

# EARNED RECOGNITION PROJECT: REPORT OF CONSULTATION WITH OTHER STAKEHOLDERS

MARCH 2021



## Executive Summary

The Earned Recognition (ER) Partnership Project involves Natural England (NE), the Bat Conservation Trust (BCT) and the Chartered Institute for Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM). The aims of the project are to design a scheme to streamline the mitigation licensing process for bats in England, raise and maintain professional standards and improve outcomes for bats.

A consultation was launched on 17<sup>th</sup> November 2020 to gather views on the proposed ER scheme from stakeholders (including local authority planners, local authority ecologists, architects, planning consultants, developers, builders and NGOs) and to identify if respondents would be interested in further stakeholder engagement as the ER project progresses. The consultation closed on 31<sup>st</sup> January 2021 and this report provides the consultation results. A more detailed consultation was carried out at the same time for ecologists involved in mitigation licensing and is reported on separately.

In total, 143 people responded to the consultation. Of these, 24% were local authority ecologists and 21% were either voluntary or professional ecologists. Planners represented 16% of the sample with smaller proportions of other stakeholders represented.

There was good representation of different geographical areas in which respondents work, sizes of organisation and ecology team, and types of development worked on.

The consultation showed an overall positive response to the ER scheme, with the majority of respondents predicting a positive impact from the scheme on their business/sector. The majority predict that the scheme will reduce delays and be better overall for developers and also that the scheme will be more efficient for NE.

However, over a third (40%) of respondents felt that the scheme might be misused by developers. Robust compliance mechanisms will be put in place to ensure that the scheme cannot be misused by any stakeholders in the development process.

Overall, respondents were divided on their predictions relating to likely outcomes for bats. However, competency-based assessment / accreditation and robust compliance mechanisms will ensure improved practices, which will benefit bats. In addition, the scheme will enable NE to divert capacity to more complex cases with greater conservation implications and also to monitoring and therefore improving outcomes for bats.

Nearly two thirds (60%) of respondents expressed interest in further stakeholder engagement.

We would like to thank those who responded to the consultation for their time and look forward to working with some in the future.

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## 1.0. Introduction

The Earned Recognition (ER) Project is a partnership between Natural England (NE), the Bat Conservation Trust (BCT) and the Chartered Institute for Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM). The aims of the project are to design a scheme to streamline the mitigation licensing process for bats in England, raise and maintain professional standards in this work and improve outcomes for bats.

This report provides the results of a consultation carried out to gather views on the scheme from stakeholders other than ecologists involved in the mitigation licensing process (for whom a separate and more detailed consultation was carried out and is reported on separately) including local authority planners, local authority ecologists, architects, planning consultants, developers, builders and NGOs. More information about the project and can be found on the BCT and CIEEM websites here:

- [Earned Recognition Project - Project collaborations & Partnerships - Bat Conservation Trust \(bats.org.uk\)](https://bats.org.uk)
- [Earned Recognition | CIEEM](https://www.cieem.org)

## 2.0. Methods

### 2.1. The Consultation

The consultation was launched on 17<sup>th</sup> November 2020 to gather views on the proposed ER scheme and to identify if respondents would be interested in further stakeholder engagement as the ER project progresses. The consultation closed on 31<sup>st</sup> January 2021.

The consultation questions were presented as a Survey Monkey questionnaire (linked from the BCT and CIEEM websites) containing 11 questions in total, including questions about the stakeholder and their overall impression of the scheme and the predicted outcomes. Respondents were also asked if they would like to be involved in further stakeholder engagement and, if so, for their contact details.

### 2.2. Publicising the Consultation

The consultation was publicised through various channels, including the NE Wildlife Licensing Newsletter, CIEEM eNews, BCT's Bat Group Bulletin and BCT social media such as Facebook and Twitter. In addition, the organisations and companies listed in Table 1 were contacted via email and chased periodically for the duration of the consultation period.

**Table 1. Organisations/Companies Contacted via email to inform them of the consultation**

Stakeholder Group	Organisations/Companies Contacted
Developers	Home Builders Federation House Builders Association Building Research Establishment Federation of Master Builders UK Green Building Council UK Contractors Group – Biodiversity sub-group Civil Engineering Contractors Association Construction Industry Research and Information Association (CIRIA)

	<p>National Custom and Self Build Association  National Self Build and Renovation Centre  Persimmon  Berkeley Group  Vistry Group  Wilmot Dixon  Barratts</p>
Infrastructure	<p>Network Rail  Highways England  National Grid</p>
Landowners	<p>Countryside and Land Association  National Farmers Union</p>
Architects/Surveyors	<p>Royal Institute of British Architects  Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors  Landscape Institute</p>
Planning	<p>Association of Local Government Ecologists  Planning Advisory Service  Planning Officer's Society  Royal Town Planning Institute  Town and Country Planning Association  Local Government Association  Planning Portal  Planning Inspectorate  Greater London Authority</p>
Government	<p>Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs  Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government  Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy  Environment Agency  Forestry Commission  Joint Nature Conservation Committee</p>
Membership organisations (where not covered elsewhere in the table)	<p>Institute for Environmental Management and Assessment (IEMA)  Royal Society of Biology  British Ecological Society  Arboriculture Association  Institute of Chartered Foresters  Wildlife and Countryside Link  Association of Local Environmental Records Centres  National Biodiversity Network  Centre for Ecology and Hydrology</p>
NGOs	<p>Mammal Society  RSPB</p>

## 3.0. Results

In total 143 people responded to this consultation. All results are presented in Appendices 1-3.

