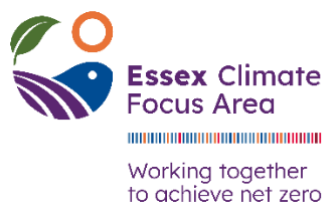
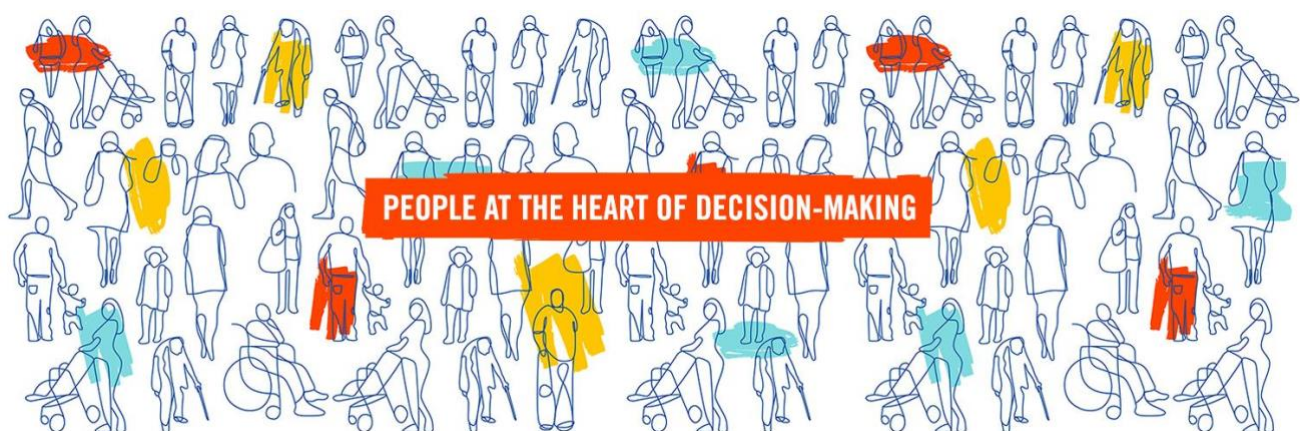




# Talking about Nature

Wivenhoe, Tiptree and Stisted

Local Climate Engagement – with Essex County Council



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Stisted Parish Council

Tiptree Parish Council

And the organisations and representatives that took part, listed on p38

**...and most of all the participants that took part in the day. Thankyou!**

All photos used by kind permission of participants

## September 2023

# Section One

## Background

### The Essex Climate Action Plan

The Essex Climate Action Commission is an independent body set up by Essex County Council to advise on how best to tackle the climate challenge and become a net zero emissions county. The Commission consists of over 30 commissioners, each with varying backgrounds across the public, private and third sectors, as well as academia and has made a number of recommendations in the Essex Climate Action Commission's (ECAC) [Net Zero: Making Essex Carbon Neutral report](#).

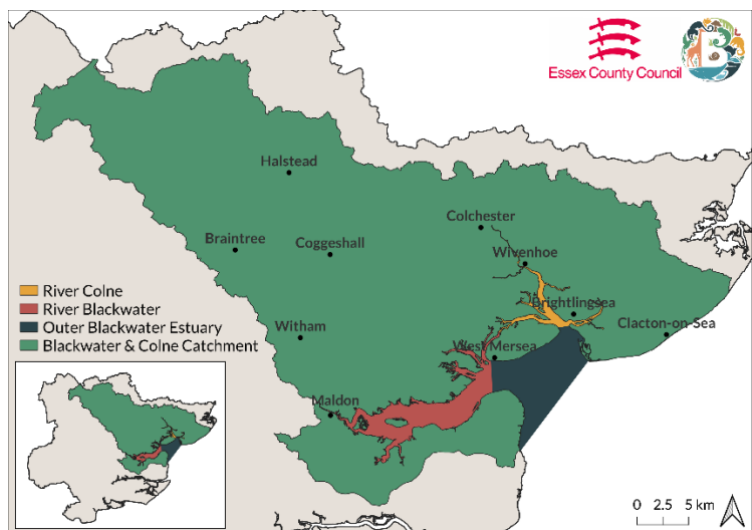
Essex County Council's [Climate Focus Area \(CFA\)](#) was developed as one of the recommendations. The CFA is located in the Blackwater and Colne river catchment areas and is a pilot project aimed at accelerating and showcasing best practice in sustainable land stewardship in collaboration with local councils, charities, residents, landowners and businesses.

The CFA aims to accelerate action and provide exemplars<sup>1</sup>:

- Adopting Sustainable Land Stewardship Practices: 100% by 2030 and
- Natural Green Infrastructure: 30% by 2030

### Local Nature Plans

Parish, town, district, city and borough councils are also playing their part in building a cleaner, low-carbon future for Essex, with one of the recommendations of the Commission being that town and parish councils develop local nature and biodiversity plans.



### Why these three places for the workshops?

Essex County Council (ECC) successfully applied to be one of five funded 'Project Group Areas' for the national [Local Climate Engagement \(LCE\) Programme](#). Subsequently in Essex, three local parishes were chosen to test out further community engagement to support the development of a specific nature action plan locally. Essex County Council had previously facilitated a workshop using

<sup>1</sup> Targets for the CFA are greater than for wider Essex County – to provide more focus for change on the CFA.

the 'Marisco Process'<sup>2</sup>. At the end of which, workshop participants were encouraged to write work packages that showed how they could take forward some action in their area.

Three parishes had work packages that focused on or mentioned biodiversity, and Wivenhoe, Tiptree and Stisted councils were approached to see if they would be willing to take part in the LCE project. They had demonstrated interest in developing their own nature planning and were in the Essex Climate Focus Area.

Each of the parishes were very different from each other - all within the CFA. They had broadly contrasting locations from, a river source to sea, plus vary in demographic profile from each other – and may show different aspects for contrasting and comparing the learning from the workshops, that other parish and town councils could learn from.

The three parishes are:

- **Wivenhoe** – a coastal town on the bank of the river Colne, with a population of around 7,500 with an established approach to developing biodiversity and wildlife protection locally
- **Stisted** – a small rural village with a population of around 600, near Braintree
- **Tiptree** – Tiptree Heath is jointly managed by the Friends of Tiptree Heath and Essex Wildlife Trust. Tiptree Parish Council (TPC) also has a long history of managing, protecting, monitoring, and creating wildlife habitats. More recently, management plans, which encourage biodiversity, have been written for all TPC owned sites.



## Local Climate Engagement (LCE) national programme

LCE is a national programme to enable local authorities and partnerships to plan, commission and deliver high quality public engagement in their climate decision-making, in a way that benefits both them and their local population. Developed by [Involve](#) and four partner organisations - [Democratic Society](#), [Shared Future](#), [UK100](#) and [Climate Outreach](#) - this programme provides local authorities with a package of training, mentoring and hands-on support. This programme is funded by [Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation](#) (UK branch) and Esmée Fairbairn Foundation.

## Involve

We are the UK's leading public participation charity, on a mission to put people at the heart of decision-making. We are a small but passionate team focused on giving people more power over the

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<sup>2</sup> MARISCO Process – MARISCO represents a toolbox and an approach to adaptive ecosystem-based management. It facilitates the integration of a dynamic risk and vulnerability perspective into the management of conservation projects and sites

decisions that affect their lives. We want to build a stronger democracy that works for everyone – that gives people real power to bring about change in their lives, communities and beyond.

Involve was founded in 2003 to “to create a new focus for thinking and action on the links between new forms of public participation and existing democratic institutions”. We've been promoting and practising participatory and deliberative decision-making ever since. We have worked with governments, parliaments, civil society organisations, academics and the public across the UK and internationally to put people at the heart of decision-making. We believe that decision-making in the UK needs to be more:

- **Open** - so that people can understand, influence and hold decision-makers to account for the actions and inactions of their governments;
- **Participatory** - so that people have the freedom, support and opportunity to shape their communities and influence the decisions that affect their lives; and,
- **Deliberative** - so that people can exchange and acknowledge different perspectives, understand conflict and find common ground, and build a shared vision for society.

## What we do

We demonstrate how citizens can help solve our biggest challenges. Our work seeks to create:

1. **New innovations** - to demonstrate better ways of doing democracy;
2. **New institutions** - to put people at the heart of decision-making;
3. **New norms** - to make democracy more open, participatory and deliberative.

Projects have included:

- **People's Assembly for Nature** - The People's Plan for Nature aims to be the UK's biggest ever conversation about the future of nature. It is powered by WWF, the RSPB and the National Trust.
- **The Citizens' Assembly on Social Care** - the first deliberative process commissioned by UK Parliament;
- **MH:2K** - a youth-led approach that has engaged over 3,400 young people in tackling mental ill-health.

Find out more about our work: [www.involve.org.uk/our-work/](http://www.involve.org.uk/our-work/)

### Our values

**Collaboration** – because change comes when broad coalitions of people work towards a common vision.

**Equality** – because everyone in society has an equal right to be listened to and participate in decisions that affect their lives. No one should be held back by societal divisions or prejudice.

**Purpose** – because participation must have an impact. We reject tokenistic or ineffectual engagement.

# Section Two

## Executive summary

'Talking about Nature' was a series of three community workshops developed to improve community engagement on climate issues in Essex in May 2023. They supported three town and parish councils to create Local Nature Plans, informed by the views and priorities of local residents. The overarching question was:

**What should your town council prioritise in their Nature Plan in order to improve and protect nature, wildlife and green spaces in your area?**

The priorities created by participants in the workshops will be used by the local town and parish councils to create Local Nature Plans, currently in progress and due to be completed in 2024. At the end of the workshop – participants voted on the ideas and issues that were most important to them and these will feature as key themes within those Nature Plans.



