

The North East Biodiversity Forum
Attitudes towards Biodiversity
in the North East of England
Research Report
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Executive Summary

Background

The **North East Biodiversity Forum** (the Forum), via **Natural England**, commissioned Marketwise Strategies to carry out research into **attitudes towards biodiversity** amongst the **general public** in the **North East** of England. This is the first **representative survey** of attitudes towards biodiversity in the North East of England. The results of this survey are designed to act as a **benchmark** against which future phases can be measured.

Research objectives

The research brief focused on Indicator 16: Public Attitudes to Biodiversity within ***Biodiversity Indicators and Targets for the North East of England***. Indicator 16 recognises the important role played by the public in supporting action to help increase biodiversity but lack of understanding of the term acts as a barrier to strong public concern for biodiversity conservation – research by Defra in 2001 found that **only 26% of English respondents were aware of the term ‘biodiversity.’** Detailed research objectives were set by the Forum to:

- Help in its reporting against the regional biodiversity Indicator 16; and
- Inform future awareness-raising activity by the Forum and its members.

The objectives included an assessment of the North East public’s **awareness** and **understanding** of biodiversity; and **attitudes** towards and **interaction** with the natural environment.

Methodology and sample profile

Quantitative interviews were carried out with **988 respondents** across the North East. Those living in all four North East **sub-regions**, the major **urban**

conurbations and a spread of **rural locations** were represented. The sample was representative of the gender, age and socio-economic profile of the North East population. It was closely representative of the population in terms of urban rural classification and to ensure more accurate representation was **weighted** slightly.

Interviews were conducted on street locations in busy town or city centres. They lasted approximately **15 minutes** and were carried out by experienced Market Research Society-accredited interviewers. The completed questionnaires were entered into specialist survey software **Snap 9.0**. Data collection was checked by validating 10% of interviews and verifying 10% of data entry.

Key findings

Awareness and understanding of biodiversity

32% of respondents claimed to have definitely **heard of biodiversity**; higher than the 26% recorded in the Defra 2001 survey of public attitudes. This was, however, considerably lower than awareness of other environmental terms put to respondents. 47% were definitely aware of sustainable development and 89% of global warming.

Many respondents (33%) confused the meaning of biodiversity with **'biodegradability'** and some with biofuel and carbon-offsetting. **31% correctly understood it to mean 'the variety of living things.'** Respondents were more likely to perceive biodiversity to be **decreasing** rather than increasing, especially throughout the world, as opposed to in the North East. Approximately one fifth of respondents cited examples of **human activity** that reduce biodiversity in the North East.

Arguments for conserving biodiversity / nature

Respondents demonstrated a **'passively positive'** attitude towards the natural environment. **85% agreed that the world would be boring with fewer species** and 83% that it is important that there is a wide variety of species in the North East. However, when asked about things they actually **thought** or **did**, respondents' attitudes were less positive. For instance, more respondents disagreed than agreed that they regularly thought about the loss of biodiversity in the world.

Respondents were also positive towards the wider environment in terms of recognising biodiversity's positive effect on people's **health and propensity to exercise**. Over three quarters agreed that plants and trees reduce the impact of climate change and accepted that climate change is partly responsible for extreme weather. Respondents were **less convinced** about whether reduced biodiversity would negatively **impact on tourism** in the North East. **58% did, however, state that biodiversity does benefit our society** and many could provide examples supporting this opinion.

Key natural assets in the North East

Many respondents **generalised** when asked to name important natural assets, for instance mentioning beaches, parks and the countryside. **Municipal** parks were commonly cited as important to respondents' **local area**, whereas more large scale tourist attractions were mentioned as being important to the **region**, for example **Kielder** or **High Force**.

Well over half of respondents believed their **local authority should do more** to protect and enhance biodiversity, especially those in Middlesbrough, Durham and Sunderland.

Interaction with the local environment

Respondents were most likely to **regularly visit 'natural' spaces near to them**. 40% had visited a park or green open space in a large town or city within the past week. However, over half of respondents had visited a large, wild open space away from towns within the last six months. People were least likely to have visited formally designated natural places, such as nature reserves.

8% of respondents were members of environmental or wildlife organisations and **3% had taken part in voluntary work** with such organisations. Respondents were more likely to interact with the environment in a more **passive** way, often at their home. In the last month: 73% had watched a television programme about nature; 45% had taken part in bird or animal watching at their home; but only 21% had gone to a natural place to bird or animal watch.

Findings by demographic characteristic

Respondents living in **urban areas** were more likely to exhibit **stronger and more positive attitudes** towards the natural environment and were more likely to interact with it than were rural dwellers. A strong relationship existed between a respondent's **socio-economic group** and their attitude to and interaction with the natural environment. Those in **higher socio-economic groups felt more strongly in favour** of the environment, were more likely to be members of environmental organisations, and better understood environmental terminology. Also, as respondents **grew older, they became more positive towards the environment** and were more likely to interact with it, up to a peak at age group 55 to 64. There were **few differences by gender**, although men were more likely to provide definite opinions one way or another.

Implications

The findings from this research suggest that people **do** regard a healthy and diverse environment as being important but they find it **difficult to articulate** the terminology and therefore to provide specific examples of whether biodiversity in the North East **is** in a healthy state. In order for the North East Biodiversity Forum to meet its targets for Indicator 16: Attitudes to Biodiversity, the North East public need to **better understand the biodiversity concept**.

A clearer understanding of the **real state of biodiversity** in the North East and the critical issues which need to be addressed may also help the general public focus on and support **particular initiatives** to safeguard biodiversity, perhaps by tapping into the strong regional pride which exists in the North East.

Whilst respondents were positive in their attitude, for many this was largely **passive**. The proportion being actively concerned or moved to action was relatively low compared with those simply believing biodiversity to be important. It might be useful for the Forum to aim to close the gap between supporting the desire to protect the region's biodiversity and actually becoming **personally involved**.

1 Introduction

1.1 Overview

The **North East Biodiversity Forum**, via **Natural England**, commissioned Marketwise Strategies to carry out research into **attitudes towards biodiversity** amongst the **general public in the North East of England**. Previous attitude surveys into biodiversity and related issues had been carried out, namely by **Defra**¹, but at a UK national level. This is the first representative survey of attitudes towards biodiversity in the North East of England. The results of this survey are designed to act as a **benchmark against which future surveys** can be measured, in order to track any changes in attitudes towards biodiversity and help evaluate the activities of the North East Biodiversity Forum.

1.2 Context

1.2.1 The North East Biodiversity Forum

The North East Biodiversity Forum is a partnership of organisations, covering Northumberland, County Durham, Tees Valley and Tyne and Wear. Its overall aim is:

*To support, encourage and positively influence the conservation and enhancement of biological diversity as a strategic issue in North East England.*²

The Forum is guided by the **UK Biodiversity Action Plan** and the objectives and actions set out in **Working with the Grain of Nature: A Biodiversity Strategy for England**. In 2004, it published the document **Biodiversity Indicators and Targets**

¹ Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

² Source: <http://www.nebiodiversity.org.uk/objectives/default.asp>.

for the North East of England. The targets include the creation and enhancement of various habitats (including semi-natural woodland, grassland and maritime habitats), but also the halting of the loss of particular species.³

For brevity, from hereon in this report, the North East Biodiversity Forum is referred to as the **Forum**.

1.2.2 Natural England

Natural England, the Government's **statutory advisor** on the natural environment for **England** was formed in October 2006. It is **one of the partners** of the North East Biodiversity Forum and the brief for this research was submitted by Natural England on behalf of the Forum.

1.3 Purpose of the research

The research brief focused on **Indicator 16: Public Attitudes to Biodiversity** within the (above mentioned) document: ***Biodiversity Indicators and Targets for the North East of England***. Indicator 16 recognises the important role played by the public in supporting action that helps increase biodiversity. However, evidence suggests that **broad sectors of society have little knowledge of the term 'biodiversity,'** despite it referring to a familiar concept – the variety of life. The Forum believes that this lack of understanding **acts as a barrier** to strong public concern for biodiversity conservation and reduces the likelihood of taking action, in the interest of biodiversity.

Research in 2001 found that **26% of English respondents** were 'aware' of the term 'biodiversity' and **50% expressed concern** over the loss of wildlife in the UK.⁴ As no similar survey of attitudes to biodiversity and wildlife in the North East had

³ Street, Margaret & Brodin, Nick (2004) ***Biodiversity Indicators and Targets for the North East of England***. North East Biodiversity Forum. Source: <http://www.nebiodiversity.org.uk/downloads/default.asp>.

⁴ Source: ***Biodiversity Indicators and Targets for the North East of England*** report, citing: Defra (2002) ***Survey of Public Attitudes to quality of life and to the environment – 2001***, Defra.

been conducted, the Forum aimed to conduct its own, within the region, on a triennial basis.

This research will be used by the Forum to:

- Help in its reporting against the regional biodiversity Indicator 16: Public Attitudes to Biodiversity;
- Inform future awareness-raising activity by the Forum and its members.

1.4 Research objectives

The objectives set out in the Forum's brief were to ascertain:

- The **extent of recognition** of the term 'biodiversity' amongst the North East public.
- The extent to which the North East public **understand** what is meant by the term 'biodiversity.'
- How familiar are people in the region with the **main arguments** put forward for **conserving** the region's biodiversity / nature?
- What people in the North East believe are **the key natural assets** of their local area and region as a whole.
- What **interaction** people routinely have with the natural environment, e.g:
 - specific **visits** to:
 - nature reserves;
 - green spaces;
 - countryside to experience nature;
 - **voluntary** work;
 - nature **watching** in their own yards, gardens or local areas;
 - membership of **wildlife organisations**;
 - watching **nature programmes** on television etc.

- Do people regard a healthy and diverse natural environment as being **important** to their lives and to the **quality of the region**, and why?

The Forum's brief stipulated that the methodology should be capable of being **repeated to enable assessment of trends** in public understanding. In addition, it was important that the results would be robust and **representative of the North East population**. Following discussions with the Forum, Marketwise Strategies recommended paying particular attention to ensure representation by the following **demographic characteristics** of respondents:

- Gender
- Age
- Socio-economic group
- Where people lived, in particular, ensuring representation across the whole region, including both urban and rural areas.

Our approach to ensuring a sample representative of the North East general public is explained in the methodology section of this report.

2 Methodology

2.1 Rationale for an 'on-street' survey

As the data required was to be robust and representative of the North East population, a **quantitative** methodology was adopted. An '**on-street**' survey was chosen as the most effective method of data collection to achieve a sample representative of the North East population.

The advantage of on-street research is that it is effective when sample **quotas** need to be achieved. For instance, researchers working in busy street locations can make an educated guess at a potential respondent's age, gender and, even, socio-economic status before addressing them and confirming this information. Carrying out research at a potential respondent's home, does not permit the same kind of initial assessment, as nothing is known of the person behind the door until they answer it (unless address and lifestyle data is purchased beforehand). A telephone database also would have needed to be purchased in order to conduct telephone research. It was not felt appropriate to recommend self-completion approaches (postal and online), as it would not be possible for the interviewer to qualify a respondent's answers to the questions exploring understanding of the term 'biodiversity.'

2.2 Sample

We aimed to achieve a **sample of 1,000 respondents** from across the North East region. Samples of around 1,000 to 1,100 are commonly used when drawing conclusions about a wider population. It is seen as an optimum sample size and is often used by government bodies and polling organisations. Achieving this size of sample ensures **that sub-samples are of sufficient size to enable meaningful cross tabulations**, for instance by age or location, to be carried out.

To ensure the data collected was as representative as possible, quotas were set by key demographic characteristic. In particular, consideration was given to those variables which may have some bearing on the results. For example, past research has shown that attitudes to the environment can vary by age of respondent. Therefore, all adult age groups should be adequately represented to enable analysis by this variable.

The sample was initially stratified by geographical location to ensure that the main urban conurbations and rural areas across the region were represented. Each researcher was then briefed to screen respondents to ensure they lived within that location. For instance, if in Newcastle City Centre, respondents were only interviewed if they lived in Newcastle or North Tyneside. The criteria in rural locations were slightly different. For example, researchers in Barnard Castle were instructed to only interview respondents who lived within approximately 20 minutes' drive in any direction from Barnard Castle. This ensured that any visitors to the countryside from urban areas were not classified as rural dwellers.

Each researcher working in a particular location was given quotas to ensure accurate representation by gender, age and socio-economic group. Section 4 shows the profile of the sample broken down by each demographic characteristic.

2.3 Quantitative interviews

Interviews were conducted by experienced Market Research Society (MRS)-accredited interviewers in **10 locations across the North East** (see Section 4 for a breakdown of the sample by location). Interviewers stood in busy locations throughout the day in order to capture responses from the full range of the population in terms of working status. Those that worked standard 9:00am to 5:00pm hours were interviewed during their lunch breaks. People who kept non-standard working hours were interviewed at various times. These included people who looked after the home, were retired, unemployed or studying at college / university.

Respondents were taken through a quantitative questionnaire, consisting mainly of closed questions, where the selecting of one or more of a series of options was required. However, some open-ended questions were asked to gather more detailed feedback from respondents. A copy of the questionnaire is shown in

Appendix 1. The questionnaire took, on average, around **15 minutes** to complete. All interviews were conducted in accordance with the MRS Code of Conduct. Completed questionnaires were entered into specialist survey software Snap 9.0.

2.4 Quality control

MRS procedures were followed to ensure that the **data collected was accurate** and reliable. **10% of respondents** were telephoned (within four weeks of taking part in the survey) to conduct a validation interview. A Marketwise Strategies researcher asked each of these respondents a series of qualifying questions to ensure that the interview had actually taken place and that key data about them had been recorded correctly. This included the respondent's name and address, and the location of the interview.

The **data entry was also checked** using the verification routine in Snap by re-entering, at random, **10%** of the questionnaires.

Few errors were encountered and we could proceed with analysis of the data, confident that it was reliable.

2.5 Considerations for future phases

On the whole, the data collection was carried out successfully; however, we would recommend considering some changes in future research stages. In order to cover all the objectives set out in the brief, the questionnaire was longer than is ideal for an on-street survey. Feedback from researchers also suggested that **some respondents knew very little about biodiversity** and for those, the questionnaire lacked relevance. It was also a challenge to meet the quotas in some locations; in particular, capturing people in Durham who actually lived there was difficult as so many people visit the city for work, study or as tourists.

If, in future phases, the same methodology is adopted; the questionnaire should be shortened to last around 5 to 10 minutes. If this is not possible, a door-to-door / in-home interview would be more suitable but would have to be carefully designed to achieve a representative sample (by age, gender, socio-economic group), as outlined in section 2.1. This would also be a more costly approach.

2.6 Comparisons with existing research

As far as is possible, we seek to build on previous research. Therefore, where appropriate, we have incorporated into the questionnaire, similar or identical questions to those used in the Defra *Surveys of Public Attitudes and Behaviours Toward the Environment*.