## 4.0. Interpretation and Discussion

### 4.1. The Respondents

#### 4.1.1. Stakeholders (Appendix 1, Question 1)

Of the 143 respondents, 24% were local authority ecologists, 21% were either voluntary or professional ecologists (represented in the 'other' category) and 16% were planners. It is not clear why the ecologists responded to this consultation rather than the more detailed one but perhaps this was because these particular respondents do not carry out work in relation to mitigation licences.

There were smaller proportions of other stakeholder groups (e.g. architects, planning consultants, builders, developers and NGOs), despite a push to gain more responses from some of these groups during January (the original closing date of 5<sup>th</sup> January was extended to 31<sup>st</sup> January and relevant contacts chased).

Some of the respondents represented alternative stakeholder groups, which are listed below the graph and table in Appendix 1, Question 1.

#### 4.1.2. Regionality (Appendix 1, Question 2)

People working in all regions were represented, with the highest proportions in the south-east (34%) and south-west (29%) and the lowest proportions in the north-east (15%) and Yorkshire and Humberside (13%).

#### 4.1.3. Size of Organisation / Ecology Team (Appendix 1, Questions 3-4)

People working in all different sizes of organisation and ecology team were represented.

The greatest proportion of respondents work in a team consisting of more than 41 staff (58% of respondents), with the next closest being in a team of 2-10 staff (22%).

When asked about the size of the ecology team respondents work with, 38% said a team of 2-10 ecologists, 25% said only 1 ecologist and 23% said this question was not applicable to them (presumably this means no ecologists in the team).

#### 4.1.4. Development Types (Appendix 1, Question 5)

Respondents work on all types of development project in the tick list that was provided, with small housing receiving the highest number of responses (80% of respondents ticked this) and mining receiving the lowest proportion of responses (21% of respondents ticked this).

There was an interesting mix of 'Other' responses to this question, which are listed below the graph and table in Appendix 1, Question 5.

## 4.2. Initial Responses to the ER Scheme

### 4.2.1. Initial Reaction (Appendix 2, Question 6)

When asked what they thought the impact of the scheme would be on their business/sector, 58% thought the impact would be positive or somewhat positive and 26% were neutral.

### 4.2.2. Likely Outcomes for Developers (Appendix 2, Question 7)

When respondents were asked about likely different outcomes from the scheme for developers, the highest proportion of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the scheme would reduce delays (71%, 22% neutral) and be better for developers (71%, 22% neutral). However, 40% agreed or strongly agreed that it could be misused by developers and 45% were neutral.

### 4.2.3. Likely Outcomes for NE (Appendix 2, Question 8)

When considering outcomes for NE, 75% agreed or strongly agreed that the scheme would be more efficient for NE, 8% were neutral.

### 4.2.4. Likely Outcomes for Bats (Appendix 2, Question 9)

When considering likely outcomes for bats, 23% agreed or strongly agreed that the scheme would provide better outcomes, 37% were neutral, 21% disagreed or strongly disagreed and 19% didn't know.

## 4.3. Further Stakeholder Engagement (Appendix 3, Question 10)

When asked if respondents would be interested in further stakeholder engagement as the project progresses, 60% responded positively.

## 5.0. Conclusion

The consultation showed an overall positive response to the ER scheme, with the majority of respondents predicting a positive impact from the scheme on their business/sector. The majority predict that the scheme will reduce delays and be better overall for developers and also that the scheme would be more efficient for NE.

However, over a third of respondents felt that the scheme might be misused by developers. Robust compliance mechanisms will be put in place to ensure that the scheme cannot be misused by any stakeholders in the development process.

