

THREE RIVERS, KILLERTON ESTATE CONNECTEDNESS TO NATURE RESEARCH REPORT

AUGUST 2024





The cover image, "Killerton House with Blooming Agapanthus, Devon," is © National Trust Images - Chris Lacey.

All other images used in this report are either in the public domain or © Lestari LLP (Note: not all images were taken on the Killerton Estate). All data presented within this report are owned by the National Trust UK.

This report was written by Lestari on behalf of the National Trust in August 2024. The research was carried out between April and July 2024.

[Lestari Environmental Education Consultancy](#) are based in the Southwest of England and specialise in providing expert social science informed guidance and support for environmental initiatives and organisations. Their services include evaluation, research, developing educational resources, and offering professional development.



THREE RIVERS KILLERTON ESTATE, DEVON

Executive summary

This report summarises the findings of a study conducted by the [National Trust Killerton](#) team, in collaboration with [Lestari Environmental Education Consultancy](#), to understand nature connectedness among communities surrounding the National Trust Killerton Estate in South Devon. The research aimed to establish a baseline for nature connection and pro-nature behaviours, to support the development of a long-term monitoring program, and explore future co-design opportunities with local communities.

Several methods of data collection were used, including an online survey, interviews and focus groups sessions with communities surrounding the estate. Key findings reveal high levels of nature connectedness among respondents, although there are also significant barriers to access, particularly related to transportation, awareness, and economic challenges. The report highlights the personal connections that many community members have with the estate, which are often linked to long-term engagement and specific locations or features within the landscape.

Despite the high levels of connectedness, younger demographics, especially teenagers, show a notable disconnect, underscoring the need for targeted outreach and engagement strategies. Additionally, the research identified opportunities for co-design initiatives, which could involve local communities in monitoring ecological changes, contributing to conservation efforts, and enhancing the overall visitor experience. Recommendations for monitoring and future work based on the research findings are provided.



The results of this research will contribute to the development phase of the Three Rivers Landscape Recovery Scheme which aims to restore nature and the natural landscape at Killerton, with a focus on improving habitats on the 2,500 hectare estate, ensuring that the land achieves High Nature Status and Priority Habitat.



Killerton is a 2,500-hectare National Trust property featuring a Georgian mansion built in 1778, surrounded by woodlands, farmland, and historic gardens.



The project is named 'Three Rivers' after the Clyst, Culm, and Cranny Brook Rivers which flow through the estate.

Executive summary - Key observations

Nature connection & pro-nature behaviours

- Survey results indicate that respondents show relatively high levels of nature connectedness, as evidenced by strong Nature Connectedness Index (NCI) scores. This suggests a significant psychological connection with nature, supporting positive ecological behaviours. The survey also reveals fair levels of pro-nature conservation behaviours, with older individuals more likely to engage regularly in these activities.
- Interviews and focus groups further illustrate that personal experiences and long-term engagement with the Killerton estate deeply influence nature connection. Older and long-term visitors display strong emotional ties and a profound sense of place, whereas younger individuals, particularly teenagers, often feel a disconnect. Features of the estate, such as seasonal displays and personal histories, significantly shape these connections.

Barriers to nature connection

- Limited public transportation options are a major barrier, affecting younger individuals and those without private vehicles. Physical barriers such as inadequate pathways and accessibility issues notably impact people with disabilities and those with mobility constraints.
- Economic challenges, such as entry fees and parking costs, coupled with a lack of awareness about the Estate's benefits and events, hinder engagement. Seasonal factors and time constraints also affect access and participation.
- Families with young children and older adults generally find their needs accommodated, while younger visitors and those without cars face more difficulties. There is a need for targeted outreach and improved communication to address these disparities.

Opportunities for co-design

- There are several promising co-design opportunities, such as integrating local knowledge into estate management and involving community members in monitoring and nature recovery efforts. This can enhance ownership and stewardship among local users.
- Co-design initiatives could focus on creating new walking routes, educational programs, and interactive activities aligned with community preferences. Engaging local schools and organisations can broaden participation and support.
- Developing inclusive events and activities that cater to various demographic groups can enhance overall engagement. Collaborations with local stakeholders and incorporating modern conservation methods could further drive community involvement.

Executive summary - Key recommendations

Improve accessibility

- Develop alternative transportation options and enhance pedestrian and cycling pathways to serve all demographic groups better.
- Address physical barriers to access, particularly for people with disabilities, and improve infrastructure such as signage and facilities.

Enhance communication & awareness

- Implement clearer communication strategies regarding the estate's benefits, events, and conservation efforts.
- Increase outreach through schools, community organisations, and local media to raise awareness and foster engagement.

Foster co-design initiatives

- Collaborate with community members to co-create management plans and nature-based programs.
- Incorporate local knowledge and preferences into estate developments to ensure programs are relevant and engaging.

Develop inclusive programming

- Create diverse range of activities that appeal to different age groups and interests, such as family-friendly events, educational workshops, and sensory experiences.
- Utilise technology and modern conservation methods to engage younger audiences and enhance their connection to nature.

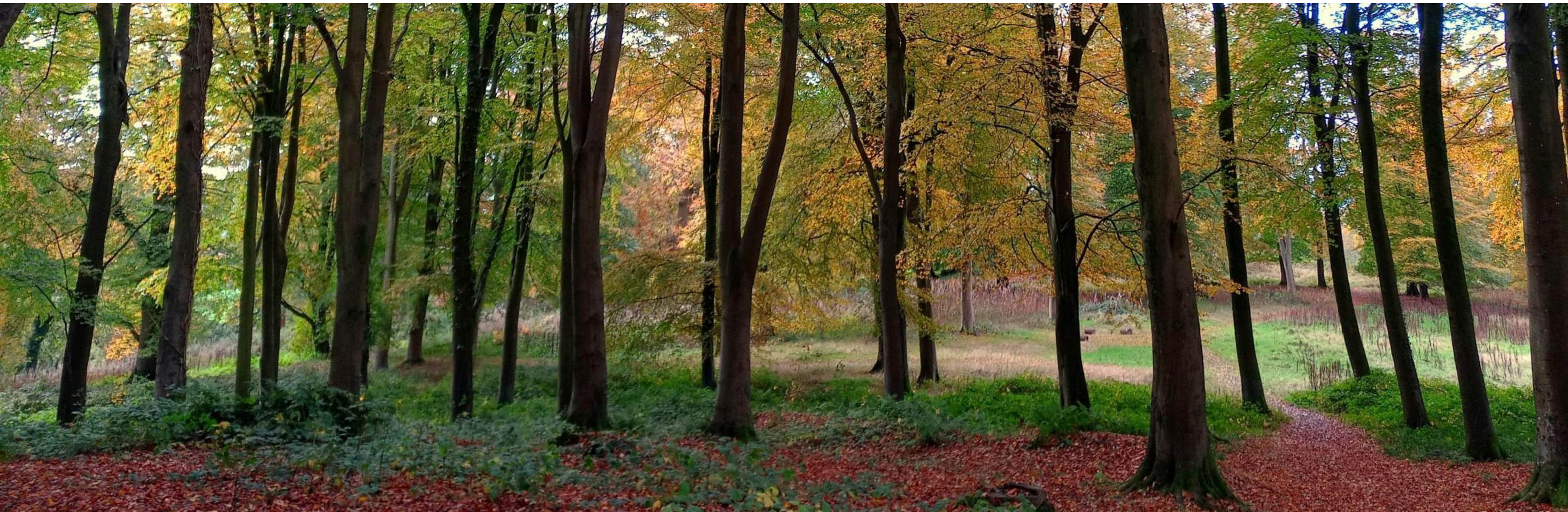
Methodology

[Note: Full details of the methodology adopted are available in [Appendix One: Methodology](#)]

To understand how people feel about nature and their connection to it, this research used a mixed methods approach involving online surveys, vox-pop style interviews, and focus groups session:

- 1. Online Surveys:** A modified version of the People and Nature Survey for England was distributed online to measure people's nature-related behaviours and awareness of the National Trust and Killerton estate. The online questionnaire was shared through emails and social media platforms.
- 2. Interviews:** 14 in-depth, informal interviews were conducted on-site at various locations around the Killerton Estate and online via Google Meet. The interviews explored why people visit, any barriers to green visitation, their experiences, and how nature affects their well-being.
- 3. Focus Groups:** Three small group discussions were held to understand collective views on nature and to explore opportunities for community-driven related to nature connection and recommended approaches to co-design of the Killerton Estate.

Together, these methods provided a comprehensive view of how people connect with nature at the Killerton Estate.





Findings: Surveys

This section summarises the findings from the surveys, providing standard analysis of the data and drawing out key results in graphical form. Detailed charts, graphs, and additional insights are available via the link below, and in **Appendix Six** for further reference.

[A complete visualisation report of the survey results in graphical form can be viewed via this link here](#)

Findings - Surveys

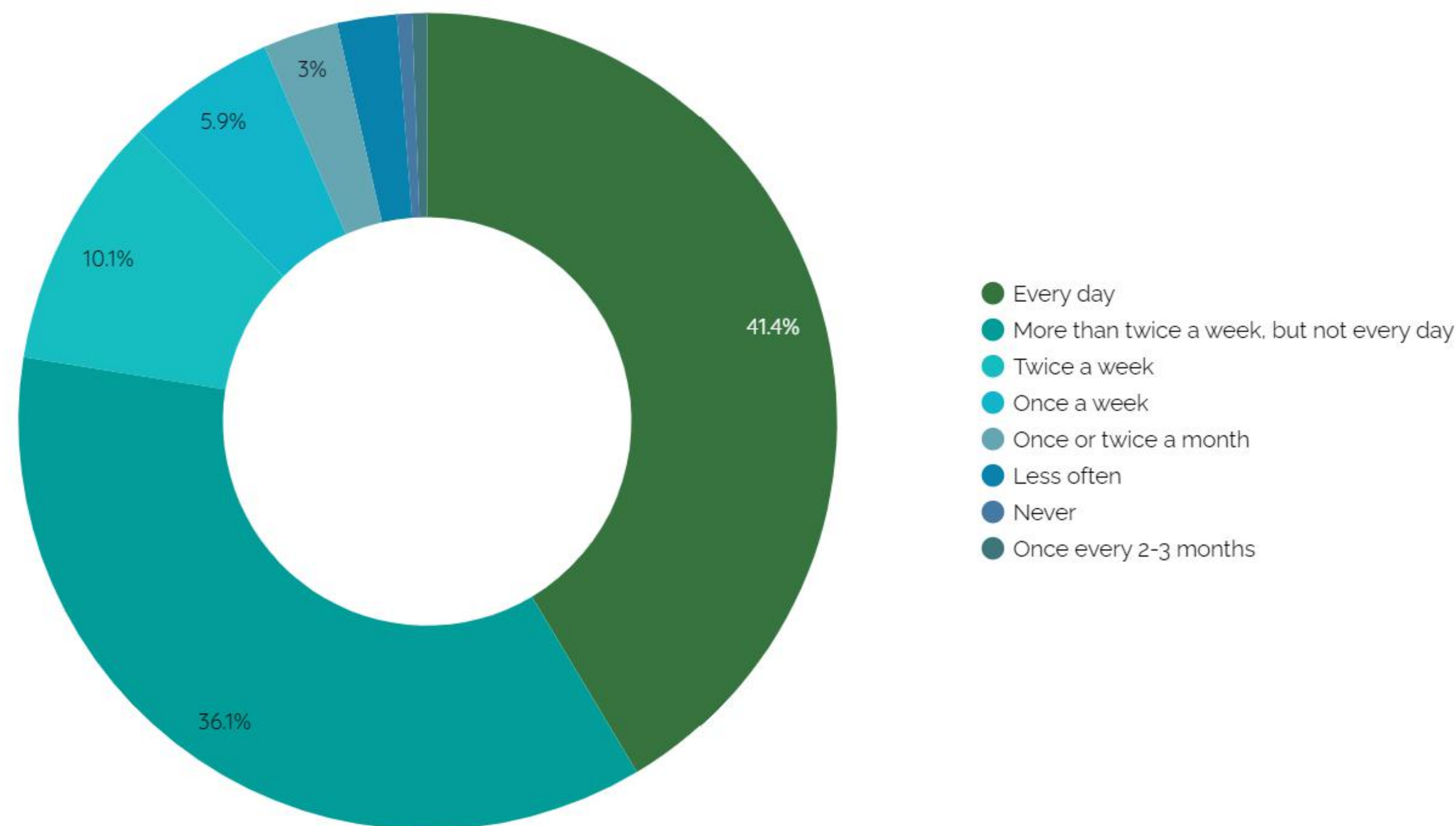


Figure 1. Responses to Question 5: *In the last 12 months, how often, on average have you spent free time outside in green and natural spaces?*

The survey results highlight several key insights into the visitors' experiences and perceptions of the Killerton Estate.

The results indicate that a significant majority of respondents regularly spend time outdoors, with 41% visiting green and natural spaces daily and 36% doing so more than twice a week (Fig. 1), reflecting a high frequency of outdoor engagement among those surveyed.