### What did participants say?

Across all the three workshops there are common themes that participants raised, including a desire for the town and parishes to influence future development in their area, which featured in the top two priorities of Tiptree and Wivenhoe.

There was acknowledgement that there were many things that residents can be doing more of themselves, such as using their front gardens more effectively, (the top priority for Wivenhoe), and support for local environmental community groups, (the top priority in Stisted).

There were key topics including a strong endorsement for the town and parish councils to play an enabling, co-ordinating and convening role across different stakeholders, to improve the impact that can be made on climate and nature issues – recognising limited resources and influence.

In conclusion, the sense in the workshops was that there was lots of energy and enthusiasm for the agenda. Participants were keen to build on existing schemes and initiatives already underway in each of the locations. They wanted to spread awareness of these, so that their reach and impact could be increased.

Taking part really matters to residents. Almost everyone across all three workshops agreed or



strongly agreed they were willing to take part in community consultation like this in future. Most residents also agreed that their knowledge of their Local Nature Plan increased.

## Diversity

When compared to local census data, there were more female participants compared to the wider community, more people not working, and more people over the age of 55 years, and a lower number of people who declared a disability, than in the general local population. This will in part be due to the challenges of recruiting a more diverse range of participants, using different recruitment methods, and lessons learned on the length of time it takes to generate all the information and invitation processes.

Participants were keen to get more children and young people involved in the issues, and recognised the workshop participants were only a sample of the local community – participants already had a high level of concern for climate issues - and participants as well as organisers recognised that other important voices need to be included. Participation was only available to people 18 and over. More on this will be in the national evaluation.

## Concerns

Participants are concerned about the long-term impact on nature and for future generations, in particular concern about the impact of development, which can feel beyond influence. Comments reflected a fear of loss of habitat and green space.

Given the high ratings from participants for a positive experience of the day, their confidence that it will make a difference positive but was not as strong. It is possible to assume that this is because of the wider issues and complexity associated with the impact that a Local Nature Plans can have. The discussion in more detail is captured at the workshop is in Section Three.

## The Impact

The town and parish representatives, and delivery team who took part in the day, gave very positive feedback on the energy and willingness of participants to get involved. The national evaluation will provide details of the impact and feedback on the event from town and parishes, community groups and ECC staff that were involved. Some lessons learned are also explored later in this report.



A quote from the town or parish council about the day:

*Wivenhoe - "The participants were full of enthusiasm and energy. It's great. They've given us some really solid priorities to work with." (Tim Multon, Mayor)*

*Stisted - The workshop informed participants, increased awareness and gave the opportunity to express views of what can be done as a village and as an individual. It provided energy to build on the existing efforts of Climate and Nature for Stisted - CANS, a working party of Stisted Parish Council. (Helen Remfry on behalf of CANS)*

*Tiptree - The day of the Workshop was well planned and organised with plenty of supporting staff. Twenty-one Tiptree residents took part in the programme and entered the discussions enthusiastically and declared the day interesting and worthwhile. (Diana Webb – Chair, TPC Amenities Committee)*

## Strategic impact

For ECC, the workshops are a 'showcase' within the CFA that helps meet their ambitions to have deeper community engagement in climate planning for local biodiversity and nature in Essex. One of the recommendations put forward by the Essex Climate Action Commission was for all parishes in the CFA to have their own climate and biodiversity plans. This is the first step towards achieving this. In addition, learning from the LCE Programme could support further work within the CFA, helping stimulate other towns and parishes to create their own nature plans involving residents.

The project will also enable three parishes to showcase Local Nature Plans that have been driven by local residents and local priorities, when they have been completed. The hope is that these will act as case studies for other parishes, who wish to deliver nature plans. The workshops can help raise the profile of the CFA strategy and how all the town and parish councils can play their part. (See tweet on the right from Peter Schwier.)

The workshops and feedback from participants provide evidence of what's important to participants and the additional resident buy-in simply by taking part. All this can help with additional funding streams and partnerships in the future and support the wider ambitions for biodiversity in the [Climate Focus Area](#) (CFA) in addressing climate change challenges.

The workshops have:

- involved a wider group of residents than usually get involved in nature planning, to varying degrees in each area
- improved understanding for councils about what is important to local residents
- brought a deeper understanding of the 'lived experience' of people across communities to enrich what is known already
- helped the local town or parish council develop a deeper understanding of issues and barriers facing some residents
- helped identify priorities, opportunities and ideas to improve and protect nature, wildlife and green spaces in the parish or town



## What happens next

The local town and parish councils will use the issues and ideas raised by participants to inform their strategy and local priorities for nature in their Local Nature Plan. The aim is for nature plans to be signed off in 2024.

*Wivenhoe - We are getting further ideas via a public survey for all residents about what the Council should do for nature in the town. A draft LNP will be ready by Christmas and a consultation version published in the spring 2024 - Cllr Glyn Evans, Chair of WTC Environment Committee.*

*Stisted - Stisted Parish Council invites Climate and Nature for Stisted to present reports at every Parish Council meeting and seek opinion on issues including grass cutting contract, street lighting, wildlife areas. The CANS reports are issued in the monthly parish magazine, a CANS facebook page has been set up and regular posts made. A plan for education talks in the village hall is being pursued as a follow up to the workshop.*

*Tiptree - Tiptree Parish Council Amenities Committee will consider and explore ideas and suggestions in the report that are the remit of the Land Use and Environment Climate Action Plan. Ideas that are the remit of TPC Highways Committee, Planning Committee, Policy Committee will be passed to them for possible inclusion in a more comprehensive Climate Emergency Action Plan. Many of the ideas involve greater communication with residents. Establishing a Tiptree Nature Watch on Facebook is being explored.*

ECC also committed to giving each council a grant of £750 to accelerate progress on some of those priorities voted as most important by participants, as part of their nature plan development. The parish and town councils are committed to spending the grant on things directly informed by the participants' priority vote, although exactly how the grant would be spent is yet to be decided. The final decision lies with the town and parish councils, once they have this report, and have reflected.



The impact of the grants could be another opportunity to profile the Local Nature Plans and the impact of this work.

# Overview Priority Statements and votes

The following sentences are the high-level list that the groups prioritised over the course of the three community workshops, as important issues for action and ideas to support a Local Nature Plan. The full statements and detail behind them are in the results section later in this report.

## Summary – Wivenhoe

**What matters:** In summary the top two priority votes for front gardens and holding developers accountable. The next six priority issues showed a desire for more information and engagement with the community, as well as the importance for volunteers, and with the importance of an enabling role for the town council.

Priority areas for action and ideas	Total number of Participants
	27
Encourage, educate and communicate the <b>importance of front gardens</b> (to homeowners, landlords, tenants, developers, suppliers).	Votes: 21
Town council should do all it can <b>to demand that developers are responsible</b> from the outset and held accountable (to the local neighbourhood plan which will have good protections in it for local nature.).	Votes: 19
Undertake a baseline <b>survey of what is where and tell people</b> what you find.	Votes: 17
Council to better <b>coordinate wildlife-focused activities</b> and clarify Council responsibilities between different Councils.	Votes: 17
Agree a <b>special site strategy</b> with <b>ongoing engagement</b> with residents and experts.	Votes: 17
Approach and work with owners of privately-owned green spaces to explore whether they will allow <b>volunteers to develop the spaces for community use</b> .	Votes: 16
Town council to actively explore how to <b>reduce car use</b> and encourage moving around the area sustainably.	Votes: 14
Promote more <b>volunteer-led</b> plant growing and plant sharing.	Votes: 10
Town council should facilitate <b>communication, and engagement</b> with university, schools, businesses, charities: Sharing ideas and good practices.	Votes: 8
Better / more leaflets, signs [information] etc from council to inform us what to do, where and why to share and enjoy special sites appropriately - help to <b>ensure people are working together</b> to protect the special sites.	Votes: 4
Council to investigate and promote pooling, sharing and mending schemes.	Votes: 2

## Summary – Stisted

**What matters:** The top priorities for Stisted participants reflected how important they felt it was for more of the local community to get involved, to help protect and develop nature, and protect the quality of life in the village - and the importance of role that the parish council can play to enable that.

Priority areas for action and ideas	Total number of Participants
To promote, encourage and <b>motivate our community to get involved</b> in CANS, so more <b>people volunteer to promote our beautiful environment</b> for ourselves, nature and future generations. CANS (Climate and Nature Stisted).	16 <b>Votes: 18</b>
We should calm traffic to <b>improve quality and safety and protect wildlife</b> .	<b>Votes: 14</b>
Improve two way and multi-media communication between PC and Stisted residents in a dynamic way that <b>promotes engagement</b> .	<b>Votes: 14</b>
To <b>promote greater awareness</b> of the importance of nature and the environment at a community and individual level through more effective communication - make Stisted a trailblazer.	<b>Votes: 14</b>
Actively <b>engage children and young people</b> in enhancing nature and biodiversity and learning to love nature.	<b>Votes: 9</b>
Identify and <b>prioritise areas</b> with established flora and fauna.	<b>Votes: 4</b>
Create more <b>opportunities to grow and share edibles</b> and to share surplus produce.	<b>Votes: 2</b>



## Summary – Tiptree

**What matters:** The top priority for Tiptree selected by participants was for using the Local Nature Plan to help new developments protect nature, and to hold developers to account longer term. There was also a range of priority issues for Tiptree Council to enable, communicate and engage residents, as they have an important role to play to protect and enhance nature too.