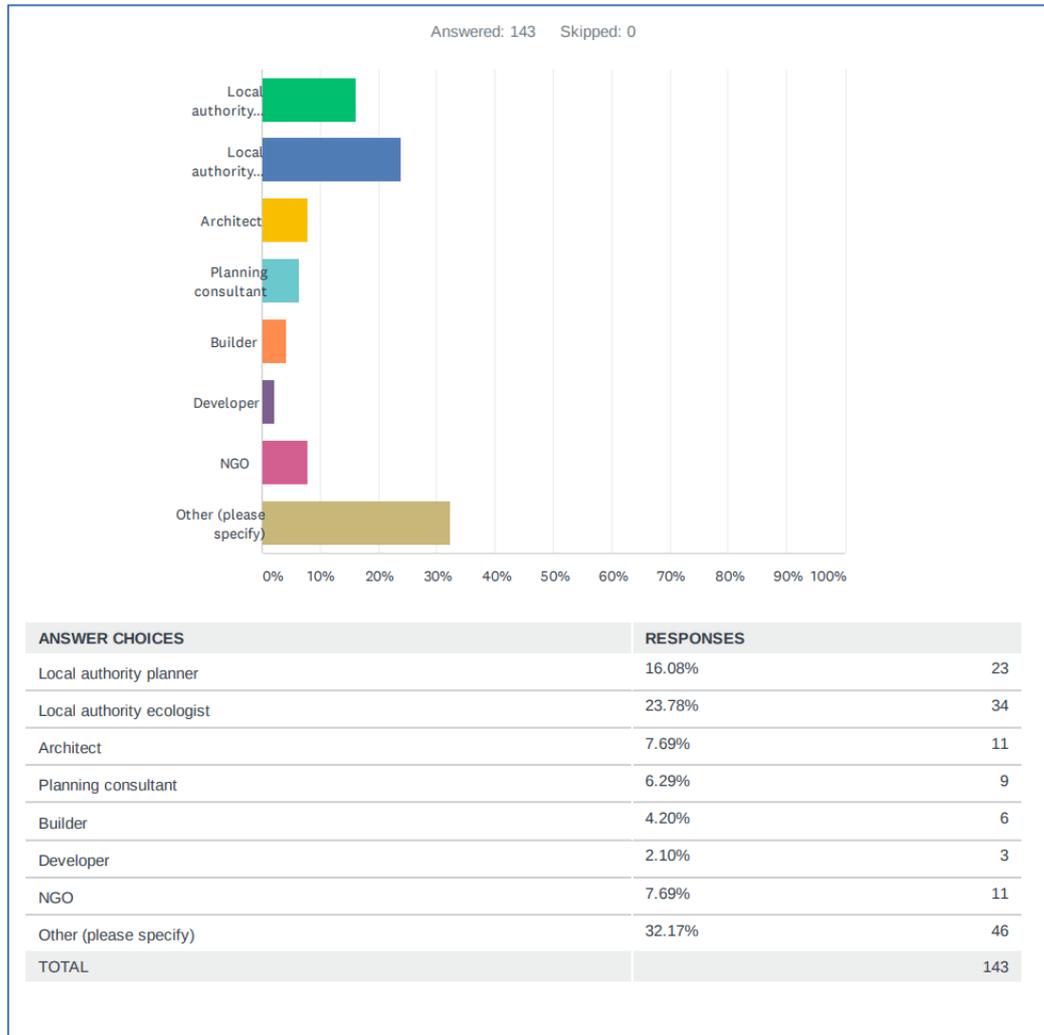
Respondents were also less clear on the likely outcomes for bats. However, competency-based assessment / accreditation and robust compliance mechanisms will ensure improved practices, which will benefit bats. In addition, the scheme will enable NE to divert capacity to more complex cases with greater conservation implications and also to monitoring outcomes for bats.

Nearly two thirds expressed interest in further stakeholder engagement.

We would like to thank those who responded to the consultation for their time and look forward to working with some in the future.