2.7 Analysis notes

2.7.1 Displaying quantitative data

Please note the following when viewing results:

- The data as collected resulted in a largely representative sample of North East adults (16 and over). However, the data was **weighted** slightly to compensate for a slight imbalance in sample towards **urban dwellers**. This is explained in Section 3: Sample Profile.
- **Base sizes** are defined on all charts and describe who should have responded and who actually did respond; for example, '**All respondents who chose to reply**.' If the question was not asked to all respondents this is noted. The **weighted base size**⁵ is then shown – which should be 988 (see Section 3: Sample Profile), if all replied – either in the sub-heading or on the X axis beside the relevant label. The percentages shown in the chart are calculated from the displayed base size, i.e. 'the number who replied.' An example of a chart title is given overleaf:

Q8. In your opinion, does biodiversity provide any practical benefits to our society?

Base: All respondents who chose to reply (986 replied)

⁵The weighted base is generally the same as the unweighted base unless there were a number of non-responses to the question, which may lead to the unweighted base being slightly different to the weighted base.

- Cross-tabulations have been carried out, in particular, by respondents' gender, age, socio-economic group and whether they lived in an urban or rural area. These cross tabulations have been analysed for every quantitative question. We have highlighted in the discussion of findings for each question where patterns of response, by these geo-demographic characteristics, are evident.

2.7.2 Displaying qualitative data

Qualitative data (answers to open-ended questions) need to be treated differently to quantitative responses. Discussion of findings refers to themes and categories of response rather than hard percentages. We have, where possible and useful, allocated open-ended responses into categories and tabulated them. This helps summarise the overall response to a question but themes are often broad and the reader should keep in mind that these are qualitative data.

3 Sample Profile

3.1 Overall sample size

988 members of the general public were interviewed on street locations during September and October 2007. The following sections show how the sample was structured by respondent demographic.

3.2 Geographical location

To ensure the whole population of the North East region was well represented, interviews were conducted in busy town centre locations from Berwick-upon-Tweed in the north, to Middlesbrough in the south. All four **sub-regions**, all major **urban conurbations** and a spread of **rural locations** were represented (Table 1).

Table 1 Breakdown of sample by location of interviews

Location	Classification	Sub-region	Sample size	
			(No.)	(%)
Alnwick	Rural	Northumberland	49	5%
Barnard Castle	Rural	County Durham	50	5%
Berwick	Rural	Northumberland	50	5%
Bishop Auckland	Rural	County Durham	50	5%
Hexham	Rural	Northumberland	50	5%
Durham City	Urban	County Durham	84	9%
Darlington	Urban	Tees Valley	101	10%
Newcastle	Urban	Tyne & Wear	178	18%
Sunderland	Urban	Tyne & Wear	178	18%
Middlesbrough	Urban	Tees Valley	198	20%
Total			988	100%

Both the Forum and Marketwise Strategies felt it was important to explore any **potential differences in attitude between urban and rural dwellers**. However, it

was also important to, simultaneously, ensure the sample **represented the North East population** as closely as possible.

The accepted definitions of 'urban' and 'rural' have gradually developed over time and there is a considerable body of work in this area. The government, through cross-departmental initiatives, produced the **ONS Rural Definition in 2004**. This is available at Census Output Area, Census Super Output Area and Ward levels. It classified parts of large market towns, such as Berwick or Hexham, as urban. In 2005 **Defra** produced an updated definition of urban and rural areas by **Local Authority (LA) Classification**. As this classification was at local authority level, it effectively classified **large market towns** in rural districts as rural – in recognition of their function as centres of rural communities.

Figure 1 shows the Defra LA urban rural classifications mapped across the North East region as reproduced in NERIP's report: *Spacial Analysis of Economic Flows in North East England* in 2006.⁶

The urban Vs rural assumption in terms of this research is that those living in areas outside the major urban conurbations of the North East will consider themselves to be living in the countryside or a rural area. They may, therefore, feel that they have closer contact with and more experience of the natural environment, which might affect the responses they have given in this study.

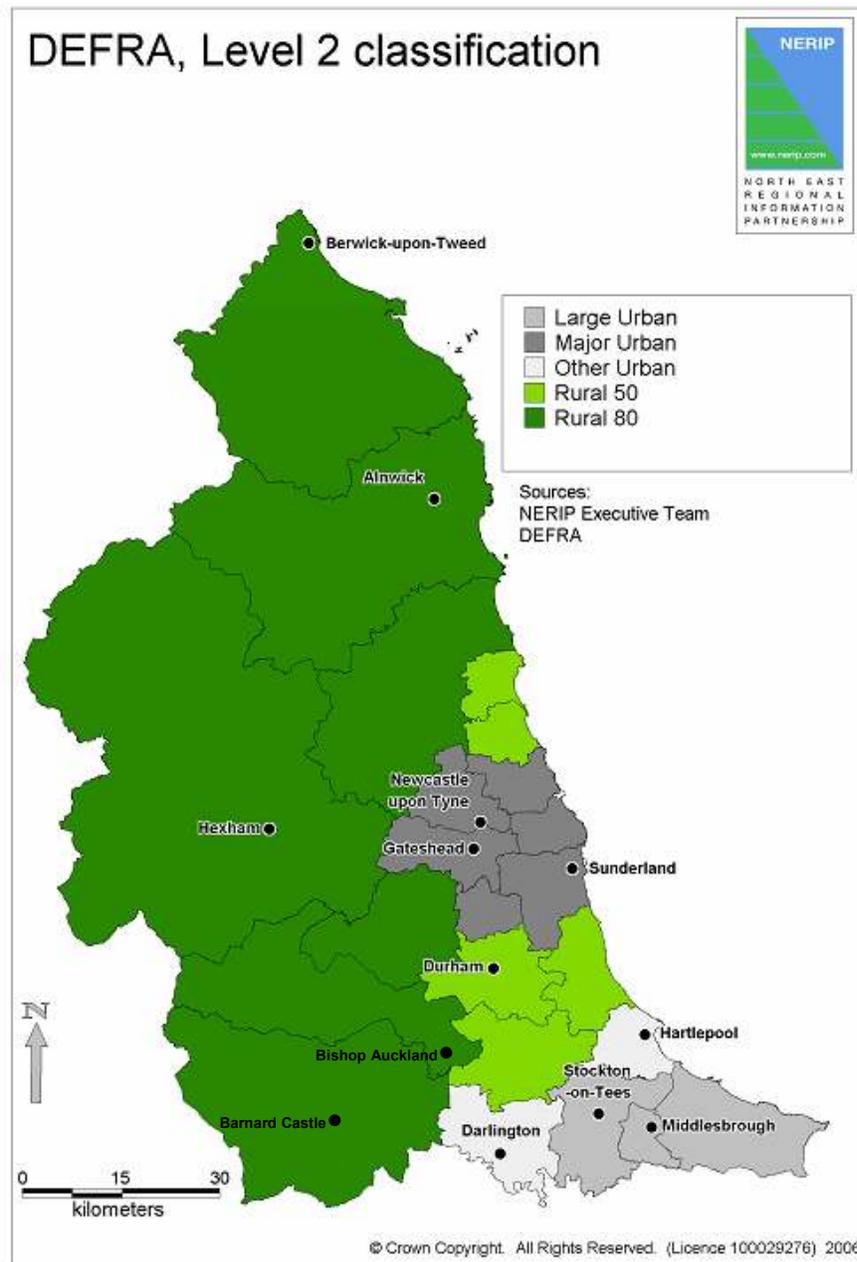
We therefore felt it was appropriate to base the weighting of our sample, in terms of urban rural split, on the **2005 LA Classification**. Figure 1 shows that each of the **market town sampling locations** designated as rural in the survey falls within an area classified by Defra as **Rural 80**.⁷ There was an exception relating to the urban areas, where the city of Durham, classified as urban for the purposes of our study falls within Defra's **Rural 50** designation.⁸ We believe that with Durham being a city and relatively close to Tyne and Wear, it should be treated as an urban location in this study.

⁶ Source: http://www.nerip.com/Reports_Briefing.aspx?id=259.

⁷ Rural districts with more than 80% of their population in Rural Output Areas.

⁸ Rural districts with less than 50% of their population in Rural Output Areas.

Figure 1 North East map of Defra LA Classification, reproduced by NERIP⁹



⁹ The locations of Barnard Castle and Bishop Auckland have been added by Marketwise Strategies.

According to Defra's 2005 classification, 30% of the population in the North East lives in a rural area.¹⁰ The proportion of the research sample living in a rural area was 25% (Table 2).

Table 2 Urban / Rural split: Research sample Vs North East population

	Research sample		Weighted to reflect North East	
	(No.)	(%)	(No.)	(%)
Urban	739	75%	691.6	70%
Rural	249	25%	296.4	30%
Total	988	100%	988	100%

When presenting the data in this report and displaying results of the sample as a whole, we have **weighted the urban rural split to represent the North East population**, i.e. increased the weighting of rural respondents from 25% to 30% (Table 2). This enables the results to be referred to as being representative of the public in North East region.

The comparison of responses from people living in urban areas with those living in rural LA districts **does not** use weighted data. Here it is just important that the sub-sample sizes are sufficiently large to enable meaningful comparison and the drawing of reliable conclusions. Any apparent differences by urban or rural dweller are highlighted in the relevant section of this report.

Further explanation of urban and rural classifications can be found on the Defra website and in various reports produced by NERIP.

3.3 Gender

We aimed to ensure that the sample was split evenly between males and females, in order to reflect the North East population¹¹ as closely as possible. As the sample closely matched the population, no weighting by gender was necessary (Table 3).

¹⁰ Source of North East population distribution by urban rural classification: <http://www.defra.gov.uk/rural/ruralstats/rural-definition.htm>.

¹¹ Source: Office for National Statistics (2005) *Key Population and Vital Statistics: Local and Health Authority Areas*. ONS.

Table 3 Gender split: Research sample Vs North East population

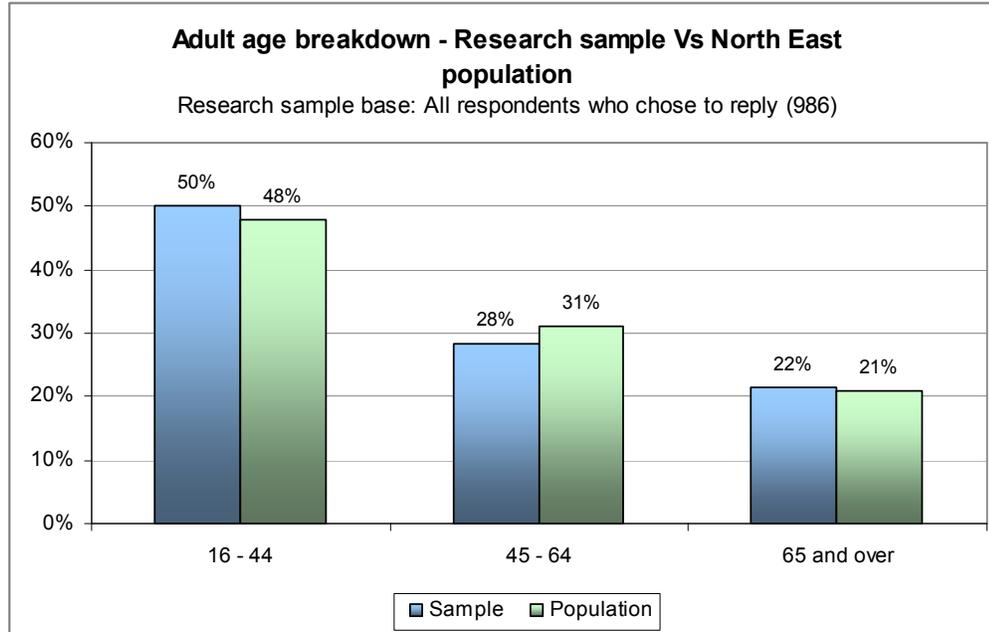
	Sample		Population
	(No.)	(%)	(%)
Male	498	51%	49%
Female	487	49%	51%
Total	985	100%	100%

3.4 Age

Standard age ranges of 10-year intervals were used to enable investigation of any potential differences in response by age (Table 4). These were matched against ONS data to ensure the sample was representative of the North East population¹¹ (Figure 2). This was deemed to be the case and no weighting was required by age.

Table 4 Age distribution: Research sample

Age range	Sample	
	(No.)	(%)
16 - 24	194	20%
25 - 34	150	15%
35 - 44	149	15%
45 - 54	140	14%
55 - 64	140	14%
65 - 74	123	12%
75 or over	90	9%
Total	986	100%

Figure 2 Age distribution: Research sample Vs North East population

3.5 Socio-economic group

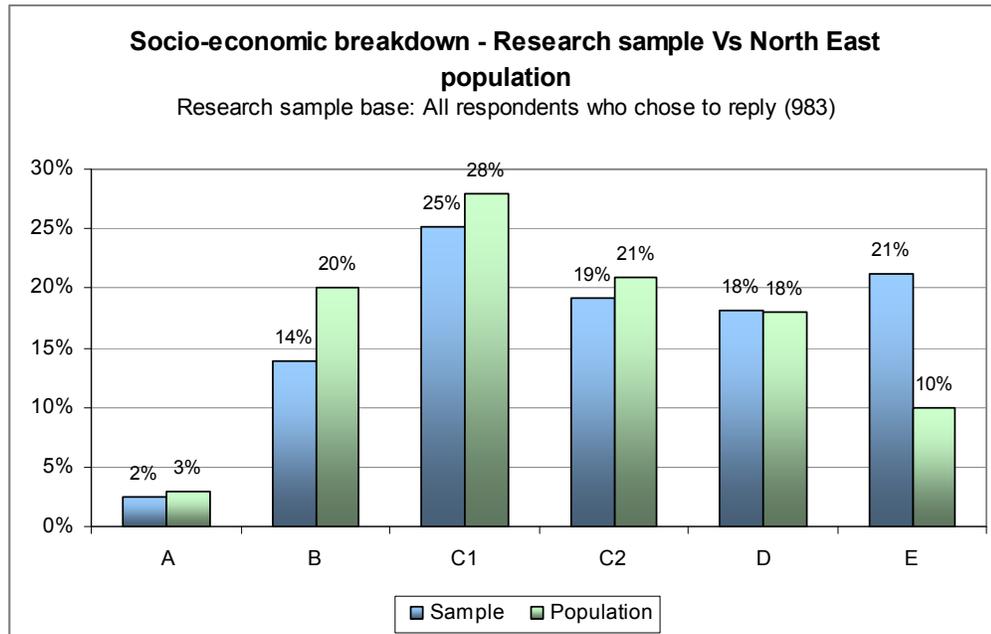
The Social Grade or 'ABC1' classification system has been widely used by the marketing industry for many years and aims to provide an approximate grade for a household's socio-economic status. It is based upon the occupation of the main wage earner in a household (so not necessarily the *respondent's* actual occupation). A summary of the occupation groupings is shown in Appendix 3.