Priority areas for action and ideas	Total number of Participants
Encourage 'quick and easy' and longer-term actions on <b>new developments to help improve nature</b> - a Local Nature Plan will involve prioritising <b>holding developers to account</b> with consequences if they undermine nature and biodiversity.	Votes: 17
The nature plan should prioritise an Environmental Group and <b>connect to the Council/ liaise</b> between the Council and other groups.	Votes: 12
<b>Education</b> , education, education.	Votes: 11
Jamland needs YOU!!! - Prioritise and <b>inspire the local community to be champions</b> of the environments - Identify community champions of all ages.	Votes: 11
The nature plan should prioritise the <b>clarification of the function</b> of each green space.	Votes: 10
<b>Protect wildlife corridors</b> - A Local Nature Plan will encourage the protection and further development of wildlife corridors.	Votes: 7
The nature plan should prioritise inspection of ditches, keep clear water courses and educate about the role of ditches and trees that soak up the water so that essential <b>trees are preserved, flooding prevented, ditches good and wildlife habitat restored</b> .	Votes: 6
<b>Clarify</b> which footpaths you... <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Can use</li> <li>○ Can't use</li> <li>○ Are under threat</li> </ul>	Votes: 6
The nature plan should prioritise <b>connecting green spaces</b> across Tiptree in an accessible way via footpaths and <b>providing information</b> about them (in printed trail guides, social media, apps etc).	Votes: 4
<b>Engage the future generation</b> - A Local Nature Plan will involve engaging and inspiring children and young people to value and actively care for their local environment.	Votes: 2
Develop a plan to inform, engage and empower the local community to protect and improve our environment.	

# Section Three

## Results - What participants said

The overarching question for the three events was:

**What should your town or parish council prioritise in their Nature Plan in order to improve and protect nature, wildlife and green spaces in your area?**

Under this broader question, participants explored a range of issues regarding biodiversity, with a broad focus on *town and parish councils, and community land use and green infrastructure* for the local councils and their residents. The participants took part in several breakout sessions to explore issues and questions posed to them. The following is a summary of the conversation recorded onto post-it notes.



### **Question 1. What works, what doesn't locally - and what are your concerns and worries?**

**What matters:** Overall participants were able to note a number of things that were working locally regarding nature, such as existing community initiatives, community groups, existing projects for protecting nature are making a difference, as well as things that were not. Similarities across the workshops also showed the concern for long term impact on nature and future generations, plus concern about the impact of development, which can feel beyond influence, and reflected a fear of loss of habitat and green space. The discussion captured at the workshop is below.

# Wivenhoe

## What works locally & What does not work in Wivenhoe?

What works	What doesn't work
Access to River and Woods, connected /interconnected access	Sea defences; Rivers e.g. pollution
Community engagement initiatives	Decisions and development/planning
Good examples of Development like Chattowood and Elmstead	Conflict with other uses of green spaces Behaviours - Compliance with nature protection
Green spaces, with wildlife and flowers	Cars and congestion
Conservation project spaces; Nature protection / several restoration, protection initiatives	Spaces could be better for nature Tree management

## Concerns and worries in Wivenhoe

Analysis THEME	Issues discussed by participants
<b>Future planning and Development</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More and more Wivenhoe going under concrete</li> <li>• Influence over developers – feels limited and beyond people's control.</li> </ul>
<b>Loss of nature; Access being lost</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Green spaces going forever</li> <li>• Increasing population vs no increase in greenspace</li> </ul>
<b>Lack of engagement</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of young people involved, volunteers</li> </ul>
<b>Lack of Resources</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prioritise action on climate change/ trade-offs needed where funding is limited</li> </ul>
<b>Not sure about council resources/roles, national; Managing different uses of spaces and understanding</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Don't know which council controls what</li> <li>• Access vs Protection</li> <li>• Different views on what is "pretty"</li> </ul>
<b>Collaboration/joined up working</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Silos – local groups aren't joined up</li> </ul>
<b>Farming</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of wild strips/connectivity</li> </ul>
<b>Gardens</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Too much building on gardens, and use of block paving for parking</li> </ul>
<b>Flooding</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Flooding and water run-off.</li> </ul>
<b>Cars &amp; Congestion</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increasing traffic, noise pollution, air pollution. Cycling provision</li> </ul>

# Stisted

## What works & What does not work in Stisted?

What works	What doesn't work
Small activities to protect nature	Council communication
Private org. Strategies	Issues with responding / working together
Education	Public transport
CANS has started for a positive influence	Hedgerows & Verges; Grass-cutting - opportunities missed for nature
Eco-church status	Waterways; Garden wildlife
Community engagement	Community engagement

## Concerns and worries in Stisted

Analysis theme	Issues discussed
<b>Farming</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Farmers spraying fields (though recognise farmers have a livelihood)</li> </ul>
<b>Council Powers &amp; Role</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not understanding remit and role of Parish Council/Low attendance at PC meetings</li> </ul>
<b>Government</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Government objectives restricting local plans/building more houses, and the protection of nature</li> </ul>
<b>Building &amp; Infrastructure</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A120 development</li> <li>• Whole areas of tarmac in new drives: No flower beds; Flooding problem; No wildlife</li> </ul>
<b>Waste</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Litter &amp; fly-tipping</li> </ul>
<b>Values / Commitment to nature from people</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of individual responsibility towards the issues</li> <li>• Changing consumer habits</li> </ul>
<b>Future Generations</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Our legacy to future generations</li> </ul>
<b>Air pollution</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Incinerator</li> <li>• Parking/engines</li> </ul>

# Tiptree

## What works & What does not in Tiptree?

What works	What doesn't
Maintenance of existing green space <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Grove Park &amp; Heath</li> </ul>	Infrastructure / Development could have better green space management
Creating new green space	Not enough infrastructure for new developments
Small local businesses supported	Green space / Plants overmanaged
Sustainability initiatives <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>solar panels on the community centre</li> </ul>	Quality of roads
Surveys of wildlife	Access / use of spaces for recreation complicated
Protection of / challenges to development on green spaces	Brook Meadows <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Should be an SSSI due to Orchids</li> </ul>
Planning <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Neighbourhood Plan</li> </ul>	Unused space has potential

## Concerns & worries in Tiptree

Analysis theme	Issues discussed
<b>Worry about new development + impacts</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>New developments mean losing wildlife corridors</li> </ul>
<b>Loss of green space + space for nature</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Not enough green spaces/habitat in the future, Fear of loss</li> </ul>
<b>Over-maintained green spaces</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Over-maintenance of new green spaces</li> </ul>
<b>Limited access for recreation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Fewer opportunities for walking and cycling</li> </ul>
<b>Damage to green spaces from use</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Not enough consideration for green spaces now or future</li> </ul>
<b>People aren't connected with nature</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>People are unaware of the value of wildlife / greenspace</li> </ul>

## Question 2. What should or could be done - actions and ideas

Participants were allocated to a group, with one area of focus for each. Each group focus is coloured below, and the following results are grouped first by area of focus.

1. <b>What the parish or town council controls</b> - manage what they own to enhance nature - such as public spaces, margins, pockets and buildings owned by the council, some verges
2. <b>Making more local green spaces for nature and residents</b> - not owned by the parish or town council, but where they can influence, partner and enable others such as residents
3. <b>Protecting special green places for nature</b> - enjoy the benefits without unwittingly compromising it, balance access to nature, with letting nature recover
4. <b>Challenges and opportunities of development and urban influence</b> - how can the parish or town council support and influence

Participants were asked to discuss what they thought ‘... **should or could be done - actions and ideas?**’ to help address the overarching question for the day. The group then created final sentences that were voted on by participants, who were asked to select three sentences issues that they thought would make the most impact or the most important to them. These are shown below – grouped by the ‘area of focus’, and then ranked in priority order.

## Wivenhoe votes

### Area of focus: What the Council Controls

<b>Wivenhoe – Votes: 17</b>
<b>Council to better coordinate wildlife-focused activities and clarify Council responsibilities between different Councils</b> - (For activities that could be coordinated) e.g. <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Strip mowing</li><li>○ Coordinating volunteer activities</li><li>○ Coordinating with young people’s groups (eg Scouts, Duke of Edinburgh)</li><li>○ Signposting</li></ul> This would make better use of resources and volunteer time
<b>Wivenhoe – Votes: 2</b>
<b>Council to investigate and promote pooling, sharing and mending schemes</b> e.g. <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Cars, tools and links to Transition Wivenhoe activities</li><li>○ Skills swap (time bank); Clothes swap</li></ul> This is important to reduce waste and pollution

## Area of focus: Making more local green spaces for nature and residents

### Wivenhoe – Votes: 21

#### **Encourage, educate and communicate the importance of front gardens (to homeowners, landlords, tenants, developers, suppliers), including:**

- the impacts and risks of block paving and fake grass;
- the value of wildlife-friendly planting, trees and grass, and ponds;

Provide more information and advice on what can be done in your garden e.g. stalls at local events to publicise education, awareness, encouragement are key

### Wivenhoe – Votes: 16

#### **Approach and work with owners of privately-owned green spaces to explore whether they will allow volunteers to develop the spaces for community use (e.g. community gardens).**

- Map who owns what land [so it's clear]
- A Community Land Fund could buy some bits of land for community use

### Wivenhoe – Votes: 10

#### **Promote more volunteer-led plant growing and plant sharing:**

Education for biodiverse friendly and drought-resistant planting

- Make it simple and fun, and inclusive for everyone e.g. with different needs or without gardens/outside space
- Include plants in tubs and planters
- Keep communicating to spread AWARENESS and UNDERSTANDING of what is available and why it is important

## Area of focus: Protecting special green places for nature

Wivenhoe – **Votes: 17**

**Undertake a baseline survey of what is where** and tell local residents what you find. This info can also inform the Local Nature Plan

(e.g. beetles, slow worms, birds, dear, cicadas etc etc)

Wivenhoe – **Votes: 4**

**Better a special sites sign/info joining to agencies with residents and experts, (where and why to share and enjoy special sites appropriately):** help to ensure people are working together to protect the special sites, use vs not use/access

- more engagement with informed discussion

(e.g. why I should keep my dog on a lead, where the best sites are to visit / see things)

Area of focus: Challenges and opportunities of development and urban influence - how can the Council support and influence

Wivenhoe – **Votes: 19**

**Town council should do all it can to demand that developers are responsible from the outset and held accountable** (to the local neighbourhood plan which will have good protections in it for local nature.)