## Appendix 1. Responses to Questions 1-5 The Respondents

### Question 1. Which stakeholder group to you represent?



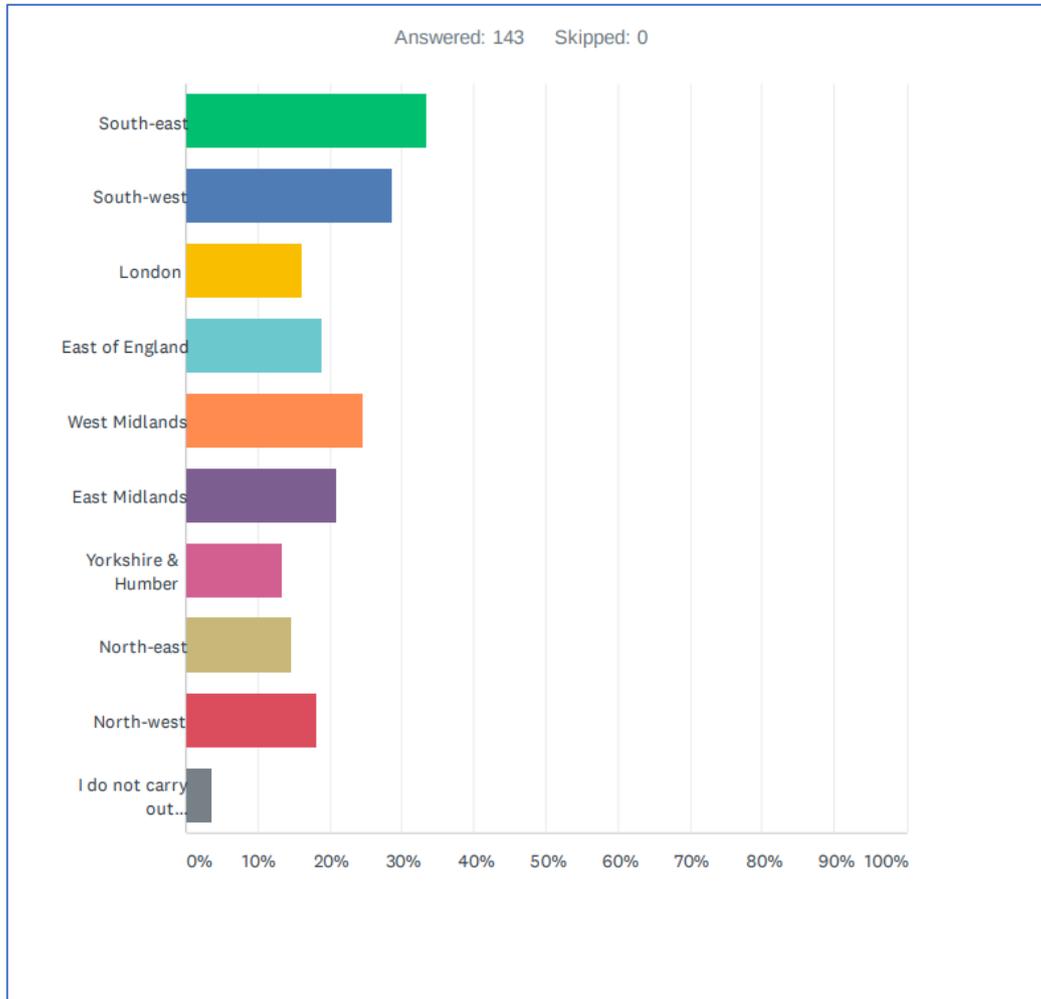
The 'Other' responses were mostly from ecologists working with bats in either a voluntary or professional capacity (30 respondents) and others were as follows:

- Civil engineer
- Landscape architect
- Planning and architectural
- Principal Contractor/Contractor
- Architectural technologist
- LERC
- Service Level Agreement with local authority for planning applications
- Property owner – with bats
- Arboriculturalist
- Local Authority Conservation Land Manager
- Highways
- Sustainability Consultant

- Developer
- Infrastructure/Rail

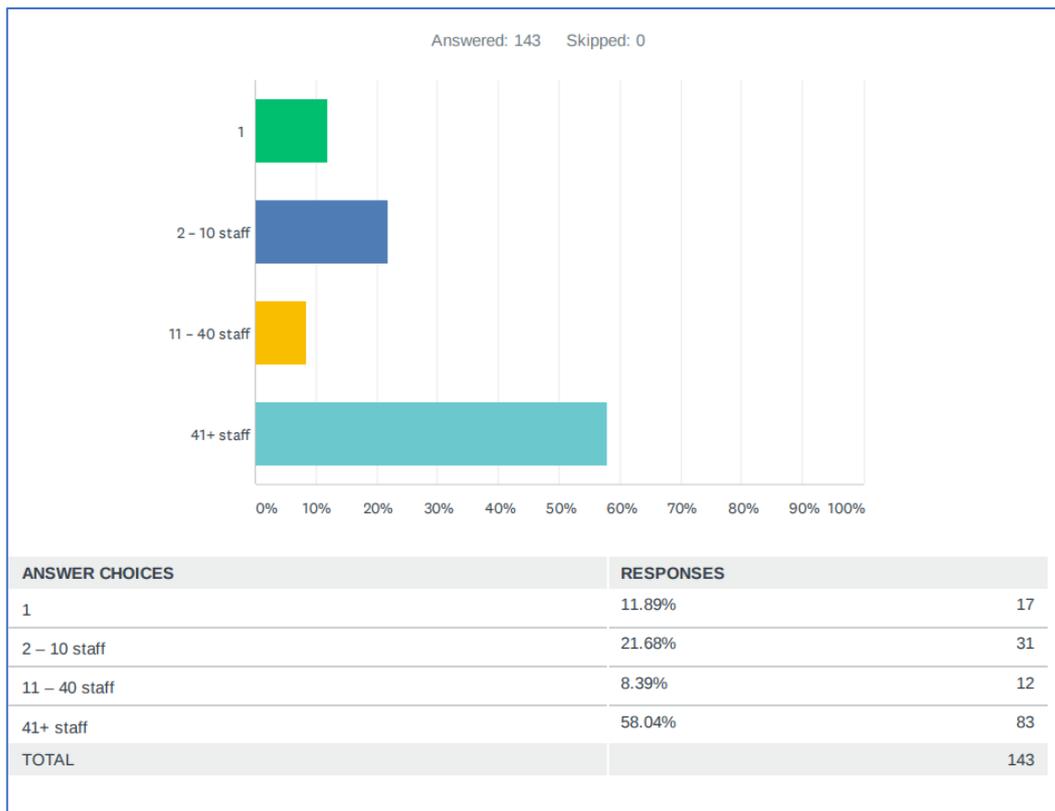
**Question 2. In which English region do you carry out most of your development-related work? Tick all that apply.**

This question was designed so that multiple options could be ticked; 275 responses were received so at least some respondents ticked more than one option.