Whilst more sophisticated systems have been developed, the ABC1 system still serves as a useful indicator of socio-economic status. As it only contains six categories, it is relatively easy to allocate a respondent to one at the time of interview. The relatively small number of categories also enables cross tabulation of responses by socio-economic group (with a sample of 1,000 respondents, sub-samples remain robust enough for this).

As with the other demographic characteristics we aimed to ensure that the sample was as representative of the population as possible. Data for the North East population was not readily available but Figure 3 illustrates that the sample closely

represents the UK population in terms of socio-economic distribution and no weighting was deemed necessary.¹²

Figure 3 Socio-economic group distribution: Research sample Vs North East population



¹² Source: Market Research Society
 (<http://www.mrs.org.uk/publications/publications.htm#occupation>).

3.6 Cross tabulations of demographic characteristics

There was some bias towards **younger respondents in urban areas** and **older respondents in rural areas**. Differences were not substantial, the largest being with the age group 16 to 24 years: 21% of urban respondents were aged 16 to 24 compared with 15% of rural respondents.

Almost all **socio-economic group A respondents lived in urban areas** but there was a higher proportion of group B respondents in rural areas. There was a higher proportion of group E respondents in urban areas. Similar proportions of C1, C2, and D respondents were represented in urban and rural areas.

42% of 16 to 24 year olds were allocated to group C1 (compared with 25% of the overall sample). There were relatively high proportions of 16 to 24 year old respondents in groups A and B, most likely due to some still living at home and one of their parents being employed in a highly paid occupation. There was some bias towards group D of 25 to 54 year olds; some bias towards groups C2 and D of 35 to 54 years olds; and a relatively high proportion of **55 to 64 year olds in group B** (24% compared with 14% of the overall sample). 36% of those aged 75 or over depended on income from the state, so were in group E, compared with 21% of the whole sample.

In summary, **rural areas consisted of a more average respondent** in terms of socio-economic group, and were biased slightly towards **older** respondents. The socio-economic extremes of groups **A and E were more prevalent in urban areas** and these were biased towards younger respondents. There was no distinct linear relationship between age and socio-economic group, although beyond age 25, there was some evidence of a trend of increasing socio-economic group by age, until retirement. This was particularly acute amongst those aged 55 to 64, 24% of which were in socio-economic group B.

Responses to all quantitative questions were analysed by the above demographic characteristics and any discernible patterns of response highlighted within the relevant sub-section of Section 4 Results.

4 Results

4.1 Awareness and understanding of biodiversity

Respondents were asked a series of questions in order to gauge how aware of and how well they understood the term 'biodiversity.' The questions expanded on those asked as part of the Defra surveys¹³ by tackling separately *awareness*, then *understanding*, of biodiversity.

4.1.1 Awareness of environmental terms

Gauging awareness and understanding of terms is difficult as many factors can influence a respondent's answer. It is possible, for instance, for someone to believe they have heard of a term when they are actually confusing it with something else. They might also confuse its meaning. We therefore felt that it would be useful to put into context the awareness levels of biodiversity by asking respondents whether they had heard of a series of other environmental terms.

Another influencing factor is that the respondents who are unsure whether they have heard of a term may answer differently; some may *think* they *must* have heard of it and so answer in the positive. Others may just say they don't know. To address this, we introduced two variations of 'don't know':

- *Think I may have but not 100% sure*
- *Don't think so, but not sure*

The options at either end of the scale allowed respondents to say whether they had *definitely* heard of, or not heard of, biodiversity. This should have left participants in no doubt as to which answer they chose.

¹³ *Surveys of Attitudes and Behaviour in Relation to the Environment* – most recent phase carried out in 2007.

Figure 4 Awareness of environmental terms

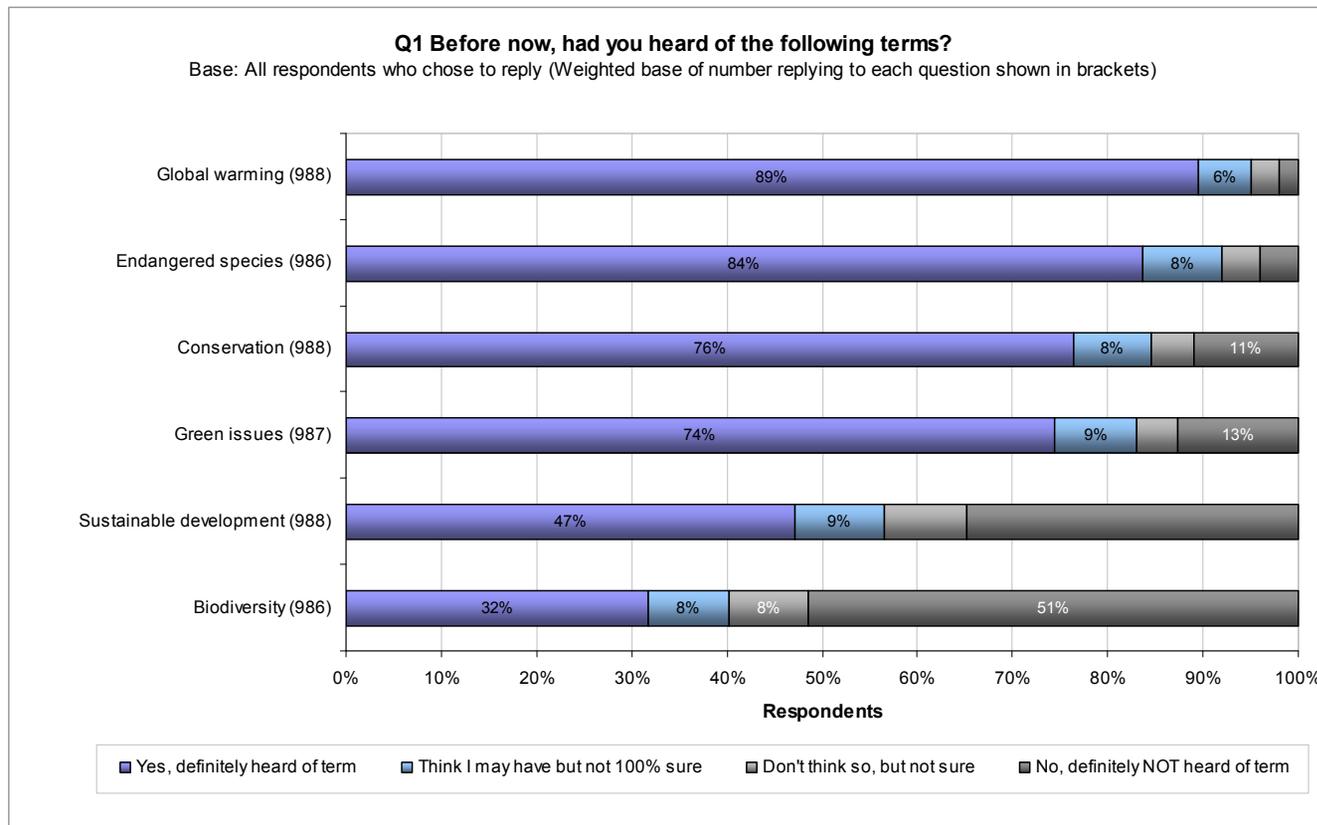


Figure 4 illustrates that the **smallest proportion, 32%, of respondents had definitely heard of ‘biodiversity’**; compared with 89% ‘global warming’, 84% ‘endangered species’, and approximately three-quarters ‘conservation’ and ‘green issues.’ Only 47% had heard of ‘sustainable development.’

Awareness of biodiversity rose to 36% amongst respondents **living in rural areas**. More rural dwellers were also aware of conservation; however, they did not exhibit higher awareness of all environmental terms – more respondents in urban areas than rural were aware of green issues and global warming.

Analysis by socio-economic group revealed a decisive pattern of response – in almost every case those in higher groups were more aware than those in the group below. For instance, **100% of those in group A were aware of conservation**, compared with 63% in group E. The variance was largest with awareness of biodiversity and sustainable development (Table 5).

Table 5 Awareness of ‘biodiversity’ and ‘sustainable development’; by socio-economic group (those ‘definitely heard of term’)

SEG	Biodiversity	Sustainable development
A	71%	91%
B	59%	74%
C1	40%	56%
C2	25%	43%
D	17%	38%
E	18%	25%
Overall sample	32%	47%

The youngest (16 to 24) and oldest (75 or over) age groups demonstrated consistently lower levels of awareness of environmental terms, with respondents **aged between 45 and 64 showing the highest levels of recall**. The magnitude of variation between age groups, however, did vary. For instance, only 56% of 16 to 24 year olds claimed to have definitely heard of green issues, compared with 87% of those aged 55 to 64 (31 percentage point difference). In the case of biodiversity, 30% of 16 to 24 year olds could recall it, compared with 42% of 55 to 64 year olds (12 percentage point difference). Only 15% of those over 75 had heard of biodiversity.

A **higher proportion of males** claimed to be aware of the environmental terms than females. Men were considerably more aware of biodiversity (36% Vs 27% definitely aware) and sustainable development (54% Vs 40%).

The 2001 Defra survey of public attitudes showed that, on asking whether respondents had heard of a similar series of terms, 26% had heard of biodiversity.¹⁴ Just over one third had heard of sustainable development. A comparison of the two surveys suggests that awareness of these terms has increased over time but it is difficult to state whether it is any higher or lower in the North East as compared with the UK.¹⁵

4.1.2 Understanding of biodiversity

It should not be automatically assumed that if a respondent is **aware** of biodiversity they also **understand** its meaning. Two questions were put to all respondents in order to assess their understanding of the term. They were first asked an open question: regardless of whether they had heard of biodiversity before, what would they say it means? They were then asked to pick one statement, out of four, that they felt best described biodiversity.

387 or two-fifths of respondents provided valid comments. The remainder were unable to provide an answer, apart from saying they did not know / had no idea / hadn't got a clue. The valid responses were organised into broad categories. Just over **90 respondents (approximately 9%) were able to provide a reasonably accurate explanation of what biodiversity meant**, i.e. that it was to do with life and the variety of it (Table 6). Comments ranged from a basic idea of the concept, to an informed view using the appropriate terminology. Some examples are shown below:

Having lots of different species of animals and vegetation

It's a range of animal and plant life

Different ecosystems and environments within one area

¹⁴ Defra (2002) *Survey of Public Attitudes to Quality of Life and to the Environment – 2001*.

¹⁵ Comparison with the latest Defra data would be useful but the questions covering awareness of biodiversity changed in 2007 making this more difficult.

The range of species and how they live and relate to the world around us

76 respondents recognised that biodiversity related to some kind of environmental issue, for instance:

To do with global warming - I think it has something to do with green issues/rainforest

Different things to help the environment

30 respondents also thought that biodiversity related in some way to biology, living things or 'something biological.' Several respondents just stated:

All living things

However, some attempted to work out the meaning from the word's elements:

It must be something about biological stuff - what you eat?

Table 6 Definitions of biodiversity

Category of response	Number of responses
The variety of life or similar	93
Environmental issues, e.g. global warming, pollution, resources	76
Recycling / biodegradability / waste	61
Fuel/energy sources, e.g. alternative energy	37
Relating to biology, biological, living things, related sciences	30
Other	26
The environment: natural and farmland	25
Relating to chemicals, chemistry, medicine	23
Diversity meaning change, difference	16
Total number of valid responses	387

There was considerable confusion with similar sounding terms, such as, 'biodegradability' and 'biofuel.' 61 respondents thought biodiversity related to recycling / biodegradability / waste:

You buy stuff that you know can be recycled

Like composting; biodegradable things

37 respondents believed biodiversity to be about alternative energy and fuel:

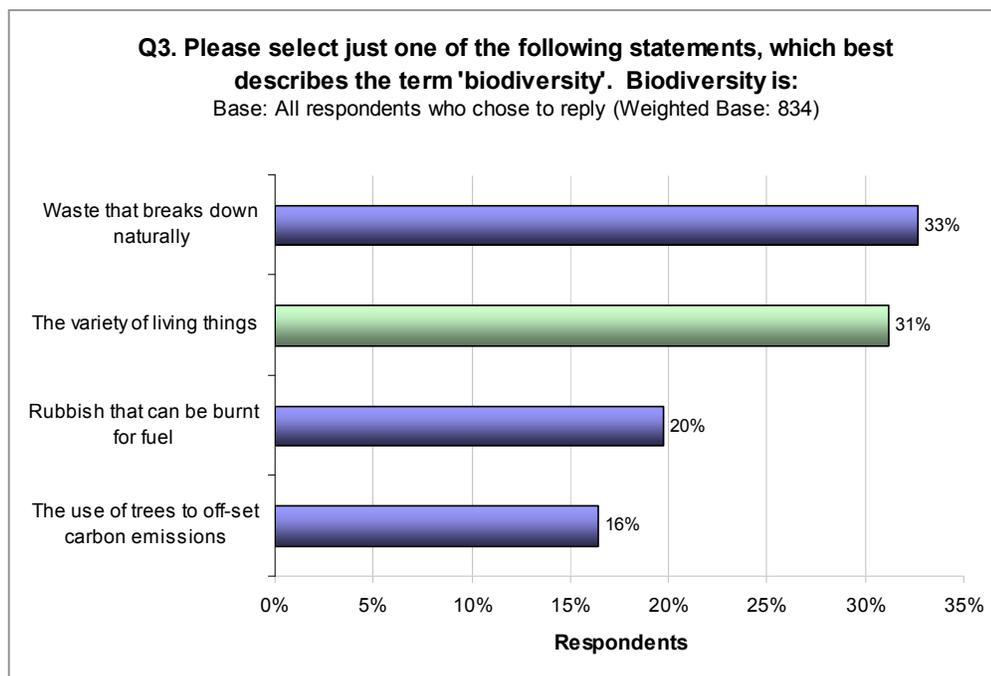
Using different things other than fossil fuels - anything that causes CO2 emissions, harms the atmosphere

I'm assuming it's bio fuels and the way we can use them

The full list of responses in all categories is shown in Appendix 2.

When presented with four potential statements that might describe biodiversity, the proportion choosing the **right option, 'the variety of living things', was 31%** (Figure 5). This was, however, slightly lower than the 33% choosing 'waste that breaks down naturally.' This illustrates further the **confusion between 'biodegradability' and 'biodiversity.'** That 20% felt biodiversity could be described with the statement, 'rubbish that can be burnt for fuel', also suggests that people are thinking of **biofuel**.

