that “*if you've got a community education worker only turning up once every six or eight weeks, if there's no communication on a regular basis*”, it makes it difficult for groups to even approach the Council on what exactly they need. A former youth worker detailed the role that dedicated personnel could play and the risks of using only unpaid workers to do that kind of work:

*We used to send them on training courses where they'd become assistant youth workers and they'd get paid. But we were employed, as like, we were employed as Community aid workers... So we were*

*helping do the day-to-day running of a youth club or a youth centre. But they were then getting young people involved and they were putting, at that point, they would put raves on in Wester Hailes because that's what youngsters were interested in. We're trying to keep them away from [an area] where it was all the drugs going on and stuff like that, and they did fundraisers and they did community exchanges with Kyiv and everything, they did really exciting stuff. I couldn't do that now, in my free time that I've got as a Granny, sort of, turning up to a youth club or something like that. You need people on the ground that actually have training to, actually, how do you - how do you get folk involved? (Speaker 6, Group 2, Anstruther Nature workshop)*

Overall, participants felt that NbS and related activities being run by few volunteers can make the volunteers overstretched and their absence truncate progress. Without a more dedicated support persons, participants are worried about cumulative impact of volunteer fatigue due to the same individuals often involved across multiple groups, carrying heavy workloads and multiple responsibilities. Therefore, 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.

### 5.3.3 Building knowledge and skills within groups

There was broader agreement that community groups lack the knowledge and skills to undertake some of the more sophisticated and flexible means of engaging and communicating NbS and related activities. Therefore, the feedback was that effective NbS activities require not only enthusiasm, but practical skills in grant writing, administration, facilitation, communication, and use of suitable technology. In many cases, these skills are concentrated in a very small number of volunteers, making groups vulnerable to burnout or loss of capacity when those individuals step back. In particular, participants recognised that some skills cannot be assumed and require external support, mentoring, or shared learning opportunities. Building skills across a wider group was therefore seen as essential for reducing dependency on a few key individuals, and enabling groups to adapt more flexibly over time. For instance, some participants felt communication experts can help with information dissemination, with a participant sharing an example of a videographer who has been keenly supporting community activities freely:

*Did you guys see the picture that was at the end here, of the drone picture of the harbour after Storm Babet? Did you see that picture? That was taken by Bill and it was just amazing, I mean, that picture is the most valuable thing we had in the project. And he just went out after the Storm Babet and did that. We said would you mind? And he just went and did it. (Speaker 1, Group 1, Anstruther Nature workshop)*

The challenge, however, was that this is the only person with such expertise and is only skilled in videomaking and not necessarily communication, and since no one is available, it becomes challenging for the local community:

*Are you asking us, do we look for someone to support us like that [communication]? Because I don't think we really do. We know it would be nice to have them, apart from Bill doing his videoing and drone work, we don't have anyone. (Speaker 4, Group 1, Anstruther Nature workshop)*

Another skills-related issue raised was digital and using technologies. For instance, livestreaming events to also allow remote involvement was seen as plausible, but there are not skills in this area:

*We do lectures here, not to do with nature-based solutions, but we have lectures in the winter once a month. We've talked about live streaming them, but we just, we don't quite have the technical know*

*how to work out how to do it? Not far off, but yeah, we're not quite there. (Speaker 5, Group 1, Anstruther Nature workshop)*

When it was suggested that younger people could help with using social media to reach wider people, some participants recognised that digital skills are needed, but cautioned against assuming that younger people should automatically take on responsibility for social media simply because of their age. One participant reflected on this concern, noting that young people are often expected to manage digital tasks regardless of interest or capacity:

*My daughter worked in a restaurant and she was the youngest person there and she got asked to do all the social media because people always ask the young person, you know, the youngest person in the room is always asked to do the social media because they're perceived to be better at it, so I'm a bit wary about always just thinking, 'Oh well, they can do the social media'. (Speaker 1, Group 1, Anstruther Nature workshop)*

Another area where skills were identified as important relates to engaging young people in NbS activities. A participant with experience working with youth noted that, while some skill gaps can be addressed through support and learning, effective youth engagement requires specific expertise and approaches tailored to young people's interests and ways of participating:

*if you get these younger people on board and you actually have a place that, you'll actually get more respect from young people as well. You know, whereas if you don't engage with them and you don't provide what they want, then you're creating a bigger barrier between older people and the community and younger people in the community. And I do think it takes skills to be able to do that... I think what happens with communities is they become factionalized. There are certain people that want, even within the older people, there'll be certain ones that want a certain thing to be a certain way... And I think sometimes you need somebody with skill that can work through that, and you might have that skill within the community, you might have that within your group, but you might not. The people who suffer from that are the younger people. I think they're the ones that come off worse because they're least able to articulate it. (Speaker 6, Group 2, Anstruther Nature workshop)*

#### 5.3.4 Partnerships and collaboration

Partnerships between groups were identified as an important way of sharing expertise, effort, resources, and knowledge. Events that brought multiple groups together were described as rare but highly valuable. Participants gave examples of successful collaboration where groups with shared interests worked together on events, land management, or community activities. A participant in Group 2 highlighted past experience of collaboration:

*There was a time when there was East Neuk Forum, which was a mix of, a collaboration of all the East Neuk Community Councils, and they did a, for a couple of years, they did participatory budgeting, but I don't know what happened to it. (Speaker 9, Group 2, Anstruther nature workshop)*

Participants described how opportunities to bring groups together, such as shared events or forums, had been rare but highly valuable when they occurred. These spaces allowed groups to exchange ideas, share challenges, and support each other with practical tasks such as fundraising and administration. A similar view was echoed in the Group 1 discussion with a participant sharing their experience:

*It takes the shared interest to get the groups together, so some of the emergency groups will have their own conferences with the Food Bank and East Neuk Emergency Trust. You know, we've worked like that,*

*trying to get a common interest. Bring in different agencies. (Speaker 4, Group 1, Anstruther Nature Workshop)*

However, the strong feedback was that collaboration is not automatic as it sometimes presents challenges in terms of different interests among various groups. Particularly, groups can become inward-looking or protective of their own activities, especially when resources are scarce. One reason for this is the possibility of competition ensuing between different groups or other groups having to default their responsibilities. But in Group 2, a participant clarified this might not necessarily be due to competition, but people trying to protect the good activities they have implemented:

*Yeah, yeah, exactly, I don't know what you think about that one [partnership]. Perhaps that could also work well. I think everybody has good intention to help community, help nature and all of that. So, it's not necessarily a competition, though I think sometimes it helps to even learn from others experience. Of course, maybe some people will come in groups might want to be a bit [hesitant], because of competition with funding all of that. (Speaker 2, Group 1, Anstruther Nature Workshop)*

The Dreel Burn Project was cited as one such example where partnership seems to work, but a participant was quick to add that this partnership works because those involved are the same people in other community groups:

*Yeah, it's often, it's the same people who are involved in various committees and we're, the Dreel Burn Project we, we partnered very closely with, there's a community asset transfer of land, just the other side of the road bridge, and so we've worked very closely with them. Any allotments we should, we share an interest in that stretch so we're holding a children's event there in October and we supported them with the scything the other day. (Speaker 6, Group 1, Anstruther Nature Workshop)*

The findings show that while partnerships can strengthen local delivery, they often feel a high-risk for volunteer-led groups. Participants described the process of formalising partnerships as demanding and, at times, intimidating, particularly where legal, insurance, and governance responsibilities are unclear. One participant explained that even when partnerships are ultimately successful, the steps required to enter into them can be daunting:

*We've done it with the Dreel Burn Project, we're in partnership. But it is really scary. I mean, we had to sign a memorandum of understanding. We had to get advice from our insurance company about whether, you know, whether we were taking on more responsibility than we're capable of dealing with and were we covered for anything that we were signing up to. We had, you know, we possibly should have got a lawyer to read the memorandum of understanding, but we didn't. It's quite scary to do that and I think, I mean definitely sort of 10 years ago, we wouldn't have been doing that because it would've been beyond [us]. (Speaker 1, Group 1, Anstruther Nature Workshop)*

This suggests that hesitation around partnerships is less about reluctance to collaborate and more about uncertainty over responsibility and risk. The findings indicate that partnerships are more likely to develop where groups have access to coordination, legal guidance, or external support to navigate these requirements, rather than relying on informal connections alone.

### *5.3.5 Local empowerment, agency and cultural responsibility*

It also emerged that local people having meaningful control over decisions, resources, and priorities can help overcome some of the barriers. However, participants' call for greater local empowerment does not remove the need for external support as highlighted in Section 5.3.4, but instead depends on it being

provided in ways that enable communities to make their own decisions, rather than having solutions imposed on them.