Findings - Surveys

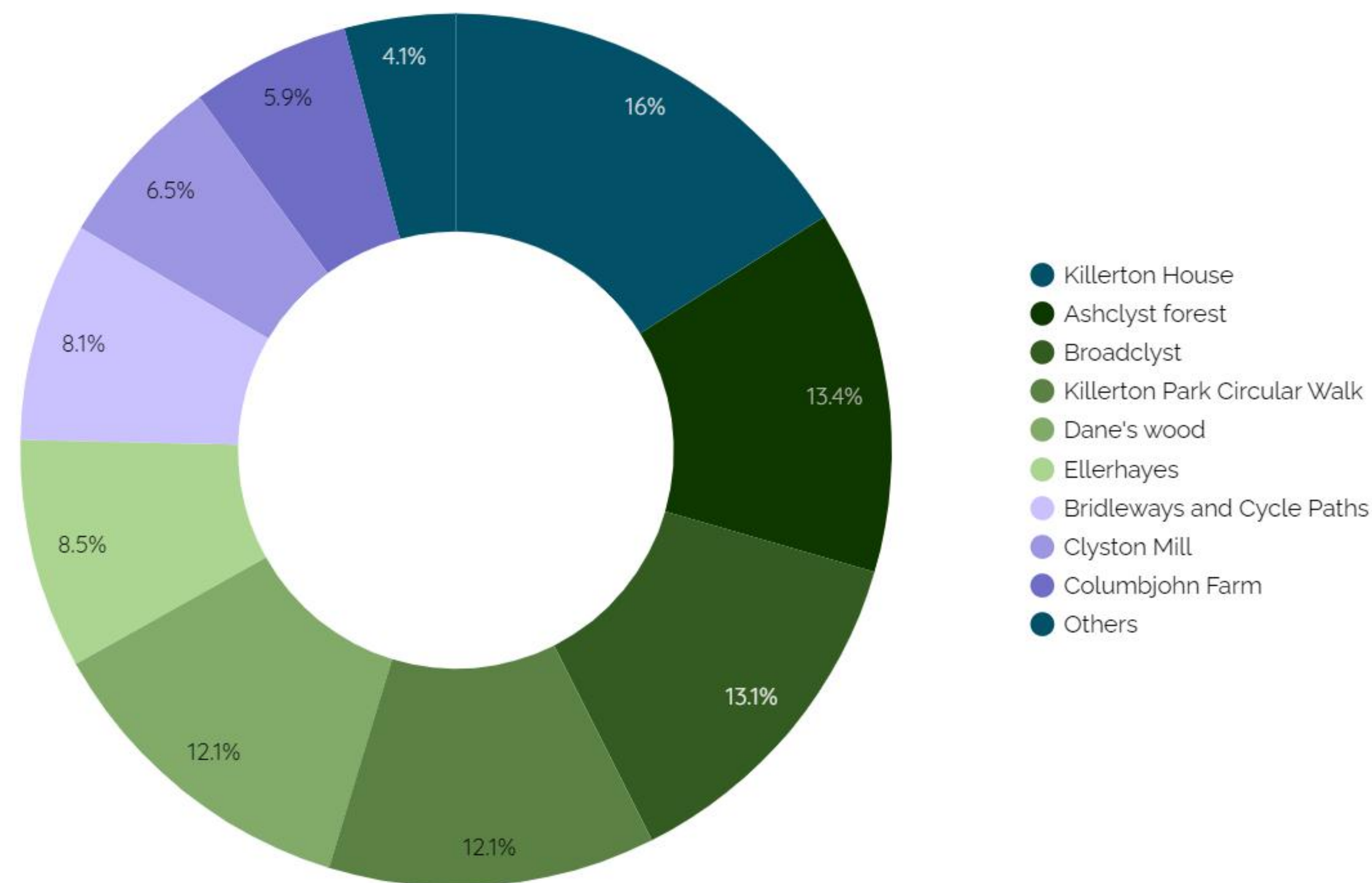


Figure 2. Responses to Question 8: *Which locations in the Killerton Estate did you visit?*

The most visited locations within the estate were Killerton House, Ashclyst Forest, and Broadclyst, with Caddihoe being the least frequented (Fig.2).

The primary mode of transportation to the estate was overwhelmingly car, van, or motorbike, used by 89% of respondents, while no one reported using public transport. Walking and cycling were the next most popular methods, chosen by 8% and 3% of visitors, respectively.

Findings - Surveys

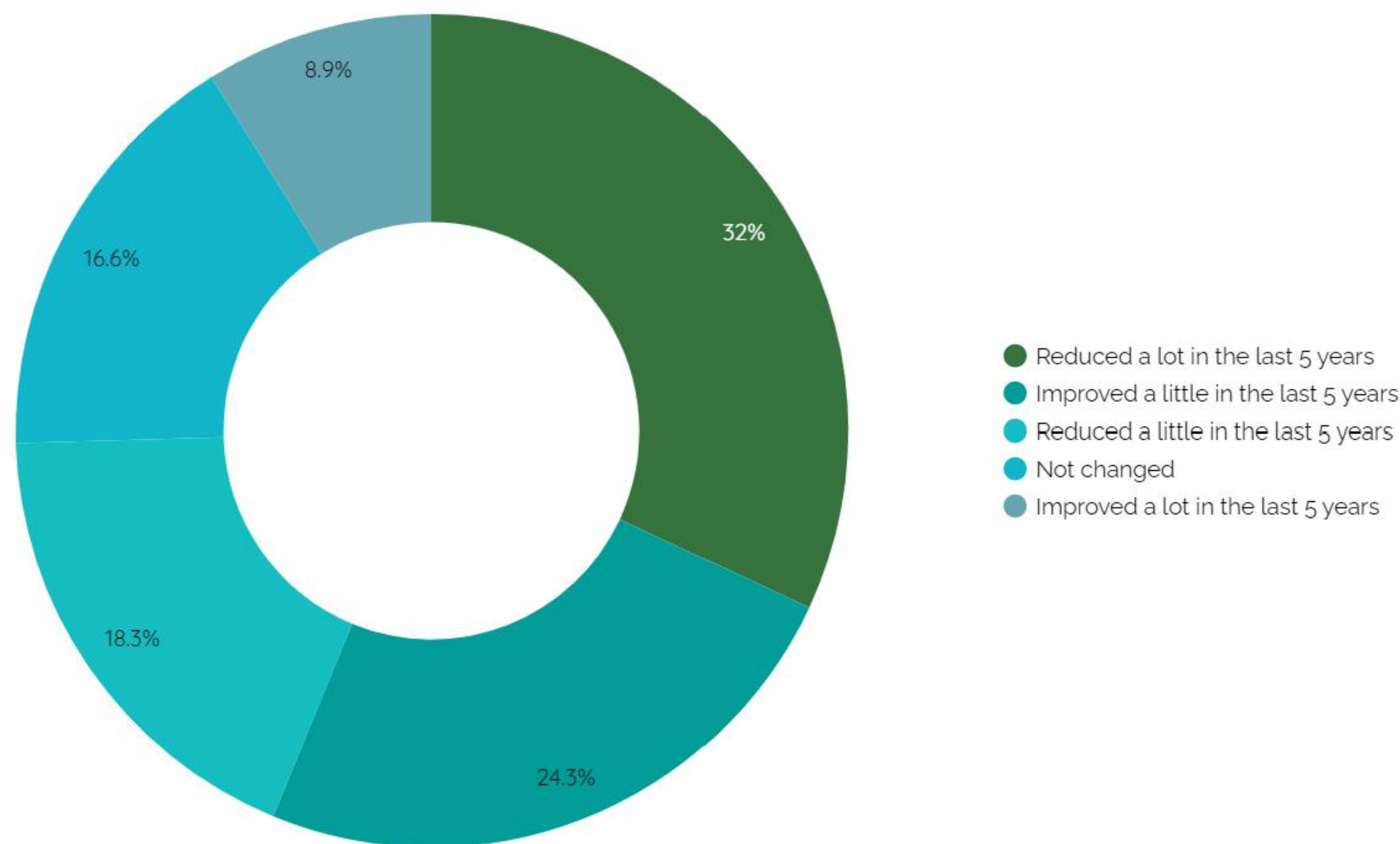


Figure 3. Responses to Question 6: *Thinking of the green and natural spaces close to where you live, have they improved or reduced in the last 5 years, or have they not changed? The quality has...*

Almost a third of those surveyed felt that the natural spaces close to where they live have reduced a lot in the last five years, while just over a quarter felt that they had improved a little (Fig.3).

Popular activities on the estate include walking, eating or drinking out (such as picnicking), and wildlife watching, which were identified as the top three most frequent activities undertaken by visitors on their recent visits. The majority of visitors (40%) reported visiting the estate with friends or family members, emphasising the social aspect of their visits. Most respondents (43%) spent between one to two hours on the estate during their visits.

Findings - Surveys

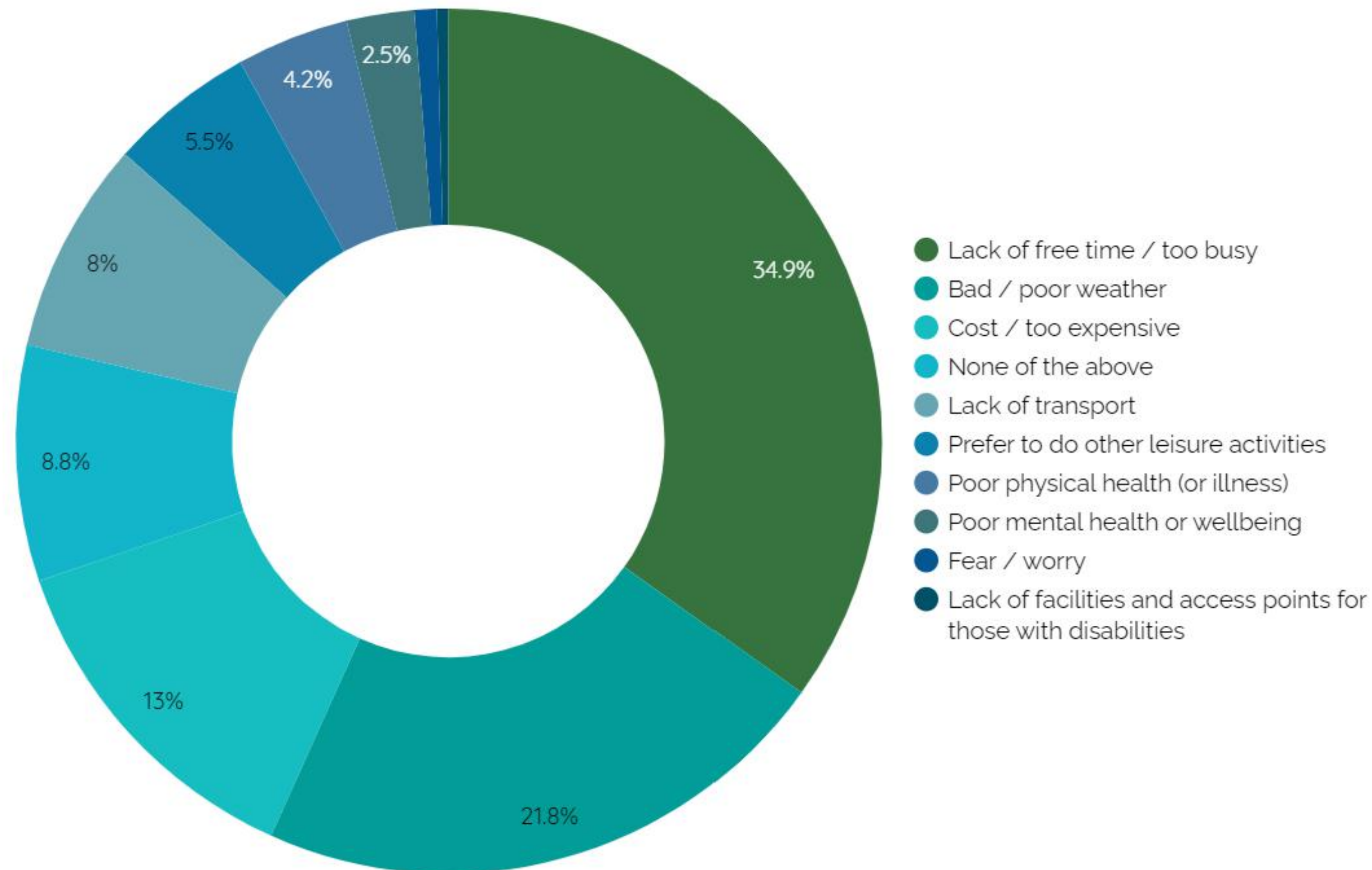


Figure 4. Responses to Question 15: *What, if anything, generally stops you from spending more free time in the Killerton estate?*

A significant majority, 88%, expressed a desire to spend more time at Killerton, suggesting a strong positive association with the estate. Meanwhile, the main barriers to spending more time in the Killerton Estate were identified as lack of free time, weather conditions and the cost (Fig.4).