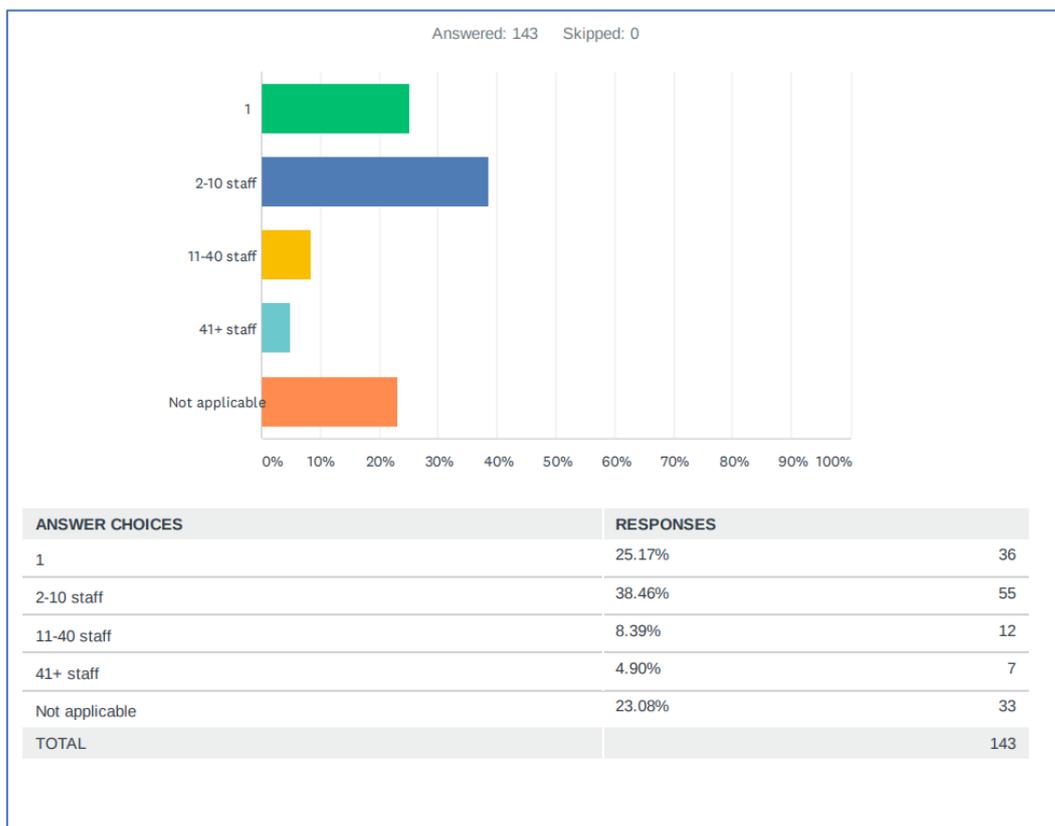


ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
South-east	33.57% 48
South-west	28.67% 41
London	16.08% 23
East of England	18.88% 27
West Midlands	24.48% 35
East Midlands	20.98% 30
Yorkshire & Humber	13.29% 19
North-east	14.69% 21
North-west	18.18% 26
I do not carry out development-related work in England	3.50% 5
Total Respondents: 143	