Wivenhoe – **Votes: 14**

**Town council to actively explore how to reduce car use and encourage moving around the area sustainably:**

- Community electric bus
- Document existing footpaths, guide paths etc – campaign for new ones and work with the Wivenhoe Society
- Public buses not private ones
- Car sharing and car pool
- Maintain cycle routes from Wivenhoe to town (Colchester)
- Developers promoting active travel

Wivenhoe – **Votes: 8**

**Town council should facilitate communication, and engagement with university, schools, businesses, charities:**

- Sharing ideas and good practices
- Honest conversations about benefits to all for local area
- Link up volunteering groups
- Share innovation e.g. community energy companies

Two draft sentences or priorities were started - but ran out of time for shaping into sentences, and did not feature in the final vote, however participants felt were important:

Challenges and opportunities of development and urban influence - how can the Council support and influence - Wivenhoe

Existing housing stock – initiatives to support sustainability

- Manage Dean Park green spaces properly before they all vanish

Protecting special green places for nature - Wivenhoe

Join up local groups so we are less siloed and more collaborative

# Stisted votes

Participants were asked to discuss what they thought ‘... should or could be done - actions and ideas?’ to help address the overarching question for the day. The group then created final sentences that were voted on by participants, who were asked to select three sentences issues that they thought would make the most impact or the most important to them. These are shown below – grouped by the ‘area of focus’, and then ranked in priority order.

## Area of focus: What the Council Controls

### Stisted – Votes: 14

#### **We should calm traffic to improve quality and safety and protect wildlife.**

This could include:

- Extending 30mph zone
- Happy / sad face signs
- Lorry Control
- Traffic management for protecting wildlife
- Speed monitoring

Difference it would make is to improve safety and quality [of life] for residents and protect the rural environment

### Stisted – Votes: 14

#### **Improve two way and multi-media communication between PC and Stisted residents in a dynamic way that promotes engagement.**

- This should be multi-media to engage all age groups
- This is important so people can get involved as they know what’s going on
- It should be short, punchy and eye catching
- To reach different age groups

### Stisted – Votes: 4

#### **Identify and prioritise areas with established flora and fauna**

- This would allow progress to be monitored
- This would allow flora/ fauna to be protected and improved

If you know what you’ve got you can improve/ protect it

## Area of focus: Making more local green spaces for nature and residents

### Stisted – Votes: 18

**To promote, encourage and motivate our community to get involved in CANS, so more people volunteer to promote\* our beautiful environment for ourselves, nature and future generations.**

CANS (Climate and Nature Stisted) -

- Communication about what it does and how to get involved
- Incentives to volunteer (e.g. Duke of Edinburgh awards for young people)
- Specific volunteer-led initiatives:
  - Plant swap scheme
  - Hedgehog awareness
  - Pond audit and 'ownership' club
  - Weedkiller amnesty
  - Local workshops
  - Visits to other innovative places
  - Village garden club with prizes at fête

“...so more people volunteer to protect our beautiful environment for ourselves, nature and future generations.”

### Stisted – Votes: 14

**To promote greater awareness of the importance of nature and the environment at a community and individual level through more effective communication - make Stisted a trailblazer.**

- Workshops locally to inform and assist change
- Use Parish magazine – Newsletter
- Introduction mag for when people move into the village
- Partnership: Church, Parish Council and others to promote/educate
- more partnership between local organisations

### Stisted – Votes: 9

**Actively engage children and young people in enhancing nature and biodiversity and learning to love nature:**

- Work with school and nursery; explore whether school can aim for Eco-school status;
- Aim some of the CANS projects at children and young people;
- Some of the local workshops to inform and assist change should be aimed at children and young people;
- Develop Forest School activities

Stisted – **Votes: 2**

**Create more opportunities to grow and share edibles and to share surplus produce:**

- Work with the community shop;
- Set up a Community Fridge;
- Work with the allotments to offer surplus to the community in a structured way;
- Include eggs and honey;
- Work with the Community Orchard;
- Encourage honesty boxes for selling eggs, etc

A draft sentence was started - but ran out of time and did not feature in the final vote, however participants felt was important:

What the Council Controls - Stisted

Stisted being a rural environment, we wish to protect this and encourage a nurturing approach through collaboration of all who live in and enjoy the village

# Tiptree votes

Participants were asked to discuss what they thought ‘... should or could be done - actions and ideas?’ to help address the overarching question for the day. The group then created final sentences that were voted on by participants, who were asked to select three sentences issues that they thought would make the most impact or the most important to them. These are shown below – grouped by the ‘area of focus’, and then ranked in priority order.

## Area of focus: What the Council Controls

Tiptree – **Votes: 12**

**The nature plan should prioritise an Environmental Group and connect to the Council/ liaise between the Council and other groups.**

So that people know more about ways to engage and helps each group to liaise with the Council. Each group can collaborate around issues

Tiptree – **Votes: 10**

**The nature plan should prioritise the clarification of the function of each green space**

So that sensitive wildlife areas and ecosystems can be protected to enhance biodiversity, facilitated by regular assessment of each environment and education of the community of the role, preservation and importance of each area

Tiptree – **Votes: 6**

**The nature plan should prioritise inspection of ditches, keep clear water courses and educate about the role of ditches and trees that soak up the water so that essential trees are preserved, flooding prevented, ditches good and wildlife habitat restored.**

Addendum: Can Anglian Water who maintain large water courses and Colchester Council who manage smaller water courses communicate as to who does what to avoid confusion and inactivity

Tiptree – **Votes: 4**

**The nature plan should prioritise connecting green spaces across Tiptree in an accessible way via footpaths and providing information about them (in printed trail guides, social media, apps etc)**

so that they are used and protected/ cared for, people are aware of and educated about them and thus feel connected to them and feel a sense of local pride

## Area of focus: Making more local green spaces for nature and residents

### Tiptree – Votes: 11

#### **Education, education, education**

- Children educate adults
- Adults educate children
- Feedback loop! (see picture)
- Reused post-its from previous session for clarity
  - Use resources from local businesses e.g. garden centre
  - Give kids things to grow
  - Booklet on wildflowers / wildlife produced by schools

### Tiptree – Votes: 11

#### **Jamland needs YOU!!!**

- **Prioritise and inspire the local community to be champions of the environment**
- **Identify community champions of all ages**

#### Through

- Inspiring (non) gardeners
- Developing community spaces
- Coordinating litter picks etc

### Tiptree – Votes: 6

#### **Clarify which footpaths you...**

- **Can use**
- **Can't use**
- **Are under threat**

And have someone to co-ordinate action to ensure access for all including:

- Developing 'human' corridors so we can get to green spaces
- Marked routes

### Tiptree – Votes: 1

#### **Develop a plan to inform, engage and empower the local community to protect and improve our environment**

- Ensure they know what is there and can see the benefits of it
- Inform them of the risks of apathy

Area of focus: Challenges and opportunities of development and urban influence - how can the Council support and influence

Tiptree – **Votes: 17**

**Encourage 'quick and easy' and longer-term actions on new developments to help improve nature - a Local Nature Plan will involve prioritising holding developers to account with consequences if they undermine nature and biodiversity**

- What this would look like
  - Correct and appropriate planting
  - Better management of green spaces on new developments
  - Better enforcement of planning promises
- Ideas/initiatives
  - Add things to your garden to support wildlife – e.g. small pond, insect hotel
  - No mow areas
  - Pollinator friendly plants
  - These are things that could be provided by local garden centre – paid for by the developers
  - More about general developer responsibility

Tiptree – **Votes: 7**

**Protect wildlife corridors - A Local Nature Plan will encourage the protection and further development of wildlife corridors**

- Map existing corridors (including private gardens) and work out how to fill the gaps  
Note – this was a new addition at the end)
- Parish council to provide literature on wildlife corridors and how to support it
- Why important? Maintain the natural beauty of the area.
  - Fear that corridors are being lost as a result of new developments
- What could it look like? Traffic free areas?

Tiptree – **Votes: 2**

**Engage the future generation - A Local Nature Plan will involve engaging and inspiring children and young people to value and actively care for their local environment**

- Why? Continuity – need to protect green spaces for the future
- Create new plans and ideas for nature in the future – needs to keep evolving
- Create a sense of pride for their environment
- Instilling a sense of ownership
- Ideas: Schools getting involved in local action groups, bird boxes, guerrilla gardening, planting wildlife
- Use local businesses to strengthen the initiatives with resources and donations

# Conclusions

## Synergies, comparison and contrasting across the workshops

### What works/What does not work

There are areas of 'What works' that emerged as themes across all three workshops, such as the value of community engagement and a wide range of positive examples of local work that is going on; initiatives that are improving wildlife, green spaces and engaging community volunteers, especially practical projects. Conservation and protected approaches were valued particularly in Wivenhoe and Tiptree, and the CANS community group were also valued in Stisted, with smaller but practical examples of community initiatives mentioned.