Almost all respondents (98%) reported having access to a private garden, allotment, or shared garden, indicating a high level of engagement with natural spaces outside the estate. Furthermore, over two-thirds (67%) of respondents indicated that they always feel that spending time in nature improves their mood and helps them manage stress and anxiety, with an additional 27% stating it often does, and the remaining 4% saying it only sometimes has this effect.

Findings - Surveys

Nature Connection Index

The Nature Connection Index (NCI: Richardson et al., 2019) measures the degree to which individuals feel connected to nature, gauging factors such as appreciation of natural beauty, respect for nature, happiness derived from being in nature, and the personal importance of spending time in nature. This survey used a series of statements where respondents indicated their level of agreement on a Likert scale ranging from "Completely disagree" to "Completely agree."

From the collected data, a significant proportion of respondents expressed strong positive connections to nature:

- **"I always find beauty in nature":** A majority, 72%, selected "Completely agree," demonstrating a widespread aesthetic appreciation of natural environments.
- **"I always treat nature with respect":** About 85% of respondents indicated "Completely agree," reflecting a strong moral or ethical stance towards nature.
- **"Being in nature makes me very happy":** 78% marked "Completely agree," highlighting the emotional benefits and joy associated with nature exposure.
- **"Spending time in nature is very important to me":** 70% of the participants completely agreed, suggesting that a significant number consider nature a vital part of their well-being.
- **"I find being in nature really amazing":** About 68% completely agreed, further affirming the awe and wonder many feel in natural settings.
- **"I feel part of nature":** Responses varied more for this statement, with about 55% indicating "Completely agree," which suggests some variance in the deeper sense of connection or identity with nature.

Table 1. Table: Summary of Nature Connection Index (NCI) Responses.

NCI STATEMENT	COMPLETELY AGREE	STRONGLY AGREE	AGREE	NEITHER AGREE NOR DISAGREE	DISAGREE	STRONGLY DISAGREE	COMPLETELY DISAGREE
I always find beauty in nature	72%	15%	10%	2%	1%	0%	0%
I always treat nature with respect	85%	8%	5%	1%	0%	1%	0%
Being in nature makes me very happy	78%	12%	8%	2%	0%	0%	0%
Spending time in nature is very important to me	70%	15%	10%	4%	1%	0%	0%
I find being in nature really amazing	68%	14%	12%	4%	1%	1%	0%
I feel part of nature	55%	18%	15%	8%	3%	1%	0%

This table illustrates that the respondents of this survey generally have a strong connection to nature, with a majority indicating "Completely agree" or "Strongly agree" across all statements. This suggests that initiatives aimed at enhancing nature connection at the Killerton estate are well-founded, given the pre-existing positive disposition towards nature among the community.

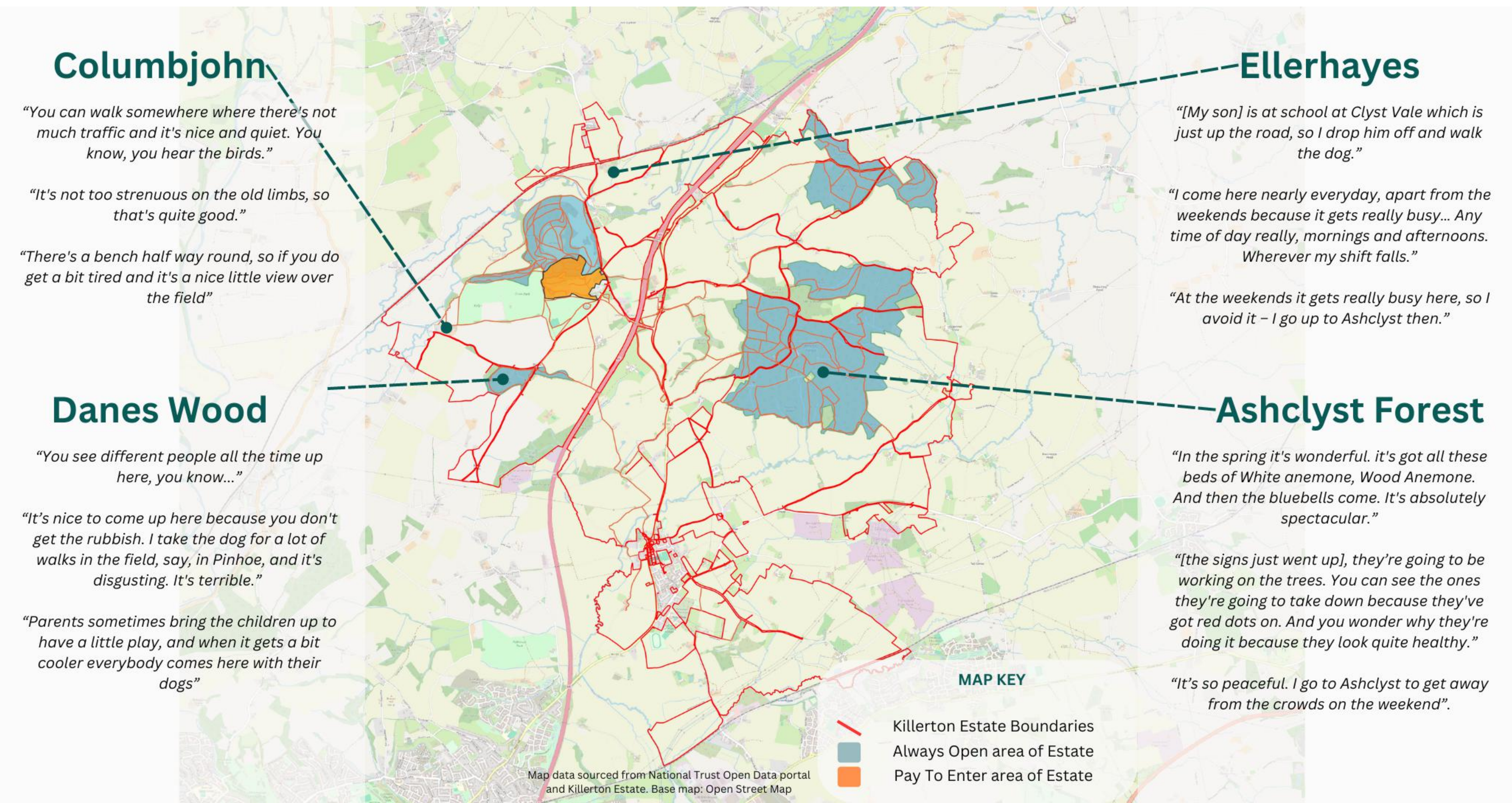
Findings: Interviews



This section presents the results from both on site and online interviews. The findings are presented according to the four identified themes, with each theme followed by a summary that synthesises key insights, ultimately culminating in a conclusion that consolidates the overall understanding gained from the research.

Findings - Map of selected interview responses

The following map of the Killerton Estate highlights key locations mentioned in our interviews, along with selected quotes from participants, providing a visual reference to the experiences and observations shared during our research.



Findings - Interviews

Change, personal connection & belonging

Interviews explored people's relationship with place, as well as changes they had witnessed during the time they have been visiting the site (if they have been returning). Interviewees related how they felt a **personal connection to the locations**, and how they felt about changes they have experienced. Interestingly, these personal connections and memories were often at the forefront of people's comments, and **very few spoke about broader environmental changes** on the estate. Where mentioned, it was in relation to the work on the river, and mainly because people had noticed it was fenced off. **This raises interesting questions about visitor's perception and understanding of nature recovery work and environmental change.**

Findings - Interviews

Changes witnessed in the past were expressed during some interviews, and these often reflected the close, personal connections people have established with the landscape. In one such conversation a woman from Stoke Hill commented on the tree felling she had witnessed:

I've been coming here on and off ...consistently over the last ten years. There's been some changes of opening up the wood up behind the house just when they've been clearing, reducing the amount of trees and just allowing them to spread a bit.

Interviewee
from Stoke Hill
Interview 2

Another interview revealed feelings of discontent concerning similar tree-felling in another area of National Trust owned woodland for a regular visitor:

In Ashclyst forest... they've made a lot of changes up there. I've got quite cross about some things because they destroyed a lovely bed of wild orchids when they were tree felling. And they leave such a mess... [the signs just went up], they're going to be working on the trees. You can see the ones they're going to take down because they've got red dots on. And you wonder why they're doing it because they look quite healthy.

Interviewee
from Cullompton
Interview 4

At Ellerhayes visitors had noticed recent management and conservation related changes to the floodplain and the river. However, often people were aware of changes because of new fences rather than an understanding of the nature recovery or environmental work in progress:

Over at the Ellerhayes side where they've obviously done the work around rewilding elements and the floodplain and all that, I've noticed that as well...It was certainly livestock that field, but certainly that stretch around the river sort of a couple of hundred meters on from the Ellerhayes car park, following the river around, that's opened up. I have noticed there's now fencing around some of the riverbanks where there wasn't any before...

Interviewee
from Stoke Hill
Interview 2

This interviewee went on to say that although they had noticed the changes, it wasn't something that was of particular concern to them:

Findings - Interviews

But if I'm honest it's not something that I've thought about it too much. I'm aware it's happening, you know, and I know why they're doing it, and, and I have to say, I think they're doing it for the right reasons. Yeah, it's fine, but like, any effect on me is quite passive rather than anything else.

Interviewee
from Stoke Hill
Interview 2

However, this is contrasted with comments from some who saw recent changes at Ellerhayes as a barrier and potential hazard for their dogs – this interviewee mentioned the bottom run of barbed wire on the fence adjacent to the river:

Obviously, they've fenced off the river. I'm assuming to keep the cattle out. But what I don't like about is that a lot of the fences that have been put up, they've put barbed wire on the bottom - the bottom row - and I don't know why they've been doing that because obviously dogs are running under it.... Because there's all fencing at the top there as well, and it's all back towards Columbjohn. I mean, I understand obviously the top two to keep the cattle out, but I just don't know why they've used barbed wire on the bottom because obviously dogs are constantly going under. I don't know what the thought process was behind that, because this is happening a lot at Ashclyst as well.

Interviewee
from Silverton
Interview 7

One visitor reflected on the tradition and personal connection they feel towards the estate, emphasising how its seasonal changes and thematic transformations during Christmas enhance their sense of belonging and connection to the place.

I've done this house several times, and I always do it at Christmas time, and they change it. They have different themes.

Interviewee
from Ashclyst
Interview 12

Some older visitors held a deeper, historic sense of change – such as this interviewee who recounted damage done to trees on the Estate during the 1984 storm. This reflects again the personal attachment visitors feel to the landscape and trees of the estate:

Findings - Interviews

I've seen a lot more changes because we used to live in Stoke Canon and we had a dog back then and used to come over here. So we were here before the hurricane in, was it 84? Downed all the fir trees along here. We came up soon after and just didn't recognise the place at all. But that is a long, long time ago.

Interviewee
from Cullompton
Interview 4

Another older interviewee's reflections highlight a deep personal connection to the Broadclyst community, which is essential for fostering a sense of belonging, especially in retirement. Their engagement in activities like art and frequent walks around the estate illustrates how the environment and community support their well-being. However, they also observe changes in the local facilities, noting the closure of key sites like the mill and a nearby house that used to be more active. This shift points to broader changes within the community that could impact others' sense of belonging and engagement.

Well, I'm retired as a retiree in supported living. I go out for walks and drift around. And I also do art, very interesting stuff.

Interviewee
from Broadclyst
Interview 11

Some reflected upon a personal connection to the site and how perceptions of its size and value have changed over time, illustrating a deeper sense of belonging and evolving understanding of the place:

I remember my first experience Clifton, years ago, going for a visit. And I didn't realise how big the Parkland was until I started exploring it for Nordic walking. I thought it was just a matter of there's that pathway that leads to main entry behind that. I thought that was it. That's the extent of it.

Interviewee
from Ashclyst
Interview 14

As well as changes to the natural environment, improvements to infrastructure and accessibility were noted. This was especially important for those with less mobility visiting areas outside of the main estate where most facilities are found:

I know this route round and I would say, you know, because there's been some changes to the path that leads out to the cottage on the other side, that track is now much more like this, well better than this, and in terms of improving access around the estate... certainly the track's been a slightly better surface I think this last year, which makes it, out of season a little bit better from that point of view.

Interviewee
from Stoke Hill
Interview 2

Findings - Interviews

I think accessibility is improved in a lot of places we visited over the years. But I mean, generally the paths in that are in good condition, in better condition now. You know, there's a lot of places where you used to walk in the gardens and that there was there was a path, but it wasn't really, really well defined. Sign postings improved, which helps.

Interviewee
from North
Devon
Interview 1

Some also remarked on the appreciation for the gardens, and how they have changed in the way they have been presented over time:

I think it's the move that I've seen over the last kind of decade, where it's moved things very much formal garden into a more, much more informal, not unstructured, kind of holistic, sort of holistic garden... a lot of people don't realise why it's important that they may not have to be showing flowers that you can get in your garden center... It's better people to understand why it's important, not just how they can do it.

