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Reintroduction of the Eurasian Lynx to the United Kingdom: Results of a Public Survey

Lynx UK Trust / Clifford Chance / University of Cumbria

Prepared by: Darrell Smith (University of Cumbria) and Ian Convery (University of Cumbria)
Reviewed by: Paul O'Donoghue (Lynx UK Trust), Adam Eagle (Clifford Chance) and Steve Piper (Lynx UK Trust)



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Executive Summary

Background

The Lynx UK Trust commissioned a consultation exercise to collect views on the reintroduction of lynx to the UK. A national consultation exercise sought to describe the opinions of two specific target audiences:

- **the Pro-active voice** – members of the general public who would actively seek to express their opinions given the means to do so;
- **the Passive voice** – a representative sample of the UK general public which may include those who have an opinion on the subject but would probably not actively seek to express it unless specifically asked.

Consultation focused on three main propositions:

1. We should reintroduce species that were once found in the UK but have since become extinct.
2. As part of a controlled and monitored scientific trial lynx should be reintroduced to the UK.
3. As part of a controlled and monitored scientific trial lynx should be reintroduced to the UK within the next twelve months.

The Pro-Active Voice

Pro-active members of the general public expressed extremely strong support for all three propositions. Overall 91% of the more than 9600 participants agreed that extirpated UK native species should be reintroduced. When asked more specifically about a UK lynx reintroduction as part of a controlled and monitored scientific trial the strength of support increased, with an additional 13% of participants adopting a viewpoint of 'strongly agree' with the proposal. When participant responses are collated by the declared nature of interest in the consultation exercise, strong net agreement for propositions 1 and 2 was received from interest groups identified as forestry (95%), conservation (95%), an interest in nature (94%), environmental issues (93%), and academic (92%).

Support for propositions 1 and 2 was expressed at slightly lower levels for interest groups identified as general interest (87%), land management (84%) and walking (73%). Participants who described their interest in the reintroduction as coming from an agricultural or farming perspective recorded the lowest levels of net support at 39%. Overall, this interest group expressed a net disagreement with both the primary principle that extirpated UK native species should be reintroduced (52%) and with the proposal for a UK lynx reintroduction (60%). However, when opinions were characterised by the agricultural-based membership groups of the National Farmers Union and the Country Land & Business Association, an overall position of support was expressed: 58% and 65% net agreement with the general reintroduction of extirpated UK species; 58% and 67% in net agreement with a UK lynx reintroduction respectively.

With the introduction of timescale, described by the third proposition, a number of participants appear to reappraise their response. Whilst strong overall net agreement (84%) was expressed for a proposed controlled and monitored scientific lynx reintroduction to take place within the next twelve months, a 5 – 9% reduction in net agreement was described across all interest groups. This subtle difference appears to represent participants adopting a precautionary approach towards lynx reintroduction. Participants, when questioned, clearly articulated an appreciation of the need for a UK lynx reintroduction to be a well thought out, measured and controlled process designed to safeguard the socio-economic and ecological interests of all parties involved.

The Passive Voice

As observed in the pro-active consultation, overall agreement was expressed with both the primary principal of species reintroduction and more specifically the reintroduction of lynx to the UK. Net agreement levels of 53% and 49% were expressed with propositions 1 and 2 from a representative UK sample of 1042 participants, with 17% and 21% expressing net disagreement, respectively. A further 30% of participants neither agreed nor disagreed. Presenting these data from the perspective of participants who hold a definite opinion sees net agreement for both proposition 1 and 2 at the level of 76% and 70% respectively. High levels of net agreement are similarly described across these data when characterised by country; proposition 1, England 75%, Scotland 80%, Wales 79%; proposition 2, England 70%,

Scotland 67% and Wales 71%. Support, described as net agreement based on all participants responses, for proposition 1 and 2 was also observed across demographic groups characterised as; 'age group', 'social grade', 'how would you describe where you live?', and 'the region you live in'.

The introduction of timescale, described by proposition 3 at the UK level, was associated with lower levels of net agreement (-15%) with consequent increases in the neither agree nor disagree position (+13%) and net disagreement (+2%); England change in net agreement -15.5%, net disagreement +2.6%; Scotland net agreement -13.0%, net disagreement +3.0%; Wales net agreement -17.2%, net disagreement +1.7%. The response to proposition 3 appears to characterise the introduction of timescale to a lynx reintroduction with a reappraisal of position similar to that observed by the pro-active voice. The greater proportion of UK passive voice participants (42%) chose to neither agree nor disagree with the proposition of beginning a controlled and monitored scientific UK lynx reintroduction trial within the next twelve months (net agree 34%, net disagree 24%).

The proposed reintroduction of lynx presents the first opportunity to experience this native apex predator in the UK landscape for more than 1300 years, and as such asks participants to address a situation for which the current UK population has no experience. The adoption of a precautionary approach to support for a UK lynx reintroduction, when associated with the introduction of timescale, suggests a need for further communication with the UK general public and stakeholder groups as Phase II of this consultation exercise. This process should be built around the knowledge, experience and lessons learned from mainland European lynx reintroduction projects, providing information and support to enable an informed expression of an 'agree' or 'disagree' opinion based on a full understanding of the proposals for a lynx reintroduction in the United Kingdom.

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1. Consultation Background, Data and Data Collection

1.1 Consultation Background

The European Union's Habitats and Species Directive 92/43, the 'Habitats Directive' together with the 'Birds Directive' forms the cornerstone of Europe's nature conservation policy. These directives are built around two core pillars: a network of protected sites plus a strict system of species protection. Under the EU Habitat Directive, UK Government is obliged to study the desirability of reintroducing select species to their former range which are threatened in Europe but have become extinct in the UK, if this is likely to contribute to their conservation. The Eurasian Lynx, *Lynx lynx*, is one such species. The legislative process sets out a framework that works towards and supports successful species reintroduction. This framework focuses not only on the interests of target species but also takes in to consideration concerns of the general public and requires UK Government to:

- take in to account the experience of other Member States;
- ensure that any reintroduction activity will effectively contribute to re-establishing the species at a favourable conservation status;
- and importantly for this consultation exercise any reintroduction should only take place after proper consultation with the public concerned.

This report represents the first phase of a consultation process designed to determine public attitudes towards the reintroduction of lynx to the UK.