Participants emphasised that involvement is shaped not only by individual willingness to engage, but by whether communities are positioned as active agents or as recipients of externally determined agendas. While inclusive approaches were seen as important, there was also recognition that local culture and norms play a role in shaping involvement. Where communities see themselves as active and responsible, participation becomes part of everyday life rather than an exceptional activity. However, a participant stressed the need to balance expectations for community involvement, such as, it can be okay for involvement to be lower at times:

*I mean, I think partly it's about, you know, a lot of this seems to be also about trying to lower the bar on engagement. Sometimes I think that's necessary, but sometimes I think it's also better to increase the expectation (Speaker 9 Group 2, Anstruther Nature Workshop)*

This view was shared to show that activities that tend to align with community culture and norm are likely to increase local participation by themselves as opposed to involvement being forced. For instance, the participant added that *“there is a sort of cultural thing, you know, in this community. We'd expect people to go on about picking up litter. But I mean, it's only an example. But that sense of what the norms are of the community.”* The participant therefore cautioned against decisions being imposed, stating that it is *“not just all about solutions being handed down or imposed”*. Another concern of this participant was about decisions occurring outside:

*But there's also a sense that the community is an active, responsible one and I think sometimes it can be disempowering if some things all happen elsewhere. If you're reliant on Edinburgh to decide, or Cupar to decide, or Glenrothes or whatever, wherever the centre of [sic]. (Speaker 9 Group 2, Anstruther Nature Workshop)*

A way of overcoming this challenge is granting local discretion over resources. Participants argued that communities are best placed to identify what support is needed at a particular moment, and that rigid or short-term funding arrangements limit this responsiveness. Locally held budgets were seen as enabling practical, context-sensitive decisions, so that local people can decide what they need, and when they need it, to avoid a situation where someone else decides to fund, for example, a *“minibus”*, but in reality *“sandwiches at lunch”* is what is needed.

The use of the term NbS was even cited as one such externally imposed concept, which some participants viewed as frustrating, with a participant noting that *“even nature-based solution, it didn't used to be called that”*. There was frustration at local people constantly having to adapt to shifting terminology and externally defined priorities, with Speaker 9 stressing again that *“now you have to learn something new to do the same things you've always been doing”* and *“having to jump through hoops... that are set not by the community itself”*, which is not *“fair to communities”*.

Finally, the discussion underlined that community capacity is uneven and shaped by social, economic, and historical contexts. Participants stressed that empowerment cannot be delivered through uniform approaches, as some communities require significantly more support than others. At the same time, they cautioned against deficit assumptions, noting that strong community action can emerge in unexpected places. What was seen as missing was accessible shared learning and sustained support to enable communities to learn from one another without constant reinvention.

### 5.3.6 Clarity of roles between communities and institutions

An additional and significant theme relates to the lack of clarity around roles and responsibilities between communities, councils, and other public bodies. Participants repeatedly described uncertainty about what communities are expected to take on, particularly as councils withdraw from certain services. This lack of explicit communication was seen as undermining trust and placing unfair pressure on voluntary groups.

*Yeah, but I think there's a slightly different issue around communication. Maybe this is not what you're asking, which is about how the social contract with the Council and with others has changed over time, so the Council for a while stepped in to do a whole lot of things. Sort of, whether anybody wanted them to or not, and then, stepping back and haven't necessarily said well, we're no longer doing litter picking, or we're no longer, collecting, emptying the bins or with, or whatever it is. And they haven't necessarily said what they expect anyone else to do about it. So, there hasn't been an explicit discussion with councils about who's to do what, and whose responsibility it is, and what they're expecting. Yeah, you know, the whole contract. (Speaker 9, Group 1, Anstruther Nature workshop)*

The findings suggest that effective support includes not only funding and advice, but clear and ongoing dialogue about expectations, limits, and shared responsibility. Without this clarity, communities' risk being positioned as the default providers of last resort, rather than as partners in a planned and supported approach to NbS delivery.

## 6 Discussion

Using a mixed-methods approach (a survey in 2024 and a community-based workshop in 2025), this study examined how local people understand Nature-based Solutions (NbS), the ways in which they are currently involved in NbS and related initiatives, the factors that shape participation, and how to support local groups to enhance participation.