**Question 3. How many people work in your organisation in total?**

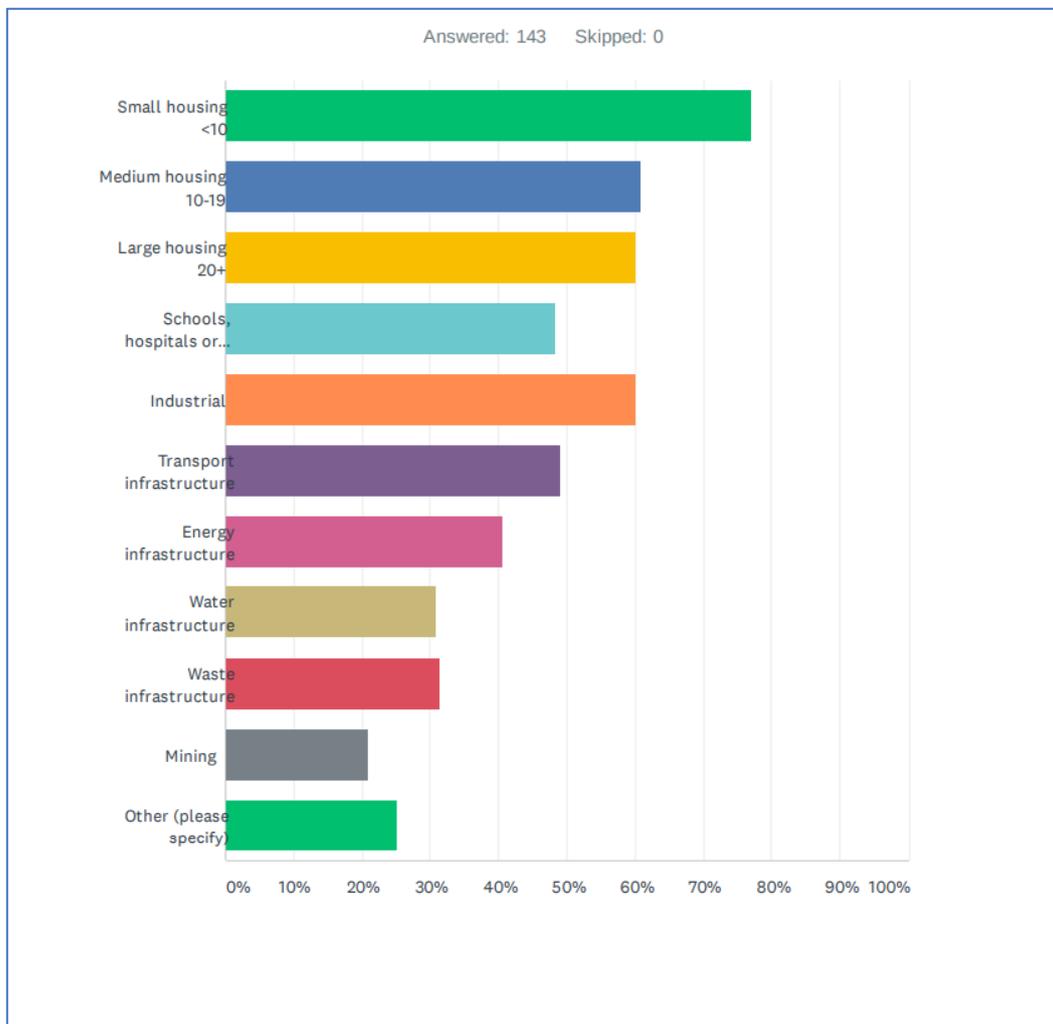


**Question 4. How many ecologists work in your organisation in total?**



**Question 5. What type of projects do you typically get involved with? Tick all that apply.**

This question was designed so that multiple options could be ticked; 721 responses were received so at least some respondents ticked more than one option.



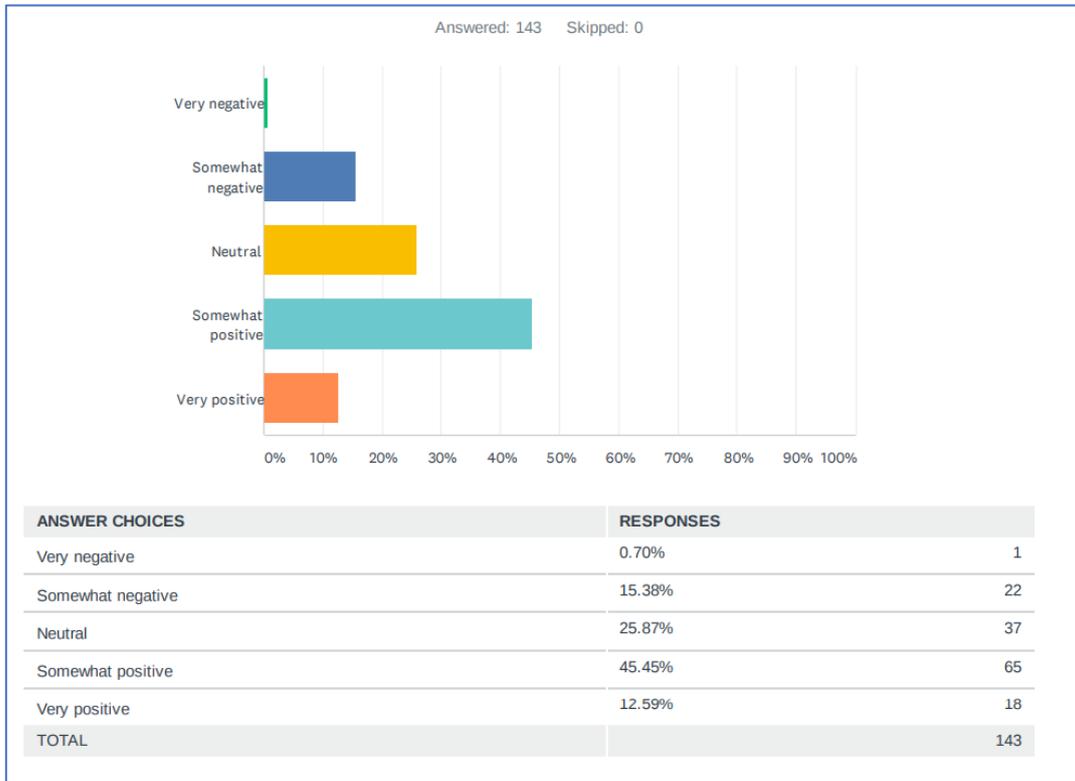
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Small housing <10	76.92% 110
Medium housing 10-19	60.84% 87
Large housing 20+	60.14% 86
Schools, hospitals or prisons	48.25% 69
Industrial	60.14% 86
Transport infrastructure	48.95% 70
Energy infrastructure	40.56% 58
Water infrastructure	30.77% 44
Waste infrastructure	31.47% 45
Mining	20.98% 30
Other (please specify)	25.17% 36
Total Respondents: 143	