Interviewee
from Broadclyst
Interview 13

This reflects a shift in gardening philosophy towards a more natural and biodiverse approach, highlighting a growing appreciation for the ecological benefits of less formal, more varied landscapes. The interviewee underlines the importance of education and awareness in promoting native plant species over more conventional, non-native garden varieties. They suggest that fostering understanding is key to encouraging ecological practices, reflecting a desire to see more informed and conscientious gardening, and values the move from rigid, aesthetically focused garden designs to ones that encourage ecological health and biodiversity.

In terms of future changes people wanted to see at Killerton, most people had little say, seeming generally very happy and clear in the reasons why they visited. Any suggestions were generally relating to infrastructure. There were comments about the busyness of car parks at weekends, but most people went on to say that they would not want to see any change, perhaps because more visitors would mean a disturbance to their peaceful walks. One interviewee mentioned that benches might be nice in Dane's Wood but went on to say that they could just use the fallen trees.

Perhaps the most important points to take forward in terms of change, then is the understanding that people feel personally connected to this landscape in deep, complex ways. Therefore, any changes must be carried out with clear communication and a respect for these often invisible connections.

Findings - Interviews

Communication & information

This theme focuses on how people felt about landscape change and managed footpaths and accessibility. Estate visitors discussed the information available to them, and the ways in which changes had been communicated. Some expressed that members of their community were **not aware of the extent or all offerings at Killerton**. The need for a **clear point of contact** at the National Trust was also raised in two interviews. There is a need to think about **clear communication in the outer areas** of the estate, whilst not creating too much signage to maintain a balance with the natural environment that people have come to enjoy.

While we were speaking to visitors outside of the central part of the estate where most signage and interpretation can be found, one interviewee told us that they appreciated interpretation on offer to them when unusual or occasional events were taking place, such as archaeological digs and horse logging:

We were disappointed because there was a notice on one that said they were going to use heavy horses to remove the trees, but we never saw them!

Interviewee
from Cullompton
Interview 4

And I know when I came down a couple of times when the University archaeology teams were up, they put boards up just explaining what they were doing and come and have a chat and that sort of stuff, which was nice to see.

Interviewee
from Stoke Hill
Interview 2

However, elsewhere, others expressed frustration at the provided maps and signage:

Findings - Interviews

*I1: Sometimes the maps aren't that brilliant.
I2: Well they're not to scale and it doesn't give you a lot of detail.
I1: You can easily get lost with those maps, especially if you're not a map reader!...
I think probably sometimes the display boards could be a bit bigger. You know, because there's a lot of our age, older people come to these places, you know. Quite often you see them like this [squints] trying to read something, you know. So perhaps that might be an improvement.*

Interviewees
from North
Devon
Interview 1

Several people identified that people in their community were confused about what the estate has to offer. Others however acknowledged that while awareness of the estate and its offerings is sufficient, there might be a lack of communication regarding financial barriers that could prevent some people from visiting, suggesting a need for better information dissemination on accessibility and affordability.

I think awareness is here. I think financial barriers could be better handled.

Interviewee
from Ashclyst
Interview 12

Speaking to visitors to Dane's wood, we heard how the removal of trees elsewhere on the Estate had caused alarm, and how at the time they didn't know who to speak to at the National Trust about it:

I didn't know who to contact about it, to be perfectly honest. You ring the National Trust and they're not helpful as far as I'm concerned.

Interviewee
from Stoke Hill
Interview 2

And another case of not being able to communicate with the estate was raised with a concern about barbed wire low down on fences being a risk to dogs:

I think some kind of my point of contact would be good as well, because obviously with the barbed wire, I thought, well, I want to get an email and find out why they did that, but I didn't know where to write to.

Interviewee
from Silverton
Interview 7

These cases reflect the need to have a clear point of contact, where people are able to seek clarity on issues and more information. Visitors would then also be able to report other issues they have spotted on the estate, maintaining a sense of personal and community care around Killerton.

Findings - Interviews

Facilities & infrastructure

Interviewees discussed how the available infrastructure afforded them the ability to visit outlying parts of the estate. They talked about the **reassurance** which comes with adequate and appropriate facilities for their needs – such as those with disabilities, limited mobility, walking dogs, accompanying children and so on. These practicalities had an **immediate impact on the ease with which people could visit, and therefore on their physical and mental health**. It was interesting how many people used the outer car parks and areas of the estate to walk as part of commutes and school runs. Some paths such as cobbled ones near the house felt unsafe to some. **The balance of this will be important to consider as populations near to the estate grow in future years.**

Some of the interviewees spoke about how the facilities at Killerton made them feel secure outside the everyday familiar, which suggests accessibility at the estate for those who might not otherwise visit National Trust properties or access the countryside. For one couple we spoke to, Dane's wood was their nearest green space which they visited regularly as they don't have a garden:

I1: Well, I've been here before, but it's... I don't know why... It's just the nearest

I2: Nearest outside, with trees.

I1: I don't know any other car parks.

I2: Yeah, a free car park is beneficial.

I1: It's not too busy either to be fair.

Interviewees
from Cullompton
Interview 5

For younger people, however, it was noted that it would be harder for them to visit independently. One teenager talked about enjoying coming with his family, but it would be difficult for him to access the estate from Exeter by himself or with his friends. And that it's not a place they would think of visiting:

I wouldn't have thought any of my friends would come out just for a walk. But maybe if there's people that come out with their parents, they might. But I definitely haven't seen people my age just come out, just because they can... It's quite far for us, for me to come out on my own but maybe if it was closer I'd come out with the dog.

Interviewee
from Exeter
Interview 8

Findings - Interviews

However, the same interviewees also described how the children in their family had come to Killerton with Forest School and to do drama events. This shows the importance of engagement with schools and children so that they see it as a place where they can come and are made welcome, and will continue to do so as they grow older.

I1: His [the son's] primary used to come out here to do Forest School from the main car park. So, they used to do that quick regular – every couple of weeks I'd say. But that was only the front car park.

I2: We've had a couple of performances with school, like drama in primary school. I come up by the big pink house - we did loads of stuff there. Since primary school we've not really done much in secondary.

Interviewee
from Exeter
Interview 8

Several interviewees mentioned the advantage of having so many paths to choose from and kinds of landscape to explore. This meant that regular, local visitors coming to walk could do a wide range of walks to keep things different:

[You can] Mix up your walks and that's something different.

Interviewee
from Exeter
Interview 8

A lot of people just stick to the main tracks. But you could spend hours walking, and the less used paths are much more kind of technical, and you can find some rocky paths.

Interviewee
from Exeter
Interview 10

However, some noted that not all paths were as accessible or felt as safe, highlighting a significant concern regarding the estate's infrastructure, particularly the safety of its cobbled paths for elderly and disabled visitors, pointing to a need for improvements in facilities to ensure accessibility and safety for all visitors:

The cobbles around the house get really wet in the winter, and it's quite dangerous for people, elderly or disabled.

Interviewee
from Ashclyst
Interview 12

While car parking was not noted as an issue, most visitors to outlying areas of the estate were forgiving of relative restriction on carparking space, and regular visitors were familiar enough to be able to navigate the limitations, while others knew where they would and wouldn't venture to on the estate due to their own sense of security and what they felt comfortable with:

Findings - Interviews

I tend to use the one at the house, but I do use the laybys by the bridge I use from time to time, but for where we are, the one out at Ellerhayes I don't tend to use very much because I just pass one of the others on the way.

Interviewee
from Stoke Hill
Interview 2

I probably wouldn't drive that tight road.

Interviewee
from Cullompton
Interview 5

The facilities over the car park - the loos, café and stuff have always been pretty consistently good.

Interviewee
from Stoke Hill
Interview 2

Probably the car park is the main thing; places to park... I mean you've got to time it right. If you come here at half past 8 you're alright. After that it seems to get busier because everyone's come to walk their dogs and that. So, you've got to time it and get up early!... But it's just nice to keep it natural. Just keep it as it is. Doesn't need any airs and graces with it. It's nice, ain't it?

Interviewee
from Ellerhayes
Interview 6

It's just the car park [at Ellerhayes] and people park out on the right there further up, but it's a bit narrow. And then some people are reluctant, just, you know, elderly across the bridge because traffic can be quite quick through there. But yeah, it's probably just a car park size really... But generally, you can get a space, whether you've got to wait for five minutes or so, you can generally get a space. People don't park up and leave their cars for hours and hours.

Interviewee
from Exeter
Interview 8

Among older visitors and those with young children, the connection between easy car parking and other facilities was also very important:

Findings - Interviews

We go and have a drink and have a walk or have a drink when we come back. and that's all the main reason we go out there because it's like this... That's a big thing is when you get older, yeah.

I2: ...You know, you want some facilities. You need something.

I1: We have a drink, go to the loo, that sort of thing.

Interviewees
from North Devon
Interview 1

This was also important for those with limited mobility. There was a good amount of choice noted of places to go enabling them to get into the countryside while remaining secure in the knowledge that needs will be looked after:

I've got two disabled twins as well as [my daughter], and when we come in, they do a small route just round the main part round where the cricket pitch is and stuff. And the facilities are good from that side of things. And the disabled parking up there as good, as well.

Interviewee
from Stoke Hill
Interview 2

Furthermore, again with older visitors were reflections on the facilities and infrastructure within the Broadclyst community and getting to the Killerton estate, noting both the positive aspects and areas where changes have occurred. They expressed satisfaction with the accessibility and overall upkeep of the estate, highlighting how the environment supports their daily activities, such as walking and attending church events. However, they also mentioned the decline in the use of certain facilities, like the mill and a nearby house, which no longer operate as frequently as they once did. This change suggests a shift in community dynamics that could affect how residents interact with their surroundings.

I think at Killerton is a mill down there which doesn't open as often as it used to, okay? And likewise, the little house around the back here, which used to open, that doesn't do it anymore, but it's difficult to get people.

Interviewee
from Broadclyst
Interview 11

This visitor went on to discuss the importance of clear communication and access within the community, praising the well-maintained footpaths and reliable bus routes. These aspects of infrastructure enhance their experience of living in the area, making it easier for them to engage with the broader community and participate in activities on the estate.

There's a very good footpath, as you say, down through past the mill and on to Killerton, that's quite a nice walk and...The bus routes are excellent. Every 20 minutes.

Interviewee
from Broadclyst
Interview 11

Findings - Interviews

One interviewee reflected on the work which has gone into ensuring that the Estate is welcoming to a variety of people, including those with disabilities:

I think over the last few years, it seems that the National Trust have put a lot of effort into making it easier for people to get about. You know, a lot of the places you go to now, you know, they can, I don't know whether they hire them or what, these buggies for disabled people so they can go further...And of course a lot of the gateways and that, have widened up. And they've done away with stiles in some places and put a gate in so that people, you know, so it makes it more accessible.

Interviewees
from North Devon
Interview 1

For others, it was the security of having a route to follow without having to worry about not being able to read a map or getting lost.

We do need a map sometimes. We would get lost I think.

Interviewees
from North Devon
Interview 1

It doesn't feel like there's too much of an incline to get back up to the car park [at Dane's Wood]. It seems that for someone well enough to walk, it seems accessible. It still feels like there's a defined path that you can follow around, so it doesn't seem closed off. It feels like you can go and explore if that's what you want to do or just come and sit if that's what you want.

Interviewees
from Cullompton
Interview 5

I'm too scared of getting lost so I stay close to the car park!

Interviewees
from Cullompton
Interview 5

There was no suggestion from interviewees that there is any lack of provision for walking dogs, and one respondent recognised the importance of having areas free of dogs, in this instance because of livestock presence:

I know, some of the gardens around the house you can't [take dogs], which is absolutely fine. And obviously there are parts of it you can't because of livestock they've got there. But there's enough places.

Interviewee
from Stoke Hill
Interview 2

Findings - Interviews

However, some of the recent landscape management has been a problem for those with dogs, as with this dog walker who was concerned about new fences with barbed wire:

Yeah, obviously they've fenced off the river. I'm assuming to keep the cattle out. But what I don't like about is that a lot of the fences that have been put up, they've put barbed wire on the bottom - the bottom row - and I don't know why they've been doing that because obviously, you know dogs are running under it... I understand obviously the top two to keep the cattle out, but I just don't know why they've used barbed wire on the bottom because obviously dogs are constantly going under. I don't know what the thought process was behind that, because this is happening a lot at Ashclyst as well.

Interviewee
from Silverton
Interview 1

Landscape & nature

This final theme explores the ways in which interviewees responded to questions about connection to and feelings relating to the natural environment. This theme also picks up on practicalities of getting to the countryside, interactions with other people and **how using the space impacts on a sense of wellbeing**. It became clear through many of the interviews how **important it was to people to have this green space** where they felt there was calm and peaceful landscape where they could easily walk and spend time. Some of the interviewees also had an **intimate knowledge of the estate**, and this raises the interesting potential of **how these might be drawn into future nature recovery plans, opening opportunities to practical improvements to landscape management and nature conservation for enhancing biodiversity and adapting to climate change**. Many expressed an appreciation for the estate's natural landscape. Some of the material draws out ideas of **visitor's perceptions of what 'natural' or 'wild' are**, and it will be interesting to think about how these ideas are framed in future nature recovery work at the estate.