Findings show limited familiarity with the term ‘Nature-based Solutions’, yet awareness of local initiatives that align closely with the principles underpinning the term. Furthermore, the evidence shows that local people’s support for working with nature is generally high. Despite the high awareness of local initiatives and increased support of such activities, participation cannot be assumed to follow automatically, with active involvement in NbS-related initiatives of local people remaining low in contrast to higher levels of involvement in local non-NbS activities, even when delivered by the same organisations leading NbS-related work. Findings also show that involvement in NbS and related initiatives is influenced by a combination of time, availability, accessibility, awareness of activities and opportunities to get involved, and skill levels.

The findings further show that overcoming these barriers to support more widespread and meaningful involvement of local people in NbS-related initiatives depends on a combination of flexible participation approaches, clear and accessible communication to increase the perceived relevance and to provide clear entry points to involve local people, and for adequate support for local groups. These elements are interdependent and together shape whether people are able and willing to take part.

Finally, the study highlights that capacity of local groups to sustain and expand NbS-related activity is closely tied to organisational and institutional support. The findings show that local groups operate within constraints of limited volunteer time, short-term or lack of funding, and technical support to adopt necessary flexible means to engagement and widen involvement. Based on these findings, the study identified several support needs for local groups, including having stable and longer-term funding, clearer coordination and communication across organisations, access to technical advice and training, and recognition and partnership with public bodies to avoid overburdening volunteers who often lead local initiatives.

This study does have limitations which need to be considered:

- The views of some, but not all, local people from the case study site (Anstruther – a rural, coastal town in Fife, UK) contributed to this study. The mixed methods research design involved a survey which captured the views of 116 people from across the case study site and the workshop, which included survey and non-survey participants, which helped validate survey findings and enabled more in-depth exploration of key issues. This mixed method design therefore provided both a breadth and depth of views and ideas within the data.
- Also, the abstract nature of the term ‘Nature-based Solutions’ was identified as a potential limitation and thus terms like ‘nature-related activities’ and ‘nature-related initiatives’ were used instead, alongside examples, to illustrate this to quickly build the understanding of study participants. NbS is however a broad term and the types of examples used, however, may have influenced participant contributions.

Despite this, the study does provide some key insights for research, policy and practitioner groups. The findings echoed concerns identified in the literature (see Section 2 and Abernethy et al., 2025; He et al.,

2022; Ibrahim, Banks, et al., 2025) regarding lack of awareness, time constraints, fragmented coordination, unclear responsibilities, and limited intermediary support, all of which can constrain meaningful involvement. This study adds value by grounding these governance challenges in a specific local context and identifying concrete ways in how local dynamics and access to institutional support can affect day-to-day practice, including how local groups navigate funding uncertainty, access technical support, and interact with public authorities. In doing so, this study moves beyond abstract calls for inclusive governance and provides empirically grounded insights into how institutional contexts can be shaped to better enable community groups to manage practical constraints and sustain NbS-related engagement.

These insights can particularly enable local contexts that have active local groups and already embedded NbS in their operations to broaden and strengthen their engagement. In the case of Anstruther, the relatively strong civic networks and a range of active local groups may enable higher levels of involvement and interests in NbS and related activities than in less organised communities. Therefore, the findings point to the need to embed NbS-related initiatives within the existing landscape of local groups and networks many of which are not primarily nature-focused, but are deeply embedded in community life. The findings show that these groups represent an opportunity for widening local involvement, as their established relationships, communication channels, and trusted presence could support outreach, collaboration, and shared delivery of NbS-related activities. In this sense, strengthening links across different types of local organisations may be as important as creating new environmental structures.

This study has implications, therefore, for proponents of NbS within academia and, particularly, within the public sector and policy development. The following sections outline the key implications and offer recommendations based the findings on the findings from local engagement.

### **6.1 Implications for future research**

This study reinforces a central insight from the milestone literature review: while NbS is widely promoted in policy and academic discourse, there remains a persistent gap between expert terminology and lived community practice (Cooper et al., 2023; Seddon et al., 2021). Consistent with earlier studies such as Christopher M Raymond et al. (2017); Christopher M. Raymond et al. (2023), our findings show that many participants are actively engaged in NbS-related activities yet do not recognise or use the 'NbS' label. Future research should therefore examine how NbS framings can become more socially embedded without losing conceptual clarity. In particular, there is scope for work exploring how NbS connects with locally meaningful narratives around safety, health, place identity, and shared memory, and how this varies across different demographic groups, including young people.