1.2 Data and data collection

A national survey was designed to understand the opinions of a range of 'stakeholders' concerning a trial reintroduction of lynx to the UK. The initial stage of this process focused on the proposition that 'lynx should be reintroduced to the UK as part of a controlled and monitored scientific trial'. Initially responses were sought from two distinct groups:

- **the Pro-active voice** – members of the general public who would actively seek to express their opinions given the means to do so;
- **the Passive voice** – a representative sample of the UK general public which may include those who have an opinion on the subject but would probably not actively seek to express it unless specifically asked.

The pro-active voice perspective was collected via a self completed online survey. An initial news story in the national press, with subsequent follow up press, radio, TV and web-based coverage, directed potential participants to an online survey site. During a fourteen day period (08/03/15 – 21/03/15), over which the survey was 'live', a total of 9632 responses were collected, of which 9621 were used in the final analyses.

Passive voice responses were collected using an independent national omnibus research company. Propositions regarding lynx reintroduction were presented to a UK representative 18+ sample population as part of a weekly polling panel (this part of the consultation was managed by an independent data management company). The Passive voice survey was conducted midweek during the first week of the Pro-active voice survey (11/03/15 – 12/03/15). A total of 1042 people completed the survey in an online format.

2. The Pro-active voice

2.1 Pro-active voice background, data collection and results¹

Here we sought to collect responses from members of the general public who would actively seek to express their views on a lynx reintroduction trial. As a precursor to the survey commencing, a national newspaper article presented a proposal for the reintroduction of lynx to the UK. This initial publication generated additional interest resulting in follow up stories across national and regional newspaper, radio, TV and social networking web-based media. Potential participants were directed by content in selected media stories to an online survey host, Survey Monkey®. The survey went live on the day of the principal news story and continued for a total of fourteen days, during which the first five days were populated by a majority of the media interests (Table 1).

| Date | Survey Day | Respondents (n) | Respondents (%) |
|------------|------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| 2015-03-08 | 1 | 1465 | 15.21 |
| 2015-03-09 | 2 | 3486 | 36.19 |
| 2015-03-10 | 3 | 2159 | 22.41 |
| 2015-03-11 | 4 | 694 | 7.21 |
| 2015-03-12 | 5 | 711 | 7.38 |
| 2015-03-13 | 6 | 294 | 3.05 |
| 2015-03-14 | 7 | 149 | 1.55 |
| 2015-03-15 | 8 | 182 | 1.89 |
| 2015-03-16 | 9 | 149 | 1.55 |
| 2015-03-17 | 10 | 81 | 0.84 |
| 2015-03-18 | 11 | 64 | 0.66 |
| 2015-03-19 | 12 | 96 | 1.00 |
| 2015-03-20 | 13 | 86 | 0.89 |
| 2015-03-21 | 14 | 16 | 0.17 |

Table 1 Number and percentage of respondents per survey day

Upon accessing the survey participants were presented with three propositions related to both the general principal of reintroduction and more specifically a lynx reintroduction to the UK as part of a controlled and monitored scientific trial.

1

The rounding of numbers presented throughout this report can cause percentage figures to total more than or less than 100%.

Propositions were presented individually with answers required before moving on to subsequent propositions:

- 1. We should reintroduce species that were once found in the UK but have since become extinct**
- 2. As part of a controlled and monitored scientific trial lynx should be reintroduced to the UK**
- 3. As part of a controlled and monitored scientific trial lynx should be reintroduced to the UK within the next twelve months**

Participants were requested to give voice to their views for each proposition using a pre-determined scale of agreement – disagreement as follows:

| | |
|----------------------------|-------------------|
| Strongly Agree | Somewhat Disagree |
| Somewhat Agree | Strongly Disagree |
| Neither Agree nor Disagree | |

A following open ended question collected background detail related to individual reasons for answer selection. A series of optional demographic style questions provided additional detail to further qualify participant responses. These question responses collected the following information:

- How would you describe where you live?**
- I am a member of the following organisations**
- What is the nature of your interest in this subject?**
- What is your gender?**
- What is your age?**

Participants were presented with a pre-defined tick box style answer for each of the above questions, with an open 'other' text box for answers that fell outside the prepared options.

The pro-active voice component of the consultation was not intended to provide a

representative sample of views from the UK general public, rather it was planned to capture opinion from those with personal interests in a lynx reintroduction. As such opinions are more likely to reflect polarised positions, representing individuals who are either wholly supportive or unsupportive of the propositions rather than those who are indifferent. However, when characterised by the 'how would you describe where you live' question the dataset presents a broad 50:50 split between urban and rural (Table 2). A breakdown of participants grouped by the declared nature of interest in lynx reintroduction is presented in Table 3.

| How would you describe where you live? | Respondents (%) |
|--|-----------------|
| urban | 25.75 |
| fringe (urban, town) | 24.26 |
| rural - small/market town | 18.28 |
| rural - village | 17.78 |
| rural - hamlet | 4.19 |
| rural - scattered dwellings | 9.75 |

Table 2 *Participants characterised by responses to the 'how would you describe where you live' question*

| Nature of Interest | Respondents (n) | Respondents (%) |
|----------------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| Interest in Nature | 2866 | 29.79 |
| Conservation | 1946 | 20.23 |
| Undeclared* | 1475 | 15.33 |
| General Interest | 1273 | 13.23 |
| Environmental Issues | 1007 | 10.47 |
| Academic | 455 | 4.73 |
| Walking | 236 | 2.45 |
| Agriculture/Farming | 151 | 1.57 |
| Land Management | 114 | 1.18 |
| Forestry | 98 | 1.02 |
| | 9621 | |