Figure 5 Definitions of biodiversity



This confusion was much **more pronounced amongst respondents of lower socio-economic groups**. For example, 24% to 27% of C2DE respondents thought biodiversity related to 'rubbish that can be burnt for fuel'; compared with 10% to 14% of those in groups ABC1. 55% of those in group A, 49% in B and 39% in C1 chose the correct description; compared with 21% or 22% of C2DE respondents.

There were also differences in the level of understanding by age. **46% of respondents aged 16 to 24 chose the correct description**, substantially more than those of any other age group. Only 20% to 21% of the older respondents (65 and over) chose the 'variety of living things' statement.

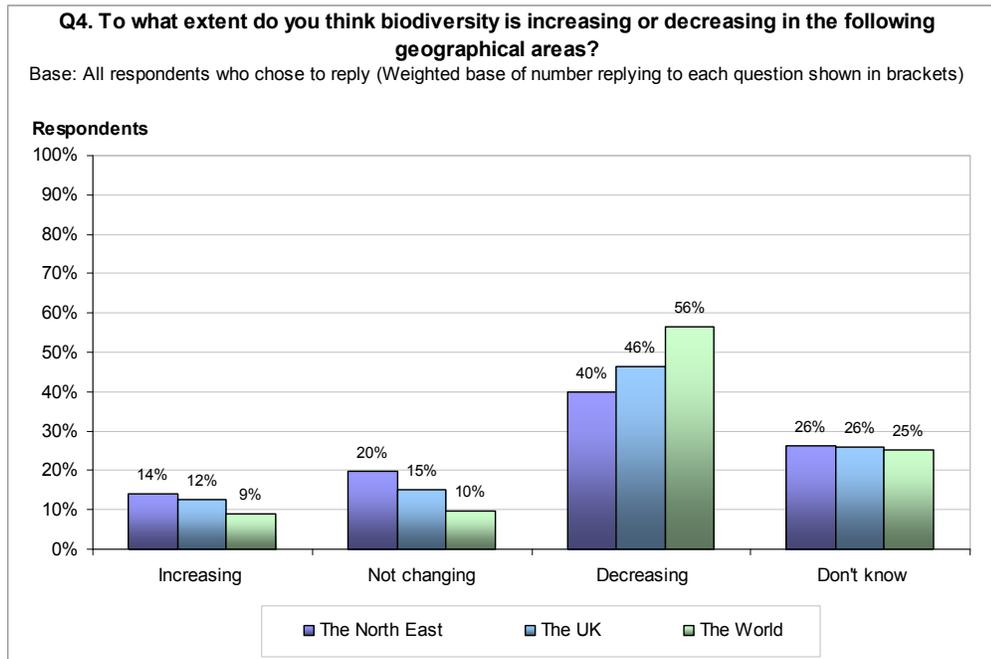
Finally, **male respondents were more likely than females** to select the correct description of biodiversity; 37% compared with 25%, respectively. The main explanation for this difference was that 37% of women selected the statement 'waste that breaks down naturally', compared with only 29% of men.

4.1.3 Perceptions of the state of biodiversity

Following the questions on awareness and understanding of biodiversity, all respondents were provided with a simple definition of the term. This enabled respondents to consider the remaining questions with the required knowledge to answer accurately and, if necessary, interviewers explained the meaning of biodiversity again as appropriate.

All respondents were asked to state whether they thought biodiversity was increasing or decreasing in the North East, the UK and the world. Figure 6 shows that respondents are more likely to perceive that biodiversity is **decreasing in the world (56%)**, compared with the UK (46%) or the North East (40%).

Figure 6 Perceptions of the state of biodiversity



Rural respondents were less likely than urban dwellers to believe that biodiversity was decreasing in the North East (22% Vs 48%, respectively), UK or the world. They were also more likely to feel biodiversity, on each geographical scale, was not changing and were more likely than urban respondents to state that they did not know.

Respondents from lower socio-economic groups were less likely to venture an opinion one way or the other, with 36% of group E choosing the 'don't know' option each time. This compares with AB respondents where, in each case, 16% or fewer chose to answer 'don't know.' There was also a **positive pattern of response, increasing in line with socio-economic group**, of the percentage believing that biodiversity in the world was decreasing (74% of group A; 46% of group E).

The most notable variation in response by age was that those **aged between 45 and 74 were more likely to provide an opinion** on the state of biodiversity in the North East, than were the youngest and oldest respondents. The latter groups were less likely to answer 'don't know' or suggest that biodiversity in the North East was not changing.

After stating whether they felt biodiversity was increasing, decreasing or not changing, respondents were asked to provide any examples of where biodiversity had increased or decreased in the North East. **More respondents were able to provide examples where biodiversity was falling as opposed to increasing: 440 and 299, respectively.** Examples of increased biodiversity are dealt with first and those relating to decreased biodiversity follow.

4.1.3.1 Examples where biodiversity in the North East has increased

Comments were arranged into broad categories as shown in Table 7. Some respondents provided comments which fell into more than one category, hence the total number of responses totalling 400.

Table 7 Examples where biodiversity has *increased* in the North East

Category of response	Number of responses
Increased numbers of / new plant and animal species	177
The existence / creation of local conservation / nature areas	92
Deliberate interventions to increase biodiversity	88
Other	25
Positive change in attitude and behaviour towards the environment	18
Total number of responses	400

The most common type of response, cited by 177 respondents, related to observing **increased numbers of, or new, plants and animals**. This included examples where respondents were unclear as to how this had occurred, just that there were larger numbers of a certain type of species or that new species were being (re)discovered:

Found beavers in the North East and Scotland

Nettles are now more common in the countryside - good for insects and butterflies.

A number of respondents named specific species, in particular red kite, red squirrel, salmon and otter. For example:

Red kite and other birds of prey species. Red squirrels, protection of water voles and otters

92 respondents cited local conservation / designated nature areas as examples of increasing biodiversity, although actual species were not necessarily mentioned. For instance:

Washington Wildfowl Park

Kielder Forest

Rising Sun Country Park

Some (18) people cited a general change in attitude and behaviour, which they felt was having a positive effect on biodiversity:

By going back to cooking from scratch, no fast food with packaging to get rid of

They are attempting to cut down on pollution

Recycling has increased

Finally, 88 comments referred to deliberate interventions to encourage biodiversity. These overlapped with the other categories of comment discussed above and included such responses as those listed overleaf.

Red kites reintroduced at Gateshead, rejuvenating farmland back to marshland for wildlife

Our school is planting trees, nature reserves are increasing in the North East

Whessoe Pond has been brought back as a wildlife sanctuary

Saltwell Park was been redone - plants and animals re-introduced

Saplings planted at Doxford

Mussels are being saved for re-stocking

4.1.3.2 Examples where biodiversity in the North East has decreased

As with the comments relating to increased biodiversity, examples where biodiversity had decreased were arranged into broad categories. Some respondents' comments could be allocated to more than one category. 440 respondents made a valid comment but 657 types of response were recorded. The other 548 said they did not know any examples where biodiversity in the North East was decreasing, or did not provide an answer. The main categories of response are summarised below and all comments listed in Appendix 2.

The most commonly cited example of decreasing biodiversity related to **human activity which was infringing upon or destroying the environment** (Table 8). Over 200 respondents made comments which fell into this category, some mentioning how this affected the environment in general, certain types of natural area, or a specific area or species. For example:

I don't think we make enough effort and there is too much development going on, new houses and apartments.

Hedgerows being dug up

South Park - Darlington - number of animals

Red squirrels out numbered by grey. Many garden birds, particularly sparrows. Many causes for this: some natural but mostly unnatural methods of farming. Over-urbanisation which also destroys habitat. Climate change also plays a part too; this, I believe, has been mainly caused by man too. Man is increasing and we have no predator apart from ourselves.

Penshaw - where the forests have been damaged by young school boys

No cod in sea. Stock has been over-caught

Table 8 Examples where biodiversity has decreased in the North East

Category of response	Number of responses
Human actions which directly decrease biodiversity	210
Specific species named	159
Decrease in natural areas as a result of building / development	154
Decrease in species due to building / development	37
Decrease in species - various causes	24
Environmental issues causing a decrease	24
Other	24
Decrease in natural areas - various causes	17
Specific natural areas where biodiversity is decreasing	8
Total number of responses	657

Many respondents, around 159, **named specific species**, in particular squirrels (mostly red), cited by 44 respondents; and birds, mentioned by over 70.

The third highest number of comments (154) was made in relation to the decrease in natural areas, specifically **as a result of building / development**. These included such responses as:

More and more land is taken for buildings and this destroys natural habitat for animals and plants

Certain wild flowers can't cope with the loss of habitat and modernised farming (methods). I would say most animals apart from rabbits are on the decline. You only have to look at the sprawling urbanisation to realise this

Cutting down forests and building on the last green areas in town

The above responses show that people have a general perception that human activity is affecting the environment in a negative way and that, in particular, housing development and urban expansion are causes for this. People can name species they believe are being affected but they tend to be the 'usual suspects', such as the red squirrel and various birds.

There were fewer numbers of respondents who could provide more specific and knowledgeable examples of where biodiversity in the North East was falling. 37 comments cited reducing diversity of species due to building and development, for example:

Increasing housing on the green belt

Some respondents (24) cited other causes of declining biodiversity in terms of the range of species, for instance:

I don't think so many plants or trees are being planted

The number respondents (24) cited specific environmental issues, including pollution and global warming:

All the factories polluting the air, and too many vehicles on the road

Finally, a handful of respondents mentioned specific locations they felt were examples of decreasing biodiversity or where it was decreasing:

North Yorks Moors

Scottish Borders.

4.2 Importance of and arguments for conserving biodiversity

The next section of the questionnaire included a series of questions designed to assess respondents' understanding of and sympathy with the arguments for conserving biodiversity and related environmental issues.

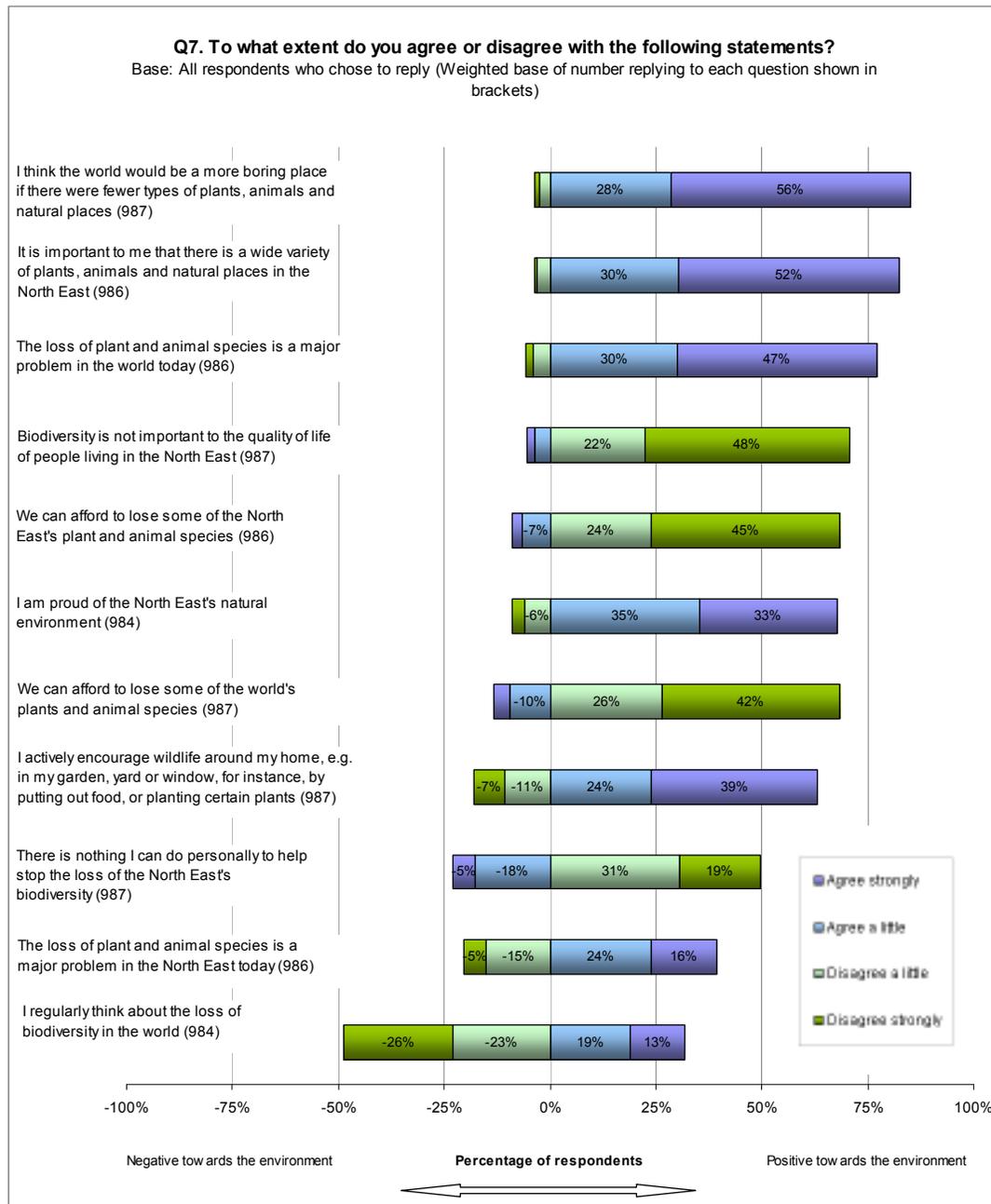
4.2.1 Attitudes towards biodiversity

All respondents were read a series of statements and asked to state their level of agreement with each one. The agreement scale used was: 'disagree strongly', 'disagree a little', 'neither disagree nor agree', 'agree a little', and 'agree strongly.' Agreement with some statements indicated a positive attitude towards biodiversity / the natural environment but agreement with others suggested a negative attitude. This was a deliberate feature of the questionnaire, designed to prevent respondents from simply choosing 'agree a little' for every question. Instead, the respondent was required to properly consider each statement before providing a response.

Figure 7 illustrates the levels of agreement with each statement on a scale that displays all responses representing a negative attitude towards the environment on the left of the Y axis, and all those representing a positive attitude on the right. **The statements are shown in order of the most positive towards the environment at the top and most negative at the bottom.**

In general, **respondents demonstrated a positive attitude** towards the environment, suggesting they supported the arguments for biodiversity. This was most decisively illustrated in relation to the statement: 'I think the world would be a more boring place if there were fewer types of plants, animals and natural places.' 85% agreed with this statement. Similarly large proportions felt it was important that there is a wide variety of plants, animals and natural places in the North East (83%). However, the strength of feeling was not quite as strong when respondents were asked to consider whether biodiversity is **not** important to the quality of life of people in the North East – only 71% disagreed with the statement (although this still represents a positive attitude towards the environment). A similar proportion (68%) agreed that they were proud of the North East's natural environment.