The 'Other' responses as follows:

- Road and rail
- Conversions
- Flood management infrastructure
- Events
- Historic Buildings
- Parks and open spaces
- Wildlife Conservation
- Construction and demolition
- Domestic extensions, refurb, loft conversions
- Non-domestic construction
- Commercial
- Retail
- Refurb
- Office
- Hotel
- Nature reserves
- Developments affecting SPAs, SSSIs, reserves
- Local Plan and strategy
- Ecological information for planning
- Leisure
- Visitor facilities and infrastructure
- Recreation
- Barn conversions
- Woodland and Trees
- Rural business
- Land management
- NSIPs
- Churches
- Country estates
- Research
- Agricultural
- Small energy generation projects

## Appendix 2. Responses to Questions 6-9 Initial Responses to the Scheme

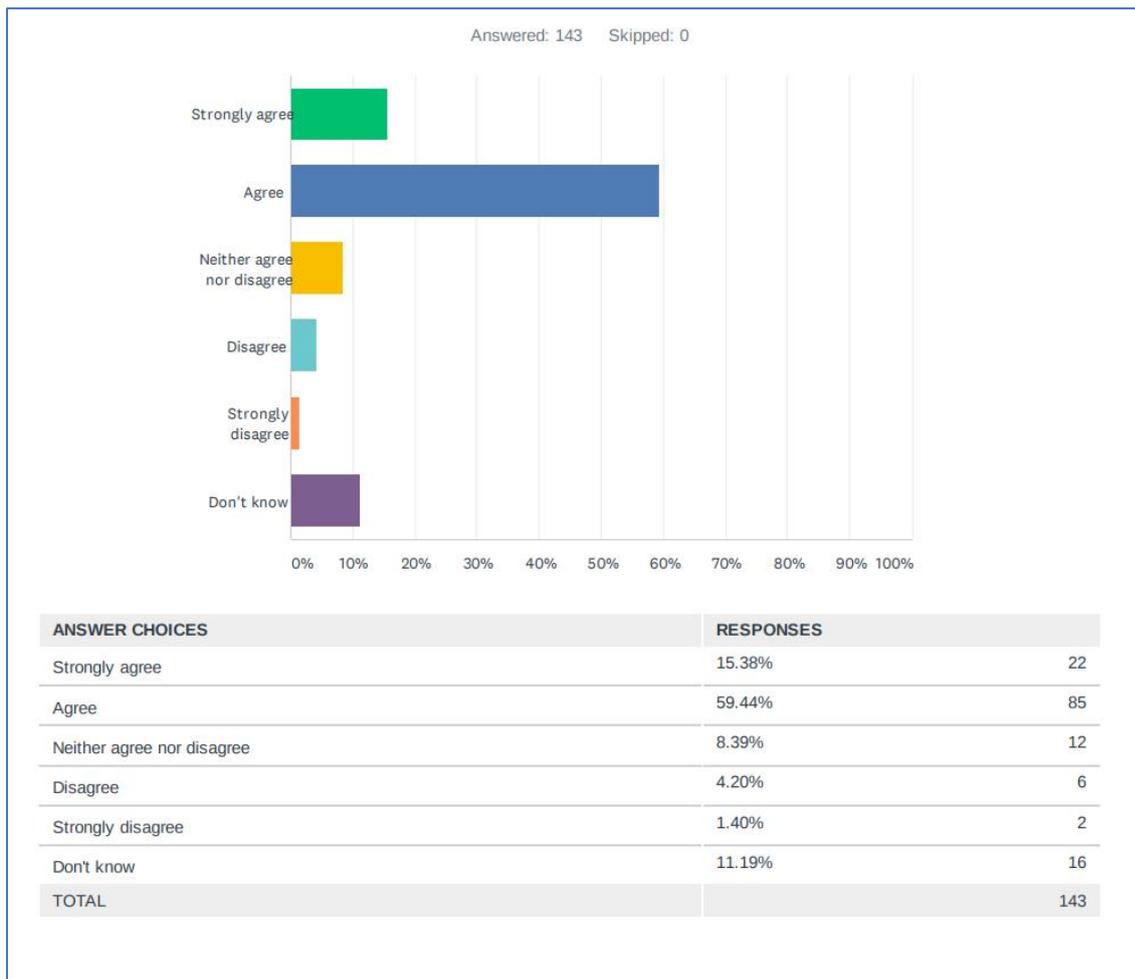
### Question 6. What do you anticipate the impact of the ER scheme on your business/sector will be?