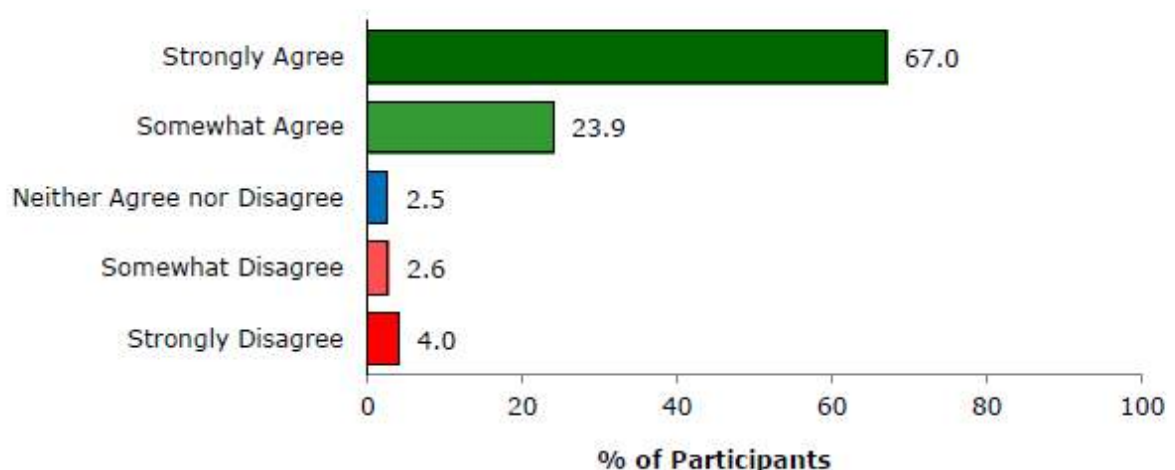
Table 3 *Breakdown of participants grouped by their declared nature of interest in the subject; *no nature of interest indicated*

Of the participants who declared their interest in lynx reintroduction, an overwhelming majority approached the online survey from a nature, conservation, and environmental issues based perspective, accounting for 60% of all respondents. The next largest groups were those who chose not to declare a position of interest and people with a general interest in the proposition of lynx reintroduction. Academic and walking based interest accounted for more than 7% of respondents. Participants with an interest directed from an agricultural/farming, land management and forestry perspective accounted for circa 4% of the total responses.

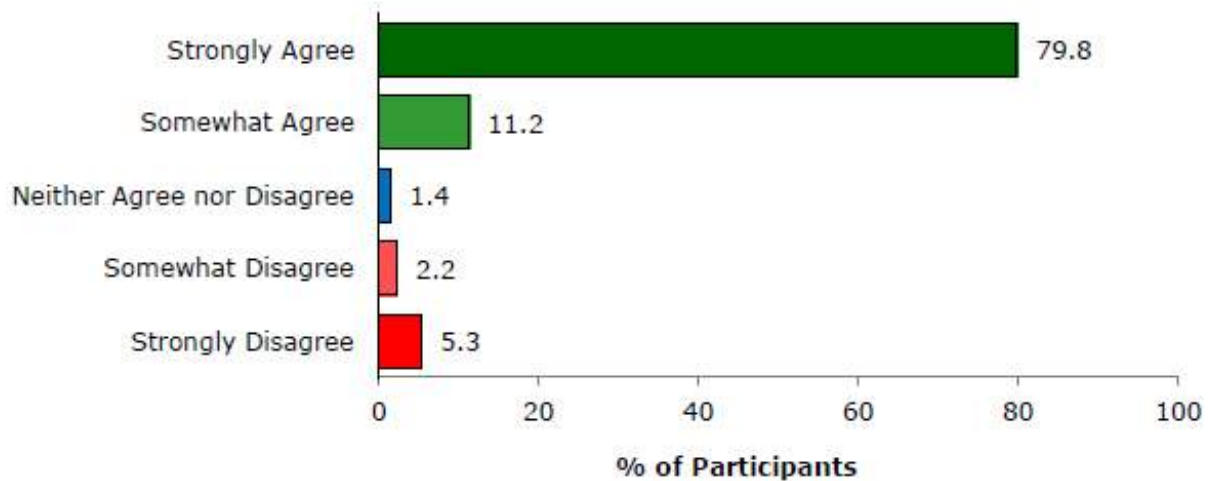
2.2 Agreement for propositions

2.2.1 Proposition 1 and proposition 2

Overall 90.9% of participants expressed net agreement with the proposition that we should reintroduce species that were once found in the UK but have since become extinct (Fig 1a). When asked more specifically about the reintroduction of lynx to the UK, as part of a controlled and monitored scientific trail, the level of net agreement remains the same at 91%. However, the extent to which participants express agreement is strengthened with an additional circa 13% taking a strongly agree position (Fig 1b). A corresponding but much smaller increase is also observed in the strongly disagree position, selected by an additional 1.3% of participants.



- a) We should reintroduce species that were once found in the UK but have since become extinct



b) As part of a controlled and monitored scientific trial lynx should be reintroduced to the UK

Figure 1 Breakdown of pro-active voice responses to proposition 1 (a) and proposition 2 (b)

Response characterised by participant's nature of interest fall in to three broad groups (Table 4a & 4b). The strongest expressions of agreement with the primary principal of reintroduction for extirpated native UK species are seen in participants whose interests are based on forestry, conservation, an interest in nature, environmental issues, and an academic interest. When presented with the proposition that we should reintroduce lynx to the UK, as part of a controlled and monitored scientific trial, an increase in the strength of the expression of agreement is seen across all of these interest groups. Increases in the level of strongly agree responses of between +11.2% (forestry) and +17.6% (academic) are registered. A corresponding but much smaller increase in the strongly disagree position is also observed, increases across these five interest groups range between +0.4% and 1.0%.

Whilst the second tier of interest groups also recorded similar increases in the selection for a strongly agree position in regard to proposition number two (a UK lynx reintroduction) of between 9% and 14%. Broad difference is described in the level of increase for the selection for a strongly disagree position; general interest +1.6%, undeclared interest +1.6%, land management +2.6% and walking +5.5%.

The agriculture/farming interest group displayed similarity in pattern, with an increase

in the selection of a strongly agree position for a UK lynx reintroduction over the primary principle of reintroduction (+1.3%). Increases in absolute values are reversed by comparison with all other interest groups, a greater percentage increase is described for a position of strongly disagree with the proposition of a UK lynx reintroduction (+13.4%). In contrast with all other interest groups an overall level of net disagreement with both the primary principle of reintroduction (52%) and the reintroduction of lynx to the UK is expressed (60%).

| Strongly Agree (%) | Somewhat Agree (%) | Neither Agree nor Disagree (%) | Somewhat Disagree (%) | Strongly Disagree (%) | n | |
|----------------------|--------------------|--------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|------|------|
| Forestry | 70.4 | 25.5 | 1.0 | 2.0 | 1.0 | 98 |
| Conservation | 72.3 | 23.2 | 1.0 | 1.6 | 1.8 | 1946 |
| Interest in Nature | 73.0 | 21.8 | 1.4 | 1.6 | 2.2 | 2866 |
| Environmental Issues | 73.3 | 20.4 | 1.6 | 2.0 | 2.8 | 1007 |
| Academic | 64.8 | 27.3 | 3.3 | 3.7 | 0.9 | 455 |
| General Interest | 61.4 | 25.9 | 3.9 | 3.5 | 5.2 | 1273 |
| Undeclared Interest | 55.7 | 30.3 | 4.9 | 4.0 | 5.1 | 1475 |
| Land Management | 57.9 | 26.3 | 0.9 | 5.3 | 9.6 | 114 |
| Walking | 55.9 | 19.1 | 7.2 | 4.2 | 13.6 | 236 |
| Agriculture/Farming | 26.5 | 12.6 | 8.6 | 7.9 | 44.4 | 151 |