Figure 7 Attitudes towards biodiversity



When asked to consider how much of a problem the loss of biodiversity is, respondents were much more likely to recognise this on a **global rather than local scale**. 77% agreed that ‘the loss of plant and animal species is a major problem in the world today’, compared with only 39% agreeing that it is a major problem in the North East. 40% chose not to agree or disagree with the latter statement; considerably more than with any other statement.

There was a smaller difference in respondent attitudes when considering differences in whether 'we can afford to lose some species' on a global scale compared with the North East. 13% of respondents felt that 'we can afford to lose some of the world's plant and animal species', compared with 9% in relation to the North East. The result for the equivalent latter question in the Defra survey of attitudes 2007 showed that the same figure, 9%, agreed that 'we can afford to lose some of the **UK's** species.' Fewer respondents in the Defra survey, 9%, agreed that 'we can afford to lose some of the **world's** species.'¹⁶

The positive attitudes illustrated above relate to situations where a relatively **passive response** is required, i.e. an opinion about something when asked. The strength of positive attitude towards the environment begins to fall where a response represents a more **active or proactive stance**, i.e. where thought or action is required. The most pronounced example of this is demonstrated with the lower level of agreement (32%) with the statement, 'I regularly think about the loss of biodiversity in the world.' 49% of respondents disagreed with this statement, a much higher proportion than with any other statement. Also, only 50% disagreed that there was nothing they 'could do personally to help stop the loss of the North East's biodiversity.' 23% agreed with this statement. The result for the equivalent question (relating to the UK) in the Defra survey 2007, was almost identical: 51% disagreed that there was nothing they could do; and 22% agreed.¹⁶

Finally, 63% actively encouraged wildlife around their home; 18% said they did not do this. This compares with 74% encouraging wildlife in the Defra survey 2007 and 12% not encouraging wildlife.¹⁶

Some distinct patterns of response in attitudes towards biodiversity were apparent by demographic characteristic. **Urban respondents continually displayed stronger, more positive attitudes** towards biodiversity and the environment than did rural dwellers. For example, 81% of urban dwellers agreed that the loss of plant and animal species is a major problem in the world today, compared with 68% of rural respondents. 51% of those in urban areas **strongly** disagreed that we can afford to lose some of the North East's species, compared with 31% of rural dwellers. 36% of urban compared with 20% of rural dwellers regularly thought about the loss of biodiversity in the world. The exception related to the statement 'I

¹⁶ Defra (2007) *Survey of Public Attitudes to Quality of Life and to the Environment – 2007*.

am proud of the North East's natural environment', where marginally more rural dwellers agreed (70%) with the statement than did urban respondents (67%).

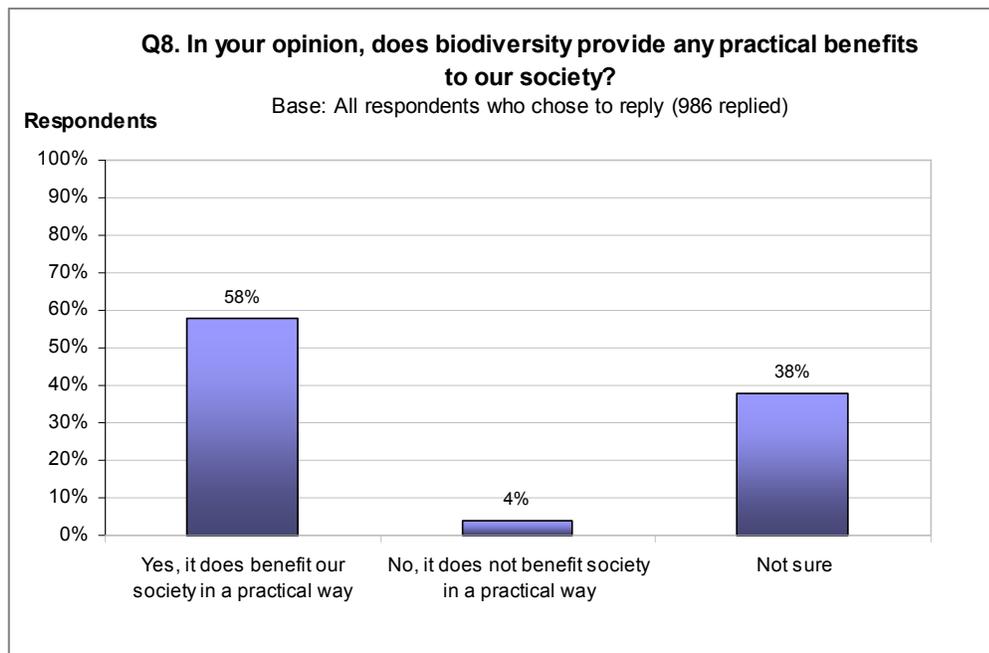
There was also evidence of some quite **clear patterns of response by socio-economic group**. In general, those in **higher groups tended to exhibit stronger opinions**, generally **in favour** of the natural environment. Respondents in groups D, E and at times, C2 were more likely to neither disagree nor agree. For instance, 40% of respondents in group A and 35% in B believed they could personally help stop the loss of the North East's biodiversity, compared with 12% of DE respondents. AB respondents agreed strongly (78% and 71%, respectively) that it is important that there is a wide variety of plants, animals and natural places in the North East, compared with 43% of respondents in group D and 45% in E. Respondents in group A were considerably more likely to think about the loss of biodiversity in the world: 29% agreed strongly with this statement compared with 16% or fewer of all other groups.

Variance in attitudes by age followed a consistent pattern. **As age increased, opinions in favour of the environment grew stronger**, that is, up until the age of 65. After this point, respondents were less likely to exhibit such strong positive opinions. Respondents **aged 55 to 64 consistently showed the most positive attitude** in their responses. 44% of this age group regularly thought about the loss of biodiversity in the world, compared with 25% of those aged 16 to 24 and 26% of those aged 75 or over.

There was very little variation in attitudes between men and women.

4.2.2 Practical benefits of biodiversity

All respondents were asked whether biodiversity provides any practical benefits to our society. 58% stated that it did, compared with 4% who did not, and 38% who were unsure (Figure 8). 61% of urban dwellers, compared with 51% of those living rural areas, felt that biodiversity had a practical benefit with a larger proportion of rural dwellers being unsure. No respondents in socio-economic group A felt biodiversity did not benefit society. The lower the respondent's socio-economic status, the more likely they were to state they were unsure of biodiversity's practical benefit to society. There was a similar pattern of response by age. Women were also less sure of its benefit compared with men.

Figure 8 Practical benefits of biodiversity

Responses to this question become more meaningful when analysed with answers to the following question, where respondents were asked to explain their answers.

Of those who felt biodiversity does not have a practical benefit to society, few could actually explain their answer. A number replied simply:

I just don't think it does.

However, there was a minority of respondents who stated that biodiversity was not particularly important:

It is only a recreational thing. (It) doesn't affect working lives. Only useful for children's education

Because we only need a set amount for what we use, pine trees for desks, cows and sheep for food

Countering these views, a large number of respondents provided various explanations of how biodiversity provides practical benefits to society. In particular,

a large number of around 150 respondents noted the **ecological benefits of biodiversity to society**:

Keeps food balance right. Once something goes it has a knock-on effect on everything else

Carbon dioxide given off from plants. Natural well-being of humans when they experience the world of plants and animals

Each animal makes its own contribution to the world

We rely on bees to pollinate blossom and then we get our fruit like apples

A similar number recognised the contribution biodiversity makes to **quality of life for people**, socially, economically and recreationally:

Green areas to visit for pleasure and health. Both mentally and physically

Natural beauty helps people to relax

It promotes tourism to the area and a healthier lifestyle by encouraging us to visit woodland areas

Nature and wildlife make people happier and it's healthy to walk in the countryside

4.2.3 Attitudes towards wider environmental issues

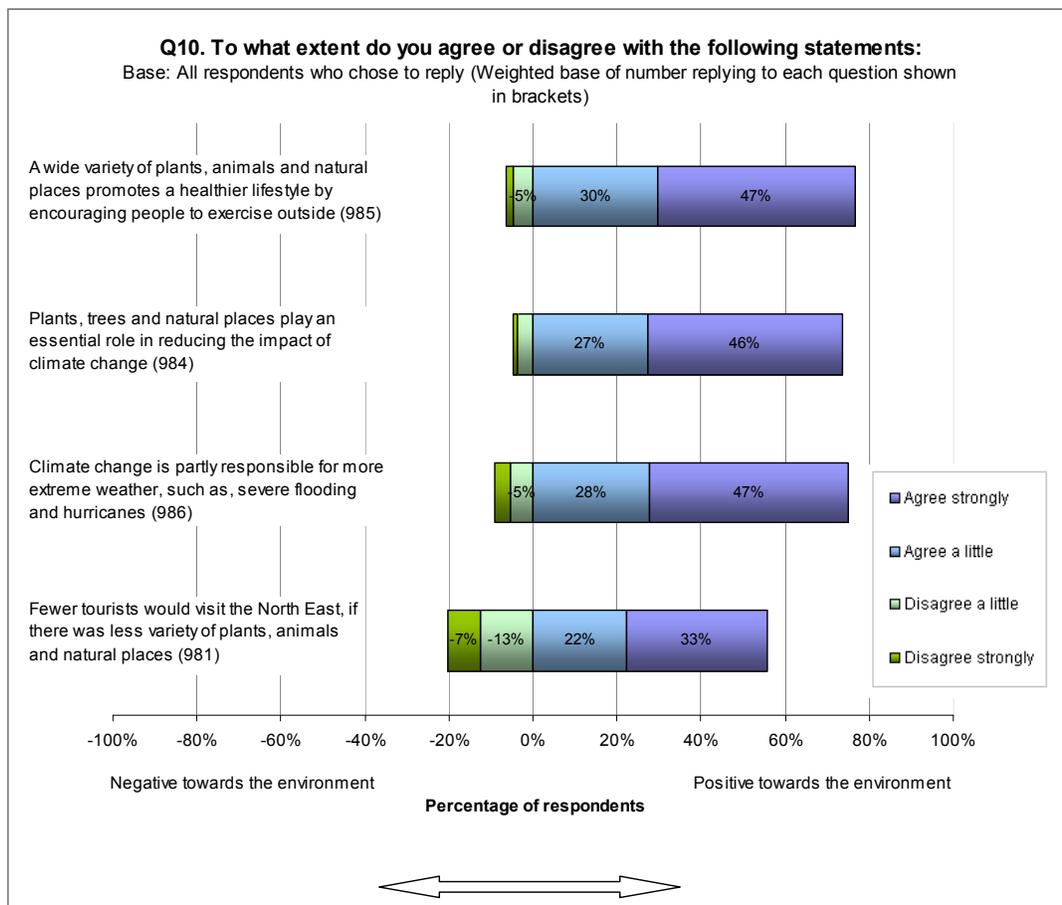
The survey was used to gauge respondents' attitudes to **wider environmental issues**. All respondents were asked to state whether they agreed or disagreed with four statements about climate change and the benefits to our society of the natural environment.

77% of respondents agreed that 'a wide variety of plants, animals and natural places promotes a healthier lifestyle by encouraging people to exercise outside' (Figure 9). 73% felt that 'plants, trees and natural places play an essential role in reducing the impact of climate change.' 75% agreed that 'climate change is partly

responsible for more extreme weather, such as, severe flooding and hurricanes.’ However, 9% disagreed with this statement.

Whilst the responses to these questions suggest that respondents illustrated a **positive attitude** towards the environment, they were **less convinced of the economic benefits of biodiversity**, at least in terms of tourism. A lower proportion, 55%, agreed that ‘fewer tourists would visit the North East, if there was less variety of plants, animals and natural places.’ This compares with 21% who actually disagreed with the statement.

Figure 9 Attitudes to wider environmental issues



There tended to be a trend of increasing agreement with these statements, the **higher the socio-economic group** of the respondent. In particular, 92% of those in group A agreed that ‘fewer tourists would visit the North East, if there was less variety of plants, animals and natural species.’ Respondents **aged 55 to 64 were most likely to agree** with the statements and so demonstrate a positive attitude to

the natural environment and to biodiversity. Urban dwellers demonstrated slightly stronger levels of agreement with the statements than did rural respondents.

4.3 Key natural assets in the North East

All respondents were asked to cite three 'natural assets' of importance to them in their local area and of importance to the North East region as a whole. It was explained to them that assets could be a type of animal, a plant, a local park, Country Park, nature reserve, beach, a view of the natural landscape or anything respondents deemed as something of 'natural' importance.

Some respondents were able to mention three assets at local and regional levels. Others did not mention any, or just one or two. The frequency with which a type of asset, or individually named asset, was mentioned was counted and is shown in the following sections.

4.3.1 Assets in the local area

Most commonly cited were **generic geographical and man-made features**, such as, 'open spaces / parks', 'beaches / coastline / sea', 'countryside / woodland / forests', and 'rivers.' 94 respondents mentioned 'wildlife parks / nature reserves' in general.

The individual place most frequently mentioned, by 50 respondents, was **Stewart Park in Middlesbrough**. This reflects that more respondents were interviewed in Middlesbrough than any other locations. However urban parks, in general, were the more individually named spaces: including; South Park (Darlington), Albert Park (Middlesbrough), Mowbray Park (Sunderland) and Jesmond Dene (Newcastle). The most commonly cited rural area was **Kielder** (Forest / Water), followed by Hamsterley (Forest).

Over 300 responses were classed as 'other' and ranged from places, such as Cleveland, to farm stock (cattle), Berwick Walls, and red squirrels.

All responses are listed in full in Appendix 2.

Table 9 Natural assets important to respondents in their local area

Natural asset	Number of responses
Open spaces / parks	373
Beaches / coastline / sea	338
Other	338
Countryside / woodland / forests	209
Rivers	151
Wildlife Park / Nature Reserve	94
Moors	53
Stewart Park	50
South Park	46
Albert Park	41
Mowbray Park	39
Jesmond Dene	29
Farm / Farmland	28
Saltwell Park	25
Kielder	24
Hamsterley	21
Hills	21
Castles / Cathedrals	21
Reservoir / Lake	18
Hadrians Wall / Roman Wall	14
High Force	11
Cheviots	10
Dales	10
Farne Islands / Holy Island	9
Teesside Barrage	9
Eston Hills / Woods	8
Lake District	6
Roseberry Topping	6

4.3.2 Assets in the North East region

'**Beaches / coastline / sea**' was considered by respondents to be the important natural asset to the North East region. When considering the North East as a whole, **Kielder** became the most important individual natural asset, cited by over 100 respondents. **High Force** mentioned by almost 50 people was the second most important individual asset. These more remote and large assets were considered more important regionally than were the smaller, more local urban parks. This demonstrates that what is important to people in their **local area**, perhaps because they use the urban park regularly, is different to their perception of what is important to the **region**. It is possible, for example, that someone who lives in Sunderland may rarely visit Kielder but perceive that it has some value for the region. There were some differences in regionally important natural assets,

with Kielder being cited more commonly by respondents living in Berwick, Hexham and Newcastle, whereas High Force was mentioned more frequently by Barnard Castle and Bishop Auckland residents. Again, there was a large number of disparate responses, falling into the 'other' category. These ranged from towns, such as, Whitby, the Tyne Valley, species like red kites and the (Newcastle) Quayside. All responses are listed in Appendix 2.