How might future engagements draw out these themes and respond to people's personal connections and feelings of place?

Findings - Interviews

Many of the visitors we spoke to referred to feelings of peace and calm which they enjoy – a visitor to Dane’s wood commented on the changing seasons and the woodland flowers:

In the spring it's wonderful. It's got all these beds of White anemone, Wood Anemone. And then the bluebells come. It's absolutely spectacular.

Interviewees
from Cullompton
Interview 4

Many others commented on the general feeling of quiet, and the chance for peaceful walks:

You get a lot of moments of peace... My flat doesn't have a garden, so just to get out in nature and sit and have peace and quiet. You don't have to think about bills and mundane life.

Interviewees
from Cullompton
Interview 5

You can walk somewhere where there's not much traffic and it's nice and quiet. You know, you hear the birds...It's just exercise and fresh air. You know, walking somewhere different than you normally do.

Interviewee from
North Devon
Interview 1

Both afternoon and morning visits to Ellerhayes and Dane’s Wood revealed the many people for whom walking in these locations is a core part of their daily or weekly routine – often structured around work or school drop offs:

Here it's peaceful. I love it. So quiet and it is relaxing. You know, I've been to work today, got home early, come up here for a nice stroll around. That's my day pretty much! And I know [the dog] loves it.

Interviewee
from Pinhoe
Interview 3

It does help, and walking's a really good thing.... It's nice and convenient. It's on my doorstep. I mean, what more could I want for a school run as well?! ...All different seasons and rather than driving through traffic in town, it's lovely. You know, it's really nice... All the different seasons and the frosty fields - I really appreciate it, rather than just being stuck in traffic.

Interviewee
from Silverton
Interview 7

Findings - Interviews

For others it was the scenery and lack of rubbish – this respondent told us that were they live the local authority owned greenspace was regularly littered. They enjoyed visiting the estate because of the low levels of litter and his dog was less likely to injure itself on broken bottles:

It's quite nice to come up here because you don't get the rubbish. I take the dog for a lot of walks in the field, say, in Pinhoe, and it's disgusting. It's terrible. The bottles of beer, cans of beer, crisp packets, cans of Coke and everything... So no, it's safe [for the dog] up here. He's not going to hurt himself.

Interviewee
from Pinhoe
Interview 3

A very strong theme among those interviewed was also the feeling of being somewhere 'natural' or 'wild'. This had an effect on people's mental health and feeling of wellbeing, as well as the general enjoyment of a different kind of landscape to the more managed gardens or surrounding agricultural areas:

It just feels nice and natural and like untouched.

Interviewees
from Exeter
Interview 9

Across the plain it's much wilder and it's a completely different impression of the estate. Because a lot of people just come here and it has managed gardens and it's walled and it's contained, whereas the other half of the estate is much wilder and it's old, you know, big ancient trees. And there's lots of them here as well [Ellerhayes], but it just feels like a completely different side of the estate, you know, hundreds of acres that aren't really fully appreciated.

Interviewee
from Exeter
Interview 10

This interviewee went on to talk about the importance of getting different perspectives on the landscape around the estate. This was something others touched on too, with particular reference to the picture frame that used to stand at one of the viewpoints:

From the top again it's completely different perspective on the garden.

Interviewee
from Exeter
Interview 10

There's something about the sky here, and out towards Stoke Cannon and Rewe. But also the viewpoint just up there on the corner where the picture frame was before, that view for me, that's quintessential England in every possible concept, really. The gently rolling hills down to the river and stuff like that.

Interviewee
from Stoke Hill
Interview 2

Findings - Interviews

This visitor continued this theme, expressing a deep appreciation for the estate's natural landscape, noting the diverse and ever-changing wildlife as a source of joy and therapeutic value. Their connection to the landscape underscores the importance of preserving its natural beauty and biodiversity:

It's different every time. You know, you see the deer, you see the birds and oh, gosh, I've seen so many things. It's wonderful.

Interviewee
from Ashclyst
Interview 12

Some interviewees addressed the future of landscape management and nature conservation at the Killerton estate, suggesting practical improvements for enhancing biodiversity and adapting to climate change.

Owners of estates like that could really use their knowledge expertise to maybe plant for climate change. You know, climate gardens more drought tolerant plants for wildlife.

Interviewee
from Exeter
Interview 14

One man with his son commented that the peace and quiet and green space not only gave them a convenient place to walk the dog, but also a chance in the day to talk and have time together as a family:

A bit of chat, no phones, yeah it's nice and it's just nice to have the time.

Interviewee
from Exeter
Interview 14

One interviewee mentioned that the estate has been busier since the Covid-19 pandemic, but that generally this hadn't affected his ability to find peace and quiet. However, it raises an important point, that these interviews have reflected how many people come here for somewhere quiet, and less stressful to walk. Therefore, future management should consider how to maintain these quieter areas of the estate for these regular, local visitors.

Findings - Interviews

Interview conclusions

The interviews were carried in the less central areas of Killerton to understand better the use of these areas, and how change is perceived or what and how changes might be best made in the future. There is a strong sense from them of how the estate functions in a variety of inter-connecting ways for different people and communities; in particular the importance of quiet but accessible areas for walking. The most pertinent points from the interviews are arranged here across the four themes:

CHANGE, PERSONAL CONNECTION & BELONGING

- The importance of personal connections and observations of the landscape through time cannot be underestimated. Going forward it will be valuable to think about how these might be drawn into understandings of Killerton, but also how these often-invisible connections, memories and voices can be considered during the planning of future work.
- People generally seemed less aware of nature recovery work on the estate, except from where fences had been put up in which case most realised that they were designed to keep the cattle away from river. However, people were aware of tree felling and clearance. This had the potential to – and was – very upsetting to people, particularly when done in wet weather when machines churned the ground and caused damage to the woodland floor and its plants. Local people visiting regularly know individual trees and have strong attachments to them (as seen in recent fellings in urban areas).
- This opens up some interesting questions around how aware people are of slower, environmental change, and to what extent changes should or could be communicated.

Findings - Interviews

Interview conclusions

COMMUNICATION & INFORMATION

- Some visitors expressed appreciation for the interpretive information provided during special events like archaeological digs and horse logging. However, there was disappointment when events like horse logging were not visible despite being announced.
- Several visitors found the maps and signage inadequate, noting they were not to scale and lacked detail, leading to confusion. Additionally, some visitors suggested that display boards be made larger to accommodate older visitors. There were also concerns about a lack of clarity on who to contact for issues or questions about the estate.
- While there was general awareness of the estate's offerings, visitors highlighted a need for clearer communication on financial accessibility and contact information. The lack of a clear point of contact for inquiries, such as concerns about tree removal and barbed wire, indicates a need for improved communication channels with the estate.

Findings - Interviews

Interview conclusions

INFRASTRUCTURE & FACILITIES

- The provision of useful infrastructure and facilities allows good use of the estate for a range of visitors with different accessibility needs. The vast majority of interviewees were very content with visitor provisions, with particular mentions from those with young families, older visitors and families with disabilities.
- The availability of car parking at a range of sites around the estate was particularly beneficial. People were drawn by easy access to quiet, green spaces. It allowed people to easily stop and walk or walk dogs as part of their routine, commute or school run. As such, the estate is being used a great deal by local populations from nearby villages, towns, and from Exeter.
- Although few people mentioned public transport, it was mentioned by a number of interviewees that they would find it difficult to get there if they didn't have a lift in the car from friends or family. This was particularly the case with younger visitors. Using the knowledge that lots of people like to visit because of ease of access, this opens interesting questions about how public transport could be connected that ties into similar routines like commutes, school runs, and exercise around working from home, as well as weekend visits. Likewise, it was noted by both the interviewers and several interviewees that it's not easy to walk on the lanes due to the fast traffic and narrow spaces. Perhaps connecting up more footpaths to allow navigation around the roads (and marking these routes) could be a future priority.

Findings - Interviews

Interview conclusions

LANDSCAPE & NATURE

- One of the main attractions for the people interviewed was the peace and quiet of the green spaces further from the house at Killerton. It forms an important place to walk in the routines of local people, playing a role in their mental and physical health. This raises the interesting question of how to manage increasing visitor numbers in areas where the primary draw is quieter walks and enjoyment of the natural world. Dispersed, limited car parks probably help control this at present.
- Personal knowledge and connection to place might offer interesting insights into the landscape of Killerton, including regular, local visitors noticing places where particular plants can be found or changes in the ecology. How might this be used within nature recovery plans, or to create greater connections with the estate?
- The topography of Killerton offers different perspectives and viewpoints of the landscape, and many of the interviewees mentioned their enjoyment of looking out from the estate and seeing the sky. The ability to walk in different kinds of natural environment (woods, lanes, fields, gardens) in one place was also a strong draw for visitors, allowing them to mix up their walks for variety, and alter routes according to weather or time.
- The estate is a place where visitors can get away from normal life and digital pressures. Walking in the peaceful environment creates the opportunity to talk properly, develop personal relationships and spend time with family and friends. The lack of rubbish allows a space where people aren't reminded of negative societal norms, where they can focus on the environment instead.
- There was mention of Killerton being 'natural' and 'wild'. Although both problematic terms in a highly managed landscape, this reflects visitor's desire to be in places they perceive as 'natural'. This will be interesting to consider in light of nature recovery work – how can the estate engage visitors with understandings of the changing landscape and the positive benefits and excitement of increasing biodiversity as part of the nature recovery plan?

Findings: Focus groups



The following pages presents the results and findings from three focus group sessions as follows:

1. Pinhoe focus group session
2. Cranbrook focus group session
3. Caddihoe Scouts' young person focus group session

Findings - Focus groups

Session One: Pinhoe

Date: Wednesday 31st July

Venue: Pinhoe Community Centre

Participants: 8

The Killerton estate has long been appreciated for its natural beauty, especially during the spring when the bluebells bloom. Participants remarked specifically on the estate's beauty, emphasising the vibrant and visually stunning displays of bluebells that marked the seasonal change. The estate was perceived as a place where the community could experience the full spectrum of seasons, providing a dynamic and ever-changing environment that fostered a connection to the natural world.

For families, the estate served as a valuable space to take young children, offering a safe and enriching environment for outdoor activities. Despite this, it had been noted that not many families took full advantage of this resource. One participant had shared their personal experience of exploring Killerton extensively during the COVID-19 pandemic, highlighting how the lockdown periods had allowed for a deeper exploration and appreciation of the estate's vast offerings. Their sentiment, *"I explored so much of Killerton during the pandemic,"* reflected a broader trend where the restrictions had led people to seek solace and connection in nature.

Another participant had mentioned Caddihoe, a location associated with camping within the estate, noting its current limited use to evenings and only with permission. This underscored a nostalgic appreciation for parts of the estate that were no longer as accessible as before.



Findings - Focus groups

Access and barriers to green visitation

Access to the estate had presented several challenges to the community. The cost of entry had deterred many, especially as the £16 fee per visit was deemed unaffordable by some, and there was a lack of awareness about the free areas of the estate. This issue was particularly pertinent for younger or less well-off families, who found the free areas crucial. Additionally, the drive to the estate and the availability of parking are significant concerns. There were limited footpaths on roads leading to the estate, which raised safety issues, particularly in places like Pinhoe where safety was already a major concern.

One participant emphasised the importance of clear signage and pocket maps, which were appreciated by visitors. Despite the availability of these resources, there had been several remarks about the need for improved signage and clarity on where to go within the estate. Another participant expressed frustration that, despite living locally, their teenage children had never visited the estate, indicating a gap in engagement with younger demographics. “Despite having two teenage boys who grew up in the area, they never visited the estate,” one participant remarked, reflecting a missed opportunity for fostering nature connectedness in youth.

The usefulness of the all-weather path was highlighted, suggesting that such infrastructure improvements were beneficial in making the estate more accessible year-round. However, issues like overgrown picnic benches indicated that maintenance and upkeep were areas needing attention.

Nature connectedness & wellbeing

The estate is valued for its contribution to wellbeing, with its extensive beech forests, bluebells, and walking routes being particularly noted. Participants reminisced about playing games like "pooh sticks" with their children on the cycle path, though it was noted that such activities were more challenging on the bridges over the road. The estate's natural beauty and the opportunity to engage with nature were seen as enhancing visitors' mental and emotional wellbeing and increasingly important.

Findings - Focus groups

There was a notable disconnect between young people and nature. One participant remarked, “I fell out of love with nature at that age,” reflecting on the challenge of engaging teenagers with the natural environment. This disconnect was attributed to various factors, including the perceived investment of time and effort required to visit the estate and a lack of appealing activities for teenagers.

Concerns about antisocial behaviour had been raised, which affected the feeling of safety necessary for spending time on the estate. Participants discussed whether an increase in visitors might also lead to an increase in such behaviours. One participant noted, “Since the Poltimore fire, many more people want to go to the estate,” suggesting that increased visitation could have both positive and negative impacts.