A second priority concerns the long-term dynamics of participation. Although NbS governance research highlights the importance of coordination, facilitation, continuity (Ferreira et al., 2022; Keech et al., 2023), and international scholarship emphasises adaptive governance and long-term learning (Kabisch et al., 2022; Wamsler et al., 2020), there remains limited longitudinal evidence on what sustains engagement over time, particularly in volunteer-led contexts (Chausson et al., 2020). Our findings echo concerns that unclear roles, institutional fragility, and reliance on unpaid labour can undermine continuity (Anderson et al., 2022; Kiss et al., 2022; Patterson et al., 2017). Future longitudinal studies could track different governance and support models across rural and urban settings, affluent and deprived communities, and across age groups, to identify which institutional arrangements and facilitation practices foster durable participation.

A third area for further research relates to the everyday conditions shaping involvement. The wider literature suggests that participation depends less on abstract motivation and more on whether opportunities fit alongside existing responsibilities (Kabisch et al., 2022; Kiss et al., 2022). Evidence from environmental volunteering and citizen science indicates that flexible, visible, and well-communicated pathways into engagement, such as short-term roles, intergenerational projects, or wellbeing-focused activities, can broaden participation (Behrens & Colombelli-Négrel, 2024; Loghmani-Khouzani et al., 2024; West & Pateman, 2016). However, such approaches require coordination capacity and sustained support, which are often under-resourced (Chausson et al., 2020). Future research should therefore examine how different participation models operate in practice, particularly among underrepresented groups and younger cohorts, and what forms of institutional backing make inclusive design viable over time.

Across these themes, there is a need for more embedded and participatory research approaches. If NbS is to avoid reproducing extractive or top-down models of environmental governance, academic inquiry itself may need to adopt longer-term, co-produced and action-oriented designs. Building on the governance literature (Frantzeskaki, 2019; Toxopeus & Polzin, 2021), future research could explore how universities and public institutions can act not only as knowledge producers but as sustained partners in community capacity-building.

## **6.2 Implications for public sector and policy**

This study shows that community participation in NbS is not limited by willingness, but by capacity, clarity, and fit with existing local priorities. Many groups are already delivering activities that supports working with nature, but without dedicated institutional support, these community-led initiatives could be fragile. For Scottish Government and public bodies, the implication is clear: involvement of a broad range of people and sustaining community-led initiatives must be deliberately enabled through existing institutional and policy mechanisms rather than assumed to emerge organically.

First, there is a need to align NbS delivery more explicitly with Scotland's place-based policy architecture, including Community Planning Partnerships under the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015<sup>2</sup>, and Local Outcome Improvement Plans. Developing a community action plan can help embed NbS within wider community activities by aligning projects with local priorities, coordinating them with existing initiatives, and reducing participation fatigue, thereby creating more integrated and accessible pathways for community involvement (Hannon et al., 2024). Workshop participants consistently described nature-related action as embedded within broader concerns such as youth engagement, health, learning, and community cohesion. Positioning NbS as a mechanism to deliver on these existing statutory and strategic priorities, rather than as a standalone environmental programme, would help embed NbS more into wider local activities and increase relevance.

Second, funding structures should better reflect the organisational realities identified in this study. Participants repeatedly highlighted reliance on a small number of unpaid coordinators, short-term project funding, and administrative burdens associated with partnerships. Existing programmes such as the

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.communitycouncils.scot/ideas/community-empowerment-act/community-empowerment-act-summary>

Nature Restoration Fund (NRF)<sup>3</sup> and Scotland’s Volunteering Action Plan<sup>4</sup> could provide relevant levers to support more community involvement in delivering NbS. The NRF has supported a wide range of nature-related projects across Scotland (Stevens et al., 2025), including work on the Dreeel Burn in Anstruther (Anstruther Improvements Association, 2024). However, broader evaluation across Scotland highlights several structural challenges associated with the NRF<sup>5</sup>, including short timescales for projects, administrative complexity, and uneven access to funding, with some community groups less able to compete successfully (Stevens et al., 2025). This reflects wider findings from Scotland that, while public funding is essential for enabling community-based initiatives, it can introduce procedural burdens and favour organisations with existing capacity, potentially limiting inclusivity and long-term continuity (Dinnie & Holstead, 2018). In parallel, research on community participation in nature-based projects emphasises that meaningful and sustained engagement requires dedicated resourcing, coordination, and alignment with existing local initiatives rather than short-term or fragmented support (Hannon et al., 2024).