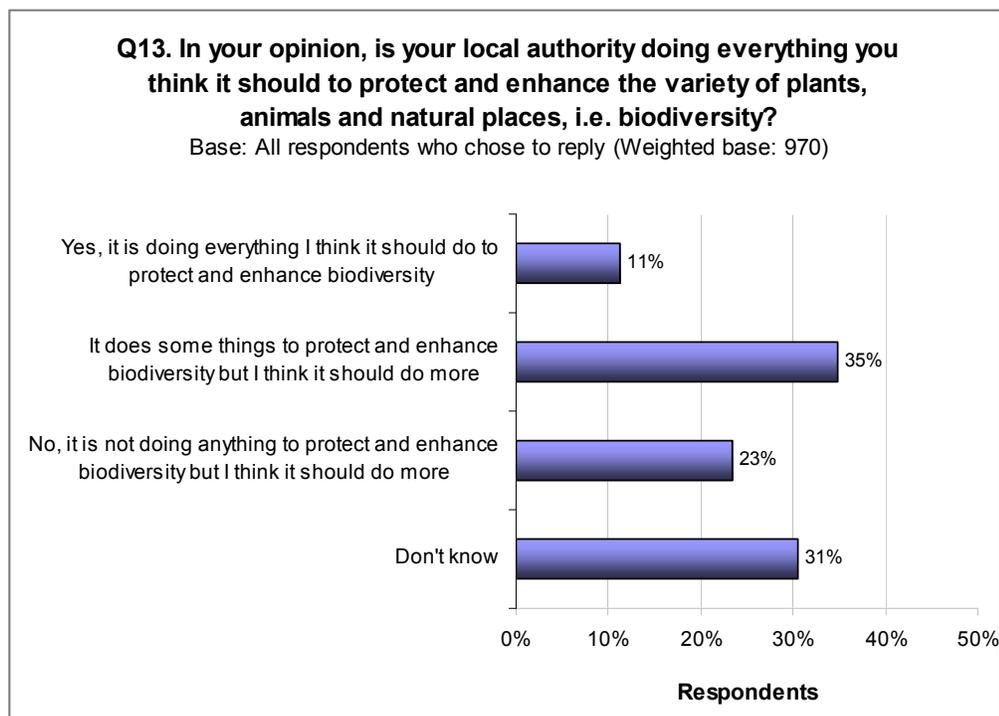
Table 10 Natural assets important to the North East region

Natural asset	Number of responses
Beaches / coastline / sea	389
Other	264
Open spaces / parks	137
Countryside / woodland / forests	136
Kielder	108
Moors	97
Rivers	94
High Force	47
Wildlife Park / Nature Reserve	45
Hadrians Wall / Roman Wall	42
Hills	38
Hamsterley	37
Cheviots	30
Dales	29
Farne Islands / Holy Island	26
Castles / Cathedrals	26
Lake District	15
Reservoir / Lake	15
People	13
Jesmond Dene	12
Bamburgh	11
Alnwick	10
Beamish	10
Bridges	10
Farm / Farmland	10
Eston Hills / Woods	8
Roseberry Topping	8
Stewart Park	7
Teesside Barrage	6
Mowbray Park	5
Saltwell Park	5
Angel of the North	4
Barnard Castle	3
Albert Park	3
Night life	2
South Park	2

4.3.3 Effectiveness of the local authority

Finally, in this section of the questionnaire, respondents were asked whether they felt their local authority was doing everything it should to enhance biodiversity. **Only 11% felt that it was doing everything it could** (Figure 10). 35% felt it was doing some things but needed to do more and a further 23% that it was not doing anything and should do more. 31% did not know.

Figure 10 Attitudes towards the local authority



Respondents in **urban areas were more likely to be critical** of their local authority, with 27% stating that it is not doing anything, compared with only 16% in rural areas. In particular, only 6% of respondents in Middlesbrough, Durham and Sunderland felt their local authority was doing everything it could. However, 26% of Newcastle respondents stated that their authority was doing everything it could. Alnwick respondents and those in Hexham were more likely to believe their local authority was doing everything it could: 22% and 18%, respectively. Rural dwellers were more likely not to know what their local authority was doing. Respondents in lower socio-economic groups were also less likely to venture an opinion about their local authority.

4.4 Interaction with the natural environment

All respondents were asked a series of questions to better understand their level of interaction with the natural environment.

4.4.1 Frequency of visits to 'natural' areas

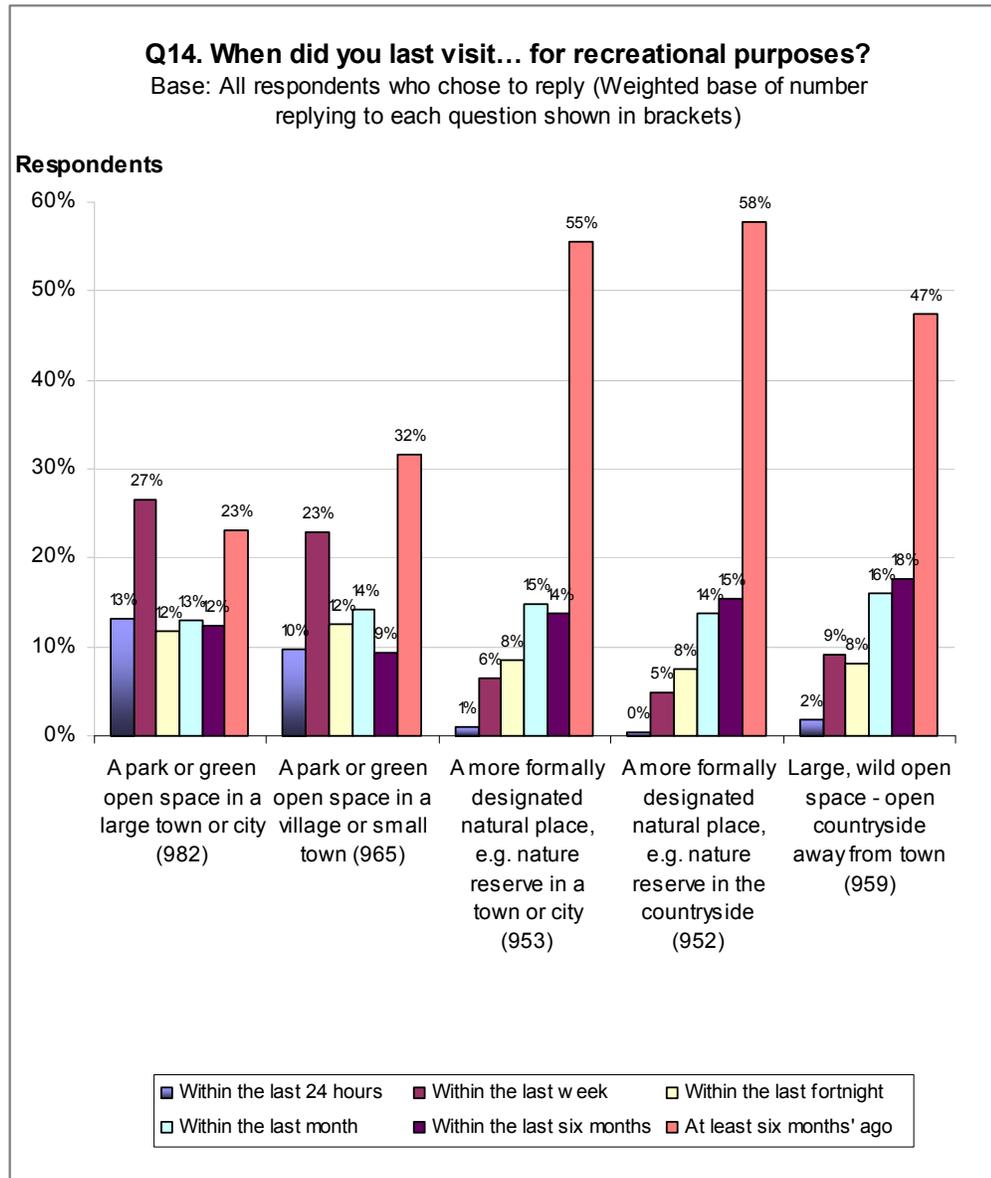
Figure 11 illustrates that parks and **green spaces within large towns / cities, or small towns or villages**, are visited most frequently, with 40% and 33% of respondents, respectively, visiting them within the last week. Although visited less regularly, it was noted that **over 50% of respondents had visited a large, wild open space** within the last six months. The least regularly visited were the more formally designated spaces, in urban and rural areas.

Urban dwellers were slightly more likely to interact with the natural environment by visiting **formally designated places**. 9% had last visited such a place in a town or city within the last week, compared with 3% of rural respondents. This might be expected as urban dwellers would not have as far to travel. However, it is notable that 6% of urban respondents and only 5% of rural dwellers had visited such a place in a small town or village. Rural respondents were more likely to have visited these (rural) areas at some point in the past six months (48% compared with 40%) but the suggestion is that a significant minority of urban respondents take an active and regular interest in visiting formally designated natural places in both urban and rural areas. However, **rural dwellers were much more likely to have visited large, wild open spaces** – 45% within the last month, compared with 31% of urban respondents.

Respondents in **higher socio-economic groups were generally more likely** to have visited all of the natural places, although this pattern was more evident with some types of place than with others. Those in group A were most likely to visit an open space in a town or city and those in group E least likely. Those in groups B, C1, C2 and D exhibited similar behaviour. However, there was a steady, declining pattern from A to E with respect to the frequency of visiting similar spaces in rural areas – 92% of As, 85% of Bs but only 54% of Es had visited such a space in the last six months. A similar but less linear trend was evident for frequency of visit to formally designated places – AB respondents were most likely to have visited; C1C2D respondents less so; and those in group E least likely. Finally, there was a

clear, linear downward trend, from groups A to E, in evidence in relation to when respondents last visited a large, wild open space. 76% of As had done so in the last six months, compared with only 34% of Es.

Figure 11 Frequency of visits to 'natural' areas



Respondents in the **oldest age groups – 65 to 74 and 75 or over – visited natural areas least often**, especially more formally designated and large, wild open spaces. The **youngest respondents (aged 16 to 24)** were most likely to visit

open spaces in urban areas. Responses from males suggested they were very slightly more likely to visit natural places than were females.

4.4.2 Places visited and purpose of visit

Respondents were then asked to give examples of where they had most recently visited and to describe the purpose of the visit(s).

Table 11 illustrates that the most recent places visited reflect many of the natural assets cited as being important to respondents in their answers to Questions 11 and 12. Parks, mainly urban, were most mentioned – by over 400 respondents. Mowbray Park in Sunderland had been visited by 53 respondents, followed by South Park (Darlington) and Stewart Park (Middlesbrough).¹⁷

Table 11 Natural places most recently visited

Where they visited	Number of responses
Parks	409
Mowbray Park (Sunderland)	53
South Park (Darlington)	29
Stewart Park (Middlesbrough)	27
Albert Park (Middlesbrough)	22
Saltwell Park (Gateshead)	20
Jesmond Dene (Newcastle)	14
Barnes Park (Sunderland)	12
Leazes Park (Newcastle)	11
Other	215
Open moor area / Countryside / Hills	202
Kielder	29
Lake District	17
Yorkshire Dales / Moors	10
Other	146
Village, Town, City	125
Beach	76
Castle / Tourist Attraction	65
Formally designated animal Park / Nature Reserve	29
Other	34

Responses to this question reaffirmed respondents' interaction with **large, wild open spaces**, with approximately 200 respondents visiting open countryside. 29

¹⁷ Reflects the sample profile, with a larger proportion of respondents living in urban areas.

had visited Kielder, although the other most commonly cited areas of the Lake District and Yorkshire Dales / Moors, are situated outside the North East.

Over 100 respondents mentioned **towns** they had visited, often those in the countryside, or tourist attractions, such as Alnwick, Wooler, Durham, South Shields, Stanhope and Saltburn. Some of these were outside the North East, such as Whitby, Scarborough and Windermere.

Many of the **beaches** cited were in Northumberland, for instance Bamburgh and Druridge Bay. However, some south of the Tyne were also visited, including South Shields, Seaburn and Redcar.

Some respondents cited specific **tourist attractions**, such as Berwick Walls, Hadrian's Wall and Alnwick Garden. Whilst these are man-made attractions, many are located in the countryside and reflect an interest in places outside the major urban conurbations.

Finally, just under 30 respondents named **actual parks and nature reserves** that they had visited. Some of these were in urban areas, such as Benwell Nature Reserve in Newcastle. The most visited of these was **Washington Wetland Centre** managed by the Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust.

The most common reason given for visiting the most recently visited natural place was to **walk** (Table 12). Respondents visited urban parks, wild open spaces, beaches and formal attractions for walking. Some gave a secondary explanation for their walk, for instance to walk the dog, to take out children / the family, or as part of a holiday / day out.

Table 12 Reasons for visiting the most recently visited natural places

Reasons for visiting	Number of responses
Walk	334
Holiday / day out	191
Other	163
Children / family	98
Exercise / sport	50
Sightseeing	42
None / don't know	35
Passing through / shortcut	28
Visit relatives and friends	14
Work	6

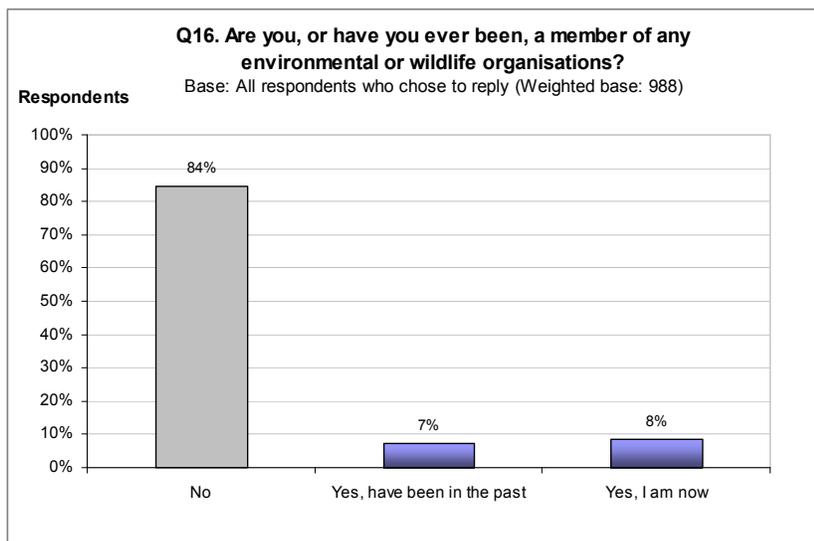
A **holiday or day out** was mentioned specifically by almost 200 respondents as their primary reason for visiting a natural place. Many of these respondents had visited formal attractions, such as, Alnwick Garden or the open countryside, as opposed to urban parks. Almost 100 respondents said that **taking children out** was the reason for visiting natural places – commonly urban parks. Respondents in these cases were parents or, often, grandparents. **Exercise** was mentioned by around 50 respondents as a reason for visiting natural places – most commonly to play football in town parks but also to cycle, go fishing, or horse riding further afield. The range of ‘other’ responses included meeting friends, nature watching and just for general pleasure and relaxation.