There is an obvious contrast between the two larger villages of Wivenhoe and Tiptree, and the small rural village of Stisted (population of 600). The greater leverage that the two larger places have, was highlighted by participants in the list of projects working well – such as the range of successful conservation approaches in Wivenhoe and the successful approaches to planning and development in Tiptree, that both councils have been able to invest in over time.

Tiptree participants also referenced 'site surveys' that give a good indication of wildlife in those areas, which was also desired more in Wivenhoe. There is a desire in the discussions across all the workshops, for more information, practical things to get involved with and a desire to involve more of the community. There were several references over the day about what residents can do themselves (especially if they have gardens).

Regarding things participants suggested were not working well in their view, synergies across all the workshops include increasing traffic and car pollution, and the over management of green spaces and verges for example. There was a desire expressed by participants that more could be done to use green spaces owned by the councils for improving nature and habitat, with a balance of education and awareness for residents that don't understand its benefits.



There were also comments by participants that more can be done to improve local infrastructure, particularly with regards to new developments, (in Wivenhoe and Tiptree) with some saying they feel confused about what their town or parish council can do and how much influence they can have.

## Concerns and worries

Overall – there were shared worries and concerns about the overall loss of habitat, wildlife, and green spaces generally, across all three workshops – including new developments and the impact on the loss of nature, and concern about the legacy for future generations. Issues around farming were raised – although with awareness with the need for business. Participants also noted that there was still a lot of ‘over’ management of green spaces that could be done differently to enhance nature, both on a small scale such as a verge or on larger spaces.



There was also some consensus about the role that individuals can play. There was concern about the lack of knowledge or personal accountability people can have regarding their own ways of doing things, for example not doing more for nature with their own gardens, or not getting involved locally with initiatives that support or protect nature.

Participants across all the workshops clearly see a role for the town or parish council for joining up different organisations, communication locally and enabling others to collaborate. There were also a lot of comments about how participants wanted more joined up working, sharing of information and improving awareness.

There were shared concerns for the future regarding the impact of development and future generations.

## Priority themes

### New development

- Overall common themes across the workshops included a desire for the town and parishes to influence future development in their area, featuring in the top two priorities of Tiptree and Wivenhoe.
- As well as holding to account – there was also the optimism that new development can be part of the solution, if pressure enough was applied for effective mitigations such as reducing paved and tarmac/concreted areas and protecting areas for nature - especially gardens as specified in the top priority in Wivenhoe.

### Residents play a role

- There was acknowledgement that there were many things that residents can be doing more of themselves, such as using their front gardens more effectively.
- There was acknowledgement that the town or parish councils cannot do it all, but an ask that they play a role to support people to make changes in their lives and be more conscious of the positive impact that could make, to enable and motivate residents; and to have a co-ordinating role for schemes and ideas.



### Enabling

- The town and parish councils were highly valued as enablers for the local community. This includes the role they can play with other larger stakeholders such as the county council – to attract funding, share knowledge and promote local schemes, rather than simply seen as the funder of all solutions.
- There were acknowledgements from participants of the funding constraints faced across both local and regional levels. There was a recognition that people understood that resources were limited, and councils could not simply pay for or be responsible for everything.

### Co-ordinator and convenor

- There were similar discussions across all three workshops, with participants seeing a value for the town or parish council to act as a co-ordinator or convenor – for example as a facilitator to help stimulate volunteers, enabling the community to do more themselves. There is an important role for the local councils to link people together, as an enabler, rather than being seen as the main provider of everything – but a valued role to stimulate others.
- There was some consensus that Councils can play a role promoting specific schemes and ideas such as carpooling or garden schemes – even if they don't own all of them – use their influence to promote them.
- Creating partnerships with other organisations, and sharing information and knowledge was also a key role for the town and parish councils – participants wanted to know more themselves, and wanted others to know more so they could get involved. Plus, participants were keen to know just how much was already happening – and where positive nature action was most needed.



### Learning and ongoing engagement



Taking part in the workshop has improved local engagement itself. Most participants said that by taking part they have improved their understanding of their Local Nature Plan, and that the workshop would make a difference.

There was value placed by participants, for continuing further engagement with the community, and acknowledgment that the workshop was only a sample of residents at a moment in time.

Participants were keen for wider engagement in the community to continue, for example recognising that children, young people and families' views are an important voice, as well as their engagement to get involved in different ways.

There was also acknowledgement amongst participants that not everyone in the community understood how important some of the issues were – this links to knowledge sharing and for example, finding ways to let people know why areas were being protected, or why a pathway is closed, or a verge not cut – and what the benefits were.



There was consensus that the parish has a role to protect nature both in strategy and policy but also in practical ways. No-one raised the idea that it's *not* the town or parish role to have a nature plan for example, or that the issue was not important.

Acknowledgement that resources and expectations are finite, and close collaborations with other stakeholders were critical, such as with Essex County Council, other organisations such as Essex Wildlife Trust and voluntary groups – as well as the local community.

For the delivery team – a longer lead-in time to cascade the invitations may have helped get a wider diversity of people involved, and the local councils needed more support for advertising – it takes time.



# Section Four

## The community workshop process

Nature is most important for the community that lives next to it and around it, so it is vital that the community has a say in how it is looked after. 'Talking about Nature' aimed to support three town and parish councils in Essex to create Local Nature Plans.

The ambition for each town and parish in the Climate Focus area (which includes Tiptree, Wivenhoe and Stisted villages) is to have Local Nature Plans, as was proposed in the Essex Climate Action Commission's (ECAC) *Net Zero: Making Essex Carbon Neutral* report. A series of three community workshops were developed to stimulate and test approaches to improve community engagement on local climate issues. The impact of local green infrastructure and biodiversity within a parish or town makes a critical contribution to the county ambitions for a carbon neutral future, alongside a range of strategic plans in the CFA.



### The overarching purpose of the workshops

A deeper insight was needed about what was important to residents. The LCE workshops provided an opportunity for a real 'ground up' approach for community voices to be heard and taken forward in the decision-making process, using the expertise of Involve and their team of facilitators. There was a great deal of insights already known on the issues around climate, biodiversity and green infrastructure across the county<sup>3</sup>. It was agreed therefore that a 'community workshop' would provide a deeper insight into what was important for people, to support the parish and town councils to create and inform their own Local Nature Plan.

It needed a deliberative approach. The workshop aimed to help facilitate a deeper conversation with residents about what's important to them, to help inform new Local Nature Plans. In turn, the Local Nature Plans created would complement and support the wider ambitions of the ECAC Net Zero report.

The approach used was to recruit and work with a group of up to 30 residents in each location (as representative a sample as possible). Recruitment would be via a promotional campaign led by ECC and supported by each of the parishes in the three different areas.

The intention was for the local councils to use outputs from the workshops to help inform or create a Local Nature Plan which will help determine how the natural environment in the area is looked after in the future. It would describe how the parish or town councils can best use its influence, funds and resources to improve nature and green infrastructure locally. It was also an opportunity to test out

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.essexclimate.org.uk>

the approach and create some resources, and momentum, for other parishes in Essex that want to use this type of approach in their own community.

The workshops would also inform the evaluation of the national LCE Programme on public engagement in climate action and policy, by contributing to the external national evaluation.

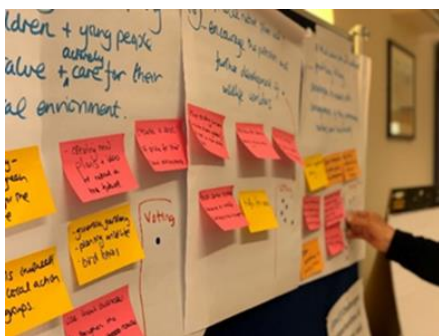
# The workshop planning

## Workshop preparation and planning

Each workshop was a carefully designed deliberative event<sup>4</sup> for residents, focused on local issues. Several stakeholder meetings helped engage local partners, shape the process, and ensure it had a 'fit' with local priorities, as well as meeting wider strategic aims of ECC. The stakeholders also agreed the overarching question.

## Deliberative public engagement

Deliberation is an approach to decision-making that allows participants to consider relevant information from multiple points of view. Deliberation enables participants to discuss the issues and options and to develop their thinking together before coming to a view, taking into account the values that inform people's opinions, and their discussions together.



The three workshops were planned, each with a similar approach, yet also with local priorities, and different speakers attending to support each local event. A project team was created with ECC and Involve, and a lead person from each local town or parish area was agreed. Each local area had an informal reference group to contribute local insight and knowledge, that included voluntary and community members that were playing a role locally and was not all members of the parish or town council.

Discussions with stakeholders helped to identify local issues and advise on speakers and content that could be used for the 'inputs' required for participants – such as the introduction talks, the content 'lightning talks' and 'advisory support' roles on the day.

This also provided the opportunity to agree important logistics such as accessibility, the suitability of the halls and catering arrangements etc – all of which contribute to participants' positive involvement in the event itself.

Involve led on planning and facilitation of the workshops, speaker briefings and the process planning - in close liaison with ECC and the local reference groups from each of the town/parishes.