Suggestions for co-designing the estate

The focus group provided numerous suggestions for improving the Killerton estate. There had been a consensus on the need for more interactive and engaging activities to attract diverse demographics. Technology had been seen as a valuable tool for engagement, with suggestions including the development of a Killerton app with QR codes and leveraging digital spaces for information sharing and citizen science initiatives. Anna Harrison from the National Trust mentioned an existing app called Wylder, which could potentially serve this purpose.

The importance of storytelling and creating a narrative to bring the estate to life was emphasised. Ideas such as bat walks, nature photography competitions, and citizen science projects using platforms like iNaturalist were proposed. Additionally, participants suggested improving transport connections and parking, as well as creating more interactive events and activities, similar to those offered at places like Holden Forest.

The role of social media in reaching younger audiences were highlighted, with recommendations to use platforms like TikTok and collaborate with influencers to promote the estate. It was suggested that the National Trust work more closely with local schools to increase awareness and involvement in nature conservation efforts. This collaboration could help change perceptions that the estate was solely about the house and heritage, making it more appealing to a broader audience.

Findings - Focus groups

Participants also pointed out the need for more accessible facilities, such as larger play parks for children and better-maintained picnic areas. The recent investment in access improvements, such as Jack's ramp into Ashclyst woods, had been appreciated, but there were still concerns about ensuring accessibility for all, including disabled individuals. Safety had been a recurring theme throughout the discussion. The feeling of safety was crucial for encouraging visitation, especially for families with young children. Recent local incidents and the absence of a youth club in Pinhoe had heightened safety concerns. Participants had shared a desire for their children to explore the estate independently, but current safety perceptions prevented this. The cultural comparison with Ghana by one participant, where young people have more autonomy, had been mentioned to highlight differences in trust and independence given to children.

Additionally, the estate had been noted for its role in community events, such as the outdoor theatre, which seemed to appeal to the younger generation. However, there was a need for events that were less niche and more inclusive of various demographics. Comparisons to other attractions like Holden Forest, which was always packed due to its structured outdoor activities and engaging themes like the Gruffalo, had been made to illustrate the potential for Killerton to adopt similar strategies. There were also suggestions to improve transport connections and parking facilities to make the estate more accessible. Participants conveyed that their communities had appreciated the free passes but stressed the importance of clear communication about what was available and accessible within the estate. There were concerns that disabled individuals might visit areas like Ashclyst only to find they lacked proper access, underscoring the need for comprehensive accessibility planning and communication.



Findings - Focus groups

Session Two: Cranbrook

Date: Thursday 8th August

Venue: Cranbrook Community Hub.

Participants: 8

The focus group session, attended by 10 community members, explored the complex relationship between the local community and the Killerton estate. Harry Hilser led the facilitation for the session, with support and contextual input from the National Trust Killerton's Nature Engagement Officer Anna Harrison and Project Manager Simon Bates. The discussion spanned various topics such as the meaning of the estate, access barriers, nature connectedness, and suggestions for co-designing the estate to better serve the community.

The meaning of Killerton Estate to the community

The Killerton estate holds significant meaning for the local community, serving as a cherished natural space that offers both beauty and a sense of escape. The estate's vast and awe-inspiring gardens were frequently mentioned as a source of admiration. As one participant described, the gardens are "awe-inspiring and expansive," a testament to the natural beauty that draws visitors to the site. The estate's natural landscape, including the beech forests and bluebell fields, plays a crucial role in the community's connection to nature, especially during the spring when these flowers bloom in abundance.

Findings - Focus groups

The estate has also been a vital resource during challenging times, such as the COVID-19 lockdowns. One participant shared how the estate became a sanctuary for walks with their daughter during the lockdown, highlighting its importance as a space for mental and emotional well-being. The sentiment "Killerton is important for making the moments, not just the memories" encapsulates the estate's role in providing meaningful experiences that go beyond mere recollections. However, the estate also evokes complex emotions for some community members. One participant expressed a "sense of grief" due to their vegan lifestyle, finding it distressing to hear cows screaming at nearby farms. This highlights the multifaceted relationship individuals have with the estate, where beauty and sorrow coexist.

Access and barriers to green visitation

Access to the Killerton estate presents several challenges for the local community, influencing how frequently and easily residents can visit. One of the most significant barriers is the cost associated with visiting the estate. The presence of a "paywall" has been a point of frustration for many, as it limits access to certain areas, particularly for those who cannot afford the entry fee. This issue has been somewhat alleviated by the recent introduction of a community group rate; a change that has been welcomed by participants. The group rate has helped foster a sense of safety and inclusivity, as it allows more people to visit together, reinforcing community bonds.

Transport and accessibility issues have also been highlighted as significant barriers. For some, especially those with additional needs, accessing the estate is challenging. One participant shared their experience of visiting the estate with an assistance dog, noting that while it is possible to take the bus, not everyone may feel comfortable doing so. Active travel, particularly for younger people, is another concern, with one parent stating, "I wouldn't want my young daughter cycling there alone," reflecting fears about safety and accessibility.

The lack of clear signage and direction within the estate has further compounded these challenges. Participants have expressed concerns about feeling lost or confused due to insufficient signage, which can erode trust and deter future visits. One participant with dyspraxia and ADHD specifically mentioned finding the estate's layout confusing, underscoring the importance of clear and accessible information. Another participant noted the difficulty of navigating the estate in a "figure of eight" pattern, which adds to the confusion for visitors unfamiliar with the area.

Findings - Focus groups

Co-design & suggestions for improvement

The focus group generated numerous suggestions for improving the Killerton estate, with an emphasis on co-designing the estate to better serve the community's needs. Participants emphasised the importance of involving the community in decision-making processes, particularly when it comes to preserving and enhancing the estate's natural environment. One participant remarked, "The key is how to harness that to help redesign the estate for all," highlighting the potential for community involvement to shape the future of the estate.

A recurring theme in the discussion was the need for improved signage and clearer communication. Participants suggested creating infographics and clear maps to help visitors navigate the estate more easily. One idea was to develop a "Dummies guide" to the area, which could serve as an accessible resource for visitors with varying levels of familiarity with the estate. Additionally, there was a call for more visual aids and an illustrated guide, which could make the estate more welcoming and easier to explore for all visitors. It was noted by the National Trust team that many of these ideas were already gathered and that some were in process, such as the development of a visual guide. The role of technology in enhancing the visitor experience was also discussed. Participants suggested using augmented reality (AR) and digital tools to engage visitors and provide additional layers of information about the estate's history, ecology, and current projects. Social media was identified as a powerful tool for raising awareness about the estate and encouraging more people to visit. Participants recommended leveraging platforms like Instagram and Facebook to showcase the estate's beauty and share updates about ongoing conservation efforts.

The concept of a central hub or community space within the estate was another significant suggestion. Participants noted that Killerton currently lacks a central gathering point where visitors can meet, relax, and engage in community activities. Drawing inspiration from other sites like The Glade at Dartington, participants suggested that a similar space could be developed at Killerton, possibly at a location like Caddihoe. Such a space could serve as a focal point for community events, workshops, and educational activities, helping to strengthen the sense of community ownership and connection to the estate. Discussions also touched on the importance of protecting and restoring the estate's natural environment. Participants expressed interest in the potential for rewilding projects, drawing comparisons to the well-known Knepp Estate. While it was noted that Killerton will remain largely agricultural, there is enthusiasm for exploring opportunities for regeneration and restoration, particularly in areas like Elbury. Participants also discussed the importance of safeguarding small pockets of nature within the estate, ensuring that these areas are preserved for future generations.

Findings - Focus groups

The idea of restoring the personhood of rivers and bringing indigenous ways of being into decision-making processes was another key recommendation. Participants suggested that the National Trust could consider incorporating the voices of the "more than human" into their governance structures, possibly by including a member on the board who represents these perspectives. This approach aligns with emerging legal frameworks in places like New Zealand, where rivers have been granted legal personhood, and could help to elevate the importance of ecological and spiritual values in the management of the estate. These legal frameworks aim to protect natural entities by recognising them as living beings with inherent rights, rather than merely as resources to be exploited. For the Killerton estate, and potentially the broader National Trust, these examples offer valuable lessons on how to approach the protection and management of natural landscapes in a way that is both innovative and respectful of ecological integrity.

The importance of engaging younger generations in nature conservation and education was highlighted. Participants discussed the potential for working with local schools and community groups to foster a deeper connection to nature among children and teenagers. The new charity Sisterwood was mentioned as a potential partner in this effort, particularly for reaching vulnerable demographics through initiatives like social prescribing. Participants also suggested creating challenges and activities that encourage young people to explore the estate and develop a sense of stewardship for the natural environment. For instance, they proposed organising nature scavenger hunts where children could search for specific plants, insects, or animal tracks, helping them learn about the local biodiversity. Another idea was to establish a "Junior Ranger" programme, where young participants could engage in hands-on conservation tasks such as planting trees, building birdhouses, or monitoring wildlife. This would not only foster a deeper connection to the land but also instil a sense of responsibility and pride in preserving the estate's natural beauty. Seasonal events like apple-picking festivals or guided nature walks were suggested which could focus on local flora and fauna and could be tailored to educate and inspire younger audiences, encouraging them to take an active role in the estate's ecological stewardship.

Conclusion of Cranbrook focus group session

The focus group session at Cranbrook has revealed a strong connection between the local community and the natural environment. However, it has also highlighted significant barriers to access and engagement, particularly related to transportation, signage, and inclusivity. The community has expressed a desire to be involved in the co-design of the estate, offering numerous suggestions for how the National Trust can enhance the visitor experience and foster a deeper connection to nature. By addressing these concerns and embracing the community's suggestions, the National Trust can ensure that Killerton remains a cherished and accessible space for all, supporting both the well-being of the local population and the conservation of the estate's natural and cultural heritage.

Findings - Focus groups

Session Three: Caddihoe

Date: Thursday 8th August

Venue: Caddihoe scouts den

Participants: 16

In a youth focus group session exploring nature connectedness, 16 young people aged 11-18 from towns surrounding the Killerton estate participated in interactive activities designed to deepen their connection to nature, alongside Killerton's Nature Engagement Officer Anna Harrison, Cranbrook Town Council's Ranger Andrew Chapman, and Cranbrook Community Hub Manager Aynsley Jones.



Findings - Focus groups

Activity one: Nature connection web

During the first session, the participants sat in a circle around an unlit fire, each holding onto a piece of string as they answered guiding questions about their experiences and feelings toward nature. This activity symbolically connected them, creating a web that visually represented their shared relationship with the natural world.

When asked where they liked to go in nature, the participants mentioned a variety of locations, though they were initially slow to recall specific places on the Killerton estate. As the conversation progressed, they began to remember areas like the chapel, Killerton House, an old, abandoned house, a rope swing, and Caddihoe, where the session was held. One participant proudly recounted how they had ridden their bike to Killerton and back—a two-hour journey—demonstrating their appreciation for the bike paths.

Participants expressed a range of emotions when discussing how they feel in nature, including excitement, calmness, and peace. One participant noted that "nature makes you feel refreshed," while another added that it makes them feel "tired—a good kind of tired," highlighting the physical and emotional benefits of spending time outdoors. The sense of interconnection within nature was also recognised, with one participant stating, "everything impacts everything else," illustrating their awareness of the intricate relationships within ecosystems.

Some participants shared personal stories, such as one who mentioned how their family had started taking walks in a nearby country park during the COVID-19 lockdown, which eventually led to them getting a dog. Another participant recalled a game they played in the woods, which involved finding all the colours of the rainbow, emphasising the fun and engaging aspects of being in nature.

However, not all memories were positive. One participant shared an anecdote about how their mother had become upset with developers building houses that obstructed a previously beautiful view of the countryside behind their home, reflecting the tension between development and natural preservation.

Findings - Focus groups

Activity two: Nature Connection Index sliding scale

In the second session, participants engaged in a sliding scale activity based on the Nature Connection Index (NCI) where they physically positioned themselves along a scale from 1 to 5 in response to questions about their connection to nature. This exercise allowed participants to reflect on the depth of their relationship with the natural world. They were encouraged to act independently in their responses rather than following others, and it appeared that they were honest in their responses.

The responses indicated a strong appreciation for nature among the group. Following the responses of “Strongly agree” to the NCI questions, they conveyed that being in nature makes them happy and that they always find beauty in it. One participant commented, "When you are out in nature, you feel mindful," capturing the sense of mental clarity and peace that nature can provide. The idea of rewilding came up, with participants recognising it as the opposite of deforestation and suggesting that Killerton should do more to allow trees to regenerate and increase the chances for endangered species.

The participants also discussed the importance of taking care of nature and encouraging others to do the same. Picking up litter was highlighted as a simple yet effective way to protect the environment. Additionally, one participant brought up the importance of life cycles and how nature provides essential resources like oxygen, leading to a reflection on how technology could potentially reduce reliance on natural materials to protect forests. Throughout the session, participants expressed a desire to spend more time in nature, specifically at Killerton, if given the opportunity. They acknowledged that Killerton has made nature more accessible, though they noted that some might find it difficult to navigate the lanes leading to the estate.