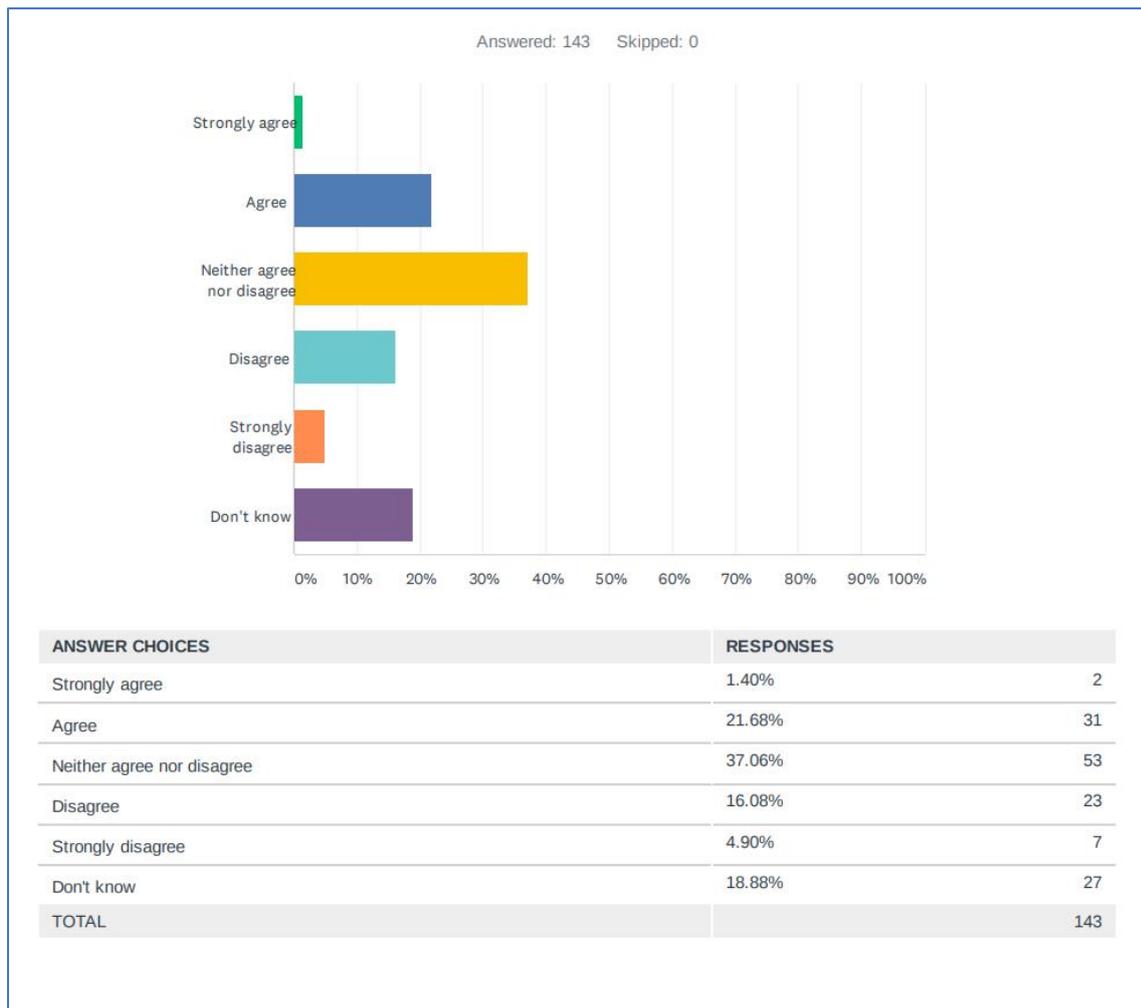
### Question 7. Do you think the scheme will.....

	STRONGLY AGREE	AGREE	NEITHER AGREE NOR DISAGREE	DISAGREE	STRONGLY DISAGREE	TOTAL
Reduce delay and uncertainty for developers?	9.15% 13	61.97% 88	21.83% 31	5.63% 8	1.41% 2	142
Be better for developers?	9.79% 14	61.54% 88	22.38% 32	4.90% 7	1.40% 2	143
Be misused by developers?	9.86% 14	30.28% 43	45.07% 64	12.68% 18	2.11% 3	142

**Question 8. Do you think the scheme will be more efficient for Natural England?**



**Question 9. Do you think the scheme will improve outcomes for bats?**



## Appendix 3. Responses to Question 10 Further Stakeholder Engagement

**Question 10. Would you be interested in further stakeholder engagement as the project progresses?**