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<sup>4</sup> <https://involve.org.uk/resources/knowledge-base/what/deliberative-public-engagement>

## The overarching question

The overarching question for the three events was:

**What should your town or parish council prioritise in their Nature Plan in order to improve and protect nature, wildlife and green spaces in your area?**

Depending on the numbers of participants that registered to take part, there were up to four breakout groups to focus on different elements of the question:

- Group 1: What the council controls - manage what they own to enhance nature – such as public spaces, margins, pockets and buildings owned by the council, some verges
- Group 2: Making more local green spaces for nature and residents - not owned by the Council, but where they can influence, partner and enable others such as residents.
- Group 3: Protecting special green places for nature - enjoy the benefits without unwittingly compromising it, balance access to nature, with letting nature recover
- Group 4: Challenges and opportunities of development and urban influence - how can the Council support and influence

Under these broader questions it was agreed to be exploring biodiversity, with a broad focus on *town/parish and community land use and green infrastructure* for the parish and town council and its residents.

### Scope of influence

To maximise the impact of the events, the design of the participant discussions needed to focus on what the town and parish council can directly or indirectly influence. The Essex Climate Action Commission report made wide ranging recommendations aimed at other stakeholders such as those in commercial land use and farming. Other local stakeholders, such as landowners, commercial or industry stakeholders can be encouraged to play a part in their Local Nature Plan at a very local scale - where they can, and as many already do, but are not central to the workshop discussion.

It is widely known that issues for improving biodiversity and supporting nature are complex, especially when contributing to wider strategies for climate mitigation and net zero targets. The design of the workshops meant the ideas and suggestions from participants were well focused on issues that can be meaningfully included in the scope of their Local Nature Plans. All the villages are in different stages of maturity with their existing plans and environmental policy. At the beginning of the workshops, all of the town and parish councils committed to bring the issues and priorities raised by participants back to the council, and to include them in their plans where possible.



# The Process Plan

## Session times

Session times from 10am to 2pm for the day enabled around 4 hours, with 3:15 hours of content.

Session	Timing
Set -up	8am
Registration	9:30am
Session 1:	10am – Speakers and getting to know you
Break	10:50am
Session 2:	11:10am – Breakout Groups
Lunch:	12 pm
Session 3:	1:10pm – 1:50pm – Breakout groups & voting
Wrap-up	1:50pm – 2pm – Final words and Evaluation



Discussions with each of the local stakeholders created the following themes to explore in up to four groups, depending on the number of participants.

Participants were allocated to a group, with one area of focus for each. The number of groups for each workshop was determined by the number of people attending, and therefore the number of areas of focus. In Wivenhoe they addressed 1-4; Stisted addressed 1-2; Tiptree addressed 1-3

1. What the council controls
2. Making more local green spaces for nature and residents
3. Protecting special green places for nature
4. Challenges and opportunities of development and urban influence

The groups then considered the long list of ideas and actions they had created – and grouped them into themes where appropriate.

Participants were also invited to rotate around the room and have input into other areas of interest and discussion. As people changed groups, the table facilitators gave a brief summary of the previous group's work and the themes already raised. New participants could add or develop some of the ideas – consider if anything is missing – or add another priority area. The principle was that each participant could have input into each of the group areas of focus. The groups were the asked to select one of the most important to them, to develop into a sentence.

Final sentences were then displayed on the wall – in order for the group to vote on what was the most important to them.

## Speakers for each event

The local steering groups for each of the events discussed the options for contributions and knowledgeable support to participants for the day – the following were invited to contribute and be available for the day for discussion and questions from the group – however each was briefed not to influence the groups, but simply to bring useful information and local knowledge to help their deliberations. (Photo – Tiptree – local experts were on hand to answer questions and give advice.)

	Wivenhoe event	Stisted	Tiptree
Introduction	Cllr Tim Multon (Mayor)	Mark Hughes	Cllr Jonathan Greenwood
Lightning talk 1: Essex wide approach to nature - and why this matters today	Cllr Peter Schwier - Essex County Council - the Council's Climate Czar	John Meehan - Head of Climate Adaptation & Mitigation, ECC	Tim Simpson - Green Infrastructure and Drainage Manager, ECC
Lightning talk 2: What's happening locally and how we can make a difference	Mark Halladay - Resident and part of the event steering group  Michael Padmore - Treasurer of the Colchester Natural History Society and long-term Wivenhoe resident.	Kathryn Hughes - Resident and CANS, and part of the event steering group  Alex Stevenson - Jordans Farms	Joan Pinch - Essex Wildlife Trust
On 'tap' local experts	SME Jayne Rogers ECC  Plus speakers above	Plus speakers above  Mark Hughes	Plus speakers above  Cllr Diana Webb

# Participant Recruitment

It was agreed that the workshop would be a face-to-face event with complimentary lunch, from 10am to 2pm, and in a central location for each area, with a maximum of 30 people given the opportunity to attend, with up to 25 in Stisted (given their much smaller population – this was still an ambitious target). Dates were agreed for the venues, to avoid a run of bank holidays, the Coronation and Purdah during local elections. The workshops took place in 2023 on:

- 13<sup>th</sup> May at William Loveless Hall, Wivenhoe
- 14<sup>th</sup> May at Stisted Village Hall, Stisted
- 20<sup>th</sup> May at Tiptree Community Centre, Tiptree

The recruitment methodology was decided to be a broad social media and email cascade of the invitation and messaging, and link to a webpage for online registration. The recruitment process for was managed by ECC supported by the town and parish councils, with advice and guidance from Involve. The online form also gathered some demographic data about participants.

ECC created a 'media kit' with key information, and a web page with all the information and FAQs etc. Communication was mainly conducted online via email cascading from parish and town council to their contacts, with some paid social advertising and some local press (Parish and town newsletters) and social media. The messages invited people to the website with more of the information, options for support to attend, and to complete the online form to register. (A paper copy was made available if requested.)

The town and parish councils promoted the event by cascading the email to their local contacts, using their local 'newsletter' and local social media. It was anticipated that from a wider range of registrations stimulated by the media campaign, a more representative sample of the community could be chosen to take part, than a first come, first served approach. ECC would then liaise with the selected participants to do final 'onboarding' and create the final list of participants. A sample of the ECC 'Talking about Nature' webpage gave the following information:



*How do I get involved?*

*Everyone from across the town or parish is welcome to apply. To get involved we ask that you fill out a short application providing us with information about you.*

*We are asking these questions as there is only capacity for roughly thirty individuals to attend each workshop. We will select a group based on survey answers which reflects the local community. It is important the event is as representative of the town/parish as possible using characteristics such as gender, age, location etc. Selection is anonymised and random, we want to hear from a diverse group of people.*

*You are not eligible to apply if you:*

- *Are an elected representative from any level of government.*
- *Are an employee of a political party.*
- *Do not live within the town/parishes of Stisted, Tiptree and Wivenhoe.*

## The recruitment approach

It was agreed to approach recruitment for the workshops using a media campaign, online form, lunch provided, but without an honorarium or participant gift, as it was intended to keep the budget to a minimum in the current financial climate. This also gave the opportunity to test out how local councils can deliver this type of deeper deliberative processes more realistically without specialist recruitment services, and with a limited budget. Formal recruitment approaches such as 'sortition' or a civic lottery can generate diverse participation but have significant cost implications.

It was also recognised that the media campaign for recruitment needed to start as soon as possible, to enable the messages to cascade, to encourage a good number and diversity of participants. It was anticipated that the workshop may be more likely to attract people who had less demands on their time (e.g. retired or without childcare demands), more likely available over a weekend, and who are already motivated by the agenda and therefore more likely to respond to give up free time. This can also mean however, that participants attending will have a strong desire to influence and get involved and turn up on the day - a common 'trade off' with this kind of deliberative approach.

Support was offered in the web page information for any additional needs people may have to take part such as a travel cost, although this was not highly profiled, and no one asked for additional support – all venues had good physical accessibility.

In order to help incentivise more people to apply – a shorter day was planned from 10am – 2pm, as a whole day would have been much more of a commitment. The impact on planning the running order for the day meant that the time for debate would be shorter than a full day – and there would be input from speakers would need to be succinct. However, these issues are always a balance in this kind of deliberative event.

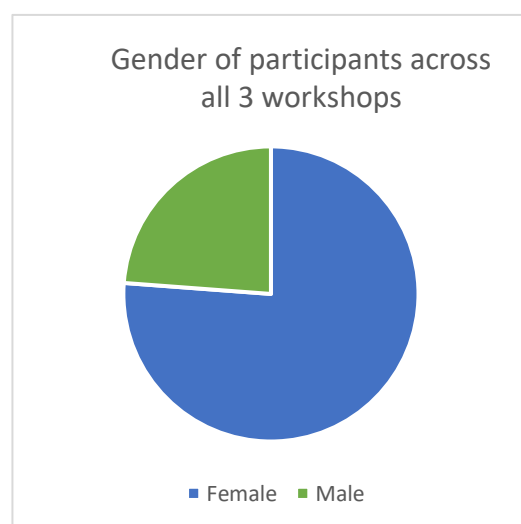
In addition, ECC offered a 'grant' for each workshop to the local councils – of £750 to be invested into top ideas that came out of the events, to add some incentive for participants, although this was not promoted in the messaging so is unlikely to have added to the incentive for signing up.

Participant recruitment can be a complex process and in principle is intended to help improve the diversity of participants, however no process is completely without its limitations. The important thing is to consider how to make it as inclusive as possible, and make it easy and attractive to take part, and to understand that the outputs and views of the session are only from those who took part – so may not be representative.

## Who attended?

The workshops in the end included a total of 63 people, who responded to an invitation in local media and communications – 27 in Wivenhoe, 20 in Tiptree and 16 in Stisted.