Findings - Focus groups

Additional observations & reflections

During the discussions, several participants expressed interest in wildlife and the potential for reintroducing species. One participant mentioned a wish to see wolves brought back, sharing knowledge about their persecution in the 17th century due to livestock predation. Other wildlife observations included sightings of kingfishers and otters, which had left participants in awe.

The session also revealed some confusion among the participants regarding different local nature sites, as one participant mentioned enjoying the Gruffalo trail, which is not part of Killerton but Holden Forest. This highlights a need for better education and communication about the unique features and offerings of the Killerton estate.

Some of the suggestions for improving the estate were more light-hearted and less aligned with the goals of nature conservation, such as adding a slip and slide or football pitches. However, these suggestions indicate a desire for more recreational activities that could make nature more engaging for younger audiences.

In summary, the youth focus group style session has provided valuable insights into how young people in the Cranbrook area perceive and connect with nature, particularly at the Killerton estate. The discussions have highlighted the emotional and physical benefits of spending time in nature, the importance of preserving natural spaces, and the need for more engaging and accessible activities to foster a deeper connection to the environment.

Discussion



This discussion presents a detailed analysis of the findings, highlighting their implications for the National Trust and local communities surrounding the Killerton Estate. It examines the barriers to nature connection identified in the research and offers recommendations for overcoming these challenges. Additionally, the discussion explores opportunities for co-design that arose from the research and emphasises the potential benefits of collaborative approaches for enhancing community engagement and fostering a deeper connection with nature.

Discussion

The discussion begins by revisiting the aims and objectives of the research, which provide a framework for understanding the key findings. It then systematically explores each research question, delving into the specific insights gained and their broader implications.

Aim: *To understand nature connectedness of communities around the National Trust estate of Killerton.*

Objective One: *To establish a nature connection and pro-nature behaviour baseline of the communities around the Killerton Estate.*

Objective Two: *To develop a programme for monitoring nature connection and pro-nature behaviour.*

Objective Three: *To explore and recommend opportunities for co-design with the community.*

The objectives of this research were achieved through a combination of methods, including surveys, interviews, and focus groups. Together, the insights gained from the collection of data using these methods helped to establish a thorough foundational baseline for understanding nature connectedness and pro-nature behaviour among the communities around the Killerton Estate, fulfilling Objective One. The comprehensive data gathered from these diverse methods allowed for a nuanced understanding of the community's relationship with nature. Following this, the monitoring programme developed under Objective Two builds on a tested proof of concept, demonstrating the efficacy of the initial research approach. This programme includes reflections and recommendations for enhancing and optimising future research methodologies to better capture longitudinal changes in nature connection and behaviour. Additionally, the in-depth exploration of co-design opportunities, facilitated through interviews and focus groups, provided rich qualitative insights that have been distilled into clear, actionable recommendations for the Killerton Estate team. These recommendations aim to enhance community engagement and support the ongoing development of the estate in alignment with the needs and preferences of local residents.

It is important to note that the findings are based on a relatively small and non-representative sample size, which may introduce biases and limit the generalisability of the results. Therefore, while the insights provide valuable perspectives, they should not be assumed to fully represent the broader community's experiences or views. However, the baseline data does provide valuable insights and a sound platform from which to inform future research and develop a monitoring programme at the Killerton site.

Discussion: Research question one

Each research question will now be addressed individually, systematically exploring the findings and their implications for enhancing nature connectedness and community engagement around the Killerton Estate.

RQ1: What are the current levels of nature connection and pro-nature behaviours within the communities surrounding the National Trust estate of Killerton, and how do these levels vary across different demographic groups?

The quantitative research revealed a trend that respondents indicated relatively high connectedness to nature, as shown by the Nature Connectedness Index (NCI) scores. This suggests that individuals in the survey have a strong sense of connection with the natural environment, which is consistent with findings in related literature. According to research (Richardson et al., 2019) high scores on the NCI reflect a deep psychological connection to nature, which can foster more environmental concern and positive ecological behaviour. The NCI results from this survey are comparable to findings from other studies conducted in the UK. For example, a similar study by Natural England (2023) reported that approximately 65% of adults scored high on the NCI, which aligns closely with the percentages seen in several of our survey items, indicating that the surveyed population at Killerton shows a relatively high degree of nature connectedness compared to national averages. This high level of nature connectedness may be attributed to the local environment and the community's engagement with the Killerton estate.

The survey also found fair levels of pro-nature conservation behaviours among respondents. This aligns with research presented in recent validation of the ProConsB scale (Barbett et al., 2020). Older individuals in the survey were more likely to report regularly engaging in pro-nature conservation activities. The intrinsic connection indicated in these research findings could be a driving force behind their pro-nature behaviours. The tendency for older individuals to more frequently engage in conservation activities might reflect accumulated environmental values and practices over time, supporting the idea that long-term exposure to nature can reinforce conservation behaviours. These findings underscore the importance of fostering nature connectedness early in life to potentially enhance long-term pro-nature behaviours.

The qualitative research has further revealed that the level of nature connection and pro-nature behaviours among communities surrounding the Killerton estate is deeply intertwined with personal experiences and perceptions of change. Many interviewees expressed a profound personal connection to the estate, often framed through long-term visits and intimate observations of its evolving landscape. The estate is cherished for its natural beauty, particularly the seasonal bluebell displays, which foster a deep sense of connection to nature among local residents.

Discussion: Research question one

Families find the estate a valuable resource for outdoor activities with young children, and personal stories from the COVID-19 pandemic illustrate a significant engagement with the estate during lockdowns, reflecting its role in providing solace and enhancing wellbeing. However, younger individuals, especially teenagers, show a notable disconnect from the estate, with some never having visited despite living nearby. This disconnect highlights a gap in engagement that needs addressing to foster a deeper connection to nature among youth. For instance, regular visitors noted their attachment to specific features like trees or seasonal changes, reflecting a personal history with the site that outweighs their awareness of broader environmental management efforts. This strong emotional bond highlights a unique form of nature connection where individual experiences and historical memories significantly influence perceptions of the estate's value and the impact of recent changes, such as tree-felling or new fencing.

Further demographic differences in nature connection and pro-nature behaviours also emerge from the data. Older visitors and long-term residents tend to reflect more deeply on historical changes and their impact on their sense of belonging. For example, recollections of past events like the 1984 storm or personal anecdotes about tree management illustrate how long-term engagement with the estate fosters a sense of continuity and belonging. In contrast, younger visitors and those with mobility constraints prioritise practical aspects such as accessibility and infrastructure improvements. Younger visitors, in particular, are less likely to visit independently but value the estate's engagement with schools and organised activities, indicating a need for targeted outreach and educational programmes to build lasting connections with younger generations.

The focus groups also identified a strong desire for the estate to engage more inclusively with all community members. Suggestions included developing interactive activities, leveraging technology, and creating community hubs to enhance the estate's appeal. The emphasis on environmental stewardship and the need for ongoing community involvement in the estate's development were also highlighted, underscoring the importance of adapting the estate to meet contemporary needs while preserving its natural and cultural heritage.

The practical aspects of infrastructure and communication also play a crucial role in shaping visitor experiences. Many interviewees appreciated improvements in accessibility, such as better paths and facilities for those with disabilities, which directly impact their ability to visit and enjoy the estate. However, there were also concerns about the clarity of information and communication regarding changes and management practices. Suggestions for improvement included clearer signage and more direct contact points with the National Trust. Addressing these concerns can enhance visitor satisfaction and support, ensuring that all community members, regardless of their demographic background, feel informed and included in the ongoing stewardship of the Killerton estate.

Discussion: Research question two

RQ2: What are the primary barriers faced by the local community surrounding Killerton in accessing greenspaces and fostering nature connection, and how do these barriers differ across demographic groups and stakeholder categories?

Based on the research findings, the main barriers faced by the local community surrounding Killerton in accessing greenspaces and fostering a connection with nature primarily revolve around transportation, awareness, and time constraints. Limited public transportation options significantly restrict access to the estate, with 89% of visitors relying on private vehicles and none using public transport. This lack of public transportation disproportionately affects certain demographic groups, such as younger visitors and those without private vehicles, who struggle to visit the estate without assistance. There is also a need for improved alternative access routes, like safe footpaths, to better serve these groups.

Additional barriers include a range of physical, social, economic, knowledge-based, and temporal challenges. Physical barriers, such as inadequate pedestrian and cycling pathways and restricted accessibility, especially impact people with disabilities, the elderly, and those without cars. Social and psychological obstacles, including feelings of exclusion, lack of representation, and cultural differences, deter minorities and lower-income families from visiting greenspaces. Economic challenges, such as entry fees, parking costs, and the general expenses of outdoor activities, further limit access, particularly in the absence of affordable, nature-based programming for all socio-economic groups. Many community members also lack awareness of the greenspaces, events, and benefits of nature, further reducing engagement. Seasonal and temporal factors, including poor weather, seasonal shifts, and restricted hours, also affect access, especially for those with limited free time.

Barriers differ across demographic groups and stakeholder categories. While families with young children, older adults, and visitors with disabilities often find their needs met by existing facilities, younger visitors and those without cars face significant access challenges. Moreover, a lack of awareness about ongoing nature recovery efforts, unless visibly apparent, reveals a communication barrier that hinders deeper engagement with conservation initiatives, particularly for those who do not immediately perceive the value of less visible environmental changes.

Discussion: Research question three

RQ3: What opportunities exist for co-design initiatives with the communities, and how can these initiatives be leveraged to enhance nature engagement and conservation efforts at Killerton in the long term?

In terms of opportunities for co-design initiatives with the community, the findings suggest several promising avenues. Given the strong attachment of local residents to specific areas and individual trees, as well as their desire for peace and quiet in less central parts of the estate, co-design efforts could begin by focusing on integrating local knowledge and experiences into the management and development of the estate. For example, considering citizen science-based approaches and involving community members in monitoring ecological changes or contributing to nature recovery plans could harness their personal connections and detailed observations of the landscape. This collaborative approach could foster a deeper sense of ownership and stewardship among local users, enhancing nature engagement and conservation efforts over the long term.

There are significant opportunities for co-design initiatives with communities to enhance nature engagement and conservation efforts at Killerton. Collaborative planning with diverse community groups can ensure greenspaces are accessible and inclusive, addressing needs related to pathways, culturally relevant programming, and signage. Leveraging local knowledge can help identify specific barriers and foster a sense of ownership and stewardship over local greenspaces. Education and awareness campaigns that highlight the benefits of nature engagement and raise awareness about conservation can be effective in enhancing community involvement, especially when partnered with schools, local organisations, and community leaders. Organising inclusive events and activities that cater to various demographic groups and interests, such as family-friendly outings, senior walking groups, or culturally themed nature walks, can increase engagement across different communities. Partnerships with local stakeholders, including businesses, schools, and community organisations, can provide essential resources and support, helping to create employment opportunities related to conservation and nature education. Finally, long-term engagement strategies that establish ongoing dialogue with the community and incorporate feedback can ensure sustained interest and involvement in nature engagement and conservation efforts.

Additionally, the results reveal a strong desire among visitors to spend more time at Killerton, with 88% expressing this sentiment. This indicates a significant opportunity to expand engagement through co-designed programs that encourage repeat visits and prolonged interaction with the natural environment. Initiatives could include creating new walking routes that are designed with community input to ensure they meet local needs and preferences, or developing education programs that involve local stories and memories of the estate. By leveraging these opportunities, Killerton can enhance its role as a hub for community engagement, promoting conservation awareness and fostering a stronger, more resilient connection to the natural world among its visitors.

Discussion: Research question four

RQ4: How effective is the proposed monitoring programme in capturing changes in nature connection and pro-nature behaviours over time within the communities around the Killerton Estate?

This research question pertains to the longitudinal aspect of the research, and thus will primarily be assessed as the data collection continues as outlined in the monitoring programme framework. As per the Recommendations for adopting the monitoring programme section below, it is proposed that the efficacy of the programme is reviewed in a systematic manner on an annual basis, with a team exploring any changes over time in any of the indicators of connectedness to nature, barriers to green visitation and other insights of the communities' relationship to the Killerton estate.

This document presents the findings from the baseline nature connectedness research conducted throughout 2024 and aims to establish a framework and set of guidelines for ongoing data collection by the National Trust and other stakeholders. The following section outlines how to integrate and upscale the approaches developed in this baseline research to incorporate into a long-term monitoring programme.

Monitoring



The framework presented in this report presents as a cost-effective and adaptable monitoring programme to track changes in nature connection and pro-nature behaviours over time. It emphasises representative sampling, GDPR compliance, sustainability, and ease of implementation. Key indicators assessed for the programme's suitability include nature connection, pro-nature behaviours, greenspace visitation, transportation modes, and accessibility. With guidance on integrating the Five Pathways to Nature Connection, these indicators are designed to support the project's long-term objectives of reliability and sustainability.

Monitoring programme

Integrating the monitoring programme within existing National Trust efforts is proposed to obtain a comprehensive view of nature connectedness across the estate over time. Regular data collection intervals and robust stakeholder engagement will bolster the programme's effectiveness and ensure its long-term sustainability. Implementing the monitoring programme necessitates consistent data collection intervals to meticulously track progress and engage with community stakeholders, thereby maintaining relevance and accuracy.