While private-sector finance is also important, as highlighted in the Biodiversity Investment Plan<sup>6</sup>, there is a complementary relationship between public and private funding in NbS delivery. The public sector plays a critical role in enabling conditions through early-stage investment, capacity building and project development, while private finance is more likely to support implementation and scaling (Toxopeus & Polzin, 2021; Trémolet et al., 2021). In Scotland, the Facility for Investment Ready Nature in Scotland (FIRNS)<sup>7</sup> provides a clear example of this approach by supporting project development, helping initiatives become investment-ready, and strengthening community capacity to engage with private finance. In this context, public funding is essential for demonstrating the value of NbS and building confidence among communities and investors alike. Without explicit resourcing for coordination and support, however, policy risks placing NbS delivery expectations on communities that exceed their funded capacity, implicitly assuming that volunteering will materialise without sustained investment.

Third, clearer role definition between councils, public agencies, and community groups is needed. It is clear that many people expect NbS to be the responsibility of public authorities (e.g. the local council), but it also obvious residents want to play a vital role in supporting such initiatives. This willingness needs to be leveraged, but caution must be exercised in order not to relinquish such public leadership on to local communities. Therefore, NbS activities could be strengthened through formalised co-governance agreements that clarify who retains liability, who provides technical expertise, how long-term maintenance is secured and how individuals and groups willing to support this can be empowered instead of being overburdened. This would reduce the perception that responsibility is being devolved without adequate backing.

Fourth, communication practice requires adjustment. The study shows that the term “NbS” itself carries limited meaning locally, whereas engagement increases when activities are framed around visible outcomes such as safer spaces, improved wellbeing, or opportunities for young people. Publicly funded

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.nature.scot/funding-and-projects/scottish-government-nature-restoration-fund-nrf>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.gov.scot/publications/scotlands-volunteering-action-plan/>

<sup>5</sup> The Nature Restoration Fund did not emerge in the workshop discussions. Also, its role in supporting the Dreeel Burn or wider community participation in this context is unclear. As such, the constraints associated to it is not specific to Anstruther.

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.gov.scot/publications/investing-nature-plan-support-investment-biodiversity-climate-adaptation-scotland/>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.nature.scot/funding-and-projects/firms-facility-investment-ready-nature-scotland>

initiatives should therefore prioritise outcome-based, plain-language communication delivered through trusted local channels, including schools, youth organisations, and community networks — rather than relying on technical environmental messaging.

Finally, NbS policy should move beyond engaging only environmental organisations and instead support its integration within the wider landscape of local groups whose primary focus may be youth development, wellbeing, culture, sport, or community cohesion. This study shows that many local activities are already taking place in these settings, but they are not currently connected with NbS-focused initiatives. If the Government wants to widen involvement, NbS should be embedded within these existing community structures rather than expecting groups to become environmental organisations. This would allow environmental action to connect directly with priorities that communities already care about and are ready to support. These key recommendations are summarised in Table 4.

*Table 4. Summary of policy recommendations for supporting people's involvement in NbS-related activities*

<b>Policy Area</b>	<b>What should be done</b>	<b>Intended effect</b>
Funding models	Allocate longer-term, flexible funding that explicitly covers coordination, facilitation, communication, and volunteer support.	Strengthens sustainability of community involvement and reduces burnout.
Institutional support	Provide accessible guidance on governance, legal responsibilities, and partnership between groups.	Reduces administrative burden and risk exposure for volunteer-led groups.
Role clarity & co-governance	Establish clear agreements between public bodies and community groups outlining responsibilities, risk-sharing, and decision-making authority.	Prevents informal transfer of responsibility and supports equitable partnership.
Integration with place-based policy	Embed NbS within community action plan, climate adaptation, health, and resilience strategies rather than treating it as a standalone programme.	Aligns NbS with locally meaningful priorities and increases cross-sector coherence.
Communication strategy	Frame NbS initiatives around visible, locally relevant benefits using trusted local channels.	Broadens participation and improves public understanding and acceptance.
Participation design	Support flexible, inclusive participation models (e.g. family-inclusive, varied commitment levels, non-physical roles).	Enables involvement across age groups and life circumstances.
Learning & evaluation	Invest in longitudinal evaluation and knowledge exchange focused on sustained participation and equity.	Builds an evidence base for durable, inclusive NbS governance.