The following data collected from registrations of participants, shows some of the key demographics of those who took part. Further insights will be included in the national evaluation. Care

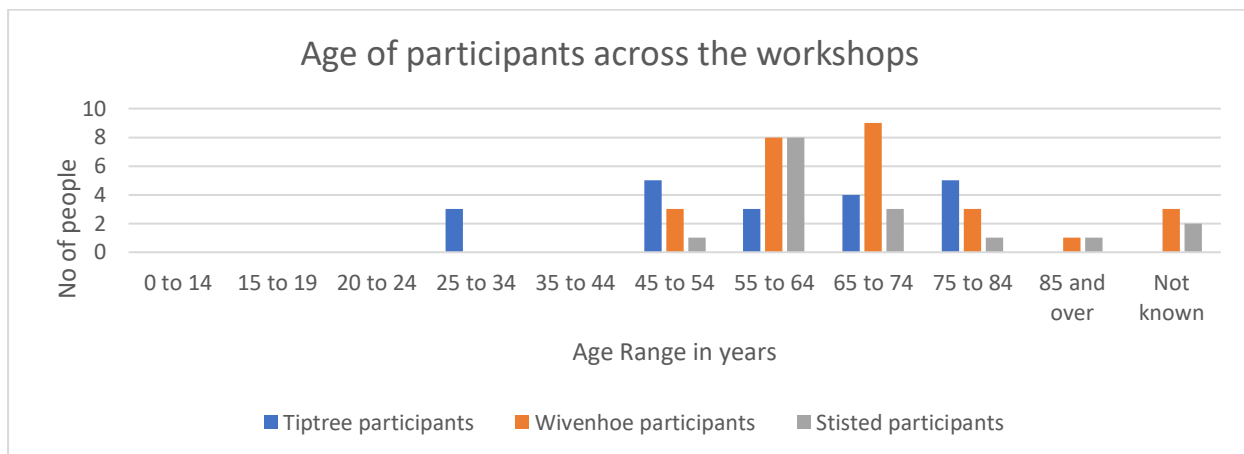


must be taken in comparing participants with wider data sets as the sample numbers are small <sup>5</sup>.

Overall, the numbers applying to take part were lower than was anticipated, however there were several reasons for this discussed in 'lessons learned' below. There was acknowledgement that a wider diversity of participants could have been more representative – however each of the workshops had a viable number of participants to make it informative and purposeful, and the insights generated provide a strong basis for ongoing engagement with the local councils.



Most participants overall were over 45 years old, with only three participants in Tiptree under 45. Participation was only available to people 18 and over. When compared to local census data, there were more women participants compared to the wider community, more people not working, and more people over the age of 55 years than the wider local population. There was also a lower number of people who declared a disability who took part, than in the general local population.



### How did people here about the workshop?

The final national evaluation is due to be published in Autumn 2023, however the following insights were gained from 14 participants in Essex, who have taken part in interviews for the evaluation. They were asked where they had *first* heard about the event (some saw it in a few places, subsequently). As far as they could recall:

- 5 had heard on Facebook (most if not all local Facebook groups)
- 5 through local nature groups they were part of
- 2 had seen posters (including one with no mobile or internet access)
- 2 through Wivenhoe society
- 1 via an email from Essex County Council

<sup>5</sup> It is important to say that the small sample size is small, and the data simply show the profiles of those who attended. Further insights of Essex attitudes can be found here <https://data.essex.gov.uk/dataset/2kr03/essex-climate-action-research>



# Participant feedback

Feedback was taken on the day and provided a good picture of the events. Overall, the feedback was very positive, with the vast majority of people feeling valued and that the event was making a difference.

	Completing feedback	Number Attending
Wivenhoe	28*	27
Stisted	16	16
Tiptree	18	20

The total number of people completing the feedback forms, demonstrated a very high level of completion, including a high number of people willing to take part in the national evaluation:

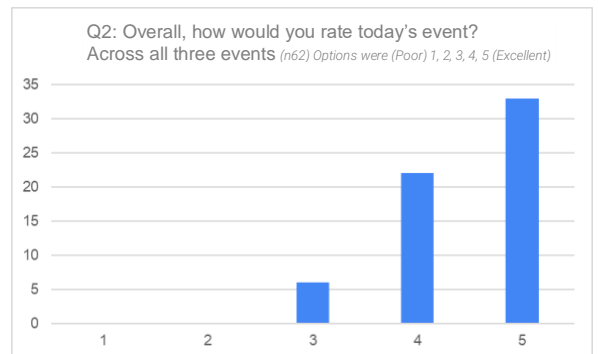
*\*It is assumed that a feedback form was completed by a guest on the day, showing that there were more forms completed than registered participants.*

Some key insights drawn from the results are below:

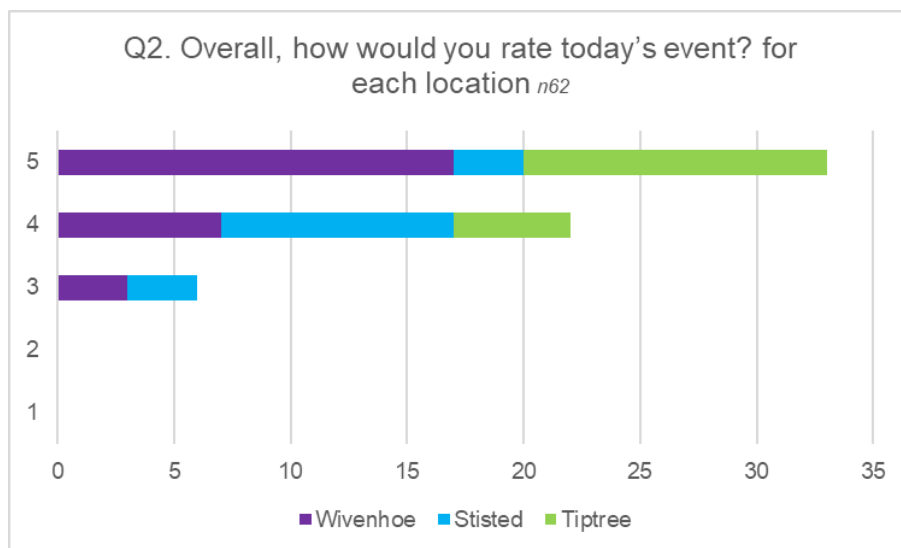
## Q2: Overall, how would you rate today's event?

Options were (Poor) 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 (Excellent)

The chart shows the combined number of participants across all three workshops giving scores for the overall rating of the day, with **55 people rating a score of 4 or 5** – showing a very positive experience of attending the workshops, although a couple of comments on things feeling rushed. The facilitators were also highly rated only two people rating 3, with comments that the group felt too big in Stisted.



A small handful of participants in Wivenhoe and Stisted gave a rating of 3, and no one rated below that, and one abstained.

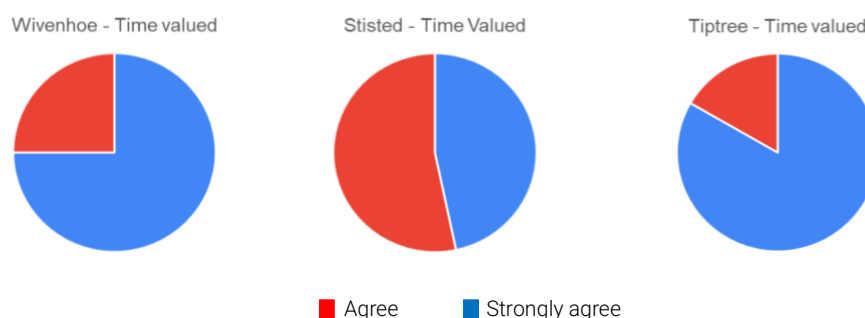


#### Q4: Please tell us the extent to which you agree or disagree with these statements about the workshop today

Options were - Strongly agree, Agree, Disagree, Strongly disagree, Not sure

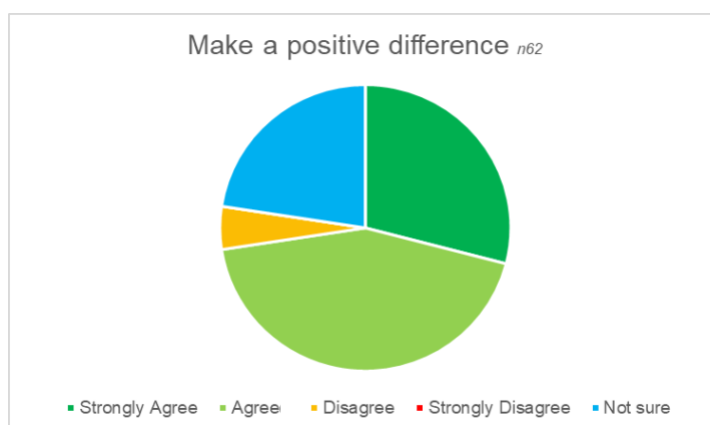
#### I felt my time was valued by the organisers.

Out of the 61 participants that fed back across all the three events - they all strongly agreed (48 participants) or agreed (18 participants) that their time was valued. The charts below show the rating broken down by each location, as a proportion. Most participants in the Tiptree and Wivenhoe workshops strongly agreed that their time was valued.