Table 4a *Participant response to proposition 1, 'We should reintroduce species that were once found in the UK but have since become extinct', broken down by the declared nature of interest.*

| | Strongly Agree (%) | Somewhat Agree (%) | Neither Agree nor Disagree (%) | Somewhat Disagree (%) | Strongly Disagree (%) | n |
|----------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|------|
| Forestry | 81.6 | 14.3 | 1.0 | 1.0 | 2.0 | 98 |
| Conservation | 88.3 | 7.6 | 0.3 | 1.6 | 2.2 | 1946 |
| Interest in Nature | 84.8 | 10.0 | 0.7 | 1.3 | 3.2 | 2866 |
| Environmental Issues | 84.7 | 9.2 | 0.8 | 1.7 | 3.6 | 1007 |
| Academic | 82.4 | 12.5 | 1.1 | 2.2 | 1.8 | 455 |
| General Interest | 74.5 | 13.0 | 2.6 | 3.1 | 6.8 | 1273 |
| Undeclared Interest | 67.4 | 18.2 | 3.6 | 4.0 | 6.7 | 1442 |
| Land Management | 71.9 | 12.3 | 0.9 | 2.6 | 12.3 | 114 |
| Walking | 65.3 | 8.5 | 4.2 | 3.0 | 19.1 | 236 |
| Agriculture/Farming | 27.8 | 10.6 | 1.3 | 3.3 | 57.0 | 151 |

Table 4b *Participant response to proposition 2, 'As part of a controlled and monitored scientific trial lynx should be reintroduced to the UK', broken down by the declared nature of interest.*

Pro-active voice responses were also collated based on membership of selected groups. Presented from this perspective two broad categories are observed, the first can be characterised as presenting a landscape relationship primarily based on an ecological standpoint, the second group describes a landscape relationship primarily based on a productive standpoint.

The first group, made up of Greenpeace, Friends of the Earth, Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB), British Trust for Ornithology (BTO), the Wildlife Trusts and The Woodland Trust, express high levels of net agreement with the primary principal of reintroduction (>90%) a position which is reinforced with a large increase in the proportions of strongly agreeing responses to the proposal for a UK lynx reintroduction (>+12%).

The second group is comprised of membership to landscape management associations, The British Association for Shooting and Conservation, Country Land & Business Association and the National Farmers Union. Responses from this group are characterised by lower overall agreement to propositions 1 and 2 (>58%), with a higher level of increase in the strongly disagree response to a proposed UK lynx reintroduction (>+5%) (Table 5, see next page).

| Strongly Agree (%) | Somewhat Agree (%) | Neither Agree nor Disagree (%) | Somewhat Disagree (%) | Strongly Disagree (%) | n |
|---|--------------------|--------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|------|
| <hr/> | | | | | |
| RSPB | | | | | 1862 |
| 86.0 (+15.0) | 8.3 (-14.5) | 0.8 (-1.1) | 2.1 (+0.1) | 2.8 (+0.5) | |
| Wildlife Trusts | | | | | 1653 |
| 85.3 (+15.6) | 8.4 (-14.9) | 0.8 (-1.3) | 1.8 (-0.2) | 3.6 (+0.9) | |
| Greenpeace | | | | | 1004 |
| 84.5 (+10.7) | 8.4 (-11.1) | 0.9 (-0.6) | 2.3 (+0.7) | 4.0 (+0.3) | |
| BTO | | | | | 429 |
| 83.9 (+14.2) | 8.6 (-12.8) | 1.6 (-0.9) | 2.6 (-1.2) | 3.3 (+0.7) | |
| Friends of the Earth | | | | | 475 |
| 83.6 (+11.4) | 9.7 (-12.0) | 1.1 (-0.8) | 2.7 (+1.3) | 2.9 (+0.2) | |
| The Woodland Trust | | | | | 802 |
| 82.9 (+12.5) | 8.1 (-12.5) | 1.0 (-1.8) | 2.9 (+0.9) | 5.1 (+0.9) | |
| National Trust | | | | | 1536 |
| 80.3 (+13.6) | 10.8 (-13.3) | 0.8 (-1.5) | 2.3 (-0.4) | 5.8 (+1.6) | |
| <hr/> | | | | | |
| The British Association for Shooting and Conservation | | | | | 243 |
| 54.7 (+6.6) | 11.5 (-9.1) | 1.6 (-2.9) | 8.6 (-1.2) | 23.5 (+6.6) | |
| Country Land & Business Association | | | | | 69 |
| 53.6 (+5.8) | 13.0 (-4.4) | 0.0 (-5.8) | 5.8 (-1.5) | 27.5 (+5.8) | |
| National Farmers Union | | | | | 157 |
| 47.1 (+1.3) | 10.8 (-1.9) | 1.3 (-7.6) | 6.4 (-1.9) | 34.4 (+10.2) | |
| <hr/> | | | | | |

Table 5 *Participants responses to proposition 2, 'As part of a controlled and monitored scientific trial lynx should be reintroduced to the UK', broken down by organisation membership; figures in brackets identify difference in response due to the specific question of a UK lynx reintroduction, by comparison with the general principle of species reintroduction*

2.2.2 Proposition 3: a question of timescale

Proposition 3 introduces the prospect of a controlled and monitored scientific trial lynx reintroduction beginning within the next twelve months. The additional element of timescale for participants to assess appears to produce a precautionary response.