Finally, some of the recommendations for policy and practice are novel, based on the results of this study and what the researchers feel are appropriate to address the identified challenges. Therefore, these need to be tested. While direct policy engagement was beyond the scope of this study, these findings provide a basis for future engagement with policy actors. Planned activities, including interdisciplinary workshops as part of ‘*D4h Transdisciplinary events on upscaling and mainstreaming*’ and the AimNbS webinar (scheduled for Autumn 2026), will offer opportunities to share findings with relevant stakeholders, gather feedback, and explore the relevance of the recommendations for policy and practice.

### 6.3 Implications for practitioners, including community groups and NGO's leading initiatives

The findings from the study shows that enthusiasm for working with nature is widespread, but sustained and inclusive participation depends on how opportunities are designed, communicated, and supported in practice. Community groups and NGOs play a central role in enabling this, yet often operate under tight time, funding, and capacity constraints. One clear implication for practice is the importance of diversifying pathways into involvement. People engage in different ways and at different stages of life, and not all contributions need to be physically demanding or time-intensive, particularly among parents, carers, older residents, and those new to community action.

Visibility and clarity of information are also fundamental to participation. In practice, this means advertising activities well in advance, repeating messages across multiple platforms (online and offline), and clearly explaining what activities involve, what commitment is expected, and who they are for. Clear follow-up and named contact points help reduce perceptions of exclusivity and uncertainty, particularly for people who are not already embedded in local networks.

Another important implication concerns internal capacity and burnout prevention. As our study shows, community-led NbS often depend on a small number of highly committed individuals, which creates risks for continuity and inclusion over time. Practical steps include spreading responsibilities across more people, sharing skills between groups, including non-nature-focused groups. Therefore, seeking funding and support from government and local businesses that supports planning, communication, and relationship-building alongside on-the-ground delivery will be imperative.

Moreover, NbS initiatives are more likely to gain local support when they are integrated into the broader social life of the community rather than presented as stand-alone environmental projects. This means linking NbS-related activities to everyday priorities such as wellbeing, youth development, community pride, neighbourhood safety, and learning, and not only to climate or biodiversity targets. NbS can contribute to these wider outcomes, but this connection must be made explicit if other community groups are to see their relevance.

Clear communication and demonstration of these multi-purpose benefits is essential. When groups understand how NbS can strengthen their existing work, they are more likely to engage. Co-design approaches can support this by involving diverse community organisations in shaping objectives and activities from the outset. Partnerships with schools, health services, youth organisations, and other non-environmental groups can further embed NbS within wider place-based resilience activities, ensuring it complements – rather than competes – with existing local priorities.

Finally, while community-based groups legitimately look to the public sector funding, it cannot deliver this alone, as reflected in the Biodiversity Investment Plan. There is therefore value in engaging private finance, including from businesses, social enterprises, and local employers. The private sector – particularly nature-focused organisations – is increasingly recognised not only as a source of funding, but also of in-kind support, skills, materials, and longer-term, flexible collaboration (Kooijman et al., 2021). Such partnerships can support community-led initiatives by enabling sustained engagement, broadening participation, and embedding NbS within local economies (van Ham & Klimmek, 2017). For local groups, widening support beyond public funding can help address capacity constraints and strengthen more resilient delivery models.

## 7 Conclusion

NbS are frequently presented as inherently multi-purpose, capable of delivering environmental improvement alongside social and economic benefits, a goal advanced by the AimNbS project. This study indicates that achieving multi-purpose outcomes requires more than technical integration of ecological and social objectives. It requires early and meaningful involvement of diverse local actors, including those not primarily focused on environmental issues. If NbS-related activities are shaped through youth organisations, wellbeing initiatives, learning settings, and neighbourhood groups, environmental goals become intertwined with everyday priorities. In contrast, where NbS is introduced as a discrete or externally defined environmental agenda, it risks remaining marginal to local concerns.