This iterative framework is meticulously designed to adapt to dynamic changes throughout the 20-year delivery period of the Landscape Recovery Scheme. Serving as a foundational tool, the monitoring programme assesses and enhances nature connection and pro-nature behaviours at Killerton Estate by establishing a baseline dataset and enabling continuous comparison and adaptive management strategies. This approach not only provides actionable insights but also amplifies community engagement initiatives and fosters enduring nature connection programmes.



Monitoring programme

Recommendations

- 1. Integration with existing efforts:** Align the monitoring programme with current National Trust initiatives to provide a holistic view of nature connectedness across the estate. This integration ensures that data collection is consistent with ongoing efforts, maximising resource efficiency and enhancing overall effectiveness. Insights may also be valuable and applicable to other National Trust sites. To grasp people's needs regarding nature, it's also crucial to consider the interwoven aspects of cultural experiences, heritage, socio-economic factors, and personal histories.
- 2. Regular data collection:** Establish consistent data collection intervals to effectively track changes in nature connectedness and pro-nature behaviours over time. Regular monitoring is crucial for identifying trends, assessing the impact of various activities, and making timely adjustments to engagement strategies.
- 3. Stakeholder engagement:** Actively engage with community stakeholders, including local residents, visitors, and conservation groups, to gather diverse perspectives and foster a sense of ownership and involvement in the monitoring process. Engaging stakeholders ensures that the programme remains relevant and that insights are reflective of the community's needs and values. This also applies to dissemination of findings, and feeding back any changes which are made based on the research findings.
- 4. Adaptive management:** Implement an iterative framework that allows for adaptive management strategies throughout the 20-year delivery period of the Landscape Recovery Scheme. This flexibility is essential for responding to environmental changes, evolving community dynamics, and new insights gained from monitoring data.
- 5. Use of the Five Pathways framework:** Employ the Five Pathways to Nature Connection as a guiding framework for designing activities, places, and initiatives, which may help tailor engagement efforts to foster deeper connections with nature, enhancing both the effectiveness of the programme and the overall experience for visitors and the community.

Monitoring: Integrating the five pathways

The Five Pathways to Nature Connection (Contact, Beauty, Emotion, Meaning, and Compassion) offer a structured framework to design engagement activities, places, and initiatives that foster deeper relationships between people and nature (Fig.5; [Appendix 7](#)). Using this framework, along with insights from annual nature connection and behavioural data, can help tailor experiences to enhance nature connectedness effectively.

The estate's natural beauty, particularly during the spring bluebell season, provides a peaceful environment that enhances wellbeing, yet there is a noticeable decline in nature connectedness among younger people. To address this, activities like sensory nature walks and mindfulness exercises can be introduced to engage the senses, leveraging areas with diverse textures, smells, and colours. Data from annual surveys can guide the development of these programmes, ensuring they cater to sensory experiences that resonate most with visitors. Creating spaces like sensory gardens and trails with interactive elements, such as textured paths and soundscapes, can further enhance sensory engagement, especially for families and those with disabilities who currently face access barriers due to high entry costs and inadequate transportation.

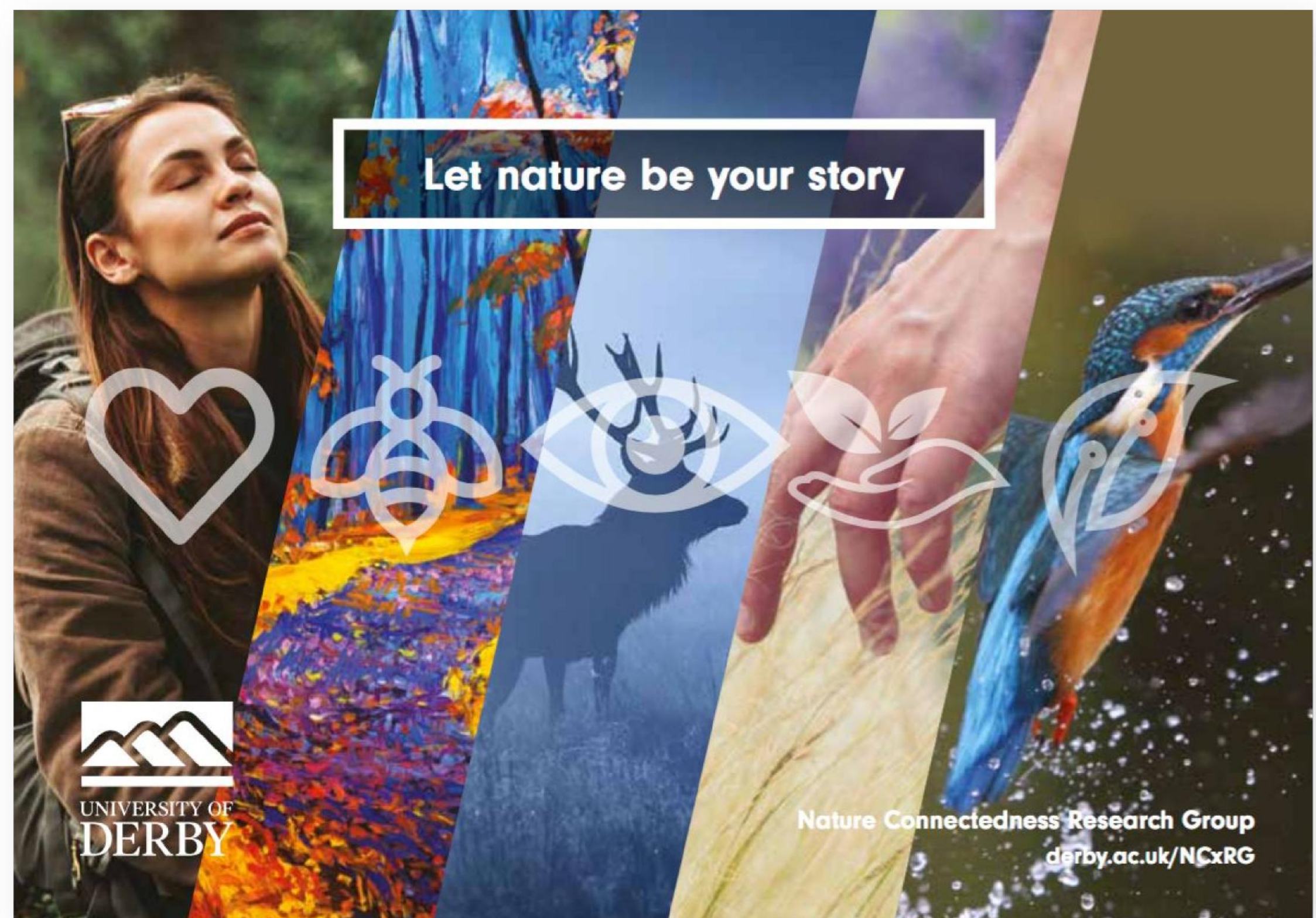


Figure 5. The Five Pathways to Nature Connection represent a useful guide to building the research findings into community engagement approaches.

Monitoring: Integrating the five pathways

In addition to sensory engagement, initiatives focusing on beauty, emotion, and meaning can be designed to align with visitor interests and feedback. For example, nature photography workshops and art installations can celebrate the estate's scenic beauty, while storytelling sessions and guided meditations can enhance emotional connections. Addressing safety concerns, particularly around antisocial behaviour, by improving pathways and fostering a sense of security can make these activities more accessible. Emphasising the cultural and historical significance of Killerton through interpretive trails and educational programmes can deepen visitors' sense of meaning, while integrating modern conservation methods and technology like augmented reality can appeal to younger audiences. Moreover, initiatives encouraging compassion, such as volunteer conservation projects and community gardens, can foster environmental stewardship and address concerns about preserving the estate's natural environment for future generations. Engaging the community in the co-design of these initiatives and improving communication through clearer signage and social media can further enhance inclusivity and ensure that the estate meets contemporary needs while maintaining its historical integrity.

To ensure the effectiveness of nature connection programmes, it is essential to regularly collect data through surveys and monitoring, allowing for continuous feedback and adaptation. Programmes should be adjusted based on data insights to stay relevant and impactful, such as introducing new sensory activities if engagement levels decline. Longitudinal studies can provide insights into long-term changes in nature connection and its effects on well-being and conservation behaviour. It is also important to make activities accessible and inclusive, using data to identify and cater to underserved communities. By aligning these efforts with the Five Pathways to Nature Connection and adapting based on data, deeper and more meaningful relationships with nature can be fostered, enhancing well-being and promoting sustainability.

Conclusion



The research profiled in this report offers insights into people's relationship with the Killerton Estate and the barriers and opportunities associated with enhancing nature connectedness. The findings highlight the strong emotional bonds that local residents have with the estate, the significant challenges they face in accessing and engaging with it, and the critical role that targeted outreach, improved accessibility, and community involvement play in fostering a deeper connection to nature.

The waypoints and recommendations offered here provide an opportunity for improving visitor experiences, landscape recovery and nature connectedness on the Killerton Estate. Looking ahead, the National Trust has a great opportunity to shape these aspects affecting people and nature, and to do so in ways which offer meaningful relationships with place to develop alongside an ecologically rich and diverse environment.

The report is followed by a list of references and resources that informed this research, and appendices containing detailed data and methodologies used throughout the study. These elements provide a comprehensive foundation for future initiatives aimed at fostering a deeper connection between communities and the natural environment.

Future work - Potential for further research & long-term monitoring

Longitudinal studies

- Continue tracking changes in nature connection and pro-nature behaviours using the established monitoring programme.
- Regular data collection and analysis will help assess the effectiveness of engagement strategies and enable necessary adjustments.

Evaluate co-design initiatives

- Assess the impact of co-designed programs and community involvement on nature engagement and conservation efforts. This will provide insights into the effectiveness of collaborative approaches and guide future initiatives.

Expand outreach & accessibility

- Explore additional strategies to overcome access barriers and improve outreach efforts.
- Research should focus on understanding the needs of underserved communities and finding innovative solutions to enhance their engagement with nature.

Integrate findings into estate management

- Use insights from ongoing research to inform estate management practices and develop adaptive strategies that align with community needs and conservation goals. This will ensure the long-term sustainability and relevance of nature connection programmes.
- Community feedback should be combined with listening to tenant farmers and other people working on the estate, to maintain a balance of needs and perspectives. This then feeds back into the strategy development, and the importance of communicating these subtle and various voices in different, innovative and effective ways that suit and enhance the management of the Killerton estate.

Future work - Potential estate co-design opportunities

Recommendations

1. Establishing community forums:

Create regular community forums that serve as a platform for open dialogue between the National Trust and local communities. These forums will gather insights and ideas for nature engagement, with representatives from different groups (e.g., families, schools, conservationists) serving as liaisons or spokespeople to voice the broader community's perspectives.

2. Diverse stakeholder involvement:

Engage a wide range of stakeholders, including local residents, visitors, environmental groups, and young people, to ensure diverse viewpoints are considered in decision-making processes. This inclusivity will help tailor initiatives to the needs of all user groups.

3. Collaborative design workshops:

Host co-design workshops where participants can actively collaborate on developing ideas for the estate's future development. These workshops should focus on identifying challenges, exploring solutions, and envisioning enhancements to nature connection experiences at the estate.

4. Pilot community-led projects:

Encourage the community to take the lead on small-scale pilot projects aimed at improving nature engagement and conservation efforts. This could include nature trails, citizen science, bio-blitz surveys, educational programmes, or conservation activities, with ongoing support from the estate.

5. Ongoing feedback and iteration:

Establish mechanisms for collecting continuous feedback from community forums and pilot projects. Regular check-ins will ensure that plans can be adapted over time based on evolving community needs and preferences, fostering long-term collaboration.

This approach emphasises long-term, participatory engagement, ensuring the community is an active partner in shaping the future of the Killerton Estate.

References

Barbett, L.; Stupple, E. J. N.; Sweet, M.; Schofield, M. B.; Richardson, M. (2020). Measuring Actions for Nature—Development and Validation of a Pro-Nature Conservation Behaviour Scale. *Sustainability*, 12, 4885.

Natural England. (2023). *People and Nature Survey: Understanding how people connect with the natural environment* (NECR373). Natural England. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/people-and-nature-survey-for-england>

Richardson, M.; Hunt, A.; Hinds, J.; Bragg, R.; Fido, D.; Petronzi, D.; Barrett, L.; Clitherow, T.; White, M. (2019). A Measure of Nature Connectedness for Children and Adults: Validation, Performance, and Insights. *Sustainability*, 11, 3250.

Appendices

All Appendices have been included with the submission of this report in pdf form. The following files were included:

Appendix 1 - Methodology

Appendix 2 - Interview transcripts

Appendix 3 - Interview questions

Appendix 4 - Focus group rundown and questions

Appendix 5 - Focus group participant agreement sheets

Appendix 6 - Full collection of survey data results

Appendix 7 - Five Pathways to Nature Connection

Appendix 8 - Monitoring programme technical details

Appendix 9 - Questionnaire raw document form