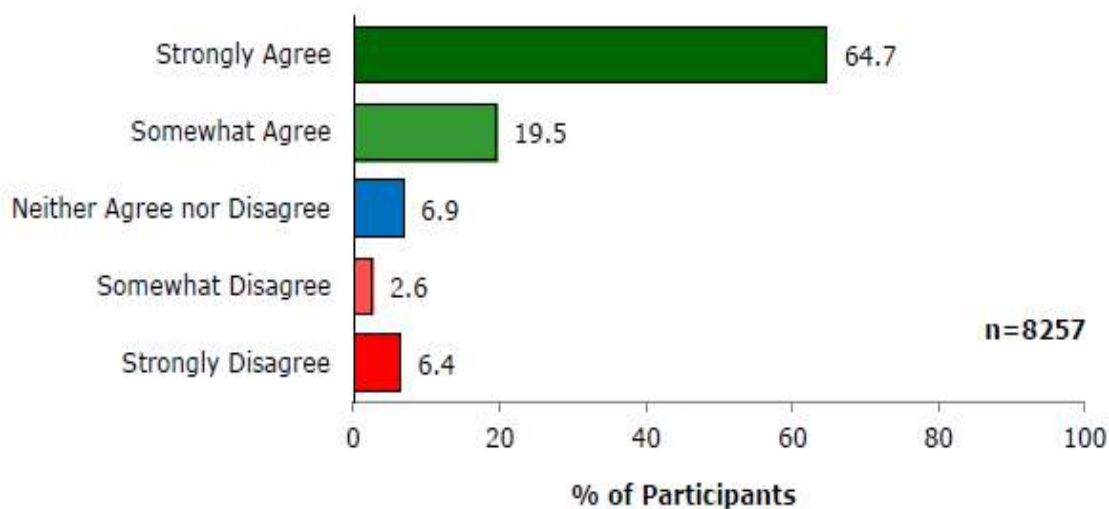


Figure 2 Breakdown of pro-active voice responses to proposition 3

Overall participants continue to describe strong net agreement (Fig 2), however the strength of agreement, when compared against agreement for the general proposal of a UK lynx reintroduction, is reduced across all interest groups (Table 6).

Responses to the open ended question related to the proposed reintroduction of lynx provide an insight to the background commentary helping to identify possible motivation for this subtle hedging of agreement.

- ***‘Scientific trial can be used to assess whether Lynx can live wild in the UK without damaging the ecological balance of the country’***
R3845692020
- ***‘To reintroduce an animal it needs to be monitored..... to see how it effects our environment and wild life’*** R3845590466
- ***‘We need to ensure re-introduction programmes are not creating unexpected damage elsewhere in the system’*** R3844816413
- ***‘The fauna of the UK countryside have been without lynx for >1300 years. Care must be taken to ensure that their reintroduction does not negatively impact beneficial wildlife that has flourished since then..... a reintroduction programme that is poorly monitored may be more***

analogous to introduction of an invasive species than reintroduction of a native one.....' R3844224222

- *'I think we need more time to..... explain what it might mean, deal with the real and non-real problems reintroduction might cause.....'*

R3844065529

- *'To view their effect on the current environment will be important before a full scale reintroduction. Also need to slowly introduce the idea to locals and landowners and show that the lynx will not damage their livelihoods'* R3843939473

- *'.....we need to understand what the potential consequences would be should the Lynx be re-introduced - socially (i.e. to landowners) and ecologically'* R3841886123

| | Strongly Agree (%) | Somewhat Agree (%) | Neither Agree nor Disagree (%) | Somewhat Disagree (%) | Strongly Disagree (%) | n |
|---|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|------|
| Friends of the Earth | 73.0 (-10.6) | 17.5 (+7.8) | 2.5 (+1.5) | 1.7 (-1.1) | 5.3 (+2.3) | 474 |
| Greenpeace | 71.8 (-12.7) | 16.6 (+8.2) | 4.3 (+3.4) | 2.1 (-0.2) | 5.2 (+1.2) | 1000 |
| RSPB | 68.3 (-17.7) | 20.0 (+11.6) | 5.1 (+4.3) | 2.5 (+0.4) | 4.1 (+1.4) | 1858 |
| Wildlife Trusts | 68.3 (-17.0) | 19.9 (+11.5) | 4.6 (+3.7) | 2.4 (+0.6) | 4.9 (+1.2) | 1647 |
| The Woodland Trust | 68.9 (-14.0) | 17.4 (+9.3) | 4.1 (+3.1) | 2.4 (-0.5) | 7.1 (+2.0) | 798 |
| BTO | 66.4 (-17.6) | 19.6 (+11.0) | 4.9 (+3.3) | 3.5 (+0.9) | 5.6 (+2.3) | 428 |
| National Trust | 65.8 (-14.5) | 18.9 (+8.1) | 5.6 (+4.3) | 2.7 (+0.4) | 7.0 (+1.2) | 1535 |
| The British Association for Shooting and Conservation | 47.7 (-7.0) | 12.9 (+1.3) | 5.0 (+3.3) | 7.5 (-1.2) | 27.0 (+3.5) | 241 |
| Country Land & Business Association | 46.4 (-7.3) | 13.0 (0.0) | 5.8 (+5.8) | 2.9 (-2.9) | 31.9 (+4.4) | 69 |
| National Farmers Union | 42.0 (-5.1) | 12.7 (+1.9) | 2.5 (+1.3) | 5.1 (-1.3) | 37.6 (+3.2) | 157 |

Table 6 *Participants responses to proposition 3, 'As part of a controlled and monitored scientific trial lynx should be reintroduced to the UK within the next twelve months' broken by organisation membership; figures in brackets identify difference in response due to the introduction of timescale.*

3. The Passive voice

3.1 Passive voice background, data collection and results

This element of the consultation exercise sought to collect responses from a representative sample of the UK general public². An independent national omnibus survey company were contracted to conduct the survey³, which respondents accessed online as part of a mid-week polling panel. The survey took place over the Wednesday and Thursday following the Sunday publication of a national newspaper article regarding the proposed lynx reintroduction, there were subsequently 'lynx stories' across national and regional newspaper, radio, TV and web-based media.

The survey format followed that of the pro-active survey with participants being presented with three propositions that related to both the general principal of reintroduction and more specifically a lynx reintroduction to the UK as part of a controlled and monitored scientific trial. Propositions were presented in a single multiple question format:

- 1. We should reintroduce species that were once found in the UK but have since become extinct**
- 2. As part of a controlled and monitored scientific trial lynx should be reintroduced to the UK**
- 3. As part of a controlled and monitored scientific trial lynx should be reintroduced to the UK within the next twelve months**

Participants were requested to give voice to their views for each proposition using a pre-determined scale of agreement – disagreement as follows:

| | |
|----------------------------|-------------------|
| Strongly Agree | Somewhat Disagree |
| Somewhat Agree | Strongly Disagree |
| Neither Agree nor Disagree | |

2

This sample may or may not include those who have an opinion on the subject but would probably not actively seek to express it unless specifically asked

3

National omnibus survey provided by Populus Limited.