All responses to Question 15a and Question 15b are listed in Appendix 2.

4.4.3 Membership of environmental organisations

All respondents were asked whether they were or had ever been members of environmental or wildlife organisations. **8% (83 respondents) said that they currently were** and 7% had been in the past (Figure 12). Those in **urban areas were marginally more likely** to currently or previously have been members of environmental organisations, as were those in **socio-economic groups AB**. 32% of group A respondents and 40% of group B were current or previous members of environmental organisations. Respondents **aged 35 to 64** were also more likely to be members.

Figure 12 Membership of environmental organisations



Those who were **currently** members of an environmental organisation were asked to name which one. **The National Trust** (36 respondents) and the **RSPB** (28) were most commonly mentioned (Table 13). The ‘other’ responses given were a disparate mixture of various types of organisation, including English Heritage and the Ramblers Association. All of these are listed in Appendix 2.

Table 13 Environmental organisations: Member of...

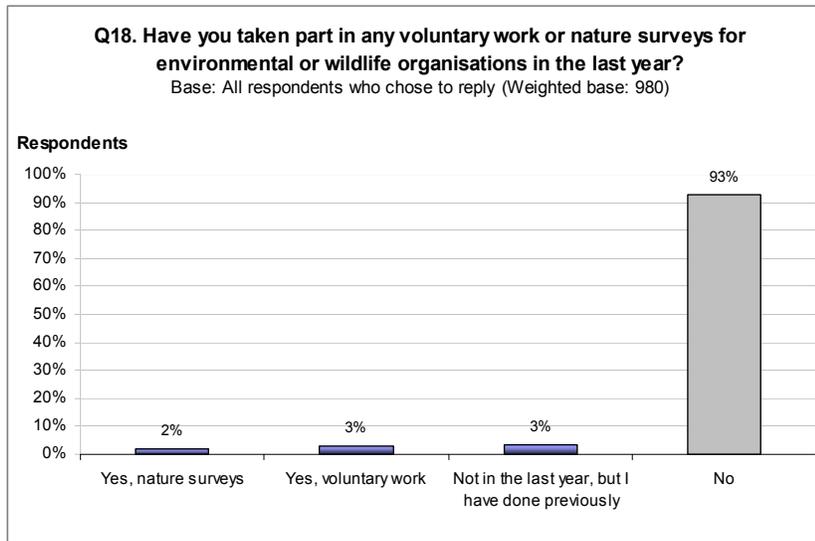
Organisation	Respondents
The National Trust	36
RSPB	28
WWF	19
Local Wildlife Trust	17
Other	15
Greenpeace	6
Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust	3
The Woodland Trust	3
Friends of the Earth	2
<i>Base: Number of respondents currently a member of an organisation who chose to reply</i>	83

4.4.4 Voluntary work

Similarly, all respondents were asked if they had taken part in any voluntary work or nature surveys in the last year. **3% (27) had taken part in voluntary work** and

2% (19) nature surveys (Figure 13). 3% (34) of respondents had taken part in either of these activities more than a year ago.

Figure 13 Participation in voluntary work and nature surveys



Only 1 rural dweller had taken part in voluntary work in the past year, compared with **28 or 4% of respondents living in urban areas**. However, 6% of rural respondents claimed to have done so previously.¹⁸ Respondents in **socio-economic groups AB** were more likely to respond that they currently and had previously volunteered with environmental organisations or taken part in nature surveys. **7% of respondents aged 55 to 64** had taken part in voluntary work in the last year.

Of the organisations with which respondents had volunteered, the most commonly mentioned were the local Wildlife Trust, the National Trust and the RSPB (Table 14). ‘Other’ responses given were a disparate mixture, including the Green Festival and the RSPCA.

¹⁸ Please note that base sizes for respondents having taken part in voluntary work are small so the answers of a few numbers of respondents have considerable impact on percentage figures.

Table 14 Environmental organisations: Volunteered with...

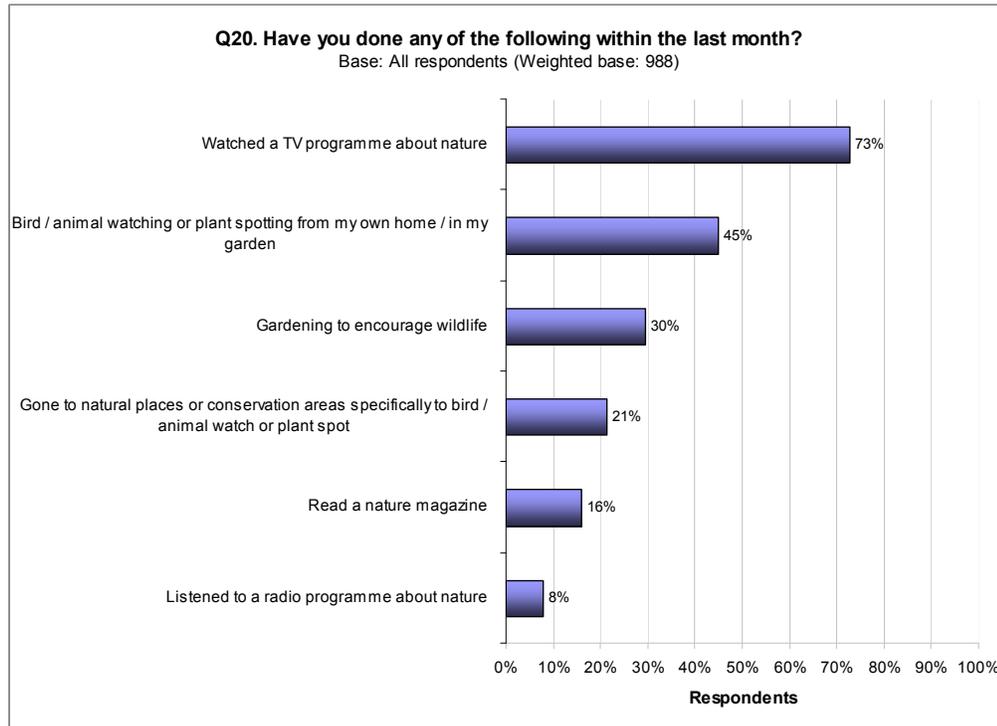
Organisation	Number of respondents
Local Wildlife Trust	5
The National Trust	4
RSPB	4
Local group looking after parks and natural sites	3
WWF	1
A local authority	1
Other	12
<i>Base: Number of respondents volunteering with an organisation who chose to reply</i>	28

4.4.5 Other interaction with the natural environment

All respondents were read a list of other forms of interaction with the natural environment and asked to state whether they had done any of these things within the last month. **By far the most common type of 'interaction' with the natural environment was watching a television programme about nature** – 73% of respondents said they had done this (Figure 14). This was followed by other activities which can be done at home – bird / animal watching from home (45%), and gardening to encourage wildlife (30%). 8% listened to a radio programme about nature.

Those going a step further included 21% who travelled to natural places specifically to bird / animal watch or plant spot; and those who read a nature magazine (16%).

17% of **167 respondents did not select any of the options**, i.e. they had not taken part in any of the activities in the past month.

Figure 14 Other interaction with the natural environment

Urban dwellers were more likely than rural respondents to take part in almost all of the above activities – in particular, 20% of urban respondents, compared with 7% of rural dwellers, had read a nature magazine within the last month. The exception was for watching television programmes – those in rural areas were more likely to have done this within the last month. In general, those **in lower socio-economic groups were less likely to interact with the natural environment** in the ways listed. At least 20% of C2DE respondents had **not** taken part in any of the activities in the last month, compared with no more than 12% of ABC1 respondents.

Those in **age groups 35 to 74 were generally more likely** to have taken part in the activities listed; especially those aged 55 to 64. In particular, 42% of this age group had taken part in gardening to encourage wildlife, compared with only 14% of 16 to 24 year olds and 32% of those aged 75 or over. There were only small differences in behaviour between men and women with the latter less likely to have taken part in any of the activities listed. **Men were more likely to have visited natural places for nature watching** and to have watched television programmes about nature within the last month.

4.5 Final comments

At the end of the questionnaire, respondents were asked if they had any final comments to make about biodiversity or related issues. 200 out of the 988 respondents provided a valid comment.

There were two broad themes to comments. The first focused on **the need to take action** – either people in general or the authorities:

Save the countryside - the council should do more

*It would be helpful to us all to stop destroying everything - trees, flowers.
Keep things as they are*

The North East isn't doing enough to prevent the loss of biodiversity

Get the council to clean up Hylton Castle Dene and stop trees being set on fire

I am sure that it is important but I don't hear anything locally or regionally that our local government is doing anything different or particularly better than other local councils. And I think it should be doing more to help the environment

More planting of trees to compensate for new housing estates

The whole of the N.E. and U.K. need to put things into place to be able to re-introduce species which were here previously

Everybody should do something to help. Need animals

The other highlighted the need to **better educate the public** of the issues surrounding biodiversity:

Biodiversity is not very well promoted

Should get a high profile and encourage the kids at school to learn

Biodiversity should be taught in schools from an early age. So children can have the understanding of the importance of their relationship with (the) natural environment

It should be more widely known and people informed, so more effort put into making people understand

More education in it, as people don't understand so don't care

Never heard about biodiversity until today - need more information via local papers/news

More of this kind of survey and awareness and keep people informed and aware of the interfering with wildlife and encouraging vigilance in country areas

The full list of comments is displayed in Appendix 2.

5 Key Findings

5.1 Awareness and understanding of biodiversity of the term biodiversity

5.1.1 Relatively low awareness levels

Awareness of 'biodiversity' was lower than that of any of the other environmental terms, including 'sustainable development' and 'global warming.' 32% of respondents stated that they had definitely heard of 'biodiversity' before. This was higher than awareness amongst UK respondents in the 2001 Defra survey of public attitudes.

5.1.2 Confusion with 'biodegradability'

There was considerable confusion amongst respondents as to the meaning of biodiversity. In particular, **33% of respondents confused it with 'biodegradability'** and only 31% correctly understood that biodiversity referred to the variety of living things.

Respondents were more likely to perceive that biodiversity is decreasing in the **world**, compared with the UK or the North East. However, more respondents believed biodiversity to be **decreasing**, rather than increasing or not changing, at all levels.

5.1.3 Falling biodiversity more of a global issue

More respondents provided examples where biodiversity was **decreasing** as opposed to *increasing*. Examples of increasing biodiversity focused on a perceived increase in plant or animal species, in particular red kites, red squirrels, salmon and otters. A number of people referred to deliberate interventions to encourage

biodiversity, such as the reintroduction of red kites and a local pond (Whessoe) being restored as a wildlife sanctuary.

Over 200 respondents cited **human activity** which they felt had a direct effect of decreasing biodiversity. In particular, housing developments and other building work were mentioned by many as a cause of decreasing natural areas and individual species. Some cited specific species they felt were in decline, for example, red squirrels and birds. Interestingly, some respondents felt species like red squirrels were in decline but others believed them to be increasing in number.

5.2 Arguments for conserving biodiversity / nature

5.2.1 Positive attitude but less likely to be proactive

Respondents demonstrated a positive attitude towards the natural environment but in a largely **passive** way. For instance, most respondents (85%) agreed the world would be boring with fewer species and that it is important that there is a wide variety of species in the North East (83%). However, when asked about things they actually thought or did, their attitude was less positive. **More respondents disagreed** than agreed that they **regularly thought about the loss of biodiversity in the world**; and only half disagreed there was nothing they could do personally to help stop the loss of the North East's biodiversity. Respondents were much more likely to perceive that the loss of biodiversity was a **problem in the world rather than the North East**. There was little difference in these findings as compared with the Defra survey.

Respondents again exhibited a **positive attitude towards the wider environment** in terms of recognising biodiversity's positive effect on people's health and propensity to exercise. Over three quarters also agreed that plants and trees reduce the impact of climate change, and accepted that climate change is partly responsible for more extreme weather. However, respondents were **less convinced** about whether **reduced biodiversity would negatively impact on tourism in the North East**.

5.2.2 Biodiversity benefits society

58% stated that biodiversity **does benefit our society** in some way, although 38% were not sure. Many of those that felt it does benefit society provided examples of how. Most of these fell into two categories: the **ecological benefit** and the contribution it makes to **people's quality of life**.

5.3 Key natural assets in the North East

5.3.1 Urban parks and wild open spaces

Many respondents **tended to generalise** when asked to name important natural assets, for instance mentioning beaches, parks and the countryside. When considering their local area, respondents most commonly mentioned **municipal parks** – places near to them that they were likely to visit frequently. When considering assets to the North East region, respondents were more likely to mention more remote and large scale assets and tourist attractions, such as, **Kielder (Water / Forest) and High Force**.

5.3.2 Local authorities should do more

Few respondents, 11%, were satisfied that their local authority was doing everything it should to protect and enhance biodiversity. 58% felt that their local authority should do more. More respondents in Alnwick, Hexham and Newcastle felt their local authorities were doing everything they could, especially compared with respondents in Middlesbrough, Durham and Sunderland.

5.4 Interaction with the natural environment

5.4.1 Parks near people's homes most visited

Respondents were most likely to regularly visit 'natural' spaces near to them. These tended to be (less natural and more man-made) **parks in urban areas**, such as, Stewart Park in Middlesbrough, South Park in Darlington or Mowbray Park in Sunderland. 40% of respondents had visited a park or green open space in a large town or city within the past week.

5.4.2 Wild, open places frequented more than nature reserves

Over half of respondents had visited a large, wild open space away from towns within the **last six months**. Kielder was the most cited large, remote space visited. Respondents were least likely to have visited formally designated natural places, such as nature reserves. The most frequently visited was the **Washington Wetland Centre**. A number of respondents mentioned visiting towns which may be considered tourist attractions: for instance, Alnwick, Wooler, Durham and South Shields (Beach).

The most common reason for visiting natural places was to **walk**, whether with a dog or as part of a holiday or day out. Taking out children and family was an impetus for many people, as was exercise and sightseeing for some.