#### I think that what we have done today will make a positive difference to the council's Local Nature Plans

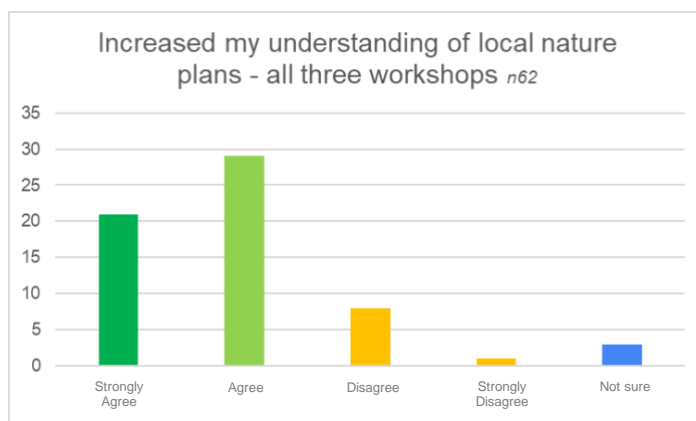
Over all three workshops the majority of people agreed (27) or agreed strongly (18) that the day will *make a positive difference to the council's Local Nature Plans* with only a small handful of people disagreeing. Importantly 14 participants said that they were 'not sure'. (See chart.) Additional comments from participants didn't illuminate the reason why people said they were 'not sure' – but given the high ratings for a positive experience of the day, there is some confidence to assume that this is because of wider issues and complexity associated with the impact nature plans can have.



Almost everyone across all three workshops agreed or strongly agreed that 'I am now more willing to take part in community consultation like this in future'.

## I have increased my understanding of Local Nature Plans

Participants were asked if they agreed or disagreed that their understanding of the Local Nature Plan had increased, as a result of taking part in the workshop. Overall, the vast majority (50) of people agreed or strongly agreed that their understanding had increased, shown in the bar chart for all three workshops combined. See chart.



Increased understanding of the nature plan			
	Wivenhoe	Stisted	Tiptree
Strongly Agree	8	2	11
Agree	14	10	5
Disagree	5	2	1
Strongly Disagree	0	1	0
Not sure	1	1	1
Total	28	16	18

When comparing each of the locations separately - there was a stronger agreement that participants' understanding of the nature plan had increased in Tiptree, (*highlighted in blue*) when compared to the other two locations as a result of taking part in the workshop. (See the table 'Increased understanding of the nature plan').

### General Comments from participants

More insights can be expected from the interviews with participants in the national evaluation – however there were a few comments in the feedback forms, for 'making it better for further events' included comments about including more young people and greater advertising of the event.

A few comments suggested participants wanted more information, either in advance or more clarity about what was existing and the roles of different councils – and a few reflected that they felt a bit rushed.



# Learning

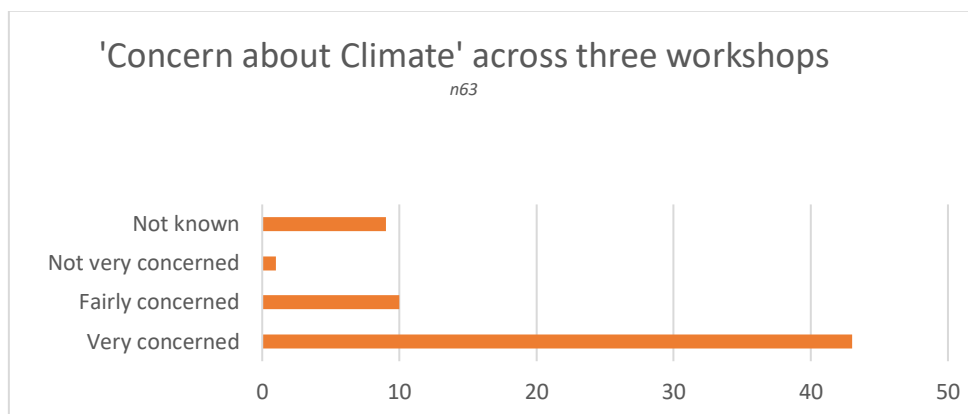
## Lessons about recruitment for further projects

Some initial reflections on the recruitment for the workshops are summarised below, and can be used planning projects like this in the future:

1. Lead in time: It can take some time to generate and pull together the messaging that incentivises people to apply and to allow the messages to cascade out to potential participants. The logistics around getting everything agreed and signed off across a range of stakeholders can be complex. Allow plenty of time. The timing of the invitations was also impacted by the Easter holidays, a run of bank holidays and local elections. The lesson was that it took longer to get the invitations, web pages and online forms ready, than was anticipated. Limited time meant that targeted publicity and subsequent promotion outside of social media left little time for targeted promotion to less heard voices or face to face to community groups.
2. Partnership: The town and parish councils cascaded and promoted the invitation to their known contacts and interest groups – which worked well. Their partnership with ECC was critical and gave residents a local focus. However, town and parish resources can be very limited and whilst they worked hard, they needed more help than anticipated and a longer lead in time than they had. Paper versions of the applications were available thanks to the town and parish councils.
3. Online: Whilst the numbers at the event were acceptable – the impact of not having enough lead in time, meant less time for the application deadline to cascade out, before it needed to be extended. Dates could be changed on live social media, but people may have not known this, and once people see a deadline gone, they will not try to apply. The learning is to be careful what deadline to publish regarding the sign ups to attend but do have the dates for the workshops themselves.
4. Using an online application form, and a web page with all the information and FAQs, enabled a lot more data to be gathered – such as the demographic data. This is very important to understanding who attends. It also enabled targeted promotion on social media and meant that the deadline for applications could be extended.
5. There was a dependency on a far-reaching cascade of the communications materials to reach a wider audience - In the future it may be helpful to have other recruitment methods combined such as door to door, street recruitment, and leaflet drops can also be considered should resources allow, so there is a combination, including a longer lead in time.
6. Concern about climate: The chart below shows that most participants attending over the three workshops were very concerned about climate issues (68%) (See the chart.). This can be helpful, and potentially contributed to the energy and commitment to the events.

It does also mean that those with less concern, and arguably less awareness of the issues, have not contributed so much, which could be a gap in insight, and something for the local

councils to consider longer term. However, caution should be used when comparing with regional figures as the sample size is too small.



## Evaluation

The national LCE programme is conducting an external evaluation, which will be a source of learning about the workshops – including learning from residents who took part – due to be published in the Autumn of 2023. The external evaluation will be looking at what could have gone better as well as what went well, and whilst exploring the workshops in Essex, will also cover the rest of the national programme.

# Recommendations

Participants clearly valued that fact that they had been involved. They were positive about the impact they could make and the following are ideas that could take local engagement further. This section gives a range of suggestions from Involve and have not been generated by participants in the workshops and are not part of the current LCE programme of work, either for the town or parish councils or for ECC – simply ideas that could be considered if time and resources allow or could be found.



- The use and impact of the £750 grants could be another opportunity to profile the Local Nature Plans and the impact of this work.
- Consider how the learning from these workshops and the development of the nature plans in Wivenhoe, Tiptree and Stisted, can be used to encourage other towns and parishes in the CFA to engage their residents and create nature plans. Ideas could include a 'showcase event' for towns and parishes, to profile the workshops, the Local Nature Plans and some feedback from the parishes and participants involved to show the value public engagement added.
- Access to further funding and support – ECC could usefully promote local funding schemes or grants that town and parish councils could apply to – or support community groups to access to support local activities.

## Towns and parishes

- Involve participants in the presentation of the priorities back to the town or parish councils.
- Ensure that the participants get a summary of the results and/or a copy of the final report – feedback is very important to recognise the input they have had.
- People want to be involved. Explore further engagement for Local Nature Plans with the community such as for children and young people, and younger adults, either in the development of the nature plan or in the delivery of activities, to help keep a breadth of views from different residents, with different needs. For example, ways to engage:
  - using 'pop-up democracy' at a community events, a local green festival (such a Big Green Week) or open days for example – these can be low cost and simple to resource
  - or two- hour community workshops with targeted groups of people such as people with disabilities – to gain less heard views and experiences. This takes a bit more planning and skill to facilitate but can provide deeper insights. (See the LCE resource guide.)
- People wanted more information. Consider using creative methods to sharing information and gaining feedback as time goes on about the progress, successes, issues and barriers to the nature plan implementation, such as community conversations on social media or blogs,

stands or exhibitions - with photographs and stories that people can relate to and see positive impact.

- Ongoing involvement in the plan - Consider having a local two or five-year review at the end of the plan, or part way through – including residents or a celebration of what has been achieved.
- Scrutiny - Consider creative ways for residents to take part in ongoing scrutiny, review and ongoing engagement with residents on the issues and priorities in the nature plan – such as collaborating with a local community group, publishing ongoing data about the issues for example using groups of children and young people via a school as researchers or ‘citizen scientists’ to monitor and collect data that the council can publish.
- After the national evaluation report is published, take further feedback about the role that the participants can or want to play to influence their local area going forward. Use the engagement already created from the participants. Invite them back to a launch event or celebration.
- It could be an interesting line of enquiry to compare the participants of the workshops and their attitude towards climate issues – with the wider population, using insights ECC already has, although caution must be used as the sample numbers are too low for direct comparison. However, insights may add to the information that local parish and town councils can use<sup>6</sup>.

## Further resources for community engagement

There are many ways of involving the community going forward and whilst meaningful engagement would need resourcing, planning and funding, they could be part of ongoing engagement and support for the nature plans.

Community engagement can focus on a more specific local issue, or the wider nature issues – a few ideas are here:

- Involve tools and resources for community engagement -  
<https://involve.org.uk/resources/methods>
- See the tools and support from Essex Association of Local Councils here –  
<https://ealc.gov.uk/climate-in-essex/>
- See the ‘Essex LCE Resource Guide for a community workshop for some ideas, soon to be published.

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<sup>6</sup> <https://data.essex.gov.uk/dataset/2kr03/essex-climate-action-research>