Demographic data, collected to ensure that the sample is representative, allowed further examination of responses to the individual propositions (Table 7).

| | % |
|---|------|
| How would you describe where you live? | |
| Urban (population over 10,000) | 41.8 |
| Town & Fringe | 35.3 |
| Village | 20.6 |
| Hamlet & Isolated dwelling | 2.3 |
| Gender | |
| Male | 51.9 |
| Female | 48.1 |
| Age Group | |
| 18-24 | 12.6 |
| 25-34 | 13.0 |
| 35-44 | 16.2 |
| 45-54 | 17.9 |
| 55-64 | 16.2 |
| 65 or older | 24.2 |
| Socio-Economic Group⁴ | |
| A | 6.5 |
| B | 17.9 |
| C1 | 29.9 |
| C2 | 20.2 |
| D | 13.3 |
| E | 12.0 |
| Region | |
| England | |
| South-West | 9.5 |
| East of England | 10.6 |
| South-East | 14.5 |
| Yorkshire & Humberside | 9.5 |
| London | 11.2 |
| West Midlands | 9.5 |
| North-West | 9.5 |
| North-East | 3.6 |
| East Midlands | 6.9 |
| Scotland | 9.6 |
| Wales | 5.6 |

Table 7 Demographic characteristics of the passive voice participants; n=1042.

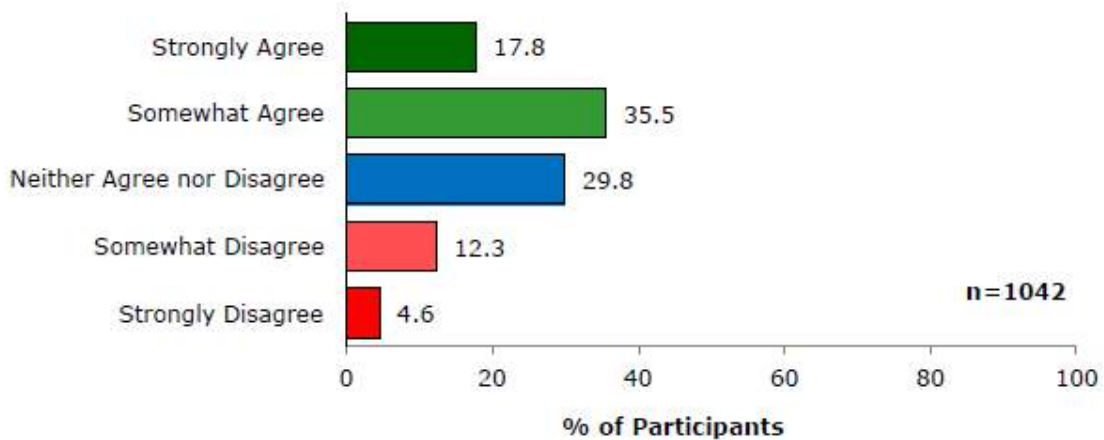
4

Socio-Economic Group – A, B = upper middle class & middle class; C1, C2 = lower middle class & skilled working class; D, E = working class and those at the lowest levels of subsistence.

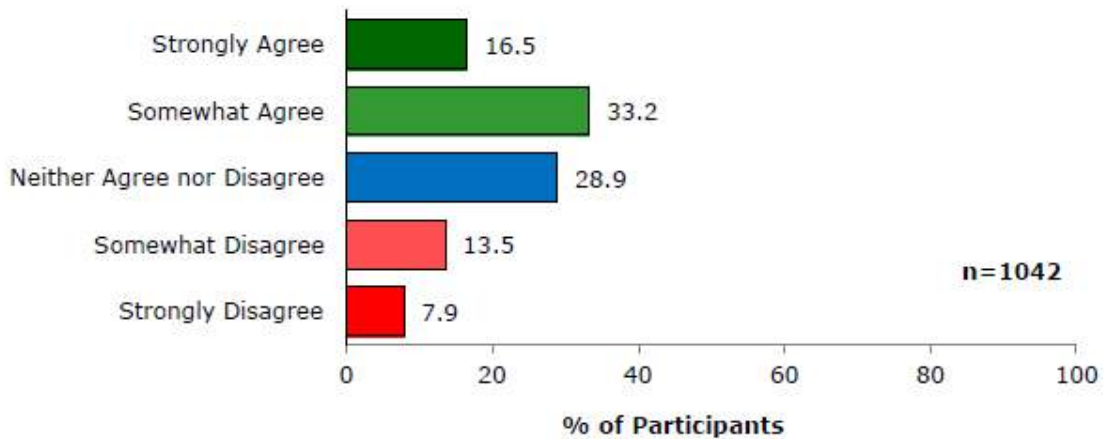
3.2 Agreement for propositions

3.2.1 Proposition 1 and proposition 2

Overall 53.3% of participants expressed net agreement with the proposition that we should reintroduce species that were once found in the UK but have since become extinct (Fig 3a). When asked specifically about the reintroduction of lynx to the UK, as part of a controlled and monitored scientific trial, participants continue to express an overall position of net agreement with the proposal for lynx reintroduction, albeit at a slightly reduced level (Fig 3b). A corresponding, but smaller, increase in the strongly disagree position is also observed, selected by an additional 3.3% of participants.



a) We should reintroduce species that were once found in the UK but have since become extinct



b) As part of a controlled and monitored scientific trial lynx should be reintroduced to the UK

Figure 3 Breakdown of passive voice responses to proposition 1 (a) and proposition 2 (b).

These data when approached from the perspective of those individuals with a firmly held opinion, as seen by participants who feel knowledgeable enough to either agree or disagree with propositions 1 and 2, describe the measure of difference between the distinct agree or disagree responses. Across the representative UK sample of participants who hold a definite opinion net agreement for both proposition 1 and 2 is observed at the level of 76% and 70% respectively. High levels of net agreement are similarly described across these data when characterised by country (Table 8).