5.4.3 Nature television more popular than volunteer work

8% of respondents were members of environmental or wildlife organisations at the time of interview. **The National Trust** was the most common organisation of which respondents were members (36 respondents), followed by the RSPB. **3% of respondents had taken part in voluntary work** and 2% in nature surveys within the past year. Respondents were more likely to have participated in more **passive interaction** with the natural environment, generally at their home. Within the last month: 73% had watched a television programme about nature; 45% taken part in bird or animal watching at their home; and 8% listened to a radio programme about nature. 30% had been more proactive by gardening to encourage wildlife, 16% had read a nature magazine and 21% had gone to a natural place to bird / animal watch.

5.5 Key findings by demographic characteristic

5.5.1 Stronger views amongst urban dwellers

Respondents living in **urban areas** were more likely to **exhibit stronger and more positive attitudes** towards the natural environment, and were more likely to interact with it than were rural dwellers. There were some exceptions to this: for instance, more rural respondents claimed to have heard of biodiversity and marginally more rural dwellers were proud of the North East's natural environment

than were urban respondents. Those living in rural areas were also more likely to have visited large, wild open space than were urban respondents. Of all the ways of interacting with the natural environment, rural dwellers were only more likely to have watched a television programme about nature within the last month, than were urban dwellers.

5.5.2 Higher socio-economic groups positive about biodiversity

There appears to be a **strong relationship between a respondent's socio-economic group and their attitude to and interaction** with the natural environment. Those in groups A and B felt more strongly in favour of the environment, were more likely to be members of environmental organisations, and better understood environmental terminology. Those in lower groups were more likely to be unsure or show more negative attitudes. For instance, 71% of group A respondents had definitely heard of biodiversity, compared with only 18% of those in group E.

5.5.3 More interest from middle aged respondents

There was also a consistent pattern of response by age. **As respondents grew older, they became more positive** towards the environment and were more likely to interact with it, up to a peak at age group 55 to 64. The inverse of this relationship was true for respondents aged 65 or older.

5.5.4 Few differences by gender

There were **few differences** in response between males and females, although men were more likely to provide definite opinions one way or another. More men were aware of biodiversity than were women.

6 Implications

The final objective of this study was to consider whether people regard a healthy and diverse natural environment as being **important** to their lives and to the **quality of the region**, and why.

The findings from this research suggest that people **do** regard a healthy and diverse environment as being important but they find it **difficult to articulate** the terminology and therefore to provide specific examples of whether biodiversity in the North East **is** in a healthy state. In order for the North East Biodiversity Forum to meet its targets for Indicator 16: Attitudes to Biodiversity, the North East public need to **better understand the biodiversity concept**.

It is an encouraging sign that some respondents were aware of where biodiversity in the North East is decreasing or increasing, for instance the reintroduction of red kites. But there is an element of **confusion** – some respondents felt red squirrels were on the increase, others assumed they were decreasing. A clearer understanding of the **real state of biodiversity** in the North East and the critical issues which need to be addressed may also help the general public focus on and support **particular initiatives** to safeguard biodiversity, perhaps by tapping into the strong regional pride which exists in the North East.

People also need to **link biodiversity with some of the better known environmental issues of the day**, for instance global warming, to further understand **biodiversity's central role** in enhancing and protecting the wider natural environment. A balance is required, as people need to understand biodiversity's role in the environmental arena but **not confuse** it with other similar sounding environmental terms, namely biodegradability and biofuel.

Whilst respondents were positive in their attitude, for many this was largely **passive**. The proportion being actively concerned or moved to action was relatively

low compared with those simply believing biodiversity to be important. It might be useful for the Forum to aim to close the gap between supporting the desire to protect the region's biodiversity and actually becoming **personally involved**. The final comments given in this survey suggest that many people want to know more and to see positive action taken:

(We need) more of this kind of survey and awareness and keep people informed and aware of the interfering with wildlife and encouraging vigilance in country areas

I am sure that it is important but I don't hear anything locally or regionally that our local government is doing anything different or particularly better than other local councils. And I think it should be doing more to help the environment.

Appendix 1: The Questionnaire

735 Natural England: North East Biodiversity Forum

Attitudes towards Biodiversity

Good morning / afternoon. My name is... from Marketwise Strategies. We are carrying out a study about the environment in the North East and would like to ask you a few questions. It will only take a few minutes.

INTERVIEWER: SHOW MRS ID BADGE AND EXPLAIN MRS CODE OF CONDUCT

Screening to classify respondent as urban or rural

URBAN: LIVES WITHIN DARLINGTON, DURHAM CITY, TEESSIDE OR TYNE AND WEAR. THE RESPONDENT SHOULD LIVE IN THE RELEVANT URBAN AREA WHERE THE INTERVIEWER IS WORKING, e.g. if in Durham City Centre, all respondents must live within Durham City.

RURAL: LIVES OUTSIDE THE ABOVE DEFINED URBAN AREAS BUT AS A RULE THEY SHOULD LIVE IN A RURAL AREA WITHIN AROUND 20 MINUTES' DRIVE OF THE INTERVIEWER LOCATION, e.g. if in Alnwick, someone living in Wooler would be eligible but not someone living in Gosforth or Blyth.

S1 Interviewer to clarify, using the above definitions, that the respondent should be classed as urban or rural. NOTE: An interviewer's entire daily quota must be purely urban OR rural, NOT a mixture.
Urban ¹ *Rural*..... ²

Awareness and understanding of biodiversity

ASK ALL AND SHOW CARD: RECALL OF TERMS

Q1 Before now, had you heard of the following terms? (NOTE: Heard means; heard, seen, been aware of in some way.) READ OUT

	<i>Yes, definitely heard of term</i>	<i>Think I may have but not 100% sure</i>	<i>Don't think so, but not sure</i>	<i>No, definitely NOT heard of term</i>
Green issues	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
Conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
Endangered species	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
Biodiversity	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
Global warming	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
Sustainable development	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4

ASK ALL

Q2 Regardless of whether or not you have heard of 'biodiversity,' what would you say it is or means?

ASK ALL AND SHOW CARD: DEFINITION OF BIODIVERSITY

Q3 Please select just one of the following statements, which best describes the term 'biodiversity.'
Biodiversity is:

- Rubbish that can be burnt for fuel..... 1
- The use of trees to off-set carbon emissions 2
- The variety of living things 3
- Waste that breaks down naturally..... 4

CONFIRM WHICH STATEMENT IS CORRECT BY READING OUT THE FOLLOWING

Biodiversity is the variety of living things and the natural environments that support them. It includes both the different types of plants and animals in the world and the places that they are found, such as woodlands, rivers, and grasslands.

Loss of biodiversity means loss of species of living things through development, pollution, climate change or other factors.

ASK ALL READ OUT OPTIONS

Q4 To what extent do you think biodiversity (the variety of plants and animals) is increasing or decreasing in the following geographical areas? So, the variety of plants and animals is, in...

	<i>Increasing</i>		<i>Not changing</i>		<i>Decreasing</i>		<i>Don't know</i>	
The North East	<input type="checkbox"/>	1	<input type="checkbox"/>	2	<input type="checkbox"/>	3	<input type="checkbox"/>	4
The UK	<input type="checkbox"/>	1	<input type="checkbox"/>	2	<input type="checkbox"/>	3	<input type="checkbox"/>	4
The world	<input type="checkbox"/>	1	<input type="checkbox"/>	2	<input type="checkbox"/>	3	<input type="checkbox"/>	4

ASK ALL

Q5 Can you give any examples, you are aware of, where biodiversity in the North East has **increased** or is **increasing**? For example, where numbers of a certain type of animal have increased or where plants or animals have been re-introduced?

Q6 Can you give any examples, you are aware of, where biodiversity in the North East has **decreased** or is **decreasing**? For instance, where numbers of a certain type of animal have fallen or a natural habitat been damaged.

Importance of and arguments for conserving biodiversity

ASK ALL AND SHOW CARD: AGREEMENT SCALE

Q7 I am going to read out a series of statements. Please can you state whether you **DISAGREE STRONGLY, DISAGREE A LITTLE, NEITHER DISAGREE NOR AGREE, AGREE A LITTLE or AGREE STRONGLY.**

	<i>Disagree strongly</i>	<i>Disagree a little</i>	<i>Neither disagree nor agree</i>	<i>Agree a little</i>	<i>Agree strongly</i>
Biodiversity is NOT important to the quality of life of people living in the North East	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
The loss of plant and animal species is a major problem in the world today	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
I am proud of the North East's natural environment	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
It is important to me that there is a wide variety of plants, animals and natural places in the North East	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
I regularly think about the loss of biodiversity in the world	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
We can afford to lose some of the world's plants and animal species	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
The loss of plant and animal species is a major problem in the North East today	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
I actively encourage wildlife around my home, e.g. in my garden, yard or window, for instance, by putting out food, or planting certain plants	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
I think the world would be a more boring place if there were fewer types of plants, animals and natural places	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
There is nothing I can do personally to help stop the loss of the North East's biodiversity	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
We can afford to lose some of the North East's plant and animal species	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5

ASK ALL READ OUT OPTIONS

Q8 In your opinion, does biodiversity provide any practical benefits to our society?

Yes, it does benefit our society in a practical way 1

No, it does not benefit society in a practical way 2

Not sure 3

ASK ALL

Q9 Please explain your answer to Q8, providing an example if you can:

ASK ALL AND SHOW CARD: AGREEMENT SCALE

Q10 I am going to read out a series of statements. Please can you state whether you **DISAGREE STRONGLY, DISAGREE A LITTLE, NEITHER DISAGREE NOR AGREE, AGREE A LITTLE or AGREE STRONGLY.**

	<i>Disagree strongly</i>	<i>Disagree a little</i>	<i>Neither disagree nor agree</i>	<i>Agree a little</i>	<i>Agree strongly</i>
Climate change is partly responsible for more extreme weather, such as, severe flooding and hurricanes	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
A wide variety of plants, animals and natural places promotes a healthier lifestyle by encouraging people to exercise outside	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
Plants, trees and natural places play an essential role in reducing the impact of climate change	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
Fewer tourists would visit the North East, if there was less variety of plants, animals and natural places	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5

Key natural assets in the North East

ASK ALL

Q11 Can you name up to three natural assets, that are important to you in the area where you live? (RESEARCHER GIVE EXAMPLES: A CERTAIN TYPE OF ANIMAL OR PLANT, A LOCAL PARK, COUNTRY PARK, NATURE RESERVE, BEACH, A VIEW OF THE NATURAL LANDSCAPE)

1.

2.

3.

ASK ALL

Q12 Can you name up to three natural assets that you feel are important to the North East region?

1.

2.

3.

ASK ALL AND SHOW CARD: LOCAL AUTHORITY

Q13 In your opinion, is your local authority (council) doing everything you think it should to protect and enhance the variety of plants, animals and natural places, i.e. biodiversity?

Yes, it is doing everything I think it should do to protect and enhance biodiversity 1

It does some things to protect and enhance biodiversity but I think it should do more 2

No, it is not doing anything to protect and enhance biodiversity but I think it should do 3

Don't know 4

ASK ALL

Q18 Have you taken part in any voluntary work or nature surveys for environmental or wildlife organisations in the last year? (TICK ALL THAT APPLY)

- Yes, voluntary work 1 Go to Q19
- Yes, nature surveys, e.g. counting hedgehogs in my garden for SpringWatch or reported the presence of wildlife to a conservation organisation 2 Go to Q20
- Not in the last year, but I have done previously 3 Go to Q20
- No 4 Go to Q20

ASK ONLY THOSE WHO ANSWERED 'YES' TO VOLUNTARY WORK IN Q18: SHOW CARD ENVIRONMENTAL ORGS

Q19 Which organisation(s) have you volunteered with in the last year?

- Friends of the Earth 01
- Greenpeace 02
- Local Wildlife Trust 03
- RSPB 04
- The National Trust 05
- WWF 06
- Local Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust 07
- Local group looking after parks and natural sites, e.g. 'Friends of Saltwell Park' 08
- British Trust for Conversation Volunteers (BTCV) 09
- A local authority (Council) 10
- Other 11

If 'other, please state:

ASK ALL AND READ OUT

Q20 Have you done any of the following within the last month?

- Bird / animal watching or plant spotting from my own home / in my garden 1
- Gone to natural places or conversation areas specifically to bird / animal watch or plant spot 2
- Watched a TV programme about nature, e.g. Countryfile, Spring Watch, David Attenborough documentaries 3
- Listened to a radio programme about nature 4
- Read a nature magazine, e.g. Nature, BBC Wildlife, Birdwatching, National Geographic, Ecology, newsletter of a wildlife or environmental organisation 5
- Gardening to encourage wildlife 6

ASK ALL

Q21 Would you like to make any further comments about biodiversity or related issues, in particular relating to the North East region?

About the respondent

INTERVIEWER CONFIRM THE FOLLOWING DETAILS WITH THE RESPONDENT, ASSURING THEM THAT COLLECTION OF PERSONAL INFORMATION IS FOR QUALITY ASSURANCE ONLY AND WILL BE TREATED IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE DATA PROTECTION ACT 1998.

Q22 Respondent name:

Q24 Address (Village, town or city):

Q23 Telephone number:

Q25 Postcode:

Q26 Gender:

Male 1

Female 2

Q27 Age range:

16 - 24 years 1

55 - 64 years 5

25 - 34 years 2

65 - 74 years 6

35 - 44 years 3

75 or over 7

45 - 54 years 4

Q28 Occupation of the main wage earner in the household:

Q29 Socio-economic grouping

A 1

C2 4

B 2

D 5

C1 3

E 6

THANK THE RESPONDENT FOR THEIR TIME AND CLOSE. COMPLETE INTERVIEWER DETAILS

Interviewer details

Q30 Interview location

Alnwick 01

Durham City 06

Barnard Castle 02

Hexham 07

Berwick 03

Middlesbrough 08

Bishop Auckland 04

Newcastle 09

Darlington 05

Sunderland 10

Q31 Interview date:

Q32

Interviewer (please tick name):

- Aileen Nixon 01
- Angela Newlove 02
- Ann Waite 03
- Carol Wunn 04
- Catherine Scrivener 05
- Elizabeth Passman 06
- Heather Parkinson 07
- Iain Cameron 08
- Lesley Gallon 09
- Lilian Lloyd 10
- Maralyn Wardle 11

- Maureen Hodgson 12
- Maureen Houghton 13
- Maureen Richards 14
- Nita Robson 15
- Nora Murray 16
- Pauline McGlen 17
- Roger Barrie 18
- Susan Duke 19
- Vivian Wilson 20
- Other 21

*Please enter your name if
not listed above:*

Appendix 2: Open-ended Responses Listed in Full

Due to the large number of pages in this section, all open-ended responses are saved in a separate 'soft copy' document.

Appendix 3: Occupation Groupings