Embedding NbS in this way involves navigating several tensions. It entails balancing environmental ambitions with locally defined priorities; linking formal policy objectives with informal community action; and connecting specialist expertise with lived experience. It also requires clarity about roles and responsibilities between public bodies and community groups. Without such clarity and support, expectations of community-led delivery can exceed realistic capacities, particularly where reliance on unpaid labour is assumed rather than explicitly resourced.

Multi-purpose NbS therefore emerges not simply from integrated design, but also from integrated governance. It depends on recognising that NbS-related activities sit within a broader landscape of social action, and on creating the institutional conditions that allow environmental initiatives to connect with that landscape. No single initiative can achieve all objectives simultaneously, and the appropriate balance between environmental, social, and economic aims will vary by context. What is critical is that these trade-offs and priorities are made visible and negotiated early.

Ultimately, this study suggests that widening local involvement from the beginning is central to realising the multi-purpose potential of NbS. However, this will require sustained support from government agencies so that local groups willing to promote this agenda are empowered, and have access to the funding, skills and requisite tools to deliver it. When communities are involved not only as participants but as partners, NbS initiatives are more likely to reflect local realities, attract broader support, and deliver benefits that extend beyond environmental metrics alone.

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## Appendices

### Appendix A: List of outputs related to this report

Name of output	Description	Full reference and access link
Supporting people’s involvement in nature-based solutions (NbS) in and around Anstruther: A workshop report.	Summarises the key themes emerging from the workshop and formed basis for detail analysis of the workshop data.	Ibrahim, A., Dillon, E., & Carmen, E. (2025). Supporting people’s involvement in nature-based solutions (NbS) in and around Anstruther: A workshop report. <a href="https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.18599395">https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.18599395</a>
Working with nature in & around Anstruther: A study about people’s perceptions, motivations and experience	A poster presentation of the survey findings at Community River Session on Worlds Rivers Day in Anstruther.	Ibrahim, A., Dillon, E., & Carmen, E. (2025). Working with nature in & around Anstruther: A study about people’s perceptions, motivations and experiences. Paper presented at the Dree Burn Community River Session. <a href="https://www.hutton.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/Working-with-nature-in-around-Anstruther-Poster.pdf">https://www.hutton.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/Working-with-nature-in-around-Anstruther-Poster.pdf</a>
Working with Nature in and around Anstruther: A summary of a study about people’s perceptions, motivations and experiences.	Provides a summary of the survey findings. This was disseminated to survey respondents and beyond, including some attendees of world Rivers’ Day event. It was also used as basis for inviting workshop participants and structuring the discussion topics.	Ibrahim, A., Dillon, E., & Carmen, E. (2025). Working with Nature in and around Anstruther: A summary of a study about people’s perceptions, motivations and experiences. Aim NbS Project, James Hutton Institute. <a href="https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.18594954">https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.18594954</a>
Understanding perceptions of nature-based solutions: understandings, motivations, and factors shaping potential engagement	Is the milestone report containing the detailed survey analysis and findings.	Ibrahim, A., Banks, E., & Waylen, K. (2025). Understanding perceptions of nature-based solutions: understandings, motivations, and factors shaping potential engagement. <a href="https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.18550982">https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.18550982</a>

# Working with nature in and around Anstruther

29th September 2025

6.00 – 8.00 pm

## Agenda

5.50 pm	<b>Participant arrival &amp; registration</b> – Registration, coffee and tea will be available, starting activities.
6.10 pm	<b>Welcome &amp; introduction (10 mins)</b>
6.20 pm	<b>Presentation of survey findings (20)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Share the key findings of last year’s survey focusing on:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Understandings</li><li>• Involvement</li><li>• Challenges</li><li>• Enablers</li></ul></li></ul>
6.40 pm	<b>General Q&amp;A about the presentation</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Any aspects you’d like clarified?</li></ul>
6.50 pm	<b>Break out session 1: Flexibility and communication</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• How can community groups can be flexible to better navigate people’s time and accessibility challenges,</li><li>• How can the benefits of Nature-based Solutions (NbS) activities and associated roles be more effectively communicated to increase involvement?</li></ul>
7.15 pm	<b>Short break and stretch</b>
7.25 pm	<b>Break out session 2: Ways to support community groups</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• What kinds of support do community groups need to better involve people, and who might help provide this support</li></ul>
7.50 pm	<b>Wrap-up and next steps</b>
No later than 8.00 pm	<b>Finish</b>