1. We should reintroduce species that were once found in the UK but have since become extinct

| | Agree (%) | Disagree (%) | n |
|--------------------------|-----------|--------------|-----|
| UK representative sample | 75.9 | 24.1 | 731 |
| England | 75.2 | 24.8 | 622 |
| Scotland | 80.3 | 19.7 | 66 |
| Wales | 79.1 | 20.9 | 43 |

2. As part of a controlled and monitored scientific trial lynx should be reintroduced to the UK

| | Agree (%) | Disagree (%) | n |
|--------------------------|-----------|--------------|-----|
| UK representative sample | 69.9 | 30.1 | 741 |
| England | 70.1 | 29.9 | 630 |
| Scotland | 67.1 | 32.9 | 70 |
| Wales | 70.7 | 29.3 | 41 |

Table 8 Breakdown of responses from participants who hold definite agree/disagree positions for propositions 1 and 2.

Tables 9a & 9b demonstrate that participant response, when characterised by demographic data, continues to operate from a position of overall support of both proposition 1 and 2, described by levels of net agreement across all demographic groups:

How would you describe where you live;
Age Group;
Region;

Gender;
Socio-economic group;

| | Net Agreement (%) | Neither agree nor Disagree (%) | Net Disagree (%) |
|---|-------------------|--------------------------------|------------------|
| How would you describe where you live? | | | |
| Urban (population over 10,000) | 56.3 | 31.5 | 12.2 |
| Town & Fringe | 50.5 | 31.8 | 17.7 |
| Village | 52.6 | 24.6 | 22.8 |
| Hamlet & Isolated dwelling | 45.8 | 16.7 | 37.5 |
| Gender | | | |
| Male | 59 | 25.7 | 15.3 |
| Female | 47.1 | 34.3 | 18.6 |
| Age Group | | | |
| 18-24 | 53.4 | 32.8 | 13.7 |
| 25-34 | 51.1 | 40.7 | 8.2 |
| 35-44 | 59.2 | 27.2 | 13.6 |
| 45-54 | 54.8 | 30.1 | 15.1 |
| 55-64 | 51.5 | 26.0 | 22.5 |
| 65 or older | 50.4 | 26.6 | 23.0 |
| Socio-Economic Group | | | |
| A | 54.4 | 30.9 | 14.7 |
| B | 56.7 | 24.6 | 18.7 |
| C1 | 53.5 | 30.5 | 16.0 |
| C2 | 49.3 | 34.6 | 16.1 |
| D | 50.4 | 29.5 | 20.1 |
| E | 56.8 | 28.0 | 15.2 |
| Region | | | |
| England | 52.9 | 29.6 | 17.4 |
| South-West | 50.5 | 26.3 | 23.2 |
| East of England | 56.4 | 26.4 | 17.3 |
| South-East | 53.0 | 29.1 | 17.9 |
| Yorkshire & Humberside | 56.6 | 24.2 | 19.2 |
| London | 50.4 | 35.0 | 14.5 |
| West Midlands | 51.5 | 32.3 | 16.2 |
| North-West | 52.5 | 32.3 | 15.2 |
| North-East | 47.4 | 29.0 | 23.7 |
| East Midlands | 55.6 | 31.9 | 12.5 |
| Scotland | 53.0 | 34.0 | 13.0 |
| Wales | 58.6 | 25.9 | 15.5 |

Table 9a *Participant responses to proposition 1, 'We should reintroduce species that were once found in the UK but have since become extinct', described by demographic group; n=1042.*

| | Net Agreement (%) | Neither agree nor Disagree (%) | Net Disagree (%) |
|---|-------------------|--------------------------------|------------------|
| How would you describe where you live? | | | |
| Urban (population over 10,000) | 52.0 | 31.5 | 16.6 |
| Town & Fringe | 49.2 | 27.7 | 23.1 |
| Village | 46.1 | 28.4 | 25.6 |
| Hamlet & Isolated dwelling | 50.0 | 4.2 | 45.8 |
| Gender | | | |
| Male | 55.9 | 24.8 | 19.4 |
| Female | 43.1 | 33.3 | 23.6 |
| Age Group | | | |
| 18-24 | 48.1 | 38.9 | 13.0 |
| 25-34 | 47.4 | 39.3 | 13.3 |
| 35-44 | 53.9 | 27.2 | 18.9 |
| 45-54 | 57.0 | 24.7 | 18.3 |
| 55-64 | 46.2 | 26.6 | 27.2 |
| 65 or older | 46.0 | 23.8 | 30.2 |
| Socio-Economic Group | | | |
| A | 51.5 | 32.4 | 16.2 |
| B | 51.9 | 26.7 | 21.4 |
| C1 | 51.0 | 27.9 | 21.2 |
| C2 | 43.6 | 35.1 | 21.3 |
| D | 47.5 | 26.6 | 25.9 |
| E | 55.2 | 24.8 | 20.0 |
| Region | | | |
| England | 50.0 | 28.7 | 21.3 |
| South-West | 49.5 | 24.2 | 26.3 |
| East of England | 53.6 | 27.3 | 19.1 |
| South-East | 51.7 | 25.2 | 23.2 |
| Yorkshire & Humberside | 53.5 | 25.3 | 21.2 |
| London | 51.3 | 27.4 | 21.4 |
| West Midlands | 43.4 | 37.4 | 19.2 |
| North-West | 50.5 | 32.3 | 17.2 |
| North-East | 39.5 | 31.6 | 29.0 |
| East Midlands | 48.6 | 33.3 | 18.1 |
| Scotland | 47.0 | 30.0 | 23.0 |
| Wales | 50.0 | 29.3 | 20.7 |

Table 9b *Participant responses to proposition 2, 'As part of a controlled and monitored scientific trial lynx should be reintroduced to the UK', described by demographic group; n=1042.*

3.2.2 Proposition 3: a question of timescale

Proposition 3 introduces the question of timescale within which a controlled and monitored scientific trial lynx reintroduction will commence. The additional element of a twelve month timescale gives participants information which appears to produce a similar precautionary approach as that presented in the pro-active voice survey. Whilst the level of net agreement expressed is larger than that of net disagreement the majority of participants selected a neither agree nor disagree response (Fig 4).

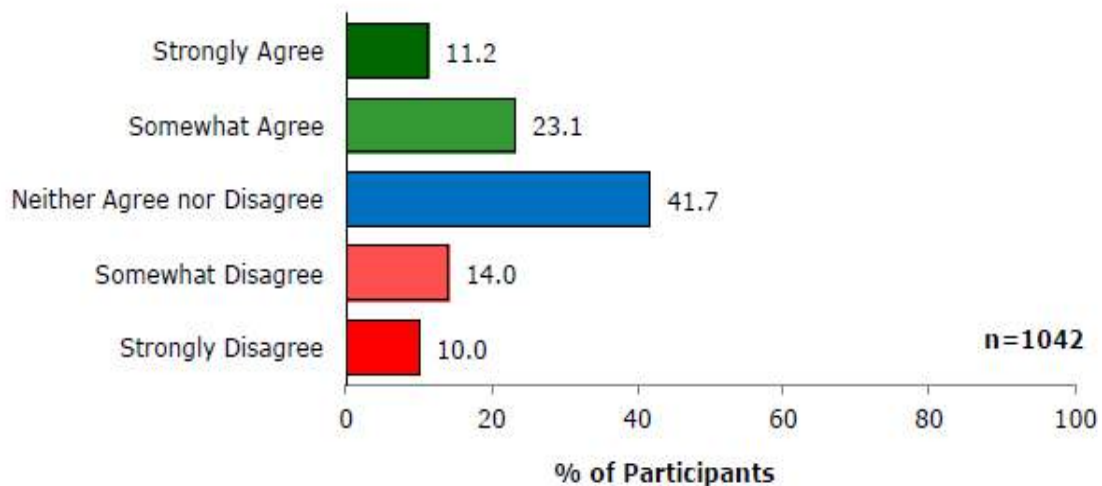


Figure 4 Breakdown of passive voice responses to proposition 3, 'As part of a controlled and monitored scientific trial lynx should be reintroduced to the UK within the next twelve months'.

Lower levels of net agreement (-15%) are associated with consequent increases in the neither agree nor disagree position (+13%) and net disagreement (+2%). This pattern of moving from an overall position of net agreement with a proposed UK lynx reintroduction to a hedging position of neither agree nor disagree is observed across England, Scotland and Wales (Table 10) and demographic groups (Table 11). The observed shift in opinion suggests that participants occupy a position of uncertainty associated with timescale. This is perhaps understandable when one considers the proposed reintroduction of lynx will return a native apex predator to the UK landscape for the first time since the seventh century AD, and as such participants are asked to assess a landscape scenario for which the current UK population has no experience.

| | Strongly Agree (%) | Somewhat Agree (%) | Neither Agree nor Disagree (%) | Somewhat Disagree (%) | Strongly Disagree (%) | n |
|--------------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|------|
| UK representative sample | 11.2 (-5.3) | 23.1 (-10.1) | 41.7 (+12.8) | 14.0 (+0.5) | 10.0 (+2.1) | 1042 |
| England | 12.2 (-5.2) | 22.3 (-10.3) | 41.6 (+12.9) | 13.8 (+0.5) | 10.1 (+2.1) | 884 |
| Scotland | 4.0 (-6.0) | 30.0 (-7.0) | 40.0 (+10.0) | 18.0 (+2.0) | 8.0 (+1.0) | 100 |
| Wales | 8.6 (-5.2) | 24.1 (-12.1) | 44.8 (+15.5) | 10.3 (-1.7) | 12.1 (+3.5) | 58 |

Table 10 *Participants responses to proposition 3, 'As part of a controlled and monitored scientific trial lynx should be reintroduced to the UK within the next twelve months' from; a UK representative sample, England, Scotland and Wales; figures in brackets identify difference in response due to the introduction of timescale.*

| | Strongly Agree (%) | Somewhat Agree (%) | Neither Agree nor Disagree (%) | Somewhat Disagree (%) | Strongly Disagree (%) | n |
|--------------------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----|
| 18-24 | -6.1 | -10.7 | +12.2 | +3.8 | +0.8 | 131 |
| 25-34 | -3.0 | -6.7 | +7.4 | +2.2 | 0.0 | 135 |
| 35-44 | -7.7 | -6.5 | +11.2 | +0.6 | +2.4 | 169 |
| 45-54 | -3.8 | -13.4 | +15.6 | -1.1 | +2.7 | 186 |
| 55-64 | -5.9 | -9.5 | +13.0 | +0.6 | +1.8 | 169 |
| over 65 | -5.2 | -11.9 | +14.7 | -1.2 | +3.6 | 252 |
| Urban (population over 10,000) | -5.5 | -9.7 | +11.7 | +2.3 | +1.1 | 435 |
| Town & Fringe | -4.3 | -11.1 | +14.4 | -1.6 | +2.7 | 368 |
| Village | -6.0 | -10.2 | +12.6 | +0.9 | +2.8 | 215 |
| Hamlet & Isolated dwelling | -8.3 | 0.0 | +8.3 | -4.2 | +4.2 | 24 |

Table 11 *Difference in response due to the introduction of timescale characterised by the demographics of 'age group' and 'how would you describe where you live? Figures describe difference in percentage between responses to proposition 3 and 2.*

4. Summary

As Wilson (2004)⁵ indicates, attitudes toward reintroduction projects tend to be favourable amongst the general public but negative among those most likely to be negatively affected. A pattern of response that Scottish Natural Heritage reported in their preliminary consultation exercise to gauge public opinion regarding the proposal for a European beaver reintroduction⁶. Whilst our study indicates broad public support for a lynx reintroduction trial, stakeholder groups who might be adversely affected, for example farmers and land owners, are underrepresented in our sample, suggesting a need for more focused consultation.

Experience from European reintroduction projects demonstrates the value that an inclusive approach, throughout all stages of the reintroduction process, brings to inform and support successful reintroduction outcomes (see White et al., (2015)⁷ for an overview of the potential values associated with a lynx reintroduction) In regard to the proposal for a lynx reintroduction trail in the UK, our study highlights a need for further representative consultation, in combination with an education and awareness campaign, to evaluate the attitudes of an 'informed public' prior to the development of a trial lynx reintroduction project.

5

Wilson, C.J. (2004), 'Could we live with reintroduced large carnivores in the UK?', *Mammal Rev.* 2004, Volume 34, No. 3, 211–232.

6

Scott Porter Research and Marketing (1998). Reintroduction of European Beaver to Scotland: results of a public consultation. SNH Research, Survey & Monitoring 121, Battleby.

7

White, C., Convery, I., Eagle, A., O'Donoghue, P., Piper, S., Rowcroft, P., Smith, D., & van Maanen, E. (2015). *Cost-benefit analysis for the reintroduction of lynx to the UK: Main report, Application for the reintroduction of Lynx to the UK government*, AECOM. Available at: <http://www.aecom.com/uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/Cost-benefit-analysis-for-the-reintroduction-of-lynx-to-the-UK-Main-report.pdf>